**Analysis of U.S. and State Population Change, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022**

*Ken Simonson*

*Chief Economist, Associated General Contractors of America*

[*ken.simonson@agc.org*](mailto:ken.simonson@agc.org)

Population changes over time are a major contributor to demand for numerous types of construction, funding for public construction, and supply of potential construction workers. In addition, changes in the rate of population growth (or loss) can indicate where construction activity may accelerate (or shrink).

2021-2022 changes

The Census Bureau posted estimates and [commentary](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/2022-population-estimates.html) on December 22, 2022 of the population of the United States, regions, states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico as of July 1, 2022, along with the change since July 1, 2021; July 1, 2020; and since the decennial census on April 1, 2020. In the latest 12 months, U.S. population (50 states and D.C.) increased by 1,256,003 or 0.38%. That represented a rebound from the historically slow 0.16% growth rate in the previous 12 months, which was—by far—the slowest growth since annual estimates were introduced in 1900. Nevertheless, the 2022 increase was barely half the 0.71% compound annual growth rate between 2010 and 2020.

The bureau noted, “A rebound in net international migration, coupled with the largest year-over-year increase in total births since 2007, is behind this increase.” In fact, net immigration nearly tripled, to 1.011 million from 376,000 in 2021, and accounted for 80% of the total population increase of 1.256 million.

The steepest percentage increase occurred in Florida, which grew by 1.9% (416,754 residents and up from 1.1% growth in 2021) and was, for “the first time since 1957,…the state with the largest percent increase in population.” Idaho had the second-steepest increase (1.8%, 34,719), after five years in first place. South Carolina was third (1.7%, 89,368); Texas was fourth (1.6%, 470,708). Texas had the largest numerical gain, followed by Florida, North Carolina (133,088, 1.3%), Georgia (124,847, 1.2%), and Arizona (94,320, 1.3%). Together, these five states accounted for nearly 99% of the total U.S. population increase.

Despite the rebound in growth nationally, 18 states lost population, compared to 15 states and D.C. in 2021. New York had the largest numerical and percentage declines (-180,341, -0.9%). Substantial decreases also occurred in California (-113,649, -0.3%), Illinois (-104,437, -0.8%), Pennsylvania (-40,052, -0.3%), and Louisiana (-36,857, -0.8%). The states with the largest percentage declines after New York were Illinois, Louisiana, West Virginia (-0.6%, -10,370), and Hawaii (-0.5%, -6,958).

California gained the largest number of immigrants but also lost the most residents to other states. Florida had the largest excess of deaths over births but also attracted more domestic migration than any other state and almost as much international migration as California.

2021-2022 compared to 2020-2021

Growth accelerated—another indicator of potential demand for construction—in 26 states and D.C. and slowed in 24 states. Florida had the largest increase in growth rate: 0.80 percentage points (from 1.1% in 2021 to 1.9% in 2022), followed D.C., 0.76 points (from -0.3% to 0.5%); California, 0.62 points (from -0.9% to -0.3%); and Georgia, 0.61 points (from 0.5% to 1.2%). Idaho had the largest slowdown, 1.2 points (from 3.0% to 1.8%), but still had the second-fastest growth rate. Growth slowed sharply as well in Oregon, -0.65 points (from 0.3% to -0.3%); Connecticut, -0.64 points (from 0.7% to 0.1%); and Vermont, -0.62 points (from 0.6% to 0.01%).

Several locations with steep population slowdowns or losses at the beginning of the pandemic returned to growth or had lesser declines in 2022, such as California, D.C., and Washington. Conversely, some more rural states with unusually large gains in 2021 returned to slower growth, including Vermont, Maine, and Montana.

Conclusion

Some of the one-time impacts of the pandemic waned or reversed in 2022: births increased for the first time since 2015 and net immigration jumped. But deaths remained elevated and exceeded births in 24 states. U.S. population growth was slower than any year from 1900 to 1920. It remains too early to see which of these trends will last and which will slacken or reverse once the pandemic has stopped affecting growth and migration.

