Internal Migration in the U.S. During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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CPS-ASEC mover rates from the pandemic period see continuation of decades-long trend:

- 9.8% in 2019
- 9.3% in 2020
- 8.4% in 2021

Figure 1. Number of Movers and Mover Rate: 1948-2021



information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/technical-documentation/complete.html.

* The migration question was asked differently between 1971 and 1980. Only 1971 and 1976 have a 1-year estimate comparable to all other years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement 1948-2021.



But media narratives suggest pandemic surge in migration and residential mobility... A Century-Old Moving Company Says the Summer of Covid Is 'Insane'

New Yorkers Are Fleeing to the Suburbs: 'The Demand Is Insane'

The Richest Neighborhoods Emptied Out Most as Coronavirus Hit New York City

Pandemic moving study: How remote work spurred moves out of big cities

The Pandemic Prompted People to Move, But Many Didn't Go Far

About a fifth of U.S. adults moved due to COVID-19 or know someone who did Coronavirus Moving Study: People Left Big Cities, Temporary Moves Spiked In First 6 Months of COVID-19 Pandemic



Sources: *The New York Times*; Pew Research Center; MyMove.com; AllConnect.com. See also Brown and Tousey (2021) and Whitaker (2021 a,b) who use Equifax Consumer Credit Panel data, and Coven, Gupta, and Yao (2020) who use Facebook friendship data to study pandemic migration spikes.

Motivation and Goals

- Did migration increase or decrease during the pandemic?
 - When? For whom? To what extent?
- Answer these questions using timely administrative data from the United States Postal Service (USPS) detailing changes of address
 - Linked with data from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA)
- Where does the gap between survey migration measures and the prevailing media narrative originate?
 - Compare individual address changes with responses to Census Bureau Survey migration responses



Data

- USPS National Change of Address Registry (NCOA, 2019 2021)
- SSA Numerical Identification Database (Numident 2022; Age)
- IRS 1040s (TY2020; Adjusted Gross Income)
- ACS (2020) and CPS-ASEC (2020, 2021)
- Linked using Protected Identification Keys (PIKs)*
 - Note that not all individuals in NCOA can be successfully assigned a PIK and, therefore, cannot be linked to the Numident, 1040s, ACS, or CPS-ASEC
 - PIK rates increase over the 2019-2021 period
 - Weight PIKed observations in month/year, origin/destination, family/individual move bins such that their sum equals the sum of all NCOA observations



*Wagner and Layne. 2014. "The Person Identification Validation System (PVS): Applying the Center for Administrative Records Research and Applications' (CARRA) Record Linkage Software." U.S. Census Bureau, CARRA Working Paper Series #2014-01.

Address changes increased, but not by much...

- Both temporary and permanent changes of address increased in 2020...
 - But, 2021 saw fewer of both relative to 2019.
- A 2% increase in 2020...
 - 38% of that increase is attributable to increase repeat address changes.
 - This rise in repeat moves continued through 2021 despite drop in total moves.
- Counts on par with CPS-ASEC total mover counts...
 - But, NCOA family moves only count one person per household.





Source: Weighted PIKed NCOA observations (2019-2021); CBDRB-FY22-CES005-018.

Sharper 2020 increases in Changes of Address among temporary, individual, and longer-distance moves



Source: Weighted PIKed NCOA observations (2019-2021); CBDRB-FY22-CES005-018.

1.15

Bureau

Peaks in March 2020 and a shift in scale

Bureau



Source: Weighted PIKed NCOA observations (2019-2021) linked with Census Numident (2022); CBDRB-FY22-CES005-018. Note: Y-axes are consistent within scale/distance categories, but not across them.

Increases concentrated among younger movers





Source: Weighted PIKed NCOA observations (2019-2021) linked with Census Numident (2022); CBDRB-FY22-CES005-018.

Young particularly likely to move at pandemic's start

Temporary

1.8 4.5 1.6 4 Permanent NCOA Filings (Relative to 2019) Temporary NCOA Filings (Relative to 2019) 1.4 3.5 1.2 3 2.5 0.8 2 0.6 ..5 -Under 25 0.4 -25 to 44 45 to 64 0.5 0.2 65 to 84 85+ 0 0 12 9 10 11 2 11 12 1 9 10 3 8 Month Month



Source: Weighted PIKed NCOA observations (2019-2020) linked with Census Numident (2022); CBDRB-FY22-CES005-018. Note: Y-axes for temporary and permanent changes of address differ, and only 2020 trends are shown.

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Permanent

2020 increases most pronounced among top earners





Source: Weighted PIKed NCOA observations (2019-2021) linked with Census Numident (2022) and IRS 1040s (TY 2020); CBDRB-FY22-CES005-018. Note: Y-axes for temporary and permanent changes of address differ.

Top earners postponed permanent moves in 2020





Source: Weighted PIKed NCOA observations (2019-2020) linked with Census Numident (2022) and IRS 1040s (TY 2020); CBDRB-FY22-CES005-018. Note: Y-axes for temporary and permanent changes of address differ, and only 2020 trends are shown.

How do we explain the gap?







Sources: <u>https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/03/united-states-migration-continued-decline-from-2020-to-</u> <u>2021.html</u>; Weighted PIKed NCOA observations (2019-2020) linked with Census Numident (2022); CBDRB-FY22-CES005-018.

(Dis)Agreement between address changes and survey responses

- ACS and CPS-ASEC
 householders with
 unedited migration
 responses
- Look for *permanent NCOA filings* in the 1 year period referenced in
 survey responses

	Given survey move, did you register an address change?	Given address change registered, did you move in?
ACS (2020)		
CPS-ASEC (2020)		
CPS-ASEC (2021)		



*Foster, Ellis, and Fiorio. 2018. "The Opportunities and Challenges of Linked IRS Administrative and Census Survey Records in the Study of Migration." CARRA-WP-2018-06. <u>https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2018/adrm/carra-wp-2018-06.pdf</u>. Source: PIKed, permanent NCOA observations (2019-2020) linked with ACS (2020) and CPS-ASEC (2020-2021) householders with unedited migration responses; CBDRB-FY22-CES005-018.

Conclusions

- NCOA data suggest a 2% increase in migration in 2020, largely restricted to younger individuals, top earners, and longer-distance moves
- Migration decline followed in 2021, but shift toward longer distance moves made by younger individuals continued
- Broadly, findings corroborate the popular narrative, but future work should focus on geographic shifts
- Gap between CPS-ASEC and NCOA remains unclear, but individuallevel disagreement in these sources is next on our agenda





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Supplemental Slides



2020 increase common to all racial/ethnic groups

Temporary

Permanent





Source: Weighted PIKed NCOA observations (2019-2021) linked with Census Numident (2022); CBDRB-FY22-CES005-018.