

# ALASKA ECONOMIC **TRENDS**

DECEMBER 2009

## The 2010 Census

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In some ways, Alaska's not so different

#### Housing Affordability

Record affordability in Alaska's housing market



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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Cover: The Inupiat Eskimo village of Noorvik, pop. 642, shown, is 45 miles east of Kotzebue. The first residents of the nation will be counted there on Jan. 25, launching Census 2010. The photo was taken by Isao Yuguchi of Japan, an adventurer and small-plane pilot, in 2008 as part of his "2006-2008 Alaska Flight Journey" that he chronicles in photos, and mostly in Japanese, on his Web site, [talkeetna.jp](http://talkeetna.jp). Photo used with permission.

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## First Resident Counted in 2010 U.S. Census Will Be an Alaskan

By Commissioner Click Bishop

This month's *Trends* focuses on the 2010 U.S. Census. Every 10 years since 1790, the U.S. government has taken a constitutionally mandated census of our nation's population.

The count is used to allocate congressional seats, electoral votes and government funding among states. Using population-driven financing formulas based on census data, the federal government will allocate more than \$400 billion among the states every year.

The concept of counting residents dates to Biblical times and, according to historians, the first census in North America was in 1576, 200 years before American independence from the British.

Alaska will be ground zero for the 2010 Census – the first U.S. resident counted on Jan. 25 will be from the Native village of Noorvik. Because of our challenging geography and climate, coupled with a multitude of cultures and languages, counting begins in rural Alaska prior to the official April 1 census kickoff.

Since 1981, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section, which works closely with the U.S. Census Bureau, has played a key role in Alaska census planning. Research and Analysis is the lead agency of the Census and Geographic Information Network, a group of 10 affiliate state agencies and local government planning offices.

Research and Analysis, on its recently redesigned Web pages on the census, [labor.alaska.gov/research/census](http://labor.alaska.gov/research/census), has local, state and national information and links for more information.

The census is more than just a head count. Participating in the census is in everyone's interest. The federal government uses census numbers each year to allocate funds for everything from job training, housing and community development to health care services.

Our state, local and tribal governments use census data for planning and allocating funds for new schools and roads as well as the location of police and fire departments.

Community organizations use the numbers to develop social service and community action projects.

Businesses use census numbers to decide where to locate retail centers, movie theaters, banks and offices – most often leading to new jobs.

Census data are used to set Alaska legislative election districts.

Many emergency systems are based on maps developed for the last census. Census information helps health providers predict the spread of diseases. And during floods, tornadoes or earthquakes, census numbers help rescuers plan for how many people will need help.

Census counting will continue through at least July – all Alaskans need to be counted.

## Why it's important and how it will work in Alaska

**I**f the U.S. Census Bureau wants to count Alaskans living in remote areas they've got to be flexible enough to show up when people are home and that's exactly what they're planning to do.

On Jan. 25, 2010 – before spring breakup and when many rural Alaskans head off to their fish camps – Census Bureau Director Robert Groves plans to personally fly to Noorvik, to meet and tally the first residents in the nation to be counted for Census 2010. Noorvik, a primarily Inupiat Eskimo community of 642 residents, is 45 miles east of Kotzebue.

While the official census date is April 1, 2010, early counting in rural Alaska begins in January and census takers will be working through at least July 2010 to obtain a complete count for the nation.

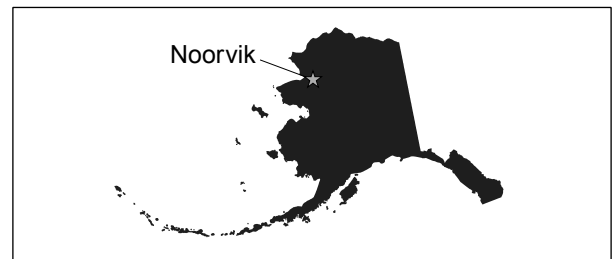
Alaska's challenging geography, climate and logistical issues along with multiple cultures and languages make Alaska an exciting place to launch the census.

### How the census is conducted in Alaska

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development has worked in conjunction with the Census Bureau for the past decade to make sure the 2010 Census gets as complete a count of Alaskans as possible.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after the 2000 Census was completed and data were delivered, evaluation and planning began for 2010. States, including Alaska, focused

<sup>1</sup> Research and Analysis has had a cooperative agreement with the Census Bureau since 1981 to help the bureau with census geographic programs, and to disseminate data when the data are released and to answer data requests. Research and Analysis does that work, along with nine other state and local government agencies in Alaska, through the Census and Geographic Information Network.



on updating boundary changes and indentifying new housing units to be included in 2010.

The process for counting Alaskans who have their mail delivered at home is quite simple. The Census Bureau will send a postcard in early March alerting people to be on the watch for the questionnaire. The questionnaire itself will be mailed between March 15 and March 17 and if the Census Bureau hasn't gotten it back within two weeks, a census worker will make a site visit.

If a household doesn't receive mail at home – usually those with post office boxes – an enumerator (census worker) will deliver the form and request it be mailed back. If the form isn't returned within two weeks, the census worker will make a site visit and collect the form. (The Census Bureau is persistent; the bureau will make up to six visits to collect the questionnaire!)

There has been concern that people who receive their mail at a post office box rather than a residential address will be missed in the census. That shouldn't happen.

All housing units across the state have been identified – whether they receive mail at their residence or not. If a census form is mailed and returned because there's no mailbox, a census worker will take a questionnaire to the home at the address. Since the address and housing unit had been verified earlier, a census worker in most cases will be able to either complete it

while there or leave it for someone in the home to complete and return.

Since the 1990 Census, the Census Bureau has worked with representatives of Alaska's Native villages to ensure all village residents are counted and that they're counted in the community where they live. Each village has identified a person to be the census liaison and to help with the census enumeration.

People who live in "group quarters" – nursing homes, prisons, dormitories, youth facilities, shelters and military barracks – and people displaced due to a natural disaster, will be counted in person at the facility where they're residing.

### **The shorter census form: easier to complete, but less data**

The United States has had a census every 10 years since the first one in 1790, and the form for the 2010 Census is one of the shortest and simplest of any of the decennial censuses.<sup>2</sup> It should only take about 10 minutes to complete. There are 10 questions on the form; six for each person in the household and four for the household itself. Information collected on each person:

- Name
- Sex
- Age and date of birth
- Relationship to the person who owns or rents the residence
- If the person is of Hispanic origin
- Race
- If the person lives or stays elsewhere

Information collected on the household:

- If the housing unit is owned or rented
- Telephone number
- Number of people living in the residence
- If any additional people who lived at the residence on April 1, 2010, weren't included in the spaces for six people on the census form

<sup>2</sup> The decennial census is a count of the U.S. population conducted every 10 years by the Census Bureau in years ending in zero.

Past censuses have asked a sample of the population to complete what was commonly called "the long form."<sup>3</sup> It asked detailed questions to create a "snapshot" of the social and economic characteristics of the population. It asked questions about education, income, occupation and commuting patterns of people in the household. The form also asked housing unit questions such as the type of housing structure, the year it was built and the number of rooms.

The "long-form" has been replaced by the American Community Survey and the ACS is a part of the Census 2010. ACS data will be more current as it collects detailed social and economic information every year rather than every 10 years. Instead of being a "snapshot" of characteristic data, the ACS provides a "moving image."

ACS data have been collected and tabulated since 2001 and so far are limited only to the areas in the state with larger populations.<sup>4</sup>

### **Am I required to respond to the census and why should I?**

Actually, yes, you're required to respond. Title 13 of the U.S. Code requires residents of the United States and its territories to fill out and return the census questionnaire. Though the law authorizes fines for noncompliance,<sup>5</sup> the Census Bureau instead focuses on encouraging residents to take part in the census because of its importance to their communities.

The U.S. Constitution requires that the census be an actual count of every person living in the

<sup>3</sup> For the 2000 Census, about one in five households in Anchorage and the Fairbanks North Star Borough received the long form, one in four households outside Anchorage and the Fairbanks borough, and one in two in many villages. Nationally, it went to one in six, or an average of 17 percent of the households.

<sup>4</sup> The ACS data releases are staggered by the size of the population of the area; for areas with smaller populations, the data need to be collected over longer time periods to yield statistically relevant samples. For instance, for areas with populations less than 65,000, the data are released as three-year or five-year rolling averages. The ACS survey is collected in every U.S. county – census areas and boroughs in Alaska – from 12 independent monthly samples of randomly selected addresses. That equates to about 3 million of the nation's households being contacted each year. For more on the ACS, go to Research and Analysis' Web page on the ACS at [labor.alaska.gov/research/census/acs.htm](http://labor.alaska.gov/research/census/acs.htm).

<sup>5</sup> Anyone who fails to respond to the census or ACS could be fined up to \$5,000. Anyone who willfully gives a false answer could be fined up to \$500.

# 1 A Timeline Alaska, 2009 to 2013

## 2010 Census

### Fall 2009

Recruitment began for local census jobs for 2010 Census operations.

### Jan. 25, 2010

The U.S. census begins in Noorvik. Census workers will then continue the count in Alaska's remote areas.

### February 2010 to March 2010

Census questionnaires are mailed between March 15 and March 17 or delivered to households.

### April 1, 2010

Census Day!

### April 2010 to July 2010

Census takers visit households that didn't return a questionnaire by mail.

### December 2010

By law, Census Bureau delivers population counts to the U.S. President for apportionment on or before Dec. 31, 2010.

### March 2011

By law, Census Bureau completes delivery of redistricting data to states.

### April 2011 to September 2013

Census data products such as demographic profiles, summary files of aggregated data and reports will be released on a flow basis.

*Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Census Bureau; Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section*

United States – both citizens and non-citizens. No Census Bureau worker will ever ask anyone's legal residency status or citizenship.

The information gathered in Census 2010 will be a primary benchmark for measuring historical change and making population projections.

## Redistricting – an important use of census data

Census data are used to determine the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives, out of a total 435 seats. Each state uses census data to redraw voting districts after each decennial census – called redistricting – affecting the elections for state legislatures, borough assemblies, county commissioners, city councils, school boards and so forth.

The Alaska Legislature's 40 House election districts will likely shift as the state's population distribution has changed over the last decade. The Alaska Department of Labor has created electronic map files with the current voting precinct and district boundaries, and has given that information to the Census Bureau. Alaska's population data will then be available at the census block

and political geography levels to help members of the state's Redistricting Board with their work.

## Government funds allocated by population

Every year, more than \$400 billion in federal funds are distributed nationally to local, state and tribal governments based on census data.

Governments at all levels use the data for purposes ranging from determining revenue sharing for communities, to locating schools, roads and hospitals, and forecasting future transportation needs.

Many federal and other governmental programs require census data to support grant applications for community services, such as school lunch programs, day care programs and services for the elderly.

Businesses use the data for planning and expansion, and private citizens can access the information for educational research or making personal decisions such as where they might like to live.

## Census data is confidential

Some people are understandably concerned about giving out personal information. Census workers will be carrying government-issued identification and the Census Bureau encourages people to ask to see it. All census workers undergo an FBI name background check, get fingerprinted and take a lifetime oath of confidentiality.

The Census Bureau doesn't share individual census records with anyone – the courts, police, IRS, FBI, CIA or any other agency or individual<sup>6</sup> – until 72 years after the record is collected. Then it's sent to the National Archives, where it will be used for genealogical research.

## Filling out the census form

The majority of forms are in English, but for the first time, bilingual forms will be sent to areas with large numbers of Spanish-only households. People will also be able to call a toll-free number to request forms in five non-English lan-

<sup>6</sup> The penalty for disclosing someone's census record is a fine of up to \$250,000 or five years in prison, or both.





























