



#LetsGrowMichigan



How Can We Grow Michigan's Population?



Results from the statewide public engagement effort and national poll.

November 2023

feedback.growingmichigan.org



Public engagement report prepared by the Growing Michigan Together team.





Launch

In June 2023, Governor Whitmer took a first-in-the-nation step to tackle Michigan's population decline head on. As part of that effort, Governor Whitmer named the **state's first Chief Growth Officer** with the goal of growing Michigan's population, boosting our economy and ensuring everyone knows Michigan is a great place to call home. Additionally, the governor created the **Growing Michigan Together Council**—a bipartisan effort to assess population drivers for Michigan and make strategic recommendations across four areas (PreK-12 Education; Higher Education; Jobs, Talent & People as well as Infrastructure & Place) to set our state up for growth.

Public Engagement Overview

In August 2023, Chief Growth Officer Hilary Doe, and her team launched a statewide public engagement effort to collect honest feedback and ideas from people across our state that will help grow Michigan. The input collected illuminates not only the challenges communities face, but also what they love most about calling Michigan home.

In under three months, the team hosted or attended **over 70 events, engaged with over 3,000 people at in-person and virtual events and listening sessions, and engaged with more than 60 organizations across the state.** Events reached Michiganders in regions across the state, from Houghton to Benton Harbor and Detroit to Grand Rapids. Participants came from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and included high school and college students, workers, business leaders, small business owners, community service providers, arts leaders, union members and many more.

Additionally, the Growing Michigan Together survey collected perspectives from in-person attendees and online from over **11,000 Michiganders across the state.** Finally, a national poll was conducted to specifically center young people--seeking to understand their motivations for moving to the cities they choose, as well as the factors they considered when looking for a place to call home.

The Growing Michigan Together team is excited to share the results from each of these sources over the last three months. An overview of collected feedback is outlined here and updates have been shared with the Growing Michigan Together Council as they prepare to submit recommendations to boost Michigan's growth to the governor in December 2023.

We hope readers will choose to stay connected with us going forward as we build a growth plan by and for Michiganders — current and future — across our state.

[Sign up to get involved at feedback.growingmichigan.org.](https://feedback.growingmichigan.org)

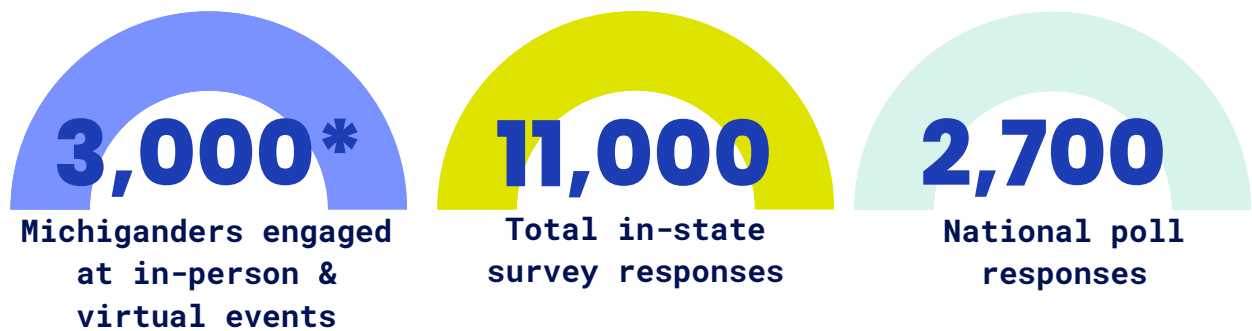
2 Survey Results



In 2022, Michigan was one of fourteen states that saw population declines, following decades where Michigan's population has hovered around 10 million people. Now, Michiganders across our state have raised their hands to help reverse that trend.

As part of the effort to grow Michigan's population, over 11,000 Michiganders have shared their thoughts on what they love about our state, and what's between them and building their future in Michigan. Additionally, a national poll of young people across the country provides further insight into what actions may help buck the slow growth trend in Michigan, and put us on a path to growth and shared prosperity for generations to come.

Fig 1. Sources of feedback



*Approx. 1,000 surveys generated from this group

*"The best parts about living in Michigan are the **four seasons**, the **people**, and the endless **opportunities for employment and adventure!**"*

SURVEY RESPONDENT

What are Michiganders saying?

Stakeholders from every corner of our state have come out to participate in listening sessions and events focused on growing Michigan's population.

For some, population declines have left their communities struggling to fill jobs or fund critical public services. In other areas, potential changes offer the opportunity to live and work near their families in Michigan, instead of pursuing different places and opportunities in other states.

While there were an incredible diversity of perspectives, in conversation, Michiganders named that growth is critical to quality of life, retaining our young people, and taking advantage of the incredible opportunities Michiganders – current and future – have right here in Michigan.

2 Survey Results



Feedback collected across Michigan and nationally clearly highlights the importance of regionally-specific approaches to growth. And, while there are no one-size-fits-all solutions, there were consistent trends in survey responses from both Michiganders and young people surveyed across the country. Analyzing the information collected highlights opportunities to position Michigan as a more competitive state for attracting new residents and retaining those who already call this great state home.

Overall, Michiganders painted a picture of a future with shared prosperity and more equitable opportunities. They were vocal about their love and pride for the Great Lakes State, while also highlighting the importance of investing in our state’s infrastructure, diversifying career and educational opportunities and building places to live and work that appeal to young people and families. Their feedback highlights common challenges and opportunities to build a stronger future for all Michiganders.

Results Highlight

When survey respondents were asked what they love most about living in Michigan, the **state's natural beauty, sense of community, weather and recreation infrastructure (like playgrounds, trails and sports fields)** rose to the top.



GMTC Survey Details

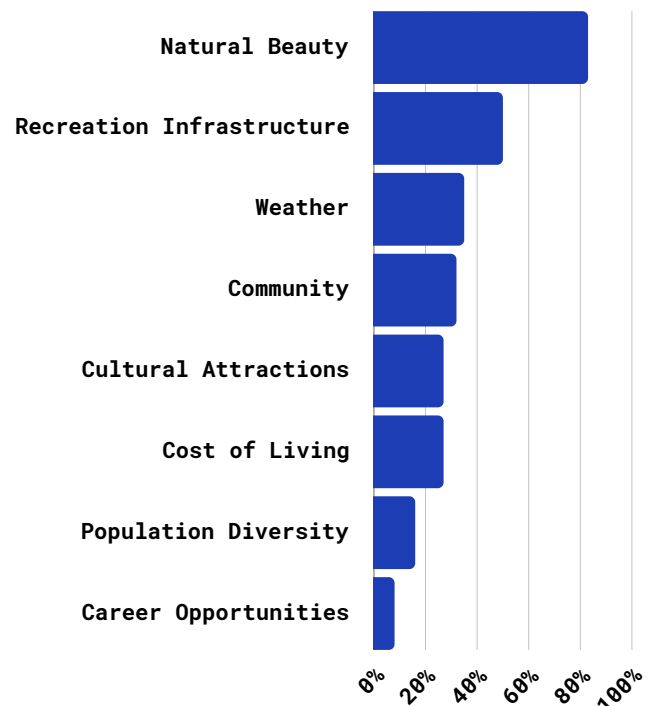
Public engagement events engaged over 3,000 Michiganders. The first 1,000 responses to the survey were collected through engagement at these in-person and digital events.

The remaining 10,000+ responses were collected digitally via social media promotion, partner distribution, and the Growing Michigan Together Council’s website.

Questions in the survey were updated since its inception in August 2023. The first iteration of the survey asked Michiganders high-level questions in four specific areas: infrastructure, preK-12 education, talent attraction and retention and higher education. The questions coincided with the focus of the workgroups that prepared suggestions for the Council to consider for the final recommendations.

The survey was revised in October to allow for even more robust feedback about community strengths and areas for growth. The updated survey also asked respondents about their relationship to Michigan. Specifically, they were asked to categorize themselves into one of six categories: lifelong Michigander, moved to Michigan as a child or adult, recently moved back to Michigan, no longer live in Michigan, visiting Michigan for the first time or returning visitor to the state. Of the 10,500 people who answered this question, 72% indicated they are lifelong Michigan residents.

Fig 2. What People Love Most About Living in MI



2 Survey Results



When asked if respondents saw themselves living in Michigan 10 years from now, 66% said yes, with many sharing that family ties have kept them in the state. Approximately 16% answered maybe, 9% answered not sure and 7% said they could not see themselves living in Michigan 10 years from now.

Among those who answered maybe, not sure or no, many noted that job opportunities were top of mind when making this decision. Respondents aged 18-34 in particular shared a curiosity about moving to different places and an urge to travel.



Community Challenges

Survey respondents were also asked to describe their communities' challenges. The top responses include cost of living, infrastructure, better education and career opportunities as well as housing.

Infrastructure

Respondents who identified infrastructure as an issue specifically mentioned the need for **better roads, access to clean drinking water, broadband connectivity, utilities and the need for a more robust transportation system** as their main points of concern.

Education & Job Opportunities

Michiganders shared concerns about the **applicability of education to employer needs, affordability of higher education and inequities of education funding.**

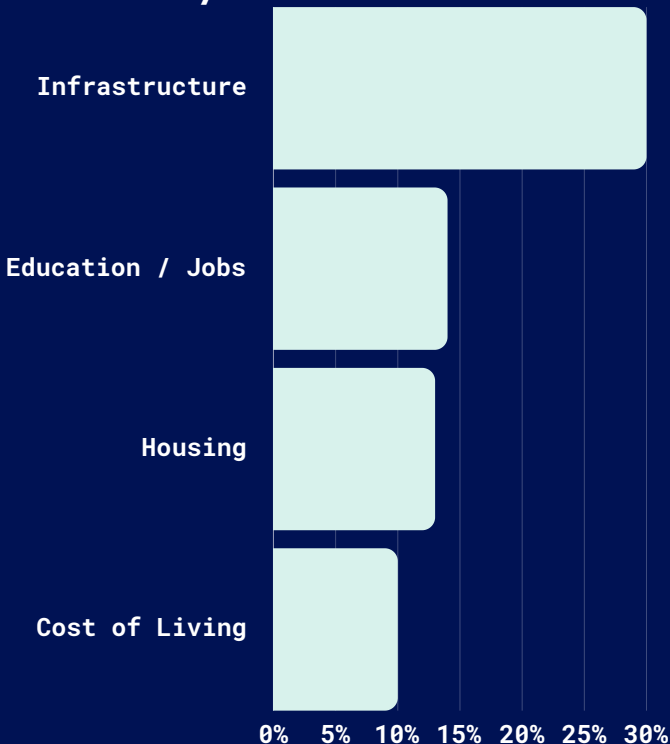
Housing

- Respondents who currently rent shared concerns about rising rent and a need for better tenant protections.
- **Homeownership was mentioned as a goal but also a challenging journey**, noting frustrations about the lack of "starter homes" and the competition with those seeking second homes and investment properties.
- Those who own their homes referenced a disconnect between their property taxes and the quality of their communities.

Cost of Living

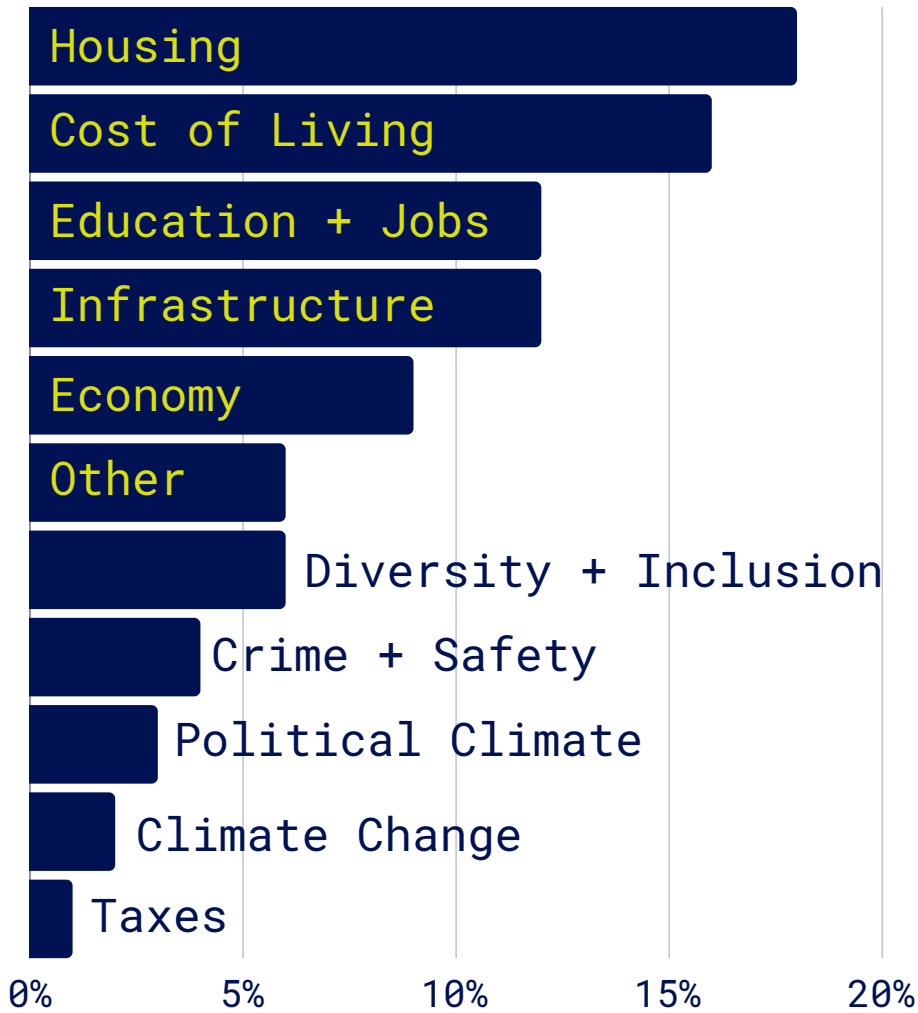
Cost of living was also mentioned as a concern to many communities across Michigan. **Specifically, housing, groceries and healthcare costs** were mentioned the most as burdens Michiganders face.

Fig 3. Top challenges facing your community



2 Survey Results

FROM IN-PERSON RESPONDENTS AGES 18-34



Infrastructure was identified as the most salient issue facing Michiganders overall. However, **18-34-year-old Michiganders view housing, cost of living and career and educational opportunities** as the biggest challenges in their community.

42%

of the 1,000 survey respondents from in-person events were ages 18-34

18%

of 18-34-year-olds engaged at in-person events identified **housing** as the most important issue facing their community



40%

of all 18-34-year-olds surveyed said **recreation infrastructure** and the **sense of community** are what they love the most about living in Michigan

3 National Poll Results



In addition to the statewide public engagement efforts, the Growing Michigan Together team worked with **Generation Lab** to conduct a national poll. This poll studied the motivations behind young people choosing to relocate and what characteristics they look for when choosing a new home. Over 2,700 responses were gathered from 15 metropolitan areas across the country.

Respondents varied in education level, race and socioeconomic status. Respondents lived in Atlanta, Austin, Boston, Chicago, Columbus, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Nashville, New York City, Phoenix, San Diego or San Francisco. Approximately 67% of responses came from people under age 25, 27% from 26–36-year-olds, 3% from 37–47-year-olds and 1% other.



Fig 4. **National poll respondents, cities**

Why do you live where you do?

When respondents were asked what motivated them to choose their current city:

- **50% said job or educational opportunities**
- **27% said proximity to family and friends**
- **13% said cost of living**

However, when analyzing poll data across the different cities, factors such as outdoor activities, natural beauty, climate and weather were more favorable in cities like Denver and Los Angeles. Similarly, cost of living was a less prevalent answer for respondents living in Boston, Minneapolis and San Francisco.

Do you plan to move?

Approximately 38% of respondents indicated they plan to relocate in the near future.

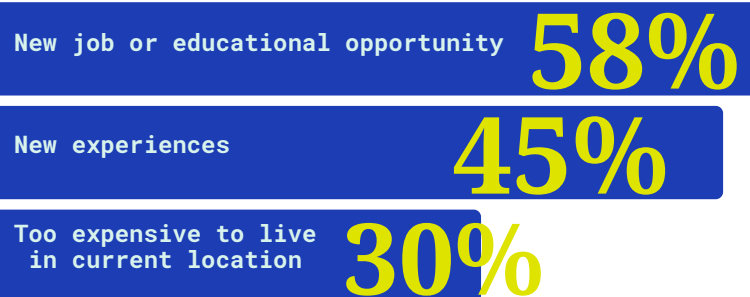
Although 58% cited a new job or educational opportunity as the main reason for their upcoming move, 45% of respondents also expressed a desire for new experiences. Indicating that new experiences are one of the main reasons respondents relocate tells us that places – not just jobs – drive migration.

Top 3 factors when deciding to live in current location?*

Job & educational opportunities	29%
Proximity to family and friends	22%
Place (natural & cultural amenities)	22%
Cost of living	17%

*Percent of people for whom each of these options ranked in their top three factors

Results: Why are you considering a move?



What could influence your next move?

To better understand which targeted efforts could be used to attract young people to move to Michigan, survey respondents were asked which incentives, if offered, would most strongly prompt them to consider moving to a new location:

- **35% of respondents identified a down payment on a home in the new location as the most enticing incentive**
- **34% identified a cash or tax incentive**
- **20% identified student loan assistance**
- 6% identified free or subsidized childcare
- 6% identified the idea of a small business loan

Tax or cash incentives rise to the top when looking at only 18–24-year-old respondents. A down payment on a home in the new location was selected as the most influential incentive for 40% of respondents aged 25–34 and 43% of respondents aged 35+. Around 37% of respondents said they would move to a new city if it offered an incentive.



**When asked:
What, if offered, would
most strongly cause you
to consider moving to a
new location?**

39%

of respondents
with a B.A. or
greater said a
down payment
on a home

When evaluating the top three factors in deciding where to live, the national poll highlighted the importance of jobs and educational opportunities. This factor was especially important among the individuals with a bachelor's degree.

However, quality of place was a close second, tied with the importance of proximity to family and friends--a factor most important to respondents with only a high school degree.

From the perspective of driving more domestic migration among young folks to Michigan, the national poll highlighted some of the top reasons that led 18–34-year-olds to consider relocation. Jobs and educational opportunities again came out on top, but the opportunity for new experiences was a very close second. This underscores the idea that young people may move for reasons well beyond the financial.

Additionally, the poll found that as respondents age, they are less likely to consider moving at all. As individuals move to a higher age bracket, the percentage interested in relocation falls from 41% for 18–24-year-olds to 21% for respondents 35 and up, implying these early moves for new experiences or otherwise can be consequential to the ultimate decisions about where individuals will build their lives and raise their families.

Finally, when asked what if offered would cause young people in the poll to consider moving to a new location, housing rose to the top. In total, 35% of respondents identified a down payment on a home as the incentive that would most strongly cause them to consider a new place to call home, followed closely by cash (or tax) incentives at 34% and student loan forgiveness at 20%. Among respondents with four year degrees, a down payment on a home became even more popular, with 39% of respondents listing it as the factor that would most strongly influence their decision to relocate.



To retain current Michiganders and attract new people to our state, we need:



GREAT OPPORTUNITIES

Access to excellent education and high-paying jobs



GREAT PLACES

Well-maintained infrastructure, access to natural amenities, walkable communities and affordable housing



WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

Places to live, work and raise a family that are friendly, inclusive and offer a sense of belonging

Conclusion



In June 2023, the Growing Michigan Together team set out to hear from Michiganders about what they love about our state and where they see areas needing improvement. The feedback received as part of this statewide public engagement effort was rich with lived experiences, fresh ideas and calls to action to further improve quality of life for Michigan residents, while we position our state for growth.

The number of organizations and individuals eager to share only underscores the incredible responsibility and opportunity before us. Around 34% of survey respondents aren't sure they see themselves living in Michigan 10 years from now. **We have an opportunity to change their minds and build a future where no Michigander feels they must leave the state in order to thrive.**

Putting Michigan on the path to growth is a project that will take all of us. As efforts to grow Michigan continue, there is a serious need to come together as residents, community leaders, business communities and elected officials to shift our current trajectory. We can do it if we do it together.

"There is a rich and diverse history in communities across the state that often goes untold. We should embrace and tell this history and use it to inform how we shape our future."

SURVEY RESPONDENT



APPENDIX: Results from the statewide public engagement effort and national poll.

Appendix 1: Growing Michigan Together Survey

Featured data, detail

Survey responses, public engagement events

Age Range*	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Younger than 18	5	<1%
18 - 34	419	42%
35 - 45	148	15%
46 - 54	135	14%
55 - 65	146	15%
65+	147	15%

**This table highlights feedback from the survey responses from in-person and digital public engagement events (approx first 1,000 survey responses)*

Total, survey responses

Age Range	Number of Respondents
Younger than 18	22
18 - 34	1,171
35 - 45	1,713
46 - 54	1,785
55 - 65	2,706
65+	3,318
No answer	521
Total	11,236

Question: What best describes you?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Lifelong Michigander	7,759	72%
Moved to MI as a child or adult	2,192	20%
Recently moved back	611	6%
No longer live in Michigan	100	1%
Visiting	74	1%
Total	10,736	

Question: What do you love most about living in Michigan?

Response	Number of respondents*
Natural beauty	7,926
Recreation infrastructure	4,822
Weather	3,346
Community	3,098
Cultural attractions	2,614
Cost of living	2,530
Population diversity	1,521
Diversity of career opportunities	937

**9,526 respondents answered this question; respondents were asked to select all that apply.*

Question: What do you love most about living in Michigan? (18-34 age bracket)

Response	Number of respondents*
Natural beauty	845
Community	479
Recreation infrastructure	468
Weather	440
Cost of living	304
Cultural attractions	251
Population diversity	165
Diversity of career opportunities	123

** 1,171 18-34-year-olds answered this question; respondents were asked to select all that apply.*

Question: Do you think you will be living in Michigan 10 years from now?

Response	Number of Respondents*	Percentage
Yes	6,298	66%
No	665	7%
Maybe	1,641	17%
Not sure	916	10%
No response	17	<1%
Total	9,537	

**excludes those that did not provide an answer to this question*

Question: Why did you move back to Michigan? *(of those indicating a recent move)*

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Family	278	45%
No response	132	22%
Simply missed Michigan	92	15%
Career opportunity	59	10%
Cost of living	30	5%
Other	12	2%
Education	8	1%

**611 respondents indicated they recently moved back to Michigan. This table shows the breakdown of the reasons why they moved back.*

Question: In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing your community today?

Response Category	Number of Respondents*	Percentage
Infrastructure	2,820	30%
Career & education opportunities	1,209	13%
Housing	1,125	12%
Cost of living	921	10%
State of the economy	801	8%
Other	571	6%
Political climate	573	6%
Crime and safety	575	6%
Taxes	381	4%
No response	190	2%
Diversity & inclusion	191	2%
Climate change	95	1%
Total	9,452	

**9,098 people answered this question. Some respondents included feedback in more than one response category.*

Question: In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing your community today? (18–34 year olds)

Response Category	Number of Respondents*	Percentage
Housing	295	25%
No response	243	21%
Cost of living	158	13%
Career and education opportunities	131	11%
Infrastructure	96	8%
State of the economy	77	6%
Crime and safety	48	4%
Political climate	35	3%
Diversity and inclusion	33	3%
Taxes	25	2%
Other	24	2%
Climate change	20	2%
Total	1,185	

**1,171 18–34-year-olds were asked this question. Some responses included feedback in more than one response category.*

Question: In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing your community today? (18-34 year olds)

Response Category	Number of Respondents*	Percentage
Housing	83	18%
Cost of living	75	16%
Career and education opportunities	58	12%
No response	57	12%
Infrastructure	55	12%
State of the economy	44	9%
Other	26	6%
Diversity & inclusion	26	6%
Crime and safety	17	4%
Political climate	14	3%
Climate change	8	2%
Taxes	6	1%
Total	469	

**This table highlights feedback from the first 1,000 survey responses. 419 respondents 18-34-years old answered this question. Some responses included feedback in more than one response category.*

Appendix 2: National Poll

Question: What were the main factors that influenced your decision to live in your current location?

Response Category*	Education Group		
	High school degree or less	Some college or associate degree	Bachelor's degree or greater
Job or educational opportunities	29%	52%	50%
Proximity to family and friends	37%	27%	25%
Outdoor activities and natural beauty	6%	3%	5%
Cost of living	18%	13%	12%
Cultural amenities	7%	3%	5%
Climate and weather	4%	3%	3%

*Respondents were asked to rank the incentives 1-5, 1 being the most influential incentive when considering moving to a new location. The data table reflects the percentage of respondents who selected each incentive as their top choice.

Question: What were the main factors that influenced your decision to live in your current location?

	Age		
Response Category*	18-24	25-34	35+
Tax or cash incentive for relocating	38%	27%	27%
Down payment on a home in the new location	32%	40%	43%
Student loan assistance program	21%	17%	14%
Free or subsidized childcare	5%	9%	10%
A small business loan	5%	7%	6%

*Respondents were asked to rank the incentives 1-5, 1 being the most influential incentive when considering moving to a new location. The data table reflects the percentage of respondents who selected each incentive as their top choice.

Question: Which of the following, if offered, would most strongly cause you to consider moving to a new location?

Response Category*	Education Group		
	High school degree or less	Some college or associate degree	Bachelor's degree or greater
Tax or cash incentive for relocating	35%	37%	30%
Down payment on a home in the new location	32%	32%	39%
Student loan assistance program	15%	21%	19%
Free or subsidized childcare	9%	5%	8%
A small business loan	11%	5%	5%

*Respondents were asked to rank the incentives 1-5, 1 being the most influential incentive when considering moving to a new location. The data table reflects the percentage of respondents who selected each incentive as their top choice.

Question: What are the main reasons for your planned relocation?

Response Category*	Education Group		
	High school degree or less	Some college or associate degree	Bachelor's degree or greater
Too expensive to live here	30%	28%	32%
New job or educational opportunity	42%	63%	54%
The weather	18%	20%	20%
Desire for new experiences	52%	49%	38%
Too few cultural attractions in the area	15%	9%	9%
Moving to be closer to friends or family	15%	20%	23%
Want to raise a family elsewhere	29%	24%	27%
Inadequate services	14%	10%	8%
Limited recreational opportunities	11%	11%	13%
Other	5%	7%	8%

*Respondents were asked to select all that apply.

Question: What are the main reasons for your planned relocation?

Response Category*	Age		
	18-24	25-34	35+
Too expensive to live here	27%	37%	30%
New job or educational opportunity	63%	50%	26%
The weather	20%	18%	19%
Desire for new experiences	50%	36%	26%
Too few cultural attractions	9%	9%	2%
Moving to be closer to friends or family	20%	23%	26%
Want to raise a family elsewhere	24%	31%	30%
Inadequate services	10%	11%	5%
Limited recreational opportunities	11%	14%	16%
Other	6%	10%	17%

*Respondents were asked to select all that apply.