

# Why People Move: Exploring the March 2000 Current Population Survey

*Special Studies*

## Current Population Reports

By  
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Why do people move? Most social scientists agree that there are a combination of economic and noneconomic reasons for moving that vary depending on the time period and the age of the movers. Previous research shows that increases in age reduce the likelihood of moving (until retirement age) and that long-distance moves are most common among the highly educated. Generally, the distance of the move is related to whether the move is motivated by employment or housing reasons. Interregional moves are more likely to be job-related, while intraurban moves are more likely to be housing related.<sup>1</sup>

Movers are defined as those who were living in a different house or apartment 1 year prior to the March Current Population Survey. Movers were asked for the location of their previous residence. Movers can be categorized as to whether they were living in the same or different county, state, or region, or were movers from abroad. For the purposes of this report, moves across county boundaries are defined as long-distance moves (intercounty migration), while moves within counties are defined as short-distance moves (also called residential mobility).

Until recently there has been little national data on individual reasons for moving. Typically, researchers have viewed differences in aggregate mobility rates and streams as a response to variations in place characteristics. Thus, macroeconomic determinants (e.g. place level characteristics) are often used to infer motivations for moving, which is typically viewed as a microeconomic (individual level) phenomenon. The addition of a question on main reason for moving to the 1998 Current Population Survey (CPS) reduces the need to make indirect inferences about individual decisions to move.

In 1998, a reason for moving question was added to the March CPS. Reason-for-moving responses are collected from the householder and for all other people 1 year and older who moved during the past year. Those who moved with the householder are assigned the reason of the householder. The reason-for-moving question offers 17 response categories, ordered under four groupings: family, employment, housing, and other reasons.<sup>2</sup> Only one reason is entered for each mover, with responses to the "other" category recorded verbatim.

Based primarily on data from the March 2000 CPS, this analysis focuses on movers within the United States between March 1999 and March 2000, though some data for the March 1998 and March 1999 CPS

<sup>1</sup>For examples of this type of research, see Steve H. Murdock. 1984. "The Relative Effects of Economic and Noneconomic Factors on Age-Specific Migration: 1960-1980," *Rural Sociology*, 49:309-18; Peter H. Rossi and Anne B. Shlay. 1982. "Residential Mobility and Public Policy Issues: Why Families Move Revisited," *Journal of Social Issues*, 38:21-34; Anne S. Williams and Patrick C. Jobes. 1990. "Economic Quality of Life Considerations in Urban-Rural Migration," *Journal of Rural Studies*, 6:187-94.

<sup>2</sup>In 1998, there were only 15 response categories listed on the survey instrument. Two categories were created from the verbatim "other" responses: "wanted cheaper housing" and "health reasons." Additionally, the response categories "to attend college" and "wanted better neighborhood" were modified to include "to leave college" and "less crime." These response categories were added to the 1999 survey instrument.

Table 1.  
**Reason for Moving: March 1997-1998, March 1998-1999, and March 1999-2000<sup>1</sup>**

(Movers within the United States, age 1 and older)

Reason for moving	Number (in thousands)			Percent distribution by reason		
	1999-2000	1998-1999	1997-1998	1999-2000	1998-1999	1997-1998
<b>Total movers</b> .....	<b>41,642</b>	<b>41,207</b>	<b>41,304</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family-related reasons</b> .....	<b>10,969</b>	<b>10,537</b>	<b>11,136</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>27.0</b>
Change in marital status .....	2,586	2,689	3,002	6.2	6.5	7.3
To establish own household .....	3,082	3,213	3,401	7.4	7.8	8.2
Other family reason .....	5,301	4,635	4,733	12.7	11.3	11.5
<b>Work-related reasons</b> .....	<b>6,725</b>	<b>6,602</b>	<b>7,080</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>17.1</b>
New job/job transfer .....	4,052	3,773	4,076	9.7	9.2	9.9
To look for work/lost job .....	540	542	677	1.3	1.3	1.6
Closer to work/easier commute .....	1,462	1,319	1,468	3.5	3.2	3.6
Retired .....	181	230	241	0.4	0.6	0.6
Other job-related reason .....	488	739	618	1.2	1.8	1.5
<b>Housing-related reasons</b> .....	<b>21,471</b>	<b>21,027</b>	<b>19,173</b>	<b>51.6</b>	<b>51.0</b>	<b>46.4</b>
Wanted to own home/not rent .....	4,776	3,329	3,868	11.5	8.1	9.4
New/better house/apartment .....	7,685	8,839	7,936	18.5	21.4	19.2
Better neighborhood/less crime .....	1,846	1,632	1,986	4.4	4.0	4.8
Cheaper housing .....	2,303	2,536	448	5.5	6.2	1.1
Other housing reason .....	4,862	4,692	4,935	11.7	11.4	11.9
<b>Other reasons</b> .....	<b>2,478</b>	<b>3,041</b>	<b>3,915</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>9.5</b>
Attend/leave college .....	944	748	719	2.3	1.8	1.7
Change of climate .....	306	325	303	0.7	0.8	0.7
Health reasons .....	464	460	234	1.1	1.1	0.6
Other reason .....	765	1,508	2,660	1.8	3.7	6.4

<sup>1</sup>See text concerning changes in the survey instrument between March 1998 and March 2000.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1998, March 1999, and March 2000.

### CPS Question on Reason for Moving

*“What was [your/name] main reason for moving?”*

#### Family-Related Reasons

1. Change in marital status.
2. To establish own household.
3. Other family reasons.

#### Employment-Related Reasons

4. New job or job transfer.
5. To look for work or lost job.
6. To be closer to work/easier commute.
7. Retired.
8. Other job-related reasons.

#### Housing-Related Reasons

9. Wanted to own home, not rent.
10. Wanted new or better house/apartment.
11. Wanted better neighborhood/less crime.
12. Wanted cheaper housing.
13. Other housing reason.

#### Other Reasons

14. To attend or leave college.
15. Change of climate.
16. Health reasons.
17. Other reason (specify).

differences in education, employment status, household income, and poverty status.

### Most moves are for housing-related reasons.

As shown in Table 1, between March 1999 and March 2000, the highest percentage of people moved for housing-related reasons (52 percent), followed by family (26 percent) and work-related reasons (16 percent).<sup>3</sup> Within these major categories, most moved for a “new/better house/apartment” (19 percent), followed by “other family” reasons (13 percent), “other housing” reasons and “to own home/not rent” (12 percent), and then by a “new job/job transfer” (10 percent).

<sup>3</sup>The estimates in this report are based on responses from a sample of the population. As with all surveys, estimates may vary from the actual (population) values because of sampling variation, or other factors. All statements made in this report have undergone statistical testing and meet U.S. Census Bureau standards for statistical accuracy.

about movers in 1997-98 and 1998-99 will be presented as well. The report begins by comparing the overall distribution of reasons for moving, for both long-distance

and short-distance moves, for the three time periods for which data are available. The report then examines reasons for moving from the March 2000 CPS, looking at

These results are very similar to those found in the 1998 and 1999 surveys. Rankings were the same among the four major groupings, (1) housing, (2) family, (3) work, (4) other, and no more than 5 percentage points separated results for any of the 3 years. Among the more detailed response categories, except for “cheaper housing” and other “other” reasons, no more than 2 percentage points separated any of the 1998 and 2000 results. The response of “cheaper housing” increased from 1 percent in 1998 to 6 percent in 1999 and 2000. This is probably due to the addition of this category to the 1999

survey instrument, since the 1998 results on “cheaper housing” were simply coded from verbatim “other” write-in responses. Similarly, the reduction in other “other” responses from 6 percent in 1998 to 2 percent in 2000 may be explained by the Census Bureau’s concerted effort to have interviewers choose responses from one of the other preexisting 16 categories and/or coding changes implemented for the 2000 survey.

These initial results illustrate one of the limitations of the data, particularly the high number of responses included in “other”

categories. While the “other” category was selected by only 2 percent of the respondents, when combined with “other” family, job, and housing reasons, these answer types were given by over one-quarter of the respondents (27 percent), though this number has decreased since 1998 (31 percent). As a result, it is more meaningful to interpret the data by grouping the responses into the four major categories shown in bold in the tables. More detailed response categories are discussed when of particular interest.

**Long-distance moves are more likely to be made for work-related reasons, while short distance moves are more likely to be made for housing-related reasons.**

For this report, moves across county boundaries (intercounty) are called long-distance moves, while moves within a county (intracounty) are called short-distance moves. Table 2 shows that between March 1999 and March 2000, the proportion of moves made for family-related reasons was about the same for intra- and intercounty moves, but there were dramatic differences for housing- and work-related moves. Only 6 percent of intracounty movers cited a work-related reason, compared with 31 percent of intercounty movers. More than two-thirds of work-related, long-distance movers moved for a new job or job transfer. Conversely, 65 percent of intracounty movers cited a housing-related reason, compared with just 32 percent of the intercounty movers. Among housing reasons, the largest percentage-point differential between short- and long-distance movers was for those moving to live in a new or better house or apartment (24 percent to 10 percent). Though less frequently given as the main reason for moving, significant

Figure 1.  
**Reason for Moving by Type of Move:  
 March 1999-2000**  
 (Percent distribution of movers within the United States, age 1 and older)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

Table 2.  
**Reason for Moving by Type of Move: March 1997-1998, March 1998-1999, and March 1999-2000<sup>1</sup>**

(Movers within the United States, age 1 and older)

Reason for moving	Percent distribution by reason								
	1999-2000			1998-1999			1997-1998		
	Total	Intra-county	Inter-county	Total	Intra-county	Inter-county	Total	Intra-county	Inter-county
<b>Total movers</b> .....	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family-related reasons</b> .....	<b>26.3</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>26.6</b>
Change in marital status .....	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.5	6.5	6.6	7.3	7.6	6.6
To establish own household .....	7.4	9.3	4.7	7.8	9.7	4.8	8.2	10.0	4.9
Other family reason .....	12.7	10.4	16.0	11.3	9.2	14.5	11.5	9.5	15.1
<b>Work-related reasons</b> .....	<b>16.2</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>36.6</b>
New job/job transfer .....	9.7	1.4	21.6	9.2	1.4	21.5	9.9	2.1	24.6
To look for work/lost job .....	1.3	0.5	2.4	1.3	0.3	2.9	1.6	0.5	3.8
Closer to work/easier commute .....	3.5	3.0	4.2	3.2	3.0	3.6	3.6	3.3	4.0
Retired .....	0.4	0.1	0.9	0.6	0.3	1.1	0.6	0.1	1.5
Other job-related reason .....	1.2	0.6	2.0	1.8	0.7	3.6	1.5	0.8	2.8
<b>Housing-related reasons</b> .....	<b>51.6</b>	<b>65.4</b>	<b>31.9</b>	<b>51.0</b>	<b>64.7</b>	<b>29.3</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>58.0</b>	<b>24.4</b>
Wanted to own home/not rent .....	11.5	14.3	7.5	8.1	10.0	5.0	9.4	11.3	5.8
New/better house/apartment .....	18.5	24.2	10.3	21.4	28.2	10.8	19.2	24.8	8.6
Better neighborhood/less crime .....	4.4	4.8	3.9	4.0	4.4	3.3	4.8	5.3	3.8
Cheaper housing .....	5.5	7.5	2.8	6.2	7.8	3.6	1.1	1.4	0.5
Other housing reason .....	11.7	14.7	7.4	11.4	14.3	6.7	11.9	15.2	5.7
<b>Other reasons</b> .....	<b>6.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>12.4</b>
Attend/leave college .....	2.3	0.7	4.4	1.8	0.5	4.0	1.7	0.8	3.6
Change of climate .....	0.7	0.2	1.6	0.8	0.1	1.9	0.7	0.2	1.8
Health reasons .....	1.1	0.8	1.6	1.1	1.1	1.2	0.6	0.5	0.8
Other reason .....	1.8	1.3	2.5	3.7	2.7	5.2	6.4	6.5	6.3

<sup>1</sup>See text concerning changes in the survey instrument between March 1998 and March 2000.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1998, March 1999, and March 2000.

differences were found between intracounty and intercounty movers who moved to attend/leave college (0.7 percent to 4.4 percent) and for a change of climate (0.2 percent to 1.6 percent). Similar relationships were found in the 1998 and 1999 CPS.

**The highly educated are more likely to move for work-related reasons, especially for long-distance moves.**

Education and its relationship to employment opportunities suggests that educational levels are related to why people move, with the highly educated more likely to move for employment-related

reasons. The data in Table 3 confirm that the greater one's education, the greater the likelihood that one moved for work-related reasons. Additionally, increases in education decrease the likelihood that one moved for family-related reasons. In 2000, only 14 percent of high school graduates moved for work-related reasons, compared with 25 percent of those with a bachelor's degree and 28 percent of those with a masters degree or higher. Most of this difference comes from those starting a new job, for instance, 7 percent of high school graduates compared with 17 percent of those with bachelor's degrees. Similarly, 31 percent of those with a high school education

moved for family-related reasons, compared with only 22 percent of those with a bachelor's degree. Housing-related reasons remained the most frequent response given.

Controlling for distance of move, one finds similar relationships, though not nearly as strong for short-distance moves. Highly educated intracounty movers are more likely to have moved for work-related reasons than less educated movers, though the differences are not large (7 percent for those with a bachelor's degree compared with 5 percent of those with less than high school education). Similarly, 21 percent of those with a bachelor's degree moved a short

Table 3.  
**Reason for Moving by Educational Attainment and Type of Move: March 1999-2000**

(Movers within the United States, age 18 and older)

Reason for moving <sup>1</sup>	Total	Less than high school education	High school graduate	Some college	Associate degree	Bachelor's	Master's/ professional/ doctorate
<b>Total movers (thousands) . . . . .</b>	<b>30,353</b>	<b>5,085</b>	<b>9,564</b>	<b>6,571</b>	<b>2,126</b>	<b>5,144</b>	<b>1,863</b>
<b>Percent of total movers . . . . .</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family-related reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>30.8</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>18.3</b>
Other family reason . . . . .	11.7	15.7	13.9	10.5	10.5	7.5	6.7
<b>Work-related reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>28.0</b>
New job/job transfer . . . . .	9.7	4.0	7.1	8.7	10.7	17.4	20.4
To look for work/lost job . . . . .	1.4	2.4	1.5	0.8	1.9	0.9	0.5
<b>Housing-related reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>49.7</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>46.5</b>	<b>46.8</b>
<b>Other reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>6.9</b>
<b>Intracounty movers . . . . .</b>	<b>17,493</b>	<b>3,297</b>	<b>5,734</b>	<b>3,879</b>	<b>1,178</b>	<b>2,533</b>	<b>872</b>
<b>Percent of intracounty movers . . . . .</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family-related reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>21.3</b>
Other family reason . . . . .	9.6	12.1	11.6	8.9	7.0	5.3	6.6
<b>Work-related reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>6.8</b>
New job/job transfer . . . . .	1.5	1.2	1.6	1.5	2.1	1.4	1.3
To look for work/lost job . . . . .	0.5	1.5	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.0
<b>Housing-related reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>64.0</b>	<b>67.0</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>62.7</b>	<b>65.1</b>	<b>68.9</b>	<b>70.2</b>
<b>Other reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>Intercounty movers . . . . .</b>	<b>12,860</b>	<b>1,788</b>	<b>3,829</b>	<b>2,691</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>2,611</b>	<b>992</b>
<b>Percent of intercounty movers . . . . .</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family-related reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>15.7</b>
Other family reason . . . . .	14.5	22.3	17.4	12.7	14.7	9.7	6.7
<b>Work-related reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>33.6</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>46.7</b>
New job/job transfer . . . . .	20.9	9.1	15.3	19.0	21.3	32.8	37.2
To look for work/lost job . . . . .	2.5	4.2	2.9	1.5	4.1	1.7	1.0
<b>Housing-related reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>26.3</b>
<b>Other reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>11.4</b>

<sup>1</sup>Complete reasons for moving data available in table package. See section entitled "More Information."

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

distance for family-related reasons, compared with 30 percent of high school graduates.

However, for longer distance moves the differences are greater. Work-related reasons have a positive monotonic relationship with education, ranging from 18 percent of those with less than a high school education to 47 percent of those with a graduate degree. Many of these work-related moves were to start a new job, ranging from 9 percent for those with less than a high school education to 37 percent for those with a graduate degree. Lower education groups were more likely than

higher education groups to have moved to look for work or because they had lost a job (4 percent of those with less than a high school education compared with 1 percent of those with a graduate degree).

There was an inverse monotonic relationship between education and family-related reasons for moving, ranging from 33 percent of those with less than a high school education to 16 percent of those with a graduate degree. Most of this variation was in the "other" family reasons category, with just 7 percent of movers with a graduate degree offering this response compared with 22 percent of those with less than a high school education.

### **Economists believe labor moves from areas of lower to areas of higher economic opportunity.**

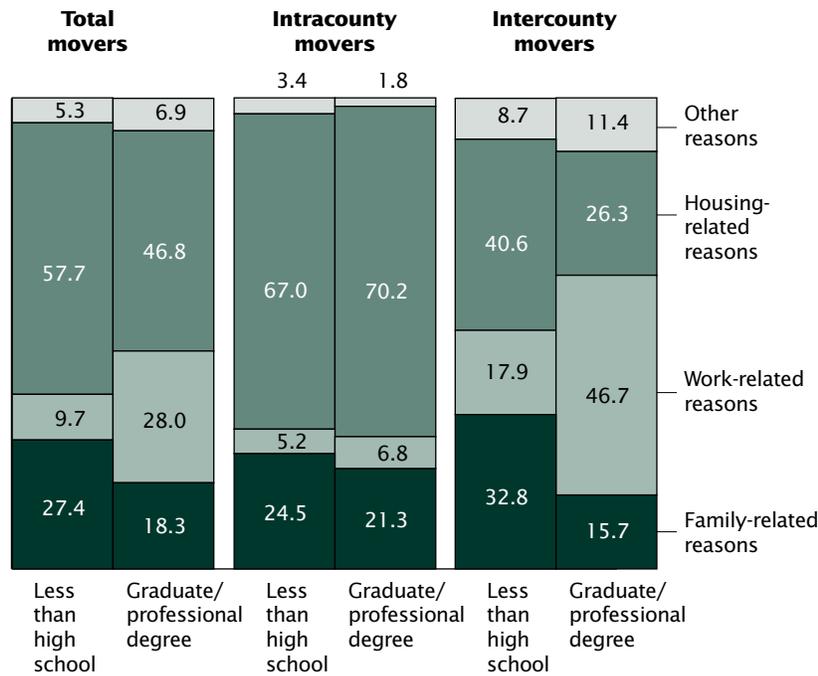
Classical economic theory views geographical mobility as an equilibrating mechanism that redistributes people and wealth.<sup>4</sup> Workers move from areas where jobs are dwindling to areas where workers are needed. Human capital economists see longer distance moves as economic investments to achieve higher wages.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the poor and

<sup>4</sup>Michael Greenwood. 1986. "Human Migration: Theory, Models, and Empirical Studies," *Journal of Regional Science*, 25:521-44.

<sup>5</sup>Kathryn L. Shaw. 1991. "The Influence of Human Capital Investment on Migration and Industry Change," *Journal of Regional Science*, 31:397-416.

Figure 2.  
**Reason for Moving by Educational Status and Type of Move: March 1999-2000**

(Percent distribution of movers with the United States, age 18 and older)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

unemployed should be particularly drawn to areas of economic opportunity, though they may face barriers, such as moving costs.

**The unemployed are not more likely than the employed to move for work-related reasons.**

Differentials for work-related reasons for moving are not as strong as economic theory suggests. Reasons for moving are quite similar for the employed and unemployed, with no more than 6 percentage points separating the groups on any of the major categories (Table 4). Within work-related reasons, 10 percent of the employed moved for a new job, compared with just 6 percent of the unemployed, while only 1 percent of the employed moved to find work, compared with 4 percent of the unemployed. However, the labor force status of the individual was determined at

Table 4.  
**Reason for Moving by Employment Status: March 1999-2000**

(Movers within the United States, age 16 and older)

Reason for moving	Total	Employed	Unemployed	Not in labor force
<b>Total movers (thousands)</b> .....	<b>31,567</b>	<b>22,285</b>	<b>1,459</b>	<b>7,824</b>
<b>Percent of movers</b> .....	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family-related reasons</b> .....	<b>26.8</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>32.3</b>	<b>26.4</b>
Change in marital status.....	6.7	7.5	4.4	4.9
To establish own household.....	8.0	8.5	9.7	6.3
Other family reason.....	12.1	10.5	18.2	15.3
<b>Work-related reasons</b> .....	<b>15.8</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>12.2</b>
New job/job transfer.....	9.3	10.4	6.2	6.5
To look for work/lost job.....	1.3	1.2	4.3	1.2
Closer to work/easier commute.....	3.5	4.1	2.4	2.1
Retired.....	0.6	0.2	0.2	1.7
Other job-related reason.....	1.2	1.4	0.7	0.8
<b>Housing-related reasons</b> .....	<b>50.5</b>	<b>50.9</b>	<b>46.0</b>	<b>50.2</b>
Wanted to own home/not rent.....	11.5	12.8	7.1	8.5
New/better house/apartment.....	17.8	18.4	15.1	16.6
Better neighborhood/less.....	4.1	4.0	3.5	4.5
Cheaper housing.....	5.6	5.2	6.4	6.6
Other housing reason.....	11.5	10.5	13.9	13.9
<b>Other reasons</b> .....	<b>7.0</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>11.2</b>
Attend/leave college.....	2.8	2.7	2.4	3.4
Change of climate.....	0.8	0.7	1.1	0.9
Health reasons.....	1.3	0.4	0.8	3.9
Other reason.....	2.1	1.6	3.6	3.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

Table 5.  
**Reason for Moving by Household Income: March 1999-2000**

(Movers within the United States, age 1 and older)

Reason for moving	Total	Less than	\$10,000 to	\$20,000 to	\$30,000 to	\$40,000 to	\$50,000 to	\$60,000 to	\$75,000 and over
		\$10,000	\$19,999	\$29,999	\$39,999	\$49,999	\$59,999	\$74,999	
<b>Total movers (thousands). . . . .</b>	<b>41,330</b>	<b>3,618</b>	<b>5,990</b>	<b>5,916</b>	<b>5,337</b>	<b>4,511</b>	<b>3,738</b>	<b>3,930</b>	<b>8,290</b>
<b>Percent of movers. . . . .</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family-related reasons . . . . .</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>28.8</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>26.2</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>23.3</b>
Change in marital status . . . . .	6.2	5.6	4.3	6.3	6.9	6.6	6.6	5.9	7.3
To establish own household . . . . .	7.4	11.3	11.8	8.1	7.6	7.8	5.8	5.3	3.6
Other family reason. . . . .	12.8	15.8	12.7	12.6	12.7	12.0	13.8	10.9	12.5
<b>Work-related reasons. . . . .</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>20.0</b>
New job/job transfer . . . . .	9.7	4.6	6.7	7.0	8.6	10.6	12.9	11.9	14.0
To look for work/lost job . . . . .	1.3	2.4	1.2	2.4	0.8	1.0	0.6	1.3	0.7
Closer to work/easier commute . . . . .	3.5	1.9	3.8	3.9	4.5	4.7	3.4	2.3	3.1
Retired. . . . .	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.2	1.0
Other job-related reason . . . . .	1.2	1.8	0.7	1.5	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.2
<b>Housing-related reasons. . . . .</b>	<b>51.6</b>	<b>48.5</b>	<b>50.4</b>	<b>51.9</b>	<b>52.0</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>50.0</b>	<b>57.2</b>	<b>52.4</b>
Wanted to own home/not rent. . . . .	11.5	3.7	5.3	7.7	13.4	12.4	14.2	18.9	15.8
New/better house/apartment. . . . .	18.5	17.3	16.5	19.8	19.3	16.9	18.4	18.6	19.9
Better neighborhood/less . . . . .	4.5	4.9	6.2	5.6	2.8	4.6	4.4	3.5	3.7
Cheaper housing. . . . .	5.5	7.5	9.0	7.9	4.8	4.5	2.9	5.1	2.6
Other housing reason. . . . .	11.7	15.1	13.5	11.1	11.7	11.1	10.1	11.0	10.5
<b>Other reasons. . . . .</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.2</b>
Attend/leave college . . . . .	2.3	2.8	3.5	2.8	1.8	2.6	1.5	1.6	1.7
Change of climate . . . . .	0.7	0.5	1.1	0.7	0.5	1.2	0.6	0.3	0.8
Health reasons. . . . .	1.1	2.4	1.5	1.4	0.7	1.1	1.0	0.6	0.6
Other reason . . . . .	1.8	2.4	2.0	1.2	2.7	1.4	2.5	1.6	1.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

the time of the survey, while a move could have taken place any time during the previous year. Thus, it is possible that some people who were unemployed when they moved, but subsequently found a job, are not represented as unemployed moving for a work-related reason.

**Lower income groups are less likely than higher income groups to move for work-related reasons.**

The relationship between household income and reason for moving followed different patterns, with higher income groups more likely to move for work-related reasons and lower income groups less likely to move for these same reasons. For work-related reasons, values ranged from 11 percent of those living in households with income under \$10,000, to 20 percent of those living in households with in-

come \$75,000 and over (Table 5). Most of this variation came from those moving for a new job, which was 5 percent of those living in households with income under \$10,000, 9 percent of those living in households with income of \$30,000 to \$39,999, and 14 percent of those living in households with income \$75,000 and over.

Conversely, lower income groups were more likely than higher income groups to move for family reasons. Among people living in households with income under \$10,000, 33 percent moved for family-related reasons, compared with 23 percent of those living in households with income \$75,000 and over. The greatest variation in this category was among those moving to establish their own household, ranging from 11 percent of those living in households with income under \$10,000 to

4 percent of those living in households with income \$75,000 and over. Housing-related reasons remained relatively consistent across most income groups and were the most frequently given reasons.

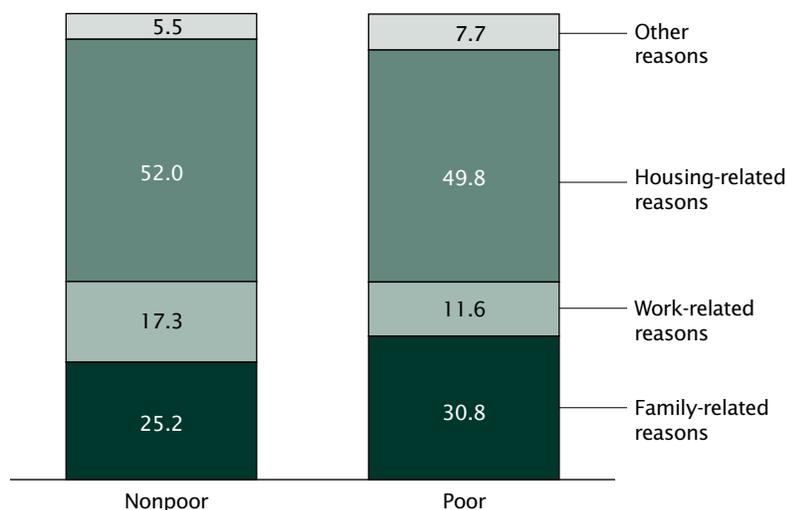
**The nonpoor are more likely than the poor to move for work-related reasons, while the poor are more likely than the nonpoor to move for family-related reasons.**

For the poverty status of individuals, the results are the same as those found for household income, with work-related reasons having less importance than economic theory would predict, and family reasons being stronger than anticipated. Housing reasons were still the most important reason for both groups, given by about 50 percent of the nonpoor and the poor (Table 6). Work-related reasons were less important, as 17 percent of the

Figure 3.

**Reason for Moving by Poverty Status: March 1999-2000**

(Percent distribution of movers within the United States, age 1 and older)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

nonpoor and just 12 percent of the poor gave this response. Family-related reasons were more likely to be given by the poor, as 31 percent cited such reasons for their move, compared with 25 percent of the nonpoor. These differences between the poor and nonpoor exist for long-distance moves and, to a lesser extent, for short-distance moves.

Among long-distance movers, work-related reasons were more important for the nonpoor (33 percent) than the poor (23 percent), while family reasons were more important for the poor (32 percent) than the nonpoor (26 percent). Most of the variation in family-related reasons between the poor and nonpoor came from the poor citing other family reasons for their move. The largest share of the

Table 6.

**Reason for Moving by Poverty Status and Type of Move: March 1999-2000**

(Movers within the United States, age 1 and older)

Reason for moving	All movers			Intracounty movers			Intercounty movers		
	Total	Nonpoor	Poor	Total	Nonpoor	Poor	Total	Nonpoor	Poor
<b>Total movers (thousands).....</b>	<b>41,642</b>	<b>33,385</b>	<b>8,257</b>	<b>24,399</b>	<b>19,013</b>	<b>5,386</b>	<b>17,243</b>	<b>14,372</b>	<b>2,871</b>
<b>Percent of movers.....</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family-related reasons.....</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>30.8</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>31.8</b>
Change in marital status.....	6.2	6.6	4.6	6.2	6.7	4.7	6.2	6.6	4.4
To establish own household.....	7.4	6.6	10.9	9.3	8.3	12.8	4.7	4.2	7.2
Other family reason.....	12.7	12.1	15.4	10.4	9.8	12.8	16.0	15.2	20.2
<b>Work-related reasons.....</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>23.3</b>
New job/job transfer.....	9.7	10.8	5.3	1.4	1.4	1.3	21.6	23.3	12.8
To look for work/lost job.....	1.3	1.0	2.6	0.5	0.3	1.2	2.4	1.9	5.0
Closer to work/easier commute...	3.5	3.8	2.2	3.0	3.3	2.0	4.2	4.5	2.7
Retired.....	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.9	1.0	0.6
Other job-related reason.....	1.2	1.1	1.3	0.6	0.6	0.9	2.0	1.9	2.1
<b>Housing-related reasons.....</b>	<b>51.6</b>	<b>52.0</b>	<b>49.8</b>	<b>65.4</b>	<b>67.0</b>	<b>59.8</b>	<b>31.9</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>31.2</b>
Wanted to own home/not rent....	11.5	13.2	4.5	14.3	17.0	4.6	7.5	8.2	4.3
New/better house/apartment.....	18.5	18.7	17.7	24.2	24.9	21.7	10.3	10.3	10.1
Better neighborhood/less crime...	4.4	4.1	5.8	4.8	4.3	6.5	3.9	3.8	4.6
Cheaper housing.....	5.5	5.0	7.7	7.5	6.9	9.5	2.8	2.5	4.3
Other housing reason.....	11.7	11.1	14.2	14.7	13.9	17.5	7.4	7.3	7.9
<b>Other reasons.....</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>13.7</b>
Attend/leave college.....	2.3	2.0	3.2	0.7	0.5	1.6	4.4	4.1	6.3
Change of climate.....	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.2	1.6	1.6	1.3
Health reasons.....	1.1	1.0	1.4	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.6	1.4	2.3
Other reason.....	1.8	1.7	2.6	1.3	1.2	1.9	2.5	2.3	3.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

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work-related variation came from the nonpoor moving for a new job (23 percent versus 13 percent). In contrast, 5 percent of the poor moved to look for work or because of a lost job, compared with just 2 percent of the nonpoor.

Among short-distance movers, work-related differences are not statistically different between the poor and nonpoor (5.4 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively). Housing reasons were most important for both groups though more so for the nonpoor (67 percent to 60 percent). Most of the variation between the two groups resulted from the nonpoor wanting to own their own home (17 percent to 5 percent). Not surprisingly, the poor were more likely than the nonpoor to have moved for cheaper housing (10 percent to 7 percent).

## CONCLUSIONS

These results show that the distance of a move is strongly related to the reason an individual moves. Longer distance moves are more likely to be associated with work-related reasons, while shorter distance moves are more likely to be associated with housing-related reasons. Socioeconomic characteristics like education and income tend to yield similar relationships, with lower education and income groups more likely to move for family reasons and less likely to move for work-related reasons than higher education and income groups. Work-related reasons were not as important for movement of the poor as economic theory suggests, with housing-related reasons taking precedence for this group, and family reasons being more important for the poor than the nonpoor. These data show the im-

portance of making a theoretical and empirical distinction between residential mobility and migration when analyzing reason for moving data.

## SOURCE OF DATA

The Current Population Survey (CPS) is a monthly national survey of about 50,000 households, representative of the civilian noninstitutional U.S. population, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. While the CPS is the primary source of labor force characteristics of the U.S. population, it also collects data on a number of demographic topics. The March survey includes questions on whether the respondents and other household members moved during the previous year.

## ACCURACY OF ESTIMATES

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and meet the U.S. Census Bureau's standards for statistical significance. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process — including the overall design of surveys, testing the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports.

The CPS employs ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates

of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but how it affects different variables in the survey is not precisely known. Moreover, biases may also be present when people who are missed in the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than the categories used in weighting (age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin). All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and use of standard errors, contact Doug Mayfield, Demographic Statistical Methods Division, at 301-457-4220 or e-mail at [Douglas.S.Mayfield@census.gov](mailto:Douglas.S.Mayfield@census.gov).

## MORE INFORMATION

Data on why people move are also collected by the American Housing Survey (AHS). Data for recent years are available in tabular format on the Internet. These tables can be accessed from the AHS Web address ([www.census.gov/hhes/www/ahs.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/ahs.html)).

A package of tables showing more detailed characteristics of reasons for moving from the CPS is available from the Census Bureau. Characteristics include age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, educational attainment, labor force status, poverty status, and income.

This set of detailed tables (PPL-139) is available on paper for \$24.60. To receive a copy, send a request for "PPL-139, Why People Move: Exploring the March 1998 to 2000 Current Population Survey," along with a check or money order in amount of \$24.60 payable to

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Commerce-Census, to U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, P.O. Box 277943, Atlanta, GA 30384-7943, or call the Population Division's Statistical Information Office on 301-457-2422. A copy of these tabulations will be made available to any existing Current Population Report, P20 subscriber without charge, provided that the request is made within 3 months of the issue date of this report.

The electronic version of these tables is available on the Internet ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)). Once on the site, under "Subjects A to Z," click on "M," then select "Migration." There is other migration information at that location including data from the 1990 Census and time series tables with data from past CPS reports.

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### **USER COMMENTS**

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of users of our data and reports. If you have any suggestions or comments, please write to:

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