

# Population Estimates for 2017

Small decline is the first since the late 1980s

By **EDDIE HUNSINGER**

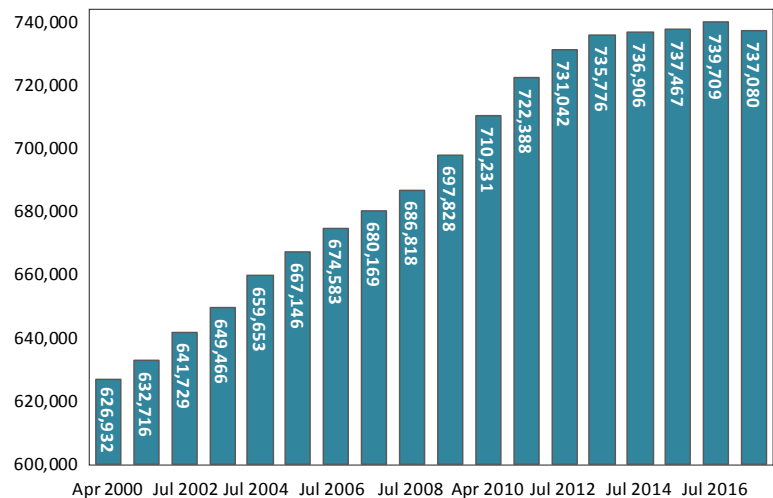
**A**laska's total population declined in 2017 for the first time since the late 1980s. The decline was small, however, at 0.4 percent, and the total population estimate hasn't changed much over the last four years. (See Exhibit 1.) Even with a steady total count, though, major changes in age structure and regional distribution are always happening beneath the surface.

## Births, deaths, and migration

The population changes through births, deaths, and migration — and all three have shifted in recent years. Alaska had 10,786 births from July 2016 to July 2017, and the number of births has declined slightly in the last few years. (See Exhibit 2.) Deaths increased some, as expected, to 4,530 and will continue to rise with the aging of the population. Because births have gone down and deaths have gone up, natural increase (births minus deaths) is declining. Until 2017, natural increase more than offset migration losses, keeping the total population growing.

This was the fifth year in a row of net migration losses (in-migration minus out-migration), the longest on record for Alaska and capped off by a particularly large net drop of 8,885. (See Exhibit 3.) That loss was big

## 1 Total Population Declines in 2017 ALASKA, 2000 TO 2017



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

because out-migration rose and in-migration fell. The number of people who move away hasn't changed much over the past few years, staying around 45,000 to 50,000 annually. The number moving into the state has changed more, down to about 40,000 from its peak of nearly 50,000 in 2013.

Since 1990, Alaska's net migration has usually hovered around zero, plus or minus 8,000, which means the characteristically large flows in and out have been

roughly equal. A few other years stand out besides 2017 — our losses were much larger in the 1980s, and between 2009 and 2010, Alaska had a net migration gain of more than 8,500.

Note that net migration around zero isn't always typical for states. For some it's consistently positive (Nevada, Arizona, Washington, and Colorado), while others sustain long periods of net loss (such as Michigan and Illinois).

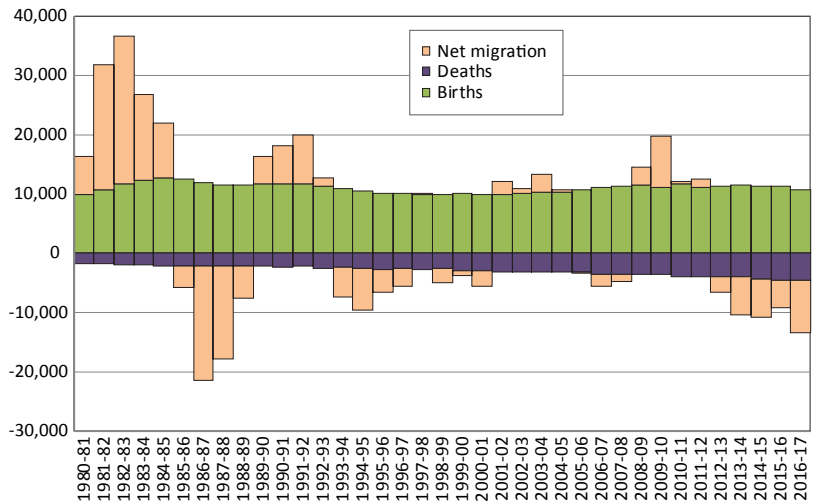
Alaska has one of the highest rates of population turnover from migration in the country due to our young population, unique mix of industries, and large military presence. For an in-depth look at migration and its history in Alaska, see page 4.

## Shift to an older Alaska

Although births, deaths, and migration all affect the population's age structure, most of the shift to an older population is simply people aging into the next age group.

# 2 Components of Population Change

ALASKA, 1980 TO 2017



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

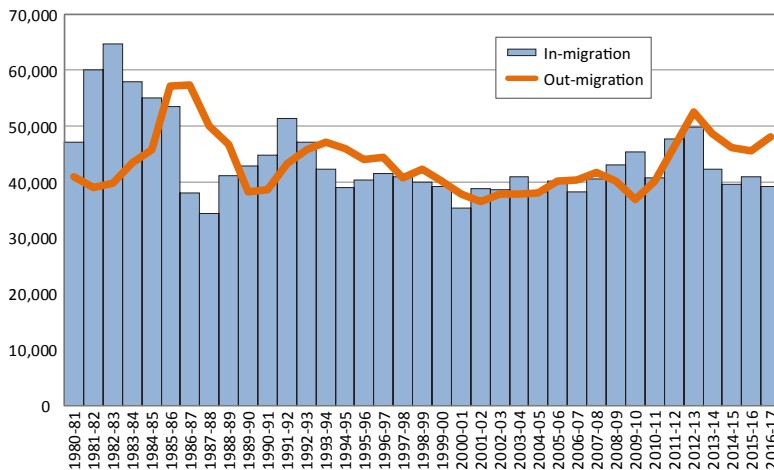
Alaska's working-age population — ages 18 to 64 — declined for a fifth consecutive year in 2017 due to net migration losses and the large baby boomer cohort reaching retirement age. The working-age population peaked in 2012, at 478,157, and declined to 465,687 by 2017, a nearly 3 percent drop.

Many baby boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, moved to Alaska in the 1970s and 1980s with construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and the state's resulting economic growth. The state's senior citizen population has increased rapidly as boomers reach 65. (See Exhibit 4.) Alaska's 65-plus population increased by more than 3,500 from 2016 to 2017, to 82,686 people.

Current data for other states aren't available yet, but Alaska had the fastest-growing senior population in the United States from 2010 to 2016, and its 44 percent growth was twice the national average. Seniors still make up a smaller share of Alaska than any other state, though, at 10.4 percent in 2016 compared to 15 percent nationwide. Utah was a close second at 10.5 percent.

# 3 Five Years of Negative Net Migration

ALASKA, 1980 TO 2017



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

Alaska's 20-to-39 year old population — ages when many people start careers and families — increased markedly between 2010 and 2015, from 203,377 to 215,897. That growth ended after 2015, partly because of aging, and the young adult population fell slightly in 2016, to 215,761. In 2017, it dropped to 214,328.

The number of children in Alaska has remained fairly steady for the past two decades, declining slightly in 2017. Alaska had 188,707 children from newborn to age 17 in 2017, down by just 692 from the year before.

## Most places lost population

By area, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough remains the fastest-growing in the state, adding 1,612 people over the year to reach 104,166 in 2017. (See Exhibit 5.) Of that growth, 854 came from natural increase (1,436 births minus 582 deaths). Mat-Su was also one of the few areas to gain population through net migration, and its net migration increase of 758 would have been even higher without the closure of Palmer Correctional Center, which housed about 400 inmates.

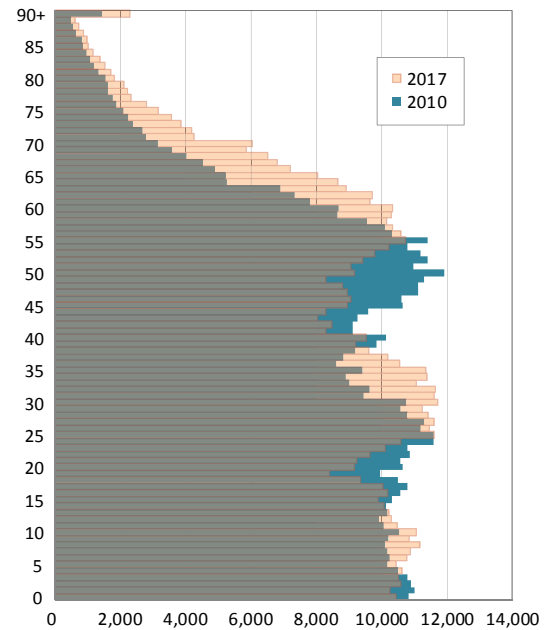
Otherwise, population decreases spanned most of the state. Anchorage's total population fell by 1,454, to 297,483. The city peaked at 300,880 people in 2013. While Anchorage's 65-and-older population continued to increase, topping 30,000, its 18-to-64 year old population — working ages — was down for the fourth year in a row. That age group peaked at 198,666 in 2013, then declined to 192,164 by 2017.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough's net migration loss was 2,334 and its natural increase was 1,118, bringing the total population down to 97,738 in 2017. That remains slightly higher than its population at the 2010 Census (97,581). Fairbanks has a relatively young population due to its military bases and university, though, and economists also expect growth in coming years from two new F-35 squadrons at Eielson Air Force Base.

Juneau's population also remains above its 2010 Census count, but 2017 was the capital city's fourth consecutive year of net migration losses and its second year of total population decline. Juneau's population decreased by 454, and the Southeast Region as a whole declined by 912.

# 4 Shift to An Older Population

## ALASKA, 2010 AND 2017



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

After net migration gains in 2015 and 2016, the Kenai Peninsula's net migration turned negative (-283) in 2017 and its population dropped by 25 people, to 58,024. Kodiak Island Borough's population also declined a bit, from 13,560 in 2016 to 13,287 in 2017. Kodiak had 13,592 people in the 2010 Census.

The Prince William Sound and Copper River Basin areas that make up the Valdez-Cordova Census Area decreased by 112 people, to a total of 9,387 — this was also lower than in 2010, when the area had 9,639 people.

Remote Western and Northern Alaska's population levels remained fairly steady, with their modest migration losses nearly balanced by natural increase. The Northern Region — including the North Slope Borough, Northwest Arctic Borough, and Nome Census Area — lost 103 people between 2016 and 2017, for a total population of 27,705. In all, Southwest Alaska's population decreased by 71 people over the year, to 42,202 — up from 40,649 in 2010.

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# Population of Alaska by Region, Borough and Census Area 2010 TO 2017

Area	Census Estimate							Natural Increase*	Net Migration*	Pop Change	Growth Rate (%)				
	April 2010	July 2011	July 2012	July 2013	July 2014	July 2015	July 2016					July 2017			
<b>Alaska</b>	<b>710,231</b>	<b>722,388</b>	<b>731,042</b>	<b>735,776</b>	<b>736,906</b>	<b>737,467</b>	<b>739,709</b>	<b>737,080</b>	<b>51,949</b>	<b>6,256</b>	<b>-25,100</b>	<b>26,849</b>	<b>-2,629</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>-0.36</b>
<b>Anchorage/Mat-Su</b>	<b>380,821</b>	<b>387,399</b>	<b>391,986</b>	<b>396,689</b>	<b>398,351</b>	<b>398,768</b>	<b>401,491</b>	<b>401,649</b>	<b>28,196</b>	<b>3,359</b>	<b>-7,368</b>	<b>20,828</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.04</b>
Anchorage	291,826	295,719	298,334	300,880	300,197	298,799	298,937	297,483	21,964	2,505	-16,307	5,657	-1,454	0.26	-0.49
Matanuska-Susitna	88,995	91,680	93,652	95,809	98,154	99,969	102,554	104,166	6,232	854	8,939	15,171	1,612	2.17	1.56
<b>Gulf Coast</b>	<b>78,631</b>	<b>80,216</b>	<b>80,576</b>	<b>80,479</b>	<b>80,863</b>	<b>81,038</b>	<b>81,108</b>	<b>80,698</b>	<b>3,878</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>-1,811</b>	<b>2,067</b>	<b>-410</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>-0.51</b>
Kenai Peninsula	55,400	56,530	56,633	56,850	57,431	57,707	58,024	58,024	2,245	258	379	2,624	-25	0.64	-0.04
Kodiak Island	13,592	13,848	13,993	13,810	13,827	13,795	13,560	13,287	1,144	134	-1,449	-305	-273	-0.31	-2.03
Valdez-Cordova	9,639	9,838	9,950	9,819	9,605	9,536	9,499	9,387	489	65	-741	-252	-112	-0.37	-1.19
<b>Interior</b>	<b>112,021</b>	<b>112,835</b>	<b>115,397</b>	<b>114,515</b>	<b>113,067</b>	<b>112,905</b>	<b>113,202</b>	<b>111,911</b>	<b>9,624</b>	<b>1,191</b>	<b>-9,734</b>	<b>-110</b>	<b>-1,291</b>	<b>-0.01</b>	<b>-1.15</b>
Denali	1,826	1,836	1,856	1,798	1,789	1,790	1,883	1,849	82	4	-59	23	-34	0.17	-1.82
Fairbanks N Star	97,581	98,234	100,664	99,965	98,779	98,727	98,954	97,738	8,868	1,118	-8,711	157	-1,216	0.02	-1.24
SE Fairbanks	7,026	7,107	7,200	7,085	6,983	6,897	6,921	6,973	472	50	-525	-53	52	-0.10	0.75
Yukon-Koyukuk	5,588	5,658	5,677	5,647	5,516	5,491	5,444	5,351	202	19	-439	-237	-93	-0.60	-1.72
<b>Northern</b>	<b>26,445</b>	<b>26,930</b>	<b>27,274</b>	<b>27,541</b>	<b>27,528</b>	<b>27,828</b>	<b>27,808</b>	<b>27,705</b>	<b>3,046</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>-1,786</b>	<b>1,260</b>	<b>-103</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>-0.37</b>
Nome	9,492	9,718	9,852	9,869	9,986	10,058	10,070	10,006	1,157	149	-643	514	-64	0.73	-0.64
North Slope	9,430	9,575	9,710	9,864	9,732	9,887	9,801	9,849	879	100	-460	419	48	0.60	0.49
Northwest Arctic	7,523	7,637	7,712	7,808	7,810	7,883	7,937	7,850	1,010	137	-683	327	-87	0.59	-1.10
<b>Southeast</b>	<b>71,664</b>	<b>73,582</b>	<b>74,168</b>	<b>74,297</b>	<b>74,518</b>	<b>74,371</b>	<b>73,827</b>	<b>72,915</b>	<b>2,788</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>-1,537</b>	<b>1,251</b>	<b>-912</b>	<b>0.24</b>	<b>-1.24</b>
Haines	2,508	2,610	2,607	2,534	2,550	2,493	2,466	2,459	7	4	-56	-49	-7	-0.27	-0.28
Hoonah-Angoon	2,149	2,149	2,200	2,179	2,141	2,177	2,188	2,122	53	12	-80	-27	-66	-0.17	-3.06
Juneau	31,275	32,328	32,689	32,915	33,020	33,145	32,723	32,269	1,495	170	-501	994	-454	0.43	-1.40
Kenai/Kan Gateway	13,477	13,720	13,878	13,826	13,872	13,813	13,749	13,754	554	35	-277	277	5	0.28	0.04
Petersburg	3,203	3,290	3,251	3,198	3,207	3,185	3,177	3,147	134	17	-190	-56	-30	-0.24	-0.95
P of Wales-Hyder	6,172	6,449	6,456	6,540	6,558	6,536	6,491	6,390	215	4	3	218	-101	0.48	-1.57
Sitka	8,881	9,023	9,065	9,051	9,085	8,922	8,914	8,748	228	22	-361	-133	-166	-0.21	-1.88
Skagway	968	964	957	981	1,038	1,045	1,069	1,087	51	10	68	119	18	1.60	1.67
Wrangell	2,369	2,408	2,444	2,455	2,415	2,445	2,387	2,387	13	-4	5	18	-69	0.10	-2.85
Yakutat	662	641	621	618	632	610	594	552	38	6	-148	-110	-42	-2.50	-7.33
<b>Southwest</b>	<b>40,649</b>	<b>41,426</b>	<b>41,641</b>	<b>42,255</b>	<b>42,579</b>	<b>42,557</b>	<b>42,273</b>	<b>42,202</b>	<b>4,417</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>-2,864</b>	<b>1,553</b>	<b>-71</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>-0.17</b>
Aleutians East	3,141	3,146	3,146	3,148	3,093	3,047	2,999	2,977	55	6	-219	-164	-22	-0.74	-0.74
Aleutians West	5,561	5,529	5,622	5,645	5,616	5,534	5,481	5,357	136	17	-340	-204	-124	-0.52	-2.29
Bethel	17,013	17,442	17,560	17,865	18,084	18,198	18,121	18,127	2,336	306	-1,222	1,114	6	0.87	0.03
Bristol Bay	997	1,024	984	933	944	887	876	887	24	1	-134	-110	11	-1.61	1.25
Dillingham	4,847	4,933	4,974	5,022	5,070	5,010	4,954	4,925	492	70	-414	78	-29	0.22	-0.59
Kustivak	7,459	7,675	7,675	7,942	8,085	8,204	8,200	8,208	1,242	165	-493	749	8	1.32	0.10
Lake and Peninsula	1,631	1,677	1,680	1,700	1,687	1,677	1,642	1,721	132	22	-42	90	79	0.74	4.70

Note: Vintage 2017. All numbers are based on 2017 geography.

\*Natural increase equals births minus deaths, and net migration equals in-migrants minus out-migrants.

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