



# Kids Count Alaska 2011-2012

Institute of Social and Economic Research • University of Alaska Anchorage





# KIDS COUNT ALASKA 2011-2012

## 2011- 2012 Data Book

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Front cover: Girl Scouts selling cookies and entertaining shoppers in Anchorage. This year's data book is celebrating the 100th anniversary of Girl Scouts in the United States. Each section of the book starts with a photo of Alaska Girl Scouts, enjoying activities around the state.

*Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Alaska*

# Acknowledgments

*We thank many people for their help with this book.*

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go to <http://kidscount.alaska.edu>

To compare data on kids in Alaska and all other states,  
go to <http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org>

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## 100 Years of Girl Scouts: 1912- 2012



Juliette Gordon Low, founder of Girl Scouts in the United States  
Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Alaska

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# Introduction

## ABOUT THIS YEAR'S BOOK

Every year we choose a theme for our illustrations. This year we're celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scouts of the United States, with photos of Girl Scouts of Alaska—selling cookies, camping, and enjoying the beauty of Alaska in many activities. The photos are on the cover and at the start of each section. Page 7 describes Alaska's Girl Scouts.

## WHAT IS KIDS COUNT ALASKA?

Kids Count Alaska is part of a nationwide program, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to collect and publicize information about children's health, safety, education, and economic status. We gather information from many sources and present it in one place, trying to give Alaskans a broad picture of how the state's children are doing and provide parents, policymakers, and others with information they need to improve life for children and families. Our goals are:

- Distributing information about the status of Alaska's children
- Creating an informed public, motivated to help children
- Comparing the status of children in Alaska with that of children nationwide, and presenting additional Alaska indicators (including regional breakdowns) when possible.

## WHO ARE ALASKA'S CHILDREN?

Children and young people through age 18 make up nearly a third of all Alaskans—210,839 of the state's 692,314 residents in 2009. The adjacent table compares Alaska's children by age and sex in 1990 and 2009.

The number of children and teenagers has increased 17% since 1990, but the total state population grew 26%—so those 18 and younger make up a somewhat smaller percentage of Alaskans than they did in 1990. Also, the age composition of the youngest Alaskans has shifted somewhat, with older teenagers (15 to 18) making up a bigger share. Boys continue to outnumber girls, accounting for nearly 52% of all children and teenagers.

The map on the facing page shows the distribution of Alaska's children by region. More than four in ten (41%) of the children in Alaska live in Anchorage, and another 12% live in the neighboring Mat-Su Borough—so more than half the state's children are concentrated in a small area of Alaska. About 16% live in the sprawling Interior region and another 10% in the Gulf Coast region. Just under 10% live in Southeast Alaska. The remaining children in Alaska live in the most remote areas—Southwest (7%) and Northern (5%).

The Alaska Department of Labor has historically classified children as White, Alaska Native, Black, or Asian/Pacific Islander. Children who are Hispanic or Multi-Race are included in those categories. Based on those categories, White children make up about 70% of children in all regions except Northern and Southwest, where Alaska Native children make up the majority.

The Alaska Department of Education and the Anchorage School District, by contrast, have separate classifications for Hispanic and Multi-Race children. With those additional categories, the statewide share of school children reporting their

race as White is 53%, and in Anchorage the share is 48%. Except for Alaska Natives, the percentage of school children in all other groups is higher in Anchorage than statewide. By contrast, Alaska Natives make up a much bigger percentage of students statewide than they do in Anchorage, and they are the majority in the Northern and Southwest regions.

Children by Age	1990				2009			
	Total Number	Percent	Male	Female	Total Number	Percent	Male	Female
<b>Under 1</b>	11,963	6.6%	6,109	5,854	11,653	5.5%	6,102	5,551
<b>1-4</b>	44,014	24.5%	22,616	21,398	46,246	21.9%	24,044	22,202
<b>5-9</b>	51,508	28.6%	26,543	24,965	55,674	26.4%	29,014	26,660
<b>10-14</b>	42,939	23.9%	22,333	20,606	52,991	25.1%	26,986	26,005
<b>15</b>	7,652	4.3%	4,021	3,631	10,946	5.2%	5,543	5,403
<b>16</b>	7,341	4.1%	3,786	3,555	11,083	5.3%	5,676	5,407
<b>17</b>	7,443	4.1%	3,887	3,556	11,179	5.3%	5,803	5,376
<b>18</b>	7,069	3.9%	3,834	3,235	11,067	5.2%	5,705	5,362
<b>Total 18 and under</b>	<b>179,929</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>93,129</b>	<b>86,800</b>	<b>210,839</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>108,873</b>	<b>101,966</b>
<b>Total Alaska Population</b>	<b>550,044</b>		<b>289,868</b>	<b>260,176</b>	<b>692,314</b>		<b>353,221</b>	<b>339,093</b>

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2009 Age, Race, and Sex Estimates

## Boroughs and Census Areas, by Region

### Municipality of Anchorage

### Matanuska-Susitna Borough

### Gulf Coast Region

Kenai Peninsula Borough  
Kodiak Island Borough  
Valdez-Cordova Census Area

### Interior Region

Denali Borough  
Fairbanks North Star Borough  
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area  
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area

### Northern Region

Nome Census Area  
North Slope Borough  
Northwest Arctic Borough

### Southeast Region

Haines Borough  
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area  
Juneau, City and Borough  
Ketchikan Gateway Borough  
Petersburg Census Area  
Prince of Wales/Hyder Census Area  
Sitka, City and Borough  
Skagway Municipality  
Wrangell, City and Borough  
Yakutat Borough

### Southwest Region

Aleutians East Borough  
Aleutians West Census Area  
Bethel Census Area  
Bristol Bay Borough  
Dillingham Census Area  
Lake and Peninsula Borough  
Wade Hampton Census Area

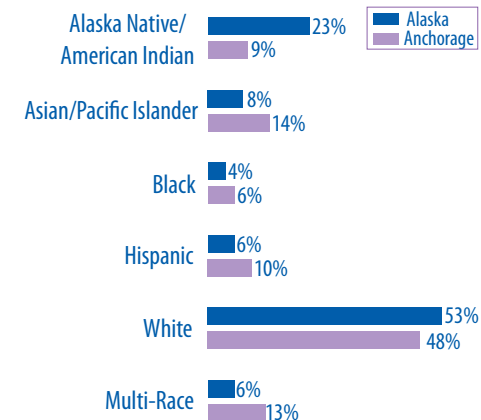
## Racial Composition of Children (19 and Under), by Region, 2009

Region	White	Alaska Native <sup>a</sup>	Black	Asian/Pacific Isl.
Anchorage	69.9%	13.0%	7.5%	9.6%
Mat-Su	81.9%	11.3%	2.6%	4.1%
Gulf Coast	78.2%	13.7%	1.3%	6.9%
Interior	74.1%	15.6%	6.6%	3.6%
Northern	13.3%	83.2%	0.7%	2.8%
Southeast	68.3%	24.0%	1.3%	6.3%
Southwest	12.9%	84.2%	0.7%	2.2%
<b>Alaska</b>	<b>66.2%</b>	<b>22.4%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>

<sup>a</sup>Also includes American Indians, who make up 0.5% of Alaska's population.

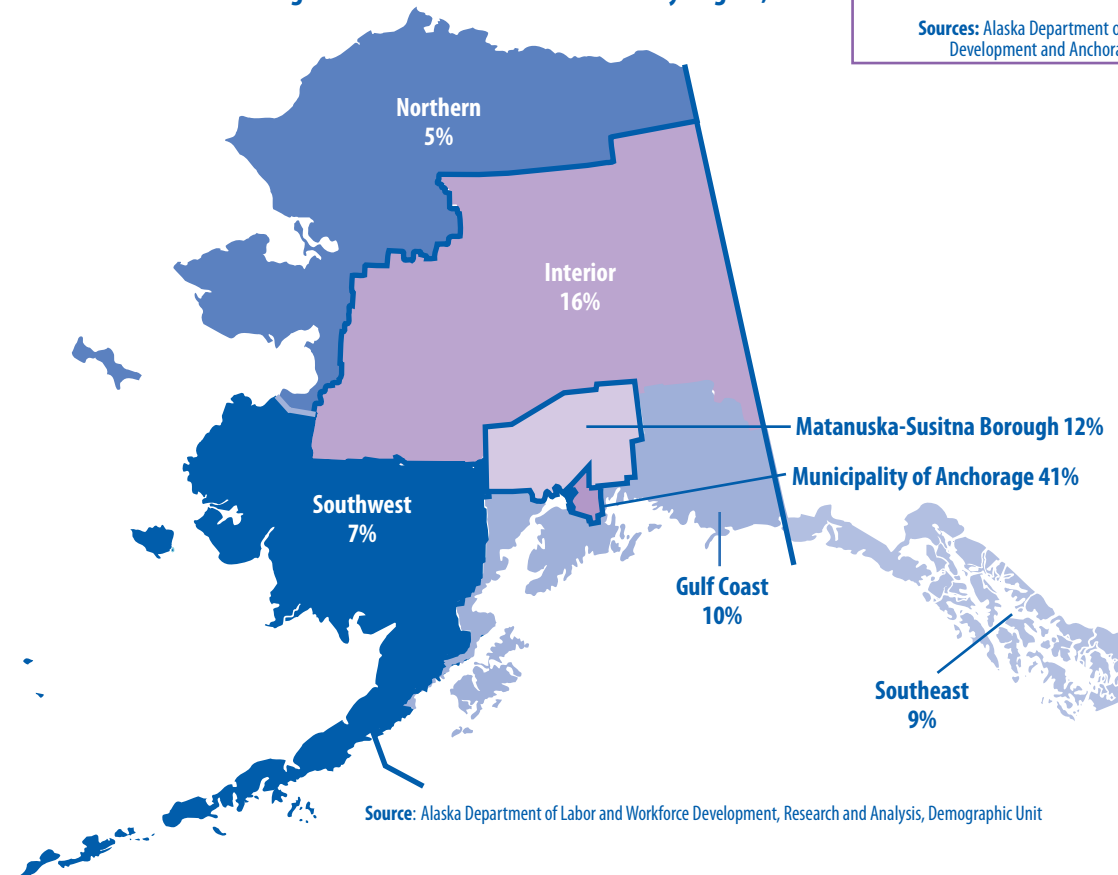
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis, Demographic Unit

## Alaska and Anchorage K-12 Students, by Race and Ethnicity, 2009-2010



Sources: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and Anchorage School District

## Percentage Distribution of Alaska Children by Region, 2009



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

# Introduction

## ALASKA AND U.S. COMPARISONS

The table below compares Alaska and U.S. averages in 2000 and the most recent year available (2008, 2009, or 2010) for ten key Kids Count indicators.

Alaska currently ranks among the best in the nation on three indicators: babies with low birthweight, children living in poverty, and infant mortality rate. The share of babies born at low birthweight has consistently been among the lowest in the nation for the past decade. The same is true of the share of children living in poverty—but those figures are not adjusted for Alaska’s higher living costs, particularly in rural areas, and may therefore underestimate actual poverty in Alaska.

The other indicator where Alaska currently ranks among the best in the country is the infant mortality rate. But that rate is—as we note throughout the book—based on small numbers and can move sharply up or down from year to year.

Alaska now ranks near the national average on two indicators—children in single-parent families and teens not in school and not high-school graduates.

Alaska’s standing is among the worst nationwide on five indicators. The child and teen death rates in Alaska have historically been far above the national average, and they remain so. Still, it is good news that those rates—especially the teen death rate—are lower now than they were a decade ago.

The share of Alaska children with no parent working full-time, year-round, has been and remains above the national average—due in part to the seasonal nature of many jobs in the state—but the gap between Alaska and other states has narrowed.

The table also shows Alaska’s teen birth rate as significantly above the U.S. average. But as we discuss more later, figures from the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics put Alaska’s teen birth rate lower. The difference can be traced to the fact that the bureau’s estimate of the number of teenage girls in Alaska is larger than that of the U.S. census, which is the source the KIDS COUNT Data Center uses.

**Alaska and U.S. Comparison, 2000 and 2008-2010**

	Alaska		U.S.		Alaska Rank 2010*
	2000	2008-2010*	2000	2008-2010*	
<b>Alaska Among the Best</b>					
Percentage of babies with low birthweight (2009)	6%	6%	8%	8%	2
Percentage of children living in poverty <sup>a</sup> (2010)	13%	13%	17%	22%	2
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) <sup>b</sup> (2008)	7	5.9	7	6.6	17
<b>Alaska Near U.S. Average</b>					
Percentage of children in single-parent families (2010)	30%	32%	31%	34%	19
Percentage of teens not in school and not graduates (2010 <sup>b</sup> )	8%	6%	11%	6%	27
<b>Alaska Among the Worst</b>					
Teen birth rate (per 1,000 girls 15-19) <sup>b</sup> (2009)	49	45	48	39	34
Percentage of children with no parent working full-time (2010)	NA	35%	NA	33%	35
Percentage of teens not in school and not working	NA	11%	NA	9%	38
Teen death rate (per 100,000 teens 15-19) <sup>b</sup> (2008)	142	87	67	58	46
Child death rate (per 100,000 children 1-14) <sup>b</sup> (2008)	32	31	22	18	49

\*Some data available for 2010; some for only 2008 or 2009.

<sup>a</sup>Based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s poverty threshold figures, which are not adjusted for Alaska’s higher living costs and may underestimate poverty in Alaska.

<sup>b</sup>These rates are based on small numbers and can therefore fluctuate sharply from year to year.

Note: Alaska figures in this table may differ from later figures in the regional graphs. The figures above are from the national Kids Count program; our regional figures may be based on different years and are sometimes measured differently.

Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center



Before we discuss specific indicators of well-being among Alaska's children, on the next several pages we highlight information about three groups of Alaska's young people.

The first is a very successful group that has provided girls in Alaska with opportunities since 1926—Girl Scouts of Alaska. This year the Girl Scouts organization nationwide is celebrating its 100th anniversary—and we are recognizing Girl Scouts of Alaska in this year's data book illustrations. The second group is far different—one that needs adults to pay far more attention to them: homeless school children. And the third group faces many problems but has just recently begun receiving critical help—teenagers aging out of Alaska's foster-care system.

## GIRLS SCOUTS OF ALASKA

Eighteen girls attended the first known Girl Scout meeting in the U.S., led by Juliette Gordon Low, in Savannah, Georgia, in March 1912.<sup>1</sup> Low's idea was that the new organization would give girls opportunities to spend time outdoors, develop skills they'd need to become leaders, and learn to serve their communities.

In the United States today more than 2.3 million girls—ages 5 to 17—are Girls Scouts, and more than 59 million women across the country belonged when they were growing up.

Alaska's first Girl Scout troop was established in Anchorage in 1926, and historical photos show a troop in Unga in 1935. Today more than 6,000 girls in communities around the state—on and off the road system—are Girl Scouts. That's roughly 9% of all girls ages 5 to 17.

The Girl Scouts have three resident summer camps in Alaska—camps where girls can spend several days—and many more day camps, including 88 in remote communities in the western and southeast regions and the Aleutian Islands. Those day camps in remote places are free and are open to all girls, whether or not they are registered Girls Scouts.

Girl Scouts of Alaska reports that in 2012 the camps will emphasize building three character traits it believes lead to “not just happy but meaningful and fulfilling lives.” Those are:

**Grit:** ability to tough it out, persevere, and recover from setbacks.

**Self-control:** ability to regulate and manage impulses and not be run by them.

**Gratitude:** ability to recognize and appreciate what we've been given.

The day camps in rural areas also focus on activities less common in more urban areas of Alaska and the rest of the U.S.—traditional Alaska Native activities like beading, berry picking, and cleaning and cooking fish.

Aside from camps, Girl Scouts of Alaska offers a number of other activities. Those include:

- A winter festival where local experts teach girls how to ice fish and build snow caves.
- A robotics program where girls learn to build and program robots.
- Workshops that show girls opportunities for careers in science, engineering, math, and technology.

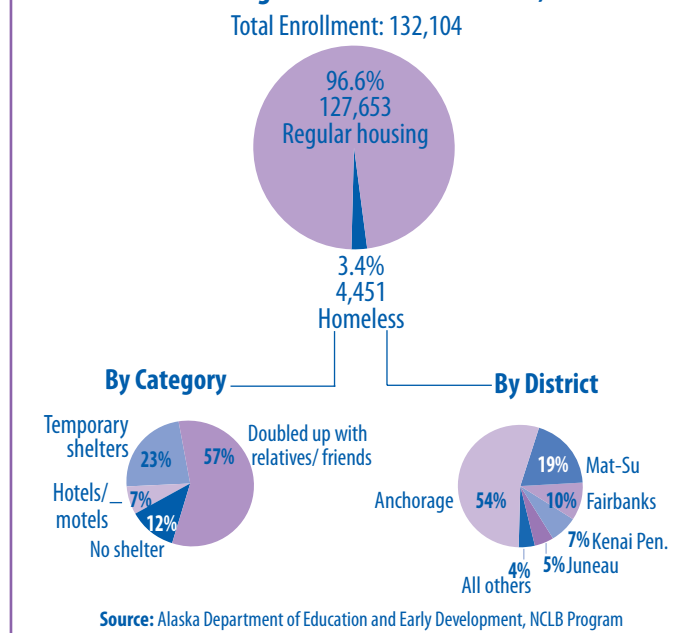
To learn more about Girl Scouts of Alaska, visit: <http://www.girlscoutsalaska.org/>

## HOMELESS SCHOOL CHILDREN

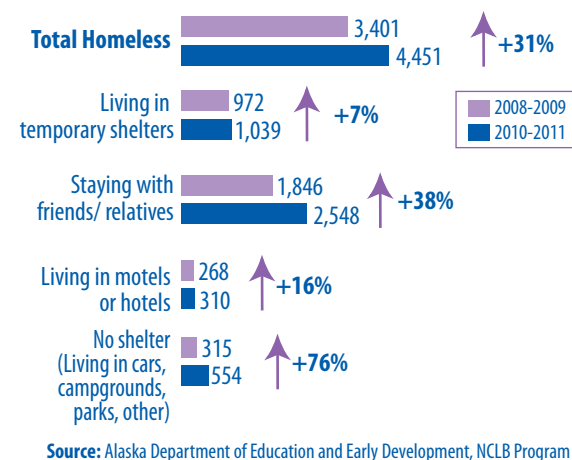
Every year, Alaska's school districts are required to collect information on homelessness among their students, as defined by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. That act considers children homeless if they lack a “fixed, regular, or adequate” place to live. It specifies four categories of homelessness:<sup>2</sup>

• *Living in temporary shelters.* These children live in “supervised publicly or privately operated shelters designed to provide temporary living accommodations” or are waiting to be placed in foster care. Emergency shelters do provide a place to live, but they are bare-bones lodgings—and they typically allow people to stay only for short periods. Transitional housing units offer a bridge for families looking for permanent housing and allow longer stays. But they often have waiting lists and don't exist in Alaska's remote rural communities.

## Homelessness Among Alaska's School Children, 2010-2011



## Change in Number of Homeless Students in Alaska, 2008-2009 to 2010-2011



## Highlights

- *Staying with friends or relatives.* These children “share the housing of others due to loss of housing or economic hardship.” Federal law classifies them as homeless because they are staying with relatives or friends not out of choice but because their families can’t afford housing of their own.

- *Living in motels or hotels.* Children in this category live in inexpensive hotels or motels because their families can’t find other affordable places to live.

- *No shelter.* These children are truly without homes, living in places “not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.” That can include living in cars, abandoned buildings, campgrounds, or parks.

Alaska’s school districts reported that in the 2010–2011 school year, 132,104 children were enrolled in the state’s public schools. Of those 4,451—3.4%—were considered homeless. Figures on the previous page show homeless children by category and by district, and how numbers of homeless Alaska school children changed from the 2008–2009 school year to 2010–2011.

Most homeless children were in the largest districts, with more than half in the Anchorage district. Since only about 40% of all Alaska school children are in Anchorage, it looks as if children in that city are more likely to be homeless. But the Alaska Department of Education, which collects these data on homelessness, believes some homeless children may not be identified, especially in rural areas.

- About 12% of homeless children—more than 550—in 2010–2011 were in the most dire circumstances, with no adequate shelter. That was up from 315 in 2008–2009—a 76% increase.

- Another 23%—more than 1,000—were living in temporary shelters. That was up about 7% from 2008–2009.

- About 7%—310—were living in hotels or motels, up about 16% from 2008–2009.

- The other 57%, about 2,500, were doubled-up in homes of relatives or friends. That was an increase of nearly 40% from 2008–2009.

Overall, the number of homeless school children in Alaska increased nearly a third between 2008–2009 and 2010–2011, up from 3,400 to more than 4,400. It is appalling that thousands of Alaska’s school children don’t have regular homes—especially the more than 500 who are living in cars or campgrounds or other places where no one should have to live.

### HELP FOR KIDS AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE Background

Government protective agencies for children—in Alaska, the Office of Children’s Services—can remove children from their families if they determine that for various reasons the children are in danger. Those children are then placed with foster families, with the understanding that they may later be able to return to their own families. But many foster children remain in the system—often moving among different foster families—until they age out of the system.

Until about 15 years ago, when teenagers in foster care anywhere in the U.S. reached 18, they were generally on their own. States were not required to provide any more protective services, and the teenagers typically got very little formal help as they suddenly had to move out into the world and start their adult lives.<sup>3</sup>

Conditions for those aging out of the foster-care system began to improve in 1999, when Congress passed legislation establishing the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program—which, among other things, allows states to provide Medicaid coverage through age 21 to those who had been in the foster-care system.<sup>4</sup> In 2002, another provision was added to the program, to increase funding for activities intended to help former foster children learn skills necessary for independent living.<sup>5</sup>

Also, in 2001, Casey Family Programs—part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation—began establishing partnerships with communities around the country to help improve services for foster care children and better prepare them to leave the foster-care system.

In a 2005 report, Casey Family Programs documented why older foster children needed help. Based on interviews with hundreds of young adults who had formerly been in the foster-care system, the report found that 20% had major depression; 25% had post-traumatic stress disorder (a rate higher than that among war veterans); 22% had spent at least some time homeless; a third had household incomes below the poverty level; and less than 3% had college degrees.<sup>6</sup>

### Survey of Alaskans Formerly in Foster Care

In 2003, Casey Family Programs began working with several agencies and organizations in Alaska to survey young adults who had spent most of their childhood in foster care. A 2005 report found, against all the odds, some former foster children were doing well—but there were also significant problems. Nearly 30% had spent some time in jail; close to 10% of the women had been pregnant before age 17; nearly 40% reported they had been homeless at some point after leaving foster care; average incomes were low; and about three-quarters said they or someone they lived with were receiving public assistance.<sup>7</sup>

### Improvements in Alaska

At the same time the survey of Alaskans formerly in foster care was going on, the Alaska Office of Children’s Services Independent Living program and the Casey Family Program began setting up a statewide Youth Advisory Board, for those who were currently or had previously been in foster care.

The board was to help give current and former foster children a say in decisions affecting them, but at first only eight young people joined.<sup>8</sup> Possibly that was because their past experiences caused them to think no one would really listen to them, according to Amanda Metivier—a former foster child herself and currently statewide coordinator of Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA).<sup>9</sup>

FFCA grew out of those early efforts, and since 2004 its goal has been “supporting foster youth and improving the foster-care system.”<sup>10</sup> In 2012 it has about 279 members, including some still in the foster-care system and others who have left care.<sup>11</sup>

FFCA has helped make a number of improvements in conditions for foster children, according to Metivier. Those include working with state legislators in 2007 to change the Alaska Department of Law’s interpretation of a statute which had required foster children to have a court order before they could talk publicly about their experiences in the system.<sup>12</sup>

But the statewide coordinator of FFCA counts two achievements as its greatest successes in improving the lives of foster children. The first was in 2009, when the group worked with Alaska Legal Services to win a court battle requiring the state to make orthodontia services—like braces to straighten teeth—more broadly available to foster children.<sup>13</sup>

The second was FFCA’s role in persuading the Alaska Legislature in 2011 to extend the age young people can stay in the foster-care system from 20 to 21—and to appropriate about \$1.4 million for a broader Independent Living Program.<sup>14</sup> State Representative Les Gara, a former foster child himself, has played an important role in efforts to improve the lives of foster children. He has also been instrumental in passing legislation to bolster the foster-care system, including provisions for young people aging out of care.

The Independent Living Program is intended to help foster children in various ways, including mentoring them as they age out of the system, helping them get job training, paying college tuition for some, and providing temporary help paying rent.

There are currently about 2,000 young people in foster care in Alaska. Metivier reports that FFCA is always on the lookout for ways to raise public awareness about the problems foster children face. Two current efforts are “Foster Wear,” where retailers offer discounts on clothing to foster families, and “Laptops for Foster Youth,” which encourages the public to donate new or used laptop computers to those in the facing foster-care program.

The laptop-donation program was initiated in Representative Les Gara’s office, and is carried out in conjunction with FFCA and the Office of Children’s Services.<sup>15</sup>

In 2011 the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services reported that 524 young people (ages 16 to 21) were eligible for independent-living services. Of those, 42 were attending college with financial aid from educational training vouchers—including 19 who also received tuition waivers from the University of Alaska.<sup>16</sup>

To learn more about Facing Foster Care in Alaska, visit <http://www.alaskacasa.org/FFCA.aspx>.

To learn more about the foster care system in Alaska, visit <http://hss.state.ak.us/FosterCare/default.htm>

### ENDNOTES FOR HIGHLIGHTS

1. Information in this section provided by Girl Scouts of Alaska, including personal communications from Anne Gore, communications manager, and Amanda Block, statewide camp director.

2. Subtitle X-C, McKinney-Vento Act.

3. State of Alaska, Office of Children’s Services, Independent Living Program, Program Overview. Retrieved May 7, 2012: <http://hss.state.ak.us/ocs/IndependentLiving/programoverview.htm>.

4. Established by Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-169): <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-106publ169/pdf/PLAW-106publ169.pdf>

5. National Foster Care Coalition. *Frequently Asked Questions III: About the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and the Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program*, May 2005. At: [http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/pdf/FrequentlyAskedQuestionsChafee\\_3.pdf](http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/pdf/FrequentlyAskedQuestionsChafee_3.pdf).

6. P. Pecora, R. Kessler, J. Williams, et al., *Improving Family Foster Care: Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study*, Casey Family Programs. Available at: <http://www.casey.org>.

7. J. Williams, S. Pope, E. Sirls, *Alaska Foster Care Alumni Study*. University of Alaska Anchorage, Casey Family Programs, Tribal State Collaboration Group, Alaska Office of Children’s Services. August 2005.

8. Personal communication, Amanda Metivier, MSW, March 28, 2012.

9. Telephone interview, Amanda Metivier, statewide coordinator, Facing Foster Care in Alaska, June 23, 2011, Anchorage, Alaska.

10. A. Metivier, *Facing Foster Care in Alaska: Mental Health Services and Foster Care*, November 2008. Available at: <http://psychrights.org/states/alaska/PsychRightsvAlaska/Docs/090108FFCSOnMentalHealthServices.pdf>.

11. See note 8.

12. Attorney General Talis J. Colberg. Personal communication (letter), from the Attorney General to Representative Les Gara, Re: Interpretation of AS 47.10.090. December 13, 2007.

13. R. Shinohara, “Help foster kids get braces, court tells the state—Loosening rules: Advocacy group wins order, but all under 21 youths on Medicaid could benefit,” *Anchorage Daily News*, November 10, 2009.

14. Alaska House Bill 126, 2011 Alaska Legislature.

15. Anyone interested in donating a laptop can get in touch with Representative Les Gara’s office in Anchorage, at 907-269-0106.

16. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, *Summer*, Amanda Metivier, MSW, *Update* 2011, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 7.





Infancy



**Girls in Southwest Alaska have fun at a Girl Scout day camp. These day camps are free and open to all girls 5-17, whether or not they are registered Girls Scouts.**

Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Alaska

## DEFINITION

Prenatal care is health care pregnant women get in the months leading up to the birth of their babies. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that women make 13 prenatal visits during a normal, full-term pregnancy—one in the first six weeks of pregnancy; monthly visits through the sixth month; two visits in both the seventh and the eighth months; and weekly visits until the baby is born.<sup>1</sup>

There is no standard measure of the *quality* of prenatal care women receive, but there is a measure of the *amount*—the Adequacy of Prenatal Care Utilization (APNCU) index, based on when women begin prenatal care (the adequacy of initiation) and how many visits they make (the adequacy of received services). That information is provided by the mother.

The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics uses the APNCU index to report the adequacy of prenatal care in Alaska.

The index divides the start of care into four periods: 1st or 2nd month, 3rd or 4th month, 5th or 6th month, and 7th to 9th month. It divides the adequacy of visits into four categories, based on the percentage of expected visits pregnant women make: inadequate (less than 50%), intermediate (50% to 79%), adequate (80% to 109%), and adequate plus (110% or more).

The final assessment of the adequacy of prenatal care is a combination of when prenatal care starts and the number of visits:

- Inadequate: Prenatal care begun after the 4th month, or with less than 50% of recommended visits.
- Intermediate: Prenatal care begun by the 4th month, with 50% to 79% of recommended visits.
- Adequate: Prenatal care begun by the 4th month, with 80% to 109% of recommended visits.
- Adequate Plus: Prenatal care begun by the 4th month, with 110% or more of recommended visits.<sup>2</sup>

## SIGNIFICANCE

Adequate prenatal care is very important for the health of mothers and babies. Analysts have identified a number of benefits, including:

- Reducing deaths, illnesses, and disabilities among mothers and babies.
- Identifying early signs of increased perinatal risk. (The perinatal period is defined as about the last five months of pregnancy and the first month after birth.)
- Identifying necessary medical interventions.
- Educating pregnant women about healthy practices.
- Encouraging mothers to use postpartum care.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, inadequate or no prenatal care puts mothers at greater risk of having premature or low-birthweight babies, and mothers and babies at increased risk of dying.<sup>4</sup>

## DATA

### Births 2005-2009

In Alaska, the use of prenatal care varies considerably by the age and race of the mother and where she lives. The pie chart breaks down births by the age and race of women who had babies in Alaska between 2005 and 2009. During that five-year period, 54,759 babies were born in Alaska. To put that in perspective, it's about 1% of the 4 million babies born nationwide in just 2009.<sup>5</sup>

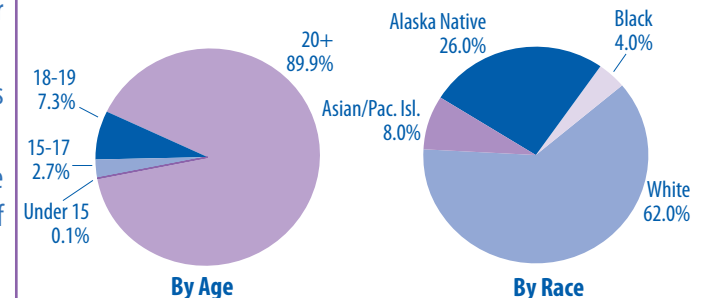
Nearly 90% of Alaska babies born from 2005 to 2009 had mothers at least 20 years old, 7% had mothers aged 18 or 19, and less than 3% were born to teenagers between 15 and 17. Very few babies—less than 0.1%—were born to girls 15 or younger.

Of the women who had babies from 2005 to 2009, about 62% were White, 26% Alaska Native, 8% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 4% Black.

### Prenatal Care by Age, Race, and Region

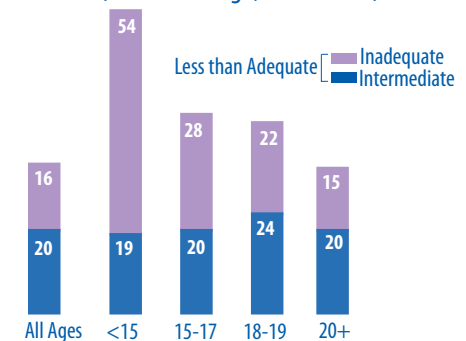
About 36% of all Alaska mothers got less-than-adequate care—either inadequate or intermediate—during the 2005-2009 period. That's up from around 30% during 1996-2000.

**Births in Alaska,\* 2005-2009, by Age and Race of Mother**  
(Total Births: 54,759)



\*Babies born in Alaska, whether to resident or non-resident mothers. Does not include babies born outside the state to Alaska residents. Also excludes a small number of births to mothers of unknown age or race.  
Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

**Percentage of Mothers Receiving Less-Than-Adequate Care, by Age\***  
(5-Year Average, 2005-2009)



\*Unknown age values are included in the "All Ages" calculations.

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, based on Adequacy of Prenatal Care Utilization index

The bar graph above and the two on the next page show shares of pregnant women getting less-than-adequate care from 2005 to 2009, by the mother's age, race, and region of residence. The youngest mothers were more likely to get less-than-adequate care—73% of those under 15 and about half of those 15 to 17.

Analysts believe younger teenagers are more likely to delay prenatal care or get no care at all because they don't know how to get care or don't understand its importance—or simply because they want to hide their pregnancies.<sup>6</sup>

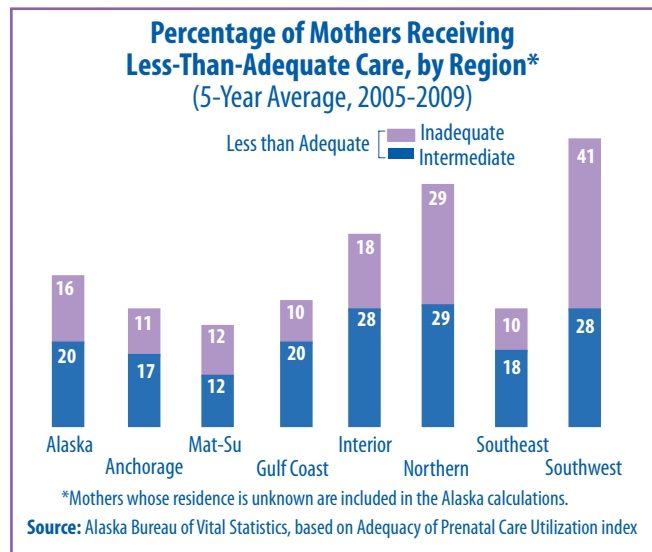
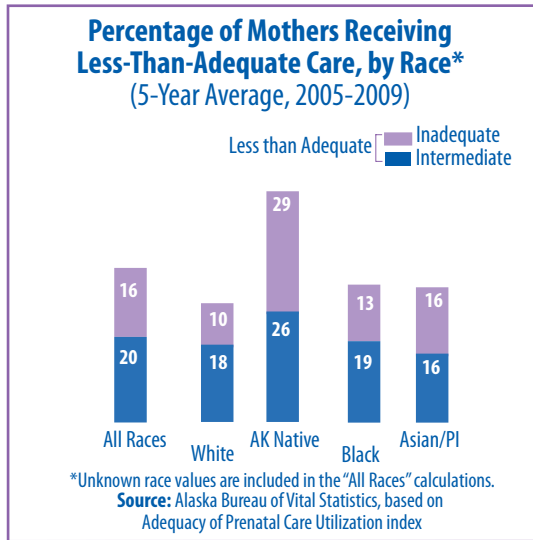
## Prenatal Care

Even among those 18 or 19 years old, about 46% also failed to get adequate care in the 2005-2009 period. Older mothers in Alaska were more likely to get adequate care—still, nearly 35% of those 20 or older got less-than-adequate care in recent years.

From 2005 through 2009, almost 55% of Alaska Native women who had babies and 32% of Asian and Pacific Islander women received less-than-adequate care. About 32% of Black and 28% of White women also got less than the recommended amount of prenatal care.

Women in remote regions are also less likely to get adequate care. In the most recent period, the Southwest had the highest share (69%) of mothers receiving less-than-adequate care, followed by the Northern (58%) and the Interior (46%).

The Mat-Su area had the lowest percentage of women not getting adequate care (24%). In the Southeast region and Anchorage, about 28% of pregnant women got less-than-adequate care, and in the Gulf Coast 30%.





## Babies With Low Birthweight

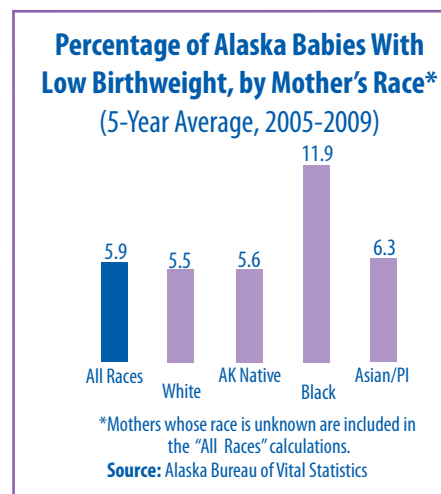
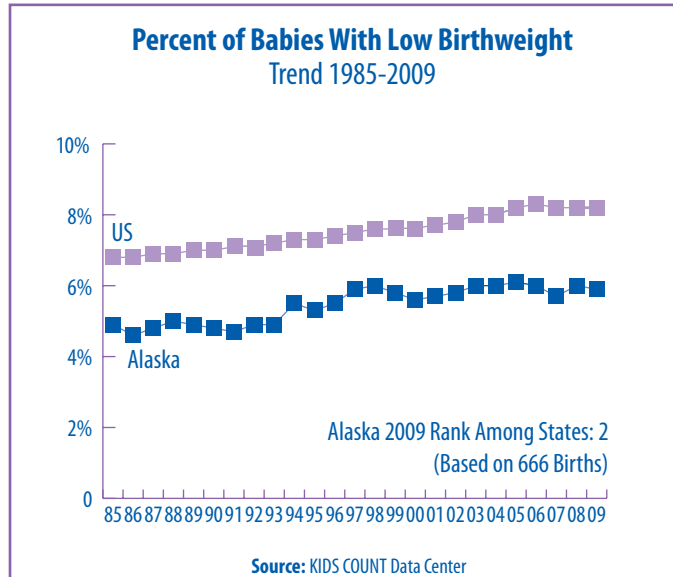
The CDC reports that the percentage of babies born at low birthweight nationwide was about 8.2% in both 2008 and 2009. In Alaska, which historically has had the smallest rate of low birthweight in the U.S., the percentage dropped very slightly, from 6.0% in 2008 to 5.9% in 2009. The share of babies born at very low birthweight in 2009 was 1.5% nationwide and 1% in Alaska.

Rates of low birthweight vary considerably by race in the U.S. In 2009, low birthweight was most common among Black babies (13.6%) and least common among White babies (7.2%) and American Indian and Alaska Native babies (7.3%). Among Asian or Pacific Islander babies, 8.3% were born at low birthweight.

Alaska's Bureau of Vital Statistics calculates 5-year averages of babies born at low birthweight by race and region in Alaska. For this data book we use 5-year averages because annual numbers in Alaska are small, and rates can fluctuate sharply with relatively small changes in numbers.

From 2005 to 2009, low birthweight by race in Alaska followed a pattern similar to national trends. Black babies had the highest rate (11.9%), while White babies (5.5%) and Alaska Native babies (5.6%) had the lowest rates. The rate among Asian and Pacific Islander babies was at 6.3%.

Regional rates of low birthweight from 2005 to 2009 ranged from 5% along the Gulf Coast to 6.6% in the Northern region.



Babies born early or at low weight also bring substantial economic costs. A 2007 study reported that preterm/low-birthweight babies accounted for just 8% of infant hospitalizations in the U.S. but 47% of all the costs. The average hospitalization cost for low-weight babies was \$15,100, compared with \$600 for normal-weight newborns.<sup>3</sup>

What affects women's likelihood of having small babies? Researchers cite a number of factors:<sup>4</sup>

- Age and marital status. Mothers 15 to 19 and over 35 are at increased risk, as are single mothers.
- Health problems before pregnancy, including high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and poor nutrition.
- Health problems during pregnancy, including inadequate weight gain, short intervals between pregnancies, and carrying more than one baby.
- Inadequate prenatal care.
- Environmental and behavioral risks, including smoking; drinking; or exposure to stress, radiation, or toxic substances during pregnancy.

### DATA

Here we report annual birthweight data from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)<sup>5</sup> and 5-year averages from the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics.<sup>6</sup>

### DEFINITION

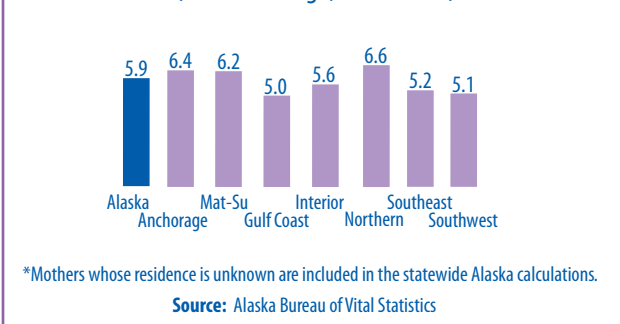
Low-birthweight babies are those who weigh less than 5.5 pounds (2,500 grams) at birth, and very low-birthweight babies are those who weigh less than 3.3 pounds (1,500 grams). Babies may be born weighing less than 5.5 pounds either because they were born preterm—at less than 37 weeks of gestation—or their fetal growth was restricted. In this indicator, babies are counted in the region where their mothers live, not the location where the babies are born.

### SIGNIFICANCE

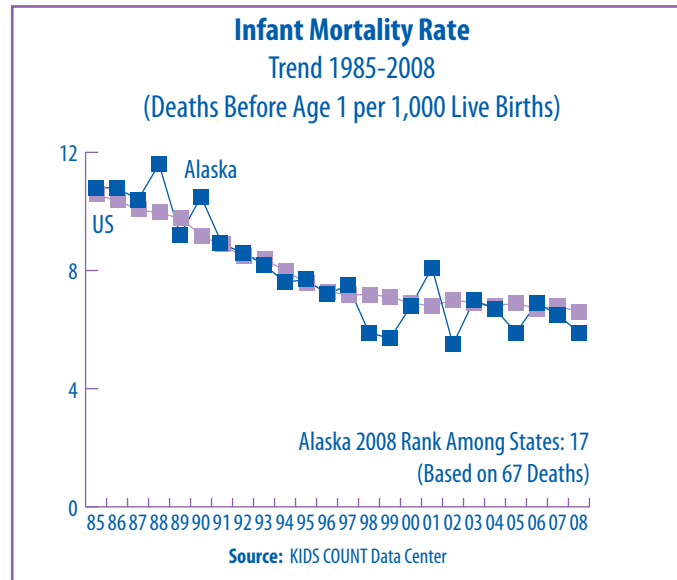
An infant's weight at birth is a good predictor of survival. Babies born full-term—between 37 and 41 weeks of pregnancy—and weighing more than 5.5 pounds have much better chances of surviving and growing up healthy. Very small babies are at much greater risk of dying. For example, in 2006, 26% of babies born in the U.S. weighing less than 3.3 pounds did not survive their first year, compared with 0.2% of normal-weight babies.<sup>1</sup>

Small babies who do survive are at increased risk of health problems throughout their lives, including respiratory distress syndrome; bleeding in the brain; heart problems; cerebral palsy; developmental delays; speech, vision, and hearing problems; attention-deficit disorder; poor social skills; and behavioral difficulties.<sup>2</sup>

**Percentage of Alaska Babies With Low Birthweight, by Region\*  
(5-Year Average, 2005-2009)**



# Infant Mortality



## DEFINITION

The infant mortality rate is the number of deaths among babies less than a year old, per 1,000 live births in a given year. Infant deaths are registered where the mother lived, not where the infant died. Here we present data from two sources—the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which reports annual data on infant mortality and leading causes of death nationwide,<sup>1</sup> and the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, which calculates five-year averages specifically for Kids Count.<sup>2</sup> The averages help smooth the spikes and dips, seen in the graph above, caused by the relatively small number of annual deaths.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The infant mortality rate is an important gauge of the health of a state or a country. Improvements in sanitation, nutrition, health care, and socioeconomic conditions have sharply reduced infant mortality in the U.S. over the last century.

But some babies are still more likely to die than others. The mother’s health, the parents’ income and education, and the availability and use of prenatal care affect the mortality rate. The CDC has strategies for lowering that rate, including “modifying the behaviors, lifestyles, and conditions that affect birth outcomes,

such as smoking, substance abuse, poor nutrition, lack of prenatal care, medical problems, and chronic illness.”<sup>3</sup>

## DATA

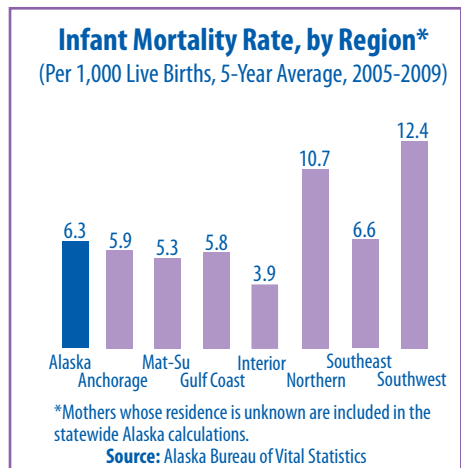
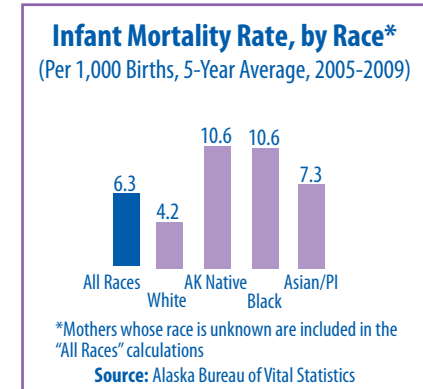
The U.S. infant mortality rate in 2008 was 6.6 deaths per 1,000 live births. Alaska’s rate was lower, at 5.9—among the lowest in the nation. The adjacent trend graph shows a relatively smooth line trending down in the entire U.S. since 1985, while Alaska’s annual rate fluctuates. That’s because, as we noted earlier, Alaska’s population is small, and small changes in the number of infant deaths in a year can make a considerable difference in the mortality rate.

To account for these annual fluctuations in infant mortality rates, the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics calculates five-year averages. From 2005 to 2009, Alaska’s infant mortality rate was 6.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. The adjacent charts show infant mortality rates by race and region during that period.

The mortality rate among White infants was 4.2 per 1,000 live births, while the rate among both Alaska Native and Black babies was more than twice as high, at 10.6. The rate among Asian and Pacific Islander infants was 7.3.

As they have in past years, infant mortality rates varied dramatically by region around Alaska during 2005-2009. The Interior had the lowest rate, at 3.9 deaths per 1,000 births, and the Northern (10.7) and Southwest (12.4) the highest. The Mat-Su (5.3), Gulf Coast (5.8), and Anchorage (5.9) had rates below the statewide average of 6.3, while the rate in the Southeast region was slightly higher, at 6.6.

The two regions with the highest infant mortality rates—Northern and Southwest—are also the ones with the highest percentage of pregnant women getting less-than-adequate prenatal care, as we saw earlier. These are remote areas of Alaska, and while small communities in those regions do have health clinics, they don’t have the types of advanced medical care available in larger, urban areas—and getting to urban areas from remote places is expensive and at times impossible, depending on the weather.



## CAUSES OF INFANT DEATHS

The adjacent figure shows the leading causes of infant mortality in Alaska and the U.S. National data are preliminary for 2009, and Alaska data are five-year averages, from 2005 to 2009.

In both Alaska and the U.S., birth defects have long been the most common cause of infant deaths, accounting for about one of every five infant deaths in recent years.

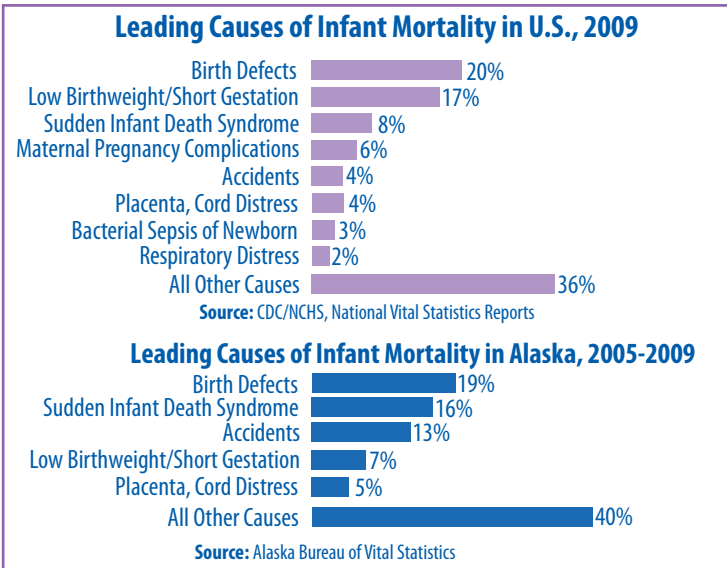
After birth defects, the leading causes of infant deaths vary in Alaska and the country as a whole. The second most common cause of death in the U.S. in 2009 was low birthweight or premature birth, but in Alaska it was Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), which accounted for 16% of all infant deaths in Alaska—twice the national rate.

Accidents are also much more likely to kill infants in Alaska than in the U.S. as a whole, accounting for 13% of infant deaths in Alaska from 2005 to 2009—but 4% nationwide in 2009.

For comparison, worldwide in 2008 the most common cause of death in newborns (under 1 month) was prematurity and low birthweight (29%), followed by birth asphyxia and birth trauma (23%), neonatal infections (25%), birth defects (8%), and all other causes (15%).<sup>4</sup>

Most of the deaths among infants in Alaska are preventable, according to recent findings of the Alaska Maternal Infant Mortality Review and Child Death Review Committee. That committee looked at 133 infant deaths that occurred in Alaska from 2005 to 2007. It found that 33% of those deaths were preventable, 15% were probably preventable, and 27% were possibly preventable—leaving only 11% that couldn't have been prevented.

The committee also determined that of the 133 deaths, 44 occurred or probably occurred because of maltreatment—abuse, neglect, or negligence by caregivers. Gross negligence, which is “the failure to exercise reasonable care that would be expected of most people in a similar situation,” was the most frequent type of maltreatment (11%).<sup>5</sup>



## NEONATAL AND POST-NEONATAL MORTALITY RATES

Infant mortality is often divided into neonatal and post-neonatal mortality. The neonatal mortality rate is the number of deaths per 1,000 live births among infants less than 28 days old. The post-neonatal mortality rate is the number of deaths per 1,000 live births among those 28 days to 1 year old.

Infant deaths during the neonatal period often occur because of problems that existed during pregnancy or are apparent at birth—including preterm delivery, birth defects, or low birthweight. Those same problems can cause deaths during the post-neonatal period as well, but social and environmental factors—including exposure to smoking, limited access to health care, and negligence among caregivers—also kill infants.

Between 2005 and 2009, Alaska's neonatal mortality rate was 2.9 deaths per 1,000 live births—much lower than the 2009 national average of 4.2. By contrast, the post-neonatal rate during that period was higher in Alaska (3.4) than in the entire U.S. (2.3). In every 5-year period since 1996-2000, Alaska's post-neonatal mortality rate has been higher than its neonatal rate.

According to the Alaska Maternal Infant Mortality Review and Child Death Review Committee, of the 36 neonatal infant deaths in the state from 2005 to 2007, the leading causes were preterm birth (44%), infections (25%), SIDS/asphyxia (22%), congenital anomalies (22%), and perinatal events (22%).

Among the 97 post-neonatal deaths in Alaska during that period, the top causes were SIDS/asphyxia (46%), congenital anomalies (22%), infections (20%), and injuries (13%).

## Endnotes for Infancy

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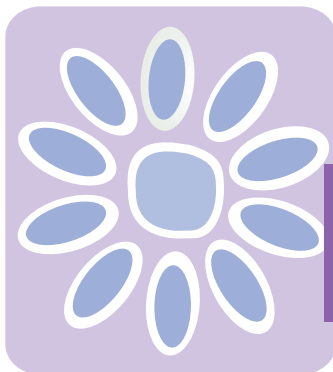
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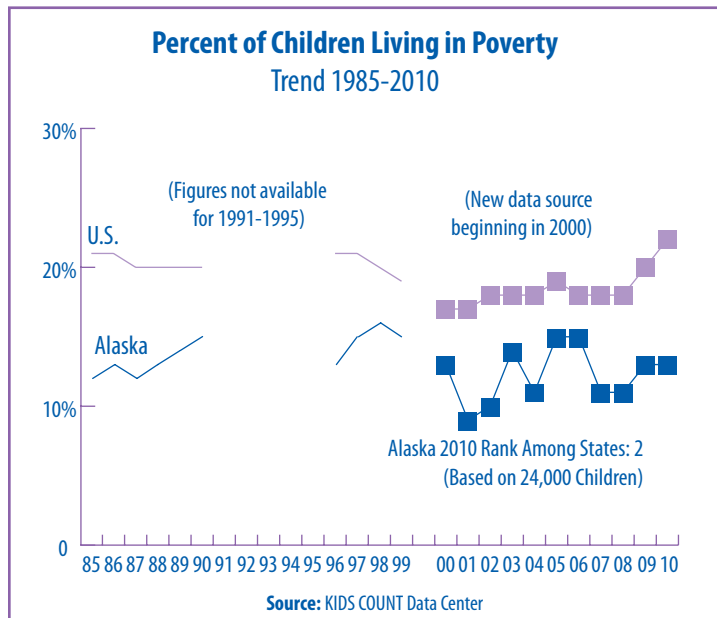
# Economic Well-Being



**Girls Scouts pose on the shore of Lake Eklutna, north of Anchorage, during a summer camping trip.**

Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Alaska

# Children Living in Poverty



## DEFINITION

The federal poverty threshold is the most commonly reported measure of poverty in the U.S. It varies by the size and composition of households, and the U.S. Census Bureau updates the figures every year. A family with two adults and two children was considered poor in 2010 if the family income was below \$22,113.

The threshold has been used for decades to gauge the number of Americans living in poverty.<sup>1</sup> But measuring poverty is complex, and many analysts have argued for years that the current measure doesn't adequately account for important factors that affect poverty among Americans. For example, a National Academy of Sciences panel identified shortcomings in the measure:<sup>2</sup>

- It doesn't account for government programs and policies that either add to or subtract from Americans' disposable income. That includes things like food stamps, Medicaid, and housing subsidies that effectively add to disposable income, as well as payroll taxes, which reduce income.

- It doesn't consider out-of-pocket medical expenses, which are much higher for some people than for others, and which have been rising fast in recent times.
- It doesn't adjust for the fact that some people have much higher job-related expenses than others—like the costs of child care for working parents.
- It doesn't take into account differences in living costs around the country. That's particularly relevant for Alaskans—especially rural Alaskans, who pay higher prices for almost everything.

In 2011, after more than a decade of research, the Census Bureau published preliminary estimates of the Supplemental Poverty Measure—designed to account for some of the factors cited above.<sup>3</sup>

The federal poverty threshold for a family of four in 2010 was just over \$22,000. The supplemental measure put that figure at anywhere from \$20,590—for a family

that owned a home outright—to more than \$25,000 for a family with a mortgage.

Children and teenagers are the likeliest to be considered poor under both measures, but the share is smaller under the supplemental measure—in part because children tend to benefit more from government health care and other programs.

By contrast, the share of older Americans classified as poor is nearly twice as high under the supplemental measure, which takes

into account their much larger out-of-pocket medical costs. The share of working-age adults considered poor is somewhat higher under the supplemental measure, probably because it takes into account child-care and other job-related costs.

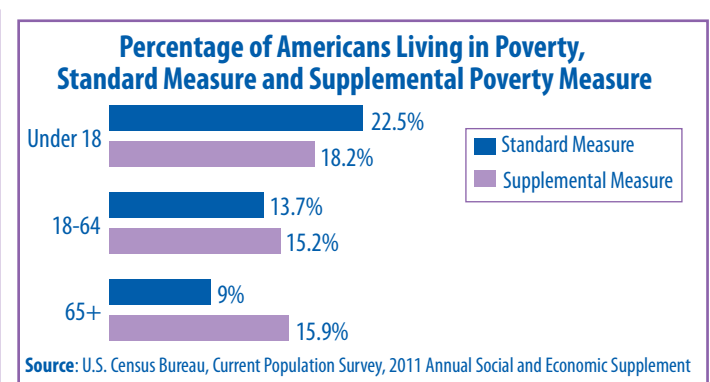
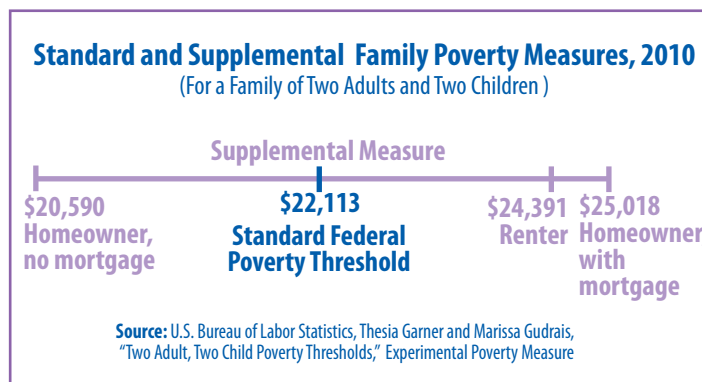
The Census Bureau has said that the Supplemental Poverty Measure is not intended to replace the existing poverty threshold, but, as the name implies, only to supplement it.<sup>4</sup> But the bureau also reports that the new measure needs much more work before it can be published regularly. Still, the preliminary figures give us a way of thinking about the effects of complex economic and social circumstances on assessing poverty.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Under either measure of poverty, roughly one in five American children is considered poor: that's about 15 million children. Many studies—in the U.S. and elsewhere—have documented the grinding effects of poverty on children's health, safety, education, development, and future opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

## DATA

The trend graph to the left shows that the share of children living in poverty—as measured by the federal poverty threshold—has increased nationwide in the past few years, reaching 22% in 2010. The rate in Alaska is among the lowest in the nation, but it was also up, from 11% in 2008 to 13% in 2010. Keep in mind, however, that this measure doesn't account for the effects of Alaska's higher living costs. The next page discusses additional measures of poverty among Alaska's children.



## Children Living in Poverty

A major influence on whether children are raised in poverty is their parents' level of education. "Low-income" families are defined as those with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level.

As the adjacent graph shows, most of the families headed by parents who did not finish high school are low-income—80% in Alaska and 87% nationwide, as of 2009. The opposite is true in families where parents have at least some college education—only 21% of those families in Alaska and 27% nationwide had low incomes.

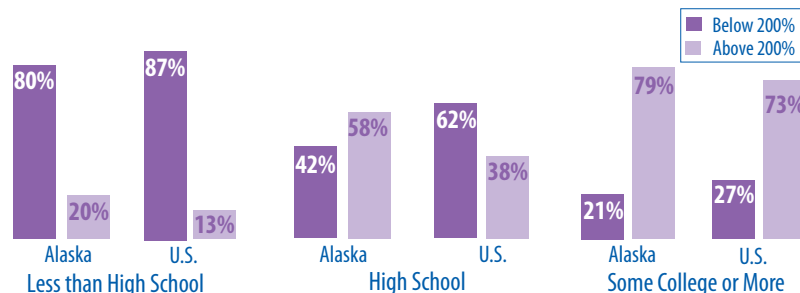
Another way of measuring how many children come from poor families is how many can qualify for free or reduced-price meals at school. In Alaska, most but not all schools take part in the federal meal program. During the 2010-2011 school year, a third of Alaska children attending schools that participate in the program qualified for free lunches; another 8% were eligible for meals at reduced prices. Overall, then, four in ten Alaska school children qualified for meals at less than the full price.

The map gives a good picture of how poverty among children varies around Alaska, showing the share of school children by district in 2010-2011 who were from families receiving some form of public assistance—SNAP (food stamps), Temporary Assistance, or Medicaid.

Nearly all children in some districts in Western and Interior Alaska were from families receiving some form of public assistance that year—more than 90% in a few districts, but 70% or more in almost all districts. Because the numbers of students in many of these remote rural districts are small, these percentages can fluctuate from year to year—but incomes are low in these areas of the state, and the shares of children from families receiving public assistance remain high.

Elsewhere, the percentages varied from lows of 8% to 15% in a few districts to 70% or more in others. In Anchorage, where about 40% of all Alaska school children are enrolled, about a third of students came from families receiving public assistance in 2010-2011.

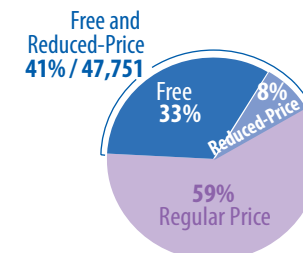
### Children in Families with Incomes Below and Above 200% of Federal Poverty Level, by Parents' Education, U.S. and Alaska



Notes: Alaska figures are three-year averages of CPS data from 2008, 2009, and 2010. U.S. figures are from the 2010 CPS. In 2010, 200% of the federal poverty level for a family of four was about \$44,226.

Source: National Center for Children in Poverty, U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey

### Share of Alaska School Children Receiving Free or Reduced-Price Meals, 2010-2011



Free and Reduced-Price  
41% / 47,751

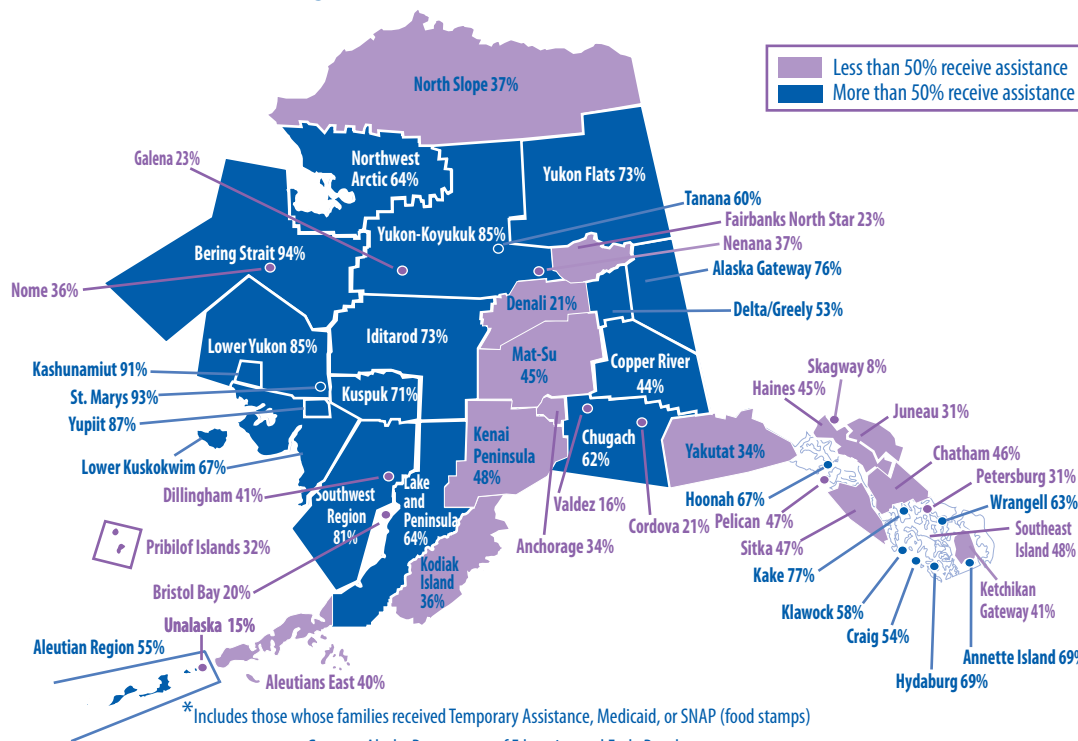
59%  
Regular Price

Total Enrollment: 117,708\*

\*Enrollment in schools that take part in the meal program; not all do.

Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

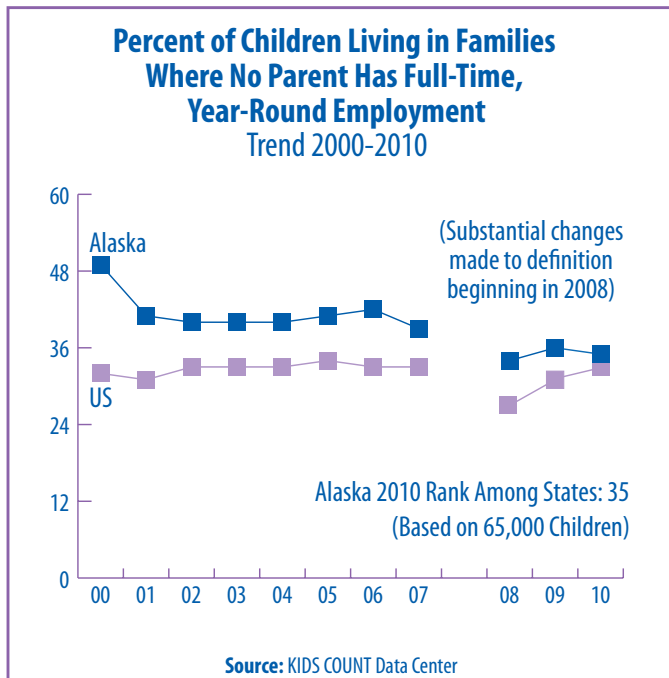
### Share of School Children Ages 5-17 in Families Receiving Public Assistance\* (Among 53 School Districts, 2010-2011 School Year)



Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development



# Children With No Parent Working Full-Time Year-Round



## DEFINITION

The trend graph shows the percentage of children nationwide and in Alaska living in families where no parent has regular, full-time, year-round employment—defined as working at least 35 hours a week, 50 weeks a year. It's based on data from the American Community Survey (ACS). But in 2008, ACS changed the questions about labor force participation, so the numbers before 2008 are not directly comparable to those collected since then.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Children whose parents have no full-time work are far more likely to be poor—which, as we discussed earlier, brings with it a host of problems—and they are also far more likely to be without health insurance.<sup>1</sup>

Studies have also found that children in families where parents are out of work for long periods are more likely to see their parents divorce; to do poorly in school; and to have low incomes when they go into the work force themselves.<sup>2</sup>

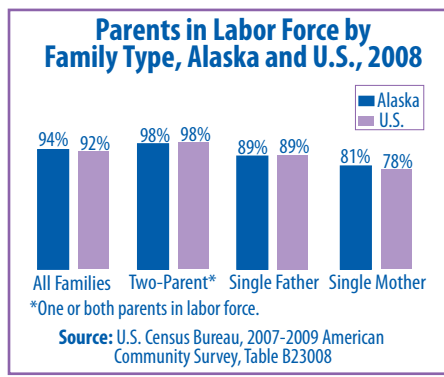
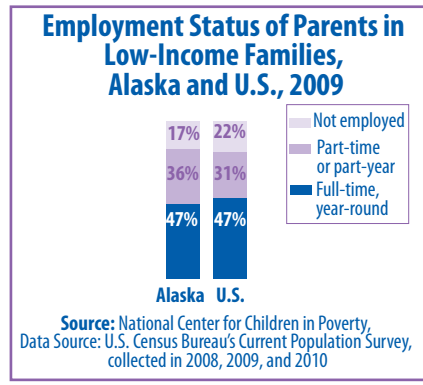
## DATA

In 2010, 33% of children nationwide lived in families with no parent working full-time. In Alaska that share was 35%—higher than the U.S. average but down a bit from 36% in 2009. That decline in Alaska contrasted with what happened in a number of other states, where the percentage went up; the national recession took a heavier toll on employment in many areas than it did in Alaska.

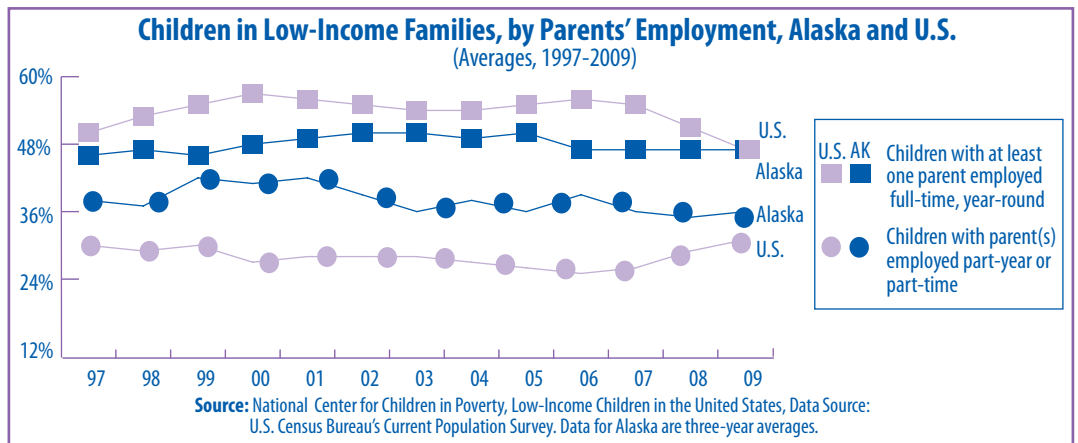
Alaska's economy was historically very seasonal, but in recent decades it has broadened and become less seasonal.<sup>3</sup> Still, a number of its private industries—especially commercial fishing and tourism—remain seasonal. That has tended to keep the share of children without full-time working parents above the U.S. average, although that gap has narrowed.

And parents in all types of families in Alaska are just as likely or more likely than families nationwide to be in the labor force. Nearly all two-parent families—98%—in both Alaska and the U.S. as a whole have at least one parent working. Single mothers in Alaska are actually more likely to be in the work force than is true nationwide—81% in Alaska, compared with 78% around the country.

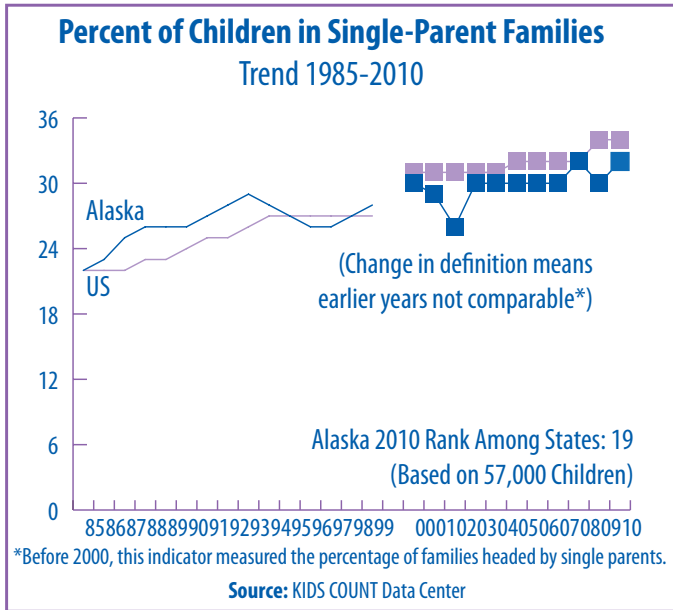
Among just low-income families—with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level—the share of parents working full time is the same in Alaska and nationwide, at 47%. But in Alaska more are part-year or part-time workers and fewer are unemployed.



For the past twelve years, as the figure below shows, children in low-income families in Alaska have been more likely to have parents who work part-time. But by 2009, the difference between Alaska and the U.S. average had become small.



# Children Living in Single-Parent Families



## DEFINITION

This indicator shows the percentage of children under 18 living with single parents. That includes single parents who live with partners to whom they are not married. Children living with step-parents are not considered to be living with single parents.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Families with only one parent can seldom earn as much as families with two working parents, and many single-parent families—especially those headed by women—are poor and face all the problems that come with poverty. But while lack of money is a big issue for many children growing up with just one parent, analysts have found that money is not the only issue.

Research shows that children living with just one parent often have parents who are more stressed and less likely to be able to provide the emotional and other support children need. Some analysts have found that behavioral problems, lower school achievement, and other social problems are more common among children whose parents are divorced.<sup>1</sup>

## DATA

A trend that began in the late 1960s has been fewer children living in two-parent families and more in single-parent families, mostly headed by women. That trend leveled off at the end of the 1990s, but in the most recent years seems to have resumed.

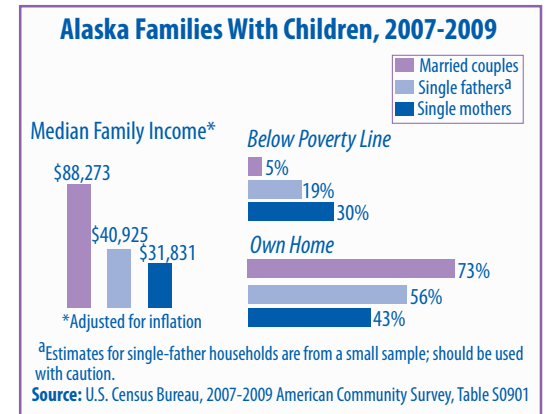
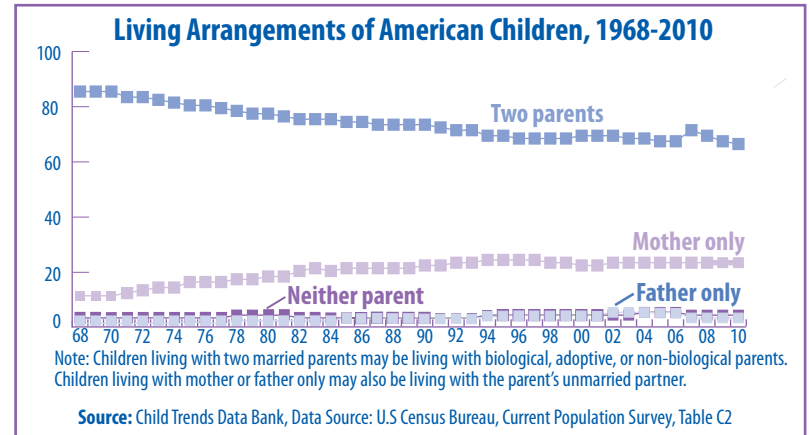
As the trend graph to the left shows, the percentage of children living with single parents nationwide climbed to 34% in 2009 and 2010, after holding at around 32% for much of the past decade. It's at least possible that the national recession has had an effect; as we noted in the previous indicator, research has found that stress from long periods of unemployment can lead more married couples to divorce.<sup>2</sup>

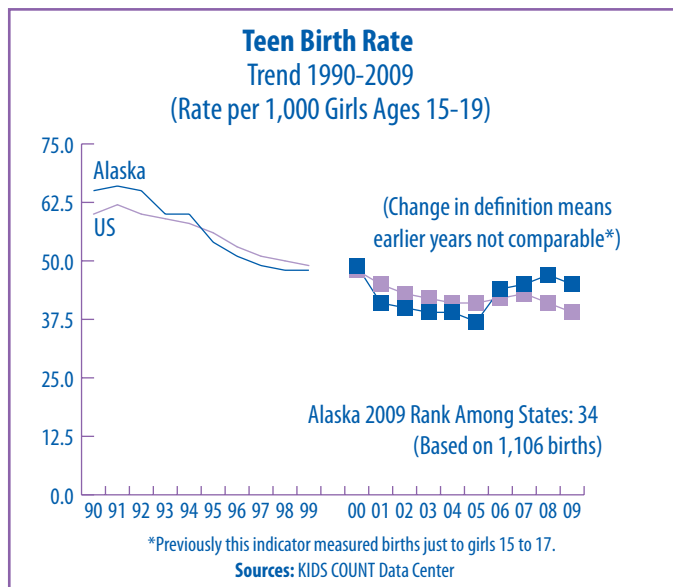
In Alaska, the percentage of children in single-parent families has been below the U.S. average since 2000 and was at 32% in 2010—but that was up from 30% in 2009. Keep in mind, though, that as with other indicators, small numbers in Alaska can cause year-to-year fluctuations.

The adjacent bar graph makes clear the economic problems single-parent families in Alaska face. During the period from 2007 to 2009, married couples in Alaska had more than twice the median income of households headed by single fathers and nearly triple that of households headed by single mothers.

Families headed by single mothers were six times more likely than married couples to have incomes below the federal poverty level. Single-father families were about four times more likely to be poor than married-couple families.

Rates of homeownership are also much lower among single-parent families. Nearly 75% of Alaska families with two parents owned their own homes in the 2007-2009 period, compared with just over half of single-father families and just over 40% of families headed by single mothers.





## DEFINITION

The teen birth rate is the number of births to girls 15 to 19 per 1,000 girls in that age group. Births are reported based on where the mother lives, not where the baby was born.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Teenage mothers face a sea of problems. They are less likely to get good prenatal care and more likely to have babies early or underweight, putting the babies at higher risk of dying.<sup>1</sup> Most teenage mothers—80% in Alaska—are unmarried and face raising their children alone.<sup>2</sup>

Only about half of mothers ages 18 and 19 graduate from high school before their babies are born.<sup>3</sup> As we discussed in the indicator Children Living in Poverty, most families headed by parents with little education have low incomes. And as shown in the section, Teens Who Drop Out, unemployment in 2010 among those with less than a high-school education was 50% higher than among those who had graduated from high school.

A 2010 report estimated that children born to unmarried teenage mothers who didn't graduate from high school are 67% more likely than other children to grow up poor.<sup>4</sup>

Recent information on how much monetary support teenage mothers get from the fathers of their babies is hard to find, but an estimate in the late 1990s put the average annual support payments from these fathers at \$800.<sup>5</sup>

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy estimates that teenagers having children in Alaska in 2008 cost the federal and state governments \$46 million, including costs for public health, welfare, and other programs and services.<sup>6</sup>

A final point worth making is that teenage mothers are not necessarily who you think they are. A public opinion poll in 2009 found that more than two-thirds of adults in the U.S. believe that most teenage mothers grow up in families headed by single mothers with incomes below the federal poverty line.<sup>7</sup>

But the Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy analyzed data from a longitudinal study of adolescents and found that, in fact, most teenage parents come from families with two parents and from households with incomes above the poverty line. Only 30% of teenage parents reported growing up in single-parent homes, and 28% came from families with incomes below the poverty line.<sup>8</sup>

Another popular but mistaken belief is that birth rates outside marriage are highest among teenagers. In reality, unmarried women in their twenties have a much higher birth rate. In 2009, the U.S. birth rate among unmarried women 20 to 24 was nearly 75 per 1,000 unmarried women in that age group—a rate more than twice that among teenage girls.<sup>9</sup>

## DATA

The 2010 teen birth rate in the U.S. was the lowest it had been since 1946, according to preliminary figures from the National Center for Health Statistics.<sup>10</sup> That rate was just over 34 births per 1,000 girls 15 to 19—just about half the 1990 rate of 60 per 1,000.

The trend graph shows the long-term decline in teen birth rates in the country as a whole for the past two decades, with some increases in 2006 and 2007 but continuing declines since then.

Birth rates in Alaska have also declined sharply over time, with some increases from 2006 to 2008, followed by another decline in

2009. But as the table below shows, analysts disagree about just how much Alaska's teen birth rate increased during that time. The table compares rates from 2003 to 2009, as calculated by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics.

The NCHS numbers show Alaska's birth rate climbing from 37 per 1,000 girls in 2005 to 47 in 2008. The vital statistics figures show the rate moving up from 39 per 1,000 girls in 2005 to 42 in 2008.

Those rates are calculated based on the total number of girls ages 15 to 19 in Alaska. But actual counts happen only once a decade, during the federal census. Between censuses, analysts estimate changes. The NCHS uses population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics uses population estimates from Alaska's Department of Labor.

But those estimates are based on different methods, and the results are different. In 2008, for example, the Census Bureau estimated there were 24,243 girls 15 to 19 in Alaska, while the Alaska Department of Labor estimated there were 26,779—10% more.

The larger the number of teenage girls relative to the number of births to teenagers, the lower the birth rates would be—so the rates calculated by the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics are lower. We believe those rates are likely to be more accurate, because they are based on broader sources of information.<sup>11</sup>

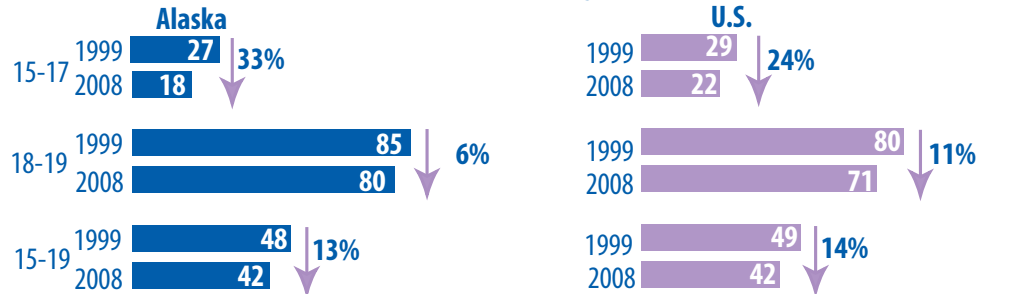
In any case, the rates as calculated by both sources moved in the same direction—and the actual 2010 census count will be available as a basis for calculating the 2010 teen birth rates.

	2003	04	05	06	07	08	09
NCHS	39	39	37	44	45	47	45
Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics	41	41	39	41	41	42	41

# Births to Teens

## Teen Birth Rates, Alaska and U.S., 1999 and 2008

(Births per 1,000 Teenage Girls)



Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

Source: CDC National Center for Health Statistics

### Birth Rates by Age

- Birth rates among older teenagers (18 and 19) are about four times higher than among younger teenagers (15 to 17), in both Alaska and the U.S. as a whole.
- Birth rates among both older and younger teenagers fell during the past decade, in Alaska and nationwide.
- The biggest drop was in the rate for girls 15 to 17 in Alaska—that rate was down 33% from 1999 to 2008, bringing it to 18 per 1,000 girls 15 to 17. The U.S. rate was higher, at 22 per 1,000.
- The birth rate among girls 18 and 19 declined more nationwide than in Alaska since 1999, dropping about 11% across the country and 6% in Alaska. The rate among older Alaska teenagers is higher than the U.S. average—80 per 1,000 girls compared with 71.

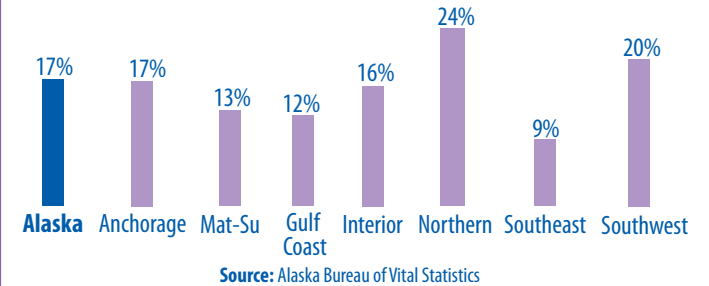
Analysts disagree about why U.S. teen birth rates have declined so much—a decline described as “one of the nation’s great success stories of the past decades.”<sup>12</sup> But many believe that a combination of teenagers using more contraceptives and delaying sex—possibly in response to widespread education campaigns—is responsible.<sup>13</sup>

Still, the teen birth rate in the U.S. remains from two to eight times higher than rates in other industrialized countries.<sup>14</sup> And as the bar graph at the top right shows, many Alaska teenagers who have babies have more than one before they turn 20. In 2009, 17% of teenagers who had babies already had children—and in the Northern and Southwest regions, that share was more than 20%.

### Alaska Birth Rates by Race and Region

- Birth rates among teenage girls of all races in Alaska, except Asian and Pacific Islanders, fell between 2000-2004 and 2005-2009.
- Rates among Black teenage girls fell the most, from 59 per 1,000 girls 15 to 19 to 48—down 19%.
- The birth rate among Alaska Native girls fell 4% in recent years, but remains the highest, at 77 per 1,000 girls.
- The birth rate among Asian and Pacific Islander girls jumped from 41 per 1,000 girls in 2000-2004 to 54 in 2005-2009.
- All regions of Alaska except the Southwest saw declines in teen birth rates from the late 1990s to the late 2000s. The rate was unchanged in the Southwest.
- The regional variation in birth rates is big, with the lowest rate in 2005-2009 along the Gulf Coast and Southeast, at 30 per 1,000 teenage girls, and the highest in the Northern region at 89—three times as high. Rates in other regions varied from 33 per 1,000 to 75.

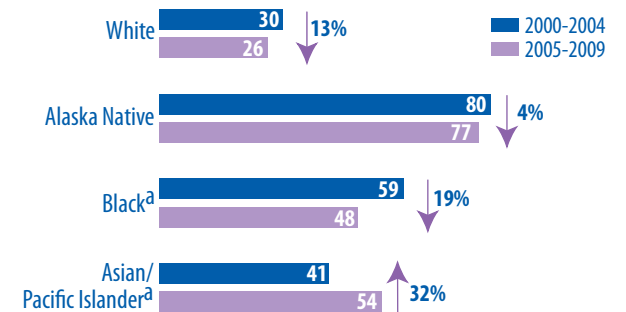
## Among Alaska Teenagers (15 to 19) Who Had Babies in 2009, What Percent Already Had Children?



Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

## Birth Rates For Alaska Teens, by Race, 2000-2004 and 2005-2009

(Rate per 1,000 Girls 15-19, 5-Year Averages)

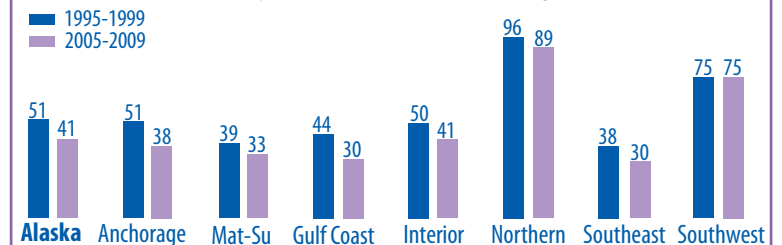


<sup>a</sup>Numbers of babies born to Black, Asian, and Pacific Islander teenagers are relatively small, so rates can fluctuate significantly.

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

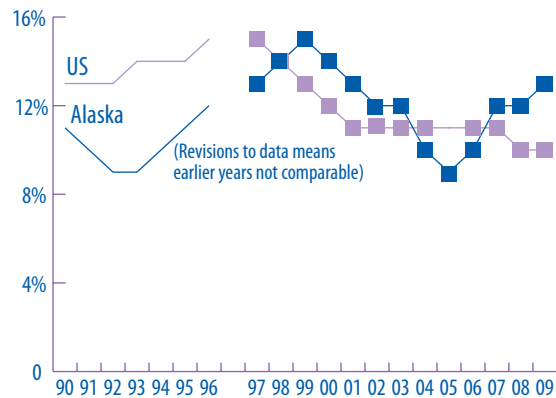
## Birth Rates by Region, 1995-1999 and 2005-2009

(Rate per 1,000 Girls 15-19, 5-Year Averages)



Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

**Percent of Children Without Health Insurance\*  
U.S. and Alaska, 1990-2009**



\*This source includes as "uninsured" children who are eligible to receive medical care through the Alaska Area Native Health Service.

Source: KIDS COUNT Data center, with data from: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

## DEFINITION

The data in the trend graph above show the percentage of children who had no health insurance coverage at any time during the entire year, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). An important point to keep in mind about this data source is that it counts as "uninsured" Alaska Native children who are eligible for health care through the Alaska Area Native Health Service and have no other coverage.

Alaska Native children are eligible for care through the Alaska Area Native Health Service, but some are also covered by Medicaid or have private insurance. Some—we don't know how many—have coverage *only* through the Alaska Native Health Service. CPS counts those children as uninsured, apparently because they don't have standard health insurance. But they do have access to care at Alaska Native Health Service clinics or hospitals—and classifying them as uninsured likely makes the reported share of Alaska children without health insurance higher than it would otherwise be.

## SIGNIFICANCE

High and rising health-care costs mean that people who don't have private or public health insurance face very hard choices when

they need medical care. Research shows that children without health insurance are less likely to get regular health care and more likely to delay getting care when they have problems.<sup>1</sup>

How the situation for uninsured children will change in the next few years is not clear. The 2010 federal health-care law includes provisions requiring insurers to cover routine and preventive services for children. It also requires most Americans to carry health insurance by 2014 and expands the pool of people who will be eligible for coverage under Medicaid.

Some groups and states challenged the constitutionality of the requirement that everyone carry health insurance, but in summer 2012 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of that provision. But at the same time, the court said that states do not have to expand Medicaid coverage to more people—and a number of states, including Alaska, are still deciding whether or not to expand Medicaid coverage.

## DATA

Nationwide the percentage of children (under 18) who lacked health insurance during the entire year of 2009 was 10%, according to CPS data (see trend graph)—the same as in 2008. The Alaska data in the trend graph are three-year averages, so the radical fluctuations seen in other graphs are smoothed. In 2007 and 2008, 12% of Alaska's children were not covered by health insurance at any point in the year. In 2009, Alaska's rate was 13%.

The table at the top of the page, children without health insurance by age group, is again based on averaged CPS data, 2008-2010. Those figures show a higher percentage of older children as uninsured in Alaska.

Coverage for children with health insurance is different in Alaska than nationwide. Children in Alaska are less likely to

**Children (17 and Under) Without Health Insurance  
by Age Group, Alaska and U.S.**

(Average 2008-2010)

	Alaska	U.S.
<b>0 to 5</b>	11%	9%
<b>6 to 17</b>	14%	10%
<b>Total 17 and below</b>	13%	10%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic supplement 3 years average, 2008-2010

be covered by private insurance—56% compared with 60%. That's not surprising, since as the bar graph shows, only 26% of small Alaska businesses offer insurance, compared with 41% nationwide. Many small businesses in Alaska and around the country say employee insurance is too expensive—and in Alaska premiums are higher than the U.S. average.<sup>2</sup>

A much bigger share of Alaska children have military insurance coverage; Alaska has a large military presence. CPS figures also show Alaska children as less likely to be covered by Medicaid.<sup>3</sup>

**Health-Care Coverage for Children (17 and Under),  
Alaska and U.S., 2010**

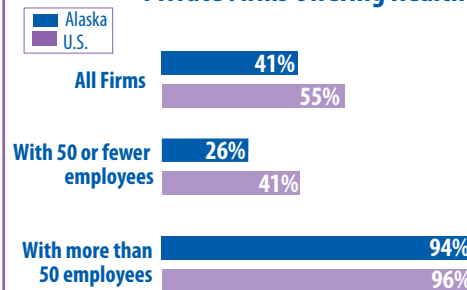
(Totals add to more than 100% because some people have more than one type of coverage)

	Private Insurance	Medicaid	Medicare	Military	None*
<b>Alaska</b>	56%	30%	>1	15%	14%
<b>U.S.</b>	60%	35%	1%	3%	10%

\* Includes children uninsured for the entire year as well as children who are eligible for services through Alaska Area Native Health Service and have no other coverage; CPS classifies those children as "uninsured."

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Table H105

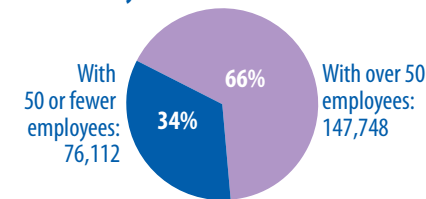
**Private Firms Offering Health Insurance,\* Alaska and U.S., 2009**



\* Not all workers at firms that offer insurance carry that insurance.

Source: Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, Table II. A. 2, 2009

**How Many Alaskans Work for Small Firms?**



2009 total: 223,860 employees

Source: Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, Table II. B.1. a, 2009

# Endnotes for Economic Well-Being

## CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY

1. The federal poverty thresholds are not used directly to determine financial eligibility for federal assistance programs, but are used to estimate the number of people in poverty. Federal poverty guidelines, issued annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Social Services, are used to determine program eligibility. Unlike the threshold figures, the guidelines do take into account Alaska's higher living costs. See *The 2011 HHS Poverty Guidelines*, at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/11poverty.shtml>.
2. C. Citro and R. Michael, *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach*, Washington, D.C., National Academy Press, 1995, cited in U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports*, "The Research Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2010," by Kathleen Short, November 2011.
3. U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports*, "The Research Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2010," by Kathleen Short, November 2011. For more discussion about the complexities and controversies in measuring poverty, see Douglas J. Besharov and Peter Germanis, *Reconsidering the Federal Poverty Measure*, Project Description, June 14, 2004.
4. Interagency Technical Working Group, "Observations from the Interagency Technical Working Group on Developing a Supplemental Poverty Measure," March 2010.
5. Under the poverty threshold in 2010, 16.8 million children (under 18) were considered poor; the supplemental measure put that number at 13.6 million. Examples of recent reports on the effects of poverty on children include National Center for Children in Poverty, *Fact Sheet*, "Basic Facts About Low-Income Children, 2009," October 2010; and Jung-Sook Lee, "The Effects of Persistent Poverty on Children's Physical, Socio-emotional, and Learning Outcomes," in *Child Indicators Research*, Volume 4, No. 4, October 2011.

## CHILDREN WITH NO PARENT WORKING FULL-TIME

1. "Secure Parental Employment," America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2011, ChildStats.gov, Forum on Child and Family Statistics, available at: <http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/eco2.asp>.
2. Child Trends Databank, *Secure Parental Employment*, November 2010. See [www.childtrends.databank.org/q=node/192](http://www.childtrends.databank.org/q=node/192).
3. For more discussion of Alaska's changing economy, see S. Goldsmith, "Oil Pumps Alaska's Economy to Twice the Size—But What's Ahead? *Understanding Alaska Research Summary* No. 17, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, February 2011.

## CHILDREN IN SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

1. Child Trends Databank, *Family Structure*, May 2011, available at: <http://childtrends.databank.org?q=node/231>.
2. Child Trends Databank, *Secure Parental Employment*, November 2010. See [www.childtrends.databank.org/q=node/192](http://www.childtrends.databank.org/q=node/192).

## BIRTHS TO TEENS

1. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Women's Children's and Family Health, "Teen Pregnancy and Sexual Behavior in Alaska," *Title V Fact Sheet*, Vol. 6, No. 22, February 2011.
2. Child Trends, *Fact Sheet Reporting National, State, and City Trends in Teen Childbearing*, Publication # 2011-10, April 2011.
3. National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, "The Changing Portrait of Teen Childbearing Over Time," Section E, DCR Report, 2009.
4. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, *Why It Matters: Teen Pregnancy, Poverty and Income Disparity*, March 2010.
5. M. Brein and R. Willis, "Costs and Consequences for Fathers," in *Kids Having Kids: Economic and Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy*, The Urban Institute Press, Washington, D.C., 1997.
6. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, "The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing in Alaska in 2008," *Counting it Up*, June 2011.
7. *Ibid.*, "Socio-Economic and Family Characteristics of Teen Childbearing," *Science Says* No. 41, September 2009.

8. See note 7.

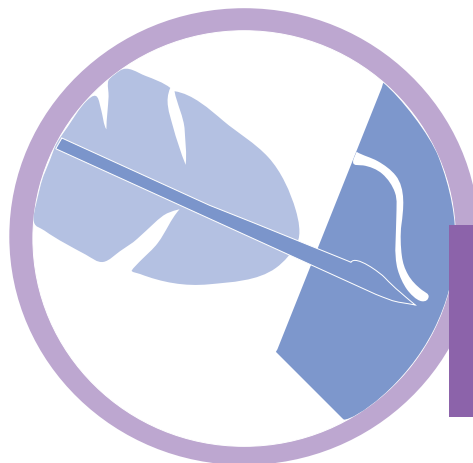
9. Child Trends, "Childbearing Outside Marriage: Estimates and Trends in the United States," by E. Wildsmith, N. Steward-Streng, and J. Manlove, *Research Brief* No. 2011-29, November 2011.
10. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, "Summary of 2010 Preliminary Data from the NCHS," *Fast Facts*, November 2011.
11. The Alaska Department of Labor benchmarks its estimates to the 2000 census figures, but uses information from the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend file to adjust the estimates. Dividends are annual payments Alaska's state government makes to all residents, and all residents must file for those dividends each year.
12. Bill Albert, chief program officer for National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, quoted in "U.S. teen birth rate drops to a record low," *CNN.com Blogs*, April 10, 2012.
13. See, for example, discussions in "Birthrate for U.S. teens is lowest in history," by Sharon Jayson, in *USA Today*, April 9, 2012; and in the CNN.com Blog cited in note 12.
14. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, "Teen Birth Rates: How Does the United States Compare?" *Fast Facts*, March 2012.

## HEALTH CARE

1. Child Trends Data Bank, "Health Insurance Coverage," available at <http://childrens.databook.org?q=node/83>.
2. M. Foster and S. Goldsmith, "Alaska's Health-Care Bill: \$7.5 Billion and Climbing," *Understanding Alaska Research Summary* No. 18, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, August 2011. See Figure 16.
3. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services reports that 42% of Alaskans 19 and under were enrolled in Medicaid in 2010 (see citation in note 3 above, Figure 3). CPS estimates that 29% of Alaskans 17 and under were enrolled in 2009. The inclusion of those ages 18 and 19 enrolled in the program is unlikely to account for the big difference in reported Medicaid enrollment. We believe the figures of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services are more accurate.



**Education**



**Girls Scouts learn about careers in construction at an event offered by the National Association of Women in Construction.**

Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Alaska



# Drop Out and Graduation Rates

## DEFINITION

This indicator looks at both dropout rates and high-school graduation rates among Alaska teenagers. Dropout and graduation rates can both be calculated in more ways than one, which can be confusing. But the various ways of calculating these rates are useful—as long as it's clear what's being measured and how.

So here we first describe some different calculation methods and then report the results. Keep in mind that rates calculated in different ways are not directly comparable. Also, be aware that the data are from different sources and may be for different years.

## Dropout Rates

Two ways of calculating dropout rates are status and event. The *status rate* is a measure at a given time of how many teenagers 16 to 19 are not enrolled and have not graduated or received a General Educational Development (GED) certificate; it doesn't show when they dropped out. That's the measure the national Kids Count program uses to calculate the figures in the trend graph.

The *event rate* measures dropout rates based on the percentage of students who stop attending school during a given school year, divided by total statewide enrollment in either grades 7 to 12 or grades 9 to 12. That's the method the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development uses. This method doesn't count students as dropouts if they transferred to other types of schools (like private institutions or vocational schools), left to get GEDs or other certifications, were temporarily suspended, or have serious illnesses.

## Graduation Rates

Two ways of calculating the graduation rate are the averaged freshman graduation rate and the leaver rate. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) uses the *averaged freshman graduation rate*—the percentage of students who receive standard high-school diplomas four years after entering high school. NCES estimates that rate by dividing the number of graduates in a given year by the average of the number of eighth graders four years earlier, the number of ninth graders three years earlier, and the number of tenth graders two years earlier. That's a reasonable way of estimating, and NCES has data that's comparable across states.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development uses the *leaver rate*, based on more detailed Alaska information. The department uses the number of high-school graduates in a given year as the numerator, and divides that by the total of several groups of students to calculate the graduation rate: (1) the number of graduates; (2) the number of first-time dropouts in each of grades 9 through 12; (3) the number of 12th graders who don't graduate on time but are continuing in school; and (4) the number of students receiving certificates of achievement, awarded to students who attend through grade 12 but don't pass the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam.<sup>1</sup>

## SIGNIFICANCE

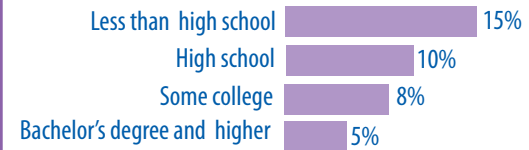
Almost 7,000 students drop out of high school across the U.S. every school day, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education.<sup>2</sup> Those who don't graduate have the highest unemployment rate in the U.S.—15% as of 2010—and those who do work are paid significantly less. The median weekly earnings of full-time workers (25 years and older) with bachelor's degrees or higher were \$1,144 in 2010, compared with \$444 among dropouts.<sup>3</sup>

The national and state economies also suffer when students don't finish high school. In Alaska, for example, 3,900 students dropped out of the class of 2010. The Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that if 1,000 of those had graduated, their additional earnings would likely have supported 80 new Alaska jobs, and their increased spending and investments would have added \$700,000 to the state treasury annually.<sup>4</sup> And because people with less education are more likely to be unemployed and poor, society faces higher costs for their health care and other social services.<sup>5</sup>

Warning signs for students at high risk of dropping out are low attendance, behavioral problems, repeating a grade, or earning low grades in core subjects.<sup>6</sup> Ninth grade is a particularly crucial time—only 10% to 15% of students who repeat ninth grade will ultimately graduate, and one-third of the students who drop out do so during the ninth grade.<sup>7</sup>

## U.S. Unemployment Rate by Education Level, 2010

(Ages 25 and Older)



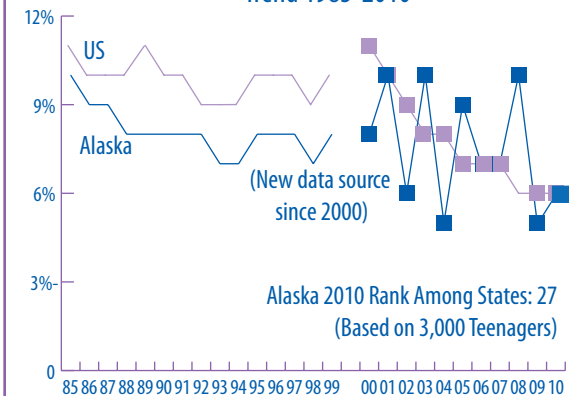
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, based on Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

## DROPOUT RATES

The trend graph below is a status rate measure of dropouts, showing the percentage of teens 16-19 who were not in school and had not graduated in each year from 1985 to 2010. In 2010, the U.S. rate remained at around 6%—the same as in the previous year. Alaska's rate increased from 5% to 6%, after dropping dramatically from 10% in 2008 to 5% in 2009. Notice, however, that Alaska's rate has fluctuated sharply from year to year since 2000, when the data source became the American Community Survey.

## Teens (16-19) Not in School and Not High-School Graduates

Trend 1985-2010



Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center

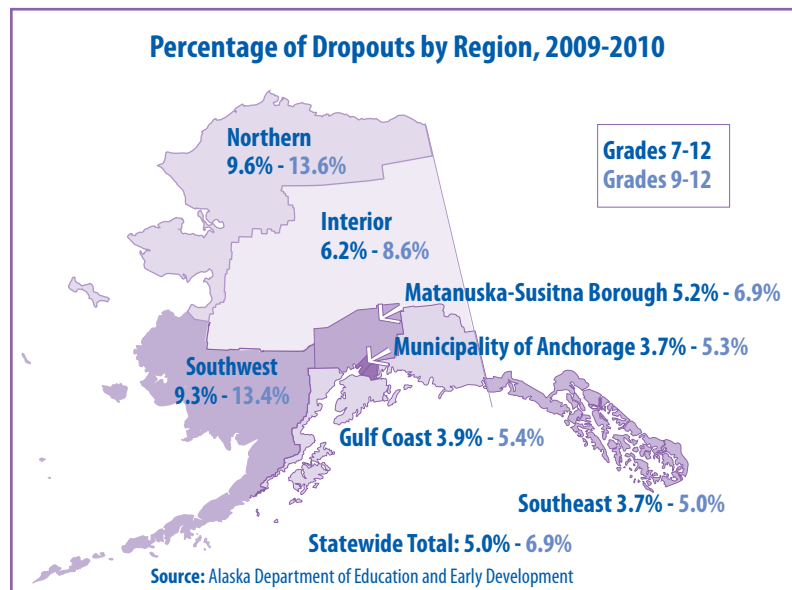
# Drop Out and Graduation Rates

## Alaska Department of Education Figures

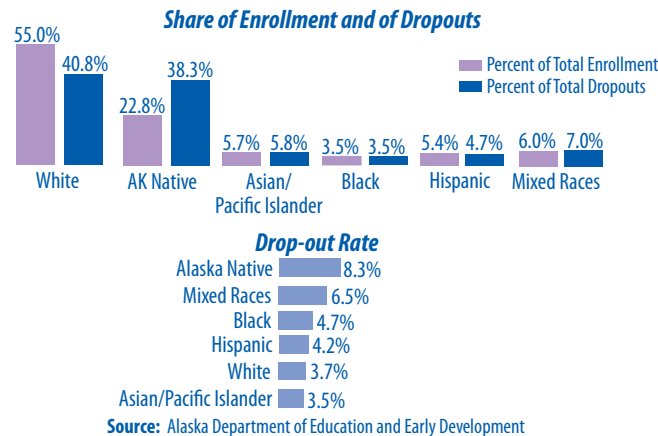
The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development reports that 60,120 students were enrolled in grades seven through twelve in Alaska during the 2009-2010 school year. Of those students, 5% (2,990) dropped out of school before the school year ended. The rate among just those in grades nine through 12 was considerably higher, at 6.9%.<sup>8</sup>

The map below shows that the regional dropout rate for Alaska high-school students (grades 9 through 12) in the 2009-2010 year varied from a low of 5% in the Southeast to more than 13% in the Northern and Southwest regions. The regional rates for grades 7 to 12 followed a similar pattern but were lower—from 3.7% in the Southeast to more than 9% in the Northern and Southwest regions.

The dropout rate by race in grades 7-12 varied from a low of 3.5% among Asian and Pacific Islander students to a high of 8.3% among Alaska Native students. Alaska Native students also dropped out at rates disproportionately high compared with their share of total enrollment. They accounted for 38% of dropouts but only 23% of enrollment in the 2009-2010 school year.



## Alaska Dropouts (Grades 7-12) by Race and Ethnicity Share of Enrollment (2009-2010)

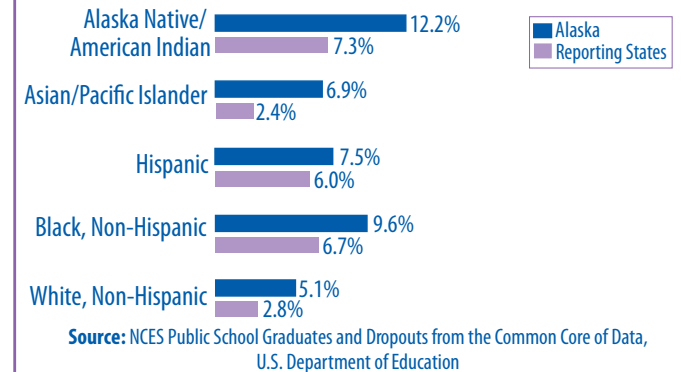


## NCES Figures

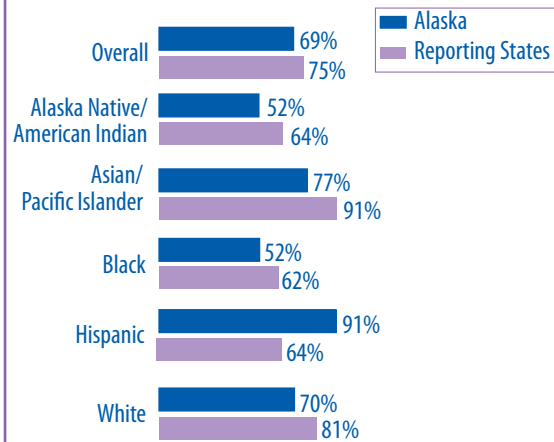
The National Center for Education Statistics defines a dropout as a student who was enrolled at any time during the previous school year but who was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year and had not graduated. NCES reports that the national dropout rate in the 2007-2008 school year was 4.1% and Alaska's rate was 7.3%—making Alaska's rate the second highest in the nation among public schools.<sup>9</sup>

The adjacent bar graph shows NCES figures on dropout rates in Alaska and other states by race. Students of all races in Alaska dropped out at higher rates than the U.S. averages, with Alaska Native and American Indian students as well as Black students having the highest rates.

## High-School (Grades 9-12) Dropout Rate by Race and Ethnicity, Alaska and U.S., 2007-2008



## Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate by Race and Ethnicity, Alaska and U.S., 2007-2008



Source: NCES Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data, U.S. Department of Education

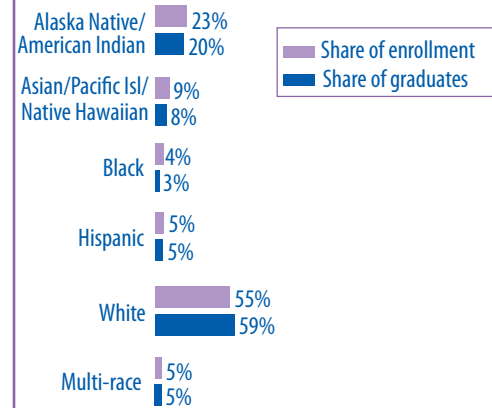
## Alaska Department of Education Figures

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development reports that in 2010, 8,245 Alaska students were awarded high-school diplomas and 333 received certificates of completion.<sup>12</sup>

The figure below shows that in 2010 the department calculated an overall graduation rate of 68%, with rates among students by race and ethnicity varying from 74% among White students to 55% among Alaska Native students. In line with national trends, girls in Alaska graduated at higher rates than boys—71% compared with 64%. It's important to keep in mind that small changes in graduation rates by race in recent years may be because Alaska's school districts have added a multi-race category.

Slightly less than half the students who spoke limited English, 40% of those with disabilities, and 59% from low-income families graduated in 2010.

## Share of Enrollment and of Graduates (Grade 12), by Race and Ethnicity, 2009-2010



Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

Finally, the chart above compares shares of enrollment and graduates by race and ethnicity—a way of looking at how likely students are to graduate if they reach the twelfth grade. Hispanic and Multi-race students graduated in roughly the same proportions as they made up of enrollment. Alaska Native, Black, and Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian students graduated in slightly smaller proportions than their shares of enrollment. White students graduated at a slightly larger proportion than their share of enrollment.

The 2009-2010 graduation rate will be the last one calculated using the leaver rate. The state will begin calculating the federally mandated Four Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate starting with the 2010-2011 school year.

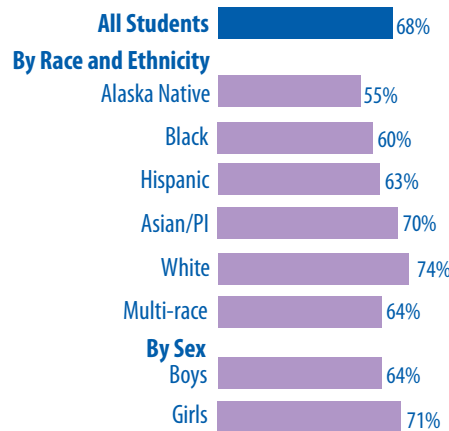
## HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES NCES Figures

The Obama administration hopes the United States can have the highest proportion of college graduates of any country by 2020.<sup>10</sup> But to reach that goal we first need to have more students finishing high school.

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that around the country in 2008, only about 75% of teenagers graduated from high school four years after they started—and in Alaska that share was just 69%. Among other states, the rate varied from a low of 51% in Nevada to a high of 90% in Wisconsin.<sup>11</sup>

The figure above compares averaged freshman graduation rates by race and ethnicity in Alaska and the country as a whole in 2008. Teenagers of all races and ethnicities graduated at higher rates in the U.S. as a whole—except Hispanic teenagers, who were much more likely to graduate in Alaska (91%) in Alaska than nationwide (64%).

## Graduation Rates Among Alaska Students, 2009-2010



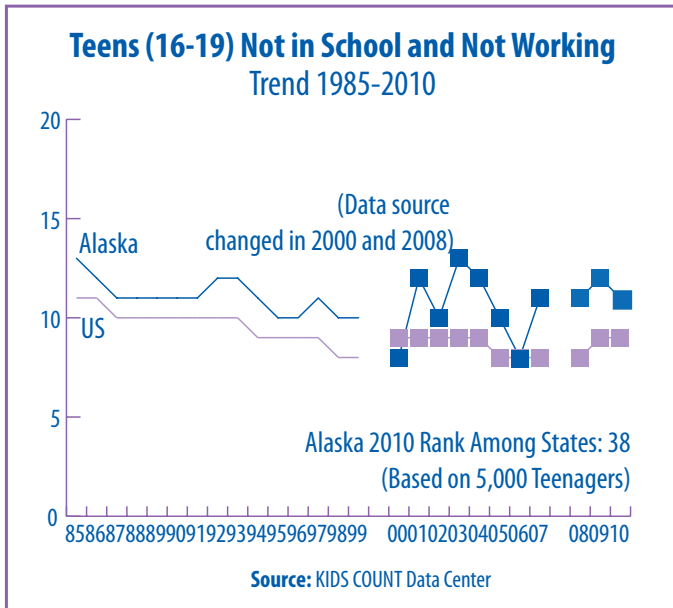
### By Other Characteristics



<sup>a</sup> "Low-income" as measured by eligibility for free or reduced-price meals

Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

# Teens Not in School and Not Working



## DATA

About 9 percent of American teenagers (16-19) were neither attending school nor working in 2010. That percentage ranged from 5% in a few states to 15% in Nevada.

Alaska's rate stood at 11% in 2010, one of the ten highest in the nation. The trend graph shows that Alaska's rate has fluctuated between 2008 and 2010, 2000 and 2007, and before 2000. Changes in questions and data sources mean that the three time periods should not be compared.<sup>4</sup>

Data on the sex and race of idle teens are not available specifically for Alaska, but the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics reports nationwide figures, as the table below shows.

Between 2000 and 2009, the percentage of all those 16 to 19 considered idle increased from 8% to 9%. But that increase was largely due to a big jump in the share of teenage boys not in school and not working—up from 7% in 2000 to 10% in 2009. The rate among teenage girls was unchanged. The rate among White teenagers was up from 6% to 7%, while the rate among Hispanic teenagers was unchanged and the rate among Black teenagers dropped from 13% to 12%.<sup>5</sup>

The increase in the share of idle teenagers can be traced at least in part to the nationwide recession in recent years, which has made it harder for teenagers to get jobs.

## DEFINITION

Teens not in school and not working are defined as those between the ages of 16 and 19 who are not enrolled in school, not working, and not in the military. These teenagers are sometimes referred to as idle or disconnected. The category includes both those who dropped out of high school and those who didn't graduate but earned General Educational Development (GED) certificates or other credentials.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Approximately 1.6 million U.S. teens were idle in 2010.<sup>1</sup> Some of the reasons included having substance abuse or mental health issues, having children, being in juvenile detention, or being in the foster-care system.<sup>2</sup>

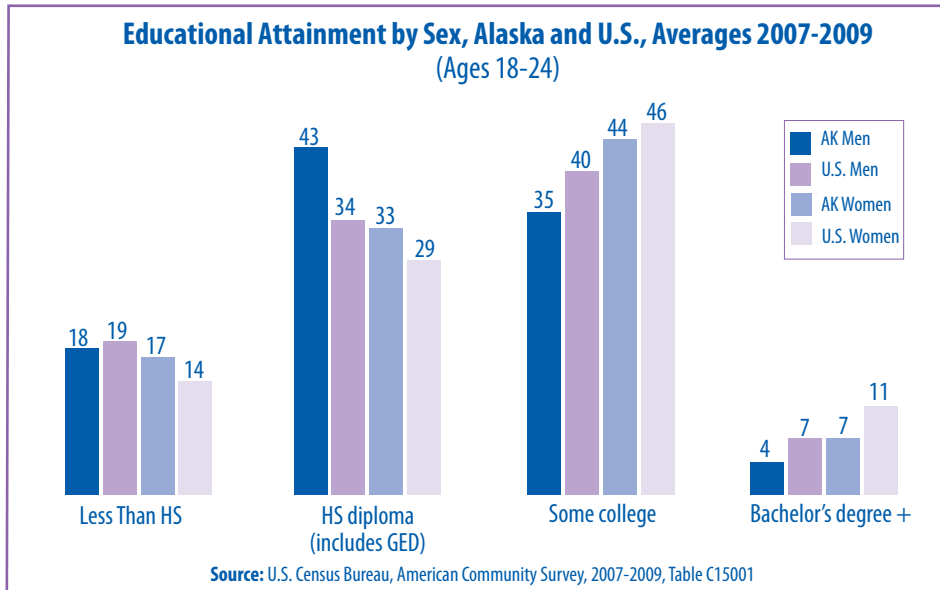
Whatever the reason, the longer teenagers are idle or disconnected, the more difficulties they will face later in life. Analysts report that young people who have been out of school and not working for three or more years are more likely to receive welfare and food stamps, to lack no health insurance, to have lower incomes, and to have trouble getting or keeping jobs.<sup>3</sup>

### Percentages of U.S. Teenagers (16-19) Not in School and Not Working, 2000 and 2009

	2000	2009	Change
All teenagers	8%	9%	+13%
Teenage girls	9%	9%	0%
Teenage boys	7%	10%	+43%
White teenagers	6%	7%	+17%
Black teenagers	13%	12%	-8%
Hispanic teenagers	13%	13%	0%

Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics

# Teens Not in School and Not Working



## EDUCATION MATTERS

The figures on this page make it clear why Alaskans and other Americans should worry that so many teenagers drop out of school and aren't working: education matters.

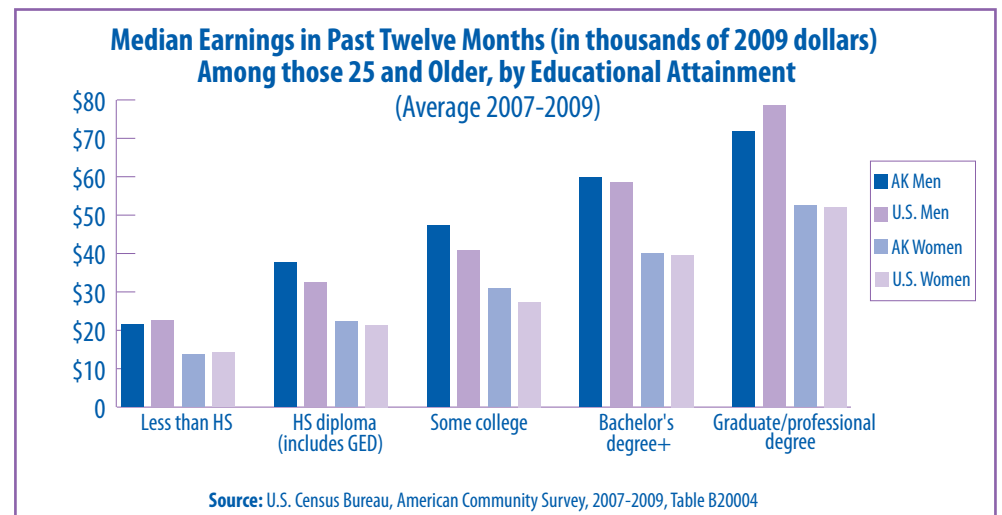
The bar chart above shows educational attainment among young adults (18 to 24) in Alaska and nationwide. Overall, young women in Alaska and across the U.S. are better educated than young men, being more likely to have at least some college courses or bachelor's degrees.<sup>6</sup> But young women in the country as a whole are somewhat better educated than young women in Alaska, with 11% nationwide holding at least bachelor's degrees, compared with 7% in Alaska. And close to one in five of both young men (18%) and young women (17%) in Alaska have less than a high-school education.

The adjacent figure illustrates the effect of education on income, showing median earnings for the period 2007-2009, by education level, for men and women 25 and older in Alaska and the entire U.S.<sup>7</sup> Two things are apparent from the figure: people with more education make more money, and men make much more money than women at every level of education.

The 2009 American Community Survey found that nationally, women earn 78.2% of what men earn. Women earned less in every state and territory, with the exception of Puerto Rico.<sup>8</sup>

Both men and women in Alaska earn more than their counterparts in the country as a whole. Median annual earnings for all Alaska men were \$46,418 in the period 2007 to 2009, compared with \$40,453 for U.S. men on average. Median earnings for Alaska women were \$30,778, compared with \$28,025 for all U.S. women.<sup>9</sup>

But those median figures for all workers hide the huge differences among people at different education levels. Those with four-year degrees make about three times what high-school dropouts make—and those with graduate or professional degrees earn about four times as much.



# School Achievement

## DEFINITION

Alaska students complete several tests that the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development uses to evaluate students' skills and knowledge and assess whether they are meeting academic standards.

The assessments include (1) the student developmental profile for those in kindergarten or first grade; (2) the standards-based assessment, which measures math, reading, and writing skills among third through tenth graders and science skills among fourth, eighth, and tenth graders; (3) the TerraNova, Third Edition, administered to those in grades five and seven; and (4) the High-School Graduation Qualifying Examination, which students can first take in tenth grade and must pass to receive a diploma.

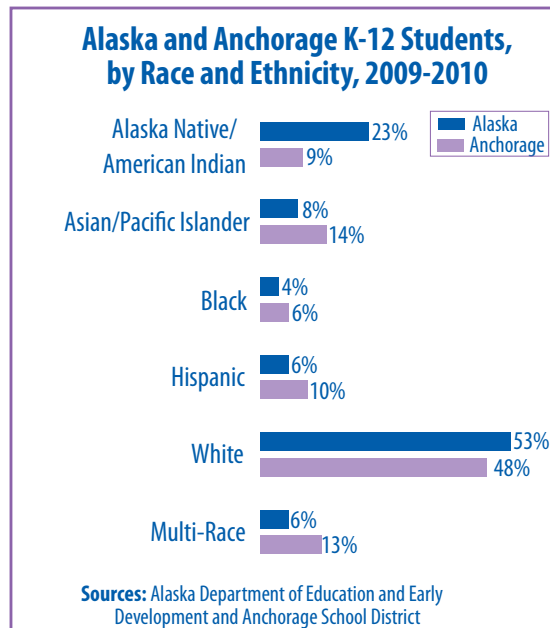
Students planning to continue on beyond high school can take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), which measures math, reading, and writing skills, or the American College Test (ACT), which measures skills in four subjects—English, reading, math, and science. Many colleges and universities use the scores from these tests when making decisions about admission, financial aid, and course placement. These tests are not required, and students can take them more than once to try to improve their scores.

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

During the 2009–2010 school year, the average daily membership in Alaska's K-12 public schools was 129,229—an increase of nearly 850 students from the year before.<sup>1</sup> The bar chart above shows students by race and ethnicity statewide and in Anchorage—where about 40% of all the state's students are enrolled.

About 53% of Alaska students statewide identify themselves as White, 23% as Alaska Native or American Indian, 8% as Asian or Pacific Islander, 4% as Black, 6% as Hispanic, and 6% as Multi-Race. In Anchorage, fewer students are White (48%) or Alaska Native (9%), and other races make up bigger shares.

Diversity among Alaska students has increased in recent years, especially in Anchorage. The school district reports that the share of students identifying themselves as from minority groups increased from 13% in 1976 to 52% by 2009.<sup>2</sup> In October 2011, about 5,400



Anchorage students (11%) were in the English-language learner program. They spoke 90 languages, the most common being Spanish (1,235), Hmong (1,084), and Samoan (866).<sup>3</sup>

Alaska also faces the challenge of seeing that its remote school districts—some of which are largely Alaska Native—adhere to a national set of standards. In 2010 the courts ruled in *Moore v. State* that the State of Alaska was not providing enough help for rural school districts that were performing below expected standards.<sup>4</sup>

Also, as part of the federal No Child Left Behind law, Alaska's schools are assessed annually to determine whether they are meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets. In 2010, 66.09% of students tested proficient in math and 77.18% in language arts. Only 37% of Alaska's public school districts met AYP standards in 2010—down from 43% in 2009.

## TERRANOVA, THIRD EDITION

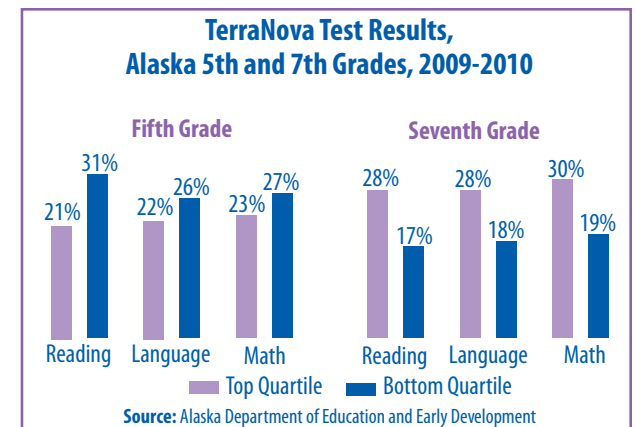
The TerraNova, Third Edition, replaced the California Achievement Test (CAT) as a gauge of the reading, language, and math skills of fifth and seventh graders in Alaska and other states. The scores of all U.S. students are divided into four quartiles, with the

### Enrollment in English-Language Learner Program, Anchorage School District, 2010-2011



highest in the top 25% and the lowest in the bottom 25%. Then student scores by state are compared with that national norm.

The graph below shows how Alaska's fifth- and seventh-grade students scored on all three sections of the TerraNova in 2009–2010. More of Alaska's fifth graders scored in the bottom than in the top 25% in reading, language, and mathematics. But seventh-



## Percentages of Alaska 5th- and 7th-Grade Students Scoring in the Top Quartile, TerraNova, 2009-2010

Gender	Reading		Math	
	5th	7th	5th	7th
Boys	19%	26%	23%	31%
Girls	24%	30%	22%	29%
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>				
Alaska Native	7%	9%	8%	12%
White	31%	39%	32%	40%
Black	10%	17%	10%	14%
Hispanic	18%	20%	17%	20%
Asian or Pacific Islander	12%	21%	17%	30%
Multi-Race	20%	25%	21%	29%

Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

grade students performed better, with more than 25% scoring in the top quartile in all three sections.

As the table above shows, there were disparities in scores between boys and girls and among students of different races. As has been true in previous years, more girls than boys in both fifth and

seventh grades scored in the top quartile on the reading portion—but more boys in both grades scored higher in math. A significantly higher proportion of White students scored in the top quartile in reading and math in both grades than any other group, while Alaska Native/American Indian students were the least likely to score in the top quartile.

### HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATION QUALIFYING EXAM

To receive high-school diplomas, students in Alaska have to complete 21 credits in specified areas and pass the High-School Graduation Qualifying Examination. That test has been a requirement since 2004. It measures students' reading, writing, and math skills and is administered over three days. Students can first take the test during the spring of tenth grade, but may retake any portion they didn't pass every year until they do.

The Alaska Board of Education has altered the minimum score needed to pass the test over the years, so the percentages of students who passed in various years are not entirely comparable. Students who do not pass the test receive certificates of achievement rather than diplomas if they meet all other graduation requirements.

Among tenth-grade students who took the test in the spring

of 2010, 84% passed the reading portion, 74% passed the writing portion, and 77% passed the math portion. A higher proportion of girls than boys passed the reading and writing sections; slightly more boys than girls (78% compared with 77%) passed the math section. White students and students from families with higher incomes were more likely to pass than other groups.<sup>5</sup>

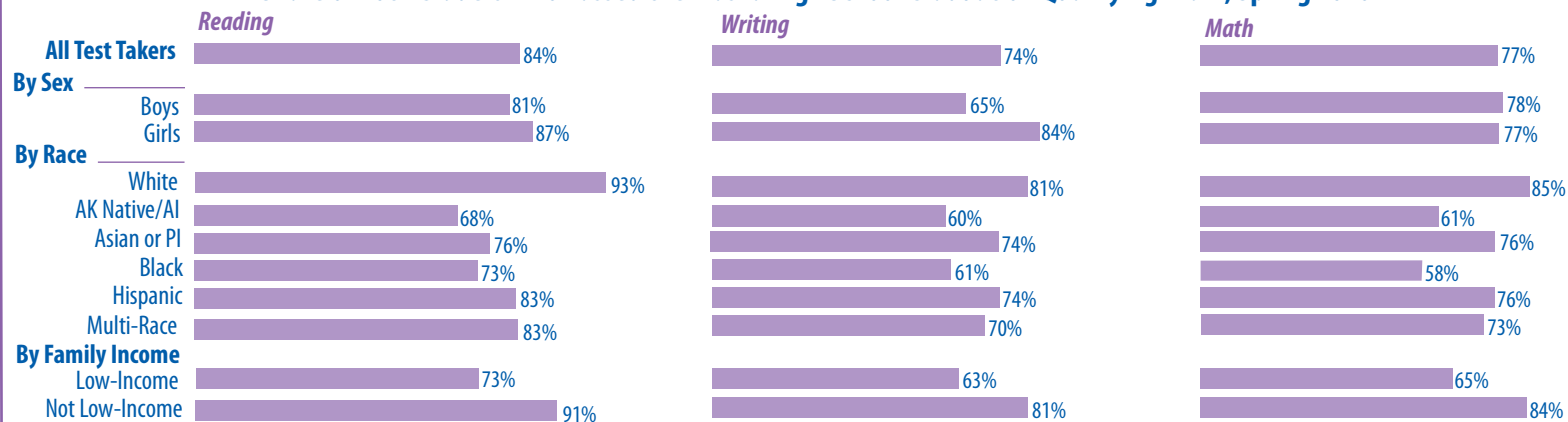
### COLLEGE PREPARATION

Students headed for college can choose to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT)—or both. Alaska seniors in public schools tend to score higher on both these tests than their peers nationwide.

A perfect score on each subsection of the SAT is 800. Alaska public-school seniors in 2009 scored an average of 493 in writing (5 points higher than their U.S. counterparts); 518 in math (7 points above the national average); and 520 in critical reading (22 points higher than the U.S. average).

The composite score on the ACT equals the average of the scores earned on the English, math, reading, and science subsections. A perfect composite score is 36. Students in Alaska's public schools had a slightly higher mean composite score (21.2) than the U.S. average (20.8) in 2009.<sup>6</sup>

## Share of 10th Graders Who Passed the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, Spring 2010



Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

## Endnotes for Education

### DROP OUT AND GRADUATION RATES

1. Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, *Report Card to the Public 2009-2010*, retrieved March 2011: [www.eed.state.ak.us/stats](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/stats).
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7. Alliance for Excellent Education, "High School Dropouts in America," *Fact Sheet*, updated February 2009, Washington, D.C. Retrieved April 2010: [http://www.all4ed.org/files/Graduation-Rates\\_FactSheet.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/Graduation-Rates_FactSheet.pdf).
8. See note 1.
9. National Center for Education Statistics, *Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2007-2008*. Retrieved March 2011: [nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2010341](http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2010341).pdf.

10. United States Educational Dashboard, *The President's 2020 College Attainment Goal*. Retrieved April 2011: <http://dashboard.ed.gov/dashboard.aspx>.

11. National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, *Newsflash*, December 2010. Retrieved May 2011: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011012>.

12. See note 1.

### TEENS NOT IN SCHOOL AND NOT WORKING

1. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *2011 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, page 54.
2. E. C. Hair, K. A. Moore, T. J. Ling, C. McPhee-Baker, and B. Brown. "Youth Who Are 'Disconnected' and Those Who then Reconnect: Assessing the Influence of Family, Programs, Peers, and Communities," *Child Trends Research Brief*, July 2009. Retrieved April 2010: <http://www.backontrack.us/library/youth-who-are-disconnected-0709.pdf>
3. See note 2.
4. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kidscount. Retrieved May 2012: [datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?loc](http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?loc).
5. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2010*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved February 2010 from <http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables/ed5a.asp>.
6. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007-2009. *Table C15001*. Retrieved March 2011: <http://www.census.gov/acs>.
7. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007-2009. *Table B20004*. Retrieved March 2011: <http://www.census.gov/acs>.
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9. See note 8.

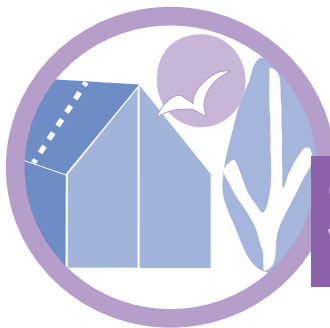
### SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

1. Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, *Report Card to the Public 2009-2010*, retrieved March 2011: [www.eed.state.ak.us/stats](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/stats).
2. Anchorage School District (November 23, 2009), *ASD Memorandum #120 (2009-2010)*.
3. Anchorage School District, *Languages our Students Speak*, retrieved April 2011: <http://www.asdk12.org/aboutasd/languages.asp>; and *English Language Learner Program*, retrieved April 2011: <http://www.asdk12.org/depts/ell/about.asp>.
4. Education Justice, *Alaska*, Retrieved October 2010: <http://www.educationjustice.org/states/alaska>.
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6. See note 1.



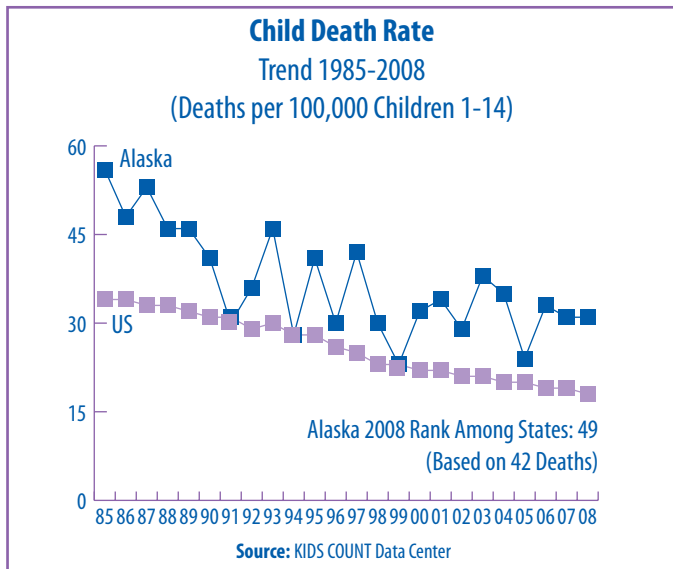


Children In Danger



**Girls Scouts in the 1970s have fun while earning water-safety badges.**

Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Alaska



safety restraints reduce the risk of death in passenger cars by 71% for infants and 54% for those 1 to 4. Unfortunately, they are often used incorrectly—and in some cases can actually increase a child’s risk of injury during a crash.<sup>3</sup>

### DATA

As of 2008 (the most recent year for which national data are available), Alaska and Wyoming had the highest death rate for children—31 deaths per 100,000 children, compared with a national rate of 18 per 100,000.

The trend graph at the left shows that the national child death rate has been declining since 1985. But Alaska’s rate fluctuates year to year. The small number of children in Alaska means that even a small change in the number of deaths can shift the death rate up or down.

The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics also tracks the causes of death among the state’s children. The table at the bottom of the page shows the number and manner of deaths for those ages 1 to 17, for the period 2005–2009. Accidents caused most deaths among children (45%), followed by natural causes (29%).

Among younger children (ages 1 to 9) natural causes and accidents caused most deaths—but a few were killed by their parents or other adults. Older children were as likely to commit suicide as to die from natural causes, and nearly 10% who died—17 of 201—were murdered.

### DEFINITION

The child death rate is the number of deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 to 14 from all causes (natural, accidental, and intentional), unless otherwise noted. The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics calculates regional data by children’s place of residence, not place of death.

### SIGNIFICANCE

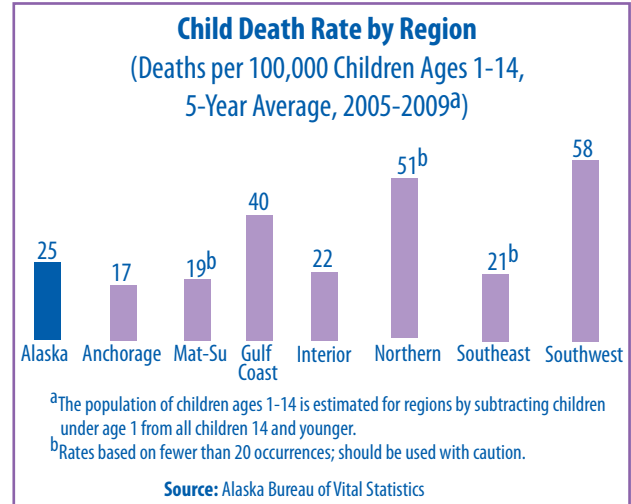
Every year, more than 5,000 American children 14 and younger die from unintentional injuries; many of these deaths could be prevented.<sup>1</sup> Deaths among children reflect not only their physical health but also the health of their mothers, their access to health care, their environment, and how much adults supervise them and keep them safe. *Child Trends* databank reports that death rates among some groups of American children have fallen by half or more in the past 30 years.<sup>2</sup> Experts say that medical advances and declines in vehicle accidents contribute to this falling death rate—still, injuries account for more than a third of deaths among children 1 to 4 and almost half of deaths among those 15 to 19.

Nationwide in 2009, 1,314 children 14 and younger were killed in vehicle accidents—and more than two-thirds were riding with drivers who had been drinking. Car seats and other

Childhood death rates tend to be higher for some ethnic and racial groups. Nationwide in 2007, American Indian and Alaska Native children died at a rate of 28 per 100,000 and Black children at 27 per 100,000. Asian and Pacific Island children had the lowest death rate—14 per 100,000.<sup>4</sup> Analysts say differences by race or ethnicity in rates of accidental injury have more to do with economic conditions than with biological differences, and that living in poor communities is a significant predictor of injury.<sup>5</sup>

Boys die at a higher rate than girls, which is often attributed to riskier behavior—but that gap is narrowing. Between 1987 and 2005, the fatality rate among boys decreased by almost 50%, compared with 37% among girls.<sup>6</sup>

The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics reports that between 2005 and 2009, Alaska’s child death rate averaged 25 per 100,000, which was a drop from the 31 per 100,000 during 2003–2007. The adjacent bar chart shows that the child death rate was highest in the Southwest region, at 58 per 100,000, followed by the Northern region at 51. Anchorage had the lowest rate, at 17 per 100,000; the Mat-Su was the next lowest at 19.

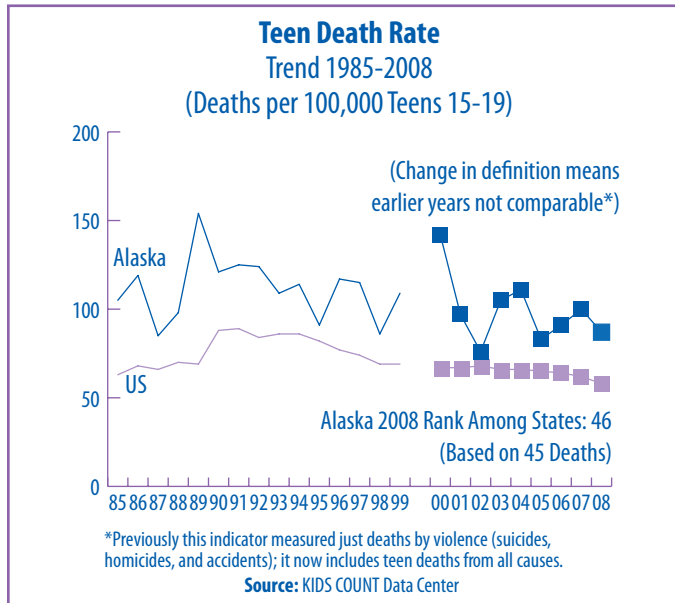


**How Do Alaska Children Die?**  
(Number of Deaths, by Age, 2005-2009)

	1-4	5-9	10-17	Total	Percent
Natural Causes	31	19	44	94	29.4%
Accidents	25	31	88	144	45.0%
Suicides	0	0	45	45	14.1%
Homicides	3	0	17	20	6.3%
Other	3	7	7	17	5.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

# Teen Death Rate



## DEFINITION

The trend graph above shows the number of deaths per 100,000 teens, ages 15-19, from all causes—the overall teen death rate. We also discuss the violent death rate (accidents, homicides, and suicides) and the suicide rate alone.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Children are exposed to new risks as they move into adolescence, and a big share of deaths among teenagers are violent. Boys are especially vulnerable. Nationwide in 2007, boys 15 to 19 were four times more likely than girls to commit suicide, six times more likely to be murdered, and eight times more likely to be involved in firearm-related deaths.<sup>1</sup> Nearly all these deaths could be prevented.

## DATA

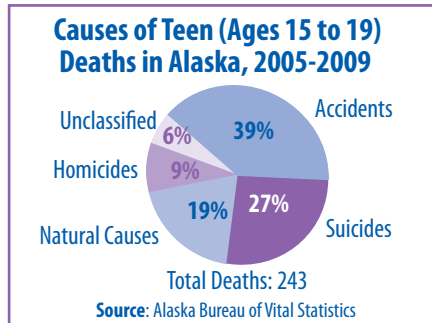
The teen death rate in the U.S. has been declining in recent years, dropping from 67 deaths per 100,000 in 2000 to 58 in 2008 (see trend graph above). But in Alaska—as is true with many indicators—the rate fluctuates from year to year because the number of deaths is small and differs from year to year. In 2008, Alaska's teen

death rate was among the highest in the nation, at 87 per 100,000, based on 45 deaths. That was, however, down from 100 deaths per 100,000 in 2007. Because of these year-to-year fluctuations, we try to use 5-year average rates for the state and regions.

Teen death rates nationwide vary considerably by race. The rate for American Indian and Alaska Native teens in 2007 was 87 per 100,000; it was 83 per 100,000 among Black teens. White and Hispanic teens both had rates of 58 per 100,000; the lowest rate was among Asian and Pacific Island teenagers, at 33 per 100,000 in 2007.<sup>2</sup>

## MANNER OF DEATH AND REGIONAL RATES

The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics reports that 243 teenagers (15-19) died in Alaska between 2005 and 2009. The pie chart below shows that only 19% of teen deaths were from natural causes; 39% were from accidents, 27% from suicides, and 9% from homicides.



**Teen Death Rates, by Manner and Region**  
(Rate per 100,000 Teens 15-19, 5-Year Average, 2005-2009)

Region	Accident	Homicide	Suicide	Natural
Anchorage	16*	11*	11*	21
Interior	29*	**	24*	**
Remainder of State	53	6	30	16*
<b>Alaska</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>

\*Rates based on fewer than 20 occurrences; should be used with caution.

\*\*Rates based on fewer than 6 occurrences are not reported.

Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

The table shows death rates among teenagers in Anchorage, the Interior, and the rest of Alaska from 2005 to 2009. Anchorage had the highest homicide rate in the state, at 11 per 100,000, but lower rates of deaths by accident or suicide. Areas of the state outside Anchorage and the Interior had very high rates of accidental death (53 per 100,000) and suicide (30 per 100,000).

## OVERALL AND VIOLENT TEEN DEATHS

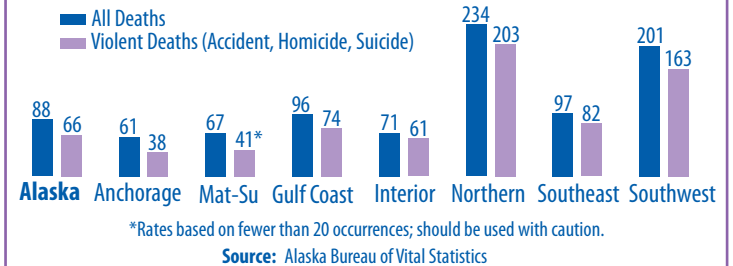
More than three-quarters of teen deaths nationwide are caused by accidents, homicides, or suicides.<sup>3</sup> Most lethal accidents are motor vehicle crashes, often involving drugs, alcohol or risky behavior such as failing to wear seatbelts.<sup>4</sup>

The bar graph below compares the overall Alaska teen death rate with the violent death rate from 2005 to 2009. Both rates were down from the previous five years. Statewide, the overall death rate for 2005-2009 was 88 per 100,000 teens, a decrease from 101 per 100,000 during 2003-2007. Most of the deaths—66 per 100,000—were violent deaths. That rate was also down, from 77 per 100,000 in the previous five years.

The Northern region had the highest overall death rate (234 per 100,000) from 2005 to 2009, followed by the Southwest at 201. Anchorage had the lowest overall teen death rate (61 per 100,000), with the Mat-Su somewhat higher, at 67. In other areas, overall death rates varied from 71 per 100,000 in the Interior to 97 in the Southeast.

Violent death rates were lowest in Anchorage, at 38 per 100,000, and highest in the Northern region, at 203 per 100,000.

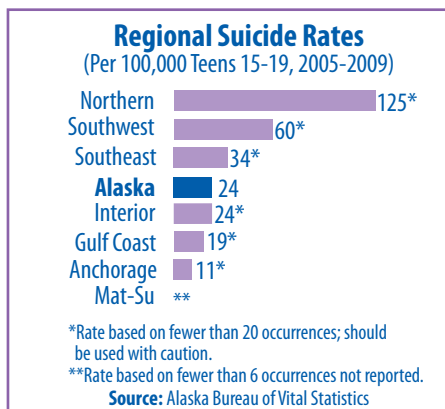
**Teen Death Rates and Violent Death Rates, by Region**  
(Rate per 100,000 Teens 15-19, 5-Year Average, 2005-2009)



## TEEN SUICIDE

Suicide is the third-leading cause of death nationwide among young people ages 10-24.<sup>5</sup> Suicide is especially high in Alaska, where the overall suicide rate is more than twice the national average.<sup>6</sup> Those 20 to 24 commit suicide at the highest rates in Alaska, followed by those 15 to 19.<sup>7</sup>

During the 2005-2009 period, teenagers in Alaska committed suicide at a rate of 24 per 100,000. That rate was far higher in some regions—125 per 100,000 in the Northern region, and 60 in the Southwest. Anchorage had the lowest rate, at 11 per 100,000 teens.



But the teen suicide rate was down statewide, dropping from 32 per 100,000 during 1998-2007 to 24 in the most recent period. Rates in several regions were also down, including substantial drops in the Northern region—from 179 to 125—and the Southwest—from 124 to 60. Rates were up in Southeast, from 14 to 34 per 100,000, and in the Gulf Coast, from 13 to 19 per 100,000.

The adjacent pie chart shows that more boys than girls, and more Alaska Natives than non-Natives, commit suicide. Of the 161 Alaska teenagers who killed themselves between 2000 and 2009, 75% were boys and 25% were girls. Alaska Native boys accounted for nearly half of all suicides, and Alaska Native girls were twice as likely as non-Native girls to kill themselves.

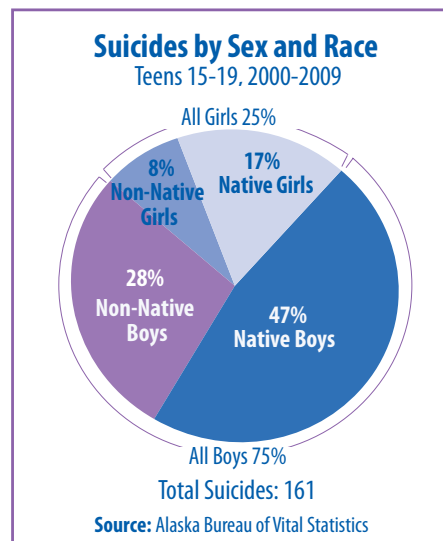
## WARNING SIGNS

Nationally, the rate of teens who report seriously considering suicide has gradually been decreasing—from 29 per 100,000 in 1991 to 19 in 2001 and 15 by 2007. But the rate of teens who actually attempt suicide has remained stable.<sup>8</sup>

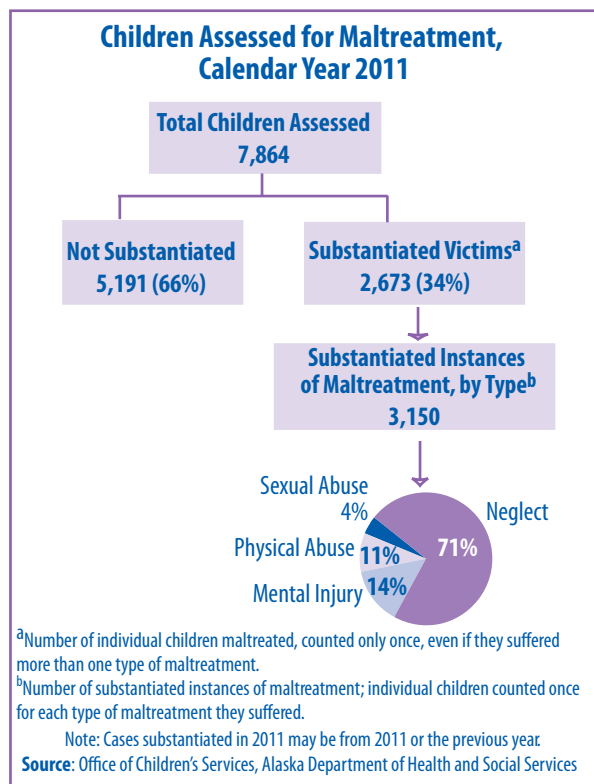
Depression and bipolar disorders are serious risks for suicide. A 2010 study reported that 8% of Americans ages 12-17 had been diagnosed with one or more episodes of serious depression.<sup>9</sup>

Girls are more likely to report feeling depressed and to attempt suicide, but boys are more likely to use lethal means, such as firearms—making them less likely to survive suicide attempts. Other risk factors for attempting suicide include a history of previous attempts, having experienced family violence or substance abuse, and a family history of mental illness.<sup>10</sup>

Many teenagers who feel depressed or suicidal may not talk about it, so it's important to recognize warning signs. Experts say clear warning signs precede approximately four of five suicide attempts.<sup>11</sup> Those signs among teenagers can include increased talk about death, intense mood swings, loss of interest in things they once enjoyed, and changes in normal habits.<sup>12</sup>



# Child Abuse and Neglect



## DEFINITION

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), defines maltreatment of children as neglect and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of children under 18.<sup>1</sup> Abuse is inflicting or failing to prevent physical, sexual, mental, or emotional harm. Neglect is failure by parents or guardians to provide children with basic needs—food, shelter, medical attention, clothing, or education.<sup>2</sup> Definitions of what constitutes maltreatment vary somewhat by state, but they are all based on federal law.<sup>3</sup>

## SIGNIFICANCE

Five American children die from abuse and neglect every day, and most of those are under age 4. But the number may be even higher. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports there is evidence that 50% or more of children's deaths from maltreatment are not attributed to abuse or neglect on death

certificates.<sup>4</sup> Federal statistics show that more than 80% of those who hurt children are the children's parents, and another 6% are other relatives of the victims.<sup>5</sup>

## DATA

The Office of Children Services (OCS) in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services investigates reports of child abuse and neglect. In 2011, OCS assessed reported maltreatment of nearly 8,000 children—down from about 9,000 the previous year. It substantiated neglect or abuse of almost 2,700—or 34%—of those children. Maltreatment of the remaining 66% was not substantiated, for various reasons.

Some victims suffered more than one type of abuse or neglect. The pie chart shows that of all the types of maltreatment substantiated in 2011, 71% was neglect, 14% mental or emotional abuse, 11% physical abuse, and 4% sexual abuse.

The smaller table shows individual victims of abuse or neglect by race—counting each child only once. More than half of the victims in Alaska in 2011 were Alaska Native or American Indian; the overwhelming majority of children in that group are Alaska Native. Of the others, 25% were White, 9% of other races, and 13% race not reported.

The larger table shows the total number of substantiated instances of maltreatment; individual children are counted once for each type of maltreatment they suffered. Neglect is by far the most common type of maltreatment among children of all races, and sexual abuse is the least common.

## RATES OF ABUSE, ALASKA AND U.S.

The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System compiles reports of child abuse and neglect throughout the U.S. for children 17 and under.

The overall rate of maltreatment in the U.S. in 2010 was 10 per 1,000 children—that figure is for total substantiated cases of abuse and neglect, including all kinds of maltreatment for

## Victims of Maltreatment,<sup>a</sup> by Race, 2011

	Number	Percent
Alaska Native <sup>b</sup>	1,412	53%
White <sup>c</sup>	680	25%
Other Races	245	9%
Not Reported	336	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,673</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>a</sup>Each victim counted only once, even if they suffered more than one type of maltreatment.

<sup>b</sup>Children who are all or part Alaska Native or American Indian.

<sup>c</sup>Children whose only reported race is White.

**Source:** Office of Children's Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

## Substantiated Instances of Maltreatment,<sup>a</sup> by Type and by Race, 2011

	Mental Injury	Neglect	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse
Alaska Native <sup>b</sup>	247	1,239	148	57
White <sup>c</sup>	105	536	109	39
Other Races	20	201	53	6
Not reported	66	258	49	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>2,234</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>119</b>

<sup>a</sup>Victims counted once for each type of substantiated maltreatment; individual children may suffer more than one type of maltreatment.

<sup>b</sup>Children who are all or part Alaska Native or American Indian.

<sup>c</sup>Children whose only reported race is White.

**Source:** Office of Children's Services, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

each victim. The comparable rate in Alaska was 17.1 per 1,000 children. That rate is far higher than the U.S. average, but it is down considerably from the 25 per 1,000 children reported for Alaska in 2008. Rates in other states in 2010 varied from a low of 2.2 per 1,000 children in Kansas to highs above 20 per 1,000 in New York and the District of Columbia.<sup>6</sup>

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4. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *2011 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, page 46.
5. See note 1.
6. See note 1.

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1. Child Trends, *Teen Homicide, Suicide, and Firearm Deaths*, 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.childtrendsdata-bank.org/?q=node/1242>.
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4. L. D. Johnston, P. M. O'Malley, J. G. Bachman, J. E. Schulenberg. *Monitoring the Future; National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975–2009—Volume I, Secondary School Students*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved May 2011: [http://monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/vol1\\_2009.pdf](http://monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/vol1_2009.pdf).
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6. Personal communication with J. Gallanos, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Behavioral Health, Prevention and Early Intervention Services, Juneau, Alaska, April 7, 2010.
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8. Child Trends Data Bank, *Suicidal Teens*. Retrieved March 2010: <http://www.childtrendsdata-bank.org/alphalist?q=node/122>.
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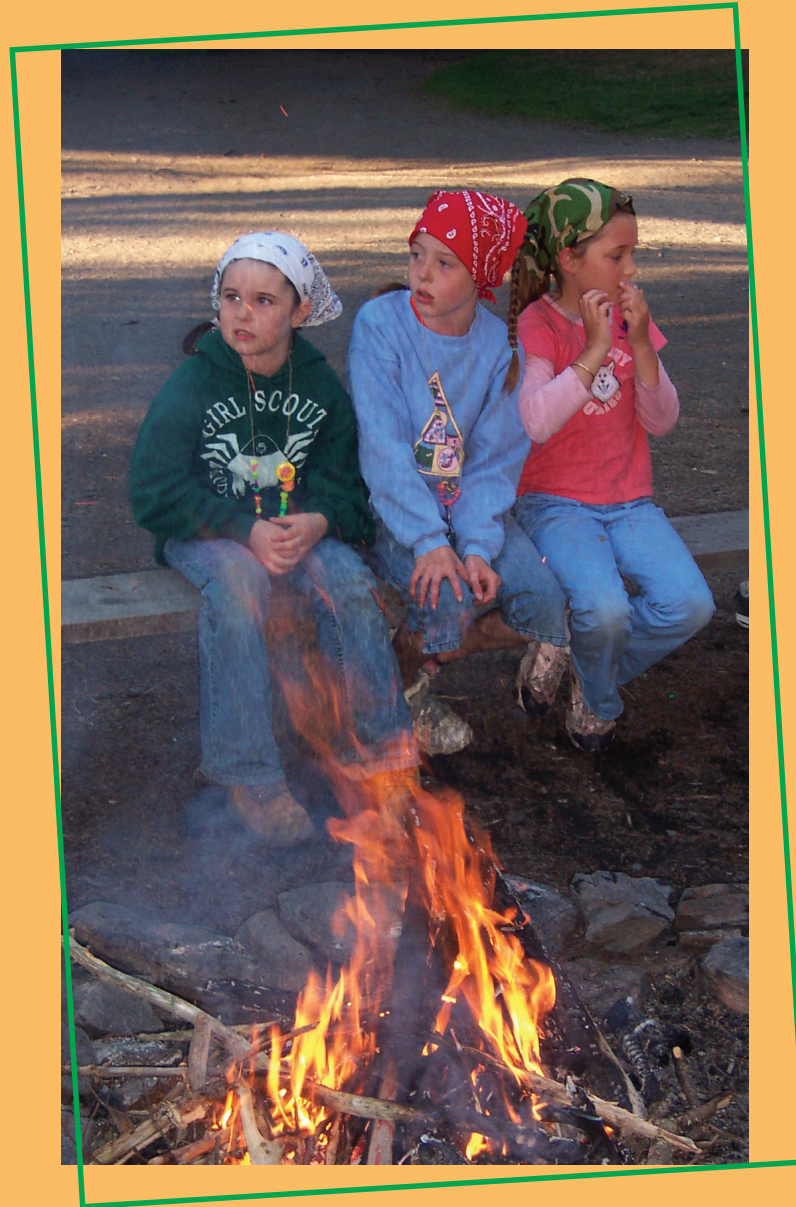
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1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Child Maltreatment: Facts at a Glance, Spring 2009*, CDC, Atlanta, GA. Retrieved May 2010: <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/CM-Fact-Sheet-a.pdf>.
2. Children's Bureau, *Child Maltreatment 2008*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Washington, D.C. Retrieved March 2010: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm08.pdf>.
3. Ibid., *Child Maltreatment 2010*. Retrieved April 2012: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm10/cm10.pdf#page=9>.

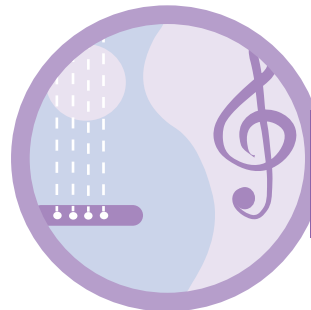
4. United States Government Accountability Office, 2011. *Child maltreatment: strengthening national data on child fatalities could aid in prevention* (GAO-11-599). Retrieved from <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d11599.pdf>; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families; Children's Bureau; Child Welfare Information Gateway. *Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities 2010: Statistics and Interventions*. Retrieved from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/fatality.pdf>
5. See note 3.
6. See note 3.







# Juvenile Justice



**Girl Scouts enjoy an evening campfire at Camp Wilderness Adventure on Woody Island, near Kodiak Island.**

Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Alaska

## DEFINITION

This section includes information from both state and federal sources on juvenile crime. Police or other law-enforcement agencies refer juveniles (ages 10-17) to the Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice which reports numbers and rates.

Police make a referral to the division when it is probable that a juvenile (1) committed an offense that would be a crime if committed by an adult; (2) committed an alcohol offense after two prior convictions in district court for consuming alcohol as a minor.<sup>1</sup> Keep in mind that while “referrals” are reasonable measures of juvenile crime, they’re not the same as proof of guilt.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reports federal data on the number of juvenile arrests. These numbers allow us to compare juvenile crime in Alaska and nationwide.

The Alaska Division of Justice’s numbers are for state fiscal years—July 1 through June 30. The federal numbers are for federal fiscal years—October 1 through September 30.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Juvenile crime in Alaska and nationwide has been dropping since the mid-1990s, after rising sharply in the 1980s. Yet more than one analyst has pointed out that many Americans mistakenly believe juvenile crime is spiraling up uncontrollably.<sup>2</sup> One commentator recently noted that we need to “adopt the same objective standards of analysis we demand for adult behavior and trends.”<sup>3</sup>

This is not to say that juvenile crime is not a serious problem in this country. It still accounts for 25% of property crimes and 16% of violent crimes in the U.S.<sup>4</sup> Research has found that people who commit crimes as teenagers are more likely as adults to be unemployed, to abuse alcohol and drugs, and to commit more crimes.<sup>5</sup> And dealing with juvenile crime is expensive—a 2004 report estimated that juvenile justice systems nationwide cost \$14.4 billion a year.<sup>6</sup>

But it’s important to acknowledge that juvenile crime rates are down—and that a number of initiatives are contributing to that decline. Nationwide those include a project encouraging alternatives to detaining juveniles when they first come into the justice

system.<sup>7</sup> Efforts in Alaska include more use of youth courts and treatment programs like aggression replacement therapy. A 2009 analysis found that programs for juvenile offenders in Alaska save money in the long-run because they help keep kids out of prison and reduce recidivism.<sup>8</sup>

## STATE CRIME DATA

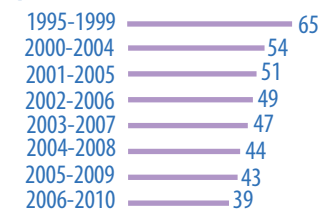
The adjacent bar graph shows referral rates for juveniles in Alaska, from the 1995-1999 period through 2006-2010. Rates for both individual teenagers (unduplicated juveniles) and for total referrals (counting multiple offenses by the same teenagers) have dropped substantially since the late 1990s. The rate for individual teenagers is down 40%—from 65 referrals to 39 per 1,000 teenagers—and the total referral rate dropped 43%.

During just the past five years, rates for individual teenagers dropped 9%—from 43 to 39 per 1,000 teenagers—and for total referrals 5%—from 60 to 57 per 1,000.

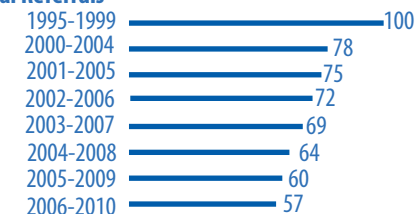
The table below estimates Alaska’s juvenile population by region and race. It includes those ages 18 and 19—so it overstates the size of the juvenile population the Division of Juvenile Justice might potentially deal with, since those 18 and over go through the adult court system—but it is the only such breakdown available.<sup>9</sup>

**Juvenile Referrals in Alaska, 1995-1999 to 2006-2010**  
(Referral Rates per 1,000 Juveniles 10-17, 5-Year Averages)

### Unduplicated Juveniles



### Total Referrals



Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice

**Alaska Juvenile Population (Ages 10-19) by Race and Region, 2009 Estimates**

Region	Alaska Native <sup>a</sup>	Black	White	Asian / Pacific Isl.
Anchorage	12.1%	7.4%	71.2%	9.4%
Mat-Su	11.0%	2.5%	83.0%	3.4%
Gulf Coast	12.8%	1.1%	79.4%	6.7%
Interior	15.8%	5.8%	75.0%	3.4%
Northern	84.1%	0.8%	12.9%	2.2%
Southeast	23.1%	1.2%	69.5%	6.2%
Southwest	83.2%	1.0%	13.7%	2.1%
<b>Alaska</b>	<b>21.6%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>67.6%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>

<sup>a</sup>Also includes American Indians, who make up 0.5% of Alaska’s population.

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

# Juvenile Justice

## Juvenile (Ages 10-17) Delinquency Referrals<sup>a</sup> by Region and Type of Offense

(5 - Year Averages, Fiscal Years 2006-2010<sup>b</sup>)

Region	Offenses Against Persons		Offenses Against Property		Drug/Alcohol Laws		Other <sup>c</sup>		Total <sup>d</sup>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Anchorage	355	17.2%	1,003	48.8%	140	6.8%	560	27.2%	2,058	100%
Mat-Su	74	16.5%	230	51.1%	65	14.4%	81	18.0%	450	100%
Gulf Coast	96	16.0%	262	43.7%	91	15.2%	150	25.1%	599	100%
Interior	97	17.0%	247	43.3%	76	13.4%	150	26.3%	571	100%
Northern	99	21.1%	216	46.0%	30	6.4%	124	26.5%	470	100%
Southeast	114	15.3%	265	35.7%	79	10.7%	285	38.4%	743	100%
Southwest	105	28.1%	162	43.3%	25	6.7%	82	21.9%	375	100%
<b>Alaska</b>	<b>941</b>	<b>17.9%</b>	<b>2,387</b>	<b>45.3%</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>1,435</b>	<b>27.2%</b>	<b>5,269</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>a</sup>These are duplicate counts—meaning they include multiple referrals of the same juvenile; duplicated counts show the overall level of reported juvenile crime. Referrals include police reports and notices of probation violations. Juveniles charged with more than one type of crime in a single referral are included in only one category, with crimes against persons ranked first, property crimes second, drug and alcohol crimes third, and other crimes fourth.

<sup>b</sup>The state fiscal year is from July 1 through June 30. <sup>c</sup>Includes probation violations, violations of public order and weapons laws, and miscellaneous other offenses. <sup>d</sup>Annual average number of crimes.

Note: Percentages may total slightly more or less than 100 because of rounding.

Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice

The table above shows that statewide, property crimes make up nearly half of all juvenile crime and crimes against persons about 18%. Violations of drug, alcohol, or weapons laws and terms of probation accounted for the rest.

Patterns of juvenile crime by region were similar, but crimes against persons were more common in the Southwest region and violations of drug and alcohol laws were more common in the Mat-Su and Gulf Coast regions.

The adjacent table breaks down referrals to the juvenile justice system by race and region. Statewide, Alaska Native, Black, and Pacific Island teenagers are referred to the system at higher rates than their shares of the total juvenile population. That pattern also generally holds by region, except that in the remote Southwest and Northern regions, which have very small populations of Black and Pacific Island teenagers, referrals of those teenagers are also very low.

## Juveniles (Ages 10-17) Referred to Juvenile Justice System, by Race and Region, Fiscal Years 2006-2010<sup>a</sup>

Region	Alaska Native	Black	White	NH/ Pacific Isl.	Asian	Mixed Races	Other	Unknown
Anchorage	16.0%	13.3%	41.9%	4.8%	5.6%	10.4%	2.4%	5.6%
Mat-Su	10.5%	2.2%	80.5%	0.2%	1.5%	2.6%	0.5%	2.0%
Gulf Coast	9.2%	1.8%	70.7%	1.0%	3.6%	8.8%	0.7%	4.3%
Interior	32.7%	9.3%	51.2%	0.3%	0.3%	3.7%	0.6%	1.9%
Northern	89.7%	0.7%	2.9%	0.3%	0.1%	5.0%	0.2%	1.0%
Southeast	35.4%	1.8%	49.3%	1.1%	0.9%	4.4%	0.4%	6.6%
Southwest	93.3%	0.2%	3.2%	0.0%	0.1%	2.2%	0.2%	0.9%
<b>Alaska</b>	<b>29.7%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>45.4%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>

<sup>a</sup>This is an unduplicated count of all individual juveniles referred to Alaska's juvenile justice system from 2006 through 2010. Race is reported by the juvenile.

Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice

The Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice believes that at least part of the reason minority teenagers are over-represented in the juvenile justice system is that (1) they are more likely to be detained and formally charged; and (2) they are more likely than White teenagers to have detention screenings.<sup>10</sup>

## FEDERAL CRIME DATA

Federal data show that juveniles nationwide committed about 25% of all property crimes. In 2008, juveniles committed 16% of violent crimes—meaning adults were responsible for 84% of all violent crime in the U.S.

In Alaska, juveniles committed about 31% of total property crime and under 10% of violent crime in 2008. So teenagers in Alaska are more likely to commit property crimes but less likely to commit violent crimes than their counterparts nationwide.

The left side of the figure below compares juvenile arrest rates in Alaska and the U.S. as a whole in 1994 and 2008. The rate of all crimes—except driving under the influence of alcohol—dropped in Alaska and elsewhere during that time. But the decline in Alaska was much larger—45%, compared with 30% nationwide.

The result was that Alaska’s overall juvenile crime rate—which in 1994 was above the U.S. rate—had by 2008 dropped below the national average.

The biggest decline in Alaska was in major property crimes (burglary, theft, and arson), down nearly 60%. But because the rate of juveniles committing major property crimes was so high in 1994, it remained above the national average in 2008.

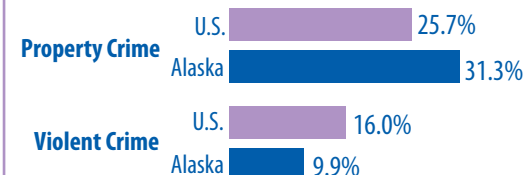
The rate of violent crime in Alaska was below the U.S. average in both 1994 and 2008—but because the rate dropped more in the country as a whole, Alaska’s rate was only about 6% below the national rate in 2008.

Rates of driving under the influence of alcohol were the exception to declining rates for other crimes—and Alaska’s rate in 2008 was more than twice the national average

The pie chart shows federal data on juvenile arrests in Alaska in 2008. This breakdown differs from what we reported earlier in state data because (1) the federal figures are for a single year, while the state data averages several years; and (2) the federal figures use somewhat different crime categories.

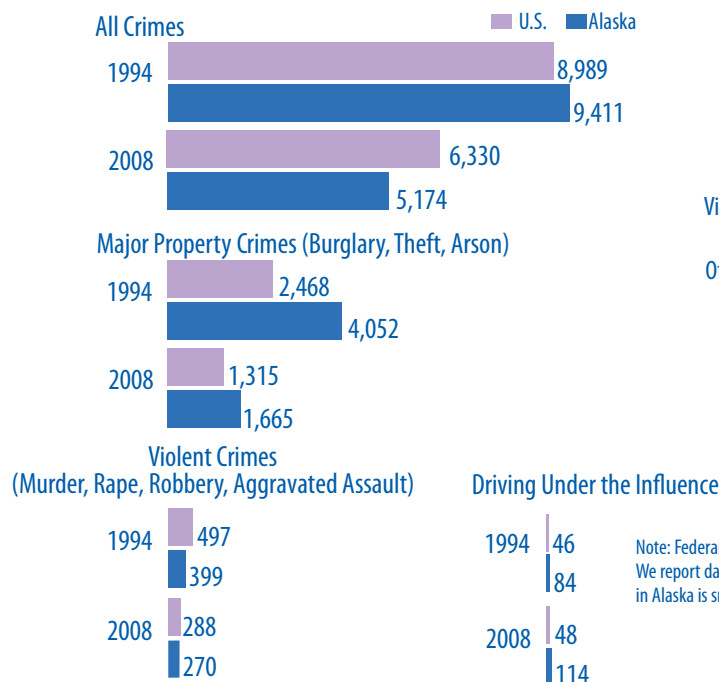
Federal figures for 2008 show about a third of juvenile crime in Alaska consisted of crimes against property, 17% drug and alcohol abuses, 15%, violent crimes and other assaults, 5%, vandalism, and 31% all other crimes.

### How Much of Total Crime (Adult and Juvenile) Do Juveniles Commit? (2008)

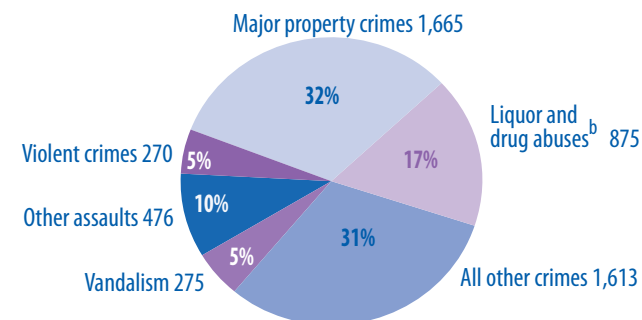


Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  
[http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/ezaucr/asp/ucr\\_display.asp](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/ezaucr/asp/ucr_display.asp)

### FBI Estimates of Juvenile Arrest Rates, U.S. and Alaska, 1994 and 2008 (Rate of Arrests Per 100,000 Juveniles 10-17<sup>a</sup>)



### Breakdown of Alaska Juvenile Arrest Rate, 2008 (Rate of Arrests Per 100,000 Juveniles 10-17<sup>a</sup>)



Total 2008 Rate: 5,174 per 100,000

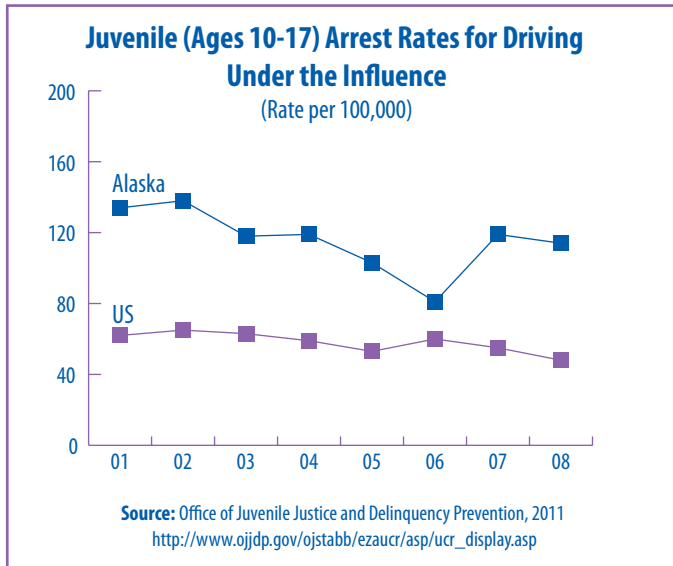
<sup>a</sup>Includes multiple arrests of same juvenile.

<sup>b</sup>Includes driving under the influence of alcohol and violations of drug and alcohol laws.

Note: Federal figures on arrest rates are for single years and differ somewhat from state juvenile referral reports. We report data from the state Division of Juvenile Justice in five-year averages; the number of juveniles in Alaska is small, so figures vary more from year to year. Crimes included within categories also differ.

Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2011  
[http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezaucr/asp/ucr\\_display.asp](http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezaucr/asp/ucr_display.asp)

# Juvenile Justice



As we noted earlier, underage drinking is the one type of juvenile crime where rates in 2008 were higher than in 1994. Still, as the trend graph above shows, those rates are lower now than they were in 2001, with the U.S. rate showing a modest but fairly steady decline. As with other indicators, Alaska’s rate moves up and down more because small changes in the number of arrests can make a significant change in the rates.

Drinking among teenagers carries big costs, aside from the very high personal costs to families and communities. The Underage Drinking Training Enforcement Center—which was established to help states and local communities reduce underage drinking—estimated that in 2010 underage drinking cost Alaska \$321 million. That includes costs of teenage violence, vehicle crashes, injuries, treatment programs, and other expenses.

## Costs of Underage Drinking by Problem, in Alaska 2010

Problem	Total Costs (in millions)
Youth Violence	\$154.7
Youth Traffic Crashes	\$91.0
High-Risk Sex, Ages 14-20	\$11.0
Youth Property Crime	\$11.4
Youth Injury	\$21.5
Poisonings and Psychoses	\$1.7
FAS Among Mothers, Age 15-20	\$4.9
Youth Alcohol Treatment	\$25.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$321.4</b>

Source: [www.udetc.org/factsheets/Alaska.pdf](http://www.udetc.org/factsheets/Alaska.pdf)

## ENDNOTES FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE

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9. Alaska Department of Labor, Demographic Unit, *2009 Population Overview*.
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