



Engage! Cleveland



State of the Young Professional Community

2018 Survey Results





Engage!
Cleveland



INTRODUCTION

The inaugural 2018 State of the Young Professional Community Survey, presented by Engage!

Cleveland with research conducted by ERC, is a comprehensive look at what young professionals in the Greater Cleveland area want and need from our region. It aims to better understand the professional, civic, and personal lenses through which young professionals perceive our area and provides insights into how their perceptions are driving their decisions and the actions they take. Engage! Cleveland intends to use these insights to work to provide meaningful experiences for young professionals that will attract, retain, and engage them in the life of our community.

The survey addresses three key areas of interest:

1. The reasons young professionals are choosing Cleveland - to live, work, and play.
2. The attributes that attract young professionals to particular jobs and/or employers.
3. The role civic engagement plays in the lives of young professionals.



Report Contents

2		Introduction
3		Methods
4		Demographics
5		Choosing Cleveland
12		Employment Preferences & Job Attributes
15		Civic Engagement
19		Key Takeaways
21		Acknowledgements



METHODS

Constituents of Engage! Cleveland, ERC, and a host of other organizations, were invited to participate in the survey on June 12, 2018 via email invitation and other online promotions. The survey was open for three weeks, officially closing on July 3, 2018. To provide the most reliable and accurate information, data was cleaned, and duplicate records were removed, as were outliers. Invalid data was also eliminated, yielding a total of 650 participants. Qualitative data was analyzed according to commonality or major themes, and all quantitative data was analyzed using statistical software to ensure validity and reliability. Please note that all open-ended responses are reported exactly as submitted by participants. This includes not correcting for spelling and grammar, a practice that preserves the integrity of the original text.

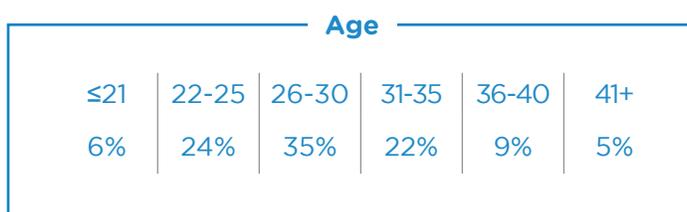
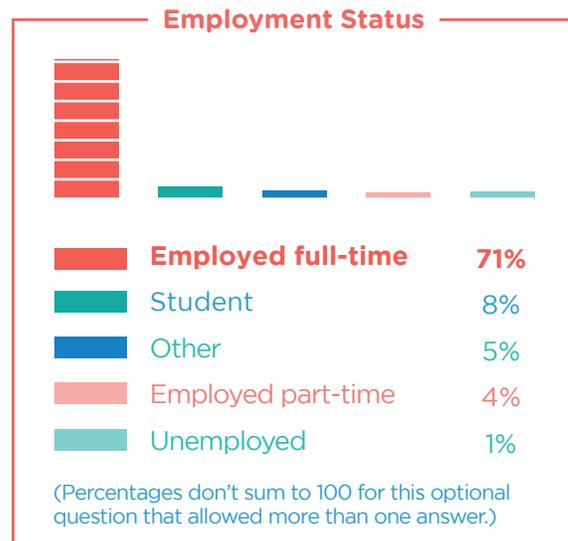
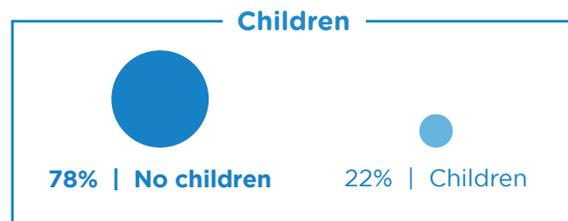
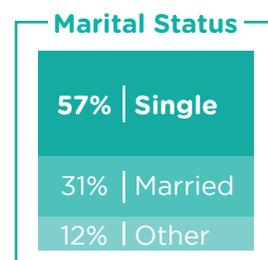
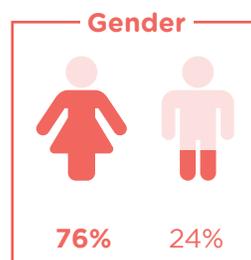
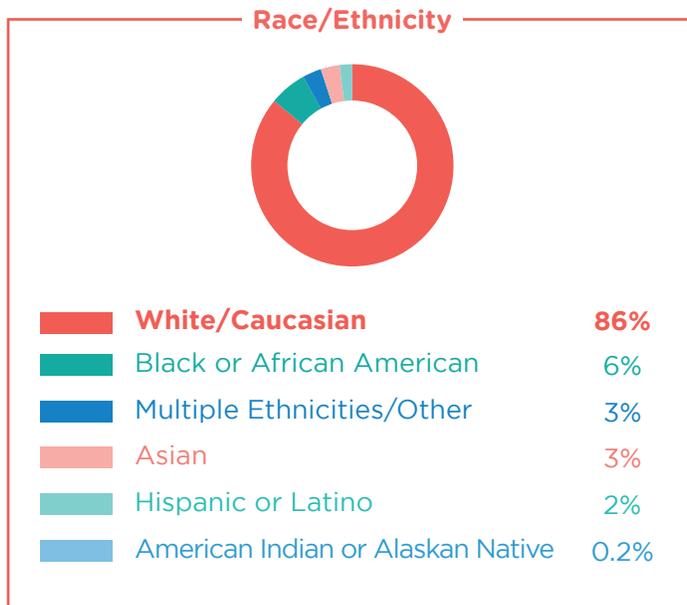
This report shows several frequencies and response distributions. Frequencies of data responses may not total 100% exactly in some cases due to rounding of decimals or the ability for participants to select multiple response options.

DEMOGRAPHICS



Below is a breakdown of the demographics represented by the 650 survey participants.

A snapshot of the sample shows that respondents largely identified themselves as female, white/Caucasian, and highly educated. This lack of diversity in and of itself is noteworthy. However, it also points to a need for future research that would aim to more fully reflect the views of populations that were underrepresented in this inaugural survey report.





CHOOSING CLEVELAND



Young professionals have an overwhelmingly positive perception of their community. Young professionals were asked to give their overall perceptions of the Greater Cleveland area using several measures throughout the survey. Two measures were strictly quantitative, and both gave a strongly positive result. However, the inclusion of a more qualitative measure gave participants the opportunity to offer up their own issues of concern, which they did in great detail.

Expressed a positive perception of quality of life | 95%

Acting as ambassadors for the region. Next, participants were asked how likely they would be to recommend the Greater Cleveland area to friends or family considering a relocation to the area. This question was structured as a “net promoter” measure, a benchmark commonly used in market research.

The resulting Net Promoter Score (NPS) is defined as: “an index ranging from -100 to 100 that measures the willingness of customers to recommend a company’s products or services to others,” (<https://www.medallia.com/net-promoter-score/>) or in the case of this research, that measures the willingness of young professional residents to act as true ambassadors for the area by recommending the Greater Cleveland region to others.

The final NPS is calculated by subtracting the “detractors” (0 to 6 ranking) from the “attractors” (9 or 10 ranking). The remaining participants who ranked the question a 7 or 8 are considered “passives” and made up 36% of this sample. Within the context of the NPS, this group cannot be counted on to be cheerleaders, but is also not likely to have a negative influence on the overall perception of the area. For that reason, passives are excluded from the final NPS calculation. The final NPS for our question was a solid 30, with 47% attractors and 17% detractors. As a stand-alone number, 30 simply sets a baseline for future research, but is a good early indicator that Greater Cleveland has more ambassadors than naysayers.

CHOOSING CLEVELAND



Choosing Cleveland, in their own words. Finally, participants were given complete freedom to simply share any positive or negative thoughts about why they and their peers may or may not choose the Greater Cleveland area. The results revealed an interesting dichotomy between strong positive perceptions and strong negative perceptions of the area for the young professional population.

Key: ↑-Mostly positive ↓-Mostly negative ✕-Both positive and negative



“I would 10/10 live in Cleveland as a Young Professional. The HUSTLE you see here in CLE is inspiring and the people here are amazing. You see more community support for local business owners, which makes the suburbs unique. Every suburb has something special to share and the downtown scene is a blast.”



“I hear time and time again safety is the biggest issue in the city and [this] stems from poverty in the Cleveland area. Until this is addressed it’ll be a revolving door of young professionals. People want good schools to feel safe and the only place that somewhat fills that description is the suburbs and so the city continuously gets a bad rap. Until this is changed Cleveland will [be] a city young professionals won’t want to stay [in] and grow into lifers.”

Most participants included both positive and negative comments in their feedback:



“I think Cleveland is a great place to live with the relatively easy flow of life, low cost of living, and cheap rent. Cleveland has everything you could possibly want in a social scene and has the Metroparks/waterfronts for people to explore the outdoors. However, the lack of job opportunities hinders the Greater Cleveland area as well as the lack of a decisive plan/vision for the future by community, business, and political leaders to spur economic growth and attract jobs/talent to the area.”



CHOOSING CLEVELAND

The concerns expressed centered primarily around issues of employment, housing, diversity, safety, and social justice:



“Cleveland really has it all, we have many amazing amenities, but our connections are broken. I hope we can focus on equity and inclusion to become unsegregated. We have a great city, but do all feel welcome to live here? We have a great transportation system, but I hope we can make it more attractive to all people regardless of income levels or race. We have incredible neighborhoods but need to fill in the gaps between them to make them feel connected.”

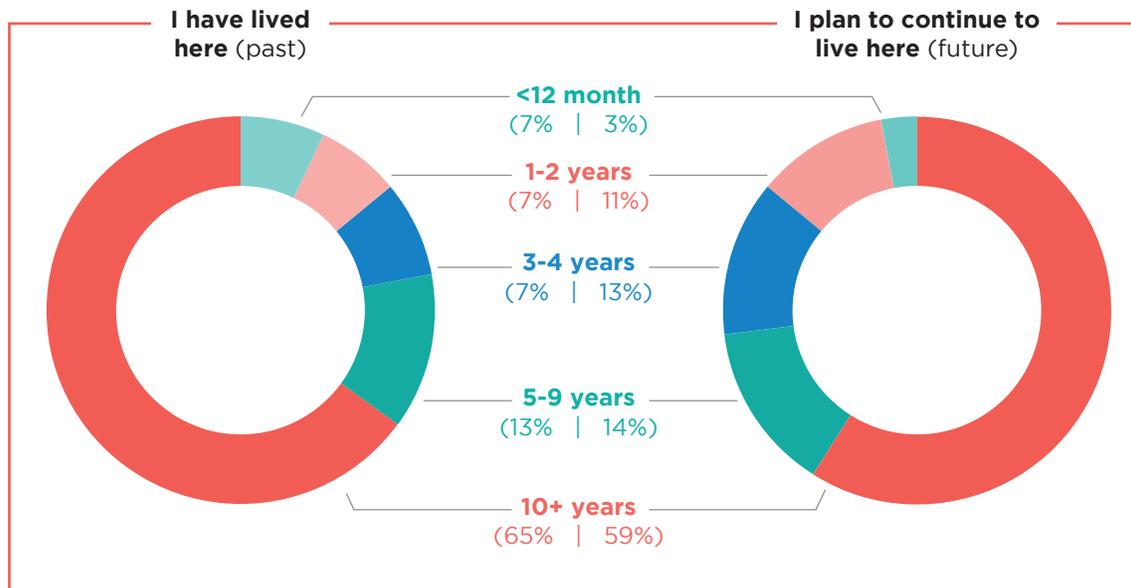


“There are select industries that young professionals can join in Cleveland. Additionally, the entire Cleveland community needs to stop investing in NEW housing and improve the caliber of housing that already exists. We are creating another housing bubble in downtown that is likely to burst. Cleveland cannot be vibrant in select areas of the county. Cleveland needs to grow in all areas, stop catering to Millennials with money and start focusing on all young professionals in ALL economic brackets.”

CHOOSING CLEVELAND

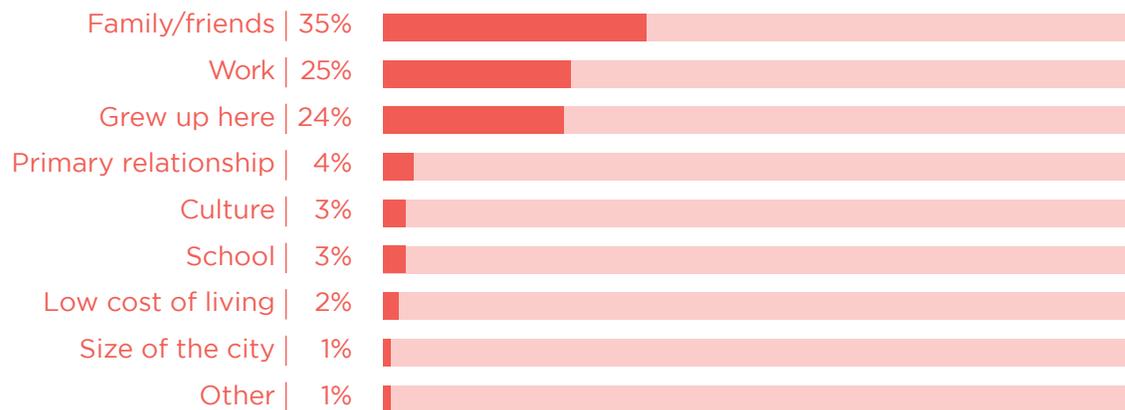


Once young professionals get here, they are here to stay. Young professionals who already live in the Greater Cleveland area are largely planning to stick around, with approximately 60% of the sample planning to continue living in the area for more than 10 years. Respondents raised in the area (“Lifers” and “Boomerangers”) reported a greater likelihood of continuing to live here for 10 or more years, at 71% and 63% respectively.



Young professionals are strongly motivated by family. Having family and friends in the area is the primary reason why young professionals live here now. The “Transplant” group was the only exception to this trend. For YPs who do not have roots in the area, “work” (51%) and “school” (29%) are the primary reasons they are here.

REASONS YOUNG PROFESSIONALS LIVE HERE NOW:



CHOOSING CLEVELAND



Unless they land a job elsewhere. Again, most of the sample had no immediate plans to leave the Greater Cleveland area, with one notable exception: being offered work elsewhere (44%). And leaving for employment opportunities was more than just a theoretical situation. Although they ultimately return to the area, 20% of “Boomeranger” survey respondents indicated that they left Greater Cleveland to pursue a job elsewhere.

A Boomeranger’s experience:



“Left for professional opportunities elsewhere (NYC and Chicago). Returned for a good professional opportunity, to be close to family and lifer friends, and for the cost of living and medium-size city offerings of Cleveland.”

Not only are out-of-town employment opportunities perceived as more plentiful, but a number of participants also expressed concerns about less than progressive workplace cultures that exist locally:



“The biggest issue is employment. Companies need to be willing to change the way they think about work, be willing to train, and be willing to put efforts into improving company culture and working environments. I haven’t run into anyone leaving the Cleveland area recently other than that they had a better career opportunity elsewhere.”

Assets and challenges of the area. Participants were asked to identify the top 3 assets and top 3 challenges that they believe exist in the Greater Cleveland area. The most common answers were:

Ranking	Assets	%	Ranking	Challenges	%
#1	Cost of Living	54	#1	Public Transportation	39
#2	Natural Assets	45	#2	Safety	33
#3	Arts & Culture	32	#3	Economic Development	29



CHOOSING CLEVELAND

Where did the all-important “employment opportunities” fall in the rankings?

Interestingly, employment opportunities just missed the top 3 challenges, coming in at No. 4 at 24%. In terms of assets for the area, employment opportunities lagged even further behind in the No. 8 spot with only 14% of the sample ranking it among their top 3 assets for the area.

Government, missing in action. Another noteworthy ranking outside of the top 3 assets and challenges was “government.” In fact, government was the only option not selected by a single respondent as a top 3 asset. Instead, references to “government” all fell on the negative side of the calculation.

One participant called the government to task specifically as it relates to their role in attracting YPs to the region:



“...I honestly feel like the only thing holding YPs back is local government and their own interests in simply being reelected and in power. We need a leadership change immediately.”

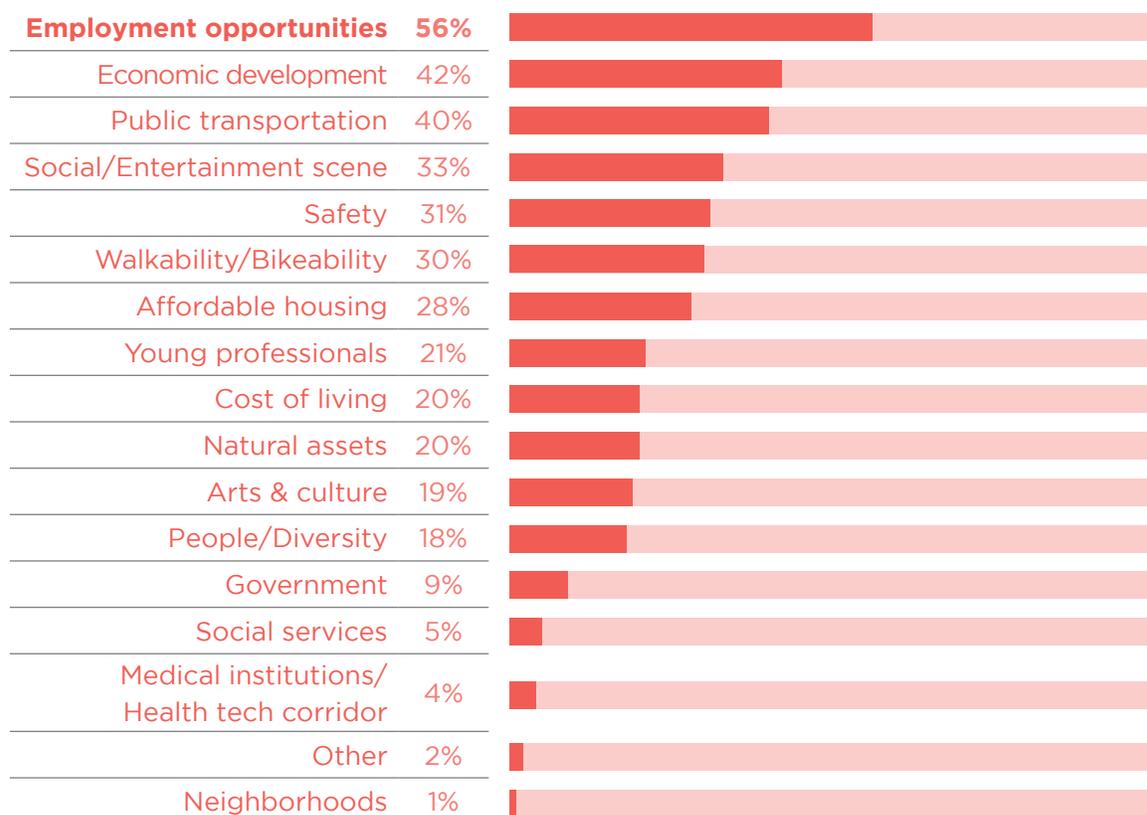


CHOOSING CLEVELAND



Setting priorities for the future. Above and beyond simply identifying challenges and assets, participants were also asked to take their opinions a step further and prioritize focus areas that would attract and retain young professionals to the Greater Cleveland area over the next five years. Under this more practical scenario, employment opportunities did rise to the top of the list.

FOCUS AREAS TO PRIORITIZE:



Downtown neighborhood vibrancy. When asked about how to make the greatest impact on improving the vibrancy of Downtown Cleveland specifically, young professionals focused on the importance of better housing and better public transportation.



EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCES & JOB ATTRIBUTES

Current employment status. The vast majority of young professionals in the research sample are not actively looking for employment, but one-third of respondents are keeping their job options open. An even smaller segment of the sample is either passively considering (17%) or actively pursuing (5%) jobs outside the Greater Cleveland area.

Searching for work, past and future. Although most participants are not in the midst of a job search, they were asked both how they had previously conducted their job searches, as well as how they would conduct one in the future – specifically when searching for jobs in the Greater Cleveland area. In both cases, friends and family topped the list as the most common job search method, past and future.

TOP 5 FUTURE JOB SEARCH METHODS:



Young professionals will apply if... Survey respondents were asked to select the top 5 attributes that are most important to them when seeking a job. The five priorities that rose to the top are:





EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCES & JOB ATTRIBUTES

But that ideal job is hard to find. When searching for jobs in the Greater Cleveland area, 68% of young professionals encountered at least “some challenges” in finding positions that satisfied their top job attributes.

Organizational culture is key. When asked to take a deeper dive into their thoughts on what makes an employer or position appealing to them as young professionals, it is clear that they are looking for a progressive work culture, again with a focus on flexibility and work/life balance.

Even the professional is personal:



“Work/life balance is a huge thing for me when it comes to finding an employer in the area. I went from a company that paid no interest to employees’ personal lives or needs, both personal and professional, to an organization that truly wants to build its employees into being the best employees and community members possible, and also acknowledges that they lead lives outside of work that are important to cultivate and prioritize. I will always look for an organization that puts that emphasis on the whole person instead of only how an individual can make an organization money.”

But it’s not all about working from home and casual Fridays. Young professionals want opportunities to contribute to the company and to the community:



“I would like to work for an organization that encourages leadership development and being active in the community.”



EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCES & JOB ATTRIBUTES

For some, this commitment to community can make or break a job offer:



“In my past position, my decision to work there was solidified when I learned that the company offers 8 hours PTO to volunteer for a non-profit organization and matches employee donations. Weekly options were also available to attend community events that the company sponsored.”

EMPLOYER-OFFERED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

40%	Coordination of community service activities or functions
33%	Encouraging non-profit board participation
30%	Paid time off to volunteer on company time
30%	Coordination of internal Young Professional groups/initiatives
29%	Coordination of an organization-wide community service day
18%	Matching of employee’s charitable donations for only isolated and/or specific occasions
16%	Matching of employee’s charitable donations
14%	Allowing employees to provide non-compensated professional services
2%	Other



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Young professionals show up to do good, with room to grow. Nearly 80% of young professionals said that they are at least “somewhat involved” in the community. Through their involvement, they hope to impact the quality of life in their community (58%), build a social network (52%), and have leadership/professional development opportunities (50%). When asked if they were “satisfied” with their current level of civic engagement in the community, 39% indicated they are satisfied. The remaining 61% were split between being “unsure” (33%) and “not satisfied” (28%). Those that were “unsure” or simply “not satisfied” almost universally wanted to do more.

The most common barriers to doing more in the community were largely personal in nature and typically revolved around a lack of time and awareness:



“I would like to be more involved. I’m just not really sure how to get started and afraid of burning myself out since I am balancing so much.”

Another challenge that was mentioned repeatedly is difficulty breaking into the small, tight-knit community that exists in a mid-sized metro area like Cleveland, particularly in the form of a bias against the younger-age cohort within civic life:



“If looking for a city to relocate to, YPs should realize this is a do-your-time city, and many older professionals are myopic and reluctant to relinquish any power. They will relegate you to a junior board, with little to no input. This city will fall to the wayside if YPs keep being underutilized.”

So where does civic engagement start? Out of this group of involved YPs, almost half (48%) credited their employer as the initial source for their civic engagement, making the employer the most common catalyst for civic engagement. Family and friends came in second with 41%, and young professional groups ranked third most popular at 38%.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Despite the prominent role of the employer in getting young professionals more civically engaged, the reverse was also true, i.e., the employer was sometimes seen as a barrier to involvement:



“Want to do more, but limited by strict 8-5 job schedule and lack of opportunities outside of this timeframe.”

TIME:



The vast majority of the sample spent time volunteering in their community. **41% spend over 15 hours annually volunteering.**

TREASURE:



Half of the sample contributed more than \$50 annually in donations, with 16% contributing over \$500 in the past 12 months.

Young professionals in their own element.

When looking specifically at how this sample of young professional survey participants engages with local young professional organizations, only half of the 650 participants indicated they were involved with any type of young professional organization. These types of organizations were the most likely area of civic engagement in which young professionals were engaged at the highest level of leadership, i.e., as a board member (12%).

INVOLVEMENT WITH YP ORGANIZATIONS:

18%	Yes, with Engage! and others
12%	Yes, with Engage! only
21%	Yes, with others—not Engage!
50%	No

Talent: While involvement in the form of attending events or spending time volunteering for nonprofits was common, a larger leadership presence — in the form of board membership — was comparatively uncommon.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement has far-reaching benefits. About two-thirds of the sample indicated that their overall perception of the Greater Cleveland area is positively influenced by their civic engagement experiences.

The quote below sums up how one participant viewed the importance of his or her own civic engagement experience here in the Greater Cleveland area, taking the concept of engagement full-circle from professional to personal:



“I have always had a desire to volunteer and be engaged. Through my employer I had the opportunity to be active in the community both personally and professionally which afforded me leadership development and career advancement. Being involved has improved my job retention as well as my quality of life.”

Civic engagement’s ability to connect young professionals to their community and help them put down their own roots is another major benefit noted by many participants:



“Civic engagement has made my life much fuller in Greater Cleveland and kept me engaged to the city in a way I would not have expected. It has created friendships and connections I could not have otherwise cultivated and inspired me to work toward the professional goals I want to accomplish.”



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

I wish... Finally, participants were asked to share three wishes for young professionals in the Greater Cleveland area. With responses varying widely, the figure below illustrates the sometimes shared and sometimes divergent nature of the vision that young professionals have for themselves within their community. This word cloud captures the responses provided by participants to the three wishes question by distilling the text down into a visual representation of each word's frequency. The larger the physical size of the word, the more often it was used in their answers.





KEY TAKEAWAYS



Young professionals are passionate about Greater Cleveland and want to contribute.

This passion manifests itself in the form of both positive and negative statements about the community. They recognize the growth the region has experienced recently, but reflect with a critical eye on what else can be done to push the area forward. With few exceptions, even the challenges that young professionals see are not insurmountable. While young professionals don't always agree on the best route to get there, the destination – a stronger community – is the same. The good news is that, at least in our sample of young professionals, this passion is often expressed as civic engagement and a desire to contribute to the greater good.



Young professionals in our region decide where to live based on family and work.

From the outset, we see two major reasons why young professionals are choosing the Greater Cleveland area. They are grounded in the importance of “family” and will return to the area for this reason even after prolonged absences. However, young professionals are also ambitious about their work life and are looking for development-oriented career opportunities for the long term. Already having or being able to establish roots in the area will keep young professionals here, but if nothing about the employment situation and culture changes locally, the pull of the economic realities young professionals face may prove stronger in some cases.



Young professionals are extremely focused on improved public transportation.

Concerns over the need for improved public transportation came up in the survey repeatedly. Not only did young professionals see public transportation as a major challenge for the area, but they want to make it a primary area of focus for improvement in the immediate future as an attraction and retention tool for other young professionals.



Young professionals want jobs at progressive, culture-driven employers.

The importance of employment opportunities at progressive, culture-driven employers cannot be underestimated. Employers should take note that respondents reported challenges in finding jobs that fit their professional priorities. Young professionals see work/life balance as more than just a trendy cliché. They feel it should encompass the whole person – from flexibility in their personal life to a strong support system in their professional development.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



Young professionals are tech savvy, but also value relationships when job searching.

The methods used to conduct job searches in the Greater Cleveland area, both past and present, are largely relationship-based, further emphasizing the important role that friends and family play in the lives of young professionals in the area. While there is still clearly significant space for technology through platforms such as company websites, online job boards, and social media, these less personal methods are being used in combination with the more human side of job searching.



Young professionals want to give more time, talent, and treasure, but struggle to do so.

Many young professionals want to get more engaged with their communities, but struggle to find the time and in some cases, the outlets through which to contribute. There is a definite opportunity to further engage young professionals civically, but overcoming the barrier of “time” is particularly challenging. Additional engagement of these young professionals could dramatically increase the “time, talent, and treasure” numbers they are already bringing to their Greater Cleveland communities.



Young professionals feel their leadership talent is underutilized by the community.

There is a frustration and perception among young professionals that the “old guard” is not open to the younger generation taking on civic leadership roles. Regardless of whether this is true, we do see that across all areas of civic engagement, from “arts & culture” to “educational initiatives” and “religious groups” – and everything in between – young professionals board membership was typically quite low.



Young professionals place high value on civic engagement and making a difference.

Even the young professionals that are less civically involved recognize that if they were able to do more (whatever the barriers may be), they want to at least try to make a positive difference in the Greater Cleveland area. Those that are already civically engaged expressed deep feelings of connection and purpose both at the personal and regional levels.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to especially thank the 650 individuals who shared their thoughts and opinions as participants in Engage! Cleveland's inaugural State of the Young Professional Community Survey.

BOARD OFFICERS:

Neal Restivo, Chair
Oatey Co.

Joseph DiFranco, Treasurer
Cohen & Company, LTD.

Lauren Rudman, Vice Chair
Donley's Inc.

SueAnn Naso, Secretary
Staffing Solutions Enterprises



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Emily Adams USI Insurance Services	Steve Gleydura Cleveland Magazine	Amanda Mockbee Dollar Bank, FSB
Alexandria Johnson Boone GAP Communications Group	Dr. Elad Granot Ashland University	Gary Shamis Winding River Consulting
Michael Bowen Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP	Caroline Guscott Cleveland Museum of Art	Harjasminder Sidhu PNC
Mary-Scott Cebul Consultant	Gary Isakov BDO USA LLP.	Michelle Tomallo FIT Technologies
Dr. Robert Eckardt Retired, The Cleveland Foundation	Ira Kaplan Benesch Attorneys at Law	David Toth USA Expositions
Anna Gibson The Lincoln Electric Company	George Mateyo KeyBank	Ted Tywang Cleveland Browns
	Amy McGahan Dix & Eaton	

STAFF:

Ashley Basile Oeken, President
Katelyn Gainer, Marketing & Events Manager

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:

The Cleveland Foundation and the Jewish Federation of Cleveland
Engage! Cleveland Employer Members
Engage! Cleveland Leadership Council Members

PRESENTED BY:

Engage! Cleveland

RESEARCH BY:

ERC



State of the Young Professional Community

RESEARCH BY **ERC**