

MCDOWELL COUNTY

- 44,600 people live in McDowell County
- The population has stayed about the same over the past decade
- NC's population increased by 11% over the past decade

Released March 2024

Data sources, dashboard, and
other counties at
NCBudget.org/Snapshots

For media queries and other
questions, contact us at
info@ncbudget.org



* Candidates include all people willing to work in the county, regardless of county of residence

** A family of four is considered low-income if they make below 200% of the poverty level, or \$59,900 in 2022, the most recent year with available income data.

McDowell County communities thrive when ...



... people can meet
their basic needs

- Rent is unaffordable for 33% of renters
- 13% of people don't have health insurance
- There is one mental health provider for every 500 residents



... good jobs are
accessible to everyone

- There are 9 candidates for every job opening*
- The number of people working decreased by 1% from Feb. 2020 (pre-COVID) to Dec. 2023
- The number of people working decreased by 2% from Dec. 2007 (pre-Great Recession) to Dec. 2023



... the economy works
for everyone

- 38% of residents are considered low-income (less than \$59,900 for a family of four)**
- The richest 5% of households make an average of 21 times more than the poorest 20% of households

Table 1: Poverty and Economic Hardship

	County	State
Living in poverty, 2018-2022		
Percentage of people living in poverty	15%	13%
Black	23	21
White	13	9
Latine	36	22
Asian & Pacific Islander	NA	9
American Indian	23	23
Percentage of children living in poverty	19	19

Table 2: Employment

	County	State
Employment, December 2023		
Unemployment rate	2.9%	3.2%
Number of unemployed people actively seeking work	580	167,000
Number of employed people	19,600	5,059,000
Percent change in employment since before COVID-19 pandemic (February 2020 to December 2023)		
Change in unemployed people actively seeking work	-24%	-11%
Change in people employed	-1%	5%

Table 3: Educational Attainment

	County	State
High school graduation, 2023		
High school graduation rate	84%	87%
Black	86	84
White	83	90
Latine	89	81
Asian & Pacific Islander	NA	95
American Indian	NA	80
College degrees, 2018-2022		
Percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher	18%	34%
Men	14	32
Women	22	35
Median earnings for men with a bachelor's degree [†]	\$66,700	\$74,400
Median earnings for women with a bachelor's degree [†]	\$42,700	\$50,200

Table 4: Income and Ability to Afford the Basics

	County	State
Living Income Standard, 2022		
Living Income Standard annual income (1 adult, 2 kids) ^{††}	\$49,700	\$60,700
Median earnings and income, 2018-2022		
Median worker earnings	\$39,100	\$45,100
Median worker earnings as a percentage of Living Income Standard ^{††}	79%	74%
Median household income	\$53,500	\$66,200

Table 5: Access to Affordable Housing

	County	State
Rent burden, 2018-2022		
Percentage of renter households paying more than 30% of income on rent	33%	48%
Percentage of renter households paying more than 50% of income on rent	14%	23%
Fair market rent, 2024		
Fair market monthly rent for a two-bedroom home	\$860	\$1,310
Number of work hours at minimum wage it takes to afford a two-bedroom home at fair market rent	91 hours per week	139 hours per week

Table 6: Healthy Lives and Communities

	County	State
Health insurance, 2018-2022		
Percentage of residents without health insurance	13%	11%
Life expectancy, 2018-2020		
Life expectancy in years	77	77
Black	77	73
White	77	78
Mental health providers, 2022		
Residents per mental health provider	500	340
Food assistance, December 2023		
Percentage of residents receiving SNAP	18%	13%

[†] Does not include people who also have a graduate degree.

^{††} The Living Income Standard is a measure of what a family needs in order to cover basic expenses. See more at NCbudget.org/LIS

NA values indicate insufficient data for this county.

Data sources, dashboard, and other counties at
[NCBudget.org/Snapshots](https://NCbudget.org/Snapshots)