

# Characteristics of Utah’s Migrants: A 2021 Update

In 2021, the magnitude and characteristics of Utah’s migrants shifted from the 2014–2018 pre-pandemic period. Changing population dynamics during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as increasing telework, increasing uncertainty, and changing housing market conditions, helped drive these shifts.<sup>1,2</sup> Additionally, annual 2020 and 2021 net migration out-paced natural increase as the largest source of Utah’s population growth. This analysis compares 2021 data to a previous report on 2014–2018 migrant characteristics, providing a new profile on Utah’s migrants, and highlighting meaningful differences that have occurred since the 2014–2018 period.<sup>3, 4, 5</sup>

Statistical tests were performed on all variables between the two time periods. The differences highlighted in each *“What’s different from 2018?”* section represent the statistically significant differences. The original 2014–2018 results can be found in [Moving Past Net Migration: Demographic Characteristics of Utah’s Recent Migrants](#).

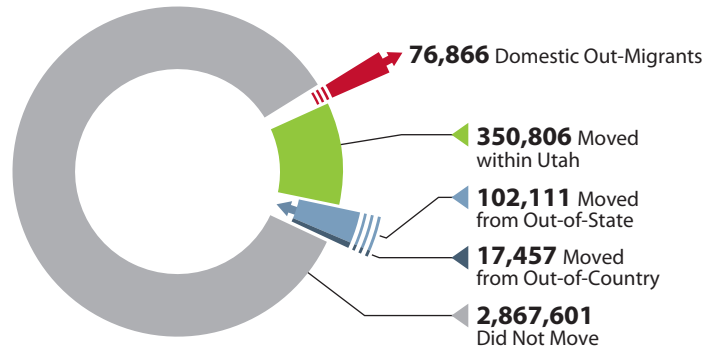
## The Magnitude of Utah’s Migrants

In 2021, in-migrants made up 3% of Utah’s resident population, or roughly 119,500 people, with nearly 17,500 of those moving from abroad. Out of the 119,500 in-migrants, 27% were born in Utah, signaling some return-migration. Almost 77,000 residents left the state for other parts of the country.

### What’s different from 2018?

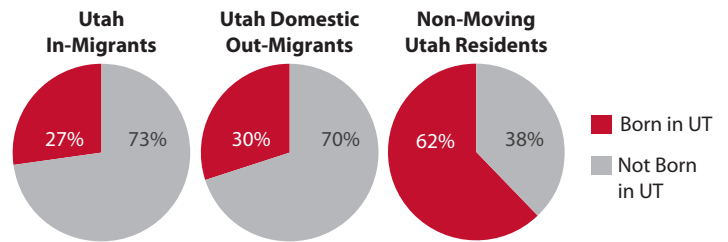
- The sheer number of migrants, both in and out, declined compared to pre-pandemic levels. The 2014–2018 estimates showed 133,399 in-migrants and 94,674 out-migrants compared to 2021’s 119,568 in-migrants and 76,866 out-migrants.
- The share of those that moved only within Utah declined from 12.4% to 10.5%.
- The share of those that did not move increased from 83.3% to 85.9%.

**Figure 1: Utah Resident Population by Migration Status and Domestic Out-Migrants, 2021**



Note: International out-migrants are not included in the data or analysis  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series

**Figure 2: Utah In-Migrant, Domestic Out-Migrant, and Non-Moving Residents Place of Birth, 2021**



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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series

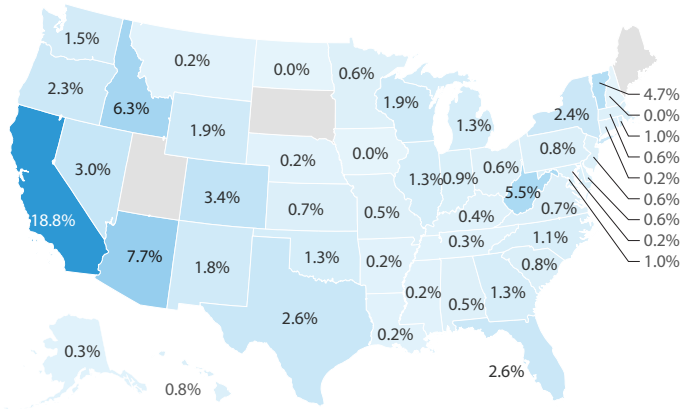
## Migrant Geographic Characteristics

Utah movers maintained geographic ties with other Western states, with the most movers coming from California, Arizona, Idaho, and Colorado. Large shares of Utah domestic out-migrants moved to Arizona, Florida, Texas, California, and Colorado.

### What’s different from 2018?

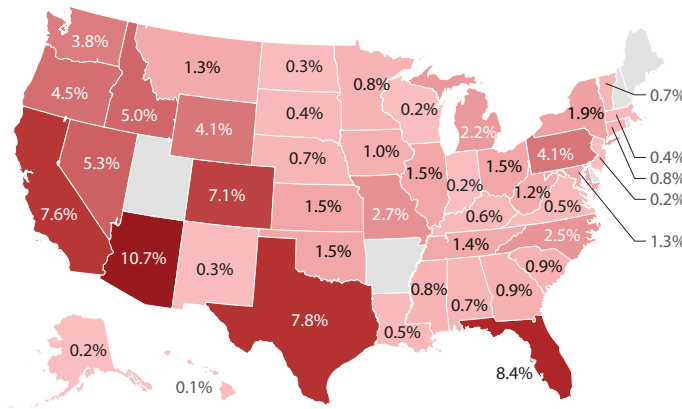
- Smaller shares of in-migrants moved from Texas, Washington state, and Iowa
- Larger shares of in-migrants moved from Indiana, Oklahoma, and West Virginia.
- Larger shares of Utah’s out-migrants moved to Arizona, Texas, and New York.

**Figure 3: Utah In-Migrant Domestic Origins, 2021**



Note: International out-migrants are not included in the data or analysis  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series

**Figure 4: Utah Out-Migrant Domestic Destinations, 2021**



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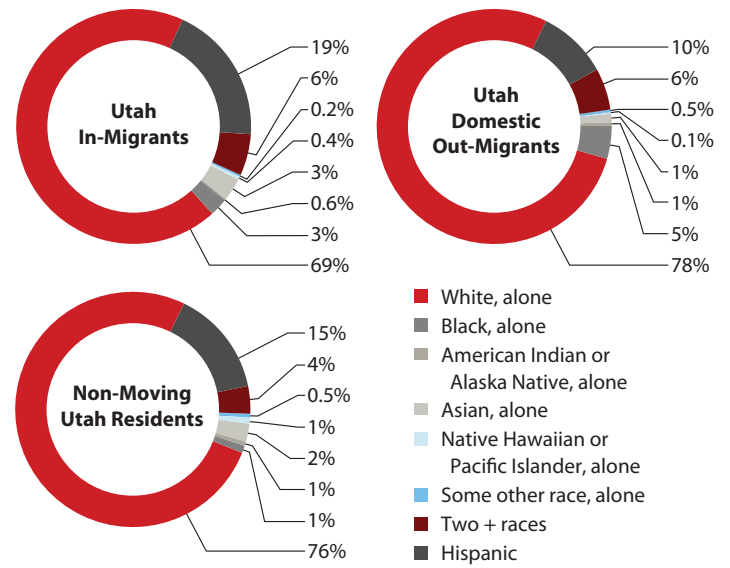
**Migrant Race and Ethnicity Characteristics**

Consistent with past trends, Utah’s in-migrant population was more racially and ethnically diverse than the state as a whole. Domestic out-migrants were similarly White, non-Hispanic as the non-moving population, but had a different racial and ethnic minority makeup: the domestic out-migrant population was less Hispanic, less Asian, and more Black than the non-moving population.<sup>6</sup>

**What’s different from 2018?**

- Non-movers were less White, not Hispanic, declining from 78.1% in 2018 to 76.2% in 2021.
- Smaller shares of in-migrants identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (.1% in 2021 compared to .9% in 2018) and larger shares identified as Two or More Races (5.7% in 2021 compared to 2.8% in 2018).
- Larger shares of domestic out-migrants identified as Black (4.5% in 2021 compared to 1.4% in 2018) and smaller shares identified as Asian (1.2% in 2021 compared to 3.3% in 2018).

**Figure 5: Race and Ethnicity by Mobility Status, 2021**



Note: International out-migrants are not included in the data or analysis  
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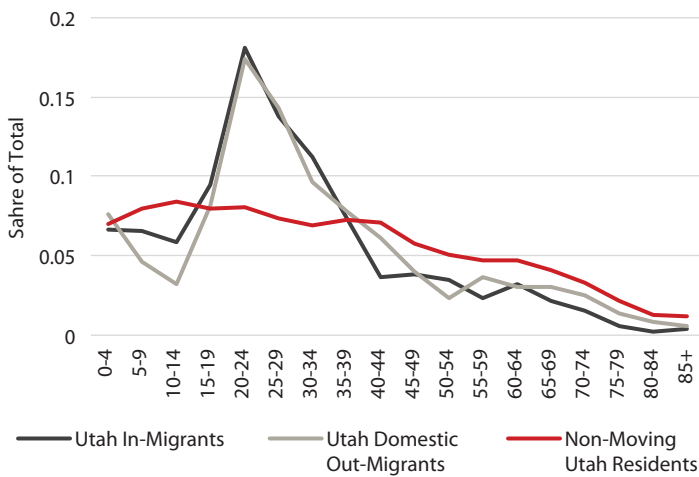
**Migrant Age Characteristics**

Utah’s in-migrant age structure peaked in young adulthood, with the most significant share clustering between ages 15-29, sharply spiking in the 20-24 age group. In 2021, Utah’s domestic out-migrant age structure became very similar to the in-migrant age structure, with peak out-migration at age 20-24. Utah’s non-moving population had more uniform age distributions, with slightly more residents in the younger age groups, and smaller shares when moving into the older ages.

**What’s different from 2018?**

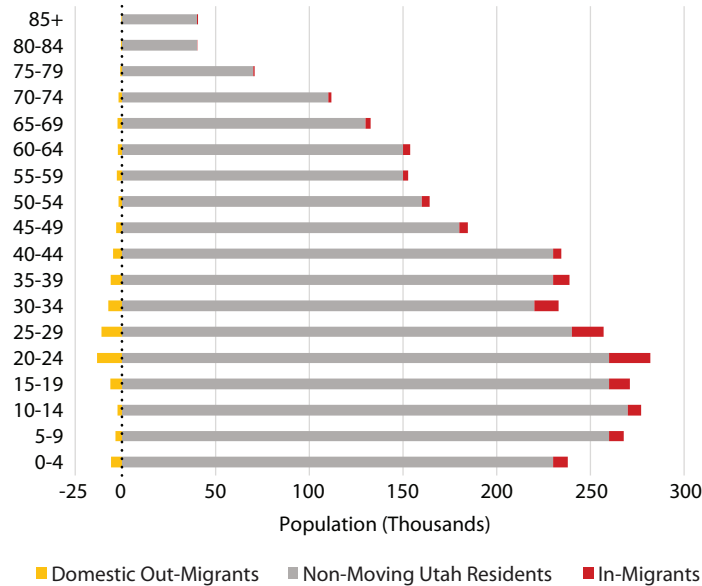
- Domestic out-migrant age structure shifted:
  - Larger shares of 20-24-year-old Utahns left in 2021, shifting the peak out-migrant ages of 25-29 in 2018 to 20-24 in 2021.
  - Additionally, smaller shares of 10-14-year-old Utahns left. This indicates less family movement and more young adult movement.
- Non-movers experienced a share increase in the 65-84 age group and 20-24 age group, and a share decrease in the 0-4 age group.<sup>7</sup>
  - This increase in the older age group and a decrease in the 0-4 age group is likely due to broad demographic shifts in the population’s age structure. But the increase in the 20-24 age group could signal a COVID-19 impact on missionary migration, or a decrease in migration to other states for school during a time when virtual schooling was the norm.

**Figure 8: Age Distribution by Mobility Status, 2021**



Note: International out-migrants are not included in the data or analysis  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series

**Figure 9: Mobility Status Population Pyramid, 2021**



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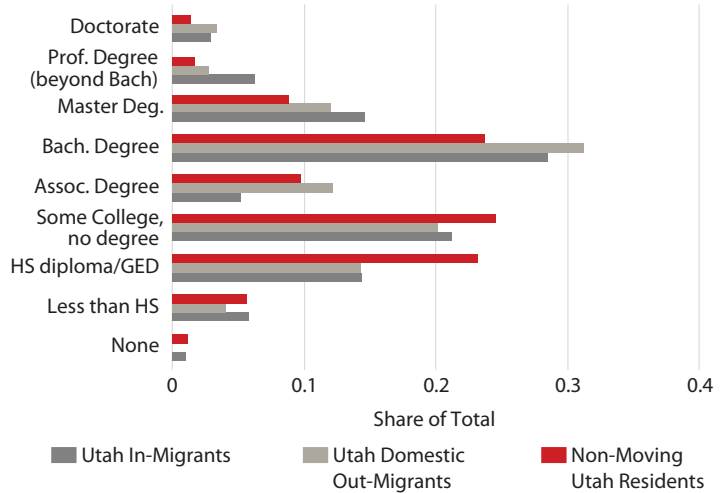
**Migrant Educational Characteristics**

In 2021, Utah in-migrants and domestic out-migrants (ages 25 and older) were more likely to have a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to non-moving Utah residents. Non-moving Utahns were more likely to have a high school degree or “some college, but no degree” than their moving counterparts. Both non-moving Utah residents and domestic out-migrants had a larger share of those who were not attending school compared to in-migrants. Additionally, non-moving Utahns were more likely to attend K-12 schools than their moving counterparts.

**What’s different from 2018?**

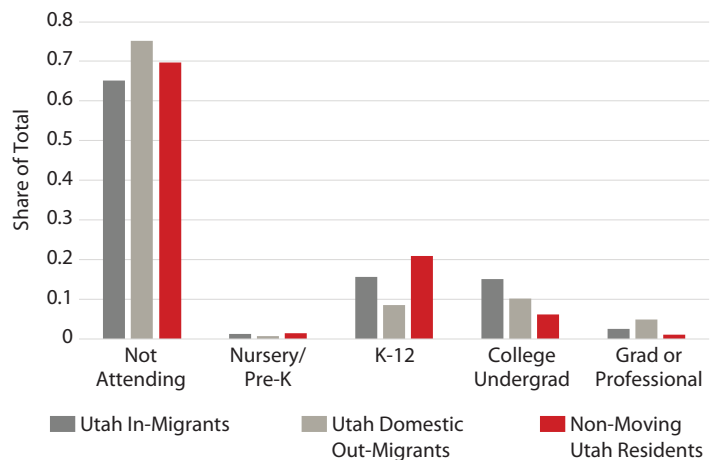
- In-migrants are slightly more likely to not be attending school, increasing from 60.8% to 65.2%.
- Out-migrants are more likely to not be attending school, increasing from 69.9% to 75.2%; and less likely to be attending K-12 schools, decreasing from 16.0% to 8.7%.
- These schooling changes to both populations indicate less family movement and more labor-related movement.

**Figure 9: Educational Attainment (Ages 25 and over) by Mobility Status, 2021**



Note: International out-migrants are not included in the data or analysis  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series

**Figure 10: School Grade Attending by Mobility Status, 2021**



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 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series

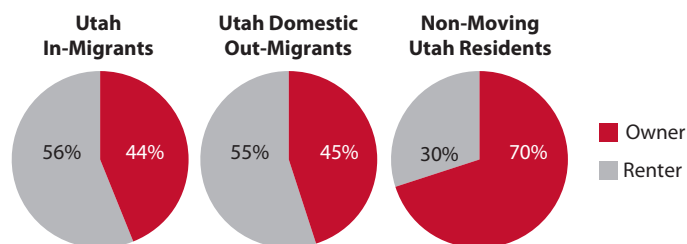
## Migrant Household Characteristics

More than half of both in-migrants and domestic out-migrants rented (56%), while the remaining 44% owned a home. This is quite different than the 70% of non-mover households who owned their home rather than rented.

### What's different from 2018?

- Domestic out-migrants were more likely to be homeowners in 2021, increasing from 36% owners in 2014-2018 to 45% owners in 2021.

**Figure 11: Housing Tenure by Mobility Status, 2021**



Note: International out-migrants are not included in the data or analysis  
source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series

## Endnotes

1. Frey, W. 2021. Despite the pandemic narrative, Americans are moving at historically low rates. Brookings Institute. Accessed at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/despite-the-pandemic-narrative-americans-are-moving-at-historically-low-rates/>
2. Cohn, C. 2021. As the pandemic persisted, financial pressures became a bigger factor in why Americans decided to move. Pew Research Center. Accessed at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/02/04/as-the-pandemic-persisted-financial-pressures-became-a-bigger-factor-in-why-americans-decided-to-move/>
3. Harris, E. (2021). Moving Past Net Migration: Demographic Characteristics of Utah's Recent Migrants. Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. Available at: <https://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/Migrant-DemographicCharacteristics-June2021-Final.pdf>
4. United States. Bureau of the Census. American Community Survey (ACS): Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 2021. Accessed at: <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums/2021/1-Year/>
5. It is not advised to compare 1-year ACS estimates with 5-year ACS estimates. However, single year data allowed for a quick update to the previous report, and the 2014-2018 time period was very stable. While this report uses the 2014-2018 time period and report as a reference, 2018 1-year data was utilized to ensure the 2014-2018 patterns were similar, and that the statistical tests still proved to be significantly different.
6. The categories and definitions of Race and Ethnicity in this paper are consistent with the Census Bureau and other federal agencies. Individuals claiming Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin are categorized as Hispanic and can be of any race. Non-Hispanic persons were classified as a single race alone—White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Some Other Race—or as two or more races.
7. This is likely a reflection of declining births over the last decade.