

2020 Alaska Progress Report

The essential reference for policy makers.



Contents

49 Measures for the 49th State

What are the primary leading and lagging indicators?

1. Demographics
2. Disparities

Education

Are children entering school ready to learn?

3. Ready to Learn

Are students graduating prepared for postsecondary opportunities?

4. Students
5. Teachers
6. Schools
7. Curricula

Do postsecondary institutions enable personal and professional development?

8. Postsecondary Institutions
9. Higher Degrees

Economy

Do Alaskans have access to quality jobs at livable wages?

10. Income
11. Poverty
12. Employment & Wages
13. Unemployment
14. Workforce Development

Are businesses encouraged to innovate and grow?

15. Small Business
16. Costs of Business
17. Transportation

Is economic growth sustainable?

18. Diversification
19. Federal Spending

Environment

Are biological diversity and wilderness areas being preserved?

20. Biodiversity
21. Wilderness

Are air, land and water quality being maintained?

22. Air Quality
23. Land Quality
24. Water Quality

Are energy and natural resource conservation being encouraged?

25. Fisheries
26. Energy
27. Waste

Communities

Are communities safe?

28. Crime
29. Courts
30. Corrections

Are communities healthy?

31. Access to Health Care
32. Mothers and Infants
33. Children and Teens
34. Physical Health
35. Mental Health
36. Substance Abuse
37. Risky Behavior

How livable are communities?

38. Housing Costs
39. Nonprofit Sector
40. Social Capital
41. Subsistence

Government

Is government trusted?

42. Public Opinion
43. Voting & Elections
44. Public Management

Is government effective and efficient?

45. Cost of Government
46. Missions & Measures

Is government sustainable?

47. Balanced Budget
48. Net Assets
49. Public Debt

About the cover: With budget pressures, three straight years of population decline, depressed oil revenue and downgraded credit ratings Alaska faces challenges like never before.

2020 ALASKA PROGRESS REPORT

Ken Osterkamp, Editor

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Are We There Yet?



Ken Osterkamp, Editor

Twenty years ago Alaska 20/20 was vigorously pursuing its mission to engage Alaskans in creating a shared vision for the future of our great state. The name was a reference to both clear vision and the year 2020. Well, 2020 is here and although the challenges before us are clear—three years of population decline, a recession that's just ending, depressed oil revenue and a state budget that is nowhere near balanced—the solutions now, as then, seem to be just out of reach.

The Alaska 20/20 objectives and measures of progress were the result of an unprecedented civic engagement effort and still stand as our best attempt to define where we are today, where we want to be tomorrow and how we'll know we're making progress. As we debate which path will get us there, I hope a common and consistent set of facts will provide focus to what will surely continue to be a passionate public conversation.

Hindsight

Alaskans built a solid foundation of civic dialogue beginning with the Alaska State Constitutional Convention in 1955. The Brookings Institution visioning forum sponsored by the Legislative Council in 1969 deliberated uses for the more than \$900 million raised from the North Slope oil lease sale.

The 1997 Principles and Interests Conference asked Alaskans to consider the future of the Permanent Fund, and the 2004 Conference of Alaskans in Fairbanks used the original convention model to bring together 55 Alaskans from all walks of life to discuss public finance.

The Alaska Humanities Forum played a key role in bringing together Alaskans from across the state and across the political spectrum. In December 1999 the Forum resolved "to launch a process to engage their fellow citizens in a long-term, ongoing dialogue, to learn first what we Alaskans value now, and to help the state plan a strategy to influence and direct the future economic, social and community development of the last frontier."

The participants named the process Alaska 20/20, a non-partisan, facilitated dialogue involving every part of the state, giving Alaskans an opportunity to share their values and ideas, and to become engaged in creating a common vision for the future. The process would include a report card to measure Alaska's progress towards realizing this common vision, setting Alaska 20/20 apart from earlier efforts and ensuring transparency and accountability.

A chorus of strong voices

In the fall of 2001 a statewide Alaska Values Survey of 1,000 households was conducted to identify issues important to Alaskans. Focus group meetings in a host of communities around the state followed the survey.

The results were presented in November 2001 at the Conference on Alaska's Future, where more than five hundred Alaskans met in Anchorage for two amazing days. They raised what University of Alaska President Mark Hamilton called "a chorus of strong voices," to develop the visions and goals that would become the focus of a statewide conversation.

Young and old, urban and rural, Alaskans from across the state shared their hopes and dreams for the future of Alaska's education, economy, environment, communities and government. The conference report was distributed statewide to more than 180,000 newspaper readers.

Following the publication of the report more than 2,000 Alaskans weighed in with their views on the future of Alaska, filling out a survey distributed statewide and made available on the Internet. Throughout 2002 over a hundred meetings were held across the state to gather the thoughts and opinions of Alaskans.

In 2003 Alaska 20/20 and the First Alaskans Institute worked together to design A Survey of Native Perspectives on Alaska Issues. 500 Alaska Native households were surveyed by telephone and the results were incorporated into the Alaska 20/20 goals and objectives.

The road ahead

In 2003 five public workgroups reviewed the progress of Alaska 20/20 and presented their recommendations at a Report Card Workshop in December 2003. A group of more than sixty Alaskans representing a wide range of organizations discussed and participated in an advisory vote on what they believed were the best measures of progress.

These findings were compiled into a draft report card that was released at the February 2004 State of the State Conference. Participants discussed priorities among the various issues and strategies for making progress on them.

The first Alaska Progress Report was published in October 2004; more than 10,000 print copies were distributed and thousands more accessed online. Two more reports followed, the 2005-06 edition and a 2007 edition published in cooperation with the United Way of Anchorage.

Alaska 20/20 officially closed its doors in 2007 after the last Alaska Progress Report was finished, but the need for a document that tracks our journey towards a better future is more urgent now than ever. The result of that need is this, the 2020 Alaska Progress Report.

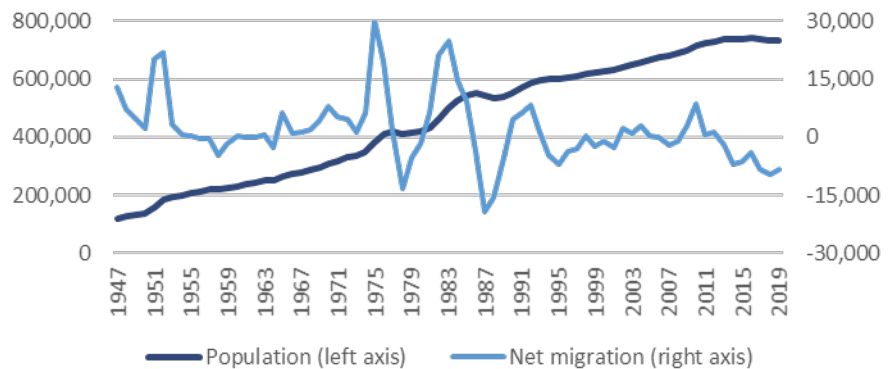
1. Demographics

The quantity and quality of the overall population are leading indicators in that they strongly influence other measures.

2019 was the third straight year Alaska's population declined slightly, due to fewer births and net out-migration.

Alaska's aging population will result in both higher demand for medical services, with more high-paying medical sector jobs, and higher state expenditures, for Medicaid and other services.

Alaska's population 1947-2019. It has declined for three years in a row due to fewer births and less in-migration.



Data: US Census Bureau

Abridged from "Alaska Population Overview: 2018 Estimates," Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, December 2019.

State population estimate

The population of Alaska was 736,239 in 2018 and represented 0.2 percent of the national population. Fifty-one percent of the population was male, and 49 percent was female.

Age

Alaska's median age was 35.2 in 2018, somewhat younger than the national median of 38.2. 87,304 Alaskans were age 65 or older, representing 12 percent of the state. The school age population (children ages 5 to 17) of Alaska was 135,947 or 18 percent. Areas with larger percentages of Alaska Natives were generally younger.

Race and ethnicity

Alaska's population was 15 percent Alaska Native or American Indian, 65 percent white, 7 percent Asian, 4 percent African American, 1 percent Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 7 percent multirace in 2018. Seven percent of Alaskans were of Hispanic origin.

Migration

Migration is the most unpredictable component of population change. From 2017 to 2018 Alaska's high migration rates continued with 38,630 migrating into the state and 46,207 migrating out, for a net migration loss of 7,577 people. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough led the state in growth due to net migration.

Births and deaths

From 2017 to 2018, 10,367 babies were born in Alaska, a birth rate of 1.4 per 100 people compared to 1.2 per 100 for the nation. Alaska had 4,398 deaths, a relatively small number and in line with our population's relatively young age.

Population centers

Eighty percent of Alaska's population lived in places with populations of 2,500 or more in 2018. Cities with more than 10,000 people included the Municipality of Anchorage (295,365), the City and Borough of Juneau (32,247), and the City of Fairbanks (31,668), together home to nearly half of Alaska's population. The five boroughs in the state with the largest populations made up 80 percent of the state in 2018: Anchorage, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (105,743 people), Fairbanks North Star Borough (97,121), Kenai Peninsula Borough (58,471), and City and Borough of Juneau.

Alaska is the second youngest state but is aging at the fastest rate in the nation, twice as fast as the national average.

Households & group quarters

Alaska had 256,886 households in 2018, and the average size was 2.8 people. Thirty-six percent of households had one or more people under age 18, and 24 percent had one or more people age 65 or older.

Editor's note

In 2017 Alaska was the second youngest state after Utah. From 2006-2016 we aged at the fastest rate: 65.6 percent, double the national rate. Alaska has the highest percentage of veterans, 12.5 percent in 2015 versus 7.6 percent nationwide. After Hawaii, Alaska was the second most multiracial state in 2013 at 7.1 percent, versus 2.4 percent nationwide.

More information

Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics: live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/index.cfm

Anchorage Daily News: www.adn.com/alaska-news/2020/01/09/alaskas-population-drops-for-the-3rd-year-in-a-row

US Census Bureau: www.census.gov

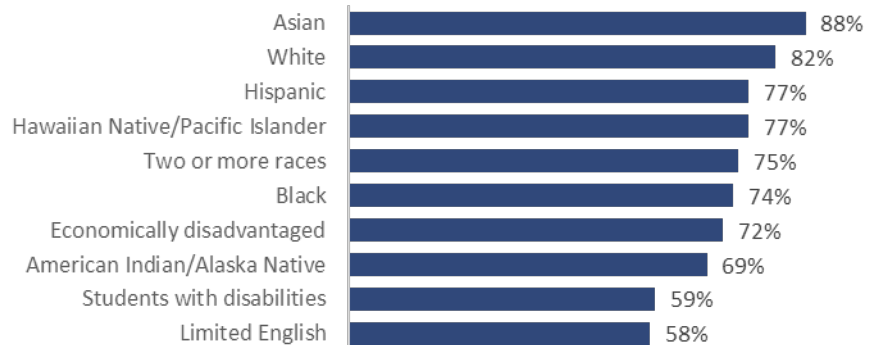
2. Disparities

Quality of life is not equal for all Alaskans. This is often normal and no cause for concern, however some disparities are severe, recurring and disproportionately affect specific groups of Alaskans.

These inequalities can challenge our society's core values of justice, fairness, and equity.

The complex nature of the causes of these conditions, including racism, can defy easy solutions, but the social and economic costs of not addressing them may be much higher.

Public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate, for school year 2016-17. Alaska's 78 percent overall rate, versus 85 percent nationwide, tied for the third-worst in the nation.



Data: National Center for Education Statistics

Abridged from "Status of Alaska Natives," Institute of Social and Economic Research, May 2004.

Status of Alaska Natives

The story since 1990 for Alaska Natives is a mixed one. They gained thousands of new jobs and improved their incomes, as they have every decade since 1960. Native women in particular continued to move into the work force. But the gains in the 1990s were smaller, and thousands of Natives who wanted jobs couldn't find them. The modest income gains were not in wages but mostly in transfer payments, including the state Permanent Fund dividend.

Native incomes on average remain just over half those of other Alaskans, and Natives are still about a third less likely to have jobs. Native households are three times more likely to be poor; poverty is especially high among households headed by women. These economic problems are all worse for Natives in remote rural villages. Subsistence hunting and fishing continue to be crucial not only for cultural but also for economic reasons.

Basic housing, sanitation, and health care in Native villages also continued to improve in the past decade. With better living conditions and improved access to health care, more Native babies are surviving and Native people are living longer. Hepatitis and other illnesses linked to poor sanitation have dwindled.

But the effects of the modern American diet and way of living are becoming more apparent among Native people, who now die from heart disease and cancer at higher rates than other Alaskans. Climbing rates of diabetes are a growing worry for doctors and the Native community.

Natives are also more likely to smoke, although rates among Native teenagers are dropping. Natives continue to die by accident, suicide, or homicide much more often than other Alaskans. But rates of accidental death are down significantly.

Widespread alcohol abuse continues to fuel high rates of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, child abuse, domestic violence, and other crimes. But Native communities are fighting back, with two thirds imposing some local controls on alcohol. More Natives also entered alcohol-treatment programs in the 1990s.

More Alaska Natives are graduating from high school and going on to college, especially women. But Native students are also more apt to drop out of school, and many fail standard tests. Native students' knowledge of their own cultures and languages is also an important gauge of education, but we currently have no way to measure such knowledge.

Editor's note

Alaska Natives have improved on many indicators of social and economic progress since the 2004 ISER report. Unfortunately, as detailed in the 2017 Alaska Native Health Status Report, Alaska Natives continue to trail non-Natives across many key indicators of morbidity and mortality.

In 2018 Alaska trailed only Utah for the most equitable distribution of income among states as measured by the Gini Coefficient. This is likely due to the relatively high personal income of Alaskans, lack of extremely rich individuals and the leveling effect of the permanent fund dividend.

The story since 1990 for Alaska Natives is a mixed one.

More information

Alaska Department of Education & Early Development: www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/results.html
 Alaska Native Epidemiology Center: anthctoday.org/epicenter/publications.html
 Institute of Social & Economic Research: www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu