

## The Census Bureau and what's in store for Alaska

**T**he U.S. Constitution mandates a counting of the country's people every 10 years and the next one will be in 2010. The first decennial census<sup>1</sup> was held in 1790 when a group of federal marshals rode on horseback through the original 13 states counting a population of 3.9 million.

Most of the 2010 Census will be conducted through the mail. In places where that isn't practical – which happens to include much of Alaska – or where follow-up is necessary, a small army of workers will do the counting. The U.S. population will be well over 300 million this time around.

<sup>1</sup> The decennial census is a count of the U.S. population conducted every 10 years by the U.S. Census Bureau in years ending in zero.

### Why do a census?

Originally, the census was designed to apportion taxes and determine state seat allotment in the U.S. House of Representatives. Today, it's no longer used for tax purposes, but it is used to establish legislative boundaries. The first set of data released after 2010 is the redistricting data file that will be used to redraw legislative boundaries based on the new census information.<sup>2</sup>

Census data serve as a primary benchmark against which to measure historical change and to make population projections for the future. Governments at all levels use the data for purposes ranging from determining revenue sharing for communities, to locating schools, roads and hospitals, and forecasting future transportation needs.



Agnes Farnsworth (right), a census crew leader from Bethel, interviews a Barrow family, possibly in the 1950s. The other adults (left to right) are John John, his unidentified wife and Mary Gregory, the mother of the unidentified children. The photo, titled "Census taking in Barrow, Alaska," was taken by Ward W. Wells. It's posted on Alaska's Digital Archives' online database, a partnership of libraries and museums within Alaska, at [vilda.alaska.edu](http://vilda.alaska.edu). Photo courtesy of the Anchorage Museum of History and Art.

Businesses use census information for their market research, to develop business plans and for making investment and personnel decisions.

Private citizens will use 2010 data for school projects, researching potential places to live or even genealogical research.<sup>3</sup>

### What does the Census Bureau have in mind for Alaska?

Preparations for Census 2010 began soon after Census 2000 was finished. By the time U.S. Census Bureau workers begin doing the actual

<sup>2</sup> Aside from the elections for U.S. House of Representatives, the legislative boundaries are used for elections for state legislatures, county or city councils, school boards and so forth.

<sup>3</sup> For confidentiality reasons, census information for an individual isn't available to the public for 72 years.

data collection in early 2010, they will have already updated addresses, tested questionnaires and conducted dress rehearsals in selected locations.

The cities of Anchorage and Fairbanks, and the Juneau Borough will be counted using a mail-out/mailback system – the forms are mailed out, completed and then mailed back.

Some areas with nonstandard mailing addresses will have a worker physically locate the address, update address information and leave the questionnaire for the respondent to complete and mail back. That method will be used for Anchorage households that don't receive mail at a street address, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, eastern part of Kenai Peninsula, Matanuska-Susitna Borough and pockets of towns and hub cities in the Bush.

In the more rural areas of Southeast Alaska and in most other remote parts of the state, including 217 Alaska Native villages, census workers won't just locate and update addresses; they'll do the enumeration, or counting, on the spot.

Census 2010 for the entire nation will officially begin in a yet-to-be-named Alaska community. The kick-off will take place the third week of January 2010, so census takers can get an early start in the state's remote areas before spring breakup.

Census Bureau Director Steve Murdock will come to Alaska to personally count the first people for the census. In 2000, the first people counted were the late Stanton Katchatag and his wife Irene of Unalakleet. The community selected to be counted first in 2010 will most likely be in Southeast Alaska.

Bureau planners have learned that many people in Alaska live a unique lifestyle and if they hope to successfully count them, they need to design a strategy just as unique.

The most challenging Alaskans to count will be those living in the most remote areas. The Bureau will hire and train most enumerators – those who do the counting – in their home communities.

Bureau officials have also learned the importance of having the support of community leaders, especially in Alaska's villages. They plan to meet with village leaders, conduct house-to-house enumeration and review housing counts with the leaders, and to discuss discrepancies with a village liaison.

After completing the census in Alaska's remote areas, Bureau officials will concentrate on the state's more urban areas.

### **What will be different in Census 2010?**

The main difference between the 2010 decennial census and earlier ones is that Census 2010 will be a "short form only" census. The short-form questionnaire is used to get an actual count of the population and collects basic information from every person living in the U.S., including name, sex, age, date of birth, race, ethnicity, relationship to the person who owns or rents the residence and whether the housing unit is owned or rented.

The long-form questionnaire, which has been used in the past to collect detailed socioeconomic information about the population, won't be used. The long form was used for a sample of households – about one in six nationally, down to one in two in some remote Alaska communities.

While the short-form survey asked just six population questions and one housing question per household, the long form asked those questions plus an additional 26 population and 20 housing questions. The long form included subjects such as income, poverty, education, commuting, household types and home values.

## **The Alaska Community Survey**

Though the Alaska Community Survey offers more current data than the decennial census, it's too early to tell if the ACS will offer a better product than the Census 2000 long form did for Alaska. Bureau budgetary limitations are likely to limit the survey sample size and travel to remote locations. Those limitations may affect the accuracy of the information.

Comparing data to past decennial censuses is also an issue. Though much of the information will be comparable, some won't be. There will be some differences with the target population, time periods the estimates describe and the reference period covered by specific questions.

For a more complete examination of ACS and the challenges it presents to Alaska census data users, see *Trends*' March 2007 issue. Go to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Web site at [labor.alaska.gov](http://labor.alaska.gov), click on the *Trends* issue in the lower right, and then under "Quick Links," click on "2007 Trends Archive."

In the fall of 2006, the Census Bureau released the first data from a new survey designed to provide detailed socioeconomic information on a timelier basis than the decennial census provided. The American Community Survey is conducted monthly each year and it's sent to a small percentage of the population on a rotating basis throughout the decade. No household will receive the survey more often than once every five years. (See the ACS sidebar.)

### **How will Census 2010 data be disseminated?**

The earliest release of Census 2010 data to the public is called the redistricting data file and it's required by law to be released by April 1, 2011. It includes data on people's race and whether they're of Hispanic origin, for both the total and the adult population. More detailed tables will be released at later dates.

The State Data Center Program, a cooperative effort between the states and the Census Bureau, disseminates census data to local users. In most states, it's a network of state agencies, universities, libraries, and regional and local governments.

The Census and Geographic Information Network is Alaska's SDC, and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section is the lead agency. Research and Analysis is the liaison with the Census Bureau and provides information, training and technical assistance to network members and other interested users.

Users are encouraged to contact SDC affiliates with census questions or data needs. An affiliate list is available on the Web at [labor.alaska.gov/research/cgin/cginnetworkaffiliates.pdf](http://labor.alaska.gov/research/cgin/cginnetworkaffiliates.pdf).

### **Conclusion**

Preparations are well on the way in Alaska and the nation as a whole for Census 2010. Administrative positions are already being filled and address locators and enumerators will begin canvassing the state in spring 2009 and early 2010 respectively. Census 2010 will be the first actual count of Alaskans and all other Americans since 2000.

## **Census 2010 Jobs**

Hundreds of Alaskans will be hired in temporary positions to help with Census 2010.

The U.S. Census Bureau is scheduled to open a local office in Anchorage this month. The office will be in charge of recruiting and hiring Alaska census workers and implementing the 2010 Census statewide.

The Bureau will be hiring office operation supervisors and clerks to work out of the Anchorage office. Pay will range from \$13.25 an hour for office and technical support clerks to \$18 an hour for office operation supervisors.

The Bureau will also be hiring field staff to work throughout the state. The field positions will first be filled in more urban areas and hub cities where people in those positions will canvass addresses. Those

are the areas where a census questionnaire will be delivered to each housing unit. The same type of positions will be available throughout Alaska in late 2009.

Field staff will include field operating supervisors, crew leaders, crew leader assistants and address canvassers (listers). The pay ranges from \$17.50 an hour for crew leader assistants to \$19 an hour for crew leaders and \$20.50 an hour for field operating supervisors.

In 2010, the Census Bureau will send out hundreds of enumerators to do follow-up and actual counting in remote locations. They'll be paid roughly the same as listers. Those working in 2010 are scheduled to make slightly more per hour than those working in 2009.

The largest number of temporary field workers will be listers and enumerators.

At press time, Bureau officials weren't sure how many enumerators would be needed in Alaska, but they anticipate hiring 650 to 700 people for address locating positions.

Field employees work out of their homes and are reimbursed for mileage. Pilots will also be needed, including those with their own planes.

For job application information, call the Bureau at (866) 861-2010 or contact one of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's 23 job centers. The job centers will have Census 2010 job announcements. For the nearest job center, call (877) 724-2539 or go to [jobs.alaska.gov](http://jobs.alaska.gov) on the Web and click on "Alaska Job Centers" on the left. The Census Bureau is an Equal Opportunity Employer.