South Dakota Newscomers Survey Report

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Project Overview

While more populous states typically attract larger numerical influxes from other states and abroad, South Dakota has nevertheless experienced growth in immigrants, both from other states and internationally. In 2024, South Dakota State University Extension launched a state-wide Newcomer Survey to gain a better understanding of the newcomer population. Following prior work in Minnesota[1] and Montana[2], the South Dakota Newcomers Survey was developed to collect data about the motivations that drive people to move to South Dakota, what they enjoy once moved, what they want more or less of, and ultimately what makes them want to, or not want to stay. By understanding the reasons people chose to move to South Dakota and their experiences in their new community, we can better inform communities of their current strengths, what improvements will be the most impactful, what can be done to help retain people in their communities, and how to create communities people want to live in. The survey was distributed virtually to identified individuals who moved to rural communities in South Dakota in recent years. Data was collected between January 1, 2024, and December 31, 2024. Data analysis was completed in July-September 2025.

This report summarizes the Newcomer Survey data analysis and findings. Starting with describing the sample characteristics and geographic distribution (Part 3.1), the report focuses on the findings in four domains related to newcomers' motivation to move and resettlement experiences: factors influencing the choice of residence, involvement with the new community, community satisfaction, and specifically the intent to remain in the community after five years of residence.

Part 3.2 examines primary reasons for moving and other factors influencing their choice of residence such as job opportunities, economic considerations, access to amenities, social and cultural factors such as preferred proximity to family and friends, and individual preferences related to lifestyle and personal needs. Factors are ranked by respondent's perceived importance. Different patterns among age groups and movers to rural/urban communities are discussed.

The integration of newcomers within a community, encompassing both social and built environment, is the focus of Part 3.3. We explore two key aspects of newcomer integration through analyzing the extent newcomers engage in activities that foster social cohesion and community development, their use of natural features like rivers and lakes, as well as built infrastructure including parks and community centers. We also examine possible variations among newcomers based on age group and geographic location of communities.

Part 3.4 investigates newcomer satisfaction across several key dimensions of their new community, including trust, safety, social integration, economic well-being, school systems, housing, family support, and the physical and built environment.

Part 3.5, the concluding element of this analysis, examines how newcomers' intention to stay varies by selected characteristics, the level of their social interactions and use of community amenities, and what aspects of the community with the highest level of reported dissatisfaction among residents had the strongest negative impact on their intention to stay.

[1] New Residents Survey Summary of Results West Central Minnesota. Ben Winchester, 2011.

[2] Montana Movers Study 2021 report. Tara Mastel et al., 2021

Executive Summary

According to the American Community Survey (ACS, 2018 and 2023 1-year estimates), recent movers to South Dakota, when compared to those from five years prior, are characterized by higher percentages of individuals aged 65 and over. The racial/ethnic composition has seen a slight increase in the proportion of white movers and a decrease in the share of foreign-born individuals. Furthermore, recent movers are more likely to possess a bachelor's degree or higher and are more frequently found in owner-occupied households than those with less than a bachelor's degree.

The survey sample differs from the general population who moved to the state, as estimated by the ACS, in several key areas. Specifically, this sample had more female participants, older individuals, and people with advanced degrees. Of the newcomers sampled in the current survey, 91.3 percent had moved from a different state. The top five previous states of residence were Minnesota, Colorado, California, Iowa, and Nebraska, which accounted for 40 percent of the total. Twenty-three percent of newcomers reported previously living in the community. The highest percentage of these returners was found among the 45-64 age group (29.6 percent vs. 23.0 percent in all respondents) and those relocating in rural (24.2 percent) and metro areas (26.2 percent).

Job-related factors were a significant reason people moved, especially for those aged 21 to 44 and individuals with bachelor's degrees or higher. Movers aged 45 and older prioritized lifestyle factors like a slower pace, smaller community size, and shared values when relocating. In contrast, younger adults were motivated by job opportunities, economic considerations, less congestion, and a good environment for raising children. Comparisons among the movers to communities in rural, micro, and metro areas revealed similarities, seeking less congestion, smaller communities with slower pace, safety, and shared values. Notably, movers drawn to micropolitan and metropolitan areas placed a relative high priority on living closer to relatives.

Newcomers were more likely to be engaged in informal social interactions, such as exchanging small favors, than in formal activities like meetings. Their participation in volunteering and religious services was moderate. They most frequently visited parks, with visits to other natural areas like rivers and lakes also being common.

Newcomers of the younger generation showed the lowest participation in community social activities but visited parks most frequently. Newcomers in rural communities reported higher engagement with neighbors and attended more local events, while using community centers and other facilities the least.

Newcomers were generally happy with utilities, garbage services, cell phone services, and parks. Areas of significant dissatisfaction included food options, housing quality, and the difficulty of making new friends. A lack of trust in local government officials was also a concern. Positive aspects of the community noted by newcomers were safety, natural surroundings, and access to recreation. Newcomers aged 21-44 reported the lowest satisfaction with housing, school quality, and social connections, and showed the lowest intent to remain in the community in the next five years.

Newcomers to rural communities were more satisfied with their community's welcoming nature than those in micro or metro areas, and they have the highest intent to stay. However, they expressed lower satisfaction with infrastructure such as sidewalks and streets.

While a majority (78.7 percent) of respondents believed they would still live in their new community in five years, younger individuals, racial/ethnic minorities, and those in urban areas showed lower retention rates. Newcomers were more likely to stay long-term if they frequently engaged in social interactions, community events, and used local facilities. The intention of newcomers to stay was the lowest among those who expressed overall dissatisfaction with their community. This trend holds true across various specific dissatisfaction points, including safety, social life, trust, economic prospects, and activities aligning with personal interests. The intent to stay was also particularly low for those who strongly disapproved of the community's housing quality and its welcoming attitude toward new residents.

Part I: National Statistics for Movers to South Dakota

Using data from the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates, approximately 29,937 people (aged 1 year and over) moved to South Dakota in the past year, either from a different state or from abroad (Table 1). This represents a 10.8 percent increase compared to the number of movers in 2018 (27,009).

There are notable differences in demographic and economic characteristics between recent movers and those who moved to South Dakota five years ago. Recent movers to South Dakota, compared to those five years ago, are older with a significant increase in the percentage of people aged 65 and over (8.0 percent in the 2023 estimates vs. 3.7 in the 2018 estimates). Racial/ethnic composition showed a slight increase in the share of white movers and a smaller share of foreign-born. More recent movers have obtained bachelor's degree or higher. They are also more likely to be living in owner-occupied households than their counterparts five years ago. Despite a higher median income among the movers in 2023, their poverty rate was significantly elevated (26.7 percent in 2023 vs. 15.8 percent in 2018).

While national statistics provide a valuable snapshot of who is moving to the state and the occurring shifts in the movers' characteristics, a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations driving these moves and, crucially, their subsequent resettlement experiences in the new communities is needed. Understanding these nuances can inform policies and initiatives that better support the needs of new residents and foster successful integration within the communities.

Label	2023 1-year estimates	2018 1-year estimates
Population 1 year and over	29,937	27,009
Median age (years)	29.7	26.5
Median income (dollars)	31,589	23,463
Below poverty level (%)	26.7	15.8
Homeownership (%)	44.4	37.8
Share of movers from a different state, by selected characteristics		
1 to 24 years	43.7	44.6
25 to 64 years	48.8	50.5
65 years and over	8.0	3.7
Female	50.6	49.5
White	84.2	83.0
Black or African American	5.1	2.8
American Indian and Alaska Native	3.4	4.5
Asian	3.4	2.9
Hispanic or Latino Origin	3.9	7.2
Foreign born	3.7	5.3
Less than high school graduate	9.5	9.0
High school graduate	16.4	26.0
Some college or associate's degree	30.1	29.5
Bachelor's degree	25.5	21.0
Graduate or professional degree	20.8	15.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 and 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year, Estimates (authors' compilation)

Table 1 Key characteristics of people who moved from a different state to South Dakota in the past year, 2023 vs. 2018

Part II: Study Design and Analytical Steps

Part 2.1 Survey Instruments and Participant Recruitment

The survey began collecting responses on January 1, 2024, and concluded on December 31, 2024. A data set purchased from Melissa Data Company was used to obtain 19,217 email addresses of individuals who had records indicating they purchased a property or began renting in South Dakota, in a Zip Code different than their previous Zip Code, within the last 5 years (October 2019–October 2023). Removing those who had moved within the same Zip Code helped reduce the chances of surveying someone who had moved across town, rather than truly being new to the community. These email addresses received an invitation to take the survey, 457 email addresses were no longer valid. Additional distribution was made in local newspapers, statewide magazines, public flyers, radio announcements, and online newsletters. All responses were received through the online survey platform QuestionPro. The survey recorded 670 views, and 548 total responses, and 377 completed responses prior to cleaning the data for this report. Participants must have selected "Yes" to the question: Do you understand the above consent form and agree to participate in this survey? And "No" to the question: Have you previously completed this survey? When sharing the survey to those outside of the email list, single reusable link and QR code were used for survey distribution. The study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of South Dakota State University under protocol reference number IRB-2312007-EXM.

Part 2.2 Analytical Steps

The analysis used a descriptive approach to identify trends and patterns in responses across five themes: newcomers' characteristics, motivation to relocate to the community of current residence, community involvement (including social interaction and resource use), community feature ratings, and intention to stay in the community after a period of residence.

The overall sample was examined, along with comparisons between different age groups and community rurality level. People's motivation to move, preference ranking of community features, and their intention to stay vary significantly across age groups. In addition, we compared the differences among those who relocated to metro areas (e.g., Sioux Falls, Rapid City), areas with small cities and towns (e.g., Aberdeen, Brookings), and rural areas. While South Dakota has designated metro and micropolitan areas, its population distribution remains notably dispersed. More than two-thirds of communities in South Dakota have a population of fewer than 500 people. The resettlement experiences of individuals relocating to small rural communities may diverge considerably from those who establish residency in urban locales. The results for each theme are thus reported for the full sample and then disaggregated by age (three groups: 21-44, 45-64, 65+) and community type (three groups: rural, micropolitan, and metropolitan).

The key demographics of the overall sample were analyzed first, followed by a breakdown of these demographics by six subgroups. The analysis included reporting the percentage of movers by year, the share of individuals who returned to the community, and the pathways through which new residents first learned about the community.

To gain a better understanding of moving motivations, moving factors were assessed by comparing their relative importance with two methods. First, ranking the factors by the percentage of respondents who rated factors as important, very important, or extremely important, then comparing the average ranking scores. The percentage of respondents who cited job or COVID-related reasons as their primary motivation for relocating to the community was also analyzed.

The section of newcomers' community involvement presented the frequency of participation in social activities and use of community resources and amenities using both stacked bar charts and average scores.

The community satisfaction rating was determined by computing the percentage of respondents expressing agreement (or satisfaction) with 27 predefined community aspects, encompassing social, economic, cultural, lifestyle, and infrastructure elements. Findings were shown for all respondents and six subgroups.

Finally, respondents' intention to stay after five years of residence, as measured by a single survey question, was compared across demographics, level of community involvement, and factors influencing their satisfaction ratings.

Part 2.3 Defining Rural/Urban Location

ZIP Code data reported by the respondents was used to define the metro, micro, and rural status of the community they moved in. A ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs)[3] shapefile is used in conjunction with the Core Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs)[4] shapefile. Through geoprocessing, each ZIP Code area is assigned a rural/urban status with three categories: metro[5], micro[6], and rural[7]. A total of 359 responses provided valid information for the ZIP Code of the current residence. 164 (46 percent) moved in communities in metro areas, 129 (36 percent) in small urban clusters, and 66 (18 percent) in rural communities (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Distribution of the survey participants by ZIP Code, overlayed with rural/urban classification
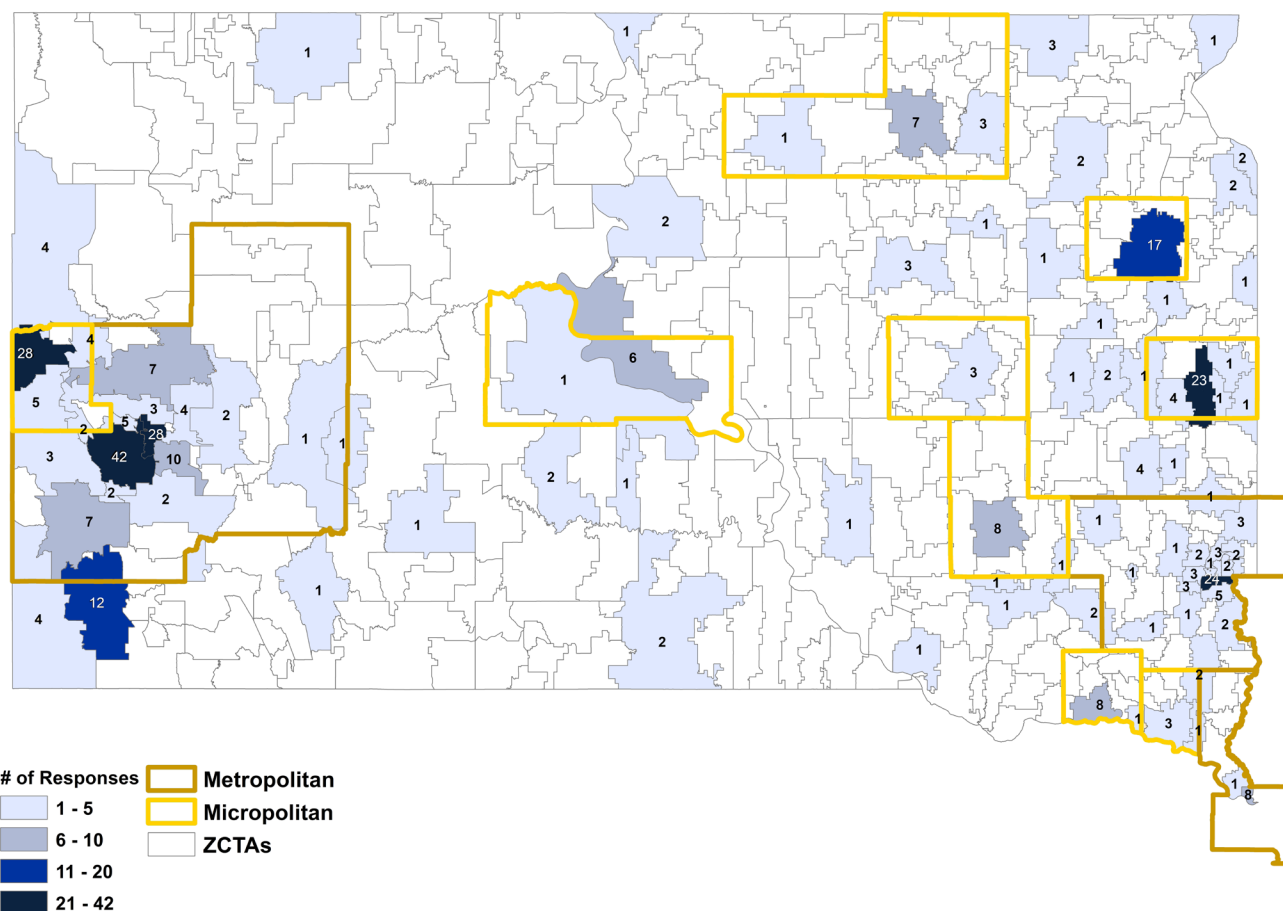
[3] ZCTAs are generalized areal representations of the geographic extent and distribution of the point-based ZIP Codes built using 2020 Census tabulation blocks.

[4] CBSAs, defined by the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB), consist of counties (or county equivalents) and are categorized into two types: Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and Micropolitan Statistical Areas. MSAs have an urban core with a population of at least 50,000, while Micropolitan areas have an urban core between 10,000 and 50,000. Counties without a CBSA code are considered as rural areas with less than 10,000 residents.

[5] Metro: If a ZIP Code area falls within a Metropolitan Statistical Area (defined by the OMB as having an urban core of 50,000 or more population), it's classified as metro.

[6] Micro: If a ZIP Code area falls within a Micropolitan Statistical Area (defined by the OMB as having an urban core of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population), it's classified as micro.

[7] Rural: If a ZIP Code area outside of any CBSA (Metropolitan or Micropolitan), it's classified as rural (or non metropolitan).

Part III: Survey Results

Part 3.1 Sample Characteristics and Geographic Distribution

Of 358 responses with valid ZIP Code of previous residence, about 91.3 percent moved to South Dakota from a different state. The top five states of previous residence shown in Table 2 were Minnesota (11.7 percent), Colorado (9.8 percent), California (8.1 percent), Iowa (5.0 percent), and Nebraska (4.8 percent). Movers from these states comprised 40 percent of the sample of newcomers for this study.

Move from a Different State	%
Minnesota	11.7
Colorado	9.8
California	8.1
Iowa	5.0
Nebraska	4.8

Table 2 Top five states of previous residence

Respondents were asked to report how they learned about the community before they made the move. Twenty-three percent mentioned they lived here previously (Table 3). The highest percentage of returners was observed among movers aged 45-64. Additionally, a greater likelihood of being a returner was found among movers to communities located in rural and metropolitan areas, as opposed to those in small cities/towns. To be able to compare South Dakota findings with the Minnesota and Montana studies, the age groups of 21-44 and 45-64 were combined and computed the percentage of returnees for this combined group as 26.7 percent.

Returner/Prior Contact (%)	All	Aged 21-44	Aged 45-64	Aged 21-64	Aged 65+	Rural	Micro	Metro
Lived here previously	23.0	23.9	29.6	26.7	19.5	24.2	19.4	26.2
Vacationed in this community or traveled through during a vacation	24.6	12.0	26.1	18.9	34.2	19.7	24.8	27.4
Visited family that live/d here	31.1	25.0	28.4	26.7	46.3	22.7	30.2	36.0
Visited friends that live/d here	13.5	12.0	11.4	11.7	15.9	10.6	12.4	15.9
Visited community during work-related travel	6.2	5.4	6.8	6.1	7.3	3.0	8.5	4.9
Attended college here	7.8	10.9	5.7	8.3	8.5	3.0	10.9	7.9
Other	9.7	9.8	9.1	9.4	12.2	13.6	8.5	9.8

Table 3 Percentage reporting prior contact with the community of current residence

Table 4 presents sample characteristics for all participants in relation to the new community's rurality. Most newcomers in the sample arrived after 2010, with nearly 80 percent moving after 2020. A median age of 56 was observed in the sample, which is greater than the estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS). A higher proportion of participants aged 70 years and over was found in rural communities when compared to those from metro and micro areas. Approximately 60 percent of the sample was female, and the highest proportion of female participants was observed in those from micro areas. The sample was primarily non-Hispanic White (91.1 percent in the overall sample), but minority participants were more prevalent in metro and micro areas (close to 10 percent). Two-thirds of the newcomers in the sample had an education higher than a bachelor's degree, exceeding ACS estimates. Participants from rural communities exhibited lower levels of educational attainment and household income, with nearly 10 percent falling into the lowest income bracket.

Overall, the sample exhibited several key differences from the mover population estimated by the ACS, including a higher representation of females, older newcomers, and individuals with advanced degrees. These differences are possibly driven by the study's timeframe as well as the target population, as the ACS estimates the movers' characteristics based on mobility information in the past 12 months. Therefore, the interpretation of our findings should be considered in relation to a mover population that closely resembles our sample.

Characteristics	All	Rural	Micro	Metro
Age				
21 to 24 years	2.7	2.1	5.4	0.9
25 to 29 years	4.2	4.3	7.6	1.7
30 to 34 years	9.9	12.8	9.8	9.4
35 to 39 years	8.4	4.3	5.4	12.0
40 to 44 years	9.9	8.5	10.9	9.4
45 to 49 years	6.9	4.3	8.7	6.8
50 to 54 years	6.9	10.6	6.5	6.0
55 to 59 years	6.9	6.4	5.4	8.6
60 to 64 years	13.0	8.5	9.8	17.1
65 to 69 years	14.1	10.6	12.0	15.4
70 years and over	17.2	27.7	18.5	12.8
Median age (years)	56	58	51	56
Sex				
Male	36.5	40.9	34.1	37.2
Female	59.7	57.6	63.6	57.9
Non-Binary	3.8	1.5	2.3	4.9
Race/Ethnicity				
Non-Hispanic White	91.1	93.8	90.5	90.7
Non-Hispanic Others	6.1	4.7	4.8	7.5
Hispanic	2.8	1.6	4.8	1.9
Educational Attainment				
High school or GED	5.6	9.4	4.8	5.1
Some college/associate degree	25.8	28.1	20.8	27.9
Bachelor's degree	34.3	26.6	36.8	34.8
Graduate degree	34.3	35.9	37.6	32.3
Household Income				
Less than $25,000	5.8	9.5	4.1	5.3
$25,000-$49,999	13.9	14.3	14.9	13.2
$50,000-$74,999	18.0	17.5	19.0	16.5
$75,000-$99,999	17.7	15.9	15.7	19.7
$100,000-$149,999	23.5	22.2	24.8	23.7
$150,000-$199,999	8.4	11.1	8.3	7.9
$200,00 or more	12.8	9.5	13.2	13.8
Year of Move				
Before 2009	1.9	3.0	1.6	1.8
2010-2019	16.6	16.7	15.6	17.1
2020-2022	62.9	59.1	67.2	62.8
2023-2024	18.5	21.2	15.6	18.3

Table 4 Sample characteristics, by community rurality

Further examination of household characteristics (Table 5) indicated that teleworking was a notable characteristic among households, with approximately 38.5 percent reporting that either the respondent or their spouse worked remotely. This trend was more pronounced among newcomer households in both rural and metropolitan areas. For working-age households specifically, the rate of telecommuting was higher, at 44.7 percent. The average household size was 2.3 people, which increased to 2.7 for working-age households. In terms of household composition, 16.5 percent of all households included children, while children were present in nearly a third (32.8 percent) of working-age households.

Household Characteristics	Rural	Micro	Metro	All	Aged 21-64
Telecommuting (%)	43.9	31.0	43.2	38.5	44.7
With children (%)	16.7	14.0	19.5	16.5	32.8
Household size (%)					
1 person	27.3	25.6	22.0	25.1	20.0
2 persons	42.4	48.8	48.2	47.0	40.6
3+ persons	30.3	25.6	29.9	27.8	39.4
Average household size	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.7

Table 5 Selected household characteristics by community rurality, and for the 21-64 age group

Part 3.2 Factors Influencing the Decision to Move

To help identify the primary reasons behind relocation (Table 6), respondents were asked, in two separate questions, if their primary reason for moving was for a job/business opportunity or if it was related to COVID-19. Job-related reasons are known to be key drivers of relocation according to existing literature, were cited as the primary motivation by 26 percent of respondents. Meanwhile, 23.4 percent indicated that their move was primarily motivated by factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Significant demographic differences emerged in the stated primary motivations for moving.

- Age: Newcomers aged 65 and over were more likely to link their move to COVID-19 concerns. In contrast, nearly half of those aged 21-44 moved for job-related reasons.

- Education: Individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher were twice as likely to move for a job compared to those without (30.1 percent vs. 15.9 percent).

- Race/Ethnicity: Approximately 41.9 percent of minority newcomers primarily moved due to COVID-related factors, compared to 21.6% of non-Hispanic white newcomers.

- Community Rurality: Relocation to metro and micro communities was more frequently associated with job or COVID-related reasons as the primary motivation for moving.

Group	Job-Related	COVID-Related
All	26.0	23.4
Age Group	*	*
21-44	48.9	13.3
45-64	20.7	34.5
65+	5.1	13.9
Sex		
Male	26.4	20.1
Female	25.7	25.6
Race/Ethnicity		*
Non-Hispanic White	25.4	21.6
Minorities	25.8	41.9
Education	*	
Some college or lower	15.9	26.9
Bachelor's degree or higher	30.1	21.8
Rural-Urban		
Rural	18.2	19.7
Micropolitan	31.8	25.6
Metropolitan	24.5	23.2

Note: *Statistical significance for the comparison within each group

The tabulation is based on the responses to the question "Did you move to your current community primarily for a job? (For example, to accept a job offer or transfer to a business in this community?" and the question "Was your move motivated by the COVID pandemic in any way?"

Table 6 Percent reporting job or COVID as the primary reason for moving into the community of current residence

To explore the nuances of relocation motivation, respondents were asked to select the importance of 23 factors spanning social connections, economic considerations, and quality of life aspects when they were considering the move to the new community. To establish the relative importance of factors, the percentage of respondents who marked them as important, very important, or extremely important was calculated[8] . Figure 2 displays these factors in descending order of importance.

The top five factors of high importance are:
- To find a less congested place to live (61.4 percent)
- To take advantage of the slower pace of life (54.1 percent)
- To live among people with similar values (53.3 percent)
- To find a safer place to live (52.4 percent)
- To find a lower cost of living (50.5 percent)

The decision to relocate to the chosen new community in South Dakota is largely driven by a desire for a safer environment, reduced congestion, a slower lifestyle, and a more affordable cost of living.

Recognizing the priorities may shift with age and the rurality of the community, the relative importance of these factors was examined by different age groups (i.e., 21-44, 45-64, and 65+) and community rurality (i.e., rural, micro, and metro). The rankings, by age group and community rurality were analyzed separately by computing the percentage of respondents who marked them as important, very important, or extremely important by age group and community rurality. Rankings of moving factors for three age groups are displayed in Figure 3 and rankings by participants from rural, micro, and metro communities are presented in Figure 4. Finally, Table 6 compares the rankings across age groups and community rurality levels.

The top five factors of high importance for people aged 21-44 are:
- To find lower-priced housing (55.4 percent)
- To take on a new job (54.4 percent)
- To find a good environment for raising children (53.3 percent)
- To find a less congested place to live (53.3 percent)
- To find a lower cost of living (53.3 percent)

The top five factors of high importance for people aged 45-64 are:
- To find a less congested place to live (67.0 percent)
- To take advantage of the slower pace of life (61.4 percent)
- To live among people with similar values (59.1 percent)
- To find a safer place to live (59.1 percent)
- To live in a smaller community (55.7 percent)

It shows similar patterns to the overall sample.

The top five factors of high importance for people aged 65+ are:
- To retire (72.0 percent)
- To find a less congested place to live (72.0 percent)
- To live in a smaller community (57.3 percent)
- To live among people with similar values (51.2 percent)
- To take advantage of the slower pace of life (46.3 percent)

The top five factors of high importance for movers to rural communities are:
- To find a less congested place to live (71.2 percent)
- To live in a smaller community (66.7 percent)
- To take advantage of the slower pace of life (66.7 percent)
- To find a safer place to live (65.2 percent)
- To live among people with similar values (63.6 percent)

The top five factors of high importance for movers to communities in micropolitan areas are:
- To find a less congested place to live (64.3 percent)
- To live closer to relatives (57.4 percent)
- To find a safer place to live (55.8 percent)
- To take advantage of the slower pace of life (54.3 percent)
- To live among people with similar values (53.5 percent)

[8] The tabulation is based on the responses to the question "When you chose to move to this community/region, how important were each of the following factors for your household?" on a 5-point Likert scale with options ranging from "Unimportant" to "Extremely Important." For this tabulation, responses of "Important," "Very Important," and "Extremely Important" are grouped into one category and "Unimportant" and "Somewhat Important" are in the other category.

The top five factors of high importance for movers to communities in metropolitan areas are:

- To find a less congested place to live (56.7 percent)

- To live among people with similar values (50.0 percent)

- To take advantage of the slower pace of life (49.4 percent)

- To find a lower cost of living (49.4 percent)

- To live closer to relatives (49.4 percent)

Both groups aged 45-64 and 65+ place relatively more importance on factors such as slower pace of life, smaller size of the community, and the shared values, compared to the younger group. For younger adults and middle-aged, the decision to relocate to the chosen new community is jointly shaped by job opportunities, economic considerations, and the preference of reduced congestion and good environment for raising children. Comparisons among individuals relocating to rural, micro, and metro areas reveal nuanced variations in how they prioritize lifestyle and financial factors. Small urban town movers focus on balancing city and country living, emphasizing safety, slower pace, less congestion, and proximity to family. Metropolitan movers are motivated by a combination of factors, including avoiding congestion, finding a community with similar values, a slower pace, affordability, and being closer to relatives.

Another way to compare the relative importance of the moving factors is to compare average ranking scores. Instead of using the percentage of respondents who marked factors as important, very important, or extremely important, an average score was calculated for each factor. A numerical value was assigned to each response option: unimportant was assigned a value of 1, somewhat important was assigned a value of 2, important was assigned a value of 3, very important was assigned a value of 4, and extremely important was assigned a value of 5.

Table 7 utilizes an Excel color scale, in addition to the average scores, to illustrate the relative importance of various factors across different age groups and community rurality levels. Blue shading indicates factors perceived as more important (with darker blue signifying the highest importance), while red shading highlights those considered less important. Individuals aged 21-44 tend to prioritize factors such as proximity to relatives, affordable housing, and a good environment

for raising children. However, for this age group, the size of the community (including rural communities) is less important compared to individuals aged 45 and older. Newcomers of more advanced ages place more importance on factors such as retirement, shared values, slower pace, and access to recreational activities. When it comes to moving to rural communities, individuals emphasize factors like a smaller community, slower pace of life, and similar values. These rural-centric factors, like community size and pace of life, are not as highly prioritized by people moving to metropolitan (metro) and micro areas.

In summary, priorities shift with age and chosen destination type of the community, with younger families focusing on affordability and proximity to support systems, while those opting for rural living seek a specific community feel, lifestyle, and shared values.

Important, very/extremely ■   **Less important** ■

	Important, very/extremely
To find a less congested place to live	61.4
To take advantage of the slower pace of life	54.1
To live among people with similar values	53.3
To find a safer place to live	52.4
To find a lower cost of living	50.5
To live closer to relatives	50.3
To live in a smaller community	48.9
To have better access to the outdoors	48.9
To have better access to recreation activities	44.3
To find lower-priced housing	42.4
To retire	33.5
To take on a new job	31.1
To find a job that allowed a better work-life balance	29.2
To find a good environment for raising children	29.2
To buy available land	25.1
To find a job that matches my skills	23.3
To take advantage of health care facilities	23.2
To find a higher-paying job	22.4
To live closer to friends	18.9
To find a better job for my spouse/partner	16.5
To find higher-quality schools	15.9
To buy or begin my own business	9.5
To live in a larger community	6.5

Figure 2.

Figure 2 Factors for moving into the community of current residence, sorted by the level of importance, all participants

Aged 21-44   **Important, very/extremely** ■   **Less important** ■

	Important, very/extremely
To find lower-priced housing	55.4
To take on a new job	54.4
To find a good environment for raising children	53.3
To find a less congested place to live	53.3
To find a lower cost of living	53.3
To find a job that allowed a better work-life balance	50.0
To find a higher-paying job	48.9
To have better access to recreation activities	47.8
To find a job that matches my skills	46.7
To have better access to the outdoors	46.7
To live closer to relatives	46.7
To take advantage of the slower pace of life	46.7
To find a safer place to live	44.6
To live among people with similar values	42.4
To live in a smaller community	42.4
To find a better job for my spouse/partner	38.0
To buy available land	29.4
To find higher-quality schools	25.0
To live closer to friends	25.0
To take advantage of health care facilities	15.2
To buy or begin my own business	14.1
To live in a larger community	5.4
To retire	4.4

Figure 3.1

Figure 3.1 Factors for moving into the community of current residence, sorted by the level of importance, by age group

Aged 45-64 ■ Important, very/extremely ■ Less important

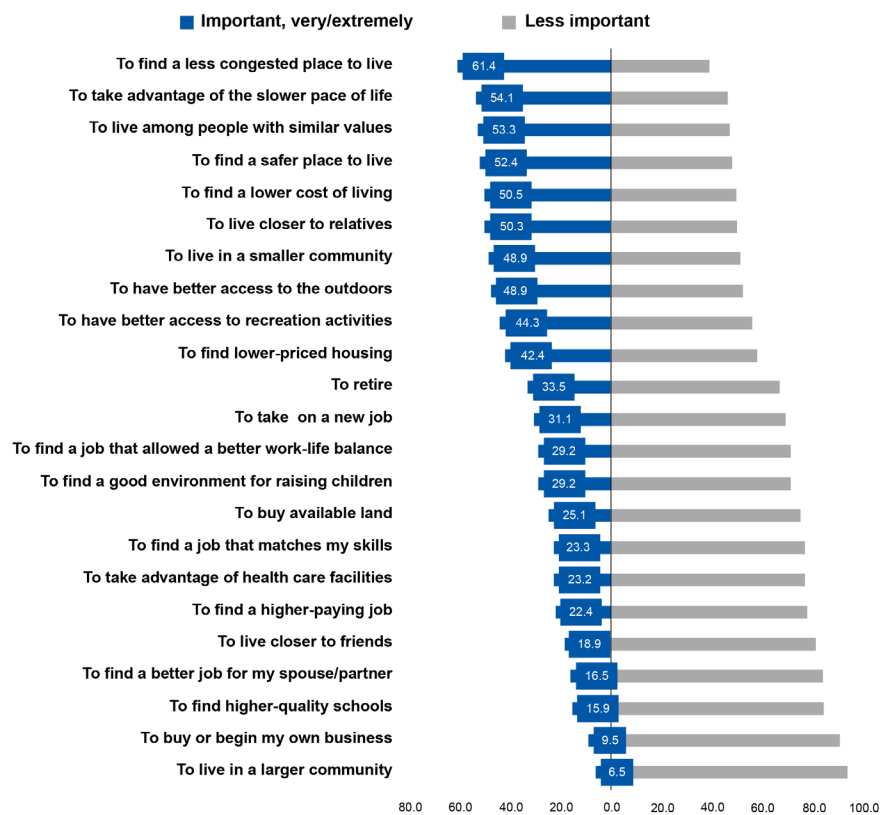| Factor	Important
To find a less congested place to live	67.0
To take advantage of the slower pace of life	61.4
To live among people with similar values	59.1
To find a safer place to live	59.1
To live in a smaller community	55.7
To live closer to relatives	54.6
To have better access to the outdoors	54.5
To find a lower cost of living	50.0
To have better access to recreation activities	43.2
To retire	43.2
To find lower-priced housing	38.6
To find a good environment for raising children	27.3
To take on a new job	26.1
To find a job that allowed a better work-life balance	26.1
To buy available land	22.7
To take advantage of health care facilities	21.6
To find higher-quality schools	19.3
To live closer to friends	19.3
To find a job that matches my skills	18.2
To find a higher-paying job	14.8
To find a better job for my spouse/partner	13.6
To buy or begin my own business	6.8
To live in a larger community	3.4

Figure 3.2

Figure 3.2 Factors for moving into the community of current residence, sorted by the level of importance, all participants

Aged 65+ ■ Important, very/extremely ■ Less important

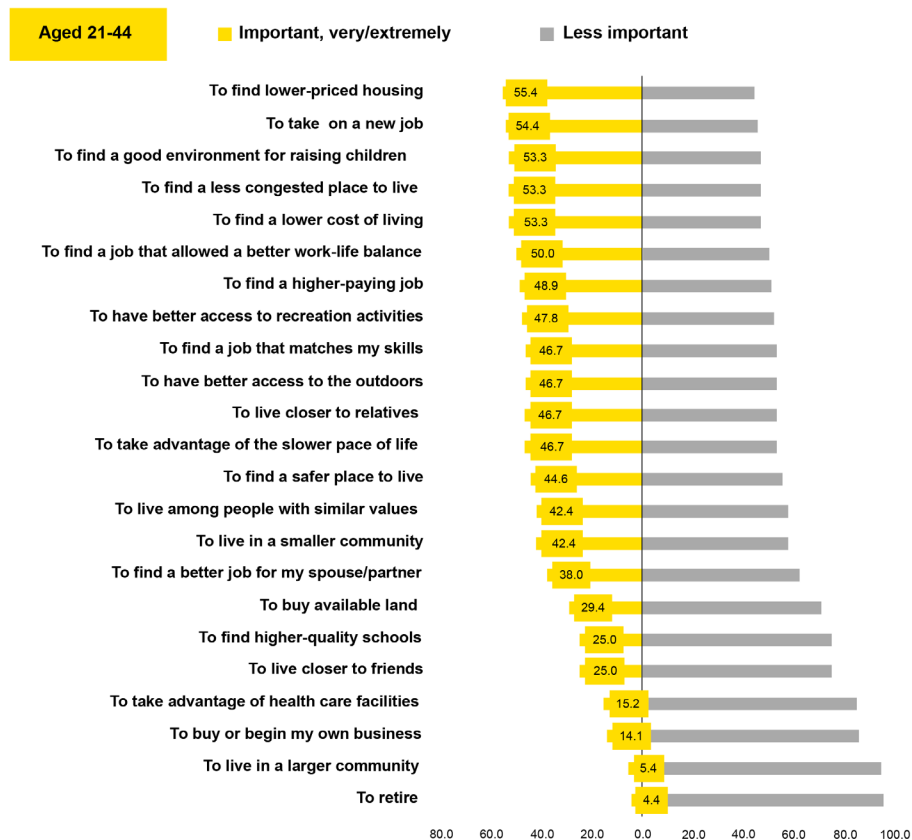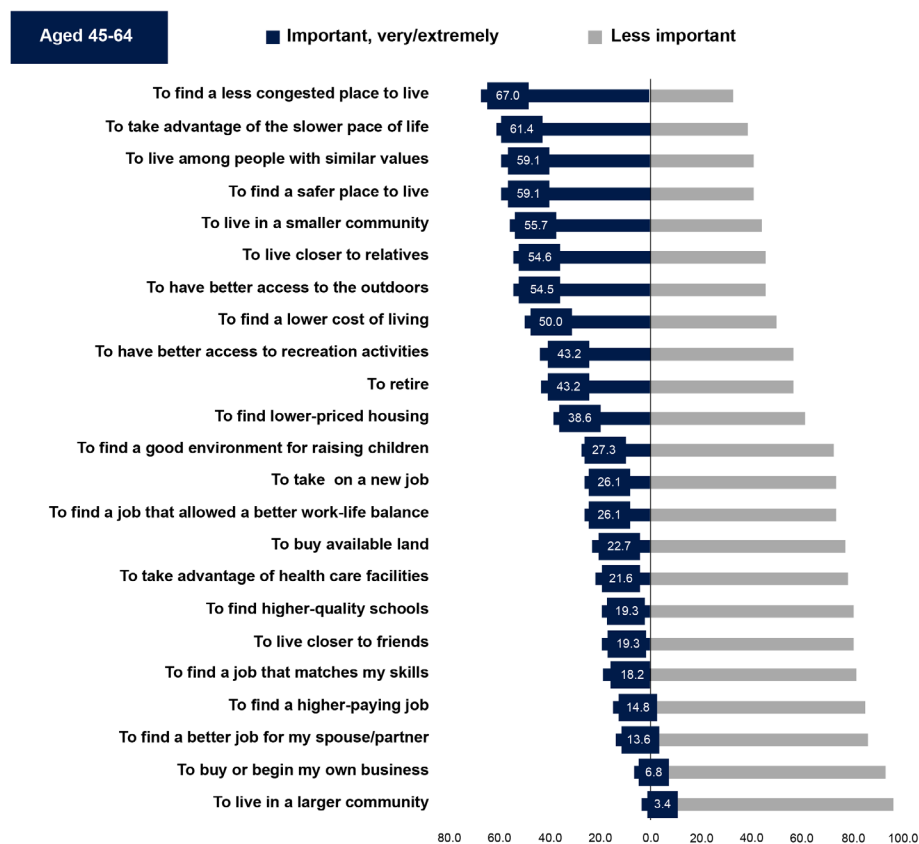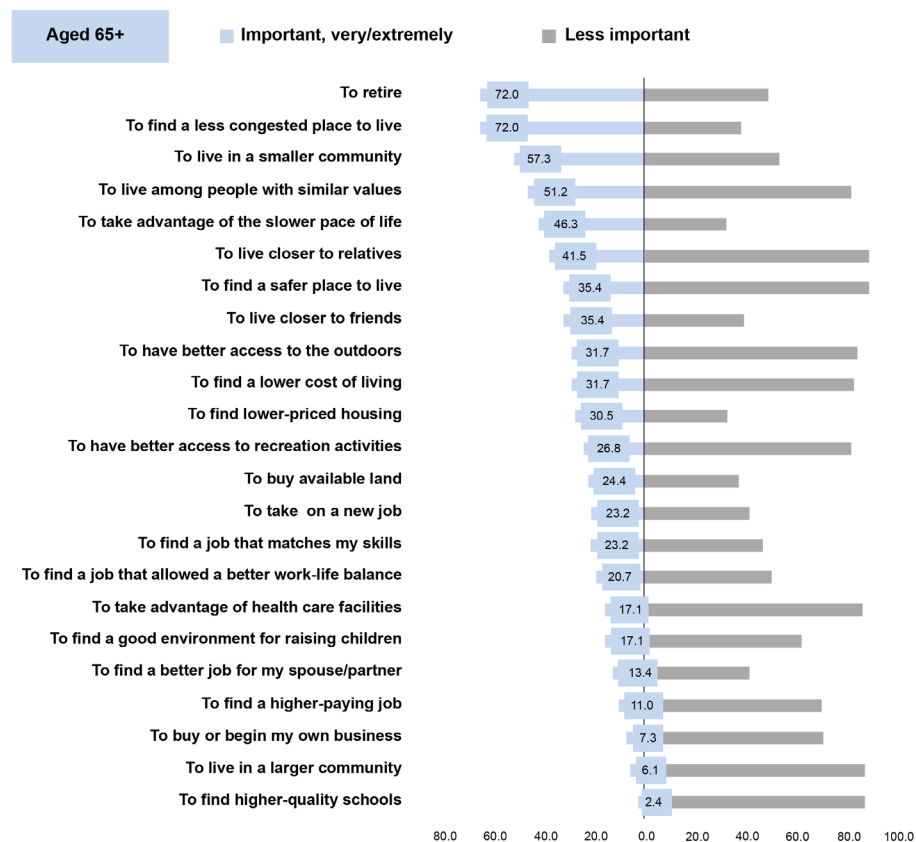| Factor	Important
To retire	72.0
To find a less congested place to live	72.0
To live in a smaller community	57.3
To live among people with similar values	51.2
To take advantage of the slower pace of life	46.3
To live closer to relatives	41.5
To find a safer place to live	35.4
To live closer to friends	35.4
To have better access to the outdoors	31.7
To find a lower cost of living	31.7
To find lower-priced housing	30.5
To have better access to recreation activities	26.8
To buy available land	24.4
To take on a new job	23.2
To find a job that matches my skills	23.2
To find a job that allowed a better work-life balance	20.7
To take advantage of health care facilities	17.1
To find a good environment for raising children	17.1
To find a better job for my spouse/partner	13.4
To find a higher-paying job	11.0
To buy or begin my own business	7.3
To live in a larger community	6.1
To find higher-quality schools	2.4

Figure 3.3

Figure 3.3 Factors for moving into the community of current residence, sorted by the level of importance, by age group
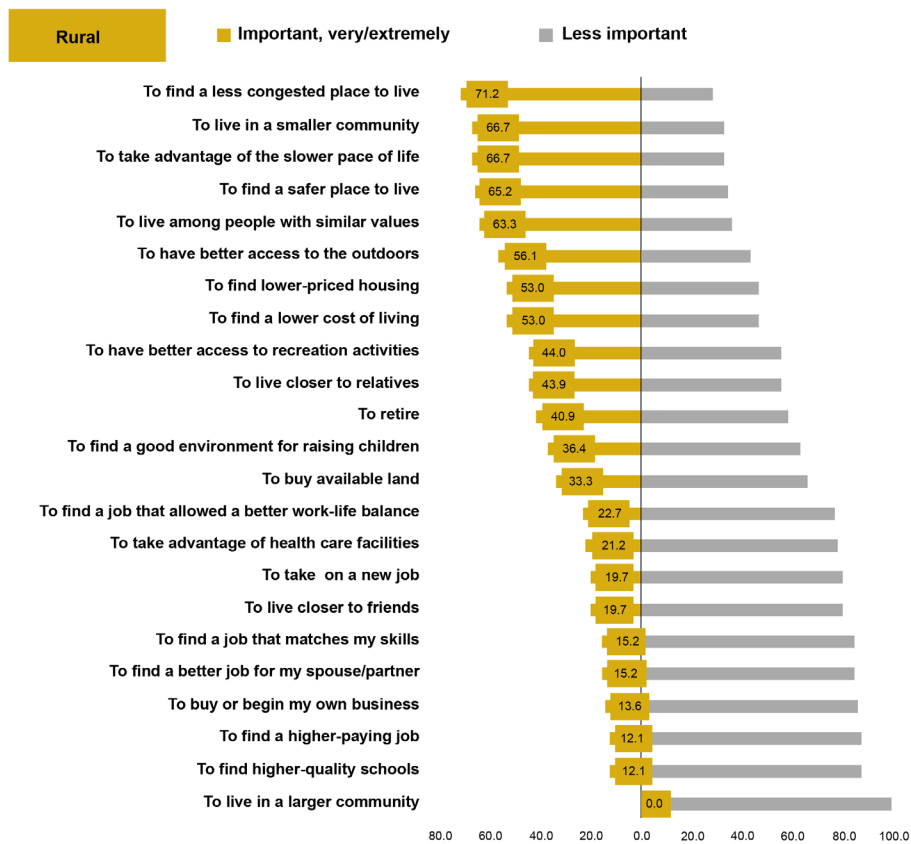
Figure 4.1

Figure 4.1 Factors for moving into the community of current residence, sorted by the level of importance, by community rurality
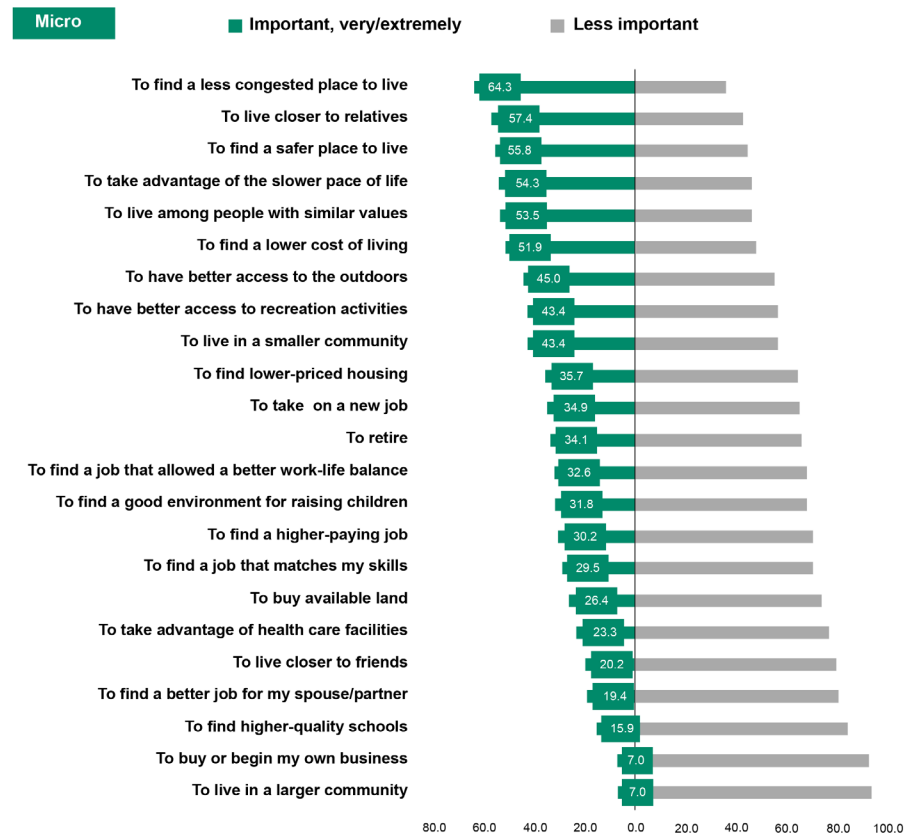

Figure 4.2

Figure 4.2 Factors for moving into the community of current residence, sorted by the level of importance, by community rurality
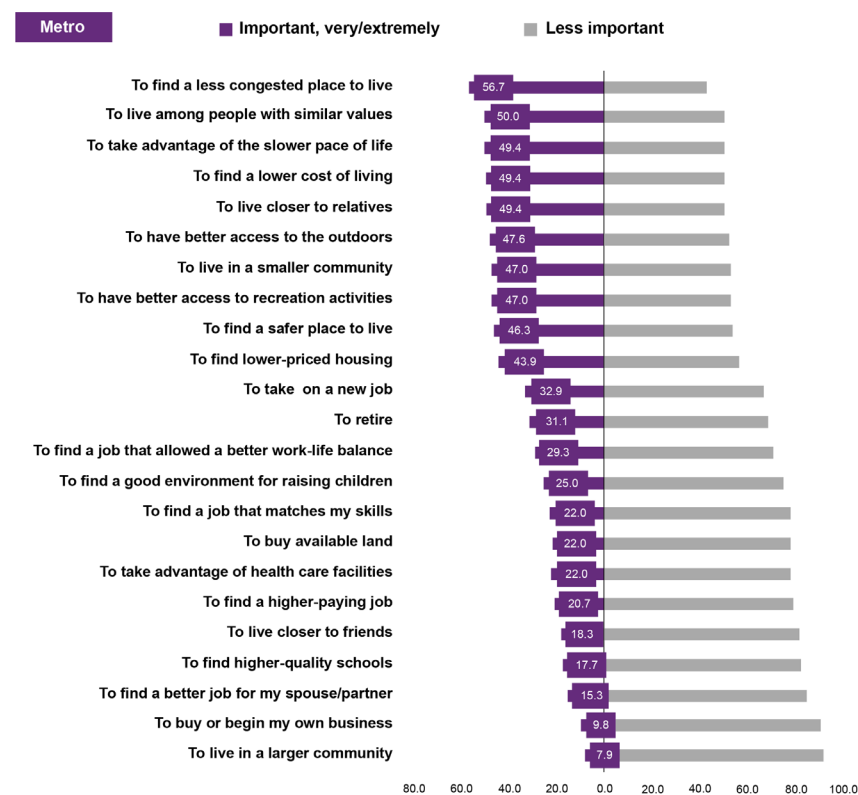
Figure 4.3

■ Important, very/extremely   ■ Less important

Factor	Value
To find a less congested place to live	56.7
To live among people with similar values	50.0
To take advantage of the slower pace of life	49.4
To find a lower cost of living	49.4
To live closer to relatives	49.4
To have better access to the outdoors	47.6
To live in a smaller community	47.0
To have better access to recreation activities	47.0
To find a safer place to live	46.3
To find lower-priced housing	43.9
To take on a new job	32.9
To retire	31.1
To find a job that allowed a better work-life balance	29.3
To find a good environment for raising children	25.0
To find a job that matches my skills	22.0
To buy available land	22.0
To take advantage of health care facilities	22.0
To find a higher-paying job	20.7
To live closer to friends	18.3
To find higher-quality schools	17.7
To find a better job for my spouse/partner	15.3
To buy or begin my own business	9.8
To live in a larger community	7.9

80.0 60.0 40.0 20.0 0.0 20.0 40.0 60.0 80.0 100.0

Figure 4.3 Factors for moving into the community of current residence, sorted by the level of importance, by community rurality

Moving Factor	All	Aged 21-44	Aged 45-64	Aged 65+	Sig.	Rural	Micro	Metro	Sig.2
To find a less congested place to live	1	4	1	2		1	1	1	
To take advantage of the slower pace of life	2	12	2	5		3	4	3	*
To live among people with similar values	3	14	3	4	*	5	5	2	*
To find a safer place to live	4	13	4	7	*	4	3	9	
To find a lower cost of living	5	5	8	10		8	6	4	
To live closer to relatives	6	11	6	6		10	2	5	
To live in a smaller community	7	15	5	3		2	9	7	
To have better access to the outdoors	8	10	7	9		6	7	6	
To have better access to recreation activities	9	8	9	12		9	8	8	
To find lower-priced housing	10	1	11	11	*	7	10	10	
To retire	11	23	10	1	*	11	12	12	
To take on a new job	12	2	13	14	*	16	11	11	
To find a job that allowed a better work-life balance	13	6	14	16	*	14	13	13	
To find a good environment for raising children	14	3	12	18	*	12	14	14	
To buy available land	15	17	15	13		13	17	16	
To find a job that matches my skills	16	9	19	15	*	18	16	15	
To take advantage of health care facilities	17	20	16	17	*	15	18	17	
To find a higher-paying job	18	7	20	20	*	21	15	18	
To live closer to friends	19	19	18	8	*	17	19	19	
To find a better job for my spouse/partner	20	16	21	19	*	19	20	21	
To find higher-quality schools	21	18	17	23	*	22	21	20	
To buy or begin my own business	22	21	22	21	*	20	22	22	
To live in a larger community	23	22	23	22		23	23	23	
Note: * represents statistically significant differences among age groups or community rurality levels.									

Table 7 Moving factors ranked for all participants, by age group, community rurality

Factors	All	Aged 21-44	Aged 45-64	Aged 65+	Rural	Micro	Metro
To live closer to relatives	2.73	2.78	2.98	2.80	2.59	2.81	2.77
To live closer to friends	1.69	1.77	1.77	1.77	1.71	1.71	1.66
To find higher-quality schools	1.56	1.94	1.60	1.16	1.41	1.53	1.64
To find lower-priced housing	2.39	2.79	2.23	2.13	2.62	2.19	2.45
To buy available land	1.93	2.08	1.87	1.91	2.21	1.96	1.81
To find a lower cost of living	2.63	2.71	2.57	2.66	2.83	2.60	2.58
To find a safer place to live	2.76	2.64	2.85	2.89	3.12	2.82	2.62
To have better access to the outdoors	2.68	2.59	2.94	2.63	2.95	2.51	2.72
To find a good environment for raising children	2.03	2.88	1.83	1.19	2.32	2.01	1.95
To take advantage of the slower pace of life	2.73	2.46	2.92	2.99	3.21	2.67	2.60
To live among people with similar values	2.78	2.29	3.02	3.11	3.29	2.67	2.68
To find a less congested place to live	2.99	2.76	3.13	3.25	3.33	2.98	2.89
To find a higher-paying job	1.80	2.52	1.53	1.28	1.55	1.94	1.79
To find a job that matches my skills	1.86	2.62	1.66	1.30	1.62	2.01	1.83
To find a job that allowed a better work-life balance	2.02	2.64	1.86	1.39	1.88	2.03	2.05
To take on a new job	2.05	2.76	1.89	1.34	1.74	2.15	2.10
To find a better job for my spouse/partner	1.60	2.23	1.46	1.15	1.52	1.71	1.56
To buy or begin my own business	1.41	1.58	1.29	1.13	1.48	1.40	1.38
To retire	2.21	1.20	2.49	3.35	2.47	2.22	2.13
To take advantage of health care facilities	1.85	1.56	1.80	2.25	1.79	1.88	1.78
To live in a larger community	1.34	1.34	1.20	1.30	1.11	1.34	1.38
To live in a smaller community	2.58	2.33	2.79	2.91	3.09	2.41	2.54
To have better access to recreation activities	2.46	2.51	2.47	2.57	2.45	2.38	2.56

Note: The score of importance is computed by averaging the scores assigned to the response categories as the following: Unimportant=1; Somewhat Important=2; Important=3 Very Important=4 Extremely Important=5. Higher scores, shaded in darker blue color, represent higher importance. Lower scores representing lower importance are shaded in darker red color.

Table 8 Factors for moving into the community of current residence by age group and community rurality, sorted by the level of importance

Part 3.3 Involvement in the New Community

The survey measured newcomers' involvement by assessing their level of participation in community activities (five questions), including volunteering and attending community/school meetings. Furthermore, four questions were used to quantify their use of community resources, including natural amenities (e.g., rivers, lakes, parks) and built infrastructure (e.g., community centers). Respondents rated the frequency of their actions using a 5-point scale: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, or Very Often.

Percentages of participants choosing each response category are charted in Figure 5 for all participants and in Figure 6-7 for three age groups and residence community rurality. Nearly half of the participants reported frequently (often or very often) socializing with community members and exchanging small favors with a neighbor. Approximately 31 percent volunteered frequently, while over one-third reported never attending a club or organizational meeting to discuss community or school affairs. While the use of parks (53.3 percent often/very often) and water bodies such as rivers, lakes, and pools (47.3 percent) were reported with high frequency, a contrasting pattern was seen for community facilities, with over a quarter of respondents indicating they never or rarely used community centers, museums, or other local facilities. A notable contrast emerged in community socialization patterns by age: individuals aged 21–44 reported participating less frequently in formal (e.g., attending clubs and meetings) and informal activities (such as exchange small flavors with a neighbor), compared to people aged 45 and older. This trend was reversed for park usage, where the 21–44 age group showed the highest frequency (59.8 percent often/very often). Differences in community engagement were observed among movers in rural, micro, and metro communities. While movers to rural and small towns reported higher levels of community socialization, movers to metropolitan areas showed the highest frequency of park usage (61.6 percent often/very often). Conversely, movers in rural areas reported the least frequent use of community centers, museums, and other local facilities (12.1 percent often/very often).

Another way to measure the relative frequency of engagement in social life and usage of amenities and community infrastructure is to compare the average scores. A numerical value was assigned to each response option: "never" was assigned a value of 1,

"rarely" was assigned a value of 2, "sometimes" was assigned a value of 3, "often" was assigned a value of 4, and "very often" was assigned a value of 5. An average score was then calculated for each type of involvement. To depict the relative frequency of involvement activities, Table 8 employs an Excel icon set, alongside average scores, for all respondents and by age group (i.e., 21-44, 45-64, and 65+) and community rurality (i.e., rural, micro, and metro). The level of icon shading directly corresponds to the perceived frequency of engagement or resource use, with darker icons (with more shaded area) indicating more frequent activity[9]. The findings revealed a propensity among newcomers to participate in informal social interactions, such as exchanging small favors and social engagement within the community, rather than formal activities like attending meetings concerning community or school affairs. Involvement in volunteering and religious service attendance represented a moderate level of engagement. Newcomers also reported the highest frequency of utilizing parks, followed by visiting natural amenities such as rivers and lakes in the community or the region.

Community engagement patterns varied significantly by age group and community rurality. Specifically, newcomers aged 21-44 reported lower participation in all noted community social activities compared to those aged 45-64 and 65+. Interestingly, the younger group (21-44) exhibited the highest frequency of park use. Regardless of community type, newcomers generally reported high utilization of parks and visitation to natural amenities. Movers into rural communities showed higher levels of engagement with neighbors and members of the community, especially for activities like exchanging small favors and attending local events such as celebrations and cultural gatherings but their frequency of using community centers and other facilities was the lowest.

[9] The icons that are not shaded are the categories with the lowest score. It does not mean it is a value of "0". The icon-set basically converts numerical information into categorical visualization, using the distribution of the data.

For example, the score for "attending club or social..." among all participants is 2.2, which is the lowest compared to the scores for "volunteer", "attend religious service", etc. Therefore, it is assigned the icon with no shading, signifying its lowest score for involvement in relative to other involvement activities.
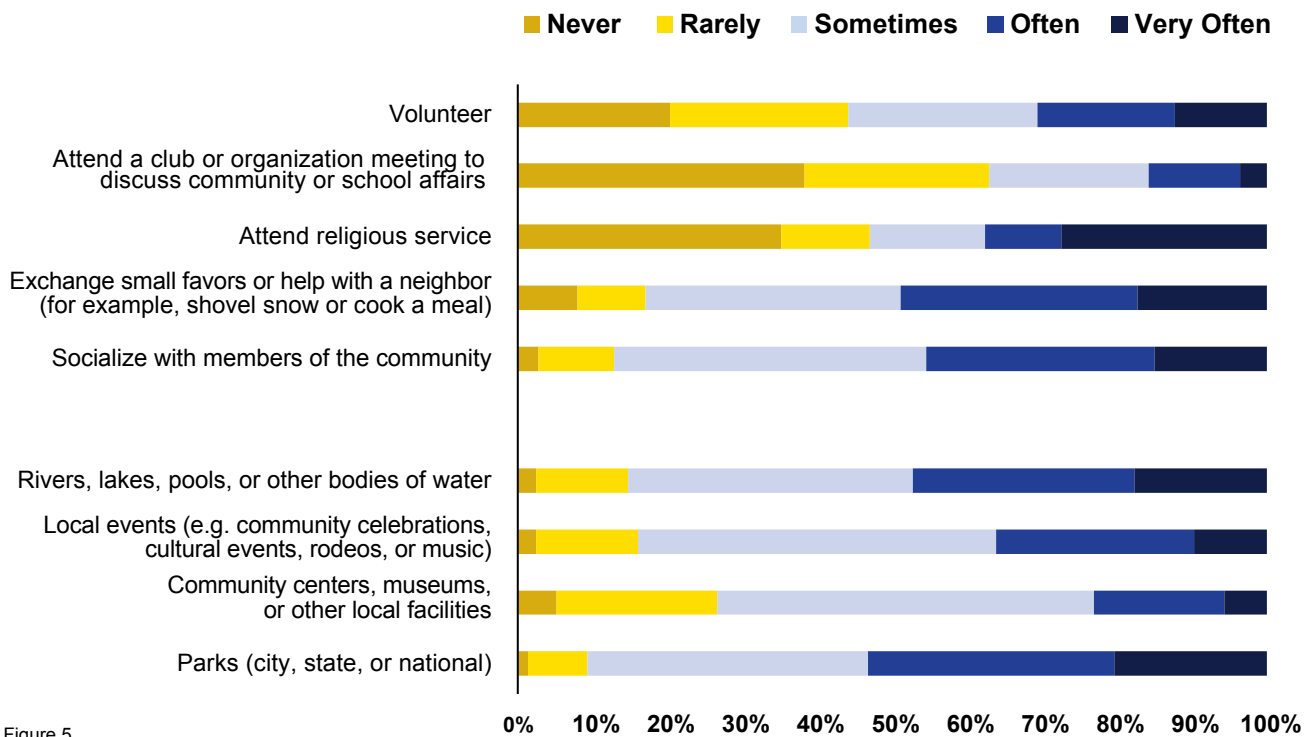
Figure 5 Involvement with social and built environments in the community of current residence, for all participants
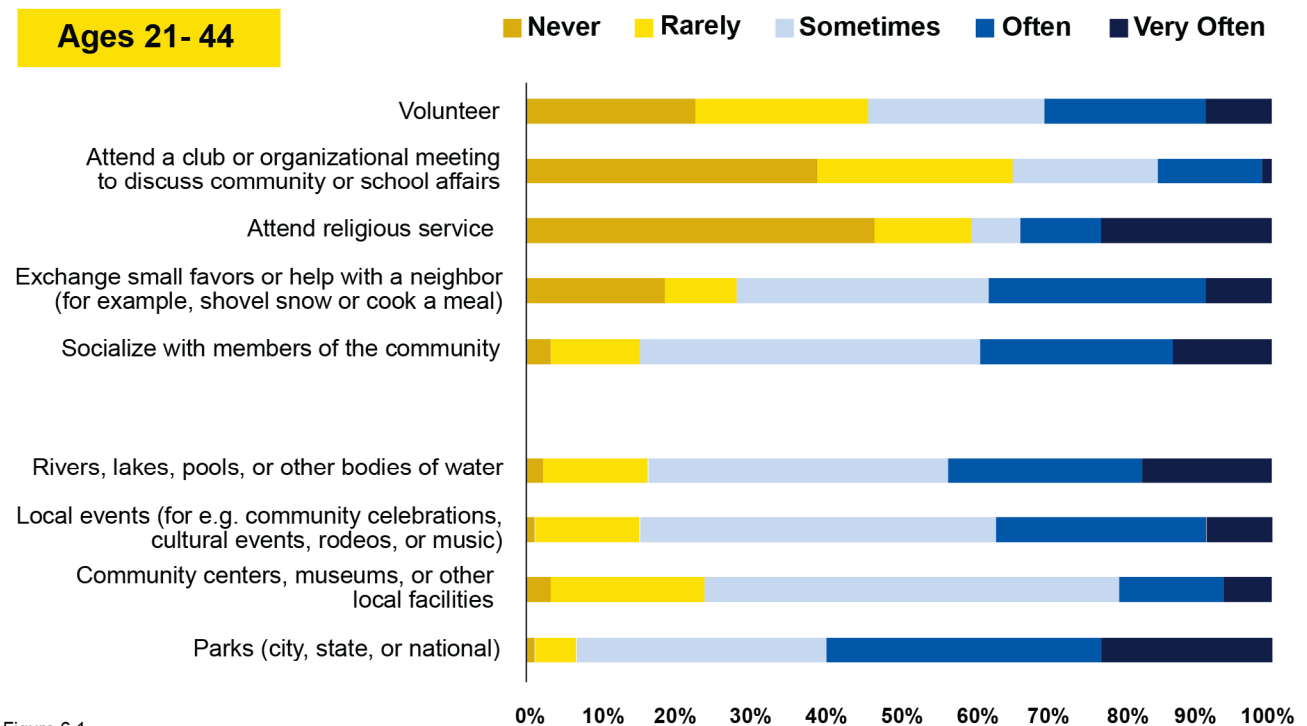
Ages 21- 44

Figure 6.1 Involvement with social and built environments in the community of current residence, by age group
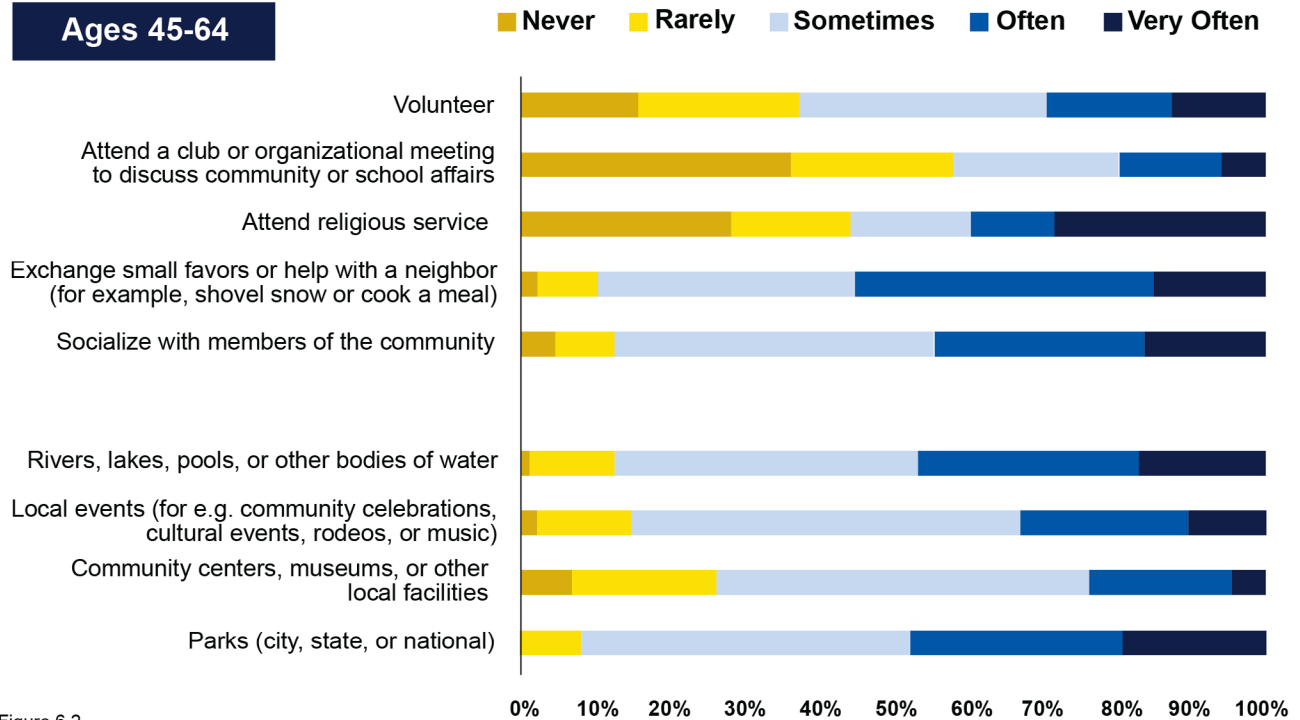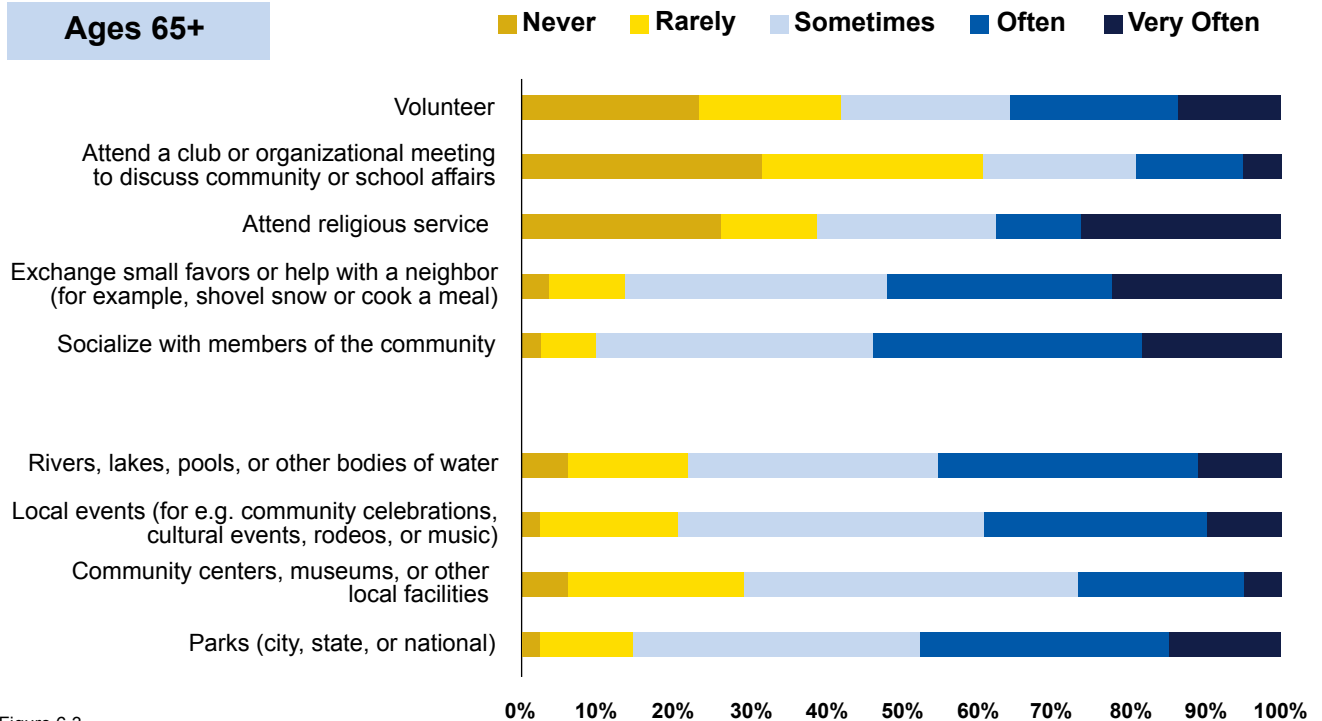
Ages 45-64

Never ■ Rarely ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Very Often

Volunteer

Attend a club or organizational meeting to discuss community or school affairs

Attend religious service

Exchange small favors or help with a neighbor (for example, shovel snow or cook a meal)

Socialize with members of the community

Rivers, lakes, pools, or other bodies of water

Local events (for e.g. community celebrations, cultural events, rodeos, or music)

Community centers, museums, or other local facilities

Parks (city, state, or national)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Figure 6.2

Figure 6.2 Involvement with social and built environments in the community of current residence, for all participants

Ages 65+

Never ■ Rarely ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Very Often

Volunteer

Attend a club or organizational meeting to discuss community or school affairs

Attend religious service

Exchange small favors or help with a neighbor (for example, shovel snow or cook a meal)

Socialize with members of the community

Rivers, lakes, pools, or other bodies of water

Local events (for e.g. community celebrations, cultural events, rodeos, or music)

Community centers, museums, or other local facilities

Parks (city, state, or national)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Figure 6.3

Figure 6.3 Involvement with social and built environments in the community of current residence, by age group
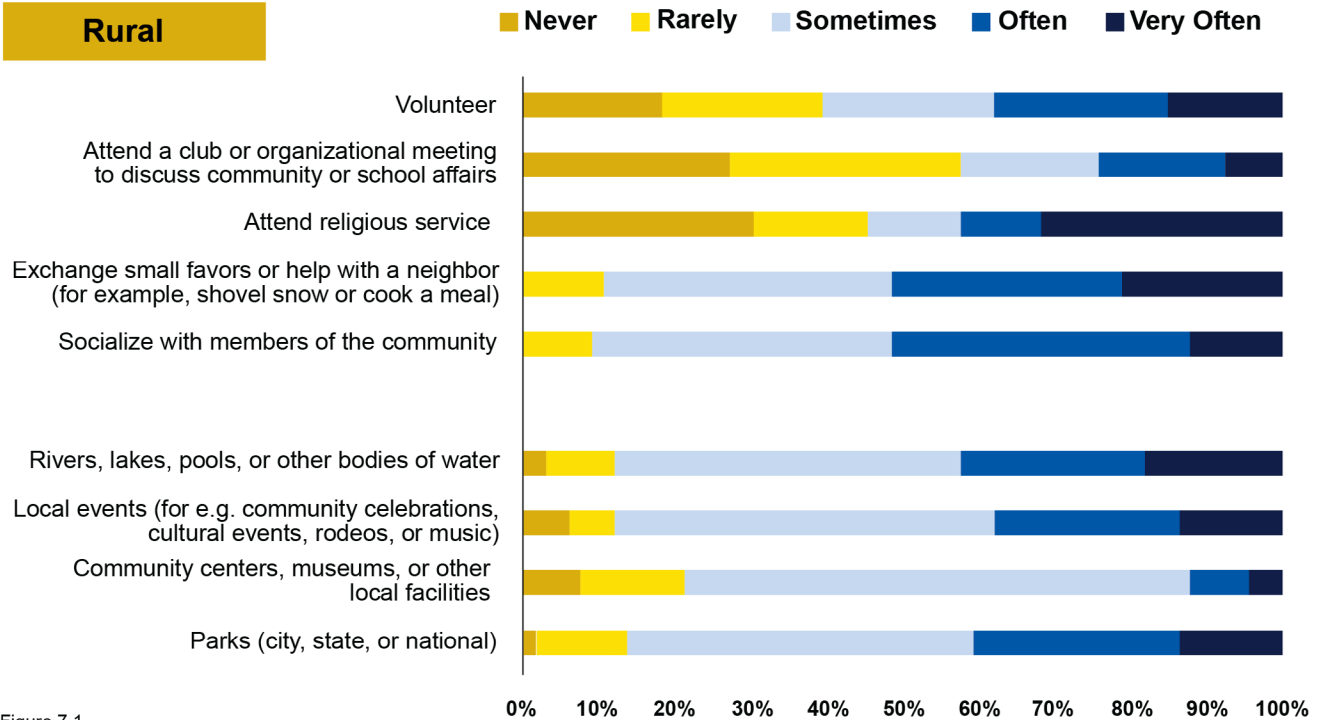
Figure 7.1 Involvement with social and built environments in the community of current residence by community rurality
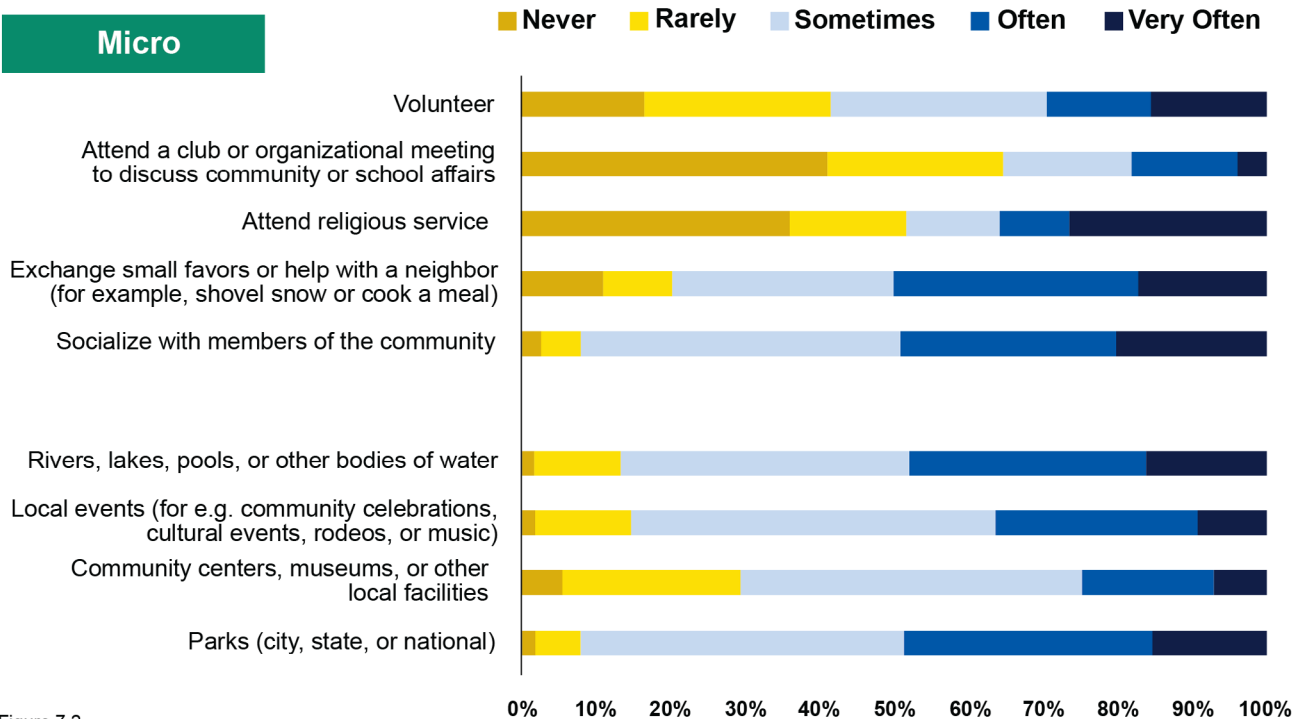
Figure 7.2 Involvement with social and built environments in the community of current residence by community rurality

Metro

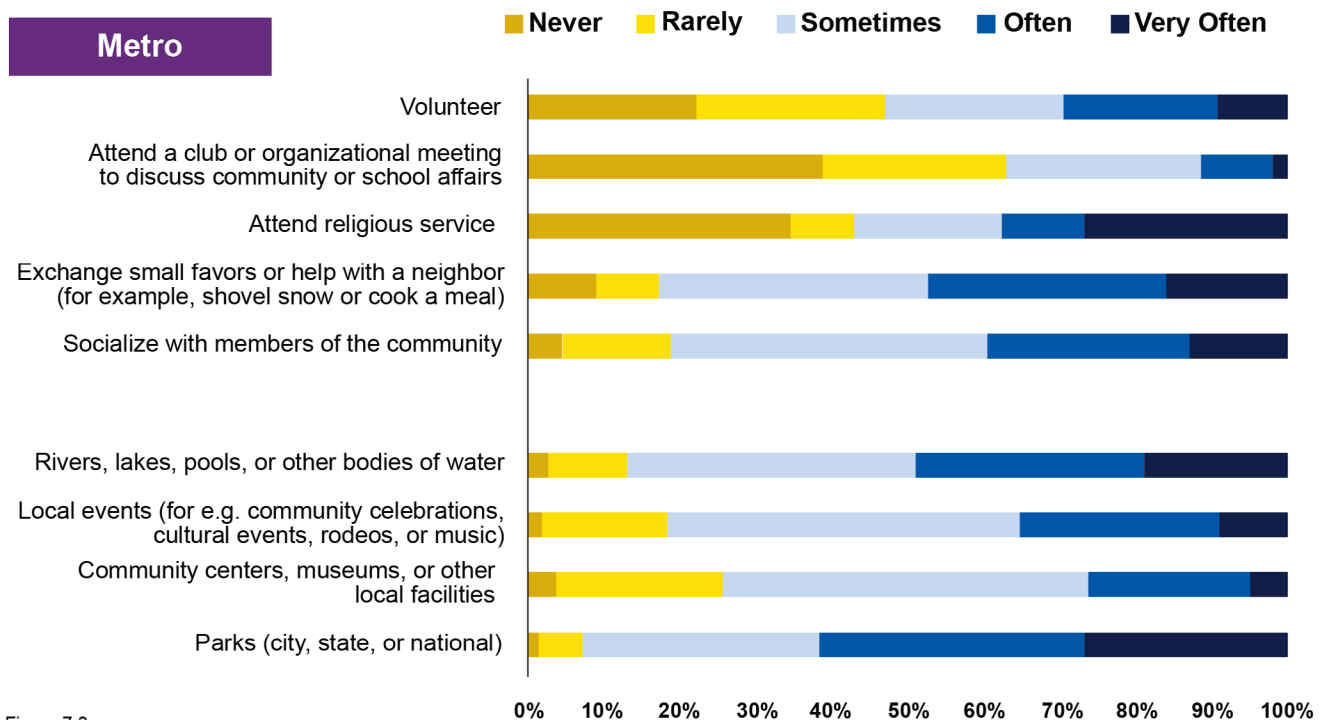Legend: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often

- Volunteer
- Attend a club or organizational meeting to discuss community or school affairs
- Attend religious service
- Exchange small favors or help with a neighbor (for example, shovel snow or cook a meal)
- Socialize with members of the community
- Rivers, lakes, pools, or other bodies of water
- Local events (for e.g. community celebrations, cultural events, rodeos, or music)
- Community centers, museums, or other local facilities
- Parks (city, state, or national)

Figure 7.3

Figure 7.3 Involvement with social and built environments in the community of current residence by community rurality

Community Involvement	All	Aged 21-44	Aged 45-64	Aged 65+	Rural	Micro	Metro
Social Environment							
Volunteer	2.81	2.73	2.87	2.88	2.95	2.88	2.70
Attend a club or organizational meeting to discuss community or school affairs	2.20	2.14	2.31	2.34	2.47	2.17	2.11
Attend religious service	2.85	2.51	2.93	3.01	2.98	2.75	2.87
Exchange small favors or help with a neighbor (for example, shovel snow or cook a meal)	3.41	3.02	3.57	3.56	3.62	3.36	2.37
Socialize with members of the community	3.45	3.34	3.43	3.59	3.55	3.59	3.29
Built Environment							
Rivers, lakes, pools, or other bodies of water	3.49	3.44	3.49	3.32	3.45	3.50	3.49
Local events (e.g. community celebrations, cultural events, rodeos, or music)	3.28	3.30	3.25	3.28	3.33	3.29	3.24
Community centers, museums, or other local facilities	2.97	2.99	2,9.	3.00	2.88	2.97	3.02
Parks (City, state, or national)	3.64	3.77	3.57	3.48	3.39	3.55	3.80

Note: The score of involvement is computed by averaging the scores assigned to the response categories as the following: Never = 1; Rarely = 2,; Sometimes = 3; Often = 4; Very Often = 5. Higher scores represent more involvement or more frequent interaction with the community environment. Lower scores represent lower levels of involvement.

Table 9 Community involvement by age group and community rurality

Part 3.4 Community Satisfaction

We evaluated newcomers' satisfaction with their current community across diverse social, economic, infrastructure, and service aspects. Respondents rated 20 statements about the community on a 4-point scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and expressed their satisfaction (from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied") with 7 specific services, including streets, sidewalks, and internet connectivity. Satisfaction is measured by the percentage of respondents reporting either "agree" or "strongly agree" to a statement, or "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the identified service. Table 9 presents the results for all respondents, while results for age groups and movers in different communities are charted separately in Figure 8-11 (Appendix includes figures of original size).

Table 9 utilizes an Excel icon set featuring three distinct symbols (circled) to visually represent newcomers' satisfaction levels, along with the corresponding percentages across all respondents. The symbols visually categorize the percentages into three ranges based on the full distribution with green circle denoting higher satisfaction (i.e., higher percentages of respondents reporting agree or satisfied), red circle indicating lower level of satisfaction, and yellow circle representing satisfaction levels in between the high and low ranges. Newcomers expressed greater satisfaction with electric/gas utilities, garbage and cell phone services, and parks and playgrounds than with streets, sidewalks, and internet access. Dissatisfaction was higher regarding food options, housing quality, making new friends, and trust in local government officials. Community safety, natural amenities, and recreational access were viewed positively. Notably, 79 percent, either agree or strongly agree, that five years from now, they will still live in the community.

Analysis of satisfaction levels by age group (Figures 8 and 10, where wider bars respectively indicate higher satisfaction) reveals consistent patterns across all three demographics. Individuals aged 21-44 consistently report the lowest levels of satisfaction, particularly concerning housing, school quality, and making new friends. Notably, this age group also shows the lowest intention to remain in the community in the next five years (69.7 percent), compared to those aged 45-64 (82.1 percent) and 65+ (92.3 percent). Figures 9 and 11 illustrate satisfaction levels by community rurality, where wider bars indicate higher satisfaction. However,

these patterns exhibit less consistency across the three destination types. Metro area newcomers report lower satisfaction with the seven service types but demonstrate greater contentment with food options, trust in local government officials, and adult education and professional development opportunities. This contrasts sharply with the preferences of newcomers in rural communities. Metro newcomers also reported the lowest intention to remain in the community in the next five years (64.2 percent), compared to those in micropolitan areas (76.0 percent) and rural communities (90.8 percent).

Aspects of the Community		% Agree or satisfied
Agree or Strongly Agree:		
The schools in this community are high quality	🟡	75%
I trust the local government officials to do what is right	🔴	64%
I am satisfied with my social life in this community	🟡	71%
I can fully use my existing skills, education, and training in this community	🟡	74%
In general, the housing in this community is of high quality	🔴	65%
I trust the people living in the community	🟢	87%
This community is welcoming of new residents	🟡	74%
I feel safe in this community	🟢	95%
Five years from now, I will still live in this community	🟡	79%
Overall, I am satisfied with living in this community	🟢	88%
This region offers many natural amenities and recreational opportunities for residents	🟢	88%
I believe that the economy of this region will grow stronger in the next five years	🟢	82%
There are enough economic opportunities in this region so that anyone who wants to work can find a job	🟡	70%
I can find activities in this region that are interesting to me	🟢	88%
I am satisfied with my broadband internet options in this community	🟡	73%
I can find the goods and services that I need to purchase in this region	🟡	68%
There are opportunities to access adult education and professional development in this region	🟡	73%
There is satisfactory health care available in this region	🟡	78%
It is easy to make friends here	🔴	66%
I am satisfied with the food options in my region	🔴	54%
Satisfied or Very Satisfied:		
Streets	🟡	71%
Sidewalks	🟡	74%
Internet access	🟡	76%
Electric/Gas Utilities	🟢	93%
Garbage service	🟢	92%
Parks and Playgrounds	🟢	91%
Cell Phone Service	🟢	85%

Table 10 Newcomers' satisfaction levels with social, economic, cultural, environmental, and infrastructural aspects of the community of current residence

Figure 8.1 Newcomers' satisfaction levels with social, economic, cultural, environmental, and infrastructural aspects of the community of current residence, by age group

Figure 8.2 Newcomers' satisfaction levels with social, economic, cultural, environmental, and infrastructural aspects of the community of current residence, by age group

Figure 8.3 Newcomers' satisfaction levels with social, economic, cultural, environmental, and infrastructural aspects of the community of current residence, by age group

Rural

Agree/Strongly Agree   Disagree/Strongly Disagree

- The schools in this community are high quality
- I trust the local government officials to do what is right
- I am satisfied with my social life in this community
- I can fully use my existing skills, education, and training in this community
- In general, the housing in this community is of high quality
- I trust the people living in this community
- This community is welcoming of new residents
- I feel safe in this community
- Five year from now, I will still live in this community
- Overall, I am satisfied with living in this community
- This region offers many natural amenities and recreational opportunities for residents
- I believe that the economy of this region will grow stronger in the next five years
- There are enough economic opportunities in this region so that anyone who wants to work can
- I can find activities in this region that are interesting to me
- I am satisfied with my broadband internet options in this community
- I can find the goods and services that I need to purchase in this region
- There are opportunities to access adult education and professional development in this region
- There is satisfactory health care available in this region
- It is easy to make friends here
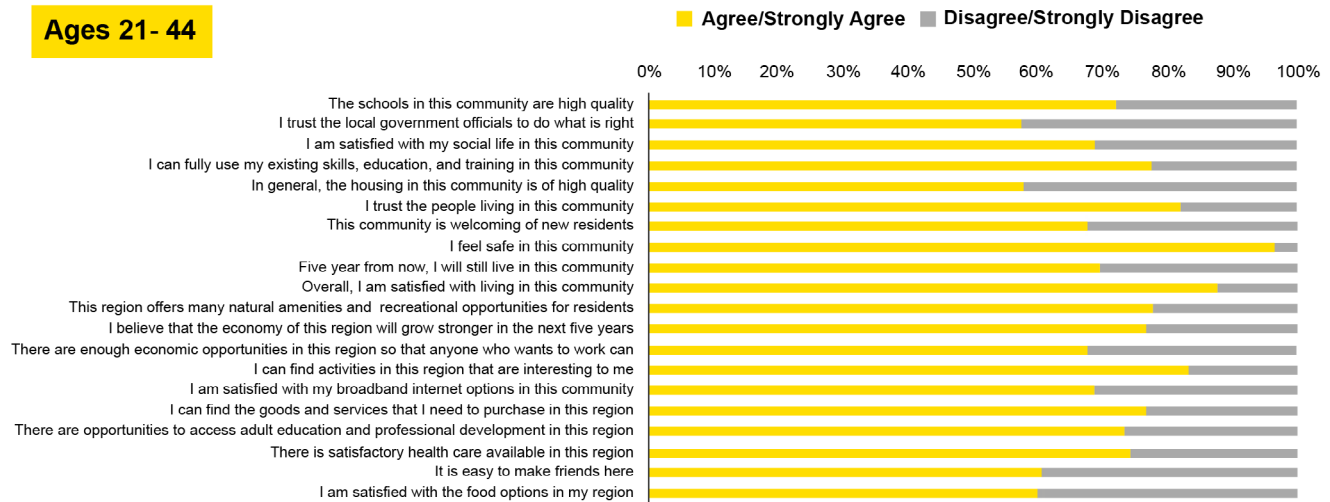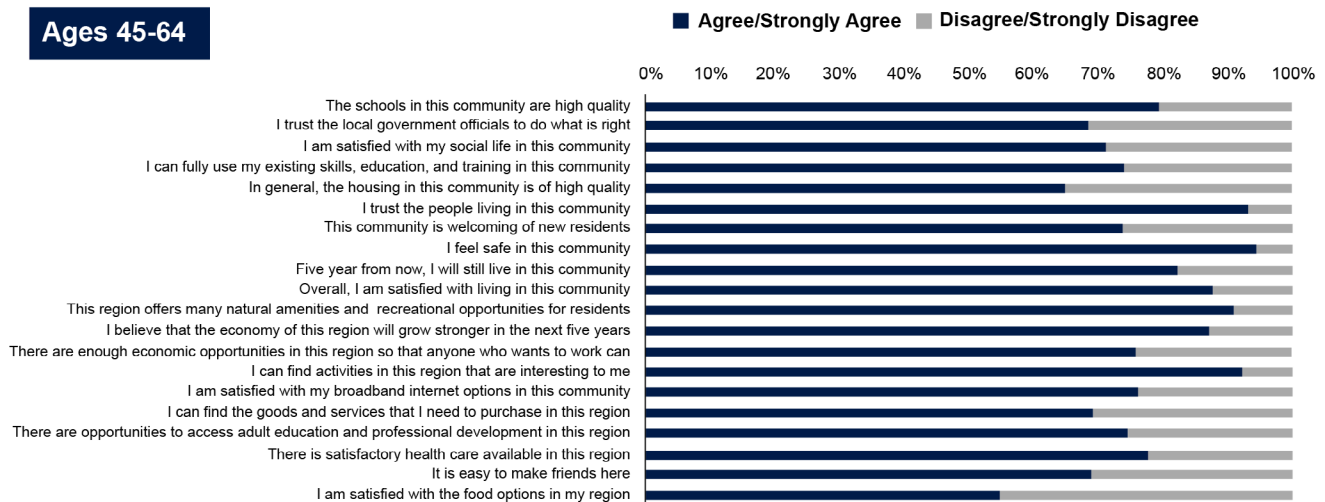- I am satisfied with the food options in my region

Figure 9.1

Figure 9.1 Newcomers' satisfaction levels with social, economic, cultural, environmental, and infrastructural aspects of the community of current residence, by community rurality

Micro

Agree/Strongly Agree   Disagree/Strongly Disagree

- The schools in this community are high quality
- I trust the local government officials to do what is right
- I am satisfied with my social life in this community
- I can fully use my existing skills, education, and training in this community
- In general, the housing in this community is of high quality
- I trust the people living in this community
- This community is welcoming of new residents
- I feel safe in this community
- Five year from now, I will still live in this community
- Overall, I am satisfied with living in this community
- This region offers many natural amenities and recreational opportunities for residents
- I believe that the economy of this region will grow stronger in the next five years
- There are enough economic opportunities in this region so that anyone who wants to work can
- I can find activities in this region that are interesting to me
- I am satisfied with my broadband internet options in this community
- I can find the goods and services that I need to purchase in this region
- There are opportunities to access adult education and professional development in this region
- There is satisfactory health care available in this region
- It is easy to make friends here
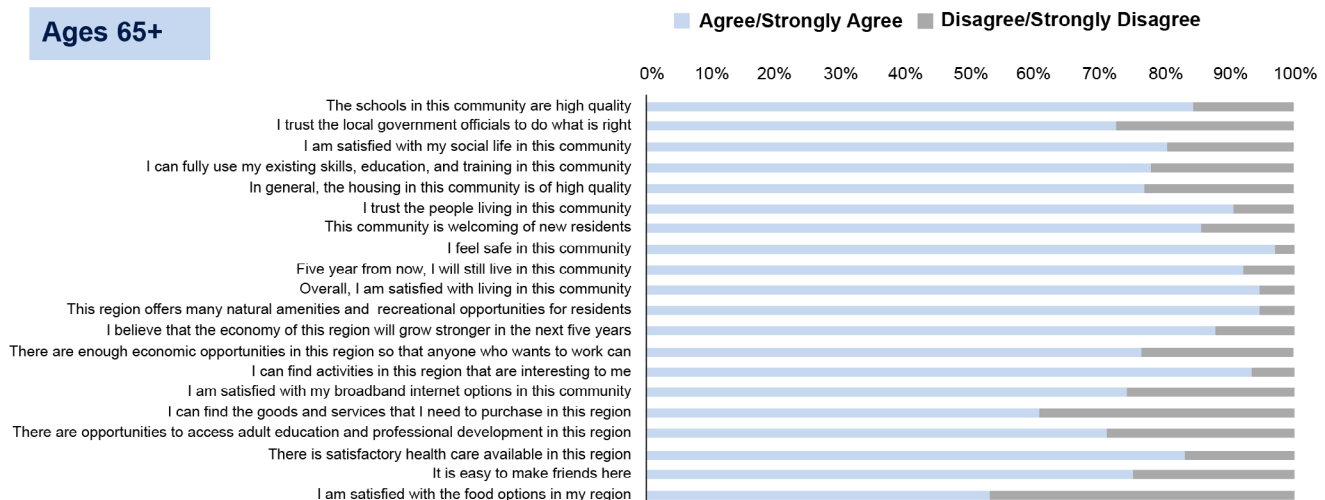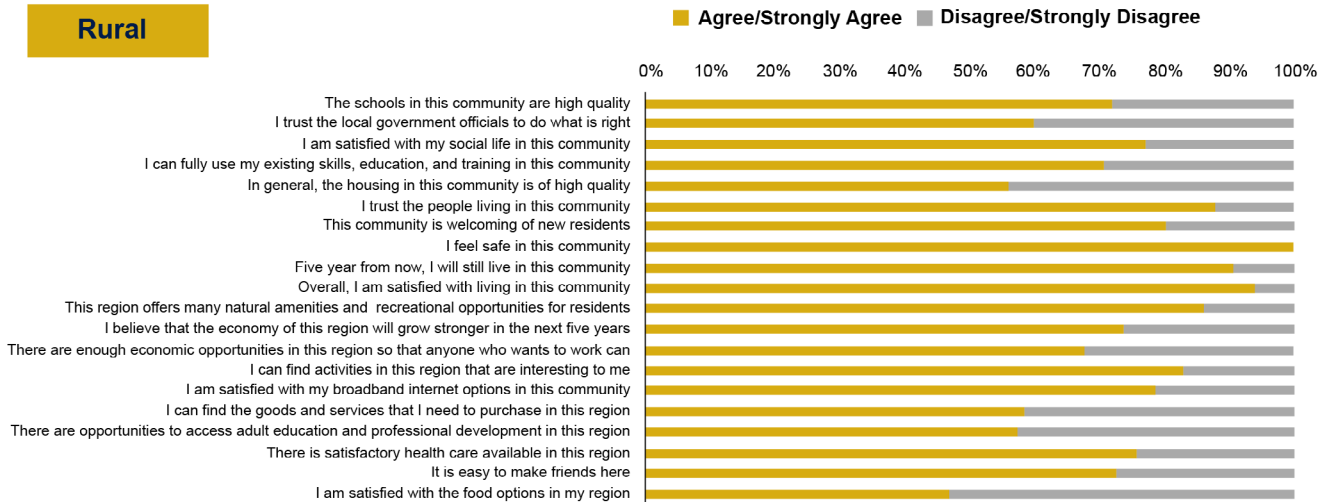- I am satisfied with the food options in my region

Figure 9.2

Figure 9.2 Newcomers' satisfaction levels with social, economic, cultural, environmental, and infrastructural aspects of the community of current residence, by community rurality

Metro

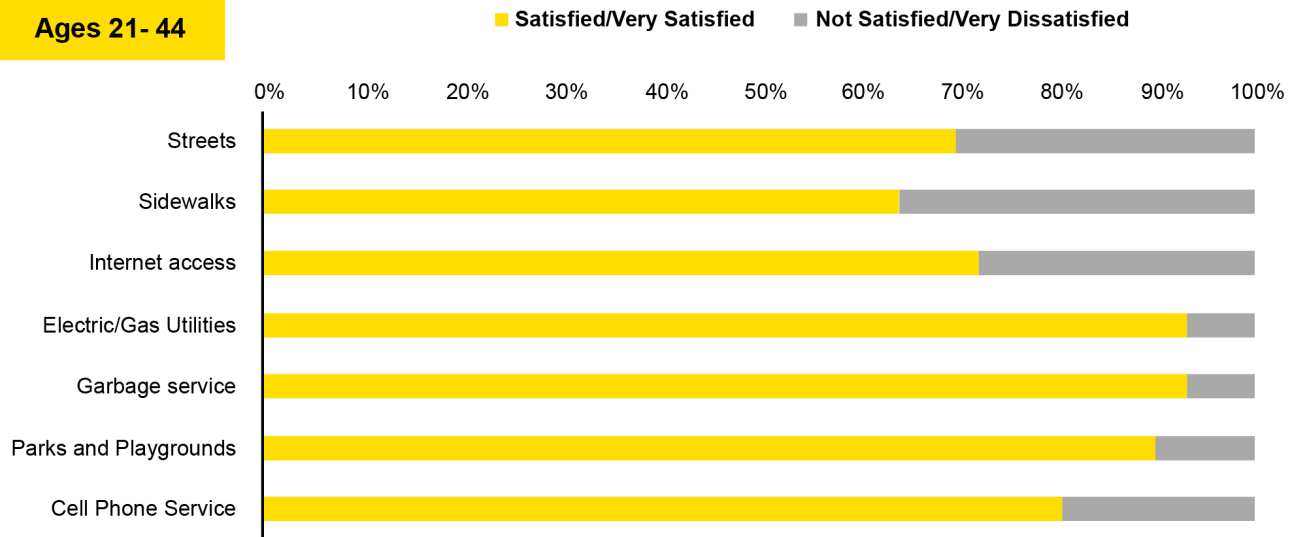Agree/Strongly Agree   Disagree/Strongly Disagree

- The schools in this community are high quality
- I trust the local government officials to do what is right
- I am satisfied with my social life in this community
- I can fully use my existing skills, education, and training in this community
- In general, the housing in this community is of high quality
- I trust the people living in this community
- This community is welcoming of new residents
- I feel safe in this community
- Five year from now, I will still live in this community
- Overall, I am satisfied with living in this community
- This region offers many natural amenities and recreational opportunities for residents
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- I can find activities in this region that are interesting to me
- I am satisfied with my broadband internet options in this community
- I can find the goods and services that I need to purchase in this region
- There are opportunities to access adult education and professional development in this region
- There is satisfactory health care available in this region
- It is easy to make friends here
- I am satisfied with the food options in my region

Figure 9.3

Figure 9.3 Newcomers' satisfaction levels with social, economic, cultural, environmental, and infrastructural aspects of the community of current residence, by community rurality

Figure 10.1 Newcomers' satisfaction with the community's quality of infrastructure and service, by age group
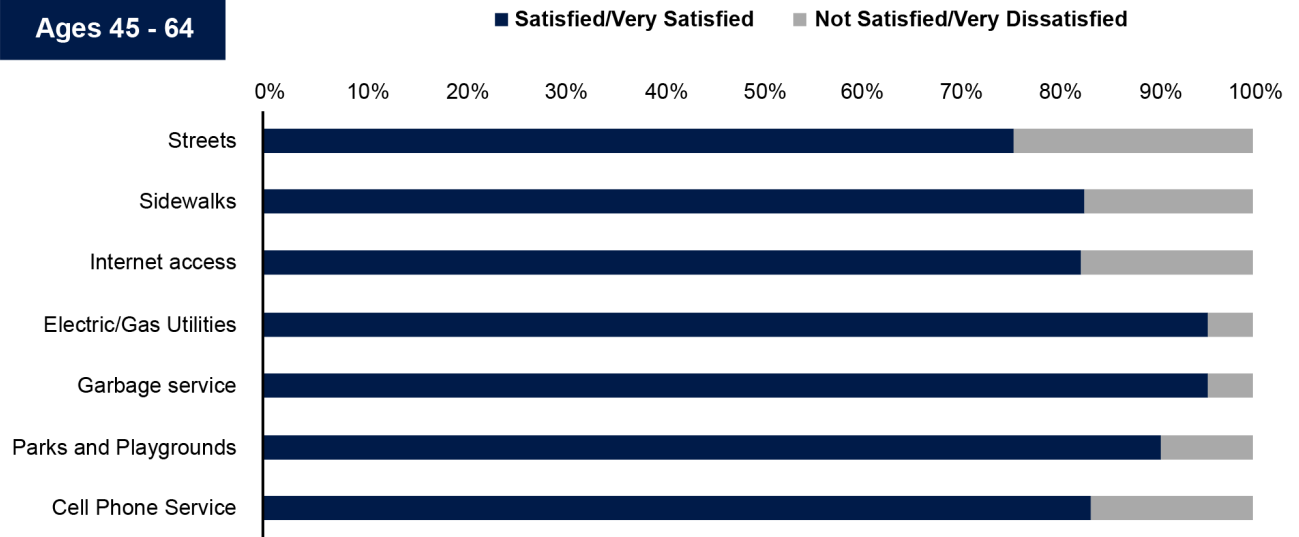

Figure 10.2 Newcomers' satisfaction with the community's quality of infrastructure and service, by age group
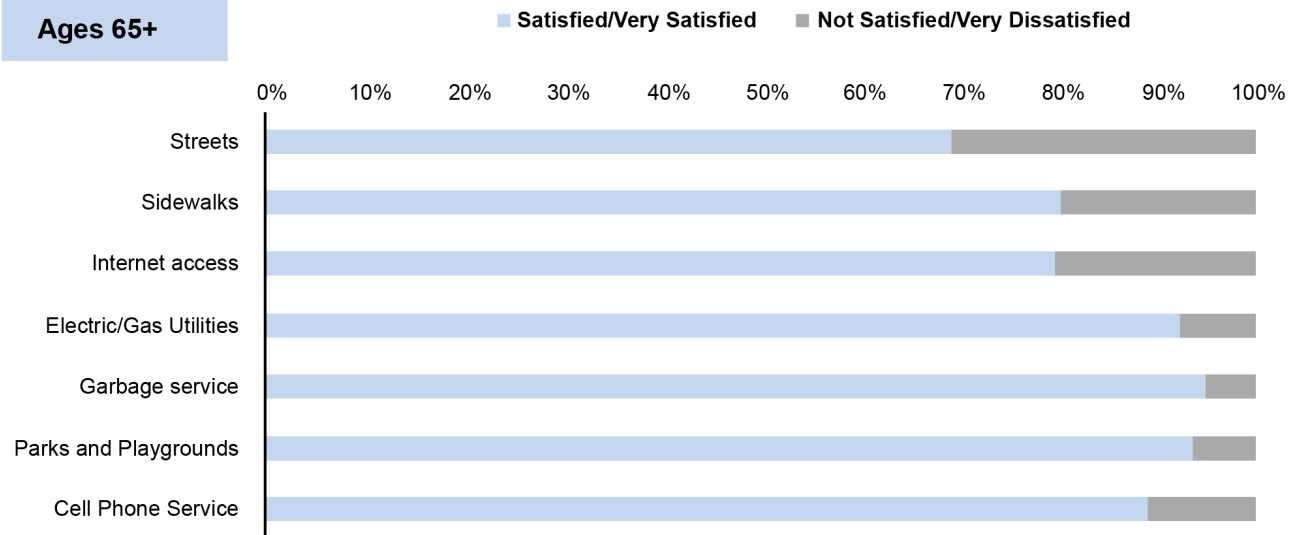

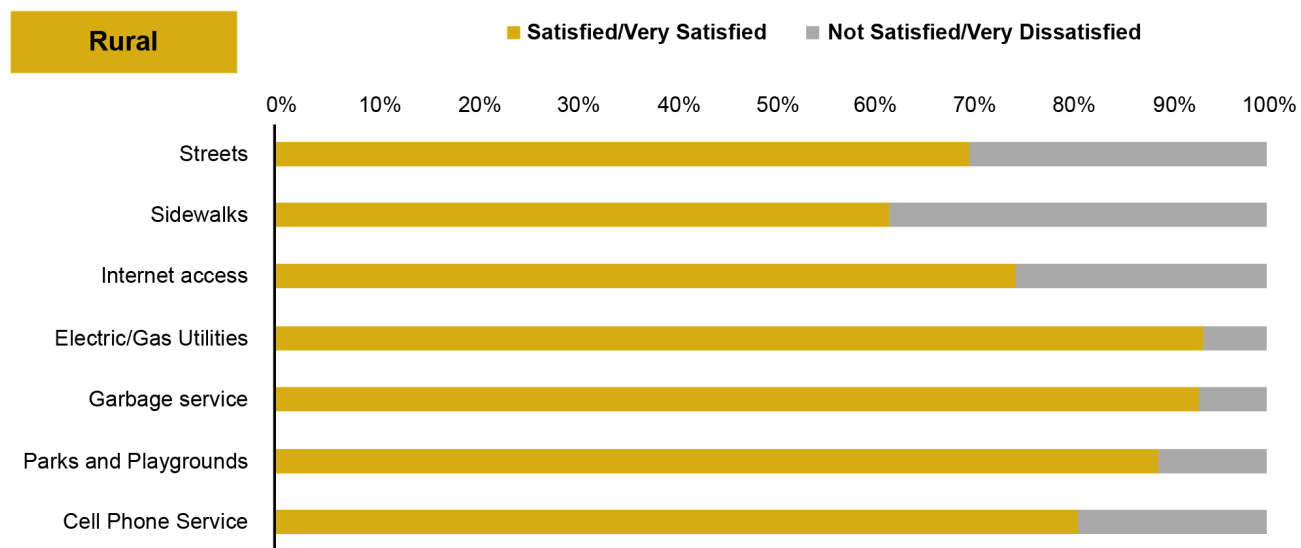**Figure 10.3** Newcomers' satisfaction with the community's quality of infrastructure and service, by age group

Figure 11.1 Newcomers' satisfaction with the community's quality of infrastructure and service, by community rurality
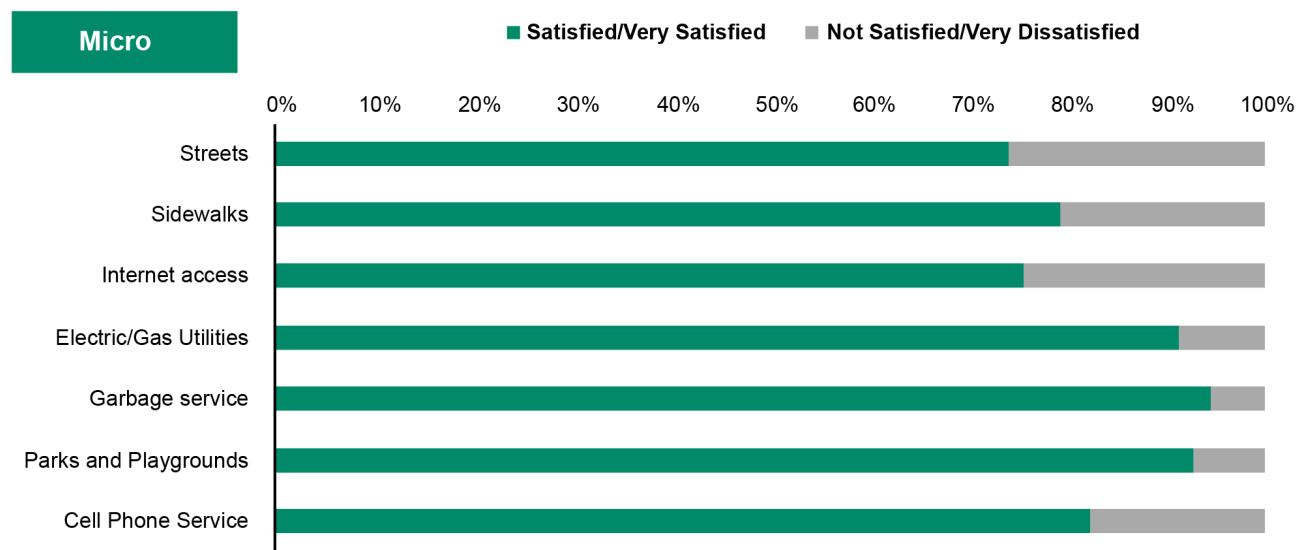
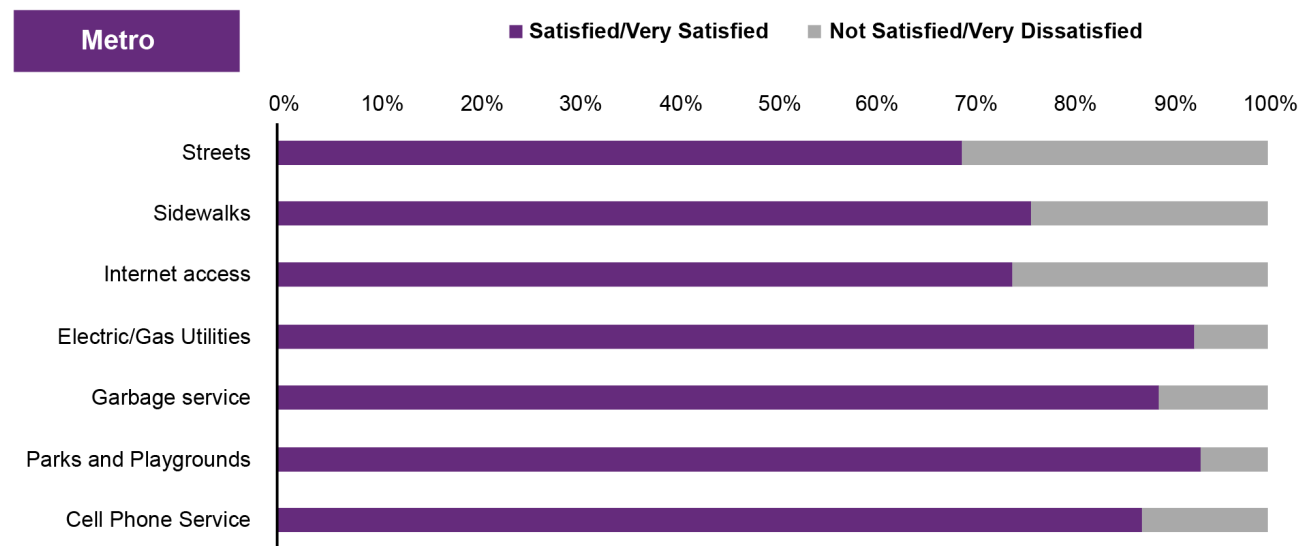**Figure 11.2** Newcomers' satisfaction with the community's quality of infrastructure and service, by community rurality

Figure 11.3 Newcomers' satisfaction with the community's quality of infrastructure and service, by community rurality

Part 3.5 Intention to remain in the community after five years of residence

The analysis in Part 3.4 showed approximately 78.7 percent of respondents indicated the intention to remain in the community after five years of residence. Part 3.5 aimed to investigate the factors influencing this intention. The intention to stay was operationalized by calculating the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Five years from now, I will still live in this community," and was then broken down by respondent characteristics (Table 10).

The statistically significant differences across newcomer groups observed were:

- Age: Younger newcomers expressed the lowest intention to remain in their community for five years. Only 70.3 percent of those aged 21–44 planned to stay, this figure rises steadily with age to 81.2 percent for those 45–64 and 92.6 percent for those 65+.

- Race/Ethnicity: The rate of racial/ethnic minorities intending to stay was considerably lower than for non-Hispanic whites, at 60.0 percent.

- Community Type: Newcomers in rural communities were the most likely to remain (90.8 percent), while their counterparts in micropolitan and metropolitan communities had lower and nearly identical rates of intent (76.0 percent and 75.8 percent, respectively).

We also examined how newcomers' intention to stay varied with the level of their social interactions and use of community amenities. The percentage of newcomers who intended to stay after five years increased with more frequent social interactions, visits to social and cultural events, and use of community facilities. Conversely, the intention to stay was lower among residents who were rarely or never engaged with these social interactions and facilities (Table 11).

Characteristics	% Indicating to Stay
All	78.7
Age Group	*
21-44	70.3
45-64	81.2
65+	92.6
Sex	
Male	80.7
Female	77.3
Race/Ethnicity	*
Non-Hispanic White	80.4
Minorities	60.0
Education	
Some college or lower	77.8
Bachelor's degree or higher	79.3
Rural-Urban	*
Rural	90.8
Micropolitan	76.0
Metropolitan	75.8
Moving Period	
Before 2020	86.6
2020	75.0
2021	84.0
2022	75.0
2023-2024	72.1

Note: *Statistical significance for the comparison within each group (p<0.05).

The tabulation is based on the responses to the question "Five years from now, I will still live in this community." Responses of "agree" and "strongly agree" were grouped into the group indicating to stay.

Table 11 Percentage of those with the intention to stay in the community after five years of residence, by selected participant characteristics

Finally, it was also important to identify which adverse aspects of the community perceived by residents would have the strongest negative impact on their intention to stay. The percentage of respondents who indicated staying is cross-referenced with four levels of satisfaction—from very dissatisfied to very satisfied—for each statement about the community (Table 12). Color shading identifies the community aspects most associated with newcomers' reduced intent to stay. Newcomers were least likely to have an intention to still live in the community after five years when they strongly disagreed or disagreed with their overall satisfaction in the community (0 percent among strongly disagree and 13 percent among disagree). This lower intent to stay was also most pronounced among those who reported the highest dissatisfaction with specific aspects, including safety (20 percent), social life (25 percent), trust (28.6 percent), the prospect of local economy (33.3 percent), and activities aligned with personal interest (33.3 percent). In addition, the intention to stay was notably lower when newcomers strongly disagreed with the statement "In general, the housing in this community is of high quality" (35.3 percent) and the statement "the community is welcoming of new residents," (35.7 percent).

Social Environment	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
Volunteer	71.0	74.1	79.1	87.7	84.4
Attend a club or organizational meeting to discuss community or school affairs	76.1	76.5	76.3	93.2	92.3
Attend religious service	69.9	83.7	88.7	75.7	83.7
Exchange small favors for help with a neighbor (for example, shovel snow or cook a meal)	51.7	78.1	81.4	76.3	90.3
Socialize with members of the community	70.0	60.0	75.2	87.0	85.2
Built Environment	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Very Often**
Rivers, lakes, pools or other bodies of water	77.8	77.3	77.8	78.5	82.0
Local events (e.g. community celebrations, cultural events, rodeos, or music)	66.7	70.8	75.9	83.3	93.9
Community centers, museums, or other local facilities	63.2	64.9	84.3	81.0	89.5
Parks (City, state, or national)	60.0	82.1	77.9	78.3	80.6

Table 12 Percentage with the intention to stay in the community after five years of residence, by levels of involvement with the social and built environment of the community

Statement About the Community	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The schools in this community are high quality	50.0	68.9	82.9	87.5
I trust the local government officials to do what is right	46.2	68.2	88.2	88.9
I am satisfied with my social life in this community	25.0	71.1	86.2	89.1
I can fully use my existing skills, education, and training in this community	37.9	72.6	84.3	86.4
In general, the housing in this community is of high quality	35.3	70.6	83.7	96.8
I trust the people living in the community	28.6	53.9	80.1	93.9
This community is welcoming of new residents	35.7	68.2	82.8	95.2
I feel safe in this community	20.0	36.4	75.5	89.6
Overall, I am satisfied with living in this community	0.0	13.3	82.0	98.2
This region offers many natural amenities and recreational opportunities for residents	50.0	73.5	75.3	85.8
I believe that the economy of this region will grow stronger in the next five years	33.3	61.8	80.6	89.3
There are enough economic opportunities in this region so that anyone who wants to work can find a job	60.0	72.4	79.2	90.7
I can find activities in this region that are interesting to me	33.3	53.1	77.0	96.1
I am satisfied with my broadband internet options in this community	76.3	73.0	77.5	86.5
I can find the goods and services that I need to purchase in this region	56.5	74.4	82.9	80.4
There are opportunities to access adult education and professional development in this region	70.0	67.6	82.1	82.2
There is satisfactory health care available in this region	52.0	77.4	78.9	87.7
It is easy to make friends here	43.8	70.1	84.2	95.7
I am satisfied with the food options in my region	64.8	76.6	83.1	87.5

Quality of the Service	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Streets	60.0	71.6	80.4	94.1
Sidewalks	77.3	67.2	80.0	92.1
Internet access	85.0	69.7	77.8	86.7
Electric/Gas Utilities	75.0	66.7	77.7	85.1
Garbage service	50.0	67.9	75.5	92.8
Parks and Playgrounds	50.0	57.1	78.5	85.7
Cell Phone Service	77.8	73.3	76.2	90.9

Table 13 Percentage with the intention to stay in the community after five years of residence, by levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the community

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