Alaska Economic Trends

March 2001

New Hires in Alaska

A window on job opportunities

Also Inside:

Worker Profiling
Unemployment Insurance
Employment Scene

Alaska Department of Labor
and Workforce Development

Tony Knowles
Governor of Alaska

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by Jill Lewis and
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Labor Economists

A window on job opportunities

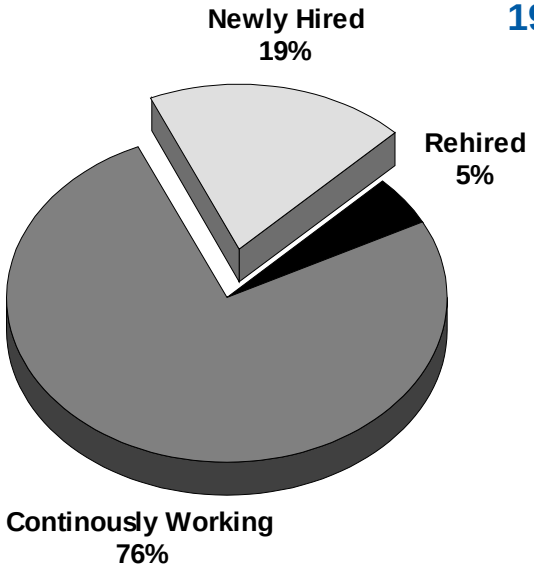
The workforce is dynamic. Businesses open, close, expand, and contract. One means of measuring business activity in the state is the New Hires Quarterly Report. Examining employers' quarterly unemployment insurance contribution reports can yield a count of job opportunities in Alaska and identify hiring trends. These are then used by state agencies and others to develop training and educational programs. This article examines hiring activity for 1999, focusing on occupations with the greatest number of new hires.

In a change from previous new hire articles, occupations will be analyzed at the most detailed level available. Occupations are based on the *Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 1980*, which lists 664 occupational classifications at the detailed, four-digit code level. These are summarized into 60 major groups with two-digit codes. Providing the information in this way better identifies the primary occupations for entry into the workforce. At this level of detail, anomalies can occur due to miscoding or missing information. These are eliminated when data is summarized into broader categories. The choice of occupational classification is the responsibility of the employer based on the worker's job duties. Two employers in the same industry may code similar jobs differently. Moreover, some employers fail to submit occupational classifications for their employees. These factors affect any analysis of occupations.

Hiring status

Workers can be categorized as newly hired, rehired, and those who remained with their employer. To determine the hiring status, each worker is matched with an employer who reported wages during the quarter. The wage records for each of these worker-employer relationships are compared to the four previous quarterly filings to determine if an employee is new to a particular company. If so, the employee is counted as a new hire. (See Methodology, page 13.)

Employment by Hire Status 1999

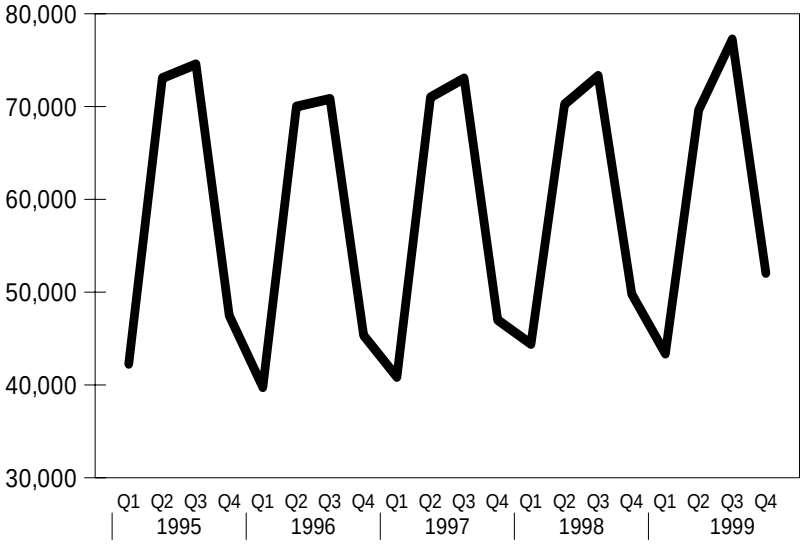


Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

- ***New hires*** *are those worker-employer relationships where the employer did not report wages for the worker in any of the previous four quarters.*
- ***Rehires*** *are those employees that worked discontinuously for the employer in at least one, but not all, of the previous four quarters.*
- ***Continuing workers*** *are those with consecutive earnings with the same employer in each of the previous four quarters.*

The proportion of new hires in the workforce has remained at a constant level since the series began. Nearly one in five workers (18.7%) is a new hire at some point during the year. (See Exhibit 1.) In 1999, there were 242,330 new hires out of 1.29 million employee/employer pairings. Rehires account for another 59,813 hiring events.

2 New Hires by Quarter
1995 to 1999



1st Qtr—Jan-Feb-Mar
2nd Qtr—Apr-May-June
3rd Qtr—July-Aug-Sept
4th Qtr—Oct-Nov-Dec

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Hiring activity is seasonal

Typically, new hire activity is greatest in the second and third quarters of any given year. (See Exhibit 2.) Job seekers found their prospects in the third and fourth quarters of 1999 improved over those quarters in 1998, while the first and second quarters were flat compared to the prior year. New hire activity is seasonal for many positions. Historically, the first quarter of the year has the lowest new hire rate (the number of new hires divided by total employment). In the first quarter of 1999, only 14.9% of the workforce were new to their employers. In contrast, the second and third quarter new hire rates were 20.8% and 21.9%, respectively. Seafood processing, construction, retail trade, and hotel and lodging jobs all peak in the second and third quarters. Health services, legal services, and finance related positions are relatively stable in comparison. Less hiring activity takes place in higher paying occupations such as attorneys, doctors, and supervisory positions. Much more takes place in lower paying jobs such as laborers, retail salespersons, and food service occupations. (See Exhibit 3.)

Top ten occupations

Leading occupations for new hire activity are typically unskilled, low paying, entry level jobs. The top ten new hire occupations for 1999 represent nearly one-third of the total new hires in the state. Twenty-eight percent of the workers in the top occupations were newly hired, compared to 18 percent for all employees. The rehire rate in this top ten is also higher than for workers in all occupations (7.0% for top occupations versus 4.6% for all employees).

Four of the top ten occupations are in the service sector while two are in the handlers and laborers category. Exhibit 4 lists the ten occupations with the most new hires for calendar year 1999.

New Hires by Occupation Group

Alaska 1999

3

Occupation Group	Total 1999	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
Service Workers, except Protective and Private Household	47,979	7,874	15,555	14,250	10,300
Administrative Support	28,950	6,545	7,836	7,612	6,957
Handlers and Laborers	26,254	4,032	8,004	8,818	5,400
Retail Salespersons	18,708	3,199	5,601	5,158	4,750
Fabricators, Assemblers, and Hand Workers	16,064	4,328	2,760	8,121	855
Construction Trades	13,147	1,816	3,690	4,822	2,819
Transportation	7,430	1,217	2,467	2,301	1,445
Mechanics and Repairers	5,742	1,056	1,847	1,558	1,281
Teachers, except Postsecondary	4,276	816	694	1,366	1,400
Management Related Occupations	3,442	930	839	877	796
Officials and Administrators, except Public Admin.	2,956	713	793	800	650
Protective Services	2,906	572	757	914	663
Helpers	2,667	501	785	854	527
Material Moving	2,269	388	700	802	379
Social, Recreation and Religious Workers	2,051	421	525	621	484
Other Agricultural workers	1,807	227	836	498	246
Health Technologists and Technicians	1,353	243	336	425	349
Registered Nurses	1,220	249	338	339	294
Postsecondary Teachers	1,055	296	164	377	218
Miscellaneous	900	148	233	252	267
Precision Production	896	207	227	245	217
Writers, Artists and Performers	863	161	275	236	191
Engineers, Surveyors and Architects	848	169	236	248	195
Forestry and Logging Workers	808	62	280	322	144
Technicians, except Health, Eng. or Science	798	194	209	228	167
Services Salespersons	768	324	120	157	167
Machine Operators and Tenders	751	148	243	168	192
Engineering Technologists and Technicians	651	100	194	222	135
Sales Related Workers	639	121	145	183	190
Pharmacists, Therapists and Physician's Assistants	610	135	116	191	168
Non-Retail Commodities Salespersons	551	132	141	143	135
Extractive Workers	514	81	214	134	85
Fishers, Hunters and Trappers	510	78	99	265	68
Plant and System Operators	506	109	147	140	110
Marketing and Sales Supervisors	454	98	126	131	99
Editors, Reporters and Public Relations	448	111	114	119	104
Admin. Support Supervisors	393	66	94	168	65
Private Household Workers	388	87	101	106	94
Public Administrators and Officials	300	68	72	65	95
Physicians and Dentists	294	62	58	102	72
Athletes and Related Workers	274	59	109	55	51
Science Technologists and Technicians	268	50	74	93	51
Construction and Extractive Supervisors	261	41	96	77	47
Natural Scientists	261	53	92	71	45
Computer, Math and Operations Researchers	231	59	84	37	51
Lawyers and Judges	162	54	28	34	46
Mechanical and Repair Supervisors	132	30	24	44	34
Vocational and Educational Counselors	125	18	22	55	30
Handlers, Helpers and Laborers' Supervisors	104	7	38	37	22
Production Inspectors, Testers, etc.	92	18	29	39	6
Social Scientists and Urban Planners	75	15	13	29	18
Librarians, Archivists and Curators	74	12	17	22	23
Machine Setup Operators	73	11	26	18	18
Production Supervisors	68	12	18	32	6
Transportation and Material Moving Supervisors	42	4	10	13	15
Other Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners	39	8	9	13	9
Farm Operators and Managers	38	4	8	22	4
Veterinarians	35	6	8	9	12
Precision Production Supervisors	10	1	4	4	1
Unknown	36,800	4,852	10,936	12,192	8,820
TOTAL	**242,330**	**43,398**	**69,616**	**77,234**	**52,082**

Occupations are based on the two-digit occupational codes from the *Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 1980*. There are 60 of these occupational groups.
Fifteen percent of all workers' occupations were unreported by employers in calendar year 1999.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Seafood workers led hiring in 1999

In spite of poor salmon catches in recent years and the difficulty processors had attracting employees, Cannery Workers, including Seafood Processors, led the state in hiring activity with 13,717 positions hired. Hiring peaks with the salmon harvest but also spikes in the first quarter for the winter fisheries. Over half the hiring in this occupation occurs in the third quarter. In contrast, the number of hires in the fourth quarter is the lowest of any of the top occupations.

Job openings are found throughout the coastal regions of Alaska, but primarily in Aleutians West, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Aleutians East Borough, Bristol Bay Borough, and Kodiak Island Borough. Cannery workers are part of the larger occupation group of Fabricators, Assemblers, and Hand Workers, and comprise 85 percent of the new hires in that category. While seafood processing has large numbers of job openings annually, Alaskans occupy a minority of these jobs. Residents of other states fill 74 percent of the positions in this occupation.

Most entry-level seafood processing jobs involve working very long hours (up to 18 hours) while standing at a workstation in a cold, drafty, wet environment. (See inside back cover for more information on these jobs.) This type of work often involves removing the viscera (guts) and cutting off fish heads, fins, gills, or tail or other processing. It's not a glamorous job, and is sometimes referred to as working the "slime line." Seafood companies will often pay for transportation to the Alaska work site, provide food, gear, housing, laundry service, and training. Days and hours of work are not guaranteed in many instances. However, overtime is widely available. Newly hired seafood processing workers had the second highest median wage for the top occupations at $2,420. Exhibit 5 shows a comparison of median wages for all employees in the top ten occupations. (See Median Earnings Definition.)

4 Top Ten Occupations
Ranked by new hire activity in 1999

Rank	Occupation	New Hires 1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	1999	All Workers 1999	% New Hires 1999
1	Cannery Workers, incl. Seafood Processors	3,902	2,199	7,079	537	13,717	39,659	34.6
2	Manual Occupations, Not Elsewhere Classified	1,654	3,386	3,346	1,997	10,383	28,502	36.4
3	General Office Occupations	1,977	2,551	2,510	2,363	9,401	50,014	18.8
4	Sales Clerks	1,113	2,437	2,368	1,992	7,910	35,151	22.5
5	Construction Laborers	676	1,867	2,534	1,381	6,458	16,975	38.0
6	Waiters and Waitresses	968	2,064	1,902	1,475	6,409	21,779	29.4
7	Carpenters	709	1,409	1,953	1,258	5,329	17,109	31.1
8	Janitors and Cleaners	1,038	1,523	1,359	1,298	5,218	25,353	20.6
9	Combined Food Prep. and Service, Fast Food	773	1,425	1,324	1,175	4,697	13,160	35.7
10	Misc. Food and Beverage Prep. Occupations	596	1,136	1,157	874	3,763	12,502	30.1
	Top Ten Occupations' Total	13,406	19,997	25,532	14,350	73,285	260,204	28.2
	All Occupations' Total	43,398	69,616	77,234	52,082	242,330	1,295,619	18.7

Occupations are based on the four-digit codes in *Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 1980.*

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Manual Occupations offer a variety of job options

Manual Occupations Not Elsewhere Classified came in second for new hires in 1999, with 10,383 workers hired. This occupation is one of two in the top ten included in the broader category of Handlers and Laborers and is responsible for 40 percent of the hiring in that category. New hires classified in this occupation don't fit easily into other occupation classifications and are typically low skilled, without special training, or hold positions that lend easily to on-the-job training. An examination of the employers using this classification reveals that positions include advertising material distributor, porter, laundry laborer, campground worker, tailings dam laborer, honey bucket hauler, boat loader helper, and general laborer, to name a few.

For these manual occupations, hiring is slow in the first quarter, peaks in the second and third quarters, then falls off sharply for the fourth. Employment agencies are the most frequent employers for this job. (See Exhibit 6.) Typically, these positions have a short duration or limited hours, making it difficult to accumulate substantial wages. Not surprisingly, median earnings of $951 for new hires in this occupation are lower than all but one of the other top occupations (fast food workers).

General Office Occupations show strong hiring in all quarters

Part of the Administrative Support occupation group, General Office Occupations, is third on the list with 9,401 new hires in 1999. Employers use this classification for positions not classified in more detail. An examination of the employers using General Office Occupations reveals that this classification is composed

(continued page 10)

Median Earnings Definition

Median earnings are derived from the four reporting quarters of 1999. Wages represent only one employer/employee relationship for a fixed period. Median earnings are obtained by ranking all the wage earners categorized in an occupation from lowest to highest and choosing the earnings that fall directly in the middle. Workers beginning employment in the third or fourth quarter of 1999 will have much lower median earnings than those workers beginning in the first quarter of the year. Workers employed with more than one employer or for different occupations will also be underrepresented. These earnings should not be construed as total annual earnings for the individual.

Median Earnings for Top Ten Occupations 1999 5

Rank	Occupation	Median Earnings: New Hires	Median Earnings: All Workers	% New Hires
1	Cannery Workers, Incl. Seafood Processors	$2,420	$3,947	61.3
2	Manual Occupations, Not Elsewhere Classified	951	1,463	65.0
3	General Office Occupations	1,671	4,212	39.7
4	Sales Clerks	1,605	2,978	53.9
5	Construction Laborers	2,308	3,224	71.6
6	Waiters and Waitresses	1,129	1,833	61.6
7	Carpenters	4,018	6,218	64.6
8	Janitors and Cleaners	1,068	2,600	41.1
9	Combined Food Prep. and Service, Fast Food	869	1,222	71.1
10	Misc. Food and Beverage Prep. Occupations	984	1,835	53.6
	Top Ten Occupations Total	1,560	2,865	54.5
	All Occupations Total	2,214	6,726	32.9

Occupations are based on the four-digit codes from *Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 1980.*

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

6 Top New Hire Occupations
By leading employers of new hires—1999

Occupation	Employer[1]	Location	New Hires
Cannery Workers, Including Seafood Processors			
	Trident Seafoods Corporation	Aleutians East Borough	1,164
		Floating At-Sea Processor	228
		Ketchikan Gateway Borough	113
		Bristol Bay Borough	68
		Dillingham	1
	Icicle Seafoods Inc.	Wrangell-Petersburg	674
		Kenai Peninsula Borough	259
		Floating At-Sea Processor	150
	Norquest Seafoods Inc.	Wrangell-Petersburg	291
		Ketchikan Gateway Borough	235
		Bristol Bay Borough	147
		Aleutians East Borough	134
		Valdez-Cordova	87
		Sitka Borough	46
		Aleutians West	35
Manual Occupations, Not Elsewhere Classified			
	Labor Ready Northwest Inc.	Municipality of Anchorage	1,784
	AVCP Housing Authority	Bethel	287
	Snopac Products Inc.	Aleutians East Borough	170
		Floating At-Sea Processor	67
General Office Occupations			
	Adams & Associates Inc.	Municipality of Anchorage	828
	Fairbanks North Star School District	Fairbanks North Star Borough	487
	Personnel Plus Inc.	Municipality of Anchorage	346
		Denali Borough	5
		Kenai Peninsula Borough	3
Sales Clerks			
	Wal-Mart Associates Inc.	Municipality of Anchorage	724
		Kodiak Island Borough	211
		Matanuska-Susitna Borough	142
		Fairbanks North Star Borough	121
	Lamonts Apparel Inc.[2]	Municipality of Anchorage	273
		Fairbanks North Star Borough	10
		Juneau Borough	8
		Matanuska-Susitna Borough	8
		Kenai Peninsula Borough	5
	Omni Enterprises Inc.	Bethel	79
		Dillingham	27
		Bristol Bay Borough	12
		Kenai Peninsula Borough	11
		Juneau Borough	7
		Wade Hampton	6
		Valdez-Cordova	2
Construction Laborers			
	Interior Region Housing Authority	Yukon-Koyukuk	198
		Southeast of Fairbanks	50
		Fairbanks North Star Borough	42
		North Slope Borough	100

Occupation	Employer [1]	Location	New Hires
	UIC Construction Inc.	Municipality of Anchorage	14
		Northwest Arctic Borough	7
		Matanuska-Susitna Borough	6
		Yukon-Koyukuk	2
	Snowball Express Inc.	Municipality of Anchorage	125
Waiters and Waitresses			
	D of Alaska Inc. (Denny's)	Municipality of Anchorage	70
		Fairbanks North Star Borough	48
	Glacial Reflections Catering [3]	Municipality of Anchorage	89
	Pepper Mill LLC	Municipality of Anchorage	81
Carpenters			
	Interior Region Housing Authority	Yukon-Koyukuk	69
		Southeast of Fairbanks	21
		Fairbanks North Star Borough	8
	McGraws Custom Construction Inc.	Ketchikan Gateway Borough	67
		Wrangell-Petersburg	21
		Juneau Borough	19
		Sitka Borough	18
		Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan	5
		Haines Borough	1
	Alcan General Inc.	Fairbanks North Star Borough	50
		Municipality of Anchorage	32
Janitors and Cleaners			
	NPS Corporation	Fairbanks North Star Borough	120
		Municipality of Anchorage	87
	ABM Company of the West	Municipality of Anchorage	157
	Q1 Corporation	Municipality of Anchorage	122
		Fairbanks North Star Borough	21
Combined Food Preparation and Service, Fast Food			
	Denali Foods Inc. (Taco Bell)	Municipality of Anchorage	452
		Fairbanks North Star Borough	149
		Matanuska-Susitna Borough	62
		Kenai Peninsula Borough	49
		Juneau Borough	47
	McDonald's	Municipality of Anchorage	467
		Matanuska-Susitna Borough	173
	Tundra & Ice [4]	Fairbanks North Star Borough	539
Miscellaneous Food and Beverage Preparation Occupations			
	Royal Fork Buffet Restaurants	Fairbanks North Star Borough	94
		Municipality of Anchorage	104
	D of Alaska Inc. (Denny's)	Municipality of Anchorage	70
		Fairbanks North Star Borough	63
	King Dimond Inc. (La Mex)	Municipality of Anchorage	55

[1] Employers who did not report employees' occupations or used other codes will not be represented even though they may, in fact, have workers in a particular occupation.
[2] Lamonts is now Gottschalks Inc.
[3] Glacial Reflections Catering is now Hotel Fourth Avenue, Inc.
[4] Tundra and Ice is now Interior Alaska McDonald's.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

mainly of office or administrative clerks, police aides, and general office, realty, and clinic clerks. While firms employing 200 or more workers make up only 0.2 percent of businesses with general office workers, they are responsible for 25 percent of new hires in this profession.

General Office Occupations have the lowest new hire rate overall within the top occupations (18.8%) and the least change from quarter to quarter. Thirty-two percent of all Administrative Support hires are in General Office Occupations. The median wages for new hires are $1,671, while for all workers in that profession they are $4,212 (60.3% higher).

Tourism boosts hiring of Sales Clerks

Next on the list of most frequently hired positions is the Sales Clerk occupation. Sales Clerks are primarily found in retail trade establishments for which knowledge of the product sold is not a requirement. This occupation makes up 42 percent of the new hires for the larger Retail Salespersons category. Among the top ten occupations, Sales Clerks were least likely to have been hired by more than one employer in 1999 (3.3%). (See Exhibit 7.)

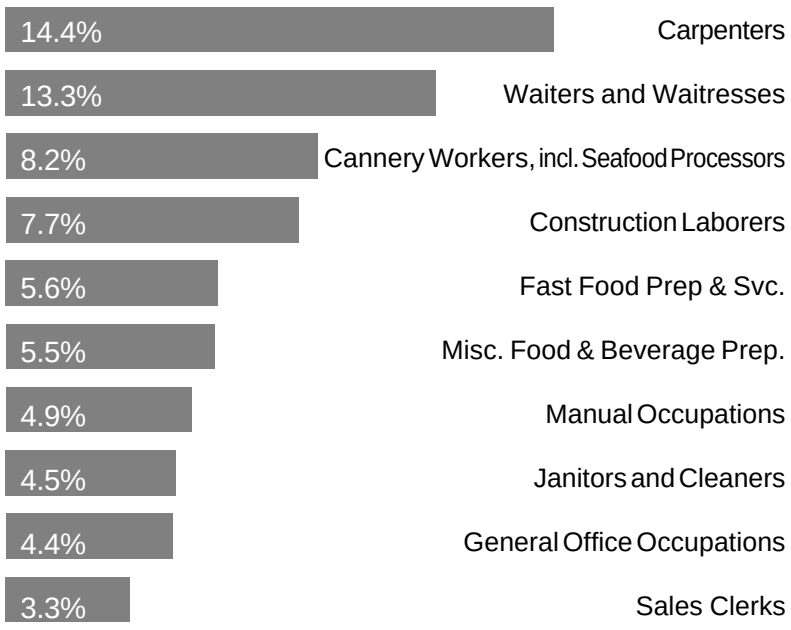
Typical job titles include salesperson, gift shop, produce, and floral clerks. There were 7,910 new hires for this occupation in the calendar year 1999.

While opportunities for Sales Clerk positions are concentrated in general merchandise stores, this type of work depends heavily on tourism. Miscellaneous retail stores, which includes gift and souvenir shops, hire more Sales Clerks than any other type of retail establishment (33.3%). Hiring for this occupation peaks in the spring quarter as employers gear up for the height of the tourism season. One in three clerks is newly hired in the second quarter. The rate drops to 24 percent for the third quarter as employers try to maintain staffing levels through the end of summer. Hiring drops to 22 percent but remains strong in the fourth quarter for the holiday season. The median earnings for this occupation are $1,605.

Construction Laborers have the highest hiring rate by occupation

The second of two classifications included in the broader category of Handlers and Laborers, Construction Laborers, hold position number five in our ranking of the top ten occupations for new hire activity. There were 6,458 new hires in this category for 1999, representing 25 percent of all Handlers and Laborers hired. While this occupation ranks fifth in terms of the number of new hires, it has the highest annual rate of new hires by profession at 38 percent. Hiring for this group peaked in the third quarter with 2,534 new workers added.

7 Hired by Multiple Employers
Top ten occupations—1999



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Workers in this group include occupations assisting construction workers with building or repair work: general contractors of nonresidential buildings (14.3% of new hires); water, sewer, pipeline, and communications and power line construction (10.5%); and single-family home general contractors (9.5%). The median earnings for newly hired workers of $2,308 are third highest for the top occupations, just behind Cannery Workers.

Waiters and Waitresses rank sixth

The first of four occupations included in the broader classification of Service Workers, Waiters and Waitresses' jobs involve serving food and/or beverages (including alcohol) to patrons, answering inquiries pertaining to menu options, and accepting payment from patrons. Most positions also require some element of clean up and food preparation. This occupation is often appealing because workers are paid cash tips that supplement their low wages. Other appealing features are flexible work schedules and part-time employment.

The occupation had 6,409 new hires in 1999, with median earnings for new hires of $1,129. Waiters and Waitresses follow Alaska's seasonal employment cycle with hiring strongest in the second quarter (35.2% new hire rate). Overall, this occupation makes up 22 percent of those employed in food and beverage occupations. (Food and beverage is a subset of the broad Service Workers category, and includes workers whose SOC codes range between 5210 and 5229.) The vast majority are found in eating establishments (67.4%). Hotels provide 13.5% of the job openings and drinking places 9%.

Carpenters change employers more often

Rank number seven in the top ten list is the occupation of Carpenter, with 5,329 new hires in 1999. This profession, which includes master, journeyman and apprentice levels, is the only one on our list that requires special skills and work experience. This is the main reason this worker earns more than the other newly hired workers on the list ($4,018 median earnings).

Like Construction Laborers, Carpenters can work in nearly all industries. Carpenters differ from laborers, however, in the type of construction where most hiring occurs. One in two new hires for Carpenters takes place with general contractors building nonresidential buildings (28.2%) or single-family housing (22.1%). Carpentry work such as cabinetry, framing, trim, and joinery accounts for another 10.7% of new hires.

These workers tend to move around a lot. Once the building, home, or other project is finished, they move on to the next job, which commonly requires changing firms. While 93 percent of the workers in the top ten occupations were newly hired by only one employer in 1999, Carpenters held positions with as many as eight employers—more than any other job classification on the top ten list. Nearly 15 percent were hired two or more times. Due to the transient nature of their work, Carpenters are responsible for 41 percent of the new hires in their occupation group, Construction Trades. Not surprisingly, the employment cycle for Carpenters follows the same pattern as Construction Laborers, with most hiring occurring in the second and third quarters.

Hiring for Janitors and Cleaners is stable

Rank number two in the broad Service Workers category is Janitors and Cleaners. They hold place number eight on the list of top ten occupations for new hires. This group includes workers who clean buildings, tend to furnaces and boilers, and perform routine maintenance activities. This job does not include Maids and Housemen who clean rooms in hotels, hospitals, and similar places. Window cleaner, floor waxer, janitor, custodian, chimney sweep, and caretaker are representative titles for this occupation.

New hires totaled 5,218 in 1999. One in five workers was newly hired. In comparison, the only occupational group with a lower new hire rate was General Office Occupations. This occupation does not experience large seasonal fluctuations. The median earnings for newly hired Janitors and Cleaners are $1,068.

Fast food jobs are in urban areas

Number three in the broad Service Workers category and number nine in the top ten list of occupations for new hire activity is the Combined Food Preparation and Service, Fast Food occupation. For this job, workers perform both food preparation and food service duties. Workers who are primarily cashiers or spend more than 80 percent of their time in food preparation are classified elsewhere. There were 4,697 new hires in the category for calendar year 1999. While this group makes up only 12.6% of the food and beverage workers, it was responsible for 16 percent of their new hires.

Nearly all of the hiring for this occupation occurs in the more populated areas of the state. Ninety-nine percent of all fast food workers hired in 1999 were in areas that had at least one urban city with a population greater than 5,000 and a population density of 2.2 persons per square mile or higher. While there is some fluctuation from quarter to quarter, overall the level of hiring for this job is stable with one in three workers a new hire. The median earnings for this occupation are the lowest of all the jobs in the top ten at $869.

Food and Beverage Preparation hiring peaks in third quarter

Rounding out the top ten occupations for 1999 and number four in the broad Service Workers category is the Miscellaneous Food and Beverage Preparation Occupations. This group includes workers with duties such as peeling vegetables, washing dishes, maintaining clean work areas, and other food service positions that are not classified in another occupation. Representative job titles are kitchen, camp, and cook helpers, food order expeditor, food assembler, kitchen utility, and dishwashing machine operator. This job classification had 3,763 new hires. The median earnings are $984.

Unlike the other two food service occupations in our list, Food and Beverage Preparation hiring peaks in the third, not second quarter. In fact, hiring in the fourth quarter is slightly ahead of the second quarter. This profession accounts for 13 percent of the hires for food and beverage workers. Seventy percent are hired in eating and drinking places and nearly ten percent in hotels and lodging establishments.

The other end of the scale

As the top ten occupations list demonstrates, new hire activity is prevalent for entry level, low skilled positions. Workers in positions requiring professional degrees, licensing, high skills, or specialized experience have much lower rates of new hire activity. All of these professions have higher median earnings than the occupations in our top ten list. Not surprisingly, the occupations with the least hiring activity also have substantially lower employment levels than the jobs with the highest volume of new hires.

For employers having 25 or more employees, the occupations with the least new hire activity in 1999 are:

1. Precision Assemblers (Metal)
2. Rolling Machine Setup Operators
3. Slicing and Cutting Machine Operators
4. Correspondence Clerks
5. Art, Drama and Music Teachers (Post-secondary)
6. Boiler Operators (Low Pressure)
7. Managers of Livestock, Dairy, Poultry and Fish Farms
8. Supervisors of Adjusters, Investigators and Collectors

9. Physicists
10. Foreign Language Teachers (Post-secondary)

Physicists and Foreign Language Teachers had no new hires in 1999 although there are 25 or more positions in the state for each. The remaining occupations on the list each had one new hire in calendar year 1999.

Summary

Alaska's highly seasonal economy continues to exert influence on the hiring cycle, with peak hiring taking place in the spring and summer months. Position openings most often occur for occupations requiring low skills or that are suitable for on-the-job training. While these occupations do not pay as well as others, they do offer entry into the workforce for unskilled, inexperienced workers, or those looking for part-time or temporary employment.

Additional analysis of Alaska's new hires can be found on the Research and Analysis web site at http://www.labor.state.ak.us/research/research.htm.

Methodology

The new hires series is designed to measure job opportunities provided by both employee turnover and new job creation. Firms with employees working in Alaska are required to report social security numbers, occupation, work site location, and wages earned for each of their employees to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development on a quarterly basis. Fifteen percent of all workers' occupations were unreported by employers in calendar year 1999.

Workers who did not work for their current employer in any of the four previous quarters are considered new hires. No differentiation is made between openings created for workers in newly created jobs and those resulting from workers who vacated existing positions. Since the new hire report reflects both types of job opportunities, it should not be used to infer job growth. Federal workers, the self-employed, and unemployment insurance-exempt workers are excluded from the new hire analysis.

Employers report all employees who received wages during the quarter regardless of how long they were employed. For this reason there is no way to distinguish between workers who worked for one day or the entire quarter, full-time or part-time, or for regular pay or overtime pay. All are given equal weight in the analysis. This limits the results in two important ways. First, since employment figures indicate the total number of people who worked at any time during the quarter, figures derived from the unemployment insurance wage files will always be above average employment levels. Second, individual employees are counted more than once if they work for more than one employer. Therefore, workers who held multiple jobs at the same time are treated no differently than those who held only one job at a time but changed employers.

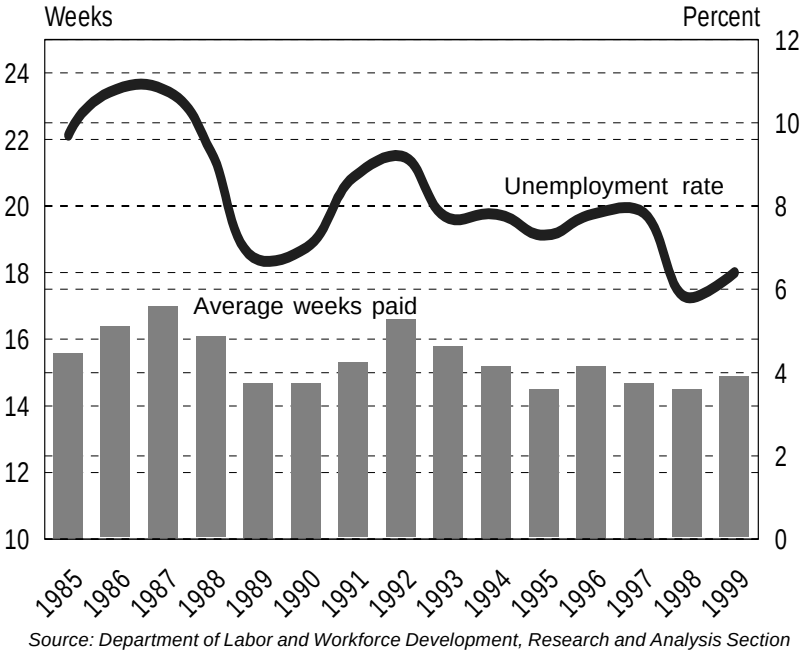
Worker Profiling

by Lorraine Cordova
Labor Economist

Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services aid return to work for unemployed workers

Profiling, the depiction of the significant features of a person or group, is a common practice. Community profiling provides information about a particular community's interests and needs, such as the types of books to include in the library, whether or not a swimming pool would be a better choice than a museum, and even the type of city government. Hiring is done on the basis of a form of profiling. The way a person looks, acts, and responds to questions determines whether or not employment at a given company is in their future.

1 Average Number of Weeks Paid
Compared to statewide unemployment rate



Source: Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

The federal government mandates the profiling of unemployment insurance (UI) claimants for all of the states. Profiling, in this instance, is the identification of characteristics of those unemployment recipients who are most likely to exhaust their benefits. Historical patterns of exhaustion by claimants in the state are examined to identify common traits.

Once identified, claimants fitting the profile receive services to aid them in their search for new employment, with the following objectives:

1. Accelerate worker's return to work,
2. Spend UI Trust Fund resources efficiently, and
3. Recoup the cost of program services through reduced UI exhaustion rates.

Birth of Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services

Unemployment Insurance is the system set up by the federal government in the 1930s to financially assist those who find themselves out of work through no fault of their own. Its purpose is to provide some economic stability both to the affected individuals while they are seeking reemployment and to their local communities.

In the fall of 1993, the Social Security Act was amended to require states to implement a system of client profiling in the Unemployment Insurance program. In response to the legislation, states

implemented Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) systems.

The federal mandate requires only that states utilize the WPRS system for claimants who have been laid off from their jobs. The State of Alaska, however, wanted the ability to serve more clients, so Alaska chose to include in WPRS claimants who voluntarily quit or were discharged.

The development, implementation, and administration of profiling and reemployment services involve the collaboration of multiple state agencies. In fact, the state is using federal grant funds to enhance the relationship between partner agencies (UI, Employment Services, and training programs).

Improvements expected from the grant are:

1. Better computer systems linkages
2. Establish comprehensive procedures
3. Enhance working relationships with partner agencies

Exhibit 1 seems to support the view that the program is working. The average number of weeks claimants collected unemployment is reduced from previous years. However, the fact that the average unemployment rate is also lower than in previous years may have contributed to the reduction in payments to claimants.

Program success is important to continued operation of WPRS. However, measuring program success is problematic, since many other services are available to claimants, and outside influences such as current economic conditions play a large role in the claimant rate of exhaustion. Current goals of the program are:

1. Increase the number of clients served through WPRS,
2. Decrease the time between layoff and enrollment into training programs, and
3. Increase the number of clients who return to work.

Model workings

Instead of providing reemployment services to clients on a first-come first-served basis, the profiling system targets those individuals who are most likely to be unemployed long term, and therefore, most likely to need assistance. The model estimates the probability of exhausting UI benefit claims based on claimants' characteristics and economic variables. In the past, as many as eight separate equations were used to estimate exhaustion probabilities. The current model has been simplified to one equation. The process has two stages, and the first is to screen for some simple characteristics.

Claimants must:

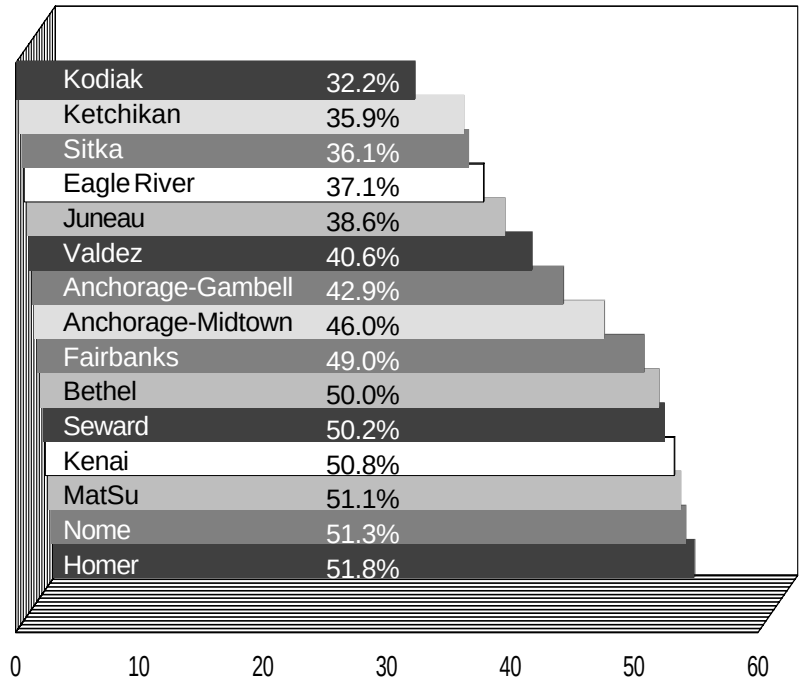
1. Reside in the state of Alaska. At this time no system is in place to provide services for interstate claimants, though there is ongoing discussion about providing interstate services in the future.

2. Reside in areas where reemployment services are available. Not all job centers have the resources to offer WPRS services. In rural areas, claimants register for unemployment services by telephone through call centers.

3. Not be seasonal workers, job attached, or affiliated with a union hall. Seasonal or on-call clients are likely to return to work without assistance, and clients affiliated with union halls obtain employment services from their union.

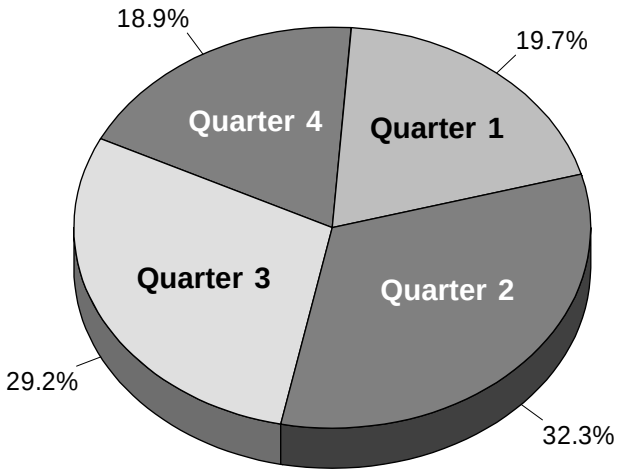
The second stage of the identification process examines the remaining candidates for probability of exhausting their benefits. This probability is derived from an individual's personal characteristics and regional economic factors. The methodology used cannot include

2 Exhaust Rates,1993-1999
For selected UI claims offices



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

3 New Hires
1/1/93—1/30/99



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

variables considered discriminatory in nature. For instance, age and ethnicity are excluded from the equation. However, other variables such as number of dependents, industry of occupation, and geographic region lend explanatory value to the likelihood of exhaustion.

Regular variables and categorical variables are the two types of variables used in the model equation. Regular variables are obtained using mathematical equations (i.e. dividing, multiplying, taking the natural log of a number, etc.). They are quantitative in nature and have numerically measurable attributes. Categorical variables are indicator variables that measure qualitative factors such as education status, season, or claim duration.

Alaska's current model has eleven variables. The weighted sum of these variables is input to the logistic regression equation and results in a value from 0 to 1. Clients with a value closer to one are more likely to exhaust their benefits. Clients with a value closer to zero are less likely to exhaust their benefits. After input of data particular to a UI claim, claimants are ranked from most likely to least likely to exhaust benefits. Their names are entered into a selection pool by the Job Center. Selected clients are notified they must attend orientation for reemployment services, and are assigned a reemployment representative. Participation is mandatory unless clients have already completed services, are already attending similar services, or are excused for "justifiable cause." Resources available at a given Job Center office determine the number of clients from the pool who will actually receive services.

This article will discuss only a few of the variables. The first is the exhaust rate by area. Exhaust rate measures the historical rate of claimant exhaustion by area. Some areas of the state experience higher rates of exhaustion. Economic conditions, limited opportunities, or lack of resources in a particular office perhaps explain the differences. In the state of Alaska, Kodiak has historically experienced the lowest rates of exhaustion at

32.2 % of claimants, while Homer experienced the highest rates at 51.8%. (See Exhibit 2.)

Variables used to aid in capturing seasonality and other industry fluctuations include:

1. Minimum unemployment rate. This variable indicates the best case unemployment rate that the claimant is expected to face, based on first payment date and duration of eligible claim. The values are determined by historical monthly unemployment rates in the claimant's census area, giving more weight to recent years. The probability of exhaustion increases as the minimum unemployment rate increases.

2. New hire index. This number is derived from historical records of new hiring activity by geographic region and industry of occupation. The minimum unemployment rate differs from the new hire index. The former measures unemployment in a given area while the latter measures the number of individuals obtaining employment in a given area and industry.

3. Quarter of the claimant's filing. Claim quarter identifies seasonal differences that influence exhaustion rates. The claim quarter is the calendar quarter (1, 2, 3, and 4) of the current claim beginning date.

The new hire index probably best demonstrates the seasonal nature of Alaska's workforce. It is measured by calendar quarters and based on wage reports filed by employers. The second and third quarters typically indicate increased hiring activity in the state while the first and fourth quarters show decreased hiring activity. (See Exhibit 3.)

The process from filing for UI to orientation for reemployment services often takes three to four weeks. Many claimants become employed during this time, or are exempt from participating for a variety of reasons. Of the total claimants selected for profiling for Fiscal Years 1998 through 2000, 49 percent were referred to services. From the total referred to services, 62 percent completed orientation. (See Exhibit 4.)

Services provided

Reemployment representatives work with the UI claimant to develop an individual reemployment plan. The plan is designed to help the claimant identify actions needed to return to work as soon as possible. The reemployment representative assists and monitors the progress of the claimant throughout the duration of the plan. Claimants choosing not to participate in their plan risk losing their UI benefits.

Most reemployment services are provided in one-stop Job Centers. Services are delivered in a variety of forms, including one-on-one with staff, group workshops, and self-directed use of library materials. Services available include but are not limited to:

- Workshops on resume writing and interviewing skills

Profiled Claimants Receiving Services 4

7/1/97—6/30/00

Total Clients Selected for Profiling Pool	**25,595**
Number referred to services	12,543
Number completing services	7,836
Orientation	5,351
Assessment	5,172
Counseling	687
Job search workshops and job clubs	4,684
Education and training	2,198

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Employment Services Division

- Information about labor market conditions
- Assistance with job search activities
- Resource areas with computers and software training options
- Vocational assessment and counseling, and
- Access to Internet resources including:
  - Alaska's Job Bank, statewide job listings
  - America's Job Bank, nationwide job listings
  - America's Talent Bank, where applicants post their resumes

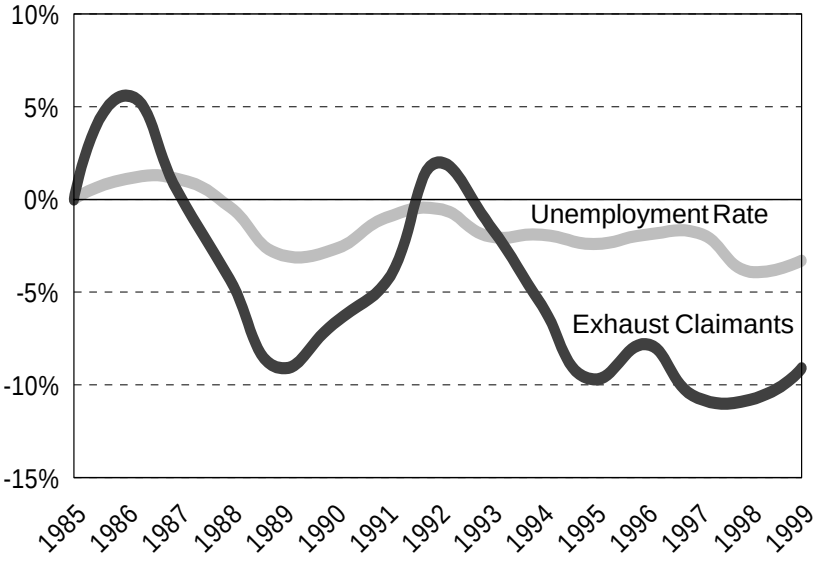
If claimants are not able to return to work due to lack of job skills, labor market conditions, or other circumstances, they are referred to other agencies to explore additional options. Options include training programs and vocational rehabilitation.

Beneficiaries of the service

Long periods of unemployment may be due to a variety of factors: closure of a business, foreign competition, obsolete skills, increased competition, or lack of experience, to name a few. The goal of the WPRS initiative is to focus claimants on finding jobs quickly by tailoring reemployment services to meet their specific needs.

Profiled clients are the obvious recipients of program benefits. Not as obvious and much more difficult to measure, is the benefit to the UI Trust Fund, and ultimately to the employers and employees who pay into the fund. Administration for UI is paid from federal funds. Benefit monies, however, are funded by the unemployment tax payments of employers and employees. Average benefits, the number of workers, and industry fluctuations can affect contribution rates to the UI Trust Fund. Other things being equal, if the WPRS system is successful in reducing the exhaustion rates of UI claimants, we would expect to see a reduction in employer/employee contribution rates. Also, as the workforce increases, the number of contributors to the UI Trust Fund also increases.

5 Claimants Exhausting Benefits
Compared to unemployment rate
Percent change since 1985



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

The UI Trust Fund fluctuates somewhat from one year to the next depending on industry conditions, interest earnings, and program additions or changes. Also, the weekly benefit amount increased in 1984, 1990, and 1997. Average benefits and the number of workers can affect the total contributions as well. Low unemployment rates enjoyed by the State of Alaska in recent years also contributed to a favorable environment for workers. Given all of these influences, there has been a decline in the number of claimants exhausting their benefits in recent years. (See Exhibit 5.)

Program effectiveness

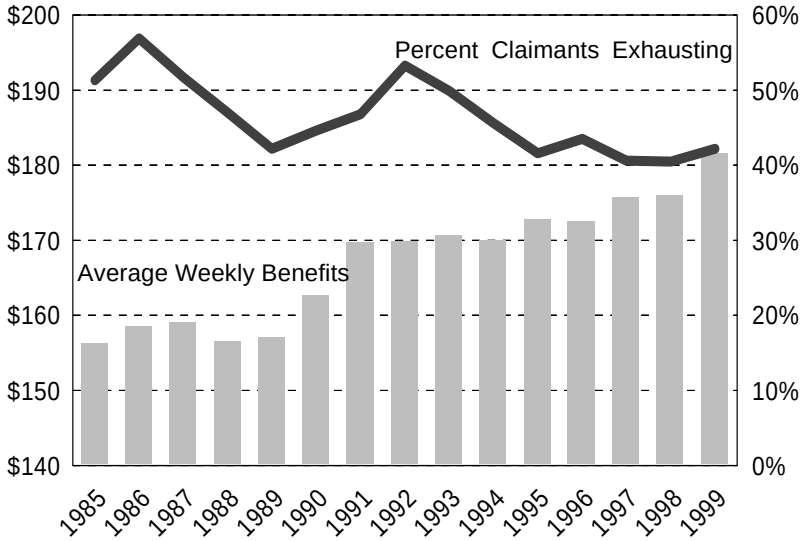
The workplace is dynamic. Employers seek qualified workers. Workers seek meaningful and rewarding employment. The success or failure of the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Service program is not easily measured given the available data and given the myriad of other programs

available. A recent grant to the state is intended to improve the data gathering process so that measurement techniques may be deployed to better determine the success of the program.

Exhibit 6 depicts average weekly unemployment benefits since 1985 and compares them to the percent of claimants exhausting benefits over the same period. While average weekly benefits enjoyed a steady rise, percent of claimants exhausting benefits declined over the same period. At first glance, it appears that identifying claimants likely to exhaust their benefits and providing services acts to get them reemployed sooner. However, the decline in the rate of exhaustion began in 1993 and the WPRS program was not implemented statewide until the third quarter of 1995. Alaska, along with the rest of the nation, has enjoyed low unemployment rates during the 1990s. It could be that the decline in exhaustion rate for claimants is due to the prosperity enjoyed by the entire nation over the last several years. More comprehensive data gathering and experience with the WPRS program will shed more light on its success rate in the future.

❑ *Margie Germain-Antrim, Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services Program Coordinator, contributed to this article.*

Average Weekly Benefit Amount 6
Compared to percent of claimants exhausting



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Unemployment Insurance

by Corine Geldhof
Communications Coordinator

The evolution of a first-rate service

In the early years of the nation's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, unemployed workers showed up every week at a local office to verify in a face-to-face interview that continuing benefit requirements were met for the previous week. Some were paid on the spot in cash.

Since every state is responsible for designing its own UI program using federal guidelines, changes in state UI laws and regulations over nearly seven decades have paralleled the dynamics of the national economy. When job opportunities in urban hubs expanded into rural areas of each state, UI administrators were challenged to find new ways to certify eligibility and guarantee timely payment of benefits. The latest national development is the use of interactive voice response or telephone technology to process unemployment insurance claims. The use of this technology and its evolution into a service highly rated by UI customers in Alaska are the subjects of this article.

In 1999, Alaska's recipiency rate of 68.5% was the highest in the nation—it paid benefits to a higher percentage of its eligible unemployed than any other state. The UI program's impact in reducing economic risks associated with unemployment, lost wages and skills shortages is significant. In 2000, Alaska paid a total of $114,331,726 in unemployment benefits to qualified workers who had a history of wage earning in the state. (See Exhibit 2.)

In 1996, a federal budget cut beset the UI program. Its administrators in the Alaska Department of Labor's Employment Security Division had to explore new ways to pay benefits. Rather than close job service offices where workers filed for UI and looked for work, the division considered remote claiming using call center technology, which promised to reduce overhead and remove the unemployment line. By 1997, no one in Alaska was standing in a line waiting to open or continue a UI claim. Claimants now use an automated phone system to file for benefits through the three call centers in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau.

Alaska's call center technology

The key feature of Alaska's UI program is an interactive voice response system known as *VICTOR* (Voice Initiated Claims Telephonic Online Response), available through a local or toll-free phone call, seven days a week. After eligibility has been determined, VICTOR poses automated questions and claimants enter their responses. The caller enters a personal identification number and then chooses from a variety of selections to continue an unemployment insurance claim for a prescribed entitlement period. The voice menu asks the caller to certify his availability for work during the life of the claim. The claimant may select an option for direct deposit of benefits into his bank account. The system is equipped with 184 phone lines and is capable of processing more than one million calls per year.

Surveys are introduced

With the advent of telephone filing, Alaska's UI program administrators and a cadre of interested

Unemployment Insurance Benefit Payment Amounts
By Census Area or Borough–2000

Census Areas	State UI [1] Regular ($)	State UI [1] Ext. Ben. ($)	UCFE [2] Regular ($)	UCFE [2] Ext. Ben. ($)	UCX [3] Regular ($)	UCX Ext. Ben. ($)	SSB [4] ($)	All Programs Total ($)
Aleutians East Borough	$351,010	$8,058	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$359,068
Aleutians West Census Area	649,749	12,315	5,727	0	0	0	0	667,791
Anchorage Municipality	27,758,874	1,241,426	568,632	32,057	381,355	14,168	16,407	30,012,919
Bethel Census Area	2,116,042	137,212	18,403	1,425	7,886	0	7,855	2,288,823
Bristol Bay Borough	233,406	10,422	5,739	0	0	0	928	250,495
Denali Borough	469,261	32,866	83,610	5,928	0	0	0	591,665
Dillingham Census Area	514,105	17,772	744	0	2,541	0	2,964	538,126
Fairbanks North Star Borough	10,354,204	508,124	363,506	10,086	293,013	22,512	4,901	11,556,346
Haines Borough	465,105	36,827	5,286	0	0	0	1,304	508,522
Juneau Borough	3,110,537	117,217	60,998	0	13,568	1,712	4,783	3,308,815
Kenai Peninsula Borough	8,725,248	678,465	89,077	6,082	42,639	1,354	16,088	9,558,953
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	2,351,680	87,499	15,942	328	6,131	0	3,889	2,465,469
Kodiak Island Borough	3,772,339	85,918	17,434	1,069	1,870	0	1,195	3,879,825
Lake & Peninsula Borough	222,840	2,524	10,940	522	0	0	165	236,991
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	10,068,664	521,804	165,515	7,329	68,247	0	12,715	10,844,274
Nome Census Area	1,409,283	99,735	15,409	1,214	840	0	5,773	1,532,254
North Slope Borough	1,281,180	69,002	4,960	0	0	0	408	1,355,550
Northwest Arctic Borough	1,011,901	73,363	5,328	0	4,446	0	4,852	1,099,890
Prince of Wales-Outer Ketch.	1,982,556	96,596	23,313	708	0	0	3,420	2,106,593
Sitka Borough	830,729	31,399	34,411	268	0	0	508	897,315
Skagway-Hoonah-Angoon	856,814	38,915	39,713	0	0	0	336	935,778
Southeast Fairbanks CA	1,189,155	74,996	87,139	292	13,093	0	5,354	1,370,029
Valdez–Cordova CA	1,740,231	118,069	20,534	284	6,658	0	1,662	1,887,438
Wade Hampton Census Area	1,418,796	92,620	4,942	282	7,375	615	4,726	1,529,356
Wrangell– Petersburg CA	1,440,215	49,583	23,139	920	0	0	1,736	1,515,593
Yakutat Borough	152,362	708	0	0	0	0	0	153,070
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	1,193,709	81,131	2,730	3,815	496	0	5,328	1,287,209
Area Unknown	2,048,655	110,315	55,091	0	23,059	1,040	5,899	2,244,059
In-State Totals	87,718,650	4,434,881	1,728,262	72,609	873,217	41,401	113,196	94,982,216
Interstate Totals	17,975,643	286,845	953,640	14,544	113,230	3,450	2,158	19,349,510
Totals All Areas	105,694,293	4,721,726	2,681,902	87,153	986,447	44,851	115,354	114,331,726

Ten-Year Historical Data Series for Census Area Totals ($)

Year	State UI [1] Regular	State UI [1] Ext. Ben.	UCFE [2] Regular	UCFE [2] Ext. Ben.	UCX [3] Regular	UCX Ext. Ben.	SSB [4]	All Programs Total
1991	$112,153,789	$9,281,316	$3,316,482	$214,828	$814,743	$0	$473,221	$129,053,263
1992	121,771,578	3,801	3,897,584	0	2,476,242	0	613,796	175,832,126
1993	105,041,423	579	3,827,029	0	1,767,553	0	813,931	180,188,366
1994	117,904,643	14,895,807	4,536,264	449,480	1,280,696	144,639	304,145	150,010,059
1995	113,609,324	7,248,703	4,343,639	202,109	1,199,348	57,836	136,008	126,843,010
1996	114,031,840	6,906,444	3,342,795	186,912	883,029	49,526	137,013	125,553,553
1997	108,885,202	5,438,470	2,911,603	115,401	998,659	34,166	90,726	118,474,227
1998	109,037,747	5,478,978	3,243,112	115,178	962,573	39,421	119,680	118,996,689
1999	117,903,392	6,842,307	2,992,843	172,629	1,129,943	56,767	136,217	129,234,098
2000	105,694,293	4,721,726	2,681,902	87,153	986,447	44,851	115,354	114,331,726

[1] Includes federal portion of UI Combined
[2] Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees
[3] Unemployment Compensation for ex-servicemen
[4] State Supplemental Benefits

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

legislators and local citizens were curious about how well the new filing system was received. Did customers prefer the old or the new way? In particular, questions arose about possible differences between urban and rural receptivity —did rural claimants think using the phone was more convenient than did urban claimants? It was also thought that claimants should provide

2 UI Surveys of Customer Satisfaction with Service

Overall Service	Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor
Nov 1997	35.70%	49.89%	8.70%	1.83%	3.98%
Apr 1998	54.13%	38.23%	6.73%	0.61%	0.31%
Dec 1998	59.06%	34.50%	4.68%	0.88%	0.88%
Apr 1999	57.18%	35.19%	6.16%	1.17%	0.29%
Dec 1999	58.05%	36.41%	4.22%	0.79%	0.53%
Jun 2000	51.05%	42.37%	4.74%	1.58%	0.26%
Oct 2000	54.77%	38.19%	5.28%	1.26%	0.50%

Length of Wait	Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor
Nov 1997	35.70%	39.40%	23.64%	2.72%	1.09%
Apr 1998	31.60%	44.17%	17.48%	4.91%	1.84%
Dec 1998	37.46%	45.13%	13.27%	3.24%	0.88%
Apr 1999	38.01%	42.69%	15.20%	2.92%	1.17%
Dec 1999	40.16%	41.73%	13.39%	3.94%	0.79%
Jun 2000	40.53%	41.32%	15.00%	1.84%	1.32%
Oct 2000	49.88%	39.90%	7.48%	1.50%	1.25%

Direct Deposit	Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor
Apr 1999	71.83%	23.94%	2.82%	0.00%	1.41%
Dec 1999	72.41%	20.69%	6.90%	0.00%	0.00%

VICTOR Rating	Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor
Nov 1997	56.80%	30.00%	5.20%	4.80%	0.00%
Apr 1998	66.44%	23.73%	5.42%	2.03%	2.37%
Dec 1998	68.00%	23.08%	6.15%	1.85%	0.92%

Handbook	Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor
Dec 1998	34.97%	49.08%	15.34%	0.61%	0.00%

Ease of Filing New Claim	Very Easy	Easy	Adequate	Difficult	Very Difficult
Jun 2000	53.40%	35.86%	8.38%	1.83%	0.52%
Oct 2000	50.75%	34.92%	7.79%	6.53%	0.00%

Ease of Biweekly filing	Very Easy	Easy	Adequate	Difficult	Very Difficult
Jun 2000	59.26%	32.54%	4.76%	2.65%	0.79%
Oct 2000	49.12%	40.81%	7.81%	1.76%	0.50%

Ease Understanding UI Mail	Very Easy	Easy	Adequate	Difficult	Very Difficult
Jun 2000	37.20%	42.48%	15.83%	3.96%	0.53%
Oct 2000	37.94%	44.97%	12.31%	4.52%	0.25%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Employment Security Division

direction to management about what the next program upgrades might be, such as Internet filing or a direct deposit option. The logical way to answer these questions is to survey claimants, a new and seminal area of research for Alaska's UI program.

A series of customer surveys was introduced in November 1997 and continued twice each year. The surveys are a management tool, guiding program improvement to offer new or modify existing services. Managers use the studies to help identify performance and service gaps and to take steps to close them. Since their inception in 1997 through October 2000, seven surveys were completed, and another one is planned for April 2001.

Research began with how the new system compared with the old. The surveys conducted twice a year address a number of factors. Among those are to:

- Evaluate the continuing usability of and general satisfaction with the phone system
- Measure satisfaction and effectiveness of various components of claim filing
- Determine which program components might be improved to increase overall satisfaction
- Identify specific demographic groups for which improvement strategies are needed
- Establish benchmarks for biannual studies tracking customer satisfaction and system success
- Learn how customers find out about services, for use in marketing and outreach efforts

Survey methods: sample and definitions

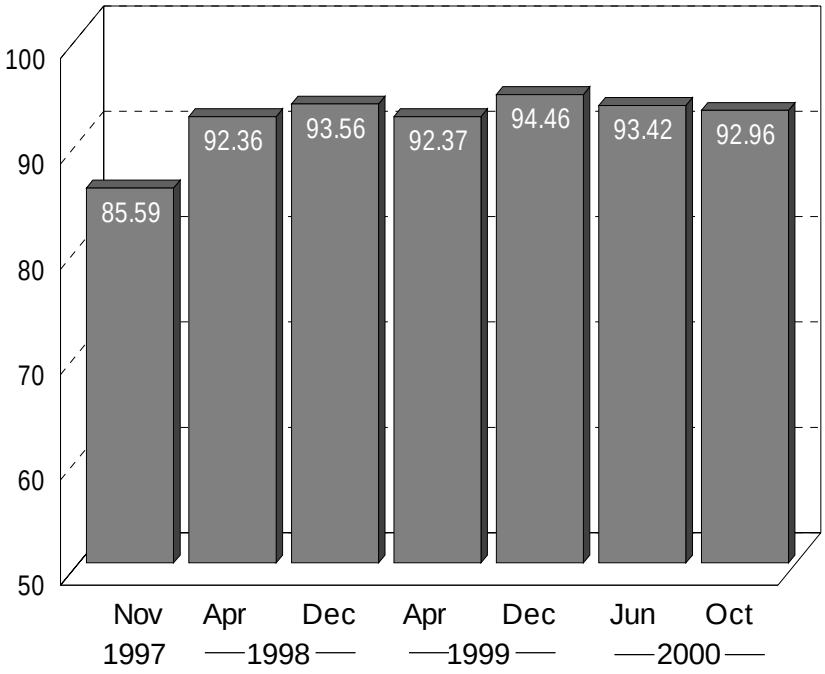
The surveys use standard polling techniques designed for optimal, unbiased results, with emphasis on producing data that are relevant to policy makers. They are developed in-house with assistance from professional survey design staff, and conducted by phone using UI call center staff. Targeted respondents are randomly identified from a universe of persons who recently filed for unemployment insurance benefits in Alaska.

Surveys contain both open and closed-ended questions, and take no more than five minutes to complete. Claimants are asked to rate their satisfaction with UI service by choosing one of five ratings: very good, good, adequate, poor, or very poor. Enough surveys are completed to demonstrate statistically valid results with fixed confidence intervals. Results are arrayed for each of the three call centers and for both urban and rural claimant populations. Urban respondents are selected from samples drawn from claimant populations in Anchorage, Eagle River, Mat-Su, Kenai, Juneau, Ketchikan and Fairbanks. Rural respondents include claimants taken from samples for all other Alaska communities.

Survey results

Each survey collects data on: 1) the degree to which customers are satisfied with overall UI services, and, 2) the degree to which customers are satisfied with the length of time required to

UI Customer Service Satisfaction 3
Percent who rated as Good or Better



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Employment Security Division

receive UI services. An assessment of overall satisfaction from the first survey shows customers preferred the convenience of phoning in for benefit filing versus the in-person interview method. Length of wait time is a vital indicator of customer satisfaction with services provided via phone. Conventional research shows if customers have to wait more than a few minutes, they will hang up, and dissatisfaction rates increase.

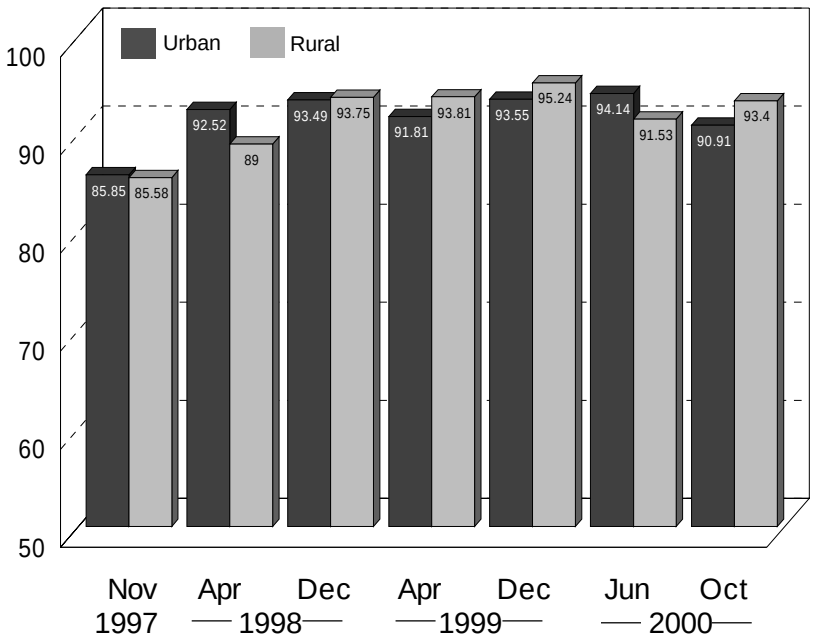
The first survey in 1997 asked claimants to compare the new method of applying for benefits using the call-in procedures versus the old system of applying either by mail or in person. The first survey's sampling differed from subsequent surveys. It surveyed claimants who had experience as filers both before and after the new telephone option was added, to determine how well it was received. The comparison between old and new systems was measured by rating convenience, length of time waiting for service, and quality of help received.

Satisfaction rates with the new telephone method for filing from the first survey were uniformly high. Ninety-two percent of statewide claimants rated the convenience of the new call-in procedure as good as or better than the mail or in-person methods. Of rural respondents, 97 percent who had filed under both systems found filing by phone to be as good or better in convenience than in-person or mail procedures. Ninety-one percent of the urban claimants surveyed found the new way convenient with ratings of good or better compared to the old way. The length of time spent waiting for service category, comparing the new phone system to the old system, showed a statewide satisfaction rate of 91 percent of good or better (97 percent for rural and 90 percent for urban claimants). In terms of quality of help received under the new system, 95 percent of the rural claimants thought the help was as good or better than the old way, as did 88 percent of surveyed urban claimants. The first survey also showed that if offered, 80 percent of the respondents indicated an interest in a direct deposit payment option, whereas only 46 percent said they would consider filing over the Internet.

4 Overall Service Satisfaction

Percent who rated as Good or Better

Urban and Rural



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Employment Security Division

A statewide comparison of all surveys conducted from 1997 through 2000 is shown in Exhibit 2. Customer satisfaction with overall service and waiting time increased in just about every survey. The greatest increase was measured in overall satisfaction. In November 1997 (the first survey), 35.7% of respondents rated their overall satisfaction with UI services as "very good." The percentage leaped to 59.06% two surveys later in December 1998, and has been rated "very good" by one out of two respondents since then. A consistent trend throughout the surveys is evident. More than ninety percent of customers in the last six surveys responded that overall services are good or better. (See Exhibit 3.)

In a comparison of urban and rural claimants, rural rates of good or better for overall service were higher than urban rates in four out of seven surveys. (See Exhibit 4.) For most of the time since 1998, satisfaction rates have showed a rising trend, with 90 percent or more choosing good or better ratings. The differences in

satisfaction with overall services between urban and rural populations are relatively small throughout the seven surveys, and in December 1998, nearly disappeared.

For length of wait, ratings are steady from December 1998 to October 2000 with 80 percent of customers rating their satisfaction good or better. The biggest increase in this category occurred recently when satisfaction rates jumped from 81.75% in June 2000 to 89.78% in October 2000. (See Exhibit 5.) Claimants filing through the Fairbanks call center demonstrated the biggest jump in length of wait satisfaction rates when the "very good" category ratings rose from 15 percent in June 2000 to 45.24% in October 2000.

Absent any showings of significant disparity in customer satisfaction categories in the four years of UI program surveying, drivers of dissatisfaction are mostly indicated through content analysis of open-ended, verbatim comments. Comments are generally solicited in relationship to a respondent's rating for a particular measure. For instance, a consistent inquiry prompts, "Would you care to comment on why you rate the UI services you are currently receiving as very good, good, poor, etc.?" Hundreds of remarks and suggestions are provided with some common themes grouped in the in-person versus on-the-phone category. For example, a repeated observation has been that some claimants express discomfort talking and responding to a pre-recorded set of voice responses and dealing with a computer system. Although there is always room for improvement and program enhancements, satisfaction levels for Alaska's UI phone filing system remain uniformly high.

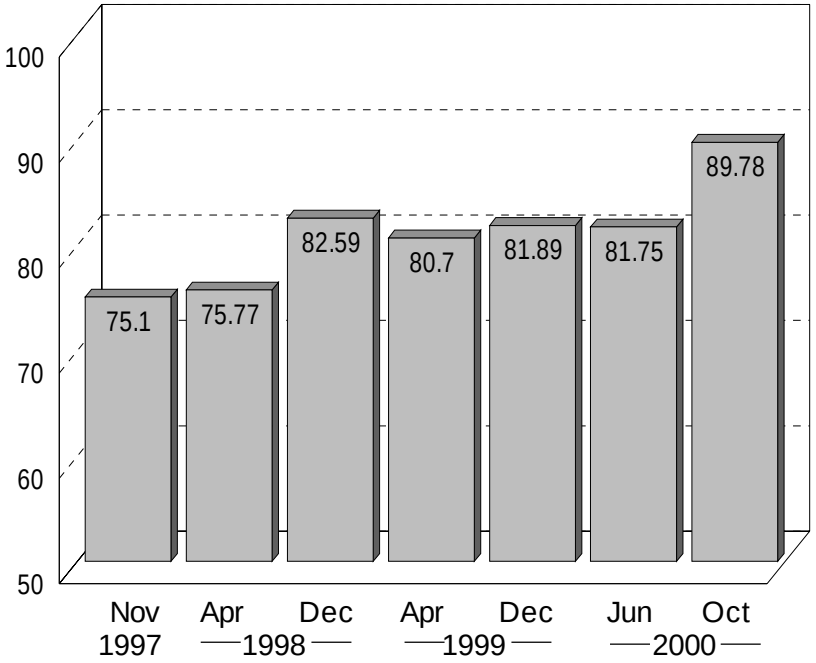
Summary

Since its inception, Alaska has continually improved its UI program and filing methods, and now uses the feedback of customers as the main impetus for program change or modification. Most recent efforts focus on refining the phone system so that customer calls are answered in record time. The Anchorage call center, which handles the majority of the state's UI claims, answered 83% of calls received in December 2000 within 24 seconds, with an average delay of 23 seconds and a 3.5% abandonment rate.

More than 90 percent of all claimants in Alaska now use the telephonic filing option. More than 30 percent have chosen the deposit of their benefits directly into their personal bank accounts, an option implemented only after 80 percent of customers surveyed indicated an interest. Changes to Alaska's UI system intended to bring progressive results and high satisfaction appear to be performing as designed. The program consistently garners high rates of customer satisfaction. The challenge remains to keep Alaska's unemployed workers receiving entitled benefits on time, conveniently and in a satisfied manner.

❑ *James Wilson, Labor Economist, and Lori West, Employment Security Analyst, contributed to this article.*

Length of Wait 5
Percent who rated as Good or Better



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Employment Security Division

Year's Numbers End in the Positive

First figures from 2000 Census begin to tell their story

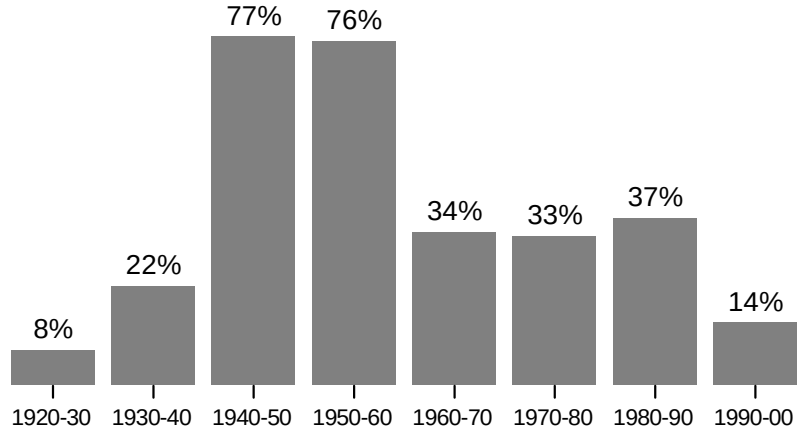
Alaska Employment Scene

by
Neal Fried
Labor Economist

As the last labor market figures came in for 2000, Alaska's economy continued to enjoy relatively low unemployment. The December unemployment rate of 6.1 percent was not the lowest for the decade, but it remained below historical averages. During most of the past decade, the Alaska statewide unemployment rate for December registered between 8 and 10 percent. The low jobless rates of the past three years continued to characterize a tight labor market in much of the state. The lowest rates were in the larger urban areas such as Juneau, MatSu, Fairbanks and Anchorage. The news for employment was also good. Wage and salary employment ended on a strong note. Compared to year-ago levels, employment in December was positive for all industries but manufacturing. Woes in the timber and fishing industries explain these losses. On a positive note, the oil industry's job count enjoyed the biggest year-ago bounce of any industry in December and for most of this past year. The services industry was not far behind.

1 Alaska Population Grew Slowly During 1990s

Percent change from each decennial census



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Economic story was mixed around the state

The biggest employment gains are coming from the Anchorage/MatSu region and Fairbanks, the state's two largest labor markets. Together they employ nearly two thirds of all workers in the state. Services, construction, transportation and to a lesser extent retail are keeping both of these areas in the black. With the turnaround in the oil industry, neither area is experiencing the negatives of 1999.

Employment in the Southwest, Gulf Coast and Northern regions moved very little from last year's levels. The weak fisheries in both the Southwest and Gulf Coast regions dampened the economic performance of these areas. A soft visitor season on the Kenai Peninsula also contributed to the Gulf Coast's lackluster showing. Although the Northern region's numbers were relatively flat during the earlier part of the year they are ending in the positive—4.5% ahead of year-ago figures. During the last half of the year, employment turned positive because of the upswing in activity on the North Slope. So much so, that air charters headed for the Slope were running at full capacity in December and room to house workers was in short supply. This trend suggests continued growth in 2001.

Losses in timber and less than stellar visitor and fishing seasons meant many of the areas in Southeast Alaska lost ground over the past year. The large and more stable economy of Juneau, however, prevented the region's overall numbers from going negative. Employment for the balance of the Interior (excluding Fairbanks) will register at slightly lower levels in 2000. The closure of Fort Greely helps explain most of the losses, but a soft visitor season was also a factor.

A decade of moderate population and employment growth

The U.S. Census Bureau released its first results from the 2000 Census in December. The bureau pegged the state's population at 626,932 persons. In 1990 Alaska's resident population was 550,043. The state's population increased by 76,889 persons between the two censuses. Alaska now ranks 48th in the nation, one ranking higher than a decade ago. It accomplished this by pushing past Vermont and remaining ahead of Wyoming. During the next two years, a flood of census data will create a very comprehensive picture of the state's demographic and socio-economic standing.

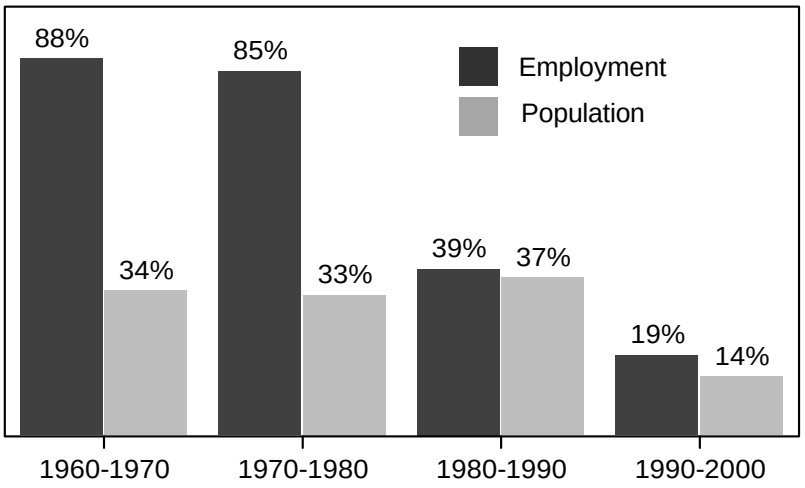
Even this single 2000 census number begins to tell quite an economic story about Alaska's most recent decade. Alaska's population grew at close to the same rate as the rest of the nation, 14% versus 13.2%. This is unprecedented in Alaska's recent history. Typically, Alaska has grown at a considerably faster pace than the nation. During each decade since statehood the state's population grew at least 2.5 times as fast as the rest of the nation. (See Exhibit 1.)

To find a comparable rate of population growth, one has to reach back to the decade of the 1920s. Since the 1940s, when results from the decennial census were tabulated, Alaska always ranked among the top five states in growth. During this most recent decade Alaska ranked 17th. As the state's population base grows, it becomes more

(continued on page 30)

Employment and Population Growth linked in Alaska 2

Percent change from each decennial census



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

3 Nonagricultural Wage and Salary Employment
By place of work

Alaska

	preliminary 12/00	revised 11/00	12/99	Changes from: 11/00	12/99
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	272,400	275,300	268,400	-2,900	4,000
Goods-producing	30,100	32,800	29,600	-2,700	500
Service-producing	242,300	242,500	238,800	-200	3,500
Mining	9,800	10,000	9,100	-200	700
Oil & Gas Extraction	8,500	8,500	7,700	0	800
Construction	12,400	13,800	12,200	-1,400	200
Manufacturing	7,900	9,000	8,300	-1,100	-400
Durable Goods	2,200	2,600	2,400	-400	-200
Lumber & Wood Products	1,100	1,500	1,300	-400	-200
Nondurable Goods	5,700	6,400	5,900	-700	-200
Seafood Processing	3,100	3,900	3,200	-800	-100
Transportation/Comm/Utilities	25,400	25,800	25,100	-400	300
Trucking & Warehousing	2,900	2,800	2,800	100	100
Water Transportation	1,500	1,700	1,500	-200	0
Air Transportation	9,300	9,500	9,200	-200	100
Communications	5,100	5,100	5,100	0	0
Electric, Gas & Sanitary Svcs.	2,600	2,700	2,600	-100	0
Trade	57,700	57,300	56,800	400	900
Wholesale Trade	8,600	8,600	8,800	0	-200
Retail Trade	49,100	48,700	48,000	400	1,100
Gen. Merchandise & Apparel	10,700	10,400	10,400	300	300
Food Stores	6,600	6,600	6,700	0	-100
Eating & Drinking Places	16,500	16,400	15,800	100	700
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	12,700	12,600	12,800	100	-100
Services & Misc.	71,600	71,700	69,400	-100	2,200
Hotels & Lodging Places	6,300	6,300	5,800	0	500
Business Services	8,800	8,900	8,800	-100	0
Health Services	17,200	17,100	16,100	100	1,100
Legal Services	1,600	1,600	1,600	0	0
Social Services	8,200	8,200	8,000	0	200
Engineering & Mgmt. Svcs.	7,800	7,900	7,700	-100	100
Government	74,900	75,100	74,700	-200	200
Federal	16,100	16,100	16,500	0	-400
State	22,500	22,700	22,000	-200	500
Local	36,300	36,300	36,200	0	100

Municipality of Anchorage

	preliminary 12/00	revised 11/00	12/99	Changes from: 11/00	12/99
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	134,700	134,900	132,200	-200	2,500
Goods-producing	11,300	12,000	11,100	-700	200
Service-producing	123,400	122,900	121,100	500	2,300
Mining	2,700	2,700	2,500	0	200
Oil & Gas Extraction	2,600	2,500	2,400	100	200
Construction	6,700	7,300	6,600	-600	100
Manufacturing	1,900	2,000	2,000	-100	-100
Transportation/Comm/Utilities	14,300	14,500	13,900	-200	400
Air Transportation	6,100	6,200	5,900	-100	200
Communications	3,500	3,400	3,400	100	100
Trade	32,500	32,200	31,900	300	600
Wholesale Trade	6,300	6,300	6,300	0	0
Retail Trade	26,200	25,900	25,600	300	600
Gen. Merchandise & Apparel	5,500	5,400	5,400	100	100
Food Stores	2,600	2,600	2,700	0	-100
Eating & Drinking Places	9,300	9,300	8,900	0	400
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	7,700	7,700	7,700	0	0
Services & Misc.	40,000	39,700	38,500	300	1,500
Hotels & Lodging Places	3,100	3,000	2,900	100	200
Business Services	6,400	6,400	6,300	0	100
Health Services	9,300	9,200	8,400	100	900
Legal Services	1,200	1,200	1,200	0	0
Social Services	4,100	4,000	3,900	100	200
Engineering & Mgmt. Svcs.	6,000	6,100	6,000	-100	0
Government	28,900	28,800	29,100	100	-200
Federal	9,500	9,500	9,900	0	-400
State	9,200	9,200	8,900	0	300
Local	10,200	10,100	10,300	100	-100

Notes to Exhibits 3, 4, & 5—Nonagricultural excludes self-employed workers, fishers, domestics, and unpaid family workers as well as agricultural workers. Government category includes employees of public school systems and the University of Alaska.

Exhibits 3 & 4—Prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Exhibit 5—Prepared in part with funding from the Employment Security Division.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

4 Hours and Earnings
For selected industries

	Average Weekly Earnings			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings		
	preliminary 12/00	revised 11/00	12/99	preliminary 12/00	revised 11/99	12/99	preliminary 12/00	revised 11/00	12/99
Mining	$1,265.28	$1,532.59	$1,340.47	44.9	52.2	49.3	$28.18	$29.36	$27.19
Construction	1,059.29	1,108.25	1,068.92	40.4	40.3	39.9	26.22	27.50	26.79
Manufacturing	590.52	506.83	526.22	37.0	33.3	35.7	15.96	15.22	14.74
Seafood Processing	307.54	264.45	289.17	29.8	25.8	30.6	10.32	10.25	9.45
Transportation/Comm/Utilities	725.55	728.17	701.40	35.0	33.9	35.0	20.73	21.48	20.04
Trade	467.85	465.12	442.20	34.3	34.0	33.5	13.64	13.68	13.20
Wholesale Trade	617.63	642.16	619.55	37.5	37.4	36.9	16.47	17.17	16.79
Retail Trade	441.47	435.84	411.58	33.7	33.5	32.9	13.10	13.01	12.51
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	618.84	626.86	597.84	36.0	35.8	34.9	17.19	17.51	17.13

Average hours and earnings estimates are based on data for full-time and part-time production workers (manufacturing) and nonsupervisory workers (nonmanufacturing). Averages are for gross earnings and hours paid, including overtime pay and hours.

Benchmark: March 1999
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

5 Nonagricultural Wage and Salary Employment
By place of work

Fairbanks North Star Borough

	preliminary 12/00	revised 11/00	12/99	Changes from: 11/00	12/99
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	33,250	33,650	33,150	-400	100
Goods-producing	2,950	3,400	2,800	-450	150
Service-producing	30,300	30,250	30,350	50	-50
Mining	900	1,050	800	-150	100
Construction	1,500	1,750	1,400	-250	100
Manufacturing	550	600	600	-50	-50
Transportation/Comm/Utilities	2,900	2,950	2,900	-50	0
Trucking & Warehousing	600	600	550	0	50
Air Transportation	950	950	900	0	50
Communications	400	400	400	0	0
Trade	6,750	6,650	7,150	100	-400
Wholesale Trade	700	650	800	50	-100
Retail Trade	6,050	6,000	6,350	50	-300
Gen. Merchandise & Apparel	1,150	1,150	1,300	0	-150
Food Stores	600	600	750	0	-150
Eating & Drinking Places	2,200	2,150	2,250	50	-50
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	1,100	1,100	1,200	0	-100
Services & Misc.	8,350	8,350	8,150	0	200
Hotels & Lodging Places	650	650	600	0	50
Health Services	2,100	2,050	2,000	50	100
Government	11,200	11,200	10,950	0	250
Federal	3,300	3,300	3,250	0	50
State	4,750	4,750	4,650	0	100
Local	3,150	3,150	3,050	0	100

Southeast Region

Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	33,150	34,200	32,850	-1,050	300
Goods-producing	3,700	4,300	3,800	-600	-100
Service-producing	29,450	29,900	29,050	-450	400
Mining	300	300	300	0	0
Construction	1,400	1,600	1,400	-200	0
Manufacturing	2,000	2,400	2,100	-400	-100
Durable Goods	1,050	1,300	1,150	-250	-100
Lumber & Wood Products	800	1,050	900	-250	-100
Nondurable Goods	950	1,100	950	-150	0
Seafood Processing	650	800	650	-150	0
Transportation/Comm/Utilities	2,350	2,450	2,400	-100	-50
Trade	6,050	6,050	5,950	0	100
Wholesale Trade	550	600	550	-50	0
Retail Trade	5,500	5,450	5,400	50	100
Food Stores	1,200	1,200	1,250	0	-50
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	1,250	1,250	1,200	0	50
Services & Misc.	7,650	7,700	7,450	-50	200
Health Services	1,750	1,750	1,700	0	50
Government	12,150	12,450	12,050	-300	100
Federal	1,550	1,650	1,550	-100	0
State	5,150	5,300	5,050	-150	100
Local	5,450	5,500	5,450	-50	0

Northern Region

Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	14,850	14,950	14,200	-100	650
Goods-producing	5,200	5,300	4,650	-100	550
Service-producing	9,650	9,650	9,550	0	100
Mining	4,700	4,750	4,200	-50	500
Oil & Gas Extraction	4,300	4,300	3,800	0	500
Government	4,400	4,450	4,450	-50	-50
Federal	100	150	150	-50	-50
State	300	300	300	0	0
Local	4,000	4,000	4,000	0	0

Interior Region

	preliminary 12/00	revised 11/00	12/99	Changes from: 11/00	12/99
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	38,000	38,400	37,600	-400	400
Goods-producing	3,200	3,650	3,050	-450	150
Service-producing	34,800	34,750	34,550	50	250
Mining	1,050	1,200	950	-150	100
Construction	1,550	1,800	1,500	-250	50
Manufacturing	600	650	600	-50	0
Transportation/Comm/Utilities	3,400	3,450	3,300	-50	100
Trade	7,450	7,350	7,750	100	-300
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	1,200	1,200	1,300	0	-100
Services & Misc.	9,300	9,300	9,050	0	250
Hotels & Lodging Places	800	800	700	0	100
Government	13,450	13,450	13,150	0	300
Federal	3,750	3,750	3,700	0	50
State	5,000	5,000	4,850	0	150
Local	4,700	4,700	4,600	0	100

Anchorage/Mat-Su Region

Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	148,050	148,300	144,650	-250	3,400
Goods-producing	12,600	13,350	12,350	-750	250
Service-producing	135,450	134,950	132,300	500	3,150
Mining	2,750	2,650	2,500	100	250
Construction	7,800	8,600	7,750	-800	50
Manufacturing	2,050	2,100	2,100	-50	-50
Transportation/Comm/Utilities	15,350	15,550	14,950	-200	400
Trade	36,200	35,900	35,350	300	850
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	8,250	8,150	8,250	100	0
Services & Misc.	43,450	43,200	41,600	250	1,850
Government	32,200	32,150	32,150	50	50
Federal	9,700	9,650	10,000	50	-300
State	10,050	10,100	9,700	-50	350
Local	12,450	12,400	12,450	50	0

Southwest Region

Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	14,450	14,900	14,400	-450	50
Goods-producing	1,450	1,800	1,450	-350	0
Service-producing	13,000	13,100	12,950	-100	50
Seafood Processing	1,300	1,600	1,300	-300	0
Government	5,900	5,900	5,850	0	50
Federal	350	300	350	50	0
State	500	500	500	0	0
Local	5,050	5,100	5,000	-50	50

Gulf Coast Region

Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	24,200	25,050	24,100	-850	100
Goods-producing	3,850	4,400	4,050	-550	-200
Service-producing	20,350	20,650	20,050	-300	300
Mining	1,000	1,000	1,100	0	-100
Oil & Gas Extraction	1,000	1,000	1,050	0	-50
Construction	1,000	1,200	950	-200	50
Manufacturing	1,850	2,200	2,000	-350	-150
Seafood Processing	1,050	1,350	1,150	-300	-100
Transportation/Comm/Utilities	2,150	2,250	2,150	-100	0
Trade	5,200	5,300	5,150	-100	50
Wholesale Trade	600	600	600	0	0
Retail Trade	4,600	4,700	4,550	-100	50
Eating & Drinking Places	1,400	1,450	1,350	-50	50
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	800	800	800	0	0
Services & Misc.	5,350	5,450	5,150	-100	200
Health Services	1,150	1,150	1,100	0	50
Government	6,850	6,850	6,800	0	50
Federal	700	700	650	0	50
State	1,550	1,550	1,550	0	0
Local	4,600	4,600	4,600	0	0

6 Unemployment Rates
By region and census area

Not Seasonally Adjusted	Percent Unemployed preliminary 12/00	revised 11/00	12/99
United States	3.7	3.8	3.7
Alaska Statewide	6.1	5.8	5.9
Anch/Mat-Su Region	4.6	4.5	4.5
Municipality of Anchorage	4.1	4.0	3.9
Mat-Su Borough	7.3	6.9	7.0
Gulf Coast Region	11.0	10.3	11.0
Kenai Peninsula Borough	10.6	9.5	11.1
Kodiak Island Borough	13.1	13.6	11.0
Valdez-Cordova	9.8	9.1	10.3
Interior Region	6.2	5.8	6.0
Denali Borough	9.9	9.9	10.6
Fairbanks North Star Borough	5.4	5.0	5.4
Southeast Fairbanks	11.5	10.7	11.1
Yukon-Koyukuk	14.3	13.9	10.9
Northern Region	9.3	9.6	8.5
Nome	10.3	10.1	8.8
North Slope Borough	6.8	8.0	6.4
Northwest Arctic Borough	11.5	11.1	11.2
Southeast Region	6.9	6.2	6.5
Haines Borough	11.9	9.6	12.2
Juneau Borough	4.6	4.5	4.3
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	7.5	7.1	6.9
Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan	11.4	9.3	10.6
Sitka Borough	4.6	4.3	4.4
Skagway-Hoonah-Angoon	11.1	9.3	10.3
Wrangell-Petersburg	9.9	8.2	9.9
Yakutat Borough	11.3	12.5	8.5
Southwest Region	10.3	9.1	8.7
Aleutians East Borough	7.9	4.6	6.9
Aleutians West	12.1	11.4	8.8
Bethel	8.9	8.1	7.8
Bristol Bay Borough	9.8	8.6	9.2
Dillingham	7.4	7.0	8.1
Lake & Peninsula Borough	10.9	12.5	9.2
Wade Hampton	16.6	14.4	12.8
Seasonally Adjusted			
United States	4.0	4.0	4.1
Alaska Statewide	6.0	6.0	5.7

March 1999 Benchmark

Comparisons between different time periods are not as meaningful as other time series produced by Research and Analysis. The official definition of unemployment currently in place excludes anyone who has not made an active attempt to find work in the four-week period up to and including the week that includes the 12th of the reference month. Due to the scarcity of employment opportunities in rural Alaska, many individuals do not meet the official definition of unemployed because they have not conducted an active job search. They are considered not in the labor force.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

(continued from page 27)

difficult to support the impressive growth rates of the past. But even during the relatively recent decade of 1980-90, Alaska's population grew by 37 percent. There are a number of reasons for this more moderate picture but none of them comes as a revelation. One reason the results are not a surprise is that each year the Department of Labor and Workforce Development produces population figures for the state and its communities. The Department's 2000 population estimate for the state differed by only 168 from the Census Bureau's count.

The other reason it comes as so little a surprise is the inextricable link between employment and population growth. (See Exhibit 2.) There are very few states where changes in the population are so closely tied to changes in employment. So, this decade's modest gains in employment have, unsurprisingly, been accompanied by small increases in population.

The 1990s lacked the economic booms of many of the past decades, which often attracted record numbers of new residents. For example, in 1975, during the construction of the oil pipeline, Alaska's population grew by more than 30,000 people—all in one year. The 1990s were characterized instead by incremental employment growth with population gains in matching measure. The national economic boom of the last half of the decade was another factor in the state's modest population gains, as more Americans stayed closer to home or moved to states with stronger growth. A significant reduction in the size of the state's armed forces and their dependent population also shoulders considerable responsibility for Alaska's smaller population gains over this past decade.

Employer Resources

Did you know that cannery workers, including Seafood Processors, lead the state in hiring activity? Did you know that while seafood processing has large numbers of job openings annually, Alaskans do not fill all of these jobs? For more information, such as current openings, job applications or facts about working in the seafood industry, check into http://www.jobs.state.ak.us/ and click on Seafood Jobs.