Nearly 51,000 individuals are no longer living in Ohio. That is the number, according to the latest Census, of individuals ages 20-35 that are no longer living in the state for a variety of reasons. In studying age cohorts for Licking County, the State of Ohio, and the City of Columbus, several interesting observations can be made. While the State and Licking County show a significant decrease in the 20-35 age group, in comparison to the Baby Boomer generation (those born between 1946 and 1964, according to the United States Census Bureau), data for the City of Columbus tends to show the opposite trend. There are less Baby Boomers living in the City as opposed to the younger generation that is moving in. The fact that Columbus has seen growth in this area may be attributed to several reasons that include geographic location in the state, job opportunities, and higher education.

Steven Kelly, a Senior Economist with the Ohio Development Services Agency, gave some great insight into the trends his office has seen in Licking County and Central Ohio as well as statewide. In comparing data from the 2000 Census with information obtained from the 2010 Census, nearly 72 of the 88 counties in Ohio have seen a decrease in the 20-35 age group population. One major reason may be because of internal migration, when individuals relocate within the same geographical region. Of the 16 counties scattered throughout the state that saw growth in this age group, the majority of them have some tie to a major college or university and/or industry that attracts people to the area. Conversely, Mr. Kelly spoke of some of the observations his office made with regards to individuals in this cohort leaving the state. These observations include better job opportunities, geographic location, higher education, and personal relationships. These reasons generally pertain to the entire country as well as the State of Ohio with regards to population shifts.

Additionally, fallout from the recent “Great Recession” is significantly influencing the younger generation. This age group had been told that a college degree will lead to a better life. In some cases, this is true however, many struggle to find work and are left with student loan debt. Recent graduates are often forced to look out-of-state for employment in order to make ends meet. It is hard to say what the future may hold for this age group. How will this generation shift as they get older and continue to replace Baby Boomers in the workforce? This question also applies to the next generation, those who will be looking for work in 10 to 15 years. It will be interesting to see if the current trends continue.