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# The Granite State Migration

Why People Are Moving to New Hampshire, Who They Are, and What It Means for Our Future

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## Executive Summary

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For twenty years we were told that migration would turn New Hampshire blue. That Massachusetts liberals were coming north to vote the way they voted back home. It was repeated so often that people stopped checking whether it was true.

It is not true. The data say the opposite.

Since COVID hit in March 2020, New Hampshire has grown for one reason and one reason only: people are moving here. Not being born here. Moving here. And the people making that choice are not who we were warned about. They are working families and higher earners walking away from high-tax states, and the voters among them are registering Republican and undeclared, not Democrat.

Two sets of numbers tell this story, and they tell the same story. The Census Bureau and the IRS show who is coming and what they bring: every bit of our growth since 2020 is migration, most of it domestic, most of it from Massachusetts, and the households moving in earn far more than the ones leaving. The voter data show how the new electorate leans: of the 236,363 people who registered to vote on or after March 1, 2020, Republicans outnumber Democrats by nearly 18,000, and the model puts far more of them on the right than the left.

Here is the part nobody wants to say out loud. The New Hampshire Advantage is not a bumper sticker. No income tax. No sales tax. One of the lowest tax burdens in America. It is a magnet, and it is pulling people and paychecks north across the Massachusetts line every single day. The lesson for Concord is simple. **Do not blink. Double down on the low taxes, the spending discipline, and the housing supply that built this. That is what is winning.**

## I. The Story We Were Told, and the One the Numbers Tell

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For most of the last two decades the conventional wisdom in this state ran one direction. Demographic change was a problem for Republicans. Massachusetts was emptying into our southern tier and bringing its politics with it. Give it time, the thinking went, and New Hampshire goes the way of every other state in New England.

That story is out of date. The numbers buried it.

Start with the one fact that reframes everything. On July 1, 2024, New Hampshire's population hit 1,409,032, up about 31,500 from the 2020 Census. Every bit of that growth came from migration. It had to, because more people have died here than have been born here every year since 2017. We are not growing because Granite Staters are having more kids. We are growing because people keep choosing to move here.

Sit with that, because it changes how you read this state. When a state only grows because people move to it, then who those people are and why they came decides what the state becomes. Its economy. Its workforce. Its politics. All of it. So this paper asks the two questions that actually matter. Who is moving here, and why. Then it draws the obvious conclusion for anyone who wants New Hampshire to keep winning.

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## II. Who Is Coming: The Census and IRS Numbers

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### **It is all migration**

Kenneth Johnson has studied New Hampshire's population longer than anyone. He is the senior demographer at the Carsey School at UNH, and his read is not subtle. Between the 2020 Census and July 2024, New Hampshire added about 31,500 residents, and migration was the entire gain. Over those four years, 40,100 more people moved in than moved out, even though deaths beat births by 9,200.

Of those 40,100 net migrants, roughly 29,200, about three in four, came from other states. The rest came from abroad. New Hampshire's percentage growth since 2020 beat every state in the Northeast except Maine. Let that sink in. In the highest-tax corner of the country, the two states gaining people fastest are the two with the lightest tax loads.

This was not one strange pandemic year. Johnson's briefs track it the whole way through. The state added about 11,500 people in the first pandemic year and 8,800 the next. By the 2021 and 2022 American Community Survey, more than 111,000 people had moved into New Hampshire while about 93,000 left, more than 200,000 people churning across our borders in two years and netting us 18,300.

### **And most of them come from Massachusetts**

No surprise where they come from. Johnson found that nearly 44 percent of the people moving to New Hampshire in 2021 and 2022 came from one state: Massachusetts. That tracks a pattern as old as the state itself. More than a quarter of everyone living in New Hampshire right now was born in Massachusetts. Only 41 percent of us were born here at all.

Census migration data put hard numbers on the Massachusetts flow. In 2021 and 2022 combined, net migration from Massachusetts added roughly 25,000 people to New Hampshire. The pull from our southern neighbor is the single biggest force in our growth. It surged during the pandemic and has since cooled back toward where it was before.

### **The part taxpayers should read twice: they bring money**

Here is where the story stops being about headcount and starts being about your future tax base. The people moving here are not just numerous. They are doing well.

Johnson and Tyrus Parker ran the IRS migration data. New Hampshire's net migration gain of 26,000 during the 2020 to 2022 pandemic stretch was a big jump from the 17,000 we netted in the three years before. But the income came in faster than the people. In the three years before the pandemic, the people moving in earned about \$1.1 billion more than the people moving out. From 2020 to 2022, that number tripled to \$3.3 billion.

The Massachusetts exchange alone tells the whole tale. The income New Hampshire gained from the Massachusetts trade more than doubled, from \$1.4 billion before the pandemic to \$2.9 billion during it. The households moving up here earned an average of \$111,000. The ones leaving earned \$87,000.

**Read that again.** The people coming in earn more than the people going out, and the gap is getting wider. We are not just adding residents. We are adding taxpayers, business owners, and paychecks. That is what it looks like when a state is winning the competition for talent and capital, and it matches exactly what the Tax Foundation sees across the country. Americans are leaving high-tax states for low-tax ones, and the higher the earner, the more likely they are to move.

### III. How They Vote: The New Electorate Is Breaking Right

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#### What the new registrants look like

Now the question that decides New Hampshire's political future. These new arrivals and new voters, which way do they lean?

Modeled party data covering the New Hampshire electorate run to 959,075 voter records. Pull everyone who registered on or after March 1, 2020, the month the pandemic hit, and you get 236,363 new registrants. Here is how they registered:

- **Republican: 68,379**
- **Undeclared: 117,584**
- **Democrat: 50,400**

Republicans beat Democrats among these new voters by nearly 18,000. In a state where statewide races come down to a few thousand votes, an 18,000-vote edge among the people just joining the rolls is not noise. It is the ground shifting.

Look past the party box they checked and it gets sharper. The modeled-party score, which estimates how a voter actually leans rather than how they registered, sorts the same 236,363 people this way:

- **Hard Republican: 36,490**
- **Weak Republican: 50,656**
- **Swing: 91,234**
- **Weak Democrat: 39,888**
- **Hard Democrat: 18,095**

Do the math. That is 87,146 Republican-leaning new voters against 57,983 Democratic-leaning ones, with 91,234 sitting in the swing middle. Republican-leaning beats Democratic-leaning among the new arrivals by almost 30,000, and the biggest single group is the persuadable bloc in the center. This is a center-right electorate that is genuinely up for grabs. It is not a Democratic one, and it never became one.

#### Let me be straight about what this does and does not prove

**Here is the honest caveat, because the argument is stronger when you do not hide the soft spots.** This voter data measures new registrants, not confirmed out-of-state movers. New Hampshire lets you register at the polls, and registrations spike in even years on presidential and midterm turnout. Roughly 95,000 of these new registrants signed up in 2020, about 41,000

in 2022, and roughly 99,000 in 2024. So some real share of these 236,363 people are not movers at all. They are 18-year-olds aging in, longtime residents registering for the first time, and people re-registering after the 2021 checklist cleanup pulled inactive records.

Which is exactly why I do not hang the migration claim on the voter file. The migration case stands on the Census and IRS data in the last section, and that data is airtight: the growth is real, it is migration, and it is Massachusetts-fed. The voter data does a different job. It tells you the shape of the electorate showing up during the migration era. Put the two together and the picture is hard to argue with. A big, higher-income, Massachusetts-driven migration is real, and the voters registering alongside it lean Republican and swing. Not Democrat.

### **And the whole state is moving the same direction**

None of this is happening in a corner. It is part of a statewide shift. For the first time in recent memory, registered Republicans outnumber registered Democrats in New Hampshire. As of the summer of 2025, Secretary of State figures showed roughly 321,650 registered Republicans, 272,316 Democrats, and 378,549 undeclared voters. That is a Republican lead of nearly 49,000.

Think about how fast that turned. As recently as 2020, New Hampshire Democrats hit an all-time high of 347,828 registered voters and held their biggest lead over Republicans ever. By the 2024 election there were nearly 82,000 fewer registered Democrats than in 2020, and Republicans had passed them. Going into 2024, undeclared voters were about 37 percent of the rolls, Republicans 34 percent, Democrats 29 percent. Undeclared is still the biggest bloc, the way it has always been in this independent-minded state. But the Republican-over-Democrat flip is real, and it is recent.

The statewide trend and the new-voter trend point the same way. The electorate is moving right at the margin, and the people moving here are a real part of the reason.

## **IV. Why They Come: The New Hampshire Advantage**

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Nobody packs up their family and crosses a state line on a whim. They do it for a better deal. New Hampshire offers a deal the high-tax states next door cannot touch. We call it the New Hampshire Advantage, and the numbers make it real.

### **No income tax. Period.**

On January 1, 2025, New Hampshire finished phasing out the Interest and Dividends Tax, the last tax we had on personal income. With that repeal, passed in the 2023 budget, New Hampshire became the only state in America with no broad income tax and no general sales tax at any level, state or local. The Tax Foundation puts it plainly. New Hampshire does not tax wages or salaries, and it has no state sales tax.

That is not a symbolic win. The Tax Foundation's 2026 State Tax Competitiveness Index ranked New Hampshire third in the country, up from sixth a year earlier, and gave the credit to killing the Interest and Dividends Tax. We rank first in New England by a mile. The next-best state in our region sits at 26th. We are now keeping company with Wyoming and South Dakota at the very top of the list.

The total burden says the same thing. WalletHub's 2026 numbers put New Hampshire's combined state and local tax burden at about 5.4 percent of income, second-lowest in the nation behind only Alaska, with the lowest sales and excise burden anywhere. Granite Staters keep more of what they earn than almost anyone in America.

### **Now look at the line on the map**

The Advantage is sharpest right at the border, which is exactly where the migration is heaviest. Walk a family a few miles north across that line and look at what changes.

Massachusetts charges a flat 5 percent income tax, with another 4 percent surtax stacked on income over roughly \$1.1 million for a 9 percent top rate. New Hampshire charges zero. On a household making \$150,000, the 5 percent alone is several thousand dollars a year that a New Hampshire family simply keeps. Massachusetts adds 6.25 percent sales tax on most of what you buy. We add nothing. Massachusetts hits estates with one of the lowest exemptions in the country. We have no estate or inheritance tax at all.

Then there is the roof over your head. As of 2024, the average New Hampshire home ran about \$479,752 against roughly \$627,596 in Massachusetts, and Greater Boston is well north of that. For a young family priced out of the Massachusetts market, crossing the border is the difference between renting forever and owning a home.

I will not pretend there is no tradeoff. New Hampshire leans hard on local property taxes, which are among the highest in the country, and property taxes carry close to 60 percent of all state and local revenue here. But even with that in the math, our total burden sits far below our neighbors. That is why the people and the money flow north, not south. The market already ran the numbers and made its call.

### **And it is the workers we want**

The people making this move skew young and skew productive. From 2018 to 2022, working-age adults were about 76.8 percent of the people moving into New Hampshire, and most recent movers were between 18 and 44. These are people in their prime earning and family-building years, picking New Hampshire for affordability, opportunity, and a government that stays out of their wallet. That is the profile of a state with a future, and it is the direct payoff of decades of holding the line on taxes.

## **V. What It Means, and What Could Blow It**

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### **The politics**

Let me be direct about the politics, because that is what people want to know. New Hampshire is still competitive. Kamala Harris carried the state by 2.8 points in 2024, the closest any state went that a Democrat won, and a sharp drop from Biden's 7.4-point win in 2020. Trump flipped Carroll, Rockingham, and Sullivan counties along the way. At the same time, Kelly Ayotte won the corner office by more than nine, Republicans hold the trifecta in Concord with a 222-to-178 House majority, and the GOP leads in voter registration for the first time in years.

The migration data explains the current running under all of it. A higher-income, Massachusetts-fed in-migration is feeding a new pool of voters that leans Republican and swing. That is not a new phenomenon either. A UNH survey years ago found that the people who had moved here from Massachusetts were mostly Republican, and they helped build the GOP strongholds in the Boston exurb towns of Hillsborough and Rockingham. The same engine is still running today, and the data shows it.

**One honest note.** This is not automatic, and I am not going to pretend it is. The single biggest group among the new voters is the swing bloc, not committed Republicans. So the lesson is not that demography hands us anything. The lesson is that New Hampshire is gaining a large, persuadable, center-right electorate that chose this state on purpose. Those voters are winnable. You win them by delivering the affordability and the freedom that brought them here in the first place.

### **The thing that could wreck it**

Here is what should keep us focused. The threat is not coming from outside. It is the temptation to take the win for granted. To assume the people keep coming no matter what Concord does. To let the very things that built this advantage erode, a new tax here, a spending binge there, or a refusal to build enough housing for the families who want in.

We already know it can stall. Migration into New Hampshire slows when housing gets too expensive, and we are still losing some of our own people to even cheaper Maine. The Advantage is not a law of nature. It is a choice we make every session. Defend it and extend it, or watch it slip.

## **VI. What We Should Do About It**

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New Hampshire should govern like a state that plans to keep winning. Here is where I would put the focus, starting with what matters most.

- 1. Hold the line on no income tax, and lock it down.** Killing the Interest and Dividends Tax in 2025 is the single biggest reason we jumped to third in the country on tax competitiveness. The Legislature should reject every attempt to bring it back or to float any new tax on personal income, and we should put a constitutional protection on the no-income-tax promise so families and businesses can count on it for good. This is the foundation. Everything else sits on top of it.
- 2. Fix the housing shortage with supply, not subsidy.** Housing is the top worry in poll after poll, and high housing costs are the one thing that can choke off the migration that is fueling our growth. We made real progress in 2025 on parking mandates, single-stair mid-rise buildings, and density. Keep going. Allow more multifamily and starter homes by right, keep cutting the local zoning barriers, and judge success by units actually permitted and built. If we cannot build fast enough to keep pace with the people moving in, and prices keep climbing faster than wages, then the state should preempt the exclusionary local zoning that is causing it.

3. **Spend like the family budgets we represent.** Our low tax burden is not luck. It is spending discipline. WalletHub named New Hampshire number one for taxpayer return on investment eleven years running, and they tie it straight to the fact that we have no income tax. That ranking is an asset. We protect it by keeping spending growth under the combined rate of population growth and inflation, every budget, no exceptions.
4. **Make the business tax code as good as the personal one.** Our personal tax climate is elite. Our business tax structure is not, and the Tax Foundation ranks it a middling 37th, dragged down by a short loss carryforward, no full expensing, and a weak Section 179 deduction. Fix it. Permanent full expensing, longer loss carryforwards, and a continued march down on the Business Enterprise Tax would turn New Hampshire into the place the employers move once the workers are already here.
5. **Go recruit. Openly.** The data is clear that the inflow is real, higher-income, and Massachusetts-led. So stop being shy about it. Treat the competition for high-tax-state refugees as a deliberate economic strategy, and sell the New Hampshire Advantage straight to the families and the employers most likely to make the jump.

## VII. The Bottom Line

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The numbers all point one direction. Since March 2020, New Hampshire has gained tens of thousands of new residents. Every bit of our net growth is migration. Most of those movers came from Massachusetts. They brought billions of dollars of income with them. And the electorate that registered alongside them leans Republican and swing, in a state where Republicans now lead Democrats in registration for the first time in years.

This is what winning looks like. People are voting with their feet for a state that lets them keep what they earn, build what they want, and raise their kids in freedom. The New Hampshire Advantage is not some relic from the past. It is the engine of our future, and right now it is rebuilding both the economy and the electorate in our direction.

**So do not blink.** Hold the line on taxes. Build the housing. Discipline the spending. Go compete for every family looking north for a better life. Do that, and New Hampshire keeps doing exactly what it has done since the pandemic hit. Out-grow them, out-compete them, and out-earn the high-tax states around us, one Granite Stater at a time. Live free or die was never just a motto. It is a growth strategy, and it is working.

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