

## Young adult exodus

Since 2000, thousands of young Michigan teenagers moved out of state after they entered adulthood, according to Census estimates.

Five states with the biggest loss of young adults:

State	2000 population, 13-19-year-olds	2005 population, 18-24-year-olds	Change	Percentage change
Ohio	1,144,610	1,119,610	-25,000	-2.2%
<b>Michigan</b>	<b>1,012,292</b>	<b>989,777</b>	<b>-22,515</b>	<b>-2.2</b>
Pennsylvania	1,192,489	1,180,356	-12,133	-1.0
Louisiana	506,892	497,738	-9,154	-1.8
Indiana	628,519	621,687	-6,832	-1.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Detroit News analysis

The Detroit News

**CENSUS: 22,000 young adults leave Michigan**

## BRAIN DRAIN

Gordon Trowbridge and Amy Lee / The Detroit News

Advertisement

▶ [GET FREE HEADLINES BY E-MAIL](#)

- [Printer friendly version](#)
- [Comment on this story](#)
- [Send this story to a friend](#)
- [Get Home Delivery](#)

Michigan lost thousands of young adults in the first half of the decade, according to population estimates released today that provide new evidence of the state's economic slide. The state ranked 49th in the nation in retaining young adults, losing 22,000 between 2000 and 2005, according to a Detroit News analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.

"This is serious stuff," said population expert Kurt Metzger. "It's really a problem, and it's not one of those quick-fix things."

Metzger, who analyzes social policy for the United Way of Southeast Michigan, said the departure of young people threatens a downward spiral: lack of jobs chases young talent from the state, making employers less likely to add jobs here, which in turn chases more

young adults away.

Ryan Post will join the exodus next week, when she and two other recent Michigan State University graduates move to Charlotte, N.C.

"I started applying for advertising jobs on Monster.com, and the responses I got were like five to one from North Carolina over Michigan," said Post, 22, of Midland, who graduated in May with an advertising degree.

"We're young. We figure now's the time to go. Hopefully, with some experience under my belt, I could move back. But I feel like right now there aren't a lot of opportunities for graduates in our field."

The "brain drain" of young, educated adults has become one of Michigan's biggest political issues. In 2004, Gov. Jennifer Granholm started the Cool Cities program, an attempt to make Michigan more attractive to hip young people. Granholm's Republican opponent, Dick DeVos, has criticized the governor's approach and made retaining young adults a centerpiece of his economic agenda.

Education and business leaders are worried, too. A report last year on Michigan's economic future, led by former U-M President James Duderstadt, argued that reversing the flight of young graduates was crucial to an economic turnaround.

The 2000 census found about 1 million people ages 13-19 in Michigan. In 2005 -- when that group was in the 18-24 category -- their numbers had fallen by more than 22,000, based on the new population estimates. Only Ohio lost more young adults, and only West Virginia lost a higher percentage than Michigan's 2.2 percent decline.

Vipul Shukla, 21, a Wayne State pre-med senior, moved with his family from India to Eastpointe in 1987. But after WSU, he'll probably attend medical school in Chicago. And while many of his friends are frustrated by a lack of jobs, that's only part of the story.

"Chicago has great schools for research, plus it has great nightlife, public transportation and a lot of stuff going on downtown near the water," Shukla said. "Detroit, eh, not so much."

The trend has to worry Michigan business and government leaders, said William Frey, a population researcher at the University of Michigan and The Brookings Institution.

"It's the future," Frey said. "You want to be able to capture those people and have them stay to make their future in Michigan. They're the people with the most potential talent, the most energy."

While the numbers released today don't include economic or education data, Frey said there is evidence that the loss is especially heavy among college graduates and those entering college.

"Young people want to go where the jobs are and where the action is," he said.

The news is not all bleak. A recent study by the Southeast Michigan Census Council found

that while Michigan is losing young college graduates, the state is gaining overall, thanks largely to immigrants from overseas.

"The only saving grace has been immigrants," Metzger said. But if the job market continues to suffer, he said, immigration will as well.

While there is no expert consensus on the best way to attract and keep young professionals, Metzger said Michigan loses out on many fronts.

"The things people claim attract young people, density, diversity, public transportation all those kinds of things we haven't figured out transportation, we haven't figured out urban reinvestment, and we sure haven't figured out race," he said.

Even if the economy improves, Metzger said, jobs might not be enough to keep young Michiganians home.

"Even in the best of times, in the late '90s when the economy was really moving, we were still losing large numbers of young people," he said. "The economy wasn't enough to keep them here."

*You can reach Gordon Trowbridge at (202) 662-8738 or [gtrowbridge@detnews.com](mailto:gtrowbridge@detnews.com).*

#### More Metro/State Headlines

- [Drowning toll worries Oakland officials](#)
- [Wayne won't take prison rape cases](#)
- [Memorial service to celebrate Mahaffey](#)
- [Charities step in to aid Mideast](#)
- [Police: Kids were robbery cover](#)
- [Wave goodbye to heat, humidity](#)
- [New plate touts best of state](#)
- [Gun buyback is a hit in Detroit](#)
- [More variety in the mix for Eastern Market](#)
- [Volunteer brings joy of reading to disabled](#)
- [Report of fewer Mich. beach closures buoys environmentalists](#)
- [One more hot one to go!](#)
- [Wayne sees developer as Aeropark's savior](#)
- [Until cease-fire, marchers press on in Dearborn](#)
- [Family confronts a 'monster'](#)
- [Evacuees' plea: Let us stay in U.S.](#)
- [Proposal would have Guard members monitor Canada border](#)
- [Fair boss champs at bit for his finale](#)
- [Classic cars roll into Rochester](#)

© Copyright 2006 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.