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**Geographical  
Mobility:  
March 1980  
to March 1981**



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## Contents

	Page
Rate of moving .....	1
Regional differences .....	1
Migration for cities and suburbs .....	2
Migration differentials .....	2
Interval length .....	4
Migration universe .....	4
Allocations of mobility status .....	4
Related reports .....	4
Comparability of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan data from the March 1980 CPS with data for previous years .....	5
Table finding guide .....	6

### TEXT TABLES

A. Mobility rates for all ages and ages 20 to 29 years: 1960-61, 1970-71, and 1980-81 .....	1
B. Movers, by type of move: 1980-81 .....	2
C. Interregional migration: 1980-81 .....	2
D. Movers, by region of current residence: 1980-81 .....	2
E. Movers within regions, by type of move: 1980-81 .....	2
F. Central city and suburban migration: 1975-76 and 1980-81 .....	3

### DETAILED TABLES

1. Detailed mobility, by sex, race, and Spanish origin .....	7
2. General mobility, by race, region, and type of residence .....	8
3. Mobility and region of residence at both dates, by race .....	10
4. Detailed mobility, by age and sex .....	14
5. General mobility, by sex and single years of age .....	16
6. General mobility, by region and age .....	19
7. Region of residence at both dates, by age and race .....	21
8. Metropolitan mobility, by race and region .....	22
9. Metropolitan mobility, by age, sex, and relationship to householder .....	23
10. Central-city mobility, by age, sex, and relationship to householder .....	26
11. Metropolitan mobility of families, by type of family household and age .....	29
12. Central-city mobility of families, by type of family household and age .....	31
13. General mobility of families, by type of family household and age .....	33
14. Metropolitan mobility of family householders, by age of householder and ages and number of own children under 18 .....	35
15. Central-city mobility of family householders by age of householder and ages and number of own children under 18 .....	36
16. Metropolitan mobility of married-couple family householders, by age of householder, family income, and number of own children under 18 .....	37
17. Central-city mobility of married-couple family householders, by age of householder, family income, and number of own children under 18 .....	39
18. General mobility of married-couple family householders, by age of householder, family income, and number of own children under 18 .....	41

## DETAILED TABLES—Continued

	Page
19. Metropolitan mobility of married-couple family householders, by age of householder and number of own children under 6 . . . . .	43
20. Central-city mobility of married-couple family householders, by age of householder and number of own children under 6 . . . . .	44
21. General mobility of married-couple family householders, by age of householder and number of own children under 6 . . . . .	45
22. Metropolitan mobility, by age, sex, and years of school completed . . . . .	46
23. Central-city mobility, by age, sex, and years of school completed . . . . .	48
24. General mobility, by age, sex, and years of school completed . . . . .	50
25. Metropolitan mobility, by race, Spanish origin, and years of school completed . . . . .	52
26. Central-city mobility, by race, Spanish origin, and years of school completed . . . . .	52
27. General mobility, by age, sex, marital status, and employment status . . . . .	53
28. Metropolitan mobility, by age, sex, marital status, employment status, and major occupation group . . . . .	61
29. Metropolitan mobility, by sex, race, Spanish origin, employment status, and major occupation group . . . . .	71
30. Central-city mobility, by age, sex, employment status, and major occupation group . . . . .	72
31. Central-city mobility, by sex, race, Spanish origin, employment status, and major occupation group . . . . .	74
32. Metropolitan mobility, by sex, age, marital status, and income . . . . .	75
33. Central-city mobility, by sex, age, marital status, and income . . . . .	81
34. Metropolitan mobility of family householders, by race, age, region, and receipt of public assistance . . . . .	87
35. Detailed mobility of family householders, by race, region, and receipt of public assistance . . . . .	97
36. Metropolitan mobility, by age, race, family status, region, and poverty status . . . . .	102
37. Nonmovers and movers to SMSA's, by size of SMSA and selected characteristics . . . . .	117
38. Movers from SMSA's, by size of SMSA and selected characteristics . . . . .	120
39. Detailed mobility, in-migrants, and out-migrants, by region and race . . . . .	123
40. Movers within and between States, and in-migrants and out-migrants for each region, by selected characteristics . . . . .	125
41. Interregional migrants, by selected characteristics . . . . .	130
42. Mobility for interregional migrants, by race . . . . .	131
43. General mobility, by race and metropolitan mobility . . . . .	131

## APPENDIXES

Appendix A. Definitions and Explanations . . . . .	133
Appendix B. Source and Reliability of the Estimates	
Source of the data . . . . .	137
Reliability of the estimates . . . . .	137

## APPENDIX TABLES

B-1. Standard errors of estimated numbers . . . . .	138
B-2. Standard errors of estimated percentages . . . . .	139
B-3. Factors to be applied to generalized standard errors in tables B-1 and B-2 . . . . .	141
B-4. "a" and "b" parameters for estimated numbers and percentages of persons . . . . .	142

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### SYMBOLS USED IN TABLES

- Represents zero or rounds to zero.
  - B Base less than 75,000.
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## Geographical Mobility: March 1980 to March 1981

Migration, or geographical mobility, is an important component of demographic change. It has a major impact on population distribution as people move between cities and suburbs, metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas, States, and regions. It is important to know the characteristics of these movers—age, race, sex, occupation, income, education, and marital status—in order to assess the impact that migration may have on the areas of origin and destination.

The mobility data in this report are estimates from the March 1981 Current Population Survey (CPS). They were derived by comparing the location of each respondent's residence in 1980 with their current residence in 1981. For comparative purposes, the text also includes some mobility data from the 1961, 1971, and 1976 surveys.

### RATE OF MOVING

The 1980-81 data indicate that the rate of moving among Americans has continued to decline (table A). About 17 percent of the population changed residences within the United States between 1980 and 1981, compared with about 19 percent during the 1970-71 period and about 21 percent between 1960 and 1961. This decline occurred despite the fact that the population 20 to 29 years old, the age group with the highest mobility rate, rose from about 12 percent of the total population in 1961 to about 18 percent in 1981. The decline in the overall mobility rate would likely be even greater if the percentage of the population in that very mobile age group was as low in 1981 as it was in 1961. Application of 1980-81 moving rates by age to the 1961 age structure produces an overall mobility rate of about 16 percent.

The majority of moves are short-distance moves. Between 1980 and 1981, about 63 percent of all those changing residence moved within the same county, 83 percent moved within the same State, and 91 percent moved within the same region (table B). Thus, about 9 percent of all movers lived in a different region in 1981 than in 1980.

### REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Trends in net interregional migration that began in the late 1960's,<sup>1</sup> including net migration out of the North and into the South and the West, have continued (table C). Between 1980 and 1981, the Northeast and North Central Regions both had net outmigration (242,000 and 406,000, respectively). The South, which includes Texas, had a large gain with a net immigration of 487,000 persons.

The mobility rates for the four regions of the United States vary from the 17 percent average for the country as a whole. The percentages of persons in each region in 1981 who had moved since 1980 are shown in table D. The Northeast and North Central regions had lower rates of moving while the South and West had higher rates than the national average. This is partially because the Northeast and North Central regions had net outmigration. Therefore, persons who lived in the North in 1980 and moved to the South or the West by 1981 inflated the number of movers living in those two regions at the survey date and deflated the number of movers living in the North.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 368, *Geographical Mobility: March 1975 to March 1980*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981.

**Table A. Mobility Rates for All Ages and Ages 20 to 29 Years: 1960-61, 1970-71, and 1980-81**

(Includes movers from abroad. Numbers in thousands)

Period	All ages		Ages 20 to 29 years		
	Number	Percent movers	Number	Percent of total population	Percent movers
1960-61.....	177,354	20.6	21,608	12.2	40.8
1970-71.....	201,506	18.7	30,508	15.1	39.7
1980-81.....	221,641	17.2	40,676	18.4	34.7

**Table B. Movers, by Type of Move: 1980-81**

(Excludes movers from abroad. Number in thousands)

Type of move	Number	Percent
Total movers.....	36,887	100.0
Within same region.....	33,525	90.9
Within same State.....	30,711	83.3
Within same county.....	23,097	62.6
Between counties.....	7,614	20.6
Between States.....	2,814	7.6
Between regions.....	3,361	9.1

**Table C. Interregional Migration: 1980-81**

(Excludes movers from abroad. Numbers in thousands)

Region	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net migration
Northeast.....	464	706	-242
North Central.....	650	1,056	-406
South.....	1,377	890	+487
West.....	871	710	+161

**Table D. Movers, by Region of Current Residence: 1980-81**

(Includes movers from abroad. Numbers in thousands)

Region	Number	Percent
United States.....	38,200	17.2
Northeast.....	5,850	12.2
North Central.....	8,968	15.7
South.....	13,690	18.5
West.....	9,692	22.7

**Table E. Movers Within Regions, by Type of Move: 1980-81**

(Numbers in thousands)

Type of move	Northeast	North Central	South	West
All movers within regions.....	5,179	8,138	11,902	8,306
Within same State.....	4,871	7,668	10,656	7,516
Within same county.....	3,780	5,931	7,719	5,668
Between counties.....	1,091	1,737	2,937	1,848
Between States.....	308	470	1,246	790
PERCENT				
All movers within regions.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Within same State.....	94.1	94.2	89.5	90.5
Within same county.....	73.0	72.9	64.9	68.2
Between counties.....	21.1	21.3	24.7	22.2
Between States.....	5.9	5.8	10.5	9.5

Rates of moving within each region also vary considerably from region to region (table E). Movers who remained in the North were more likely to make shorter distance moves than intraregional movers in the South and the West. Persons residing in the North who moved within the same region were more likely to have moved within the same State than those in the South and West, while movers living in the South and West were more likely to have moved between States. Even for those moving within the same State, persons living in the North were more likely to have moved within the same county rather than between counties.

## MIGRATION FOR CITIES AND SUBURBS

Persons moving to metropolitan areas more frequently moved to suburban areas than to the central cities. In fact, 50 percent more of those persons leaving nonmetropolitan areas went to the suburbs (1,276,000) than to central cities (880,000).

Central cities of metropolitan areas continued to experience net outmigration between 1980 and 1981, at approximately the same magnitude as they had in the 1975-76 period (table F). Central cities lost 5,001,000 persons and gained 2,765,000 persons through internal migration between 1980 and 1981 for a net loss of 2,236,000. Of those leaving the central cities, three times as many went to the suburbs (3,844,000) as to nonmetropolitan areas (1,157,000).

The balance of SMSA's (the mostly suburban part of metropolitan areas outside the central cities) continued to experience net immigration. These areas gained 5,120,000 persons from central cities and nonmetropolitan areas and lost 3,078,000 persons for a net gain of 2,042,000. Most migrants who left the suburbs went to the central cities (1,885,000), but a large number also went to nonmetropolitan areas (1,193,000).

## MIGRATION DIFFERENTIALS

Migration rates for the 1980-81 period varied considerably by age (tables 4 and 5). As stated earlier, persons in their 20's move more often than any other age group. In

**Table F. Central-City and Suburban Migration:  
1975-76 and 1980-81**

(Numbers in thousands)

	1975-76	1980-81
To suburbs.....	4,753	5,120
From central cities.....	3,499	3,844
From nonmetropolitan areas.....	1,254	1,276
From suburbs.....	3,193	3,078
To central cities.....	1,822	1,885
To nonmetropolitan areas...	1,371	1,193
Net for suburbs.....	+1,560	+2,042
To central cities.....	2,650	2,765
From suburbs.....	1,822	1,885
From nonmetropolitan areas.....	828	880
From central cities.....	4,605	5,001
To suburbs.....	3,499	3,844
To nonmetropolitan areas...	1,106	1,157
Net for central cities.....	-1,955	-2,236

1981, about 38 percent of the persons who were 20 to 24 years old and 31 percent of those 25 to 29 years old reported that they lived in a different house 1 year earlier, compared with about 17 percent of the total population. As age increases, the likelihood of moving decreases and the annual rates of moving decline. For age groups above 45, the annual rates of moving are less than 10 percent.

Persons in their 20's have the highest rates of moving for many reasons. These are the ages at which persons leave their parental homes to establish their own households, start new jobs, get married, attend college, and enter or leave the Armed Forces. All of these life-cycle and employment status changes are frequently accompanied by residential changes as well.

The high rate of mobility for children at the youngest ages reflects the high rates of mobility of their parents. Older children are more likely to have older parents with lower rates of mobility. Generally, the older the child, the lower the rate of mobility. For example, the mobility rate for children 1 to 4 years old was 26 percent, while that for children 14 to 17 years old was only 12 percent. The rate of 23 percent for 18-to-19 year olds is less a reflection of the low mobility rates of their parents than the fact that some of these people are already beginning to make the kinds of moves responsible for the high mobility rates found for the 20-to-24 age group.

Between 1980 and 1981, Blacks had a higher overall rate of moving than Whites (18 percent and 16 percent, respectively); however, Blacks tended to move shorter distances than Whites (table 2). In the 1980-81 period, about 14 percent of Blacks moved within the same county, compared with only 10 percent of Whites. Whites, however, had higher rates of intercounty and interstate migration than Blacks. During the 1-year period, 6 percent of the Whites moved to a different county. Only about 5 percent of Blacks moved

between counties with approximately equal rates for those moving within the same State and between States.

Persons with moderate incomes have higher rates of moving than persons at either end of the income distribution (table 32). One reason that persons with moderate incomes are more likely to move than persons with high incomes is because the former are more likely to be renters. Data from the 1978 Annual Housing Survey<sup>2</sup> show that renters are over three times as likely to move as owners. Persons with low incomes, such as the elderly or those not in the labor force, may have low rates of moving because they cannot afford to move.

The survey data indicate that mobility status varies by labor force status (table 28). The mobility rates were higher for civilian persons currently unemployed than for those employed (28 percent and 18 percent, respectively). At least some of these people may have been employed before the move but were still looking for work at their new location.

Persons not in the labor force in 1981 had much lower mobility rates than either of those groups (12 percent). Nearly 40 percent of the 817,000 members of the Armed Forces included in the survey (those living off post or with their families on post) changed residence during the 1-year period, continuing the trend of Armed Forces personnel to have the highest mobility rates of any of the labor force status groups.<sup>3</sup> Labor force status refers to the time of the survey and, therefore, represents status at the end rather than the beginning of the mobility interval.

Mobility status also varies somewhat among occupation groups (table 28). For nonfarm workers, mobility rates vary little among occupations. Farm workers had, by far, the lowest mobility rate of any of the occupations. A limitation of the statistics is that occupation is measured at the end of the migration interval; for some persons occupation changed, but the data do not allow comparison of occupational changes associated with geographical mobility.

Educational attainment also influences the likelihood of geographical mobility (table 25). College graduates are more likely to move than high school graduates who, in turn, move more frequently than persons with only an elementary education. Among persons 25 years old and over, 16 percent of those with 4 or more years of college moved between March 1980 and March 1981, compared with 12 percent of those who had completed only 4 years of high school. Only 9 percent of those with 8 or fewer years of education, many of whom are also elderly, moved during the year.

The presence and ages of own children in a family influence the likelihood of moving (table 14). Among family householders who were 15 to 54 years old at the survey date, those with own children under 18 were less residentially mobile than those with no own children under 18. The families whose children were all under 6 years were more

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Housing Reports, Series H-150-78, Part D, *Housing Characteristics of Recent Movers for the United States and Regions: 1978*, Annual Housing Survey: 1978, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 368, *Geographical Mobility: March 1975 to March 1980*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981.

residentially mobile than those with children over 6 years. Thus, the presence of school-age children acts to reduce the geographical mobility of families.

The data in this report are for individuals and, therefore, do not relate directly to the migration of families. For many purposes, the mobility of family householders can be used as an indication of the mobility of the entire family because family members usually have the same mobility status as the householder. However, some families were formed during the migration interval and others were dissolved. Still other families experienced changes in composition as a result of persons joining the family or leaving it during the migration interval.

## INTERVAL LENGTH

The mobility questions that are used in the March CPS do not measure the number of moves during a given time period but estimate the number of persons who lived in a different house at the beginning of the period than at the survey date. In other words, the number of *movers* is estimated, not the number of *moves*. Persons who moved more than once are counted only once, and persons who moved out of their current residence but returned by the end of the period are not counted as movers at all. As a result, a count of the number of *movers* in a shorter period more nearly approximates the number of *moves* during that period than is measured in a longer interval which more nearly measures the percentage of the population that is affected by mobility.

The effect of repeat movers on short-interval mobility rates can be illustrated by comparing the 1-year mobility rate from the March 1981 CPS with the 5-year rate derived from data collected in the 1980 survey. According to estimates from the 1981 survey, 16.6 percent of the 221,641,000 persons 1 year old and over were living in a different house in the United States 1 year earlier. By comparison, the 1980 survey shows that 45.0 percent of the 202,216,000 persons 5 years old and over were living in a different house in the United States on that date 5 years earlier.

## MIGRATION UNIVERSE

The mobility data in this report are derived from the answers to questions on residence 1 year before the survey date and the geographical location of the respondent's current residence. A facsimile of the question on previous residence is shown below. These questions were asked for all members of the survey household who were 15 years old and over on the survey date. Previous residence for persons under 15 years old was allocated based on the responses of their parents or other members of the household. (See the section entitled "Allocations of Mobility Status" for a further discussion of the allocation of mobility data for children and other persons for whom no response or only partial responses to the mobility questions were given.)

The universe sampled includes all civilian noninstitutional households and members of the Armed Forces living off base or with their families on base. (For a more detailed discussion of the sample selection and limitations of the sample and survey design, see "Source and Reliability of the Estimates.")

<p>53. Was . . . living in this house 1 year ago; that is, on March 1, 1980?</p> <p>Yes <input type="radio"/> (<i>Skip to 55</i>) No <input type="radio"/></p>
<p>54. Where did . . . live on March 1, 1980?</p> <p>A. Name of State, foreign country, U.S. possession, etc. →</p> <p>B. Name of county →</p> <p>C. Name of city, town, etc. →</p> <p>D. Did . . . live inside the limits of that city, town, village, etc.)</p> <p>Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/></p>

## ALLOCATIONS OF MOBILITY STATUS

In the March 1981 CPS, complete mobility information was not reported for about 6 percent of all persons 15 years old and over, and the mobility questions were not asked for any persons under 15 years of age. In these cases, missing mobility data are allocated by values obtained for other family members (if available) or from other active respondents with similar demographic characteristics. The previous residence assigned to a nonrespondent is that obtained for another person with similar demographic characteristics who did respond and who has been selected systematically in the order in which individual records are processed. Characteristics used in these allocations (when mobility data for other family members are not available) are age, race, years of school completed, metropolitan status, and State of current residence. (State of previous residence is used instead of State of current residence if State but not place or county of previous residence is provided by the respondent.)

## RELATED REPORTS

Statistics on the mobility of the population have been collected annually in the Current Population Survey since 1948. Tables similar to those in this report were published for the 1975-80 period in Series P-20, No. 368, *Geographical Mobility: March 1975 to March 1980*; for the 1975-79 period in Series P-20, No. 353, *Geographical Mobility: March 1975 to March 1979*; for the 1975-78 period in Series P-20, No. 331, *Geographical Mobility: March 1975 to March 1978*; for the 1975-77 period in Series P-20, No. 320, *Geographical Mobility: March 1975 to March 1977*; for the 1975-76



period in Series P-20, No. 305, *Geographical Mobility: March 1975 to March 1976*; for the 1970-75 period in Series P-20, No. 285, *Mobility of the Population of the United States: March 1970 to March 1975*; for the 1970-74 period in Series P-20, No. 273; and for the 1970-73 period in Series P-20, No. 262. Data for the 1970-71 period were issued in Series P-20, No. 235, and similar statistics were published in this series each year beginning with the report for 1947-48.

Statistics on geographical mobility of the population for cities, counties, SMSA's, urbanized areas, State economic areas, States, divisions, regions, and the United States appear in Volume I of the 1970 Census of Population (based on State of birth or residence 5 years before the census). Detailed statistics on mobility status by race and sex for these areas and the United States appear in Volume II, Subject Reports: PC(2)-2A, *State of Birth*; PC(2)-2B, *Mobility for States and the Nation*; PC(2)-2C, *Mobility for Metropolitan Areas*; PC(2)-2D, *Lifetime and Recent Migration*; PC(2)-2E, *Migration Between State Economic Areas*; and PC(2)-7E, *Occupation and Residence in 1965*. Some other subject reports of the 1970 census present statistics on mobility status in relation to the main subject of the report.

## COMPARABILITY OF METROPOLITAN AND NONMETROPOLITAN DATA FROM THE 1980 CPS WITH DATA FOR PREVIOUS YEARS

Changes in CPS design and procedures over the last several years have made the annual series of sample population data for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas inconsistent. Analytic comparisons of year-to-year changes in these figures should be avoided. Trends in metropolitan

and nonmetropolitan population growth over the 1970-80 and 1975-80 periods should not be appreciably affected by the procedural changes.

The major revisions to the CPS sample design and estimation methods have involved the expansion of the number of sample units from 55,000 housing units to 65,500 housing units. This incorporation of approximately 10,000 supplemental housing units into the March CPS sample in 1977 was accompanied by new procedures for inflating the sample results to reflect national estimates. It was determined subsequent to the introduction of the additional sample that the new inflating (weighting) procedures used for processing both the March 1977 and March 1978 CPS supplement data had resulted in an apparent overestimate of the nonmetropolitan population and corresponding underestimate of the metropolitan population for those years. For March 1979, another revision of the weighting process was introduced to correct the problem discovered in the earlier procedures. The result of this change was a spurious large increase in the metropolitan population and decrease in the nonmetropolitan population relative to March 1978 levels.

Beginning with the March 1979 CPS, metropolitan and nonmetropolitan population estimates also reflect other operational changes including the introduction of a coverage improvement sample designed to provide greater accuracy in survey estimation. The net effect of all changes in procedure was to increase the metropolitan area estimates. Research and detailed analysis of the impact of each procedural change on the population estimates is underway and the results will be issued in a forthcoming technical report.