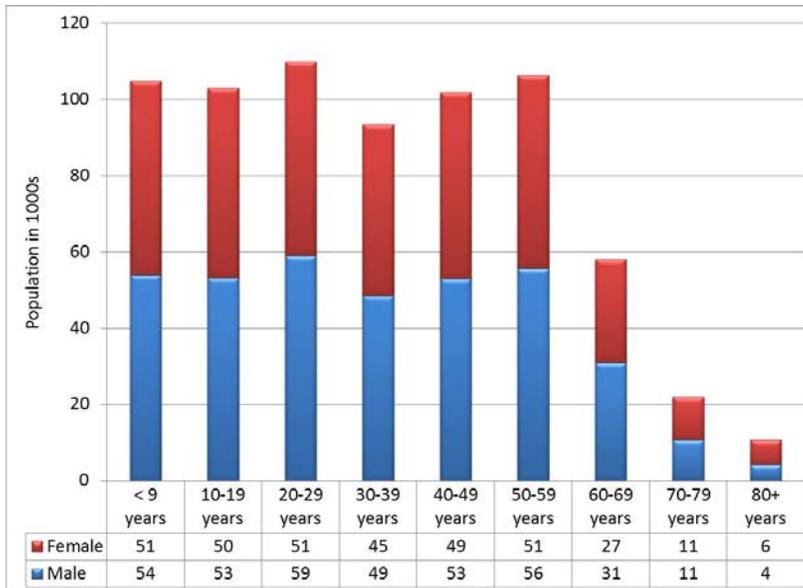


POLICY ACADEMY STATE PROFILE

# Alaska's Population

ALASKA POPULATION (IN 1000S) BY AGE GROUP



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

Alaska is home to more than 700,000 people. Of these, nearly 200,000 (27.8 percent) are over 50; nearly 91,000 (12.8 percent) are over 60; nearly 33,000 (4.6 percent) are over 70; and nearly 11,000 (1.5 percent) are over 80. The proportion of females rises with each age group – 60.0 percent of those 80 and older are female. The racial/ethnic composition of Alaska's older /younger age groups follows:

Race/Ethnicity of Alaskans

Age	White	Black	Am Indian AK Native	Other	White not Hispanic
<55	65.1%	3.5%	14.7%	16.7%	61.9%
55+	76.0%	2.3%	12.0%	9.7%	74.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 Projections

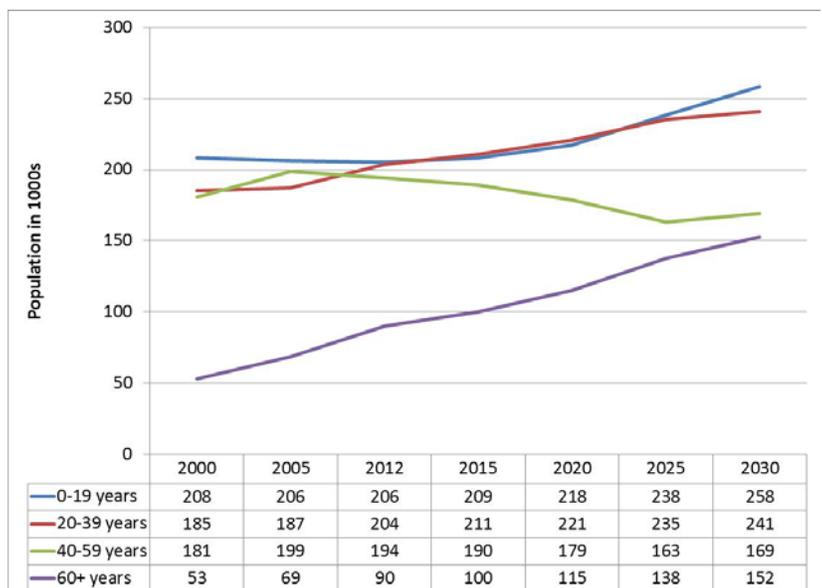
## THE NUMBER OF OLDER ALASKANS IS GROWING (POPULATION IN 1000S)

The proportion of Alaska's population that is age 60 and older is growing at a rapid pace. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that about 19 percent of Alaskans will be 60 or older by the year 2030, an increase of 43 percent from 2012.

Projected Alaska Population

Age Group	2012	2020	2030
0 to 19	29.6%	29.7%	31.5%
20 to 39	29.4%	30.1%	29.3%
40 to 59	28.0%	24.4%	20.6%
60+	13.0%	15.7%	18.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 Projections



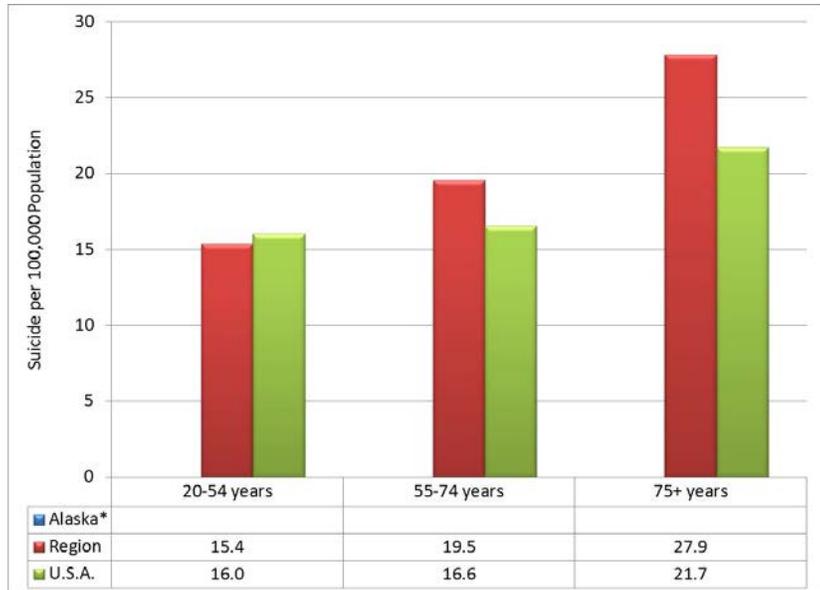
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2009 Projections

# Suicide in Alaska's Region

## 2004-2008 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SUICIDE RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION

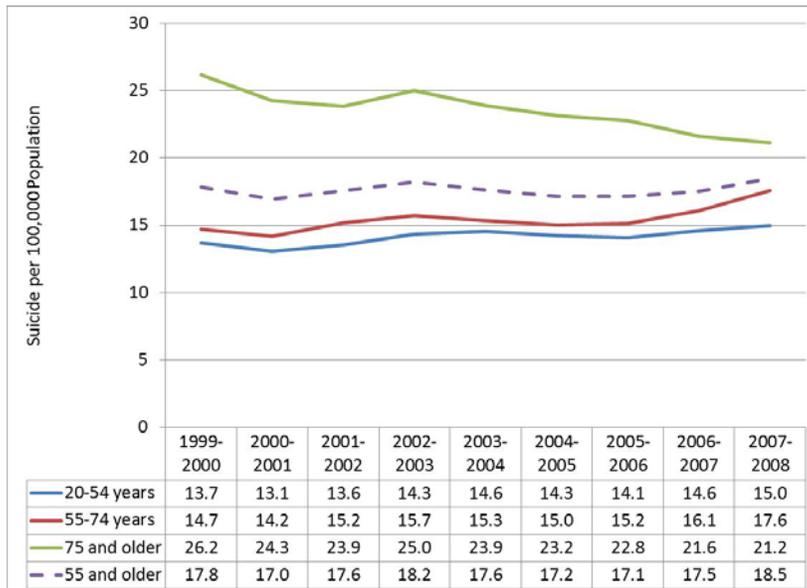
The Centers for Disease Control has suppressed information about the suicide rate among Alaskans age 55 and older due to the low number of reported cases and consequent concerns about confidentiality. The numbers shown here represent the 2004 to 2008 average suicide rate per 100,000 population from 2004 to 2008 in the nation and the West Region, which includes Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon and Washington. As shown, these rates are highest in the 75 and older age group.

Please Note: States vary in their reporting practices surrounding suicide deaths. The apparent rate of suicide is influenced by these reporting practices.



Source: Centers for Disease Control Vital Statistics 2008  
 \* Alaska's rates suppressed due to small numbers.

## WESTERN REGION SUICIDE TREND



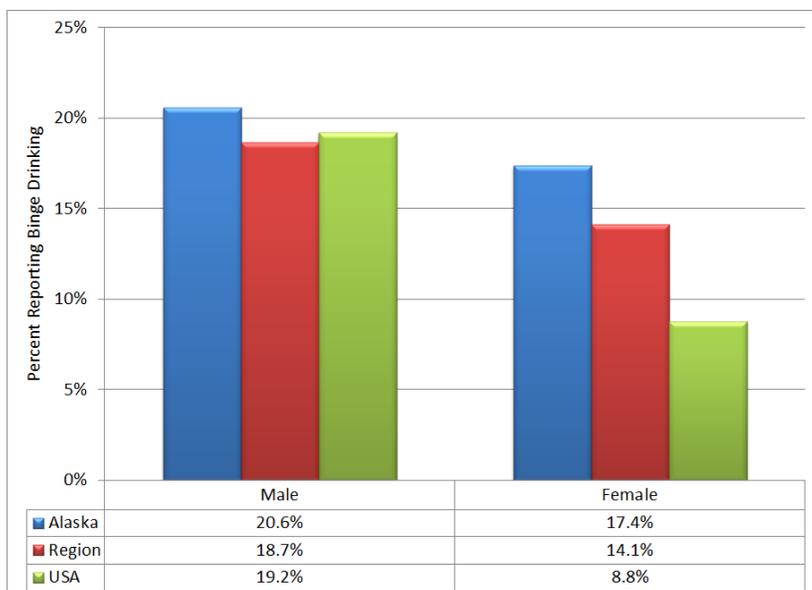
Over the past decade, the two-years moving average rate of suicide among people age 55 and older in the Western region - shown with the dashed line - has fluctuated from a high of 18.5 to a low of 17.0 per 100,000 population. The rate in the 75 and older group has remained consistently above the rate in younger age groups; however, the differences have appeared to narrow in most recent reporting.

Please Note: States may vary in their reporting practices surrounding suicide deaths from year to year within the same state. The number of suicides is generally low, so even a small difference in reported numbers may make the rate appear to fluctuate widely.

Source: Centers for Disease Control, Vital Statistics 2009

# Older Alaskans' Substance Use/Abuse

## 30-DAY BINGE DRINKING AMONG OLDER ALASKANS BY GENDER



Duke Medicine News (August 17, 2009) notes that binge drinking can cause: “serious problems, such as stroke, cardiovascular disease, liver disease, neurological damage and poor diabetes control.” Binge drinkers are more likely to take risks like driving while intoxicated, and to experience falls and other accidents. Older people have less tolerance for alcohol. Therefore, this table defines a “binge” as 3 or more drinks in one event for women and 4 or more for men. Binge drinking is consistently highest among men. Overall, 18.8 percent of Alaskans age 50 and over reported binge drinking: 20.6 percent of males and 17.4 percent of females. The confidence intervals around these estimates were less than  $\pm 0.2$  and  $\pm 2.0$  percent around national, regional and Alaskan estimates respectively.

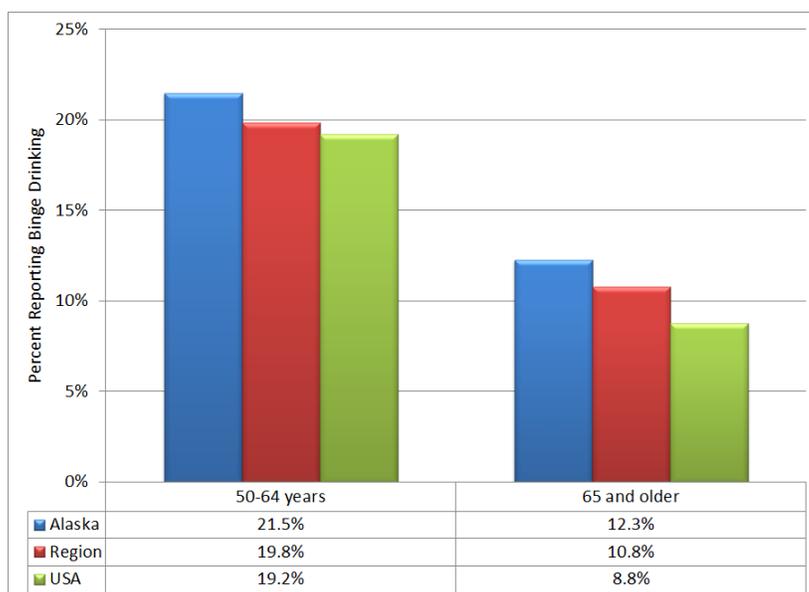
Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2011

## 30-DAY BINGE DRINKING AMONG OLDER ALASKANS BY AGE GROUP

Binge drinking tends to decrease with age. 21.5 percent of Alaskans age 50-64 reported binge drinking, while 12.3 percent in the 65 and older group reported similar behavior. The confidence intervals were less than  $\pm 0.2$  and  $\pm 2.0$  percent around regional / national and Alaska estimates respectively. The following table shows the distribution of binge drinking by age and gender:

### Binge Drinking among Alaskans by Age and Gender

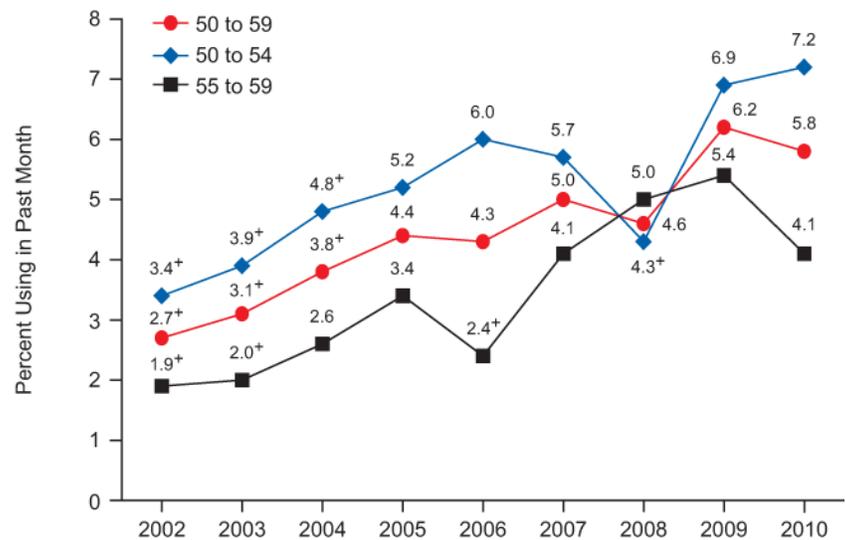
	Male	Female
50-64 years	22.9%	20.4%
65 and older	15.2%	9.6%



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011

## ILLICIT DRUG USE AMONG OLDER AMERICANS

Nationally, illicit drug use has more than doubled among 50-59 year olds since 2002. The rate rose from 3.4 to 7.2 percent among 50-54 year olds and from 1.9 to 4.1 percent among 55-59 year olds. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, “These patterns and trends partially reflect the aging into these age groups of members of the baby boom cohort, whose rates of illicit drug use have been higher than those of older cohorts.” Specific data about substance abuse among older Alaskans are not available; however the SAMHSA NSDUH Report (<http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k9state/Cover.pdf>), provides general information about substance use in Alaska.



Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2010  
Volume 1. Summary of National Findings

## DRUG-RELATED EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS INVOLVING PHARMACEUTICAL MISUSE AND ABUSE BY OLDER ADULTS

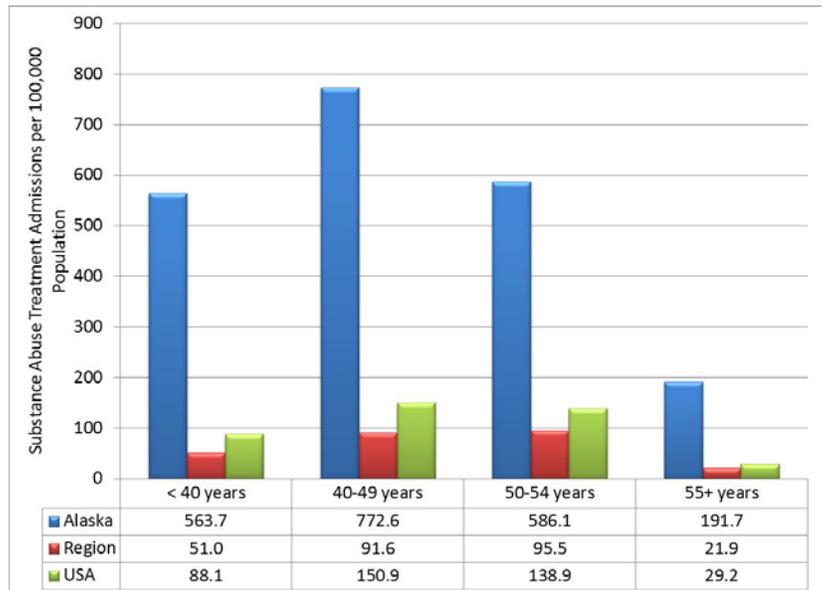
The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration’s Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality periodically releases reports from the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN). DAWN comprises a nationwide network of hospital emergency rooms (ER) primarily located in large metropolitan areas. DAWN data consist of professional reviews of ER records to determine the likelihood and extent to which alcohol and other drug abuse was involved. The November 25, 2010, DAWN Report showed that (quote):

- In 2004, there were an estimated 115,803 emergency department (ED) visits involving pharmaceutical misuse and abuse by adults aged 50 or older; in 2008, there were 256,097 such visits, representing an increase of 121.1 percent
- One fifth (19.7 percent) of ED visits involving pharmaceutical misuse and abuse among older adults were made by persons aged 70 or older
- Among ED visits made by older adults, pain relievers were the type of pharmaceutical most commonly involved (43.5 percent), followed by drugs used to treat anxiety or insomnia (31.8 percent) and antidepressants (8.6 percent)
- Among patients aged 50 or older who visited the ED for pharmaceutical misuse or abuse, more than half (52.3 percent) were treated and released, and more than one third (37.5 percent) were admitted to the hospital

### OLDER ALASKANS ADMITTED TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

600 Alaskans age 50 and older were admitted to public substance abuse treatment in 2009. This represented a rate of more than 300 per 100,000 population. While this rate appears to be much higher than that in the Western Region and the Nation, Alaska's small base population numbers are partially responsible for this effect. Characteristics include:

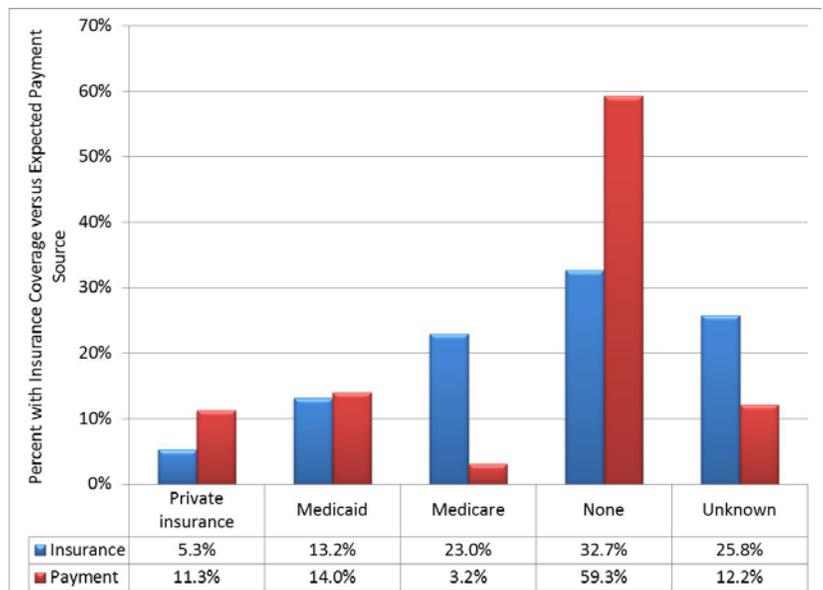
- 376 (63 percent) were male.
- 257 (44 percent) were white.
- 249 (43 percent) were American/Alaska Native.
- 11 (2.4 percent) were of Hispanic ethnicity.
- 160 (27 percent) were referred to treatment by the criminal justice system.
- 150 (25 percent) were referred to treatment by self or other individual.



Source: Treatment Episode Data Set, 2009  
Includes only those clients reported to SAMHSA

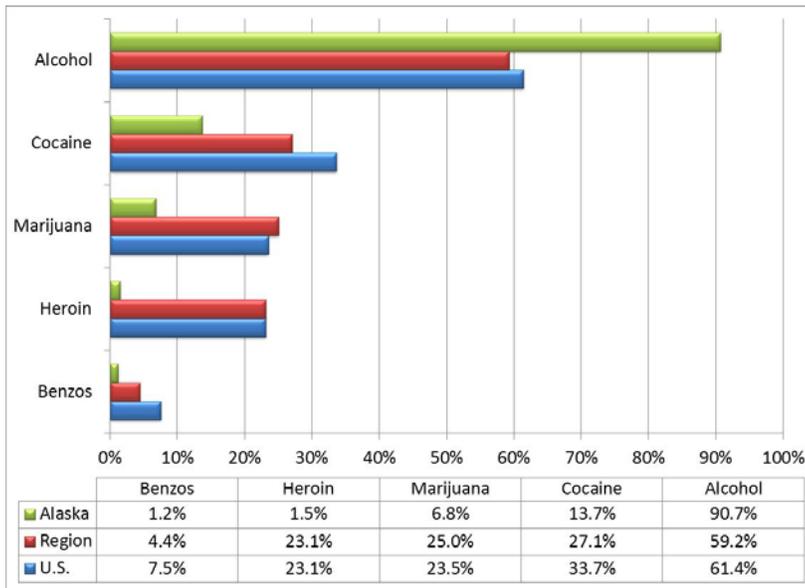
### TREATMENT ADMISSIONS AMONG AGE 50 AND OLDER BY INSURANCE TYPE

In 13.2 percent of admissions, the client was covered by the State's Medicaid program and Medicaid was identified as the expected source of payment in a nearly identical proportion of cases (14.0 percent). In 71.5 of total admissions, the expected source of payment was "None" or "Unknown." In these instances, the bills were likely directed toward the State's SAPT Block Grant and State-funded treatment programs.



Source: Treatment Episode Data Set, 2009  
Includes only those clients reported to SAMHSA

AGE 55+ TREATMENT ADMISSIONS - SUBSTANCES USED



Alcohol was - by far - the most frequently used drug among older Alaskans in publicly financed substance abuse treatment in 2009. Alcohol was mentioned as the primary, secondary or tertiary substance of abuse in more than 90 percent of admissions among those age 50 plus. Alcohol was followed by cocaine at 13.7 percent; marijuana at 6.8 percent; heroin at 1.5 percent; and benzodiazepines/other tranquilizers at 1.2 percent.

Please note: TEDS data include only those clients reported to SAMHSA.

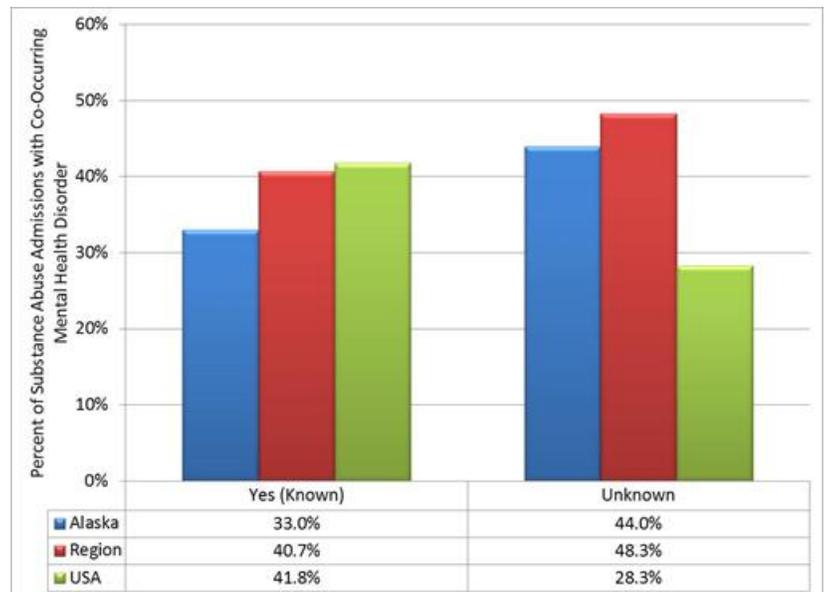
Source; Treatment Episode Data Set, 2009<sup>1</sup>

## Substance Abuse and Mental Health

### CO-OCCURRING MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER

Research shows a strong relationship between substance use and mental health disorders. Studies show 30-80 percent of people with substance abuse or mental health disorders also have a co-occurring substance abuse/mental health disorder. The graph to the right shows the proportion of Alaskans 50 or older who were admitted to substance abuse treatment and also had a mental health diagnosis. While this rate appears lower than the nation or Western Region, in a large number of cases the existence of a co-occurring disorder was not known and/or reported.

Please note: TEDS data include only those clients reported to SAMHSA.

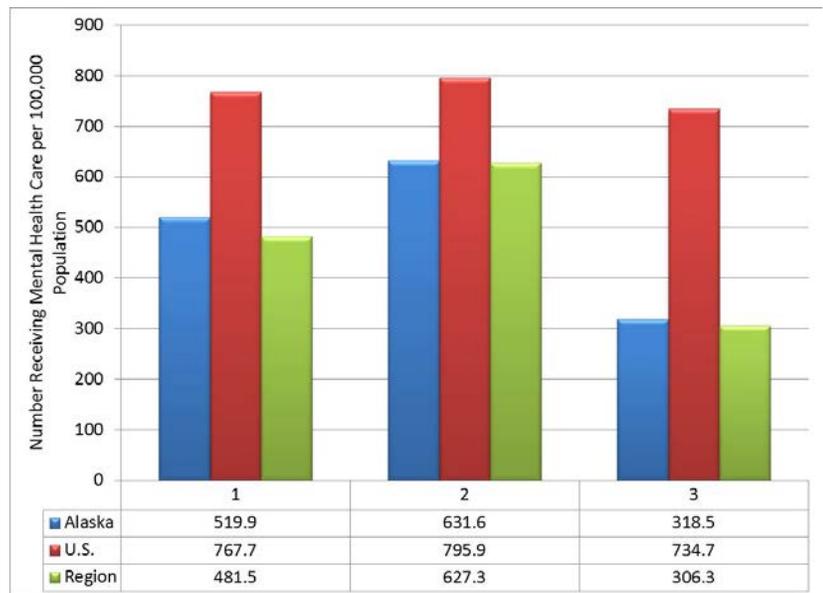


Source: Treatment Episode Data Set, 2009

<sup>1</sup> TEDS Limitations: TEDS data are collected by states that accept Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant funds. Guidelines suggest that states should report all clients admitted to publicly financed treatment; however, states are inconsistent in applying the guidelines. States also have freedom to structure and implement different quality controls over the data. For example, states may collect different categories of information to answer TEDS questions. Information is then “walked over” to TEDS definitions.

OLDER ALASKAS ADMITTED TO STATE MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

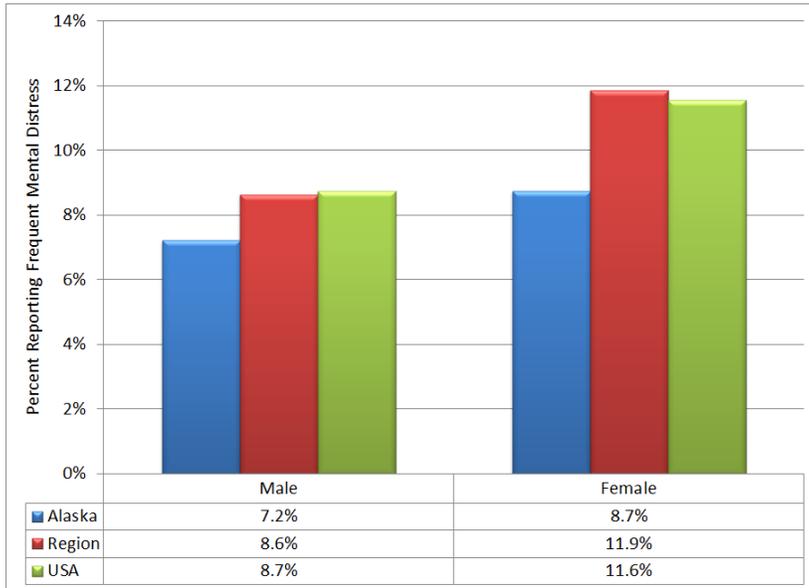
Just under 2 percent of the people served by the Alaska mental health system were age 65 or older (1.4 percent were age 65 to 74 and 0.4 percent were age 75 or older). This represents a total of approximately 223 people. This rate appears to be consistent with the rate in the nation and lower than the rate in the Western Region. Please note, however, that the rate is influenced more dramatically by the small size of Alaska's base population.



Source: Center for Mental Health Services, Uniform Reporting System, 2010

# Mental Health

## OLDER ALASKANS REPORTING FREQUENT MENTAL DISTRESS BY GENDER



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011

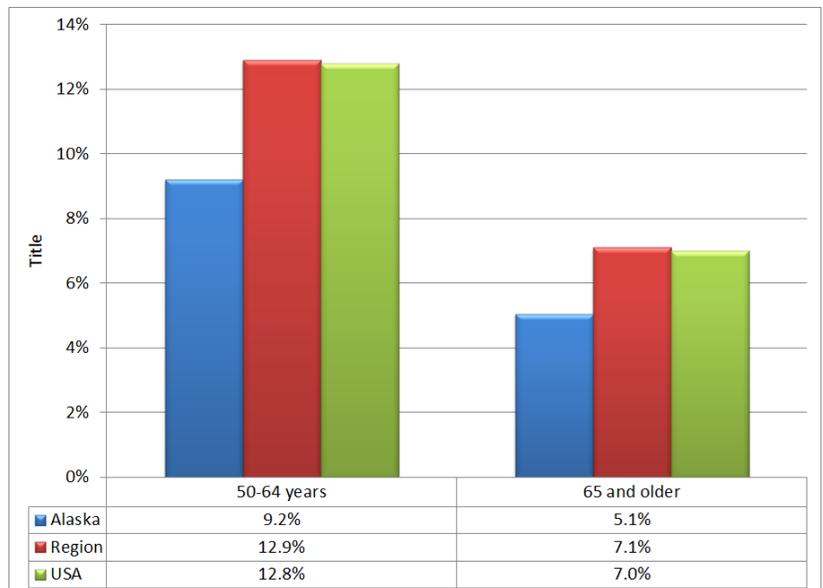
The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), a household survey conducted in all 50 states and several territories, asks the following question: “Now thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, for how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?” The Centers for Disease Control defines those individuals reporting 14 or more “Yes” days in response to this question as experiencing frequent mental distress (FMD). Females are more likely than males to report FMD. While 8 percent of Alaskans age 50 and older reported experiencing FMD, 8.7 percent of females and 7.2 percent of males experienced FMD. The confidence intervals around national/regional and Alaska estimates were  $\pm 0.2$  and  $\pm 2.0$  percent respectively.

## OLDER ALASKANS REPORTING FREQUENT MENTAL DISTRESS BY AGE GROUP

Alaskans in the 50-64 year age group were more likely to report FMD than those 65 and older: 9.2 percent versus 5.1 percent. The confidence intervals around national / regional and Alaska estimates were  $\pm 0.2$  and  $\pm 2.0$  percent respectively. The breakdown by age and gender follows:

### Older Alaskans Reporting FMD by Age Group and Gender

	Male	Female
50-64 years	7.6%	10.6%
65 and older	6.1%	4.1%



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011

## OTHER MEASURES OF MENTAL HEALTH

The Behavioral Health Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) collected other measures showing risk factors for mental and/or physical illness. These included:

- Social and Emotional Support (2010). The BRFSS asked, “How often do you get the social and emotional support you need?” The responses included: “always,” “usually,” “sometimes,” “rarely” or “never.”
- Life Satisfaction (2010). The BRFSS asked, “In general, how satisfied are you with your life?” The responses included: “Very satisfied,” “Satisfied,” “Dissatisfied” or “Very dissatisfied.”
- Current Depression (2006). In 2006, the BRFSS included a special Anxiety and Depression module which was collected in 38 states and several jurisdictions, including Alaska. The measure presented below was derived from this module.
- Lifetime Diagnosis of Depression (2006). The BRFSS asked, “Has a doctor or other healthcare provider EVER told you that you have a depressive disorder (including depression, major depression, dysthymia, or minor depression)?”
- Lifetime Diagnosis of Anxiety Disorder (2006). The BRFSS asked, “Has a doctor or other healthcare provider EVER told you that you have an anxiety disorder (including acute stress disorder, anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic attacks, panic disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, or social anxiety disorder)?”

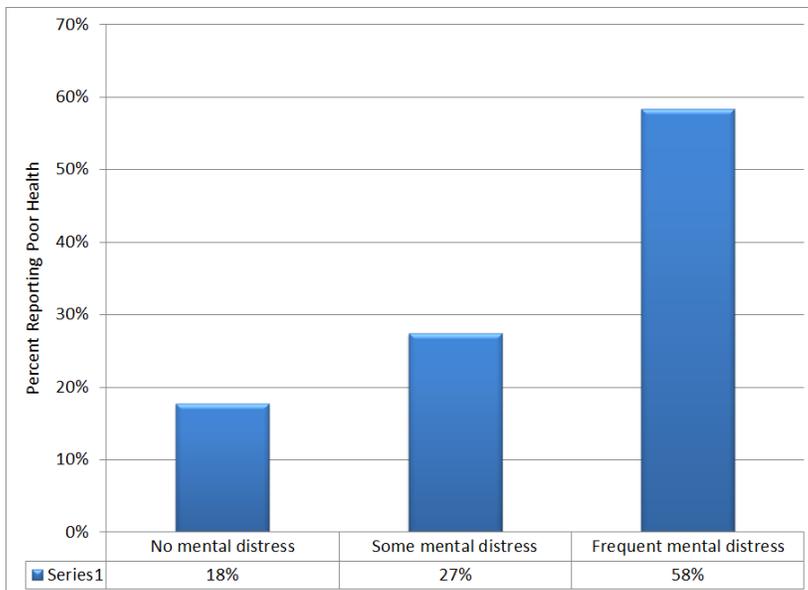
The results of these surveys among older Alaskans are shown below:

### BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTOR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM, 2010

Indicator	Age Group					
	Age 50+		Age 50–64		Age 65+	
	Data %	Confidence Interval	Data %	Confidence Interval	Data %	Confidence Interval
Core BRFSS Indicators (2010)						
Rarely or never get social or emotional support (revised)	9.6	(8.2-11.0)	8.0	(6.5-9.5)	13.4	(10.4-16.4)
Very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with life (revised)	4.9	(3.9-5.9)	5.0	(3.8-6.1)	4.7	(2.9-6.5)
Anxiety and Depression Optional Module Indicators (2006) <sup>2</sup>						
Current Depression	5.5	(3.9-7.7)	5.7	(3.8-8.5)	4.9	(2.6-9.1)
Lifetime Diagnosis of Depression	15.8	(12.9-19.3)	18.5	(14.8-22.9)	8.5	(4.9-14.4)
Lifetime Diagnosis of Anxiety Disorder	11.2	(8.5-14.6)	12.6	(9.3-17.0)	7.3	(4.2-12.4)

<sup>2</sup> Data available at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/MAHA/StateDetails.aspx?State=AK>

## PEOPLE WITH FREQUENT MENTAL DISTRESS REPORT POOR PHYSICAL HEALTH



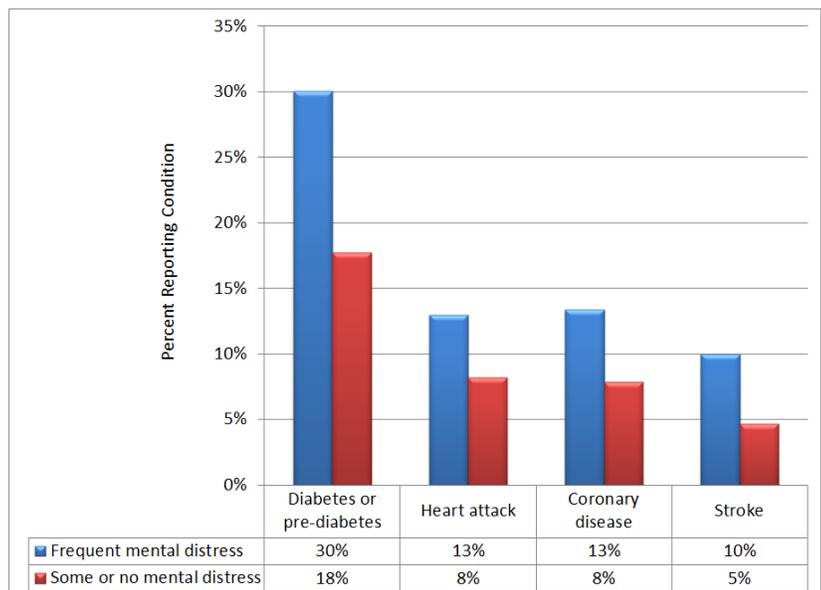
Older Americans who experienced frequent mental distress were more likely to report that their physical health was poor or fair (as opposed to good, very good or excellent). As shown here, while 18 percent of older Americans with no mental distress reported poor or fair physical health, nearly 60 percent – nearly triple the rate – of those with frequent mental distress reported poor/fair health. Older Americans with frequent mental distress were also much more likely to report that they had experienced serious health problems.

These differences are statistically significant.

Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MENTAL DISTRESS AND SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS

Older Americans who experience frequent mental distress, such as symptoms of depression or anxiety, are more likely to report that they had chronic health problems. People with frequent mental distress experienced strokes at twice the rate of those with some or no mental distress (10 percent versus 5 percent). They experienced coronary disease, heart attack and diabetes/pre-diabetes at more than 1.5 times the rate of those with some or no mental distress (13 versus 8 percent for coronary disease and heart attack, 30 versus 18 percent for diabetes/pre-diabetes). These differences are statistically significant.



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011

## DATA SOURCES

BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTOR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (<http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data*. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010 and 2011. The BRFSS is “the world’s largest, on-going telephone health survey system, tracking health conditions and risk behaviors in the United States yearly since 1984. Currently, data are collected monthly in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam.” BRFSS data are collected by local jurisdictions and reported to the CDC.

VITAL STATISTICS (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss.htm>). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *National Vital Statistics System*, Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009. The CDC Web site describes the National Vital Statistics System as “the oldest and most successful example of inter-governmental data sharing in Public Health and the shared relationships, standards, and procedures form the mechanism by which NCHS collects and disseminates the Nation's official vital statistics. These data are provided through contracts between NCHS and vital registration systems operated in the various jurisdictions legally responsible for the registration of vital events – births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and fetal deaths.”

CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES UNIFORM REPORTING SYSTEM (URS) (<http://www.samhsa.gov/dataoutcomes/urs/>). Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), *Uniform Reporting System*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2010. States that receive CMHS Block Grants are required to report aggregate data to the URS. URS reports including information about utilization of mental health services as well as client demographic and outcome information.

NATIONAL SURVEY ON DRUG USE AND HEALTH (NSDUH) (<https://nsduhweb.rti.org/>). United States Department of Health and Human Services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2010. ICPSR32722-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2011-12-05. doi:10.3886/ICPSR32722.v1 The NSDUH, managed by SAMHSA, is “ an annual nationwide survey involving interviews with approximately 70,000 randomly selected individuals aged 12 and older.” NSDUH data are most frequently used by State planners to assess the need for substance abuse treatment. NSDUH data also include information about mental health needs.

TREATMENT EPISODE DATA SET (TEDS) (<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/SAMHDA/>). United States Department of Health and Human Services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Office of Applied Studies. Treatment Episode Data Set -- Admissions (TEDS-A), 2009. ICPSR30462-v2. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2012-07-18. doi:10.3886/ICPSR30462.v2 States that participate in the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant submit individual client data to the TEDS. The TEDS includes both admission and discharge data sets, and some 1.5 million admissions are reported annually. TEDS includes information about utilization of substance abuse treatment services as well as client demographic and outcome information.

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (<http://www.census.gov/people/>). Two main sources of Census Bureau data were used in this report: (1) Population estimates, and (2) Population projections. Population projections and estimates were created using 2010 Census Data.

**This profile was developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in partnership with the U.S. Administration on Aging.**