From Coast to Coast: How Canada's Housing Market Shapes Residential Mobility

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Executive summary

The relationship between housing and residential mobility is complex and multifaceted. Housing markets can either promote or restrict mobility, as the availability, affordability and suitability of homes play a pivotal role in the decision to relocate. This study seeks to identify the key drivers of residential mobility in Canada and to evaluate how the housing market of origin influences these decisions. By leveraging longitudinal tax data from 1989 to 2020, along with extensive housing and economic data, we conduct a logistic regression analysis to determine the likelihood of moving. Our analysis covers various types of relocations: within a census metropolitan area (CMA), between CMAs within the same province and interprovincial moves.

Our descriptive analysis of the data first shows there has been a persistent decline in residential mobility over time. While nearly 20% of all households used to move on an annual basis in the early 1990s, only 10% moved in 2020. A lifecycle analysis shows high mobility rates between the ages of 20 and 40, before bottoming out between 60 and 80, thereafter rising again. A potential implication of younger households being more mobile is that they are likely to choose their region of residence early in life and not move again thereafter. For that reason, any factor that might affect the choice of region of residence, such as the housing market, might have a long-term effect on population distribution across Canada. Moreover, younger generations tend to move less than previous cohorts at all points of the lifecycle. Declines across the lifecycle are suggestive of less downsizing at older ages and less household formation at younger ages, which might reflect suppressed housing demand.

Second, our logistic regression models yield several important conclusions:

- We find that the decision for households to relocate is largely associated with their socioeconomic characteristics. Moves are more common among renters, low-income families, individuals experiencing unemployment, single persons and newly arrived immigrants. Additionally, the likelihood of moving decreases significantly the longer a household has resided at the same address.
- House prices, rents, vacancy rates and housing completions in the region of origin also play a role in the decision to move but are less strong predictors compared to many socioeconomic factors. The impact of the housing market of origin is more pronounced for moves within a CMA compared to moves to another CMA or province.
- Higher vacancy rates, housing completions, and rents in the census tract of origin are linked to increased mobility within the same CMA, whereas higher house prices are associated with reduced intra-CMA mobility. These findings are aligned with the main moving motivations of Canadian households, which are to either become a homeowner or buy a larger dwelling.

In summary, this study sought to uncover the primary factors driving residential mobility in Canada, using a long-running and high-quality longitudinal data sample at the household level. When assessing the impact of the housing market of origin on these decisions, we detect significant correlations, yet socioeconomic factors of the household remain stronger determinants. These findings might help policymakers predict how changes or new policies in the Canadian housing markets might alter different types of residential mobility, which is itself a core component of a healthy economy.

Résumé

La relation entre le logement et la mobilité résidentielle est complexe et multidimensionnelle. Les marchés de l'habitation peuvent promouvoir ou restreindre la mobilité, car la disponibilité, l'abordabilité et la taille des logements jouent un rôle crucial dans la décision de déménager. Cette étude vise à déterminer les principaux facteurs de mobilité résidentielle au Canada et à évaluer comment le marché de l'habitation d'origine influence ces décisions. En utilisant des données fiscales longitudinales de 1989 à 2020, couplées à de nombreuses données sur le logement et l'économie, nous effectuons une analyse de régression logistique pour déterminer la probabilité de déménager. Notre analyse porte sur divers types de déménagements : à l'intérieur d'une région métropolitaine de recensement (RMR), entre deux RMR d'une même province et entre des provinces.

Notre analyse descriptive des données montre d'abord qu'il y a eu une baisse persistante de la mobilité résidentielle au fil du temps. Alors que près de 20 % des ménages déménageaient chaque année au début des années 1990, seulement 10 % d'entre eux ont déménagé en 2020. Une analyse du cycle de vie montre des taux de mobilité élevés entre 20 et 40 ans, avant d'atteindre un creux vers 60 à 80 ans, puis d'augmenter de nouveau. Une conséquence possible découlant de la plus forte mobilité des jeunes ménages est que ces derniers sont susceptibles de choisir leur région de résidence tôt dans leur vie et de ne plus déménager par la suite. Pour cette raison, tout facteur qui pourrait avoir une incidence sur le choix de la région de résidence, comme le marché de l'habitation, pourrait avoir un impact à long terme sur la répartition de la population au Canada. De plus, les générations plus jeunes ont tendance à déménager moins que les générations précédentes à toutes les étapes du cycle de vie. Cela suggère une diminution de la proportion de personnes qui déménagent dans un logement plus petit à un âge avancé et une réduction de la formation de ménages à un plus jeune âge, ce qui pourrait refléter demande réprimée de logements.

Deuxièmement, plusieurs conclusions importantes peuvent être tirées de nos modèles de régression logistique :

- Nous constatons que la décision des ménages de déménager est en grande partie associée à leurs caractéristiques socioéconomiques. Les déménagements sont plus courants chez les locataires, les familles à faible revenu, les personnes sans emploi, les personnes seules et les nouveaux arrivants. De plus, la probabilité de déménager diminue considérablement lorsqu'un ménage vit à la même adresse depuis longtemps.
- Les prix des habitations, les loyers, les taux d'inoccupation et le nombre de logenents achevés dans la région d'origine jouent également un rôle dans la décision de déménager, mais leur pouvoir explicatif est moins important que de nombreux facteurs socioéconomiques. L'impact du marché de l'habitation d'origine est plus marqué pour les déménagements au sein d'une RMR que pour les déménagements dans une autre RMR ou une autre province.
- Des taux d'inoccupation élevés, un plus grand nombre de logements achevés et des loyers élevés dans le secteur de recensement d'origine sont liés à une mobilité accrue dans la même RMR, tandis que des prix plus élevés des habitations sont associés à une mobilité réduite à l'intérieur de la RMR. Ces constatations cadrent avec les principales motivations de déménager des ménages, qui sont de devenir propriétaires ou d'acheter un plus grand logement.

En résumé, cette étude vise à identifier les principaux facteurs qui stimulent la mobilité résidentielle au Canada à l'aide d'un long échantillon de données longitudinales de grande qualité sur les ménages. Nous constatons des corrélations significatives entre le marché de l'habitation d'origine et les décisions de déménager. Toutefois, les facteurs socioéconomiques du ménage demeurent des déterminants plus importants du choix de déménager. Nos résultats ont le potentiel d'aider les décideurs à prédire comment des changements ou des nouvelles politiques sur les marchés canadiens de l'habitation pourraient modifier les différents types de mobilité résidentielle, qui est elle-même une composante essentielle d'une économie en santé.

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How Canada's Housing Market Shapes Residential Mobility

1. Introduction

Residential mobility plays a crucial role in a well-functioning economy. It is tied to better matching within the housing market and the labour market, and to a generally more efficient allocation of resources. When households can easily move and adapt their choice of dwelling based on their current needs, it allows for ongoing turnover of residential properties across various tenure types throughout the lifecycle. This turnover promotes filtering and ensures that housing needs are met at different stages of life. When individuals and families can easily relocate to areas with better job opportunities or lower living costs, it enhances overall productivity and economic growth. It supports a more resilient economy by allowing for adaptive responses to shocks. As Canada grapples with an escalating affordability crisis, shifting demographics and a constrained supply landscape, delving into the dynamics of residential mobility with timely and high-quality data is of great importance.

In turn, the housing market also affects residential mobility. The availability, suitability and affordability of housing in a region may attract or deter migration. Our study is motivated by the need to further understand both the micro and macro factors associated with the decision to move, particularly those related to the housing market of origin. It aims to foster a better understanding of the factors driving households' decisions to move, whether within their census metropolitan area (CMA), to another CMA within the same province or to another province, and the importance of the housing market of origin behind these decisions. This objective is addressed through the use of longitudinal data, which tracks transitions of households over extended periods of time. To that end, we use Canadian tax data supplemented with information on housing and economics in Canada from 1989 through to 2020. Our descriptive and econometric analyses reveal a number of important conclusions:

- Between 1989 and 2020, Canada saw a persistent decline in the rates of residential mobility, from nearly 20% of all households on an annual basis in the early 1990s to 10% in the early 2020s.
- Newer generations tend to move less than previous cohorts at all points of the lifecycle.
- Households' decisions to move are mostly related to their socioeconomic characteristics. Moves are more frequent among renters, low-income households, the unemployed, younger households (age 34 and under), single people and recent immigrants. The longer households have lived at the same address, the less likely they are to move.
- House prices, rents, vacancies, and housing completions in the region of origin also play a small but notable role in the decision to move. This role is stronger for short-distance moves than long-distance moves.
- Higher vacancy rates, housing completions and rents are associated with more moves within the same CMA, while higher house prices are associated with less intra-CMA mobility.

These findings are important, as they can help foresee how changes in housing markets might drive or impede different types of residential mobility, which in turn affect whether the economy functions properly. They are consistent with the view, supported by a recent article published in The Housing Observer, that the driving force for choosing a location is income, but the effect is attenuated by housing costs (Ab Iorwerth 2025).

The rest of the paper is divided as follows: Section 2 provides a brief discussion of the literature followed by descriptive statistics in Section 3, the methodology in Section 4 and our key findings and results in Section 5. Section 6 provides concluding remarks.

2. Literature review

The body of literature on residential mobility and its interplay with the housing markets is extensive and multifaceted. It highlights the complexities embedded in the two-way relationship between the housing market and mobility as one affects the other (Mulder 2006). As a starting point, there is a general consensus that incoming migration, whether driven by international or internal sources, tends to increase house prices (Moallemi and Melser 2020; Degen and Fischer 2017; Erol and Unal 2022; Akbari and Aydede 2012). In turn, housing has been cited as one of the various economic factors impacting mobility, although this relationship has been found to vary depending on the type of mobility–either it refers to short- or long-distance moves (Clark and Huang 2004; Morel 2022; Weinberg, Friedman, and Mayo 1981). The literature also highlights the role of individual housing situations on residential mobility. Among them are households' housing equity, which affects the ease of buying and selling houses (Ferreira, Gyourko, and Tracy 2010; Goetz 2013; Henley 1996; Steegmans and Hassink 2018). Residential mobility has also been found to be motivated by the search for a dwelling that meets the needs of households, which change over the course of the lifecycle (Baker et al. 2016; Reiner and Smith 2010; James et al. 2021; Ostrovsky 2004), or caused by evictions and forced moves (CMHC 2023; Ong ViforJ et al. 2022). Another topic that has been studied is the role of housing-related policies (e.g., rent control) in shaping mobility and housing markets, which was found to be consequential (Causa and Pichelmann 2020; Chapple et al. 2022; Sánchez and Andrews 2011).

Studies delving into the impact of housing markets on residential mobility have generally used house prices as indicators of the housing market (Rabe and Taylor 2012; Ferreira, Gyourko, and Tracy 2010; Goetz 2013; Head and Lloyd-Ellis 2011; Seslen 2004; Steegmans and Hassink 2018; Alun 1993). Rents, supply and vacancies were considered in a handful of studies (Myers, Park, and Cho 2021; Causa and Pichelmann 2020; Chapple et al. 2022).

Many of these earlier studies find that decreasing house prices can erode a household's housing equity and, in some instances, lead to negative equity when the market value falls below the mortgage debt, thereby restraining residential mobility through financial means. This phenomenon is known as the equity lock-in effect (Bloze and Skak 2016; Bricker and Bucks 2016; Ferreira, Gyourko, and Tracy 2011; Foote 2016; Goetz 2013; Henley 1996; Modestino and Dennett 2013; Sterk 2015). In the same vein, studies have suggested that rising house prices can boost housing equity, facilitating household relocations (Disney, Gathergood, and Henley 2010; Kiel 1994). Hence, these studies indicate that house prices can have a positive impact on migration decisions.

Despite the predominance of studies affirming the equity lock-in effect resulting from declining housing prices, there are dissenting voices. Some studies have suggested that the connection between households' mobility and falling housing prices is not statistically significant (Causa and Pichelmann 2020; Berger and Blomquist 1992; Valletta 2013).

The body of literature on housing and mobility spans various geographical contexts, including Australia (James et al. 2021; Vij et al. 2022; Baker et al. 2016; Erol and Unal 2022), the United Kingdom (Clark and Huang 2004; Henley 1996; Reiner and Smith 2010; Alun 1993), the United States (Ferreira, Gyourko, and Tracy 2010; Myers, Park, and Cho 2021; Goetz 2013; Chapple et al. 2022) and China (Zhang et al. 2023). There is some Canadian literature on the topic, but it is scarcer. Canadian studies with findings on the role played by the housing market in residential mobility include the study by Amirault, de Munnik, and Miller (2012) on the macroeconomic drivers of interprovincial mobility patterns, which finds that higher homeownership rates reduce interprovincial mobility. This study is inconclusive about the impact of average house prices in the region of destination on interprovincial mobility. The Canadian literature also includes a study by Ostrovsky (2004) on the factors behind elderly households' residential mobility choices. That study finds that these choices are mostly affected by moving costs, which vary depending on tenure. Based on descriptive statistics, Clinkard and Clayton (2019) suggest that housing supply shortages may have contributed to the decline in mobility rates in Toronto. CMHC (2023) indicates that populations experiencing vulnerability—particularly those with low- or fixed-income levels—experience more housing instability. Finally, (Morel, 2022) finds a preference shift toward more living space during the pandemic, which reduced the price gap between houses in the suburbs and those downtown.

Despite the existing body of literature on the relationship between housing and mobility, our large-scale microeconomic study fills a significant knowledge gap. It aims to quantify the impact of the housing market of origin, measured by various indicators including house prices, rents, supply and vacancy rates, on mobility in Canada. This study takes a longitudinal perspective and covers both short-distance and long-distance mobility in Canada as a whole and in certain Canadian regions. Housing markets are known to be intrinsically regional, with characteristics and dynamics varying from one country to another, from one province to another and even from one city to another within the same province (CMHC 1992; Causa and Pichelmann 2020; Courchene 1981). For this reason, the international literature can hardly be used to infer conclusions about Canada. This study is a much-needed addition to the scarce Canadian literature.

3. Data

3.1 Data description

Our analysis is primarily derived from Statistics Canada's Longitudinal Administrative Databank (LAD). We also draw insights from the Canadian Census and CMHC's Starts and Completions Survey (SCS) and Rental Market Survey (RMS).

The LAD is a 20% subsample of the Canadian T1 Family Files, which tracks annual tax information among Canadian families over time and includes a wide range of demographic characteristics. Overall, the LAD provides excellent coverage of the Canadian population as most adults file taxes (an estimated 91% to 95% of the adult population), and attrition tends to be low (Finnie 2007). Once an individual is included in the LAD, they are retained in the sample until attrition occurs, meaning the sample is both representative cross-sectionally and is also compelling from a longitudinal perspective. The sample is re-populated with new filers on a regular basis, filling the void when attrition does occur in the LAD. This dataset is particularly valuable for our analysis because it allows us to track households and individuals from year to year, which is essential for studying household residential mobility. For this analysis, our sample is a panel of census families from the years 1989 through to 2020.[1] Families were identified by keeping the highest income earner between the age of 21 and 103 (household head) for every year of the LAD. We then followed this household head longitudinally.[2] We tracked and classified moves based on changes in the family's postal code from one year to the next and assumed no move occurs when the postal code remains the same. It should be noted that there were administrative changes in the coding of the postal code in the LAD in 2018 that resulted in mobility for 2018 being observed over four months of data (between December 2018 and April 2019) instead of over one year, as in all the other years. The adjustments we made to avoid observing data breaks are described in the following sections. The LAD also includes numerous important socioeconomic variables that help describe households and explain the factors associated with residential moves, such as age, marital status, number of children, income, unemployment benefits, disability benefits and immigration status.

Regretfully, the LAD does not contain much information on housing-related characteristics, which are likely to have an influence on a household's probability of moving. Consequently, other information was needed to fill this void. Household tenure is one crucial factor in understanding residential mobility. It offers insights into housing security, commitment and the preferences of individuals or families. Homeownership often indicates a more significant commitment to a specific residence, while renters tend to have more flexibility in their mobility decisions (Ostrovsky 2004; James et al. 2021). We thus used non-longitudinal census data to derive a "tenure probability" variable and impute it to the LAD. The first step was to generate a model that predicts whether the household is in

[1] In our usage of the data, we also include one-person households.

[2] Since the highest income earner in a family may change from year to year, this approach may cause breaks in the longitudinal series. However, since the composition of families is likely to change over time, any approach to identify families would cause longitudinal breaks.

homeownership in the census. Doing so requires the list of inputs used in the model to be shared between our two datasets, i.e., the census and the LAD. These inputs are household income decile, age, squared age, age of immigration, squared age of immigration, marital status, number of people in the family and number of children. Estimations were conducted on data from each census (there was one census every five years between 1991 and 2021) using a linear probability model for each census tract in Canada. A linear probability model was chosen over other binary prediction models (that would predict a binary variable for moving/not moving) because it had a more successful classification rate in a series of out-of-sample tests with the census data.[3] Estimates were conducted on each census because of the strong likelihood that the parameters of our control variables change over time. Then, the models were used to impute a tenure probability to each household in our LAD sample. Since the census is conducted every five years, each model was used to impute data to five years of the LAD (e.g., models estimated using the 1991 census were used to impute the tenure probability to our sample of LAD households from 1989 to 1993).

Census microdata was also used to impute average house prices and rents at the census tract level in our LAD sample. A linear interpolation was used between the census years. We also imputed housing starts and vacancy rates to our LAD sample at the census tract level from CMHC's annual Starts and Completions Survey (SCS) and Rental Market Survey (RMS). The annual RMS is conducted every October in all Canadian urban areas with a population of 10,000 or more, and targets only privately initiated structures with at least 3 rental units. It provides key insights on average rents and vacancy rates within Canada at a detailed geographical level (CMHC 2024a).[4] Similarly, the SCS takes inventory of housing starts and completions in urban centres with more than 10,000 people (CMHC 2024b). Unemployment rates and median income at the CMA level were also imputed to our LAD sample based on calculations from the LAD. In the next subsection, we explore the characteristics of the data in greater detail.

3.2 Descriptive statistics

This section takes a detailed look at the demographic and economic characteristics associated with moving in our assembled panel of Canadian families. In Table 1, we present means and standard deviations for a number of variables contained in the LAD that describe the profiles of movers and non-movers in Canada between 1989 and 2020.

[3] Some machine learning models had marginal improvements but faced a steep trade-off in terms of computational resources.

[4] In our longitudinal database, we used average rents from the census instead of from the RMS since the RMS does not cover rural areas.

Table 1: Contrasting the profiles of mover and non-mover households – micro factors

Variable	Movers (N = 34,636,560)		Non-movers (N = 242,103,585)	
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev
Age of the household head	43.03	17.31	51.32	17.14
Couple with children	0.32	0.47	0.39	0.49
Couple without children	0.26	0.44	0.31	0.46
Single parent	0.10	0.30	0.07	0.26
Single	0.32	0.47	0.22	0.42
Number of children	0.76	1.08	0.85	1.10
Unemployed	0.13	0.34	0.10	0.30
Disabled household head	0.02	0.14	0.02	0.16
Household head did not immigrate	0.78	0.41	0.79	0.41
Years since household head immigrated	13.87	10.09	18.78	9.94
Years at the same address	2.71	4.23	5.27	6.31
Owner	57.84%	31.63	72.02%	27.40
Family income	$54,200	105,743	$68,300	115,954

Notes: Calculations by the authors using data from the LAD and the Canadian Census. "Owner" is a variable that was imputed to the LAD from a regression model conducted among variables common to the LAD and the Canadian Census. The same household can be counted multiple times, i.e., once for each year it appears in the LAD.

Table 1 draws from a large sample of households, containing over 34 million moves and 242 million non-moves across all years. It yields a number of important insights about the socioeconomic profiles—micro factors—of moving households in Canada. Younger households are more likely to move than older households, with statistics showing that mobility rates tend to decrease with age (with mean values of 43 and 51 between movers and non-movers). This difference could be attributed to factors such as job changes, household formation, pursuit of education and the desire for new experiences, which are more prevalent among younger demographics. A potential implication of younger households being more mobile is that they are likely to choose their region of residence early in life and not move again thereafter. For that reason, any variable that might affect the choice of where to live, such as house prices or rents, might have a long-term effect on how the population is distributed across Canada.

Additionally, this data indicates that individuals who are single or single parents are more likely to move compared to those who are married. For instance, single-parent households may be more likely to exhibit lower stability in their housing situations as the challenges of balancing work, caregiving responsibilities and financial constraints may ultimately contribute to a higher likelihood of moving. Similarly, we find that renters generally have higher mobility rates compared to homeowners, with an estimated 42% of movers being renters, compared to 28% of non-movers. The flexibility of renting, coupled with other possible contributing factors, such as evictions, fixed-term leases, sudden changes in housing affordability and the desire for more stable living arrangements, can lead to more frequent moves among renters. This is likely also correlated with the number of years at the same address, which tend to be higher depending on tenure type, and has been found to be statistically a very strong predictor of a household's decision to move (James et al. 2021). For instance, the average mover has been at the same address for only 2.7 years before moving again, while the average non-mover has been in their residence for 5.3 years.[5]

Elsewhere, this data shows that recent immigrants often experience higher rates of residential mobility as they adjust to a new environment. Factors such as establishing oneself in a new country, the pursuit of stable job opportunities, access to cultural and social networks, and housing affordability can influence their decision to move

[5] Shorter durations at the same address are also seen more commonly among renters.

within or between communities. Elsewhere, we also find that households whose highest earner is unemployed (as determined by receiving employment insurance [EI] benefits in the LAD) are also more likely to move, which could be driven by the search for employment opportunities in different regions. Economic factors play a role in residential mobility, with job prospects and income levels influencing the decision to relocate for work-related reasons. Many of these observations are supported by previous similarly motivated studies (Finnie 2007; Ostrovsky 2004).

Table 2: Contrasting the profiles of movers and non-movers – macro factors

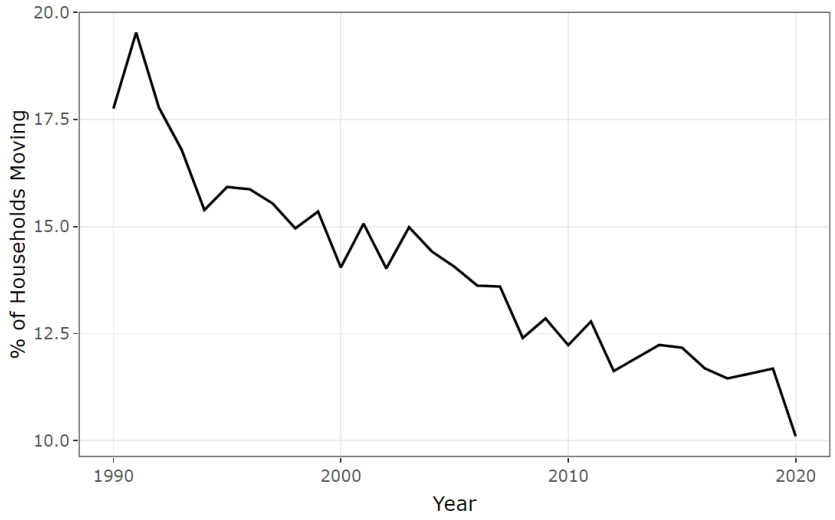
Variable	Movers (N = 34,636,560)		Non-Movers (N = 242,103,585)	
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev
Rural area; Population < 1,000 (PC)	0.16	0.37	0.24	0.43
1,000 ≤ Population ≤ 29,999 (PC)	0.10	0.3	0.10	0.3
29,999 < Population ≤ 99,999 (PC)	0.15	0.35	0.12	0.33
Population > 99,999 (PC)	0.59	0.49	0.54	0.5
Unemployment rate (CMA)	9.74%	4.41	9.77%	4.75
Average rent (CT)	$685	245	$678	260
House prices (CT)	$280,781	210,337	$290,710	222,431
Vacancy rates (CT)	3.16%	4.04	3.18%	4.01
Completions per household (CT)	0.01	0.58	0.01	0.16

Notes: Calculations by the authors using data from the LAD, Statistics Canada and the Canadian Census. The same household can be counted multiple times, i.e., once for each year it appears in the LAD. PC = Population centre, CMA = Census metropolitan area, CT = Census tract.

Building on these findings, we next show "macro" variables about the region of origin of households that may be correlated with the decision to move. These are profiled in Table 2, which contains data on the size of the population centre, unemployment rates at the CMA level, as well as housing costs, vacancy rates and housing completions at the census tract level. Table 2 shows that in very small rural areas (population under 1,000), households are less likely to move compared to those in mid-sized or larger areas (population of at least 30,000). Smaller and rural communities can be tightly knit and more isolated (hence the cost of moving is higher) and have limited housing options. Altogether, this can contribute to higher stability in these rural settings (van der Star and Hochstenbach 2022). Surprisingly, there are minimal statistical differences in residential mobility based on macroeconomic factors such as unemployment rates, average rents, house prices and vacancy rates across different areas, suggesting that the micro factors shown in Table 1 may play a more significant role in determining mobility patterns.

Both Table 1 and Table 2 describe the profiles of movers and non-movers irrespective of the time between 1989 and 2020. Time trends and the changing nature of household mobility is also of interest, which we illustrate first at the national level in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows a persistent downward trend in household residential mobility from 1989 to 2020. Mobility peaked at close to 20% of households during the severe recession of the early 1990s, before bottoming out at approximately 10% as COVID began. This declining trend in mobility, which is not specific to Canada, has been the subject of previous studies, but reasons behind it remain mostly speculative due to the difficulty of decomposing the underlying factors (Haan and Cardoso 2020; Myers, Park, and Cho 2021; White and Haan 2021).

Figure 1: Trends in household mobility by year in Canada

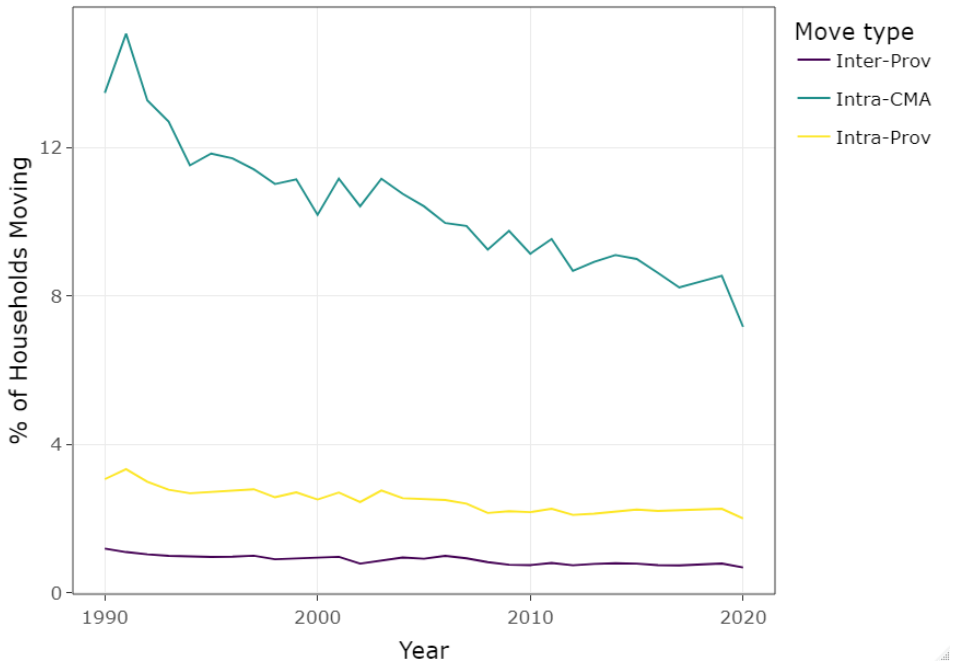


Notes: Calculations by the authors using data from the LAD. Because of coding changes in the LAD, the data in 2018 was linearly interpolated between years 2017 and 2019.

One of the drivers of this trend could be Canada's long-growing housing affordability issues. The affordability crisis in many areas has made it increasingly difficult for individuals and families to consider moving or even forming a household in the first place. Younger Canadians, in particular, face challenges in moving into their own houses due to affordability issues, with many delaying homeownership or opting for alternative housing arrangements, including living with family. For instance, data from Statistics Canada shows that in 2020, more than 35% of adults under the age of 34 lived with at least one of their parents—a figure that has increased by over five percentage points since 2001 (Statistics Canada 2022a). Other demographic trends likely also play a role, with an aging population and changing family structures influencing mobility patterns. The large baby boomer cohort—which comprises a significant portion of the total population—has transitioned into age groups that are less likely to move. Conversely, our sample began at an age where baby boomers were considerably more likely to be moving and forming households. In recent years, people in this cohort could be less inclined to move for job-related reasons, are more likely to have stable housing and family situations and could prefer to stay close to their established social networks.

Other explanations could include the growth of rent control programs within Canada, which often mean that families can stay in their current rental units for extended periods because the controlled rents provide stability and affordability relative to outside options. This stability can lead to less frequent moves, as heightened market rents relative to a controlled unit may discourage moving. A cross-sectional analysis of OECD countries found that residential mobility was higher in countries with a more elastic housing supply, lower rent controls and lower transaction costs (Sánchez and Andrews 2011). Elsewhere, changes in the job market, such as the rise of remote work, have altered the traditional motivations for moving that would have been more prevalent in the early 1990s. This trend is not unique to Canada either, with sharp declines in residential mobility also observed in the United States (Myers, Park, and Cho 2021).

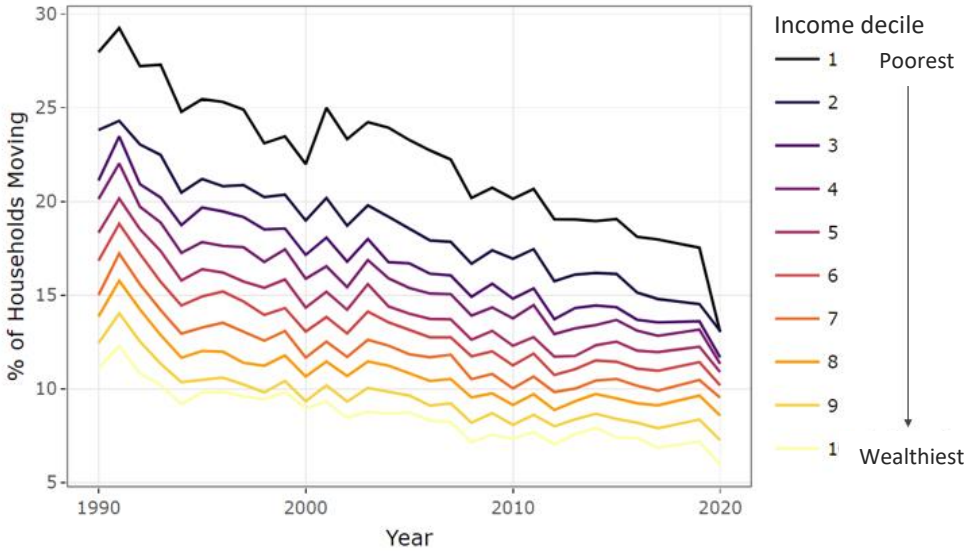
Figure 2: Trends in household mobility by year in Canada: Intra-CMA, intra-provincial and inter-provincial



Notes: Calculations by the authors using data from the LAD. Because of coding changes in the LAD, the data in 2018 was linearly interpolated between years 2017 and 2019. Intra-Prov refers to movements from one CMA to another but within the same province.

Next, we dissect things further to profile by move type, classified as being intra-CMA (within a CMA), intra-provincial (between CMAs, but within a province), or interprovincial. This is shown in Figure 2. Not surprisingly, all three lines decline by a considerable margin over time, similarly to what was profiled in Figure 1. This figure does however show that there are sizeable differences in the proportion of moves classified as being within or outside of a CMA, or between provinces, with intra-CMA moves being the most frequent. The convenience of staying within the same CMA reduces the challenges associated with relocating to a completely new area, such as adapting to unfamiliar surroundings, finding new services and establishing new social networks. Additionally, intra-CMA moves may be more financially feasible for individuals and families. This is because movers can retain existing job opportunities, access familiar resources and avoid the moving costs and uncertainties of moving to a different CMA or province.

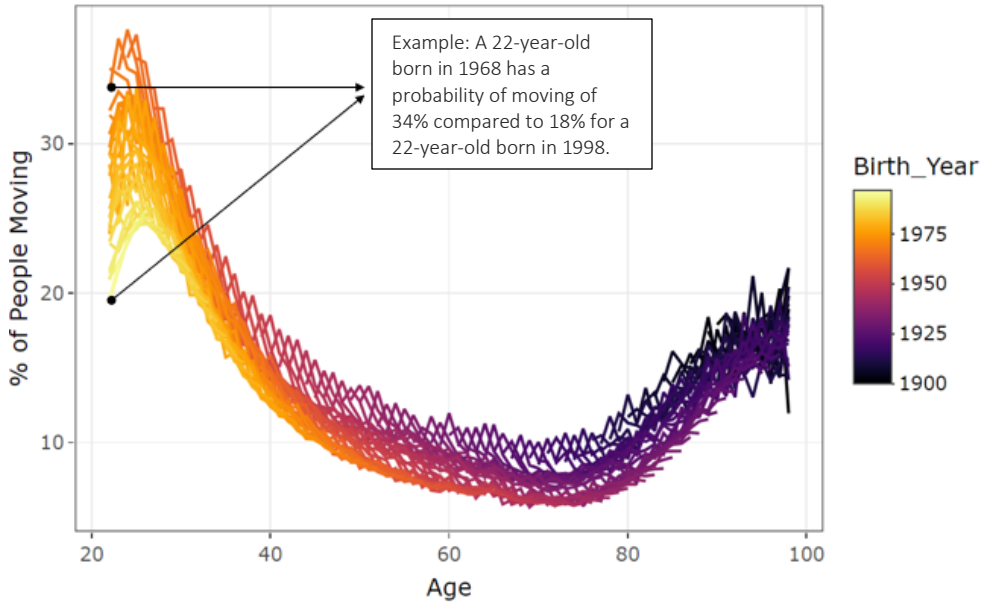
Figure 3: Trends in household mobility by year and income decile in Canada



Notes: Calculations by the authors using data from the LAD. Because of coding changes in the LAD, the data in 2018 was linearly interpolated between years 2017 and 2019.

As previously discussed, income is strongly correlated with a household's likelihood of moving. Figure 3 presents long-running trends in household mobility, where groups are sorted by income and divided into 10 equally sized groups known as "deciles." This means that household moving rates are plotted from the lowest (bottom 10%) to the highest (top 10%) income groups. The decline in mobility is observed for all groups. At the peak in the early 1990s, households in the lowest income decile had an annual moving rate of nearly 30%, before dropping by half as we entered 2020. At the opposite end, the wealthiest households have always been considerably less mobile, with just barely 6% of them moving on an annual basis into 2020. For the deciles in between, mobility rates are gradually cascading downwards between the poorest and wealthiest income groups. It should, however, be noted that many factors correlated with income could be driving these differences. Age is one simple example, as younger people tend to disproportionately explore new opportunities in life, including education and the job market, with typically little experience and lower incomes. Beyond age, households with lower incomes often face challenges such as housing unaffordability, eviction risk or substandard living conditions, which can prompt them to seek alternative options and could lead to housing instability. Other associated economic factors, including job changes, unemployment and underemployment, can also contribute to mobility among lower-income households as they search for better employment opportunities or financial stability. Because of these associated factors, our later regression analysis will better isolate and dissect the key components that relate to a household's decision to move, including income.

Figure 4: Trends in household mobility by age and year of birth



Notes: Calculations by the authors using data from the LAD. Because of coding changes in the LAD, the data in 2018 was linearly interpolated between years 2017 and 2019.

Finally, one of the main advantages of the LAD dataset is that the data is longitudinal. This means we can also profile how year-of-birth cohorts have evolved over time, to better exploit how the propensity to move has evolved over the lifecycle. In Figure 4, we plot trends in household mobility by age and year of birth. Each line in Figure 4 represents the average probability of moving by year and, through the colouring indicated in the legend to the right, by year of birth. It therefore profiles each birth cohort as it is observed in the lifecycle through the years from 1989 to 2020. Figure 4 contains a number of important insights, notably a decline in residential mobility at all points throughout the birth cohorts (i.e., for a fixed age, lines push downward to lighter shades, which represent younger birth cohorts). For example, there is a 16 percentage point (p.p.) decline in the probability of moving between a 22-year-old born in 1968, relative to a 22-year-old born in 1998. This gap is especially large for younger households but continues to be persistently different at all points in the lifecycle. The overall pattern also shows high mobility rates between the ages of 20 and 40, before bottoming out between 60 and 80, thereafter rising again.

A potential reason for the increase in mobility rates after age 80 is downsizing, although the extent is difficult to measure (Ostrovsky 2004).[6] If downsizing is indeed the reason behind these moves, then the decline in mobility among older people has potentially significant implications for the housing market, as it can contribute to housing shortages. When older people downsize, they leave dwellings that may meet the needs of growing households requiring more space, or that could be converted into more dense housing. Reduced mobility among older people could be driven by a lack of suitable and affordable housing for Canada's elderly population, policies that promote staying longer at home, and changes in preferences between generations, among other factors.

Another observation from Figure 4 that has implications for the housing market is the decrease in mobility at younger ages—especially in the 20s and 30s—that is consistent with a lack of household formation profiled earlier in this section. The trend of younger people staying longer in their parents' homes can reflect suppressed housing

[6] Other reasons could also include moving to a warmer climate, to seniors' residences and closer to family or caregivers.

demand that, if unbottled, for example through increased supply and gains in affordability, could pose greater challenges in the pursuit of more affordable housing.

4. Models and methodology

4.1 Predicting residential mobility

As in Finnie (2007) who used the LAD to analyze the determinants of interprovincial mobility, we use a panel logit model where the dependant variable is a binary indicator for moving. In contrast to Finnie (2007) who focused on the socioeconomic characteristics of movers, our set of control variables also includes information on the housing market of origin. It thus allows us to address our research question, which is to understand the factors behind the decision to move and to quantify the importance of the housing market of origin behind residential mobility. Our regressors reflect the characteristics of the household head in his or her region of origin and include sex, age, language, family status, number of children, an indicator for receiving EI benefits, an indicator for receiving disability benefits, the number of years at the same address, the imputed ownership probability (see Section 3), income deciles, the number of years since immigration (0 for native-born Canadians), industry of work, population size of the population centre of origin, median income and unemployment rate in the CMA of origin, as well as the rental vacancy rate, housing completions, log average rent, and log average house prices in the census tract of origin. Fixed effects for provinces of residence of origin and years are also included.[7] The set of dummy variables for provinces allows us to capture economic and labour conditions not otherwise captured by median income and unemployment rate at the CMA level. The year indicators are used to capture the general (declining) trend in the probability of moving over time, the tendency for individuals to move from and to specific regions throughout the period covered by the data, as well as other cyclical factors not otherwise captured by our other control variables.[8] Because the relationship between age and mobility is not linear (see Figure 4), age is subdivided into eight categories. The language variables included in the model are interactions between provinces and the language in which taxes were filed. The first binary variable indicates that taxes were filed in French in any province other than Quebec. The second binary variable indicates that taxes were filed in English in Quebec. These variables aim to capture the effect of speaking a minority language in the region of residence.

5. Results

Table 3 presents the results from the logistic regressions. We report marginal effects at the mean from the regressions, such that our estimates can be interpreted as p.p. change in the probability of moving, other factors remaining fixed. The first regression (column 1) shows estimates for the probability that a household has moved during the year, *before* controlling for variables describing the local housing market of origin. In that sense, this specification is similar to that of Finnie (2007), except that Finnie focused on interprovincial mobility. Column 1 shows that the socioeconomic characteristics of the households play a major role in the decision to move. In particular, the household head being a man, being younger and being unemployed are factors associated with higher mobility, while having children is a deterrent factor to mobility. As expected, these findings are consistent with Finnie (2007). The sector of employment also plays a role in the decision to move, as people working in mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction are the most likely to move and people working in agriculture, forestry, fishing

[7] Household fixed effects are not included because they tend to soak up a large amount of the variation in mobility when included.

[8] Including a fixed effect for year 2018 allows to control for administrative changes in the coding of the postal code in the LAD in 2018.

and hunting are the least likely to move.[9] Over the course of our sample, we would expect to see skilled workers relocating to Canada's natural resource-rich regions, attracted by the employment opportunities and the economic benefits associated with this industry.

We also find that those who recently immigrated to Canada are more likely to move than people born here. However, the trend decreases with the number of years in Canada, and after about 12 years in the country, immigrants become less likely to move than Canadian-born citizens. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Simonova 2017). In line with descriptive evidence, the probability of moving decreases through higher income deciles, even when other socioeconomic characteristics are taken into account. Being in the highest income decile decreases the probability of moving by 3.6 p.p. compared to being in the lowest income decile.

The longer households live at the same address, the less likely they are to move. In fact, for every additional year at the same address, the probability of moving decreases by 0.6 p.p. This finding is aligned with the literature and the theory of self-reinforced mobility and chronic moves (Bernard and Vidal 2020; Quigley and Weinberg 2016). As expected, due to the costs of selling a house (Causa and Pichelmann 2020; Amirault, de Munnik, and Miller 2012; Quigley and Weinberg 2016), homeowners are found to be less mobile than renters. Owning a house (proxied by a 100 p.p. increase in the probability of owning a house) reduces the probability of moving by 6.4 p.p. Living in medium-sized areas (populations of 30,000–99,999) is associated with the highest probability of moving compared to the other types of areas. A one-log-point increase in the median income in the CMA of origin (i.e., more than doubling the median income) is associated with a 3.9 p.p. increase in the probability of moving. Consistent with our descriptive statistics and the widely documented trend of decreasing internal mobility (Haan and Cardoso 2020; Jia et al. 2022; White and Haan 2021; Clinkard and Clayton 2019), we find in the year fixed effects a decreasing probability of moving over time (e.g., -5 p.p. between 2001 and 2020). As mentioned earlier, there were administrative changes in the coding of the postal code in the LAD in 2018 that resulted in the probability of moving being noticeably low during that year.

Variables related to the housing market of origin are added in the second regression (column 2). We find that the housing market of origin plays a role in the decision to move, but that this role is less important than the other factors previously listed. For example, a one-log-point increase in the average rent in the census tract of origin (i.e., more than doubling the average rent) is needed for the probability of moving to increase by 1.8 p.p. An increase of one log point in average house prices in the census tract of origin (i.e., more than doubling average house prices) is associated with a decrease of 1.0 p.p. in the probability of moving. These results are interpreted and discussed in Section 6.

Columns 3, 4 and 5 report the results of regressions where we respectively measure the probability of moving within the same CMA, of moving within the same province but to another CMA and of moving to another province.[10] Language is an interesting factor of mobility in these regressions, as households who filed their taxes in English while living in Quebec or in French while living outside of Quebec are less likely to move within their province of residence, but are more likely to move to another province. Our results are also in line with the literature that emphasizes different motivations for short- and long-distance moves. Short-distance moves have often been linked to the housing market and long-distance moves to employment opportunities (Pendakur and Young 2013). We find that an increase of 1 p.p. in the unemployment rate in the region of origin is associated with a decrease of 0.1 p.p. in intra-CMA mobility and an increase of 0.8 p.p. in intra-provincial mobility. While the magnitude of the marginal effects remains small in all the regressions, the impact of rents on mobility is more than 9 times higher for intra-CMA moves than for intra-provincial moves and interprovincial moves. A 1 p.p. increase in the vacancy rate in the census tract of origin results in a 0.01 p.p. increase in mobility within the CMA and in a 0.01 p.p. decrease in intra-provincial mobility. Completions in the census tract of origin tend to marginally increase all types of moves; an increase of 0.01 completions per household, effectively doubling the average number of

[9] Some professions are less mobile than others, such as those that are are licensed or regulated at the provincial level.

[10] As a test to the sensitivity of our analyses, we removed the other types of movers from the regressions and the conclusions did not change in any meaningful way.

housing completions, respectively correlates with +0.03 p.p, +0.01 p.p. and +0.003 p.p. in the probability of moving within the same CMA, to another CMA within the same province or to another province.

The regression on the probability of moving within a CMA (column 3) was also replicated for Canada's six largest CMAs: Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa-Gatineau, Calgary and Edmonton. Results from these regressions are shown in the appendix (Table A1). Apart from the impact of the industry of work, which changes from one region to another, the conclusions we draw about the impact of socioeconomic characteristics of the households on the probability of moving tend to remain the same as those observed for intra-CMA mobility across Canada. The impact of the housing market on mobility remains relatively minor in each CMA. However, the dynamics appears to be slightly different in Calgary, where the relationship between rents and mobility is negative, and in Edmonton, where this relationship is found to be non-significant. In Calgary, house prices are also found not to be significantly correlated with mobility. In both cities, the coefficient on housing completions is negative, meaning that an increase in the stock of houses is associated with lower mobility. This different dynamic may stem from intrinsically different regional characteristics, such as tax regimes, housing systems, or preferences. For example, the homeownership rate in Alberta being one of the highest in Canada (Statistics Canada 2022b), renters and homeowners in Alberta may have different housing preferences or may impute a different cost to moving than renters and homeowners from other regions.

Table 3: Marginal effects[1] of socioeconomic characteristics on mobility

	1 Any mobility type, without housing variables	2 Any mobility type, with housing variables	3 Intra-CMA mobility	4 Intra-provincial mobility	5 Interprovincial mobility
Household characteristics					
Sex	0.140***	0.193***	0.027**	0.027***	0.065***
Age (compared to 21–24 years old)					
25–34 years old	1.176***	1.467***	1.446***	-0.014*	0.014***
35–44 years old	-1.802***	-1.759***	-0.588***	-0.675***	-0.146***
45–54 years old	-4.621***	-4.848***	-2.965***	-1.043***	-0.277***
55–64 years old	-6.751***	-7.070***	-5.047***	-1.069***	-0.336***
65–74 years old	-7.808***	-8.251***	-5.982***	-1.232***	-0.377***
75–84 years old	-8.300***	-8.933***	-5.790***	-1.708***	-0.595***
85 and over	-2.958***	-3.006***	-1.345***	-0.943***	-0.191***
Province (compared to Ontario)					
Newfoundland and Labrador	-0.503***	-0.336***	0.885***	-1.886***	0.478***
Prince Edward Island	-0.442***	-0.091	1.459***	-2.205***	0.580***
Nova Scotia	0.416***	0.188***	0.640***	-1.494***	0.548***
New Brunswick	0.474***	0.033	1.424***	-1.624***	0.388***
Quebec	-0.329***	-0.184***	1.214***	-0.766***	-0.560***
Manitoba	0.257***	0.345***	0.768***	-1.139***	0.439***
Saskatchewan	-0.112***	0.544***	0.374***	-0.689***	0.483***
Alberta	1.029***	1.195***	1.421***	-0.774***	0.350***
British Columbia	1.299***	1.463***	1.272***	-0.182***	0.231***
Other	-0.611***	2.322***	2.001***	-2.930***	0.611***
English in Quebec	-0.892***	-0.841***	-1.040***	-1.740***	0.980***
French in the rest of Canada	0.619***	1.477***	-0.081	-0.357***	0.516***
Family status (compared to single, no children)					
Couple with children	-1.861***	-1.748***	-1.076***	-0.358***	-0.106***
Couple without children	-0.472***	-0.125***	-0.158***	-0.034***	0.025***
Single parent	-0.560***	-0.533***	0.051*	-0.203***	-0.184***
Number of children	-0.493***	-0.506***	-0.344***	-0.098***	-0.020***
Unemployed	0.659***	0.846***	0.560***	0.163***	0.057***
Disabled	-0.837***	-1.036***	-0.563***	-0.129***	-0.134***

Industry of work (compared to agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting)					
Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	2.467***	2.234***	2.085***	0.003	-0.084***
Utilities	1.392***	0.752***	1.315***	0.059	-0.399***
Construction	2.217***	1.803***	2.625***	-0.267***	-0.261***
Manufacturing	1.325***	0.736***	1.814***	-0.412***	-0.331***
Wholesale trade	1.537***	0.909***	1.986***	-0.438***	-0.304***
Retail trade	1.232***	0.458***	1.643***	-0.498***	-0.281***
Transportation and warehousing	2.249***	1.678***	2.274***	-0.222***	-0.158***
Information and cultural industries	1.468***	0.762***	1.747***	-0.518***	-0.213***
Finance and insurance	1.583***	0.961***	1.979***	-0.465***	-0.266***
Real estate and rental and leasing	1.973***	1.301***	2.341***	-0.423***	-0.279***
Professional, scientific and technical services	1.803***	1.139***	1.855***	-0.349***	-0.187***
Management of companies and enterprises	1.725***	0.946***	1.762***	-0.349***	-0.218***
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	2.267***	1.559***	2.468***	-0.437***	-0.202***
Educational services	0.822***	0.106	1.052***	-0.483***	-0.197***
Health care and social assistance	1.718***	1.041***	2.030***	-0.396***	-0.282***
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.334***	0.505***	1.374***	-0.367***	-0.212***
Accommodation and food services	2.162***	1.330***	2.250***	-0.433***	-0.214***
Other services (except public administration)	1.567***	0.873***	1.883***	-0.415***	-0.258***
Public administration	1.515***	0.974***	1.386***	-0.240***	-0.024*
Years at the same address	-0.635***	-0.654***	-0.474***	-0.094***	-0.042***
Homeowner (probability)	-0.064***	-0.069***	-0.051***	-0.006***	-0.003***
Income decile (compared to 1st decile [poorest])					
2	-0.774***	-1.008***	-0.309***	-0.256***	-0.110***
3	-1.406***	-1.742***	-0.725***	-0.368***	-0.173***
4	-1.880***	-2.277***	-1.064***	-0.444***	-0.219***
5	-2.299***	-2.708***	-1.463***	-0.474***	-0.210***
6	-2.828***	-3.273***	-1.918***	-0.553***	-0.219***
7	-3.336***	-3.862***	-2.415***	-0.612***	-0.234***
8	-3.691***	-4.341***	-2.835***	-0.673***	-0.235***

9	-3.929**	-4.663***	-3.193***	-0.684***	-0.214***
10	-3.636***	-4.379***	-3.208***	-0.582***	-0.139***
Years since immigrating (compared to those born in Canada)[2]					
1	5.045***	5.272***	4.331***	-0.325***	0.247***
2	4.049***	4.032***	3.634***	-0.443***	0.171***
3	3.325***	3.441***	3.318***	-0.484***	0.115***
4	2.436***	2.526***	2.638***	-0.550***	0.069***
5	1.959***	1.972***	2.240***	-0.605***	0.042***
10	0.319***	0.276***	0.898***	-0.729***	-0.029**
15	-0.493***	-0.598***	0.184***	-0.764***	-0.054***
20	-1.026***	-1.186***	-0.194***	-0.793***	-0.130***
25	-0.948***	-1.123***	-0.279***	-0.719***	-0.084***
30+	-0.674***	-0.884***	-0.260***	-0.427***	-0.115***
Characteristics of the region of origin					
Population size (compared to rural areas)					
Small population centres (1,000–29,999)	1.559***	0.548***	-0.074**	0.407***	0.060***
Medium population centres (30,000–99,999)	2.070***	1.068***	0.716***	0.172***	0.080***
Large urban population centres (100,000+)	1.323***	0.484***	1.422***	-0.724***	0.001
Unemployment rate	0.002	0.037***	-0.101***	0.076***	0.008***
Log (median income)	3.936***	2.607***	0.539***	0.578***	0.561***
Vacancy rates		0.000	0.011***	-0.007***	0.001*
Completions per household		5.144***	2.650***	1.037***	0.293***
Log (rent)		1.757***	1.443***	0.145***	0.080***
Log (house prices)		-1.025***	-0.585***	-0.412***	0.006
Year (compared to 2001)					
2002	-1.002***	-0.958***	-0.548***	-0.212***	-0.103***
2003	0.842***	0.787***	0.838***	0.024	0.005
2004	0.026	0.209***	0.329***	-0.053**	-0.017
2005	-0.155	0.072	-0.006	0.057**	-0.047***
2006	-0.504***	-0.217***	-0.455***	0.158***	0.026*
2007	-0.623***	-0.201***	-0.404***	0.048**	0.028**
2008	-1.823***	-1.301***	-1.071***	-0.074***	-0.071***
2009	-1.296***	-0.612***	-0.294***	-0.049**	-0.141***

2010	-1.601***	-1.312***	-0.845***	-0.121***	-0.158***
2011	-1.034***	-0.699***	-0.579***	0.039*	-0.100***
2012	-2.165***	-1.906***	-1.558***	-0.034	-0.145***
2013	-1.854***	-1.568***	-1.357***	0.050**	-0.136***
2014	-1.468***	-0.962***	-1.027***	0.196***	-0.117***
2015	-4.410***	-3.868***	-3.151***	-0.143***	-0.280***
2016	-4.558***	-4.054***	-3.271***	-0.119***	-0.298***
2017	-4.442***	-4.005***	-3.359***	-0.102***	-0.282***
2018	-8.547***	-8.478***	-6.517***	-0.746***	-0.469***
2019	-3.546***	-2.952***	-2.575***	0.159***	-0.229***
2020	-4.998***	-4.447***	-3.932***	0.067***	-0.293***
Pseudo R^2	**0.091**	**0.090**	**0.082**	**0.065**	**0.105**
Number of observations	**128,847,160**	**101,126,735**	**100,948,990**	**100,948,990**	**100,948,990**

Notes:

*: Significance at the 0.1 level; ** significance at the 0.05 level; *** significance at the 0.01 level

1. Marginal effects are calculated at the mean and are reported in percentage points.
2. The regression includes one dummy variable for each number of years since immigrating. They are not all reported in this table.

6. Discussion

Our results show that the housing market plays a small but notable role in the decision to move, mostly within the same CMA. One of the unexpected findings is the negative relationship between house prices in the region of origin and mobility. Indeed, despite some dissentions, many of the earlier studies on the impact of the housing market on mobility support a positive relationship between house prices in the region of origin and mobility due to the equity lock-in effect (Bloze and Skak 2016; Bricker and Bucks 2016; Ferreira, Gyourko, and Tracy 2010, 2011; Foote 2016; Goetz 2013; Henley 1996; Modestino and Dennett 2013; Seko, Sumita, and Naoi 2012; Sterk 2015). Our results run counter to this notion, since we find a small but negative relationship between house prices and mobility. Various reasons could explain the difference. First, most studies mentioned above focused on negative price shocks. Our longitudinal study covers 20 years of data, and our results reflect multiple business cycles. Second, previous studies usually abstracted from controlling for other indicators of the housing market. It is possible that, in the previous studies, house prices were capturing the effect of other drivers of the housing market, which we account for, such as rents, completions and vacancy rates. Third, as previously mentioned, housing markets are intrinsically regional, and findings obtained from studying another country cannot easily be used to infer conclusions about Canada.

The Canadian Housing Survey (CHS) can be used to shed some light on the positive relationship between mobility and rents and the negative relationship between mobility and house prices. The CHS is a cross-sectional survey from Statistics Canada and CMHC that is conducted every two years and gathers data on housing needs and experiences of a sample of Canadian households. In 2018, about 61,000 households responded to the survey. People living in social and affordable housing are voluntarily oversampled in the CHS. Among the many topics covered by the CHS, some questions include information about a household's most recent move.

The CHS suggests that our results might reflect renters' and homeowners' motivation to move. Table A2 shows that the biggest motivation for renters is to buy a house, while homeowners' main motivation is to move to a larger or better-quality dwelling. These objectives are most likely achieved through short-distance (intra-CMA) moves, which are also the most common type of move. In both cases, an increase in house prices raises the cost of moving by making houses less affordable and the incremental costs of buying a bigger or better-quality house more expensive. On the flip side, an increase in rents (and no equivalent increase in house prices) lowers the relative cost of owning versus renting and may convince renters to buy a house. Reducing housing costs is also mentioned by renters as a notable reason for moving. This suggests that, in absence of rent regulations, rent increases might be felt quickly by renters and might incite them to move to a more affordable dwelling. Similarly, another reason for moving cited by renters is being forced to move. Difficulty paying rent (which is one of the most common reasons for eviction) and certain evidence indicating that landlords use evictions to circumvent rent control policies and increase rents (Geddes and Holz 2022) suggest that increased rents might lead to more evictions. But of course, house prices and rents tend to follow each other over the long term, so it is not easy to isolate the two dynamics.

The CHS can also provide additional insights for the different motivations for short-distance and long-distance moves. Table A3 shows that the main motivation for a move to another city is employment, and the main motivation for a move within the same city is bigger or better-quality housing. This is consistent with our findings about the unemployment rate driving intra-provincial moves and the housing market being a more important factor for intra-CMA moves.

The relationship between housing markets and mobility is more complex than a simple one-way relationship (Mulder 2006), and challenges any analytical approach to measure it. Not only does the price of housing affect households' decisions to move, but mobility may also be used as a tool by households to achieve certain housing outcomes. In this study, we avoided endogeneity problems by exploring the relationship between the housing market in the region of origin and the determinants of moving. Other analytical approaches could be used in future studies to investigate the characteristics of the market of destination, or the housing outcomes achieved by households after moving. Moreover, our data stopped in 2020, and it might be interesting for future studies to explore how disruptive the pandemic was on the dynamics between the housing market and mobility.

7. Conclusion

This study finds that, while the housing market of origin plays a role in the decision to move, a large proportion of the variation in residential mobility can be attributed to the socioeconomic characteristics of the household, including age, time at the same address, tenure, having children, time since immigration, income, and employment status. It also finds the influence of the housing market of origin to be more significant for moves within a CMA than for moves to another CMA or province. On the flip side, higher unemployment rate in the region of origin tends to decrease the probability of moving within a CMA, but increase the probability of moving to another CMA, whether in the same province or in another province. Finally, the study revealed a positive relationship between rents in the region of origin and mobility and a negative relationship between house prices in the region of origin and mobility.

This research provides valuable insights into how residential mobility and the housing market interact in Canada. Policymakers can use findings from this study to estimate how new housing policies might impact mobility, which is a crucial element of a well-functioning economy. For example, if policymakers are exploring a policy that would increase housing supply and reduce rents in a specific area, they could use our estimated marginal effects on rent and housing starts to predict how this might influence household moves within the same CMA, to another CMA or to another province. Even when the marginal effects are small, the impact on moving trends at the macro level might still be notable.

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Appendix

Table A1: Marginal effects[1] of socioeconomic characteristics on intra-CMA mobility for chosen CMAs

Household characteristics	Toronto	Vancouver	Montreal	Calgary	Edmonton	Ottawa-Gatineau
Sex	0.254***	0.051	0.049	0.156**	-0.069	0.057
Age (compared to 21–24 years old)						
25–34 years old	2.932***	2.606***	1.176***	2.181***	0.890***	1.303***
35–44 years old	0.864***	0.537***	-1.860***	0.048	-0.975***	-0.895***
45–54 years old	-2.048***	-2.467***	-4.581***	-2.653***	-3.566***	-3.325***
55–64 years old	-4.190***	-4.734***	-6.955***	-5.051***	-6.101***	-5.274***
65–74 years old	-5.408***	-6.079***	-7.699***	-6.424***	-7.441***	-6.015***
75–84 years old	-5.699***	-6.644***	-6.499***	-6.736***	-6.978***	-6.998***
85 and over	-1.400**	-2.511**	-1.654***	-1.638	-5.311***	-1.602
English			-1.390***			
French	-0.918***	-0.514		0.892**	0.554	0.630***
Family status (compared to single, no children)						
Couple with children	-1.617***	-1.201***	-0.963***	-1.215***	-1.199***	-0.907***
Couple without children	0.122***	0.012	-0.101**	0.051	0.037	-0.122
Single parent	-0.994***	0.094	0.438***	0.049	-0.072	0.284**
Number of children	-0.413***	-0.738***	-0.526***	-0.466***	-0.308***	-0.470***
Unemployed	0.384***	0.777***	0.448***	0.482***	0.752***	0.462***
Disabled	-1.466***	-0.747**	-1.397***	-1.336***	-0.765**	-0.590*
Industry of work (compared to agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting)						
Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	5.176***	0.865*	2.653***	1.586***	1.278**	0.220
Utilities	4.271***	-0.678*	1.869***	0.405	-0.007	0.268
Construction	5.415***	1.036***	3.088***	2.246***	2.347***	1.985***
Manufacturing	4.873***	-0.097	2.371***	1.340***	1.105**	0.700
Wholesale trade	4.986***	0.197	2.653***	1.441***	0.977*	1.377***

Retail trade	4.388***	-0.353	2.309***	0.808	0.364	0.961*
Transportation and warehousing	5.164***	0.082	3.094***	1.482***	1.277**	1.551***
Information and cultural industries	4.845***	-0.279	2.418***	0.462	-0.227	1.193**
Finance and insurance	5.107***	0.086	2.574***	1.160**	0.433	1.410***
Real estate and rental and leasing	5.209***	0.286	2.789***	2.050***	1.601***	1.936***
Professional, scientific and technical services	5.344***	-0.107	2.413***	0.910*	0.208	1.038**
Management of companies and enterprises	4.556***	-0.065	2.133***	1.203**	1.206**	0.983*
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	5.447***	0.726***	2.912***	2.153***	1.578***	1.358***
Educational services	4.250***	-0.813***	1.710***	0.109	-0.610	0.270
Health care and social assistance	4.748***	0.180	2.417***	1.680***	1.219**	1.135**
Arts, entertainment and recreation	4.420***	-0.507*	2.036***	0.404	-0.200	0.592
Accommodation and food services	5.094***	0.155	2.818***	1.491***	1.367***	1.242**
Other services (except public administration)	4.953***	0.207	2.477***	1.250**	0.744	1.047**
Public administration	4.269***	-0.514**	1.912***	0.870*	-0.012	0.860*
Years at the same address	-0.433***	-0.600***	-0.460***	-0.650***	-0.614***	-0.448***
Homeowner (probability)	-0.036***	-0.044***	-0.059***	-0.075***	-0.081***	-0.061***
Income decile (compared to 1st decile [poorest])						
2	-0.754***	-0.917***	-0.359***	-0.194	-0.481**	0.062
3	-1.405***	-1.740***	-0.744***	-0.565***	-0.808***	0.133
4	-1.949***	-2.229***	-0.836***	-0.884***	-0.725***	-0.008
5	-2.401***	-2.614***	-1.012***	-1.514***	-1.052***	-0.211
6	-2.786***	-2.970***	-1.135***	-1.802***	-1.432***	-0.685***
7	-3.219***	-3.428***	-1.450***	-2.532***	-2.244***	-0.986***
8	-3.576***	-3.833***	-1.878***	-3.145***	-2.895***	-1.366***
9	-4.041***	-4.295***	-2.118***	-3.697***	-3.570***	-1.817***
10	-4.180***	-4.217***	-1.769***	-4.046***	-3.404***	-2.112***

Years since immigrating (compared to those born in Canada)[2]						
1	5.549***	5.231***	3.108***	7.911***	4.627***	4.029***
2	4.391***	4.012***	2.715***	4.648***	4.162***	2.952***
3	4.056***	3.677***	2.381***	4.416***	4.597***	2.271***
4	3.258***	3.604***	2.188***	3.848***	3.321***	1.512***
5	2.765***	3.500***	2.065***	2.482***	2.636***	1.642***
10	1.352***	1.275***	1.077***	0.888***	1.252***	0.421
15	0.713***	-0.173	0.512***	-0.390	-0.186	-0.037
20	0.119	-0.223	-0.032	-0.494	-0.651	-0.264
25	0.187	-0.921***	-0.525**	-0.943**	0.390	-0.429
30+	-0.088	-0.498***	-0.421***	-0.407**	-0.986***	-0.583***
Characteristics of the region of origin						
Population size (compared to rural areas)						
Small population centres (1,000–29,999)	-1.675***	-0.539	1.193***	-0.512	1.181***	1.156***
Medium population centres (30,000–99,999)	-1.812***	0.542	1.683***	1.069***	2.069***	2.148***
Large urban population centres (100,000+)	-0.690***	0.350	2.109***	0.714**	1.916***	1.699***
Vacancy rates	0.018***	0.021**	0.024***	-0.035***	0.010	0.006
Completions per household	4.643***	6.527***	3.822***	-4.511***	-8.061***	-1.097
Log (rent)	1.900***	0.988***	1.210***	-1.696***	-0.115	0.457***
Log (house prices)	-0.528***	-0.124*	-0.179**	0.068	-1.320***	-1.004***
Year (compared to 2001)						
2002	-0.549***	-0.692**	-1.012***	-1.116***	0.182	-0.260
2003	1.164***	0.931***	0.745***	-0.328	0.692**	1.220***
2004	0.870***	-0.319	-0.671***	0.375	1.797***	0.669**
2005	0.542***	0.196	-0.715***	-1.108***	-0.085	0.774***
2006	-0.283*	-1.117***	-0.640***	-1.608***	0.161	0.244
2007	-0.490***	-0.887***	-0.367**	-2.037***	-0.309	0.712***
2008	-1.274***	-2.684***	-0.980***	-2.032***	0.244	0.322
2009	-0.194	-0.568**	-0.906***	-0.693**	1.503***	1.469***
2010	-1.651***	-1.414***	-0.764***	-1.817***	0.802**	0.843***
2011	-1.372***	-1.326***	-0.506***	-1.780***	1.193***	0.692**
2012	-2.104***	-2.961***	-1.811***	-3.069***	-0.187	-0.146

2013	-1.818***	-1.946***	-1.423***	-2.022***	0.859***	-0.134
2014	-1.534***	-0.805***	-1.181***	-1.030***	1.630***	0.278
2015	-3.227***	-3.786***	-3.200***	-4.199***	-1.158***	-1.869***
2016	-3.481***	-4.307***	-3.316***	-4.226***	-1.102***	-1.759***
2017	-4.162***	-4.413***	-2.502***	-4.363***	-1.842***	-1.408***
2018	-7.184***	-8.618***	-6.889***	-8.187***	-5.397***	-4.962***
2019	-3.378***	-3.653***	-1.267***	-3.959***	-1.356***	-0.591***
2020	-4.486***	-5.119***	-3.256***	-5.516***	-2.611***	-1.922***
Pseudo R2	0.083	0.069	0.080	0.094	0.096	0.085
Number of observations	19,291,330	8,030,750	14,956,110	4,568,150	4,093,480	4,494,550

Notes:

*: Significance at the 0.1 level; ** significance at the 0.05 level; *** significance at the 0.01 level

1. Marginal effects are calculated at the mean and are reported in percentage points.

2. The regression includes one dummy variable for each number of years since immigrating. They are not all reported in this table.

Table A2: Moving reasons by tenure type before the move, 2021 CHS

Reason for moving	Among previous owners (%)	Among previous renters (%)
Forced to move	2.8	6.8
Employment	8.2	8.6
School	2.2	2.4
Form own household	3.5	12.6
Be closer to family	9.4	6.6
Household size change	20.0	13.0
Reduce commute	5.8	5.9
Bigger/better housing	32.5	26.7
Reduce housing costs	13.6	6.3
Better neighbourhood	17.7	14.3
Personal health	3.8	3.6
Become homeowner	3.6	37.3
Issues w/ landlord or tenant	0.6	6.2
Other	1.3	1.6

Table A3: Moving reasons by type of move, 2021 CHS

Reason for moving	Intra-city	Inter-city
Forced to move	4.8	3.1
Employment	2.1	20.2
School	1.3	5.0
Form own household	11.4	10.8
Be closer to family	3.9	14.0
Household size change	17.8	13.0
Reduce commute	4.5	8.7
Bigger/better housing	32.1	19.3
Reduce housing costs	9.1	8.8
Better neighbourhood	13.9	17.1
Personal health	3.5	3.7
Become homeowner	24.2	19.4
Issues w/ landlord or tenant	4.2	1.8
Other	1.6	1.3