

Migration within the United States: Role of Race-Ethnicity

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This article uses 2000 Census migration data to assess the role of race-ethnicity as part of interstate migration within the United States. The rising prominence of immigrant minorities, Hispanics and Asians, as well as blacks in the U.S. population, and their changing dispersal patterns, calls for explicit attention to their roles in interstate migration. The analysis employs maps, graphs, descriptive statistics, and a nested logit migration model that evaluates residents' departures from origin states, and migrants' selections of destination states over the 1995–2000 period. Focusing on two themes, we first assess the role of “cultural constraints” as they affect departures and destination selections for different race-ethnic groups. These constraints shape migration patterns for these groups due to their needs for social support networks, kinship ties, and access to informal employment opportunities that tend to be available in areas that house large concentrations of co-ethnics. For both the departure and destination selection parts of the migration process, we find that a concentration of co-ethnics in a state serves to deter potential out-migrants and to attract potential new migrants. There is also evidence of spatial assimilation in that cultural constraints are less pronounced in the destination selections for the more educated Hispanic, Black, and Asian migrants. Second, we examine the impacts that low-skilled immigration and high housing costs exert on domestic out-migration from urbanized, high immigration states. Our earlier research indicated that the former factor affected a low-skilled “white flight.” However, more recently, high housing costs, along with more racially diverse populations in these areas, suggest that the latter may be promoting a more multiethnic “middle class flight.” Our results support this interpretation by showing accentuated out-migration and reduced destination selections of less-educated migrants among all race-ethnic groups for states with high housing values and high levels of foreign-born immigration.