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COLORADO'S WANING POPULARITY:

CENSUS FIGURES SHOW DOMESTIC OUTFLOW

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ABOUT COMMON SENSE INSTITUTE

Common Sense Institute is a non-partisan research organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of Colorado's economy. CSI is at the forefront of important discussions concerning the future of free enterprise and aims to have an impact on the issues that matter most to Coloradans. CSI's mission is to examine the fiscal impacts of policies, initiatives, and proposed laws so that Coloradans are educated and informed on issues impacting their lives. CSI employs rigorous research techniques and dynamic modeling to evaluate the potential impact of these measures on the economy and individual opportunity.

TEAMS & FELLOWS STATEMENT

CSI is committed to independent, in-depth research that examines the impacts of policies, initiatives, and proposed laws so that Coloradans are educated and informed on issues impacting their lives. CSI's commitment to institutional independence is rooted in the individual independence of our researchers, economists, and fellows. At the core of CSI's mission is a belief in the power of the free enterprise system. Our work explores ideas that protect and promote jobs and the economy, and the CSI team and fellows take part in this pursuit with academic freedom. Our team's work is informed by data-driven research and evidence. The views and opinions of fellows do not reflect the institutional views of CSI. CSI operates independently of any political party and does not take positions.

INTRODUCTION

Colorado's former status as a popular destination for movers from other states continues to deteriorate, according to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau figures. This could bolster Colorado's declining popularity among businesses and potentially stifle economic growth if left unaddressed.

Formerly, Colorado's population growth was among the nation's highest, driven both by healthy natural growth and by hundreds of thousands of movers from other states. In the mid-2020s, that domestic migration has dried up, though foreign immigration slightly complicates the picture. Colorado's recent population growth was sustained mainly by a low death rate and foreign immigration.

This trend has serious implications for future economic success. Colorado's birth rate is not producing a high enough supply of workers to fill upcoming and existing jobs. Its domestic migration slowdown no longer imports them, either.

This could potentially compound an already-occurring loss of economic activity. CSI's Free Enterprise Competitiveness Index has shown in the past several years that Colorado is facing declining business and economic momentum, even while its nominal economic standing is healthy compared to other states. Colorado ranked 17th in overall free enterprise competitiveness in 2024, down from a ranking of 10th in 2011. Policymakers should consider how to avoid a situation in which the two trends feed into each other: businesses leave as fewer skilled and educated workers are available, and fewer people move from other states as high-paying jobs become scarcer.

KEY FINDINGS

Colorado gained 20 times more people from net migration in 2015 than it did in 2025.

From July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, Colorado ranked:

- 21st for population growth – 24,059 added to population
- 29th for population growth as share of population
- 42nd for net migration
- 42nd for net migration as share of population
- 44th for domestic migration
- 48th for domestic migration as share of population
- 21st for international migration
- 29th for international migration as share of population
- 21st for births per population
- 47th for deaths per population

Between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015, Colorado ranked:

- 7th for population growth
- 2nd for population growth as share of population
- 5th for net migration
- 4th for net migration as share of population
- 3rd for domestic migration
- 3rd for domestic migration as share of population
- 19th for international migration
- 39th for international migration as share of population

STATE-LEVEL POPULATION GROWTH

Colorado once topped the nation's rankings in terms of both raw population growth and population growth as a share of total population. This is no longer the case, according to this year's release of nationwide components of change statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau.ⁱ

Colorado's population grew by 24,059 between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025. In raw growth terms, this was the nation's 21st-highest rate. While not the nation's lowest growth, this is a significant change from the previous decade's trend.

Though the Centennial State's population surpassed 6 million for the first time in its history, the rate of growth has slowed significantly from the mid-2010s. Between the summers of 2014 and 2015, Colorado's population grew by 100,986, the seventh-highest raw change in population in the U.S.

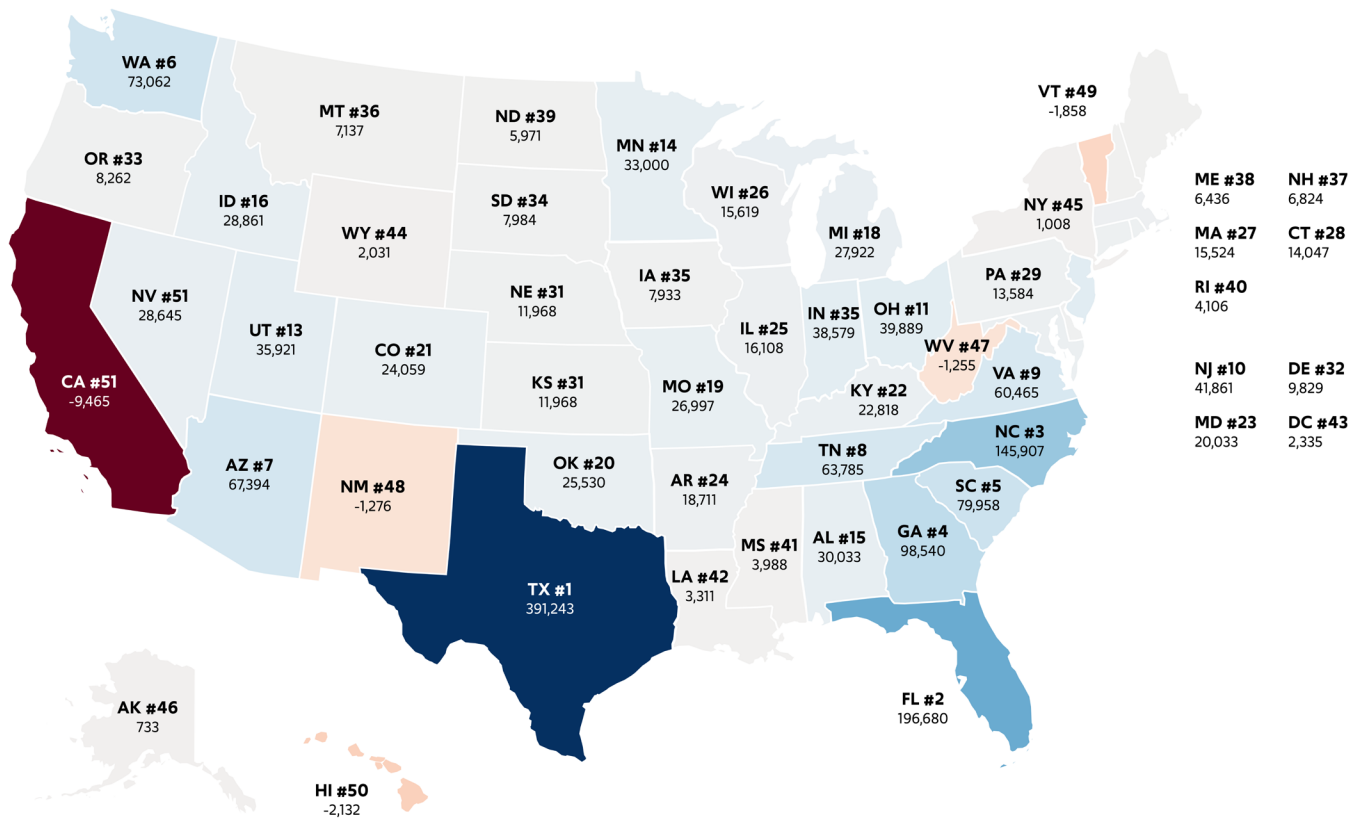
As a share of population, Colorado's population growth is below average, ranking 29th among U.S. states. In 2015, Colorado ranked 2nd in the U.S. for population growth as share of population.ⁱⁱ

States in the U.S. south and southeast have become the nation's fastest growing. Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas claim the top five spots in raw population growth between 2024 and 2025. California, Hawaii, Vermont, New Mexico, and West Virginia, meanwhile, are the states shedding the most population.

FIGURE 1.

Change in Population

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025



STATE-LEVEL MIGRATION GROWTH

Population growth is comprised of two major items – migration and natural growth from births and deaths. Net migration is comprised of the persons gained from both international and domestic migration. For both categories, “net” describes the number of people who moved in minus the number of people who moved out.

Colorado’s net migration in the 2010s drove its population growth, particularly from domestic migration from other U.S. states. This changed in the mid-2020s.

In total, Colorado gained 3,256 people from net migration in 2025 – only 5% of the net migration from 2015. For both net migration gain and net migration as share of population, this ranks 42nd in the nation. In 2015, Colorado ranked 5th for raw net migration and 4th for its net migration as share of population.

The decline is most pronounced with domestic migration, or movers from other U.S. states. Colorado has become one of the nation’s least popular moving destinations.

Though the state gained population from movers overall, that gain was due to international migration. Between 2024 and 2025, Colorado lost 12,100 from domestic migration, or movers from other U.S. states. Colorado ranked 44th in the nation for this metric. For domestic migration as share of population, it ranked even lower at 48th in the nation.

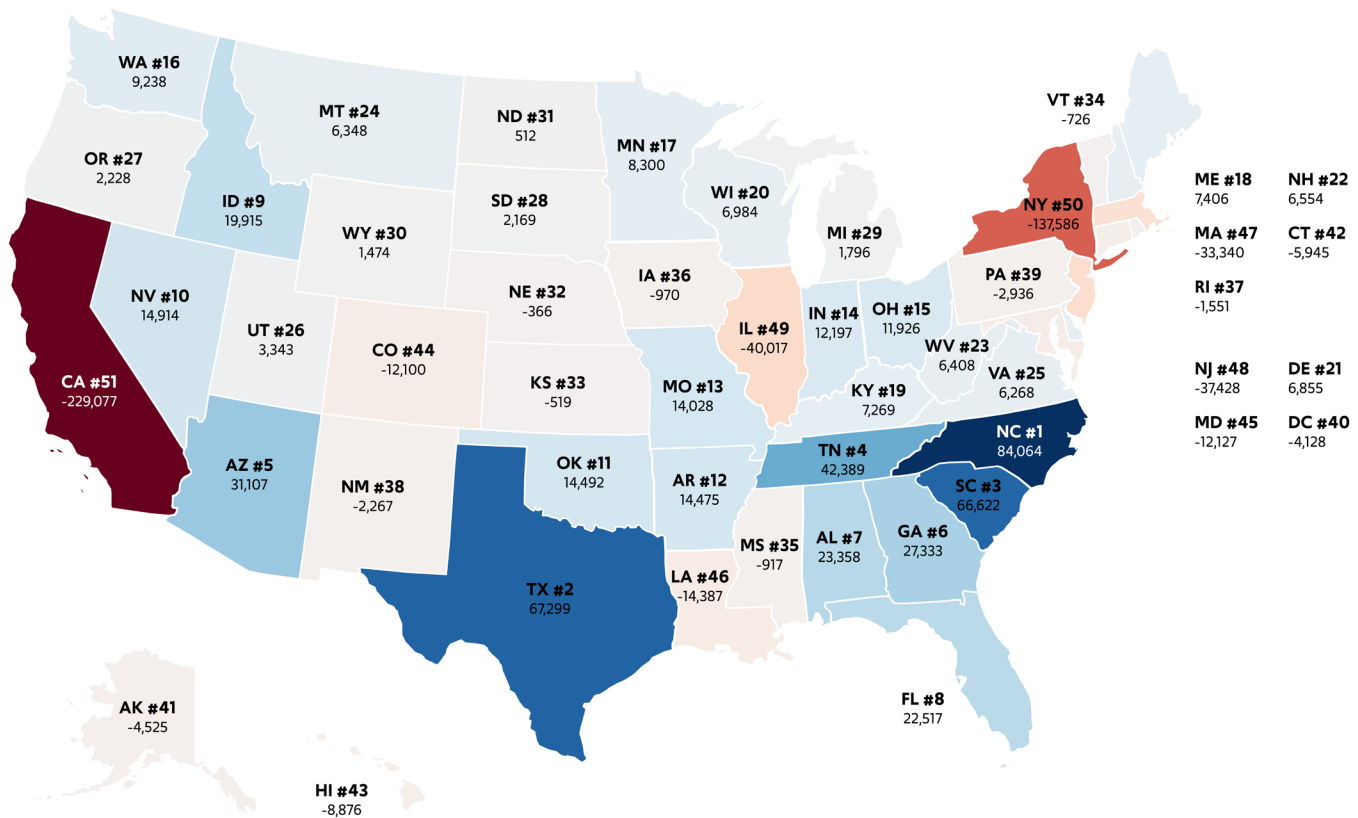
In 2015, Colorado was one of the most popular moving destinations. It ranked 3rd in the nation for raw domestic migration and 3rd for domestic migration as share of population.

FIGURE 2.

Net Domestic Migration

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

-229,077  84,064



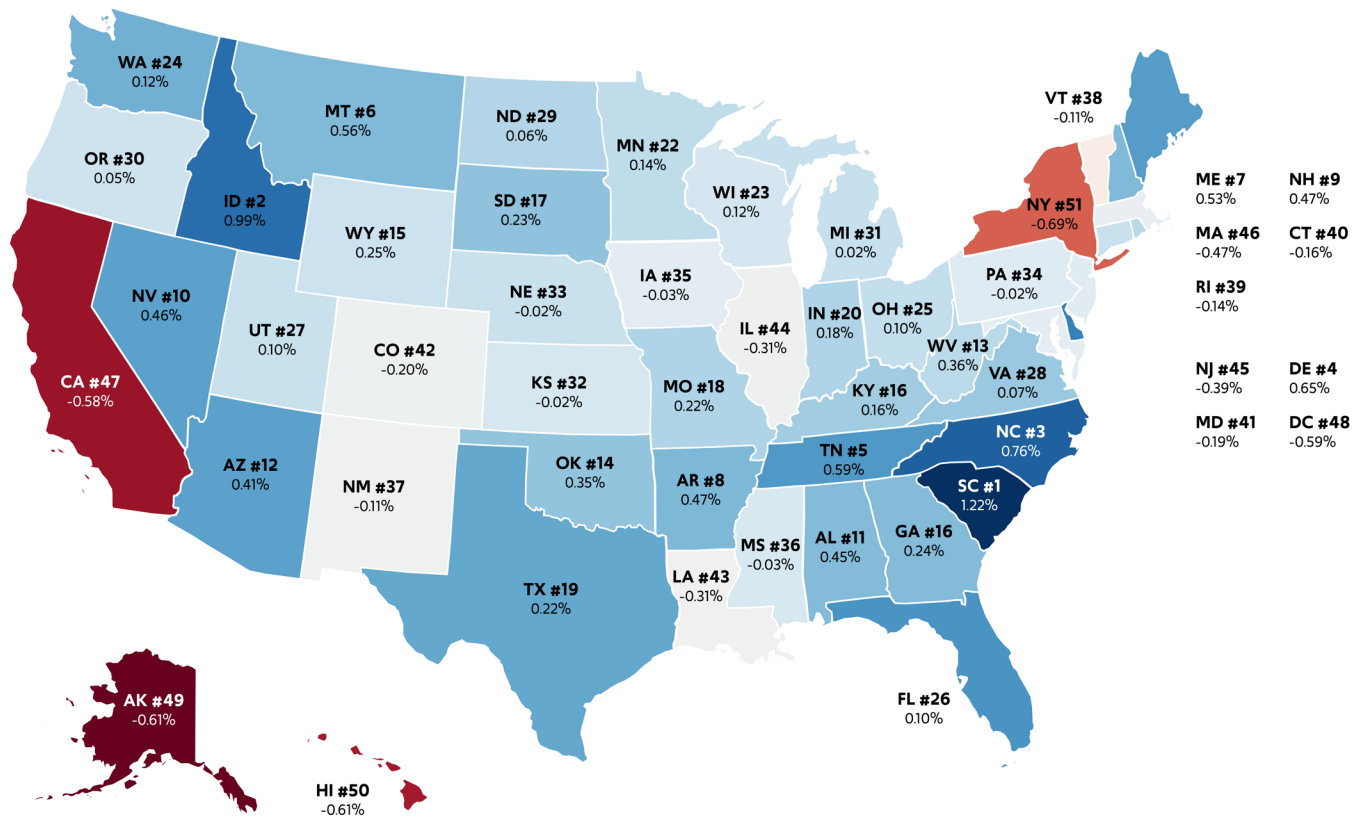
Foreign migration kept Colorado's population growing between 2024 and 2025, offsetting the losses from domestic migration. The state gained 15,356 from foreign migration, ranking 21st in the U.S. Colorado ranked 29th for foreign migration as share of population.

It should be noted that foreign migrants are counted as domestic when they exit the state. Roughly 40,000 foreign migrants arrived in Colorado from the southern border between 2022 and 2024, half of whom left the state shortly thereafter. This could be giving the impression of greater outmigration.

FIGURE 3.

Net Migration as Share of Population

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025



STATE-LEVEL NATURAL GROWTH

Colorado ranked highly in natural growth between 2024 and 2025. However, this speaks more to Colorado's low death rate than a booming birth rate.

Colorado ranked 7th in the nation for natural growth, having gained 20,608 from the difference in births and deaths. This is an improvement in rank from 2015, in which Colorado ranked 11th for natural growth.

This high ranking in natural growth is due to Colorado's lower-than-average death rate. Colorado ranked average – 21st in the nation – for its births per population between 2024 and 2025. However, it ranked among the nation's lowest – 47th – for its deaths per population.

Colorado had 10.87 births per 1,000 people, slightly higher than the average of 10.55 among U.S. states. It had 7.45 deaths per 1,000 people, however, which is substantially below the U.S. state average of 9.58.

BOTTOM LINE

Colorado's economic engine in the previous decade relied heavily on the state's popularity as a destination for U.S. movers. This popularity is no longer reliable, as the state's domestic migration is among the nation's lowest.

In order to sustain the kind of economic growth that characterized Colorado since 2011, state leaders will need to consider how best to once again attract and retain more skilled, educated workers.

ⁱ <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-kits/2026/national-state-population-estimates.html>

ⁱⁱ https://www.polidata.org/census/2015_state_components_Part6.pdf