

Migration in Michigan's Upper Peninsula

Summary of U.P. Population Change Over Time:

- The U.P. has experienced population loss since its peak in 1920 (332,556), with occasional increases (four out of 10 decades) and more frequent losses (six out of 10 decades) since the 1920s.
- Of particular concern here, two consecutive decades of population loss in 2010 (-6,255) and again in 2020 (-8,966). The consistent losses of the last two decades hint at a concerning trend.
- Cumulatively, migration from 1970 -2020, demonstrates that losses far exceed the gains at -33,952 and 4,950 respectively, for a total net migration of -29,002.
- **From 2010** (pop. 311,361) - **2020** (pop. 302,395):
 - About half of U.P. population loss was due to natural decrease (51%), with just slightly less of the change (49%) due to net out-migration.
 - Population in the U.P. is aging quickly, which makes for natural decrease (more deaths than births) which occurred in every county with only one exception, Houghton County.

Loss of Students & Young Adults:

- Since the 1970s, the region has generally experienced net gains among those traditionally college aged (15-19 and 20-24). This is associated with the fact that U.P. universities attract students from out of the region.
- Post-graduation, those students and other young adults (age 25-34) tend to leave the region with a net out-migration in most recent decades of about 6,000 young adults. The region then attracts a retirement age population (55-74).
- Together, these migration patterns—losing young adults and attracting older adults—accumulate over time and have changed the age structure of the U.P. population.

Migrant Origins & Destinations:

- Most U.P. migration flows to and comes from outside of Michigan, primarily within the Midwest, with migration to and from Wisconsin being the most active.

During the Pandemic:

- Migration out of the U.P. has slowed post-pandemic - said a different way, U.P. residents stayed in place. Migration into the U.P. slowed, but less so than out migration.
- Altogether, this means less population loss than pre-pandemic years.
- The latest census data (July 2020 - June 2021) shows all but one U.P. county (Menominee) shifts to positive net migration after pandemic onset.
- Data from postal service change of address forms (March 2020 - February 2022) show that fewer people left the U.P. and, in some places, more people moved in during the pandemic, when compared to the three years prior. Especially, Alger, Iron, Marquette, Mackinac, Dickinson, Houghton, and Keweenaw counties saw more positive migration since the onset of the pandemic.



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Full report available online:

mtu.edu/social-sciences/research/publications/reports/

Video presentation of this data:

investupmi.com/index.php/upmigrationdata/