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% County State

Less than high school
High school graduate (including GED)
Some college, no credential
Short-term credential
Associate degree
Bachelor’s degree
Graduate or professional degree

No Degree
Have Degree or Credential

2010 Census: 59.9% 8,973
2020 Census: 40.1% 6,013

Educational Attainment
Wilkes County residents ages 25-44, 2020

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%.

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

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

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

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% vs. 91%). 2022
• 1,599 more 3-8 graders earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading (goal: 73% vs. 31%). 2022
• 1,930 more 3-8 graders earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math (goal: 86% vs. 35%). 2022
• 47 more 9th graders to graduate within four years (goal: 95% vs. 89%). 2021
• 556 more students to attend school regularly (goal: 11% chronic absenteeism vs. 18%). 2021

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

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).

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.
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
- <5% 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

211 Basic Skills
1,146 Continuing Education
1,690 Curriculum

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.

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

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/