

Introduction

America is an extremely mobile nation. Every year, millions of people in the United States pack up and move to a different home. Two often-asked questions about this mobility are the time of the year when most moves occur—seasonality of moves—and the length of time that people stay in one place—duration of residence. This report, using data collected in the Survey of Income and Program Participation, gives us a look at these two topics.

Seasonality of Moves

Seasonality of moving, that is, how mobility varies from month to month, is important to schools and many businesses but these data are rarely collected in surveys. The 1993 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP),

however, asked people who were at least 15 years old for the month and year they moved into both their current and previous residences.

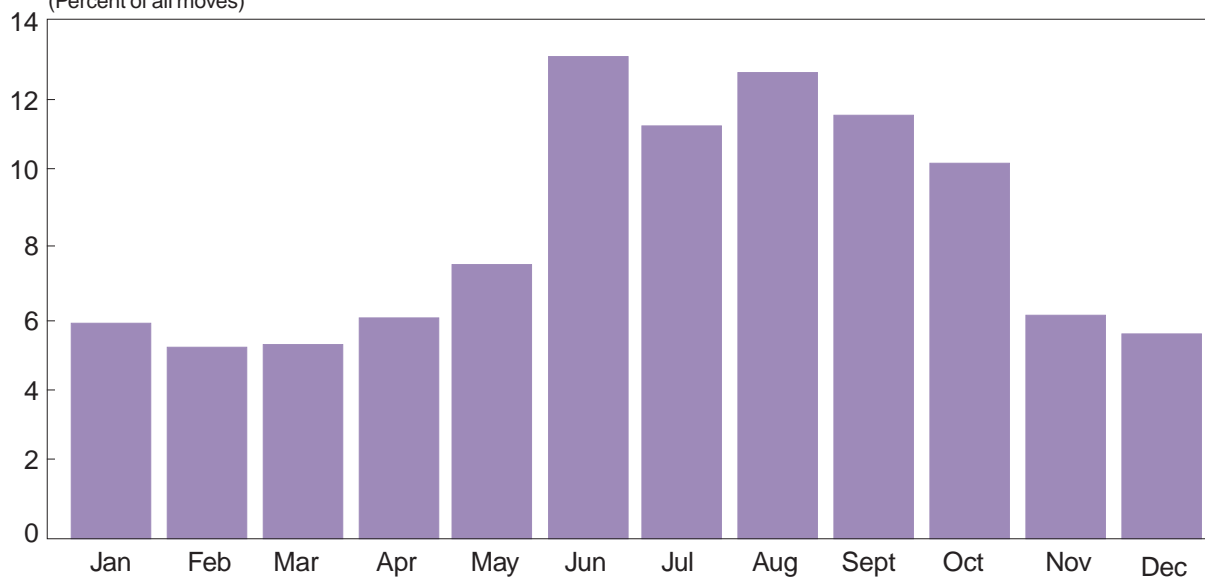
The data on seasonality of moves contained in this report have been tabulated by the characteristics of movers at the time the survey was conducted. Some characteristics such as owner/renter status (also known as tenure), household relationship, income, education, and employment status may have been different at the time of the move than at the survey date. The survey did not collect data on the characteristics of people at the time they moved.

Moving is concentrated in the summer months.

Moves are not evenly distributed throughout the year. Most people

appear to prefer to move in the summer when the weather is good and children are not in school. Some moves may be timed to coincide with the end or the beginning of the school year. The months of June, about the time most schools let out, and August, just before they start again, have the largest percentages of people changing residence. July and September have the next highest percentages. Nearly half of all moves (48.4 percent) take place during the four months of June through September; about 60 percent are in June through October. After October moving rates decline significantly. In many areas, the winter weather conditions make moving an unpopular event; rates are much lower in November through May.

Figure 1.
Distribution of Moves by Month
(Percent of all moves)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, SIPP, 1993

Table 1. Percent of Movers by Month of Move, Race and Hispanic Origin, Nativity, and Tenure²

Month	Total movers	White	Black	Asian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic origin ¹	Natives	Foreign-Born	Living in an owner-occupied unit	Living in a renter-occupied unit
January	5.9	5.8	5.7	6.8	7.1	5.8	6.8	5.6	6.4
February	5.2	5.1	5.4	6.8	6.4	4.9	6.6	4.6	6.3
March	5.3	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.0	5.3	5.3	5.1	5.6
April	6.0	6.0	5.5	6.7	5.6	6.0	5.6	5.8	6.3
May	7.5	7.5	7.1	6.7	7.8	7.5	7.2	7.5	7.3
June	13.1	13.2	13.0	12.5	13.0	13.2	12.9	13.2	13.0
July	11.2	11.2	11.8	10.4	11.2	11.2	10.9	11.2	11.1
August	12.6	12.6	12.4	11.6	11.0	12.8	11.4	12.9	12.0
September	11.5	11.5	11.7	11.5	10.2	11.5	11.7	11.8	11.0
October	10.2	10.1	10.6	10.1	10.6	10.2	10.2	10.2	10.0
November	6.1	6.2	5.6	5.1	5.4	6.2	5.3	6.3	5.6
December	5.6	5.5	5.7	6.3	6.7	5.5	6.3	5.7	5.3

¹Hispanics may be of any race.

²Tenure is defined as residence in an owner-occupied versus a renter-occupied housing unit.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, SIPP, 1993

Seasonality is not related to race, ethnicity, nativity, or tenure.

Seasonality of move is not significantly related to race or Hispanic origin. Blacks, Whites, and Asian and Pacific Islanders all have the highest rates of moving in June through October. This same pattern also holds true for people of Hispanic origin (who may be of any race). Likewise, both natives and foreign-born people are more likely to move during the summer months than during the winter.

The seasonality of moving also does not vary significantly for people living in owner-occupied or rented housing units.

Age has little effect on the seasonality of moves.

Month of move shows little variation by age—all age groups are more likely to move during the warmer months of June through October, with the highest rates generally in June and August. However, older people are more likely to move after school starts than are younger—12.5 percent of

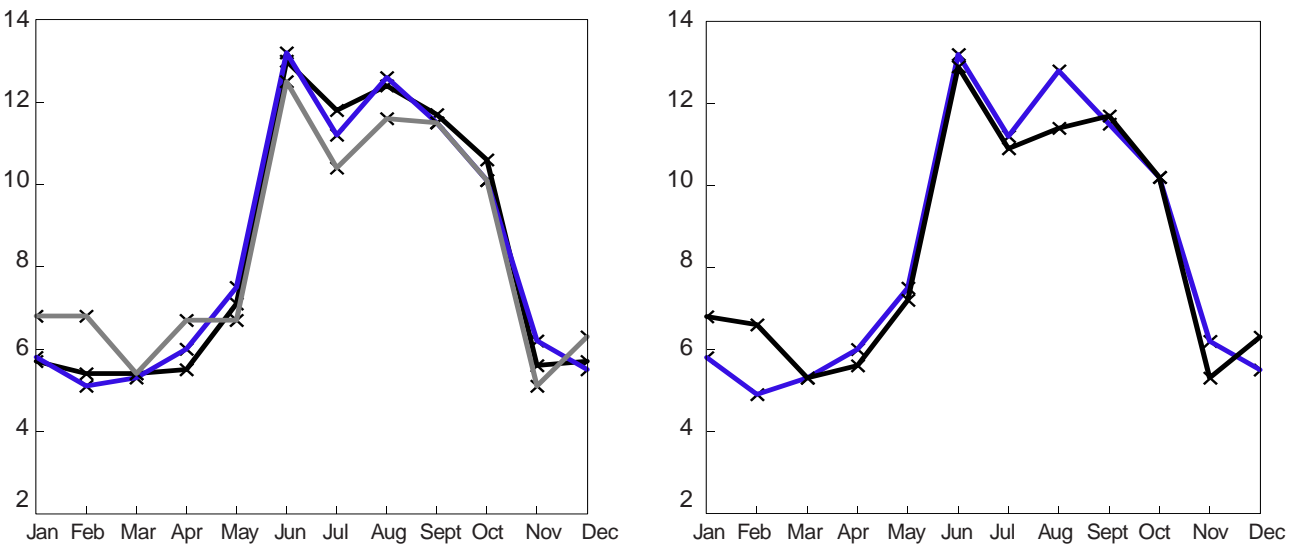
those 45 to 64 years old and 13.1 percent of those 65 years and over moved in September, compared with 10.3 percent of those ages 15 to 29 years. A similar pattern is found for October—with 10.8 percent of those 45 to 64 years and 11.5 percent of those over 65 moving, compared with about 9 percent for those under 29.

The presence of children in the household has some effect on the timing of moves.

Moving is concentrated in the summer months whether or not children

Figure 2. Month of Move by Characteristics

(Percent of all movers)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, SIPP, 1993

Table 2. Percent of Movers by Month of Move and Age

Month	Total 15 years and over	15 to 19 years	20 to 29 years	30 to 44 years	45 to 64 years	65 years and over
January	5.9	6.0	6.5	6.1	5.4	5.4
February	5.2	5.8	6.3	5.5	4.3	4.4
March	5.3	5.8	5.3	5.6	5.0	4.8
April	6.0	7.0	6.7	6.0	5.6	5.3
May	7.5	8.5	8.8	7.8	6.8	5.9
June	13.1	12.5	13.0	13.0	13.3	13.6
July	11.2	10.5	10.0	10.9	11.9	12.2
August	12.6	12.3	12.2	12.5	12.9	12.8
September	11.5	10.3	10.3	11.0	12.5	13.1
October	10.2	9.4	9.1	9.8	10.8	11.5
November	6.1	5.6	5.7	6.2	6.3	6.0
December	5.6	6.2	6.2	5.6	5.2	5.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, SIPP, 1993

Table 3. Percent of Movers by Month of Move into Current Residence by Presence of Children under 18 in the Household

Month	Total 15 years and over	Living in households without children under 18 years old	Living in households with children under 18 years old
January	5.9	6.0	5.8
February	5.6	5.3	6.2
March	5.6	5.6	5.7
April	6.6	6.5	6.8
May	8.0	7.8	8.3
June	12.3	12.4	12.0
July	10.8	11.1	10.2
August	12.3	12.1	12.6
September	10.8	11.3	9.9
October	9.6	10.0	9.1
November	6.7	6.6	7.0
December	5.7	5.3	6.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, SIPP, 1993.

Table 4. Percent of Movers by Month of Move and Type of Move

Month of move	Total	Same State			Differ-ent state	Abroad
		Total	Same county	Differ-ent county		
January	5.9	6.0	5.7	7.0	5.4	7.1
February	5.0	5.4	5.4	5.2	4.2	5.3
March	5.2	5.7	5.7	5.7	4.3	5.3
April	5.7	6.4	6.6	5.9	4.6	5.1
May	7.2	8.2	8.3	7.8	5.7	6.3
June	13.4	12.7	12.3	14.2	15.0	12.8
July	11.3	10.6	10.6	10.8	12.5	11.7
August	12.7	11.7	11.9	10.9	14.6	11.7
September	11.8	11.0	11.1	10.3	13.2	12.2
October	10.4	9.6	9.7	9.1	11.5	11.6
November	5.8	6.9	6.8	7.3	4.3	4.8
December	5.5	5.9	6.0	5.7	4.7	6.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, SIPP, 1993.

live in the household.¹ About 35.6 percent of people in households without children under 18 moved in the summer (June, July, or August), not significantly different from the 34.8 percent for households with children under 18. However, households with children do appear to try to avoid moving early in the school year. Among people in households with children under 18, only 19.0 percent moved in September or October—compared with 21.3 percent for people in households without children.

Seasonality effects are greater for longer distance moves.

As the relative distance of moves increases, moves become increasingly concentrated in the summer (June, July, and August).² Rates of moving in the three summer months increase from 34.8 percent for those moving within the same county, to 35.9 percent for those moving between counties in the same state, and to 41.0 percent for those making interstate or international moves.

If September is added to the three summer months, about equal percentages move within or between counties in the same state—about 46 percent. However, over half of interstate or international moves (54.0 percent) took place in that 4-month period.

¹The data on seasonality are based on the month each person moved into their current residence, as well as the months they moved into and out of their previous residences. Moves for which the month was not reported were dropped. As a result, the totals on which the percentages are calculated are different for each characteristic. When available, using the month of move for both current and previous residences increases the number of cases and, thereby, increases reliability and reduces the sampling error associated with the data. Data on the presence of children is not available for previous residence so Table 3 is restricted to the month of move into the current residence.

²While the data do not permit a direct calculation of distance moved, we can estimate the relative distance by assuming that people who move within the same county are moving, on average, a shorter distance than those moving between counties, and that those moving between states or from abroad are moving the longest distance, on average.

Table 5. Duration in Current Residence by Tenure

Duration	Total 15 years and over	Living in an owner-occupied unit	Living in a renter-occupied unit
Total ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 1 year	11.9	6.4	22.9
1 year	14.6	8.9	26.0
2 years	9.4	7.0	14.1
3 years	7.1	6.5	8.2
4 years	6.0	6.0	6.0
5 years	4.9	5.4	3.9
6 years	4.1	4.7	2.9
7 years	3.4	4.1	2.2
8 years	3.3	3.9	2.0
9 years	2.0	2.4	1.1
10 years	2.4	2.9	1.4
11 to 15 years	9.0	11.3	4.4
16 to 20 years	6.7	9.1	2.1
21 to 30 years	8.4	11.6	1.9
31 to 40 years	4.4	6.3	0.8
More than 40 years	2.5	3.5	0.4
Median (years)	5.2	8.2	2.1

¹Persons 15 years old and over when they moved into their current residence.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, SIPP, 1993.

Median duration in current residence is 5.2 years.

Duration of residence is the length of time that people have lived in their current residence. This is not a measure of how long they will live in a residence since we do not know how much longer they will continue to reside in the unit occupied at the time of the SIPP interview. In this survey, we found that the median duration that people had lived in their current residence was 5.2 years.³ This means that half of all people 15 years and over had lived there longer—and half had lived there a shorter time—than the median of 5.2 years.

Fifteen percent have lived in the same house 20 or more years.

The United States is often described as a geographically mobile nation in which 43 million, or 16.7 percent of the population, moves each year.⁴ Duration of

Duration of Residence

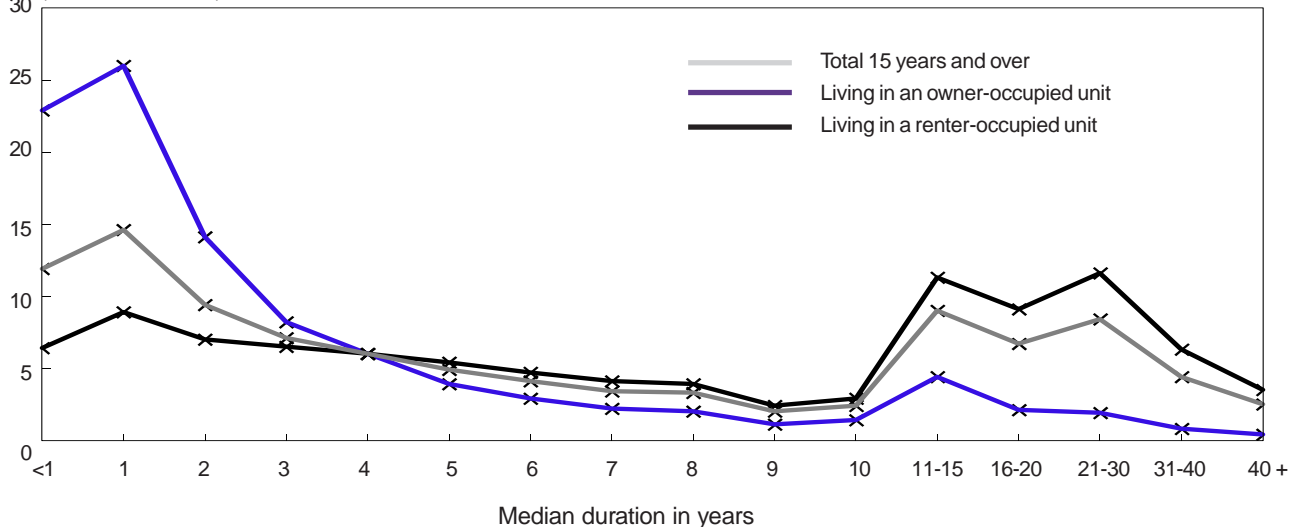
The average length of time people live in a home is also of interest. For this report, duration of residence is the length of time each person 15 years old and over has lived in his or her current home. Duration is calculated by counting the number of months between the date they moved into their current residence and the date the survey was administered and then rounding to the nearest year. Median

durations can be calculated for various age groups (age is recalculated to the age at the time the person moved into their current residence) and by gender, race, Hispanic origin, and tenure (whether people are living in an owner or renter-occupied housing unit). Data on duration by tenure is limited to the current residence because the survey does not collect tenure status for the previous residence.

³SIPP asks questions only of people 15 and over at the time of the survey. However, the data on duration of residence have been tabulated for people whose recalculated age at the time they moved into their current residence was 15 years old and over.

⁴Hansen, Kristin A., "Geographical Mobility: March 1993 to March 1994", U.S. Bureau of the Census, **Current Population Reports**, P20-487, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington DC 20233, 1995.

Figure 3.
Median Duration by Tenure and Age
(Percent of the total)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, SIPP, 1993

Table 6. Median Duration (Years) in Current Residence by Age

Age when moved into current residence	Total population	Living in an owner-occupied unit	Living in a renter-occupied unit
15 years and over	5.2	8.2	2.1
15 to 19 years	2.6	4.4	1.7
20 to 24 years	3.4	9.3	1.6
25 to 29 years	5.1	8.9	1.9
30 to 34 years	5.7	8.8	2.1
35 to 44 years	6.0	8.7	2.4
45 to 64 years	6.6	8.4	3.1
65 years and over	4.6	5.2	4.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, SIPP, 1993.

Table 7. Median Duration (Years) in Current Residence by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Gender

Race, Hispanic origin, and Gender	Total 15 years old and over	Living in an owner-occupied unit	Living in a renter-occupied unit
All races ¹	5.2	8.2	2.1
White	5.5	8.4	2.0
Black	4.2	8.1	2.6
Asian or Pacific Islander	3.3	5.2	2.0
Hispanic origin ²	3.1	6.6	1.9
Male	4.9	7.6	2.0
Female	5.6	8.8	2.2

¹Includes American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts.

²Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, SIPP, 1993.

residence shows that almost as high a proportion 15.3 percent have lived in the same house for more than 20 years.

Renters have shorter durations of residence than homeowners.

People who rent their home tend to have lived in their residence for a shorter time than homeowners—a median duration in their current residences of only 2.1 years, compared with 8.2 years for people living in owner-occupied housing units. This is not surprising—data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) indicated that nearly one-third of people in rental units had moved in the previous year, compared with less than 10 percent of homeowners.⁵

Length of residence increases with age for renters.

Median length of residence increases with age for people living in rental units. While there is no

significant difference in the medians for those under the age of 25, the median duration rises with increasing age for those over 25. Renters who are 65 years old or older have the highest median—4.0 years compared with 2.1 years for all renters.

There is no difference in median duration by age for people in owner-occupied units, except for teenagers and seniors. Regardless of age group, those between the ages of 20 and 64 had lived in their current residences for about 9 years. Teenagers (ages 15 to 19) had much shorter durations, only 4.4 years, or slightly less time than for people ages 65 and over, whose median duration was 5.2 years.

Because the duration of residence increases with increasing age among renters and there is no change with age for owners, the median length of residence for all people also increases as they age, at least up to the age of 65.

Length of residence varies by race and Hispanic origin.

The length of residence varies by race and Hispanic origin. Some of this variation can be explained by differences in rates of home ownership by race and Hispanic origin. Since owners have longer durations than renters, a racial or ethnic group with a higher percentage of people living in owner-occupied units should have longer durations than a group with a lower percentage living in owner-occupied units. For most groups this relationship appears to be true.

Seventy percent of Whites live in owner-occupied units compared with about half of Blacks. And, as expected, Whites have longer median durations (5.5 years) than Blacks (4.2 years). A lower percentage of Hispanics than either Whites or Blacks were living in owner-occupied units (42 percent) and again, as expected, Hispanics also have a lower median duration (3.1 years). The pattern does not hold true for Asian and Pacific Islanders, however. This group has a higher percentage living in owner-occupied units than either Blacks or Hispanics (about 54 percent), but a median duration of only 3.3 years—no different than the median for Hispanics.

The patterns by tenure for each race group are similar to those for the entire population. Owners in each of these groups have much longer median durations than renters. Whites in owner-occupied units do not have a median duration significantly different than that for Blacks living in owner-occupied units—both a little over 8 years. Both Hispanics and Asian and Pacific Islanders living in owner-occupied units have shorter median durations, however—5.2 years and 6.6 years, respectively.

For renters, a new pattern emerges. Whites, Asian and

⁵Ibid.

Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics living in rental units all have median durations of about 2 years. Black renters, in comparison, have a significantly longer median duration than the other groups—2.6 years.

Women have longer durations than men.

Women have a median duration of 5.6 years, compared with a median of 4.9 years for men. This relationship holds for both owners and renters. For example, among people living in owner-occupied housing units, women have a median duration of 8.8 years, compared with 7.6 years for men.

Source of the data

The estimates in this report come from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The SIPP is a longitudinal survey of people who are at least 15 years old conducted at 4-month intervals by the Census Bureau. Although the main focus of SIPP is information on labor force participation, jobs, income, and participation in federal assistance programs, information on other topics is also collected in topical modules on a rotating basis. Data shown in this report are from a migration history module collected in the 4-month period from June through September 1993.

The migration history module in the 1993 SIPP included questions on the location of each person's previous residence, the month and year they moved into and out of that home, and the month and year they moved into their current residence. Other items included each person's state or foreign country of birth, their citizenship status, and the year people born outside the United States came to this country.

Accuracy of the estimates

All survey statistics are subject to sampling error, as well as non-sampling error such as survey design flaws, respondent classification and reporting errors, data processing mistakes, and undercoverage. The Census Bureau attempts to reduce errors made by respondents, coders, and interviewers through the use of quality control and editing procedures. Ratio estimation to independent age-race-gender-Hispanic population controls partially corrects for bias due to survey undercoverage. However, biases exist in the estimates when missed people have characteristics different from those of interviewed people in the same age-race-gender-Hispanic origin group.

Analytical statements in this report have been tested and meet statistical standards. However, because

of methodological differences, use caution when comparing these data with data from other sources. Contact Karen E. King, Demographic Statistical Methods Division, at 301-457-4192 or on the Internet at:

Karen.e.King@cmail.census.gov for survey design and estimation questions. For information on the source of data, the accuracy of estimates, the use of standard errors, and the computation of standard errors, see the "Source and Accuracy Statement for the 1993 SIPP Public Use File". See also the SIPP web site: <http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp>

Contacts

Statistical Information Office
pop@census.gov
301-457-2422

Kristin A. Hansen
kahansen@census.gov
301-457-2454

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Chief, Population Division
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