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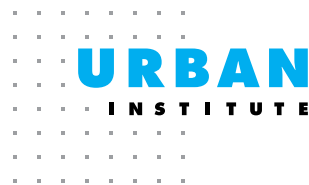


# Community Ties

**UNDERSTANDING WHAT  
ATTACHES PEOPLE TO THE  
PLACE WHERE THEY LIVE**

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Knight Foundation is a national foundation with strong local roots. We invest in journalism, in the arts and in the success of cities where brothers John S. and James L. Knight once published newspapers. Our goal is to foster informed and engaged communities, which we believe are essential for a healthy democracy.

For more, visit [kf.org](http://kf.org).

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# Executive Summary



Well before COVID-19 shut down community life as we know it, Knight Foundation commissioned Urban Institute to explore a key question: what attaches people to the places where they live? To understand this question, Urban Institute, in partnership with the firm SSRS, surveyed over 11,000 Americans: 1,206 U.S. adults living in urbanized areas<sup>1</sup> and 10,261 living in 26 metro areas throughout the United States where Knight Foundation works.

**Understanding what ties residents to their community may be even more important in a post-pandemic America.**

Many of us have become more acutely aware of the amenities in our communities that were rendered inaccessible during closures. At the same time, new questions are being raised about what the future of

community will look like. Critical to addressing all of these issues is a clear understanding of what matters to people about their community—and what about that community connects them to the place and to each other. We wanted to learn more about what attaches people to the places they live, measured both sentiment (how they feel about

the place) and behavior (ways they might exhibit their sense of attachment). These insights could shed light on why people choose to stay in a place or to leave, and could inform efforts by cities to boost attachment in their local communities. (See box for a list of the attachment measures used in this study.)

<sup>1</sup> In order to create a national benchmark of people living in metropolitan areas, the research team used a random sample of households living in urbanized areas across the country. Urbanized areas form the urban cores of metropolitan areas. Each one contains at least one urbanized area, defined as having a population of 50,000 or more.

## HOW WE MEASURED ATTACHMENT

### ATTACHMENT SENTIMENTS

- Satisfaction
- Fit with local lifestyle/culture
- Preference to stay

### ATTACHMENT BEHAVIORS

- Social bridging capital
- Community investment
- Choosing to stay

This report highlights both national trends as well as examples from the eight communities where Knight has a particular focus, which represents a diverse set of U.S. cities: Akron, OH; Charlotte, NC; Detroit, MI; Macon, GA; Miami, FL; Philadelphia, PA; San Jose, CA and St. Paul, MN. To see full results from all 26 cities where Knight works, see the interactive website located at [kf.org/communityties](http://kf.org/communityties).

## KEY FINDINGS

**People who spend more time in the main city at the heart of their metro area tend to be more attached to it—both in feeling and in action.**

- In comparison to suburban residents who rarely come into the main city, residents and frequent visitors are more likely to feel attached to their metro area; they are more satisfied with it as a place to live and find it a better culture/lifestyle fit.

- People who spend more time in the main city invest more of their time and resources in their communities, have greater bridging capital, and are more likely to stay in the metro area where they were born.

**Quality of life matters in people's decisions to move or stay, and it drives how attached they feel to their metro area.**

- Across the U.S., quality of life accounts for about a third of moves to metro areas, and a third of resident decisions to stay. Natives usually define quality of life in very general terms, saying that they just like the area, its vibrancy, its strong economy or its affordability. People who move from other places are more likely to talk about quality of life in more particular terms like the quality and affordability of housing (24%) or particular neighborhood amenities (25%).
- People who choose to live in their metro area because of its quality of life express significantly stronger sentiments of attachment than those who live in their metro area for a different reason, such as family or jobs. These sentiments include higher satisfaction, better culture/lifestyle fit and a stronger preference to stay in comparison to those motivated by other reasons like family or jobs.

**People with access to arts and cultural activities are more attached to their communities—in both feeling and action.**

- Of all of the amenities explored in the survey, only one stood out for its potential to enhance both feelings of attachment and concrete actions. Access to arts and cultural activities not only has the potential to boost feelings of satisfaction and lifestyle fit, but also correlates with greater investment of time and resources in the community.
- Despite their importance, however, arts and cultural activities can be hard to access. Nationally, they scored as the fourth most difficult amenities to access—after affordable housing, public transit and job opportunities.

**Access to recreational areas and safe places to work and play was also linked to higher feelings of attachment.**

- People who report easy access to recreational areas and safe places to work and play report stronger sentiments of attachment across the board: they are more satisfied with their metro area, identify more with the local culture and lifestyle, and show a stronger preference for staying.

**Demographic differences do matter. Generation, race and household income all strongly shape levels of attachment and access to quality-of-life amenities.**

- We consistently see differences in both attachment sentiments and behaviors across generations. The most established generations, such as the Silent Generation and the Baby Boomers, tend to feel more satisfied, identify more with the lifestyle/culture of their metro area, and have stronger inclinations to stay in their community than other generations. Boomers and Generation Xers, in midlife, stand out for their relatively high levels of community investment. Meanwhile, Millennials and Generation Z have significantly higher social bridging capital across class, race and language and are the most likely to be natives of the metro area where they live, perhaps due to the diversity of this generation and their life stages.
- People of color and low-income people are more likely than others to choose to move to a place or stay there because of quality of life. Moreover, metro area amenities tend to be much more important to their quality of life but are systematically harder to access.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings, here are some key considerations for cities and stakeholders that want to improve community attachment in their city:

- **Boosting time in the center city:** Of all variables, this had the broadest significant effects on both attachment feelings and behaviors. Nationally, about 42% of metro area residents either live in the principal city or come into the city daily, while 12% visit the city once a year or less. Local initiatives that bring more people from the suburbs downtown to participate in the life of the city could help boost both attachment sentiments and actions.
- **A focus on improving quality of life:** While people often move for family or employment reasons, quality of life fosters stronger sentiments of attachment for both newcomers and natives. Local stakeholders might boost attachment by improving perceptions of access to quality-of-life amenities like quality recreational facilities, safe places to live, work and play, and arts and cultural activities, particularly for the types of residents who most value them and are the most underserved.
- **Attention to equity:** Community leaders and residents who look to enhance attachment through quality-of-life initiatives must be sure to examine racial and income inequities, and design approaches that address them directly. Otherwise, well-intentioned efforts may not yield the results desired and even exacerbate existing inequalities.



# Understanding Attachment

Attachment is a difficult thing to define. It can mean many different things to different people. For this reason, the Community Ties Study uses several different ways to define attachment that complement each other.

Attachment starts with sentiment—how people feel about where they live. We choose to measure this in a number of different ways:

- **Satisfaction:** General feelings that the metro area where people reside lives up to their expectations.
- **Fit with local culture and lifestyle:** The degree to which residents feel that the local lifestyle and culture is perfect for people like them.
- **Preference to stay:** The desire to keep living in the metro area, even if given other viable options.

But attachment is not only about feelings. It's also about what people do to demonstrate their attachment to their communities. Just as strong feelings of attachment can drive connections and investments, those connections can also reinforce feelings of attachment among residents.

- **Social bridging capital:** The connections residents foster across the lines of race, class and language to build more cohesive, democratic places.<sup>2</sup>

- **Community investment:** Investments of time and resources in their metro area to make them better places for everyone.
- **Choosing to stay:** Choices residents make to stay and have continued opportunities to engage and contribute.

In this section, we describe both sentiments of attachment and attachment behaviors, and illustrate how they tend to vary in urban areas across the country, as well as in the eight core Knight metro areas.

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<sup>2</sup> Literature shows that communities with strong bridging capital tend to have stronger democratic norms, community involvement and flow of information through social networks that promotes social mobility and connectedness (Malecki 2012; Hipp and Perrin 2006; Beaudoin 2011).



## SENTIMENTS OF ATTACHMENT

We first explain the measures used to describe sentiments of attachment in metro areas across the country, including satisfaction, fit with local lifestyle and culture, and preference to stay.

### Satisfaction

Perhaps the simplest measure of attachment is how much residents seem to be satisfied with the metro area where they live. People who are generally unhappy or unsatisfied with their experience may feel less attached and may be more open to finding opportunities in other places.

The Community Ties Survey asked respondents on a 5-point scale, “Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with your metro area as a place to live?” Average responses appear in Figure 1.1.

The national trend shows that people are generally more satisfied than not, giving their communities an average score of 3.9, on a scale of 1 to 5. Residents in all but one of the core Knight metro areas—St. Paul—tend to have slightly lower average satisfaction scores than residents of urban areas nationwide. However, not all of these differences are substantive. Only those between the national sample and Akron, San Jose, Detroit and Macon hold up after controlling for other factors.

### Fit with culture and lifestyle

Under ideal circumstances, people who feel attached to their metro area would strongly identify with the culture and lifestyle of the place where they live. If they live in an “outdoorsy” place, this would fit their personality. Or if they live in a fast-paced city with a lot of nightlife, or a sleepy town with a strong tradition of family and history, local residents would feel at home in these environments.

In addition to satisfaction, the survey asked residents to describe the culture and lifestyle of their metro area, and then report how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “[My] metro area’s culture and lifestyle are perfect for people like me.” Answers fell on a 5-point culture and lifestyle fit score with values ranging from 1 to 5. The question served to gauge the sense of attachment that residents feel to the intangible identity of a metro area.

In the national sample, the average culture and lifestyle fit score registers at 3.9, identical to the average score for satisfaction (Figure 1.2). Again, residents generally identify with their metro area more than not. Only Charlotte, Akron and Macon have scores that differ significantly from the national average after controlling for other factors.

### Preference for staying in the metro area

High satisfaction and identification with the culture and lifestyle of their metro area may reinforce residents’ preferences for staying in their metro area, even when other opportunities present themselves. In the Community Ties Survey, we asked local residents if they would choose to stay in their metro area if given the choice to live anywhere else in the United States (Figure 1.3).

Nationally, about 58% of the residents of urban areas say they would choose to live in their current metro area, in either their current neighborhood or another location in the same metro area. After controlling for other factors, we find that two of the metro areas, San Jose (64%) and Charlotte (63%), have persistently higher shares, and two metro areas—Akron (49%) and Macon (48%)—have significantly lower shares of residents who would prefer to stay.

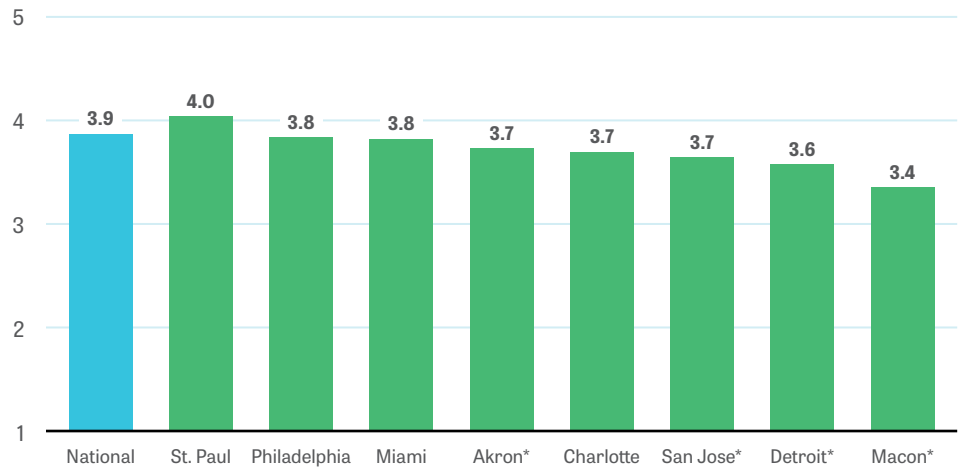


**FIGURE 1.1**

**Satisfaction levels are modest nationwide, but vary slightly by metro area**

*Mean score on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the most satisfied*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019. \* denotes where there are statistically significant differences from the national average

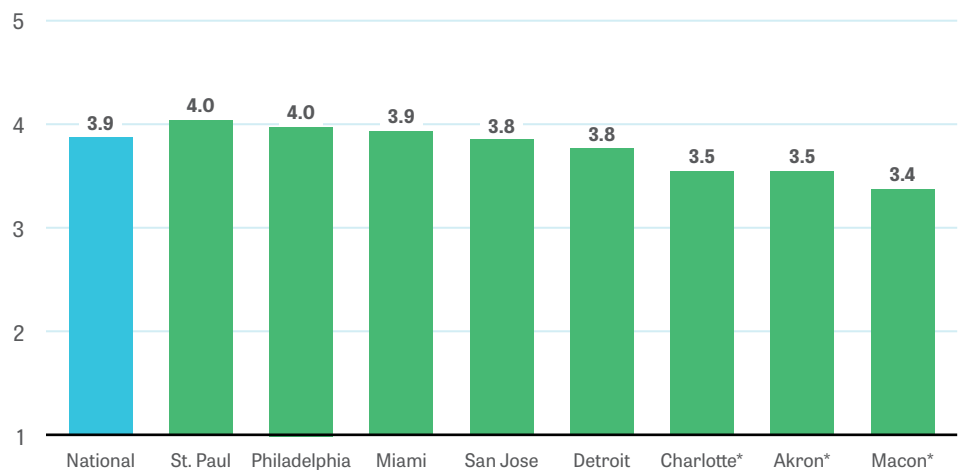


**FIGURE 1.2**

**Most community residents feel a modest fit with their metro area culture and lifestyle**

*Mean score on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the most perfect fit*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019. \* denotes where there are statistically significant differences from the national average

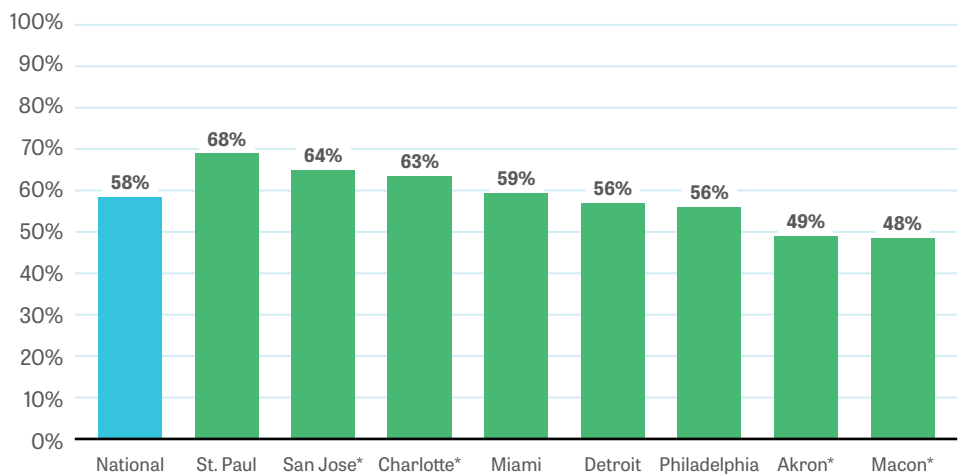


**FIGURE 1.3**

**Between half and two-thirds of residents would stay if given a choice**

*Share of residents who would stay in their metro area if they could live anywhere in the United States*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019. \* denotes where there are statistically significant differences from the national average



## ATTACHMENT BEHAVIORS

Next, we discuss several different ways that residents can demonstrate attachment to their communities, including the relationships they forge across fault lines of race, class and language; the ways they participate and invest in their communities; and their actual choices to continue living in their metro areas. We discuss each of these in turn and illustrate how these different attachment behaviors vary across metro areas.

### Social bridging capital

In communities with strong bridging capital, people have relationships that cut across class, race and language that serve as the glue that holds communities together—it cements democratic norms and supports community involvement, and the flow of information through social networks that promotes social mobility and connectedness (Malecki 2012; Hipp and Perrin 2006; Beaudoin 2011).

To measure bridging capital, the survey asked respondents a series of four questions about their own personal networks. These are the people they tend to interact with on a daily basis—their family, friends, neighbors or co-workers who live in their metro area. The questions asked how many people in their personal networks 1) live in a wealthier neighborhood, 2) live in a poorer neighborhood, 3) are of a different race/ethnicity and 4) grew up speaking a different language. Answers included none, a few, some, most and all.

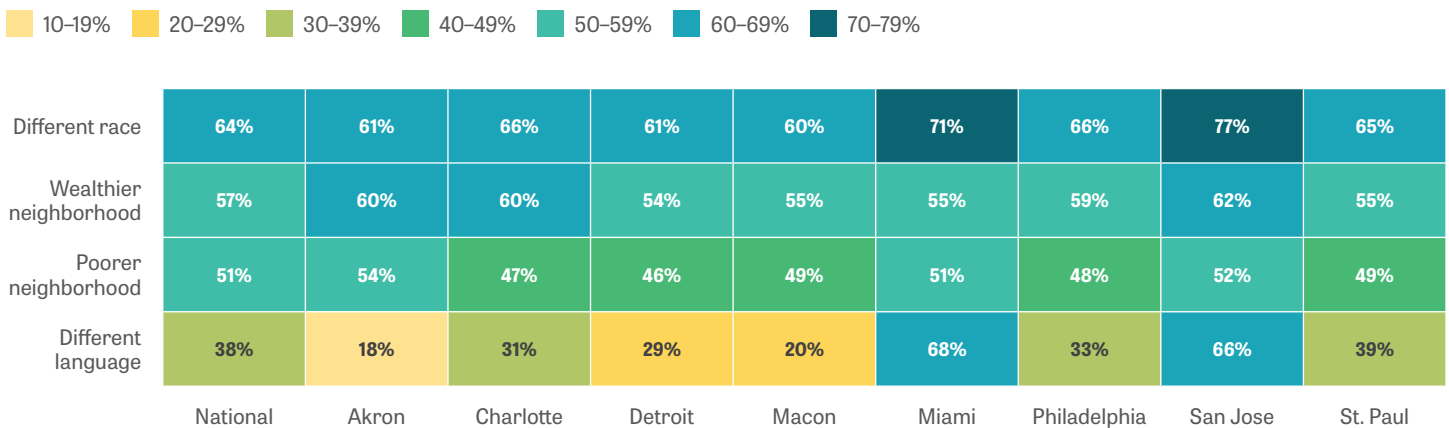
Using the answers to these four questions, we display the shares of residents in each metro area that said at least some (i.e., the aggregate of some, most and all) people in their personal networks fit the four descriptions (Figure 1.4A).

We find that the most common connections occur between people of different races and ethnicities. Five of the eight core Knight communities have higher racial social bridging capital than the national average, where 64% of residents have at least some people

FIGURE 1.4A

### Social networks tend to be the most diverse in terms of race/ethnicity and the least diverse in terms of language

Share of residents who have at least some people in their social network from different groups



Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.

of a different race or ethnicity in their networks. Miami and San Jose, which have the highest levels of racial/ethnic social bridging capital, are highest for bridging across language. Sixty-eight and 66 percent of residents in these respective cities have at least some people in their personal networks who grew up speaking a different language. This is in stark contrast to national trends, and those in most core Knight metro areas, where language network diversity lags behind all of the other types. Only 38% of urban residents nationally have linguistically diverse personal networks. In cities like Akron and Macon, the shares are even lower—18% and 20% respectively—although this may simply reflect the demographic makeup of those communities.

Connections across social class are less frequent than across racial/ethnic lines, but more common than across language groups. Across the board, residents in all eight core Knight communities and the national sample of urban areas report greater integration with people living in more wealthy neighborhoods, and less integration with those in poorer neighborhoods. Some of these metro areas—Akron and San Jose—have consistently high rates of class integration when compared along both dimensions. Others—Detroit and Macon—have lower than average class integration using both definitions.

To come up with an overall measure of social bridging capital, we assigned survey respondents a point for each type of social bridging capital they

reported, then summed these scores (Figure 1.4B). This resulting scale ranged from 0 to 4.

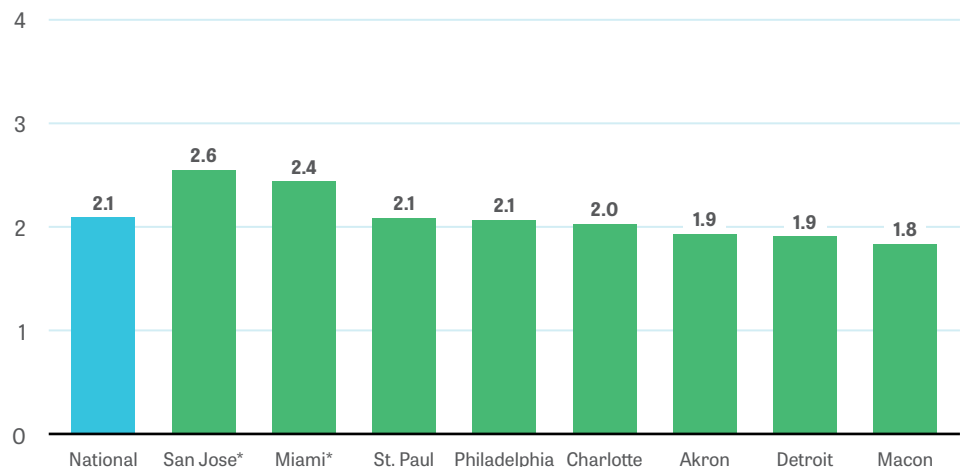
In the national sample of people living in urban areas, we find that the average resident has about two types (2.1) of social bridging capital. Average social bridging capital scores exceed the national average in only two communities: Miami (2.4) and San Jose (2.6). Notably, these two communities are the two most diverse in terms of both race/ethnicity and share of foreign-born residents (see Appendix B for more detail on metro area demographics), which may provide additional opportunities for residents to bridge across these groups. In all other core Knight metro areas, scores are statistically the same as the national average.

**FIGURE 1.4B**

### On average, community residents have about two types of social bridging capital

*Social bridging capital scale from 0-4, with 4 being the most attached to people unlike themselves*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019. \* denotes where there are statistically significant differences from the national average



## Community investment

People who are more active and invested in their communities have a greater sense of permanence and greater opportunities to construct social bridging capital and greater attachment to other people (Comstock, Miriam Dickinson et al. 2010). There is also a broad set of different ways that people can invest (Coffé and Geys 2008; Hodgkin 2011; Bentley 2014; Andrianai and Christoforou 2016).

We measured this concept of community investment by asking a series of questions about the actions of respondents and people in their household during the last 12 months, including 1) volunteering, 2) participation in arts

activities, 3) attendance at community meetings, 4) work to make change, 5) donations to local organizations, 6) ownership or investment in a business, and 7) homeownership. Results appear in Figure 1.5A.

Local residents are invested in their communities in many different ways. Nationally, more than three out of four residents have donated money or resources to local organizations (Figure 1.5A). The most active core Knight metro areas in this respect are Charlotte and St. Paul, where about 78% of residents contributed in these ways. In contrast, donations are relatively low in Miami, with only about two-thirds contributing to local groups.

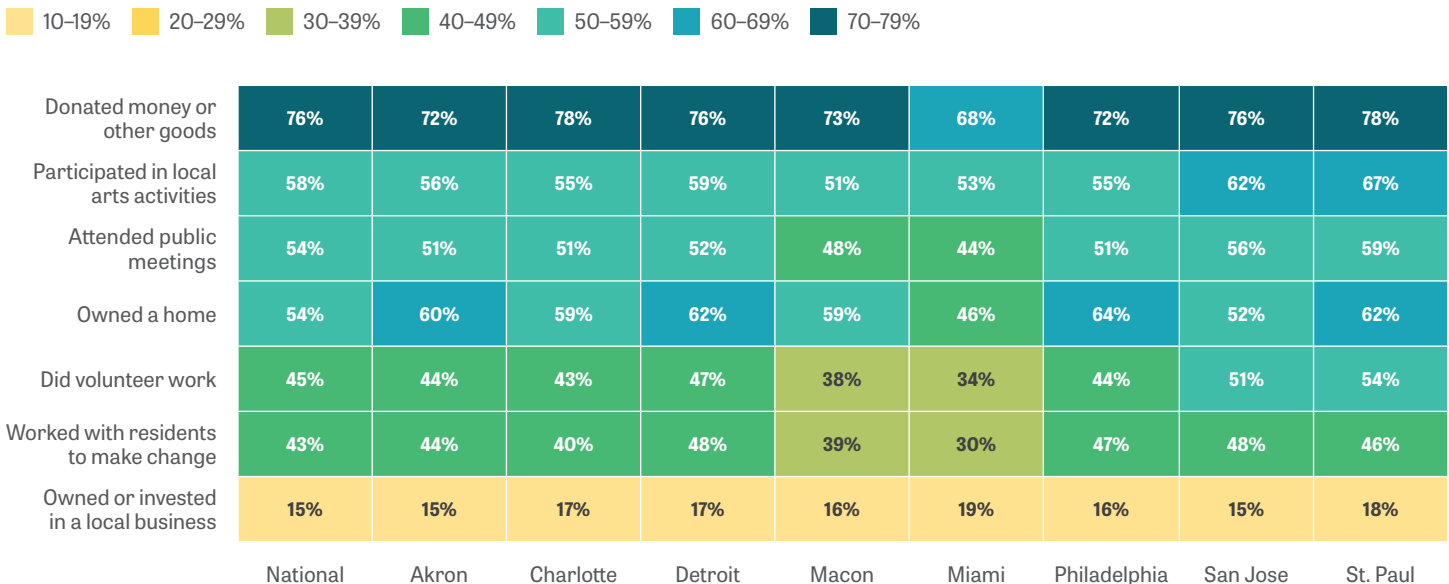
Owning a home surfaces as the other most common way that residents of core Knight metro areas invest in their communities. Homeownership itself is recognized as a wealth strategy and represents part of the American dream. Homeownership also serves to promote civic engagement to protect and build on the home investment. This is why homeownership may be a marker for attachment.

A little more than half of urban residents nationally participate in arts-related activities. San Jose and St. Paul have the highest proportion of residents who are active in the arts; Macon and Miami have the lowest.

**FIGURE 1.5A**

### Donating money or goods is the most common way people invest in their metro area

Share of residents who invest in their metro area in different ways



More civic-minded ways of investment come next in the hierarchy: attending public meetings, doing volunteer work and working with other residents to make change. Miami tends to trail other metro areas in terms of its residents' civic involvement, with rates for each of these different ways to engage that are at least 10 points lower than the national average.

Relatively few residents invest in or own local businesses—only about 16% in urban areas nationwide. Miami has the highest rate of 19%.

Next, to more efficiently measure attachment through community investment, we summed all of the responses to the seven questions to develop a single score, ranging from 0 to 7, with 7 being the most active and invested in their community. The results are presented in Figure 1.5B.

In Figure 1.5B, we see that average community investment scores exceed the national average of 3.5 in just three core Knight metro areas: St. Paul (3.8), Detroit and San Jose (both 3.6). All others have values at or below

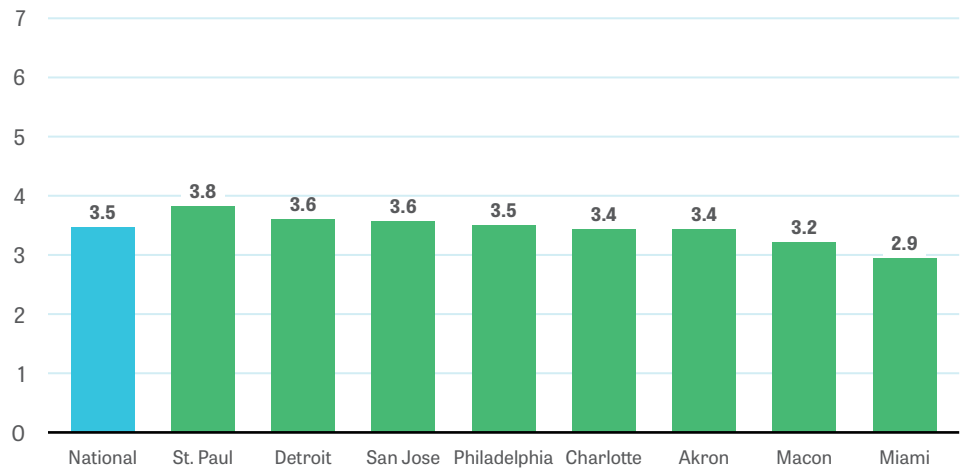
the national average. Miami residents reported the lowest community investment scores with an average of only 2.9 different ways of investing and participating in their communities. However, after controlling for other factors, none of these metro areas has levels of community investment that are significantly different from that of residents in urban areas across the country.

**FIGURE 1.5B**

**Overall levels of community investment do not vary much across metro areas**

*Mean score on a scale of 0 to 7, with 7 being the most active and invested in the community*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.

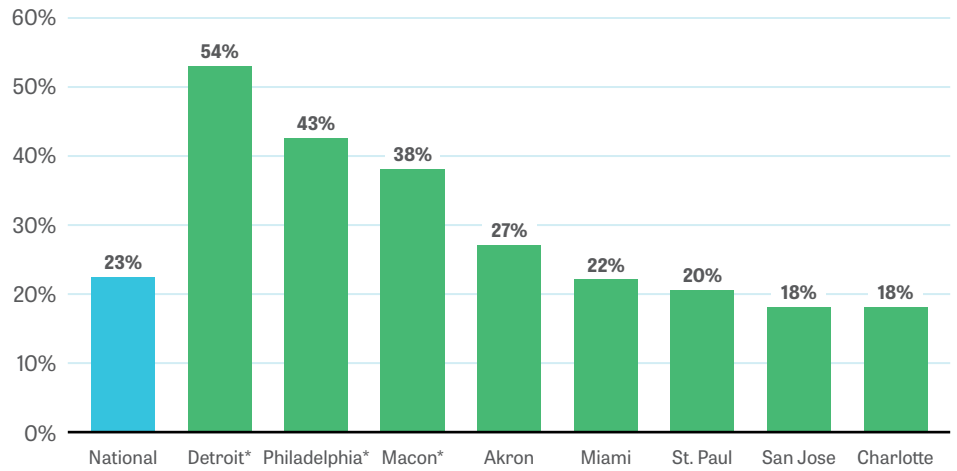


**FIGURE 1.6A**

**Despite high shares of residents who would prefer to stay in their metro area, shares of native residents who stayed are modest in most metro areas**

*Share of residents who were born in the metro area and stayed*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019. \* denotes where there are statistically significant differences from the national sample

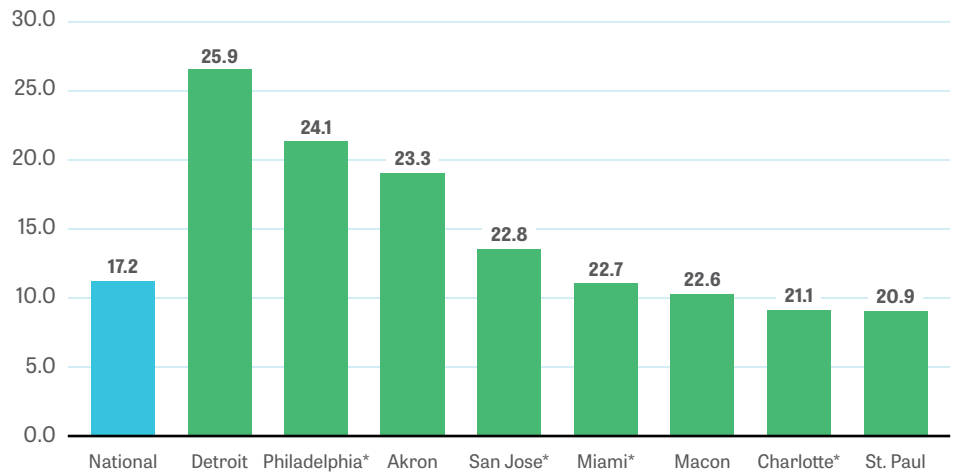


**FIGURE 1.6B**

**Nationally, people who moved to their metro area averaged about 17 years of tenure**

*Average number of years since move to the metro area*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019. \* denotes where there are statistically significant differences from the national sample



## Choosing to stay

Intention is different from action. Just because some say they would prefer to stay where they live does not mean that they actually do. The Community Ties Survey asked all residents if they were born in their current metro area to gauge which metro areas have a strong pull for natives to the area (1.6A).

Nationally, only about 23% of metro area residents are natives (Figure 1.6A). That means over three-quarters of urban area residents came from other places. The national share of native-born residents in the Community Ties Study is slightly lower than in other studies. However, this is likely because other studies include both urban and rural populations. The urban residents of metro areas may be more geographically mobile than those living in more rural areas.<sup>3</sup>

Ironically, the metro areas with the highest shares of residents saying they would prefer to stay in their metro area given other options, are the ones with the lowest shares of natives

who actually choose to stay—St. Paul, San Jose and Charlotte. In contrast, Detroit, Philadelphia and Macon have lower rates for preferring to stay, but relatively high rates of residents who were born in the area and do stay: 54%, 43% and 38% respectively. These three metro areas are also the only ones with significantly different trends in this measure of attachment after controlling for other metro area and personal factors.

We also looked at the average number of years that newcomers to the area had lived in their metro area (Figure 1.6B). Nationally, people in urban areas who had moved to their metro area averaged about 17 years of tenure. Stays tended to be longer in other core Knight metro areas, although these differences were significant only after controlling for other factors in Philadelphia, San Jose, Miami and Charlotte. Metro areas like Philadelphia tend to have an equally strong pull for both natives and transplants, while Charlotte has both fewer natives and slightly more recent transplants.

## LOOKING FORWARD

There is more than one way to think about the attachment that local residents have to the place where they live, in terms of both feelings and the actions that they take to engage with other residents in the life of their communities.

Nevertheless, attachment does not vary that much in aggregate across communities, and where it does, it's difficult to pinpoint what local leaders and residents can do to enhance it. Thankfully, analysis of Community Ties data offers several actionable insights that we discuss in the following chapters.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor P, Morin R, Cohn D, Wang W, American Mobility Who Moves? Who Stays Put? Where's Home? Pew Research Center. December 17, 2008.



# Spending Time in the City



Much of the identity of American metro areas lies in the heart of their cities. They are often the centers of civic life, hubs of economic activity and home to vibrant arts and culture. But metro areas are big places, often with suburbs extending out to different counties and even different states. Despite distance, many suburban residents still regularly commute to the city for work, enjoy their cities' parks, arts and culture, and maintain social ties to the city.

The Community Ties Study asked people where they lived and how often they came into the city. Keeping connected to the city—by either living there or visiting frequently—makes a difference. In this chapter, we explore how doing so may enhance sentiments of attachment and encourage people to act in ways that reflect these feelings.

## **People who spend more time in the city feel more attached to their metro area**

People who spend time in the city more frequently tend to both be more satisfied with their metro areas and more strongly identify with their metro area' culture and lifestyle. In terms of satisfaction, when we look

at simple average scores, most of this difference lies between people who come into the city once a year or less, and everyone else. After controlling for other factors, these differences largely hold up, although there is not a real difference between people who visit the city every few months and those who go in less frequently.

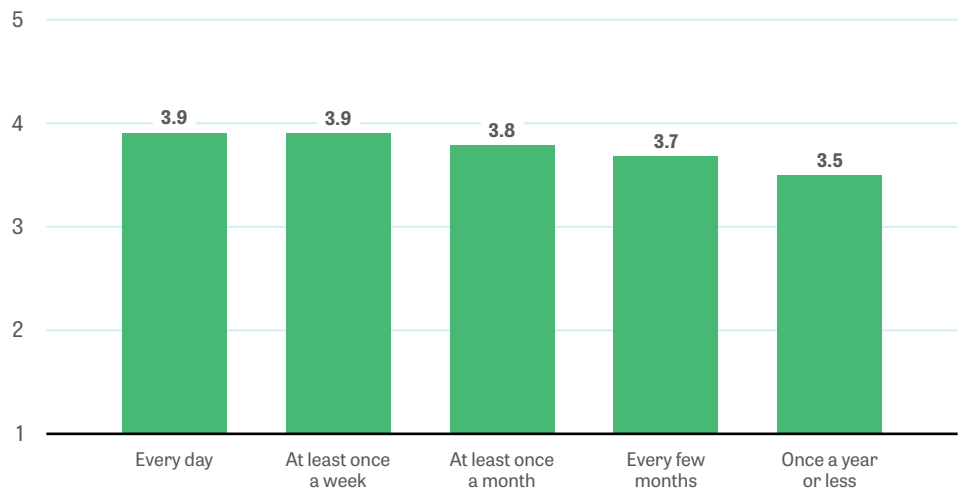
FIGURE 2.1

## People who spend more time in the city tend to score it higher on culture and lifestyle fit

*Culture and Lifestyle fit, by time spent in the principal city*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.

### CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE FIT SCORE



With culture and lifestyle fit, we see more of a gradient when looking at the raw scores (Figure 2.1). People who are in the city every day or at least once a week have the highest scores and they decrease as frequency of visits to the city decreases. In fact, in more complex analyses, we see that all groups express significantly stronger identification with their local culture and lifestyle than those who make it into the city once a year or less.

## Spending more time in the city may also boost attachment in more concrete ways

People who spend more time in the city don't just feel more attached to where they live. They also demonstrate it in concrete and measurable ways (Figure 2.2).

When we look at the raw community investment scores, we see that people who come into the city once a year or

less tend to invest less of their time and resources in their community than all of the other groups. This is indeed a real difference, though after controlling for demographics and other factors, those who visit once a month are no more likely to invest than those who spend less time in the city. We also are able to see that suburban residents who frequent the city about once a week are the most highly invested.

Important trends in terms of the bonds that residents are able to form across race, class and language also surface. Here analysis shows that people who are in the city every day—because they either live there or travel in daily—tend to have significantly greater bridging capital. This may be because of greater opportunities to interact with people who are different from them within the more densely populated environment of the city.

Lastly, we see that living in the city or coming in daily may actually influence

natives to stay in their communities. We find that those who are in the city every day are 46% more likely to be natives who have chosen to stay. Note that being in the city regularly has no relationship to the number of years transplants stay in their community.

## Some cities have a stronger pull than others

Nationally, we see that about 42% of urban residents either live in the city at the heart of their metro area or go into the city every day (Figure 2.3). Looking at our core Knight metro areas, we see that trends in particular areas frequently deviate from nationwide trends. In Macon—a relatively small metro area where about two-thirds of residents live in the city—fully 80% are in the city every day, a much higher share than the national average.<sup>4</sup> This difference remains even when we control for other demographic and contextual factors.

<sup>4</sup> About 67% of the residents of Macon CBSA lived in the principal city, according to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. This is the highest share among Knight core communities.

At the other extreme, four of the core Knight metro areas—Philadelphia, Akron, Detroit and St. Paul—have significantly lower shares of people who are in the city every day than urban areas overall. There may be several reasons for this. In a metro area like St. Paul’s, there are not one but two principal cities with economic centers distributed across a high number of counties. In contrast, Philadelphia, Akron and Detroit have long histories of stark racial and class divides between the city and suburbs that may discourage greater connection. For example, Philadelphia and Detroit rank among the 10 metro areas with the highest black-white segregation in the country.<sup>5</sup>

## LOOKING FORWARD

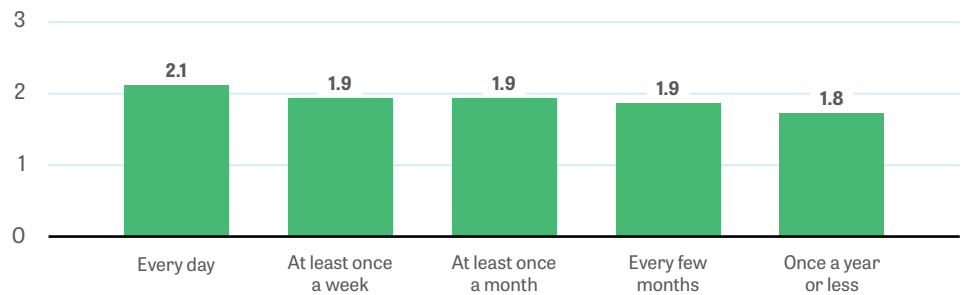
We’ve seen in this chapter that spending more time in the city has the potential to strengthen attachment in terms of residents’ sentiments and actions. Being a part of the life of the city may enhance quality of life, which we explore more in depth in the next chapter, in terms of both what it means and how it may help to bond residents to the places where they live.

**FIGURE 2.2**

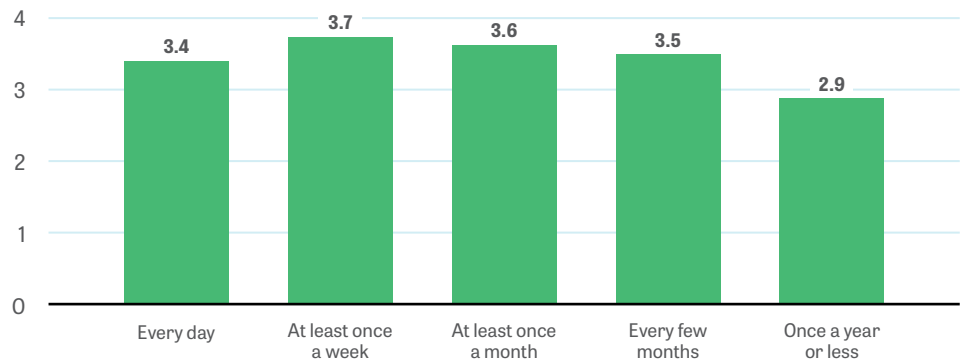
### People who spend time in the city more frequently tend to build stronger bridging capital, invest more time and resources in their communities, and choose to stay

*Average bridging capital and community investment scores as well as percentage of residents who are natives, by time spent in the principal city*

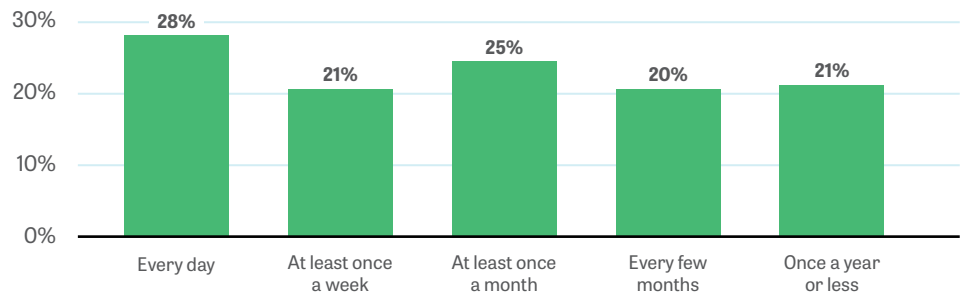
#### SOCIAL BRIDGING CAPITAL SCORE



#### COMMUNITY INVESTMENT SCORE



#### PERCENTAGE STAYING IN METRO OF BIRTH



<sup>5</sup> See the Brookings Institution’s work in this topic here: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2017/09/14/segregation-and-changing-populations-shape-regions-politics/>

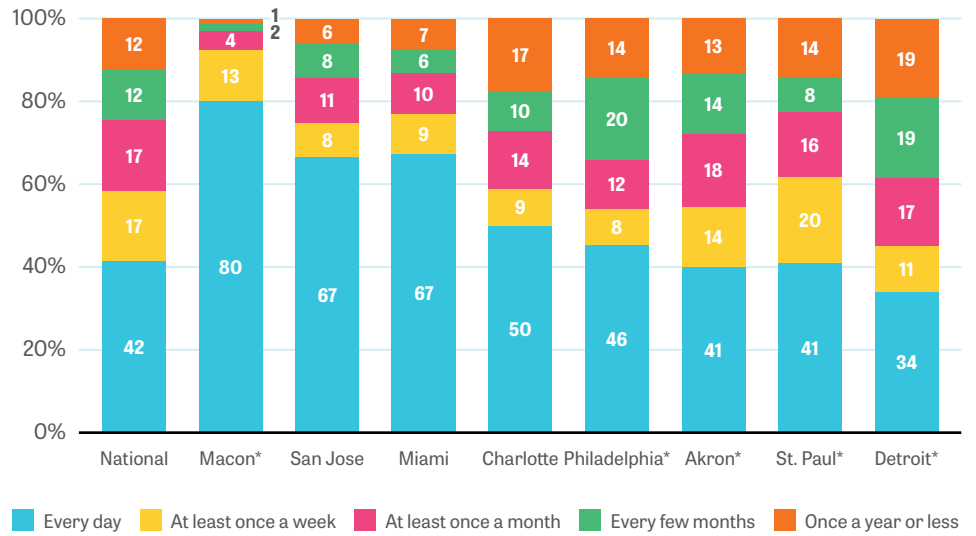
Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.

**FIGURE 2.3**

**Some cities attract more residents than others**

*Share of residents, by frequency of time spent in the principal city*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019. \* denotes where there are statistically significant differences from the national sample



**CHARLOTTE, NC**



# Choosing Metro Areas for Quality of Life

People have many different reasons for choosing to live where they do. Family may be the driving force, or the offer of a job or enrollment in a local college may attract and keep people in their community. But there are also concrete things about metro areas themselves that make them good places to live. Quality of life can be powerful in terms of both attracting new residents and retaining natives.

The Community Ties Study asked transplants to each metro area why they moved there, and natives why they stayed. Analysis of these open-ended responses shows that people who choose their metro area for quality-of-life reasons tend to have stronger sentiments of attachment to that place. We discuss these findings in more detail below.

## **People who choose their metro area because of their quality of life have stronger sentiments of attachment**

Across all three measures of attachment, we find that people who say they chose to move to a metro area because of its quality of life, or choose to stay for that reason, tend to also express stronger sentiments of attachment (Figure 3.1).

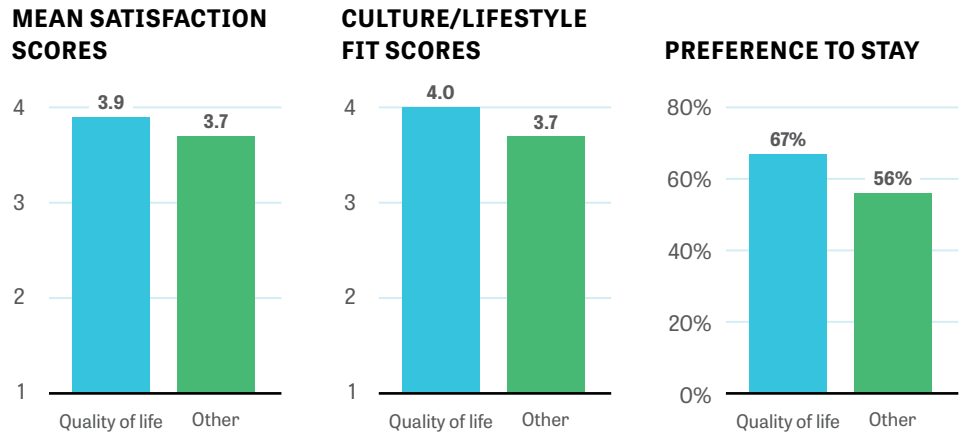
They tend to be more satisfied than people who choose their metro area for other reasons (3.9 vs. 3.7, on a scale of 1 to 5) and feel more strongly that their metro area's culture and lifestyle are a good fit for people like them (4.0 vs. 3.7, on a scale of 1 to 5). Furthermore, when quality of life is salient, people are 54% more likely to prefer to stay in their metro area, even when given other viable options. These trends consistently hold up to rigorous analysis, even when we control for demographics and other factors.

**FIGURE 3.1**

**People who choose their metro area for their quality of life tend to express stronger sentiments of attachment**

*Average satisfaction, culture/lifestyle fit scores, and percentage who would prefer to stay in their metro area, by choosing it for quality-of-life reasons*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.

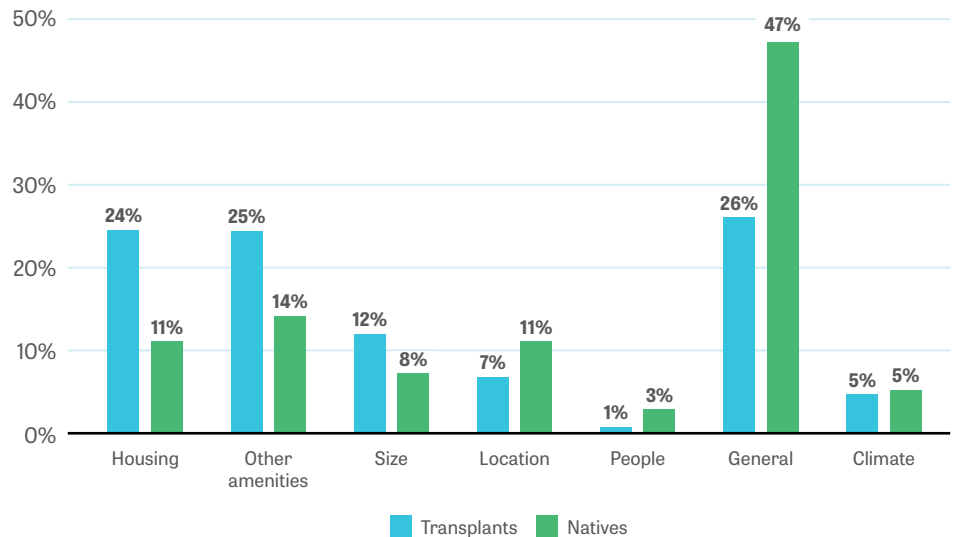


**FIGURE 3.2**

**Nationally, metro natives tend to define quality of life in more general terms than transplants**

*Share of residents offering different types of quality-of-life reasons for moving to or staying in their metro areas, by transplants vs. natives*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.



**Some amenities contribute more to quality of life than others**

When asked open-ended questions about their primary motivations for moving to or staying in their metro area, people talked about many different aspects of quality of life. Interestingly enough, these tended to vary depending on whether the person speaking had been born in the area or had moved there.

Transplants to the area were much more likely to give specific responses (Figure 3.2). About a quarter of transplants cited things about local housing stock—its affordability, its quality and the opportunity to own versus rent. A similar share of transplants mentioned something about particular neighborhood or city amenities that motivated their moves. These included safety and security, recreational, commercial, transportation

and cultural amenities. About 1 in 4 of the people who moved to their metro area also gave varied reasons such as liking the cost of living, the vibrancy of the area or the availability of opportunities, without much explanation as to the specifics. Natives tended to give these kinds of general responses much more frequently than transplants. Almost half of the people who were born in their metro area responded in this way.

So, where might community leaders start to improve quality of life? There is little they can do about the size of their metro area, its location, the people who live there or the climate, but there is potentially a lot they can do to make the housing and amenities in their area more attractive. The question is where to start. The Community Ties Study offers some insight into this question. It asked people how important a series of 12 amenities were to people's quality of life. The results reveal that not all amenities are equally important.

Most people prioritize attributes that meet basic needs for safety, health, employment and shelter. Results confirm that both in metro areas nationally and in most core Knight

metro areas, the important amenities relate to people's basic needs: public safety, health care facilities and services, job opportunities and affordable housing. These attributes were generally identified by upwards of 70+ percent of residents as being very important to their quality of life.

The four most chosen metro area attributes—safety, health, employment and shelter—reflect the universal need to live and thrive. At some level these need to be met in order for other metro area attributes such as arts and cultural activities to emerge in importance.

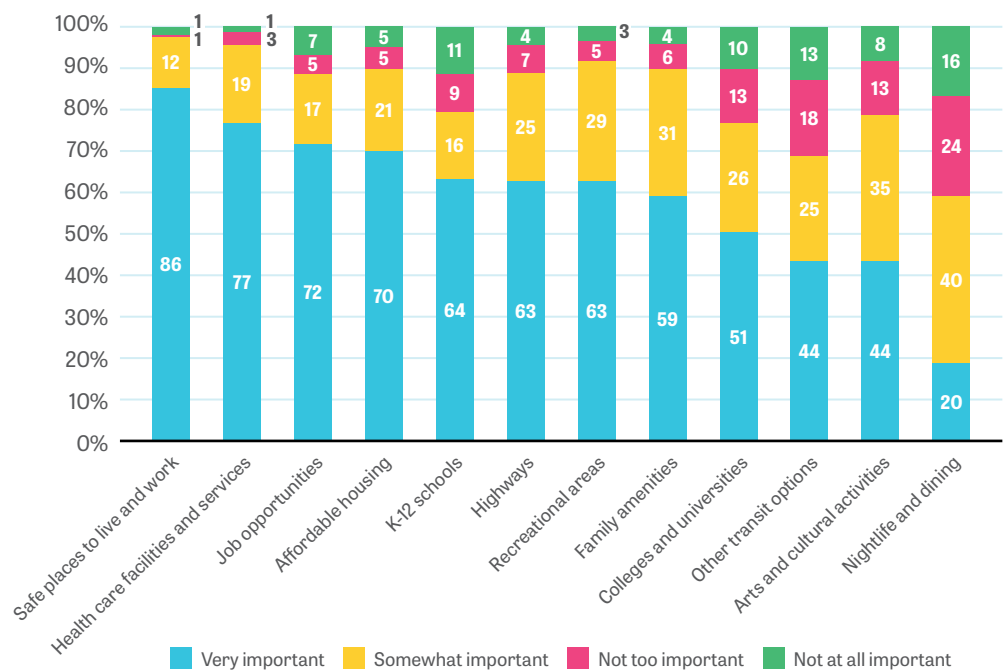
The insights here are twofold. First, the basic needs of safety, health, employment and shelter fall under the purview

of national, state and especially local governments and chambers of commerce. Addressing these kinds of issues can have tremendous impact. Secondly, the importance of all other features is necessarily tempered by the wider context of a metro area—the ecosystem that reflects the metro area's level of safety, health, employment and shelter. Other features may emerge as more important once basic needs are met.

Attributes related to infrastructure and families/children are next in priority. Once basic needs are acknowledged and set aside, roughly half to three-quarters of residents cited features related to infrastructure and family/children as most important.

**FIGURE 3.3**  
**Some metro amenities are more important than others to quality of life**  
*Share of residents living in urbanized areas, by frequency of time spent in the principal city*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.





With regard to families, metro area attributes included family-related infrastructure such as K-12 schools and colleges and universities. These results suggest that education and its associated infrastructure are important to communities. Highways and access to public transit—infrastructure that allows access to all metro area features—are also prominent among the attributes in this grouping. Other important attributes were recreation areas and family amenities. Recreation areas include parks, playgrounds, trails, beaches, lakes or rivers, while family amenities refer to such things as libraries, zoos and community centers.

For the most part, this second priority tier of metro area attributes reflects local publicly funded infrastructure. Like the first group, these attributes are often governed and managed by federal, state and local entities, especially through funding for maintenance, enhancement

or new construction. However, unlike the top priority basic needs attributes, the second tier can more readily be promoted through civic engagement, community advocacy and community-based organizations. For instance, citizens groups often lead the way to improve neighborhood recreational areas, libraries and schools. Community organizations often influence the placement of new schools or the development of roads or highways (e.g., expanding boulevards, creating tollways to relieve traffic congestion, adding transit stops to improve community mobility). Community organizations play a role in enhancing residents' experiences of such infrastructure as recreational areas, libraries and schools through youth camps, community sports leagues and after-school care. And all these groups can interact with and benefit from local businesses to garner support for sustainability and facilitate scalability.

A third important set of metro area attributes relates to leisure activities. Roughly between 1 in 5 and half of residents nationally and in core communities reported that the metro area's offerings in arts and cultural activities were very important to them. These include events such as theater, museums, craft fairs, concerts and sports or classes in painting, music or dance. Dining and nightlife such as restaurants, clubs or bars also featured prominently in this group of attributes.

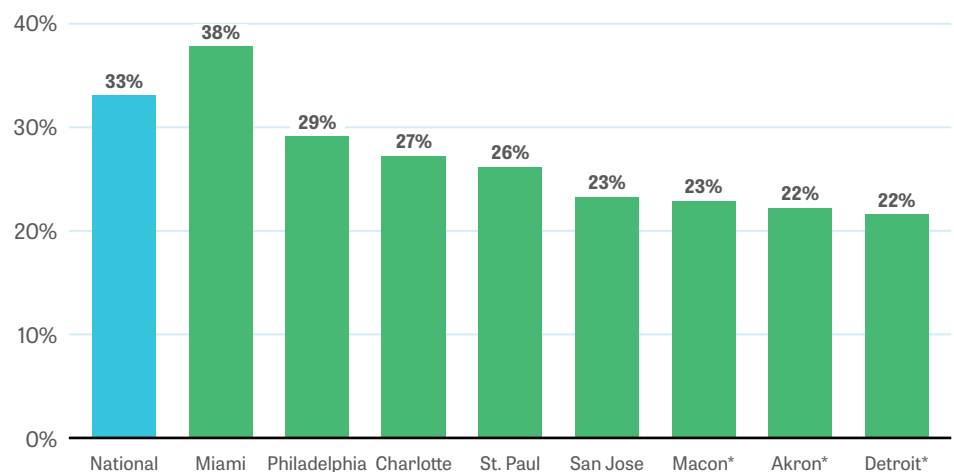
Despite their relatively low standing on the hierarchy of needs, it is nevertheless notable that arts and cultural activities emerge as very important for about 40% to 60% of residents across communities and the nation. These findings suggest that there is value in bolstering arts and culture in a metro area.

**FIGURE 3.4**

### Quality of life motivates residents to choose their metro areas more in some places than others

*Share of residents who move to or stay in a metro area because of quality of life, by metro area*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019. \* denotes where there are statistically significant differences from the national sample



## Quality of life may motivate residents more in some metro areas

Nationally, we see that about 33% of residents choose their metro area because of its quality of life (Figure 3.4). This is in comparison to about 30% who choose them because of family connections, 25% for specific job opportunities and 12% for other reasons.

Generally, the core Knight metro areas tend to have slightly lower rates of attachment due to quality of life, particularly in places like Detroit, Akron and Macon, where these differences persist even after controlling for other factors. In contrast, nearly 40% of Miamians choose the area because of its quality of life. Miami also surfaced as unique because of its climate; 20% of natives and nearly 40% of transplants cited it as their primary reason for choosing the area.

## LOOKING FORWARD

It's clear that quality of life can motivate many people to move to or stay in their communities, and this can foster a strong sense of connection to the places that people live. We also see that definitions of quality of life vary widely and that not all metro area amenities are equally important in shaping local quality of life.

In the next chapter we further explore the connections between local amenities, sentiments of attachment and the actions that demonstrate it, by exploring how accessibility mediates these relationships.



AKRON, OH

# Enjoying Access to Quality Amenities

As we saw in the previous section, quality of life can engender strong sentiments of attachment in local communities, but it can also mean very different things in different contexts. Community leaders struggle with the difficult task of figuring out what kinds of issues they should address first to enhance quality of life and, in turn, improve residents' feelings of attachment.

Some might argue that one should start by making sure cities and communities provide the kind of amenities that are most important for the largest share of residents. However, there's also another way of looking at it. Local stakeholders can look to see which amenities, when accessible and of sufficient quality, really seem to make people feel and act more invested in and attached to their communities.

In addition to asking people how important 12 metro area amenities are to their quality of life, the Community Ties Survey followed up with questions about how easy they perceive it is for people in their neighborhoods to access quality versions of these amenities.

We find that access to 11 out of 12 of the metro area amenities was associated with at least one of the seven measures of attachment. Access to quality family amenities like libraries,

zoos and other facilities was the only type of amenity that proved to be completely unrelated to attachment after controlling for other factors.

In contrast, perceived access to quality recreational areas, safe places to work and live, and arts and cultural activities promises to provide opportunities for strengthening feelings of attachment, and to some degree increasing real engagement. This chapter explores these trends in depth.

**People who enjoy easy access to recreational areas and safe places express stronger sentiments of attachment**

Access to the two amenities with the most consistent relationship fills some basic universal needs. Fundamentally, residents cannot live and thrive in a place if they do not feel safe where they live and work; safe places also ranked higher in importance than all of the other individual amenities (see Figure 3.3 in the last chapter). Moreover, recreational areas like parks, beaches, playgrounds and other green areas not only provide free space for people to relax and

unwind, but also enhance the beauty and enjoyability of neighborhoods and communities.

Thus, it comes as little surprise that—even after controlling for a wide array of demographic and other factors—people who perceive easy access to safe places and to recreational areas are consistently more satisfied with their metro areas and perceive a better fit with the local lifestyle and culture (Figure 4.1). We also find that a significantly greater share of these individuals say that they would prefer to stay in their metro areas, even when given other options.

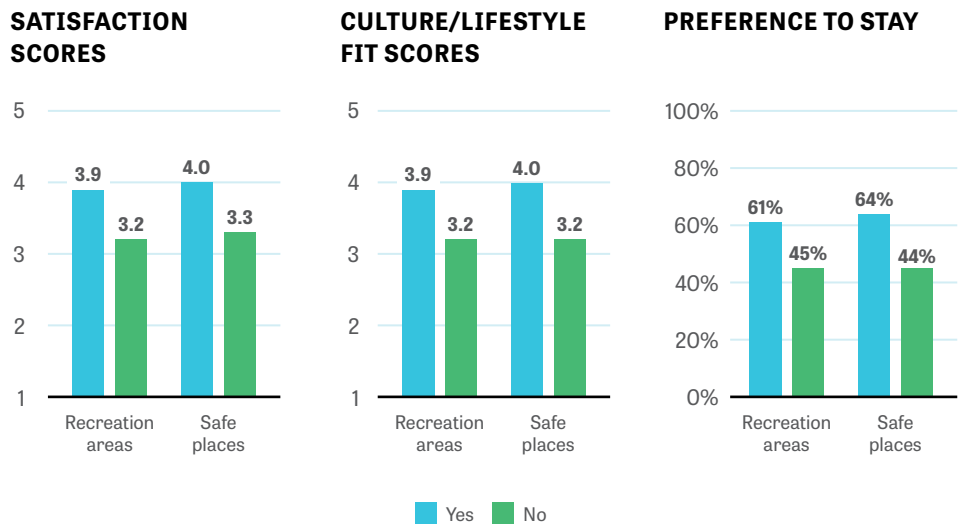
**People with access to quality arts and cultural activities not only have stronger feelings but also invest more in their communities**

Of all of the amenities explored in the Community Ties Survey, only one stood out for its potential to enhance not only feelings of attachment, but also concrete actions (Figure 4.2). People who say their neighborhood has easy access to quality arts and cultural activities tend to be more satisfied and identify more with local lifestyle and culture. This may be because access to these kinds of amenities provides residents with greater opportunity to enjoy and explore local culture.

**FIGURE 4.1**

**People who say their neighborhood has easy access to quality recreational areas and safe places to live and work express stronger sentiments of attachment across the board**

*Average satisfaction and culture/lifestyle fit scores and percentage of residents who prefer to stay in their metro, by accessibility of recreational areas and safe places to live and work*



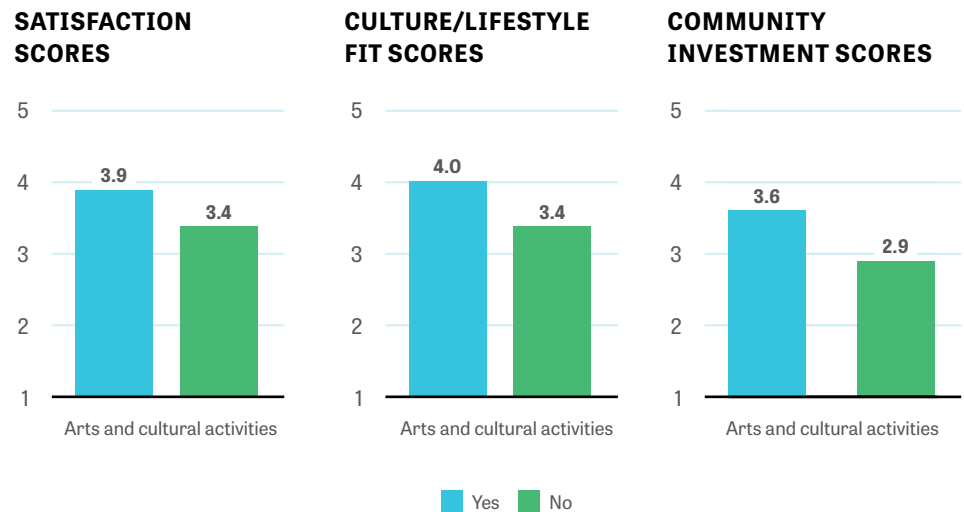
Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.



FIGURE 4.2

**People who say their neighborhood has easy access to quality arts and cultural activities tend to be more satisfied, identify more with local lifestyle and culture, and invest more of their time and resources in their communities**

*Average satisfaction, culture/lifestyle fit, and community investment, by accessibility of quality arts and cultural activities*



Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.

**Some metro areas face greater accessibility challenges than others**

Nationwide, we see that quality recreational areas—which are among the most impactful amenities for attachment—are among the most accessible of metro area amenities; 85% of people living in urban areas felt people in their neighborhoods had easy access (Figure 4.3). That said, a slightly lower share (81%) in Detroit perceived access to quality recreational spaces like parks, playgrounds and natural areas.

Local residents consistently reported relatively lower levels of access to safe places to live and work, and arts and cultural activities. After controlling for other factors, we found that some metro areas in particular tended to

provide lower access to safe spaces—notably, Macon, Miami, San Jose and Detroit.

There are also some metro areas that clearly struggle more to provide quality amenities than others. Macon's and San Jose's rates of accessibility are significantly lower than the national average for about half of 12 amenities, although the reasons behind this may be very different in the two places. In a high-priced metro area like San Jose in Silicon Valley, the issues may have much more to do with affordability,<sup>6</sup> while in much smaller Macon, factors like smaller municipal budgets, a small economy and difficulties providing public infrastructure across its largely rural surrounding areas may come into play. Cities like Akron, Charlotte, Detroit, Miami and Philadelphia also struggle more than average in

providing four of the 12 amenities. Only St. Paul stands out at the head of the pack. Its accessibilities are on par with national averages for 11 of the 12 and are significantly higher for job opportunities.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

The last few chapters have focused on the types of things that community leaders and residents might be able to build strategies around to enhance attachment in their community. However, there is another important story underlying all of this: demographic differences matter. In the next chapter, we explore how demographics shape not only attachment, but also the factors that are most likely to influence it.

4 See articles like this which describe the high cost of living in San Jose: <https://www.businessinsider.com/san-jose-most-expensive-place-silicon-valley-life-2019-2>

**FIGURE 4.3**

**Perceived accessibility to quality features varies significantly across metro areas**

10-19% 20-29% 30-39% 40-49% 50-59% 60-69% 70-79% 80-89% 90-99%

Recreational areas	85%	91%	83%	81%*	80%	85%	87%	89%	96%
Highways	87%	90%	75%*	88%	88%	72%*	86%	76%*	91%
Health care facilities and services	85%	88%	86%	86%	81%*	77%	88%	80%*	92%
Colleges and universities	82%	86%	81%	86%	86%	76%	85%	79%	91%
Family amenities	88%	92%*	84%	84%	68%*	82%	88%	89%	93%
K-12 schools	84%	86%	80%*	78%*	73%*	80%	80%*	79%	89%
Dining and nightlife	79%	77%	80%	86%	80%	86%	85%	81%	85%
Safe places	77%	79%	75%	72%*	55%*	67%	72%*	71%*	85%
Arts and cultural activities	72%	76%	72%	74%	66%	69%	82%	77%	85%
Job opportunities	63%	61%	65%	61%	52%*	44%*	66%	68%	82%*
Other transit options	60%	60%	49%*	50%	52%*	58%*	79%*	58%*	72%
Affordable housing	50%	72%*	45%*	58%*	64%*	29%*	50%	12%*	50%
	National	Akron	Charlotte	Detroit	Macon	Miami	Philadelphia	San Jose	St. Paul

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.

\* denotes cases where the accessibility rate for a given metro diverges significantly from the national average

# Exploring Demographics

As we've seen in preceding chapters, there are many things about people's perceptions and expectations of their metro areas that foster strong feelings of attachment, and actions that demonstrate it. Nonetheless, we must not ignore that the ways that people experience and express attachment to their communities are strongly shaped by demographic differences.

This chapter highlights several trends that are vital for local leaders and residents to keep in mind when thinking about how to strengthen attachment in their communities. Most notably, attachment may look very different for different generations, and communities still struggle to provide good quality of life for all their residents, particularly people of color and those with fewer economic resources.

## **People of different generations attach to their communities in distinctive ways**

Almost all of the demographic factors explored—gender, race, language, education, household income—were related to at least one way of thinking about sentiments of attachment or related behaviors. However, the most salient and consistent trends emerged around different generations.

Analysis shows that people of different generations attach to their communities in very distinctive ways (Figure 5.1). Older generations tend to express higher satisfaction with their metro area and identify more with the local culture and lifestyle.

In terms of choices to stay or go, we also see very different patterns by generation (Figure 5.2). Younger generations are the most likely to want to look outside their metro area for new



**FIGURE 5.1**

**Older generations express stronger sentiments of attachment, younger generations build more bridges, and Gen Xers lead the way in community investment**

*Average satisfaction, culture/lifestyle fit, social bridging capital and community investment scores, by generation*



Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.

experiences, while older generations are more content to stay put. Much of this reflects the very different life stages of these groups. In contrast, we see that older generations are much less likely to still be living in the metro area where they were born than younger generations. This may reflect life-stage; older people have had many more years to have made choices to move than younger people. However, there are also likely other dynamics in play. Boomers and the Silent Generation came of age in a time when it was relatively common and easy to move to other cities and metro areas. In contrast, Millennials and Gen Z are coming into their own at a time when geographic mobility is at an

all-time low.<sup>7</sup> Today's younger generations may very well *want* to move, but they may not be able to.<sup>8</sup> In this sense young people are more of a captive audience than in years past. The relevant questions for local community leaders may have less to do with how you retain them, and more to do with how you increase satisfaction and get them to engage, though some of this may happen naturally as Gen Z and Millennials navigate to later life stages.

Although younger generations are no more likely than older ones to say they choose to live in their metro area because of its quality of life, we do see pronounced differences in what this means. Things like quality health care

facilities and highways tend to be more important to older generations like the Silent Generation or Boomers. Gen Xers and Millennials—the generations most likely to have minor children living in the home—care most about safe places to live, recreational areas, K-12 schools and family amenities. And the youngest generations just starting out value job opportunities, affordable housing, colleges and universities, arts and cultural activities, other transit options, and nightlife more than older generations. At the same time, younger generations—often with their lower incomes—have the most difficulty accessing quality amenities.

7 See reports from the US Census bureau here: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2017/01/mover-rate.html>

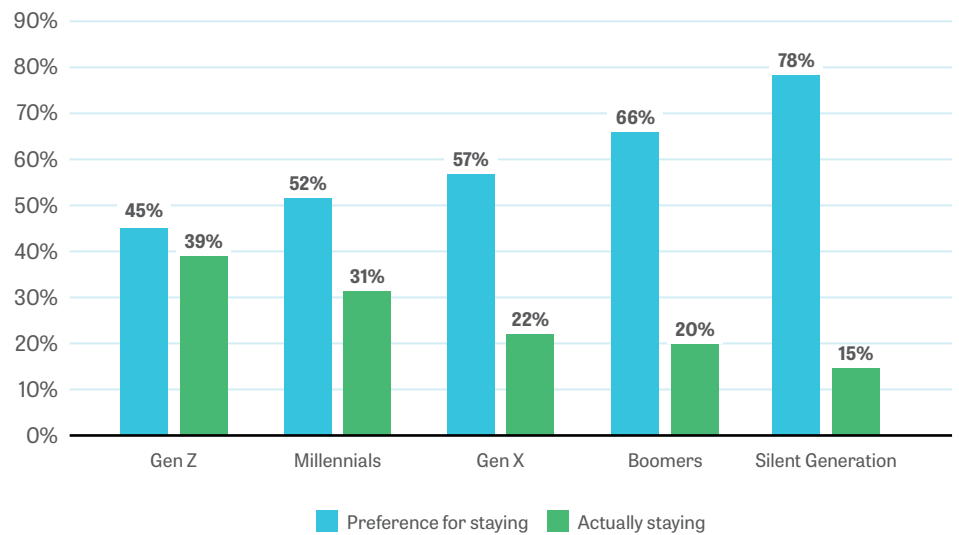
8 See discussions about why it's hard for young people to move here: <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/10/geographic-mobility-and-housing/542439/>

**FIGURE 5.2**

**Younger generations express weaker preferences for staying in their metro area, but are the most likely to still live in the metro area where they were born**

*Percentage preferring to stay in their metro area and actually staying in metro area of birth, by generation*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.

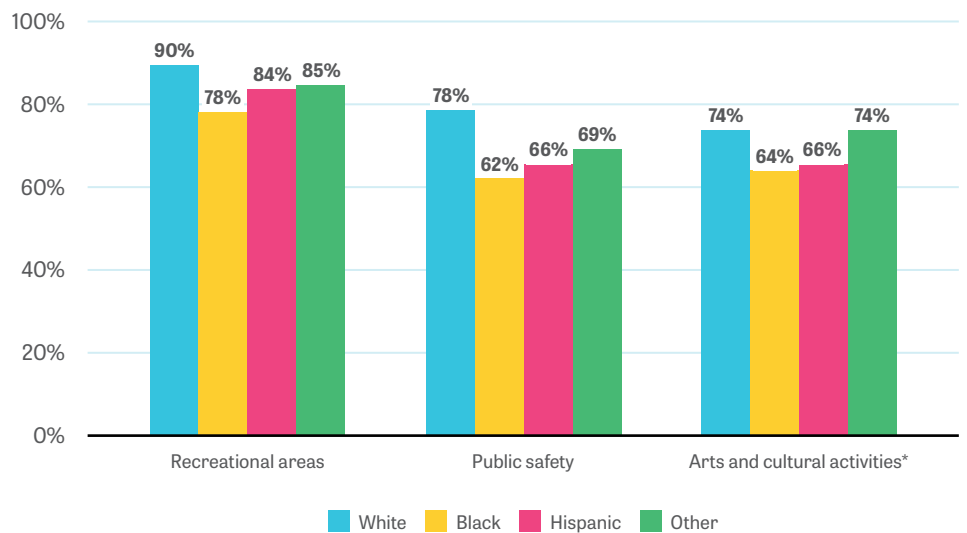


**FIGURE 5.3**

**African Americans and Hispanics report easy access to key amenities less frequently than whites and people of other racial and ethnic groups**

*Share of urban residents reporting easy access to amenities, by race/ethnicity*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019.  
\* indicates that characteristic is significant for this amenity



**Quality of life matters more to low-income people and people of color, but it is often harder to come by**

When we look at who is most likely to say quality of life matters to their choices to move or stay, we find that people of color and low-income individuals are significantly more likely than others to give these kinds of responses. These residents also more frequently say individual amenities matter. Even after controlling for other factors, low-income people were statistically more likely than high-income people to say eight of the 12 amenities were very important to their quality of life; and for racial/ethnic minorities it amounted to 10 of the 12.

At the same time, we see that these residents consistently say that people

in their neighborhoods experience greater difficulty accessing quality amenities. Access to the three amenities most closely tied to stronger attachment illustrates these issues well (Figure 5.3). African Americans and Hispanics reported access to recreational areas, safe places to live and work, and arts and cultural activities less frequently than whites and people of other racial/ethnic groups. In the case of arts and cultural activities, this was true even after controlling for a multitude of other factors.

We see similar trends by household income (Figure 5.4). People in low-income households report easy access to recreational areas, safe places to live and work, and arts and cultural activities less frequently than people living in high-income households.

These differences are most persistent when it comes to public safety. Even among people who are otherwise similar, lower income makes individuals less likely to enjoy safe places to live and work.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

In this chapter, we see that both attachment and the way people prioritize and experience quality of life vary by key demographics like generation, race/ethnicity and household income. This complements the analyses in other chapters of more metro-centric factors.

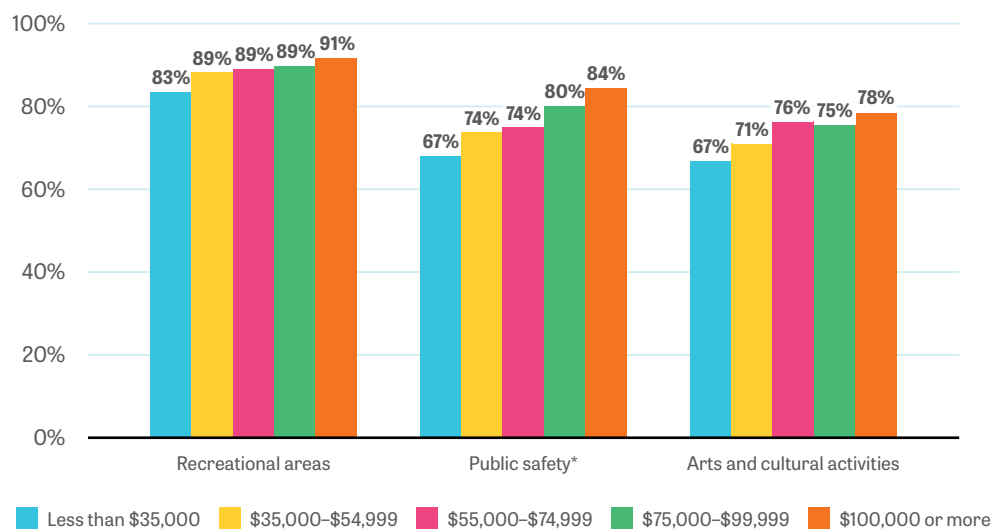
In the last chapter, we pull all of these factors together to synthesize lessons learned and their implications for communities.

**FIGURE 5.4**

**People from low-income households report easy access to key amenities less frequently than those in high-income households**

*Share of urban residents reporting easy access to amenities, by household income*

Source: Data comes from the Community Ties Survey administered by SSRS from 2018-2019. \* denotes where there are statistically significant differences among income groups



# Implications for Communities

Local community leaders and residents often struggle with how to make their cities and towns better places to live—places that make young people want to stay and that attract new long-term residents. The task can be daunting, with many competing priorities and limited resources. However, the Community Ties Study offers some insights into strategies that have the potential to foster greater community attachment.

## **Boost time in the central city**

Of the many factors explored in this study, spending more time in the city at the heart of metro area had the broadest and most significant effects on both attachment feelings and behaviors, even after controlling for demographics and a host of other factors. Local initiatives that aim to bring more people from the suburbs downtown to

participate in the life of the city could help boost both attachment sentiments and actions.

These need not be large redevelopment efforts to entice suburbanites to move to the city; other, lower-touch efforts might also be effective. The analysis suggests that even getting suburbanites into the city once a month or a few times a year could make a difference. Together, public and

private sector leaders in many major and mid-sized cities are actively reshaping their downtowns to attract visitors and residents, particularly in this age of relatively low geographic mobility. To design the best approaches, cities would do well to purposefully engage with the leadership of surrounding towns and suburban residents to better understand what kinds of programming or public spaces might be most attractive, and

how to build stronger ties that might benefit both the central city and its suburbs. Many communities already have regional economic development partnerships that they may or may not be leveraging to full effect around the issues surfacing in this report.

### **Focus on quality of life**

While people choose their metro area for family or employment reasons, quality of life fosters higher attachment for both newcomers and natives. Local stakeholders might boost attachment by focusing on improving access to quality-of-life amenities for current and future residents.

In particular, community leaders should pay attention to public safety. Having safe places to live, work and play ranked as the most important amenity for urban residents, and people who felt they enjoyed access to safe places also consistently felt much more attached to their communities. Public safety lays the groundwork for all of the other aspects of quality of life and must be a priority, particularly for low-income people who report more limited access to safe places.

Stakeholders would also do well to examine the accessibility of other quality-of-life amenities. Investing in recreational areas and open spaces, as well as in local arts and cultural activities, may yield outsized benefits in terms of making people identify more strongly with their community and get involved.

Nonetheless, designing effective approaches to addressing issues of access and enhancing attachment is fraught with complications. To be accessible, amenities must be proximate, but residents also must be aware that they are there and be able to use them. Schedules, restrictions on who can take advantage of them, or cost can all limit accessibility in different ways. Consequently, approaches to improving perceived accessibility could include better marketing existing offerings, adding new locations and changing schedules, and lowering the cost or lessening other barriers to entry.

Similarly, quality is very much in the eye of the beholder, and therefore different aspects of quality matter to different people. For example, some residents might think that having a swim team makes for a quality public school, but others might prioritize

reading proficiency rates or an up-to-date facility. Local community leaders must engage with residents to explore these issues and better understand how to improve the accessibility of quality amenities that support good quality of life for residents.

### **Pay attention to issues of equity**

It is also a good idea for metro areas to take a closer look at the underlying equity issues around access and how they play out in local communities. People of color and low-income people are more likely than others to choose to move to a place or stay there because of quality of life. Moreover, metro area amenities tend to be much more important to their quality of life but are systematically harder to access.

As a result, community leaders and residents who look to enhance attachment through quality-of-life initiatives must be sure to examine racial and income inequities, and design approaches that address them directly. Otherwise, well-intentioned efforts may not yield the results desired and may even exacerbate existing inequalities.

# Appendix A

## OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY TIES STUDY

Previous work on this topic published as the Soul of the Community studies included a large scale, three-year scientific sample survey of resident adults in the 26 communities of interest to Knight Foundation. Conducted by Gallup, annual 15- to 20-minute telephone surveys of 14,000+ adults were collected across 26 communities annually in 2008-2010. The Soul of the Community studies were very well received by many key stakeholders and provided important insights. To further strengthen the survey, Urban Institute (Urban) was commissioned to review and update the research framework and approach to make sure it maximizes the benefit to the foundation and local decision makers. The goals of the redesign were to:

- Define attachment more clearly as a construct that is both meaningful and interpretable.
- Focus on aspects of community that are actionable for decision makers.
- Ensure survey sampling methodology allows meaningful comparisons both across and within communities.

The resulting redesign included two complementary research components:

- An original survey to explore attachment in urban areas both nationally and in Knight metro areas.
- An in-depth analysis of secondary data on all 26 Knight metro areas.

## SURVEY

The Community Ties Survey conducted in 2018 and 2019 by SSRS obtained a representative sample of 1,206 U.S. adults age 18+ living in urbanized areas (i.e., not rural) and 10,261 adults age 18+ living in Knight's 26 target metro areas throughout the United States. At least 582 people participated in the eight core Knight metro areas, and at least 310 in the 18 Knight-affiliated metro areas.

Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish via a telephone methodology from June 18, 2018, to February 18, 2019. The survey firm used a dual sampling frame, heavily weighted toward cellphones to ensure a younger, more diverse set of respondents. In addition, the research team actively monitored the demographics of

survey respondents during the field period to modify targeting strategies and ensure the representativeness of the survey across all 26 metro areas.

Metro area samples were also designed to ensure that residents in the principal cities were adequately represented. The survey firm set minimum target proportions of principal city interviews relative to the larger sampling area (Core-Based Statistical Areas [CBSA] or Micropolitan Statistical Areas), except for the Long Beach community, which is only a principal city and with no surrounding metro area.

Upon completion of data collection, all survey responses were weighted to ensure that the survey sample in each metro area accurately reflected actual distributions of age, race, ethnicity, family status, education and residence in the principal city in these places.

Urban researchers used these weights to analyze all of the data in this report. Note that all the findings presented are based on analysis across all 26 Knight metro areas and the national sample—not just the core eight Knight metro areas. Major themes highlighted in this report are culled from complex multivariate regression analysis that allows researchers to isolate the effects of individual factors after controlling for other factors simultaneously. However, for ease of communication and interpretation, all of the graphics reflect raw means or frequencies, rather than predicted values or probabilities of effects on the margin.

More detailed information about the technical aspects of the survey itself can be found in the survey documentation here: [kf.org/communityties](http://kf.org/communityties).

## SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

Indicators are created in a set of core domains to set the scene for the next iteration of the survey. We describe these indicators below.

### Growth and Mobility

In this topic area, we pull indicators exclusively from the American Community Survey (ACS). They include total population, the population of young adults (18-34), respondents' place of residence in the prior year and the number of years households have lived in their current residence. All of these measures help us better understand macro trends in attachment to Knight communities.

### Socio-Demographics

Indicators in this domain include basic characteristics like age, race/ethnicity, gender, income and poverty. We also calculate several measures of disparity. First, we include median household income not only for all households, but also specifically for non-Hispanic white-headed households, and households headed by respondents from each community's largest racial/ethnic minority. We also include two measures of segregation for Knight communities: racial/ethnic segregation between non-Hispanic whites and the area's largest minority group, and income segregation across income brackets. Both numbers indicate the share of people in each community who would have to move to achieve an even distribution across the community's geographic area. The values range from 0 to 1, with lower values

indicating less segregation and higher values indicating more segregation. These indicators help us understand opportunities and barriers to building social capital, as well as the economic constraints residents might face when choosing where to live or how to engage in their community.

### Business and Education

The indicators in this domain include basics on labor market participation, unemployment and part-time work. There are also basic descriptive statistics on industries, occupations and business establishments to identify opportunities in local markets. In addition, a number of indicators focus on educational attainment, including the mix of jobs available by entry-level educational requirements, overall educational attainment for the population 16 and older, as well as a breakdown for non-Hispanic whites and each community's largest racial/ethnic group. Labor market indicators provide important context for residents' decisions about where to live as well as insights in the economic vitality of place.

### Housing Markets

This last domain describes residential housing market trends, including vacancy and owner occupancy rates, home values, rents and the cost burden of housing for residents. In addition, we include information on transportation, including mean travel time to work and transit mode. All of these factors play an important role in local residents' decisions about where to live, whether to invest in homeownership, and what community resources might be available.



## DATA SOURCES

To compile these data, we used a number of different data sources.

- **The American Community Survey (ACS)** is an ongoing annual survey implemented by the U.S. Census Bureau to gather information about a wide array of topics, including our key focus areas, growth and mobility, socio-demographics, given on previous page as business and education, and housing markets. In order to be sustainable, the ACS uses a sample of respondents across all states and territories and aggregates these samples to create snapshots. One-year estimates are available for geographies with relatively large populations like states, populous counties and metropolitan areas. However, to have a robust enough sample in smaller areas and increase the reliability of estimates in larger areas, the ACS pools estimates across 5-year periods. The data contained in the Knight community profiles uses these 5-year estimates (2006-2011, 2012-2016) in order to provide comparable estimates across all communities, small and large alike. As a result, these numbers function more like 5-year averages than discrete annual estimates. This may mask trends within each 5-year period.
- **County Business Patterns (CBP)** is an annual survey fielded by the U.S. Census Bureau that provides subnational economic data by industry. This series includes the number of business establishments, employment during the week of

March 12, first- quarter payroll and annual payroll. This data is useful for studying the economic activity of small areas; analyzing economic changes over time; and serving as a benchmark for other statistical series, surveys and databases between economic censuses. Businesses use the data for analyzing market potential, measuring the effectiveness of sales and advertising programs, setting sales quotas and developing budgets. Government agencies use the data for administration and planning.

- **The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)** program conducts a semiannual mail survey designed to produce estimates of employment and wages for specific occupations. The OES program collects data on wage and salary workers in nonfarm establishments in order to produce employment and wage estimates for about 800 occupations. For the Knight profiles, data on employment in each occupation was matched to the entry-level education requirements defined by the **Employment Projections Program**, also at the U.S. Department of Labor, to calculate each metropolitan area's supply of jobs by level of education.
- **Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA)** data summarizes data on home values included on forms that all mortgage lenders are required to file. For the Knight profiles, we used data compiled for metropolitan areas by Urban Institute's Housing Finance Center. The data are for the years 2010 and 2015.

## GEOGRAPHIC DEFINITIONS

All Knight communities have a principal city and a surrounding metro area geography. Cities are defined in the ACS using what are called census designated places. Most of these are cities or towns; however, some, including two of the core Knight communities and one affiliated community, are city-counties, where the boundaries of the two are essentially the same.

For most communities, we used core-based statistical area (CBSA) to define the metro area. CBSAs are metropolitan or micropolitan statistical areas defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that consist of one or more counties (or equivalents) anchored by an urban center of at least 10,000 people plus adjacent counties that are socioeconomically tied to the urban center by commuting. Note that the definitions used are the latest ones from guidance issued in 2014.

In cases where Knight communities were located in very large CBSAs, crossing multiple states, we used the metropolitan divisions instead. These are smaller groupings of counties or equivalent entities within CBSAs containing a single core with a population of at least 2.5 million. A metropolitan division consists of one or more main/secondary counties that represent an employment center, plus adjacent counties associated with the main/secondary county or counties through commuting ties.



In the case of Philadelphia, we used the portion of the CBSA that fell in Pennsylvania, which includes two different metropolitan divisions using the latest rules from OMB. This was to maintain consistency with the definitions used in the Soul of the Community studies.

## Core Communities

### 1. Akron, OH

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Portage, Summit

### 2. Charlotte, NC

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography:
  - In North Carolina: Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Union, Rowan
  - In South Carolina: Chester, Lancaster, York

### 3. Detroit, MI

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Wayne, Lapeer, Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair

### 4. Macon, GA

- Type of principal city geography: City-County (Macon-Bibb)
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Bibb, Crawford, Jones, Monroe, Twiggs

### 5. Miami, FL

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: Metropolitan Division
- Counties included in geography: Miami-Dade

### 6. Philadelphia, PA

- Type of principal city geography: City-County
- Type of surrounding area geography: Pennsylvania portion of the CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area), consisting of two Metropolitan Divisions
- Counties included in geography: Delaware, Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Montgomery

### 7. San Jose, CA

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: San Benito, Santa Clara

### 8. St. Paul, MN

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography:
  - In Minnesota: Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Chisago, Hennepin, Isanti, Le Sueur, Ramsey, Scott, Sherburne, Sibley, Washington, Wright, Mille Lacs
  - In Wisconsin: St. Croix, Pierce

## Affiliated Communities

### 9. Aberdeen, SD

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Brown, Edmunds

### 10. Biloxi, MS

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Hancock, Harrison, Jackson

### 11. Boulder, CO

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Boulder

### 12. Bradenton, FL

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Manatee, Sarasota

### 13. Columbia, SC

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Calhoun, Fairfield, Kershaw, Lexington, Richland, Saluda

### 14. Columbus, GA

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography:
  - In Alabama: Russell
  - In Georgia: Chattahoochee, Harris, Marion, Muscogee

### 15. Duluth, MN

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography:
  - In Minnesota: Carlton, St. Louis
  - In Wisconsin: Douglas

**16. Fort Wayne, IN**

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Allen, Wells, Whitley

**17. Gary, IN**

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: Metropolitan Division
- Counties included in geography: Lake, Porter, Newton, Jasper

**18. Grand Forks, ND**

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography:
  - In North Dakota: Grand Forks
  - In Minnesota: Polk

**19. Lexington, KY**

- Type of principal city geography: City-County (Lexington-Fayette)
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Bourbon, Clark, Fayette, Jessamine, Scott, Woodford

**20. Long Beach, CA**

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: Metropolitan Division
- Counties included in geography: Los Angeles

**21. Milledgeville, GA**

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Micropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Baldwin, Hancock

**22. Myrtle Beach, SC**

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography:
  - In South Carolina: Horry
  - In North Carolina: Brunswick

**23. (West) Palm Beach, FL**

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: Metropolitan Division
- Counties included in geography: Palm Beach

**24. State College, PA**

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Centre

**25. Tallahassee, FL**

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Wakulla

**26. Wichita, KS**

- Type of principal city geography: City
- Type of surrounding area geography: CBSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area)
- Counties included in geography: Butler, Harvey, Sedgwick, Kingman, Sumner

# Appendix B

## OVERVIEW OF KNIGHT METRO AREAS

Knight Foundation's communities program seeks to attract and nurture talent, enhance opportunity and foster civic engagement in the places where the Knight brothers once published newspapers. This includes the eight core Knight communities highlighted in this report—Akron, Charlotte, Detroit, Macon, Miami, Philadelphia, San Jose and St. Paul— where the foundation has active offices. There are also 18 other Knight-affiliated communities where Knight does its work in partnership with local community foundations.

The Knight communities have many things in common, as well as characteristics that make each of them unique. We highlight a few larger trends across all eight below from the analysis

of existing secondary data that complemented the fielding of the Community Ties Survey.

### Growth and Mobility

- The city population makes up a relatively small share of the metro area population (<25%) in three of the Knight communities: St. Paul, Detroit and Miami. Philadelphia, Akron and Charlotte fall in the mid-range between 26-50%. And San Jose and Macon are communities where more than 50% of the metro area population lives in the principal city.
- Five of the eight Knight metro areas are growing, while Macon, Detroit and Akron are all losing population.

### Socio-Demographics

- African Americans are the largest minority group in all but two of the metro areas, San Jose and Miami.
- Racial segregation in these areas has generally declined over time but remains higher than income segregation in all of them.
- In all communities but Charlotte, residents are more economically distressed in cities than in the metro area as a whole, with higher poverty rates, higher unemployment and lower household incomes.

## Business and Education

- Unemployment has declined over time in all of the communities' metro areas and cities except in Macon.
- Seven of the eight metro areas exhibit substantial racial/ethnic disparities in terms of educational attainment. The college completion gap between non-Hispanic whites and the largest minority group ranges from 12 percentage points in Charlotte to 26 in Philadelphia. San Jose is the only metro area where the education of the largest minority, Asian-Pacific Islanders, exceeds that of non-Hispanic whites.
- The top industry in seven of the eight Knight metro areas is education, health and social services. In contrast, the professional, scientific, management and administration industry is the most prominent in San Jose.

- The top occupations were in management across all eight metro areas.
- The number of business establishments has increased in all but Akron and Macon.

## Housing Markets

- Rents are rising in the metro areas of all communities, while home values generally declined in all but Philadelphia and San Jose.
- Average commute time ranged from 23 minutes in the Macon and Akron metro areas to 29 minutes in greater Miami and Philadelphia, but the most common mode of transportation in all eight communities was driving alone.

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