



# A Decade of Illinois' Migration Patterns

*Providing Demographic, Geographic, and Socioeconomic Context*



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**Frank Manzo IV**  
Economist  
Illinois Economic Policy Institute

**Robert Bruno**  
Professor and Director  
Project for Middle Class Renewal  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

**ILEPI**  
ILLINOIS ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE

**I ILLINOIS** LABOR & EMPLOYMENT  
RELATIONS  
PROJECT FOR MIDDLE CLASS RENEWAL

## Executive Summary

Reports of Illinois' population decline have been greatly exaggerated due to a reliance on faulty Census estimates instead of actual counts of people. An analysis of *Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement* survey data from 2013 through 2022 and Illinois Department of Revenue data from 2010 through 2020 can provide clarity and context, as well as important details on *who* is moving out of, moving into, and staying in Illinois.

### **The data reveal that Illinois' population was relatively stable, but its tax base grew between 2010 and 2020.**

- Official Census counts showed that Illinois' population declined by 18,000 people (0.1 percent) from 2010 to 2020, but a post-Census review later found that Illinois' population was likely undercounted by 2 percent.
- The Chicago area's population grew by 2 percent while Downstate communities lost residents.
- The number of Illinois residents filing income tax returns increased by 200,000 (4 percent) from 2010 to 2020, driven by substantial growth in filers from the Chicago metropolitan area and slight declines Downstate.

### **The data show that people who have moved out of Illinois are younger, more likely to be Black, less likely to be Hispanic, and have lower incomes.**

- The average age of people who have left Illinois is 32 years old.
- People who left Illinois were more likely to be Black (18 percent) than people who moved in from other states.
- Only 30 percent of people who left Illinois were homeowners in their first year in their new states.
- 14 percent of people who left Illinois report relying on food stamp assistance, which is higher than people who stayed in Illinois (12 percent) and moved into Illinois from other states (10 percent).
- Hispanic residents comprise a significantly smaller share of people who have left the state (10 percent) than those who have stayed in Illinois (17 percent).

### **People who have moved into Illinois are better educated and more likely to arrive for college.**

- While Illinois lost residents to net domestic migration from 2013 through 2022, these losses were almost entirely offset by the addition of migrants from abroad.
- Higher education enrollment rates were 6 percentage points higher for adults who moved into Illinois from other states and 14 percentage points higher for adult migrants from abroad than for adults who moved out of Illinois.
- Adult workers who moved into Illinois were more likely to have bachelor's degrees or higher (64 percent domestically and 70 percent from abroad) than adult workers who left Illinois (59 percent).

### **People who stayed in Illinois have better socioeconomic outcomes and greater levels of financial stability.**

- People who stayed in Illinois have 16 percent higher average annual household incomes than those who left.
- People who stayed in Illinois are more likely to live in homes that they own (70 percent) than those who left.
- Stayers were more likely to be married (53 percent) than leavers (44 percent).

### **The data do not support claims that high taxes or the estate tax are the primary reasons why people move out of state or that high-income earners are disproportionately moving out of state.**

- The top reason cited for moving out of Illinois was job-related, such as a new job or job transfer (39 percent).
- Between 2010 and 2020, the number of taxpayers reporting over \$500,000 in adjusted gross income increased by 80 percent and those earning between \$100,001 and \$500,000 grew by 52 percent in Illinois, while those claiming Earned Income Credit (EIC) benefits decreased by 11 percent.

### **There are still reasons to treat Illinois' population projections from the U.S. Census Bureau with hesitancy.**

- Hispanic residents and foreign-born individuals have offset losses associated with net domestic migration, but these two groups have historically been most at risk of undercounts by the Census Bureau.
- Due to pandemic-related complications, the Census still bases population estimates on a convoluted mix of 2020 Census data (which undercounted Illinois) and the same projections that incorrectly predicted Illinois would lose more than 240,000 residents last decade.

The data reveal that Illinois' migration patterns have made the state more urban, more educated, more foreign-born, more female, more Hispanic, and higher paid than a decade ago. They have also made the state less reliant on government assistance programs. The data also suggests that maintaining fiscal responsibility, investing in under-resourced areas, making college more affordable, and enacting pro-family policies can attract and retain people in Illinois.

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## About the Authors

**Frank Manzo IV, M.P.P.** is an Economist at the Illinois Economic Policy Institute. He earned a Master of Public Policy from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Political Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He can be contacted at [fmanzo@illinoisepi.org](mailto:fmanzo@illinoisepi.org).

**Robert Bruno, Ph.D.** is a Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign School of Labor and Employment Relations and is the Director of the Project for Middle Class Renewal. He earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Political Theory from New York University, a Master of Arts from Bowling Green State University, and a Bachelor of Arts from Ohio University. He can be contacted at [bbruno@illinois.edu](mailto:bbruno@illinois.edu).

## Introduction

Reports of Illinois' population decline have been greatly exaggerated (Miller, 2022). For years, Census estimates had been suggesting that Illinois was losing tens of thousands of people every year, primarily due to outmigration to other states. By the end of the decade, the cumulative annual projections led commentators to claim that Illinois had lost more than 200,000 residents (Chicago Tribune Editorial Board, 2020). These estimates, however, were significantly flawed. According to the official counts, Illinois had 12.83 million residents in the 2010 Census and 12.81 million residents in the 2020 Census, a decline of about 18,000 residents (Census, 2023). Moreover, a post-Census review by the U.S. Census Bureau found that Illinois' population was likely undercounted by 2 percent, meaning that Illinois actually had around 13 million residents in 2020 (Hill et al., 2022; Ramos & Armentrout, 2022).

A state's population can grow or decline in two ways. The first is through "natural change," or the relationship between births and deaths. Natural increase occurs when there are more births than deaths while natural decrease occurs when more people are dying than babies are being born.<sup>1</sup> The second is through migration. Domestic migration, or people moving from one state to another, receives much of the media attention when it comes to Illinois' population changes. One-way U-Haul trips, for example, imply that Illinois is a state from which people are leaving while Texas is a state into which people are moving (U-Haul, 2023). International migration is important as well, because the Chicago metropolitan area and places across Illinois are top destinations for immigrants coming to the United States (Budiman, 2020; Krogstad & Keegan, 2014).

This report focuses on the second factor: migration. There are many reasons why people may choose to move (Taylor et al., 2008). Those who stay in their hometowns cite family ties (74 percent), the desire to remain where they grew up (69 percent), and the belief that their communities are good places to live (59 percent). Those who choose to move cite job or business opportunities (44 percent), better communities to live (36 percent), and family reasons (35 percent) as their top factors (Taylor et al., 2008). While some think tanks claim that taxes are a factor, academic researchers have concluded that state tax rates do not have statistically significant impacts on interstate migration (Loughead, 2022; CTBA, 2017; Mazerov, 2014). The biggest reasons people give for moving are new jobs or job transfers, shorter commutes, better schools, better housing, and to be closer to their families (Reyes & O'Connell, 2019).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, U.S. migration had reached historically low levels. Between 2019 and 2020, only 9 percent of Americans changed residences, the lowest rate recorded in the seven decades that the U.S. Census Bureau has tracked migration (Frey, 2020). This "long pre-pandemic decline in American migration" began in the mid-1980s, when over 20 percent of Americans changed residences annually (Frey, 2020). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, interstate migration rose significantly between 2020 and 2021, but "it is likely that these changes are related to the pandemic's impact on domestic migration preferences" and migration patterns had already started to return to pre-pandemic levels between by 2022 (Toukabri et al., 2022; Toukabri & Delbé, 2023).

As part of its data release announcing the uptick in domestic mobility during the pandemic, the U.S. Census Bureau once again suggested that Illinois' population declined by more than 100,000 residents from 2021 to 2022. This led some commentators to claim that Illinois has lost population for nine

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<sup>1</sup> In 2019 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 140,145 births and 108,937 deaths in Illinois, a natural increase of 31,208 residents. However, in 2020, there were only 133,304 births and 132,701 deaths, causing a natural increase of just 603 residents. In 2021, there were 132,221 births and 125,102 deaths, causing a natural increase of 7,119 residents (IDPH, 2023a; IDPH, 2023b).

consecutive years, due primarily to domestic out-migration to other states (Miller, 2023a). Rarely, however, do those who reference these speculative estimates provide details on *who* they claim is moving out of and into Illinois.

This report, conducted jointly by researchers at the Illinois Economic Policy Institute (ILEPI) and the Project for Middle Class Renewal (PMCR) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign aims to provide some clarity for the public, for the media, and for lawmakers. The report investigates three sources of data to understand long-term population changes in Illinois. The first section utilizes official counts from the 2010 Census and 2020 Census. It cross-references population data with tax return data filed with the Illinois Department of Revenue for the 2010 and 2020 tax years. The second section analyzes 10 years of data from 2013 through 2022 from the March *Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement* (CPS ASEC), which includes questions about migration. This section explores differences between people who stay in Illinois, people who leave Illinois, and people who move to Illinois from other states and from abroad. Three common claims that are often made about Illinois migration patterns are subsequently addressed before policy implications are offered based on the data. A concluding section recaps key findings.

## Census and Taxpayer Data Between 2010 and 2020

The U.S. Constitution requires that a Census be taken every 10 years. The U.S. Census Bureau is the agency tasked with counting the number of people living in the United States. Additionally, the Bureau houses the Population Estimates Program (PEP), which is intended to publish annual estimates on births, deaths, and migration data to provide up-to-date information on how the U.S. population has changed since the most recent Census. PEP estimates are important because they are used in federal funding allocations; if states and localities are undercounted, then they receive less in revenue from the federal government (PEP, 2022).

**FIGURE 1: OFFICIAL POPULATION COUNTS AND POPULATION ESTIMATES IN ILLINOIS BY THE CENSUS, 2010-2021**

Annual Estimates of the Resident Population of Illinois		
Census	2010	12,830,632
Population Estimates (July 1)  <i>[Incorrect]</i>	2010	12,840,503
	2011	12,867,454
	2012	12,882,510
	2013	12,895,129
	2014	12,884,493
	2015	12,858,913
	2016	12,820,527
	2017	12,778,828
	2018	12,723,071
	2019	12,671,821
Census	2020	12,812,508
Population Estimates (July 1)	2020	12,785,245
	2021	12,671,469

Source(s): Authors' analysis of "QuickFacts: Illinois," "County Population Totals: 2020-2021," and "County Population Totals: 2010-2019" by the U.S. Census Bureau (Census, 2023; Census, 2022; Census, 2021a). NOTE: The U.S. Census Bureau has reported that Illinois' population was likely undercounted in the 2020 Census and was likely over 13 million people (Hill et al., 2022; Ramos & Armentrout, 2022).

The official count of the 2020 Census revealed that the Population Estimates Program had been undercounting Illinois' population (Figure 1). Illinois had a population of 12.83 million in the 2010 Census. PEP estimated that Illinois was adding people until 2013, when the state had about 12.90 million residents. After that, PEP projected declines every year, down to 12.67 million residents in 2019. These estimates were off significantly, as Illinois had 12.81 million residents who were actually counted in the 2020 Census.

The fact that PEP's population estimates in 2020 were below the official count—and continued to decline in 2021—should be taken with a fair degree of caution. That is because, for a host of reasons including the pandemic, Census researchers did *not* exclusively use the 2020 Census in updating their population estimates for this current decade. Instead, PEP reports that it used a “blended base” derived from a mix of the 2020 Census population counts, “Vintage 2020 Population Estimates” that use 2010 demographic data and expected Illinois to have only 12.59 million people, and the exact same migration data that contributed to previous undercounts in Illinois (Hartley, Rogers, & Doren, 2021; Census, 2021b). Unless the Census Bureau changes its methodology, this means that its population estimates from 2021 through 2029 still largely rely on a 2020 Census that undercounted Illinois by 2 percent, the exact same projections that predicted Illinois would lose more than 200,000 residents between 2010 and 2020, and migration data that was unreliable throughout the previous decade (Hill et al., 2022; Ramos & Armentrout, 2022).

Figures 2 and 3 display the differences between the Census' speculative estimates and the official Census count. Through 2019, the Census projected that Illinois' population was about 159,000 people below its official 2010 count. The Census estimated that Cook County had lost over 44,000 residents and the collar counties of the Chicago area had gained just under 43,000 people. The rest of Illinois—often referred to as “Downstate”—had shrunk by 157,000 people between the official count in 2010 and July 2019, according to the estimates. In total, the State of Illinois' population was projected to be down by more than 1 percent (Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2: ESTIMATED POPULATION CHANGE BETWEEN THE 2010 CENSUS AND 2019 IN ILLINOIS, BY GEOGRAPHY**

Area of Illinois	2010 Census	2019 “Estimates”	Change (#)	Change (%)
Illinois	12,830,632	12,671,821	-158,811	-1.2%
Chicago Area	8,431,386	8,429,599	-1,787	-0.0%
Cook County	5,194,675	5,150,233	-44,442	-0.9%
Collar (Suburban) Counties	3,236,711	3,279,366	+42,655	+1.3%
Downstate	4,399,246	4,242,222	-157,024	-3.6%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of “QuickFacts: Illinois,” “County Population Totals: 2020-2021,” and “County Population Totals: 2010-2019” by the U.S. Census Bureau (Census, 2023; Census, 2022; Census, 2021a). NOTE: The U.S. Census Bureau has reported that Illinois' population was likely undercounted in the 2020 Census and was likely over 13 million people (Hill et al., 2022; Ramos & Armentrout, 2022).

**FIGURE 3: OFFICIAL POPULATION CHANGE BETWEEN THE 2010 CENSUS AND 2020 CENSUS IN ILLINOIS, BY GEOGRAPHY**

Area of Illinois	2010 Census	2020 Census	Change (#)	Change (%)
Illinois	12,830,632	12,812,508	-18,124	-0.1%
Chicago Area	8,431,386	8,577,735	+146,349	+1.7%
Cook County	5,194,675	5,275,541	+80,866	+1.6%
Collar (Suburban) Counties	3,236,711	3,302,194	+65,483	+2.0%
Downstate	4,399,246	4,234,773	-164,473	-3.7%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of “QuickFacts: Illinois,” “County Population Totals: 2020-2021,” and “County Population Totals: 2010-2019” by the U.S. Census Bureau (Census, 2023; Census, 2022; Census, 2021a). NOTE: The U.S. Census Bureau has reported that Illinois' population was likely undercounted in the 2020 Census and was likely over 13 million people (Hill et al., 2022; Ramos & Armentrout, 2022).

Figure 3 shows the reality. The Chicago area added more than 146,000 people between 2010 and 2020, including about 81,000 in Cook County and 65,000 in the collar suburbs—a growth of 2 percent. Illinois’ population losses were entirely driven by Downstate communities. Downstate lost 164,000 people, or nearly 4 percent of its population, between 2010 and 2020. As a result, Illinois’ population declined by about 18,000 people over the decade (Figure 3). In general, the U.S. Census Bureau significantly undercounted urban Cook County and somewhat undercounted the suburban collar counties, while its estimates for Downstate Illinois—which is much more rural—were more accurate.

While Downstate Illinois lost population between 2010 and 2020, the state was far from an outlier in losing residents in predominately rural areas. The 2010 to 2020 period was the first time in U.S. history that rural America lost population, with the largest population losses occurring in the most rural counties (Johnson, 2022; Rakich & Best, 2021). More than half of all U.S. counties (53 percent) declined in population between 2010 and 2020, including more than half of all counties in bordering Indiana, Iowa, and Missouri (Mackun, Comenetz, & Spell, 2021). The pandemic reversed this trend in 2021, with rural areas and suburban counties adding residents while “urban core counties” lost population (Frey, 2022). Data from 2022 show a retreat, with most large cities once again gaining residents or experiencing dramatically slower rates of population loss (Toukabri & Delbé, 2023). A 2023 report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland concludes that Chicago’s migration patterns are returning to pre-pandemic trends and levels as well (Whitaker, 2023; Grieve, 2023). However, it remains to be seen which post-pandemic changes are temporary and which will be more permanent over the decade.

**FIGURE 4: NUMBER OF TAX RETURNS IN ILLINOIS BY LOCATION OF TAX FILER AND TAX YEAR, 2010-2020**

<b>Tax Year</b>	<b>Illinois Tax Returns</b>	<b>Non-Illinois Tax Returns</b>	<b>Total Tax Returns</b>
2010	5,526,311	428,981	5,955,292
2011	5,541,592	449,484	5,991,076
2012	5,545,204	475,552	6,020,756
2013	5,584,116	501,897	6,086,013
2014	5,603,673	526,723	6,130,396
2015	5,667,343	547,707	6,215,050
2016	5,665,154	560,338	6,225,492
2017	5,667,774	571,338	6,239,112
2018	5,711,444	600,447	6,311,891
2019	5,734,440	600,125	6,334,565
2020	5,726,454	599,368	6,325,822
<b>2010-2020 Change, #</b>	<b>+200,143</b>	<b>+170,387</b>	<b>+370,530</b>
<b>2010-2020 Change, %</b>	<b>+3.6%</b>	<b>+39.7%</b>	<b>+6.2%</b>

Source(s): Authors’ analysis of “Individual Income Tax Stratifications” (Final Reports) for each tax year from 2010 through 2020 by the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR, 2023).

Illinois Department of Revenue tax statistics corroborate the Census data (Figure 4). In 2010, Illinois collected 5.5 million returns from Illinois-based taxpayers and 429,000 returns from “non-Illinois zip codes,” which can include people who work in Illinois but live in others states, people with pass-through businesses in other states who do business in Illinois and owe Illinois Income Tax, and undocumented workers (IDOR, 2021).<sup>2</sup> By 2020, the number of Illinois-based taxpayers had increased by 200,000 (4

<sup>2</sup> Examples of pass-through businesses entities include partnerships, S corporations, and trusts. *Partnerships* are relationships between two or more people who share in the business’ profits and losses; *S corporations* are corporations that pass corporate income, losses, deductions, and credits on to their shareholders for tax purposes; and *trusts* are relationships in which a single

percent) to 5.7 million and the number of non-Illinois tax returns rose by another 170,000 (40 percent). While taxpayers only represent a portion of the total population, the tax data do not show a state in decline between 2010 and 2020.

Figure 5 focuses only on the tax returns from Illinois residents to show changes by geography. The Chicago area added more than 203,000 taxpayers between the 2010 and 2020 tax years, a growth of nearly 6 percent. The number of tax returns filed by residents increased by about 86,000 over the decade in Cook County (4 percent) and by more than 117,000 over the decade in the collar suburbs (8 percent). Only Downstate Illinois experienced losses in its tax base, losing just over 3,000 taxpayers.

**FIGURE 5: CHANGE IN TAX RETURNS IN ILLINOIS BETWEEN THE 2010 TAX YEAR AND 2020 TAX YEAR, BY GEOGRAPHY**

Area of Illinois	2010	2020	Change	%
Illinois	5,526,311	5,726,454	+200,143	+3.6%
Chicago Area	3,657,816	3,861,143	+203,327	+5.6%
<i>Cook County</i>	<i>2,235,402</i>	<i>2,321,594</i>	<i>+86,192</i>	<i>+3.9%</i>
<i>Collar Counties</i>	<i>1,422,414</i>	<i>1,539,549</i>	<i>+117,135</i>	<i>+8.2%</i>
Downstate	1,868,495	1,865,311	-3,184	-0.2%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of "Individual Income Tax Stratifications" (Final Reports) for each tax year from 2010 through 2020 by the Illinois Department of Revenue ([IDOR, 2023](#)).

Finally, the Illinois Department of Revenue tax return data allow for comparisons by income level (Figure 6). Between 2010 and 2020, Illinois experienced a substantial increase in tax returns from higher-income households. The number of taxpayers reporting over \$500,000 in adjusted gross income increased by nearly 32,000, a growth of 80 percent, and the number of taxpayers reporting between \$100,001 and \$500,000 grew by 407,000, a growth of 52 percent. Illinois added another 69,000 taxpayers earning between \$50,001 and \$100,000 annually, a growth of 5 percent. This shows that the middle class also grew in Illinois. Conversely, it was only at the lower end of the income distribution where Illinois lost portions of its tax base between 2010 and 2020 (Figure 6). Over the decade, Illinois lost more than 311,000 tax filers who reported earning adjusted gross incomes of \$25,000 or less. As a result, Illinois had 99,000 fewer households claim Earned Income Credit (EIC) benefits in 2020 than in 2010, a decrease of 11 percent.<sup>3</sup> Relative to the increase in the number of Illinois-based taxpayers, this drop represented a 14 percent decrease in EIC claimants over the decade.

There are a few caveats to Figure 6. First, both wages and the cost of living increased over the decade. For example, the Consumer Price Index increased by 19 percent between July 2010 and July 2020, so many lower-paid taxpayers may have "graduated" into higher adjusted gross income (AGI) brackets simply through raises and cost-of-living adjustments ([BLS, 2023](#)). Additionally, Illinois' minimum wage increased up to \$10 per hour in 2020, which also could have pushed some workers and their families upwards into higher AGI brackets and off of EIC benefits—one of the stated goals of the minimum wage policy ([IDOL, 2023](#)). Lastly, in 2020, low-income workers in face-to-face occupations were disproportionately laid off or

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individual holds title to property, subject to a duty to keep or use the property for the benefit of another party. Trusts can be income-generating and subject to taxation. Partnerships, S corporations, and trusts are required to make pass-through Illinois Income Tax withholding payments on behalf of nonresident shareholders, partners, and beneficiaries ([IDOR, 2022](#)).

<sup>3</sup> By contrast, nationally, the number of federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) claims was 27.4 million in 2010 and 25.4 million in 2020, a decrease of just 8 percent—suggesting that the drop in families relying on this form of government assistance was larger in Illinois ([IRS, 2023a](#); [IRS, 2023b](#)).



furloughed due to pandemic-related business closures, which could be a factor in the large drop in tax returns from the lowest-income group (Dunn, Manzo, & Bruno, 2022; Manzo & Bruno, 2020).

**FIGURE 6: CHANGE IN TAX RETURNS IN ILLINOIS BETWEEN THE 2010 TAX YEAR AND 2020 TAX YEAR, BY INCOME LEVEL**

Adjusted Gross Income Range	2010 Tax Returns	2020 Tax Returns	Total Change	Percent Change
Less than \$25,000	2,127,812	1,816,492	-311,320	-14.6%
\$25,001-\$50,000	1,274,736	1,278,466	+3,730	+0.3%
\$50,001-\$100,000	1,297,019	1,366,419	+69,400	+5.4%
\$100,001-\$500,000	787,307	1,194,119	+406,812	+51.7%
\$500,001 or More	39,437	70,958	+31,521	+79.9%
Illinois Tax Returns	5,526,311	5,726,454	+200,143	+3.6%
Illinois Returns Claiming Earned Income Credit	902,271	803,183	-99,088	-11.0%
Earned Income Credit (EIC) Share of Returns	16.3%	14.0%	-2.3%	-14.1%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of "Individual Income Tax Stratifications" (Final Reports) for each tax year from 2010 through 2020 by the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR, 2023).

There are two key takeaways from the Census and taxpayer data from the last decade. First, both the population and the tax base grew in the Chicago area while they declined Downstate—primarily in rural areas. Second, given the net gain of more than 200,000 taxpayers over the decade relative to the net loss of 18,000 residents and the net gain of high-income taxpayers relative to the net loss of low-income taxpayers, those who stayed in Illinois were more likely to be employed and were more likely to earn higher incomes than those who left the state.

### Household Survey Data from 2013 through 2022 *Current Population Surveys*

To find out more about who stays in Illinois, who leaves Illinois, and who moves into Illinois, data from the March *Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement* (CPS ASEC) are analyzed. Data are analyzed over a 10-year period from 2013 through 2022. The CPS ASEC is an annual survey of more than 75,000 households across the United States, conducted jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and containing detailed questions that cover social and economic characteristics of each person. Importantly, the survey contains questions about migration, including whether the respondent had changed residences in the past year, the state of previous residence for respondents who were living in a different house a year ago, and their primary reason for moving.

There is one big limitation to the March CPS ASEC data: it is based on a survey with sample sizes that are scaled up to match the estimated U.S. population based on sampling weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. For example, the Census Bureau accounts for the probability of certain demographics responding to the survey, adjusts for labor force estimates from other surveys, and projects demographic data from the last available Census based on "other data sources that account for death[s], births, and net migration" (IPUMS CPS, 2023). These are the same sources that led to significant underestimates of Illinois' population over the last decade.

In fact, if the March CPS ASEC data are taken at face value, then Illinois lost about 460,000 residents to migration within the United States between 2013 and 2022 (Figure 7). This is the result of an estimated 1.75 million people who moved out of Illinois and 1.29 million people who moved into Illinois from other states. Specifically, this population difference is those who reported living in Illinois in the year before

taking the survey, moving residences, and then living in another state in the year they took the survey minus those who said that they lived in another state in the previous year but then moved into Illinois at the time of the survey. This estimated net domestic migration loss is similar to misleading graphics which suggest that Illinois lost nearly 513,000 residents between 2013 and 2022 (Hill, 2022).<sup>4</sup>

However, if the 439,000 people who are estimated to have migrated to Illinois from abroad are added in, then the population change is a decrease of just 21,000 people between 2013 and 2022. This may be more realistic given that the state lost just 18,000 people between the last two Census counts. Figure 7 also suggests that, while a little more than 1 percent of Illinois' population has left for other states on average, per year, since 2013, these losses have been nearly offset by a similar amount of people coming in from other states and from other countries (Figure 7).

**FIGURE 7: SUMMARY DATA ON DOMESTIC MIGRANTS, MIGRANTS FROM ABROAD, AND STAYERS IN ILLINOIS, 2013-2022**

<b>2013-2022 Movers and Stayers: March CPS ASEC Data for Illinois</b>	<b>2013-2022 Estimates</b>	<b>Average Per Year</b>	<b>Share of Sample</b>
Lived in Illinois and Left for Another State	-1,753,708	-175,371	1.4%
Moved Into Illinois from Another State	+1,293,523	+129,352	1.0%
Net Domestic Migration	-460,185	-46,019	--
Moved Into Illinois from Abroad	+439,218	+43,922	0.3%
<b>Net Domestic Migration Plus Migration from Abroad</b>	<b>-20,967</b>	<b>-2,097</b>	<b>--</b>
Stayed in Illinois	124,971,271	12,697,127	97.3%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Despite these data limitations, the March *Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement* provides insights as to who is leaving Illinois and who is coming to Illinois. More importantly, these movers can be compared with “stayers” to understand how migration patterns may be changing Illinois. Results are available by age, by demographics and educational attainment, by family characteristics, and by economic and employment outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

**Full Population by Migration Status**

Figure 8 presents the age breakdown of both movers and stayers. The average age of those who stayed in Illinois was 38 years old. Among those who stayed, 23 percent were children, 9 percent were between 18 and 24 years old, 39 percent were between the working ages of 25 and 54 years old, and 28 percent were age 55 years old or older. By contrast, those who have moved out of Illinois were younger. Their average age was only 32 years old, and they were significantly more likely to be between the ages of 18

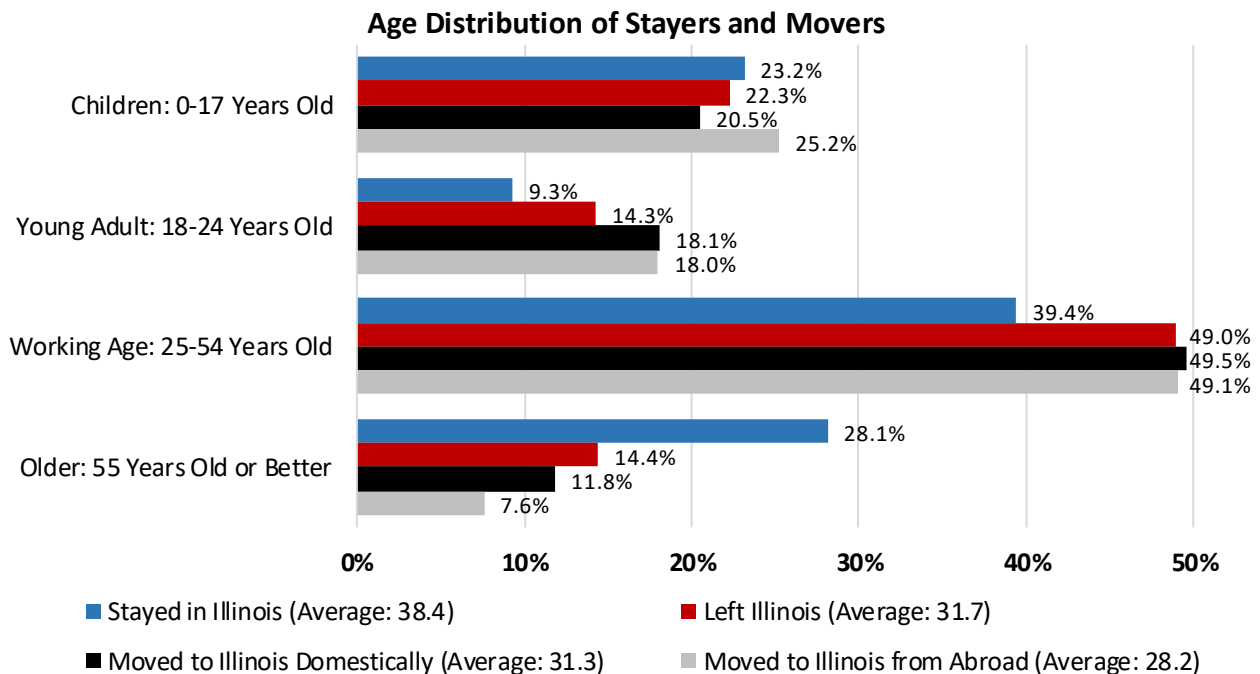
<sup>4</sup> The Illinois Policy Institute (IPI) continues to produce a graphic that incorrectly shows Illinois losing about 253,000 people between 2010 and 2020, despite official Census counts showing that Illinois only lost around 18,000 residents over that time—and a Post-Enumeration Survey revealing that Illinois was likely undercounted. The graphic should be updated to reflect a loss of only 18,000 residents. Worse, the IPI adds to the incorrect number with new speculative estimates from the Census Bureau for 2021 and 2022 (Hill, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> The overall sample size is 52,501 respondents, including 51,016 people who lived in Illinois both in the year prior to taking the survey and the year in which they took the survey (“stayers”), 862 migrants who moved out of Illinois to another U.S. state and 623 individuals who moved into Illinois. The results are weighted to match the U.S. population, but—for comparative purposes—the margins of error would be ±0.4 percent for the full sample, ±0.4 percent for the stayers, ±3.3 percent for the leavers, ±4.6 percent for domestic incomers, and ±7.5 percent for new arrivals from abroad in a standard poll (Maple Tech, 2023).

and 24 years old (14 percent) and in their prime working years of 25 and 54 years old (49 percent). Those who have left Illinois were less likely to be 55 years old or older (14 percent) and less likely to be children (22 percent).

People are at their most mobile when they are young adults, as those who moved into Illinois were also younger than those who stayed in the state (Figure 8). The average age of people moving into Illinois was 31 years old for domestic migrants and 28 years old for international migrants. Fully 50 percent of migrants moving into Illinois from other states were in their prime working years, as were 49 percent of migrants from abroad. Another 18 percent of migrants into Illinois were between the ages of 18 and 24 years old for both inbound categories, which was 4 percentage points higher than the comparable share amongst leavers. In total, 67 percent of people who moved to Illinois from abroad were between the ages of 18 and 54 years old and 25 percent were children.

**FIGURE 8: AGES OF DOMESTIC MIGRANTS, MIGRANTS FROM ABROAD, AND STAYERS IN ILLINOIS, 2013-2022**



Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

**FIGURE 9: ESTIMATED CHANGES IN AGE COHORTS FROM MIGRATION PATTERNS IN ILLINOIS, 2013-2022**

Estimated Changes in Illinois' Age Cohorts from 2013-2022 Migration Patterns	Left Illinois for Another State	Moved into Illinois from Another State	Moved Into Illinois from Abroad	Net Domestic Migration Plus International
Children: 0-17 Years Old	390,322	265,172	110,831	-14,320
Young Adults: 18-24 Years Old	250,718	234,148	79,197	+62,628
Working Age: 25-54 Years Old	859,400	640,938	215,773	-2,689
Older: 55 Years Old or Better	253,268	153,265	33,417	-66,586

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

As a result, the data suggests that Illinois added residents between the ages of 18 and 24 years old but lost residents from the other age cohorts (Figure 9). After accounting for both net domestic migration and migration from abroad, Illinois added an estimated 63,000 people between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. The largest population losses occurred amongst people aged 55 years or older, with Illinois losing nearly 67,000 people in this age cohort. Although they account for a small share of leavers (14 percent), their counterparts accounted for even smaller portions of new arrivals from within the United States (12 percent) and abroad (8 percent).

People who left Illinois between 2013 and 2022 were more likely to be men, more likely to be Black, and less likely to be foreign-born (Figure 10). Fully 50 percent of those who left Illinois for another state were men. By contrast, just 47 percent of people who moved to Illinois from another state were men, 48 percent of people who moved to Illinois from abroad were men, and 49 percent of people who remained in Illinois were men. Additionally, leavers were 18 percent Black, which is 4 percentage points higher than stayers (14 percent) and 8 percentage points higher than new arrivals from other states (10 percent) but slightly lower than migrants from abroad (19 percent). On the other hand, people who moved into Illinois from other states were disproportionately more likely to be women (53 percent) and white (69 percent). Importantly, not all migrants from other countries are foreign-born; many were born in the United States but reside internationally temporarily for school, work, family, or military reasons. Consequently, only three out of every five migrants into Illinois from abroad were foreign-born immigrants (62 percent). Finally, Hispanic residents comprise a larger share of people who have stayed in Illinois (17 percent) than those who have left the state (10 percent). The net effect is that Illinois now has higher shares of female, Hispanic, and foreign-born residents and lower shares of male, Black, and native-born residents due to these migration trends over the last decade.

**FIGURE 10: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MOVERS AND STAYERS, WITH ESTIMATED CHANGES, 2013-2022**

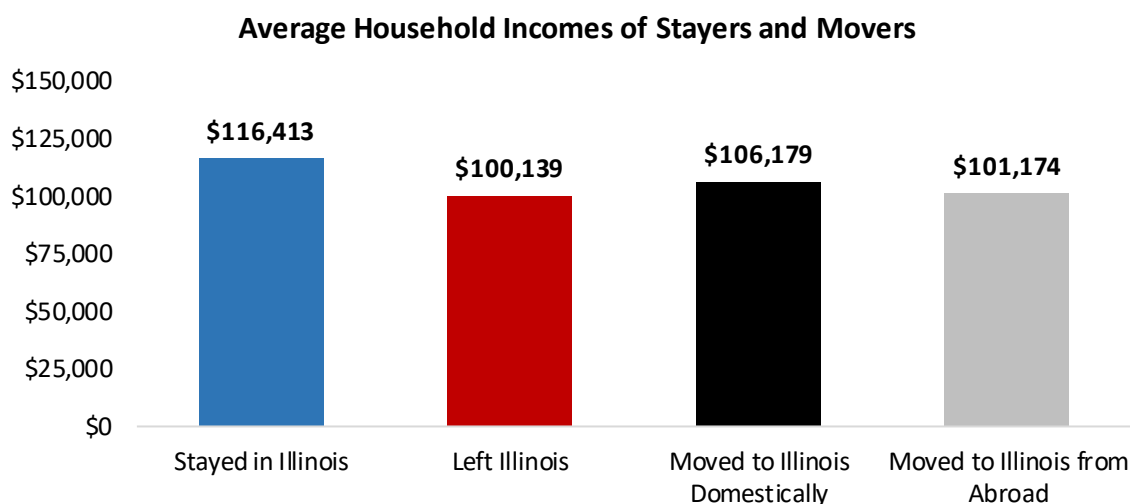
<b>Demographics of Movers and Stayers: March CPS ASEC Data for Illinois</b>	<b>Stayed in Illinois</b>	<b>Left Illinois for Another State</b>	<b>Moved into Illinois from Another State</b>	<b>Moved Into Illinois from Abroad</b>	<b>Net Domestic Migration Plus International</b>
<u><i>Gender Identification</i></u>					
Men	49.2%	49.8%	46.9%	47.6%	<b>-56,808</b>
Women	50.8%	50.2%	53.1%	52.4%	<b>+35,841</b>
<u><i>Racial or Ethnic Background</i></u>					
White, non-Hispanic	62.1%	58.7%	69.2%	28.5%	<b>-9,371</b>
Black or African American	13.9%	17.7%	9.8%	19.1%	<b>-98,902</b>
Hispanic or Latinx	17.1%	9.8%	11.8%	16.0%	<b>+50,449</b>
Asian or Pacific Islander	5.5%	11.6%	7.7%	35.1%	<b>+49,712</b>
<u><i>Immigration Status</i></u>					
Foreign-Born	15.0%	14.1%	16.8%	62.2%	<b>+243,566</b>

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The *Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement* includes important questions about household economic characteristics that are not available in official Census counts. One of these is annual household income (Figure 11). After adjusting for inflation, the average household income of people who left Illinois for another state was \$100,100 per year in constant 2022 dollars. By contrast, the inflation-adjusted average annual household income was \$106,200 for those who moved to Illinois from another state, \$101,200 for those who moved to Illinois from abroad, and \$116,400 for those who stayed

in Illinois. Accordingly, compared to those who left Illinois, those who stayed earned 16 percent more per year and those who moved into the state earned between 1 and 6 percent more per year.

**FIGURE 11: INFLATION-ADJUSTED AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF MOVERS AND STAYERS IN ILLINOIS, 2013-2022**



Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Additionally, those who left Illinois were less likely to be homeowners and more likely to rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food stamps (Figure 12). Fully 70 percent of the people who stayed in Illinois lived in homes that they or members of their households own. Over the past decade, 12 percent of those who have stayed in Illinois have received food stamp assistance. In comparison, among those who have left Illinois, only 30 percent were homeowners in the first year living in their new states. Moreover, just over 14 percent report relying on food stamp assistance—which is 2 percentage points higher than the people who chose to stay in Illinois. Moreover, people who moved into Illinois from other states had both a higher homeownership rate within one year of moving (38 percent) and a lower food stamp reciprocity rate (10 percent) than those who left. After accounting for both net domestic migration and migration from abroad, the U.S. Census Bureau data indicates that Illinois has about 54,000 *more* residents living in homes they own and 55,000 *fewer* people relying on food stamp government assistance due to migration patterns between 2013 and 2022.

**FIGURE 12: SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MOVERS AND STAYERS, WITH ESTIMATED CHANGES, 2013-2022**

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Movers and Stayers: March CPS ASEC Data for Illinois	Person Lives in Home Owned by Household		Person in Household Receiving Food Stamps	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Stayed in Illinois	70.2%	8,775,864	12.3%	1,534,069
Lived in Illinois and Left for Another State	29.7%	-520,597	14.5%	-253,845
Moved Into Illinois from Another State	37.8%	+488,653	10.2%	+132,131
Moved Into Illinois from Abroad	19.5%	+85,815	15.2%	+66,639
<b>Net Domestic Migration Plus Migration from Abroad</b>	--	<b>+53,871</b>	--	<b>-55,075</b>

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

**Adults by Migration Status**

Demographic characteristics are similar when concentrating only on migrants who were aged 18 years old or older (Figure 13). Once again, leavers were more likely to be men (49 percent) than those who moved into Illinois from another state (48 percent) or from abroad (44 percent), causing Illinois to have 31,000 fewer adult men but 24,000 additional adult women over the 10-year period. While not as pronounced as the overall population estimates, the adult data suggest that a larger share of Black people left the state than either entered or stayed in Illinois, resulting in about 57,000 fewer Black adults due to migration patterns. The state also lost a net of about 45,000 white adults from 2013 through 2022 but gained nearly 44,000 Hispanic adults and another 54,000 Asian adults.

**FIGURE 13: FULL CHARACTERISTICS OF MOVERS AND STAYERS, ADULTS ONLY, 2013-2022**

<b>Demographic, Educational, and Family Characteristics of Adults: March CPS ASEC Data for Illinois</b>	<b>Stayed in Illinois</b>	<b>Left Illinois for Another State</b>	<b>Moved into Illinois from Another State</b>	<b>Moved Into Illinois from Abroad</b>	<b>Net Domestic Migration Plus International</b>
<b><u>Gender Identification</u></b>					
Men	48.7%	49.1%	47.9%	44.4%	<b>-30,800</b>
Women	51.3%	50.9%	52.1%	55.6%	<b>+24,154</b>
<b><u>Racial or Ethnic Background</u></b>					
White, non-Hispanic	65.2%	62.7%	69.1%	30.2%	<b>-44,853</b>
Black or African American	13.4%	15.6%	9.5%	17.9%	<b>-56,599</b>
Hispanic or Latinx	14.9%	9.5%	12.1%	14.9%	<b>+43,658</b>
Asian or Pacific Islander	5.6%	10.6%	7.8%	36.0%	<b>+53,693</b>
<b><u>Immigration Status</u></b>					
Foreign-Born	18.5%	16.9%	19.2%	67.4%	<b>+187,852</b>
<b><u>Education Status</u></b>					
Student Enrolled in School	9.0%	10.7%	17.1%	24.9%	<b>+111,990</b>
High School Degree or Less	36.7%	26.2%	21.0%	32.0%	<b>-37,007</b>
Some College, No Degree	19.6%	13.8%	15.1%	12.3%	<b>+7,338</b>
Associate's Degree	8.8%	9.8%	6.3%	7.0%	<b>-46,332</b>
Bachelor's Degree or More	34.9%	50.1%	57.6%	48.7%	<b>+69,354</b>
<b><u>Family Status</u></b>					
Married	52.6%	44.1%	36.1%	40.2%	<b>-98,631</b>
Average Family Size	2.8	2.4	2.3	3.0	<b>--</b>

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Illinois has historically been a “brain gain” state, characterized as a state that enjoys greater in-migration of college graduates relative to those leaving and living in the state (JEC–Republicans, 2019; Van Dam, 2022). The 2013-2022 March CPS ASEC data continue to validate this claim.<sup>6</sup> While only 11 percent of adults who moved out of Illinois were students in their new states, the share of domestic adult migrants into Illinois who were students was 17 percent and the share of adult migrants from abroad into Illinois who were students was 25 percent, producing an estimated net gain of 112,000 adult students due to migration patterns over the decade. In general, new arrivals were more likely to have bachelor's degrees

<sup>6</sup> Note that the CPS ASEC migration data does include college students, who may be transient or permanent residents of the state.

or higher, yielding 69,000 additional adults with bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctoral degrees (Figure 13).

Compared to all adult migrants, those who have stayed in Illinois are more likely to be married. Fully 53 percent of adults remaining in Illinois are married, and they have an average family size of 2.8 members. Adults who left Illinois had a lower marriage rate (44 percent) but they were, in turn, more likely to be married than adults from both within the United States who moved to Illinois (36 percent) and outside of the country who moved to Illinois (40 percent), translating into an estimated 99,000 fewer married persons in the state. Domestic migrants both averaged smaller family sizes than stayers in Illinois while migrants from abroad had a larger mean family size.

**Adult Workers by Migration Status**

Among adults employed in at least one job, leavers in the last decade were statistically more likely to be male (57 percent) and Black (15 percent) and less likely to be Hispanic (10 percent) (Figure 14). By comparison, adult workers who stayed in Illinois were 52 percent male, 12 percent Black, and 16 percent Hispanic. New entrants into the state were 52 percent male, 7 percent Black, and 15 percent Hispanic from within the United States and 44 percent male, 15 percent Black, and 19 percent Hispanic from other countries. While all employed migrants were better-educated than the workers who stayed put, those who left Illinois were less likely to have bachelor's degrees or higher (59 percent) than those who came into Illinois domestically (64 percent) and internationally (70 percent).

**FIGURE 14: CHARACTERISTICS OF MOVERS AND STAYERS, ADULT WORKERS ONLY, 2013-2022**

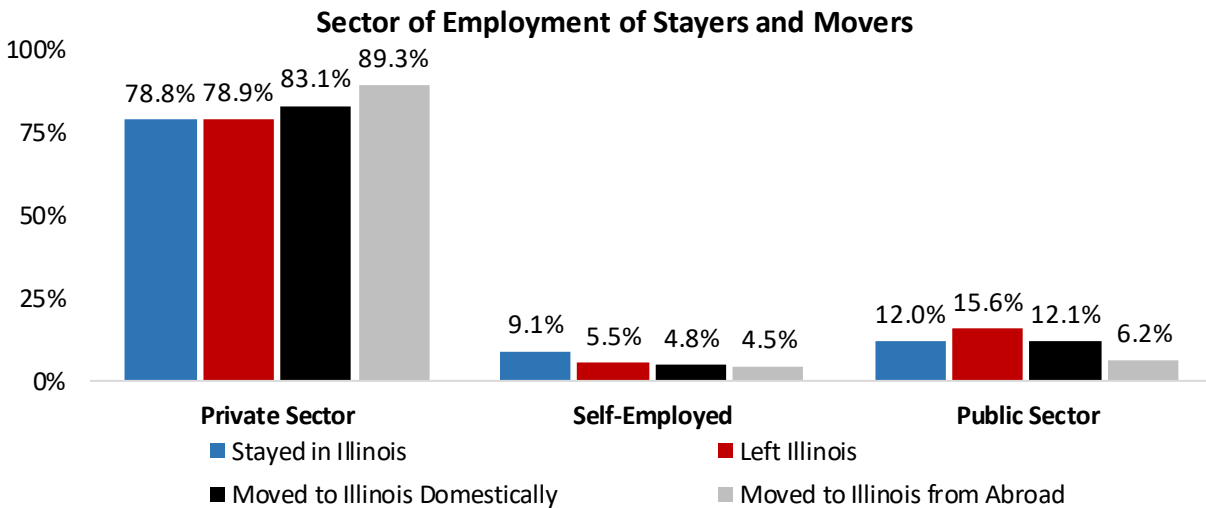
<b>Demographics and Education of Adult Workers: March CPS ASEC Data for Illinois</b>	<b>Stayed in Illinois</b>	<b>Left Illinois for Another State</b>	<b>Moved into Illinois from Another State</b>	<b>Moved Into Illinois from Abroad</b>
<b><u>Gender Identification</u></b>				
Men	52.1%	56.8%	52.0%	43.7%
Women	47.9%	43.2%	48.0%	56.3%
<b><u>Racial or Ethnic Background</u></b>				
White, non-Hispanic	65.7%	61.4%	72.4%	39.9%
Black or African American	11.5%	15.1%	6.6%	14.8%
Hispanic or Latinx	16.2%	10.3%	14.7%	18.6%
Asian or Pacific Islander	5.8%	11.9%	5.6%	26.8%
<b><u>Education Status</u></b>				
High School Degree or Less	29.8%	18.0%	16.0%	18.6%
Some College, No Degree	18.0%	13.7%	12.9%	7.7%
Associate's Degree	9.9%	9.8%	7.0%	4.2%
Bachelor's Degree or More	42.3%	58.5%	64.1%	69.5%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Workers who left Illinois were no more or less likely to be employed in the private sector of the economy in their new states than their counterparts who stayed in Illinois. In fact, the only differences emerged in the public sector and amongst self-employed independent contractors (Figure 15). Fully 16 percent of adult workers who left Illinois report that they were employed in the public sector in their new states,

compared to just 12 percent of workers who stayed in Illinois, 12 percent of workers who moved to Illinois from other states, and 6 percent of workers who migrated to Illinois from abroad. Additionally, only about 5 percent of working migrants—regardless of origin or destination—were self-employed versus 9 percent of adults workers who stayed in Illinois. The data suggest that Illinois' private sector has attracted and retained workers while its public sector has hollowed out over the past decade.

**FIGURE 15: SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT OF MOVERS AND STAYERS, ADULT WORKERS, 2013-2022**



Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

**FIGURE 16: OCCUPATIONAL GROUP OF MOVERS AND STAYERS, NONFARM ADULT WORKERS, 2013-2022**

Occupational Group of Adult Workers: March CPS ASEC Data for Illinois (Nonfarm Workers Only)	Stayed in Illinois	Left Illinois for Another State	Moved into Illinois from Another State	Moved Into Illinois from Abroad
Business and Professional Occupations	27.4%	35.8%	32.8%	42.0%
Healthcare Occupations	8.9%	7.5%	10.0%	4.6%
Education and Training Occupations	6.3%	9.4%	9.9%	2.4%
Blue-Collar Occupations*	21.4%	15.0%	14.7%	12.5%
Low-Wage Service Occupations**	34.0%	28.2%	29.3%	25.0%
Arts and Recreation Occupations	2.1%	4.1%	3.3%	13.4%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. \*"Blue-Collar Occupations" include traditionally male-dominated construction, extraction, installation, maintenance, repair, production, transportation, material moving, and protective service occupations. \*\*"Low-Wage Service Occupations" include office, administration, sales, food preparation and serving, building and ground cleaning and maintenance, and personal care occupations.

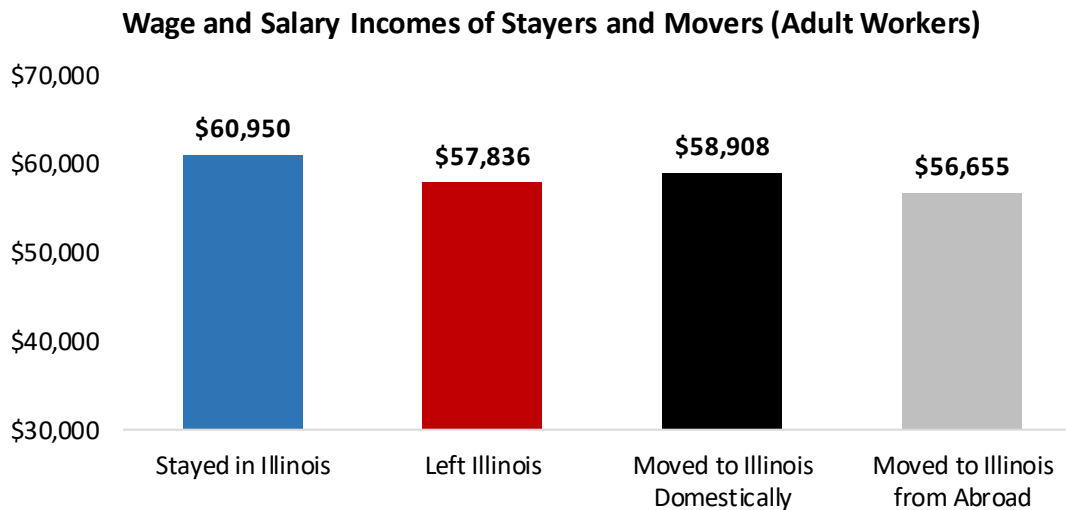
The data by occupation is mixed, and mostly does not shed light on areas of the economy that are attracting or failing to retain workers in Illinois (Figure 16). There are generally not any major occupational groups in which adult workers who left Illinois were disproportionately likely to be employed relative to those who moved into the state. For example, while 36 percent of adult workers who left the state were employed in business and professional occupations—which is higher than 27 percent of adult workers who stayed in Illinois—that was offset by the 33 percent of adult workers moving into Illinois from other



states employed in these careers and the 42 percent of adult workers moving into Illinois from abroad employed in these positions. The only group of occupations with a higher portion of outbound migrants than inbound migrants was blue-collar jobs, a broad category that includes traditionally male-dominated occupations in construction and extraction; installation, maintenance, and repair; production; transportation and material moving; and protective services such as policing and firefighting. Of adult workers who left Illinois, 15 percent found jobs in these blue-collar occupations, which is marginally more than the share of those who entered Illinois from other U.S. states (just under 15 percent) and those who arrived from abroad (13 percent). Note that these are small differences, and that 21 percent of those who stayed put in Illinois—a much larger share—are employed in these blue-collar careers.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, Figure 17 displays the inflation-adjusted annual incomes from wages and salaries of adult workers who stayed in Illinois, moved out of Illinois, and moved into Illinois. Incomes are presented in constant 2022 dollars. On average, adult workers who remained in Illinois earned \$61,000 per year. By contrast, adult workers who left Illinois earned under \$58,000 per year, a difference of more than \$3,000. Those who moved into Illinois from other states averaged \$59,000 in annual wage and salary incomes and those who migrated from abroad earned less than \$57,000 per year. The data reveal that, compared to those who left the state, workers who stayed in Illinois earned 5 percent more, those who moved into Illinois domestically earned 2 percent more, and those who moved into Illinois from abroad earned 2 percent less on average.

**FIGURE 17: INFLATION-ADJUSTED WAGE AND SALARY INCOME OF MOVERS AND STAYERS, ADULT WORKERS, 2013-2022**



Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The March *Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement* data show why people stay in Illinois. The vast majority of residents have remained in Illinois. Stayers are significantly more likely to be homeowners, proportionally more likely to be married, and earn higher wage and salary incomes and have higher annual household incomes compared to movers. These are socioeconomic outcomes that have traditionally been associated with financial stability.

<sup>7</sup> This data generally aligns with the tax statistics from the Illinois Department of Revenue which shows that Illinois became higher paid, including by adding high-income individuals (e.g., those in business and professional occupations who moved from abroad) and modestly growing the middle class (e.g., by retaining those in blue-collar occupations that are likely to be unionized).

But the data also reveal who has chosen to leave Illinois and who has chosen to come to Illinois. Those who have moved away to other states are disproportionately more likely to be men and more likely to be Black. They earn lower wages and salaries, have lower household incomes, are more likely to rely on food stamps, and are more likely to work in the public sector. Some research has indicated that these individuals may be moving to other states in search of economic opportunities caused by long-term divestment in both majority-Black communities and rural communities that historically depended on public sector jobs and blue-collar jobs (Brooks, 2021; Husain et al., 2020; Green, 2020). In contrast, those who have moved into Illinois are statistically more likely to be women, more likely to be students, more likely to have bachelor's degrees or higher, and more likely to be employed in the private sector. These individuals may be moving into Illinois because of the state's world-class universities and competitive \$1 trillion economy (U.S. News & World Report, 2023; Manzo, Bruno, & Jekot, 2022). In both cases, young migrants are in search of upward economic mobility—but their paths to prosperity have been bifurcated.

The March CPS ASEC data *may* also provide clues as to why the U.S. Census Bureau has exaggerated Illinois' population decline. Relative to other racial and ethnic identifications, Hispanic individuals have been most likely to remain in Illinois. Additionally, increases in foreign-born individuals have mostly offset net losses associated with net domestic migration. Hispanics and immigrants have historically been two of the groups who are most at risk of undercounts by the U.S. Census Bureau due to structural factors such as administrative barriers, redlining, lower homeownership rates, language barriers, reduced access to the internet, and lack of trust in the government (Lou & Martin, 2022). In the 2020 Census, there was a record undercount of Hispanics, with the Census Bureau missing one-in-20 Hispanic people (Cohn & Passel, 2022). If these problems have continued into this decade, then the Census' population estimates for Illinois should continue to be viewed with hesitancy.

### Addressing Three Common Claims About Illinois Migration Patterns

The data from the *Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement* and from the Illinois Department of Revenue allow for an assessment of the veracity of common claims that are often made about Illinois' recent migration patterns. These include popular narratives that people are fleeing the state due to high taxes or to its estate tax structure, that high-income earners are leaving the state, and that Black and African American residents have left Illinois. While each of these anecdotal assertions is evaluated in this section, Figure 18 first offers actual answers provided by respondents to the Census' March CPS ASEC to the question of why they moved.

**FIGURE 18: PRIMARY REASON FOR MOVING INTO AND OUT OF ILLINOIS, BROAD CATEGORIES, 2013-2022**

Primary Reason for Moving: March CPS ASEC Data for Illinois	Left Illinois for Another State	Moved into Illinois from Another State	Moved Into Illinois from Abroad
Job Reasons	38.7%	40.1%	35.9%
Family Reasons	22.8%	27.7%	22.5%
Housing Reasons	22.4%	16.3%	17.0%
College	4.3%	7.1%	13.4%
All Other Reasons	11.8%	8.8%	11.3%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022). **NOTE:** The sample size is adjusted to match the state's population using weights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

These responses and the broader data upend popular narratives that people are fleeing Illinois due to high state and local taxes or its estate tax structure (Henderson, 2017; Miller, 2023b).<sup>8</sup> While it may be true that some people have chosen to move out of Illinois and have bought homes in lower-tax jurisdictions where their annual property taxes are lower or where there are no estate taxes, the typical outbound mover is nearly 7 years younger, averages \$16,000 less in household income, and is significantly less likely to be a homeowner (30 percent) than those who stay in Illinois (70 percent) (Figures 8, 11, and 12). It is unlikely that young renters with relatively lower household incomes, who tend to have less accumulated wealth, are highly concerned about a tax which annually affects fewer than 900 estates valued at \$4 million or greater every year (Bellisle et al., 2023). In addition, employment is the primary reason cited for moving out of Illinois over housing-related and family-related reasons that would be most likely to factor in property taxes and estate planning. Finally, information on combined state and local tax contributions as a share of personal income from the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center as well as each state's estate tax status by the Tax Foundation were utilized to determine that Illinois experienced negative net domestic migration to 59 percent of other "high-tax" states, 58 percent of "low-tax" states, 55 percent of other states with estate taxes, and 60 percent of states without estate taxes (Figure 19). These results do not suggest that people who are leaving Illinois are disproportionately moving to states with significantly lower combined state and local tax burdens or those without estate taxes. Taken together, it is incorrect to assert that either tax policy is "the number one reason that people leave Illinois" (Miller, 2023b).

**FIGURE 19: ILLINOIS' NET DOMESTIC MIGRATION GAINS OR LOSSES TO STATES BY TAX METRICS, 2013-2022**

Illinois Net Domestic Migration Gain or Loss from Specific States by Tax Metrics	More Moved Into Illinois Than Out	More Moved Out of Illinois Than In
<u>State and Local Taxes as a Percent of Personal Income</u>		
High-Tax States (10% or More Combined)	41.2%	58.8%
Low-Tax States (Less than 10% Combined)	41.9%	58.1%
<u>States by Estate Tax Status</u>		
States with an Estate Tax	45.5%	54.5%
States without an Estate Tax	40.5%	59.5%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2013-2022 March Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data from the U.S. Census Bureau (Flood et al., 2022); 2021 U.S. Census Bureau Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances from the Urban Institute and Brookings Institution (Airi, Dadayan, & Rueben, 2023); and "Does Your State Have an Estate or Inheritance Tax?" from the Tax Foundation (Fritts, 2022). **NOTE:** This analysis only accounts for net domestic migration and does not include foreign migrants. **NOTE:** Not all 49 other U.S. states plus the District of Columbia are represented in the data—meaning that survey respondents who migrated did not move to or originate from all 50 other jurisdictions around the country.

It is often claimed that high-income earners are leaving Illinois as well (Bessler, 2023). One estimate purports that Illinois lost \$4 billion in income to Florida alone in 2021 (Frank, 2023). One problem with these estimates is that they only consider net domestic migration within the United States and do not account for immigration. As the data shows, foreign migration often offsets much of the losses that Illinois experiences to other states (Figure 7). Another problem is that the Illinois Department of Revenue tax statistics undermine this narrative. This data reveals that, between 2010 and 2020, the number of tax filers who earned \$500,001 or more in adjusted gross income annually increased by 80 percent and those earning between \$100,001 and \$500,000 increased by 52 percent while only those earning less than

<sup>8</sup> It is also worth noting that the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability has found no relationship between local property tax burden and net migration rates in Illinois' counties and that "as local property tax burdens increase, gross migration per capita also increases" (CTBA, 2017).

\$25,000 per year decreased (Figure 6). Illinois also had 11 percent fewer families claiming Earned Income Credit benefits, a larger decrease than the 8 percent drop nationally (Figure 6). If high-income earners were leaving the state at higher rates than lower-income and middle-class earners over the past decade, it would show up in the Illinois Department of Revenue's numbers. Instead, on average, people who move out of Illinois have lower incomes and are more likely to qualify for food stamps than both those who stay in Illinois and those who move in from other states, according to the March CPS ASEC data (Figures 12 and 17). While it is possible that these dynamics have changed post-pandemic, more data is needed to reach that conclusion. The last decade of data shows that the people who have moved out of Illinois tend to have lower incomes and are more likely to rely on government assistance programs.

Another piece of conventional wisdom is that Black residents have left Illinois, particularly Chicago, for neighboring and Southern states (Loury, 2023; Cooper & Paral, 2021). One explanation is that decades of disinvestment have resulted in lack of employment opportunities including a hollowing out of public sector job opportunities, poor housing options, underfunded schools, and higher crime rates in the South and West sides of Chicago—causing people to leave for job-related, housing-related, education-related, and family-related reasons (Balta, 2021; Manzo, Bruno, & Manzo, 2017). Although the data in this report cannot definitively connect these dots, it does generally support this common claim. The people who left Illinois were 4 percentage points more likely to be Black than those who stayed and 8 percentage points more likely to be Black than those who moved into Illinois from other states (Figure 10).

## Potential Policy Options to Attract and Retain People

In 2022, Illinois became just the fifth U.S. state to have a \$1 trillion economy (Manzo, Bruno, & Jekot, 2022). Illinois' economy is 12 percent larger than Pennsylvania's economy, despite the U.S. Census Bureau now estimating that the latter has more people. Illinois also has a larger economy than 13 other U.S. states combined. However, Illinois still needs to attract and retain people if it is to become a \$2 trillion economy in the next two decades (Manzo, Bruno, & Jekot, 2022).

Based on the analysis of Census, taxpayer, and March CPS ASEC data, there are several potential policy options that elected officials could pursue to attract and retain more residents. Each policy prescription is aligned with the population data and designed to address either out- or in-migration. The following list is a suggested menu of four policy dimensions that, while warranted for reasons independent of population impacts, also would contribute to how attractive Illinois is to current and potential residents. Importantly, it should be recognized that the potential policy options could require tradeoffs in other areas of spending or revenue, depending on budget constraints in given fiscal years. Nonetheless, the potential policy options all have compounding effects that make them great “bangs for the buck,” or returns on investment, for taxpayers.

1. **Maintain fiscal responsibility every year.** This includes passing balanced state budgets annually and continuing to make extra contributions into the state's Budget Stabilization Fund, or “rainy day” fund (Sfondeles, 2022). Budget surpluses and years of fiscal discipline can improve investor confidence in Illinois and ensure that funds are available during recessions that can otherwise drive outmigration in search of employment.
2. **Invest in under-resourced communities.** This includes both rural communities Downstate and majority-Black neighborhoods in the Chicago area. For every dollar increase in infrastructure

spending, the economy grows by between \$1.57 and \$2.20 (Zandi, 2010; Arnon et al., 2020). For example, a \$1 billion investment in broadband internet infrastructure connects 238,000 homes, businesses, and farms in Illinois and creates jobs, with the largest impacts in rural communities and predominately-Black neighborhoods (Manzo, Wilson, & Bruno, 2022).

3. **Make college more affordable.** Illinois needs affordable universities to retain college-ready students from in-state and to continue attracting young adults from other states who arrive for school enrollment. The State of Illinois could continue to increase support for Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants to improve financial aid for Illinois residents, boost state funding for public universities and community colleges, and expand opportunities to make community colleges free (Hancock, 2023). Lowering college tuition costs may not only raise the percentage of residents who have college degrees but also incentivize lower-income populations, rural citizens, and Black residents who are disproportionate recipients of MAP grants to remain in the state.
4. **Enact pro-family policies.** People who are married, are homeowners, and have larger family sizes are the most likely to stay in Illinois. Making it easier for people to have families and ensuring that their children attend high-quality schools may help sustain Illinois' population numbers. Expanding access to affordable childcare options or enacting a refundable child tax credit are options that can improve labor force participation in the economy, reduce turnover costs for businesses, make it more likely that couples decide to grow their families, and support the stability of family households (Dickson et al., 2021; Gould & Schieder, 2016; Pilkauskas et al., 2022). In addition, adjusting the state's annual increase in appropriation for public schools to account for rising inflation would fully fund the Evidence-Based Funding Model by 2037, which would prioritize school districts and students in under-resourced communities while strengthening family and residential stability (Flanagan & Martire, 2022).

## Conclusion

Illinois' population is not booming, but it is also not declining as rapidly as naysayers suggest. Between 2010 and 2020, both the population and the tax base grew in the Chicago area but fell Downstate. Over this timeframe, Illinois added more than 200,000 taxpayers, even as its total population remained relatively stable.

The primary goal of this report has been to provide context about who moves into and out of Illinois, using a decade of data from 2013 through 2022. It must be conveyed that the report deals in totals and averages. Some Illinois residents may have differing experiences within their own local areas and neighborhoods. It could also be the case that post-pandemic dynamics since 2020 have resulted in new migration patterns that diverge from earlier trends in the data. It could take years to assess the effects of these changes and whether they are temporary or long-lasting, although recent data suggests that migration patterns are mostly returning to pre-pandemic levels. Ultimately, the data from household surveys over the past decade indicates that migrants are generally younger and more likely to be seeking upward economic mobility, either through job opportunities or educational pursuits.

In general, the data reveal that Illinois' migration patterns have made the state more urban, more educated, more foreign-born, more female, more Hispanic, and higher paid than a decade ago. At the same time, they have made the state less reliant on government assistance programs, less rural, less male,

and less Black. Those who have moved out of Illinois are more likely to be men, have lower incomes, and have higher rates of food stamp reliance. By contrast, people who have moved into Illinois are more likely to be women, more likely to be students, and more likely to have bachelor's degrees or higher. Illinois has remained a top destination for immigrants as well.

With this information, assessments of the veracity of common claims about Illinois' recent migration patterns can be made. The data do not support the narratives that high state and local taxes or that Illinois' estate tax structure are the primary reasons why people who move out of the state choose to do so. Among people who choose to leave the state, the data undermine the claim that high-income earners have left at a high rate but do show that Black residents have been more likely to move out since 2013.

Equally important as who moved out of and into Illinois is who did not move. People who stay in Illinois tend earn higher incomes, have higher marriage rates, and have greater levels of homeownership. They are more likely to be in the Chicago area. As a proportion of the population, stayers are also slightly more likely to be white and significantly more likely to be Hispanic. This likely contributed both to inaccurate population estimates leading up to the 2020 Census—which were projecting too few residents in Cook County and the Chicago suburbs—and an undercount of Illinois' population in the official 2020 Census counts, because there was a record undercount of Hispanic residents across the United States.

Illinois can do more to attract and retain people. An evidence-based review of the data suggests that maintaining fiscal responsibility, investing in under-resourced areas, making college more affordable, and enacting pro-family policies like a state-level child tax credit could reduce the number of outmigrants while also attracting new residents to move to Illinois.

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