### Educational Attainment

**Polk County residents ages 25-44, 2021**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Degree</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Degree or Credential</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (including GED)</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no credential</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term credential</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers may add to more than 100% due to rounding

### Top Opportunities for Growth

These three areas represent the biggest opportunities for Polk County to improve future attainment outcomes.

- **First-Year Persistence**: 72% of Polk 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**: 53% of Polk County seniors enroll in postsecondary within 12 months of graduation, below the state average of 55%.
- **Adult Learners**: 17% of Polk County adults 25-44 have some college, no degree, above the state average of 15%.

### Impact of Covid-19 on Education Pipeline

Covid-19 has affected critical transition points along the education continuum.

- **K-12 Enrollment (district schools)**: -3.7% 2021-22 vs. 2019-20
- **Postsecondary Enrollment**: -7.6% 2021 vs. 2020
- **FAFSA Completion**: -20.9% 2021-22 vs. 2018-19
- **Postsecondary Intentions**: 6.1% 2025-21 vs. 2018-19

### How students in Polk County traditional schools are currently doing:

To meet state goals, each year Polk County needs:

- **Pre-K enrollment** (Goal: 75%).
- **College and Career-Ready in Reading**: 272 more needed to meet state goal of 73%.
- **College and Career-Ready in Math**: 417 more needed to meet state goal of 86%.
- **Graduate within four years**: 5 more needed to meet state goal of 95%.
- **Chronically absent from school**: 88 less needed to meet state goal of 11%.

Polk County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 228:1 versus 318:1 in peer counties.

- **FAFSA Completion**
- 92 graduates participated in Career & College Promise programs (56%) versus 49% in peer counties (2021).

Students in Polk County completed 146 Career & Technical Education concentrations in 2021. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Agricultural, Food, & Natural Resources; Health Science; and Human Services.

### Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Polk County, 2021

Note: Outcomes for demographic groups with fewer than 10 students are not displayed.
Success of Polk County High School Graduates

Top destinations of graduates, 2016-2020

- 39% of college-goers attended a public 4-year college
- 14% of college-goers attended a private 4-year college
- 46% of college-goers attended a public 2-year college
- <5% of college-goers attended a private 2-year college
- 87% of college-goers attended an in-state college

- 72% of students who enroll persist to their second year versus 73% in peer counties. 2021
- 63% of students who enroll earn a degree or credential within 6 years versus 55% in peer counties. 2021

Adult Learners

Polk County resident enrollments in NC Community Colleges, 2021

- 35 Basic Skills
- 268 Continuing Education
- 410 Curriculum

9% of Polk County residents have student loan debt; 8% of debt holders had student loans in default.

Degree Credentials Awarded, 2021

- 1,557 certificate
- 1,492 associate
- 1,388 bachelor’s

In your Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:

71.6% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs.

636 Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2020

UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:

- 3,023 graduates in 2020
- 69% of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021
- $35,824 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

13.7% of young adults ages 16-24 in Polk 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 Polk County has been meeting local needs:
https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt_search=Polk

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