

RECENT PATTERNS IN NEW ENGLAND'S

Migration: Changes Since the Turnaround of the 1980s

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades a large literature has emerged on population change in New England, especially the general pattern of out-migration of the younger labor force. However, snapshot analyses do not fully capture the complexity of migration flows to and from the region. In this paper I analyze migration data over a nearly two decade time span (1988-2006), especially since the economic/population turnaround of the 1980s. The focus of the analysis is on changes in the magnitude (efficiency) and geography (origin and destination) of these flows, and possible linkages with fluctuations in the regional economy. What emerges is a complex set of spatial and temporal migration patterns, for the region as a whole, and for each state. While out-migration related losses in population remain a broad regional problem, broad generalizations of uniform population loss throughout the region—a perception commonly held by the public and scholars alike—are off the mark. *Keywords: migration, New England, demographic change.*

Introduction

Analyzing the vicissitudes of interstate migration in the United States has long been a staple of population geographers. Of particular interest has been the deindustrialization process and the long-term outflow of people from the Northeast and Midwest 'Snowbelt' parts of the United States to the 'Sunbelt' states in the South and West, especially over the past few decades (Weinstein and Firestone 1978; Bluestone and Harrison 1984; Gober 1993). A small subset of these studies has focused more closely on the New England region, consisting of the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont (also termed the New England Census Division) (Stevenson and Bluestone 2002; Johnson 2008). For example, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of studies explored the short-term volatility of the region's economy, especially its strong linkages with high-tech and the defense buildup of the Reagan years (e.g., see Markusen et al. 1991 for a detailed account of New England's unique defense oriented industrial structure) (Barff 1989, 1990). This boom in defense spending, which served the region quite well into the early 1990s, also led to problems as defense spending declined in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. For a region whose population growth has consistently lagged behind other parts of the United States, these boom times and positive net in-migration represented a welcome reprieve (and aberration) from the long-term redistribution of population out of the region (Barff 1989, 1990).

Since the early 1990s, a number of studies argue that the region has generally fared poorly, with many of the articles focusing on the pattern of out-migration from the region, or the 'brain drain' of the region's younger, highly educated workforce (Kodrzycki 2000a, 2000b, 2001; Peirce and Johnson 2003; Lanza 2005). In addition to the outflow of younger migrants in an aging population base and its associated problems (Coelen and Berger 2006), the high cost of living makes the region unattractive for new migrants (Barff 1989, 1990). For New England, these trends point toward significant problems in the future as the population changes in ways not favorable to economic growth. In recent decades a surge of immigrants stabilized population in much of the Northeast, but this effect has been much smaller in New England (Sum et al. 2003; Coelen and Berger 2006; Wright 2007). With its still potent (but declining) manufacturing base and a highly skilled (but aging) workforce, it appears that New England faces a set of economic and demographic pressures different from those found in other parts of the United States

While the above studies provide useful information on recent changes in population in New England, a detailed time series analysis of the region's migration has not been completed. As a result, a number of questions remain: how have the region's migration patterns changed as the economic opportunities related to the defense industry declined in the early 1990s? Perhaps more specifically, how have fluctuations in the region's economy (the business cycle) been associated with short- and long-term patterns in migration over the past twenty years? These questions about the New England region and changes in its population base in recent decades are important by themselves, and a broad analysis of recent migration trends would be useful since this represents the primary mechanism for population change (Barff 1989). However, New England—like other parts of the country—is far from monolithic, and scholarly studies that group the region's constituent parts together in aggregate analyses obscure considerable heterogeneity in terms of demographic change. Even when scholars examined in more detail state-level differences in demographic processes like migration, the analysis was either limited to a small number of years and/or did not focus on the origins and destinations of migrants, or the economic environment in which population change and migration took place was peripheral to the study (Barff 1989; Agrawal 2006; Johnson 2008).

This paper is an attempt to provide a richer and more comprehensive temporal and geographic picture of migration for New England, especially given recent periods of economic volatility. Specifically, in this study I examine annual United States interstate migration flows for the time period 1988-1989 to 2005-2006 using United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) migration data (eighteen observations in a time series). This period captures a number of major economic changes that have taken place in the United States and New England, including the recession of the early 1990s, the incredible economic growth that marked the latter part of the decade, and the start of the crash that ended the dot.com boom. To do this, I use a number of approaches, including: calculation of migration efficiency rates to analyze the magnitude and direction of regional and individual state-to-state migration streams; creation of several maps that explore the geography of the region's migration streams; and analysis of the coefficient of variation in the migration statistics to gauge the geographic variability (i.e., spatial focus) between each state's in- and out-migration fields.

The first part of this paper presents a discussion of the data and techniques utilized in this study. The next two sections entail a discussion of the empirical analysis. Specifically, the first empirical section provides an overview of the region's and each state's migration flows over a nearly two decade time span. Also included in this section is a discussion of links between the region's economy and changes in the redistribution of population in and out of the region. Utilizing a series of maps, the second empirical section focuses on the geography of the migration streams for New England as a whole, and for individual states. The last section reviews the findings of the research and discusses possible avenues for future research.

Data and Methods

The migration data used for this paper comes from the Internal Revenue Service (U.S. Internal Revenue Service 2010a, 2010b). These data first became available in the early 1980s, and are generated by matching tax returns from one year to the next to see if a tax payer and his/her dependents (exemptions) changed residences from one county or state to another (Engels and Healy 1981; Isserman, Plane and McMillan. 1982; McHugh and Gober 1992). Recent data sets included information on income flows as well. Besides providing estimates on gross migration, the data sets have proved invaluable because they provide detailed geography on the origins and destinations of the migrants, and since generated on an annual basis, the data sets provide a time series on migration that goes back well over twenty years; this information is not available from any other source in the United States.

Unfortunately, the IRS dataset does have its problems. For example, many people do not file tax returns, so the estimates generated undercount true flows. These 'nonfilers' include the poor, the unemployed, the illegal/undocumented population¹, and transient groups such as the military and college students. Some estimates on the undercount reach up to 20 percent or more of the actual movers (Isserman, Plane and McMillan 1982). As a quick check of the data used in this study, net migration for New England from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) Components of Population Change were obtained for the 1990s. These data indicate the region experienced net outmigration, with the loss of 506,239 people (internal migration within the region is not included). IRS data for the same years produced a net outmigration estimate of 428,845 people leaving the region, suggesting the IRS count missed about 15 percent of the actual flows. This error—especially when weighed against the valuable geographical and temporal information not available elsewhere—seems to make utilization of the dataset worthwhile. One caveat is worth noting: although often used to provide snapshot views of individual areas, the data sets are really best suited for providing insights on broad migration trends, especially over a number of years and for larger geographic areas like states and regions. (McHugh and Gober 1992; Manson and Groop 1996).

Throughout the paper the demographic or migration efficiency (effectiveness) rate is utilized to gauge the direction and magnitude of migration streams. The migration efficiency rate is a measure of the migration into and out of a state that actually results in population change in a region, and is a preferred measure of net migration change (compared to net migration rates) for many researchers examining population change (Rogers 1990). This is because net migration

rates do not adequately account for the base populations (or those at risk of migrating), making these rates problematic. The migration efficiency rate at the state level is calculated:

$$E_i = 100 (IM_i - OM_i) / (IM_i + OM_i) \quad (1)$$

where E is efficiency (in percent), and IM_i and OM_i represent in-and out-migration flows for state i . The measure goes from +100 percent to -100 percent, with a value of 0 indicating that there is an equal number of migrants moving in and out of the state. In the analysis presented, the efficiency rate is used to gauge regional migration (for New England as a whole, and for individual states) to other states in the United States.

In the last part of the study I explore the geography of the migration streams for the entire region (over four time periods) and for individual states over the entire span of the data set. Additionally, the spatial focus of migration flows between states is examined. That is, are migration flows to/from a state (or the migration field) distributed evenly among all states (low spatial focus), or are the flows primarily from a small number of states (high spatial focus)? Geographers use a number of measures to assess the geographic nature of these flows, including the Gini Index, Dissimilarity Index, and the Theil Index (Rogers and Raymer 1998). However, here the Coefficient of Variation (CV) is preferred because it closely approximates the more traditional Gini Index, while being easier to calculate (Rogers and Sweeney 1998). Using this approach is quite straightforward. For example, to analyze out-migration for a single state, first the proportion of all out-migrants going to each state as a percentage of all out-migration is calculated. Then, the CV is calculated by taking the standard deviation of the distribution of proportions of outmigration divided by the mean of the proportions, and multiplied by 100. (Note that each of the streams are weighted by the size of the destination state.) The higher the value of the CV , the more relative variation that exists in the distribution of out-migration from a state, which indicates a spatially focused migration stream.

One other issue important to understanding this paper relates to mobility rates as opposed to migration efficiency rates. The focus in this paper is on how efficient New England's migration streams are at redistributing population. A high efficiency rate says little about the gross size of the flows between two regions, only that these flows (however large or small) are not cancelling each other out. In contrast, scholars note a broad decline in mobility rates over the past century (Plane 1984; Rogerson 1987; Wolf and Longino 2005). This trend continued into the 2000s with a mobility rate that is now consistently below 14 percent since 2003, and significantly below the 20 percent rate found in the years after World War Two (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009). To be clear, it is possible to have high mobility rates (lots of people moving between two regions), but no real population redistribution if the flows in each direction are equal, hence canceling each other out.

Differences in Regional and State-level Migration Over Time

Before providing a detailed breakdown of New England migration trends, some broad aggregate statistics over the full time span of this study (1988-1989 through 2005-2006) are worth

reviewing (see Table 1). In terms of total flows, 3,896,627 people left the region as a whole (no intra-regional migration is included here), while 3,151,968 people moved to the region from other parts of the United States, for a net outflow of 744,659 people. Thus, the region lost an average

Domestic Migration Only					
	In-migration	Out-migration	Net Migration	Migration Efficiency (percent)	Net Foreign Migration
CT	948,835	1,157,351	-208,516	-9.9	18,265
ME	301,188	325,459	-24,271	-3.9	10,937
MA	1,207,860	,579,713	-371,853	-13.3	21,464
NH	300,409	368,723	-68,314	-10.2	4,730
RI	218,393	283,407	-65,014	-13.0	6,106
VT	175,283	181,974	-6,691	-1.9	2,996
Total	3,151,968	3,896,627	-744,659	-10.6	64,498

Table 1. Migration to and from New England as a region – no internal migration within New England included, 1988-2006.

of 40,000+ people a year. This net outflow has an associated migration efficiency rate of -10.6 percent.

In contrast, the data show the region gained over 60,000 immigrants over the same time frame. However, these IRS immigration figures are far off the mark, especially compared to the IRS numbers on internal migration. This is because the data only include those filing income taxes in two consecutive years; so similar to internal migrants making too little to file tax returns, it is likely that legal/documentated but low-skilled immigrants barely making a living may not be included. More problematic is that many of the immigrants are illegal/undocumented, and will do everything they can to stay away from government agencies like the IRS, let alone file taxes. As a result, immigration into the region is certainly much higher.² To gauge the magnitude of this error, data drawn once again from the CPS components of population change for the 1990s permitted a comparison with IRS data. While the IRS data show a net inflow of 36,215 (for the 1990s alone), the CPS shows a net inflow of 253,411, a figure that includes estimates on migration from Puerto Rico (a large flow for New England states), as well as illegal/undocumented immigrants. Fortunately, the focus of this study is internal migration, although any comprehensive study of demographic change in the region must accurately account for immigration (legal/documentated or not), as other studies have (Agrawal 2006; Wright 2007).

Disaggregating the data to the state-level provides a more interesting and diverse view of New England migration over the past two decades. As shown in Table 1, all six states lost popu-

lation through internal migration over this time period. However, the magnitude of these losses varied quite a bit, with Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Hampshire showing efficiency rates of -9.9, -13.3, -13.0, and -10.2 percent, respectively. On the other hand, migration flows into and out of Vermont and Maine had a smaller impact on population change, with

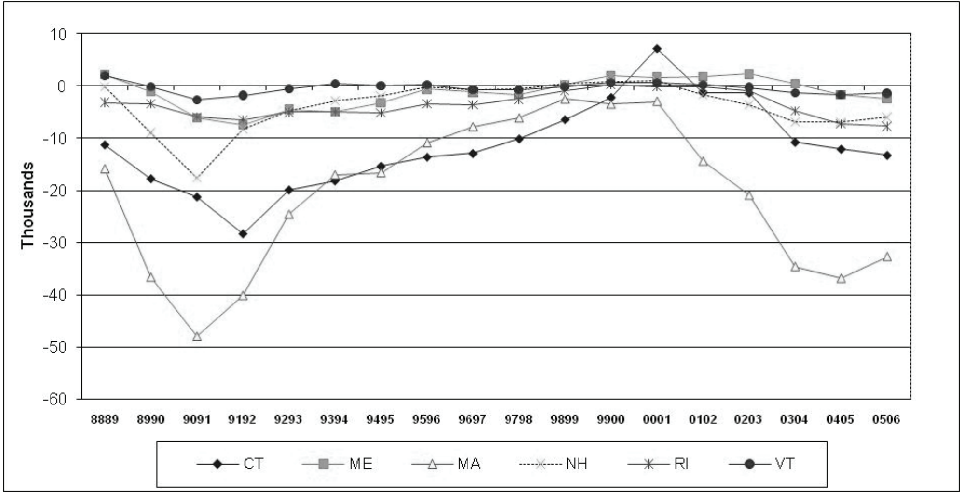


Figure 1. Net migration totals by state – 1988-2006.

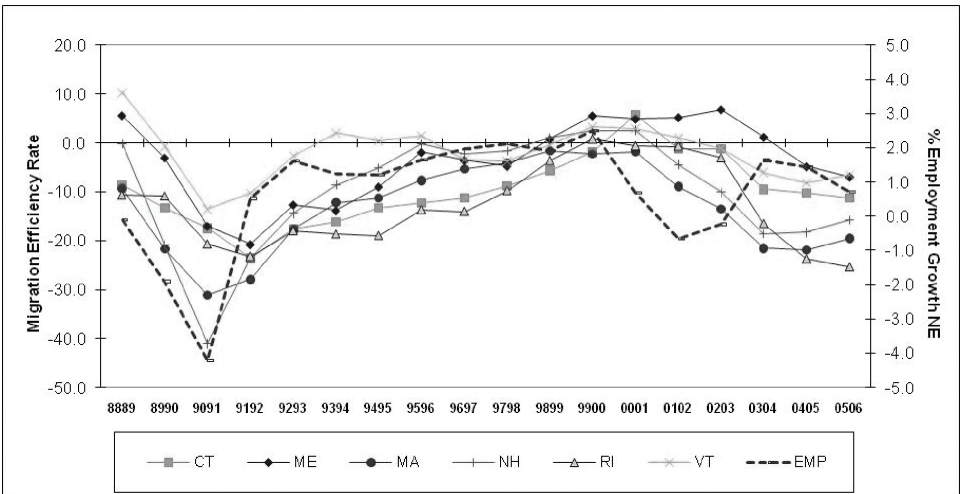


Figure 2. Migration efficiency rates by state – 1988-2006, and year-to-year employment change in New England region (EMP line).

efficiency rates of -1.9 and -3.9 percent, respectively.

Besides differences in migration efficiency between the various states of the region for temporally aggregated data, a fuller picture of state-to-state heterogeneity in migration streams emerges from a time series analysis of annual changes. In terms of annual net migration totals, Figure 1 shows the big population states of Connecticut and Massachusetts had the largest fluctuations, hardly a surprising finding. However, differences in migration between the six states are easier to examine using migration efficiency rates over time, as shown in Figure 2. Also, to delineate the ups and downs of the regional economy, an additional line in the graph shows year to year employment change for the New England region as a whole.

Note that I use employment data for New England alone rather than national trends because there are significant differences between the two trends (Vias 2010). For example, the downturn of the early 1990s persisted much longer in New England than in the entire United States, which experienced a decline in employment for only one year. Furthermore, the region never really rebounded to experience the broad trend of growth associated with the dot.com boom of the late 1990s. Finally, once the recession of the early 2000s started in 2001-2002, the region never again experienced employment growth, at least through 2006. It is important to note that employment change need not correlate directly with migration, since people can enter and leave the workforce without migrating. However, there is a strong link between the two, as shown in numerable other analyses of this type (Plane 1984; McHugh and Gober 1992; Milne 1993; Miller 1995).

In terms of linkages between the economy and migration, the recession in the early 1990s was tightly associated with a dramatic decline in migration efficiency rates (turning strongly negative) for all six states in the region, with Massachusetts and New Hampshire faring the worst. This means that the economic downturn accompanied a major redistribution of population out of the region. Although the economy slowly improved in relative terms for the rest of the decade, the region continued to lose jobs until 1999-2000, when employment change briefly turned positive, but returned to negative rates of change until 2005-2006.

In terms of migration, each of the states generally followed the regional economy, and the redistribution of population out of the region slowly abated toward the end of the 1990s, with Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine experiencing one to four years of net immigration. However, for two of the states, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, migration efficiency rates remained negative throughout the eighteen time periods of this study. Then, after 2000-2001, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont and Rhode Island once again experienced sharp declines in their efficiency rates, hemorrhaging population to states outside the region. Interestingly, the declines in efficiency rates lagged to some extent for the states of Connecticut and Maine, and did not start to fall for 2-3 more years. That outcome with respect to Connecticut may make some sense given the dramatic rise of high-end financial services in Fairfield County (as opposed to stagnant levels over time in Hartford County) and strong linkages with New York City, although no such explanation is readily available for the lag in rates for Maine.

One other feature of Figure 2 worth noting is that the apparently strong association in the early 1990s between employment losses and declining migration efficiency rates (and significant population losses), became weaker over time. That is, while employment decline in the

region was sharp in the early 2000s, any apparent effect on migration and population change was less obvious, or was staggered by a couple of years at the very least. In recent years migration efficiency rates have leveled off to some extent, although every state in the region continues to lose population through out-migration. One other interesting difference in state-level migration streams between the two recessions concerns Rhode Island, which became the state most efficient in losing population through out-migration, replacing Massachusetts and Connecticut. Considering the condition of the economy in Rhode Island—among the worst in the nation in recent years—this finding is not remarkable (Downing 2009).

Overall, there is an apparent relationship between employment growth/decline, and the efficiency of migration, leading to the redistribution of population out of New England. Unfortunately, the relationship differs from that found for the entire United States migration system, where the overall efficiency of migration and population redistribution generally increased in times of economic growth (Miller 1995; Vias 2010). Plane and Rogerson (1991) and Pandit (1997) found a similar relationship at the national level as well, although in their analyses they emphasized the significant role of an aging baby boom cohort in population redistribution through migration. That said, for the opposite relationship to exist in the United States system as a whole, many regions will have positive efficiency rates and employment growth as they gain population through in-migration (e.g., the Mountain West region). However, for New England the broad trend of job losses over time has been associated with net out-migration and a significant redistribution of population out of the region. This process only slowed for a short period of time in the late 1990s and early 2000s as the national economy (and New England to some extent) grew, thereby moderating, but not stopping net out-migration.

Geographic Differences in Regional and State-level Migration Flows

In the last section I reviewed changes in migration for New England over time, without any reference to the geography of the various migration streams. As a result, the following question naturally presents itself: how do the states of New England differ in terms of the primary origins/destinations of their migrants? To supplement this analysis with a more spatial perspective, aggregate regional migration efficiency measures between the region as a whole and individual states outside the region were calculated for four short time periods associated with major reversals in employment change: 1989-1991, 1996-1998, 2001-2003, and 2004-2006. As noted above, the time periods roughly correspond to national business cycle peaks and troughs over the past 20 years in terms of employment growth (Vias 2010). These specific choices for the top and bottom of the business cycle are debatable, especially since the data in Figure 2 show the region did vary from national trends, but they still provide a reasonable basis for examining changes in migration patterns through differing economic conditions affecting much of the nation. Additionally, two-year time periods were used to lower variability that might be found with a single time period of data. Overall, the objective of producing these maps was to determine if the spatial pattern of major/minor migration streams for the entire region were consistent over time, and possible linkages between these patterns and changes in the

Vias: Recent Patterns in New England's Migration

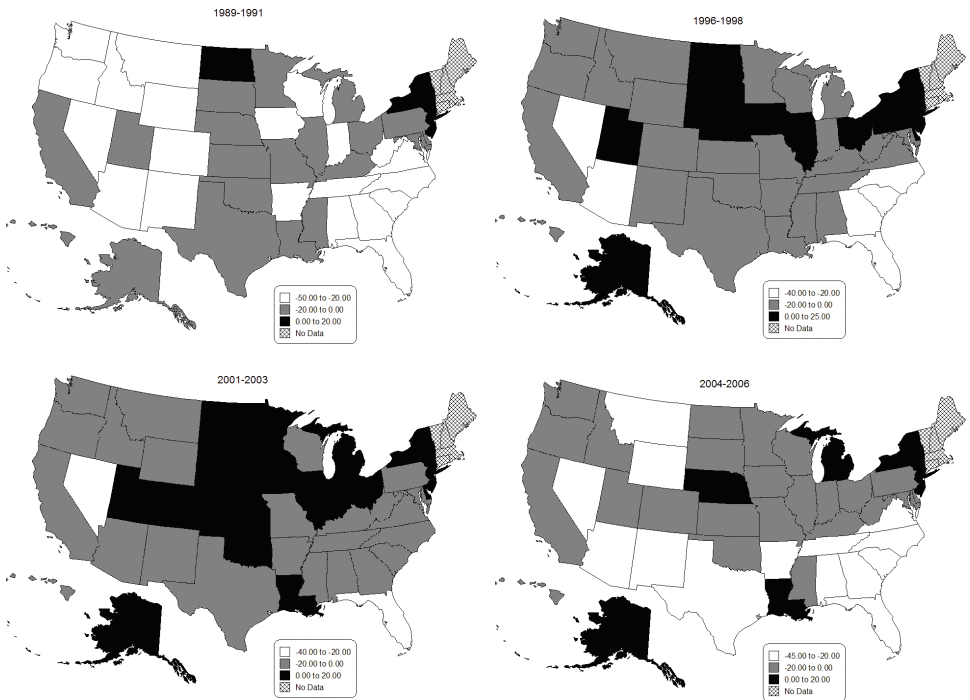


Figure 3. Geography of migration efficiency rates for New England region, 1989-1991, 1996-1998, 2001-2003, and 2004-2006

national economy.

Examining the first set of maps produced (see Figure 3), the recession of the early 1990s shows clearly on the first map for 1989-1991, with New England experiencing significant net outmigration (negative migration efficiency rates) to virtually every state. Only New York, New Jersey and North Dakota sent more migrants to New England than they received. Furthermore, these migration streams were very efficient (lower than -20 percent) in redistributing population to other parts of the United States, except for a few states in the Great Plains and Midwest (where efficiency rates were 0 to -20 percent). As the decade progressed (1996-1998), there was a reversal in the direction of the migration stream for a number of states in the rest of the Northeast, the Great Plains, and Midwest, with New England attracting more migrants than it was losing. Additionally, the number of states with migration efficiency rates lower than -20 percent decreased significantly, and only consisted of 6 states, Arizona, Nevada, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The overall trend during the peak years of the dot.com boom, however, still showed New England was losing population through out-migration to a majority of states, although the efficiency of these streams declined over time.

Interestingly, at the start of the dot.com bust (2001-2003), the number of states with positive net migration into New England actually increased, further supporting the finding from above that linkages between the economy and migration efficiency had weakened since the early 1990s. Besides additional states from the Northeast and Midwest, states with positive net migra-

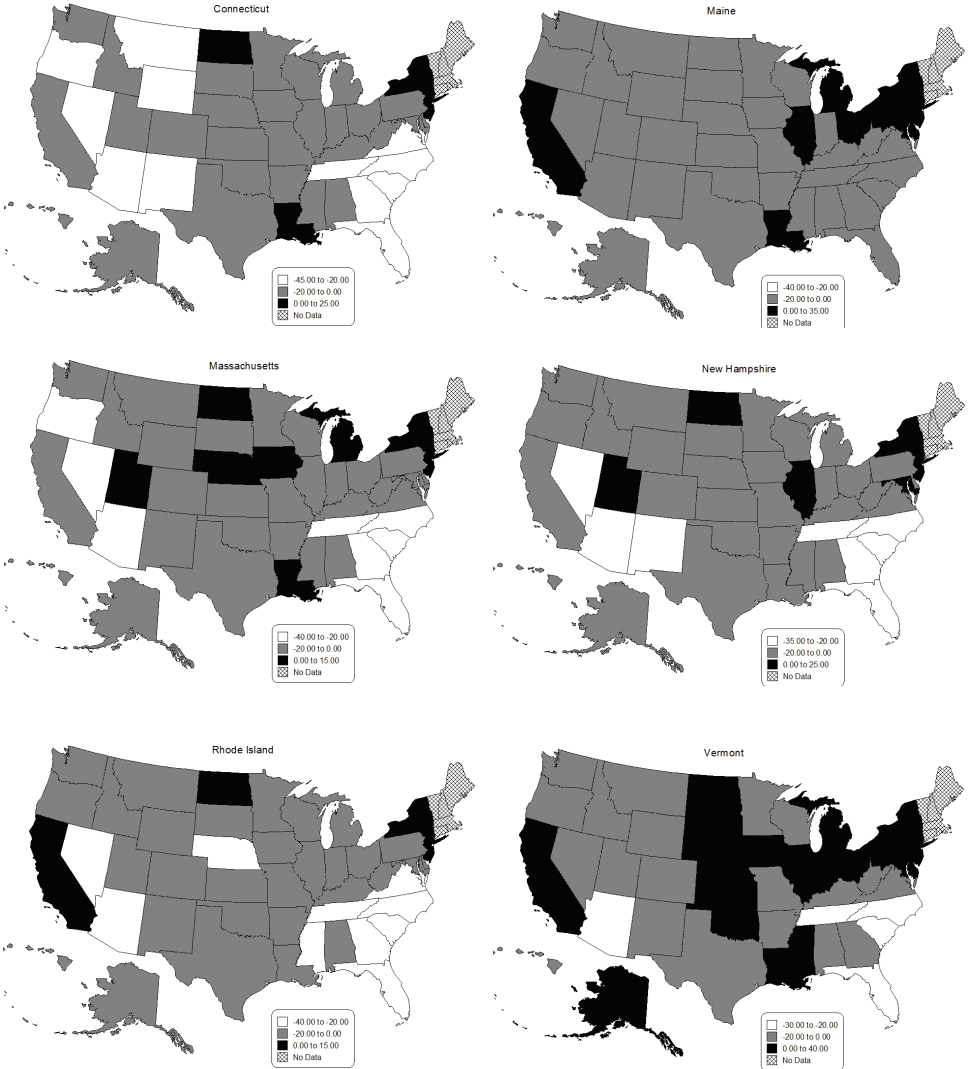


Figure 4. Geography of migration efficiency rates for New England states, 1988 – 2006.

tion into the region also included Utah and Colorado in the Mountain West (an interesting but unexplained reversal), and the spatial outlier states of Arkansas and Louisiana. Finally, only two states remained with very efficient net migration streams out of the region (lower than -20 percent), Florida and Nevada.

The last map shows that the middle of the decade (2004-2006) marked a return to a broad pattern of net out-migration streams from New England to most parts of the United States. Furthermore, by 2004-2006, many of the traditional sunbelt regions in the Southeast, Southwest, and Mountain West had emerged once again as the destination of highly efficient migration streams (rates lower than -20 percent). Only New York, New Jersey, Michigan, Nebraska, Arkansas and Louisiana had net in-migration into New England. One interesting anomaly picked up in the maps, and noted elsewhere (Vias 2010), is Louisiana as an outlier, especially when compared to the rest of the South. This is an artifact of the state's overall poverty, but also of the impact of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

In-Migration Flows		Out-Migration Flows	
CT	2.23	CT	1.70
ME	1.29	ME	1.46
MA	1.57	MA	1.65
NH	1.38	NH	1.56
RI	1.58	RI	1.80
VT	1.84	VT	1.62

Table 2. Spatial focus of migration streams into and out of each state using coefficient of variation, 1988-2006.

Other anomalies like Arkansas, Nebraska and North Dakota are likely an artifact of small numbers, and where small differences in migration flows in either direction can lead to sizeable efficiency rates.

While the maps in Figure 3 provide interesting information about the geography of New England's migration streams as a whole, it is worth emphasizing that the large population states of Connecticut and Massachusetts dominate the region's gross migration flows when analyzed as an aggregate, hence,

the maps largely represent the spatial pattern of migration for these states. To examine in more detail where migration to and from individual states was taking place, another series of maps was produced showing the migration efficiency rates of each state for the entire time frame of this study, 1988-2006. Specifically, flows were summed for the eighteen time periods, from which efficiency rates between each New England state and every other state in the United States were calculated. See Figure 4 for these maps.

A quick review of the six maps shows considerable heterogeneity in the migration flows for each state, in terms of magnitude and geography. One clear anomaly is the state of Vermont, which had net in-migration from more states (19 of 45) compared to other New England states. This may reflect the amenity-rich nature of the state, and its isolation from the declining industrial sector that has been the heart of the region's economy for so long. In contrast, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine and Rhode Island experienced net out-migration to a majority of states. Of these states, Connecticut had highly efficient out-migration streams (lower than -20 percent) to the most states (13 of 45 states), while Maine had no highly efficient out-migration streams, hence overall population losses from out-migration were smaller. One other interesting facet of the maps is in terms of the geographic distribution of net out-migration from the states of

New England. Over this two decade time period, Connecticut had very efficient out-migration streams (lower than -20 percent) to states spread throughout the western half of the United States, with no strong regional clustering patterns. On the other hand, the most efficient out-migration streams from Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Hampshire clustered in the Southeast and Southwest United States. Overall, it is quite apparent that each state in New England has its own relationship with other states in the United States in terms of migration, and that some parts of the region do not exhibit the same patterns of out-migration (in terms of magnitude and geography).

The final approach used to assess regional migration to/from New England in this paper was an examination of the spatial concentration of the region's in- and out-migration flows. This analysis answers the following type of question: is out-migration from the region primarily going to a few states (a spatially focused migration flow), or is the loss being redistributed evenly around the entire United States (an unfocused migration flow)? The above maps can hint at an answer to this question, although the large data intervals used in the legends do not provide the detail really required for such an analysis. To provide a more precise assessment, I use the Coefficient of Variation (*CV*) described earlier (Rogers and Sweeney, 1998). The *CV* values generated for in- and out-migration for each state are shown in Table 2. Interestingly the in-migration flows to Connecticut were the most focused, with 60 percent of Connecticut in-migrants coming from only five states, and over half of that amount from New York alone. The least focused in-migration flow was to Maine, with a little over 45 percent of the migrants coming from the top five states, and half of that amount from New York and Florida alone.

In terms of out-migration, the spatial focus pattern is quite different, that is, there is less variability in the *CV* between the states. In this case, Rhode Island had the most spatially concentrated out-migration flows, with 55 percent of their out-migrants going to only five states, and over half that amount going to Florida alone. On the other hand, Maine had the most evenly distributed outflows with 46 percent going to the top five states (over half that amount going to Florida alone). Overall, this analysis of the spatial focus of New England's migration flows provides results that are similar in one way to those already shown using migration efficiency rates—there is considerable heterogeneity from one state to another.

Conclusion

Although a person traveling around the United States may get the impression that regional differences in this country are diminishing over time (e.g., culture, landscapes, economy, etc.), the perception of New England as a distinctive (and homogeneous) part of the United States still seems to remain. In recent years, that perception of the region as a whole often extends to its large number of socioeconomic ills in the past ten to twenty years, especially since the economic and population expansion associated with the Reagan years. Problems include a declining industrial base, and the out-migration of the region's young population. However, is this notion of homogeneity in terms of the region's migration patterns a reality, especially in terms of (dis)similarities between the region's states? Additionally, does this picture of net out-migration tell the full story of the social and economic conditions that exists today in New England, and in

the future?

The above findings present the picture of a region with states that can differ from each other in terms of demographic change, especially with respect to patterns of in- and out-migration. While the results show that the region has experienced fairly strong and consistent patterns of net out-migration, states like New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont have not experienced out-migration driven population losses as large as those found in the region's other states. Additionally, there is considerable variation in the geographic structure of each state's in- and out-migration streams. In contrast, there seems to be a regional linkage between economic change and the efficiency of population redistribution processes, with times of economic decline leading to much more efficient patterns of regional population loss through out-migration.

Knowledge of these state-level variations in migration suggests differences in the socioeconomic processes that underlie demographic change. Clearly, additional research would help delineate the economic conditions that may be leading to the worst out-migration problems in the region, as well as display broad patterns of immigration. Whatever the outcome of this research might be, it seems a uniform regional policy to solve problems associated with out-migration is likely to fall short. Interestingly, the parochialism that is so strong in the region, with an emphasis on locally-based decision-making, may serve this issue well (Mass and Soule 2005). At the same time, this reliance on local decision-making has often caused towns and states to work at cross-purposes with each other. One way or the other, the above research should help officials better understand the nature of migration patterns in New England, especially since it is the primary component of population change in the region.

In terms of the region's future prospects, it is worth emphasizing that this picture of net out-migration--though not a good trend--does not tell the whole story. While the boom economy of the late 1980s and early 1990s discussed in detail by Barff (1989, 1990) no longer exists, the region is far from a manufacturing wasteland. Recent Census Bureau data still indicate the region's total population grew over the first decade of the twenty-first century by about half a million people (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2010a). Additionally, the region still has among the highest per capita income levels in the United States, and a human capital base (percentage of population older than 25 years with a college degree) that provides a highly trained workforce, better equipped to compete in today's global markets than other parts of the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2010b). But the question is, for how long will this continue to be true? Clearly, local officials cannot depend on this high-quality workforce to save the region forever, especially since the newspapers continue to feature stories of the region's most famous employers (and their jobs) moving to other parts of the country (Gershon 2010).

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Notes

1. There is debate among scholars and the media on the terminology used to describe this group of people. Most scholars use the term ‘undocumented workers,’ while much of the media uses ‘illegals.’ Which one is used is important because these terms (and others) are often loaded with various meanings, both negative and positive. In this paper a hybrid/combined term is used, but with the recognition that the terms can be problematic. (Couper 1984; Coutin and Chock 1995; De Genova 2002; Media Matters 2010).
2. Note that the IRS migration data probably account for more of these illegal/undocumented internal migrants than in the past (before 1996). This is because there is a relatively new 9-digit individual tax number available for filing taxes that has nothing to do with social security numbers, legal residency, or citizenship. As a result, many of these migrants are filing taxes to help establish records for future residency applications (should some type of immigration reform come about). This is especially true since the IRS data are NOT supposed to be available to other government agencies (U.S. Internal Revenue Service, 2010b). However, large portions of this particular migration flow remain undetected and are not part of most government migration databases.

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