

Introduction

In 2019 and 2021, more people moved into rural Pennsylvania than moved out, according to an analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.

Key Findings:

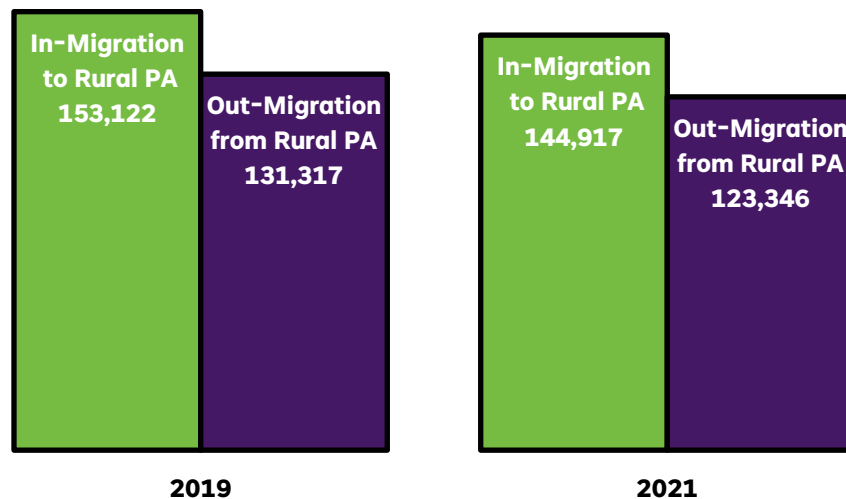
- Most people who moved into rural Pennsylvania were not from Pennsylvania.
- Rural Pennsylvania had a net gain in the number of working age adults in 2021.
- College students and people under 18 years old were important drivers in Pennsylvania in-migration.
- The rate at which people were moving into rural Pennsylvania slowed from 2019 to 2021. This mirrored a nationwide slowdown in the number of people who were moving.

The data for this snapshot came from the 2019 and 2021, 1-year Average, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, U.S. Census Bureau. (See Page 6 for more information).

Rural Pennsylvania In-Migration and Out-Migration, 2019 and 2021

Census Bureau data show that in 2021, more than 144,900 people moved into rural Pennsylvania and approximately 123,300 moved out of rural Pennsylvania, for a net gain of nearly 21,600 new residents. Two years earlier in 2019, rural Pennsylvania had a net gain of about 21,800 new residents. While rural Pennsylvania had a net gain in new residents in both 2019 and 2021, the rate at which people were moving slowed (See Figure 1). The slowing rate was not unique to rural Pennsylvania. According to Census figures, the number of people in the United States who moved went from 44.3 million in 2019 to 41.9 million in 2021, a decrease of 2.4 million or 5 percent.

Figure 1: Rural Pennsylvania In-and Out-Migration, 2019 and 2021

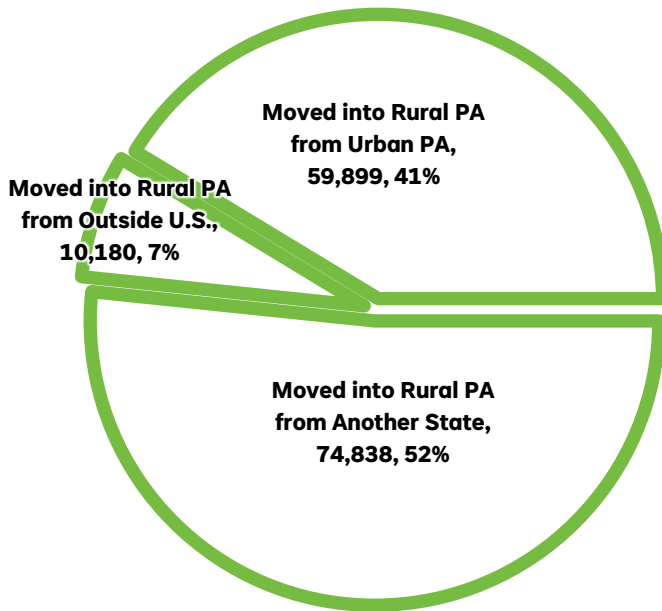


Where People Came from and Went to

In 2021, the majority (52 percent) of people who moved into rural Pennsylvania came from another state (See Figure 2). More than one-half (54 percent) of those coming from another state were from New York, New Jersey, and Maryland. In addition, 41 percent of the people who moved into rural Pennsylvania came from urban Pennsylvania and 7 percent came from outside the U.S.

In 2019, a higher percentage of people (55 percent) moved to rural Pennsylvania from other states and a lower percentage of people came from urban Pennsylvania (38 percent). The movement from outside the U.S. stayed the same at 7 percent.

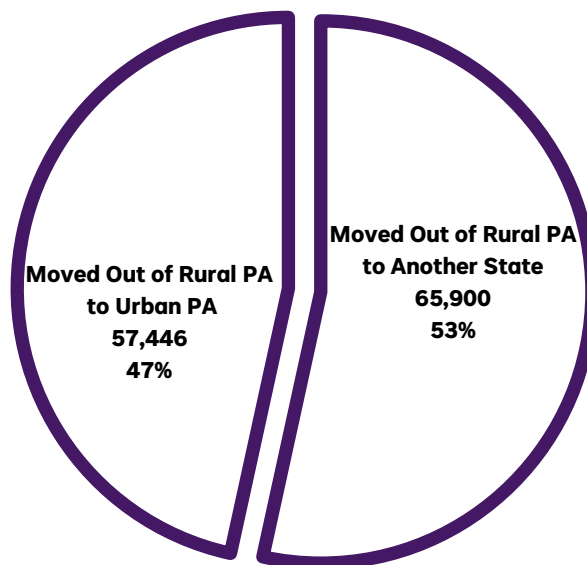
Figure 2: In-Migration to Rural Pennsylvania, 2021



As Figure 3 shows, in 2021, most people moving out of rural Pennsylvania went to another state (53 percent), with 51 percent of these moving to one of the following five states: Florida, New York, Maryland, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Forty-seven percent of those moving out of rural Pennsylvania went to urban Pennsylvania.

In 2019, 61 percent of those moving out of rural Pennsylvania went to another state and 39 percent moved to urban Pennsylvania. Data were not available on the number of people who moved out of rural Pennsylvania to another country.

Figure 3: Out-Migration from Rural Pennsylvania



Most Rural In-Migration Came from Urban Areas

According to the data, in 2021, 86 percent of people moving into rural Pennsylvania came from urban areas (Pennsylvania and U.S). Fourteen percent came from rural areas outside of Pennsylvania. These figures exclude those who moved into rural Pennsylvania from outside the United States.

There was a similar pattern for those who moved out of rural Pennsylvania: 75 percent of people moving out of rural Pennsylvania moved to an urban area (Pennsylvania and U.S.) and 25 percent went to a rural area.

Who is Moving Into and Out of Rural Pennsylvania?

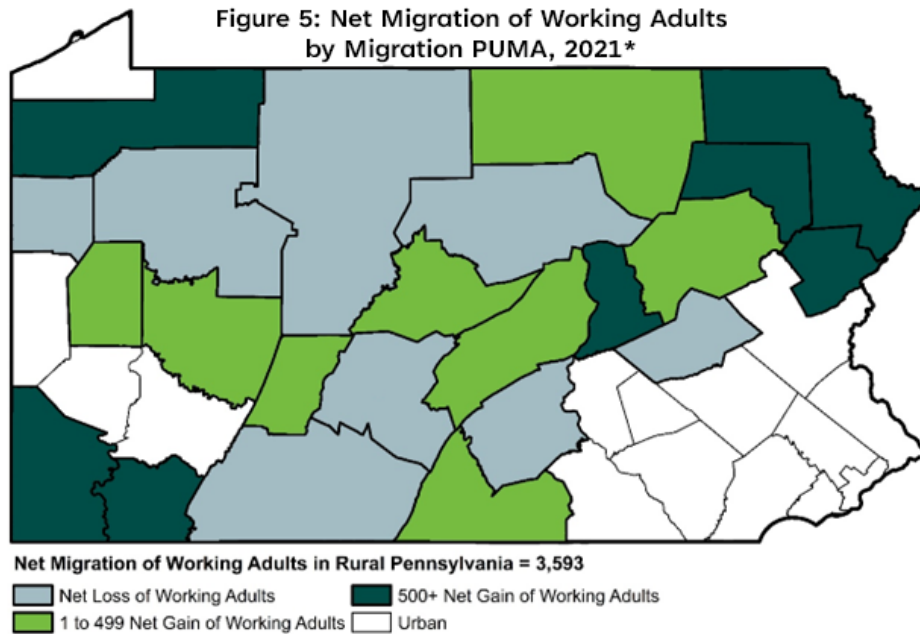
Working age adults (18 to 65) who were in the labor force made up the largest percentage of people moving into and out of rural Pennsylvania. In 2021, this group comprised 37 percent of the people who moved into rural Pennsylvania and 40 percent of the people who moved out of rural Pennsylvania. The net results were a gain of about 3,600 individuals in 2021. That is, more people in the labor force moved into rural Pennsylvania than moved out. The second largest group of people moving into and out of rural Pennsylvania was college students. In 2021, this group comprised 22 percent of those who moved into rural Pennsylvania and 18 percent of those who moved out (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Types of People Who Moved Into and Out of Rural Pennsylvania, 2021

	In-Migration to Rural PA	Out-Migration from Rural PA	Net-Migration (In-Migration minus Out-Migration)
Working Adults			
<i># People in Labor Force, Age 18-64, Not in Group Quarters and Not Enrolled in College</i>	53,305	49,712	3,593
People Not in Labor Force			
<i># People Not in Labor Force Age 18-64, Not in Group Quarters and Not Enrolled in College</i>	16,298	12,880	3,418
People In Group Quarters <i>(Prison, Group Home, Long-Term Care Hospital, etc.)</i>			
<i># People Not in Labor Force Age 18-64, and Not Enrolled in College</i>	6,500	7,821	-1,321
College Students			
<i># People 18+ Years Old Enrolled in College Living in a Household or Group Quarter</i>	31,938	22,702	9,236
Youth			
<i># People <18 Years Old, Living in a Household or Group Quarter</i>	24,718	19,569	5,149
Senior Citizens			
<i># People 65+ Years Old, Living in a Household or Group Quarter</i>	12,158	10,662	1,496
Total	144,917	123,346	21,571

Working Adults

Because working age adults were the largest group moving into rural Pennsylvania, the Center took a closer look at this group. Adult workers were defined as individuals who were between the ages of 18 and 64 years old and in the labor force. From this group, the Center excluded those individuals who were enrolled in college (undergraduate and graduate) as well as those individuals living in groups quarters, such as prisons, nursing homes, and long-term care hospitals.



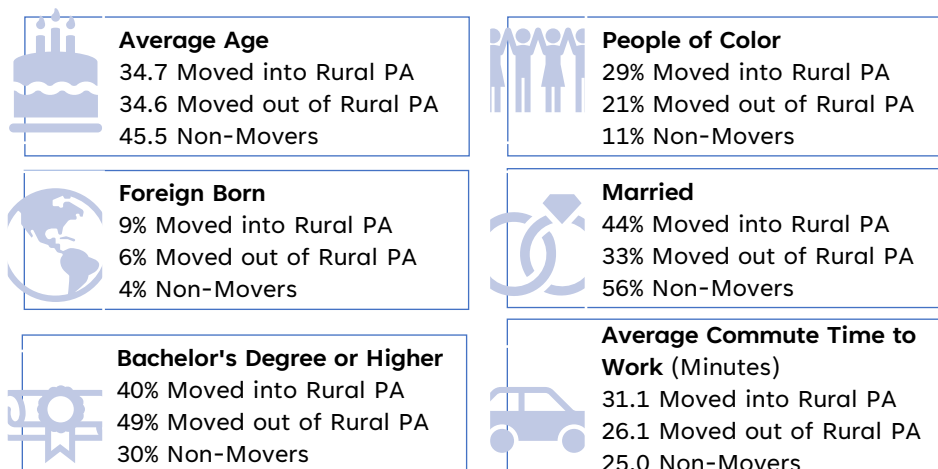
In 2021, slightly more than 53,300 working adults moved into rural Pennsylvania and 49,700 moved out. This resulted in a net gain of nearly 3,600 people. However, as Figure 5 shows, their distribution in rural Pennsylvania was not even. Rural areas in eastern and parts of western Pennsylvania had a net gain in working adults, while those in the central region had a net loss.

*Map includes net-migration from urban Pennsylvania and out-of-state. Excludes intra-rural Pennsylvania migration. See Page 6 for explanation of migration PUMAs.

Who Are Working Adults Moving Into and Out of Rural Pennsylvania?

Working adults who moved into and out of rural Pennsylvania tended to be younger and more diverse than the general rural population. They were also better educated and slightly more affluent (See Figure 6).

Figure 6: Demographic Characteristics of Working Adults Who Moved into and Out of Rural Pennsylvania and Adults Who Did Not Move, 2021



Those moving into rural Pennsylvania had a median personal income of \$37,077, while those moving out had a median income of \$41,197. For all working adults in rural Pennsylvania that did not move, the median personal income was \$42,330.

The top five occupations of working adults moving into and out of Rural Pennsylvania were:

Working Adults Moving Into Rural PA	Working Adults Moving Out of Rural PA
14% Management	10% Medicine
10% Office work	10% Sales
9% Medicine	9% Education
9% Transportation	8% Management
7% Sales	8% Office work

Conclusions

Don't Blame Out-Migration for Rural Population Loss: The analysis indicates that, overall, rural Pennsylvania is not losing people due to out-migration. In both 2019 and 2021, more people moved into rural Pennsylvania than moved out. The positive net-migration suggests there are other demographic factors causing rural population loss — namely rural Pennsylvania having more deaths than births every year since 2008. (For more information, see the fact sheet, *Natural Population Change in Rural Pennsylvania, 2010 to 2020.*)

Rural is an Urban Magnet: Most people who moved into rural Pennsylvania came from an urban area. This influx may indicate that some residents are attracted to the many positive quality-of-life attributes that are synonymous with rural.

Rural is Competitive: Working adults who moved into rural Pennsylvania outnumbered those who moved out. This gain could suggest that rural employers are competitive in attracting new workers and that telework opportunities could also be attracting workers to rural areas.

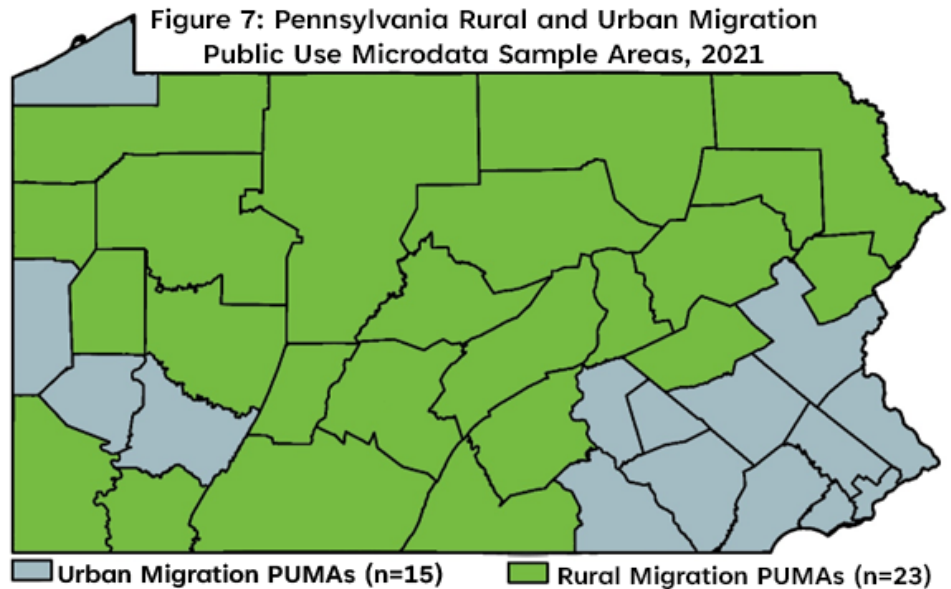
College Students and Youth Helped Drive In-migration: After adult workers, the next largest drivers of rural in-migration were college students and youth (<18 years old). Together, they made up more than one-third of the net in-migration. Long-term, however, this group is likely to decline. Across the U.S., postsecondary enrollment has been declining since 2010. Similarly, in 2010, there were more youth in American than there were in 2020.

Methods

Using data from the 2019 and 2021 American Community Survey, 1-year Average, Public Use Microdata Sample, U.S. Census Bureau (hereafter ACS-PUMS), the Center for Rural Pennsylvania analyzed the number of people who moved into and out of rural Pennsylvania. The Center excluded people moving within rural Pennsylvania. The Center also did not analyze or compare urban migration.

The American Community Survey asks respondents if they had moved in the past year. If they answered yes, respondents were asked for the street address of their prior residence. The Census Bureau then released this information at the Migration PUMA (see below). The Center used this information to identify migration locations.

The Census Bureau reports ACS-PUMS data for geographic areas it calls “Public Use Microdata Areas” or PUMAs. These are areas that have populations of 100,000 or more. These areas can be single counties, parts of counties, or multiple counties. In 2019 and 2021, Pennsylvania had 92 PUMAs. For migration data, the Census Bureau combines PUMAs into what it calls Migration PUMAs. For example, the 11 PUMAs in Philadelphia County were combined into one Migration PUMA. Figure 7 shows Pennsylvania’s 38 Migration PUMAs. A rural Migration PUMA had a population density below the statewide rate of 291 people per square mile. Urban Migration PUMAs were at or above the statewide rate. The Center’s analysis looked at in- and out-migration to and from Pennsylvania’s rural Migration PUMAs.



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