

# COUNTY OF YORK

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** October 8, 2025

**TO:** York County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Mark L. Bellamy, Jr., County Administrator



**SUBJECT:** Why Are Americans Relocating

Mr. Shepperd discussed this at the October 7 Board of Supervisors meeting. This article highlights key shifts in American mobility and their implications for economic development. These findings suggest a need to rethink how states and communities approach economic development in today's mobility landscape.

Nardozzi/3334

Attachment:

- *Why Are Americans Relocating* Article



**Opinion**

Mitch Daniels

# Why are Americans relocating? The data shows surprises.

The tranquility and safety of suburban and rural areas increasingly appeal to many movers.

Today at 6:45 a.m. EDT

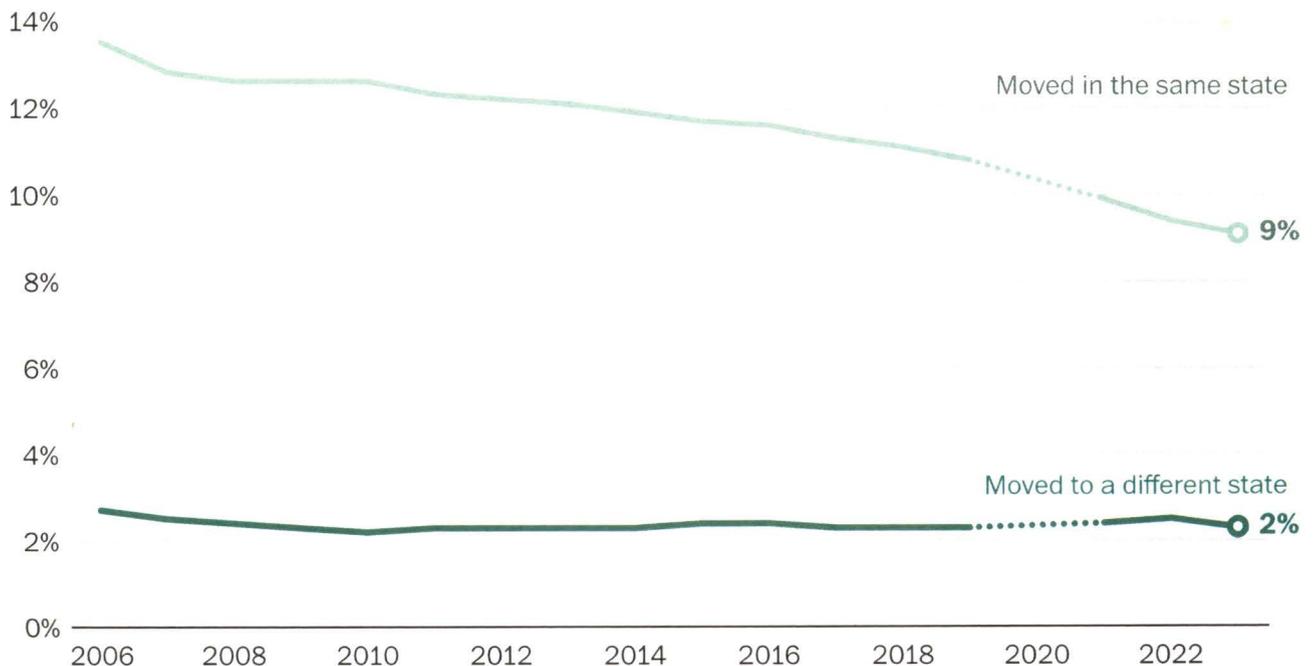
Economists are paying a lot of attention these days to mobility, the rate at which Americans change residences and jobs. The historically higher U.S. proclivity to pick up and move has been a driver of economic dynamism and growth, and a competitive edge vs. European and other less fluid societies.

Although Americans are moving less often than in the past, they remain the most mobile among the populations of developed countries. Again this year, some 9 percent of Americans are expected to change homes, and while the total has declined somewhat, the percentage of people moving across state lines has been stable for decades.



## Americans have been moving across states for decades

Percentage of population that relocated in the past year



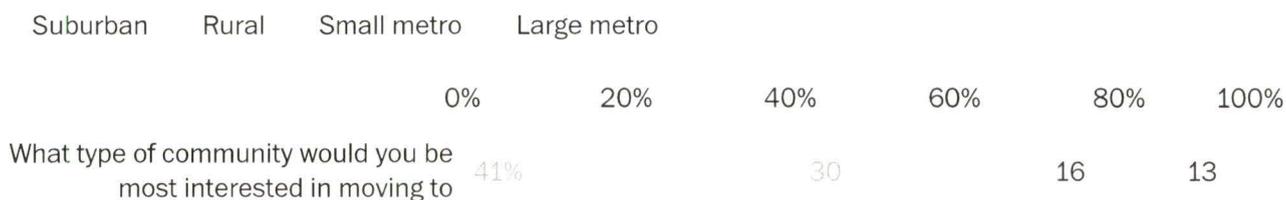
What *does* change is the reasons people make the big decision to move, and the destinations they choose in doing so. In the internet era, a new industry has sprung up to assist relocators and communities eager to attract them. The data these companies are accumulating contains some surprises — challenging some prevailing generalizations and casting doubt on the way many states pursue economic development.

High among these surprises is that the future may not actually belong to the big “cool” cities; the economically vital “creative class” may not inevitably congregate in such places. This may have been the case before so many of those cities became overly expensive, overly taxed and overly dangerous. But today, people on the move, including the young, have shifted preferences in a major way.

In its annual survey, Development Counsellors International, specialists in marketing economic development and travel, found that 41 percent of movers preferred suburbs; 16 percent, small metropolitan areas; and only 13 percent leaned toward large metros. More surprising, 30 percent were seeking rural locations.



### Suburban and rural areas top moving wish list

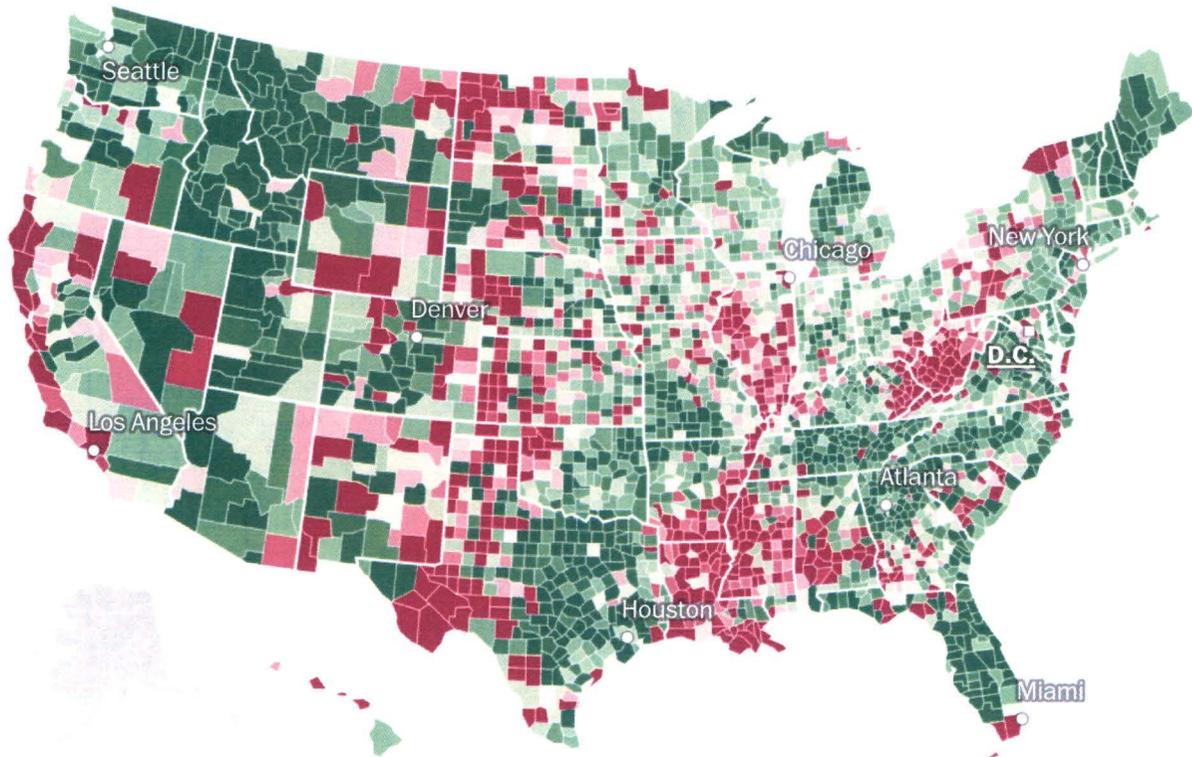
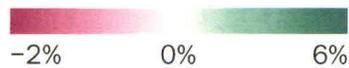


Source: [Development Counsellors International Report 2024](#)

It isn't just retirees who are seeking tranquility. Sixty-three percent of rural and small metro counties added residents between 25 and 44 years old from 2020 to 2023, more than twice the percentage of a decade before. The top counties adding to their young populations were in Texas, Montana and Georgia, and those counties were all rural or near smaller cities.

## Most counties added young workers from 2020 to 2023

Population change of 25-to-44-year-olds



Alaska is excluded due to low data accuracy.

Source: [Census Bureau](#), analysis by Hamilton Lombard of University of Virginia



One especially shaky speculation is that moves are motivated primarily by the perceived cultural or political character of competing communities. DCI's survey shows that economics and personal safety dominate relocators' decisions. When ranking their criteria, last year's movers named the cost of living and housing affordability in a first-place tie, followed by safety/crime and housing availability. Short commutes, a friendly local population and quality health care come next. Proximity to family also scores high.

FACTORS

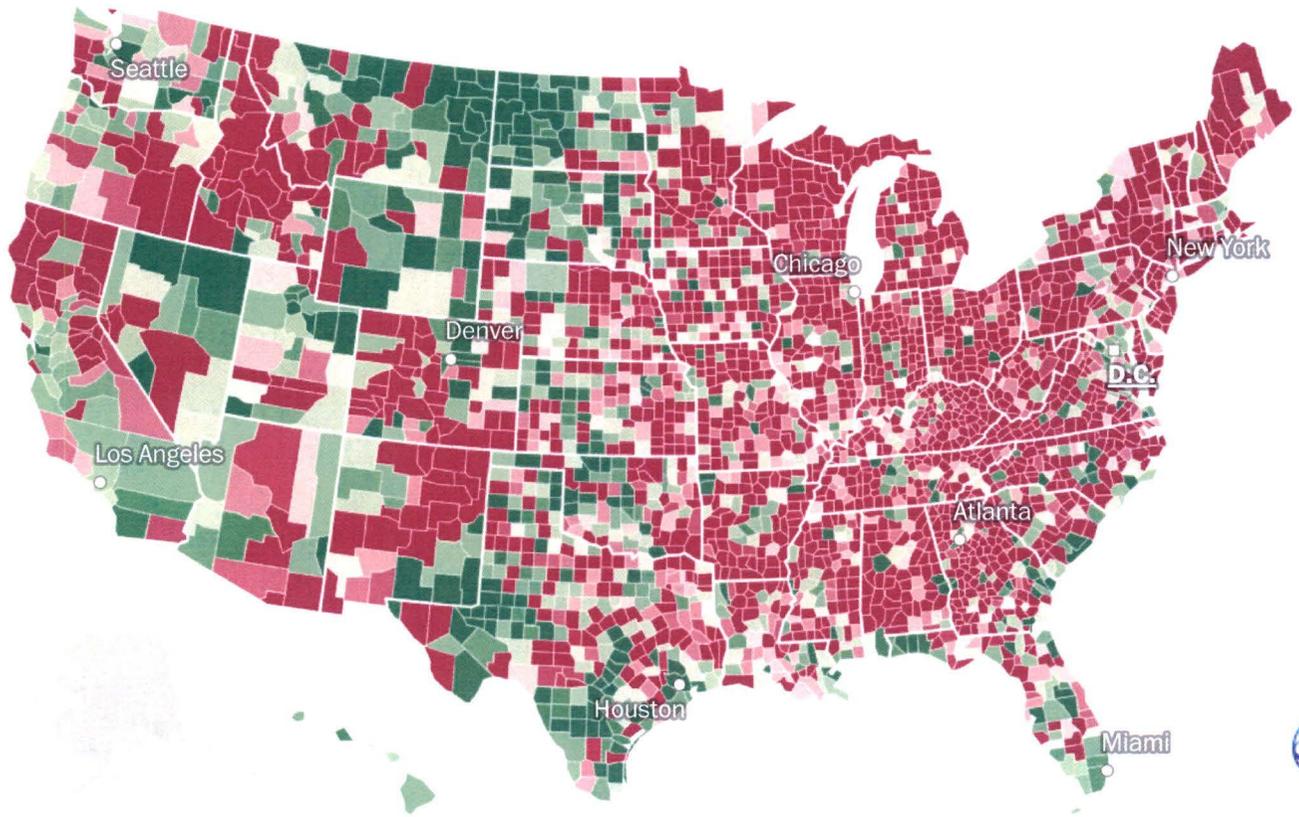
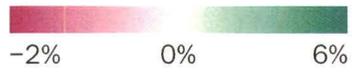
Trailing far behind are nightlife, arts and culture, and the "cool factor." At rock bottom are "political/social fit" and "diversity." These characteristics also rank lowest in relocators' criteria when seeking a new job.

While governments throw millions in cash incentives at corporations, at \$50,000 or more per potential job, savvy localities such as Tulsa are landing hundreds of new residents annually with a fraction of such costs. Offering a few thousand dollars for moving and other expenses often does the job, sometimes augmented by an intriguing array of low-cost perks: In Lincoln County, Kansas, the high-school football team shows up to help newcomers move in.

URBAN → suburban - rural

# Rural America saw little growth among young workers from 2010 to 2013

Population change of 25-to-44-year-olds



Another stereotype that calls for caution: While numerically the hemorrhage of people from states such as New York and California to Sun Belt destinations is unmistakable, the flow is surprisingly two-way. MakeMyMove, one of the entrepreneurial outfits that have emerged to connect movers and Midwest host communities, tells me that, though California is the No. 1 sending state and Illinois an unsurprising No. 4, second and third place are held by Texas and Florida.

The surge in remote work plays a role, but not a dominant one. Fifty-three percent of movers wind up taking a job in their new location. The 23 percent who work remotely mirrors the level at which fully remote jobs seem to have stabilized across the economy.

The data suggests that state economic development strategies need updating. The standard practice of throwing subsidies at established businesses encourages reckless excess as politicians outbid one other for the opportunity to cut the ribbon on plants, sticking their successors with the tab. Now a hardheaded return-on-investment analysis says that a far smarter retail approach can pay off better, and quicker.

One study found that the boost to state and local tax receipts from individual relocations is almost 10 times greater than that from corporate subsidies. The relocators typically bring above-average incomes, and therefore tax payments and consumer spending, and the economic lift starts within months, not after years of abatement.

Americans on the move have always made America a nation on the move. The impulse to try something, and somewhere, new is still alive. What's needed is more encouragement that will inspire people to chase their dreams.



## What readers are saying

The conversation explores various factors influencing relocation decisions, with a strong emphasis on economic considerations. Many participants highlight the appeal of lower housing costs and taxes in rural or suburban areas, often enabled by the rise of remote work. Access to... [Show more](#)

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