Oklahoma Experiences Historic Population Shifts During Pandemic

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OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma City Branch of the Federal Reserve of Kansas City released its latest issue of the quarterly publication the *Oklahoma Economist,* titled "Oklahoma's Population During COVID: Early Deaths, New Residents and an End of the Brain Drain."

For the first time in history, in 2020-21 more people died in Oklahoma than were born, according to Chad Wilkerson, branch executive, vice president and economist at the Oklahoma City Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

"The pandemic inflicted the highest death rate in state history, across nearly all age groups," he said. "Oklahoma ranked in the top quarter of states in terms of COVID-related deaths, with deaths among people of color especially high."

Wilkerson said conversely, more people moved into Oklahoma from other states than any time in recent decades, reversing a recent trend of outmigration—especially of college graduates—and more than offsetting the state's decline in natural population growth.

"Thousands more people moved into Oklahoma during 2020 and 2021 than moved out, and the state ranked highly among states on this measure," he said. "Many communities across the state, of all sizes, saw positive in-migration, not just the two large metro areas. The state's brain drain from 2013-19—when more bachelor's degree holders moved out of the state than moved in—also ended in 2020. The net result of these demographic changes was the highest overall Oklahoma population growth in six years."

The complete issue is available at www.kansascityfed.org/oklahomacity/oklahoma-economist.

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