

THE GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY OF AMERICANS

An International Comparison

CURRENT POPULATION
REPORTS

Special Studies
Series P-23, No. 64

U.S. Department of Commerce
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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by Larry H. Long
and
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FOREWORD

This is the second in a new series of analytical reports prepared by demographers in the Population Division, Bureau of the Census. A distinguishing feature of these occasional reports is that they are to include broad speculative analysis and illustrative hypotheses by the authors as an aid in understanding the statistics and in assessing their potential impact on public policy. The usual scope of these reports will probably be broader than that of annual census reports on population subjects but less complete than book-length monographs.

For providing data and assistance in interpreting and understanding the statistics for the various countries, the authors would like to express appreciation to: Jerry Sexton of the Central Statistical Office, Ireland; Martin Daly and Norman Davis of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, London; A. L. Hart of the Australian Bureau of Statistics; and Wei Sou-Pen of the Department of Population, Republic of China. None of these persons read the completed report, however, and therefore cannot be held responsible for the authors' conclusions and interpretations.

Larry H. Long and Celia G. Boertlein are demographers who do research and analysis as part of their work in the Population Analysis Staff of the Population Division. Larry Long received a Ph.D. degree in sociology from the University of Texas in 1969. Celia Boertlein received a B.S. degree in mathematics from the University of Maryland in 1975. They expect to do further work with migration data of other countries and invite comments on this study.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY OF AMERICANS: AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

Larry H. Long and Celia G. Boertlein

Are Americans more geographically mobile than residents of other countries? The prevailing opinion has always been that they are and that this characteristic is fundamentally linked to other distinctively American traits. But statistics which permit accurate comparisons among countries in this respect are of very recent origin. Data on residential mobility—the probability of moving from one house to another—permit unambiguous comparisons among countries and first became available from the 1960-61 round of censuses. As a result of the 1970-71 censuses, more countries are now beginning to collect and publish this type of data.

Our purpose in analyzing these statistics is not only to state by how much countries differ according to this and other measures of geographical mobility, but also to speculate as to why they differ. Among the specific questions we want to ask are the following: (1) Are differences among countries in terms of residential mobility increasing or decreasing? (2) Are rates of internal migration rising, as many people believe? (3) How many times in a lifetime can a person expect to move? (4) How is geographical mobility spread over the life cycle of individuals in different countries?

The most basic measure of geographical mobility is the count of all moves from one residence to another during a specified interval of time. This measure reflects the total amount of geographical movement taking place within a country and is a kind of least common denominator that can be applied in all countries. A limitation of this summary measure is that it does not give any indication of the average distance of moves, but most countries that collect statistics on residential mobility divide the total moves into those within and between local administrative units, thereby providing some indication of how many moves take place within purely local areas.

For many years there has been a relative abundance of statistics on the numbers of persons moving between administrative areas within countries. But such areas vary greatly in size and shape, and the unsolved problem has been how to standardize these units in a way to permit comparisons between countries. The unanswered question in the past has been how to transform into some common equivalency the moves between counties and States in the U.S., between *församlingar* and *länen* in Sweden, between *shi*, *ku*, *machi*, and *mura* in

Japan, between "local authority areas" in England, between *gemeenten* in the Netherlands, between *communes*, *cantons*, and *départements* in France, and between administrative areas used in other countries as a basis for collecting statistics on internal migration.

A great many statisticians, geographers, and other social scientists have worked on this problem without solving it, although Courgeau (1973a; 1973b; 1975) reports recent breakthroughs. Someday the problem may be completely solved, and someone will produce a cardinal measure of the rate of internal migration for every country that collects data on movements between administrative areas. In the meantime, we avoid the problem by focusing on all changes of residence rather than only those that involve movement between administrative areas, and in the process we obtain a measure that reflects the total geographical mobility of a population.

In the sections that follow, we first ascertain the degree of difference among seven countries that provide data on residential mobility. Later sections investigate patterns of movement by age, the implied number of moves in a lifetime, and trends in the volume of internal migration. The final part of this study is devoted to the authors' explanations and theories about why countries differ in terms of geographical mobility and probable future trends in the rate of residential mobility.

The Rate of Moving

Table 1 shows rates of residential mobility existing in seven countries around 1970. These rates represent the percent of the population moving from one residence to another during a 1- or 5-year interval. Only these seven countries currently furnish this information.

Data for all the countries except Taiwan come from census or survey questions of the basic form, "Did you live at this address 1 year ago (or 5 years ago), on _____ (date)?" In table 1 we sought to show the percent answering "no." Examples of the census or survey questions used in the different countries are reproduced in appendix B of this report, where the dates of the mobility intervals may be identified. The data for Taiwan come from that country's registration system, which records changes of address.

When data were available, table 1 shows rates of residential mobility on the basis of including as well as excluding movers from outside the country. The base for the latter rate is the population living in the country at both the beginning and end of the migration interval. The base for the former rate was the total population at the survey or census date. The census volumes from which the data in table 1 and other tables were obtained are identified in appendix A.

**Table 1. Percent of Population Residentially Mobile in Seven Countries:
Around 1970**

Country	Percent moving in 1 year ¹		Percent moving in 5 years ²	
	Including movers from abroad	Excluding movers from abroad	Including movers from abroad	Excluding movers from abroad
Australia	(NA)	15.7	51.4	48.4
Canada	(NA)	(NA)	46.6	44.3
Great Britain	11.8	11.1	37.2	35.9
Ireland	5.1	4.3	(NA)	(NA)
Japan	12.0	12.0	35.9	35.8
Taiwan	(NA)	9.1	(NA)	(NA)
United States	19.2	18.6	47.0	43.2

NA Not available.

¹ Persons 1 year old and over.

² Persons 5 years old and over.

A frequently quoted statistic about the United States is that nearly 20 percent of the population moves in a year's time. When we exclude the effect of movement from abroad, as is done in column 2 of table 1, we find that about 18.6 percent of the U.S. population changed residence within the country in a 12-month period around 1970. This rate compares with 15.7 percent in Australia, 11.1 percent in Great Britain, 4.3 percent in Ireland, 12.0 percent in Japan, and 9.1 percent in Taiwan. Strictly comparable data for a 1-year period are not available for Canada, but other evidence implies a 1-year rate that is about the same or slightly lower than that found in the United States (see Nickson, 1967; Long, 1970).

As in all international comparisons, great importance should not be attached to small differences, for several factors mitigate against perfect comparability. The 1-year data for the United States and Australia and the 5-year data for Canada refer basically to the noninstitutional population, but the other data refer to the total population, which includes persons in group quarters—a category that frequently has above-average rates of moving. The figure for Taiwan is an estimate of the number of movers per 100 population derived from data on the number of moves per 100 population. Published statistics from Taiwan show about 11.7 changes of residence per 100 population; other data (Kono, 1969) indicate that this represents about 9.1 movers per 100 population.

The data support the idea that rates of geographical mobility are high in the United States, although Canada and Australia also have high rates of resi-

dential mobility. According to the data in column 2 of table 1, the 1-year rate of residential mobility in the United States is about 55 percent greater than the Japanese rate, about 68 percent greater than the British rate, more than double the rate for Taiwan, and over four times as great as the rate for Ireland.

An additional perspective on international differences in residential mobility is provided by data on 5-year rates of moving. The 1-year rates of moving cited above can be compared with the 5-year rates in column 4, which also is based on excluding movers from abroad. The figure for the U.S. shows that of the 1970 population who reported living in the U.S. in 1965, about 43.2 percent moved at least once during the 5 years, compared with 48.4 percent in Australia, 44.3 percent in Canada, 35.9 percent in Great Britain, and 35.8 percent in Japan.

The U.S. figure in column 4 is somewhat low relative to the other countries because of differences in treatment of nonresponse. In the other countries, persons not reporting their residence 5 years earlier were only 1 to 2 percent of the total population, compared with over 5.2 percent in the United States. In the United States a computer allocation assigned nonresponse either to "same house" or "moved, residence in 1965 not reported." The U.S. rate of 43.2 includes in the base persons allocated to "same house" but excludes from the numerator persons allocated to "moved, residence in 1965 not reported." The result is to bias downward the U.S. figure in column 4 relative to the rates for the other countries. The data for Japan in columns 3 and 4 have a slight upward bias because they refer to a migration interval of 5 years and 9 months.

The important conclusion is that the United States, Canada, and Australia appear to have similar 5-year rates of residential mobility, although the rate for Australia may be slightly higher than that found in the United States and Canada. The level of mobility in these countries, however, is distinctly higher than in the other countries shown in table 1.

The degree of difference among countries is less for the 5-year rates than for the 1-year rates. For example, for the 1-year interval the British rate is only 60 percent of the U.S. rate, but for the 5-year interval the British rate is over 80 percent of the U.S. rate. Countries differ more in terms of a 1-year mobility interval than a 5-year interval simply because the longer interval allows a greater proportion of persons to move at least once in 5 years although only one move is counted with the type of question that is used. Many of the people who indicated that at the census date they were living at a different address 5 years earlier had, in fact, moved several times, but the question recorded only the fact that they had moved. A short interval more nearly records each move and thus indicates greater differences among countries.

The 5-year rate of residential mobility which characterizes the United States, Canada, and Australia is over 20 percent greater than the 5-year rate of residential mobility in Britain and Japan. Five-year rates of moving were not available for Ireland or Taiwan. These comparisons are based on rates of moving which exclude movers from outside the countries. Inclusion of such movers in the rates, as is done in columns 1 and 3 of table 1, may give a better picture of a country's incidence of mobility, but we focused attention on the rates which exclude movers from abroad because this information was available for more countries. Including movers from abroad raises the rates, as table 1 shows, but nearly the same degree of difference among the countries is maintained.

Returning nationals frequently constitute a large proportion of movers to the seven countries in table 1. In the United States, for example, a great many movers from abroad are servicemen and students and other private citizens returning from prolonged stays outside the United States. Most of the persons moving to Ireland are citizens of Ireland who have spend a year or two working in the United Kingdom. Immigrants probably constitute a larger proportion of movers to Australia and Canada than is the case in the other countries.

We can now summarize and say that the United States, Canada, and Australia have similar, high rates of residential mobility. As will be discussed more fully in the following section, there is some evidence that the United States has slightly higher rates of residential mobility than Canada and Australia over a 1-year interval but not over a 5-year interval. The United States, Canada, and Australia, however, clearly constitute the high extreme of a continuum representing the level of residential mobility. Farther down on the continuum come Japan, Great Britain, and Taiwan. Ireland has by far the lowest rate of residential mobility for the countries shown in table 1.

These differences are large and offer interesting opportunities to speculate as to why they exist, whether they imply other differences, and where other countries might lie on the mobility continuum. One would be in a better position to explain these differences, however, with additional information on patterns of moving by age and type of move and whether such differences have recently developed or have existed for quite some time. These topics are considered next.

Standardization for Age

A technique that facilitates international comparison is standardization for age. Some of the apparent differences among the countries shown in table 1 are due to their different age distributions. A long history of relatively low fertility has given Great Britain an older population than is found in some of the other countries, and since older persons have lower rates of moving than younger persons, the British mobility figures are somewhat low.

Age-specific rates of moving were available for each of the countries in table 1 except Ireland and Taiwan. For each of the countries with age-specific rates of moving we standardized the all-ages rate by multiplying the rate of moving at each age group by the U.S. population in the age group. The result is to show what each country's rate of moving would be if it had the U.S. age distribution. Both the unstandardized and standardized rates are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Age-Standardized Rates of Residential Mobility in Six Countries: Around 1970

Country	Unstandardized rate	Standardized on U.S. age distribution
ONE-YEAR INTERVAL		
Australia	15.7	15.1
Great Britain	11.8	12.1
Ireland	5.1	(NA)
Japan	12.0	10.8
United States	19.2	19.2
FIVE-YEAR INTERVAL		
Australia	51.4	50.8
Canada	46.6	45.6
Great Britain	37.2	38.4
Japan	35.9	32.7
United States	47.0	47.0

NOTE: Except for Australia for the 1-year period, the rates include movers from outside the countries.

NA Not available.

As can be seen, the rates for Australia, Canada, and Japan are lowered and the rate for Great Britain is raised as a result of standardizing for age. Whereas previously the rate for Japan was slightly higher than the British rate for a 1-year interval, after standardization for age the British rate is higher. Standardization for age raised the British rate from 11.8 to 12.1, while the Japanese rate was reduced from 12.0 to 10.8.

Age standardization widens somewhat the mobility difference between the United States and Australia for the 1-year interval. The unstandardized rates (excluding movers from abroad) are 18.6 for the United States and 15.7 for Australia; after standardization the rate for Australia is reduced to 15.1. The rate for Australia is reduced because Australia has a somewhat younger population than the United States.

For the 5-year rates, the differences among the United States, Australia, and Canada are approximately maintained. Including movers from abroad, the 5-year age-standardized rates are 47.0 for the United States, 50.8 for Australia, and 45.6 for Canada. Australia, therefore, appears to have a 5-year residential mobility rate that is slightly higher than found in the United States and Canada.

Since we do not have age-specific rates of moving for Ireland, we cannot be sure as to how much Ireland's 1-year mobility rate of 5.1 percent would be raised if that country had the same age distribution as the United States. We can, however, standardize the U.S. rate against the age distribution of Ireland. Doing this reduces the 1-year rate for the U.S. by only a very small amount, from 19.2 to 19.0. We can conclude that very little of the difference in mobility between the two countries can be attributed to differences in the age distribution.

The data in table 2 constitute a better measure than table 1 of the "true" differences among countries in terms of residential mobility. Standardization for age has reinforced the conclusion that rates of residential mobility are highest in the United States for a 1-year interval but may be highest in Australia for a 5-year interval. The United States, Australia, and Canada, however, clearly have rates of residential mobility that are similar and represent the most geographically mobile populations of the countries under consideration.

The relative ranking of Great Britain and Japan was reversed by age standardization, showing that Great Britain's population is more residentially mobile than Japan's. Age-standardization would reduce slightly the rate for Taiwan and raise the rate for Ireland, but the ranking of these two countries relative to the other countries would not be affected.

Rates of Moving At Each Age

Are the mobility differences among countries the same at each age group? The importance of this question lies in its implications for explaining the overall mobility differences among countries. Much geographical mobility is thought to be a product of various life-cycle changes, and if we find that the relative differences among the countries are maintained at each life-cycle stage, then we can conclude that each life-cycle stage generates proportionately more mobility in the high-mobility countries. Accounting for overall mobility differences then becomes a problem of explaining why each life-cycle stage generates more mobility in some countries than others.

There is some reason to think, however, that mobility differences will be least at the "young-adult" ages, when geographical mobility is greatest. Previous studies have shown that much mobility is concentrated within a fairly

narrow age span—from 18 to 25, or 18 to 30, or some similar age interval representing a time of life when individuals are typically leaving their parental home to get married, to go away to school, to enter the armed forces, to take their first job, or to embark upon some other activity that removes them from their parents' household. If mobility is to a considerable degree "required" or "necessitated" by such life-cycle changes, then it is probably about equally required in most industrial countries. Hence, one would expect mobility differences among industrial countries to be least at the "young-adult" ages.

Table 3 shows rates of residential mobility by age for each of the five countries for which data were available. Countries do not, unfortunately, use the same age categories for their tabulations, so we had to collapse categories, but we also show the greater age detail when possible.

As can be seen, rates of residential mobility for a 1-year interval reach their peak at ages 20 to 24, rising to 44.4 percent in the United States, 35.1 percent in Australia, 29.4 percent in Great Britain, and 23.7 percent in Japan. Children under 5 years of age also have high rates of moving, reflecting the high mobility of their young parents. After the peak is reached at ages 20 to 24, the rates of moving steadily decline with advancing age, although in the United States and Great Britain the decline is interrupted around the retirement age of 65 and the rate rises at the most advanced age group (75 years and over). Many persons over 75 years of age find they are no longer able to maintain their existing households and either move in with their children or make other living arrangements.

For the 5-year interval, the peak rate of moving is at the 25 to 29 age group in each of the countries. Since age refers to the time of the census, movers during the 5-year interval were probably $2\frac{1}{2}$ years younger at the time they first moved during the interval. The 1-year rates more nearly record age at the time of moving.

Among persons 25 to 29 years old, the 5-year rates of residential mobility reach 79.8 percent in Canada, 78.8 percent in Australia, 78.4 percent in the United States, 69.6 percent in Great Britain, and 67.2 percent in Japan. Rates of moving steadily decline thereafter, although in the United States and Great Britain there are modest upturns around age 65 and at ages 75 and over.

These data show that a similar age curve of mobility characterizes each of the countries, but this information does not answer the question as to whether differences among the countries are least at the ages when mobility is greatest. In order to show relative differences among countries at each age group, we took each country's residential mobility rate as a percent of the U.S. residential mobility rate at the age group. The results are shown in table 4.

Table 3. Percent of Population Residentially Mobile in Five Countries, by Age: Around 1970

Age at end of migration interval	1-year interval					5-year interval				
	Australia	Great Britain	Japan	United States	United States	Australia	Canada	Great Britain	Japan	United States
1 to 4 years	(NA)	17.3	13.5	28.8	...	...	...	...	...	...
5 to 14 years	(NA)	10.3	7.6	17.4	50.7	45.4	40.4	29.3	49.6	49.6
5 to 9 years	(NA)	11.6	8.9	19.7	54.2	(NA)	45.4	34.9	55.6	55.6
10 to 14 years	(NA)	8.8	6.1	15.0	47.3	(NA)	...	23.4	43.8	43.8
15 to 19 years	17.0	13.0	16.4	18.1	48.8	37.1	33.6	35.8	44.5	44.5
20 to 24 years	35.1	29.4	23.7	44.4	73.7	67.2	62.2	52.9	75.4	75.4
25 to 34 years	23.8	18.9	19.1	29.4	71.9	73.6	62.4	61.1	71.6	71.6
25 to 29 years	(NA)	22.2	23.1	34.7	78.8	79.8	69.6	67.2	78.4	78.4
30 to 34 years	(NA)	15.2	14.9	23.4	64.1	66.1	54.5	54.5	63.6	63.6
35 to 44 years	11.3	9.7	8.9	15.6	49.4	46.0	37.7	33.2	45.2	45.2
35 to 39 years	(NA)	11.1	10.1	17.8	53.3	(NA)	42.4	37.9	50.4	50.4
40 to 44 years	(NA)	8.4	7.7	13.6	45.8	(NA)	33.3	27.9	40.3	40.3
45 to 64 years	7.4	6.1	5.6	10.0	38.2	31.9	23.8	19.5	30.4	30.4
45 to 54 years	7.8	6.6	6.2	10.7	39.2	(NA)	26.0	21.6	32.4	32.4
45 to 49 years	(NA)	7.0	6.6	11.5	40.4	(NA)	27.4	22.9	34.1	34.1
50 to 54 years	(NA)	6.3	5.8	9.9	37.7	(NA)	24.5	20.0	30.5	30.5
55 to 64 years	6.8	5.5	4.8	9.0	36.8	(NA)	21.5	16.8	27.8	27.8
55 to 59 years	(NA)	5.5	5.1	9.3	36.8	(NA)	21.9	18.1	28.3	28.3
60 to 64 years	(NA)	5.5	4.4	8.6	36.8	(NA)	21.2	15.4	27.3	27.3
65 years and over	6.0	5.6	4.0	8.4	36.5	30.7	21.5	13.2	28.1	28.1
65 to 69 years	(NA)	5.7	4.2	8.7	(NA)	(NA)	22.4	13.6	27.8	27.8
70 to 74 years	(NA)	5.1	4.0	7.5	(NA)	(NA)	20.6	13.1	26.4	26.4
75 years and over	(NA)	5.9	3.9	8.9	(NA)	(NA)	21.4	12.5	29.4	29.4
Ages 1 year and over	(NA)	11.8	12.0	19.2	...	...	...	...	...	...
Ages 5 years and over	(NA)	11.4	11.9	18.4	51.4	46.6	37.2	35.9	47.0	47.0
Ages 15 years and over	15.4	11.6	12.8	18.7	51.6	47.0	36.6	37.2	46.3	46.3

NOTE: Except for Australia for the 1-year period, the rates include movers from outside the countries.
 ... Not applicable.
 NA Not available.

Table 4. Ratio of Residential Mobility Rate in Other Countries to Residential Mobility Rate in the United States, by Age: Around 1970

Age at end of migration interval	1-year interval				5-year interval			
	Australia	Great Britain	Japan	Great Britain	Australia	Canada	Great Britain	Japan
1 to 4 years	(NA)	0.60	0.47	...	...	...	...	...
5 to 9 years	(NA)	0.59	0.45	0.97	(NA)	0.82	0.63	0.63
10 to 14 years	(NA)	0.59	0.41	1.08	(NA)	0.80	0.53	0.53
15 to 19 years	0.96	0.72	0.91	1.10	0.92	0.76	0.80	0.80
20 to 24 years	0.82	0.66	0.53	0.98	0.92	0.82	0.70	0.70
25 to 34 years	0.84	0.64	0.65	1.00	1.03	0.87	0.85	0.85
25 to 29 years	(NA)	0.64	0.67	1.01	1.02	0.89	0.86	0.86
30 to 34 years	(NA)	0.65	0.64	1.01	1.64	0.86	0.86	0.86
35 to 44 years	0.75	0.62	0.57	1.09	1.02	0.83	0.73	0.73
45 to 64 years	0.76	0.61	0.56	1.26	1.06	0.78	0.64	0.64
45 to 54 years	0.74	0.62	0.58	1.21	(NA)	0.80	0.67	0.67
55 to 64 years	0.77	0.61	0.53	1.32	(NA)	0.77	0.60	0.60
65 years and over	0.71	0.67	0.48	1.30	1.20	0.77	0.47	0.47
Ages 1 year and over ¹	0.81	0.63	0.56	...	...	...	...	...
Ages 5 years and over ¹	...	...	...	1.08	1.02	0.82	0.70	0.70

... Not applicable.

NA Not available.

¹ Age-standardized.

For these comparisons, we adjusted the U.S. data to correspond as closely as possible to the population represented by the data for the other countries. Since the 1-year data for Australia excluded movers from abroad, we excluded movers from abroad in the U.S. figures used in the U.S.-Australia comparisons in column 1 of table 4. All of the other comparisons included movers from abroad. Since the Canadian data referred only to the population in private households, we excluded persons in group quarters from the U.S. data used in the U.S.-Canada comparisons in column 5.

The differences among the countries are not always the least at precisely the ages when mobility is greatest, but there is nevertheless a clear pattern for differences to minimize when mobility rates are high. For example, for all ages combined, the 1-year rate for Australia is 81 percent of the U.S. rate, but at ages 15 to 19 the Australian rate is 96 percent of the U.S. rate. The British residential mobility rate for the 1-year interval is 63 percent of the U.S. rate at all ages combined but 72 percent at ages 15 to 19. The 1-year Japanese mobility rate for all ages is 56 percent of the U.S. rate but 91 percent at ages 15 to 19. For the 5-year interval differences among countries tend to be lowest at ages 25 to 29, the age group with the highest rates of moving during the previous 5 years.

The data, therefore, support the hypothesis that in industrial countries a certain, minimum amount of geographical mobility is a structured part of the life-cycle stage associated with leaving the parental home. All of the countries under consideration have compulsory school attendance and other factors which keep most persons in school until around age 16 or 17. Shortly after this age, most persons begin leaving their parents' household, and at this point in a person's life mobility differences among countries are least.

This pattern is likely to characterize all countries that are highly industrialized and urbanized and—most importantly—possess the nuclear family system which requires children to establish their own household apart from their parents shortly after formal schooling is completed. At life-cycle stages which follow the establishment of independent households, mobility differences among countries are greatest. The important conclusion is that in explaining differences among countries a theory of residential mobility should focus attention on life-cycle stages that follow the establishment of independent households by persons in their twenties.

The age categories in tables 3 and 4 are only broad indicators of life-cycle stages. Obviously, more precise identification of life-cycle stages would be of great value in explaining mobility differences. Several studies of residential mobility in the United States have shown the value of using simple indicators of family life-cycle stage, like number and ages of children. Families are frequently classified according to the presence of children below school age

(under 6 years old), children of school age (6 to 18 years old), or children at both age groups. In the United States number of children and ages of children exercise effects on moving that are independent of the age of the family head (see Long, 1972; Speare, 1970). Hence, age of persons interacts with stage in the life cycle to produce residential changes.

We would like to see more detailed tabulations from different countries on residential mobility controlling for age, family status, duration of marriage, and the timing of residential changes in relation to the birth of children. Such tabulations would provide an indication of how much residential mobility is generated in each country by the different stages of the life cycle.

Expected Moves in a Lifetime

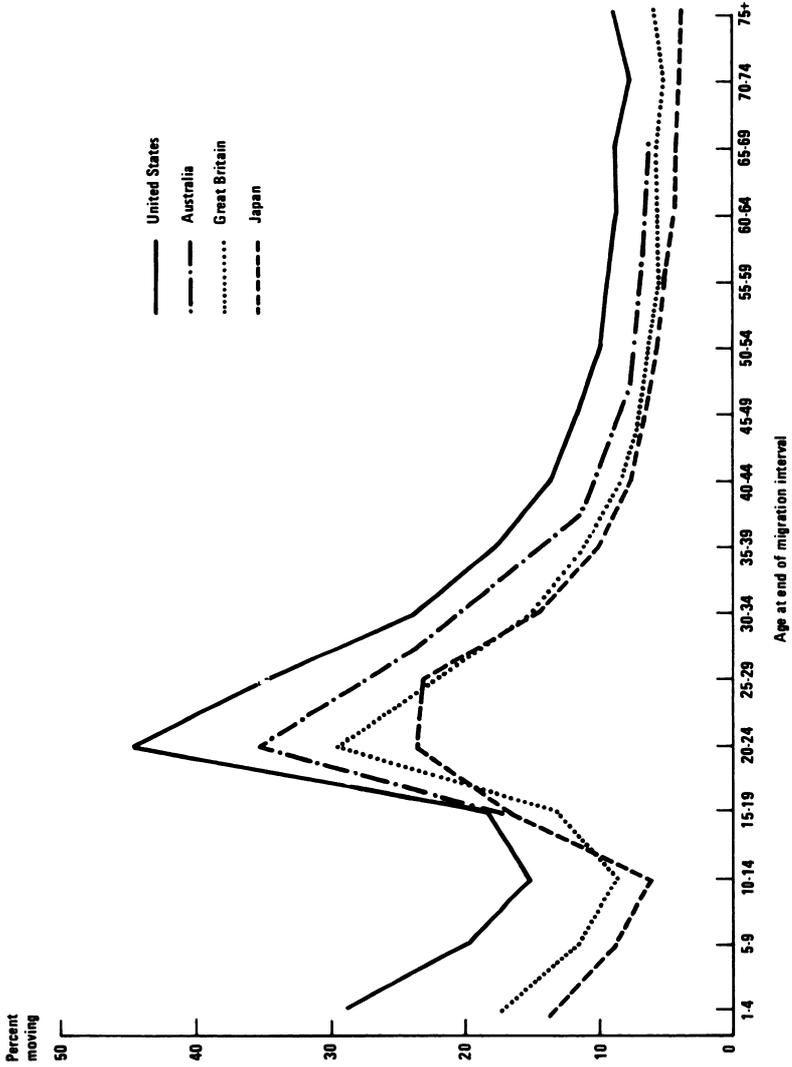
The 1-year rates of moving allow us to be more precise than the above comparisons in showing how residential mobility is distributed over the life cycle of individuals. Calculating the amount of mobility experienced at each age is a by-product of estimating the number of moves a person can expect to make in a lifetime.

Assume that as a person goes through life he or she is subject to moving according to the existing probabilities at each age, as illustrated for several countries in figure 1. Several years ago George Wilber (1963) showed how the number of moves in a lifetime could be estimated by a method analogous to that used to calculate the net reproduction rate—a common fertility measure which represents the number of daughters that a “typical” woman will have if current rates of childbearing and mortality continue.

The value of such a calculation for residential mobility lies in the graphic way it allows us to portray the consequences for individuals of national differences in levels of mobility. It also allows us to compute how much of total lifetime mobility is experienced up to and between different ages.

Calculation of expected lifetime mobility is made on the basis of a hypothetical cohort of 100,000 persons, assuming that as they go through life they are subject to mobility and mortality according to the rates which currently prevail at each age. The actual calculation involves taking each of the age-specific probabilities of moving and multiplying by the number of persons out of the original cohort alive at each age group (the L_x column of a life table). The sum of the resulting value for each age and for all later ages is the total number of moves to be made by the cohort of 100,000 during and after each age. This value is analogous to the T_x column of a life table and when divided by the population alive at the beginning of each age interval (the ℓ_x column of a life table), the result can be interpreted as the expected number of moves for an individual at each age during the remaining lifetime. This last value is analogous to the e_x column of an ordinary life table.

Figure 1. Percent of Population Residentially Mobile in 1 Year in Australia, Great Britain, Japan, and the United States, by Age: Around 1970



Since some of the persons who moved during the 1-year interval moved more than once, the calculations refer to “years with moves” rather than actual moves. Hence, the calculations understate slightly the number of residence changes but reflect the number of years in which mobility will be experienced. Rates of residential mobility over a 5-year period cannot be used for these calculations.

The results of the calculations are given in table 5 for Great Britain, Japan, and the United States. Sufficiently detailed age data for the 1-year interval were not available for Australia, and the other countries did not provide any age-specific mobility data for a 1-year interval.

Columns 1, 4, and 7 show the rates of moving that were plotted in figure 1 for Great Britain, Japan, and the United States. Columns 2, 5, and 8 show the total number of moves to be made by the cohort of 100,000 if the cohort moves according to the age-specific residential mobility rates in Great Britain, Japan, and the United States. Columns 3, 6, and 9 show the transformation of the cohort’s total moves into the average for an individual. The calculations were made using life-table values for the United States in order to show the number of moves in a lifetime for persons according to three levels of residential mobility—those actually prevailing in Great Britain, Japan, and the United States. Using the same life table standardizes for mortality and thus age.

The data show that in its lifetime the cohort of 100,000 persons will make about 720,411 moves according to the Japanese level of residential mobility, about 805,115 moves according to the British level, and 1,264,892 moves according to the U.S. level. These cohort figures average out to about 7.35 moves per person for the Japanese level, 8.22 moves per person according to the British level, and 12.91 moves per person according to the U.S. level.

Several persons have suggested studying residential mobility in terms of a lifetime “quota” of moves (for example, Shryock, 1964; Simmons, 1968). According to the data in table 5, an average American’s lifetime quota of moving is about 57 percent greater than the average Briton’s and about 76 percent greater than that for the average Japanese. The lifetime quota of an average Canadian or Australian would be similar to that shown for the U.S. The data for Taiwan imply about six moves in a lifetime, while the data for Ireland imply three or four moves in a lifetime. Thus, in the high-mobility countries—the United States, Canada, and Australia—a person probably makes between three and four times as many moves in a lifetime as the average resident of Ireland.

Another way of highlighting the differences among countries is to note that after age 22 or 23 an American would expect to make about as many additional moves as the average resident of Great Britain or Japan would make in a lifetime. At age 20 an American expects to make 9.25 additional moves

Table 5. One-Year Rates of Residential Mobility and Expected Years with Moves During Remaining Lifetime, for Great Britain, Japan, and the United States: Around 1970

Age at end of migration interval	Great Britain				Japan				United States			
	Expected years with moves in the age interval and all later ages		Expected years with moves in the age interval and all later ages		Expected years with moves in the age interval and all later ages		Expected years with moves in the age interval and all later ages		Expected years with moves in the age interval and all later ages		Expected years with moves in the age interval and all later ages	
	Percent residentially mobile ¹	Total for cohort of 100,000	Per person	Percent residentially mobile ¹	Total for cohort of 100,000	Per person	Percent residentially mobile ¹	Total for cohort of 100,000	Per person	Percent residentially mobile ¹	Total for cohort of 100,000	Per person
1 to 4 years	17.3	805,115	8.22	13.5	720,411	7.35	28.8	1,264,892	12.91			
5 to 9 years	11.6	737,615	7.55	8.9	667,403	6.83	19.7	1,152,036	11.80			
10 to 14 years	8.8	680,874	6.99	6.1	623,750	6.40	15.0	1,055,943	10.83			
15 to 19 years	13.0	638,192	6.56	16.4	593,810	6.11	18.1	982,976	10.11			
20 to 24 years	29.4	574,966	5.94	23.7	514,406	5.32	44.4	894,979	9.25			
25 to 29 years	22.2	433,408	4.51	23.1	400,143	4.17	34.7	681,065	7.09			
30 to 34 years	15.2	327,107	3.43	14.9	289,660	3.04	23.4	515,186	5.41			
35 to 39 years	11.1	254,870	2.70	10.1	219,147	2.32	17.8	403,929	4.28			
40 to 44 years	8.4	202,627	2.17	7.7	171,526	1.84	13.6	320,449	3.43			
45 to 49 years	7.0	163,675	1.79	6.6	135,893	1.48	11.5	257,566	2.81			
50 to 54 years	6.3	132,158	1.49	5.8	106,213	1.19	9.9	205,686	2.31			
55 to 59 years	5.5	104,806	1.23	5.1	81,018	0.95	9.3	162,395	1.91			
60 to 64 years	5.5	82,035	1.03	4.4	59,989	0.75	8.6	123,994	1.56			
65 to 69 years	5.7	61,189	0.85	4.2	43,128	0.60	8.7	91,474	1.27			
70 to 74 years	5.1	41,930	0.68	4.0	29,175	0.47	7.5	62,177	1.00			
75 years and over	5.9	27,545	0.55	3.9	17,913	0.36	8.9	41,280	0.83			

¹ Includes movers from outside the country.

(see table 5), and at age 25 over seven changes of residence can still be expected. Thus, somewhere between 20 and 25 years of age an American has a mobility expectancy equal to the 8.22 lifetime moves of an average person in Britain and the 7.35 lifetime moves for an average person in Japan. Not until age 70 does an American's mobility expectancy drop below one. That is, a 70-year-old American still expects to move once more. For Britain, mobility expectancy drops below one shortly after age 60, and for Japan it drops below one shortly after age 50.

A question that frequently arises involves how many moves—or how much of one's lifetime mobility—is experienced as a child moving with one's parents. Some approximate answers can be given with the data in table 5. Moves after age 20, for example, typically reflect residential changes that persons make on their own, independently of their parental family. The data show that a 20-year-old person would expect 9.25 additional moves according to the U.S. mobility level but 5.94 moves according to the British level and 5.32 moves according to the Japanese level. Thus, out of a lifetime total of more than 12 moves, an "average" American expects to make more than three as a child. In Britain and Japan a person expects closer to two moves as a child moving in connection with residence changes of parents. It is interesting to note that the number of moves an American makes as a child nearly equals the lifetime mobility expectancy of an average resident of Ireland. Before age 20, an American probably moves more than three times, whereas the mobility level of Ireland probably implies between three and four moves in a lifetime.

We earlier commented that for 1-year rates of moving, differences among countries were least at the 15 to 19 age group and that this finding implied that lifetime residential mobility was somewhat more highly concentrated at this age group in the other countries than in the United States. The data in columns 2, 5, and 7 verify this conclusion. These data show that according to the Japanese mobility schedule, about 11 percent of the cohort's mobility will occur at the 15 to 19 age group, compared with 8 percent for the British mobility schedule and 7 percent for the American mobility schedule. About 42 percent of the cohort's mobility will occur between age 15 and age 30 according to the Japanese mobility pattern, compared with 39 percent for the British pattern and 37 percent for the U.S. pattern. Mobility, therefore, is slightly more highly concentrated at the "young-adult" ages in Japan than in Great Britain and the United States.

Another indicator of the distribution of lifetime mobility is the age at which one-half of a person's total moving will have been experienced. This age is most appropriately estimated by finding the age when the cohort's total moving (columns 2, 5, and 7 in table 5) has been reduced by one-half. For all three countries shown in table 5, one-half of lifetime residential mobility is experienced by age 26 or 27 (see also Long, 1973b). These data mean that for a "typical" person one-half of lifetime residential mobility has been experienced shortly after the twenty-sixth birthday.

Trends in the Rate of Residential Mobility

The above calculations of expected lifetime mobility are most appropriate when residential mobility rates are not rapidly rising or falling. If mobility rates are rising, the calculations of lifetime mobility based on current rates will understate the probable mobility experience of persons currently alive. On the other hand, if residential mobility rates are falling, the calculations will overstate the lifetime mobility of persons currently alive.

Data on residential mobility in the United States were first collected in 1948. Data on residential mobility in Canada, Great Britain, and Japan were first collected in 1960 or 1961 and are shown in table 6, along with the 1970 figures. Because of differences in tabulation practices, we had to limit the 1960-70 comparisons to persons 15 years old and over, and for this reason the 1970 data in table 6 differ slightly from figures in earlier tables.

**Table 6. Percent of Population Residentially Mobile
in Four Countries: Around 1960 and 1970**

Country	1960	1970
ONE-YEAR INTERVAL		
Great Britain	11.9	11.6
Japan	9.5	12.8
United States	19.9	18.7
FIVE-YEAR INTERVAL		
Canada	46.0	47.0
Great Britain	36.2	36.6
United States	49.5	46.3

**NOTE: Data refer to persons 15 years old and over and include
movers from outside the countries.**

The data clearly show stability in the rates of residential mobility in Canada and Great Britain. Residential mobility has increased in Japan, from a 1-year rate of 9.5 percent in 1960 to 12.8 percent in 1970. This rise in residential mobility in Japan in the 1960's is part of a gradual increase in internal migration that has been underway since the early 1950's. Japan's registration system, which records moves between administrative districts (*shi, ku, machi, and mura*), indicated a rise in rates of migration from about 5.8 percent in the early 1950's to 8.0 percent in 1970 (Kuroda, 1973). There was some question whether this rise reflected improvements in the registration system or a real increase in the propensity to migrate (Kuroda, 1973). The data in table 6 indicate that the rise in the rate of internal migration was real.

The rise in rates of residential mobility and internal migration in Japan are probably due in part to Japan's continued industrialization. The difference between rates of residential mobility in Britain and Japan in 1960 can be attributed to the fact that Japan had a larger proportion of its population engaged in agricultural occupations, which have lower-than-average rates of moving (Long, 1970). When one considers only the nonagricultural labor force, the 1960 difference between the Japanese and British rate of residential mobility is eliminated (Long, 1970). The overall rate of moving in Japan has probably increased as the country has shifted more of its population into nonagricultural pursuits.

We earlier concluded that in 1970 the age-standardized rate of residential mobility was higher in Britain than in Japan. It is likely that in 1970 Japan still had a higher proportion of its population in agriculture than Britain. Thus, if we were able to examine only the nonagricultural populations in the two countries, we might find very nearly the same rate of moving. The needed statistics, however, are not now available.

Data from annual surveys in the United States between 1948 and 1971 showed no statistically significant year-to-year changes in the rate of residential mobility (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1972), but the data in table 6 seem to indicate a modest decline in the residential mobility rate in the United States between 1960 and 1970. The 1-year rate in 1960 was 19.9, compared with 18.7 for 1970. The rate for 1955-60 was 49.5, compared with 46.3 for 1965-70. Cumulating the annual surveys for 1958-61 and 1968-71 does appear to indicate a small but statistically significant decline in the rate of residential mobility in the United States.

The decline is small, however, and the most important conclusion is that rates of residential mobility and internal migration are not going up in the United States, as one might expect. Cross-sectional surveys, for example, have repeatedly shown that the probability of moving long distances is directly related to years of school completed (Long, 1973a), and because of this relationship, one might expect the migration rates to be increasing slightly simply as a result of the rising educational level of the population. Few people have recognized this implied relationship between selectivity and volume of migration.

In the past, a rising educational level was associated with increases in the rate of internal migration in the United States. For men 25 to 34 years old, the rate of interstate migration increased by about 80 percent between 1935-40 and 1955-60 (Long, 1973a). Of this large increase, about 35 percent could be attributed to rising educational levels which put proportionately more persons at the upper educational categories where migration is more likely. The remaining 65 percent of the increase in the interstate migration rate could be attributed to an increased likelihood of migration among persons at each educational level (Long, 1973a).

This increase in the rate of interstate migration occurred around the time of World War II. Since then, educational levels have continued to increase but rates of migration have not. Apparently, other factors are offsetting the tendency for rates of migration to rise as level of education rises; perhaps the effect of education on migration is diluted through educational "upgrading" of occupations. Precise measurement of changes in the relationship between education and migration is difficult because of increasing levels of error in the U.S. data arising from increased nonresponse. The most likely hypothesis is that the relationship between education and migration is changing as a result of the college-educated population becoming somewhat less migratory.

For the four countries that had data on residential mobility in 1960 and 1970, the relative differences have decreased slightly, due primarily to an increase in Japan's rate of moving. Rates of residential mobility are slow to change, however, and do not fluctuate much from year to year.

Long-Distance and Short-Distance Movement

In each of the countries under consideration, how much movement covers short distances and how much covers long distances? There is no clear answer to this question simply because it is not possible to define "long" and "short" in the same way in each of the countries. If we knew the actual distance involved in each residential change, we could calculate the relative mobility of different populations for moves of varying distance.

We do know that most moves cover only a short distance. In 1885 Ravenstein concluded that (p. 198) "... the great body of our migrants only proceed a short distance," and subsequent studies have sought to quantify the degree to which the volume of migration decreases with increasing distance. Each of the countries being studied divides total moves into those within and between administrative units of different average size, and with this information we can calculate rates of moving within and between the different areas, as shown in table 7. The major reason for doing so is to demonstrate that the higher rates of residential mobility in the United States, Canada, and Australia reflect higher rates of both short- and long-distance movement.

In the United States "local" areas in table 7 refer to counties, of which there are slightly more than 3,100. Even this is not always an adequate indicator of "local," for many moves from one county to another take place within the same metropolitan area. Still, one can see that more than one-half of moves in the United States are within the same county—61.9 percent of moves in a 1-year period and 55.7 percent in a 5-year period take place within the same county. Similarly, 60 percent of Ireland's moves were within the same county. In Great Britain and Canada about 50 percent of moves were local—

Table 7. Rates of Moving Within and Between Local Areas and Percent of Movers Who Cross Boundaries of Local Areas, for Six Countries: Around 1970

Country	Percent of population moving ¹						Percent of total movers who move —			
	Total	Within local areas	Between areas within a State or province	Between States or provinces	Within local areas	Between areas within a State or province	Between States or provinces	Within a State or province	Between States or provinces	From outside the country
ONE-YEAR INTERVAL										
Great Britain	11.1	5.7	3.8	1.6	48.1	32.4	13.3	6.2		
Ireland	4.3	3.1	1.2	...	60.3	22.9	...	16.8		
Japan	12.0	4.7	3.6	3.7	38.9	30.0	30.8	0.2		
United States	18.6	11.9	3.3	3.5	61.6	16.9	18.0	3.5		
FIVE-YEAR INTERVAL										
Australia	48.4	22.6	21.9	3.9	41.4	40.1	7.2	11.2		
Canada	44.3	24.8	14.9	4.6	51.0	30.5	9.4	9.1		
Great Britain	35.9	18.7	12.2	5.0	49.1	32.2	13.1	5.6		
Japan	35.8	15.2	10.9	9.7	42.5	30.4	27.0	0.2		
United States	43.2	25.0	9.0	9.3	55.7	20.1	20.7	3.5		

... Not applicable.

¹ Excludes movers from outside the countries.

within “local authority areas” in Britain and within municipalities in Canada. The percent moving within local areas appears to be low in Japan only because the local areas (*shi, ku, machi, and mura*) are much smaller than in the other countries; even movers between wards within the largest cities in Japan are counted as movers between areas. Why Australia appears to have a low percent of movers within local areas is not clear.

The data in table 7 also constitute a rough indicator of higher rates of migration (movement between areas) in the United States. For example, in 1 year about 3.5 percent of the United States population moves between States and about 3.7 percent of the Japanese population moves between prefectures. But States are, on the average, much larger than prefectures and in view of the fact that the volume of migration diminishes with increasing distance, this statistic indicates higher rates of migration in the United States than in Japan. Similarly, the percent of population moving between States in the United States is larger than the percent of population moving between regions of Great Britain, in spite of the fact that the U.S. States are larger, on the average, than the British regions. We can continue this approach and show higher rates of migration in the United States than in European countries which have data on numbers of persons moving between administrative areas of different average size.

The conclusion from the above comparison is that high rates of residential mobility generally seem to indicate high rates of short-distance as well as long-distance movement. There is some evidence that countries differ in the degree to which their populations are mobile over short distances and in the degree to which they are mobile over long distances. Klaasen and Drewe (1973), for example, suggest the possibility that the population of the Netherlands is more mobile than that of Sweden over short distances but not over long distances. What this means is that insofar as migration is concerned, the “friction of distance” may be greater in some countries than in others.

In general, however, countries with high rates of residential mobility probably have high rates of moving over short as well as long distances, although we do not have adequate data to measure the degree of difference among countries for short- and long-distance movement. The high rates of moving over short distances mean that one cannot attribute the high rate of residential mobility in the United States, Canada, and Australia simply to the fact that they are geographically large.

Why Countries Have Different Levels Of Geographical Mobility

There is no automatic or prescribed way to answer the question of what determines a country’s level of geographical mobility. If enough countries collected statistics on residential mobility, we could undertake correlation

studies to see what nationwide characteristics were associated with high or low rates of moving. Unfortunately, the number of countries collecting statistics on residential mobility is not large enough to permit such correlation analysis.

In the absence of data for enough countries to permit multivariate regression models to be built, we can consider several hypotheses and offer our own theories as to why some countries have more geographical mobility than others. We note first that the amount of geographical mobility is related to a country's level of industrialization and urban development. For example, Ireland's rate of moving is low partly because it is a rural country, but this fact does not completely account for the differences observed. The rate of residential mobility for Ireland as a whole is 5.1 percent (including movers from outside the country), but the rate reaches 7.5 percent in Dublin county—still below the rate of moving found in the other countries. Controlling for level of urbanization or percent of population in nonagricultural occupations in the other countries would have little effect on their nationwide rates of moving.

What do the United States, Canada, and Australia have in common that gives them high rates of geographical mobility? As noted earlier, geographical size is probably not the determining factor insofar as the overall rate of moving is concerned, for the three countries have high rates of short-distance as well as long-distance moving. But geographical size may be related to other factors which strongly influence the overall rate of moving. We will consider these relationships shortly.

One characteristic shared by the United States, Canada, and Australia is that each is a "nation of immigrants" and has attracted the geographically mobile segments of the populations of other countries. The effect of current immigration on rates of geographical mobility in the three countries is relatively small, for even when we exclude movers from abroad, the United States, Canada, and Australia still have high rates of geographical mobility. More important is the long-run dynamic that is built into populations which are almost entirely descended from long-distance migrants. Most persons in the United States, Canada, and Australia either crossed an ocean themselves or are descendants (frequently children or grandchildren) of persons who crossed an ocean. Past mobility may generate future mobility because of the exposure (direct or vicarious) with diverse places. Such knowledge about earlier migrations can make the possibility of mobility seem more readily apparent to potential movers. In a sense, Americans, Canadians, and Australians learn about mobility simply through knowledge of their ancestors.

It is a firmly established principle that persons who have moved once are likely to move again (see Morrison, 1971). In the United States, for example, persons who were living outside their State of birth in 1965 were over three times as likely to move between States in the 1965-70 interval as persons living

in their State of birth in 1965. The persistence of this effect has probably continued to expose persons in the United States, Canada, and Australia to geographical mobility—either their own or that of others.

Another characteristic shared by the United States, Canada, and Australia is that each has had a history dominated by a frontier that needed to be settled, and each country has taken measures—like the Homestead Act in the United States—to encourage its citizens to move to the less densely populated regions. Each country has been rich in natural resources and each has considered itself underpopulated throughout much of its history. In an attempt to extend governmental authority over unclaimed territory, each country early in its history adopted policies to encourage persons to move to developing regions.

These successive waves of settlement established numerous urban centers geographically separated from one another, and today the United States, Canada, and Australia each has an urban structure that is not clearly dominated by a single metropolis. None of the numerous metropolitan areas in these countries dominates life and commerce the way that London dominates English society, or Rome overshadows other Italian cities, or the way that other European capitals tend to be centers of trade, commerce, and industry in their respective countries. The numerous metropolitan centers in the United States, Canada, and Australia compete with each other for industry and migrants and in the process may keep the overall migration rate high. Many companies in the United States have had a practice of repeatedly moving their executives and managers from place to place to provide exposure to the many regional markets in which big corporations operate.

It is perhaps not coincidental that the United States, Canada, and Australia chose to locate their capital cities away from the largest city. After the American Revolution, the seat of government was not located in the largest city, as was the case in Europe. Instead, the government was located in a “new town” removed from the existing urban centers. As the Federal Government has grown, Washington, D.C. has grown, but for much of its history it occupied a place in the urban hierarchy similar to that occupied today by Ottawa and the Australian Capital Territory.

The major effect of geographical size of country on the level of migration is likely to result from the influences mentioned above; namely, the fact that geographically large countries typically have many regional urban centers that compete for migrants. In a sense, therefore, large geographical size may stimulate migration simply by offering more places to move to. But geographical size of a country has less explanatory power in accounting for rates of short-distance movement.

Since most short-distance movement is undertaken for reasons connected with housing (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1966; Lansing and Mueller, 1967), one might think that differences among countries in terms of local mobility could be explained by differences in the quality and quantity of housing available. It is impossible to demonstrate this presumed relationship empirically because neither "local mobility" nor the quality and quantity of housing are measured in ways that are strictly comparable from country to country.

Nevertheless, it is probably true that at least since World War II housing has been more abundant and less expensive in North America and Australia, where residential mobility rates are high, than in Europe and Japan, where they are low. Housing is almost certain to be a factor influencing a country's overall level of residential mobility, but it cannot by itself completely account for the mobility differential that has existed between North America and Australia on the one hand and Europe and Japan on the other.

One consideration to bear in mind is that changes in the housing stock in the United States since World War II have not been associated with changes in the overall rate of residential mobility. Housing was certainly improving during this period of time, but, as mentioned earlier, residential mobility rates did not go up. In fact, annual data on residential mobility for the United States from 1947 to 1971 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1972) showed no statistically significant year-to-year changes in rates of moving. Thus, not only have steady improvements in the housing stock failed to raise the residential mobility rate, but short-run fluctuations in building cycles have failed to alter the annual rate of moving.

These considerations lead one to believe that housing is one of several factors influencing a country's rate of residential mobility, but housing is not the dominant factor accounting for international differences in residential mobility. It is likely that long-distance and short-distance moves are mutually reinforcing, so that a readiness to move long distances and a history of such movement is conducive to frequent short-distance movement. That is, the short-distance mobility rate in the United States, Canada, and Australia is likely to be high partly because these countries have high rates of long-distance migration, but these relationships cannot be statistically demonstrated.

The broad conclusion seems to be that the United States, Canada, and Australia have high rates of short- and long-distance moving now because they have had high rates in the past. And they probably had high rates in the past because they were immigrant countries that attracted the most geographically mobile element of European populations. These populations and their descendants have participated in successive waves of internal movements that established numerous regional population centers which have competed for migrants and thereby kept the level of mobility high.

Historical Views of American Mobility

This study began by stating that prevailing opinion has always been that Americans possess a high degree of geographical mobility. Documenting this assertion provides support for several preceding statements which were based on the assumption that the United States has always had a high rate of internal migration.

One of the earliest observers to comment on the mobility of Americans was Alexis de Tocqueville, who in his famous work on **Democracy in America**, identified a high rate of geographical mobility as one of the distinctive traits of Americans. In the early 1830's Tocqueville discerned that:

In the United States a man builds a house in which to spend his old age, and he sells it before the roof is on; he plants a garden and lets it just as the trees are coming into bearing; he brings a field into tillage and leaves other men to gather the crops; he embraces a profession and gives it up; he settles in a place, which he soon afterwards leaves to carry his changeable longings elsewhere (pp. 144-145 in Vintage Books edition).

This observation was made by Tocqueville in a chapter on "Why the Americans Are So Restless In the Midst of Their Prosperity." In this chapter, he attributed a high rate of geographical mobility in America to material abundance coupled with the lack of a hereditary class structure. Without a class structure based on inherited wealth, individuals in America were led to believe that sharing in material abundance was open to all if only a person would work hard and be ready to move about to take advantage of opportunities wherever they might occur. Hence, according to Tocqueville, material abundance and belief in upward mobility through individual effort produced a restlessness that manifested itself in a great deal of moving around. These traits were logically related to other characteristics that Tocqueville identified with Americans in the 1830's, including a desire for change, a readiness to accept innovations, and a pragmatic disposition. Numerous other foreign observers also commented on high rates of geographical mobility in America (see Pierson, 1973).

Americans themselves took note of their mobility. In an early "demographic analysis," the Superintendent of the Census of 1850 wrote that:

The roving tendency of our people is incident to the peculiar condition of their country, and each succeeding Census will prove that it is diminishing. When the fertile plains of the West shall have been filled up, and men of scanty means cannot by a mere change of location acquire a homestead, the inhabitants of each State will become comparatively stationary, and our countrymen will exhibit

that attachment to the homes of their childhood, the want of which is sometimes cited as an unfavorable trait in our national character.

In quoting these remarks, Everett Lee (1970, p. 437) observed that according to this measure the American character has still not improved.

A characteristic of the above quotations is the absence of statistics to support the assertions made. An empirical study which did support the idea that rates of migration were high in the United States was Adna Weber's **The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century**, published in 1899. This book still stands as a remarkable example of the careful but imaginative use of statistics from many countries. Using data on place of birth from American and European countries in the period from 1860 to 1890, Weber concluded (pp. 250-251):

This brings out the fact of the superior mobility of Americans, which has long been familiar to us in a general way. Indeed, it appears from the table that Americans are more accustomed to migrate from State to State than are Europeans from county to county ... the percentage of native Englishmen living outside their county of birth was in 1871 almost exactly equal to the percentage of native Americans living outside the State in which they were born—the percentages being 25.66 and 26.2 (1870) respectively.

Weber obtained statistics for most European countries and found that the percent of population living outside their place of birth was generally lower than the figures cited above for England. His statistics on place of birth understated the degree of difference among countries because, as we showed earlier, a long migration interval less accurately records each move. Place-of-birth data relate to a migration interval of indefinite length, and Weber recognized that they understated the differences among countries but could be used to rank in a rough way countries according to level of internal migration.

Using similar data, Ravenstein (1889) had earlier come to the same conclusion. He observed: "... the great mobility of the native Americans. They are greater wanderers, less tied to home associations, than are the inhabitants of Europe" (p. 280). Ravenstein attributed the greater mobility in the United States to "the vast extent of unoccupied land, and the great natural resources of the country, which have as yet hardly been touched" (pp. 280-281).

Americans have readily accepted the idea of themselves as a highly mobile people, even without empirical evidence to back up this belief. "The United States is a mobile society," asserted the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future in 1972 (p. xv), but the Commission did not provide comparative statistics or other evidence in support of the assertion.

The many commentaries on the level of geographical mobility were generally correct in concluding that the United States is indeed a geographically mobile society, and the explanations they gave—that the high mobility stemmed from a restless desire to exploit abundant natural resources spread over a wide territory—were probably correct for the nineteenth century. The early accounts were wrong, however, to imply that the level of mobility would begin to decline as soon as the “fertile plains of the West” were settled. Many of the commentaries were also remiss in believing that the United States was unique in these respects, for Canada and Australia have populations that are about as geographically mobile as the population of the United States.

Present Impacts and Future Trends

Several of the classic statements on migration concluded that the rate of moving increased over time. Ravenstein in 1885 was of this opinion, and Lee (1966) gives reasons for thinking that migration might increase. In empirical studies, Zelinsky (1971) and Parish (1973) found that rates of internal migration in several countries rose in the course of economic development.

Popular opinion is clearly of the belief that geographical mobility is increasing in the United States and will continue to do so. Several books on the best-seller list in recent years have expressed this point of view, usually to emphasize presumed detrimental effects of a high level of geographical mobility. Alvin Toffler's **Future Shock** (1970) asserted that increased geographical mobility was part of the onrush of events which people were unable to adjust to. According to Toffler (1970, p. 75):

Never have man's relationships with place been more numerous, fragile and temporary ... We are witnessing a historic decline in the significance of place to human life. We are breeding a new race of nomads, and few suspect quite how massive, widespread, and significant their migrations are.

Vance Packard developed this theme more fully in **A Nation of Strangers** (1972), long on the best-seller list. The title of Packard's book accurately describes his conclusions about the impact of geographical mobility. The same point is made in other books built around the theme of increasing alienation, including Ralph Keyes' **We, the Lonely People** (1973) and Suzanne Gordon's **Lonely in America** (1975). Again, the titles indicate what the authors think that increased geographical mobility is doing to us.

As discussed in a previous section, rates of residential mobility and migration have not increased in the United States since World War II. There is evidence that rates of moving are beginning to decline slightly, and several reasons will be advanced later as a basis for believing that rates of moving may

decline in the future. Even if alienation were increasing or if “future shock” were severe, there is little empirical basis for linking these conditions with the overall level of geographical mobility. Empirical research has not supported the idea that high rates of geographical mobility are causally associated with nationwide alienation or anomie. Advances in transportation and communication can help to prevent high rates of geographical mobility from contributing to alienation or anomie, as suggested in studies by Litwak (1960) and Fellin and Litwak (1963), who found that movers were able to keep in touch with friends and relatives.

Ironically, improvements in transportation and communication may make us more aware of geographical mobility and thereby create the illusion that migration is increasing. Easier and more frequent travel and communication can allow persons to maintain friendships over long distances. In an earlier time, neighbors who moved away were simply removed from our lives. Today, it is easier to keep in touch and visit persons who have moved, and because such friendships can be sustained over long distances we know about subsequent moves. If friendships could not be maintained over long distances, we would know of only one move—the initial move out of the neighborhood.

The result is that improvements in transportation and communication can keep geographical mobility from being the socially disorganizing process it might otherwise be. High rates of moving may be part of larger social processes whereby people find “community” in a likeness of interests rather than in propinquity of residence.

Excessively frequent long-distance movement can have deleterious effects on individuals (Long, 1975), but migration is most often a problem-solving mechanism for individuals. Migration out of economically lagging regions has increased the income-earning opportunities of many people (Wertheimer, 1970), and geographical mobility has facilitated occupational mobility (Blau and Duncan, 1967) and has been an important force in bringing about greater income equality between Blacks and Whites (Long and Heltman, 1975).

Future increases in geographical mobility in the United States are unlikely. Rates of internal migration in the United States will probably stay about the same as they have been since World War II or else they may slowly decline.

Perhaps the major reason for thinking that migration rates might rise concerns changes in the occupational and educational composition of the population. In the past, persons with high levels of education and employed in white-collar occupations have had high rates of long-distance movement, and an increasing proportion of the population in these categories would, other things being equal, raise the overall rate of long-distance migration. This influence was important in the rise in the rate of interstate migration between the 1930's and the 1950's, but subsequent rises in the educational level of the

population have not produced rises in the overall rate of moving and seem unlikely to do so in the future.

Rising income levels and declining family size might tend to make people feel freer to move to areas where their personal preferences in regard to climate or recreation could be realized. In the past large family size has tended to reduce the readiness with which families move (Long, 1972). But other factors tend to offset the mobility-generating effects of rising income and falling fertility. Rising income and falling fertility have also been associated with an increase in the labor force participation of wives, and at some age groups working wives reduce the long-distance migration of their husbands, although a wife's earnings also tend to raise short-distance mobility rates (Long, 1974). In the future, an increasing commitment of wives to their own careers is likely to reduce the readiness with which couples relocate. Also, declining fertility levels will be associated with an increasing concentration of population at older age groups, and this fact will tend to reduce the rate of moving for all ages combined.

A related consideration is that as birth rates decline, areal differences in fertility are likely to decrease. In the past, a large fertility differential existed between big cities, whose populations did not reproduce themselves, and rural areas, which had excess fertility. In view of limited economic opportunities in rural areas, a considerable amount of migration was induced by the rural-urban fertility differential. In the future, fertility differentials between rural and urban areas, or metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas, are likely to be reduced, and the stimulus to migration will be accordingly reduced.

This influence is perhaps illustrated by a finding reported by Taeuber et al. (1968). In an analysis of lifetime migration histories of the American population, they found that persons born in and around large metropolitan areas had lower lifetime migration frequencies than persons born in small towns and rural areas. The rationale for this finding is that in the past persons born in metropolitan areas more readily found educational opportunities and good jobs without having to migrate. In the future, an increasing proportion of the population will be born in metropolitan areas, and this fact will, other things being equal, tend to reduce somewhat the overall lifetime frequency of migration.

Other factors may also reduce the rate of moving. For example, extensive highway construction in recent years has meant that more people can commute rather than migrate. As a result, employment has been decentralizing, moving from cities to suburbs and into nonmetropolitan areas. Improved highway access allows more persons to stay in nonmetropolitan areas and commute to places of employment, whether in the suburban fringe of a metropolitan area or in a nonmetropolitan place. The decentralization of jobs is likely to continue, and so is a greater reliance on commuting as a substitute for migration.

Furthermore, many of the traditional economic incentives to move inter-regionally or from nonmetropolitan to metropolitan areas are declining. Most economists consider migration to be stimulated by large income differences among areas, because under such circumstances the probable payoffs of migration will be great. But regional differences have diminished considerably. For example, of nine major regions in the United States, the per capita income of the richest was 169 percent greater than the per capita income of the poorest in 1940 (data from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 1973). By 1970 the per capita income of the richest was only 50 percent greater than that of the poorest. If we were to make allowances for cost of living differences, these apparent differences in per capita income would be even smaller. They will decrease still further in the future, reducing thereby the incentive to migrate. The income difference between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas has also declined (Zuiches and Brown, 1976), lessening the incentive to engage in this traditional form of movement.

These considerations lead us to conclude that rates of internal migration in the United States are more likely to decline than to rise. By international standards, the United States will continue to have high rates of geographical mobility, but it is likely to become less distinctive in this regard.

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APPENDIX A
Sources of Data

SOURCES OF DATA

Table 1:

Australia—Australian Bureau of Statistics. 1974. Reference No. 4.26, **Internal Migration, 1969-70 to 1972-73**, tables 4 and 5; Australian Bureau of Statistics. Unpublished data from the 1971 Census of Population and Housing.

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Table 2:

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Canada—Statistics Canada. 1974. **1971 Census of Canada, Population**, Catalogue 92-719, Volume I, Part 2 (Bulletin 1.2-7): **Internal Migration**, table 31.

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Table 4:

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Table 5:

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Table 6:

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Table 7:

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Figure 1:

Data from table 3 of this report.

APPENDIX B

**Facsimiles of Census and Survey Questions on
Residential Mobility**

Question on Address in 1966 from the 1971 Census of Australia

9. Did this person live at this address in June 1966? (i.e. 5 years ago)

Yes → Go to instruction following this question

No
↓

Did this person live in a city, town or village in June 1966?

Yes
↓
Give name of that city, town or village

No
↓
Give name of city, town or village which was NEAREST

(If overseas write 'O')

Name of city, town or village.....

State, Territory

Questions on Address in 1966 from the 1971 Census of Canada

26. Where did you live 5 years ago, on June 1, 1966?

Same dwelling → **SKIP TO QUESTION 28**

Same city, town, village or municipality
(*not same dwelling*)

Outside of Canada

Different city, town, village or municipality in Canada,
give its name →

City, town, village, municipality, etc.

County Province

IMPORTANT: *If outside city or town limit, specify name of suburban municipality and not of city or town.*

27. How many times have you **MOVED from one Canadian city, town, village or municipality to another since June 1, 1966?**

Count moving away and returning to the same place as 2 moves.

None 2 4

1 3 5 or more

Questions on Address 1 Year Earlier and 5 Years Earlier from the 1971 Census of Great Britain

Usual Address

B4

If the person usually lives here, write 'HERE'.

If not, write the person's **usual address**.

For boarders write 'HERE' only if they consider this their usual address.

For students and children who are away from home during term time give their home address.

For persons with no settled address write 'NONE'.

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Migration - 1 Year

B11

Was the person's **usual address one year ago (on 25th April 1970)** the same as that shown by the answer to **question B4**?

Write 'YES' or 'NO'.

If no, write also the usual address on 25th April 1970.

For a child now under one year of age, write 'UNDER ONE'.

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Migration - 5 Year

B12

Was the person's **usual address five years ago (on 25th April 1966)** the same as that shown by the answer to **question B11**?

Write 'YES' or 'NO'.

If no, write also the usual address on 25th April 1966.

For a child now under five years of age, write 'UNDER FIVE'.

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Questions on Previous Address from the 1970 Census of Japan

Time Moved Into Present House

<p>9 Time Moved into the Present House If a person has continuously resided in the same house since the time of his birth, encircle 1.</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Since the time of birth</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1959 or before</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1960-1964</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Jan 1965 - Sep 1969</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Oct 1969 and after</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	Since the time of birth	1959 or before	1960-1964	Jan 1965 - Sep 1969	Oct 1969 and after
1	2	3	4	5							
Since the time of birth	1959 or before	1960-1964	Jan 1965 - Sep 1969	Oct 1969 and after							

Previous Address

<p style="font-size: small;">Only for persons who indicated 4 or 5 in Ques. 9, i.e., who moved into the present house in 1965 or after.</p>	<p>10 Previous Address If the previous address was in</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">the same <i>shi</i>, <i>ku</i>, <i>machi</i> or <i>mura</i> as present</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>other <i>ku</i> of the same city (for the 7 major cities only)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>other <i>shi</i>, <i>machi</i> or <i>mura</i> within the same prefecture</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>other prefecture</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>a foreign country</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> </table> <p>If 2, 3 or 4 in Part A is encircled, write the previous address, i.e. the name of the prefecture and <i>shi</i>, <i>ku</i>, <i>machi</i> or <i>mura</i>. Do not omit the name of <i>ku</i>, if the previous address was in the 7 major cities, that is, <i>ku</i>-area of Tokyo-<i>to</i>, Yokohama-<i>shi</i>, Nagoya-<i>shi</i>, Kyoto-<i>shi</i>, Osaka-<i>shi</i>, Kobe-<i>shi</i> or Kitakyushu-<i>shi</i>.</p>	the same <i>shi</i> , <i>ku</i> , <i>machi</i> or <i>mura</i> as present	1	other <i>ku</i> of the same city (for the 7 major cities only)	2	other <i>shi</i> , <i>machi</i> or <i>mura</i> within the same prefecture	3	other prefecture	4	a foreign country	5	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">The same <i>shi</i>, <i>ku</i>, <i>machi</i>, <i>mura</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Other <i>ku</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Other <i>shi</i>, <i>machi</i>, <i>mura</i></td> <td style="text-align: center;">Other prefecture</td> <td style="text-align: center;">A foreign country</td> </tr> </table> <hr style="border: 0.5px dashed black;"/> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">To</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;">Do</td> <td style="width: 33%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Fu</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Ken</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Ku</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Shi</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Machi</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Mura</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Gun</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	The same <i>shi</i> , <i>ku</i> , <i>machi</i> , <i>mura</i>	Other <i>ku</i>	Other <i>shi</i> , <i>machi</i> , <i>mura</i>	Other prefecture	A foreign country	To	Do		Fu	Ken	Ku	Shi	Machi	Mura	Gun		
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Question on Address in 1965 from the 1970 Census of the United States

<p>19a. Did he live in this house on April 1, 1965? If in college or Armed Forces in April 1965, report place of residence there.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"> <input type="radio"/> Born April 1965 or later { <i>Skip to 20</i> <input type="radio"/> Yes, this house } <input type="radio"/> No, different house </p>
<p>b. Where did he live on April 1, 1965?</p> <p>(1) State, foreign country, U.S. possession, etc. _____</p> <p>(2) County _____</p> <p>(3) Inside the limits of a city, town, village, etc.? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No </p> <p>(4) If "Yes," name of city, town, village, etc. _____</p>

Questions on Address in March 1969, from the March 1970 Current Population Survey of the United States

For All Household Members 14 Years Old and Over:

<p>49. Was ... living in this house on March 1, a year ago?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">↗</p> <p>No <input type="radio"/> (<i>Ask 50</i>)</p> <p>Yes <input type="radio"/> (<i>Skip to 52</i>)</p>	<p>50. Was ... living in this county on March 1, a year ago?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">↗</p> <p>No <input type="radio"/> (<i>Ask 51</i>)</p> <p>Yes <input type="radio"/> (<i>Skip to 52</i>)</p>	<p>51. What State (or foreign country) was ... living in on March 1, a year ago?</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><i>(Specify and mark one circle below)</i></p> </div> <p>This State <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Different State ... <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Abroad <input type="radio"/></p>
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For Each Household Member Under 14 Years of Age:

<p>49. Was ... living in this house on March 1, a year ago?</p> <p>No <input type="radio"/> (<i>Ask Item 50</i>)</p> <p>Yes <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Born after March 1, 1969 <input type="radio"/></p> <p style="text-align: right;">↗</p>	<p>If "No" in Item 49</p> <p>50. Was ... living in this same county on March 1, a year ago?</p> <p>No <input type="radio"/> (<i>Ask Item 51</i>)</p> <p>Yes <input type="radio"/> (<i>Omit Item 51</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">↗</p>	<p>If "No" in Item 50</p> <p>51. What State (or foreign country) was ... living in on March 1, a year ago?</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><i>(Enter State or foreign country and mark one circle below)</i></p> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">■</p> <p>This State <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Different State. <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Abroad <input type="radio"/></p>		
		<p style="text-align: center;">OFFICE USE ONLY</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-right: 1px dashed black;"> <p>NE <input type="radio"/></p> <p>NC <input type="radio"/></p> <p>S <input type="radio"/></p> <p>W <input type="radio"/></p> </td> <td style="width: 50%;"> <p>C <input type="radio"/></p> <p>N <input type="radio"/></p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>NE <input type="radio"/></p> <p>NC <input type="radio"/></p> <p>S <input type="radio"/></p> <p>W <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>C <input type="radio"/></p> <p>N <input type="radio"/></p>
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