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Examining causes and outcomes of migration patterns out of Southeast Michigan

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REPORT: Examining causes and outcomes of migration patterns out of Southeast Michigan

February \ 2024

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1) Wayne State University, Department of Urban Studies and Planning; 2) U-Haul International, Inc.

Cover image courtesy of the subject, Paul Jones III, 2023

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Executive Summary

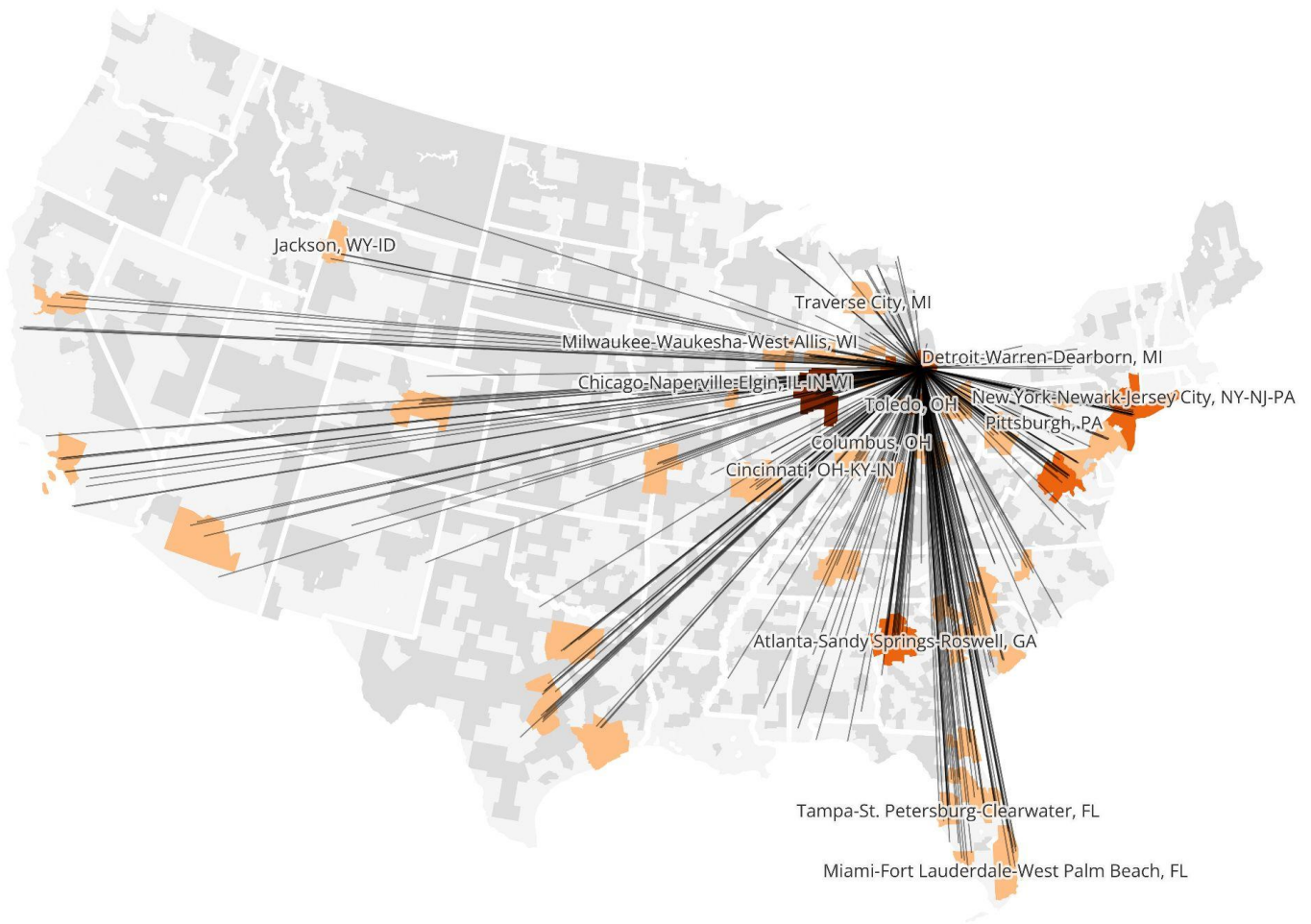
¹. U-Haul Growth Index 2023 is calculated based on 2.5 million one-way equipment rental transitions.

In the latest U-Haul Growth Index¹, the state of Michigan moved from ranking 48 out of 50 states up to 46. This represents a relatively small change that doesn't relate to the documented population loss in the state.

The city of Detroit and Michigan are both at critical crossroads. Population declines are pushing local officials to come up with new and unique programs to attract new residents, new business investment, and new tax revenue.

The reasons that people leave a location can be many, but it is often a confluence of factors that include better opportunities and better amenities. Michigan is lagging in both categories with median wages stagnant and limited transportation options beyond a personal vehicle.

SEM U-Haul Survey Participants Relocation by CBSA



SOURCE: Survey data, 2018-2023 (Map by Alex B. Hill)

#1

Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL

#2

Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA

#3

New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA

U-Haul in Southeast Michigan (SEM)

Southeast Michigan (SEM) is defined by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) as a region made up of seven counties, including: Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne.

These seven counties make up the largest metropolitan region by population size and economic activity in the State of Michigan.

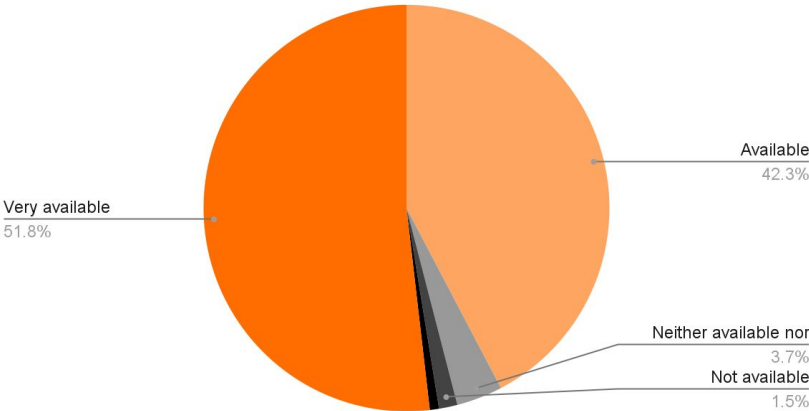
There are 150 U-Haul rental locations located in SEM, the greatest number are in Wayne (38) and Oakland (37) counties. In an analysis of clustering of U-Haul locations, the results showed a high degree of clustering within SEM (NNI=0.55, z-score=-10.3).²

Survey participants rated the importance of U-Haul highly as it relates to improving the mobility of American families with 94% of participants ranking U-Haul “very important” or “important.”

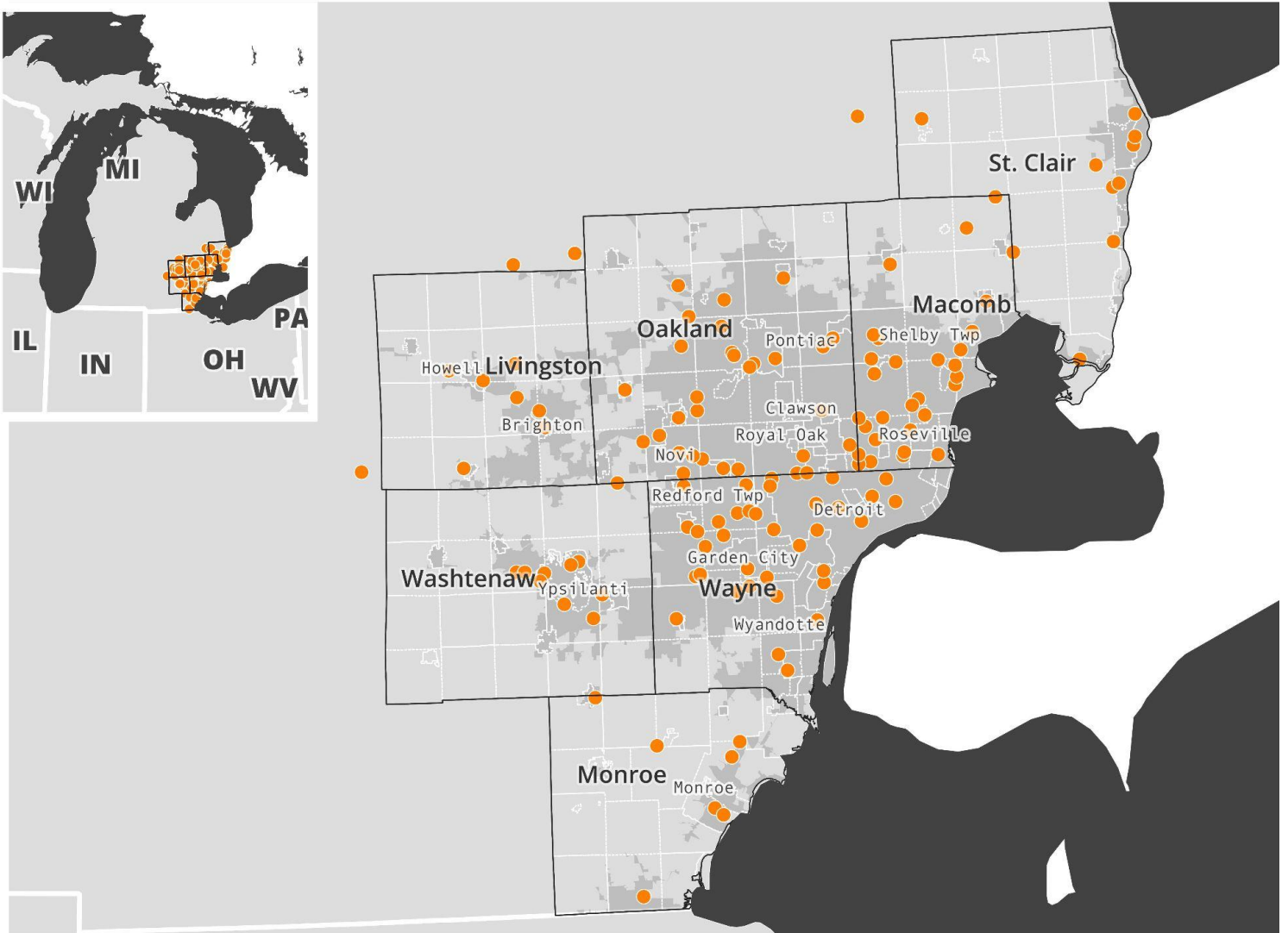
Over 51% of participant responses indicated that U-Haul facilities are “very available” within the SEM region. Relatedly, 95% of participants noted using a personal vehicle to get to a U-Haul facility.

². A nearest neighbor Index (NNI) closer to 0 means more clustering as does a negative z-score

How would you rank the availability of U-Haul truck rental facilities in SEM?



Southeast Michigan U-Haul Locations



SOURCE: Google Places, 2023 (Map by Alex B. Hill)

Participant Sample and Demographics

3. Surveys were conducted from 2020 to 2023, but participants may have moved out of SEM as early as 2011.

Survey participants were recruited through a mass email outreach based on contact information provided by U-Haul of Michigan.

Participants were provided a unique link by the Wayne State University (WSU) Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP) to the Qualtrics survey software along with a research disclaimer.

All survey participants had to have lived in the SEM region and utilized U-Haul to move out of the SEM region.³

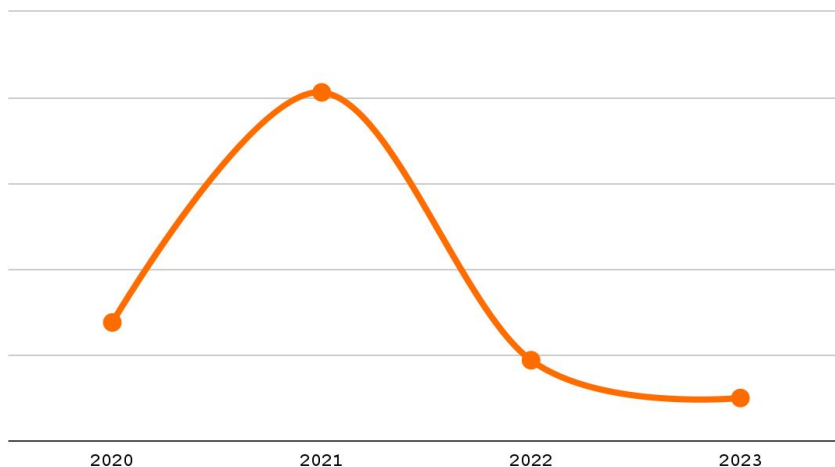
Participants were asked a series of questions regarding:

- Basic demographics: age, sex, race, education, income
- Where they relocated to after leaving SEM
- Reasons for leaving SEM
- Industry of work before and after relocating

Follow-up or re-surveying occurred with a subset of the participants to clarify location information or to correct incomplete information.

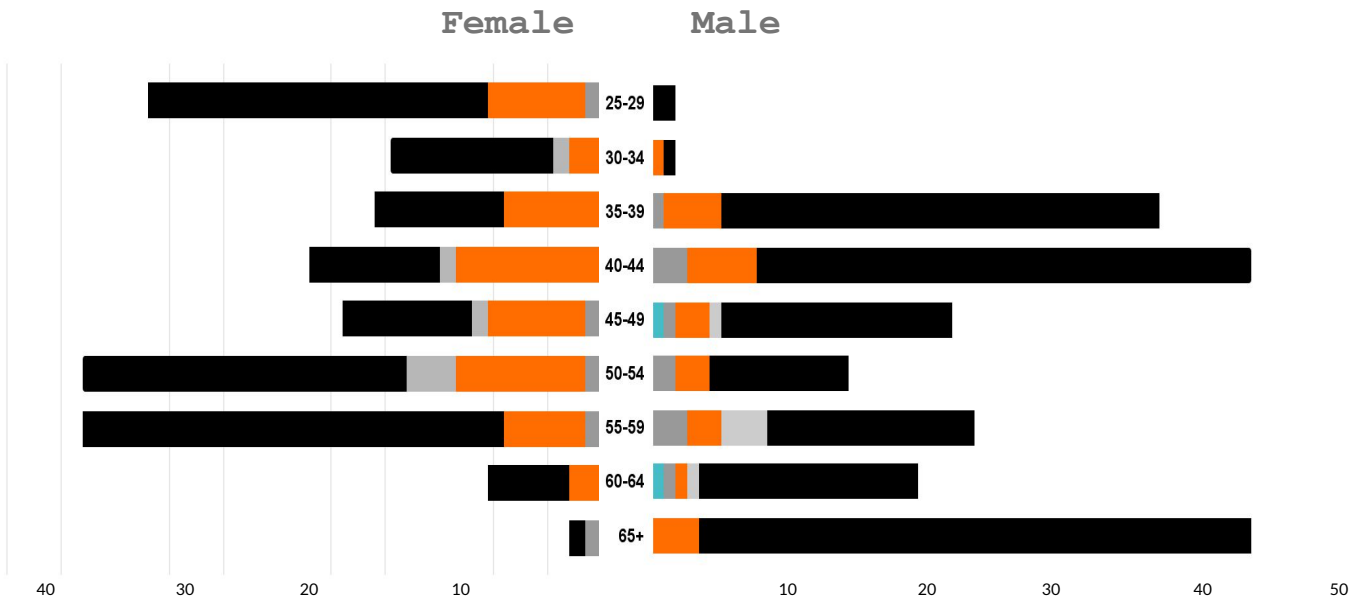
Just 34 participants (7.5%) out of 450 reported that they returned to SEM after leaving.

Survey responses by year





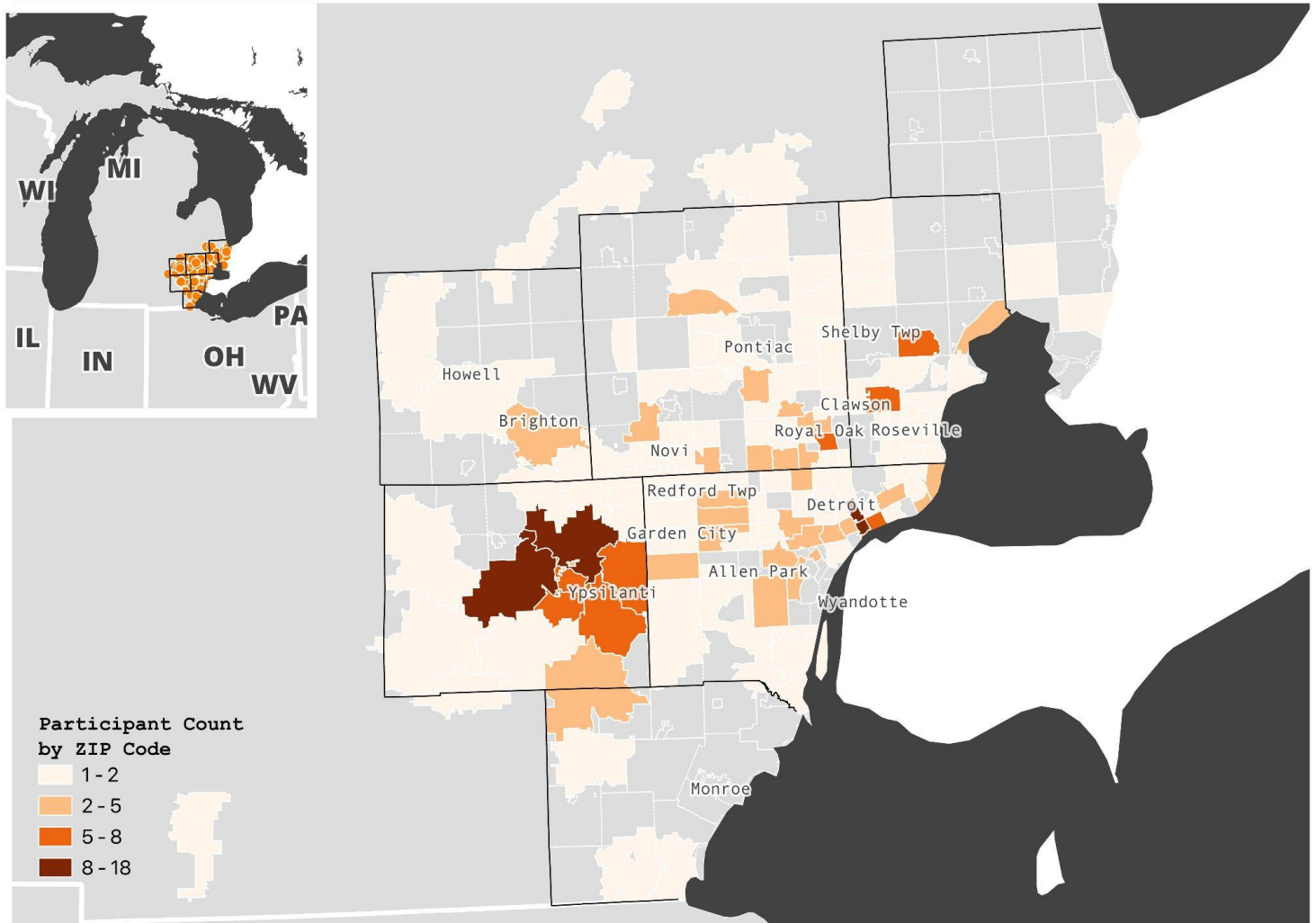
The participant sample disproportionately represented white males which reflects the population of the SEM region, but may also point to broader trends in economic mobility and access to opportunity in and out of SEM.



Notably, no one currently in the 18-24 year old age category participated in the survey when many governmental efforts in Michigan are focused on retaining “young people.”

White males made up 44% of the survey sample and White females made up 22%. BIPOC male and female combined representation made up just 14% of the sample.

Southeast Michigan U-Haul Survey Participants



SOURCE: Survey participants (Map by Alex B. Hill)

Participants came from ZIP Codes in every county of the SEM region. The highest numbers of responses came from the Midtown and Downtown areas within the City of Detroit, where Wayne

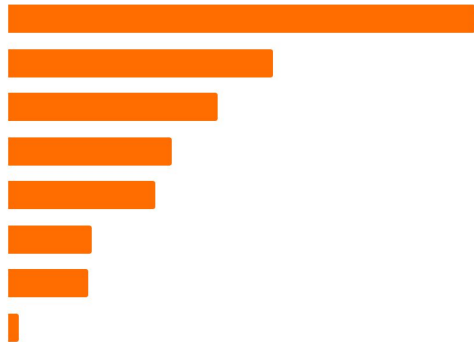
State University (WSU) is located as well as areas of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, where the University of Michigan (UM) and Eastern Michigan University (EMU) are respectively located.

Highest Education

Level of

Participants

	Count	Percent
Bachelors	134	33%
Masters	76	19%
Some college, no degree	60	15%
Professional	47	11%
Associates	42	10%
HS diploma	24	06%
Doctoral	23	06%
Less than HS	3	01%

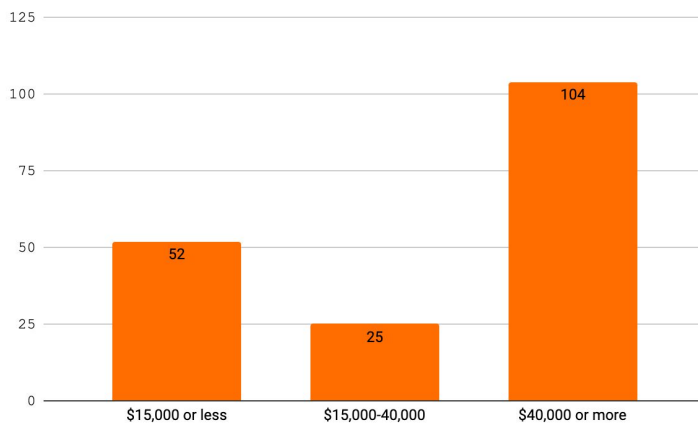


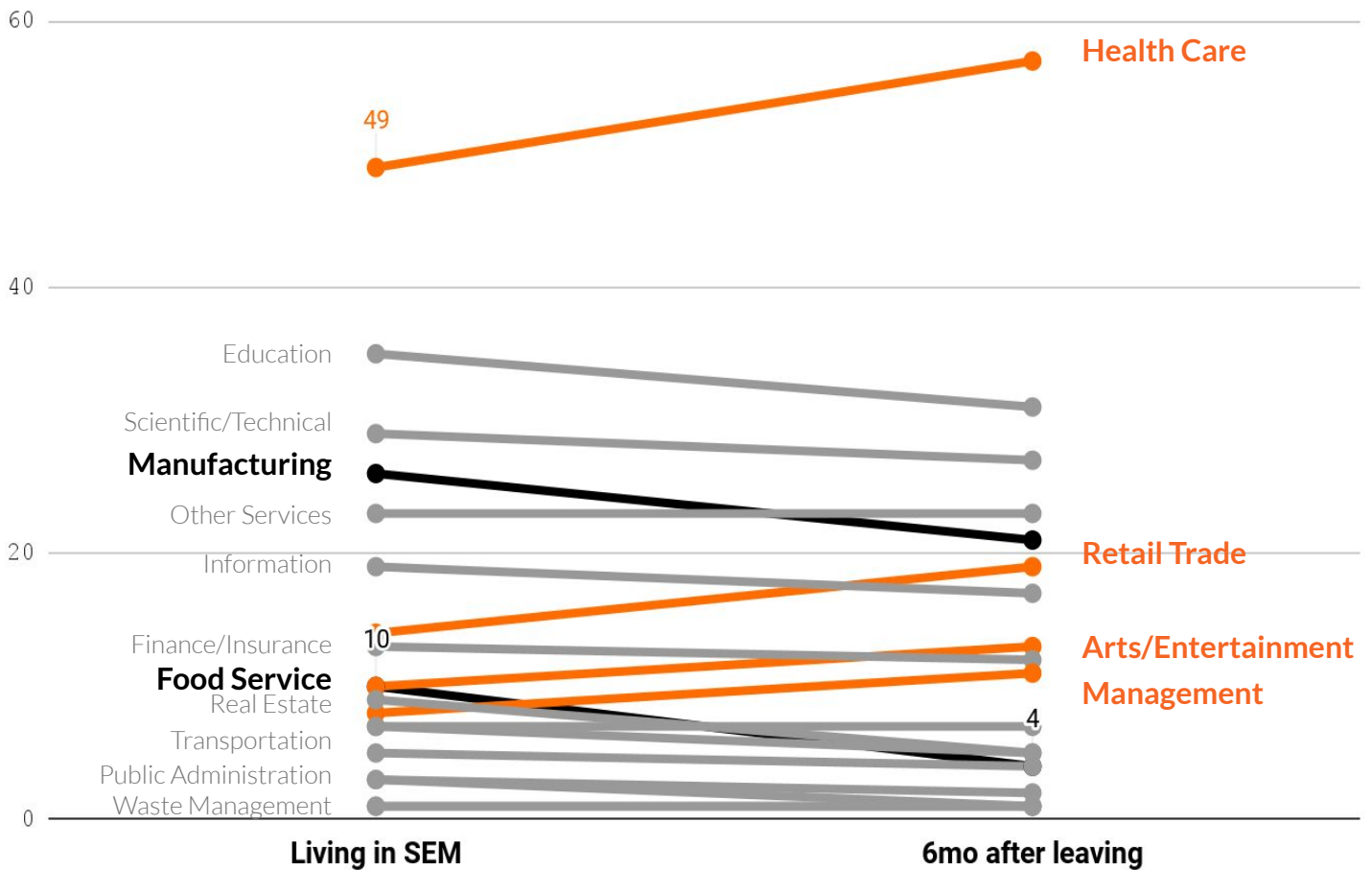
Many survey participants had a bachelors degree (33%) with just over 50% holding a bachelors or a masters degree as their highest education level. The third most common was participants who had gone to college, but had not completed a degree program. A small percentage of participants had professional or doctoral degrees.

When it came to income levels, many participants' households were earning above a "living wage" salary of \$40,000 or more. In that category earning over \$40,000, 73% of participant households were earning over \$100,000.

The income levels are likely skewed by the age distribution of survey participants where most of the participants could be assumed to be mid-career and not earning a less than \$40,000 annual salary.

Notably, the next largest category of participants who relocated were earning minimum wage.





Only a handful of industry categories had notable changes among participants. Health Care and Social Assistance saw the biggest increase with 8 participants relocating in that industry category. Retail Trade, Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, as well as Management of Companies and Enterprises all had gains

after participants relocated outside of SEM. The two notable industry sectors with declines in SEM among survey participants were Accommodation and Food Service with the greatest loss along with Manufacturing. The former was likely temporary work for many students working near universities.

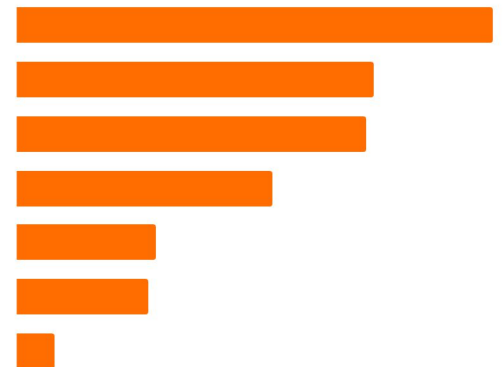
Why Participants Utilized U-Haul to Leave SEM

Participants who left SEM had a range of reasons, but for most participants family circumstances led them to relocate. The next most prevalent reasons highlight some of the SEM region's shortcomings. Both employed

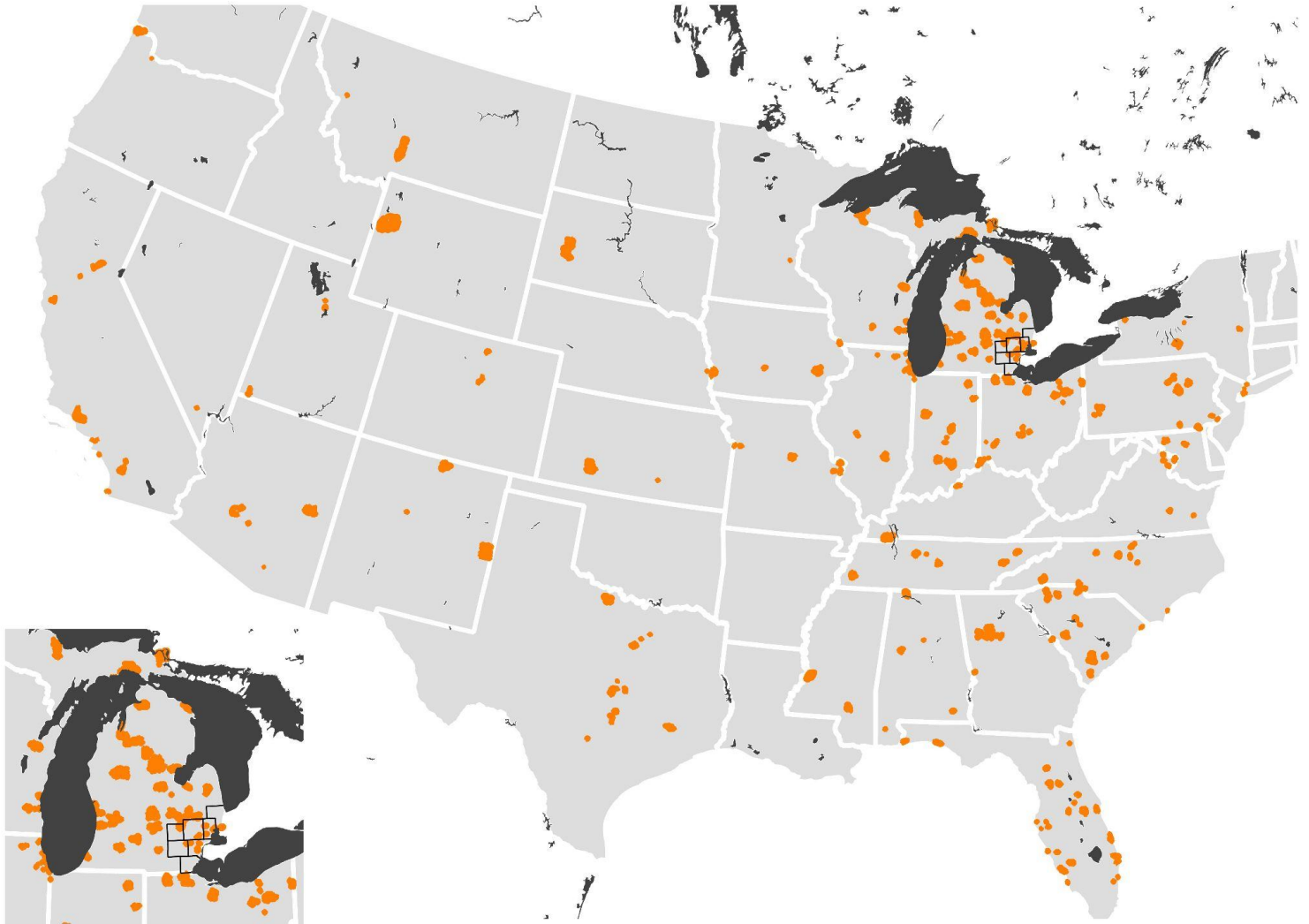
and unemployed participants felt they could find better opportunities outside of the SEM region. The remaining reasons had lower response rates such as: retirement, attending school, or job transfers.

Reasons Participants

Left SEM	Count	Percent
Family circumstances	127	27%
Employed, better economic prospects	95	20%
Unemployed, opportunity elsewhere	93	20%
Wanted to retire elsewhere	68	15%
Left to attend school	37	08%
Voluntary transfer	35	08%
Involuntary transfer	10	02%



SEM U-Haul Survey Participants Relocation ZIP Codes



SOURCE: Survey participants (Map by Alex B. Hill)

There were no significant clusters of participants relocating to a single city or even metropolitan areas outside of SEM. ZIP Codes where participants relocated were in all except ten U.S.

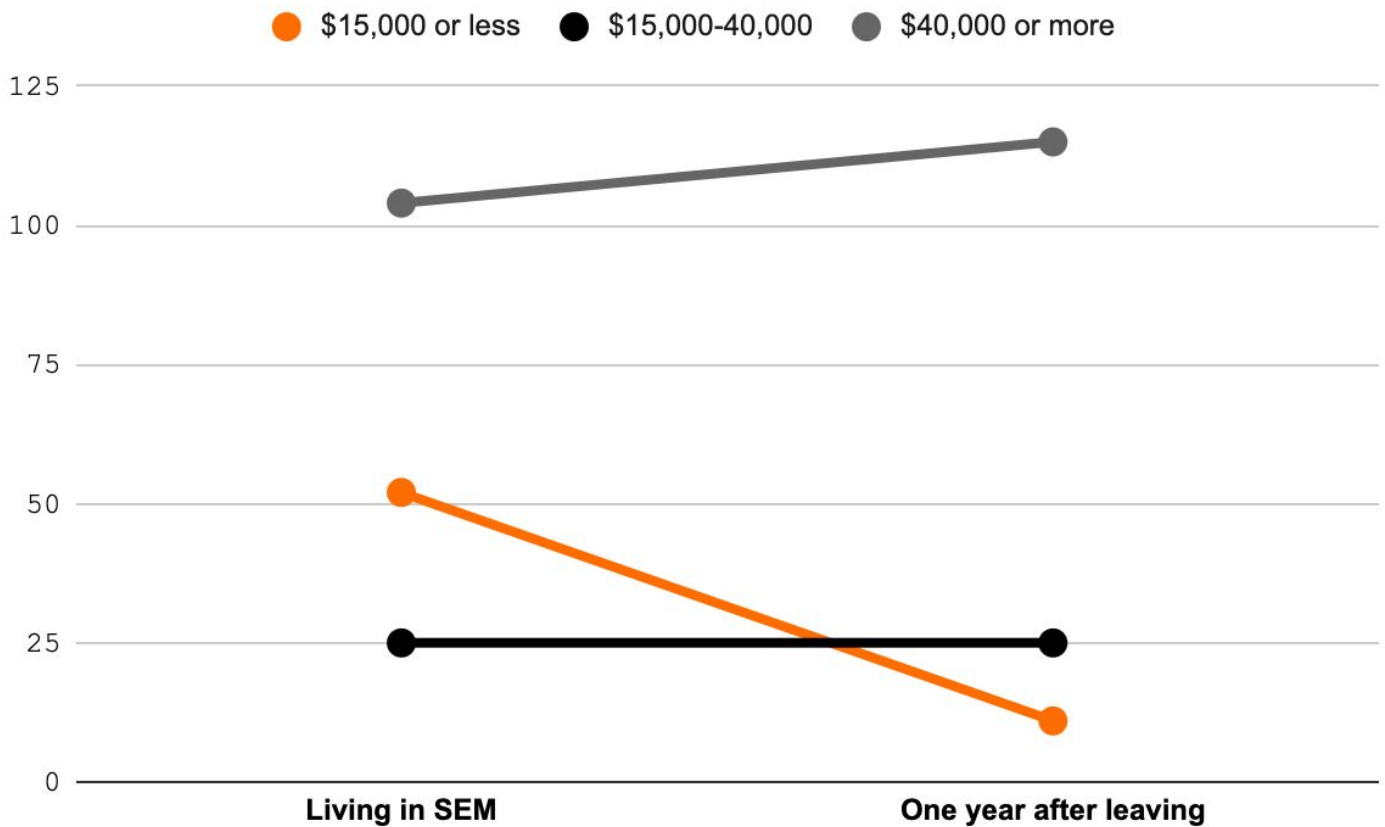
states. Roughly 1 in 5 participants relocated within Michigan. The next most common U.S. state for relocation was Illinois around the Chicagoland area followed closely by Florida.

Both unemployed job-seekers and employed participants looking for better opportunities listed leaving SEM as a means to find better opportunities.

Participants reported greater income gains after leaving SEM. The minimum wage income category dropped significantly after participants moved outside of SEM.

The category of participants earning more than \$40,000 also saw a slight increase, but not significant with just 14 participants moving into that category.

The average increase in income across all participants was \$9,289. Just 24 participants reported a loss of income a year after relocating outside of SEM.



Conclusions

The U-Haul survey participants responses point to broader trends and opportunities in SEM. Michigan's cities are struggling to provide opportunity in the form of good paying jobs, regional connectivity via transit, quality higher education, and childcare options.

As evidenced by survey participants responses, health care is a high potential industry that also has a high rate of relocation. SEM has a concentration of health care corporations, but with a high degree of uncertainty stemming from private investor ownership to mergers.

Among all participants, both employed and unemployed, **40%** noted that they relocated out of SEM for better opportunities. Our analysis showed that held true as most participants moved out of the minimum wage income category and increased their earnings.

Overall analysis of survey participants responses showed:

1. Greater opportunity is nearby with most relocations to the **Chicagoland** metro;
2. Predominantly **minimum wage** workers are relocating;
3. On average earning potential increased by almost **\$10,000** when relocating.

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