



JUNE 2026

Winning the Talent Wars

National Trends & Practical Strategies for Wichita

Introductions



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TOURISM

TALENT ATTRACTION

CITIES

REGIONS

STATES

COUNTRIES

The Leader in Marketing Places



65 YRS

Specializing in
marketing places



500 +

Unique places
and destinations



80 +

People with a
passion for places

NEW YORK

DENVER

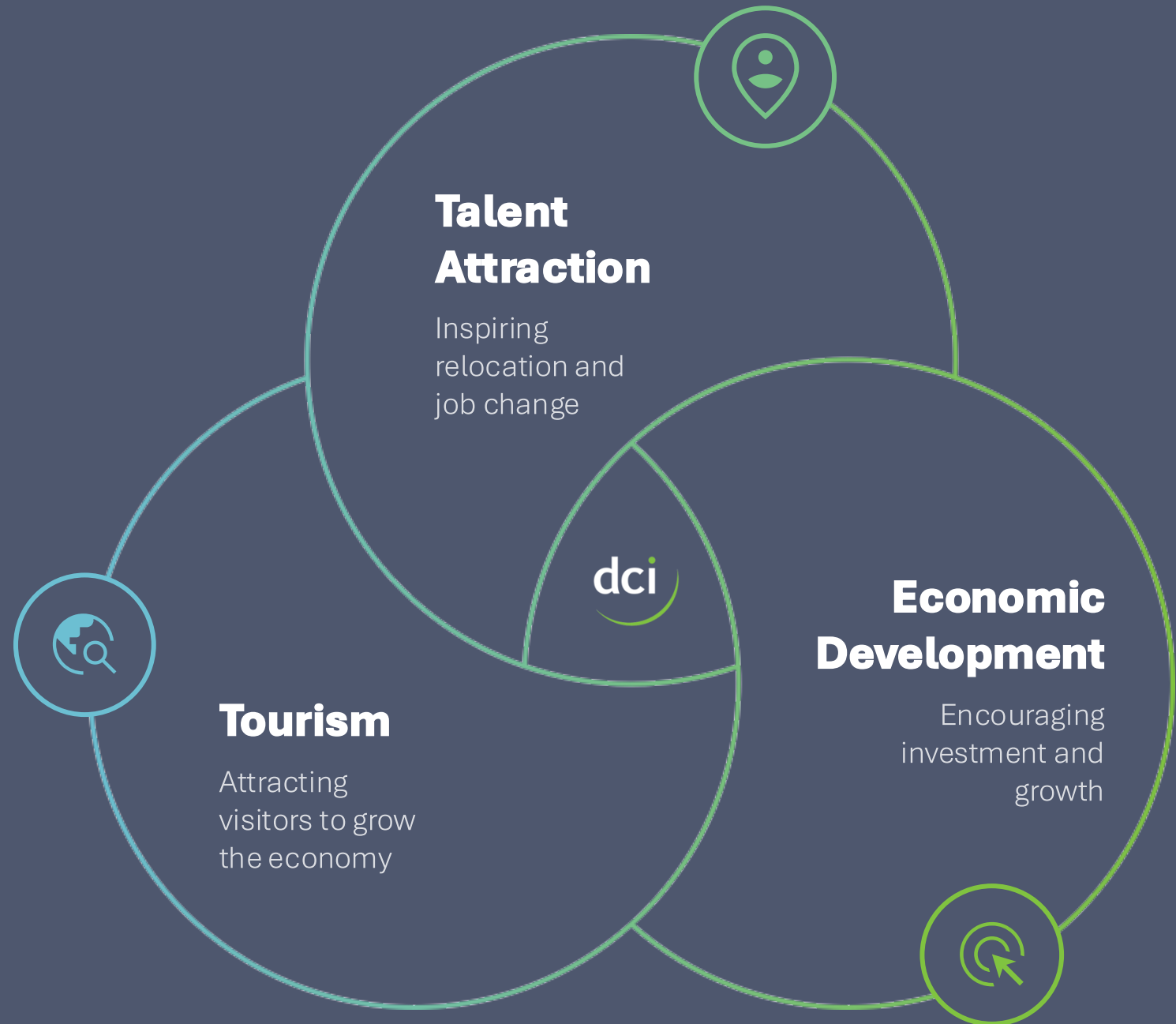
TORONTO

AMSTERDAM

LONDON

PARIS

Expertise



WHY TALENT ATTRACTION? WHY NOW?

Before the end of the decade,
the U.S. will see a shortfall of
roughly *6 million* workers.

LIGHTCAST, *THE RISING STORM*

WHAT ABOUT AI?

The industries facing the most severe labor shortages – *healthcare and hospitality* – have the lowest AI adoption rates.

LIGHTCAST, *FAULT LINES*



**Workforce
Development**

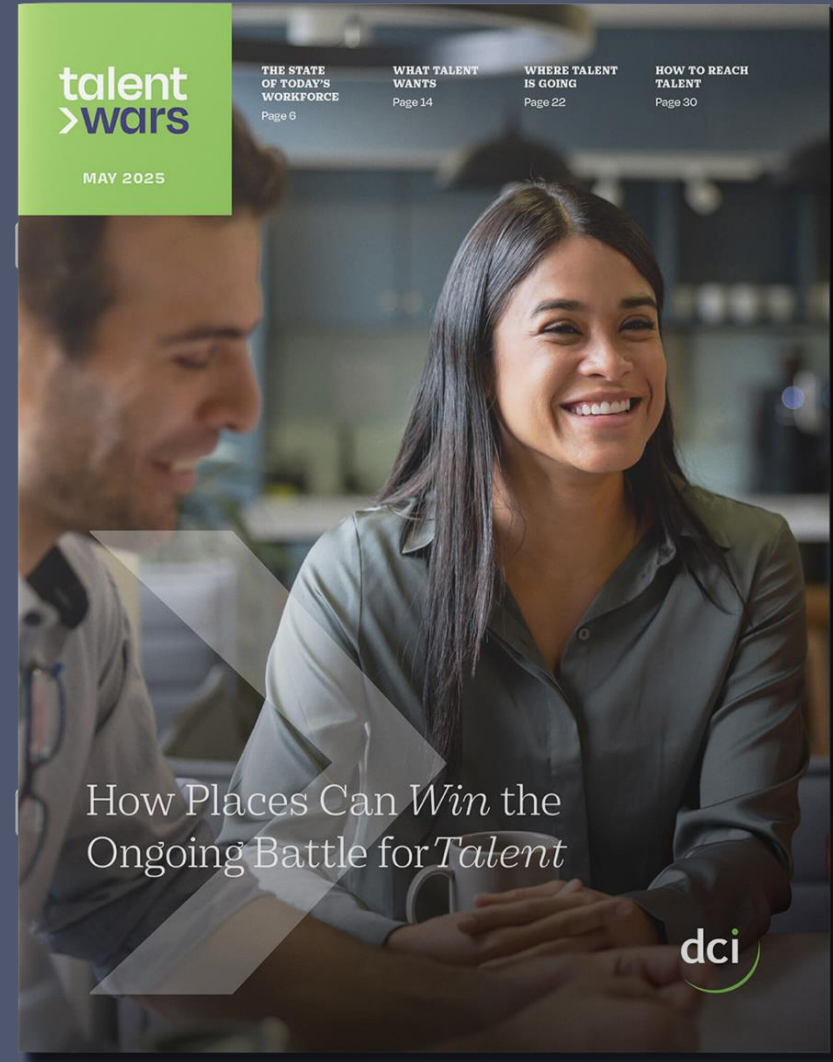


**Talent
Attraction**

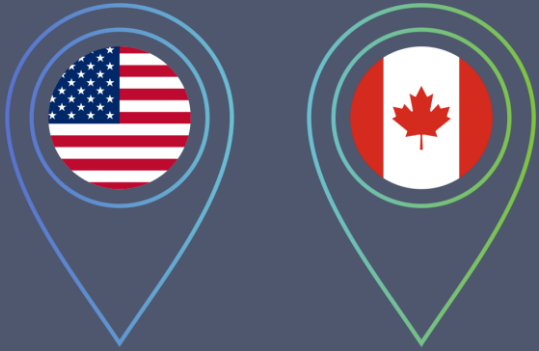
9 YEARS

of Talent Intelligence

2017-2025



Talent Wars 9th Edition



2,000+
Working-Age
Individuals

U.S. & Canada



Recent Relocators

Relocated 100 miles away
from previous residence in
past 3 years



Ages 21-65

Representative of all
industry sectors

What the Data Tells Us



1



**Financial Security Is
the New Quality of Life**

What **Motivates** Talent to Relocate?

1



To have a
better quality
of life

2



To be closer to
family

3



To lower my
cost of living



NEW

What Does **Quality of Life** Mean to Talent?



2

**Practical Factors >
Cool Factor**



Top **Lifestyle** Factors

How important were the following factors in your decision to relocate?
(1 = not important, 10 = very important)



3

A group of four business professionals (three women and one man) are seated around a wooden conference table in a modern office setting. They are engaged in a discussion, with one man pointing at a laptop screen. The background shows a blurred office interior with warm lighting.

Jobs Are Still the Deal Closers of Relocation

67%

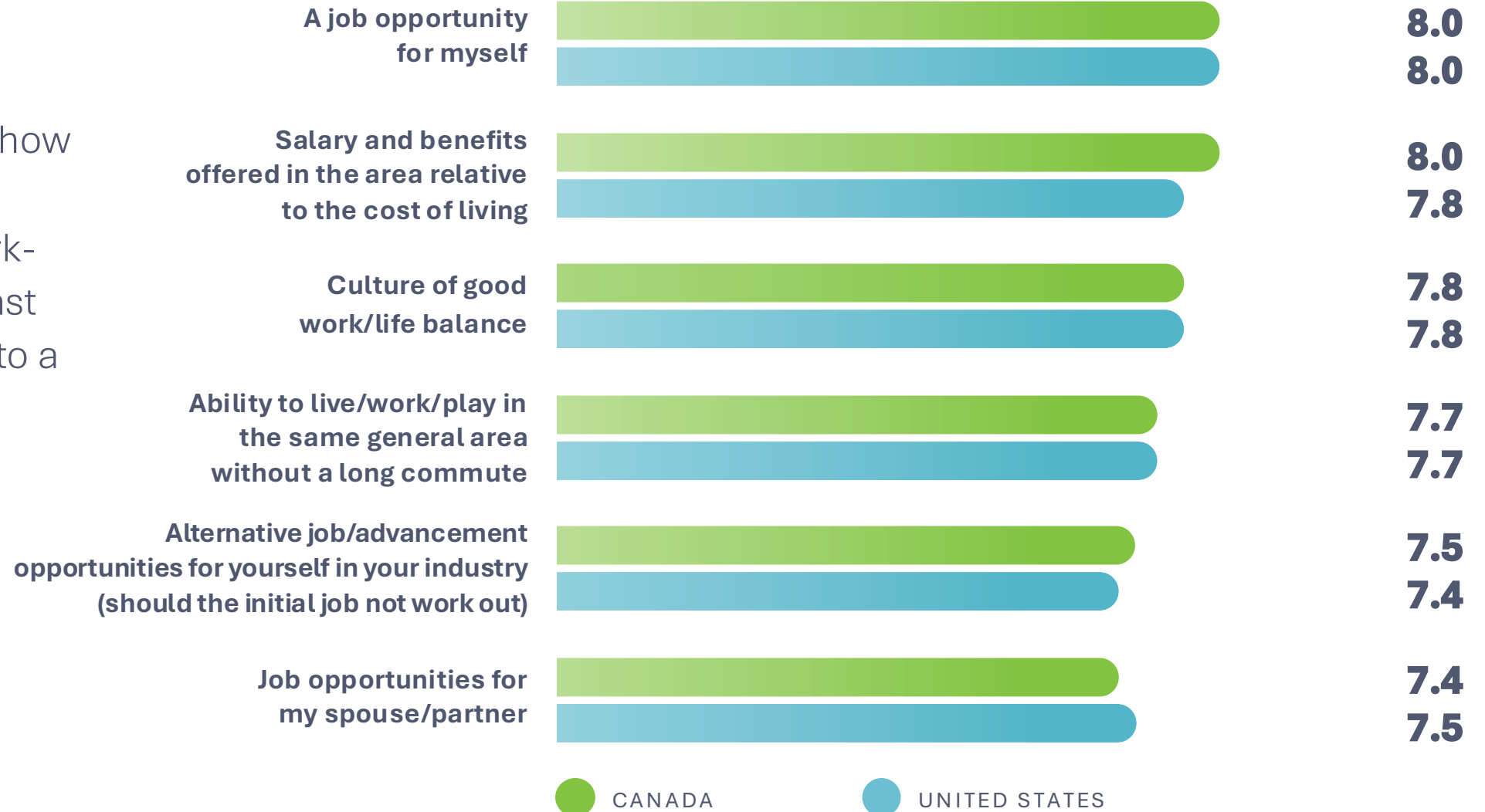
Will not relocate
without a job in place

Compared to 76% in 2024



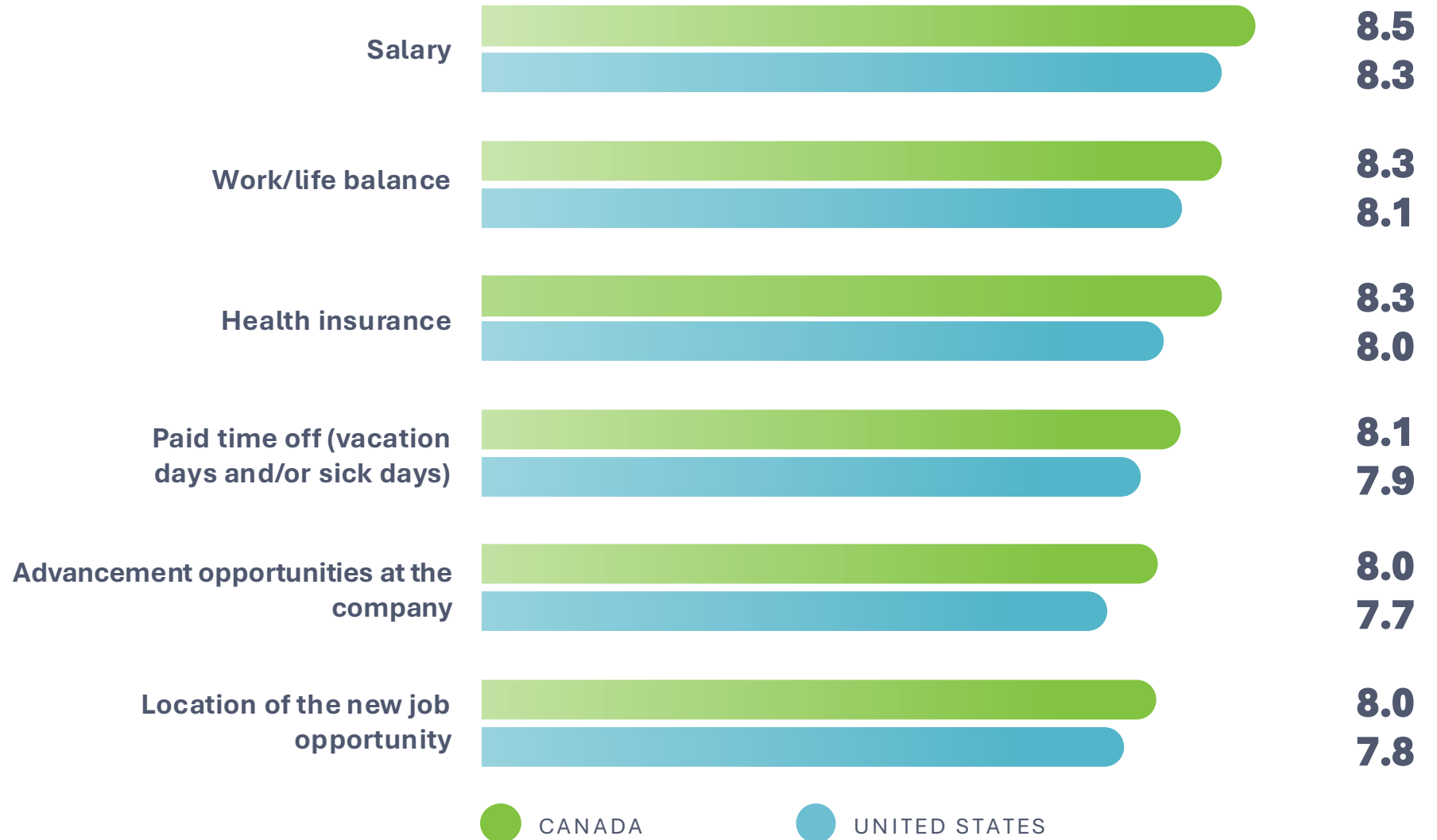
Most Important **Career Factors** for Relocation

On a scale from 1 (not important) to 10 (very important), how important were the following career/work-related factors the last time you relocated to a new area?



Most Important Job Factors

On a scale from 1 (not important) to 10 (very important), please rate each of the following factors when considering a new job opportunity



4

A photograph of three industrial workers in a factory. In the foreground, a man with a beard and a woman are looking at a tablet. They are wearing dark blue work shirts with reflective silver stripes. In the background, another worker is visible, wearing a yellow safety vest over a blue shirt. The setting is a modern industrial facility with large windows and machinery.

Talent Is Looking for “Career Insurance”

44%

Of workers' core skills will be *completely different* in 5 years.

LIGHTCAST, FAULT LINES

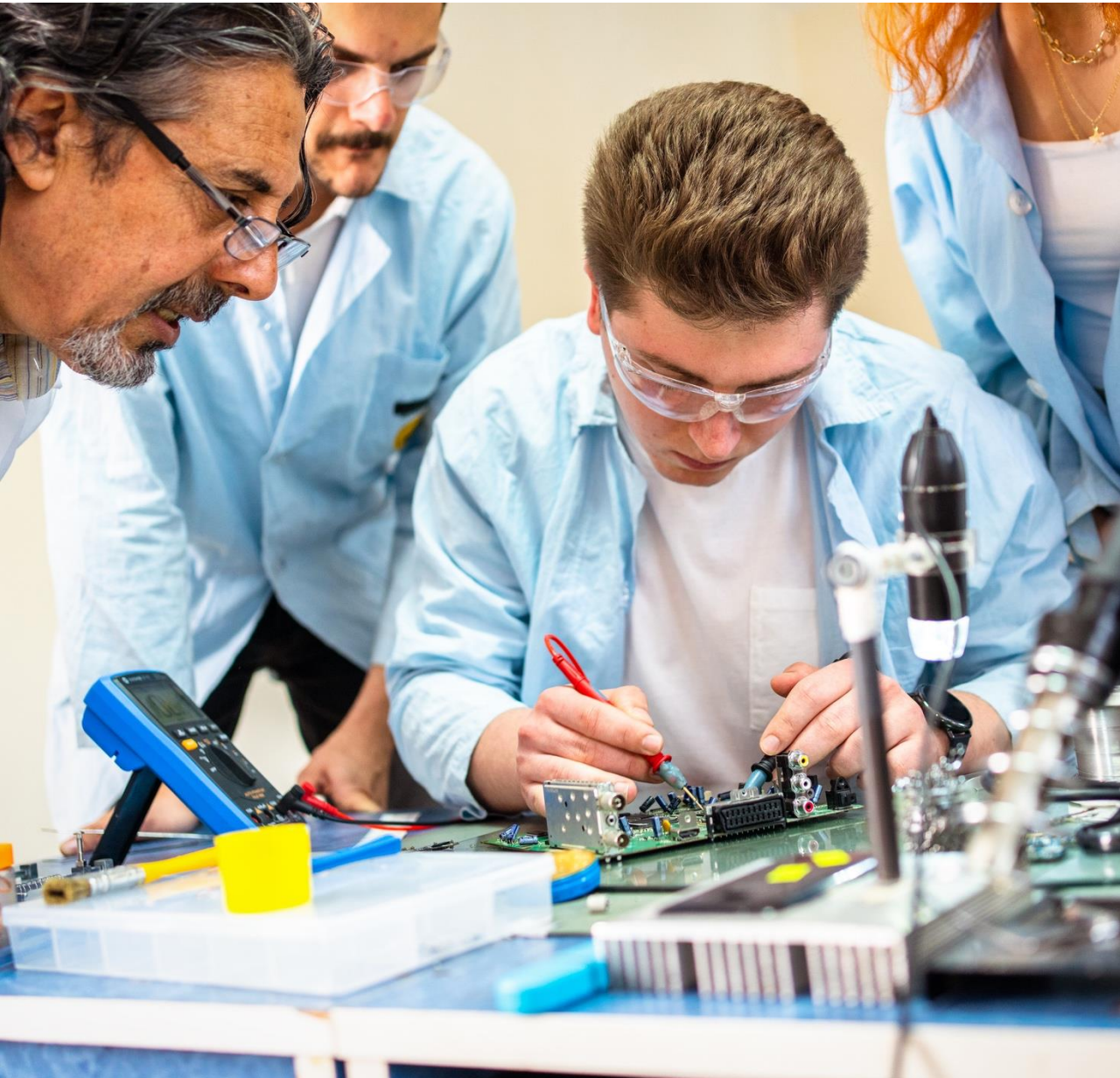
The Good News? **Talent Wants to Upskill**

88%

Would be willing to train
to shift their career path



The Bad News? **There's An Awareness Gap**

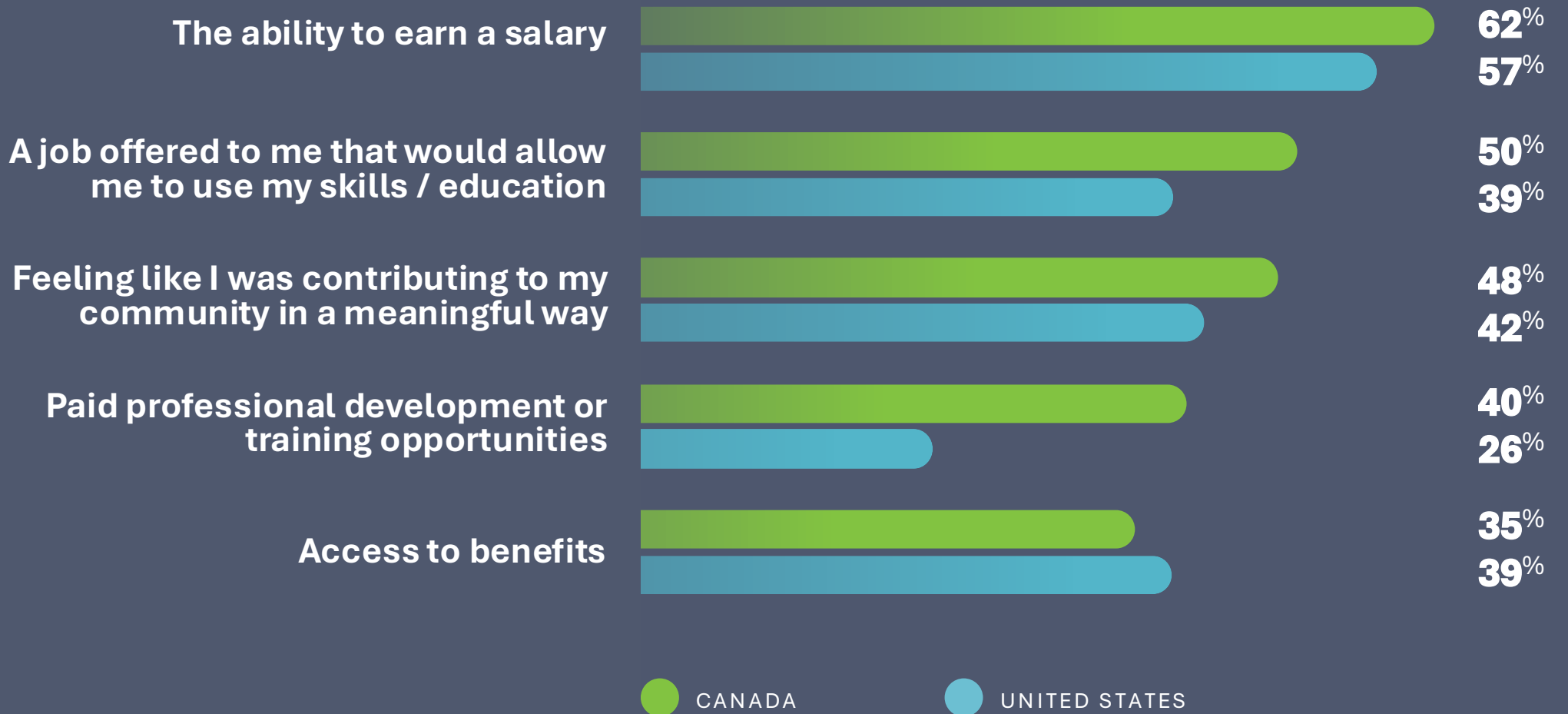


32%

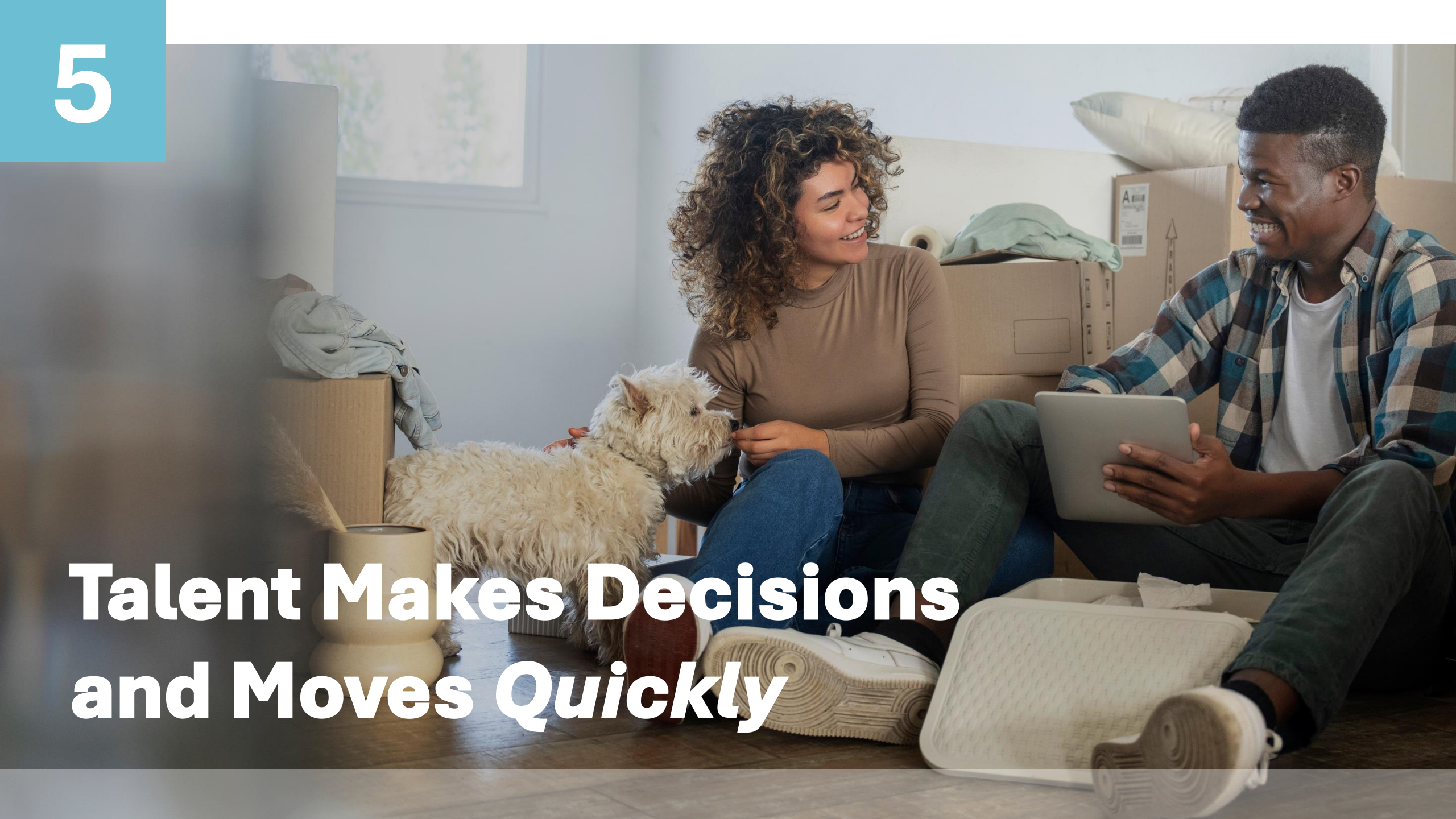
Of those willing to train
are not aware of training
opportunities

Labor Force Participation

What factors would most likely entice you to reenter the workforce?



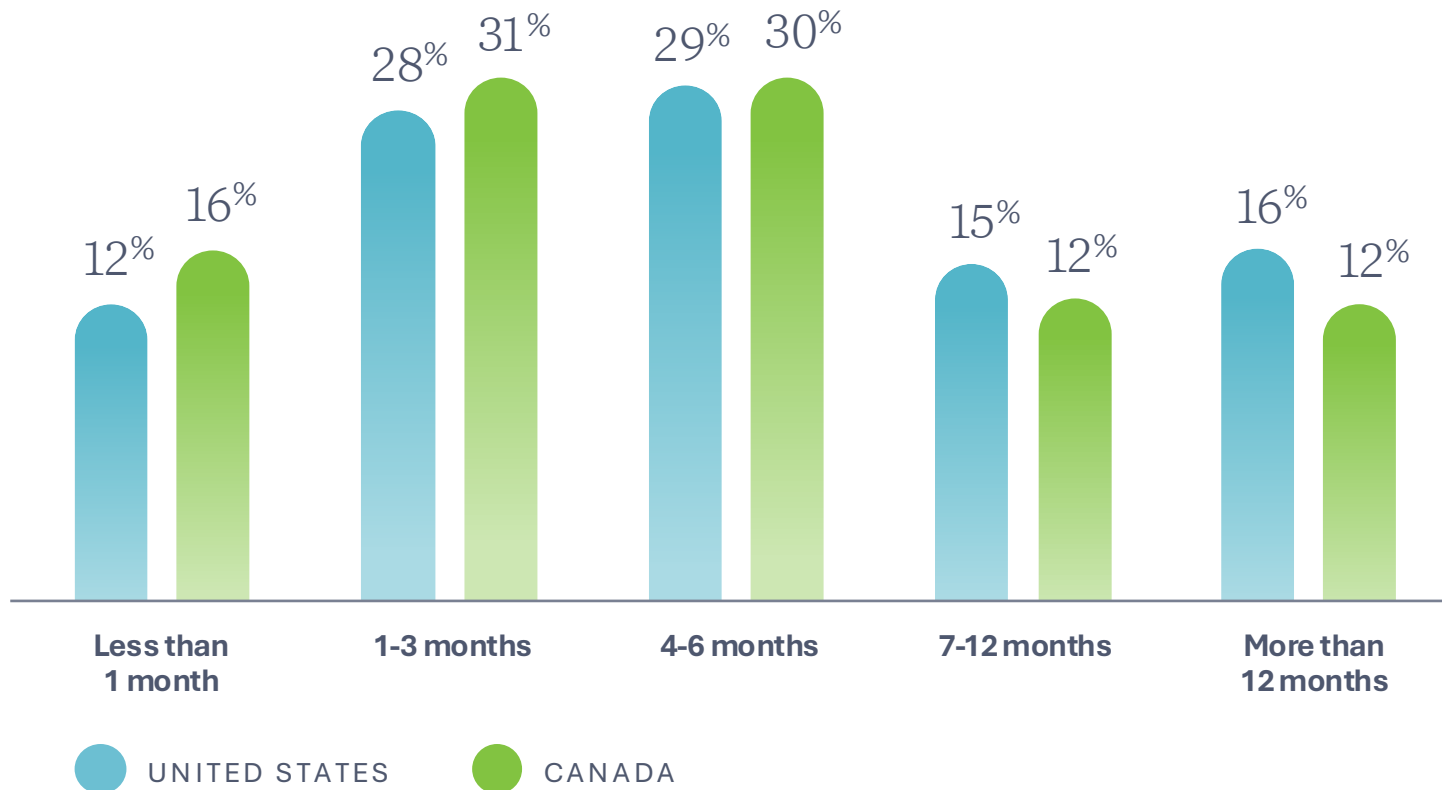
5

A young couple is sitting on the floor of a room filled with cardboard boxes, suggesting they are moving. The woman, with curly brown hair, is wearing a brown long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. The man, with short dark hair, is wearing a blue and white plaid shirt over a white t-shirt and green pants. They are both smiling and looking at each other. A small, fluffy white dog is sitting between them. The man is holding a tablet computer. In the background, there are several cardboard boxes, some with labels, and a white pillow. A white ceramic pot is visible on the floor to the left.

**Talent Makes Decisions
and Moves *Quickly***

Timeline for Relocation

Approximately how many months did it take from the time that you first considered relocation to when you actually relocated to a new location?



2/3

Move within
six months of
considering
relocation

Where is talent going?

Previous Area

CURRENT AREA		LARGE METRO*	SMALL METRO	SUBURBAN	RURAL
	LARGE METRO*	59%	22%	4%	7%
	SMALL METRO*	15%	33%	8%	9%
	SUBURBAN	15%	25%	76%	33%
	RURAL	10%	20%	13%	50%

*1M RESIDENTS OR MORE | + FEWER THAN 1M RESIDENTS

U.S.A. Regional Migration

Previous Region

CURRENT REGION		MIDWEST	NORTHEAST	SOUTH	SOUTHWEST	WEST
	MIDWEST	75%	8%	8%	10%	8%
	NORTHEAST	5%	64%	5%	1%	4%
	SOUTH	9%	16%	73%	9%	6%
	SOUTHWEST	6%	2%	5%	66%	8%
	WEST	3%	5%	5%	9%	66%

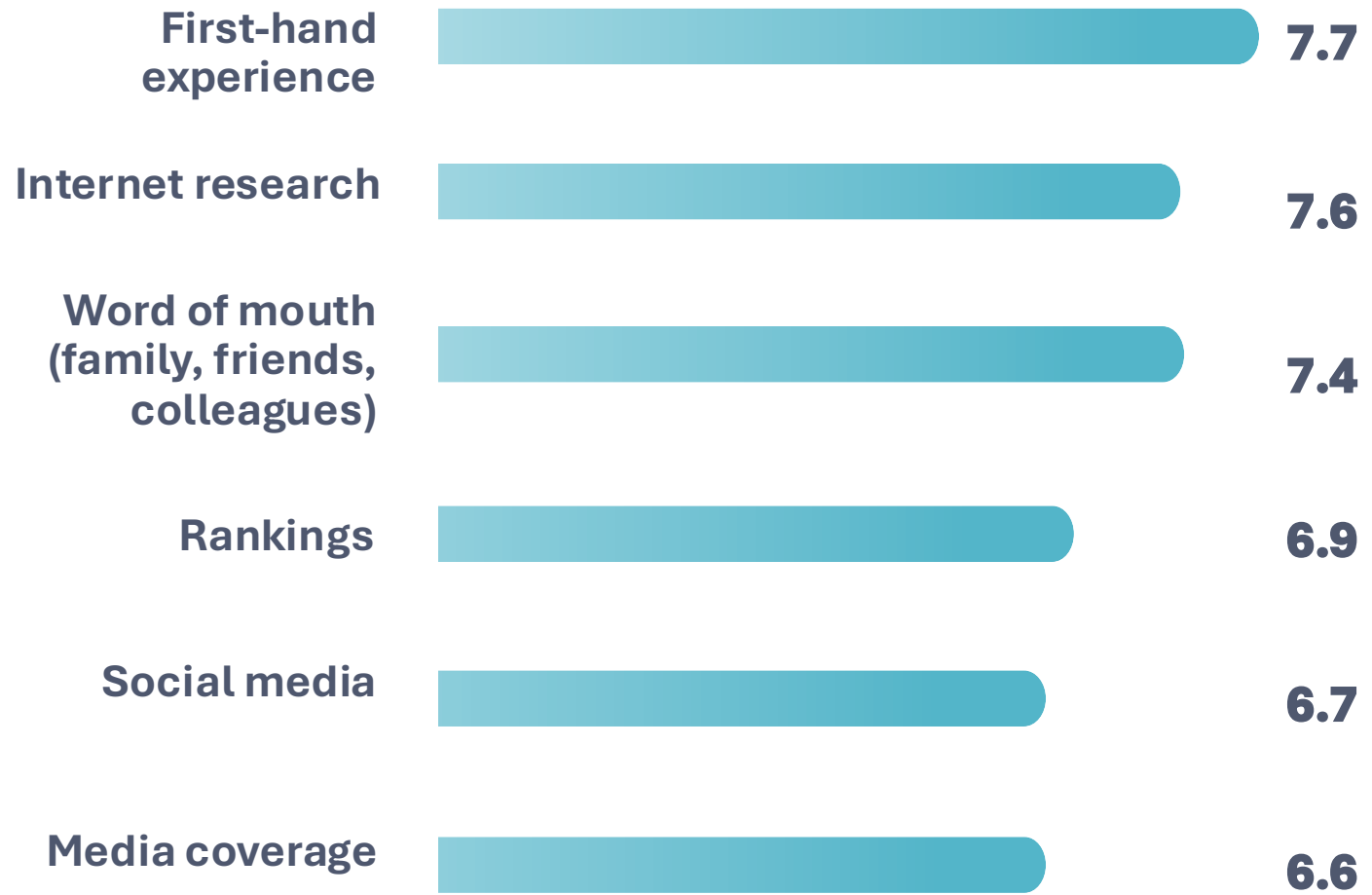
A photograph of three people outdoors. On the left, a woman with grey hair tied back is leaning on a dark metal railing, looking towards the other two. In the center, a man with a beard and a plaid shirt over a white t-shirt is smiling and gesturing with his hand. On the right, a woman with dark hair wearing a denim jacket over a light blue shirt is also smiling. They are standing in front of a blurred background of trees and a house.

Relocation is Increasingly a *Digital-First* Journey.

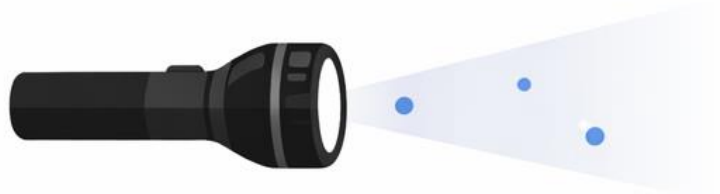
Top **Sources** Influencing Perceptions of Places to Relocate

How influential are each of the following sources of information on your perceptions of an area as a place to live and the quality of life in an area?

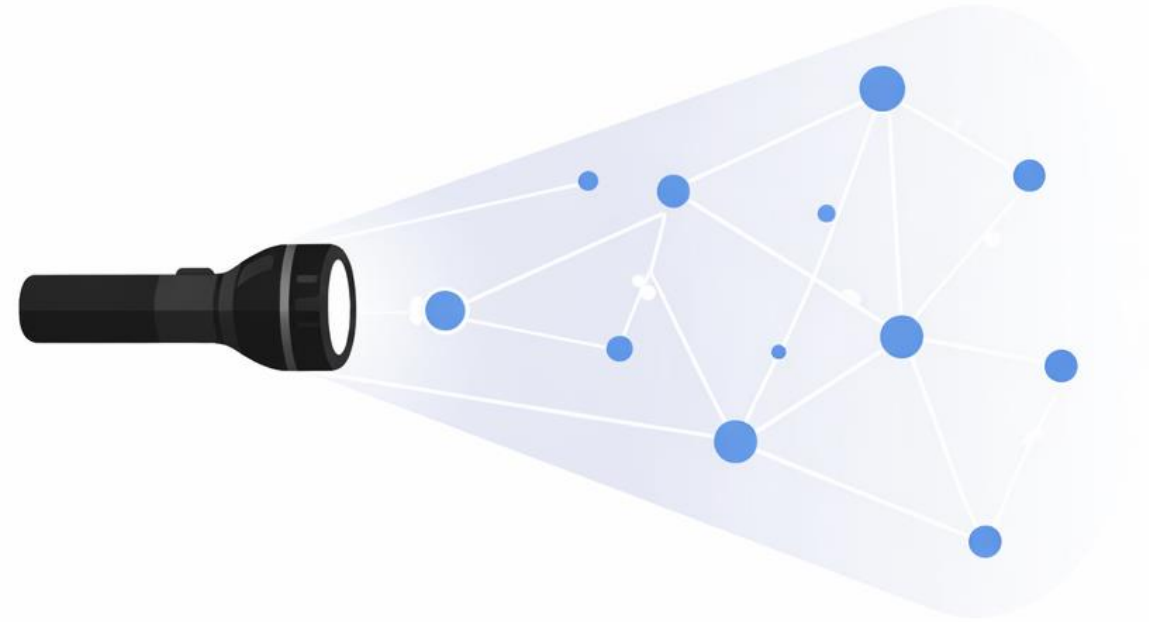
(1 = not influential,
10 = extremely influential)



Search Behavior In the Age of AI



Traditional SEO



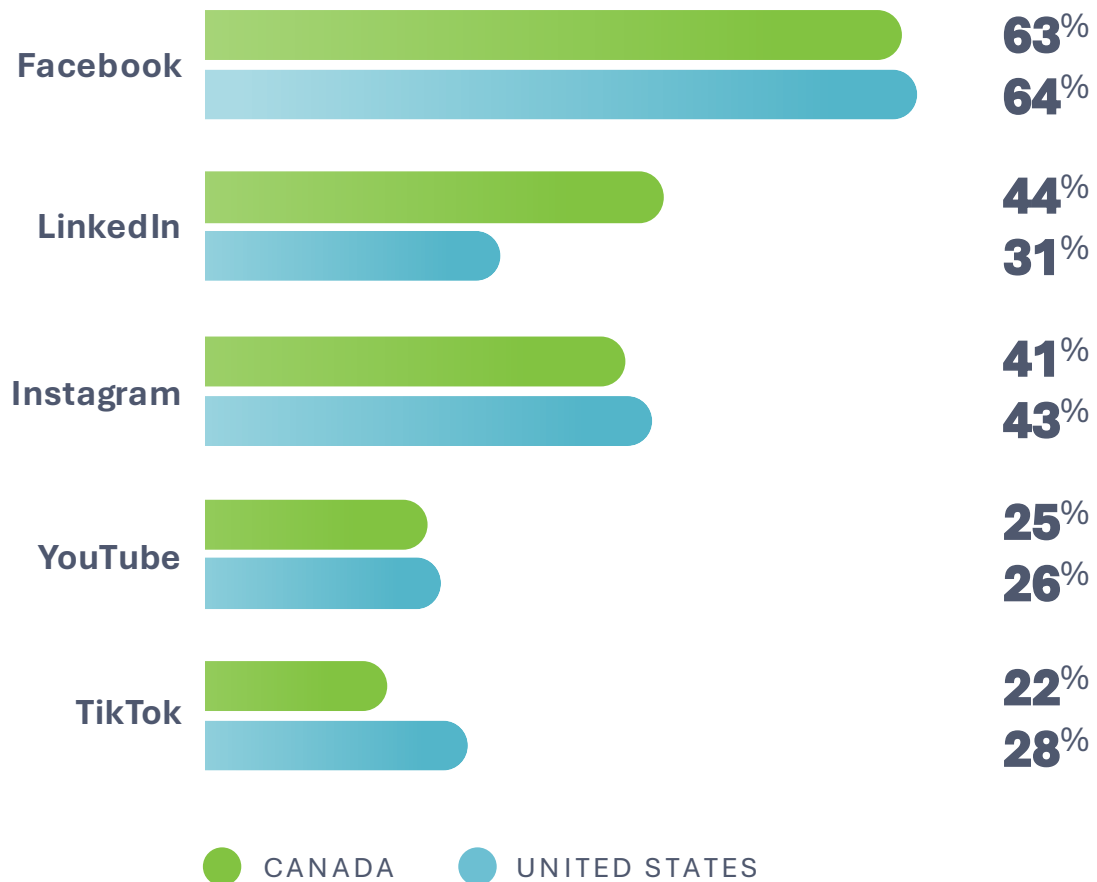
Modern SEO + GEO



Top Social Platforms

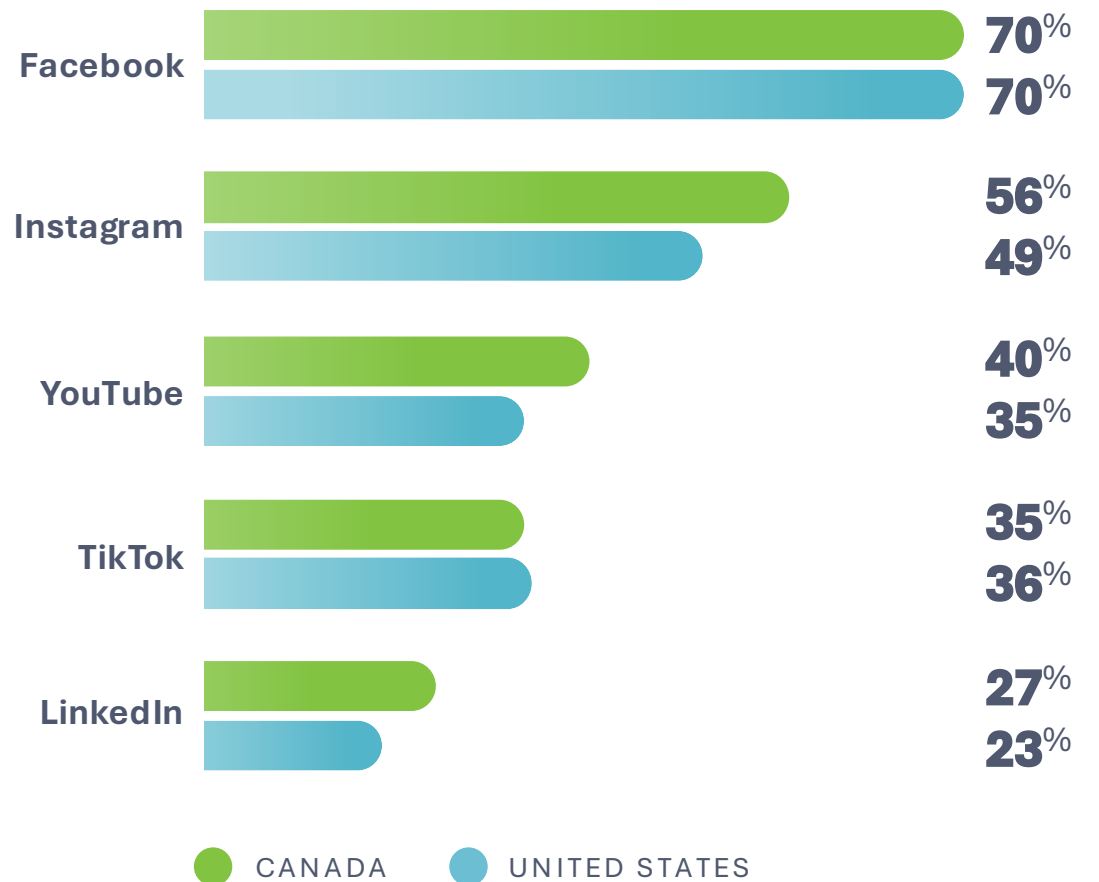
Jobs & Places to Work

What social media sources do you most frequently refer to for information on employment opportunities and places to work?



Places to Live

Which of the following social media channels most influences your perception of communities as a place to live?



7

Marketing *Matters*



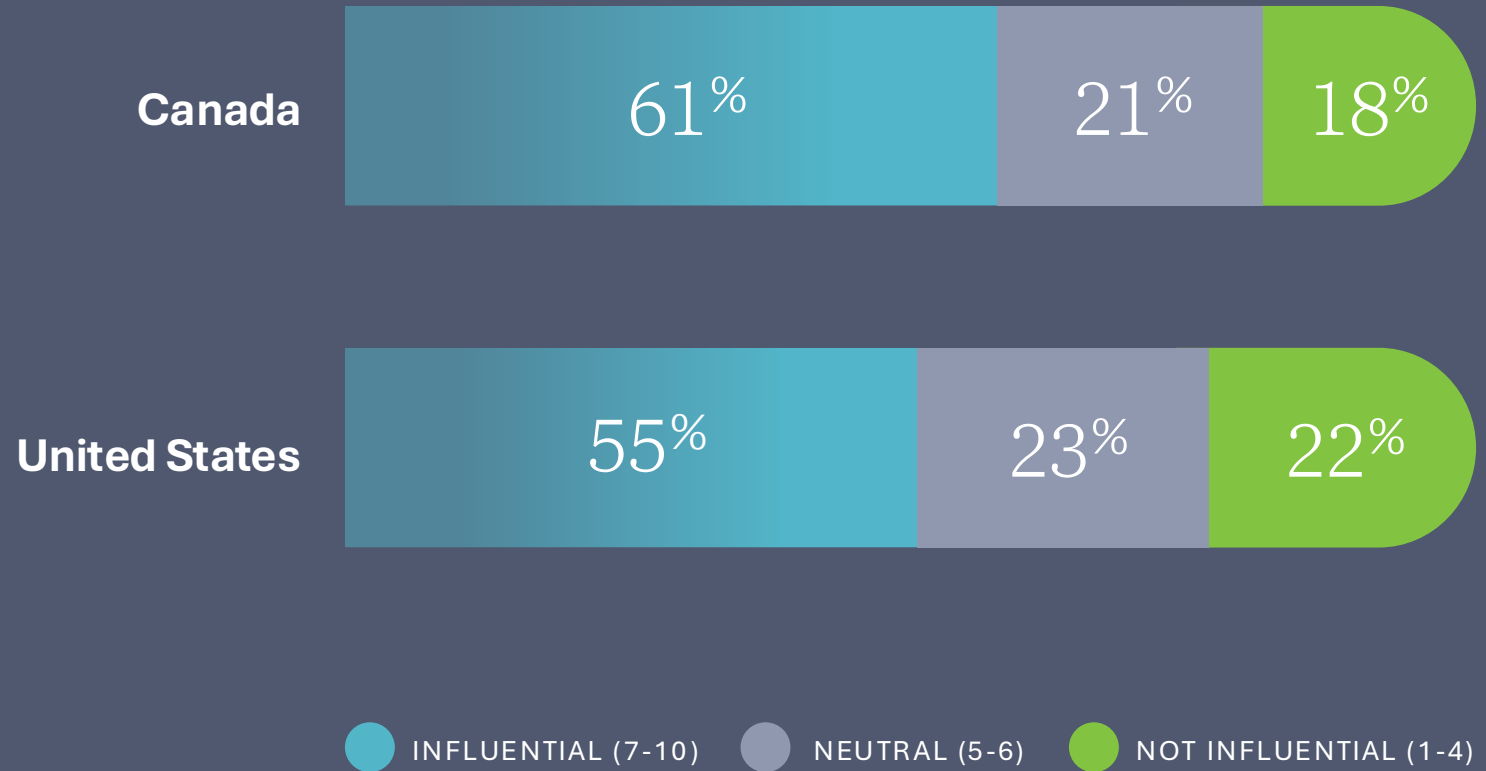
Awareness and Impact of **Talent Attraction Marketing**

More Than Half

Of U.S. and Canadian talent report seeing talent attraction advertising/marketing

The Majority

report it was influential

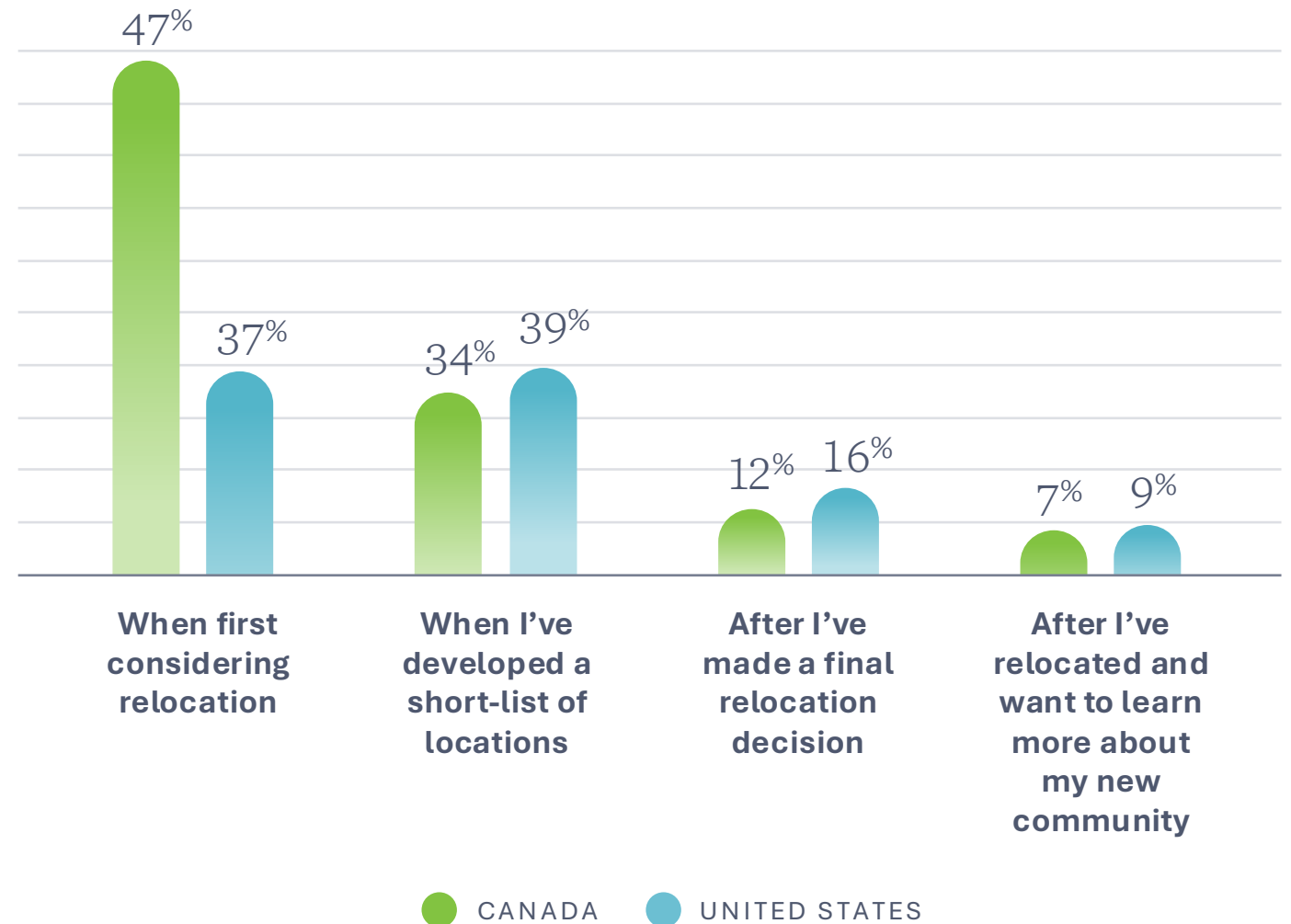


On a scale from 1 (not influential at all) to 10 (very influential), how much did advertising/marketing impact your perception of the area as a place to live and work?

76%

Consulted relocation
marketing materials
during their last
relocation process

At what point in your relocation decision-making process did you look for/consult marketing materials/other information on different locations?



Most Wanted Relocation Content

What specific information would you need from a city to seriously consider it as a relocation option?



1) Crime & Safety



2) Cost of Living



3) Job Opportunities



4) Housing Availability



5) Local Amenities &
Infrastructure

Let's Talk Wichita



Talent Attraction Scorecard: Where Does **Wichita** Stand?

Wichita MSA

#130

Out of 196 Large MSAs

High-Earning Job Growth	#71
Overall Job Growth	#101
Prime-Age Pop. Growth	#137
Attraction of Earners	#151
College-Educated Pop.	#184

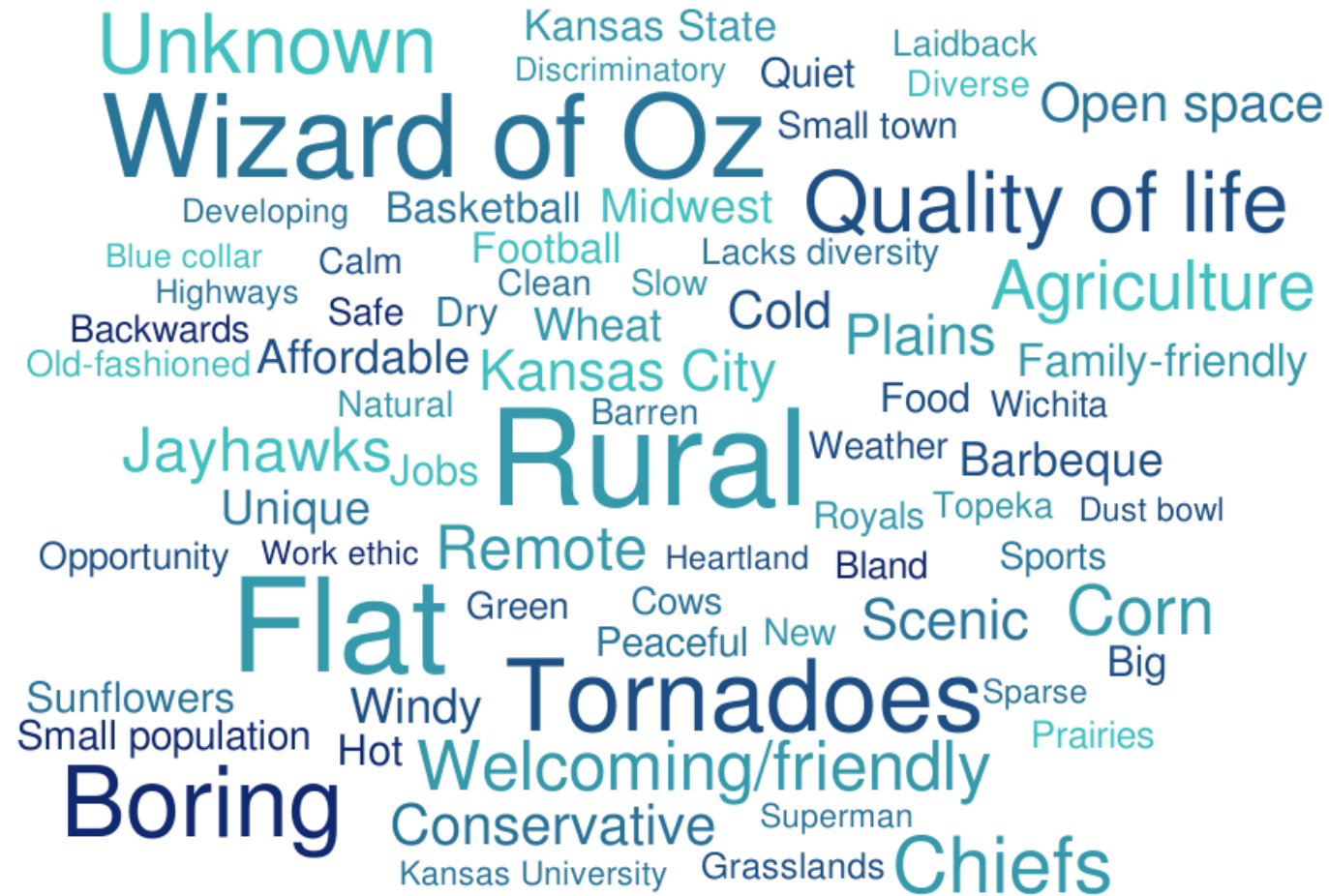
Kansas

#37

Out of 50 States + D.C.

Blue-Collar Job Growth	#20
Prime-Age Pop. Growth	#23
Attraction of Earners	#26
Overall Job Growth	#34
College-Educated Pop.	#51

External Perceptions of **Kansas**



Wichita **Has What It Takes**

The question isn't whether Wichita has a story. *It's whether the region tells it — proactively, consistently, and loudly enough to compete.*

01

**Affordability
You Can't Find
Coast-to-Coast**

02

**Growing
Industries + Job
Opportunities**

03

**Central
Location + Easy
Commutes**

04

**Outsized Arts,
Culture +
Entertainment
Scene**

05

**Family Friendly
Lifestyle +
Communities**

WICHITA'S READY-MADE AUDIENCES:

Boomerangs &
Regional Alumni

Job-Seekers in Aviation, Cyber, etc.

Young Families

Quality-of-Life Chasers from High-Cost Cities

Everyone in this room has a role.

Talent attraction and retention is a team sport!



5 Action Items

1. Tell your personal “why Wichita” story
2. Champion regional wins publicly – IRL and online
3. Show how you can address talent’s pain points
4. Continue to invest in digital-first resources
5. Be the welcome wagon for newcomers

Listen to the **Podcast** and
Read the **Full Report**





Thank You