



ALASKA ECONOMIC

TRENDS

FEBRUARY 2012

Federal Spending in Alaska

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The Insured Unemployment Rate

What it says about Alaska's seasonal workforce

Poverty Measures in Alaska

The national thresholds and how the state compares



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Governor Sean Parnell
Commissioner Click Bishop**

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Brynn Keith
Director, Administrative Services

Dan Robinson
Chief, Research and Analysis

Sara Whitney
Editor and Graphics Artist

Sam Dapcevich
Cover Artist

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Trends Authors



Neal Fried, a Department of Labor economist in Anchorage, specializes in the Anchorage/Mat-Su region's employment, wages, and the cost of living. To reach him, call (907) 269-4861 or e-mail him at Neal.Fried@alaska.gov.



Lennon Weller, a Department of Labor economist in Juneau, specializes in the unemployment insurance system. To reach him, call (907) 465-4507 or email him at Lennon.Weller@alaska.gov.



Alyssa Shanks, an economist for the Department of Labor in Anchorage, specializes in the employment and wages of the Interior, Gulf Coast, and Northern economic regions. To reach her, call (907) 269-4863 or e-mail Alyssa.Shanks@alaska.gov.

Federal government a major source of funding, jobs



**By Commissioner
Click Bishop**

Last month's issue of *Trends* provided our employment and economic forecast for 2012, which showed that while about 90 percent of Alaska's unrestricted government funds are oil-related, the federal government is a major economic engine in the state.

As you'll read in this month's issue, federal funds provide about 40,000 military and civilian jobs, making it one of the state's largest employers.

The U.S. Department of Defense is the largest federal entity, employing almost 30,000 Alaskans — both uniformed and civilian workers. Defense is followed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, with 2,700 workers who manage the roughly 50 percent of Alaska's land that is owned by the federal government.

With 1,500 employees, the U.S. Postal Service is the third largest federal civilian employer, providing a lifeline through service to cities and communities on the road system and delivering letters and parcels by air to Alaska's roadless rural areas.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's 1,000 employees include the Forest Service staff that controls 22 million acres of forests, primarily in the Chugach and Tongass national forests.

The federal footprint is more than direct jobs for Alaskans — it includes everything from funding for grants to procurement and Social Security checks. The federal government spent \$17,762 for every Alaskan in 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Consolidated Funds Report, which ranks the state No. 1 in federal per capita spending.

Poverty in Alaska

Also in this issue, we report that 9.5 percent of Alaskans were living in poverty in 2010, in contrast to the national rate of 15.3 percent. For a family of four — two adults and two children — the poverty threshold in the American Community Survey was \$22,113 a year.

With a few exceptions, the percentage of families living in poverty is higher in Alaska's rural areas. However, families that are headed by a single woman with young children had the highest rates, between 50 and 60 percent, whether in urban or rural areas. While not always the case, the highest rates of poverty are often in areas where jobless rates are also high.

Insured unemployment rate

You'll also read about the "insured unemployment rate" in this issue. The IUR measures only unemployed workers who apply for benefits. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development tracks and reports the standard unemployment rate each month, and also tracks the IUR each week.

With Alaska's high swing in seasonal employment, the IUR historically moves more than a few percentage points throughout the year — in 2011 it moved from a high of 7.08 percent in March to a low of 3.78 percent in October.

While Alaska's unemployment rates have been below national rates for more than three years, a slight rise in the IUR to 6 percent recently triggered two federally funded programs that extend unemployment benefits — up to 13 weeks of federal extended benefits and up to six weeks of emergency unemployment compensation, known as EUC Tier IV. Beginning at the end of January, potentially eligible Alaskans were notified by mail.

Federal Spending in Alaska

Funding and employment a major part of state economy

The federal government has been Alaska's largest employer since the days before statehood, generating approximately a third of all jobs in the state. That means Alaska has a lot to lose as proposed federal budget cuts over the next 10 years could top \$1.5 trillion — the largest spending cuts since the end of World War II.

There aren't yet enough data to determine what these federal cuts will mean for Alaska, but a picture of the U.S. government's role in our economy will make it easier to measure the effects in the future.

Importance waxes and wanes

Although the federal government has always been a dominant economic player in the state, its influence has waxed and waned over the decades. During the 1970s and 1980s, many other pieces of Alaska's economy grew faster than the federal sector — for example, the oil industry, fishing, tourism, and the service sector — diminishing federal influence on the state's economy.

That decline accelerated in the 1990s with the closures of military bases and downsizing of base and

Origin of federal spending data

The U.S. Census Bureau's Consolidated Federal Funds Report is the most comprehensive annual report published on federal expenditures for all 50 states, boroughs, census areas, counties, and other geographic areas.

The most recent edition, for 2010, was published in September 2011. It covers all dollars spent, from a small \$1,011 for tribal courts to \$887 million for medical assistance.

Without the Consolidated Federal Funds Report, we wouldn't be able to measure the federal influence on Alaska's economy. In addition to the report's usefulness when comparing geographic areas, it's a good source for trends analysis because it has been produced since 1983.

civilian staff. In 1994 and 1995, total federal expenditures fell in Alaska. The University of Alaska Anchorage estimates that the federal government was responsible for a third of the state's gross product in 1965, but by 1998, that had fallen to 13 percent. The downward trajectory appeared permanent a decade ago, but to everyone's surprise, things changed.

The federal government booms

The 2000s brought big increases in federal spending — accelerated by the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 — and Alaska's well-positioned congressional delegation took advantage of that growth. According to the annual Consolidated Federal Funds Report, the U.S. government spent \$17,762 for every man, woman, and child in Alaska in 2010, putting the state at No. 1 for per capita federal expenditures — 69.8 percent above the national average. (See Exhibit 1.)

These per capita figures are noteworthy, but so is the total dollar amount. In 2010, the U.S. spent \$12.6 billion in Alaska — a \$6.6 billion increase over the year 2000 (see Exhibit 2), or 110 percent

1 Alaska is No. 1 Among States

Per-capita federal funds, 2010

Rank	State	2010	Rank	State	2010
1	Alaska	\$17,762	13	Louisiana	\$11,738
2	Virginia	\$17,008	14	South Dakota	\$11,676
3	Maryland	\$16,673	15	West Virginia	\$11,609
4	Connecticut	\$15,662	16	Pennsylvania	\$11,489
5	Hawaii	\$15,331	17	Rhode Island	\$11,172
6	New Mexico	\$13,578	18	Maine	\$11,024
7	Kentucky	\$13,198	19	Wyoming	\$11,019
8	North Dakota	\$12,930	20	Montana	\$10,873
9	Massachusetts	\$12,593	21	Tennessee	\$10,852
10	Vermont	\$11,834	22	Mississippi	\$10,588
11	Alabama	\$11,820	23	Washington	\$10,475
12	Missouri	\$11,746		U.S. Average	\$10,460

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Consolidated Federal Funds Report

more. In contrast, federal spending grew by 83 percent in the 1990s. Overall, Alaska represented 0.2 percent of the nation's population in 2010, and 0.4 percent of all federal expenditures.

Wages, salaries topped spending categories

The most dramatic rise in federal expenditures in Alaska has been in salaries and wages — the largest spending category — which doubled over the past decade. (See Exhibits 3 and 4.) In 2010, Alaska ranked second for per capita federal wages and salaries at \$5,710 — five times the national average. (See Exhibit 5.)

Average salaries also increased, and the typical civilian federal worker earned \$68,484 in 2010 — considerably more than the \$47,724 earned by the average Alaska worker.

Much of the growth in wages and salaries is attributable to the military's expansion, and the U.S. Census Bureau also assembled a large temporary workforce to conduct the decennial census. However, none of these changes fully explain the rise.

Growth in other funding categories

Although grants grew more slowly than all other categories, they were the second-largest federal expenditure category in Alaska. Alaska ranks first among states for per capita grant spending — twice the national average — and federal grant money in the state budget went from \$1.9 billion in 2001 to a peak of \$3.5 billion in 2009. (See Exhibits 5 and 6.)

Alaska ranks fourth in procurement, the other big federal spending category, with most of it tied to the military. The remaining categories also grew rapidly, but are much smaller and play lesser roles in Alaska than elsewhere in the nation.

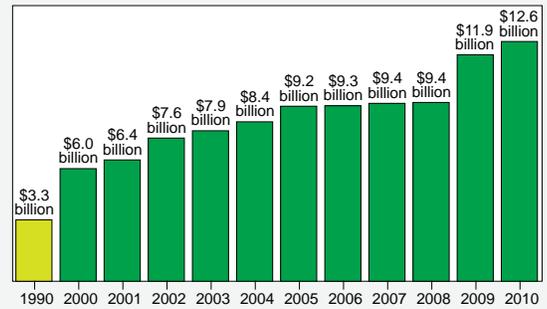
It's important to remember that not all federal spending is equal. For example, the economic effect of a Social Security check or salary tends to be significantly higher than dollars spent on procurement. A Social Security check is typically spent immediately in the state, whereas a large share of procurement money goes to equipment manufactured and purchased outside Alaska.

Defense is the largest federal employer

In 2010, 40,000 Alaskans were on the federal payroll. The Department of Defense is the largest employer, with 29,714 combined uniformed and civilian workers in the state.

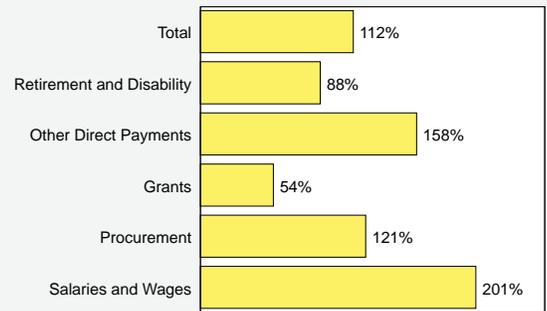
In 2010, there were 7,313 civilian jobs on bases or other military property, ranging from highly specialized professionals working for the Corps of Engineers to retail personnel working for the commissaries and base exchanges.

2 Federal Funds on the Rise Alaska, 1990 to 2010



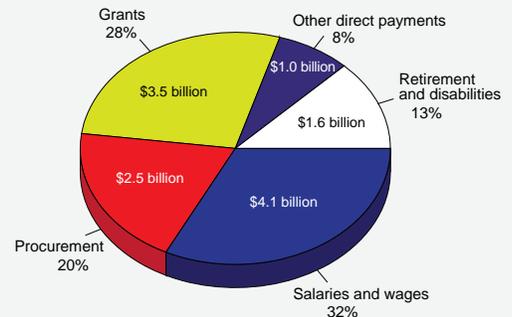
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Consolidated Federal Funds Report

3 Categories in Alaska Federal fund growth, 2000 to 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Consolidated Federal Funds Report

4 Expenditure Categories Federal dollars to Alaska, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Consolidated Federal Funds Report

5 Alaska's Rank Per-capita federal funds

	2010 rank
Total Expenditures	1
Salaries and Wages	2
Grants	1
Procurement	4
Other Direct Payments	50
Retirement and Disability	49

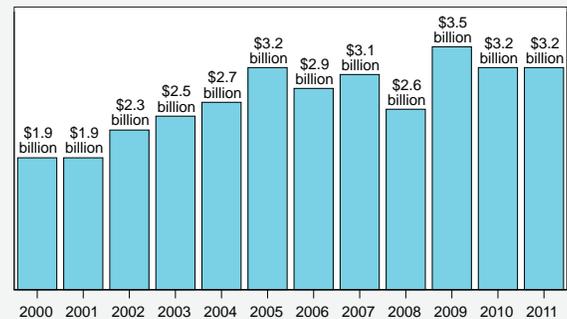
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Consolidated Federal Funds Report for Fiscal Year 2010

The total federal civilian workforce (including civilians working for the Department of Defense) was 17,544 in 2010, with a payroll of \$1.2 billion. (See Exhibits 7 and 8.)

The largest all-civilian agency

When the Department of Defense is excluded, the next top five agencies in Alaska employ more than three-quarters (76 percent) of all civilian federal workers. (See Exhibit 7.) The largest civilian agencies are the Department of the Interior, the United States Postal Service, and the departments of Transportation, Homeland Security, Agriculture,

The State's Budget Federal money, 2000 to 2011



Sources: State of Alaska, Legislative Finance Division, State Fiscal Years 2000 to 2011

Commerce, Veterans Affairs, and Health and Human Services.

Considering the Department of the Interior is the state's largest property owner, it's not surprising that its presence is second only to the Department of Defense. The Department of the Interior controls over 50 percent of the state's landmass, and most of its mission is to manage these federal lands and their resources. The big branches within the Department of the Interior are the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The other major agencies

The U.S. Postal Service is the second-largest federal civilian employer in Alaska, although it's typically the largest elsewhere in the nation. Alaska has a special relationship with the USPS, which injects additional federal funds into Alaska's economy by paying air carriers to move goods such as groceries to roadless areas. This unique system is called "by-pass mail," and in 2010 its federal subsidy was \$70 million.

Carrying mail is the largest piece of business for many of the state's air carriers that operate in rural areas. Without U.S. mail, Alaska's air transportation system would be very different and much smaller than it is today.

The state's geographic distances also dictate the size of the Department of

7 Federal Civilian Jobs and Payroll Alaska, by agency, 2010

	Employment	Total payroll
U.S. Department of Defense, civilian only	7,313	\$433,039,395
U.S. Department of Interior	2,710	\$189,248,483
U.S. Postal Service	1,562	\$102,925,325
U.S. Department of Transportation	1,309	\$131,765,745
U.S. Department of Homeland Security	1,118	\$80,812,698
U.S. Department of Agriculture	1,089	\$77,688,131
U.S. Department of Commerce	944	\$68,412,838
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	627	\$41,822,502
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	292	\$21,730,053
U.S. Department of Justice	207	\$22,107,409
U.S. Court System	121	\$7,907,401
Social Security Administration	72	\$4,617,724
General Service Administration	51	\$633,337
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	39	\$3,916,234
Environmental Protection Agency	37	\$3,509,894
U.S. Department of Labor	22	\$1,664,240
All other agencies	31	\$2,601,092
Total	17,544	\$1,194,402,501

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

Transportation, the third-largest civilian agency. The Federal Aviation Administration is its dominant player, as air transportation in Alaska is more intensive than anywhere else in the country.

Although the Department of Homeland Security is a relatively new agency, it ranks fourth in size. It was born in 2003 through the consolidation of other agencies and creation of the Transportation Security Administration. The U.S. Coast Guard is traditionally part of Homeland Security, but in time of war, the Coast Guard becomes militarized — in this article, Coast Guard personnel are part of the uniformed defense workforce.

Although agriculture is a small industry in the state, the Department of Agriculture is the fifth-largest federal civilian agency. This is because the Forest Service dominates this department in the state and controls approximately 22 million acres, largely made up of the Chugach and Tongass national forests.

The Department of Health and Human Services was historically one of the largest agencies in Alaska, but it now ranks eighth behind the departments of Commerce and Veterans Affairs. Prior to 2000, it had more than 1,000 employees — most of these worked for the Indian Health Service, specifically at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage. In 1998, the federal government turned the medical center over to the Alaska Native Health Consortium, made up of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and the Southcentral Foundation, and most of the center's 1,400 federal employees became part of the private-sector workforce. By 2010, these two organizations combined employed nearly 3,000 private-sector employees along with a small contingent of federal workers. In this case, privatization reduced the size of the federal workforce, but federal funding increased.

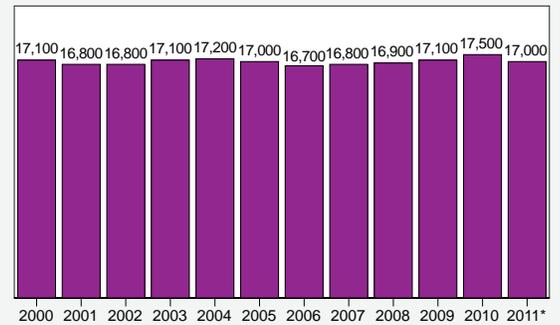
The shifts in Alaska's military

The Army represents over half of the state's armed forces. (See Exhibit 9.) It's followed by the Air Force and then the Coast Guard, which is the smallest group nationally but with a disproportionately large presence in Alaska. Total military personnel and their families make up 8 percent of the state's population, and most live in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Kodiak.

Alaska's military population fell significantly during the 1970s through the 1990s. The drop in troop levels between 1970 and 1980 marked the end of the Vietnam War, but it also represented the transition from mandatory military service to an all-volunteer army. In addition, the realignment campaign of the 1990s resized military strength to match modern warfare. The ensuing base closures and reorganization of military units in the 1990s meant Alaska lost nearly 24 percent of its military population, which hit rock bottom in 2001.

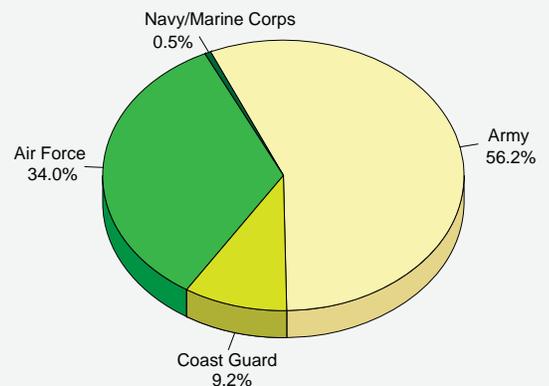
The trend reversed in 2003 after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and the military regained its status as one of the state's dynamic economic forces. By 2007, the active duty count had climbed to 23,141: a 36 percent increase over 2001, or 6,099 additional troops. (See

8 Federal Civilian Jobs Alaska, 2000 to 2011



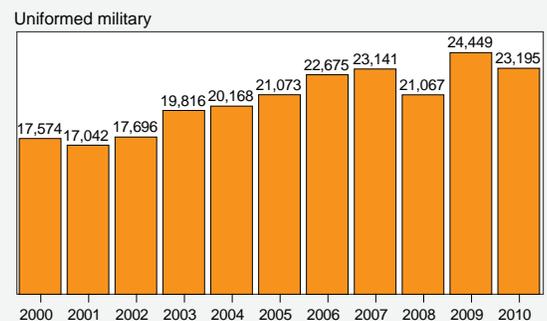
*Estimated based on first three quarters of 2011
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

9 The Army Dominates Alaska armed services, 2010



Sources: The Defense Manpower Data Center, Jan. 31, 2011

10 Military Grew in Alaska 2000 to 2010



Sources: ALCOM; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Exhibit 10.) All of these increases were in the Army — since 2000, its numbers have more than doubled. By 2010, 23,195 uniformed personnel lived in the state and worked for all branches of the armed forces, and defense represented 41 percent of all federal spending in the state.

The increases in construction money that followed were even more pronounced. The University of Alaska Anchorage estimated defense construction added up to more than \$1 billion in 2010 and 2011. According to these same reports, defense spending hit \$730 million in 2006, its biggest year, and never fell below half a billion dollars in any year since UAA began reporting data in 2004. These defense dollars became the bread and butter for a large segment of the state's construction industry.

Military outsourcing has grown

Outsourcing has grown over the years and as a result, private contractors play a big role at military installations. Civil functions on bases, ranging from janitorial services to highly specialized technical support, are often contracted to private companies. No reliable numbers are available, but total defense contract awards in Alaska totaled \$2.1 billion in 2008. Some of the large beneficiaries are listed in Exhibit 12.

Top Military Contractors **12** Alaska, 2009

Contractor	Contract value
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation	\$150,765,000
Lakeshore Engineering Services	\$129,481,000
Lynden Incorporated	\$107,799,000
API	\$62,471,000
Davis Watterson JV	\$59,273,000
Tatitlek Support Services	\$58,796,000
Tyco International	\$57,212,000
Doyon Utilities	\$56,732,000
Chugach Alaska	\$50,350,000
Pepsico Holdings	\$49,935,000

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, *Atlas/Data Abstract for the U.S. and Selected Areas, Fiscal Year 2009*

Guard and retirees also key

In 2009, 4,747 Alaskans were in the Reserves and the National Guard with a payroll of nearly \$91 million. And according to the Census Bureau, 15 percent of the state's adult population were veterans — the highest concentration of veterans in the nation. In 2009, military retirees received \$170 million in benefits.

Impact around the state

The federal government is a strong presence in every corner of the state through direct employment, funding, or both. Per capita expenditures and employment vary dramatically by area, and with the exception of Juneau, the areas with the highest rates tend to be rural. Most do not have a large military or strong federal employment — instead, most money flows into these areas as grants to local health care and social services organizations, tribal governments, and housing authorities. Transfer payments — such as retirement, welfare, housing assistance, and medical — are also important sources of federal money.

Military and federal civilian workforces play a larger role in urban areas such as Juneau, Kodiak, Fairbanks, and Anchorage. Federal employment is high in the Denali Borough because of Denali National Park and Clear Air Station. And for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, which ranks last in per capita expenditures, the figures are somewhat misleading. A significant number of Mat-Su residents work for the federal government or are active duty in Anchorage, so these expenditures are counted in Anchorage.

11 Active Duty Military in Alaska By borough or census area, 2000 and 2010

Area	July 1, 2010	July 1, 2000	Percent of population in 2010
Alaska	23,195	17,574	3.3%
Aleutians West Census Area	4	40	0.1%
Anchorage, Municipality of	12,787	8,630	4.4%
Denali Borough	99	132	5.4%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	8,166	6,861	8.4%
Juneau, City and Borough of	267	192	0.9%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	93	97	0.2%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	241	222	1.8%
Kodiak Island Borough	950	913	7.0%
Nome Census Area	1	23	0.0%
Petersburg Census Area	28	20	0.7%
Sitka, City and Borough of	187	183	2.1%
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	209	166	3.0%
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	163	95	1.7%

Note: These numbers are based on the assignment location and not the place of residence.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

The Insured Unemployment Rate

What it says about Alaska's seasonal workforce

The standard monthly unemployment rate receives a lot of media attention, but there is another little-talked-about rate that measures only those who file for unemployment insurance benefits. This weekly rate — the insured unemployment rate or IUR — is a more frequent gauge of current unemployment, specifically for the industries most affected by the seasonal swings that tend to drive it.

The standard unemployment rate is a survey-based estimate of the entire unemployed population, whether or not they apply for benefits. The IUR, although more limited in scope, measures the population covered under the UI system who file claims for benefits.

IUR is the claims barometer

In Alaska, 98 percent of all wage and salary workers are covered under the unemployment insurance system.¹ The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development divides covered employment by an average of the 13 most recent weeks of benefit claims to get the IUR.

Alaska has a notoriously seasonal economy, so the IUR tends to fluctuate by more than a few percentage points throughout any given year. (See Exhibit 1.) Because the rate is a 13-week moving average, there's a lag between the seasonal increase in claims and the change in the rate.

Although overall unemployment is lowest in the summer when fishing and tourism are in full swing, the IUR doesn't hit its lowest yearly level until late September or early October. When seasonal employment ends in the fall and benefit claims increase, the IUR begins to climb through the last months of the year and hits its high point around the beginning of March.

For example, the high in 2011 was 7.08 percent

The insured unemployment rate, or IUR, is the "other" unemployment rate. It measures only the unemployed workers who actually apply for benefits.

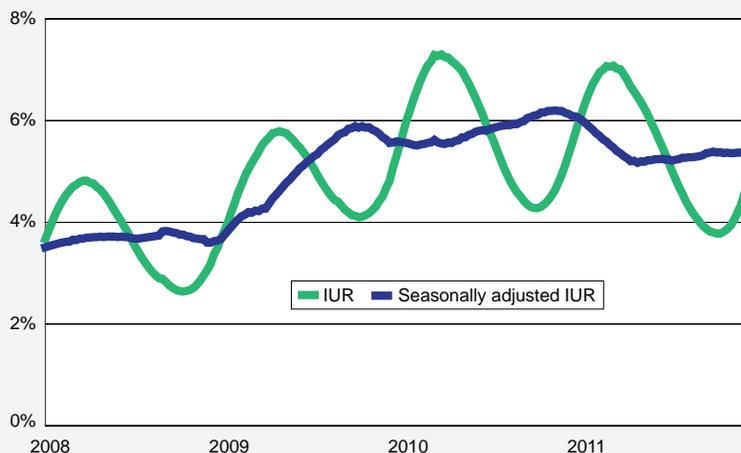
in March and the low was 3.78 percent in October. The resulting fluctuation in the rate for 2011 was 3.30 percentage points, which is well within the normal annual range. The average yearly fluctuation since 1981 has been 3.45 percentage points.

Seasonal adjustment of the IUR

One drawback of the IUR is that the seasonal swing in claims has the tendency to obscure underlying changes in the demand for benefits. To better understand these trends, the department developed a seasonally adjusted IUR in 2009, which smoothes out the seasonal fluctuation to make underlying trends more visible.

Seasonal Adjustment Shows Trends

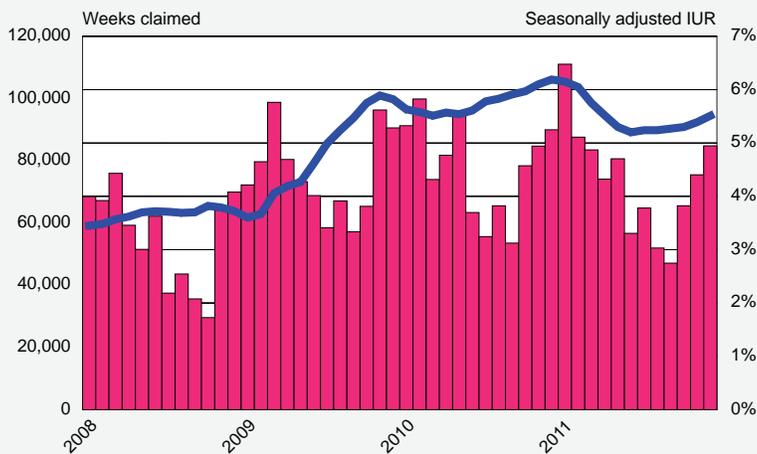
Alaska IUR, 2008 to week 50 of 2011



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

2 Adjusted IUR and Weeks Claimed

Alaska, January 2008 to December 2011



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

This seasonally adjusted rate remained below 4 percent between 2006 and late 2008. Throughout 2008, modest increases in claims and payments across all industries elevated the adjusted IUR only slightly, from 3.5 percent in January to around 3.6 percent by the year's end.

However, in early 2009, the aftershocks from the U.S. recession began to affect Alaska. The state witnessed its first real spike in claims in March when the rate leaped from 3.6 percent to 4.0 percent, largely led by the heavily seasonal construction industry as well as trade, food and lodging, mining, manufacturing, public administration, transportation, and health care.

Although the U.S. recession officially ended in June of 2009, this jump showed its effects had only begun to take hold in Alaska, with more increases to come. Claims continued to climb as the year went on, and the adjusted rate reached 5.89 percent. (See Exhibit 2.)

Claims in Alaska after recession

The recession's after-effects continued to echo in Alaska throughout 2010 and into 2011. A brief recovery in early 2010 lowered the rate, but claims spiked again in March 2010 beyond the expected seasonal level. That summer, claims fell seasonally to the still-elevated levels of the previous year, and then resurged through the end

of the year, reaching a seasonally adjusted recession-related high of 6.2 percent.

In 2011, industry composition changed notably as roughly a third of the difference in payments from pre-recession levels came from industries other than the traditional filers. This was an indication that the downturn affected industries across the board and not just those with regular seasonal layoffs.

Starting in early 2011, the rate fell significantly to around 5.20 percent by week 15 — early April — but then remained flat and rose slightly in the second half of the year.

Most of the recent uptick was due to a resurgence in manufacturing claims, mostly from seafood processing. While claims from other industries began fluctuating closer to their normal levels, seafood processing claims topped their expected seasonal level and continued to climb in late 2011.

Despite recent improvements in most industries, the underlying rate is still more than a percentage point higher than its pre-recession levels, and benefit payments are still running about 20 percent higher than 2007.

Overall, this shows that while Alaska has recovered some lost ground, the national recession still affects Alaska's labor market. While the recession hasn't affected total employment in Alaska the way it has in other states, it has had a significant influence on tourism-related spending and future expectations. Unemployment claims show this has dampened short-term demand for nonessential goods and services, which has affected industries that depend on seasonal and discretionary spending.

Notes

¹Workers who are considered self-employed aren't covered under the unemployment insurance system. These workers include most commercial fishermen, other agricultural workers, and private household workers.

Poverty Measures in Alaska

The national thresholds and how the state compares

Measuring poverty is an important task, but it can be a challenge to figure out what the measures mean and how they should be used. The U.S. Census Bureau calculates nationwide “poverty thresholds” for individuals and households based on family size and ages. If a family’s income is below the applicable threshold, that family and every person in it are considered in poverty.

That designation does not necessarily mean the family or its members qualify for a specific public benefit, though. Eligibility is determined by the federal, state, and local agencies that provide the benefits, and poverty thresholds should not be confused with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ “poverty guidelines,” which are widely used to determine eligibility.

Instead, the poverty thresholds are a statistical measure to track changes in poverty over time and to examine poverty among different groups within a population. To a lesser extent, they are

Limitations of the American Community Survey

The poverty numbers in this article are from the American Community Survey, which replaced the “long form” that the U.S. Census Bureau used to send to one in six American households during each decennial census. Before the ACS, the long form was the main source of detailed social and economic data such as poverty.

The bureau administers the ACS on an ongoing basis to about one in 750 households nationwide and releases data every year for states and large cities, every three years for smaller cities, and every five years for the smallest areas. Comparisons for small areas — most of Alaska’s boroughs and census areas — are often difficult because the margins of error can be large.

The data used in this article are from 2006 to 2010, for comparisons among the state as a whole and the individual boroughs and census areas.

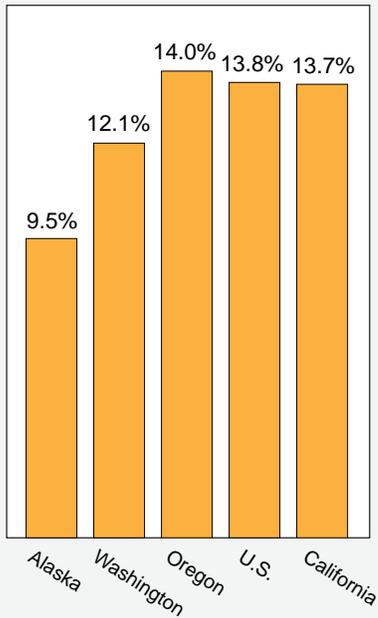
For more on using ACS data, see the March 2011 issue of *Trends*.

1 Poverty Thresholds United States, 2010

Size of family unit	How many in the household are children under age 18								
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight or more
One person									
Under 65 years	\$11,344	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 years and over	\$10,458	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Two people									
Householder under 65 years	\$14,602	\$15,030	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Householder 65 years and over	\$13,180	\$14,973	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Three people	\$17,057	\$17,552	\$17,568	—	—	—	—	—	—
Four people	\$22,491	\$22,859	\$22,113	\$22,190	—	—	—	—	—
Five people	\$27,123	\$27,518	\$26,675	\$26,023	\$25,625	—	—	—	—
Six people	\$31,197	\$31,320	\$30,675	\$30,056	\$29,137	\$28,591	—	—	—
Seven people	\$35,896	\$36,120	\$35,347	\$34,809	\$33,805	\$32,635	\$31,351	—	—
Eight people	\$40,146	\$40,501	\$39,772	\$39,133	\$38,227	\$37,076	\$35,879	\$35,575	—
Nine people or more	\$48,293	\$48,527	\$47,882	\$47,340	\$46,451	\$45,227	\$44,120	\$43,845	\$42,156

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

2 Poverty Rates 2006 to 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

3 Percent Below Poverty Line Alaska families and individuals, 2006 to 2010

Demographic category	Percent	Margin of error
All families	6.6%	+/-0.4%
With related children under 18 years	10.6%	+/-0.6%
With related children under 5 years only	14.0%	+/-1.8%
Married couples	2.6%	+/-0.2%
With related children under 18 years	4.0%	+/-0.4%
With related children under 5 years only	4.2%	+/-1.2%
Families with female householder, no husband present	22.6%	+/-1.6%
With related children under 18 years	28.1%	+/-1.9%
With related children under 5 years only	41.4%	+/-6.0%
All people	9.5%	+/-0.3%
Under 18 years	13.0%	+/-0.8%
Related children under 18 years	12.5%	+/-0.7%
Related children under 5 years	16.5%	+/-1.2%
Related children 5 to 17 years	10.9%	+/-0.7%
18 years and over	8.2%	+/-0.3%
18 to 64 years	8.6%	+/-0.3%
65 years and over	4.5%	+/-0.7%
People in families	7.3%	+/-0.4%
Unrelated individuals 15 years and over	18.4%	+/-0.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

also useful when comparing poverty between geographic locations.

The same poverty thresholds apply to all states, and although they are updated for inflation using the U.S. Consumer Price Index, there are no adjustments for costs of living¹ or incomes. The income used in poverty calculations includes wages and salaries, unemployment compensation, Social Security benefits, public assistance, and the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend — all before taxes. It also includes some miscellaneous

income, although noncash benefits such as food stamps are not counted.

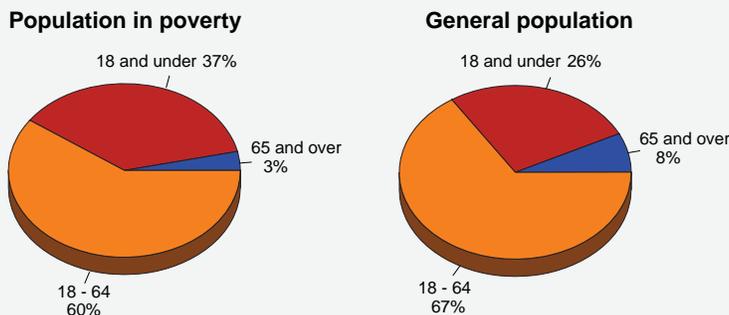
The poverty threshold for a family of four, made up of two adults and two children under the age of 18, was \$22,113 in 2010. The threshold rises for each additional person living in the home, to a maximum of \$48,527 for a family of nine or more. The thresholds change slightly depending on how many people in the household are children under age 18. (See Exhibit 1.)

How Alaska compares

Data from the American Community Survey, collected between 2006 and 2010, show 9.5 percent of Alaskans lived in poverty over that period. Unlike many other states whose poverty rates rose during the recession, Alaska's percentage was not statistically different from the 9.4 percent in poverty in 2000, as measured by the decennial census.

In both 2000 and the 2006–2010 period, the poverty rate for Alaskans was noticeably lower than for the nation as a whole. The U.S. rate climbed from 12.4 percent in 2000 to 13.8 percent during 2006–2010. Alaska's poverty rate was also well

4 Poverty Breakdown by Age Alaska, 2006 to 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

5 Poverty By Household Makeup

Alaska boroughs and census areas, 2006 to 2010

	Poverty rates 2006-2010							
	All people	Margin of error	Married couples	Margin of error	Female head	Margin of error	Unrelated, 15 and over	Margin of error
Alaska	9.5%	+/-0.3%	2.6%	+/-0.2%	22.6%	+/-1.6%	18.4%	+/-0.9%
Aleutians East Borough	10.4%	+/-2.5%	2.2%	+/-5.4%	20.4%	+/-13.0%	10.4%	+/-2.4%
Aleutians West Census Area	12.6%	+/-5.1%	1.0%	+/-2.6%	7.5%	+/-10.2%	14.8%	+/-6.4%
Anchorage, Municipality of	7.9%	+/-0.6%	1.9%	+/-0.5%	20.7%	+/-2.6%	15.7%	+/-1.7%
Bethel Census Area	18.6%	+/-1.9%	11.5%	+/-1.8%	29.4%	+/-7.4%	28.8%	+/-5.8%
Bristol Bay Borough	5.0%	+/-2.3%	3.9%	+/-3.9%	0.0%	+/-44.8%	21.0%	+/-10.6%
Denali Borough	4.6%	+/-4.2%	0.0%	+/-12.6%	57.1%	+/-57.1%	9.5%	+/-7.0%
Dillingham Census Area	18.1%	+/-3.5%	8.1%	+/-3%	15.7%	+/-8.9%	35.1%	+/-6.2%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	7.6%	+/-1.0%	1.5%	+/-0.7%	27.4%	+/-5.8%	18.1%	+/-2.7%
Haines Borough	7.2%	+/-4.5%	2.1%	+/-3.5%	0.0%	+/-42.1%	16.9%	+/-8.2%
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	15.9%	+/-4.3%	12.5%	+/-8.0%	35.6%	+/-19.1%	25.2%	+/-11.1%
Juneau, City and Borough of	6.5%	+/-1.4%	0.6%	+/-0.5%	19.2%	+/-8.6%	13.8%	+/-3.1%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	9.5%	+/-1.0%	2.8%	+/-0.6%	18.5%	+/-5.6%	21.7%	+/-2.4%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	8.3%	+/-3.2%	1.6%	+/-1.4%	16.6%	+/-10.4%	19.5%	+/-5.7%
Kodiak Island Borough	10.9%	+/-3.2%	3.2%	+/-2.3%	28.3%	+/-17.1%	20.1%	+/-4.2%
Lake and Peninsula Borough	21.4%	+/-6.4%	10.5%	+/-6.5%	22.2%	+/-12.5%	35.4%	+/-10.9%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	9.9%	+/-1.3%	2.8%	+/-0.8%	26.7%	+/-5.4%	24.3%	+/-2.9%
Nome Census Area	24.6%	+/-2.9%	12.4%	+/-2.9%	32.9%	+/-7.1%	25.8%	+/-6.0%
North Slope Borough	11.8%	+/-3.7%	3.2%	+/-3.1%	11.1%	+/-6.9%	31.1%	+/-7.8%
Northwest Arctic Borough	19.7%	+/-3.1%	9.7%	+/-3.3%	23.9%	+/-6.1%	29.1%	+/-8.9%
Petersburg Census Area	9.7%	+/-4.7%	2.5%	+/-1.6%	29.1%	+/-25.2%	9.4%	+/-5.2%
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	14.0%	+/-3.2%	5.8%	+/-3.0%	30.7%	+/-11.3%	18.0%	+/-4.2%
Sitka, City and Borough of	7.0%	+/-2.4%	1.5%	+/-1.5%	11.4%	+/-12.3%	18.4%	+/-6.7%
Skagway, Municipality of	10.8%	+/-12.4%	0.0%	+/-13.9%	0.0%	+/-46.1%	29.3%	+/-30.3%
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	10.0%	+/-2.9%	2.4%	+/-2.0%	39.5%	+/-21.0%	20.2%	+/-5.8%
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	6.9%	+/-2.1%	1.3%	+/-1.3%	20.1%	+/-11.2%	12.8%	+/-5.4%
Wade Hampton Census Area	31.4%	+/-3.9%	26.0%	+/-5.4%	33.6%	+/-6.3%	43.1%	+/-5.5%
Wrangell, City and Borough of	8.3%	+/-5.3%	1.5%	+/-2.7%	23.2%	+/-24.4%	15.8%	+/-10.6%
Yakutat, City and Borough of	4.3%	+/-4.7%	1.7%	+/-5.7%	0.0%	+/-59.5%	8.0%	+/-14.0%
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	23.6%	+/-2.8%	7.8%	+/-3.2%	42.8%	+/-8.8%	32.8%	+/-4.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

below those of Washington, Oregon, and California. (See Exhibit 2.)

Alaska's lower poverty rates are mostly the result of the state's relatively high per-capita income, which ranked ninth in the U.S. in 2010. However, Alaska also has a higher-than-average cost of living, which makes the comparison less meaningful than it would be if living costs were a consideration.

Lower poverty for married couples

Married couples in Alaska — with and without children — had the lowest poverty rate from 2006–2010, at 2.6 percent. The rate among married couples with children under the age of 18 was slightly higher, at 4.0 percent.

At the other end of the spectrum, female heads of households with young children and no husband had the highest poverty rate at 41.4 percent. (See Exhibit 3.) Many of these women were likely single mothers, but this category also includes grandmothers and other women raising children who aren't their own.

Overall, children were 26 percent of the measured population but 37 percent of the individuals in poverty. (See Exhibit 4.) The poverty rate was also higher for families with young children under 5 — 14.0 percent — than for the larger category of families with children under 18 (10.6 percent).

Another category with high poverty rates is un-

6 Poverty by Race or Ethnicity Alaska, 2006 to 2010

Racial or ethnic group	Percent in poverty	Margin of error
One race	9.3%	+/-0.4%
White	6.5%	+/-0.4%
Black or African American	10.8%	+/-2.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native	21.6%	+/-1.2%
Asian	9.7%	+/-2.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	18.5%	+/-8.7%
Some other race	9.8%	+/-3.2%
Two or more races	12.2%	+/-1.4%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	11.6%	+/-1.7%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	6.4%	+/-0.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

related individuals over age 15 who live together — in other words, roommates or unmarried couples. People in this category had a poverty rate of 18.4 percent.

Race, ethnicity, and poverty

Among the state's racial and ethnic groups, poverty is highest among people who self-identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, at 21.6 percent. (See Exhibit 6.) Poverty was also relatively high among those who identified themselves as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander at 18.5 percent, although the margin of error was large for that group at plus or minus 8.7 percent because of the small sample size. People who identified themselves as Hispanic or of Latino origin also had a higher-than-average poverty rate, at 11.6 percent.

Poverty varies around the state

The rates in Bristol Bay, Denali, and Yakutat were all especially low over the 2006–2010 period. (See Exhibit 7.) However, the margins of error are large for the state's smaller boroughs and census areas, so comparisons at that level are useful only in the broadest sense. (See Exhibit 5 and the sidebar on page 11.)

Bristol Bay's low poverty rate may be due in part to its flourishing fishing industry and the structure of its economy. Many of the area's lower-paid seasonal workers do not live in the area year-round, so their poverty status would be recorded elsewhere.

The Wade Hampton Census Area had the highest poverty rate at 31.4 percent. In addition to Wade Hampton, areas with rates over 20 percent included the Nome Census Area, Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area, and the Lake and Peninsula Borough (although Lake and Peninsula's margin of error was quite large).

The urban areas of the state tended to have less poverty. Those with rates below 10 percent were the state's most populous areas: Anchorage, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, Juneau, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

Unlike some of the other population groups, poverty rates among unrelated cohabitants don't seem to differ significantly from rural to urban areas. Rural areas had the highest and the lowest rates for this group — 43.1 percent in Wade Hampton and 8.0 percent in Yakutat. Poverty rates for unrelated people over age 15 in Alaska's urban areas varied from 13.8 percent in Juneau to 24.3 percent in Mat-Su.

Unemployment and poverty

The correlation between high unemployment and high poverty might seem simple and direct, but the seasonality and industry mix of some areas can complicate the relationship.

Generally speaking, the state's boroughs and census areas with high unemployment rates also have high poverty rates. Wade Hampton had the highest average monthly unemployment in the state in 2010 as well as the highest poverty rate over the 2006–2010 period. Nome and Yukon-Koyukuk are two other areas with high poverty rates and higher-than-average unemployment.

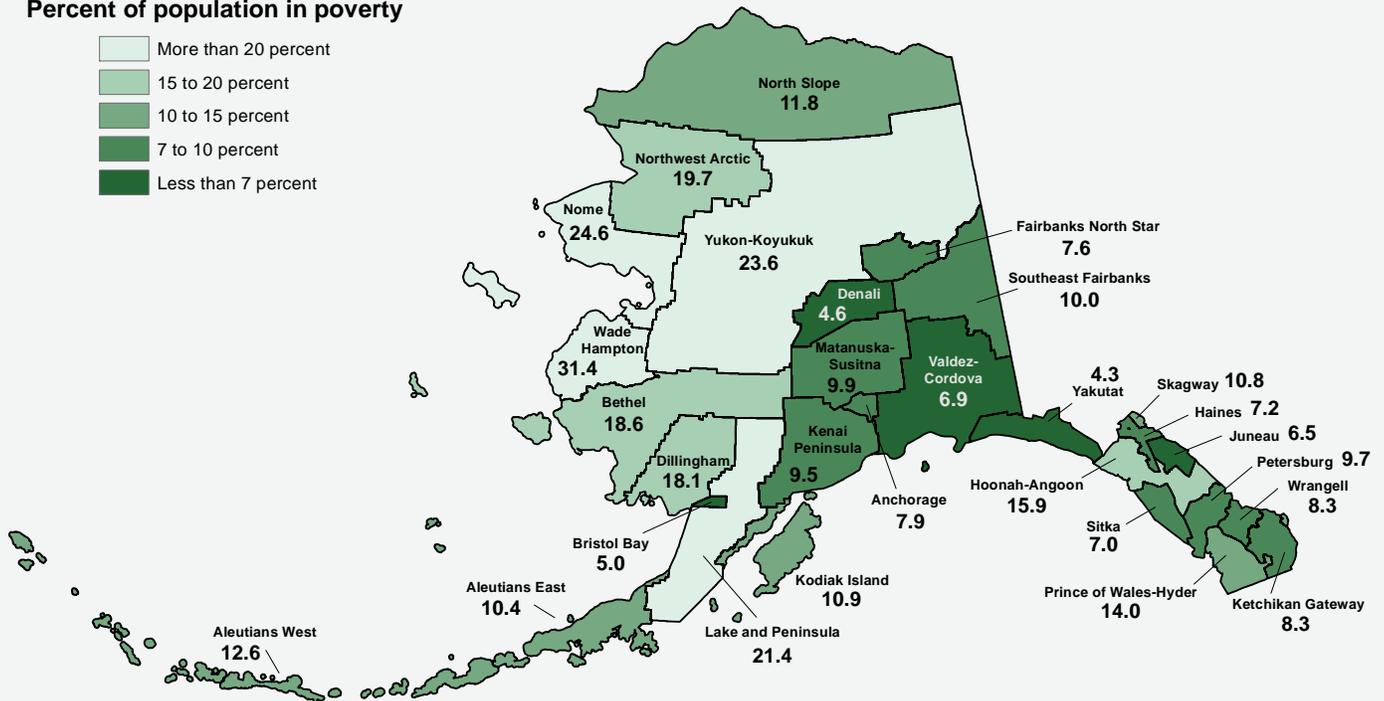
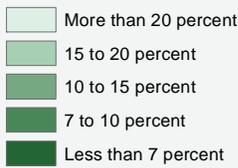
On the other hand, areas with especially seasonal economies — Yakutat, Denali, and Skagway are examples — can have relatively low poverty rates and high average unemployment rates because so much of their income is earned during the summer and there are few jobs during the off-season.

Another complicating factor is that people who stop looking for work are no longer counted

7 Poverty by Borough or Census Area

Alaska, 2006 to 2010

Percent of population in poverty



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

as unemployed, so they are not included in the unemployment rate. For example, an area can have high poverty rates because of limited job opportunities, but also low unemployment rates because workers have grown discouraged and stopped actively seeking work.

Economists Dan Robinson and Lennon Weller contributed to this article.

Note

¹For more on the cost of living in Alaska, see the May 2011 issue of *Alaska Economic Trends*.

Employment Scene

Unemployment rate stays at 7.3 percent in December

Alaska's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained unchanged in December, at 7.3 percent.

The comparable national jobless rate for December was 8.5 percent, down from 8.7 percent in November. Both rates were lower than a year ago, when the national unemployment rate was 9.4 percent and Alaska's was 7.9 percent.

Alaska's number of seasonally adjusted unemployed workers was 28,208 in December, which was lower than a year ago but remains historically high.

Unemployment up in most areas

Not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates increased in all six of the state's regions, as they typically do in December. Rates were lower than December 2010 in four regions, about the same in the Northern Region, and noticeably higher in the Southwest Region. The largest increases in Southwest were in the Aleutians East Borough and in the Aleutians West and Wade Hampton census areas.

Nineteen of 30 areas in the state had unemployment rates in the double digits, and five of those exceeded 20 percent — not unusual for Alaska in the winter.

Rates were highest in Skagway and the Aleutians East Borough, whose economies are tied to fishing and tourism; some communities in Aleutians East also suffer from chronic joblessness all year. The areas with lower rates tend to be the state's largest communities, where seasonal employment is less pronounced.

Rates among demographic groups

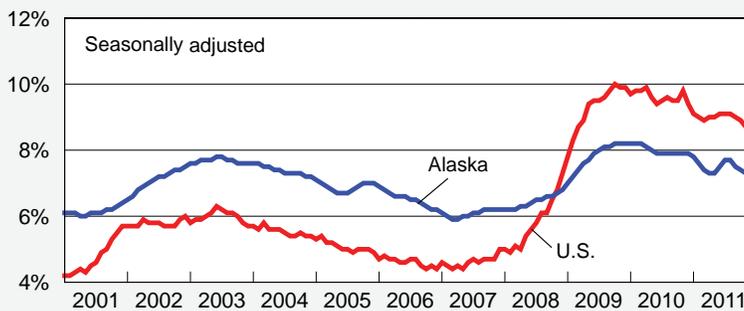
Each month the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a household survey for the Bureau of Labor Statistics and collects data on the national and state labor force. BLS compiles and releases this annualized Current Population Survey data each year, and it becomes a major ingredient in Alaska's monthly labor force statistics.

The CPS provides some additional information beyond what we typically report in *Trends*, such as data by education level, gender, and age. For example:

- In 2010, the unemployment rate among those in Alaska's labor force who had less than a high school diploma was 15.4 percent in contrast to 8.9 percent for high school graduates, 7.0 percent for those with associate degrees or some college, and 3.5 percent among those with bachelor's degrees or higher.
- The male unemployment rate in Alaska was 9.0 percent versus 6.8 percent for women. One explanation for the disparity is the concentration of men in some of Alaska's seasonal industries, such as fishing and construction.
- Younger workers have higher unemployment rates than the overall average of 8.0 percent. The rate among 16-to-19-year-olds was 19 percent.

See the Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment (www.bls.gov/gps/) for more detail.

1 Unemployment Rates January 2001 to December 2011



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis; and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Cost of living up 3.2 percent

Overall inflation in Anchorage in 2011 was 3.2 percent, a pretty big jump from the 1.8 percent increase in 2010. (See Exhibit 2.) The average yearly increase for the past decade was 2.7 percent.

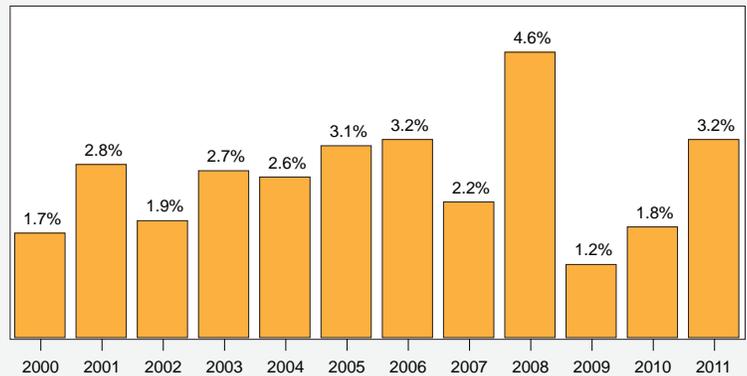
Anchorage is the only Alaska city for which a consumer price index is calculated, so by default it is used as the state's inflation measure. Most of the volatility in this index over time has been tied to big changes in energy prices. (See Exhibit 3.)

In 2011, energy prices increased by 10.8 percent — the fourth double-digit increase during the past decade. Health care also contributed to the 2011 rise, as costs jumped by 5.3 percent. Food prices also grew a little faster than the overall index, at 4.1 percent. Housing, the index with the heaviest weight — or influence on the overall cost of living — grew by 2.9 percent.

Anchorage Consumer Price Index

Increase in inflation, 2000 to 2011

2

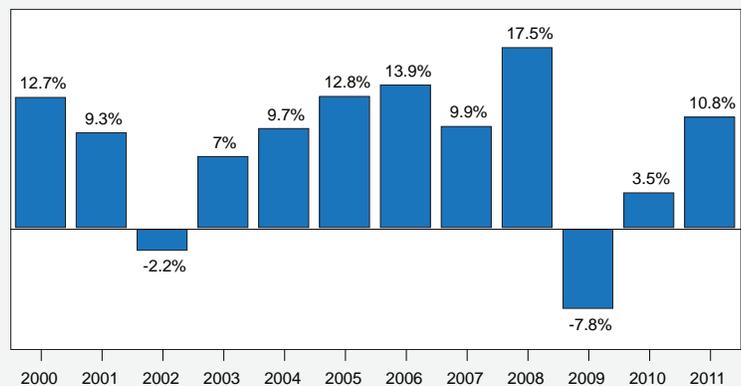


Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Anchorage Energy Prices

Percent change, CPI-U, 2000 to 2011

3



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

3 Statewide Employment

Nonfarm wage and salary

	Preliminary		Revised		Year-Over-Year Change	
	12/11	11/11	12/10	12/10	90% Confidence Interval	
Alaska						
Total Nonfarm Wage and Salary¹	313,100	317,400	313,400	-300	-7,683	7,083
Goods-Producing ²	34,600	38,200	35,800	-1,200	-4,084	1,684
Service-Providing ³	278,500	279,200	277,600	900	-	-
Mining and Logging	16,300	16,600	15,700	600	-193	1,393
Mining	16,000	16,100	15,400	600	-	-
Oil and Gas	13,400	13,600	13,100	300	-	-
Construction	13,100	14,400	13,400	-300	-2,883	2,283
Manufacturing	5,200	7,200	6,700	-1,500	-2,494	-506
Wholesale Trade	6,000	6,100	6,000	0	-556	556
Retail Trade	35,500	35,800	35,000	500	-1,528	2,528
Food and Beverage Stores	6,200	6,100	6,100	100	-	-
General Merchandise Stores	10,500	10,700	9,900	600	-	-
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	20,700	20,500	20,800	-100	-1,138	938
Air Transportation	5,700	5,500	5,600	100	-	-
Truck Transportation	3,500	3,500	3,100	400	-	-
Information	6,500	6,500	6,400	100	-481	681
Telecommunications	4,300	4,400	4,300	0	-	-
Financial Activities	14,700	14,900	15,400	-700	-2,643	1,243
Professional and Business Services	25,700	26,300	25,500	200	-1,593	1,993
Educational⁴ and Health Services	43,800	43,700	42,400	1,400	132	2,668
Health Care	32,100	31,900	30,400	1,700	-	-
Leisure and Hospitality	29,200	29,300	29,000	200	-1,837	2,237
Other Services	11,200	11,000	11,200	0	-3,176	3,176
Government	85,200	85,100	85,900	-700	-	-
Federal Government ⁵	16,200	15,900	16,500	-300	-	-
State Government	26,200	26,300	26,000	200	-	-
State Government Education ⁶	8,600	8,700	8,400	200	-	-
Local Government	42,800	42,900	43,400	-600	-	-
Local Government Education ⁷	25,300	25,300	25,100	200	-	-
Tribal Government	3,700	3,800	3,800	-100	-	-

A dash means confidence intervals aren't available at this level.

¹Excludes the self-employed, fishermen and other agricultural workers, and private household workers. For estimates of fish harvesting employment and other fisheries data, go to labor.alaska.gov/research/seafood/seafood.htm.

²Goods-producing sectors include natural resources and mining, construction, and manufacturing.

³Service-providing sectors include all others not listed as goods-producing sectors.

⁴Private education only

⁵Excludes uniformed military

⁶Includes the University of Alaska

⁷Includes public school systems

Sources for Exhibits 1, 3, and 4: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Changes in producing the estimates

Beginning with the production of preliminary estimates for March 2011, production of state and metropolitan area Current Employment Statistics estimates transitioned from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Concurrent with this transition, BLS implemented several changes to the methods to help standardize estimation across states. While these changes reduce the potential for statistical bias in state and metropolitan area estimates, they may increase month-to-month variability. More detailed information on the CES changes is available on the BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/sea/cesprocs.htm.

4 Unemployment Rates

Boroughs and census areas

	Prelim. Revised		
	12/11	11/11	12/10
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
United States	8.5	8.7	9.4
Alaska Statewide	7.3	7.3	7.9
NOT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
United States	8.3	8.2	9.1
Alaska Statewide	7.7	7.1	8.1
Anchorage/Mat-Su Region	6.4	6.1	7.0
Municipality of Anchorage	5.6	5.4	6.4
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	9.0	8.5	9.3
Gulf Coast Region	10.3	9.0	10.8
Kenai Peninsula Borough	9.6	8.9	10.7
Kodiak Island Borough	12.3	8.8	11.4
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	11.4	10.0	10.7
Interior Region	7.8	7.3	8.0
Denali Borough	21.4	20.4	17.7
Fairbanks North Star Borough	6.7	6.3	7.1
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	11.5	10.5	10.8
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	16.6	15.1	16.1
Northern Region	8.8	8.6	8.7
Nome Census Area	11.2	10.6	11.9
North Slope Borough	4.4	4.6	4.6
Northwest Arctic Borough	13.6	13.0	11.8
Southeast Region	8.0	7.3	8.6
Haines Borough	11.9	9.6	12.3
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area ¹	21.5	18.1	21.9
Juneau, City and Borough of	5.0	4.9	5.8
Ketchikan Gateway Borough ¹	8.1	7.3	8.8
Petersburg Census Area ¹	14.4	10.4	-
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area ¹	15.3	13.6	-
Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan CA ¹	-	-	16.2
Sitka, City and Borough of ¹	6.8	6.2	7.4
Skagway, Municipality of ¹	26.5	27.4	27.5
Wrangell, City and Borough of ¹	12.2	10.4	-
Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area ¹	-	-	11.9
Yakutat, City and Borough of	13.0	11.8	14.2
Southwest Region	15.5	13.1	14.1
Aleutians East Borough	26.5	17.8	17.6
Aleutians West Census Area	19.8	12.4	12.0
Bethel Census Area	13.8	12.8	13.7
Bristol Bay Borough	7.8	6.9	9.2
Dillingham Census Area	11.4	10.5	11.8
Lake and Peninsula Borough	7.5	6.5	10.8
Wade Hampton Census Area	21.5	18.3	19.1

¹Because of the creation of new boroughs, this borough or census area has been changed or no longer exists. Data for the Municipality of Skagway and Hoonah-Angoon Census Area became available in 2010. Data for the City and Borough of Wrangell, Petersburg Census Area, and Prince of Wales-Hyder went into effect in January 2011. Prior to January, data were published for Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area and Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan Census Area.

Employer Resources

Trade Adjustment Assistance helps laid-off workers, employers

Are you an employer facing layoffs? It could be due to foreign trade — either the shifting of jobs overseas or competition from import of a similar product — and not just an economic downturn. You may not even realize your sales are down because of the import of a similar product. Employers often face layoffs for a number of business reasons without knowing the exact cause.

If you've had or may have layoffs and you value your employees, Trade Adjustment Assistance may be your answer. TAA is a federal program, administered by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, that helps workers who lose their jobs because of foreign trade.

For workers who qualify, TAA provides a variety of employment and training services, such as funding to upgrade skills or train for a new occupation. Services such as employment counseling, job development, workshops, and job referrals are available through the Alaska Job Center Network, whose staff works one-on-one with workers to develop an individualized reemployment plan. Other TAA benefits include covering the costs of a job

search or relocation if the worker must leave the commuting area.*

If your workers have already been laid off, you may still qualify for the program and your former employees may still be eligible for benefits.

For workers to qualify, an employer may file a petition with the U.S. Department of Labor. The workers, a union representative, or a One-Stop (Job Center) partner may also file on the workers' behalf. To file online or download a petition, visit www.doleta.gov/tradeact/petitions.cfm. Submit the completed forms to Heidi Carlson, Alaska's Trade Adjustment Assistance coordinator, at heidi.carlson@alaska.gov, via FAX at (907) 465-8753, or call (907) 465-1805.

To learn more about the Trade Adjustment Assistance program and who may apply, contact Heidi Carlson or visit www.doleta.gov/tradeact/.

*Funding for the Trade Adjustment Assistance program depends on availability.

A Safety Minute

Avalanche training can save your life on the mountain

Avalanche safety becomes a major concern as the days get longer and Alaskans head to the mountains to enjoy the snow. Most avalanches occur directly after a storm before the snow has had time to stabilize. Wind can also build slab avalanches that can be easily triggered by travelers.

When in avalanche terrain, stay away from slopes 30 degrees or higher. Be aware of gullies, ravines, and the bases of slopes where deep snow could accumulate if there is a slide. These areas, called terrain traps, can bury people even though the slope may be reasonably small.

If you feel the snow suddenly settle under you with a "whumpf" sound, it means there is a weak layer that could create an avalanche. Stay off the slopes for the day.

The way to prepare for an avalanche is to take an avalanche awareness class. These classes are often free (see <http://www.alaskasnow.org> or <http://www.naoiak.org/>). Get a pack, shovel, probe, and beacon and learn how to use them if you're going to be in an avalanche area.

SAVE THE DATE

31st Annual Alaska Governor's
Safety & Health Conference
MARCH 19-21, 2012
Egan Civic and Convention
Center – Anchorage



Injury Prevention in Alaska - No One Left Behind

For registration and more information please visit:

<http://www.labor.state.ak.us/lss/asac.htm>

or contact Christy Andresen at 907-276-6060

For help developing your business safety and health program, contact Consultation and Training at the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Occupational Safety and Health Section, 3301 Eagle Street, Suite 305, Anchorage, AK 99503 or (800) 656-4972.