Policy Brief
December 2022

Kem C. Gardner POLICY INSTITUTE
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
DAVID ECCLES SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

State and County Population Estimates for Utah: 2022

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Summary

July 1, 2022 estimates produced by the Utah Population Committee indicate a total population of 3,404,760, adding 61,242 residents to the state since July 1, 2021. The midyear reference date of these estimates reflects the economy opening up and thriving with the unwinding of the pandemic, leading up to a turning point in the economic picture, resulting in a different growth trajectory in the latter half of 2022. The 2023 population estimates will likely capture that slow down. Several aspects of last year's growth continued this year. In the estimates period, population growth continued to be strong at 1.8%, largely driven by net migration (62% of new residents). Increasing deaths continued to negatively impact natural increase; however, births increased for the first time since 2015. The combined effects of these shifts resulted in a natural increase of over 23,000 or 38% of Utah's growth.

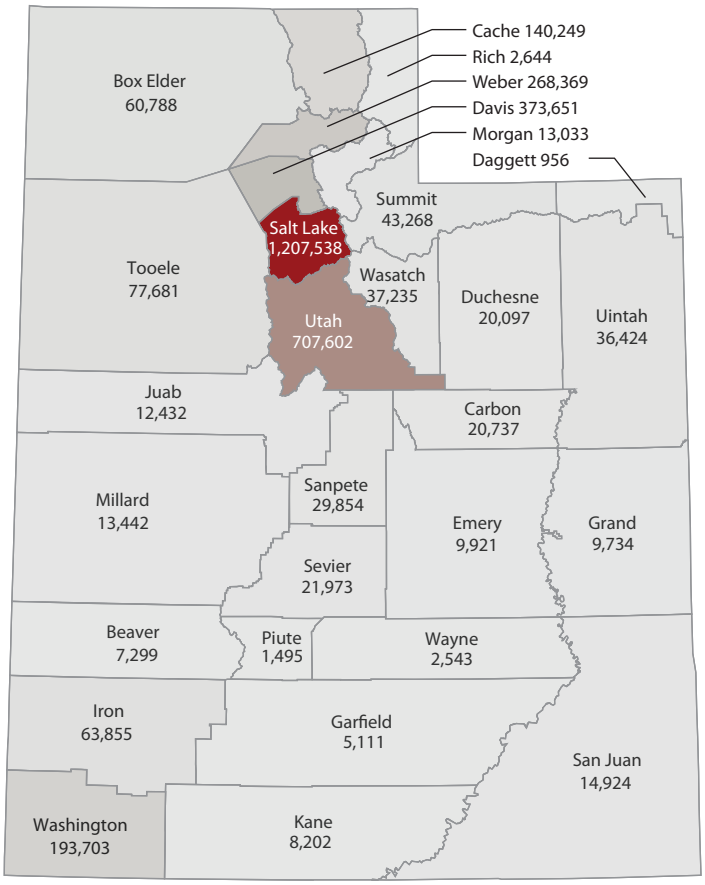
Twenty-eight counties grew in 2022, all but one driven by net migration. For the second year in a row, Iron County experienced the fastest population growth (4.3%). Wasatch, Utah, Kane, Rich, Juab, and Sanpete counties were the next fastest growing respectively, and all grew by over 3.0%. Utah County added the most population, totaling 23,980 new residents, over 39% of the state's population growth. Daggett County was the only population that decreased since 2021.

State-Level Results

In 2022, Utah continued to experience strong population growth, adding the most residents since 2006. However, with a total population of nearly 2.6 million residents in 2006, the increase at that time resulted in a higher percentage annual change at 2.8%.

Net migration continued to drive growth statewide, following a similar trend from 2021. Of the estimated 61,242 new residents, 62% came from net migration and 38% from natural increase. This shift from natural increase to net migration driving the majority of growth in the past two years is a combination of increased deaths from COVID-19, decreasing births since 2008, and increasing net migration annually since 2015.

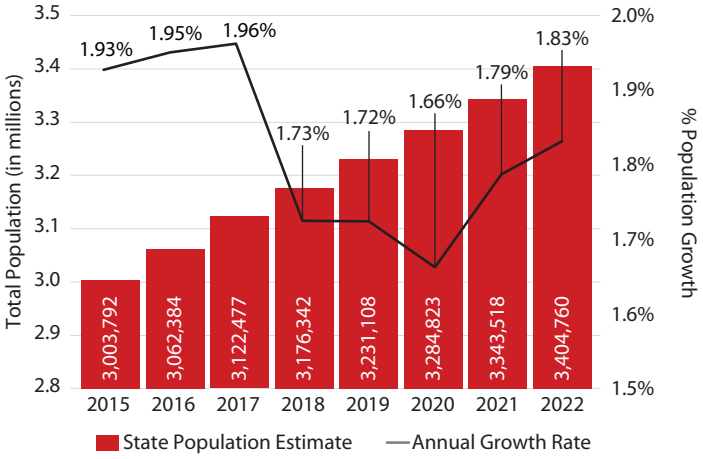
Figure 1: Utah Population Estimates, 2022



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

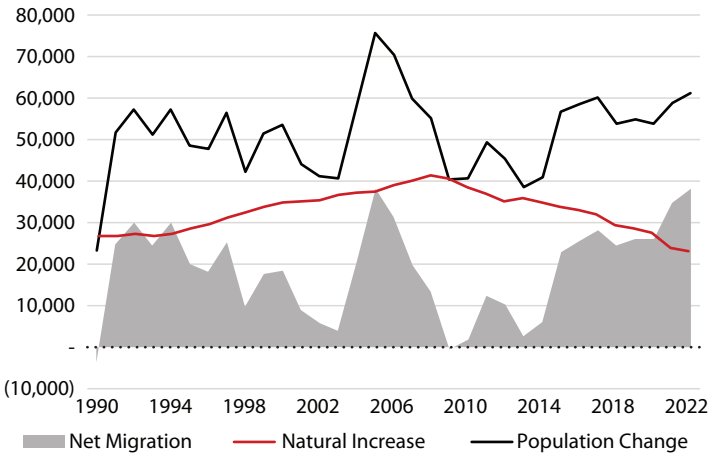
The Utah Population Committee (UPC), chaired and staffed by the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, produced Utah's state and county population estimates for July 1, 2022. The 2022 estimates incorporate the most recent 2020 Decennial Census data, released in August 2021. This postcensal series will extend from July 1, 2020, until the next decennial Census in 2030.

Figure 2: Utah's Population and Annual Growth Rates, 2015–2022



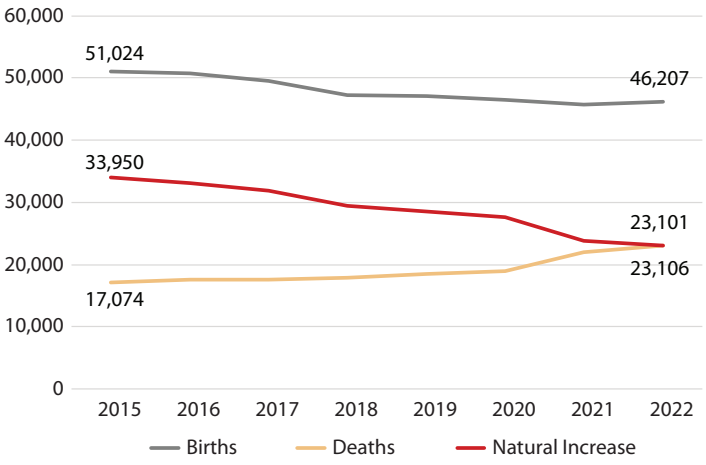
Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Figure 3: State Components of Change, 1990–2022



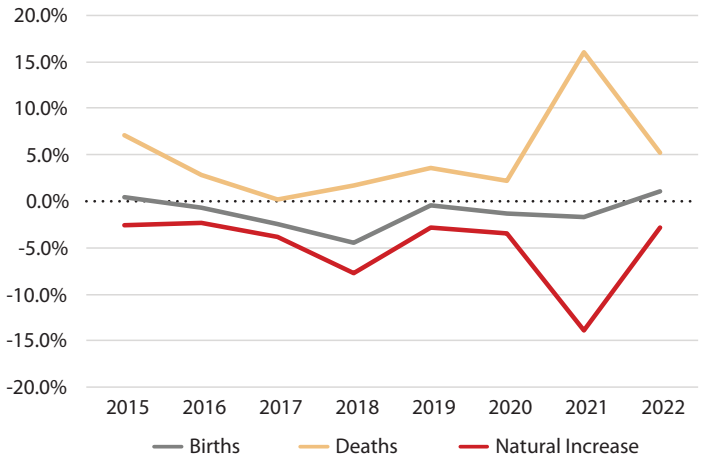
Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Figure 4: State Vital Records, 2015–2022



Source: Utah Department of Health

Figure 5: State Vital Records Annual Percent Change, 2015–2022



Source: Utah Department of Health

Natural Increase

Natural increase declined to 23,101, or 38% of overall population growth in 2022. Natural increase is the number of annual births minus annual deaths. This is the lowest natural increase since 1975, when the total state population was 1,233,900, though natural increase has been steadily declining since 2008.[1] The decline is the result of the combined effects of fewer annual births and annual deaths increasing from an aging population and COVID-19.

For the first time since 2015, births increased by 1.2% this year to 46,207. Like the nation, Utah's population continues to age. The aging of the population has resulted in increased annual deaths since 2010. COVID-19 exacerbated this increase, with deaths increasing by 14.9% in 2021. This year, deaths increased an additional 6.1% totaling 23,106 statewide.

Net Migration

Net migration increased to 38,141 in 2022, the highest level in state history and just above the previous record high of 38,108 in 2005. Net migration accounted for 62% of total state growth this year, increasing from 59% in 2021 and 49% in 2020. This increasing influence of net migration on overall growth follows national trends, where it has been the driver in growing areas since 2020.[2]

Subtracting out-migration (people moving out of an area) from in-migration (people moving into an area) provides the net migration value. Migration is historically more volatile than natural increase and is sensitive to societal and economic situations. Positive net migration is often an indicator of favorable economic conditions, particularly in the western United States.[3] Utah's strong economy in 2022, combined with

dampened effects of natural increase for the factors mentioned above, helped make net migration the dominant driver of growth for the July 1, 2022 estimates.

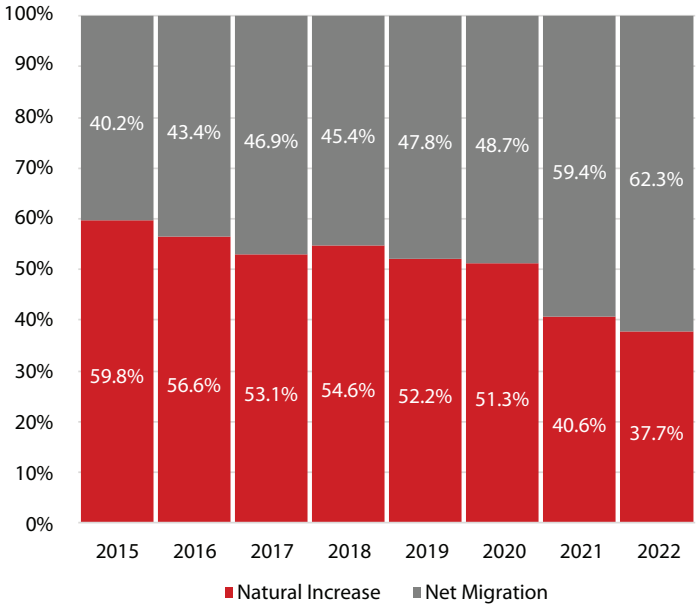
County-Level Results

Iron County experienced the fastest growth for the second year in a row at 4.3%, despite decreasing from last year's 6.2% increase. Wasatch (3.8%), Utah (3.5%), Kane (3.5%), Rich (3.3%), Juab (3.2%), and Sanpete (3.1%) counties increased by over 3.0%, all having higher growth rates than in 2021.

Utah County added the most new residents – 23,980, driven by net migration (15,394 or 64%) with natural increase of 8,586 making up the remaining 36% of the county's growth. This population growth was more than double Salt Lake County (9,998), which added the second most new residents.

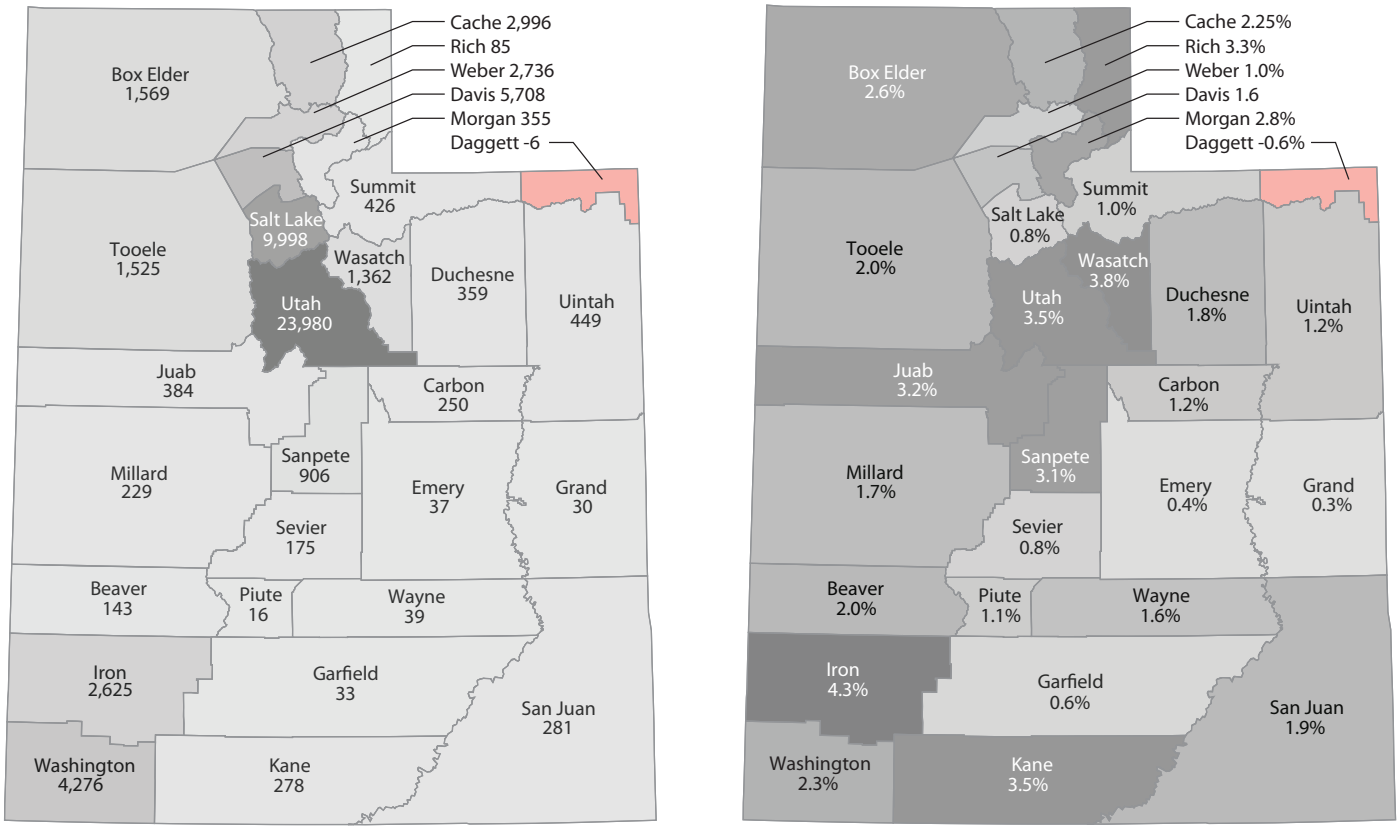
Utah County continues to be the most significant contributor to state growth, accounting for 39% of the state's population gain in 2022. Salt Lake (16%), Davis (9%), and Washington (7%) counties also contributed large shares of state growth. Daggett County was the only population that decreased since 2021, losing six residents.

Figure 6: Share of Annual Population Growth by Components of Change, 2015-2022



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

Figure 7: Absolute and Percentage Changes in County Population, 2021-2022



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

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

Economic Region/County	2020 Census	Utah Population Committee Estimates			July 1, 2021– July 1, 2022				
		July 1, 2020	July 1, 2021	July 1, 2022	Absolute Growth	Growth Rate	Natural Increase	Net Migration	Net Migration Share of Change
Greater Salt Lake	**2,836,793**	**2,847,422**	**2,893,366**	**2,944,489**	**51,123**	**1.77%**	**22,055**	**29,068**	**57%**
Box Elder	57,666	57,886	59,219	60,788	1,569	2.65%	358	1,211	77%
Cache	133,154	133,743	137,253	140,249	2,996	2.18%	1,323	1,673	56%
Davis	362,679	363,419	367,944	373,651	5,708	1.55%	2,535	3,173	56%
Juab	11,786	11,831	12,049	12,432	384	3.18%	99	285	74%
Morgan	12,295	12,353	12,679	13,033	355	2.80%	88	267	75%
Rich	2,510	2,517	2,560	2,644	85	3.30%	1	84	99%
Salt Lake	1,185,238	1,188,213	1,197,540	1,207,538	9,998	0.83%	6,818	3,180	32%
Summit	42,357	42,394	42,842	43,268	426	0.99%	197	229	54%
Tooele	72,698	73,149	76,155	77,681	1,525	2.00%	539	986	65%
Utah	659,399	664,258	683,622	707,602	23,980	3.51%	8,586	15,394	64%
Wasatch	34,788	34,933	35,873	37,235	1,362	3.80%	176	1,186	87%
Weber	262,223	262,727	265,633	268,369	2,736	1.03%	1,335	1,401	51%
Uintah Basin	**56,151**	**56,230**	**56,674**	**57,476**	**802**	**1.42%**	**264**	**538**	**67%**
Daggett	935	943	962	956	-6	-0.65%	-2	-4	68%
Duchesne	19,596	19,608	19,737	20,097	359	1.82%	106	253	71%
Uintah	35,620	35,679	35,975	36,424	449	1.25%	160	289	64%
West Central	**66,858**	**67,073**	**67,942**	**69,307**	**1,365**	**2.01%**	**179**	**1,186**	**87%**
Millard	12,975	13,010	13,214	13,442	229	1.73%	17	212	93%
Piute	1,438	1,442	1,479	1,495	16	1.10%	-6	22	137%
Sanpete	28,437	28,560	28,948	29,854	906	3.13%	110	796	88%
Sevier	21,522	21,571	21,798	21,973	175	0.80%	64	111	63%
Wayne	2,486	2,490	2,504	2,543	39	1.56%	-6	45	115%
East Central	**30,237**	**30,273**	**30,372**	**30,658**	**286**	**0.94%**	**-89**	**375**	**131%**
Carbon	20,412	20,449	20,488	20,737	250	1.22%	-78	328	131%
Emery	9,825	9,824	9,884	9,921	37	0.37%	-11	48	130%
Southeast	**9,669**	**9,664**	**24,347**	**24,658**	**311**	**1.28%**	**29**	**282**	**91%**
Grand	14,518	14,541	9,704	9,734	30	0.31%	12	18	60%
San Juan	24,187	24,205	14,643	14,924	281	1.92%	17	264	94%
Southwest	**257,390**	**259,621**	**270,817**	**278,171**	**7,355**	**2.72%**	**666**	**6,689**	**91%**
Beaver	7,072	7,076	7,156	7,299	143	2.00%	28	115	80%
Garfield	5,083	5,084	5,079	5,111	33	0.64%	7	26	79%
Iron	57,289	57,658	61,230	63,855	2,625	4.29%	342	2,283	87%
Kane	7,667	7,692	7,924	8,202	278	3.51%	-3	281	101%
Washington	180,279	182,111	189,428	193,703	4,276	2.26%	292	3,984	93%
State	**3,271,616**	**3,284,823**	**3,343,518**	**3,404,760**	**61,242**	**1.83%**	**23,101**	**38,141**	**62%**

Note: The 2020 Census reflects April 1, 2020.
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (April 1, 2020); Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute (2020-2022)

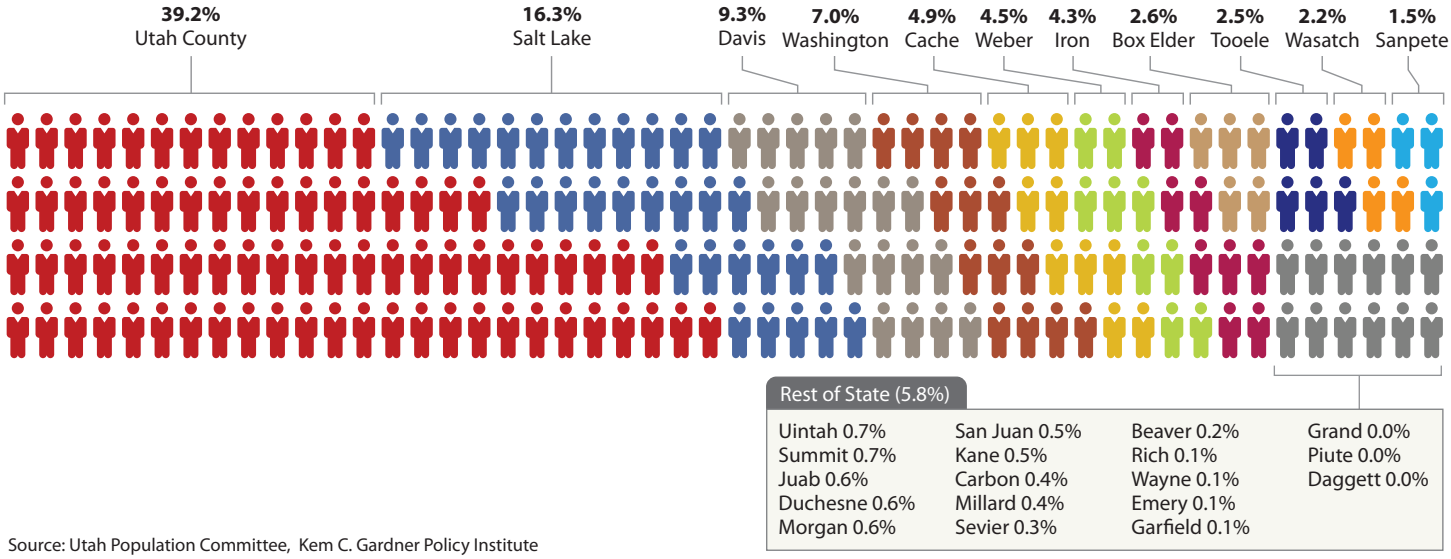
Natural Increase and Net Migration

Natural increase and net migration have had a fairly 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. However, in 2022, net migration drove population change in 28 counties.

Six counties – Carbon, Emery, Piute, Wayne, Kane, and Daggett– experienced natural decrease between 2021 and 2022. The results of this natural decrease were small, ranging from 2 to 78 residents. Despite this, five of the six counties added population in 2022, with positive net migration compensating for the natural decrease.

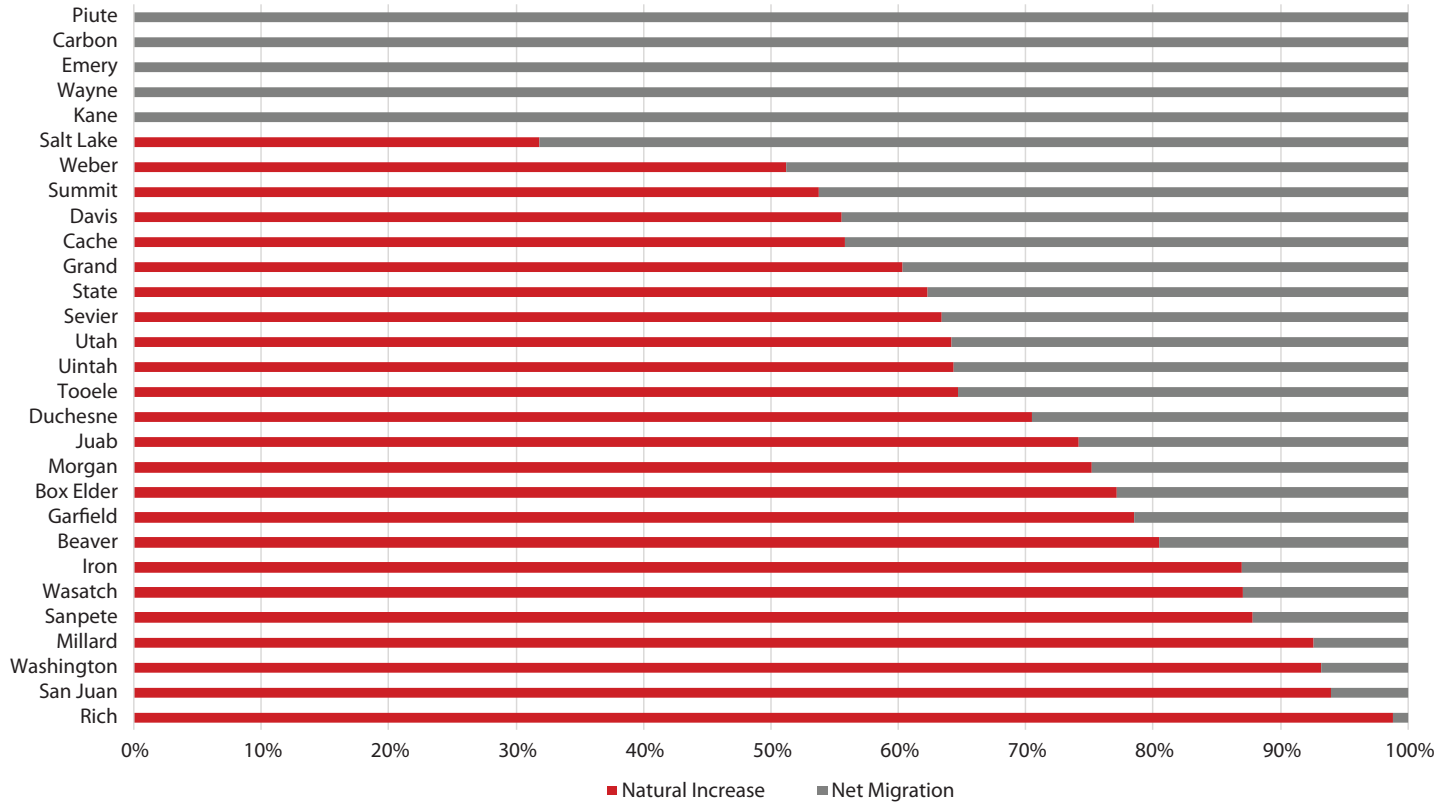
Only six counties – Grand, Cache, Davis, Summit, Weber, and Salt Lake – had net migration shares of growth lower than the state. Salt Lake County was the only county with less than half (32%) of growth driven by net migration.

Figure 8: County Share of State Population Growth, 2021-2022



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

Figure 9: Share of Population Growth by Components of Change by County, 2015-2022



Note: Daggett County is not included due to population decline of 6 residents.
Source: Utah Population Committee, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Conclusion

In 2022, Utah continued to experience strong population growth, even with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the start of an economic shift. Absolute growth reached its highest level since 2006, driven by record-high net migration. Natural increase decreased for the second year in a row, despite an increase in births for the first time since 2015. These estimates reflect a particular inflection point in the statewide story of growth and change, with the 2023 estimates likely reflecting broader economic shifts and their resulting impacts to migration.

The UPC has continued to investigate the data and modify the estimates process to accurately reflect the period between July 1, 2021, and July 1, 2022. The UPC will continue to monitor the state's data and conditions into the future. Additional data

and insights are anticipated in 2023 with the release of the full suite of 2020 census products. With this new data, the UPC anticipates methodology revisions for future estimates.

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 national-, state-, and county-level estimates annually, but their methods lack a contextual understanding of each state. This motivates many states, including Utah, to calculate their own set of estimates to benefit from local knowledge, and 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. Utah Population Committee (UPC) Members include the following:

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Aaron Brough, Utah State Board of Education
Laura Hanson, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
David Landward, Dominion Energy
Jacoba Larsen, Utah State Tax Commission
Sojung Lim, Utah State University
Carrie Mayne, Utah System of Higher Education
Collin Peterson, Department of Workforce Services
John Sagers, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Andrea Wilko, Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst
Linda Wininger, Utah Department of Health

Endnotes

1. Kem C. Gardner Institute analysis of the following datasets: Historical State and County Estimates from the Utah Population Estimates Committee: 1940-2009, State and County Intercensal Population Estimates and Components of Change: 2010-2019
2. U.S. Census Bureau. (2021, December 12). New Vintage 2021 Population Estimates Available for the Nation, States and Puerto Rico.
3. Li, W.L. 1976. A Note on Migration and Employment. Demography 13(4): 565-570.

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