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**Generational Perspectives on Residential  
Mobility: Implications for Housing Demand**

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## **Abstract**

Residential mobility rates in the U.S. have dropped to historically low levels. In 2012, less than 12 percent of U.S. residents had changed residences and less than two percent had moved from one state to another. Examining residential mobility by generational cohort is critical for understanding how trends in mobility will impact housing demand. In particular, the residential mobility decisions of the Echo Boom and Baby Boom generations—and their decisions about marriage, childbearing and retirement—will be important drivers of overall mobility and migration patterns in the U.S. This research examines residential mobility trends of the U.S. population from a life-cycle perspective using four decades of microdata from the Current Population Survey. Among the key findings are that the life-cycle theory provides a good, though not perfect, framework for analyzing residential mobility trends. The Echo Boom population is much less mobile than the Generation X or Baby Boom populations were when they were in their 20s. This decline in mobility is associated with declines in marriage and childbearing, but the economic and housing market downturn were also key factors in reduced residential mobility.

## Residential Mobility Trends from a Life-Cycle Perspective

Residential mobility rates in the United States have been falling since the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> In 2011, 11.6 percent of the U.S. population had changed residences in the prior year, reflecting this lowest one-year mobility rate on record. The overall mobility rate ticked up slightly in 2012 to 12.0 percent, but it remains close to half of the mobility rates of the 1960s. The decline in residential mobility accelerated in recent years, with the overall one-year mobility rate declining by four percentage points between 1999 and 2012. (By contrast, between 1986 and 1999, the mobility rate fell by 2.5 percentage points.)

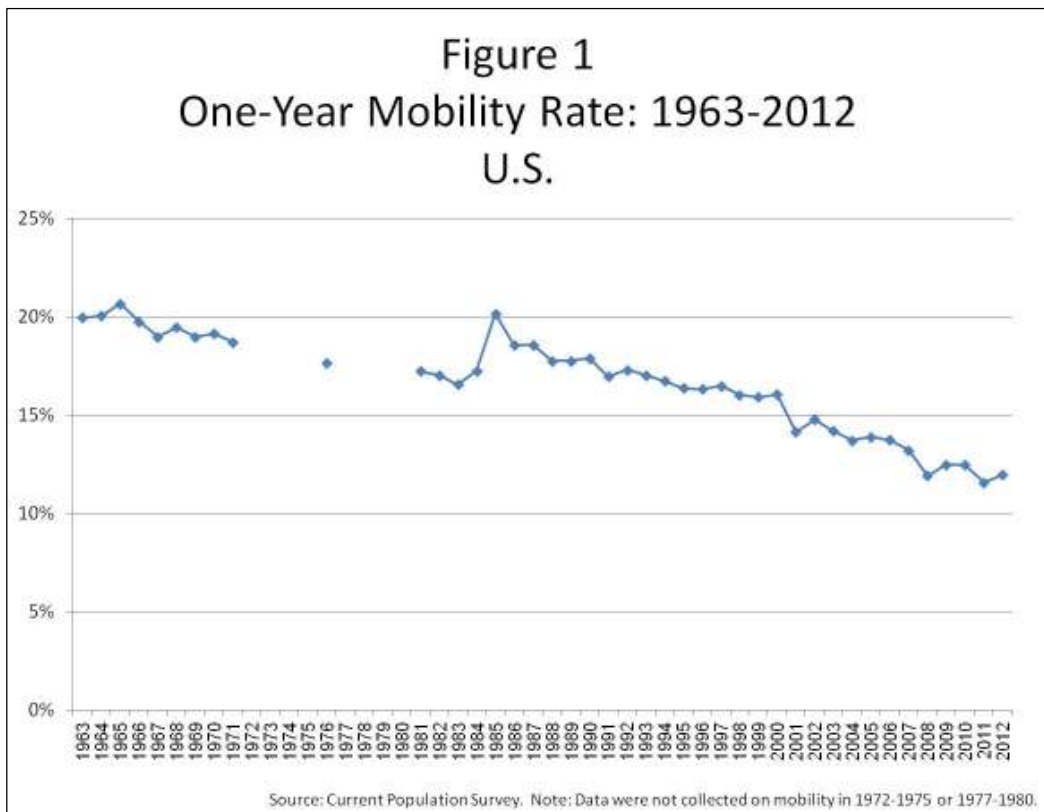
A substantial amount of research has been done on the recent decline in mobility rates (Cohn and Morin 2008; Ludwig and Raphael 2010; Ihrke et al 2011; Malloy et al 2011; Frey 2011; Ferreira et al. 2010.) For example, Ludwig and Raphael (2010) discuss how limited economic opportunities in the most recent recession, particularly among the long-time unemployed, could have curbed employment-related mobility. They posit that up-front costs associated with moving to places where there is job growth can be an overwhelming obstacle to the un- or under-employed, thereby reducing overall mobility rates. Molloy et al. (2010) use Current Population Survey data to investigate the link between declines in residential mobility and the recent economic recession and housing bust. The authors conclude there is insufficient evidence to support that either the economic recession or the housing market downturn can explain sufficiently the recent declines in residential mobility in the United States. Ferreira et al. (2010) use 1985 through 2007 data from the American Housing Survey and draw contradictory conclusions, finding that the condition of the housing market does play an important role in mobility. Specifically, negative equity and rising interest rates are both associated with lower overall residential mobility. The findings from this research suggest that the housing market downturn could, in fact, be a factor in recent residential mobility declines.

Despite the substantial interest in the low mobility rates of recent years, and the debate over the relative importance of the economic downturn and the housing market on mobility, there has been relatively little research on the relationship among demographic trends, economic conditions and residential mobility. Examining long-term demographic and mobility trends is important for putting the current patterns of residential mobility in context, particularly as the current residential mobility rates reflect an acceleration of a steady, decades-long decline in residential mobility rates (Figure 1.)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The term “mobility” often is used to indicate short-distance moves while “migration” is used for long-distance moves (Zax 1994). In this research, residential mobility will refer to all kinds of moves, unless otherwise specified. The Current Population Survey reports “mobility rates” which includes all moves from one housing unit to another regardless of distance.

<sup>2</sup> The spike in the mobility rate in 1986 has been attributed to a change in the methodology used by the Census Bureau to sample households in metropolitan areas (Hansen 1995).



The pace of residential mobility and the location choices of movers have important implications for regional and state economies, as well as local housing markets. Frey (2011) uses Current Population Survey and American Community Survey data to show that the residential mobility of young workers with college degrees has slowed (along with the overall mobility rates) between 2008 and 2010, and that a smaller number of metropolitan areas is attracting well-educated young workers, compared to earlier in the decade. Artz (2003), among others, has documented that rural counties have been experiencing a “brain drain.” Counties outside of metropolitan areas, and in particular the upper Midwest, have lost college-educated residents (or not gained them as quickly) compared to metropolitan counties. Carr and Kefalas (2010) investigate through qualitative means the decisions of movers, stayers and returners in a rural community, and discuss the implications for rural areas if they are unable to attract young, skilled workers. Higher levels of human capital, as measured by educational attainment level, are associated with higher regional economic growth. Understanding the characteristics and motivations of movers has been important to local and regional policymakers focusing on improving their economic development potential.

Evaluating the patterns of and reasons for moving is therefore important for predicting future mobility rates and for analyzing potential impacts of population change on regions, states, and localities. Original models of residential mobility and location were based on consumer theory whereby individuals choose whether or not to move and where to move in order to maximize their utility subject to an income constraint. The decision of whether or not to move is assumed to be undertaken by a rational individual based on a calculation of the perceived costs and benefits (utility) associated with various location alternatives. The implication of a decision to move is that the net benefits at an alternative locale are

higher than those at current residence, given an individual's income and non-housing expenses, particularly commuting costs (see Alonso 1969; Muth 1969; Graves and Linneman 1979).

In recent decades, empirical research has shown that patterns of residential mobility cannot be satisfactorily explained under the consumer-driven utility maximization framework. Economic models, whereby households trade off costs and benefits, are complicated by the presence of multiple-worker households, decentralizing employment locations, and family responsibilities (Hamilton & Roell 1982; Linneman & Graves 1983; Cervero & Wu 1997; Abraham & Hunt 1997). In addition, preferences not necessarily encompassed in the utility framework have been found to be important drivers of mobility. Models based on economic theory have been supplemented by alternative models of residential mobility and migration grounded in sociology and other social sciences.

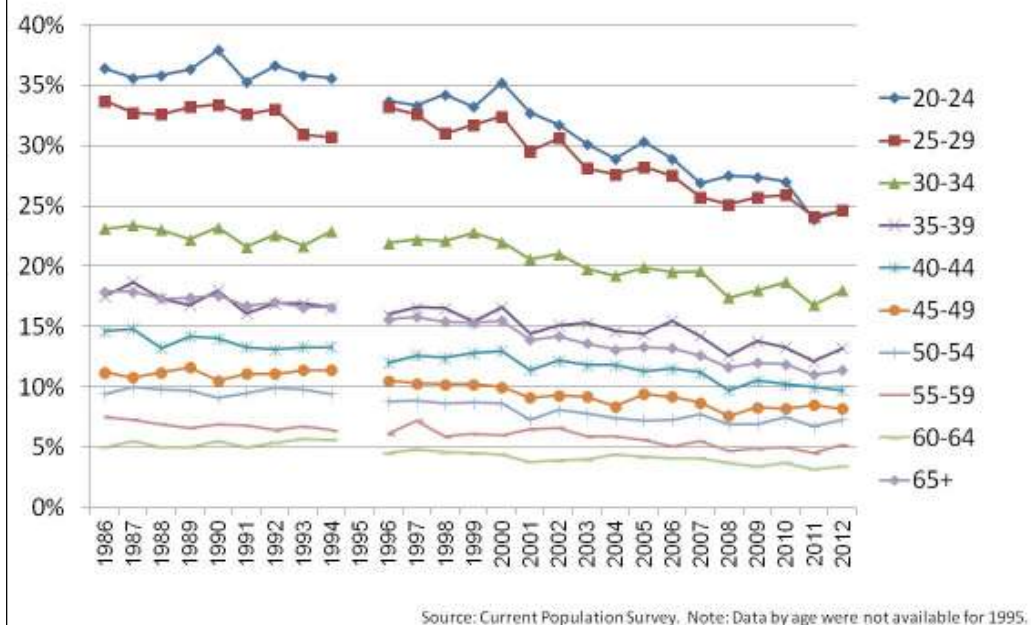
An important contribution to the residential mobility research is Peter H. Rossi's seminal work (originally published in 1954) on the residential location decision-making process that resulted in his life-cycle model of residential mobility (Rossi 1980.) He described the life-cycle model of residential mobility as the process by which families change their housing to meet the housing needs that are generated by shifts in family composition that accompany life-cycle changes (Rossi 1980, 61). He conducted an empirical analysis of mobility based on personal interviews with families in the Philadelphia area. He found that the most important factors influencing a family's residential mobility include life-cycle issues (e.g. marriage, divorce, or children), as well as the family's "housing philosophy" (i.e. the preference for ownership over renting), general housing dissatisfaction, and residential stress (i.e. space issues.) Later research explicitly added early career and job changes as pivotal points of the life-cycle that precipitate a move, particularly long-distance moves (Greenwood 1975).

Decades of research on residential mobility and migration have validated the importance of life-cycle factors for explaining both the likelihood of moving and the residential location and housing choice of movers. (See, for example, Leslie & Richardson 1961; Speare 1970, McAuley & Nutty 1982; South and Crowder 1997; Detang-Dessendre et al. 2002; Geist & McManus 2008; and Chen & Rosenthal 2008.)

The well-documented link between demographic and economic life-cycle events and mobility suggests there should be a relationship observed between mobility rates and age, since age is strongly tied to the aforementioned life-cycle events. In particular, mobility rates should be higher for people in their 20s as they enter the job market and get married. People in their 30s should also have relatively high residential mobility rates because this decade is when moves related to the presence of children are more common. Mobility rates should be somewhat higher at retirement age because exiting the labor force can precipitate a move.

Indeed, the residential mobility data for different age groups reveal the expected patterns. In 2012, for example, the highest mobility rates were among people in their 20s; nearly one-quarter of individuals in this age cohort changed residences in 2012. Mobility rates decline with age until retirement. The 2012 mobility rate for people age 65 or older was 11.4 percent, higher than the rate for people in their 40s and 50s and just slightly lower than the overall mobility rate. The relationship between mobility rates and age has been consistent over time, even as overall mobility rates have been declining (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
**One-Year Mobility Rates by Age**



The residential mobility data reported annually from the Current Population Survey (CPS) includes four different types of moves—state-to-state moves, county-to-county moves within a state (i.e. same state, different county), within-county moves, and moves from abroad. Mobility rates are reported for individuals. In 2012, about 12 percent of U.S. residents moved. Just 1.7 percent of individuals moved from one state to another. A little more than two percent of people moved from one county to another within the same state and 7.7 percent of individuals in the U.S. changed residences within the same county. Thus, 60 percent of moves in 2012 were within-county moves. Only 0.4 percent of people moved from abroad in 2012.

The life-cycle theory of residential mobility suggests that different types of moves may occur at different stages of the life cycle. Employment change has been found to be associated with long-distance moves while family change more often prompts short-distance moves (Greenwood 1979; Zax 1994; Lyons 1996). As a result, it is expected that the long distance mobility rates will be relatively higher for people in their 20s than for people in the 30s and 40s. People in their 20s are entering the labor force, are more likely to be changing jobs, and are more likely to be moving between school and work than are older people.

For this analysis, long distance moves are defined as moves between states. Short distance moves are defined as moves within the same county. While individuals in their 20s are much more likely than older individuals to move, they are not disproportionately more likely to make long-distance moves. Over the 1986-2012 period, the state-to-state mobility rate for the population age 20 to 29 years old was about

2.5 times the rate for 40-to-49 year olds. However, the overall mobility rate was about 2.5 times higher for younger people, as well.

About 15 percent of moves 20-to-29 year olds make are state-to-state moves (Table 1). This share is somewhat lower than the share for older individuals. The age groups most likely to make a state-to-state move (given they move at all) are the 55-to-59 year olds and the 60-to-64 year olds. While the life-cycle hypothesis suggests that younger people might more often make long-distance moves for employment reasons, the mobility data do not bear out that supposition. People in their 20s—though they are more likely to move overall—have been no more likely than people in their 30s or 40s to move from one state to another over the 1986-2012 period. (People in their 20s and 30s are more likely to have moved from abroad than older people.)

**Table 1**  
**Proportion of Moves by Distance and Mover Age Group: 1986-2012**

Age	State-to-state	Same state, different county	Within county	From abroad
20 to 24 years	15%	20%	61%	4%
25 to 29 years	16%	20%	61%	4%
30 to 34 years	16%	19%	62%	4%
35 to 39 years	16%	19%	61%	4%
40 to 44 years	17%	19%	61%	3%
45 to 49 years	17%	19%	61%	3%
50 to 54 years	18%	20%	59%	3%
55 to 59 years	22%	22%	53%	3%
60 to 64 years	20%	22%	55%	2%
65+ years	17%	20%	60%	3%

Source: Current Population Survey

Short-distance moves are hypothesized to be associated with adjusting housing needs resulting from changes in family situations rather than employment changes. Children often precipitate a need for larger housing. Divorce can lead to a need for smaller housing. In these cases, one's employment status may not have changed, so the move may be within the same labor force area, or, in the case of those with children in schools, within the same school district. As such, it could be expected that the short-distance mobility rates of people in the 30s and 40s may be relatively higher than that of 20-to-29 year olds.

The data again suggest there are no significant differences in the share of short-distance versus long-distance moves comparing individuals in their 20s and to individuals in their 30s or 40s. Over the 1986-2012 time period, about 61 percent of moves for people in the 20s, 30s, and 40s were within-county moves. Movers in the 50s and 60s were somewhat less likely to make a within-county move.

Taken all together, the residential mobility data for 1986 through 2012 do not support the relationship between distance of move and age that is suggested by the life-cycle theory of mobility. The most important age-related trend is simply that young adults—that is, people in their 20s—are much more likely to move at all than others. Overall, short-distance moves are the most common type of move. The over-50 population of movers has been most likely to demonstrate different patterns of long-distance versus short-distance moves.

If employment change is a primary driver of long-distance mobility, it would be expected that state-to-state mobility rates should be more sensitive to business cycles. Over the past 30 years, overall mobility rates have declined somewhat more sharply in recession years. However, there is a somewhat stronger association between long-distance mobility rates and economic downturns, particularly for the most mobile younger people (Figures 3a and 3b). In the 1990-1991 and the 2001 recessions, state-to-state mobility rates fell for most age groups. During the most recent recession, the steep downward trend in state-to-state migration had been underway years before the recession. In fact, long-distance mobility rates for people in their 20s began falling in 2001, dropping from a high of over six percent to about three percent by 2007. During the recession—that is, between 2007 and 2009—the state-to-state mobility rates among 25 to 29 year olds actually started to pick up.

The life-cycle model has been used extensively to study residential mobility and location choices of individuals and households. An examination of three decades of residential mobility trends reveals some patterns that are consistent with the life-cycle model of residential mobility and migration. In particular, mobility rates vary by age, and these variations are consistent with the life-cycle hypothesis that suggests mobility rates would be highest for younger people as this is the age when people tend to be starting careers and families, lower in middle age when employment and family situations are more stable, and then somewhat higher at older ages during periods of retirement and beyond.

The relationship between age and distance of move that is perhaps suggested by the life-cycle model of residential mobility and migration is not supported by the three decades of CPS mobility data. Younger people, who are more likely to be starting and changing careers and to have fewer ties to a particular place, are not more likely to make long-distance moves compared to people in their 30s and 40s. People in their 30s and early 40s, in presumed childbearing and childrearing ages, are not any more likely than younger people to make short-distance moves. Older individuals—that is, people in their 50s and 60s—have the most distinctive patterns of move type, with a relatively greater share of state-to-state moves and a relatively lower share of within-county moves.

## **The Relationship Between Changes in the Population Age Structure to Declining Mobility Rates**

As described in the prior section, the likelihood of moving is strongly correlated with age. Over the past 30 years, the age distribution of the U.S. population has shifted as the Baby Boom population has aged, the Echo Boom population has grown and international migration has ebbed and flowed. How are changes in the population's age distribution related to the trends in residential mobility rates? Can these changes partially explain declines in residential mobility?

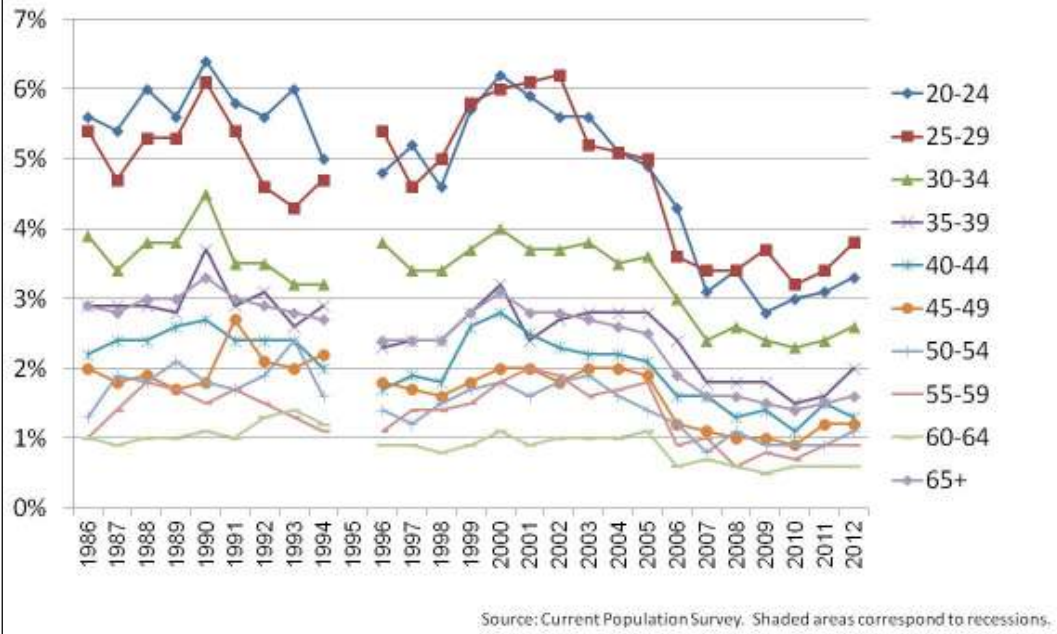


Residential mobility rates have been steadily declining since the 1980s. If the shifting age distribution of the U.S. population was a driver of the decline in mobility rates, one would expect the less mobile age groups (e.g. 40-to-59 years old) to be getting bigger or adding people to the population compared to the more mobile age groups (e.g. 20-to-39 years old, 65+ years old). This premise assumes that the propensity of moving is unchanged over time for different age groups.

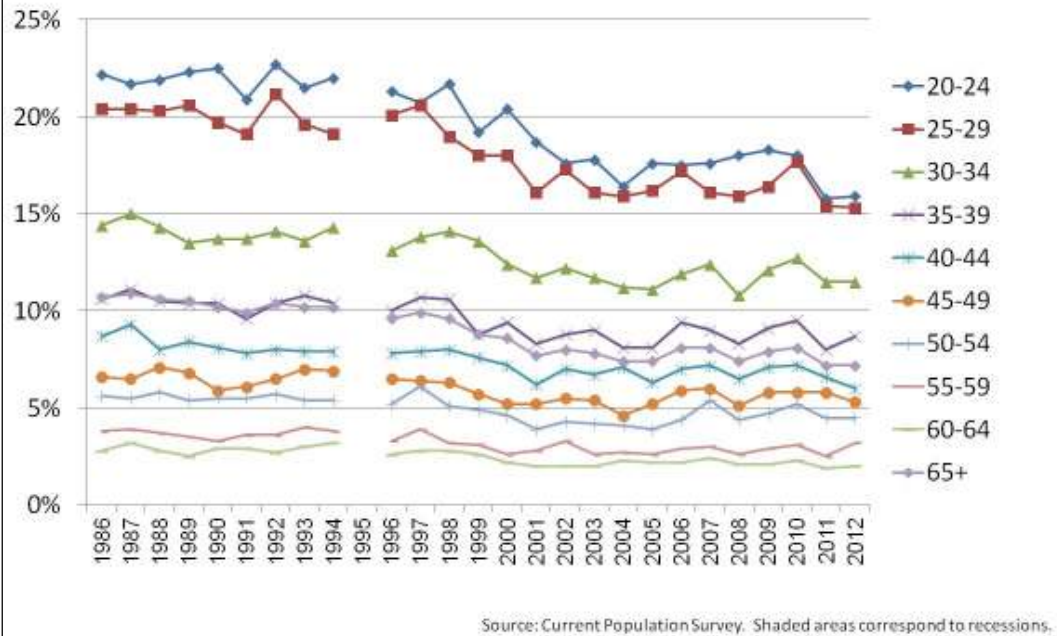
Between 1980 and 2000, the residential mobility rate decline by a just over a percentage point, from 17.2 to 16.1 percent. Over this two decade period, percent to the share of people in their 40s and 50s increased substantially (Table 2). In 1980, 5.2 percent of the U.S. population was between 40 and 44 years old. The share of 40-to-44 year olds in the population increased to eight percent in 2000. Between 1980s and 2000, the number of people age 45 to 49 years old increased from 4.9 percent of the population to 7.1 percent. The growth in the number of people in their 40s reflects the Baby Boomers who were born in the 1950s moving into this age cohort. The group of 40-to-49 year olds grew by nearly 20 million between 1980 and 2000 (Table 3). (Overall, the U.S. population increased by nearly 55 million people between 1980 and 2000.)

At the same time, the population of 20-to-29 year olds was declining as a share of the overall population. The number of people age 20 to 24 years old declined from 9.4 percent of the population in 1980 to 6.7 percent in 2000. The share of 25-to-29 year olds fell from 8.6 percent to 6.9 percent between 1980 and 2000. In 2000, there were nearly 2.5 million more people aged 20 to 29 than there were in 1980, much smaller population growth than the 40-to-49 year olds. Overall, then, the shifts in the relative sizes of the most and least mobile groups of the population may at least partially explain why mobility rates fell in the 1980s and 1990s. The U.S. population was made of a relatively greater number of people who have been historically less mobile, while the mobile class grew became relatively smaller.

### Figure 3a Long-Distance Mobility Rates by Age



### Figure 3b Short-Distance Mobility Rates by Age



**Table 2**  
**U.S. Population Distribution by Age Group**

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020*
Under 5 years	7.2%	7.5%	6.8%	6.5%	6.5%
5 to 9 years	7.4%	7.3%	7.3%	6.6%	6.4%
10 to 14 years	8.1%	6.9%	7.3%	6.7%	6.2%
15 to 19 years	9.3%	7.2%	7.2%	7.1%	6.2%
20 to 24 years	9.4%	7.7%	6.7%	7.0%	6.5%
25 to 29 years	8.6%	8.6%	6.9%	6.8%	7.0%
30 to 34 years	7.8%	8.8%	7.3%	6.5%	6.9%
35 to 39 years	6.2%	8.0%	8.1%	6.5%	6.5%
40 to 44 years	5.2%	7.1%	8.0%	6.8%	6.1%
45 to 49 years	4.9%	5.5%	7.1%	7.4%	6.0%
50 to 54 years	5.2%	4.5%	6.2%	7.2%	6.1%
55 to 59 years	5.1%	4.2%	4.8%	6.4%	6.5%
60 to 64 years	4.5%	4.3%	3.8%	5.4%	6.3%
65+ years	11.3%	12.5%	12.4%	13.0%	16.8%
Mobility rate		1980-90	1990-00	2000-10	
Change (pp)		0.67	-1.85	-3.59	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. \*Projected.

Between 2000 and 2010, the decline in mobility rates was even steeper than it had been in the decade before. Over the 2000-2010 period, the number of people age 40 to 49 years old grew more slowly in the population, and this group comprised a smaller share of the population in 2010 than it did in 2000. In 2000 the group of 40-to-44 year olds made up eight percent of the total population; by 2010 the share had fallen to 6.8 percent. This trend reflects the relatively smaller Generation X population moving into their 40s. Faster population growth occurred among the older age cohorts. The proportions of the population age 50 and older increased substantially between 2000 and 2010 as the Baby Boomers moved into these age groups. At the same time, the population of 20-to-29 year olds also began to increase. In 2010, the people reaching their 20s were born between 1981 and 1990—solidly in the Echo Boom cohort or Generation Y. Their numbers increased enough to shift the shares in the overall population slightly. For example, the population age 20 to 24 years old made up 6.7 percent of the overall population in 2000 and was seven percent in 2010. The share of 25 to 29 year olds actually declined by a tenth of a percentage point between 2000 and 2010.

**Table 3**  
**Population Change by Age Group (thousands)**

	<b>1980-1990</b>	<b>1990-2000</b>	<b>2000-2010</b>	<b>2010-2020*</b>
Under 5 years	2,417	411	1,026	1,607
5 to 9 years	1,342	2,508	-201	958
10 to 14 years	-1,175	3,461	149	-61
15 to 19 years	-3,275	2,327	1,820	-1,234
20 to 24 years	-2,176	-179	2,622	65
25 to 29 years	1,815	-1,955	1,721	2,264
30 to 34 years	4,277	-1,328	-548	2,943
35 to 39 years	5,886	2,856	-2,527	1,689
40 to 44 years	5,924	4,849	-1,551	-530
45 to 49 years	2,657	6,345	2,616	-2,701
50 to 54 years	-395	6,271	4,713	-1,832
55 to 59 years	-1,126	2,980	6,196	2,082
60 to 64 years	539	178	6,012	4,199
65+ years	5,534	3,908	5,276	15,701
Total	22,244	32,632	27,324	25,150

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. \*Projected.

In absolute numbers, there were 10.9 million more 50-to-59 year olds in 2010 than there were in 2000. This age group tends to be the least mobile group. In 2010, there were 4.3 million more 20-to-29 year olds than there were in 2000. Therefore, the most highly mobile population grew faster in the 2000 to 2010 period than it did in the decades before, but still added fewer people than the 50-to-59 year old age group.

As a result, compared to the 1980s and 1990s, one might expect mobility rates to fall at a slower rate between 2000 and 2010 than they had in prior years. The relatively more mobility 20-to-29 year old population was growing. But in fact, during the 2000-2010 period, the decline in mobility rates actually accelerated. The mobility rate fell by 3.6 percent points between 2000 and 2010.

Bivariate correlation coefficients measure the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. Considering the bivariate correlations between age group share and mobility rates is another way to identify if and how the changing age structure of the population may be related to mobility rates. A positive correlation coefficient indicates a positive relationship which means in a given year, a higher (lower) proportion of a particular age group in the population is associated with a higher (lower) overall mobility rate over the 1981-2010 period. A negative correlation coefficient indicates that a higher (lower) proportion in the population is associated with a lower (higher) overall mobility rate. A higher absolute value of a correlation coefficient signifies a stronger relationship between the two variables. A correlation coefficient of 1 indicates perfect correlation.

Over the 1981-2010 period, there is a consistent negative relationship between the share of the population in their 40s, 50s, and 60s and all measures of population mobility (Table 4a). In other words,

in the years 1981 through 2010, as the shares of people age 40 and older in the population increased, mobility rates decreased. The strongest negative relationship with overall mobility rates is the 50-to-54 year old population share. There are some modest differences depending on the type of mobility rate as measured by distance, but the pattern is generally consistent. Over the 1981-2010 period, there is a positive correlation between the proportion of younger people in the population and mobility rates. The largest positive correlation with overall mobility rates is with the early 30s population share.

During the most recent decade, the relationship between the share of different age groups in the population and population mobility rates changed dramatically (Table 4b). In particular, in the years between 2001 and 2010, there was a *negative* relationship between the proportion of people in the 25-to-29 year old age group and mobility rates (with the exception of short distance, or within-county mobility rates). These negative correlation coefficients indicate that as the proportion of 25-to-29 year olds in the population increased, the overall population mobility rate decreased over the 2001-2010 period. The value of the correlation coefficient indicates a *strong* negative relationship. This group includes a large share of the Echo Boom population.

There are also modest negative correlations between the shares of people in the 30s and early 40s and within county mobility rates. These age groups include some of the oldest Echo Boomers but primarily are people in Generation X. Over the longer 1981-2010 period, the proportion of the population in the 40-to-44 year old age group was negatively correlated with overall mobility rates. However, in 2001-2010, the correlation is positive and very strong. At the same time, there are positive correlations between the shares of the population that is in their late 40s, 50s and 60s and within county mobility rates over the 2001-2010 period. These include mostly the Baby Boom generation.

These bivariate correlation coefficients suggest that the nature of the relationship between age and mobility changed in the last decade. The Echo Boomers in the 25-to-29 year old age group could have different preferences for moving compared to earlier 25-to-29 year olds. There could also be changes in preferences for local moves among other age groups. Or the economic and housing market conditions that characterized the decade could be responsible for the change in the nature of the relationship between population age structure and mobility rates.

For example, the negative relationship between within county mobility rates and the share of people in their 30s and early 40s could be partially explained by the housing market boom and bust. This group generally is more likely to transition from renter to owner, often moving short distances. These moves, driven by family change, may be more discretionary compared to long-distance moves precipitated by a job change or transfer. As home prices ballooned between 2002 and 2006 and then crashed, these households may have been less able to make these moves to homeownership.

**Table 4a**  
**Correlation Coefficients**  
**Share of Population in Each Age Group to Overall Population Mobility Rates: 1981-2010**

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>State-to-state mobility</b>	<b>Same state, different county</b>	<b>Within county</b>
20 to 24 years	0.5607	0.4232	0.5943	0.5126
25 to 29 years	0.7729	0.5060	0.7311	0.7650
30 to 34 years	0.9128	0.7227	0.8340	0.8589
35 to 39 years	0.4292	0.3900	0.3615	0.3901
40 to 44 years	-0.4017	-0.1419	-0.3880	-0.4506
45 to 49 years	-0.8364	-0.6027	-0.8021	-0.8016
50 to 54 years	-0.9426	-0.7086	-0.8815	-0.8974
55 to 59 years	-0.8226	-0.7245	-0.7574	-0.7391
60 to 64 years	-0.3462	-0.5278	-0.4059	-0.1837
65+ years	-0.4413	-0.5068	-0.5752	-0.2911

**Table 4b**  
**Correlation Coefficients**  
**Share of Population in Each Age Group to Overall Population Mobility Rates: 2001-2010**

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>State-to-state mobility</b>	<b>Same state, different county</b>	<b>Within county</b>
20 to 24 years	0.4142	0.4021	0.5327	-0.1102
25 to 29 years	-0.8596	-0.9068	-0.7677	0.1407
30 to 34 years	0.8251	0.9258	0.7122	-0.2428
35 to 39 years	0.8247	0.8765	0.7884	-0.2603
40 to 44 years	0.9178	0.9702	0.9327	-0.3091
45 to 49 years	-0.0751	-0.1801	0.1577	0.0076
50 to 54 years	-0.9175	-0.9682	-0.9104	0.2721
55 to 59 years	-0.7845	-0.8971	-0.7172	0.3276
60 to 64 years	-0.9007	-0.9448	-0.9215	0.3073
65+ years	-0.8658	-0.8706	-0.9589	0.2871

The population of people in their late 20s was growing over the 2001-2010 period and at the same time mobility rates were falling. Because their likelihood of moving may be more tied to economic conditions and job availability, their mobility decisions may have been disproportionately affected by the economic downturn. They may also have other financial considerations (e.g. college debt) that made moving into homeownership, for example, prohibitive during the housing boom.

While the likelihood of an individual moving remains highly dependent on age, the relationship between mobility rates and the relative sizes of different age groups in the population is different for

the 2001-2010 period compared to the longer 1981-2010 period. Whether it is the economic and housing market or changing preferences or something else, the patterns of residential mobility in the most recent decade are noticeably different.

It is helpful to compare mobility rates of a particular generation with other generations when they were in the same age group. Figure 4 shows the one-year mobility rates by age group for 2012, 1997, 1987 and 1976. These years were selected to isolate the period in which each generation was in their 20s, the most highly mobile period of life. Individuals who were between the ages of 20 and 29 years in 2012 were born between 1983 and 1992, a period that encompasses a large proportion of the current Echo Boomer generation or Generation Y. The mobility rate for the Generation X population when they were in their 20s is shown by the 1997 bars for the 20-to-24 year old and 25-to-29 year old age groups. Many of the youngest Baby Boomers were in their 20s in 1987 and the older Baby Boomers were in their 20s in 1976.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, this chart allows a comparison of the mobility rates for each generation when they were in their 20s.

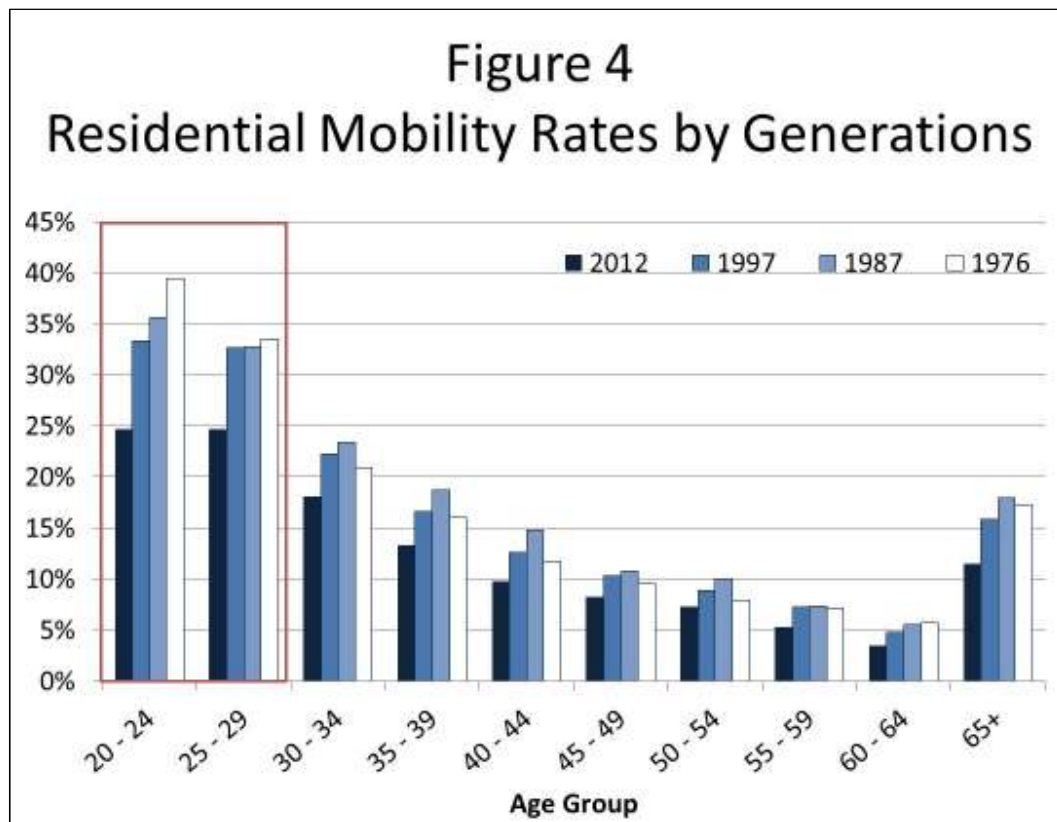
In 2012, the mobility rate for individuals in their 20s remains higher than that of older people. Even as people in their 20s continue to have higher mobility rates than other age groups, the current group of twentysomethings is significantly less mobile than either Generation X or the Baby Boomers were when they were in their 20s. Compared to Generation X, the mobility rates for Echo Boomers between the ages of 20 and 24 years are 8.7 percentage points lower. The differential is 8.0 percentage points for 25-to-29 year olds. Compared to young Baby Boomers when they were 20-to-24 years old, Echo Boomers in this age group have a mobility rate that is 11.0 percentage points lower. The mobility rate for 25-to-29 year old Echo Boomers is 8.1 percentage points lower than for young Baby Boomers when they were 25-to-29 years old. The differential is even greater when Echo Boomers are compared to older Baby Boomers—14.8 percentage points for 20-to-24 year olds and 8.9 percentage points for 25-to-29 year olds.

Mobility rates have declined for all age groups over the past four decades. However, the mobility rates for 20-to-24 year olds and 25-to-29 year olds have declined even further in recent years than have the mobility rates for other age groups. The rate of mobility among 20-to-24 year olds, in particular, is substantially lower for Echo Boomers compared to Generation X or Baby Boomers.

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<sup>3</sup> The CPS did not ask a mobility question in 1977 and therefore the data are not available for that year.





Comparing the mobility rates of Echo Boomers who are currently in their 20s to the other generations when they were in their 20s is instructive for assessing whether Echo Boomers are significantly different from prior generations in terms of their likelihood of moving. It remains difficult to ascertain the reasons for the lower mobility rates. The year 2012 was characterized by very different economic conditions than were 1997, 1987 or 1976. Slower economic growth could partially explain lower relative mobility rates across age groups and among young workers in particular. The drop in mobility among this group of Echo Boomers is much bigger than the drop seen between the Gen X'ers and Baby Boomers so that it suggests that something atypical has occurred in the drivers of residential mobility over the past decade.

### Changes in Residential Mobility in the Most Recent Decade

The decline in the overall mobility rate between 2001 and 2012 is part of a continuation of the downward trend that began in the 1960s. However, a closer look reveals that the 2001-2007 period was significantly different from the 2007-2012 period, and that the decade overall was characterized by steep mobility rate declines.

Between 2001 and 2007, the overall mobility rate fell from 14.2 percent to 13.2 percent, a drop of one percentage point. This change reflects a 6.6 percent decline in the overall rate (Table 5). Over the same period, the state-to-state mobility rate dropped 41 percent while the within-county mobility rate



increased by 8.2 percent. Thus, the driver of the decline in mobility rates between 2001 and 2007 was a decline in long-distance moving.

Over the longer 1986 through 2001 period, the overall mobility rate declined by 23.7 percent, with the biggest decline in within-county mobility (declining by 29.8 percent.) The same state, different county mobility rate declined by 26.3 percent and the state-to-state mobility rate fell by just 5.6 percent over the 15-year period.

**Table 5**  
**Changes in Mobility Rates by Distance**

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Overall mobility (% change)</b>	<b>State-to-state (% change)</b>	<b>Same state, different county (% change)</b>	<b>Within county (% change)</b>	<b>From abroad (% change)</b>
1986-2001	-23.7%	-5.6%	-26.3%	-29.8%	23.7%
2001-2007	-6.6%	-41.2%	-7.3%	8.2%	-36.1%
2007-2012	-9.4%	-0.1%	-12.4%	-10.5%	-7.0%

Over the 2007-2012 period, when the overall mobility rate fell by 9.4 percent, the greatest declines were again for within county and same state, different county mobility.

The 2001-2007 period appears to be unique, with the decline in mobility rates being driven very strongly by drops in the proportion of people moving from one state to another. The 2001-2007 period was characterized by several important events. First, the 2001 terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> had a marked impact on Americans' psyche, and created a mood that encouraged stability rather than mobility. The subsequent economic recession, though relatively short, also likely dampened mobility. The run-up in home prices is the longest and probably the most important trend occurring during this decline in state-to-state mobility rates. The increased availability of credit in the 2001-2004 period led to an increase in homeownership nationwide. These mobility data suggest that much of the home buying and moving during the housing boom was local. Making moves out of state became less common as the housing market heated up.

The declines in mobility between 2001 and 2007 were also most apparent among individuals in their 20s. While the overall mobility rate declined 6.6 percent between 2001 and 2007, the rates declined 17.7 percent for 20-to-24 year olds and 12.9 percent for 25-to-29 year olds. (There was also a relatively large decline for people age 55 to 59 years old.) Although their mobility rates continued to fall between 2007 and 2012, the drops for the 20-to-29 year olds (and particularly for the 25-to-29 year olds) were more modest than they were for people in their early 40s or age 60 and older. This recent patterns suggests a slowing in the decline in the mobility rates of individuals in their 20s as the economy and housing market improve.

For the past three decades, age and residential mobility have been closely linked. Before 2001, the relative shares of the most and least mobile age cohorts could partially explain the declining mobility rates. Declining mobility between 1986 and 2001 was primarily attributable to declines in shorter

distance moves. Less long-distance moving was not a major factor in the overall mobility declines over the 15-year period. Between 2001 and 2007; however, the drop in residential mobility was driven by less state-to-state movement and lower mobility rates among individuals in their 20s. The response of the Echo Boomers to the economic conditions of the last decade is important to explaining recent declines in mobility. Other factors may also be useful explanations for the reduced mobility of this demographic cohort.

**Table 6**  
**Changes in Mobility Rates by Age Group**

Time Period	Overall mobility (% change)	Age Group (rate % change)									
		20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+
1986-2001	-23.7%	-10.2%	-12.5%	-10.8%	-17.7%	-21.9%	-18.8%	-22.3%	-13.3%	-24.0%	-22.3%
2001-2007	-6.6%	-17.7%	-12.9%	-4.9%	-1.4%	-1.8%	-4.4%	5.5%	-15.4%	7.9%	-9.4%
2007-2012	-9.4%	-8.6%	-4.3%	-8.2%	-7.0%	-13.4%	-5.7%	-5.2%	-5.5%	-17.1%	-9.5%

## Delay in Life-Cycle Events Related to Mobility

Because life-cycle events have been closely associated with residential mobility and migration decisions, it is important to understand how life-cycle transitions are being made by different age cohorts and whether there are significant differences observed over the last decade. If certain life-cycle events that are associated with mobility are happening less often or are being delayed, the decline in residential mobility could be explained by those demographic and cultural changes. One hypothesis about why the current cohort of twentysomethings has substantially lower mobility rates is that they are less likely to be married and to have children than were prior generations. These two life-cycle events have been shown to be important predictors of the likelihood of moving.

### Marriage

Marriage is a catalyst for residential mobility. Based on an analysis of Census data, however, the share of people in their 20s and early 30s who are getting married has dropped dramatically just over the 2000-2011 period. In 1990, 28.3 percent of 20-to-24 year olds were married or had been married. This age cohort includes individuals in Generation X, born between 1966 and 1972. In 2000, 26.0 percent of 20-to-24 year olds were married or had been married and by 2011, the share was 12.7 percent, a halving of the marriage rate from just 11 years earlier. The period between 2000 and 2011 represents the decade when Echo Boomers were moving into their 20s.

There are similar trends for other age groups, although the decline is not as dramatic. In 2000, 56.3 percent of 25 to 29 year olds had been or were married, compared to 40.3 percent in 2011, a 16 percentage point decline. Nearly three quarters of 30-to-34 year olds had been or were married in 2000, a share that dropped by almost 11 percentage points to just 63.4 percent in 2011.

**Table 7**  
**Percentage of Individuals Who Are Married or Have Ever Been Married by Selected Age Group**

	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2011</b>
20 to 24 years	28.3	26.0	12.7
25 to 29 years	61.7	56.3	40.3
30 to 34 years	78.6	74.2	63.4
35 to 44 years	88.8	84.4	78.8
45 to 54 years	94.1	91.2	85.6
55 to 59 years	95.2	94.3	89.7
60 to 64 years	95.2	95.2	92.4

Source: 1990 Census 5% sample IPUMS; 2000 Census, Summary File 3; 2011 American Community Survey

Rates of marriage have declined for all age cohorts, but the propensity to marry has declined most dramatically for people in their early 20s. These statistics indicate that many people are delaying marriage. There is also evidence suggesting that many young adults are forgoing marriage altogether (Thompson 2012; Hymowitz et al. 2013). Fewer marriages suggest fewer moves precipitated by the need to combine households or move into a larger housing unit. Cohabiting, which has been on the increase, could be an alternative means of household formation that ultimately also encourages mobility. But currently, the significant decline in marrying among young people seems particularly relevant to explaining recent declines in mobility rates among this population.

### **Childbearing**

Data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on birth rates suggest that childbearing also is being delayed. Between 2000 and 2008<sup>4</sup>, the overall fertility rate in the U.S. increased from 65.9 births per 1,000 women to 68.6 births per 1,000 women. However, the birth rate for women between the ages of 20 and 24 years old declined substantially while the rates for women in their 30s increased substantially. (The rate for 25-to-29 year old women increased modestly.)

**Table 8**  
**Birth Rate (per 1,000 Women)**

	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2008</b>
20 to 24 years	116.5	109.7	103.0
25 to 29 years	120.2	113.5	115.1
30 to 34 years	80.8	91.2	99.3
35 to 39 years	31.7	39.7	46.9
40 to 44 years	5.5	8.0	9.8

Source: U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control.

<sup>4</sup> The 2008 fertility data are the most recent available by age group from the CDC.

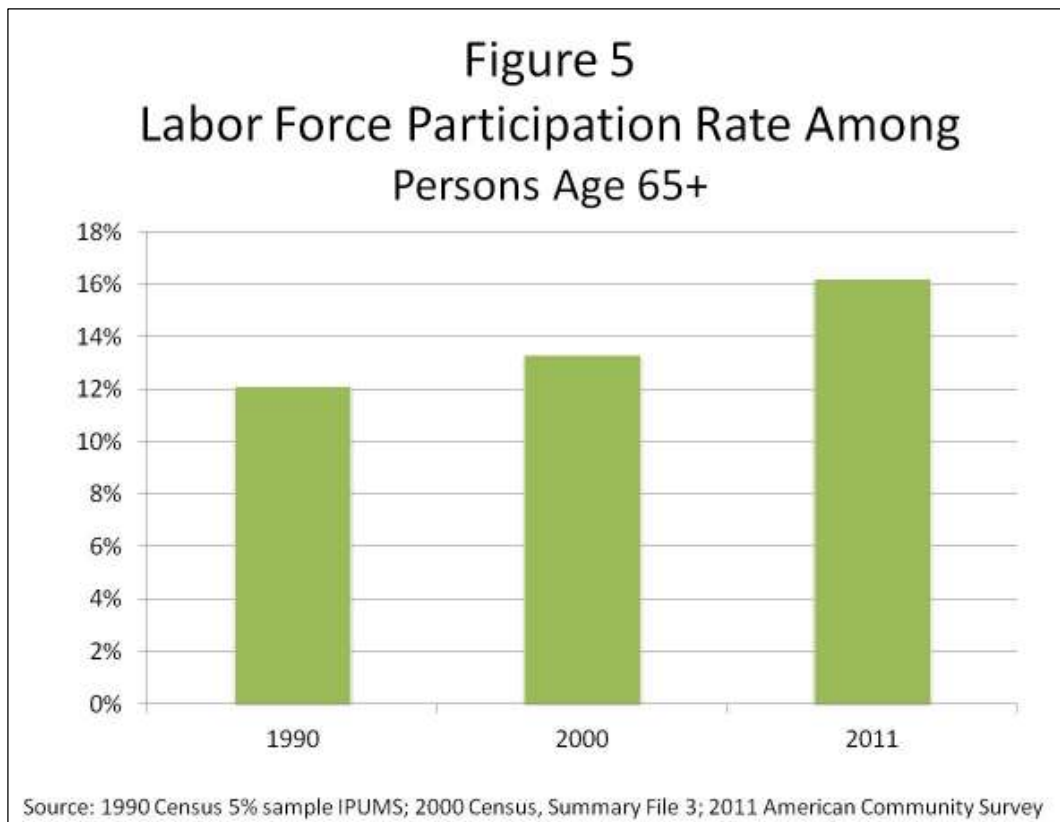
As the life-cycle model suggests, the addition of children to a household leads to residential stress—that is, the need for different or more space. Younger women (i.e. 20-to-24 year olds) are less likely to have children than they were ten or 20 years ago. It is possible that this decline in childbearing—coupled with the decline in marriage—in their 20s could be part of the explanation of the decline in residential mobility among Echo Boomers.

This conclusion presupposes that the relationship between these life-cycle events and residential mobility continues to be applicable. If it is possible that the residential stress component of the life-cycle model is not as germane as it once was. Instead of moving into a bigger housing unit when they get married and have children, perhaps the current cohort of twentysomethings is staying put and living in smaller spaces despite the household changes. This shift could be a result of different preferences and/or the state of the economy and housing market.

### **Retirement**

The life-cycle related decisions of Baby Boomers will also be important to mobility and housing choice patterns in the near term. Decisions about retirement are particularly linked to mobility. While a majority of retirees remain in the state or region in which they were working (Walters 2002), many move and downsize in order to reduce housing expenses or for other reasons. The popular media (e.g. Greenhouse 2013) and academic research (e.g. Allen & Klein 2011) have begun documenting in earnest the trends in retirement decisions among the Baby Boomers, the oldest of which are just entering typical retirement age. In 1990, 12.1 percent of people age 65 and older in the U.S. were in the labor force. In 2000, the share had increased slightly to 13.3 percent but by 2011, just over 16 percent of all people age 65 or older were in the labor force (Figure 5). The labor force participation patterns of the 65+ population in 2011 likely foreshadow future trends for Baby Boomers.

The delay in retirement is partially related to a change in the nature of work. In particular, the number of professional jobs has increased and these are the types of jobs that many can continue working in past typical retirement age. These are jobs with relatively few physical demands, relying instead on knowledge and accumulated skills. As a result, some highly skilled seniors find value in staying the labor force longer.



The economy and the housing market are also likely reasons why older workers are remaining in the workforce longer. Retirement accounts were hit hard by the economic downturn. Home values also took a nose-dive during this period. Many seniors rely on the equity in their homes to at least partially support themselves during retirement. Because of the loss in value, many may be staying in their homes—and in their jobs—longer in the hopes of making up that lost equity.

As a result, mobility among the 65+ population, which has historically ticked up, may be relatively slower in the near-term as Baby Boomers remain tied to their job and current housing unit.

### **Housing and Neighborhood Choices of Echo Boomers and Baby Boomers**

The nation's Echo Boomers appear to be moving substantially less than previous generations of twentysomethings. Part of the reasons may be related to life-cycle factors, including delayed marriage and childbearing. It is a little less clear whether residential mobility among Baby Boomers is significantly different than earlier cohorts of people in their 50s and 60s; there is insufficient data to make comparisons with prior generations of the same age. Over the next decade, the mobility and housing decisions of the Echo Boomers and Baby Boomers will have an outsized impact on the nation's housing market.

How Echo Boomers and Baby Boomers make decisions about moving, housing and neighborhoods is important to the character of local housing market, the outlook for the homebuilding industry and the focus of government policies related to a spectrum of issues from schools to transportation. There has been much written recently on how these two generations will make decisions about how and where to live. Echo Boomers have been judged to be much more urban, less desirous of private space, and more concerned about public amenities (Kirk 2011). Millennial Marketing, a market research firm specializing in trends among Echo Boomers, has labeled this generation “optimistic,” “tolerant,” and “diverse.” But despite being more socially liberal, this generation has “fairly traditional values.”<sup>5</sup>

It has been speculated that Echo Boomers will have different neighborhood preferences compared to prior generations, namely a stronger desire for smaller units in urban areas with access to public transportation and cultural amenities. On the other hand, recent housing preference surveys suggest that Echo Boomers like the suburbs and have a strong preference for homeownership. According to a 2009 survey of the Echo Boom population by The Concord Group, Echo Boomers are very optimistic about the possibility of becoming homeowners. More than 40 percent of those surveyed indicated that they thought they would buy their next residence, even as the housing market was still bottoming out. And 90 percent of respondents in the Echo Boomer age cohort had either already bought a home or anticipated they would buy a home before age 35. When researchers asked Echo Boomers about the place they would like to be living when they were age 50, the largest share (43 percent) said they would like to live in the suburbs. Only about 22 percent said they wanted to be in the city.

Similarly, in a survey commissioned by the Urban Land Institute in 2010, researchers found that people in the Echo Boom or Generation Y cohort were convinced they would own a home. More than 70 percent of Echo Boomers indicated they believed they would own a home by the time they reached their early 30s. While about a third of the Echo Boomers survey considered themselves “city people,” another third of this demographic said they were “suburbanites” and the rest called themselves “small town or country” people. In the analysis of the survey respondents, M. Leanne Lachman and Deborah L. Brett state: “This is not a radical generation. Its members are making traditional residential decisions once they move out of their parents’ homes—a move that is taking them longer than it took previous generations” (Lachman & Brett 2011).

Baby Boomers have dictated a myriad of social and economic trends over the past six decades. This generation is projected to change notions of aging and retirement just like they shaped ideas about youth and adulthood (Grinberg 2011). As a result of their relative health there have been many who have argued that this generation will also be drawn increasingly to urban locations and smaller, rental, transit-accessible neighborhoods. Research on this population in the Washington-Baltimore region suggests older Baby Boomers may already be more inclined towards urban locations (Sturtevant 2012). On the other hand, this generation defined and grew up in the suburbs and the suburbs may continue to be a draw as they move into retirement years.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.millennialmarketing.com/2010/02/gen-y-out-values-define-us](http://www.millennialmarketing.com/2010/02/gen-y-out-values-define-us)

The American Housing Survey is a good source of national data on not just the types of housing units and neighborhoods different people choose, but also the *reasons* for those choices. In this section of the research, data from the 2001 and 2011 national dataset from the American Housing Survey (AHS) are used (as well as 2000 Census data and 2011 American Community Survey data) to analyze the mobility, housing and neighborhood choices of 25-to-34 year olds and 55-to-64 year olds in two periods separated by a decade. By examining the same age group a decade apart, it is possible to tease out some evidence of changing preferences, although it is possible that a decade is not enough time for these types of preferences to change substantially. And it is certainly true that U.S. economic conditions in 2011 are significantly different from those of 2001. However, this analysis represents a first step towards better understanding the role changing preferences may play in the residential mobility and location decisions of Echo Boomers and Baby Boomers.

The U.S. homeownership rate in 2011 is lower than it was in 2000. Drops in the homeownership rate are observed across age groups (with the exception of the 65 and older age group), but the declines have been more pronounced among younger people (Figure 6). In 2000 17.9 percent of 15-to-24 year olds were homeowners.<sup>6</sup> In 2011, the homeownership rate for this age group was just 13.5 percent. Similarly, the homeownership rate among 25-to-34 year olds (which encompasses the older Echo Boomers) fell from 45.6 percent in 2000 to 39.7 percent in 2011. Homeownership rates dropped for other age groups, as well, but the declines were more precipitous among younger adults.

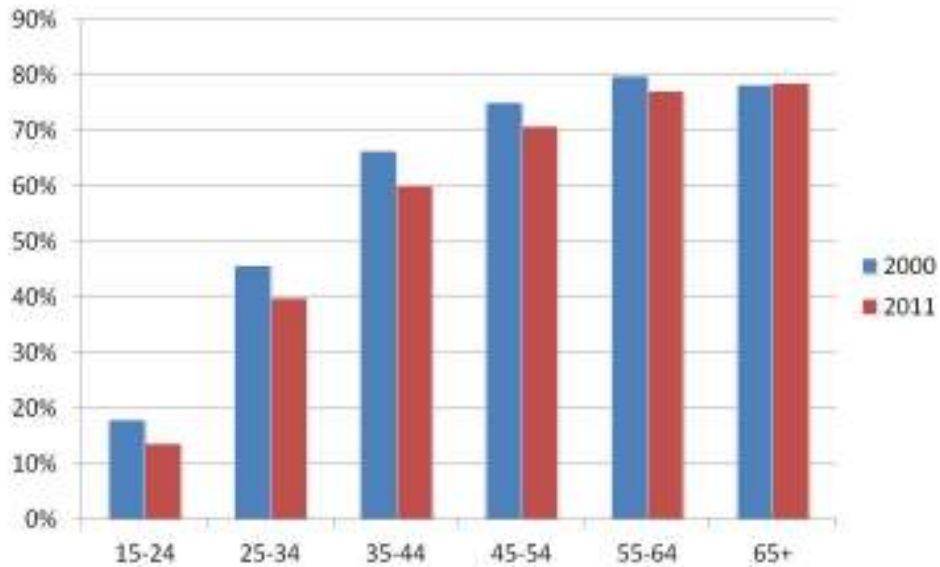
The AHS includes not only questions about whether or not an individual moved and characteristics of individuals' housing units and neighborhoods, but also "why" questions—that is, why did an individual move? Why did an individual choose a particular housing unit or neighborhood? Analyzing response to these types of questions for 2001 and 2011 can help to better understand motivations and, possibly, preferences of current Echo Boomers and Baby Boomers compared to people in the same age group a decade earlier.

As discussed in earlier sections, residential mobility has been found to be strongly tied to life-cycle factors, including job changes and family changes. The AHS data on the primary reason an individual moved largely support these expectations. For recent movers between 25 and 34 years old (i.e. the oldest Echo Boomers), the primary reasons stated for moving were to establish one's own household, for a new job or job transfer, for family-related reasons (including marriage, divorce and "other" family reasons), and for a larger housing unit (Figure 7a).

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<sup>6</sup> The Census data on homeownership are presented by age of the household head.

**Figure 6**  
**Homeownership Rates by Age**



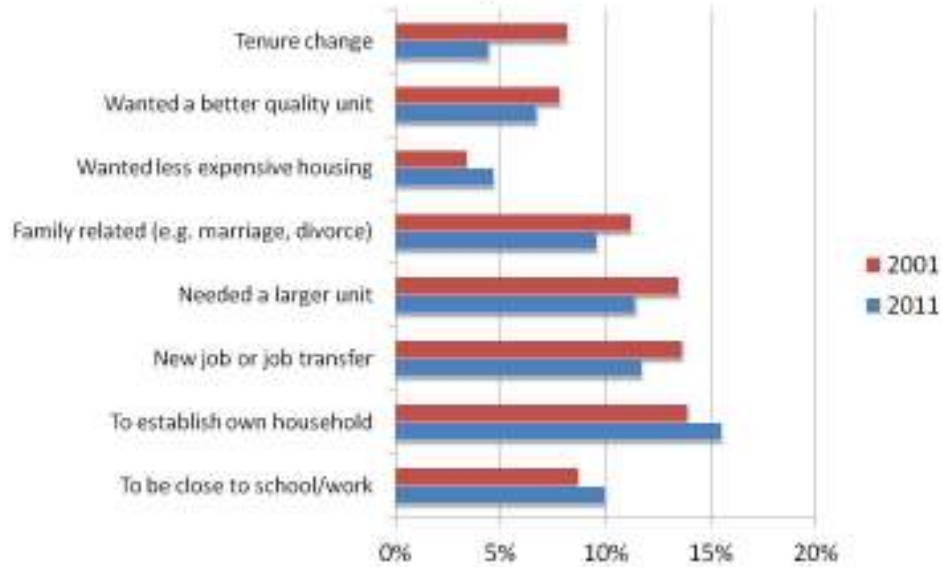
Source: 2000 Census, Summary File 3; 2011 American Community Survey

As mobility rates declined for this age group between 2001 and 2011, the reasons given for moving also changed. The most common reason given for moving continued to be to establish one’s own household (13.9 percent of respondents in 2001 and 15.5 percent of respondents in 2011). However, other reasons became less important in 2011. For example, a new job or job transfer was cited as the most important reason for moving by 13.6 percent of 25-to-34 year olds in 2001, but only 11.7 percent in 2011. Moving for a larger housing unit was the main reason for moving for 13.5 percent of 25-to-34 year olds in 2001, but only 11.5 percent of 25-to-34 year olds in 2011. Family-related reasons were also less likely to be cited by 25-to-34 year old movers—11.2 percent in 2001 versus 9.6 percent in 2011. While the economy was growing slowly in 2011, there was also a recession in 2001, so the decline in the new job or job transfer reason may be just as likely to do with the characteristics of the current group of 25-to-34 year olds as with the growth and structure of economic opportunities. The need (or desire) for a larger unit may have been put off in 2011, as the housing market was still recovering in many places. Additionally, the share of individuals age 25-to-34 citing tenure change (e.g. renter to homeowner) was lower in 2011 than in 2001, again suggesting that the state of the housing market was an important factor in mobility decisions in 2011. The decline in the family-related reasons for moving further supports the potential link between marriage, childbearing and mobility.

Among 55-to-64 year olds, the single most important reason for moving given was a family-related reason, which includes marriage, divorce and “other” family reasons. Family reasons were somewhat less important in 2011. In that year, 16.8 percent of 55-to-64 year olds stated family reasons were the primary reason for moving, compared to 18.1 percent of 55-to-64 year olds in 2001. The desire for

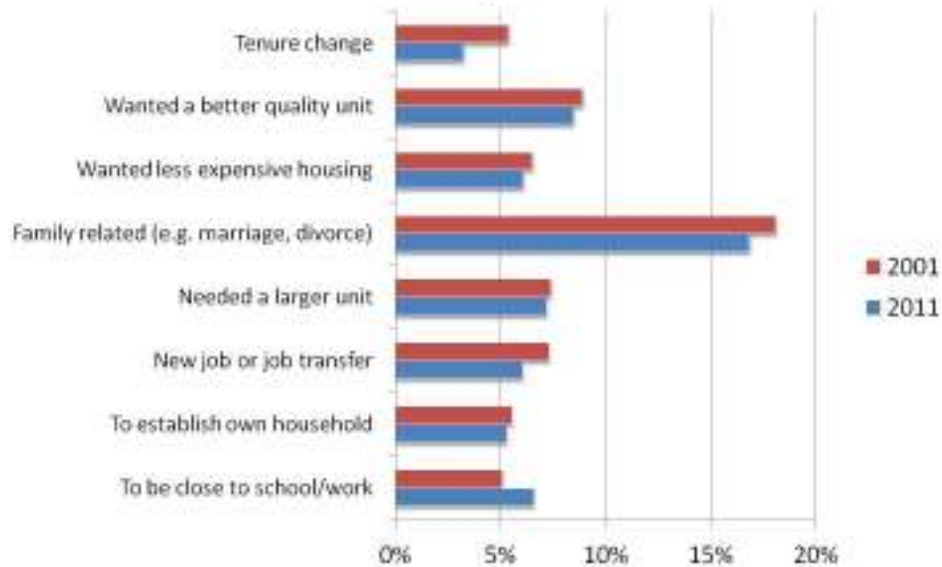


**Figure 7a**  
**Main Reason for Move**  
**25-to-34 year olds**



Source: 2001, 2011 American Housing Survey. Recent movers.

**Figure 7b**  
**Main Reason for Move**  
**55-to-64 year olds**



Source: 2001, 2011 American Housing Survey. Recent movers.

tenure change was also cited less often among this age group in 2011—5.4 percent gave this reason in 2001 compared to 3.3 percent in 2011.

The AHS also includes data on the reasons individuals chose a particular housing unit and neighborhood. Among 25-to-34 year old recent movers, financial reasons were by far the most common reasons given for the choice of the particular housing unit. Size and room layout/design were somewhat less important. Financial reasons were the primary reasons given by 55-to-64 year olds, though room layout and design was more important to this older group than to the 25-to-34 year olds.

When it comes to neighborhood choice, convenience to job was the most common reason among 25-to-34 year olds for choosing a particular neighborhood. Between 2001 and 2011, there was a slight shift in the reasons given for the choice of a particular neighborhood, although convenience to job remained the most important factor. In 2001, the house itself was the most important consideration for the neighborhood choice for 16.3 percent of 25-to-34 year olds. In 2011, the percentage citing this reason had dropped to 11.0 percent. Access to public transit remained the most important reason for neighborhood choice for a very small proportion (under two percent) of 25-to-34 year olds in both 2001 and 2011.

Among 55-to-64 year olds, the house itself and the look and feel of the neighborhood were the most common reasons given for the choice of the particular neighborhood. However, the share citing those reasons declined between 2001 and 2011. In 2001, 18.1 percent of 55-to-64 year olds stated it was the house itself that was the most important consideration when choosing their neighborhood. In 2011, only 12.6 percent of 55-to-64 year olds gave that reason. The look and feel of the neighborhood was the most important factor for 17.3 percent of 55-to-64 year olds in 2001, but only 13.0 percent in 2011. Access to transit became more important (cited by 2.4 percent of 55-to-64 year olds in 2011 compared to 1.4 percent in 2001.)

The impact of the housing market bust can be seen in the data on tenure, reason for moving and reason for housing unit/neighborhood choice. It has been problematic to disentangle the economy/housing market effect from the effect of changing preferences. Tenure change (i.e. from renter to owner or owner to renter) was less likely to be the primary reason for moving in 2011 compared to 2001. Moving for a larger unit was also less common in 2011 than in 2001. In addition, the choice of neighborhood was less tied to the specific housing unit in 2011 compared to 2001. These changes over the decade—which are observed for both the 25-to-34 year olds and the 55-to-64 year olds—suggest that the state of the housing market is important to recent decisions about mobility and housing choice.

Life-cycle events related to family changes were also important determinants of moving, but their relative importance declined in 2011 for both age groups. Among 25-to-34 year olds, the delay in marriage and childbearing might have had led to family matters being cited less often as a reason for moving in 2011. More of these Echo Boomers may be forming their own individual households—instead of forming a household with someone else—as evidenced by the greater share stating in 2011 that they moved to form their own household.

These results are merely suggestive, but they provide some potential evidence of the importance of recent housing market conditions to mobility decisions, housing choice and neighborhood choice, and that the Echo Boomers have been more sensitive to housing market conditions.

## **Conclusions and Implications**

Residential mobility has been on the decline in the U.S. for decades, falling from a high of over 20 percent in the 1960s to just under 12 percent in 2012. Age is a consistently good predictor of the likelihood of an individual moving—younger adults are the most mobile age groups, adults in middle age are the least likely to move, and senior adults have somewhat higher mobility rates than middle age adults. The relationship between age and likelihood of moving provides support to the life-cycle model of residential mobility and migration that states that mobility is prompted by life-cycle events, including marriage, children, job change, and retirement. Even when mobility rates reached a record low in 2011, the mobility rate for 20-to-29 year olds was 24.6 percent, 2.5 times the rate of individuals in their 40s. The mobility rate for the 65-and-older population was 11.4 percent, just below the overall average.

The inference from the life-cycle model that age can also predict trends in mobility by distance of move (as a result of the particular life-cycle event driving mobility) was not supported by the CPS mobility data. Younger adults who move are no more likely than middle age and older adults who move to change states. In general, the movers most likely to make within-county moves are older residents, and not individuals in their prime childbearing and rearing ages. Thus, more investigation is needed to see whether the life-cycle model, with its focus on mobility-inducing events, can be helpful for explaining specifically local and long-distance moves.

Between 1986 and 2001, the decline in the overall residential mobility rate can be partially explained by changes in the age structure of the U.S. population. Over this period, the large Baby Boom cohort aged, moving into the least mobile age groups. At the same time, the population of people in their mobile 20s—Generation X primarily—was a smaller share of the population. Bivariate correlation coefficients for this time period substantiate the premise that when the population has relatively more people in low-mobility age groups, the overall mobility rate is lower.

Additional research is needed to better understand other factors affecting mobility rates over the long-term. Potential explanations worth exploring include the increased availability of information via the internet and a convergence of state economies. These trends could be an explanation for the decline in mobility and, in particular, a decline in state-to-state or long-distance migration. However, the biggest declines in mobility over the long-term have been in within-county and same state, different county moves. A theory that helps explain those declines may be related to assumptions about ties to place and suburbanization. Demographic explanations, including household formation, marriage and childbearing, immigration trends, and housing opportunities might also be relevant for developing a model of decline in short-distance mobility in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was marked by an unprecedented housing boom and bust and the deepest recession in 70 years. During the decade, Echo Boomers became young adults and Baby

Boomers began to reach typical retirement years. Along with these major economic and demographic developments, declines in residential mobility rates accelerated and the age structure of the population became a less reliable predictor of overall mobility rates. The drop off in residential mobility between 2001 and 2007 was driven by declines in state-to-state migration and by declines in mobility rates among 20-to-29 year olds. Bivariate correlation coefficients indicate very different relationships between population share by age group and mobility rate in the 2001-2010 period compared to the longer 1986-2010 period. In particular, the share of the population that was 25-to-29 years old in 2001-2010 was negatively correlated to mobility rates, and shares of the population in their 40s and 50s were positively correlated with within-county mobility rates.

The Echo Boom generation has made different mobility and housing choices than prior generations. The reasons for these differences may have less to do with the values or culture of this cohort, but rather the economic environment in which they are entering their 20s and early 30s. The mobility rates for 20-to-29 year olds declined substantially between 2001 and 2011, and compared to earlier generations, this group of twentysomethings was significantly less likely to move. Reduced mobility among this population comes at the same time that marriage and childbearing are being postponed or skipped altogether. Because these life-cycle events have been shown to be strongly associated with mobility in the past, it is likely that these delayed phases of life have also been part of the explanation of the reduced mobility rates among Echo Boomers in their 20s and early 30s. However, a more important explanation appears to be the condition of the economy and housing market. The economic downturn and the housing boom and bust made it more difficult for young workers to find jobs and to become homeowners.

As the economy and the housing market continue to recover, mobility rates will likely rise. In fact, compared to 2011, the mobility rates of 30-to-34 year olds are up 1.2 percentage points in 2012. Mobility rates have risen 0.5 and 0.7 percentage points for 20-to-24 year olds and 25-to-29 year olds, respectively between 2011 and 2012. (By contrast, mobility rates continued to decline between 2011 and 2012 for individuals in their 40s.) Because this population may stay renters longer, there is increased potential for an uptick in mobility over the next decade. There are few reasons to expect that Echo Boomers will have significantly different preferences for moving once the economic and housing markets have returned to normal. Demographic factors will be one factor. Delayed marriage and childbearing will continue and will postpone moves associated with those events. Another possible factor that may reduce mobility among this generation is the nature of work and some reduction in the need for work to be done at a particular worksite. A portion of this generation may be more likely to work from home or from remote locations and therefore moves tied to job change or transfer will be reduced.

The cohort of Baby Boomers is also somewhat less mobile compared to the 55-and-older population of prior generations. They, too, have been affected by the recent economic and housing market downturn which has led to a delay in retirement and housing downsizing. The Baby Boom cohort is rapidly approaching retirement age; the leading edge of this group is now 67. When people retire, most do not move to Florida or Arizona. Rather, they tend to stay local to the region or state in which they had been living before retirement. Therefore, when Baby Boomers ultimately do move, the majority will make

short distance moves. Between 2011 and 2012, the mobility rate among the population age 65+ edged up, with the biggest increase in the same state, different county mobility rate. The mobility rates for this population have likely bottomed out and will start to rise very modestly over the coming decade. And as the population of Baby Boomers passes through retirement and into old age, their contribution to the overall mobility rate will grow. The mobility rate among older seniors tends to be somewhat higher than average, so the aging of the Baby Boomers might actually put upward pressure on the overall mobility rate in the coming decades.

The most recent declines in residential mobility are not new; rather they are a continuation and acceleration of mobility declines that have been occurring in the U.S. for nearly half a century. This long-term downward trend suggests that some underlying fundamentals have changed with regard to the push and pull factors related to residential mobility. The last decade has been markedly different, due mostly to the economic and housing market downturn. Looking ahead, mobility rates should increase modestly for the Echo Boom and Baby Boom population over the next decade as the economic and housing market improves, as Echo Boomers marry, cohabitate and have children, and as Baby Boomers retire and downsize.

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