



Aberdeen: Bridging Campus to Community

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On Behalf of Aberdeen Development Corporation

April 24, 2024

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Executive Summary

This comprehensive study dives into various aspects influencing individuals' decisions on whether or not to reside in Aberdeen, South Dakota post-graduation. Through surveys and focus groups, valuable insights have been gained, shedding light on residents' preferences and areas for improvement in the community. Our survey was emailed to 500+ students, whom we were able to reach through class lists, Northern's athletic pages, and professors. We had **130 responses**, making our response rate slightly over 25%. The focus groups had 13 participants spread over 4, 30-minute sessions.

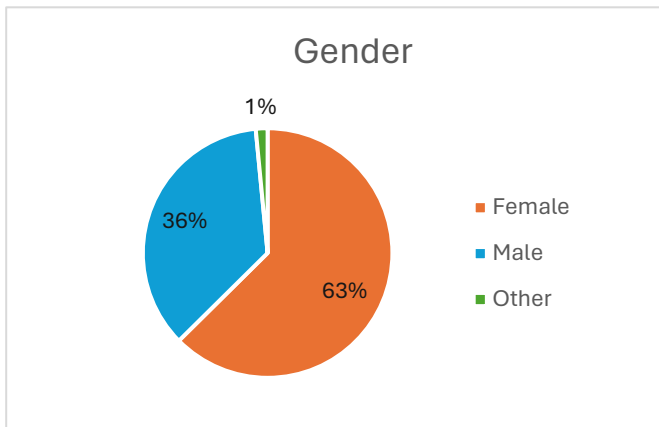
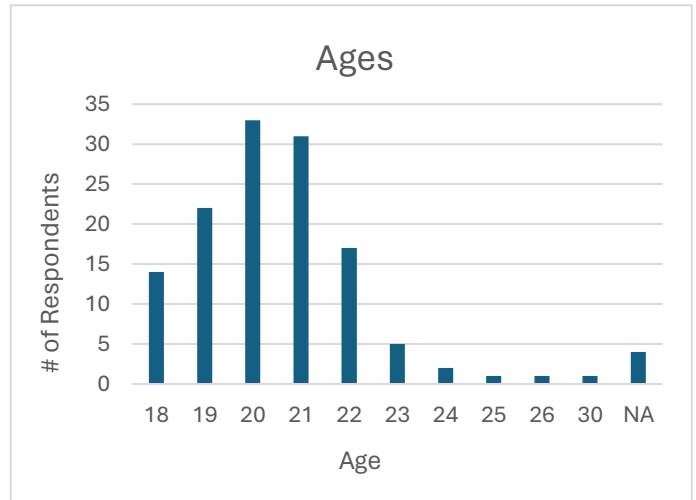
The majority of respondents express a preference for rental apartments or condos, emphasizing the importance of flexibility and convenience in housing options. However, a significant portion aspire to be homeowners, reflecting a desire for stability and investment. Proximity to friends and family emerges as moderately important, highlighting the significance of social connections in residential decisions. Moreover, respondents value access to community events and recreational activities, with sports events, festivals, and seasonal celebrations ranking highest in importance.

When evaluating potential employers, respondents prioritize compensation and benefits packages. A clear career path and company culture are also significant factors, highlighting the importance of growth opportunities and a supportive work environment. Flexibility, particularly the option to work from home, is increasingly valued, reflecting a growing emphasis on work-life balance.

Participants identified several areas for improvement in Aberdeen's community offerings. These include enhancing shopping options with popular brands like Scheels and ALDI, diversifying dining choices with establishments like Texas Roadhouse and Raising Canes, and improving nightlife and entertainment options. Additionally, residents seek more diverse and engaging community events, such as live music concerts and seasonal attractions like pumpkin patches.

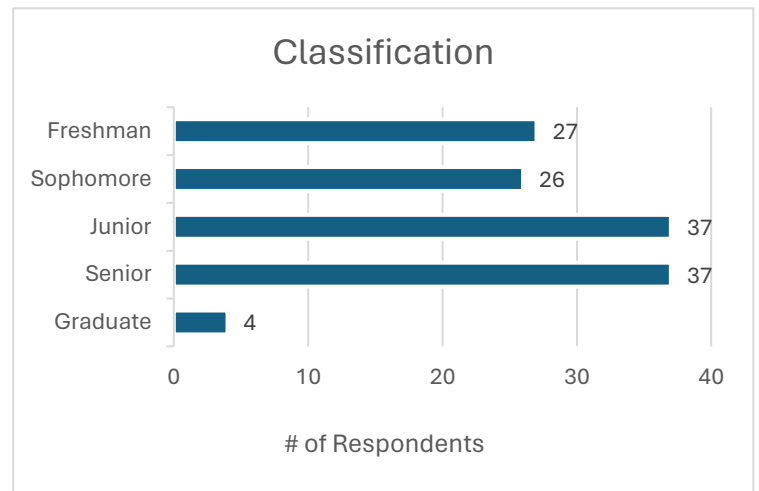
DEMOGRAPHICS

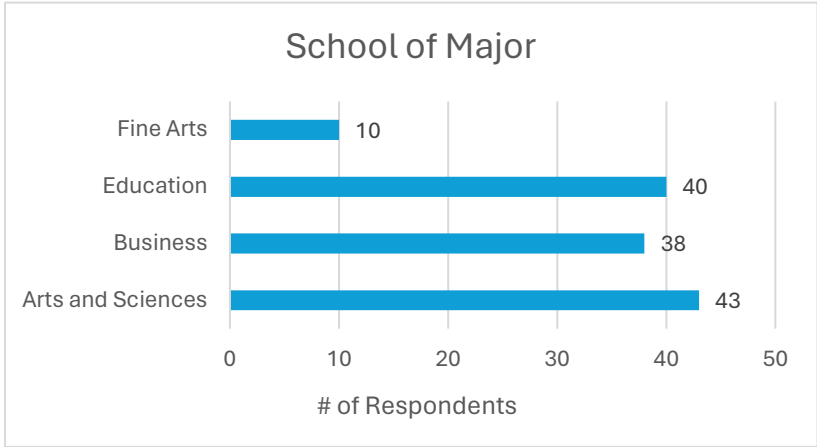
- The majority of respondents were ages 18-22



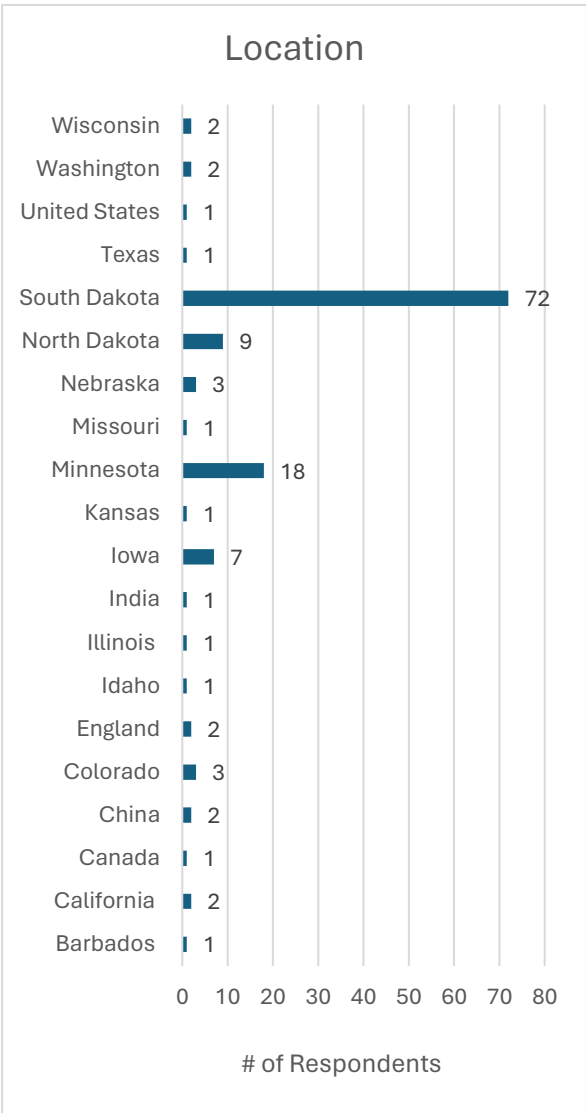
- The majority of respondents were female

- The majority of respondents were juniors and seniors





- The majority of respondents were in the School of Education, Business, and Arts and Sciences



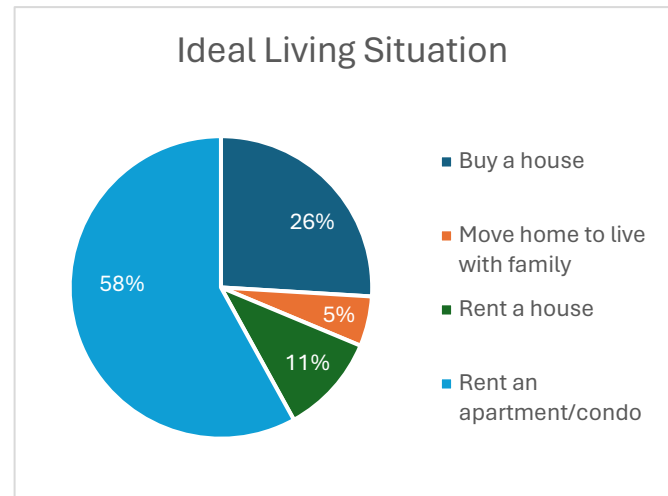
- The majority of respondents are from South Dakota with Minnesota being a far second

LIVE

Context: These percentages offer insights into the diverse housing preferences within the surveyed population.

Key Findings:

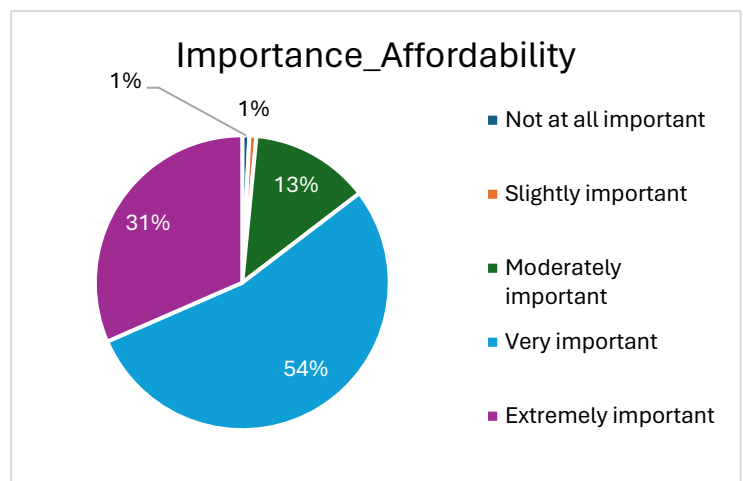
- The majority of respondents (76) are inclined towards the flexibility and convenience offered by renting an apartment or condo.
- A notable portion of respondents (34) aspire to become homeowners, reflecting a desire for stability and investment in property.
- A smaller number of respondents (14) are open to renting a house, suggesting a preference for more space and autonomy compared to apartment living.
- A minority of respondents (7) expressed a desire to move back home to family, highlighting the significance of familial ties in housing decisions.



Context: Participants were asked to rate the importance of affordability when considering their future living arrangements. The responses were categorized into five levels ranging from "Not at all important" to "Extremely important."

Key Findings:

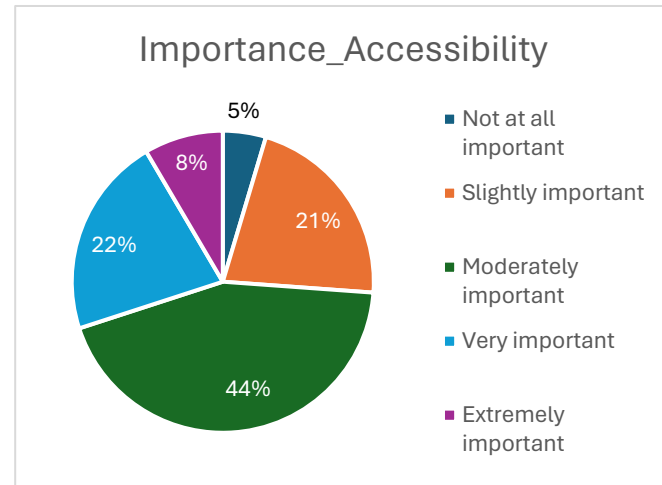
- The majority of respondents (70) rated affordability as very important when considering living in Aberdeen.
- A significant portion of respondents (41) considered affordability as extremely important, indicating a strong emphasis on financial considerations.
- Moderately important was chosen by respondents (17), suggesting a moderate level of concern regarding affordability.
- A small percentage rated affordability as either not at all important or slightly important, comprising only (2) respondents combined.



Context: Participants were asked to rate the importance of accessibility when considering their future living arrangements. The responses were categorized into five levels ranging from "Not at all important" to "Extremely important."

Key Findings:

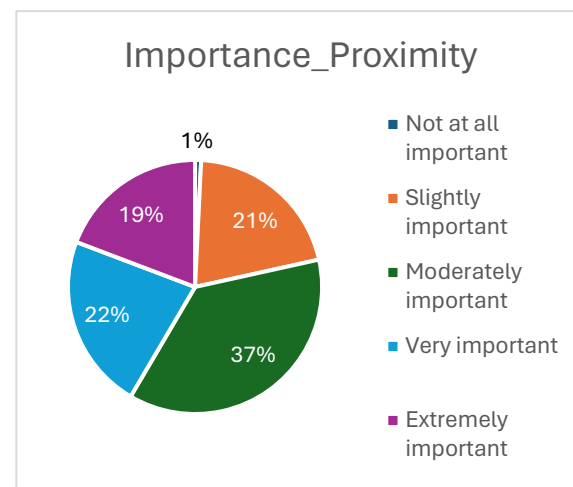
- Moderately important was the most selected option, with respondents (57) indicating a moderate level of importance placed on accessibility.
- Slightly important and very important were chosen by participants (28 each), suggesting a split in opinions regarding the significance of accessibility.
- A smaller percentage of respondents rated accessibility as either not at all important (11) or extremely important (6), indicating varying degrees of emphasis on this factor.



Context: Participants were asked to assess the importance of proximity to friends and family. The responses were categorized into five levels ranging from “Not at all important” to “Extremely important”.

Key Findings:

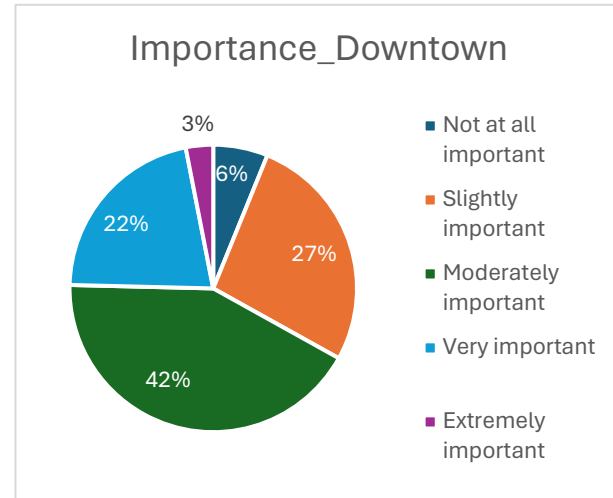
- The majority of respondents (48) rated proximity to friends and family as moderately important, suggesting a significant consideration in their decision-making process.
- Approximately one-fifth of participants rated this factor as either slightly important (27) or very important (29), indicating a notable emphasis on maintaining closeness with their social network.
- A smaller percentage of respondents considered proximity to friends and family as either not at all important (1) or extremely important (25), reflecting a range of attitudes toward this aspect of their living arrangements.



Context: Respondents were asked to evaluate the significance of a city's downtown area in their decision-making process. The question aimed to gauge how critical the urban core is to individuals when selecting a place to live.

Key Findings:

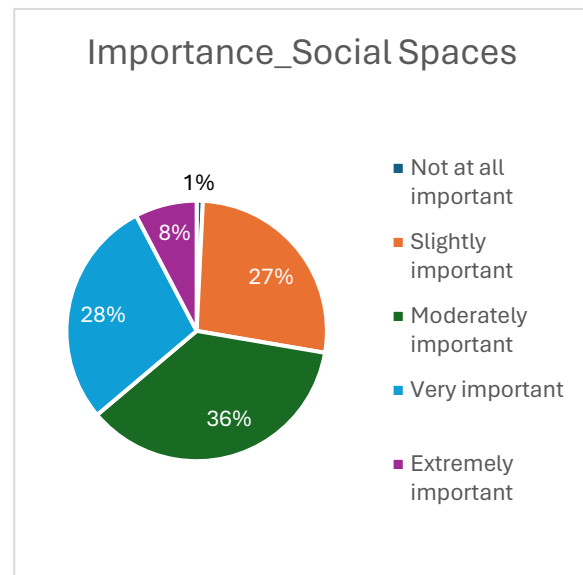
- A plurality of the respondents (55), found the proximity to a city's downtown area moderately important, indicating a balanced perspective on its relevance to their living choices.
- Over a quarter of the participants (35) considered it slightly important, suggesting that while some value is recognized, it is not a decisive factor for a significant portion of the population.
- Around a fifth of the respondents (28) rated the downtown area as very important, reflecting a strong preference for being near urban core amenities.
- Only a small minority viewed the downtown area as either not at all important (8) or extremely important (4), highlighting polarized views but with few adherents.



Context: For this question, respondents were asked about the extent to which features like community centers, parks, and other social gathering spots influence residential choices.

Key Findings:

- A significant segment of the respondents (47), rated the importance of social spaces as moderately important, indicating that while these features are considered beneficial, they are not crucial for a majority.
- Nearly a third of the participants (37) view social spaces as very important, suggesting a strong desire for community interaction and social connectivity within their living spaces.
- A smaller group (35) considers these spaces slightly important, which implies a recognition of their benefits but not as a primary factor in their housing decision.
- Only a minority view social spaces as either not at all important (1) or extremely important (10), showing that while most acknowledge their value, few regard them as essential or completely irrelevant.

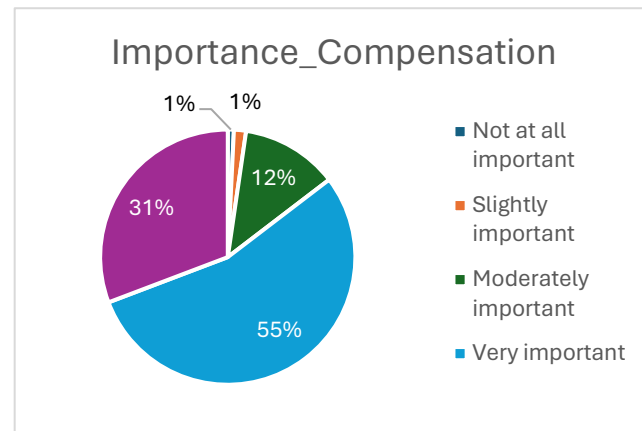


WORK

Context: This question assessed the factors influencing individuals' choices regarding their employment, with a specific focus on the importance of compensation, such as salary or financial incentives. This aspect is crucial in understanding how economic benefits impact decisions about which employer to choose.

Key Findings:

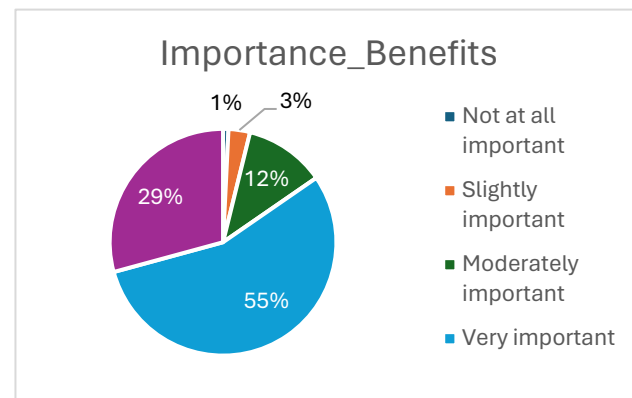
- A majority of the respondents (71) consider compensation very important, indicating that financial considerations are a key driver in choosing an employer. This reflects the practical priority of economic stability in employment decisions.
- A significant portion (40) views compensation as extremely important, further underscoring the critical role that economic factors play in employment choices.
- Moderately important responses (16) suggest that while compensation is a consideration, it does not outweigh other factors for some individuals.
- Only a very small group finds compensation slightly important (2) or not at all important (1), highlighting that for the vast majority, financial incentives are crucial in the decision-making process.



Context: The question explored how crucial benefits packages, including 401(K) plans, student loan assistance, and health insurance, are to individuals when considering potential employers.

Key Findings:

- A majority of the respondents (72) consider benefits packages very important, indicating that non-salary perks are a key driver in choosing an employer. This reflects the practical priority of comprehensive benefits in employment decisions.
- A significant portion (38) views benefits packages as extremely important, further underscoring the



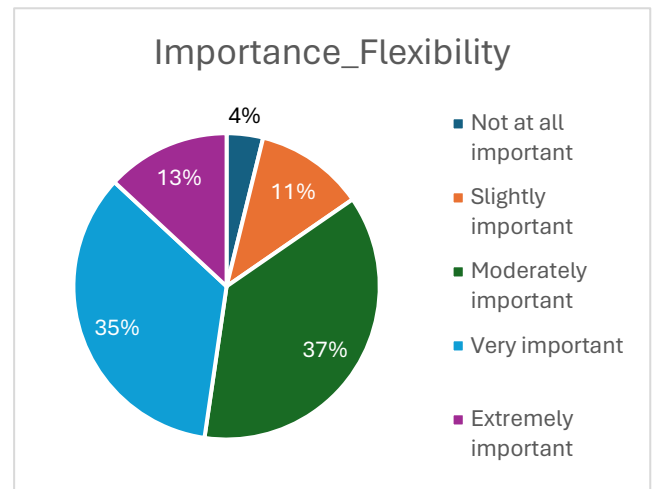
critical role that these benefits play in employment choices.

- Moderately important responses (15) suggest that while benefits packages are a consideration, they do not outweigh other factors for some individuals.
- Only a very small group finds benefits packages slightly important (4) or not at all important (1), highlighting that for the vast majority, such benefits are crucial in the decision-making process.

Context: This survey investigated the factors influencing individuals' decisions regarding employment, specifically focusing on the importance of flexibility, such as the option to work from home. Understanding the significance of flexible work arrangements provides insights into how work-life balance impacts the choice of employer.

Key Findings:

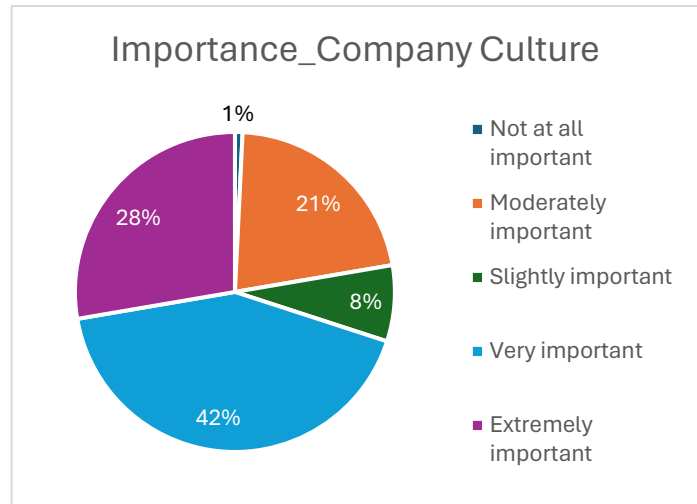
- The majority of respondents (48) consider flexibility moderately important, suggesting that the ability to work from home or enjoy other flexible arrangements significantly influences their choice of employer. This underscores the growing importance of work-life balance in today's workforce.
- A notable proportion (45) views flexibility as very important, indicating that while it may not be a decisive factor, it still holds considerable weight in their decision-making process.
- A significant segment (17) regards flexibility as extremely important, emphasizing the strong preference for flexible work arrangements among some individuals.
- Responses indicating slight importance (15), or no importance (5) suggest that while flexibility matters to many, it may not be the primary consideration for a minority of respondents when selecting an employer.



Context: This question explored the factors influencing individuals' decisions regarding employment, particularly focusing on the significance of company culture. Understanding the importance placed on organizational culture provides insights into how the workplace environment impacts the choice of employer.

Key Findings:

- The majority of respondents (55) consider company culture very important, indicating that the organizational environment and values significantly influence their choice of employer. This highlights the emphasis placed on a positive workplace culture in attracting and retaining talent.
- A significant proportion (36) views company culture as extremely important, suggesting a strong preference for workplaces that foster a supportive and inclusive environment.
- Responses indicating moderate importance (28) suggest that while company culture is a consideration, it may not be the primary factor for all individuals when selecting an employer.
- A smaller segment (10) regards company culture as slightly important, indicating that while it matters to some extent, other factors may take precedence in their decision-making process.
- Very few respondents (1) perceive company culture as not important at all, suggesting that for the vast majority, organizational culture plays a significant role in their employment decisions.

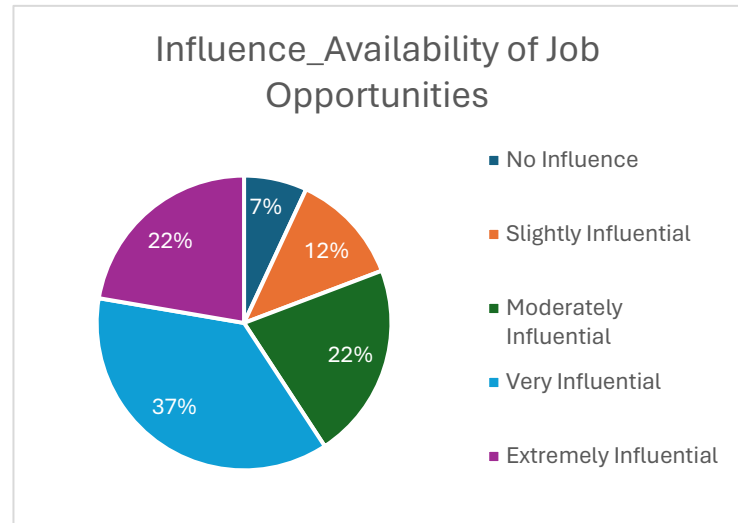


Context: This question aimed to understand the impact of job opportunities in respondents' fields of study on their decisions to stay or leave Aberdeen after graduation. Exploring the influence of job availability provides valuable insights into the role of employment prospects in shaping post-graduation plans.

Key Findings:

- A significant portion of respondents (48) perceive the availability of job opportunities in their field of study as very influential, indicating that career prospects strongly influence their decision to stay or leave Aberdeen post-graduation. This highlights the critical role of employment opportunities in shaping individuals' post-graduate plans.

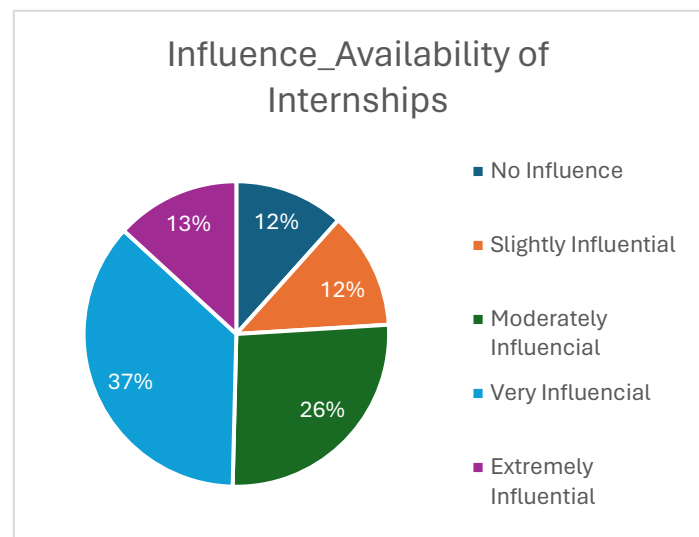
- Similarly, a considerable segment (29) finds job availability extremely influential, underscoring the pivotal importance of career prospects in determining their future residence.
- Moderately influential responses (28) suggest that while job opportunities play a significant role, they may be balanced with other factors in the decision-making process.
- Slightly influential responses (16) indicate that while job availability is a consideration, it may not be the primary factor influencing respondents' decisions.
- A small proportion (9) perceive job opportunities as not influential in their decision to stay or leave Aberdeen post-graduation, suggesting that other factors may weigh more heavily in their decision-making process.



Context: This question aimed to investigate how the availability of internships, work, or field experiences in Aberdeen, particularly those accessible while studying at Northern State University, influences respondents' decisions to stay or leave Aberdeen post-graduation.

Key Findings:

- A notable proportion of respondents (47) perceive the availability of internships, work, or field experiences in Aberdeen as very influential, indicating that these opportunities play a significant role in their decision to stay or leave post-graduation. This highlights the importance of practical experiences in shaping career decisions.
- Similarly, a considerable segment (34) finds these opportunities moderately influential, suggesting that while important, they may be balanced with other factors in the decision-making process.
- A proportion (17) perceive these opportunities as extremely influential, highlighting their critical role in shaping post-graduation plans for a subset of respondents.

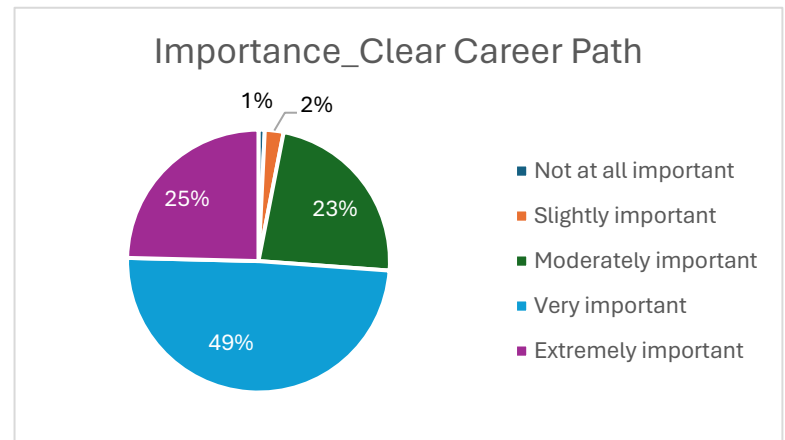


- Responses indicating slight influence (16), or no influence (15) suggest that while internships and work experiences are available, they may not significantly impact respondents' decisions to stay or leave Aberdeen post-graduation for some individuals.

Context: This question examined the significance of a clear career path, encompassing growth opportunities when individuals evaluate potential employers. Understanding the importance of career advancement prospects sheds light on factors influencing employment decisions.

Key Findings:

- Nearly half of the respondents (64) consider a clear career path very important when assessing potential employers, emphasizing the significance of growth opportunities in employment decisions. This underscores the desire for professional development and advancement prospects.
- A substantial portion (32) regards a clear career path as extremely important, indicating that robust growth opportunities heavily influence their choice of employer. This highlights the critical role of career progression in attracting and retaining talent.
- Moderately important responses (30) suggest that while a clear career path is a consideration, it may not be the primary factor for all individuals in their employment decision-making process.
- A minority of respondents find a clear career path either slightly important (3) or not at all important (1), indicating that for a small segment, growth opportunities may not be a significant consideration when evaluating potential employers.



PLAY

Context: This question explored the types of community events or activities that individuals perceive as enhancing their overall experience and potentially influencing their decision to stay in Aberdeen after graduation. Understanding the preferences for community engagement provides insights into factors that contribute to resident retention.

Key Findings:

- Sports events emerged as the most favored community activity, with respondents (48) expressing a preference for such events. This highlights the importance of recreational and leisure opportunities in enhancing the overall experience and fostering community engagement.
- Community festivals and seasonal celebrations were also highly regarded, with respondents (42) and (40), respectively, indicating their importance. These events likely contribute to the cultural vibrancy and social cohesion of Aberdeen.
- Community service projects and farmers' markets were perceived as valuable by a significant portion of respondents (29) and (31) respectively. These activities reflect a commitment to civic engagement and community involvement beyond recreational pursuits.
- Respondents (12) cited other activities, representing a variety of interests and preferences. While less prevalent, these responses highlight the diversity of community enhancement opportunities that individuals value.

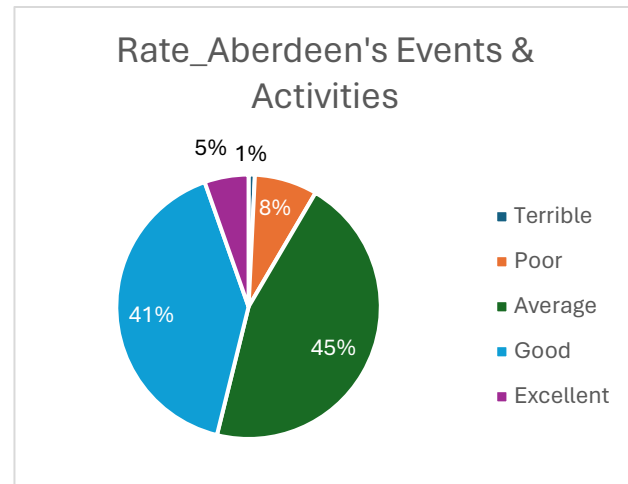


Context: This survey aimed to gauge respondents' perceptions of Aberdeen's community events and activities, providing insights into the overall satisfaction and effectiveness of local offerings in enhancing residents' experiences.

Key Findings:

- The majority of respondents (59) rated Aberdeen's community events and activities as average, suggesting that while they may be satisfactory, there is room for improvement to meet residents' expectations and preferences.

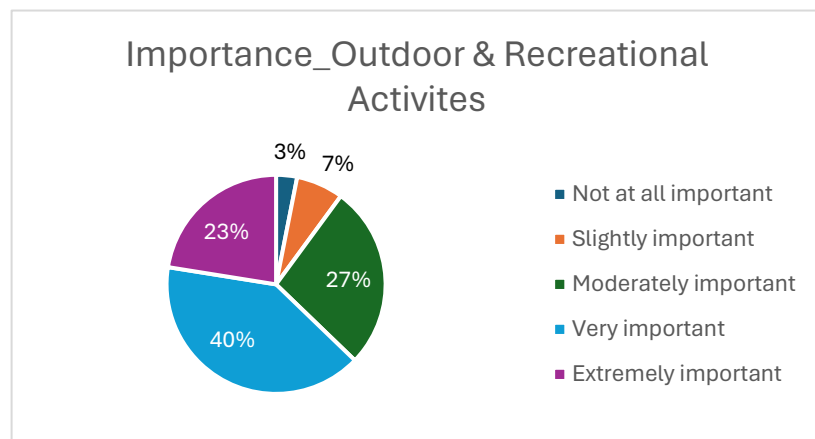
- A significant portion (53) rated the events and activities as good, indicating a generally positive perception among respondents. However, there may still be specific areas for enhancement to further elevate the community experience.
- A smaller percentage of respondents (7) rated Aberdeen's community events and activities as excellent, highlighting areas of strength and excellence in the local offerings. These positive assessments signify the presence of impactful and engaging events that contribute positively to the community.
- Respondents (11) rated Aberdeen's events and activities as poor or terrible, indicating dissatisfaction with the current offerings. Addressing the concerns raised by these respondents could lead to improvements in overall community satisfaction and retention.



Context: This question aimed to assess the significance of outdoor and recreational activities in respondents' decision-making process when choosing a community to reside in. Understanding the importance placed on these activities provides insights into the factors influencing community selection.

Key Findings:

- The majority of respondents (52) regarded a community's outdoor and recreational activities as very important, indicating that access to such amenities significantly influences their decision to live in a particular area. This underscores the value placed on outdoor pursuits and the role they play in enhancing quality of life.
- A significant portion of respondents (35) considered these activities moderately important, suggesting that while they may not be the primary determinant, they still contribute significantly to the appeal of a community. Ensuring the availability and accessibility of outdoor amenities could attract a broader range of residents.
- Respondents (29) deemed outdoor and recreational activities extremely important, highlighting the strong preference for communities that offer robust opportunities for outdoor



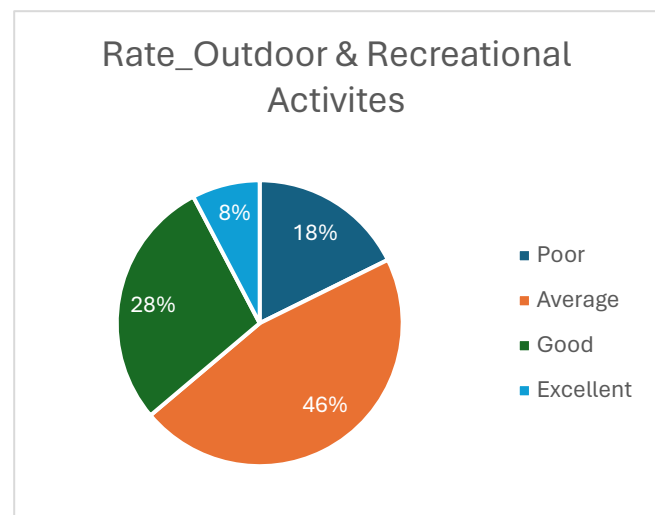
engagement. Addressing this need could lead to increased satisfaction and retention among residents who prioritize outdoor lifestyles.

- A smaller percentage of respondents (9) indicated that these activities were slightly important, while only few respondents (4) considered them not at all important. Acknowledging and accommodating the diverse preferences regarding outdoor amenities could contribute to a more inclusive and attractive community environment.

Context: This question aimed to gauge respondents' perceptions of Aberdeen's outdoor and recreational activities, providing insights into the community's amenities and potential areas for improvement.

Key Findings:

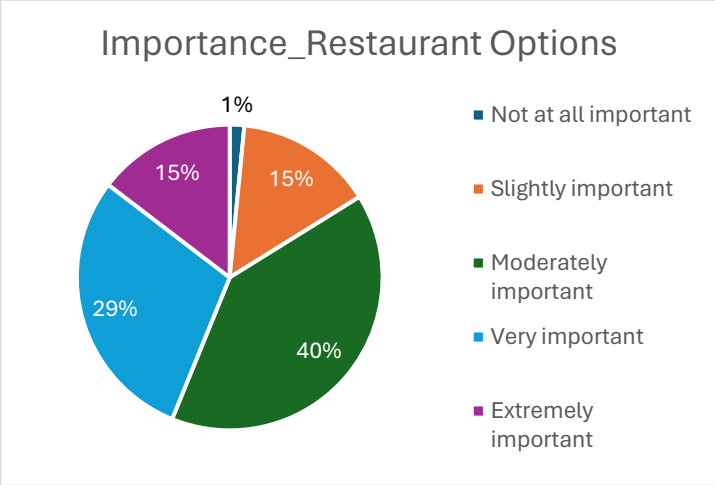
- A significant portion of respondents (60) rated Aberdeen's outdoor and recreational activities as average, suggesting that while the community offers some amenities, there is room for enhancement to meet residents' expectations. Addressing areas for improvement could elevate the overall appeal of Aberdeen as a desirable place to live.
- Respondents (37) perceived Aberdeen's outdoor and recreational activities as good, indicating that the community provides satisfactory options for outdoor engagement. Enhancing existing facilities and introducing new initiatives could further enhance residents' experiences and satisfaction levels.
- A smaller number of respondents (23) rated Aberdeen's outdoor and recreational activities as poor, signaling dissatisfaction with the current offerings. Identifying areas for improvement and implementing strategies to address deficiencies could help attract and retain residents seeking robust outdoor amenities.
- A few respondents (10) rated Aberdeen's outdoor and recreational activities as excellent, suggesting that while the community may excel in certain areas, there is still room for enhancement to create a more comprehensive and appealing outdoor environment. Recognizing and building upon existing strengths could further enhance Aberdeen's reputation as a desirable living destination.



Context: This question aimed to assess the significance of restaurant options in respondents' decisions when choosing a community to live in, providing insights into the role of culinary amenities in community selection.

Key Findings:

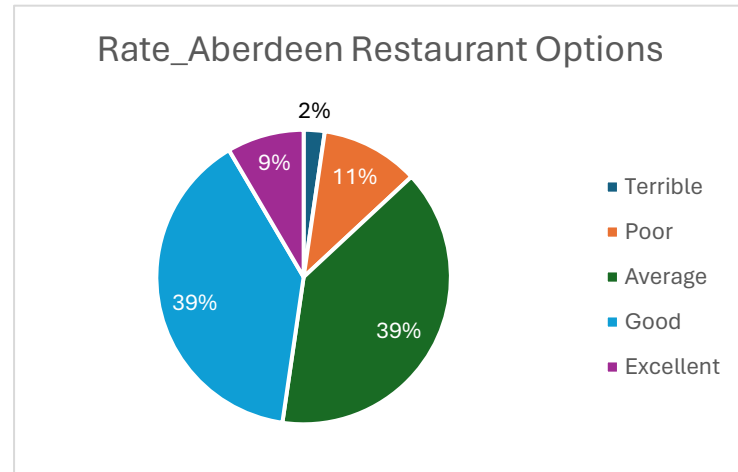
- The majority of respondents (52) considered restaurant options moderately important when selecting a community to live in, indicating that culinary amenities play a significant role in their decision-making process. This suggests that communities with diverse dining options may be more appealing to residents seeking culinary variety and convenience.
- A significant portion of respondents (38) rated restaurant options as very important, highlighting the importance of a robust culinary scene in community selection.
- A notable portion of respondents (19) viewed restaurant options as extremely important, emphasizing the critical role of culinary amenities in their decision to reside in a particular community.
- About (19) respondents considered restaurant options slightly important, indicating that while culinary amenities may influence their decision-making process to some extent, they are not a primary consideration.
- Only a small number of respondents (2) indicated that restaurant options were not at all important when choosing a community to live in.



Context: This question aimed to assess respondents' perceptions of Aberdeen's restaurant options, providing insights into the overall satisfaction with the culinary amenities available in the community.

Key Findings:

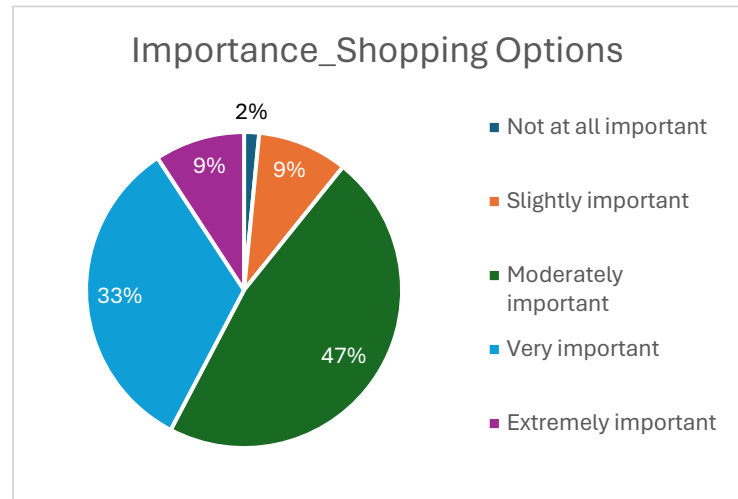
- Respondents (51) rated Aberdeen's restaurant options as good, indicating a positive perception of the culinary amenities available in the community. These respondents likely find the restaurant scene to be exceptional, with a variety of dining options meeting their needs and preferences.
- A significant portion of respondents (51) rated Aberdeen's restaurant options as average as well, suggesting a neutral perception of the culinary amenities available in the community.
- Several respondents (14) rated Aberdeen's restaurant options as poor, indicating a negative perception of the culinary amenities available in the community.
- Respondents (11) rated Aberdeen's restaurant options as excellent, indicating an exceptionally positive perception of the culinary amenities available in the community. These respondents likely perceive Aberdeen's restaurant scene as offering high-quality, diverse dining experiences that meet or exceed their expectations.
- A small portion of respondents (3) rated Aberdeen's restaurant options as terrible, indicating an extremely negative perception of the culinary amenities available in the community. These respondents likely view Aberdeen's restaurant scene as severely lacking in quality, variety, or other essential attributes, suggesting significant areas for improvement to enhance resident satisfaction with the local dining options.



Context: This question aimed to gauge respondents' perceptions regarding the importance of shopping options when choosing a community to live in. Understanding the significance of shopping amenities provides insights into residents' preferences and priorities when selecting a place to reside.

Key Findings:

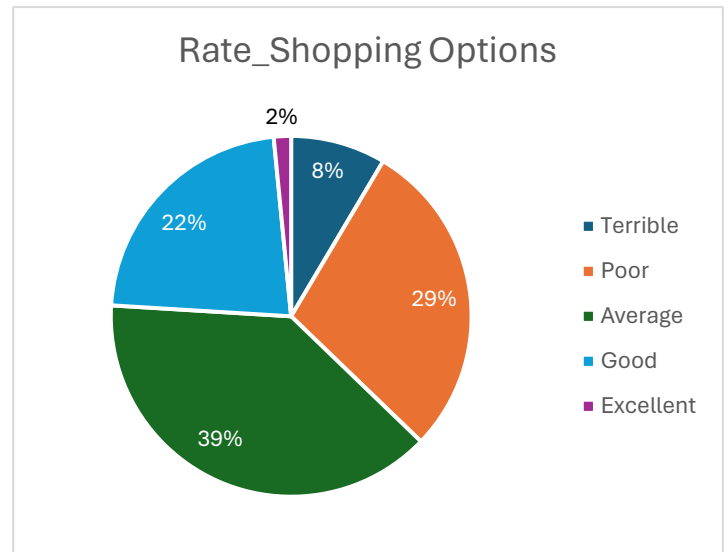
- The majority of respondents (61) rated shopping options as moderately important when choosing a community to live in. This suggests that a significant portion of respondents consider access to shopping amenities to be a notable factor in their decision-making process but do not prioritize it above other considerations.
- A great portion of respondents (43) rated shopping options as very important, indicating a substantial level of importance placed on access to shopping amenities when selecting a community to live in. These respondents likely value convenience and accessibility to retail outlets and commercial centers in their residential decision-making process.
- Respondents (12) rated shopping options as extremely important, suggesting that a smaller yet significant portion of respondents prioritize access to shopping amenities above other factors when choosing a community to live in. These respondents likely place a high value on the variety, quality, and proximity of shopping options in their residential environment.
- A smaller portion of respondents (14) rated shopping options as slightly important or not at all important, indicating a lesser degree of importance placed on access to shopping amenities in their decision-making process. These respondents may prioritize other factors such as housing affordability, community safety, or recreational opportunities over shopping amenities when selecting a place to reside.



Context: This survey gauged respondents' perceptions of Aberdeen's shopping options to understand the community's retail landscape and its impact on residents' quality of life.

Key Findings:

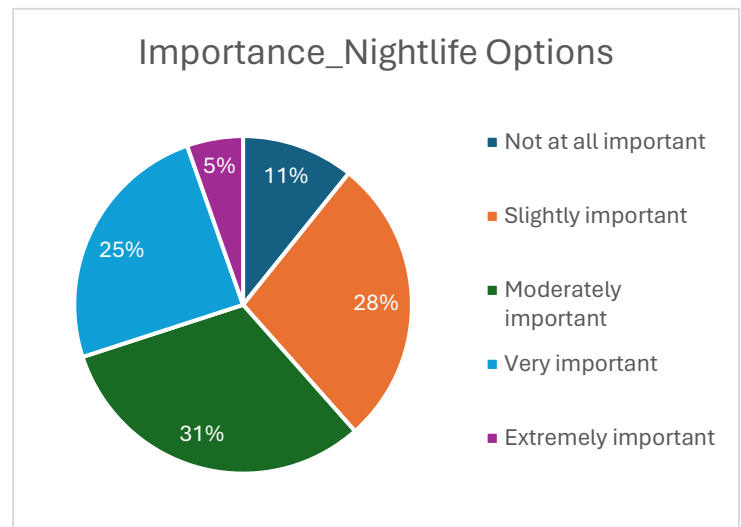
- A significant number of respondents (50) rated Aberdeen's shopping options as average, reflecting a neutral sentiment.
- Dissatisfaction was evident among (48) of respondents who rated shopping options as poor or terrible, indicating concerns about variety or quality.
- Positive perceptions were expressed by respondents (29) who rated shopping options as good, signaling satisfaction with the available retail outlets.
- A minority (2) rated shopping options as excellent, suggesting rare instances of high satisfaction.



Context: This question aimed to assess the significance of nightlife options in Aberdeen as a factor influencing individuals' decisions about where to live.

Key Findings:

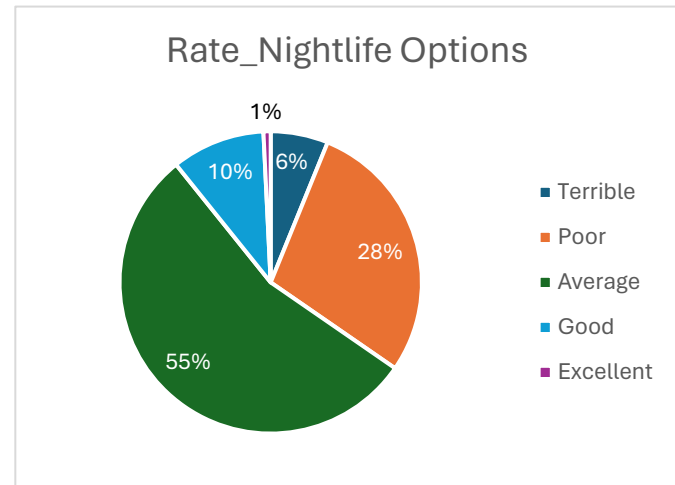
- For a majority of respondents (41), nightlife options were rated as moderately important, suggesting a notable consideration in their choice of community.
- Several respondents (39) rated nightlife options as either very important or extremely important, indicating a strong preference for vibrant evening activities.
- A smaller number of respondents (36) rated nightlife options as slightly important, and while nightlife options may influence their decision-making process to some extent, they are not a primary consideration.
- Conversely, a minority (14) considered nightlife options not at all important, indicating that these amenities hold little sway in their decision-making process.



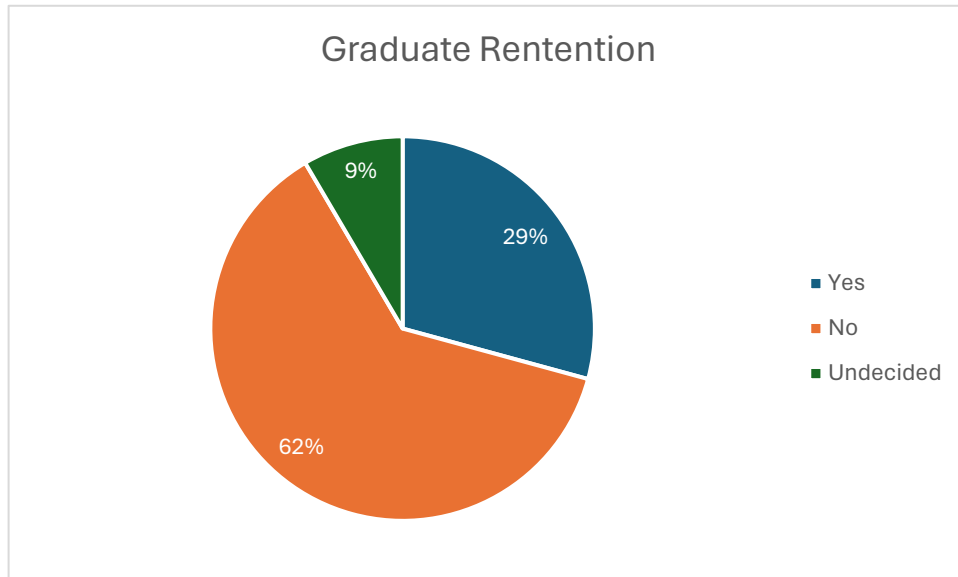
Context: This question sought to evaluate the perceived quality of nightlife options in Aberdeen, providing insights into residents' satisfaction with evening activities in the community.

Key Findings:

- The majority of respondents (71) rated Aberdeen's nightlife options as average, suggesting a neutral stance on the overall quality of evening activities.
- A notable proportion of respondents (45) rated the nightlife options as poor and terrible, indicating dissatisfaction with the variety or quality of available activities.
- Few respondents (14) rated Aberdeen's nightlife options as either good or excellent, suggesting a minority view that evening activities meet or exceed expectations.



GRADUATE RETENTION



Individuals who answered “Yes” value these things from most to least important:

1. **Family and Social Connections:** This reason is the most frequently mentioned, with many students emphasizing the importance of staying close to family and existing social networks.
2. **Comfort and Familiarity with the Community:** Students often cite their comfort with the area and the people as a major reason for staying, highlighting the appeal of the known and familiar environment.
3. **Job Opportunities:** While not all students mention high-paying jobs, the availability of suitable employment and opportunities particularly for Northern alumni are frequently noted.
4. **Affordability:** The lower cost of living in Aberdeen compared to other areas is a significant factor that makes staying in the area economically appealing for graduates.
5. **Quality of Life and Community Involvement:** The overall quality of life, including outdoor activities, community events, and opportunities for involvement in local initiatives, although mentioned, is less frequently highlighted compared to the above reasons but still plays a role in the decision to stay.
6. **Educational and Professional Development:** This reason is mentioned specifically by those considering further education, like attending graduate school locally, but it is not as prevalent as the other factors.

Individuals who answered “No” value these things from most to least important:

1. **Proximity to Family:** Many students express a desire to be closer to their families, prioritizing familial relationships over other factors.
2. **Educational and Career Aspirations:** Students often leave Aberdeen to pursue further education or better job opportunities in specialized fields.
3. **Preference for Smaller Communities:** Some students prefer smaller towns and feel that Aberdeen is too large for their liking, seeking a close-knit community and lifestyle.
4. **Personal Preferences and Comfort:** Factors such as living in larger cities, warmer climates, or areas with better amenities influence students' decisions to leave Aberdeen.
5. **Family and Relationship Plans:** Future plans involving family, relationships, or significant others play a significant role in students' decisions to leave Aberdeen.
6. **Limited Recreational and Social Opportunities:** Students find the recreational and social opportunities in Aberdeen to be lacking, especially during certain months of the year.
7. **Environmental Preferences:** Dissatisfaction with Aberdeen's environmental factors, such as harsh winters or water quality issues, influences some students' decisions to leave.
8. **Cultural and Social Fit:** Some students feel that Aberdeen does not align with their cultural or social preferences, citing issues like safety concerns or lack of diversity.

FOCUS GROUPS

Things participants were thankful for and/or liked about Aberdeen.

- Aberdeen offers diverse attractions and amenities, such as axe throwing, magic shows, sporting events, and affordable drinks.
 - The community provides a range of activities for all age groups, catering to both kids and the older generation.
- Quality establishments like Kessler's and essential businesses contribute to the city's appeal.
 - "Kessler's is hands down the best place to shop in Aberdeen, especially for us students. It's close to campus, making those quick grocery runs between classes super easy."
 - "And their sushi, it's top-notch! Whether I need a quick lunch or something for dinner, their sushi selection NEVER disappoints."
- Aberdeen's small-town charm is evident in its welcoming atmosphere and beloved local eateries like Twist Cone and The Red Rooster.
 - "Twist Cone is like a hidden gem to someone who hasn't visited Aberdeen before! Not only is it super affordable, but it's also trendy and a blast to hang out at with friends."
 - "The Red Rooster is an awesome spot! It's got this really cool vibe, and they often have live music, which makes it super fun."

TOPIC 1. How participants described what Aberdeen has to offer to someone who has never visited or heard of the community.

- Aberdeen offers more attractions and activities for younger families, but options may become limited as individuals grow older.
- It is community-based, providing numerous opportunities for engagement and relationships.
- It is known as one of the cheapest places to attend college in South Dakota.
- While Aberdeen is simple, it may lack convenience in terms of food options.
- The city embodies a big-small-town dynamic, offering urban conveniences with small-town charm.
- Aberdeen maintains a calm atmosphere but becomes lively during events.
- Some individuals may perceive Aberdeen as having nothing to offer.

TOPIC 2. When deciding where participants would want to live post-graduation, these are the top three things that would impact that decision process the most. Of those items mentioned, here are the most important and least important.

Important	Moderately Important	Least Important
Degree Related Career	Community Activities	Food
Career	Money	Cost of Living
Career	Environmental Political Climate	Cost of Living
Career	Entertainment	Cost of Living
Community	Housing	Family
Community	Housing	Career
Career	Housing	Entertainment
Quality Neighborhoods	Career Availability	Shopping Options
Education System	Size of City	Transportation

TOPIC 3. In the participants’ opinion, these are the items that are constraining or limiting Aberdeen’s growth and retention of college graduates in the community.

- Not enough activities are tailored to individuals right out of college, suggesting a gap in the city's offerings for this demographic.
- Limited entertainment options and nightlife were a concern for students seeking more vibrant social scenes.
- Some individuals felt that there is a lack of housing availability in Aberdeen.
- There is a desire for more shopping options, particularly larger retailers, to meet the diverse needs of residents.
- The proliferation of car washes and casinos may be perceived as excessive by some residents.

TOPIC 4. Job opportunities were frequently mentioned as an area of improvement in the Aberdeen community. Below is what the participants believe makes a job attractive as well as the career opportunities that they would like to see in Aberdeen's future.

Job Attraction:

- Income
- Variety
- Growth
- Character of Employer
- Ethical Companies
- Work Type
- Positive and Community-like Workplace Culture
- Great Benefits

Career Opportunities:

- Internships
- Higher Paying Careers
- Technological Careers
- Entry-level Positions
- Management Opportunities
- More Position Openings

TOPIC 5. Shopping options were mentioned frequently as an improvement area in Aberdeen. Specifically, these were the brands or companies that participants thought would do well in Aberdeen and improve the retail market.

- **Scheels**
- **Carhartt/Nike (More locations in the Uptown Aberdeen Mall)**
- **ALDI**
- **Sam's Club**
- **Costco**
- **American Eagle/Urban Outfitter (More clothing shopping options for students)**

TOPIC 6. Restaurant options were mentioned frequently as an improvement area in Aberdeen. Specifically, these are types of restaurants or companies participants thought would succeed in Aberdeen and improve the restaurant market.

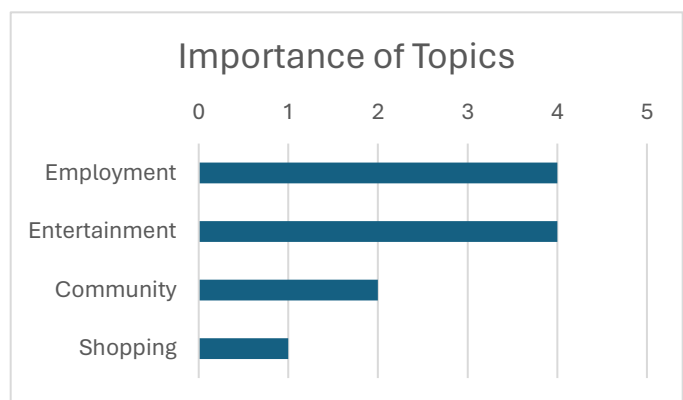
- **More options closer to campus for students**
- **Need more sit down as well as a better variety in franchise restaurants**
- **Need local Indian restaurants**
- **Acai Bowls**
- **Texas Roadhouse**
- **Raising Canes**

TOPIC 7. Entertainment options like events, community activities, entertainment-based businesses (i.e., axe throwing), or hangout spaces were commonly mentioned as something that Aberdeen could improve. These are some events, businesses, or spaces that participants have seen before that would add value to Aberdeen’s entertainment options.

- **Smash Room:** A facility where individuals can safely release stress and frustration by breaking various items.
- **Arcade with Liquor:** An entertainment venue that combines classic arcade games with the option to enjoy alcoholic beverages.
- **Live Music During the School Year:** Students stated that there aren’t enough places to go listen to live music during the school year.
- **Concert Venue:** Establishing a dedicated venue for hosting live music concerts and performances.
- **Top Golf Variants:** Offering variations of the popular Top Golf entertainment concept, likely in a scaled-down format.
- **More Community Events in Winter:** Organizing additional community events during the winter months utilizing facilities such as the Aberdeen Recreation and Cultural Center (ARCC).
- **Pumpkin Patches and Haunted Houses:** Creating seasonal attractions like pumpkin patches and haunted houses for Halloween were among the mentioned items.
- **Apple Picking:** Offering opportunities for apple picking as a seasonal outdoor activity to get students off campus could be a nice event.

Participants’ most important/relevant topics that were discussed:

1. Employment
2. Entertainment
3. Community
4. Shopping



Participants' final thoughts and/or recommendations:

- **Cost of Living:** Single household cost is relatively high, with good apartments being too expensive, while cheaper options may be of lower quality.
- **More Housing Options:** Increasing the availability of housing options to accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of residents.
- **More Real Estate Opportunities:** Expanding real estate opportunities to attract investment and stimulate growth within the community.
- **Internships:** There is a desire for more internship opportunities to provide valuable hands-on experience and career development for students and young professionals.
- **Public Transportation:** There is a need for improved public transportation options to enhance accessibility and mobility within the community as well as to and from campus.
- **In and Out:** Requests for popular chains like In-N-Out Burger to be available in the area to provide more dining options for residents/students.
- improve the overall feeling of safety and security among residents.
- **Structured Daycare:** Providing more structured/quality daycare options to meet the needs of families and working parents.
- **Better Roads/Parking Lots:** Improving the road infrastructure and parking facilities to enhance convenience and safety for motorists were frequently mentioned.
- **Snow Removal:** Enhancing snow removal services to ensure safe and accessible roadways during winter months was a concern.
- **Better Water:** Participants mentioned their concerns about Aberdeen's water quality, wanting access to clean and safe drinking water.
- **Transportation Accessibility:** Improving transportation accessibility, including the installation of ramps and other infrastructure to accommodate individuals with disabilities was a concern.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION

LIVE

Based on the data, it's clear that the majority of respondents prefer rental options for their future living arrangements, highlighting a need for accessible and convenient housing options.

Additionally, a significant proportion of respondents aspire to become homeowners, emphasizing the importance of supporting initiatives that facilitate home ownership. Affordability emerged as a key concern, with the majority rating it as very or extremely important. Therefore, exploration of strategies to address affordability challenges and advocate for policies that promote fair housing practices should be taken.

Accessibility was also identified as significant, underscoring the need for housing options easily accessible to amenities and transportation. Proximity to friends and family was another crucial consideration, suggesting the need for initiatives that promote social connections and community engagement. Overall, should prioritization of initiatives that address these key concerns to create a more inclusive and livable community.

WORK

Based on both the quantitative data and qualitative insights from the focus groups, it's clear that job opportunities and career advancement play a significant role in individuals' decisions regarding employment in Aberdeen. The quantitative data highlights the importance of factors such as compensation, benefits packages, flexibility, and company culture in attracting and retaining talent, aligning with the qualitative findings from the focus groups.

Participants in the focus groups emphasized the importance of income, growth opportunities, and the character of the employer in making a job attractive. They also expressed a desire for ethical companies, positive workplace culture, and great benefits, all of which mirror the sentiments captured in the survey.

In terms of career opportunities, the focus group participants identified internships, higher-paying careers, technological careers, entry-level positions, and management opportunities as areas of interest. These aspirations align with the quantitative data, which underscores the significance of growth opportunities and career advancement prospects when evaluating potential employers.

Fostering a positive and inclusive workplace culture, promoting internships and entry-level positions, and supporting the development of technological and management careers can contribute to enhancing the job market in Aberdeen and retaining local talent. By aligning efforts with both the quantitative data and qualitative insights, it can work towards creating a thriving and attractive job market that meets the needs and aspirations of the community.

PLAY

To enhance resident satisfaction and attract newcomers, Aberdeen should focus on improving various aspects of its community offerings. Residents value sports events, festivals, and cultural celebrations but seek more diverse and engaging activities.

Additionally, they desire a broader range of shopping options, including popular brands like Scheels and ALDI, and more diverse dining choices, such as Texas Roadhouse and Raising Canes. Aberdeen's outdoor offerings are perceived as average, indicating a need for enhancement to meet residents' desires for an active lifestyle.

Moreover, residents seek a variety of entertainment options, including venues for live music, seasonal events like pumpkin patches, and unique experiences like smash rooms and arcades with liquor. By introducing diverse and engaging community events, attracting popular brands and diverse dining options, developing outdoor amenities, and expanding entertainment options, Aberdeen can create a more vibrant and attractive community that meets the diverse needs and preferences of its residents, ultimately enhancing resident satisfaction and retention.