

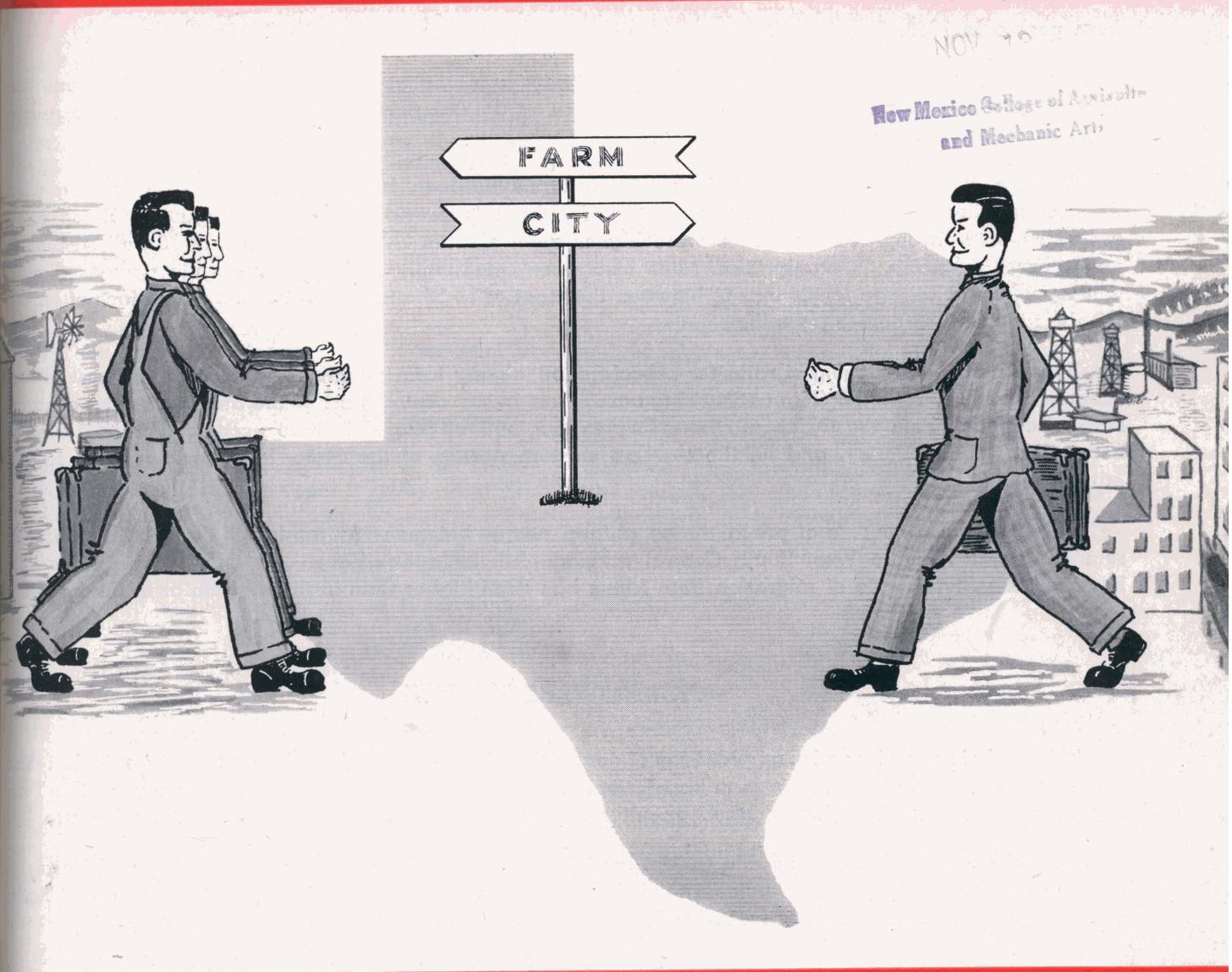
# Migration of the

# TEXAS FARM POPULATION

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TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

R. D. LEWIS, DIRECTOR, COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS

IN COOPERATION WITH THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## SUMMARY

There were 1,156,000 people living on Texas farms in April 1956. This figure is not significantly different from the 1955 estimate of 1,141,000.

Farm residents made up 13.2 percent of the State's total population and 5.2 percent of the nation's farm people in 1956.

An estimated 617,000 persons migrated from Texas farms between 1950 and 1956. At the same time, 276,000 moved to farms, leaving a net out-migration of 341,000 persons. A decided drop in the number of people leaving farms has occurred since 1954.

A net of 910,000 persons migrated from Texas farms between 1940 and 1950, a period during which the net loss through migration was greater than for the two previous decades combined. Rates of net out-migration between 1940 and 1950 were higher among youth between the ages of 10 and 24 than for any other age group. Out-migration rates also were consistently higher for nonwhite persons than for white persons at all age levels except between the ages of 50-59 and 60-64. Larger proportions of females left the farm and at earlier ages than males.

Between 1940 and 1950, net rates for out-migration among farm people in Texas were highest in state economic areas 9, 14 and 8 (Figure 6). These areas are in the central part of the State, covering a narrow strip of counties from the Oklahoma boundary to the Gulf of Mexico. State economic areas 15, in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and 1a, the extreme western portion of the State, had the lowest net rates of out-migration.

Texas had a lower rate of out-migration of farm people between 1920 and 1930 than the nation or the remaining states in the West South Central division—Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma. Since 1930, however, the State's rate of migration from farms has been higher than in the division or in the nation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study is one of a series on problems of developing, improving and analyzing the elements that make up annual estimates of the Texas farm population. These estimates are made cooperatively by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station and the Agricultural Marketing Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Special acknowledgment is made to Margaret Jarman Hagood, chief, Farm Population and Rural Life Branch, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, for her cooperation in carrying out this project. Appreciation also is expressed to Loyd B. Keel and Mrs. Sarita Marland for their assistance in this study.

# Migration of the Texas Farm Population

R. L. Skrabanek and Gladys K. Bowles \*

POPULATION CHANGES in any given area are the result of three basic factors: people are born, thereby resulting in an increase in population; others die, resulting in a loss in population; and people migrate, resulting in either a population increase or decrease, depending on the direction of their movement.

## PURPOSE

This report focuses attention on the third of these factors—*migration*—as it affects the farm population of Texas. The study of migration is concerned with the number and kinds of people who move in and out of an area or who change residence within it. The motives leading to migration are many and complex. Nevertheless, the movement of farm people is a continuous process which is capable of causing the populations of both rural and urban areas to change rapidly in size and composition. Each reshuffling of the farm population becomes important because it affects our agricultural, industrial, commercial, institutional and community life.

## RECENT FARM POPULATION TRENDS

There was little change in the size of the Texas farm population during the past 2 years. According to estimates based on a state-wide survey conducted cooperatively by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station and the Agricultural Marketing Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1,156,000 people were living on Texas farms in April 1956. This estimate is not significantly different from the estimates of 1,141,000 for April 1955 and 1,126,000 for April 1954.

The number of people residing on Texas farms in 1956 was approximately 230,000 fewer than in 1950. For the 6-year period, 1950-56, the farm population in Texas declined at a faster rate than in the nation, 16.7 and 11.2 percent, respectively (Figure 1). For the same period, the farm population declined more slowly in Texas than in the other states in the West South Central Division—Arkansas, Louisiana and Oklahoma—where the loss was 20.1 percent.

Even though the Texas farm population has remained about the same in the past 2 years, farm residents continue to make up an increas-

ingly smaller proportion of the State's total population. This is chiefly because the nonfarm population is growing more rapidly. The 1956 farm population comprised 13.2 percent of the State's total residents, as compared with 13.3 percent in 1955 and 17.9 percent in 1950.

In 1956, Texas had 5.2 percent of the nation's farm people, as compared with 5.1 percent in 1955 (Table 1). The State's share of the farm residents in the United States in 1950 was 5.5 percent.

## MIGRATION AND FARM POPULATION TRENDS

Migration is one of the basic factors in the growth or decline of the Texas farm population. It represents more than just a movement of persons from one place to another since it breaks the bonds and institutional ties of the individual. It also involves the transplanting of wealth, social values and economic production. In some cases, migration is a means of correcting the lack of balance between population and resources, at the same time causing the age and sex composition of an area to change. It affects the patterns of land use, the agricultural and general economy, the church, the school and other institutions and agencies in both the areas from which migrants are leaving and in the new places of residence.

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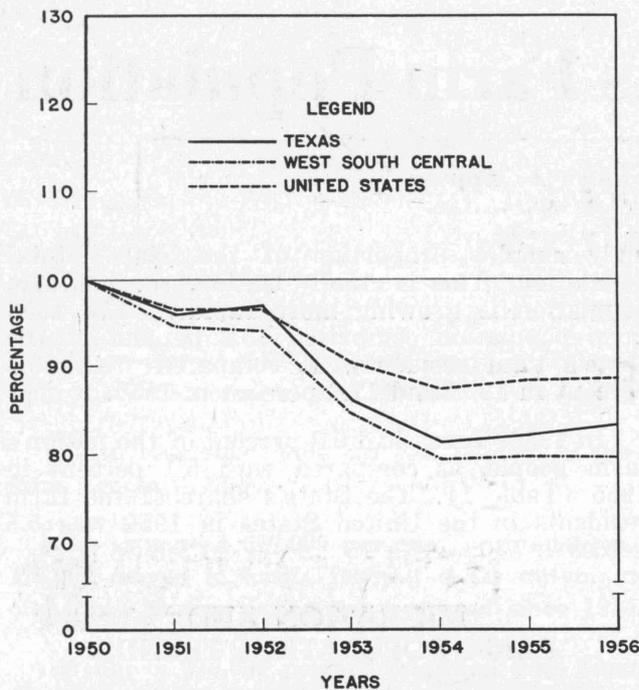


Figure 1. Farm populations of Texas, West South Central division and the United States expressed as percentages of their 1950 farm populations. Data are from reports of the Agricultural Marketing Service, the Bureau of the Census and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, issued separately or cooperatively.

Two types of estimates are used in this report for studying migration from the farm population. For the most recent period, 1950-56, estimates are available for the United States, regions, geographic divisions and Texas of movements (1) from farms to nonfarm areas, (2) to farms from nonfarm areas and (3) net change resulting from these two movements in opposite directions. These estimates are restricted to the number of migrants and do not provide any information as to the population characteristics of the persons involved. Since they are computed on an annual basis, and these annual estimates are summed to obtain estimates for the 1950-56 period, they may include children born or persons who have died during the period. Also, in the gross estimates of movements to or from the farm population, a person may be counted more than once if he moves

TABLE 1. TEXAS FARM POPULATION AS PERCENTAGE OF THE UNITED STATES FARM POPULATION, 1950-56<sup>1</sup>

Year	Farm population by area		Percent of U. S. farm population
	United States	Texas	
	(000)	(000)	
1950	25,058	1,387	5.5
1951	24,160	1,331	5.5
1952	24,283	1,346	5.5
1953	22,679	1,193	5.3
1954	21,890	1,126	5.1
1955	22,158	1,141	5.1
1956	22,257	1,156	5.2

<sup>1</sup>Data are from reports of the Agricultural Marketing Service, the Bureau of the Census and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, issued separately or cooperatively.

back and forth during the period. These double counts are canceled out in the estimates of net change.

For the 1940-50 and earlier decades, estimates are available of the change in farm population due to net migration of persons alive at both the beginning and end of the specified decade. The estimates, therefore, do not include the migration of children who were born after the beginning of a decade, nor do they include estimates of migration of persons who were alive at the beginning of the decade, but who died before the end of the period. These net migration estimates are available for age and sex groups for all areas and also for color groups in the Southern States.

In making comparisons either between areas or its constituent elements, such as age, sex or race, those areas or groups with the highest or lowest numbers of migrants may or may not necessarily have the highest or lowest rates of migration. For this reason, two different terms are used in this report. *Net migration* is the change in the rural farm population due to the net movement of persons alive at both the beginning and the end of the period of years under consideration. The term, *rate of net migration*, is the change in the rural farm population due to the net movement of persons expressed as a percentage of the rural farm population alive at both the beginning and the end of the period under consideration.

#### MIGRATION, 1950-56

The rate of growth or loss of any population group is determined by its birth and death rates and by the balance of in- and out-migration. A summary of these elements for the Texas farm population for 1950-56 is shown in Figure 2.

If there had been no migration either to or from Texas farms between April 1, 1950 and April 1, 1956, the State's farm population would have increased by approximately 110,000 persons. This is the difference between the number of births and deaths that occurred during the 6-year period. The number of births was almost three times the number of deaths.

It is estimated, however, that 617,000 persons migrated from Texas farms during this period. This is more than five times the natural increase of the farm population. The net migration from farms was somewhat lower, since 276,000 persons moved to farms in the State. There has been little change in the number of migrants to Texas farms from one year to another since 1950. This left the net out-migration figure for the period at 341,000 persons.

#### MIGRATION, 1940-50

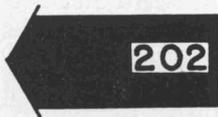
A high degree of mobility occurred between farms and nonfarm areas between 1940 and 1950. The movement away from farms was much greater than that to farms. This is the chief

TOTAL TEXAS FARM POPULATION  
APRIL 1, 1950 1,387,000

MIGRATION TO AND FROM FARMS  
1950-1956

TO (THOUSANDS)

FROM (THOUSANDS)



CIVILIAN



ARMED FORCES



FARMS IN OTHER STATES

NATURAL INCREASE AND DECREASE



BIRTHS

DEATHS



TOTAL TEXAS FARM POPULATION  
APRIL 1, 1956 1,156,000

Figure 2. Texas farm population changes, 1950-56. Source: Published and unpublished information of the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.

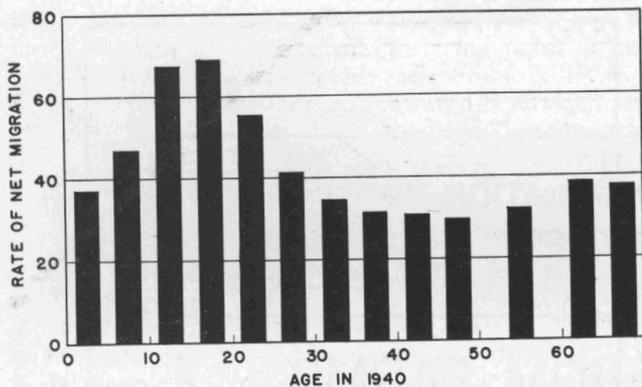


Figure 3. Rate of net migration from the Texas rural farm population, by selected age groups, 1940-50. Source of data for Figures 3-6: Gladys K. Bowles, "Farm Population . . . Net Migration From the Rural Farm Population, 1940-50," AMS, USDA Statistical Bulletin No. 176 (June 1956).

reason for the rapid decrease in farm population in Texas between 1940 and 1950, with the migrants from farms outnumbering by a wide margin the migrants to farms plus the increase brought about by the excess of births over deaths. A net migration occurred from farms of approximately 910,000 persons alive at both the beginning and end of the decade. The net migration rate for the decade was 45.6 percent.

The magnitude of the migration from farms is important in appraising and planning different types of action programs. The composition of the migratory groups also is of primary importance to persons interested in problems of the utilization of manpower, the location of industry and social

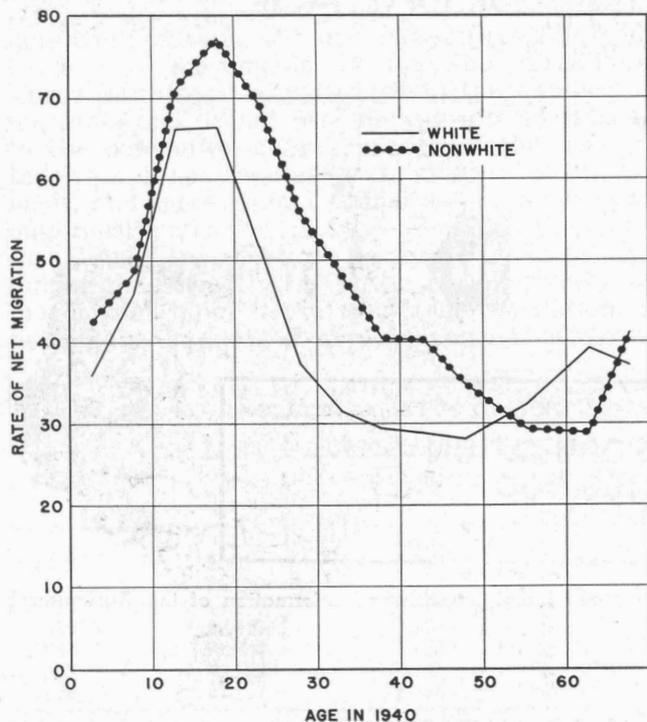


Figure 4. Rate of net migration from the Texas rural farm population, by race and age, 1940-50.

institutions and the inter-relationships of agriculture and farm population. For this reason, individual characteristics, such as age, sex and racial composition of the migrants from farms, are given separate consideration.

### Net Migration by Age

Numerous factors work singly or in combination to influence people to leave the farm at different age levels. In Texas, youths between the ages of 10 and 24 migrate in larger numbers.

Migration during the 1940's from the rural farm areas in Texas was the greatest among those aged 15 to 19 (Figure 3). The net rate of out-migration of this group was over 68 percent. The second largest net out-migration occurred among people between the ages of 10 and 14 at the beginning of the decade, followed by persons between 20 and 24. Their net rates of migration were 67.2 and 54.7 percent, respectively.

After reaching their thirtieth birthday, persons are less likely to leave their farm homes than when they were younger. Their net rate of out-migration remains relatively low for the remainder of their lives. However, a slight increase in migration from farms takes place among people who are 60 years of age or older. This reflects the tendency for the older males to retire at this age level and for the female whose spouse has died to move off the farm.

### Net Migration by Race and Sex

The net rate of migration from farms in Texas between 1940 and 1950 was consistently higher

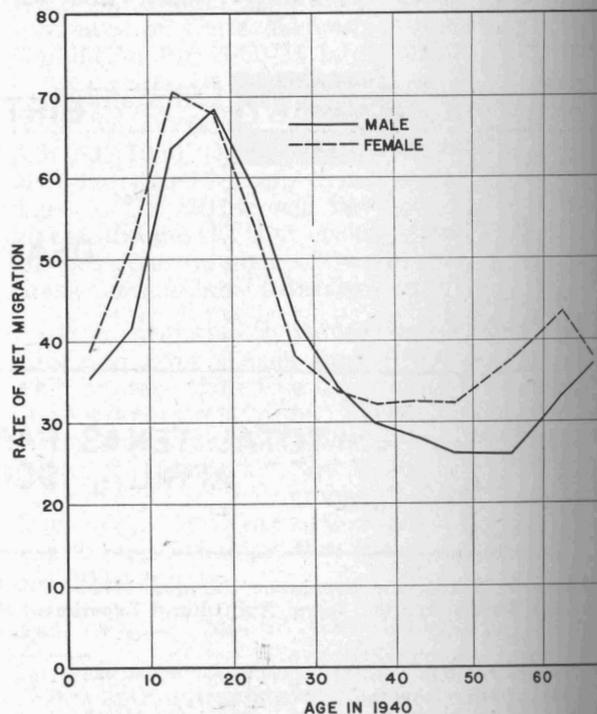


Figure 5. Rate of net migration from the Texas rural farm population, by sex and age, 1940-50.

for nonwhite than for white persons. Rates for the two groups were 53.5 and 44.1 percent, respectively. Nonwhites had higher rates at every age level with one exception, that being between 50 and 64 (Figure 4). The biggest differences in rates between the two racial elements occurred between the ages of 20 and 29, where nonwhites had migration rates around 18 percent higher than whites.

The tendency for girls to leave farm areas in larger proportions and at earlier ages than boys is shown in Figure 5. The overall rate of net migration from farms for the 10-year period was 47.2 percent for all females, as compared with 44.1 percent for males. The only time that the rates of out-migration of males exceeded those of females was between the ages of 15 and 34. The biggest differentials occurred between the ages of 50 and 64, when out-migration among women exceeded that of men by a comparatively wide margin. The proportionately heavier net out-movement of females in the older age groups reveals, to a large extent, the migration of widows who are more likely to leave the farms than are male operators who have lost their wives.

Both males and females in the nonwhite group had higher rates of net migration from the farm between 1940 and 1950 than did their white counterparts. The highest rate for all race-sex classes as a whole was among nonwhite females, the lowest among white males.

Among whites, the highest out-migration rate exists among females between 10 and 14 years

TABLE 2. NET CHANGE IN THE TEXAS RURAL FARM POPULATION DUE TO MIGRATION, BY STATE ECONOMIC AREAS, 1940-50<sup>1</sup>

State areas	Number of persons			Rate of migration		
	Total	white	nonwhite	Total	white	nonwhite
	(000)	(000)	(000)	(%)	(%)	(%)
1a & A	- 5	- 5	-	-27.8	-27.6	-
1b	- 6	- 5	-	-32.9	-32.5	-
2	- 25	- 25	- 1	-40.4	-40.1	-57.9
3	- 15	- 15	-	-43.6	-43.7	-
4	- 15	- 15	-	-29.2	-29.5	-
5	- 25	- 24	-	-32.3	-33.0	-
6a	- 68	- 68	-	-43.8	-44.5	-
6b	- 12	- 12	-	-42.2	-42.1	-
7a	- 32	- 32	-	-42.0	-42.0	-
7b & B	- 20	- 20	- 1	-37.2	-37.1	-42.0
7c	- 21	- 21	-	-46.9	-46.8	-
8 & C, D, E	-189	-154	- 35	-50.7	-49.3	-57.4
9	- 56	- 31	- 25	-54.0	-50.8	-58.5
10	- 41	- 30	- 11	-44.9	-41.8	-57.3
11 & F	- 60	- 58	- 2	-49.3	-49.1	-58.6
12	-180	-115	- 65	-47.5	-45.6	-51.2
13	- 45	- 32	- 13	-47.6	-46.8	-49.8
14 & G, H	- 78	- 58	- 20	-51.7	-49.8	-58.2
15	- 17	- 17	-	-27.3	-27.8	-
Total	-910	-737	-173	-45.6	-44.1	-53.5

Figures adopted from: Gladys K. Bowles, "Farm Population ... Net Migration From the Rural Farm Population, 1940-50," AMS, USDA Statistical Bulletin No. 176 (June 1956) Table 8, p. 160. The figures are rounded to the nearest thousand without being adjusted to group totals.

of age (70.4 percent), with the highest point for males being between the ages of 15 and 19 (66.6 percent). Nonwhite males between 15 and 19 had the highest out-migration rate of all groups (78.5 percent). The next highest (76 percent) occurred among nonwhite females between 15 and 19.

### Net Migration by State Economic Areas

State economic area 8 had the largest net change in rural farm population due to migration between 1940 and 1950 (Table 2). This area, which roughly corresponds to the Blackland Prairie, had a net out-migration of approximately 189,000 persons. The only other state economic area with a net migration from farms that exceeded 100,000 persons was area 12, in the north-eastern corner of the State, with a net of 180,000 persons. At the other extreme, state economic areas 1a and 1b, which occupy the extreme western portion of the State, had a relatively small net out-movement of people from farms. They each registered net losses of about 5,000 persons.

State economic areas with the smallest or largest net migrations numerically, however, did not necessarily have the highest net rates. State economic area 9 had the highest net rate of out-migration, 54.0 percent (Figure 6). Next highest were areas 14 and 8, with net rates of out-migration of 51.7 and 50.7 percent, respectively. All three areas are in the central section of the State, comprising a narrow strip of counties from the Oklahoma boundary to the Gulf of Mexico. State economic areas with the lowest net rates of out-migration were area 15 (27.3 percent), in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and area 1a (27.8 percent), which occupies the extreme western portion of the State.

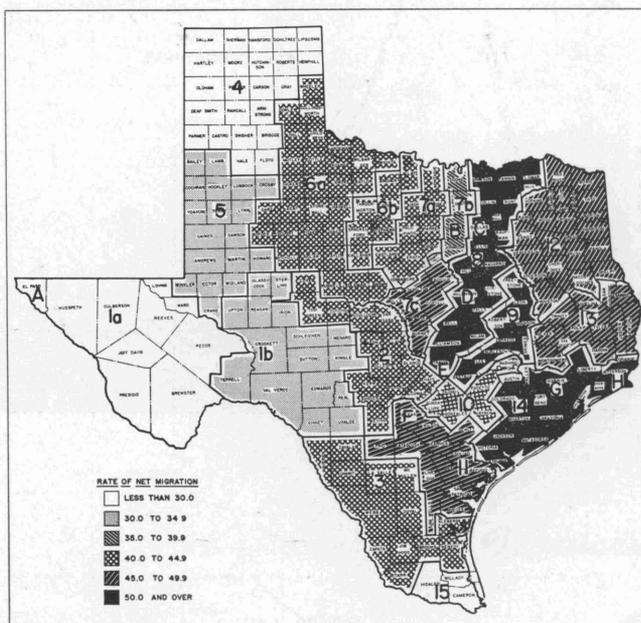


Figure 6. Rate of net migration from the Texas rural farm population, by state economic areas, 1940-50.

**TABLE 3. RATES OF NET MIGRATION FROM THE RURAL FARM POPULATIONS OF TEXAS, THE WEST SOUTH CENTRAL DIVISION AND THE UNITED STATES, 1920-30, 1930-40, 1940-50<sup>1</sup>**

Area	Net migration rates		
	1920-30	1930-40	1940-50
Texas	-15.5	-22.0	-45.6
West South Central	-17.3	-19.9	-44.0
United States	-19.3	-12.7	-30.9

<sup>1</sup>Source: Gladys K. Bowles, "Farm Population . . . Net Migration From the Rural Farm Population, 1940-50," AMS, USDA Statistical Bulletin No. 176 (June 1956) Table 1, p. 16.

**IN RELATION TO THE NATION AND REGION**

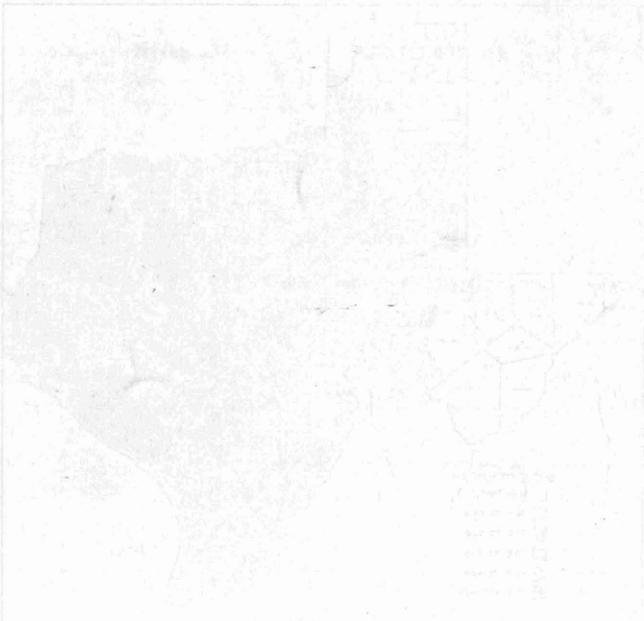
The amount of net loss through migration from farm areas in Texas increased steadily for each successive decade up to 1950. Between 1920 and 1930, there was a net loss of approximately 354,000 persons who were alive at both the beginning and the end of the period. In the next decade, the net loss through migration increased to 469,000. Between 1940 and 1950, rural farm areas lost more people through migration than during the two previous decades combined, the net loss being 910,000.

Migration data for the farm population of Texas indicate that the outward movement was considerably greater in every state economic

area during 1940-50 than during the previous decade. State economic area 15, in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, had a net increase in farm population through migration between 1930 and 1940.

In a comparison of migration trends for the farm populations of different areas, rates of migration may be more indicative than absolute numbers. In Texas and the West South Central division, the net rates of out-migration increased with each successive decade since 1920 (Table 3). Such has not been the case, however, in the nation as a whole. After a relatively high out-migration rate between 1920 and 1930, the movement from farms in the United States fell off considerably during the following decade. Then it went back up again between 1940 and 1950.

Texas had a lower rate of out-migration of farm people between 1920 and 1930 than did the West South Central division or the nation. Since that time, however, the rate of migration from farms in the State has been higher than in the division or in the United States. The net rate of migration from farms in Texas during the last decade was only slightly higher (45.6 percent) than in the West South Central Division (44.0 percent), but considerably higher than in the nation (30.9 percent).



Map showing county boundaries and major cities in Texas.