

Kids Count Alaska

2013-2014





Pat DeRoche

September 27,-1945 - January 27,-2013

This book is dedicated to the memory of Pat DeRoche, who did research at ISER from the early 1990s until her death in 2013. She worked on many Kids Count Alaska data books over the years, and her respectful way of dealing with people won her friends throughout Alaska. As one colleague observed, she created such trust in people she interviewed "they would tell her absolutely anything." Rural Alaskans she talked with over the phone would sometimes come to the office specifically to meet her, when they made trips to Anchorage.

She loved many things, but especially children, animals, and flowers. We chose the photos on the front and back covers and the illustrations dividing the sections of the book with Pat in mind. We miss her.



2013- 2014 DATA BOOK

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The photos on the front and back cover are of children enjoying themselves in Camp Fire Alaska's Rural Program, and are used here with permission of Camp Fire Alaska.

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CAMP FIRE ALASKA

We especially thank Rebecca Luczycki of Camp Fire Alaska, who sent us the photos we chose for this year's front and back covers. In 2013, Camp Fire Alaska celebrated 100 years of bringing programs to Alaska's children and teenagers. The organization offers a range of programs in urban and rural areas, including day camps and before and after school care. About 5,000 young Alaskans participate in the programs. Most are between the ages of 7 and 12, but some are as young as 4 or as old as 18.

The children in the photos were taking part in Camp Fire's Rural Program, which for more than 40 years has been teaching children and teenagers in rural communities how to swim and stay alive in cold waters. Most of Alaska's dozens of small remote communities are on the coast or along rivers, and historically rates of drowning among rural residents have been very high. In 2013, the Rural Program taught more than 2,000 children in 27 remote rural communities.

To find this and all previous Kids Count Alaska Data Books, 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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KIDS COUNT is a nationwide program of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The foundation produces a national data book each year, detailing the condition of America's children. It also sponsors KIDS COUNT programs in all 50 states. Feel free to copy, distribute, or otherwise use information from the Kids Count Alaska Data Book, citing the source as:

Kids Count Alaska 2013-2014 Data Book, prepared by the Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS YEAR'S BOOK

Every year we choose a theme for our illustrations. This year's illustrations celebrate children, animals, and flowers, in honor of our friend and colleague Pat DeRoche, to whose memory we dedicate this book. See the first page of the book to learn more about Pat.

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, to give Alaskans and others a broad picture of how well 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, but also presenting additional indicators relevant for Alaska

WHO ARE ALASKA'S CHILDREN?

In 2012, children and teenagers (through age 18) made up just over a quarter of Alaskans, down from about a third twenty years earlier. That's because the state's total population was up 33% from 1990 through 2012, while the number of Alaskans 18 and younger increased only 10%.

There was also a shift among those 18 and under, with the oldest (15-18) making up a bigger share, up from 16% to 20%, and the youngest (under 5) a smaller share—down from 32% to 27%.

The adjacent map shows the distribution of children by region. More than half are in Anchorage and the adjoining Mat-Su Borough, and the rest are in regions with anywhere from 5% to 16% of the state's children.

The table above the map shows the 2012 distribution of children by race in each region, as estimated by the Alaska Department of Labor. White children make up the majority in all regions except the remote Northern and Southwest regions, where Alaska Native children account for nearly 90% of all children. In other regions, Alaska Native children make up anywhere from 10% to 25% of children. Black and Asian and Pacific Islander children make up small shares of children in all regions except Anchorage, where they represent more than one in ten.

The bar graph shows the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development's 2012 figures on race and ethnicity of school students (K-12) statewide and in Anchorage, based on self-reporting by students. About 57% of students statewide report being White, compared with 46% in Anchorage. Students in Anchorage are much more likely than students statewide to be Black, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander, or of more than one race—and much less likely to be Alaska Native.

(Note: U.S. census figures group American Indians with Alaska Natives. American Indians make up a very small share of children in Alaska—the Population Reference Bureau estimates between 0.8% and 1.8%.)

Alaska Children by Age and Sex, 1990 and 2012

Children by Age	1990				2012			
	Total		Male	Female	Total		Male	Female
	Number	Percent			Number	Percent		
Under 1	11,963	7%	6,109	5,854	10,595	5%	5,358	5,237
1-4	44,014	25%	22,616	21,398	44,129	22%	22,802	21,327
5-9	51,508	28%	26,543	24,965	52,792	26%	27,043	25,749
10-14	42,939	24%	22,333	20,606	51,349	26%	26,375	24,974
15	7,652	4%	4,021	3,631	10,228	5%	5,270	4,958
16	7,341	4%	3,786	3,555	10,119	5%	5,280	4,839
17	7,443	4%	3,887	3,556	10,188	5%	5,283	4,905
18	7,069	4%	3,834	3,235	9,950	5%	5,227	4,723
Total 18 and under	179,929	100%	93,129	86,800	199,350	100%	102,638	96,712
Total Alaska Population	550,044		289,868	260,176	732,298		379,494	352,804

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2012 Age, Race, and Sex Estimates

INTRODUCTION

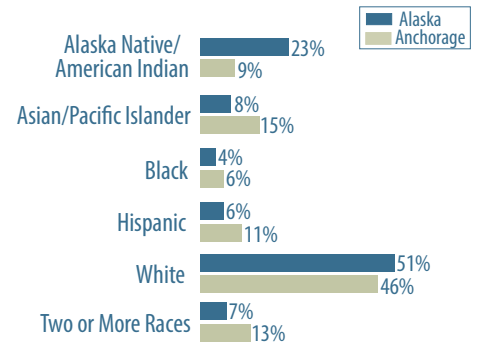
Racial Composition of Children (19 and Under), by Region, 2012

Region	White	Alaska Native ^a	Black	Asian/Pacific Isl.
Anchorage	62%	12%	11%	15%
Mat-Su	85%	10%	2%	2%
Gulf Coast	77%	15%	2%	7%
Interior	73%	16%	8%	3%
Northern	10%	87%	1%	2%
Southeast	65%	26%	2%	8%
Southwest	11%	86%	1%	3%
Alaska	63%	22%	6%	8%

^aAlso includes American Indians, who make up an estimated 0.8% to 1.8% of Alaskans under 18.

Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis; Population Reference Bureau

Alaska and Anchorage K-12 Students, by Race and Ethnicity, 2011-2012



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

Boroughs and Census Areas

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

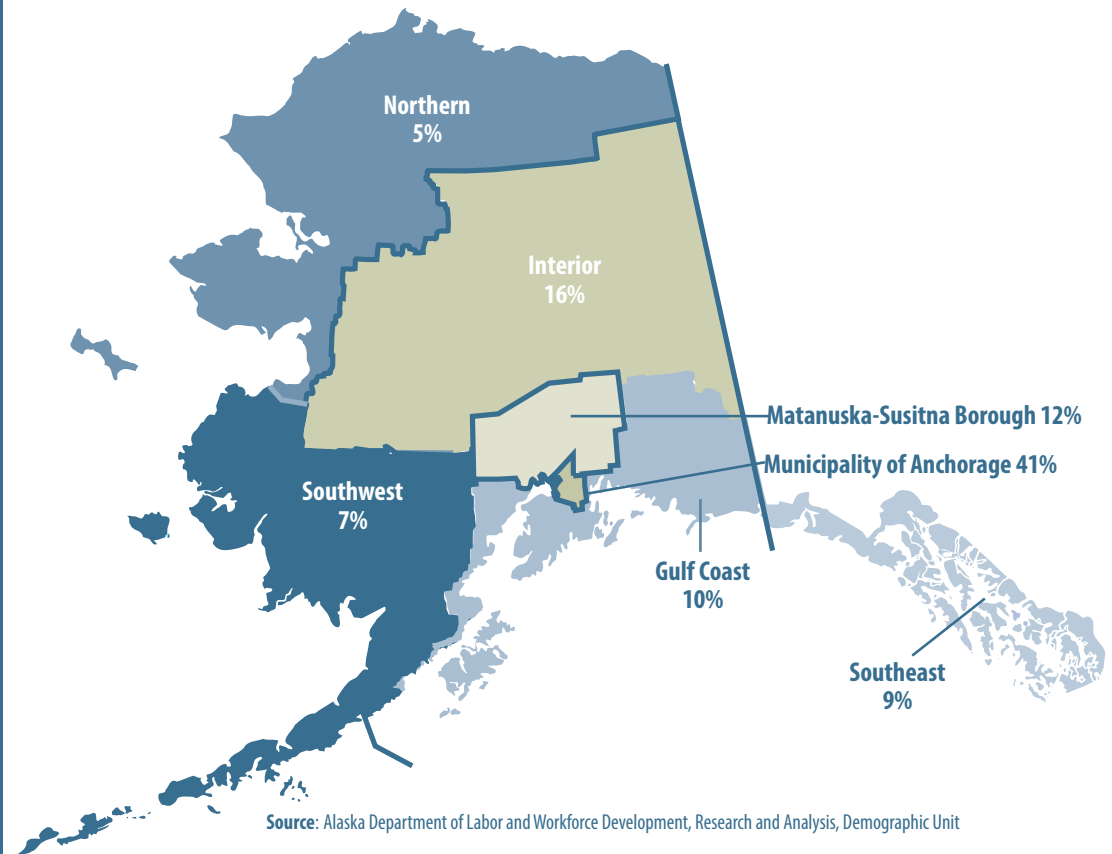
Southeast Region

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

Percentage Distribution of Alaska Children by Region, 2012



INTRODUCTION

ALASKA AND U.S. COMPARISONS

The table compares Alaska and U.S. averages in 2000 and the most recent year available (2011, 2012, or 2013) for ten KIDS COUNT indicators.

Alaska currently ranks among the nation's best on four indicators: babies with low birthweight, children living in poverty, infant mortality rate, and children in single-parent families. The share of babies born at low birthweight in Alaska has been among the lowest in the nation for more than two decades. 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.

Another 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. The same is true of the percentage of children in single-parent families; Alaska ranked 19 nationwide on that indicator in 2010 but 6 in 2013.

Alaska ranks near the national average on one indicator—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, 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 also been and remains above the national average—due in part to the seasonal nature of many jobs in the state. But the gap between the shares in Alaska and other states has narrowed.

Alaska's teen birth rate is also significantly above the U.S. average, at 35 per 1,000 girls 15-19 in 2013, compared with 29 nationally. Teen birth rates in both Alaska and across the country are considerably lower now than in 2000—but Alaska's didn't fall as much as the national average.

Alaska and U.S. Comparison, 2000 and 2011/2012/2013

	Alaska		U.S.		Alaska Rank*
	2000	2011/12/13	2000	2011/12/13	
Alaska Among the Best					
Percentage of babies with low birthweight (2011)	6%	5.7%	8%	8%	1
Percentage of children living in poverty** (2012)	13%	12%	17%	22%	2
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) (2010)	7	3.8	7	6.1	1
Percentage of children in single-parent families (2013)	30%	30%	31%	35%	6
Alaska Near U.S. Average					
Percentage of teens not in school and not working (2013)	NA***	8%	NA	8%	29
Alaska Among the Worst					
Teen birth rate (per 1,000 girls 15-19) (2012)	49	35	48	29	37
Percentage of children with no parent working full-time (2011)	NA***	10%	NA	8%	46
Percentage of teens not in school and not graduates (2013)	8%	6%	11%	4%	42
Teen death rate (per 100,000 teens 15-19) (2011)	142	76	67	49	49
Child death rate (per 100,000 children 1-14) (2011)	32	25	22	17	43

*Rank for most recent year available. Some data are available for 2013 and some only for 2011 or 2012.

**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.

***Definition of indicator changed after 2000, so 2000 figures not directly comparable.

Note: All Alaska indicators are based on small numbers and as a result can fluctuate sharply from year to year. 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

Infancy



BIRTHS AND CARE BEFORE BIRTH

BIRTHS 2007-2011

From 2007 through 2011, more than 56,000 babies were born in Alaska, up slightly from the previous five-year period. Nationwide, the number of babies born between 2007 and 2010 dropped nearly 1%.¹

Over 90% of babies born in Alaska during this period were to mothers at least 20 years old; about 7% to mothers 18 or 19; 2% to mothers 15 to 17; and only 0.1% to mothers under 15. Percentages of births by the age of the mother remained roughly the same as in the previous five years.

White women gave birth to 62% of babies in Alaska from 2007-2011, Alaska Native women 26%, Asian and Pacific Island women 9%, and Black women 4%. The share of births by race in Alaska has remained relatively unchanged over the last 10 years, with a slight increase among Asian and Pacific Island women and a slight decrease among White women.

CARE BEFORE AND DURING PREGNANCY Before Pregnancy

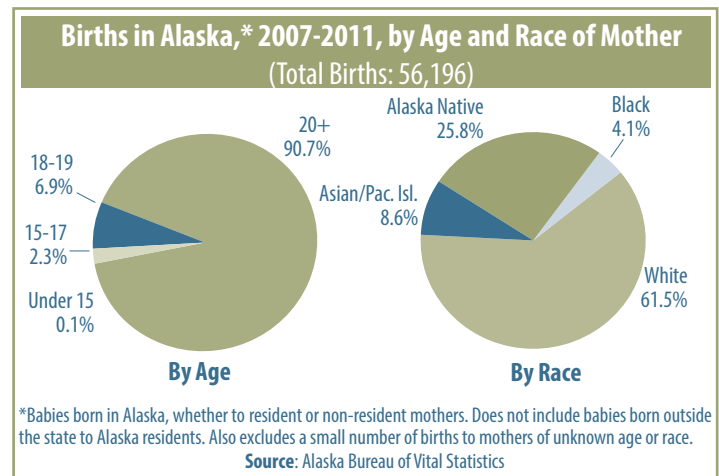
For a long time, doctors and other health-care professionals have strongly encouraged women to get prenatal care—that is, care during pregnancy—as an effective way to help prevent problems for themselves and their babies and particularly to reduce the number of babies born at dangerously low weight.² Now, a growing number believe that medical services and information women receive *before* they are pregnant—what is known as preconception care—is also critical for women’s health and that of their future babies, and is an additional step toward reducing the number of low-birthweight babies.³ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention outlines what women can do to be healthy before they become pregnant, including:

- Have regular health check-ups
- Control chronic medical conditions and maintain a healthy weight
- Stay up to date with immunizations
- Take folic acid (a B vitamin) daily
- Don’t smoke, use drugs, or drink excessively
- Learn about the health histories of their families⁴

During Pregnancy

Prenatal care is regular health care a woman receives when she is pregnant. Types of prenatal care vary, but most often include:

- Regular medical screenings
- Guidelines for a healthy diet
- Encouragement to exercise regularly
- Information on harmful substances and chemicals to avoid
- Discussions on the benefits of breastfeeding⁵



There are no universally accepted measures of the quality of prenatal care a woman receives, but there are measures of whether she receives an adequate amount of care. The measure we use is the Adequacy of Prenatal Care Utilization (APNCU) index, which is what the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics uses. This index records when prenatal care began and the number of prenatal-care visits, and assigns the amount of care to four levels:

- Inadequate: Began care in month 7 or later or had no prenatal care; made less than 50% of expected visits.
- Intermediate: Began care in months 5 or 6 and made 50% to 79% of expected visits.
- Adequate basic: Began care in months 3 or 4 and made 80% to 109% of expected visits.
- Adequate plus or intensive: Began care in months 1 or 2, and made 110% or more of expected visits.⁶

BIRTHS AND CARE BEFORE BIRTH

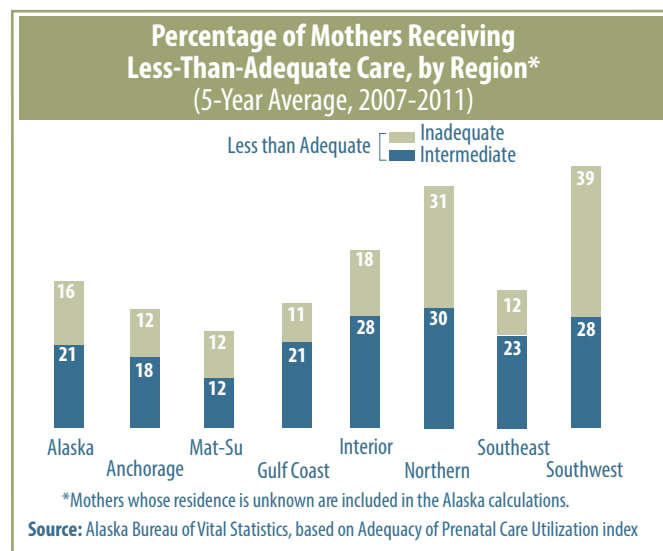
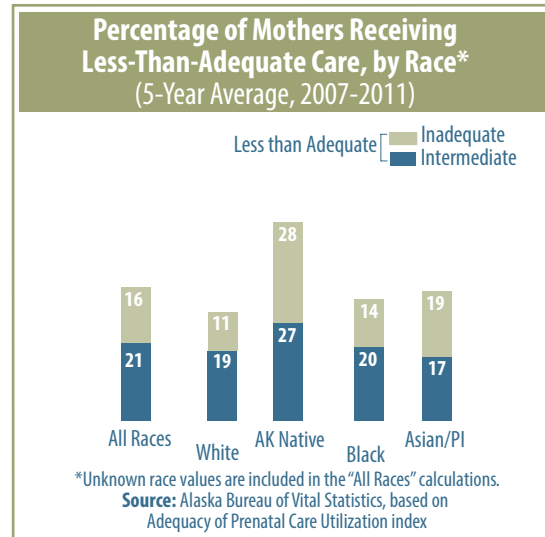
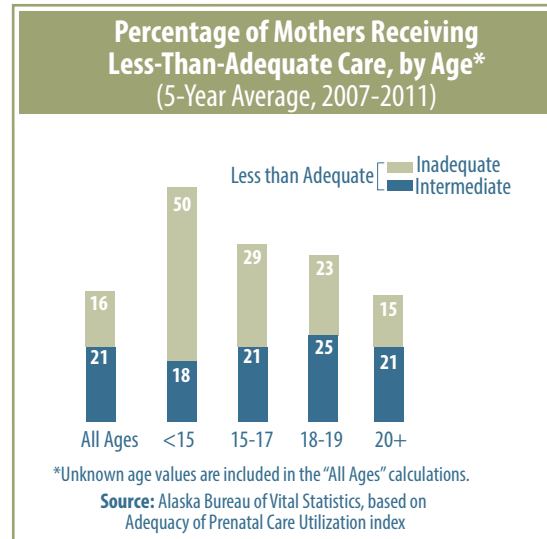
Prenatal Care by Age, Race, and Region

From 2007 through 2011, approximately 37% of pregnant women in Alaska received less-than-adequate prenatal care—a combination of the inadequate and intermediate care levels. That percentage was the same as in the previous five-year period.

Those younger than 15 continue to have the highest percentage of less-than-adequate care, and that share increased in the 2007-2011 period—68%, compared with 59% in the previous five years.

More than half (55%) of Alaska Native mothers reported receiving less-than-adequate care in the most recent five-year period, compared with 36% of Asian and Pacific Island mothers, 34% of Black mothers, and 30% of White mothers. These percentages are quite similar to those from 2002 through 2006.

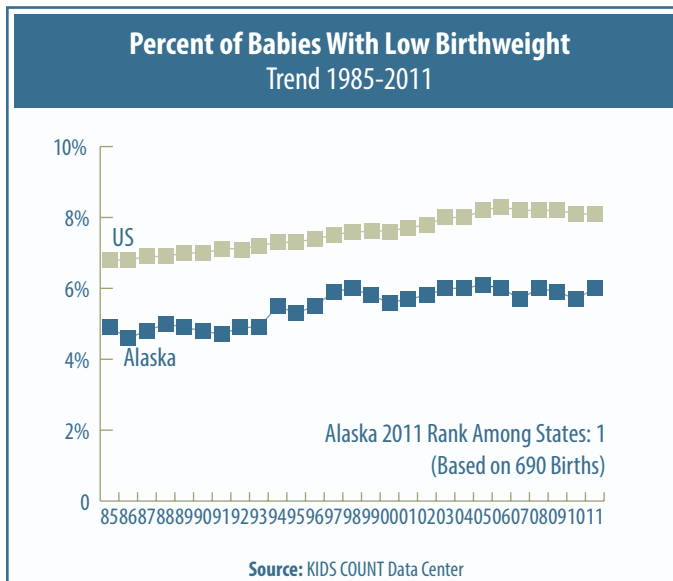
There are stark regional differences in the share of pregnant women receiving less-than-adequate prenatal care. Those living in the remote Northern and Southwest regions have the highest percentages of less-than-adequate care—more than 61% in the Northern region and 67% in the Southwest. In other regions, where health care is more easily accessible, that share ranged from 24% in the Mat-Su to 46% in the Interior.



BABIES WITH LOW BIRTHWEIGHT

DEFINITION

Babies born weighing less than 5.5 pounds (2,500 grams) are classified as low birthweight, and those weighing 3.3 pounds (1,500 grams) or less as very low birthweight. Low-birthweight babies include those born early—pre-term—and those whose fetal growth was restricted. Birth at less than 37 weeks' gestation is classified as pre-term. Growth-restricted babies are defined as those born weighing less than the 10th percentile of birthweight for any given gestational age.¹

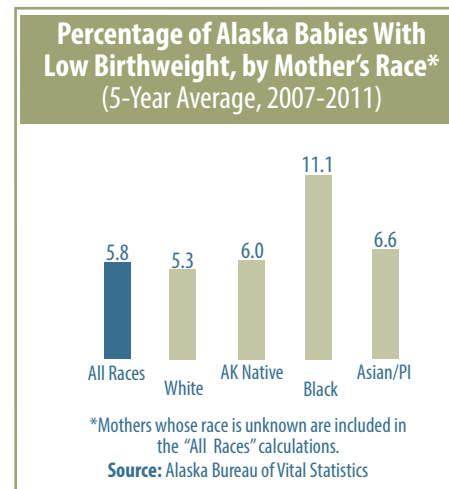


SIGNIFICANCE

Birthweight is a good sign of a baby's overall health, and those born at low birthweight face a higher risk of respiratory, cardiac, and many other health problems.² As children, they are more likely to have learning disabilities and serious medical conditions.³ As adults, they face higher risks of developing high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease.⁴

Pregnant women who smoke, drink, or use drugs increase the risk they will have low-birthweight babies, but chronic health problems, uterine infections, and failure to gain weight during pregnancy also contribute.⁵ Some researchers also believe that life-long health—not just health during pregnancy—plays a big role in determining who has babies with low birthweight.⁶

About two-thirds of low-birthweight babies are pre-term, and some of those pre-term births are due to early elective deliveries. These are deliveries that aren't medically necessary but are done before 39 weeks' gestation, typically for convenience. As of 2010, these early deliveries made up 17% of all births nationwide.⁷ But a number of organizations and agencies have been working—through public education campaigns and other means—to make Americans more aware of the dangers early elective deliveries pose to babies.⁸ By 2013, less than 5% of U.S. deliveries were early-elective.⁹



DATA

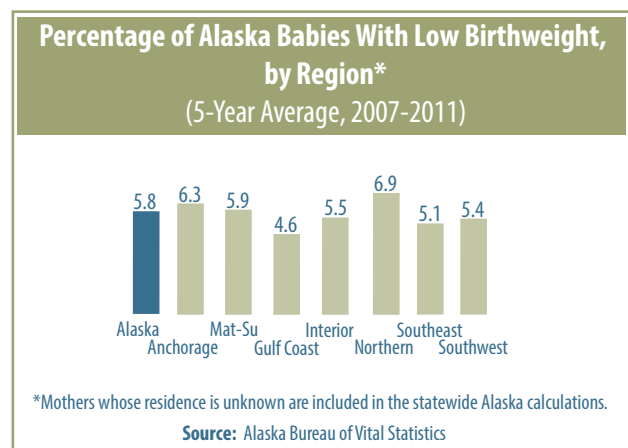
The adjacent trend graph shows that in 2011, 6% of babies born in Alaska were low birthweight, compared with the U.S. average of 8%. Less than 1% babies born in Alaska that year were very low birthweight, while the U.S. average was 1.4%. Alaska consistently has the lowest or the second lowest percentage of low-birthweight babies in the nation.

The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics calculates five-year average percentages of low-birthweight babies. The statewide average for the period 2007-2011 was just under 6%.

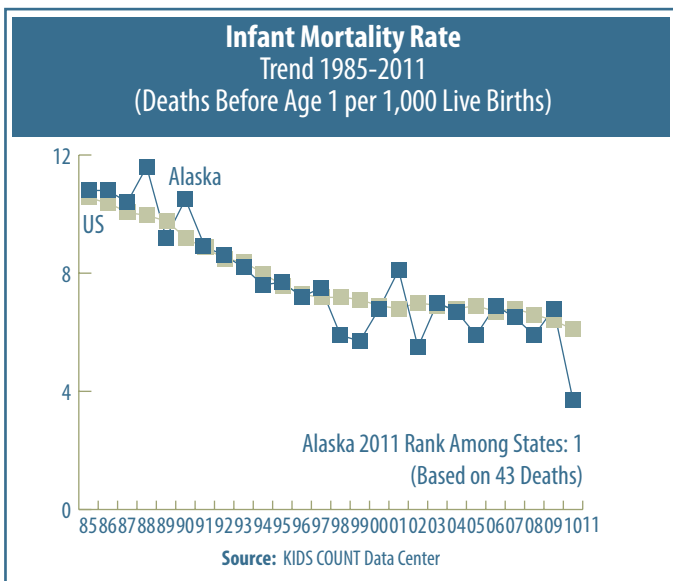
Black mothers had the highest share of low-birthweight babies, at 11%, followed by 7% among Asian and Pacific Islanders, 6% among Alaska Natives, and 5% among Whites. These percentages by race were relatively unchanged from those in the 2002-2006 period.

Babies are counted in the region where the mothers live, not the place of birth. For example, if a baby is born in Anchorage, but the mother lives in Bethel, that baby is counted in the Southwest region.

From 2007-2011, the Northern region had the highest percentage of low-birthweight babies, 7%, and the Gulf Coast the lowest, 4.6%. In other regions, the share was roughly 5% to 6%.



INFANT MORTALITY



DEFINITION

The infant mortality rate is the number of deaths among babies less than 364 days old, per 1,000 live births. These deaths can be divided into two periods: neonatal (birth-27 days) and post-neonatal (28-364 days).¹ Alaska's regional rates are based on where the mother lives, not where the infant dies. Our data on infant mortality is from the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

SIGNIFICANCE

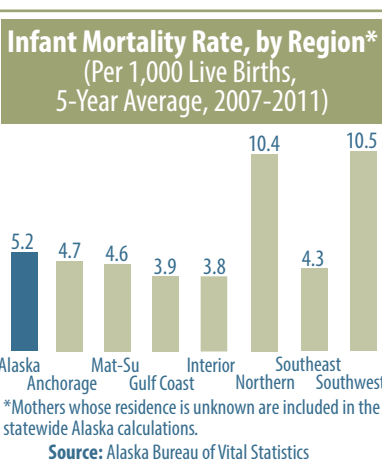
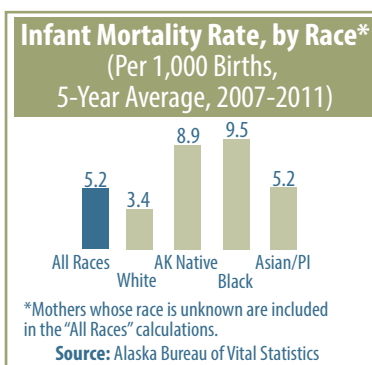
The U.S. rate of infant mortality is much lower now than 50 years ago, but it remains higher than in 25 other countries.² Also, there are wide racial and geographic differences around the country. The rate among Black infants is twice that of White infants nationwide. Rates in some southern and midwestern states are significantly higher than in other states.³

Most infant deaths in the U.S. occur during the neonatal period, commonly due to pre-term births, birth defects, maternal health problems, complications of labor and delivery, and lack of access to necessary care during delivery. Post-neonatal, the leading causes of death are Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), injury, and infection.⁴

DATA

Alaska had the lowest infant mortality rate in the nation in 2011, at 3.8 deaths per 1,000 live births; the U.S. average was 6.1. The trend graph above shows that after declining steadily throughout the 1990s, the U.S. rate leveled off and only began to decline again in recent years. The Alaska rate, by contrast, fluctuates much more; that rate is based on small numbers of both births and deaths—so a relatively small change in the actual numbers can make a significant difference in the rate.

To smooth year-to-year fluctuations in Alaska's rate, the Bureau of Vital Statistics calculates a five-year average. From 2007 through 2011, the state's infant mortality rate averaged 5.2 deaths per 1,000 live births.

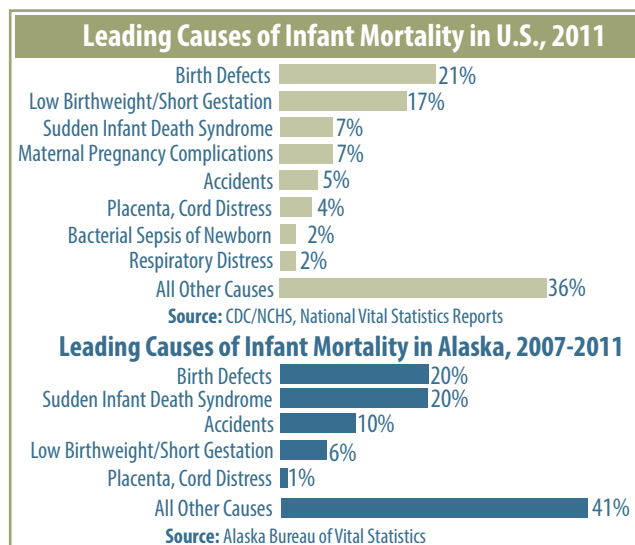


Mortality was highest among Black infants (9.5 per 1,000 births) and Alaska Native infants (8.9)—but those rates were down from the previous five years, when the rate was 11.7 for Black infants and 10.9 for Alaska Native infants.

The lowest regional rates during 2007-2011 were in the Interior (3.8 per 1,000 live births) and Gulf Coast (3.9). The Southeast, Mat-Su, and Anchorage also had rates below the state average. The most remote regions, the Northern and Southwest, had rates above 10.

CAUSES OF INFANT DEATH

Birth defects continue to be the leading cause of infant deaths in Alaska (20%) and across the U.S. (21%). The second most common cause nationwide is low birthweight (17%), but in Alaska it is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (20%). Infants in Alaska continue to be at a higher risk of death from accidents than the U.S. average, with 10% of infant deaths from 2007-2011 due to accidents—twice the 5% nationwide in 2011.



ENDNOTES FOR INFANCY

BIRTHS AND CARE BEFORE BIRTH

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4. See note 2.
5. See note 2.
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7. The Leapfrog Group, "Dramatic Decline in Dangerous Early Elective Deliveries," March 3, 2014. Retrieved December 2014 at www.leapfroggroup.org.
8. March of Dimes., *The March of Dimes Data Book for Policy Makers: Maternal, Infant, and Child Health in the United States 2012*, March of Dimes Foundation, White Plains, NY, September 2012. Retrieved October 2013 at <http://www.marchofdimes.com/materials/data-book-for-policy-makers-maternal-infant-and-child-health-in-the-united-states-2012.pdf>.
9. See note 7.

INFANT MORTALITY

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "CDC Grand Rounds: Public Health Approaches to Reducing U.S. Infant Mortality," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Volume 62. Retrieved October 2013 at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6231a3.htm>.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "International Comparisons of Infant Mortality and Related Factors: United States and Europe, 2010," *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Volume 63, Number 5, September 2014. Retrieved December 2014 at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr63/nvsr63_05.pdf.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Quick Stats: Infant Mortality Rates by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity of Mother, United States, 2000, 2005, and 2010," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* January 10, 2014. Retrieved December 2014 at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6301a9.htm>. Also see National Center for Health Statistics, *Data Brief 120*, "Recent Declines in Infant Mortality in the United States, 2005-2011," April 2013. Retrieved December 2014 at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db120.pdf>.
4. See note 1.

Economic Well-Being



CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY

DEFINITION

The U.S. Census Bureau publishes and annually updates the federal poverty threshold, the official measure of poverty in the U.S. The threshold varies by household size and composition (including age of householders). In 2013, a family with two adults and two children was considered poor if its income was below \$23,624.¹ The threshold has been used for decades to provide a standard measure of poverty. But the census bureau describes it as “a statistical yardstick” rather than a “complete description of what people and families need to live,”² and government agencies typically don’t use it to determine eligibility for government aid programs.³

The census bureau also publishes another measure, called the Supplemental Poverty Measure, based on a broader group of households and accounting for some things the poverty threshold doesn’t. It’s not intended to replace the threshold, but to offer a different way of assessing poverty.

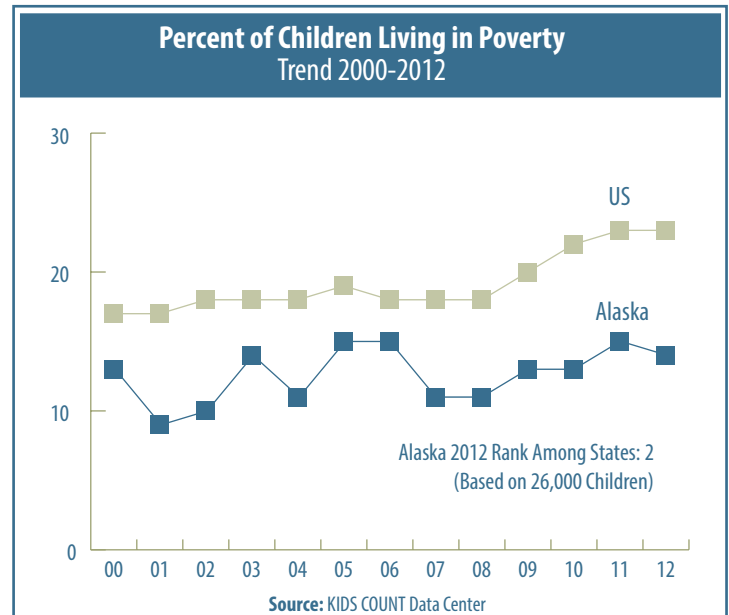
The supplemental measure takes into account differences in housing costs for families that rent or own homes, with and without mortgages; it also adjusts for geographic differences in housing costs. The poverty threshold does not account for housing costs.⁴ The figure below shows that in general under the supplemental measure, households of two adults and two children with incomes from about \$21,000 to nearly \$26,000 were considered poor in 2013, depending on whether they owned or rented. Those income levels would be adjusted in areas where housing costs are higher or lower.

The supplemental measure also considers cash income as well as the value of non-cash benefits (like housing subsidies or food stamps), but subtracts taxes, work expenses, and out-of-pocket medical expenses. The poverty threshold uses gross (before tax) income.⁵

As the graph at bottom right shows, fewer children are considered poor under the supplemental measure (probably because they are more likely to benefit from government aid programs) and more people over 65 are considered poor (likely because of higher out-of-pocket medical expenses.) Among working age adults, the supplemental measure classifies more as poor, probably due to their expenses for work and child care.⁶

SIGNIFICANCE

Under either the poverty threshold or the supplemental measure, about one in five American children is considered poor. That’s about 15 million children, and growing up poor takes a heavy toll on them. Many studies have documented the grinding effects of poverty on children’s health, safety, education, and development.⁷

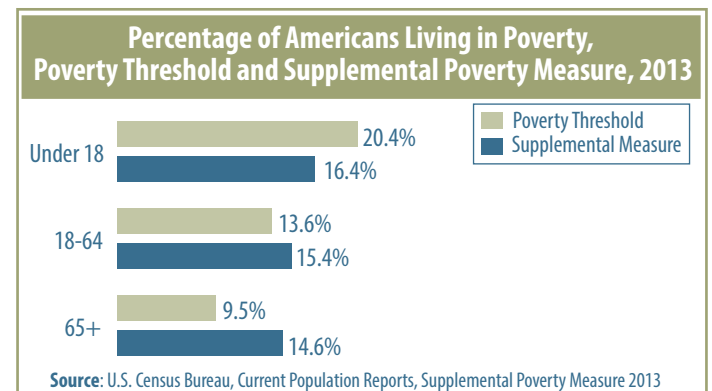
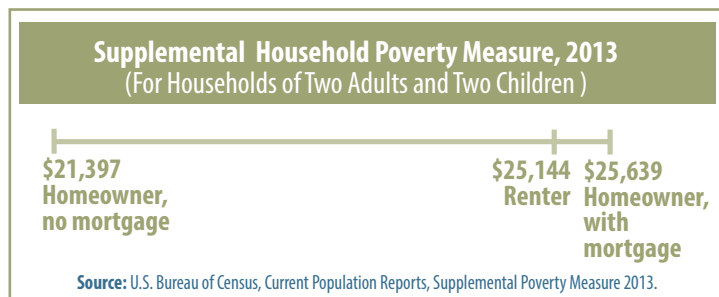


DATA

The trend graph above shows the share of children living in poverty—as measured by the poverty threshold—increasing nationwide in the past few years, at 23% in 2011 and 2012. The rate in Alaska is among the lowest in the nation, but it was also up from 13% in 2010 to 15% in 2011, before dropping to 14% in 2012. But remember that this measure does not take into account Alaska’s higher living costs. Below we discuss additional measures of poverty among Alaska’s children.

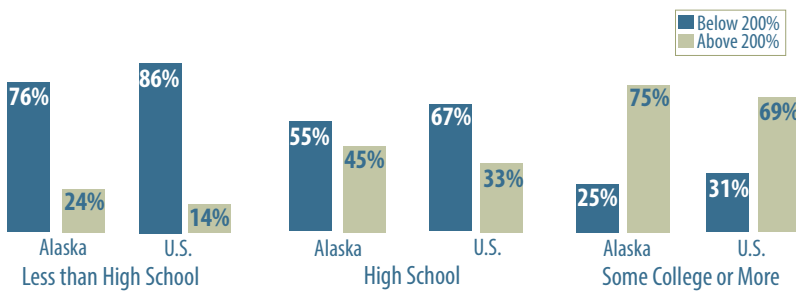
How much education parents have strongly influences whether their children grow up poor. “Low-income” families are defined as those with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty threshold. A majority of the families headed by parents who didn’t finish high school are low-income—76% in Alaska and 86% nationwide. The opposite is true in families where parents have at least some college education—only 25% of those families in Alaska and 31% nationwide had low incomes. (See figure, next page.)

Another measure of poverty among children is whether they 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 2012-2013 school year, 39% of the children attending schools that participate in the program qualified for free lunches; another 7% were eligible for meals at reduced prices. (See pie chart, next page.)



CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY

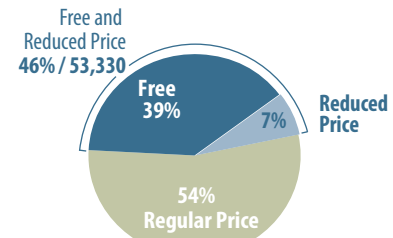
Children in Families with Incomes Below and Above 200% of Federal Poverty Level, by Parents' Education, U.S. and Alaska, 2012*



*In 2012, 200% of the federal poverty level for a family of four was about \$46,566.

Source: National Center for Children in Poverty

Share of Alaska School Children Receiving Free or Reduced-Price Meals, 2012-2013



Total Enrollment: 116,067*

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

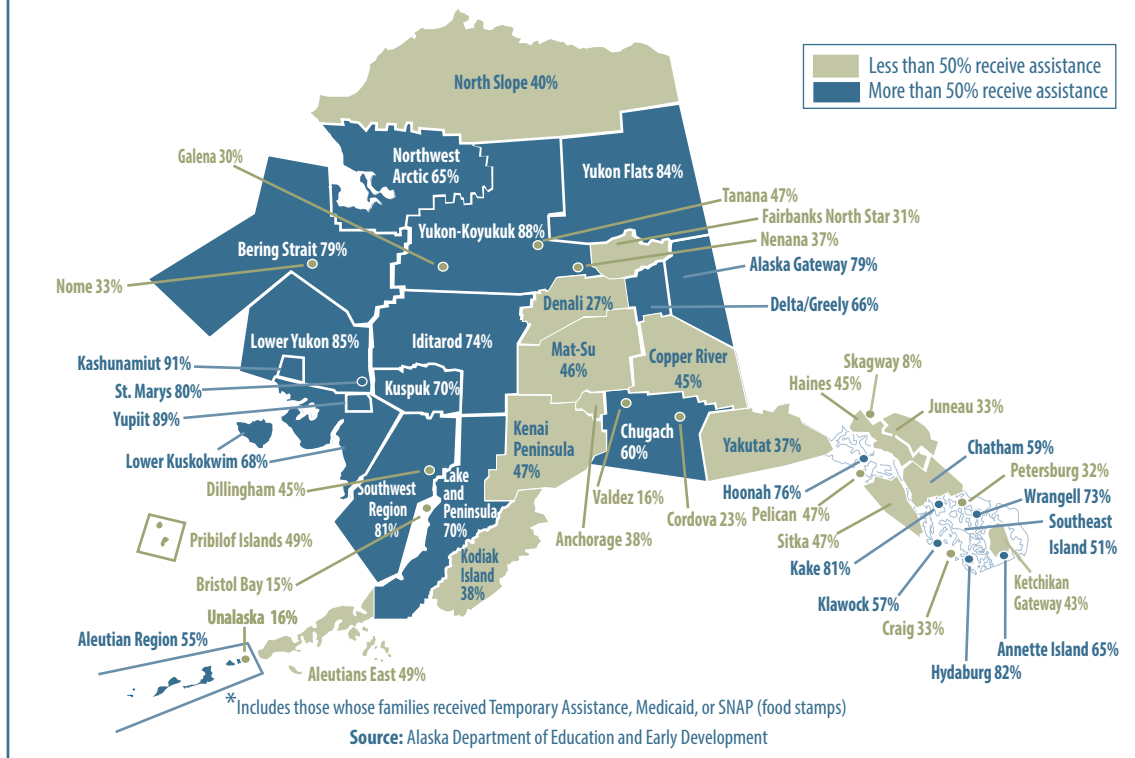
Source: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

The map gives a good picture of how poverty among children varies around Alaska: it shows the share of school children, by district, from families receiving some form of public assistance—SNAP (food stamps), Temporary Assistance, or Medicaid—in the 2012-2013 school year.

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 in general are low in these areas of the state, and the share of children from families receiving public assistance is consistently high.

Elsewhere in the state, the percentages of children from families receiving public assistance in 2012-2013 varied from lows of 8% to 16% in a few districts to 70% or more in others. In Anchorage, where about 40% of all Alaska school children are enrolled, 38% of students came from families receiving public assistance that year.

Share of School Children Ages 5-17 in Families Receiving Public Assistance* (Among 53 School Districts, 2012-2013 School Year)



CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY

HOMELESS SCHOOL CHILDREN

Our final measure of poverty among children in Alaska is the number of school children (K-12) who are homeless. Alaska's school districts are required to collect annual 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.⁸ It specifies four categories of homelessness:

- *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.

- *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.

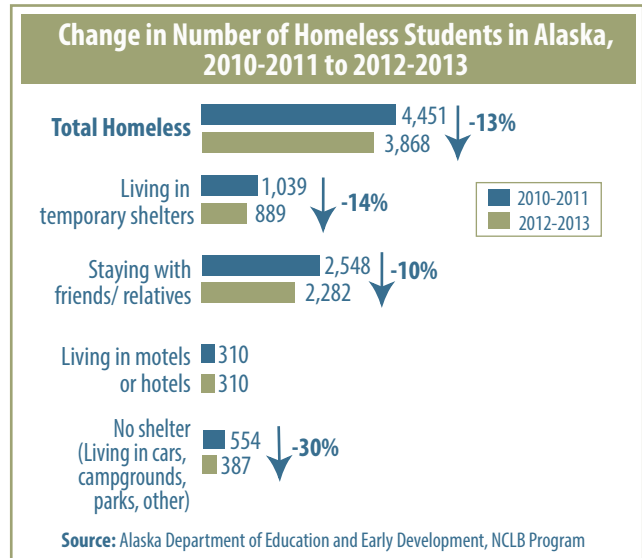
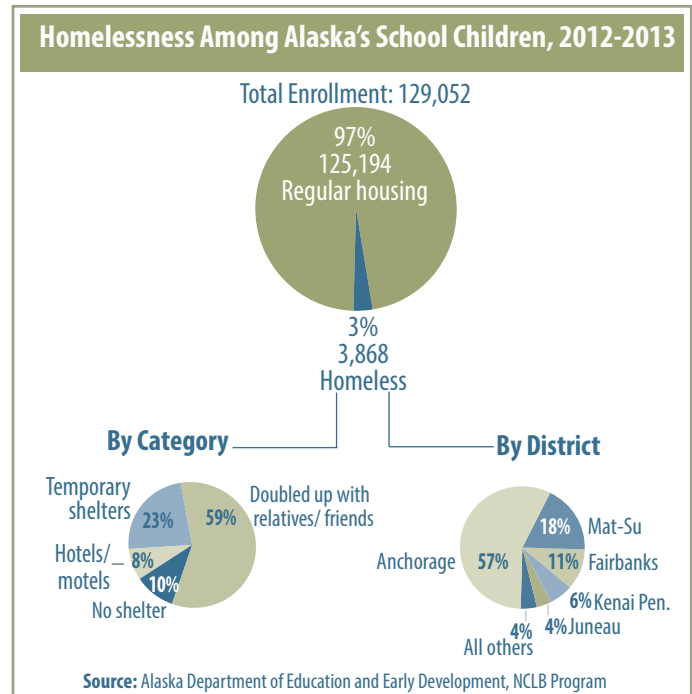
Alaska's school districts reported that in the 2012-2013 school year, 129,052 children were enrolled in the state's public schools. Of those, 3,868—3%—were considered homeless.

Most homeless children in 2012-2013 were in the largest districts, with nearly 60% reported in Anchorage. 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.

The bar graph shows changes in the number of homeless children in Alaska between 2011 and 2013.

- The total number of children counted as homeless was down about 13% between 2011 and 2013, from 4,451 to 3,868.
- About 10% of homeless children—nearly 400—were in the most dire circumstances in 2013, with no adequate shelter. But that was down from 550 in 2011.

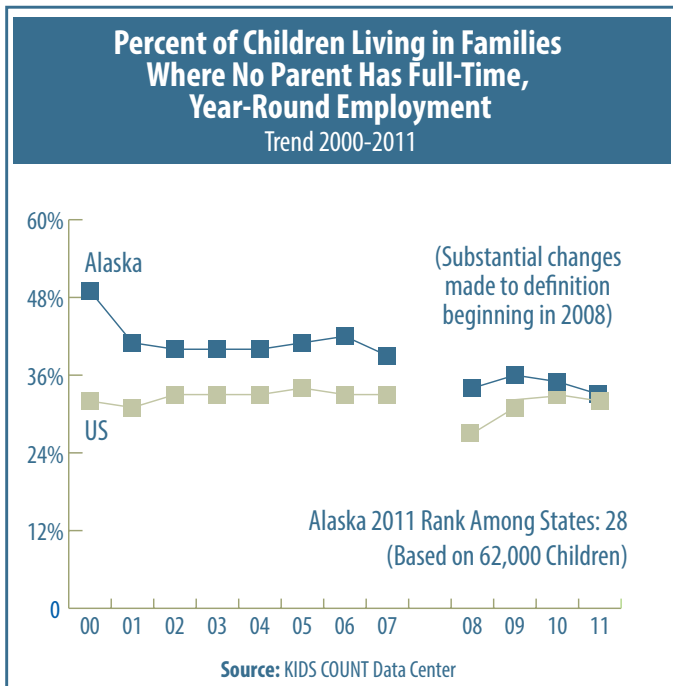
- Another 23%—close to 900—were living in temporary shelters in 2013, down from more than 1,000 in 2011.
- The number of children living in hotels or motels was unchanged from 2011 to 2013, at about 310, or 8%, of total homeless children.
- The other 59% of homeless children, about 2,200, were doubled-up in homes of relatives or friends. That was down from more than 2,500 in 2011.



CHILDREN WITH NO PARENT WORKING FULL-TIME, YEAR-ROUND

DEFINITION

Regular, full-time, year-round employment is defined as working at least 35 hours a week, 50 weeks a year. The trend graph shows percentages of children living in families where neither parent has full-time work. 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.



SIGNIFICANCE

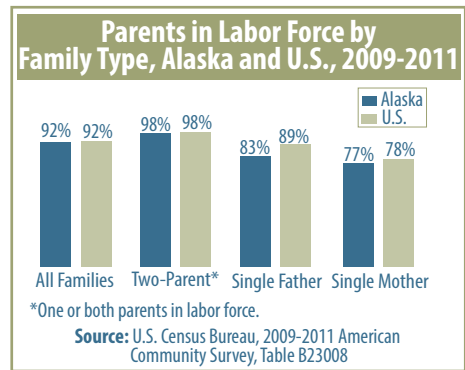
Research shows that children with parents who work full-time are generally healthier, have more access to private health insurance, do better in school, and are more likely to be financially successful as adults.¹

DATA

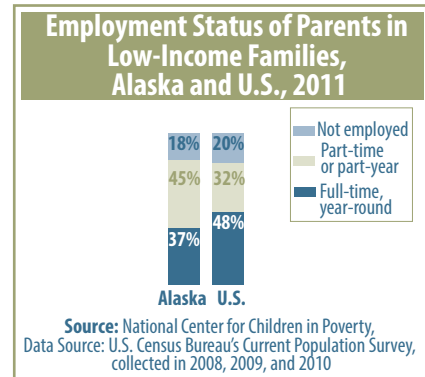
In 2011, 32% of children nationwide lived in families with no parent working full-time. In Alaska that share was 33%—higher than the U.S. average, but down from 36% in 2009 and 35% in 2010. That decline in Alaska contrasted with what happened in a number of other states, where the percentage went up; the national recession took a heavier toll on employment in many areas than it did in Alaska.

The share of children in Alaska without full-time working parents has been above the U.S. average in the past, although that gap has narrowed. Alaska's economy has historically been very seasonal. In recent decades it has broadened and become less seasonal, but a number of its private industries—especially commercial fishing and tourism—remain seasonal.²

Still, parents in Alaska are just about as likely as parents nationwide to be in the labor force: 92% of all families in the state and across the country have at least one parent in the labor force. Nearly all two-parent families—98%—in Alaska and the entire U.S. have at least one parent working.

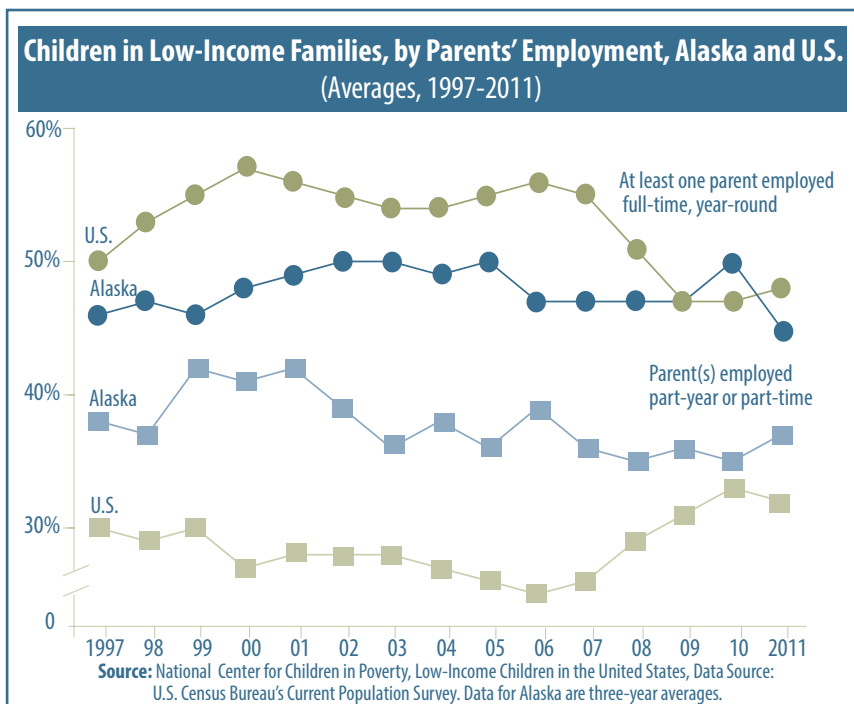


Single mothers in Alaska and nationwide are just about equally likely to be in the work force, at 77% and 78%. Only single fathers in Alaska are less likely to be in the work force—83% in Alaska, compared with 89% around the country.



Among low-income families (those with incomes up to 200% of the poverty level), the share of parents working full time is substantially higher nationwide (48%) than in Alaska (37%). More low-income parents in Alaska work part-year or part-time—45%, compared with 32% in the U.S. as a whole.

So over the past decade, children in low-income families in Alaska have been more likely to have parents working part-time. But in the most recent years, that gap has narrowed, as the figure below shows.



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

About one third of all children in the United States live with single parents, mostly single mothers. A recent report found that as of 2011, 44% of all single mothers had never been married; half were divorced, separated, or widowed, and the remaining 6% had absent spouses.¹

More than a third—36%—of all births nationwide in 2011 were to unmarried women. These unmarried mothers were of all educational levels, but less than 10% were college graduates. Half had 2011 household incomes of less than \$35,000, and three-quarters were under age 30. About 40% were White, 27% Black, and the remaining 33% were of other or mixed races.²

Children growing up in single-mother households face disadvantages, a major one being that they are much more likely to be poor. But the American Academy of Pediatrics also cites some advantages in growing up with a single mother—for instance, girls raised by single working mothers often see more future professional opportunities for themselves.³

DATA

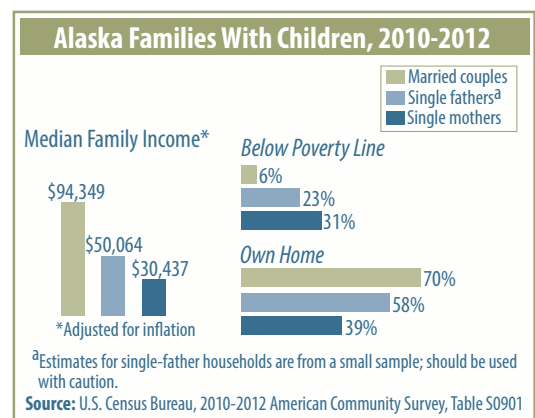
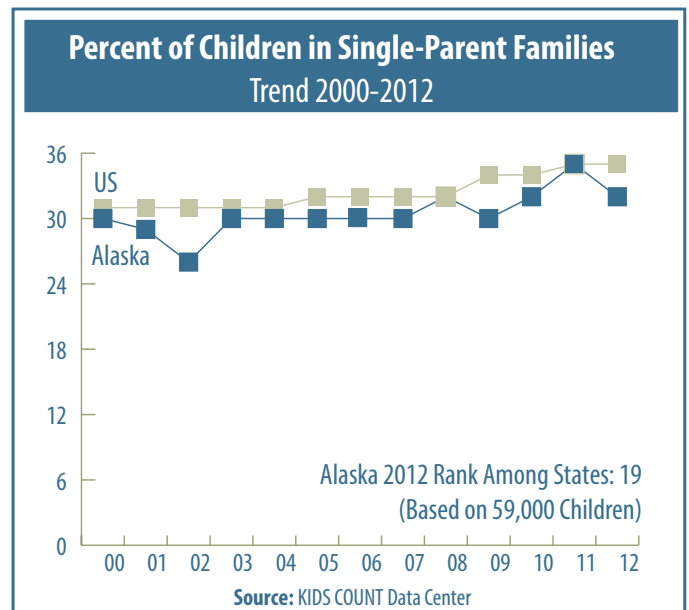
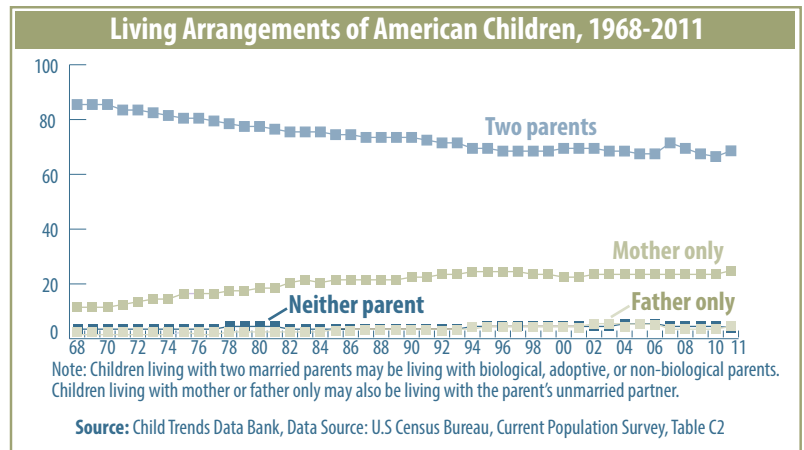
Beginning in the late 1960s, the share of children living with just one parent—almost always their mother—began increasing nationwide (see graph, top right). That trend leveled off at the end of the 1990s, but in the most recent years the percentage moved up again.

The share of children living with single parents nationwide increased from 32% in 2008 to 35% in 2011 and 2012 (see adjacent trend graph). In Alaska, the percentage of children in single-parent families had been below the U.S. average since 2000, but in 2011 it equaled the national rate of 35%, before dropping to 33% in 2012 and then 30% in 2013. Keep in mind, though, that as with other indicators, year-to-year fluctuations are common, because the number of children in Alaska is small compared with numbers in most other states.

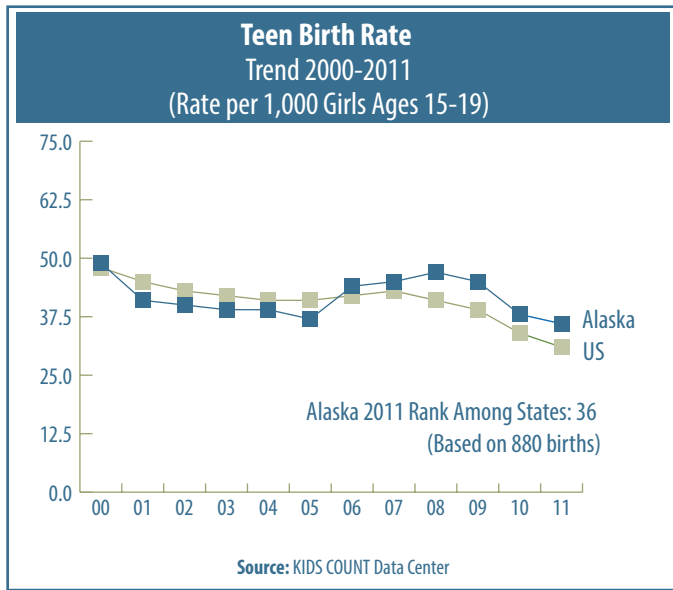
The bar graph to the right makes clear the economic problems single-parent families—especially those headed by women—face in Alaska. During the period from 2010 to 2012, married couples in Alaska had nearly twice the median income of households headed by single fathers and more than triple that of households headed by single mothers.

In recent years, families headed by single mothers were five times more likely than married couples to have incomes below the federal poverty line, and families headed by single fathers were about four times more likely.

Rates of homeownership are also much lower among single-parent families. In the 2010-2012 period, 70% of Alaska families with two parents owned their own homes, compared with less than 60% of single-father families and less than 40% of single-mother families.



BIRTHS TO TEENS



DATA

The adjacent trend graph, based on figures from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), shows the decline in teen birth rates in the country as a whole since 2000, with some increases in 2006 and 2007 but continuing declines since then.

Birth rates in Alaska have also declined over time, with some increases from 2006 to 2008, followed by declines in more recent years. But as the table below shows, analysts disagree about just how much Alaska's teen birth rate changed in the past decade. It compares rates from 2003 to 2011, from NCHS and the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics.

NCHS numbers show a much sharper rise and fall in Alaska's teen birth rate over the decade. NCHS figures show the birth rate declining from 39 per 1,000 girls in 2003 to 37 in 2005, before climbing to 47 in 2008—and then dropping again, falling to 36 per 1,000 girls in 2011.

By comparison, figures from the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics show a smaller change, with teen birth rates peaking at 42 births per 1,000 girls in 2008 and then dropping to 36 in 2011.

NCHS uses population figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, which estimates annual population changes between the 10-year federal censuses. The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics uses population estimates from the Alaska Department of Labor, which are also benchmarked to the 10-year census but updated with additional information—so we believe the bureau's estimates are likely to be more accurate.⁸

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 is born.

SIGNIFICANCE

About 75% of births to teenagers in the U.S. are unplanned, and only 11% of teenage mothers are married.¹ A recent report from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention outlines a few of the economic and social problems these teenage mothers face: they are far less likely to finish high school; their limited education limits their job prospects and their ability to provide for their children's basic needs; they are more likely than older mothers to have low-birthweight babies, in part because they are more likely to smoke while they're pregnant; and they are more likely to rely on government aid programs.²

Teenagers having babies also creates substantial public costs, including health care, child welfare, and other less direct costs. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy has estimated that in 2010 births to teenagers cost U.S. taxpayers \$9.4 billion, with costs in Alaska at about \$39 million.³

The good news is that the teenage birth rate nationwide has been declining most of the time since the late 1950s; just between 2007 and 2013 it fell 36%.⁴ Researchers believe much of that decline is due to increased use of contraceptives.⁵ In Colorado, which in recent years saw the biggest decline in teen birth rates in the nation, public health officials believe that an initiative making long-acting, reversible contraceptives more readily available to women with low incomes is responsible for much of the decline.⁶

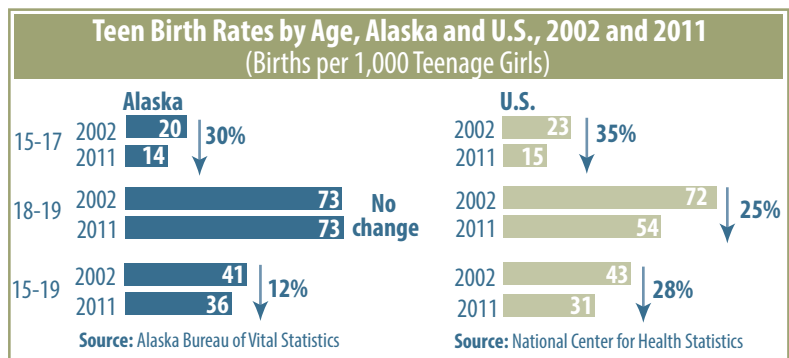
Still, despite the big drop in teenage birth rates, the U.S. rate of 26.6 births per 1,000 girls 15 to 19 in 2013 was significantly higher than that in many other developed countries. Sweden, for example, had a rate of 3.4 in recent years, and a number European countries had rates below 10.⁷

	2003	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
NCHS	39	39	37	44	45	47	45	38	36
Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics	41	41	39	41	41	42	41	38	36

BIRTH RATES BY AGE

Birth rates among all teenage girls (15 to 19) dropped both nationwide and in Alaska between 2002 and 2011, but the national decline was more than twice as much—28% compared with 12% (see figure below).

That's because the decline in Alaska was entirely among girls 15 to 17. The rate among girls 18 and 19 remained at 73 per 1,000 in 2011, the same as it was in 2002. A decade ago, the rate among older girls was just about the same in Alaska and across the country—but by 2011, the U.S. rate had dropped much lower—54 compared with 73.



BIRTHS TO TEENS

REPEAT BIRTHS

Many Alaska teenagers who have at least one baby subsequently have others before they turn 20. On average from 2007 to 2011, about 17% of teenagers in Alaska who had babies already had other children. That percentage varied by region, from a low of 11% in Southeast to 27% in the Northern region.

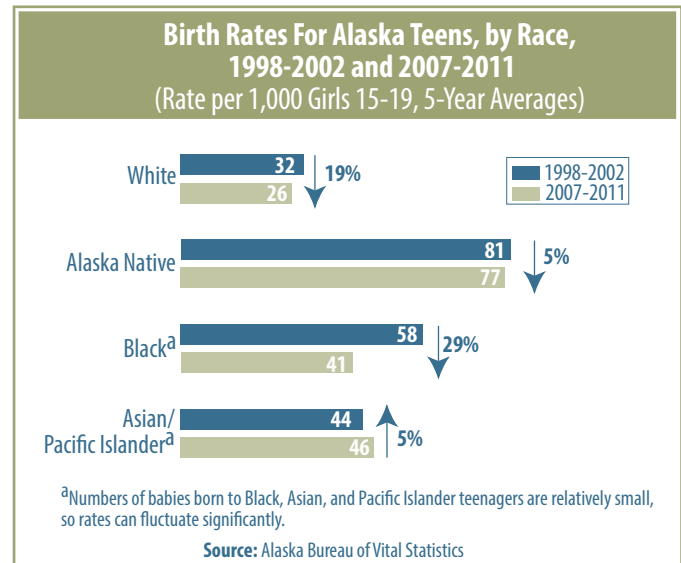
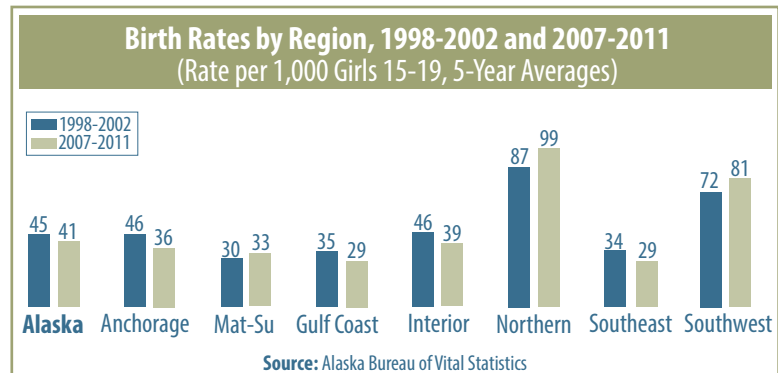
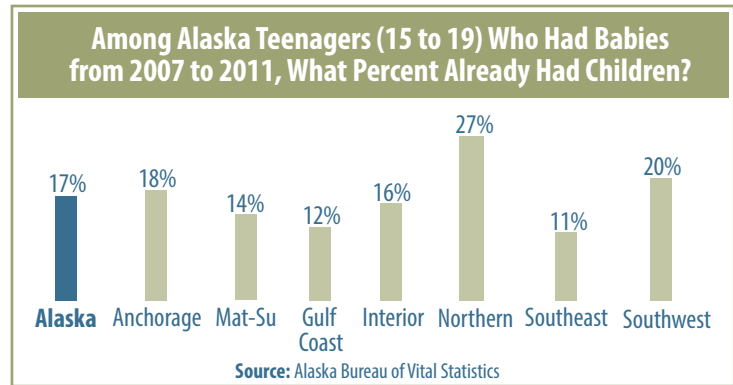
RATES BY REGION AND RACE

The statewide rate of births to girls 15-19 dropped from 45 to 41 births per 1,000 between 1998-2002 and 2007-2011, and rates in the Anchorage, Gulf Coast, Interior, and Southeast regions also declined.

But rates in the Northern, Southwest, and Mat-Su regions increased. The rate in the Northern region reached almost 100 per 1,000 teenage girls in 2007-2011—more than twice the statewide rate and three times the rates in the Southeast and Gulf Coast.

Teen birth rates for Alaska girls of all races, except Asian and Pacific Islanders, were lower from 2007-2011 than they had been from 1998-2002. The rate among Black teenagers dropped the most, 29%, while the rate among White teenagers was down about 19% and the rate among Alaska Native teenagers 5%. Among Asian and Pacific Island teenagers, rates were up 5% from the earlier period.

The birth rate among Alaska Native teenagers remained the highest from 2007 through 2011, at an average of 77 per 1,000 girls 15 to 19. Rates among Black teenagers and Asian and Pacific Islanders were both more than 40, while the rate among White teenagers was 26.



HEALTH-CARE COVERAGE

DEFINITION

Most of the data for this section are from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). Two things are important to keep in mind about this data source. First, it classifies children who had health-insurance coverage at any time during a given year—even a very brief period—as having coverage in that year. So those classified as “without insurance” (as shown in the adjacent trend graph) are only those who had no insurance coverage at any time during the year.

Second, the CPS classifies children with health-care coverage only through the Alaska Native Area Health Service (the Alaska division of the federal Indian Health Service) as “without insurance.”¹ That's because this health-care coverage is not standard insurance: eligible children can receive services only at Indian Health Service clinics or hospitals. But they do in fact have access to health care, so classifying them as uninsured inflates the actual number of Alaska children lacking health-care benefits.

SIGNIFICANCE

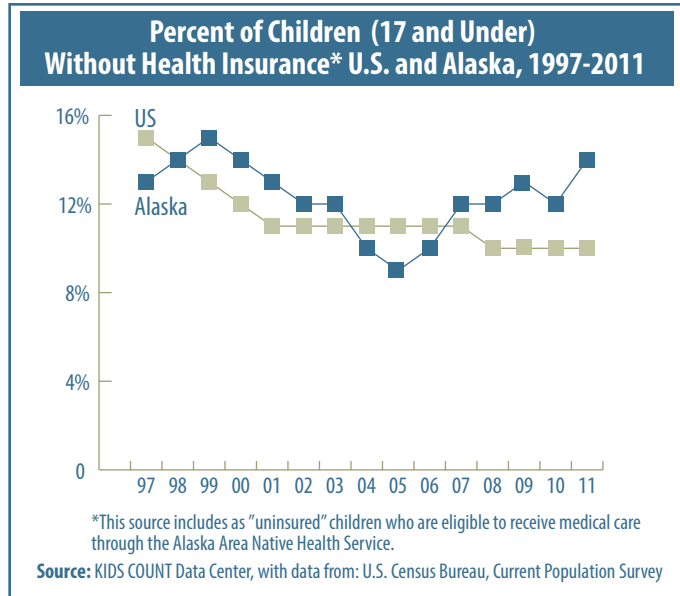
In late 2014, the Kaiser Family Foundation published an overview of uninsured Americans and the initial effects of the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) on them.² The foundation found:

- About 80% of the uninsured are in families with at least one worker.
- Almost two-thirds of those without insurance say they can't afford it or they lost jobs that provided them coverage.
- A fifth of the uninsured have unpaid medical bills causing financial strain, and medical debts play a role in nearly half the bankruptcies nationwide.
- Preliminary data show that millions of previously uninsured Americans have coverage as a result of the ACA, and that the uninsured rate among non-elderly Americans may have been a percentage point lower in the first quarter of 2014, compared with the first quarter of 2013.
- In states that have been expanding Medicaid, the numbers of uninsured declined the most. ACA expands eligibility to nearly all adults with incomes below 138% of the federal poverty level.

States can choose whether or not to expand Medicaid coverage; it is a joint federal-state program—but the federal government will pay most of the costs of the expansion in the next several years.³ Alaska is among the states that have not yet approved expanding Medicaid, but the state's new governor, elected in November 2014, has said he favors the expansion, which would benefit an estimated 40,000 Alaskans.⁴

DATA

The trend graph shows the CPS figures on uninsured children (under 18) nationwide and in Alaska. In 2011 the percentage of uninsured children in the U.S. as a whole remained at 10%, as it had been the year before. The data for Alaska is combined into three-year averages to control for the small sample size; in 2009-2011, 14% of Alaska children were classified as uninsured, up from 12% in the previous three years. Only Texas and Nevada had higher percentages of uninsured children in 2011.⁵ But keep in mind that some of the children CPS considers uninsured in Alaska have health-care benefits through the Indian Health Service.



Older children are more likely to be uninsured than younger children, in Alaska and nationwide—but the jump is much sharper in Alaska, where CPS estimates 15% of children ages 6 to 17 are uninsured, compared with 10% in the U.S. as a whole.

There are also differences in the kinds of health-care coverage children have in Alaska and nationwide. The percentages of children covered by private insurance in Alaska and in the U.S. are very similar, at 58% and 59%. But Alaska children are less likely to be covered by Medicaid, and much more likely to be covered through the military—which reflects the large military presence in Alaska. And CPS figures show more children in Alaska as uninsured—again, including some with health-care benefits through the Indian Health Service.

	Alaska	U.S.
0 to 5	11%	9%
6 to 17	15%	10%
Total 17 and below	14%	9%

Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 3-year average 2009-2011

	Private Insurance	Medicaid	Medicare	Military	None*
Alaska	58%	30%	Less than 1%	17%	14%
U.S.	59%	36%	1%	4%	9%

* 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

ENDNOTES FOR ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY

1. Kathleen Short, "The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2013," in *Current Population Reports*, U.S. Census Bureau, October 2014. Retrieved December 2014 at <http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/demo/p60-251.pdf>.
2. "How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty," U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved December 2014 at <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html>.
3. To determine eligibility for government aid programs, agencies typically use the federal poverty guidelines, developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Social Services. Unlike the poverty thresholds, these guidelines take into account differences in costs of living around the country. See <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/13poverty.cfm#thresholds>.
4. See note 1.
5. See note 1.
6. Anupama Jacob, "The Supplemental Poverty Measure: A Better Measure for Poverty in America?" *Policy Briefs*, Center for Poverty Research, University of California at Davis. Retrieved December 2014 at <http://poverty.ucdavis.edu/policy-brief/supplemental-poverty-measure-better-measure-poverty-america>.
7. See, for example, American Psychological Association. (2013). *Effects of Poverty, Hunger, and Homelessness on Children and Youth*. Retrieved at <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/poverty.aspx#>.
8. Subtitle X-C, McKinney-Vento Act.

CHILDREN WITH NO PARENT WORKING FULL-TIME

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Education



DROPOUT AND GRADUATION RATES

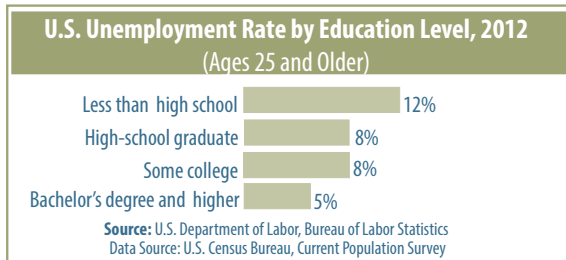
DEFINITION

This section reports dropout and high-school graduation rates among teenagers in Alaska. Those rates can be calculated using various methods and different data sources; each method is useful and helps show a more complete picture of dropout and graduation rates. First we discuss students who drop out.

SIGNIFICANCE

Americans who don't graduate from high school are more likely to be unemployed, have limited job options, rely on government health-care and other aid programs, and become teenage parents.¹

Dropouts had 2012 unemployment rates 50% above those of high-school graduates and twice those of college graduates. In 2013, Americans without high-school diplomas earned on average \$472 a week, high-school graduates \$651, and those with bachelor's degrees \$1,108.²

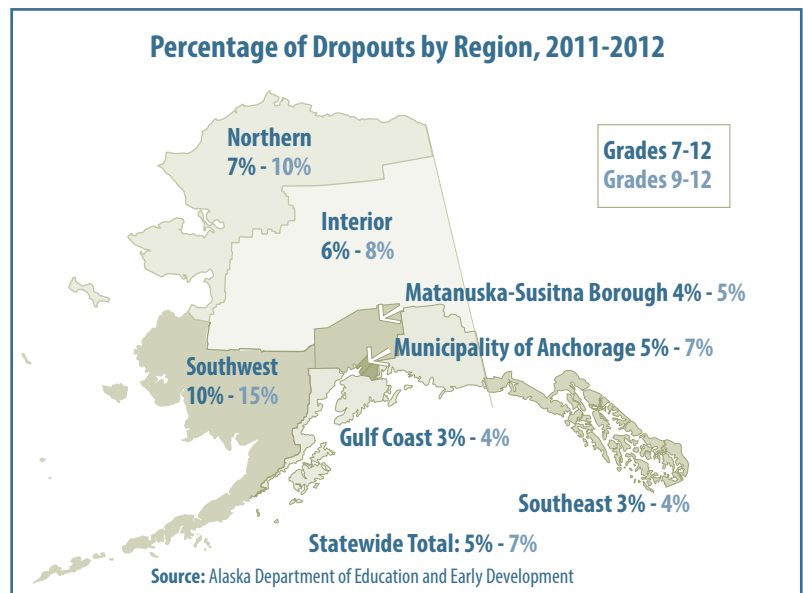
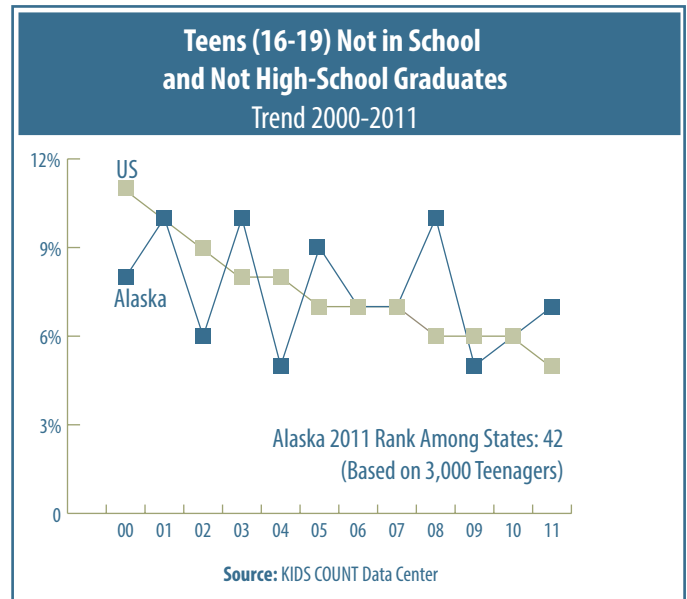


MEASURING DROPOUT RATES

Here we report on both status and event dropout rates among teenagers in Alaska. The *status* dropout rate measures, at a given time, how many teenagers 16 to 19 are not enrolled in school, have not graduated, and have not received diplomas or General Educational Development (GED) certificates. The national KIDS COUNT program reports this measure of dropouts.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development uses the *event* dropout rate, calculated by dividing the number of students in grades 7-12 and in 9-12 who stop attending school by total students in those grades in a given year. Some students who leave are not considered dropouts: those who complete or transfer to an education program approved by the school district or the state; move to another school; are temporarily suspended; or die. But those who leave to get GEDs are considered dropouts under this method.

We also report dropout rates by race, published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which also calculates an event dropout rate but somewhat differently. It counts as dropouts those students who were enrolled in the previous but not the current school year and have not completed school. It reports just on dropouts from grades 9 through 12.³



DROPOUT DATA

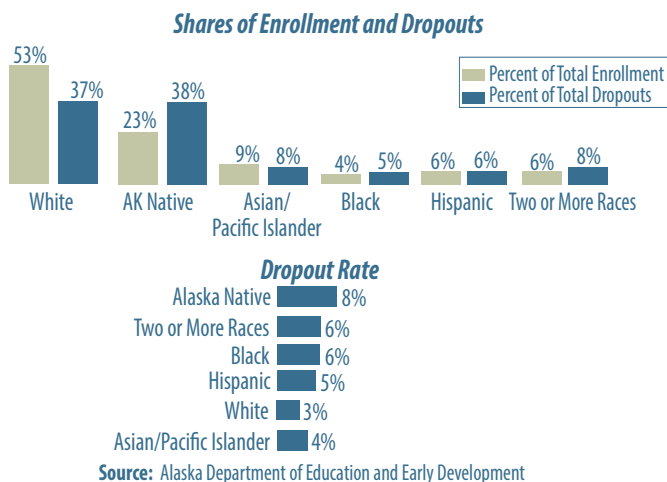
The trend graph (top of the page) shows the U.S. average and Alaska status dropout rates over the past decade. The U.S. rate has declined steadily, from 11% in 2000 to about 5% in recent years. The Alaska rate, by contrast, has jumped up and down from year to year, but overall is down a couple of percentage points from where it was in 2000.

Data from the Alaska Department of Education show that statewide in the 2011-2012 year, 5% of students in grades 7-12 and 7% of those in grades 9-12 dropped out. The department also provided us with dropout data by school district; we combined that data into regions (see map above).

Among regions of Alaska, the Gulf Coast and Southeast regions had the lowest dropout rates, at 3% for those in grades 7-12 and 4% for those in grades 9-12. In other regions, rates varied from 5% to 10%—except in the Southwest region, where 15% of students in grades 9-12 dropped out.

DROP OUT AND GRADUATION RATES

Alaska Dropouts, 2011-2012, Grades 7-12, by Shares of Enrollment and Dropouts and by Dropout Rates



The bar graph above shows information by race about dropouts in Alaska—both as a rate and as a share of total enrollment in the 2011-2012 year. The dropout rate by race for those in grades 7-12 ranged from a low of 3% among White students to a high of 8% among Alaska Native students.

Alaska Native students made up a disproportionately large share of total dropouts that year, compared with their share of enrollment—about 23% of enrollment but 38% of dropouts. White students accounted for more than half of enrollment but just 37% of dropouts. Among students of other races, the differences between share of enrollment and share of dropouts were much smaller.

How do these dropout rates in Alaska compare with the U.S. average? The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that in 2010 the national event dropout rate was 3.4%, while Alaska’s rate was 6.9%. Only two states and the District of Columbia had higher rates that year.⁴

Students of all races in Alaska drop out at higher rates (see figure below), but the U.S.-Alaska gap is largest for Alaska Natives and American Indian students, Asian and Pacific Islander students, and White students.

MEASURING GRADUATION RATES

The two measures we use to report high-school graduation rates are the averaged freshman graduation and the adjusted cohort graduation rates.

NCES collects information annually from every public school in the country and compiles it into a statistical database known as the Common Core of Data, which includes an estimate of the *averaged freshman graduation rate*: the percentage of students who receive standard high-school diplomas four years after entering ninth grade.

NCES makes that estimate using ninth-grade enrollment figures and diploma counts four years later, with an adjustment to account for the fact that ninth-grade enrollment includes not only students just entering that grade but also some students held back from the previous year.⁵

These NCES figures have long been used to report and compare graduation rates nationally and across states. But some analysts believe NCES data aren’t adequate to account for a number of complexities in calculating graduation rates—not only the count of incoming freshmen but also the different state methods of defining graduates and the various ways of classifying students who transfer into and out of districts.⁶

These methodological issues led the National Governors Association to call for a new method using student-level data instead of estimated student counts: the *four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate*. In 2008 the U.S. Department of Education mandated that all states begin reporting graduation rates using that method by the 2011. Some states began adopting it before the deadline; Alaska began using it in the 2010-2011 school year.

This method assigns all high-school students a cohort year based on when they first entered ninth grade, and assumes all students are on track to graduate within four years. A student may join or be removed from a cohort by entering or leaving the state for another high school.

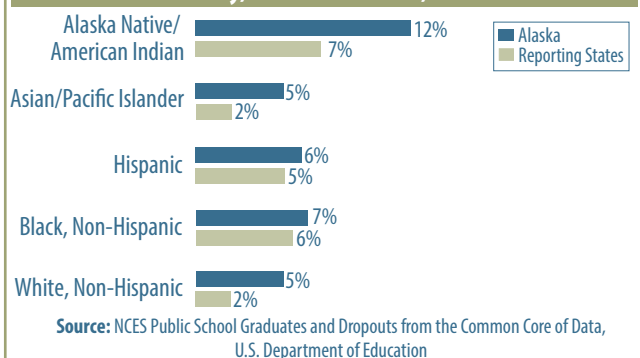
The graduation rate is equal to the number of students in the cohort group who graduate within four years, divided by the total number of students in the cohort group, adjusted for transfers in and out.⁷

SIGNIFICANCE

Graduating from high-school is a minimum requirement for many jobs, and (as we discussed earlier) those with at least high-school diplomas earn significantly more on average than those who drop out.

The national graduation rate increased over the past decade, from 71.7% in 2001 to 78.2% in 2010, according to a major 2013 study on progress toward reducing high-school dropout rates. But that report also notes that rates in some states improved much more than in others—and that while higher graduation rates among minority students helped boost the overall graduation rate, minority students still graduate at lower rates than White students.⁸

High-School (Grades 9-12) Dropout Rate by Race and Ethnicity, Alaska and U.S., 2009-2010

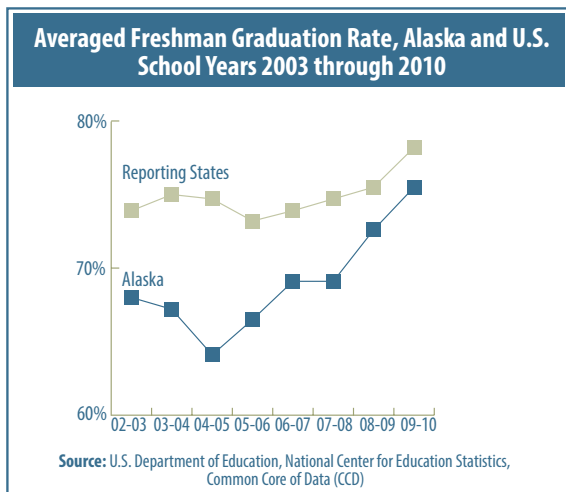


DROP OUT AND GRADUATION RATES

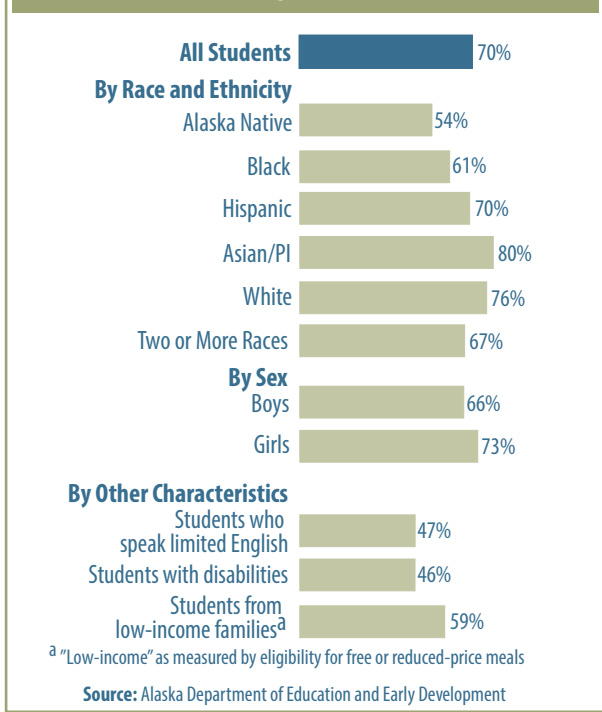
NCES FIGURES

The trend graph below shows NCES figures for averaged freshman graduation rates in Alaska and the U.S. as a whole from school years 2002-2003 through 2009-2010. In both Alaska and the country as a whole, rates fell early in that period—but the drop in Alaska was more dramatic, and at one point there was a wide gap between rates in Alaska and the country as a whole. But the rate in Alaska rebounded sharply after 2005. By 2010, NCES estimated Alaska’s graduation rate at 75.5%, which was much closer to the U.S. average of 78.2%.

That Alaska graduation rate of 75.5% in 2010 was up from just 64% in 2005.⁹ Among other states, the 2010 rate varied from a low of 57.8% in Nevada to a high of over 91% in Vermont and Wisconsin.¹⁰



Graduation Rates Among Alaska Students, 2011-2012



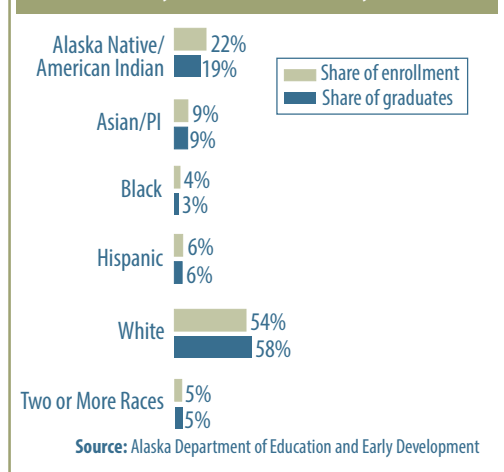
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FIGURES

Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development reports that in 2012, 7,989 Alaska students earned high-school diplomas.¹¹ As noted earlier, the department began reporting adjusted cohort graduation rates in the 2010-2011 year, so the department’s figures from earlier years are not directly comparable.

In 2012 the department calculated an overall cohort graduation rate of about 70%. Rates by race and ethnicity varied from 80% among Asian and Pacific Islander students to 54% among Alaska Native students. And as is also true in every other state, girls in Alaska graduate at higher rates than boys—in 2012, 73% of Alaska girls graduated, compared with 66% of boys. Among Alaska students who speak limited English or have disabilities, graduation rates in 2012 were below 50%.

Share of Enrollment and of Graduates (Grade 12), by Race and Ethnicity, 2011-2012



Enrollment and Graduation

Even among students who reach 12th grade, some drop out. The figure above compares shares of grade-12 enrollment and high-school graduates by race in 2012. Alaska Native students made up a larger share of grade-12 enrollment than they did of graduates, while the opposite was true of White students. Asian and Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, and students of two or more races made up about the same share of graduates as they did of enrollment.

TEENS NOT IN SCHOOL AND NOT WORKING

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

Analysts have found that young people who spend years out of school and out of the workforce are more likely to rely on government aid programs, to have low incomes, and to have trouble getting jobs as they get older.¹

And in recent years, it's become more difficult for Americans of all ages to get jobs—but particularly so for high-school dropouts. An analysis for the Children's Defense Fund found that among young adults (16 to 29) nationwide, close to 46% without high-school diplomas were unemployed in 2010—compared with about 34% of those who had graduated from high school and less than 13% of those with bachelor's degrees.²

The analysis also found that people who don't have jobs in their late teens and early 20s miss valuable work experience and opportunities for apprenticeships or other training that could improve their later earnings.³

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Strategic Plan includes programs aimed at bringing unemployed young Alaskans back into the workforce—including those who have aged out of foster care, committed crimes, have parents in jail, are homeless, or have disabilities. The department's "one-stop service delivery" system, known as the Alaska Job Center Network, is available in both rural and urban areas and offers young people help in GED testing and preparation, literacy programs, English as a second language, and vocational rehabilitation counselors.⁴

DATA

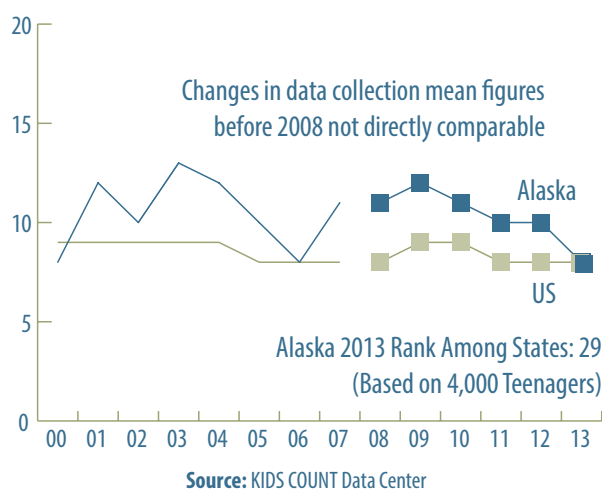
Nationally in 2011, about 8% of teenagers (16-19) were not attending school nor working, down from 9% the previous year. That rate has remained at 8% in the more recent years.

In Alaska, about 10% of youth were disconnected in 2011, an improvement from 12% in 2009, and in 2013 Alaska's rate dropped to the national level of 8%. Changes in the way these data are collected mean that rates published before 2008 cannot be directly compared with those after.

Data for subgroups of disconnected youth are not available specifically for Alaska, but the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics reports nationwide figures. The table shows figures for 2009 and 2012.

Between 2009 and 2012, the share of all teenagers not in school and not working dropped from 9% to 8%. Shares among all groups except White teenagers also dropped. The biggest declines were among teenage boys (down from 10% to 8%) and Hispanic teenagers (down from 13% to 11%).

Teens (16-19) Not in School and Not Working
Trend 2000-2013



Percentages of U.S. Teenagers (16-19) Not in School and Not Working, 2009 and 2012

	2009	2012	Change
All teenagers	9%	8%	-11%
Teenage girls	9%	8%	-11%
Teenage boys	10%	8%	-20%
White teenagers	7%	7%	same
Black teenagers	12%	11%	-8%
Hispanic teenagers	13%	11%	-15%

Source: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics

TEENS NOT IN SCHOOL AND NOT WORKING

WHY EDUCATION MATTERS

Graduation rates in Alaska and nationwide have been improving in recent years, but a significant share of teenagers still drop out. The rate of dropouts remains higher in Alaska than nationwide, and educational attainment among young Alaska adults (18 to 24) is a mixed picture.

As the figure below shows, young men in Alaska are far less likely to go to college and get degrees than young women, and they also fall short of the average percentages among young men and women across the country. Young women in Alaska attend college and get degrees at about the same rate as young men nationwide—but they fall considerably short of the educational attainment of young women in the country as a whole.

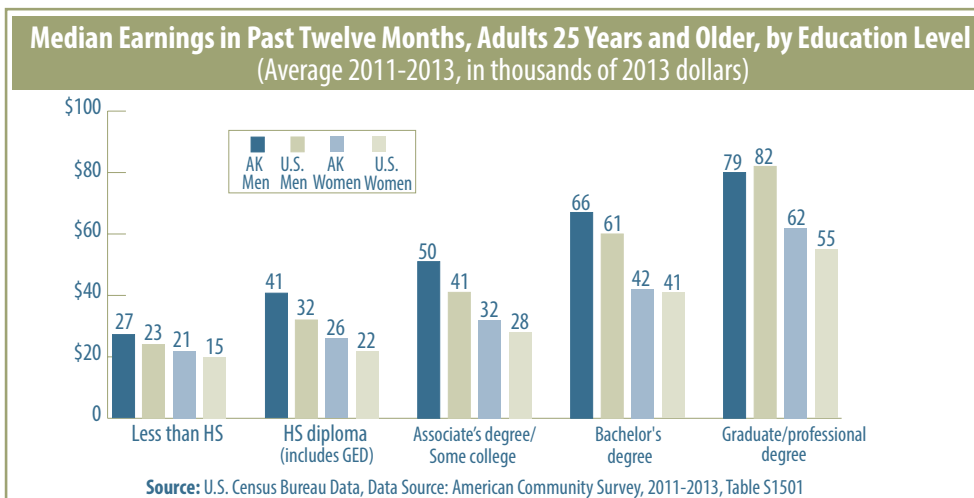
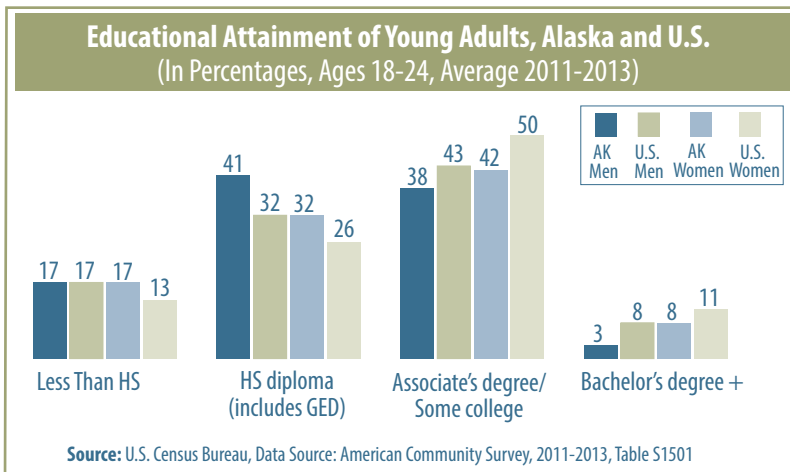
Getting more education is important for a number of reasons, but the figure at the bottom of the page shows one big economic reason: overall, people with more education make more money. But the figure also shows a more complicated picture, between earnings of men and women and Alaskans and other Americans.

In Alaska and nationwide, at all education levels, women earn less than men. The difference is largest between earnings of men in Alaska and of women in the Lower 48. Alaska men at all education levels earn in the range of 40% more than women with comparable education nationwide.

Men in Alaska earn more than men nationwide, except at the highest degree levels. The earnings gap is especially large among men with only high school or limited college education, with Alaska men earning roughly 20% more than their counterparts nationwide. That’s probably because Alaska has a lot of jobs in fields like oil or other resource extraction, fishing, and construction—jobs that can pay well and don’t require four-year degrees, or at times no degrees at all.

Women in Alaska earn more than women in the U.S. as a whole, at all education levels—but the gap isn’t as large as it is among men, with women in Alaska earning around 10% to 15% more.

Men in Alaska earn more than women in Alaska, at all education levels—from 20% to 35% more.



SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

DEFINITION

Alaska students take several tests, at various grade levels, so school officials can evaluate their skills and assess whether they're meeting academic standards. But the testing requirements in Alaska are in transition.

For a number of years, Alaska schools used the TerraNova, third edition, as a nationally norm-referenced test to compare skills of fifth and seventh graders in Alaska with those of their counterparts nationwide. But in April 2013, the Alaska State Board of Education repealed the requirements for administering a standardized norm-referenced test, reporting the test results, and preparing the related school and student questionnaires.¹

Students in fourth and eighth grades continue to take, as they have in the past, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), administered every other year at a sample of schools in Alaska and around the country. It tests reading and math skills and allows comparisons across states.

Alaska also has its own assessments of student achievement. It formerly used what were called Alaska Standards-Based Assessments, administered at all public schools. But educators and others decided those standards were not rigorous enough and stopped using them in 2014. The state is now transitioning to new assessments, called the Alaska Measures of Progress. Beginning in the spring of 2015, all schools will be required to administer those tests to students in grades three through ten, assessing language arts and math skills.²

For about a decade, Alaska also had a high-school graduation qualifying exam, which students had to pass to receive diplomas. But the Alaska Legislature, with the support of the state school board, eliminated the exam in 2014. Critics said, among other things, that state assessments starting in elementary grades and continuing through high school are better measures of how much students are learning, and that passing the high-school exam didn't necessarily mean students were ready for college.³

Instead of that exam, the state now requires students to take at least one of three tests in their last two years of school to assess whether they're ready to go to college or move into the workforce: a work-ready assessment, called WorkKeys, or either of two tests often required for college admission—the SAT, measuring math, reading, and writing skills, or the ACT, measuring English, reading, math, and science skills.⁴

ALASKA NCLB WAIVER

Another recent change is that Alaska has received a waiver from requirements of the 2001 federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. Under that law, Alaska's schools had been assessed annually, to determine whether they were meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets. In 2011-12, 47% of Alaska's schools met AYP targets and 53% did not.

But Alaska officials had long argued that requirements of NCLB were very difficult or impossible for many of the state's schools to meet—especially the small, rural ones—and that AYP targets did not adequately measure

progress in those schools. They applied for a waiver from provisions of the act, and in May 2013, Alaska was granted a waiver, making it the 37th state to get such a waiver from major provisions of NCLB.⁵

Under the waiver, Alaska agreed to adopt college- and career-ready standards (done in December 2012); to devise its own system for holding schools accountable for students' academic success (done in June 2013); and to require school districts to evaluate teachers and principals partly on improvement in individual student achievement over two consecutive years (done in June 2013).⁶

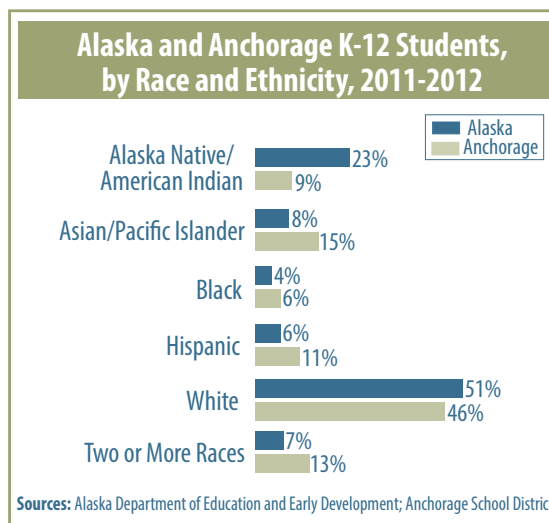
Alaska's accountability system, called the Alaska School Performance Index, ranks schools with one to five stars. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development reports that in the 2013-2014 year, 15% of the state's 501 schools received five stars, 40% four stars, 30% three stars, 10% two stars, and 5% one star.⁷

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Nearly 129,000 students attended Alaska's K-12 public schools in 2012, a figure that hasn't changed much in recent years.⁸ Looked at another way, close to one in five of Alaska's 732,000 residents that year were public school children.

About 51% of Alaska's students identify themselves as White, 23% as Alaska Native or American Indian, 8% as Asian or Pacific Islander, 4% as Black, 7% as two or more races, and 6% as Hispanic.

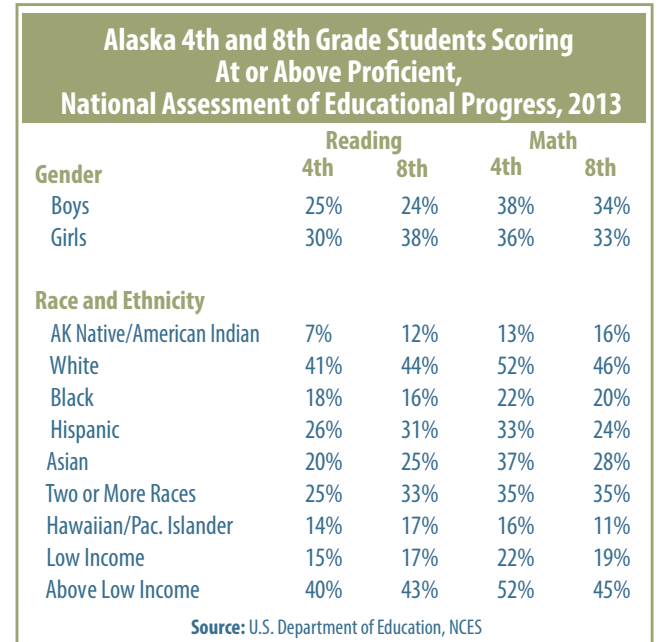
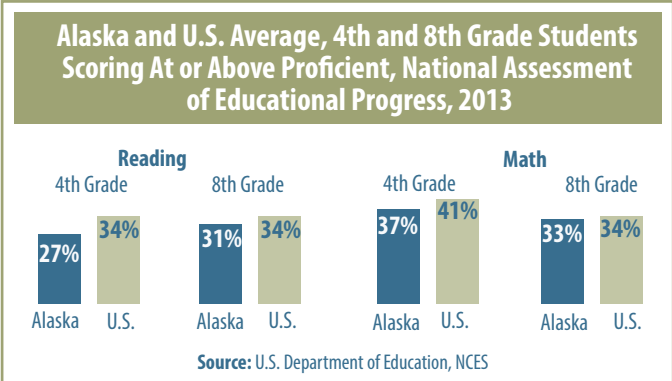
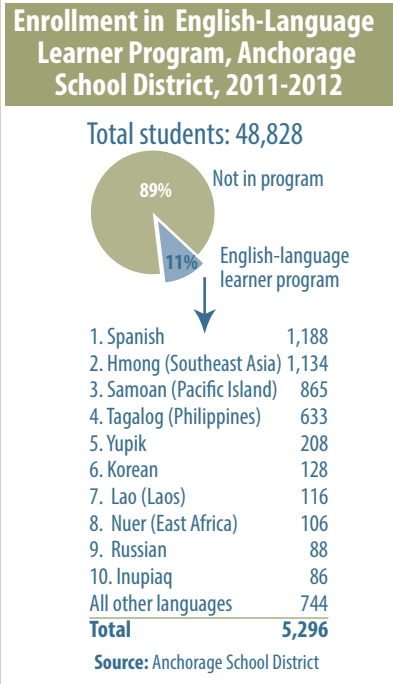
Compared with students statewide, those in Anchorage are less likely to be White or Alaska Native and more likely to be Black, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander, and of more than one race.



SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

Alaska's students have become more diverse in recent times, especially in Anchorage, where the school district reports that the share of students from minorities increased from 28% in 1992 to 54% by 2012.⁹

That diversity is also reflected in the 90 languages spoken by students in the district's English-language learner program. In the 2011-2012 year, about 11% of students in Anchorage were enrolled in that program. By far the most common languages are Spanish, Hmong, Samoan, and Tagalog (the language of the Philippines).



NAEP

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assesses reading and math skills of students in grades 4 and 8 at a representative sample of schools in Alaska and across the nation every other year. About half the students in grades 4 and 8 in Alaska took NAEP assessments in 2013.

NAEP reports average test scores and also divides scores into three levels, to show how well students are meeting specific achievement standards defined by NAEP administrators: basic, proficient, and advanced. Individual states, including Alaska, have their own standards, not necessarily the same as NAEP's, for determining "proficiency." But by providing a consistent measure of proficiency, NAEP scores allow for comparisons across states.

The Alaska Department of Education reports that average scores for Alaska students, in both 4th and 8th grade, and in reading and math, haven't changed substantially in the past decade. And in most years between 2003 and 2013 those scores were below national averages by a few points.¹⁰

In 2013, the percentages of Alaska students scoring at proficient or better were below national averages, with the widest gap for 4th grade reading and the smallest for 8th grade math. As the figure at the top right shows, only 27% of Alaska's 4th graders scored at least proficient in reading, compared with 34% nationally.

But there are considerable differences in reading proficiency by gender and race among Alaska 4th graders. Boys are less likely to read well than girls. Children from minorities and low-income families are less proficient at reading than the average for all 4th graders; White students and those from families with higher incomes are more proficient.

A 2014 report from the Annie Casey Foundation found that not only in Alaska but all other states, children from low-income families are much more likely to read poorly in the 4th grade—and that children who can't read well at that point risk becoming adults who can't get good-paying jobs.¹¹

COLLEGE PREPARATION

As discussed earlier, when the Alaska Legislature eliminated the high-school graduation qualifying exam in 2014, it instead required students to take a work-ready assessment, the SAT, or the ACT.

Many colleges use SAT and ACT results to make admission and financial-aid decisions. But the percentage of students taking these tests varies widely by state, and in states where smaller percentages take the tests they tend to be those with strong academic backgrounds.

About half of Alaska's graduates took the SAT in 2012 and 35% the ACT.¹² Alaska test-takers have generally scored near national averages in recent years. It remains to be seen how their scores will compare with U.S. averages in the future, when bigger percentages will be taking the tests.

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DROP OUT AND GRADUATION RATES

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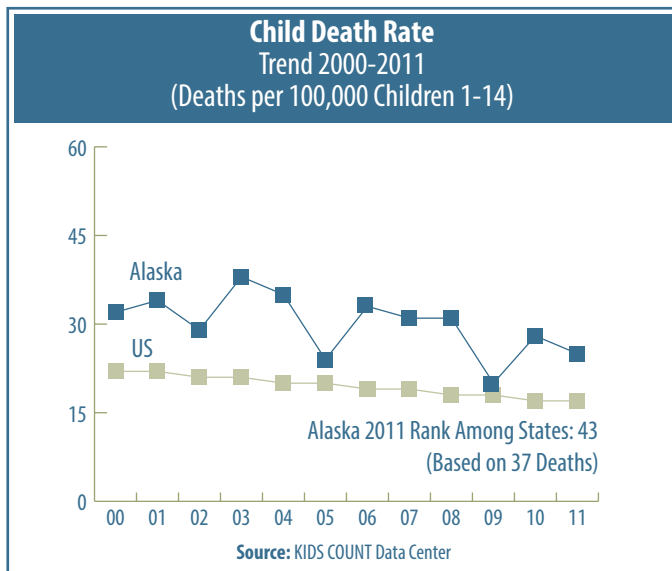
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Children In Danger



CHILD DEATH RATE



DATA

As of 2011 (the most recent year for which national data are available), Alaska had a child death rate of 25 per 100,000 children age 1-14; the U.S. average that year was 17. Alaska's rate was higher than in 42 other states.⁷ That rate fluctuates from 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. But as the trend graph shows, Alaska's recent rate is down from what it was 10 years earlier.

The child death rate varies a lot between regions of Alaska. From 2007-2011, the average statewide rate was 27 deaths per 100,000 children, but the regional rate varied from 18 in Anchorage to 85 in the Southwest.

Causes of death also vary somewhat by age. From 2007-2011, the top cause of death among the youngest children was natural causes, followed by accidental injuries. Among children 5 to 9, accidental injuries were the leading cause and natural causes were second. Among the oldest, those 10 to 17, accidental injuries cause the most deaths—but suicides were second and natural causes third. Of the 293 children who died from 2007-2011, 17 were murdered—including 7 children under age 4.

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. (Deaths of those under age 1 are reported in Infant Mortality.) Regional data reflect the child's place of residence, not place of death.

SIGNIFICANCE

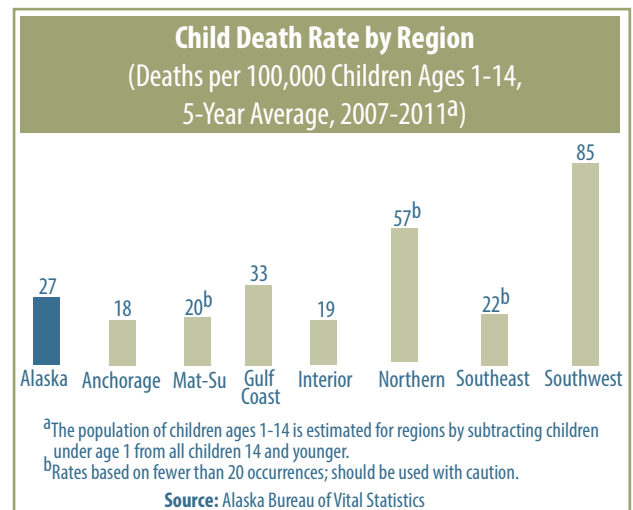
The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that by far the most common cause of death among both younger and older children nationwide remains accidental injury. Birth defects and cancers are the next most frequent causes, but the fourth is murder: in 2012, 650 American children were murdered—and half of those were under age 5.¹

But the CDC also reports that American children are "safer from injuries today than ever before," with a 30% drop in total accidental deaths among those 19 and under from 2000 through 2009.² That includes a 40% drop in deaths from vehicle crashes, a 19% decline in deaths from falls, a 45% drop in deaths from burns, and a 28% drop in deaths from drowning.³

Still, the death rate among American children is higher than that in other high-income countries. As of 2008, American children 14 and under (including infants) died at a rate of 8.7 per 100,000—four times the rate in Sweden and the Netherlands and nearly double the rate in Canada.⁴

And rates of death vary substantially among American children by age group, gender, and race. Younger children (ages 1 to 4) die at higher rates than older children (5 to 14). Boys in all age groups are more likely than girls to die. Black children have the highest rates of death in every age group, while Asian and Pacific Islander children have the lowest.⁵

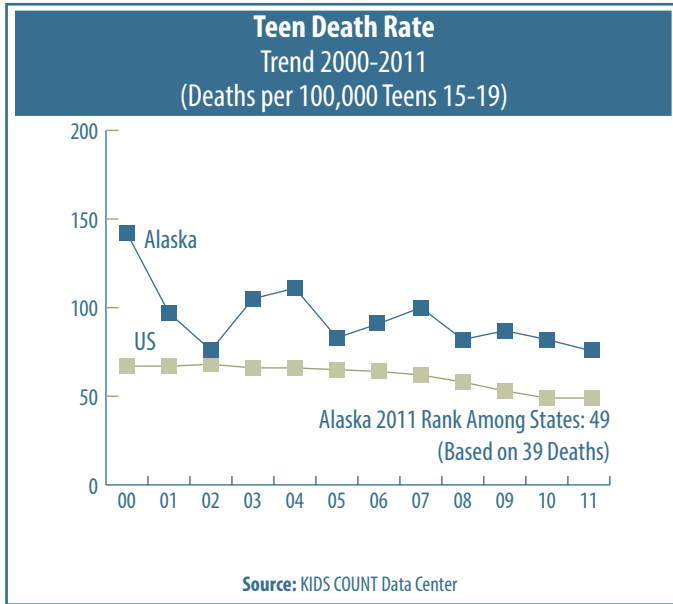
CDC has a number of recommendations for saving children's lives, including: take measures that are proven to reduce injuries, like learn-to-swim programs; broaden access to trauma care and train more adults in CPR and first aid; and provide more safety education to new parents.⁶



	1-4	5-9	10-17	Total	Percent
Natural Causes	37	18	30	85	29%
Unintentional Injuries	28	24	79	131	45%
Suicides	0	0	42	42	14%
Homicides	7	0	10	17	6%
Other	6	8	8	18	6%
Total	78	46	169	293	100%

Accidental but non-fatal injuries also often put Alaska children in the hospital; falls are the most common cause of injury that hospitalizes those 1-14. But among those 15-19, the type of injury most often leading to hospitalization is self-inflicted injury—reflecting the serious problem of teenage suicide, discussed in the next section.⁸

TEEN DEATH RATE



U.S. AND ALASKA RATES

As the adjacent trend graph shows, teen death rates in both Alaska and the country as a whole dropped in the past decade, but Alaska's rate is higher and more variable than the U.S. average. In 2011 Alaska's rate dropped to 76 deaths per 100,000 teenagers—down 40% from 142 in 2000. Still, it remains among the highest in the country. The U.S. average in 2011 was 49 deaths per 100,000 teenagers.

TOTAL AND VIOLENT RATES BY REGION

The bar graph shows Alaska's overall and violent death rates among teenagers, statewide and by region, averaged over the period from 2007-2011. That averaging helps smooth out sharp fluctuations that can happen from year to year, especially in regions with small populations.

As is true nationwide, most teen deaths in Alaska are from violence—about 77% of deaths from 2007 through 2011 were from accidents, suicides, or homicides. But the rates of overall and violent teen deaths were sharply different by regions of Alaska.

Rates in Anchorage, the Mat-Su, and the Interior fell below the statewide averages. But rates of death in the Northern and Southwest regions were roughly triple the statewide rate—and they were four times higher than the 2010 and 2011 U.S. average of 49.

DEFINITION

This indicator presents data on teenage deaths: the overall death rate from all causes, the violent death rate, and the suicide rate. All the death rates are per 100,000 teens, ages 15-19. The violent death rate is based on deaths from suicides, accidents, and homicides combined. The suicide rate documents just deaths from suicide.

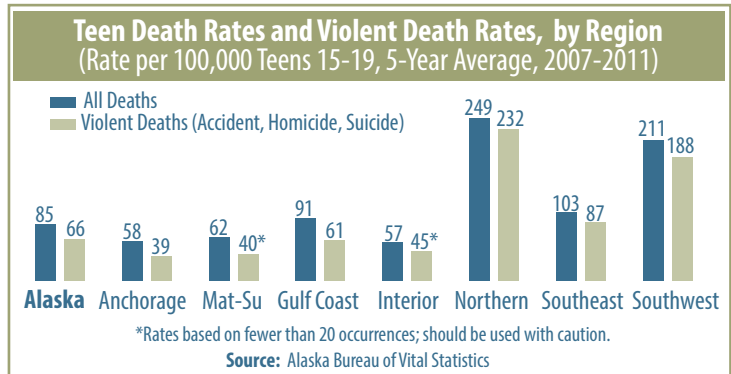
SIGNIFICANCE

The three leading causes of death among American teenagers are accidents, suicides, and homicides, together accounting for more than 70% of all deaths among those 15 to 19 in 2013.¹ But accidents alone account for nearly 40% of deaths among American teenagers—and half those deaths are from motor vehicle crashes.²

The number of children and teenagers killed in vehicle crashes did drop sharply over the past decade, but the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in 2013 that such crashes still pose “the greatest single risk to teenagers in this country.”³ And the CDC director also said that the downward trend could be threatened by a practice that's become widespread among teenagers: texting while driving.⁴

In a 2011 survey, 45% of teenagers 16 and older reported texting while driving.⁵ Texting while driving doubles the risk of crashes, according to a 2013 driving study, and the process of texting causes drivers to take their eyes off the road for an average of 23 seconds.⁶

Alaska and 38 other states have banned texting while driving.⁷ But an analysis of the 2011 survey of teenagers found that state laws banning texting had little effect.⁸ One author of the analysis said he believed that stopping drivers from texting will require “technological solutions” that make phones smarter to “protect teens (and others) from doing dumb things.”⁹



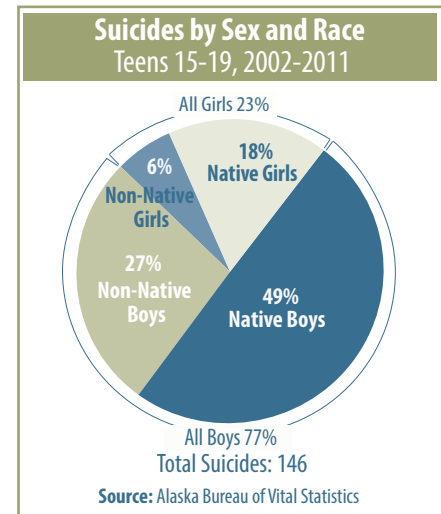
MANNER OF DEATH

The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics reports that 228 teens (ages 15-19) died in Alaska from 2007 through 2011. About 40% of those deaths were from accidents, 29% from suicides, 18% from natural causes, and 8% from homicides (see pie chart, next page).

The table translates the manner of death numbers into death rates by region and cause of death for the period 2007-2011. Rural regions are combined as “Remainder of the State,” because when the actual numbers of deaths in that five-year period are divided into specific causes, they are often too small to use for calculating reliable rates.

What stands out in the table is how much higher rates of suicide and accidental death are in areas outside Anchorage—the rate of accidental death twice as high and the rate of suicide four times higher.

TEEN DEATH RATE

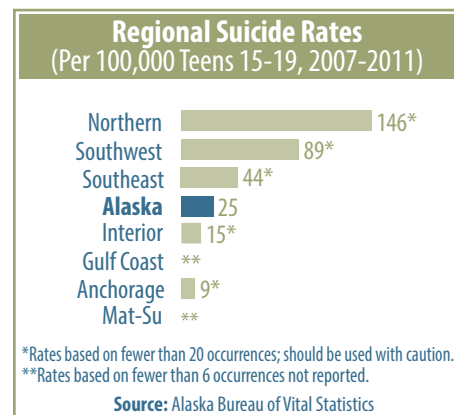


Teen Death Rates, by Manner and Region

(Rate per 100,000 Teens 15-19, 5-Year Average, 2007-2011)

Region	Accident	Homicide	Suicide	Natural
Anchorage	20*	9*	9*	15*
Interior	27*	**	15*	**
Remainder of State	44	7*	36	17*
Alaska	34	7*	25	15

*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



TEEN SUICIDE

Rates of suicide among teenagers in Alaska are much higher than the national average, which in 2013 was 8.3 per 100,000 teenagers 15 to 19.¹⁰ From 2007-2011, the statewide rate of suicide was 25 per 100,000 teenagers, and the rate in just rural areas was far higher, reaching 146 in the Northern region and 89 in the Southwest.

Boys in Alaska are by far more likely than girls to kill themselves. About three-quarters of Alaska teenagers who killed themselves in the decade from 2002-2011 were boys.

Alaska Native teenagers are far more likely than other Alaska teenagers to kill themselves. They make up only about 22% of teenagers in Alaska, but they accounted for 67% of all suicides over the decade from 2002-2011. Alaska Native boys alone accounted for nearly half of all teenage suicides, and Alaska Native girls another 18%.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Many Alaskans are working to stop teenagers from killing themselves. For example, the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council reported that 1,800 Alaskans were trained in suicide prevention in 2012, and calls to the statewide suicide prevention line increased 35% from 2010 to 2012.¹¹

In recent years high-school students themselves have worked to help prevent suicide, through campaigns of the Alaska Association of Student Governments and the 4-H Club of Tanana, among others.¹²

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

DEFINITION

Child abuse and neglect are often combined and called “child maltreatment.” The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines child abuse and neglect as “any act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver (e.g., clergy, coach, teacher) that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child” (17 or younger).¹

Acts of commission (child abuse) are deliberate and intentional physical, sexual, or psychological abuse.

Acts of omission (child neglect) are “failure to provide for a child’s basic physical, emotional, or educational needs or to protect a child from harm or potential harm.” Such neglect can be physical, emotional, medical, or educational. It can also be failing to adequately supervise children or exposing them to violent environments.

SIGNIFICANCE

Maltreatment of children is common in the United States: in a 2011 survey, 25% of children (through age 17) reported having been abused or neglected at some time in their lives.² The federal government’s Child Welfare Information Gateway reports that in 2012, nearly 700,000 American children were abused or neglected, and more than 1,600 died as a result—translating into a rate of 2.2 deaths per 100,000 children. Most victims of maltreatment—75%—are neglected.³

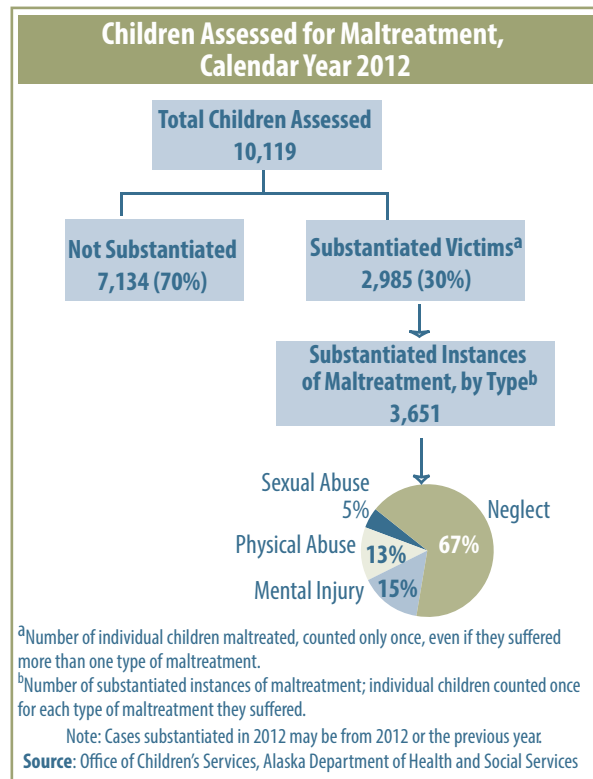
Children who don’t die as a result of mistreatment can be badly hurt. A recent analysis found that in a single year, more than 4,500 American children were hospitalized as a result of abuse.⁴ Analysts have also found that stress caused by abuse or neglect can impair the developing brain and nervous systems of children and lead to many problems as they age, including obesity, depression, drug abuse, and suicide.⁵

Besides the horrific cost to children, maltreatment also has big economic costs. In 2012, researchers estimated that health care, welfare, criminal justice, and other costs resulting from child abuse and neglect nationwide in just one year add up to nearly \$125 billion over the lifetimes of the victims.⁶

NATIONAL DATA: ALASKA AND U.S.

The KIDS COUNT Data Center compiles data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. It reports that in 2012 the U.S. average rate of confirmed child maltreatment (including both abuse and neglect) was 9 per 1,000 children 17 and younger. The reported rate for Alaska in 2012 was 15 per 1,000 children—two-thirds above the national average.

As with other indicators for Alaska, this one often fluctuates from year to year; since 2005 it has ranged from a low of 13 to a high of 21. But the Alaska rate has consistently been among the highest in the country.⁷



ALASKA OCS DATA

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services’ Office of Children’s Services (OCS) investigates reported child abuse and neglect in the state. In 2012, OCS assessed reported maltreatment of more than 10,000 children (17 and younger), and substantiated that 2,985 children, or about 30%, had been maltreated. The number of substantiated instances of abuse in 2012 was 3,651—larger than the number of individual victims, because some suffered more than one type of abuse.

As is true nationwide, neglect was by far the most common type of maltreatment among Alaska children in 2012, accounting for 67% of substantiated instances. The rest were various types of abuse—15% mental injury, 13% physical abuse, and 5% sexual abuse.

The two tables on the facing page show the number of individual victims of maltreatment and the number of substantiated instances of maltreatment in 2012.

Alaska Native children are the likeliest to be maltreated, making up nearly 60% of victims in 2012, but only an estimated 22% of all Alaskans 19 and younger. Of the other victims, 23% were White, 6% were other races, and for 13% the race was not reported.

Neglect is the most common type of maltreatment among children of all races and sexual abuse the least common.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Victims of Maltreatment,^a by Race, 2012

	Number	Percent
Alaska Native ^b	1,727	58%
White ^c	689	23%
Other Races	182	6%
Not Reported	387	13%
Total	2,985	100%

^aEach victim counted only once, even if they suffered more than one type of maltreatment.

^bChildren who are all or part Alaska Native or American Indian.

^cChildren whose only reported race is White.

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

Substantiated Instances of Maltreatment,^a by Type and by Race, 2012

	Mental Injury	Neglect	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse
Alaska Native ^b	363	1,510	211	84
White ^c	97	533	134	57
Other Races	19	113	63	23
Not reported	64	310	53	17
Total	543	2,466	461	181

^aVictims counted once for each type of substantiated maltreatment; individual children may suffer more than one type of maltreatment.

^bChildren who are all or part Alaska Native or American Indian.

^cChildren whose only reported race is White.

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

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Juvenile Justice



JUVENILE JUSTICE

DEFINITION

State and federal data in this section describe crime among those 10 to 17 in Alaska. Currently there are about 82,000 Alaskans in that age group.

State data are from the Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice. Police or other law-enforcement agencies refer Alaskans ages 10-17 to the division when they believe it is probable the juveniles committed offenses which would be criminal if committed by an adult; committed felony traffic offenses; or committed alcohol offenses after two prior convictions in district court for minor consuming.¹ These referrals are reasonable measures of juvenile crime, but they're not the same as proof of guilt.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) collects information on numbers of juvenile arrests nationwide and by state, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention reports the data. This information allows us to compare juvenile crime in Alaska and nationwide.

The Division of Juvenile Justice's numbers are for state fiscal years, July 1 to June 30. The federal numbers are for federal fiscal years, October 1 to September 30.

SIGNIFICANCE

For a long time, many Americans thought that juveniles who committed crimes should mostly be sent to juvenile correctional facilities—and that if they weren't, juvenile crime would spiral up. Today the U.S. still has a juvenile incarceration rate multiple times that of European and Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom.²

But between 1997 and 2007, the number of juveniles in correction facilities nationwide dropped 24%.³ In Alaska, the average daily number of juveniles in Division of Juvenile Justice facilities dropped by nearly half from 2003 to 2013, down from 300 to 170.⁴

An analysis for the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that the nationwide drop was due to several factors, including the long-term decline in juvenile crime rates and budget cuts that caused states to close some facilities—but also some shift in thinking about how to deal with juveniles who commit crimes.⁵

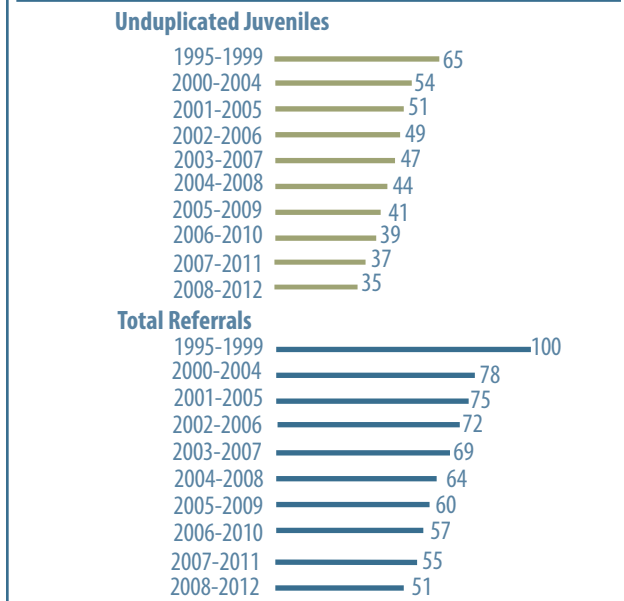
A number of analysts now believe that putting juvenile offenders in facilities is not only very expensive but also ineffective at reducing recidivism—and that many facilities are dangerous and abusive places.⁶ Research has also shown that alternatives to detention—like restorative justice programs and family therapy—are not only cheaper but can be more effective at reducing recidivism.⁷

One example of an Alaska program to help teenagers stay out of the juvenile justice system is StepUp, begun in 2009 by the Division of Juvenile Justice and the Anchorage School District. That program gives teenagers expelled from school or facing long suspensions for fighting, carrying weapons, or other aggressive behavior a chance to get back in school. Researchers report that of the 100 students who went through the program from 2009-2013, 80% continued some form of education.⁸

STATE CRIME DATA

Rates of juvenile crime in Alaska dropped consistently in all periods from 1995-1999 through 2008-2012. The rate of individual juveniles referred to the division dropped from 65 per 1,000 juveniles to 35, and the rate of total referrals (counting multiple offenses by the same juvenile) dropped from 100 per 1,000 to 51. Those are declines of nearly 50%.

Juvenile Referrals in Alaska, 1995-1999 to 2008-2012
(Referral Rates per 1,000 Juveniles 10-17, 5-Year Averages)



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

Before we discuss rates of juvenile crime by race and region in Alaska, the table below estimates how the racial composition of the total juvenile population varies by region. Most juveniles in the remote Northern and Southwest regions are Alaska Natives. In other regions most are White, but in Anchorage 25% are either Asian and Pacific Islander or Black.

Alaska Juvenile Population (Ages 10-19) by Race and Region, 2011 Estimates				
	Alaska Native ^a	Black	White	Asian/ Pacific Isl.
Region				
Anchorage	11.9%	10.1%	63.4%	14.6%
Mat-Su	10.2%	2.6%	84.8%	2.3%
Gulf Coast	14.8%	1.4%	77.2%	6.7%
Interior	15.7%	7.5%	73.7%	3.0%
Northern	86.9%	1.1%	10.2%	1.7%
Southeast	25.2%	2.3%	65.0%	6.8%
Southwest	85.7%	1.1%	10.7%	2.5%
Alaska	21.9%	6.0%	63.7%	7.8%

^aAlso includes American Indians, who make up an estimated 0.8% to 1.8% of Alaskans under 18.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis, Demographic Unit

JUVENILE JUSTICE

In the Northern and Southwest regions, where most juveniles are Alaska Native, they accounted for most of the referrals to the Division of Juvenile Justice from 2008-2012. And in the Mat-Su and Gulf Coast, where most juveniles are White, they made up most of the referrals.

In other regions, the picture was more mixed. Alaska Natives were referred to the division in higher percentages than they make up of all juveniles in the Interior and Southeast. In Anchorage, juveniles from minorities, except for Asian and Pacific Islanders, tended to be referred in higher percentages than they make up of the population.

Juveniles (Ages 10-17) Referred to Juvenile Justice System, by Race and Region, Fiscal Years 2008-2012^a

	Alaska Native	Black	White	NH/ Pacific Isl.	Asian	MultiRace	Other/ Unknown
Region							
Anchorage	17%	15%	42%	5%	4%	9%	8%
Mat-Su	12%	2%	80%	0%	1%	2%	3%
Gulf Coast	10%	1%	72%	1%	3%	8%	5%
Interior	34%	9%	52%	0%	0%	3%	2%
Northern	91%	0%	3%	0%	0%	4%	1%
Southeast	36%	2%	48%	1%	1%	4%	8%
Southwest	95%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Alaska	30%	8%	45%	3%	2%	6%	6%

^aThis is an unduplicated count of all individual juveniles referred to Alaska's juvenile justice system from 2008 through 2012. Race is reported by the juvenile.
Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice

Juvenile (Ages 10-17) Delinquency Referrals^a by Region and Type of Offense (5 - Year Averages, Fiscal Years 2008-2012^b)

Region	Offenses Against Persons		Offenses Against Property		Drug/Alcohol Laws		Other ^c		Total ^d	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Anchorage	359	19%	889	47%	159	8%	482	25%	1,889	100%
Mat-Su	65	16%	212	52%	64	16%	66	16%	407	100%
Gulf Coast	82	17%	204	43%	79	16%	113	24%	478	100%
Interior	91	18%	213	42%	76	15%	131	26%	511	100%
Northern	86	23%	159	43%	20	5%	108	29%	373	100%
Southeast	90	14%	218	34%	73	11%	258	40%	639	100%
Southwest	87	29%	135	44%	13	4%	70	23%	305	100%
Alaska	860	19%	2,029	44%	480	10%	1,228	27%	4,602	100%

^aThese 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.

^bThe state fiscal year is from July 1 through June 30. ^cIncludes probation violations, violations of public order and weapons laws, and miscellaneous other offenses. ^dAnnual 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

Property crimes were the most common from 2008-2012, statewide and in all regions except Southeast, where other crimes—like violations of public order and weapons laws—were most frequent. Property crimes include burglary, auto and other theft, credit card fraud, and arson.

Crimes against people made up about 20% of crimes statewide and in most regions from 2008-2012, but slightly more in the Southwest and Northern regions and less in Southeast and Mat-Su. Those crimes include sexual abuse, assault, robbery, kidnapping, and homicide.

Violations of drug, alcohol, and weapons laws and of probation or public order, along with miscellaneous other offenses, made up about a third of juvenile crime across most of Alaska in recent years—but more than half in Southeast.

About 70% of referrals statewide from 2008-2012 were of boys and 30% of girls. Referrals by region ranged from 66% boys in Anchorage to nearly 80% boys in the Northern and Southwest regions. (Breakdown not shown in the table but based on Division of Juvenile Justice data.)

JUVENILE JUSTICE

FEDERAL CRIME DATA

Federal data show that the juvenile arrest rate for all types of crimes nationwide was 46% lower in 2010 than in 1994—and in Alaska that drop was more than 50%, as the bar graphs at the bottom of the page show. In 1994 the arrest rate in Alaska was higher than the national average. But because Alaska’s rate declined faster in the past 20 years, the rate for all juvenile crime was lower in Alaska by 2010: 4,612 arrests per 100,000 juveniles in Alaska, compared with 4,889 in the U.S. as a whole.

Property crimes also took a big drop, across the country and in Alaska. The juvenile arrest rate for property crimes in Alaska dropped 67% from 1994 to 2010. But it still remained above the U.S. average in 2010—1,332 arrests per 100,000 juveniles, compared with the U.S. average of 1,091.

Rates of violent crime among juveniles also dropped sharply in Alaska and across the country between 1994 and 2010—the U.S. average was down more than 50% while Alaska’s rate dropped 40%. In 2010, Alaska’s juvenile arrest rate for violent crimes was 239 per 100,000 juveniles, while the national rate was 226.

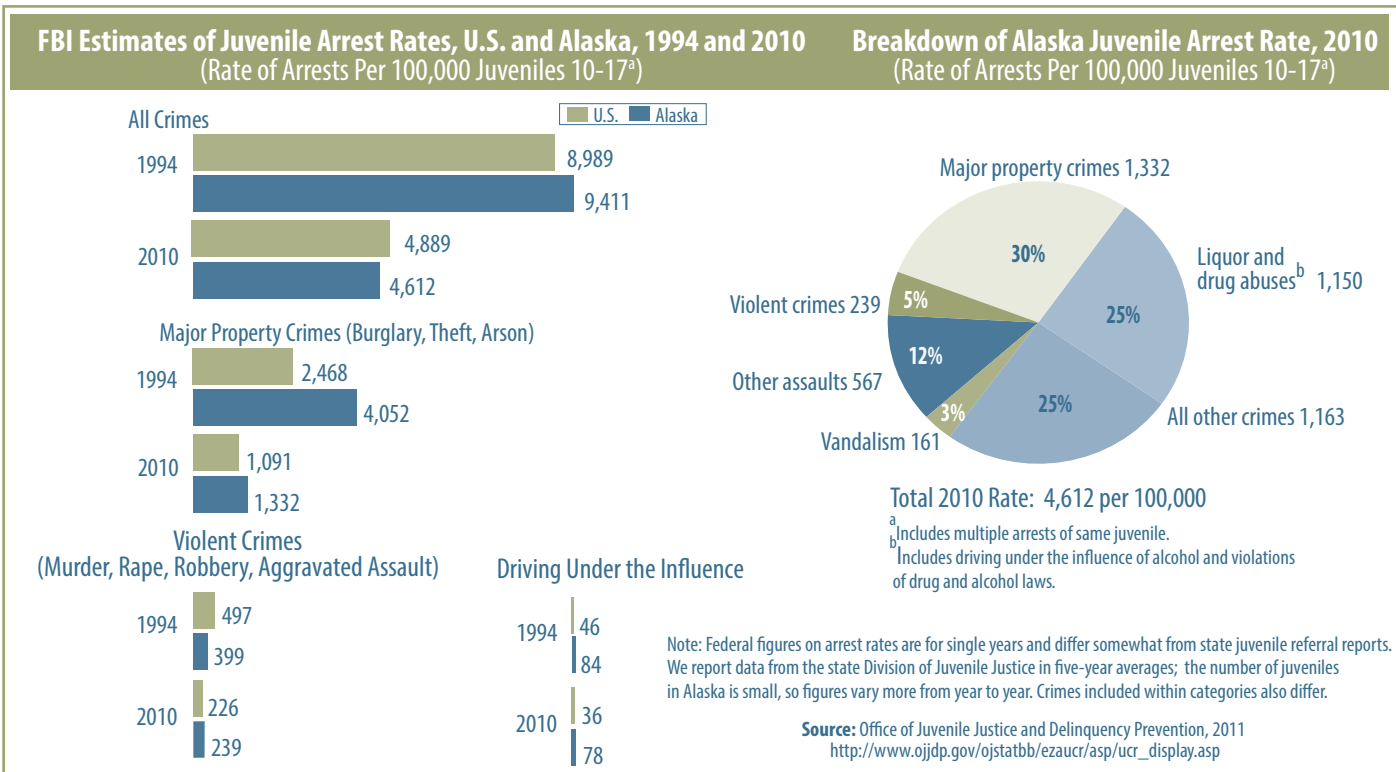
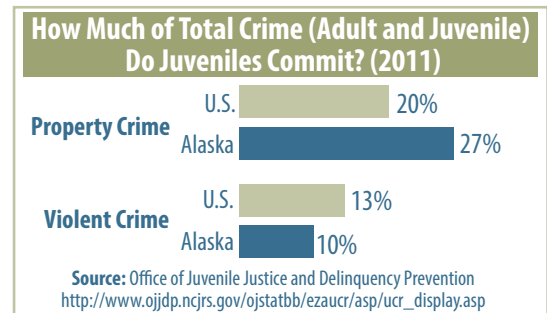
The pie chart adjacent to the bar graphs breaks down 2010 federal data on juvenile arrests in Alaska by major crime categories. This breakdown differs from what state data show, because the federal figures use somewhat different crime categories and they are for just a single year.

In 2010 major property crimes accounted for 30% of juvenile arrests in Alaska, liquor and drug abuses 25%, violent crimes 5%, other assaults 12%, and all other crimes 28%.

JUVENILE VERSUS ADULT CRIME

How much of total crime in the U.S. and Alaska do juveniles commit? Federal data show that nationwide in 2011 juveniles committed about 20% of property crime (including burglary, larceny, theft, and arson) and about 13% of violent crime (including murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault).

In Alaska, juveniles committed more of the property crime and less of the violent crime: 27% of the property crime and 10% of the violent crime.



JUVENILE JUSTICE

DUI

Nationally, juvenile arrest rates for driving under the influence of alcohol have steadily declined in recent years, dropping from 58 per 100,000 juveniles in 2006 to 30 by 2011.

As is true with other indicators, the juvenile arrest rate fluctuates more from year to year in Alaska than it does nationwide. But overall it is down from a decade ago, and it dropped from a spike of 116 per 100,000 juveniles in 2007 to 70 in 2011. Still, it remains more than double the national rate.

A non-profit organization that has studied costs of underage drinking nationwide reports that in 2010 underage drinking in Alaska cost more than \$320 million, taking into account, among other things, costs of teenage violence, car crashes, property crimes, and treatment programs (see table).

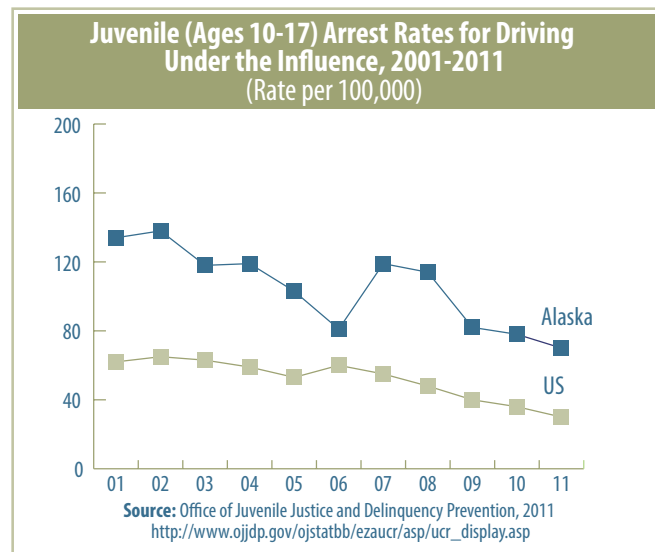
DISPARITIES BY RACE

The Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice is concerned about the high proportion of Alaska Natives 10-17 in the juvenile justice system. The number of referrals of Alaska Native juveniles has fallen sharply over the past decade—as it has among other racial groups—and in 2013 was nearly 50% smaller than it had been in 2003. Still, in 2013 Alaska Natives accounted for about 37% of referrals, while making up only about 22% of the general Alaska population that age.⁹

The division reports that it is working to reduce that disproportionality, by holding mini-conferences in rural communities, to help prevent crime and improve communication; by increasing the focus on cultural programs at juvenile facilities; and by hiring a rural specialist focused on the problem.¹⁰

RECIDIVISM

The Division of Juvenile Justice reports it is also working to reduce recidivism among juvenile offenders. Data from the division show that among juveniles who committed the most serious crimes and completed court-ordered institutional treatment in fiscal year 2009, about 71% committed other crimes within two years. In the same year, 41% of those who committed less serious crimes and completed court-ordered probation programs committed more crimes within two years. The division hopes to reduce those rates of recidivism through a number of treatment programs that improve education and job skills of juvenile offenders.¹¹



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
Total	\$321.4

Source: Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation
<http://www.udetc.org/factsheets/AK.pdf>

ENDNOTES FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE

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3. Richard A. Mendel, *No Place For Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration*, 2011. Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved at <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-NoPlaceForKidsFullReport-2011.pdf>. See page 38.
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10. Matt Davidson, program coordinator, Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice. E-mail reporting disproportionate minority contact and recidivism, June 19, 2013.
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