

## NEW 2024 CENSUS ESTIMATES SHOW SURGE IN POPULATION GROWTH, WITH CONSIDERABLE CAVEATS

Since [new state population estimates](#) were released by the Census Bureau in December 2024, state leaders have been quick to take a [victory lap](#). At first glance topline numbers point to a significant influx of immigrants and a decrease in yearly domestic out-migration. The result? The highest population increase as a percentage of the state’s total population [since 2013](#). A net increase of 69,603 residents in total. Yet, a more nuanced look at the data reveals how a methodological change had a significant impact.

The primary change is to how net international migration is calculated. In the previous iteration of the estimates the Census relied primarily on the American Community Survey (ACS). However, the survey has two drawbacks—data is on a year delay and there are sample frame and coverage issues, particularly for “humanitarian migrants” who often don’t answer surveys or are otherwise difficult to reach.

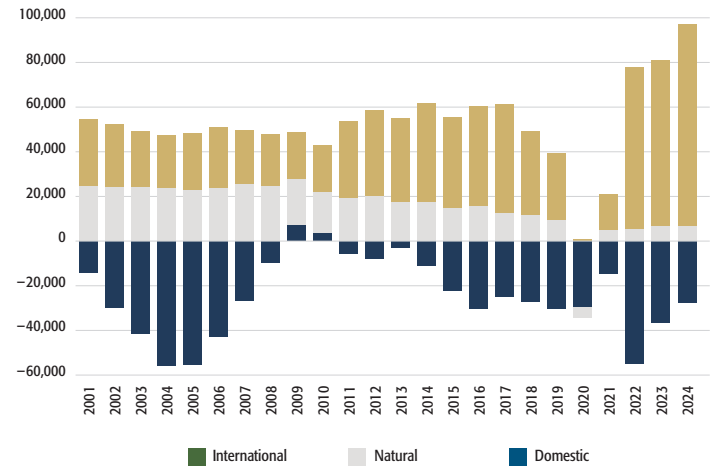
To account for this the Bureau decided to incorporate Homeland Security and State Department administrative data on border encounters and refugees to supplement the ACS. The new data led directly to significant upward revisions for the 2020-2023 estimates made last year in the Vintage 2023 series and a historically high estimate for net international migration for 2024.

Nationally the 2022 estimate for net international migration was revised from 998,983 to 1,693,263, the 2023 estimate was revised from 1,135,220 to 2,289,938, and the new 2024 estimate came in at a whopping 2,785,517—easily dwarfing any previous year by a wide margin.

The rate of increase in so-called natural population change in Massachusetts has dropped over three-fold over the last two decades. In 2005, 22,856 more people were born than died, however by 2024 the difference was only 6,718. [Mass Taxpayers](#) has estimated that natural population change will likely turn negative by the end of the decade as the population ages.

**FAST FACT**

Figure 1: Components of Population Change, Massachusetts 2001–24



Source: Census Bureau [Population Estimates](#), 2000–2010; 2010–2020; and 2020-2024.

Massachusetts’ 2024 net international inflow (90,217) is almost double the highest pre-pandemic year (2017)—or a full 41,634 higher. That equates to new international arrivals accounting for 1.26 percent of the population in 2024. Only Florida, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia had a greater influx. Over the full 2020 to 2024 period 255,102 new immigrants came to the Bay State.

These numbers are significant departures from last year’s Vintage 2023 estimates, as detailed in Figure 2. Between 2022 and 2023 estimates for net international migration were revised upwards by nearly 54,000.

Figure 2: Comparison of Vintage 2023 and Vintage 2024 State Population Estimates, Massachusetts

TOTAL POPULATION					
Estimates	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Vintage 2023	-35,220	-5,762	-9,211	18,659	X
Vintage 2024	-38,534	5,875	21,994	44,100	69,603
Difference	-3,314	11,638	31,205	25,441	X
NET INTERNATIONAL POPULATION					
Estimates	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Vintage 2023	908	16,477	42,932	50,647	X
Vintage 2024	908	16,475	72,892	74,610	90,217
Difference	0	-2	29,920	23,963	X

Source: [Census Bureau Population Estimates](#)

The effect was large enough to change total population estimates from negative (-31,534) to positive (33,436) in the 2020 to 2023 period. The total population increase, including 2024, was 103,139 or 1.47 percent of the Bay State’s 2020

population. That still only ranks 33<sup>rd</sup> in the nation (including D.C.), and trails Connecticut (1.87 percent), New Hampshire (2.29 percent), and Maine (3.07 percent).

However, just looking at 2024, Massachusetts' growth as a percentage of its 2023 population ranks 15<sup>th</sup>, a significant improvement over previous years and ahead of all other New England states.

## THE BIG PICTURE

This increase in growth is likely to be short lived when considering long-term [predictions](#) related to international migration and new Trump Administration policies. Recent [headlines](#) and the topline figures of the estimates themselves obfuscate the trouble the state is still in.

The data tells us that population growth is being driven by humanitarian migrants. While immigrants generally play an integral and important role in the economic wellbeing of the state, humanitarian migrants—many with no or dubious legal status and ability to work in the regulated economy—have put additional stress on an already depleted housing market and [overburdened shelter system](#).

They are not like replacements for the thousands of highly educated young people and high-income earners leaving the state every year and do little to fill skilled positions that continue to see shortages.

Consider that even with population growth of 22,000 people in 2022 according to the Census estimates, the IRS still [found](#) that Massachusetts lost nearly \$4 billion in

net adjusted gross income (AGI) from net out-migration.

Policymakers have made some inroads in recent years to reduce tax burdens, incentivize new housing construction, and lower the cost of living. Now is not the time to hit the brakes. Much still needs to be done to make Massachusetts competitive and shore up the state's economic future.

For a more in-depth analysis of the Vintage 2024 population estimates, you can read our policy brief [here](#).

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***There is a notable departure of the unadjusted (ACS-based), foreign-born immigration estimate from the benchmark data (based on federal reporting agencies) beginning July 1, 2021. The sharp and sudden rise in inflows can be traced to the reversal of pandemic-era travel restrictions and the simultaneous increase in humanitarian migrants to the United States.***

[U.S. Census Bureau](#)

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

## IF YOU MISSED IT

Previous editions of the newsletter covered:

- [State-to-state migration trends, 2010 to 2023](#)
- [International inflows into Massachusetts](#)
- [Migration trends for remote workers](#)
- [Population Change in New England, 2020-23](#)

### DATA NOTE

**Estimates are subject to change as new information becomes available. The Census Bureau uses a combination of surveys and administrative data in making its estimates. For 2024 that includes the 2023 American Community Survey, 2022 National Center for Health Statistics births and deaths data, 2022 IRS tax data, Medicare enrollment records, and administrative data from the Department of Homeland Security and State Department. Thus, estimates are not new data but rather extrapolations from older data sets using built in assumptions about trends. Estimates do not refer to a single year but rather a span across years, thus the Vintage 2024 estimate for 2024 includes the period from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, for example.**

## STAY TUNED!

Upcoming editions of Mapping Mass Migration will include analyses of:

- A historical comparison of national migration trends over time
- Migration by educational attainment and income
- Comparison of lost adjusted gross income from net out-migration