

Americans move less and toward southwest

Social commentator Vance Packard described America as a rootless society in his 1972 book "A Nation of Strangers." In the book he noted that nearly 20 per cent of the population changes address annually, and that the average American moves about 14 times in his lifetime.

Although Americans continue to be among the most geographically mobile people in the world, recent U.S. Census Bureau figures indicate that the mobility rate—the percentage of the population moving each year—is declining.

From an average annual rate of 20.1 per cent recorded by the census bureau between 1958-61, the rate slipped to 19.1 per cent in the 1967-70 period and to 17.7 per cent between 1975-76. At the present rate, the average American moves only 12 times in his lifetime.

Although Americans once led the world in geographic mobility, Americans and Canadians now rank along side Americans as the most mobile people, says census bureau analysts.

Ken Kerin, director of the Department of Economics and Research for the National Association of Realtors, said the gradual decline in mobility may be a reflection of the nation's increasingly older population. Older people are more inclined to remain where they are, he said.

Kristin A. Hansen, a statistician for the census bureau, said other factors may have contributed to the decline. He said a decline in job-related moves, may be caused by people more concerned about the quality of life available than larger salaries.

A SPOKESMAN for American Telephone & Telegraph Co. confirmed this point: It is becoming more difficult to draw employees to large metropolitan areas than it was a few years ago. The Bell System employs some 800,000 people across the U.S.

Easier access to junior colleges within "home" communities also may have caused a drop-off in school-related relocations in recent years. Ms. Hansen added. And, with fewer people in the armed services, there are probably fewer moves for military reasons.

Observers also noted some reluctance to move. Cris Collie, executive director of the Employee Relocation Council—an organization which charts relocation trends for some 520 member firms—said a survey conducted earlier this year revealed that about 17 per cent of the responding firms reported some employee resistance to transfers.

Although the per cent recorded in 1977 was higher than in 1976 (15 per cent) and 1975 (12 per cent), Collie would not term the increase a trend because of differences in survey development. In fact, he said he thought higher resistance to relocation would be reported.

IF MOBILITY is on the decline, it's not yet apparent to the investment moving industry. Edward B. Martin, public relations director of the American Movers Conference, said member firms enjoyed a busy year, with demand increasing an unexpected 15 per cent or more in 1977. The conference now represents some 1,400 interstate moving companies.

What's going to happen in the future? On a percentage basis, experts predict mobility will continue to decline. Population increases will result in more people moving each year—at least in the foreseeable future.

Although there is a disagreement on whether there is a trend toward less mobility, there is no question as to where Americans are moving.

In increasing numbers Americans are migrating from the populous northeast and north central regions to the south and west. According to the census bureau, is also a shift in population to non-metropolitan areas.

Between 1965 and 1970, according to the census bureau, nearly 2,000,000 people left the northeast. However, because 1.3 million migrated to the region, the northeast showed a net migration loss of 700,000 for the period.

Nearly 2.4 million people left the region in the next five years, and slightly more than 1,000,000 moved there during 1970-75. Thus, the region recorded a net migration loss of more than 1.3 million in the first five years of the decade.

The north central region suffered similar population losses during the 10-year period. The region's net loss for 1965-70 was about 636,000. It nearly doubled, reaching almost 1.2 million between 1970-75.

ON THE OTHER side of the coin, both the south and west recorded net migration gains between 1965 and 1975. Some 2.1 million people moved into the south, while just under 2.5 million left between 1965 and 1970 for a net increase in population of more than 600,000. In the next five-year span, arrivals increased and departures decreased. The result was a net increase of 1.8 million people.

Net in-migration in the west totaled 695,000 from 1965-1970. Despite increases in both in-and-out migration during the following five-year span, net in-migration rose to 708,000 for that period.

Several southern and western states have experienced impressive population gains through in-migration. Arizona's population grew 27.9 per cent between 1970 and 1976. 20.1 per cent attributable to net in-migration.

Florida's population rose 22.9 per cent between 1970 and 1976. 20.7 per cent due to net in-migration. Nevada's population increased 24.8 per cent between 1970 and 1976. Net in-migration accounted for 18.5 per cent of the state's growth.

At the other end of the scale, 16 states and the District of Columbia recorded net migration losses between 1970 and 1976, according to the census bureau, and two states—Rhode Island and New York—actually lost population.

BETWEEN 1975 and 1976, central cities gained 2,650,000 persons through in-migration, but 4,605,000 persons left—a net loss of 1,955,000. Nearly two-thirds of people leaving central cities—some 3,499,000—settled in the suburbs. The other third—about 1,106,000—settled in non-metropolitan areas.

Rural counties—particularly those with a state university or attractive recreation or retirement centers—have attracted new residents in recent years, according to the census bureau's Ms. Hansen. The Ozarks typically such an area, she said.

New data, the census bureau reports, does not point to a reversal of the nation's long-standing trend towards urbanization, but rather to slowed growth. More than 70 per cent of the nation's population lives in metropolitan areas, Hansen said.


Orchard Lake traffic signals to be updated

The Oakland County Road Commission is proposing the modernization of 17 traffic signals on Orchard Lake Road, including two signals located in the City of Farmington.

The modernization will include the intersection of the 17 signals to provide smoother traffic flow along Orchard Lake Road between Grand River and Long Lake Road.

Total cost of the project is estimated at \$85,000, 90 per cent of which will be provided by federal funding. The road commission will assume 10 per cent (or \$8,500) of the cost.

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