

Five-year Geographic Mobility: 1970-2010

A 5-year geographic mobility question has been asked continuously in the Decennial Census since 1940. Providing estimates once every ten years meant changes between Censuses could be missed and data were outdated by the end of the decade. To offer more timely estimates, the American Community Survey (ACS) was created in 1996. The geographic mobility question asked on the ACS has a 1-year reference period because it is conducted annually. Comparisons between 1-year and 5-year migration estimates cannot be made due to the difference in reference period. The Census long form was replaced by the ACS in 2010, resulting in a loss of 5-year migration data.

The Current Population Survey (CPS) is the other major source of geographic mobility data conducted by the Census. It has been collecting migration data since 1948 and asks about residence 1 year ago. Between 1970 and 1980, the migration question changed from a 1-year reference period to a base year. For example, all respondents who completed the surveys in 1971 through 1975 were asked if they lived in a different residence since 1970. Respondents who took the survey between 1976 and 1980 were asked the same question with 1975 as the reference point. This approach ended with mixed results but it unexpectedly offered 5-year migration estimates for 1975, midpoint between the 1970 and 1980 Census. In an effort to continue an uninterrupted cycle of 5-year geographic mobility data, the CPS adds a 5-year question during years ending in "5". When approached with the 2010 dilemma of no 5-year migration data, it was decided to add the 5-year question to the CPS survey. The end result is a set of 5-year migration estimates dating back to the 1970 Census.

The current project is an update to the Current Population Report "Geographic Mobility: 1990 to 1995". It begins with a general overview of 5-year mover rates by type of move from 1970 to 2010. Because of when it was written, the previous report ended with data from 1995. Select characteristics from the 2005 and 2010 CPS 5-year migration data are shown and analyzed. Distance of intercounty move for the 2005 and 2010 CPS are discussed. In, out, and net 5-year regional migration estimates for 1970 to 2010

are included. The analysis ends with a map containing five-year region-to-region migration flows comparing 1975 and 2010.