

Working-Age Illinoisans Continue To Flee State

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(The Center Square) – Working-age Illinoisans continue to relocate to other states.

An analysis by the University of Illinois Extension looked at demographic trends and revealed the number of people aged 25 to 39 in Illinois decreased, one of the few states in the country to see a decline. Illinois also lost population in the 40 to 59 age group.

“The U.S. population actually grew in the prime working age, young adult age cohorts, 25 to 29, 30 to 34 and 35 to 39 year olds,” said Zach Kennedy, community and economic development state specialist for the U of I Extension.

Kennedy said possible reasons for the age group to leave are job opportunities, Illinois' high taxes, weather, and something he calls "brain drain."

"The students who went out of state for college and not return, the rate of that was second highest in Illinois," Kennedy said. "Only New Jersey lost more of their college-aged individuals out of state who then never returned."

In rural Illinois, only six downstate counties out of 83 gained population since 2010: Monroe, Johnson, Grundy, Carroll, Effingham, and Williamson.

Three urban counties outside of the Chicago area added population, including Kendall, Champaign and McLean counties.

Some of the cities with the largest population losses include East St. Louis (-31.6%), Charleston (-20.8%), Harvey (-19.6%), Aurora (-8.8%), and Decatur (-7.4%).

Where are people headed? Kennedy said statistics show the top five states for population growth are Texas, Florida, California, Georgia and Washington.

Only two other states have lost population since 2010, West Virginia and Mississippi.

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