

A Few Facts about Alaskans

The American Community Survey covers a lot of ground

The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community survey covers more than just the basics. Selected American households answer detailed survey questions each month covering everything from how much time they spend commuting to how they heat their homes.

As with any sample-based survey, the accuracy of the ACS is limited — but it's often the only source for much of the information it produces. (See the sidebar for more on the ACS.) The most recently released ACS data highlight some of Alaska's unique characteristics, and reveal some of the ways the state is not so different.

Not a retirement haven

A larger-than-average share of Alaska's population is made up of new migrants from other states, and Alaska is especially attractive to people in their

20s. Is the state a draw for retirees? Not so much.

In 2010, 36,326 people moved to Alaska from another state (roughly 5 percent of the state's 2010 population). Of that number, 22 percent were in the 20-to-24 age group and an additional 13 percent were 25 to 29, which means more than one-third of all sister-state migrants to Alaska were in their 20s.

Alaska is less enticing for people of retirement age — less than 2 percent of migrants from other states were 65 or older.

To give those numbers context, just 2 percent of the nation's population moved from one state to another in 2010. As with Alaska, the largest percentage of movers were people in their 20s, although by a smaller percentage — 29 percent compared to Alaska's 35 percent.

People 65 and older moved at a lower rate than other age groups, just as in Alaska, but the 65-plus population made up 6 percent of nationwide state-to-state migration — three times higher than Alaska's 2 percent.

Migration numbers for Florida, a state known to attract retirees, present a striking contrast to the Alaska data. About 14 percent of Florida's migrants from other states were people 65 and older.

About 10 percent of total migrants to Florida from other states in 2010 were between 20 and 24 — considerably lower than the 22 percent for Alaska. That age group still made up the largest single percentage of state-to-state migrants to Florida, as students and nonstudents alike in their early 20s are especially mobile. But Alaska apparently has an especially strong pull for people in their 20s



ALASKA HAS MORE VETERANS—Sharlott Uriarte holds her son Justo while waiting for her husband, Tech Sgt. Chris Uriarte, to deplane after returning from Afghanistan last May. Photo by Maj. Guy Hayes, Alaska National Guard

and a relatively weak one for people 65 and older.

Fewer never-married women

A smaller-than-average percentage of Alaska women have never been married, but Alaska men are on par with the rest of the country.

About 20 percent of Alaska women age 20 or older had never been married as of 2010, slightly less than the 23 percent for the nation as a whole. On the men's side, 29 percent of Alaska men 20 or older had never been married, equal to the nationwide percentage.

Utah stands out for its low percentage in that age group who have never been married: just 17 percent of Utah women and 23 percent of Utah men.

New York is the opposite, with 29 percent of its women and 34 percent of its men in the 20-plus age group having never been married.

Alaska has more veterans

Alaska has a noticeably higher percentage of veterans than the nation as a whole.

Approximately one out of every four Alaska men age 18 or older is a veteran — 24 percent — in contrast to 18 percent nationwide. Alaska women were also more likely to be veterans in 2010 — 4 percent in Alaska as opposed to 1 percent for the U.S.

More about homes in the state

- Nearly 5 percent of Alaska's occupied housing



ALASKA HAS DIFFERENT KINDS OF PLUMBING—Above, this outhouse near Juneau features a solar-powered ventilation system. Photo by Nick Bonzey

units lacked complete plumbing in 2010. Nationwide, that percentage was just 0.6.

- Almost one-third of all Alaska owner-occupied housing units did not have a mortgage, presumably because many of the houses had been paid off — roughly the same percentage as the rest of the U.S.
- Less than 1 percent of Alaska's owner-occupied housing units (0.6 percent) were valued at \$1 million or more. Nationwide, 2.1 percent of owner-occupied housing units were worth \$1 million or more.

What the American Community Survey can tell us about the population

For years, the decennial census was the only source of detailed social, housing, and economic information. In addition to its effort to count every person in the United States, it also collected more detailed information from a sample of households using a "long form." One drawback to that approach was that 10 years is a long time between surveys, especially in rapidly changing areas.

After the 2000 Census, the Census Bureau began shifting to a survey of about three million households a year to produce more frequent data. Starting in 2005, the bureau's American Community Survey began to produce detailed yearly data for areas with populations of 65,000 or more. Data for areas with 20,000 or more have been produced each year since 2007, and data for even smaller areas produced every year since 2009.

Data for areas with populations of less than 65,000 are only available over multiple-year periods because it takes time to collect enough data to produce reliable numbers. For example, data released for Kotzebue in 2010 covers the five-year period from 2005 to 2009, and data released in 2011 covers 2006 to 2010.

Juneau and the Kenai Peninsula Borough are large enough for the ACS to produce data covering three-year periods. Only Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Mat-Su are large enough for the ACS to produce single-year estimates.

For more on the ACS, see the March 2011 issue of *Trends*. For a convenient way to access the ACS data, visit our Web site at live.laborstats.alaska.gov/cen/acsarea.cfm.