

Moving repeatedly in childhood linked with poorer quality-of-life years later

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Moving to a new town or even a new neighborhood is stressful at any age, but a new study shows that frequent relocations in childhood are related to poorer well-being in adulthood, especially among people who are more introverted or neurotic.

The researchers tested the relation between the number of childhood moves and well-being in a sample of 7,108 American adults who were followed for 10 years. The findings are reported in the June issue of the [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#), published by the American Psychological Association.

"We know that [children](#) who move frequently are more likely to perform poorly in school and have more behavioral problems," said the study's lead author, Shigehiro Oishi, PhD, of the University of Virginia.

"However, the long-term effects of moving on well-being in [adulthood](#) have been overlooked by researchers."

The study's participants, who were between the ages of 20 and 75, were contacted as part of a nationally representative random sample survey in 1994 and 1995 and were surveyed again 10 years later. They were asked how many times they had moved as children, as well as about their psychological well-being, personality type and [social relationships](#).

The researchers found that the more times people moved as children, the more likely they were to report lower life satisfaction and psychological well-being at the time they were surveyed, even when controlling for

age, gender and [education level](#). The research also showed that those who moved frequently as children had fewer quality social relationships as adults.

The researchers also looked to see if different personality types - extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism - affected frequent movers' well-being. Among introverts, the more moves participants reported as children, the worse off they were as adults. This was in direct contrast to the findings among extraverts. "Moving a lot makes it difficult for people to maintain long-term close relationships," said Oishi. "This might not be a serious problem for outgoing people who can make friends quickly and easily. Less outgoing people have a harder time making new friends."

The findings showed neurotic people who moved frequently reported less [life satisfaction](#) and poorer psychological well-being than people who did not move as much and people who were not neurotic.

Neuroticism was defined for this study as being moody, nervous and high strung. However, the number and quality of neurotic people's relationships had no effect on their well-being, no matter how often they had moved as children. In the article, Oishi speculates this may be because neurotic people have more negative reactions to stressful life events in general.

The researchers also looked at mortality rates among the participants and found that people who moved often as children were more likely to die before the second wave of the study. They controlled for age, gender and race. "We can speculate that moving often creates more stress and stress has been shown to have an ill effect on people's health," Oishi said. "But we need more research on this link before we can conclude that moving often in childhood can, in fact, be dangerous to your health in the long-term."

Provided by American Psychological Association

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