

More move in than out of NYC: First time in decades

March 14 2013, by Jennifer Peltz

For the first time in more than 60 years, more people moved into New York City than out last year, a turnaround that tracks changing attitudes about the biggest city in the U.S. and urban living more broadly, officials and researchers said Thursday.

The net influx—about 12,000 people—is a small piece of the city's overall growth to a record high population of more than 8.3 million, according to census estimates released Thursday. But the statistic helps encapsulate New York's rebound from a decline that began after World War II and hit a nadir in the 1970s here and in many other big American cities.

It "reverses a trend that has been a fact of life for decades and that a number of pundits have talked about when they predicted the end of New York City," Mayor [Michael Bloomberg](#) said Thursday. "People vote with their feet. In the end, that's what really matters."

The city's population has grown by more than 161,500 people since 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated.

Mostly, New York City's growth is due to a widening gap between the numbers of births and deaths as life expectancy increases, according to [city planners](#)' analysis of the census estimates. But an influx of foreign immigrants in the last two years also played a role by outdistancing the number of New Yorkers who left town.

The data released Thursday don't show where the immigrants are coming from, but other data provide some clues, said Joseph Salvo, the city's chief demographer.

The city's Asian population has increased by about 30 percent over the last decade, largely due to growth in its Chinese, Indian and Bangladeshi populations, city planners said. And the already large [Hispanic population](#) has grown by about 8 percent.

Brooklyn saw the biggest growth among the city's five boroughs, gaining more than 60,000 residents, as people flocked to a borough increasingly seen as having all the cachet of Manhattan—if not more—with less of the cost.

Bloomberg hailed the population rise as a measure of the city's quality of life, crediting factors he often cites as key accomplishments on his 11-year watch: crime rates at historic lows, rising life expectancy and a public school system that has seen an aggressive, if not uncontroversial, overhaul. Since he took control of schools in 2002, changes have included expanding charter schools and closing schools deemed to be failing.

The influx of new New Yorkers also reflects a larger narrative of cultural shifts and changing fortunes in some of the nation's big cities, says Robert E. Lang, an urban affairs professor at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas.

After growth spurts as soldiers returned from [World War II](#), cities began losing residents in the 1950s as suburbs rose: newer, roomier, seen as having better schools—and havens for what became known as "white flight."

The trend hit a fever pitch in the 1970s, when New York and many other

big cities saw their populations drop by 10 percent or more. New York became something of a symbol of urban dysfunction: a city that nearly went bankrupt, a place where trash piled up amid a garbage strike and a massive blackout struck as the Son of Sam serial killer was on the loose.

Local leadership and broader urban renewal efforts helped change that, but so did a movement in mindsets, Lang said.

"Generations change, and they change their views of where the good life is," he said. "New York is just the top of this whole change and is a dramatic example because of its size and importance as a city. But it's not alone."

Thursday's population estimates were for counties, not cities. But New York's boroughs are each counties of their own, so it could be measured—unlike, for instance, Los Angeles County, which includes the city of Los Angeles and other municipalities.

New York [City](#) challenged the official 2010 census count of its population at less than 8.2 million, saying it was too low. The [Census Bureau](#) ultimately said the number would stand.

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