February 2014
BRIEFING PAPER
UTAH LEGISLATURE

UTAH'S POPULATION

Growing Fast, Concentrating More, Diversifying Rapidly

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH AND GENERAL COUNSEL

HIGHLIGHTS

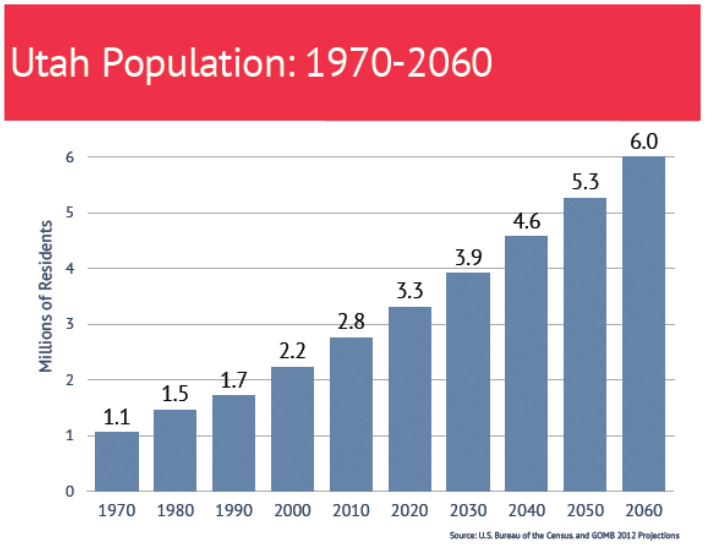
- Despite a short lived slowdown in Utah's population growth due to the Great Recession, the state is still one of the fastest growing states in the nation and seems to be heading back to its historical average annual population growth of 2.2%. Utah is likely to have a population in excess of 3,000,000 by the end of 2015.
- Utah's population growth continues to be centered along the Wasatch Front and in Washington County. Projections indicate that this concentration of Utah's population will continue, with over half (56.5%) of the state's population growth between 2010 and 2030 occurring in Utah and Salt Lake counties. When three other counties are added (Washington, Davis, and Weber) to Salt Lake and Utah counties, 80% of the state's projected population growth is accounted for.
- With a substantial amount of Utah's population increase over the last two decades coming from immigration, Utah's minority population has increased substantially. With those in-migrants being mainly in their child bearing years, Utah's minority population will increase. Currently one in five Utahns is a minority; by 2030 that ratio is expected to be one in four.

Utah: 3,000,000 by 2015? [1]

By July 1, 2014, (just a few months from now) it is estimated that Utah's population will be 2,946,100. This is 48,900 more than the 2013 estimate – a growth rate of 1.7%. This increase, both in percent and in number, will be the largest annual increase for the state since 2008.

Utah is now on the threshold of having 3 million residents. When will Utah reach 3 million in population? It looks like it will be sometime within the year 2015. If population projections prove to be accurate, the state's July 1, 2014 population will be at 2,946,100, just 53,900 persons short of 3 million. Utah could reach 3 million by July 1, 2015 but in all likelihood Utah will reach 3 million by the end of 2015.

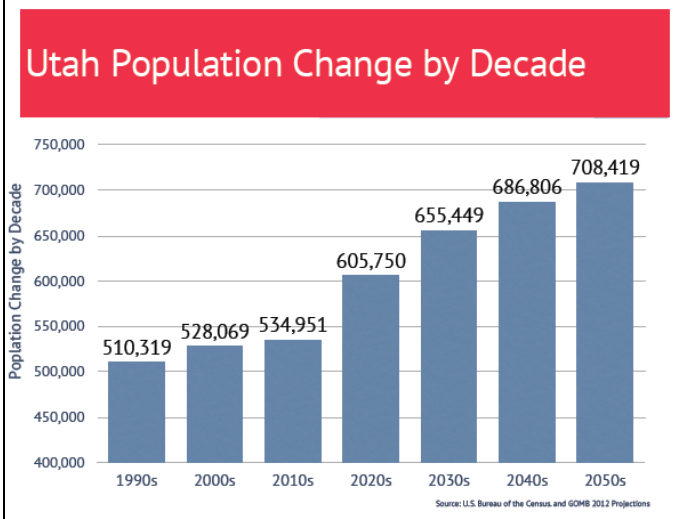
Figure 1
Utah's Census Population Projected through 2060



If Utah continues to grow at its historical average rate, it will pass three states, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Iowa, in population before the next census and will become the 30th most populous state in the nation. **Figure 1** shows Utah's census population by decade to 2010, and its projected population increase through 2060. **Figure 2** shows Utah's population increase by decade. As can be seen, in each decade the state's population has increased more than the decade before. This trend is projected to continue.

The U.S. Census Bureau reported that from 2012-2013, Utah's population grew faster than any other state except North Dakota in percentage terms and was the 13th fastest growing state in absolute terms.

Figure 2
Utah's Population Increase by Decade



The population increase projected between July 1, 2013, and July 1, 2014, is the result of a natural increase (births minus deaths) of 37,200 and net migration (in-migrants minus out-migrants) of 11,700. To put this growth in perspective it is helpful to take a historical look at Utah's population. From 1960 to 2014 (54 years), Utah's population has grown by an average annual rate of 2.2%. However, during the several years prior to the Great Recession (2004-2008) Utah's population grew even faster, by an average annual rate of 2.6%. Between 2009 and 2013, the Great Recession reduced that rate down to an average annual rate of 1.5%. **Table 1** shows these trends in Utah's population from 1960 to 2014.

Figure 3 shows these trends graphically. As can be seen, Utah's total population change (blue line) looks like a mountain range, going up and down, though overall the trend is upward. The natural increase (red line) is much less volatile and shows a relatively steady increase, meaning that Utah consistently has more births than deaths. The reason natural increase is consistently positive is the state's high fertility rate of 2.4 children per woman compared to a fertility rate of 1.9 for the nation. Such a rate simply produces more births than deaths and will continue for quite some time to come.[2] The state's net-migration (green) runs lower than the total population line but almost parallel to it. Net-migration is the difference between those that move into the state and those that leave. It is the volatility of net-migration that causes the volatility in the state's annual population growth. Why is there such volatility in net-migration? Because net-migration is substantiality driven by the quality of Utah's economy.

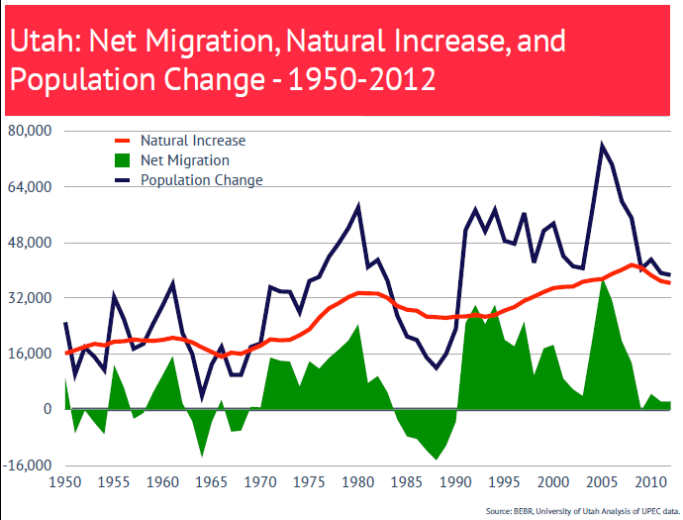
Table 1
Utah Population Trends from 1960 to 2014

Year	July 1st Population	Percent Change	Increase	Net Migration	Natural Increase	Fiscal Year Births	Fiscal Year Deaths
1960	900,000	3.5%	30,100	10,047	20,053	26,011	5,958
1961	936,000	4.0%	36,000	15,371	20,629	26,560	5,931
1962	958,000	2.4%	22,000	1,817	20,183	26,431	6,248
1963	974,000	1.7%	16,000	-3,317	19,317	25,648	6,331
1964	978,000	0.4%	4,000	-13,863	17,863	24,461	6,598
1965	991,000	1.3%	13,000	-3,553	16,553	23,082	6,529
1966	1,009,000	1.8%	18,000	2,810	15,190	21,953	6,763
1967	1,019,000	1.0%	10,000	-6,350	16,350	23,030	6,680
1968	1,029,000	1.0%	10,000	-6,029	16,029	22,743	6,714
1969	1,047,000	1.7%	18,000	798	17,202	24,033	6,831
1970	1,066,000	1.8%	19,000	612	18,388	25,281	6,893
1971	1,101,150	3.3%	35,150	14,966	20,184	27,400	7,216
1972	1,135,100	3.1%	33,950	14,046	19,904	27,146	7,242
1973	1,168,950	3.0%	33,850	13,810	20,040	27,562	7,522
1974	1,196,950	2.4%	28,000	6,621	21,379	28,876	7,497
1975	1,233,900	3.1%	36,950	13,897	23,053	30,566	7,513
1976	1,272,050	3.1%	38,150	11,761	26,389	33,773	7,384
1977	1,315,950	3.5%	43,900	14,824	29,076	36,707	7,631
1978	1,363,750	3.6%	47,800	17,220	30,580	38,289	7,709
1979	1,415,950	3.8%	52,200	19,868	32,332	40,216	7,884
1980	1,474,000	4.1%	58,050	24,536	33,514	41,645	8,131
1981	1,515,000	2.8%	41,000	7,612	33,388	41,509	8,121
1982	1,558,000	2.8%	43,000	9,662	33,338	41,773	8,435
1983	1,595,000	2.4%	37,000	4,914	32,086	40,555	8,469
1984	1,622,000	1.7%	27,000	-2,793	29,793	38,643	8,850
1985	1,643,000	1.3%	21,000	-7,714	28,714	37,664	8,950
1986	1,663,000	1.2%	20,000	-8,408	28,408	37,309	8,901
1987	1,678,000	0.9%	15,000	-11,713	26,713	35,631	8,918
1988	1,690,000	0.7%	12,000	-14,557	26,557	35,809	9,252
1989	1,706,000	0.9%	16,000	-10,355	26,355	35,439	9,084
1990	1,729,227	1.4%	23,227	-3,480	26,707	35,830	9,123
1991	1,780,870	3.0%	51,643	24,878	26,765	36,194	9,429
1992	1,838,149	3.2%	57,279	30,042	27,237	36,796	9,559
1993	1,889,393	2.8%	51,244	24,561	26,683	36,738	10,055
1994	1,946,721	3.0%	57,328	30,116	27,212	37,623	10,411
1995	1,995,228	2.5%	48,507	20,024	28,483	39,064	10,581
1996	2,042,893	2.4%	47,665	18,171	29,494	40,495	11,001
1997	2,099,409	2.8%	56,516	25,253	31,263	42,512	11,249
1998	2,141,632	2.0%	42,223	9,745	32,478	44,126	11,648
1999	2,193,014	2.4%	51,382	17,584	33,798	45,434	11,636
2000	2,246,467	2.4%	53,453	18,526	34,927	46,880	11,953
2001	2,290,632	2.0%	44,165	8,914	35,251	47,688	12,437
2002	2,331,826	1.8%	41,194	5,815	35,379	48,041	12,662
2003	2,372,457	1.7%	40,631	3,911	36,720	49,518	12,798
2004	2,430,224	2.4%	57,767	20,522	37,245	50,527	13,282
2005	2,505,844	3.1%	75,620	38,108	37,512	50,431	12,919
2006	2,576,228	2.8%	70,384	31,374	39,010	52,368	13,358
2007	2,636,077	2.3%	59,849	19,676	40,173	53,953	13,780
2008	2,691,122	2.1%	55,045	13,468	41,577	55,357	13,780
2009	2,731,558	1.5%	40,437	-326	40,763	54,548	13,785
2010	2,774,663	1.6%	43,104	4,501	38,603	52,898	14,295
2011	2,813,923	1.4%	39,260	2,313	36,947	51,734	14,787
2012	2,852,589	1.4%	38,666	2,310	36,356	54,573	15,217
2013f	2,897,200	1.6%	44,611	8,011	36,600	na	na
2014f	2,946,100	1.7%	48,900	11,700	37,200	na	na

Note. The Utah Population Estimates Committee revised the populatione stimates for the years from 2000 to 2009 following the results of the 2010 Census.

Source. Utah Population Estimates Committee

Figure 3
Utah's Population Changes



When Utah's economy is stronger than the national economy, Utah experiences positive net-migration. When Utah's economy is weaker than the national economy, Utah has historically experienced negative net-migration. The early 1950s, much of the 1960s, and 1980s were such periods. As can be seen in the graph, the green line drops below the zero base line, indicating this negative net-migration. However, Utah did not experience this negative net-migration during the Great Recession. Why? One possible reason is that the Great Recession was so widespread the economies of other states were no better and there was little incentive to leave the state.

As the blue line in **Figure 3** shows, Utah's population is always increasing but at different amounts each year. Generally, when Utah's population is driven by natural increase, with little or no positive net-migration, Utah grows at slower rates. The 1980's is the best example. Though Utah's population grew each year during this decade, the amount of increase fell from 58,050 in 1980 to 12,000 in 1988. This is because Utah experienced negative net-migration from 1984 through 1990.

When Utah's natural increase is aided by strong positive net-migration, Utah grows very rapidly. The period of 1990-2005 is a good example of this. In 2005, for example, Utah's natural increase amounted to 37,245 and positive net-migration amounted to 38,108, the largest increase in over 50 years. That year, Utah's population increased by an amazing 75,620.

Utah has come out of the Great Recession much better than most states. Employment in Utah grew by 3.3% in 2013 as compared to 1.6% for the nation. In 2014 the state's job market is expected to grow by 3.1%, slightly slower but still much better than the nation, which is projected to grow by 1.7%. As would be expected then, with the Utah economy stronger than the nation as a whole, positive net-migration is increasing again. In 2013, positive net migration totaled 11,700, the largest increase since 2008. **Table 1** shows these numbers.

Population Growth by County 2010-2012 [3]

Utah's population growth by county continues to follow a trend set decades ago – increasing urbanization. As **Figure 4** shows, Salt Lake County experienced the biggest increase in population between 2010 and 2012, growing by 25,813. In 2012, Salt Lake County's population stood at 1,059,112; this is 37.1% of the state's entire population. Utah County came in second, growing by 22,079, reaching a population of 541,378 and accounting for 19.1% of the state's population. Combined, these two counties account for 56.2% of the state's population. Davis County grew by 9,698, reaching a population of 317,248, coming in third, and accounting for 11.1% of the state's population. Washington County, which over the last few decades has been growing by leaps and bounds, seems to have been affected more by the Great Recession than most counties. Still, it came in fourth with an increase of 4,591, and totaling a population of 143,352, well below the annual growth of previous years. Weber County grew by 3,415 and ranked fifth, growing to 235,517. When combined, the four Wasatch Front counties (Salt Lake, Utah, Davis, and Weber) accounted for 75.5% of the state's growth. This concentration of population in such a small area of the state makes Utah one of the most urban states in the nation. See **Table 2.**

Figure 4
County Population Absolute Change 2010-2012

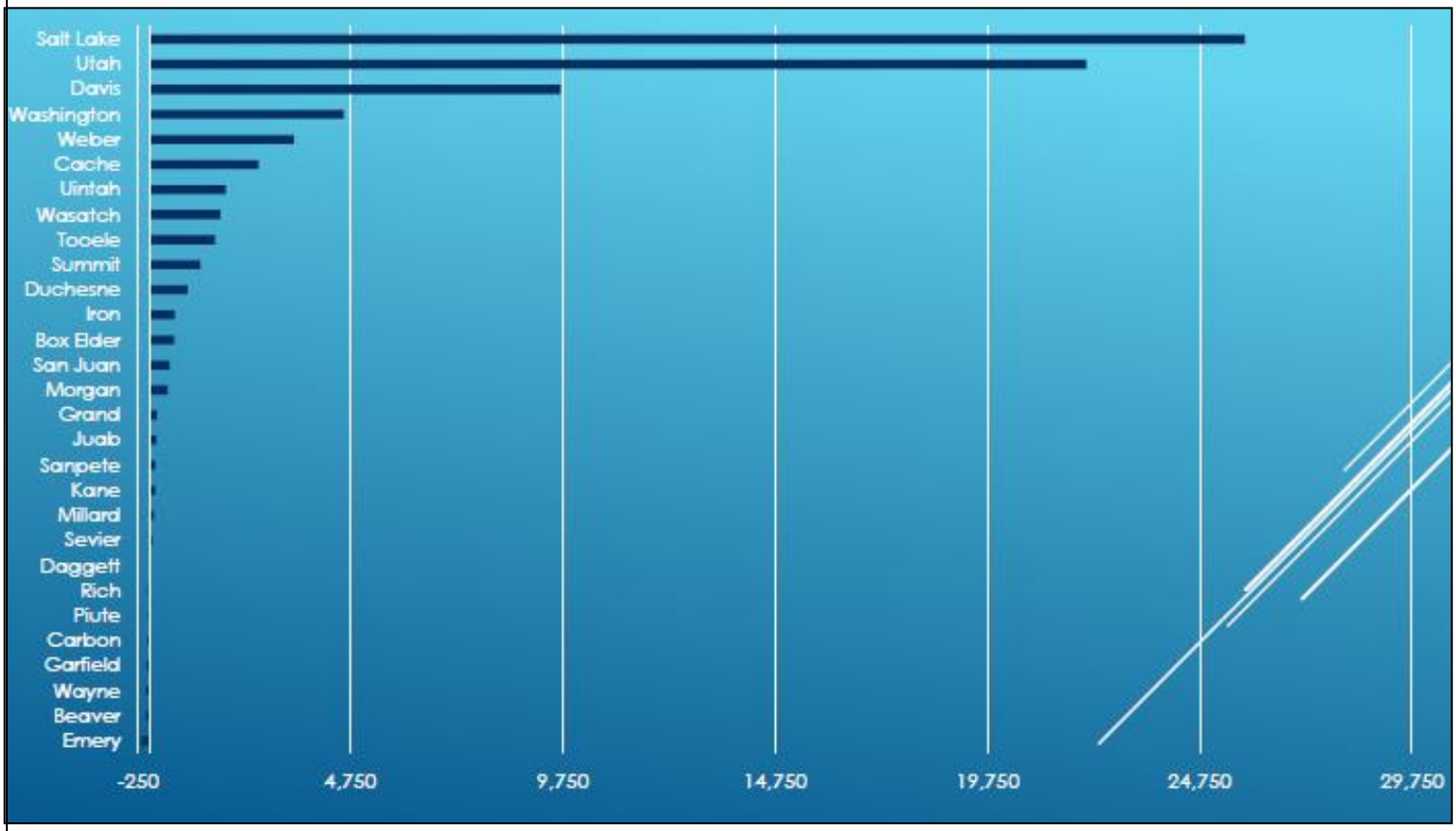


Figure 5
Utah Population Change by Percent 2010-2012

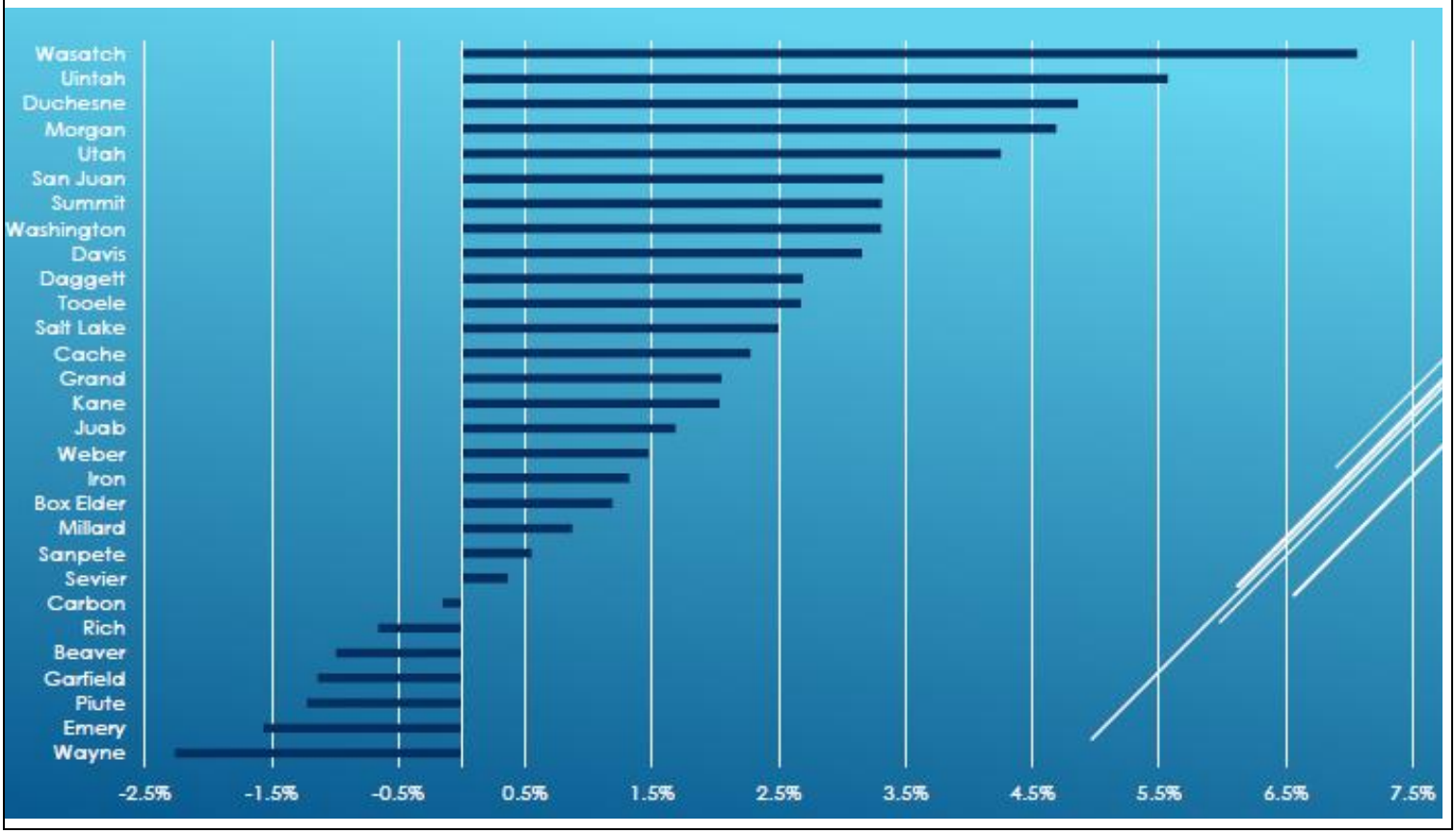


Table 2
Utah Population Estimates by County

County	July 1, 2010	July 1, 2011	July 1, 2012	2010 - 2012 Absolute Change	2010 - 2012 Percent Change	2010 - 2012 As a Percent Total Grow
Beaver	6,655	6,615	6,589	(66)	-1.0%	-0.1%
Box Elder	50,110	50,466	50,705	595	1.2%	0.8%
Cache	113,272	114,721	115,851	2,579	2.3%	3.3%
Carbon	21,463	21,485	21,431	(32)	-0.1%	0.0%
Daggett	1,078	1,115	1,107	29	2.7%	0.0%
Davis	307,550	312,603	317,248	9,698	3.2%	12.4%
Duchesne	18,665	19,111	19,572	907	4.9%	1.2%
Emery	11,018	10,997	10,846	(172)	-1.6%	-0.2%
Garfield	5,184	5,149	5,125	(59)	-1.1%	-0.1%
Grand	9,231	9,322	9,420	189	2.0%	0.2%
Iron	46,272	46,767	46,883	611	1.3%	0.8%
Juab	10,253	10,323	10,426	173	1.7%	0.2%
Kane	7,137	7,208	7,282	145	2.0%	0.2%
Millard	12,516	12,591	12,625	109	0.9%	0.1%
Morgan	9,469	9,668	9,913	444	4.7%	0.6%
Piute	1,556	1,544	1,537	(19)	-1.2%	0.0%
Rich	2,270	2,276	2,255	(15)	-0.7%	0.0%
Salt Lake	1,033,299	1,045,829	1,059,112	25,813	2.5%	33.1%
San Juan	14,742	14,954	15,232	490	3.3%	0.6%
Sanpete	27,914	28,173	28,067	153	0.5%	0.2%
Sevier	20,839	20,903	20,914	75	0.4%	0.1%
Summit	36,496	37,208	37,704	1,208	3.3%	1.6%
Tooele	58,422	59,133	59,984	1,562	2.7%	2.0%
Uintah	32,619	33,315	34,435	1,816	5.6%	2.3%
Utah	519,299	530,789	541,378	22,079	4.3%	28.3%
Wasatch	23,682	24,456	25,354	1,672	7.1%	2.1%
Washington	138,761	141,219	143,352	4,591	3.3%	5.9%
Wayne	2,788	2,742	2,725	(63)	-2.3%	-0.1%
Weber	232,102	233,241	235,517	3,415	1.5%	4.4%
Total	**2,774,662**	**2,813,923**	**2,852,589**	**77,927**	**2.8%**	**100.0%**

Source: Utah Economic Outlook

There are two ways to measure population growth: one is by percent change, the other is by absolute change. Both measurements tell different but important stories about Utah's counties. In terms of percent change, as shown in **Figure 5**, the fastest growing county since 2010 is Wasatch County. Between 2010 and 2012, it grew by 7.1% or 1,672, reaching a population of 25,354. Uintah County came in second, growing by 5.6%, or 1,816 persons and totaling 34,435. Coming in third was Duchesne County. It increased by 4.9%, or 907 persons. Morgan County came in fourth, increasing by 4.7% or 444 persons. Wasatch and Morgan counties, just east of the four populous Wasatch Front counties, benefit from their bedroom community status. Uintah and Duchesne are benefitting from the increased energy exploration and extraction industries in the Uintah Basin.

Wasatch County is a good example of the different story that can be told by looking at percent change as opposed to absolute change. Although Wasatch ranks first in the state in percent growth, its absolute change of 1,672 ranked it only eighth. Morgan County is another example. Though it ranked fourth in percent change, it ranked twelfth in absolute change. Though both measurements add understanding to population growth, the high percentage growth rates of the less populous counties mentioned above should not cloud the fact that Utah is continuing its long term trend of increasing urbanization.

Population Projections 2010-2030

Recent projections (**Figures 6 and 7**) show a continuation of the state's urbanization trends. Between 2010 (base year) and 2030, over half (56.5%) of the state's entire population growth is projected to occur in just Utah (313,794) and Salt Lake (307,391) counties. When three other counties, Washington (141,810), Davis (84,376), and Weber (68,380) are included, 80% of the total projected population growth is accounted for.

Figure 6
Projected Population Increases by County 2010 through 2030

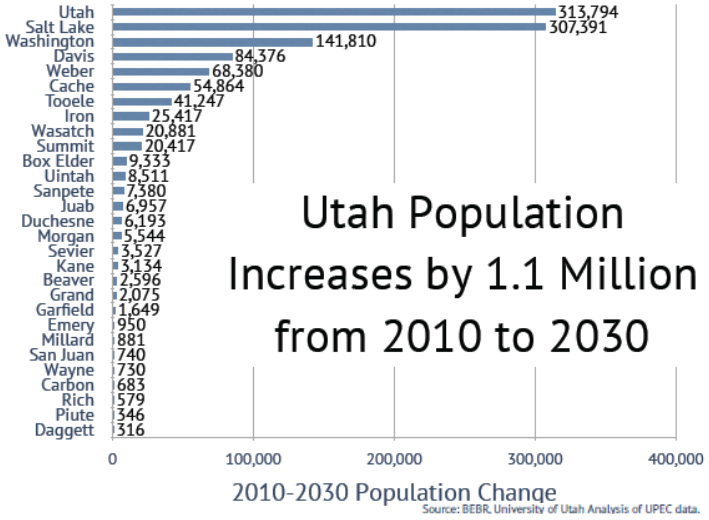
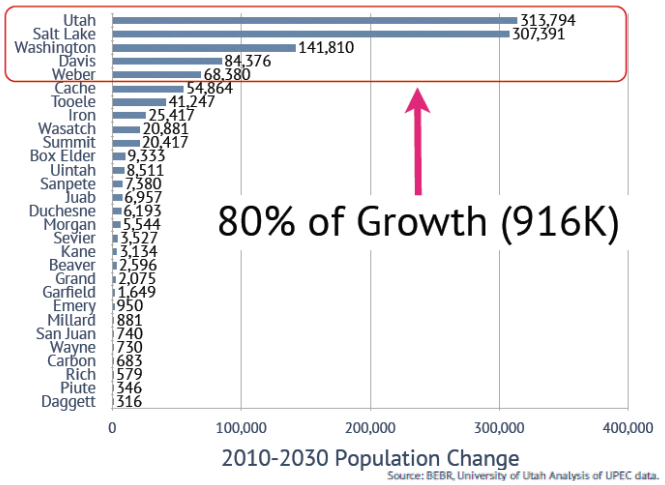


Figure 7
Projected Population Increases by County 2010 through 2030



Cache and Tooele counties are the next fastest growing counties with projected increases of 54,864 and 41,247 respectively. After these two counties, the projected population growth drops off significantly. No other county in the state is projected to increase by more than 26,000. Eight counties are projected to increase by less than 1,000. They are: Emery (950), Millard (881), San Juan (740), Wayne (730), Carbon (683), Rich (579), Piute (346), and Daggett (316).

Trends in Foreign Born Population: U.S. and Utah

In the twentieth century, the nation's foreign born population peaked in 1910 at 14.7% of the nation's total population. From there it steadily declined to a low of 4.9% in 1970. Since then it has increased rapidly, and in 2012 stood at 13.0% or 40.8 million foreign born residents. **See Figure 8.**

Utah shows a similar, though not so dramatic, trend. In 1900, Utah's foreign born population amounted to 19.4% of the state's population. By 1970, the foreign born population had declined to 2.8% and was still only 3.4% in 1990. By 2012, however, Utah's foreign born population had jumped to 8.4% or 240,872. **See Figure 9.**

Figure 8
U.S. Foreign Born Population

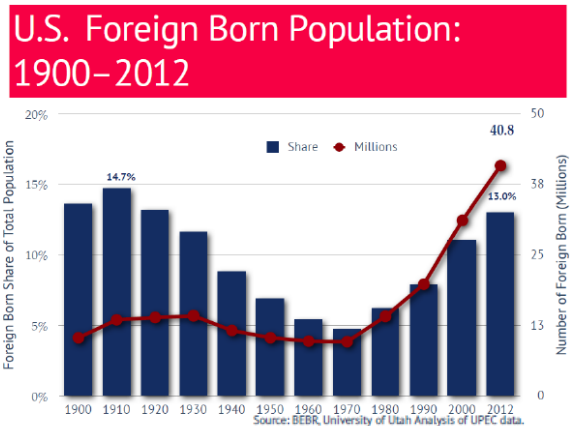
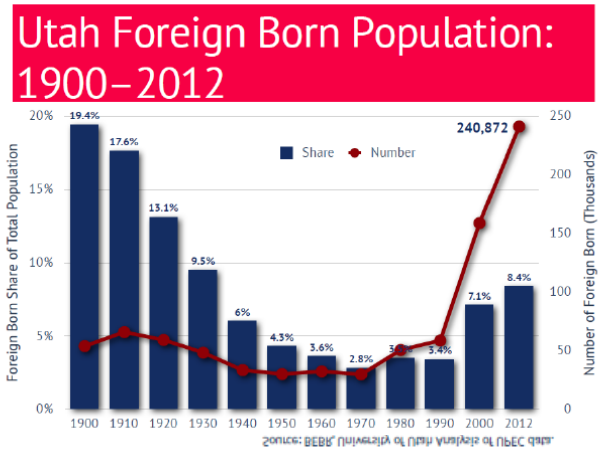


Figure 9
Utah Foreign Born Population

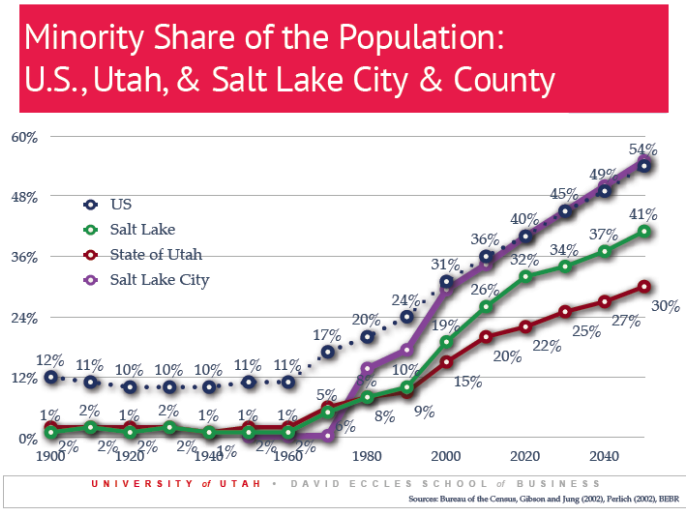


Race and Ethnicity

With Utah's foreign born population increasing, it should not be surprising that the state's minority population is increasing as well. **Figure 10** shows the percentage of minorities of four population areas: the United States, Salt Lake County, Salt Lake City, and Utah. As can be seen from 1900 to 1960, minorities as a percent of the nation's population ranged between 10% and 12%. Then it increased steadily and rapidly to 36% in 2010. During the same time, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, and the state all had minority populations ranging between 1% and 2%. Then the minority populations of these three population areas all started to increase. Salt Lake City jumped to 31% minority population in 2000 and to 36% in 2010. By that year, Salt Lake County's minority population had increased to 26%,

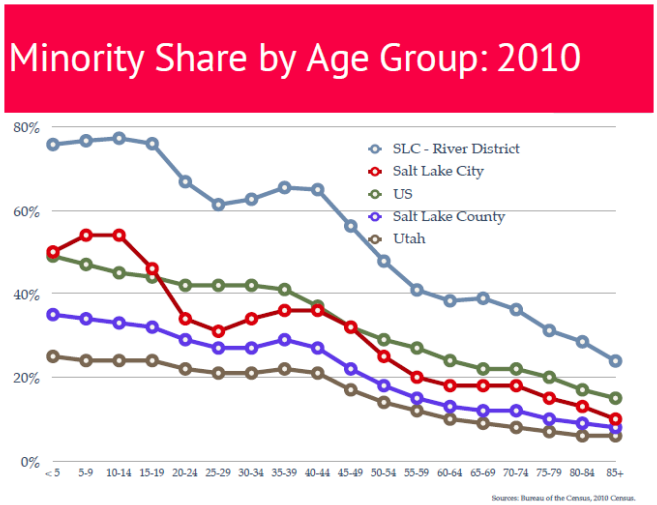
while the state's minority population increased to 20%, or one in five persons.

Figure 10
Percentage of Minority Population Areas



Much of this increase occurred between 1991 and 2000 and again between 2004 and 2008. During both of these periods Utah's economy grew vigorously and attracted in-migrants. During the Great Recession, as already mentioned, positive net-migration slowed significantly and has not yet returned to the positive net-migration patterns of 1991-2000 and 2004-2008. In fact, it may be quite some time before Utah experiences such explosive in-migration as during the two above mentioned periods.

Figure 11
Minority Share by Age Group



The impact of this strong net in-migration has and will continue to affect Utah. The reason is that those who move from one place to another do so mainly for economic reasons. These people are generally younger and want to make a better life for themselves and their families; many of those who move are in their child-bearing years. **Figure 11** shows the minority share of an area's population by age group. As can be seen, all five areas show higher minority populations in the younger age groups than the older age groups. The United States (green) shows that minorities in the age groups from age 0 to 19 range between 40% and 50% of total population. In each age group from 35 to 85+ the share of minority population decreases so that by the 85+ age group minorities are only 15% of the population. It should not be surprising then that **Figure 10** shows a continued increase in the nation's minority population. As the older age groups pass on and the younger age groups with much higher minority populations replace them, the nation's population that is minority is going to increase. As **Figure 10** shows, by 2020 the minority population of the U.S. is projected to increase to 40%, and to 49% by 2040.

For Utah, **Figure 11** shows a similar, though less dramatic, pattern for minority age groups. For the state, minority populations in the age groups from 0 to 39 range from 20% to 23%, but for age groups 60 and over, minorities make up a much smaller percentage, ranging from 4% to 10%. As with the nation, as time passes, these larger minority populations in the younger ages are going to account for a much larger share of the state's population. In Salt Lake City and Salt Lake County the percent of minorities are even higher than the state. The most dramatic, however, is the Salt Lake City River District.[4] There, the minority populations in the younger ages are near 80%.

Figure 11 tells us something very important - that regardless of whether there is more or less positive net-migration of minorities into Utah, the minority population of the state is going to increase as a percent of the state's population. This is because the children are already here in such high percentages

that a significant increase in Utah's minority population is almost assured.

SUMMARY

There are three key points to remember from this report:

- Despite a short lived slowdown in Utah's population growth due to the Great Recession, the state is still one of the fastest growing states in the nation and seems to be heading back to its historical annual average population growth of 2.2%. By 2015 Utah will have a population in excess of 3,000,000.
- Utah's population growth continues to be centered along the Wasatch Front and in Washington County. Projections indicate that this concentration of Utah's population will continue, with over half of the state's population growth between 2010 and 2030 occurring in Utah and Salt Lake counties, and 80% of the total growth in these two counties plus Washington, Davis, and Weber counties.
- With a substantial amount of Utah's population increase over the last two decades coming from immigration, Utah's minority population has increased substantially. With those in-migrants being mainly in their child bearing years, Utah's minority population will increase. Currently one in five Utahns is a minority; by 2030 it is projected that one in four will be a minority.

OLRGC thanks Dr. Pam Perlich, Senior Research Economist, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Utah, for the use of data in this paper that she presented to legislators at the Utah Legislative Policy Summit, December 17, 2013.

[1] The estimates and projections used in the report come from the Utah Population Estimates Committee. The committee prepares the official state and county population estimates for the State of Utah. The committee is part of the Governor's Office of Management and Budget.

[2] Total Fertility is the number of children a woman is expected to have during her childbearing years.

[3] County population is an estimated number as opposed to the projected numbers discussed in the state's population. County populations are not projected. As a result, county population numbers end at 2012 and not the 2014 projected population numbers used for the state.

[4] The Salt Lake City River District is the area of Salt Lake City west of I-15. It includes Westpointe, Rose Park, Jordon Meadows, Fairpark, Poplar Grove, and Glendale.