

CENSUS DATA BRIEF

Haywood County

Population Growth

2020 Census vs. 2025 Estimates

County at a Glance

62,089

2020 Census

decennial count

~63,100

2025 Estimate

July 1, 2025

+1,000

Population gain

since 2020

+1.6%

Growth rate

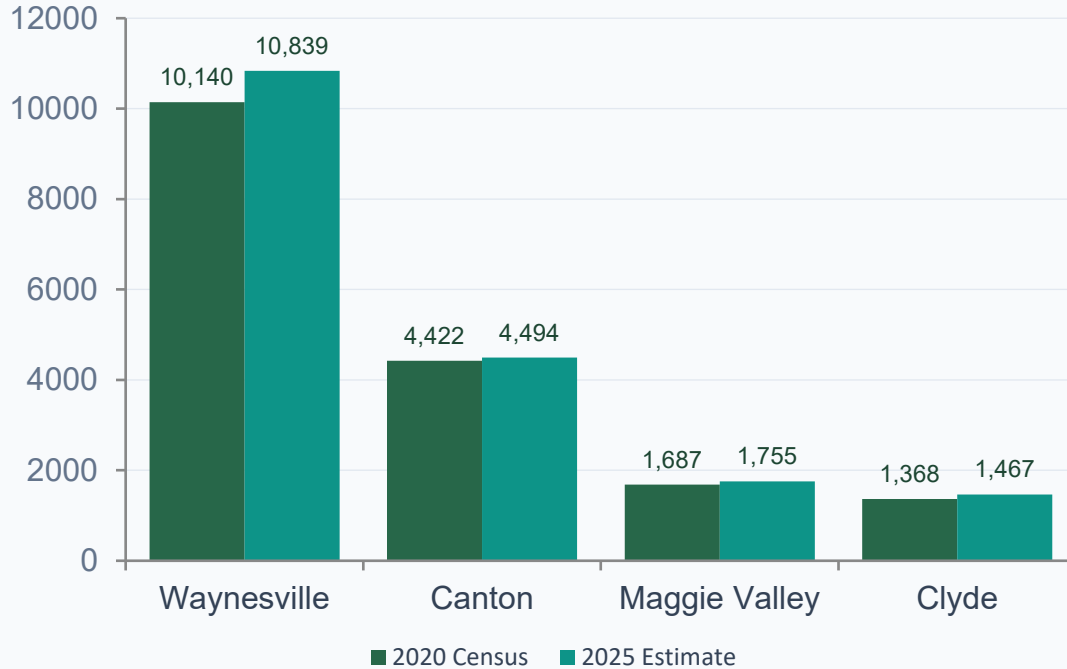
5-year change

Key context

Haywood County is the 45th most populous county in North Carolina **out of 100 counties**, with the county seat and largest community being Waynesville. Four incorporated towns — Waynesville, Canton, Maggie Valley, and Clyde — account for about 29% of the county's population.

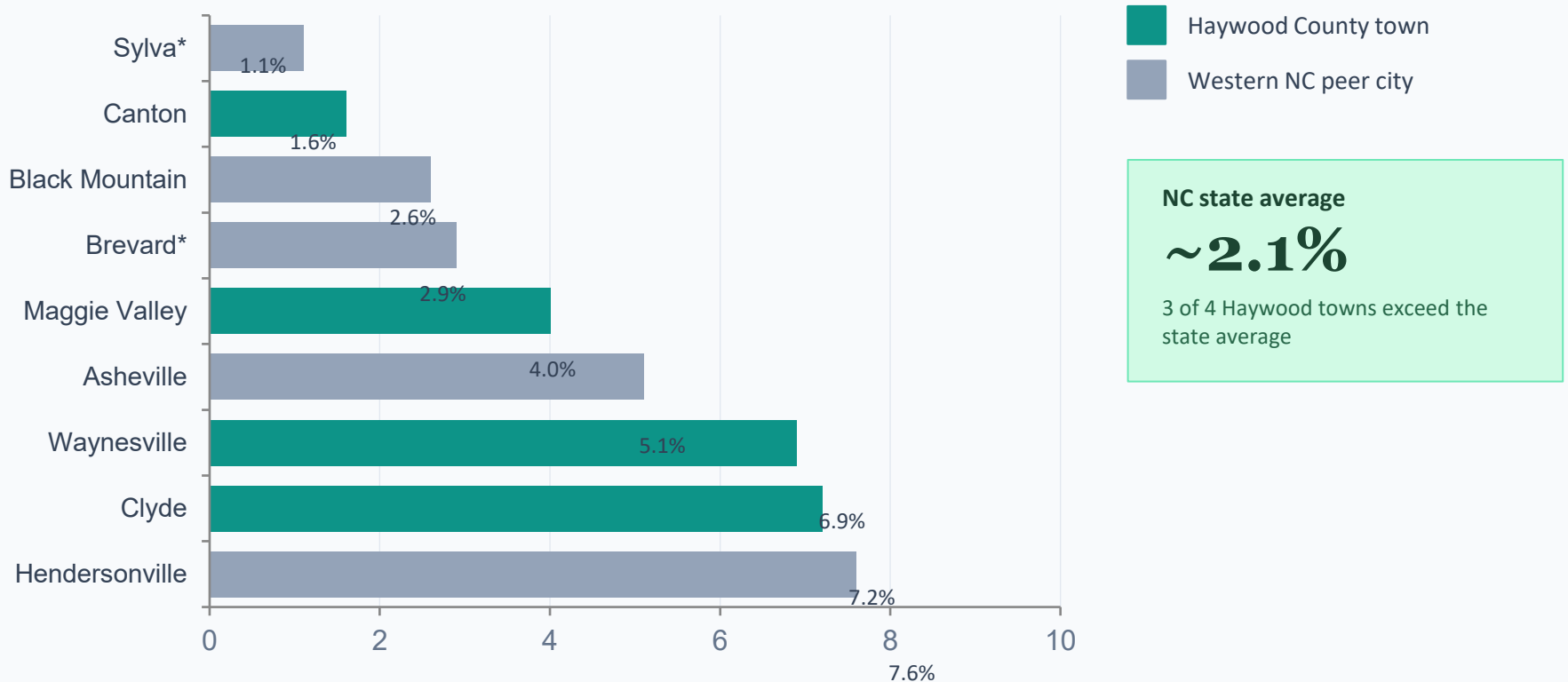
⚠ Note: Western NC — including neighboring Buncombe and McDowell Counties — experienced population loss in 2024–2025 partly due to Hurricane Helene impacts. Haywood County towns continued to grow despite this regional headwind.

Incorporated Towns: 2020 vs. 2025



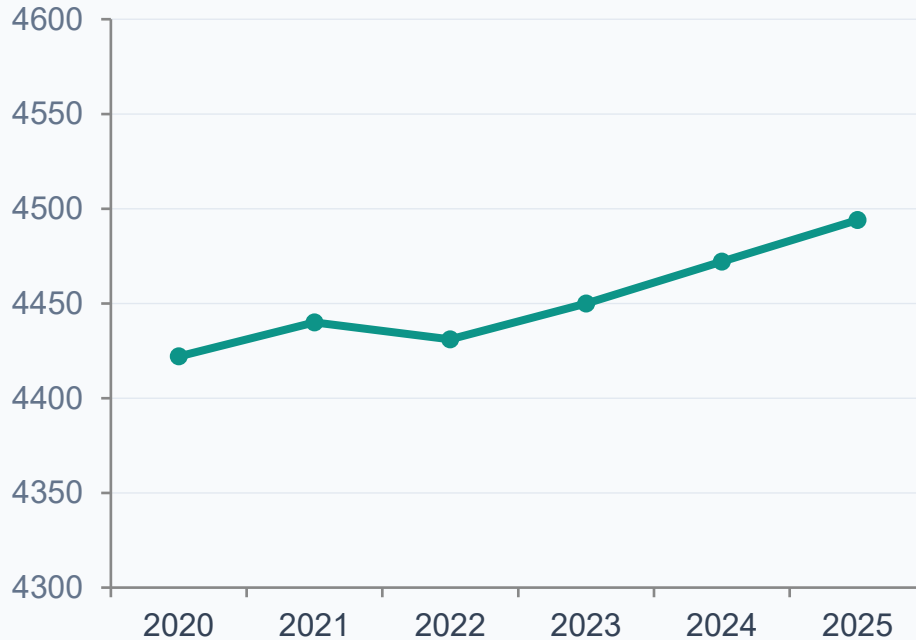
Town	2020	2025	Change
Waynesville	10,140	10,839	+699 (+6.9%)
Canton	4,422	4,494	+72 (+1.6%)
Maggie Valley	1,687	1,755	+68 (+4.0%)
Clyde	1,368	1,467	+99 (+7.2%)
Total towns	17,617	18,555	+938 (+5.3%)

Growth vs. Regional Peers (2020–2025)



* Brevard & Sylva use 2024 estimates (Vintage 2025 unavailable at time of publication)

Canton: Growth Despite Economic Headwinds



Mill closure impact

The Pactiv Evergreen paper mill — Canton's largest employer — closed in mid-2023, eliminating hundreds of jobs and an estimated \$500M in economic impact.

Resilience signal

Despite the closure, Canton still added 72 residents (+1.6%) over the 5-year period. Haywood County Schools became the largest employer, signaling an economic transition underway.

Key Takeaways

01

All four towns grew

Waynesville, Canton, Maggie Valley, and Clyde all added residents between the 2020 Census and the 2025 estimates — a positive signal for the county as a whole.

02

Three towns outpace the state

Clyde (+7.2%), Waynesville (+6.9%), and Maggie Valley (+4.0%) all grew faster than North Carolina's municipal average of ~2.1%.

03

Strong regional performance

Haywood's towns are competitive with western NC peers — trailing only Hendersonville and outpacing Asheville, Brevard, Black Mountain, and Sylva on percentage growth.

04

Canton shows resilience

Despite the 2023 Pactiv Evergreen mill closure and significant job losses, Canton still posted positive population growth — the slowest of the four towns, but growth nonetheless.