

For Reference

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OC residents aren't coming, they're going

California study shows record numbers leaving

By Marilyn Kalfus
The Orange County Register

So, what's the attraction? The Grand Canyon? The Painted Desert? The Petrified Forest? Or the job market?

Whatever it is, Arizona has become the No. 1 destination of Orange County folks moving from California.

And they're resettling in record numbers.

For the first time in at least a decade, more people are leaving Orange County for other parts of the nation than are moving in.

Other magnet states for Orange County residents, in descending order: Washington, Nevada and Texas.

In fact, Californians are bailing out, period. For the first time since 1973, more Americans are leaving the Golden State than are moving in.

And Oregon is the top draw.

That's all part of a migration report issued by the state Department of Finance's demographic research unit.

"People move around for jobs," said Elizabeth Hoag, the unit's research manager. "People are not coming to California in the large numbers that they were."

Nevertheless, California's population of 31 million is still growing overall because of births and foreign immigration, mostly of Hispanics and Asians, she said.

California is in its steepest economic slump since the Depression, and the latest downturn has led to tens of thousands of layoffs.

The state's unemployment rate in May was 8.7 percent, compared with Arizona's 7.2 percent and Oregon's 7.0 percent, according to the Department of Labor.

Bailing out

This year, for the first time in 20 years, more Americans left California than moved in. Among Southern California counties, only San Diego had a net gain.

County	Moved to Calif.	Left Calif.
Orange	30,270	34,251
Los Angeles	73,838	86,496
San Diego	46,792	42,968
Riverside	14,062	15,464
San Bernardino	16,225	20,528
California total	341,782	354,842

Source: State Dept. of Finance, Demographic Research Unit

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The migration report shows that in the fiscal year ending July 1, 30,270 people moved to Orange County from other parts of the nation, but 34,251 left for greener pastures outside California. That's a net loss of 3,981.

And more people moved from Orange County to other California counties last year than vice versa. In that category, Orange County had a net loss of 2,533.

California drew 341,782 newcomers, mostly from Texas, New York, Arizona, Florida and Washington.

But 354,842 California residents left for states such as Oregon, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Texas, Washington and Arizona.

In fact, the numbers of those who moved — both in and out — probably exceed the estimates, Hoag said, as the report represents only people with driver's licenses.

Still, the figures show that California lost a large number of people in their prime working years, from 30 to 44 years old, Hoag said. Historically, more people in that age group come to California than leave.

The last exodus, in 1973, also was prompted by tough economic times, she said.