



# The Pandemic’s Impact on NYC Migration Patterns

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## Summary

For a few short months in the spring of 2020, New York City was the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in America. The number of cases exploded from an average of 274 per day during the week of March 8<sup>th</sup> to 5,132 just three weeks later.<sup>1</sup> Through September 2021, more than 34,000 people have died from COVID-19 in the city; close to two-thirds of those deaths occurred in the first three months.<sup>2</sup> Even as the virus eventually spread across the country in the latter half of 2020, among the 10 largest U.S. cities and their counties, New York City still had the highest number of total deaths per capita through October 2021.<sup>3</sup>

Following the closure of non-essential businesses in New York City for nearly three months, the process of fully reopening schools, child care centers, businesses, entertainment, cultural attractions, and other city amenities took more than a year and included numerous starts and

<sup>1</sup> Thompson CN, Baumgartner J, Pichardo C, et al. COVID-19 Outbreak — New York City, February 29–June 1, 2020. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. November 20, 2020. 69(46):1725–1729, [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6946a2.htm?s\\_cid=mm6946a2\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6946a2.htm?s_cid=mm6946a2_w)

<sup>2</sup> New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, “COVID-19 Data,” <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data.page>.

<sup>3</sup> Based on county-level data reported by the New York Times, as of October 18, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/covid-cases.html>.

stops. COVID-19 restrictions were not fully lifted by New York State until June 2021 and public schools did not fully return to full-time, in-person learning until September 2021.

The pandemic experience in New York City had a significant impact on migration into and out of the city. The following analysis documents changes in migration to and from New York City using data published by the United States Postal Service (USPS) from change of address forms. The analysis confirms that when schools and offices closed in March 2020, and sirens filled the air, many New Yorkers fled, particularly from wealthier neighborhoods.

Major findings of the analysis include:

- In a typical year, a tally of change of address forms for New York City shows a net loss of movers – that is, the number of move-outs exceeds the number of move-ins (excluding international move-ins) – but from 2019 to 2020, the net loss more than tripled. Excluding moves marked as “temporary,” net out-migration from the city increased by an estimated 130,837 from March 2020 through June 2021, as compared to pre-pandemic trends.
- In the first three months of the pandemic, from March to May 2020, more than 60 percent of net moves from city addresses were marked as temporary, indicating that the person or household intended to return, but since then 79 percent of net moves have been marked as permanent.
- Residents from the city’s wealthiest neighborhoods were the most likely to leave. Residents in the wealthiest 10 percent of city neighborhoods, as measured by median income, were 4.6 times more likely to leave than other residents during 2020, recording 109 net move-outs per 1,000 residents vs 24 elsewhere. Moves from wealthier neighborhoods were also more likely to be recorded as temporary. About half of net out-migration from the wealthiest 10 percent of neighborhoods was marked as temporary in 2020, compared to 44 percent in the next wealthiest decile and less than 30 percent elsewhere.
- Since July 2021, USPS data has shown an estimated net gain of 6,332 permanent movers, indicating a gradual return to New York City, mainly in neighborhoods that experienced the greatest flight. On a per-capita basis, the largest net gains over the summer were in Chelsea/Midtown, Murray Hill/Gramercy, Battery Park City/Greenwich Village, and Chinatown/Lower East Side.

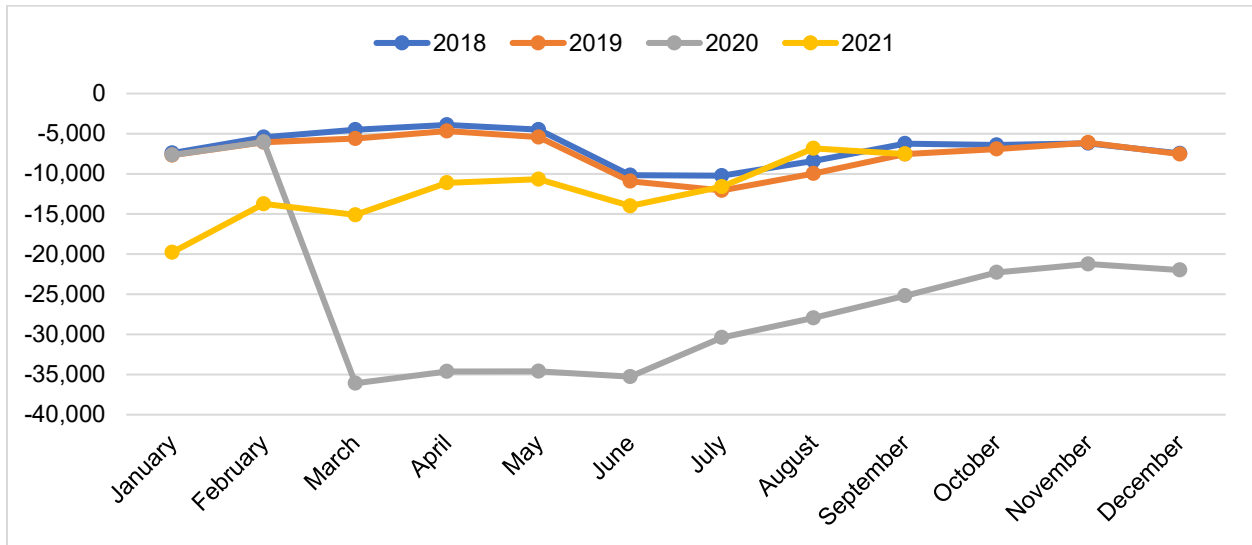
In more recent months, the reopening of office buildings, the return of in-person school, and the rebirth of arts and entertainment have helped to attract movers to the city. Nonetheless, certain neighborhoods have a long road ahead to regain pre-pandemic population. Whether or not these gains continue and accelerate will depend on the trajectory of the pandemic and the city’s ability to maintain in-person activities and attractions, as well as the endurance of telework arrangements and workers’ ability and desire to live farther from their place of work as commuting becomes less burdensome.

## The Pandemic Migration

In any given year, hundreds of thousands of households move to or from a New York City home. Some moves happen locally, within the city or even within the same borough or neighborhood, while other residents change states or move abroad.<sup>4</sup> Before the pandemic, in calendar year 2019, residential movers submitted 616,091 change of address request forms for temporary and permanent moves from a New York City address and 525,559 forms for moves to a New York City address, indicating a net loss of 90,532 movers. (As discussed in more detail in the methodology section, USPS change of address requests include residents who moved within the five boroughs but exclude moves in which a form was not submitted, such as moves originating abroad, resulting in an undercount of move-ins.) Change of address forms can be submitted for both temporary moves, that is, the mover intends to return, and permanent moves.

But in 2020, migration patterns changed drastically. The number of change of address requests for move-outs from New York City addresses increased 36 percent to 837,404, while requests for move-ins, including intracity moves, remained relatively stable at 534,142. In every month from March 2020 through June 2021, New York City lost more movers citywide than during the same month in 2019 (Chart 1). Net losses peaked in March 2020 at the pandemic’s onset, as New Yorkers filed 79,793 move-out forms, an increase of 65 percent over March 2019. However, since July 2021 monthly net losses have been comparable to or even slightly better than 2019.

**Chart 1. Monthly Net Residential Moves to and from New York City, 2018-2021**



SOURCE: NYC Comptroller’s Office analysis of United States Postal Service, “Change of Address Stats,”

<https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Includes temporary and permanent moves.

<sup>4</sup> Matched tax return data from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) shows that 91,143 tax filers, representing 144,516 personal exemptions, moved from a New York City borough to a different New York City borough during 2019. Internal Revenue Service, “SOI Tax Stats – Migration Data,” <https://www.irs.gov/statistics/soi-tax-stats-migration-data>.

## Data and Methodology

The United States Postal Service (USPS) publishes monthly data on requests for a change of address form. Such requests are used to initiate mail forwarding services. The data offers insight into general trends in migration and population but does not capture all population movements. The data includes domestic moves, including intracity moves, and moves to a foreign country but does not capture moves originating from outside the country – historically a significant source of new residents for New York City prior to COVID-related travel bans. The federal Census Bureau estimates that in 2019 New York City gained a net of 33,818 residents from international migration but lost a net of 132,266 residents from domestic migration. Given strict international travel restrictions in place during 2020 and 2021, comparisons to 2019 likely understate pandemic-era net losses. The USPS also redacts data if 10 or fewer moves occur within one zip code during the month.

When submitting a change of address form, the USPS instructs movers to indicate that the move is “permanent” if they do not plan to return to their old address or “temporary” if they plan to move back. Temporary mail forwarding can initially be requested for between 15 days and six months, with an option to extend for another six months. The USPS public dataset separates the data by residential and business and also by permanent and temporary but does not include cross tabulations, such as permanent residential or temporary business. In 2020, 92 percent of all moves to or from New York City addresses were residential. To estimate permanent, residential movers, this analysis applies the share of residential move-ins and move-outs to total permanent move-ins and move-outs in each month in each zip code.

In this analysis, the number of residential moves reflects change of address forms submitted by both families and individuals. A request for a “family” can be made if everyone has the same last name and everyone is moving to the same place. In 2020, 82 percent of recorded residential moves were for individuals. Unless otherwise noted, data reflect both temporary and permanent residential moves.

Data for New York City is based on a match of New York City zip codes. The analysis excludes four zip codes that are partially in Queens but primarily in Nassau County. To summarize migration data by neighborhood, zip code level data was apportioned to community districts and Census-defined Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) based on a crosswalk developed by Baruch College.

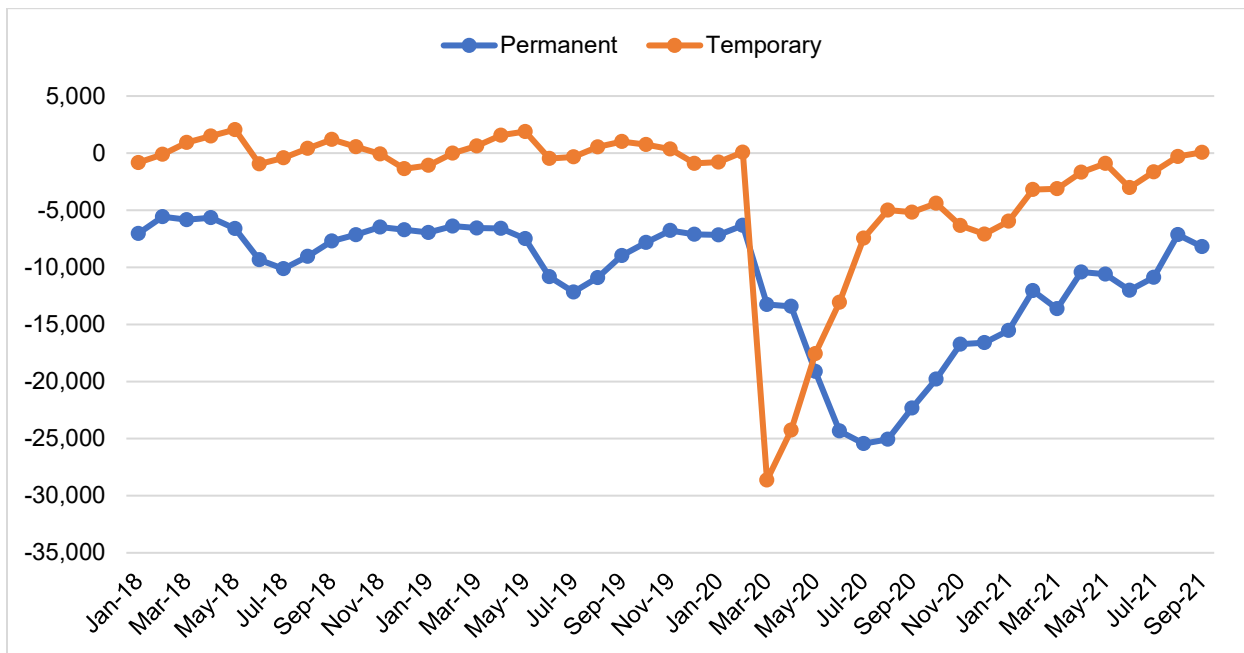
## A Temporary Exodus?

When move-outs first spiked, the majority of net moves from city addresses were intended to be temporary. The post office instructs movers to mark a change of address as “temporary” if the mover intends to move back within six months. In New York City, net temporary move-outs, including residential and business moves, jumped from close to zero in February 2020 to 28,625 the following month (Chart 2). From March to May 2020, more than 60 percent of net moves from city addresses were marked as temporary.

However, following the initial burst of largely temporary moves, a wave of permanent moves from city addresses occurred during the summer and fall. From June 2020 through September 2021, 79 percent of net move-outs have been marked as permanent.

Based on an extrapolation of USPS data, the Comptroller’s Office estimates that the city experienced additional out-migration of 130,837 permanent residential movers from March 2020 through June 2021 (see Data and Methodology for more details). Since July 2021, the city has registered an estimated net gain of 6,332 permanent movers, as compared to the same months in 2019, indicating a gradual return to New York City. Nearly 62 percent of the net gain over these three months occurred during August.

**Chart 2. Monthly Net Residential and Business Moves to and from New York City Recorded as Permanent or Temporary, 2018-2021**



SOURCE: NYC Comptroller’s Office analysis of United States Postal Service, “Change of Address Stats,” <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

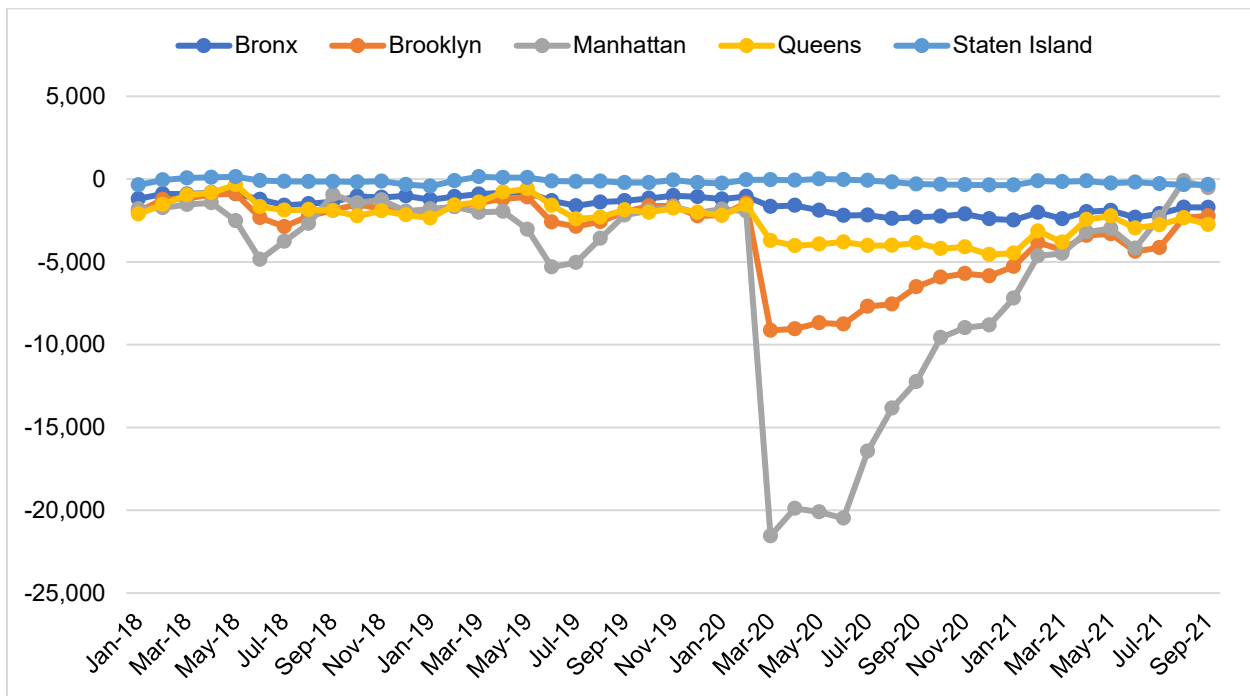
Note: Includes residential and business moves.

## Escape from (Parts of) New York

Prior to the pandemic, annual net residential move-outs recorded by the USPS were higher in Manhattan than other boroughs, following a seasonal pattern with peak out-migration in June (Chart 3). Larger net outflows from Manhattan likely reflects multiple factors, including a high number of transient residents, such as college and university students, who may not consistently file change of address forms, and wealthier residents who may temporarily leave for a season. Yet, despite a higher baseline in Manhattan, the pandemic had a far outsized impact on the borough.

In March 2020, Manhattan saw net residential move-outs of 21,547, compared to 1,938 in the month prior and 2,008 in March 2019 (Chart 4). Substantial out-migration, including temporary and permanent moves, was sustained for several months before gradually beginning to lessen over the summer. Compared to the pre-pandemic trend in 2019, net losses continued in Manhattan until May 2021.<sup>5</sup>

**Chart 3. Monthly Net Residential Moves by Borough, 2018-2021**

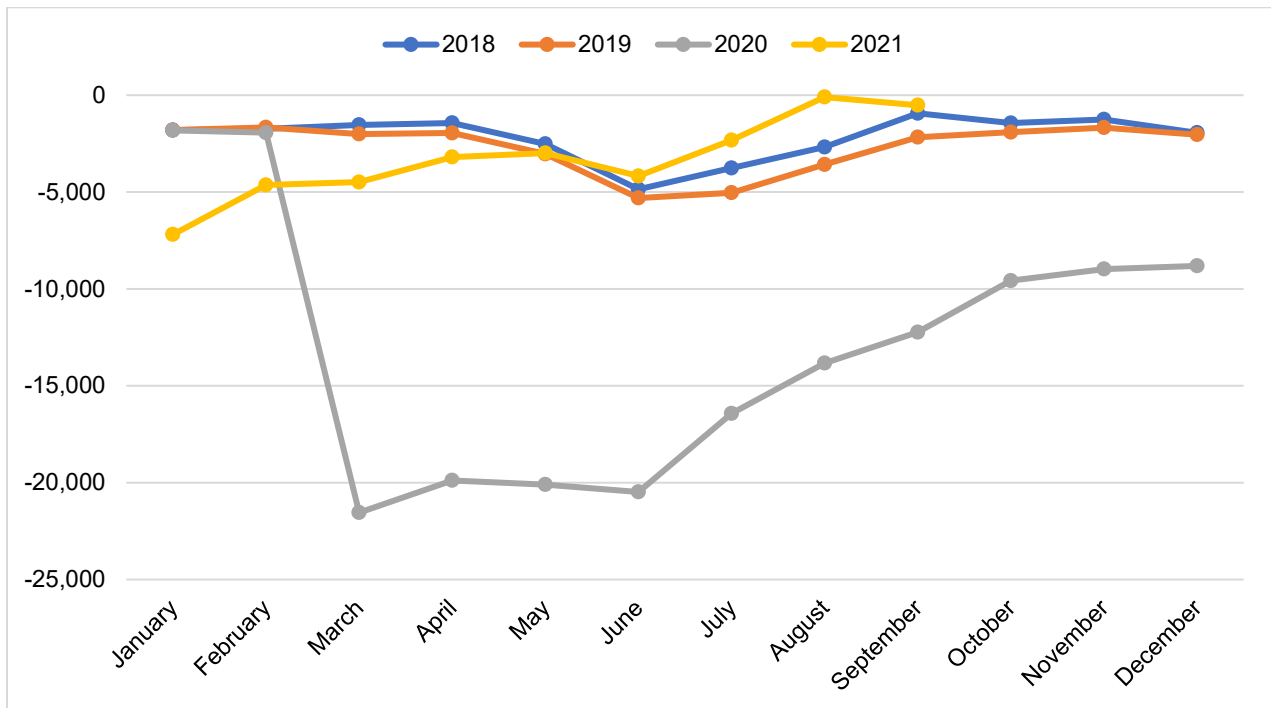


SOURCE: NYC Comptroller’s Office analysis of United States Postal Service, “Change of Address Stats,” <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Includes temporary and permanent moves.

<sup>5</sup> Also see, Ben Winck, “People are moving back to NYC, but not to San Francisco – and the migration to the Sun Belt looks permanent,” *Business Insider* (July 29, 2021), <https://www.businessinsider.com/moving-new-york-growing-silicon-valley-shrinking-postal-service-jefferies-2021-7#:~:text=People%20are%20moving%20back%20to%20NYC%2C%20but%20not%20to%20San,the%20Sun%20Belt%20looks%20permanent&text=People%20are%20flocking%20back%20to,with%20finance%20giants%20reopening%20offices.>

**Chart 4. Monthly Net Residential Moves to and from Manhattan, 2018-2021**

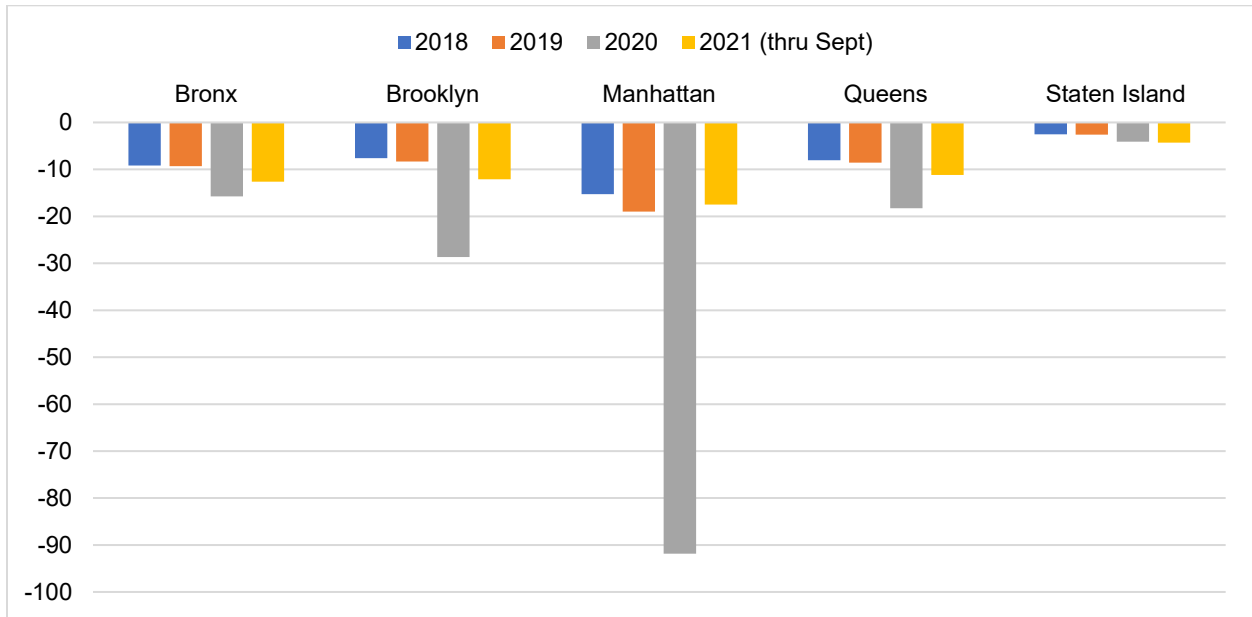


SOURCE: NYC Comptroller's Office analysis of United States Postal Service, "Change of Address Stats," <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Includes temporary and permanent moves.

Notwithstanding the explosive growth in moves from Manhattan, an analysis of annual residential moves on a per-capita basis shows that the number of net move-outs increased significantly in every borough in 2020 (Chart 5). From 2019 to 2020, citywide net residential move-outs rose from 10 to 34 per 1,000 residents. Net move-outs per 1,000 rose 69 percent from 9.3 to 15.7 in the Bronx; 113 percent from 8.6 to 18.3 in Queens; and 57 percent from 2.6 to 4.1 in Staten Island. But in Brooklyn, out-migration more than tripled from 8.3 to 28.7 per 1,000 residents, while net move-outs almost quintupled in Manhattan, growing from 19.0 to 91.9 per 1,000.

**Chart 5. Annual Net Residential Moves per 1,000 Residents by Borough, 2018-2021**



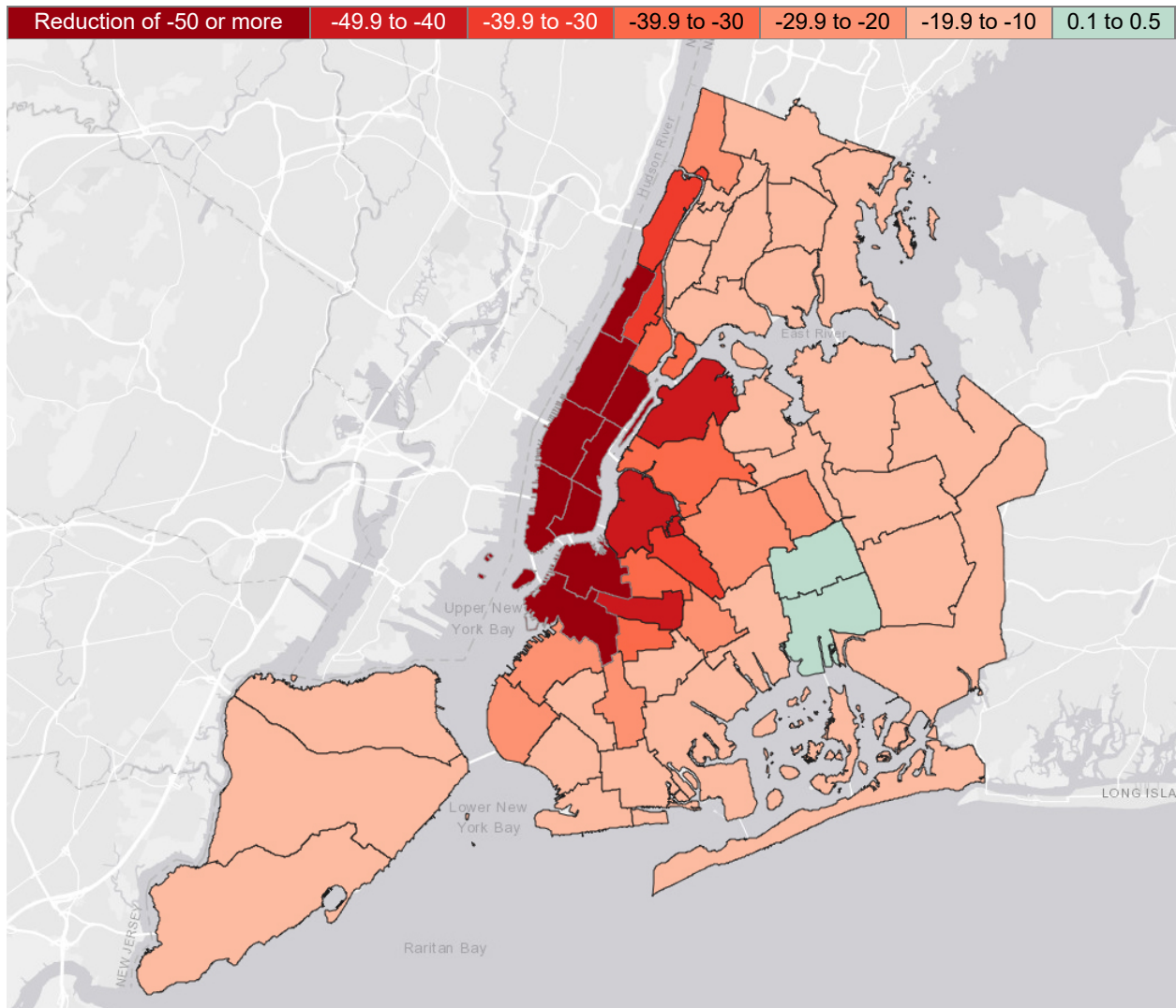
SOURCE: NYC Comptroller’s Office analysis of United States Postal Service, “Change of Address Stats,” <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Per-capita figures based on 2020 decennial census data. Includes temporary and permanent moves.

As shown in the map below, on a per-capita basis, additional residential net out-migration in 2020 was worst in the Manhattan neighborhoods of Battery Park City/Greenwich Village, Murray Hill/Gramercy, and the Upper East Side. Conversely, in two Queens neighborhoods, Howard Beach/Ozone Park and Richmond Hill/Woodhaven, net out-migration improved slightly in 2020.



**Map 1: Change in Net Residential Moves from Pre-Pandemic Trend in 2020 (Change in Net Residential Moves per 1,000 Residents in 2020, as Compared to 2019)**



SOURCE: NYC Comptroller's Office analysis of United States Postal Service, "Change of Address Stats," <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Per-capita figures based on 2020 decennial census data. Includes temporary and permanent moves.

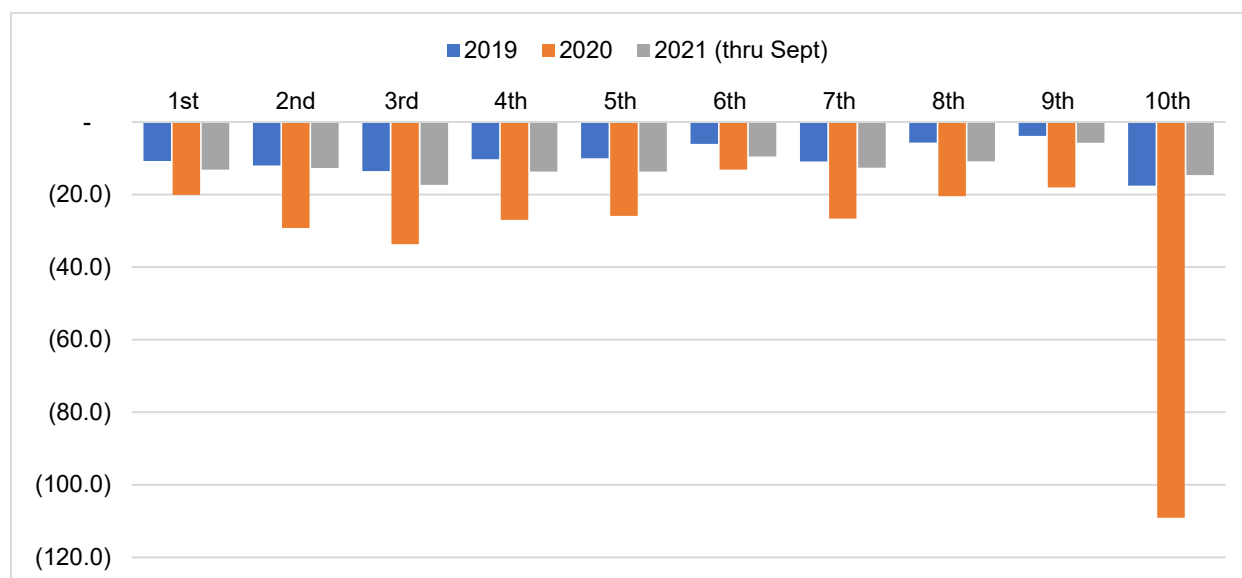
## The Role of Wealth and Density

In the early days of the pandemic, the ability to leave the city quickly depended on both the means to travel and secure a secondary living space, as well as being untethered from a job that required in-person work. During this period, many essential workers, including healthcare workers, grocery store clerks, delivery workers, sanitation workers, and public safety workers had to continue to work in person, while most office workers were free to work from anywhere. Therefore, it is not surprising that wealth played a clear role in who moved from the city in 2020.

Residents in the wealthiest 10 percent of neighborhoods, corresponding to median incomes above \$110,000, were 4.6 times more likely to leave than other residents during 2020, recording 109 net move-outs per 1,000 residents vs 24 elsewhere (Chart 6). Such neighborhoods include Park Slope/Carroll Gardens in Brooklyn and Battery Park City/Greenwich Village, Murray Hill/Gramercy, Chelsea/Midtown, the Upper West Side, and the Upper East Side in Manhattan. During the spring of 2020, residents of the wealthiest neighborhoods were 7.2 times more likely to exit.

Moves from wealthier neighborhoods in 2020 were also more likely to be temporary. During 2020, about 50 percent of net moves to and from the wealthiest 10 percent of neighborhoods were marked as temporary, compared to 44 percent in the next wealthiest decile and less than 30 percent in all other areas.

**Chart 6. Net Residential Moves per 1,000 Residents, by Neighborhood (PUMA) Income Decile**

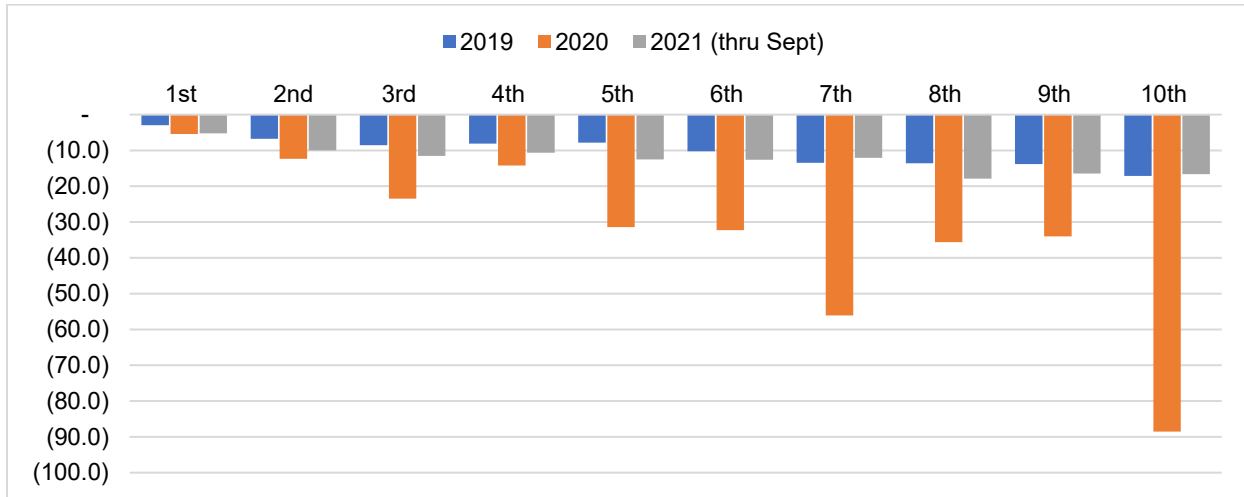


SOURCE: NYC Comptroller’s Office analysis of United States Postal Service, “Change of Address Stats,” <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Based on 2020 decennial census population data and median income by PUMA from the 2019 5-year American Community Survey. Includes temporary and permanent moves.

Residents of denser neighborhoods were also more likely to leave. Flight from the densest 10 percent of city neighborhoods was 3.3 times greater than the rest of the city during the entirety of 2020, 88 net move-outs per 1,000 residents versus 27 per 1,000 in all other neighborhoods, and 4.4 times greater during the spring of 2020 (Chart 7). Nonetheless, wealth was a bigger factor than density (Chart 8). For example, Morris Heights/Fordham in the Bronx is the fifth densest neighborhood in the city but has the fourth lowest median household income. At the pandemic’s onset, during the spring of 2020, net move-outs from Morris Heights rose from 2.6 to 3.9 per 1,000 residents, as compared to the same months in 2019. In contrast, net move-outs per 1,000 from the Upper West Side, another dense but also wealthy neighborhood, increased from 0.9 to 46.2.

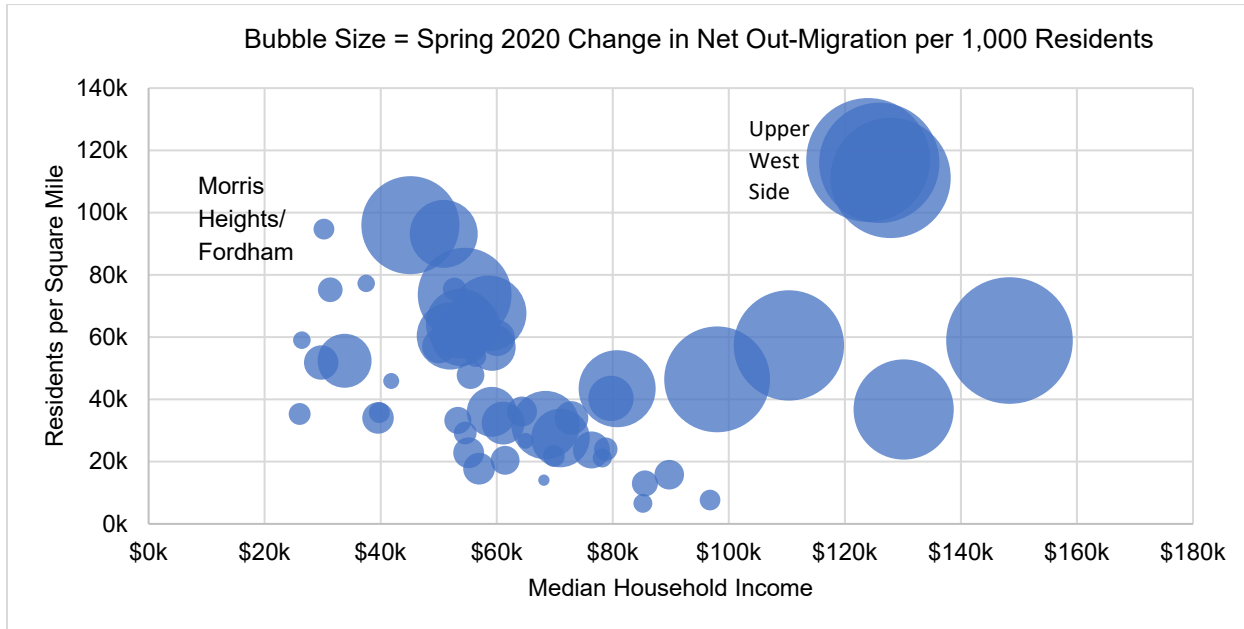
**Chart 7. Net Residential Moves per 1,000 Residents, by Neighborhood (PUMA) Density Decile**



SOURCE: NYC Comptroller’s Office analysis of United States Postal Service, “Change of Address Stats,” <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Based on 2020 decennial census population data and land area by PUMA from the New York City Department of City Planning, “Community District Profiles.” Includes temporary and permanent moves.

**Chart 8. Relationship between Neighborhood Density, Income and Out-Migration During Spring 2020**



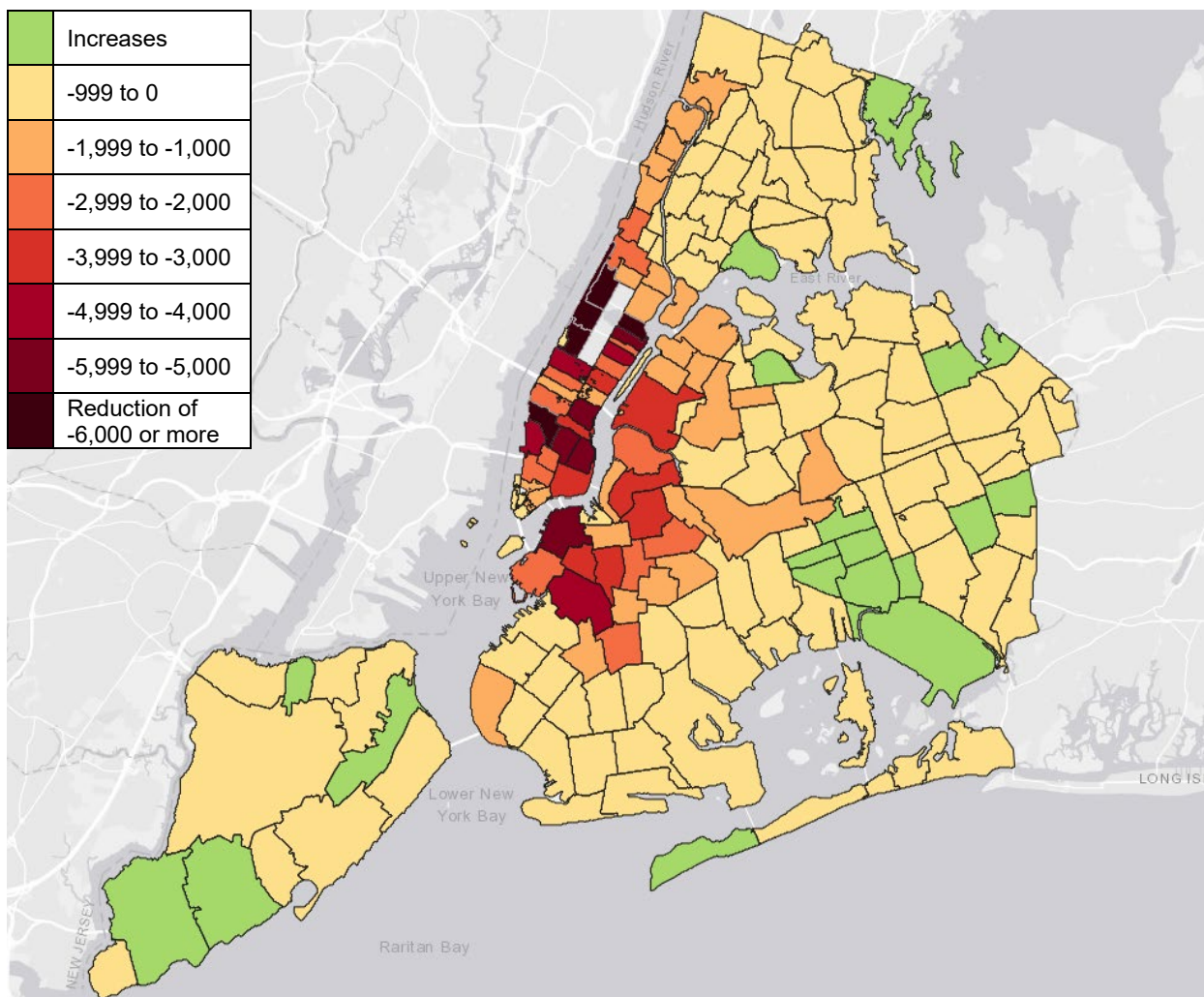
SOURCE: NYC Comptroller’s Office analysis of United States Postal Service, “Change of Address Stats,” <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Based on 2020 decennial census population data, median income from the 2019 5-year American Community Survey, and land area from the New York City Department of City Planning, “Community District Profiles.” Net loss is based on the change from March to May 2019 to the same months in 2020. All but one PUMA (Richmond Hill and Woodhaven in Queens, not shown) experienced a decline in net movers.

By zip code, the largest residential losses in 2020 occurred on the Upper West Side, with zip codes 10025, 10023, and 10024 recording the highest change in net move-outs for the year (Map 2). Zip codes with the next highest 2020 net losses were in Chelsea (10011) and the Upper East Side (10128).

Of the city's 313 zip codes, 23 bucked the trend in 2020 and gained net movers, including 15 zip codes in Queens and four in Staten Island. The top net gainers were 11418 (Richmond Hill) and 11419 (South Richmond Hill), which both improved by more than 100 net movers. On the south shore of Staten Island, zip code 10309 (Rossville) gained 100 net movers from 2019 to 2020 and has added another 90 through September of 2021.

**Map 2: Change in Net Residential Moves from Pre-Pandemic Trend in 2020 by Zip Code (Change in Net Residential Moves in 2020, as Compared to 2019)**



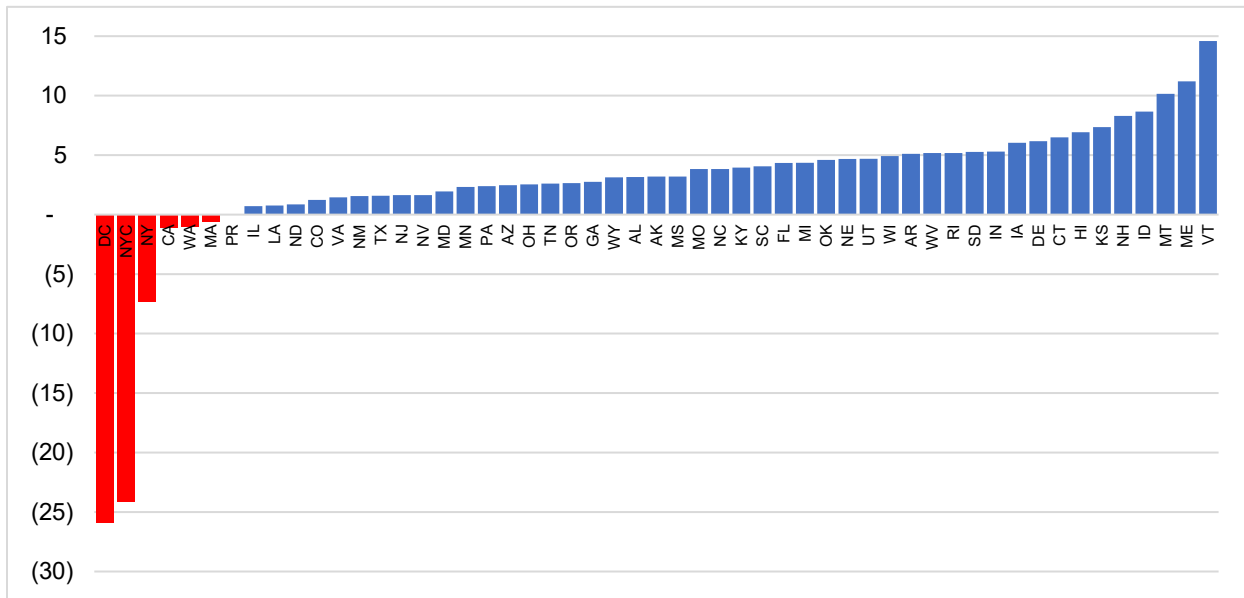
SOURCE: NYC Comptroller's Office analysis of United States Postal Service, "Change of Address Stats," <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Includes temporary and permanent moves. Data is not adjusted for population.

## Where Did People Go?

As New York City lost residents during 2020, other states gained. On a per-capita basis, the largest net gains, relative to 2019, including temporary and permanent moves, happened in less densely populated states, with Vermont and Maine topping the list (Chart 9). At the state level, three other states in addition to New York also registered heavier net outflows during 2020 than before the pandemic – California, Washington, and Massachusetts. On an absolute basis, Florida gained the most new movers, as net in-migration increased by 93,601 during 2020, growing from inflows of 82,943 in 2019 to 176,544 in 2020, far above the second highest net gain of 46,238 in Texas.

**Chart 9. Annual Change in Net Residential Moves per 1,000 Residents Between 2019 and 2020 by State**



SOURCE: NYC Comptroller’s Office analysis of United States Postal Service, “Change of Address Stats,” <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Based on 2020 decennial census population data. Includes temporary and permanent moves.

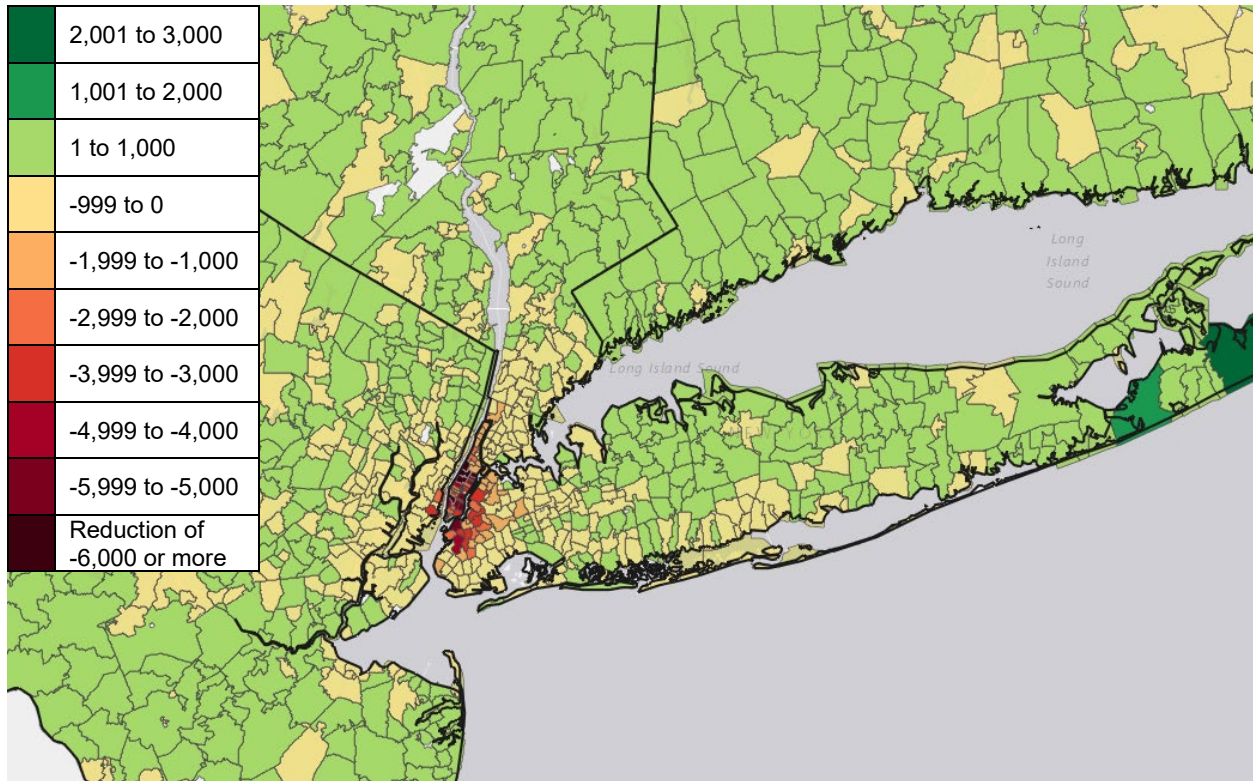
In neighboring New Jersey, the pandemic initially derailed the typically busy spring move-in season in 2020, but these losses were offset by higher-than-normal inflows during the summer. Net moves to New Jersey jumped 64 percent over the prior year from March through August 2020. Over the course of 2020, USPS data shows net outflows from New Jersey of 10,962, a large improvement over net out-migration of 26,130 in 2019.

During this period, neighboring suburbs within New York State also benefited. From March through August 2020, net in-migration rose 9 percent in Westchester County but more than doubled on Long Island. More than 59 percent of the gain on Long Island was from temporary moves to Suffolk County, home of the Hamptons. Among zip codes within New York State, New Jersey and Connecticut, the largest net gain in 2020 occurred in East Hampton (11937), which



saw in-migration of 2,489 temporary and permanent residential movers in 2020, an increase of 2,616 from outflows of 127 in 2019 (Map 3). The next largest 2020 net gains happened in Southampton, NY (11968), Sag Harbor, NY (11963), and Beach Haven, NJ (08008).

**Map 3: Change in Net Residential Moves from Pre-Pandemic Trend in the New York City Tri-state Area in 2020 (Change in Net Residential Moves in 2020, as Compared to 2019, by Zip Code)**



SOURCE: NYC Comptroller's Office analysis of United States Postal Service, "Change of Address Stats," <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Includes temporary and permanent moves. Data is not adjusted for population.

Based on more detailed migration data that the USPS has since ceased releasing, Bloomberg CityLab found that within the New York City metro area, 79 percent of permanent moves were within the region.<sup>6</sup> Among Manhattan residents who moved, 20,000 went to Brooklyn, the most popular location; another 19,000 went to Florida but 9,000 recorded their moves as temporary. New Jersey was also a popular destination for New York City residents. According to the Wall

<sup>6</sup> Marie Patino, Aaron Kessler, and Sarah Holder, "More Americans Are Leaving Cities, But Don't Call It an Urban Exodus," *Bloomberg* (April 26, 2021), <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2021-citylab-how-americans-moved/?sref=1fgx274d>. Also see, Yan Wu and Luis Melgar, "Americans Up and Moved During the Pandemic. Here's Where They Went" *Wall Street Journal* (May 11, 2021), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/americans-up-and-moved-during-the-pandemic-heres-where-they-went-11620734566>.

Street Journal, net growth of New York City residents moving to 12 suburban counties in New Jersey rose 76 percent to more than 35,000 in 2020.<sup>7</sup>

New York City was not alone in experiencing heavy net losses during the pandemic. Similar outflows occurred in other large, dense cities.<sup>8</sup> While New York City lost an additional 24 movers per 1,000 residents in 2020, as compared to 2019, additional net losses totaled 26 per 1,000 residents in the District of Columbia and 41 in San Francisco. The CityLab analysis of USPS data found that 82 percent of urban centers saw more people moving out than in during the pandemic (through February 2021), while 91 percent of suburban counties saw more people moving in than out.<sup>9</sup>

## A Return to the City

In September 2021, New York City public schools and colleges opened to full-time, in-person learning; some employers, including city government, called office workers back; and the curtains rose on Broadway after an 18-month shutdown. Not surprisingly, these events coincided with an improvement in net residential migration to the city, particularly in the neighborhoods that experienced the greatest flight in the spring of 2020.

Overall, from June to September 2021, the city lost a net 39,961 residential movers, a slight improvement from a net loss of 40,494 in 2019. A total of 14 city neighborhoods outperformed their pre-pandemic trends, including nine in Manhattan (Map 4). On a per-capita basis, net gains were highest in the following neighborhoods (in order): Chelsea/Midtown, Murray Hill/Gramercy, Battery Park City/Greenwich Village, Chinatown/Lower East Side, and the Upper East Side.

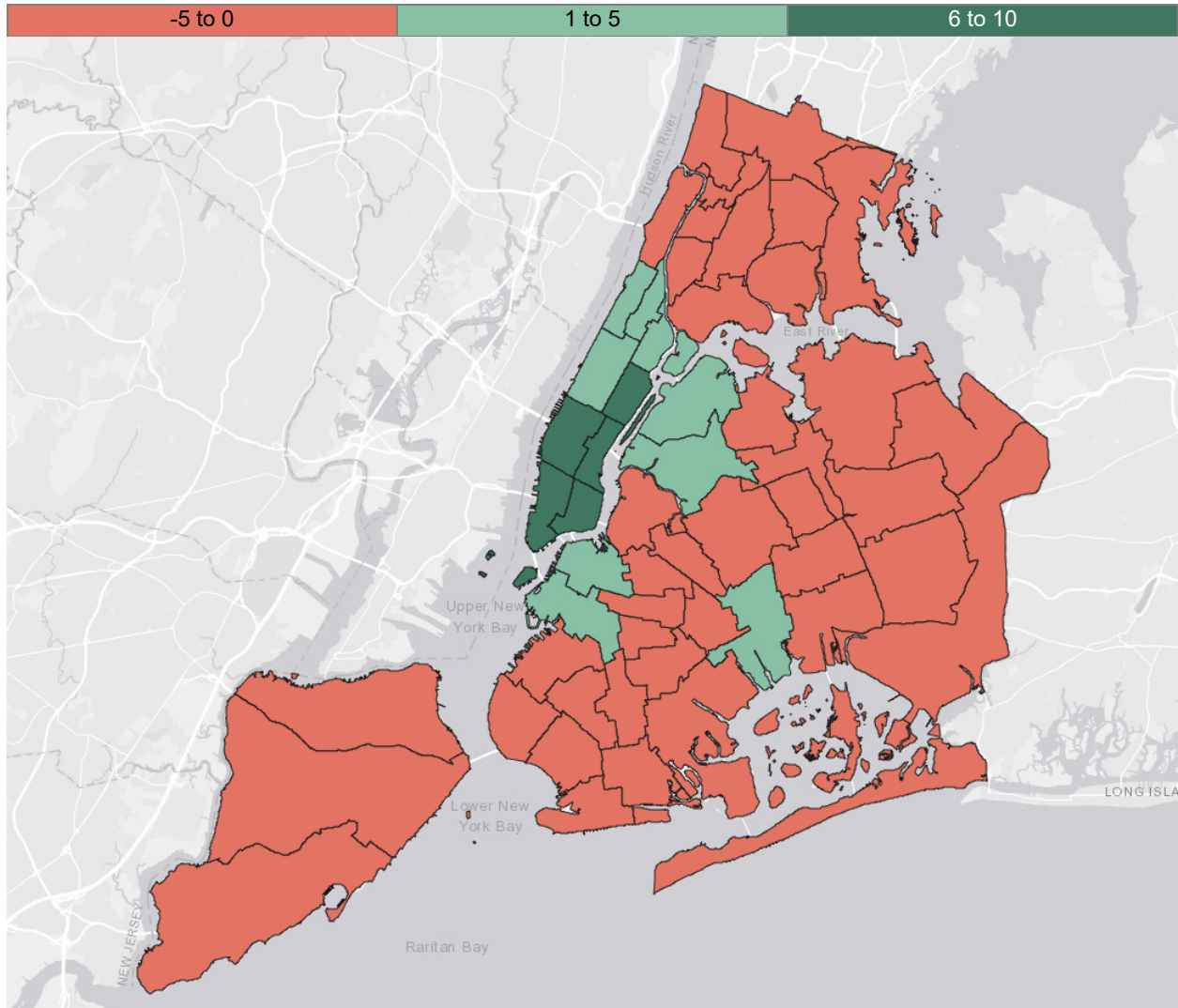
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<sup>7</sup> Arian Campo-Flores, Paul Overberg, Joseph De Avila and Elizabeth Findell, "The Pandemic Changed Where Americans Live," *Wall Street Journal* (April 27, 2021), [https://www.wsj.com/articles/pandemic-supercharged-changes-in-where-americans-live-11619536399?mod=article\\_inline](https://www.wsj.com/articles/pandemic-supercharged-changes-in-where-americans-live-11619536399?mod=article_inline).

<sup>8</sup> See Ginger Moored, "D.C. lost at least 17,000 more people during the pandemic than in the prior year, according to USPS data on net moves. At least 9,000 of the loss appears to be permanent." (July 8, 2021), <https://districtmeasured.com/2021/07/08/d-c-lost-at-least-17000-more-people-during-the-pandemic-than-in-the-prior-year-according-to-usps-data-on-net-moves-at-least-9000-of-the-loss-appears-to-be-permanent/>; and CBRE, *COVID-19 Impact on Resident Migration Patterns* (April 2021), <https://www.cbre.us/research-and-reports/COVID-19-Impact-on-Resident-Migration-Patterns>.

<sup>9</sup> Marie Patino, Aaron Kessler, and Sarah Holder, "More Americans Are Leaving Cities, But Don't Call It an Urban Exodus," *Bloomberg* (April 26, 2021), <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2021-citylab-how-americans-moved/?sref=1fgx274d>.

**Map 4: Change in Net Residential Moves from Pre-Pandemic Trend During June to September 2021 (Change in Net Residential Moves per 1,000 Residents in June-September 2021, as Compared to Same Months in 2019)**



SOURCE: NYC Comptroller's Office analysis of United States Postal Service, "Change of Address Stats," <https://about.usps.com/who/legal/foia/library.htm>.

Note: Per-capita figures based on 2020 decennial census data. Includes temporary and permanent moves.

## The Road Ahead

As the pandemic washed across New York City, the country was in the midst of the 2020 decennial census, providing a snapshot of population just before COVID-19 changed everything. The count showed that New York City's population had boomed to more than 8.8 million, outpacing growth in five of the nine next largest cities. Growth over the decade was widespread



but strongest in Brooklyn (9.2 percent), followed by Queens (7.8 percent), Manhattan (6.8 percent), the Bronx (6.3 percent), and Staten Island (5.8 percent).

Well before the pandemic, households moved from the city every year, including families with young children moving to the suburbs, young people leaving for another city, and older adults heading to a warmer climate. It is reasonable to assume that at least some portion of the moves that occurred during the pandemic would have happened anyway but over a period of a few years, rather than months.<sup>10</sup> Going forward, these accelerated moves should lessen the number of move-outs in the near future.

At the same time, the pandemic likely interrupted planned moves to the city. Pent-up demand from young adults, after more than a year of lockdowns, combined with depressed rents in more expensive areas and the lifting of international travel restrictions in early November 2021, may unleash a new wave of residents. Bars, restaurants, museums and other cultural institutions are open at full capacity; schools and colleges returned to full-time, in-person learning; and Broadway is back. In recent months, high-end rental leasing and residential sales have even surpassed pre-pandemic levels, signaling that indeed a wave of new or returning residents has arrived.<sup>11</sup>

While recent post office data has been encouraging, particularly in August 2021, many city neighborhoods have significant population loss that will not be replaced quickly. Subway and commuter rail ridership has grown but still barely surpassed 50 percent of pre-pandemic trends as of October 2021. The pandemic has also changed employers' views on telework, prompting some companies to adopt hybrid work structures and others to allow employees to work from anywhere long term. This shift to more remote work may have a long-term impact on the city's population that is not yet knowable.

In March 2020, the city's density quickly turned from a key asset to an existential liability. Ultimately, restoring and maintaining population at pre-pandemic highs will depend again on this unique asset and on people's need and desire to be in close proximity to their jobs, each other, and the many public amenities that the city has to offer.

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<sup>10</sup> See Richard Florida, "The Forces That Will Reshape American Cities" *Bloomberg CityLab* (July 2, 2020), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2020-07-02/how-coronavirus-will-reshape-u-s-cities>.

<sup>11</sup> Office of the New York City Comptroller, "New York by the Numbers" (October 4, 2021), <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/new-york-by-the-numbers-monthly-economic-and-fiscal-outlook-no-58-october-4th-2021/>.