

Does Migration Matter to the District of Columbia?

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Executive Summary

Over the decade leading up to 2018, the District of Columbia entered a period of positive population growth with the most significant contribution coming from migration. The forecast for the next decade points to continued population growth but at declining rates. Given the significant role that migration has played over the last decade in the District, this report examines the impact of migration on the District's population growth to determine if migration matters going forward. The general highlights are as follows:

- The District of Columbia entered a new demographic era beginning in 2007 when its population reversed its declining trend for over half a century to begin increasing again.
- The biggest driver of the District's population growth was migration, followed by natural increase.
- Between 2012-2016, an average of 65,600 people moved into the District annually and another 60,100 moved out at the same time (excludes international out migration).
- For the 2012-2016 period, about 33 percent of the people who moved into the District came from Maryland and Virginia. Similarly, for the same period, over 50 percent of the people who moved out of the District went to Maryland and Virginia.
- The concentration of colleges and universities in the Washington area has a tremendous impact on the movement of young adults into and out of the District.
- The gap between out-migrants and in-migrants of young adults 18-29 years yielded the most positive net movers to the District and has driven the migration component of the population growth.
- The outlook for migration over the next ten years points to continued net positive migration but at a declining rate.
- The next several decades will see the continued exit of the Baby Boomer generation from the District's labor force, as in other parts of the nation.
- Migration matters to the District of Columbia as a contributing component to a positive growth trend in the population.

Definitions

Migration: Population migration is the movement of people from one place to another.

Net Migration: The difference between the number of people coming into an area (in-migrant) and the number of people leaving an area (out-migrant) throughout the year. When the number of in-migrants is larger than the number of out-migrants, a positive net migration rate occurs.

Baby Boomers: Baby Boomers are defined as people who were born between 1946 and 1964.

Introduction

Does migration matter to the District of Columbia? This report looks at the migration of people to (inbound) and from (outbound) the District of Columbia and how migration may impact the District's population growth in terms of retaining and attracting additional people to grow the labor force and build and secure a stronger economy for the future. The data used in the analysis were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates and the U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division estimates.

Common Facts on Movers

Many residents of the District of Columbia, like residents in all states, are continuously on the move. They move within the state or jurisdiction and they move to other states or abroad. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people migrate for many different reasons ranging from economic, social and political to environmental, and there are usually both push factors and pull factors. Moving rates were found to differ by characteristics such as age, race, ethnicity, marital status, household type, whether the house is owned or rented, income, and poverty status.

Nationally, among people who changed residence, the highest percentage of people moved because of housing-related reasons, followed by family-related, work related and other reasons. Housing-related reasons included people wanting to own home not to rent, people looking for a new or better house or apartment, and a better neighborhood with less crime. Family-related reasons included a change in marital status and to establish own household. Work-related reasons included a new job or job transfer closer to work or the desire for an easier commute, and retired. Other reasons included attending or leaving college, a need for a change of climate, and health reasons.

Why Does Migration Matter?

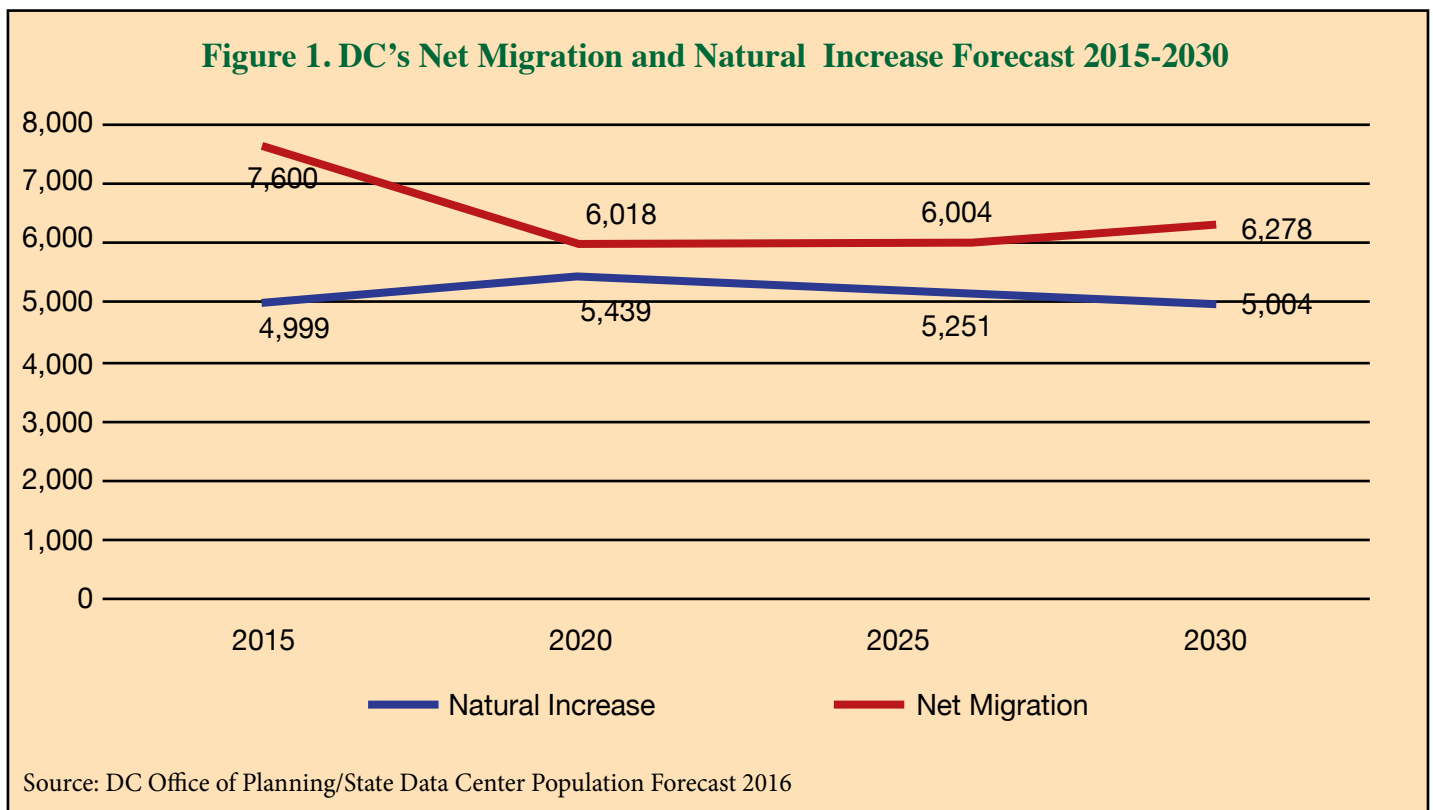
A general understanding of the movement of people in and out of an area is important for decision makers charged with the responsibility of preparing for the area's future. The District of Columbia entered a new demographic era beginning in 2007 when its population reversed its declining trend for over half a century to begin increasing again. This new era has witnessed the components of demographic change, namely births, deaths and migration, changing their relative influence on population growth in the District. According to forecast data prepared by the DC Office of Planning, the District's positive population growth is expected to continue and the impact of migration may be even more significant. However, the present uncertainty due to possible policy changes, especially at the federal government level, among other things, may impact labor force and migration, and therefore, population growth.

In the absence of specific District of Columbia labor force projections, if it's assumed that the District will follow national trends, then according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in a September 2016 report, the next 50 years will witness demographic changes that will significantly alter the U.S. population and labor force. The projected changes will include an aging and more diverse population that will continue to grow, but at a slower rate. The next several decades will see the continued exit of the Baby Boomer generation from the District's labor force, as in other parts of the nation. However, in the District, the degree of the loss in the Baby Boom labor force on the total labor force and on population total is uncertain given the potential for new migrants to replace and surpass their numbers, and the possibility of more people postponing retirement.

Drivers of Population Growth

The biggest driver of the District's population growth since 2007 was migration, followed by natural increase. The most recent population estimates showed the District population increasing from 684,336 in 2016 to 693,972 in 2017, a growth of 1.4 percent. The growth since the 2010 Census was 92,249 or 15.3 percent. The majority of this growth - about 2 out of every three persons added - was due to positive net migration while the remaining person added was due to natural increase.

In the District of Columbia, as in the rest of the nation, as more of the Baby Boomer generation move into the later season of their lives, mortality totals are expected to increase. However, due to the growing population in the District and especially the growth in women of child bearing age (15-44 years), the expectation over the next ten years is that natural increase growth rates will continue to be positive but declining. This is attributed to declining fertility rates and higher death totals. The outlook for migration over the next ten years points to continued net positive migration but at a declining rate. Hence, both components of change will tend to converge but with net migration still remaining above natural increase (Figure 1). Both components of change are therefore important to the District if its population is to continue growing.



A Closer Look at Migration – Domestic and International

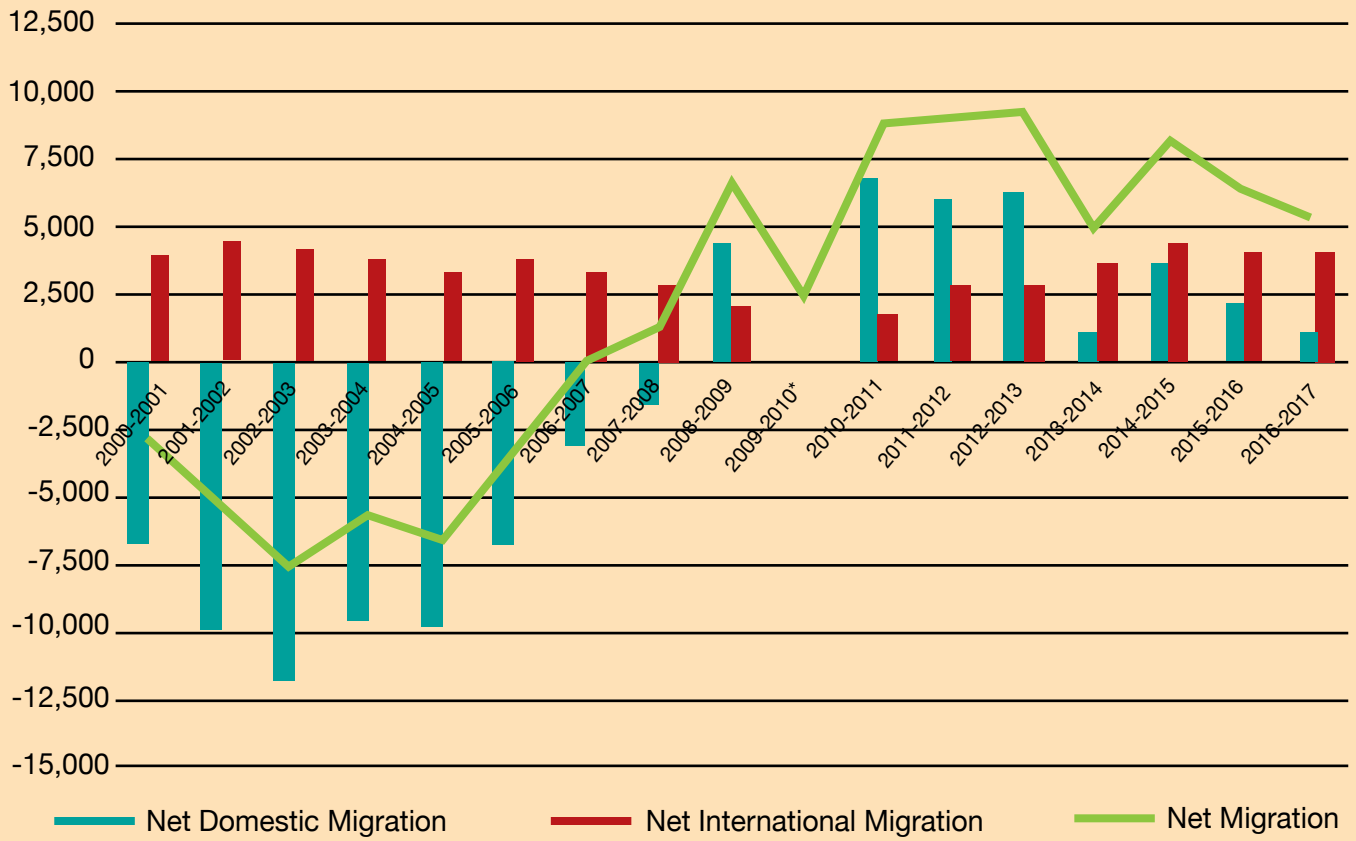
For more than 50 years prior to 2007, the District had lost more people than it gained from other places. From 2000 to 2006, the District lost an average of 5,000 people each year due to migration (Table 1). Beginning with the Great Recession in 2007, as more people flocked to the District to find jobs, these losses have been replaced by gains and the District has added an average of 5,600 people due to migration each year from 2007-2017. These overall figures are the net result of over 60,000 people moving both into and out of the District each year.

Table 1: Net Migration (Domestic and International)

Year	Net Domestic Migration	Net International Migration	Net Migration
2000-2001	-6,791	4,034	-2,757
2001-2002	-10,059	4,517	-5,542
2002-2003	-11,837	4,180	-7,657
2003-2004	-9,680	3,919	-5,761
2004-2005	-9,913	3,435	-6,478
2005-2006	-6,848	3,900	-2,948
2006-2007	-3,141	3,358	217
2007-2008	-1,622	2,832	1,210
2008-2009	4,454	2,096	6,550
2009-2010*	1,335	881	2,216
2010-2011	6,907	1,862	8,769
2011-2012	6,050	2,903	8,953
2012-2013	6,319	2,858	9,177
2013-2014	1,173	3,760	4,933
2014-2015	3,731	4,551	8,282
2015-2016	2,276	4,116	6,392
2016-2017	1,152	4,160	5,312
2009-2010* - Data not available due to census 2010 count and population not estimated.			
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2017 vintage data from Population Division			

Disaggregating the District's migration data into its two components, domestic migration – occurring between the District and U.S. states, and international migration – occurring between the District and countries outside of the U.S., sheds light on migration patterns. The reasons for moving may differ between the two groups and may have had important implications for the District's migration patterns over the past years and for its future.

Figure 2. Net Migration by Domestic and International Components 2000-2017



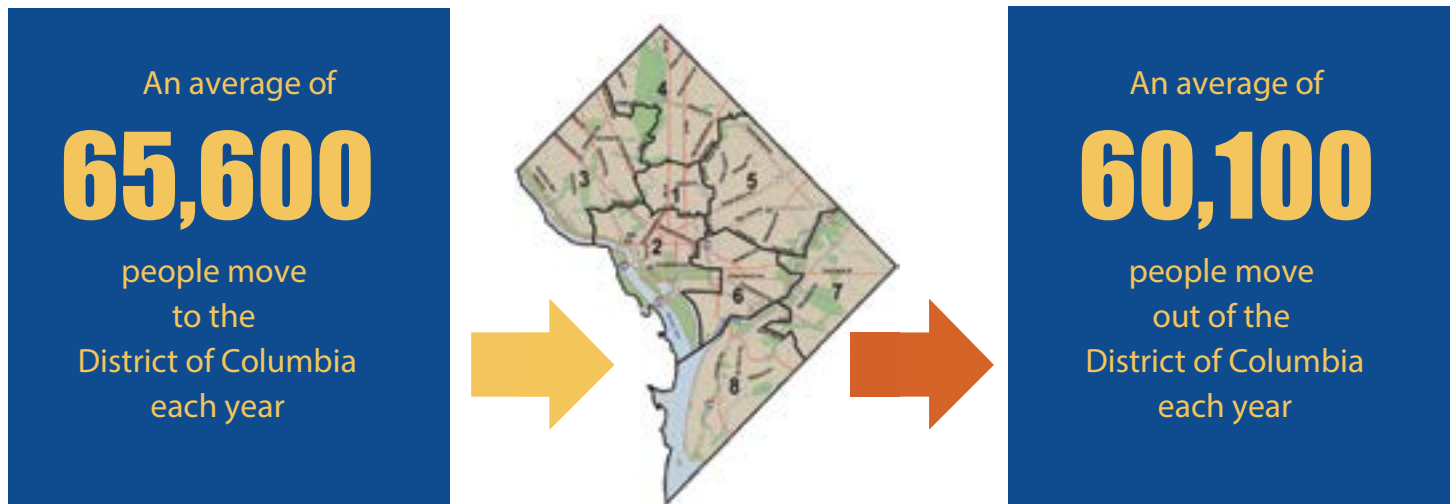
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2017 vintage data from Population Division

As Figure 2 shows, between 2000 and 2008 the District's net domestic migration was consistently negative with the highest loss between 2002-2005 when it was close to or above -10,000. The first annual positive net domestic migration occurred in the 2008-2009 period and continued through to 2017. The peak period was between 2010-2013 when net domestic migration was above 6,000.

The picture was different for international migration. With the District (Washington D.C) being a long sought-after destination for immigrants from all over the world, net international migration for the District remained positive throughout the period. The total number of people the District gained from other countries averaged about 3,500 annually.

Net migration does not tell the whole story about the number of people that moved both ways. The relatively small size of net migration hides a significant amount of total migration into and out of the District each year. Between 2012 and 2016, an average of 65,600 people moved into the District each year while at the same time an average of 60,100 moved out (Figure 3).

Figure 3. District of Columbia Average Annual IN and OUT Migration 2012-2016



Source: DC Office of Planning State Data Center

Table 2 shows that between 57,000 and 71,000 people moved into the District annually between 2012 and 2016, and another 57,000 to 65,000 moved out at the same time (excludes international out migration). For example, in 2016, there were 69,309 people who came into the District from other states, and abroad. In the same period, 59,972 people left the District for another state (data on international out-migration are not available).

Table 2: District of Columbia Migration Flow Summary 2012-2016

Category	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Population 1 year and over estimate	624,847	636,535	648,586	663,006	672,022
Same house 1 year ago (<i>didn't move</i>)	500,267	509,958	513,634	525,024	538,547
Same state of residence 1 year ago (<i>moved within DC</i>)	61,992	68,917	67,286	67,188	64,166
Different state of residence 1 year ago (<i>Domestic In-migration to DC</i>)	53,830	46,571	56,234	59,905	58,154
Abroad 1 year ago (<i>International In-migration to DC</i>)	8,758	11,089	11,432	10,889	11,155
Total In-migration (Domestic and International)	62,588	57,660	67,666	70,794	69,309
Out-migration (Domestic only)	59,513	57,087	59,138	64,736	59,972
*Out-migration (International)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability

*N/A – Not available. Since international out-migrants are not available for the survey their information is not captured.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 to 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates

Migration Patterns with Other States

Physical border is not the only thing the District shares with the states of Maryland and Virginia. Based on the data shown in Table 3, for the 2012-2016 period, about 40 percent of the total number of people (274,694) who moved into the District came from Maryland (64,467) and Virginia (45,146). Similarly, for the same period, over 50 percent of the total number of people who moved out of the District (300,446) went to Maryland (101,284) and Virginia (52,525) (Table 4). The District had a negative net domestic migration with both Maryland and Virginia from 2012-2016. One of the main reasons for this movement is that the District is the employment center of the region and given its relative distance from both Maryland and Virginia and the transportation network that trisects the three areas, it is relatively easy to live in one place and work in another. In addition, there are various “pull factors” and “push factors” that relates to such things as housing, family, school choice, jobs, leisure and entertainment that motivate people to live in either of the three places. Hence, there is continuous movement of people to and from each of the three areas.

Beside Maryland and Virginia, the other two places where a significant amount of people migrate to and from the District are California and New York. Between 2012 and 2016, the District had a net positive domestic migration number with New York, but a slightly net negative domestic migration number with California (Tables 3 & 4).

**Table 3: District of Columbia Domestic In-Migrations Flows 2012-2016:
Top 12 States**

States	In-Migration to the District of Columbia					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total 2012 - 2016
Total In-Migration	53,830	46,571	56,234	59,905	58,154	274,694
Maryland	14,120	9,237	13,606	14,726	12,778	64,467
Virginia	9,537	7,814	9,920	8,028	9,847	45,146
New York	3,085	4,770	3,562	5,133	4,762	21,312
California	4,999	2,427	5,206	4,119	3,908	20,659
Florida	1,705	1,307	1,745	2,731	2,717	10,205
Pennsylvania	1,494	2,177	2,311	1,999	2,468	10,449
Illinois	795	753	1,768	785	2,418	6,519
Texas	1,473	1,625	1,311	1,314	2,213	7,936
Massachusetts	1,524	1,557	1,575	2,876	1,974	9,506
New Jersey	1,451	2,173	2,075	1,804	1,494	8,997
North Carolina	985	1,253	1,670	1,501	1,367	6,776
Connecticut	618	1,597	1,336	1,292	1,225	6,068
Ranking is based on 2016 numbers.						
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates						

**Table 4: District of Columbia Domestic Out-Migration Flows 2012-2016:
Top 12 States**

States	Out-Migration from the District of Columbia					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total 2012 - 2016
Total Out-Migration to States	59,513	57,087	59,138	64,736	59,972	300,446
Maryland	21,213	20,845	17,421	22,051	19,754	101,284
Virginia	10,964	9,389	12,511	10,969	8,692	52,525
California	3,199	3,823	4,219	3,908	6,319	21,468
New York	3,936	3,066	3,323	5,619	3,042	18,986
Pennsylvania	2,921	1,601	1,636	1,487	1,908	9,553
Florida	780	1,762	1,897	1,512	1,752	7,703
North Carolina	1,801	2,032	1,724	3,401	1,737	10,695
Texas	1,189	1,435	1,266	1,423	1,624	6,937
South Carolina	435	417	649	262	1,552	3,315
Georgia	1,352	1,064	582	652	1,473	5,123
Massachusetts	379	845	1,689	1,213	1,398	5,524
Colorado	488	78	1,323	1,132	1,360	4,381

Ranking is based on 2016 numbers.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates

Migration Trends by Age

There were noticeable age differences in the likelihood of a person changing their residence from one place to another. The general expectation is that most movement will take place during the two prominent transition periods in a person's life – leaving for college and retirement. However, Table 5 and Figure 4 show, this was only true for the former group – the young adults. The data shows that domestic migration peaked in later teens and 20s and declined into older adulthood.

The concentration of colleges and universities in the Washington area has a tremendous impact on the movement of young adults into and out of the District. In addition, the District of Columbia as the central core for jobs in the region contributes significantly to the movement of people to and from the region.

Among all age groups, the likelihood of moving within, into or out of the District is the lowest among people 65 years and older. While this group exhibits some degree of domestic migration, their out-migration is low and somewhat offset by in-migrants of the same age. Young adults in their late teens and 20s were mostly responsible for the District's mobility and migration patterns. As Table 5 and Figure 4 show, over 33,000 District residents age 20-34 made a change of address within the District. Another 32,000 domestic migrants and over 5,000 international migrants ages 20-34 moved into the District in 2016. At the same time, the outflow of movers from the District for young adults ages 20-34 was reported at 30,000. In summary, 50 percent or more of all inbound and outbound movers were between the age of 20 and 34, and most can be assumed to be leaving

the home of their parent(s), often in exchange for a residence in pursuit of post-secondary education or training, entrance into the labor market or change of jobs. For the District, the gap between out-migrants and in-migrants of young adults 18-29 years yielded the most positive net movers to the District in 2016 and has driven the migration component of the population growth.

A significant share of the District's net gain of residents from other states is explained by those who move into the District for post-secondary education. While data are not available for the total number of students who move into or out of the District each year to attend a postsecondary institution, the following may be viewed as a representation of the direction of movement. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in Fall 2016, there were 7,500 first-time degree/certificate seeking undergraduates in 4-year degree granting institutions in the District who graduated from high school in the previous 12 months and participated in Title IV federal financial aid programs. At the same time, there were 1,800 students in the same category who left the District for other states. Since students are counted in the state where they reside during college, this meant that the District had a net addition of 5,600 students (residents) from this category alone. NCES further reports that each fall from 2010 through 2015 there were over 90,000 students enrolled in degree-granting institutions in the District. While some fraction of these students returns to their home state or elsewhere after graduation, a significant amount of them stay in the District after graduation. Postsecondary institutions create many opportunities to keep former students near them through connections like internships, fellowships, the local job market, friendships and community partners to which students may have developed some attachments. It is therefore of critical importance to understand the role that higher education plays in retaining and attracting young adults to the District.

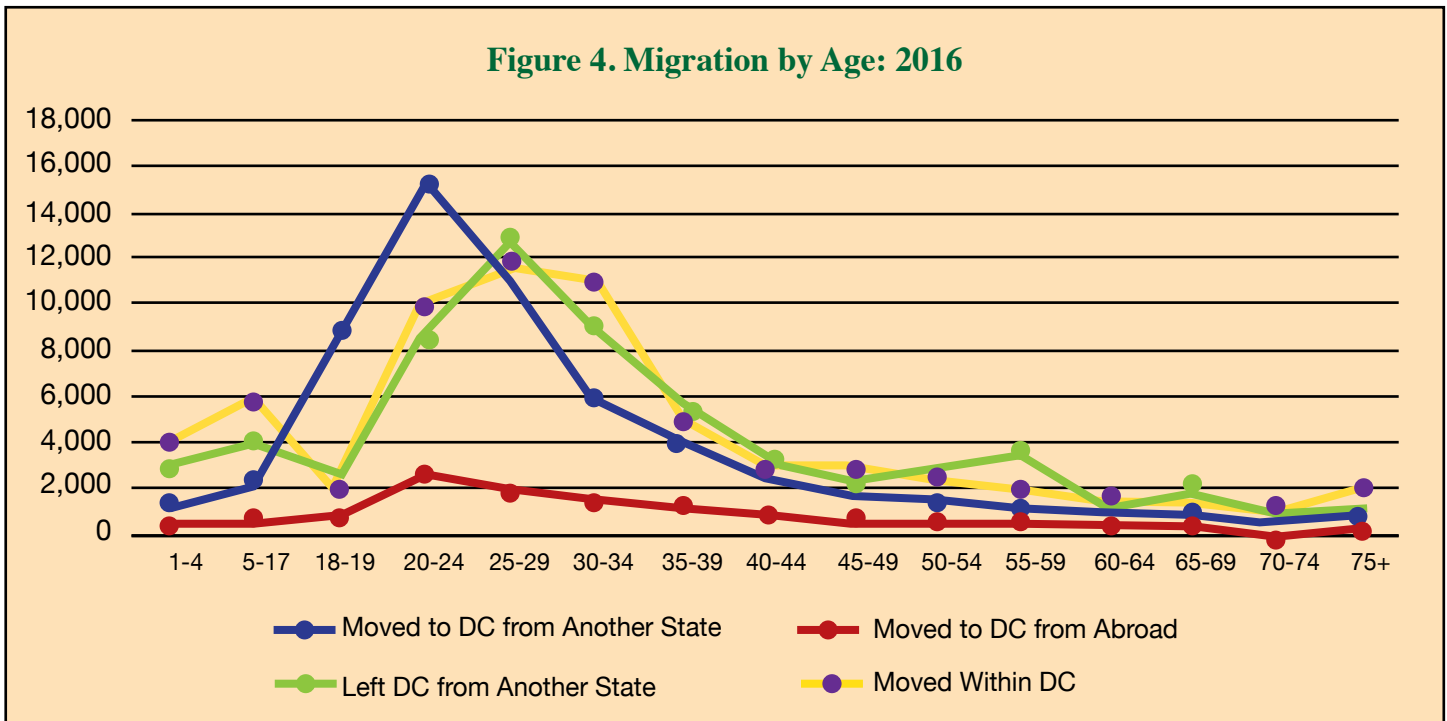
Table 5: Movers by Age Group: 2016

Age Group	Moved Within DC		Inbound Domestic Movers 2016		Inbound International Movers 2016		Outbound Domestic Movers 2016		*Net Migration
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Total Movers	62,181	100%	58,154	100%	10,855	100%	59,972	100%	9,037
1-4 years	3,867	6.2	1,196	2.1	401	3.6	3,019	5.0	-1,422
5-17 years	5,757	9.3	2,215	3.8	496	4.4	3,992	6.7	-1,281
18-19 years	1,841	3.0	8,935	15.4	686	6.1	2,382	4.0	7,239
20-24 years	9,881	15.9	15,315	26.3	2,415	21.6	8,350	13.9	9,380
25-29 years	11,678	18.8	11,310	19.4	1,635	14.7	12,634	21.1	311
30-34 years	10,946	17.6	5,829	10.0	1,291	11.6	9,021	15.0	-1,901
35-39 years	4,950	8.0	3,933	6.8	1,184	10.6	5,633	9.4	-516
40-44 years	2,909	4.7	2,622	4.5	650	5.8	3,020	5.0	252
45-49 years	2,721	4.4	1,839	3.2	486	4.4	2,307	3.8	18
50-54 years	2,246	3.6	1,483	2.6	590	8.0	2,537	4.2	-464
55-59 years	1,809	2.9	968	1.7	424	3.8	3,390	5.7	-1,998
60-64 years	1,405	2.3	1,027	1.8	243	2.2	1,448	2.4	-178
65-69 years	1,393	2.2	689	1.2	129	1.2	846	1.4	-28
70 to 74 years	778	1.3	371	0.6	89	0.8	434	0.7	26
75 years and over	1,985	3.2	422	0.7	136	1.2	959	1.6	-401

Note: *Excludes outbound international migration since data on outbound international migrants are not available.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year estimates

Figure 4. Migration by Age: 2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000-2017 vintage data from Population Division

The movement in and out of the District is incomplete without looking at the net loss of residents in some age cohorts of the population. While the 0-17 years population continues to show a net positive increase annually since 2010, this growth is mainly due to over 9,000 births annually, resulting in a net positive natural increase in the age cohort. Since the population age zero is not counted in the movers' population, their possible impact on migration is not accounted for. According to sample data from the American Community Survey, Table 5 and Figure 4 show a higher number of 1-4 years old and 5-17 years old moving out of the District than into the District. The age groups from 30-39 years and 50-69 years display a similar pattern. The general analysis points to more young parents in their 30s with their children, and early retirees migrating from the District in higher numbers than those of similar age who came in. The most common reasons for moving cited by the U.S. Census Bureau, as mentioned earlier, are housing, family and job-related reasons.

Migration Does Matter

The analyses presented in this report supports the conclusion that migration matters to the District of Columbia as a contributing component to a positive growth trend in the population among other impacts. Net positive migration also supports labor force growth. The role of the positive natural increase in the District of Columbia, though numerically less than net migration, is also important. Natural increase contributes to the growth and survival of families and complements migration in the overall population growth trends. However, policy decisions that affect housing, family life and jobs can be the determining factors in the level of in- or out-migration to an area or jurisdiction like the District of Columbia. The sizeable flow of people into and out of the District presents opportunities to change the migration equation to its benefit. The District can work towards stemming and reversing domestic migration losses with its neighboring states of Maryland and Virginia, and redouble efforts to attract and integrate new residents.