

State Size and Interstate Migration in the United States: Evidence from a Structural Gravity Model

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of state size on internal migration in the United States from 2000 to 2017, employing the structural gravity framework. We use three alternative metrics to measure state size: GDP, Population, and Land Area. Our results provide robust evidence that, contrary to conventional expectations, individuals tend to migrate from larger to smaller states. We carry out a series of robustness checks, and the qualitative results remain the same. We also find considerable heterogeneities in the effects across regions. For example, when size is measured by population, the effect of size is greater for the midwestern states than for the rest. The same is true for the southern states. These results enhance our understanding of population dynamics and have important implications for state-level policy and planning.

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