

# Lifestyle Factors and Moving in Nonmetro Iowa

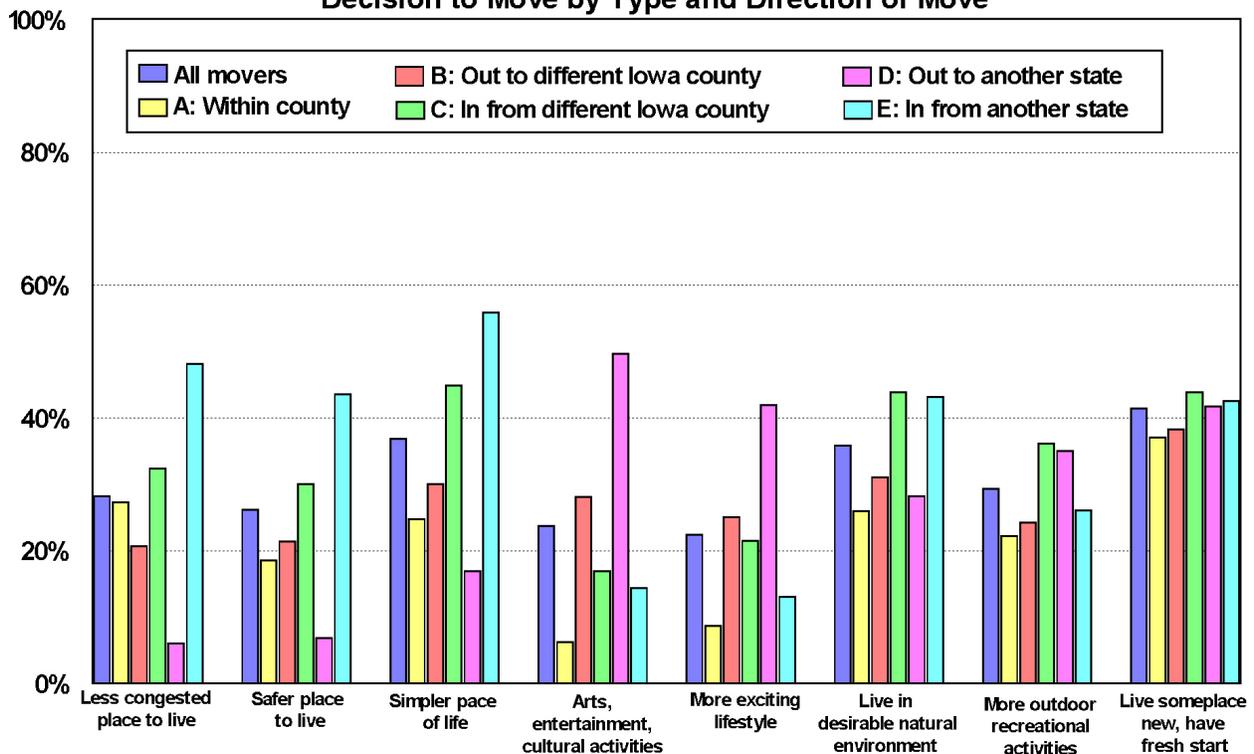
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## Findings

This study highlights the influence of lifestyle factors in the decisions of people who have recently moved to or from 19 selected nonmetropolitan counties of Iowa. The purpose is to increase understanding about why people move so community leaders and citizens can develop actionable strategies for attracting and retaining population. Using data from a survey mailed to residents who moved, this study finds that:

- Seventy percent of respondents cited at least one lifestyle factor as important in their decision to move.
- Respondents moving into the counties, whether from other states or other areas of Iowa, were more likely than those who moved out to say they moved to find a less congested place, a safer place, a desirable natural environment, or a simpler pace of life.
- Just over 48 percent of the respondents who moved into Iowa from other states said they wanted a less congested place to live; six percent who left for other states said this.
- Nearly 44 percent of the respondents who moved into Iowa from other states said they wanted a desirable natural environment; 28 percent who left for other states said this.
- Respondents moving out of the counties, whether to other states or other areas of Iowa, were more likely than those who moved in to say they moved to find arts, entertainment, or cultural activities, or a more exciting lifestyle.
- The youngest respondents, age 18 – 24, were the most likely to say they moved to find arts, entertainment, or cultural activities (32.8%), a more exciting lifestyle (35.9%), or to live someplace new and have a fresh start (60.9%). The oldest respondents were the least likely to note these factors in their moving decision.

**Figure 1: Percent Responding ‘Yes’ to Selected Lifestyle Factors as Part of Decision to Move by Type and Direction of Move**



Source: Community Vitality Center, New Movers Study

**The Study**

This report is the fourth in a series<sup>1</sup> that examines the experiences of people who have recently moved to or from 19 selected nonmetropolitan counties of Iowa. The goal is to better understand the decisions and thoughts of people who have moved and what they think about the communities and areas where they have lived. The objective of this project is to help community leaders better understand local household moving trends so they can develop actionable strategies to address the reasons why people come, why people leave, enhance the qualities that cause people to stay, and thus stabilize or increase their populations.

The research results are from a survey of nonmetropolitan movers in 19 selected counties in Iowa (Adams, Appanoose, Cherokee, Davis, Decatur, Dickinson, Floyd, Hamilton, Hardin, Henry, Howard, Jefferson, Page, Ringgold, Sioux, Taylor, Union, Van Buren, Wayne).<sup>2</sup> People who had moved either into or out of these 19 counties were identified through a purchased database of new movers. The criteria to be included in the study were that both current and previous zip codes had to be known, at least one of the zip codes had to be from the selected 19 counties, and the zip codes had to be different, indicating a community move rather than just a move across the street or down the block.

Category	Number	Type and Direction of Move
A: <i>Within County, Zipcode change</i>	85	Moved within one of the 19 study counties but changed zip code.
B: <i>Out To Another Iowa County</i>	206	Moved out of one of the study counties to another county in Iowa.
C: <i>In From Another Iowa County</i>	207	Moved from another county in Iowa into one of the study counties.
D: <i>Out To Another State</i>	121	Moved out of one of the study counties to another state.
E: <i>In From Another State</i>	159	Moved from another state into one of the study counties.

The survey asked questions about the respondent’s previous location as well as their current location, reasons for moving, satisfaction with multiple factors in their communities, as well as their demographic, social, and economic situation. The surveys were mailed in the fall of 2005 and 737 respondents who met the study criteria replied for a response rate of 35 percent. Most respondents had moved during 2003 through 2005.

Five categories of movers are used to examine the results (Table 1). Among the respondents, 696 (94.4%) fit into just one of the five mover categories. The other 41 respondents (5.6%) had moved out of one of the study counties and into another of the 19 included counties. These 41 responses are included as both out-movers to another Iowa county and in-movers to a county in the study. However, in the results that follow, the category of *All Movers* includes only the 737 respondents without duplication.

**Lifestyle Factors and Type of Move**

This report focuses on lifestyle-related factors, including recreation, entertainment, and pace of life, that

influenced the decision to move. This report adds to the results described in previous reports<sup>1</sup> by presenting more detailed information about specific lifestyle factors that respondents said influenced their moving decision. These results come from a series of eight questions that asked about finding a less congested or safer place to live, more arts or entertainment, a desirable natural environment, outdoor recreation, or living someplace new and having a fresh start (Table 2).<sup>1</sup> For each of the eight items, the respondent was asked to circle “yes” or “no” if the factor was involved in the decision to move. Respondents could respond “yes” to more than one of the eight items.

When thinking about the role that these lifestyle factors played in their decision to move, 70 percent of the respondents selected “yes” for at least one of the eight items. This reinforces the importance of lifestyle factors in the decision to move, however, the specific factors varied significantly in the role they played in the moving decision.

Among all respondents, 28.2 percent said that finding a less congested place

	Type and Direction of Move					
	All Movers <sup>b</sup>	A: Within County, Zipcode Change	B: Out To Different Iowa County	C: In From Different Iowa County	D: Out To Another State	E: In From Another State
Lifestyle Factors	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes
To find a less congested place to live	28.2	27.2	20.6	32.3	6.0	48.1
To find a safer place to live	26.1	18.5	21.3	30.0	6.8	43.5
To live in desirable natural environment	35.8	25.9	31.0	43.8	28.2	43.1
To find more outdoor recreational activities	29.3	22.2	24.2	36.1	35.0	26.0
To find arts, entertainment, cultural activities	23.7	6.2	28.1	16.9	49.6	14.3
To find a simpler pace of life	36.8	24.7	30.0	44.8	16.9	55.8
To find a more exciting lifestyle	22.4	8.6	25.0	21.4	41.9	13.0
To live in someplace new or have a fresh start	41.4	37.0	38.2	43.8	41.7	42.5

<sup>a</sup>respondents could respond “Yes” to more than one question; <sup>b</sup>based on 737 total respondents.

Table 3. Percent Responding “Yes”<sup>a</sup> to Lifestyle Factors as Part of Decision to Move by Age.

Lifestyle Factors	Age in Years						
	All Ages <sup>b</sup>	18 – 24	25 – 34	35 – 44	45 – 59	60 – 69	70 or Older
To find a less congested place to live	27.9	25.0	30.1	26.0	27.7	30.1	26.5
To find a safer place to live	25.6	26.6	23.7	25.2	26.2	25.0	28.4
To live in desirable natural environment	35.8	31.3	32.7	32.3	42.8	38.8	32.1
To find more outdoor recreational activities	29.3	32.8	28.2	30.7	32.4	29.8	19.3
To find arts, entertainment, cultural activities	23.8	32.8	22.4	24.4	24.9	22.1	18.1
To find a simpler pace of life	36.3	32.8	35.3	29.1	37.0	46.2	38.1
To find a more exciting lifestyle	22.4	35.9	26.9	22.0	22.7	16.3	11.1
To live in someplace new or have a fresh start	41.3	60.9	42.9	40.2	44.5	39.2	20.7

<sup>a</sup>respondents could respond “Yes” to more than one question; <sup>b</sup>based on 728 respondents who completed the age question.

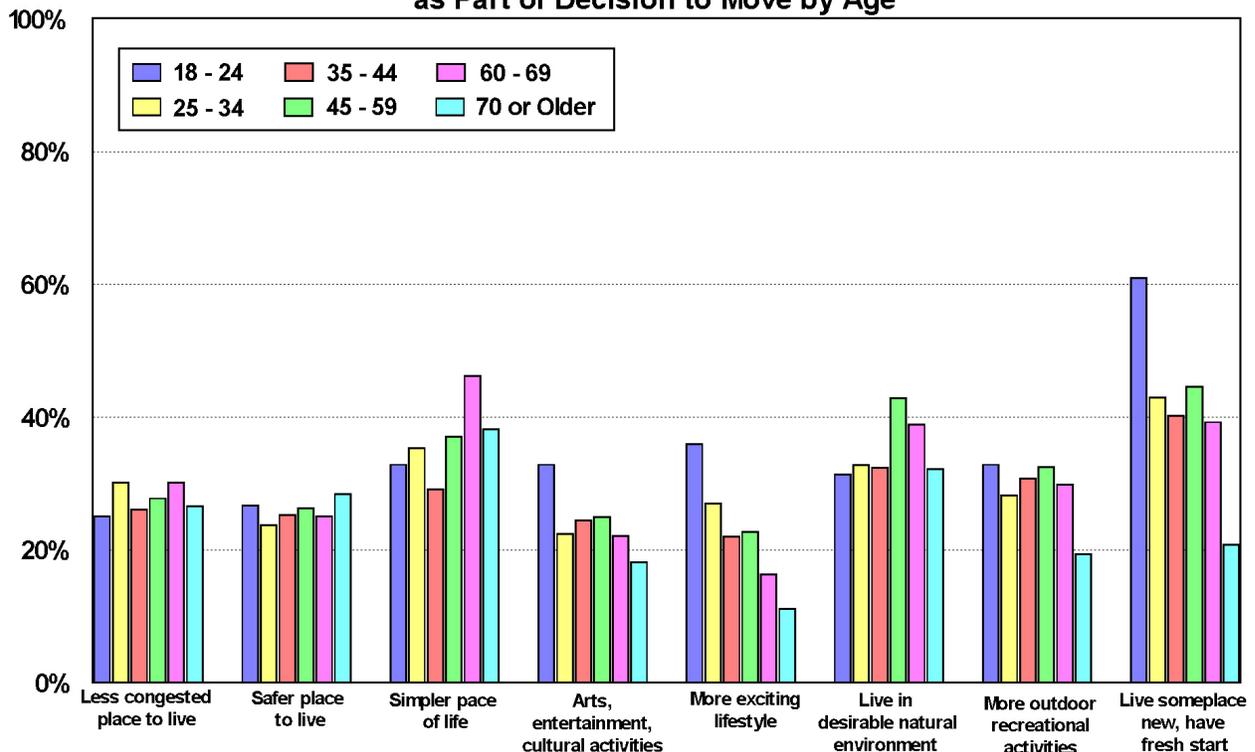
to live influenced their moving decision. In a similar fashion, 26.1 percent wanted a safer place to live while 36.8 percent wanted a simpler pace of life (Table 2, Figure 1). In contrast, some respondents (22.4%) reported they moved to find a more exciting lifestyle and 23.7 percent moved to find arts, entertainment, or cultural activities. Wanting to live in a desirable natural environment was a factor in moving for 35.8 percent while finding more outdoor recreational activities was noted by 29.3 percent. Finally, living

someplace new or having a fresh start was important as 41.4 percent of the respondents said this was a factor in their decision to move (Table 2, Figure 1).

Responses by mover category (Table 1) provided clear variation in the roles that lifestyle factors played in moving decisions, with important differences on most of these factors between those who moved into the counties and those who moved out. Among the respondents, 32.3 percent of those who moved into the

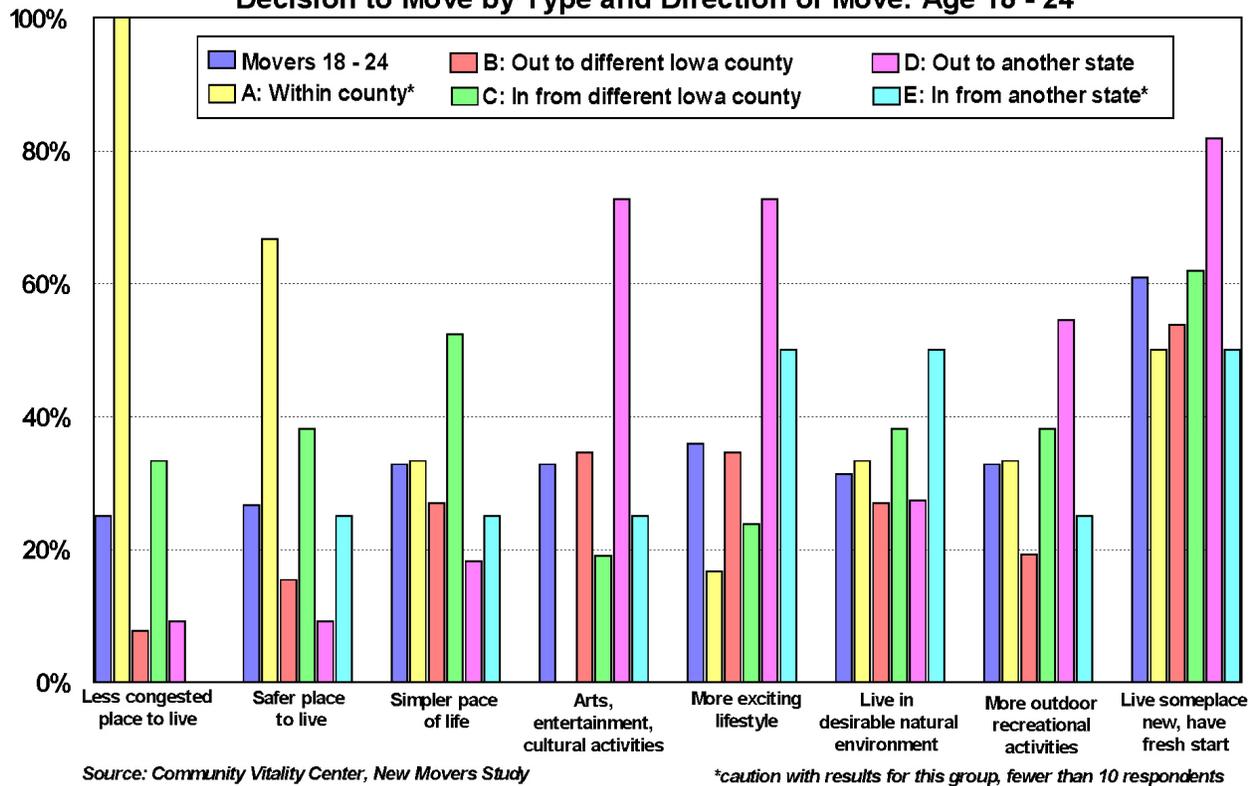
counties from somewhere else in Iowa (Group C) said they moved to find a less congested place to live compared with 20.6 percent who moved out to another Iowa location (Group B). However, a large difference for this item emerged between those who moved in or out from other states. Forty-eight percent of those who came into the counties from other states (Group E) said they wanted a less congested place but only six percent who left for other states (Group D) said this (Table 2, Figure 1).

Figure 2: Percent Responding ‘Yes’ to Selected Lifestyle Factors as Part of Decision to Move by Age

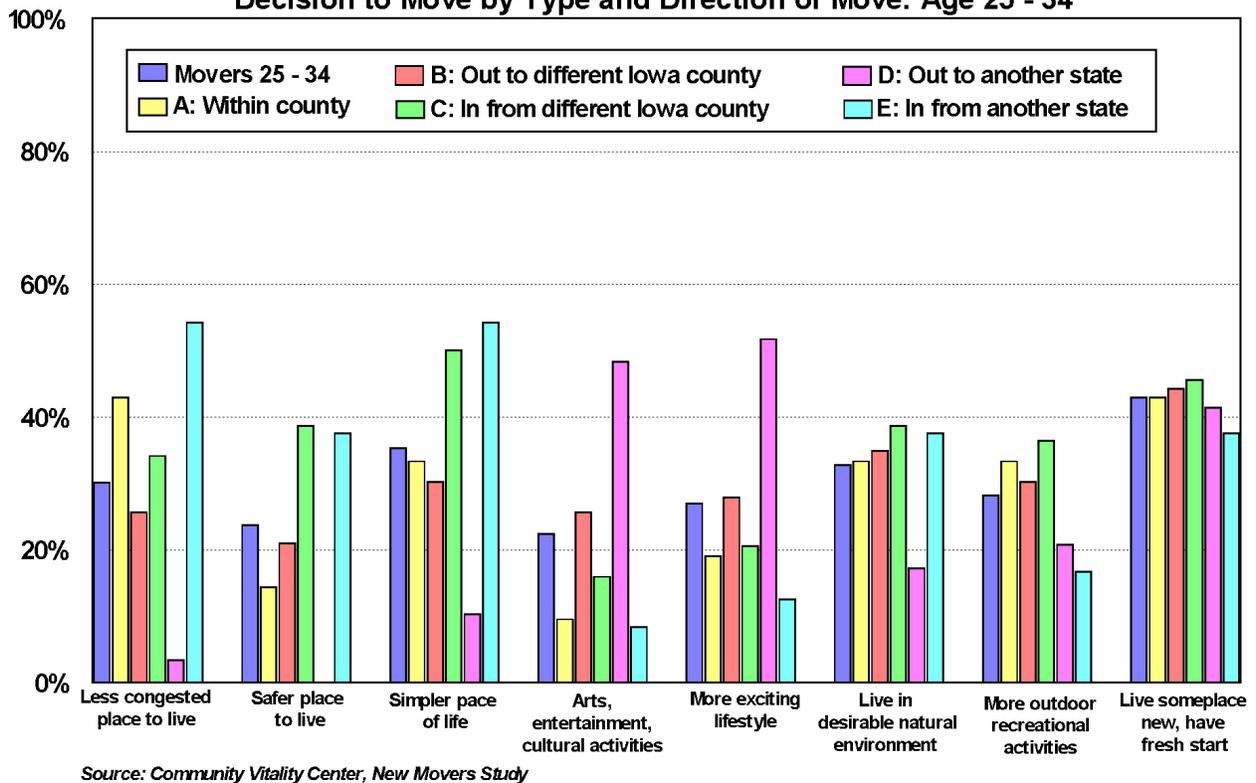


Source: Community Vitality Center, New Movers Study

**Figure 3: Percent Responding ‘Yes’ to Selected Lifestyle Factors as Part of Decision to Move by Type and Direction of Move: Age 18 - 24**



**Figure 4: Percent Responding ‘Yes’ to Selected Lifestyle Factors as Part of Decision to Move by Type and Direction of Move: Age 25 - 34**



The responses for the questions about a safer place to live and a simpler pace of life followed a similar pattern as the item for less congestion. Many of the respondents (43% and 55%) who came to Iowa from other states (Group E) said these were factors in their decision to move compared with relatively few (6% and 16%) of those who left Iowa (Group D). The respondents who moved in from other Iowa counties were also more likely to note these factors in their moving decision than those moving out to other areas of Iowa (Table 2, Figure 1). Overall, those who came to these counties were more likely to say they wanted a less congested place, a safer place, or a simpler pace of life than those who left.

This pattern reverses for factors regarding arts, entertainment, or cultural activities and a more exciting lifestyle. For these items, those leaving Iowa were more likely (49% and 41%) to note them as factors in their moving decision than respondents moving into Iowa (14% and 13%). Those moving out of the counties to other areas in Iowa also were more likely to note these factors than the respondents who moved in from other counties in the state. Overall, those who left these counties were more likely to say they wanted arts, entertainment, cultural activities or a more exciting lifestyle than those who moved in. The respondents who stayed in the same county in their move (Group A) were the least likely (6% and 8%) to cite these factors in their moving decision (Table 2, Figure 1).

The natural environment played a role in the moving decision for many respondents but a somewhat unexpected pattern emerged for this factor. Although Iowa doesn't have mountains or oceans, those coming into the counties were more likely to note that living in a desirable natural environment influenced their decision than those who moved out of the counties. Forty-three percent of those moving into the counties, from either other Iowa counties or other states, cited wanting to live in a desirable natural environment compared with 28 percent of those leaving Iowa or 31 percent of movers elsewhere in Iowa. The natural

environment was also cited by more than a fourth of the within-county movers as well. Outdoor recreation was selected by fewer respondents overall than the natural environment and with a less consistent response pattern as well. Thirty-six percent of movers into the counties from other areas of Iowa as well as 35 percent of those moving to other states noted this factor (Table 2, Figure 1).

Finally, the results show that many respondents, regardless of which type of move, were hoping for something new or different in their lives. There was less than seven percentage points difference (37.0% to 43.8%) among the mover types in those saying that, as they made their decision to move, they wanted to live someplace new or have a fresh start. Even those who moved locally within the same county were nearly as likely to cite having a fresh start as a part of their moving decision as were the respondents who moved to or from other states (Table 2, Figure 1).

### Lifestyle Factors by Age and Type of Move

Age and life-cycle stage influence decisions about moving. The respondents were grouped into six age categories to examine how lifestyle factors and the moving decision varied (Tables 3, 5).<sup>3</sup> There was relatively little difference by age in the percentage of movers interested in finding a less congested or a safer place to live. Between 25% and 30% of each age group said they wanted a less congested place to live and similar proportions (23% - 28%) said their moving decision was influenced by finding a safer location. Unlike the significant differences noted earlier between those who moved into Iowa and those who moved out, respondents who were age 18 to 24 were just as likely to have concerns about congestion and safety as those who were middle age or those age 60 to 70 or older (Table 3, Figure 2).

In other lifestyle factors, age differences in responses did emerge. The respondents age 60 - 69 were the most likely (46%) to say they wanted a simpler pace of life compared with those age 35 - 44 who were the least likely (29%) to note that.

More than 20 percentage points separated the youngest respondents who said that moving to find a more exciting lifestyle was part of their decision (35.9%) from the oldest group for which just 11.1 percent said that. Likewise, the youngest group had the most respondents (32.8%) citing arts, entertainment, or cultural activities compared with the oldest group (18.1%) who said this the least (Table 3, Figure 2).

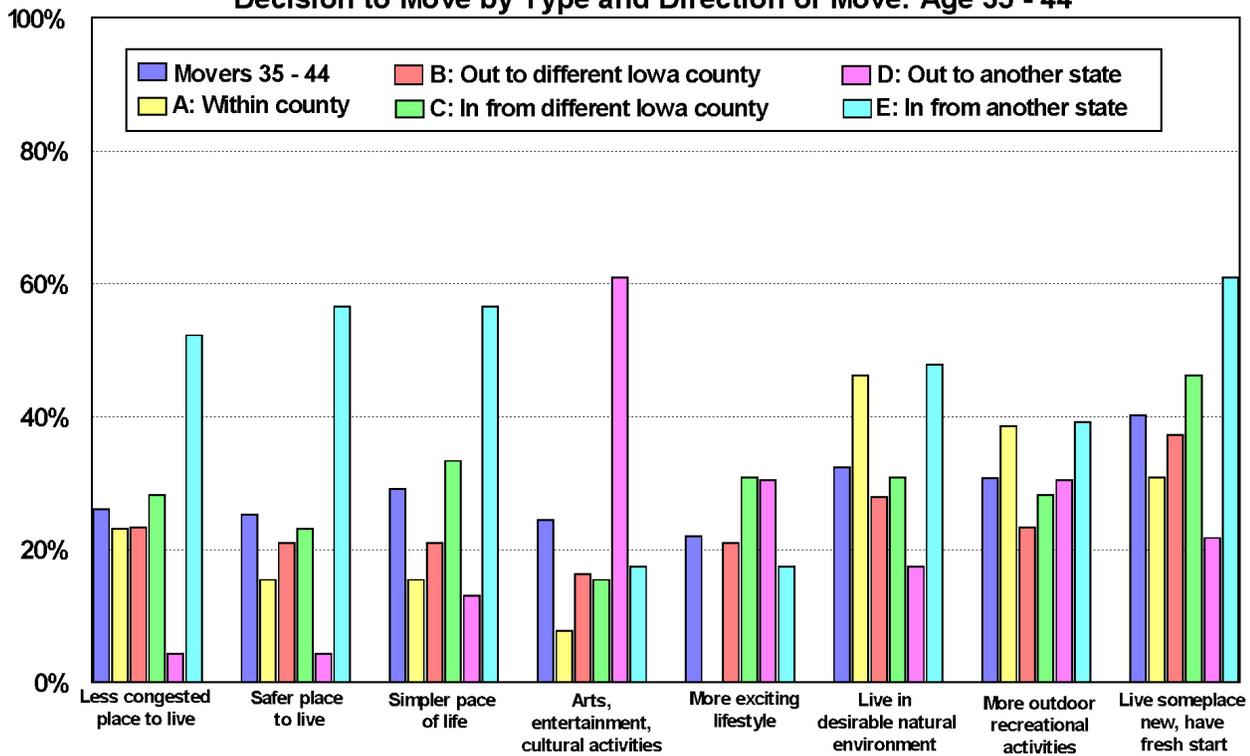
Approximately 32 percent of most age groups said that moving to live in a desirable natural environment was important, however, those age 45 - 59 (42.8%) and age 60 - 69 (38.8%) were more likely than the others to cite this factor. The respondents age 70 and above (19.3%) had the least interest in finding more outdoor recreation. About 30 percent of the other age groups, however, did note outdoor recreation as part of their moving decision (Table 3, Figure 2).

The most dramatic difference by age in the lifestyle factors was in the interest in living someplace new or having a fresh start. Almost 61 percent of the youngest respondents said that this was a factor in their moving decision. The age groups from 25 through 69 were much less likely (39% - 44%) to cite this factor, however, just 20.7 percent of those 70 or older said they moved to live someplace new or have a fresh start (Table 3, Figure 2).

This study provides the ability to look for decision patterns that might be unique or specific to one particular group or age combination (Table 4).<sup>4</sup> In general, many of the significant differences in these lifestyle factors between those who moved into the counties and those who moved out remained across the age groups.

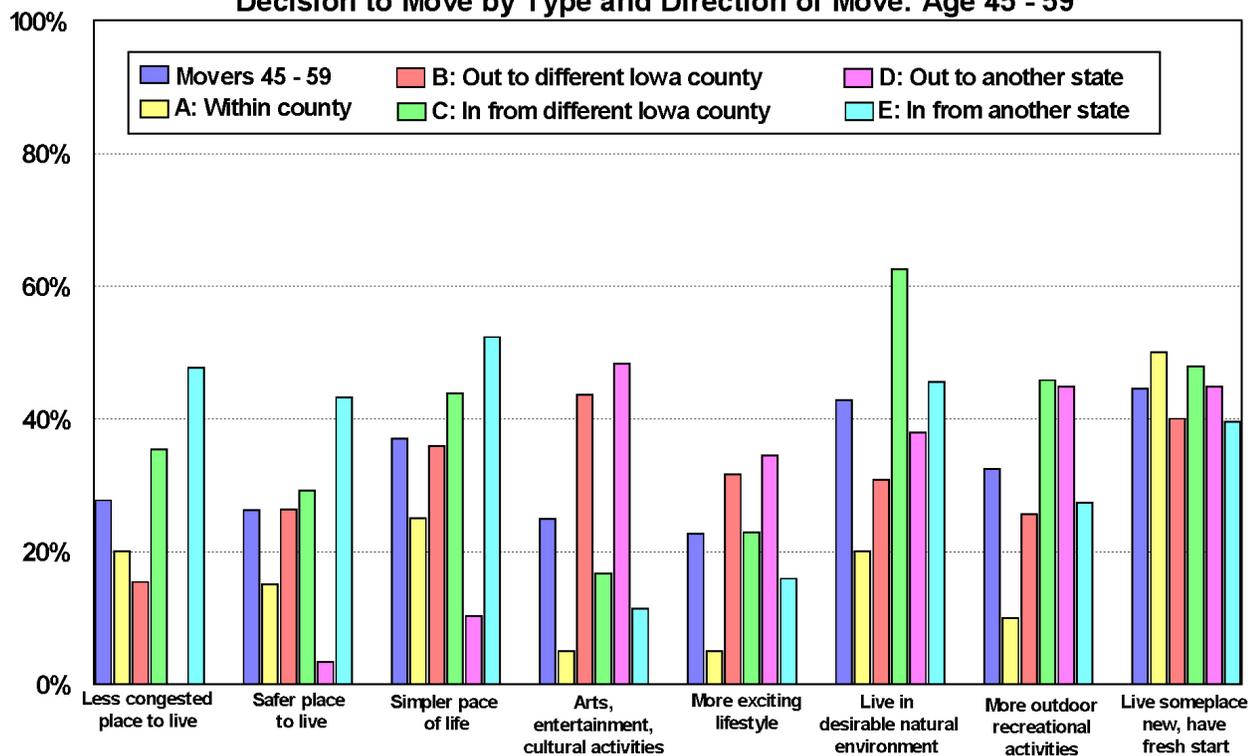
The 18 - 24 age group had some of the highest proportions of "yes" responses on these lifestyle factors. All (100%) of the within-county movers of this age said finding a less congested place to live was important and nearly 67 percent wanted a safer location. In contrast to the local movers age 18 - 24, the respondents of that age who left the state had a sharply different set of responses. Nearly 73 percent of these respondents said that

**Figure 5: Percent Responding 'Yes' to Selected Lifestyle Factors as Part of Decision to Move by Type and Direction of Move: Age 35 - 44**



Source: Community Vitality Center, New Movers Study

**Figure 6: Percent Responding 'Yes' to Selected Lifestyle Factors as Part of Decision to Move by Type and Direction of Move: Age 45 - 59**



Source: Community Vitality Center, New Movers Study

arts, entertainment, and cultural activities influenced their moving decision as well as 73 percent who noted finding a more exciting lifestyle. Fewer than 10 percent of the out-of-state movers this age were seeking a less congested place or a safer place to live. Although relatively high proportions of all the mover categories of the 18 – 24 year olds said they wanted to live someplace new or have a new start, nearly 82 percent of those this age who left Iowa said this, more than any other age or mover group (Table 4, Figure 3).

The set of responses that emerged for those who were age 25 – 34 mirrored the overall pattern of responses by type of move. Those of this age who were moving into the counties were more likely than those who moved out to say they wanted a less congested place to live, a safer place, a simpler pace of life, and a desirable natural environment. Those moving out were more likely than those who moved in to note a more exciting lifestyle and arts, entertainment, and cultural activities in their moving decision. As with the overall pattern, the most dramatic differences for this age group came between those moving in or out from other states with more modest differences for movers between counties in Iowa (Table 4, Figure 4).

There was remarkable consistency in the response patterns of between-state movers for all the other age groups as well. Much larger proportions of those age 35 or older who moved to Iowa from other states (Group E) cited less congestion, safer places to live, and a simpler pace of life than those who left the state (Group D). Larger proportions who moved out of Iowa (Group D) noted a more exciting lifestyle and arts, entertainment, and cultural activities than those age 35 and over who moved into the state (Group E) (Table 4, Figures 5 – 8). Although there was more variation in the responses for movers between counties within Iowa, in general those moving into the counties were more likely to cite congestion, safety, and a simpler pace of life than those who left while those who left were more likely to note arts, entertainment, and a more exciting lifestyle.

There was less consistency or similarity in the responses to the questions about a desirable natural environment, outdoor recreation, or living someplace new for the respondents age 35 and above. For those 35 – 44, living in a desirable natural environment was most important for within-county movers (46.2%) and those coming from other states (47.8%). Among the respondents age 45 – 59 and those 70 or older, a desirable natural environment most often influenced the moving decision of those coming into the counties from other areas of Iowa (age 45 – 59, 62.5%; age 70 or older, 47.8%). Besides the youngest respondents, the only other groups to have at least 60 percent citing living someplace new or having a fresh start were those age 35 – 44 moving into Iowa from other states (60.9%) and those age 60 – 69 moving out of Iowa (64.3%) (Table 4, Figures 5 – 8).

### Summary

Lifestyle factors played a role in the moving decision of 70 percent of the respondents in the study. Age influenced the pattern of responses in that the youngest respondents, age 18 – 24, were the most likely to say they moved to find arts, entertainment, or cultural activities, a more exciting lifestyle, or to live someplace new and have a fresh start. The oldest respondents, 70 and above, were the least likely to note these factors in their moving decision. Moving to find a simpler pace of life was cited most often by respondents age 60 – 69 while those age 45 through 59 most frequently noted that living in a desirable natural environment influenced their decision to move.

Although there were some differences in the most important factors cited by the respondents based on their age, remarkable consistencies in the responses emerged based on the type of move made. Respondents moving into the counties, whether from other states or other areas of Iowa, were more likely than those who moved out to say they moved to find a less congested place to live, a safer place to live, or a simpler pace of life. Especially dramatic differences in responses occurred between those who moved in or out from other states.

This pattern was reversed for the factors regarding arts, entertainment, or cultural activities and a more exciting life style. For these items, those leaving the counties were more likely to note them as factors in their moving decision than respondents moving into the counties and, again, it was between those moving to or from other states and Iowa where the most pronounced differences occurred. The respondents who stayed in the same county in their move were the least likely to cite arts, entertainment, or an exciting lifestyle in their moving decision.

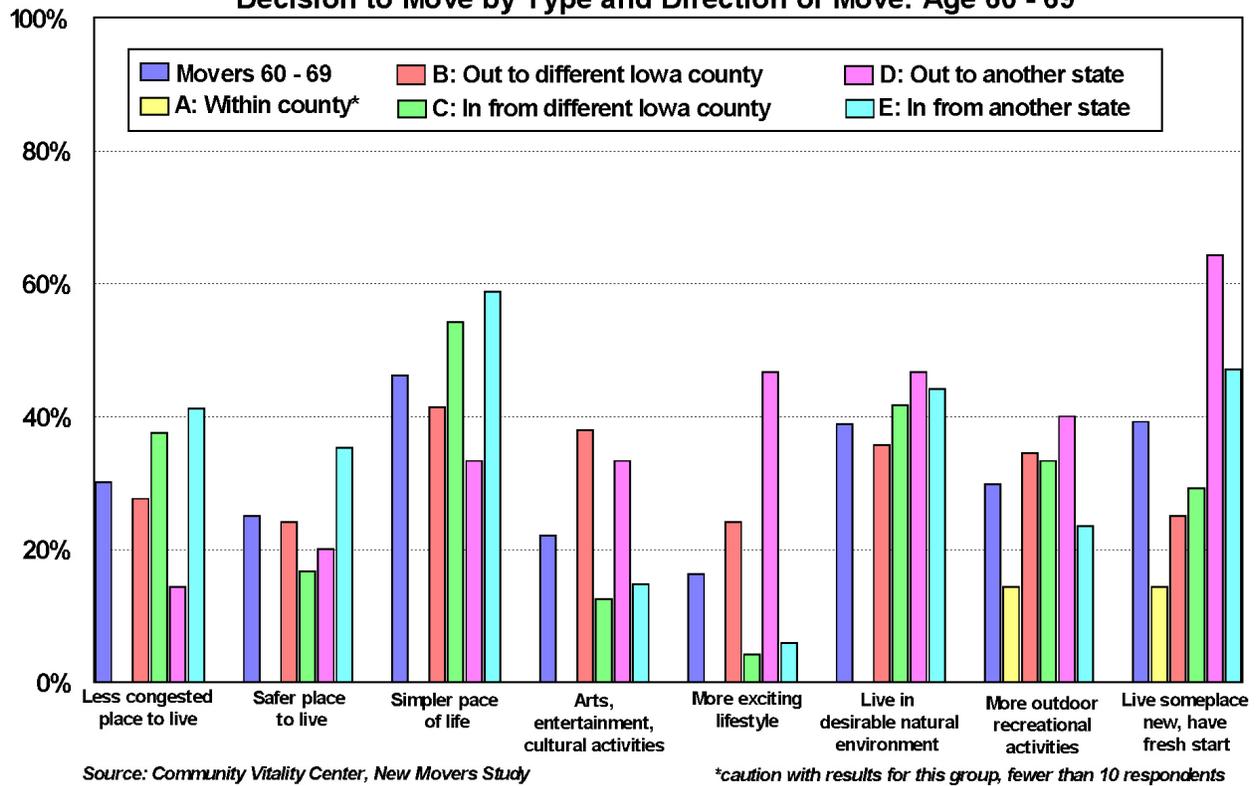
The natural environment played a role in the moving decision for many respondents but, in a somewhat unexpected fashion, it was those coming into the counties who were more likely to note that living in a desirable natural environment influenced their decision than those who moved out of the counties. The youngest respondents most often said that moving to live someplace new and have a fresh start influenced their moving decision, however, these aspects of moving were widespread as about 40 percent of each mover type cited these factors in their moving decision.

### Thinking About Next Steps

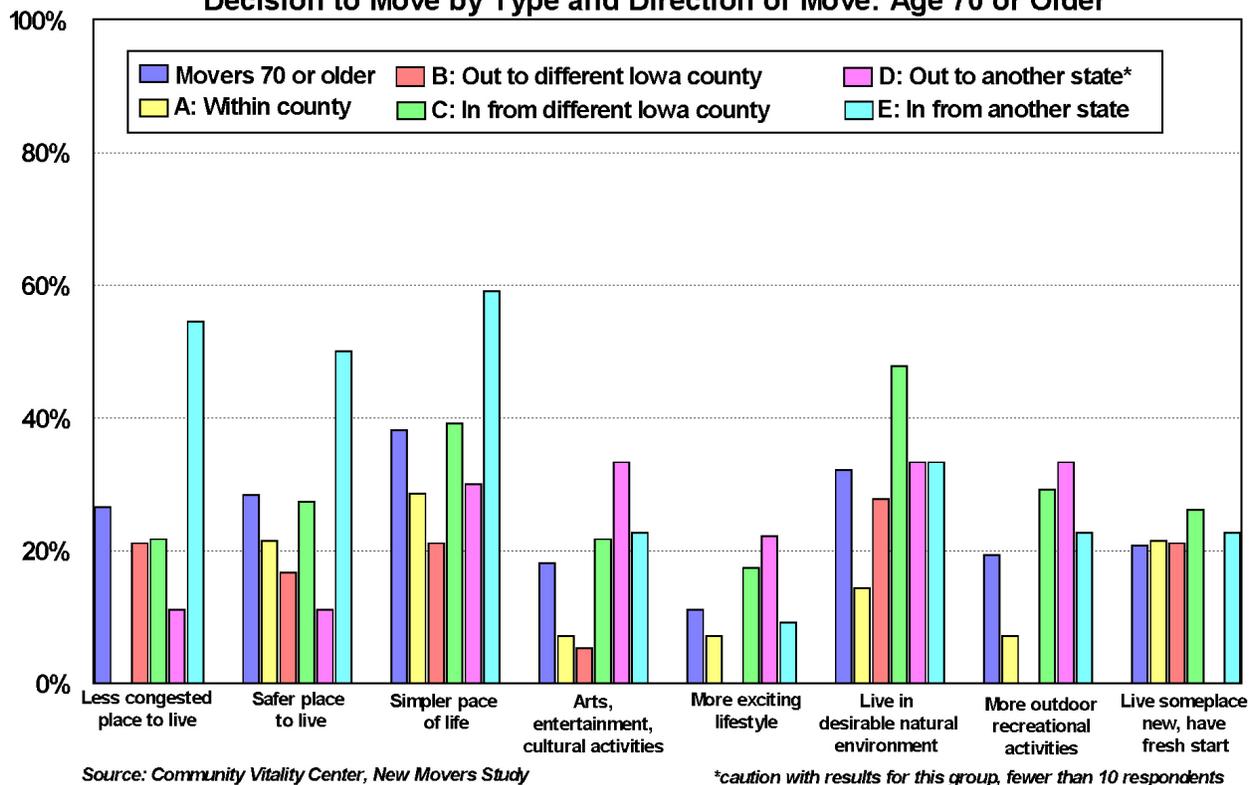
Most people thought about lifestyle factors as they made their decision to move. The findings in this study reinforce the importance of lifestyle issues as motivations in moving decisions but these results show important variations between those who moved into the counties and those who moved out.

The respondents coming to the state found Iowa's natural environment attractive and a motivating factor in their moving decision. Iowans may often think that the state's natural environment isn't as nice as other areas since there are no mountains or oceans. However, Iowa's wide-open spaces, sunsets, trees, wildlife, lakes and river resources make the state attractive. This suggests that the environment can attract new residents and is a valued asset that can be promoted to attract people from out of state.

**Figure 7: Percent Responding ‘Yes’ to Selected Lifestyle Factors as Part of Decision to Move by Type and Direction of Move: Age 60 - 69**



**Figure 8: Percent Responding ‘Yes’ to Selected Lifestyle Factors as Part of Decision to Move by Type and Direction of Move: Age 70 or Older**



## New Mover Studies: Lifestyle Factors and Moving in Nonmetro Iowa

Table 4. Percent Responding “Yes”<sup>a</sup> to Lifestyle Factors as Part of Decision to Move by Age and Type and Direction of Move.

Lifestyle Factors by Age	All Movers in Age Group <sup>b</sup>	Type and Direction of Move				
		A: Within County, Zipcode Change	B: Out To Different Iowa County	C: In From Different Iowa County	D: Out To Another State	E: In From Another State
<b>Age 18 - 24</b>	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes
To find a less congested place to live	25.0	100.0 <sup>c</sup>	7.7	33.3	9.1	0.0 <sup>c</sup>
To find a safer place to live	26.6	66.7 <sup>c</sup>	15.4	38.1	9.1	25.0 <sup>c</sup>
To find a simpler pace of life	32.8	33.3 <sup>c</sup>	26.9	52.4	18.2	25.0 <sup>c</sup>
To find arts, entertainment, cultural activities	32.8	0.0 <sup>c</sup>	34.6	19.0	72.7	25.0 <sup>c</sup>
To find a more exciting lifestyle	35.9	16.7 <sup>c</sup>	34.6	23.8	72.7	50.0 <sup>c</sup>
To live in desirable natural environment	31.3	33.3 <sup>c</sup>	26.9	38.1	27.3	50.0 <sup>c</sup>
To find more outdoor recreational activities	32.8	33.3 <sup>c</sup>	19.2	38.1	54.5	25.0 <sup>c</sup>
To live in someplace new or have a fresh start	60.9	50.0 <sup>c</sup>	53.8	61.9	81.8	50.0 <sup>c</sup>
<b>Age 25 - 34</b>						
To find a less congested place to live	30.1	42.9	25.6	34.1	3.4	54.2
To find a safer place to live	23.7	14.3	20.9	38.6	0.0	37.5
To find a simpler pace of life	35.3	33.3	30.2	50.0	10.3	54.2
To find arts, entertainment, cultural activities	22.4	9.5	25.6	15.9	48.3	8.3
To find a more exciting lifestyle	26.9	19.0	27.9	20.5	51.7	12.5
To live in desirable natural environment	32.7	33.3	34.9	38.6	17.2	37.5
To find more outdoor recreational activities	28.2	33.3	30.2	36.4	20.7	16.7
To live in someplace new or have a fresh start	42.9	42.9	44.2	45.5	41.4	37.5
<b>Age 35 - 44</b>						
To find a less congested place to live	26.0	23.1	23.3	28.2	4.3	52.2
To find a safer place to live	25.2	15.4	20.9	23.1	4.3	56.5
To find a simpler pace of life	29.1	15.4	20.9	33.3	13.0	56.5
To find arts, entertainment, cultural activities	24.4	7.7	16.3	15.4	60.9	17.4
To find a more exciting lifestyle	22.0	0.0	20.9	30.8	30.4	17.4
To live in desirable natural environment	32.3	46.2	27.9	30.8	17.4	47.8
To find more outdoor recreational activities	30.7	38.5	23.3	28.2	30.4	39.1
To live in someplace new or have a fresh start	40.2	30.8	37.2	46.2	21.7	60.9
<b>Age 45 - 59</b>						
To find a less congested place to live	27.7	20.0	15.4	35.4	0.0	47.7
To find a safer place to live	26.2	15.0	26.3	29.2	3.4	43.2
To find a simpler pace of life	37.0	25.0	35.9	43.8	10.3	52.3
To find arts, entertainment, cultural activities	24.9	5.0	43.6	16.7	48.3	11.4
To find a more exciting lifestyle	22.7	5.0	31.6	22.9	34.5	15.9
To live in desirable natural environment	42.8	20.0	30.8	62.5	37.9	45.5
To find more outdoor recreational activities	32.4	10.0	25.6	45.8	44.8	27.3
To live in someplace new or have a fresh start	44.5	50.0	40.0	47.9	44.8	39.5
<b>Age 60 - 69</b>						
To find a less congested place to live	30.1	0.0 <sup>c</sup>	27.6	37.5	14.3	41.2
To find a safer place to live	25.0	0.0 <sup>c</sup>	24.1	16.7	20.0	35.3
To find a simpler pace of life	46.2	0.0 <sup>c</sup>	41.4	54.2	33.3	58.8
To find arts, entertainment, cultural activities	22.1	0.0 <sup>c</sup>	37.9	12.5	33.3	14.7
To find a more exciting lifestyle	16.3	0.0 <sup>c</sup>	24.1	4.2	46.7	5.9
To live in desirable natural environment	38.8	0.0 <sup>c</sup>	35.7	41.7	46.7	44.1
To find more outdoor recreational activities	29.8	14.3 <sup>c</sup>	34.5	33.3	40.0	23.5
To live in someplace new or have a fresh start	39.2	14.3 <sup>c</sup>	25.0	29.2	64.3	47.1
<b>Age 70 or Older</b>						
To find a less congested place to live	26.5	0.0	21.1	21.7	11.1	54.5
To find a safer place to live	28.4	21.4	16.7	27.3	11.1	50.0
To find a simpler pace of life	38.1	28.6	21.1	39.1	30.0	59.1
To find arts, entertainment, cultural activities	18.1	7.1	5.3	21.7	33.3	22.7
To find a more exciting lifestyle	11.1	7.1	0.0	17.4	22.2	9.1
To live in desirable natural environment	32.1	14.3	27.8	47.8	33.3	33.3
To find more outdoor recreational activities	19.3	7.1	0.0	29.2	33.3	22.7
To live in someplace new or have a fresh start	20.7	21.4	21.1	26.1	0.0	22.7

<sup>a</sup>respondents could respond “Yes” to more than one question; <sup>b</sup>based on 728 respondents who completed the age question; <sup>c</sup>caution with results for this group because fewer than 10 respondents.

Table 5. Age of Respondents by Type and Direction of Move.

Age Categories	All Movers <sup>a</sup>	Type and Direction of Move				
		A: Within County, Zipcode Change	B: Out To Different Iowa County	C: In From Different Iowa County	D: Out To Another State	E: In From Another State
Median Age	46.0	45.0	43.0	44.0	41.0	53.5
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
18 – 24	8.8	7.1	12.7	10.2	9.3	2.6
25 – 34	21.6	24.7	21.0	22.0	24.6	15.4
35 – 44	17.7	16.5	21.5	19.0	19.5	14.7
45 – 59	24.3	23.5	20.5	24.4	24.6	28.2
60 – 69	14.3	8.2	14.1	11.7	12.7	21.8
70 or older	13.3	20.0	10.2	12.7	9.3	17.3
Total Number of Respondents	728	85	205	205	118	156
18 – 24	64	6	26	21	11	4
25 – 34	157	21	43	45	29	24
35 – 44	129	14	44	39	23	23
45 – 59	177	20	42	50	29	44
60 – 69	104	7	29	24	15	34
70 or older	97	17	21	26	11	27

<sup>a</sup>based on 728 total respondents who completed the age question.

For the respondents who moved into the study counties, there is a clear pattern of moving to find a less congested place to live, a safer place to live, and a simpler pace of life. These are characteristics that are prevalent in many of Iowa’s nonmetropolitan communities, yet Iowans may tend to take them for granted and may not usually think of these things as “assets” to take pride in.

Communities and state agencies could utilize these features in efforts to promote Iowa to people from other states and to attract new residents. Websites, brochures, and promotional materials might focus on these lifestyle characteristics as assets in messages about the community and area. Moreover, although the interest in these features was important to those who came from other areas of Iowa, it was highest for the respondents who came from other states. This suggests that nonmetropolitan Iowa can attract people from other parts of the country who are interested in such a lifestyle and who may be tired of city problems of traffic and crowding.

What might be a surprising result in the study is that the interest in a simpler pace of life, safety, and less congestion was not limited to those of older age, but was consistently important to respondents who moved into the counties who were

of younger and middle age as well. More than half of those age 25 – 34 who came from other states said they were looking for less congestion and a simpler pace of life. Too often, perhaps, there are conventional notions about what young adults want that may overlook real differences in attitudes and diverse interests that exist within the group. This study shows that young adults can be and are interested in a nonmetropolitan lifestyle and that they consider these aspects of a community when they make moving decisions.

There is evidence, however, that a simpler pace of life with less congestion and more safety is not what everyone looked for when moving. An important portion of the respondents said they wanted more arts, entertainment, or cultural activities or a more exciting lifestyle. Some of those who said this tended to be younger, however, it is clear in the findings that the key factor was the type of move made. The respondents who most often said they wanted more arts or entertainment or a more exciting lifestyle were those who not only moved out of the counties but also moved out of the state. In addition, those who left Iowa tended to give opposite responses on five of the lifestyle items than those who came to these counties from other states.

This implies that there is a different mindset between those who move into nonmetropolitan Iowa and those who leave and this is, perhaps, an unexpected finding. One strategy may be to develop and promote more arts and entertainment venues to appeal to a broader range of interests and help retain residents. Many Iowa communities have undertaken such projects in recent years and this study suggests these are useful and development along these lines continues to be appropriate.

There likely are limits, however, to what low-density population areas can do in terms of entertainment opportunities. Some efforts to develop regional awareness of attractions and events may be appropriate. Nonmetropolitan Iowa may not be able to attract all types of persons, but if various cultural events are held in metro areas that are in close proximity, there may be opportunities for regional metro-nonmetro collaboration in marketing.

Overall, the results show that there is desirable and valued lifestyle potential in nonmetropolitan Iowa. The state, in fact, has assets that attracted the study respondents into Iowa and which could be utilized to attract others and retain current population as well. Iowa may be able to develop a dual marketing strategy

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promoting environmental assets, safety, less congestion, and a simpler pace of life to attract residents from out of state while promoting arts, culture, and entertainment regionally to retain those already in Iowa. Overall, Iowa has the possibility of a wholesomeness of life that many areas could only hope for.

A final comment is in order regarding the reasons for moving of younger adults. This report focuses on lifestyle-related reasons and these were important in the decisions of younger as well as older respondents. It is likely, however, that

lifestyle reasons alone may not be enough to entice young residents to Iowa. The work-related findings discussed in our second report in this series<sup>1</sup> make clear the very high importance of work in the moving decisions of younger adults. Work, lifestyle, and family needs play a role in moving decisions and communities must take all into account when promoting and showcasing their areas.

### Notes

1. Previous reports and the survey questionnaire are available on the Community Vitality Center web site at: [www.cvcia.org](http://www.cvcia.org).

2. The 19 counties were selected based on population, migration patterns from Census 2000, and geographic distribution across Iowa.

3. The median age of respondents was 46, but ranged from 41 for those leaving for other states to 53.5 for the respondents who came into Iowa (Table 5).

4. Because three age by mover categories (18 – 24, Within County; 18 – 24, In From Other States; 60 – 69, Within County) have fewer than 10 respondents, the results for those groups must be considered more tentative than the findings for the other groups.

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