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Introduction

The Utah Population Committee, chaired and staffed by the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, has produced state and county population estimates for Utah for July 1, 2016. These estimates indicate that the state has added nearly 300,000 people since April 1, 2010, and has surpassed the 3 million mark with an estimate of 3,054,806 Utahns. Population growth from 2015-2016 is estimated to be 57,402 persons. The annual growth rate of 1.9 percent is unchanged from the previous year.

Several distinctive patterns emerge from this analysis. First, net migration continues to increase with a statewide estimate of 24,742 net migrants. This exceeds last year’s estimate by 2,314 or 10.5 percent. Second, annual births continue to decline with 331 fewer births than last year.

Figure 1
Utah’s Population and Annual Growth Rates: 2010-2016

Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

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An Initiative of The David Eccles School of Business
Further evidence of the relative economic strength of the state (see Figure 1) appears that a pattern of strong net in-migration to Utah has been firmly reestablished, albeit at a slower rate than prerecession levels. The volatile county-level migration patterns seen since 2010, which partially resulted from the LDS missionary age change policy in 2012, appear to be stabilizing as we move past 2015.

Most counties continue to experience steady population growth; however, a subset of counties are also experiencing intense growth, or even population loss. Strong growth has occurred in counties adjacent to Salt Lake and Utah Counties as well as in Washington County, which has gained an estimated 5,757 persons, or 3.7 percent. Wasatch and Morgan Counties grew four percent or more since 2015. Indeed, Wasatch and Morgan County were highlighted by the Census Bureau last year as the seventh and eleventh fastest-growing counties in the U.S. that have a population greater than 10,000.

While the Census Bureau has not yet released these statistics for 2016, our estimates indicate more growth than last year for both counties (see Figure 2). Six counties have estimated population loss. These include energy-producing counties such as Uintah County, with final annual deaths continue to increase. These last two forces combine to result in another year of declining natural increase.

Finally, annual deaths continue to increase. These last two forces combine to result in another year of declining natural increase. Utah County’s population increased by 17,668 people from July 1, 2015 to July 1, 2016. This is the largest numeric increase among all counties. Utah County’s net migration was more than double that of Salt Lake County. These two counties contain 56 percent of the state population and account for 55 percent of the growth from 2015-2016. However, if we look at the annual growth rate, Wasatch County continues to be the fastest growing county in Utah since 2014, and has grown 27.5 percent since the decennial census in 2010. Other counties with the most rapid rates of growth are contiguous to Salt Lake and Utah Counties or are in southwest Utah, notably Washington and Kane Counties.

### Overall Population Change

In the period from July 1, 2015 to July 1, 2016, Utah’s population increased by 57,402 people, or 1.9 percent. The state continues to experience annual population growth, further evidence of the relative economic strength of the state (see Figure 1). It appears that a pattern of strong net in-migration to Utah has been firmly reestablished, albeit at a slower rate than prerecession levels.

The volatile county-level migration patterns seen since 2010, which partially resulted from the LDS missionary age change policy in 2012, appear to be stabilizing as we move past 2015. Most counties continue to experience steady population growth; however, a subset of counties are also experiencing intense growth, or even population loss. Strong growth has occurred in counties adjacent to Salt Lake and Utah Counties as well as in Washington County, which has gained an estimated 5,757 persons, or 3.7 percent. Wasatch, Kane, Juab, and Morgan Counties grew four percent or more since 2015. Indeed, Wasatch and Morgan County were highlighted by the Census Bureau last year as the seventh and eleventh fastest-growing counties in the U.S. that have a population greater than 10,000. While the Census Bureau has not yet released these statistics for 2016, our estimates indicate more growth than last year for both counties (see Figure 2). Six counties have estimated population loss. These include energy-producing counties such as Uintah County, with ...
Utah experienced a decline in natural increase, a result of the combined effects of declining births and rising deaths. Overall national trends during this same period depict a declining fertility rate that has been significantly impacted by the recession. While Utah may have a higher fertility rate than the nation, Utah women are also delaying births and on average are having fewer children as compared to the last decade. These forces all combine to result in declining births (see Tables 2, 3, and 4 in the Appendix).

Natural Increase

Natural increase is measured as annual births minus annual deaths, and accounts for approximately two-thirds of Utah’s population increase since 1990. However, since 2015, we have seen a convergence of natural increase and net migration. Natural increase now accounts for 58 percent of population growth at the state level, down from 95 percent of population growth in 2010, though at the county level there is much variation in the shares of population change.

Beginning in 1990, Utah experienced a run of 17 out of 18 consecutive years of accelerating natural increase with births and natural increase peaking in 2008. Per capita deaths are lower in Utah than the nation, partly due to the young age structure, but annual deaths continue to increase along with median age. Since July 1, 2010, Utah experienced a decline in natural increase, a result of the combined effects of declining births and rising deaths. Overall national trends during this same period depict a declining fertility rate that has been significantly impacted by the recession. While Utah may have a higher fertility rate than the nation, Utah women are also delaying births and on average are having fewer children as compared to the last decade. These forces all combine to result in declining births (see Tables 2, 3, and 4 in the Appendix).

Natural increase is also affected by the number and characteristics of migrants coming into the state. The more net in-migration the state experiences, the more children we would expect to move with the migrants, or be born after the migrants arrive and settle. With rebounding net in-migration occurring due to recent economic growth, one might expect natural increase to rebound as well. However, the data suggest this is not happening, and natural increase has continued to slow to its lowest level since 1998.
Conclusion

These population estimates indicate that, since 2015, Utah has experienced continued growth, marked by an increase in net migration, but slowing of natural increase. Utah continues to experience moderate population growth (both statewide and in the urban counties), decreasing fertility, and an aging population, all of which are consistent with national trends.

Net Migration

Net migration is gross in-migration (people moving into the state or a county) minus gross out-migration (people moving out of the state or a county). Net migration comprised 42 percent of state population growth over the past year. County net migration levels vary greatly, however. For high in-migration and low natural increase counties such as Washington, Wasatch, Morgan, Kane, and Grand, net migration provided over 75 percent of annual population growth.

Since 1990, Utah has typically experienced net in-migration, with more people coming to Utah than leaving. Immediately following 2010 (generally recognized to be the trough of the Great Recession), net migration was minimal. Subsequently, Utah has experienced a rebound in net in-migration. Utah’s net migration for 2016 reached 24,274 which is 2,314 greater than last year’s estimate, and the highest level of net in-migration since 2006. This most recent surge in net in-migration is especially concentrated in Utah, Washington, Salt Lake, Davis, Tooele, and Wasatch Counties (see Table 5 in the Appendix). As noted, three energy-producing counties experienced substantial net out-migration, including Duchesne, Uintah, and Emery.
About the Utah Population Committee

The Utah Population Committee prepares state- and county-level population estimates each year. These estimates inform state decisions and assist in the state’s review of the U.S. Census Bureau estimates. Locally produced estimates benefit from local data sources and a more complete understanding of local conditions. The Utah Population Committee is chaired and staffed by the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute and involves the following members:

- Pamela Perlich, UPC Chair, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute
- Mylitta Barrett, Utah Department of Health
- Joseph Curtin, Utah System of Higher Education
- Evan Curtis, Governor’s Office of Management and Budget
- Jacoba Larsen, Utah State Tax Commission
- Carrie Mayne, Department of Workforce Services
- Randy Raphael, Utah State Board of Education
- Eric Reither, Utah State University
- John Sagers, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Andrea Wilko, Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst

For information about the Utah Population Committee’s methodology please see the DemographyUTAH Population Committee 2015 Vintage Methodology.

Endnotes


About the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah enhances Utah’s economy by placing data-driven research into the hands of decision makers. An initiative of the David Eccles School of Business, its mission is to develop and share economic, demographic and public policy data and research that help community leaders make informed decisions. The Gardner Policy Institute is housed at the newly restored Thomas S. Monson Center, located on historic South Temple Street, where it serves as a vital gathering place for thought leadership. Learn more at http://gardner.utah.edu/ or by calling 801-587-3717.
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Annual Births for State and Counties: 2010-2016

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Source: Utah Department of Health
Note: All UPC data are dated July 1 of the calendar year.
*Annual births are the previous fiscal year total (i.e. 2010 total births equals births occurring from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010).
Table 3
Annual Deaths for State and Counties: 2010-2016

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Source: Utah Department of Health
Note: All UPC data are dated July 1 of the calendar year.
*Annual deaths are the previous fiscal year total (i.e. 2010 total deaths equals deaths occurring from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010).
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Annual Natural Increase for State and Counties: 2010-2016

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Source: Utah Department of Health
Note: All UPC data are dated July 1 of the calendar year.
*Annual Natural Increase is the previous fiscal year total (i.e. 2010 total natural increase equals births minus deaths occurring from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010).
**Table 5**  
**Annual Net Migration for State and Counties: 2010-2016**

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Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Note: All UPC data are dated July 1 of the calendar year. In 2013 and 2014 data revisions occurred due to updated building permit data. This resulted in: a 34 person decrease in the 2014 net migration and population estimate; a 649 increase in net migration and the population estimate for 2015. This is in comparison to the historical UPC estimates released in June 2016.

* Due to the residual calculation of net migration, estimated net migration in 2010 is from the April 1, 2010 Census Decennial Count through July 1, 2010.
Table 6
Annual Change for State and Counties: 2010-2016

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State: 40,569 48,240 44,131 37,387 39,728 55,511 57,402 322,967

Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Note: All UPC data are dated July 1 of the calendar year. In 2013 and 2014 data revisions occurred due to updated building permit data. This resulted in: a 34 person decrease in the 2014 net migration and population estimate; a 649 increase in net migration and the population estimate for 2015. Thus, absolute growth for 2014 and 2015 also changed compared to the historical estimates released in June 2016.
### Table 7

**Percent Change for State and Counties: 2010-2016**

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</table>

Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Note: All UPC data are dated July 1 of the calendar year.
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Mitt Romney

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