McDowell County

myFutureNC 2024 Attainment Profiles

2030 Proposed McDowell County Attainment Goal: 5,871 (Stretch Goal: 5,972)

2030 State Attainment Goal: 2 million

Population Spotlight
2020 Census: 44,577
2022 Estimate: 44,753
Change: 176

Growth Rate
0.4% vs. 2.5%
County vs. State

73%
Home Owners (2022)
State: 67%

18.7%
Child Poverty Rate (2022)
State: 17.2%

20.3%
Opportunity Youth Rate (2021)
State: 12.1%

55%
Households with Broadband (2022)
State: 77%

3.5%
Unemployment Rate (2022)
State: 3.7%

Median Household Income (2022)
$54,042
State: $67,516

Educational Attainment
McDowell County residents ages 25-44, 2022

No Degree
6,407
59.2%

Have Degree or Credential
4,414
40.8%

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

FAFSA Completion
49% of McDowell County high school seniors complete the FAFSA, below the rural - non-metro county average of 61%.

Chronic Absenteeism
41% of McDowell County students are chronically absent from school, above the rural - non-metro county average of 35%.

High School Graduation
84% of McDowell County 9th graders complete high school in 4 years or less, below the rural - non-metro county average of 85%.

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

In Hickory Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:
70.2% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs.

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)

43% of adults (ages 25-44) in McDowell County earned a family sustaining wage, 2022

McDowell County is served by:
Foothills Workforce Development Board
Foothills Regional Commission

UNC System College Enrollment
Curriculum

NC Community College Enrollment
Curriculum

Top 3 Five-Star Jobs in Hickory Prosperity Zone Sub-Region

Job Title
Nurse Practitioners
Logisticians
Physician Assistants

Annual Growth
4%
3%
3%

Top 3 Employers in McDowell County

Employer
Baxter Healthcare Corp
NC Public Schools
County Of Mcdowell

Employment Range
1000+
500-999
250-499

First-time Curriculum Enrollments

Basic Skills

Continuing Education

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
10% of McDowell County residents have student loan debt. 10% of debt holders had student loans in default. 2022

Success of McDowell County High School Graduates

- 81% of students who enroll persist to their second year versus 78% in peer counties. 2022
- 57% of students who enroll earn a degree or certificate within 6 years versus 55% in peer counties. 2022

Top destinations of all college-goers, Fall 2023

- 1,661 of all college-goers attended McDowell TCC
- 190 of all college-goers attended Asheville-Buncombe TCC
- 142 of all college-goers attended Western Piedmont CC

How students in McDowell County traditional schools are doing:

- McDowell County has met the goal for Pre-K enrollment (Goal: 75%). 2023
- 27% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading, compared to 30% statewide; 1,495 more needed to meet state goal of 73%. 2023
- 30% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math, compared to 35% statewide; 1,413 more needed to meet state goal of 86%. 2023
- 84% of 9th graders graduate within four years, compared to 87% statewide; 50 more needed to meet state goal of 95%. 2023
- 41% of students are chronically absent from school, compared to 32% statewide; 1,738 less needed to meet state goal of 11%. 2022

School Choice

6,925 total students were enrolled in K-12 in McDowell County in the 2022-23 school year.

Access to Postsecondary Credits

Students in McDowell County completed 1,440 Career & Technical Education (CTE) credentials (industry-valued credential data available in Spring 2024) and 200 concentrations in 2022. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Law, Public Safety, Corrections, & Security; Manufacturing; and Arts, Audio/Video Technology, & Communications.

For more information about each indicator, including data sources and methodology, visit:
dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/