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All the Right Moves

5 Key Insights Into the Present
and Future of Millennial Talent Attraction

A Trend Report by Livability.com in conjunction with Ipsos

What do Millennials want?

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Welcome to the \$200 billion question.

And that's no arbitrary number. According to a report by *Forbes*, Millennials had a collective spending power of \$200 billion in 2017, and in 2018 will have the most combined spending power of any generation.

As they age into their 30s, Millennials will become an increasingly important consumer group for businesses and municipalities to consider as they enter the decade of their lives where major life decisions around career, marriage, family and home ownership will be made.

Businesses and economic development organizations are vying to attract this sought-after generation. With consistently low unemployment rates and a robust economy, Millennials in the U.S. have their choice of jobs in cities all across the country, making it crucial for talent attraction strategy to understand how they assess new employment opportunities and relocation decisions.



Livability.com, an authority in identifying what makes communities great places to live, commissioned an in-depth survey to examine the issues that drive and impact relocation decisions. The survey, conducted by the leading global market research firm Ipsos asked 1,050 adults between the ages of 20 and 35 about the characteristics of livability they value in their current and future communities.

The survey examined a variety of factors and provided answers to questions such as:

- ▶ **What are the most important factors Millennials consider when making a relocation decision?**
- ▶ **How does gender impact what factors are given more weight in the relocation decision process?**
- ▶ **What role does diversity play in evaluating various communities in which to relocate?**

Livability analyzed the data to find key insights that succinctly illustrate what Millennials are looking for in a new community and what drives their decision to relocate so that communities can better understand how to market themselves to attract and retain talent and promote economic growth.

MILLENNIAL VOICES :

“Affordability was a very important factor in deciding where my fiancé and I wanted to move. We both loved living in New York City, but saving money was very difficult and trying to plan for a future was just unrealistic when both of us were spending the majority of our paycheck on rent. So we made a conscious decision to look at new destinations that would allow us to save.”

–Dustin H.

▶ **KEY INSIGHT #1:**

When making a relocation decision, affordability reigns supreme.

Turns out, money may not buy you love, but it certainly goes a long way in a city that provides a lower cost of living. It’s no surprise, then, that the biggest question Millennials ask themselves when considering a move to a new city is, “can I afford to live here?”

Affordability was ranked the top decision-making factor by 36 percent of survey respondents, with 70 percent of those surveyed listing it as one of the top three things they consider.

The question becomes, what exactly defines affordability for Millennials? What price point might entice them to make a move?

According to the Livability.com survey, 35 percent of respondents from households making under \$50,000 annually consider a monthly rent or mortgage payment of \$600 (or less) affordable, while 40 percent of that same income bracket consider \$900 or less affordable.

Interestingly, geography also factored into how much affordability impacted the decision to move. More than 70 percent of Millennials from the Midwest, South and West say that a higher cost of living would prevent them from moving to a new city, even with a promising job opportunity. About 60 percent of respondents from the three regions rank lack of affordable housing as a second factor that would prevent them from moving.

40%

OF RESPONDENTS FROM HOUSEHOLDS UNDER 50K CONSIDER

\$900

A MONTH FOR RENT OR MORTGAGE AFFORDABLE

\$\$\$

AFFORDABILITY WAS RANKED A TOP THREE DECISION-MAKING FACTOR BY

70%

OF RESPONDENTS

MORE THAN **82%**

OF FEMALE RESPONDENTS WOULD NOT MOVE TO A NEW CITY FOR A NEW JOB DUE TO HIGH COST OF LIVING

Besides a job opportunity, what factors would you consider most important when deciding where to relocate?

	MOST IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	ALSO IMPORTANT
Affordability	36%	22%	12%
Men	36%		
Women	42%		
Future career opportunities	20%	19%	15%
Climate	12%	16%	18%
Ease of mobility	9%	14%	17%
Arts, culture and recreation opportunities	8%	12%	19%

▶ **KEY INSIGHT #2:**

When it comes to relocation, Millennial women know what they want—and it’s affordability.

While both genders cite affordability as one of the top three decision-making factors, for 42 percent of women, affordability is the most important factor influencing their decision to move. In fact, more than 82 percent of female respondents would not move to a different city for a new job due to high cost of living. They also cited lack of affordable housing options as a reason to stay put.

Men, on the other hand, placed importance on factors such as public transportation, access to an airport, prior experiences with the city and the presence of a vibrant art scene.



42% of women choose affordability as the most important factor that influences their decision to move



64% percent of female respondents are willing to move to a small to mid-size city or suburb

► KEY INSIGHT #3:

To attract Millennials, show them that your community isn't an "employment desert."

Communities and businesses need to play the Jerry Maguire to Millennials' Rod Tidwell—show them the money! Or better yet, show them the job opportunities.

Currently, 6.7 million job openings in the U.S. are unfilled, and Millennials want to know that a fair number of them are available in their community's market. In fact, 54 percent of respondents listed career options and job opportunities as the second most important factor influencing a relocation decision.

And here's an eye-opening gender reveal: 18 percent of all female respondents value future career opportunities in the cities they're considering for relocation. Next to affordability, a viable job playing field is a key decision-making factor for women when it comes to relocation.

Location also plays a role here—26 percent of respondents from the Midwest cited career opportunities as the most important factor to consider when deciding where to relocate.

FUTURE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR 26% OF THE RESPONDENTS FROM THE MIDWEST

RANKED **SECOND** AS A FACTOR INFLUENCING A RELOCATION DECISION AND **54% OF RESPONDENTS LISTED IT IN THEIR TOP 3**

► KEY INSIGHT #4:

Having a diverse community goes a long way with Millennials, although the definition of diversity varies based on individual preference.

More so than previous generations, Millennials place a strong degree of importance on diversity and inclusion at work and in the community around them. And that makes sense—according to a 2017 article in Forbes, "Millennials recognize, appreciate, and encourage diversity because they're living it. As opposed to older generations that were overwhelmingly white, today's millennial workforce is divided across a number of races and backgrounds."

But according to the Livability.com survey, respondents defined diversity in slightly different ways according to their gender, stated level of income and geographic region.

More than 70 percent of female respondents defined diversity as race, religion, nation of origin, income level and sexual orientation, versus 65 percent of males.

Households reporting an annual income of less than \$50,000 defined diversity as a mix of races, income levels and sexual orientation.

Respondents from different parts of the country also define diversity differently. Seventy percent of respondents from the Midwest believe diversity includes religion, nation of origin, income levels and gender identity.

Region also played a big role in how diversity factored into Millennials' decision-making process.

In fact, an astounding 93 percent of all respondents from the West were more likely to move to a place they perceived as diverse and inclusive, with the South close behind at 81 percent.

Another factor of note was ethnicity. The survey found that 88 percent of non-white respondents were more likely to move to a place they perceived as diverse and inclusive.

88%

OF NONWHITE RESPONDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO MOVE TO A PLACE THEY PERCEIVED AS DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE

MORE THAN 70% OF FEMALE RESPONDENTS DEFINED DIVERSITY AS **RACE, RELIGION, NATION OF ORIGIN, INCOME LEVEL AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

RESPONDENTS WITH HOUSEHOLD INCOME LESS THAN 50K DEFINE DIVERSITY AS A MIX OF **RACES, INCOME LEVELS AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

What might prevent you from relocating to a new city for a promising job opportunity?

	MEN	WOMEN
High cost of living	63%	82%
Lack of affordable housing options	46%	66%
Distance from family	39%	55%
Climate	33%	44%
Traffic	33%	40%
Hassle of moving	26%	31%
Lack of culture/ things to do (art scene, museums, food, festivals)	24%	29%
Lack of diversity	21%	21%
Lack of outdoor recreation:	19%	20%

Mobility is a major influencer: Easy commutes and airport accessibility, walkability and bike friendliness were cited by 40% of respondents as in their top 3 factors influencing a relocation decision

41% OF RESPONDENTS WITH INCOME OVER \$50K SAID **BAD TRAFFIC CONDITIONS** WOULD PREVENT THEM FROM MOVING, EVEN WITH A PROMISING JOB OPPORTUNITY

► **KEY INSIGHT #5:**

A community’s quality of life plays a major role in Millennials’ relocation decisions.

Does your city boast a lively arts scene? Can residents drive to work in a reasonable amount of time or are they braving miles of nerve-grinding traffic? If so, Millennials want to know about it. Quality of life is paramount to this generation—studies have shown that Millennials would take an average pay cut of \$7,600 if they could find better work-life balance.

In striking the right balance between their career and personal life, mobility is a major influence. Easy commutes and access to transportation (including airport accessibility, walkability and bike-friendly communities) were both cited by 40 percent of respondents as one of the top three decision-making factors in relocation. In addition to that, 41 percent of respondents with higher income said bad traffic conditions would prevent them from moving, even with a promising job opportunity.

But don’t count out cultural offerings—39 percent of all respondents listed outdoor attractions and a community’s arts scene as one of the top three factors in considering a relocation.

MILLENNIAL VOICES :

“While living in Chicago, the cost of living and very limited access to nature caused me to feel stressed. I made the decision to search for a new city to live in. I had a few deal breakers: affordable housing, outdoor climbing and hiking, bike-friendly and a growing art community. Chattanooga became my top choice.”

–Samantha D.

39%

OF ALL RESPONDENTS LISTED OUTDOOR ATTRACTIONS AND A COMMUNITY’S ARTS AND CULTURE SCENE AS TOP 3 FACTORS IN CONSIDERING A RELOCATION.

MORE THAN 70% OF MILLENNIALS FROM THE MIDWEST, SOUTH AND THE WEST SAY THAT **HIGHER COST OF LIVING** WOULD PREVENT THEM FROM MOVING TO A NEW CITY EVEN WITH A PROMISING JOB OPPORTUNITY. ABOUT 60% OF RESPONDENTS FROM THE 3 REGIONS RANK **LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING** AS A SECOND FACTOR THAT WOULD PREVENT THEM FROM MOVING

To sum it up...

Communities are in a heated competition to attract Millennial talent. Affordability, particularly in housing costs, career opportunities and amenities are front and center in the Millennial mindset. Communities need to be strategic in promoting their assets and advantages but be aware that gender, income and geography matter in the messaging. Small and mid-size communities, where overall cost of living is generally lower, would be wise to promote this advantage.

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About Livability

Livability.com showcases what makes communities great places to live. With more than 11 million annual users, **Livability.com** offers proprietary research studies and engaging daily content on community amenities, education, affordability, sustainability, transportation and housing. Livability Media is a full-service media and content marketing company that helps cities, regions and states attract talent and business investment.

Want to learn more about talent attraction efforts across the country? What's new, what's working, and where it's happening?

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