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Michigan's Population Growth Effort Releases New National Poll Findings

Data showcase young talent want safe, inclusive and welcoming communities that confront society's most vexing issues like climate change

Mackinac Island, Mich. – New poll findings released today by Michigan's population growth effort will inform legislators and policymakers to further understand where and why young talent relocate. The release of the findings coincides with the annual **Mackinac Policy Conference** this week that brings together Michigan's most influential leaders to discuss the state's economic future.

"The findings from this poll underscore that Michigan's leadership on climate action and other policies are population and economic growth drivers as well," said Hilary Doe, chief growth officer for the State of Michigan. "We want to build on our value proposition to appeal to the young talent in our state and across the country," said Doe, who, along with Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II, is among the conference's keynote dignitaries.

The poll surveyed 6,098 people from 15 cities across the United States that are popular among young talent, including Atlanta, New York City and Austin, Texas among others.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the most mobile people are those between the ages of 20 and 34. Understanding why these individuals choose to move is critical to reversing Michigan's existing population trends.

While Michigan is in-line with neighboring states when it comes to retention, attracting new residents has been challenging. Michigan is 49th in the nation in terms of residents who live here but weren't born in-state. The population growth effort collaborated with Generation Lab to conduct this survey that targeted this age group to better understand their relocation trends.

The poll revealed which considerations are most important to young people when choosing a place to call home. Among the top factors were:

- Diverse and safe communities, and those welcoming to immigrants.
- Future-focused communities making investments in the fight against climate change.
- Access to reproductive health care.
- Amenity-rich and walkable communities, including those with robust transit.



Specifically, in terms of community factors, housing affordability, safety, quality of health care, access to nature and outdoor activities and walkability rank as the top five characteristics young people indicated as important to them when seeking a new place to call home.

Additionally, social factors including diversity and climate policy, for example, were important to more than 50% of respondents.

Overall, over 50% of survey respondents strongly agreed that access to reproductive healthcare, diversity and welcoming immigration policies, community safety, unionization and combating climate change were important factors in where they chose to live. Fifty-two percent of respondents aged 25-34 said they wish their community did more to combat climate change.

“When folks think about looking for a place to call home, we want them to think of Michigan,” Doe said. “The findings from this poll will be folded into the population effort’s work, and into our thinking as we partner with Michigan communities to launch pilots and programs that support regions in retaining current residents and welcoming new faces to our great state.”

As the war for quality talent becomes more competitive, many cities and states — from Indiana to West Virginia — have launched programs encouraging movers to choose their communities.

To that end, survey respondents were asked questions about whether specific talent attraction and retention programs or state policies would motivate them to relocate. When respondents were asked which would most strongly cause them to consider moving to a new location, if offered, down payment and student loan assistance rose to the top as the most motivating.

Among young parents who indicated they planned to move in the near future or were not sure of their relocation plans, the poll found free universal pre-K became the second-most influential consideration in their relocation plans. In addition to the educational benefits for children, then, universal pre-K was found to be a talent attraction/retention strategy for young families.

Many of the findings captured in this poll reinforce the state’s blueprint for growth laid out by the Growing Michigan Together Council last year. The blueprint consists of three pillars:

- Establish Michigan as the Innovation Hub of the Midwest and America’s Scale-up State.
- Build a lifelong learning system focused on future-ready skills and competencies.
- Create thriving, resilient communities that are magnets for young talent.

The population growth effort also conducted a statewide survey last year that collected feedback from over 11,000 Michiganders across 800-plus ZIP codes. That survey showcased Michigan residents want great places with high-quality infrastructure that are transit- and



amenity-rich, access to great educational and career opportunities and welcoming communities to call home.

In addition to launching new pilot programs in partnership with stakeholders and communities statewide, Let's Grow Michigan, the population growth effort's campaign to engage Michiganders in the task of growing Michigan, is hitting the road this summer to hear from Michiganders and roll out new ways to engage folks in telling Michigan's story.

To learn more about the new national poll, read the complete report here:

<https://growingmichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/Lets-Grow-Michigan-National-Poll-Final-Report.pdf>

For more information about the Let's Grow Michigan campaign, visit: growingmichigan.org/lets-grow-michigan/

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Actions Taken to Grow Michigan's Population

- In the past year, over 11,000 Michiganders provided feedback regarding challenges in their communities but also what they love most about calling Michigan home. This feedback was shared with the Growing Michigan Together Council.
- In December 2023, the Growing Michigan Together Council voted 19-1 in support of recommendations to grow the state's population.
- Gov. Whitmer's proposed 2025 budget recommendations correlate to many of the Council's blueprint for growth recommendations, including the Michigan Innovation Fund, R&D tax credit, key industry apprenticeship pilots, a Michigan marketing program, Community College Guarantee and transit innovation grants.
- Legislative action on the blueprint for growth, including legislative hearings with the Senate's Economic and Community Development Committee on the Council's findings and report has continued momentum around the population growth work.
- Since January 2024, engaged in over 70 public education sessions and briefings across the state on the blueprint for growth.
- Hosted public events such as the MI HOMEcoming Tailgate for visitors and residents in town for the NFL draft to experience what makes Michigan a great place to call home.
- Earned national media coverage on Michigan's innovative population growth effort, including "why to move to Michigan" and the nation's most ambitious talent retention and attraction effort.
- The You Can in Michigan campaign, sister campaign to the growth office's focus on talent attraction and retention, recently won 11 Telly awards for excellence in marketing