

Staying put BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

WITH SO MUCH attention given to the business of selling houses (and, now, losing houses to banks), it may be easy to forget that few Americans actually change residences in any given year. According to the Census Bureau's recently expanded American Community Survey (which uses polling data covering three years), 83.5 percent of Americans in 2005-07 lived in the same home that they had a year earlier. That figure was generally higher in the Northeast, and it was 85.9 percent in Massachusetts, the seventh highest in the nation.

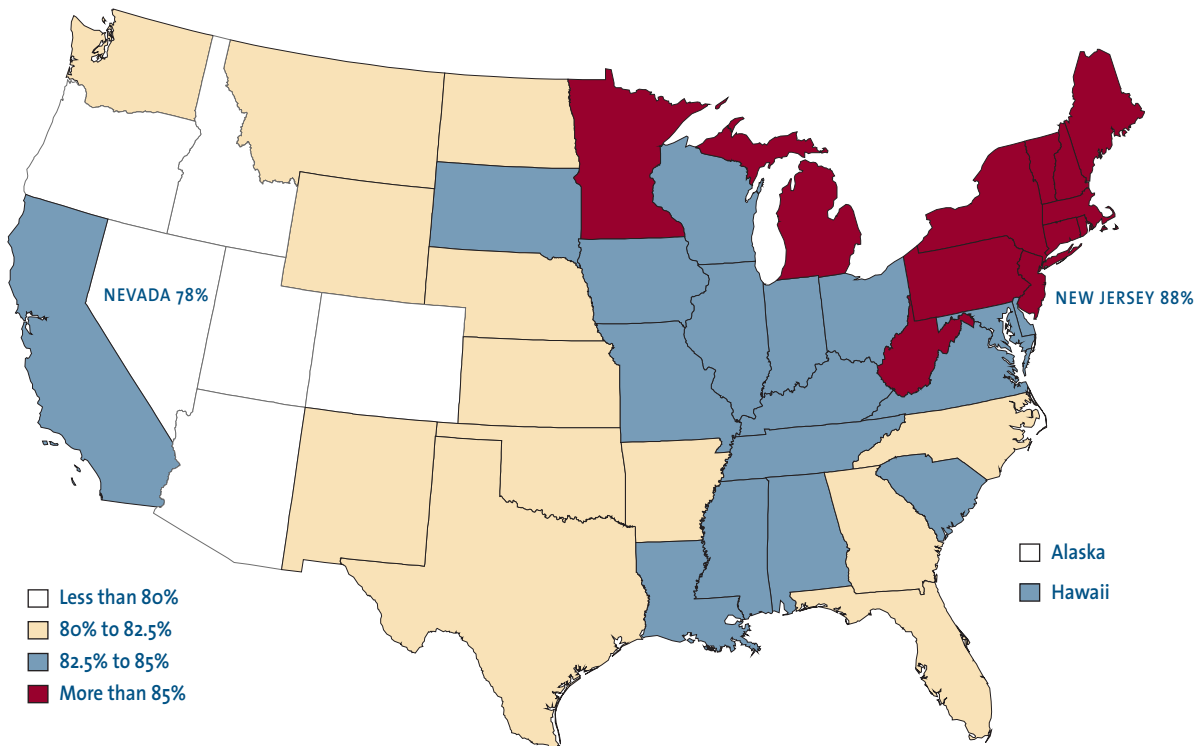
The question is, does a low mobility rate in Massachusetts represent a population that's satisfied with the way they live—or does it mean a tight housing market in which younger people in particular can't find, or afford, new homes?

The American Community Survey may provide one clue: Over the same three-year period, the median age of people moving into Massachusetts from other states was 25.8 years, making our new residents the eighth youngest in the country. (North Dakota had the youngest influx

and Florida had the oldest.) But every year for more than a decade, more people have moved out than have come here from other states. In 2005 alone, we had a net loss of 60,000 people. During that same year, one of our rivals at building a New Economy workforce, North Carolina, had a net gain of 66,000 residents from other states, and the average age of their newcomers was 27.5 years. The Tar Heel State is apparently more attractive to mobile Americans who are more than a few years out of school.

Curiously, over the same three-year period covered by the survey, the median age of people moving from one county to another within Massachusetts was 29 years, or the fourth oldest in the country—behind Hawaii, New Jersey, and Connecticut, which all share our high housing costs. Perhaps Bay State residents in their mid-20s here aren't in so much of a hurry to move from, say, a triple-decker in Jamaica Plain to a house in the suburbs with enough room to raise children. Or perhaps some of those twentysomethings simply found more affordable options in North Carolina. **CW**

SHARE OF POPULATION LIVING IN THE SAME HOME FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR



Source: 2005-2007 American Community Survey three-year estimates, US Census Bureau (www.factfinder.census.gov).

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