



# POPULATION BRIEF

## Trends in the Western U.S.

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### Alaska

The population in the State of Alaska has grown very rapidly in recent decades. Between 1980 and 2010, the number of Alaska residents increased from 401,851 to 710,231, a boost of 76.7 percent. In the western region, only Nevada, Arizona and Utah had higher growth rates than Alaska. Nationally, only two additional states, Florida and Georgia, grew faster than Alaska. Between 2000 and 2010, Alaska added 83,299 more residents, an increase of 13.3 percent.

Politically, parts of Alaska are organized in 'Boroughs', which are similar to counties in other states. The Census Bureau has divided those areas of the state not in boroughs into 'Census Areas' for the purpose counting residents. The extent of population change varied widely in different boroughs or census areas in Alaska (Table 1). Between 1980 and 2010, the population more than doubled on the Kenai Peninsula, the North Slope and in Matanuska-Susitna Borough (suburban Anchorage). The population in Matanuska-Susitna Borough grew from 17,816 in 1980 to 88,995 in 2010, an increase of 399.5 percent. Numerical population increases were most extensive in Anchorage Borough (117,395) and Matanuska-Susitna (71,179). Several boroughs or census areas experienced population declines. Some of these declines, however, are simply a result of boroughs or census areas being recently divided.

The population of Alaska is heavily concentrated in the Anchorage (Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna Boroughs) and Fairbanks (Fairbanks North Star Borough) metropolitan areas. As shown in Figure 1, 67.4 percent of Alaska residents lived in the state's two metropolitan areas in 2010. This proportion has steadily increased since 1980 as metropolitan growth rates have exceeded those in non metropolitan areas. Figure 2 reveals that the percent population change from 2000 to 2010 was 18.9 percent in metro areas and 3.3 percent in nonmetro areas. In the three decades from 1980 to 2010, the metro areas grew by 94.3 percent while the nonmetro areas grew by 49 percent.

#### Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Alaska Population

As presented in Table 2, 64.1 percent of the Alaska population was White in 2010. In recent decades, the racial and ethnic diversity

of the state has increased substantially. The proportion of the population that is minority has increased steadily from 24.2 percent in 1980 to 35.9 percent in 2010 (Figure 3). Five western states have a higher minority population than Alaska. Native Alaskans are the most numerous minority group and represented 14.8 percent of the population in 2010. The distribution of minority populations varies widely across the state. On the one hand, the population is more than 80 percent White in Denali, Haines, Kenai Peninsula, Matanuska-Susitna, and Skagway. On the other hand, less than 20 percent of the residents are White in Aleutians East, Bethel, Dillingham, Nome, Northwest Arctic and Wade Hampton. In Wade Hampton, only 2.7 percent of the residents are White and 95 percent are Native Alaskans.

#### Educational Attainment in Alaska

The data in Table 3 indicate that 90.7 percent of adults (age 25 and older) in Alaska have at least a high school degree, while 26.5 percent have a college degree. Among the states of the western region, only in Wyoming is the percentage of adults with a high school degree higher than in Alaska. In seven western states the proportion of adults with a college degree exceeds the number in Alaska. In 15 Alaska boroughs or census areas, at least 90 percent of residents have at least a high school degree, while in 7 boroughs or census areas, less than 80 percent of adults are high school graduates. More than 30 percent of adults in Anchorage, Haines, Juneau, and Skagway are college graduates, compared to only 8.5 percent in Aleutians West.

Educational attainment varies substantially by population segment in Alaska. Differences are especially pronounced by race/ethnicity. The data in Figure 4 show that nearly 90 percent or more of Whites, Blacks, Hispanics and Asians are high school graduates compared to only 78.8 percent of Native Alaskans. Likewise, while 34.5 percent of Whites and 26.7 percent of Asians have a college degree, this proportion is only 3.7 percent for Native Alaskans. Figure 5 shows that educational attainment levels are better in metro than in nonmetro areas. This is especially true for college graduation levels. Thus, while 36.9 percent of metro adults have a college degree, this proportion is only 21.5 percent for nonmetro adults.

#### Income and Poverty in Alaska

The median household income in Alaska in 2009 was \$66,712 in 2009 (Table 3). This was higher than in any other state in the western region. Incomes varied widely by geographic region. Median household income surpassed \$70,000 in North Slope (\$75,057), Juneau (\$73,044), Anchorage (\$72,210) and Matanuska-Susitna (\$70,442). In contrast, the median household income in Wade Hampton was \$30,238. Table 3 also shows that 9.1 percent of Alaska residents were living in poverty in 2009. Again, there were substantial differences by geographic region. Poverty levels were less than 10 percent in 16 Alaska Boroughs or Census Areas. The lowest poverty levels were in Skagway at 4.0 percent. In contrast, 30.9 percent of the Wade Hampton residents were living in poverty in 2009. Table 3 also shows that the median value of owner-occupied homes in Alaska was \$221,300 in 2009. These values ranged from \$317,600 in Sitka to \$70,300 in Wade Hampton.

Incomes and poverty levels also varied widely for people with different characteristics. Figure 6A shows that while median household incomes were \$72,033 for Asians and \$67,622 for Whites, income levels were only \$41,028 for Native Alaskans. Similarly in Figure 6B, while 5.5 percent of Whites were living in poverty, this proportion was 17.8 percent for Native Alaskans and 18.5 percent for Hispanics. Figures 7A and 7B shows that incomes were higher and poverty rates lower for metro as opposed to nonmetro residents. 🧑

Figure 1. Distribution of Alaska Population, 1980-2010

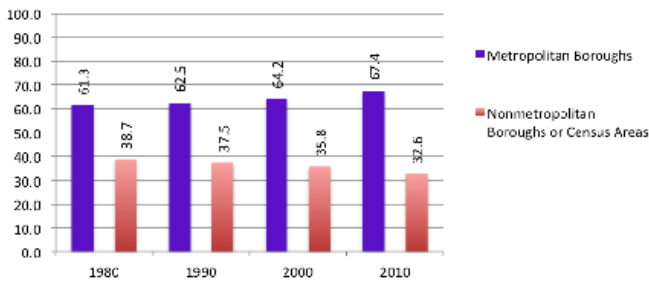


Figure 5. Educational Attainment by Residence in Alaska, 2009

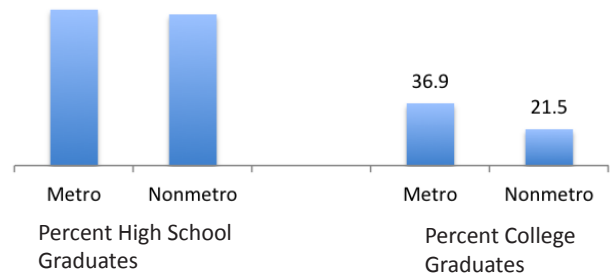


Figure 2. Percent Population Change in Alaska, 1980-2010

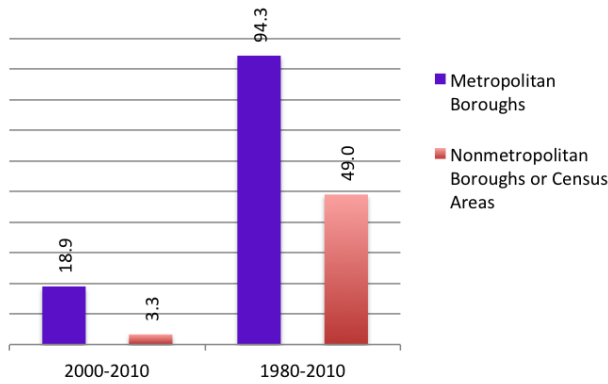


Figure 6A. Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity in Alaska, 2009

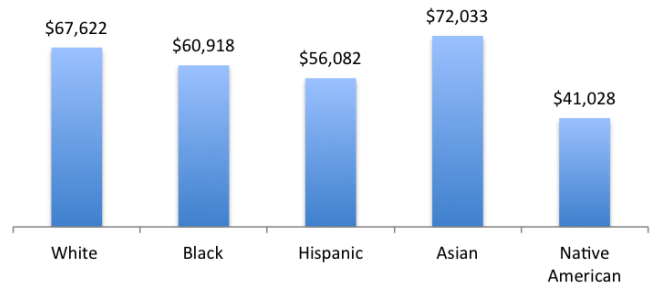


Figure 3. Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Alaska Population (Percent), 1980-2010

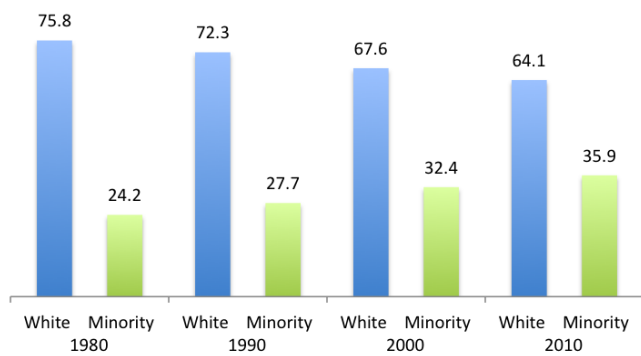


Figure 6B. Percent of Persons in Poverty by Race/Ethnicity in Alaska, 2009

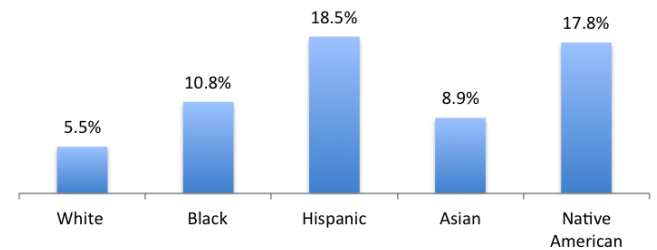


Figure 4. Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity in Alaska, 2009

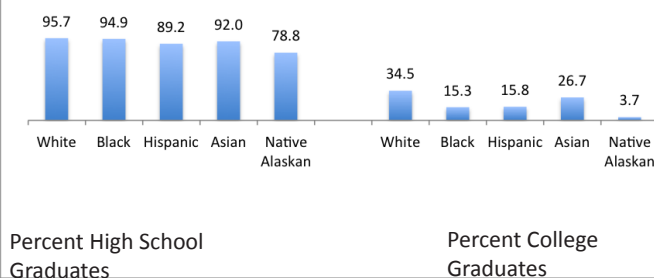
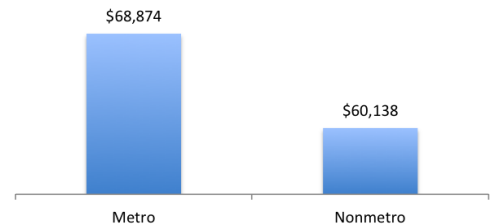
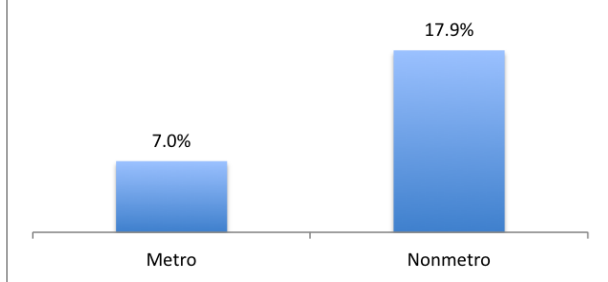


Figure 7A. Median Household Income by Residence in Alaska, 2009



**Figure 7B. Percent of Persons in Poverty by Residence in Alaska, 2009**



**Table 1. Population Change in Alaska Boroughs and Census Areas, 1980-2010**

Borough or Census Area					Change			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2000 - 2010		1980 - 2010	
					Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Aleutians East	-	2,464	2,697	3,141	444	16.5	3,141	-
Alleutians West	7,768	9,478	5,465	5,561	96	1.8	-2,207	-28.4
Anchorage	174,431	226,338	260,283	291,826	31,543	12.1	117,395	67.3
Bethel	10,999	13,656	16,006	17,013	1,007	6.3	6,014	54.7
Bristol Bay	1,094	1,410	1,258	997	-261	-20.7	-97	-8.9
Denali	-	-	1,893	1,826	-67	-3.5	1,826	-
Dillingham	4,616	4,012	4,922	4,847	-75	-1.5	231	5.0
Fairbanks North Star	53,983	77,720	82,840	97,581	14,741	17.8	43,598	80.8
Haines	1,680	2,117	2,392	2,508	116	4.8	828	49.3
Hoonah-Angoon	-	-	-	2,150	-	-	2,150	-
Juneau	19,528	26,751	30,711	31,275	564	1.8	11,747	60.2
Kenai Peninsula	25,282	40,802	49,691	55,400	5,709	11.5	30,118	119.1
Ketchikan Gateway	11,316	13,828	14,070	13,477	-593	-4.2	2,161	19.1
Kodiak Island	9,939	13,309	13,913	13,592	-321	-2.3	3,653	36.8
Lake and Peninsula	-	1,668	1,823	1,631	-192	-10.5	1,631	-
Matanuska-Susitna	17,816	39,683	59,322	88,995	29,673	50.0	71,179	399.5
Nome	6,537	8,288	9,196	9,492	296	3.2	2,955	45.2
North Slope	4,199	5,979	7,385	9,430	2,045	27.7	5,231	124.6
Northwest Arctic	4,831	6,113	7,208	7,523	315	4.4	2,692	55.7
Petersburg	-	-	-	3,815	3,815	-	3,815	-
Prince of Wales-Hyder	3,822	6,278	6,146	5,559	-587	-9.6	1,737	45.4
Sitka	7,803	8,588	8,835	8,881	46	0.5	1,078	13.8
Skagway	3,478	4,385	3,436	968	-2,468	-71.8	-2,510	-72.2
Southeast Fairbanks	5,676	5,913	6,174	7,029	855	13.8	1,353	23.8
Valdez-Cordova	8,348	9,952	10,195	9,636	-559	-5.5	1,288	15.4
Wade Hampton	4,665	5,791	7,028	7,459	431	6.1	2,794	59.9
Wrangell	6,167	7,042	6,684	2,369	-4,315	-64.6	-3,798	-16.6
Yakutat City	-	-	808	662	-146	-18.1	662	-
Yukon-Koyukak	7,873	8,478	6,551	5,588	-963	-14.7	-2,285	-29.0
State Total	401,851	550,043	626,932	710,231	83,299	13.3	308,380	76.7

**Table 2. Percentage of Population by Race/Ethnicity for Alaska Boroughs and Census Areas, 2010**

Borough or Census Area	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native Alaskan
Aleutians East	13.5	7.0	12.3	36.0	27.9
Alleutians West	31.4	6.0	13.1	28.9	15.4
Anchorage	62.6	5.6	7.6	8.1	7.9
Bethel	10.9	0.4	1.1	0.9	82.9
Bristol Bay	47.7	0.0	2.4	0.8	33.5
Denali	88.4	0.5	2.3	1.0	3.6
Dillingham	17.6	0.2	2.1	0.7	71.6
Fairbanks North Star	74.1	4.5	5.8	2.7	7.0
Haines	82.2	0.4	1.9	0.6	9.2
Hoonah-Angoon	46.2	0.4	3.6	0.6	41.4
Juneau	67.4	0.9	5.1	6.1	11.8
Kenai Peninsula	82.8	0.5	3.0	1.1	7.4
Ketchikan Gateway	66.2	0.6	4.0	7.0	14.2
Kodiak Island	52.5	0.7	7.3	19.6	13.2
Lake and Peninsula	22.2	0.6	2.6	0.4	65.1
Matanuska-Susitna	82.8	1.0	3.7	1.2	5.5
Nome	15.9	0.3	1.2	1.0	75.8
North Slope	32.4	1.0	2.6	4.5	54.1
Northwest Arctic	11.0	0.5	0.8	0.6	81.4
Petersburg	69.4	0.4	3.4	2.6	16.1
Prince of Wales-Hyder	49.6	0.3	2.3	0.4	39.7
Sitka	63.5	0.5	4.9	6.0	16.8
Skagway	90.1	0.0	2.2	0.5	3.5
Southeast Fairbanks	78.7	1.1	3.3	0.9	11.5
Valdez-Cordova	72.1	0.5	3.6	3.7	13.6
Wade Hampton	2.7	0.0	0.1	0.2	95.0
Wrangell	71.7	0.2	1.6	1.4	16.2
Yakutat City	40.5	0.3	2.6	4.1	35.8
Yukon-Koyukak	21.8	0.2	1.2	0.3	71.4
State Total	64.1	3.3	5.5	5.4	14.8

**Table 3. Economic Conditions and Education for Alaska Boroughs and Census Areas, 2009**

Borough or Census Area	Median Household Income	Percent of Persons in Poverty	Median Value of Owner-Occupied Homes	Percent of Persons 25+ with High School Degree	Percent of Persons 25+ with College Degree
Aleutians East	\$50,444	13.9	\$122,100	65.1	12.5
Aleutians West	\$58,174	9.1	\$165,400	74.4	8.5
Anchorage	\$72,210	7.6	\$255,900	91.9	32.3
Bethel	\$41,810	20.7	\$119,200	79.1	14.4
Bristol Bay	\$64,418	7.8	\$170,500	90.0	14.2
Denali	\$62,615	4.8	\$167,000	97.0	24.6
Dillingham	\$46,580	18.5	\$171,900	83.9	20.5
Fairbanks North Star	\$64,691	7.9	\$198,200	93.6	26.3
Haines	\$48,644	9.8	\$186,300	94.0	36.2
Hoonah-Angoon	\$41,824	17.2	\$169,000	88.4	22.5
Juneau	\$73,044	6.6	\$284,000	95.6	35.8
Kenai Peninsula	\$57,171	8.7	\$183,000	91.2	21.4
Ketchikan Gateway	\$58,492	8.3	\$209,600	92.8	24.1
Kodiak Island	\$62,574	6.9	\$173,800	87.7	20.7
Lake and Peninsula	\$42,236	16.1	\$169,600	79.1	17.3
Matanuska-Susitna	\$70,442	8.7	\$205,000	90.6	19.9
Nome	\$48,174	21.3	\$129,500	82.7	15.1
North Slope	\$75,057	7.8	\$143,400	80.3	19.4
Northwest Arctic	\$52,272	15.0	\$132,100	78.7	13.2
Petersburg	\$51,374	9.2	\$181,700	95.3	24.7
Prince of Wales-Hyder	\$43,210	15.4	\$144,000	87.6	15.4
Sitka	\$59,536	7.6	\$317,600	91.2	26.2
Skagway	\$63,947	4.0	\$259,800	95.4	31.0
Southeast Fairbanks	\$54,749	12.5	\$159,300	88.8	16.6
Valdez-Cordova	\$60,780	7.9	\$163,700	91.2	22.0
Wade Hampton	\$30,238	30.9	\$70,300	74.0	11.2
Wrangell	\$48,021	10.5	\$167,200	92.6	14.8
Yakutat City	\$52,102	14.1	\$151,700	92.7	17.0
Yukon-Koyukak	\$32,125	22.7	\$89,900	78.7	12.9
State Total	\$66,712	9.1	\$221,300	90.7	26.5



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#### About the WRDC

The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) is one of four regional centers competitively funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture to strengthen the capacity of local citizens to guide the future of their rural communities. Each of the four Centers link the research and extension capacity of regional land-grant universities with local decision-makers to enhance rural prosperity, create thriving communities, and support a sustainable and competitive agricultural system.

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