

## Conclusion

Baby boomers today are between the ages of 45 and 63. Many younger members of the cohort are still in the middle of child rearing, while those in their fifties are more likely to be empty nesters. Separate analyses of net migration by 5-year age groups reflect such diverse life-cycle situations. Differences by age group in the effects of employment growth, housing prices, urban influence, natural amenities, and other socioeconomic characteristics on county-level net migration reflect expected changes in migration decisions by age group.

Employment considerations still exert a strong influence on younger boomers, but these effects will decrease in the coming decade. Boomers are increasingly drawn to areas with a combination of scenic amenities, recreation or cultural opportunities, and reasonable housing costs. Nonmetro destinations for baby boomers will likely become more dispersed across the landscape and not as concentrated around metro areas.

The presence of seasonal housing is a particularly strong indicator of an area likely to attract retirement-related migration. This association reflects the importance of recreation and leisure activities for those building ties to future residential destinations. Many people identify a future migration destination while vacationing or visiting family and friends. Retirement-related migration may not be a discrete event that occurs in a finite period of time. Individuals or families may purchase a second home to visit for a few weeks a year or on weekends. Then, when children leave home, sojourns to the second home become more frequent and the “cottage” or condo may be renovated into a more substantial residence. Modern telecommunications technology and increased airport accessibility have made work from these more remote locations possible and increased permanent moves to second-home destinations in recent years. Projections of baby boomer population growth reflect the fact that areas once popular as recreation destinations are becoming increasingly popular as permanent residences.

Net migration increased the number of baby boomers living in nonmetro areas by 1.1 million during 1990-2000 and is projected to add similar or higher numbers of boomers during 2000-10 and 2010-20, despite declines in their overall propensity to migrate. The nonmetro population of 55-74 year olds is projected to increase two-thirds between 2000 and 2020 as a result of net migration trends among baby boomers.

Anticipating the types of areas where large numbers of baby boomers will migrate in the near future could prove useful. Development professionals in areas already attracting large numbers of baby boomers often emphasize traditional strategies designed to attract manufacturing jobs to their communities. Infrastructure investments geared toward fostering this type of export-based employment growth likely will have minimal or negative influence on the rising number of footloose baby boom migrants more attracted to scenic amenities, recreation, or cultural opportunities and affordable housing. Other specialists realize that to attract well-to-do boomers, development strategies need to be expanded or revised to cater to the interests of boomers. They realize this cohort can bring significant new money into a county's economy

and boost development opportunities (Beyers and Nelson, 2000; Nelson, 2005). Implementing strategies to attract older migrants requires alternative views about what drives regional economies, which could be aided by increased knowledge of key factors attracting baby boomers moving to rural and small-town America.