

The Institute

Turning Information into Insight

A partnership among Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Johnson College, Keystone College, King's College, Lackawanna College, Luzerne County Community College, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State Scranton, Penn State Wilkes-Barre, The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education, University of Scranton, Wilkes University, and the business community

The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development (The Institute)

launched a polling program in 2014. The Institute regularly polls students at its partnering higher education institutions. These polling and survey research services are part of The Institute's menu of services offered to all types of clients.

This 2022 poll assesses students' opinions about the region and their post graduation plans. A total of 894 students participated in this poll. Students from all class years, a variety of majors, and part-time and graduate students are well-represented in the data. The poll is distributed online through our academic partners. The data was collected during February 2022.



When deciding where to launch their careers, students prioritize availability of jobs in their desired fields, and cost of living.

Additionally, those planning to stay in Northeastern Pennsylvania after graduation assign high value to a location's proximity to family, as well as housing options and suitability for raising a family. They are less likely to value the area's diversity and inclusiveness, proximity to friends, or its entertainment, recreation, and dining options. Conversely, students who plan to depart the area after graduation are likelier to value diversity, inclusiveness, and those entertainment, recreation, and dining options – while downplaying proximity to family and friends, along with suitability for raising families.

When evaluating job opportunities, students also prioritize starting salary along with the opportunity to make a positive impact.

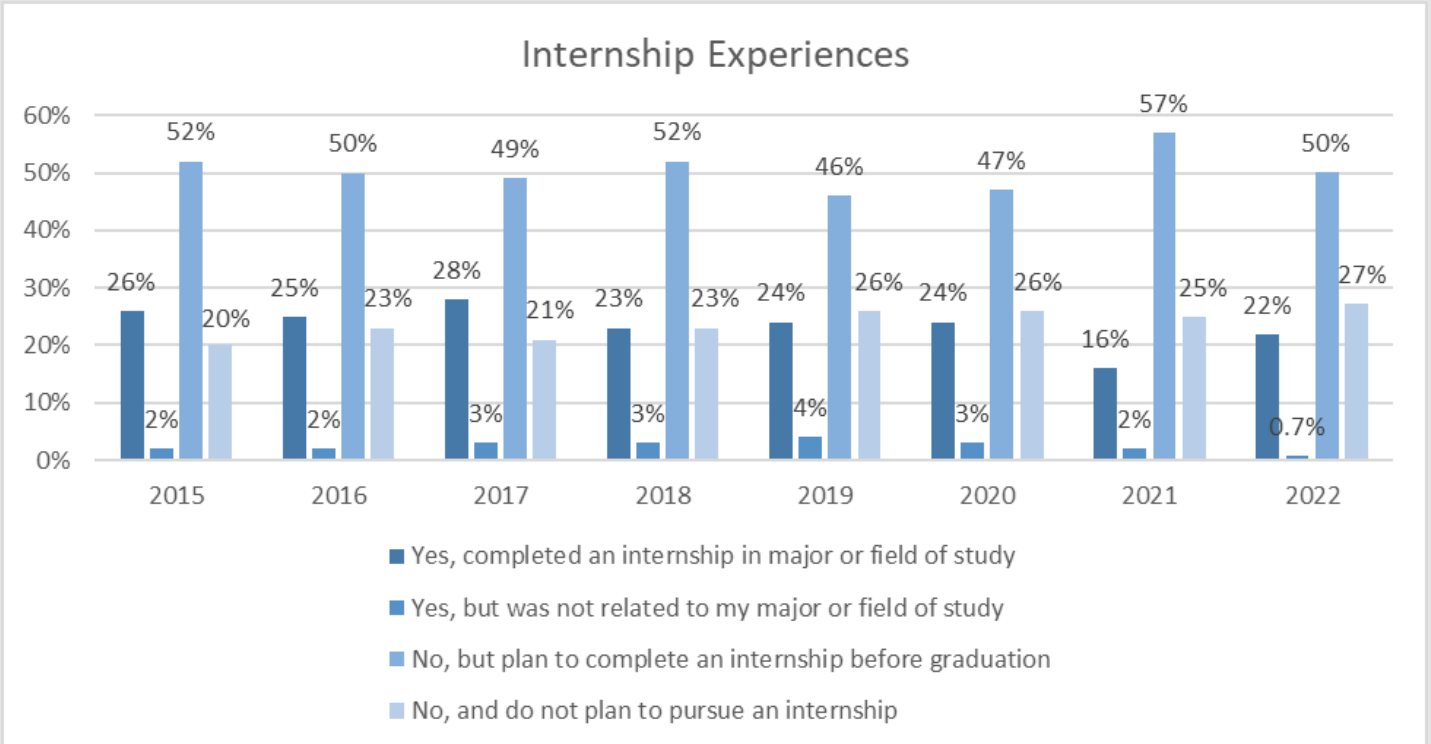
When asked to rank six possible factors to consider when evaluating job opportunities, students placed opportunities *in their desired fields* higher than any other option, with 58.5 percent placing the category first or second on their lists. In descending order, they also consider fringe benefits, desirability of location, and workplace culture.

“The information in this report shares an extremely important perspective - that of individuals embarking upon their professional careers. These young professionals represent the future of our workforce here in northeastern Pennsylvania, so it is essential that we, as current business and community leaders, take the time to understand the wide range of emotions, challenges and opportunities they are experiencing.”

Greg Cant, Ph.D., President & CEO, Wilkes University

Internships continue to be highly valued by students.

In the 2022 poll, nearly 73 percent of respondents had either completed or planned to complete an internship before graduation. This percentage has somewhat rebounded from the decline revealed in the 2019 and 2020 polls - prior to which over 75 percent of students either completed or planned to complete internships before graduation. It is also noteworthy that, at 27 percent, the proportion of respondents with no intentions of completing internships was larger than the proportions in any other polling year—and this share has grown throughout the period analyzed.



Completion of a regional internship may induce students to remain in the region after graduation.

Nearly 87.0 percent of students who intend to remain in Northeastern Pennsylvania after graduation have completed internships in the region, compared to 69.0 percent who are likely to depart after receiving their degrees. On the other hand, individuals who did not complete local internships comprise 31.0 percent of the respondents who are unlikely to remain in NEPA. While no formal causal connection between these two variables can be inferred, a strong connection exists between them.

NEPA Internship by Likelihood of Post-Graduation Relocation	Likely to Stay in NEPA	Unlikely to Stay in NEPA
Yes (completed internship in NEPA)	78 (86.7%)	49 (69.0%)
No (did not complete internship in NEPA)	12 (13.3%)	22 (31.0%)
TOTAL	90	71

POST GRADUATION — WHAT'S NEXT

The majority of students who completed internships received academic credit for doing so, and approximately 43 percent received payment for their work.

Did you receive academic credit for your internship?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Yes	121	64.7%
No	66	35.3%

Did you get paid for your internship?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Yes, was paid hourly wage/salary	72	38.3%
Yes, received stipend, reimbursement, or other one-time payment	9	4.8%
No	107	56.9%

For the first time since the launch of this annual poll, students are likelier to seek employment within the region. This is a sure sign of growth. It is my hope that community leaders in all areas – from business and government agencies to nonprofit and faith-based organizations – collaborate to embrace this trend and maintain its forward momentum.”

Jill Murray, Ph.D.,
President & CEO,
Lackawanna College



Student anxiety about finding employment after graduation is returning to pre-pandemic levels.

In each poll, students are asked to indicate their level of anxiety about finding a job after graduation. Every year a majority of students have selected either *extremely* or *somewhat anxious*. Although the total percentage of students who were at least somewhat anxious about the post-graduation job search had continuously dropped over the years studied—falling to 50.8 percent in 2019—it rose to 53.2 percent in 2020 and then to 61.4 percent in 2021 before falling again to 51.4 percent in 2022.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic in 2019, just under 80.0 percent of responding students felt at least a *little* anxious about the impending job search (an approximate five-percentage point drop from 2015). This proportion shrunk to 78.6 in 2020 but then jumped to 84.0 in 2021 before dropping to 76.3 percent by 2022.

How well do you think that your college or graduate school education has prepared you for the career you intend to pursue?

	Frequency	Percent
Very well	299	38%
Somewhat well	244	31%
Adequately	177	22%
Somewhat poorly	37	5%
Very poorly	12	2%
Not sure	28	4%
Total	797	

“Poll data consistently reminds us that internships are critical links between campus and career – and perhaps even help students establish feelings of connection with the area. We cannot lose sight of the ways such partnerships foster a sense of community and contribute to longer-term retention.”

Katie Leonard, Ed.D.
President & CEO,
Johnson College



Interest in graduate school has changed.

Student interest in attending graduate school has steadily declined since dropping from 59 percent in 2015 to 51 percent in 2018 and 2019. It then declined to 49 percent in 2020 and further to 40 percent by 2022. Instead, students have expressed growing degrees of uncertainty regarding graduate school. In 2015, one-quarter of respondents were unsure of their plans. By 2022, 32 percent expressed their uncertainty.

Furthermore—and among 2022 graduates in particular, 45.1 percent plan to attend graduate school. Conversely, the percentage of students uninterested in pursuing graduate degrees in the 2022 cohort is just two percentage points above average (25.4 percent to 23.4 percent, respectively).

However...

Students feel their education has prepared them for their careers.

The majority of respondents to the most recent poll felt prepared for their intended careers, although in 2021 this proportion has dropped below 70.0 percent for the first time in all the polling years. Approximately 69.0 percent of students felt that their college education prepared them either very well or somewhat well for their intended career paths. By 2022, that percentage dropped to 68.1.



“Academic partnerships are essential to economic competitiveness throughout the region. I am confident that, by working together, educators and leaders at all levels will elevate a diverse and knowledgeable workforce composed of people who are markedly aware of all Northeastern Pennsylvania has to offer.”

Rev. Thomas P. Looney, C.S.C., Ph.D.
President,
King's College

POST GRADUATION — WHAT'S NEXT

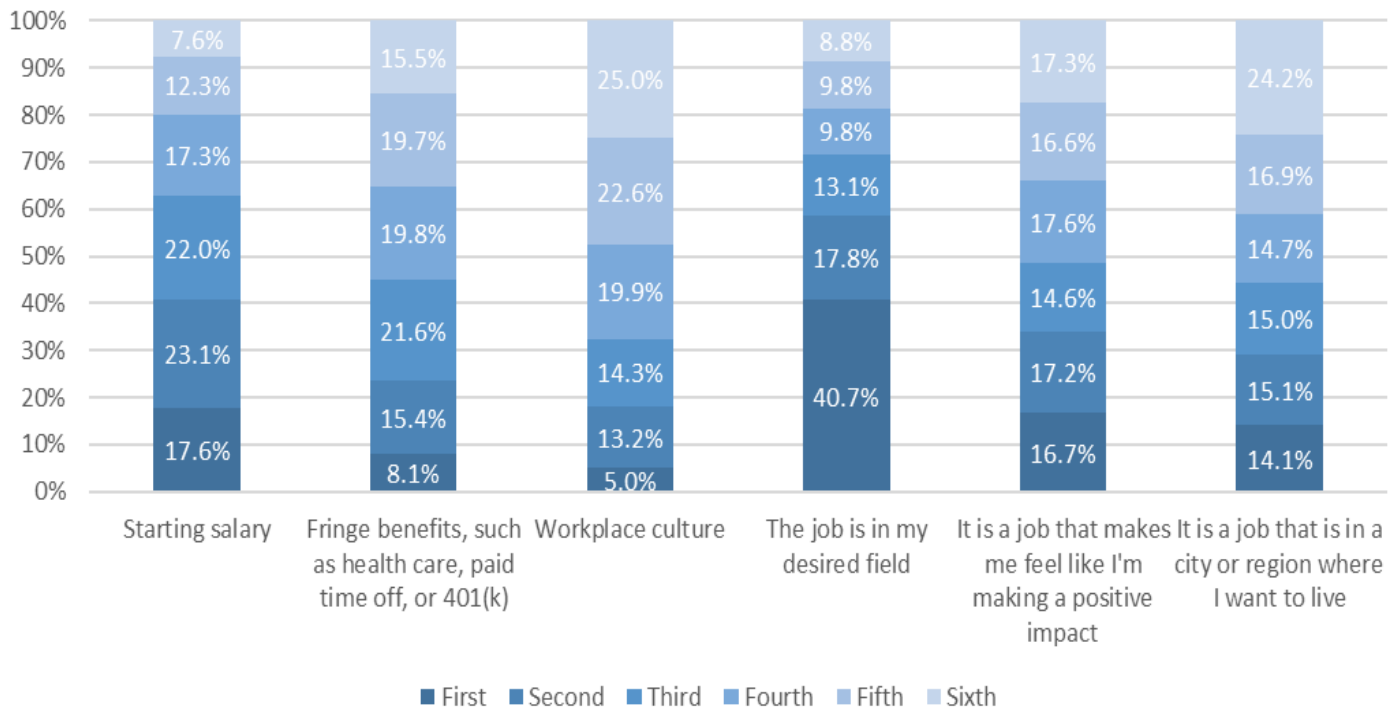


“Northeast Pennsylvania is fortunate to have a diverse landscape of educational opportunities for traditional and non-traditional students. Our longstanding, valuable town-and-gown relationships provide true testament of our community’s appreciation of and gratitude for our amazing educational institutions as treasured community assets. These educational relationships help replenish our workforce and grow our economy, providing bountiful opportunities in our region for up and coming tradesmen, professionals and entrepreneurs. More importantly, though, is what these opportunities mean to our children and their futures. Each academic partnership that is established with or between industry, college or graduate school means added vocational opportunities to inspire students to become the next carpenter, welder, business leader, nurse, dental hygienist, dentist or physician in our community. The value of intentional pipelines and mentorship opportunities is reflected in The Institute’s student poll that reveals how much emphasis students place on career internship availability and how these opportunities foster an attractive sense of community for student retention.”

Linda Thomas-Hemak, MD, FAAP, FACP
 CEO, The Wright Center for Community Health
 President, The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education

Considerations in Job Opportunities. Respondents were asked to rank six factors they may consider when evaluating a job opportunity. The assigned rankings were 1 through 6, one indicating the *most important*, and six, the *least important*. The factors, with their weighted averages, include *the job being in their desired field* (4.4), *starting salary* (3.9), *feeling as though they are making a positive impact* (3.5), *fringe benefits* (3.3), *location in a desired region* (3.2), and *workplace culture* (2.8). The full distribution of these rankings are shown below, where the bars show the within-category distribution of ranks, and the darker shades correspond with higher rank.

Importance in Consideration of Job Opportunities



Perspectives on the Region—Economy

Respondents were asked to endorse one of a series of statements regarding Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economy in relation to the United States as a whole. Nearly 31.0 percent of respondents suggested feeling that the condition of Northeast Pennsylvania was *about the same as the United States* as a whole, while 35.2 percent endorsed some level of belief that the economy of Northeast Pennsylvania was in *worse* condition than the United States as a whole.

Which of the following best describes your perception of the economy of Northeastern Pennsylvania compared with the economy of the United States as a whole?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economy is much better than that of the United States.	4	0.6%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economy is somewhat better than that of the United States.	54	7.9%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economy is about the same as that of the United States.	209	30.7%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economy is somewhat worse than that of the United States.	190	27.9%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s economy is much worse than that of the United States.	50	7.3%
Not sure	175	25.7%

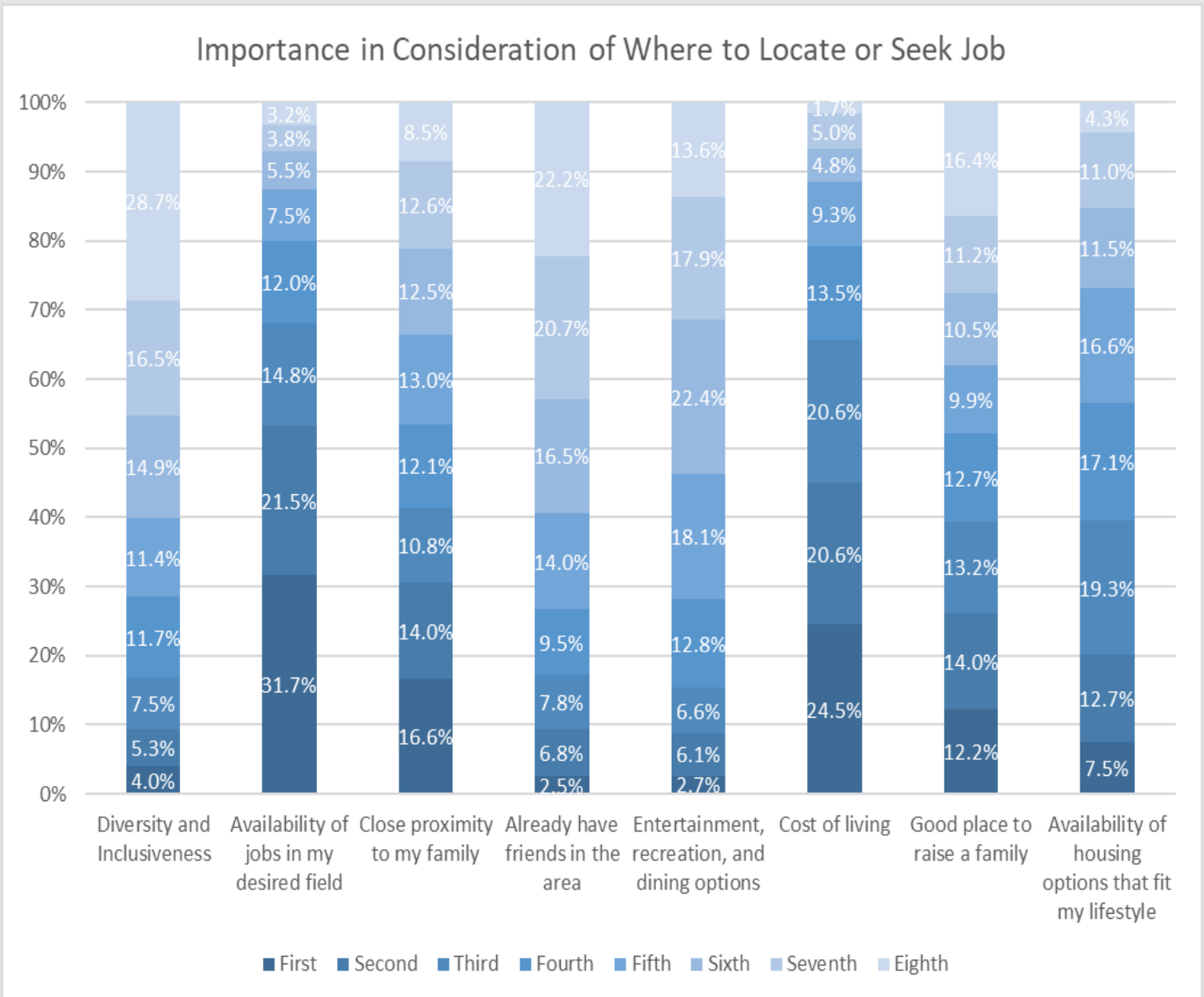
Perspectives on the Region—Quality of Life

Respondents were also asked to endorse one of a series of statements related to the quality of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania compared to the United States as a whole. Almost 33.0 percent of respondents indicated feeling that the quality of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania is either *somewhat* or *much worse* than the United States as a whole. However, 52.7 percent of respondents suggested feeling that NEPA quality of life was about the same as or somewhat better than that of the United States.

Which of the following best describes your perception of the overall quality of life in Northeastern Pennsylvania compared with the quality of life in the United States as a whole?	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s quality of life is much better than that of the United States.	18	2.7%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s quality of life is somewhat better than that of the United States.	105	15.4%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s quality of life is about the same as that of the United States.	235	34.6%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s quality of life is somewhat worse than that of the United States.	175	25.7%
Northeastern Pennsylvania’s quality of life is much worse than that of the United States.	48	7.1%
Not sure	99	14.6%

Considerations When Locating and Job Seeking

Participants were asked to rank a list of characteristics and features they would consider when deciding where to locate or seek employment after graduation. Items were ranked from first (most important) to eighth (least important). The factors, with their weighted averages, include *availability of jobs in desired field* (6.1); *cost of living* (6.0); *proximity to family* (4.8); *suitable housing options* (4.8); *environment appropriate for raising a family* (4.5); *entertainment, recreation, and dining options* (3.6); *proximity to friends* (3.3); and *diversity and inclusiveness* (3.3). The full distribution of these rankings are shown below, where the bars show the within-category distribution of ranks, and the darker shades correspond with higher rank.



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What We Believe

At The Institute, we believe that empowering leaders with the research-based strategies and solutions they need to make informed decisions will lead to a stronger economy and a better quality of life for regional residents. For over a decade, The Institute has worked behind the scenes to support initiatives that advance regional competitiveness and revitalize communities.

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