

6-17-2020

Population Growth in Major Mountain West Metros, 2010 - 2019

Marie A. Falcone

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, marie.falcone@unlv.edu

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, eliadeltcarmen.solano-patricio@unlv.edu

Caitlin J. Saladino

The Lincy Institute and Brookings Mountain West, caitlin.saladino@unlv.edu

William E. Brown Jr.

Brookings Mountain West, william.brown@unlv.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/bmw_lincy_demography



Part of the [Human Geography Commons](#), [Public Affairs Commons](#), and the [Urban Studies Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Falcone, M. A., Solano-Patricio, E. D., Saladino, C. J., Brown, W. E. (2020). Population Growth in Major Mountain West Metros, 2010 - 2019. *Demography Fact Sheet No. 10* 1-2.

Available at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/bmw_lincy_demography/10

This Report is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Report in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Report has been accepted for inclusion in Demography by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

POPULATION GROWTH IN MAJOR MOUNTAIN WEST METROS, 2010 - 2019

Demography Fact Sheet No. 10 | June 2020

Prepared by: Marie A. Falcone, Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

PURPOSE:

On March 26, 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau released population estimates for the time period between July 2010 and July 2019.¹ Brookings senior fellow, William H. Frey suggests that “Even before coronavirus, census shows U.S. cities’ growth was stagnating.”² This fact sheet explores population growth trends in 5 Mountain West Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA)³ with populations over one million residents (i.e. Phoenix, Denver, Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, and Tucson).

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. From 2010 to 2019, 4 out of 5 Mountain West metros experienced peak growth rates between the years 2014 and 2016.
2. Population growth rates for both the Denver and Las Vegas metro areas peaked from 2014-15, but as of 2019, the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood MSA had a larger population.
3. Population growth in the Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV MSA remained constant (at a growth rate of 2.0) after its peak growth rate in 2014-2015, before slowing in 2018-19 to a rate of 1.8.
4. In Arizona, the Phoenix metro area has experienced incremental growth since the last census in 2010; its growth rate peaked in 2015-16 and slowed from 2016 to 2018—though still growing faster in the last year than at the start of the decade. However, and while the area did not experience any population deficits, the rate of population growth in the Tucson MSA stagnated at a rate of 1.0 from 2016 until 2019.
5. Unlike many metros on the East Coast and in the Rust Belt, metros in the Mountain West did not lose population. Growth slowed but none of the major metros examined here experienced population deficits.

ABOUT THE DATA:

Frey’s (2020) report explores population growth rates in large metros (over 100,000 residents) from the Census Bureau population estimates, released March 26, 2020. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that during the 2010 to 2019 period, “Phoenix [broke] into the top 10 largest metro areas” (U.S. Census, 2020)⁴.

The latest census data reveal that relocation out of large metros to smaller cities is not a new pattern. The dispersal from large metropolitan areas has been continuous since the early 2010s, which is relevant in the Mountain West as shown in the data below.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, March 26, 2020, Press Release No. CB2-53, *Most of the Counties with the Largest Population Gains Since 2010 are in Texas* (<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/pop-estimates-county-metro.html>)

² Frey, H. W., *Even before coronavirus, census shows U.S. cities’ growth was stagnating*, (Brookings Institution, 2020). (<https://www.brookings.edu/research/even-before-coronavirus-census-shows-u-s-cities-growth-was-stagnating/>)

³ Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as a core area containing a large population nucleus, together with adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that core.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *Ibid.*

Table 1 shows the 2019 population of Mountain West metros exceeding a population size of one million.

TABLE 1: TOP 5 MOUNTAIN WEST MSA, BY 2019 CENSUS POPULATION ESTIMATES

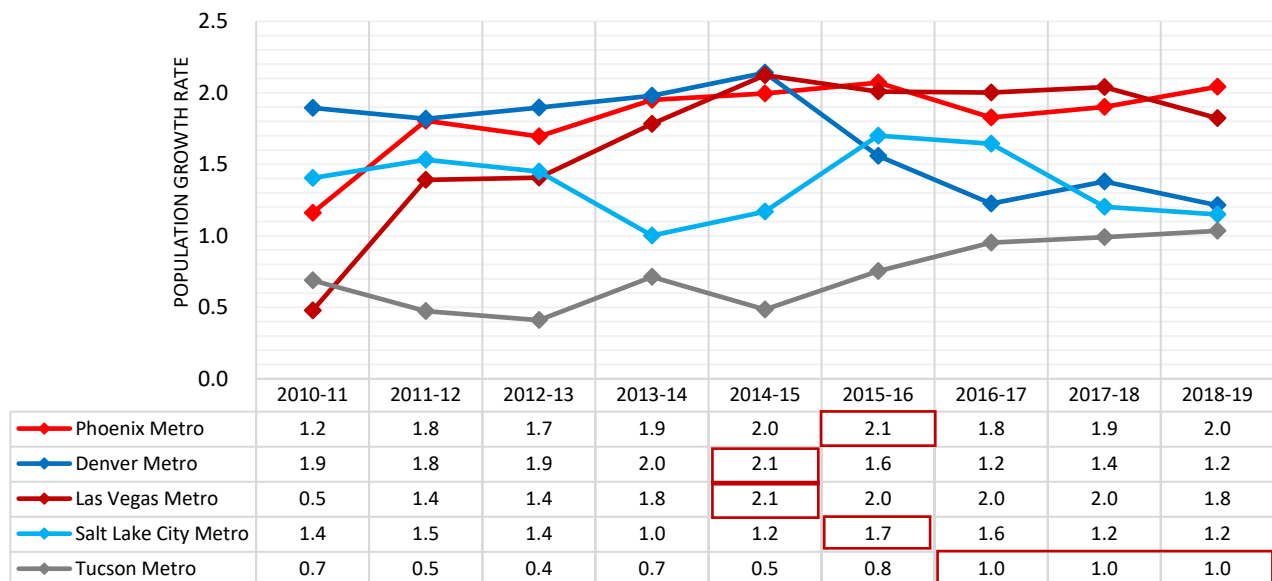
U.S. Rank	State	Metropolitan Statistical Area	Population
10	Arizona	Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ MSA	4,948,203
19	Colorado	Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO MSA	2,967,239
28	Nevada	Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV MSA	2,266,715
47	Utah	Salt Lake City, UT MSA	1,232,696
53	Arizona	Tucson, AZ MSA	1,047,279

Source: Adapted from William H. Frey’s analysis of Census Bureau Population Estimates, released March 26, 2020.

Figure 1 displays the annual population growth rates in the five Mountain West metros with populations over one million residents. While the *rate* of growth fluctuates for each, it is important to note that in every case, there is population growth each year. For each metro in the data table, the year with the peak rate of population growth is identified in red. Most peaks in population growth rates—four out of five—occurred between 2014 and 2016, while the peak growth rate of Tucson, AZ (1.0) has been maintained for three years beginning in 2016 until 2019.

The Phoenix metro area experienced incremental growth since the last census in 2010; its population growth rate peaked in 2015-16 and slowed from 2016 to 2018. Despite this, Phoenix is still growing faster in the last year than at the start of the decade. Like the Phoenix MSA, the Las Vegas MSA has been a fast-growing metro since 2010; growth remained constant after 2015 at a rate of 2.0 from 2015 until 2018, when it slowed again to a rate of 1.8. The Denver and Salt Lake City metro areas, on the other hand, had a lower growth rate in 2018-19 than in 2010-11.

FIGURE 1: ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH IN MOUNTAIN WEST METROS WITH POPULATIONS OVER ONE MILLION (July 2010 – July 2019)



Source: Adapted from William H. Frey’s analysis of Census Bureau Population Estimates, released March 26, 2020.