

# Where Should I Live? Evaluating Factors That Shape Personal and Civic Decisions

**Subject:** Civics / Government / Economics

**Grade Level:** 10–12

**Time Required:** 1–2 class periods

**Lesson Type:** Decision-making simulation, research, discussion

**Materials Needed:**

- Internet access
  - Research websites (e.g., bestplaces.net, realtor.com, census.gov)
  - Student worksheet or notebook
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## Lesson Overview

Every major life decision involves trade-offs, and few decisions are more significant than choosing where to live. This lesson asks students to examine the **economic, social, and civic factors** that influence residential choices and to evaluate how individual priorities shape outcomes.

Students will first rank a set of common factors that affect where people choose to live. They will then research real locations using credible data sources and justify their choices using evidence. Through this process, students learn that decisions—both personal and political—are rarely simple and are often shaped by values, opportunity, and access.

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## Essential Question

**What factors matter most when deciding where to live, and how do values and data shape that decision?**

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## Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify key economic, social, and civic factors that influence residential choices
- Rank decision-making criteria based on personal priorities
- Use reliable data sources to research and compare locations

- Justify decisions using evidence and reasoning
  - Recognize how public policy affects quality of life and opportunity
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## Key Civic Connection

Where people live affects:

- Taxes they pay
- Schools their children attend
- Access to health care and employment
- Political representation and civic participation

This lesson connects personal decision-making to **public policy and governance**.

# Activity Part I: Ranking Life Priorities

## Directions

Below is a list of factors that often influence where people choose to live. **Reorder them from most important (1) to least important (14)** based on *your own priorities*.

## Factors to Consider

- Affordability
- Taxes
- Employment Opportunities
- Real Estate Value
- Crime Rates & Public Safety
- Proximity to Family & Friends
- Climate
- Education System
- Culture (arts, entertainment, diversity, community life)
- Commute Time & Public Transportation
- Food Options
- Town or City Size
- Health Care Facilities
- Proximity to an Airport

## Student Ranking

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.

## Activity Part II: Research & Data Analysis

### Research Tools

Students should use **reliable, data-driven sources**, including but not limited to:

- <https://www.bestplaces.net>
  - <https://www.realtor.com>
  - U.S. Census Bureau
  - State or city government websites
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## Activity Part III: Location Selection

### Step 1: Primary Choice

Select your **#1 location to live**.

Provide:

- City and state
  - At least **three data points** (cost of living, employment, safety, schools, etc.)
  - A written explanation explaining **why this location best matches your priorities**
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### Step 2: Secondary Choices

Select your **2nd and 3rd choice locations**.

For each:

- Identify the city and state
- Compare it to your #1 choice using **specific data**
- Explain why it ranks lower or higher on certain factors

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## Reflection Questions

Students should answer **at least two**:

1. Which factor surprised you by ranking higher or lower than expected?
2. How might your rankings change if you had children? Were retired? Earned more money?
3. How do government policies influence affordability, education, and safety?
4. Should governments try to make all communities equally attractive? Why or why not?