

Problematic Population Enumerating

by Gregory Williams

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The U.S. census enumerates people at their usual place of residence. A usual place of residence is a place where a person lives for six months of the year or more. If a person has no usual place of residence, they are counted where they are found. The census also counts persons aboard commercial ships in American waters. These ships are assigned to the port they were bound into or out of on April 1 of the census year. These facts make the census enumeration of a community like Unalaska particularly problematic.

First, because of the seasonality of shore-based fish processing, the population is highly transient. Since recruitment for the predominately Seattle based fish processing companies is usually from the Seattle area, the west coast and mountain states, many workers have usual places of residence elsewhere. Some, however, are truly transient or may not be U.S. citizens. Secondly, almost a third of the population assigned to Unalaska's in 1990 is attributable to shipboard populations who happened to be bound into or out of the port on April 1, 1990. This may

include catcher processors working the Bearing Sea.

Since Unalaska is America's largest fisheries port, considerable numbers of ships pass through to offload fish for shipment elsewhere, to refuel, and change crews. While an unknown number of persons were counted aboard commercial ships in Unalaska in 1980, the numbers were substantially smaller, in part because the Magnuson Act did not impact the number of long liners until the early 1980s. The end result is that interpreting even census population numbers and change for a community like Unalaska is particularly difficult.

Table 1 shows the population of Alaska, Aleutians West and Unalaska by race and Hispanic Origin. In both decades, Unalaska has had a higher proportion of Asian and Pacific Island and Hispanic populations than Alaska as a whole. Of persons on shipboard 23% were Asian and Pacific Islander and another 20% were of Hispanic Origin. The most noticeable change in ethnic composition since 1980 is the decline in Native population in Unalaska.

Table • 1

Census Shows Population Changes from 1980-1990

RACE	Alaska		Aleutians West Borough		Unalaska		Ships Bound For or Out Of Unalaska		
		Pct.		Pct.		Pct.		Pct.	
April 1, 1990									
Total	550,043	100.0	9,478	100.0	3,089	100.0	901	100.0	
White	415,492	75.5	6,360	67.1	1,917	62.1	506	56.2	
Native American	85,698	15.6	1,076	11.4	259	8.4	17	1.9	
Black	22,451	4.1	662	7.0	63	2.0	39	4.3	
Asian & Pacific Islander	19,728	3.6	979	10.3	593	19.2	212	23.5	
Other Races	6,674	1.2	401	4.2	257	8.3	127	14.1	
April 1, 1980									
Total	401,851	100.0	6,125	100.0	1,322	100.0			
White	309,728	77.1	4,156	67.9	848	64.1			
Native American	64,103	16.0	1,004	16.4	200	15.1			
Black	13,643	3.4	320	5.2	19	1.4			
Asian & Pacific Islander	8,054	2.0	518	8.5	220	16.6			
Other Races	6,323	1.6	127	2.1	35	2.6			
ETHNICITY									
April 1, 1990	Hispanic Origin	17,803	3.2	742	7.8	213	6.9	181	20.1
April 1, 1980	Hispanic Origin	9,507	2.4	260	4.2	42	3.2		

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis Section, Demographics Unit.