

# Roughly 5 million people left California in the last decade. See where they went.

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An unprecedented number of Californians left for other states during the last decade, according to new tax return data from the Internal Revenue Service.

About 5 million Californians left between 2004 and 2013. Roughly 3.9 million people came here from other states during that period, for a net population loss of more than 1 million people.

The trend resulted in a net loss of about \$26 billion in annual income.

About 600,000 California residents left for Texas, which drew more Californians than any other state. Roughly 350,000 people came from Texas to California.

The housing boom, recession and housing bust, which hit California harder than most states, likely played a role in the trend. The greatest net population losses occurred during the housing boom, the IRS data show, when many Californians were priced out of the market. The subsequent recession saw many people lose their homes and jobs and go to states with lower unemployment. Conservative analyst and Hoover Institute Fellow Carson Bruno also blames the state's high cost of living and tax structure.

Based on tax returns, the IRS migration data is considered the gold standard for measuring population shifts, though it lags two to three years behind the current date. The latest, separate estimates from the state Department of Finance showed net domestic migration losses slowing, but not ending, in 2014.

Despite the loss of residents to other states, California continued to grow during the last decade because of natural increase - more births than deaths - and foreign migration.

This graphic shows the number of people who came to and left California from each state during the last decade.

Source: IRS

[Click here to see graphic if using the Bee's mobile app.](#)

Notes: Population figures reflect the number of exemptions claimed on tax returns. The large majority of people, but not all of them, claim tax exemptions for themselves and their dependents. | Likewise, the large majority of people, but not all of them, file tax returns. The very poor, for instance, often do not file tax returns. | The total number of exemptions in the IRS migration data is equivalent to about 80 percent of the U.S. population. | Numbers shown

reflect tax years 2003-04 to 2012-13. | Updated text above graphic on 9/1/2015 to add more context regarding housing prices and the recession.

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**Evan Bour**

153 days ago

Not surprising to see many of them come to Indiana.

With the lowest cost of living in America, The nations most affordable housing market, fiscally responsible government, good schools, lots of good paying jobs with higher wages than California, good roads, good services, more freedom than any other state, friendly neighbors, less traffic, and very strong economic growth its no surprise Indiana is the place to be :) Carmel Indiana was even ranked as the #1 place to live in America by CNN Money magazine.

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**David Norris**

205 days ago

My wife and I are engineers. We left California in 2006 and moved to Texas. The cost of living is way less in Texas. And, I estimate that we have saved about \$200,000 in income taxes over the last decade. As far as I am concerned, California is a one word IQ test. The correct answer is either Leave or Texas.

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**Alexander Portelli**

195 days ago

I hope you're voting Republican.

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