

# REPORT

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## One Region Indiana Poll

**Prepared by:** Consumer Insights North America

**Respondents:** 465 US adults 18 or older living in Lake, La Porte, or Porter counties in Indiana

**Interviewing:** July 27-August 25, 2015

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## BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

One Region believes that a synergy could exist if Porter, La Porte, and Lake counties in Northwest Indiana coordinate and share resources to solve issues they might not be able to alone.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the current state of the three counties, better understand the most important issues they are facing, determine the attitudes of residents toward potentially pooling/sharing resources for the purpose of leveraging efficiencies to more effectively solve the issues at hand, and identifying what is most important to the future of the Northwest Indiana region.

The results of this study will be used to create mediagenic materials to galvanize the idea of the three counties working together as one region for the benefit of all.

## METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by telephone within the United States by Harris Poll on behalf of One Region from July 27-August 25, 2015, among 465 adults ages 18 and older, who live in one of the following Northwest Indiana counties: Porter, La Porte, or Lake. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, county and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

## REGIONAL COORDINATION



*Northwest Indiana residents see a number of upsides to greater collaboration between counties within the Region. The vast majority believe that coordination would allow the Region to compete more effectively and efficiently in a global economy. And, most feel that sharing public services (across municipalities or counties) would not have any negative impact on quality or service—although fire and police are viewed this way by under half of residents.*

*On a more personal level, more than 6 in 10 wish local residents had a greater sense of connection to the broader Region. But in reality, over 8 in 10 say people do not feel bonded to the larger Region; rather they behave like they live in separate, independent communities.*

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- The overwhelming majority of residents (86%) feel there needs to be greater collaboration between local governments within the NW Indiana Region.
- More than 9 in 10 (93%) believe that the NW Indiana Region needs to work together to be able to compete in a global economy and get more accomplished.
- A majority feel that the following public services could be shared by multiple counties or municipalities with no impact on service quality: transportation (61%); emergency dispatch (58%); public utilities (54%); and education (54%). Fewer believe that fire (46%), zoning and permitting (46%), and police (44%) could be shared with no negative impact.
- Most residents (62%) wish people in their city or town had a stronger sense of connection with the larger NW Indiana Region.
- More than 8 in 10 residents (82%) say that people act like they are living in separate communities instead of one NW Indiana Region.

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## PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES



*Nearly all NW Indiana residents find it important to follow regional public policy issues. For most residents, the top concerns for the Region clearly involve either employment or education. Specifically, the majority of residents say priority needs to be placed on both job creation and universal access to quality education to ensure future stability within the Region. Although not mentioned as a key focus for public policy officials, most residents do express high interest in how their tax dollars are spent, with over 8 in 10 saying there are extremely concerned with this action.*

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- Over 3 in 4 (76%) residents feel it is at least very important to follow public policy issues in the news that affect the Northwest Indiana Region, with about 1 in 4 (24%) saying it is “absolutely essential”.
- According to residents, the top priority issues for the NW Indiana Region to address are: access to good paying jobs (84%); education system (84%); new business creation (83%); and the economy (83%).
- Of the issues selected, the #1 issue residents say the NW Indiana Region should address is: education system (24%), followed by access to good paying jobs (19%).
- Similarly, when asked about the issues that are most important to the future of the Region, the majority of residents say: job creation (89%); equal access to a good education for all children (86%); public safety agencies cooperating/sharing information more efficiently (79%); government making public information readily available in an efficient manner (76%); and improvement in the transportation system (74%).
- Of the issues selected, job creation (40%) and equal access to education (30%) are by far the top responses when residents chose their #1 priority.
- The vast majority (85%) are extremely concerned about how their tax dollars are being spent by the local government.

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## ECONOMY

*The economy is explicitly mentioned as one of the key priorities for the Region. However, a majority do not believe that the government is currently doing enough to successfully build a diverse economy.*



*Nearly everyone believes that greater emphasis needs to be placed on creating jobs that pay a livable wage as well as attracting more contemporary jobs (and younger talent) to the Region. To bring greater economic growth to the Region, most residents feel the focus needs to be on jobs in technology, manufacturing and small business.*



*With respect to small business specifically, almost 9 in 10 residents feel attention and effort is critical for economic growth, and the government should make it easier for entrepreneurs to start small businesses within the community.*

- Seven in ten (70%) say the NW Indiana Region is not doing enough to build a diverse economy.
- Nearly all residents (98%) believe attracting jobs to the NW Indiana Region is extremely important.
- In order to grow the economy in the Region with existing tax dollars, most residents feel the government should prioritize creating 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs that pay a livable wage in growing economic sectors (86%).
- More than three-quarters of residents believe that the NW Indiana Region need to focus on technology (81%); manufacturing (78%); and small-business (77%) in order to create more jobs.
- When asked to select the one area that was most important to creating more jobs, 28% of residents reported manufacturing.
- Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) say fostering small business is key to economic growth in the NW Indiana Region, and along these lines, 85% feel the government needs to make it easier for people to start small businesses in the NW Indiana Region.
- The vast majority believe that attracting young talent is key to economic growth in the NW Indiana Region (90%) and that a young population is vital to the future of the NW Indiana Region (92%).

## QUALITY OF LIFE

*The vast majority of NW Indiana residents are proud of their Region, believing it is a unique and special place to live. About 7 in 10 feel the Region is the best place to live in Chicagoland and would recommend their specific town to someone looking to reside in the area.*



*Most residents are convinced the NW Indiana Region is a great place for families and seniors and is inclusive to people of all races and ethnicities. However, when thinking about retirees in particular, about 7 in 10 residents rate their community as only slightly above average (fair or good) on healthcare, affordable housing, safety, social services and recreation.*



*Moreover, despite the generally high praise, only a small minority of residents feel their Region is continuing to improve as a place to live. A much larger proportion feel the area is declining in residential value.*

- Almost 9 in 10 residents (87%) feel that the NW Indiana Region is unique compared to the rest of Indiana.
- The majority (67%) feel the NW Indiana Region is the best place to live in Chicago land and 7 in 10 (70%) are likely to recommend their city or town to someone looking to live in the NW Indiana Region.
- Nearly 8 in 10 (79%) feel the NW Indiana Region is a great place to raise a family.
- Nearly 7 in 10 (68%) say the NW Indiana Region values the inclusion of all races and ethnicities.
- Over 3 in 4 (76%) believe access to healthcare is very good in the NW Indiana Region.
- A slight majority (56%) feel the NW Indiana Region is a great place to live for retirees and senior citizens.
- Most rate the NW Indiana Region as positioned as fair/good as a place for retirees with respect to: healthcare (74%); affordable housing (74%); safety/security (74%); social services (72%); recreation (70%) and cost of living (71%). In contrast, only 1 in 10 or less grades these aspects as "Excellent" [healthcare (13%); affordable housing (8%); safety/security (6%); social services (3%); recreation (8%) and cost of living (9%)]
- However, only about one-quarter (26%) feel the NW Indiana Region is becoming a better place to live, while about 43% say it getting worse.
- A strong minority (41%) agree that the NW Indiana Region does not have enough public access to Lake Michigan.

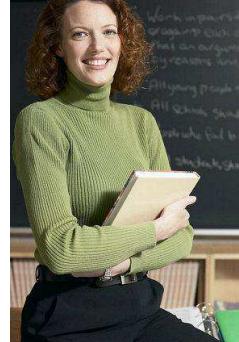
## EDUCATION

*Currently, the NW Indiana educational system is not given exceptionally high marks by its residents (an average of “B/C” on a standard grading scale). Very few (only 1 in 10) rate the schools as “excellent”, while five times more feel the schools are performing at a less than acceptable (fair, poor or failing) level.*

*One key criticism is that a large minority believe that children across the Region are not universally given equal access to a quality education.*



*Furthermore, a majority do not believe that the regional educational system is adequately preparing students for a 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace and this deficit (of not developing a career-ready workforce) is considered one of the top priorities that the government needs to address.*



- The regional educational system gets a satisfactory grade of C or better from residents. Nearly half of residents (46%) give the educational system high marks (either “A” or “B”), while roughly a third (34%) give it a C, and about 1 in 5 (19%) grade it as poor or failing with a grade of “D” or “F”.
- A majority (69%) do not believe the regional education system is adequately preparing students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace.
- Only about 4 in 10 (42%) feel that all children in the Region have equal access to a good education.
- According to residents, one of the top priorities the NW Indiana Region should address is the education system (84%), along with jobs (84%). Even when asked to select just one as their top priority, education still comes out as #1 (24%).
- In order to grow the economy with existing tax dollars, most residents feel the government needs to prioritize improving the educational system to create a career-ready workforce (82%).

## TRANSPORTATION



***About half of NW Indiana residents stress the lack of public transportation options as a challenge for people who want to live to stay in the Region. Nearly 3 in 4 feel improvements in transportation are a key focus area for the NW Indiana Region, and about 1 in 5 admit they have considered moving to a nearby city where a car would not be necessary.***

***Many residents access Chicago at least once a month to socialize, shop, work or participate in events/activities.***

- A slight majority (53%) say the lack of transportation options has made it difficult for people to want to stay in the NW Indiana Region.
- In fact, about 1 in 5 (19%) have considered moving to a nearby city where they wouldn't need a car.
- Many residents visit Chicago on at least a monthly basis for a variety of reasons, including: visit friends and relatives (26%); do recreational activities (22%); work (17%); go retail shopping (17%); and attend cultural activities (16%).
- About 3 in 4 residents (74%) feel improvement in the transportation system is an important issue for the NW Indiana Region to address. When asked specifically, 3 in 4 (76%) say road infrastructure and 3 in 5 (59%) say public transportation are priority issues for the Region to address.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

*There is some modest optimism that the State of Indiana is headed in the right direction. However, this limited optimism (held by about 4 in 10 adults) is overshadowed by a larger proportion of residents who are pessimistic about the future outlook for the state.*

*On a micro level, NW Indiana residents are more hopeful than doubtful about the prospects for the Region, and nearly two-thirds express confidence in its future. Most hold the government (either local or state) responsible for the Region's future direction.*



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- About 4 in 10 residents (39%) feel the State of Indiana is heading in the right direction. However, about half (48%) are pessimistic and feel it is on the wrong track. Over 1 in 10 (12%) do not know.
- Comparatively, almost half of residents (47%) feel the NW Indiana Region is heading in the right direction, while only 39% feel it is on the wrong track. Over 1 in 10 (14%) do not know.
- While 67% say the future of the NW Indiana Region is uncertain, a similar proportion (63%) feel confident in the future of the Region.
- Most residents say they hold the local government (73%) and the state government (63%) mainly responsible for the direction of the NW Indiana Region.

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