

# Reason for Moving: 2012 to 2013

## Population Characteristics

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### INTRODUCTION

Between 2012 and 2013, 35.9 million people 1 year and over living in the United States moved to a different residence. The mover rate for this period was 11.7 percent. Why did these people move? As displayed in Figure 1, housing-related reasons were the most popular response with 17.2 million (48.0 percent).<sup>1</sup> Family-related reasons were the second most selected choice with 30.3 percent, followed by job-related (19.4 percent) and other (2.3 percent).

These data come from the 2013 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS). The 2013 ASEC questionnaire had a list of 18 common reasons for moving, with an additional option to write-in reasons that did not fit into any of the predetermined choices.<sup>2</sup> All of the individual reasons can be collapsed into four major reason for move categories: family-related, employment-related,<sup>3</sup> housing-related, and other.

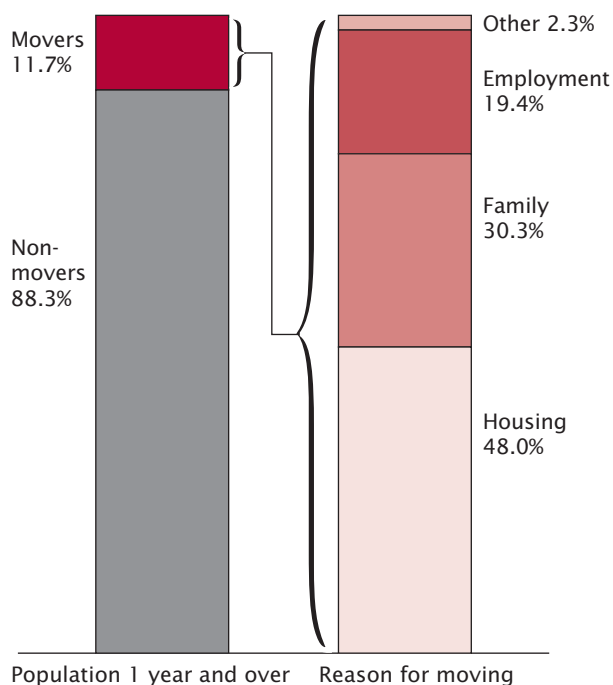
This report contains an in-depth look at the most recent reason for move data available. Using estimates from the 2013 ASEC, cross tabulations of collapsed reason for move categories are analyzed by selected characteristics. In this report, these characteristics include sex, age, race and Hispanic origin, educational attainment, marital status, labor force status, and type of move with distance moved incorporated. Next, an analysis focusing exclusively on householders is conducted. Householders are isolated in order to remove the influence of other family members who could be

<sup>1</sup> All comparative statements in this report have undergone statistical testing, and, unless otherwise noted, all comparisons are statistically significant at the 90 percent significance level.

<sup>2</sup> For a list of the individual reasons, see Appendix Table 1 in the appendix of this report.

<sup>3</sup> This category can also be referred to as job- or work-related.

Figure 1.  
**How many people moved and what was their main reason for moving? In the United States, 35.9 million people moved between 2012 and 2013.**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2013.

assigned the householder's reason for move, thereby inflating estimates. In the third section, historical reason for move data are used to identify if any significant fluctuations are observed in the data over time. The

last segment of the report contains a comparison of 2011 ASEC reason for move estimates with those from the 2011 American Housing Survey (AHS). An appendix containing information on changes to the response categories over time and how write-in responses are handled concludes this report.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Of the 35.9 million people 1 year and over that moved between 2012 and 2013, 17.2 million (48.0 percent) gave a housing-related reason for moving.
- Males were more inclined to move for job-related reasons than females.
- Better-educated movers were more likely to move for job-related reasons than movers with lower levels of educational attainment.
- Married respondents were the least likely to move for family-related reasons.
- Intracounty moves were typically for housing-related reasons, while intercounty moves and moves from abroad were more for job-related reasons.
- “Wanted new or better home/apartment,” “other housing reason,” and “other family reason” were the most popular detailed reason for move responses in 1999 and 2013.<sup>4</sup>
- Despite differences in survey methodology and reason for move responses, the AHS and ASEC had comparable rankings across the four collapsed categories.

<sup>4</sup> The 2013 estimates for “wanted new or better home/apartment” and “other family reason” were not significantly different.

## CHARACTERISTICS

Reason for move data from the most recent cycle, 2013, of the ASEC are provided in Table 1.<sup>5</sup> The collapsed categories of family-related, employment-related, housing-related, and other are crossed by an assortment of characteristics in order to identify basic commonalities and differences by reason for move.

### Males moved more for job-related reasons than females.

The number of female movers was greater than the number of male movers. Over 17 million males moved, compared to 18.3 million females. A plausible explanation for this difference is that there are more females in the population universe (civilian noninstitutionalized population 1 year and over) than males, which could carry over into migration. Looking at the distribution by sex, females composed a greater percentage of the population universe than males with 51.1 percent.

Analyzing the reason for move responses, housing-related reasons were most popular among both sexes.<sup>6</sup> Results indicate that a greater percentage of males moved for job-related reasons. Males led the job-related category with 20.4 percent, compared to 18.5 percent of females.

<sup>5</sup> To access the 2013 ASEC detailed migration tables, visit <[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)>, go to the “People” tab near the top of the page, and select “Geographical Mobility/Migration.” This takes you to the U.S. Census Bureau’s migration Web page. Use the “Quick Links” on the left hand side to access “CPS Data on Migration/Geographical Mobility.” Under the “Geographical Mobility: 2012 to 2013” sub-heading, click on the “Detailed Tables” link.

<sup>6</sup> Housing-related reasons were not significantly different for males and females.

### Respondents 25 to 29 years old had the lowest percentage of housing-related reasons for moving.

A respondent’s age plays an important role in the reason for move given, partly because of their stage in the life course. For example, the reason for move distribution for 18- to 24-year-olds was 45.6 percent housing-related, 32.0 percent family-related, 18.7 percent job-related, and 3.7 percent for “other” reasons. Compared with some of the other age groups, housing-related reasons were not as important to 18- to 24-year-olds.<sup>7</sup> Instead, other reasons played a greater role. One of the detailed reasons contained in the other collapsed category is “to attend or leave college,” which is a common occurrence for this age range.

The only age range reporting a lower housing-related reason for move percentage than 18- to 24-year-olds was 25- to 29-year-olds with 42.5 percent. This group focused more on job-related reasons than 18- to 24-year-olds (23.6 percent compared to 18.7 percent). Like the 18- to 24-year-olds, 25- to 29-year-olds had a high percentage of other reasons with 2.8 percent, which is not significantly different from the 3.7 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds.<sup>8</sup> Some of these 25- to 29-year-olds are still attending and leaving college, which helps explain why the other category is relatively high. Respondents 65 years and over had a high percentage of other reasons as

<sup>7</sup> Housing-related reason for moves for 18- to 24-year-olds were not significantly different from 30- to 44-year-olds and 65 years and over.

<sup>8</sup> The other reason for move estimate for 25- to 29-year-olds was not significantly different from 45- to 64-year-olds.

Table 1.

**Reason for Move by Selected Characteristics (Collapsed Categories): 2012 to 2013**

Selected characteristics	Total (in thousands)	Percent			
		Family- related	Job- related	Housing- related	Other
<b>Movers (1 year and over)</b> .....	<b>35,918</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>Sex</b>					
Male .....	17,638	29.6	20.4	47.6	2.3
Female .....	18,280	30.9	18.5	48.3	2.4
<b>Age</b>					
1 to 17 years .....	9,194	31.0	17.0	50.5	1.5
18 to 24 years .....	6,498	32.0	18.7	45.6	3.7
25 to 29 years .....	4,915	31.0	23.6	42.5	2.8
30 to 44 years .....	8,288	27.6	22.7	48.3	1.4
45 to 64 years .....	5,443	29.6	17.8	50.4	2.3
65 years and over .....	1,581	32.5	12.0	50.0	5.4
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>					
White alone .....	26,219	31.0	19.7	46.8	2.5
Black or African American alone .....	5,940	30.6	15.1	52.7	1.6
Asian alone .....	2,041	21.2	28.3	47.8	2.6
All remaining single races and all race combinations <sup>1</sup> .....	1,719	28.9	19.4	49.9	1.9
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino .....	19,862	30.8	20.2	46.0	2.9
Hispanic or Latino <sup>2</sup> .....	7,230	31.7	17.6	49.3	1.5
<b>Educational Attainment (25 years and over)</b>					
Not a high school graduate .....	2,579	29.2	14.7	54.2	1.9
High school graduate .....	5,776	32.0	16.3	49.2	2.4
Some college or associate's degree .....	5,639	32.7	17.2	47.8	2.3
Bachelor's degree .....	4,188	25.8	28.3	43.2	2.7
Professional or graduate degree .....	2,045	20.2	35.2	42.8	1.9
<b>Marital Status (15 years and over)</b>					
Married .....	9,993	26.1	24.0	48.5	1.5
Widowed .....	733	32.1	10.2	51.8	5.9
Divorced .....	3,352	36.1	16.5	44.5	3.0
Separated .....	997	46.5	13.2	38.8	1.4
Never married .....	12,965	30.3	18.8	47.6	3.3
<b>Labor Force Status (16 years and over)<sup>3</sup></b>					
Employed (civilian) .....	16,951	29.5	22.3	46.2	2.0
Unemployed .....	2,291	33.3	17.0	46.5	3.2
Not in labor force .....	8,091	30.8	15.1	50.1	4.0
<b>Type of Move/Distance Moved<sup>4</sup></b>					
Intracounty .....	23,150	29.9	10.5	57.6	2.0
Intercounty .....	11,731	31.0	34.8	31.2	2.9
Less than 50 miles .....	4,720	33.4	22.7	41.5	2.5
50 to 199 miles .....	2,458	29.6	34.3	32.1	3.9
200 to 499 miles .....	1,661	25.2	48.0	23.0	3.7
500 miles or more .....	2,892	31.7	47.5	18.4	2.4
From abroad .....	1,036	30.3	43.3	22.4	4.0

<sup>1</sup> Includes American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, and Two or More Races.

<sup>2</sup> Hispanics or Latinos may be of any race.

<sup>3</sup> Members of the Armed Forces are excluded due to small sample size.

<sup>4</sup> Distance moved is only calculated for intercounty moves.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2013.

well.<sup>9</sup> “Health reasons” is a popular response for this group and is contained in the other collapsed category.

### **Black or African American respondents reported the highest housing-related reason for move of any race.**

Over half of Black or African American movers said their main reason for moving was housing-related, which is higher than Whites or Asians.<sup>10</sup> Asian movers reported the highest percentage of job-related reasons with 28.3 percent. “New job or job transfer” accounts for the largest percentage of job-related reasons for this group with 14.8 percent.

In 2013, 49.3 percent of Hispanic or Latino movers of any race gave a housing-related reason, and 31.7 percent gave a family-related reason for moving. By comparison, among non-Hispanic Whites, 46.0 percent reported a housing-related reason and 30.8 percent a family-related reason.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The other reason for move estimates for 18- to 24-year-olds and those 65 years and over were not statistically different.

<sup>10</sup> Federal surveys now give respondents the option of reporting more than one race. Therefore, two basic ways of defining a race group are possible. A group such as Asian may be defined as those who reported Asian and no other race (the race-alone or single-race concept) or as those who reported Asian regardless of whether they also reported another race (the race-alone-or-in-combination concept). This report shows data using the first approach (race alone). This report will refer to the White-alone population as White, the Black or African American-alone population as Black or African American, the Asian-alone population as Asian, and the White-alone-non-Hispanic population as White, not Hispanic or Latino. Use of the single-race population does not imply that it is the preferred method of presenting or analyzing data. The Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches. In this report, the term “White, not Hispanic or Latino” refers to people who are not Hispanic and who reported White and no other race. The Census Bureau uses non-Hispanic Whites as the comparison group for other race groups and Hispanics. Because Hispanics may be any race, data in this report for Hispanics overlap with data for racial groups.

<sup>11</sup> Family-related reasons for move were not statistically different for Hispanic or Latinos of any race and non-Hispanic Whites.

### **Bachelor’s degree and professional or graduate degree holders had different reason for move distributions than those with lower levels of educational attainment.**

Movers 25 years and over at the highest rungs of the educational attainment ladder gave job-related reasons as their second most common choice. Among movers with a bachelor’s degree, 28.3 percent said their move was the result of a job-related reason. Professional or graduate degree holders were even higher, with 35.2 percent reporting job-related reasons. Movers with lower levels of educational attainment were more inclined to report family-related reasons for moving. For those in the categories of not a high school graduate, high school graduate (or equivalent), and some college or associate’s degree, family-related reasons were second only to housing-related. Some college or associate’s degree holders and high school graduates had the highest percentage of family-related reasons, at 32.7 percent and 32.0 percent, respectively. These estimates are not statistically different. People who did not graduate from high school attributed 54.2 percent of their moves to housing-related reasons. This was in stark contrast to the 42.8 percent of professional or graduate degree holders.<sup>12</sup>

### **Among all marital statuses, married respondents were the least likely to move for a family-related reason.**

About 47 percent of movers separated from their spouses gave a family-related reason for moving, the highest of any marital status for persons 15 years and over. This can primarily be attributed to the “change in marital status” detailed

<sup>12</sup> Housing-related reasons for professional or graduate degree holders and those with a bachelor’s degree were not significantly different.

reason, with 22.4 percent. Married respondents had the lowest family-related move percentage at 26.1 percent, but led the job-related category at 24.0 percent. Widowed respondents reported the highest percentage of other reasons with 5.9 percent. Not surprisingly, health reasons played a critical role for widows, who tend to be older.

### **Job-related reasons for moving were more common among employed civilians than unemployed individuals and those not in the labor force.**

For persons 16 years and over, half of those not in the labor force provided a housing-related reason for move.<sup>13</sup> Job-related moves were the lowest for this group: 15.1 percent. Employed civilians had the highest percentage of job-related reasons, 22.3 percent, while the unemployed had the highest family-related reasons with 33.3 percent. It is important to consider that the detailed reason “to look for work or lost job” is located in the job-related reason for move. Therefore, an unemployed respondent could accurately provide a job-related reason for moving.

### **TYPE OF MOVE/DISTANCE MOVED**

One of the common ways of classifying moves are the categories: intracounty, intercounty, and from abroad. Intracounty movers are people who moved within the same county. Intercounty mover refers to people who moved from one county to another. This encompasses those who moved to a different county within the same state and to a different state. The “from abroad” category describes people who lived in a different country 1 year ago and moved into the United States.

<sup>13</sup> Members of the Armed Forces were excluded from this analysis due to their relatively small sample size.

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**Intracounty movers moved more for housing-related reasons, while intercounty movers and movers from abroad moved for job-related reasons.**

Intracounty movers reported the highest percentage of housing-related moves with 57.6 percent. Essentially, these people are settled in their area, and are just changing homes. By comparison, just 31.2 percent of intercounty movers gave a housing-related reason. Job-related reasons were more common among intercounty movers and movers from abroad than intracounty movers. The percentage of intercounty movers that gave a job-related move was 3.3 times higher than the percentage of intracounty movers (34.8 percent and 10.5 percent, respectively). This difference highlights the relationship between why people move and where. If the move is instigated by a housing reason, such as “wanted a new or better home/apartment,” “wanted own home, not rent,” or “foreclosure/eviction,” then moving to a new residence located within the same county seems likely. In fact, it might even be preferable because the respondent possesses personal knowledge of potential housing choices and neighborhoods in the area, which could prove beneficial. On the other hand, people who moved for job-related reasons may not be as focused on the housing stock. Instead, they are more concerned with housing in relation to a place of employment. If a respondent accepted a job located in another county, they would be more likely to move closer to that county or stay in the same house/apartment. Moving within the county is a possibility, but might not be worth the additional resource costs associated with moving. The same argument can be made for movers from

abroad. Moving to another country because of housing-related reasons such as “foreclosure/eviction” or “wanted cheaper housing” seems unlikely given that there are probably other houses or apartments in the origin country that fulfill these requirements.

**Job-related reasons were most common among long distance moves, while housing-related reasons were the preferred choice for shorter moves.**

How far a person moved, otherwise known as distance moved, is calculated for intercounty movers.<sup>14</sup> There are four basic distance moved categories: less than 50 miles, 50 to 199 miles, 200 to 499 miles, and 500 miles or more. Among those who completed an intercounty move, the reason why they moved played an important role in the distance moved. Based on the 2013 results, intercounty movers were more likely to report job-related reasons than family or housing as move distances increased. About 18 percent of people who moved 500 miles or more gave a housing-related reason. By comparison, 41.5 percent of moves less than 50 miles were for housing-related reasons. These results indicate a preference to remain relatively close to the county of residence 1 year ago if the person moved for a housing-related reason. Estimates for job-related reasons, however, suggest a likelihood to move longer distances. About 48 percent of moves 500 miles or more occurred due to a job-related reason.<sup>15</sup> By contrast,

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<sup>14</sup> Distance moved is calculated by measuring the distance from the previous county's population center to the current county's population center. More information on this calculation is available on page 10, footnote 14, of the Current Population Report titled “Geographical Mobility: 2002 to 2003” at <[www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p20-549.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p20-549.pdf)>.

<sup>15</sup> The estimates for job-related moves 200 to 499 miles and 500 miles or more were not significantly different.

only 22.7 percent of moves less than 50 miles were for job-related reasons.

**HOUSEHOLDER'S REASON FOR MOVE**

One method of analyzing reason for move estimates is to limit the data to householders.<sup>16</sup> This approach reduces the occurrence of a reason for move being assigned to a family member or someone else in the household. An example of assigning someone a reason for move would be a child who moved because his or her parent accepted a job offer. In this scenario, the child is not moving because they had a “new job or job transfer.” Instead, the parent's reason was assigned to other family members. Narrowing the results to householders is an attempt to eliminate the influence caused by such assignments.

Figure 2 provides a breakdown of the householder's individual reason for move within the collapsed categories. Two of the most selected reasons were in the housing-related category. “Wanted new or better home/apartment” accounted for 14.0 percent of reasons and “other housing” was 14.6 percent.<sup>17</sup> These two reasons comprised a greater percentage (28.6 percent) of the reason for move distribution than all five of the job-related reasons combined (20.6 percent), indicating their importance. Among the remaining reasons in the housing category, 8.4 percent “wanted cheaper housing,” and 1.8 percent moved due to a foreclosure or eviction.<sup>18</sup>

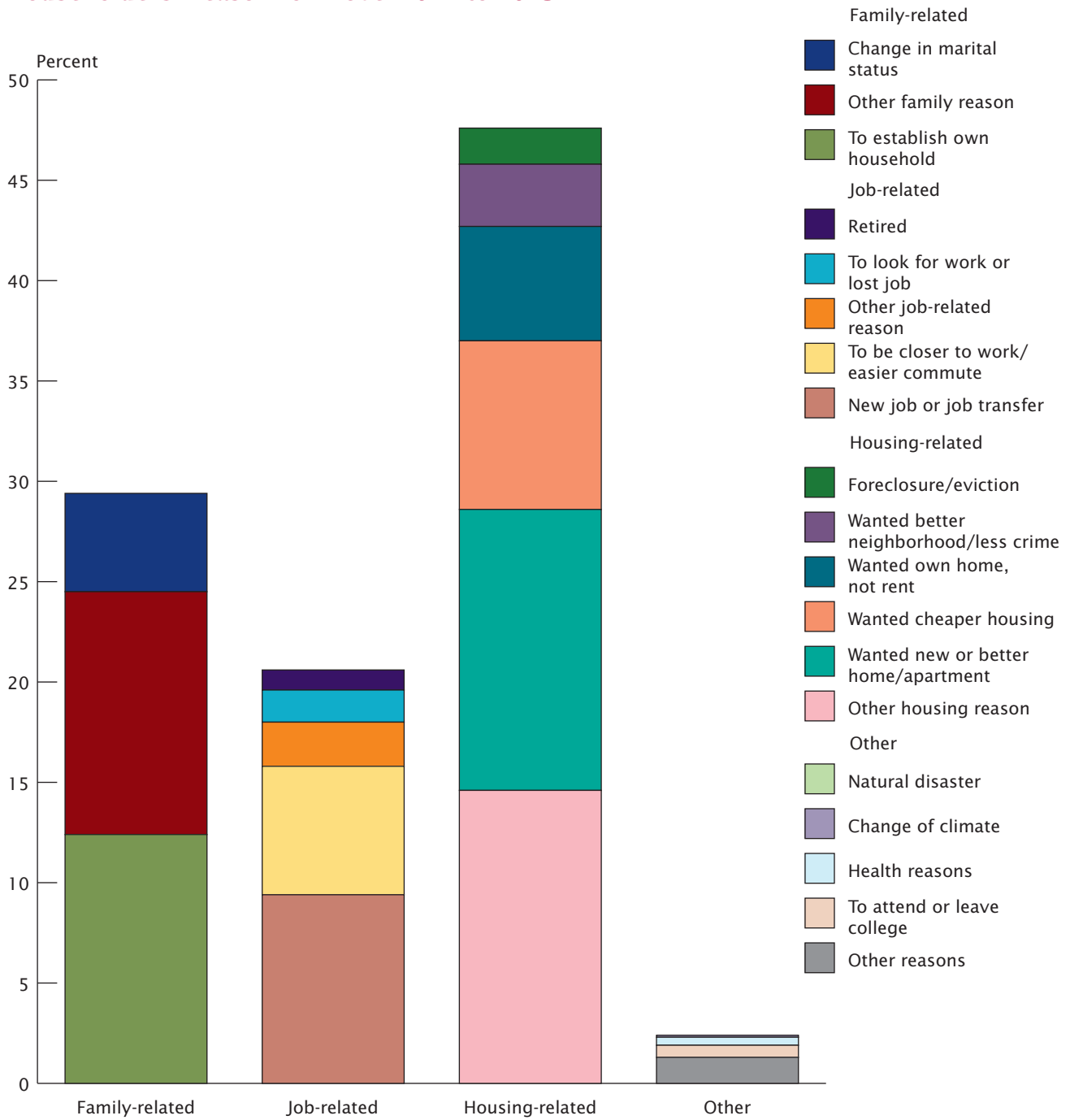
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<sup>16</sup> Householders are determined by the relationship to householder statuses of householder (spouse present), other family householder, and nonfamily householder.

<sup>17</sup> Estimates for “wanted new or better home/apartment” and “other housing” were not significantly different.

<sup>18</sup> The “foreclosure/eviction” reason for move estimate was not significantly different from “to look for work/lost job.”

Figure 2.  
**Householders' Reason for Move: 2012 to 2013**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2013.

In regards to family-related reasons, 12.4 percent of householders said their main reason for moving was to “establish own household.” This is not statistically different from the 12.1 percent who responded with an “other family” reason. The lowest family-related reason was “change in marital status,” with 4.9 percent. This category includes any type of change in marital status and is not limited to marriage or divorce. Becoming a widow or separated both qualify for placement in this reason.

Most job-related reasons were not selected a great deal by householders. The only choices that were selected a considerable amount were “new job or job transfer” and “to be closer to work/easier commute,” at 9.4 percent and 6.4 percent, respectively. The remaining job-related reasons of “to look for work or lost job,” “retired,” and “other job-related reason” combined for a total of 4.8 percent of householders’ reason for move responses.

None of the individual responses in the collapsed “other” category account for a particularly large percentage of reasons why householders moved either. Out of all householders that moved, 2.4 percent gave a reason in the “other” collapsed category. The two largest reasons within the collapsed category were “other reasons” with 1.3 percent and “to attend or leave college” with 0.6 percent. The estimate for “to attend or leave college” suggests very few householders moved for the purpose of attending or leaving college. The “other reasons” response is too vague to be helpful. An extremely

small percentage of householders moved for a change of climate, health reasons, or a natural disaster.

## **HISTORICAL REASON FOR MOVE DATA**

This portion of the report concentrates on historical reason for move data for all movers.<sup>19</sup> It is broken into two sections, individual reasons and collapsed categories, because tracking the change of up to 19 reasons over the course of 13 years can be difficult.<sup>20</sup> To reduce the amount of confusion, the first portion concentrates on individual reasons for 1999 and 2013. The second section narrows the individual reasons into the four collapsed categories while expanding the years from 1999 through 2013.

### **Individual Reasons**

Before proceeding with the individual reason for move comparison, categories from 2013 need to match those from 1999 as closely as possible. In an attempt to achieve this, the 2013 estimate for “foreclosure/eviction” was grouped into the “other housing” reason and “natural disaster” was grouped into “other.”<sup>21</sup> Between 2012 and 2013, 35.9 million people 1 year and over moved to a different residence. This represents a decline of 6.7 million from the 42.6 million movers

<sup>19</sup> The historical reason for move table (A-5) is available at <[www.census.gov/hhes/migration/data/cps/historical.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/migration/data/cps/historical.html)>.

<sup>20</sup> Over time, some reasons were added to the list of responses. To see the full list of reasons for moving and when they were added, see Appendix Table 1 in the Appendix of this report.

<sup>21</sup> This approach assumes respondents from 1999 selected “other housing” if they moved for a foreclosure- or eviction-related reason and “other” if their move was prompted by a natural disaster.

between 1998 and 1999. Over this period, the mover rate dropped from 15.9 percent in 1999 to 11.7 percent in 2013.

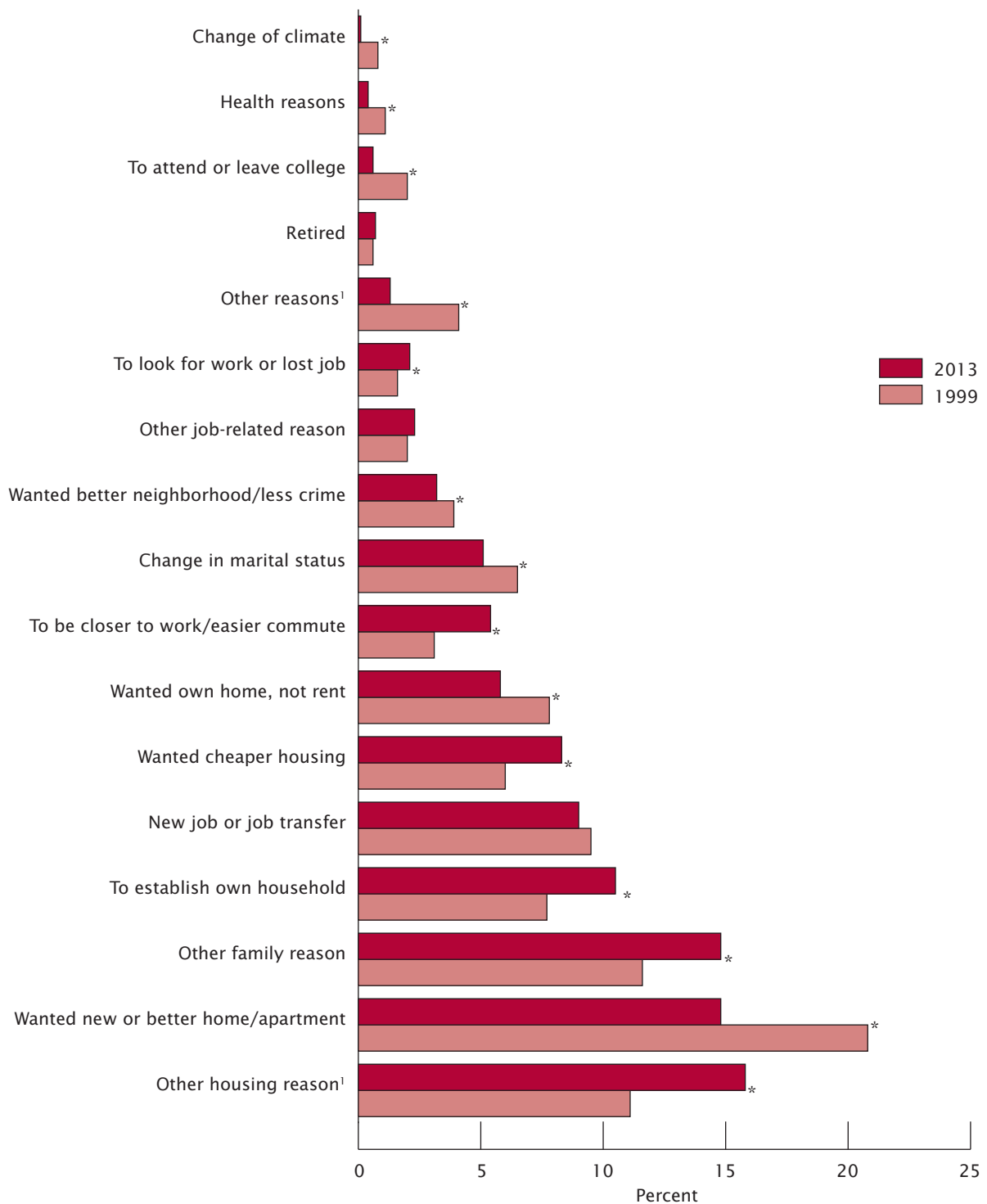
Among individual reasons presented in Figure 3, “wanted new or better home/apartment,” “other housing reason,” and “other family reason” were selected most in 2013 with 14.8 percent, 15.8 percent, and 14.8 percent, respectively.<sup>22, 23</sup> These three reasons were given by 45.4 percent of movers. The same three individual reasons were also given most often by movers in 1999. The distribution shows “wanted new or better home/apartment” was the top choice, with 20.8 percent, followed by “other family reason” (11.6 percent) and “other housing reason” (11.1 percent). “Other family reason” and “other housing reason” were not significantly different from one another. In 1999, these three responses were given by 43.5 percent of movers. The fact that this estimate has remained over 40 percent suggests that the top three reasons continue to play an integral part in the decision making process for moving.

Several reasons did not differ significantly between 1999 and 2013. Estimates for “new job or job transfer,” “retired,” and “other job-related reason” are examples where the estimates are not significantly different. Most reasons changed over time, which may indicate a shift in importance. A greater percentage

<sup>22</sup> The 2013 estimates for “wanted new or better home/apartment” and “other family reason” are not significantly different.

<sup>23</sup> Foreclosure/eviction accounted for 1.8 percentage points of the 15.8 percent of “other housing reason” in 2013. Foreclosure/eviction was not an option for 1999 reason for move responses.

Figure 3.  
**Reason for Move: 1999 and 2013**



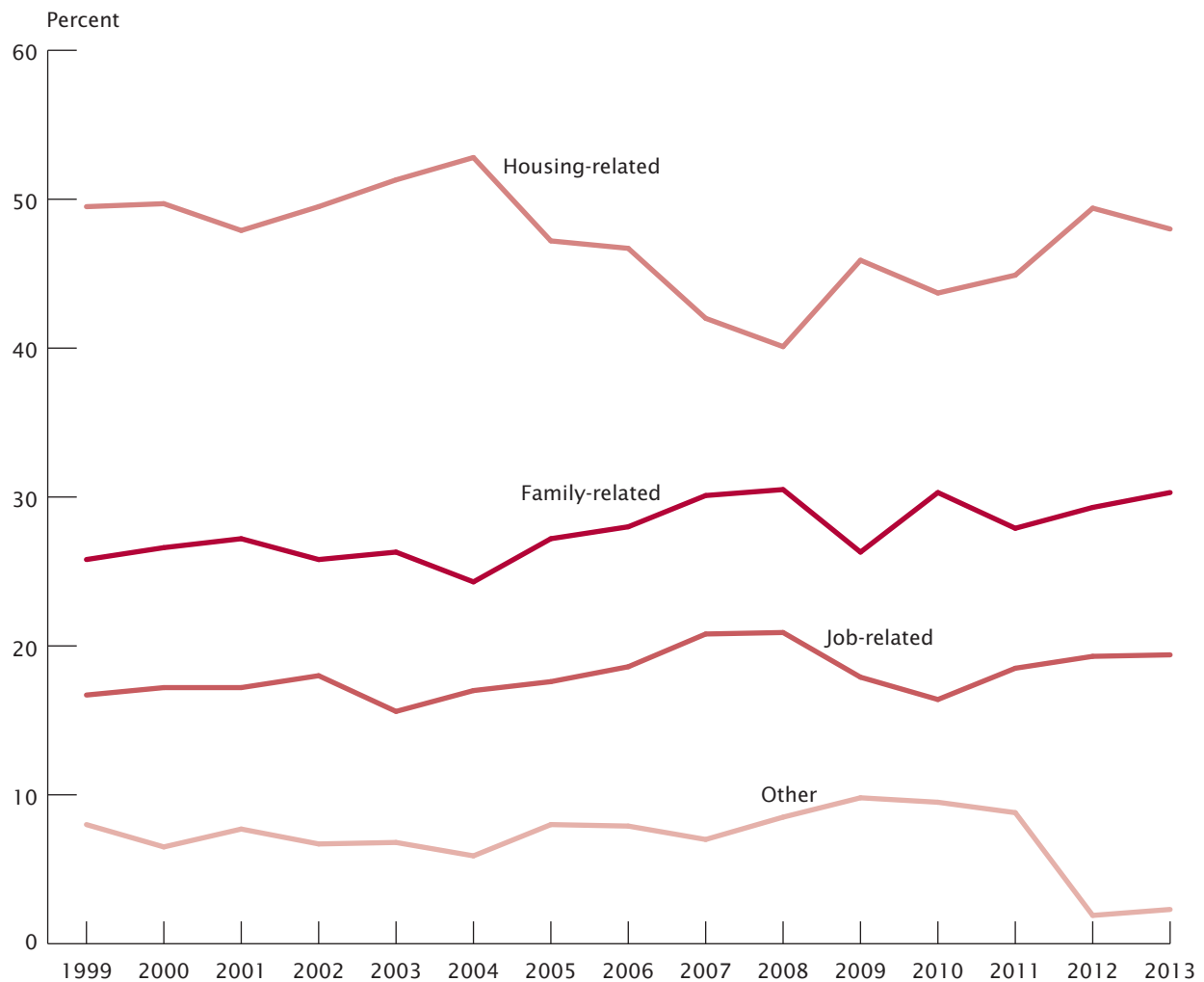
\* Indicates significant difference between 1999 and 2013.

<sup>1</sup> The 2013 "foreclosure/eviction" estimate was grouped with "other housing reason" and the "natural disaster" estimate was grouped with "other reasons" for better comparability with 1999 data.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 1999 and 2013.



Figure 4.  
**Collapsed Reason for Move: 1999–2013**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 1999–2013.

of movers left their previous residence to establish their own household in 2013 than 1999. “To establish own household” increased from 7.7 percent to 10.5 percent. “Other housing” also went up from 11.1 percent to 15.8 percent.<sup>24</sup> In some cases, the change went in the opposite direction. “Wanted better home/apartment” decreased from 20.8 percent to 14.8 percent.

<sup>24</sup> The “other housing” reason is a catch-all category, where a respondent’s primary reason for moving was housing-related in nature but did not fit into any of the provided housing choices.

“Wanted own home, not rent” decreased from 7.8 percent to 5.8 percent. This suggests that establishing their household and other housing reasons were more important to respondents than improving their housing situation or owning their home in 2013 relative to 1999.

### Collapsed Categories

Figure 4 contains a visual representation of the collapsed reason for move categories for 1999 through 2013. Overall, the order of the

collapsed category distribution did not change over time. Housing-related reasons were the most common, family-related were the second most common, job-related were third, and other reasons were last. However, within these collapsed categories, some change over time is evident. The housing-related reason category reached its peak in 2004 with 52.8 percent of all reason for move responses. This estimate reached its lowest point of 40.1 percent in 2008. Because they are all part of the

Table 2.

**Reason for Move Response Crosswalk: ASEC and AHS**

ASEC Reason for Move	AHS Reason for Move <sup>1</sup>
<b>Family-Related</b> Change in marital status To establish own household Other family reason	<b>Family-Related</b> Married, widowed, divorced, or separated To establish own household Other, family/personal related
<b>Job-Related</b> New job or job transfer To look for work or lost job To be closer to work/easier commute Retired Other job-related reason	<b>Job-Related</b> New job or job transfer No equivalent reason To be closer to work/school/other No equivalent reason Other, financial/employment related
<b>Housing-Related</b> Wanted own home, not rent Wanted new or better home/apartment Wanted better neighborhood/less crime Wanted cheaper housing Foreclosure/eviction Other housing reason	<b>Housing-Related</b> Change from owner to renter OR renter to owner Needed a larger house or apartment; wanted a better quality house (apartment) No equivalent reason Wanted lower rent or less expensive house to maintain Foreclosure; evicted from residence Other housing-related reasons
<b>Other Reason</b> To attend or leave college Change of climate Health reasons Natural disaster Other reasons	<b>Other Reason</b> No equivalent reason No equivalent reason No equivalent reason Disaster loss (fire, flood, etc.) Private displacement; forced to leave by the government; other

<sup>1</sup> Some AHS reasons do not fit entirely into a single ASEC reason. For example, “to be closer to work/school/other” could be coded in the ASEC as “To be closer to work/easier commute,” “to attend or leave college,” or “other reasons” depending on what the respondent wanted to be closer to.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement; American Housing Survey.

same distribution, change within one category necessitates change in at least one other category. When housing-related reasons were at their highest point in 2004, family-related reasons reported its low of 24.3 percent. According to estimates from 2012 and 2013, other reasons experienced historic lows of 1.9 percent and 2.3 percent. It appears that housing-related reasons became more important for movers between 2011 (44.9 percent) and 2012 (49.4 percent), which detracted from other reasons.

### **REASON FOR MOVE COMPARISON: ANNUAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SUPPLEMENT (ASEC) AND AMERICAN HOUSING SURVEY (AHS)**

The AHS is another Census Bureau survey that collects data on reasons for moving. There are several

differences between the AHS and the ASEC, both in terms of the surveys themselves and the reason for move question. The AHS is primarily concerned with housing topics, such as the physical condition of housing units, equipment breakdowns, and information regarding the nation’s housing inventory. The ASEC is a person-based survey, concentrating on economic and demographic characteristics of respondents and their families. This leads to major differences in the sample design between the surveys. The last AHS sample frame was drawn in 1985 and that frame was used when the survey was conducted in 2011. The same housing units are sampled when the survey is conducted. There are some additions or modifications conducted to account for differences in the housing composition between 1985 and current conditions. The current ASEC data uses information

collected from the 2000 Decennial Census as a sampling frame, with a new set of respondents surveyed every year.<sup>25</sup>

The differences mentioned above result in small differences in the sample frame, but the reason for move comparison has its own complications. First, the questions and responses are not directly comparable. The AHS version gives respondents the option to select “all reasons are of equal importance,” while ASEC forces a single choice. Movers are required to select their main reason for moving; otherwise, a reason is allocated to them. Second, the AHS includes

<sup>25</sup> The 2012 ASEC is the first year using population controls from the 2010 Census. Migration estimates using 2010 population controls were created retroactively for the historical tables, including Table A-5 reason for move. This section of the report uses the 2000 population control estimates. This note is mainly for informational purposes only, as the difference between the reason or move estimates using the two controls is extremely small, typically less than 0.1.

reasons not provided by the ASEC, and vice versa. Examples from the AHS include private displacement and being forced to leave by the government. Third, there are cases where a category from the AHS could potentially fit into two or more categories in the ASEC. One example is the response “to be closer to work/school/other.” In the ASEC, it could be classified as “to be closer to work/easier commute” or “other reasons,” depending on which reason the respondent intended to highlight.

In order to compare results across surveys, Table 2 shows one possible crosswalk between the two surveys.<sup>26</sup> For purposes of this comparison, attempts were made to maintain the highest level of detail possible. This decision mainly applied to the AHS reason “to be closer to work/school/other,” because it could be placed in either job-related or other reasons. All other AHS responses that could fit into two individual reasons would be placed into the same collapsed reason for move category. “To be closer to work/school/other” was placed into the AHS job-related category. The most recent data available for the AHS is 2011.<sup>27</sup> Because the AHS only surveys householders, estimates from the 2011 ASEC for householders are used to provide the best possible comparison.<sup>28</sup>

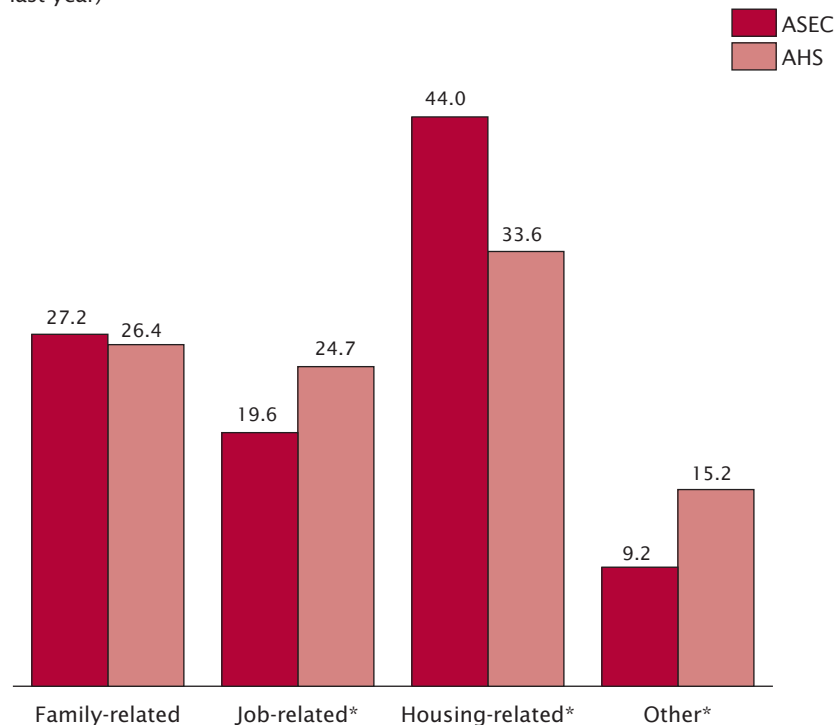
Figure 5 indicates that the collapsed ASEC reason for move distribution was more concentrated in a

<sup>26</sup> This exercise is intended purely for informational purposes and in no way acts as a standard approach used by the Census Bureau.

<sup>27</sup> The number of respondents that did not report a main reason for moving was 883,000. An additional 782,000 gave “all reported reasons equal.” Because the ASEC requires respondents to select a reason, these AHS cases were excluded from the comparison. Combined, they compose 10.4 percent of AHS mover cases.

<sup>28</sup> ASEC householders include the following relationships to the householder: householder, spouse present; other family householder; and nonfamily householder.

Figure 5.  
**Reason for Move by Survey (Collapsed Categories): 2011**  
(In percent. Universe: Householders 15 years and over who moved within the last year)



\* Indicates significant difference between ASEC and AHS estimate.  
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2011; American Housing Survey, 2011.

single category than the AHS. Housing-related reasons were the most common for both surveys, albeit to different degrees. The 2011 ASEC estimate was 44.0 percent of all movers, compared with 33.6 percent from the AHS. Family-related reasons were reported second most and were not significantly different between surveys, with 27.2 percent for the ASEC and 26.4 percent for the AHS. A greater percentage of people gave employment-related reasons for moving in the AHS (24.7 percent) than the ASEC (19.6 percent).<sup>29</sup> Finally, a greater share of people attributed their primary reason for moving to other reasons in the AHS than the ASEC. It accounted for 15.2 percent of AHS responses. This is about 1.7 times

<sup>29</sup> The AHS collapsed categories of family-related reasons and job-related reasons were not significantly different.

higher than the ASEC estimate of 9.2 percent. Despite differences in survey methodology and reason for move responses, the AHS and ASEC had comparable rankings across the four collapsed categories.

## SOURCES OF THE DATA

The population represented (the population universe) in the ASEC is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States. Members of the Armed Forces living off post or with their families on post are included if at least one civilian adult lives in the household. The institutionalized population, which is excluded from the population universe, is composed primarily of the population in correctional institutions and nursing homes (94.3 percent of the 4.0 million institutionalized people

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in Census 2010). Most of the data from the ASEC were collected in March (with some data collected in February and April), and the data were controlled to independent population estimates for March 2013. For annual time series from the CPS, data collected in the 2013 ASEC may be compared with data collected in the March supplement to the CPS in prior years.

### **ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES**

Statistics from surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level. This means the 90 percent confidence interval for the difference between the estimates being compared does not include zero. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey is designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately the answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process, including the overall design of surveys, the wording of questions,

review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports, to minimize these errors.

The CPS weighting procedure uses 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 biases may still be present when people who are missed by the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. 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, go to <[www.census.gov/aprd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar13.pdf](http://www.census.gov/aprd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar13.pdf)> or contact the Census Bureau's Demographic Statistical Methods Division via e-mail at <[dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov](mailto:dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov)>.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Detailed geographical mobility/migration tables from the 2013 ASEC are available on the Census

Bureau's Web site <[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)>. Once on the site, go to the "People" section at the top of the page and click "Geographical Mobility/Migration." From the "Geographical Mobility/Migration" page, use the "Quick Links" for "CPS Data on Migration/Geographical Mobility." Under the "Geographical Mobility: 2012 to 2013" subheading, select "Detailed Tables." The reason for move tables are 23 through 27. To access the historical reason for move table, return to the CPS migration page and scroll to the bottom where it says "Historical Time Series Tables." The historical reason for move table is A-5.

### **CONTACTS**

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For additional information, contact the U.S. Census Bureau Customer Services Center at 1-800-923-8282 (toll free) or visit <[ask.census.gov](http://ask.census.gov)>.

### **SUGGESTED CITATION**

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## APPENDIX

### CHANGES TO RESPONSE CATEGORIES

What is the main reason people move? What seems like an easy question to answer actually contains a complex, continuously changing answer. Achieving an adequate list of reasons why people move is an ongoing process, often requiring direct respondent feedback and analysis. A few changes occurred in 1998, the first year the question was asked.<sup>30</sup> Originally, there were 15 responses in the survey. After data collection was completed, analysts noticed that variations of “wanted cheaper housing” and “health reasons” were common write-in responses. These answers were removed from the “other” write-ins and given their own listing. Other changes occurred when “to attend college” was added to “to leave college,” and “wanted better neighborhood” was added to “less crime.” These modifications were implemented and an updated response list was included for the 1999 survey.<sup>31</sup>

A complete list of the current reason for move responses is included in Appendix Table 1, along with a general description and the year the reason was added to the survey. There have been two additions since the changes from 1999. A “natural disaster” category

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<sup>30</sup> Earlier versions of a reason for move question appeared in the 1948 and 1963 CPS. For additional information, see p. 230 of Long, Larry, (1988), *Migration and Residential Mobility in the United States*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

<sup>31</sup> Because of these differences, reason for move comparisons between 1998 and future years is not advised.

was added in 2006. This was an attempt to capture displacement caused by the destructive forces of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, along with any future natural disasters. The most recent change occurred in 2011, when a “foreclosure/eviction” reason was created from write-in responses. The “foreclosure/eviction” reason was added in response to the tumultuous economic climate and resulting housing situation. Census Bureau migration analysts working with ASEC data noticed foreclosure and eviction were becoming more common among write-in responses. In 2011, write-in responses that specified either foreclosure or eviction were placed into a separate category.<sup>32</sup> While the creation of a separate “foreclosure/eviction” category provided a publicly available estimate for 2011, it likely underestimated the number of people who moved for foreclosure- or eviction-related reasons. Respondents who completed the ASEC in 2011 were not given the opportunity to select foreclosure/eviction as a standard response. Only those who decided to utilize the write-in response could be included. People who did not use the write-in option but would have selected foreclosure/eviction may have selected “other housing” instead. Unfortunately, there is no way to deconstruct the “other housing” reason in order to ascertain how many selected this

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<sup>32</sup> “Foreclosure/eviction” was treated as an independent category for processing purposes. Movers who neglected to answer the reason for move question could be allocated to this category during imputation. For additional information, consult the CPS User Note: Addition of Foreclosure/Eviction Reason for Move Category at <[www.census.gov/hhes/migration/data/cps/usernote2012.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/migration/data/cps/usernote2012.html)>.

response because of a foreclosure or eviction. “Foreclosure/eviction” was added as a selectable category for all movers starting with the 2012 ASEC.

### WRITE-IN RESPONSES

Every year, hundreds of movers write-in responses to the “other” reason for move category that they feel do not adequately fit in the standard reason for move options. These responses are compared with the definitions found in Appendix Table 1 of this report to ensure that they do not belong in one of the standard response categories. Some of the responses are coded to one of the provided options from the survey. For example, the response of “marriage” is placed in the first category of “change in marital status.” More complicated situations arise when multiple reasons are given. When this happens, the first answer (in order on the form) is selected to be the main reason. An exception to this rule exists when one reason likely caused another. One example of this is becoming ill and losing a job. In these cases, coding rules attempt to determine the chain of events. It can be argued that the person moved because they lost their job, but they would not have lost their job if they were healthy. If the chain of events cannot be sufficiently determined, then the first reason is taken.

Write-in responses that cannot be confidently placed in another category are assigned to “other reasons.” These cases are generally too ambiguous to fit into the standard responses. An example is

Appendix Table 1.

**Reason for Move Response by Description and Year Added to the Annual Social and Economic Supplement**

Reason for Move	Description	Year Added
<p><b>Family-Related</b>            Change in marital status            To establish own household            Other family reason</p>	<p>Person moved because of family formation or dissolution resulting in a change to their marital status.            Moved out of an existing household in order to establish a separate one.            All other family-related reasons not listed above.</p>	<p>1998            1998            1998</p>
<p><b>Job-Related</b>            New job or job transfer            To look for work or lost job            To be closer to work/easier commute            Retired            Other job-related reason</p>	<p>Moved because of a new job or location of existing job moved. This can include military transfers.            Moved in order to find work or due to a loss of employment.            Moved to be closer to their work and/or reduce their commuting time.            People who, after retirement from a job, changed their place of residence.            All other job-related reasons not listed above.</p>	<p>1998            1998            1998            1998            1998</p>
<p><b>Housing-Related</b>            Wanted own home, not rent            Wanted new or better home/apartment            Wanted better neighborhood/less crime<sup>1</sup>            Wanted cheaper housing            Foreclosure/eviction<sup>2</sup>            Other housing reason</p>	<p>People who wanted to own their home and not rent a house/apartment.            People who wanted to move from their current home/apartment to a new, bigger/better house/apartment.            Moved to improve the neighborhood of their residence and/or moved to an area with less crime.            Moved to a cheaper/less expensive house/apartment.            Moved due to a foreclosure or eviction.            All other housing-related reasons not listed above.</p>	<p>1998            1998            1999            1999            2012            1998</p>
<p><b>Other Reason</b>            To attend or leave college<sup>1</sup>            Change of climate            Health reasons            Natural disaster            Other reasons</p>	<p>People who move to attend or leave college.            People who moved to a better climate.            People who moved for health-related reasons, either of the individual or another person.            People who were forced to move due to a natural disaster.            All other reasons not listed.</p>	<p>1999            1998            1999            2006            1998</p>

<sup>1</sup> First appeared in 1998, but was reworded for 1999 and later years.

<sup>2</sup> Coded from "other reasons" write-in responses in 2011.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

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the write-in response of “school.” If school refers to college, then this response would be coded as “to attend or leave college.” If a parent moved to enroll their children in a better school, then it would be coded as an “other family reason.” If the respondent was a child who moved to attend a different school, then it should be coded in “other reasons.” The exact reasoning behind such a move is unclear due to a lack of details in the response.

Therefore, these cases are left in the “other reason” category.

There are detailed cases that rightfully belong in “other ” because they do not adequately fit into another category. A common occurrence involves cohabiting with unmarried partners, such as a boyfriend, girlfriend, or fiancé. The official Census Bureau definition does not consider these unrelated persons to be members

of the respondent's family. Therefore, based on the definition, these cases cannot be placed in any of the family reasons. Instead, they are coded to the “other reason” response. Additional examples of responses commonly found in the “other reason” category include being a foreign exchange student, moving in with friends, foster care, being released from prison, and just because/wanted to.