

# FLIGHT FROM LI IN LATEST CENSUS DATA

Being priced out of the area cited in 'out-migration'

## FIRST IN NEWSDAY

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Long Island's population fell by more than 15,000 in a 12-month span ending last July, according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau estimates, driven by "domestic out-migration" of people priced out of the region, experts said.

The decades-long trend of people leaving the Island is part of a broader trend of many New Yorkers leaving the state in pursuit of an affordable place to live. Between July 1, 2021, and July 1, 2022, people moved out of New York State at a higher percentage than anywhere else in the Northeast, according to census data released Thursday.

"New York State's population decline is largely the result of domestic out-migration," said Kristie Wilder, a census bureau demographer with the population division.

Fewer homeowners, customers and workers, and the resulting drain on Nassau and Suffolk's tax base, have prompted leaders to search for "innovative solutions," to entice Long Islanders to stay.

"There is an affordability crisis here," said Matthew Cohen, president of the Long Island Association, the region's largest business group.

"The cost of living is high, that includes housing, transportation, child care," said Cohen, a supporter of adding industries like offshore wind and biotechnology to keep people local.

"It's an expensive bill to pay overall . . . In many ways, it's

really the existential issue facing Long Island."

According to the census estimates, Nassau's population declined by 7,386 people, and Suffolk's dropped by 7,653 between July 1, 2021, and July 1, 2022. Nassau's population was estimated in 2022 at 1,383,726, down from 1,391,112 in 2021. Suffolk's population was estimated at 1,525,465 in 2022, down from 1,533,118 the year before.

The change can be seen in the numbers, said Larry Wagner, an Amityville-based real estate investor who with his son owns the house flippers, Leave the Key Homebuyers.

A decade back, Wagner said, they'd buy six homes a year; now it's 50.

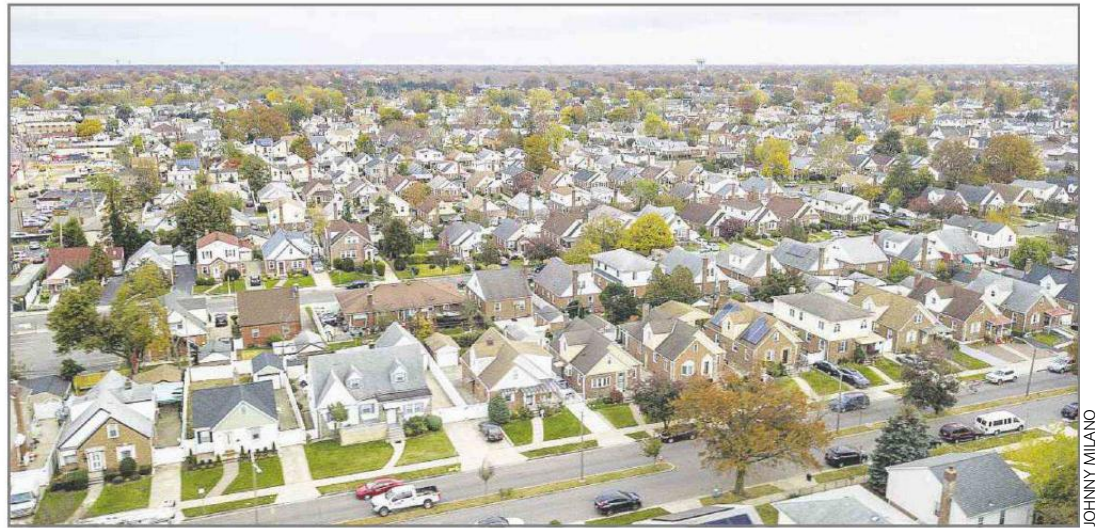
"Ten years ago, people were selling houses to us because they were buying a new house, they were buying a bigger house," he said. "Now people are selling to us because they're leaving." And the reason is the cost of living, he added.

### Pandemic-era migration

Despite Suffolk's drop in 2022, its total population is almost on par with the county's 2020 Census count of 1,525,936, due to an increase in 2021 over 2020, which one official said could be pandemic related, citing movements of New York City residents to surrounding counties, including on Long Island.

New York State lost 180,341 people in that one-year period, and more than half a million between its 2020 Census count of 20,201,230 and 19,677,151 in 2022, according to the estimates.

The bureau's 2022 population data for the state showed greater losses between 2021 and 2022 than the prior one-year period, when the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic altered migration patterns, said Jan Vink, a researcher with Cornell University's Program on Applied Demographics, which is part of the Fed-



Homes in Elmont. A real estate investor says people now are selling houses "because they're leaving."

JOHNNY MILANO

## MOVING OUT

Long Island was among many counties statewide that lost population from 2021 to 2022, according to latest U.S. Census figures.

	Population as of July 1, 2022	Change from July 1, 2021
Nassau	1,383,726	-7,386
Suffolk	1,525,465	-7,653
Bronx	1,379,946	-41,143
Brooklyn	2,590,516	-46,970
Manhattan	1,596,273	+17,472
Queens	2,278,029	-50,112
New York State	19,677,151	-180,341

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

eral-State Cooperative for Population Estimates.

Vink said 2021 "was kind of a very strange year in the estimates, and in reality as well, with everything going on around COVID between July 2020 and July 2021." Vink said the pandemic "contributed to population gains" in some areas like Suffolk in 2021, and losses, particularly in New York City. "The surrounding counties picked a lot of that [population] up."

The current estimates actually showed the population in Manhattan (New York County) grew by 17,472 between July 2021 and July 2022, while the other four boroughs posted significant losses. Manhattan was one of only seven of New York's 62 counties that saw population gains.

### Slow growth

Wilder, the census bureau demographer, said in an interview that Suffolk's "decline is largely due to domestic out-migration with just over 12,000 people

leaving the county, and it's the same for Nassau."

The "natural increase," or more births than deaths, and population gains on Long Island through international migration "just weren't enough to grow the population," Wilder said, adding that the state's total population loss was .9% between 2021 and 2022, compared with .4% for the Northeast region overall.

According to the estimates, New York lost about 299,500 people to domestic migration in 2022, while only gaining about 77,900 people through international migration, for a net migration population loss of nearly a quarter of a million people.

Wilder added: "I would note that the losses from domestic migration in New York isn't something that's new. New York has annually lost tens of thousands to domestic migration."

Expanding Long Island's commercial tax base through new businesses and developing

"quality jobs" in offshore wind, biotechnology and other industries, Cohen said, would help ease the tax burden on residents and help address affordability issues.

Long Island's population is aging, and many older people have left for Southern states where taxes are lower, said John Cameron, chair of the Long Island Regional Planning Council. And many of the Island's young people aren't returning home after college, Cameron said.

### Unsustainable tax burden

"They're not coming back. That's a problem," Cameron said. "The only way to stabilize the tax base is to grow the commercial tax base, otherwise the burden is on the residential [sector]. We need young people here. In order to do that, we need to create housing they can afford, rental housing for them."

Cameron said the council identified in a 2010 report that "the two greatest impediments to Long Island are an unsustainable tax burden and lack of diversity of housing, i.e. rental housing."

The Kassay Family of Smithtown and St. James began their exodus off Long Island more than a decade ago.

Erin Kassay, now 42, said she doesn't miss the Island. Not at all.

"We moved away from these higher taxes down to warmer weather," said Kassay, who was born, raised and went to school in Smithtown, as did her sister and brother.

Erin said she didn't have to sacrifice enjoying New York delicacies. There's New York-style pizza and bagels down in North Carolina, too.

"We even have a bagel shop here that gets their dough imported from Brooklyn," she said.

With Matthew Chayes