

## **Selected Socio-economic Characteristics of Recent Residents in Vigo County, Indiana**

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### **Introduction**

Of the 106,159 persons who are five years of age and older living in Vigo County in 1970, 46.6 percent lived in a different house than they occupied in 1965. Of the 49,493 persons in Vigo County who moved between 1965 and 1970, 56 percent changed residences within the Terre Haute SMSA. The 46.6 percent figure compares favorably with 47 percent of the American people who moved and with 46.2 percent of Hoosiers who lived in a different house in 1970 than in 1965.

One purpose of this study was to examine why the people moved to new residences. Another purpose was to identify their comparative evaluation of former and present residences. The study involved sampling 149 recent residents living in sixty-seven different subdivisions of Vigo County. During the summer of 1973 the 149 households were surveyed by a questionnaire that was taken to the household. The survey was directed to the head of household but the results normally included a joint response of both husband and wife.

The questionnaire included some fundamental questions of age, occupation, and formal schooling of the head of household. Other basic questions included were number of years at the address, the type and nature of the previous location, the number of cars available to the household, an estimate of total family income before taxes, the number of children living at home, and the distance the head of household drove to work. Further questions sought comparisons of the respondents perception of their former and present locations. The last question asked them to state the one main reason for moving to their current address.

### **Selected Socio-economic Characteristics**

Few changes occurred in the categories of where the head of household was employed before and after he moved to the present address. However, it should be noted that 40 out of 149 cited a job transfer or change of employer as a major reason for the relocation of residences. Yet, about two-thirds of the 149 persons interviewed had the same employer as they had before they moved to their new households although a few were transferred to Vigo County from another branch of the company located outside of the Terre Haute SMSA. One-sixth of the persons interviewed had changed their employer from one outside of Vigo County to either retirement or employment within Vigo County but it is doubtful if that factor caused them to move.

Forty percent of those interviewed were employed in service or business concerns. Of these about one-half were employed by small business or service agencies. Another 19 percent were employed by government or professional agencies with teachers and professors

having the largest number represented. About 29 percent were employed by various industries such as Pillsbury, Columbia Records, Commercial Solvents, Pfizer and Eli Lilly. About six percent were retired, and none indicated that he was unemployed.

The distance that the head of household drove to work was most often cited as a disadvantage of suburban living. It decreased in the close-in categories but increased in the 6 to 10 mile category. Every household interviewed had a car available. Thirty percent had one car and 70 percent of the households had two or more cars available to them.

The relative number of home owners increased significantly from 60 percent prior to moving to 90 percent after the move. In contrast, 40 percent rented their house before moving to their new location. Many suburban moves were made on the basis of a chance to own their home.

Forty-seven percent of the head of households had completed a formal college education in an undergraduate, graduate, or professional school. In addition, eight percent had completed trade or technical training and only three percent of the heads of households stated that they lacked a high school education.

The age structure of the heads of households showed that 81 percent of the sample in the survey clustered between ages twenty and forty-nine. Twelve percent were between ages fifty and fifty-nine with the remaining seven percent more than sixty years of age.

About two-thirds of the families had one, two or three children living at home. Twelve percent had four children or more. The remaining 23 percent of the families reported no children were presently living at home. Of the 114 households that had children living at home, the average was 2.3 children per household.

Nine different characteristics provided measures with which to compare the present residence with that of the previous location of the recent residents interviewed. Of those factors that were rated the same or better, schools (91%), quality of neighborhood (88%), and crime rate (84%) stood out as significant improvements. On the negative side those that rated the same or worse were transportation (87%), sewage treatment (86%), cost of living (85%), and water supply (80%). Mixed results were tabulated about tax rates and shopping centers. Problems arose for some respondents when they attempted comparisons with such previous out of state locations as Long Island, San Francisco, and Puerto Rico. Also some respondents had trouble distinguishing one environmental factor from another with much clarity.

Of the 149 respondents, 113 were willing to answer the question regarding total family income before taxes. 61 percent reported annual incomes of more than \$12,000. Nine percent reported their yearly incomes to be less than \$5,999 and 11 percent had annual incomes of \$25,000 or more. Contrastingly, for Vigo County the census reports 20.8% of families with incomes to be below \$4,999 and 3.1% with an income of \$25,000 or more.

In the last question of the interview the respondent was asked to focus on the one major reason for moving to his present address. Job related reasons accounted for slightly more than one-third of the responses and house related reasons were given in 39 of the 149 samples. Forty-six respondents reported community and neighborhood reasons as their main reason for moving. Family reasons and closer to family were given on seven occasions.

### A Comparison of Two Subdivisions

The results of Vigo County suburban questionnaires showed a marked diversity in response depending upon the suburb in which the individual respondents lived. As a result, a survey was made in greater detail of two subdivisions, Colonial Park and Youngstown Meadows, which are both located in Honey Creek Township south of Terre Haute. They are both approximately five and three-quarter miles south of the city limits of Terre Haute and are located on opposite sides of U. S. Highway 41.

The questionnaire was modified to elicit more detailed subjective attitudes toward their previous and present residences. Aside from the demographic aspects, the questionnaire was further divided into: (1) a comparison of present house and former house; (2) a comparison of present neighborhood and former neighborhood; (3) a comparison of the main reasons for choosing the present site over that of other possible sites in the city region; and (4) whether the respondent would have bought his present house if the same financing and cost had been available in Terre Haute.

Colonial Park had a total of 40 homes occupied of which 25 were sampled (63%). Youngstown Meadows consisted of 108 occupied homes of which 43 were sampled (40%). Eighty percent of the residents of Colonial Park who were interviewed moved from outside Indiana. Colonial Park was composed largely of junior to middle management or professional people who frequently changed jobs or were often transferred in the company (88%). They were highly mobile. The housing units in Colonial Park were found to be 100 percent owner occupied. Eighty-four percent of the heads of households interviewed were between thirty and forty-nine years of age and 80 percent of those interviewed had two, three or four children living at home. By comparing their present residence with their former household, Colonial Park residents perceived that the size of their lot and the interior decor were the most significant factors affecting their choice of location. Other important items included the size of house, convenience of layout, land value, room size, and tax rates. The most notable negative comparisons of Colonial Park with their previous residence included the financing of their house, landscaping and resale value. In the neighborhood comparison, the items that rated best were a decreased crime rate, less congestion, and better traffic flow. The conditions that were rated worst included air pollution odors, inadequate public transportation, improper sewage treatment, distance to shopping areas, distance to recreation, and distance to friends and relatives. The main reasons for selecting their present site at Colonial Park outside the city limits

of Terre Haute included such factors as they liked the house, they liked the look of a new subdivision, it was the only place available, and their new house was the best buy at the time. In 1973, the Colonial Park subdivision had 92 percent of the homes priced above \$40,000 and all the residents reported having two or more cars per household. Twenty-eight percent of the residents of Colonial Park responded that they would have bought the same house within the Terre Haute city limits if it had been available.

In contrast to Colonial Park, in Youngstown Meadows 58 percent of the residents came from Vigo County and 86 percent came from the State of Indiana. Virtually all moved to Youngstown Meadows from urban locations. The number of owner-occupied households more than doubled from their previous residence (40% to 91%). The age structure of the heads of households was younger with thirty percent less than twenty-nine years of age, and fifty-nine percent of the heads of households were between thirty and forty-nine years of age. In Youngstown Meadows all items appeared better or at least as good as their former home. Clearly, most of the residents had moved up in their choice of homes. The neighborhood comparisons items that had substantially improved were general cleanliness, quality of school, prestige, landscaping, noise, and congestion. The conditions that declined were the increased distance to work, poorer public transportation, an increasing cost of living, greater distance to recreation, and a further distance to friends and relatives. The main reasons for selecting Youngstown Meadow's subdivision as compared to other sites in Vigo County were that they liked the house, it was the best buy at the time, and they liked the "looks of the subdivision."

In Youngstown Meadows, 95 percent of the housing units were priced below \$30,000 in 1973. Of the respondents interviewed, forty-two percent reported having only one car available for use in their household. The main reasons given for moving were to buy their own home, and a changed job location or a job transfer. Slightly less than one-fourth of the respondents thought they would have bought the same house in Terre Haute if it had been available to them at the same price.

### Conclusions

In conclusion it appeared that most of the respondents sampled were not attempting to escape from the urban way of life. But, rather they were attempting to avoid the incidental disadvantages of urbanism. For a minority of the respondents, the move involved a search for more satisfying housing than was found available in the city.

Another conclusion formed was that suburbs differ vastly one from another. The income characteristics of the residents, their occupational makeup, the price range of homes, the education levels, the size of the suburb, the social-geographical origin of the residents, and the countless other indices all strongly affected their values, their life styles and their perception of what comprises a quality residential area.