

State and County Population Estimates for Utah: 2023

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Summary

July 1, 2023 estimates produced by the Utah Population Committee indicate a total Utah population of 3,456,482, adding 55,989 residents to the state since July 1, 2022. The midyear reference date of these estimates reflects a post-COVID-19 era, with rising inflation, increasing interest rates, and a moderation of high growth from the last few years. From July 1, 2022 to July 1, 2023, population growth continued to be strong but slowed to 1.6% from 1.7% in 2022. This year's growth was primarily driven by net migration, accounting for 56% of new residents. Deaths declined sharply for the first time since the start of the pandemic; however, births also declined this year after increasing in 2022. These dynamics caused an increase in natural increase for the first time since 2013, totaling 24,431 and 44% of annual population growth.

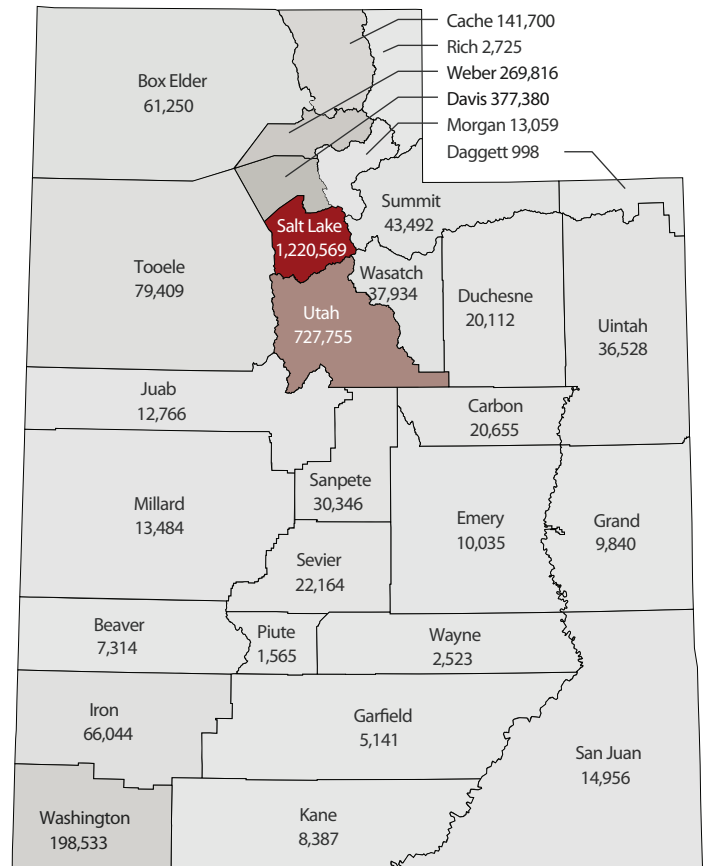
Twenty-seven counties grew in 2023, with approximately two-thirds of those counties driven by net migration. For the second year in a row, Iron County experienced the fastest population growth (3.7%) for a county with a resident population over 5,000. Utah, Piute, Daggett, Rich, Juab, Kane, Washington, Wasatch, and Tooele counties grew by over 2.0%. Utah County added the most population, totaling 22,063 new residents, over 39% of the state's population growth.

State-Level Results

In 2023, Utah experienced a slight decline in population growth, from 1.7% in 2022 to 1.6% in 2023. Net migration continued to drive growth statewide, following a similar trend from 2021 and 2022. Of the estimated 55,989 new residents

The Utah Population Committee (UPC), chaired and staffed by the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, produced Utah's state and county population estimates for July 1, 2023. The 2023 estimates incorporate the most recent 2020 decennial census data, released in August 2021. This postcensal series will extend from July 1, 2020, until the next decennial census in 2030.

Figure 1: Utah Population Estimates, 2023

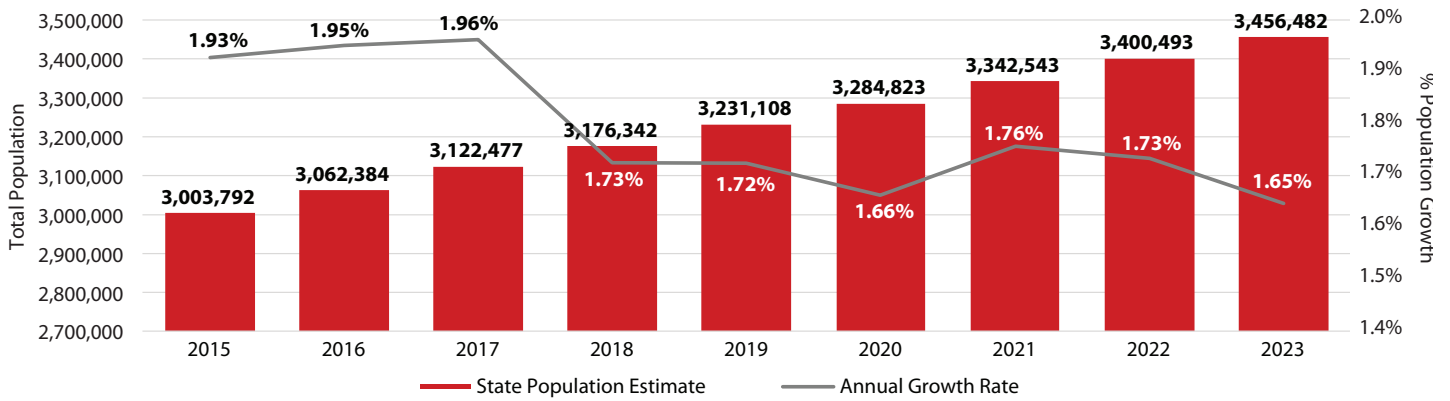


Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Revised Population Estimates for 2021 and 2022

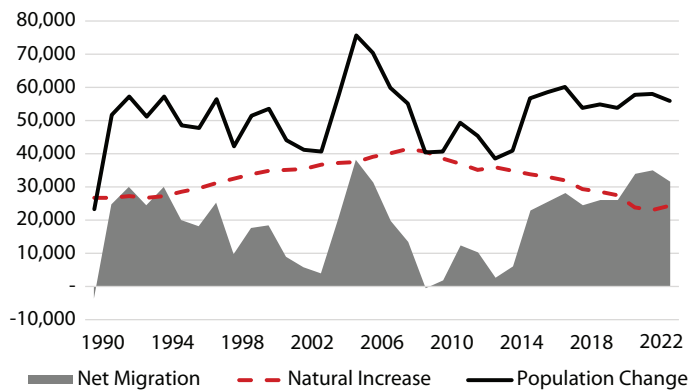
Utah state and county population estimates for 2021 and 2022 have been revised. The UPC improved one of the three methods used to create the estimates by focusing on better utilization of building permit data, construction timing, and occupancy characteristics. These methodological changes were retroactively applied to previous years' estimates. The revised estimates produced notable changes to net migration and total population. Further insights will be available in the upcoming 2020-2030 methodology documentation.

Figure 2: Utah Population and Annual Growth Rates, 2015-2023



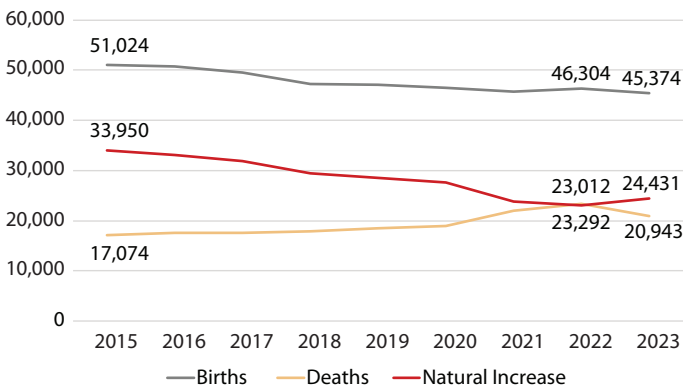
Note: 2021 and 2022 population estimates and net migration have been revised due to methodological improvements.
 Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Figure 3: Utah Components of Change, 1990-2023



Note: 2021 and 2022 population estimates and net migration have been revised due to methodological improvements.
 Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

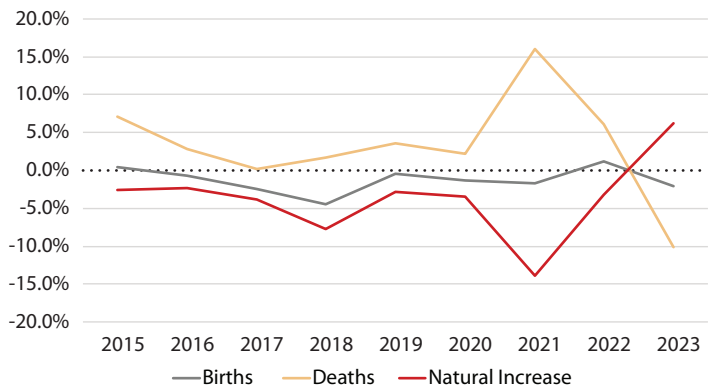
Figure 4: Utah Vital Records, 2015-2023



Source: Utah Department of Health

added between 2022 and 2023, 56% came from net migration and 44% from natural increase. Utah's shift from natural increase to net migration as the primary source of growth represents a continuation of COVID-19 trends.

Figure 5: Utah Vital Records Annual Percent Change, 2015-2023



Source: Utah Department of Health

Natural Increase

Natural increase increased to 24,431, or 44% of 2023's population growth. Natural increase is the number of annual births minus annual deaths. This is the first time natural increase has increased since 2013. The increase is the result of a sharp decline in annual deaths, a signal that COVID-19 deaths are starting to subside. COVID-19 sharply increased deaths in 2021 and 2022 with statewide deaths increasing by 14.9% in 2021 and 6.1% in 2022 but decreasing by -10% in 2023. After an increase in annual births in 2022, births in 2023 declined again, continuing Utah's general trend of declining births since 2008.

Net Migration

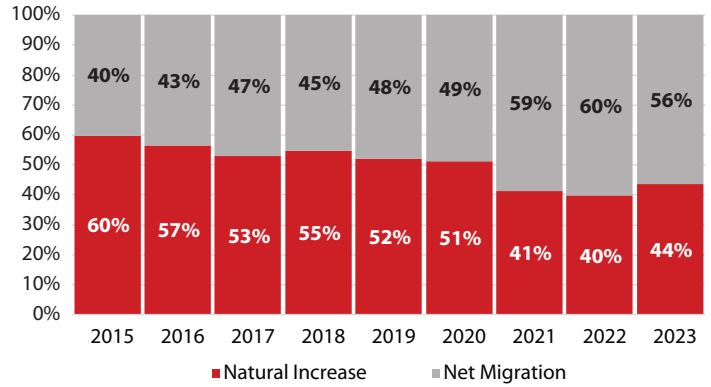
Net migration reached 31,558 in 2023, declining from 34,939 in 2022.² Net migration accounted for 56% of total state growth this year, declining from 60% of growth in 2022 and 58% in 2021. This strong influence of net migration on overall growth follows national trends, where it has been the driver in growing areas since 2020.³

Subtracting out-migration (people moving out of the state or a county) from in-migration (people moving into the state or a county) provides the net migration value. Net migration is more volatile than natural increase and sensitive to societal and economic situations. Positive net migration is often an indicator of favorable economic conditions, particularly in the western United States.⁴ Utah's low unemployment rate in 2023, combined with slightly dampened effects of natural increase for the factors mentioned above, combined to result in net migration continuing to be the dominant driver of growth for the July 1, 2023 estimates.

County-Level Results

Iron County recorded the fastest growth for a county with a resident population over 5,000 for the second year in a row at 3.7%, decreasing from last year's increase of 4.2%. Utah (3.1%), Piute (4.7%), Daggett (4.5%), Rich (3.1%), Juab (2.6%), Kane (2.6%), Washington (2.4%), Wasatch (2.3%), and Tooele (2.2%) counties all grew by over 2.0%. Utah County added the most residents at 22,063, driven by net migration (13,022 or 59%) with natural increase of 9,041 or 41% of growth. This population growth was more than Salt Lake County's (13,836), which added the second most new residents in 2023, an additional 4,300 residents than in 2022.

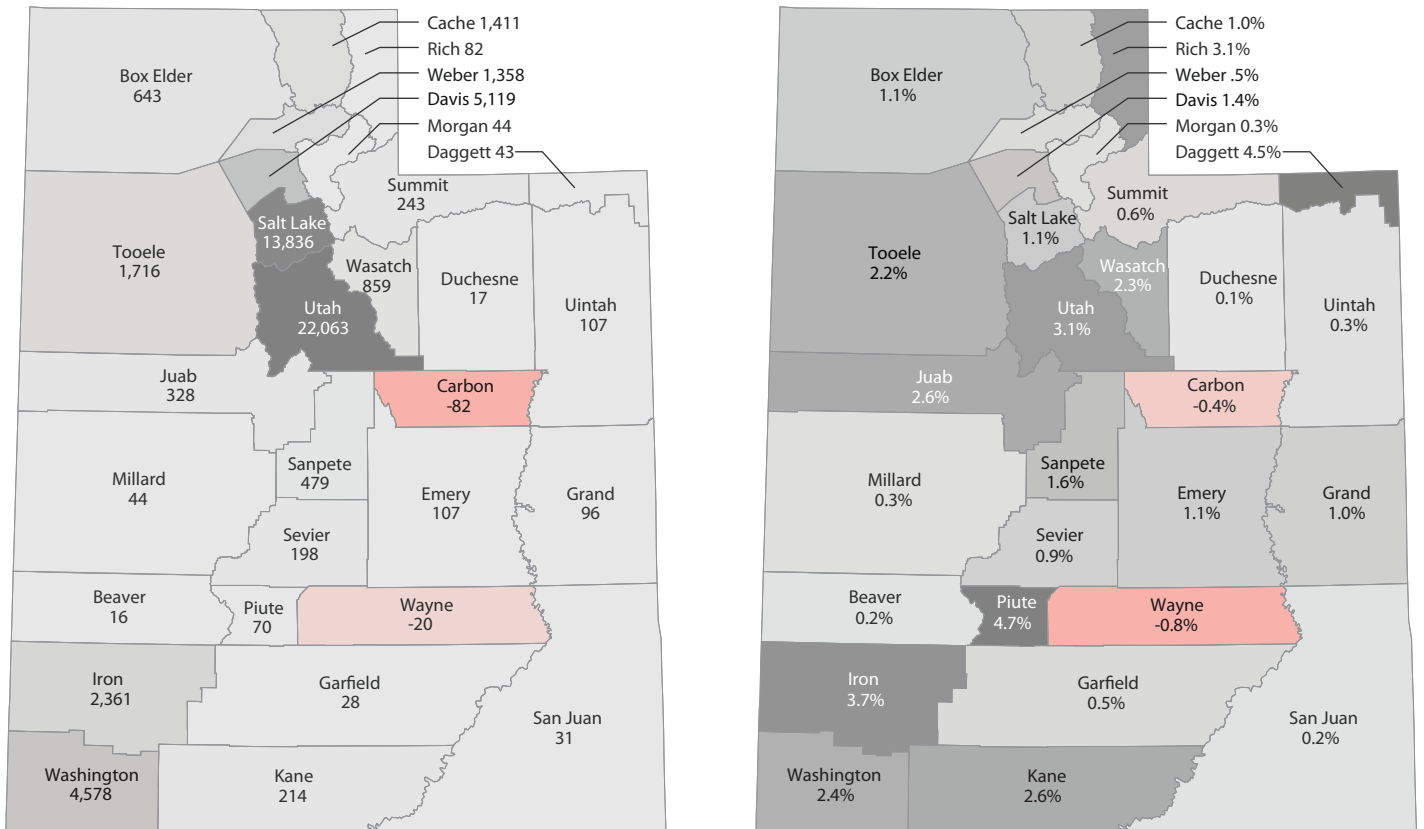
Figure 6: Share of Utah Annual Population Growth by Components of Change, 2015-2023



Note: 2021 and 2022 population estimates and net migration have been revised due to methodological improvements.
Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

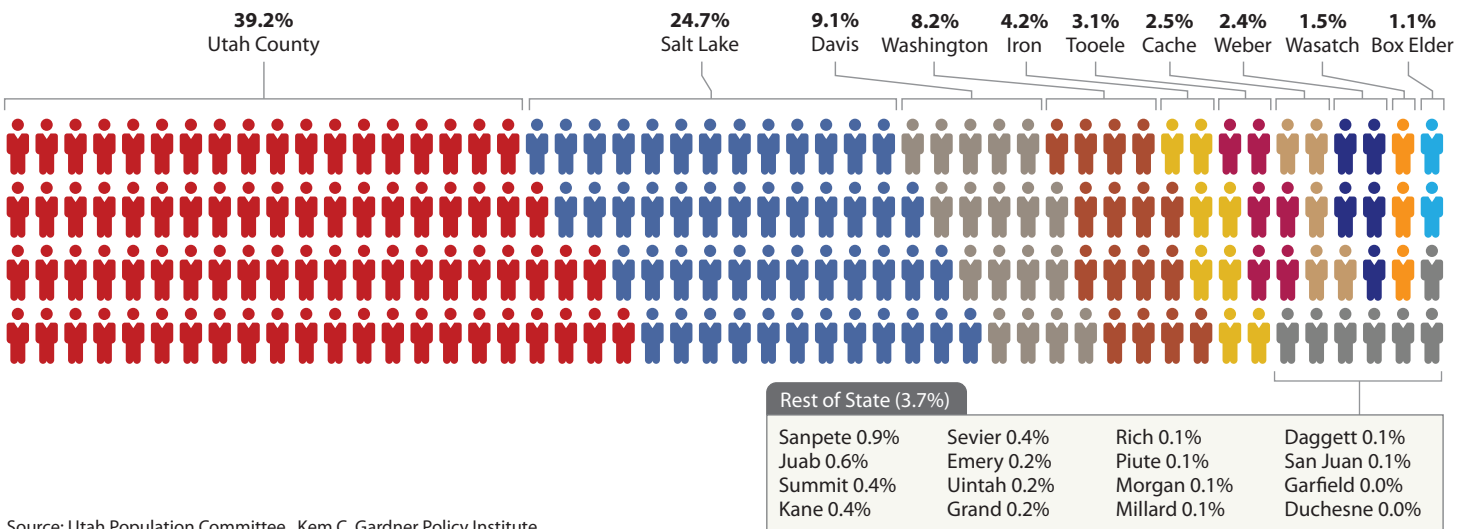
Utah County has been the largest driver of statewide growth for the last five years and accounts for 39% of the population increase in 2023. Salt Lake (25%), Davis (9%), and Washington (8%) counties also contributed large shares of state growth in 2023. Carbon and Wayne counties were the only populations that decreased in 2023, losing 82 and 20 residents, respectively.

Figure 7: Absolute and Percentage Changes in County Population, 2022-2023



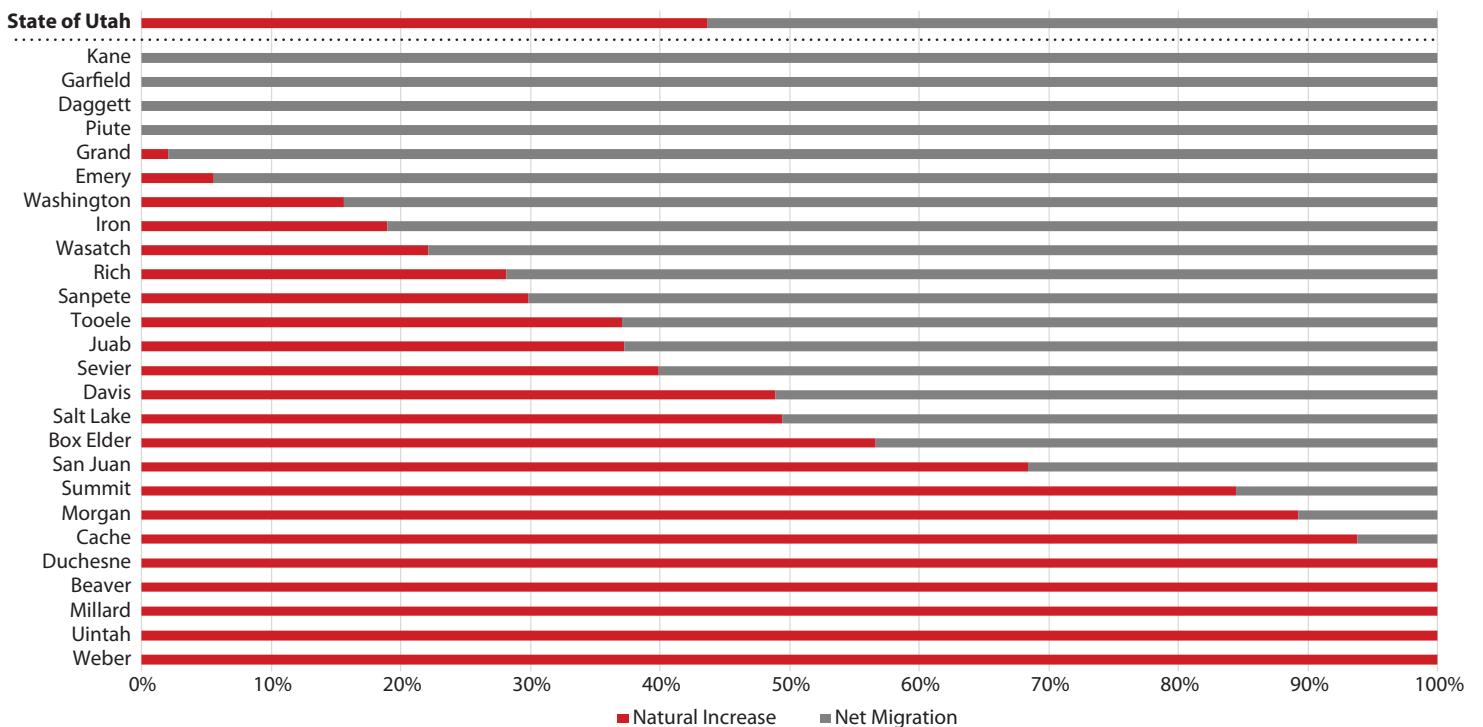
Note: 2021 and 2022 population estimates and net migration have been revised due to methodological improvements
Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Figure 8: County Share of State Population Growth, 2022-2023



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

Figure 9: Share of County Population Growth by Components of Change, 2022-2023



Note: Carbon and Wayne counties are not included due to population declines.
 Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Natural Increase and Net Migration

Natural increase and net migration have had a stable relationship at the state level, but there is more variation at the county level. Typically, slower-growing counties are fueled by natural increase, with less or negative net migration, and faster-growing counties are fueled more by net migration. In 2023, net migration drove growth in 17 counties, a drop from last year when 28 counties' growth were fueled by net migration.

Five counties, Carbon, Piute, Kane, Daggett, and Garfield, experienced natural decrease between 2022 and 2023, ranging from

-1 to -78 residents. Despite this, four of the five counties added population in 2023, with positive net migration compensating for the natural decrease.

Twelve counties, Weber, Uintah, Millard, Beaver, Duchesne, Cache, Morgan, Summit, San Juan, Box Elder, Salt Lake, and Davis, had net migration shares of growth lower than the state (see Figure 9). For the last few years, natural increase has been the driver of Salt Lake County's growth. However in 2023, Salt Lake County's growth was 51% net migration.

Table 1: Population Estimates and Components of Change, 2020-2022

Economic Region/County	2020 Census	Utah Population Committee Estimates				July 1, 2022– July 1, 2023				
		July 1, 2020	July 1, 2021	July 1, 2022	July 1, 2023	Absolute Growth	Growth Rate	Natural Increase	Net Migration	Net Migration Share of Change
State	3,271,616	3,284,823	3,342,543	3,400,493	3,456,482	55,989	1.65%	24,431	31,558	56%
Greater Salt Lake	2,836,793	2,847,422	2,892,355	2,940,154	2,987,855	47,701	1.62%	22,719	24,982	52%
Box Elder	57,666	57,886	59,208	60,607	61,250	643	1.06%	364	279	43%
Cache	133,154	133,743	136,945	140,289	141,700	1,411	1.01%	1,324	87	6%
Davis	362,679	363,419	367,361	372,262	377,380	5,119	1.37%	2,504	2,615	51%
Juab	11,786	11,831	12,057	12,438	12,766	328	2.64%	122	206	63%
Morgan	12,295	12,353	12,678	13,016	13,059	44	0.34%	39	5	11%
Rich	2,510	2,517	2,559	2,643	2,725	82	3.09%	23	59	72%
Salt Lake	1,185,238	1,188,213	1,197,256	1,206,733	1,220,569	13,836	1.15%	6,831	7,005	51%
Summit	42,357	42,394	42,837	43,249	43,492	243	0.56%	205	38	16%
Tooele	72,698	73,149	76,249	77,692	79,409	1,716	2.21%	636	1,080	63%
Utah	659,399	664,258	683,385	705,692	727,755	22,063	3.13%	9,041	13,022	59%
Wasatch	34,788	34,933	35,816	37,075	37,934	859	2.32%	190	669	78%
Weber	262,223	262,727	266,003	268,459	269,816	1,358	0.51%	1,440	-82	0%
Uintah Basin	56,151	56,230	56,673	57,472	57,639	167	0.29%	253	-86	0%
Daggett	935	943	962	956	998	43	4.48%	-2	45	100%
Duchesne	19,596	19,608	19,738	20,095	20,112	17	0.09%	85	-68	0%
Uintah	35,620	35,679	35,973	36,422	36,528	107	0.29%	170	-63	0%
West Central	66,858	67,073	67,967	69,311	70,083	772	1.11%	287	485	63%
Millard	12,975	13,010	13,211	13,441	13,484	44	0.32%	70	-26	0%
Piute	1,438	1,442	1,479	1,495	1,565	70	4.69%	-11	81	100%
Sanpete	28,437	28,560	28,978	29,867	30,346	479	1.60%	143	336	70%
Sevier	21,522	21,571	21,795	21,966	22,164	198	0.90%	79	119	60%
Wayne	2,486	2,490	2,504	2,542	2,523	-20	-0.77%	6	-26	0%
East Central	30,237	30,273	30,377	30,664	30,689	25	0.08%	-42	67	100%
Carbon	20,412	20,449	20,487	20,737	20,655	-82	-0.40%	-48	-34	0%
Emery	9,825	9,824	9,890	9,927	10,035	107	1.08%	6	101	94%
Southeast	24,187	24,205	24,356	24,668	24,796	127	0.51%	23	104	82%
Grand	9,669	9,664	9,709	9,743	9,840	96	0.99%	2	94	98%
San Juan	14,518	14,541	14,647	14,925	14,956	31	0.21%	21	10	32%
Southwest	257,390	259,621	270,814	278,223	285,420	7,197	2.59%	1,190	6,007	83%
Beaver	7,072	7,076	7,156	7,298	7,314	16	0.22%	37	-21	0%
Garfield	5,083	5,084	5,083	5,113	5,141	28	0.54%	-1	29	100%
Iron	57,289	57,658	61,128	63,683	66,044	2,361	3.71%	448	1,913	81%
Kane	7,667	7,692	7,919	8,174	8,387	214	2.61%	-7	221	100%
Washington	180,279	182,111	189,527	193,956	198,533	4,578	2.36%	713	3,865	84%

Note: The 2020 Census reflects April 1, 2020.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (April 1, 2020); Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute (2020-2023)

Note: 2021 and 2022 population estimates and net migration have been revised due to methodological improvements

Conclusion

In 2023, Utah exited the COVID-19 era, evidenced by natural increase returning to pre-pandemic levels. Compared to 2022, Utah experienced strong but slightly lower population growth, driven mostly by net migration. Natural increase increased for the first time since 2013, driven by a sharp decline in deaths. These estimates reflect a slowing of the fast growth exhibited in the previous two years.

The UPC continues to investigate the data and modify the estimates process to accurately reflect the period between July 1, 2020, and July 1, 2023. Recently, the UPC enhanced its methodology to appropriately utilize building permit data and provide more intuitive and realistic results. UPC will continue to monitor the state's data and conditions into the future.

About the Utah Population Committee (UPC)

The Utah Population Committee (UPC) prepares state and county-level estimates of the usual resident population for the state of Utah. The U.S. Census Bureau produces annual national, state, and county-level estimates, but their methods lack a contextual understanding of each state. This motivates many states, including Utah, to calculate their own estimates to create a more precise view and explanation of population change each year. State statute determines UPC membership composition and utilization of the committee-produced population estimates. The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute chairs and provides technical staff for the committee.

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Endnotes

1. UPC averages three separate methods to create the annual state and county population estimates. Previously, the Housing Stock method was used in the average, but has now been replaced with a traditional Housing Unit Method. This methodological change was incorporated into the 2023 population estimates, and retroactively applied to the 2021 and 2022 population estimates.
2. Utah state and county population estimates for 2021 and 2022 have been revised, producing notable changes to net migration and total population. Originally, 2021 and 2022 state net migration were estimated at 34,931 and 38,141, respectively. Revised 2021 and 2022 state net migration are now estimated at 33,956 and 34,939.
3. U.S. Census Bureau. (2022, December 22). New Vintage 2022 Population Estimates Available for the Nation, States and Puerto Rico.
4. Li, W.L. 1976. A Note on Migration and Employment. *Demography* 13(4): 565-570.
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8. Li, W.L. 1976. A Note on Migration and Employment. *Demography* 13(4): 565-570.

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