

Migration: Changing Faces of the South

A close examination of interregional migration patterns in the last two decades reveals some significant changes in the South's traditional demographic profile.

An important turnaround in South-to-North migration took place in the 1970s. The Census "South"¹ lost population through internal migration in each of the first six decades of the 20th Century and most southern states continued to experience out-migration through the 1960s. In the 1970s, however, net migration losses from most southern states were reversed. Today, the region is attracting a burgeoning number of people from other parts of the country and more southerners are "staying home."

¹This region includes Delaware, Maryland, D.C., Virginia, W. Virginia, N. Carolina, S. Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.

This article reviews the magnitude and reasons for the dramatic turnaround in South-to-North migration and points out some little-known changes in southern migration patterns which seem to have emerged in recent years. Some highlights are:

- The South is attracting more than 350,000 people each year compared to only 130,000 annually in the late sixties.
- Migration is now adding more women than men to the South's population.



- For the first time, inter-regional migration is adding to the South's black population.
- Experienced workers are becoming a more dominant force in the South's migration gains.
- The South is now gaining workers in all occupations; in the late 1960s only white collar workers and skilled craftsmen flowed into the South.
- The South has benefited from a North-to-South "brain drain" as a result of recent migration.
- Recent migration has helped to lower the incidence of Southern poverty.

These newcomers, drawn by the rise of the "New South," are also changing the South. We will discuss how they are changing the South and also look forward to the likely course of migration streams in coming years.

Changing Opportunities Have Caused the Migration Turnaround

The northern and western trek of southerners for most of this century is linked to the nation's pattern of economic development. Until recently, industries concentrated in the Midwest and Northeast as the country raced to world leadership in manufacturing production. Meanwhile, the South lagged behind the rest of the nation in adapting to technological change and industrialization; as a consequence, job seekers surged out of the region. The 1930s depression and, later, mechanization of farming, also pushed numerous low-income farmers to better opportunities outside the region. (Of course, the South was growing before the 1970s, but it still had surplus labor.)

The population shift to the South actually traces to the decade of the 1960s as southern out-migration slowed, in-migration to the South increased, and return migration of southern-born picked up.² But most southern states continued to lose population then through migration. Population gains were heavily concentrated in a few states, like Florida and Texas, which have gained from migration throughout this century.

Most of the South's newcomers in recent years have been white. Blacks continued their

exodus through the 1960s. However, in the 1970s the black out-flow was also reversed and by the end of the decade the South's black migration gain was accelerating. As the 1980's began, the decades-long tide from South to North and West had not only ebbed, but sizable white and black flows back into the region were adding to the South's population (see Box 1).

The migration balance now shows the South far out in front among the nation's regions. In the 1970s, the South gained 3.6 million residents from interregional migration, while the West gained 1.6 million, the industrial Northeast lost 2.8 million and the North Central lost 2.4 million.³ The reversal of the South's tide of out-migration is even more remarkable because so many Southern states have participated in the turnaround (see Box 2). Furthermore, the importance of migration gains is increasing; to gain population now, when natural increase is low, a region must keep its native-born and attract new residents from other regions.⁴

Why has the South recently been so successful in retaining its native population and in attracting Northerners and others to the region? Although a variety of complex forces are at work, a basic answer is that changes in the structure of the U.S. economy and the lifestyle of its people now favor production growth in the region. And production of goods and services, "robotics" aside, requires people!

The rise of the New South is partly related to the nation's shift away from reliance on heavy manufacturing industries toward "high tech" and service industries. New or expanded plants and firms in these industries are following the labor-intensive and low-wage industries (textiles, apparel) and natural resource industries (forest products, oil and gas, chemicals) which located here after World War II. These businesses and people are gravitating to the South because of "push" factors—high taxes and labor unionization elsewhere—as well as "pull" factors—the availability of lower-cost resources here.

The South's generally favorable business climate is bolstered by a mild-weather climate

³The data used in this study are from the 1970 Census of Population and the March 1980 round of the Current Population Survey. It is important to note that, because the CPS is a sample survey, apparent changes or differences noted in this article could be due to sampling error.

⁴International migration, in addition to natural increase and interregional migration, is the third possible source of population gain. Indeed, such states in the South as Texas and Florida have gained substantial population from this source in recent years. However, except for the data presented in Box 2, this article deals only with the magnitude and characteristics of interregional migrants.

²Larry H. Long and Kristin A. Hansen, "Trends in Migration in the South," *Demography*, 12:4 (November, 1975), pp. 601-614.

**BOX 1:
WHERE ARE MIGRANTS TO THE
SOUTH COMING FROM?**

Another way to view the turnaround in migration patterns from the late 1960s to the late 1970s is to examine how interregional migration patterns have changed.

In the period 1965-70, the South enjoyed a favorable migration balance against the rest of the nation (see Table A). Two-thirds of the net flow of people came from the Northeast which, in 1970, contained only 24 percent of the nation's population. In this period, the South still had a negative balance with the West. In terms of gross exchange, the South and North Central connection was, by far, the most significant for our region; over 2.3 million people crossed the borders between southern and North Central states.

There were two significant changes in these patterns by 1975-80. Migration between the South and West came to favor the South and the migration flows increased substantially from 1965-70. The Northeast continued its role as "loss leader" to the South and the North Central region continued to have the largest amount of interchange with the South.

The South's black population flowed out of the South to all of the other regions in the late 1960s. (See Table B). The North Central region was the big gainer with 107,000, while the Northeast gained 51,000 and the West gained 58,000. As with whites, the region with the largest gross black exchange with the South in the late 1960s was the North Central.

By the late 1970s, black migration had turned completely around so that the South now gained 142,000 from the Northeast, 27,000 from the North Central region, and 26,000 from the West. The black turnaround totaled 411,000, representing 37 percent of the increase in net migration to the South from 1965-70 to 1975-80. Clearly, this turnaround in the migration patterns of blacks is an important demographic event of the 1970s which will influence the economy of the South in coming years.

Table A. Total Migration To and From the South
(Age 5 and Over)
(thousands)

	1965-70			1975-80		
	To the South	From the South	Net Migration	To the South	From the South	Net Migration
Northeast	1,064	626	+438	1,452	589	+ 863
North Central	1,282	1,007	+275	1,688	950	+ 738
West	796	853	- 57	1,064	901	+ 163
TOTAL	3,142	2,486	+656	4,204	2,440	+1,764

Table B. Black Migration To and From the South
(Age 5 and Over)
(thousands)

	1965-70			1975-80		
	To the South	From the South	Net Migration	To the South	From the South	Net Migration
Northeast	69	120	- 51	192	50	+142
North Central	57	164	-107	121	94	+ 27
West	36	94	- 58	102	76	+ 26
TOTAL	162	378	-216	415	220	+195

and a comfortable and relatively low-cost lifestyle. These factors go a long way towards explaining the region's attractiveness to the growing pool of retirees. They also help explain the southward trek of an increasing number of footloose service industries created by the nation's shifting production structure.

These and other reasons account for the phoenix-like rebirth of the South. The enormous changes hold great promise for further growth of the region. But we must understand how the region is being affected by people flows to fully appreciate these changes. What are these migrants bringing to the party?

Migration adds workers, who then spend their wages on everything from homes to cars to ice cream for their children. As voters, they also demand that schools, roads, and hospitals be built with money from the public coffers. We know that migrants tend to be young and well educated; on the other hand, we also know that Florida has been a mecca for the elderly. Has the South's favorable migration balance changed the region's population composition in such a way as to add to, or subtract from, the public coffers? A careful comparison of late-1960s migrants and late-1970s migrants provides tentative answers to these questions and clues to other

important consequences of the recent migration turnaround.

The South Is Attracting Many Different Faces

Startling changes have occurred in the South's migration streams since 1965. The South's population gain from migration more than doubled from 130,000 per year in the 1965-70 period to over 350,000 per year in 1975-80. The rate⁵ of net migration to the South also has more than doubled over the same period, from 1.1 percent to 2.7 percent of the South's population. But this rate, it should be emphasized, is influenced by the tendency of people to migrate at different ages *and* by the number of people in the various age groups. As we will see, the high migration rate to the South in the late 1970s occurred partly because members of the large Baby Boom generation were reaching a time in their "life cycle" when they were most likely to move.

⁵"Rates" referred to in this article are not rates on an "at risk" basis (due to unavailability of data). Instead, they refer to the relevant number of migrants with a particular characteristic as a percentage of the relevant end-of-period resident population with the characteristic.

Table 1. Interregional Migration: 1965-1970 and 1975-1980
(Number in Thousands)

	North-east	North Central	South	West
1965-1970:				
In-migrants	1,273	2,024	3,124	2,309
Outmigrants	1,988	2,661	2,486	1,613
Net migration	-715	-637	+656	+696
1975-1980:				
In-migrants	1,106	1,993	4,204	2,838
Outmigrants	2,592	3,166	2,440	1,945
Net migration	-1,486	-1,173	+1,764	+893

Source: Bureau of the Census, **Geographical Mobility: March 1975 to March 1980**

Generally, the acceleration of the South's migration gain was caused by an increase in people moving into the South and a decrease in people moving out (see Table 1). In the process, the economic and demographic characteristics of the migrants have changed. For

Table 2: Percent Distribution of Southern Migrants by Selected Characteristics for Persons Age 5+

Age	Non-South U.S. Population		South Population		In-Migrants		Out-Migrants		Net Migrants	
	1970	1980	1970	1980	'65-'70	'75-'80	'65-'70	'75-'80	'65-'70	'75-'80
5-14	21.7	16.6	22.3	17.4	20.3	18.6	23.4	19.1	8.7	18.0
15-24	18.8	20.1	19.7	19.7	28.1	19.9	28.0	23.1	28.4	15.4
25-34	13.4	17.6	13.4	17.0	19.4	25.6	25.5	33.3	-3.6	14.8
35-44	12.4	12.3	12.3	13.0	11.2	12.2	11.4	10.6	10.5	14.3
45-64	22.8	21.8	21.8	20.9	13.3	16.3	8.9	9.5	30.3	25.8
65+	10.9	11.6	10.5	12.0	7.7	7.5	3.0	4.4	25.4	11.7
Total ('000)	128,630	136,473	57,426	65,742	3,142	4,204	2,486	2,440	656	1,764
Rate	—	—	—	—	2.4	3.1	4.3	3.7	1.1	2.7
Race										
% Black	7.4	8.2	18.6	17.9	5.2	9.9	15.2	9.0	-32.9	11.0
Total	9,462	11,252	10,686	11,785	162	416	378	220	-216	195
Black rate	—	—	—	—	1.7	3.7	3.5	1.9	-2.0	1.6
White rate	—	—	—	—	2.5	3.1	4.5	4.1	1.9	2.9
Sex										
% Male	48.4	48.2	48.5	48.4	53.2	49.5	51.8	50.2	58.8	48.6
Total	62,324	65,769	27,843	31,798	1,672	2,083	1,289	1,225	386	858
Male rate	—	—	—	—	2.7	3.2	4.6	3.8	1.4	2.4
Female rate	—	—	—	—	2.2	3.0	4.1	3.6	.9	2.4

**BOX 2:
CHANGING PATTERNS OF TOTAL
MIGRATION TO SOUTHERN STATES**

When detailed migration data from the 1980 Census of Population is released next year, it will allow us to examine effects of total migration—interregional and international—on individual southern states. In the meantime, estimates of total migration (but not the characteristics of international migrants) are available from other researchers. How have these migration patterns changed for individual states?

William J. Serow (Florida State University) and Dudley L. Poston (University of Texas) have estimated the components of population change for the nation, its regions, and southern states in the 1960-70 and 1970-80 periods. They estimate total migration gains for the states as the residual differences between the states' populations in 1970 and 1980 after adding births and subtracting deaths during the decade. Their results are shown in the table.

One of their major findings is that all southern states gained population from migration in the 1970s (the District of Columbia was the only area of the South to register net out-migration in the decade). In contrast, nine southern states lost population from migration in the 1960s. Serow and Poston also claim that "the singularly striking feature of migration trends in the 1970s" is this turnaround in many southern states' migration trends (including such Sixth Federal Reserve District states as Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee).

The dramatic turnaround from net out-migration to net in-migration in so many southern states, they say, explains why the South was the only region with a population growth rate higher in the 1970s than in the 1960s. The strong southern migration gain more than offset the falling rate of natural increase for the nation. Equally important, the changing migration streams point to the "emergence of the South as a region of broadly based growth."

Even though many more southern states are now gaining population from migration, two states' gains dominate the region. Florida and Texas together accounted for almost half the region's population increase in the 1970s. Fully 60 percent of the South's 7.5 million net migrants moved into these states. It is likely that these states received disproportionate numbers of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, and, domestically, were favored by economic growth and federal spending on military installations. Florida, as noted elsewhere, also attracts numerous retired people.

Southern migration patterns changed sharply over the past twenty years.

(Thousands)

Net Migration

1960-70 1970-80



W.V.	-265	WV	111
MD	385	MD	57
DE	38	DE	8
DC	-100	DC	-150
VA	141	VA	351
NC	-94	NC	370
SC	-149	SC	269
GA	51	GA	440
FL	1,326	FL	2,716



KY	-153	KY	205
TN	-45	TN	389
AL	-233	AL	178
MS	-267	MS	81



OK	13	OK	295
AR	-71	AR	230
LA	-132	LA	187
TX	146	TX	1,761

Source: William J. Serow and Dudley L. Poston, "Demographic and Economic Changes in the South," *Texas Business Review*, January-February, 1982.

example, women have gained relative to men, and blacks have gained relative to whites (see Table 2). In addition, the age composition, educational levels, types of occupations, and poverty characteristics of the migrating and resident populations have changed.

Females and Blacks Have Increased Their Net Migration Shares

Migration to the South in the 1965-70 period tended to increase slightly the ratio of males to females. The population gain due to migration favored males by a ratio of six to four. Today, however, both sexes have the same odds of migrating; and, because women are more numerous than men, migration is increasing the proportion of women in the southern population.

There has been an even more pronounced change in black migration patterns. In the 1965-70 period black migration subtracted from the population of the South in all age groups (see chart 1) and lowered the black share of the region's population. In sharp contrast, by 1975-80 net migration of blacks of all ages turned positive. Net migration in 1975-80 amounted to 1.6 percent of the 1980 black southern population compared to -2 percent of the 1970 population in the earlier period.

In spite of the dramatic turnaround in the migration pattern of blacks, migration flows in the 1975-80 period still reduced the black share of the South's population. This was due

to the increased tendency of whites to migrate to the South and the fact that the white population was much larger than the black population. But given higher black fertility and the new migration trends, the black percentage of the South's population is likely to increase in coming years.

Baby Boomers Have Made Their Presence Felt

The age distribution of the South's newcomers changed significantly in the two periods. Most notably, the share of net migrants age 45 and over fell precipitously, from 55.7 percent in 1965-70 to 37.5 percent in 1975-80. Their share fell largely because the net migration rate of the Baby Boom generation increased. The net migration rate of the 25-34 population went up sharply, from -.3 percent in 1965-70 to 2.3 percent in 1975-80.

The changing age distribution of migrants, however, had little effect on the age distribution of the southern population in either period. The number and age distribution of migrants were dominated by the age distribution of the resident population. But for particular states in the South such as Florida, which attracts a large share of elderly migrants, the impact of migration on the age distribution was quite significant.

Changes in the age characteristics of those moving into and out of the South are also

Chart 1. Black Net Migration Rates Turned Around in All Age Groups

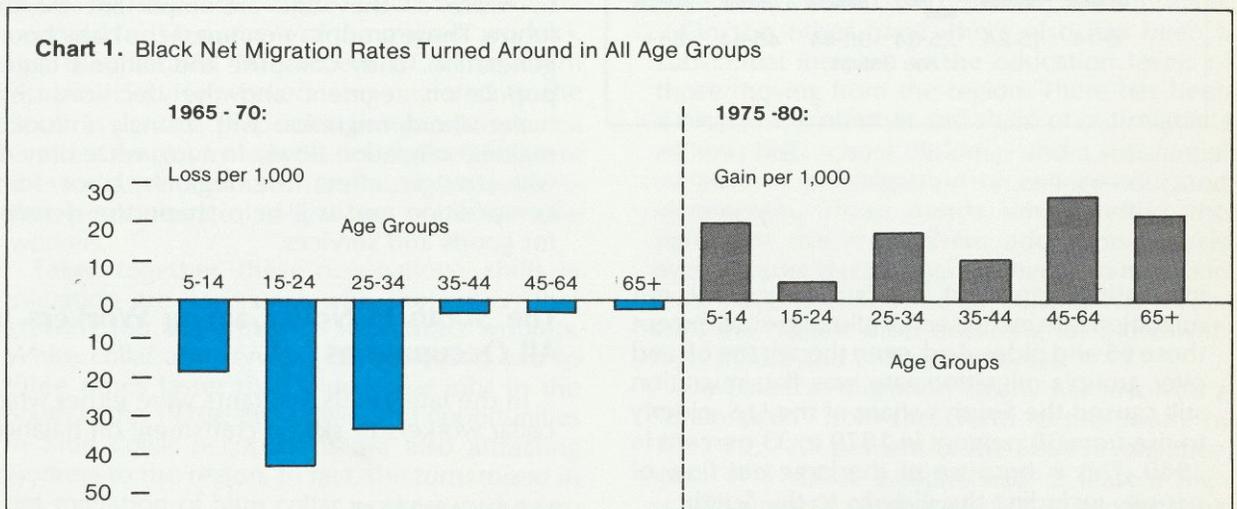
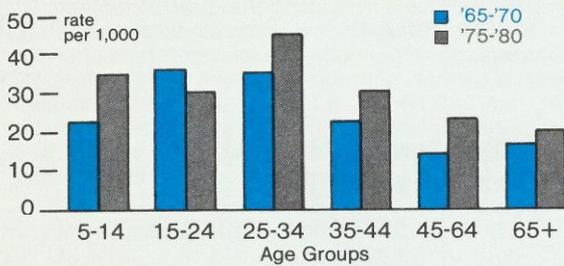
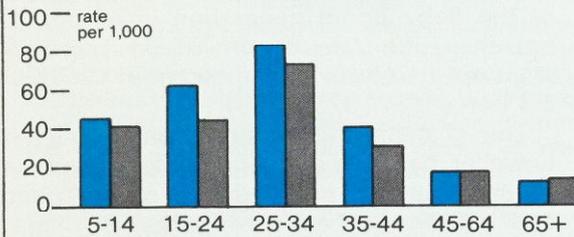


Chart 2.

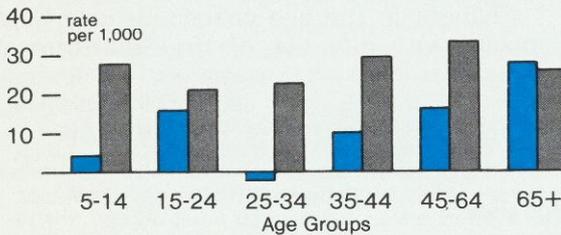
Since 1970, there has been an increasing tendency to move to South from outside and . . .



a decreasing tendency of southerners to move out of region . . .



thus contributing to the South's gain.



interesting (see chart 2). On balance, the net migration rate increased for all age groups except those 65 and older. And, even though the 65 and over group's migration rate was flat, migration still caused the South's share of the U.S. elderly to rise from 30 percent in 1970 to 33 percent in 1980. This is because of the large net flow of people, including the elderly, to the South.

Changes in the patterns of migration for those age 15-24 and 25-34 also seem startling. In the age group 15-24, the net migration rate increased slightly, from 16 per 1,000 to 21 per 1,000. The net gain, 85,000 is due entirely to the turnaround in net black migration, which amounted to -98,000 in 1965-70 but +13,000 in 1975-80. The number of movers age 15-24 into the South fell by 47,000 but black in-migration increased by 37,000; total moves out of the South fell by 132,000 with over half that decline attributable to the much smaller black population. Thus, the South in the 1970s began to keep its young, native black and to attract young blacks from other regions.

Changing migration patterns of blacks age 25-34 also contributed to the sharp increase in net migration of the 25-34 population. Southern out-migrants in this age group increased by 180,000, while black out-migration fell by 17,000. Viewed another way, the black population accounted for one-fourth of the turnaround of 286,000 in net migration and the black share of in-migrants rose from 5.9 percent in 1965-70 to 9.2 percent in 1975-80.

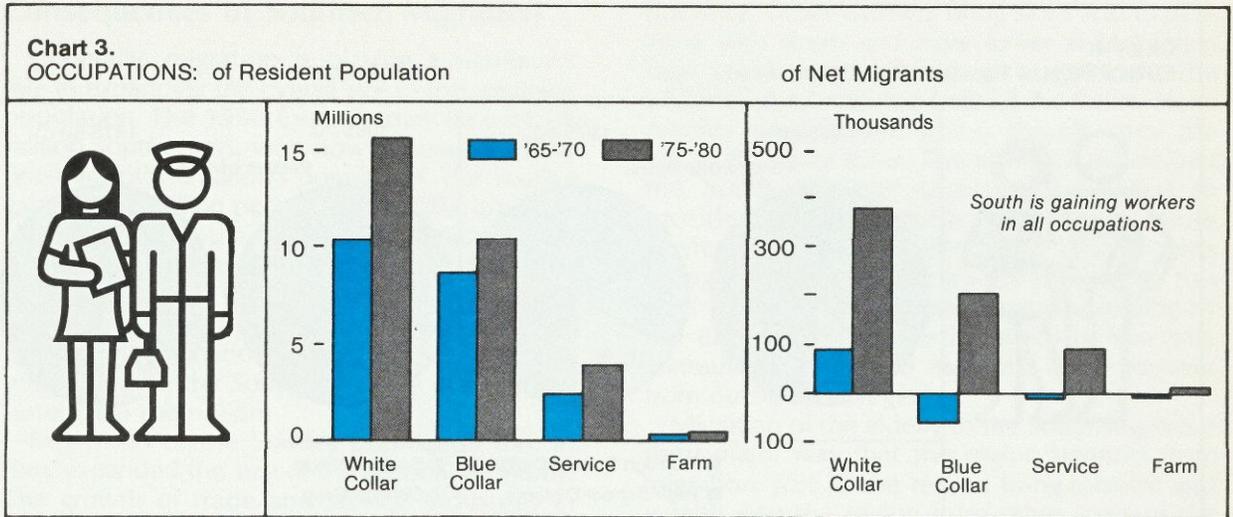
In fact, these sharp reversals are somewhat misleading. An important reason for the changes in these two young age groups is that in-migration of those age 15-24 in the 1965-70 period is exaggerated by those entering military service and being sent to southern bases. Similarly, out-migration of those 25-34 is exaggerated by personnel departing military service and returning to their home states.⁶

Today, in the absence of war, changes in the tendency of people in these two young groups to move as they age are important for the future. These groups encompass the baby boom generation. They comprise the nation's largest population segment and the decisions they make about migration will strongly influence regional migration flows. In turn, what they do will strongly affect the region's labor force composition and will help shape the demand for goods and services.

The South Is Now Gaining Workers In All Occupations

In the late 1960s, migrants were either white collar workers or skilled craftsmen; on balance,

⁶Long and Hansen, op. cit.



blue collar, service and farm workers flowed out of the region. In the 1975-80 period white collar workers still dominated the South's new arrivals, but the other occupational groups have begun to flow into the region as well (see chart 3).

The South's major employment shifts in the decade of the seventies were increases in the white collar and service workers' shares of employment. A comparison of the distribution of 1975-80 migrants' occupations with the occupational distribution of the South's resident population in 1980 shows that migration into the region helped white collar and service shares to increase. White collar workers accounted for 55 percent of the migrant workers, but they totaled 50 percent of all southern workers. Service workers also migrated to the South in a greater proportion compared to service workers' employment in the South. The flip side of these relative additions from migration was less-than-proportionate migration of blue-collar workers.

Taken together, these occupational shifts in migration are consistent with the notion that growing job opportunities will attract workers. White collar and service jobs increased two to three times faster than blue collar jobs in the South in the 1970s. But growing job opportunities in blue collar occupations are also attracting workers to the region. In fact, the *turnaround* in net migration of blue collar workers in the two

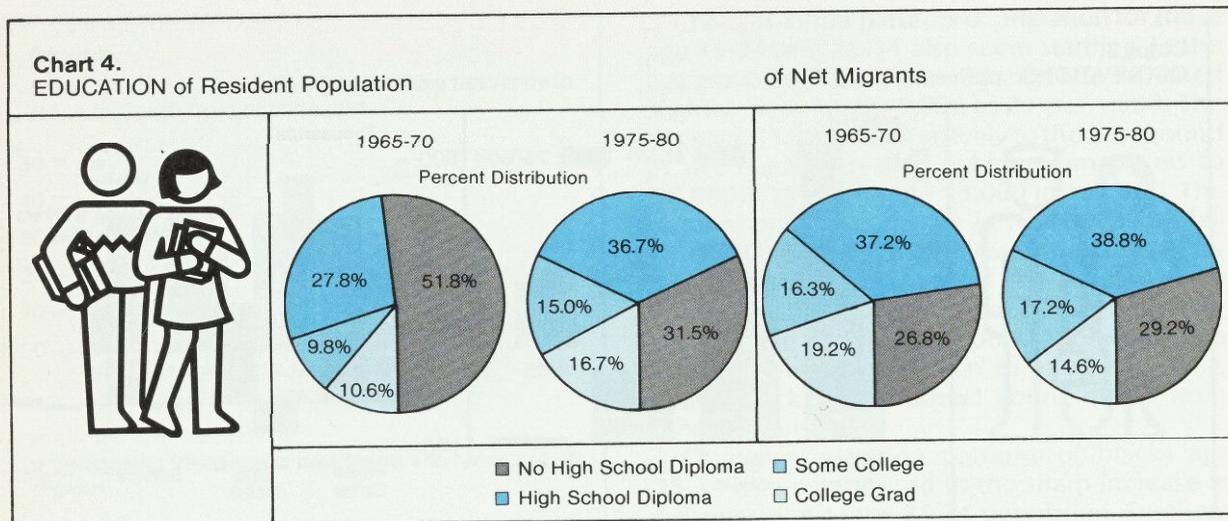
periods, 267,000, is almost as large as the 293,000 increase in white collar migrants.

The South has Benefited from a "Brain Drain"

Roughly one-third of the people age 25-64 who entered the South in both periods had a high school education while the share of in-migrants with some college study or a degree increased over the two periods. Migration rates for all categories of educational achievement rose, partly because of the national increase in educational levels. The tendency to migrate to the South increased with higher levels of education.

On the other hand, there also has been a substantial increase in the education levels of those moving from the region. There has been a drop in the number and share of out-migrants without high school diplomas and a substantial increase in out-migration of college-educated southerners. These trends simply reflect the significant rise in southern educational levels over the past decade. Southerners' out-migration rates have declined for all educational levels, with the biggest drop occurring for those with high school and college diplomas.

On balance, migration clearly has involved a "brain drain" from the North to the South. In 1965-70, 72.7 percent of the South's migration gain, or 174,000 people, had at least a high school diploma, compared to 48.2 percent of the



South's resident population (see Chart 4). In 1975-80, migration added 833,000 people with at least a high school diploma to the South's population. In the latter period this group represented 70.6 percent of the South's migration gain; meanwhile, the South's resident population in this category rose to 68.5 percent. These data indicate that the relative education gain to the South has declined over the two periods.

This narrowing of the relative education gain to the South from migration is most evident in the data concerning college graduates. In the 1965-70 period, 19.2 percent of the net migrants possessed college degrees compared to 10.6 percent of the resident population. By 1975-80, the share of migrants with college degrees declined to 14.6 percent, or 2.1 percent less than this group's share of the South's resident population. However, absolute migration still added 172,000 people in this category to the South's population.

Migration has Helped Lower the Incidence of Southern Poverty

Southern migration gains have tended to lower the share of the South's population living in poverty in both five-year periods.⁷ But, like differences in educational levels, the poverty mix of migrants and the resident population has narrowed in the two periods. In 1965-70, some 12.9 percent of the net migrants were

poor compared to 20 percent of the southern population. By 1975-80 the share of the South's population which was poor dropped to 14.5 percent while the share of poor migrants declined only to 11.7 percent.

Among whites, newcomers with above-poverty incomes grew more than twice as fast as the number of poor migrants between the two periods. However, because of advances made against poverty in the South, the white migrant gain in both periods was proportional to the above-below poverty mix of the South's resident population. In the 1975-80 period, 90 percent were above-poverty compared to 85 percent in the earlier period.

Blacks, on the other hand, were net movers from the South in 1965-70; one-fifth of them were poor. This black migration lowered the overall share of net migrants who were poor compared to the South's overall poverty rate. On balance, poor blacks entered the South in the 1975-80 period. However, there were relatively fewer poor black migrants compared to the resident southern black population (26 percent versus 32.5 percent). Thus, migration has tended particularly to lower the poverty mix among southern blacks.

⁷The South's share of the nation's poverty population also dropped—from 46 percent in 1969 to 42 percent in 1979. Despite the South's relative improvement in reducing poverty, the South still had more poor persons in 1979 than any other region (10.6 million) and the highest poverty rate as well (15 percent). See Bureau of the Census, **Population Profile of the United States: 1980**, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 363.

Consequences of Southern Migration

Generally, migration is playing a significant role in expanding the overall size of the southern population. The 1980 Census counted over 75 million southerners, who now account for fully one-third of the nation's population. The South's gain of 12.5 million people in the 1970s amounts to slightly more than half of the nation's total population increase. Changing migration patterns help explain the South's population growth of 20 percent in the 1970s compared to 11.4 percent for the nation; in the 1960s, before the migration shift, the South grew only one percent faster than the nation.

Expansion of the South's population has, in turn, expanded the size of the regional economy. The growth of trade and service industries in the South, for example, is largely the result of population shift to the South.⁸ The construction industry is also heavily dependent on population pressures to provide more housing, factories and highways. Equally dependent are the housing-related finance, insurance, and real estate, transportation, and public utilities industries.

Expansion of the region's economy via population shifts also can enhance the efficiency of producing for local or national markets. (Recall Adam Smith's dictum, ". . . specialization and division of labor is limited only by the extent of the market"). In addition, market-enlarging migration can lower the per capita cost of "social infrastructure" (like roads, schools, and hospitals). This is because a fixed expense is shared among a larger number of workers.

A second important way that migration has benefited the South is through the effect of the composition of migration on employment. There are several ways that migration should have had a favorable employment impact. Young trained workers have provided skills to fill local shortages or labor bottlenecks. Job opportunities have attracted engineers to Louisiana, Texas, and other parts of the South where the energy industry has burgeoned, and have brought computer scientists and programmers to such white collar areas as central Florida and Atlanta.

The addition of mature workers, increasingly a force in migration to the South, should also have helped employment and increased pro-

ductivity. Older workers bring skills and experience with them and have lower absenteeism than young workers. Perhaps surprisingly, the addition of retirees has helped the South make relative employment gains, though they are not in the labor force. The elderly have helped the South because workers are needed to provide services to them. Furthermore, these services are paid for with savings and pensions brought into the region by the retirees. In this way, "autonomous" migration and spending by the elderly (who come in search of sun and, sometimes, even surf) may pull other workers from outside the region.

Migration of the elderly to the South suggests a third major way that the region benefits from migration. Just as the retired bring income and wealth into the region from other parts of the nation, so, too, do young and mature workers. What the workers bring is "human capital," or skills, which have been developed and paid for by other regions where they were trained. It is even likely that skilled workers have complemented and increased the productivity of the relatively large pool of unskilled southern workers.⁹

On the cost side of the migration ledger, some potential losses from migration should be noted. Migration may foster cultural disagreements—the "Yankee-Confederate" clash is an example which comes to this migrant writer's mind. A more tangible example is the clash of migration-fed urban growth competing with nearby rural interests for scarce land. These localized density and/or cultural problems are examples of the general problem of environmental disruption which change usually brings. (In terms of the natural ecology, a similar example is salt intrusion into vital Florida water supplies.)

Migration can generate other possibly important problems associated with competing demands. For example, poor adults with families and more affluent singles may compete over housing or over providing schools for the young or hospitals for the elderly. But since trade-offs like these are present in all economies, the problem is one of degree and not kind. Fortunately, fast-growing economies like the South

⁸Philip L. Rones, "Moving to the Sun: Regional Job Growth, 1968 to 1978," *Monthly Labor Review*, 103 (March 1980).

⁹Migrants are **not** taking skilled jobs from southerners. Skilled labor demand is increasing faster than skilled labor supply, so that unemployment rates in the South are normally below national levels, and the southern income per capita is rising more rapidly than the nation's income per capita.

can generate more income throughout the economy. This offsets the need, in a stagnant economy, for someone to lose when another person gains. And the South has benefited doubly because newcomers have helped generate economic southern growth.¹⁰

The Future of Southern Migration

Recent migration to the South is almost surely positive in its impact on the well-being of the region's population. Migration helped increase per capita personal income from 86 percent of the national income level, \$3,945, in 1970 to 91 percent of the national income level, \$9,521, in 1980. But what about the future? Will migration continue and will it benefit the South?

There is some evidence that there has been a tendency for the characteristics of migrants and the resident population to become more alike. This fact suggests that the relative gain to the South of additional migration is declining.

The convergence should not really be all that surprising. For example, young college graduates are more likely to move than those with fewer years of education or those who are older. (Net lifetime benefits to these younger workers is likely to be higher than for older and less-educated people). Since the South's average level of educational achievement has lagged behind the rest of the nation, migration to the South promises to raise its average school years completed. However, because the educational gap between the South and other regions also has been narrowing, the educational characteristics of migrants and of the South's resident population should similarly narrow. If more education leads to greater productivity, then the narrowing of educational differences also means that the South is gaining relatively less from migration. But migration can still benefit

the South through enlargement of the market, for reasons discussed earlier. And the South still is gaining skills which were developed elsewhere.

A persuasive argument can be made that the convergence we have noted is coming about precisely because markets work to eliminate differences in costs and prices across markets. In this view, the benefits of migration should diminish eventually and, with them, migration itself—until differences in opportunities among regions again arise. In the meantime, the fact that strong migration to the South continues suggests that migrants and the region alike are still benefiting from the shift.

It is unlikely that the South's favorable migration balance will be reversed in this decade. For environmental and economic reasons it appears that capital and businesses are still flowing into the South from other regions. It is likely that firms looking to the region are finding the changing composition of the resident workforce—older and more educated—to be an attractive feature of the South. It should also be encouraging to firms that past business investments in the region have succeeded in attracting workers from outside the region.

Two major demographic events are likely to affect migration flows to the region in the 1980s—the falling rate of natural increase for the nation and the aging of the baby boom generation. The low rate of natural increase, combined with changes in the age structure of the population, will slow the growth of the migration pool. If the migration tendencies of the late seventies hold through this decade, the South's yearly migration gains will also hold steady. Further, the aging of the baby boomers suggests that the average age of migrants will rise as older workers should continue to follow business to the South, joining the migration stream of the elderly who are moving to their place in the sun.

—William J. Kahley

¹⁰This point can be made another way. Suppose income of in-migrants is relatively high compared to the resident population. Then consumption, saving, and investment can be higher than in the absence of migration. The higher investment, in turn, generates expansion of the ability of the regional economy to produce, thereby "paying for" the migrants' initial spending which generated the "conflict."