

Migration To and From Nassau-Suffolk Counties
An Analysis of IRS Tax Return Data for the Tax Years 2008-2009

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This analysis was aided by an online application provided by the Missouri Census Data Center. The application generates a migration profile for counties based on movement reflected in IRS tax returns in consecutive tax years. Essentially, by using IRS records to determine where taxpayers file tax returns in consecutive years, it is possible to track migration patterns.

The data is a complement, but not a replacement, for the U.S. Census Bureau's decennial census and the annual American Community Survey, which asks if the householder lived in their present home in the prior 12 months. IRS records capture only individuals who file tax returns and their dependents ("exemptions"), which means large numbers of non-filers (e.g. some low income individuals and households, some elderly individuals and households, some immigrants, and some individuals working "off the books") are not included in this data. Also, this analysis counts "exemptions" as individual migrants. It is possible that some filers do not take a personal exemption, preferring higher tax withholding throughout the year. This analysis might therefore understate the actual number of migrants, though not their destinations.¹

1. Between the tax years 2008 and 2009, 70,776 people moved out of Long Island (Nassau and Suffolk counties), while 67,605 moved into Long Island, a net loss of 3,171.
2. For those moving within New York state, Long Island realized a net gain of 9,658 (i.e. more residents of New York State who moved to a different county moved to either Nassau or Suffolk counties than moved from Nassau or Suffolk counties to another county in New York state).
3. The New York state county sending the largest number of people to Long Island was Queens county, which sent 17,560 people to Long Island while 9,510 residents of Long Island moved to Queens, for a net gain of 8,050.² Tax filers moving from Queens to Nassau-Suffolk had a higher average adjusted gross income (\$69,676) than those leaving Nassau-Suffolk to Queens (\$55,255).

¹ Note: there had to have been migration to or from both Nassau and Suffolk counties to be included in this analysis. Migration to or from either Nassau or Suffolk individually is not counted.

² Queens taken as its own city would be the [fifth](#) most expensive one in America. See Harry Siegel, "Citizen Bloomberg - How Our New York Mayor has Given Us the Business," *Newgeography.com*, July 22, 2011. Also, a report prepared by the Center for an Urban Future in November 2009, estimated from census data that Queens county had a net loss of 13,499 residents with bachelor's degrees between 2004 and 2006. See *Revising the City of Aspiration* (New York: Center for an Urban Future, 2009) http://www.nycfuture.org/images_pdfs/pdfs/CityOfAspiration.pdf.

4. Other counties in New York State with which Long Island had a net migration gain include Kings (Brooklyn – net 2,125) and the Bronx (net 529). Average adjusted gross incomes of households moving from Kings and the Bronx to Nassau-Suffolk exceeded the agi of households moving from Nassau-Suffolk to Kings and the Bronx by more than \$14,000.
5. New York state counties among the top twenty net gainers with Nassau-Suffolk include Orange (113) and Saratoga (87. Census data for 2010 shows Saratoga county was the fastest growing county in New York state at 9.5 percent).
6. Nassau was a net loser to Suffolk county, sending 2,382 more residents to Suffolk than Suffolk sent to Nassau. Nassau sent 8,203 people to Suffolk while Suffolk sent 5,821 to Nassau. Average adjusted gross incomes of inter-island migrants were roughly equal.
7. Long Island had a net loss of 13,302 residents to other states, sending 33,818 people to states other than New York, while receiving 20,516 from other states.
8. People who left Long Island were distributed among many different states. States with a high exchange of residents with Nassau and Suffolk counties include Florida, New Jersey, North Carolina, Connecticut, Arizona, Texas, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.
9. Florida had several counties among the twenty counties with the highest net gains of residents from Long Island, including Palm Beach (618), Marion (106), and Sarasota (101).
10. The top ten counties with which Nassau and Suffolk had a net loss of residents were Palm Beach, FL (-618), Wake, NC (-569), Mecklenburg, NC (-451), Harris, TX (-335), Maricopa, AZ (-237), Fairfield, CT (-172), Middlesex, NJ (-166), Morris, NJ (-139), Fairfax, VA (-117), Orange, NY (-113).
11. Overall, households leaving Long Island for other regions within the state had lower average adjusted gross incomes (\$63,835) than those coming to Nassau-Suffolk from other parts of New York state (\$74,059). This is in line with expectations. Higher adjusted gross incomes of households moving from places within New York state such as Queens or Kings to Long Island reflect larger households, typically with more than one worker. The lower incomes of migrants from Long Island to other parts of the state, particularly New York City, reflect smaller household size, more singles, and younger households. For example, 741 more tax filers moved to Manhattan from Long Island between 2008 and 2009 (3,035) than moved from Manhattan to Long Island (2,294). However, the actual number of people (which includes “exemptions” – most likely spouses and children) moving from Nassau and Suffolk counties to Manhattan (3,841) was roughly equal to the number of people moving from Manhattan to Long Island (3,819), suggesting that more filers moving to Manhattan are single filers, while more households moving to Long Island contain family members (exemptions).
12. However, households leaving Long Island for areas outside of New York state had higher average adjusted gross incomes (\$61,152) than those coming to Long Island from other areas of the country (\$49,022). This is in line with expectations, given that median household incomes in Nassau-Suffolk are substantially higher

than that of the nation at large (US \$51,425 vs LI \$88,332).³ Higher adjusted gross incomes of leavers from Long Island to other parts of the country reflect higher pay and income on Long Island.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005-2009. Nassau and Suffolk number reflects weighted average for population of both counties.