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CENSUS 2010

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Fewer people move to new states, but Texas is still their top choice

Posted Tuesday, Nov. 15, 2011 9 Comments Print Reprints Share Like

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Mobility across the United States slowed to a crawl in 2010, but Texas managed to lead the barely moving pack with a net gain of nearly 75,000 people, according to new census data released Tuesday.

"Migration across the U.S. has virtually stopped – it's an economic phenomenon. There are few jobs to move to, and if you can't get rid of your home, you are going to think real hard about moving at all. We saw similar patterns during the Depression," said Steve Murdock, a Rice University professor, former Census Bureau director and longtime state demographer.

Texas topped the 2010 mobility list, but its numbers have slowed dramatically.

"In the 2000-2010 period, we had about 200,000 migrants to Texas a year – about 2 million for the decade," Murdock said. "So you are talking about migration that is half-full in that it's better than every other place. The half-empty is that it's about 40 percent of what the migration was during the decade."

Over the last decade, Texas' population grew by 20.6 percent, far surpassing the national rate of 9.7 percent, to more than 25 million.

The biggest state-to-state shift last year was again from California to Texas (68,959 movers). But 36,582 people moved the opposite direction, giving Texas a net gain of 32,377.

Overall, Texas and California were at the opposite end of the coming-and-going spectrum in 2010, with Texas recording a net gain of 74,917 and California a net loss of 129,239.

A new Texan

Chuck DeVore, 49, is one of the latest to make the move, and he's literally writing the book on what's fueling the California-to-Texas exodus.

After term limits ended his job as a state assemblyman from Orange County, Calif., DeVore looked to return to work in the aerospace industry but soon realized it had mostly moved out of state.

"I had to ask, 'How am I going to pay the bills and support my family?' I wanted an environment where next year is going to be better than this year. California is not that place," he said Tuesday.

He landed a job as a visiting senior scholar for fiscal policy at the

A

American mobility

Largest net gains

1. Texas, 74,917
2. North Carolina, 56,291
3. Florida, 55,036
4. Arizona, 45,957
5. Colorado, 45,746

Largest net losses

1. California, 129,239
2. New York, 93,712
3. Illinois, 73,620
4. New Jersey, 66,603
5. Michigan, 62,058

State-to-state moves

1. California to Texas, 68,959
2. New York to Florida, 55,011
3. Florida to Georgia, 49,901
4. California to Arizona, 47,164
5. New Jersey to Pennsylvania, 42,456

Net increases to Texas

1. California, 32,377
2. Illinois, 7,924
3. Alaska, 7,490
4. New York, 6,932
5. Michigan, 6,591

Net increases from Texas

1. New Mexico, 6,759
2. Colorado, 5,892
3. Oklahoma, 5,269
4. Hawaii, 2,976
5. Washington, 2,491

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Geographical Mobility: 2011"

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getting worse compared to Texas."

He's already written 103 pages of a book tentatively called *The Texas Model*, exploring how low taxes, a light regulatory burden and a friendly business climate have paid economic dividends.

"There's more to life than a pretty coastline, mountains and a benign climate. You need freedom and opportunity to be able to keep more of what you earn," DeVore said.

Low mobility

Other states contributing the most new Texans were Northern ones: Illinois (7,924), Alaska (7,490), New York (6,932) and Michigan (6,591).

New Mexico had the biggest net gain of people moving out of Texas, adding 6,759, followed by Colorado (5,892) and Oklahoma (5,269).

The next-biggest net gainers after Texas were Southern and Western states: North Carolina (56,231), Florida (55,036), Arizona (45,957) and Colorado (45,746).

Suffering big drops along with California were New York (93,712), Illinois (73,620), New Jersey (66,603) and Michigan (62,058).

Across the country, 11.6 percent of Americans changed residences, the lowest rate since the Census Bureau began collecting such statistics in 1948, the bureau said. The rate was 20.2 percent in 1985 and slid to a then-record of 11.9 percent in 2008 before rising to 12.5 percent in 2009, according to the 2010 American Community Survey.

"The fact that mobility is crashing is something that I think is quite devastating," Richard Florida, an American urban theorist and professor at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, told The Associated Press. "The latest decline shows we are in a long-run economic reset and that we never really recovered – we've just been stagnating along."

Overall, 45.3 million people lived in a different home within the United States than one year earlier, and of those, 6.7 million lived in a different state.

Native-born residents

While those numbers sound sizeable, 58.8 percent of Americans still live in the state where they were born, according to another new census report, Lifetime Mobility in the United States 2010.

In Texas, 60.5 percent of residents are natives. The states with the highest percentages are Louisiana (78.8), Michigan (76.6) and Ohio (75.1).

Nevada, at 24.1 percent, has the lowest, followed by Florida (35.2), Arizona (37.7) and Alaska (39).

Foreign-born residents make up 12.9 percent of the U.S. population and 16.4 percent of Texas'. The states with the highest percentages are California (27.2), New York (22.2) and New Jersey (21).

West Virginia (1.2) has the lowest percentage of foreign-born residents, followed by Montana (2) and Mississippi (2.1).

Staff writer Darren Barbee contributed to this report.

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