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# Apartment Resources

A Real Estate Research Periodical

*Apartment Resources is a monthly publication designed for apartment developers, lenders and builders involved in all forms of multifamily housing.*

*Volume 6 Number 3 June 1992*

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An American Housing Survey - 1989

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# RENTER HOUSEHOLDS

## Recent-Mover Rental Households

Every other year, the United States Bureau of the Census produces the American Housing Survey, a detailed examination of housing in the United States. The results of the most recent American Housing Survey, conducted in 1989, were released in 1991. Among the items examined in the survey are housing conditions, the number of households in various types of housing, rents and payments as a percentage of income and reasons for moving.

A total of 36.4% of all renter households had moved in the year prior to being surveyed. Separate distributions exist in the survey for this group, which we will call recent-mover renters. This article will examine in detail the preferences and reasons for moving of these recent-mover renter households, because these are the types of households that you are likely to see visiting your development. It should be noted that this is a tabulation of all renter households, not just those in modern apartments. Tabulations for those in modern apartments were not available.

### Previous Residence

An examination of previous residence indicates that 46.1% of recent-mover renters previously lived in an apartment. Nearly as many (45.1%) lived in a house, with 5.2% living in mobile homes and 3.0% living in another type of residence.

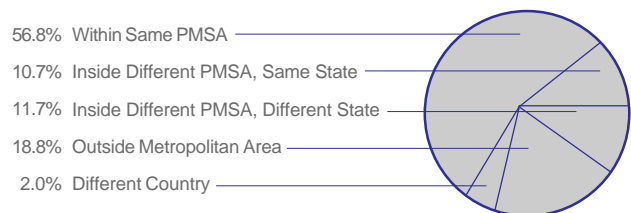
Almost three-fourths of the recent-mover renters lived in a renter-occupied unit (74.8%), with 25.2% of the units owner-occupied.

It appears that nearly one-fourth of these moves create new households. A total of 23.5% of the previous residences were owned or rented by someone who did not move into the current residence. A total of 71.2% of previous residences were owned or rented by someone who moved into the current residence. It should be noted that these numbers do not necessarily measure the demand for entry-level housing. For example, new households created by divorce/separation often move into mid-level or upscale rental housing.

### Mobility

An examination of mobility comparing previous residence to current residence is as follows:

### Previous Residence:



This distribution indicates that most renters tend to move within the same metro area (internal mobility). An examination of this internal mobility indicates that 43.6% moved within the central city (i.e., Columbus in the Columbus PMSA), 11.5% moved from the suburbs (or outlying areas) to the central city, 10.6% moved from the central city to the suburbs, and 34.4% moved either from suburb to suburb or within the same suburb.

### Reasons for Moving

Respondents were asked to disclose why they left their previous units. Following is a distribution of responses. It should be noted that the total is greater than 100% due to multiple responses.

REASON	PERCENT
NEW JOB/JOB TRANSFER	15.0%
TO ESTABLISH OWN HOUSEHOLD	13.5%
NEEDED LARGER HOUSE/APT.	12.4%
WANTED BETTER HOME	10.1%
TO BE CLOSER TO WORK/SCHOOL	10.0%
WANTED LOWER RENT/MAINTENANCE	7.7%
WIDOWED/DIVORCED/SEPARATED	6.4%
MARRIED	2.2%
CHANGE FROM OWNER TO RENTER	2.0%

## Current Residence

Almost two-thirds of the recent-mover renters (65.0%) moved into an apartment. The remainder moved into a house (30.8%) or a mobile home (4.2%). Respondents were also asked to indicate reasons why they chose their present home. Again, the total will be over 100% because of multiple responses.

REASON	PERCENT
FINANCIAL REASONS	40.6%
ROOM LAYOUT/DESIGN	17.5%
SIZE	15.4%
ONLY ONE AVAILABLE	14.8%
YARDS/TREES/IEWS	6.2%
EXTERIOR APPEARANCE	5.2%
QUALITY OF CONSTRUCTION	3.6%
KITCHEN	1.2%
OTHER	31.1%

When asked to compare their present residence to their previous residence, the largest group of respondents felt their new unit was better (44.3%). Over one-fourth felt that both units were about the same (28.5%), while a smaller amount felt the current unit was worse (23.4%).

Recent-mover renters in apartments were asked what type of units they had looked at in their search for a new home. The majority of respondents (62.1%) said they had looked at houses and/or mobile homes as well as apartments. Only 26.5% looked only at apartments. A total of 6.5% of respondents looked only at the unit they now occupy.

## A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood?

Respondents were asked a variety of questions about their previous neighborhoods. It should be noted that the survey does not actually define neighborhood, so respondents are answering based on their personal perceptions of their neighborhood. A neighborhood could be an area of one or several blocks, or an area of several square miles.

Respondents were asked what factors they

considered in choosing their present neighborhood (total exceeds 100% due to multiple responses).

FACTOR	PERCENT
CONVENIENT TO JOB	26.1%
HOUSE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION	21.4%
CONVENIENT TO FRIENDS & RELATIVES	16.4%
LOOKS/DESIGN OF NEIGHBORHOOD	16.4%
GOOD SCHOOLS	6.7%
CONVENIENT TO LEISURE ACTIVITIES	4.1%
CONVENIENT TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION	3.8%
OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES	2.3%
OTHER	34.6%

When comparing their current neighborhood with their previous neighborhood, just over one-third (34.8%) found the current neighborhood to be better. Over one-fourth (28.5%) found the neighborhoods to be about the same, while 19.7% found the current neighborhood to be worse than the previous one. A total of 6.0% moved within the same neighborhood.

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*A very large percentage of respondents (44.1%) looked only in the neighborhood to which they moved.*

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When asked about their neighborhood search, the majority of respondents (52.1%) considered at least one other neighborhood besides the one to which they ended up moving. However, a very large percentage of respondents (44.1%) looked only in the neighborhood to which they moved. These numbers are particularly important given the tendency for apartment leasing agents not to "sell" potential tenants on the neighborhood. As reported in our "Presenting Your Community" series, 62.1% of rental agents failed to give information on the neighborhood.

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*A total of 6.0% moved within the same neighborhood.*

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Recent-mover renters were also asked if there were anything about their neighborhood that bothered them. Most respondents (57.5%) said "no." Those neighborhood items which bothered respondents are displayed in the graph in the next column.

### **Conclusions**

Although these numbers represent renters in all types of housing, they are still particularly important for multifamily professionals. This survey indicates why people are moving, what they are looking for, and how they conduct their search for a new unit.

We hope to profile additional subgroups from the American Housing Survey in future issues of *Apartment Resources*, with the next profile to focus on elderly renters.

### **Problems**

