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Home for the Holidays...and Every Other Day

Recession Brings Many Young Adults Back to the Nest

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The journey home for Thanksgiving won't be quite so far this year for many young adults. Instead of traveling across country or across town, many grown sons and daughters will be coming to dinner from their old bedroom down the hall, which now doubles as their recession-era refuge.

A recent survey by the Pew Research Center finds that 13% of parents with grown children say one of their adult sons or daughters has moved back home in the past year. Social scientists call them "boomerangers" -- young adults who move in with parents after living away from home. This recession has produced a bumper crop.

Census Bureau data confirm that proportionately fewer young singles are living solo now than before the recession. Overall, the proportion of adults ages 18 to 29 who live alone declined from 7.9% in 2007 to 7.3% in 2009. Similar drops in the proportion of young people who live by themselves occurred during or immediately after the recessions of 1982 and 2001.

The current decline has been particularly steep among young women; the proportion who live by themselves fell by a full percentage point to 6.1%. Among young men, the share living on their own fell 0.2 percentage points to 8.4%, a statistically insignificant change.

While the recession has touched Americans of all ages, it has been particularly hard on young adults. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a smaller share of 16- to 24-year-olds are currently employed -- 46.1% -- than at any time since the government began collecting such data in 1948.

At the same time, [college enrollment has soared to an all-time high](#). Taken together, record unemployment and growing college enrollments help explain why proportionately fewer young people today are living by themselves.

The Pew Research Center survey also asked all respondents if they had moved back home in the past year. Fully one-in-ten adults ages 18 to 34 (10%) say the poor economy has forced them to move back in with Mom and Dad.¹ An additional 12% say they acquired a roommate. Hard times are leading young adults to put their lives on hold in other ways as well. For example, some 15% of adults younger than 35 say they have postponed getting married because of the recession; an additional 14% say they have delayed having a baby.

Data from two different but complementary sources are used in this analysis to estimate the impact of the recession on living arrangements and family formation. The Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey, conducted each March by the Census Bureau, was used to estimate the proportion of adults who lived alone in 2007 and in 2009. (The recession officially began in December 2007.)

These data are supplemented by a nationally representative survey of 1,028 adults by the Pew Research Center conducted Oct. 21-25, 2009. Results from this survey are used to produce estimates of changes in living arrangements and other actions taken by individuals in response to the recession.

Moving Back

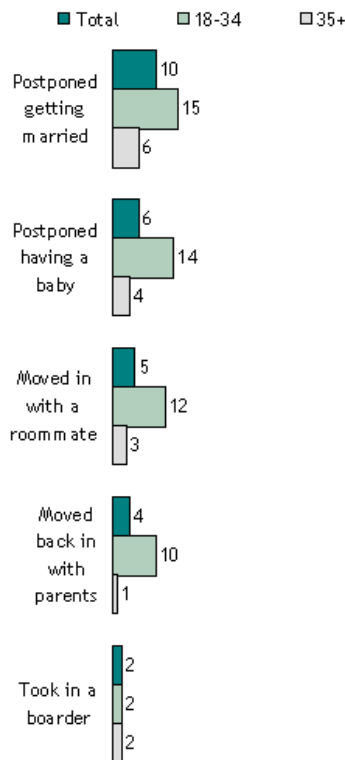
To measure changes in household arrangements,

	2007 %	2009 %	Change %
All	14.0	13.9	-0.1
Age Groups			
18-29	7.9	7.3	-0.6
30-49	9.5	9.5	—
50-64	15.7	15.6	-0.1
65+	30.2	30.1	-0.1

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey, 2007 and 2009, U.S. Census Bureau.

The Impact of the Recession on Family Structure and Household Size

% who say they have done the following because of the recession ...



Note: "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

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the Pew Research survey asked all adults if they lived in their own home or with one or both parents in the parents' home. The survey further asked all adults if they had moved back in with their parents "as a result of the recession." Overall, about 11% of all adults 18 or older live with their parents in their home and 4% of all adults say they were forced to move back with their parents because of the recession, a proportion that rises to 10% among those ages 18 to 34.

About seven-in-ten grown children who live with their parents are younger than age 30. About half work full- or part-time, while a quarter are unemployed and two-in-ten are full-time students. Of all adults who report they currently live in their parents' home, about a third (35%) say they had lived independently at some point in their lives before returning home. While the sample is small, roughly equal proportions of adult men and women live with their parents. A somewhat larger proportion of Hispanics and blacks than whites live with their parents.

When the focus shifts to parents, a similar story emerges. According to the survey, nearly half of all adults (46%) have children ages 18 or older. Among these parents of adult children, some 13% say at least one of their grown sons or daughters had returned home in the past year for any reason.

The proportion of "boomeranged parents" increases to 19% among those ages 45 to 54 and declines sharply in later age groups.

Continue reading the [full report at pewsocialtrends.org](http://pewsocialtrends.org).

1. Because different questions were asked of each group, the percentage of parents who report children moved back and the percentage of adult children who report moving back do not have to be identical. Parents were asked whether any child had moved back, while adult children were asked only if they personally moved in with their parents. Also, parents of adult children were not asked if the children who returned did so because of the recession.

