New Estimates
POPULATION

Alaska had 735,601 people in July 2014, a slight decline

By **EDDIE HUNSINGER**

Alaska's population is in constant flux. Each year, thousands of Alaskans are born, thousands die, tens of thousands move to and from the state, and everyone who lives here ages.

The most recent official estimates put Alaska's population at 735,601 in July 2014. That's a loss of just 61 people from July 2013, but it's notable because it was the first time in more than 25 years that Alaska's population declined. (See Exhibit 1.)
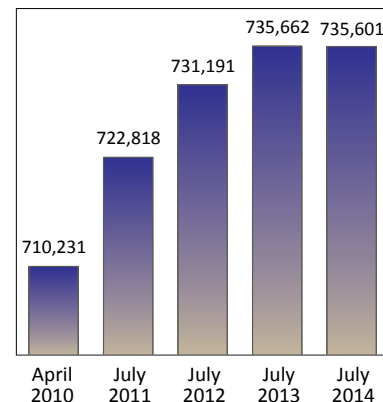
The reasons for the loss aren't simple to define. Population aging and birth and death rates each play key roles in population change each year, and so do troop movements and fluctuations in employment and housing markets. It's also important to note that this decline came before the more recent changes in the price of oil.

Net migration and Alaska's high yearly population turnover

Population change is made up of three components: births, deaths, and migration. Net migration, or in-movers minus out-movers, produced a loss of nearly 7,500 people from July 2013 to July 2014. That's not unusual, as net migration has fluctuated within plus-or-minus 10,000 per year since the late 1980s, and as recently as 2009, the state had a net gain of more than 8,000.

Alaska's turnover remained high. More than 40,000 people moved to the state, which was lower than the year before, and the number of people who left Alaska

1 Population Growth
ALASKA, 2010 TO 2014

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

was about the same as the prior year. (See Exhibits 2 and 3.) Alaska's turnover rates are consistently among the highest in the country.
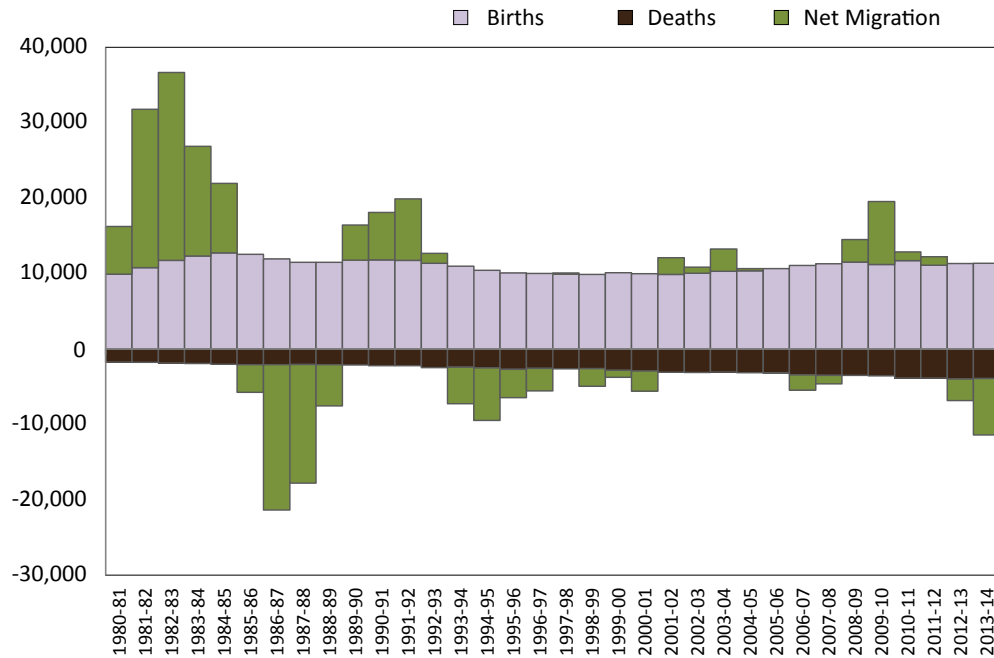
Military always a factor in Alaska

Alaska is home to U.S. Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard installations and a large military population, so troop movements to and from the state add another variable to population change.

In July 2014, Alaska's active duty military population was just under 22,000, down about 1,000 from 2013 but within the range of 20,000 to 25,000 that Alaska has had since the mid-2000s.

2 Migration the Most Volatile Component of Change

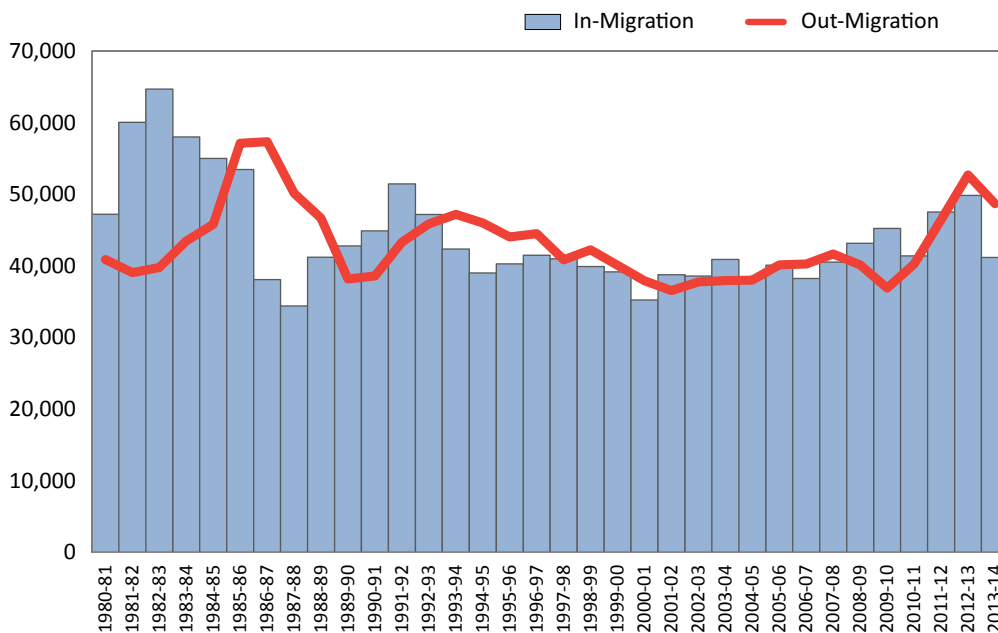### Alaska population, 1980 to 2014

Legend: Births Deaths Net Migration

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

3 Moving In Versus Moving Out

Alaska, 1980 to 2014

Legend: In-Migration Out-Migration

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

Roles of births and deaths evolve

More than 11,000 Alaskans are born each year, a pattern that's held since the mid-2000s. Birth counts evolve over time with age structure and rates of childbearing, a trend that's always uncertain, but births haven't been higher than 11,800 per year or lower than 9,800 since the late 1980s.

Deaths, however, have steadily increased with the aging of Alaska's population. From a little more than 2,000 per year in the late 1980s, deaths rose to nearly 4,000 between 2013 and 2014. To give a better sense of what that means for population change, if deaths had instead been at late-1990s levels, the state would have gained nearly 2,000 people overall.

Deaths will play an even bigger role in population change in future decades, as the rate is projected to continue increasing as the population ages.

Aging affects more than just births and deaths

Aging affects education, employment, and consumption of goods and services as well as birth and death rates, and comparing the state's 2014 and 2010 age profiles reveals significant shifts in recent years. (See Exhibit 4.)

The population ages 25 to 34 increased by more than 10,000 people during those four years. This age group typically grows through net migration in Alaska and that, coupled with aging of the large cohort of millennials, meant big gains in recent years.

The 45-to-49-year-old population declined by nearly 8,500 people. Migration typically yields losses before age 45 in Alaska, but in this case, the biggest factor has been "baby boomers" aging past their 40s. It follows, then, that Alaska's 55-plus population increased dramatically — by nearly 28,000 people — between 2010 and 2014.
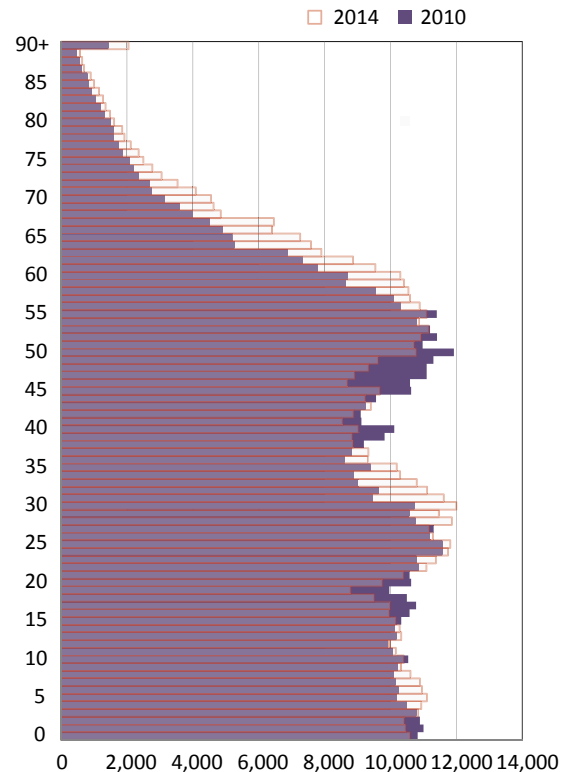
In the 65-plus group, the increase was more than 16,000, or 29 percent. That's a faster growth rate for that group than any other state, and there's much more to come.

Though Alaska loses people between 40 to 70 to net migration each year, people tend to move less the older they get. Because migration is less of a factor with age, cohort size tells a lot — meaning the size of the age group approaching 65 is a much bigger determinant of how big the future senior citizen population will be.

In terms of the senior citizen share of the overall population, we expect Alaska will continue to have

4 Age Profile Shifts Upward
ALASKA, 2010 AND 2014

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

a smaller percentage who are 65 and over than the nation as a whole, despite the state's rapid growth in that age group.

School-age population fluctuates

Alaska's 5-to-9-year-old population also grew, a gain that was smaller but also notable. This age group has increased by about 3,000 since 2010. The 15-to-19-year-old population declined by more than 3,700.

Fluctuations like these are continuous with population aging and the effects of migration but, particularly for the school-age population, they're an important factor in planning.

Mat-Su and Kenai areas grow

Trends varied around the state, with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough by far the state's fastest-growing area and poised to surpass 100,000 residents in the near future. Between 2010 and 2014, Mat-Su gained more than 9,000 residents.

While Mat-Su continues to be the fastest growing area,

5 Alaska's Population by Borough or Census Area
2010 to 2014

	Census April 2010	Estimate July 2011	Estimate July 2012	Estimate July 2013	Estimate July 2014	Natural Increase (Births-Deaths) 2010 to 2014	Natural Increase (Births-Deaths) 2013 to 2014	Net Migration (In-Out Migrants) 2010 to 2014	Net Migration (In-Out Migrants) 2013 to 2014	Total Change 2010 to 2014	Total Change 2013 to 2014
Alaska	710,231	722,818	731,191	735,662	735,601	31,801	7,427	-6,431	-7,488	25,370	-61
Anchorage/Mat-Su Region	**380,821**	**387,673**	**392,048**	**396,774**	**398,612**	**17,174**	**4,077**	**617**	**-2,239**	**17,791**	**1,838**
Anchorage, Municipality	291,826	295,920	298,308	300,780	300,549	13,658	3,204	-4,935	-3,435	8,723	-231
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	88,995	91,753	93,740	95,994	98,063	3,516	873	5,552	1,196	9,068	2,069
Gulf Coast Region	**78,628**	**80,335**	**80,624**	**80,439**	**80,576**	**2,428**	**548**	**-480**	**-411**	**1,948**	**137**
Kenai Peninsula Borough	55,400	56,623	56,668	56,813	57,212	1,442	325	370	74	1,812	399
Kodiak Island Borough	13,592	13,865	14,020	13,815	13,797	689	166	-484	-184	205	-18
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	9,636	9,847	9,936	9,811	9,567	297	57	-366	-301	-69	-244
Interior Region	**112,024**	**112,432**	**114,991**	**114,070**	**112,197**	**5,802**	**1,369**	**-5,629**	**-3,242**	**173**	**-1,873**
Denali Borough	1,826	1,837	1,868	1,790	1,785	55	5	-96	-10	-41	-5
Fairbanks North Star Borough	97,581	97,828	100,243	99,549	97,972	5,307	1,275	-4,916	-2,852	391	-1,577
Southeast Fairbanks CA	7,029	7,114	7,208	7,092	6,963	312	65	-378	-194	-66	-129
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	5,588	5,653	5,672	5,639	5,477	128	24	-239	-186	-111	-162
Northern Region	**26,445**	**26,942**	**27,263**	**27,525**	**27,437**	**1,862**	**393**	**-870**	**-481**	**992**	**-88**
Nome Census Area	9,492	9,728	9,848	9,865	9,952	676	138	-216	-51	460	87
North Slope Borough	9,430	9,585	9,713	9,869	9,711	557	121	-276	-279	281	-158
Northwest Arctic Borough	7,523	7,629	7,702	7,791	7,774	629	134	-378	-151	251	-17
Southeast Region	**71,664**	**73,686**	**74,287**	**74,310**	**74,280**	**1,842**	**397**	**774**	**-427**	**2,616**	**-30**
Haines Borough	2,508	2,614	2,614	2,527	2,537	5	-3	24	13	29	10
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	2,149	2,155	2,205	2,179	2,128	39	15	-60	-66	-21	-51
Juneau, City and Borough	31,275	32,379	32,806	33,030	33,026	951	223	800	-227	1,751	-4
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	13,477	13,741	13,890	13,828	13,825	363	78	-15	-81	348	-3
Petersburg Borough	3,203	3,295	3,261	3,213	3,209	87	23	-81	-27	6	-4
Prince of Wales-Hyder CA	6,172	6,457	6,431	6,443	6,426	150	11	104	-28	254	-17
Sitka, City and Borough	8,881	9,022	9,055	9,034	9,061	183	33	-3	-6	180	27
Skagway Borough, Municipality	968	965	959	981	1,031	22	2	41	48	63	50
Wrangell, City and Borough	2,369	2,412	2,445	2,453	2,406	19	9	18	-56	37	-47
Yakutat, City and Borough	662	646	621	622	631	23	6	-54	3	-31	9
Southwest Region	**40,649**	**41,750**	**41,978**	**42,544**	**42,499**	**2,693**	**643**	**-843**	**-688**	**1,850**	**-45**
Aleutians East Borough	3,141	3,229	3,223	3,281	3,070	47	9	-118	-220	-71	-211
Aleutians West Census Area	5,561	5,732	5,873	5,830	5,727	87	26	79	-129	166	-103
Bethel Census Area	17,013	17,461	17,562	17,851	17,991	1,429	348	-451	-208	978	140
Bristol Bay Borough	997	1,025	985	933	942	11	-4	-66	13	-55	9
Dillingham Census Area	4,847	4,942	4,980	5,020	5,044	284	51	-87	-27	197	24
Lake and Peninsula Borough	1,631	1,678	1,671	1,691	1,672	80	29	-39	-48	41	-19
Wade Hampton Census Area	7,459	7,683	7,684	7,938	8,053	755	184	-161	-69	594	115

Note: All numbers are based on 2014 geography.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

its net migration gains in recent years have slowed to around 1,000 to 1,500 per year from the range of about 1,500 to 3,000 in the 2000s. (See Exhibit 5.)

Within Mat-Su, the Knik-Fairview area stood out for population gains between 2013 and 2014, adding nearly 800 people from the previous year and surpassing 17,000 inhabitants. The Point Mackenzie area was second with a gain of nearly 500, mostly from the recent opening of the Goose Creek Correctional Facility.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough also stood out for its growth during that period, adding nearly 400 people overall. Aside from Seward, which grew largely because of the population at Spring Creek Correctional Facility, the areas that registered clear gains were Kalifornsky and Ridgeway.

Mixed change across Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau

Anchorage's population dipped in 2014 but remained above the 300,000 threshold it passed in 2013. City and borough populations fluctuate more than the

statewide population, and Anchorage's last annual drop was in 2007, with a loss of 680 people.

Across Anchorage, population change was mixed with growth standouts in parts of Hillside, Fairview, and Muldoon.

After passing the 100,000 mark in 2012, the Fairbanks North Star Borough population decreased through 2013 and 2014. The borough, with its particularly concentrated military and college populations, is always prone to sharp ups and downs. The borough communities that grew were the Goldstream, Steele Creek, Pleasant Valley, and Salcha areas.

Juneau changed little overall between 2013 and 2014, though like the rest of the state, its turnover was considerable. The Auke Bay/Lynn Canal and Douglas Island areas both grew.

Remote and rural Alaska mostly held steady

The hundreds of communities outside the more urban Anchorage, Mat-Su, Juneau, Fairbanks, and Kenai areas made up 20 percent of the state's population in 2014, which was unchanged from 2010. Overall, remote and rural Alaska lost population through net migration, but the losses were less than in the large-population areas.

For small communities in particular, several years of data are necessary to assess trends — but the communities that made up the Bethel and Wade Hampton census areas in western Alaska and Nome Census Area to the north stood out for population growth from 2013 to 2014.

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