

## The Vermont Legislative Research Service

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#### Migration Patterns of College Students and Recent College Graduates

The young, single, and college educated (YSCÉ) are the most mobile segment of the total U.S. population and display migrational patterns nearly opposite those for the total population.<sup>1</sup> Roughly 75% of YSCÉ individuals reported moving between 1995 and 2000 compared to 64.9% for young individuals and 45.9 for the total population during the same period.<sup>2</sup> During the same period, 92% of YSCÉ individuals migrated to metropolitan areas.<sup>3</sup> All age groups except young

state students who are then more likely to out-migrate following graduation. The Pacific region, which consistently displays a high rate of YSC in-migration, features an extensive and relatively low cost public higher education system that retains a large number of in-state college students.<sup>7</sup>

### College Students

In 1997, the overall rate at which individuals left their home state to attend college was 17.1%. This figure was significantly higher in states such as Connecticut (44.3%) and Vermont (43.9%). These states also had high numbers of first-time college students from other states with student in-migration rates of 34% and 60% respectively during the same year.<sup>8</sup> Students who out-migrate to attend college in states in the Western region of the United States are less likely than average to leave their college state following graduation, while students who attend college in the Midwest and South regions are more likely to leave their college state following graduation.<sup>9</sup>

### Factors that Influence the Migration of College Students and Recent College Graduates

#### College Students

Studies investigating recent college graduate migration have consistently found that individuals who attend private colleges or universities are more likely to migrate following graduation compared to individuals who attend public institutions.<sup>10</sup> Using data from the 1976 cohort of college graduates, Jeffrey Groen estimates that attending a public in-state university increases the odds a student will remain in-state following graduation by 15% compared to 9% for private universities and 0% for private colleges.<sup>11</sup> States with a higher per-capita income generally attract more out-of-state college students.<sup>12</sup>

#### Recent College Graduates

Individuals whose parents achieved a high level of educational attainment, grant recipients, those who applied to multiple institutions, those without children, those who migrated to attend college, those born in the U.S. or to U.S. born parents, and those who lived in a rural area, small town, or large town at the time of high school graduation are more likely than U.S. p12act Td12a

average to leave their native state following college.<sup>13</sup> Students who reside in states with a high gross domestic product are more likely than average to remain in their native state after college.<sup>14</sup>

Graduates of private institutions and individuals who either have completed or plan on completing a doctoral or professional degree have a greater than average tendency to leave their home state following graduation. Engineering and computer science majors are more likely than other majors to migrate following graduation; however, individuals whose jobs were not related to their major report greater migration distances than those with major-related jobs.<sup>15</sup>

Young graduates are more likely to migrate if they are in a state that has low employment growth, high unemployment, or low pay for college graduates and the majority of migrations are to states that offer "improved conditions in one or more areas such as job growth, unemployment, compensation housing costs, or amenities."<sup>16</sup> Students who attend college in states with a larger population are more likely than average to remain in the same state following graduation. Quality of life has a significant effect on the migration of students and both in-state and out-of-state college graduates. A higher GDP per capita increases the odds of both in-state and out-of-state students remaining in their college state after graduation, and states with high GDP-per-capita neighbors are more likely than average to lose both in-state and out-of-state graduates to those neighbors.<sup>17</sup>

### The Impact of Attending College in a State on Post-Graduation Retention

Of the individuals from Groen's sample of the 1976 cohort of college graduates, 73% of those who attended college in-state lived in their native state 10 years after graduating compared to 45% of those who attended out of state colleges. Of the individuals who applied to colleges in more than one state, 60% lived in their native state 10 years after graduation.<sup>18</sup>

Groen also found that individuals with high SAT scores and recipients of advanced (MA's, professional, doctoral) degrees were more likely than average to out-migrate following graduation.

The effect of attending college in-state on post-graduation location did not decline with SAT score or the reception of an advanced degree versus a bachelor's degree. Attending college in

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<sup>13</sup> Terry T. Ishitani, "The Determinants of Out-Migration Among In-State College Students in the United States," *Research in Higher Education* 52 (2011): 712-30. doi:10.1007/s11162-010-9270-0. <sup>14</sup> Terry T. Ishitani, "The Determinants of Out-Migration Among In-State College Students in the United States," *Research in Higher Education* 52 (2011): 712-30. doi:10.1007/s11162-010-9270-0. <sup>15</sup> Terry T. Ishitani, "The Determinants of Out-Migration Among In-State College Students in the United States," *Research in Higher Education* 52 (2011): 712-30. doi:10.1007/s11162-010-9270-0. <sup>16</sup> Terry T. Ishitani, "The Determinants of Out-Migration Among In-State College Students in the United States," *Research in Higher Education* 52 (2011): 712-30. doi:10.1007/s11162-010-9270-0. <sup>17</sup> Terry T. Ishitani, "The Determinants of Out-Migration Among In-State College Students in the United States," *Research in Higher Education* 52 (2011): 712-30. doi:10.1007/s11162-010-9270-0. <sup>18</sup> Terry T. Ishitani, "The Determinants of Out-Migration Among In-State College Students in the United States," *Research in Higher Education* 52 (2011): 712-30. doi:10.1007/s11162-010-9270-0.

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retention rate.<sup>24</sup> Groen found that of the students who entered the GUS through the HOPE program would have most likely attended college anyway, and Siquos suggests that these students are less attached to the state than students who would have entered the Georgia University system without a scholarship. The reduction in retention rates was highest for high academic ability students.