

Census Goes Internet

by
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Census and Geographic Information Network (CGIN) puts the numbers out

If you asked a sample of Americans what they know about the U.S. Census, chances are many would give the same answers. Most people know that the census occurs every ten years and that the last one was completed in 2000. They know that the purpose is to get as accurate a count of Americans as possible, that there is a short form and a long form, (Please, make them send me the short one!) and that some of the questions on the long form seem a little personal, and by the way, why does the federal government need to know about our plumbing?

Some citizens might know that the data the Census Bureau collects are used for redrawing legislative districts, for establishing revenue sharing allocations, and that though the census is captured in a matter of months, final tallies can be tied up in court for years. Most of us, though, forget about the census soon after dropping our short form in the mail or after closing the door on the census taker who made us miss the last half hour of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* in order to complete the long form.

Collecting census data is much more than finding out that “officially” there were more than 281 million Americans and almost 627 thousand Alaskans in 2000. This massive collection of data will serve as a primary benchmark against which to measure historical change and to make population projections for the future. The new data will be quoted, examined, compared,

interpreted, and manipulated countless times up to, and even beyond, the time when a new decennial census is taken in 2010.

Data from Census 2000 is an important source of information for many users. Governments at all levels, businesses of all types, and private users from all over depend on the data for evaluating present situations and for making plans for the future. Governments use the numbers not only as a basis for redistricting and revenue sharing, but also for emergency service planning, forecasting future transportation needs, making informational thematic maps, and similar purposes. Business people look at the data for market research and product development strategies or for developing business plans. They use them for making personnel and investment decisions. Private citizens use the information for school and research projects, or researching potential places to live or visit. In 2072, they will be able to use Census 2000 data for genealogical research. (For confidentiality reasons, information collected in the Decennial Census of Population and Housing on individuals does not become available to the public until after 72 years.)

Census and Geographic Information Network (CGIN)

Making the massive body of census data readily available to users is no small task. In 1978, the State Data Center system was created to address

this issue. The State Data Center established a nationwide network of state organizations designed to support the Census Bureau in the collection and dissemination of their data. Each state was charged with the task of identifying willing and logical in-state partners to help with this task. In 1981, Alaska signed on by creating the Alaska State Data Center, which was later renamed the Census and Geographic Information Network (CGIN).

CGIN is a network of currently 10 affiliate state agencies and local government planning offices, with the Research and Analysis Section (R&A) of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (AKDOL) serving as the lead agency. In this capacity, Research and Analysis serves as the liaison with the Census Bureau and provides

information, training, and technical assistance to the network members and other interested users. The affiliate members, in turn, serve as local contacts for census data users throughout the state.

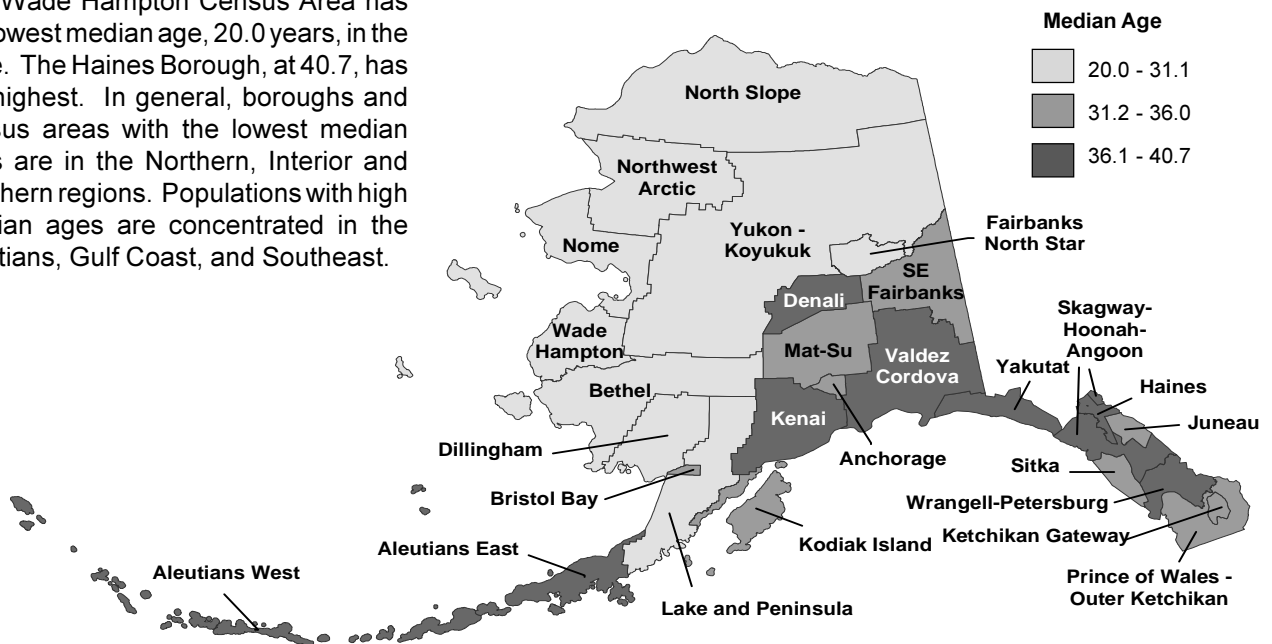
Census 2000 is on the Web

The Internet has become the primary tool for providing census information to users. The Census Bureau periodically releases data from Census 2000 to the states. Alaska information is then reformatted to be easily accessible and put on the CGIN site.

The most recent release of data is the Summary File 2 (SF2). Released in January 2002, this file

1 Median Age of Alaskans, Census 2000 By borough or census area

The Wade Hampton Census Area has the lowest median age, 20.0 years, in the state. The Haines Borough, at 40.7, has the highest. In general, boroughs and census areas with the lowest median ages are in the Northern, Interior and Southern regions. Populations with high median ages are concentrated in the Aleutians, Gulf Coast, and Southeast.



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

provides detailed race information for the state's population. CGIN and AKDOL data processing staff have designed and implemented an innovative, interactive site where users can view population data by age, sex, household relationship, and household and family characteristics. They can also explore housing data for total housing units, occupancy, average household size, and tenure. This population and housing information is available for the state, borough/census area, place, (cities and towns), census tract, and Alaska Native Village Statistical Areas. For most subjects, data not on the Internet can be obtained from CGIN staff at the block group and block levels.

Summary File 1 (SF1) was released in July 2001 and has the same population and housing information as SF2, but without SF2's detailed race data. When detailed race is not an issue, this file can be a simpler way to access the data.

The median age data shown on the map in Exhibit 1 is an example of information available in SF1.

The Redistricting Files were released in March of last year. Every ten years this information is used to redraw legislative districts to accommodate changes in population of geographic locations. Population information is available in the site as far down as the precinct level, and from CGIN staff to the block and block group levels.

Summary File 3 (SF3) is scheduled to be released by the Census Bureau some time between June and September of 2002 (a four-page profile should be released in March 2002). SF3 will be the first release of information collected on a sample basis and will contain more detailed population and housing characteristics. This file will look at characteristics related to the labor force, household and family, educational attainment, poverty status, income and housing.

Scheduled for release between October 2002 and February 2003, Summary File 4 (SF4) will include

Did you know?

The median age of males in the Mat-Su Borough is 34.3 years, and for females, it's 33.8.

In the City of Alakanuk, 102 owner and 23 renter housing units are reported occupied by American Indians or Alaska Natives.

In the Municipality of Anchorage, 5,805 persons claim Filipino alone as their race, 3,432 claim Korean alone, 899 Japanese alone, 870 Chinese alone, and 380 claim Vietnamese alone.

Within the geographical boundaries of the Sealaska Native Regional Corporation, there are 71,507 people. 51,578 of them are 18 and over.

According to Census 2000, when the census was taken, there were 27 twenty-one-year-old males and 40 twenty-one-year-old females in Bethel.

In House District 9 (includes part of Fairbanks), 694 people claim lineage of two or more races.

This and other information is available from Summary File 1 (SF1), Summary File 2 (SF2), or the Redistricting Files accessible at <http://146.63.75.50/research/cgin/cen2000.htm>.

Census and Geographic Information Network (CGIN)

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tabulations of the population and housing data collected from a sample of the population and like SF2, the tables will contain detailed race information.

Census 1990 data is on CGIN's site, too

Although the Census 2000 data is the most recent, it is not the only data available on the CGIN site. 1990 census information is also on the site. Historical census data from before 1990 is available from CGIN staff.

In the future, through Geographic Information System (GIS) software, maps will be produced that connect geographic details such as boroughs, census areas, or census block groups to census data such as numbers of housing units or population by sex or race.

The CGIN site also includes affiliate member contact information and links to other federal statistical organizations and programs.

CGIN staff and affiliate members are available to help

CGIN and affiliate member staff are available to provide assistance. The volume of census information is substantial, and finding one's way through it can be daunting. CGIN and affiliate staff can help with locating and interpreting census information. They can help navigate the complex Census Bureau site for national or individual state data. They can assist those users without web accessibility to find the information they need. They can help with historical data not available on the web site. They can provide maps and other census-related publications.

What are they doing when not maintaining the web site or assisting users of census data? The Census Bureau is already contacting CGIN with early plans associated with preparing for the next decennial census. Yes, the groundwork is already being laid for Census 2010.

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Affiliate agency contact information

Summary

The information gathered in the 2000 census is important, but the job of making this information readily available to users is challenging. State data centers were created in the late 1970s to help the federal government in the collection and dissemination of census information. In the early 1980s, CGIN was created and designated Alaska's state data center. The primary method of delivering census information is through the Internet. As files are released from the Census Bureau, CGIN puts them in user-friendly formats and makes them available on the CGIN site. Though the web site is CGIN's most obvious presence, CGIN staff at Research and Analysis and the affiliate network members are available to help users in such ways as locating and interpreting data and providing maps and other information.

CGIN On-Line Newsletter

The Census and Geographic Information Network's first issue of CGIN E-Bulletin, a quarterly, online newsletter of census and geographic related information, is up. You can view it in the CGIN section of the Research and Analysis website at [/www.labor.state.ak.us/research/cgin/cen.htm](http://www.labor.state.ak.us/research/cgin/cen.htm) You can subscribe to it at Labor-CensusInfo-request@list.state.ak.us.

The Census and Geographic Information Network (CGIN) maintains a web site of Alaska data at <http://146.63.75.50/research/cgin/cen.htm>

The U.S. Census Bureau site has national and state information. Their home page is www.census.gov/

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