



# Calistoga Community Conversation

December 2023

## Executive Summary

Napa County Health and Human Services Agency partnered with UpValley Family Centers, the Calistoga Joint Unified School District, and the City of Calistoga to host a Community Conversation on December 6, 2023. For the 2023-2024 academic year, Calistoga Joint Unified School District was one of 10 schools in the United States selected to partner with the national education nonprofit organization, Transcend, to be a part of the Rural Schools Design Community. The ten-month program works with school administrators and faculty to prioritize reimagining school models to better serve students and families in rural communities across the nation. In the 2023 Calistoga Community Conversation, participants had the opportunity to review and provide reflections on current trends occurring in rural school communities on the following topics: *Demographics & Culture, Employment & Economics, Physical & Mental Health, and Infrastructure & Resources.*

In small groups, community members participated in guided group discussions centering on the Calistoga community compared to other rural communities in the United States, as well as discussing potential solutions to address challenges and opportunities that the local trends present. Facilitators recorded responses to a 3-question guided discussion within small groups. At the end of the event, each table shared their insights with the larger group, focusing on how the presented data trends reflected or did not reflect the Calistoga community. Groups also discussed local assets that could be used to fuel significant leaps, impacting the experiences of Calistoga Joint Unified School district students and the greater Calistoga Community.

The Community Conversation was facilitated simultaneously in English and Spanish, and in-person live interpretation was provided by bilingual (English and Spanish) staff at each group as needed. Results from the participants' discussion are included in this report and the key findings are summarized below.

## **Introduction**

In December 2023, UpValley Family Centers, the Calistoga Joint Unified School District, and Napa County Health and Human Services Agency hosted a Community Conversation to discuss the community's vision for reimagining schools and the community to better serve students and families. Updates on recent community developments occurring within Calistoga were also provided. Community Conversations are annual community events that provide an opportunity to collect qualitative data on the lived experiences of Calistoga community members. During this year's 4<sup>th</sup> annual Community Conversation, participants reviewed local data from a school survey and provided feedback on rural data trends in collaboration with the Transcend organization.

Event participants provided feedback by working in table groups ranging from four to nine individuals. A total of 60 participants in six groups, four bilingual-speaking (English and Spanish) and two English-speaking, discussed barriers facing Calistoga and potential developments to address those barriers. While over 19 unique responses were recorded during this community event, it is important to note that these responses provide a snapshot of the rich and fruitful discussion that occurred in each participant group. Staff facilitators were instructed to record key highlights from group discussions; the data in this report represents a glimpse into the time of the participants in the room and the way they view their community.

## **Community Development**

During the event, the attendees had the opportunity to hear from a parent leadership group, the City of Calistoga Parks and Recreation Department, the Calistoga mayor, and the Brannan Center on community development projects. These presentations provided attendees the opportunity to learn about local projects that impact their community as well as a space to discuss with local leaders.

Rachel Stepp from the Parks and Recreation Department of the City of Calistoga, and Julie Garcia from Adelante, a parent leadership group in Calistoga, provided an update on the Logvy Park renovation. The Adelante group has been leading a community effort to renew and renovate the local park, Logvy Park. Adelante is comprised of parent leaders who have been collaborating with the Calistoga Parks and Recreation department over the last several years on this project, which was a direct outcome of the Calistoga Community Conversation in 2016, to address the need for improvements to local parks. In 2023, the group shared recent progress and blueprints for upcoming renovations; planned renovations were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, Calistoga Parks and Recreation shared their programming for the 2023-2024 winter season and beyond.

The City of Calistoga was represented by Mayor Donald Williams, who spoke to attendees regarding efforts to address housing stock in Calistoga and plans for the City of Calistoga to acquire the Napa County Fairgrounds. Limited housing availability is not an issue unique to Calistoga, but the small size of the city contributes to limited opportunities to access housing. Mayor Williams cited housing as a priority to improve the quality of life for residents and the city government continuously seeks to address the need for low-income and accessible housing within Calistoga. Another topic was the status of the local fairgrounds. The Napa County Fairgrounds, also referred to as the Calistoga Fairgrounds, is one of two fairgrounds in Napa County and consists of approximately 70 acres of land within the City of

Calistoga. The property is owned by the County of Napa but there has been interest within the community to revitalize the property for Calistoga residents. At the time of the event in December 2023, Mayor Williams shared that the city and its local leaders were continuing to explore options with the County of Napa on acquiring the property.

Lastly, Aime Dunstan from the Brannan Center presented the recent progress in the center's renovations and upcoming possibilities for the space. The mission of the Brannan Center, a local 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, is to restore and expand the former Presbyterian Church site in Calistoga. Commonly referred to as the 'Green Church' among residents, the building has been closed for restoration and renovations in recent years and has an estimated opening date of Fall 2025. The center will be a state-of-the-art community and performing arts center for Calistoga. While programming has not been determined, event attendees were able to learn more about the potential offerings for residents such as concerts, performances, films, documentaries, art exhibitions, community meetings, workshops, culinary arts, children's programs, etc.

## Methods

### Data Collection

The Transcend organization shared a bilingual 15-minute slide show presentation with participants before beginning the small group discussions. Participants were asked to **review** data, **discuss** trends, and **create** solutions to reimagine a rural school community focusing on the community of Calistoga. All 60 participants self-selected themselves into six table groups and group discussions were held concurrently in the same space. Responses are quoted in this report to provide a sampling of the most common themes.

Participants were divided into six tables; four tables were comprised of bilingual (English and Spanish) participants and two tables were English-speaking only. Age compositions of the groups were recorded as *Youth, Adults, or Older Adults*. Individual demographic information of each participant was not recorded. Each table was assigned one to three data trend sheets (See Appendix II) based on one of the four categories, along with a local asset map (See Appendix III) created with the results of the 2022 Calistoga Community Conversation. The group was given approximately 15 minutes to discuss their designated topics by answering the first two questions and then sharing their reflections with the larger group of participants. Considering the first two questions, the conversation concluded by asking participants, "*What development would we like to see to address the challenges or opportunities that these trends present?*". At least one staff member from UpValley Family Centers or HHSA was present at each table and functioned as a notetaker and speaker for each small group. While group discussion occurred in both English and Spanish, most of the recorded notes summarizing discussions were written in English. A total of 60 attendees were recorded; staff members were not included in the attendance. The questions posed to community members are listed below (see Appendix I).

- *What about these trends surprises or resonates with you?*
- *What impact do these trends have on the community of Calistoga?*

- *What development would we like to see to address the challenges or opportunities in the presented trends?*
- *Additional thoughts or comments?*

Community members were given the data cards at each table to discuss topics through the lens of their unique lived experiences as residents of Calistoga (See Appendix III). Additional survey data from CJUSD staff and students was presented to community members as well (See Appendix IV). Facilitators captured key points and highlights of the discussion and transcribed their group's responses onto the provided sheets.

### **Analysis**

Written responses were recorded on the provided sheets; data was collected and copied into an Excel sheet. Some responses were written in shorthand. Spanish responses were translated into English and used in this report. HHS – Public Health Division staff reviewed community feedback from the group discussions and categorized responses into relevant themes. Individual demographic data was not collected from participants. Age categories were designated as the following: Youth were identified as any person that was of school age and/or a minor (18 years and below), Adults were those ages 18-59 and Older Adults were those who were ages 60 and up.

## Results

60 participants were divided into six tables and given three discussion questions based on presented data. Responses are quoted in this report to provide a sampling of the most popular themes. Notetakers recorded key points and highlights at each group. All written responses were in English, with in-person discussions held in both Spanish and English.

### ***Discuss: What about these trends surprises or resonates with you?***

Of the six table groups, five groups recorded responses. Three participant groups stated that the trends present at their table did not resonate with the Calistoga community. Similar responses were noted in the larger group share out. The data trends provided described rural communities in the United States and were not specific to Calistoga.

*“Not all reflective of our Calistoga community” – Group of Youth, Adults and Older Adults, Bilingual*

*“[Demographics and Trends card] Does not resonate. No identification of data. Percent of races does not reflect the local population, approximately 51% Latine.” – Group of Adults and Older Adults, English*

The most popular themes that resonated with, or surprised participants among the different groups and designated topics were **Economic Opportunities** and **Housing**. The theme of economic opportunity arose among the four groups while housing was mentioned among the two groups and both themes were present in the bilingual and English-speaking groups. Many participants defined economic opportunity as the ability to live and pursue a desired career within the city of Calistoga. Participants discussed the potential opportunity for youth to be able to explore career development programs or gain skills without having to leave the local area, especially youth transitioning out of the K-12 school system. Some groups mentioned resources that can be used to support access to economic opportunities, while others identified gaps that the community can address.

*“They [students entering higher education] leave their community; kids feel that the school curriculum did not prepare them” – Group of Adults, Bilingual*

*“CA minimum wage above the federal poverty line.” - Group of Youth, Adults and Older Adults, Bilingual*

Difficulty accessing housing is not unique to Calistoga, but the impacts of limited housing stock resonated with participants. Some groups expressed challenges acquiring affordable housing, while other groups shared that maintaining housing was a challenge. Participants identified the limited stock of affordable housing options within the city and the conditions of housing options as important issues.

*“Housing: multiple people living in one home slows down services – lack of affordable housing.” - Group of Youth, Adults and Older Adults, Bilingual*

**Discuss: What impact do these trends have on the community of Calistoga?**

Of the six groups, all six responded to the question. Themes in responses covered a wide array of topics but the theme of **Economic Opportunities** was mentioned most frequently. Participants identified the traits of Calistoga that contribute to the community and may not speak specifically to the larger national trends of the other communities. Opportunities for the community to be more inclusive and representative of all its members were also mentioned by participants.

*“[There is] more of an economic divide than political.” – Group of Adults, English*

*“It can be hard to feel a part of the community when you don't see yourself represented in the community.” – Group of Adults, English*

*“Hard to apply to Calistoga and California rural picture [as] the same.” – Group of Adults, Bilingual*

**Create: What development would we like to see to address the challenges or opportunities in the presented trends?**

Of the six groups, all six recorded responses. Three major themes arose:

**Community Involvement, Educational Services and Resources, and Community Spaces.**

Related to the theme of **Community Involvement**, participants described instances where community members came together in the past to work on various local projects, such as raising money for the local Boys and Girls Club or creating an educational app for school-aged youth. Participants also highlighted the idea of organizations providing more opportunities for students to connect with the community. Furthermore, the need for a central place where people can access resources and get connected to the community was emphasized.

*“Community comes together...Like. Brannan [Center]., Boys and Girls Club, Swimming pool. [The community] raised money... Created [an] app for kids and bringing more resources from outside. Improve schools.” – Group of Adults and Older Adults, English*

*“Student representative/parents on city council boards to make decisions that resonate w/ students and schools...Engaging the unengaged.” – Group of Young Adults and Older Adults, Bilingual*

*“A way to make all the resources available to people - like a central place where folks can ask about whatever and get connected.” – Group of Adults, Bilingual*

**Educational Services and Resources** were another community asset that the group identified as a tool to bolster local opportunities for Calistoga. The group stated the importance of providing resources and opportunities for students to learn and grow within their community. Discussion spurred several ideas such as hands-on job training, field trips, and building connections to Calistoga businesses or community members and leaders. Participants felt that educational opportunities should feel more meaningful to students and align more with their interests, and engaging community experts to

provide information and training would be beneficial. The need for more resources in schools was also highlighted. Participants also mentioned inclusive ideas to engage parents of students, such as stipends to attend meetings.

*“Train and teach people [and] have people internally to sustain [training]... Create [those] opportunities [for] youth here” – Group of Adults and Older Adults, English*

*“Student representative/parents on city council boards to make decisions that resonate [with] students and schools.” – Group of Youth, Adults*

*“Asking students what they are passionate or curious about and honing [in] on that,” – Group of Adults, English*

The theme of **Community Spaces** and facilities that can benefit all the residents of Calistoga, especially the youth, was mentioned by four out of the six groups. This theme is not unique to the 2023 event as the desire to create spaces for youth recreation was also mentioned in the last three Community Conversation events. Responses listed several ideas such as an indoor soccer field, all-weather field, skateboard park, movie theater, and wellness center as potential projects to improve youth life within Calistoga. Responses that did not call for new development included a space for students and providers to meet, facility additions such as air conditioning and sports equipment storage, and expanded student services and programming at the schools. Improvements to community spaces could be opportunities to create lasting benefits for not only students but also for residents of Calistoga.

*“Elevate physical spaces where the community can come together...Field, recreation, office.”  
Group of Adults, Bilingual*

*“School Health Clinic...Indoor Soccer field...All-weather field...Push it and top of [the] list.”-  
Group of Youth, Adults, and Older Adults, Bilingual*

*“Connect students and nature... City owns access.” – Group of Adults and Older Adults, English*



## Conclusion

The 2023 Calistoga Community Conversation provided an opportunity for community members to engage with one another, reflect on their lived experiences as students, parents, and community members of Calistoga, and discuss areas of opportunities within the city. Through the lens of the partnership between Transcend and the Calistoga Joint Unified School District for the 2023-2024 academic year, the Community Conversation event served as a space for information sharing with speakers from the City of Calistoga Department, Adelante, and the Brannan Center, and a space for community building. Participants identified assets and connections within the community, while also acknowledging areas that would benefit from additional support.

The guided questions in small groups allowed participants to engage in conversation with fellow community members and discuss key themes that resonated with them. Common themes that arose amongst the 60 participants, across ages and languages, were Economic Opportunity and Housing. Many participants expressing a desire for more affordable housing options and increased economic opportunities, particularly for youth within Calistoga and those who transition to higher education or careers outside Calistoga. Some participants stated the rural data trends presented did not fully reflect the Calistoga community, however, this discrepancy allowed the community conversation to focus on the unique strengths and attributes of Calistoga.

Moving forward, the identified areas of development of Community Involvement, Educational Services and Resources, and Community Spaces were discussed as starting points for community collaboration and design. Building on the Asset Mapping of the 2022 Calistoga Community Conversation, participants sought to identify opportunities already present in the community and for ways to bolster these assets to support the community's needs. The annual Calistoga Community Conversation continues to be an event that brings together people from diverse backgrounds and centers the voices of families and residents to improve the well-being of all of the Calistoga community.

# Appendix I

## Notetaker Sheet (English Version)

### Note-Taker Form

Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_ # of people at table: \_\_\_\_\_

Conversation Primary Language: English Spanish Bilingual Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How many folks from the table have attended a Calistoga Community Conversation before?: \_\_\_\_

Select the age groups that apply: Youth Adults Older Adults

Notes to the following questions:

1. What about these trends that surprise or resonate with me?
2. What evidence do we see in Calistoga that these trends impact our community?
3. What development would we like to see to address the challenges or opportunities that these trends present? *[Please write responses in bullet points, and include any assets identified from the Asset Map, if any.]*
4. Any additional thoughts or comments?

# Notetaker Sheet (Spanish Version)

## Formulario para tomar notas

**Facilitador:** \_\_\_\_\_

**# de personas en la mesa:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Conversación Idioma principal:** Inglés    Español    Bilingüe    Otro: \_\_\_\_\_

**¿Cuántas personas de la mesa han asistido antes a una Conversación Comunitaria de Calistoga?:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Seleccione los grupos de edad que aplican:** Jóvenes    Adultos    Adultos mayores

Notas a las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Qué pasa con estas tendencias que me sorprenden o resuenan?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. ¿Qué evidencia vemos en Calistoga de que estas tendencias impactan a nuestra comunidad?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. ¿Qué desarrollo nos gustaría ver para abordar los desafíos u oportunidades que presentan estas tendencias? *[Escriba las respuestas en viñetas e incluya cualquier recurso identificado en el Mapa de activos, si corresponde.]*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. ¿Alguna idea o comentario adicional?

# Appendix II

## Transcend Rural Data Trends - Sample Card

# TREND CARDS



**2 | DEMOGRAPHICS & CULTURE**

While the overall rural population has gone down slightly, the working age population has had the steepest decline.

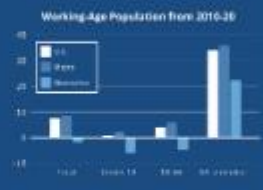


© Transcend, Inc. 2023

As the younger population has declined, the older population has spiked.<sup>1</sup>

Many rural areas, especially scenic or recreation destinations, are aging because they attract retirees.<sup>2,3</sup>


Working-Age Population from 2010-20




Category	Change
Total	-10
18-24	-15
25-64	-5
65+	10

One-third of older age rural counties are classified as either retirement destinations or as having recreation-based economies.

Greater educational opportunities outside of rural areas may encourage young people to leave rural areas, contributing to "brain drain," and "human capital flight."<sup>4</sup>



A person between 18 and 24...



70,000 times more likely to move to a city than 50-year old.

# Appendix III

## Asset Map – Assets Map 2023 Image



# Appendix IV

## Calistoga Junior-Senior High School Survey Data

As part of the 10-month cohort, Calistoga Joint Unified School District gathered feedback from school students and staff to learn about the student experience. Leaps are characteristics and themes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that are desirable in rural school settings. The leaps with the higher percentage response are those with a positive response by staff and students. With 497 out of 612 students surveyed (81% of the student population) and 68 out of 125 staff members surveyed (54% of the staff population), in addition to Student, Staff, and family Interviews/Focus Groups, the Calistoga Joint Unified School District was able to identify areas of interest and opportunity in the curriculum and school. Data was collected and presented by the Calistoga Joint Unified School District – Transcend team.

Figure 1. 21<sup>st</sup> Learning Leaps Ranking – Percent of Responses that are Positive.

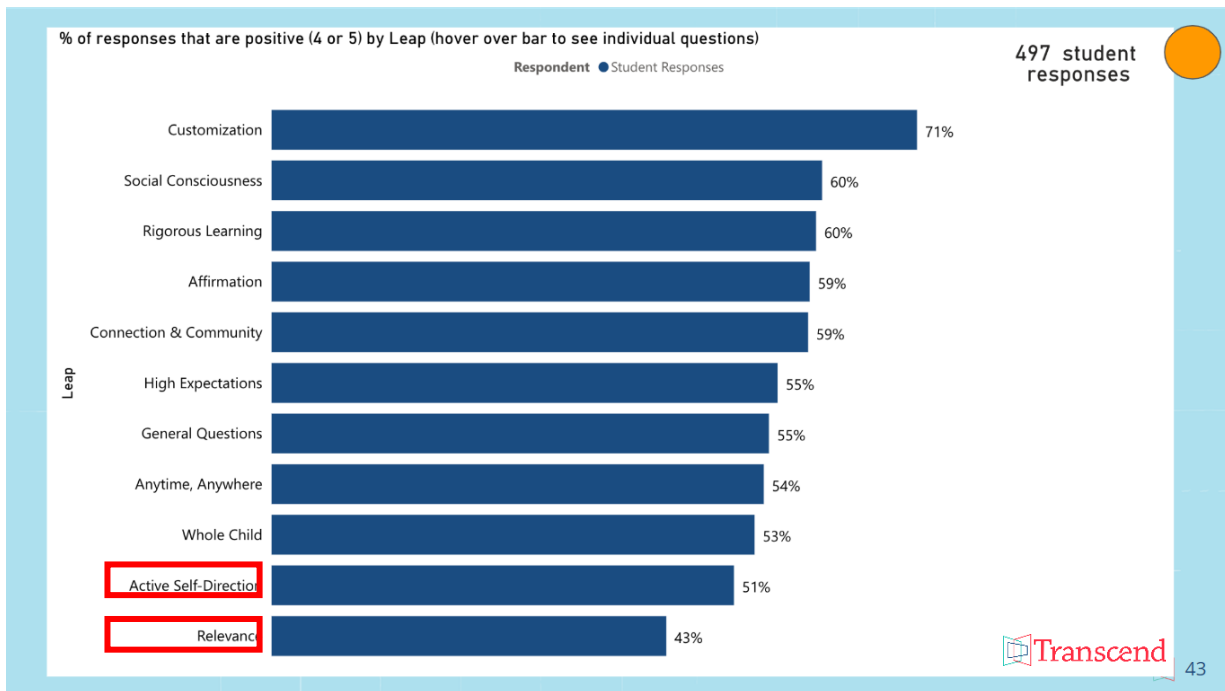


Figure 1a. 21<sup>st</sup> Learning Leaps ‘Relevance’ – Percent of Responses that are Positive.

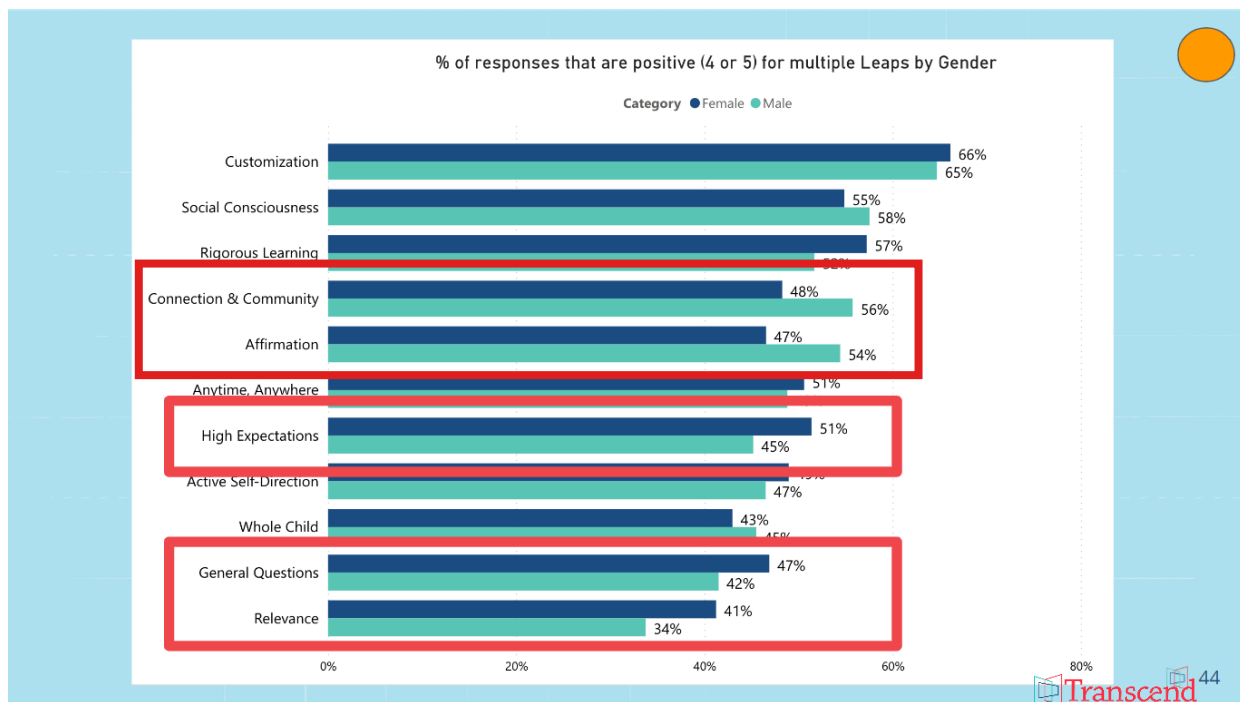
Question	% Positive
At my school I have goals for my learning, and I have choices about how I pursue those goals.	72%
At my school I feel like I have a say about what happens to me.	33%
At my school I can choose how to do my work.	37%
Adults at my school respect my ideas and suggestions.	61%

Question	% Positive
At my school what we learn is often connected to life outside the classroom.	34%
At my school what I'm learning matters a lot to me.	54%
At my school I get to learn things I'm interested in.	42%

**Figure 1b.** 21<sup>st</sup> Learning Leaps ‘Active Self-Direction’ – Percent of Responses that are Positive.

Of the listed 21st-century school leaps, ‘Active Self-Direction’ and ‘Relevance’ had the smallest percentage of positive rankings amongst CJUSD survey respondents. Each leap had a corresponding subset of questions that students ranked to contribute to the overall percentage of positive ranking of the leap. For the ‘Relevance’ category, only 33% of respondents agreed that they felt like they had a say in what happened to them, at school (*Figure 1a*) and only 37% agreed that they can choose how to do their [school] work. Additionally, under the ‘Active Self-Direction’ leap, only 34% of students agreed that what they learned is often connected to life outside of the classroom (*Figure 1b*). These data points were referenced frequently by participants, especially when reimagining school curriculum and career skills development for youth.

**Figure 2.** 21<sup>st</sup> Learning Leaps Ranking – Percent of Responses that are Positive for multiple Leaps by Gender.



When comparing these ranks in leaps, some differences become apparent between genders. Four out of the 5 leaps with at least a 3% difference had female respondents ranking leaps at a high percentage compared to male respondents. ‘Relevance’ had the largest disparities between genders, with a 7% difference between females and males.