

December, 2023

East Coast Migration Hubs

We dove into 4 states attracting domestic relocators on the East Coast and looked at emerging hubs in each area to understand the factors driving migration to the region.

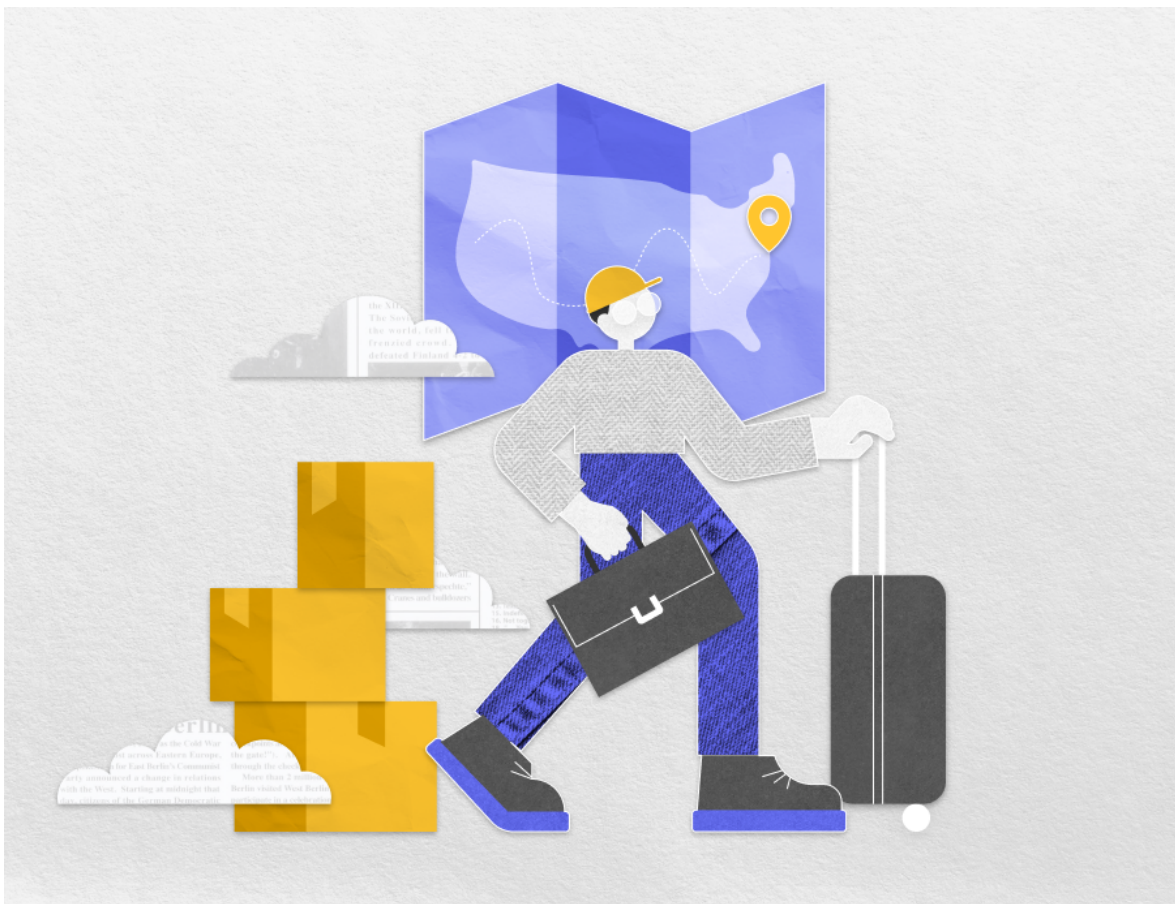


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Overview

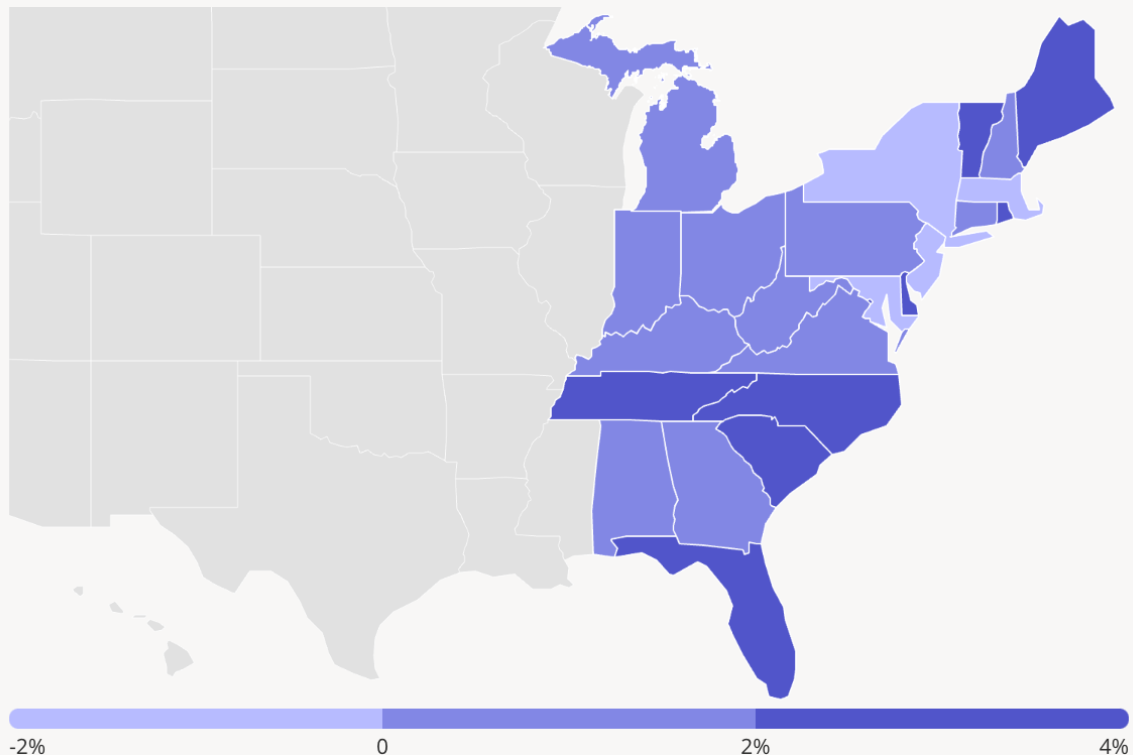
Much has been written about the recent population outflows from [New York](#), [Massachusetts](#), and [other northeastern states](#). But many states on the East Coast – including Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island, Delaware, North and South Carolina, and Florida – are actually seeing influxes of newcomers.

Each of these states – and each of the metropolitan areas attracting relocators within them – offers its own set of benefits. But those willing to make the move often fit a similar profile – younger individuals or families looking for a more favorable housing market, better schools, or more job opportunities.

This white paper looks at several states and metro areas on the East Coast to explore the factors driving migration to these emerging hubs. Using location data to understand who is moving, and harnessing [Niche's Neighborhood Grades](#) dataset to identify differences between origin and destination areas, the report seeks to shed light on recent domestic migration trends in the Eastern United States. What characterizes inbound migration to different metro areas in the Carolinas? Which states with older populations are seeing an influx of newcomers from younger areas? Where are people flocking in search of a lower cost of living, and where are they bucking the trend and moving from lower-income areas to more affluent ones? Keep reading to find out.

A Number of Inbound Migration Hubs Are Emerging on the East Coast

Net Migrated Percent of State Population, August 2019 to August 2023



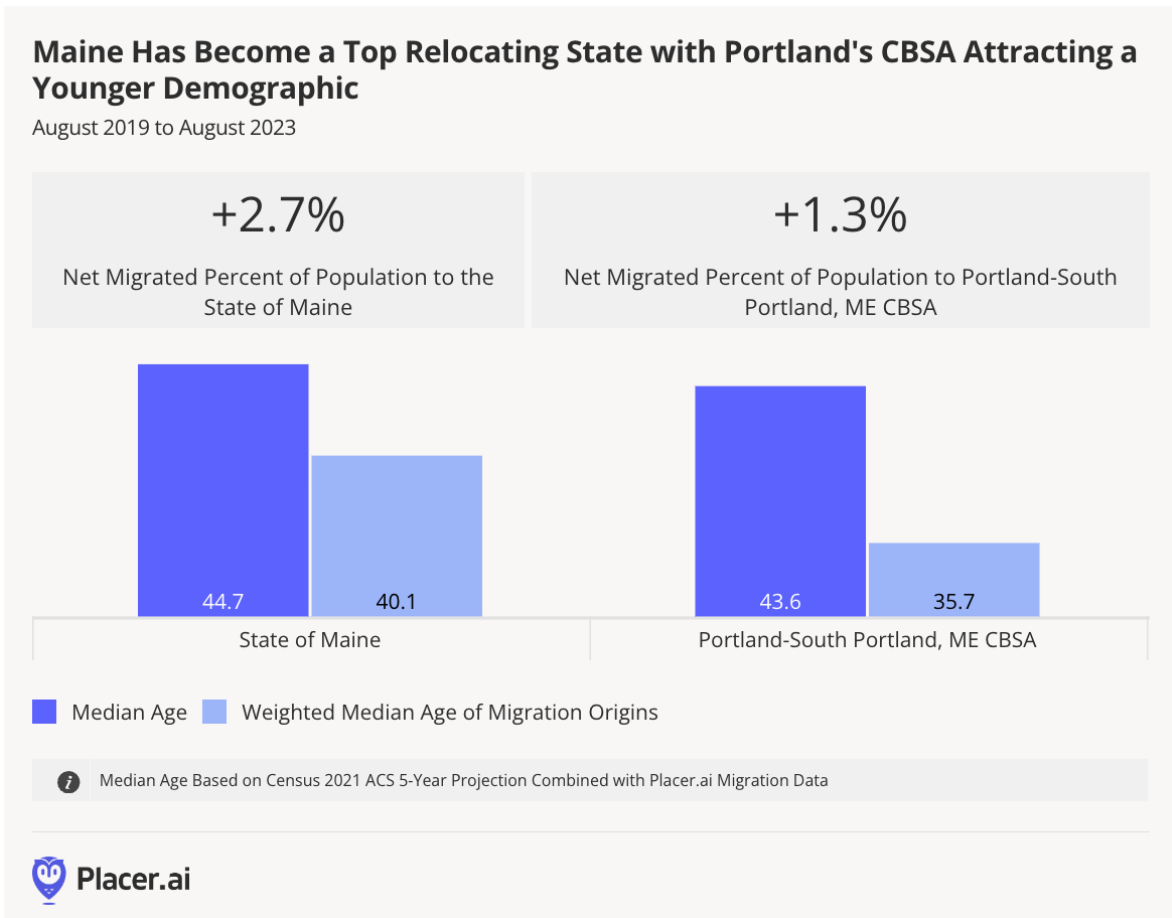
Maine

With [famously](#) low crime rates and a [robust](#) job market, Maine has emerged in recent years as a [top destination](#) for domestic relocators seeking greener pastures. The state's postcard-worthy forests and rugged coastal scenery also make it a particularly attractive place for nature lovers to make their homes.

Between August 2019 and August 2023, Maine experienced positive domestic net migration, meaning that more Americans relocated to the state than moved away from it. The net influx of population during that period (i.e. the total number of people

that moved to Maine from elsewhere in the U.S., minus those that left) constituted 2.7% of the state's August 2023 population.

Maine, long an [attractive destination](#) for retirees, has one of the highest median ages in the country. And domestic migrants to the Pine Tree State tend to come from areas that also trend older. Between August 2019 and August 2023, the weighted median age of the areas of origin that fed migration to Maine stood at 40.1 – higher than the [nationwide median](#) of 38.4. (Weighted in this context means that each CBSA of origin was weighted according to its share of the total number of newcomers to Maine). But some Maine locales are also drawing younger crowds. Relocators to the Portland-South Portland metro area, for example, hailed from much younger areas over the past four years.



Portland, Maine: Something for Everyone


Portland, Maine's most populous city – with a bustling port, a vibrant marine industry, and a [flourishing](#) culinary scene – has plenty to offer newcomers from younger communities. Though housing prices in Portland tend to be on the [high side](#), the city's [thriving job market](#) and [celebrated](#) quality of life make it an attractive destination for singles and families looking for a place to settle down. And looking at Portland's scores on the key livability metrics assessed by Niche's [Neighborhood Grades](#), shows why it clearly makes the grade.

Examining livability metrics for the city of Portland – the economic capital of the Pine Tree State – shows that the zip codes in the city and its neighboring suburbs get an "A" grade overall for their "Fit for Young Professionals." Meanwhile, Portland's areas of origin – zip codes in other cities that feed migration to Portland – collectively score only a "B+" grade on that metric. The city also scores significantly higher than its feeder areas on factors like walkability, access to restaurants, commuting conditions and health & fitness (including such things as access to doctors and health facilities).

The City of Portland, Maine Seems to be a Great Fit for Younger New Residents

August 2019 to August 2023

Draw Factors	Weighted Niche Grade of Migration Origins	Grade for Portland, Maine
Health & Fitness	B+	A
Fit for Young Professionals	B+	A
Walkability	B	B+
Commute	B+	A-
Access to Restaurants	B+	A-

 Based on Niche Neighborhood Scores Combined with Placer.ai Migration Data



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It seems, then, that Maine has what to offer both younger and older newcomers – so the state is likely to continue drawing residents from [neighboring New England states](#) and beyond.

South Carolina

South Carolina is another East Coast state that has gained traction as a major post-pandemic [domestic migration hub](#). Since 2019, the Palmetto State – so-named for the ubiquitous trees that dot its landscape – has seen a major influx of new residents from across the country, with net positive migration equal to 4.3% of its August 2023 population.

Several major South Carolina population centers, from [Charleston](#) to [Greenville](#), have benefited from the state’s remarkable inflow. But one metro area in particular – Myrtle Beach-Conway – stands out as a particularly popular destination. Over the past four years, new residents flocking to Myrtle Beach-Conway dramatically increased the



CBSA's population, with new inbound domestic migrants accounting for a whopping 10.6% of the metro area's August 2023 inhabitants.

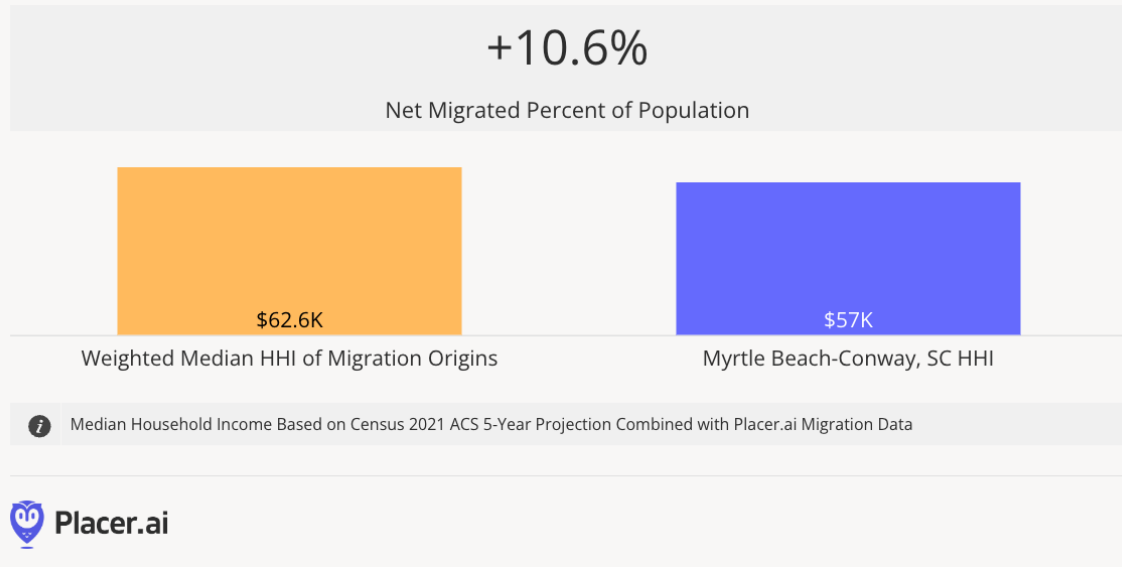
Myrtle Beach-Conway: The Affordability Draw

With a stunning coastline, mild climate, and myriad of entertainment and recreational [opportunities](#), the Myrtle Beach-Conway CBSA is undeniably a fun place to live. But a big part of the Myrtle Beach draw may also be its relative affordability. As of October 2023, [Zillow's ZHVI Home Value Index](#) put the typical home value in the Myrtle Beach metro area at \$335.7K – about 3.2% [below](#) the nationwide average. (In the city of Myrtle Beach itself, typical home values [came in](#) at an even lower \$299.3K). And with mortgage rates still [the highest](#) they've been in decades, Myrtle Beach's relatively inexpensive housing market makes it the perfect place for first-time [homebuyers](#) to put down roots.

The supposition that domestic migration to Myrtle Beach is driven – at least in part – by people seeking a lower cost of living is supported by the fact that many newcomers to the CBSA hail from wealthier places. Indeed, like many [other](#) relocation hotspots throughout the U.S., the influx to Myrtle Beach has come largely from areas with higher median household incomes (HHIs) than that of the popular South Carolina destination. Over the past four years, the weighted median HHI of the CBSAs feeding domestic migration to Myrtle Beach's was \$62.6K – almost 10% higher than the median HHI in the Myrtle Beach CBSA.

The Myrtle Beach-Conway, SC CBSA Is Seeing New Residents Coming from Wealthier Areas

August 2019 to August 2023

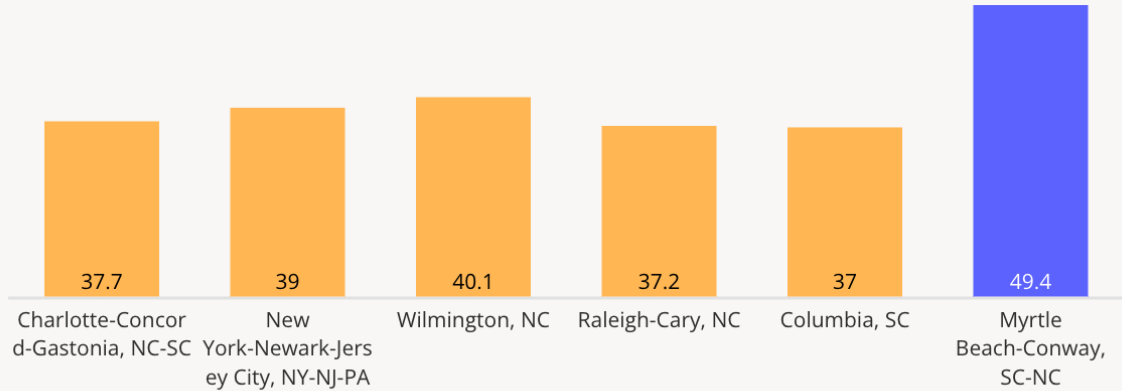


Myrtle Beach: Younger Crowds Moving In

Concerted [efforts](#) by the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce to attract a younger demographic also appear to be bearing fruit. Like some of the other CBSAs discussed in this white paper, Myrtle Beach-Conway trends older, with a median age of 49.4. But the top five origin CBSAs feeding migration to Myrtle Beach all have younger median ages – and at least some of these younger people are likely moving into Myrtle Beach.

Median Age for the Top 5 Origin CBSAs for Incomers Moving to Myrtle Beach-Conway CBSA

August 2019 to August 2023



i Median Age Based on Census 2021 ACS 5-Year Projection Combined with Placer.ai Migration Data



With everything that Myrtle Beach has to offer, the area appears poised to continue to thrive in the years to come.

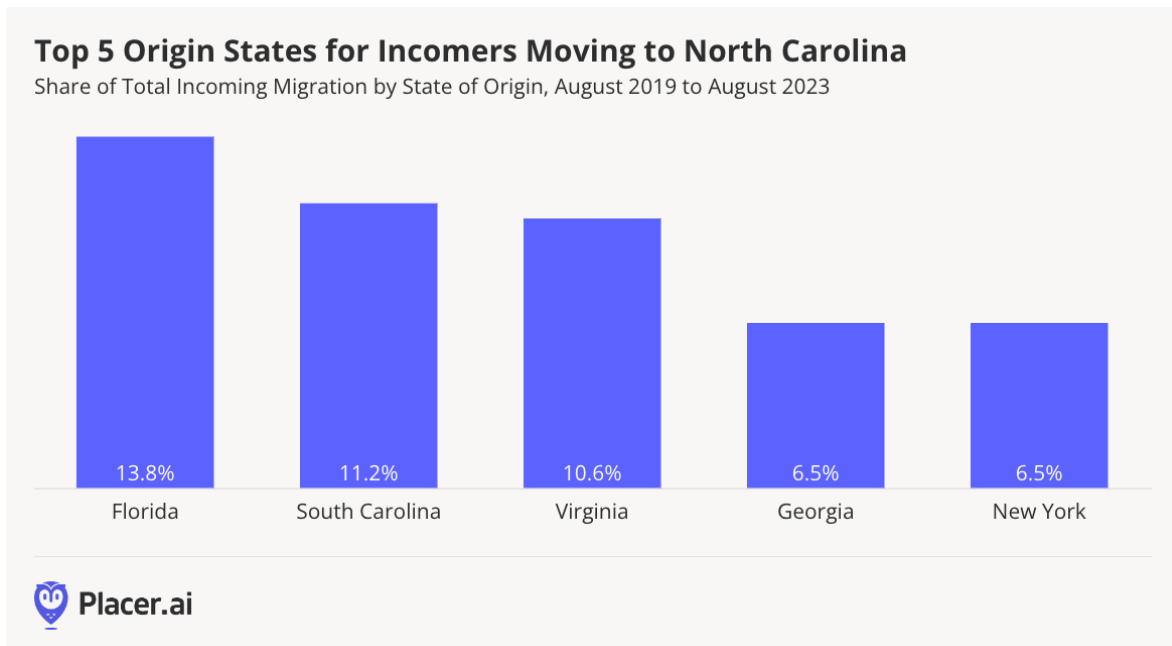
North Carolina

North Carolina, with its [pleasant climate](#), plentiful [job opportunities](#) and [affordable cost of living](#), has become another popular destination for [relocators](#). The state's largest city, Charlotte, welcomed [over 100 new residents](#) a day between mid-2021 and mid-2022, and location data indicates that the trend has continued into 2023. And Raleigh, North Carolina's capital – recently named a [top city](#) for first-time homebuyers – seems particularly attractive to [millennial movers](#) looking to settle down. Nearby [Cary, North Carolina](#) (part of the Raleigh-Cary CBSA) also ranks high among millennial newcomers.

Between August 2019 and August 2023, most of the domestic newcomers to North Carolina came from Florida, followed by neighboring South Carolina and Virginia.



Georgia and New York were also major feeders of domestic migration to the Tar Heel State.



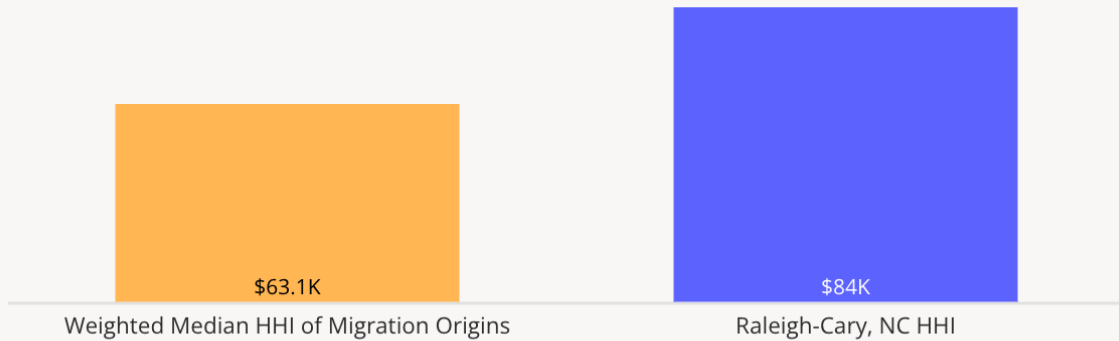
Raleigh-Cary, NC: An Aspirational Destination?


As in Myrtle Beach-Conway, SC, much domestic relocation in recent years has been [fueled](#) by people leaving higher-cost cities and states in favor of more affordable ones. This pattern is often reflected in differences between the median household income (HHI) in the origin and destination, with popular relocation destinations usually having a lower median HHI than their feeder areas. In the case of North Carolina, the search for more affordable pastures could [explain](#) some of the migration from Florida, Virginia, Georgia, and New York.

But zooming into domestic migration to Raleigh-Cary, NC, reveals a reversal of the trend in this locale. The CBSA saw positive net migration – with a net migration rate of 1.8% between August 2019 and August 2023 – but the median HHI in the areas of origin tended to be significantly lower than the median HHI in Raleigh-Cary. So what’s driving the move to Raleigh?

Raleigh-Cary, NC CBSA is Attracting New Residents from **More Modest CBSAs**

August 2019 to August 2023



 Median Household Income Based on Census 2021 ACS 5-Year Projection Combined with Placer.ai Migration Data




Raleigh Makes the Grade

According to Niche, the Raleigh-Cary CBSA is a particularly good fit for [young families](#), with favorable housing prospects, a thriving job market, and good public schools. Overall, the CBSA received an "A-" grade for its "Fit for Families," compared to the "B-" score on that metric for the areas of migration origins. Newcomers can also enjoy Raleigh-Cary CBSA's relatively high diversity.

What are The Main Factors for People Moving to the Raleigh-Cary, NC CBSA?

August 2019 to August 2023

Draw Factors	Areas of Origins	Raleigh-Cary, NC
Housing	B ⁻	B ⁺
Public Schools	B	B ⁺
Jobs	B	B ⁺
Fit for Families	B ⁺	A ⁻
Diversity	B ⁺	A ⁻

 Based on Niche Neighbourhood Scores Combined with Placer.ai Migration Data



These advantages may attract relocators from less affluent areas willing to trade in their current lower-cost area in favor of a better quality of life in Raleigh-Cary.

Florida

Florida is another East Coast state that has long been on the radar as a domestic migration hotspot. With its warm climate and beautiful beaches, Florida has a lot to offer people seeking a lifestyle upgrade. And between August 2019 and August 2023, domestic migration boosted the Sunshine State's population by 2.6% of its August 2023 headcount.

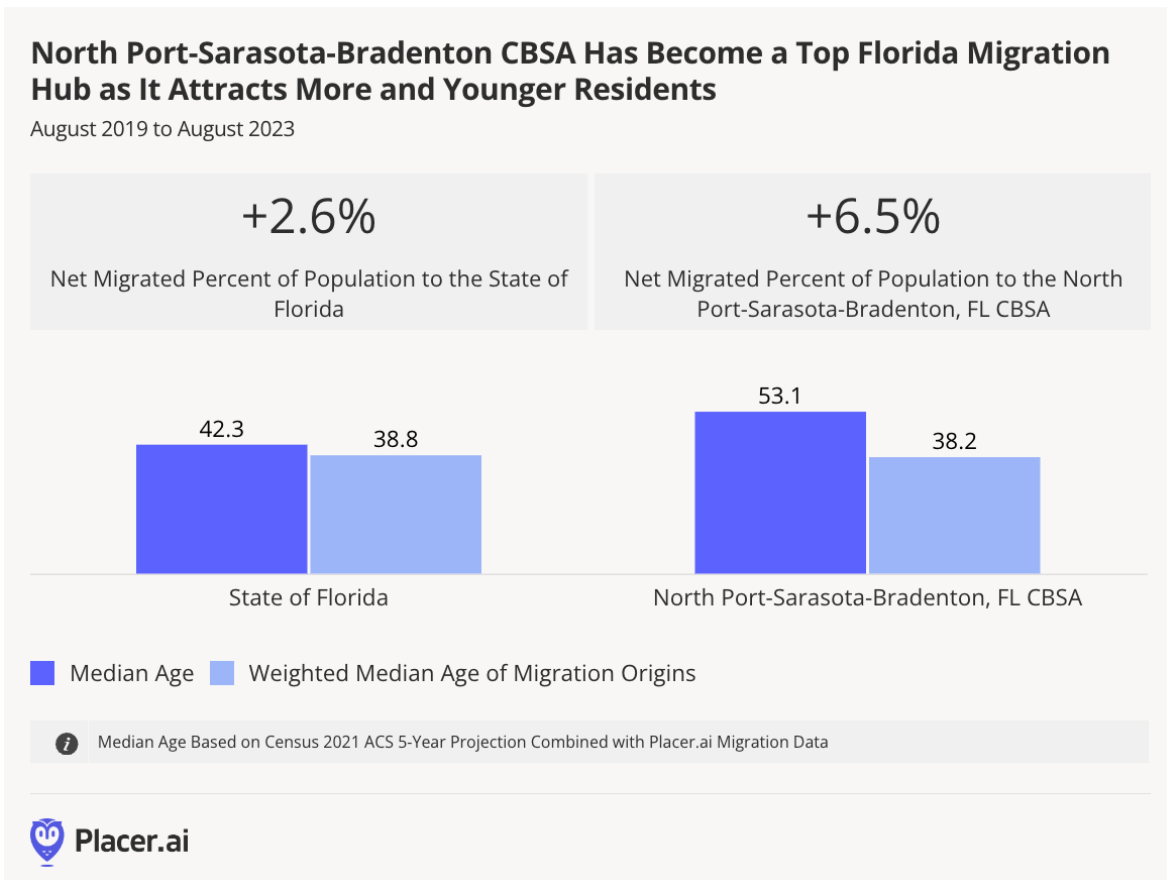
North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton: A Fast-Growing Midsize Hub

While [much attention](#) has [been paid](#) to major Florida hubs like Tampa, Jacksonville, and Orlando, other metropolitan areas in the Sunshine State are also thriving. The North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton CBSA, for example, spanning Manatee and Sarasota



Counties, is quietly emerging as one of the [fastest-growing](#) midsize metropolitan areas in the nation. Between August 2019 and August 2023, the CBSA experienced positive net domestic migration equal to 6.5% of its August 2023 population.

And the metro area – which has been ranked a [top](#) place to live for young professionals – seems to be drawing a large share of relocators from younger communities. With a median age of 53.1, North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton stands out as an older community, even by Florida standards. (Florida’s median age of 42.3 makes it the fifth-oldest state in the U.S.) But the CBSAs that are feeding inbound domestic migration to the metro area, weighted to reflect the share of newcomers from each CBSA moving to the region, have a median age of just 38.2 – slightly below the nationwide average.



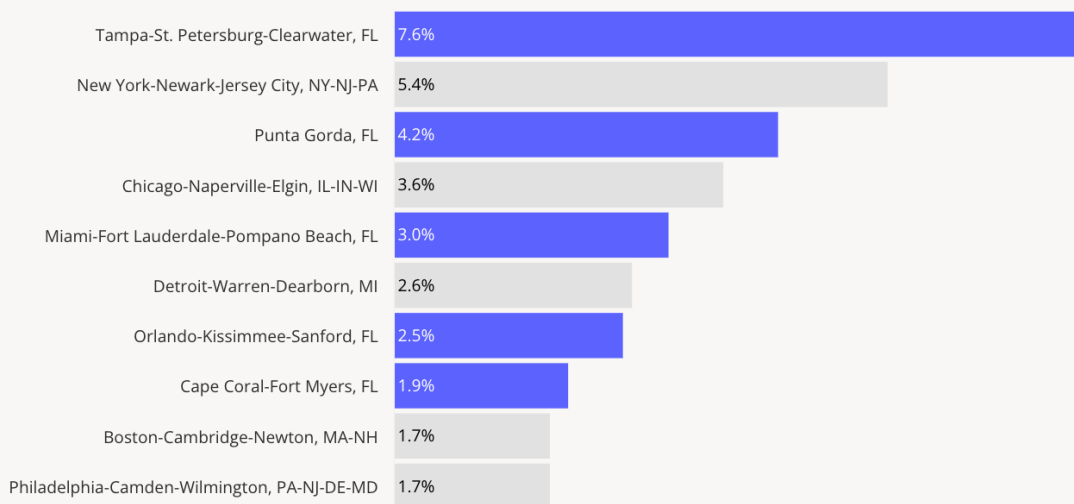
A Local Phenomenon

But where exactly are all the people moving to North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton coming from?

Drilling down into the data for the top 10 metro areas feeding domestic migration to the CBSA shows that 19.3% of new residents from these CBSAs – or about one in five – hail from other cities in the Sunshine State. The top origin CBSA by far for relocators to the area is Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, which contributed a whopping 7.6% of new area residents between August 2019 and August 2023. But much [like Tampa](#), the North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton CBSA is also drawing a large share of its fresh locals from New York. Some of these relocators may be remote-capable employees who [sought out](#) less-expensive and warmer environs in the wake of COVID.

Half of the Top 10 CBSAs Feeding Domestic migration to North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton are in Florida

Share of Total Incoming Migration for Top 10 CBSAs of Origin | August 2019 to August 2023



Young people are likely flocking to North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton to enjoy the area's booming [job market](#), [relatively](#) low cost of living, and dynamic [cultural scene](#). And

given these trends, it should come as no surprise that the CBSA has been [deemed](#) the number one housing market to watch nationwide.

The Growing Attraction of East Coast Gems

Shifting [work patterns](#) and pandemic-era relocation [trends](#) have fueled growth in many areas of the country – from Austin, TX in the South to Boise City, ID in the Northwest. But several East Coast metropolitan areas – including Portland-South Portland, ME, Myrtle Beach-Conway, SC, Raleigh-Cary, NC, and North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton, FL have also emerged as relocation hotspots in recent years. And while solid job markets, natural beauty, and local amenities are always important, each city tells a somewhat different story about the factors driving domestic migration patterns.

Key Takeaways

1. **Older communities can draw younger crowds.** With one of the highest median ages in the nation, Maine has long been a prime destination for retirees. But despite trending older, the Portland-South Portland CBSA has emerged as a magnet for domestic relocators from younger locales. Myrtle Beach-Conway, SC, with a median age of 49.4, has also succeeded in positioning itself as a sought-after hub for younger movers.
2. **Affordability remains key.** The perennial quest for a lower cost of living is a major driver of domestic migration to some of the fastest-growing areas of the country. In places like Myrtle Beach-Conway, SC, people are flocking to less affluent metro areas in hopes of improving their standard of living while cutting costs.
3. **Relocation patterns are fueled by a variety of factors.** Despite the importance of affordability, some relocators are willing to endure a slightly higher cost of living if it means better job opportunities and higher-quality public schools. Factors like the local job market, access to health care and amenities, and walkability all go into making a city attractive to would-be

residents. In Raleigh-Cary, NC, for example, factors such greater suitability for families appear to be fueling the influx.

4. **Domestic migration is often a local affair.** While some people move across the country, many relocators choose to remain closer to home. Four out of five of North Carolina's top feeder states were southeastern neighbors. And metro areas within the Sunshine State accounted for at least 19.3% of domestic migrants to North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton, FL. Sometimes, it seems, good things are just around the corner.