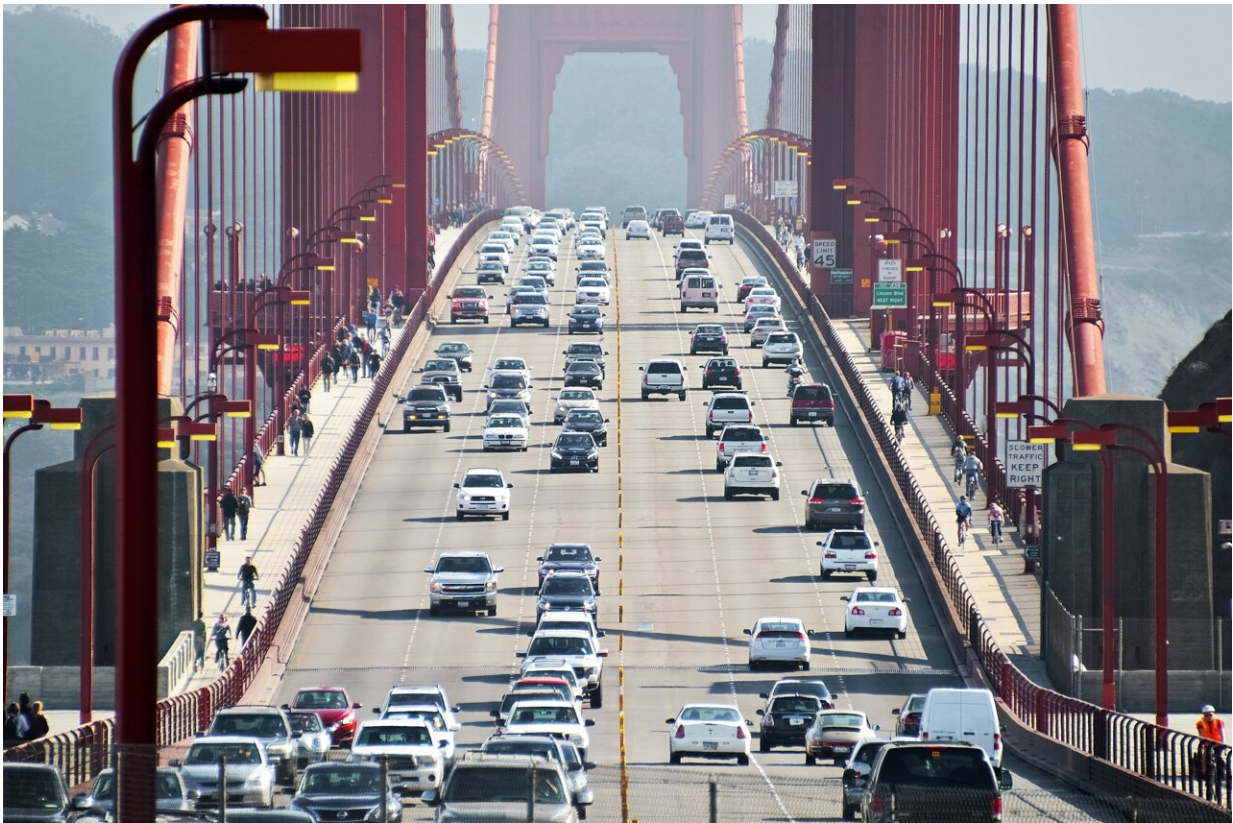


California domestic migration has plunged during pandemic

December 16 2021, by Edward Lempinen



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

The COVID-19 pandemic has put sharp downward pressure on California's population, with far fewer people coming from other states to live here and slightly more people than usual leaving to live elsewhere,

according to a new UC Berkeley study.

Research published today by the California Policy Lab reports a decline of 38 percent in the number of people migrating to the Golden State from elsewhere in the U.S. At the same time, the number of people leaving the state for other U.S. locations has increased by 12 percent since the start of the pandemic.

The sharply falling in-migration and steadily rising out-migration, taken together, have doubled domestic migration away from California since March 2020, the study authors concluded.

"Most of the public's attention has been focused on whether there are more people leaving the state, but as we found, there's also significantly fewer people moving into California from other states," said report co-author Natalie Holmes, a research fellow at the California Policy Lab and a Ph.D. student at the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley.

"If these trends continue," Holmes added, "the implications for California are significant, ranging from federal funding allocations and tax revenues to how many seats we have in Congress. Population swings can have even more dramatic effects on local jurisdictions."

Using anonymous credit bureau data, the researchers found that all of California's 58 counties have seen fewer people moving in from out of state since the start of the pandemic.

The impact is especially pronounced in the Bay Area. Between March 2020, when the first pandemic lockdowns were imposed, and the end of September 2021, the number of people migrating to the Bay Area was down by 45 percent—and by over 50 percent in San Francisco and Santa Clara counties.

Of course, people are always moving, and for decades the [population](#) of California has risen as people have arrived here from other states and countries to pursue their dreams. California is still the largest U.S. state, by far. In 2019, births in California were nearly double the number of deaths, the study says.

But the state has been losing population to domestic migration for more than a decade, Holmes said. International migration was not included in the study, but it has produced substantial gains for more than a decade, she added.

Overall, the state's population growth has slowed significantly in recent decades. Earlier this year, the state Department of Finance estimated that for the first year since the start of the 20th century, California suffered a net loss of population in 2020.

Some analysts, and a [number](#) of conservative critics, have pressed the argument that California is a failing state and that [people](#) are fleeing in droves to avoid high housing costs and high taxes. A complex, multi-institution study released earlier this year by the University of California President's Office found no evidence of an unusual recent exodus of California residents to other [states](#).

More information: Pandemic Patterns: California is Seeing Fewer Entrances and More Exits. [www.capolicylab.org/pandemic-p ... nces-and-more-exits/](http://www.capolicylab.org/pandemic-patterns-nces-and-more-exits/)

Provided by University of California - Berkeley

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