

Where Alaskans relocate in state

Migration within Alaska has declined in recent years

By ERIC SANDBERG

Previous issues of *Trends* have covered migration to and from Alaska extensively. That's because roughly three-quarters of moves across a borough or census area boundary involve people leaving the state or moving in. The remaining quarter happens within the state's borders.

In-state migration, although much smaller, is an important component of local population change, especially in small and rural communities. The picture in-state migration provides varies by the geographic scale; that is, patterns and trends at the borough level may not apply to all communities within it.

The number of people who move between Alaska boroughs and census areas each year, as shown by Permanent Fund Dividend applications, has declined about 25 percent over the last 20 years. The steepest sustained decline spanned the last five years, as a state recession and then the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in about 3,000 fewer Alaskans relocating in-state between 2016 and 2021.

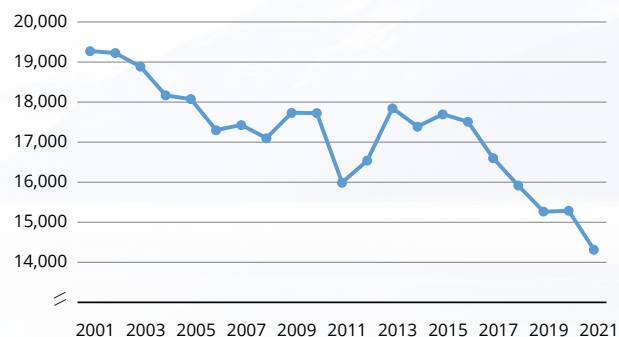
In-state migration plays a major role in shaping local populations.

In-state movers make up a higher share of rural Alaska's migrants

The maps on the next page show what percentage of each area's yearly migration in and out is in-state. Urban and rural areas reveal a stark difference; urban areas' migration is mainly into or out of Alaska, and many rural areas send and receive migrants almost entirely within the state.

The Lake and Peninsula Borough in western Alaska has the highest percentage of in-migrants coming from within Alaska at 91 percent, followed by the Kusilvak Census Area at 89 percent and the

Numbers of moves between areas in Alaska on a long-term decline



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

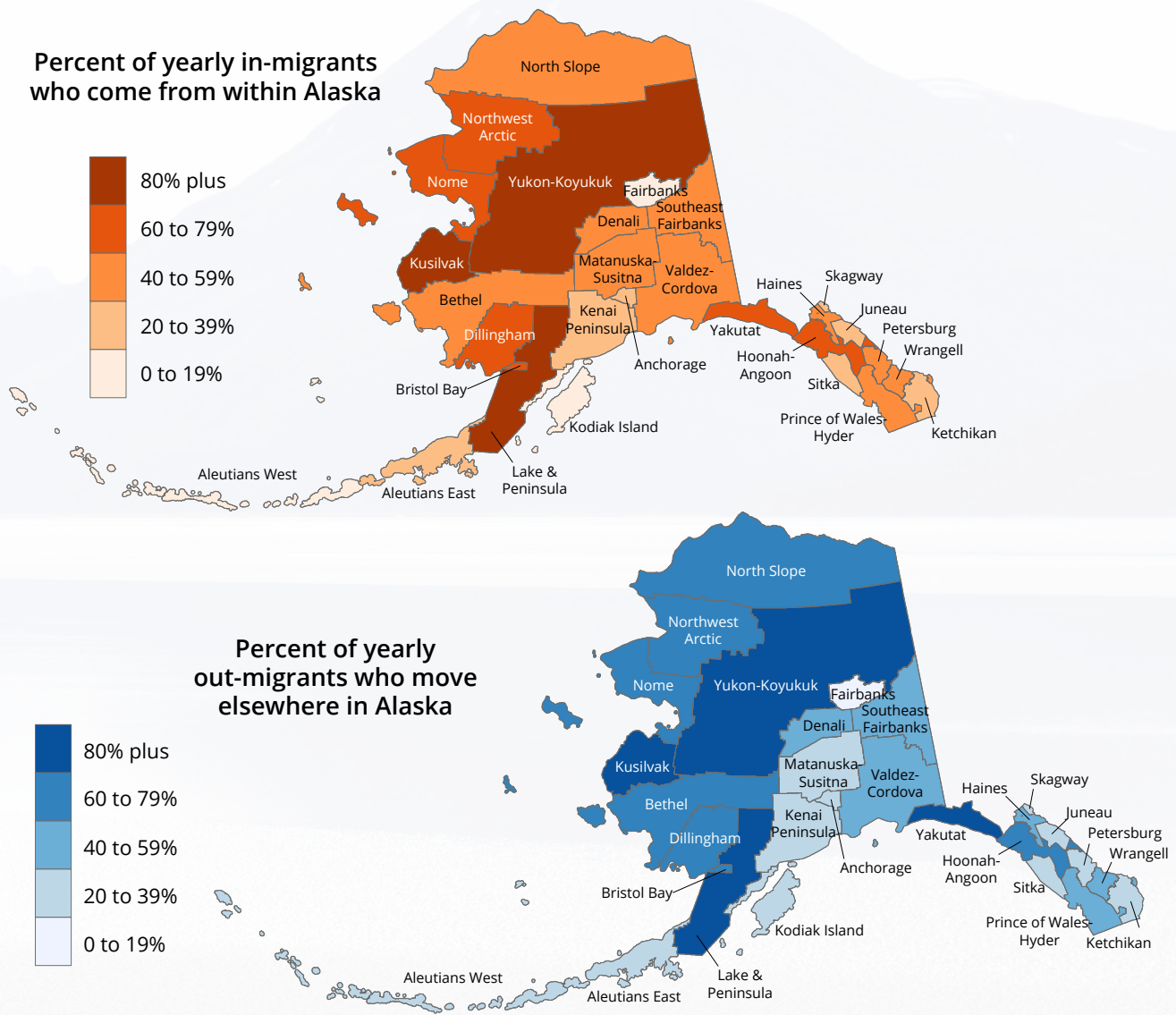
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area at 86 percent. All other western areas — except the Aleutians — get at least half of their in-movers from inside the state. The only other areas with Alaskans making up such a large percentage of their total in-migrants are parts of rural Southeast such as Yakutat and the Hoonah-Angoon Census Area.

Boroughs with military bases or remote worker sites often get less than 20 percent of their inflow from Alaska. Fairbanks, with its large military population, gets just 14 percent of in-migrants from elsewhere in the state. For Kodiak and the Aleutians West Census Area, which have seafood processing and Coast Guard facilities, it's 18 and 19 percent.

Alaska's populous boroughs tend to get most of their in-migrants from outside. In Anchorage (22 percent), Juneau (28 percent), and the Kenai Peninsula (38 percent), in-state migrants account for well under half of the total migrant inflow.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough, which gets 54

Areas' yearly movers who come from or stay in Alaska, 2000 to 2019



Source: Internal Revenue Service Tax Statistics

percent of in-migrants from within Alaska, is the exception. This influx, predominantly from nearby Anchorage, has powered Mat-Su's continuous population growth even as other urban parts of the state stalled in recent years.

The out-migration map largely mirrors the in-migration map. Fairbanks is again the lowest; just 13 percent who leave stay in the state.

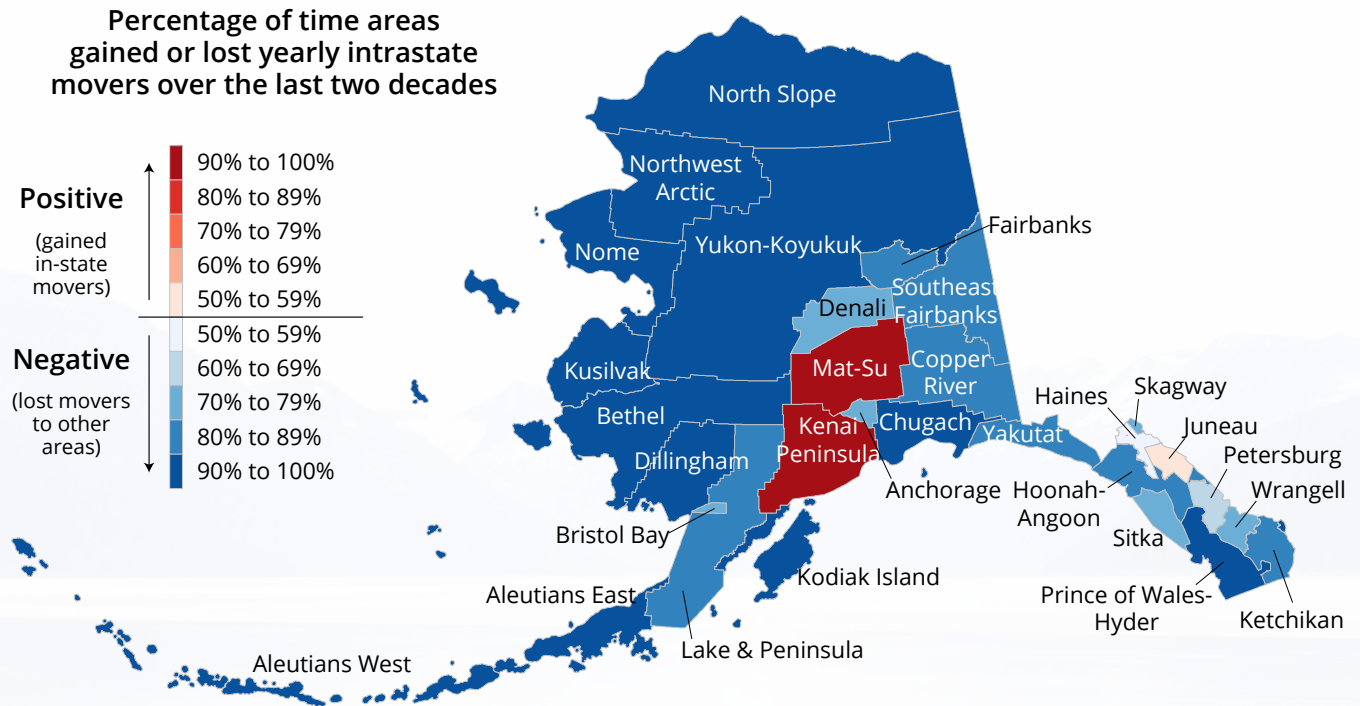
The highest percentages are in western Alaska, where every area besides the Aleutians exceeds 60 percent. The Lake and Peninsula Borough as well as Kusilvak top out at 96 percent.

Mat-Su is another exception here, with the largest percentage point difference between the in-migrants and out-migrants. Just 37 percent of Mat-Su's outflow remains in Alaska. This 17 percentage point difference puts Mat-Su more in line with the other urban boroughs' migrant outflows.

For all but a few areas, in-state migration has a net outflow

Most areas lose more migrants to other places in Alaska than they gain, with a few major exceptions.

Some areas consistently gain in-state movers and some usually lose them



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

Since 2000, nearly every area has usually lost more migrants to other parts of the state than it has gained. The map above shows, for each area, how often that area's annual net in-state migration was positive or negative from 2000 to 2021.

For 27 out of the 30 borough-equivalents, in-state migration was more often a source of population loss than gain. Twelve areas, mainly in western and northern Alaska, saw net losses over 90 percent of the time. Another seven had losses over 80 percent of the time.

Of the three boroughs that gained in-state migrants more often than not, Juneau was only slightly positive. Mat-Su and Kenai Peninsula were nearly always positive because of the continuous, large inflows to those two areas from Anchorage. Anchorage's losses to the two nearby boroughs tend to offset any net inflows it receives from rural Alaska.

Most in-state movers end up in the Anchorage/Mat-Su region

Most of Alaska's internal migration is to the more populous boroughs. The large circular chart on the next page shows the average makeup of each

Most areas lose more movers to other parts of the state than they gain, with a few exceptions.

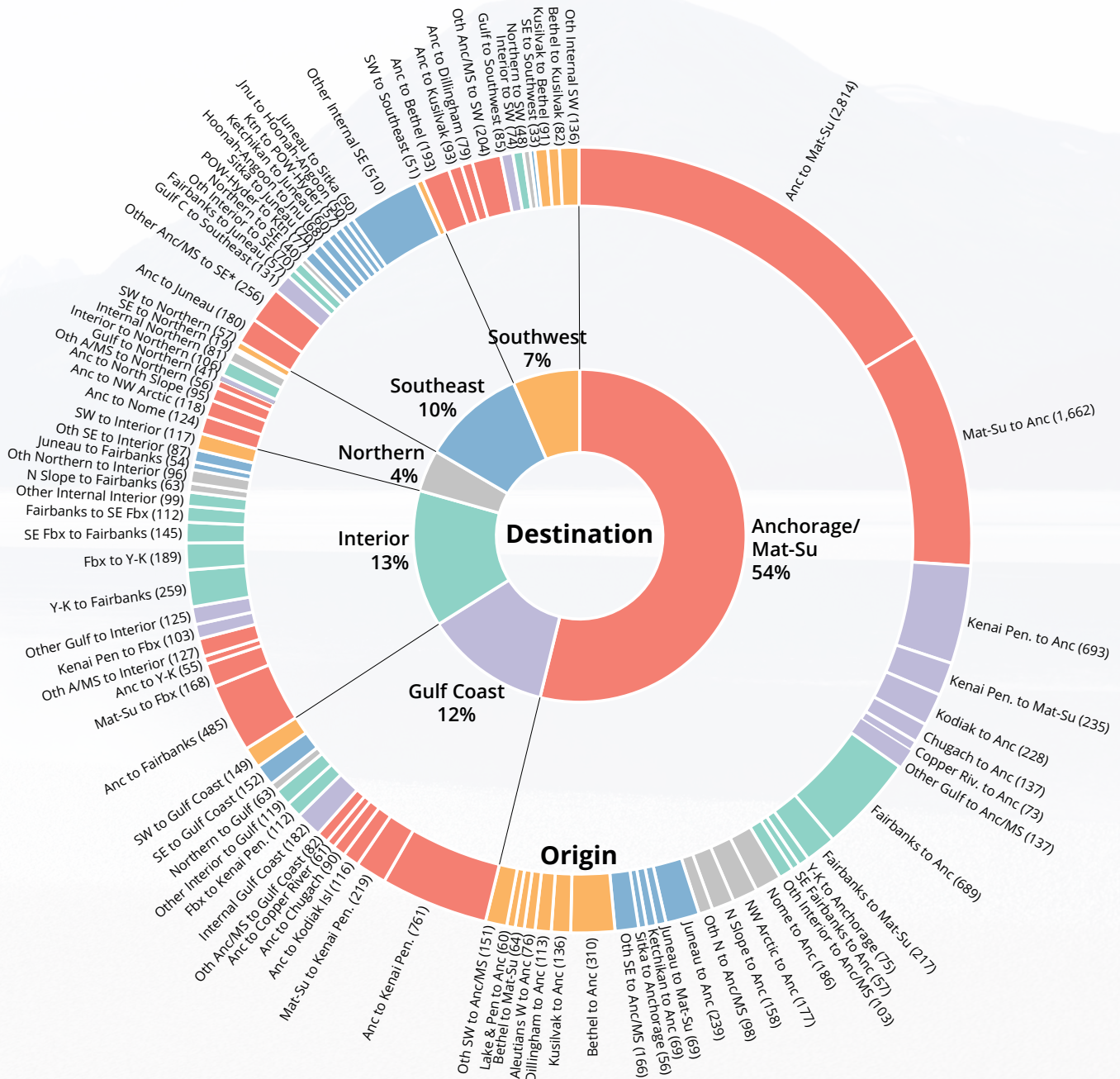
region's yearly inflow over the last two decades. The regional destinations are the inner ring, and the outer ring is a breakdown of where the movers originated. The numbers are the yearly average of cross-borough moves from 2000 through 2021.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the destinations for in-state movers align with population size. The largest region, Anchorage/Mat-Su, receives 54 percent of all cross-borough movers. Just under half of those, however, are people moving between Anchorage and Mat-Su. On average, more than 2,800 people from Anchorage move to Mat-Su every year and 1,700 move in the other direction.

Anchorage/Mat-Su takes in most of the outflow from the Gulf Coast, Southwest, and Northern regions. In return, these regions receive over half of their Alaskan migrants from Anchorage/Mat-Su.

Text continues on page 9

Where regions' in-state migrants came from, 2000 to 2021 yearly average



*Includes all movers from Anchorage/Mat-Su to parts of Southeast other than Juneau, plus movers from Mat-Su to Juneau.
 Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

How to interpret this chart

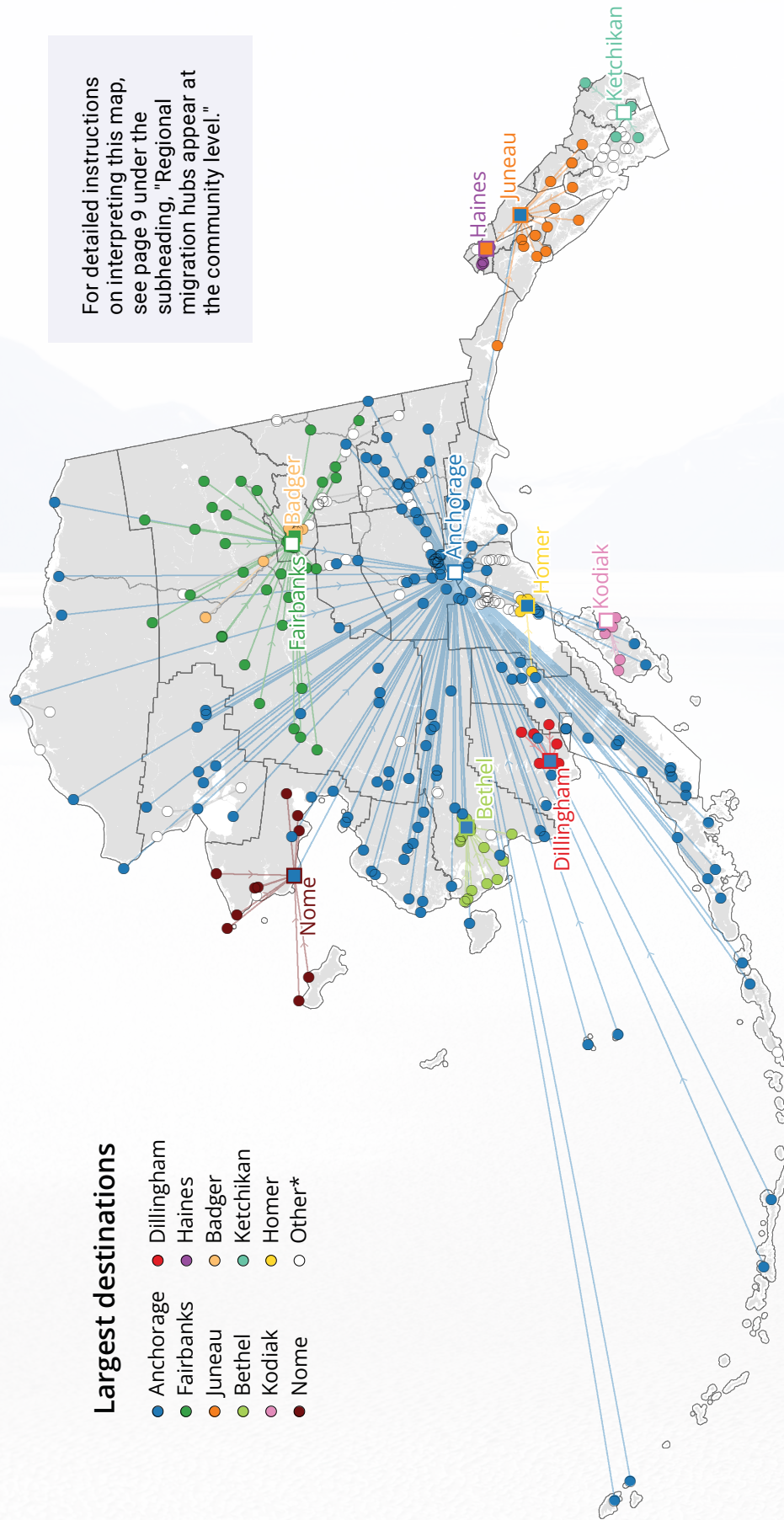
The inner circle shows each region as a destination for in-state movers, with the percentage reflecting the share of total in-state migrants that region received, on average, over the last two decades.

The outer circle shows where each region's in-state

migrants came from, mostly at the borough level. The number in parentheses is the average number of people from that area who moved to the inner region each year.

The boroughs and census area origins are color-coded to their own regions so it's also possible to see the region-to-region migrant exchanges.

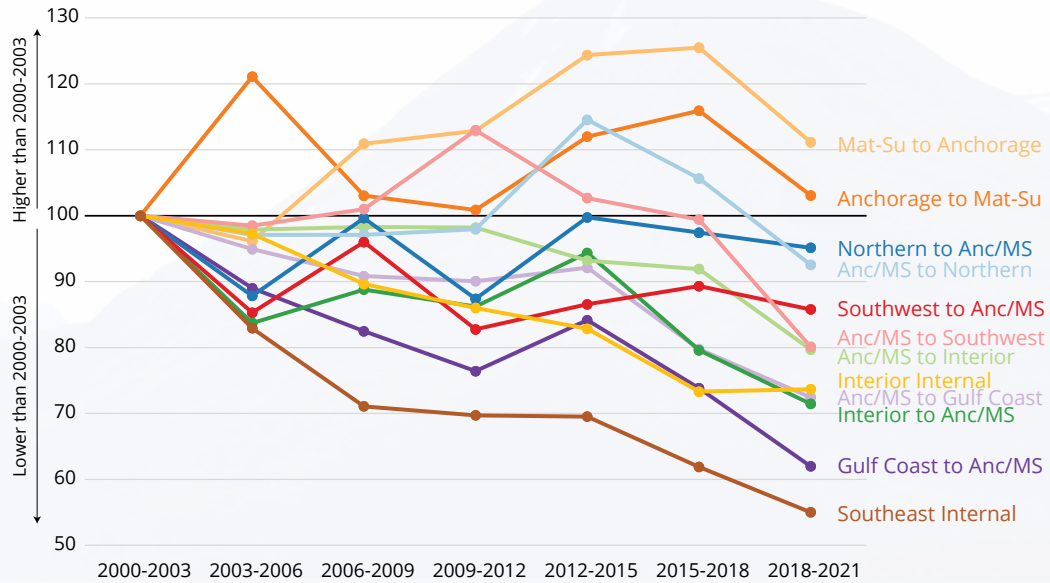
Where communities send their largest number of in-state migrants, 2000 to 2021



*Communities shown as a white circle mainly send their out-movers to communities other than the major destinations shown here. Destinations for these white-circle communities are places that aren't the main destination for at least five places.

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

How intrastate migration has changed for 12 major routes since 2000



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

Movement within a region is a major factor in the Interior and Southeast. While Fairbanks shares a sizable migration exchange with Anchorage/Mat-Su, for the most part, rural parts of the Interior exchange mostly with the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

Southeast is the only region whose in-state moves are mostly internal. Although no community's yearly number is higher than 77 people, the combined total of movers within the region adds up to nearly 950 every year.

Regional migration hubs appear at the community level

As mentioned earlier, drilling down to migration at the community level often reveals different patterns than the borough. The map on the previous page shows the state's major destinations (meaning they are the primary destination for out-movers from at least five other communities).

Each dot is color-coded to where that place sends its largest number of out-movers. For example, all of the blue dots are communities whose movers tend to go to Anchorage, and the pink dots primarily go to Kodiak. If a place has a white marker, that means its biggest group of out-movers goes somewhere other than the major destinations on the map.

The map also shows where people tend to go when they leave the major destinations. For example,

Haines is purple, and the communities that lose people mostly to Haines have purple dots. But Haines' marker is filled with orange, meaning people who leave Haines usually move to Juneau.

Anchorage is the largest destination for around 40 percent of communities. Alaska's biggest city not only receives the largest shares of migrants from nearby areas such as Mat-Su and Prince William Sound, but also from wide swaths of western and northern Alaska. A majority of places in the North Slope and Northwest Arctic boroughs, the Lower Yukon River, the Alaska Peninsula, and the Aleutians send the largest numbers of their in-state migrants to Anchorage.

The exceptions are Interior and Southeast, where Fairbanks and Juneau tend to be the major destinations.

Fairbanks is the leading destination for the western half of its borough, Alaska Highway communities, and Koyukuk and Yukon River communities down to Kaltag. Eastern parts of the borough move to Badger, a neighborhood between Fairbanks and North Pole.

Migrants from the northern half of Southeast, including Petersburg and Wrangell, typically move to Juneau. In the southern half, they more often relocate to Ketchikan or Prince of Wales Island.

Within smaller regions, a local hub is the usual terminus. These include Bethel for the Lower Kuskokwim area, Nome for the Seward Peninsula, and

How areas' migrant age structure differs from Alaska average, 2000 to 2021

BLUE: Percentage points above state average

ORANGE: Percentage points below state average

Age	State average	Anc to Mat-Su	Mat-Su to Anc	Southeast Internal	Interior Internal	Gulf to Anc/MS	Anc/MS to Gulf	A/MS to Interior	Interior to A/MS	Northern to A/MS	A/MS to Northern	SW to Anc/MS	Anc/MS to SW
0 to 4	7.6%	0.6%	-0.5%	-1.0%	0.6%	-1.3%	-0.7%	-0.4%	-0.7%	2.1%	1.9%	0.8%	1.7%
5 to 9	8.5%	0.6%	-1.1%	-0.9%	0.1%	-1.3%	-0.7%	-0.5%	-0.2%	2.0%	2.3%	1.2%	1.5%
10 to 14	7.0%	0.3%	-1.2%	-0.6%	0.1%	-0.7%	-0.7%	-0.4%	-0.3%	1.5%	1.4%	0.8%	1.0%
15 to 19	8.1%	-2.1%	0.8%	-0.2%	0.6%	1.3%	-1.8%	0.2%	-0.2%	1.5%	0.4%	1.7%	0.6%
20 to 24	12.6%	-2.9%	3.4%	-2.2%	0.8%	2.2%	-1.9%	4.0%	1.6%	0%	0.1%	1.1%	1.2%
25 to 29	11.4%	0.7%	1.6%	-2.2%	-0.8%	-0.4%	-0.6%	1.3%	1.9%	-1.0%	0.5%	-1.1%	0%
30 to 34	9.2%	1.4%	0.6%	-0.6%	-1.3%	-0.9%	0.2%	0.5%	0.6%	-1.8%	-0.9%	-1.3%	-0.6%
35 to 39	7.2%	0.8%	-0.4%	0.2%	-0.7%	-0.4%	0.2%	0%	0.4%	-1.2%	-1.3%	-0.9%	-0.6%
40 to 44	6.3%	0.3%	-0.5%	0.8%	-0.4%	0%	0.4%	-0.3%	0.2%	-1.0%	-0.9%	-0.6%	-0.8%
45 to 49	5.8%	-0.1%	-0.3%	1.3%	-0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	-0.5%	-0.4%	-0.6%	-0.3%	-0.8%	-0.9%
50 to 54	5.1%	-0.1%	-0.5%	1.3%	0.3%	0%	1.0%	-0.8%	-0.6%	-0.8%	-0.6%	-0.6%	-0.4%
55 to 59	4.2%	0%	-0.9%	1.4%	0.1%	0.1%	1.4%	-0.8%	-0.9%	-0.3%	-0.9%	-0.4%	-0.7%
60 to 64	2.9%	0.4%	-0.8%	0.7%	0.1%	0.1%	1.5%	-0.8%	-0.6%	-0.2%	-0.8%	-0.1%	-1.0%
65 to 69	1.8%	0.2%	-0.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.1%	0.9%	-0.8%	-0.4%	0%	-0.4%	0.1%	-0.5%
70 to 74	1.0%	0%	-0.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	-0.2%	-0.1%	0%	-0.2%	0.1%	-0.3%
75 to 79	0.6%	0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0%	-0.2%	-0.1%	0%	0%	0.1%	-0.1%
80 to 84	0.4%	0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	-0.1%	-0.1%	0%	-0.1%	0%	-0.2%
85+	0.4%	0%	0.1%	0.5%	0.1%	0.2%	0%	-0.2%	-0.1%	-0.1%	-0.2%	0.1%	-0.1%

*An area's yearly in-state migrants include those going in both directions: into the area from elsewhere in Alaska, and out of the area to someplace else in Alaska.

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

Homer, Kodiak, Dillingham, and Haines for their nearby communities. These hubs most often lose movers to Anchorage, however.

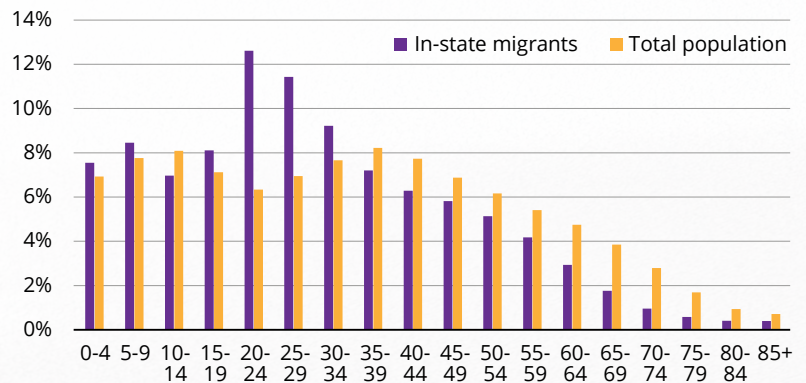
Many of the major migration routes have declined over time

The fact that the total number of intra-state migrants has declined since 2000 raised a further question: has this been the case for all of the state's major migration routes?

While there are numerous movement routes around the state, 12 stand out. The major routes shown between regions either have large annual numbers or are of specific public interest.

These include the two-way migration flows between the Anchorage/Mat-Su Region and the Gulf Coast, Interior, Northern, and Southwest regions as well as the internal migrations within the Interior and Southeast. Rounding out the 12 is the major yearly exchange between Anchorage and the

How movers' age structure compares to overall population, 2000-2021 average



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

adjacent Mat-Su Borough.

The line graph on the previous page shows the relative change in the numbers of intrastate migrants for the 12 major routes since the early 2000s. To smooth out the graph and make it more legible, we divided the timeline into seven three-year averages. The early 2000s, when in-state migration was highest, are set at 100 percent. Values for the

subsequent three-year periods are their percentage of the early 2000s total.

The decline is visible in most major routes. Eight have never regained their early-2000s heights. Internal migration in Southeast has dropped the most, with its 2018-2021 migration equaling just 55 percent of the early 2000s.

Migration between the Gulf Coast and Anchorage/Mat-Su regions, along with internal Interior migration and movement from the Interior to Anchorage/Mat-Su, have all fallen below 75 percent of their early-2000s numbers.

Migration between Anchorage/Mat-Su and the two western regions — watched closely because of the effect on the size of western Alaska's rural populations — has held steady over the past two decades.

For both routes from Southwest and Northern to the Anchorage/Mat-Su area, intrastate migrant numbers have never reached early-2000s levels. Both areas saw a small peak in the mid-2000s and then a steep drop from 2009-2012. Movement has picked up since then but remains below the 2000s. (Migration from Anchorage/Mat-Su back to western Alaska did top its early-2000s level briefly in the early 2010s.)

The routes between Anchorage and Mat-Su have been consistently more active than they were in the early 2000s. The number moving from Anchorage to Mat-Su peaked in 2003-2006, declined in the early 2010s, then rose again in the latter half of the decade. In the other direction, it rose each three-year period before peaking at around 125 percent of its earliest total in 2015-2018.

Migrants tend to be younger

Adults move more when they're younger. Besides moving for education, employment, or other opportunities, younger people tend to be less settled and less likely to own homes. Migration peaks in the 20s and declines during each subsequent decade of life.

In Alaska, the proportion of in-state migrants under 35 is higher than their representation in the overall population. (See the bar graph on the previous page.) It's the opposite for people older than 35.

Migration into and out of Alaska skews male, but women are more likely to move within the state.

The age breakdown for people moving within the state matches the breakdown of people moving into and out of the state. (See the March 2021 issue for more interstate migration.) About a quarter of in-state migrants are in their 20s, and 64 percent are under 35. Over the past two decades, only about 13 percent of the total population was in their 20s on average, and about half were under age 35.

After 35, age groups' representation among intrastate migrants falls under their share of the total population. Alaskans in their 50s and 60s are about 20 percent of the population but 14 percent of migrants. Migrants over 60, when they move, tend to leave Alaska.

Age breakdown of migrants varies slightly for the major routes

The table on the previous page breaks down the age structure of the 12 major in-state migration routes. The first column gives the average age breakdown for all in-state migrants. The columns for each route show whether an age group's representation is above the state average (blue) or below it (orange), and by how much.

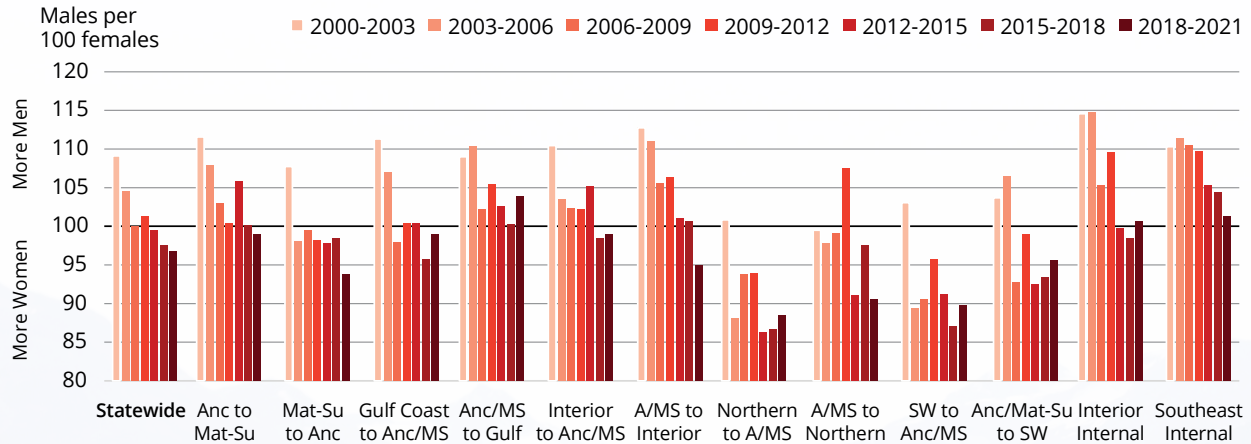
Families with kids stand out in the largest migration route, Anchorage to Mat-Su. The makeup of that group includes more children under age 15 as well as adults from their late 20s to early 40s, when they often have younger children.

Young adults are overrepresented in the reverse direction. People in their early 20s moving to Anchorage from Mat-Su are a larger share of movers on that route than they are statewide.

Some of the other routes lean toward younger or older migrants. Movers between Anchorage/Mat-Su and the rural Northern and Southwest regions trend younger. Larger families explain the high proportions of children, as do people in their early 20s moving for work or school. For people over 30, the proportion of migrants is usually below the statewide average.

Other areas see more migration at older ages. The migrants from Anchorage/Mat-Su to the Gulf Coast region aren't above the state average for any age group until the early 30s, but then they fall above

Gender makeup of movers varies among 12 major routes, has shifted with time



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

average through the 80s. Migration along this route is disproportionately older people, suggesting they want to settle in a more desirable area.

The internal migration throughout Southeast is also older people, probably because Southeast is older in general. Many of its boroughs and census areas' median ages are 10 years higher than the statewide median.

Over time, gender ratio for in-state movers skewed female

In previous issues, we've talked about the gender ratio of movers into and out of Alaska being skewed toward men. About 120 males per 100 females migrate into and out of the state each year, a ratio that's held steady for decades. For in-state migration, the opposite is true.

The bar graph on this page shows the male-to-female ratios for all Alaska migrants who moved across a borough/census area boundary from 2000 to 2021. We compressed these ratios into seven three-year averages.

The gender ratio for in-state migrants has skewed

increasingly toward women over the last two decades. In the early 2000s, it was 110 males per 100 females. The ratio approached parity about 10 years later. During the most recent three-year period, more women moved within the state than men (96:100).

The 12 well-traveled migration routes all show this trend. In the largest corridor, between Anchorage and Mat-Su, the latest three-year period shows more women than men moving in both directions, which is a reverse from two decades ago. From Anchorage to Mat-Su is close to even, but in the other direction, the ratio has dropped to 94 males per 100.

Among the other 10 routes, just three were skewed toward men. The largest relative drop in men moving was from Anchorage/Mat-Su to the Interior; the ratio fell from 110 men per 100 women two decades ago to around 95 today.

Two routes from the Southwest and Northern regions to Anchorage/Mat-Su were close to even early on and have continued to move toward women in recent years. Both now have ratios under 90:100.

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