

Goodbye jobs, hello mom and dad, say young adults

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- Faced with limited job options, many young adults are turning to an old standby to weather the recession: moving back in with mom and dad.

Nearly 1 in 7 parents with grown children say they had a "boomerang kid" move back home in the past year, according to a study released Tuesday by the Pew Research Center. In a turnabout in the rite of passage in which a college graduate finds a job and an apartment, many are returning to their parents' empty nests because of tight finances or as they pursue an advanced degree.

"The journey home for Thanksgiving won't be quite so far this year for many adults," said researchers Wendy Wang and Rich Morin, who wrote the report. "Instead of traveling across country or across town, many grown sons or daughters will be coming to dinner from their old bedroom down the hall."

Pew's survey and analysis of government data found that the share of adults 18 to 29 who lived alone declined from 7.9 percent in 2007 to 7.3 percent this year. Drops of that magnitude were also seen during or immediately after the recessions of 1982 and 2001.

Roughly one-third, or 35 percent, of boomerang kids said they had lived independently at some point in their lives but had to move back in with their parents. About half of the grown children worked full- or part-time, while 25 percent were unemployed and 20 percent were full-time students.

The findings are the latest to highlight the sweeping social impact of a recession that began in December 2007. The effects have included declining immigration and U.S. migration between states, as well as increased carpools, use of public transit and "doubling up" of families in single-residence homes.

Data released earlier this year showed that older Americans will make up virtually all of the growth in the U.S. work force in the coming years as a nearly unprecedented number hold onto jobs and younger people decide to stay in school.

Among 16- to 24-year-olds, less than half, or 46.1 percent, are currently employed, the smallest share since the government began collecting such data in 1948. At the same time, a record high of about 11.5 million Americans ages 18 to 24, or nearly 40 percent, attended college in October 2008.

"Boomerang kids are a major trend, and they represent a shift in cultural norms," said David Morrison, president and founder of Twentysomething Inc., a marketing and research firm. "Young adults are the first to feel the brunt of a bad economy and the last to feel the benefits of a recovering economy. So the first way you hedge your bets is to minimize your expenses."

Saying there is now less of a stigma in moving back home, Morrison predicted that the trend of boomerang kids may lessen somewhat but still continue after the economy recovers. That could create longer-term ripple effects in social relationships, from multigenerational family tensions to delayed marriage, he said.

According to the latest Pew survey and census data:

- About 20 million people ages 18 to 34 live at home with their parents - roughly 30 percent of that age group. That's up from about 18 million, or 27 percent, in 2005.

- About 12 percent of young adults ages 18 to 34 said they were forced to move in with a roommate because of the poor economy.

- Fifteen percent of adults 18 to 34 said they had postponed getting married due to the recession. That share increases to 21 percent for adults ages 25 to 34, when many people tend to get married.

- Fourteen percent of adults 18 to 34 say they delayed having a baby.

Pew based its findings on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau. It also interviewed 1,028 people ages 18 and older by cell phone or landline from Oct. 21-25. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.9 percentage points.