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Best places to live with kids

You might hear that America is urbanizing again, but a new study shows that some urban parents regret their choice to move to the city



If it's really true that we're only as happy as our unhappiest kid, then it's important to find the best location for a happy childhood, too. So what does that mean for the classic city-versus-suburb conundrum?

The most recent U.S. Census Bureau data from 2000 and 2010 indicates a shift toward families favoring urban living. Yet, another survey from Rent.com, the country's leading Internet rental listing site, finds that parents are divided on location but united about the importance of neighborhood safety.

Among Rent.com's findings is that 42 percent of parents say they've always lived in the city and are raising children there, but a close 41.5 percent prefer the suburbs. Perhaps more important is that 46 percent of suburban parents say they'd make their same choice again, while only 34 percent of city parents would.

Real estate saleswoman Donna Mercier, affiliated with a suburban Chicago office of Coldwell Banker, says many parents with kids find the North Shore suburbs appealing for the ease of getting around, finding parking, networking with families and enjoying community activities and good schools. But once many become empty nesters, they return to the city, Mercier says.

In contrast, David Staples, director of sales at 2 Midtown, a mixed-use condominium in midtown Miami that offers rentals, says that parents with kids are attracted to urban life because of the convenience of living close to work and gaining a range of cultural activities.

When picking a home, he says they're most concerned about security, green spaces for kids to play and to walk dogs and nearby shopping.

The bottom line, according to April Masini, a relationship expert who writes an advice column called “Ask April,” is that a family can make a good life in either place.

“The age of the child may be a good determining factor. Young children can easily play in a yard and go to friends’ homes, but if you have teenagers and want them exposed to culture or get a part-time job, a city might offer a bigger advantage,” she says.



— *Barbara Ballinger*

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