



“What would it take to get you to move to the city of Detroit?”

One of the big truths of marketing is that you have to know how your product is perceived in the marketplace. It is also true that you must be truthful about your products’ strengths and weaknesses, knowing what it can and cannot do, and not over promising/ under delivering. Aspirational brands are powerful, but even aspirational brands have to deliver results in a competitive landscape. No one likes buying something and then finding out it doesn’t deliver as promised. There is an aggressive push to market Detroit residency underway, but how well is that message tuned to the existing needs, wants, concerns and preoccupations of the intended target audience? Is the Detroit marketing message relevant to the persuadable audience?

As part of WDET’s *Crossing the Lines* series, WDET created and fielded a survey that was designed to test our hypothesis: the two sides, city/ suburb, Detroit partisan and skeptic, are speaking past each other. The latest iteration of the persistent “Detroit authenticity Detroit love” battle shows little evidence of the participants actually engaging with the arguments/ ideas of the other side. Instead, there is a lot of interaction with existing beliefs, misremembered history, convenient reformulations of the past and a willful disregard for “live and let live” acceptance.

The survey was designed to test the hypothesis and then support ongoing conversations that would provide a starting ground for useful, progressive conversation. The anonymous survey was fielded Friday, December 2 – 9, 2011. Although there is clear evidence that this survey was heavily shared through social media and travelled far beyond WDET’s audience, this survey is not a scientific or representative sample of the regions’ population and is not being represented as such.

Respondent overview

2200 individuals completed a portion of the survey; Over 1700 complete surveys

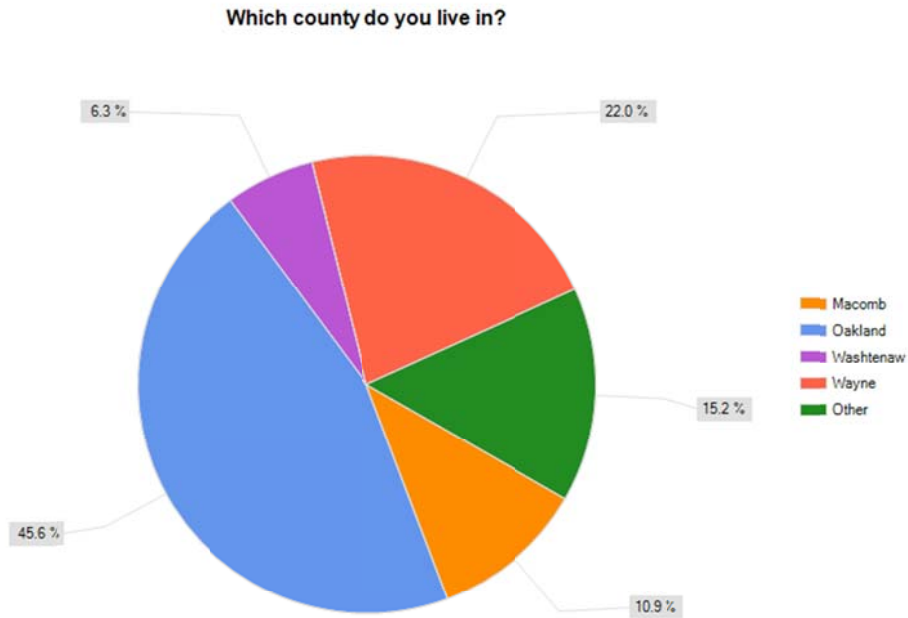
82.8% of respondents do not currently reside in the city of Detroit.

84% of city residents said they would be unlikely to move to the suburbs in the future.

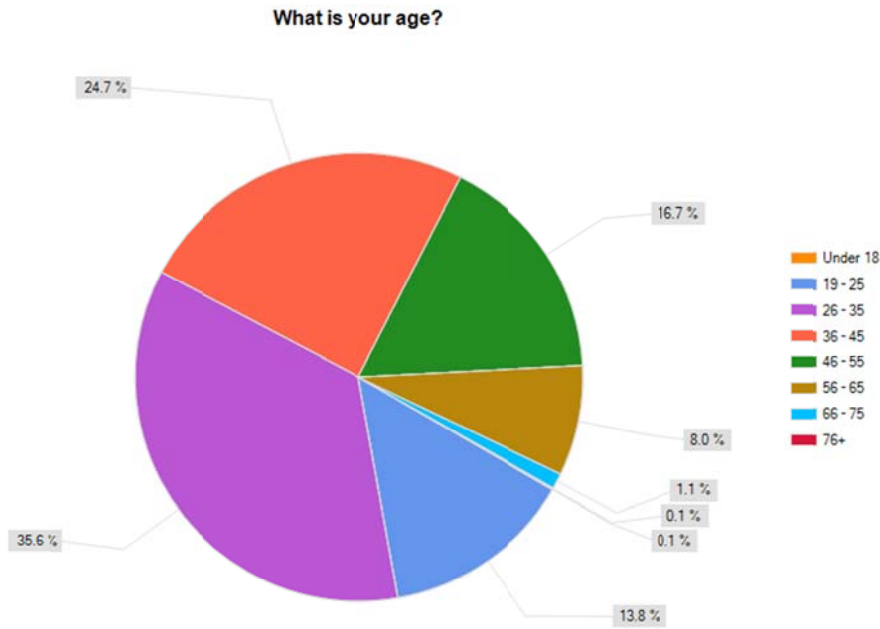
Respondents split nearly even between men and women.

Of the non-Detroit resident sample, over 70% of the respondents do not have children under 17 currently living in their home. This group was split nearly 50/50 between mothers/ fathers and the majority was between the ages of 36 – 45.

The county of residence break out for the non-Detroit resident respondent sample:



The age break out for the non-Detroit resident respondent sample:



Likelihood of moving to Detroit

Most of the demographic factors were significantly related to the person's likelihood to move to the city in the future.

Age

Over half (55%) of those under 25 years of age said they would be "likely or very likely" to move to the city in the future, compared to one third (36%) of those 26-45 and one-quarter (24%) of those 45 and above. As age increases, likelihood of moving to the city decreases significantly.

Gender

Women were somewhat more likely to say they would "likely or very likely" move to the city in the future (56% of women versus 44% of men).

Marriage and Kids

The influence of marriage and children on respondents' likelihood to move to Detroit is complex. About half of single respondents (49%) said they would be likely or very likely to move to the city in the future compared to only one-quarter of married respondents (25%). Those with other relationship statuses fell somewhere in between - domestic partnership (43%), divorced (40%), widowed (38%), or engaged (33%).

Of those who have children under age 17 living in their household, three-quarters (75%) said they were unlikely or very unlikely to move to the city in the future. Despite their low likelihood to move to Detroit, 85% of those with children under 17 in their household said they would consider moving to Detroit if better schools were addressed.

Satisfaction with and Length of Time Living in Current Community

Likelihood of moving to Detroit declined as people were more satisfied with the community they currently lived in. Those who were unsatisfied with the community they live in (56%) were twice as likely to say they would be likely or very likely to move to Detroit compared to those who were very satisfied (25%).

Additionally, the longer the respondent lived in their community, the less likely they would be to move to the city in the future. Forty-seven percent (47%) of those who have lived in their community for less than a year said they would be likely or very likely to move to the city versus 30% who have lived in their community for 10+ years. The survey did not ask if respondents are currently renters or homeowners, but homeownership status is likely a significant and related factor to both how long someone lives in a community or whether they would consider moving to Detroit in the future.

Identity and Lifestyle

Those who considered themselves to have an urban lifestyle were most likely to consider a move to the city (67%) compared to those who said they had a suburban, exurban or rural lifestyle.

Those who considered themselves to be a “Detroiter” were three times as likely to move to the city in the future (75%) compared to those who did not consider themselves to be a Detroiter (25%).

Yet, the data paints a complex picture in terms of how county of current residence and frequency of visits to Detroit influence likelihood to move to Detroit. Those who visit Detroit more frequently are more likely to say they would be likely or very likely to move to the city. Those who come to Detroit daily are the most likely to consider a move to the city (45%), followed by those who visit weekly (42%), monthly (32%) and annually (25%).

Paradoxically, a smaller percentage of survey takers were from Washtenaw County and this group comes to Detroit less frequently than those living in Wayne or Macomb counties, yet this group was the most likely to say they would be likely or very likely to move to the city in the future (50%). The next largest group of respondents who said they would be likely or very likely to move to the city in the future lived in a county other than Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne (outside Metro Detroit) (42%). Smaller percentages of survey takers from Wayne (35%) or Macomb (34%) counties and Oakland County (31%) said they would be likely or very likely to move to Detroit. The largest group of survey takers was from Oakland County, but they were least likely to say they would move to the city in the future.

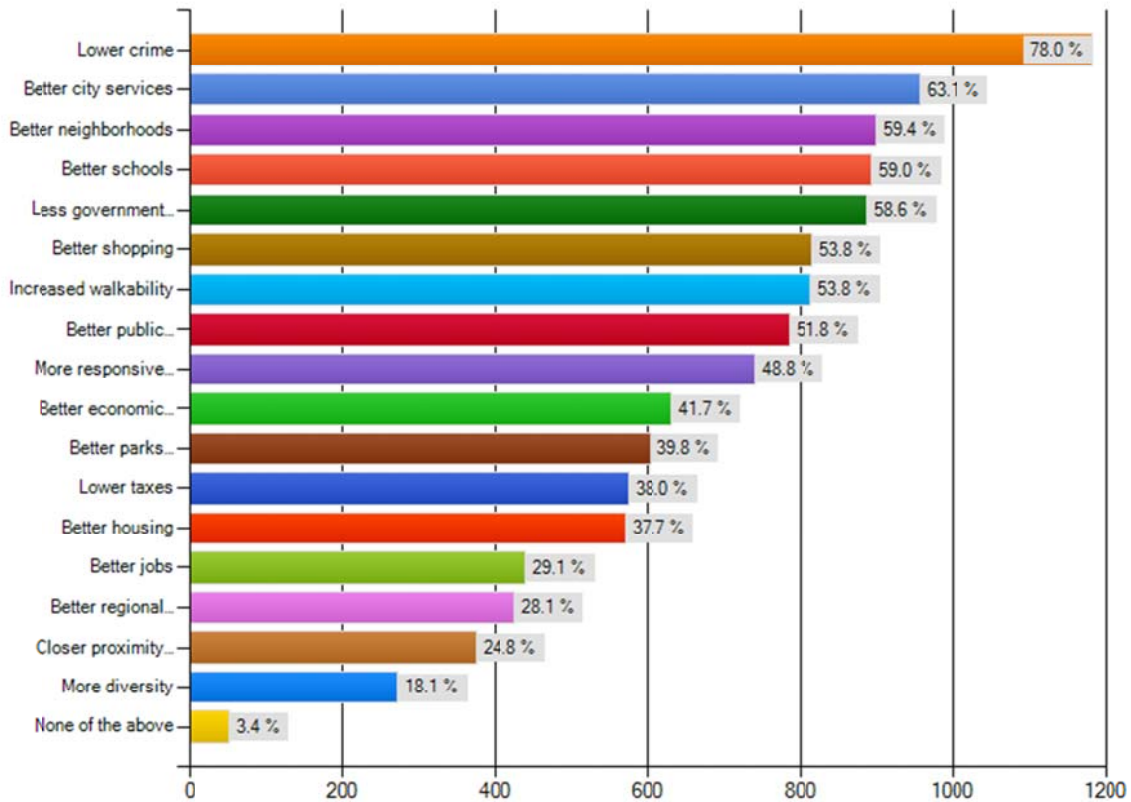
In conclusion, those outside of Metro Detroit may be most likely to move to Detroit if they visit regularly (weekly or monthly). Those living in Metro Detroit may be most likely to move to Detroit if they visit daily or weekly.

Factors that, if addressed, would influence consideration of moving to Detroit

Respondents were asked to indicate which factors which, if addressed, would influence them to consider moving to Detroit. Overall, lowered crime was the factor the largest percentage of people (78%) identified in response to the statement: “I would consider moving to Detroit if the following were addressed”.

The majority of respondents said the following factors, if addressed, might influence them in considering a move to Detroit: lowered crime, better city services, better neighborhoods, better schools, less government corruption, better shopping, better public transportation, and increased walkability. These factors mattered as frequently for respondents who said they were likely to move to the city in the future as for those who were unlikely.

I would consider moving to Detroit if the following were addressed: (check all that apply)



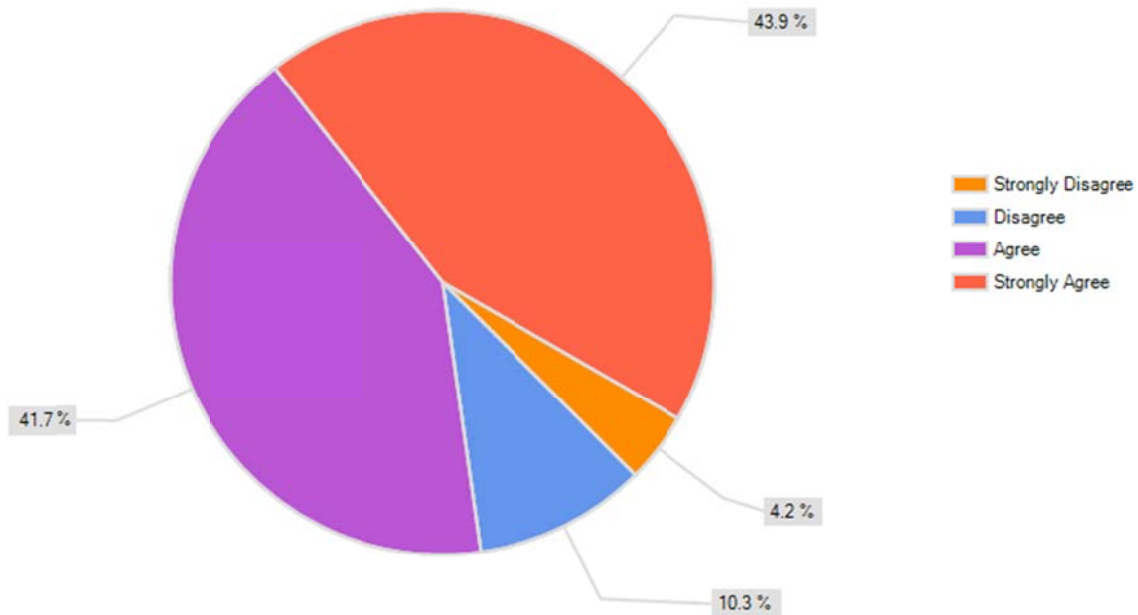
* Complete titles for choices above: *Less government corruption, Better public transportation, More responsive city government, Better economic environment, Better parks and recreation, Better regional cooperation, Closer proximity to my job*

A few factors stood out as mattering to more of the respondents who said they were likely or very likely to move to the city in the future, compared to those who were unlikely or very unlikely to move to the city:

- Better schools is #1 issue among respondents with children in home, regardless of likelihood of moving to Detroit
- Better city services (57% of likely movers compared to 51% of unlikely movers)
- Better public transportation (60% of likely movers compared to 36% of unlikely movers; this factor rises past lower crime to the #1 issue among the very likely subset respondents)
- Increase walkability (53% of likely movers compared to 41% of unlikely movers)

We also developed a question to gauge people's perception of the city - outside of their own interest in or ability to move. We asked if they would support a friend or family member's decision to move to the city. 85% agreed or strongly agreed that they would.

"I would support a friend or family member's decision to move to the city of Detroit"



Conclusions

When considering the above factors, the person most likely to consider a move to Detroit would be a single 19-25 year old woman or man with no kids. She/he visits Detroit daily, weekly or monthly, regardless of whether he/she lives inside or outside of Metro Detroit. He/she thinks of him/herself both as a Detroiter and as someone with an urban lifestyle. Better city services, as well as better public transportation and increased walkability, would be particularly influential considerations in his or her decision to move to the city, in addition to lowered crime, better city services, better neighborhoods, better schools, less government corruption, and better shopping.

That said, there is considerable variation in factors that predict who might consider a move to the city. Those in domestic partnerships were fairly likely to consider a move to the city. Those from Washtenaw or other counties outside Metro Detroit were most likely to consider a move to Detroit, despite scoring lower on other influential predictors such as how often they visit Detroit and considering themselves to be Detroiters. Those living in Washtenaw or 'other' counties

were less likely to think of themselves as Detroiters and visited less often, compared to those living in Wayne, Macomb or Oakland Counties but were more likely to say they would move to Detroit in the future.

In addition, subgroups of potential movers may have particular priority factors that might influence their decision to move to the city. For instance, 25% of those with kids under the age of 17 said they would be likely to move to the city in the future. If the person had children in their household, better schools would be a top consideration.

Finally, it is critical for anyone marketing Detroit residence to incorporate the responses of current city residents who identified the following factors that support this choice.

Why do you choose to live in the city? (listed in order of appearance)

- 1) Urban lifestyle
- 2) Proximity to job or school
- 3) Desire to be a part of changing/bringing back the city
- 4) Sense of community
- 5) Affordability
- 6) Family/Born in city