

2012 Population Overview

Total State Change and U.S. Comparison

The July 2011 Colorado population was estimated by the State Demography Office to be 5,118,526. This is an increase of 68,800 or 1.4% from July 2010. Population change is comprised of **net migration** (those moving in minus those moving out) and **natural increase** (births minus deaths). Net migration was estimated at 34,900 and natural increase at 33,900. Colorado's growth ranked 5th in the US in percentage terms and 10th in absolute change. The US grew by 2,261,700 or .7% therefore Colorado grew twice as fast as the US as a whole.

Eighty two percent of Colorado's population live in the 12 counties that comprise the Front Range, 11% live in the 21 counties that comprise the Western Slope, 3% live in the 16 counties that comprise the Eastern Plains, 3% live in the 9 counties that comprise the Central Mountains, and 1% live in the 6 counties that comprise the San Luis Valley.

Change by County

Colorado's 2011 county population ranged from El Paso with a population of 637,302 to San Juan County with a population of 691. Twenty-six or 40% of Colorado's counties had fewer than 10,000 people. Only 11 or 17% of the counties had greater than 100,000 residents.

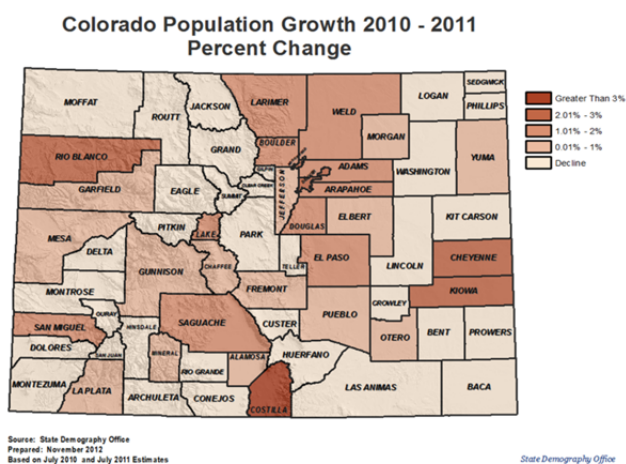
Between 2010 and 2011 thirty counties gained population thirty-four counties lost population. The table below shows the fastest growing counties in absolute terms and in percent change. The counties with the largest growth in absolute terms were along the Front Range. Interestingly, many of the faster growing counties in percentage change were smaller rural counties (except for Denver). Denver ranked in the top 5 fastest growing counties for both absolute and percentage change. The Denver Metro Region was the fastest growing region at 1.8% followed by the North Front Range at 1.7%.

An unusually large share of counties lost population between 2010 and 2011. Many of the counties experiencing decline were mountain counties still struggling with the recession. The population declines were not large numbers, however, in the small counties, a loss of 300 people can be a large share of its total population as can be seen for Las Animas and Moffat in Table 1.

Table 1

2011 Top 5 Colorado Counties for Growth and Decline			
Increase	Percent	Decline	Percent
COSTILLA	3.7%	BENT	-3.0%
DENVER	2.7%	HUERFANO	-2.7%
RIO BLANCO	2.5%	LAS ANIMAS	-2.7%
KIOWA	2.4%	MOFFAT	-2.7%
BROOMFIELD	2.1%	HINSDALE	-2.6%
Absolute		Absolute	
DENVER	16,038	DELTA	-477
EL PASO	10,070	LAS ANIMAS	-416
ARAPAHOE	9,884	MOFFAT	-372
ADAMS	7,865	GRAND	-290
DOUGLAS	5,181	EAGLE	-281

Map 1



Population By Age

Colorado is a relatively young state with a 2010 median age of 36.1, 11th youngest in the US. The US median age is 37.2. One of the factors leading to Colorado's relatively young age is the relative absence of people over the age of 65. Only 10% of Colorado's population is over 65 which in 2010 was 6th lowest in the US. The below graph shows Colorado's population by age in 2010 showing relatively few people over 65.

From 2010 through 2030 the population over 65 will be the fastest growing age group in the state as shown in the bar chart on the right. The population over 65 is expected to increase by 123% by 2030 compared to the 45-64 population only increasing by 16%.

Chart 1

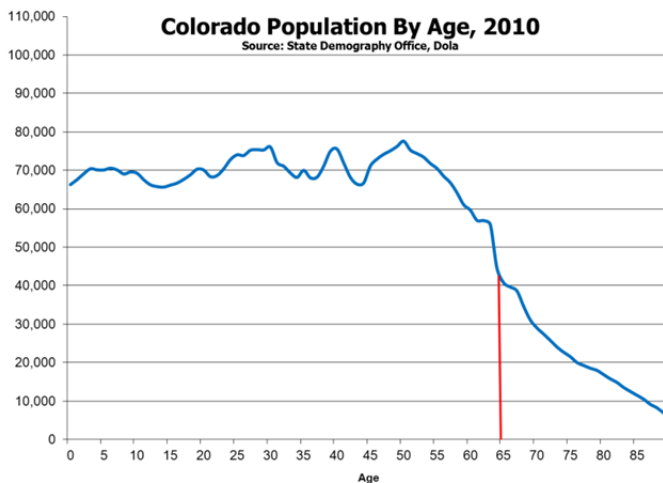
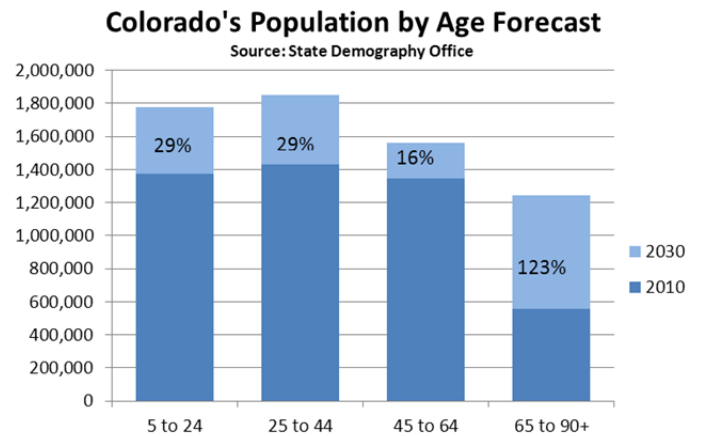


Chart 2



Population Forecast

Colorado's population is forecast to grow 1.5% per year over the next five years increasing to 1.7% per year before the end of the decade to reach to close to 6 million persons by 2020 from 5,050,000 in 2010. Growth rates are forecast to decrease slowly to 1.1% per year by the year 2040 with the population reaching approximately 7.8 million residents. Over the next five years, annual growth rates are forecast to vary from a high of 1.9% per year along the North Front Range to 1.0% on the Eastern Plains. The share of the total population by region is forecast to change very slightly with a decline from 82% to 81% in the Front Range and in increase of 11% to 13% in the Western Slope.

Chart 3

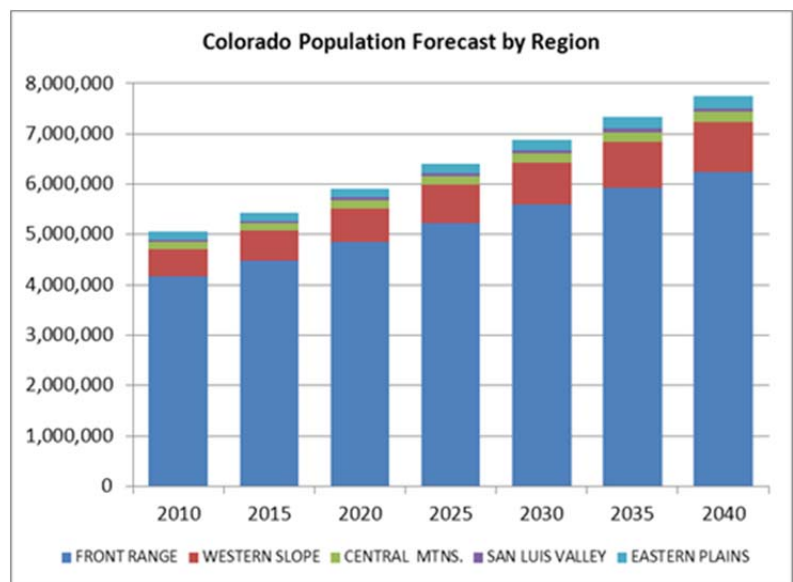
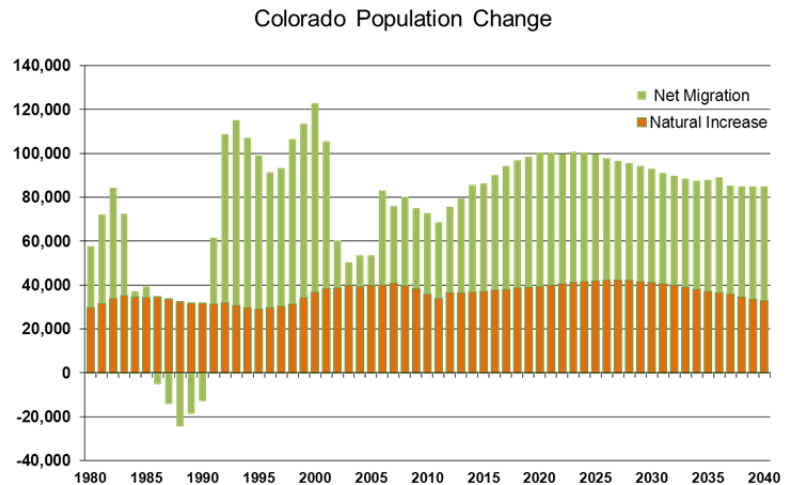


Chart 4

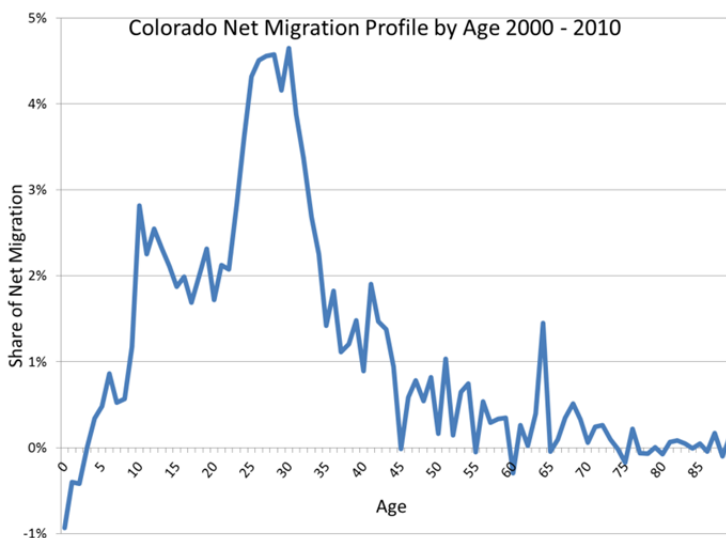
Colorado's population forecast is tied to both demographic and economic change. A demographic cohort survival model creates a potential supply for labor. An economic (job) forecast produces the future demand for labor. The labor supply and labor demand forecasts are combined to establish the migration (in or out) forecast assumptions. Net migration has historically represented approximately 60% of Colorado's population change, with the remaining 40% from natural increase (births-deaths). See Chart 4



Net migration is highly correlated to job growth. When Colorado creates more new jobs, net migration in Colorado tends to increase. Somewhat unusual, during the economic downturn (2008-2011) Colorado had positive net migration even with job declines. There are several factors that supported continued in-migration. First, Colorado was economically performing relatively better than other parts of the US. Colorado's unemployment rate, although higher than usual, was lower than other places in the US. Second, during the recession, Colorado was still creating new jobs in certain sectors primarily education and health services which attracted workers to the state. Third, the aging of the labor force and resulting retirees were creating opportunities for new entrants. Finally, the additional Combat Aviation Brigade at Fort Carson brought soldiers and related family members to the state.

The forecast of net migration to Colorado remains strong especially through 2025 as the "Baby Boomers" age out of the labor force and retire as can be seen in Chart 4. Over 1 million workers are forecast to age out of the labor force between 2010 and 2030 creating opportunities for new entrants.

Colorado attracts relatively young migrants to the state as shown in Chart 5. The largest shares of migrants to Colorado are between the ages of 20 and 40 – primary working age. Each county has a different migration by age profile which can be seen on the State Demography Office Dash Board at <https://dola.colorado.gov/ddb/>

Chart 5

The State Demography Office updates its Population and Economic Estimates and Forecasts on an annual basis in November. The Office hosts an extensive website with state, county, and municipal population and economic data. Please visit us at: www.colorado.gov/demography