

# Western

## Prosperity Zone (PZ)

myFutureNC 2025 Attainment Profiles



### Counties in Western PZ:

Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, and Transylvania Counties

### Western PZ Served By:

Foothills, Land-of-Sky, and Southwestern Councils of Governments  
and Foothills, Mountain Area, and Southwestern Workforce Development Boards

### Educational Attainment

Western residents ages 25-44, 2023

**Have Degree or Credential**  
89,632  
51.7%

**No Degree**  
83,721  
48.3%

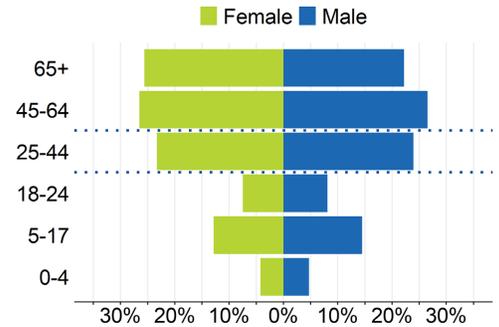
**Residents Ages 25-44**  
173,353

### Educational Level Breakdown, 2023

Graduate or Professional degree	10.3%
Bachelor's degree	24.1%
Associate degree	9.8%
Short-term credential	7.5%
Some college, no credential	13.7%
High school graduate (including GED)	25.4%
Less than high school	9.2%

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding

### Age Structure, 2023



2030 Proposed Western Attainment Goal: 128,232

2030 State Attainment Goal: 2 million

### Population Spotlight

2020 Census: 727,911  
2023 Estimate: 746,064  
Change: 18,153

### Growth Rate

2.5% vs. 3.8%  
County State

### Race/Ethnicity, 2023

Amer. Indian	1.3%
Asian/Pac. Isl.	0.9%
Black	3.9%
Hispanic	7.7%
Multiracial	2.9%
White	82.8%



**\$63,276**  
Median Household Income (2023)  
State: \$70,838



**71.1%**  
Home Owners (2023)  
State: 66.3%



**66.3%**  
Households with Broadband (2023)  
State: 77.1%



**18.3%**  
Child Poverty Rate (2023)  
State: 17.6%



**13.9%**  
Single Parent Households (2023)  
State: 17.0%



**5.4%**  
Foreign Born (2023)  
State: 9.2%

LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT

### In Western Prosperity Zone:

**74.9%**

of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs.

### Top Misalignments Job Openings vs. Degrees/Credentials

- **Health Science** Jobs > Creds
- **Education & Training** Jobs > Creds
- **Transportation, Distribution & Logistics** Jobs < Creds

**824** Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2023

### UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:

**6,134** graduates in 2020  
**69.1%** of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021  
**\$38,657** annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs), 2021

**46.6%** of adults (ages 25-44) in Western earned a **family sustaining wage**. State: 57.6%, 2023

**10.2%** of youth (ages 16-24) in Western were **Opportunity Youth**. State: 10.3%, 2023

**82.7%** of adults (ages 25-44) in Western **participated in the labor force**. State: 84.2%, 2023

### Top Industries in Western PZ, 2024 Q2

Industry Name	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wages
Health Care and Social Assistance	48,954	\$1,187
Retail Trade	38,624	\$671
Accommodation and Food Services	37,443	\$540
Public Administration	17,789	\$1,141
Construction	16,485	\$1,189

### Top Job Sectors in Western PZ, 2024 Q2

Job Sector	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wages
Private	243,698	\$968
Local Government	32,451	\$1,052
State Government	8,817	\$1,048
Federal Government	5,256	\$1,695

POSTSECONDARY COMPLETION

### Degree Credentials Awarded in PZ, 2023

2,399 certificate | 2,270 associate | 3,935 bachelor's

### Adult Learners

Western Residents Aged 25+ enrolled in NC Community Colleges, Fall 2023

1,264 Basic Skills  
10,073 Continuing Education  
4,100 Curriculum

13.7% of residents (aged 25-44) have some college but no degree. State: 11.7%, 2023

### Success of Western High School Graduates

79.5% of students who enroll persist to their second year. State: 83.8%, 2023

91.2% UNC | 66.4% NCCCS | 84.2% NCICU

59.1% of students who enroll earn a degree or certificate within 6 years. State: 60.0%, 2023

29.7% UNC | 16.6% NCCCS | <5% NCICU

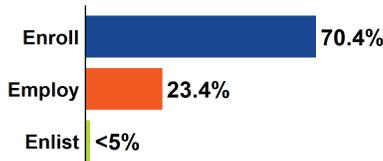
### Top destinations of all college-goers, 2024

- 10,872 of all college-goers attended Asheville-Buncombe TCC
- 5,665 of all college-goers attended Blue Ridge CC
- 3,506 of all college-goers attended Southwestern CC

COLLEGE & CAREER ACCESS

51.7% of 2024 high school class completed the FAFSA as of Sept. 27, 2024. 1,487 more need to complete in 2024 to meet state goal of 80%. State: 55.0%

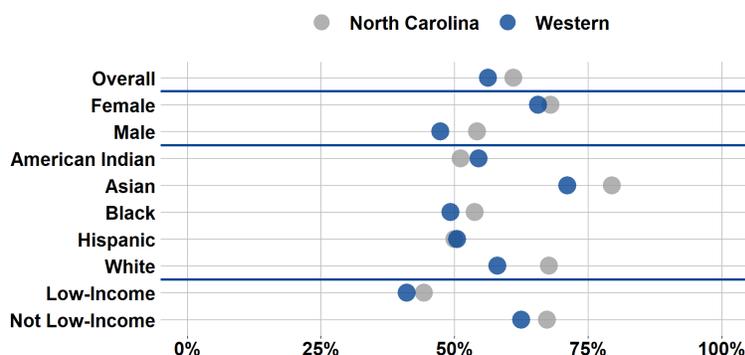
### Post High School Graduation Intentions, 2023



90.8% of 9th graders graduated within four years. 261 more needed to meet state goal of 95%. State: 87.3% 2024

54.6% of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 12 months. State: 59.3% 2023

### Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Western, 2023



Note: Outcomes for groups with less than 10 students, <5% or >95% are not displayed.

ACADEMIC READINESS

55.2% of eligible 4-year-olds enrolled in NC Pre-K program in 2024. 592 more needed to meet state goal of 75%. State: 57.2%

### Western Traditional Public Schools students:

31.4% of 3-8 graders earned college-and-career-ready scores in reading in 2024. 18,010 more needed to meet state goal of 86%. State: 29.8%

37.4% of 3-8 graders earned college-and-career-ready scores in math in 2024. 11,732 more needed to meet state goal of 73%. State: 36.5%

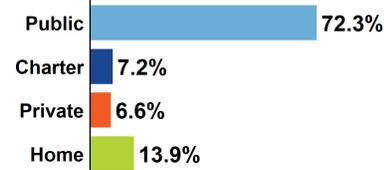
25.3% of students were chronically absent from school in 2024. 11,106 fewer needed to meet state goal of 11%. State: 25.7%

1.4% of students drop out of high school (339 total students), compared to 2.1% statewide. 2023

### School & Student Overview (2024 school year)

Traditional Public School District(s): 14  
Traditional Public School(s): 179  
Charter School(s): 15  
Private School(s): 83  
Home School(s): 8,986

102,061 total K-12 students enrolled in schools.



### Pathways to College and Career

Students in traditional public schools completed 14,673 Career & Technical Education (CTE) credentials and 4,363 concentrations. 3,093 (21.1%) of credentials were industry-valued in 2023. The top three CTE concentrations: Human Services; Agricultural, Food, & Natural Resources; and Health Science.

2,587 (11.1%) high school students took at least one AP, IB, or CIE exam. State: 16.8% (2023).

2,980 (51.3%) high school graduates participated in Career & College Promise programs. State: 36.0% (2024).

For more information about each indicator, including data sources and methodology, visit:

[dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/](https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/)