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Report: More Men, Singles, Asian-Americans Lived at Home During Recession

A study reveals the groups more likely to live with their parents during the recession.

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Melissa Jenkins and her mother sit on beds in her old room in North Reading Mass. Melissa moved back home to live with her parents to find work after graduating college.

The Great Recession changed how young adults lived, but they may have felt it more in Bridgeport than in Des Moines.

A new analysis of census data finds that 24 percent of adults age 20 to 34 lived with their parents during the 2007-2009 period, compared to 17 percent in 1980. While that increase occurred across age groups, races and ethnicities, educational attainment, and both sexes, it did so to varying degrees.

Zhenchao Qian, the brief's author and chair of sociology at The Ohio State University, says that what surprised him most was "an across-the-board increase in co-residence with parents, although the extent of increase varies."

Those variations made for some wide geographic discrepancies. The report from the U.S. 2010 Project, which studies American societal changes, finds that among the 100 largest metropolitan areas, the Bridgeport (Conn.), Honolulu, McAllen (Texas), and Miami metropolitan areas saw the most young adults living under their parents' roofs in the 2007 to 2009 period. Around one-third of people age 25 to 29 in those cities lived with their parents during that period. Meanwhile, in the metro areas around Des Moines, Iowa; Raleigh, N.C.; and Boise, Idaho, fewer than one in ten of these late-20s adults were living at home.

Figures on where, exactly, adults are heading back to the nest may seem to be data of the interesting-but-useless variety, but they illustrate a few of the study's key findings.

For example, the Bridgeport metropolitan area had the highest percentage of young adults age 25 to 29 living with their parents (34 percent). It also had a relatively low marriage rate, at 29 percent, and an 8 percent jobless rate among 25- to 29-year-olds. At the other end of the spectrum was Des Moines, with a 53 percent marriage rate and 3 percent jobless rate for its late-20s set.

Altogether, metropolitan areas where young adults lived with their parents also tended to be places with high unemployment rates.

"The recession hit young adults the hardest because they were often 'last hired, first fired,'" says Qian in a release accompanying the report.

Likewise, these tend to be cities with lower median incomes and marriage rates—once again, logical correlations, as poorer adults and those without spousal income might naturally need parental support more than their richer or married counterparts.

Even among the oldest and presumably most independent cohort, the marriage divide is wide. Three percent of married people age 30 to 34 lived with their parents during the recession, compared to 27 percent of the singles and 20 percent of those who were married or separated.

The study also finds connections between race and ethnicity and the likelihood of living at home. The share of Asian-Americans age 20 to 34 living with parents grew sharply between 1980 and the late 2000s, from 17 to 26 percent, a pattern that may be attributed either to this group's later marriage age or tendency to live in places with high costs of living, according to the report. Around 27 percent of blacks lived with parents during the recession as well, along with 30 percent of American Indians. Latinos and whites, meanwhile, did so slightly less often, at 24 and 23 percent, respectively.

Likewise, higher educational attainment is generally linked to a lower likelihood of living at home, according to the results—among 20 to 34-year-olds, only 8 percent of people with graduate education and 17 percent with college degrees lived with their parents during the

recession, compared to 29 and 27 percent, respectively, for those with only high school educations or some college. Interestingly, those with less than a high school education lived with their parents slightly less than their diploma-holding peers, at 22 percent.

In line with these results, Qian found that cities with more young adults living at home also tended to have fewer college graduates and more Latinos or Asians.

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