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The Impact of COVID-19 on U.S. Internal Migration

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ABSTRACT

Internal migration refers to the movement of people within a country; internal migration patterns vary by differing demographic groups, socioeconomic factors, and temporal factors. Internal migration is an important mechanism for individuals to improve their socio-economic status and find new employment opportunities. Those most likely to internally migrate are the unemployed, college-educated, and those of working age.

Prior research has found that interstate migration has been declining since the late 20th century, consistently reaching historic lows. This paper examines the prevalence of interstate migration for the years 2000-2025, with an emphasis on the COVID-19 pandemic years. Using data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and its Annual Socio-Economic Supplement (ASEC), this paper finds a widespread decline in interstate migration across all socio-economic demographic groups consistent with prior literature. Additionally, interstate migration did not decrease discernibly more during the COVID-19 pandemic than prior to it. The adjusted odds of interstate migration were lower for Hispanic at 0.70 (95% CI: 0.68 to 0.73) and 0.93 (95% CI: 0.90 to 0.97) for Non-Hispanic Black compared to Non-Hispanic White. Compared to individuals with a high school diploma or equivalent (adjusted for sociodemographic characteristics), the adjusted odds were higher for those with at least some college at 1.35 (95% CI: 1.32 to 1.38) and lower for those with less than a high school education at 0.83 (95% CI: 0.79 to 0.86). Compared to those born in the United States, the adjusted odds of interstate migration were lower for naturalized citizens at 0.85 (95% CI: 0.81 to 0.90) and higher for Non-citizens at 1.30 (95% CI: 1.25 to 1.36), adjusted for sociodemographic characteristics.

Overall, these findings suggest that long-term structural factors, rather than short-term disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, continue to drive patterns of interstate migration in the United States.

1. INTRODUCTION

Internal migration refers to the movement of people within a country; internal migration patterns vary by differing demographic groups, socioeconomic factors, and temporal factors (Molloy et al., 2011; Palarino, 2025; Rosenbloom & Sundstrom, 2023). Historically, the United States has experienced a high rate of

internal migration. Prominent historical examples include the first and second Great Migrations of African Americans out of the Southern United States in search of economic opportunities, and the Post–Second-World-War migration to the Sunbelt due to increased housing supply, air-conditioning, and clean water (D. A. Black et al., 2015; Glaeser & Tobio, 2007; Leduc & Williams, 2024). Since the late 20th century, however, interstate migration has declined in the United States. In 1984, the intercounty migration rate was 6.4% and decreased to 3.5% in 2010 (Cooke, 2013).

One important facet of internal migration is that it is a mechanism for individuals to increase their access to socio-economic opportunities (Abramitzky et al., 2021; Chetty & Hendren, 2018). Indeed, the population group with the highest rate of internal migration from 1981–2010 were unemployed individuals (Molloy et al., 2011). Working-age populations, particularly college-educated individuals aged 18–44, continue to migrate at higher rates than other demographic groups (Foster, 2017; Molloy et al., 2011).

Despite this established literature, it is unknown how COVID-19 pandemic affected interstate migration. COVID-19 has significantly disrupted the U.S. economy, with mandatory closures and supply chain disruptions being the primary cause (Walmsley et al., 2021). U.S. GDP losses over a two-year period are estimated to range from $3.2 trillion (14.8%) to $4.8 trillion (23.0%); the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the unemployment rate rose from under 4.0% to over 14.0% (Walmsley et al., 2021).

This study proposes two hypotheses. First, economic hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will be associated with a decline in interstate migration. Second, Non-White population groups are more likely to internally migrate than Non-Hispanic White individuals, reflecting the role of socioeconomic inequality in shaping migration behaviour. To test these hypotheses, I utilize nationally representative data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) to study temporal patterns in interstate migration from 2000 to 2025 — a period spanning before the COVID-19 pandemic, during the height of the pandemic, and after the pandemic. Furthermore, this study also identifies socio-demographic characteristics associated with increased likelihood of interstate migration to determine whether a decline in internal migration rates is associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and to establish whether a lower socio-economic status is associated with a reduced internal migration rate.

2. METHODS

2.1 Data

I used data from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS), administered annually by the U.S. Census Bureau for the years 2000–2025. The CPS is based on a probability-selected sample of approximately 60,000 households, covering all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and is designed to produce nationally representative estimates (U.S. Census Bureau & U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Data were collected by trained Census Bureau representatives through

personal and telephone interviews. Individuals under the age of 15, those currently serving in the armed forces, and residents of institutional settings (e.g., prisons, nursing homes, and long-term care hospitals) were excluded from participation.

The ASEC supplements the core CPS with additional information on work experience, income, non-cash benefits, health insurance coverage, and migration (U.S. Census Bureau & U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025). A key limitation of the ASEC is that only 50% of the CPS sample is included in two consecutive years; furthermore, eligible housing units may generate non-interview records or experience resident turnover between survey waves. As a result, the matched longitudinal sample is smaller than the theoretical 50% ceiling.

2.2 Outcome variable

The outcome of interest was interstate migration between two consecutive survey years. I classified respondents as interstate migrants if they reported residing in a different U.S. state in the year prior to the survey. Those who reported living in the same state, regardless of whether they had moved within the state, were classified as non-migrants. Full details of the survey questions used to ascertain migration status are provided in Appendix Table 1.

2.3 Covariates

Covariates included age, sex, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, marital status, employment status, and citizenship status (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024). I treated age as a continuous variable. Sex was coded as male or female. I captured race/ethnicity using a two-part question on Hispanic origin and a five-category racial classification, grouping respondents into mutually exclusive categories for analysis. I categorized educational attainment from "less than high school" through "doctorate degree." Marital status was classified as married (spouse present), married (spouse absent), widowed, divorced, separated, or never married. I distinguished employed respondents — those who worked for pay or were temporarily absent from a job during the reference week — from unemployed respondents, defined as those without work but actively seeking employment. Citizenship status was derived from place of birth and direct questioning about U.S. citizenship and naturalisation. Survey questions, original response categories, and the collapsed categories used in the analysis are detailed in Appendix Table 1.

2.4 Analysis

First, I calculated the distribution of each socio-demographic characteristic, including age, sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment, employment status, and citizenship status, as measured in the CPS. Second, I calculated the weighted prevalence of interstate migration over time and across each of these socio-demographic characteristics. Third, I fit a weighted logistic regression model in which the binary outcome was interstate migration within the past year, and covariates included the

aforementioned socio-demographic characteristics. All statistical analyses were conducted using R version 4.5.3, and the type I error rate (α) was set at 0.05.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Characteristics of Sample

My study included N=3,503,663 respondents surveyed in the 2000-2025 CPS March Economic Supplement (Table 1). Nearly half of respondents were between the ages of 30 and 54 years (49%), one in five of respondents were between the ages of 18-29 years (20%), 17% of respondents were ages 65 years or older, and 14% of respondents were between the ages of 55 and 64 years. More than half of respondents were female (52%) and 48% of respondents were male. Over half of respondents were Non-Hispanic White (64%), 16% of respondents were Hispanic, 11% of respondents were Non-Hispanic Black, 5.5% of respondents were Non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander, and 3.2% of respondents were other. Over half of respondents had at least some level of college attainment (56%), 30% of respondents had a high school diploma or equivalent, and 14% of respondents were less than high school graduates. Over 62% of respondents were married, 27% of respondents were single, and 11% of respondents were divorced. 64% of respondents were employed, 33% of respondents were not in the labor force, and 3.6% of respondents were unemployed. A majority of respondents were born in the United States (84%), while Non-citizens comprised 8.7% of respondents and naturalized citizens comprised 7.3% of respondents.

3.2 Overall Interstate Migration Over Time

Interstate migration decreased from 3.1% in 2000 (95% confidence interval [CI]: 3.0% to 3.3%) to 1.7% in 2007 (95% CI: 1.6% to 1.7%; Figure 1). Interstate migration then remained relatively constant between 2007 and 2020, varying between 1.7% (95% CI: 1.6% to 1.7%) and 1.3% (95% CI: 1.2% to 1.4%). The lowest rate between 2007 and 2020 occurred in 2010 and 2020: 1.4% (95% CI: 1.4% to 1.5%) and 1.3% (95% CI: 1.3% to 1.4%), respectively. During the COVID-19 pandemic years of 2020 to 2023, interstate migration increased from 1.3% (95% CI: 1.3% to 1.4%) in 2020 to 1.5% (95% CI: 1.4% to 1.6%) in 2022 and 1.5% (95% CI: 1.4 to 1.5%) in 2023.

3.3 Interstate Migration Over Time By Characteristics

Interstate migration patterns were generally similar over time across sex, educational levels, marital status, race/ethnicity, and employment (Figure 2-6). By sex, migration decreased from 3.2% (95% CI: 3.0%–3.4%) in 2000 to 1.4% (95% CI: 1.3%–1.5%) in 2025 for males and from 3.0% (95% CI: 2.9%–3.2%) to 1.3% (95% CI: 1.1%–1.4%) for females. By educational levels, interstate migration declined from 2.4% (95% CI: 2.1%–2.7%) to 0.9% (95% CI: 0.7%–1.2%) for less than high school graduate, from 2.9% (95% CI: 2.7%–3.1%) to 1.1% (95% CI: 0.9%–1.2%) for high school diploma or equivalent, and from 3.4% (95% CI: 3.3%–3.6%) to 1.5% (95% CI: 1.4%–1.6%) for at least some college. In terms of marital status, migration decreased from 3.6% (95% CI: 3.2%–4.1%) to 1.1% (95%

CI: 0.8%–1.3%) for divorced, from 2.6% (95% CI: 2.4%–2.7%) to 1.2% (95% CI: 1.1%–1.3%) for married, and from 4.4% (95% CI: 4.1%–4.8%) to 1.8% (95% CI: 1.6%–2.0%) for single. By race/ethnicity, migration declined from 2.7% (95% CI: 2.4%–3.0%) to 1.2% (95% CI: 1.0%–1.3%) for Hispanic, from 3.8% (95% CI: 3.1%–4.5%) to 1.8% (95% CI: 1.4%–2.2%) for Non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander, from 3.5% (95% CI: 3.1%–4.0%) to 1.4% (95% CI: 1.1%–1.6%) for Non-Hispanic Black, and from 3.0% (95% CI: 2.9%–3.2%) to 1.3% (95% CI: 1.2%–1.4%) for Non-Hispanic White. By employment, migration decreased from 3.2% (95% CI: 3.1%–3.4%) to 1.4% (95% CI: 1.3%–1.5%) for employed, from 2.6% (95% CI: 2.4%–2.8%) to 1.1% (95% CI: 0.9%–1.2%) for not in labor force, and from 5.3% (95% CI: 4.3%–6.3%) to 2.9% (95% CI: 2.1%–3.7%) for unemployed.

Similarly, by age and citizenship status, interstate migration exhibited similar downward trends (Figure 7-8). Among age groups, migration decreased from 5.8% (95% CI: 5.5%–6.2%) to 2.6% (95% CI: 2.4%–2.9%) for 19–29 year olds, from 2.8% (95% CI: 2.7%–3.0%) to 1.3% (95% CI: 1.2%–1.4%) for 30–54, from 1.9% (95% CI: 1.6%–2.2%) to 0.7% (95% CI: 0.5%–0.8%) for 55–64 year olds, and from 1.1% (95% CI: 0.9%–1.3%) to 0.7% (95% CI: 0.5%–0.8%) for 65 years and older. For citizenship, migration decreased from 3.1% (95% CI: 2.9%–3.2%) to 1.3% (95% CI: 1.2%–1.4%) for born in United States, from 2.6% (95% CI: 2.1%–3.1%) to 0.8% (95% CI: 0.6%–1.0%) for naturalized citizens, and from 3.8% (95% CI: 3.3%–4.2%) to 1.9% (95% CI: 1.6%–2.3%) for not a citizen. Overall, while interstate migration declined substantially across all variables, relative differences among subgroups remained largely consistent over the 25-year period.

3.4 Regression Results

Compared to 2000, the odds of interstate migration were lower for later years (Table 2). For example, the odds of interstate migration were 0.46 times as high in 2025 compared to 2000 (95% CI: 0.42 to 0.49) accounting for socio-demographic characteristics. Compared to 30-54 year olds, the odds of interstate migration were 2.21 times higher for 18-29 year olds (95% CI: 2.14 to 2.28) accounting for year and other socio-demographic characteristics. The adjusted odds were lower for older age groups: 0.61 (95% CI: 0.59 to 0.64) for 55–64 year olds and 0.38 (95% CI: 0.36 to 0.40) for those aged greater than or aged 65-year-olds. Compared to females, the odds of interstate migration were 1.06 times higher for males (95% CI: 1.04 to 1.09) accounting for socio-demographic characteristics. Compared to Non-Hispanic White, the odds for interstate migration were not statistically significantly different for Non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander at 1.03 (95% CI: 0.98 to 1.08) accounting for socio-demographic characteristics accounting for socio-demographic characteristics. The adjusted odds were lower for Hispanic at 0.70 (95% CI: 0.68 to 0.73) and 0.93 (95% CI: 0.90 to 0.97) for Non-Hispanic Black compared to Non-Hispanic White.

Compared to people with a high school diploma or equivalent, the adjusted odds were higher for people with at least some college at 1.35 (95% CI: 1.32 to 1.38) accounting for socio-demographic characteristics, and lower at 0.83 (95% CI: 0.79 to 0.86) accounting for socio-demographic characteristics

for less than high school graduates. Compared to married people, the odds of interstate migration were 1.35 times higher (95% CI: 1.31 to 1.40) accounting for socio-demographic characteristics for divorced people, and lower at 0.95 (95% CI: 0.92 to 0.98) accounting for socio-demographic characteristics for single people. Compared to the employed, the odds of interstate migration were 1.18 times higher for those not in labor force (95% CI: 1.15 to 1.21) accounting for socio-demographic characteristics and 1.83 times higher for the unemployed (95% CI 1.65 to 1.91) accounting for socio-demographic characteristics. Compared to those born in the United States, the adjusted odds of interstate migration were lower for naturalized citizens: 0.85 (95% CI: 0.81 to 0.90) accounting for socio-demographic characteristics, and higher for Non-citizens at 1.30 (95% CI: 1.25 to 1.36) accounting for socio-demographic characteristics.

4. DISCUSSION

Three central findings emerged from this national study of interstate migration. First, overall interstate migration declined substantially from 2000 to 2025 across all groups. Second, since 2000, the odds of interstate migration have consistently remained lower through 2025. Third, compared with Non-Hispanic White populations, the odds of interstate migration were not significantly different for Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Black populations and similar for Non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander populations.

4.1 Long-Term Trends in Interstate Migration

These findings contribute to the existing literature showing that internal migration rates in the United States have been steadily declining since the mid-twentieth century. Molloy et al., (2011) calculated annual internal migration rates using CPS data and found that interstate migration rates from 1981 to 2010 were 2.4% for males and 2.3% for females, declining to 1.7% for males and 1.6% for females between 2001 and 2010. Comparable declines appear across demographic and economic strata. By race, rates fell from 2.5%, 2.1%, and 1.5% (White, Black, and Hispanic adults, respectively) in 1981–2010 to 1.8%, 1.7%, and 1.3% in 2001–2010. By educational attainment, rates declined across every category: from 1.3% to 1.0% for those with less than a high school education, from 1.5% to 1.2% for high school graduates, and from 2.1% to 1.5% for those with some college. By age, the highest mobility rate (4.2% among those aged 18–24 in 1981–2010) fell to 3.0% by 2001–2010; rates for ages 1–17 declined from 2.3% to 1.7%, for ages 25–44 from 3.0% to 2.2%, for ages 45–64 from 1.3% to 1.0%, and for those 65 and older from 0.9% to 0.7%. By employment status, rates dropped from 2.3%, 4.5%, and 1.9% (employed, unemployed, and not in the labor force) to 1.6%, 3.5%, and 1.5%. These declines in interstate migration are consistent with my results.

Importantly, Molloy et al., (2011) found that the decline in interstate migration was not attributable to demographic, socioeconomic, or cyclical factors. Because the downward trend is remarkably widespread, occurring across nearly all age groups, education levels, and industries, the authors argue that the cause is a broad-based economic force rather than a shift in population composition. They further contend that the decline is not merely a byproduct of the Great Recession or the mid-2000s housing collapse; migration rates have been falling steadily since the 1980s, making cyclical downturns an unlikely primary driver.

Foster (2017) similarly used CPS data and documented a substantial decline, with interstate migration rates falling from 3.0% in 1982 to 1.6% in 2015—a nearly 50% drop. Over the same period, the composition of migrants shifted: the share of Black migrants rose slightly from 10.7% to 11.7%, the Hispanic share rose sharply from 5.4% to 15.5%, and the share holding four or more years of college rose from 16.0% to 29.8%. Taken together, these trends are consistent with the broader literature documenting long-term declines in internal migration in the United States.

From 2005 to 2010, interstate migration rates faced a significant decline; this may be due to the collapse of the U.S. housing market and the onset of the subprime mortgage crisis. In Q4 2005, the median house price sold in the U.S. was $243,600; in Q4 2006, it was $245,400; $238,400 in Q4 2007; $222,500 in Q4 2008; reaching its lowest point in Q1 2009 at $208,400; before partially recovering to $224,300 in Q4 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau & U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2024). As house prices fell below outstanding mortgage balances, many homeowners found themselves in negative equity, unable to sell their properties without realising a financial loss and therefore unable to finance a move. Ferreira et al (2012) found that household mobility is nearly 30% lower for those with negative equity. This acute housing shock may have compounded longer-run structural trends already suppressing migration. Guler and Taşkın (2013) document that the rise of dual-earner households over the preceding decades has reduced household interstate migration rates. When both spouses earn comparable wages, accepting an outside job offer requires the trailing spouse to quit their job and enter unemployment in a new location, raising the threshold at which relocation becomes worthwhile for the household as a unit.

4.2 Demographic and Socioeconomic Patterns of Movement

Prior research has consistently found that unemployed individuals, those with higher levels of educational attainment, and working-age adults are the most likely groups to migrate across state boundaries (Bozick, 2021; Cooke, 2013; Foster, 2017; Frey, 2009; Molloy et al., 2011; R. Black & Sward, 2009). This reflects the role of internal migration as a means of improving socioeconomic circumstances, including access to employment, higher wages, and career advancement. Consistent with this literature, my findings indicate that college-educated individuals, the unemployed, and working-age adults exhibit significantly higher odds of interstate migration. Higher educational attainment expands job opportunities, unemployment acts as a push factor that increases the incentive to relocate, and working-age individuals tend to face fewer family- and health-related constraints on mobility.

Consistent with prior literature, migration patterns also varied across racial and ethnic groups even as rates declined for all of them (Bozick, 2021; Foster, 2017; Frey, 2009; Molloy et al., 2011; Palarino, 2025). Non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander and Non-Hispanic Black individuals did not exhibit statistically significant differences in the odds of interstate migration relative to Non-Hispanic White individuals across the study period, while Hispanic individuals consistently exhibited lower odds. These disparities may reflect differences in socioeconomic resources, housing constraints, social networks, and geographic concentration, all of which can shape both the capacity and the incentive to migrate.

State tax policies may also influence interstate migration, particularly with the expansion of remote work. When workers can reside in one state while working for an employer in another, differences in state tax rates may weigh more heavily in decisions about residence and place of business. Agrawal & Brueckner (2025) found that in high-tax states, a shift to a work-from-home economy reduces employment and raises wages, and that subsequent tax increases either depress employment and raise wages or leave the labor market unaffected. Rohlin et al. (2014) similarly concluded that entrepreneurs near state borders tend to locate businesses in jurisdictions that minimise tax exposure. Because employment opportunities are a major determinant of migration, these tax differentials may indirectly shape interstate migration patterns.

Alternatively, Guler and Taşkın (2018), using CPS and SIPP data spanning 1981 to 2012, document that dual-earner couples — households in which both spouses are employed — migrate at substantially lower rates than single-earner couples, and that this gap widened over time as dual-earner households became more prevalent. As previously mentioned, when both spouses earn comparable wages, accepting an outside job offer requires the trailing spouse to quit their job and enter unemployment in a new location, raising the threshold at which relocation becomes worthwhile for the household as a unit. As the gender wage gap narrowed over this period, with women's earnings rising from 64% of men's in 1980 to 81% by 2010, Guler and Taşkin estimate that the change in the gender wage gap alone accounts for approximately 35% of the total decline in family migration between 1981 and 2012. Indeed, the overall family interstate migration rate averaged 1.53% during 1981–1989, falling to 0.81% during 2005–2012, a 47% decline. Dual-earner couples interstate migration rates fell from 1.03% to 0.51%, a 50% drop, while single-earner couples declined from 2.15% to 1.31%, a 39% decrease.

4.3 The COVID-19 Pandemic and Interstate Migration

Research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on internal migration in the United States remains limited, though the pandemic's economic effects are well documented. Business closures and lockdowns contributed directly to a sharp rise in unemployment (Walmsley et al., 2021; World Bank Group, 2022). Because internal migration is a means by which individuals improve their socioeconomic status, and because unemployed individuals are typically more likely to migrate in search of better conditions, the net effect of the pandemic on mobility is theoretically ambiguous: heightened unemployment may have raised the incentive to relocate, while the lockdowns and economic contraction may have simultaneously suppressed migration by reducing job opportunities across regions and increasing the costs and risks of moving (Bozick, 2021; Foster, 2017; Frey, 2009; Molloy et al., 2011; Palarino, 2025).

The increase in interstate migration rates after 2020 may reflect the economic recovery from the initial COVID-19 economic shock, the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines beginning on December 14 2020, and residential moves deferred due to the pandemic (Diesel et al., 2021). U.S. Annual GDP Growth was -2.2% in 2020 and 6.1% in 2021, before falling to 2.5% in 2022, rising to 2.9% in 2023, and decreasing to

2.8% in 2024 (World Bank 2026.). Following the increase, Interstate migration rates would decline after 2022, continuing the long-term downward trend.

On balance, the pandemic appears to have produced at most a modest, perhaps transient deviation rather than a reversal of the long-run downward trend in interstate migration. This is consistent with the broader finding that the decline in interstate migration is driven by structural economic and social forces rather than short-term factors (Molloy et al., 2011).

4.4 Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these results. First, the analysis focuses exclusively on interstate migration. Prior research shows that inter-county migration rates are substantially higher than interstate rates, indicating that much residential mobility occurs within state boundaries (Cooke, 2013; Foster, 2017). By excluding intra-state moves — particularly short-distance relocations driven by housing, employment, or family factors — this study may understate overall internal migration, and its findings should be read as reflecting long-distance migration rather than internal mobility more broadly.

Second, the analysis relies on the CPS, which surveys approximately 105,000 individuals per month (U.S. Census Bureau & U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019) and excludes individuals living in college dormitories and military barracks, populations that are disproportionately young and highly mobile. Their exclusion may further underestimate interstate migration, particularly among younger adults and those connected to military service.

Third, because the survey relies on self-reported information, responses may be affected by recall bias. Kjellsson et al. (2014) find that errors in recalling nights spent hospitalized increase as the recall period lengthens: after 30 days the mean positive and negative recall errors were 0.043 and −0.002, whereas after 365 days they were 0.078 and −0.134. CPS respondents may be subject to similar errors.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the continued decline in interstate migration may have important implications for economic opportunity, workforce dynamics, and social inequality in the United States. Internal migration has historically served as a mechanism through which individuals improve their economic prospects by relocating to regions with greater opportunities (Abramitzky et al., 2021; Chetty & Hendren, 2018). A sustained decline in mobility may therefore limit the ability of workers to respond to changing labor market conditions, slowing the reallocation of labor toward new growing industries. Beyond individual economic outcomes, reduced geographic mobility may have broader structural consequences. At the macroeconomic level, declining migration can impede regional income convergence by preventing the

flow of human capital, potentially widening regional inequality over time (Ganong & Shoag, 2017). For firms, especially those concentrated in high-cost urban centers, constrained labor supply may dampen innovation, productivity growth, and competitiveness.

Additionally, Migration has long functioned as a method for social mobility, allowing families to access better education, services, and neighborhood environments (Abramitzky et al., 2021; Chetty & Hendren, 2018; Zhou et al., 2023). A decline in this channel may reinforce intergenerational inequality; place of birth may become an increasingly important determinant of long-term outcomes. Future research should examine the structural factors contributing to declining migration rates — including housing affordability, remote work, labor market changes, and regional economic disparities — to better understand the long-term consequences of reduced geographic mobility. Overall, these findings suggest that long-term structural forces, rather than short-term disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, continue to drive patterns of interstate migration in the United States.

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Table 1

Study Characteristics

Characteristic	**N = 3,503,633**[1]
Age (years)	
18-29	704,085 (20%)
30-54	1,707,002 (49%)
55-64	499,911 (14%)
65+	592,635 (17%)
Sex	
Female	1,837,922 (52%)
Male	1,665,711 (48%)
Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic	571,976 (16%)
Non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander	194,449 (5.5%)
Non-Hispanic Black	394,813 (11%)
Non-Hispanic White	2,231,405 (64%)
Other	110,990 (3.2%)
Educational Attainment	
Less than high school graduate	475,102 (14%)
High school diploma or equivalent	1,054,320 (30%)
At least some college	1,974,211 (56%)
Marital Status	
Divorced	354,066 (11%)
Married	1,996,793 (62%)
Single	879,252 (27%)
Unknown	273,522
Employment Status	
Employed	2,233,579 (64%)
Not in labor force	1,142,277 (33%)
Unemployed	127,777 (3.6%)
Citizenship Status	
Born in United States	2,944,844 (84%)
Naturalized citizen	255,299 (7.3%)
Not a citizen	303,490 (8.7%)

[1] n (%)

Table 2

Regression Results

Characteristic	OR	95% CI	p-value
Year			
2000	—	—	
2001	0.92	0.87, 0.97	0.004
2002	0.90	0.85, 0.96	<0.001
2003	0.87	0.82, 0.93	<0.001
2004	0.83	0.78, 0.88	<0.001
2005	0.82	0.77, 0.87	<0.001
2006	0.63	0.59, 0.67	<0.001
2007	0.53	0.49, 0.57	<0.001
2008	0.52	0.48, 0.55	<0.001
2009	0.48	0.45, 0.52	<0.001
2010	0.45	0.42, 0.48	<0.001
2011	0.49	0.46, 0.53	<0.001
2012	0.52	0.49, 0.56	<0.001
2013	0.49	0.46, 0.53	<0.001
2014	0.48	0.44, 0.52	<0.001
2015	0.53	0.50, 0.57	<0.001
2016	0.49	0.45, 0.52	<0.001
2017	0.56	0.52, 0.60	<0.001
2018	0.51	0.47, 0.54	<0.001
2019	0.51	0.47, 0.55	<0.001
2020	0.44	0.41, 0.48	<0.001
2021	0.45	0.42, 0.49	<0.001
2022	0.53	0.49, 0.57	<0.001
2023	0.50	0.46, 0.54	<0.001
2024	0.46	0.42, 0.50	<0.001
2025	0.46	0.42, 0.49	<0.001
Age (years)			
30-54	—	—	
18-29	2.21	2.14, 2.28	<0.001
55-64	0.61	0.59, 0.64	<0.001
65+	0.38	0.36, 0.40	<0.001
Sex			
Female	—	—	
Male	1.06	1.04, 1.09	<0.001

Race/Ethnicity			
Non-Hispanic White	—	—	
Hispanic	0.70	0.68, 0.73	<0.001
Non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander	1.03	0.98, 1.08	0.2
Non-Hispanic Black	0.93	0.90, 0.97	<0.001
Other	1.25	1.18, 1.33	<0.001
Educational Attainment			
High school diploma or equivalent	—	—	
Less than high school graduate	0.83	0.79, 0.86	<0.001
At least some college	1.35	1.32, 1.38	<0.001
Marital Status			
Married	—	—	
Divorced	1.35	1.31, 1.40	<0.001
Single	0.95	0.92, 0.98	0.002
Employment Status			
Employed	—	—	
Not in labor force	1.18	1.15, 1.21	<0.001
Unemployed	1.83	1.75, 1.91	<0.001
Citizenship Status			
Born in United States	—	—	
Naturalized citizen	0.85	0.81, 0.90	<0.001
Not a citizen	1.30	1.25, 1.36	<0.001

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

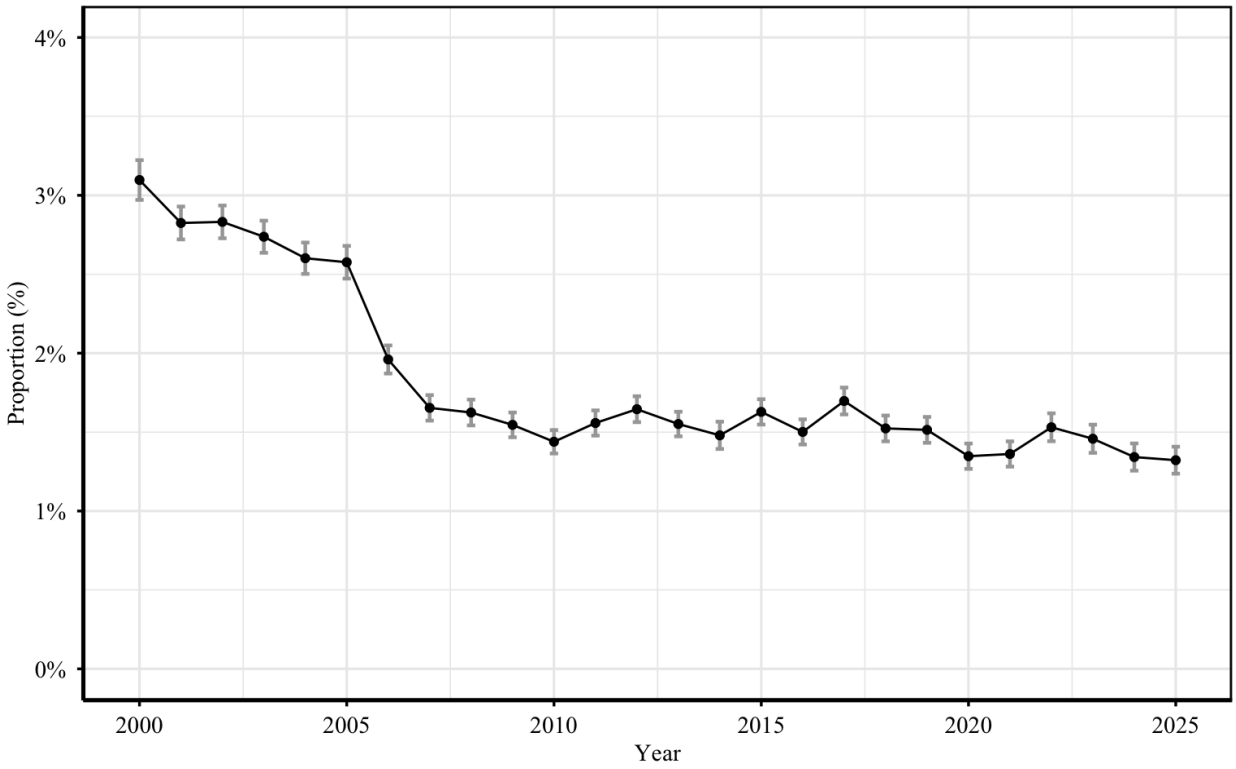

Figure 1: Interstate Migration Over Time

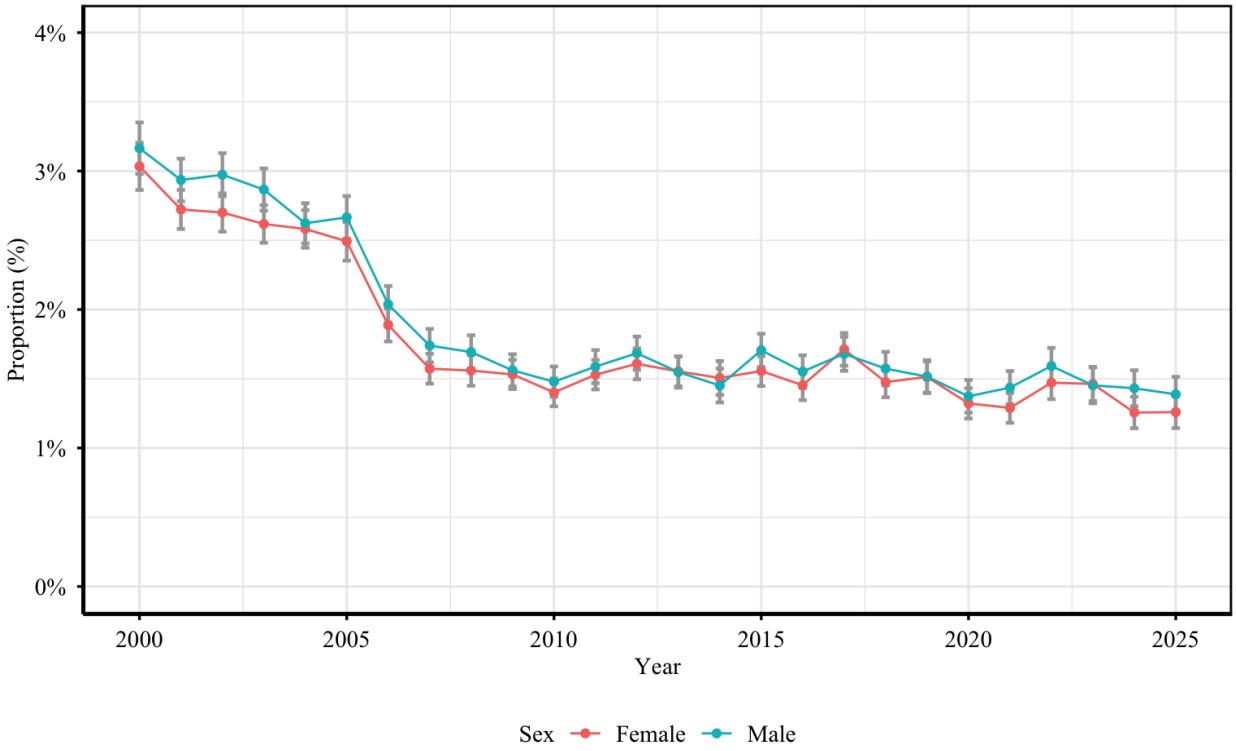

Figure 2: Intestate Migration Over Time By Sex

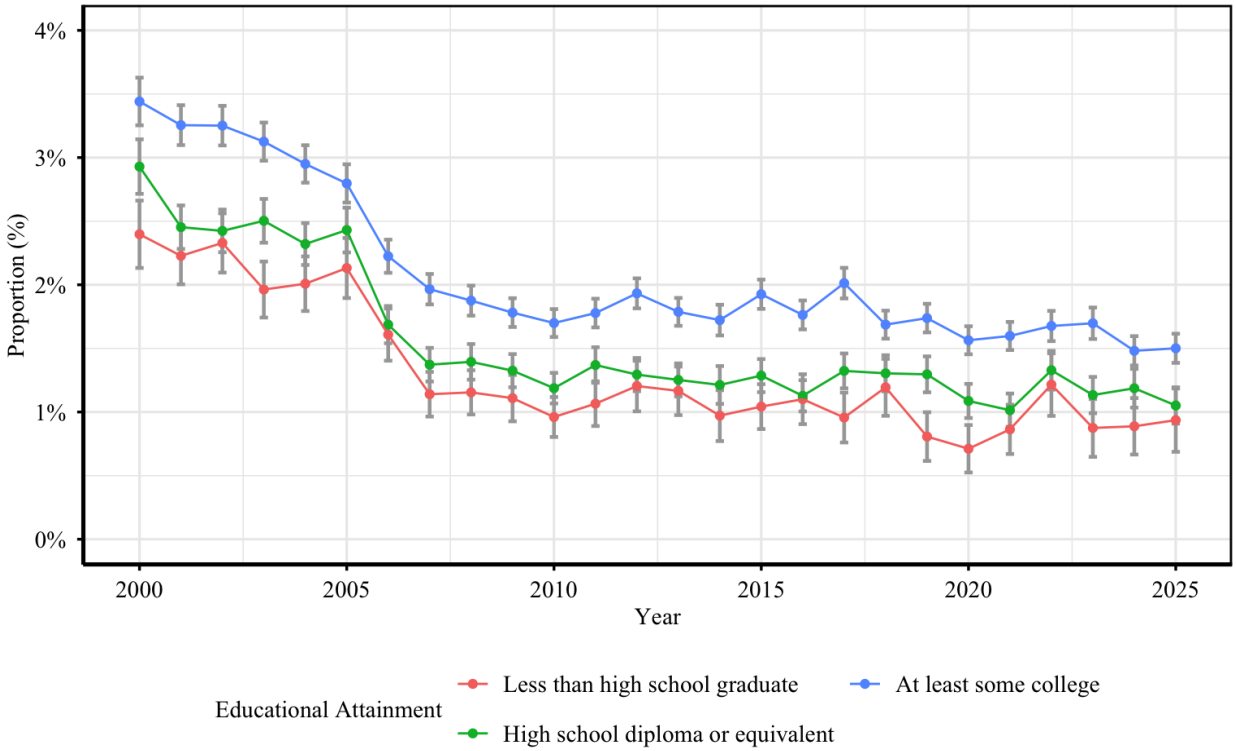

Figure 3: Interstate Migration Over Time By Education

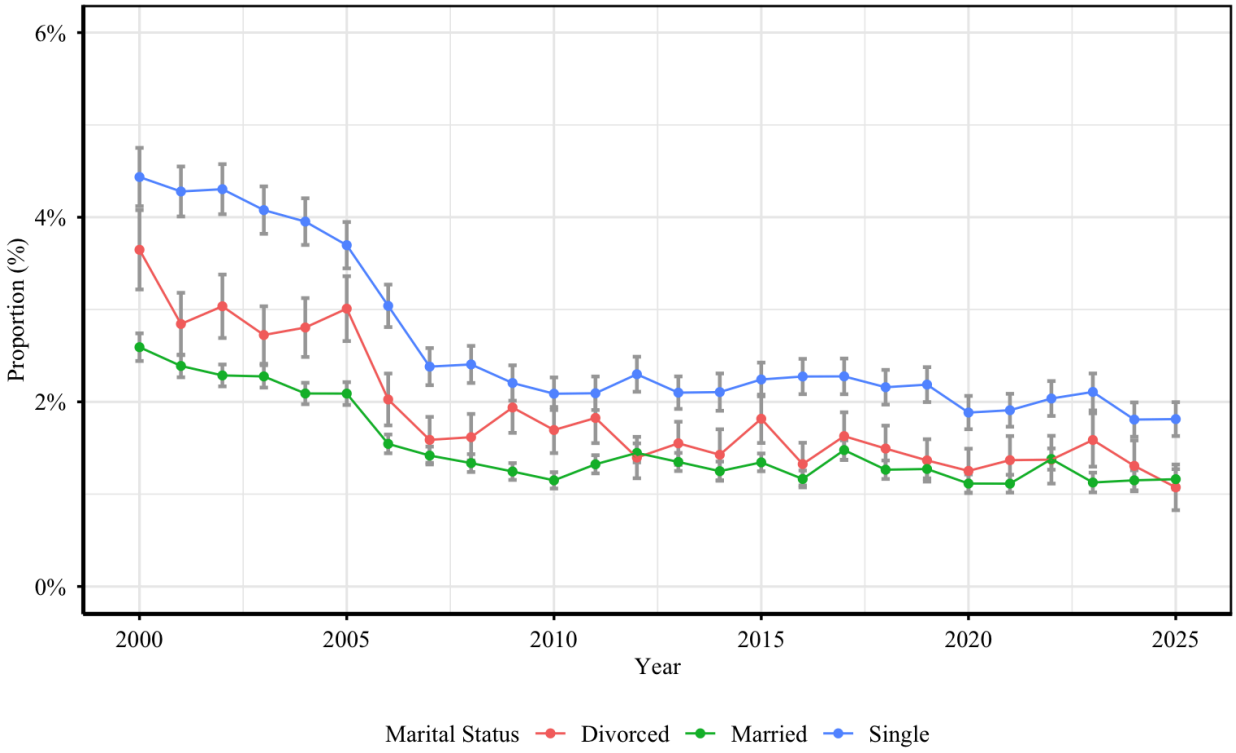

Figure 4: Interstate Migration Over Time By Marital Status

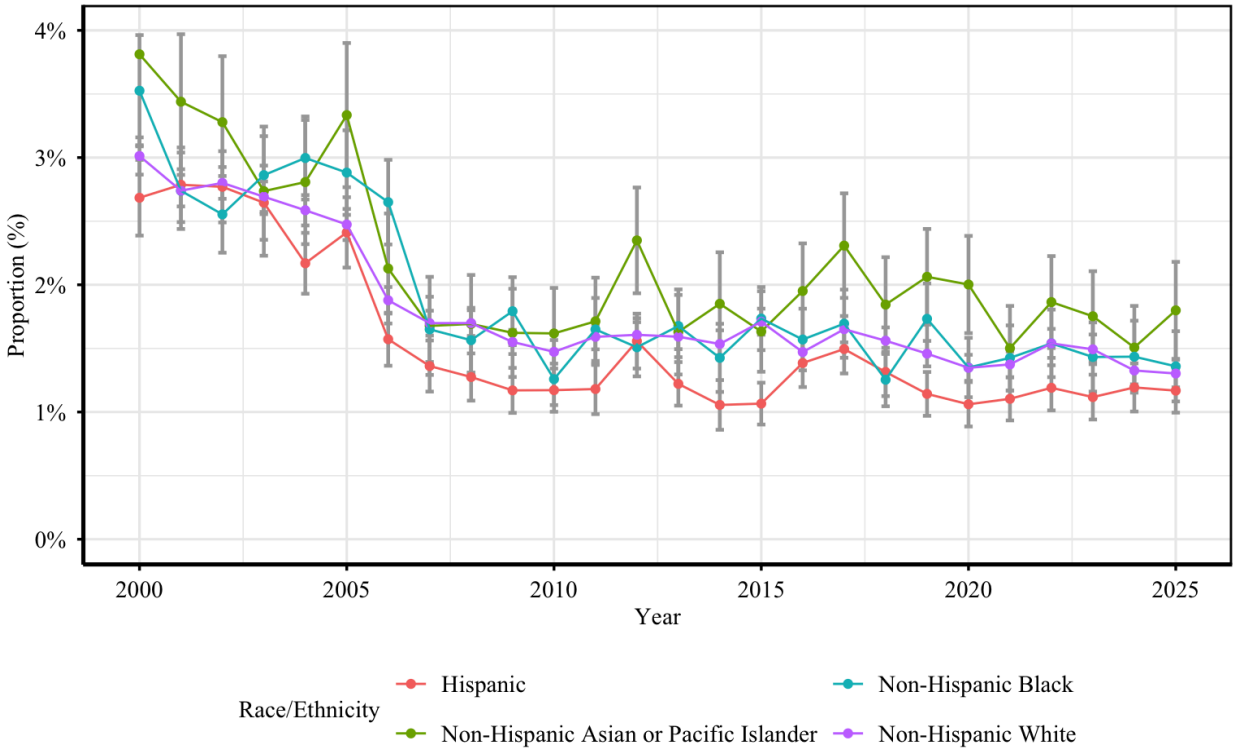

Figure 5: Interstate Migration Over Time By Race

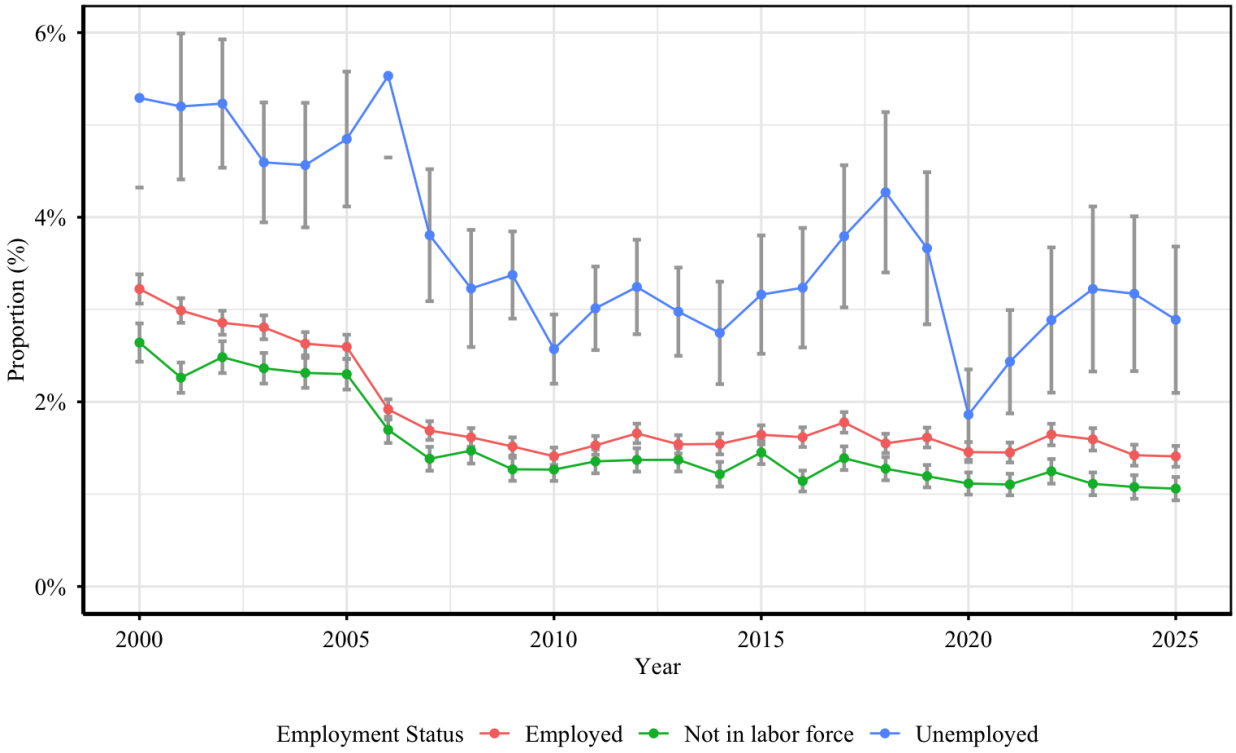

Figure 6: Interstate Migration Over Time By Employment

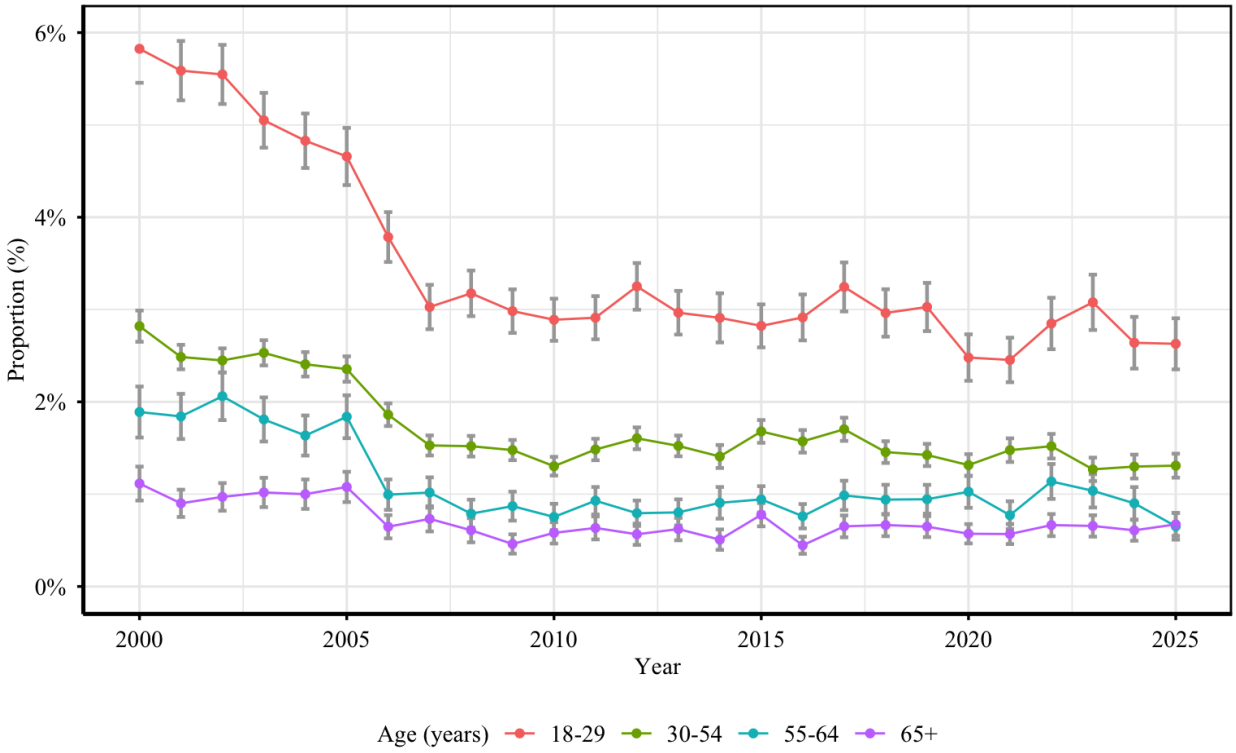

Figure 7: InterstateMigration Over Time By Age

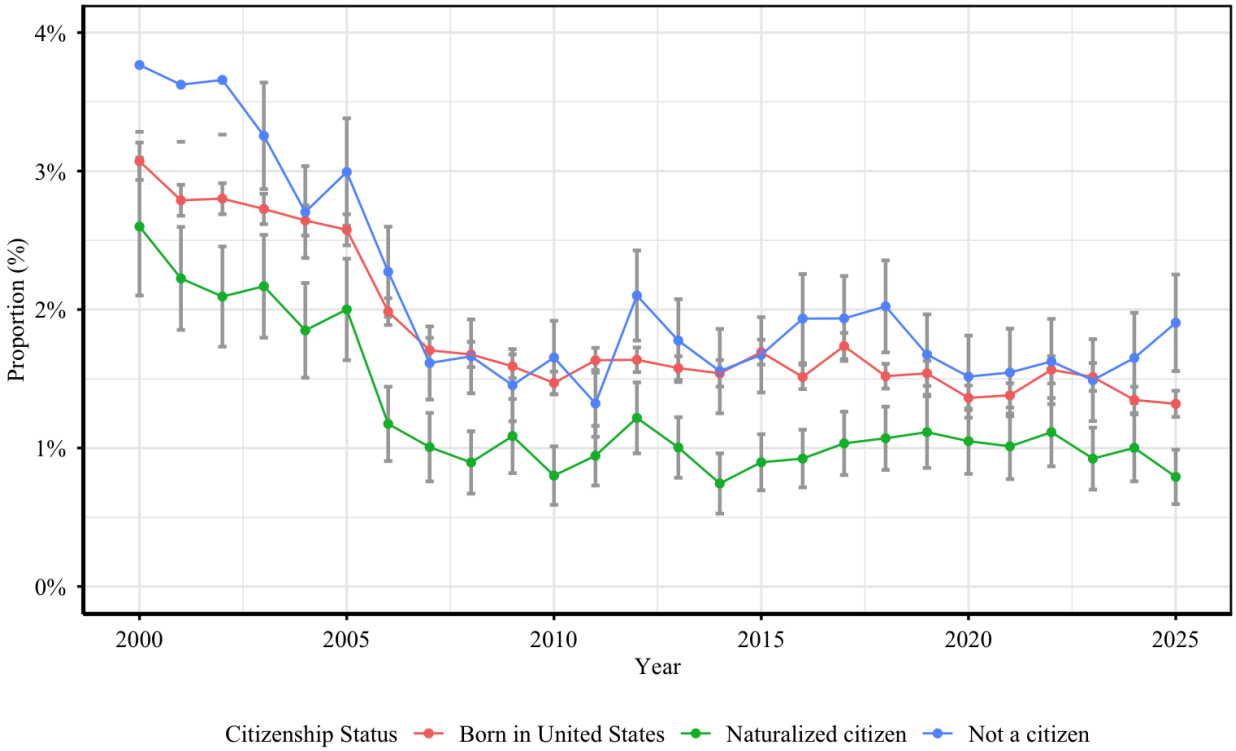

Figure 8: Interstate Migration Over Time By Citizenship Status

APPENDIX

The outcome of interest was interstate migration between two consecutive years. To ascertain this outcome, I used several survey questions to collect the necessary data.(U.S. Census Bureau & U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025) First, CPS asked, "(Were/Was) (you/reference person's name) living in this house (or apartment) one year ago?" Responses were "Yes, this house (apt)"; "No, different house"; or "No, outside the U.S." Then, CPS asked, "Where did (reference person's name/you) live one year ago?" Respondents provided the name of the city, town, or post office, or the current city if it was the same city. Next, CPS asked, "Where did (reference person's name/you) live one year ago?" Respondents provided the name of the state they lived in one year ago, the current state they lived in if they lived in the same state, or they indicated that they lived on a ship at sea. Finally, respondents that indicated they were living in the same house and living in the same or different city, town, or had a post office within the same state were considered not to be interstate migrants in this study. Respondents who lived in a different state the prior year were considered to be interstate migrants.

First, age was determined by asking, "As of last week, that would make (name/you) (approximately (AGE)/ less than 1 / over 98 / AGE) years old. Is that correct?" with response options "1. Yes" or "2. No," and was further refined with the question, "Even though you don't know (name's/your) exact birthdate, what is your best guess as to how old (you/he/she) (was/were) on (your/his/her) last birthday?" where responses range from "00–98" for ages 0 to 98 years old, and "99" for 99 years or older. Sex is captured with, "What is (name of person talking about)'s sex?" with answers "1 Male" or "2 Female."

Race and ethnicity are measured using a two-part approach: respondents are first asked, "(Are/Is) (name/you) of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?" with answers "1 Yes" or "2 No," and then presented with, "I am going to read you a list of five race categories. You may choose one or more races. For this survey, Hispanic origin is not a race. (Are/Is) (NAME/you) White; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; OR Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?" with the possible responses: "1 White, 2 Black or African American, 3 American Indian or Alaska Native, 4 Asian, 5 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 6 Other (not read out loud)."

Marital status is determined by asking, "(Are/Is) (name/you) now married, widowed, divorced, separated or never married?" with responses "1 Married – Spouse PRESENT, 2 Married – Spouse ABSENT, 3 Widowed, 4 Divorced, 5 Separated, 6 Never married." Educational attainment is assessed with the question, "What is the highest level of school (name/you) (have/has) completed or the highest degree (name/you) (have/has) received?" and includes all response options provided to respondents: "31 Less than 1st grade, 32 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th grade, 33 5th or 6th grade, 34 7th or 8th grade, 35 9th grade, 36 10th grade, 37 11th grade, 38 12th grade no diploma, 39 high school graduate – high school diploma or the equivalent (For example: GED), 40 Some college but no degree, 41 Associate degree in college – Occupational/vocational program, 42 Associate degree in college – Academic program, 43 Bachelor's degree (For example: BA, AB, BS), 44 Master's degree (For example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW,

MBA), 45 Professional School Degree (For example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD), and 46 Doctorate degree (For example: PhD, EdD)."

Employment status is defined using the reference week: employed individuals include those who did any work at all for pay or in a family enterprise, or who were temporarily absent from a job for valid reasons, whereas unemployed individuals are those "not employed during the reference week but were available for work (excluding temporary illness) and had made specific efforts to find employment some time during the 4-week period ending with the reference week." Finally, citizenship status is determined through a combination of place of birth and direct questioning: respondents were first asked "In what country (was/were) (name/you) born?" Afterwards, they were asked, "In what country was (your/his/her) mother born?" and "In what country was (your/his/her) father born?" Respondents were then asked "(Are / Is) (name/you) a CITIZEN of the United States?" If respondents answered with yes, then they were considered a citizen. Afterwards, they were asked "Did (name/you) become a citizen of the United States through naturalization?"

Appendix Table 1: Covariate Survey Questions

Covariate	Survey Question	Sample Level	Categorized level
Age	Respondents were first asked their date of birth. After confirming such, respondents were asked their age as of last week.	Ages 00-98 or 99+	18-29 years 30-54 years 55-64 years 65+ years
Sex	Respondents were asked whether their sex was male or female.	Male or Female	Male or Female
Race/Ethnicity	Respondents were first asked whether they were of Hispanic origin. If not, respondents were asked whether they were White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander.	Hispanic, White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Other	Hispanic, Non-hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander, Non-hispanic White, Non-hispanic Black
Marital Status	Respondents were asked whether they were married, with spouse present; married with absent spouse; widowed; divorced; separated; or never married.	Married – Spouse PRESENT; Married – Spouse ABSENT; Widowed; Divorced; Separated; Never married."	Divorced, Married, Single
Educational Attainment	Respondents were asked what their highest educational attainment was.	Less than 1st grade; 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th grade; 5th or 6th grade; 7th or 8th grade; 9th grade; 10th grade; 11th grade; 12th grade no diploma; high school graduate – high school diploma or the equivalent (For example: GED); Some college but no degree; Associate degree in college – Occupational/vocational program; Associate degree	Less than high school graduate, High school diploma or equivalent, At least some college

		in college – Academic program; Bachelor's degree (For example: BA, AB, BS); Master's degree (For example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA); Professional School Degree (For example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD); Doctorate degree (For example: PhD, EdD)."	
Employment Status	Employment status was determined using CPS labor force criteria based on respondents' work activity and job-search status during the reference week	Employed, Unemployed, Not part of the labor force	Employed, Unemployed, Not in labor force
Citizenship Status	Respondents reported their country of birth and citizenship status, including whether citizenship was obtained through naturalization	Born in U.S, Born in U.S. outlying, Born abroad of American parents, Naturalized citizen, Not a citizen, NIU	Born in United States, Naturalized Citizen, Not a citizen