

Economy has Americans staying put

By Annie Lowrey, New York Times

Economists admire Americans for many traits: our profound respect for property rights, our tendency to forgo vacation days, our ingenious methods of mass-producing “food.”

Another important attribute is our willingness to move, between houses, between states and across the country. Some economists believe our inborn rootlessness makes the country’s work force more dynamic and strengthens our economy’s growth. Imagine how much worse off the country might be if the 49ers had decided against making the trek to California or the sharecroppers chose to stay in the South.

Economic mobility and geographic mobility have been closely linked for much of American history, so economists find it troubling that migration rates have been in decline lately. The proportion of Americans moving has fallen to new postwar lows in the past few years.

According to Census Bureau data from 2013, about 4.8 million Americans moved across state lines in the previous year. That is down from 5.7 million in 2006 and 7.5 million in 1999. All in all, the percentage of Americans moving across state lines has fallen by about half since the 1990s.

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