Watauga County

**myFutureNC 2024 Attainment Profiles**

### 2030 Proposed Watauga County Attainment Goal: 13,321 (Stretch Goal: 13,384)

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

**Growth Rate**
- 1.9% vs. 2.5% State

**Income**
- Median Household Income (2022): $57,888
- State: $67,516

**Poverty**
- 61% Home Owners (2022)
- State: 67%
- Child Poverty Rate (2022): 8.8%
- State: 17.2%

**Opportunity**
- 5.6% Opportunity Youth Rate (2021)
- State: 12.1%

**Broadband**
- Households with Broadband (2022): 77%
- State: 77%
- Unemployment Rate (2022): 3.2%
- State: 3.7%

**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%.

### Educational Attainment
Watauga County residents ages 25-44, 2022

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than high school</th>
<th>High school graduate (including GED)</th>
<th>Some college, no credential</th>
<th>Short-term credential</th>
<th>Associate degree</th>
<th>Bachelor's degree</th>
<th>Graduate or professional degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

### Promising Attainment Practices
The new [Promising Attainment Practices Database](https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt_search=Watauga) 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](https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt_search=Watauga)

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

- **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

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

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

**First-time Curriculum Enrollments**
- 2018: 250
- 2020: 200
- 2022: 150

**Top 3 Five-Star Jobs in Boone-Wilkesboro Prosperity Zone Sub-Region**
- Nurse Practitioners: 4%
- Logisticians: 3%
- Occupational Therapy Assistants: 3%

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

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**2030 State Attainment Goal: 2 million**

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Updated: Feb 12 2024

### Adult Learners

Watauga County resident enrollments in NC Community Colleges, Fall 2022

- **35** Basic Skills
- **765** Continuing Education
- **837** Curriculum

17% of Watauga County residents have student loan debt. 5% of debt holders had student loans in default. 2022

### 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

### Postsecondary assets in Boone-Wilkesboro Prosperity Zone sub-region

- **4,461** bachelor's
- **499** associate
- **763** certificate

### Degree Credentials Awarded, 2022

- 4,461 bachelor's
- 499 associate
- 763 certificate

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

- Overall: 77%
- Female: 75%
- Male: 79%
- American Indian: 71%
- Asian: 72%
- Black: 77%
- Hispanic: 81%
- White: 75%
- Low-Income: 58%
- Not Low-Income: 88%

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

### How students in Watauga County traditional schools are doing:

- Watauga County has met the goal for Pre-K enrollment. (Goal: 75%). 2023
- 45% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading, compared to 30% statewide; 872 more needed to meet state goal of 73%. 2023
- 47% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math, compared to 35% statewide; 823 more needed to meet state goal of 86%. 2023
- 91% of 9th graders graduate within four years, compared to 87% statewide; 14 more needed to meet state goal of 95%. 2023
- 17% of students are chronically absent from school, compared to 32% statewide; 288 less needed to meet state goal of 11%. 2022

Watauga County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 303:1 versus 325:1 in peer counties. 2022

2% of students drop out of high school (33 total students), compared to 2% statewide. 2022

### School Choice

5,920 total students were enrolled in K-12 in Watauga 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 Watauga County completed 498 Career & Technical Education (CTE) credentials (industry-valued credential data available in Spring 2024) and 170 concentrations in 2022. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Human Services; Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics; and Hospitality & Tourism.

- 303 high school students took at least one AP course (21%) versus 7% in peer counties (2022).
- 278 high school students participated in Career & College Promise programs (43%) 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/