



The Alaska Native Population

Steady growth for original Alaskans through years of change

Alaska is home to one of the largest indigenous populations in the nation. With more than 120,000 people, Alaska Natives represented 17 percent of the state in 2010 — a larger proportion than any other state.

The Alaska Native population is made up of many distinct cultures and has lands in each region of Alaska. After large population declines that followed early contact with Europeans in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Native population has grown substantially over the past 100 years, and that growth is projected to continue.

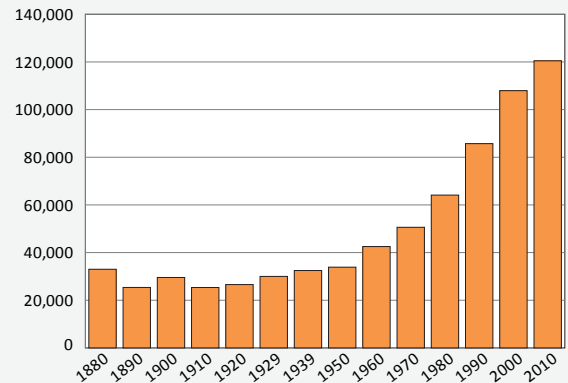
Today, most Alaska Natives still live in small villages and remote regional hubs even though the urban Native population has increased. Alaska's urban areas¹ were home to less than half the state's Native population in 2010.

The first Alaskans

People have resided in Alaska for at least 15,000 years, and possibly for more than 30,000 years. Migration to Alaska and the rest of North America

¹"Urban areas" refers to Anchorage, Juneau, and the Matanuska-Susitna, Fairbanks North Star, and Kenai Peninsula boroughs.

1 Alaska's Native Population 1880 to 2010



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

is generally understood to have been across a land bridge that surrounded what is now the Bering Strait. It's unclear how many waves of migration there were, or what drove them, but by the time Europeans first reached Alaska in the 1700s, dozens of distinct cultures and tens of thousands of people lived here.

These original residents of Alaska include the Inupiat from the northern and northwest parts of the state, the Yupik from the southwest coastal and delta region, the Aleut/Unangan from along the Aleutian chain, the Alutiiq/Sugpiaq and Eyak of the southcentral coast, Athabascans from the interior, and the Tlingit and Haida of Southeast. There are also many more distinct cultures within these larger groups.

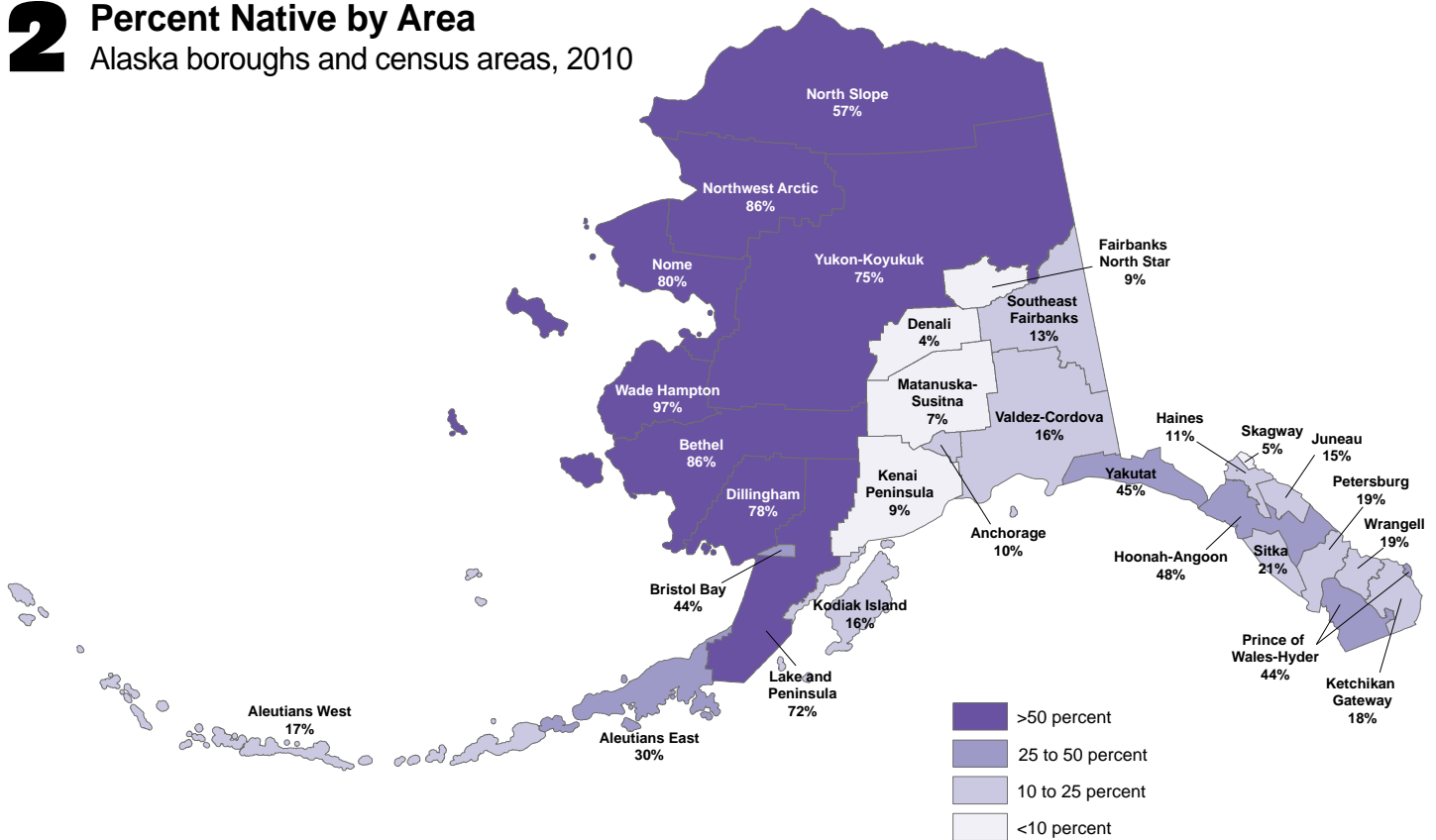
Research on human settlement puts the Alaska Native population at around 80,000 to 90,000 people by the time of regular contact with Europeans in the 18th and 19th centuries. A large part of these populations was lost to disease soon after contact. By the first U.S. census of Alaska in 1880, the count of Alaska Natives was 32,996, along with 430 white settlers who lived mostly in Southeast.



Note: Additional groups include the Eyak of Southcentral and the Tsimshian of Southeast.

2 Percent Native by Area

Alaska boroughs and census areas, 2010



Note: These are “bridged” race estimates, which adjust data from surveys that allow reporting of more than one race group (such as the 2000 and 2010 censuses) so that each respondent is assigned a single race. Data on race alone and race alone or in combination with other races are available at labor.alaska.gov/research.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Though that early count was incomplete, it’s clear that massive decline in the Alaska Native population followed first contact.

Further decline in mining era

Mining — especially gold — and commercial fishing of the late 1800s and early 1900s brought the first large-scale migrations of non-Natives to Alaska, and that significantly reduced the share of Native residents in the district. Between 1880 and 1900, Alaska Natives went from representing nearly 100 percent of the overall count to less than 50 percent.

In contrast to the thinly spread-out Native population, the non-Native (mostly white) population at that time was mainly young male workers centered near mining and fishing sites including Juneau, Skagway, Fairbanks, Nome, and Kodiak.

The actual number of Alaska Natives declined as well during that period, to 29,536 in 1900 and

then further to 25,331 in 1910. Since 1910, despite deaths from the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919, the Native population has grown with each decade. (See Exhibit 1.)

Growth during military expansion

With the economic slowdown between the 1920 and 1939 censuses, Alaska’s overall population growth halted and the Native share stayed at around 50 percent. The Native proportion later decreased following the start of World War II, the massive entrance of military personnel and buildup for the Cold War, and the expansion of the fishing and timber industries.

By 1950, the percentage of Natives was down to about 25 and still declining, reaching 17 percent by 1970. Still, the Native population was growing steadily, largely in areas far removed from the economic events of those days, and reached more than 50,000 people by the 1970 Census.

3 Alaska Native Populations by Area and Group 2010 Census

Area	Total Population	Athabaskan	Aleut	Inupiat	Tlingit-Haida	Tsimshian	Yupik
Alaska	710,231	16,665	11,216	25,687	13,186	1,939	30,868
Aleutians East Borough	3,141	5	756	2	1	0	6
Aleutians West Census Area	5,561	16	763	25	17	12	31
Anchorage, Municipality	291,826	4,333	3,982	6,103	2,241	221	4,835
Bethel Census Area	17,013	188	44	429	24	1	12,212
Bristol Bay Borough	997	8	163	8	1	0	249
Denali Borough	1,826	36	5	6	0	0	9
Dillingham Census Area	4,847	39	120	96	8	0	3,280
Fairbanks North Star Borough	97,581	3,564	202	1,269	252	9	516
Haines Borough	2,508	0	4	5	213	1	6
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	2,149	14	11	31	801	0	10
Juneau, City and Borough	31,275	119	186	174	3,825	114	113
Kenai Peninsula Borough	55,400	1,401	860	670	243	26	557
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	13,477	76	129	35	1,409	333	22
Kodiak Island Borough	13,592	47	1,606	37	45	1	105
Lake and Peninsula Borough	1,631	209	616	18	18	2	245
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	88,995	1,122	1,034	1,208	444	28	878
Nome Census Area	9,492	68	21	4,455	22	3	1,955
North Slope Borough	9,430	37	9	4,275	16	0	61
Northwest Arctic Borough	7,523	44	17	5,633	17	8	63
Petersburg Census Area	3,203	5	20	14	573	3	1
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	6,172	18	37	44	940	1,075	34
Sitka, City and Borough	8,881	45	77	71	1,394	65	60
Skagway, Municipality	968	0	7	2	22	6	0
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	7,029	738	10	62	18	0	23
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	9,636	669	459	81	62	11	65
Wade Hampton Census Area	7,459	33	20	839	3	0	5,475
Wrangell, City and Borough	2,369	6	38	6	351	20	2
Yakutat, City and Borough	662	19	10	18	223	0	7
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	5,588	3,806	10	71	3	0	48

Notes: "Alaska Native" in this case includes those who reported they were Alaska Native alone or in combination with another race. Though the Alutiiq, or Sugpiaq, have Yupik roots, they are tabulated as Aleut in the 2010 Census. This goes back to the early Russian grouping of all Unangan/Aleut and Alutiiq people as Aleut.

These numbers won't add to bridged-race population estimates. (See Exhibit 4 for more explanation.)

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

ANCSA created corporations

In 1966, the Alaska Federation of Natives was formed from the many established Native regional associations to act as a collective voice and help resolve ongoing land rights issues. The discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay in 1968 pushed the state and federal government to settle Native land claims, and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, or ANCSA, was signed into law in 1971.

Under ANCSA, the government granted 44 million acres of land to Alaska Natives and created the 13 Alaska Native regional corporations along with more than 200 village corporations. Native corporations are an important part of the economy

for Alaska Natives, providing dividends to their shareholders and generating a significant part of the economic activity in many Native communities.

Statewide oil booms and busts

The big discovery of oil brought two dramatic population boom-bust periods for the state: one in the 1970s with the construction and completion of the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline and one in the 1980s with new oil revenue followed by a significant drop in oil prices. In addition to these, Alaska's birth rates increased in the 1980s when many of its new "baby boomer" residents were in their child-bearing years.

Though the economic events of the 1970s and 1980s affected the whole state, migration shifts in the Native population were much smaller. The Native population grew less than the non-Native population, but with its robust birth rates it gained more than 35,000 people in that 20-year span — a 70 percent increase. By the 2000 Census, the Alaska Native and American Indian statewide population was 107,929.

A fifth of Alaskans

As of 2010, an estimated 120,452 people in the state were Alaska Native or American Indian, representing 17 percent of the state population. Including those who identified any Native ancestry increased the total to 20 percent, or nearly 140,000.

Majority Native areas

While many Alaska Natives live in Alaska's major population centers, the areas with the highest proportions of the Native population are in remote western and northern Alaska. Eight Alaska boroughs or census areas were over 50 percent Native in the 2010 Census, and six were over 75 percent Native. (See Exhibit 2.)

Of the major Native groups counted in the Census, the Yupik and Inupiat of western and northern Alaska had the largest populations, followed by Athabascan, Tlingit and Haida, Aleut, and Tsimshian. Nearly 13,000 Alaskans reported American Indian heritage in 2010.

Southwest home to most Yupik

Of the more than 30,000 Yupik counted in Alaska in 2010, 75 percent lived in the western part of the state and were the majority in the Bethel, Dillingham, and Wade Hampton census areas. Like all Alaska Native groups, a significant share

4 Where Alaska Natives Lived in 2010 vs. 2000

Alaska boroughs and census areas, April

	2000		2010	
	Total	Alaska Native or American Indian	Total	Alaska Native or American Indian
State of Alaska	626,932	107,929	710,231	120,452
Aleutians East Borough	2,697	1,036	3,141	953
Aleutians West Borough	5,465	1,225	5,561	971
Anchorage, Municipality	260,283	21,851	291,826	28,211
Bethel Census Area	16,047	13,575	17,013	14,601
Bristol Bay Borough	1,258	571	997	436
Denali Borough	1,893	111	1,826	77
Dillingham Census Area	4,922	3,679	4,847	3,774
Fairbanks North Star Borough	82,840	6,873	97,581	8,598
Haines Borough	2,392	313	2,508	275
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	2,574	1,281	2,150	1,032
Juneau, City and Borough	30,711	4,220	31,275	4,775
Kenai Peninsula Borough	49,691	4,333	55,400	5,141
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	14,067	2,418	13,477	2,414
Kodiak Island Borough	13,913	2,277	13,592	2,218
Lake and Peninsula Borough	1,823	1,422	1,631	1,180
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	59,322	4,026	88,995	6,568
Nome Census Area	9,196	7,161	9,492	7,598
North Slope Borough	7,385	5,330	9,430	5,403
Northwest Arctic Borough	7,208	6,121	7,523	6,436
Petersburg Census Area	4,260	816	3,815	736
Prince of Wales-Hyder CA	6,125	2,625	5,559	2,453
Sitka, City and Borough	8,835	1,908	8,881	1,877
Skagway, Municipality	862	52	968	50
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	6,174	889	7,029	930
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	10,195	1,567	9,636	1,585
Wade Hampton Census Area	7,028	6,648	7,459	7,202
Wrangell, City and Borough	2,448	448	2,369	455
Yakutat, City and Borough	808	357	662	300
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	6,510	4,796	5,588	4,203

Notes: Bridged race estimates. "Bridged" race estimates are race estimates that adjust data from surveys that allow reporting of more than one race group (such as the 2000 and 2010 Censuses) so that each respondent is assigned a single race.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

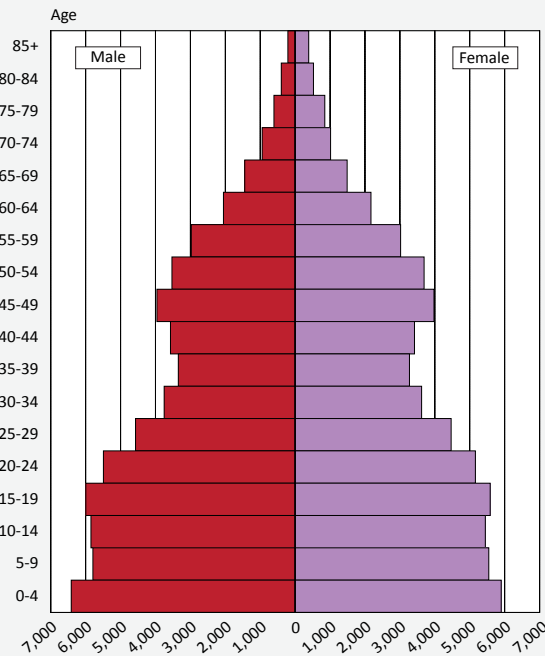
of the Yupik people — 16 percent — lived primarily in Anchorage. Bethel Census Area had the largest population of Yupik by far, at 12,212. (See Exhibit 3.)

Inupiat make up most of north

Alaska was home to nearly 26,000 people of Inupiat origin in 2010, and more than half lived in the Northern Region. The Inupiat made up the majority of the household population in the North Slope and Northwest Arctic Boroughs, and just under half the population of the Nome Census Area.

The single area with the largest number of Inupiat was Anchorage, where more than 6,100 people

5 Population by Age and Sex Alaska Natives, 2010



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

in 2010. With lands covering the entire Interior down to parts of the southcentral coast, many Athabascans live in the Fairbanks North Star Borough and Anchorage. The massive and sparsely populated Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area, which has no central hub and is made up of dozens of small communities, was home to more than 3,800 Athabascans in 2010 — more than two-thirds of the YK Census Area’s population.

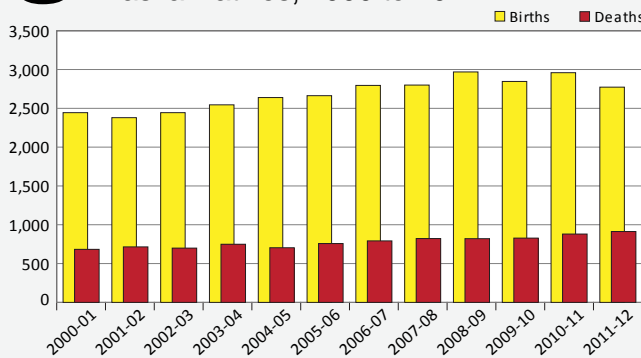
Tlingit, Haida live in Southeast

The Tlingit and Haida of Southeast Alaska accounted for more than 13,000 Alaska residents in 2010. While the domain of the Tlingit has historically covered almost all of Southeast, Haida are originally from Prince of Wales Island.

The largest Tlingit communities are in the Southeast hubs of Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan, but Anchorage is home to many Tlingit as well.

The Tsimshian originated in British Columbia but have resided in Metlakatla on Annette Island — Alaska’s only Indian Reservation — since the late 1800s. Tsimshian had a statewide population of 1,939 in 2010.

6 Births and Deaths Alaska Natives, 2000 to 2012



Sources: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Bureau of Vital Statistics; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Aleut includes two groups

The basic 2010 Census tables for the Aleut population include both the Aleut/Unangan of the Aleutian chain and the Alaska Peninsula as well as the Alutiiq/Sugpiaq of the Alaska Peninsula, Kodiak Island, and Southcentral Alaska.

The Russians used the word “Aleut” in the 18th century for both the Unangan and the Sugpiaq. “Alutiiq” reflects the Sugpiaq pronunciation of “Aleut,” but many Alutiiq/Sugpiaq do use the “Aleut” spelling. Though the data group the two, the Alutiiq/Sugpiaq are related by language to the Yupik, and the Unangan are not.

reported they were Inupiat alone or in combination with another race. Northwest Arctic Borough had the largest number of people who self-identified as Inupiat alone, at 5,268.

Athabascans cover a large area

Athabascans had an Alaska population of 16,665

The total population count for “Aleut” in the 2010 Census was 11,216, with nearly 40 percent residing in Anchorage. Kodiak Island Borough, a major area for the Alutiiq, was home to more than 1,600 Alutiiq or Aleut people in 2010. Large parts of the household populations of Aleutians East Borough and Aleutians West Census Area identified as Aleut as well.

Increasingly urban

Within the state, a growing share of the Alaska Native population lives in the population centers, largely away from village life. Between 2000 and 2010, the portion of the Alaska Native or American Indian population that lived in Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna, Fairbanks North Star, Juneau, and Kenai Peninsula boroughs increased from 38 to 44 percent. Anchorage, which is home to most Alaskans overall, gained 6,360 people of Alaska Native or American Indian origin between 2000 and 2010, by far the most in the state. (See Exhibit 4.)

Rural to urban migration

The reason for the increasingly urban residence of Alaska Natives is migration, both historic and current. Migration data based on Permanent Fund Dividend applications show clear net migration from majority-Native areas to the rest of the state as well as outside. On average, the mostly Native boroughs lose about 750 residents per year to the rest of the state and lose about 900 people overall.

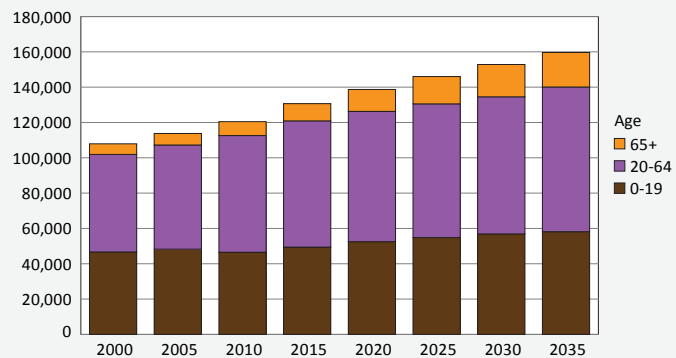
It's important to note, though, that these data include all residents of those majority-Native areas and not just Natives. Also, many people are moving both to and from remote Alaska. Further, many urban Alaska Natives keep strong ties with their traditional Native communities and may spend significant parts of the year there or plan to eventually return.

Large presence in Washington

A little over one-fourth of those with Alaska Native origin lived outside Alaska as of 2010 — a large share, but one that hasn't changed much since 2000. Washington has by far the most Alaska Native residents outside of Alaska, with 9 percent of the nationwide total in 2010, which includes Alaska. Twenty-two percent of U.S. residents with Tlingit, Haida, or Tsimshian ancestry lived in Washington, and 15 percent of those with Aleut/Unangan or Alutiiq/Sugpiaq ancestry lived there.

California and Oregon are the only other states that were home to more than 1 percent of Alaska Natives, at 4 and 2 percent respectively.

7 Population Distribution by Age Alaska Natives, 2000 to 2035



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Consistently high birth rates

Alaska Natives have higher birth rates than non-Natives, and these contribute to steady population growth at the state level as well as for many remote communities that regularly lose residents to migration. On average, Natives have a total fertility rate — the number of children per woman — of more than 3, compared to less than 2.5 for non-Natives in the state.

Residents of majority-Native boroughs and census areas have even higher fertility rates than the Native population as a whole. Wade Hampton Census Area has a rate of over 4, and several areas in western and northern Alaska have rates over 3.5.

A young population overall

With decades of high birth rates, the Alaska Native population is young. The median age of Natives in 2010 was just 26.7 compared to 33.8 for the whole state. There are relatively few Alaska Natives in the highest age groups, so even with lower life expectancy than the Alaska average, the natural increase (births minus deaths) of Natives in Alaska is high and more than makes up for statewide Native losses due to out-migration. Statewide net migration losses of the Native population can vary considerably from year to year, and averaged an estimated 650 residents per year between 2000 and 2010. (See exhibits 5 and 6.)

Continued on page 13

cast projects just 1.6 percent growth, or 1,010 new jobs — far below the forecasted 12 percent growth for all industries. Most job openings will likely come from replacements rather than new positions.

Although some occupations in media are expected to grow, job openings for reporters are forecasted to decrease 7.7 percent by 2020. (See Exhibit 5.) Job openings for radio and television announcers, editors, and broadcast technicians are also forecasted to decline somewhat or remain flat.

ALASKA NATIVES

Continued from page 9

Steady growth projected

Population projections based on rates of births, deaths, and migration suggest the state's Native population will grow steadily through 2035, gaining 40,000 people for a 33 percent increase from the 2010 Census. To compare, the state as a whole is projected to add a little more than 200,000 people to its 2010 count of 710,231, for a 29 percent increase. (See Exhibit 7 on page 9.)

All age groups to increase

The Native population ages 20 to 64, which roughly covers the working ages, is expected to increase by nearly 16,000 people, or 24 percent, between 2010 and 2035. That increase is very large and is attributable to the high birth rates among Natives over the past 25 years. For the state, the same age group is projected to increase by just 11 percent through 2035.

The population of Alaska Natives age 65 or

older is projected to grow by nearly 12,000 people, or 150 percent, between 2010 and 2035. Though that increase is dramatic and will represent an important shift for the Native community, it's not out of line with the projected statewide increase of 180 percent over the same period.

Sustained populations

Through the dramatic ups and downs of population and economic change that Alaska has seen over the past 100 years, the Alaska Native population has sustained a steady increase in numbers. By the start of the 21st century, the Native population was more than 100,000 and on pace to reach 150,000 by 2030.

Though Alaska Natives are increasingly connected to the state's biggest cities, many Native villages in remote areas still gain population regularly, and continued growth for both ways of life is likely.