

rural new york minute

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Natural increase is the key to NYS population growth*

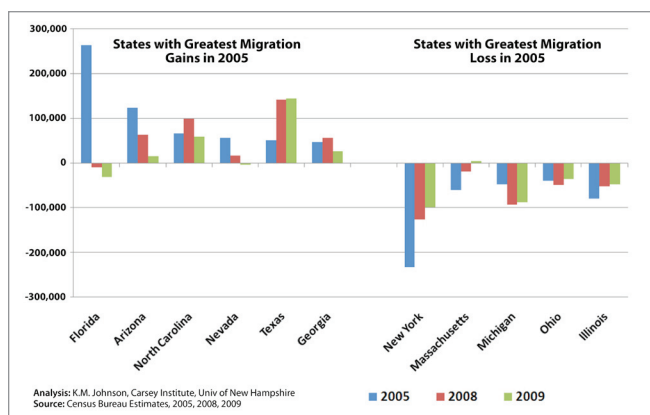
By **Kenneth M. Johnson**, Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire

What is the Issue?

As a result of the economic recession in the U.S., fewer people are moving from one state to another. Given the lower rate of internal migration, natural increase (births minus deaths) now plays a greater role in producing inter-state differences in population growth. For states that gained the most domestic migration from other states during the mid-2000 boom years, the impact of the migration slowdown has reduced their rates of population growth compared with other states. In contrast, for some states that suffered large domestic migration losses during the boom years, such as New York (NYS), slower migration has narrowed the gap in population growth rates compared with more rapidly growing states. As a result, this may strengthen NYS's ability to retain more seats in the U.S. Congress.

Florida, long a major recipient of movers from New York and other north-eastern and mid western states, saw its domestic migration drop from a *gain* of 263,000 in 2005 to a *loss* of 31,000 last year (Figure 1). Nevada also experienced a domestic migration loss of 4,000 persons last year after gaining 56,000 domestic migrants in 2005. Arizona's inflow dropped from 124,000 to only 15,000 last year. Even Georgia and North Carolina, which appeared to be weathering the domestic migration downturn, show sharply reduced levels.

Fig. 1: Migration Trends for States with History of Migration Loss or Gain



Among states that experienced large domestic migration losses during the mid-2000s, the situation has changed significantly. With the exception of Michigan, each of the five states with the greatest migration losses in 2005 either lost *fewer* domestic migrants last year or actually *gained* some. In NYS, the domestic migration loss last year was 98,000 compared to a loss of nearly 233,000 in 2005. Massachusetts enjoyed a modest domestic migration gain of 4,000 last year after losing more than 60,000 domestic migrants as recently as 2005. Ohio and Illinois also experienced less migration loss than they had in 2005.

Why natural increase is important

With domestic migration at record postwar lows and with immigration also reduced, population growth in the U.S. depends increasingly on the excess of births over deaths ("natural increase"). At the national level, natural increase accounted for 67% of the total population gain last year. But there are distinct regional- and state-level differences in how much influence natural increase has on population growth. In the Midwest, natural increase accounted for *all* the population gains last year—offsetting migration losses. Similarly, in the Northeast, natural increase accounted for most (88%) of the population gain. In contrast, it only accounted for 51% of the growth in the South and 68% of the growth in the West.

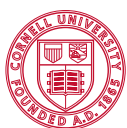
For the states that enjoyed the largest migration gains during the mid-decade boom, continuing population growth now depends less on migration and more on natural increase. For example, migration fueled virtually all of Florida's population gain between 2000 and 2005, with natural increase accounting for only 14% of state population increase. Last year, the excess of births over deaths accounted for 51% of the population gain. Similar trends are evident in other fast-growing states.

In states like New York, however, the story is quite different. Natural increase combined with foreign immigration and smaller domestic migration losses has reduced or even reversed population loss in NYS. This is a striking contrast to the situation during the migration boom, when natural increase together with immigration had to offset huge domestic migration losses. Between 2000 and 2005, NYS's population diminished by 26,000 because it lost 233,000 migrants to other states. Even with 99,000 more births than deaths and 109,000 immigrants, NYS's domestic migration loss was too great to offset. In contrast, NYS grew by 74,000 last year because the domestic migration loss diminished to 95,000, and this was more than offset by a natural increase of 95,000 and 75,000 immigrants.

Implications of these trends

With lower domestic migration, state population growth is increasingly determined by natural increase, and has important implications for the allocation of seats in the U.S. Congress. Congressional seats will be reallocated after the population counts from the 2010 Decennial Census are finalized. Recent media speculation regarding whether Minnesota will retain its eight congressional seats is a prime example. Research by the Brookings Institution suggests that had the demographic trends of the migration boom years continued, Minnesota would likely lose a seat in Congress. However, with migration slowing, Minnesota may be able to hang on to the seat, in no small part due to the state's continued natural increase. A similar scenario might play out in New York. Will New York State lose fewer seats in congress as a result? The 2010 Census will tell us.

*Kenneth M. Johnson is a professor of sociology and a senior demographer at the University of New Hampshire's Carsey Institute. This *Rural New York Minute* is a revised version of an article (*With less migration, natural increase is now more important to state growth*) that first appeared as a Carsey Institute publication (www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/FS-JohnsonNationalMigration.pdf)



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