

BERKSHIRE COUNTY SURVEY

2019 RESULTS

**A survey examining the attitudes, preferences and needs of adults (ages 18 and over)
in Berkshire County**



December, 2019

2019 Berkshire County Survey Results

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Introduction

Young adults who bring innovation and drive to a region and establish families to sustain it far into the future are vitally important. To better understand the reasons why young people move to the Berkshire region, remain in the region, or decide to leave the region, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission conducted a county-wide survey of the attitudes, preferences, and needs of young adults (ages 18 to 39), in 2015. The results of that survey helped to focus attention on workforce development – strategies to attract and retain young adults. However compelling, the 2015 Young Adults Survey results did not paint a complete picture of workforce needs in the County, which naturally must include people age 40 and older.

Therefore, an updated survey was conducted in 2019 by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission as a result of a partnership including 1Berkshire and MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board to gain greater insight about changing attitudes among members of the public, relative to living and working in the County. This new survey, the results presented here, was expanded to include multiple age groups to inform workforce development better, economic development, and regional marketing efforts.

According to US Census data, Berkshire County has been consistently losing population since the 1970s. On average, the county has experienced a loss of 450 people each year. By 2030, the county's population is projected to decrease to approximately 122,500 (an additional decline of 5,260 after 2020). The fastest decline in numbers is among 18-39-year-olds. Also, the population is skewing towards older adults, most of whom are retired or approaching retirement age. In fact, by 2030, it is estimated that all municipalities in the region, except for Williamstown and North Adams, (due to their large college populations) will have 50% or more of their total population aged 50 or older.

Individuals age 18 years old or older, who currently reside in Berkshire County, those who had taken the 2015 survey and those who had left the Berkshires since 2015, were invited to participate.

The survey instrument was created in Survey Monkey, an online survey tool, and distributed via broad email solicitation, social media postings and through partner listservs and websites. As such, it is not a statistically significant survey but meant to see if efforts focused on workforce development have made headway, including raising awareness among the public of the critical need to attract and retain younger workers to the region, has had any effect.

Altogether, the 2019 Survey elicited 1,550 responses, 81% from current residents. This report summarizes overall results as well as describes the differences in responses among various cohorts based on age, gender, educational attainment, the community of residence, plans for continued residency and native status. The analysis also compares/contrasts the results of the earlier survey with this latest and explores what has changed over the four years between the two surveys.

"It is getting more diverse and there are more interesting things to do year-round."

The good news is that the 2019 survey indicates that whether native-born or transplant, people generally enjoy or mostly enjoy, living in the Berkshires! Respondents currently residing in the Berkshires live here primarily because their family is here, they like the natural scenic beauty of the region, or they have found work here. These primary reasons were closely followed by choosing to live someplace with less stress/traffic/people than a big city, enjoyment of the outdoor recreation offerings available, the desire

to raise a family in the region and enjoyment of the many cultural attractions too. The top reasons residents left the region include obtaining a better-paying job elsewhere, a perceived lack of things to do and not liking the cold and snow.

In determining where to live, respondents reported that quality, affordable housing ranked highest among community attributes considered, followed by finding a job that matches their interests, the overall cost of living, finding a job that pays well, the natural scenic beauty, presence of family members and a low crime rate.

Native residents are more likely to live here because of family, while those who have moved here from other locations are more likely to be here for jobs, the natural scenic beauty and enjoying the outdoor recreational and cultural opportunities.

In comparing this survey to the Young Adult Survey conducted in 2015, there was little change in the percentage of respondents who thought they would stay in the Berkshires (23% in both.) On a positive note, even though there were fewer respondents compared to 2015, there was an increased percentage of respondents who are here because they have obtained a job in the area, enjoy living in the area's natural beauty, enjoy outdoor recreational opportunities, as well as a desire to live in a place outside of a big city.

Survey Participation

There were 1,550 responses received for the 2019 Berkshire Survey. Of these 1,550 responses, 32% identified as male, and 66.3% identified as female. Ages of the respondents were as follows: 42.3% age 18-39, 45.5% age 40-64, and 12.06% age 65 or older. Slightly more than half (54%) of respondents were raised in the Berkshires and 87.6% currently live in the Berkshires. **Table 1** and **Table 1.1** below, show the communities in which native respondents were raised and where respondents currently live. Unsurprisingly, the City of Pittsfield has the highest percentage of native-born, reflecting its status as the largest community in Berkshire County, offering a reasonably affordable and attractive place to live and work. Communities not listed accounted for less than 2% of the total response.

Table 1: Where respondents were raised		Table 1.1: Where they live now	
Top towns/cities raised in	Percentage	Top towns/cities living in	Percentage
1. Pittsfield	33.2%	1. Pittsfield	33.9%
2. North Adams	9.3%	2. Lenox	9.0%
3. Lee	6.9%	3. North Adams	8.2%
4. Adams	6.9%	4. Great Barrington	6.3%
5. Great Barrington	6.1%	5. Egremont	6.1%
6. Lenox	5.4%	6. Adams	5.5%
7. Dalton	4.3%	7. Dalton	3.8%
8. Cheshire	3.5%	8. Lee	3.6%
9. Lanesborough	2.5%	9. Lanesborough	2.9%
10. Stockbridge	2.5%	10. Stockbridge	2.8%
11. Egremont	2.2%	11. Williamstown	2.7%
12. Sheffield	2.1%	12. Sheffield	2.3%
13. Williamstown	2.1%	13. Cheshire	2.2%

Nearly 70% of respondents have completed a four-year degree, with the top three most common educational levels attained, including: Bachelors (34.4%), Graduate degree (34%), and some college (12.7%).

When asked about living preferences, a small-town setting was the most preferred by survey respondents (28.7%). Only 3.4% prefer to live in a large city. Table 2 shows the ranking of all living preference options provided.

Living preference	Percentage
Small town	28.7%
Medium city	20.7%
Large town	18.4%
Rural	15.8%
Small city	7.4%
Major urban area	5.7%
Large city	3.4%

Comparison to Berkshire County’s Population

Lenox and Egremont were overrepresented in survey participation, as compared to their Town’s population rank in the county. Williamstown and Dalton were underrepresented in survey participation. The survey also did not get any responses from residents of New Ashford or Savoy.

Survey participation by respondents in the age ranges of 18-39 years and 40-64 years was proportionally higher than their representation in the overall population, while participation by those in the 65+ age range was lower. But, since workforce participation and retention is a focus of this survey, having more input from working-age residents is a benefit.

The survey had lower participation by males and higher participation by females than the actual gender distribution of Berkshire County according to 2018 population estimates.

Those with higher educational attainment (some college or higher) were overrepresented in the survey, suggesting that the outreach methods utilized to recruit survey respondents might favor the educated, those with leisure time, and those who are no longer working.

Current Residents

One thousand two hundred fifty-three respondents currently live in the Berkshires. Of these current residents, 30.3% identify as male and 68% as female, with 39.4% aged 18-39, 47.9% aged 40-64, and 12.7% aged 65+. The educational levels of these respondents were graduate degree (34.5%), Bachelor’s degree (34%), and some college (11.9%), consistent with ratios for all respondents. Places of current residence closely followed actual population distribution Berkshire County, with the largest group living in Pittsfield.

Table 3 indicates the places of residence for respondents currently residing in Berkshire County

Municipality	Percentage	Municipality	Percentage
1. Pittsfield	33.9%	17. Hinsdale	1.1%
2. Lenox	9.0%	18. New Marlborough	1.1%
3. North Adams	8.2%	19. Otis	1.0%
4. Great Barrington	6.3%	20. Clarksburg	0.7%
5. Egremont	6.1%	21. West Stockbridge	0.6%
6. Adams	5.49%	22. Hancock	0.40%
7. Dalton	3.79%	23. Mount Washington	0.32%
8. Lee	3.55%	24. Peru	0.24%

9. Lanesborough	2.91%	25. Tyringham	0.24%
10. Stockbridge	2.82%	26. Windsor	0.24%
11. Williamstown	2.74%	27. Sandisfield	0.16%
12. Sheffield	2.26%	28. Washington	0.16%
13. Cheshire	2.18%	29. Alford	0.08%
14. Monterey	1.53%	30. Florida	0.08%
15. Becket	1.45%	31. New Ashford	0%
16. Richmond	1.37%	32. Savoy	0%

Of these resident respondents, 66.9% say they enjoy living in the Berkshires, 2.4% say they don't, and 30.7% say they sometimes do. Of the people surveyed that currently live here, 14.7% did not live in the Berkshires five years ago and 85.3% did.

Reasons for staying in the Berkshires

The Survey questions that related to reasons for living/staying in the Berkshires were presented as multiple-choice, allowing respondents to select as many response options as applied to them. The top reasons current residents chose to live or chose to stay is in Table 4 (options which were chosen by fewer than 20% of respondents are not displayed). The number one reason was "have family in the area," followed closely by "like the natural scenic beauty."

"I came out for a job but stayed for the people and the way of life"

Table 4: Reasons for living in/staying in Berkshire County	
Options (participants could select more than one)	Percentage
1. Have family in the area	51.9%
2. Like the natural scenic beauty	51.3%
3. Offered a job in the area	44.0%
4. Live someplace with less stress/traffic/people than a big city	37.6%
5. Enjoy the outdoor recreation available in the region	37.4%
6. Wanted to raise my family here	32.9%
7. Enjoy the cultural activities available in the region	32.2%
8. Like having four different seasons/enjoy the snow/cold	30.3%
9. Live in a rural area/small town/small urban area	30.2%
10. Have friends in the area	30.0%
11. Live in a house I can afford	28.7%
12. New England lifestyle	26.3%
13. Live relatively close to major urban areas	23.3%
14. It's my home, it's where I belong	23.0%

Community Quality Ranking

Respondents who currently live in Berkshire County were asked to choose which community qualities they considered when deciding where to live, and asked to assign them a weight, with five being "Extremely Important" down to one, "Not Important." When all responses were combined, the overall importance of that item was determined. While the #1 ranked Community Quality was "quality housing that I can

afford,” four of the top ten ranked Community Quality items were job-related. Table 5 shows all the rankings.

Table 5: Important Values			
Item/Issue	Total	Item/Issue	Total
1. Quality housing that I can afford	4.3	15. Friends	3.6
2. A job that meets your interests	4.2	16. Diversity	3.5
3. Cost of living	4.1	17. Rural life	3.4
4. A job that pays well	4.1	18. Innovative practice by the employer	3.4
5. Natural scenic beauty	4.0	19. People with similar views	3.3
6. Family	4.0	20. Professional network of an age cohort	3.2
7. Crime rate	4.0	21. Proximity to major urban areas	3.0
8. Quality job for my spouse/ partner	3.8	22. Proximity to educational institutions	2.9
9. A job that offers advancement	3.8	23. A high density of employers in my industry	2.7
10. Outdoor recreation	3.8	24. Nightlife	2.7
11. Cultural activities	3.7	25. Public transportation	2.5
12. Good schools	3.7	26. Urban life	2.5
13. Climate	3.6	27. Religious community	2.2
14. Short commutes/less traffic	3.6		

“Likely to Leave” Analysis

Of current residents surveyed, 237 respondents (18.9%), indicated they think they plan to leave the Berkshires in the next 5-10 years. Of this group, 29.5% identified as male and 67.9% identified as female. 48.5% were age 18-39, 46.8% were age 40-64, and 4.6% were aged 65+.

“The more familiar I got with the city of Pittsfield, the more I understood how many problems this county really has.”

The ages and genders in this subset were compared to the entire survey’s corresponding age and gender figures, to see what percentage of each is likely to leave. Out of all respondents, 14.4% of male respondents think they may leave while 16.11% of females think they may leave. Of the 18-39 age group, 17.5% of respondents think they may leave, of the 40-64 age group 15.7% think they may leave, and of the 65+ age group, 5.9% think they may leave.

The communities in which a current percentage of residents indicated that they plan to leave are summarized in Table 6. (Those with a tally of 2% or less are omitted.)

Table 6: Places of Residence for Current Residents Planning to Leave		
Municipality	Respondents are planning to leave within 5-10 yrs.	Percentage of the town population
1. Pittsfield	38%	21.4%
2. Lenox	8.9%	18.8%
3. Great Barrington	8.4%	20.6%
4. Adams	5.5%	19.1%
5. Stockbridge	5.1%	34.3%
6. Lee	4.6%	25.0%

7. Dalton	4.2%	21.3%
8. North Adams	4.2%	9.8%
9. Lanesborough	3.4%	22.2%
10. Cheshire	3.0%	25.9%
11. Sheffield	2.5%	21.4%
12. Williamstown	2.1%	14.7%

Of the respondents planning to leave, 30.08% say they enjoy living in the Berkshires, 11.02% do not, and 58.9% sometimes do. 77.22% of these respondents lived in the Berkshires five years ago.

Current residents likely to leave were asked to indicate the reasons why and were asked to select all reasons that applied. The #1 reason selected for leaving the region is the prospect of a better paying job elsewhere, which corresponds with the importance placed on employment when choosing a place to live, as seen in Table 5. Table 7 shows the results, with reasons identified by fewer than 20% of respondents removed.

Reason	Percentage
1. Better paying job	38.3%
2. Lack of things to do	37.9%
3. Don't like the cold and snow	37.9%
4. Work I want to do isn't available here/career advancement	34.5%
5. Quality of life	28.1%
6. Want to move to a different geography	26.8%
7. Drug use	25.1%
8. Crime rate	23.4%
9. Want different cultural activities	23.0%
10. No nightlife	22.6%
11. Never intended to stay here long term	23.1%
12. The family doesn't live here/leaving the area	21.7%
13. Personality/vibe of the area	21.3%
14. Not enough diversity	21.3%
15. Friends are in other places	20.4%

Suggested Improvements

The survey asked what respondents believe should be done to improve the Berkshires to make it a more desirable place to live. Respondents could select multiple options, with space for an open-ended response. Table 8 shows the top five selected answers. A **Higher paying job** was the most frequently selected potential improvement, reinforcing the trend seen in Tables 5 and 7.

What can be done?	Percentage
1. Higher Paying Jobs	71.0%
2. Provide Rail access to the Major Urban Areas	61.4%
3. Better Quality Housing that is Affordable	58.6%
4. More Opportunities for Career Advancement	56.7%
5. Lower Crime Rates and Drug Use	51.8%

Overall Comparison

Natives vs. Non-Natives

Among all respondents, there were some key differences between native-born and non-natives: The non-natives constituted a larger proportion of the 65+ age range, and more non-natives surveyed have obtained graduate degrees, compared to natives. Non-natives preferred large cities and major urban areas at a significantly higher rate than natives did. The balance of natives and non-natives in certain towns/cities within Berkshire County differed. Native respondents live in Adams and Cheshire at a significantly higher rate than non-natives. Non-native respondents live in Great Barrington, Lenox, Monterey, and Williamstown at higher rates.

"This is my home. I like to go on adventures to explore living in other places, but this is home. Very grateful to be from here, even if I can't handle the winters very well."

The reasons for staying in the Berkshires vary between the two groups. Natives cite having family here, wanting to raise a family where they were raised, having friends in the area, being unable to afford to leave, and "it's my home/it's where I belong" at significantly higher rates than non-natives. Non-natives cite being offered a job in the area, a partner moved to/wanted to stay in the area, enjoy the cultural activities available, enjoy the outdoor recreation available, like the natural scenic beauty, like living in a rural/small town, living close to major cities, living someplace with less stress, and liking a politically liberal area, at higher rates. One thing the two groups agreed on was "like the natural scenic beauty," which has only a 4% difference between natives and non-natives. Table 9 summarizes these results.

Reason for moving to/staying in the Berkshires	Native	Non-Native
Like the natural scenic beauty	50.9%	54.3%
Offered a job in the area	40.7%	49.6%
Live someplace with less stress/traffic/people than a big city	35.1%	41.9%
Enjoy the outdoor recreation available in the region	35.3%	41.4%
Enjoy the cultural activities available in the region	25.1%	41.4%
Live in a rural area/small town/small urban area	28.3%	33.6%
Live relatively close to major urban areas	18.6%	29.5%
Wanted to raise my family here	41.7%	24.8%
Liberal area	11.6%	23.9%
Have family in the area	82.5%	21.0%
Partner moved to the area/wants to stay in the area	12.9%	19.6%
Have friends in the area	42.5%	17.9%
It's my home, it's where I belong	37.0%	8.7%
Can't afford to leave	14.0%	4.5%
Living with my parents to pay off student debt	7.0%	0.9%

Non-natives responded that they enjoy living in the Berkshires more often than natives did. While there was no significant difference in the amount of either group thinking of leaving the Berkshires, there were variations in the reasons they may want or need to leave, which are summarized in Table 10. The top

reason to leave cited by non-natives is “family doesn’t live here/family is leaving the area.” For natives, disliking the cold and snowy weather was the most often cited reason.

Table 10: Reasons for maybe leaving compared for natives and non-natives

Reason(s) to leave	Native	Non-Native
The family doesn't live here/leaving the area	10.3%	32.6%
Don't like the cold and snow	37.8%	26.2%
Not enough diversity	13.0%	22.4%
Want a more urban setting	8.9%	17.9%
Never intended to stay here long term	7.1%	17.9%
Drug use	31.3%	14.7%
Crime rate	30.7%	13.7%
Quality of life	27.1%	13.7%
Lack of opportunities in school for my kids	18.3%	10.5%
Want different outdoor recreation opportunities	15.0%	7.7%
Too conservative	1.2%	3.5%
Need to get away from family	5.6%	1.9%

Plans to stay

Survey participants were asked about their plans to stay or move within the next 5-10 years. Multiple Choice answers included “Plan to stay,” “Plan to leave,” or “Unsure.” Answers to this question were compared with demographic data of respondents overall, which revealed that those who plan to stay were more likely to have a graduate degree already, compared to those who think they will move.

“I love the Berkshires but most of my friends are getting jobs in the Albany area, and since I can't afford a place on my own, moving to NY and sharing living space with them may be my best option.”

Those who plan to stay cited having family in the area, wanting to raise a family here, enjoying the outdoor recreation, liking the four seasons/enjoying the snow and cold weather, like living a “New England lifestyle,” and “it’s my home and where I belong,” also being part of a religious community, at a higher rate than those who plan on leaving and those who are unsure.

Those planning to stay cited being offered a job in the area, living with parents to pay off student debt, and not being able to afford to leave, as their reason for moving to or staying in, the Berkshires.

There were some differences between those that plan on leaving and those *who may* leave. Those planning on leaving cited better-paying jobs, wanting different cultural activities, and never intending to stay long term at higher rates than those who are unsure/undecided.

In terms of important values when selecting a place to live, those who do not plan to leave indicated that family, rural life, cultural activities, outdoor recreation, natural scenic beauty, and religious community were extremely important to them, more often than those planning to or those that may leave. Those that do plan to or may leave cited cost of living, job that meets interest, job that pays well, job that offers advancement, professional network of those similar in age, close to a high density of similar industry employers, quality housing they can afford, nightlife, climate, and crime rate as important to them more often than those staying here. Those planning to leave cited public transportation as an important value

when selecting a place to live, which was not often the reason cited by those planning to stay, or those who are unsure.

Regarding suggested improvements to the region, differences arose among those planning to stay, planning to leave, or those who are unsure. Those planning to stay selected providing better internet service, provide rail access to major urban areas and lowering crime rates/drug use more frequently than those planning to leave/those unsure/undecided. Those planning to leave suggested the need to improve nightlife, offer different cultural activities, and put greater focus on locals and not tourists, more frequently. Those unsure or undecided suggested offering different cultural activities and providing rail access, more often than those planning to stay.

Community type preferences

Living environment preferences /choices had some correlation with a respondent's reason for staying in or moving to the Berkshires. Respondents that prefer a large city or major urban environment were more likely to cite being offered a job in the area and living with parents to pay off student debt as reasons they moved to or stayed in the Berkshires. This same group was less likely to cite wanting to raise a family here, having friends in the area, like living in a small town, and it's their home and where they belong, as their reasons for staying or moving to the Berkshires.

Respondents describing why they may leave, cited wanting a more urban setting, having friends in other places, wanting different cultural activities, lacking a nightlife here, never intending to stay long term, lack of public transportation, and lack of good internet service at a higher rate than those who moved here or stayed here. Those who prefer a rural or small-town setting cited a partner wants to move, lack of opportunities in school for their children, too liberal and the crime/drug rate as reasons to leave.

Living environment preferences also impacted responses from those who have already left the area. Those who prefer a more rural environment cited meeting a partner outside the area, family not living in the area, lack of opportunities in school for their kids, and the area being too liberal, as their reasons for leaving at a higher rate than former residents who preferred a more urban setting.

Aspects such as family, affordable quality housing, and short commutes were important to respondents, regardless of their living environment preferences. However, those that prefer a more urban setting were more likely to cite a job that meets their interest, job that pays well and offers advancement, professional networks, urban life, proximity to urban areas, nightlife, public transportation, proximity to educational institutions, and diversity as important to them. Those that prefer a more rural environment indicated crime rate, natural scenic beauty, outdoor recreation, rural life, and cost of living as important aspects of their living environment.

Educational Attainment

Respondents whose highest level of education is high school/GED, some college, or an associate degree were more likely to have grown up in Berkshire county, while those who did not grow up in Berkshire County were more likely to have obtained a bachelor's or graduate degree. When asked if they felt the Berkshire public school system fully prepared them

*"Great college prep,
no real-world
experience."
-on public schools
in the Berkshires*

for successful lives, participants/respondents with a high school or some college education said no at a higher rate than those with a bachelor or graduate degrees.

Educational attainment had an impact on the reasons why people moved to or stayed in Berkshire County. The higher the educational attainment, the more likely the reasons cited for moving to or staying in the Berkshires, were related to finding many attributes attractive: such as being offered a job in the area, enjoying the cultural activities, and the region being a politically liberal area. These same respondents were less likely to cite things like not being able to afford to leave, having family or friends in the area, and it being their home and where they belong.

Educational attainment also had an impact on why a person may leave the Berkshires. The higher the educational attainment, the more likely the respondent was to cite work not being available, leaving to find a better paying job, and the lack of diversity, as reasons to leave. This group was also less likely to cite things like lack of things to do, not liking the cold and snow, or personality/"vibe" of the area.

For respondents that have left the area, their reasons for leaving differed based on educational attainment. Those with higher educational attainment were less likely to cite needing to get away from family, meeting a partner outside of the area, or wanting to start a new life. They were more likely to cite never intending to stay long-term and not enough diversity.

Educational attainment also impacted answers regarding what is most important when choosing a place to live. Aspects like family, cost of living, rural life, affordable quality housing, and crime rate were of lower importance for those with higher educational attainment, while jobs that meet personal interests and cultural activities were of higher importance.

When asked about potential improvements for the Berkshires, those with higher educational attainment were more likely to favor infrastructure improvements such as providing rail access to major urban areas, better internet service, and better public transportation.

Age

Older respondents were less likely to work/have worked in the area, or to have grown up here - reflecting the high number of 2nd homeowners and retirees in Berkshire County. The older the respondent, the more likely they were to live in south County - Egremont, Lenox, Monterey, and Stockbridge. The younger the respondent, the more likely they were to have grown up in Berkshire County. For living preferences, age 35 and overall had "small towns" as their first preference, with a variety of second and third preferences, shown in Table 11.

Age	First	Second	Third
18-21	Medium-sized city	A major urban area or Small town	Large city
22-24	Large town	Small town	Major urban area
25-29	Medium-sized city	Small town	Large town
30-34	Large/Small town	Medium-sized city	Rural

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35-39	Small town	Medium-sized city	Large town
40-44	Small town	Large town	Medium-sized city
45-49	Small town	Rural	Medium-sized city
50-54	Small town	Medium-sized city	Large town
55-59	Small town	Rural	Large town
60-64	Small town	Medium-sized city	Rural/Large town
65+	Small town	Rural	Medium-sized city

When asked about why they moved to or stayed in Berkshire County, the responses varied among age ranges. Younger adults were more likely to indicate they were offered a job in the area, went to college in the area, have family here, are living with parents to pay off student debt, or can't afford to leave. They were less likely to cite cultural activities, having four different seasons, a low crime rate, or being a member of a religious community.

Overall, younger respondents were more likely to indicate that they may move away from the Berkshires within the next five to ten years. The reasons cited, of which respondents could select all that applied, varied among different cohorts. Younger adults cited better-paying jobs, seeking education/training elsewhere, having student debt and needing a higher paying job, wanting to raise kids somewhere else, inability to find a suitable partner, having friends in other places, wanting different cultural activities, lacking things to do, and never intending to stay long. Older adults likely to move cited the fact that family doesn't live in the area, they don't like the cold and snow, they want different geography and the region is too politically liberal.

Among those that have moved away from the Berkshires, age is closely linked to the reasons cited. Young adults under age 40, cited that the work they want to do wasn't available, that they met a partner that lives outside the area, there is a lack of things to do, and they were seeking education or training elsewhere. Older adult respondents were less likely to have lived in the Berkshires and moved away; however, they did cite family not living in the area, not liking the cold and the snow, and illicit drug use in the community, as primary reasons they left.

The community qualities that are important when considering where to live also varied among age ranges. The aspects that younger adults listed as more important were the cost of living, a job that interests them, jobs that pay well and offers advancement, affordable quality housing, and nightlife. Proximity to friends, rural life, cultural activities, natural scenic beauty, and religious community were more important to older adults.

Regarding suggestions for improvements in Berkshire County, older adults prioritized better internet service and public transport more than younger adults. Younger adults suggested improving nightlife, different cultural activities, career advancement, and organized sports leagues at a higher rate.

Gender

When considering differences between responses based on gender, those that identify as either male or female were compared. While options for those who prefer not to identify, those who identify as non-binary, and an option to self-describe were provided, there were not enough responses in those categories for statistical comparison.

"I came here for the job and I stay here for the people. If it weren't for the people and opportunities I've found, I probably would have no reason to stay and would seek a higher paying job elsewhere."

Those who identified as male were more likely to have stayed in or moved to Berkshire County because of having been offered a job, enjoying the outdoor recreation, and for finding religious community. Those who identified as male cited the area being too liberal as the reason why they may leave at a significantly higher rate than females. Those identifying as female cited having family in the area, partner moved to or wanted to stay in the area, or not being able to afford to leave, as reasons they intended to stay in or moved to the region. Those identifying as male also enjoyed

living in the Berkshires more than their female counterparts.

Male and female respondents who have left the area demonstrated a significant difference in primary reasons for doing so. Those identifying as female cited wanting to raise children somewhere else and the personality/vibe of the area at a significantly higher rate than males. Those who identified as male cited military service, the offer of a better paying job, and pressure to leave at a significantly higher rate than females. When asked if they had enjoyed living in the Berkshires and if they may move back someday males said yes more than females. In terms of reasons why they may move back, there was only one response with a significant difference: starting a business here was cited at a significantly higher rate by males than females.

When selecting aspects that were important when choosing a place to live, male and female participants responded similarly about family, friends, a job that pays well, professional network, innovative practice by employer, urban life and proximity to urban places, nightlife, outdoor recreation and natural scenery, proximity to educational institutions, climate, cultural activities, and religious communities. Aspects such as cost of living, a job that meets interest and offers advancement, opportunities for a partner, quality housing that's affordable, public transportation, good schools, people with similar views, crime rate, and diversity were rated as extremely important by females. Rural life, good schools, and affordable quality housing were very important for males.

Regarding potential improvements for Berkshire County, females cited better housing that is affordable and putting the focus on locals and not tourists at a significantly higher rate than males, while males cited more organized sports leagues and improving nightlife at a significantly higher rate than did females.

Did you leave for College or the Military?

One reason for young adults to leave their hometown is to attend college or join the military, and Berkshire County is no exception. However, reasons for staying or returning to the Berkshires does vary. For those that left for college or military, being offered a job in the area, living with parents to pay off student debt, and enjoying the cultural activities were primary reasons for returning. Those that did not leave for college/military cited not being able to afford to leave and attending college in the Berkshires, at a higher rate as their reason to stay in Berkshire County.

For those that had previously left for college/military, came back and now think they might leave the Berkshires again, they said the work they want to do isn't available, can't find a suitable partner, they have friends in other places, and want a more urban setting, compared to other respondents. Those that did

not leave for college/military said wanting to raise kids elsewhere, wanting different outdoor recreation, lack of opportunities in school for their kids, and crime rate, more frequently than other respondents.

Those that left for reasons other than college/military cited lack of opportunities in school for their kids, the personality of the area, the area being too liberal, crime rate, drug use, and quality of life as their reasons for leaving at a higher rate. Having friends in the area was named as a reason for possibly returning to the Berkshires at a lower rate by respondents who originally left for college/military than those who left for other reasons.

When asked what they find important when choosing a place to live, those that did not move for college/military said family, cost of living, job that pays well, short commute, rural life, affordable quality housing, people with similar views, and crime rate as important at a higher rate.

When they were asked about improvements that could be made to Berkshire County, those that did leave for college/military suggested providing rail access at a higher rate while lowering the crime rate and drug use was cited more often by those that did not leave for college/military.

Do you enjoy living in the Berkshires?

Respondents who stated they enjoy/enjoyed living in the Berkshires had a wide variety of reasons. Those who do enjoy the Berkshires said wanting to raise family here, enjoy the cultural and outdoor activities, enjoy having four seasons, living in a rural or small town, living in a place with less stress, less traffic, and less people, low crime rate, liberal area, New England lifestyle, and that “it’s their home and where they belong” at a high rate as compared to respondents who do not or only sometimes enjoy living here. Those who do not enjoy the Berkshires cited not being able to afford to leave and living with parents to pay off student debt. Those who said they sometimes enjoy the Berkshires gave the reasons of being offered a job here, went to college in the area, have family here, and partner lives here as reasons for being here.

When asked if they may leave the region, responses about why varied among those that enjoy the region and those that do not. Those that do enjoy the Berkshires say family isn’t in the area and a partner wants to leave the area as their reasons for potentially leaving. For those that do not enjoy the region, they say pressure to leave, work they want isn’t available, want to raise children elsewhere, met a partner outside the area, wanting different cultural activities, lack of things to do, personality of the area, military, and quality of life as their primary reasons. Those that sometimes enjoy the Berkshires cite the lure of a better paying job and not liking the cold and the snow as their reasons at a higher rate than those that feel strongly one way or another.

When it comes to the importance of different aspects when choosing a place to live, those who enjoy the Berkshires rated family, friends, rural life, cultural activities, and natural scenic beauty as important at a high rate. Those who don’t enjoy the Berkshires rated cost of living, job that meets their interest, pays well and offers advancement, professional network, opportunities for their partner, a high density of similar industry employers nearby, urban life, affordable quality housing, climate, public transportation, and crime rate as most important.

When asked to suggest possible improvements for Berkshire County, those that do enjoy living here focused on better public transportation, rail access, and internet service, those that do not enjoy the

Berkshires felt strongly that different cultural activities were needed, while those that sometimes enjoy it emphasized improved nightlife and focusing on locals rather than tourists.

Analysis of Survey Results Differences, 2015 to 2019

New survey vs. old survey

The 2015 Berkshire Young Adult survey focused on the attitudes and beliefs of young adults (aged 18-39) regarding Berkshire County. The Young Adult survey asked many of the same questions that were repeated in the 2019 Berkshire survey. To directly compare results from 2015 and 2019, the 2019 survey responses for ages 18-39 were filtered. In both surveys, approximately 23% of respondents said they would likely leave the Berkshires, 39% said they would not, and 36% were unsure.

Participation by age cohorts between the two surveys did shift a bit, with younger respondents (18-29) decreasing in 2019. The age group of 22-24 shrank the most, from 13% to 7.2% of total respondents. The age range of 30-39 increased, with ages 35-39 increasing the most from 18.1% to 32.1%. Gender identification and educational attainment levels were similar between the two surveys.

When considering only those respondents between the ages of 18 and 39, the number of respondents who grew up in the Berkshires shrank from 74.2% in 2015 to 62.8% in 2019. Respondents who currently live in Berkshire County increased from 68.0% in 2015 to 81.6% in 2019. It should be noted that the 2015 survey focused just on the young adults and ended up being more widely distributed than the 2019 survey, which likely reduced the number of people participating who no longer live in the region. Table 12 compares the current towns/cities of residence for respondents in 2015 vs. 2019.

Current town/city	2015	2019	Current town/city	2015	2019
Pittsfield	39.4%	39.1%	Otis	0.8%	1.0%
North Adams	11.8%	9.7%	New Marlborough	0.6%	0.6%
Adams	7.9%	7.6%	Monterey	0.4%	0.1%
Great Barrington	5.4%	6.0%	Peru	0.4%	0.4%
Lenox	4.4%	5.8%	Windsor	0.4%	0.4%
Lanesborough	1.9%	3.7%	Clarksburg	1.1%	0.2%
Lee	3.6%	3.7%	Florida	0.4%	0.2%
Dalton	4.9%	3.5%	Hancock	0.3%	0.2%
Sheffield	1.6%	2.9%	Mount Washington	0.0%	0.2%
Stockbridge	1.2%	2.7%	Sandisfield	0.2%	0.2%
Cheshire	2.9%	2.3%	Tyringham	0.4%	0.2%
Egremont	0.9%	1.9%	Washington	0.3%	0.2%
Hinsdale	1.8%	1.9%	West Stockbridge	0.8%	0.2%
Williamstown	4.3%	1.9%	Alford	0.1%	0.0%
Richmond	1.1%	1.7%	New Ashford	0.1%	0.0%
Becket	0.5%	1.2%	Savoy	0.1%	0.0%

Table 13 shows the reasons respondents stayed or moved to the Berkshires. Having family in the area was the top reason for living in the Berkshires in both surveys. However, the selection of this reason dropped by nearly 10% in 2019. On the other hand, being offered a job increased by close to 10% from 2015 to 2019. Some of the possible reasons changed in rank, for instance, having friends in the area was third in 2015 and dropped to sixth in 2019.

Reason	2015	2019
Have family in the area	67.2%	58.7%
Offered a job in the area	45.6%	56.0%
Like the natural scenic beauty	41.5%	51.0%
Live someplace with less stress/traffic/people than a big city	30.5%	37.5%
Enjoy the outdoor recreation available in the region	32.0%	36.6%
Have friends in the area	43.7%	34.5%
Live in a house I can afford	24.1%	30.3%
Live in a rural area/small town/small urban area	27.4%	29.5%
Wanted to raise my family here	26.2%	29.3%
New England lifestyle	23.5%	29.1%
Like having four different seasons/enjoy the snow/cold	27.6%	26.3%
Enjoy the cultural activities available in the region	19.0%	26.1%
It's my home; it's where I belong	20.6%	22.5%
Live relatively close to major urban areas	16.5%	21.9%
Partner moved to the area/wants to stay in the area	14.9%	19.0%
Liberal area	14.1%	16.0%
Went to college in the area	16.4%	15.8%
Can't afford to leave	19.2%	14.5%
Low crime rate	11.9%	10.1%
Living with my parents to pay off student debt	11.5%	9.7%
Started a business here	5.1%	5.9%

Table 14 shows the reasons they may leave and the reason they did leave of which respondents could select all that applied to them. For those that plan to leave, for both 2015 and 2019, the top reason was “better paying job.” However, for those that did leave the top reason was “work I want to do isn't available here/advancement within my career,” followed by “better-paying jobs” for both surveys. This result again shows that the importance of employment is a big factor in why young adults may leave and why they did leave.

Reasons to leave	Might leave		Did leave	
	2015	2019	2015	2019
Work I want to do isn't available here/career advancement	52.2%	43.7%	67.2%	62.6%
Better paying job	61.8%	54.6%	50.0%	55.1%
No nightlife	40.2%	26.6%	32.2%	44.9%
Don't like the cold and snow	36.9%	28.3%	12.9%	33.6%

Want different outdoor recreation opportunities	13.2%	12.2%	7.0%	32.7%
Seeking education/training elsewhere	11.6%	12.6%	32.5%	30.8%
Want different cultural activities	9.4%	22.0%	6.9%	30.8%
Have student debt and need a higher paying job	24.2%	19.2%	22.3%	20.6%
Never intended to stay here long term	20.6%	19.6%	12.8%	18.7%
Want to move to a different geography	21.2%	20.3%	12.6%	18.7%
Want to raise kids someplace else	16.0%	21.3%	11.8%	18.7%
Want to start a new life	24.2%	9.8%	20.2%	15.9%
Too liberal	4.6%	5.6%	2.9%	15.0%
Can't find a suitable partner	19.0%	18.9%	13.6%	12.2%
Lack of opportunities in school for my kids	17.8%	20.3%	10.6%	12.2%
Personality/vibe of the area	22.6%	13.6%	17.0%	12.2%
Friends are in other places	23.4%	21.0%	18.3%	11.2%
Lack of good internet service	11.7%	12.6%	6.8%	10.3%
Lack of public transportation	15.4%	17.8%	17.2%	10.3%
Lack of things to do	54.6%	36.0%	42.1%	10.3%
Partner/Family wants to leave the area	19.7%	14.3%	8.3%	10.3%
Need to get away from family	7.7%	6.3%	8.7%	9.4%
The family doesn't live here/leaving the area	14.6%	16.1%	7.9%	8.4%
Want to start a business someplace else	3.2%	5.9%	2.2%	0.9%
Want a more urban setting	25.9%	16.8%	33.2%	0.0%

Those who have moved away were asked why they might come back to the area. Table 15 shows the responses. The top two responses are the same in both surveys, but they flipped ranks. “Have family in the area” went from first to second, while “like the natural scenic beauty” went from second to first. The next three reasons (enjoy the outdoor recreation in the region, have friends in the area, and New England lifestyle) remained the same. The prospect of being offered a job in the area increased in importance by almost 27% from 2015 to 2019, while “wanting to raise a family here” decreased by about 38%.

Reasons to return	2015	2019
Like the natural scenic beauty	72.1%	69.6%
Have family in the area	76.2%	66.7 %
Enjoy the outdoor recreation available in the region	56.4%	60.9%
Have friends in the area	55.2%	58.0%
New England lifestyle	54.5%	43.5%
Live in a rural area/small town/small urban area	42.9%	36.2%
Offered a job in the area	18.8%	34.8%
Partner moved to the area/wants to stay in the area	5.5%	33.3%
Live in a house I can afford	37.4%	33.3%
Live someplace with less stress/traffic/people than a big city	45.7%	27.5%
It's my home; it's where I belong	37.6%	27.5%
Enjoy the cultural activities available in the region	44.3%	24.6%
Like having four different seasons/enjoy the snow/cold	40.7%	24.6%
Liberal area	31.4%	23.2%
Live relatively close to major urban areas	28.1%	18.8%

Low crime rate	24.3%	15.9%
Started a business here	2.6%	13.0%
Went to college in the area	6.9%	7.3%
Wanted to raise my family here	45.7%	7.3%
Living with my parents to pay off student debt	3.1%	4.4%

The Values sections of both surveys, shown in Table 16, show some slight but insignificant differences. Between the two surveys, the top five values remained the same but differed slightly in rank.

Table 16: Comparison of value, 2015 vs. 2019		
Values	2015	2019
A job that meets your interest	4.4	4.4
A job that pays well	4.3	4.4
Quality housing that I can afford	4.2	4.4
A job that offers advancement	4.3	4.2
Family	4.1	3.9
Good schools	3.9	3.9
Natural scenery	3.8	3.9
Outdoor recreation	3.8	3.9
Cultural activities	3.7	3.7
Friends	3.8	3.6
Climate	3.5	3.6
Short commutes/less traffic	3.5	3.6
People with similar views	3.4	3.3
Rural life	3.1	3.2
Proximity to major urban areas	3.2	3.1
Proximity to educational institutions	3.2	3.1
Nightlife	3.1	2.9
Urban life	2.7	2.9
Public Transportation	2.6	2.5

Suggested improvements also shifted when comparing the two surveys, with a significantly decreased emphasis on nightlife, cultural activities, organized sports, and opportunities for career advancement, but an increased emphasis on improved public transportation and internet access. Though the emphasis on improvements differed, the top four improvements cited were the same in 2015 and 2019. Both showed “higher-paying jobs” as the top suggested improvement with “more opportunities for career advancement,” “better quality housing that’s affordable,” and “provide rail access to the major urban areas” following. Table 17 shows the differences between the two surveys.

Suggested Improvement	2015	2019
Higher paying jobs	81.7%	75.8%
More opportunities for career advancement	80.5%	66.6%
Better quality housing that's affordable	61.9%	61.9%
Provide rail access to the major urban areas	61.5%	61.7%
Provide better internet service	26.4%	39.9%
Better public transportation	31.2%	38.6%
Improve nightlife	53.7%	35.9%
More organized sports leagues	29.5%	19.9%
Different cultural activities than what is currently offered	30.8%	17.8%

20s versus 30s, 2015 and 2019

Further analysis was conducted to discern any changes for respondents in their 20s and respondents in their 30s, examining what is important to the two age groups and what may have changed over five years. Gender ratios of respondents did not differ significantly from 2015 to 2019. There were also no significant differences in educational attainment within the 30-39 age group, but the 18 to 29-year-old participants with Bachelor's degrees increased by almost 10% from 2015 to 2019. The following tables demonstrate trends between the two age groups and the two surveys.

Reasons given by respondents for moved to or staying in the Berkshires were examined. These reasons brought up some interesting differences. Not surprisingly, people in their 20s are more likely to be living with parents to pay off student debt than those in their 30s. From 2015 to 2019, the top four reasons for staying in/moving to Berkshire County for those in their 20s were the same but ranking shifted. The top three reasons given by those in their 30s remained the same in rank. Across all four columns, "have family in the area" and "offered a job in the area" were among the top three reasons for staying or moving to the Berkshires. Table 18 compares responses by age range and survey year.

Reasons	20-29-year-olds		30-39-year-olds	
	2015	2019	2015	2019
Have family in the area	65.3%	51.6%	67.7%	60.4%
Like the natural scenic beauty	39.2%	47.1%	45.6%	51.7%
Offered a job in the area	50.8%	61.2%	43.3%	51.4%
Live someplace with less stress/traffic/people than a big city	29.0%	31.9%	32.9%	39.6%
Enjoy the outdoor recreation available in the region	31.2%	33.8%	34.1%	37.5%
Wanted to raise my family here	16.1%	14.7%	35.2%	36.0%
Have friends in the area	46.5%	33.8%	41.2%	33.8%
Live in a house I can afford	20.2%	24.2%	28.8%	32.3%
New England lifestyle	23.2%	24.8%	24.7%	30.5%
Live in a rural area/small town/small urban area	26.4%	28.0%	27.7%	29.9%
Enjoy the cultural activities available in the region	15.5%	22.3%	22.6%	27.8%
Like having four different seasons/enjoy the snow/cold	25.4%	24.8%	29.5%	26.6%
It's my home; it's where I belong	20.3%	16.6%	19.8%	24.5%
Live relatively close to major urban areas	14.8%	17.2%	18.6%	23.9%

Partner moved to the area/wants to stay in the area	13.1%	14.7%	18.0%	20.9%
Liberal area	13.3%	14.0%	16.4%	16.3%
Went to college in the area	20.7%	17.2%	12.5%	14.8%
Can't afford to leave	26.3%	19.8%	12.9%	11.5%
Low crime rate	10.0%	9.6%	12.5%	10.0%
Started a business here	2.9%	3.2%	6.7%	7.0%
Living with my parents to pay off student debt	21.2%	19.1%	3.7%	4.8%

Reasons respondents may leave the Berkshires in the next 5 years were then compared, allowing us to see what people currently living in Berkshire County think about when they consider leaving. The differences here were also noticeable. A desire for different cultural activities increased for both age groups from 2015 to 2019, while wanting different outdoor recreation barely changed for either group. Those in their 20s cited the reasons for “no nightlife” and “can’t find a suitable partner” at a higher rate in both surveys than respondents in their 30s. Respondents in their 30s were more likely to cite a lack of opportunities in school for their children than those in their 20s. Across all four categories, all cited “better paying job” as the top reason they may leave. The next two reasons for all categories were “work I want to do isn’t available here/advancement within my career” and “lack of things to do,” though not at the same rank. Table 19 compares responses by age range and survey year.

Reasons for leaving	20-29-year-olds		30-39-year-olds	
	2015	2019	2015	2019
Better paying job	65.2%	55.1%	57.5%	54.4%
Work I want to do isn't available here/career advancement	57.2%	49.2%	47.3%	40.4%
Lack of things to do	60.3%	37.3%	45.4%	35.1%
Don't like the cold and snow	34.0%	27.1%	36.3%	29.2%
Lack of opportunities in school for my kids	15.2%	15.3%	21.6%	23.4%
Want to raise kids someplace else	17.1%	20.3%	15.8%	22.2%
Want different cultural activities	11.9%	22.9%	5.0%	21.6%
No nightlife	48.9%	35.6%	27.4%	20.5%
Lack of public transportation	15.8%	14.4%	14.3%	20.5%
Want to move to a different geography	29.4%	22.0%	23.1%	19.9%
Friends are in other places	30.9%	27.1%	19.0%	17.0%
Never intended to stay here long term	25.4%	23.7%	14.3%	16.4%
Personality/vibe of the area	25.1%	11.9%	19.2%	16.4%
Can't find a suitable partner	21.4%	22.0%	16.0%	15.8%
Want a more urban setting	30.5%	19.5%	18.8%	15.2%
Partner/Family wants to leave the area	19.3%	13.6%	21.2%	14.6%
Have student debt and need a higher paying job	31.5%	28.0%	17.7%	13.5%
Family doesn't live here/leaving the area	15.5%	22.0%	14.5%	12.9%
Want different outdoor recreation opportunities	13.4%	13.6%	11.5%	11.7%
Lack of good internet service	11.6%	14.4%	11.5%	11.7%
Want to start a new life	28.4%	9.3%	16.9%	9.9%
Want to start a business someplace else	3.1%	5.1%	2.6%	7.0%
Seeking education/training elsewhere	14.7%	22.0%	6.1%	7.0%

Need to get away from family	9.2%	6.8%	4.8%	5.9%
Too liberal	4.0%	5.1%	4.5%	5.9%

Former resident respondents were asked to select all applicable reasons for moving out of Berkshire County. Comparison between age ranges and survey years show the same top three reasons, at the same ranking, for leaving: “work I want to do isn’t available here/advancement within my career,” “better paying job” and “lack of things to do.” Former residents in their 20s still cite “no nightlife” at a higher rate than those in their 30s, but to a lesser degree than in 2015. A lack of nightlife remained the fourth reason for those in their 20s, as did “want a more urban setting” for those in their 30s. As the fifth reason, all four groups identified “seeking education/training elsewhere.” Again, reasons for leaving revolve around employment and seeking better opportunities. Table 20 compares responses by age range and survey year.

Reasons for leaving	20-29-year-olds		30-39-year-olds	
	2015	2019	2015	2019
Work I want to do isn't available here/career advancement	65.2%	55.9%	65.1%	66.7%
Better paying job	46.1%	55.9%	49.6%	51.9%
Lack of things to do	45.4%	48.5%	33.4%	40.7%
Seeking education/training elsewhere	36.8%	32.2%	27.7%	31.5%
Want a more urban setting	35.7%	30.5%	28.2%	31.5%
Want different cultural activities	8.2%	32.2%	3.5%	31.5%
No nightlife	38.5%	37.3%	20.2%	29.6%
Don't like the cold and snow	11.3%	13.6%	13.0%	22.2%
Have student debt and need a higher paying job	24.7%	18.6%	20.7%	20.4%
Can't find a suitable partner	13.9%	5.1%	12.5%	18.5%
Want to raise kids someplace else	9.1%	20.3%	13.5%	16.7%
Personality/vibe of the area	18.0%	13.6%	12.5%	16.7%
Want different outdoor recreation opportunities	7.4%	6.8%	5.0%	14.8%
Lack of opportunities in school for my kids	7.4%	6.8%	12.7%	14.8%
Want to start a new life	21.0%	20.3%	17.7%	14.8%
Lack of good internet service	6.0%	8.5%	5.5%	14.8%
Family doesn't live here/leaving the area	8.2%	3.4%	7.0%	13.0%
Lack of public transportation	19.1%	17.0%	12.5%	13.0%
Want to move to a different geography	12.1%	8.5%	12.2%	11.1%
Never intended to stay here long term	13.9%	17.0%	11.5%	9.3%
Need to get away from family	8.7%	10.2%	8.0%	7.4%
Partner/Family wants to leave the area	7.3%	13.6%	9.7%	5.6%
Friends are in other places	21.4%	17.0%	14.2%	5.6%
Too liberal	2.0%	0.0%	3.2%	3.7%
Want to start a business someplace else	1.9%	0.0%	2.0%	1.9%

Respondents who had moved away from the Berkshires and were thinking about moving back were asked to select reasons for being interested in returning. All groups (both age ranges and in both surveys) had the same top two reasons for possibly returning: “like the natural scenic beauty” and “have family in the

area.” Also, “enjoy the outdoor recreation available in the region,” “have friends in the area,” and “New England lifestyle” is cited at high rates as reasons for considering a return. “Enjoying the cultural activities in the region” was selected by fewer people in either age range during the 2019 survey, though respondents in their 30s cited it more frequently than those in their 20s. In 2015, respondents in their 30s cited a desire to raise a family in the area more frequently than 30-something respondents in 2019. Table 21 compares responses by age range and survey year.

Table 21: Comparison of reasons to consider returning, 20s vs. 30s and 2015 vs. 2019				
Reasons	20-29-year-olds		30-39-year-olds	
	2015	2019	2015	2019
Like the natural scenic beauty	73.6%	73.9%	74.4%	69.4%
Have family in the area	77.0%	76.3%	74.4%	58.3%
Enjoy the outdoor recreation available in the region	55.2%	60.5%	61.6%	58.3%
Have friends in the area	54.4%	60.5%	56.8%	55.6%
New England lifestyle	58.2%	42.1%	49.6%	44.4%
Live in a rural area/small town/small urban area	45.6%	31.6%	40.8%	38.9%
Enjoy the cultural activities available in the region	41.8%	21.1%	52.0%	33.3%
Offered a job in the area	19.2%	36.8%	18.4%	30.6%
Live someplace with less stress/traffic/people than a big city	45.6%	29.0%	49.6%	30.6%
Live relatively close to major urban areas	29.5%	15.8%	28.8%	27.8%
Live in a house I can afford	34.9%	47.4%	45.6%	27.8%
Wanted to raise my family here	49.8%	42.1%	44.0%	22.2%
Like having four different seasons/enjoy the snow/cold	40.2%	23.7%	42.4%	22.2%
Liberal area	33.7%	21.1%	31.2%	22.2%
It's my home, it's where I belong	36.0%	31.6%	43.2%	22.2%
Low crime rate	24.5%	13.2%	25.6%	16.7%
Started a business here	3.8%	13.2%	0.0%	11.1%
Went to college in the area	7.7%	7.9%	7.2%	5.6%
Partner moved to the area/wants to stay in the area	6.1%	10.5%	4.8%	2.8%
Living with my parents to pay off student debt	4.6%	7.9%	0.8%	0.0%

Both surveys asked respondents to rank how they value reasons for choosing a place to live from Extremely Important to Not Important. To assess how values differ between respondents in their 20s and 30s, as well as how those values changed over 5 years, the ranks were given weights and then combined with the percentage of respondents. One of the biggest differences demonstrated is that nightlife ranked at higher importance for those in the 20s than those in their 30s in both surveys. The importance of proximity to major urban areas increased significantly for respondents in their 20s, while respondents in their 30s remained about the same on this item. Across all four groups, “job that meets your interest” was the top value when choosing a place to live. Comparison by age range and survey year are shown in Table 22.

Values	20-29-year-olds		30-39-year-olds	
	2015	2019	2015	2019
Job that meets your interest	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.4
Quality housing that I can afford	4.2	4.5	4.1	4.3
Job that pays well	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.3
Job that offers advancement	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.2
Good schools	3.8	3.9	4.1	4.0
Family	4.0	3.8	4.1	3.9
Natural scenery	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.9
Outdoor recreation	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.9
Cultural activities	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.7
Short commutes/less traffic	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.6
Friends	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.5
Climate	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.5
People with similar views	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.2
Rural life	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.2
Proximity to educational institutions	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1
Proximity to major urban areas	3.3	4.5	3.1	3.0
Nightlife	3.3	3.1	2.9	2.7
Public Transportation	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.6
Urban life	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.5

Differences are also seen when comparing what the respondents said could be improved in the Berkshires. Again, those in their 20s cited improving nightlife and different cultural activities at higher rates than those in their 30s. The top two improvements cited among the four groups were “higher-paying jobs” and “more opportunities for career advancement,” showing again that employment and employment conditions are important factors. Between the two age groups, “provide better internet service” increased significantly from 2015 to 2019. These differences are shown in Table 23.

Suggested Improvement	20-29-year-olds		30-39-year-olds	
	2015	2019	2015	2019
Higher paying jobs	79.6%	77.2%	82.5%	73.8%
More opportunities for career advancement	80.2%	70.4%	79.7%	63.4%
Provide rail access to the major urban areas	62.5%	58.7%	60.4%	62.3%
Better quality housing that's affordable	66.0%	68.0%	57.2%	57.8%
Provide better internet service	25.8%	35.0%	26.0%	41.7%
Better public transportation	32.5%	32.5%	29.6%	41.2%
Improve nightlife	62.8%	48.1%	45.1%	28.9%
More organized sports leagues	32.8%	22.8%	26.2%	17.4%
Different cultural activities than what is currently offered	35.3%	21.4%	26.0%	15.8%

Analysis of Employment in 2019

The final section of the 2019 Berkshire Survey focuses on employment and work experiences in Berkshire County. Responses were filtered for age, focusing on respondents aged 18-60 to focus on workforce participants and omit responses from retirees or those likely to retire soon. Filtering in this way resulted in 1,104 respondents. These respondents were then filtered further for those that currently work or have worked in Berkshire County for a subset of 930 respondents.

Of these 930 responses, 49.3% live and work in Berkshire County, but live in one city/town and work in another. 44.5% live and work in the same city/town. 6.2% live outside of the county and commute into the Berkshires for work.

Table 24 shows the different industries in which the respondents in this subset work.

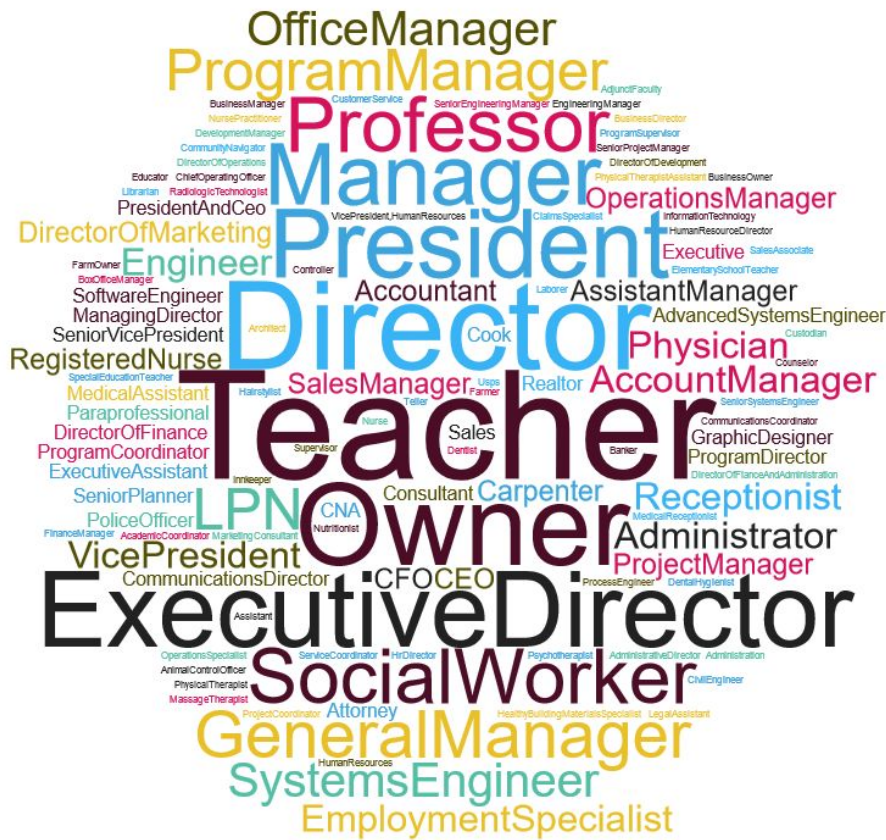
Table 24: Employment industries of respondents			
Answer Choices	Responses	Answer Choices	Responses
Other (please specify)	19.7%	Creative Economy	5.5%
Education	16.0%	Professional/Technical	3.5%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	13.5%	Retail	3.5%
Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	8.6%	Management	2.4%
Finance/Insurance	7.5%	Other Manufacturing	2.4%
Government/Public Administration	7.2%	Construction/Contracting	2.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	5.8%	Food and Agriculture	2.0%

As seen in the table, “Other” is the top result. For an idea of what those respondents specified, please see the word cloud below (the larger the word, the more often it was used).

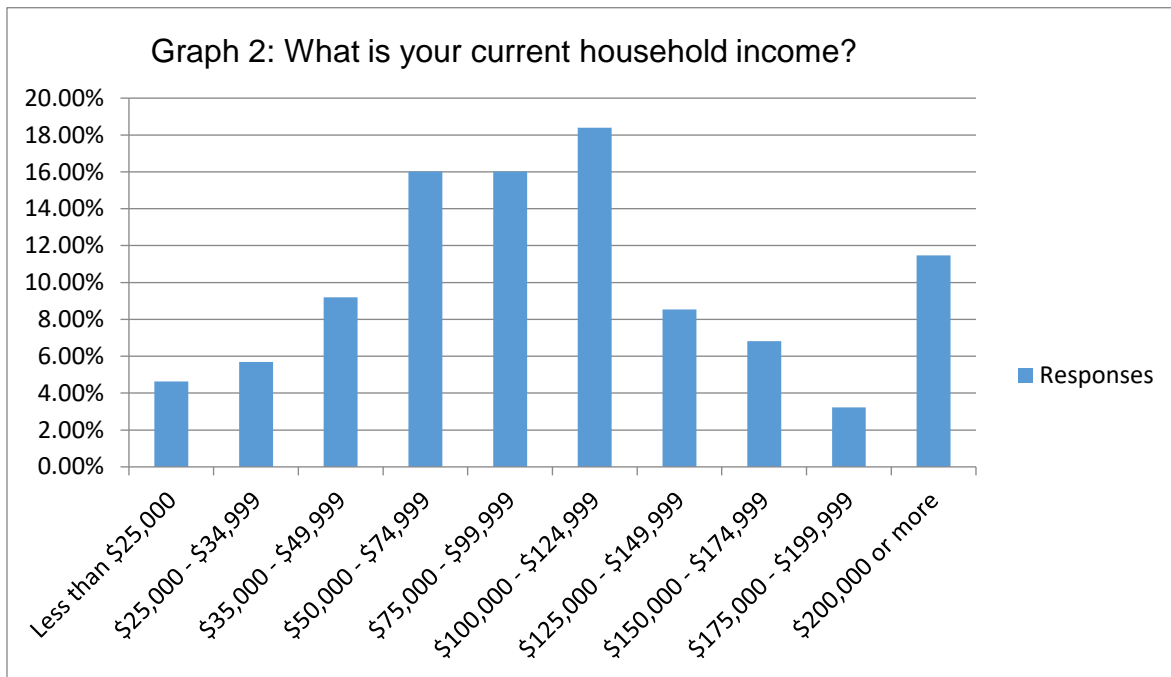
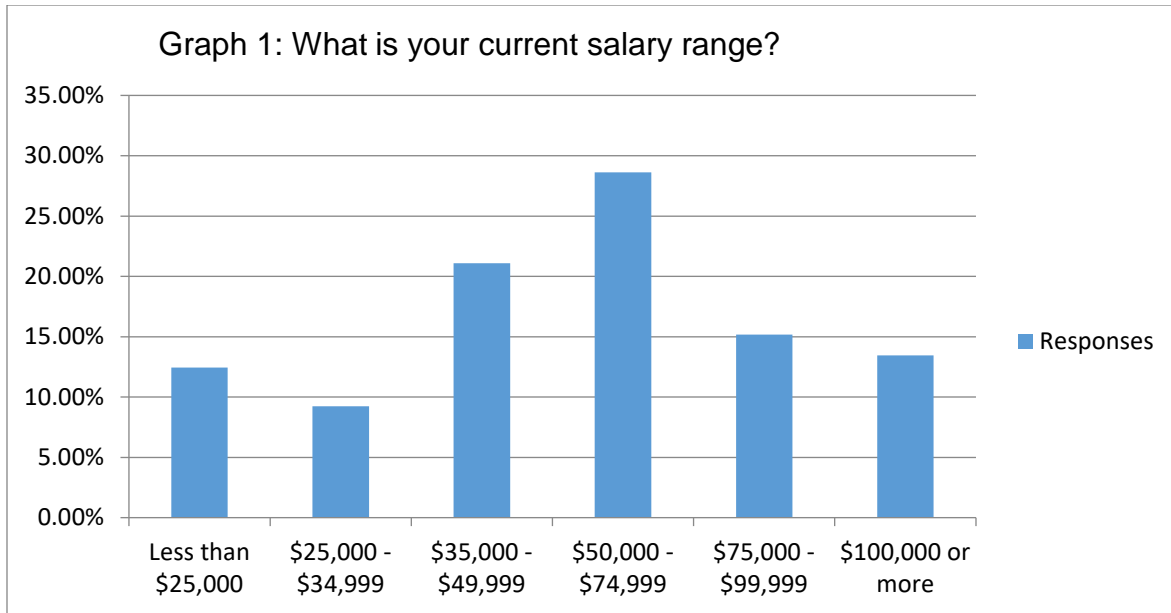


2019 Berkshire County Survey Results

When asked for their job title, the top five responses were: manager, director, teacher, assistant, and coordinator. The word cloud below demonstrates what other titles are mentioned.



Regarding salary and income, the survey asked for both personal salary range and the household income range. The most frequent individual income range selected was \$50,000-\$70,000 at 28.6% of respondents, and the most frequent household income range was \$100,000-\$124,999 at 17.9% of respondents. See graphs below for a summary of the responses received for each question.



The survey asked respondents how many years they have been working for their current employer. Controlling for non-numerical answers, answers that did not register as numerical in Excel, and answers of less than a year, the average came to 8.1 years with their current employer. Using the same technique, the average time spent working in the Berkshires is 15.2 years, and the average number of years working in their current industry is 13.2 years. When asked how likely it is that they would still be working in their current industry in five years, 57.8% said it was very

"I love the Berkshires and would live here forever. There just aren't enough career opportunities."

Table 25: What employers should focus on and what they do focus on						
	The employer should focus on			The employer does focus on		
	Should	Should Not	Not Sure	Does	Does Not	Not Sure
Serving customers	92.2%	1.2%	6.6%	86.2%	5.1%	8.7%
Improve society (i.e., educate, inform, promote health and well-being)	88.2%	3.4%	8.5%	79.6%	11.9%	8.5%
Improve skills of its employees (i.e. training, professional development)	97.7%	0.6%	1.8%	73.7%	16.3%	10.1%
Generate jobs and provide more employment	83.8%	2.9%	13.3%	64.9%	23.2%	12.0%
Advancing employees within the company	95.0%	1.2%	3.8%	62.9%	23.7%	13.4%
Create a diverse staff of many ages, ethnic identities, backgrounds, and mindsets	84.2%	4.1%	11.7%	61.5%	24.2%	14.3%
Innovate and develop new products, services, and ideas	83.6%	2.2%	14.1%	61.2%	24.8%	14.0%
Enhance the livelihoods of its employees	94.2%	1.7%	4.1%	60.3%	25.7%	14.0%
Generate a profit	79.0%	4.9%	16.1%	51.7%	30.4%	17.9%
Drive efficiency and find quicker ways of doing things	73.3%	6.1%	20.7%	50.6%	31.0%	18.4%
Improve and protect the environment	88.8%	3.3%	8.0%	48.0%	28.0%	24.1%

Participants were asked to say whether they were likely to partake in various types of career/professional development opportunities if they were provided free of charge. The opportunities asked about included Career Fairs, Resume Reviews/Mock Interviews, Advanced or Stackable Credential Programs, Education Support, Professional Development, Mentor program participation, Off-site training courses, and On-site training courses. The top three were professional development (35.5%), education support (27.2%), and on-site training courses (26.1%), with respondents indicating they were “very likely” to participate. Respondents indicated they were “unlikely” to partake of resume reviews/mock interviews (61.2%), career fairs (52.2%), and to a lesser extent, advanced/stackable credential programs (37.8%).

To gauge the participant's knowledge about career/professional development opportunities currently being made available by their employer and in the region in general, they were asked to rate their knowledge on both. Many participants, but less than half (40.5%), said they were very knowledgeable of the career/professional development opportunities made by their employer. When it came to career/professional development opportunities offered in general, the largest percentage of the participants (35%) were in the middle between not knowledgeable and very knowledgeable. Participants were then asked how they prefer to receive information on career/professional development opportunities. The top three forms of communication participants cited were employer-based email at (38%), personal email (24.3%), and social media (21.5%).

Regarding familiarity and usage of MassHire Berkshire Career Center services, it was split almost evenly when it came to familiarity, with 53.5% being familiar and 46.5% that were not familiar. When asked if they or someone they knew have used MassHire services, the majority (55.5%) said they have never used the services. Those that have or know someone who has used MassHire services was at 25.4%. 2.4% were unsure if they had personally used them, and 16.8% weren't sure if someone they knew had.

Respondents were also asked about workplace culture. First, they were asked if their employer offers a new employee referral program (getting a benefit for referring a candidate that gets hired). Most of the participants said they don't (60.6%) while 13% did not know if they did or not. Then they were asked to review a list of potential non-salary benefits and provide answers about whether each benefit was important to them and if their current employer offers that benefit. Table 26 shows the distribution of responses for those two questions. The benefit with the widest gap between it being valued by employees and offered by employers was "bonuses/perks for good work." The smallest gap was regarding a pet-friendly workplace, though this was deemed important by a relatively small group of respondents (22%) and is offered by a relatively small group of respondents' employers (21.2%). Of those benefits considered important by more than 85% of respondents, access to a retirement plan and flexible schedules appear to be areas of opportunity for employers not currently offering these benefits.

Table 26: Potential Non-Salary Benefits						
	Importance of benefit			Employer offers this benefit		
	Important	Not Important	Not Sure	Does	Does Not	Not Sure
Paid time off (i.e. vacation)	96.5%	2.0%	1.5%	90.1%	7.5%	2.4%
Benefits (health/dental)	95.6%	3.1%	1.3%	84.9%	12.4%	2.6%
Retirement plan (i.e., 401(k))	93.1%	4.5%	2.5%	80.9%	16.0%	3.1%
Flexible schedule	85.6%	10.0%	4.5%	68.0%	25.2%	6.8%
Bonuses/perks for good work	75.4%	17.6%	7.0%	37.8%	51.7%	10.5%
Team-building activities	50.4%	38.2%	11.4%	45.8%	38.9%	15.3%
Telecommuting	46.8%	40.4%	12.8%	35.9%	47.3%	16.8%
Pet-friendly workplace	22.0%	66.5%	11.6%	21.2%	67.9%	10.9%

Conclusion

The 2019 Berkshire County Survey (including the comparison with the 2015 Survey) has helped understand what the population of Berkshire County and some former members think of the area, believe need improvements, and what influenced them to move here or move away. It shows that most people enjoy or mostly enjoy living here – the mix of natural, scenic beauty, cultural activities and outdoor recreational offerings make for a good place to live, work and play.

One pervasive theme is the importance of family. Family is the primary reason survey respondents stay or move back to this area. A lack of family in the area is also one of the main reasons non-natives may move away.

Throughout the report, employment opportunities were demonstrated to be a primary reason to move here, influenced the choice of community in which to live, and was also a primary reason to move elsewhere. Employment opportunities were also one of the most-cited areas needing improvement. Focusing attention and resources toward diversifying and enhancing employment opportunities, to make Berkshire County a more attractive place to live, is warranted.

In comparing this survey to the 2015 Young Adult Survey, the overall attitudes of young adults have not changed much in the intervening 4 years. Some items are more or less important than previously, but the overall reasons and magnitude for why people are here, why they may stay or leave, and their values tend to be the same.