

# Alaskans In Their Twenties



The state has a relatively large and growing share

By **EDDIE HUNSINGER**

Alaska has about 110,000 people in their twenties today, 25,000 more than it had in 2000. That's more twentysomethings than the state has had since the early 1980s, when Alaska was awash in young workers attracted first by pipeline construction and then the boom years fueled by new oil revenue.

In 1985, people in their twenties made up nearly 25 percent of the state's population, at more than 123,000. In fact, the population booms of the 1970s and early 1980s — which included many then-twen-

tysomethings moving to Alaska and starting families — set the stage for the jump in numbers for that age group over roughly the past decade.

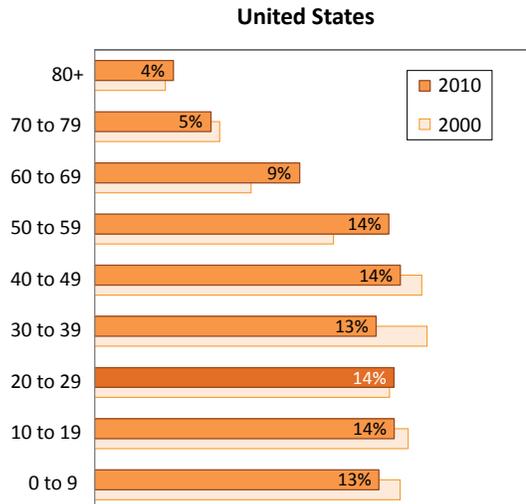
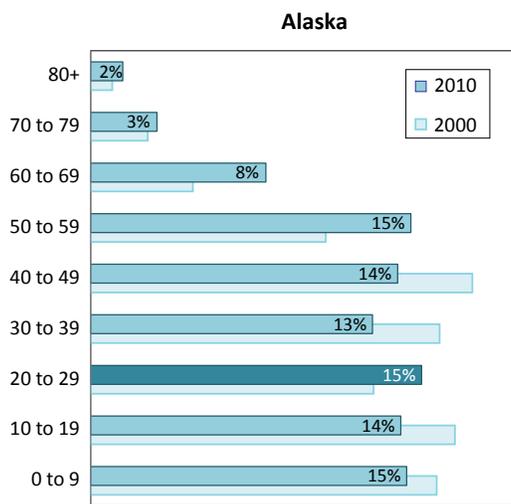
Those booms — along with continuous net migration gains of people in their twenties — added up to big increases in that age group from 2000 on.

## Slightly bigger share than nationwide

Alaska's growing group in their twenties is also proportionally larger than that of the nation as a whole

# 1 Alaska is Younger Than the U.S.

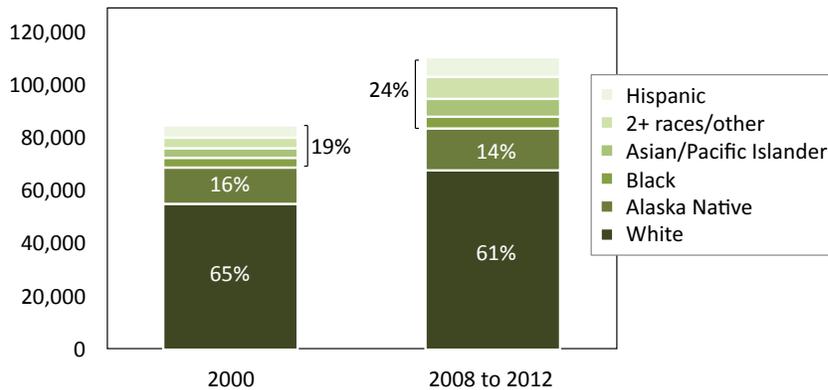
AGE STRUCTURE, 2000 AND 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 censuses

# 2 Twentysomethings Become More Diverse

## ALASKA, CHANGE OVER THE PAST DECADE



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2008 to 2012 American Community Survey

— as of the 2010 Census, it was 15 percent versus 14 percent. (See Exhibit 1.) The group has grown even more since then as the large cohort who were 16 to 19 that year has moved into their twenties.

### Racial diversity continues to increase

Alaska's twentysomethings are not just a bigger group than in 2000, they're more racially diverse. That shift is due to different birth and migration rates by race.

In 2000, 65 percent of Alaskans in their twenties were non-Hispanic white, and by 2010 that was down to 61 percent. (See Exhibit 2.) For the nation as a whole, 61 percent were non-Hispanic white in 2000, declining to 58 percent by 2010.

It's notable that those in their twenties and younger are less white than any of the older age groups, which suggests Alaska will become even more racially diverse in the future.

### Most in Anchorage and Fairbanks

More than 60 percent of Alaska's twentysomethings lived in the population centers of Anchorage and Fairbanks in 2010, and that share has held since. In addition to having the state's largest university campuses and military installations, Anchorage and Fairbanks

are among the top destinations for young people looking for new work in Alaska.

In terms of a percentage of each area's population, several areas in western Alaska have the biggest shares of twentysomethings. (See Exhibit 3.) The North Slope and Northwest Arctic boroughs in the north and the Lake and Peninsula Borough and Wade Hampton Census Area in the southwest have consistently high birth rates and relatively large young populations in general. The Aleutians East Borough has a significant number of young seafood processing workers.

### More are living with parents

The share of 25-to-29-year-olds living with parents or grandparents in Alaska has increased considerably since 2000, from 10 percent to 16 percent for the 2008 to 2012 period. (See Exhibit 4.) Nationwide, it grew from 15 percent to 21 percent.

As these percentages have gone up, the percentage living alone or with a spouse, partner, or housemate has gone down. Eighty-four percent of Alaskans ages 25 to 29 are either a householder or live with another householder who isn't a parent or grandparent, according to 2008 to 2012 American Community Survey data. That's higher than the nationwide figure of 79 percent, but a drop from 90 percent in the 2000 Census.

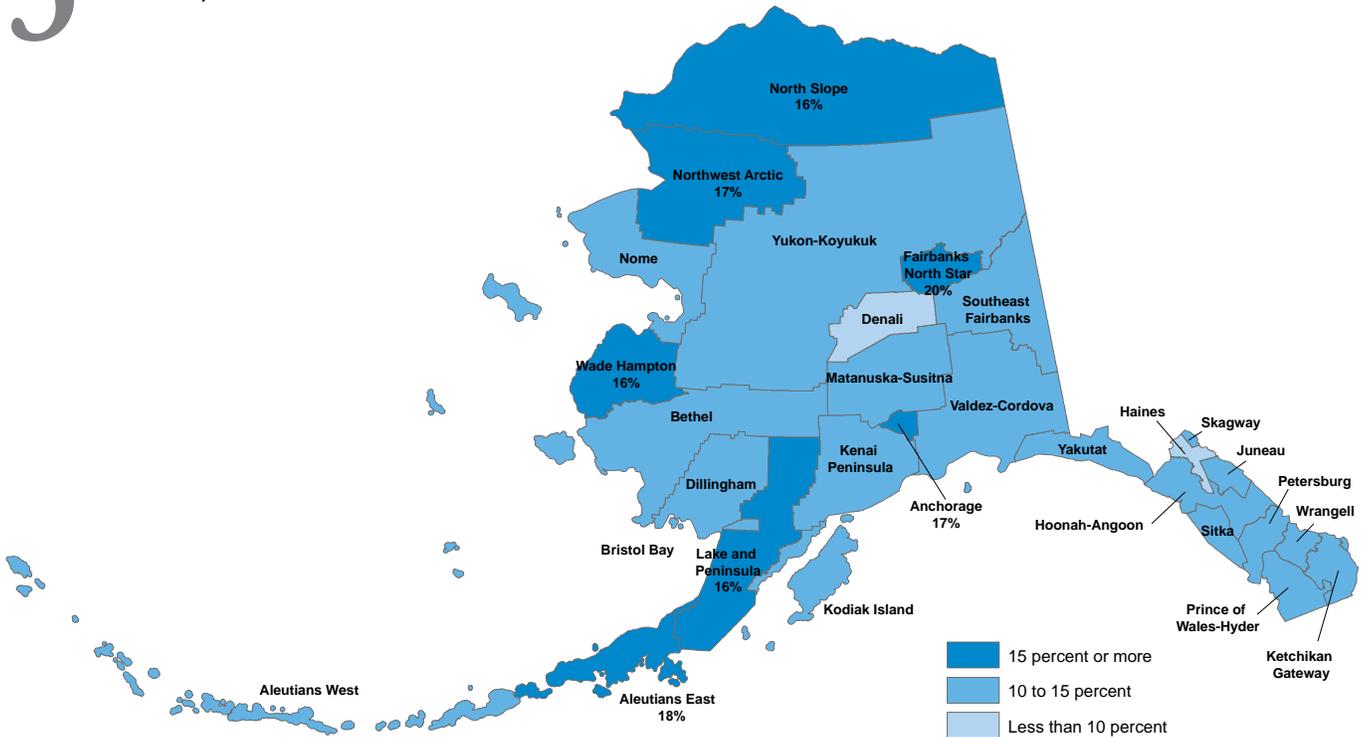
Looking at only those who live alone shows that percentage hasn't changed much, though. Between 2008

Although marriage is down, birth rates haven't changed much.

# 3

## Percent in Each Area Between Ages 20 and 29

ALASKA, 2010

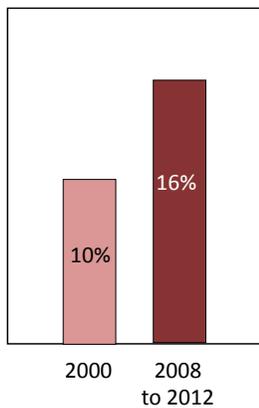


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

# 4

## More Living With Parents

ALASKANS 25 TO 29



Note: Includes grandparents  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2008 to 2012 American Community Survey

and 2012, it was 10 percent for twentysomethings in both Alaska and the U.S., both up slightly from 9 percent in 2000.

## Marriage down, but birth rates steady

Most Alaskans in their twenties have never married, and substantially fewer are getting married now than they were a decade ago.

During the 2008 to 2012 period, just 22 percent of 20-to-24-year-olds had ever married, and for 25-to-29-year-olds it was 48 percent. (See Exhibit 5.) In 2000, the rates were 33 percent and 64 percent respectively.

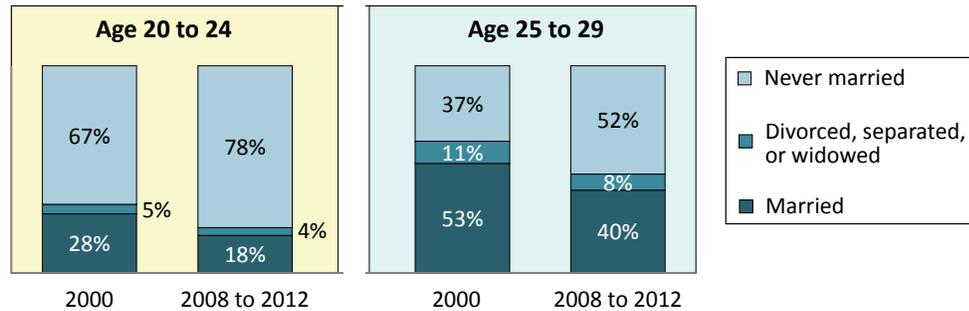
To compare with older people — keeping in mind they've had more time to get married — about 85 percent of Alaskans and U.S. residents age 30 or older have been married.

The proportion in their twenties that are divorced, separated, or widowed has also dropped during that time period, from 11 percent to 8 percent for Alaskans between 25 and 29. For 20-to-24-year-olds, the percentage dropped from 5 percent in 2000 to 4 percent from 2008 to 2012.

# 5

## Percent Who Have Never Married Has Grown

ALASKANS IN THEIR TWENTIES, 2000 vs. 2008–2012



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2008 to 2012 American Community Survey

Though marriage is down, birth rates are little-changed for Alaska’s 20-to-29-year-olds. Based on vital statistics for 2000 and 2009 and American Community Survey data for 2008 to 2012, about 12 to 14 percent of Alaskan women in their twenties had given birth in the previous year.

The rates were a bit lower for the entire U.S. between 2008 and 2012, at around 9 percent for women ages 20 to 24 and 11 percent for ages 25 to 29.

While birth *rates* haven’t changed much, the sheer *number* of births has increased because of the larger number of people in their twenties. Just as Alaska had a large bubble of “echo boomers” born during the baby boomers’ family-building era, the echo boomers themselves have produced an uptick in births in recent years.

### More are going to college

More young adults are attending college in Alaska as well as nationwide. For the 2008 to 2012 period, 27 percent of Alaskans between 18 and 24 were enrolled in college or graduate school, up markedly from 19 percent as of the 2000 Census. At the national level, enrollment for that group was 43 percent, up from 34 percent.

Educational attainment has remained about the same, with 21 percent of Alaska’s 25-to-29-year-olds having at least a bachelor’s degree in 2008 to 2012 versus 20 percent in 2000. (See Exhibit 6.) This isn’t the case nationwide, where the share with a bachelor’s degree has grown from 27 percent to 31 percent.

### High shares working or in the military

Relatively fewer Alaskans in their early twenties are in college than nationwide, but a similar percentage are in the labor force and more are in the military. (See Exhibit 7.) To be considered part of the labor force, a person has to be either working or actively seeking work.

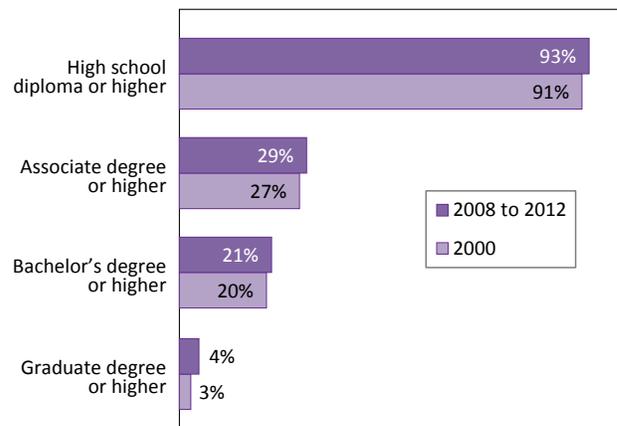
Seventy-one percent of Alaskans between 20 and 24 were in the civilian labor force during the 2008 to 2012 period, and another 11 percent were part of the active duty armed forces.

Nationwide, 73 percent of 20-to-24-year-olds were

# 6

## They’re Getting Higher Degrees

ALASKANS AGES 25 TO 29, 2000 vs. 2008–2012



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2008 to 2012 American Community Survey

in the civilian workforce, but just 2 percent were serving in the military. Alaska's higher military percentage is mainly due to its large bases.

## Different industries in early, late 20s

While people in their early and late twenties participate in the labor force at similar rates, their industries tend to differ. Alaska's 20-to-24-year-olds work more in lower-paying industries including retail, food service, and accommodations, something that has changed little over time.

Many of these younger workers transition to careers in higher-paying industries by their late twenties or early thirties.

## Poverty levels haven't changed

About 15 percent of Alaska's 18-to-24-year-olds population lived below the federal poverty threshold during 2008 to 2012, the same as in 2000. (See Exhibit 8.)

For 25-to-34-year-olds, who are often much further into their careers, it was roughly 10 percent — about the same as the total population's 11 percent and close to 2000's 9 percent.

Federal poverty thresholds are solely statistical measures, and though they reflect adjustments for household size, there's no adjustment for local cost of living.

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# 7

## More Alaskans in the Military

EMPLOYMENT AMONG TWENTYSOMETHINGS, 2008–12

### Alaska, Ages 20 to 24

In civilian labor force	71%
Unemployed	14%
Armed forces (active)	11%

### Alaska, Ages 25 to 29

In civilian labor force	75%
Unemployed	9%
Armed forces (active)	7%

### U.S., Ages 20 to 24

In civilian labor force	73%
Unemployed	15%
Armed forces (active)	2%

### U.S., Ages 25 to 29

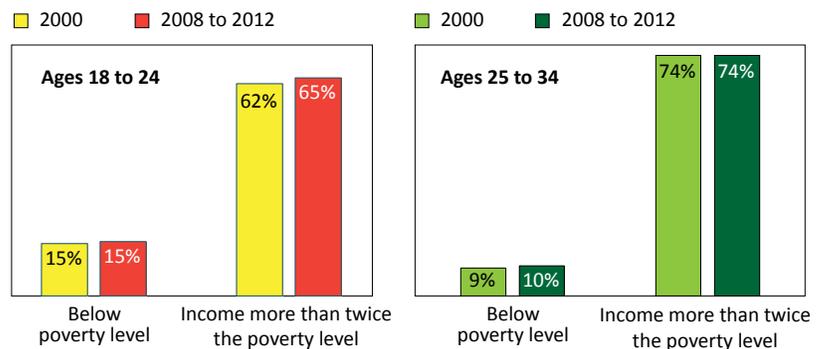
In civilian labor force	81%
Unemployed	10%
Armed forces (active)	1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 to 2012 American Community Survey

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## Poverty Levels Haven't Changed Much

ALASKANS AGES 18 TO 34, 2000 vs. 2008–2012



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2008 to 2012 American Community Survey