

Emery County



Emery County, located in the heart of Utah’s “coal country” in east-central Utah, ranks as Utah’s ninth smallest county with 9,825 residents as of April 1, 2020.¹ The county lost population and experienced out-migration in eight of the past 10 years.

From 2020 to 2060, Emery County is projected to continue to experience below state average population and employment growth.² The median age is projected to rise from 36.4 in 2020 to 48.9 in 2060.

Emery County’s economy ranks as one of the most economically specialized economies in the state. Emery County’s two coal-fired powerplants –Huntington and Hunter – are slated for closure in 2036 and 2042, respectively. Analysts expect the economy to recover, driven by attractive economic assets, including a hardworking workforce, close access to Utah State University Eastern, red rock tourism attractions, favorable broadband access, and proximity to the Greater Salt Lake economic region.

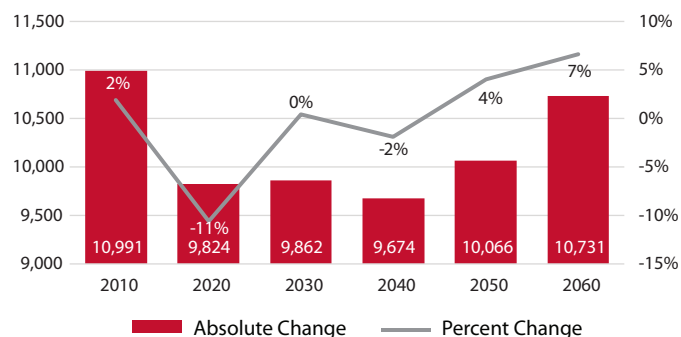
Key Findings

- **Historical context** – Between 2010 and 2020, Emery County declined by 1,151 residents. Driven by out migration, this resulted in a 2020 Census population of 9,825, the ninth smallest in Utah.
- **Regional context** – Emery County shares a strong economic link with Carbon County. This two-county economic region functions largely as a single consumer market and labor market.
- **Population growth** – Emery County’s population is projected to grow from 9,824 on July 1, 2020 to 10,731 in 2060. Emery County is projected to remain the ninth smallest county in the state.
- **Components of change** – Emery County will experience negative growth in the 2030s driven by net out-migration. However, starting in 2040, positive net in-migration will contribute to growth in the county.
- **Age composition** – Emery County’s population ages over the projection horizon. The share of the total population age 65 and older is projected to increase from 17.6% in 2020 to 26.3% in 2060. The share of the population under

18 is projected to decline, from 29.1% in 2020 to 17.4% in 2060. The median age is projected to rise from 36.4 in 2020 to 48.9 in 2060.

- **Economic growth** – Emery County’s employment is projected to decrease from 4,857 in 2020 to 4,595 in 2060 as mining and utilities employment decreases. Projected growth sectors include construction, manufacturing, professional, scientific and technical services, and arts, entertainment and recreation.

Historic and Projected Growth in Emery County



Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, 2020-2060 Projections

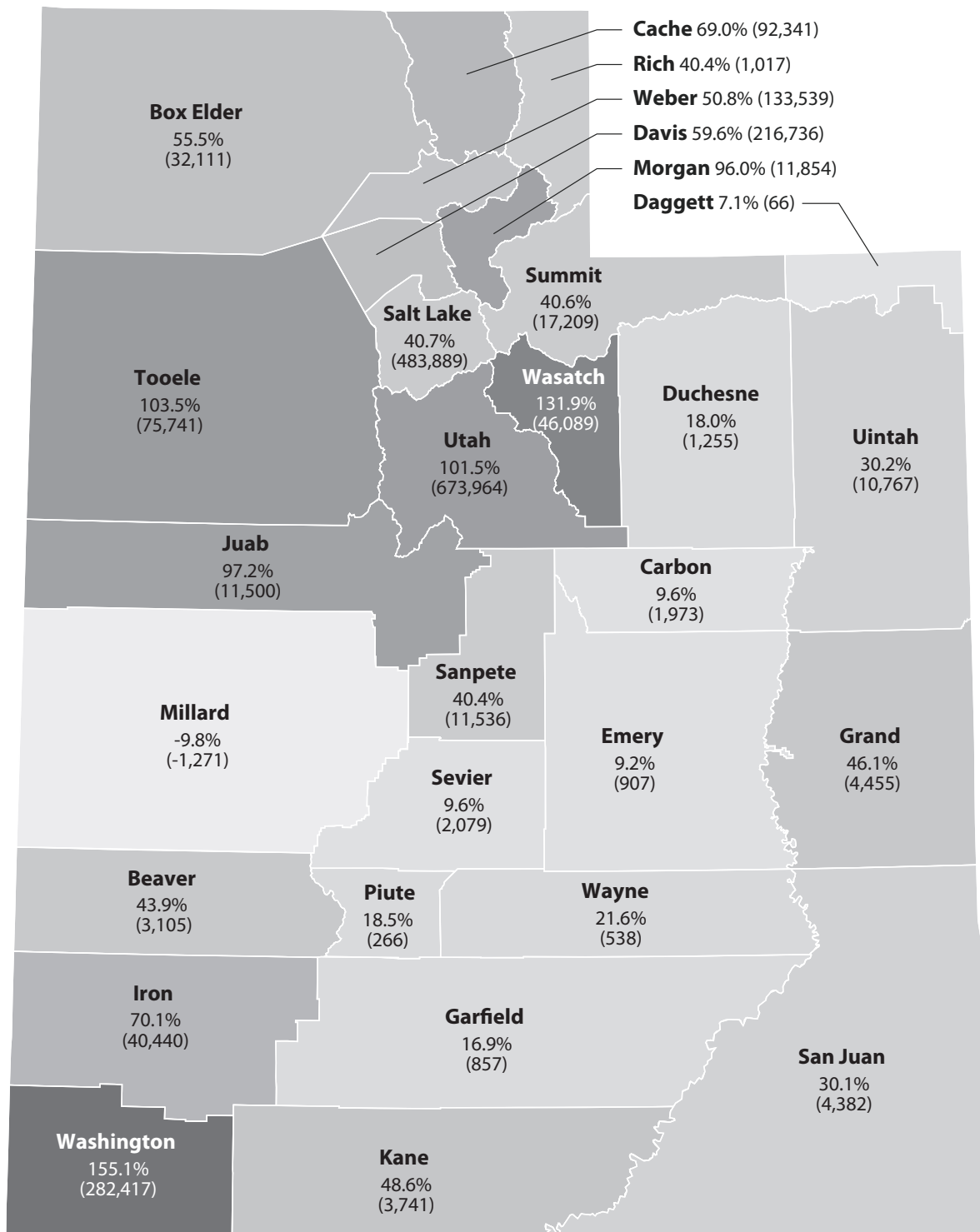
Major Events/Projects

- **Economic development plans/CEDS** – The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy sponsored by the U.S. Economic Development Administration calls for the prioritization of economic diversity, workforce development, infrastructure investments (including tourism), and support for entrepreneurship. These plans are expected to guide Emery County's economic diversification.
- **Coal-fired Powerplants** – The investor-owned utility PacifiCorp plans to retire two coal-fired powerplants in Emery County by 2036 and 2042. This timeline could be adjusted forward or backward depending on market conditions.
- **San Rafael Energy Research Center** – The San Rafael Energy Research Center in Emery County seeks to further diversify the local economy through coal gasification, carbon fiber and hydrogen fuel research. They are also constructing a molten salt/thorium laboratory that will support medical isotope harvesting.
- **Silicon Slopes East** – Emery and Carbon County leaders have joined with Silicon Slopes to create a Silicon Slopes East chapter. This initiative capitalizes on and supports Utah's rapidly growing tech sector and stretches this momentum to eastern Utah, which is just a 90-minute drive from the epicenter of Utah's tech sector in Lehi, Utah. The initiative seeks to empower Coal Country's startup and tech community to learn, connect, and serve.
- **Uinta Basin Railway** – The Uinta Basin Railway is a public-private proposal for a common carrier railway envisioned to connect Utah's Uinta Basin with the national railway network. The Railway is currently being assessed through the NEPA process, including the evaluation of three route alternatives, environmental impacts, and mitigation options, as well as a "no-action" alternative. The U.S. Surface Transportation Board oversees this process. These projections recognize the potential for this development, but do not explicitly include the construction and ongoing impacts.

Assumptions

- **Fertility** – The estimated 2020 Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for Emery County is 1.84. The TFRs in all regions are predicted to decline, resulting in a TFR of 1.65 in Emery County in 2060. Statewide, the TFR is projected to decline from 1.99 in 2020 to 1.78 in 2060.
- **Life expectancy** – The estimated 2020 life expectancy for Emery County males is 75.9 and 80.3 for females. Based on historical trends, we project it to rise to 81.7 for males and 85.5 for females by 2060.
- **Powerplant closures** – These projections assume the closure of Huntington and Hunter Powerplants in 2036 and 2042, respectively, as specified by their owner in their 2021 Integrated Resource Management Plan. Coal mining employment also declines based on these closures.
- **Resource constraints and policy choices** – These projections for Emery County assume no land (including slopes, flood plains, and soils), water, or other resource constraints. Policy choices such as land use, community preferences, and opportunity zones are considered as part of the local review process.

Utah Projected County Population Absolute and Percent Change, 2020 to 2060



Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, 2020-2060 Projections

Projected Emery County Growth by Category, 2020–2060

Year	Population				Employment			Households			
	Population	Absolute Change	Annual Growth Rate	Median Age	Employment	Absolute Change	Annual Growth Rate	Households	Absolute Change	Annual Growth Rate	Persons Per Household
2020	9,824	n/a	n/a	36.4	4,980	n/a	n/a	3,535	n/a	n/a	2.8
2021	9,885	61	0.6%	36.6	5,125	145	2.9%	3,575	40	1.1%	2.8
2022	9,869	-16	-0.2%	37.0	5,127	2	0.0%	3,599	24	0.7%	2.7
2023	9,868	-1	-0.0%	37.4	5,253	126	2.5%	3,636	37	1.0%	2.7
2024	9,876	8	0.1%	37.7	5,279	26	0.5%	3,665	29	0.8%	2.7
2025	9,885	9	0.1%	38.1	5,232	-47	-0.9%	3,703	38	1.0%	2.7
2026	9,893	8	0.1%	38.5	5,210	-22	-0.4%	3,738	35	0.9%	2.6
2027	9,895	2	0.0%	38.8	5,213	3	0.1%	3,776	38	1.0%	2.6
2028	9,891	-4	-0.0%	39.1	5,121	-92	-1.8%	3,801	25	0.7%	2.6
2029	9,879	-12	-0.1%	39.5	5,117	-4	-0.1%	3,822	21	0.6%	2.6
2030	9,862	-17	-0.2%	39.9	5,038	-79	-1.5%	3,846	24	0.6%	2.6
2031	9,842	-20	-0.2%	40.3	5,010	-28	-0.6%	3,857	11	0.3%	2.5
2032	9,823	-19	-0.2%	40.8	4,980	-30	-0.6%	3,887	30	0.8%	2.5
2033	9,806	-17	-0.2%	41.2	4,965	-15	-0.3%	3,912	25	0.6%	2.5
2034	9,791	-15	-0.2%	41.6	4,967	2	0.0%	3,934	22	0.6%	2.5
2035	9,778	-13	-0.1%	41.9	4,969	2	0.0%	3,957	23	0.6%	2.5
2036	9,740	-38	-0.4%	42.1	4,624	-345	-6.9%	3,952	-5	-0.1%	2.4
2037	9,706	-34	-0.3%	42.3	4,639	15	0.3%	3,963	11	0.3%	2.4
2038	9,681	-25	-0.3%	42.4	4,644	5	0.1%	3,963	0	0.0%	2.4
2039	9,670	-11	-0.1%	42.6	4,652	8	0.2%	3,976	13	0.3%	2.4
2040	9,674	4	0.0%	42.7	4,661	9	0.2%	3,991	15	0.4%	2.4
2041	9,676	2	0.0%	42.8	4,675	14	0.3%	4,003	12	0.3%	2.4
2042	9,675	-1	-0.0%	42.8	4,340	-335	-7.2%	4,022	19	0.5%	2.4
2043	9,682	7	0.1%	42.9	4,361	21	0.5%	4,034	12	0.3%	2.4
2044	9,705	23	0.2%	42.9	4,375	14	0.3%	4,065	31	0.8%	2.4
2045	9,739	34	0.4%	43.0	4,392	17	0.4%	4,095	30	0.7%	2.4
2046	9,791	52	0.5%	43.3	4,406	14	0.3%	4,129	34	0.8%	2.4
2047	9,853	62	0.6%	43.6	4,424	18	0.4%	4,172	43	1.0%	2.3
2048	9,921	68	0.7%	43.9	4,442	18	0.4%	4,211	39	0.9%	2.3
2049	9,993	72	0.7%	44.3	4,460	18	0.4%	4,254	43	1.0%	2.3
2050	10,066	73	0.7%	44.7	4,478	18	0.4%	4,303	49	1.2%	2.3
2051	10,141	75	0.7%	45.1	4,494	16	0.4%	4,361	58	1.3%	2.3
2052	10,218	77	0.8%	45.5	4,503	9	0.2%	4,405	44	1.0%	2.3
2053	10,293	75	0.7%	45.9	4,516	13	0.3%	4,456	51	1.2%	2.3
2054	10,364	71	0.7%	46.4	4,525	9	0.2%	4,510	54	1.2%	2.3
2055	10,435	71	0.7%	46.8	4,536	11	0.2%	4,566	56	1.2%	2.3
2056	10,505	70	0.7%	47.2	4,548	12	0.3%	4,625	59	1.3%	2.2
2057	10,572	67	0.6%	47.7	4,560	12	0.3%	4,672	47	1.0%	2.2
2058	10,631	59	0.6%	48.1	4,571	11	0.2%	4,717	45	1.0%	2.2
2059	10,683	52	0.5%	48.5	4,580	9	0.2%	4,748	31	0.7%	2.2
2060	10,731	48	0.4%	48.9	4,595	15	0.3%	4,789	41	0.9%	2.2

Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, 2020–2060 Projections

Endnote

- 1 The decennial census count is as of April 1, 2020. Projections are as of July 1 of each year.
- 2 Utah Geological Survey, Utah Department of Natural Resources, Circular 130, 2020.