



*By Riordan Frost, Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, May 4, 2020*

“For the past five years, just over 40 million Americans moved each year, according to American Community Survey data.

“Most moves are local, either within the same county or within the same state.

“People move for a variety of reasons, but the most common motivator is housing.

“Mobility rates are about half what they were in the 1940s — when one in five Americans moved each year — and have been steadily declining since the mid-1980s. Local moves have been declining the most, especially among young adults, but all age groups have been moving less than in the past.

“There is little consensus as to why Americans are moving less, but three factors seem to be playing a role — demographic change, housing affordability, and changes in labor dynamics.

- “People move less often as they age, and as millennials (America’s second-largest generation) age out of their most mobile years, some decline in mobility should be expected.
- “The [housing affordability crisis \(discussed in detail in our recent report\)](#) could also be depressing mobility, with high costs discouraging moves into unaffordable areas.
- “The rise in dual-earner households, as well as increases in rates of working from home (especially during and possibly after the COVID-19 pandemic) could be having a downward effect on mobility, as both dual-earner households and remote workers have lower mobility rates than single-earner households and commuters.

“Since the COVID-19 pandemic is still unfolding, it is difficult to assess its possible impacts on mobility. It could be that mobility is going to spike after the quarantines end and people move to cheaper housing (if available) after losing income from a job loss. Mobility could also spike as a result of evictions or foreclosures if substantial payment assistance is not provided before the temporary bans on evictions and foreclosures end.

“It could also be that mobility will decline further as people become less likely to buy or sell homes, especially during the quarantines but also afterwards due to higher economic uncertainty. Working from home is likely at record high levels right now, and if even a small portion of this shift proves to be permanent, it could mean fewer people moving for job-related reasons as well.”

[Read more here.](#)