

MOVERS TO ALASKA

A look at the demographics of our newest residents

By **EDDIE HUNSINGER**

Of the 735,000 people who live in Alaska today, more than 40,000 arrived in just the last year. Although the number who move here each year is mostly balanced by the number who leave, newcomers significantly and continuously change the state's makeup.

From large, close states

The states that send the most people to Alaska are either close or have large populations (see Exhibit 1), a trend that has been steady over time. Likewise, when Alaskans leave, they typically move to these states. Over the most recent time period available, 2009 to 2013, Texas had the most Alaska-bound movers — but the top spot fluctuates among Washington, California, and Texas.

Altogether, people moving here from other U.S. states or territories make up about 90 percent of our recent arrivals, and 10 percent come from other countries. Eleven percent were born in Alaska and are returning. (Just 40 percent of Alaska's population was born in the state, far less than the national figure of 59 percent born in their current state of residence.)

Also many international movers

Alaska receives 3,000 to 5,000 movers from other countries each year. Nations that send the most people, typically a few hundred per year, are the Philippines, Mexico, and Canada. Military deployments and bases overseas also affect migration from foreign coun-

About these numbers

The American Community Survey collects socioeconomic data throughout the country on an ongoing basis. Due to limited sample sizes, data released in a combined five-year format (such as the 2009 to 2013 data used here) are considered more reliable, especially for small areas. Still, they often have large margins of error.

The geographic mobility data presented in this article are based on the following questions: "Did this person live in this house or apartment one year ago?" and "Where did this person live one year ago?"

tries, and many movers in recent years were soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

About 8 percent of newcomers aren't U.S. citizens, versus 3 percent of the current state population. (See Exhibit 2.) Of the noncitizens who moved here recently, it's notable that about half moved from another state rather than from abroad. For comparison, about 40 percent of Washington's noncitizen newcomers moved from another state, and for California the figure is just 20 percent.

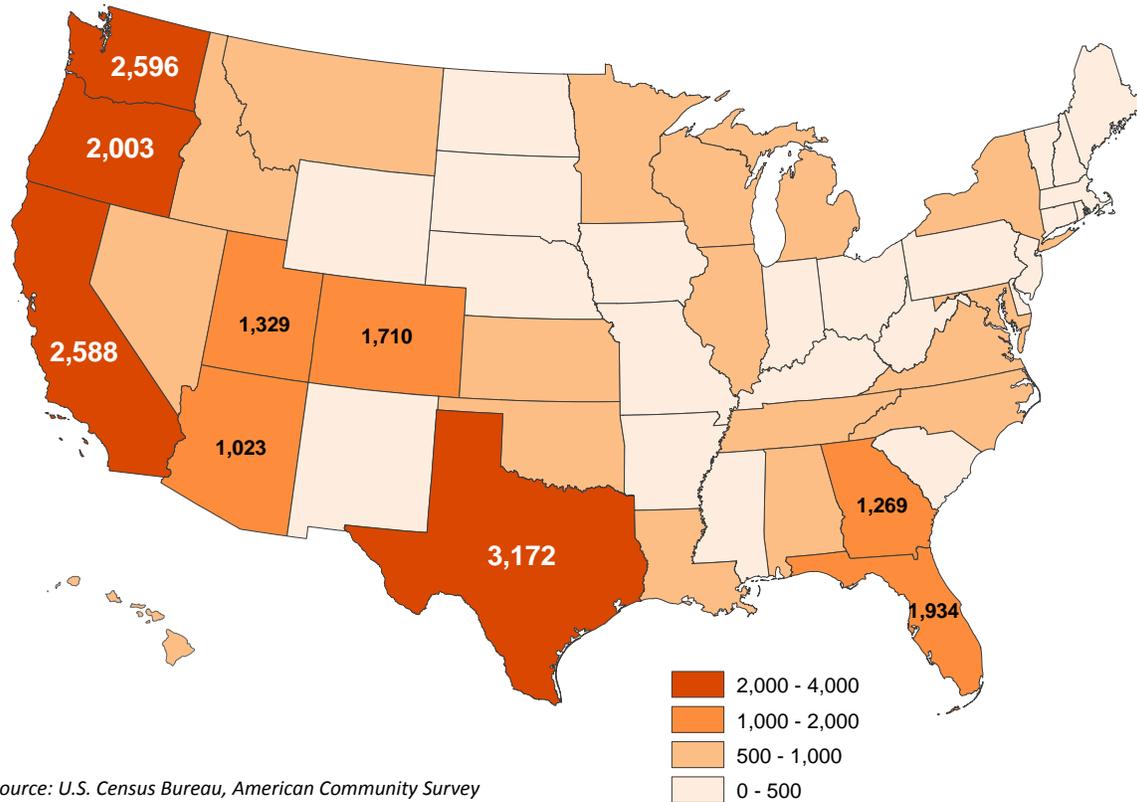
Just over 80 percent of the recent arrivals ages 5 or older speak English at home — not much different from the 84 percent of all Alaskans age 5-plus who do.

To population centers and bases

Anchorage, Alaska's biggest city and home to just over

1 Migration to Alaska by State

PER YEAR, 2009 TO 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

40 percent of the state's population, was the destination for 44 percent of Alaska's recent migrants, according to the 2009 to 2013 American Community Survey.

Within Anchorage, the areas with the most newcomers were on or near Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, including the base itself (between 4,000 and 5,000 per year) as well as the lower Eagle River Valley (about 1,000 per year). The areas with the fewest newcomers included higher-income areas like Chugiak, the upper Eagle River Valley, and Turnagain, each with less than 100 per year.

In general, where people move in Alaska follows the distribution of population across the state, but the locations of military bases also play an important role. Fairbanks North Star Borough, which is home to 14 percent of the state's population and two major military bases, received an estimated 23 percent of annual migrants.

Movers are typically young

Throughout the country, people in their late teens

and early twenties move the most, and the oldest age groups tend to move the least. Thirty-five percent of those who moved to Alaska from 2009 to 2013 were 20 to 29 years old, and just 4 percent were over age 60. If we were to look at the population moving *from* Alaska, it would have a similar age structure.

It's important to note, though, that the aging of Alaska's population will overwhelm the migration-related changes at higher ages. With the aging of Alaska's baby boomers, the 65-plus population will continue to grow.

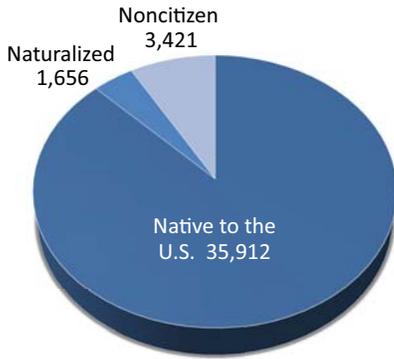
Slowly changing racial makeup

Ten percent of the new Alaskans from 2009 to 2013 were Hispanic, 10 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, 7 percent were black, and just 4 percent were American Indian or Alaska Native. (See Exhibit 3.) About two-thirds were non-Hispanic white.

Altogether, the population that recently moved to the state is a bit more nonwhite and non-Native than Alaska's total population and, based on analysis of population estimates by age and race, a bit more non-

2 Most Are U.S. Citizens

MIGRANTS TO ALASKA, 2009 TO 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

white and non-Native than the population that left Alaska. Though the differences are slight, they contribute to a continuously changing racial makeup of the state over time when coupled with differing birth rates by race.

More in military, college

About 63 percent of the 16-plus newcomer population were in the civilian labor force,¹ and 12 percent of those were unemployed, according to the 2009 to 2013 data. Sixteen percent were in the active duty armed forces. In Alaska's overall 16-plus population, about 69 percent were in the civilian labor force, of which 9 percent were unemployed. Just 3 percent were in the military.

New arrivals were also more likely to be in college than the current population. For those 16 and over, 16 percent who recently arrived were enrolled versus just 9 percent of Alaskans. Much of this is related to the greater tendency for young people to move.

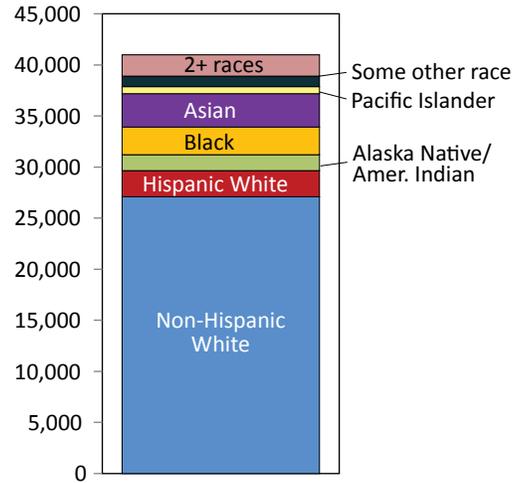
Alaska's recent arrivals tend to have higher levels of education, as well. Among newcomers 25 or older, 71 percent have some college and 34 percent have a degree. (See Exhibit 4.) For the state as a whole, it's 64 percent and 28 percent.

The new arrivals tend to have lower incomes, though, as younger people are often in school or earlier in their careers. Alaskans 15 and older had a median income of \$30,947. The median income for recent movers from another state was \$24,520, and for those who came from abroad it was \$26,256.

¹"In the labor force" means a person is either working or actively looking for work.

3 Most Migrants Are White

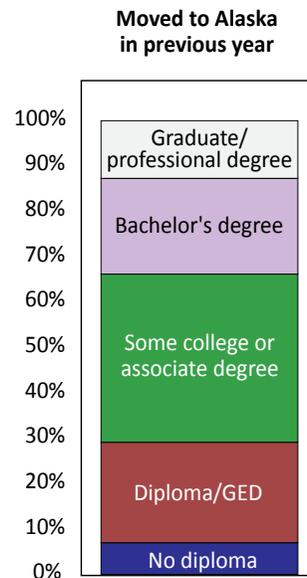
MIGRANTS TO ALASKA, 2009 TO 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

4 Most Have Gone to College

MIGRANTS TO ALASKA



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Similarly, the poverty rate for newcomers was higher than Alaska's 10 percent overall, at 15 percent for those from another state and 16 percent for international migrants.