By EDDIE HUNSINGER and DAVID HOWELL, Demographers; and ERIC SANDBERG, Research Analyst

Alaska's Highly Migratory Population

Annual moves to, from, and across the state

Alaska has one of the highest rates of population turnover in the nation — there are always large numbers of people moving in and out, regardless of whether the overall population is growing or shrinking.

Depending on the year and data source, between 5 and 7 percent of Alaska's population enters or leaves the state each year. These large flows in and out, or "gross migration," tend to be fairly stable and predictable.

While gross migration flows explain how the makeup of the population changes, "net migration" measures the effect on the total population count — just one effect of moves.

Net migration — the number who move in minus those who move out — is much more volatile, and it's important to remember it's just at the surface of the much larger and more consistent in-and-out migration flows. Even during the years that Alaska has a net migration loss, more than 30,000 people still arrive here each year.

Population change is made up of three components: migration, births, and deaths. Of these, migration is the most complex and volatile.

A history of major swings

A number of major economic events over the past century have caused large numbers of people to move in, out, and across Alaska. (See Exhibit 1.)

Through the 1940s and 1950s, the state's population boomed due to military buildups for World War II and the Cold War. A large proportion of the new residents were young GIs who would either stay in the state or return with their families.

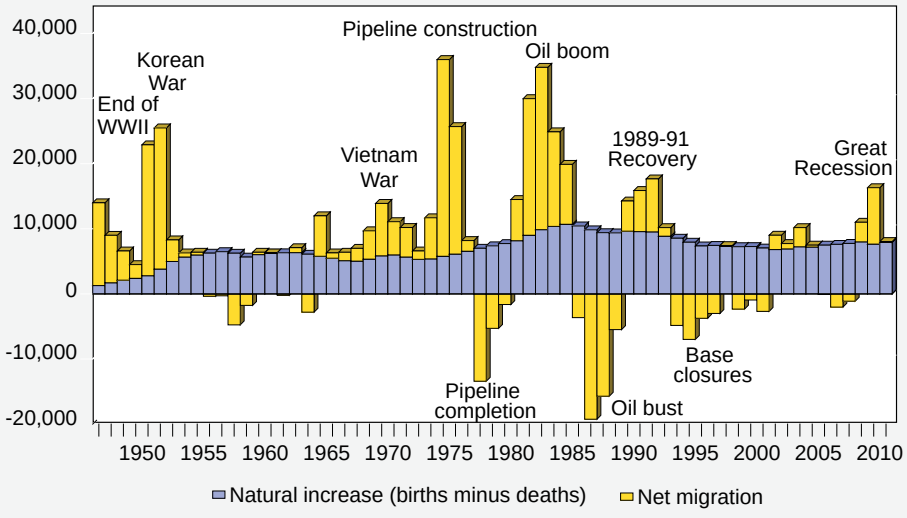
Alaska's population at statehood in 1959 was just a third of what it is today. Then in 1968, oil discovery at Prudhoe Bay and construction of the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline brought in tens of thousands of workers, followed by large net losses after the pipeline's completion.

New oil revenue in the early 1980s brought another period of dramatic growth through net migration, followed by big losses when oil prices dropped. Since the early 1990s, these fluctuations have been less dramatic.

No perfect data source

Migration data come from three main sources, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. This means each source is an indicator of migration, but none provides a complete system to track it.

1 Historic Events and Population Change
Alaska, 1947 to 2011

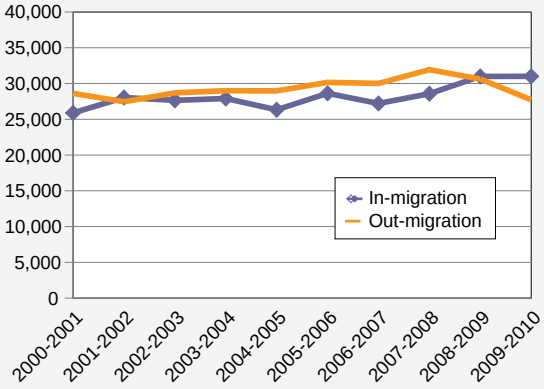


Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

- **Data from Permanent Fund Dividend applications** have broad in-state coverage and provide information on age and sex, but lag on new migrants from outside the state because they aren't eligible for the PFD until they've lived in Alaska for one calendar year. Similarly, PFD data do not capture people who never live here long enough to qualify for a dividend. Younger workers are especially likely to be missed for that reason.

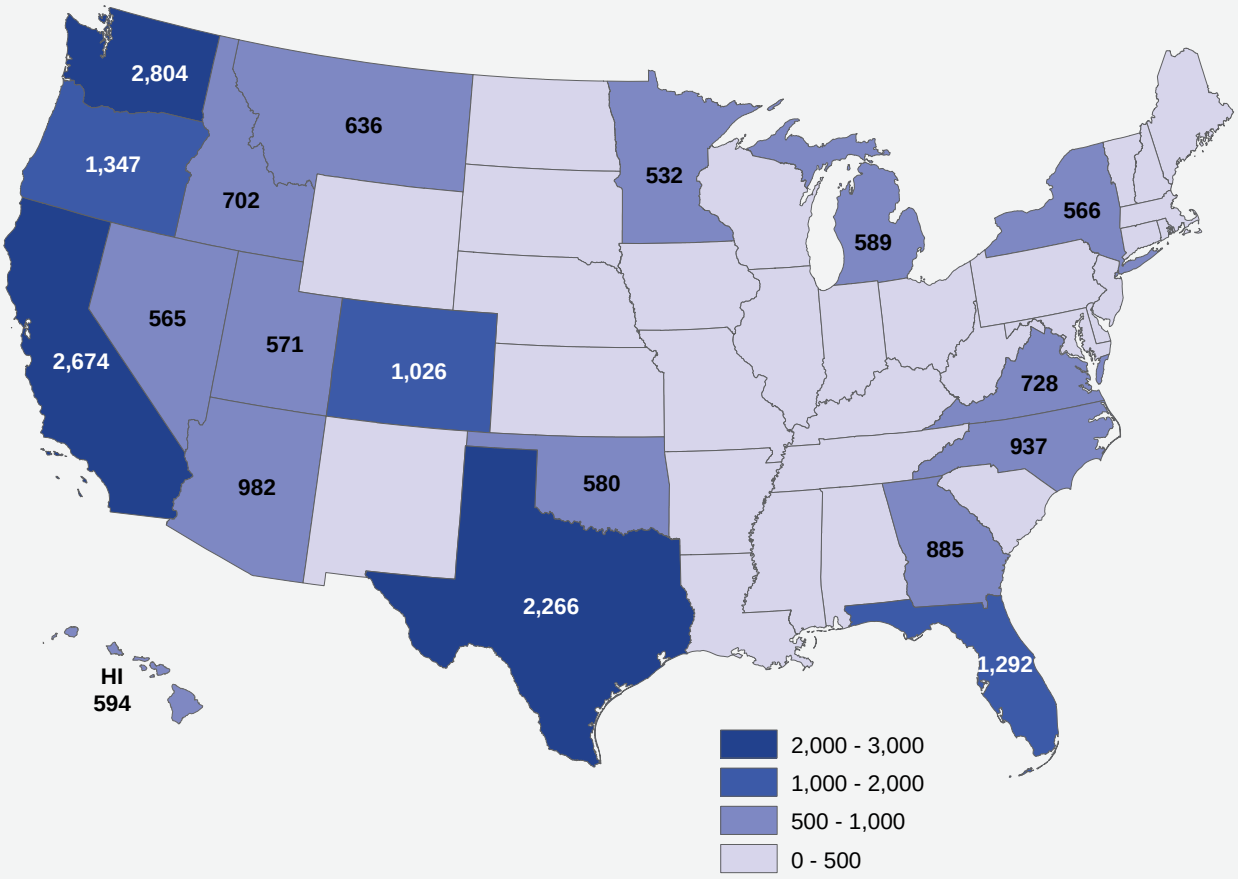
- **Data based on Internal Revenue Service tax forms** provide direct counts of migration between U.S. counties, boroughs, and census areas by comparing the mailing addresses of exemptions — that is, filers and their dependents — from year to year. However, the IRS data give no population characteristics except median income and those aged 65 or over, and

Large Movements In, Out 2
IRS data, 2000 to 2010



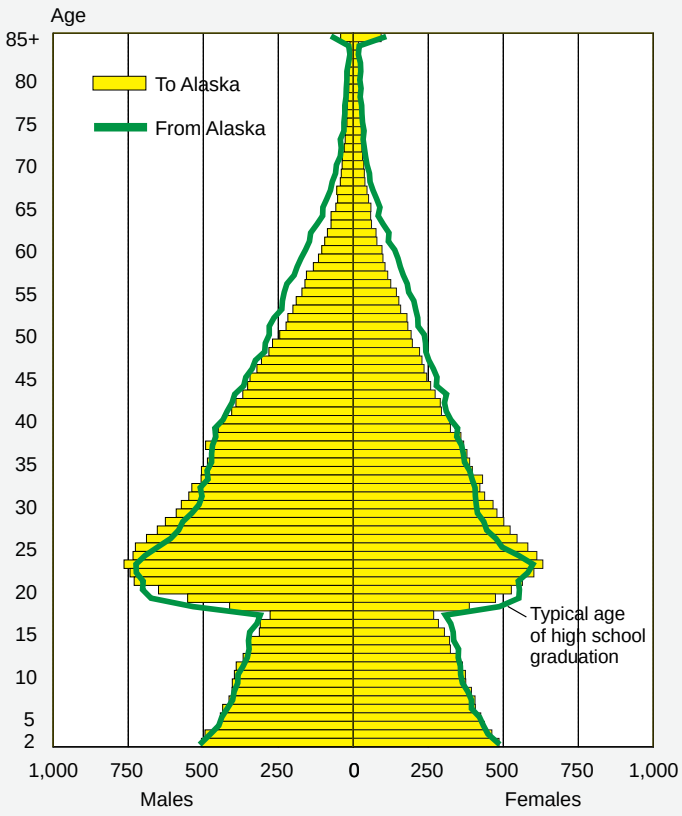
Note: These data only cover state-to-state migration for those included on IRS tax forms.
Sources: IRS Tax Statistics; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Yearly Migration to Alaska by State 3
IRS data, 2000 to 2010



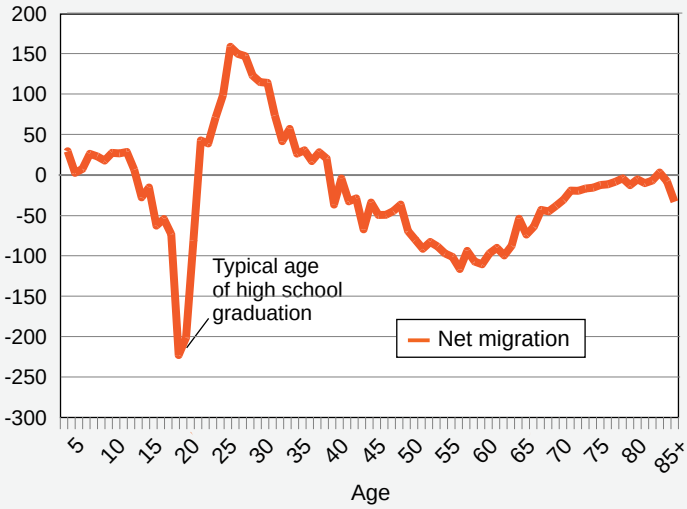
Sources: IRS Tax Statistics; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

4 Yearly Migration by Age and Sex
PFD data, 2000 to 2010



Note: Adjusted for one-year delay in Permanent Fund Dividend eligibility.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

5 Yearly Net Migration by Age
PFD data, 2000 to 2010



Note: Adjusted for one-year delay in Permanent Fund Dividend eligibility.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

they are based on the address given on the form. The data cover about 85 percent of Alaska's population, and the timing of the data release isn't clear from year to year.

- **Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey** provide more population characteristics than any other source, including age, sex, race, income, and education. However, the ACS is based on a small sample of the population and tends to have large margins of error. For most areas in Alaska, it's only available in five-year averages.

Migration to and from outside

Exhibit 2 shows Alaska's IRS exemption-based annual gross migration to and from other states from 2000 to 2010. Note it only covers those on federal tax returns, and it doesn't include international migration. The ACS shows that 6,500 people moved in from abroad each year on average from 2006 to 2010, netting around 1,000 to the state annually.

Overall, Alaska gets most of its new residents from states that are large and/or close. Exhibit 3 shows the states that sent the highest numbers of people to Alaska from 2000 to 2010, and this map wouldn't change much if it reflected individual years.

Large numbers of people move here from neighboring states such as Washington and California, and few come from small or faraway places like Maine and Nebraska. Distant states such as Texas and Florida have low rates of migration to Alaska, but because they have such large populations, the numbers of their residents who move here are substantial. If the map showed where in the U.S. people tend to go when they leave Alaska, the pattern would be similar.

Young people move more

It's important to understand gross migration flows by age as well as across time and space. The pattern is fairly predictable, as some age groups are more likely to move than others.

As the PFD-based migration data in Exhibit 4 show, younger people are more likely to move than older people, and parents of young children are more likely to relocate than those with children in middle school or high school. When people reach college age, movement jumps substantially as many leave home for school, new jobs, or military service. The level of migration generally peaks in the mid-20s as people settle down, and

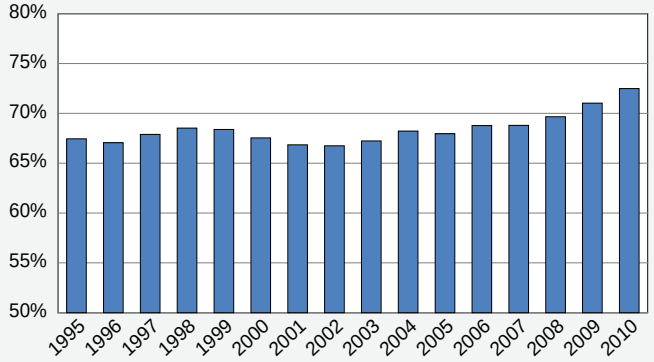
declines steadily thereafter.

The pattern of net migration by age is fairly stable from year to year, with net gains in younger years as children settle here with their parents, followed by a clear drop at college age when people leave for outside opportunities. There is a comparably dramatic increase for ages just past college, as many young adults seeking career opportunities settle here. (See Exhibit 5.)

Although the pattern of net loss and then gain of those aged 18 to 20 is striking, it's only a fraction of the more than 30,000 people in that age group. The state also consistently attracts more people between 21 and 35 than it loses.

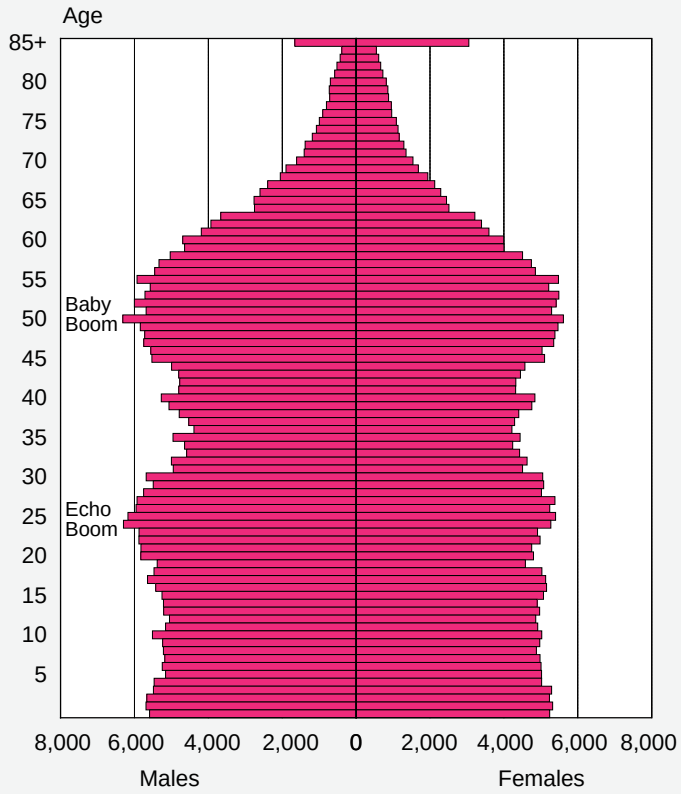
A comparison of PFD data from year to year shows what proportion of residents are still in Alaska five years after the typical high school graduation age of 18. Since 1995, the percentage of 18-year-old applicants who have remained in Alaska or returned has increased from 67 to 72 percent. (See Exhibit 6.) Though that rise isn't dramatic, this age group is undoubtedly affected by opportunities in Alaska and the rest of the nation.

6 More 18-Year-Olds Stay or Return
Percent in Alaska at age 23, 1995 to 2010



Note: Based on Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend data.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

7 Alaska Population by Age and Sex
U.S. Census, 2010



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Past age 30, net migration gains steadily decrease and become net losses (See Exhibit 5.) The size of net losses among older people has been fairly stable, but this could soon change with the aging of Alaska's large "baby boomer" population — those born between 1946 and 1964 — and the relatively small pre-boomer population ahead of it. (See Exhibit 7.)

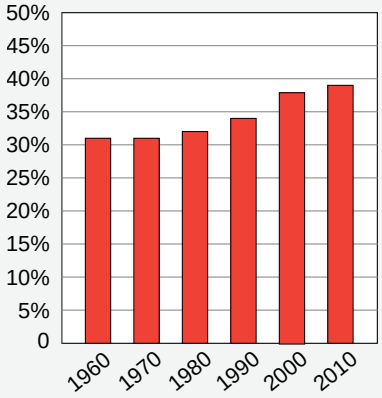
Losses at the highest ages are somewhat lower, partly because there are fewer people to affect the numbers at those ages, and partially because elderly people move less.

Most aren't born here

Place of birth is an obvious and useful indicator of whether a person has ever moved, and these data are available from decennial censuses through 2000 and the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey for 2010.

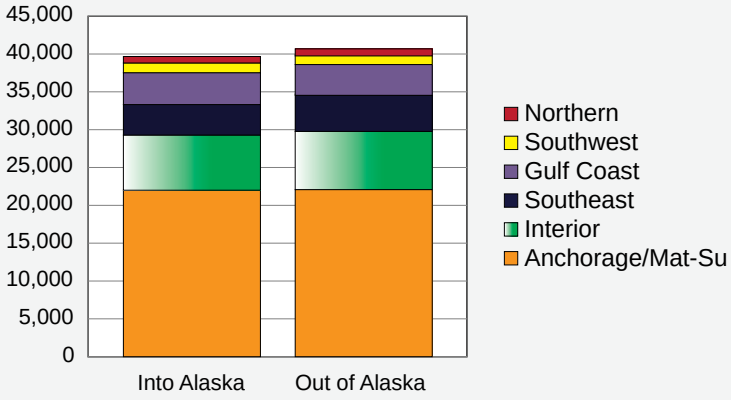
As of 2010, 39 percent of Alaskans were born in the state. (See Exhibit 8). This is an increase from 31 percent in 1960, but

8 Born in Alaska
1960 to 2010



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

9 Movement To and From the Regions
Yearly PFD data, Alaska, 2000 to 2010



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

still much lower than the 59 percent for the nation as a whole in 2010. The only states with a smaller percentage born there were Arizona (38 percent), Florida (35 percent), and Nevada (24 percent).

Regional losses and gains

Between 2000 and 2010, approximately 55 percent of Alaska's new and returning residents moved to the Anchorage/Matanuska-Susitna area, followed by 19 percent to the Interior, 10 percent to Southeast, and 10 percent to the Gulf Coast. The more remote regions, including Northern and Southwest, gained only slim shares of the state's new or returning residents — around 5 percent combined. (See Exhibit 9.)

In terms of overall net migration across the state, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough gained the most on average, with more than 2,200 additional residents per year. Mat-Su was followed by the Kenai Peninsula Borough and Fairbanks North Star Borough, which each gained 250 people per year on average. (See Exhibit 10.) Military buildups and deployments have strongly affected Fairbanks' population, especially over the past decade.

The state's more rural areas have consistently lost population to migration over the past few decades. However, the Southwest and Northern regions have had higher-than-average natural increase — that is, births minus deaths — which has tended to make up for their migration losses. (See Exhibit 11.)

In Southeast, net migration losses led to some decline in the population between 2000 and 2010, but the region gained residents between 2010 and 2011.

Relocations within the state

Migration within Alaska often brings to mind the large numbers of people moving from villages to urban areas — particularly to Anchorage and Mat-Su — but that's only part of the story. While Anchorage and Mat-Su attract migrants each year from rural areas, they also lose a large number of people to both rural and other areas of the state. (See Exhibit 12.)

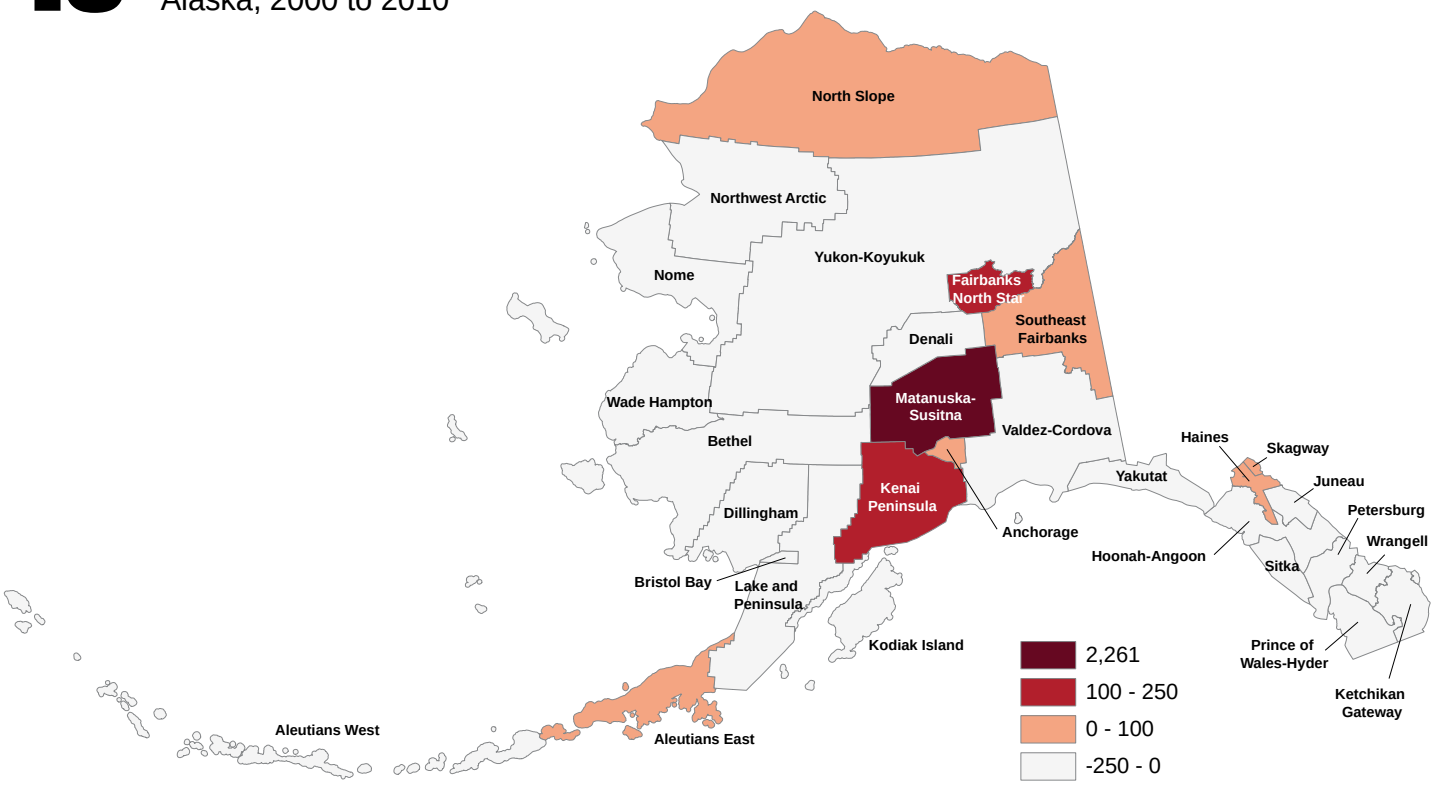
PFD records show that between 2000 and 2010, the Anchorage/Mat-Su Region gained about 5,100 people per year from elsewhere in Alaska, but also lost about 3,700 each year.

As with state-to-state migration, a region's size and location play an important role in these patterns. For example, the Anchorage/Mat-Su Region — which has the most people moving in and out by far — holds more than half the state's population, and is centrally located.

The Gulf Coast Region gained more than 500 residents each year since 2006, due in part to those who move to the Kenai Peninsula from neighboring Anchorage. Annual turnover between the Gulf Coast and Anchorage/Mat-Su is also significant.

10 Yearly Net Migration by Borough or Census Area

Alaska, 2000 to 2010



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

The Interior Region's migration is largely tied to Fairbanks, but also to regular movement between Anchorage/Mat-Su and other parts of the state.

In-state migration for the Southeast Region is mainly characterized by people in the state's major population centers moving to and from Alaska's capital in Juneau, as well as migration between the region and Anchorage/Mat-Su.

Migration for the Northern and Southwest regions is often connected to hubs such as Barrow, Bethel, Dillingham, Kotzebue, and Nome; and also to Fairbanks and Anchorage — particularly at college age. These regions generally have net losses to other parts of the state, but PFD data show Southwest gained 72 people overall from Anchorage/Mat-Su in 2010–2011. In other words, during that year at least, the number of people leaving Anchorage for Southwest communities was larger than the number moving to Anchorage from those communities.

Alaska Native majority areas

Eight boroughs and census areas have populations that are more than 50 percent Alaska Native (see Exhibit 13), and their migration patterns are of unique interest.

The total population for these areas is 62,983 as of the 2010 Census: 9 percent of the state's total of 710,231. These areas are 80 percent Alaska Native on average, in contrast to 17 percent statewide. Approximately 85 percent of these areas' residents were born in Alaska — considerably more than the 39 percent statewide.

Based on PFD data, annual migration out of these areas averaged slightly more than 4,500 for 2000 to 2010, and migration into Alaska Native areas averaged just under 3,600. Native majority areas lose population to migration each year, but they also have a higher number of children per family, which offsets the migration losses.

Of those who left majority Native areas, 2,364

11 Population by Economic Region, Borough, and Census Area

Alaska, 2000 to 2011

Area Name	Estimate April 2000	Estimate July 2001	Estimate July 2002	Estimate July 2003	Estimate July 2004	Estimate July 2005	Estimate July 2006	Estimate July 2007	Estimate July 2008	Estimate July 2009	Census April 2010	Estimate July 2011	Nat increase 2000–2010	Nat increase 2010–2011	Net migration 2000–2010	Net migration 2010–2011	Pop change 2000–2010	Pop change 2010–2011	Growth rate 2000–2010	Growth rate 2010–2011
Alaska	626,932	632,716	641,729	649,466	659,653	667,146	674,583	680,169	686,818	697,828	710,231	722,190	73,645	9,845	9,654	2,114	83,299	11,959	1.25	1.34
Anchorage / Mat-Su Region	319,605	326,507	331,975	340,267	347,904	352,028	360,060	362,163	366,562	375,304	380,821	387,894	38,611	5,213	22,605	1,860	61,216	7,073	1.75	1.47
Anchorage, Municipality	260,283	264,600	267,339	272,304	276,865	277,157	281,831	281,151	282,871	289,230	291,826	296,197	31,547	4,145	-4	226	31,543	4,371	1.14	1.19
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	59,322	61,907	64,636	67,963	71,039	74,871	78,229	81,012	83,691	86,074	88,995	91,697	7,064	1,068	22,609	1,634	29,673	2,702	4.00	2.39
Gulf Coast Region	73,799	73,790	74,576	75,732	75,129	75,403	75,196	76,121	76,973	77,742	78,628	80,022	5,666	714	-837	680	4,829	1,394	0.63	1.41
Kenai Peninsula Borough	49,691	50,190	50,879	51,743	51,616	51,735	52,025	52,904	53,669	54,632	55,400	56,369	3,305	416	2,404	553	5,709	969	1.09	1.39
Kodiak Island Borough	13,913	13,517	13,557	13,691	13,411	13,491	13,220	13,399	13,625	13,616	13,592	13,870	1,616	208	-1,937	70	-321	278	-0.23	1.62
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	10,195	10,083	10,140	10,298	10,102	10,177	9,951	9,818	9,679	9,494	9,636	9,783	745	90	-1,304	57	-559	147	-0.56	1.21
Interior Region	97,417	98,089	99,906	97,652	101,555	104,391	104,919	109,336	110,473	110,752	112,024	112,170	13,687	1,832	920	-1,686	14,607	146	1.39	0.10
Denali Borough	1,893	1,889	1,863	1,882	1,806	1,769	1,732	1,692	1,717	1,788	1,826	1,820	165	19	-232	-25	-67	-6	-0.36	-0.26
Fairbanks North Star Borough	82,840	83,872	85,860	83,714	87,555	90,381	90,953	95,354	96,423	96,631	97,581	97,615	12,449	1,649	2,292	-1,615	14,741	34	1.63	0.03
Southeast Fairbanks CA	6,174	5,847	5,836	5,766	5,933	6,199	6,409	6,569	6,691	6,743	7,029	7,080	661	108	194	-57	855	51	1.30	0.58
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	6,510	6,481	6,347	6,290	6,261	6,042	5,825	5,721	5,642	5,590	5,588	5,655	412	56	-1,334	11	-922	67	-1.52	0.95
Northern Region**	23,789	23,616	23,800	23,843	23,874	23,665	23,655	23,548	23,532	23,685	26,445	26,965	4,346	598	-1,690	-78	2,656	520	1.06	1.56
Nome Census Area	9,196	9,260	9,335	9,342	9,416	9,448	9,521	9,458	9,454	9,492	9,492	9,730	1,605	220	-1,309	18	296	238	0.32	1.98
North Slope Borough**	7,385	7,221	7,220	7,198	7,098	6,857	6,762	6,669	6,633	6,749	9,430	9,584	1,328	162	717	-8	2,045	154	2.43	1.30
Northwest Arctic Borough	7,208	7,135	7,245	7,303	7,360	7,360	7,372	7,421	7,445	7,444	7,523	7,651	1,413	216	-1,098	-88	315	128	0.43	1.35
Southeast Region	73,082	71,853	72,214	72,250	71,546	71,712	71,399	70,219	70,504	71,141	71,664	73,526	4,962	653	-6,380	1,209	-1,418	1,862	-0.20	2.05
Haines Borough	2,392	2,405	2,412	2,391	2,343	2,312	2,357	2,387	2,464	2,453	2,508	2,620	45	18	71	94	116	112	0.47	3.49
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	2,574	2,426	2,329	2,263	2,205	2,225	2,177	2,194	2,159	2,166	2,150	2,148	81	16	-505	-18	-424	-2	-1.80	-0.07
Juneau, City and Borough	30,711	30,482	31,047	31,364	31,213	31,340	30,943	30,350	30,554	30,946	31,275	32,290	2,540	322	-1,976	693	564	1,015	0.18	2.55
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	14,067	13,795	13,764	13,651	13,242	13,331	13,439	13,350	13,287	13,377	13,477	13,686	943	125	-1,533	84	-590	209	-0.43	1.23
Petersburg Census Area	4,260	4,260	4,191	4,115	4,167	4,127	4,056	3,993	3,931	3,904	3,815	3,951	113	32	-558	104	-445	136	-1.10	2.80
Prince of Wales-Hyder CA	6,125	5,804	5,679	5,599	5,597	5,546	5,535	5,374	5,452	5,525	5,559	5,814	403	50	-969	205	-566	255	-0.97	3.59
Sitka, City and Borough of	8,835	8,737	8,812	8,918	8,860	8,990	9,043	8,678	8,698	8,730	8,881	8,985	658	65	-612	39	46	104	0.05	0.93
Skagway, Municipality	862	848	861	868	907	875	905	900	911	944	968	965	63	11	43	-14	106	-3	1.16	-0.25
Wrangell, City and Borough	2,448	2,384	2,369	2,349	2,281	2,258	2,232	2,316	2,362	2,352	2,369	2,411	79	10	-158	32	-79	42	-0.33	1.41
Yakutat, City and Borough	808	712	750	732	731	708	712	677	686	744	662	656	37	4	-183	-10	-146	-6	-1.99	-0.73
Southwest Region	39,240	38,861	39,258	39,722	39,645	39,947	39,354	38,782	38,774	39,204	40,649	41,613	6,373	835	-4,964	129	1,409	964	0.35	1.87
Aleutians East Borough	2,697	2,553	2,732	2,726	2,671	2,677	2,613	2,818	2,726	2,908	3,141	3,172	122	21	322	10	444	31	1.52	0.79
Aleutians West Census Area	5,465	5,292	5,141	5,430	5,370	5,406	5,105	4,711	4,669	4,862	5,561	5,546	251	24	-155	-39	96	-15	0.17	-0.22
Bethel Census Area	16,047	16,066	16,438	16,640	16,736	16,915	16,831	16,542	16,624	16,725	17,013	17,548	3,341	440	-2,375	95	966	535	0.58	2.48
Bristol Bay Borough	1,258	1,177	1,170	1,113	1,114	1,193	1,077	1,053	1,050	995	997	1,035	67	10	-328	28	-261	38	-2.31	2.99
Dillingham Census Area	4,922	4,885	4,911	4,894	4,839	4,777	4,787	4,758	4,739	4,716	4,847	4,947	653	95	-728	5	-75	100	-0.15	1.63
Lake and Peninsula Borough	1,823	1,739	1,650	1,643	1,632	1,647	1,589	1,568	1,590	1,597	1,631	1,693	125	18	-317	44	-192	62	-1.11	2.98
Wade Hampton Census Area	7,028	7,149	7,216	7,276	7,283	7,332	7,352	7,332	7,376	7,401	7,459	7,672	1,814	227	-1,383	-14	431	213	0.60	2.25

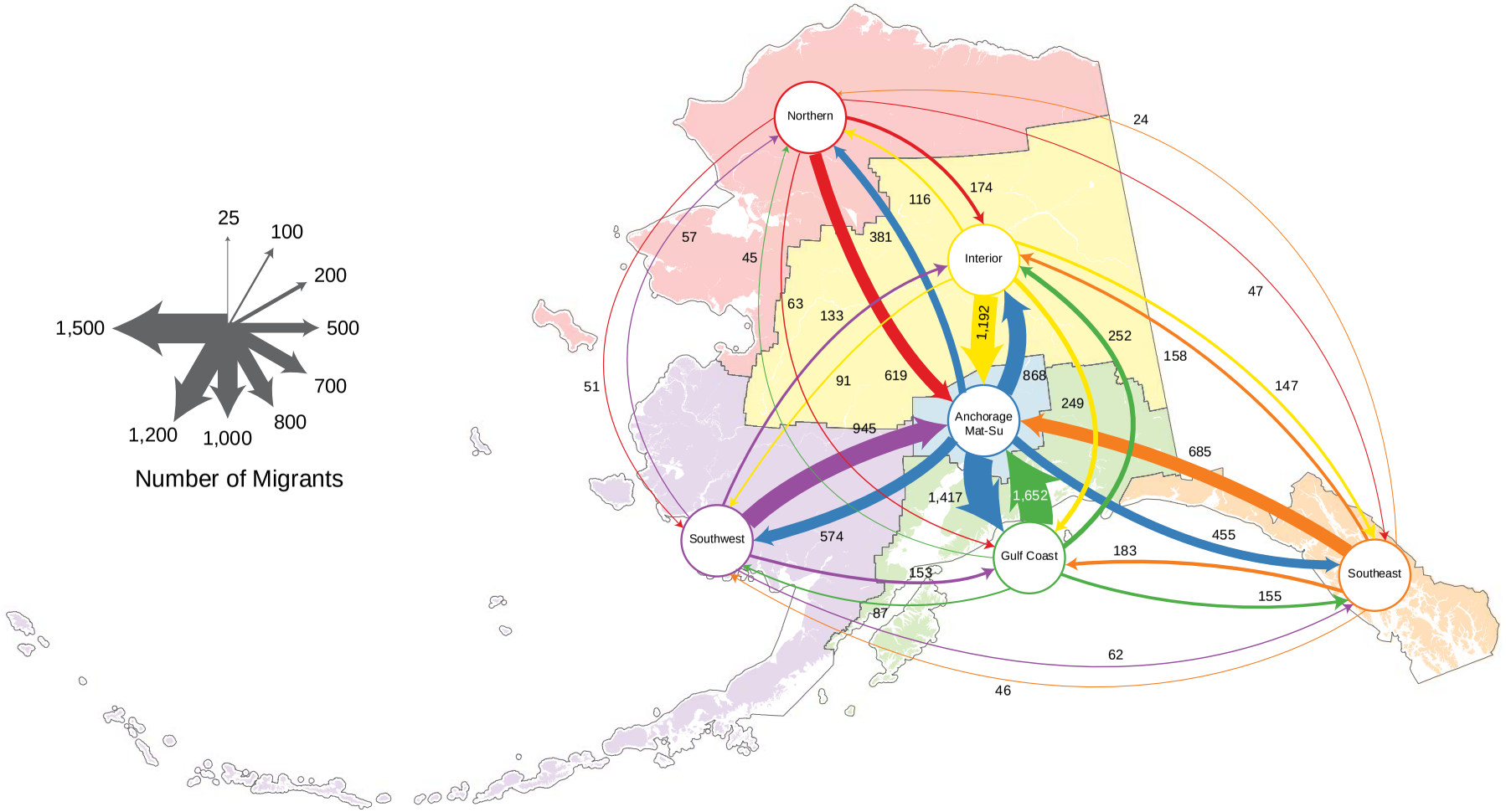
Note: Intercensal 2000-2009, 2010 Census, and postcensal 2011. All numbers are based on 2010 Census geography.

**The large increase for 2010 Census North Slope Borough population numbers is primarily due to employees at remote work sites in the borough, who were not counted in past censuses.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

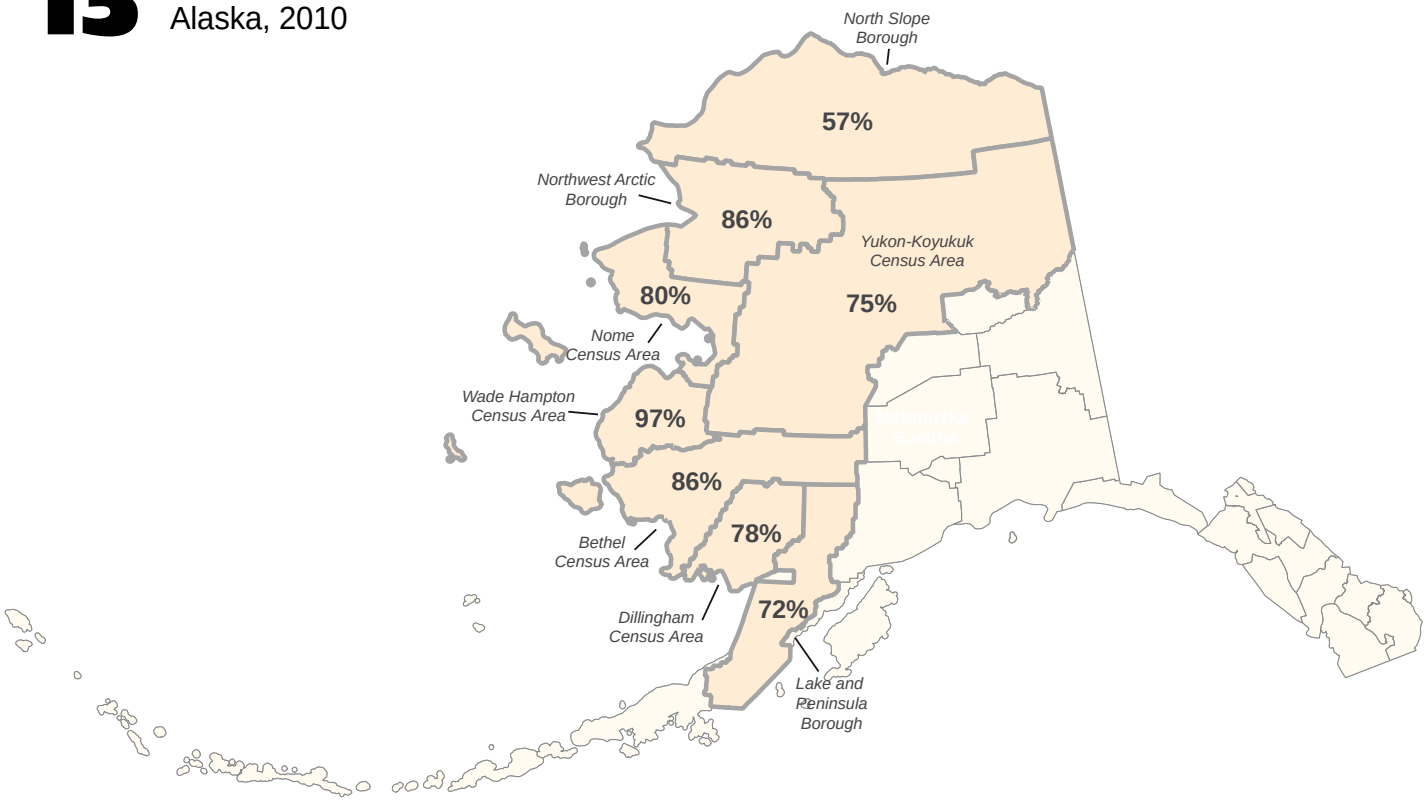
12 Yearly Migration Within the State

PFD data, 2000 to 2010



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

13 Alaska Native Majority Areas
Alaska, 2010



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

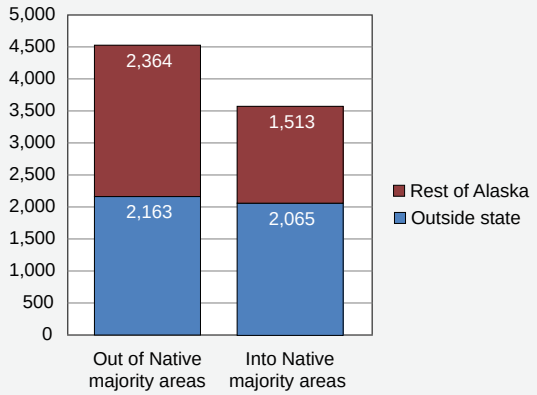
per year went elsewhere in Alaska, and 2,163 left the state. (See Exhibit 14.)

Of those who moved to a majority Native area, 1,513 per year arrived from another part of Alaska, and 2,065 came from outside the state.

Within Alaska, most of these areas' movements are to and from Anchorage, with much smaller but consistent numbers moving to and from Fairbanks, the Kenai Peninsula, and Mat-Su. Due to small numbers and fewer data sources, moves to and from outside of Alaska are harder to track, but other states with large numbers of Alaska Natives are Washington (12,485), Oregon (3,190), and Florida (1,115).

Gross migration by age and sex to and from these areas follows the overall pattern of high numbers at young ages, decreasing to high school age, then jumping sharply at age 18 with a gradual decline from the mid-20s on. Though men have higher overall rates of migration between Native majority areas and all other places, women have higher post-high school rates of relocation between Native majority areas and Anchorage.

14 Native Majority Areas
Yearly migration, 2000 to 2010



Note: Based on Permanent Fund Dividend data
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Of Alaskans in these areas who were 18 in 2005, 73 percent still lived in a Native majority area or had returned in 2010, and 12 percent lived else-

where in Alaska. The remaining 15 percent didn't apply for a PFD, so their status was unknown. Many had likely moved outside the state.

As with all areas, the reasons people migrate to and from majority Alaska Native areas are complex and varied. People at certain ages, particularly those looking to start a career or further their education, have a tendency to move more.

However, the overall net gains and losses are best understood through incentives. There is a rural-to-urban migration trend throughout the world because people in remote locations have incentives to move to more populated areas with more job opportunities and amenities, and this holds true in Alaska.

Where to find migration data

For annual estimates of migration, including data from the Alaska Permanent Fund, Internal Revenue Service, and the American Community Survey, go to labor.alaska.gov/research. Click "Population and Census," then select "Migration Data and Information."