

Internal Migration in the U.S. During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Thomas B. Foster, *U.S. Census Bureau*

Mark Ellis and Lee Fiorio, *University of Washington*

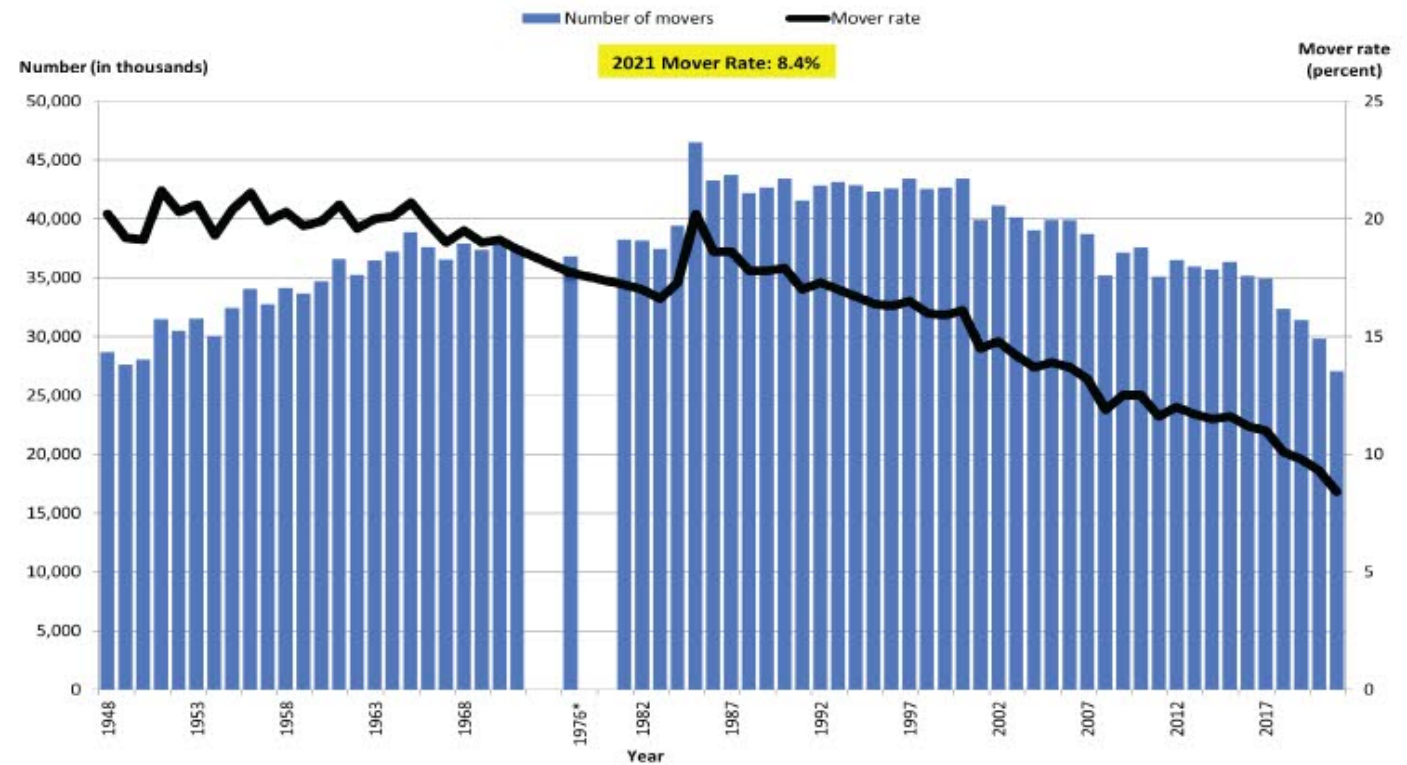
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Survey-derived mobility rates continue to fall

CPS-ASEC mover rates from the pandemic period see continuation of decades-long trend:

- **9.8%** in 2019
- **9.3%** in 2020
- **8.4%** in 2021

Figure 1.
Number of Movers and Mover Rate: 1948–2021



Notes: The CPS sample design was generally updated in years ending in "5" based on previous decennial censuses. Data for the following years are: 2011 (2000 controls), 2010 (2000 controls), 2001 (SCHIP, 2000 controls), 1993 (1990 controls). For more information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <<http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/technical-documentation/complete.html>>.

* The migration question was asked differently between 1971 and 1980. Only 1971 and 1976 have a 1-year estimate comparable to all other years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement 1948–2021.

But media narratives suggest pandemic surge in migration and residential mobility...

A Century-Old Moving Company Says the Summer of Covid Is 'Insane' *New Yorkers Are Fleeing to the Suburbs: 'The Demand Is Insane'*

The Richest Neighborhoods Emptied Out Most as Coronavirus Hit New York City

Pandemic moving study: How remote work spurred moves out of big cities

The Pandemic Prompted People to Move, But Many Didn't Go Far

About a fifth of U.S. adults moved due to COVID-19 or know someone who did

Coronavirus Moving Study: People Left Big Cities, Temporary Moves Spiked In First 6 Months of COVID-19 Pandemic

Motivation and Goals

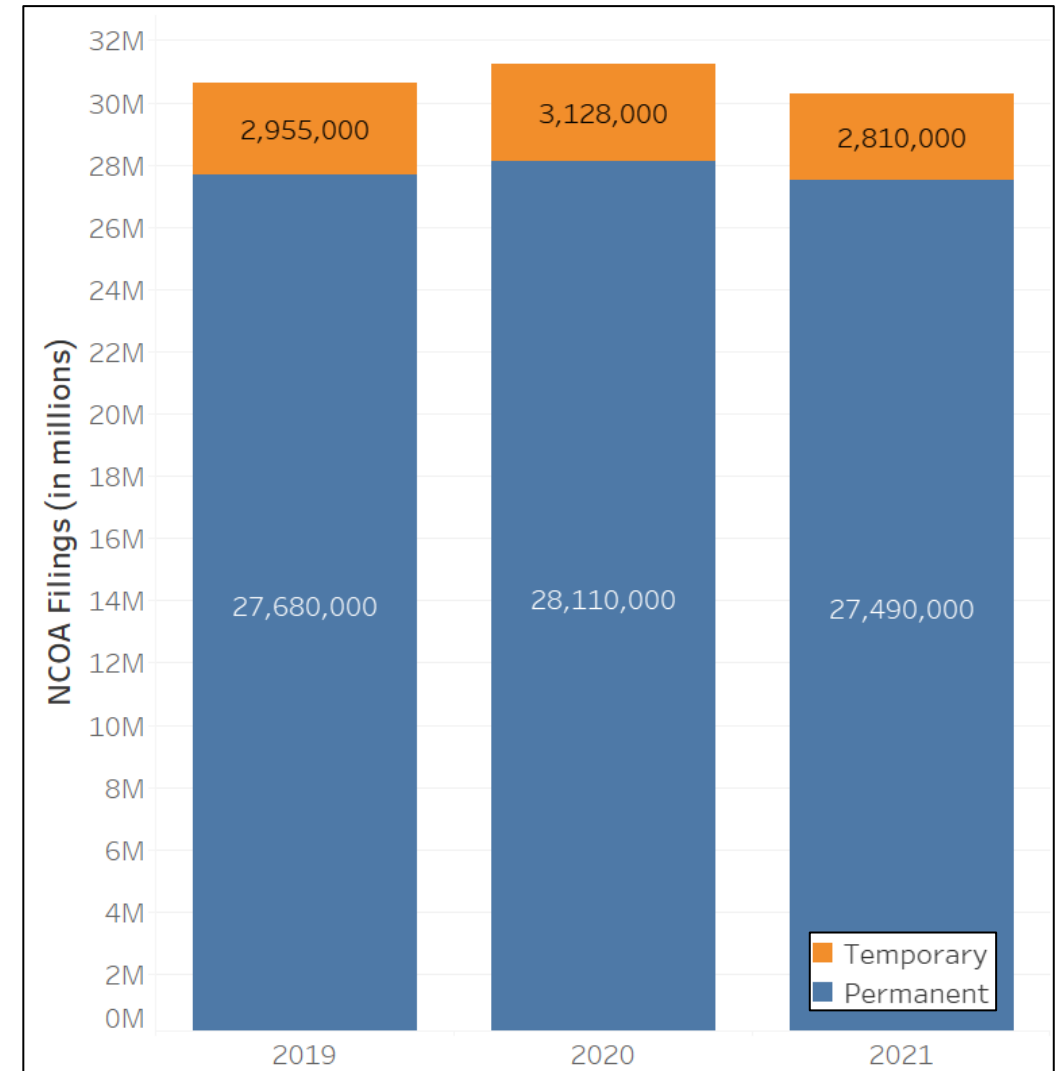
- Did migration increase or decrease during the pandemic?
 - When? For whom? To what extent?
- Answer these questions using timely administrative data from the United States Postal Service (USPS) detailing changes of address
 - Linked with data from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA)
- Where does the gap between survey migration measures and the prevailing media narrative originate?
 - Compare individual address changes with responses to Census Bureau Survey migration responses

Data

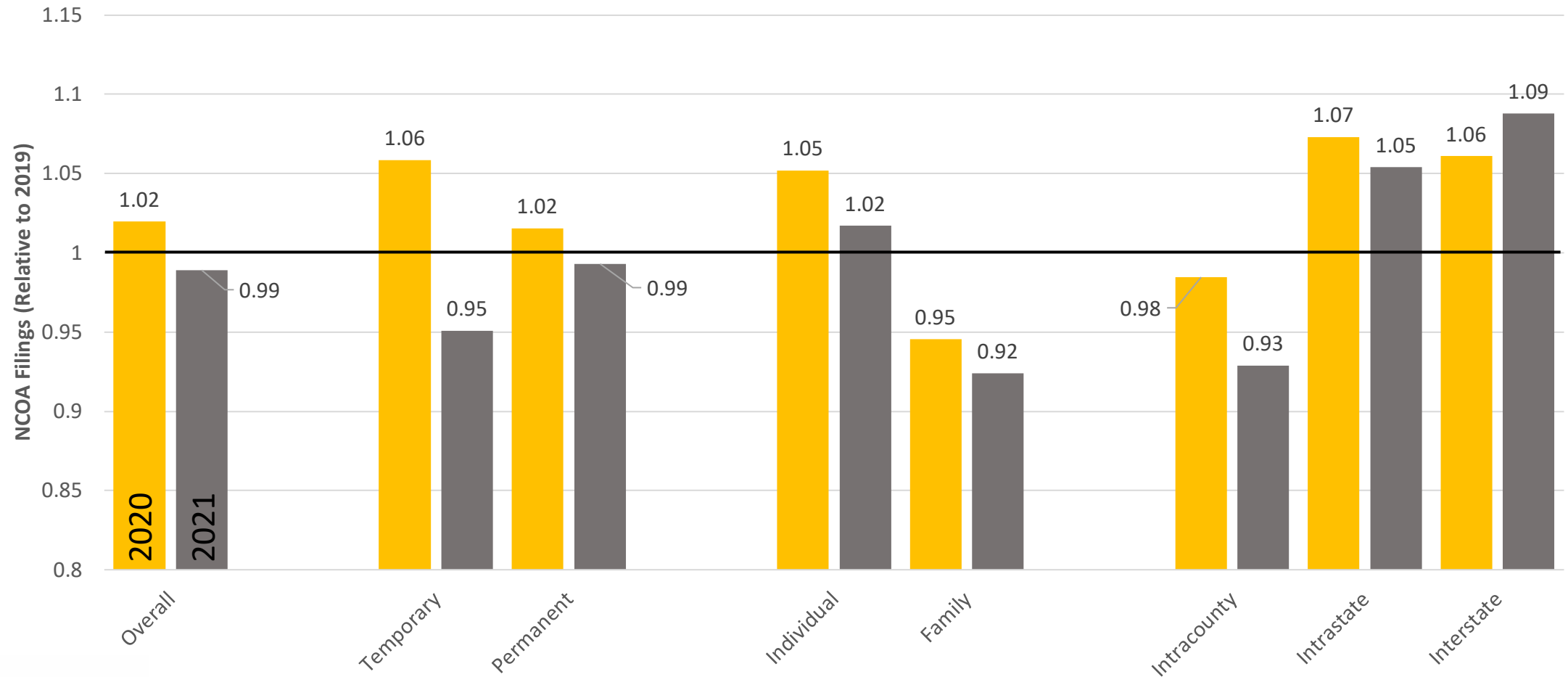
- USPS National Change of Address Registry (NCOA, 2019 – 2021)
- SSA Numerical Identification Database (Numident 2022; Age)
- IRS 1040s (TY2020; Adjusted Gross Income)
- ACS (2020) and CPS-ASEC (2020, 2021)
- Linked using Protected Identification Keys (PIKs)*
 - Note that not all individuals in NCOA can be successfully assigned a PIK and, therefore, cannot be linked to the Numident, 1040s, ACS, or CPS-ASEC
 - PIK rates increase over the 2019-2021 period
 - Weight PIKed observations in month/year, origin/destination, family/individual move bins such that their sum equals the sum of all NCOA observations

Address changes increased, but not by much...

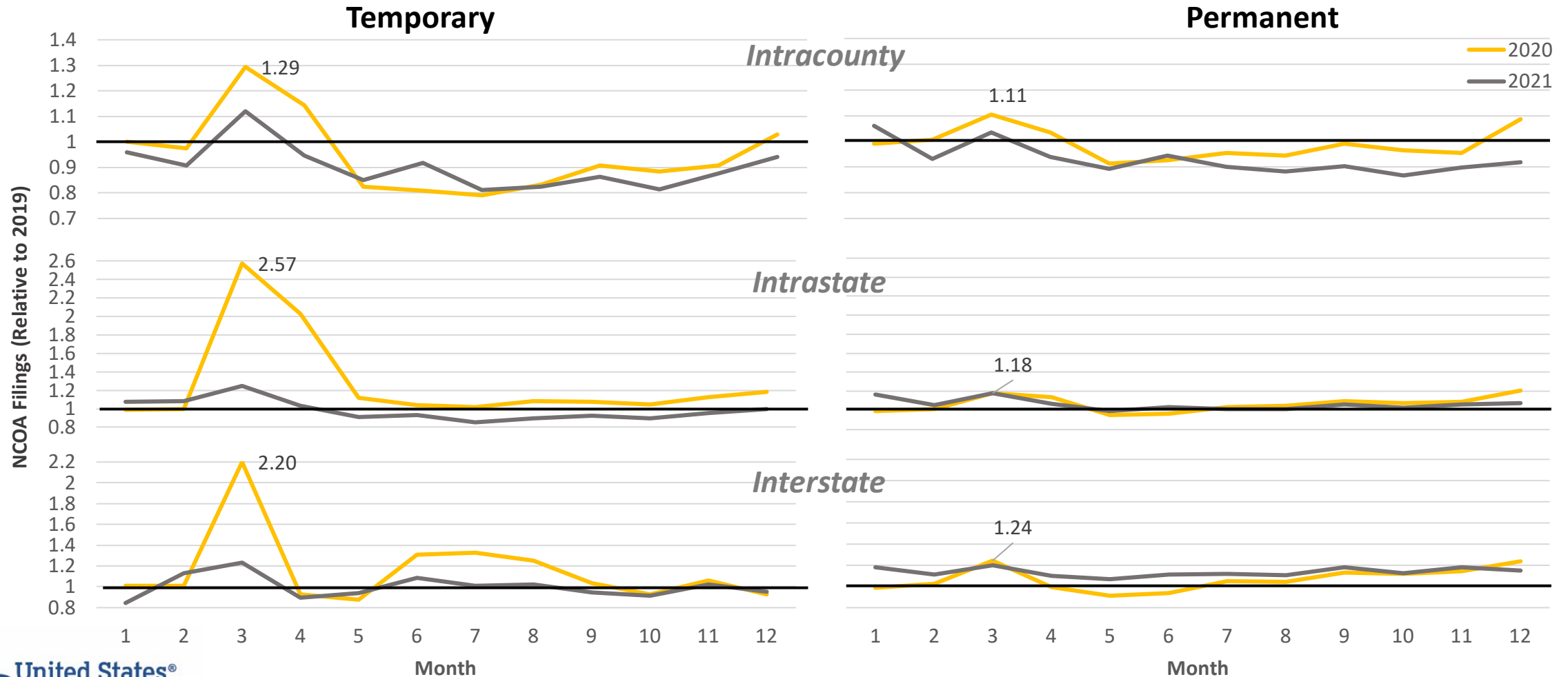
- Both temporary and permanent changes of address increased in 2020...
 - But, 2021 saw fewer of both relative to 2019.
- A 2% increase in 2020...
 - 38% of that increase is attributable to increase repeat address changes.
 - This rise in repeat moves continued through 2021 despite drop in total moves.
- Counts on par with CPS-ASEC total mover counts...
 - But, NCOA family moves only count one person per household.



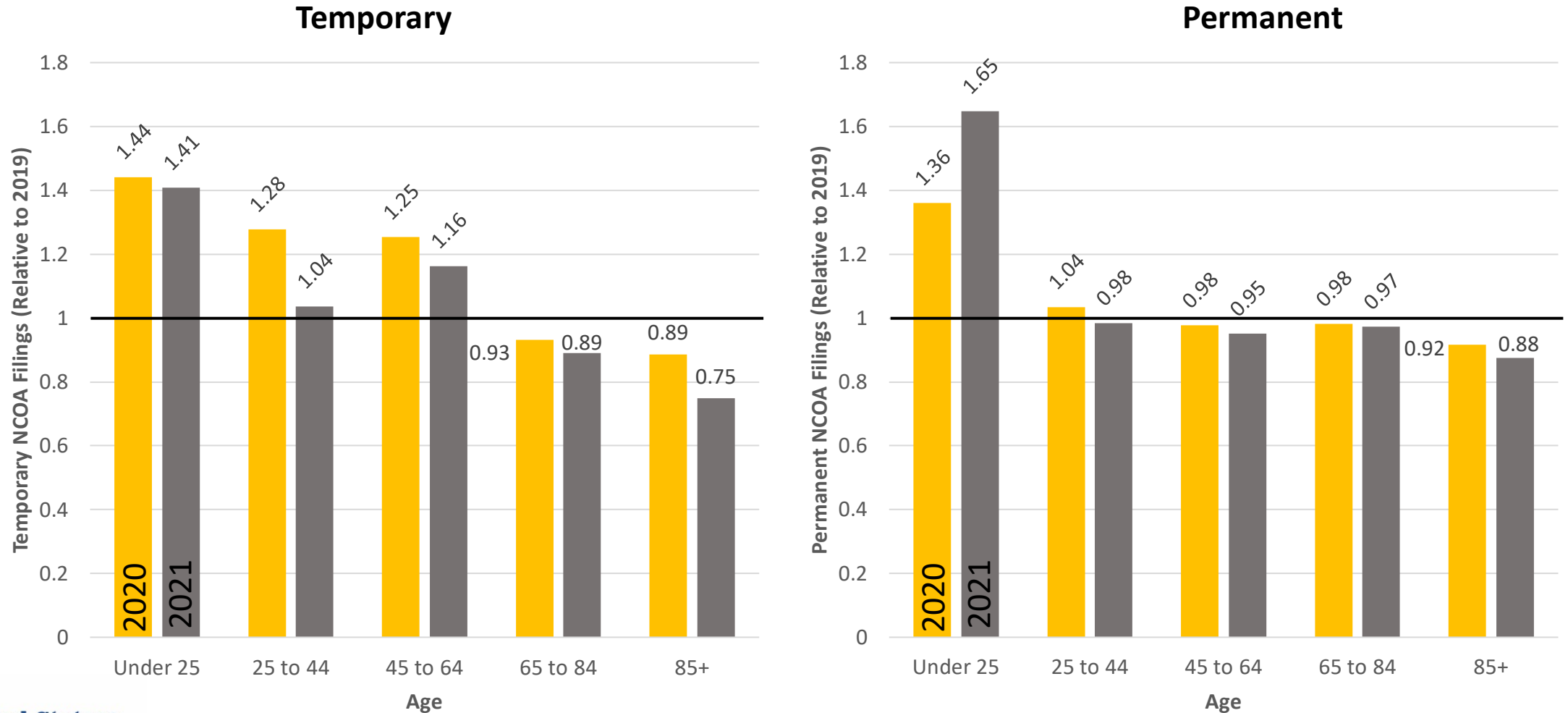
Sharper 2020 increases in Changes of Address among temporary, individual, and longer-distance moves



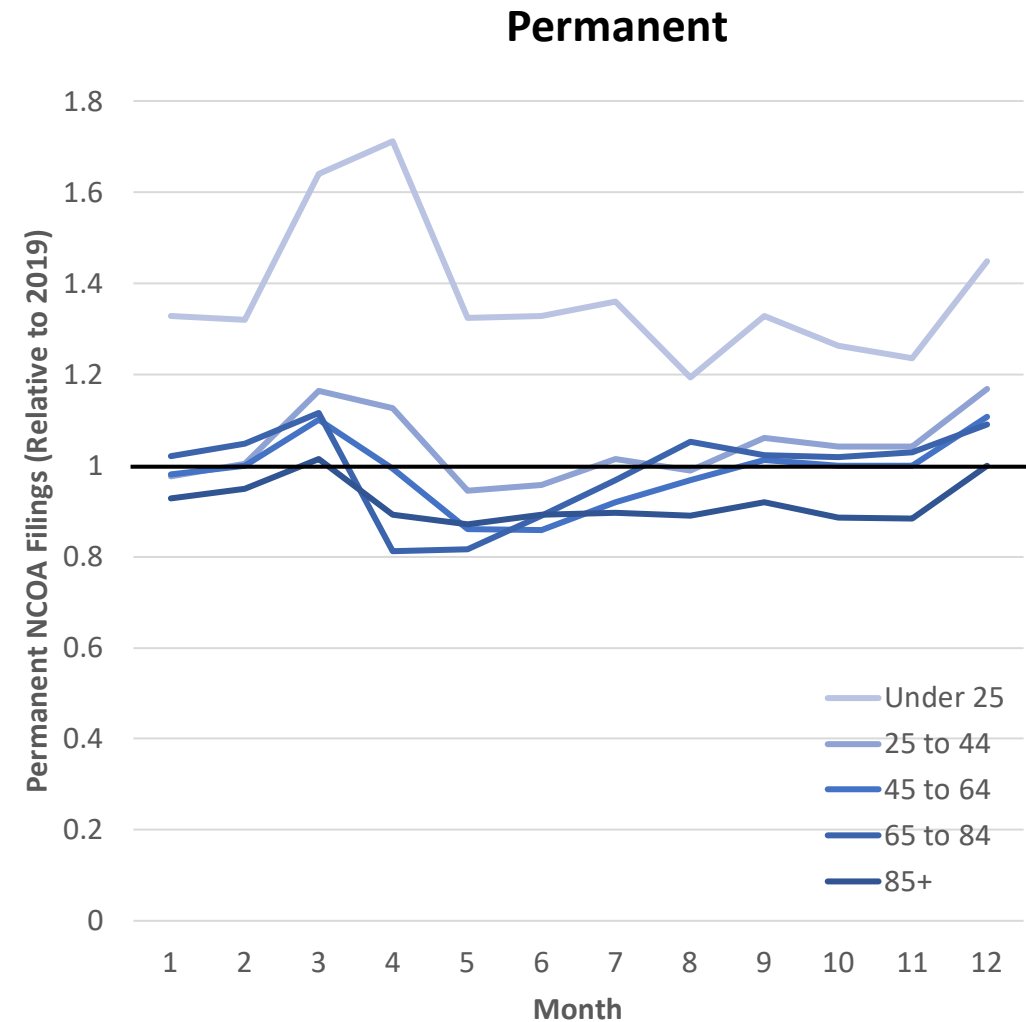
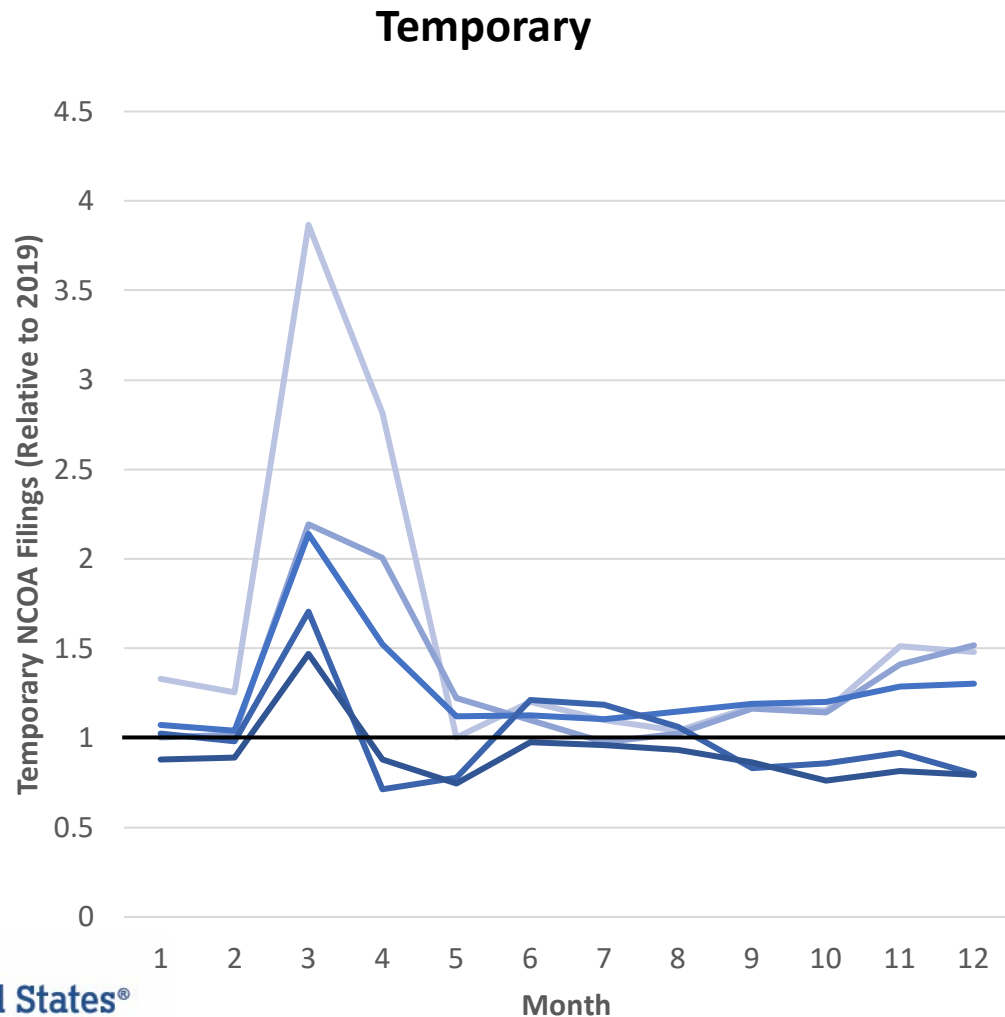
Peaks in March 2020 and a shift in scale



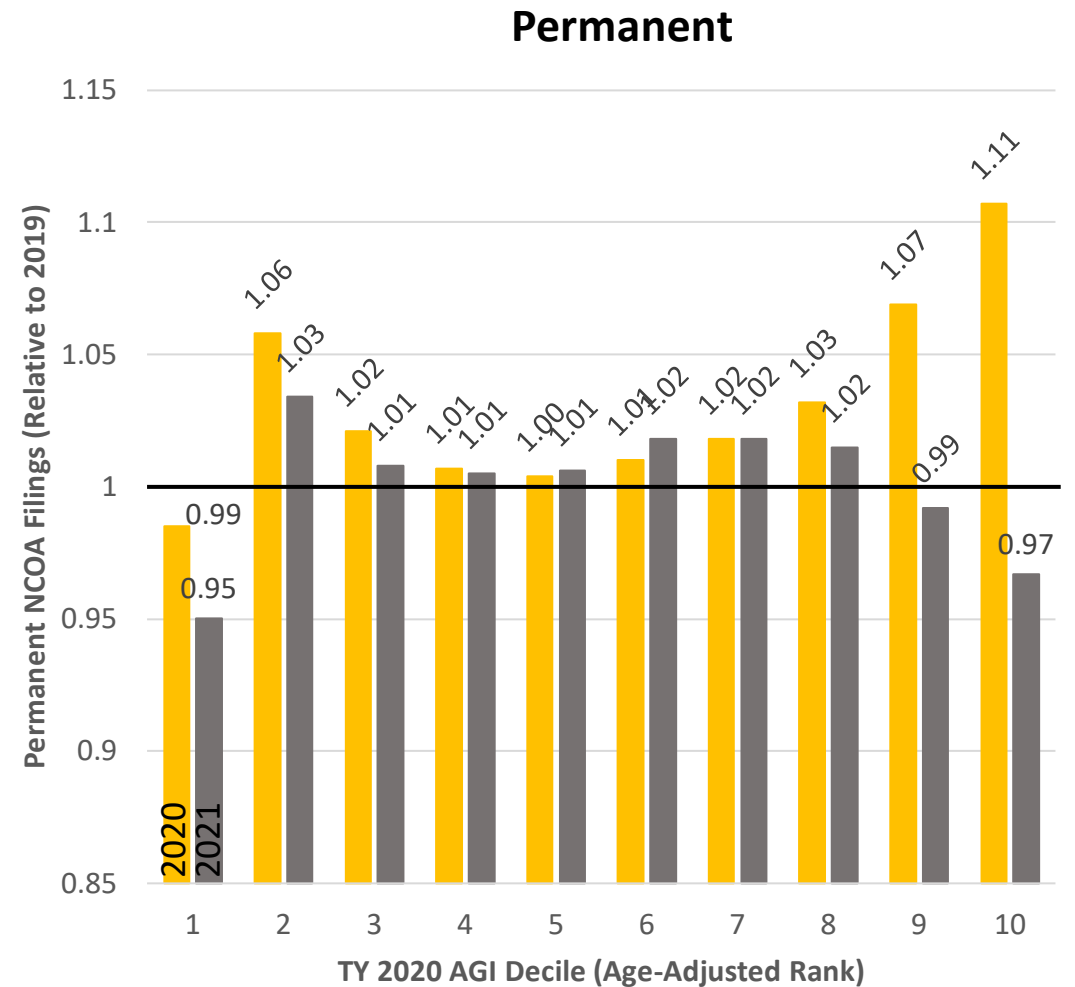
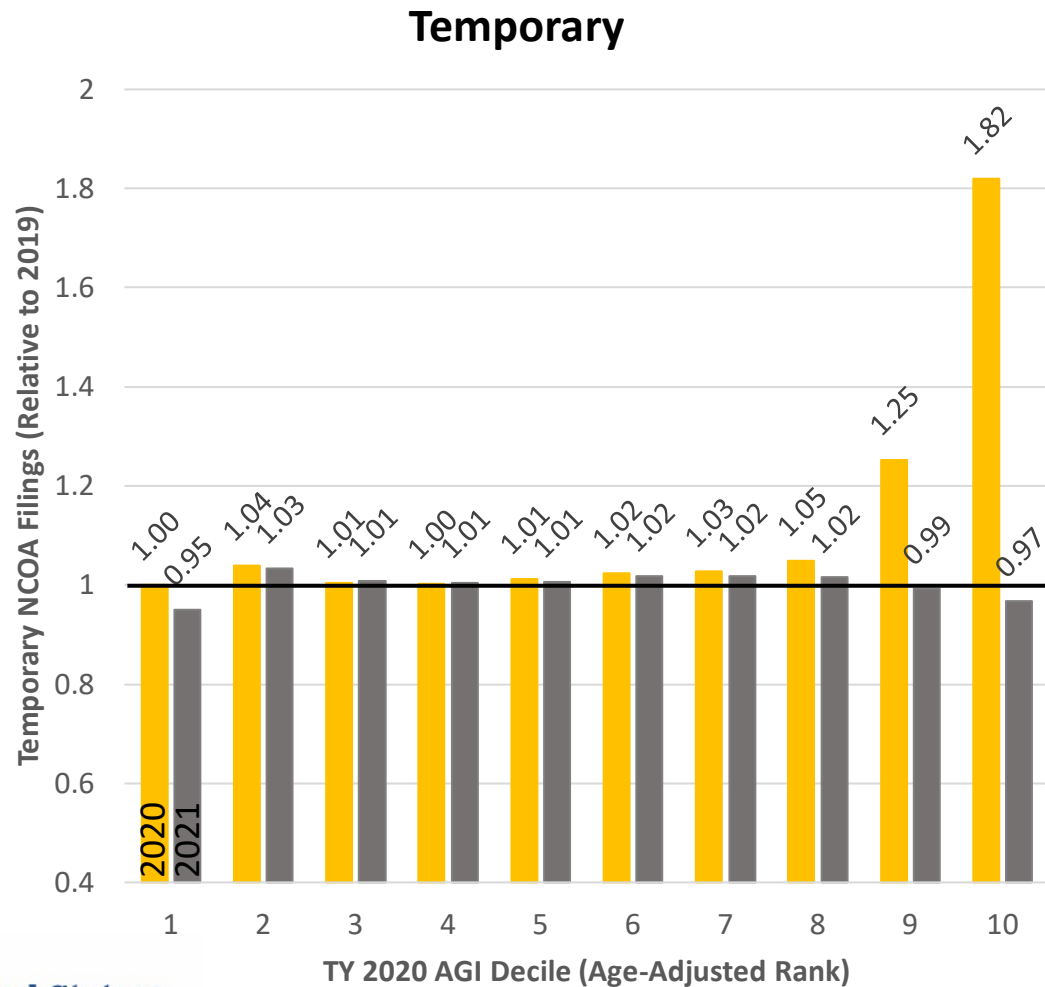
Increases concentrated among younger movers



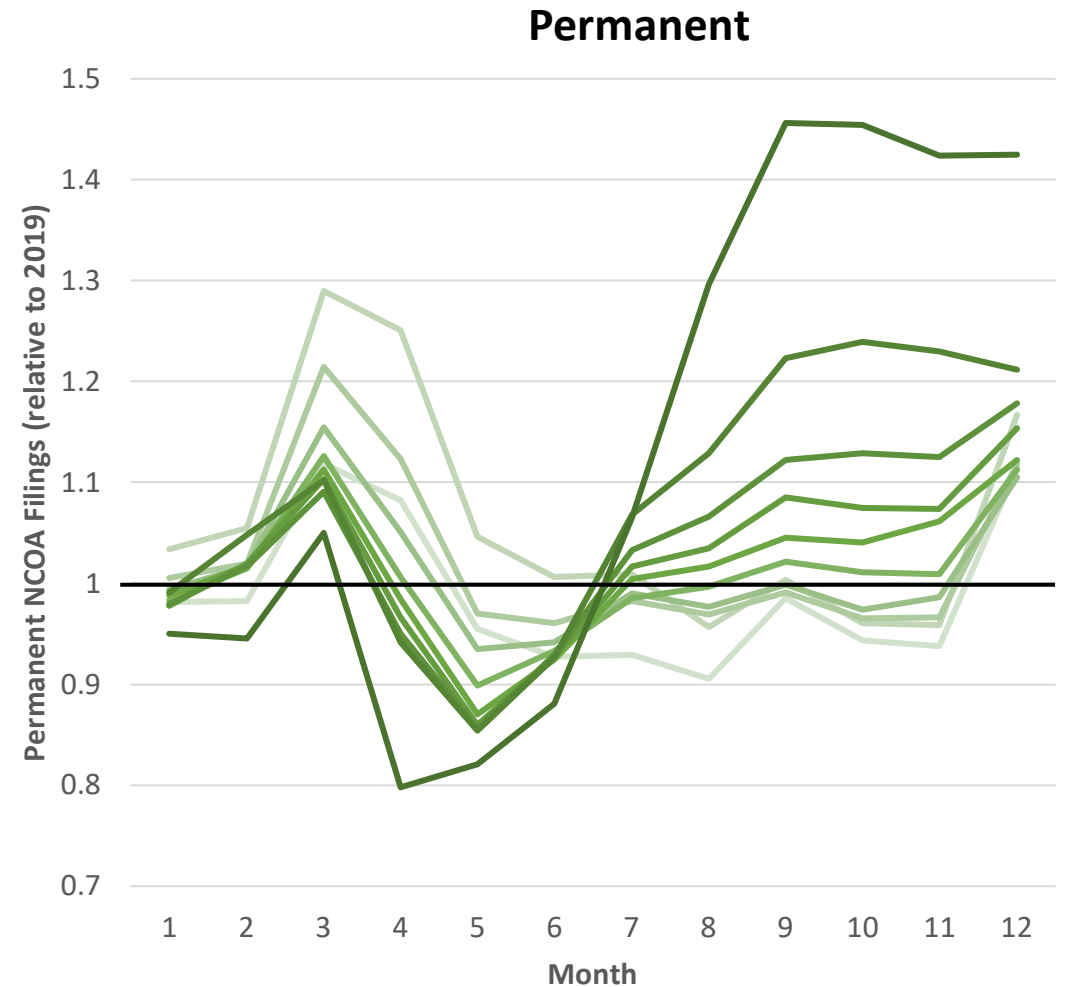
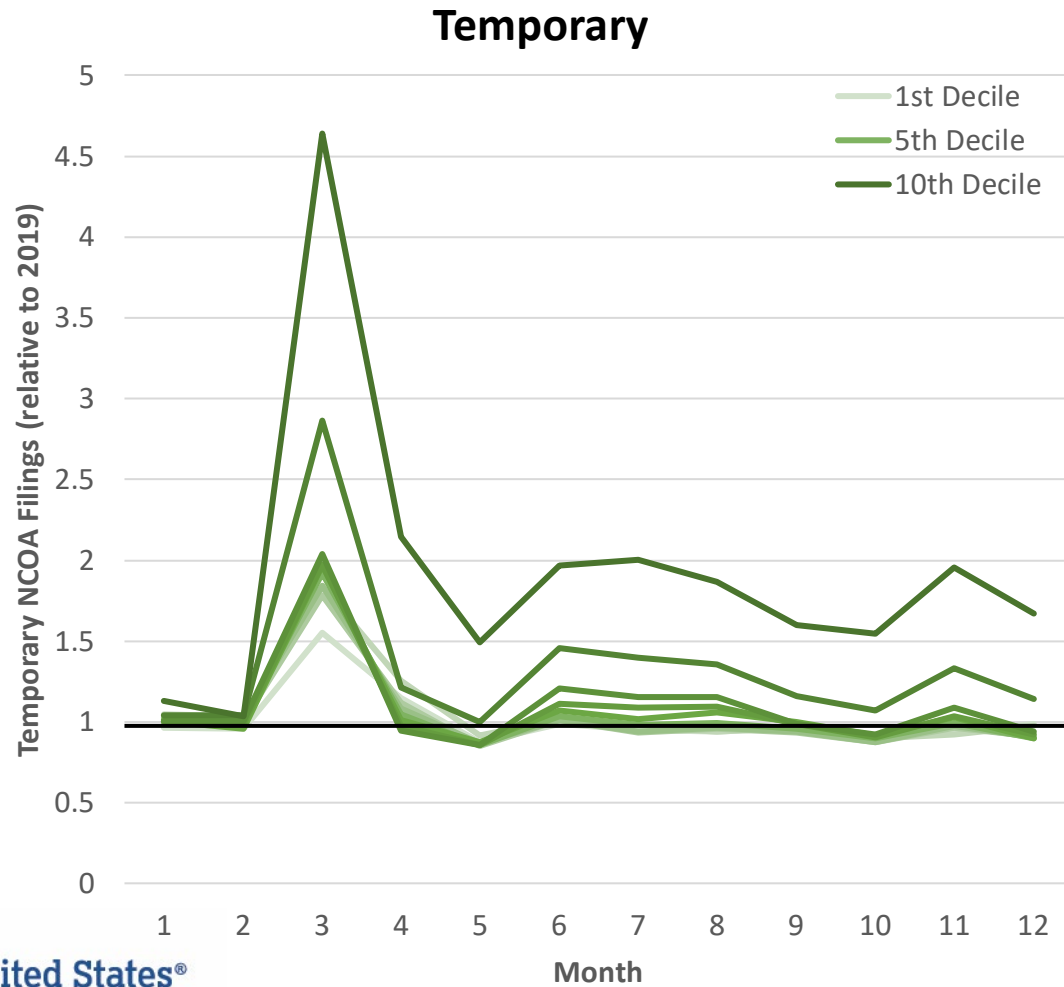
Young particularly likely to move at pandemic's start



2020 increases most pronounced among top earners

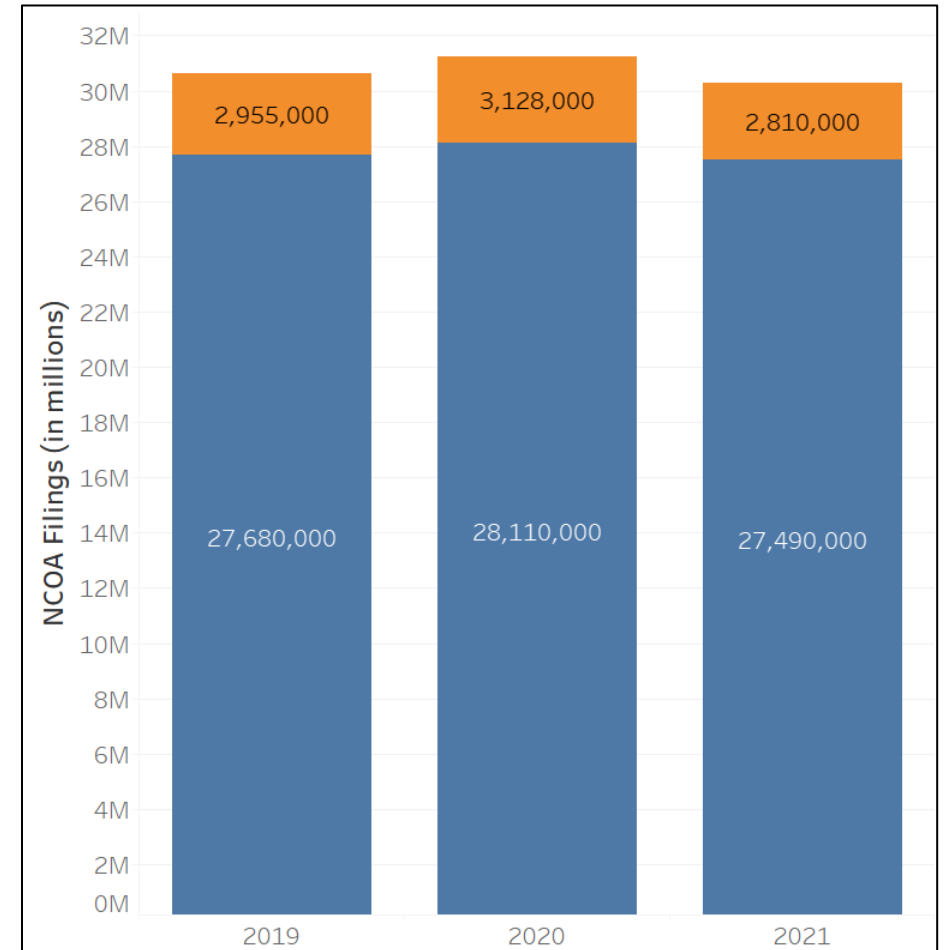
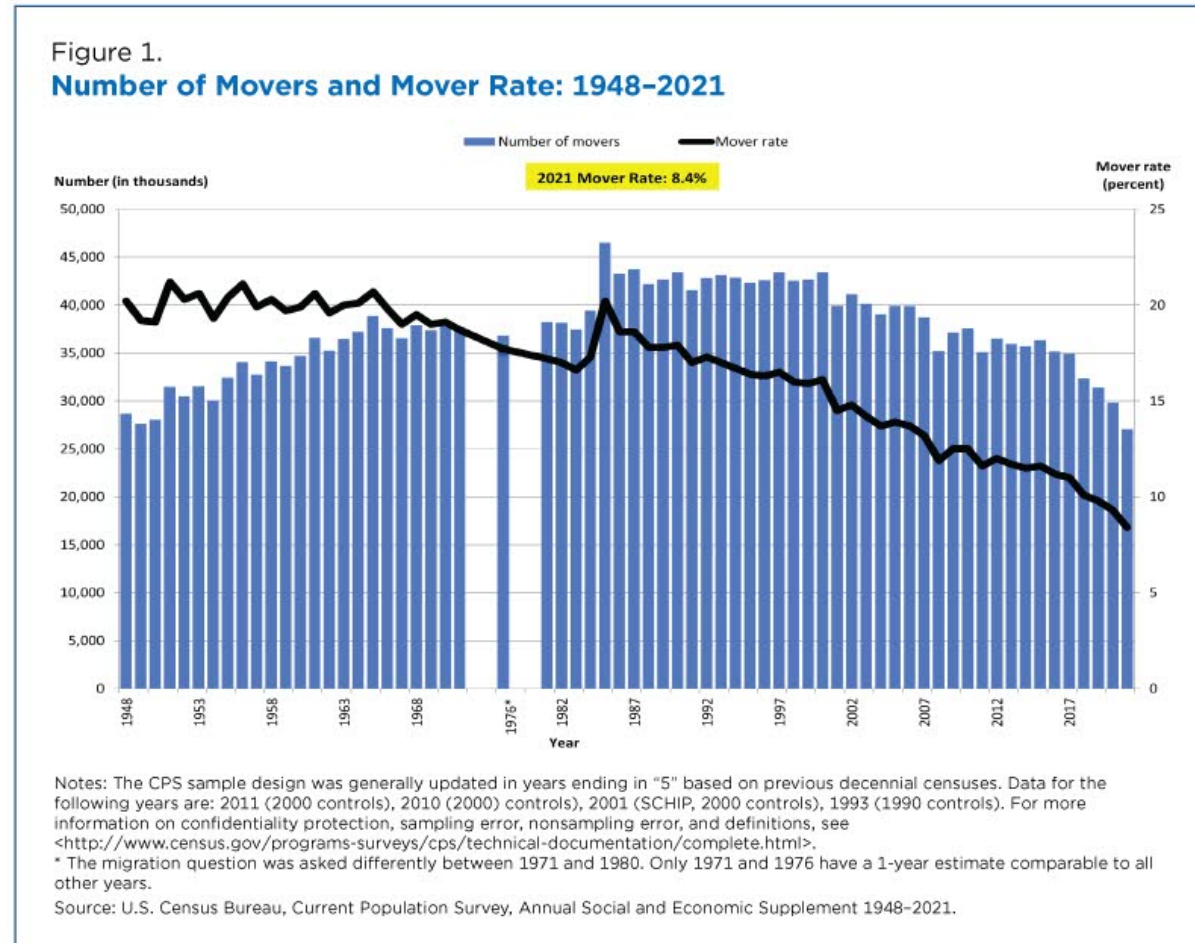


Top earners postponed permanent moves in 2020



Source: Weighted PIKed NCOA observations (2019-2020) linked with Census Numident (2022) and IRS 1040s (TY 2020); CBDRB-FY22-CES005-018. Note: Y-axes for temporary and permanent changes of address differ, and only 2020 trends are shown.

How do we explain the gap?



(Dis)Agreement between address changes and survey responses

- ACS and CPS-ASEC *householders* with *unedited migration responses*
- Look for *permanent NCOA filings* in the 1-year period referenced in survey responses

	Given survey move, did you register an address change?	Given address change registered, did you move in...?
ACS (2020)		
CPS-ASEC (2020)		
CPS-ASEC (2021)		

Conclusions

- NCOA data suggest a 2% increase in migration in 2020, largely restricted to younger individuals, top earners, and longer-distance moves
- Migration decline followed in 2021, but shift toward longer distance moves made by younger individuals continued
- Broadly, findings corroborate the popular narrative, but future work should focus on geographic shifts
- Gap between CPS-ASEC and NCOA remains unclear, but individual-level disagreement in these sources is next on our agenda

Thank you!

Brad Foster

Senior Sociologist

U.S. Census Bureau

thomas.b.foster@census.gov

Lee Fiorio

PhD Candidate, Geography

University of Washington

Mark Ellis

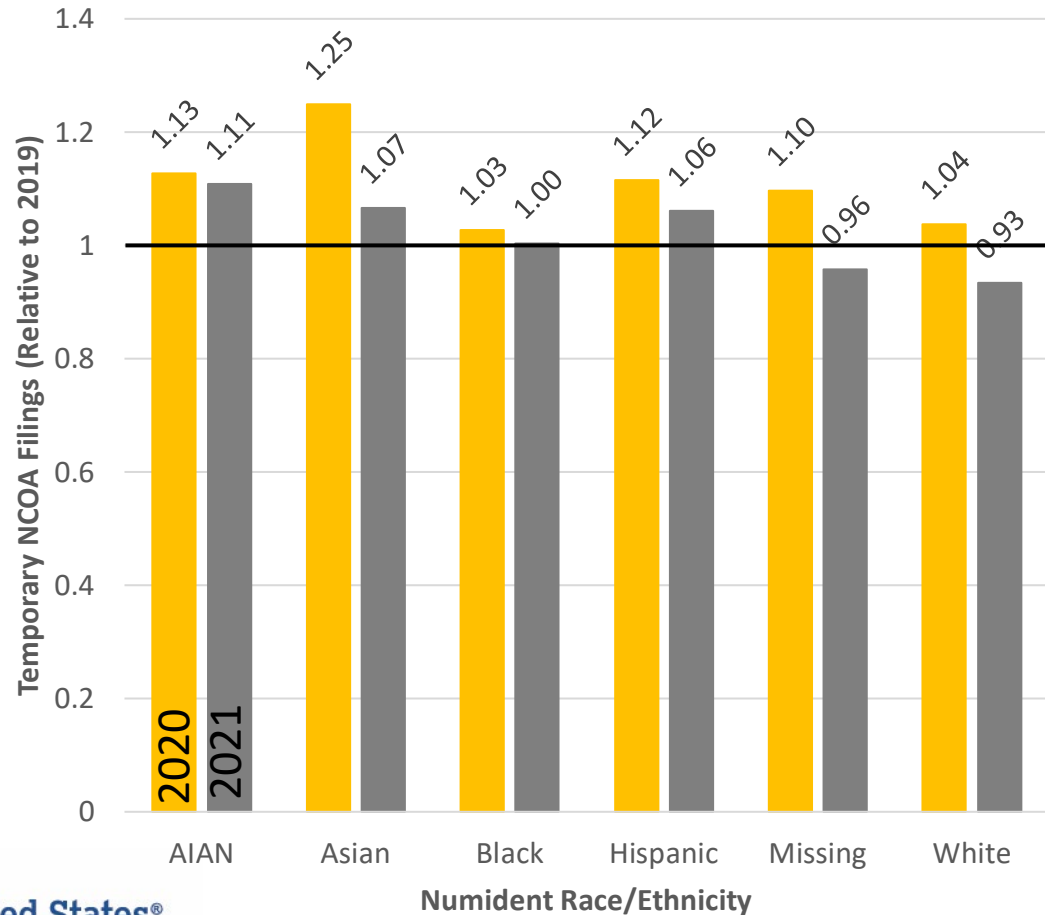
Professor of Geography

University of Washington

Supplemental Slides

2020 increase common to all racial/ethnic groups

Temporary



Permanent

