

Dealing with Growth in Utah

May 3, 2004

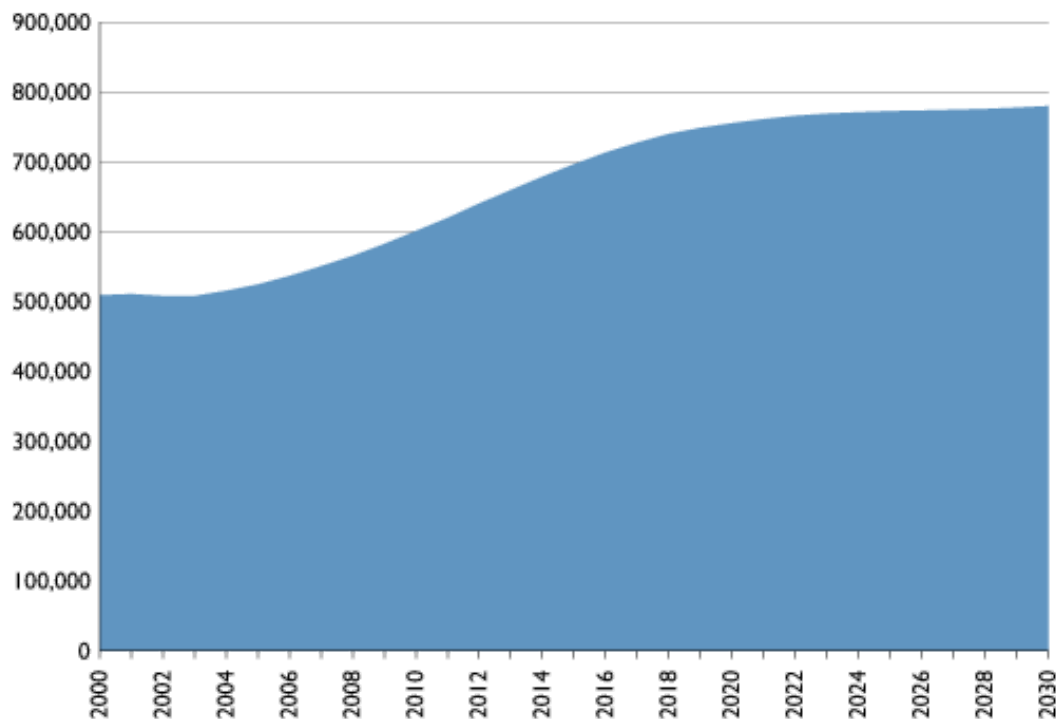
The rapid population growth that occurred in Utah during the 1990s is still expected to continue for the next thirty years. The challenges presented by the significant growth underlie many of the other top issues facing this state. Education, jobs, water supply, health care, crime, higher education, environment, and transportation are all greatly impacted by population growth. This brief will seek to explain how growth patterns will impact some of the top issues identified by the 2004 Utah Priorities poll.

Education & Higher Education

According to population analysts, Utah's school age population (5 through 17 years of age) is expected to begin significant growth in 2004. Analysis of the Utah Process Economic and Demographic Model (UPED) data used by the State of Utah shows that with average growth Utah's school age population will increase by 163,000 students in the next ten years and by over 264,000 students by 2030 (Figure 1). This is a respective increase of 24% and 39% by years 2014 and 2030.

The Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) at the University of Utah predicts that the college aged population (18 through 24 years of age) will decrease until 2008 and will then begin a steady increase and will see a boom period between 2016 and 2025. An issue of concern that is not reflected in the analysis is the increasing percentage of the college aged cohort choosing and seeking to attend college and other institutions of higher learning.

Figure 1: Projected School Age Population



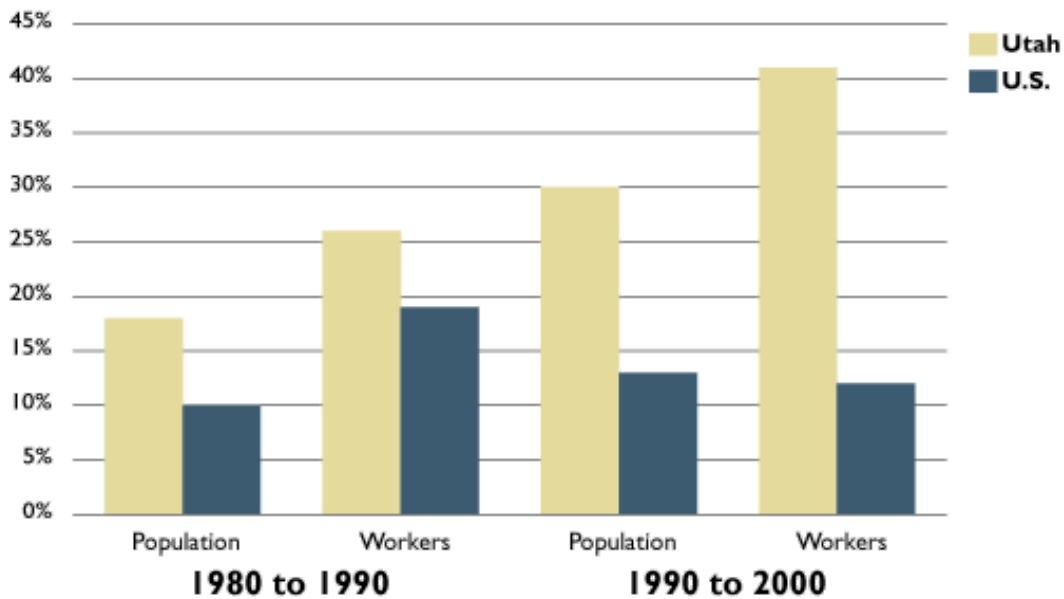
Source: Utah Process Economic and Demographic Model, Governor's Office of Planning & Budget

Economy & Jobs

The working population in the state of Utah continues to grow at a rapid pace. While the population grew 30% from 1990 to 2000, according to Census numbers, the number of workers grew an astonishing 41% (Figure 2)

as compared to 12% nationally. BEBR states that the reason for this growth was because the Utah baby boom peaked in the early 1980s, and this cohort entered the labor force in the 1990s. Nationally, the baby boom peaked in the 1950s, ending in 1964, which then generated echo booms beginning in the late 1970s, fostering job growth in the 1990s as they entered the work force. Despite the national echo boom, the national workforce growth of 19% in the 1990s paled in comparison to Utah's growth (41%).

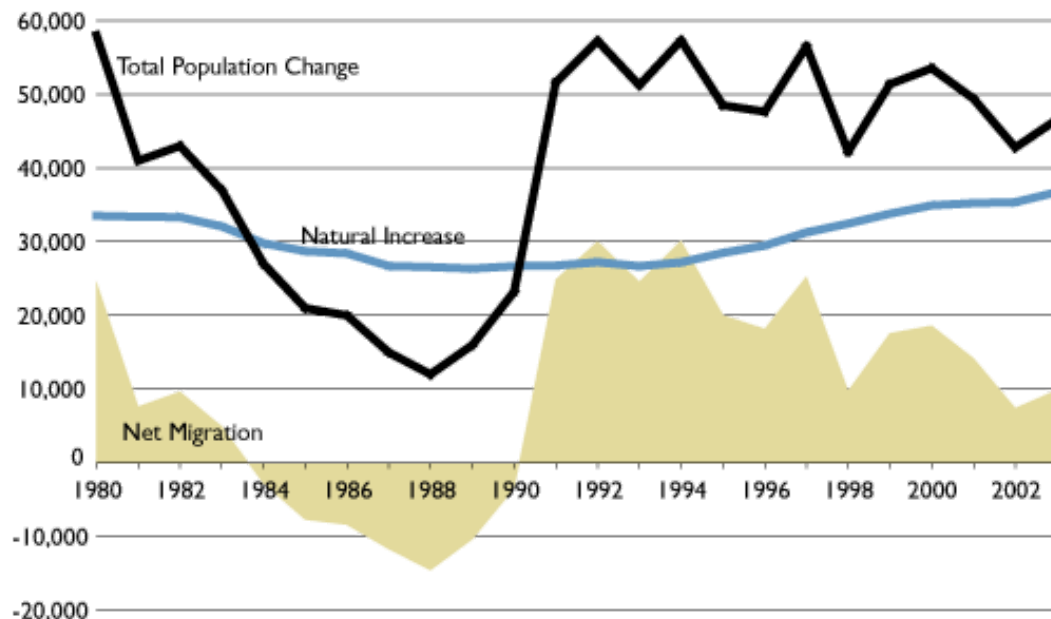
Figure 2: Percentage Increase in Population & Workers



Sources: Census Transportation Planning Package 2000 Profiles, Bureau of the Census; Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), University of Utah

The economic prosperity and job growth in the 1990s resulted in considerable net in-migration into the state of which half were international in origin according to BEBR. Figure 3 shows the Utah Population Estimates Committee's approximated components of population change since 1980. Although in-migration has slowed in recent years due to a less favorable economic climate, the Utah Population Estimates Committee expects positive net in-migration to occur through 2030. Net in-migration is expected to account for 20% of the projected 1.5 million population increase over the next three decades. However, these projections are contingent on considerable improvement in job growth and the Utah economy.

Figure 3: Utah Components of Population Change



Source: Utah Population Estimates Committee

Minority Populations

Census figures show that 35% of Utah's population increase from 1990 to 2000 was in minority population groups. The minority population growth increased the percentage of minorities as a share of the Utah population from 24.4% in 1990 to 30.9% in 2000. Much of the minority population growth that occurred was in foreign born populations which grew from a 3% share of the population to 7% in the 1990s. Nationally speaking, 51% of the foreign born population hails from Latin America, while Asia accounts for 27%.

Transportation & Residential Patterns

Over the last decade the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the state has grown over 50%. This contrasts with population growth which was around 30% in that same period. Much of the reason for the rapid increase in VMT is the aforementioned increase in the working population and that Utahns are living farther and farther away from their workplaces. According to Census figures, 16.6% of employed Utahns in 2000 were commuting out of their respective counties for work. This figure is up from 15.2% in 1990 and 13.5% in 1980. For workers living in Davis and Tooele counties, over 45% were commuting outside of their counties. The majority of out-commuting is to Salt Lake County, which provides about half of the state's jobs (47.4% in 2000). The number of residents commuting into Salt Lake County grew from 29,640 in 1980, to 40,639 in 1990, and to 72,404 in 2000.

Also, the trend isn't just workers choosing to live outside of the counties where they work, but also more citizens are choosing to live away from population centers within their counties, especially within the last few years. According to Census estimates on city growth in Utah, from April 2000 to July 2002, nine out of the ten fastest growing cities had populations smaller than 10,000 residents. Saratoga Springs in Utah County grew 216%, Eagle Mountain, also in Utah County, grew 183% and Herriman in Salt Lake County grew 175%. Meanwhile, Salt Lake City, West Valley City, and Provo, which are the largest cities in the state, saw little or no growth in that same period.

Figure 4: Utah's Fastest Growing Cities

City	County	Population	Percent Growth
1 Saratoga Springs	Utah	3,157	216%
2 Eagle Mountain	Utah	6,093	183%
3 Herriman	Salt Lake	4,195	175%
4 Cedar Hills	Utah	4,522	47%
5 Syracuse	Davis	12,423	32%
6 Ivins	Washington	5,554	25%
7 West Haven	Davis	4,883	23%
8 South Weber	Weber	5,176	22%
9 Highland	Utah	9,724	19%
10 Washington	Washington	9,683	18%

Source: Bureau of Census

Environment

Commuting trends also will have a large impact on air quality in Utah. The Utah Priorities [April brief on air quality](#) stated that vehicle emissions were Utah's largest source of air pollutants. As mentioned above, vehicle miles traveled have increased over 50% in the past decade, and it seems that the growth trend will continue. Barring major gains in fuel efficiency, vehicle emissions will likely grow at a similar pace as increased vehicle travel.

Water Supply

With an already limited water supply, the state faces a challenge in meeting the water needs of the state, especially in Washington County. Over the last three years Washington County has seen the state's largest average annual population growth rate at 5.1%. Two of the top ten fastest growing cities in Utah are located in Washington County. Ivins is the sixth fastest growing at 24.8% between April 2000 and July 2002, and

Washington was the tenth fastest at 18.3% in the same period. Booming population growth, coupled with an extremely dry climate, will continue to create challenges in meeting Washington County's water needs. It is no wonder that Washington County respondents to the Utah Priorities poll ranked water supply and quality as their number one priority.

Health Care

Utahns identified in the Utah Priorities Poll that health insurance for children and care for the elderly were issues of concern. The growth concern lies in that both children and the elderly are some of the fastest growing segments of society in Utah. The large increases in children and the elderly will further strain resources devoted to children's health insurance and elderly care programs where funding has already failed to keep pace with the growing populations.

The number of births per year is projected by the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) to increase from 50,718 in 2004 to 59,185 by 2014. This trend that is expected to continue through 2030. GOPB also estimates that natural increase, which is the amount by which annual births exceed annual deaths, will fuel 81% of Utah's population growth over the next thirty years.

While much attention has been paid to the increasing young population in Utah, it is actually the segment of people aged 85 and older that is the fastest growing segment of Utah's population as well as the national population. According to Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, the number of people aged 85 and older is expected to grow from 7,177 in 2000 to 10,059 by 2015, and 16,302 by 2030.

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