



Crowded Neighborhoods

October 29, 2024

Many of the Utah Priorities Project’s issues are concerns viewed through the lens of growth. A growing population puts pressures on housing, water, the education system, and air quality – all of which are high-priority issues for Utah voters. With the crowded neighborhoods issue, the Utah Foundation attempted to isolate how concerning growth was on its own. Based on survey results, Utah voters prioritized crowded neighborhoods among the items of low importance. **Utahns may have been supportive of growth in the past. However, many Utahns now want to see growth slowed – though not in exchange for more expensive housing.**

Population Changes

Utah’s population has gone through several changes since the turn of the millennium. Since 2000, Utah’s population has increased from around 2.2 million to 3.4 million – an increase of nearly 50%.¹ What’s more notable, is that the change in Utah’s population is much higher than the rest of the country – second only to Nevada.² Since 2020, Utah’s population increased 4%.³ By comparison, the rest of the U.S. population grew only about 1%.⁴ Idaho had the fastest growth, with a 6% increase.⁵

Alongside population growth, Utah’s demographic characteristics have changed. Compared to 2000, Utah has become more demographically diverse, with the white population decreasing the most from 85% in 2010 to 77% in 2022.⁶ In comparison, the Hispanic/Latino population increased from 9% to 15%, the Asian and Pacific Islander population increased from 2% to 4%, and the multiracial population increased from 1% to 2%.⁷

Migration

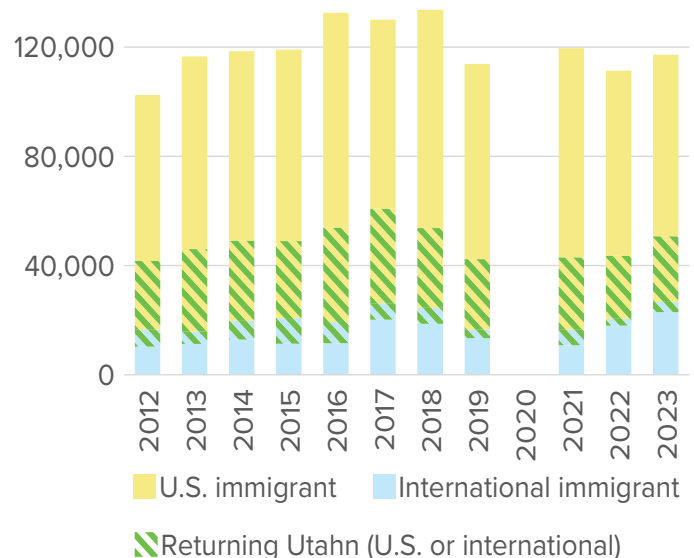
Since 2012, an average of 120,000 individuals moved into Utah annually.⁸ About 100,000 of these have been from other U.S. states or territories. The remaining 20,000 immigrants come from outside the United States. (See Figure 1.) Since 2018, about a quarter of all migrants to Utah were originally born in Utah.⁹ This is a decrease from the 2012-2017

average of 31%. Since 2010, 19% of the out-of-state migrants to Utah were from California, 8% were from Arizona, and 8% were from Idaho.¹⁰

The effect of COVID-19 on these migration trends is unclear. The U.S. Census did not publish standard datasets for 2020 due to concerns regarding the accuracy of the data collected. However, 2021-2023 is not very different from 2017-2019.¹¹

The level of Utah immigrants has been relatively stable over the past 12 years.

Figure 1: Utah Immigration by Origin and Utah Nativity



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Population Growth Concerns

Utah’s population is projected to increase 66% over 40 years, from around 3.3 million in 2020 to 5.5 million in 2060.¹² Growth will very likely continue to be a concern for Utah voters.

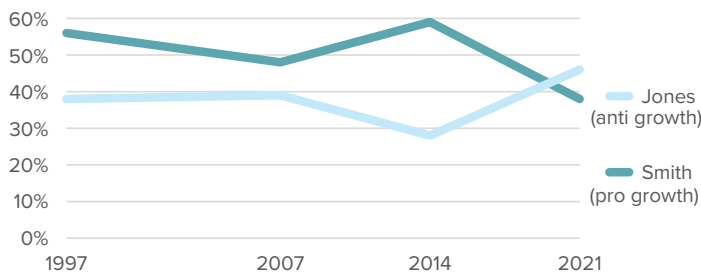
In the past, Utahns have generally supported growth when weighing benefits and disadvantages. That changed in 2021, when survey respondents tended to choose anti-growth over pro-growth positions for the first time.¹³ (See Figure 2).

A 2020 Utah Foundation survey found that 41% of Utah voters supported state policies to slow

growth in urban areas, while only 29% opposed it.¹⁴ However, a 2024 survey shows that voters are not willing to sacrifice housing affordability to slow growth. One of the most direct ways to slow growth is limiting the number of housing units – which would also put a strong upward pressure on housing prices. Only 18% of Utah voters agreed more that “Utah should focus on slowing growth by keeping housing expensive” while 82% agreed more that “Utah should focus on making housing more affordable which might encourage more growth.” (See Figure 3.)

Anti-growth attitudes have recently surpassed pro-growth ones.

Figure 2: Envision Utah Polling on Pro- and Anti-Growth Sentiment

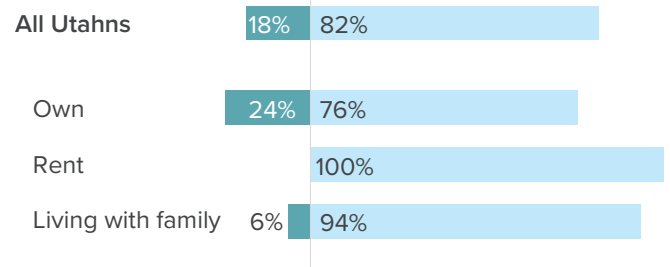


Note: See Jones’ anti-growth position and Smith’s pro-growth position in endnote 13.

Source: Envision Utah.

Homeowners are more willing to sacrifice housing affordability to slow growth.

Figure 3: Willingness to Use Housing Affordability to Slow Growth



Utah should focus on...

making housing more affordable which might encourage more growth.

slowing growth by keeping housing expensive.

Source: The Utah Foundation.

Since 1945, leaders, legislators, and community members have relied upon the illuminating, independent, and nonpartisan public-policy research produced by the Utah Foundation to support informed decision-making on topics that matter most. As a 501(c)3 with broad community support and a 60-member board, the Utah Foundation exists to empower civic engagement as the foundation for enhanced quality of life for Utahns.

This research brief was written by Research Intern Krishnam Goel with assistance from other Utah Foundation staff.

Endnotes

1. U.S. Census, "State population estimate tables – all data," <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/>.
2. Ibid.
3. U.S. Census, 2024, "State population estimate tables – all data – 2023," <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/datasets/2020-2023/state/totals/NST-EST2023-ALLDATA.csv>.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. USAFacts, 2024, "Utah population by year, county, race, & more," <https://usafacts.org/data/topics/people-society/population-and-demographics/our-changing-population/state/utah/>. USAFacts analysis using US Census Data.
7. Ibid.
8. U.S. Census, 2024, "ACS 1-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample," Sample Query: <https://data.census.gov/mdat/#/>.
9. Ibid.
10. U.S. Census, 2024, "State-to-state Migration Flows," <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/geographic-mobility/state-to-state-migration.html>. Used datasets from 2010-2023.
11. Ibid.
12. Utah population to increase by 2.2 million people through 2060. (2022, January 19). Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. Retrieved September 23, 2024, from <https://gardner.utah.edu/news/utah-population-to-increase-by-2-2-million-people-through-2060/>.
13. Utah Foundation, 2022, "Filling in the Blanks: How Utah communities can deploy infill development to advance quality of life," <https://www.utahfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/rr806.pdf>. The options were: "Smith believes that growth in Utah has and will continue to bring many benefits and advantages to the state. Smith believes that growth should be strongly encouraged and fostered. Jones believes that growth in the state has and will continue to jeopardize the quality of life for Utah residents. Jones believes that growth should be strictly managed or limited."
14. Utah Foundation, 2021 "Significant Statistics I Growth Part IV: Should Utah Limit Population Growth?" <https://www.utahfoundation.org/2021/12/significant-statistics-growth-part-iv-should-utah-limit-population-growth/>.

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