THE BEST TECH CITIES

As Ranked By Tech Workers

P33

A city's ability to develop, attract and retain highly skilled talent for technology-centric companies will be the primary determinant of its success over the next few decades. Trends prior to the pandemic suggested the emergence of a small handful of "superstar" cities that would continue to capture an increasing share of talent and wealth. Relocations and wide adoption of remote work offerings have changed the particulars—and perhaps have expanded the number of cities that can be winners—but what has not changed is the criticality of talent wanting to be in your city.

At the same time, the reality of tech talent shortages across the country mean that skilled technical workers have an abundance of choice regarding where to live, where to work, and who to work for. To compete, cities must first understand what workers think about theirs—what attracts and what deters.

So, what does this tech talent actually think about different cities?

In partnership with B2B market research firm NewtonX, we conducted a country-wide study of tech professionals' perception of the desirability of different cities for having a thriving tech career, and other considerations relevant to individual decision making about where to live. We asked additional questions about the perception of Chicago, and what aspects of Chicago appeal or repel.

Questions From the Survey That Informed Key Findings

How likely is it that you would recommend the following cities to a friend or colleague as a place to have a thriving tech career?

Atlanta

Austin

Boston

Chicago

Dallas

Denver

L.A.

New York City

Pittsburgh

San Francisco

Seattle

Washington, D.C.

Miami

How likely is it that you would recommend Chicago to a friend or colleague with a tech or digital-skill based jobs based on the following factors?

Entertainment and recreational opportunities

Efficient/reliable public transportation

A diverse and inclusive city

Global connectedness

Compatible cultural alignment

Affordable cost of living

Collaborative network of business professionals

Tech-focused career opportunities in large established companies

Healthy work/life balance

Career opportunities in the tech industry

Strong local small and medium-sized businesses

Paid family leave

Quality K-12 educational system

Low tax rates

Pleasant weather

Low crime rate

What would make you hesitate to relocate to the Chicago metropolitan area for a technology-related job opportunity?

Weather

Family/personal ties

Crime rate

Career opportunities in tech

Satisfaction with current city

Cost of living

Culture

Tax rates

Global connectedness

To which extent do you associate Chicago's tech and innovation culture with the following words?

Purpose-driven

Resilient

Progressive

Practical

Modern

Confident

Approachable

Collaborative

Secure

Cutting-edge

Disruptive

Elitist

Boring

Not exciting

Inferior

Which work arrangement do you prefer most?

Fully in-person

Fully remote

Hybrid between remote and in-person

FIVE KEY FINDINGS

Together these findings tell a story of a Chicago with strong fundamentals, well-regarded as a city to live in and a city to grow a tech career, and with an opportunity to accelerate growth by being more assertive in telling our story and highlighting our many strengths.

01

THE DATA CONTRADICTS THE HYPE

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THOSE WHO KNOW CHICAGO, KNOW

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JOB OPPORTUNITIES ARE THE KEY

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THE CITY'S CHARACTER HELPS

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REMOTE WORK IS AN OPPORTUNITY—AND A RISK

01 THE DATA CONTRADICTS THE HYPE

Breathless stories about people fleeing the traditional tech hubs, or the dramatic rise of new tech hubs, don't align with what actual tech workers think about where to have a great tech career. Here's what the data says:

When tech professionals around the country were asked, **"How likely is it that you would recommend the following cities to a friend or colleague as a place to have a thriving tech career?"** it revealed:

01 SAN FRANCISCO

02 SEATTLE

03 NEW YORK CITY

04 AUSTIN

05 CHICAGO

06 LOS ANGELES

07 BOSTON

08 WASHINGTON, D.C.

09 DENVER

10 ATLANTA

11 MIAMI

Ranks in perception as places to have a thriving tech career

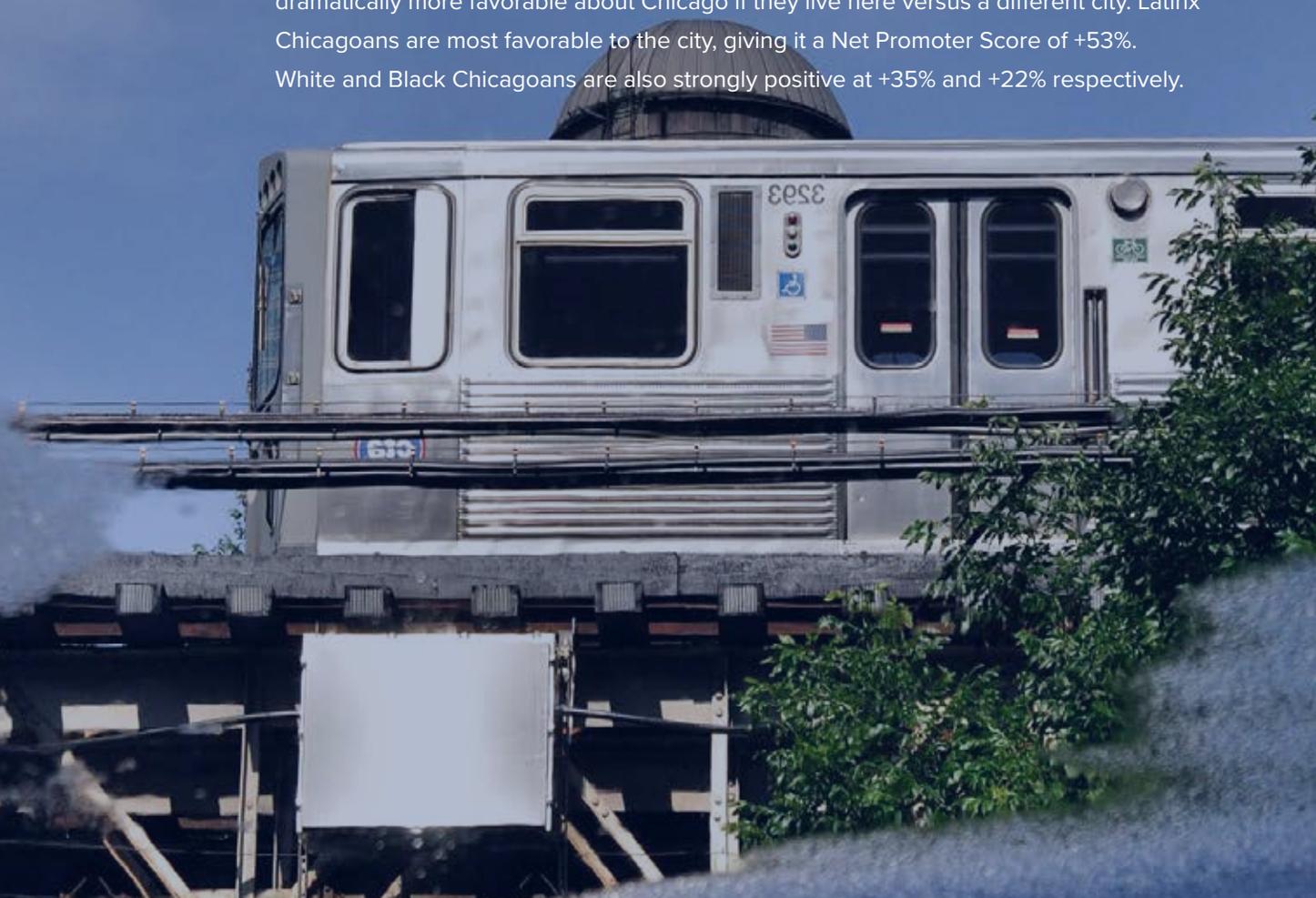**The cities in the middle all have the opportunity to thrive or to fade**

Some of the cities getting a lot of attention right now rank surprisingly low

Our research is in line with another recent survey conducted by Axios and The Generation Lab, which found that Chicago is in a group of six cities of most interest to youth for living post-college, along with Seattle, New York, Los Angeles, Denver and Boston. That survey showed Chicago as the 4th most attractive city to those with incomes greater than $80,000, which would correlate with employment in tech roles or tech companies. And most intriguing, Chicago was the only city ranked in the Top Five for both Democrat and Republican respondents.

The low rankings for Miami and Atlanta were especially a surprise, given much hype over the last two years.

02 THOSE WHO KNOW CHICAGO, KNOW

Tech professionals who live in Chicago rate the city much more favorably than those who don't. Overall, Chicago residents rank the city second only behind San Francisco/Silicon Valley as a place to have a thriving tech career. Every demographic subgroup is dramatically more favorable about Chicago if they live here versus a different city. Latinx Chicagoans are most favorable to the city, giving it a Net Promoter Score of +53%. White and Black Chicagoans are also strongly positive at +35% and +22% respectively.

CHICAGO

Overall Population

01 SAN FRANCISCO
02 SEATTLE
03 NEW YORK CITY
04 AUSTIN
05
06 LOS ANGELES
07 BOSTON
08 WASHINGTON, DC
09 DENVER
10 DALLAS
11 MIAMI

Chicago Residents

SAN FRANCISCO 01

02

SEATTLE 03
NEW YORK CITY 04
AUSTIN 05
LOS ANGELES 06
WASHINGTON, DC 07
BOSTON 08
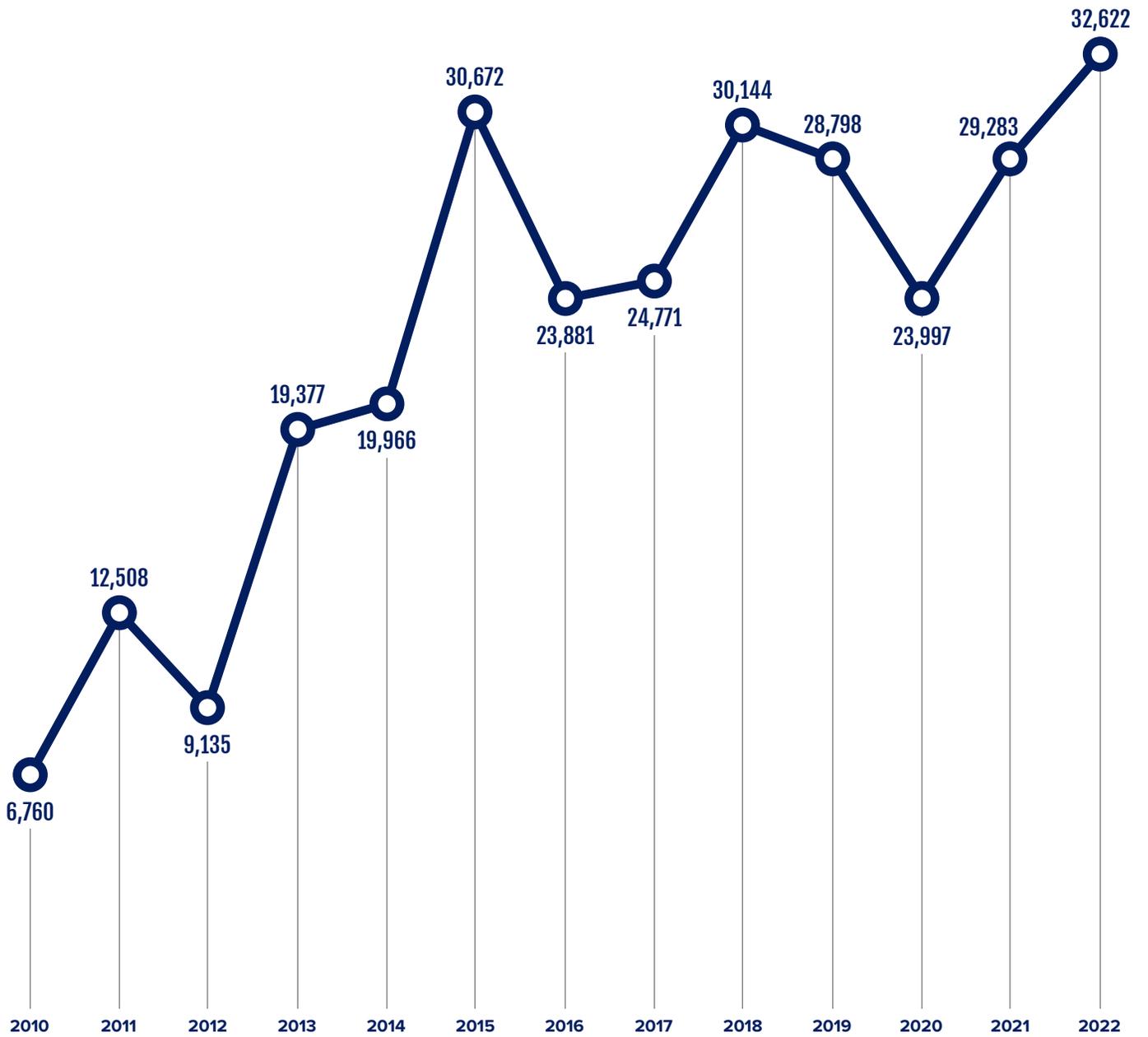DALLAS 09
ATLANTA 10
MIAMI 11

03 JOBS ARE THE KEY

The primary determining factor of an individual's interest in a city for a tech career is the perceived availability of large numbers of tech industry opportunities. However, which cities do have the best opportunities and which are perceived to aren't necessarily the same. This underscores the importance of narrative about the trajectory of a city, and compelling information about new and established companies offering attractive tech opportunities.

And Chicago's trajectory is ascendant. The Chicagoland region has averaged more than 30,000 unique job postings for tech roles in recent months according to Emsi Burning Glass, after more than 250% growth in postings over the last decade, driven primarily by growth in demand for software developers/engineers. Roughly 150,000 people work in tech in Chicagoland.

Average Monthly Unique Tech Job Postings in Chicago

Year	Value
2010	6,760
2011	12,508
2012	9,135
2013	19,377
2014	19,966
2015	30,672
2016	23,881
2017	24,771
2018	30,144
2019	28,798
2020	23,997
2021	29,283
2022	32,622

04

THE CITY'S CHARACTER HELPS

Tech professionals view Chicago
as a city with a character.

PURPOSE-DRIVEN ✴

RESILIENT ⬦

PROGRESSIVE 》

were the three of fifteen adjectives most associated with the city when asked, "To which extent do you associate Chicago's tech and innovation culture with the following words?"

Perception of quality-of-life factors is also important. The city is very well regarded for entertainment and recreation; diversity and inclusion; good transit. And is viewed favorably across several factors, including global connectedness, cultural alignment, collaborative business community, and work-life balance. Weather and crime were the only two factors (unrelated to the jobs or family location) that more than one-third of respondents indicated would give them hesitation about moving to Chicago.

Taken together, the perceptions tech professionals have of Chicago bodes well for the city's new tech-sector marketing effort, TechChicago, which highlights Chicago's purpose-driven companies, the focus on solving important problems, and diversity, to attract talent. See gotechchicago.com

05 REMOTE WORK IS AN OPPORTUNITY— AND A RISK

The plurality of respondents prefer hybrid work arrangements to fully-remote or fully in office.

35%

of respondents do prefer fully-remote, creating an opportunity for cities to attract talent to local companies without an initial family relocation and without having to overcome any perceptions issues about a city as place to live or to find the *next* job.

50%

of Black respondents indicated a preference for fully-remote work, suggesting an opportunity for companies across the country to make gains in representation.

Of course, the flip side of the opportunity is a risk that employees will leave their current, local, companies for higher-paying jobs with the largest tech companies, undermining economic growth and vitality in cities across the country. Note that survey respondents ranked cash compensation as the top-ranked factor in determining attractiveness of a career opportunity.

SO, WHAT'S THE UPSHOT FOR CHICAGO?

It's a Jump Ball

Chicago is in a decent position, below the few clear market leaders but ahead of most other competitor cities, and it can get even stronger by focusing on a few key elements unearthed in the study. Chicago is such a diversified economy that it doesn't need to be *the* city that people flock to for a tech career – but we need to be towards the top of the list to ensure a sufficient share of tech talent to keep growing our economy. It's within our reach.

Share Our Story

It's been said before: Chicago has work to do when it comes to promoting ourselves. We need to up our game to succeed in a national tech talent market. Most important, we need tech professionals to know that Chicago has abundant career opportunities—with companies solving real problems, building diverse teams, and raising money from national investors. When we complement that story by reinforcing what people already know about Chicago as a fun, interesting, diverse city, then we're in an especially strong position compared to smaller cities, less culturally rich cities, and less inclusive cities.

P33, in partnership with World Business Chicago, is currently leading a movement called "TechChicago" with Chicago's tech, academic and business leaders to illuminate the city's legacy of innovation. The goal of the initiative is to make the region a destination for the next generation of tech talent and start-up founders. To learn more and to get involved visit gotechchicago.com.

Win the Reshuffle

As more people are interested in remote work and more companies are offering it as an option, this is a moment to bring people into Chicago tech's orbit even if they don't move here right away. By connecting more professionals around the country to jobs with Chicago tech companies we help those local companies grow, gradually increase the individuals' familiarity with Chicago and Chicago tech, and increase their likelihood of a physical move to Chicago later.

APPENDIX

About P33

P33 is a privately funded non-profit focused on driving inclusive, global tech and innovation leadership in Chicago. P33's work is anchored in deep research and driven by a need to unlock the potential of the digital age to solve some of the toughest problems facing Chicago, such as equitable access to digital careers, talent retention, deep science commercialization, and gaps in our growth-stage startup ecosystem. Launched in 2019, P33 is co-chaired by Penny Pritzker, former Secretary of Commerce and founder and chairman of PSP Partners; Chris Gladwin, CEO and Cofounder of Ocient and Cleversafe; and Kelly Welsh, President of the Civic Committee of The Commercial Club of Chicago. www.p33chicago.com

Survey Methodology

NewtonX   P33 partnered with NewtonX, the world's leading B2B research company, to learn what drives and attracts tech talent. NewtonX's Knowledge Graph allowed it to precisely recruit P33's target audience of mid-career US technology professionals, with a large representation of minorities. NewtonX's 10-minute 200-respondent survey was fielded from January 12 to February 5, 2022, with respondents custom recruited from an open network of 1.1 billion professionals in over 140 industries. All respondents underwent a two-point verification process consisting of a LinkedIn and corporate email check. Every single survey response was screened and guaranteed 100% fraud free. Thirty-seven percent of respondents were African Americans or LatinX and 49% were women, ensuring that diverse perspectives were accounted for.

Study insights will be used to guide development of a Spring 2022 media campaign focused on tech talent with highly relevant messaging and targeted media. A follow-up study will be done to assess the campaign's impact on perceptions and metrics of Chicago's status as a technology and innovation hub that promotes inclusive economic growth.

Photography

Photos by Moe Magners and Karl Solano found on Pexels. Photos by Benjamin Suter, Rihards Sergis, Clement Fusil, and Microsoft Surface found on Unsplash.