



The Capital Reworks Its Jobs Data

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Americans are thought to be a wandering, job-seeking clan. But in 2006 the [Census Bureau \(/tag/bureau-of-the-census.html\)](/tag/bureau-of-the-census.html) reported a sharp drop in interstate moves, and as mobility continued to slide in the recession, the new rootedness got prominent coverage. It's not clear, however, that it's real.

The decline, which is often attributed to early recession troubles with selling homes or paying for moves, is a "statistical artifact," according to a report published by the National Bureau of Economic Research. It's 90 percent attributable, the study claims, to a 2006 change in the way the bureau estimates missing data. Once the change is corrected for, the steep drop in moving rates disappears. Interstate migration is indeed falling, says University of Pennsylvania professor Greg Kaplan, who coauthored the study. But the trend is decades old and, says Kaplan, may be "an optimal response" to the information economy, where work is no longer as regionally diverse. The bureau's Web site links to the study, and a spokesperson tells NEWSWEEK, "We welcome the scrutiny."