

# **Who Are They and Where Did They Go?**

## **Demographic Profiles of Louisiana Out-Migrants at Two Points in Time**

**Charles M. Tolbert**  
Baylor University

**Troy C. Blanchard**  
Louisiana State University

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### **Executive Summary.**

There is good reason to be concerned about out-migration from Louisiana. Only 5 states experienced more out-migration from 1985 to 1990. But, with the possible exception of Alaska, none of those states could be considered oil-patch states. Other states with a dependence on the chemical, oil, and gas industries did not experience the level of out-migration that Louisiana did in the late 1980s.

Louisiana has recently experienced two similar, yet distinct streams of out-migration:

- Typical late 1980s out-migrants were highly educated professional and managerial workers, more likely to be males, more likely to be white, and more likely to have higher incomes in their new locations than persons who chose to stay in Louisiana. If the Louisiana economy were to weaken substantially again, this migration pattern could be repeated.
- Typical late 1990s out-migrants were also primarily young professionals (however, not as likely to be executives and managers). But, they were more likely to be female, somewhat less likely to be white and/or have attended college, and likely to earn slightly less after moving than Louisiana non-migrants.

The late 1980s migration stream is somewhat consistent with conventional explanations such as white flight, brain drain, and financial gain. These explanations seem less relevant for the late 1990s migration stream. The oil-patch hypothesis is not supported during either time period. The later out-migration stream occurred at time when the Louisiana economy was quite robust. Out-migration under such conditions is more likely to be driven by noneconomic considerations.

While every state experiences some out-migration of young professionals, Louisiana seems to lose a disproportionate share. The state would do well to promote the opportunity structures, amenities, and quality-of-life factors that attract and retain this socially and economically vital population.

## Detailed Findings.

While it is too soon to derive comparable figures from Census 2000, the 1990 Census results indicate that only four states (Wyoming, Alaska, North Dakota, Montana) and the District of Columbia experienced more out-migration on a percentage basis than did the state of Louisiana. Out-migrants from 1985 to 1990 amounted to nearly six percent of the 1980 Louisiana population base. While it is commonly held that the oil-patch states and adjacent states experienced down times in the late 1980s, Louisiana's experience is unique. Net out-migration amounted to four percent of Oklahoma's 1980 population base. Census data for 1990 show even less for other some nearby states: Texas (minus 2 percent), Mississippi (minus 1 percent). And, the data over the same period indicate positive net migration for Arkansas and Alabama. These data challenge the conventional oil-patch wisdom which holds that the economies in other states with extensive oil and gas industry activity will produce similar migratory patterns. Concern about out-migration from Louisiana is clearly warranted.

We have developed demographic profiles of Louisiana out-migrants based on 1990 Census results and on sample surveys conducted in the later 1990s by the Census Bureau.<sup>1</sup> For the 1990 Census, we assembled sample long-form data representative of about 480,000 persons who reported living in Louisiana in 1985, but resided in another state by 1990.<sup>2</sup> It will be 2003 before corresponding Census 2000 long-form data are available. For an interim assessment, we pooled together the results of four Census surveys taken annually between 1997 and 2000. From these data, we identified information representative on roughly 112,000 persons who have moved out of Louisiana in a given year.<sup>3</sup> While these survey data are in no way equivalent to a complete census, they do permit us to derive some estimates for comparing Louisiana out-migrants in the late 1980s with those of the late 1990s. The complete statistical profile for these two time periods is attached as Table 1.

Out-migrants from Louisiana tend to be young, and the age of out-migrants doesn't vary much across time. Indeed, there is a striking difference between the age structures of out-migrants and non-migrants such that between 65 and 70 percent of out-migrants are 34 years old or less. Only about half the non-migrants fall into that age range. In the 1985-1990 and 1997-2000 periods, almost half of the out-migrants are in the economically vital 18-34 age range. Another telling socioeconomic gauge is the size of the dependent population—i.e., share of population under age 18 and over age 64. At both points in time, the non-migrant Louisiana dependent population is about one-third of the total population. The share of non-migrants who are under 18 or over 64 is about one-fourth of total population.

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<sup>1</sup>The 1990 Census data are taken from the PUMS-A 5 percent sample of long-form responses. The later 1990s data are taken from for Current Population Surveys taken in March of the years 1997-2000. The CPS is a survey used to estimate monthly national and state unemployment levels (among other uses). Migration and other key demographic information are collected in the CPS each March.

<sup>2</sup>We also compiled information on about 240,000 persons who moved into Louisiana during the same period. The level of in-migration is insufficient to offset the observed level of out-migration. Data for these in-migrants are not included in our tabulations of non-migrants.

<sup>3</sup>We also assembled data on approximately 100,000 in-migrants during these years.

In the late 1980s, just over 52 percent of out-migrants were male. This contrasts with 48 percent of non-migrants who were male. By the later 1990s, sex differences in migratory behavior show a demographic crossover: out-migrants were slightly more likely to be female than their nonmoving counterparts. Note also that the increasing disparity in the sex ratio among those who continued to reside in Louisiana in the later 1990s (47 percent male vs. 53 percent female).

In terms of race, out-migrants from Louisiana in the late 1980s were most likely to be white (77 percent) or other which primarily means those of Asian descent (4.5 percent).<sup>4</sup> Though they composed 30.7 percent of the 1990 state population, blacks constitutes only 18.8 percent of out-migrants. Members of the “other” race category were three times more likely to be out-migrants than in-migrants in the late 1980s. Data for the late 1990s show a 8 percent decline in the percent of out-migrants who are white. This leaves white out-migrants with the same population share as white non-migrants (about 68 percent). The data also indicate that blacks have increased among out-migrants by roughly 3 percent. The most striking aspect of the later 1990s race data is that fully 10 percent of the out-migrants fall into the other race category.

With respect to education, Louisiana out-migrants and non-migrants differed substantially in the late 1980s and the late 1990s. Our data for 1985-1990 show that 60 percent of out-migrants had at least some college-level training. Of those, 31 percent had a bachelor’s degree or a graduate and/or professional degree. This contrasts with 35 percent of the non-migrants who had some college training and 15 percent who had a bachelor’s or advanced degree. This educational contrast is also evident in our late 1990s data. However, the differences among migrants and non-migrants narrowed somewhat across the decade (30 percent of out-migrants held at least a bachelor’s degree compared to 21 percent of non-migrants).

In either time period, employment data show that 92 percent of out-migrants have found employment in their new states. As the Louisiana economy improved across time, the percent of non-migrants employed climbs from 90 to 95. The fact that most migrants and non-migrants are employed belies some important occupational differences. These occupational variations between out-migrants and non-migrants were most pronounced at the high and low skill levels in the late 1980s. About 30 percent of late 1980s out-migrants had executive, administrative, managerial, or professional jobs in their new locations. Only 22 percent of non-migrants from that era had such high-skill jobs. The other major occupational differences for that time period are indicated in larger percentages of service, operative, fabricating, and laboring jobs for non-migrants. These earlier patterns contrast in some respects with those for the later 1990s. It continues to be the case that out-migrants are more likely than non-migrants to be in professional occupations (19 percent vs. 13 percent). However, non-migrants in the later 1990s are more likely than out-migrants to have executive and managerial occupations. The other major occupational difference is a larger percentage of later 1990s out-migrants have service jobs than do non-migrants (20 percent vs. 16 percent). Shifts in Louisiana industrial employment are often attributed to the volatility in the chemical, oil, and gas sectors. The late 1980s were a period of contraction in these industries, and we might expect that these workers

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<sup>4</sup>The other race category includes American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, Asian, and Pacific Islander. In our ongoing work, we will explore Census nativity data in detail. This will permit us to break down the other race category into relevant groups such as Vietnamese.

would be an important component of out-migration at that time. Yet, our data indicate that the industries in which late 1980s out-migrants and non-migrants worked were very similar. In the later 1990s—a more robust economic time for Louisiana—more non-migrants were employed in manufacturing and more out-migrants found work in transportation and communications industries.

Louisiana out-migrants in the late 1980s reported median annual wage and salary incomes of \$15,000. This compares with \$13,000 for non-migrants. This income differential reversed as of the late 1990s. The median wage and salary income for non-migrants between 1997 and 2000 was \$21,000 compared to \$20,000 for out-migrants.

Where did the recent out-migrants go? Not far. We have tabulated state of residence in our survey sample data for the later 1990s. Neighboring states in the U.S. southeast and southwest were the destinations for most migrants: Texas (20 percent), Mississippi (16 percent), North Carolina (10 percent), Florida (7 percent), Arkansas (6 percent), and Oklahoma (5 percent).<sup>5</sup>

### **Discussion and Conclusions.**

These demographic profiles suggest that Louisiana has recently experienced two similar, yet distinct streams of out-migration. The out-migration of the late 1980s was characterized primarily by the departure of young adults who were highly educated professional and managerial workers. They were somewhat more likely to be males and were predominantly white. They also enjoyed higher incomes elsewhere (typically only a state or so away). Oil-patch explanations to the contrary, available data suggest that nearby states with substantial employment in oil and gas sectors did not exhibit as much out-migration as Louisiana in the 1980s. If the tide of an exodus like the late 1980s were not stemmed, the future prosperity of Louisiana would surely be at risk. It does appear, however, that the robust Louisiana economy of the later 1990s changed the character of out-migration. Were the state's economy to weaken substantially, we could again see out-migration of the sort experienced in the late 1980s.

While similar to the late 1980s, patterns of late 1990s out-migration do differ in some important ways. Like their counterparts a decade earlier, out-migrants in the later 1990s are primarily young professionals. But, unlike earlier out-migrants, more recent ones are more likely to be female. And, while most out-migrants are still white, an increasing proportion of them are black and a substantial proportion are in the other racial category. As the racial composition of out-migrants approaches the racial composition of non-migrants, the numbers suggest that white flight does not characterize recent out-migration from Louisiana. A brain-drain explanation also seems less relevant for more recent out-migration. While college graduates and holders of advanced degrees continue to be over-represented among Louisiana out-migrants, the percent of non-migrants with similar educational attainment has increased substantially. The recent out-migrants are also less likely than their predecessors to have executive and managerial jobs and much less likely to be employed in the manufacturing sector. Lastly, the more recent out-migrants earn slightly less than Louisiana non-

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<sup>5</sup>In our ongoing work, we will tabulate the destinations of out-migrants in the 1990 Census long-form sample data files.

migrants. We can surmise that improving one's financial standing is not as important a motive for leaving Louisiana as it once may have been. If a migration decision is not motivated by economic concerns, quality of life considerations become paramount. These include public health and safety, quality of public education, affordable housing, and amenities associated with the environment and geophysical character of an area.

The good news is that out-migration from Louisiana in the late 1990s is qualitatively different than the out-migration a decade ago. White-flight, brain-drain, oil-patch, and financial-gain hypotheses seem less relevant than they may once have been in explaining out-migration from Louisiana. Pending more comprehensive data from Census 2000, the bad news seems to be that out-migration of young professionals is continuing. We can take some consolation in the fact that young professionals are perhaps the most mobile of all population categories. Every state experiences out-migration of young professionals. But, some states enjoy disproportionate shares of in-migration of young professionals. Louisiana would do well to promote and protect the opportunity structures, amenities, and quality-of-life factors that attract and retain this socially and economically vital population.

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**Charles M. Tolbert, Ph.D.**, is Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Baylor University, Waco, TX 76798. (254) 710-6060. [Charlie\\_Tolbert@baylor.edu](mailto:Charlie_Tolbert@baylor.edu). A Louisiana out-migrant himself, he is formerly Professor and Chair, Departments of Sociology and Rural Sociology, Louisiana State University. He is also Research Associate, Center for Economic Studies, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Troy C. Blanchard, M.A.**, is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70808. (225) 388-5359. [Troy@lapop.lsu.edu](mailto:Troy@lapop.lsu.edu). He is also Research Associate, Center for Economic Studies, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

**Table 1. Out-Migrants from Louisiana: 1985-1990 and 1997-2000**

	1985 - 1990		1997-2000	
	<u>Out-Migrants</u>	<u>Non-Migrants</u>	<u>Out-Migrants</u>	<u>Non-Migrants</u>
<b>Approximate Number of Persons Represented</b>	<b>480,000</b>	<b>3,940,000</b>	<b>112,000</b>	<b>4,100,000</b>
<b>Age</b>				
5 to 17	21.7%	23.3%	21.0%	21.7%
18 to 34	47.7%	28.6%	45.1%	24.8%
35 to 54	24.4%	26.4%	26.2%	30.2%
55 to 64	3.3%	9.1%	3.6%	10.0%
65+	2.9%	12.6%	4.1%	13.3%
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	52.5%	47.8%	48.3%	46.9%
Female	47.5%	52.2%	51.7%	53.0%
<b>Race</b>				
White	76.7%	67.0%	68.2%	68.9%
Black	18.8%	31.4%	21.3%	29.4%
Other	4.5%	1.5%	10.1%	1.8%
<b>Education (Persons Age 25+)</b>				
Less than High School Diploma	14.2%	32.7%	11.7%	20.9%
High School Diploma Only	25.1%	32.2%	31.5%	37.0%
Some College/Associate Degree	29.5%	19.9%	27.0%	21.1%
Bachelor's Degree	21.4%	10.0%	14.4%	14.2%
Graduate/Professional Degree	9.8%	5.2%	15.3%	6.8%
<b>Employment (Civilian Labor Force, Persons Age 16+)</b>				
Employed	92.6%	90.6%	92.7%	95.0%
Unemployed	7.4%	9.4%	7.3%	5.0%
<b>Occupation (Civilian Labor Force, Persons Age 16+)</b>				
Executive, Administrative, and Managerial	13.7%	9.7%	9.1%	13.2%
Professional Specialty	16.4%	12.9%	19.1%	13.2%
Technicians	5.0%	3.3%	2.7%	4.1%
Sales	12.5%	12.4%	12.7%	13.3%
Administrative Support	14.4%	15.3%	10.9%	13.5%
Service Occupations	13.0%	15.1%	20.9%	15.6%
Farming, Forestry, and Fishery	1.4%	2.6%	0.0%	2.0%
Precision, Production, Craft, and Repair	11.1%	12.8%	10.9%	11.0%
Operators, Fabricators, Laborers	12.4%	15.9%	13.6%	14.2%

**Table 1. Out-Migrants from Louisiana: 1985-1990 and 1997-2000 (continued)**

	1985 - 1990		1997-2000	
	<u>Out-Migrants</u>	<u>Non-Migrants</u>	<u>Out-Migrants</u>	<u>Non-Migrants</u>
<b>Industry (Civilian Labor Force, Persons Age 16+)</b>				
Agriculture	1.6%	2.7%	0.9%	1.9%
Mining	1.9%	3.1%	1.8%	3.1%
Construction	7.9%	7.5%	9.1%	7.4%
Manufacturing	13.9%	12.6%	3.6%	10.0%
Transportation, Communication, Public Utility	7.8%	7.6%	15.4%	7.5%
Wholesale/Retail Trade	23.0%	22.4%	22.7%	21.2%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	6.7%	5.5%	1.8%	5.6%
Services	33.3%	33.6%	39.1%	38.4%
Public Administration	3.9%	5.0%	5.4%	4.9%
<b>Income</b>				
Median Wage or Salary Income	15,000.00	13,000.00	20,000.00	21,000.00
Mean Wage or Salary Income	19,457.67	17,610.30	26,641.60	27,212.36