

# Net migration losses among states

## How Alaska's decade-plus streak compares historically

By ERIC SANDBERG

Alaska's 11-year streak of net migration losses is the state's longest historically, and losing more movers than we gain is a topic we've explored from several perspectives. A question we had yet to address — and an important one for putting the magnitude of these losses in historical context — is how our current streak compares to the rest of the country. Which states have been through similar periods of net migration losses and why, and how long did they last?

### Our historical migration patterns

#### Net migration gains most of the time

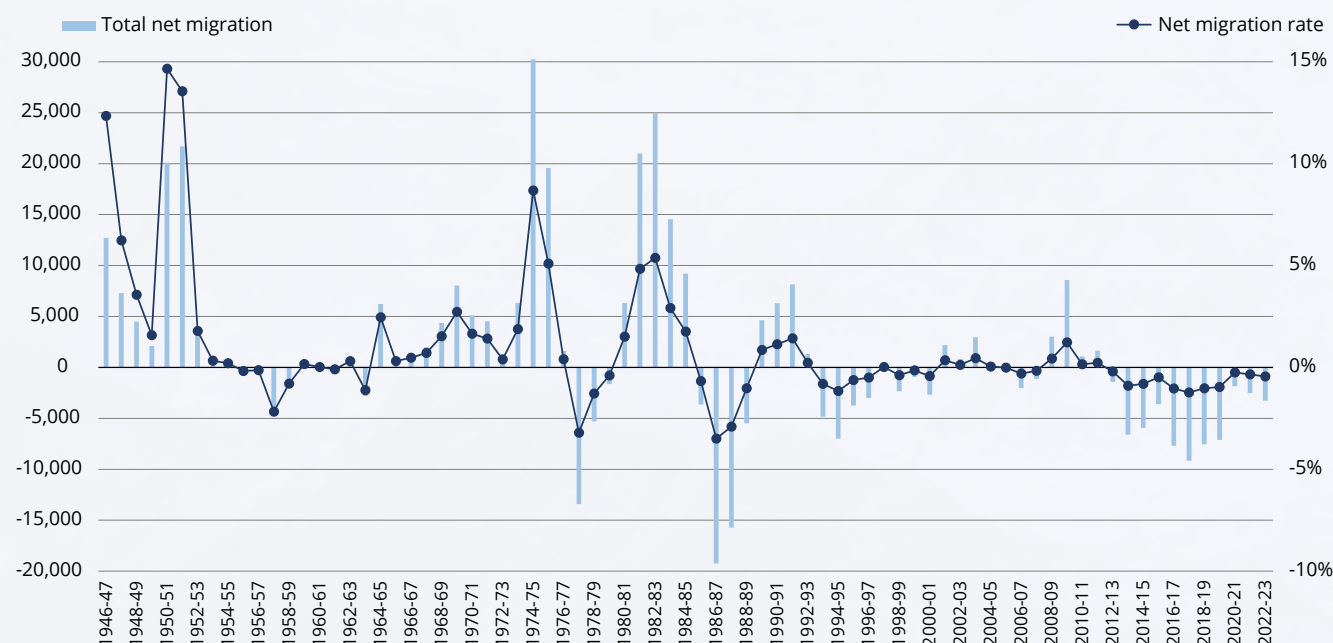
While Alaska's net migration — in-movers minus

out-movers — has been consistently negative during the past decade, that hasn't been the case historically. Since the end of World War II, more people have moved to than from Alaska a majority of the time.

For the first quarter-century after the war, Alaska's migration patterns were tied mainly to military movements. The largest example is the early 1950s during the Korean War, when for two consecutive years more than 20,000 more people arrived than left the territory. Both years' net migration rates approached 15 percent, the highest two years on record. (The rate is the percentage of the total population that the net movement represents.)

After oil was discovered on the North Slope at the end of the 1960s, Alaska's net migration swung wildly for the next two decades.

### Alaska's historical yearly net migration numbers and rates, 1946 to 2023



**Notes:** Yearly net migration is measured from July to the next July, so one data year spans two calendar years. Total net migration is the year's in-movers minus the out-movers, and the rate is the percentage of the total population that the net movement represents.

**Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

The first year of pipeline construction, 1974-75<sup>1</sup>, spurred the largest total net migration increase on record of just over 30,000. While the rate was lower than in the Korean War, as Alaska's population had more than doubled since 1950, it still approached 9 percent.

Net gains stayed high throughout pipeline construction, then turned to losses as workers left the state when it was complete. Net migration stayed negative for three years in the late 1970s, falling to -3 percent in 1977-78.

By the early '80s, rising oil prices, a housing boom, and a recession in the rest of the country brought a flood of people into Alaska. Net migration rose to at least 1.5 percent for five straight years, peaking in 1982-83 at 5.4 percent. In the late '80s, however, oil prices dropped and the housing market cratered. Four hard years followed, with the rate bottoming out at -3.5 percent in 1986-87.

## Many years of little change, then losses

After a brief recovery in the early 1990s, losses resumed in the mid-'90s, mainly through a post-Cold War military drawdown in places like Adak. Net losses were the steepest in 1994-1995.

After that, net migration settled for the next 15 years into a series of mostly small gains and losses, with a few brief exceptions such as the increase during the national recession of the late 2000s. The long-term trend, though, was an equal number coming in and leaving.

Alaska's current negative streak began in 2012-13 and losses deepened the following year. For the next seven, the net migration rate was -0.5 percent at most, and in four of those years, it was -1 percent or lower as the state weathered a recession.

The pandemic that began in 2020 slowed migration everywhere, and while Alaska's economy has recovered somewhat, the negative outflow has continued. Between 2022 and 2023, Alaska lost over 3,200 more people than we gained (-0.4 percent). That was the fifth-lowest rate in the country last year after New York, California, Hawaii, and Louisiana. (See the map on page 8.)

<sup>1</sup>Yearly net migration is measured from July to the next July, so one data year spans two consecutive calendar years.

## About the data

Net migration rates for other states come from the U.S. Census Bureau's population estimates by state for 1930-2023. Birth and death data come from either the Census Bureau or the Centers for Disease Control.

Estimated net migration is the difference in year-to-year population change after accounting for births and deaths. In one year, 2019-2020, we substituted IRS net migration rates because Census intercensal estimates were not available at publication time.

Net migration rates allow a fairer comparison of the relative magnitude of migration gains and losses among states with vastly different population sizes.

We calculated the rates by dividing the yearly net migration by the total population. For instance, if a state with 700,000 people has 7,000 more people arrive than leave in a year, the net rate is 1 percent. If the same state has 7,000 more people leave than move in, the rate is -1 percent.

Alaska's current net loss streak is the longest on record, but past negative streaks were sharper.

## The current net loss streak is Alaska's longest

At 11 straight years, our current streak is nearly three times longer than any on record. In total, nearly 57,000 more people left Alaska than arrived in that time.

Previous loss periods were sharper, and the nadir of each was lower, but the total outflows of the late '70s and late '80s were less at 20,000 and 44,000, respectively.

## Historical net migration patterns for other states

The large, two-page exhibit that follows shows net migration rates for each state and U.S. region since 1930, aside from Alaska and Hawaii, whose data series starts later.

Numbers shaded in blue are states with net migration gains and those in red show net out-migration. The shades darken every quarter of a percentage point from zero to 1 or -1 percent. A medium

Text continues on page 8



# Net migration rates (percent) by state and region, 1930 to 2023

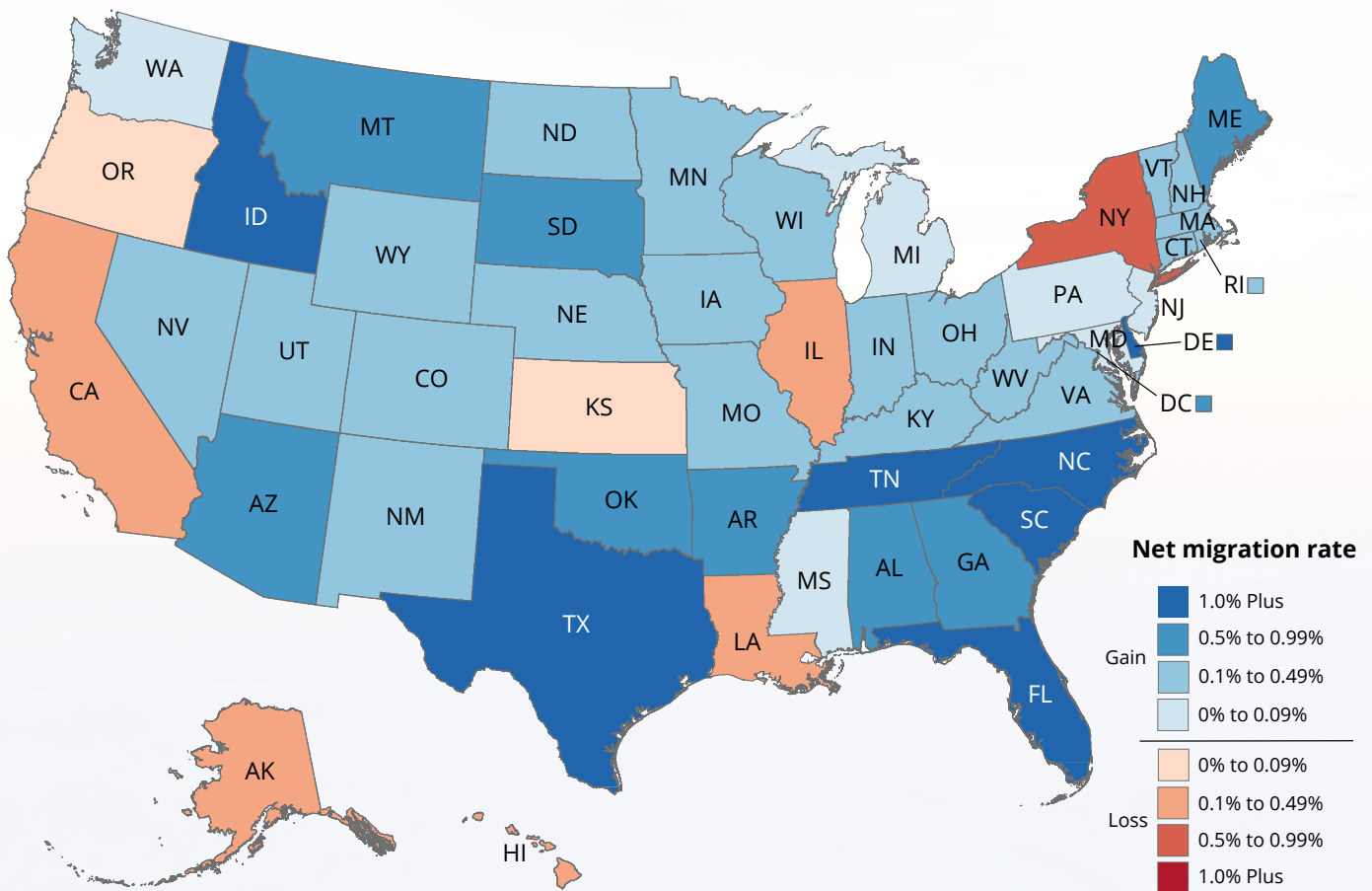
	WEST	Pacific	Alaska	California	Hawaii	Oregon	Washington	Mountain	Arizona	Colorado	Idaho	Montana	Nevada	New Mexico	Utah	Wyoming	MIDWEST	Great Lakes	Illinois	Indiana	Michigan	Ohio	Wisconsin	Plains	Iowa	Kansas	Minnesota	Missouri	Nebraska	North Dakota	South Dakota
1930-31	0.9	1.3		1.7		0.7	0.4	0.1	-2.0	1.0	0.4	-0.7	2.0	0.8	-0.8	0.3	-0.2	-0.3	0.0	-0.2	-1.7	-0.2	0.5	0.1	-0.4	-0.9	0.6	1.3	-0.7	-1.7	-1.0
1931-32	0.4	0.7		1.0		0.3	-0.2	-0.3	-1.5	0.4	0.0	-0.8	2.3	-0.3	-0.7	-0.6	-0.2	-0.2	0.2	0.2	-1.2	-0.1	0.2	-0.2	-0.4	-0.6	0.4	0.5	-0.8	-1.9	-1.4
1932-33	0.4	0.8		1.0		0.4	0.2	-0.3	-0.7	0.0	0.0	-0.5	0.1	0.4	-0.9	-1.0	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.3	-0.8	0.0	-0.1	-0.3	-0.3	-1.0	0.2	0.3	-1.0	-1.6	-1.4
1933-34	0.9	1.3		1.5		0.5	0.9	0.1	-0.1	-0.1	1.0	0.0	2.0	1.2	-1.1	0.3	-0.3	-0.2	0.1	-0.3	-0.2	-0.2	-0.4	0.0	-1.1	0.1	0.1	-1.0	-1.4	-2.1	
1934-35	1.2	1.5		1.7		1.4	0.9	0.3	0.7	-0.2	0.6	0.1	1.9	1.6	-0.7	0.7	-0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	-0.2	-0.4	-0.1	-0.5	0.1	0.0	-1.4	-1.6	-2.2
1935-36	1.8	2.3		2.6		2.2	1.2	0.6	1.4	0.6	1.9	0.0	0.9	1.5	-1.3	0.4	-0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	-0.1	-0.3	-0.8	-1.2	-0.7	-0.1	-0.3	-2.0	-2.1	-2.2
1936-37	1.9	2.5		2.8		2.1	1.5	0.6	1.6	0.9	1.4	-0.7	2.0	1.5	-1.0	0.3	-0.3	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.9	-0.2	-0.4	-1.0	-1.0	-1.1	-0.3	-0.4	-2.1	-2.5	-2.5
1937-38	1.1	1.5		1.7		1.5	0.7	0.2	2.1	0.2	0.1	-1.1	1.5	0.5	-0.3	0.4	-0.3	0.1	-0.2	-0.1	1.0	0.0	-0.4	-1.0	-0.8	-1.3	-0.5	-0.7	-1.6	-2.3	-2.0
1938-39	1.0	1.3		1.6		0.9	0.5	0.4	2.8	0.0	0.2	-0.4	1.3	0.3	-0.1	-0.3	-0.1	0.2	-0.2	-0.1	1.1	0.2	0.0	-0.6	0.3	-1.6	-0.2	-0.4	-1.4	-1.7	-1.6
1939-40	1.2	1.6		2.0		0.0	1.0	0.2	2.1	0.2	-1.0	-0.4	5.0	-0.1	0.1	-0.3	0.1	0.5	-0.2	0.3	2.3	0.2	0.0	-0.7	0.0	-2.6	-0.2	-0.4	-0.9	-1.8	-1.6
1940-41	1.1	2.8		3.7		-1.9	2.3	-2.9	-3.0	-1.3	-5.3	-3.7	5.6	-6.4	-1.7	-2.4	-0.4	0.6	0.7	0.8	2.1	-0.1	-0.8	-2.3	-2.6	-1.8	-3.5	0.2	-4.1	-5.2	-5.3
1941-42	3.9	5.8		6.3		2.7	5.6	-0.8	5.7	-1.8	-6.0	-5.7	13.5	-2.6	2.7	0.4	-1.0	-0.4	0.2	-0.1	0.4	-0.5	-3.6	-2.2	-2.9	-0.9	-3.1	-0.1	-3.4	-6.5	-4.9
1942-43	7.8	8.5		9.1		9.4	5.7	5.8	30.7	2.6	3.1	-7.6	9.5	4.6	7.8	-2.9	-3.4	-4.4	-4.5	-2.6	-3.9	-2.4	-2.4	-3.4	-5.3	1.2	-4.4	-4.0	-0.8	-7.8	-1.5
1943-44	1.3	3.4		4.2		0.5	2.1	-4.2	-13.2	-2.4	4.2	-4.5	0.4	-3.2	-6.1	-3.4	-1.7	-0.9	-1.3	-1.2	-0.1	-0.2	-2.2	-3.4	-2.3	-1.8	-3.2	-4.7	-3.0	-3.7	-4.9
1944-45	1.7	3.3		3.5		0.5	4.4	-2.9	-4.1	-2.9	-5.6	0.6	-3.7	-0.1	-4.3	-2.6	-1.4	-1.4	-2.2	-1.3	-0.9	-0.8	-1.6	-1.4	-0.6	-3.6	-0.7	-2.0	-1.4	0.6	1.3
1945-46	2.5	2.0		1.3		6.2	2.7	4.0	2.3	6.8	-1.0	6.7	-5.1	2.6	6.1	5.0	6.3	6.9	6.7	7.2	6.2	7.8	6.0	5.0	6.0	3.4	6.7	5.8	2.7	2.9	0.4
1946-47	0.7	0.5	12.3	1.6		0.5	-4.7	1.2	4.3	1.4	0.8	1.9	3.0	1.5	2.4	0.1	1.2	1.4	1.3	0.8	2.0	1.4	1.3	0.9	0.4	1.5	0.8	1.6	-0.5	-0.4	0.7
1947-48	1.0	0.9	6.2	0.8		1.6	0.3	1.5	3.7	0.5	3.4	0.4	3.0	1.2	0.0	2.2	0.5	0.9	1.3	1.1	0.5	0.7	0.4	-0.3	-0.2	0.8	0.9	-1.3	-1.5	-1.8	0.1
1948-49	1.2	1.0	3.6	1.3		0.4	0.2	1.7	1.6	0.9	1.5	3.3	-0.7	4.2	0.3	1.2	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.3	-0.1	0.9	-0.3	0.0	0.5	0.8	-0.2	1.5	0.9	1.4
1949-50	2.3	2.4	1.6	1.9		5.6	2.5	2.3	4.0	0.7	1.5	2.6	1.8	4.6	1.3	2.9	-0.3	-0.7	-0.3	-1.2	-0.4	-1.3	-0.1	0.4	0.4	-1.7	0.6	1.0	0.5	1.7	2.0
1950-51	1.6	2.2	14.7	2.9		0.1	0.1	-0.4	2.0	-1.6	-2.0	-1.1	2.4	1.7	-0.9	-1.5	-0.4	-0.2	-0.5	-1.9	-0.2	-0.3	-1.4	-0.9	-1.7	0.6	-1.1	0.2	-2.3	-4.4	-1.8
1951-52	1.9	2.3	13.6	3.1		0.2	-0.5	0.9	5.3	1.2	-2.2	-0.6	6.4	0.1	0.0	-1.2	-0.1	0.5	0.7	-0.2	0.6	1.2	-0.7	-1.4	-1.2	0.0	-1.1	-2.8	-1.9	-1.3	-2.5
1952-53	2.3	2.6	1.8	3.8		-0.4	-0.9	1.5	4.1	3.0	-0.5	0.6	6.3	0.3	-0.5	-3.0	0.2	0.6	0.0	-0.7	0.8	2.3	-0.5	-0.8	-1.3	-0.6	-1.0	0.0	-1.0	-1.8	-2.4
1953-54	1.6	1.9	0.3	2.5		0.0	0.4	0.7	2.3	2.6	-1.3	-0.4	7.7	-1.6	-1.1	-1.1	0.9	1.3	0.9	0.4	1.8	1.8	1.4	-0.2	-1.5	0.9	0.2	-0.1	-1.6	-0.8	-0.8
1954-55	1.5	1.4	0.2	1.5		0.6	1.8	2.0	3.7	1.8	1.0	0.2	9.5	0.3	1.9	2.6	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7	1.3	0.1	0.4	-0.4	0.6	0.9	0.2	0.4	1.0	-1.4	-0.7
1955-56	2.3	2.3	-0.2	2.9		1.0	0.9	2.0	4.6	3.3	-0.3	-1.4	3.9	0.1	0.8	-0.3	0.1	0.3	-0.3	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.2	-0.3	-0.5	-0.3	0.5	-0.6	0.1	-2.3	-0.9
1956-57	1.7	1.8	-0.1	2.5		-0.5	0.5	1.3	4.8	0.6	0.4	0.0	2.3	2.5	-0.4	-1.2	-0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	-0.5	0.6	-0.2	-1.0	-0.9	-1.1	-0.6	-0.7	-1.7	-2.1	-2.4
1957-58	1.5	1.9	-2.2	2.7		-0.9	0.3	0.3	4.0	-1.5	-1.2	-1.9	1.8	2.1	-0.1	-1.4	-0.3	0.1	0.9	-0.4	-0.6	0.4	-0.2	-1.3	-1.6	-0.8	-0.5	-1.3	-2.2	-2.8	-3.2
1958-59	1.1	0.9	-0.8	2.4		0.4	0.3	1.1	3.7	0.9	-1.2	2.1	1.3	0.6	-0.1	-1.4	-0.4	-0.5	-0.3	-0.9	-0.5	-0.7	-0.3	-0.1	-0.5	-0.5	0.1	0.4	-0.4	0.1	0.0
1959-60	1.7	0.9	0.2	1.1	3.8	0.4	-0.2	1.5	2.8	1.8	0.3	-0.1	2.7	1.3	1.2	1.8	-0.3	-0.5	-0.4	-0.2	-0.8	-0.8	0.3	-0.0	-0.4	-0.3	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.7	0.7
1960-61	1.8	1.8	0.0	2.5	0.5	-0.4	-0.4	2.0	4.5	2.6	0.2	0.9	6.7	-1.3	1.7	0.1	-0.5	-0.6	-0.9	-0.3	-0.9	-0.2	-0.4	-0.4	-1.3	0.2	-0.3	-0.7	0.6	-0.7	-0.2
1961-62	1.7	1.7	-0.1	2.0	1.6	0.6	0.7	0.9	2.7	1.3	-0.5	-1.3	10.1	-0.9	0.2	-2.9	-0.7	-0.6	0.2	-1.3	-1.1	-0.6	-0.5	-0.8	-1.5	-0.5	-0.3	-1.0	-0.2	-2.4	0.1
1962-63	1.2	1.5	0.3	2.1	-2.4	0.8	-0.8	0.4	1.6	0.4	-2.9	-0.7	11.2	-1.3	-0.4	-0.6	-0.4	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	-0.7	0.2	-0.9	-1.3	-1.8	-1.0	-0.3	-0.5	-0.5	-1.1
1963-64	0.8	1.0	-1.1	1.4	0.6	1.0	-0.9	0.0	0.7	0.3	-1.8	-0.9	5.7	-0.4	-1.5	-0.5	-0.1	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.3	-0.2	0.0	-0.7	-1.1	-1.4	-0.6	0.2	-0.8	-0.7	-2.4
1964-65	0.6	0.9	2.5	1.2	-1.4	1.8	-0.8	-0.4	0.3	-0.5	-0.3	-1.1	2.7	-1.3	-0.2	-3.3	-0.1	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.8	0.1	0.4	-0.8	-1.1	-1.1	-0.3	-0.4	-1.8	-1.3	-2.6
1965-66	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.4	-0.9	0.9	2.2	-0.5	0.6	0.0	-0.6	-0.8	-0.9	-2.2	-0.1	-3.8	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.0	-0.4	-0.1	-1.0	-0.4	0.5	-1.9	-1.5	-2.3
1966-67	0.7	0.9	0.5	0.7	0.3	-0.2	3.1	-0.2	0.8	1.3	-1.2	-1.7	-0.5	-2.2	-0.6	-1.3	-0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	-0.1	-0.3	-0.4	0.4	-0.7	0.3	-0.3	-0.7	-4.3	-2.6
1967-68	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.6	2.2	0.5	1.0	2.3	0.0	-0.9	2.0	-0.2	-0.7	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	-0.3	-0.1	-0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	-0.3	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.1	-1.7	-1.0
1968-69	0.9	0.9	1.5	0.7	0.8	2.2	1.4	0.9	2.2	1.2	0.7	-1.6	2.4	0.4	0.1	0.7	0.0	-0.2	-0.3	0.1	0.0	-0.3	0.0	0.3	-0.6	0.4	0.7	1.0	-0.1	-0.9	-0.9
1969-70	1.0	0.9	2.7	0.8	2.0	1.3	1.5	1.2	2.5	1.8	0.6	-0.2	2.1	-0.1	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.7	0.4	-0.4	-1.1	-0.8
1970-71	1.0	0.6	1.7	0.5	1.7	1.5	-0.1	2.3	4.1	2.3	1.7	1.0	4.0	1.5	1.2	0.9	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2	-0.1	-0.2	-0.4	0.0	0.0	0.1	-0.7	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	-0.2
1971-72	1.0	0.4	1.4	0.4	1.9	1.5	-0.7	2.7	4.8	3.4	2.3	0.3	4.1	1.0	1.2	1.2	-0.3	-0.3	0.0	-0.3	-0.7	0.2	0.2	-0.1	-0.3	-0.1	-0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2
1972-73	1.2	0.8	0.4	0.7	1.5	1.5	0.4	2.6	4.7	2.9	1.5	0.5	3.2	1.3	1.3	1.1	-0.3	-0.3	-0.6	-0.1	-0.2	-0.4	0.0	-0.1	-0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	-0.5	-0.3
1973-74	1.2	1.0	1.9	0.9	0.7	1.4	1.6	2.0	3.7	1.0	2.3	0.7	4.2	1.2	0.8	2.4	-0.3	-0.3	-0.4	-0.2	-0.3	-0.6	0.0	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	0.1	-0.4	-0.4
1974-75	1.3	1.2	8.7	1.1	0.8	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.8	0.9	1.9	0.8	3.2	1.4	1.1	3.6	-0.3	-0.4	-0.3	-0.6	-0.7	-0.5	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	-0.2	-0.3	-0.1	-0.4
1975-76	1.3	1.3	5.1	1.2	0.8	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.7	0.9	1.8	0.5	3.7	1.4	1.2	3.1	-0.2	-0.4	-0.1	-0.2	-0.5	-0.7	-0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	-0.1	0.2	0.1
1976-77	1.4	1.3	0.4	1.2	0.3	2.2	1.6	1																							

# Net migration rates (percent) by state and region, 1930 to 2023 (cont.)

	NORTHEAST				New England				Connecticut	Maine	Massachusetts	New Hampshire	Rhode Island	Vermont	Mid-Atlantic				New Jersey	New York	Pennsylvania		SOUTH	Upper South	Delaware	D.C.	Kentucky	Maryland	North Carolina	Tennessee	Virginia	West Virginia	Lower South	Alabama	Florida	Georgia	Louisiana	Mississippi	South Carolina	Southwest	Arkansas	Oklahoma	Texas	
1930-31	0.3	-0.4	0.3	0.2	-0.6	0.4	-1.3	-0.9	0.5	0.7	1.0	-0.2	-0.3	0.0	0.7	2.9	0.0	0.8	0.6	0.3	-0.9	-0.6	-1.2	0.9	0.4	0.0	-1.8	-0.6	-0.5	-1.8	-0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
1931-32	0.1	-0.2	0.0	0.3	-0.2	0.5	-1.1	-0.9	0.3	-0.5	0.8	-0.1	-0.3	0.1	0.9	1.5	-0.2	0.8	0.0	-1.1	-0.6	-0.8	-1.1	1.3	0.4	0.5	-0.7	-1.3	-0.7	-1.8	-1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
1932-33	0.0	0.0	-0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	-0.8	-0.6	0.0	-0.8	0.6	-0.4	-0.2	0.1	0.8	2.7	-0.3	0.5	-0.2	0.4	-0.7	-0.9	-0.3	-0.3	1.7	-0.6	0.1	0.1	-1.0	-0.3	-0.2	-1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1933-34	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.4	-0.4	-0.4	0.1	-0.7	0.7	-0.4	-0.1	0.2	0.5	6.7	-0.1	0.7	-0.8	0.3	0.5	0.0	-0.3	0.0	1.4	-1.3	0.3	-0.7	-0.8	-0.3	-0.5	-1.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1934-35	0.1	0.4	0.7	0.3	0.6	-0.1	0.1	-0.5	0.0	-0.4	0.6	-0.7	-0.2	0.2	0.5	6.7	-0.1	0.7	-0.8	0.3	0.5	0.0	-0.3	0.0	1.4	-1.3	0.3	-0.7	-0.8	-0.3	-0.5	-1.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1935-36	0.1	0.4	0.1	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	-0.3	-0.8	0.0	-0.3	0.5	-0.6	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	-0.2	0.2	0.5	0.7	-0.9	0.4	-0.5	-0.1	-0.4	1.9	-0.2	0.0	-0.8	-0.5	-0.4	-0.9	-1.8	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
1936-37	-0.1	-0.1	0.1	-0.2	-0.2	-0.3	0.9	-0.7	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	-0.2	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.5	0.7	-0.9	0.4	-0.4	3.1	1.2	-0.3	0.5	0.2	-0.4	-0.2	-2.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
1937-38	0.2	-0.1	0.1	-0.3	-0.1	0.6	-0.3	0.4	0.3	0.1	-0.2	1.2	0.3	0.3	0.8	3.0	-0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	1.0	-0.4	0.8	-0.2	3.1	0.8	0.3	0.6	0.7	-0.2	0.4	-0.4	-1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
1938-39	-0.4	-0.2	0.3	-0.2	-0.7	0.7	0.7	0.1	-0.5	0.4	-0.2	-1.1	0.5	0.7	1.9	2.4	-0.3	1.1	0.8	1.0	0.3	0.8	0.7	-0.2	3.1	-0.1	1.1	0.5	1.0	-0.2	0.0	-0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1939-40	-0.4	-0.2	0.4	-0.1	-1.0	0.1	2.2	0.9	-0.5	0.8	-0.8	-0.6	0.4	1.0	1.8	4.0	0.1	2.1	0.4	1.3	1.0	0.8	0.2	-0.1	3.7	-1.1	0.5	-1.0	0.3	-0.4	-0.6	-1.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1940-41	-0.4	0.9	1.8	-0.2	1.3	-0.9	1.3	-4.7	-0.8	1.6	-1.8	-0.4	0.9	0.7	1.7	9.8	-2.4	3.6	-0.9	0.4	4.0	-2.4	1.7	0.8	4.8	0.9	3.7	-1.0	1.9	0.0	-0.4	-3.7	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1941-42	-1.7	-0.3	2.0	-2.2	-0.9	-2.4	1.8	-2.1	-2.1	0.5	-2.5	-2.8	0.4	0.2	0.8	10.1	-2.1	3.8	-2.0	-2.2	5.4	-4.2	1.1	0.1	5.9	-0.2	1.3	-0.3	0.9	-0.4	-0.8	-3.2	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
1942-43	-2.8	-2.8	-1.0	-4.8	-3.3	-4.8	0.8	-5.5	-2.8	-2.4	-2.2	-3.6	0.2	-0.4	0.2	4.3	-5.1	3.6	0.7	-0.2	1.8	-6.4	0.9	-2.8	13.1	-0.2	-0.6	1.6	-3.5	0.2	-8.1	-1.7	3.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
1943-44	-2.3	-1.6	-1.8	-1.6	-2.3	-2.1	3.8	-4.8	-2.6	-2.4	-2.1	-3.3	-3.6	-2.4	0.1	-3.6	-3.7	0.4	-4.3	-4.9	2.5	-3.5	-4.1	-5.2	-2.2	-3.6	-3.7	-6.7	-3.0	-4.8	-5.6	-8.7	-3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
1944-45	-1.5	-0.9	-1.3	-1.0	-0.4	0.1	-3.1	-0.4	-1.6	-1.8	-1.7	-1.5	-2.4	-2.1	-0.6	-2.2	-2.7	-1.9	-2.5	-1.1	-2.8	-1.3	-2.9	-2.7	0.7	-3.3	-4.6	-5.2	-2.2	-2.1	-1.9	-2.1	-2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
1945-46	6.7	5.5	6.9	3.2	6.4	7.0	-1.5	7.7	7.1	8.7	6.6	7.2	2.5	3.5	3.6	1.0	5.0	4.8	3.2	5.5	-0.5	5.6	0.8	3.2	-2.1	2.4	3.8	-2.9	-1.6	3.4	0.6	3.7	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
1946-47	2.3	1.2	2.1	1.4	0.9	1.5	-0.3	2.4	2.7	1.8	3.4	2.2	0.1	-0.1	0.8	-3.2	-0.1	0.4	-0.3	1.3	-1.7	1.3	0.0	-0.8	2.3	-0.9	-0.9	0.0	1.0	0.5	0.4	-1.2	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
1947-48	1.3	0.8	1.1	1.2	0.8	1.1	0.1	0.0	1.4	2.2	2.5	0.5	-1.1	-1.1	0.8	-7.7	-1.3	-0.4	-0.4	-1.5	-1.2	-1.6	-1.2	0.6	-2.4	-1.3	-3.7	-1.9	-0.2	-2.5	-3.7	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
1948-49	0.9	0.5	-0.2	1.5	0.5	1.2	0.6	1.4	1.0	1.4	1.7	-0.2	-0.5	-0.3	0.0	-6.2	-0.6	1.3	-0.1	-1.1	-1.1	-0.2	-0.2	0.9	2.1	0.1	-0.4	-1.8	-0.4	-1.4	-0.8	-0.7	-1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
1949-50	-1.0	-1.7	-1.8	0.3	-2.1	-1.3	0.0	1.4	-0.8	-1.3	-1.2	0.0	1.2	0.7	0.3	-2.5	1.3	-0.1	2.0	0.8	-0.8	2.1	1.7	0.0	4.0	2.1	0.4	2.1	2.1	1.2	1.8	4.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
1950-51	-0.8	-1.3	-0.4	-1.3	-1.7	-1.6	-1.4	-1.5	-0.6	1.8	-0.8	-1.5	0.4	0.0	1.8	-2.2	-1.5	2.5	-0.6	0.1	2.1	-2.8	0.4	-1.8	4.8	0.3	0.7	-2.7	0.7	-0.9	-2.0	-2.2	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
1951-52	0.2	-0.3	1.5	-1.3	-1.1	0.0	1.0	-2.0	0.4	1.3	1.0	-0.8	-0.7	-1.4	1.6	-3.1	-2.4	1.0	-2.2	-2.2	0.5	-3.1	0.0	-1.5	4.6	-0.3	0.6	-2.6	-1.5	-0.5	-4.9	-1.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
1952-53	1.0	1.7	3.0	-1.5	2.2	1.1	0.3	-0.2	0.8	0.9	1.1	0.3	-1.6	-1.3	1.4	-2.2	-2.2	1.3	-1.7	-2.5	0.0	-3.1	-1.3	-2.3	3.5	-2.6	-1.1	-4.3	-1.9	-2.4	-4.7	-3.1	-1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
1953-54	0.8	1.0	2.5	0.2	1.1	0.3	-1.2	-1.8	0.7	1.4	0.8	0.3	-1.1	-1.0	3.3	-5.1	-1.6	3.2	-1.7	-0.4	-1.7	-2.8	-0.9	-3.1	4.4	-0.7	-1.4	-4.0	-2.3	-1.7	-4.2	-3.2	-1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
1954-55	-0.1	-0.8	1.0	-0.6	-1.7	-0.5	-0.5	-1.9	0.1	1.5	-0.2	-0.1	0.1	-0.5	4.0	-3.7	-1.4	0.7	0.7	0.0	-0.8	-3.0	0.4	-0.7	5.4	-1.0	0.1	-2.4	-1.1	-0.6	-2.2	0.4	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
1955-56	-0.3	-0.6	-0.6	-0.9	-1.0	0.6	0.8	-0.8	-0.2	0.9	-0.2	-0.9	0.0	-0.6	3.2	-6.3	-2.1	1.1	-0.4	-1.6	2.1	-2.7	1.1	-1.1	6.6	-0.2	0.8	-0.9	-0.7	-0.5	-2.8	-0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
1956-57	-0.1	-0.2	0.5	-0.8	-0.4	0.0	-0.1	-1.5	-0.1	1.0	0.5	-1.4	-0.2	-0.2	2.6	-2.6	-0.6	0.8	-0.5	-1.1	1.6	-2.3	1.2	-0.6	6.6	-0.2	0.7	-2.0	0.0	0.3	0.1	-1.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
1957-58	0.3	0.6	2.3	-1.3	0.4	0.4	-0.5	-0.2	0.3	1.5	0.2	-0.3	-0.4	-0.4	-0.2	-3.9	-0.5	2.4	-1.6	-0.5	0.3	-1.4	0.4	0.0	4.5	-0.8	-0.7	-2.1	-0.6	-0.6	-1.9	-2.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
1958-59	0.2																																											



## The most recent net migration rates by state, 2022 to 2023



**Note:** Total net migration is the year's in-movers minus the out-movers, and the rate is the percentage of the total population that the net movement represents.

**Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

shade of blue or red means 1 to 2 percent or -1 to -2 percent, and shades are darkest for rates above 2 percent or below -2 percent.

The exhibit divides the country into four regions: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. Each region has two or three subregions. We calculated net migration rates for regions and subregions using the number of people moving to and from the group of states as a whole.

### Big shifts during Depression, World War II

The numbers in the two-page exhibit start in the 1930s, when the country was in the grips of the Great Depression. One of the prominent migrant images of that time is farmers fleeing the Dust Bowl states of the Great Plains, something the net migration rates reflect.

Multiple Plains states recorded annual net migration losses of -1 to -2 percent throughout the decade. Outflows were massive from North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma as drought and economic depression intensified. Each had negative streaks of at least 10 to 15 years.

Several other states saw long net out-migration streaks during the Depression, albeit less intense than the Plains. These included nearby Minnesota and Wisconsin as well as Alabama and Maine.

Some regions absorbed big influxes of people during the Depression. The West Coast was a key recipient, especially California. California's net inflows topped 1 percent the entire decade, lifting the entire region's population.

Other areas with large migration inflows included

Washington, D.C., which was in the middle of New Deal government expansion.

Florida, Nevada, and Arizona rates all exceeded 1 percent a year by mid-decade. Those three stand out nationwide for having, with few exceptions, consistently high net in-migration to the present day.

The U.S. entering World War II in late 1941 spurred massive shifts in population around the country. Not only were newly enlisted troops moved to bases and overseas duty, but other people moved for war work. For most states, the war years brought their greatest negative outflows, mostly of young men.

Several regions had years with a net migration rate of -3 to -4 percent. After the war ended in 1945, states almost across the board recorded large net inflows the following year as soldiers demobilized.

## West Coast became a major destination

During the war, Pacific Coast states drew in huge numbers of migrants — even more than they did during the Depression. Alaska and Hawaii were both attacked directly by Japan and took in many servicemen in response, although their rates weren't recorded at that time.

For California, Oregon, and Washington, the war also spurred massive inflows. Not only was the area full of military bases and used as a staging zone for the Pacific war, but it also hosted large war industries such as airplane manufacturing. These three states' net migration rates exceeded 3 percent per year throughout the war, peaking at a sky-high 8.5 percent in 1942-43.

## Post-war years brought suburbanization and a more mobile young population

The years after WWII ended brought a moving boom as well as a baby boom. The upheaval of the war created a young adult population that had seen more of the country and the world than past generations, and this one was increasingly untethered to their place of origin compared to the 1930s. This led to more states' rates both up and down topping over 1 percent of their population.

Rural areas continued to deal with large outflows. North and South Dakota, after a brief post-WWII interlude, spent nearly the entire 1950s and '60s in

the negative. Other Plains states such as Iowa and Kansas also endured net outflows for much of the period.

Net migration also turned negative across much of the rural South. Losses picked up in Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, and South Carolina, partly driven by African-Americans leaving.

Farther north in Kentucky and West Virginia, steep declines in coal industry employment through the 1950s and '60s prompted large net outflows.

In addition to some rural areas, many Northern urban areas sustained net losses. Multiple large cities' populations peaked in 1950 and then declined, including Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, and Cleveland.

One post-war trend was suburbanization: people moving from dense urban centers to outlying bedroom communities. Though mostly an intrastate phenomenon, suburbanization bled into states that border a large urban area. New Jersey, Connecticut, Maryland, and Delaware saw related net gains during this period.

Suburbanization's effects are also visible in Washington, D.C.'s rates. A top destination during the New Deal and early war years, D.C.'s net migration dropped sharply into the negative after the war.

In the longest negative streak in our study, D.C.'s net losses lasted nearly 40 consecutive years, from the mid-1940s into the mid-1980s. During that streak, D.C.'s net migration rate didn't rise above -1 percent until the tail end. The district didn't register two consecutive positive years until the late 1990s.

Elsewhere, the West remained a top destination. Net migration rates for the entire region stayed mostly above 1 percent well into the 1960s. California led the way with rates above 1 percent through most of the period, pushing the state past New York to become the most populous by 1962.

Not only was the Pacific Coast a major draw, but the Mountain West region began to attract newcomers at a greater rate than during the Depression.

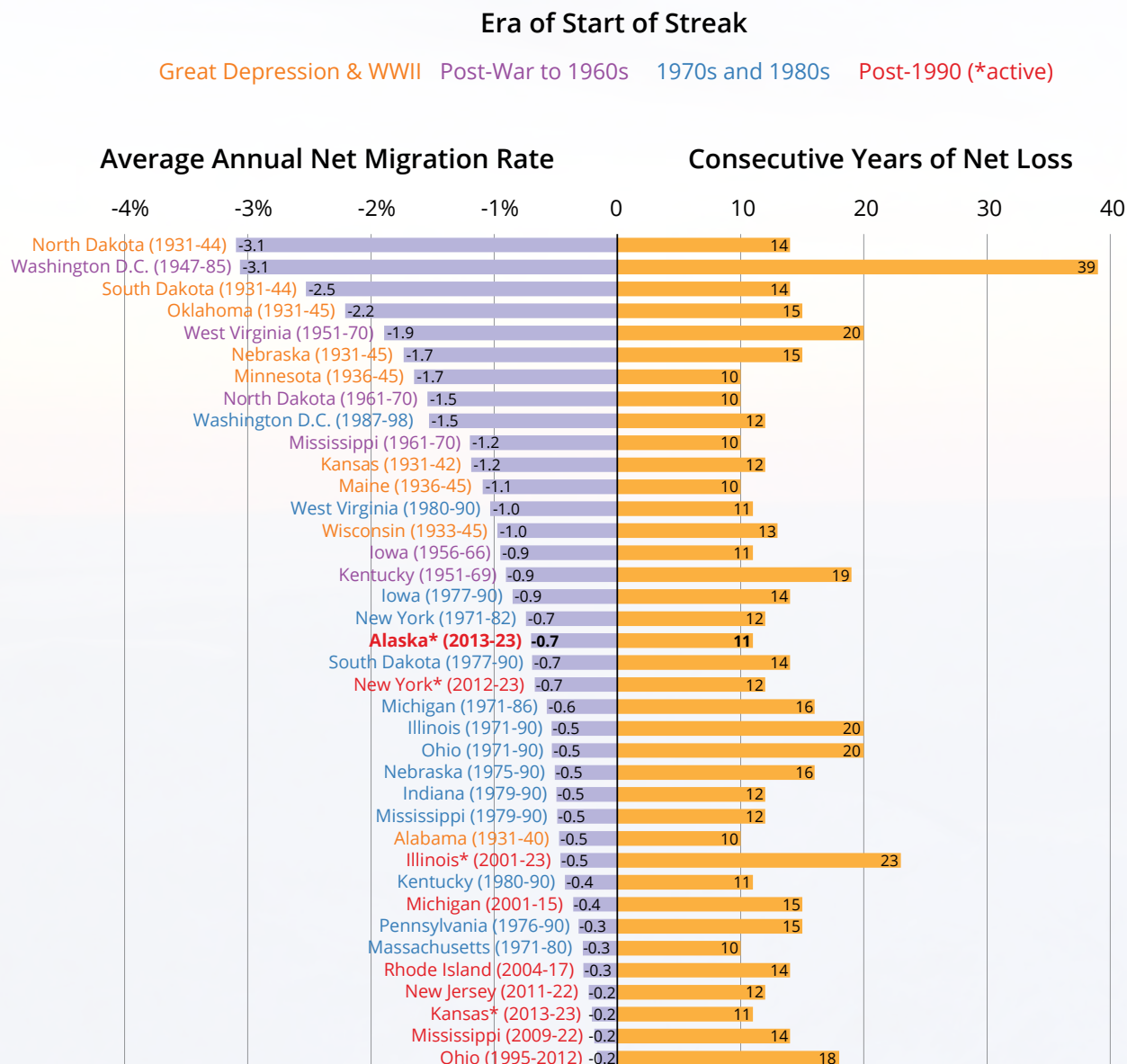
## Rust, Sun belts formed in the '70s and '80s

Net migration patterns shifted in the 1970s and '80s. Regional differences became starker and new parts of the country turned into destinations.

The Mountain West started growing in the 1970s and has not stopped since.

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# States with decade-plus net migration loss streaks since 1930



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

A great Sun Belt across the South and West attracted new residents while a Rust Belt of manufacturing hubs in the Midwest and Northeast suffered from changing economic conditions.

The South in particular became desirable for movers in the 1970s, fed by economic growth, more incoming retirees, economic downturns in other regions, and a reversal of Black out-migration following the civil rights movement.

Before 1970, Florida, Maryland, and Delaware were the only southern states with consistently positive net migration rates. But in the 1970s, the entire South

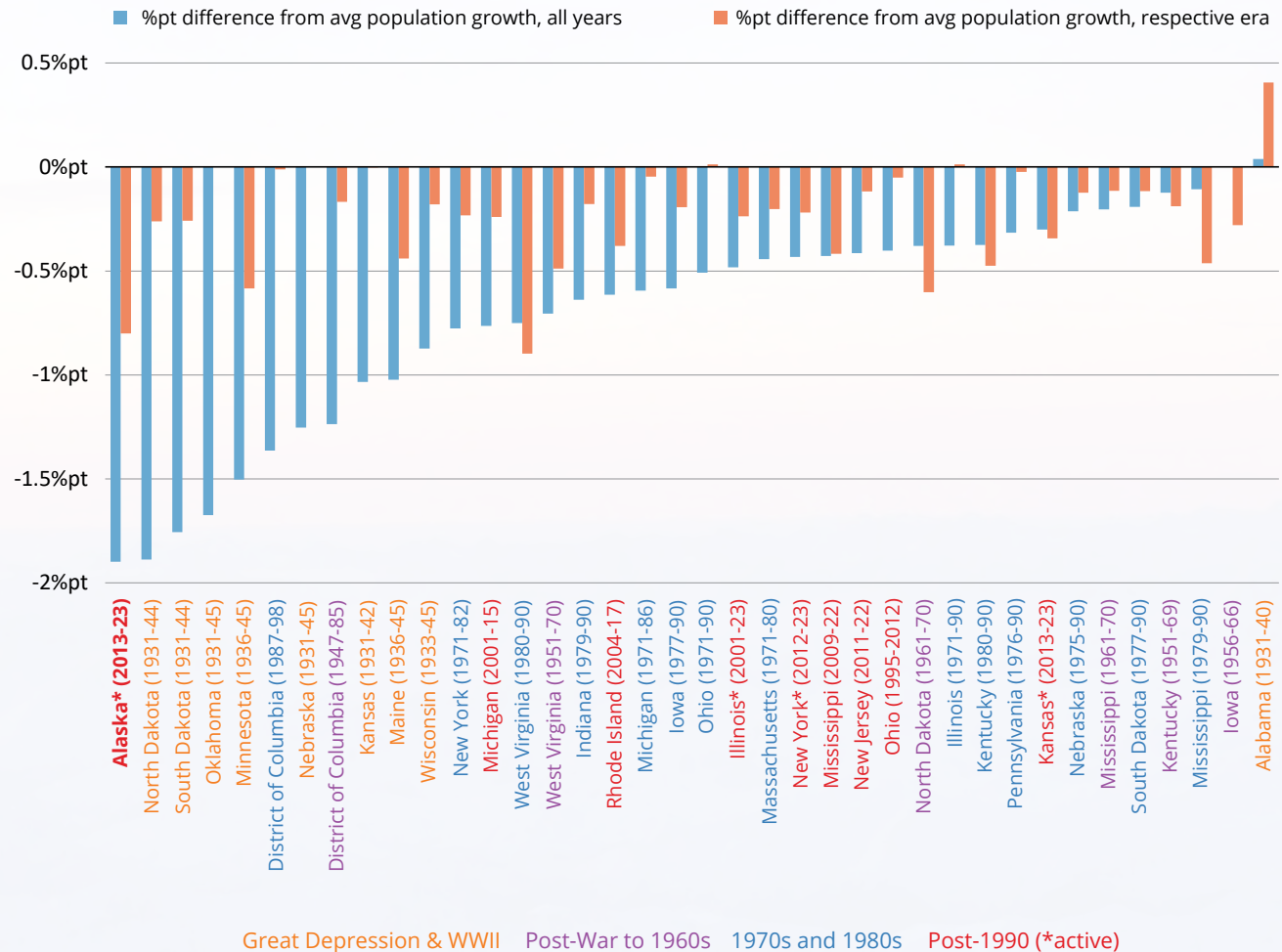
averaged a roughly 1 percent net gain per year, including Texas, Oklahoma, the Carolinas, and Virginia.

Another region with widespread increases in the 1970s and positive in-migration ever since was the Mountain West. Much of the area had been negative a decade earlier with job losses in agriculture and mining. After that, the region drew a flood of newcomers, which has with limited exceptions continued to today.

While new areas suddenly saw large increases, other parts of the country started to decline. In the early to mid-1970s, New York suffered the most



## How decade-plus net loss streaks affected states' population growth



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

striking net losses from declining employment and municipal near-bankruptcy in New York City. The state spent the majority of the decade with rates below -1 percent a year.

Moving into the 1980s, rates fell in the manufacturing centers of the Midwest. Manufacturing employment had peaked in 1979, and job losses in the national recession of the early 1980s hit the region hard. The Rust Belt emerged around the Great Lakes states of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. Each of these states saw net losses slump to near or below -1 percent.

Later in the decade, as oil prices dropped, the oil-producing states also turned negative. Similar to Alaska at that time were Oklahoma, Louisiana, Wyoming, and briefly Texas.

Coal-producing states such as Kentucky and West Virginia also saw net outflows during the 1980s,

with the latter sustaining a sharp reversal of immigration from a decade earlier.

### Immigration lifted net losses back to a net inflow starting in the 1990s

In the 1990s, negative net migration rates began to moderate somewhat, partly because immigration increased. Though international migrants made up a small percentage of total U.S. movers at roughly 1 to 5 percent, rising immigration pushed rates into the black and made net migration less of a zero-sum game between states.

The trend continued through the first half of the 2000s. Louisiana suffered the largest net loss in a single year (-6.3 percent) for any state post-WWII after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, but its inflow resumed the next year. Washington, D.C., after decades of net losses, became a consistent net gainer



in the late 2000s as federal employment increased.

Several states suffered through industry declines in the mid-2000s such as Rhode Island (manufacturing) and Michigan (auto), which led to extended losses through the start of the Great Recession in the late 2000s. In general, however, the Great Recession cooled net migration gains in places with a hot housing market such as Florida and Arizona rather than prompting large outflows from any state.

## Several states entered net migration loss streaks during the 2010s

By the 2010s, negative net migration became more pronounced in other states besides Alaska.

Several long-established high-cost urban states such as Illinois, New York, and New Jersey began to see a consistent net outflow.

Rural states like Mississippi and Kansas also recorded losses, albeit at a slower rate. During the second half of the 2010s, many other oil-producing states besides Alaska lost people to out-migration, including Louisiana, North Dakota, and Wyoming.

The pandemic years intensified the outflow from large urban or high-cost-of-living states. Net losses from New York and Illinois worsened, and California joined the group.

The five West Coast states have either seen net losses or large drops lately, reversing a long-time trend. It had been the one consistently positive region since 1930, but in the last five years, the Pacific sub-region has become a net exporter of people.

## How Alaska's current streak of net migration losses compares

It ranks most severe in the current era, but not historically

The exhibit on page 10 shows all of the negative net migration streaks lasting 10 years or longer, ranked by the average annual rate over the period.

The U.S. has had 38 total instances since 1930 where a state has had a decade-long net loss streak, with 23 states and D.C. having at least one.

Four states (Alaska, New York, Illinois, and Kansas) have active streaks as of 2023.

Of the 38 decade-plus streaks, the average length before positive in-migration resumed was around 14 years. Thirteen of those lasted at least 15 years, five for at least 20 years, and one (D.C. in 1947-1985) lasted almost 40 years.

Over the past 11 years, Alaska's net migration rate averaged -0.7 percent. Out of all the decade-plus loss streaks, that is exactly middle-of-the-pack (19th of 38).

The severity of such streaks appears to have declined over time. All but one of the pre-1970 streaks were more negative, with most averaging at least -1 percent a year during their streak, and four averaging -2 percent or lower.

North Dakota in the Depression edged out Washington, D.C. in the post-war years for the worst negative net migration spell on average, but the streak in D.C. lasted nearly three times longer.

Even though Alaska's rate of the past 11 years is mid-range for states across the last century, for recent history — since 1990 — it ranks as the worst. Along with New York, Alaska's current stretch ranks more similarly to the Rust Belt industrial states of the 1970s and 1980s than to other recent loss streaks, which tended to be less severe.

## Effect on Alaska population growth

Alaska's recent series of yearly migration losses has hindered total population growth. Net migration is just one component of population change; the other, natural increase (births minus deaths) can be large enough to offset migration losses. Still, at the very least, a decade-plus of net outflow greatly reduces population growth and can be the catalyst for population decline.

The exhibit on page 11 shows, for the states with decade-long negative net migration stretches, how far the annual population growth rate fell during the streak. In percentage points, the dual bars show how much the yearly population growth rate changed from the state's average across all years since 1930 (or, for Alaska, 1946) as well as how much it changed the state's average in the era when it occurred. The color of the label denotes the era.

For Alabama in the Depression, due to high natural increase, population growth during the negative outflow streak was actually higher than the long-term average.

Alaska's population growth rate during the current net migration loss streak has been just 0.1 percent per year. While total change has stayed positive despite negative net migration — something that happened in half of all decade-plus streaks in the U.S. — Alaska's historical population growth rate averages 2 percent a year when extended back to the end of World War II.

The 1.9 percentage point drop is the largest deviation from the historical average of any state in the loss group. Most of the other instances of population growth dropping a percentage point from the historical rate were either during the Great Depression or in Washington, D.C.

Alaska's historically high population growth rate partly explains the large drop. Two percent a year, one of the highest of any state at that time, occurred over a period of rapid population growth during the post-war and oil boom years. A more relevant comparison might be how much state population growth changed relative to the rate in the era when the negative migration streak occurred, as defined at the bottom of the chart on page 11.

Since 1990, Alaska's population growth rate has been 0.9 percent a year. Though less than the historical state rate across all years, it is still roughly equal to that of the U.S. as a whole. Most of Alaska's growth since 1990 has come from high natural increase.

When comparing Alaska's current streak growth rate of 0.1 percent with the post-1990 growth rate, the decline of 0.8 percentage points is still stark. Looking at the other states with decade-plus migration loss streaks shows that only in West Virginia in the 1980s did population growth fall further from its growth rate in its respective era. Nearly all other states' population growth rates declined only a couple of tenths of a percentage point from the era norm.

Whether compared using long-term or short-term growth rates, Alaska's current net out-migration streak is among the largest deviations from normal population growth among the decade-plus group.

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