McDowell County

2030 NC Degree Attainment Goal: 2 million (67%)
2030 Proposed McDowell County Attainment Goal: 5,871 (50%)

Population Spotlight
2010 Census: 44,996
2020 Census: 44,578
Change: -418

Growth Rate
-0.9% vs. 9.5%

$47,579 Median Household Income (2020)
18.8% Child Poverty Rate (2020)
84% Households with Broadband (2020)
74% Home Owners (2020)
70% Voter Registration Rate (2021)
4.5% Unemployment Rate (2021)

Educational Attainment
McDowell County residents ages 25-44, 2021

- No Degree 59.5% (6,384)
- Have Degree or Credential 40.5% (4,341)

Top Opportunities for Growth
These three areas represent the biggest opportunities for McDowell County to improve future attainment outcomes.

- First-Year Persistence
65% of McDowell County high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary persist to their second year, below the rural non-metro county average of 73%.
- Transition to Postsecondary
43% of McDowell County seniors enroll in postsecondary within 12 months of graduation, below the rural non-metro county average of 50%.
- Chronic Absenteeism
33% of McDowell County students are chronically absent from school, above the rural non-metro county average of 29%.

Impact of Covid-19 on Education Pipeline
Covid-19 has affected critical transition points along the education continuum.

- K-12 Enrollment (district schools)
-4.1% 2021-22 vs. 2019-20
- Postsecondary Enrollment
-10.6% 2021 vs. 2020

How students in McDowell County traditional schools are currently doing:
To meet state goals, each year McDowell County needs:

- 54% of seniors completed the FAFSA in 2022; 74 more need to complete in 2022 to meet state goal of 80%.
- 62% of graduates reported intentions to enroll in a postsecondary institution versus 69% in peer counties.
- 43% of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 12 months versus 50% in peer counties.

McDowell County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 310.1 versus 318.1 in peer counties.

61% of McDowell County students have parents with no college degree (either 2- or 4-year) versus 59% in peer counties.

Note: Outcomes for demographic groups with fewer than 10 students are not displayed.
McDowell County 2022 Attainment Profile

Success of McDowell County High School Graduates

Top destinations of graduates, 2016-2020

- 34% of college-goers attended a public 4-year college
- 12% of college-goers attended a private 4-year college
- 53% of college-goers attended a public 2-year college
- <5% of college-goers attended a private 2-year college
- 92% of college-goers attended an in-state college

- 65% of students who enroll persist to their second year versus 73% in peer counties. 2021
- 59% of students who enroll earn a degree or credential within 6 years versus 55% in peer counties. 2021

Adult Learners

McDowell County resident enrollments in NC Community Colleges, 2021

- 146 Basic Skills
- 820 Continuing Education
- 1,290 Curriculum

11% of McDowell County residents have student loan debt; 13% of debt holders had student loans in default. 2020

In your Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:

- 70.2% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs.

Top areas of misalignment:

- Health Science (bachelor’s and below bachelor’s)
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics (below bachelor’s)
- Business Management & Administration (bachelor’s)

- 359 Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2020

UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:

- 2,139 graduates in 2020
- 80% of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021
- $37,952 annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs)

In 2021 your Workforce Development Board served:

- 6,325 in Basic Services
- 2,960 in Career Services
- 200 in Education Services

- 18.1% of young adults ages 16-24 in McDowell County were not working and not in school versus 15.2% in peer counties. 2019

Promising Attainment Practices

The new Promising Attainment Practices Database is a curated, searchable, and filterable collection of about 250 county, region, and state-level initiatives and programs that directly address various components of the state’s attainment challenge. The Database allows local and regional initiative leaders and other stakeholders to identify groups across the state who are developing or operating initiatives designed to boost attainment.

Follow link to discover how McDowell County has been meeting local needs:

https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt_search=McDowell

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

dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/