

# Geographical Mobility

## Population Characteristics

Geographical mobility has long been an important aspect of American life. This report highlights some of the changes that have occurred in recent years, including differences in the extent of movement, in the types of movement, in the characteristics of movers compared with nonmovers, and in how the population is distributed. These changes are important to federal, state, and local governments as they plan for needed services and facilities such as schools and hospitals. Geographical mobility data are also used by private industry as they expand and locate businesses and other services.

All respondents in the March 2000 Current Population Survey were asked whether they lived at the same residence 1 year earlier. Nonmovers were living in the same home at both dates. Movers were asked for the location of their previous residence. When current and previous residences are compared, movers can be categorized by whether they were living in the same or different county, state, region, or were movers from abroad. Though not true in all cases, we treat these different types of moves as if they form a distance continuum. In addition, movers can be categorized by whether they moved within or between metropolitan areas, central cities of metropolitan areas, other parts of metropolitan areas, or nonmetropolitan areas of the United States.

### About 43 million Americans moved.

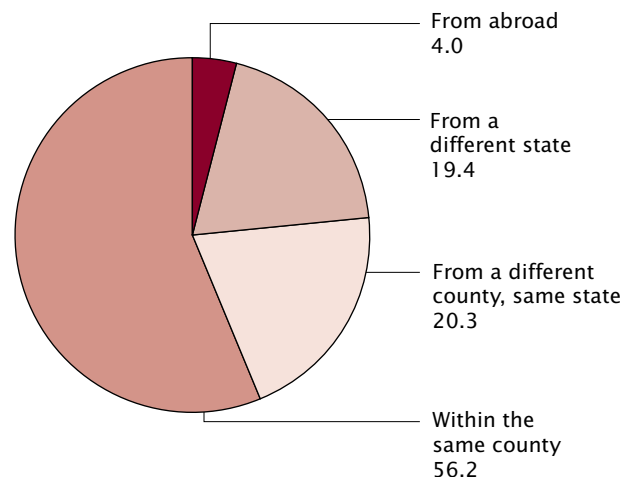
Between March 1999 and March 2000, 43.4 million Americans moved.<sup>1</sup> Over half (56 percent) of these moves were local (within the same county), 20 percent were between counties in the same state, and 19 percent were moves to a different state. Only 4 percent of movers came from abroad.

<sup>1</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.

## Current Population Reports

By  
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Figure 1.  
**Percent Distribution of Movers by Type of Move: March 1999 to 2000**



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

Table A.  
**Annual Moving Rates by Type of Move: 1990 to 2000**

(Numbers in thousands)

Mobility period	Total, age 1 and older	Same residence (non- movers)	Total movers	Percent moved				
				Total	Within same county	From different county		From abroad
						Same state	Different state	
1999-2000 .....	270,219	226,831	43,388	16.1	9.0	3.3	3.1	0.6
1998-1999 .....	267,933	225,297	42,636	15.9	9.4	3.1	2.8	0.5
1997-1998 .....	265,209	222,702	42,507	16.0	10.2	3.0	2.4	0.5
1996-1997 .....	262,976	219,585	43,391	16.5	10.5	3.0	2.4	0.5
1995-1996 .....	260,406	217,868	42,537	16.3	10.3	3.1	2.5	0.5
1994-1995 <sup>1</sup> .....	258,248	215,931	42,317	16.4	10.8	3.1	2.2	0.3
1993-1994 .....	255,774	212,939	42,835	16.7	10.4	3.2	2.6	0.5
1992-1993 .....	252,799	209,700	43,099	17.0	10.7	3.1	2.7	0.6
1991-1992 .....	247,380	204,580	42,800	17.3	10.7	3.2	2.9	0.5
1990-1991 .....	244,884	203,345	41,539	17.0	10.3	3.2	2.9	0.6

<sup>1</sup>The primary mobility question in the 1995 survey asked about residence 5 years earlier, not 1 year earlier as in the other survey years. There was an additional question on residence 1 year earlier, but the resulting 1-year data for the 1994-95 period are not comparable with the data for other years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Surveys, March 1991 to 2000.

### The overall moving rate has stayed constant, but people moved longer distances.

Overall moving rates have not changed substantially over the past few years, and the 1999-2000 rate is among the lowest rates found during the past decade. However, since 1998, there has been a decrease in the percentage of moves made within the same county and a corresponding increase in the percentage of moves between counties, particularly to counties in different states. In 1998, 64 percent of all moves were within the same county, compared with 56 percent of all moves in 2000.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in 1998, 15 percent of all moves were between states, compared with 19 percent of all moves in 2000.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF MOVERS

Moving rates differ by characteristics like age, race, Hispanic origin, income, housing tenure, marital

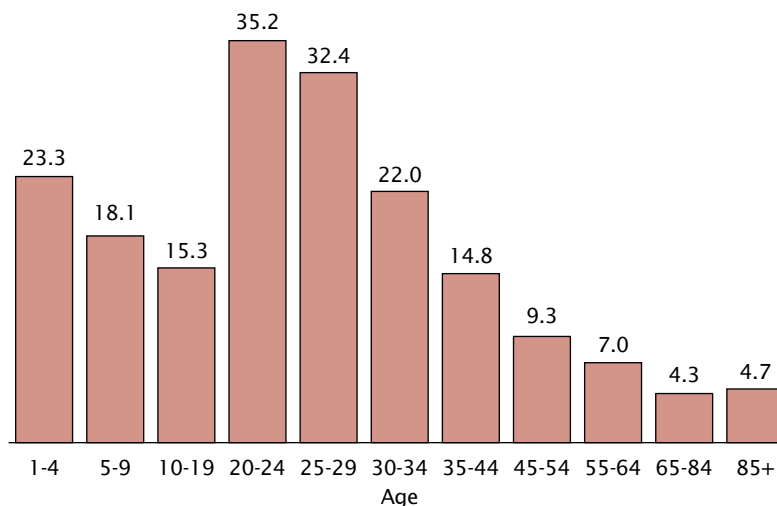
status, and education. Table B shows mobility rates by many of these characteristics.

### 20- to 29-year olds had the highest moving rates.

About one-third of 20- to 29 year-olds moved in the previous year, a

little more than twice the moving rate of all people 1 year and older (16 percent). Among adults, as age increased moving rates decreased, at least until very advanced ages: by ages 65 to 84, the rate was only 4 percent. Moving rates were higher for young adults because of

Figure 2.  
**Moving Rates by Age: March 1999 to 2000**  
(In percent)



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

<sup>2</sup>These proportions can be calculated from Table A by dividing the percent moved for the type of move (e.g. within the same county) by the total percent moved.

Table B.  
**Geographical Mobility by Selected Characteristics: March 1999 to 2000**

(Numbers in thousands)

Selected characteristics	Total	Same residence (non-movers)	Total movers	Percent moved				
				Total	Within same county	From different county		From abroad
						Same state	Different state	
<b>Total, age 1 and older.....</b>	<b>270,219</b>	<b>226,831</b>	<b>43,388</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<b>Age</b>								
1 to 4 years.....	15,740	12,075	3,665	23.3	14.1	4.4	4.0	0.8
5 to 9 years.....	20,379	16,685	3,694	18.1	11.0	3.2	3.3	0.7
10 to 19 years.....	40,430	34,226	6,204	15.3	8.6	3.0	3.1	0.7
20 to 24 years.....	18,441	11,942	6,499	35.2	20.4	7.1	6.2	1.6
25 to 29 years.....	18,268	12,358	5,910	32.4	18.0	7.1	6.0	1.3
30 to 34 years.....	19,518	15,216	4,302	22.0	12.4	4.6	4.0	1.1
35 to 44 years.....	44,805	38,178	6,627	14.8	8.3	3.0	3.0	0.6
45 to 54 years.....	36,631	33,211	3,420	9.3	4.9	2.1	1.9	0.4
55 to 64 years.....	23,387	21,744	1,643	7.0	3.4	1.5	1.9	0.2
65 to 84 years.....	29,482	28,205	1,277	4.3	2.2	0.9	1.1	0.1
85 years and older.....	3,140	2,992	148	4.7	2.3	1.3	1.0	0.1
<b>Sex</b>								
Male.....	131,969	110,396	21,573	16.3	9.1	3.4	3.2	0.7
Female.....	138,250	116,435	21,815	15.8	8.9	3.2	3.1	0.6
<b>Race and Hispanic origin</b>								
White.....	221,703	187,810	33,893	15.3	8.5	3.2	3.0	0.6
Non-Hispanic.....	191,197	163,595	27,602	14.4	7.8	3.3	3.1	0.4
Black.....	34,948	28,226	6,722	19.2	11.7	3.5	3.6	0.5
Asian and Pacific Islander.....	10,779	8,577	2,202	20.4	10.5	3.4	3.6	3.0
Hispanic (of any race).....	32,103	25,347	6,756	21.0	13.3	3.1	2.7	2.0
<b>Nativity</b>								
Native.....	241,867	204,777	37,090	15.3	8.8	3.2	3.1	0.2
Foreign born (naturalized and non U.S. citizen).....	28,352	22,054	6,298	22.2	11.1	3.4	3.2	4.4
<b>Poverty status (in 1999)</b>								
Below poverty level.....	32,100	23,229	8,871	27.6	16.8	4.6	4.4	1.9
100 percent to 149 percent above poverty level.....	24,637	19,410	5,227	21.2	13.1	3.5	3.9	0.7
Above 149 percent of poverty level ..	213,482	184,192	29,290	13.7	7.4	3.0	2.8	0.5
<b>Housing tenure</b>								
Owner-occupied.....	189,408	172,258	17,150	9.1	5.0	2.1	1.7	0.3
Renter-occupied.....	80,811	54,573	26,238	32.5	18.6	5.9	6.4	1.6
<b>Household type</b>								
In married-couple family households ..	176,427	155,022	21,405	12.1	6.4	2.5	2.6	0.7
In other households.....	93,792	71,809	21,983	23.4	14.0	4.7	4.1	0.6
<b>Household income (in 1999)</b>								
Less than \$25,000.....	63,680	50,228	13,452	21.1	12.9	3.6	3.6	1.1
\$25,000 to \$49,999.....	75,986	62,624	13,362	17.6	10.4	3.3	3.3	0.6
\$50,000 to \$99,999.....	89,674	78,031	11,643	13.0	6.7	3.1	2.8	0.4
\$100,000 and over.....	40,879	35,948	4,931	12.1	5.6	3.0	2.8	0.7
<b>Marital status (age 16 and older)</b>								
Never married.....	56,182	43,316	12,866	22.9	12.9	4.9	4.2	1.0
Married.....	115,719	101,871	13,848	12.0	6.3	2.6	2.6	0.6
Divorced or separated.....	24,282	19,293	4,989	20.5	12.5	4.0	3.8	0.3
Widowed.....	13,662	12,718	944	6.9	3.8	1.5	1.5	0.2
<b>Education (age 25 and older).....</b>								
Not a high school graduate.....	27,853	24,221	3,632	13.0	7.9	2.5	2.0	0.7
High school graduate.....	58,086	50,934	7,152	12.3	7.0	2.4	2.5	0.4
Some college or Associate degree...	44,445	38,394	6,051	13.6	7.6	3.1	2.6	0.3
Bachelor's degree.....	29,840	25,259	4,581	15.4	7.4	3.6	3.5	0.8
Graduate degree.....	15,006	13,094	1,912	12.7	5.6	2.7	3.5	1.0

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

their relatively higher frequency of life course events (such as marriage, child birth, or a new job).

### White non-Hispanics were less mobile than other racial and ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup>

White non-Hispanics had the lowest moving rate (14 percent). Hispanics (of any race) and Asians and Pacific Islanders had the highest overall moving rates (about 20 percent), closely followed by Blacks (19 percent). Among people who moved, Hispanics and Blacks were most likely to have moved within the same county (63 and 61 percent, respectively), while White non-Hispanics were most likely to have made intercounty and interstate moves (44 percent).<sup>4</sup> Asians and Pacific Islanders and Hispanics were much more likely than Blacks or White non-Hispanics to have come to the United States from abroad.

Table C shows that some of the mobility difference between White non-Hispanics and other racial and ethnic groups can be attributed to age. For example, Hispanic moving rates were higher than White non-Hispanics in most age categories. However, standardized overall moving rates show that even if the Hispanic population had the same age distribution as the White non-Hispanic population, the moving rate would still have been higher for Hispanics (18 percent compared with 14 percent).

<sup>3</sup>Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native population are not shown in this report because of the small sample size in the Current Population Survey. Based on the March 2000 Current Population Survey, 3 percent of the Black population and 2 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander Population are also of Hispanic origin.

<sup>4</sup>See footnote 2.

Table C.

### Moving Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin and Age: March 1999 to 2000

(In percent)

Age	White non-Hispanic	Black	Asian and Pacific Islander	Hispanic (of any race)
1 to 9 years .....	18.2	25.6	23.7	23.1
10 to 19 years .....	13.5	18.5	16.9	19.9
20 to 29 years .....	34.1	31.1	36.4	34.4
30 to 39 years .....	18.2	21.3	23.9	20.8
40 to 49 years .....	10.5	15.6	13.8	14.4
50 to 64 years .....	7.2	7.8	10.9	11.1
65 to 84 years .....	3.9	4.8	8.5	8.0
85 years and older .....	4.5	4.6	8.7	8.3
Total .....	14.4	19.2	20.4	21.0
Standardized mobility rate .....	*14.4	17.1	18.4	18.1

\*Standardized by age, White non-Hispanic as reference category.

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

### Single and divorced people were more likely to move than married people.

Among those 16 years and older, single and divorced or separated people were most likely to have moved, followed by married people. Widowed people were least likely to have moved. Age could explain some of this variation, particularly the higher moving rates of those never married and the lower rates of widowed people. People living in married-couple family households were less likely to have moved than those living in other types of households.

### One-third of renters moved.

Nearly one-third of people living in renter-occupied housing units in March 2000 moved in the previous year, compared with only 1 in 11 people living in owner-occupied housing units.<sup>5</sup> Housing tenure is closely related to age, race, Hispanic origin, and income. Those living in owner-occupied housing units are more likely to be older, White non-Hispanic and more

affluent than those living in renter-occupied units.

### Lower-income groups were more likely to move than higher-income groups.

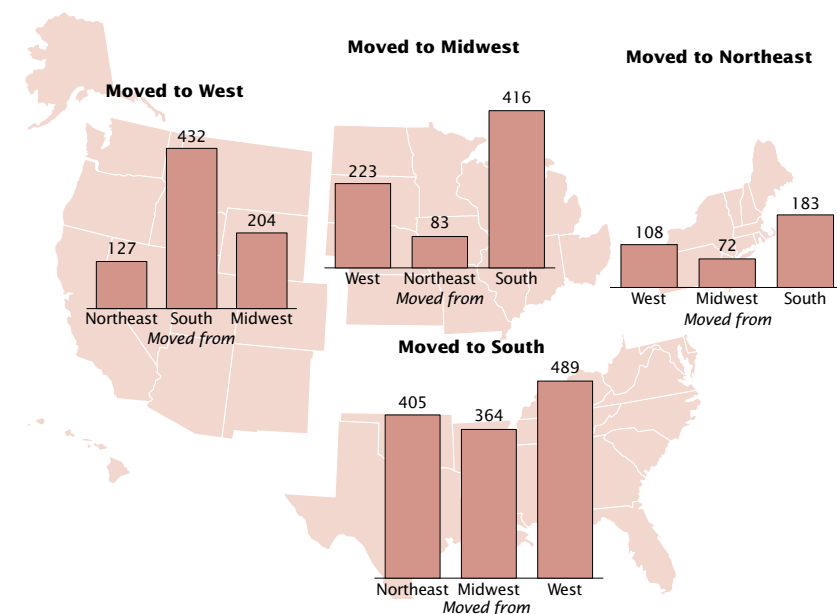
People living in households in lower-income categories were more likely to move than those in higher-income categories: 21 percent for incomes under \$25,000, compared with 12 percent for incomes over \$100,000. Some of this disparity may reflect differences in homeownership patterns, particularly the higher proportion of renters among households with low incomes.

Additionally, those living in households with income less than \$50,000 were more likely than those with higher incomes to move short distances (about 60 percent and 50 percent, respectively). Some of these differences could be explained by factors like educational differences, differences in reasons for moving, and potentially higher costs associated with making longer distance moves.

Moving rates differ by the poverty status of individuals. Those with income below the poverty level were

<sup>5</sup>As is the case with all characteristics on the Current Population Survey, housing tenure is measured at the time of the survey in March 2000; tenure before the move is not ascertained.

Figure 3.  
**Region-to-Region Migration: March 1999 to 2000**  
 (Numbers in thousands)



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

more likely to have moved (28 percent) than those with income 150 percent above the poverty level or higher (14 percent). Also, those with income below the poverty level were more likely to have made a short-distance move (about 61 percent) than those in the higher income group (about 54 percent).

### People of different education levels had similar moving rates.

There were only small differences in moving rates by education, ranging from 12 percent of those with only a high school education to 15 percent of those with a bachelor's degree. However, movers with a bachelor's degree were more likely to have moved longer distances: 47 percent made an intercounty move compared with 34 percent of those with less than a high school education. This difference could indicate that better

educated people move longer distances for better paying jobs.

## REGIONAL MOVEMENTS

Interstate migration, along with differences in rates of natural increase (births minus deaths), changes the distribution of the population among regions of the country. In recent decades, more people have moved from North to South than in the opposite direction, and this trend continued. Figure 3 shows the flows of migrants among the four major regions of the United States between 1999 and 2000.

### Only the Northeast had a net loss in population because of internal migration.

As found throughout the 1990s, more people moved from the Northeast than to it from other regions of the country. Of all the regions, only the net loss of 252,000 people for the Northeast and the

net gain of 227,000 people for the South were statistically significant for the 1999-2000 year.

### Nonmetropolitan areas had net internal migration close to zero.

Nonmetropolitan areas as a whole had about equal numbers of internal immigrants and outmigrants during the year — 1.9 million people compared with 2.0 million, as shown in Table D. These numbers are not statistically different.

### Within metropolitan areas, central cities had net outmigration, while the population outside central cities had net immigration.

Metropolitan areas outside central cities were the most frequent destination among movers within and between metropolitan areas. Although metropolitan areas as a whole had about equal numbers of immigrants and outmigrants, central cities of metropolitan areas followed the migration pattern found throughout the 1990s: continued net migration loss. Between 1999 and 2000, 6.9 million people moved out of central cities, while 3.7 million moved in, resulting in a net loss due to internal migration of 3.2 million people.

### Movers from abroad added population to the West and helped offset net internal migration losses for the Northeast.

Between March of 1999 and 2000, the CPS estimates that 1.75 million people moved to the United States from abroad. Two-thirds of these movers were foreign-born and not United States citizens (1.2 million), while the other third were civilian citizens (600,000). Most movers

Table D.

# **Annual Internal Migration by Region and Type of Residence, March 1999 to 2000 and Annual Net International Migration by Region, July 1, 1998 to July 1, 1999**

(Numbers in thousands)

Geographic area	Estimates from the Current Population Survey for March 1999 to March 2000			Estimate for July 1, 1998 to July 1, 1999 based on administrative records <sup>4</sup>	
	Internal migration			Movers from abroad <sup>3</sup>	Net international migration
	Inmigrants	Outmigrants	Net internal migration		
<b>Region</b>					
Total <sup>1</sup> .....	3,106	3,106	-	1,745	852
Northeast .....	363	615	*-252	292	184
Midwest .....	722	640	82	238	99
South .....	1,258	1,031	*227	612	244
West .....	763	820	-57	604	325
<b>Type of residence</b>					
Total <sup>2</sup> .....	3,951	3,951	-	1,745	(NA)
Metropolitan areas .....	2,044	1,907	137	1,639	(NA)
Central cities .....	3,670	6,928	*-3,258	845	(NA)
Outside central cities .....	7,376	3,981	*3,395	794	(NA)
Nonmetropolitan areas .....	1,907	2,044	-137	106	(NA)

NA Not available. \*The net migration flows are significantly different from zero.

<sup>1</sup>There were 3,106,000 internal migrants who moved from one region to another.<sup>2</sup>There were 3,951,000 internal migrants who moved from metropolitan areas to nonmetropolitan areas or vice-versa.<sup>3</sup>These numbers from the CPS include both temporary and permanent movers to the United States, among the civilian U.S. population. See text for more details.<sup>4</sup>These numbers are derived independently by the Population Estimates Program and are not directly comparable to the CPS. See text for more details.

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

from abroad (1.2 million) came to the South and West.

The CPS does not collect data on the number of people who move away from the United States, and thus it is not possible to use the CPS to estimate net international migration. However, the Census Bureau does provide independently derived estimates for net international migration using administrative records and other data. The components of net international migration include: legal immigration to the United States as reported by the Immigration and Naturalization Service; refugee data from the Office of Refugee Resettlement; an estimate of net undocumented immigration from abroad,

based on data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the 1990 decennial census; an estimate of emigration from the United States based on data from the 1980 and 1990 censuses; and net movement between Puerto Rico and the United States.

These estimates based on administrative records indicate that 852,000 more people came to the United States from abroad than left between July 1 of 1998 and 1999, the latest year for which these estimates are available. Combining these estimates by region with regional net domestic migration figures suggests that all regions except the Northeast showed significant population gains from

net migration. While the West did not experience a significant gain in population from domestic migration, it did grow when net international migration is included. Although the Northeast still had a significant loss of people, this loss was mitigated by net international migration.

## **SOURCE OF DATA**

Most estimates in this report come from data collected in March 2000 by the CPS. The CPS is a monthly national survey of about 50,000 households, representative of the civilian noninstitutional population of the United States. Some estimates are based on data collected by the CPS in earlier years. The Census



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Bureau conducts the CPS every month but collects the data on residential mobility only in March.

## 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 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, reviewing 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 Alfred Meier, Demographic Statistical Methods Division, at 301-457-4220 or on the Internet at [Alfred.G.Meier@census.gov](mailto:Alfred.G.Meier@census.gov).

## MORE INFORMATION

A set of detailed tabulations consisting of 30 tables from the 2000 March CPS shows more detailed characteristics of movers and nonmovers by type of move for the United States and the regions. The electronic version of these tables is available on the Internet at the Census Bureau's World Wide Web site ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)). Once on the site, go to "Subjects A to Z," then click on "M," and finally on "Migration."

An abbreviated paper version of the tables (without the race and geographic repeats) is available as PPL-144 for \$24.50. To receive a paper copy, send a request for "PPL-144, Geographical Mobility: March 1999 to March 2000," along with a check or money order in the amount of

\$24.50 payable to Commerce-Census-88-00-9010, to the U.S. Department of Commerce, 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.

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## USER COMMENTS

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