



State of the Greater Burlington Young Professional Community

2019 Survey Results

Burlington Young
Professionals is
a program of





INTRODUCTION

The State of the Greater Burlington Young Professional Survey, presented by Burlington Young Professionals (BYP), a program of the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, looks into what the young professionals want and need to continue to live and work in our community. It aims to better understand the professional, civic and personal lenses through which young professionals perceive our community and provides insight into how their perceptions are driving their decisions and actions. As a leading voice for our community's young professionals, BYP intends to use the results from this survey to provide better advocacy and programming for the young professional demographic so that they can in turn have a more meaningful living and working experience in our community.

The State of the Greater Burlington Young Professional Community Survey is a follow up to Burlington Young Professionals' 2014 housing survey. The housing survey results, showing 50% of participants viewing their housing situation unfavorably, helped push the first-time home buyers' assistance program. Administered by VHFA, the first-time home buyers program provides up to \$5,000 for closing costs and down payments to eligible buyers. While housing continues to be a theme in the State of the Greater Burlington Young Professional Community Survey, it's not the only one. The survey also focused on young professionals' job preferences, student loan debt, and civic/community engagement.



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METHODS

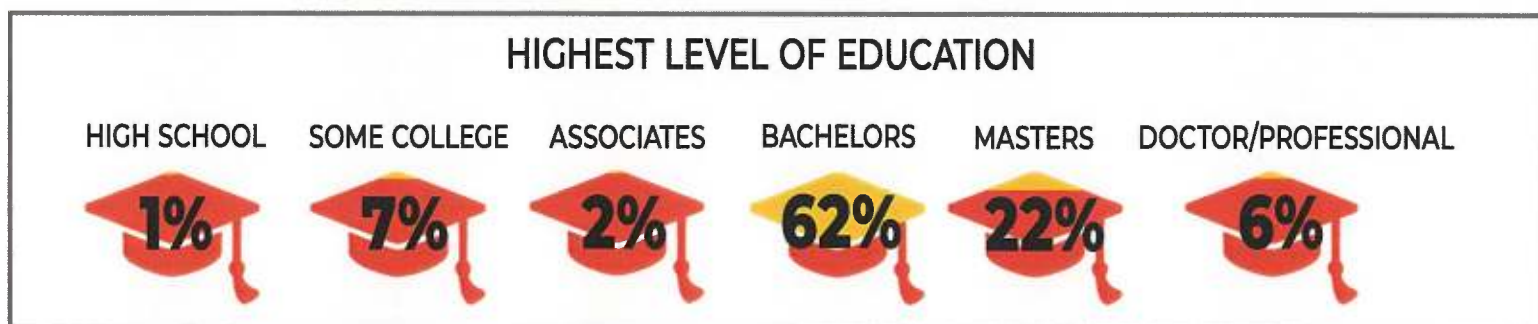
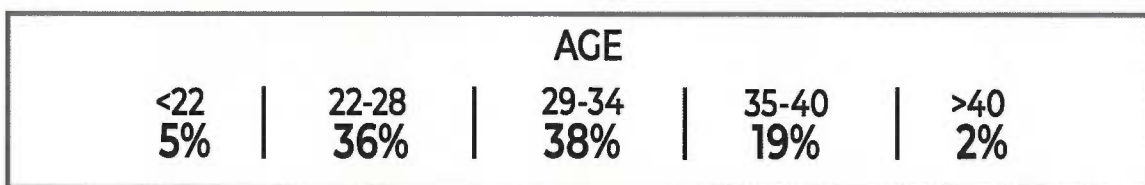
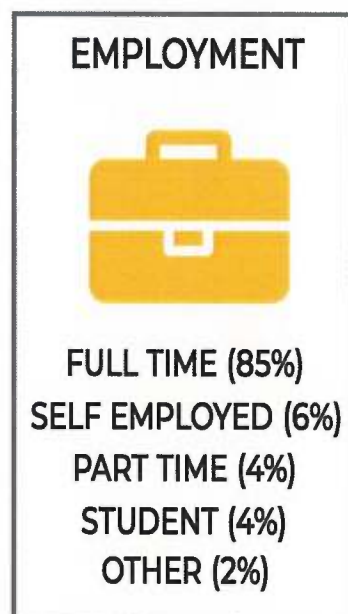
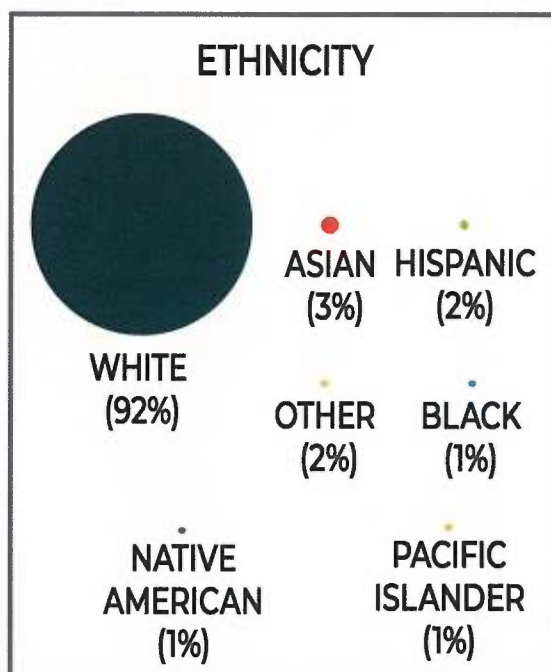
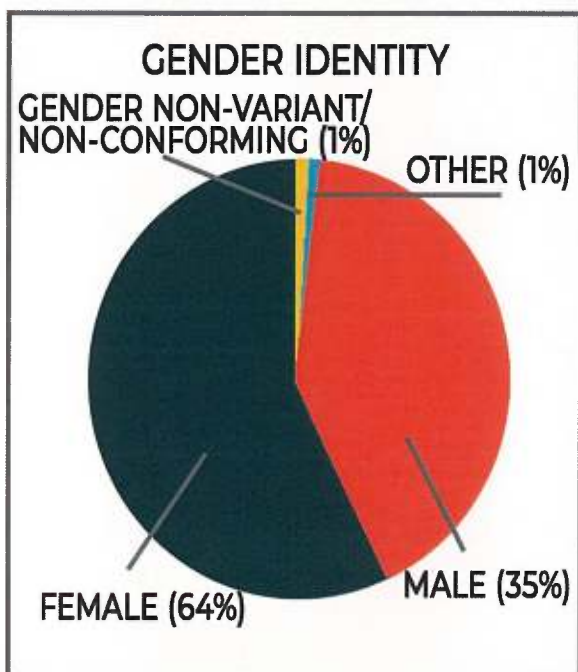
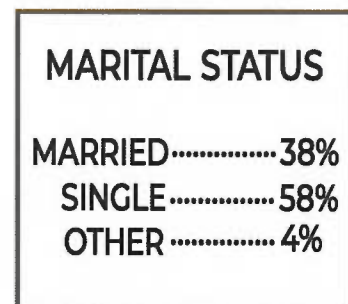
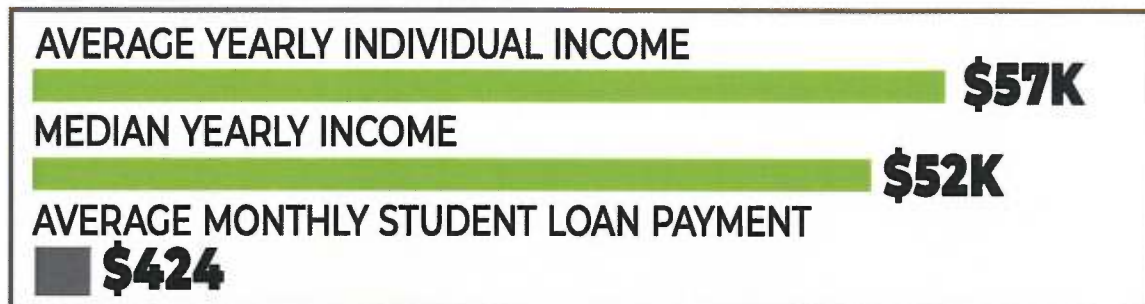
Any young professional living and/or working in the greater Burlington region was invited to participate in the survey. The survey was promoted through Burlington Young Professionals' and Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce's (LCRCC) networks. LCRCC members, area associations like Vermont Human Resource Association as well as local colleges and universities (UVM and Champlain College) also helped cross-promote the survey, while our official media sponsor Burlington Free Press ran strategic ads to garner even greater reach. Courtesy of Hotel Vermont, we were also able to raffle off a one-night stay to survey participants.

The survey remained open from January 21, 2019 to March 1, 2019. To secure the most reliable and accurate information, data was cleaned, and duplicate records removed, as were outliers. Invalid data was also eliminated, yielding a total of 500 participants. Qualitative data was analyzed according to major themes, and data was analyzed using statistical systems to ensure accuracy and reliability. Quotes have not corrected for grammar or spelling to preserve the integrity of the submissions.





DEMOGRAPHICS





KEY TAKEAWAYS



Young professionals desire more single family homes. The fact more than 80% of the surveyed young professionals do not have kids and more than 40% have intentions of leaving the state comes down to one thing: they cannot afford a single family home. Renting works for the recent college graduate, but most survey participants, those falling between the age 29-34, do not want to rent or purchase a condo. They want space to grow a family and set down roots down here.



Young professionals want to stay here. Whether a college student or in their mid-30s, young professionals don't need to be sold on Burlington. They love the culture, community and its natural assets. Despite the fact young professionals make an average of \$57,000, the reason they are choosing to leave is not to move to a bigger city or to be closer to family, but to relocate somewhere there are more job growth opportunities and affordable, single family homes.



Young professionals are worried about their job growth opportunities. There is an interesting dichotomy between strong positive outlook and strong negative outlook of their job opportunities here. When young professionals weren't spending months searching for a job or feeling they were underemployed, they felt "lucky" to be in the current position they are in because they know how hard it is for their colleagues. Even those that felt the luckiest to have their current position were fearful that if they ever lost their job, needed more money or wanted to advance their career, they would have to look elsewhere--and likely out of state.

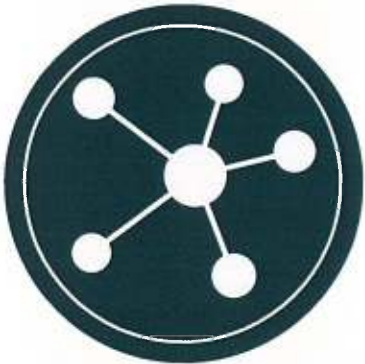




KEY TAKEAWAYS



Young professionals have a dismal outlook on the state's infrastructure. Traffic and road conditions came up more frequently than anticipated in the open-ended responses. While a sizable portion of young professionals want to live in Burlington, another large group prefer to live right outside of Burlington. The group lists the commute as one of the main reasons they aren't making the move.



Young professionals are tech savvy but value networking. The methods used for job searching are largely relationship based. While there is still clearly significant space for technology through platforms like company websites, job boards and social media, these less personal methods are being used in combination with the more human side to job searching. The fact many young professionals are finding their jobs through networking speaks to our small community and provides an opportunity for employers to strengthen their recruitment strategies.



Young professionals want to give back to the community--and they want their employers to as well. Young professionals gravitate to employers that provide meaningful work and place an emphasis on civic engagement opportunities. Time and not knowing where to look are frequent barrier for young professionals getting more engaged in the community. When employers provide paid time off to volunteer or support non-profit board participation, young professionals have a more positive outlook on their job and community involvement.





CHOOSING THE GREATER BURLINGTON REGION

Young professionals are renting property, but not just in Burlington. 56% of participants are in rental properties, but only 30% are renting in Burlington. When participants are living in Burlington, they aren't living alone. Of the participants renting in Burlington, half are renting with a non-relative roommate.

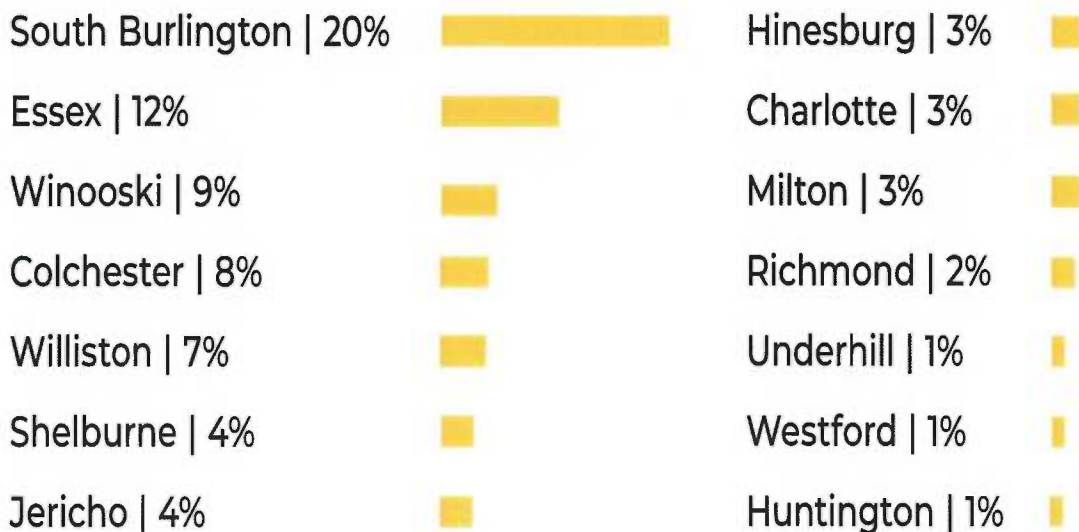
When young professionals are buying property, they are doing so outside of Burlington--and in some cases, outside of Chittenden County.

- Own a home in Burlington: 14%
- Own a condo in Burlington: 5%
- Own a home outside of Burlington: 54%
- Own a condo outside of Burlington: 14%

Of the participants that own a home outside of Burlington, 27% of them are living outside of Chittenden County.

If young professionals are renting or owning property in Chittenden County, but aren't living in Burlington, they are dispersed throughout the county.

WHERE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ARE LIVING IN CHITTENDEN COUNTY:





CHOOSING THE GREATER BURLINGTON REGION

Even though many rent or own property outside of Burlington, respondents want to live in Burlington. When asked, participants listed Burlington as the top place they would live if they could live anywhere in Vermont.

TOP 10 PLACES YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WANT TO LIVE



- #1 Burlington
- #2 South Burlington
- #3 Richmond
- #4 Stowe
- #5 Charlotte
- #6 Shelburne
- #7 Williston
- #8 Jericho
- #9 Waterbury
- #10 Colchester

However, there are limitations preventing them from living in their ideal location.

TOP 5 CHALLENGES PREVENTING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS FROM MOVING TO THEIR IDEAL LOCATION



#1 Cost



#2 Too far of a commute



#3 Lack of single family homes



#4 Lack of rental properties



#5 Lack of dining options/nightlife

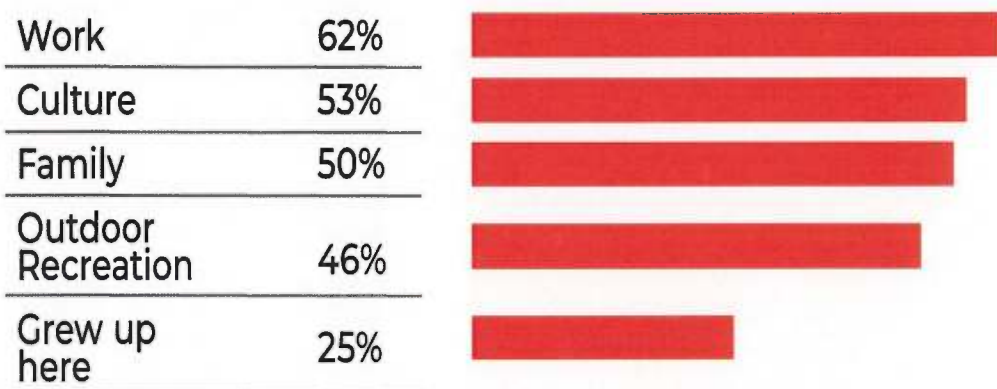




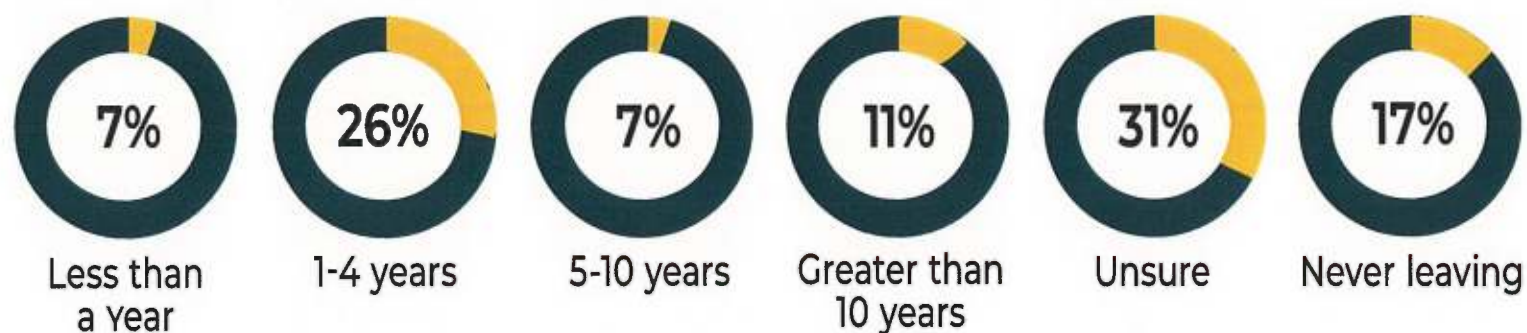
CHOOSING THE GREATER BURLINGTON REGION

Work is the number one reason young professionals are choosing to live in the greater Burlington area, but that is not enough of a reason for them to stay. While 31% of respondents are unsure what their long term plans are, 40% are planning to leave in less than 10 years.

TOP FIVE REASONS YOUNG PROFESSIONALS LIVE IN THE GREATER BURLINGTON AREA:



HOW MUCH LONGER THEY PLAN TO LIVE IN THE GREATER BURLINGTON AREA:





CHOOSING THE GREATER BURLINGTON REGION

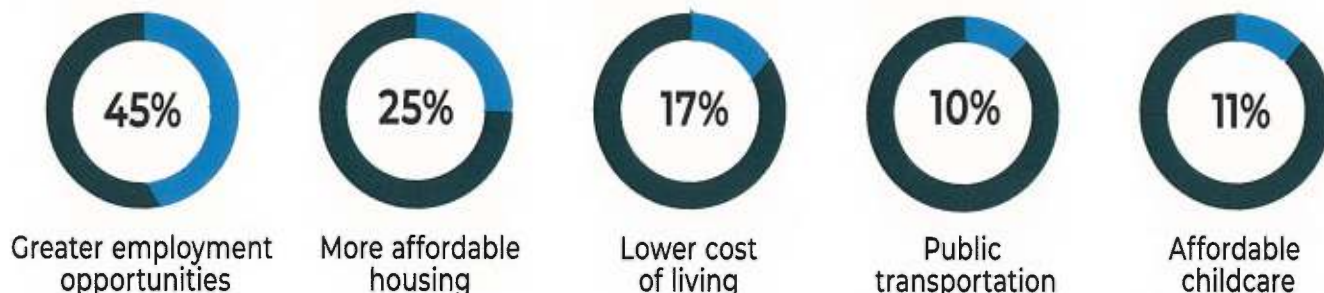
Unless the cost of living is addressed. Even if the participant had no intention of leaving the greater Burlington area, cost of living was ranked as a leading challenge.

“My spouse and I are currently living in a condo that I purchased by myself in 2015. Now that we are expecting our first child, we are looking for the jump to a house; however the cost of a reasonably sized affordable house & yard PLUS daycare costs in excess of \$12k per year is preventing us from leaving this condo. We could purchase a home of our dreams out in Buffalo NY and work the same jobs for same money.”

Participants were asked to identify the top 3 assets and challenges they believe exist in the Greater Burlington area. The common answers were:

ASSETS	CHALLENGES
<p>#1 Culture/ Sense of community</p> <p>#2 Natural assets</p> <p>#3 Localvore culture</p>	<p>#1 Cost of living</p> <p>#2 Housing</p> <p>#3 Lack of job opportunities/job growth</p>

Young professionals have solutions. In addition to having the participants rank the assets and challenges of their community, we had them rank the top five areas that would attract and retain young professionals.





CHOOSING THE GREATER BURLINGTON REGION

Choosing Burlington in their own words. Participants were given the freedom to share both their positive and negative thoughts about living in the greater Burlington area. The results revealed an interesting chasm of positive and negative perceptions.

KEY



Strong positive



Strong negative



Mixed

“As a young adult, I think Burlington is the perfect place to begin. Everyone tends to be super friendly, and the community is so supportive. There is ALWAYS stuff to do. Food + Beer culture in Burlington is also a plus.”



“I have felt more accepted here in Burlington than anywhere I've lived before. There is such a sense of community.”

“Great place to work and raise a family. Excellent networking opportunities because, it seems, everybody knows everybody.”



“Burlington is expensive to live in especially when it comes to housing. There is very little focus on affordable, quality housing for young professionals and there needs to be. Plus, most of what's available is extremely overpriced and the standards are really low because landlords can overcharge college students.”





CHOOSING THE GREATER BURLINGTON REGION

I believe Burlington doesn't live up to its full potential, Vermont as a whole is desperate to attract new residents, but yet our government is overlooking the young and prosperous workforce that is right under their nose. If we paid better attention to the young adults that graduate here and provided a more advancing environment (ie. higher paying jobs, affordable living etc.) we would be more likely to retain the talent and youth that Vermont is so desperate for."



There aren't enough large business to recruit and train younger people to develop the skills needed for today and the future. Wages are very low here and cost of living is very high. I don't think focusing on driving housing costs down will be good for Vermont's economy, the focus needs to be increasing the number of good paying jobs and getting companies to pay market value for employees (they are getting away with paying people too little because there is little competition in many industries)."



Most participants had both positive and negative feedback to give, and touched on housing, cost of living, infrastructure and employment:

I love Burlington because it's just as picturesque as I thought it would be before moving here. There's always lots to do and see, especially in the summer, and getting outside is easier here than in other cities. But rent prices are high for the low-quality apartments, and many college grads find that the only jobs in their field around here need 5+ years of experience, so they leave. I have a lot of friends here and a good job post-grad, but I know many people can't say the same. "





CHOOSING THE GREATER BURLINGTON REGION

You want Burlington to be prosperous. It's home to some incredible colleges and universities, lakefront views, a quaint downtown, and some thriving--somewhat large--companies. However, too much emphasis is placed into creating "affordable" rental properties reserved for the very low income population and college students. The average young professional is stuck with rent prices that rival that of a large metropolis without all the perks. The downtown isn't as lively, the public transit infrastructure is depressing, and the high paying jobs aren't there. Burlington has the bones to be something great, but it's priorities are not in the right place. Don't get me wrong: I love how our city strives to help those less fortunate and support our college students. But there comes a point where you need to start developing more single family homes, and creating incentives for small businesses to grow here. Because in order for young professionals to live here and grow here they need a house and they need a job that pays them a livable wage and gives them opportunity to grow in their company."



What Burlington lacks is a robust job market. It is wonderful that the Burlington area has so much entrepreneurial spirit, and benefits from many smaller organizations that are successful and participate in the community. But for a city that has so much university talent, it seems that Burlington lacks major employers who can retain some of that talent here after graduation. I think many young people feel it is hard to find good jobs, and even harder to find good jobs that pay well and have opportunity to grow and earn more. The good: Burlington provides incredible opportunities to get outside and recreate or relax. There is a strong and growing culture of good food and music. Burlington has a very active event scene that is well participated in."





EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCES

Current employment status. A majority of participants aren't actively looking for employment, but that is not to say they aren't keeping their options open. When participants weren't part of the 53% not looking for work or the 10% actively looking for work, they were part of the 38% keeping their options open.

Searching for a new job takes more than a Google search. When the participants are in search of employment--even if they aren't currently looking--the way they are finding jobs is through networking. Although company websites ranks as the number one source for job searching, family/friends and word of mouth fall close behind.

TOP FIVE JOB SEARCHING METHODS



#1 Company websites



#2 Word of mouth



#3 Family/friends



#4 Social media

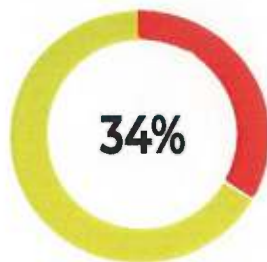


#5 Job boards

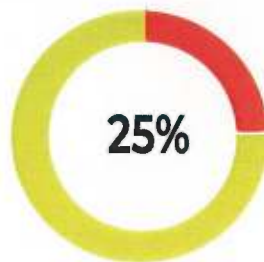
And young professionals will apply for the job if... Participants were also asked to rank the top five attributes that are most important to them when searching for a job.



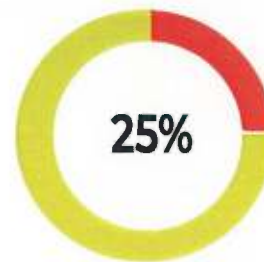
Meaningful work



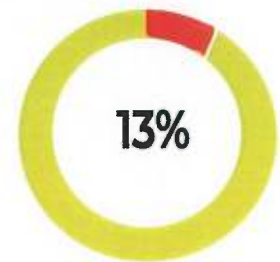
Compensation



Benefits



Career Development



Flexibility





EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCES

Young professionals have mixed feelings about the opportunities with their employers. When asked if they feel there is a path to move up in their organization or if they feel supported and encouraged to do so, 38% of participants said yes while another 38% feel “somewhat supported” and 19% feel they have no opportunities.

“Again I am fine now but I feel as though it is only a matter of time until the next step in my career from an opportunity and compensation standpoint will drive me to look out of state. Vermont is quickly becoming a very rich state that will be quite challenging for young professionals to stay.”

And there is a general concern for workforce development:

I feel like you get can pigeon holed quickly. While there are always job options, there are many entry (with low starting salaries - \$30k-ish) and then very high level (6-10 years direct experience). This makes it tricky for the middle movements or those who have only been in their field for 4 or 5 years to move to higher level jobs. Also, because we are such a small market, there will always be someone with that 8-10 years experience who will beat you for the job. A variety in mid-high level positions would be a game-changer ...and I totally understand the many layers associated with making this wish come true...larger businesses, more mid-level commitments, adjusting current businesses to promote and grow talent versus spreading jobs / duties of those who have left the company etc.”





EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCES

It would be nice if there were more options for young professionals. If you are not in certain industries ie healthcare, environmental sciences or tech, then there is not a wide range of opportunities."

“There are some wonderful employers in the Burlington area, but there are so many talented applicants to every job that most qualified applicants will never hear back from most local job postings. Burlington would benefit greatly from employers who had many opportunities available and positions that offered opportunity for growth.”

Business here need to be willing to train graduates in entry level positions in order to retain that huge chunk of our population!"

When it comes to their employers, it's not always about the ability to work remotely, fitness classes and the ability to dress casual; young professionals want to get paid more:

It's been amazing and I want to put down roots here-but I worry despite my education, hard work/dedication to my work, and skills/experience, I will not be able to afford supporting a family. I would love to stay here and raise children, but it'd be a financial nightmare."

“I was able to find a job that meets my needs in the Burlington area I do feel though I could be making more money doing the same thing in another state.”





EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCES

But that's not all young professionals are looking for. Young professionals want the opportunity to contribute to their company and to the community:

"I would like to see more incentives and encouragement to engage with the community. All my experiences are on my own time."

"I like that my job supports the community, encourages sustainable practices, etc."

EMPLOYER-OFFERED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITY RANKING:



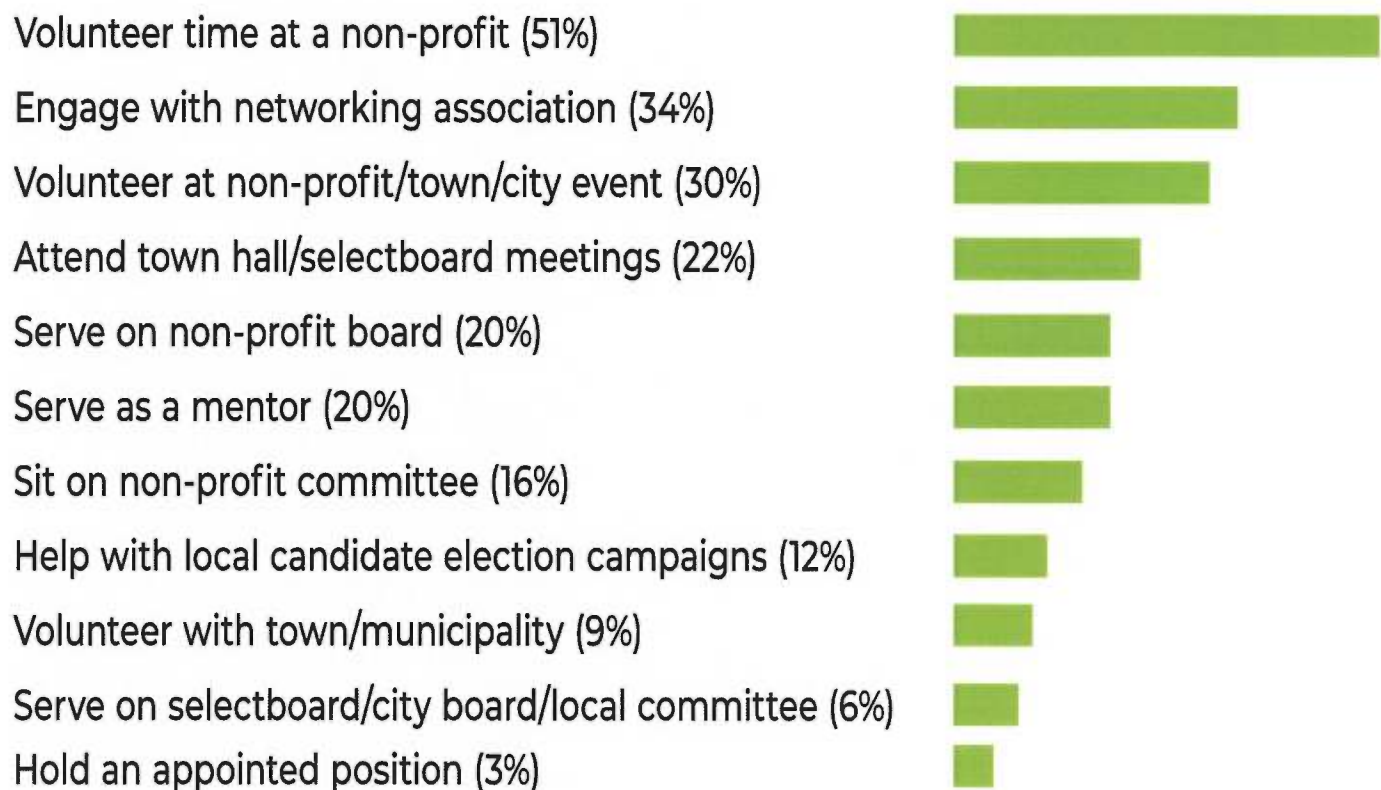
- #1 Paid time off to volunteer
- #2 Encouraging and supporting non-profit board participation
- #3 Coordination with the Burlington Young Professionals Group
- #4 Matching employers charitable donations
- #5 Participating in Leadership Champion
- #6 Allowing employees to provide non-compensated or pro bono professional services



CIVIC/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Let's start with the basics: Young professionals are voting in local elections. An overwhelming 90% of young professionals say they vote locally.

And young professionals understand that it takes more than casting a vote to make a difference in their community. Most participants are incredibly involved.



Even with all this participation, most young professionals feel they aren't doing enough. When participants were asked if they are satisfied with their involvement, 39% said somewhat satisfied and 27% are not satisfied.





CIVIC/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A lot of the hold up is time and money:

As mentioned above if I could make a great salary and not have to put in 60+ hours a week for a poor salary I would be happy to spend free time volunteering."

"I wish I had more to share but I'm really so preoccupied with just barely trying to scrape by that civic engagement feels like it's become a luxury to me when I really feel that it should be a necessity. It's hard to contribute and give back when I feel like I'm constantly just gasping for single breaths, so to speak."

Or simply not knowing where to look:

"For young people even living here for many years can be challenging to find the outlet to contribute, so somehow making this easier would be nice."

Whether they are involved with the community through their employer or on their own terms, the role of civic and community engagement impacts why young professionals are choosing to live in the greater Burlington area.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TO LIFE IN THE GREATER BURLINGTON AREA:

Very important 20%
Important 29%
Somewhat important 34%
Not important 12%





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to thank all our 500 plus individuals who shared their thoughts and input on their experience here in the greater Burlington region. We also want to thank all our community partners who helped make our survey a success, especially Burlington Free Press and Hotel Vermont.



Burlington Free Press
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