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Emily Eisner, PhD, *Chief Economist*
Andrew Perry, *Director of Fiscal Research*

New Census Data Show Population Growth as well as Continuing Affordability Challenges

Key Findings

- New Census data show that New York's population grew in 2023 and 2024, regaining one-third of the state's pandemic-era population losses.

- Net outmigration in 2024 reached its lowest level since 2013. Remaining outmigration is driven by low and middle-income households that face affordability challenges.

- The new Census data confirm FPI's prior findings that the top 1 percent of income earners move out of state less than all other income groups—in 2023, the top 1 percent was the only income group with no overall net outmigration.

- The Census Bureau, which had previously reported that from 2022 to 2023 the state's population had fallen by 102,000, now estimates that the population grew by 34,000 during that period.

Introduction

Census data released last month show that New York's population growth has returned to pre-Covid patterns, characterized by both overall population growth and affordability pressure driving many working and middle-income New Yorkers to leave the state.

Census population estimates for 2024 show fewer New Yorkers leaving the state than in the immediate wake of the Covid pandemic and population growth driven by natural increase (that is, births outnumbering deaths) and international immigration. Population gains over the past two years have partly reversed the state's sharp pandemic-era population loss.

The Census Bureau also released more detailed data covering 2023, which similarly show a return to pre-pandemic migration patterns. These data show that moderate-income households are more likely to leave New York than other income groups. The top-earning one percent of households leave the state at far lower rates than any other income group.

Both the overall level and income patterns of recent outmigration from New York align with pre-pandemic dynamics. In this way, the elevated outmigration in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic appears to be a temporary aberration. Nevertheless, the continued outmigration of low- and middle-income households points to the urgent need for policy action to make New York more affordable for working and middle-class families. In particular, evidence suggests the costs of housing and childcare create especially acute financial strains.

## Population growth resumes in New York State

New York's population grew by 130,000 between July 1, 2023 and 2024, reaching 19.8 million, according to Census estimates released in December 2024. Further, the estimates revised population growth between 2022 and 2023. The Census Bureau, which had previously reported that the state's population had fallen by 102,000, now estimates that the population grew by 34,000. These two years of growth made up for about one-third of the state's half-million-person population loss between April 1, 2020 and July 1, 2022—the state remains 337,000 (1.7 percent) below the 20.2 million estimated in the 2020 census.

Figure 1. New York State population, 2010 to 2024 (population in millions)
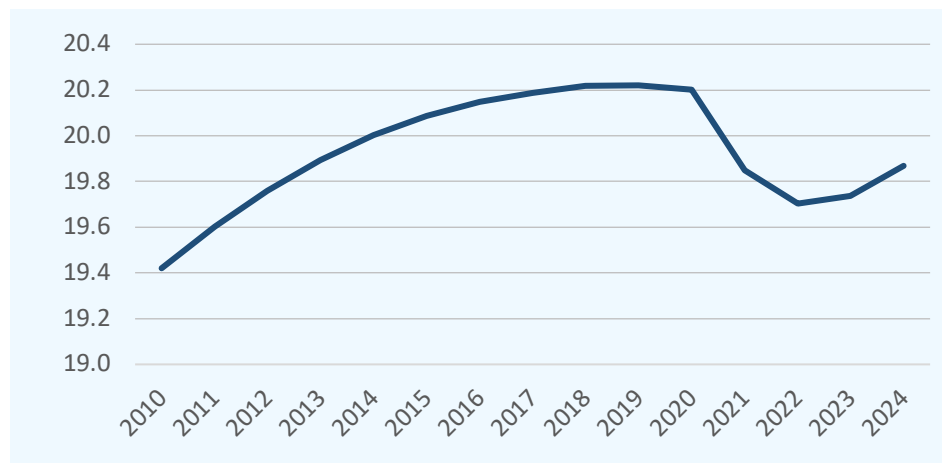
New York's population typically experiences net domestic outmigration—more New Yorkers moving to other states than other U.S. residents moving in—and grows as a result of natural increase and international immigration. During the Covid pandemic, outmigration doubled, from an average of 151,000 during the 2010s to 300,000 in both 2021 and 2022. In 2024, outmigration was 121,000, the lowest level since 2013.

Figure 2. Components of population change, 2010 to 2024
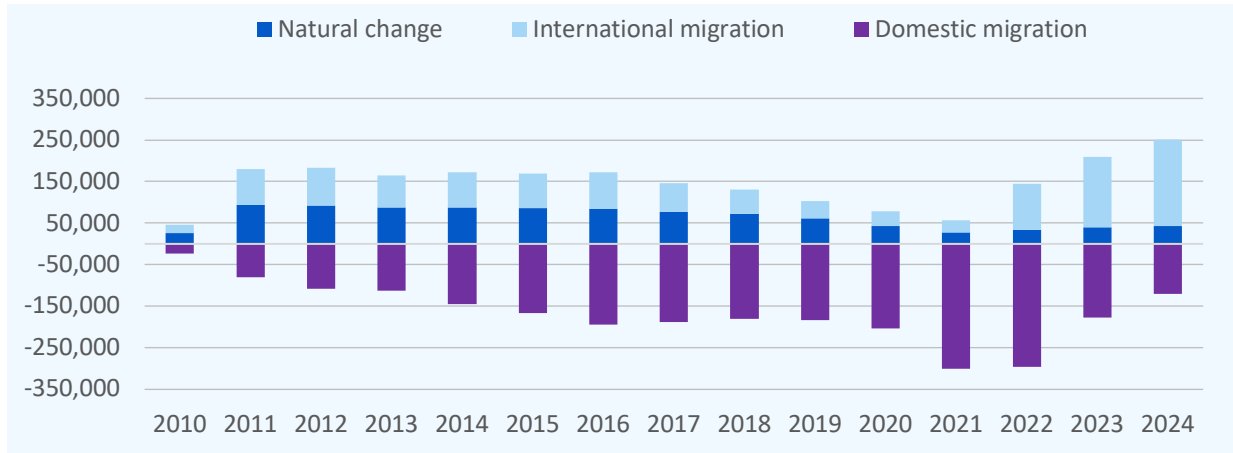
Outmigration concentrated among moderate income households

In December 2024, the Census also released another year of data from the American Community Survey, allowing FPI to analyze the economic and social characteristics of those moving into and out of the state in 2023. The data show that the highest income New Yorkers leave the state at the lowest rate, confirming FPI's previous findings.

While outmigration of the top 20 percent of earners rose in 2020 and 2021, it has since normalized, returning to lower rates than lower income groups. In 2022 and 2023, domestic outmigration from New York was primarily driven by lower- and moderate-income groups.

Figure 3. Net outmigration rates from New York by household income, 2017 to 2023
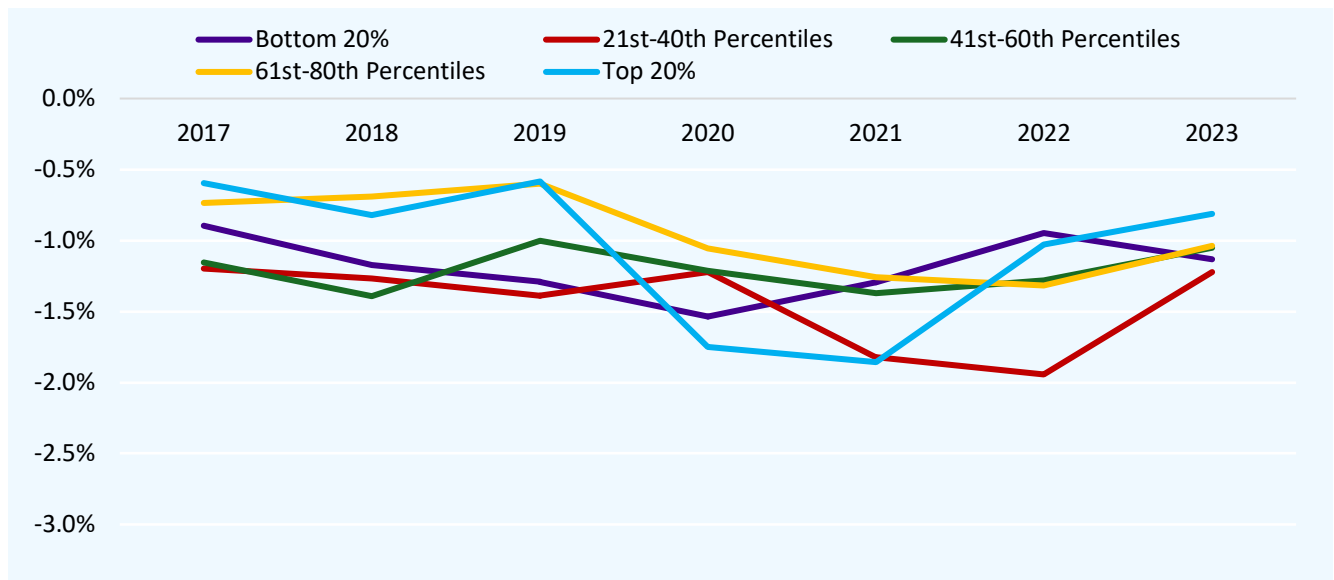
The highest income group—those with incomes in the top one percent—have by far the lowest outmigration rate of any income group. In 2023 the top one percent outmigration rate was slightly

positive, though not statistically significantly different from zero. That is, about as many top-earners moved to New York from elsewhere in the U.S. as left it.

Figure 4. Net outmigration rates from New York, by household income, breakdown of top 20 percent
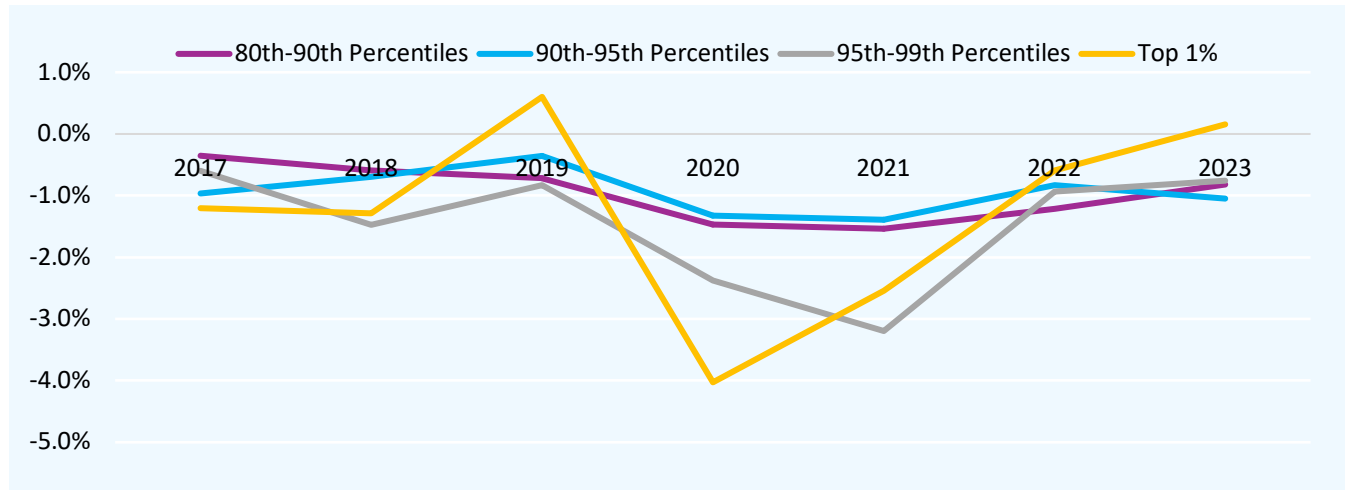
This analysis of new data confirms the findings of FPI's two-part report on state migration trends. The first report documented the income patterns of migration, finding that the highest income New Yorkers moved out of the state at one-quarter the rate of all other New Yorkers. This pattern was temporarily upended in 2020 and 2021—when Covid prompted Americans across the income distribution to consider moving, the higher income households moved the most quickly. By 2022, their outmigration had returned to lower levels while middle-income households continued to move out of the state at elevated rates. Further, the report documents that top earners do not leave more frequently in the aftermath of tax increases, and finds that when they do move, they typically leave the state for similarly high tax states, undermining the myth of high earner tax flight. The new data confirm that these findings remain true.

FPI's second migration report examined the social characteristics of those moving to and from New York. The report found that affordability concerns are a central driver of outmigration, with families with young children are 40 percent more likely to leave the state. A plurality of outmigrants report seeking more affordable housing. The outmigration of middle- and working-class families in 2023 highlights the continuation of this reality. The high costs of childcare and housing, especially in the New York metropolitan area, are forcing many New Yorkers to leave the state for more affordable destinations. This challenge poses an immediate threat to New York's quality of life and long-run economic potential and necessities urgent policy action to support affordability, especially in childcare and housing.