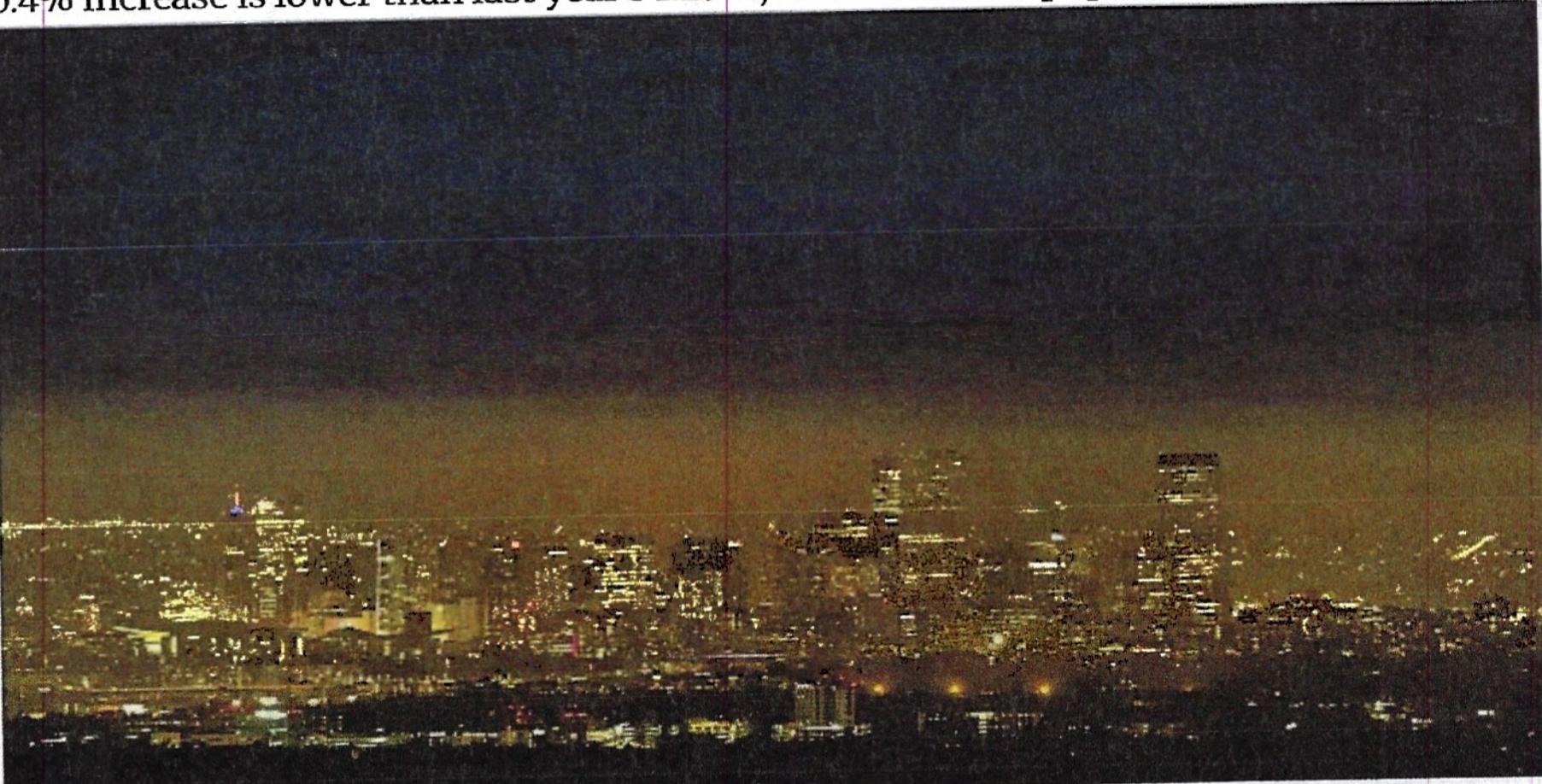


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Colorado hits 6M population

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Colorado finally hit the 6-million mark on the eve of its sesquicentennial anniversary during a year in which the U. S. population growth rate slowed significantly. But the latest figures came with caveats. Notably, the addition of some 24,000 new Colorado residents is the lowest since the 1990s. Also, that 0.4% increase is lower than last year's 1.29%, when the state population grew by roughly 76,000.



It's also lower than the national average, which stood at 0.5%.

Colorado didn't crack the Top 20 for raw population growth, and the state also didn't make the Top 20 for percentage growth.

The net in-migration, at 15,000, barely covered for the 12,000 residents who left the state. Still, Gov. Jared Polis framed that slight population increase as a confirmation that Colorado is a prime destination.

"The secret is out: Colorado is the best place to live, work, play, start a family, and grow a business," the governor said in a news release. "The numbers don't lie, and I am excited to see Colorado's population grow despite trends across the nation."

A bigger population brings its own set of challenges, notably the potential to push housing prices up, the governor noted.

But, he said, population growth bolsters the economy, helps expand business ventures and brings "fresh ideas" to the state.

A decade ago, Colorado was in the throes of its biggest modern population boom, with in-migration in the mid-2010s peaking in a 12-month period with some 100,000 people relocating here — more than double the average influx for other states at the time. Not in 2025.

The Census Bureau's most recent report shows similar slow trends across the country, with every state except Montana and West Virginia reporting downturns. The nation, overall, experienced its "slowest

population growth since the early period of the COVID-19 pandemic,” the federal agency said. The U.S. grew by 1.8 million people, or 0.5%, between July 1, 2024, and July 1, 2025, representing a drop of almost 50% from the previous 12-month cycle, according to the bureau.

“The slowdown in U.S. population growth is largely due to a historic decline in net international migration, which dropped from 2.7 million to 1.3 million in the period from July 2024 through June 2025,” said Christine Hartley, assistant division chief for estimates and projections at the Census Bureau.

“With births and deaths remaining relatively stable compared to the prior year, the sharp decline in net international migration is the main reason for the slower growth rate we see today.” Colorado, in fact, fared better than many states when it came to “natural change,” referring to births outpacing deaths or vice-versa.

The number of births in Colorado between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025 stood at 65,380, a 4.6% increase over the 2023-2024 period and the most since 2017, according to the state demography office. Earlier, the “U-Haul Growth Index: Where People Moved in 2025” survey had offered a rosier picture about population ebbs and flows in the Centennial State.

Results of that survey sent Colorado leap-frogging from 2024’s 40th-most popular destination to No. 23, back into the realm of “net-gain states,” with more U-Haulers moving in than out.

The birth rate increase is welcome news to demographers, though it remains to be seen whether Colorado can sustain that growth.

Birth rates, in particular, and demographic trends, in general, affect several factors tied to a state’s health: its labor force, school funding, and the economy. Population trends also hold ramifications for spending on safety net programs.

In Colorado, for example, the older population has been growing fast, with ramifications for the major challenges the state already faces, notably housing, healthcare costs and workforce needs. It also affects student enrollment, which, in turn, directly impacts school financing.

Over the years, many have sounded the alarm over Colorado’s graying population, saying it requires more attention and careful planning, particularly since this trend, if it persists, could fundamentally alter the state’s priorities.

More immediately, birth rates impact school funding. An area could lose enrollment, which means a cut in schools’ budgets.

Denver Public Schools, for one, lost more than \$6 million in public funding tied to declining enrollment since the budget was approved. The revenue loss is reflected in the district’s amended draft budget. DPS enrollment dropped by about 1,200 students — a 1.4% year-over-year decline — in the fall, according to the district. The district’s enrollment numbers have been on a downward trajectory for several years.

The district’s enrollment peaked in 2019 and has been declining ever since, with the exception of the recent influx of immigrants, whose families arrived in Denver after illegally crossing the southern border. That influx provided a temporary boost and among the key drivers of enrollment declines is a lower birth rate.

Meanwhile, Monument-based economist Tatiana Bailey said population trends also affect tax revenue. In her purview as founder and executive director of Data Driven Economic Strategies, Bailey has seen the ebbs and flows and has come to understand the critical connections at play. When numbers shift,

even by small degrees, the outcomes can be difficult to predict, she said. People's movement in and out of a state "matters tremendously," said Bailey. "If lots of people are moving here, you get lots of new tax revenue, right? And then builders are happy because they're building more homes, and the businesses are happy because you have more consumers," she said. "Demographics," she said, "affect everything."

