Wilkes County

2030 NC Degree Attainment Goal: 2 million (67%)
2030 Proposed Wilkes County Attainment Goal: 9,337 (54%)

Population Spotlight
2010 Census: 69,340
2020 Census: 65,969
Change: -3,371

Growth Rate
-4.9% vs. 9.5%

Medians
$46,830 Median Household Income (2020)
28.4% Child Poverty Rate (2020)
85% Households with Broadband (2020)
74% Home Owners (2020)
72% Voter Registration Rate (2021)
4.7% Unemployment Rate (2021)

Education Continuum
Impact of Covid-19 on education continuum.
Transition to Postsecondary
53% of Wilkes 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 Wilkes County to improve future attainment outcomes.

1. Opportunity Youth
16% of Wilkes County youth ages 16-24 are not working and not in school, above the rural non-metro county average of 15%.

2. Transition to Postsecondary
53% of Wilkes County seniors enroll in postsecondary within 12 months of graduation, below the state average of 55%.

3. Adult Learners
17% of Wilkes County adults 25-44 have some college, no degree, above the state average of 15%.

Educational Attainment
Wilkes County residents ages 25-44, 2021

- No Degree: 59.3%
  8,708
- Have Degree or Credential: 40.7%
  5,974

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

Steps for Improvement
To meet state goals, each year Wilkes County needs:

- How students in Wilkes County traditional schools are currently doing:
  - K-12 Enrollment (district schools): -7.6% 2021-22 vs. 2019-20
  - Postsecondary Enrollment: -9.6% 2021 vs. 2020
  - FAFSA Completion: 11.3% 2021-22 vs. 2018-19
  - Postsecondary Intentions: -11.6% 2020-21 vs. 2018-19

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

- Opportunity Youth
16% of Wilkes County youth ages 16-24 are not working and not in school, above the rural non-metro county average of 15%.

- Transition to Postsecondary
53% of Wilkes County seniors enroll in postsecondary within 12 months of graduation, below the state average of 55%.

- Adult Learners
17% of Wilkes County adults 25-44 have some college, no degree, above the state average of 15%.

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

- Wilkes County has met the goal for Pre-K enrollment. (Goal: 75%). 2022
- 31% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading, 1,599 more needed to meet state goal of 73%. 2022
- 35% of 3-8 graders are earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math, 1,930 more needed to meet state goal of 86%. 2022
- 89% of 9th graders graduate within four years; 47 more needed to meet state goal of 95%. 2021
- 18% of students are chronically absent from school; 556 less needed to meet state goal of 11%. 2021

Wilkes County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 309:1 versus 318:1 in peer counties, 2021

- 65% of seniors completed the FAFSA in 2022; 80 more need to complete in 2022 to meet state goal of 80%. 2022
  https://www.myfuturenc.org/ourwork/first-in-fafsa/
- 72% of graduates reported intentions to enroll in a postsecondary institution versus 69% in peer counties. 2021
- 53% of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 12 months versus 50% in peer counties. 2021

58% of Wilkes County students have parents with no college degree (either 2- or 4-year) versus 59% in peer counties.

School Choice
10,076 total students were enrolled in K-12 in Wilkes County in the 2021-22 school year.
Note: This profile focuses on outcomes of students enrolled in district schools.

Career and College Preparation
196 high school students took at least one AP course (7%) versus 7% in peer counties (2021).
435 graduates participated in Career & College Promise programs (66%) versus 49% in peer counties (2021).

Students in Wilkes County completed 439 Career & Technical Education concentrations in 2021. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Health Science; Human Services; and Agricultural, Food, & Natural Resources.

Postsecondary Enrollment Rates for Select Groups in Wilkes County, 2021

Note: Outcomes for demographic groups with fewer than 10 students are not displayed.
Wilkes County 2022 Attainment Profile

**Success of Wilkes County High School Graduates**

Top destinations of graduates, 2016-2020

- 28% of college-goers attended a **public 4-year college**
- 9% of college-goers attended a **private 4-year college**
- 63% of college-goers attended a **public 2-year college**
- 45% of college-goers attended a **private 2-year college**
- 95% of college-goers attended an **in-state college**

- 77% of students who enroll **persist to their second year** versus 73% in peer counties. 2021
- 59% of students who enroll **earn a degree or credential** within 6 years versus 55% in peer counties. 2021

**Adult Learners**

Wilkes County resident enrollments in NC Community Colleges, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Enrollments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Skills</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing Education</td>
<td>1,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>1,690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9% of Wilkes County residents have **student loan debt**; 11% 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.

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

15.5% of young adults ages 16-24 in Wilkes 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 Wilkes County has been meeting local needs:

https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/promising-attainment-practices/?wdt_search=Wilkes

For more information about each indicator, including data sources and methodology, visit:

dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/