Watauga County

2030 NC Degree Attainment Goal: 2 million (67%)
2030 Proposed Watauga County Attainment Goal: 13,321 (79%)

Population Spotlight
2010 Census: 51,079
2020 Census: 54,086
Change: 3,007

Growth Rate
5.9% vs. 9.5%

County State

$54,004 Median Household Income (2020)
11.7% Child Poverty Rate (2020)
89% Households with Broadband (2020)
62% Home Owners (2020)
73% Voter Registration Rate (2021)
3.7% Unemployment Rate (2021)

Impact of Covid-19 on Education Pipeline
Covid-19 has affected critical transition points along the education continuum.

Educational Attainment
Watauga County residents ages 25-44, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Degree</th>
<th>Have Degree or Credential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,492</td>
<td>7,340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note: Numbers may add to more than 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
45% of Watauga County 3-8 graders earn college-and-career-ready scores in Math, below the state goal of 86%.

Reading Performance
42% of Watauga County 3-8 graders earn college-and-career-ready scores in Reading, below the state goal of 73%.

FAFSA Completion
65% of Watauga County high school seniors complete the FAFSA, below the state goal of 80%.

How students in Watauga County traditional schools are currently doing:
To meet state goals, each year Watauga County needs:
• Watauga County has met the goal for Pre-K enrollment. (Goal: 75%). 2022
• 42% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading. 657 more needed to meet state goal of 73%. 2022
• 45% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math. 869 more needed to meet state goal of 86%. 2022
• 92% of 9th graders graduate within four years; 11 more needed to meet state goal of 95%. 2021
• Watauga County has met the goal for chronic absenteeism. (Goal: 11%). 2021

Watauga County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 317:1 versus 318:1 in peer counties. 2021

• 65% of seniors completed the FAFSA in 2022; 50 more need to complete in 2022 to meet state goal of 80%, 2022
https://www.myfuturenc.org/ourwork/first-in-fafsa/
• 82% of graduates reported intentions to enroll in a postsecondary institution versus 69% in peer counties. 2021
• 60% of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 12 months versus 50% in peer counties. 2021

48% of Watauga County students have parents with no college degree (either 2- or 4-year) versus 59% in peer counties.

School Choice
5,830 total students were enrolled in K-12 in Watauga County in the 2021-22 school year.

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

Career and College Preparation
278 high school students took at least one AP course (19%) versus 7% in peer counties (2021).

Students in Watauga County completed 167 Career & Technical Education concentrations in 2021. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Human Services; Architecture and Construction; and Hospitality & Tourism.

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Watauga County, 2021

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

Top destinations of graduates, 2016-2020

- 50% of college-goers attended a public 4-year college
- 13% of college-goers attended a private 4-year college
- 37% of college-goers attended a public 2-year college
- <6% of college-goers attended a private 2-year college
- 83% of college-goers attended an in-state college

- 81% of students who enroll persist to their second year versus 73% in peer counties. 2021
- 68% of students who enroll earn a degree or credential within 6 years versus 55% in peer counties. 2021

Adult Learners

Watauga County resident enrollments in NC Community Colleges, 2021

- 24 Basic Skills
- 419 Continuing Education
- 819 Curriculum

19% of Watauga County residents have student loan debt; 4% of debt holders had student loans in default. 2020

In your Prosperity Zone Sub-Region:

84.0% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs.

Top areas of misalignment:
- Health Science (below and above bachelor's)
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics (below bachelor's)
- Business Management & Administration (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)

In 2021 your Workforce Development Board served:

- 3,616 in Basic Services
- 1,617 in Career Services
- 245 in Education Services

5.7% of young adults ages 16-24 in Watauga 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 Watauga County has been meeting local needs:
https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt_search=Watauga

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