



Civic Academy: October 7, 2025

Understanding growth in our region: can data shape the way we approach solutions



Summary

- Discuss growth in the Denver region.
 - What is growth?
 - How do we measure growth?

Defining growth in a regional context

- Increase in population.
- Increase in households.
- Increase in jobs.
- Increase in housing units.
- Increase in commercial and industrial development.



What do these numbers mean?

- Increased demand!
 - Housing
 - Transportation
 - Schools
 - Healthcare
 - Water, waste management, and electricity.





Growth as movement

- Growth isn't just about numbers—it's about movement. When people relocate and jobs shift across a region, they reshape demand for services and infrastructure.
 - Housing
 - Transportation
 - Schools
 - Healthcare
 - Utilities

Growth impacts vary across geographic scales

- **States:** Broad shifts in economy infrastructure; shaped by policy and funding decisions.
- **Regions:** Changes in housing, commuting, resources; requires cross-jurisdiction collaboration.
- **Jurisdictions:** Cities and counties manage land use, services, and infrastructure.
- **Neighborhoods:** Growth affects affordability, schools, traffic, and amenities.

Growth looks different at each level—planning must reflect local context and scale.

Why no growth can be a problem

- Aging infrastructure may go unfunded and deteriorate.
- Smaller tax base limits public services.
- Fewer workers can slow economic activity.
- Schools may close and services may decline.



No growth limits housing improvement

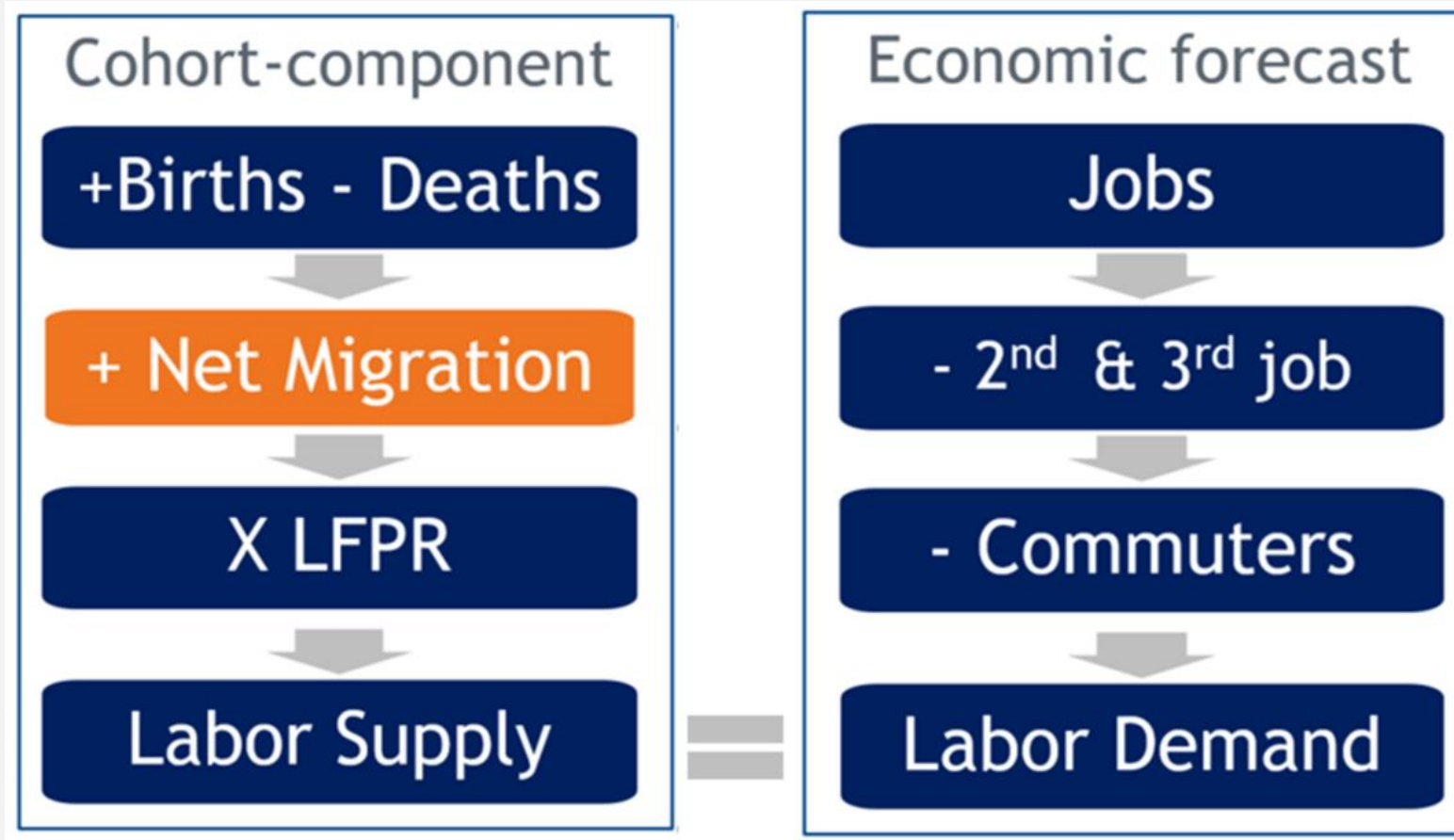
- **Limited location choices:** Without growth, new housing isn't built where people want to live, reducing access to jobs, schools, and services.
- **Lack of diversity:** No growth means fewer options—like townhomes, apartments, or accessible units—especially for changing household needs.
- **Affordability challenges:** Without new supply, housing costs can rise, pricing out residents and limiting economic mobility.



How do we measure and forecast growth

- **2020 census:** Provides counts of households, individuals, and housing units.
- **Current estimates:** The Colorado State Demography Office uses the American Community Survey and other sources like taxpayer data.
- **Forecasts:** The Colorado State Demography Office projects population, households, age groups, and regional employment through 2050.

Colorado Population Forecast Methodology



Differences between supply and demand
resolved by net migration

U.S. growth is important

Jobs are people

Age matters

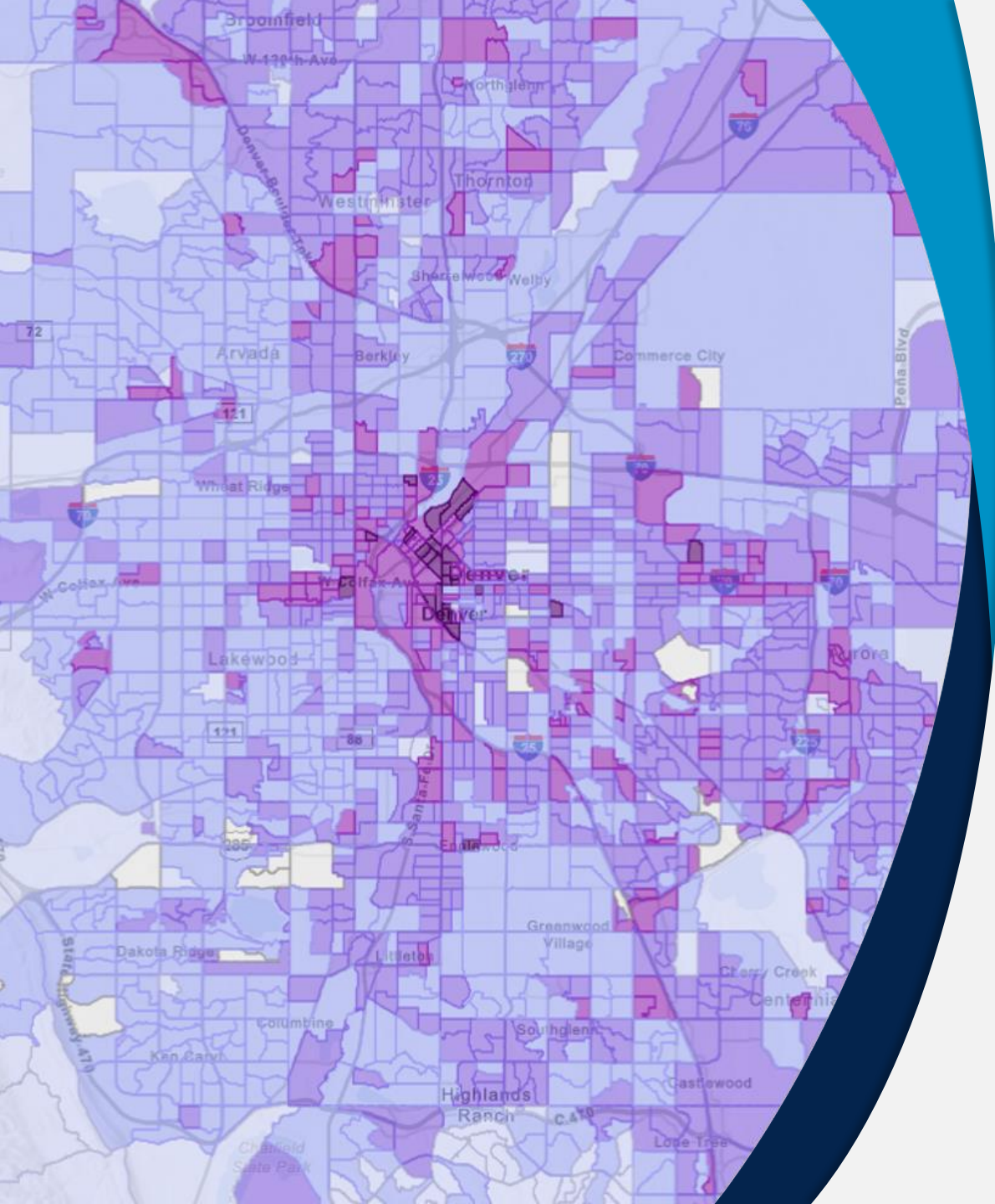
Job demand and
expected retirements
drive migration





What do the forecast methods tell us about the future?

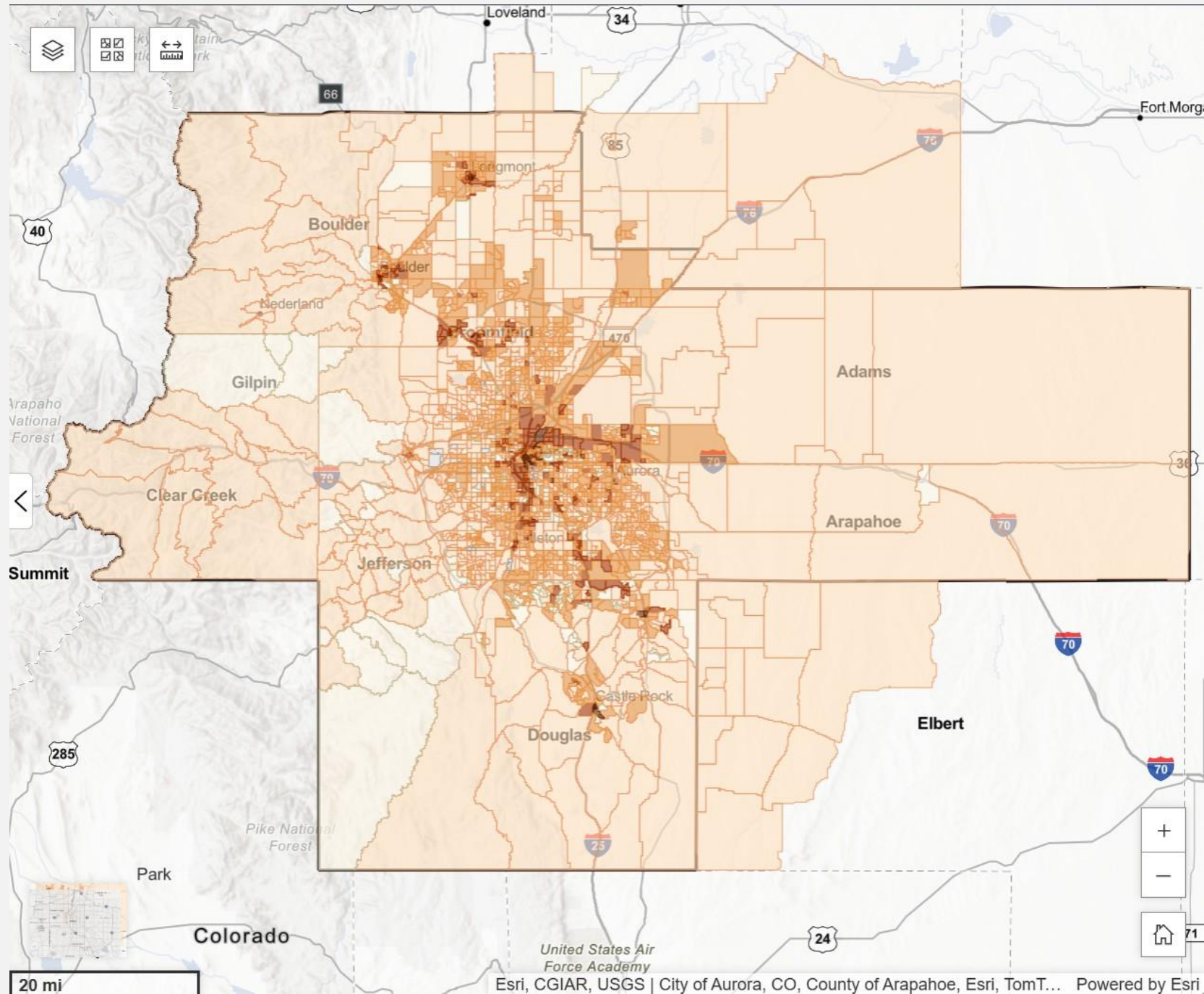
- The forecasted growth in population, households, and employment assume the region can attract workers.
- Where will they live?
- Can they afford to stay?
- Will they be allowed in the country?



DRCOG small-area forecast

- Forecast of population, households and jobs.
- From 2020 to 2050.
- **Block level forecast** – aggregated to TAZ, block group, municipality.
- Helps identify where growth and change are expected across the region

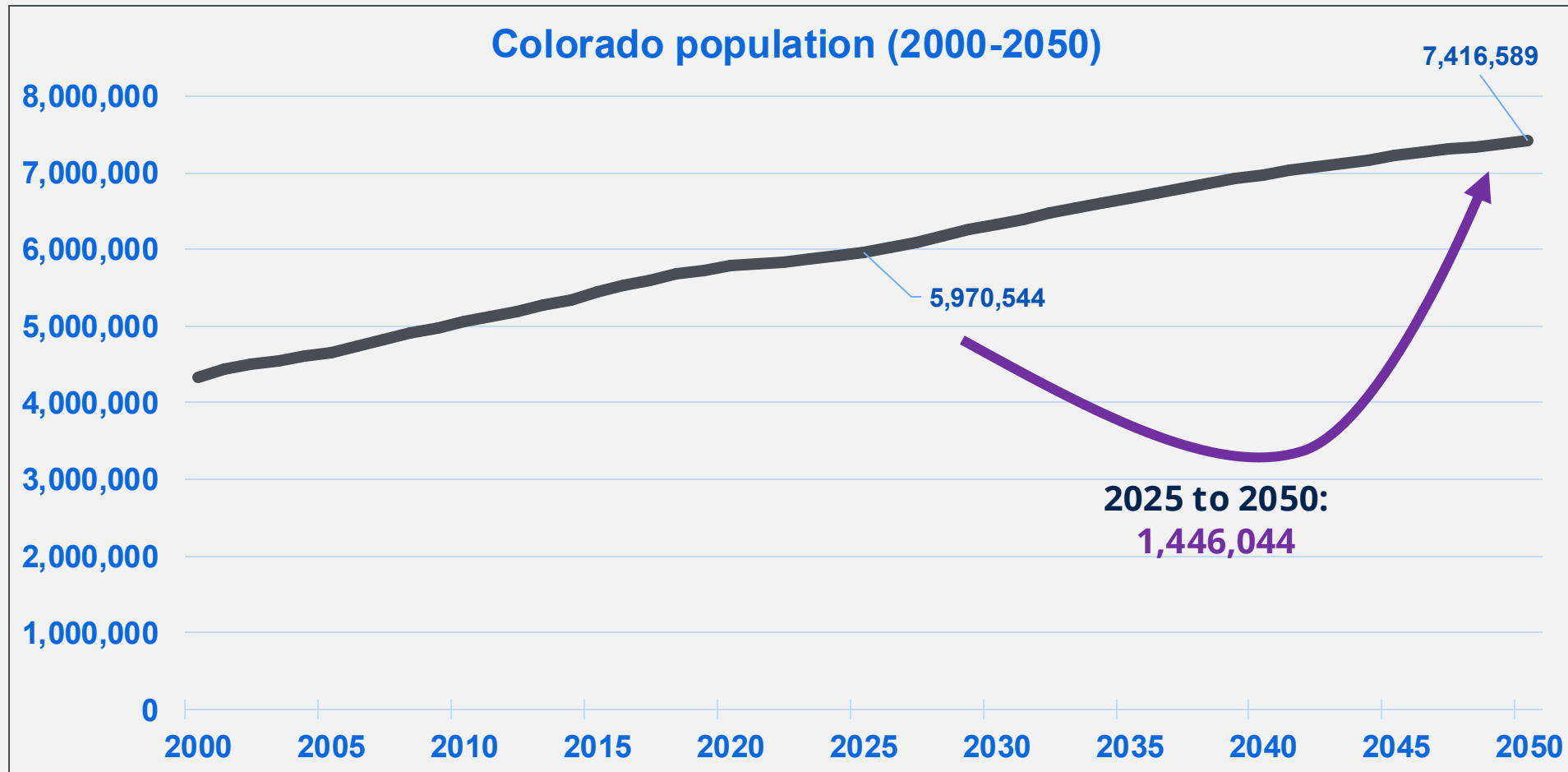
DRCOG small-area forecast



What can we expect going forward?

- Spoiler...
 - Increasing population
 - More households
 - More jobs
 - Older population, smaller households

Population growth



Population growth context

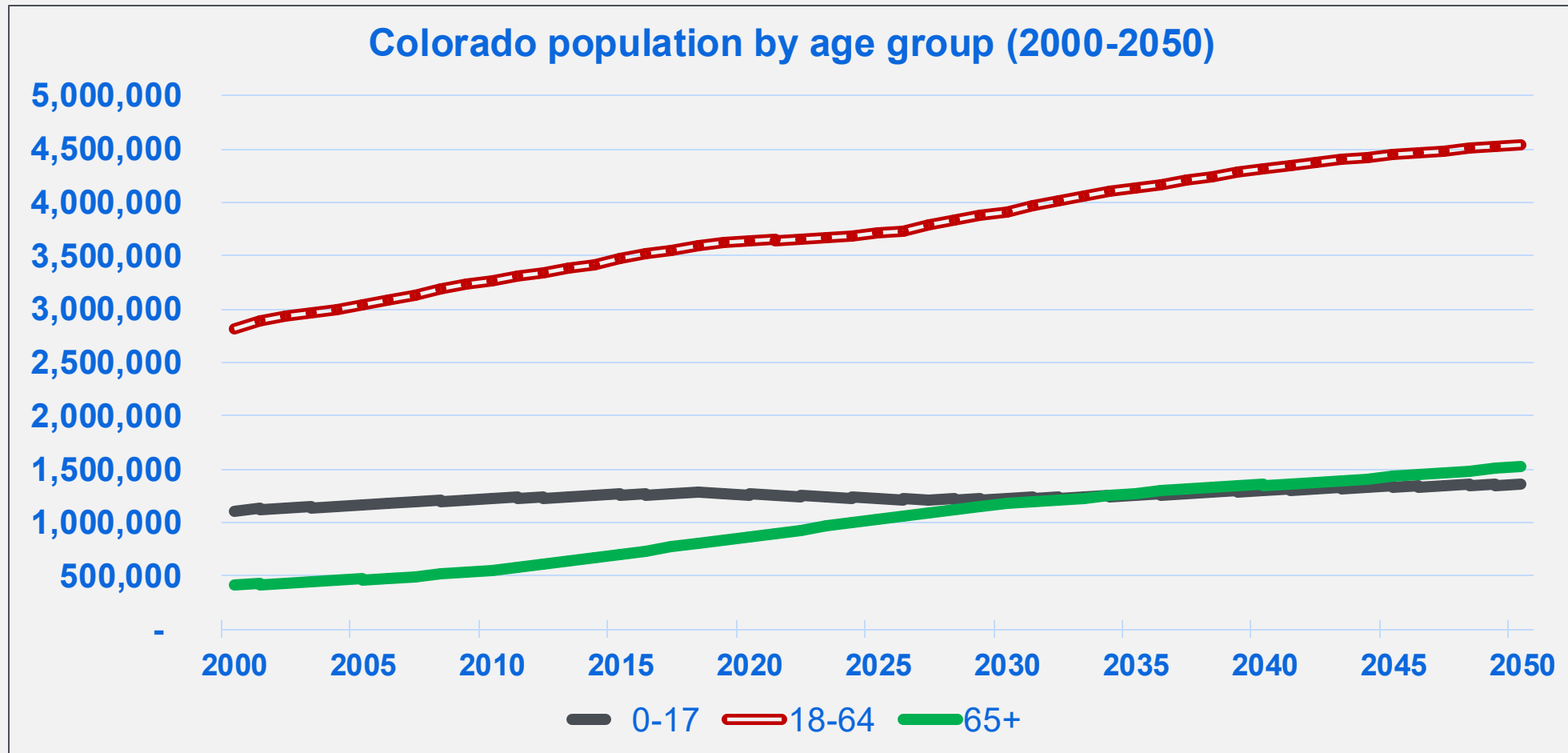
Last 20 years	Next 20 years
28% population growth	17% population growth

	Last 20 years	Next 20 years
0-17	6%	10%
18-59	22%	22%
65+	113%	41%
75+	102%	92%
85+	76%	209%

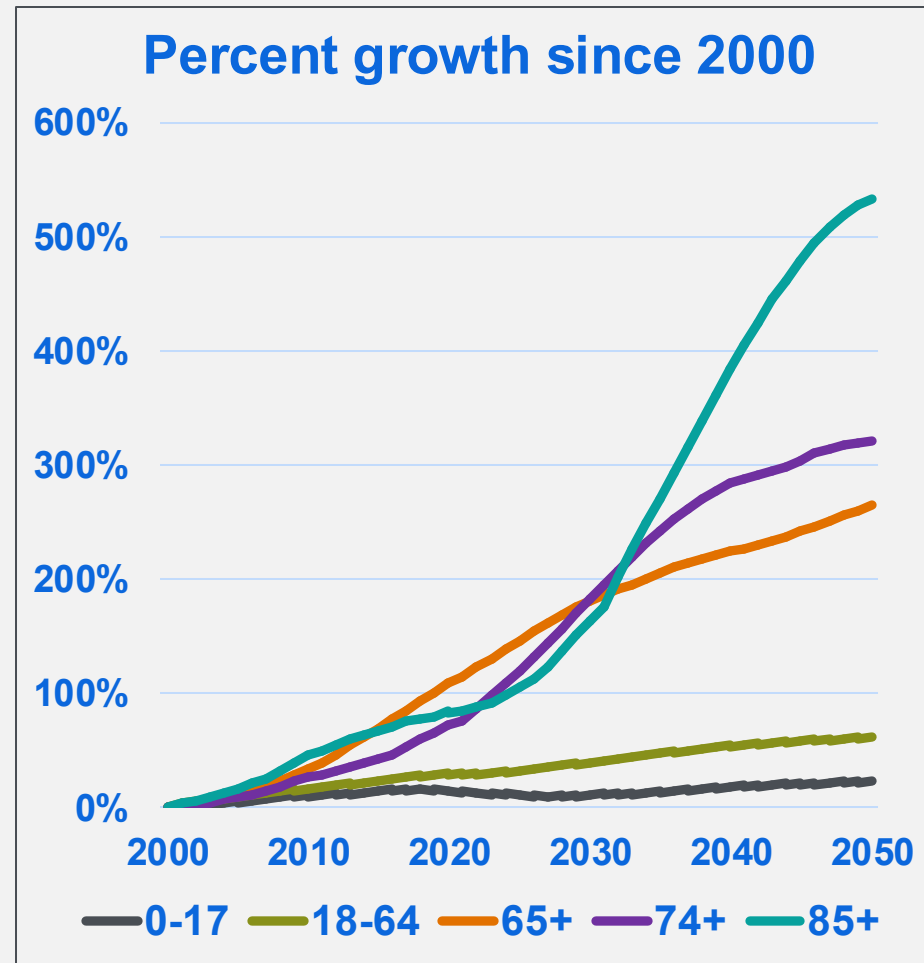
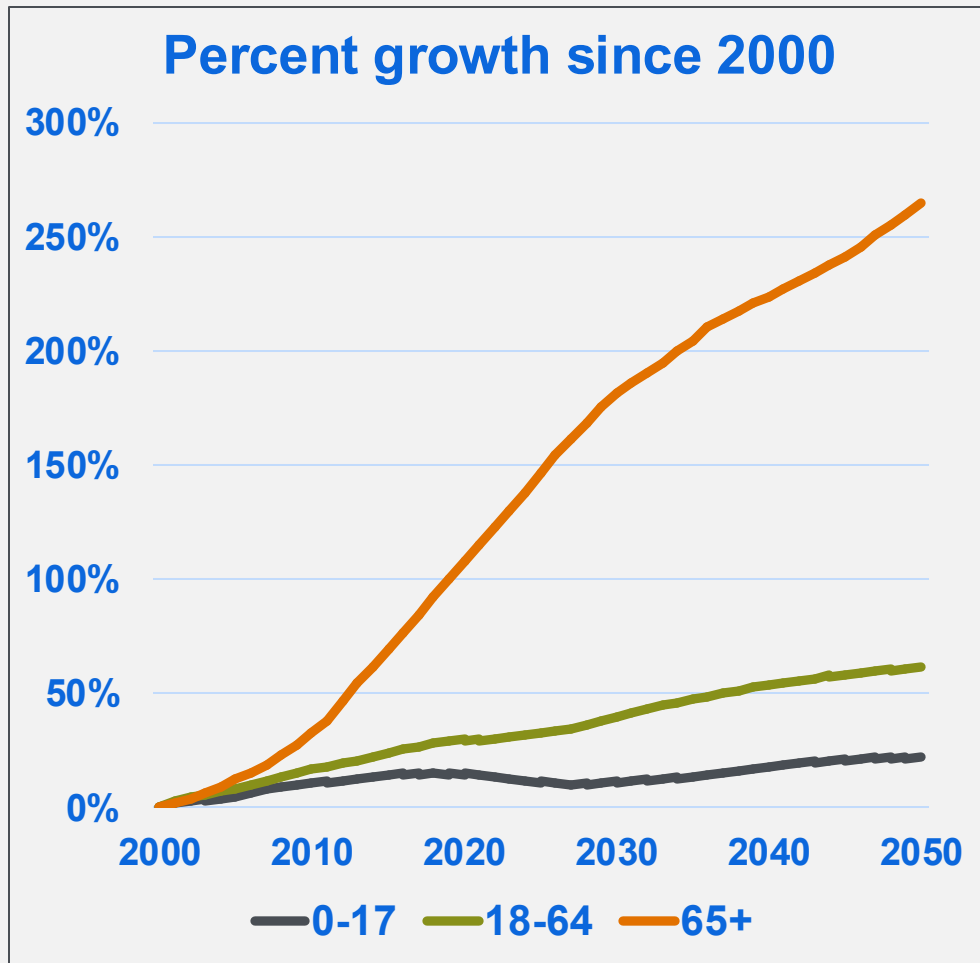
	2005	2025	2050
Working age adult per 65+	4.5	2.4	2.0



Population growth again



Population growth...last time



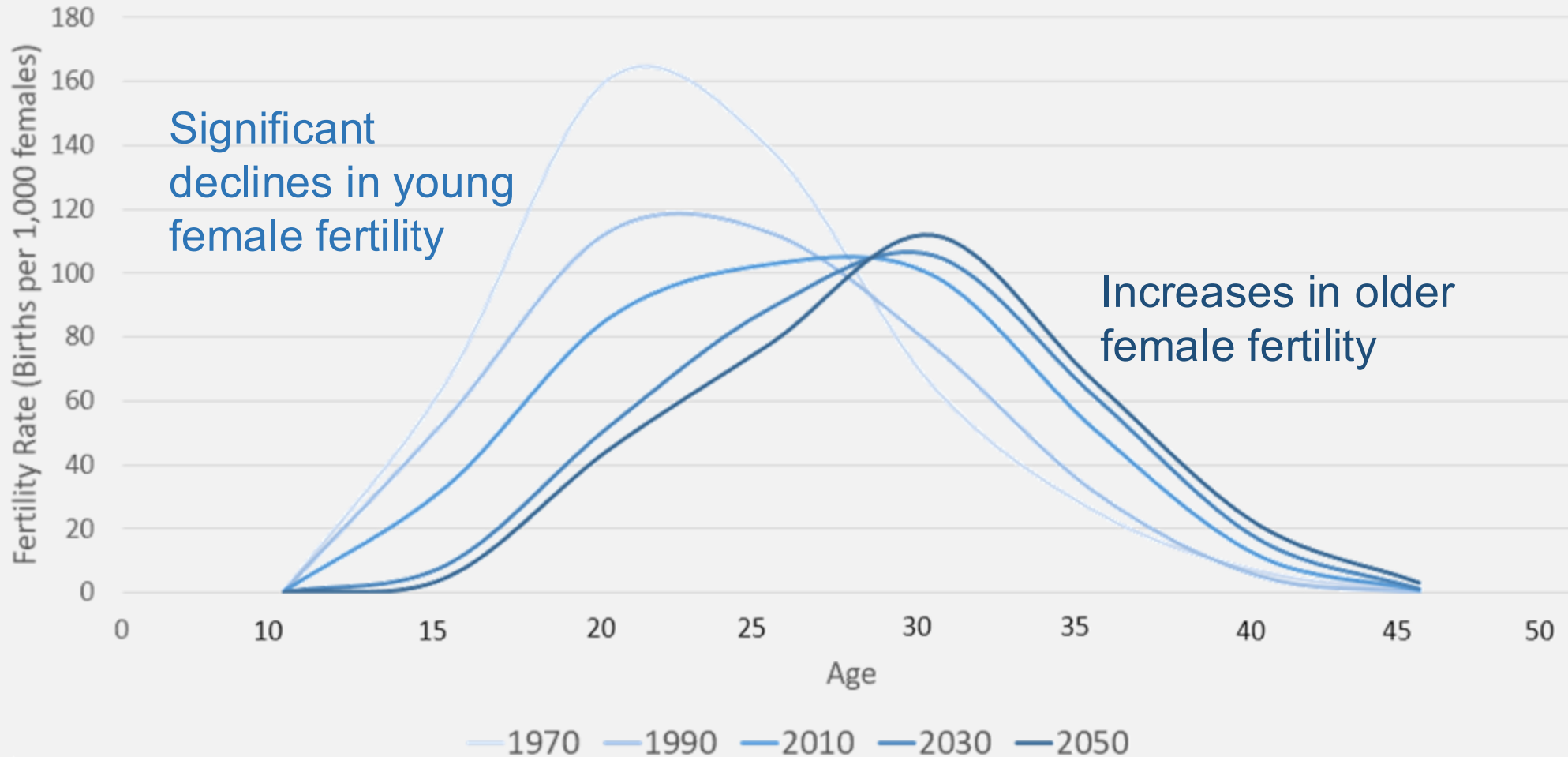
Population growth...last time

Growth by decade by age group					
	0-17	18-64	65+	74+	85+
2000s	11%	16%	33%	26%	45%
2010s	3%	12%	57%	36%	27%
2020s	-3%	8%	35%	65%	43%
2030s	6%	10%	15%	36%	84%
2040s	4%	5%	13%	10%	31%

Fertility rates continue to decline

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Colorado Fertility Rate by Age

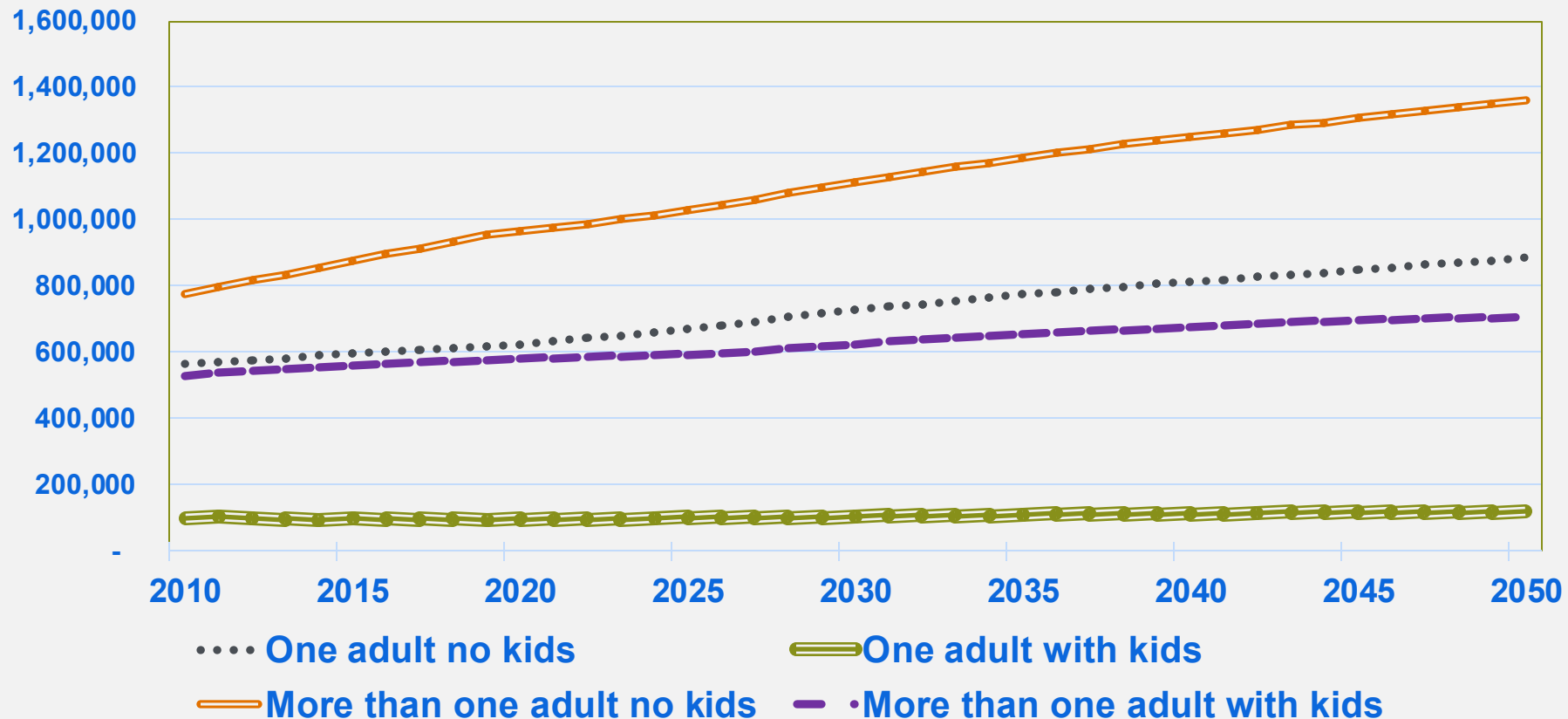


Source: Colorado Demography Office vintage 2023 estimates and projections; Colorado birth estimates from Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 2024.

cdola.colorado.gov

Household size changes

Households by type (2010-2050)



Growth isn't equal across the region

Some counties and municipalities may see **flat or declining population**.

- Aging populations increase demand for healthcare and senior services
- Fewer children and younger adults can lead to school closures and workforce shortages
- Declining service workforce affects local businesses and care systems
- Falling tax base limits funding for infrastructure and public services

Where to find data on growth in the region.

- Census bureau: <https://data.census.gov/>
- The Colorado State Demography Office: <https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/>
- DRCOG small-area forecast: <https://www.drcog.org/growth-development/small-area-forecast>
- Federal Reserve Economic Data: <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/>
- Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/>

Thank you!

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