

Head Count Census Method

Manual:

Population Count

Instructions and Reporting Forms

January 2026



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I. Population Determinations and Requests for Adjustment

A. Population Determination

The director of the Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) determines funding for municipalities, communities, and reserves that are eligible to receive State of Alaska FY 2026 revenues under various programs based on their population. Population estimates are established by the state demographer of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) for each fiscal year and are used to inform funding programs. **Note: DOLWD estimates are delayed for 2026. The regular April 1 appeal date is being extended to April 20 for 2026 ONLY.**

Municipalities, communities, and reserves are NOT REQUIRED to conduct a local census or population estimate. These forms ONLY need to be completed if they disagree with the population estimate sent to them by DCRA and if they wish to request an adjustment. Since the funding allocation is based on the most accurate population estimate available, it is their responsibility to provide the most accurate information about their population.

B. Population Adjustment Request

If a municipality, community, or reserve believes its population estimate does not reflect its permanent resident population, it has until **April 20, 2026**, to request from the DCRA's director an adjustment to the estimated population. If the request for adjustment is postmarked after **April 20, 2026**, it will be denied by the director as being **untimely filed** and, if the request for adjustment does not include all the required documentation set forth in this manual, it will be denied by the director as being **unresponsive**.

In determining a new population estimate, the municipality, community, or reserve must select one of the following estimation methods:

1. A **head count census**, as described in *this* manual; or,
2. A **housing unit population** estimate, as described in the separate *Housing Unit Method Manual: Population Estimate Instructions and Reporting Forms* document.

Municipalities, communities, and reserves with a population of less than 1,000 must use the head count census, which is more reliable than the housing unit method for smaller populations. Those with a population of 1,000 or more may use either method. Communities located in unincorporated areas are responsible for ensuring that their appeal addresses how the population area meets the definitions of a community and a

social unit (AS 29.60.865, AS 29.60.879(1), and 3 AAC 180.110). Additional information may be requested to make that determination.

C. Point in Time Estimation

The municipality, community, or reserve must account for the population of residents (persons who consider a housing unit or group quarter facility within their boundary as their “primary place of residence”) at the time of the estimate. To ensure that the population number aligns with the previous calendar year as required per regulations, DCRA staff will linearly adjust the new count to align with July 1, 2025, the date of the population estimates as released by DOLWD. See the example below for the adjustment methodology:

New local count as of March 1, 2026 (e.g., as determined by the municipality, community, or reserve early in the calendar year)	= 900
Most recent certified population count (July 1, 2024, for previous fiscal year)	= 700
Linear Adjustment Methodology	
Population Change (from previous certified fiscal year population)	= 200
Number of periods between previous certified fiscal year population count and new local count (e.g. July 1, 2024 and March 1, 2026)	= 20 months
Resulting resident change is	= 10 residents/month
Adjusted time periods from July 1, 2024, to July 1, 2025	= 12 months
Population adjustments is calculated to be (10 x 12)	= 120 residents
The final accepted population level	= 820

D. Appeal to the DCCED Commissioner

If DCRA's director does not grant the request for a population adjustment or the municipality, community, or reserve has other grounds for challenging the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) estimate, the director's decision may be appealed to the DCCED commissioner (*3 AAC 180.050*). **The appeal must be made in writing and postmarked within 10 days after the municipality, community, or reserve receives the decision from the director.**

E. Certified Population

After all appeals have been resolved, the commissioner will adjust a certified final municipal, community, and reserve population report by June 1. The department's certified population is determined from one of the following:

1. A census of the United States Bureau of Census.
2. A head count census conducted in accordance with *this* manual.
3. A housing unit method population estimate conducted in accordance with the *Housing Unit Method Manual: Population Estimate Instructions and Reporting Forms*.
4. An estimate made by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Regulations state that the department must use whichever of the above methods indicates the most recent population for each of the municipalities, communities, and reserves for the previous calendar year. If there is a conflict among the population numbers for the same year from two or more of the sources listed above, it will be resolved by taking them in the order in which the censuses and population estimates are enumerated above. The approved locally conducted census that includes an adjustment figure takes precedence over the most current DOLWD estimate.

II. Head Count Census Documentation and Procedures

A municipality, community, or reserve conducts a “head count” population census by going door-to-door to every housing unit within its boundaries to count residents. To successfully adjust its population, the items mentioned below must be included in its Head Count Census submission. The completed census documentation must be postmarked by **April 20, 2026**, and submitted to:

Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
Division of Community and Regional Affairs
Attn: Grace Beaujean
550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1650
Anchorage, AK 99501

Phone: (907) 269-4521
Fax: (907) 269-4539

A. Map

A map of the municipality, community, or reserve that accurately depicts the placement and names of block numbers, streets, roads, and landmarks within the corporate (legal) limits must be provided. Individual housing units must be identified on the map by using housing unit numbers that correspond to the census forms. Housing units outside the legal limits cannot be included. Communities located in unincorporated areas are responsible for ensuring that any housing units included in their map meet the definitions of a community and a social unit (*AS 29.60.865*, *AS 29.60.879(1)*, and *3 AAC 180.110*). Additional information may be requested to make that determination.

B. Population Census Forms

1. **Housing Units.** A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied or, if vacant, is intended for occupancy as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live separately from any other persons in the building and which have direct access from the outside of the building or through a common hall.

The population census in housing units should be documented using the format of the sample census as shown in Attachment A. The information gathered by the census-taker(s) must include:

- a. The address or location of each housing unit and whether the unit is occupied or vacant. For purposes of the census, a housing unit is vacant if it is either without occupants or is temporarily occupied by persons whose usual place of residence is elsewhere. A unit from which the occupants are temporarily absent

(e.g., on vacation, etc.) is not considered a vacant unit. When listing vacant units do not include:

- i. Dilapidated or derelict housing structures that are not considered fit for human habitation. These structures could have broken windows, missing doors or roof, collapsed walls, or extensive fire damage.
- ii. Housing units being used solely for storage, recreational boats, tents, motor homes, or travel trailers.
- iii. New housing unit(s) under construction or units undergoing renovation.
- iv. Offices, stores, churches, vacant lots, public buildings, or facilities unless a residential unit exists at that location.

Large municipalities, communities, or reserves (population greater than 1,000) that choose to do a head count census must also indicate the structure type of each housing unit -- note whether each unit is a single-family unit, duplex, apartment, trailer, or live-aboard boat. See Attachment B for illustrations of housing types.

- b. A housing unit sequence number (#1, #2, #3 ... #100). Assign a number to each housing unit; it should correspond to the housing unit number marked on the map.
- c. A list of all first and last names of the residents. Residents include persons that consider the unit their “primary place of residence.” Per 3 AAC 180.900, “primary place of residence” means a place where a person sleeps on a weekly basis; if a person has more than one residence, “primary place of residence” means a place where the person sleeps more often during the calendar year. Incomplete names will not be accepted (*i.e.*, do not list “Mrs. Jones” or “4 children” or “baby”). If an individual has not been in the city continuously all year, the census-taker must ask additional questions to establish the person’s usual place of residence. For example, a parent may list their daughter as a member of the household, but when asked about dates may state, “She is home only for the summer because she attends the University in Anchorage.” Or a householder may respond, “My brother just moved to town last month and he intends to remain here.” The census-taker must gather enough information to accurately determine whether each person is a resident or a non-resident. See Attachment C, Table of Residence Situations to determine residency.
- d. Names and contact information of proxy respondents who provide resident information. Households that are otherwise occupied but vacant on the day of enumeration must be contacted at least three times before asking a proxy respondent for the information about the household members unless all members are away for an extended period and not expected to return within the enumeration period. Proxy respondents are adult non-household members who have knowledge about the members of the household in question. Examples include neighbors, rental agents, or building managers.

- e. A subtotal on each page for the number of occupied housing units, vacant units, and residents.
2. **Group Quarters.** A group quarters is a place where people live or stay other than their usual house, apartment, or mobile home. Two general types of group quarters are recognized: institutional (*e.g.*, nursing homes, mental hospitals or wards, hospitals or wards for chronically ill patients, hospices, and prison wards) and non-institutional (*e.g.*, college dormitories, military barracks, group homes, shelters, missions, labor camps, and flophouses). Group quarters may have housing units on the premises for staff and guests.
 - a. Contact the group quarters' entity and request a written and signed copy of the residency documentation from the respective entity's administrator/manager. Persons in these facilities must be surveyed to determine their primary place of residence using the Group Quarter Survey Form in Attachment D. See Attachment C for assistance in determining residency.
 - b. Documentation must include all group quarters surveys and Attachment E, which lists each group facility name, service provided/facility purpose, address, contact name, phone number, and surveyed resident population.

C. Census Summary Sheet

The summary form shown as Attachment F provides the total housing units, vacant units, and residents found in the municipality, community, or reserve. This summary also provides the total residents living in group quarters.

D. City Council Resolution

The city **must pass a resolution** adopting the results of the head count census. A sample is shown as Attachment G.

III. Attachments

A. Census - Housing Units, Occupancy Status and Residents

_____ (Name of the municipality, community, or reserve)

Enumerator: _____

Date: _____

Block: _____

Page: _____

*“Primary place of residence” means a place where a person sleeps on a weekly basis; if a person has more than one residence, “primary place of residence” means a place where the person sleeps more often during the calendar year.

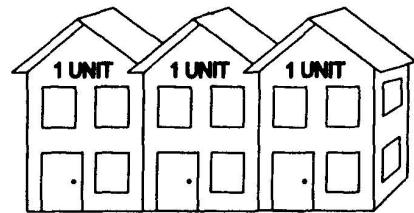
B. Example of Housing Structure Types



1 Structure with
1 Housing Unit



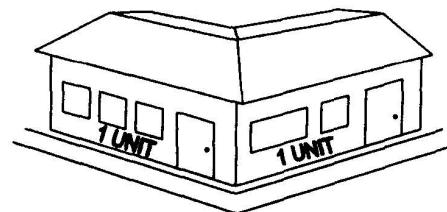
1 Structure with
1 Housing Unit



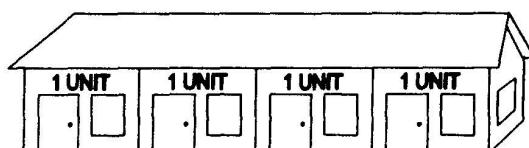
1 Structure with
3 Housing Units



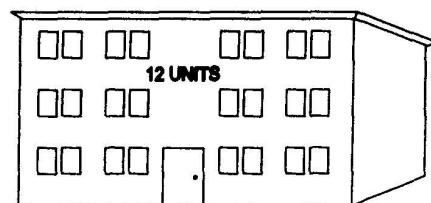
1 Structure with
2 Housing Units



1 Structure with
2 Housing Units



1 Structure with
4 Housing Units



1 Structure with
5 or more Housing Units

C. Table of Residence Situations

Residence Situations	Residency Location
People Away from Their Usual Place of Residence	
People away from their usual residence on Census Day, such as on a vacation or a business trip, visiting, travelling outside the U.S., or working elsewhere without a usual residence there	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time.
Visitors on Census Day	
Visitors on Census Day who will return to their usual residence	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time.
Citizens of foreign countries who are visiting the U.S. on Census Day, such as on a vacation or a business trip	Not counted in the census.
People Who Live in More Than One Place	
People living away most of the time while working, such as people who live at a residence close to where they work and return regularly to another residence	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If there is no residence where they can live and sleep most of the time, they are counted where they live and sleep more than anywhere else. If time is equally divided, or if the usual residence cannot be determined, they are counted at the residence where they are staying on Census Day.
People who live at two or more residences (during the week, month, or year), such as people who travel seasonally between residences (for example, snowbirds)	
Children in shared custody or other arrangements who live in more than one residence	
People Without a Usual Residence	
People who cannot determine a usual residence	Counted where they are staying on Census Day.
People at soup kitchens and regularly scheduled mobile food vans	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they do not have a place they live and sleep most of the time, they are counted at the soup kitchen or mobile food van location where they are on Census Day.
People at targeted non-sheltered outdoor locations	Counted at the outdoor location where people experiencing homelessness stay without paying.
Students	
Boarding school students living away from their parental home while attending boarding school below the college level, including Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools	Counted at their parental home rather than at the boarding school.
College students living at their parental home while attending college	Counted at their parental home.
College students living away from their parental home while attending college in the U.S. (living either on-campus or off-campus)	Counted at the on-campus or off-campus residence where they live and sleep most of the time.
College students living away from their parental home while attending college in the U.S. (living either on-campus or off-campus) but staying at their paternal home while on a break or vacation	Counted at the on-campus or off-campus residence where they live and sleep most of the time.
U.S. college students living outside the U.S. while attending college outside the U.S.	Not counted in the census.
Foreign students living in the U.S. while attending college in the U.S. (living either on-campus or off-campus)	Counted at the on-campus or off-campus residence where they live and sleep most of the time.
Movers on Census Day	
People who move into a residence on Census Day who have not been listed on a questionnaire for any residence	Counted at the residence they move into on Census Day.
People who move out of a residence on Census Day and have not moved into a new residence on Census Day and who have not been listed on a questionnaire for any residence	Counted at the residence from which they moved.

People who move out of a residence or move into a residence on Census Day who have already been listed on a questionnaire for any residence	If they have already been listed on one questionnaire, do not list them on any other questionnaire.
People Who Are Born or Die on Census Day	
Babies born on or before 11:59:59 pm on Census Day	Counted at the residence where they will live and sleep most of the time, even if they are still in the hospital on Census Day.
Babies born after 11:59:59 pm on Census Day	Not counted in the census.
People who die before Census Day	Not counted in the census.
People who die on Census Day	Counted in the census if they are alive at any time on Census Day.
Nonrelatives of the Householder	
Roomers or boarders	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time.
Housemates or roommates	
Unmarried partners	
Foster children or foster adults	
Live-in employees, such as caregivers or domestic workers	
U.S Military Personnel	
U.S military personnel living in military barracks in the U.S.	Counted at the military barracks.
U.S. military personnel living in the U.S. (living either on base or off base) but not in barracks	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time.
U.S. military personnel on U.S. military vessels with a U.S. homeport	Counted at the onshore U.S. residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they have no onshore U.S. residence, they are counted at their vessel's homeport.
People in military disciplinary barracks and jails in the U.S.	Counted at the facility.
People in military treatment facilities with assigned active duty patients in the U.S.	Counted at the facility if they are assigned there.
U.S. military personnel living on or off a military installation outside the U.S., including dependents living with them	Counted as part of U.S. overseas population.
U.S military personnel on U.S military vessels with a homeport outside the U.S.	Counted as part of U.S. overseas population.
Merchant Marine Personnel on U.S. Flag Maritime/Merchant Vessels	
Crews of U.S flag maritime/merchant vessels docked in a U.S. port or sailing from one U.S port to another U.S. port on Census Day	Counted at the onshore U.S. residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they have no onshore U.S. residence where they live and sleep most of the time, they are counted at their vessel. If the vessel is docked in a U.S. port, crewmembers with no onshore U.S. residence are counted at the port. If the vessel is sailing from one U.S. port to another U.S port, crewmembers with no onshore U.S. residence are counted at the port of departure.
Crews of U.S. flag maritime/merchant vessels engaged in U.S. inland waterway transportation on Census Day	Counted at the onshore residence where they live and sleep most of the time.
Crews of U.S. flag maritime/merchant vessels docked in a foreign port, sailing from one foreign port to another foreign port, sailing from a U.S. port to a foreign port, or sailing from a foreign port to a U.S. port on Census Day	Not counted in the census.

Foreign Citizens in the U.S.	
Citizens of foreign countries living in the U.S.	Counted at the U.S. residence where they live and sleep most of the time.
Citizens of foreign countries living in the U.S. who are members of the diplomatic community	Counted at the embassy, consulate, United Nations' facility, or other residences where the diplomats live.
Citizens of foreign countries visiting the U.S., such as on a vacation or business trip	Not counted in the census.
U.S. Citizens and Their Dependents Living Outside the U.S.	
U.S. citizens living outside the U.S. who are employed as civilians by the U.S. Government, including dependents living with them	Counted as a part of U.S. overseas populations.
U.S. citizens living outside the U.S. who are not employed by the U.S. Government, including dependents living with them	Not counted in the census.
U.S. military personnel living on or off a military installation outside the U.S., including dependents living with them	Counted as part of the U.S. overseas population.
U.S. military personnel on U.S. military vessels with a homeport outside the U.S.	Counted as part of the U.S. overseas population.
People in Correctional Facilities for Adults	
People in correctional residential facilities on Census Day	Counted at the facility.
People in federal detention centers on Census Day	Counted at the facility.
People in federal and state prisons on Census Day	Counted at the facility.
People in local jails and other municipal confinement facilities on Census Day	Counted at the facility.
People in Group Homes and Residential Treatment Centers for Adults	
People in group homes intended for adults (non-correctional)	Counted at the facility.
People in residential treatment centers for adults (non-correctional)	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they do not have a residence where they live and sleep most of the time, they are counted at the facility.
People in Health Care Facilities	
Patients in general or Veterans Affairs hospitals (except psychiatric units) on Census Day, including newborn babies still in the hospital on Census Day	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. Newborn babies should be counted at the residence where they will live and sleep most of the time.
People in hospitals on Census Day who have no usual home elsewhere	Counted at the facility.
People staying in in-patient hospice facilities on Census Day	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they do not have a residence where they live and sleep most of the time, they are counted at the facility.
People in nursing facilities/skilled nursing facilities on Census Day	Counted at the facility.
People in Juvenile Facilities	
People in correctional facilities intended for juveniles on Census Day	Counted at the facility.
People in group homes for juveniles (non-correctional) on Census Day	Counted at the facility.
People in residential treatment centers for juveniles (non-correctional) on Census Day	Counted at the facility.
People in Shelters	
People in emergency and transitional shelters (with sleeping facilities) on Census Day	Counted at the shelter.

People in living quarters for victim of natural disasters	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they do not have a residence where they live and sleep most of the time, they are counted at the facility.
People in domestic violence shelters on Census Day	Counted at the shelter.
People in Transitory Locations	
People at transitory locations such as recreational vehicle (RV) parks, campgrounds, hotels and motels (including those on military sites), hostels, marinas, racetracks, circuses, or carnivals	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If there is no residence where they can live and sleep most of the time, they are counted where they live and sleep more than anywhere else. If time is equally divided, or if the usual residence cannot be determined, they are counted at the residence where they are staying on Census Day.
People in Religious-Related Residential Facilities	
People in religious group quarters such as covenants and monasteries	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they do not have a residence where they live and sleep most of the time, they are counted at the facility.
People in Workers' Residential Facilities	
People in workers' group living quarters and Job Corps Centers	Counted at the residence where they live and sleep most of the time. If they do not have a residence where they live and sleep most of the time, they are counted at the facility.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau	

D. Group Quarters Survey Form

Group Quarter Facility Name _____ Date _____

Unit # _____

1. What is your name? *Print name below*

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

2. Do you consider this facility your “primary place of residence”?*

Yes No (Go to Question 3)

3. (If No) What is the full address of the place that you consider your primary place of residence?

Street Address Number: _____

Street Name: _____

Apartment Number: _____

Rural Route Address: _____

City/Work Site: _____

State or Foreign Country: _____

ZIP Code: _____

*“Primary place of residence” means a place where a person sleeps on a weekly basis; if a person has more than one residence, “primary place of residence” means a place where the person sleeps more often during the calendar year.

E. Group Quarters Population Summary

_____ (Name of municipality, community, or reserve)

Date _____

Contact _____

Page _____

F. Population Census Summary

Name of municipality, community, or reserve

Census Enumerator or Contact:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Date(s) population census was conducted:

I have attached the following required documentation:

- Map of municipality, community, or reserve legal limits
- Census Schedule of housing units/individual names
- Population Resolution

Population Census Results:

Total Resident Population: _____

Residents in Housing Units: _____

Residents in Group Quarters: _____

Total Housing Units: _____

Occupied Housing Units: _____

Vacant Housing Units: _____

G. Population Resolution

A RESOLUTION OF THE _____ adopting the
(Municipality, community, or reserve)
determination of population.

WHEREAS, the _____ has conducted a census of the
(Municipality, community, or reserve)
population indicating the population of permanent residents as of
_____; and
(Date)

WHEREAS, the governing body of the _____ must pass a
(Municipality, community, or reserve)
Resolution adopting the results of the census for use by the Department of Commerce,
Community, and Economic Development;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the governing body finds that on
_____ the population of permanent residents of the
(Date)
_____ was _____.
(Municipality, community, or reserve) (Population)

PASSED AND APPROVED BY THE _____ on the
(Municipality, community, or reserve)

(Day) Day of _____, _____.
(Month) (Year)

BY: _____
(Mayor/President)

ATTEST: _____
(Clerk or Secretary)