

Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) Senior Snapshot Older Alaskans in 2020/21

The Alaska Commission on Aging gathers data annually to provide a snapshot in time of the health and well-being of Alaskan residents, age 60 years and older. The Senior Snapshot incorporates the latest data available. However, due to data source limitations, some senior statistics are tracked for ages 60+ and others are tracked for ages 65+.

Below are highlights from the 2020/2021 Senior Snapshot as well as the data sources compiled to complete this report. Thank you to the people and organizations who provided data for this Snapshot.

Population Growth

Alaska continues to be the fastest growing senior population per capita for the ninth consecutive year. In three states, the age 65 and over population increased by 50% or more between the years of 2007 and 2018: Alaska (69%); Nevada (57%); Colorado (58%). *Source: 2020 Profile of Older Americans, Administration on Aging.*

- Alaska's 50-plus population creates a huge economic impact and will drive economic growth for the next 30 years. Households aged 50-plus accounted for 52 cents of every dollar spent in Alaska in 2018-this will grow to 58 cents by 2050.¹
- In 2018, the 50-plus population accounted for 31% of Alaska's population, yet contributed 37% (\$23 billion) of the state's total gross domestic product (GDP). Their contribution to GDP is forecast to reach \$63 billion in 2050.²
- Alaska's population of seniors age 60+ continues to grow and increased 56.4% between 2010 and 2021.
- Total population declined 0.5% from 2019 to 2021 due to net migration and falling birth rate.
- Despite this year's statewide population declines, those age 60+ increased by 2.3%.
- In 2020, Alaskans age 60+ represent 19.5% of the state's total population.
- Alaska's senior population has increased in all regions across the state from 2010 to 2020, with all regions experiencing an increase.
- Southeast Alaska continues to have the highest concentration of seniors where almost one in four residents in the region is an adult age 60+. *Source: Alaska Department of Labor Workforce and Development, Research and Analysis, 2020 Population Estimates.*

¹ AARP Vital Voices Survey. AARP Research, 2020. <https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/life/info-2021/aarp-vital-voices-survey-program.html>

Issues Impacting the Lives of Alaskan Seniors

Poverty

The percentage of Alaska seniors (age 65+) living below poverty levels increased from 5.3 percent in 2010 to 6.9 percent in 2019.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates; Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement; American Community Survey.

Mortality Rates

While mortality rates for Alaskan seniors are lower than most of the leading causes of death such as cancer, diabetes, chronic lower respiratory diseases, and others, Alaskan seniors have a higher mortality rates due to causes linked to behavioral health conditions.

Mortality rates for senior suicide, chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, fatal falls, and alcohol-induced deaths are higher for the Alaska senior population than national averages. These figures suggest that behavioral health programs targeted to seniors with depression, other mental illness, and substance abuse problems could have a positive impact on the quality of life for older Alaskans.

Alzheimer's Disease is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States. More than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's.

Source: Alaska Healthy Analytics & Vital Records, 2020, National Alzheimer's Disease Information, <https://www.alz.org>

The Cost of Long-Term Care

Long-Term care involves a variety of services designed to meet a person's health or personal care needs. These services help people live as independently and safely as possible when they can no longer perform everyday activities on their own. The cost of long-term care costs varies based on the amount and types of care provided. Examples of long-term care provided in the community are personal care, adult day care, assisted living, transportation, and home delivered meals. Long term care can also be provided in a nursing home and is much more expensive.

Level of Care	Personal Care	Community-based Care	Nursing Home Care
Alaska 2020 Average Cost / Person	\$12,155	\$35,846	\$156,956

Source: State of Alaska Automated Budget system, Final Auth 20 Report, Harmony, and COGNOS.

Southeast Alaska continues to have the highest concentration of seniors where almost one in four residents in the region is an adult age 60+. Alaska Department of Labor Workforce and Development, Research and Analysis, 2020 Population Estimates.

Senior Population by Region and Age Group

Population Age 60+ By Region	Percentage of Regions 2021 Population	Seniors in CY2021	Seniors in CY2020	Seniors in CY2019	Seniors in CY2010	Change in Population 2010-2021	Communities in Regions
Statewide	20.1%	147,507	142,099	138,897	90,876	62.3%	
I. Bethel Area	12.4%	3,299	3,169	3,105	2,266	45.6%	Bethel, Kusilvak Census Area
II. Interior	19.4%	21,577	20,940	20,164	13,177	63.7%	Fairbanks NSB, Yukon- Koyukuk, Denali, SE Fairbanks
III. North Slope	11.4%	1,249	1,179	1,137	856	45.9%	North Slope Borough
IV. Anchorage	19.0%	54,872	52,755	51,904	35,079	56.4%	Municipality of Anchorage
V. Southcentral	22.2%	40,832	39,310	38,153	22,762	79.3%	Kenai Peninsula, Mat-Su, Copper River, Chugach
VI. Northwest	13.7%	2,356	2,270	2,243	1,681	40.2%	Nome, Northwest Arctic
VII. Southwest	7.8%	3,832	3,754	3,721	2,444	56.8%	Bristol Bay, Dillingham, Kodiak, Lake & Peninsula
VIII. Aleutians	16.0%	1,395	1,329	1,318	847	64.7%	Aleutians East, Aleutians West
IX. Southeast	25.0%	18,135	17,393	17,152	11,764	54.1%	Haines, Juneau, Ketchikan, Prince of Wales, Sitka, Skagway-Hoonah-Angoon, Wrangell-Petersburg, Yakutat

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's 2021 population estimates. Regions are those used by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. All regions from around the state increased the percentage of seniors around the state.

Population by Age Group	Percentage of Senior Population	Seniors in CY2021	Seniors in CY2020	Seniors in CY2019	Seniors in CY2010	Senior Population Change 2010-2021
Age 60-64	32.1%	47,363	46,854	47,404	35,938	24%
Age 65-74	46.1%	67,920	64,484	62,062	35,350	47%
Age 75-84	17.0%	25,097	23,829	22,702	14,877	41%
Age 85+	4.8%	7,127	6,932	6,709	4,711	34%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Workforce and Development, Research and Analysis. Senior Population Growth: Age 65+.

2011-2018 US Ranking	AK Growth, 2007-2018	US Average Growth, 2006-2018
#1	69%	30%

Veteran Population in Alaska

Veteran Population	Alaska 2020	Alaska 2019
Number of Veterans Aged 65 and over	17,331	20,421
Percent of Veterans Aged 65 and over	25.1%	29.7%

Source: National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, <https://www.va.gov/vetdata>; VA Veteran Population Projection Model, VA Geographic Distribution of Expenditures, VA Annual Benefits Report

Senior Economic Factors

Economic Contribution	CY2014	CY2013	CY2012	CY2010
Seniors' economic contribution to Alaska	\$2.5 billion	\$2.4 billion	\$2.1 billion	\$1.7 billion

Source: The University of Alaska Anchorage's Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) estimated the 2004 cash contribution of Alaska retirees age 60 and older at \$1.461 billion. The estimate is contained in the 2007 ACoA-commissioned "Report on the Economic Well-Being of Alaska Seniors" available on the Commission's website at: <http://www.alaskaaging.org>.

Economic Status Indicators	2021	2020	2019	2018
Estimated Average Monthly Social Security Benefits in Alaska	\$1,563	\$1,463	\$1,461	\$1,404
Average Monthly Public Employee Retirement Payments	\$2,022	\$1,966	\$1,946	\$1,872
Number of seniors receiving Public Employee Retirement System payments	19,454	18,949	18,276	17,882
Average Monthly Teachers Retirement System Payment	\$3,065	\$3,051	\$3,017	\$2,965
Number of seniors receiving Teachers Retirement System payments	6,393	6,228	6,124	6,059

Sources: Fact Sheet Social Security, <https://money.usnews.com/money/retirement/social-security/articles/how-much-you-will-get-from-social-security> - Average payment per person for retirement PERS payments. Alaska Dept. of Administration, Division of Retirement & Benefits - figures on PERS (Public Employee Retirement System) benefits include PERS retirees age 60 and older who currently reside in Alaska. AK Dept. of Administration, Div. of Retirement & Benefits - figures on TRS (Teachers Retirement System) benefits include TRS retirees age 60 and older who currently reside in Alaska.

Number of Seniors Age 65+ Receiving Senior Benefits, by Region

Region	October 2021	October 2020	October 2019	October 2018	Communities by Regions
Statewide Total	11,484	11,204	10,723	11,492	
I. Bethel Area	675	689	678	741	Bethel, Kusilvak Census Area
II. Interior	1,377	1,358	1,300	1,359	Fairbanks NSB, Yukon- Koyukuk, Denali, SE Fairbanks
III. North Slope	25	26	25	30	North Slope Borough
IV. Anchorage	4,365	4,281	4,097	4,268	Municipality of Anchorage
V. Southcentral	3,071	2,951	2,790	3,007	Kenai Peninsula, Mat- Su, Copper River, Chugach
VI. Northwest	338	334	316	388	Nome, Northwest Arctic
VII. Southwest	322	324	319	393	Bristol Bay, Dillingham, Kodiak, Lake & Peninsula
VIII. Aleutians	35	40	43	49	Aleutians East, Aleutians West
IX. Southeast	1,276	1,201	1,155	1,257	Haines, Juneau, Ketchikan, Prince of Wales, Sitka, Skagway- Hoonah-Angoon, Wrangell- Petersburg, Yakutat

Source: Alaska Division of Public Assistance. The Senior Benefits Program pays cash benefits to Alaskan seniors who are age 65 or older and have low to moderate income. Cash payments are \$76, \$175, or \$250 each month depending on income.

Food Stamps and Other Senior Assistance Programs

Other assistance	FY2021	FY2020	FY2019
Seniors in Alaska (age 60+) receiving the Alaska Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	5,262 (60-64) 7,420 (65+) Total: 12,682	5,025 (60-64) 7,125 (65+) Total: 12,150	4,989 (60-64) 6,804 (65+) Total: 11,793
Average dollar monthly benefit for Alaskan seniors on SNAP	\$374 (Age 60-64) \$258 (Age 65+)	\$349 (Age 60-64) \$258 (Age 65+)	\$294 (Age 60-64) \$184 (Age 65+)
Seniors receiving Adult Public Assistance age 65+	7,584 \$295 (Age 65+)	9,166 \$236 (Age 65+)	9,154 \$226 (Age 65+)
Households with a senior member (age 65+) receiving heating assistance	LIHEAP: 1,740	LIHEAP: 2,116	LIHEAP: 2,148

The SNAP program, previously referred to as the Food Stamp Program, provides food benefits to low-income households. Eligible applicants must pass income and assets tests. The gross monthly income test is based on 130% of the current Alaska poverty standard. Information from the Alaska Division of Public Assistance.

Adult Public Assistance is a supplement to SSI, so recipients must be either certified as disabled by the Social Security Administration (with severe long-term disabilities that impose mental or physical limitations on their day-to-day functioning) or be age 65 and older.

The federally funded Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides heating assistance to households below 151% FPL. Source: Alaska Division of Public Assistance.

AHFC and Senior Housing

Housing	2021	2020	2019
AHFC total units of senior/disabled housing (statewide)	610 units (December)	610 units (December)	610 units (December)
AHFC wait list for senior/disabled housing (statewide)	1,239 (November)	1,018 (November)	1,491 (November)
AHFC wait list for housing vouchers	5,390 families (November)	6,636 families (November)	5,791 families (November)

Total AHFC units include HUD properties only. Wait list for senior/disabled housing includes individuals age 62+. All families, regardless of age, are on the housing voucher wait list.

Source: Information from the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC).

Housing Development	FY2020	FY2019	FY2018	FY2017
AHFC senior housing units funded for development	96 Units	73 Units	95 units	40 units

Source: Information from the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC).

Senior Health: Alzheimer's Disease & Related Dementia (ADRD)

ADRD Estimates	2025 Alaska Projected	2020 Alaska	2019 Alaska	2010, Alaska	2000 Alaska	2021 US
Number with Alzheimer's Disease & Related Dementia (ADRD)(estimate)	8,500	8,500	8,000	5,000	3,400	5.5 million

An estimated 10% of Alaska seniors age 65+ have Alzheimer's disease.

Source: Alzheimer's Association: 2020 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures.

<https://www.alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf>

Unpaid Care	Alaska 2021 Number of Caregivers	Hours of Unpaid Care in Alaska	Value of Unpaid Care in U.S.	U.S. 2019 Number of Caregivers
Caregivers of People with Alzheimer's or Other Dementias	12,000	21,000,000	\$406 million	16,343,000

Source: 2021 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures.

<https://www.alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf>

Senior Behavioral Health

Behavioral Health, Seniors Age 65+	2019 Alaska	2018 Alaska	2017 Alaska	2016 Alaska
Heavy drinkers	7.5%	5.2%	6.3%	4.6%
Smoke every day	8.1%	7.2%	7.6%	6.1%
Binge drinkers	5.6%	6.2%	7.1	6.3%
Frequent mental distress	N/A	8.2%	5.4%	5.9%
Obese seniors	30.2%	30.1%	33.8%	34.7%

“Heavy drinking” is defined as adult men having more than two drinks per day and adult women having more than one drink per day. “Smokers” are defined as current smokers. “Obese” individuals are defined as those with a body mass index (BMI) of 30.0 or greater.

Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Survey for States.

Senior Health

Leading Causes of Death 65+	Alaska 2020 Age 65+ Deaths	Alaska 2020 Age 65+ Rate (per 100,000)	Alaska 2019 Age 65+ Deaths	Alaska 2019 Age 65+ Rate (per 100,000)	U.S. 2017 Deaths	U.S. 2017 Rate (per 100,000)
Suicides	28	29.4	18	19.7*	8,568	19.7
Fatal falls (accidental)	52	54.6	51	55.9	31,190	63.3
Other accidental deaths	N/A	N/A	57	62.4	55,951	112.7
Alcohol-induced deaths	30	31.5	37	40.5	8,343	15.9
Drug-induced deaths	8	8.4	11	12.1*	4,103	7.7
Cancer	N/A	N/A	720	788.8	427,896	869.0
Heart Diseases	618	648.9	571	625.6	510,052	1,046.6
Stroke	N/A	N/A	162	177.5	125,653	255.2
Influenza & Pneumonia	37	38.8	30	32.9	46,862	94.8
Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases	149	156.4	156	170.9	46,862	94.8
Alzheimer's Disease	136	142.8	124	138.0	20,107	243.5
Diabetes Mellitus	112	117.6	74	81.1	59,020	119.7
Chronic Liver Disease	23	24.1	26	28.5	15,746	31.0
Parkinson's Disease	46	48.3	31	34.0	31,177	65.3
Accident/Unintentional Injuries	122	128.1	108	118.3	55,951	112.7
COVID-19	181	190.0				

**Rates based on fewer than 20 occurrences are statistically unreliable and should be used with caution. Source: hss.dparesearch@alaska.gov email 12/14/2021. Crude rates are per 100,000 U.S. population, Age 65+.*

Source: Alaska Bureau of Health Analytics & Vital Records via email 11/15/2019. Crude rates are per 100,000 U.S. population, Age 65+.

COVID-19 - Case and Death Counts by Age, AK Residents

	60 – 69 Yrs.	70 – 79 Yrs.	85+ Yrs.	Total 60+	Percentage of people 60+
COVID-19 cases	8,523	3,710	703	13,701	9.29%
COVID-19 Deaths	197	194	97	565	0.38%

Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Coronavirus Response, <https://coronavirus-response-alaska-dhss.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/table-3-demographic-distribution-of-confirmed-cases/data>.

Senior Safety

Long-Term Care Ombudsman	2020	2019	2018	2017
Number of unannounced visits to senior assisted living homes	403	1,049	1,085	977
Number of complaints	379	583	N/A	N/A
Number of opened cases	282	367	N/A	N/A
Number of active volunteers ombudsman	70	60	62	39

Source: Alaska Office of Long-Term Care Ombudsman and the 2019 Annual Report.

Adult Protective Services	FY2020	FY2019	FY2018	
Reports of harm	5,962	6,373	6,350	Intakes age 60+. Intakes age 18+.
Referred to APS investigators	1,250	1,306	1,622	Adult Protective Services (APS)
Screened in for investigation	2,136	2,136	1,858	APS continues to respond to reports of harm within 10 business days or within 24 hours for investigations that rise to the level of serious harm or danger to the adult.

Intakes age 60+. Adult Protective Services (APS) APS responds to reports of harm within 10 days.

Source: Adult Protective Services, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services.

Medicare Beneficiaries

	FY2019	FY2018	FY2017	FY2016	FY2015	FY2014
Alaskans on Medicare	106,536	98,175	89,989	84,959	80,430	77,403

Source: Alaska Medicare Information Office, Service Snapshot,

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dsds/Documents/Medicare/ServiceSnapshot-2019.pdf>

Home and Community Based Grant Services for Seniors

Home and community-based grant services provide low-cost evidence-based services that allow seniors to remain independent longer and delay need for nursing home care. Grant funded services include meals, transportation, homemaker, chore, legal assistance, health promotion and disease prevention, adult day, respite, family caregiver support, Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementia education and support, case management, legal assistance, and information and referral.

	FY2020	FY2019	FY2018	FY2017
State and Federal funding for Senior grant services	\$14,468,274	\$15,329,989	\$14,881,844	\$13,896,046
Number of individuals 60+ served	29,873			
Average cost per individual 60+	\$484	\$265	\$570	\$581
Number served: Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC) 60+	14,902	12,383	10,764	16,359

Source: SDS Grants Unit, SAMS data

Assisted Living and Long-Term Care: Alaska Pioneer Homes

The State of Alaska owns and operates six licensed assisted living homes, including a state veterans’ home, known collectively as the Alaska Pioneer Homes. These homes are in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Ketchikan, Palmer, and Sitka. The six Alaska Pioneer Homes are licensed for 497 beds in total. Approximately 58% of Alaska Pioneer Home residents have some form of dementia.

To be eligible for the Pioneer Homes, one must be 60 years or older, be a resident for at least one year, and complete an application and qualify for the active wait list. To qualify for the active wait list, the senior must be willing and ready to move into a Pioneer Home within 30 days of an offer.

Source: Alaska Pioneer Homes, 2020

	Alaska 2020	Alaska 2019	Alaska 2018	Alaska 2017	Alaska 2016	Alaska Baseline
Percent of Pioneer Home residents at Level III & IV	66.3% (December)	48.3% (November)	56.8% (November)	58.0% (December)	54.3% (November)	46.1% (December 2004)
Pioneer Home Applicants on Active Wait List	238 (December)	201 (November)	242 (November)	266 (November)	361 (November)	374 (November 2008)
Average age of Pioneer Home resident	84.7 years (December)	86.3 years (November)	86.3 years (November)	86.5 years (November)	86.2 years (October)	76 years (1998)

Level V is the most advanced level of care. Source: Alaska Division of Pioneer Homes

Long Term Care: Daily and Annual Costs – Private Pay

Long Term Care	Alaska 2020	Alaska 2019	Alaska 2018	U.S. 2020
Nursing home costs – private room, median daily rate	\$1,196/day	\$907/day	\$909/day	\$290/day
Nursing home costs – private room, median yearly rate, private pay	\$436,540/year	\$330,148/year	\$330,873/year	\$105,850/year
Assisted Living Home costs – average median daily rate	\$218/day	\$207/day	\$207/day	\$141/day
Assisted Living Home costs – average annual median rate	\$79,590/year	\$72,000/year	\$72,000/year	\$51,600/year
Home Health Care Costs: Home Health Aide – median daily rate	\$176/day	\$169/day	\$169/day	\$150/day
Home Health Care Costs: Home Health Aide – annual median rate	\$64,156/year	\$61,776/year	\$61,776/year	\$51,600/year

Nursing home cost is based on a private room. Alaska has the highest cost of skilled nursing facility care in the country, and costs almost four times as much as the national average.

Alaska has the 4th highest median cost per year for Assisted Living Home costs, Delaware has this highest cost at \$80,280 and the lowest annual cost is Missouri at \$36,000.

Source: Genworth Long Term Care Cost Survey Across the United States, 2020.

<https://www.genworth.com/about-us/industry-expertise/cost-of-care.html>.

Medicaid LTSS Supports	FY2020	FY2019	FY2018	FY2017	FY2016	FY2015
Alaskans Living Independently Waiver, Age 65+	1,598	1,532	1,355	1,356	1,428	1,678
Personal Care Services and Community First Choice Age 60 +	2,506	3,178	2,626	3,179		

**To qualify for services under the Alaskans Living Independently Waiver, individuals must be age 65 years or older, income-eligible, and must meet nursing home level-of-care requirements.*

Need more information? Please call the Alaska Commission on Aging at 907-465-3250.