Polk County

2030 NC Degree Attainment Goal: 2 million (67%)
2030 Proposed Polk County Attainment Goal: 3,478 (69%)

Population Spotlight
2010 Census: 20,510
2020 Census: 19,328
Change: -1,182

Growth Rate
-5.8% vs. 9.5% County State


15.1% Child Poverty Rate (2020)

84% Households with Broadband (2020)

76% Home Owners (2020)

76% Voter Registration Rate (2021)

4.7% Unemployment Rate (2021)

Asheville
Prosperity Zone Sub-Region
Peer County Type: Rural Non-Metro
Local Education Agencies: 1
Charter Schools: 0

Updated: Dec 08 2022

Educational Attainment
Polk County residents ages 25-44, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Degree</th>
<th>Have Degree or Credential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,958</td>
<td>1,714</td>
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</table>

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%.

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

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Transition to Postsecondary
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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

Data Disruptions
• College-and-Career-Ready in Reading
• College-and-Career-Ready in Math
• Chronic Absenteeism

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

• Polk County has met the goal for Pre-K enrollment (goal: 75% vs. 103%). 2022
• 272 more 3-8 graders earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading (goal: 73% vs. 44%). 2022
• 417 more 3-8 graders earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math (goal: 86% vs. 42%). 2022
• 5 more 9th graders to graduate within four years (goal: 95% vs. 92%). 2021
• 88 more students to attend school regularly (goal: 11% chronic absenteeism vs. 15%). 2021

Polk County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 228:1 versus 318:1 in peer counties. 2021

Career and College Preparation
42 high school students took at least one AP course (6%) versus 7% in peer counties (2021).

Students in Polk County completed 146 Career & Technical Education concentrations in 2021. The top three CTE concentrations completed included 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.
Polk County 2022 Attainment Profile

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Skills</th>
<th>Continuing Education</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 9% of Polk County residents have student loan debt; 8% of debt holders had student loans in default. 2020

In your Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:

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

Top areas of misalignment:
Health Science (all levels)
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics (below bachelor’s)
Finance (bachelor’s)

- 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/