

Rethinking Relocation & Resilience

How pushes and pulls of place shape relocation decisions

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ABSTRACT

Background: Among the suite of risk reducing strategies for adaptation, relocation or assisted retreat is one of the most extreme. Altogether moving from one's home is not equivalent to strategies in place, such as investing in one's home or supporting construction of community-wide infrastructure.

Objective: This study extends resilience theory to the conceptualization of relocation decisions by framing push and pull factors as tradeoffs between 'capitals' or resources. It presents a conceptual framework outlining the web of interacting household and community capitals involved in relocation decisions to answer: *Who is most likely to prefer relocation in response to natural hazards? And what are the factors of place that affect the likelihood of relocation?*

Data & Methods: To explore these questions, this study uses mixed method analysis of original open-ended interviews and survey data collected in 2022 from the Houston and New Orleans regions.

Results: This research illuminates how household level decisions are in part based on community-level assets. As relocation occurs these decisions may be adding to or detracting from (e.g., financial capital – loss of tax revenue) collective capital. Additionally, by targeting respondents in communities at least six months after a major disaster, this research improves upon existing literature by identifying the scope of resources households consider when choosing where to live with limited pressure of displacement.

Implications: Understanding how different residents experience pushes and pulls of place can inform assisted relocation and compensating policies for sending communities to foster resilience to future hazards.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Data collection was supported by Texas Comprehensive Research Funds, the Erma Lee and Luke Mooney Graduate Research Travel Grant, and the Institute for Disaster Resilient Texas. Graduate student support was provided by the Graduate Student "Boost" Award. This work was advised by Dr. Ashley Ross.

INTRODUCTION

A Closer Look at Relocation

Relocation: voluntary movement involving an intentional household decision to move to a different home and/or community



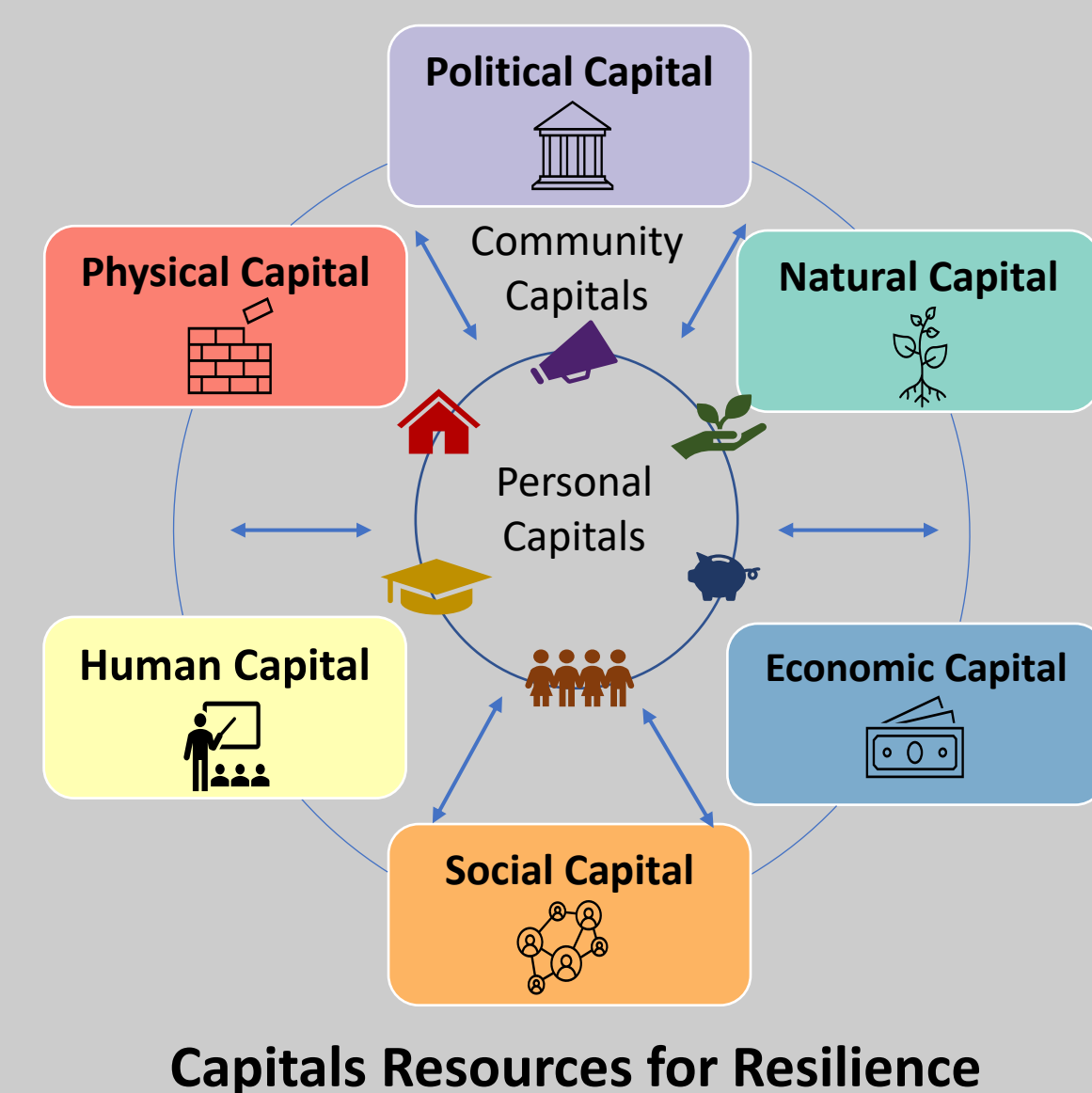
Displacement: the uprooting of people from a home territory in response to physical, economic, or environmental danger against their preference



Assisted relocation/resettlement: policy tools used to encourage, incentivize, or empower relocation of households/ communities (e.g., home buyouts, resettlement grants, etc.)



A Resilience Framework



Relocation decisions depend on the complex interplay of "push" and "pull" factors affecting quality of life. Pulls of place can be categorized into capital resources for resilience.

Justification

Altogether moving from one's home is not an equivalent adaptation strategy to those in place...

- Many adaptation strategies involve tradeoffs between economic and physical capital resources
- It is particularly difficult to trace tradeoffs involved in relocation decisions
- Relocation and displacement may remove someone entirely from the web of resources used to maintain resilience to future disasters

RQ: Who is most likely to prefer relocation in response to natural hazards? And what are the factors of place that affect the likelihood of relocation?

DATA & METHODS

Data Collection

Open-ended Interviews

- Interviews post Hurricane Ida in LA throughout January 2022
- Convenience and snowball sampling (N=22) across 5 parishes: Jefferson, Orleans, St. James, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist

Online Survey of 2 Metro Regions

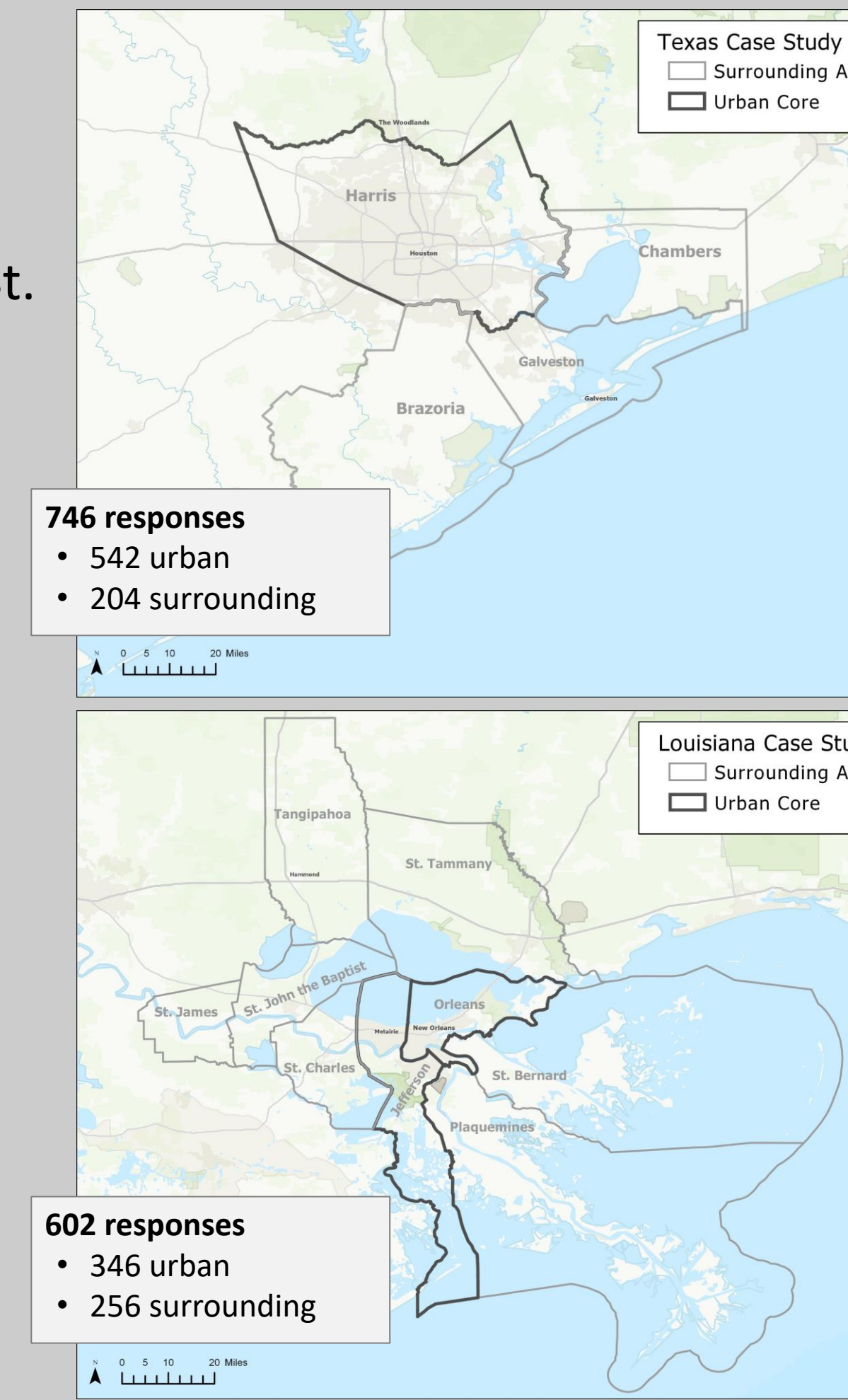
- Coastal counties/parishes in Houston and New Orleans Combined Statistical Areas
- In field February 2022 - April 2022 through Qualtrics
- Nested quotas for age, race/ethnicity, gender and state population size (N=1,348)

Mixed-Method Approach

- Thematic content of interviews
- Logistic regressions of relocation preference
- Descriptive analysis of each region

	TEXAS		LOUISIANA	
	Urban	Surrounding	Urban	Surrounding
SEX				
Male	40%	28%	39%	33%
Female	60%	72%	61%	67%
AGE				
18-34 years	38%	29%	38%	31%
35-54 years	39%	40%	37%	38%
55-64 years	10%	16%	13%	17%
65 years and +	13%	15%	11%	14%
RACE				
White	64%	79%	55%	72%
Black	20%	12%	37%	23%
Asian	5%	3%	3%	2%
Other	11%	6%	5%	4%
ETHNICITY				
Hispanic/Latino	37%	17%	8%	6%
Other	63%	83%	92%	94%
N	1348	n = 542	n = 204	n = 256

Survey Demographics by Case Region



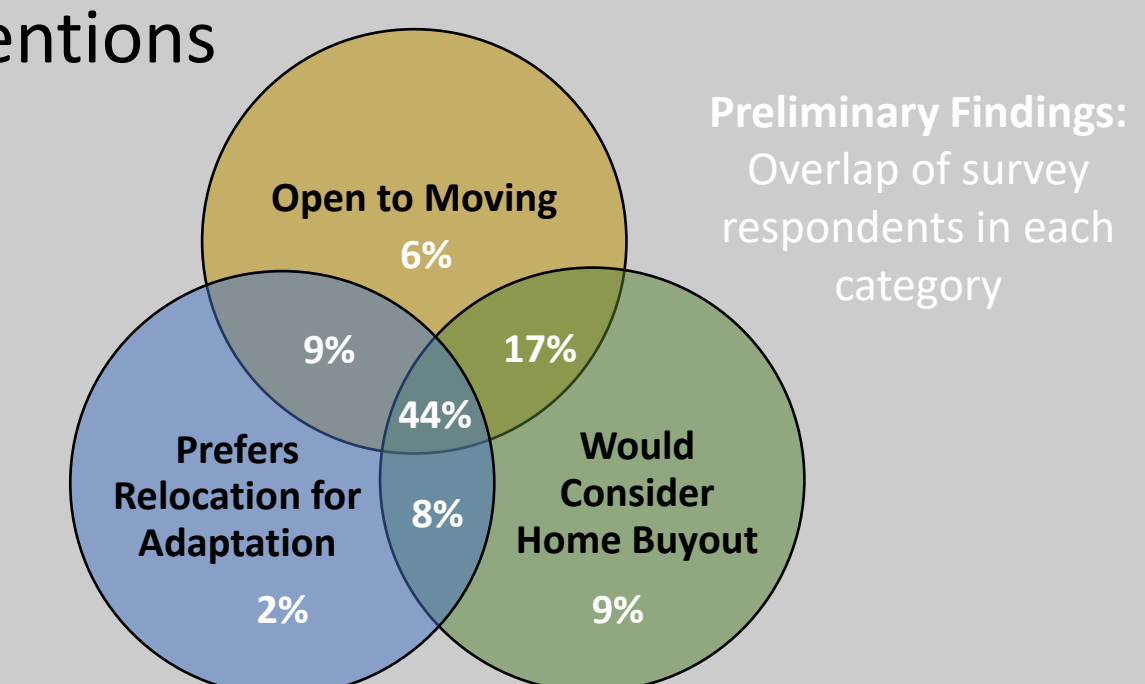
DISCUSSION

Key Findings:

1. There is significant desire for relocation in high-risk areas, particularly among those who are younger, racial minorities, and have greater risk perceptions
2. Factors of place such as social ties, jobs, and environmental quality help shape preference for relocation and adaptation

Next Steps in Research:

- Validation and robustness checks
- Explore intersection of relocation preferences with existing policy interventions



RESULTS

The most important pulls of place in current communities:

- Flood and hurricane risk
- Cost of living
- Quality of roads

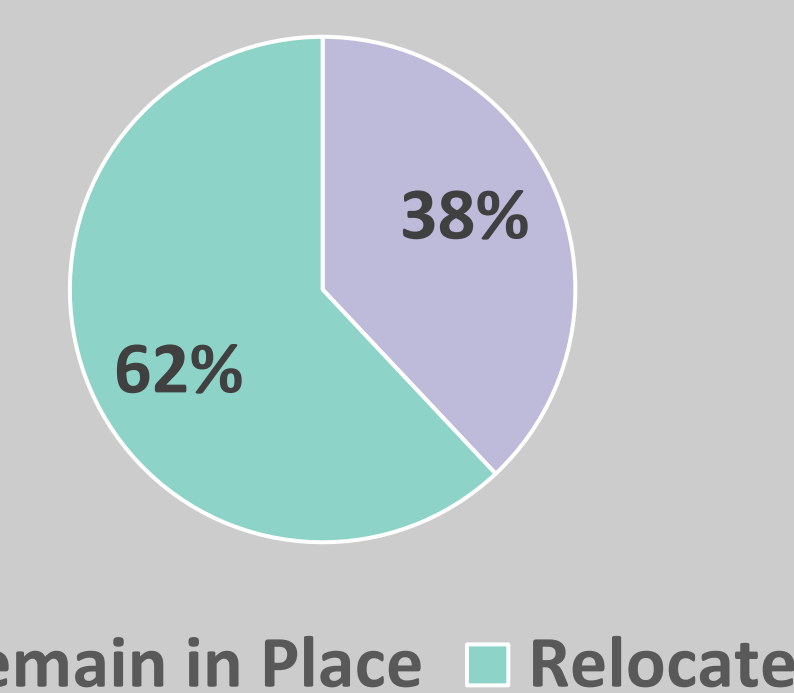
Residents who would prefer to relocate are more likely to:

- Be Younger
- Be a Racial Minority
- Have Greater Risk Perceptions
- Have Greater Linking Social Capital
- Have Lower Community Attachment

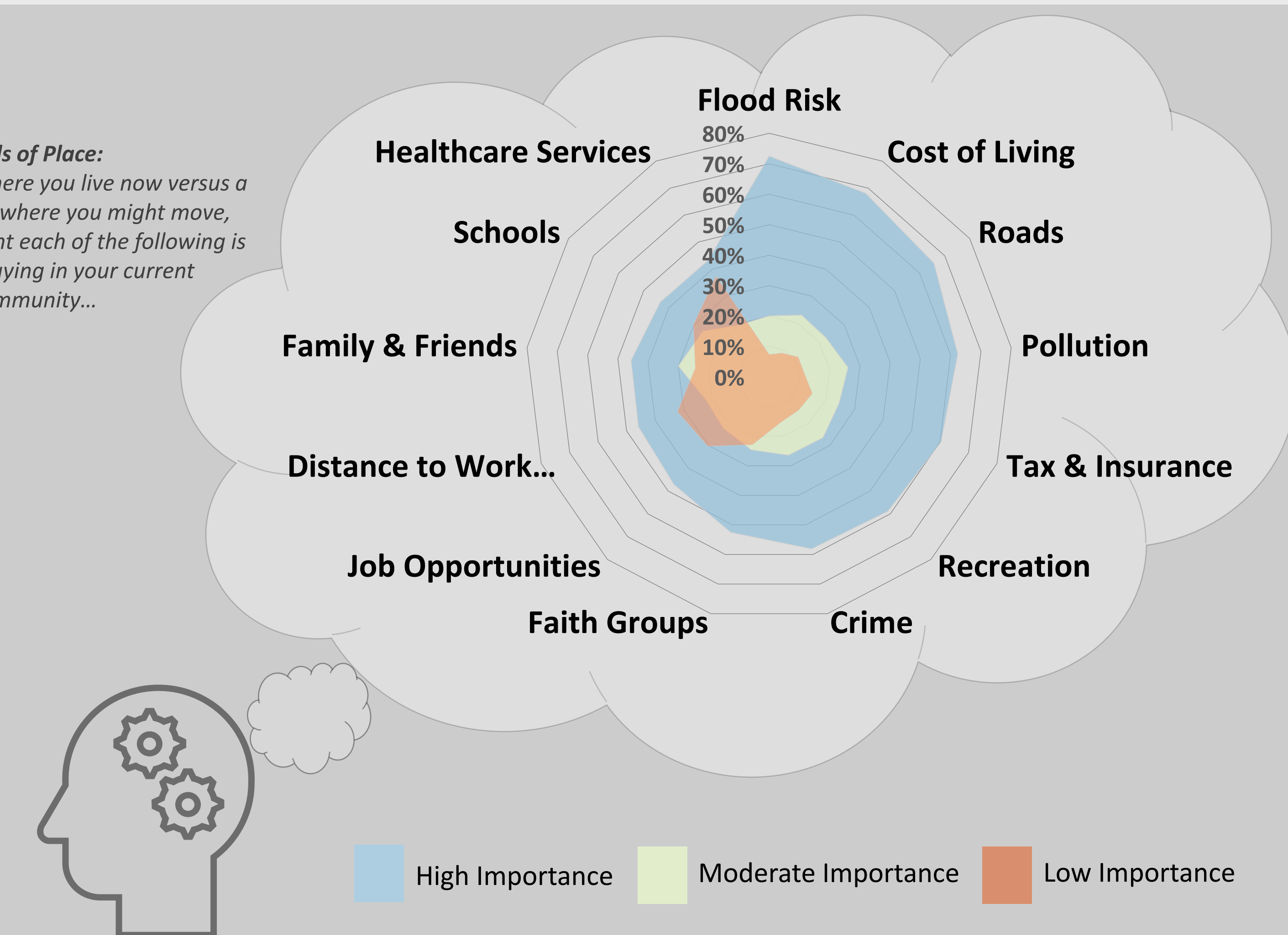
The importance of certain pulls of place can affect relocation preference:

- Those who place high importance on **family and friends** in their community are *more* likely to prefer relocation
- Those who place high importance on **job opportunities** in their community are *less* likely to prefer relocation
- Those who place high importance on **air and water pollution** in their community are *more* likely to prefer relocation

Pulls of Place:
Thinking about where you live now versus a new community where you might move, rate how important each of the following is to you for staying in your current community...



Relocation Preference:
If natural hazards (such as flooding) in your community got worse, what would you prefer to do?



The relative importance of pulls of place vary by characteristics such as age, race, and social capital.

