

Denver Tops List of Favorite Cities  
For Half of America,  
Grass is Greener Somewhere Else

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE: JANUARY 29, 2009

Paul Taylor, Project Director  
Rich Morin, Senior Editor  
D'Vera Cohn, Senior Writer  
Wendy Wang, Research Analyst

MEDIA INQUIRIES CONTACT:  
Pew Research Center  
202 419 4328  
<http://pewresearch.org>

**PewResearchCenter**  
A Social & Demographic Trends Report

**EMBARGOED FOR PRINT / ON-LINE RELEASE: 12:01 A.M. JANUARY 29, 2009**

## Table of Contents

Overview .....	1
I. America’s Favorite Large Cities .....	5
II. Good Fits and Misfits.....	13
III. Community Satisfaction .....	21
Survey Topline .....	32
Appendices .....	37

## Denver Tops List of Favorite Cities

# For Half of America, Grass is Greener Somewhere Else

Where would Americans most like to live – and how do they feel about the places they currently call home?

A new national survey by the Pew Research Center finds that about half (48%) of the public would rather live in a different type of community from the one they're living in now – a sentiment that is most prevalent among city-dwellers. When asked about specific metropolitan areas where they would like to live, respondents rank Denver, San Diego and Seattle at the top of a list of 30 cities, and Detroit, Cleveland and Cincinnati at the bottom.

Even though the survey shows that many Americans have a bit of wanderlust, it also finds that most are satisfied with where they live now. More than eight-in-ten rate their current communities as excellent, very good or good. People who have moved at least once (63%) and those who have lived in the same place all their lives (37%) are equally content with their current home.

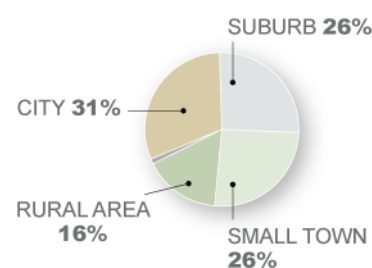
These findings emerge from a wide-ranging telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of 2,260 adults, conducted from Oct. 3-19, 2008. [An earlier report \(hyper link\)](#), based on other questions from the same survey, found that nearly one in four adults (23%) say the place “in their heart” they consider home isn't where they are living now. That report also cited Census data indicating that Americans are changing residences less often than they used to: Only 11.9% moved between 2007 and 2008, the lowest share since the government began tracking this measure in the late 1940s.

This latest report explores a range of attitudes related to where Americans live, where they would like to live, and why. It finds that most city-dwellers think the grass would be greener in a suburb, small town or rural area. But urbanites aren't alone in feeling mismatched with their surroundings. More than four-in-ten residents of suburbs, small towns and rural areas also report they would prefer to live in a different type of community.

## Who We Are Shapes Where We Want to Live

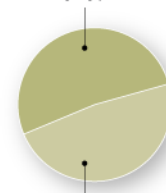
Some notable demographic and ideological patterns emerge in the survey responses. For example, most young urbanites consider cities the place to be, while most middle-aged urbanites would like to live elsewhere. Seven-in-ten rural men are content where they are, compared with just half of rural women. Most rural conservatives feel right at home; most urban conservatives don't. But urban liberals do.

### Where do you live now...



### ...is it right for you?

Those living in their ideal community type **52%**



Those who would rather live in a different kind of place **48%**

**NOTE:** "Don't know/Refused" responses are not shown.

Demographics and political views also help shape people's taste for specific cities. Many more young adults than older adults are drawn to New York and Los Angeles. More men than women want to live in Las Vegas. Well-to-do adults are twice as likely as the less affluent to want to live in Boston. Republicans think Phoenix would be a great place to call home. Democrats feel the same way about San Francisco.

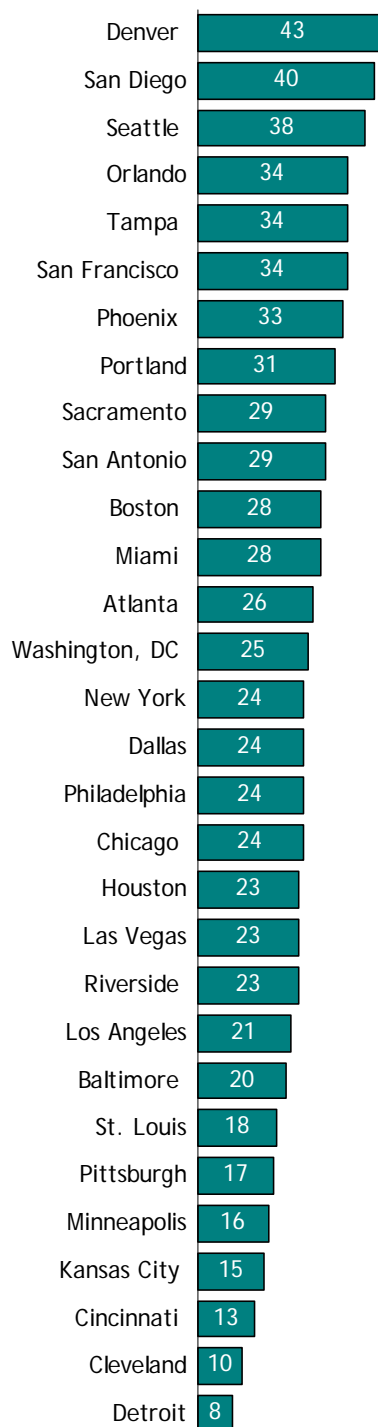
Geography matters too. Seven of the public's 10 most popular big cities are in the West – Denver, San Diego, Seattle, San Francisco, Phoenix, Portland and Sacramento – and the other three are in the South – Orlando, Tampa and San Antonio. The five least popular are all in the Midwest – Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Minneapolis and Kansas City. These attitudes reflect what government data show about the nation's migration patterns: [As this series of maps shows \(hyper links\)](#), Americans are leaving the Northeast and the Midwest in favor of the South and West.

Other survey findings include:

- Americans are all over the map in their views about their ideal community type: 30% say they would most like to live in a small town, 25% in a suburb, 23% in a city and 21% in a rural area.
- By a ratio of three-to-one, Americans prefer living where the pace of life is slow, not fast. A similarly lopsided majority prefer a place where neighbors know each other well to one where neighbors don't generally know each other's business.
- By about two-to-one, they prefer to live in a hot-weather place over a cold-weather place.

### America's Most Popular Big Cities

% say they want to live in this city or its surrounding metropolitan area



PewResearchCenter

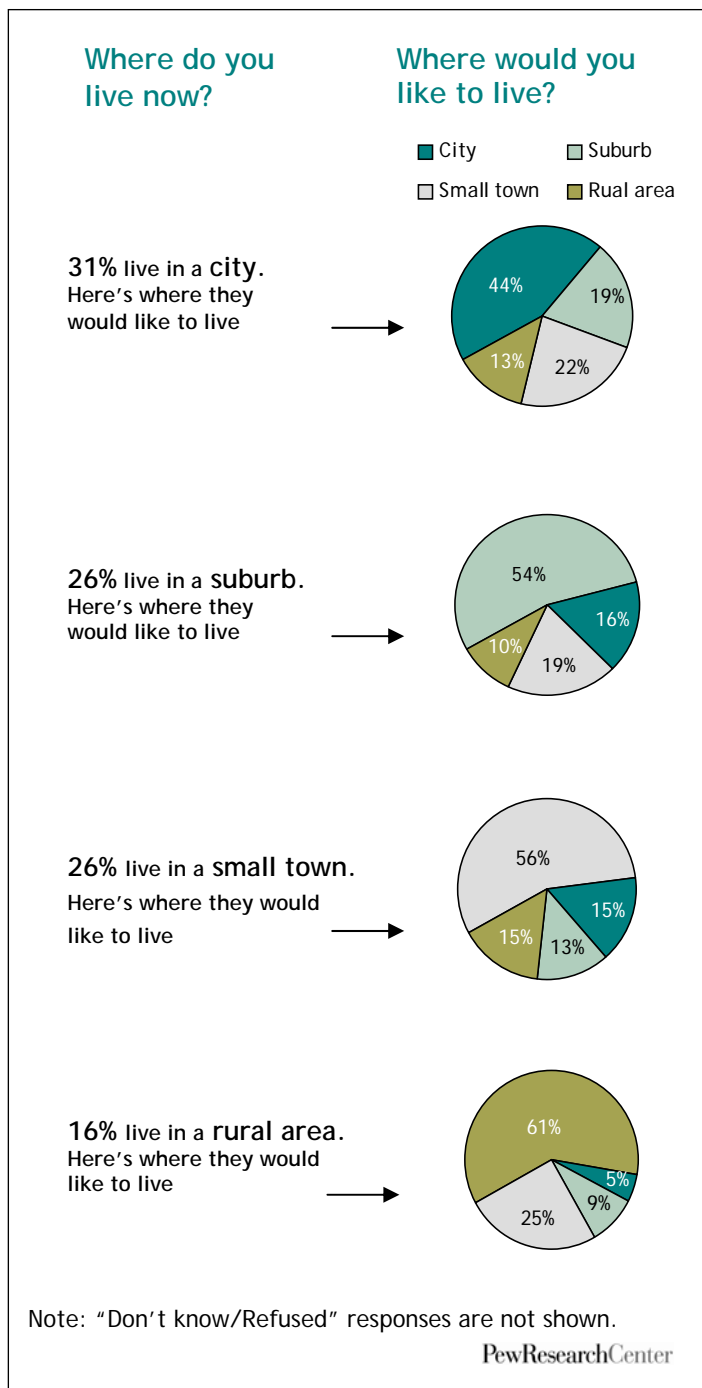
- On the fast food front, a slight plurality would rather live in a place with more McDonalds (43%) than one with more Starbucks (35%).

- About seven-in-ten whites rate their current community as “excellent” or “very good”; only about half of Hispanics and four-in-ten blacks say the same. Rural and suburban residents rate their communities better than do residents of cities or small towns.

- People who live in a city – as well as people who *want* to live in a city – are more open than others to the idea of living with neighbors who are of different races. They are also more open to living among immigrants.

- When it comes to community involvement, there is no difference among those who live in cities, suburbs, small towns or rural areas. About half of the residents in each place say they are involved, and half say they aren’t.

The remainder of this report is organized as follows: Section I: Metropolitan Area Ratings. Section II: Where We Live, Where We Want to Live. Section III: Community Satisfaction.



## About the Survey

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted with a nationally representative sample of 2,260 adults living in the continental United States. A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the continental United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. A total of 1,502 interviews were completed with respondents contacted by landline telephone and 758 from those contacted on their cellular phone. The data are weighted to produce a final sample that is representative of the general population of adults in the continental United States.

- Interviews conducted Oct. 3-19, 2008
- 2,260 interviews
- Margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.3 percentage points for results based on the total sample at the 95% confidence level.
- Note on terminology: Whites include only non-Hispanic whites. Blacks include only non-Hispanic blacks. Hispanics are of any race.

Survey interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Interviews conducted in English or Spanish.

## I. America's Favorite Large Cities

When it comes to the nation's 30 biggest metropolitan areas, Americans have a wide range of likes and dislikes. Denver, San Diego and Seattle top the list of favorites, while Detroit, Cleveland and Cincinnati anchor the bottom.

Overall, the advice to "Go west, young man" offered by newspaper editor Horace Greeley more than a century ago still resonates with Americans of all ages. Seven of the top 10 metropolitan areas are in the west, and the other three—San Antonio, Orlando and Tampa—are southern cities that share the characteristics of many western metro areas: warmer weather, a casual lifestyle and rapid growth. The absence of Heartland cities at the top of the list is striking: Chicago is the first large Midwestern metropolitan area to appear, and it finishes in the middle of the pack. In contrast, six Midwestern cities rank among the ten least popular big cities.

To measure how the public rates the country's largest cities as places to live, three separate nationally representative samples of adults were asked whether they would or would not want to live in each of 10 large metropolitan areas taken from a list of the nation's 30 largest metro areas. The results from each of the sub-samples were analyzed together to produce a ranking of all 30 metro areas.

Notably, not a single one of the 30 metropolitan areas was judged by a majority of respondents as a place where they'd like to live. This predominance of negative reviews is consistent with another survey finding: fewer than a quarter (23%) of respondents name cities as their favorite community type.

However, despite these skeptical attitudes toward cities in general, the public makes some fairly sharp distinctions among specific cities. For starters, there's that strong regional tilt in the lists of favorite and least-liked cities. But there are also clear variances in peoples' assessments by income, age, gender, education levels and ideology.

Some 43% of all Americans say they would like to live in Denver, placing it with San Diego (40%) and Seattle (38%) at the top of the rankings of America's most desirable major metropolitan area. Next on the list: Orlando (34%), Tampa (34%), San Francisco (34%), Phoenix (33%) and Portland (31%).

The survey suggests that Americans favor the big cities of the west and south. Seven of the 10 most preferred big cities are in the

### Where America Wants to Live: The Top 10 Big Cities

	Would like to live here %	Would not like %
Denver	43	55
San Diego	40	59
Seattle	38	60
Orlando	34	65
Tampa	34	64
San Francisco	34	65
Phoenix	33	64
Portland	31	66
Sacramento	29	69
San Antonio	29	68

Note: Ranked by percentage that say they would like to live in each city. Percentage with no opinion not shown. In each column, a difference of less than 3.5 percentage points between two cities is not statistically significant.

### Where America Doesn't Want to Live: The Bottom 10

	Would like to live here %	Would not like %
Detroit	8	90
Cleveland	10	88
Cincinnati	13	84
Minneapolis	16	82
Kansas City	15	81
Pittsburgh	17	80
Saint Louis	18	79
Los Angeles	21	78
Baltimore	20	77

Note: Ranked by percentage that say they would not like to live in each city. Percentage with no opinion not shown. In each column, a difference of less than 3.5 percentage points between two cities is not statistically significant.

West, two are in Florida—Orlando and Tampa—and one, San Antonio, is in Texas.

At the same time, rustbelt cities of the Midwest and East received the lowest ratings. Overwhelming majorities of Americans would prefer not to live in Detroit (90%), Cleveland (88%) or Cincinnati (84%). Nearly as many give a thumbs-down to Minneapolis (82%), Kansas City (81%) and Pittsburgh (80%) while fewer than one-in-five would like to make their home in any of these cities.

Not all western and southern cities rated highly. Los Angeles finished well down the list, with 78% of the public saying they would not want to live there and 21% saying they would. Houston and Las Vegas fared nearly as poorly: Three-in-four Americans say they don't want to live in either city.

### Income and City Preferences

The rich are different – not just in how much money they have, but in where they'd like to live. Americans earning \$100,000 or more disproportionately want to live in Boston, San Francisco and San Diego. But the poor are different, too: Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Orlando rank higher up the list of desirable cities among Americans with family incomes below \$30,000 than they do with more affluent Americans.

Overall, San Diego and Denver rate well with higher-earning adults, with slightly more than half (52%) saying they wanted to live in each city. Nearly half would like to live in San Francisco (48%), while almost as many find Boston Seattle and Portland to be desirable metropolitan areas.

Among adults with family incomes below \$30,000, fully 41% say they would like to live in Seattle. Orlando—a city that isn't among the top 10 among wealthier Americans—also finished high on this list, at 38%. About a third of all less-affluent Americans say they would like to live in Denver, San Diego, Miami or Los Angeles.

Significantly, six of the top 10 cities among adults earning less than \$30,000 don't rank among the 10 favorite cities among more affluent adults. They include Orlando, Miami, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. and Las Vegas.

At the same time, Boston, San Antonio and New York rank among the top 10 places to live among more affluent Americans but rank much lower with the less affluent. Judgments of Boston as a place to live are particularly striking: Nearly half of all high income Americans say they want to live there, double the proportion of those earning less than \$30,000 (46% vs. 23%).

#### Preferred Cities, by Income

Percentage that would like to live in...

	\$100k Or more		LT \$30k	
	%		%	
San Diego	52	Seattle	41	
Denver	52	Orlando	38	
San Francisco	48	Denver	35	
Boston	46	Dan Diego	34	
Seattle	45	Miami	34	
San Antonio	43	Los Angeles	33	
Portland	43	Washington, DC	31	
Tampa	37	Sacramento	30	
New York	35	Las Vegas	29	
Chicago	35	Phoenix	29	

Note: Percentage with no opinion not shown. Among those with family incomes of \$100,000 or more a year, a difference of less than 10 percentage points between two cities is not statistically significant. A difference of less than 9 points is not significant among those earning under \$30,000.

#### Rich Towns, Poor Towns

Largest differences in city preferences by income

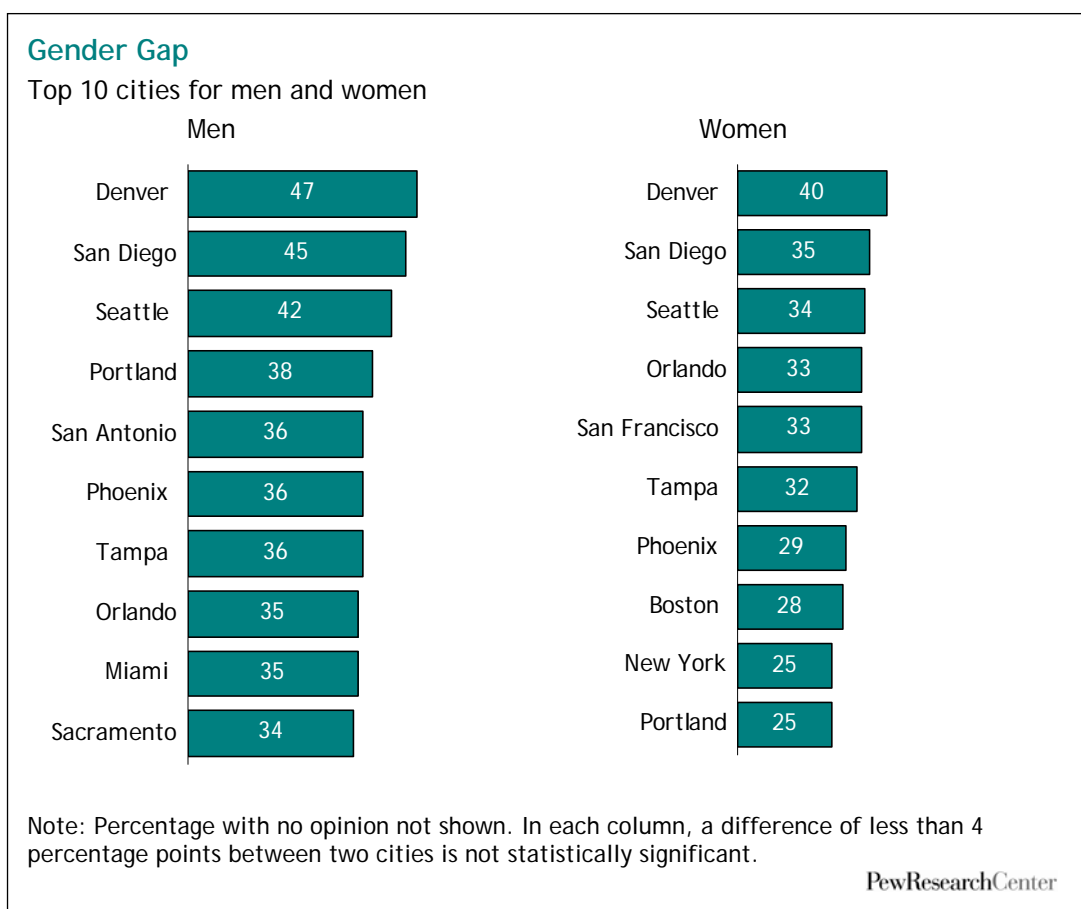
	\$100k or more	LT \$30k	Diff.*
	%	%	%
Boston	46	23	23
Los Angeles	14	33	-19
San Antonio	43	25	18
San Francisco	48	30	18
San Diego	52	34	18

\*Percentage of those with family incomes less than \$30,000 minus those with family incomes of \$100,000 or more that said would like to live in each city.

Overall, wealthier Americans on average are about 9 percentage points more likely to say they would like to live in each of the 30 cities tested in the survey. This result echoes the findings of an earlier Pew analysis that showed more affluent people were likelier to have lived in more than one state than the less affluent. [\[LINK TO MOBILITY REPORT\]](#)

## Mars and Venus Cities

The proportion of men who view each city favorably as a place to live is, on average, about 5 percentage points larger than the share of women who say they want to live in that city. For none of the 30 cities tested do a significantly larger share of women than men say that metro area is a place they want to live. By contrast, men are significantly more likely than women to say they want to live in 13 of the cities in the survey.



But when the cities are ranked in order of preference by each gender, the lists look similar, with some notable exceptions.

Men and women agree that Denver, San Diego and Seattle are places they would like to live; each finishes in the top three on each gender's list of desirable large metropolitan areas. More than a third of men (36%) say they would like to live in San Antonio, placing it squarely among the top 10 on their list. About as many men see Miami as a desirable locale. But both cities finished in the bottom half of the rankings among women; barely two-in-10 (22%) say they wanted to live in either city.

### Mars-Venus Cities

Largest differences in city preferences by gender

	Men	Women	Diff.*
	%	%	%
Las Vegas	30	16	-14
San Antonio	36	22	-14
Portland	38	25	-13
Miami	35	22	-13
Houston	29	18	-11

\*Percentage of men minus percentage of women that said would like to live in each city.

The survey finds that men are about twice as likely as women to gamble on Las Vegas as a place to live (30% vs. 16%, a 14 percentage point gender gap). The sexes also disagree about San Antonio (also a 14-point gap), Portland (13 points), Miami (13 points) and Houston (11 points).

San Francisco and New York break into the top-10 list of women's favorite cities but finish lower in the rankings among men. But in both instances, the percentage of men and women who would like to live in each city are roughly comparable; the difference in rankings occurs because a smaller proportion of women, on average, express

the desire to live in the nation's 30 largest cities.

### Education

College graduates seemingly can't wait to move to Denver, San Diego or Boston. Half or more of adults with a college degree say they would like to live each of these cities. But Detroit, Cleveland and Kansas City hold no such attraction, ranking at the bottom of desirable places to live for better educated Americans—and for less well educated adults as well.

At the same time, Orlando, Denver and Tampa top the list of desirable cities among Americans with no more than a high school degree, reflecting, in part, the preferences of older Americans who are disproportionately represented in this group.

Overall, those with a college degree are more likely than those who did not go beyond high school to say they want to live in the 30 largest metro areas. In 13 of the cities tested, better educated adults were significantly more likely than others to say they wanted to live there. Less well-educated adults expressed a greater desire to live in only one city. On the remaining 16 cities, the difference between the two groups is statistically insignificant.

Among the bigger differences in city preferences by education: Denver, where 59% of all college grads say they'd like to live, compared with 34% of those with a high school education or less, a 25 percentage point gap. There are similar gaps of 20 percentage points or more in ratings of Boston, San Diego, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington D.C.

### Preferred Cities, By Education

Percentage that would like to live in...

	College grads		High school grads or less
	%		%
Denver	59	Orlando	35
San Diego	54	Denver	34
Seattle	51	Tampa	34
San Francisco	46	Seattle	32
Boston	43	Phoenix	31
Portland	41	Miami	30
Philadelphia	38	San Diego	30
Washington, DC	38	Miami	30
Tampa	35	Sacramento	28
Phoenix	33	Las Vegas	26
Chicago	33	San Francisco	26

Note: Percentage with no opinion not shown. In each column, a difference of less than 7 percentage points between two cities is not statistically significant.

### Differences in City Preferences by Education

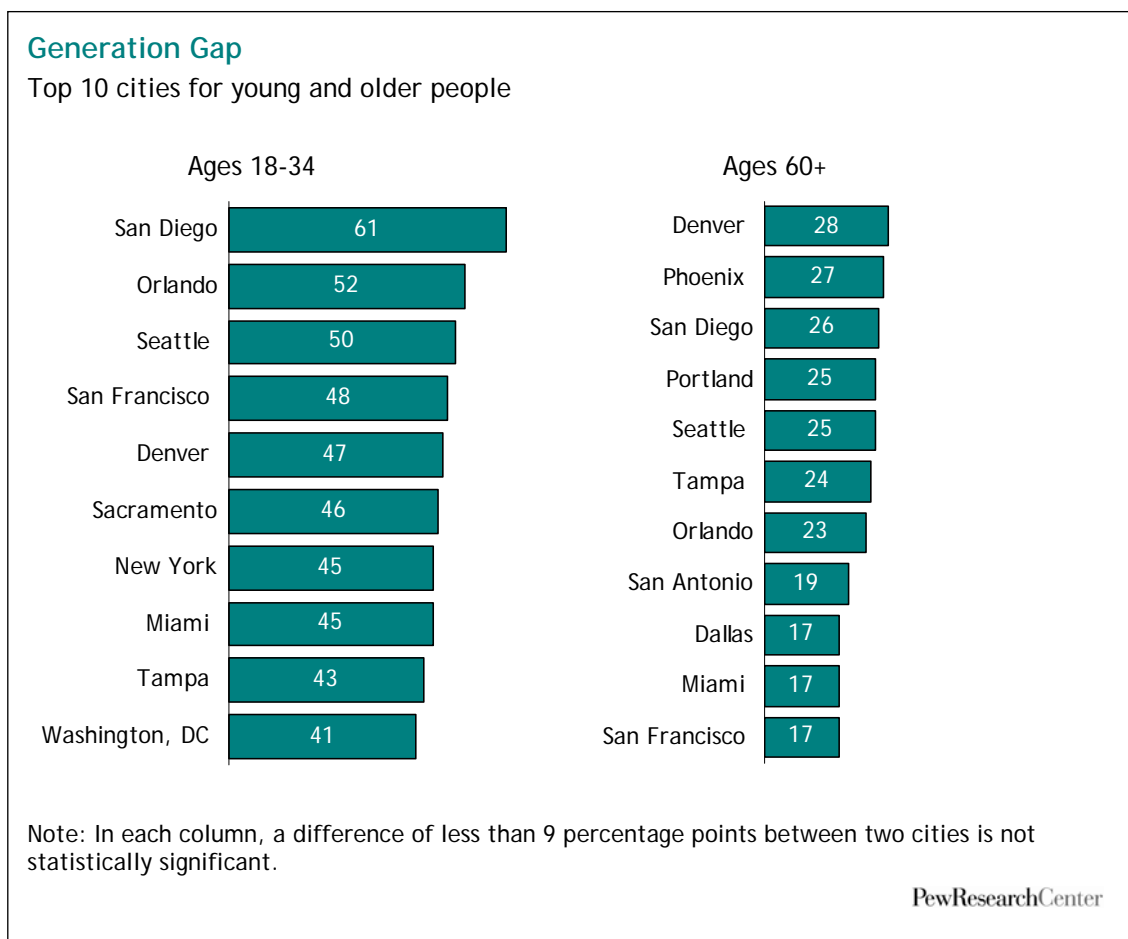
Largest differences in city preferences by education

	College grads	High school or less	Diff.*
	%	%	
Denver	59	34	25
San Diego	54	30	24
Boston	43	20	23
Philadelphia	38	16	22
Washington, D.C.	38	17	21

\*Percentage of those with college degrees less minus the percentage with a high school diploma or less that said would like to live in each city.

## The Generation Gap

The survey also finds that cities are most attractive to the young. On average, adults younger than 35 are about twice as likely as those 60 or older to say any of the cities tested in the survey are a place they would like to live.



For example, 61% of young people say they want to live in San Diego, compared with 28% of older adults. It's not because seniors don't like sunny weather, sandy beaches and the laid-back California lifestyle. In fact, San Diego ranked with Denver and Phoenix at the top of the ratings among older adults. It's just that the overwhelming majority of older people appear content with where they currently live or otherwise unwilling to move.

But some cities have a very different appeal to different generations. Nearly half of all young people rate New York as a desirable place to live—three times greater than the proportion of older adults who say they want to live in the Big Apple (45% vs. 14%). Los Angeles, too, is a youthful taste lost with age: LA finished near the bottom among older Americans (8%) but ranks in the upper half among young adults (38%) as a place they want to live. Conversely, Phoenix ranks near the top among older adults (27%) while finishing in the bottom half of desirable cities among younger adults.

## Politics and City Preferences

Republicans and Democrats may not agree on much, but they do concur that Orlando is a nice place to live. Mickey Mouse's Florida home finishes near the top of the rankings among both Republicans and Democrats. (Perhaps predictably, political independents offered an independent view: Orlando finishes significantly lower among unaligned adults.) Denver and San Diego also finish at or near the top among Democrats and Republicans, and score well among independents, too.

Republicans say Phoenix is a great place to call home, and San Francisco is equally attractive to Democrats. But don't ask a conservative Republican to move to San Francisco or a liberal Democrat to settle in Phoenix, these data suggest. Fully half of all liberals would like to live in San Francisco, double the proportion of conservatives (53% vs. 22%). Phoenix, on the other hand, is the second-rated city among right-leaning Americans but finished in the middle of the pack among liberals.

In the following sections, we analyze these preferences, first by party, then by ideology.

### Preferences by Party

Denver is easily the favorite big city among Republicans. Nearly half (48%) of all GOP partisans say they would like to live in Denver. Another western city, Phoenix, ranked second; 38% of Republicans say they could see themselves living quite nicely in Arizona's capital city. About a third of all Republicans say they would enjoy living in Orland, San Diego, San Antonio or Portland.

Cities of the West and South also dominate the preferences of Democrats. San Diego, San Francisco, Orlando and Denver lead the list, closely followed by Tampa, Seattle and Boston—the only eastern city to finish in the top 10 among Democrats, Republicans and independents. Echoing the pattern found repeatedly in these data, no Midwestern city cracks either party's list of top-ten cities or in the listing of independent voters favorite cities in which to live.

### Party Towns

Republicans		Democrats		Independents	
	%		%		%
Denver	48	San Diego	45	Denver	50
Phoenix	38	San Francisco	41	Seattle	49
Orlando	34	Denver	39	San Diego	44
San Antonio	34	Orlando	38	Tampa	36
San Diego	33	Tampa	38	Phoenix	35
Portland	33	Seattle	37	Portland	34
Dallas	29	Boston	34	San Francisco	33
Seattle	29	Portland	31	Sacramento	32
Tampa	28	Sacramento	31	Orlando	31
San Francisco	28	Atlanta	31	Miami	31

Note: Percentage with no opinion not shown. In each column, a difference of less than 7 percentage points between two cities is not statistically significant.

### Party Differences

Biggest differences in city preference by political partisanship

#### ...among Democrats

	Dem. %	Rep. %	Diff.
New York	30	14	16
San Francisco	41	28	13
San Diego	45	34	12
Philadelphia	28	17	11
Washington, D.C.	30	20	10
Tampa	38	28	10
Las Vegas	26	16	10
Atlanta	31	21	10

#### ...among Republicans

	Rep. %	Dem. %	Diff.
Phoenix	38	28	10
San Antonio	34	25	9
Denver	48	39	9
St. Louis	24	17	7
Kansas City	21	14	7

\*Percentage of Republicans minus percentage of Democrats that said would like to live in each city

While Republicans and Democrats generally place the same cities at or near the top of their respective rankings, some notable differences emerge. Democrats, for example, have a far more favorable view of New York: 30% say they would like to live in the Big Apple compared to 14% of Republicans, a 16-point gap. San Francisco also is more attractive to Democrats (41%) than Republicans (28%). On the other hand, significantly more Republicans (38%) than Democrats (28%) would like to call Phoenix home.

## Preferences by Ideology

Liberals and conservatives differ even more than Republicans or Democrats when it comes to places they would like to live.

A narrow majority of liberals say they would be pleased to call San Francisco their home town. On the other hand, San Francisco doesn't make the list of conservatives' top 10 metro areas in which to live.

At the same time, Denver has the right stuff for conservatives and also tops the list of preferred big cities for political moderates. Nearly half of both groups (46%) say they would like to make Denver their home.

But among liberals, the Mile-High City doesn't stand quite so tall: 38% of all liberals want to live in Denver, tied with Portland and Washington, D.C. but significantly behind San Francisco, San Diego and Seattle.

Liberals and conservative also diverge in their views of other cities. Liberals are more than twice as likely as conservatives to say they'd like to live in the Washington, D.C. (38% vs. 17%) or New York (39% vs. 19%) metropolitan areas. Boston, too, ranks higher with liberals (41%) than conservatives (21%). On the other side of the ideological divide, conservatives are more likely than liberals to prefer San Antonio (34% vs. 23%), Dallas (27% vs. 17%) and Denver (46% vs. 38%).

## Most Prefer a Politically Diverse Home Town

Do Americans who vote alike want to live in communities with people who share their political beliefs? These results provide some evidence that partisans and those who share a similar political philosophy are attracted to certain metropolitan areas but not others. Another question in the survey attempts to answer this

### City Preferences, by Ideology

<u>Conservatives</u>		<u>Liberals</u>		<u>Moderates</u>	
	%		%		%
Denver	46	San Francisco	53	Denver	46
Phoenix	36	San Diego	49	San Diego	43
San Diego	34	Seattle	46	Seattle	42
San Antonio	34	Boston	41	Tampa	39
Seattle	32	New York	39	San Francisco	37
Orlando	31	Orlando	39	Orlando	33
Tampa	31	Portland	38	Phoenix	32
Sacramento	29	Washington DC	38	Portland	32
Portland	28	Denver	38	Chicago	31
Dallas	27	Miami	36	Miami	31

Note: Percentage with no opinion not shown. For columns reporting results for conservatives and moderates, a difference less than 7 percentage points is not statistically significant. For column reporting results for liberals, a difference of less than 9 percentage points is not significant.

### Ideological Differences

Biggest differences in city preference by political ideology

#### ...for Liberals

	Liberal %	Conserv. %	Diff. %
San Francisco	53	22	31
Washington, D.C.	38	17	21
Boston	41	21	20
New York	39	19	20
Riverside, Ca.	34	19	15
San Diego	49	34	15

#### ...for Conservatives

	Conserv. %	Liberal %	Diff. %
San Antonio	34	23	11
Dallas	27	17	10
Denver	46	38	8
Cincinnati	16	9	7
Houston	26	20	6

\*Percentage of Conservatives minus percentage of Liberals who said they would like to live in each city

question more directly. Respondents were asked whether they would prefer to live in a community where most people share their political beliefs, or one in which there is a mix of different political views.

Regardless of political party or ideology, more than six-in-10 Americans say they would prefer to live in a politically diverse community. But some differences do emerge. More than a third (35%) of all Republicans say they would prefer a community where most residents shared their political views, compared with just 24% of Democrats and 17% of self-described independents. Similarly, about a third (33%) of all conservatives want to live in a community where most share their political views, compared with 27% of Democrats and 17% of political moderates. But again, clear majorities of conservatives (65%), liberals (70%) and moderates (83%) prefer political diversity or say it doesn't matter. [\(LINK TO SORTERS REPORT\)](#)

### Home Town Politics

Percentage of each group that prefer to live in a place where...

	Most share my political views %	There are a mix of views %	Neither/ Both/DK %
<b>Total</b>	24	63	10
<b>Party ID</b>			
Republican	35	54	11
Democrat	24	65	11
Independent	17	74	9
<b>Ideology</b>			
Conservative	33	57	10
Moderate	17	73	10
Liberal	27	63	10

## II. Good Fits and Misfits

If you ask Americans to describe the type of community they live in, they serve up a range of responses: 31% say city, 26% say a suburb, another 26% say a small town and 16% say a rural area.<sup>1</sup>

If you ask them to describe the type of community they'd *like* to live in, the size of these response categories shifts around a bit: city falls to 23%, suburbs hold nearly even at 25%, small town rises to 30% and rural area rises to 21%.

But when you tote up all these small shifts, you come up with a pretty big finding: about half (48%) of Americans are, by their own reckoning, geographic mismatches. They live in one type of community but would prefer to live in another.

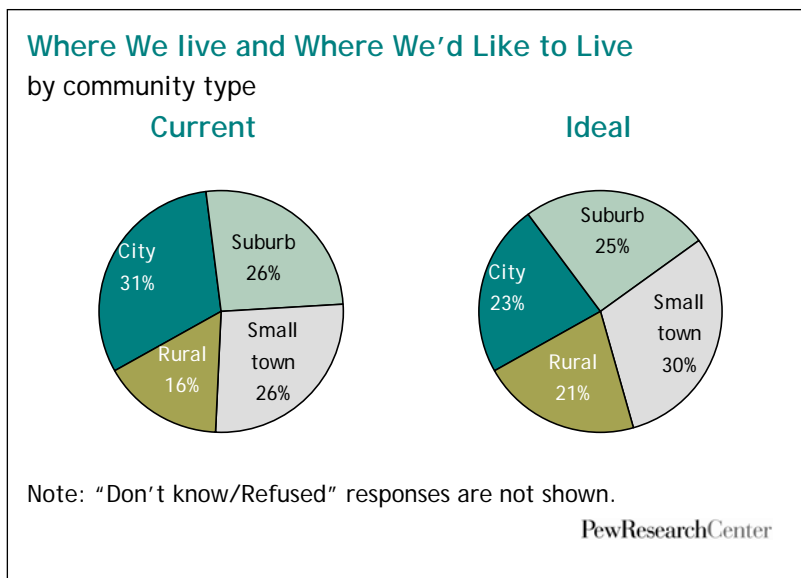
Who are these mismatched Americans—and who fits in best with the type of community they currently call home?

Overall, these data show that men living in the country are among the most likely group to say they are living in their ideal locale.

Fully seven-in-ten rural men can't imagine being happier in a city, small town or suburb than they are living in the country. Rural women are somewhat less satisfied: only about half say the country is their ideal place to live. In contrast, similarly sized majorities of men and women living in the city agree that someplace else would be their ideal place to call home, while roughly similar proportions of the sexes who live in small towns or suburbs agree that these community types are the best place for them.

While most city-dwellers say they are not living in their ideal surroundings, there's one group that's right at home in the city: young people. A 57% majority of urbanites under the age of 30 say the city is the perfect place for them, while majorities of every other age group that lives in the city would ideally prefer to live somewhere else.

Conversely, most young people who live in small towns (63%) and rural areas (53%) would rather be somewhere else. But other age groups find small towns and rural locales a good fit: About six-in-ten of



<sup>1</sup> The categories used in the Pew Research Center survey differ from those used by the Census Bureau, which divides community types into urban and rural or into metropolitan and non-metropolitan. The bureau does *not* recognize a "suburb" or a "small town" as a community type – even though these categories are commonly used by many Americans. For more explanation on how the Census Bureau defines community types, see Appendix Two.

adults older than 30 in either type of area say there's no better place for them than where they currently live.

One striking finding emerges from the age data: adults living the city who are in the in their mid-to-late middle age (50 to 64 years old) are the least likely of any age group to say the city is their ideal place to live. Just 29% of these adults to say the city is their ideal place to live.

These data do not answer why these adults are more attracted to another locale – whether it might be because they are anticipating a retirement relocation, or perhaps because this group is disproportionately dissatisfied with the challenges of living in a big city. Conversely, members of this group who live in the country couldn't imagine living anywhere else: two-thirds say they are living in their ideal locale, largest proportion of any age group to feel so well-suited to country living.

Education also shapes people's notion of whether they are living in their ideal type of area. Among city-dwellers, a 62% majority of adults with no better than a high school education say their perfect home would be somewhere other than a city. At the same time, majorities of less-well educated adults currently living in the suburbs, small towns and rural areas say they are living in their ideal place.

Among college graduates living in a city, slightly more than half (52%) say there's no better place to be. But even larger proportions of these well-educated Americans who live in the suburbs, small towns or rural areas can imagine no better place for them to be than their current community type. College-educated adults in the suburbs are particularly happy: more than six-in-ten (62%) of them say there's nothing better than suburban life for them, and a similar share are equally content to be living in small towns or rural areas (58%).

Cities are particularly inhospitable homes to middle-income Americans and those on the lower rungs of the income ladder. More than six-in-10 city dwellers with household incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 say they would rather be living in some other kind of place. An equally large share of these middle-class wage earners who live in other community types say they feel right at home where they are, including 60% of those the suburbs, 60% of those in small towns and 61% of those in rural areas.

### Good Fits

Percentage of residents in each type of area that say it is their "ideal" place to live

	Total*	City	Suburb	Small town	Rural
	%	%	%	%	%
All	52	44	54	56	61
<b>Gender</b>					
Men	53	44	52	54	70
Women	52	44	55	58	51
<b>Age</b>					
18-29	50	57	50	39	47
30-49	56	43	62	60	61
50-64	51	29	48	62	67
65+	51	41	47	57	61
<b>Education</b>					
College grad	58	52	62	58	58
Some college	52	45	48	56	65
High school or less	49	38	47	55	59
<b>Family income</b>					
\$100k+	56	53	55	59	65
\$50-100k	54	40	60	60	61
LT \$50k	50	41	46	55	60

\*Overall percentage of group

Note: Percentage with no opinion not shown.

Among those earning less than \$50,000, majorities who live in cities (59%) and the suburbs (54%) are not in their ideal place, while majorities in small towns (55%) and rural areas (60%) say there is no place better for them to live. High income city-dwelling adults deliver a split verdict on city life: a 53% majority of those earning \$100,000 or more say urban life is the perfect fit for them while 47% disagree.

## The Politics of Mismatches

Apparently it's hard for a middle-income family to fit into city life. But it appears to be even harder for a Republican to fit in. Nearly two-thirds of all Republicans (65%) who live in cities say they are not living in their ideal place. In fact, these data suggest that nearly anywhere else is a better fit for GOP partisans: About six-in-ten Republicans living in the suburbs, small towns and rural areas say nowhere else would be better to live than their current type of community.

Many Democrats, on the other hand, appear to be less-than-ideal fits wherever they call home. Slightly fewer than half (46%) of city-dwelling Democrats say there's no other place they would rather live while a slight majority believe there is somewhere else where they would fit in better. At the same time, Democrats in the suburbs (52%), small towns (50%) and rural areas (51%) say their respective locales are the right fit for them, while nearly as many disagree.

The city-country divide opens even wider among political conservatives. Fully two-thirds of all self-described conservatives living in the city say they are not living in their ideal place. And the farther you move from the urban core, the happier political conservatives seem to be: 51% of suburban conservatives, 54% of small town conservatives and 62% of rural conservatives say they are living in their ideal kind of place. Locale seems to matter little to liberals: small majorities living in the city (54%), suburbs (57%) or in a small town or rural area (54%) say they are living in their ideal locale. Majorities of moderates in the suburbs, small towns and rural areas say no place would suit them better. But a 58% majority of city-dwelling moderates say they are not living in their ideal place.

## Lifestyle Preferences

The survey also explored certain lifestyle preferences – including pace of life, neighborliness, and tolerance for diversity – to see if they are linked to where people live, where they'd like to live and whether or not they feel mismatched with their surroundings.

For example, it finds that by a lopsided 71%-21% margin, Americans prefer a slow pace of life over a fast pace. A majority of city-dwellers subscribe to this consensus. But among those who say they would *like* to live in a city, a majority chooses the fast pace of live.

### Political Fits and Misfits

Percentage of residents in each area that say it is their "ideal" place to live

	Total %	City %	Suburb %	Small town %	Rural %
<b>Party ID</b>					
Republican	54	35	58	61	60
Democrat	49	46	52	50	51
Independent	53	44	52	60	63
<b>Ideology</b>					
Conservative	49	34	51	54	62
Moderate	52	42	56	56	57
Liberal	55	54	57	57	*

\*Too few in subsample to reliably characterize  
Percentage with no opinion not shown.

The survey also finds that more than seven-in-ten city residents who prefer a faster-pace of life say the city is perfect for them. But among those city residents who favor a slower lifestyle, exactly the same percentage say they are not living in their ideal place.

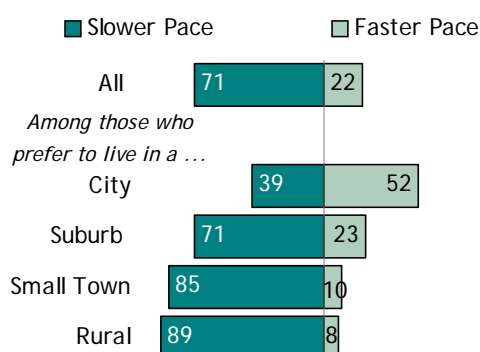
In the country and in small towns, the opposite pattern emerges. Here, more than eight-in-ten overall prefer a slow pace. And among this group, more than six-in-ten say they are living in their ideal locale. But substantial majorities of those who prefer a faster-paced life and live in small towns or the country say they are not living in their ideal place. In the suburbs, modest majorities say they are living in their ideal place irrespective of whether they prefer to live in an area with a faster paced (54%) or slower paced (53%) lifestyle.

Attitudes toward social distance also shape judgments about where people want to live. Overall, Americans are neighborly folks – some 73% say they want to live in a place where people know each other well, compared with just 22% who say they would rather live where most people don't know each other's business. But there are some differences by community preference. Among those who consider small towns the ideal place to live, 78% say they prefer to be in a place where neighbors know each other well; among those drawn to cities, just 64% say the same.

These attitudes, too, are associated with contentment with one's current community type. For example, six-in-ten (61%) urban dwellers who prefer to live in a place where people know each other well say the city isn't their ideal place to live. By contrast, among city residents who favor a place where neighbors don't know each other's business: slightly more than half (52%) say they're living in

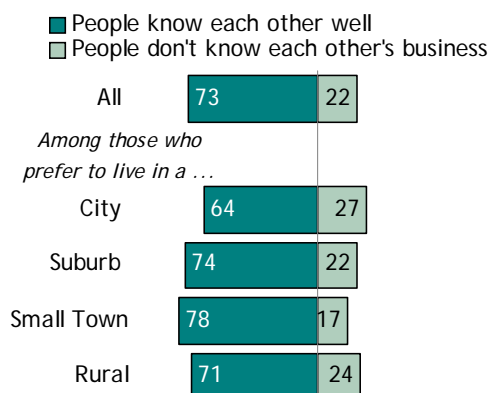
### Pace of Life

Do you prefer to live in a community with a...



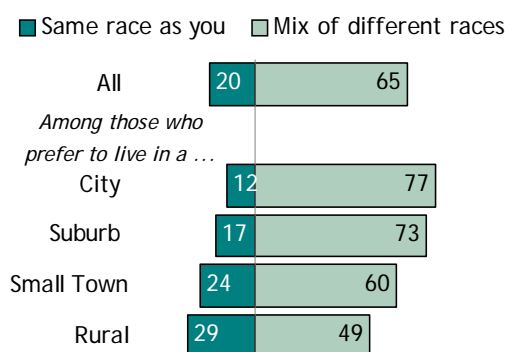
### Knowing Your Neighbors

Do you prefer to live in a community where...



### Racial Diversity

Do you prefer to live in a community where most people are...



Note: "Don't know/Refused" responses are not shown.

PewResearchCenter

their ideal place.

The pattern is reversed the farther one gets from the city: About six-in-ten residents of small towns and rural areas who want lots of social interaction with neighbors say the country is the best possible place for them to live. But among residents in these areas who prefer to be left alone, big majorities say some other type of locale is their ideal place to live.

On the question of tolerance for diversity, Americans by a lopsided margin say they prefer living in a place where there is a mix of different races (65%) over one where most people are the same race as they are (20%). But there are differences by community preference. Fully 77% of people who think of cities as their ideal place say they prefer racial diversity in their surroundings, while just 49% of people who would like to live in rural areas say they prefer to live in a racially-mixed place. These response patterns are similar with regard to questions about a tolerance for living among immigrants and a tolerance for living among people of different religions.

Not surprisingly, an analysis of all “mismatched” Americans shows they are significantly less satisfied with their current community than are those who say their ideal community type is the one they’re living in now. Overall, fully 31% of those who say they are living in their ideal locale rate the overall quality of life in their present community as “excellent,” compared with just 18% who would prefer to live in some other kind of place.

### Community Ratings

	Living in ideal community %	Not living in ideal community %
Excellent	31	18
Very good	35	37
Good	24	30
Only fair	8	13
Poor	2	3

Note: Percentage with no opinion not shown.

## Who Lives Where; Who'd Like to Live Where?

Each of America's four major community types presents a somewhat different profile – with notable variances by age, race, ethnicity, income and political affiliation.

On the age front, cities are more tilted than the other communities to a young adult population, while suburbs have their biggest age bulge among residents ages 30-49, and small towns and rural areas are more skewed toward an older population than are the other community types.

On the socio-economic front, suburbs have higher shares of affluent adults and college graduates than do the other three communities types. Rural areas and small towns lag behind the others in college grads.

The racial and ethnic patterns are also notable. Blacks and Hispanics are much more prevalent in cities than in rural areas. Meantime, the racial and ethnic makeup of small towns closely resembles that of the nation as a whole, while in the suburbs, blacks and

Hispanics are slightly underrepresented – but not by as much as they are in rural areas.

On the marital front, married couples are overrepresented in the suburbs. And when it comes to political affiliation, the cities skew heavily Democratic, the rural areas skew heavily Republican and the partisan affiliation of suburban and small town residents resembles that of the nation as a whole.

These four community types also differ by the share of residents who have large extended families living nearby. In rural areas, 58% residents say they have six or more members of their family living within an hour's drive. In cities, just 38% of residents say they have that many family members who live nearby. The other two community types fall in between: about half of small town residents (51%) say they have that many family members nearby, as do 43% of suburbanites.

### Who Lives Where?

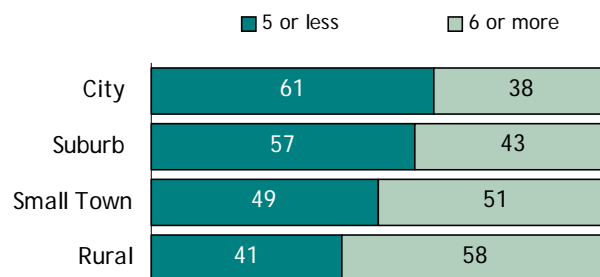
Demographics by current community type

	All	City	Suburb	Small town	Rural area
	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Age</b>					
18-29	22	28	22	19	14
30-49	36	34	40	34	34
50-64	24	21	22	25	30
65+	15	14	11	19	18
<b>Gender</b>					
Men	48	48	49	46	50
Women	52	52	51	54	50
<b>Family Income</b>					
\$75,000+	26	21	39	20	24
\$50-75k	15	17	15	12	17
\$30-50k	18	17	13	20	22
LT \$30,000	25	27	17	32	22
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>					
White	69	58	73	71	83
Black	11	15	10	11	5
Hispanic	13	19	9	13	6
<b>Education</b>					
College grad+	27	25	43	21	17
Some college	23	26	23	19	25
HS grad/less	49	48	34	60	58
<b>Party ID</b>					
Republican	25	19	25	27	31
Democrat	35	42	35	33	27
Independent	31	29	35	30	29

There patterns are similar – but less pronounced -- when it comes to having friends who live nearby. Some 28% of city residents say they have fewer than the average number of friends living nearby, while just 18% of rural residents, 20% of suburbanites and 23% of people living in small towns say the same. However, roughly equal shares of all four community types say they have more than the average number of friends living nearby.

### Family Nearby?

How many members of your extended family live within an hour's drive?



Note: "Don't know/Refused" responses are not shown.

PewResearchCenter

Looking next at where people say they *want* to live, the demographic patterns are broadly similar – but, in a few cases, the variances are more pronounced. Age is the most striking example. Twice as many young adults as elderly adults currently live in the city. But more than three times as many young adults as elderly adults say they *want* to live in a city.

<b>Who Wants to Live Where?</b>					
Demographics by preferred community type					
	All	City	Suburb	Small town	Rural area
	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Age</b>					
18-29	22	40	22	14	13
30-49	36	32	42	34	35
50-64	24	14	20	30	32
65+	15	12	14	18	17
<b>Gender</b>					
Men	48	46	45	44	60
Women	52	54	55	56	40
<b>Family Income</b>					
\$75,000+	26	26	34	24	22
\$50-75k	15	13	15	15	17
\$30-50k	18	16	15	19	21
LT \$30,000	25	28	19	26	28
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>					
White	69	55	67	74	81
Black	11	15	15	9	6
Hispanic	13	20	9	14	7
<b>Education</b>					
College grad+	27	29	39	23	18
Some college	23	26	22	21	25
HS grad/less	49	44	39	56	57
<b>Party ID</b>					
Republican	25	17	27	26	29
Democrat	35	44	36	33	27
Independent	31	30	31	32	30

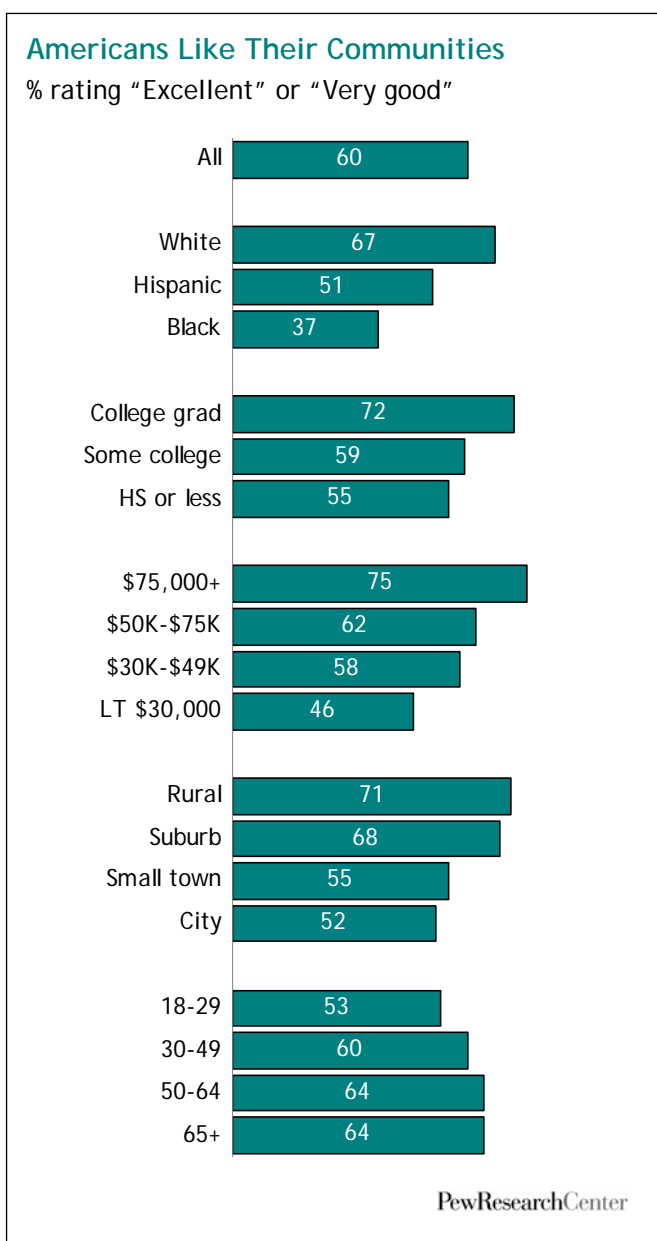
### III. Community Satisfaction

Most Americans give high marks to the community where they currently live. Six-in-ten adults describe their current community as an “excellent” or “very good” place to live, and another quarter rate it as “good.” Just 12% say their community is an only fair or a poor place to live.

There are some notable demographic differences in these ratings. For example, whites are nearly twice as likely blacks to rate their community as “excellent” or “very good” – 67% of whites do so, compared with just 37% of blacks. Hispanic fall in between; 51% give their community one of the top two ratings.

Greater educational attainment and higher family income are both associated with a higher community rating. And there differences in community ratings by community type. Residents of rural areas are most likely to give their community a rating of “excellent” or “very good” (71%), followed by suburbanites (68%), small town residents (55%) and city dwellers (52%).

Older residents tend to have higher ratings about their communities than younger ones. Over 60% of residents who are 30 years or older rate their communities as “Excellent” or “Very good,” compared with 53% of young adults who are below age 30.



## Rate Your Community

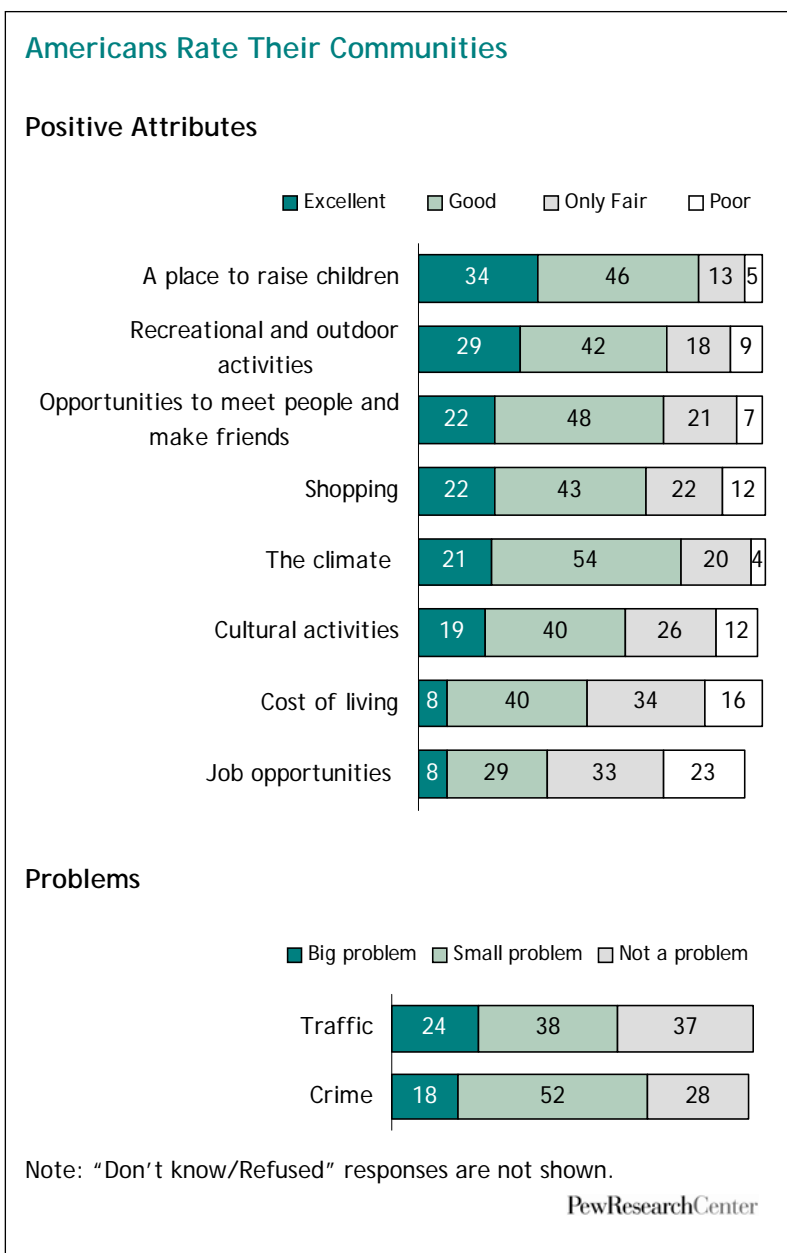
Survey respondents were asked to judge their community on ten familiar criteria, eight of which focused on positive attributes and two of which focused on problems.

On the positive side, more survey respondents had good things to say about their community as “a place to raise children” than about any other qualities tested in the survey. Eight-in-ten describe their local community as an excellent (34%) or good (46%) place to raise children. Having access to recreational and outdoor activities, and having opportunities to meet people and make friends also are highly rated by most Americans. A majority of Americans give good or excellent ratings to local shopping, climate and cultural activities.

In contrast, “job opportunities” and “cost of living” received lower ratings: only 37% of survey respondents think the job opportunities in their local communities are excellent or good, and only 48% think positively of the cost of living in their local area.

Asked to assess problems, about one quarter (24%) of respondents say traffic is a “big problem” in their community, while equal shares of the rest say it is a small problem (38%) or not a problem (37%). And on the subject of crime, 18% say it is a big problem in their area, 52% say it is a small problem and 28% think it is not a problem.

The following sections explore the community ratings in greater detail and analyze responses by different demographic groups.

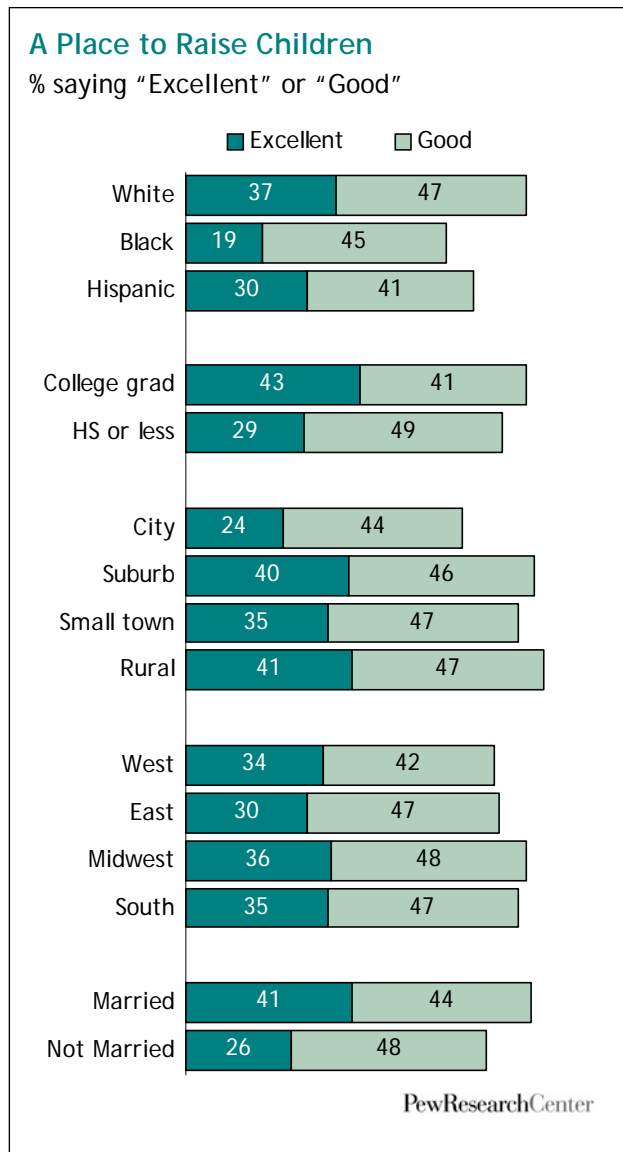


## A Place to Raise Children

The vast majority of whites (84%) give excellent or good ratings to their community as a place to raise children. In contrast, only about six in ten black respondents think the same. Hispanics are in between: About seven in ten Hispanics give positive ratings to their community as a place for children. Americans who earn at least a college degree are more likely than those who are less educated to have positive ratings about their communities' childrearing environment.

While nearly seven in ten city dwellers rate their communities as excellent or good for raising children, those living in other communities offer even better marks on this question. Indeed, close to nine in ten rural (88%) and suburban (86%) residents give positive ratings to the childrearing aspect of their communities. On the regional front, more than eight in ten adults living in the Midwest and South think their local community is an excellent or good place to raise children, compared with 76% of residents who live in the West or East.

The survey also finds that married couples and home owners have higher ratings about their communities' childrearing environment than do unmarried respondents and those who rent a home, respectively.

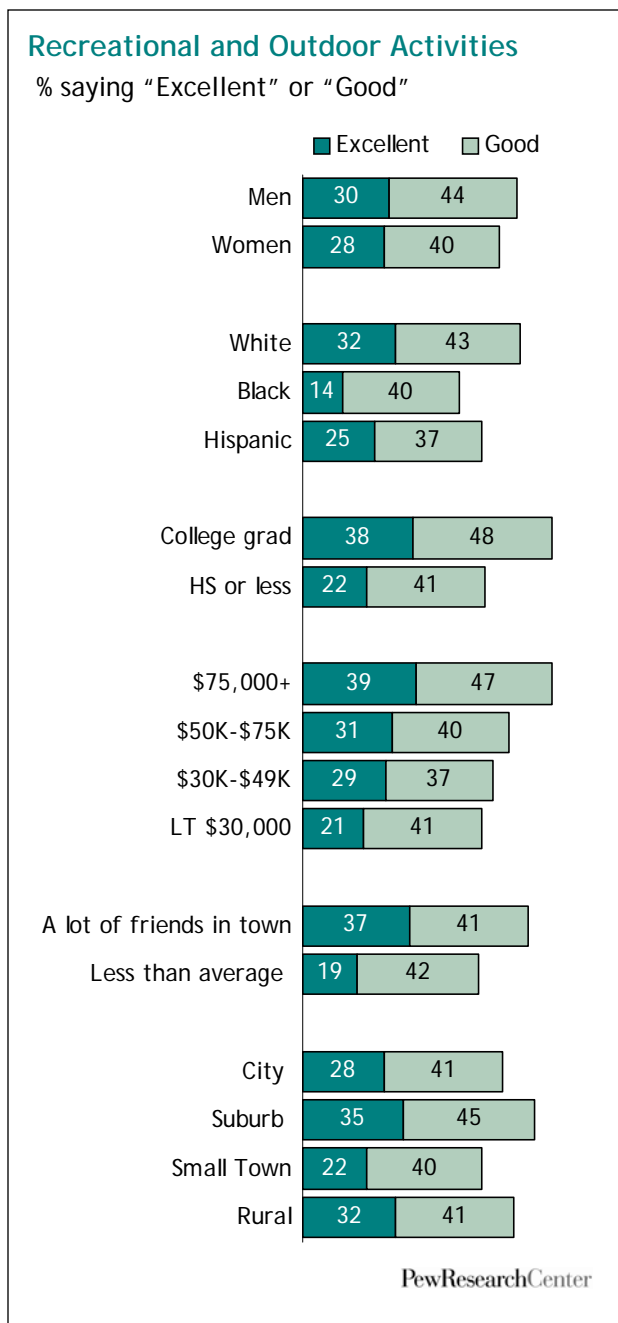


## Recreational and Outdoor Activities

About three quarters (74%) of men rate their communities' recreational and outdoor activities as excellent or good, compared with a slightly smaller share of women (69%). Whites (76%) are more positive about the recreational activities in their community than are blacks (54%) or Hispanics (62%). College grads are more likely than those who have lower education to give positive ratings to the recreational activities in the local communities.

Family income is also associated with Americans' ratings on local recreational and outdoor activities. The vast majority (85%) of those with a family income of \$75,000 or more a year give positive ratings to this aspect, while only a bit more than six in ten of those who make less than \$30,000 feel the same way. Further, respondents who say they have "a lot of friends in town" are much more likely to rate the local recreational and outdoor activities as good or excellent than those who say that their number of friends locally is below average.

Also, Westerners are more likely than those in other sections of the county to give positive ratings to recreational and outdoor activities available at the local communities. Compared with those who rent, homeowners are happier about the recreational activities in their local communities.

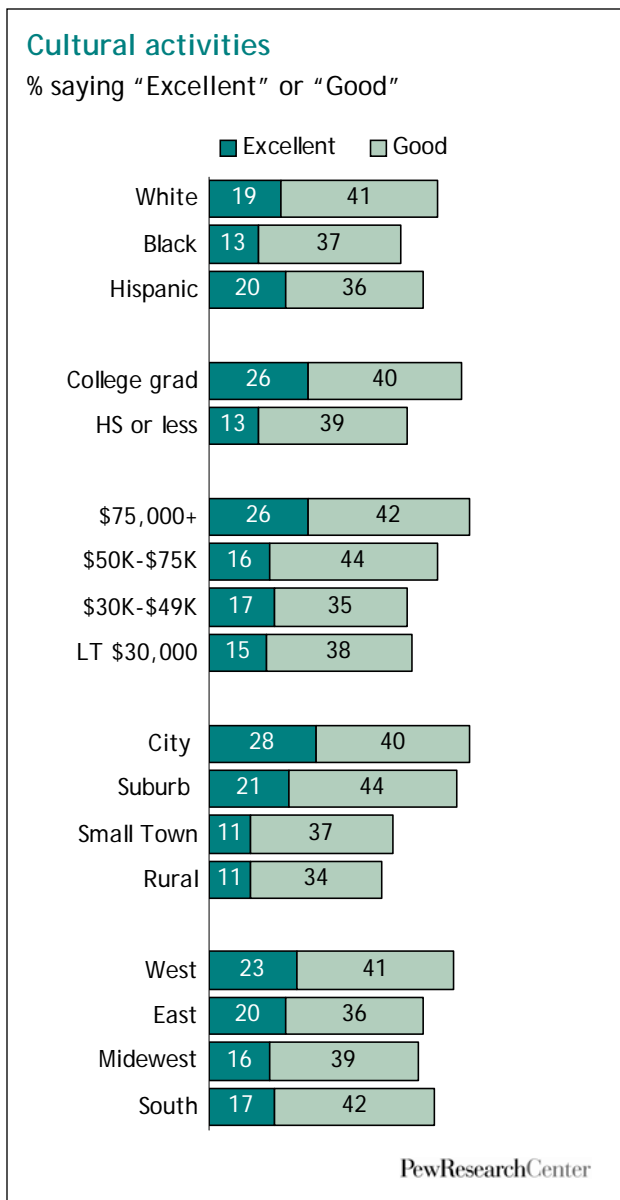


## Cultural Activities

City dwellers and suburban residents have better feelings about the cultural activities in their area than do those who live elsewhere. Nearly seven in ten residents of cities or suburbs rate the cultural activities as “excellent” or “good,” with about half of those live in a small town or rural area.

People with college degrees and higher incomes give better ratings than others to the cultural activities in their community, and whites register slightly higher levels of satisfaction on this front than do blacks or Hispanics. .

Westerners are a little more likely than people who live in other regions of the country to say that the cultural activities in their local communities are excellent or good.



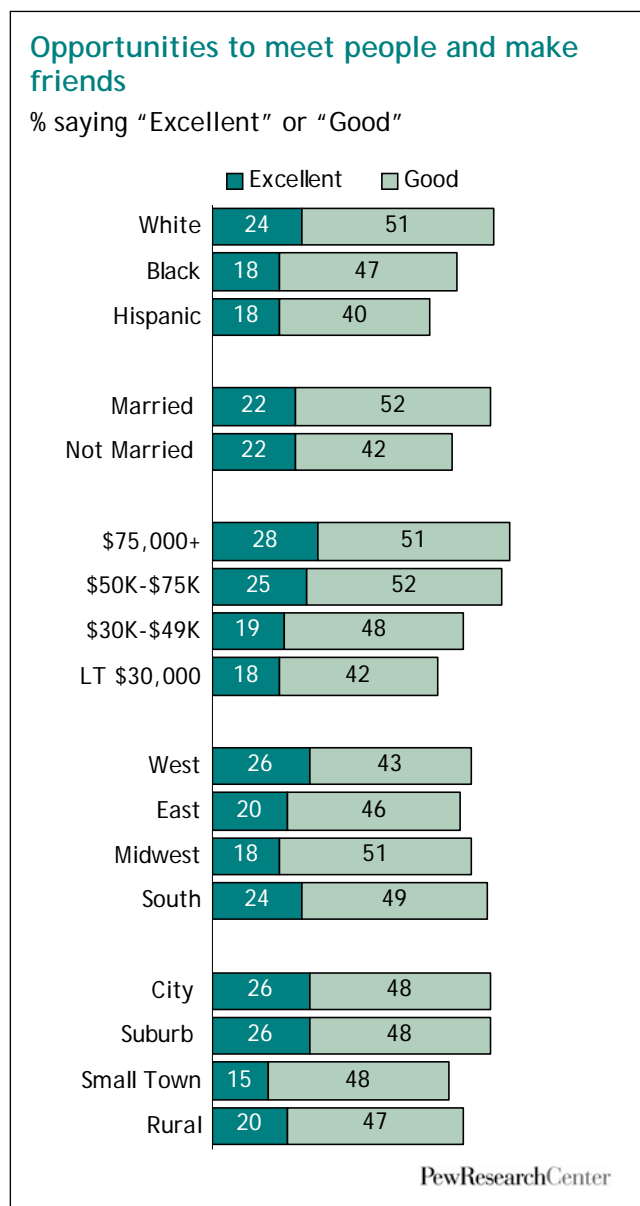
## Opportunities to Meet People and Make Friends

People who live in the city or the suburbs are more likely than those in small towns or rural areas to describe their local communities as an “excellent” or “good” place to meet people and make friends. There is a difference on this front by race and ethnicity as well. About three quarters of whites think that opportunities to meet people and make friends are excellent or good in their community, compared with just two-thirds of blacks and 58% of Hispanics who feel the same way

Married respondents (75%) are more likely than those who are not married (65%) to rate their social opportunities high within the local community.

Family income is positively associated with how people view the social opportunities in their community. More than three quarters of respondents who have family income \$50,000 or higher think their chances of meeting people and making friends are excellent/good in their community, compared with about 67% of respondents with income less than \$50,000 and 60% with income below \$30,000.

There are slight regional differences regarding this question. Southerners are a bit more likely than those living in the East to say that their chances of meeting people and making friends are excellent/good in their local community. Americans who live in the Midwest and West fall in between.



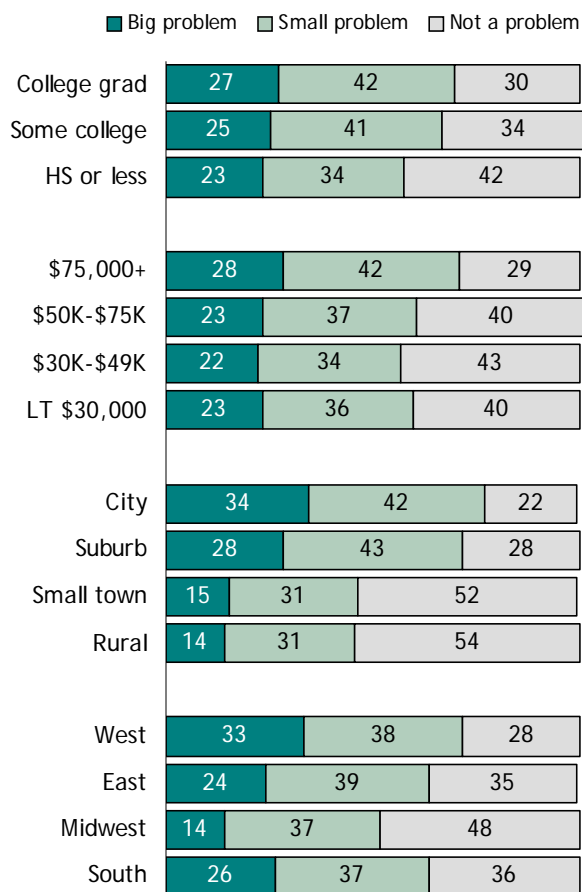
### Traffic, Crime as Community Problems

City dwellers have the worst traffic situation locally: more than one third of them say that traffic is a “big problem” in their local community. Residents in the suburbs come second; nearly three in ten rate traffic as a “big problem.” By contrast, in small towns and rural areas, the percentage of people who think traffic is a big problem is 15% or below.

Analyzing responses by regions, one finds that Westerners are the most troubled by traffic. A third of them rate it as a big problem, compared with a quarter of those who live in the East and South, and just 14% of those who live in the Midwest.

There are no other notable variations by demographic group.

### Is Traffic a Problem in Your Community?



Note: Numbers in the bar show the “Excellent” or “Good” responses. “Don’t know/Refused” responses are not shown.

PewResearchCenter

As with traffic, city residents have the biggest problem with crime. More than one third of city dwellers think crime is a big problem in their community, while fewer than one in ten residents of suburbs and rural areas feel this way, as do about one in seven residents of small towns.

There are notable racial differences as well. Blacks and Hispanics are both about twice as likely as whites to say crime is a “big problem” in their community.

People with a high school degree or less are more likely than college grads to say they live in a community where crime is a big problem.

Higher family income is associated with perceptions of a safer community: One quarter of people whose family income is under \$30,000 say crime is a big problem in their communities, while only about one in ten of those who have a family income of \$75,000 or more say so.

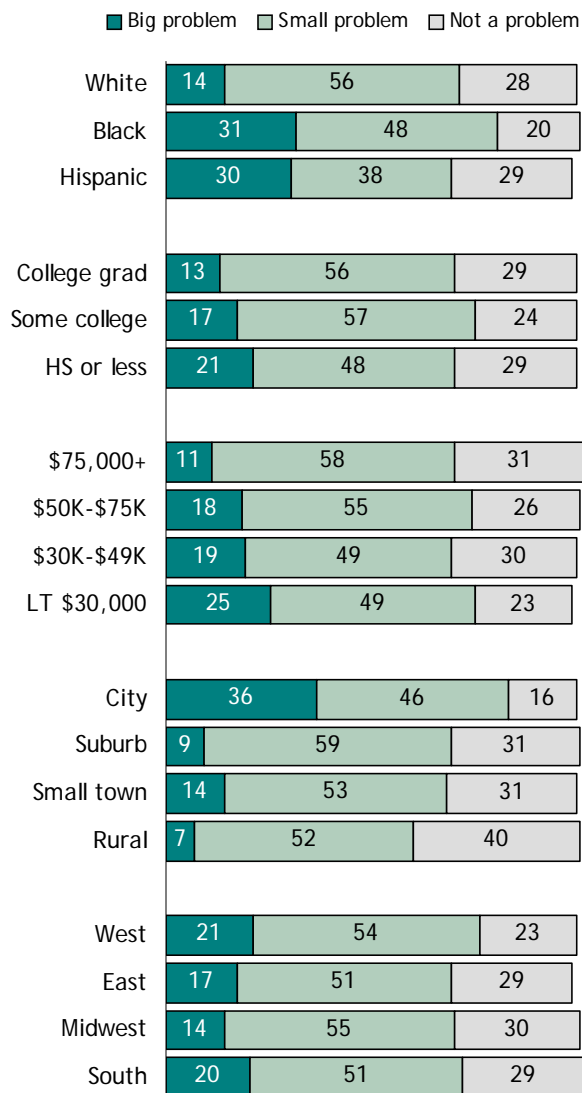
### Other Community Ratings

The survey also asked about ratings regarding shopping, cost of living, job opportunities, and the climate in local communities.

People with different demographic and socio-economic backgrounds all rate the shopping in their area about the same -- with the exception that college grads are more likely to rate shopping in their community as excellent or good (72%), than are those with a high school education or less (60%).

People with higher family income do not think they live in the area where the cost of living is higher. Nearly six in ten among those with a family income of \$75,000 or higher rated their cost of living as “excellent” or “good,” which is higher than those with a family income of \$30,000 to \$50,000 (49%) and below \$30,000 (38%). Other surveys show that people with higher incomes tend to live in communities with a higher cost of living.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it

### Is Crime a Problem in Your Community?



Note: Numbers in the bar show the “Excellent” or “Good” responses. “Don’t know/Refused” responses are not shown.

PewResearchCenter

<sup>2</sup> See the Pew Research Center report “Inside the Middle Class: Bad Times Hit the Good Life” released April 9, 2008. (<http://pewsocialtrends.org/pubs/706/middle-class-poll>)

would appear that assessments of local cost of living are, at least in part, a subjective measure in which positive ratings rise as income rises. Likewise, higher educational attainment is also associated with a better rating of cost living in local communities.

Compared to the city dwellers, suburb and small town residents have slightly better rating of the cost of living in their communities. People living in the South and the Midwest give better ratings than those live in other parts of the country to cost of living in their local communities.

City dwellers and suburb residents give higher ratings than people who live in small towns or rural area to the local job opportunities in their community. Southerners think more highly their local job opportunities than do residents of other regions. More than four in ten residents in the South rate their local communities as a place with “excellent” or “good” job opportunities, compared with about one third of people living in the East or Midwest, and 39% of those in the West.

How’s the weather in your community? Residents of South (80%) and West (79%) are more likely to say their weather is “excellent” or “good” than are those live in the East (72%) or Mid-West (65%).

### Ratings and Mobility

Overall, people’s ratings of their community are not influenced in any significant way by whether they spent their whole life in their community or moved there from somewhere else. Both groups have similar ratings about their community.

However, community ratings *are* linked to whether a resident plans to stay in a community or move. Among people who say that they are very likely or somewhat likely to move away from their current community within the next five years, 50% give an “excellent” or “very good” rating to their community. Among those who say they are not likely to move in the near future, 67% give on of these top ratings to their community. The survey also finds that when

#### Community Ratings by Likelihood to Move

Looking ahead five years from now, how likely is that you will move away from the local community where you are living now?

	Likely to move	Not likely to move	% Differences
<i>% who give “Excellent” or “Good” ratings</i>			
Overall rating	50	67	17
A place to raise children	73	85	12
The climate	68	80	12
Opportunities to meet people and make friends	65	74	9
Recreational and outdoor activities	68	74	6
Cost of living	46	50	4
Shopping	64	66	2
Cultural activities	58	59	1
Job opportunities	37	38	1

Note: Overall rating shows the “Excellent” or “Very good” responses.

people give lower ratings to where they live regarding the childrearing environment, the climate, opportunities to meet people and make friends and recreational and outdoor activities, they are more likely to say they plan to

move out of a community. In contrast, job opportunities, cost of living, shopping, and cultural activities are not critical factors related to the intention to relocate.

## Community Involvement

Americans are evenly split in terms of community involvement: Half of the population is either very involved or somewhat involved in community and neighborhood activities, and the other half is either not too involved or not at all involved.

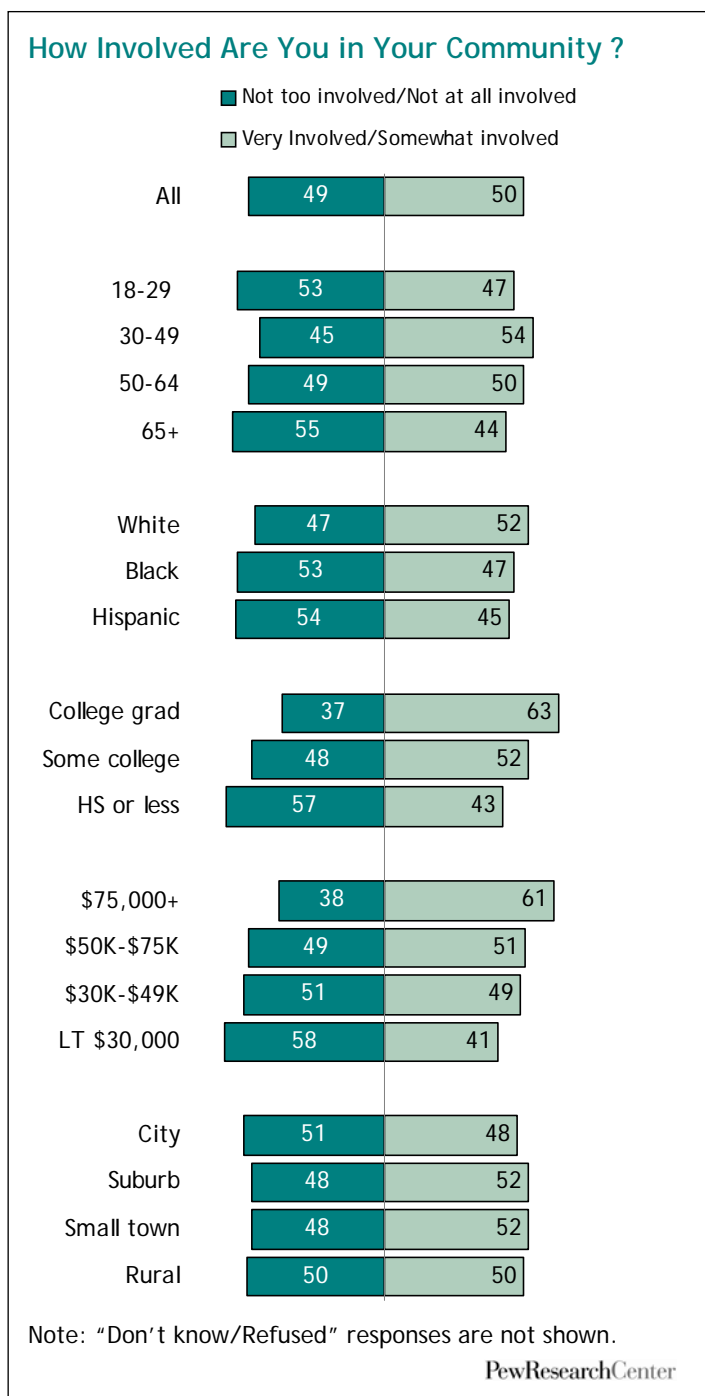
People ages 30-49 are the group most involved in community activities. About 54% of this age group say that they are either “very” or “somewhat” involved in their local communities, compared with 47% of younger adults 18-29 and 44% of older folks ages 65 and older who have similar ratings.

Higher income and higher education are generally associated with a higher level of community involvement. More than six in ten people with family income \$75,000 or higher are involved in community activities, compared with about four in ten of those who make less than \$30,000.

Also, more than six in ten Americans with college or post-graduate education are either “very” or “somewhat” involved in their local communities. In contrast, 52% of people with some college education and 43% of people with high-school or less education fall into this category.

There are only minor differences in community involvement by race and ethnic groups and by community type. About half of all blacks, whites and Hispanics say they are involved in their community, as do about half of the residents of cities, suburbs, small towns and rural areas.

Surprisingly, residents who are not originally from the community where they live now are somewhat more involved in community and neighborhood activities than are those who have lived in the same place their whole



lives. Among the “movers”, 52% say that are very or somewhat involved in community activities, compared with 47% of “stayers.” The likely explanation is that “movers” tend to have more income and education – and both of these characteristics are linked to greater community involvement<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> See the Pew Research Center report “American Mobility: Who Moves? Who Stays Put? Where’s Home?” released December, 17, 2008. (<http://pewsocialtrends.org/pubs/721/movers-and-stayers>)

**EMBARGOED FOR PRINT / ON-LINE RELEASE: 12:01 A.M. JANUARY 29, 2009**

**PEW SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS**  
**TOPLINE FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS**  
 Oct 3-19, 2008 MOBILITY SURVEY  
 N=2,260

**NOTE: ALL NUMBERS ARE PERCENTAGES. THE PERCENTAGES LESS THAN .5 % ARE REPLACED BY AN ASTERISK (\*). COLUMNS/ROWS MAY NOT TOTAL 100% DUE TO ROUNDING. ALL TRENDS REFERENCE SURVEYS FROM THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS AND SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.**

Q.1 Which of the following BEST describes the place where you now live? (READ)

31	A city
26	A suburban area
26	A small town
16	a rural area
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

Q.2 Overall, how would you rate your [INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q1--IF Q1=1: city; IF Q1=2: suburb; IF Q1=3: town; IF Q1=4,9: area] as a place to live? Would you say it is (READ)?

<u>Oct 2008</u>		<u>Oct 2006</u>	<u>May 1999</u>	<u>Feb 1997</u>
24	Excellent	27	28	25
36	Very good	29	38	31
26	Good	31	24	28
10	Only Fair	9	8	11
2	Poor	3	2	4
*	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1	*	1

Q.3 How would you rate each of the following in your local community? First, ... [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]?  
 READ IF NECESSARY: Is this excellent, good, only fair, or poor in your local community?

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u> <u>(VOL.)</u>
a. Job opportunities	8	29	33	23	6
b. Cost of living	8	40	34	16	1
c. A place to raise children	34	46	13	5	2
d. Recreational and outdoor activities	29	42	18	9	2
e. Shopping	22	43	22	12	1
g. The climate	21	54	20	4	1
h. Cultural activities	19	40	26	12	3
j. Opportunities to meet people and make friends	22	48	21	7	1

**RANDOMIZE Q4 and Q5**

**Q4/Q5 COMBINED**

Q.4 How about traffic? Is this a big problem, a small problem, or not a problem in your local community?

Q.5 How about crime? Is this a big problem, a small problem, or not a problem in your local community?

	<u>Traffic</u>	<u>Crime</u>
Big problem	24	18
Small problem	38	52
Not a problem	37	28
Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1	1

**EMBARGOED FOR PRINT / ON-LINE RELEASE: 12:01 A.M. JANUARY 29, 2009**

Q.6 How involved are you in community and neighborhood activities where you live? (READ)

50	Involved <b>(NET)</b>
11	Very involved
39	Somewhat involved
49	Not Involved <b>(NET)</b>
28	Not too involved
22	Not at all involved
*	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

Q.7 About how many members of your extended family live within an hour's drive of where you live now? (READ CHOICE CATEGORIES AS NECESSARY) IF ASK WHAT IS MEANT BY 'EXTENDED FAMILY": By extended family, I mean children, parents, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles.

54	Five or less <b>(NET)</b>
19	None
35	1 up to 5
46	Six or more <b>(NET)</b>
19	6 up to 10
13	11 up to 20
14	More than 20
1	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**ASK ALL:**

On a related topic.

Q37 If you could live anywhere in the United States that you wanted to, would you prefer a city, a suburban area, small town or rural area?

23	City
25	Suburban area
30	Small town
21	Rural area
1	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

Q38 If you could live anywhere in the United States that you wanted to, which STATE would you MOST prefer to live in? [OPEN-END; ACCEPT ONE RESPONSE ONLY; ACCEPT CURRENT STATE]

IF REGION OR MORE THAN ONE STATE GIVEN PROBE: Which ONE state would you MOST prefer?

By State

13	California
8	Florida
5	New York
5	North Carolina
5	Texas
4	Colorado
3	Arizona
3	Hawaii
47	Total other states, each less than 3%
7	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

By Region

12	Northeast
12	Midwest
36	South
33	West
7	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**ASK FORM A ONLY, n=725:**

Q39FA As I read through the following places, just tell me your first reaction—Would you want to live in this city or its surrounding metropolitan area or NOT want to live there?

First, ...[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]

READ IF NECESSARY: What's your first reaction? Would you want to live in [INSERT ITEM] or not want to live there?

IF RESPONDENT SAYS THEY CURRENTLY LIVE IN THIS AREA PROBE ONCE: "If you had a choice, would you want to live there, or not want to live there?"

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No Opinion/ DK/Ref (VOL.)</u>
a. The New York City area	24	75	1
b. The Cleveland, Ohio area	10	88	2
c. The Dallas, Texas area	24	74	1
d. The Minneapolis, Minnesota area	16	82	2
e. The Orlando, Florida area	34	65	1
f. The Portland, Oregon area	31	66	3
g. The Sacramento, California area	29	69	2
h. The Saint Louis, Missouri area	18	79	3
i. The Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area	17	80	3
j. The San Diego, California area	40	59	1

**ASK FORM B ONLY, n=763:**

Q40FB As I read through the following places, just tell me your first reaction—Would you want to live in this city or its surrounding metropolitan area or NOT want to live there?

First, ...[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]

READ IF NECESSARY: What's your first reaction? Would you want to live in [INSERT ITEM] or not want to live there?

IF RESPONDENT SAYS THEY CURRENTLY LIVE IN THIS AREA PROBE ONCE: "If you had a choice, would you want to live there, or not want to live there?"

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No Opinion/ DK/Ref (VOL.)</u>
a. The Detroit, Michigan area	8	90	1
b. The Houston, Texas area	23	75	2
c. The Las Vegas, Nevada area	23	75	2
d. The Los Angeles area	21	78	1
e. The San Antonio, Texas area	29	68	3
f. The Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area	24	73	3
g. The Phoenix, Arizona area	33	64	3
h. The Seattle, Washington area	38	60	2
i. The Tampa, Florida area	34	64	2
j. The Washington, DC area	25	74	1

**ASK FORM C ONLY, n=772:**

Q41FC As I read through the following places, just tell me your first reaction—Would you want to live in this city or its surrounding metropolitan area or NOT want to live there?

First, ...[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]

READ IF NECESSARY: What's your first reaction? Would you want to live in [INSERT ITEM] or not want to live there?

IF RESPONDENT SAYS THEY CURRENTLY LIVE IN THIS AREA PROBE ONCE: "If you had a choice, would you want to live there, or not want to live there?"

## Q.41FC CONTINUED...

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No Opinion/ DK/Ref (VOL.)</u>
a. The Atlanta, Georgia area	26	72	2
b. The Baltimore, Maryland area	20	77	3
c. The Boston, Massachusetts area	28	69	2
d. The Cincinnati, Ohio area	13	84	3
e. The Chicago area	24	74	1
f. The Denver, Colorado area	43	55	1
g. The Kansas City area	15	81	3
h. The Miami, Florida area	28	70	2
i. The Riverside, California area	23	72	5
j. The San Francisco area	34	65	2

**ASK ALL:**

Q42 For each of these pairs of statements, tell me which kind of community comes closer to where you would prefer to live, even if neither is exactly right. First...[INSERT ITEMS; RANDOMIZE ITEMS; ROTATE RESPONSE OPTIONS FOR EACH ITEM PAIR]

READ IF NECESSARY: Which of these kinds of places would you prefer to live in?

- a.
- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 20 | A place where most people are of the same race as you           |
| 65 | A place where there are many different racial and ethnic groups |
| 13 | Neither/Both/Doesn't matter <b>(VOL.)</b>                       |
| 2  | Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>                                |
- b.
- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 24 | A place with a large immigrant population                |
| 56 | A place where there is only a small immigrant population |
| 16 | Neither/Both/Doesn't matter <b>(VOL.)</b>                |
| 5  | Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>                         |
- c.
- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 71 | A place with a slower pace of life        |
| 22 | A place with a faster pace of life        |
| 5  | Neither/Both/Doesn't matter <b>(VOL.)</b> |
| 2  | Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>          |
- d.
- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 29 | A colder weather climate                  |
| 57 | A hotter weather climate                  |
| 12 | Neither/Both/Doesn't matter <b>(VOL.)</b> |
| 1  | Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>          |
- e.
- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 73 | A place where people know each other well                        |
| 22 | A place where neighbors usually don't know each other's business |
| 4  | Neither/Both/Doesn't matter <b>(VOL.)</b>                        |
| 1  | Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>                                 |
- f.
- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 25 | A place where many people are of the same religion that you are |
| 59 | A place where there are many different religious groups         |
| 14 | Neither/Both/Doesn't matter <b>(VOL.)</b>                       |
| 2  | Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>                                |

## Q.42 CONTINUED...

g.

- 24 A place where most people share your political views
- 63 A place where there is a mix of different political views
- 10 Neither/Both/Doesn't matter **(VOL.)**
- 3 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

h.

- 32 A place where most people are the same Social and economic class as you
- 61 A place where there are a mix of the upper, middle and lower classes
- 6 Neither/Both/Doesn't matter **(VOL.)**
- 1 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

Q43 The next question is just for fun: Would you prefer to live in a place with more Starbucks or more McDonalds?

- 35 Starbucks
- 43 McDonald's
- 20 Neither/Both/Doesn't matter **(VOL.)**
- 1 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

Q44 Looking ahead FIVE YEARS from now, how likely is that you will move away from the local community where you are living now? Would you say it is very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

- 20 Very likely to move
- 20 Somewhat likely
- 24 Not too likely
- 34 Not at all likely to move
- 1 Will not move **(VOL.)**
- 1 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

## Appendix A: City Preferences

Shown: Percentage of group that said they would like to live in that city

### By Age

City	18-34	35-59	60+
Atlanta	35	26	11
Baltimore	23	20	14
Boston	36	29	15
Chicago	41	21	12
Cincinnati	14	14	10
Cleveland	19	7	7
Dallas	32	24	17
Denver	47	49	28
Detroit	17	4	5
Houston	36	23	11
Kansas City	16	19	9
Las Vegas	30	22	14
Los Angeles	38	17	8
Miami	45	24	17
Minneapolis	25	14	12
New York	45	14	14
Orlando	52	30	23
Philadelphia	35	23	12
Phoenix	34	35	27
Pittsburgh	29	14	11
Portland	38	29	25
Riverside	33	22	14
Sacramento	46	25	15
St. Louis	26	16	12
San Antonio	36	30	19
San Diego	61	33	26
San Francisco	48	32	17
Seattle	50	38	25
Tampa	43	34	24
Washington, DC	41	21	14

### By Gender

City	Men	Women
Atlanta	26	25
Baltimore	18	22
Boston	28	28
Chicago	26	23
Cincinnati	14	12
Cleveland	11	9
Dallas	26	23
Denver	47	40
Detroit	8	8
Houston	29	18
Kansas City	16	15
Las Vegas	30	16
Los Angeles	24	18
Miami	35	22
Minneapolis	20	13
New York	22	25
Orlando	35	33
Philadelphia	23	24
Phoenix	36	29
Pittsburgh	18	16
Portland	38	25
Riverside	27	20
Sacramento	34	24
St. Louis	20	16
San Antonio	36	22
San Diego	45	35
San Francisco	33	33
Seattle	42	34
Tampa	36	32
Washington, DC	26	23

## By Income

City	<\$30k	\$30-50k	\$50-100k	\$100k+
Atlanta	24	28	30	26
Baltimore	19	18	20	26
Boston	23	25	30	45
Chicago	23	20	24	35
Cincinnati	11	19	10	18
Cleveland	18	7	7	7
Dallas	26	29	27	22
Denver	35	50	50	52
Detroit	13	6	6	7
Houston	27	20	27	23
Kansas City	16	17	15	15
Las Vegas	29	15	29	18
Los Angeles	33	12	22	14
Miami	34	29	22	29
Minneapolis	17	20	15	15
New York	21	22	23	35
Orlando	38	39	34	30
Philadelphia	24	17	28	27
Phoenix	29	29	43	31
Pittsburgh	20	17	18	15
Portland	26	35	31	43
Riverside	26	22	20	26
Sacramento	29	36	27	31
St. Louis	18	20	20	11
San Antonio	25	25	33	43
San Diego	34	46	41	52
San Francisco	30	31	35	48
Seattle	41	32	42	45
Tampa	30	30	39	37
Washington, DC	31	13	29	28

## By Education

City	HS or less	Some college	College grad+
Atlanta	21	33	28
Baltimore	15	21	27
Boston	20	27	43
Chicago	19	26	33
Cincinnati	11	16	15
Cleveland	10	10	10
Dallas	25	24	24
Denver	34	44	59
Detroit	9	7	8
Houston	22	28	22
Kansas City	15	20	12
Las Vegas	26	20	20
Los Angeles	21	23	19
Miami	30	31	24
Minneapolis	14	19	19
New York	18	32	28
Orlando	35	37	30
Philadelphia	16	21	38
Phoenix	31	35	33
Pittsburgh	17	20	16
Portland	25	34	41
Riverside	25	26	18
Sacramento	28	34	26
St. Louis	18	18	17
San Antonio	25	33	32
San Diego	30	44	54
San Francisco	26	34	46
Seattle	32	35	51
Tampa	34	34	35
Washington, DC	17	24	38

## By Party Identification and Ideology

<b>City</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Conserv</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Liberal</b>
Atlanta	21	31	27	Atlanta	26	26	32
Baltimore	14	23	22	Baltimore	18	24	18
Boston	26	34	25	Boston	21	29	41
Chicago	23	29	20	Chicago	18	31	25
Cincinnati	14	14	14	Cincinnati	16	15	9
Cleveland	10	10	10	Cleveland	8	13	11
Dallas	29	25	23	Dallas	27	26	17
Denver	48	39	50	Denver	46	46	38
Detroit	8	7	6	Detroit	9	7	9
Houston	21	25	23	Houston	26	25	20
Kansas City	21	14	15	Kansas City	16	16	15
Las Vegas	16	26	23	Las Vegas	22	22	23
Los Angeles	14	22	23	Los Angeles	16	18	30
Miami	27	30	31	Miami	22	31	36
Minneapolis	17	17	18	Minneapolis	14	16	21
New York	14	30	26	New York	19	19	39
Orlando	34	38	31	Orlando	31	33	39
Philadelphia	17	28	26	Philadelphia	17	28	29
Phoenix	38	28	35	Phoenix	36	32	31
Pittsburgh	19	18	17	Pittsburgh	15	16	20
Portland	33	31	34	Portland	28	32	38
Riverside	23	27	21	Riverside	19	22	34
Sacramento	27	31	32	Sacramento	29	27	34
St. Louis	24	17	17	St. Louis	19	19	17
San Antonio	34	25	30	San Antonio	34	30	23
San Diego	33	45	44	San Diego	34	43	49
San Francisco	28	41	33	San Francisco	22	37	53
Seattle	29	37	49	Seattle	32	42	46
Tampa	28	38	36	Tampa	31	39	33
Washington, DC	20	30	24	Washington, DC	17	25	38

## State Preferences

Shown: Percentage that said they would like to live in this state if they could live anywhere in the country

California	13	Oklahoma	1
Florida	8	Alaska	1
Don't know/Refused	7	New Jersey	1
Texas	5	Maryland	1
New York	5	Maine	1
North Carolina	5	Louisiana	1
Colorado	4	Arkansas	1
Hawaii	3	New Mexico	1
Arizona	3	Utah	1
Georgia	3	Kansas	1
Pennsylvania	3	Delaware	1
Tennessee	3	West Virginia	1
Virginia	2	Mississippi	1
Washington	2	Iowa	1
South Carolina	2	Connecticut	1
Oregon	2	Wyoming	*
Illinois	2	Nebraska	*
Ohio	2	Idaho	*
Kentucky	2	New Hampshire	*
Indiana	1	Vermont	*
Missouri	1	South Dakota	*
Montana	1	District of Columbia	*
Massachusetts	1	North Dakota	*
Minnesota	1	Rhode Island	*
Michigan	1		
Alabama	1		
Wisconsin	1		
Nevada	1		

\* less than .5 %.

## Appendix B. How the Census Bureau Defines Community Types

A metropolitan area consists of at least one densely populated urbanized area with a population of at least 50,000, as well as adjacent counties linked to it economically and socially. Although they once were defined as communities revolving around a core city, metropolitan regions now often include several nodes of activity and may sprawl over several states.

More than eight-in-ten Americans live in metropolitan areas, a share that has inched up in recent decades. Boundaries of these metropolitan areas can change based on new census data, or on revisions to the government's definition of what constitutes a metropolitan area.

	Metropolitan Population	Total U.S. Population	Percent Metro
1960	140,753,110	179,323,175	78.5
1970	164,272,878	203,302,031	80.8
1980	182,645,007	226,545,805	80.6
1990	203,987,166	248,709,873	82.0
2000	232,703,964	281,421,906	82.7
2007	251,786,911	301,290,332	83.6

Source: Census Bureau statistics analyzed by William H. Frey

The Census Bureau first produced data for metropolitan areas in 1950, using the county-based definition adopted by the Office of Management and Budget (replacing an older concept of "metropolitan district."). The OMB's definition of what constitutes a metropolitan area has been revised repeatedly since then, reflecting changes in population distribution and interaction around urban centers, as well as the changing needs of data users.

The most recent major revision, in 2003, reduced the focus on a central city. For an outlying county to be included in a metropolitan area, the new definition simplified the rules: Now, it is based on the share of employed workers who commute in or out. The old definition also included some population density and growth thresholds for those outlying counties. The most recent change also introduced the concept of a "micropolitan" area, with one urban cluster of at least 10,000 people.

Because the modern concept of metropolitan areas was not standardized until six decades ago, it is not possible to track metropolitan population trends for longer than that. The Census Bureau does publish data comparing the number of Americans living in "urban" and "rural" areas, which are defined by their population density and concentration. Until the 1920 Census, most Americans lived in rural areas. That balance shifted in 1920, when just over half (51%) of Americans were counted in urban areas.

The most current definition of urban and rural areas, which took effect for 2000 Census data, is based on census blocks or block groups. Unlike earlier definitions, it ignores boundaries of places, so one jurisdiction can include land that is both urban and rural.

An urbanized area (or urban cluster) consists of core census block groups or blocks with a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile, and surrounding census blocks with an overall density of at least 500 people per square mile. Under some conditions, according to the Census Bureau, "less densely settled territory may be part of" urban areas.

"Rural" consists of all territory, population and housing units not in an urbanized area or urban cluster.

Many people who think of themselves as living in small towns in fact reside in metropolitan areas under the Census Bureau's classification. That is because many lightly populated places are part of

metropolitan regions. In fact, 51% of the rural population of the United States lives within metropolitan areas. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Brookings Institution analysts pointed out that even Wasilla, Alaska, where Sarah Palin had served as mayor, is part of the Anchorage metropolitan area.

**Census numbers on urban-rural population shares**

	% urban	% rural
1900	39.6	60.4
1910	45.6	54.4
1920	51.2	48.8
1930	56.1	43.9
1940	56.5	43.5
1950	64.0	36.0
1960	69.9	30.1
1970	73.6	26.4
1980	73.7	26.3
1990	75.2	24.8
2000	79.0	21.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau