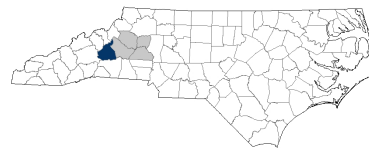


# McDowell County

myFutureNC 2024 Attainment Profiles



Hickory  
Prosperity Zone Sub-Region  
**Peer County Type:** Rural - Non-Metro  
**Local Education Agencies:** 1 (2023)  
**Charter Schools:** 0 (2023)

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%** County vs. **2.5%** State



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



**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%

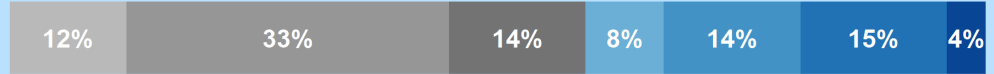
## Educational Attainment

McDowell County residents ages 25-44, 2022

Less than high school High school graduate (including GED) Some college, no credential Short-term credential Associate degree Bachelor's degree Graduate or professional degree

**No Degree or Credential**  
**6,407**  
59.2%

**Have Degree or Credential**  
**4,414**  
40.8%



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

## 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](https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt_search=McDowell)

LABOR MARKET ALIGNMENT

## In Hickory 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  
**Business Management & Administration** bachelor's  
**Transportation, Distribution & Logistics** below bachelor's

**359** Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2020

### UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:

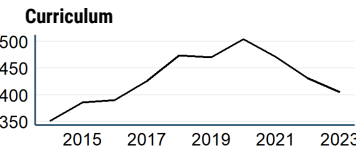
**2,139** graduates in 2020  
**80%** of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021  
**\$37,952** annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs)

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

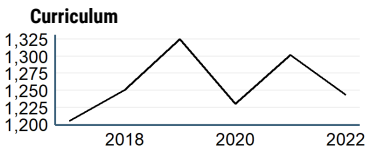
### McDowell County is served by:

Foothills Workforce Development Board  
Foothills Regional Commission

## UNC System College Enrollment



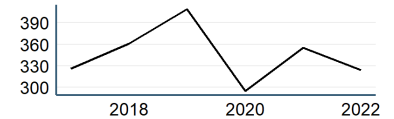
## NC Community College Enrollment



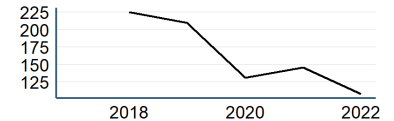
## Top 3 Five-Star Jobs in Hickory Prosperity Zone Sub-Region

Job Title	Annual Growth
Nurse Practitioners	4%
Logisticians	3%
Physician Assistants	3%

## First-time Curriculum Enrollments



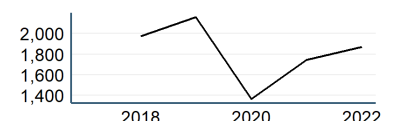
## Basic Skills



## Top 3 Employers in McDowell County

Employer	Employment Range
Baxter Healthcare Corp	1000+
NC Public Schools	500-999
County Of McDowell	250-499

## Continuing Education



### Adult Learners

#### McDowell County resident enrollments in NC Community Colleges, Fall 2022

- 108 Basic Skills
- 1,871 Continuing Education
- 1,243 Curriculum

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**

49% of seniors **completed the FAFSA** in 2023, compared to 62% statewide; 103 more need to complete in 2023 to meet state goal of 80%. 2023

53% of graduates reported **intentions to enroll** in a postsecondary institution versus 68% in peer counties. 2022

53% of graduates **enrolled in a postsecondary institution** within 12 months versus 52% in peer counties. 2022

61% of McDowell County students have **parents with no college degree** (either 2- or 4-year) versus 57% in peer counties.

#### 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

McDowell County has a **student-to-school counselor ratio** of 287:1 versus 325:1 in peer counties. 2022

4% of students **drop out of high school** (70 total students), compared to 2% statewide. 2022

#### Degree Credentials Awarded, 2022

1,720 certificate | 2,199 associate | 327 bachelor's

#### Postsecondary assets in Hickory Prosperity Zone sub-region

##### Public, 4-year or above

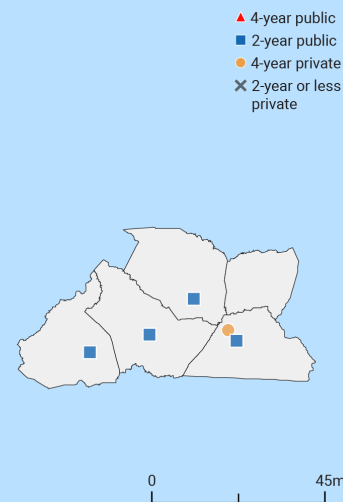
##### Public, 2-year

Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Catawba Valley Community College, McDowell Technical Community College, Western Piedmont Community College

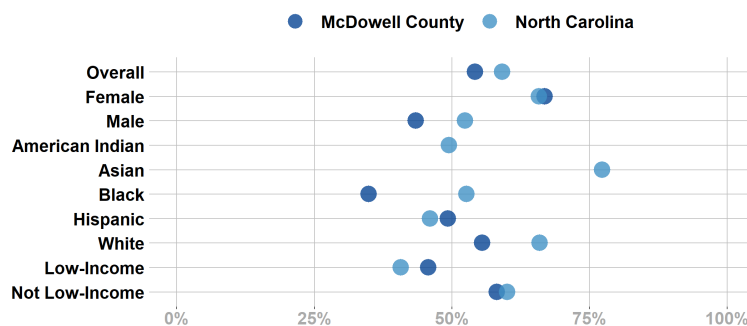
##### Private not-for-profit, 4-year or above

Lenoir-Rhyne University

##### Private not-for-profit, 2-year



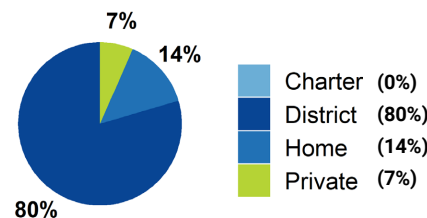
#### Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in McDowell County, 2022



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

#### School Choice

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



Note: This profile focuses on outcomes of students enrolled in district schools.

#### 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.

142 high school students took at least one **AP course** (8%) versus 7% in peer counties (2022).

298 high school students participated in **Career & College Promise programs** (41%) versus 39% in peer counties (2022).

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/)