

## **Executive Summary**

Situated in one of the fastest growing states in the country, and located near the increasingly popular Boise area, Mountain Home is uniquely positioned to experience its own population growth. The first section of this chapter contextualizes these demographic changes by comparing Mountain Home residents to the statewide population in terms of age, ethnicity, household size and income, military service and educational attainment. The second section offers bold and moderate projections of the city's future population growth. Overall, compared to the rest of the state, Mountain Home's population tends to be younger, more diverse and more involved in military service (as a result of the city's proximity to the Air Force Base), but its residents are also less college-educated and have a slightly lower median income.

## **Goals**

(Suggestions from 2008 plan—change to meet today's goals)

- Provide for orderly population growth.
- To expand the City's population at a moderate rate while maintaining the high degree of livability and level of community services that presently characterize the community.
- To use population forecasts to project facility, service and utility needs.
- To ensure that population growth does not outpace the City's ability to provide services.

(Suggestions from 2014 Elmore County goals)

- To encourage sustainable economic expansion and population growth throughout the County plus increase economic diversity for continued enhancement of our quality of life to meet citizen needs.
- To guide future growth in order to enhance the quality and character of the County while providing and improving the amenities and services available to Elmore County residents.

## **Action Steps**

(Suggestions from 2008 plan—change to meet today's action steps)

- Improve the level of development monitoring and generate status reports on subdivision and building permits on a routine basis.
- Ensure that no development is granted building privileges unless water, sewer, gas and power availability can be secured/verified.

- Continue to monitor and work with the Air Force, state and federal officials on future planning for the Mountain Home Air Force Base.
- Update development regulations for compatibility with expected growth.

**(Suggestions from 2014 Elmore County objectives)**

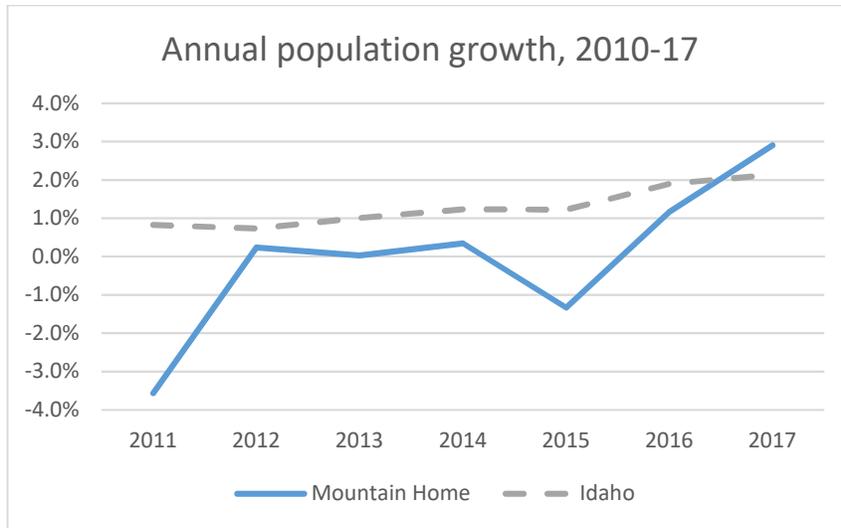
- Provide adequate sites for growth in quality surroundings that include clean air and water, and public services where available.
- To increase density near existing communities and near areas of city impact and preserve agricultural lands without adversely impacting existing populated areas.
- When soils are not adequate to sustain individual septic systems, development density should be controlled until central sewage systems can be established.
- Encourage cooperation between the County and all Communities, Districts and Cities in providing public services.
- Encourage growth and development in areas that are environmentally compatible with nearby surroundings to protect the quality of life.

**Population Characteristics**

Between 2010 and 2017, the city of Mountain Home’s population remained relatively stable. Despite a few annual swings during this time period, a slight decline in residents early in the decade has been offset by consecutive years of growth during 2015-17. Overall, however, the city’s population has decreased by 0.3% since 2010. This is in sharp contrast to the prolific growth experienced on the state level. During the same period of 2010 to 2017, Idaho’s population grew by 9.4%.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Population year</b>	<b>Mountain Home</b>	<b>Annual change</b>	<b>Elmore County</b>	<b>Annual change</b>	<b>Idaho</b>	<b>Annual change</b>
2010	14,270	-	27,120	-	1,570,773	-
2011	13,761	-3.6%	26,217	-3.3%	1,583,828	0.8%
2012	13,794	0.2%	26,287	0.3%	1,595,441	0.7%
2013	13,798	0.0%	26,265	-0.1%	1,611,530	1.0%
2014	13,846	0.3%	26,226	-0.1%	1,631,479	1.2%
2015	13,662	-1.3%	25,796	-1.6%	1,651,523	1.2%
2016	13,822	1.2%	26,084	1.1%	1,682,930	1.9%
2017	14,224	2.9%	26,800	2.7%	1,718,904	2.1%

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division; Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2017.



Mountain Home’s median age, 30.3, remains virtually unchanged over recent years. It continues to be lower than Idaho’s median age of 35.9, which has increased from 34.7 in 2012. Among the city’s residents, 27% are younger than 18 years old and 11% are 65 and older. The remaining residents are aged 18 to 29 (22%), 30 to 39 (14%), 40 to 49 (11%) and 50 to 64 (15%). This is slightly different compared to the statewide breakdown, where the youngest and oldest groups make up 26% (under 18) and 15% (over 65). Idaho’s other age groups are 18 to 29 (16%), 30 to 39 (13%), 40 to 49 (12%), and 50 to 64 (18%).<sup>2</sup>

Age group	Mtn. Home	Idaho
<i>Under 18</i>	27%	26%
<i>18 to 29</i>	22%	16%
<i>30 to 39</i>	14%	13%
<i>40 to 49</i>	11%	12%
<i>50 to 64</i>	15%	18%
<i>Over 65</i>	11%	15%

As of 2017, 76.4% of Mountain Home residents identify exclusively as white. Another 12.1% claim Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race). These numbers have not significantly shifted in recent years. Across Idaho, 82.5% are white (down 1.4% since 2012) and 12.2% have Hispanic or Latino heritage (up 1%).<sup>3</sup> The main difference in ethnic makeup between the city and state is

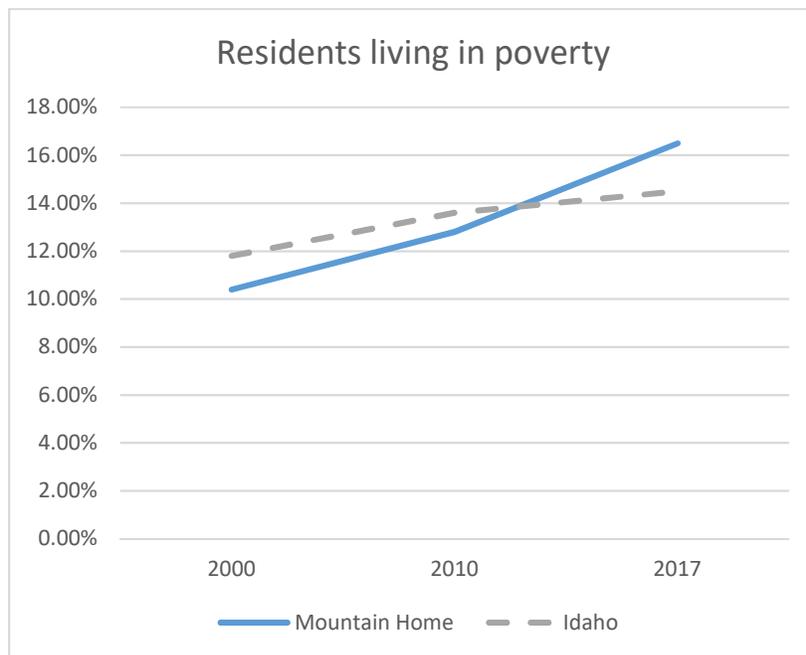
<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Age and Sex

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Demographic and Housing Estimates

that, on the state level, other minority groups constitute a slightly larger share of the overall population.

The average households in Mountain Home and Idaho are of a comparable size—in 2012, each jurisdiction had 2.66 residents per household. Since then, Idaho’s average has essentially remained the same while Mountain Home’s has slightly decreased to 2.56 per household. A similar trend exists in household composition. 67.1% of homes in the city are occupied by families, while the remaining 32.9% are nonfamily. Across the state, the split among households is 68% family and 32% nonfamily.<sup>4</sup> Each jurisdiction experienced a similar 2% decrease in family-occupied households between 2012 and 2017.

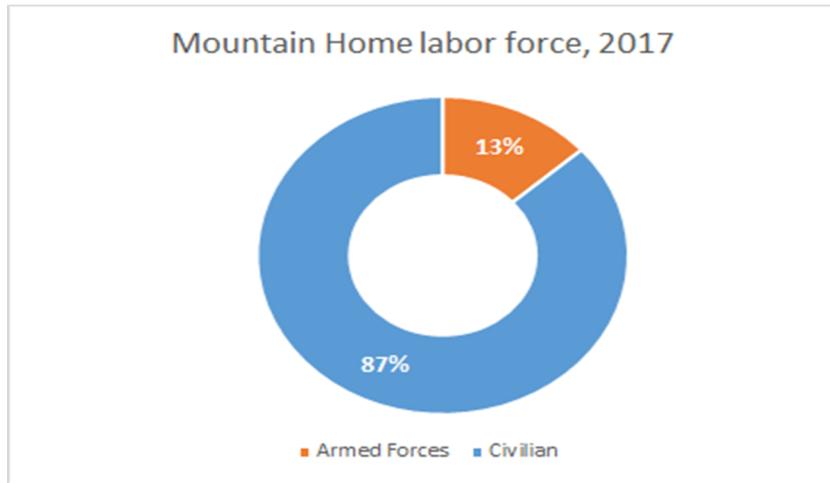
Mountain Home’s median household income is \$48,625, slightly lower than Idaho’s median income of \$50,985. The city also has a larger share of residents below the poverty level (16.5%) compared to the state’s 14.5%. Mountain Home and Idaho’s number of residents experiencing poverty has gradually increased over the last two decades. In 2010, the city and state had 12.8% and 13.6% of residents below the poverty line, respectively. Poverty rates were lower still in 2000, when Mountain Home had 10.4% and Idaho 11.8%.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Occupancy Characteristics

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Selected Economic Characteristics

It is estimated that 6,766 Mountain Home residents are part of the labor force, which is 64.9% of residents over the age of 16. Among those in the labor force, 13.4% are serving in the military, a substantial share compared to Idaho's 0.5%,<sup>6</sup> which is a direct consequence of Mountain Home Air Force Base's proximity to the city. Mountain Home's unique connection to the armed forces is also seen in its veteran population. Civilian veterans make up 25.3% of all adults. In Idaho, only 9.5% are veterans.<sup>7</sup>



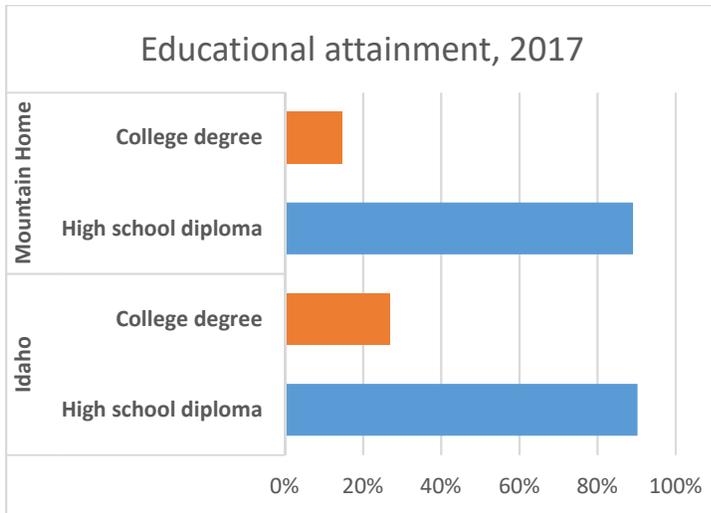
Regarding educational attainment, 89.1% of Mountain Home residents have a high school diploma or equivalent, which is consistent with the statewide rate. There is a significant difference, however, among college graduates. Only 14.7% of city residents hold a four-year degree, compared to 26.8% of Idahoans. The city and state are currently experiencing inverse trends related to higher education.<sup>8</sup> Since 2000, the former has been losing college graduates while the latter has been gaining ground. Specifically, Mountain Home's number of degree earners has decreased by about 5%, while the state's percentage has increased by the same amount.

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Employment Status for the Population 16 Years and Over

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Veteran Status

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Educational Attainment

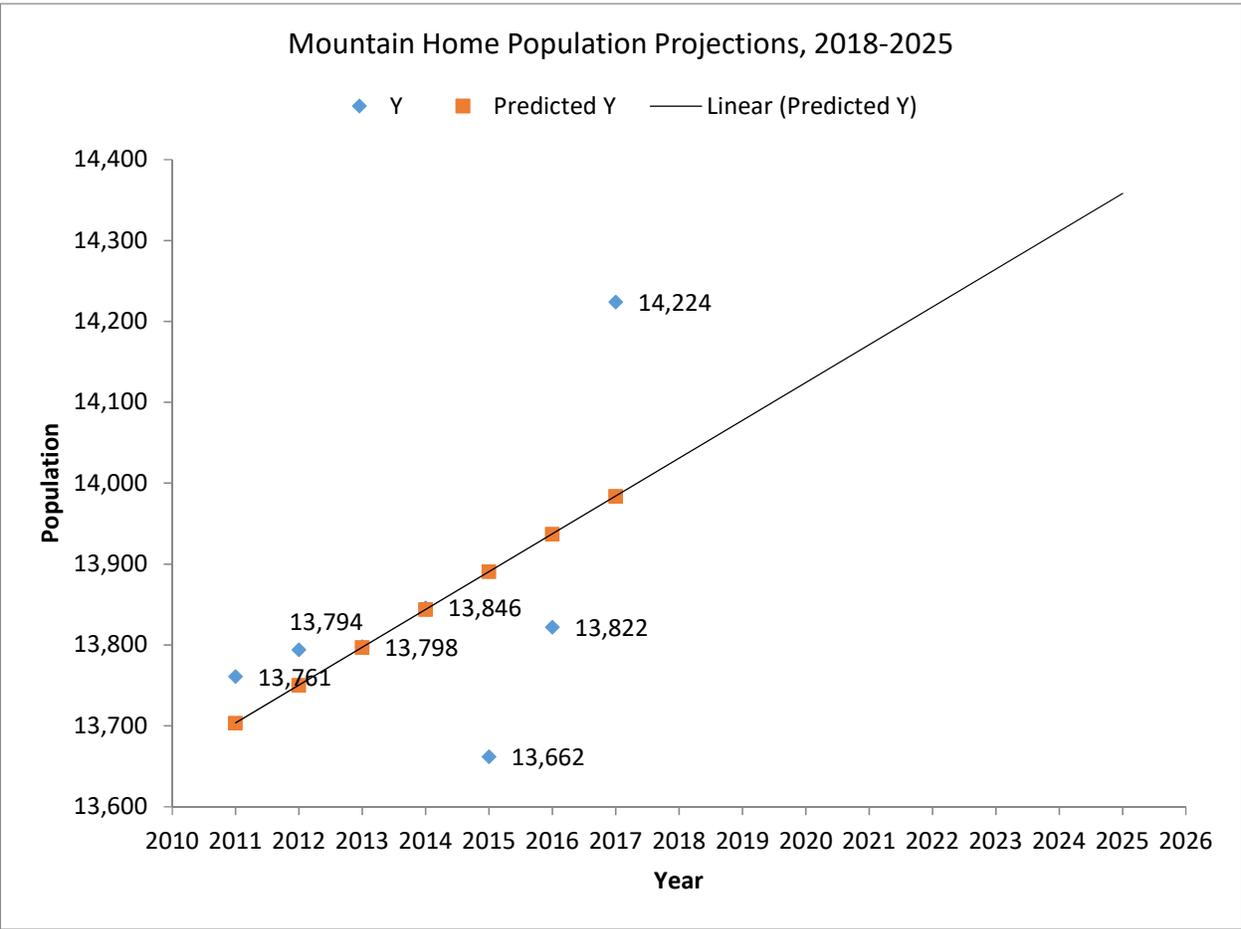


### Population Forecasts

Mountain Home’s population has been stable since 2011, typically having between 13,600 and 13,800 residents, with the only exception being 14,224 residents in 2017. Population projections using regression were produced for 2018-2025 based on the actual populations from the years 2011-2017. According to a moderate model, the city is expected to grow by about 46 new residents every year. Based on this expectation, Mountain Home is predicted to reach a population of 14,358 by 2025.

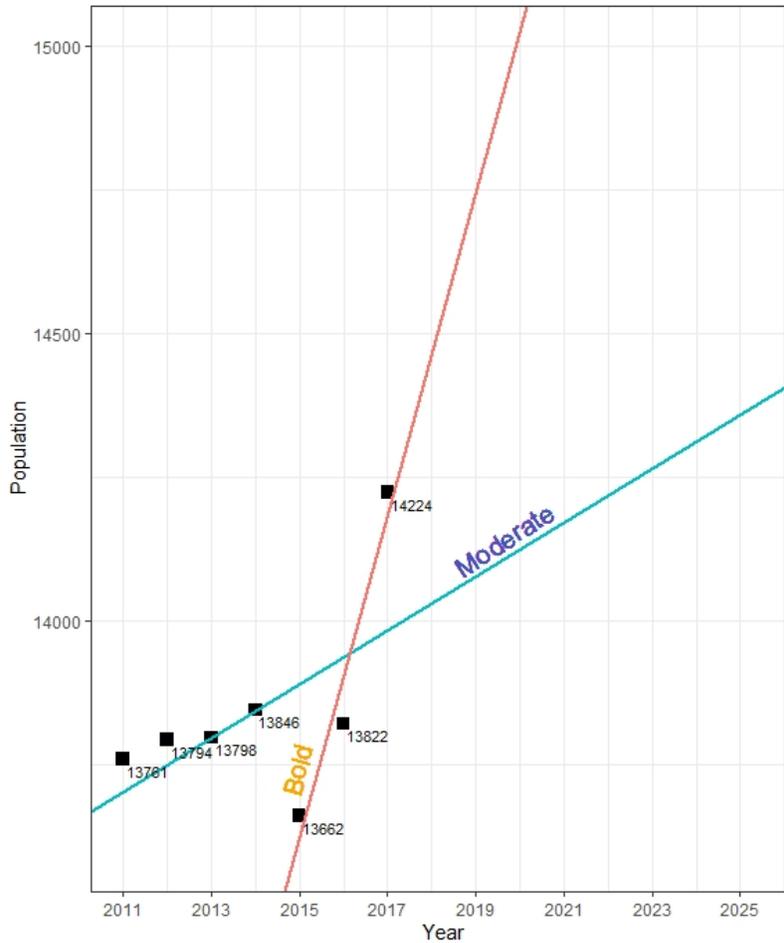
Year	Mountain Home population
2011	13,761
2012	13,794
2013	13,798
2014	13,846
2015	13,662
2016	13,822
2017	14,224
<b>2018 predicted</b>	<b>14,030</b>
<b>2019 predicted</b>	<b>14,077</b>
<b>2020 predicted</b>	<b>14,124</b>
<b>2021 predicted</b>	<b>14,171</b>
<b>2022 predicted</b>	<b>14,217</b>
<b>2023 predicted</b>	<b>14,264</b>
<b>2024 predicted</b>	<b>14,311</b>
<b>2025 predicted</b>	<b>14,358</b>

Note: Projections are produced by  $\text{Population} = -80,310 + 46.75 * \text{Year}$  based on actual populations, 2011-2017. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 Annual Estimates of the Resident Population (Data ID: PEPANNRES).



Note: Projections are produced based on actual populations, 2011-2017. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 Annual Estimates of the Resident Population (Data ID: PEPANNRES).

A bold projection model based on trends from three recent years' data, 2015-2017, can also be created. According to this model, 281 new residents are projected to be added annually. This annual addition represents a much faster rate of population growth than the moderate model explained above. The difference of growth rate between these two models stems from the city experiencing both the peak (14,224 in 2017) and the trough (13,662 in 2015) of the decade's population within just three years.



In other words, exclusive reliance on short periods of time with extreme values could produce a very different projection model compared to using data from longer periods of time. While it would not take much convincing to argue that the city will keep growing, especially from a long-term perspective, what could still be uncertain is whether the *rate* of the growth observed from 2016 to 2017 will be sustained into the future.

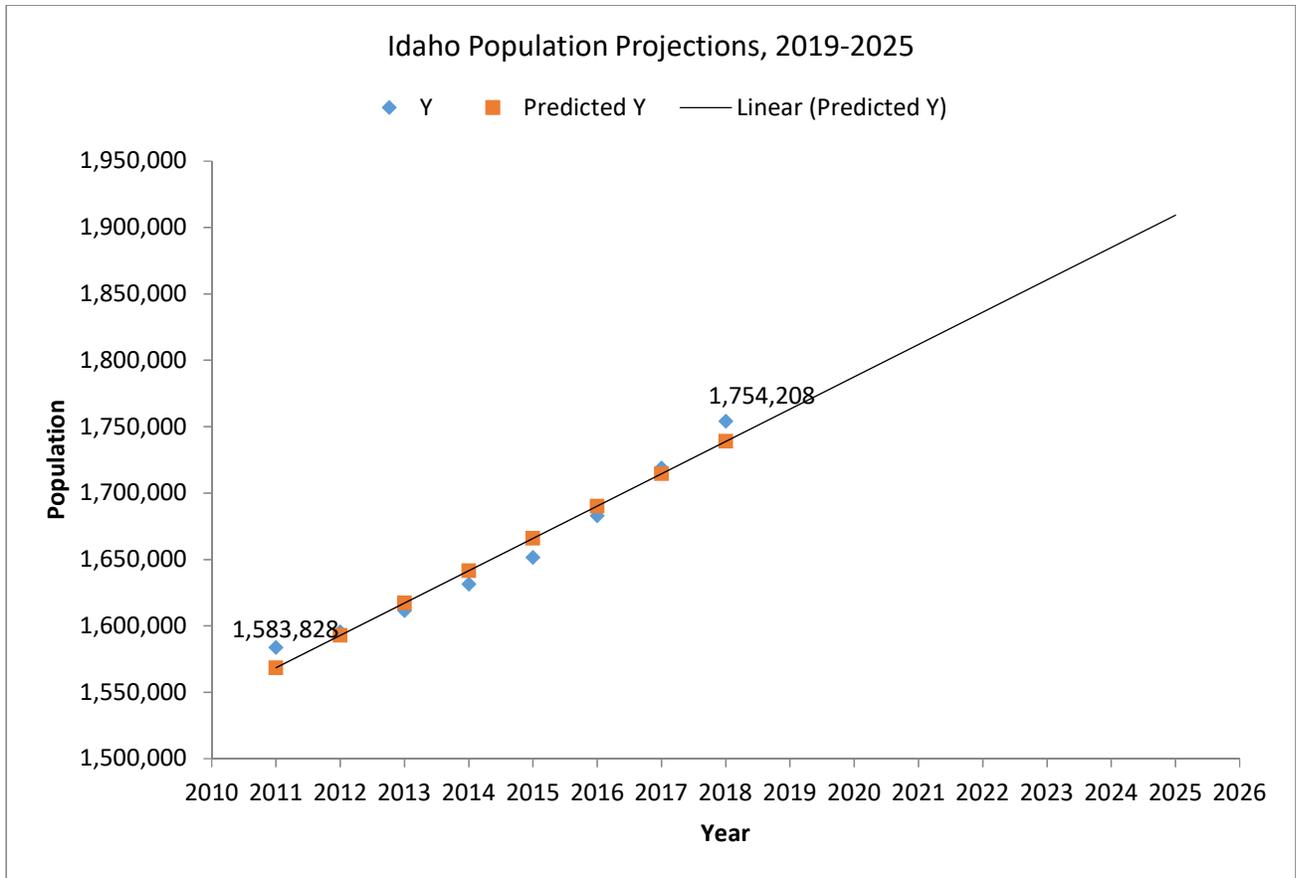
Mountain Home’s population growth is influenced by many factors, including the national economy, the influx of residents from the Treasure Valley and changes to the nearby Air Force Base, among others. If any of these factors change, like an economic recession or the development of more housing closer to, or within, the Treasure Valley, the sudden population growth between 2015 and 2017 may not hold. As such, the bold projection model may not reliably take into account long-term factors.

It is of note that the projections made here, both the moderate and bold, are provided for informational purposes only. Population growth projection models, even when made with the best data and knowledge, are still susceptible to the uncertain nature of the future.

In addition, population projections for the state of Idaho are presented for reference according to a model produced based on actual populations from 2011-2018. This model shows that about 24,000 people are being added every year to the state. The state's population surpassed the 1,750,000 mark as of 2018 and is projected to reach 1,900,000 by 2025.

Year	Idaho population
2010	1,570,773
2011	1,583,828
2012	1,595,441
2013	1,611,530
2014	1,631,479
2015	1,651,523
2016	1,682,930
2017	1,718,904
2018	1,754,208
<b>2019 predicted</b>	<b>1,763,363</b>
<b>2020 predicted</b>	<b>1,787,699</b>
<b>2021 predicted</b>	<b>1,812,035</b>
<b>2022 predicted</b>	<b>1,836,371</b>
<b>2023 predicted</b>	<b>1,860,707</b>
<b>2024 predicted</b>	<b>1,885,043</b>
<b>2025 predicted</b>	<b>1,909,379</b>

Note: Projections are produced by  $\text{Population} = -47,371,021 + 24,336 * \text{Year}$  based on actual populations, 2011-2018. Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2018 Annual Estimates of the Resident Population (Data ID: PEPANNRES).



Note: Projections are produced based on actual populations, 2011-2018. Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2018 Annual Estimates of the Resident Population (Data ID: PEPANNRES).

Mountain Home Air Force Base (AFB) is separate from the city and designated by the U.S. Census Bureau as a Census-designated place. As any substantial change in the size of the military personnel stationed in the AFB would have an impact on the city in many aspects including housing or economic development, it would be helpful to be aware of the recent trends. The Census Bureau does not publish population data series for the AFB comparable to that for the city (Annual Estimates of the Resident Population, Data ID: PEPANNRES).

Two alternative data series from the Census Bureau are considered: American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates and the decennial census (Summary File 1, Data ID: P001). First, the AFB had a total population of 3,238 in 2010 decennial census, while it had 8,894 in 2000 decennial census. Second, total population was 3,245 in 2008-2012 ACS 5-year estimates, and then it became 3,070 in 2013-2017 ACS 5-year estimates. Taken together, these figures suggest that there had been a major shrinkage between 2000 and 2010, but the size sustained around 3,000 through the 2010s. It is noted that the data series of total population from these two sources may include military personnel living off base in the city, who can then be counted as residents of the city as well.