“Where did all the Camp Fire survivors go?”

By Lily Jamali, KQED News, January 22, 2020

“The Camp Fire, which killed 85 people, remains the deadliest and most destructive fire in California history.

“A CSU Chico study has been mapping out where survivors of the wildfire ended up.” (CSU-Chico map powered by ESRI) “Using data including U.S. Postal Service change-of-address information, researchers found new mailing addresses for roughly a third of former Paradise residents.

“Small clusters landed in mid-sized cities like Boise, Denver, Salt Lake City, and Orlando. One cluster turned up in Crossville, Tennessee, a town of less than 12,000 people.

“The age of survivors has emerged as one of the most important factors determining who stayed and who moved away, said geographic information systems specialist Peter Hansen.

“ ‘Of the 65 or older population, half of that group moved beyond 30 miles of the fire,’ he said. ‘That says to me that we lost a lot of our older population. The people who were able to remain were more of the working age population.’”

Those with the lowest incomes moved the farthest.

“The data shows that 47 percent of those whose annual income was less than $25,000 moved 30 miles or more from Paradise.

“While some are still deciding whether to stay in the region, former Paradise Mayor Dan Wentland, 69, moved across to Crossville, Tennessee.

“ ‘I went back up to Paradise immediately when the fire was still burning. I saw it, went back, and told my wife, ‘We’re moving because it’s never going to be a town again,’ Wentland said. ‘It’ll never be the Paradise that we knew.’

“Cheaper real estate in Tennessee was a major draw. So was the fact that he has family — a brother and an uncle — in the state.”

Read more here and see bar graphs showing the age and estimated income of those who moved away.