Population Spotlight
2020 Census: 54,077
2022 Estimate: 55,089
Change: 1,012

Growth Rate
1.9% vs. 2.5% State

Watauga County residents ages 25-44, 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have Degree or Credential</th>
<th>7,133</th>
<th>66.9%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Degree</td>
<td>3,534</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Educational Attainment

| Less than high school | 7% |
| High school graduate (including GED) | 17% |
| Some college, no credential | 10% |
| Short-term credential | 8% |
| Associate degree | 10% |
| Bachelor's degree | 31% |
| Graduate or professional degree | 19% |

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

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

Math Performance
47% of Watauga County 3-8 graders earn college-and-career-ready scores in Math, below the state goal of 86%.

Reading Performance
45% of Watauga County 3-8 graders earn college-and-career-ready scores in Reading, below the state goal of 73%.

FAFSA Completion
64% of Watauga County high school seniors complete the FAFSA, below the state goal of 80%.

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 Watauga County has been meeting local needs:
https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt_search=Watauga

Watauga County is served by:
High Country Workforce Development Board
High Country Council of Governments

In Boone-Wilkesboro Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:
83.4% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs.

Top areas of misalignment:
Health Science below bachelor’s
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics below bachelor’s
Business Management & Administration below bachelor’s

17 Individuals served in an ApprenticeshipNC program in 2020

UNC and NC Community College Outcomes:
5,202 graduates in 2020
69% of 2016 graduates were employed in NC in 2021
$44,421 annual average earnings of graduates employed in NC (includes both part-time and full-time jobs)

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

Top 3 Employers in Watauga County
- Appalachian State University: 1000+
- Appalachian Regional Healthcare Sys: 1000+
- Samaritan’s Purse: 500-999

In 2010:
- 83.4% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions were aligned with labor market needs.

In 2020:
- 83.4% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions were aligned with labor market needs.

In 2030:
- 83.4% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are expected to be aligned with labor market needs.

Watauga County Prosperity Zone Sub-Region
Peer County Type: Rural - Non-Metro
Local Education Agencies: 1 (2023)
Charter Schools: 1 (2023)
17% of Watauga County residents have student loan debt. 5% of debt holders had student loans in default.

Success of Watauga County High School Graduates

- 88% of students who enroll persist to their second year versus 78% in peer counties. 2022
- 65% 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

- 1,007 of all college-goers attended Caldwell CC and TI
- 89 of all college-goers attended Wilkes CC
- 49 of all college-goers attended Appalachian State University

- 64% of seniors completed the FAFSA in 2023, compared to 62% statewide; 54 more need to complete in 2023 to meet state goal of 80%.
- 81% of graduates reported intentions to enroll in a postsecondary institution versus 68% in peer counties. 2022
- 67% of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 12 months versus 52% in peer counties. 2022

42% of Watauga County students have parents with no college degree (either 2- or 4-year) versus 55% in peer counties.

Students in Watauga County completed 586 Career & Technical Education (CTE) credentials (259 (44%) were industry-valued credentials) and 225 concentrations in 2023. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Human Services; Architecture and Construction; and Health Science.

281 high school students took at least one AP test (19%) versus 8% in peer counties (2023).

221 high school students participated in Career & College Promise programs (63%) versus 51% in peer counties (2023).

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