



Written by [Dennis Behreandt](#) on January 6, 2021

U-Haul Data Reveals Ongoing Migration From America's Leading Cities

During the COVID pandemic year of 2020, a flurry of lurid headlines shouted that panicked Americans were fleeing the nation's largest cities.

In August, the *New York Post* [carried this alarming headline](#): "New Yorkers keep moving out of the city to suburbs, other states."

The *Post* talked to Moon Salahie, owner of Elite Moving & Storing in the city, whose business it is to help people move to new homes.

"People are fleeing the city in droves," Salahie told the *Post*. Another moving company owner in the city, Mark Ehrhardt, explained to the *Post* that younger workers were among those getting out.

"All the kids are leaving," Ehrhardt said. "The studios and one-bedrooms are emptying out like crazy." It's not just New York City that is seeing a major trend in urban flight. According to real estate site Redfin, on the Pacific coast, too, people are leaving the city.

"There has been a 50% increase in the number of people looking to leave New York and Los Angeles since last year," [Redfin noted](#) in November 2020.

Now, moving van and trailer supply firm U-Haul has released data characterizing in detail the moves many Americans are making as a result of the pandemic and public health police closures and lockdowns.

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According to [U-Haul data](#), lockdowns kept people from moving in April, but as soon as the lockdowns eased, Americans loaded up trucks and headed for greener pastures outside of the cities.

"Self-moves sputtered in April when shutdowns across the country generated uncertainty," U-Haul reported. "But starting in May, one-way U-Haul truck rentals began to rise with each passing month."

May of 2020 saw a stunning 72% increase in one-way U-Haul truck rentals compared to the previous month. The increase in May was also large compared to March, which itself represented a five-percent increase from February.

Increases in rentals continued month after month through the summer, U-Haul's data points out.

The company found that the largest number of moves from cities originated in the San Francisco Bay Area and New York City.



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“San Francisco was a slight growth city in 2019, with more U-Haul trucks entering the city than leaving it,” the company said. “But in 2020, San Francisco was the epicenter of the Bay Area’s exodus. Departures accounted for 58% of all one-way U-Haul traffic from March through June. Limited fleet inventory prevented the numbers from being more lopsided in favor of departures. The ratios in San Jose and Oakland were similar.”

The story was similar in New York City.

“Like San Francisco, New York City welcomed more self-movers than it bid farewell in 2019,” the company noted. “That migration trend reversed in 2020. Severe stagnation occurred during the shutdown. From March to June, arrivals to the five boroughs plummeted 58% year-over-year, while departures were curbed only by limited fleet inventory as trucks left the city.”

Where were people headed in their escape from the city? For those leaving New York, U-haul found that the top 10 destinations were “New York (outside NYC); New Jersey; Pennsylvania; Connecticut; Massachusetts; Virginia; Maryland; Florida; Rhode Island; and North Carolina.”

The top 10 destinations for those leaving the San Francisco area were “California (outside the Bay Area); Nevada; Arizona; Oregon; Washington; Colorado; Texas; Utah; Idaho; and New Mexico.”

Among states in the eastern half of the United States, Florida with its beaches, perpetual summer weather, resistance to lockdowns, and favorable business environment has been seeing strong, consistent population growth as people flee northern, high-tax, and lockdown-prone locations.

In November, a [report](#) from the state’s Demographic Estimating Conference described the current and expected influx of people to the Sunshine State.

“Between April 1, 2020 and April 1, 2025, population growth is expected to average 303,264 net new residents per year (831 per day), representing a compound growth rate of 1.37% over this five-year time horizon,” a conference report executive summary noted. “These increases are analogous to adding a city slightly larger than Orlando every year.”

That number might even turn out to be low. As the Florida conference report noted, “The population estimates developed by the U.S. Census Bureau continue to be higher than the official state estimates adopted by the Demographic Estimating Conference.”

In his dissent in the 1932 ruling in *New State Ice Co. v. Liebmann*, [Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis observed](#): “It is one of the happy incidents of the federal system that a single courageous State may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory; and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.”

Today, states that are “experimenting” with high taxes and strong and invasive restrictions and lockdowns on business are witnessing the results of their efforts in the form of people fleeing in an effort to find a better life elsewhere.



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