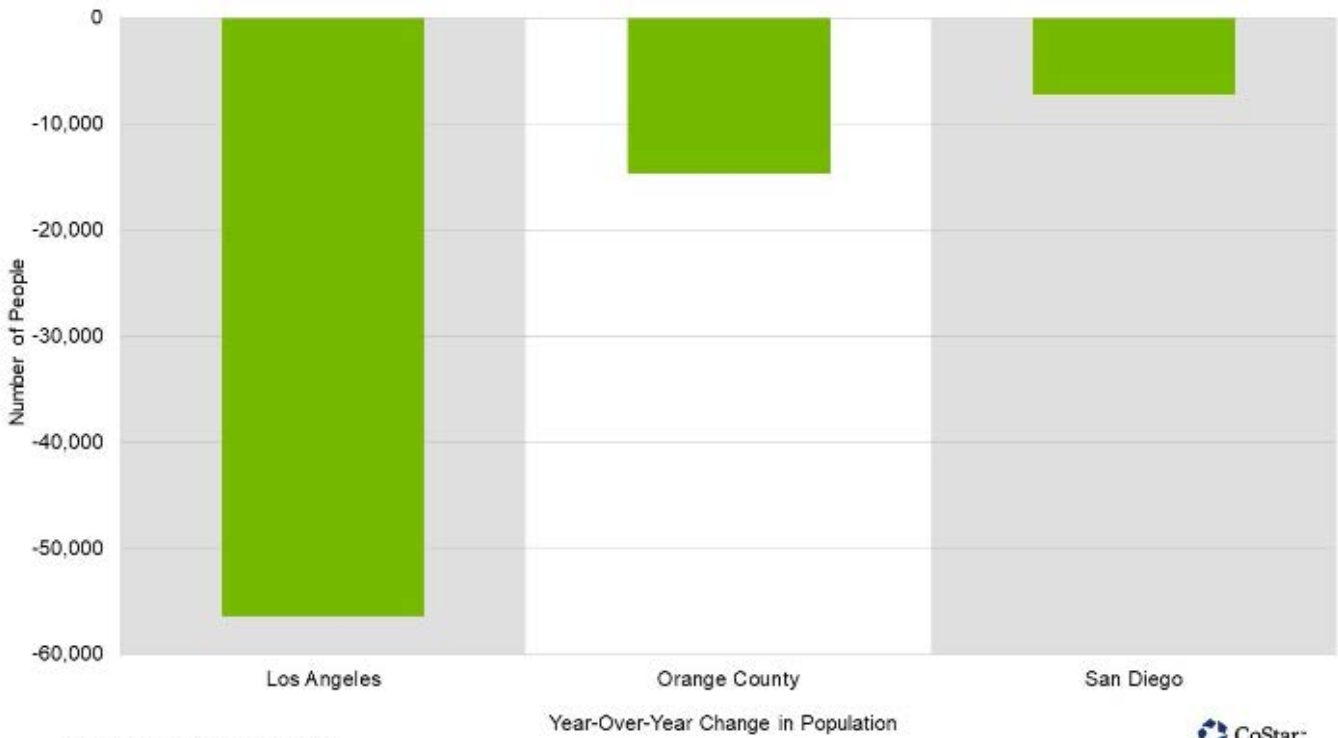


San Diego Joins Other Southern California Regions With Shrinking Population

High Housing Costs Push People Out of San Diego

Residents Leave Southern California Counties



By Joshua Ohl

New population estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau between July 2022 and July 2023 show what many San Diegans had suspected: people are leaving the region.

The latest report details that natural growth, or the change in the number of births versus deaths, and international migration were not enough to overcome the number of domestic migrants to move out of San Diego.

San Diego County, the country's fifth-largest county by population size, saw its population shrink by 7,200 people to just shy of 3.27 million. It joined other coastal Southern California regions of Los Angeles County and Orange County in losing residents, placing all three counties in the bottom 10 of the country in terms of population losses.

That marked three of the past four years that San Diego's population shrank following the dislocation caused by the onset of the pandemic in 2020.

Although international migration into San Diego reached its highest level since the start of the pandemic, with more than 10,000 people entering San Diego, more than 30,000 residents left San Diego. That was almost twice as many people who left compared to a year earlier, and it was the second since 2021 that more than 30,000 people left the region. It was also one of the highest levels to leave in the past 30 years.

Much of the blame can be tied to high housing costs. A consistent theme among the area's apartment property managers has been that vacancies have been the result of renter households leaving San Diego in search of more affordable housing markets.

That has resulted in lower occupancies and slowing rent growth in the local apartment market. Average apartment rents of \$2,426 per month places San Diego with the sixth highest apartment rents in the United States among metropolitan areas with over 100,000 market-rate units.