

Fewer people moving, but Texas leads in new arrivals

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More than ever before, Americans are staying put.

Only 11.6 percent of Americans changed residences between 2010 and 2011, the lowest recorded rate by the census in 63 years and more evidence of the lingering effects of the housing bust and a sagging economy.

Among Americans on the move to a new state, however, Texas was the top destination, the Census Bureau said Tuesday.

In 2010, Texas led the nation in migration from other states with 486,558, and the largest outflow among all states was from California to Texas, with nearly 69,000 Californians moving here. (The flow worked in reverse, too; more than 36,000 Texans headed from the Lone Star State to the Golden State in 2010.)

But Texas also saw the third-highest number of people leave the state for other states, with 411,641, meaning it had a net in-migration of about 75,000.

That was the highest in the nation, but one of the lowest in Texas in a decade, said Steve Murdock, director of the Hobby Center for the Study of Texas at Rice University and former director of the Census Bureau.

"For Texas, the glass is half empty and half full," Murdock said. "We're doing better than other states in terms of migration. But that's a lower rate than Texas has been used to."

Texas consistently had annual net in-migration of about 200,000 people during the past decade — contributing to a population increase of more than 4 million since 2000 — though those figures included immigration from other countries, Murdock said. Tuesday's census data did not include immigration figures.

In all, 6.7 million Americans said they lived in a different state one year earlier, according to the 2010 American Community Survey.

The Census Bureau said decreases in the likelihood of people moving within the same county further illustrated the record overall low mobility rate.

Once at 13 to 14 percent levels in the 1950s, moves within the same county were at 7.7 percent between 2010 and 2011, continuing a trend first seen in 2000. Intercounty moves have been at historic lows for four years, said William Frey, a senior demographer at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

Sagging overall migration trends have "to do with home foreclosures and the bad economy. This is the key to put us at the historical low," Frey said.

But he said there are other contributing factors, including increases in the ranks of older Americans, who tend not to move as much, and younger adults living with their parents because they can't find jobs.

"It's the economy everywhere," said Murdock, the Rice University professor. "People aren't moving because there aren't job opportunities and because of the difficulty of things like selling homes."

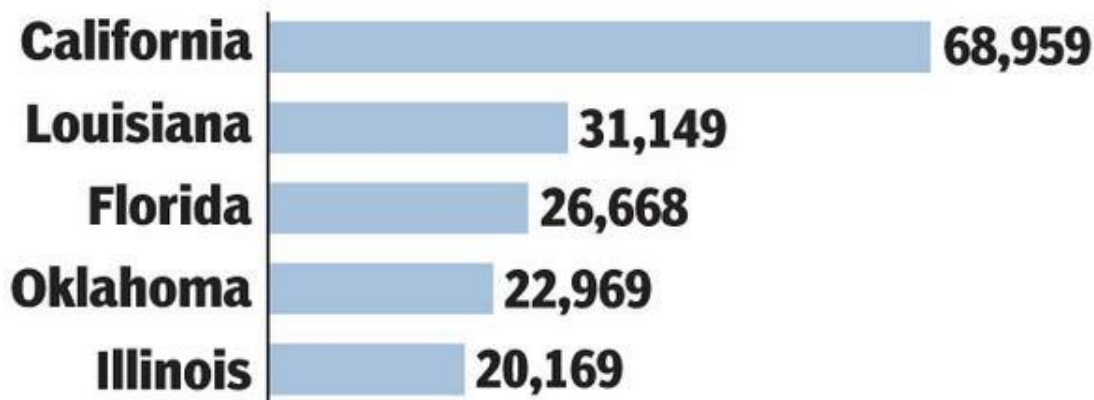
According to the Census Bureau, people who moved longer distances — 500 or more miles — between 2008 and 2009 were more likely to cite job-related reasons instead of housing-related reasons as the driving factor. The reverse was true for people who didn't move far — less than 50 miles.

Earlier this year, a Brookings Institution analysis of other mobility data revealed a bright spot for the Austin-Round Rock metro area, which had the highest annual average net migration of young adults ages 25 to 34 and young adults with college degrees for 2007-09. Frey said the region's high-tech industry, its generally good economic health when compared with other parts of the country and its "cool" factor were draws for the young adults who moved here.

Tuesday's census data did not include figures for counties. The Census Bureau said it expects to release that information in 2012.

Who's moving to Texas

Among the top states of origin of those moving to Texas:



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey

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