

Alaska's Hispanic Population

Largest U.S. minority is growing part of Alaska

Alaska is home to people from many backgrounds, and its increasing diversity has become more apparent in recent decades as its economy and population have grown and changed rapidly.

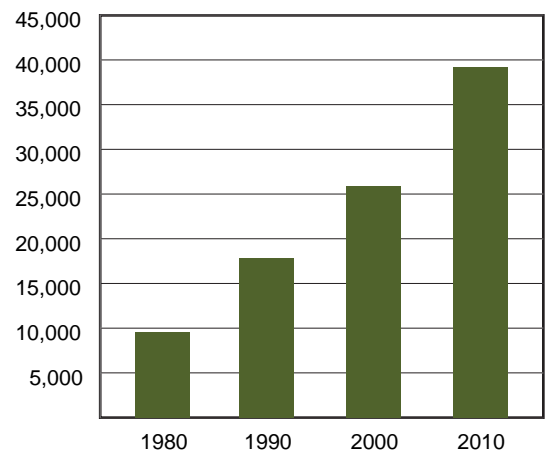
Though people of Hispanic or Latino origin make up a smaller share of the state population than the nation as a whole, they are a growing part of this ever-changing state and its economy. (See Exhibit 1.)

Hispanics are the largest minority group in the nation, at 16.3 percent and rising, making them the subject of much research and discussion. In Alaska, people of Hispanic or Latino origin made up 5.5 percent of the state's population in the 2010 Census, up from 4.1 percent in 2000. In numeric terms, the state's Hispanic representation increased by more than 13,000 people — that's 51.8 percent over the decade, which is considerably higher than the 43.0 percent growth nationwide.

Youth, migration add to growth

Alaska's Hispanic population is growing rapidly due to both net migration and natural increase — births minus deaths. Hispanics have a higher-

1 Hispanic Population Alaska, 1980 to 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

than-average birth rate, which adds a large number of newborns to their population each year, and a lower overall death rate due to few people in the oldest age groups, both in Alaska and nationwide.

Growth by natural increase is closely related to a population's age structure, and similar to the nationwide Hispanic population, Alaskan Hispanics tend to be young. (See Exhibit 2.) Their median age was 24.4 in 2010, significantly younger than the statewide median of 33.8 years.

Part of the reason for the young makeup of Alaska's Hispanic population is that it lacks the large population of "baby boomers," or those born between 1946 and 1964. While the U.S. saw a steep increase in births after World War II, this was not the case for Latin American countries, where much of Alaska's older Hispanic population was born.

Many people from Latin American countries immigrated to the U.S. in the past few decades, and though migration for the group is difficult to esti-

Who is considered Hispanic or Latino

The U.S. Census Bureau defines Hispanic or Latino origin as an ethnicity rather than a race. The race question on census forms is separate from the ethnicity question, and people of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Hispanics or Latinos are those who classified themselves in one of the following categories on the 2010 Census questionnaire: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or "another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin." The latter category includes those whose origins are Spain, the Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, or the Dominican Republic. "Origin" is also self-defined, and it can mean heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of that person or his or her parents or ancestors.

mate and predict, it's clear that Alaska's Hispanic population has grown due to moves. Review of the difference between population change and birth/death data shows that roughly half of Alaska's Hispanic population growth between 2000 and 2010 was due to migration.

Many move to Anchorage

Most immigrants move to the U.S. in search of work and opportunities often found in cities, and a large share of foreign-born Hispanics in Alaska have settled in Anchorage in recent decades. Reflecting the growing presence of Hispanics in the state, a Mexican consulate office was established in Anchorage in 2008.

As of 2010, Anchorage was home to 56.2 percent of Hispanic Alaskans compared to 41.1 percent of all Alaskans. (See Exhibit 3.) Within the Anchorage bowl, the Hispanic population is fairly evenly spread, with few areas being less than 4 percent or more than 15 percent Hispanic.

Beyond Anchorage and Alaska's more densely populated areas, there are somewhat higher shares of Hispanic residents in Aleutians East Borough and Aleutians West Census Area, where many work in the seafood industry. (See Exhibit 4.) The Kodiak Island Borough also has many people of Hispanic origin connected to the Coast Guard at Kodiak Station, just as the Fairbanks North Star Borough has a significant Hispanic population tied to Fort Wainwright.

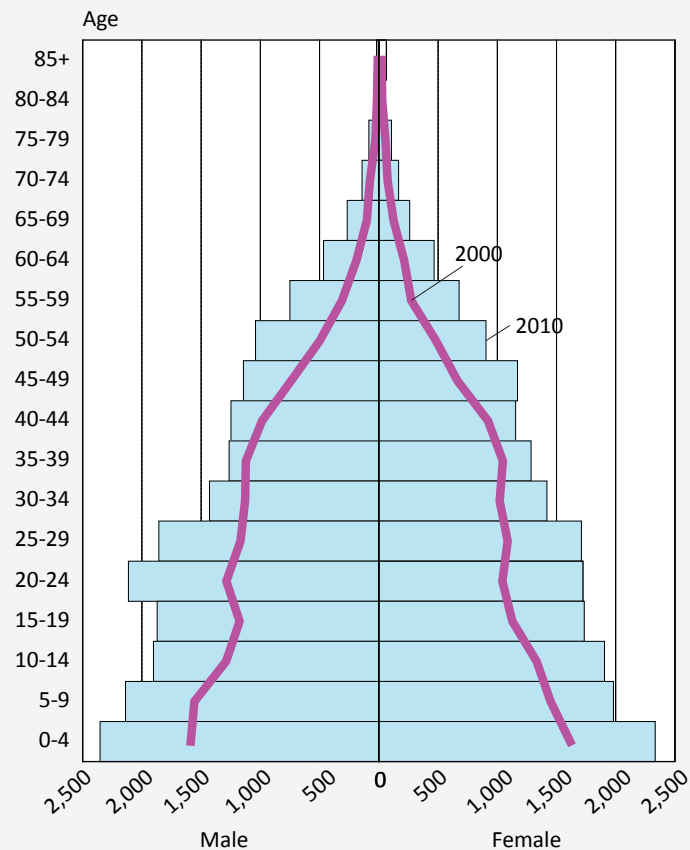
Most were born in the U.S.

Most Hispanic Alaskans were born in the United States — 77.5 percent according to the 2006-2010 American Community Survey, which is higher than the nationwide percentage of 61.9. Another 9.5 percent in Alaska are naturalized citizens.

Over half the state's Hispanic population reported Mexican origin in the 2010 Census (55.1 percent), followed by Puerto Rican at 11.5 percent and Dominican at 4.9 percent.

Half of Hispanic Alaskans speak only English — 51.1 percent — and 88.0 percent report they speak English well. This is higher than the national average for Hispanics, where just 23.6 percent speak only English, and 77.2 percent speak it well.

2 Hispanics by Age and Sex Alaska, 2000 and 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Education higher than Lower 48

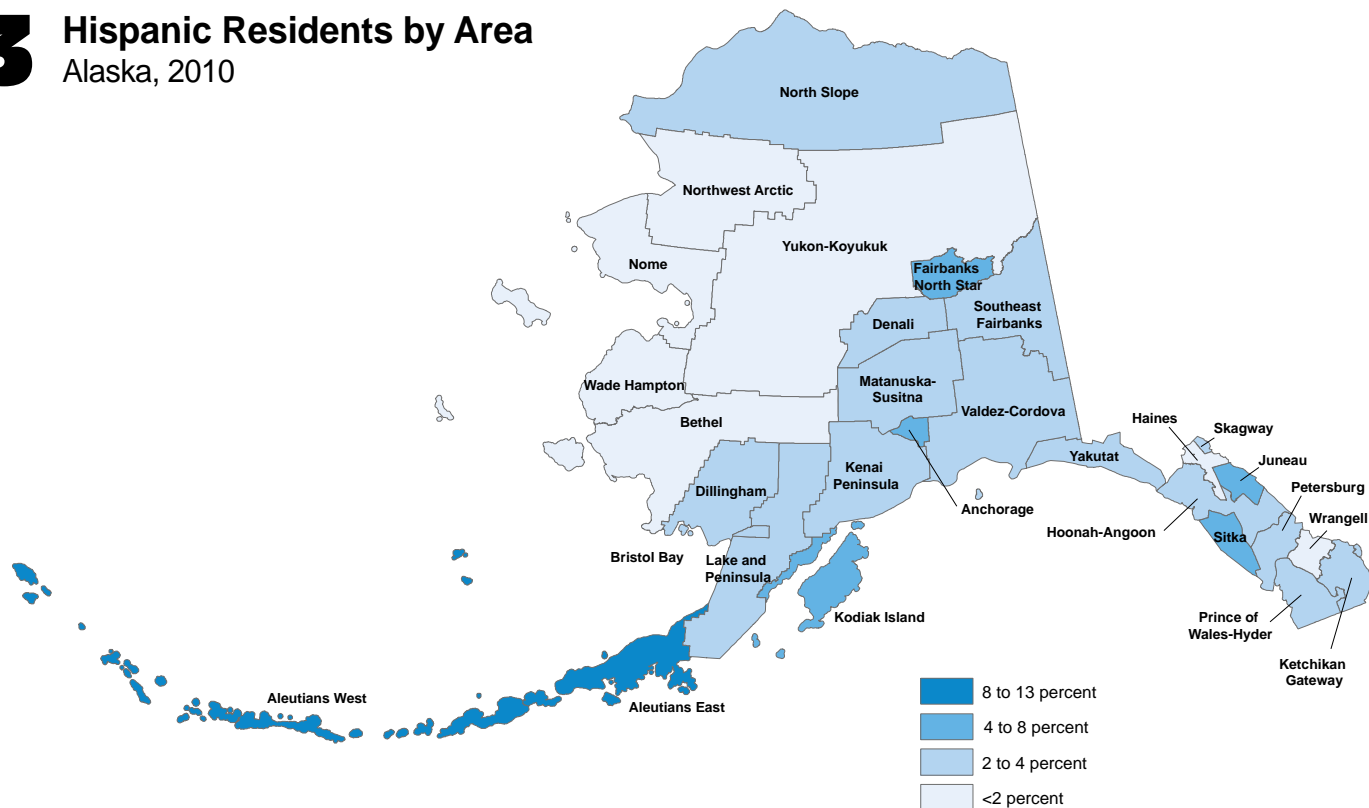
Though educational attainment levels among Hispanic Alaskans are lower than those for the state population as a whole, they have significantly higher education levels than Hispanics nationwide.

Among Hispanic Alaskans ages 25 or older, 76.7 percent have obtained at least a high school diploma, in contrast to 61.5 percent of Hispanics nationally and 90.7 of all Alaskans. Similarly, 18.2 percent of Alaskan Hispanics have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 13.0 percent of Hispanics nationwide and 27.0 percent of all Alaskans ages 25-plus.

Labor force participation among Hispanics was comparable to that of the state as a whole from 2006 to 2010, at 77.5 percent and 72.0 percent respectively. Hispanics made up 5.2 percent of Alaska's labor force during that period.

3 Hispanic Residents by Area

Alaska, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Area Name	Total Population	Hispanic Origin (any race)
State of Alaska	710,231	39,249
Aleutians East Borough	3,141	385
Aleutians West Borough	5,561	726
Anchorage, Municipality of	291,826	22,061
Bethel Census Area	17,013	181
Bristol Bay Borough	997	24
Denali Borough	1,826	42
Dillingham Census Area	4,847	101
Fairbanks North Star Borough	97,581	5,651
Haines Borough	2,508	47
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	2,150	77
Juneau, City and Borough of	31,275	1,588
Kenai Peninsula Borough	55,400	1,641
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	13,477	538
Kodiak Island Borough	13,592	996
Lake and Peninsula Borough	1,631	43
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	88,995	3,301
Nome Census Area	9,492	115
North Slope Borough	9,430	249
Northwest Arctic Borough	7,523	58
Petersburg Census Area	3,815	130
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	5,559	127
Sitka, City and Borough of	8,881	437
Skagway, Municipality of	968	21
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	7,029	234
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	9,636	349
Wade Hampton Census Area	7,459	7
Wrangell, City and Borough of	2,369	37
Yakutat, City and Borough of	662	17
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	5,588	66

Note: As of April 2010
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Relatively low poverty

Alaska's Hispanic population had relatively low per capita income from 2006 to 2010, at \$20,010 per year in contrast to Alaska's overall per capita income of \$30,726. However, age has a lot to do with income, and a large share of the young Hispanic population in the state isn't old enough to work. Median household income for Hispanic-headed households over that period — \$57,006 a year — was closer to the statewide median of \$66,521. Alaskans in general had a higher median household income than the national median of \$51,914.

Substantially fewer Hispanics were below the poverty level in Alaska than in the nation as a whole, at 11.6 percent in Alaska versus 22.4 percent nationally. That's a slightly higher poverty rate than the statewide estimate of 9.5 percent.

David Howell, a demographer with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, contributed to this article.