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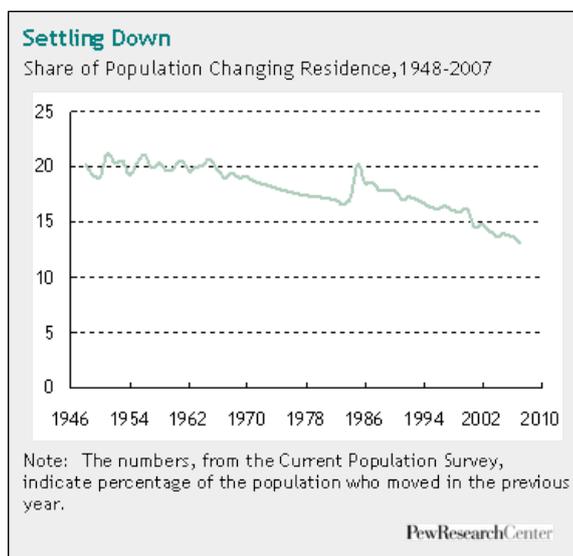
American Mobility: Movers, Stayers, Places and Reasons

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As a nation, the United States is often portrayed as restless and rootless. Census data, though, indicate that Americans are settling down. Only 13% of Americans changed residences between 2006 and 2007, the smallest share since the government began tracking this trend in the late 1940s.

This report is accompanied by a series of interactive maps that display regional and state migration totals and trends, based on Census Bureau data. [CLICK HERE TO VIEW MAPS](#)

A new Pew Social & Demographic Trends survey finds that most Americans have moved to a new community at least once in their lives, although a notable number -- nearly four-in-ten -- have never left the place in which they were born.¹ Asked why they live where they do, movers most often cite the pull of economic opportunity. Stayers most often cite the tug of family and connections.



Both the survey and Census data indicate that the biggest differences in the characteristics of movers and stayers revolve around geography and education. In the Midwest, nearly half of adult residents say they have spent their entire lives in their hometown. That compares with fewer than a third of those who live in Western states. Cities, suburbs and small towns have more movers than stayers, while rural areas are more evenly split. Three-quarters of college graduates have moved at least once, compared with just over half of Americans with no more than a high school diploma. College graduates also move longer distances -- and move more often -- than Americans with a high school diploma or less, and employment plays a greater role in their decisions about where to live. By income group, the most affluent Americans are the most likely to have moved.

The Census Bureau's Current Population Survey indicates that the number of people who moved between 2006 and 2007, 38.6 million, was the lowest since 1982-83. That earlier period included part of a 16-month recession that ended in November 1982. The annual migration rate, which held at 20% through the mid-1960s, has drifted downward since then before hitting its low last year, with the recent housing market slowdown perhaps playing a part.

Analysts say migration has declined because the U.S. population is getting older and most moves are made when people are young. Another brake on moving is the rise of two-career couples, because it is more difficult to coordinate a relocation when two jobs are involved.

About the Survey

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted with a nationally representative sample of 2,260 adults living in the continental United States. A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the continental United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. A total of 1,502 interviews were completed with respondents contacted by landline telephone and 758 from those contacted on their cellular phone. The data are weighted to produce a final sample that is representative of the general population of adults in the continental United States.

- Interviews conducted Oct. 3-19, 2008
- 2,260 interviews
- Margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.3 percentage points for results based on the total sample at the 95% confidence level.
- Note on terminology: Whites include only non-Hispanic whites. Blacks include only non-Hispanic blacks. Hispanics are of any race.

Survey interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Interviews conducted in English or Spanish.

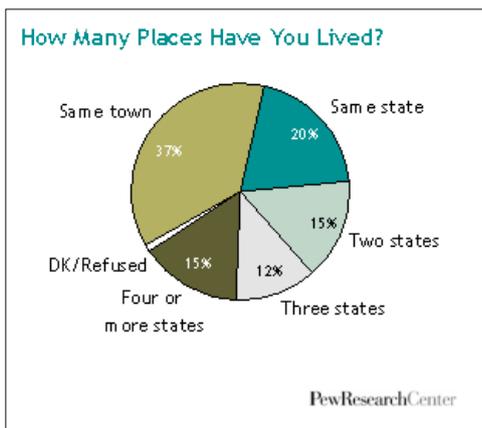
The Pew Social & Demographic Trends survey of 2,260 adults, which was conducted Oct. 3-19, 2008, asked respondents why they have stayed in their hometowns or have moved to their current community. This report combines the survey findings with Census Bureau data on migration patterns between states and regions.

The survey also posed questions to U.S.-born movers about the "place in your heart you consider to be home," and to foreign-born respondents about "the country in your heart you consider to be home."

Home means different things to different people. Among U.S.-born adults who have lived in more than one community, nearly four-in-ten (38%) say the place they consider home isn't where they're living now. But there's a wide range of definitions of "home" among Americans who have lived in at least one place besides their original hometown: 26% say it's where they were born or raised; 22% say it's where they live now; 18% say it's where they have lived the longest; 15% say it's where their family comes from; and 4% say it's where they went to high school.

As for foreign-born adults, a majority say that the U.S. is home, while nearly four-in-ten reserve that designation for their country of birth. Not surprisingly, the longer an immigrant lives in this country, the more likely the U.S. is considered "home."

Among all respondents to the Pew Research Center survey, 57% say they have not lived in the U.S. outside their current state: 37% have never left their hometown and 20% have left their hometown (or native country) but not lived outside their current state.



The Pew survey finds that stayers overwhelmingly say they remain because of family ties and because their hometowns are good places to raise children. Their life circumstances match those explanations. Most stayers say at least half a dozen members of their extended families live within an hour's drive; for 40%, more than 10 relatives live nearby. A majority of stayers also cite a feeling of belonging as a major reason for staying put.

Movers are far less likely to cite those kinds of ties. Fewer than four-in-ten say a major reason they moved to their current community has to do with family or child-rearing. Most movers have five or fewer extended-family members living within an hour's drive of them, and 26% have none. The most popular reason that movers choose a new community, selected by a 44% plurality, is job or business opportunities, according to the Pew survey. About the same share of stayers (40%) cite job or business opportunities as a major reason for staying, but far more stayers choose reasons related to family and friends.

Movers are more likely than stayers to say that it is likely they will move in the next five years. But despite those and other differences, equal shares of movers

and stayers-about six-in-ten-rate their communities overall as good to excellent.

Read the full report at pewsocialtrends.org.

Notes

¹ The Pew survey defines a mover as someone who has changed communities, while the Census Bureau uses a broader definition that also includes people who moved to a new home in the same community.