

ALASKA ECONOMIC **TRENDS**

JUNE 2016

**1 IN 10 ALASKANS
IS A VETERAN**

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Alaska's firefighters
The corrections industry

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS

JUNE 2016

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ON THE COVER: Staff Sgt. Seth Reab, an Arctic Survival School instructor, stands outside of the Air Force Arctic Survival School training area near Eielson Air Force Base. Photo by Staff Sgt. Vernon Young Jr., U.S. Air Force

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Our Role in Reducing Recidivism



Heidi Drygas
Commissioner

This month's Trends profiles Alaska's "fast-growing" and "state-run" prison industry. Clearly, growth in this particular industry is not a positive development for Alaska. Higher prison populations and spiraling costs of incarceration are a significant problem, particularly when such costly policies don't actually improve public safety. Governor Walker recently signed into law a significant criminal justice reform bill that attempts to change these trends by reducing recidivism and crime rates while saving money for the state. Our department has an important role in that criminal justice reform effort.

Before passage of the criminal justice reform bill (Senate Bill 91), Alaska's recidivism rate was 66%. That means two out of every three inmates released from prison would reoffend and be convicted. Such a high recidivism rate is unacceptable, not just because it imposes massive and unsustainable costs on the state, but more importantly because high recidivism rates mean more crime in our communities. Conversely, if we are successful in reducing recidivism, we will also reduce crime rates.

Many Alaskans participated in the public process to develop criminal justice reforms, including members of the Criminal Justice Commission. The Commission's members ranged from police officers to judges to victims' rights advocates. One of the challenging topics the Commission considered was the difficulty of finding a job when an inmate is released from prison. If a former prisoner is unable to find work upon reentering society, he or she is far more likely to resort to criminal activity to survive. Therefore, it is incumbent on the state, and our department, to maximize opportunities for returning citizens to support themselves through employment.

Our department's Job Centers are the focal point of our efforts to support recidivism reduction efforts. Our Job Center staff help returning citizens find jobs. We educate employers about Work Opportunity Tax Credits and fidelity bonding programs that reduce risk for businesses that take a chance on hiring returning citizens. We partner with the Department of Corrections to offer education and training programs to inmates in order to prepare them for employment when they are released. Our staff participate in community coalitions in which citizens and non-profits work with returning citizens to keep them out of jail.

Reducing recidivism is a complicated task. As a state, we will not be successful unless returning citizens can find a job, housing, and substance abuse and mental health treatment. In addition to employment services through the Job Centers, we are aligning training investments to address the behavioral health issues that underlie a great deal of criminal behavior in Alaska. For example, we are working with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to significantly expand Behavioral Health Aide training through a Registered Apprenticeship model. This training isn't just designed to address recidivism—it will improve health outcomes in our communities more generally—but expanded behavioral health services are an essential component for successful recidivism reduction.

Our most complex policy challenges require an honest assessment of causes and possible solutions, and collaborative approaches to address them. We are proud to be a part of the state's far-reaching work to reduce crime and recidivism through criminal justice system reform, and will keep looking for ways to expand employment assistance and training programs in support of that effort.



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ONE IN 10 IS A VETERAN

A look at military veterans in the state with the highest percentage

By **EDDIE HUNSINGER**

At 10 percent, Alaska has a higher share of veterans than any other state. Four other states come close at 9 percent and nationwide it's 7 percent.

Alaska's high percentage of veterans, defined here as civilians who were previously active duty in any branch of the military including the Coast Guard, is tied to our military history. During World War II, the U.S. established major military bases near Anchorage and Fairbanks and built a number of other facilities, such as a Naval Air Station on Kodiak Island. Military

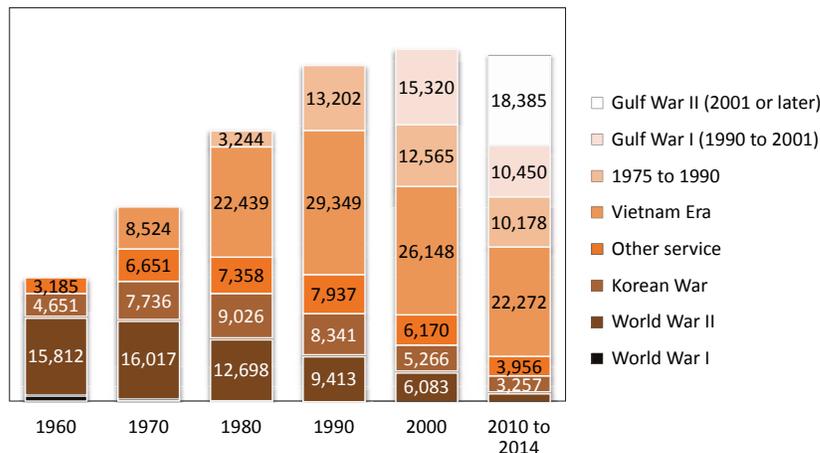
presence peaked in 1943, when more than 150,000 personnel represented over 60 percent of the state's population.

Just 25,000 remained by 1950, but the military stayed influential with the start of the decades-long Cold War. During the Korean War of the 1950s, the military population jumped to 50,000.

Just after statehood, the 1960 Census counted 32,692 military personnel in Alaska, representing 14 percent of the state. There were also 25,054 veterans, who were 11 percent of the population that year. Most had served during World War II or the Korean War, and 1,406 were World War I veterans. (See Exhibit 1.)

1 Veterans By Era Served

ALASKA, 1960 TO 2014



Notes: This exhibit does not include people who are currently serving. "Other service" includes veterans who served only between World Wars I and II, or only between the Korean War and Vietnam era. Data are adjusted for multi-era veterans.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 to 2014 American Community Survey

In the decades since statehood, the number of World War II and Korean War veterans has steadily declined, with less than 6,000 here today. The last of the World War I veterans passed away sometime after 1990, when just 10 were counted in the census in Alaska.

Many Vietnam veterans

By the 1970 Census, Alaska had a growing number of Vietnam War veterans. Vietnam vets made up 22 percent of Alaska's veteran population that year, and many more completed their service and settled in Alaska during the high-growth 1970s and '80s. By 1990, nearly 30,000 Vietnam vets made up 43 percent of all Alaska veterans.

The Cold War continued in the 15 years between the Vietnam era and the 1990 Gulf War, and Alaska and the nation maintained large military populations. Alaska's current veteran population includes more than 10,000 who served at some time during the 1975 to 1990 period.

Numbers of Iraq, Afghanistan vets still growing

Those who served in the 1990 Gulf War, up to 2001, accounted for 21 percent of Alaska's veterans in 2000. Many of these went on to serve again in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s and 2010s.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's latest American Community Survey, Alaska is home to more than 18,000 veterans who served after 2001, a number that is certain to climb as many of today's 20,000-plus active-duty personnel complete their service.

Veterans older on average

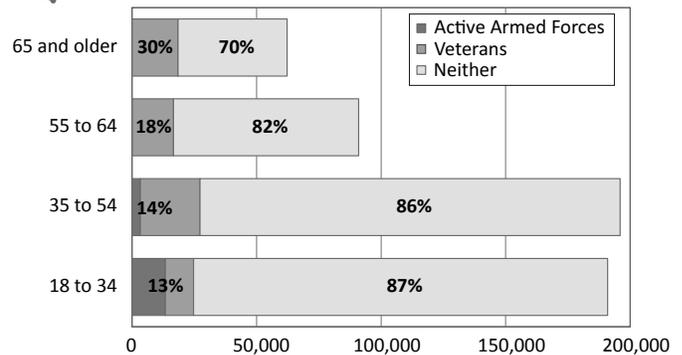
Veterans and those currently serving made up 13 percent of Alaska's 18-to-34-year-old population over the 2010 to 2014 period. (See Exhibit 2.)

Thirty percent of Alaska's seniors have served in the military — the highest of any age group — and while people 65 or older were 9 percent of Alaska's total population, veterans in that age group represented 21 percent of the veteran and active-duty population.

Although veterans tend to be older on average than Alaskans overall, veterans are younger here than nationwide. In the U.S. as a whole, senior citizens were 43 percent of the national veteran

2 Higher Shares at Older Ages

ALASKA VETERANS, 2010 TO 2014



Note: This is a combination of American Community Survey data on veterans and active-duty Armed Forces.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 to 2014 American Community Survey

3 Veterans by Alaska Area

2010 to 2014

	Veterans		Percent Veterans	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
Alaska	70,370	+/-1,609	10%	+/-0.2%
Aleutians East Borough	99	+/-33	3%	+/-1.0%
Aleutians West Census Area	340	+/-95	6%	+/-1.7%
Anchorage, Municipality	30,203	+/-1,185	10%	+/-0.4%
Bethel Census Area	843	+/-127	5%	+/-0.7%
Bristol Bay Borough	83	+/-19	8%	+/-1.9%
Denali Borough	217	+/-77	11%	+/-3.8%
Dillingham Census Area	184	+/-32	4%	+/-0.6%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	10,979	+/-732	11%	+/-0.7%
Haines Borough	230	+/-80	9%	+/-3.1%
Hoonah-Angoon CA	194	+/-43	9%	+/-2.0%
Juneau, City and Borough	2,548	+/-266	8%	+/-0.8%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	5,949	+/-423	10%	+/-0.7%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	1,329	+/-150	10%	+/-1.1%
Kodiak Island Borough	1,024	+/-234	7%	+/-1.7%
Kusilvak Census Area	281	+/-35	4%	+/-0.4%
Lake and Peninsula Borough	64	+/-20	4%	+/-1.3%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	9,775	+/-400	10%	+/-0.4%
Nome Census Area	573	+/-59	6%	+/-0.6%
North Slope Borough	721	+/-137	7%	+/-1.4%
Northwest Arctic Borough	328	+/-63	4%	+/-0.8%
Petersburg Borough	268	+/-58	8%	+/-1.8%
Prince of Wales-Hyder CA	592	+/-71	9%	+/-1.1%
Sitka, City and Borough	764	+/-122	9%	+/-1.4%
Skagway, Municipality	68	+/-36	7%	+/-3.6%
Southeast Fairbanks CA	951	+/-144	14%	+/-2.0%
Valdez-Cordova CA	868	+/-141	9%	+/-1.5%
Wrangell, City and Borough	388	+/-80	16%	+/-3.4%
Yakutat, City and Borough	46	+/-15	7%	+/-2.4%
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	461	+/-39	8%	+/-0.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 to 2014 American Community Survey

and active-duty population between 2010 and 2014.

The percentage of women in the veteran and active-duty population has grown, from 7 percent in 1980 to 11 percent in 2000 to 13 percent over the 2010 to 2014 period. The nationwide percentage for 2010 to 2014 was 8 percent, up from 6 percent in 2000 and 4 percent in 1980.

Most live near the bases

Alaska's population centers of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna and Fairbanks North Star boroughs (see exhibits 3 and 6), which are home to or near the state's major military bases, have over 70 percent of Alaska's veterans. Approximately 40,000 veterans (57 percent) live in the Anchorage/Mat-Su region and another 11,000 (16 percent) live in the Fairbanks area.

Areas with the most veterans per capita are the City and Borough of Wrangell (16 percent), Southeast Fairbanks Census Area (home to Fort Greely; 14 percent), and the Fairbanks North Star and Denali boroughs (11 percent each; Denali is home to Clear Air Force Station).

Similar education, employment

Alaska veterans 25 and older are more likely to have attended college than nonveterans — 71 percent versus 63 percent — but about as likely to have a bachelor's degree, at 27 and 28 percent respectively. (See Exhibit 4.)

5 Veteran Employment and Income

ALASKA, 2010 TO 2014

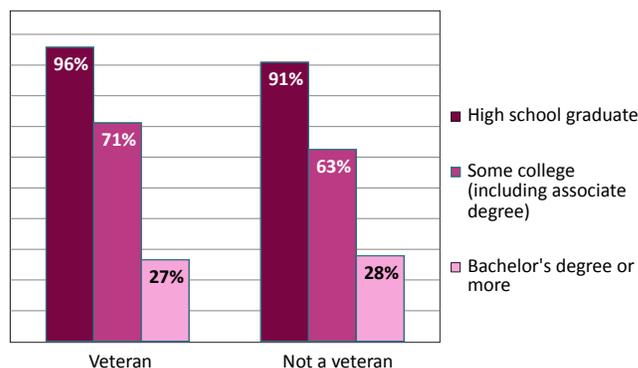
	Veterans		Nonveterans	
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Estimate	Margin of Error
EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
Civilian population 18 to 64 years	51,868	+/-1,496	409,325	+/-1,641
Labor force participation rate	81%	+/-1.1%	78%	+/-0.5%
Civilian labor force 18 to 64 years	42,230	+/-1,401	317,383	+/-2,335
Unemployment rate	7%	+/-1.0%	9%	+/-0.3%
MEDIAN INCOME IN THE PAST YEAR (IN 2014 DOLLARS)				
Civilian population 18 years and over with income	\$50,674	+/- \$1,207	\$30,858	+/- \$418
POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS				
Civilian population 18 years and over for whom poverty status is determined	69,529	+/-1,594	445,417	+/-1,758
Below poverty in the past 12 months	5%	+/-0.5%	10%	+/-0.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 to 2014 American Community Survey

4

Similar Education for Vets

ALASKA, 2010 TO 2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 to 2014 American Community Survey

The nationwide pattern is similar. Sixty-three percent of U.S. veterans attended college and 27 percent have at least a bachelor's degree.

Alaska's veterans were also a bit more likely to be working and less likely to be unemployed. Just over 80 percent ages 18 to 64 were participating in the labor force — meaning working or actively seeking work — which is a bit higher than nonveterans at 78 percent. Seven percent were unemployed versus 9 percent of nonveterans. (See Exhibit 5.)

Higher income related to age

Veterans had significantly higher incomes than nonveterans — about \$20,000 more per year — but this is partly due to age. Vets tend to be further into their careers, and more are in age groups that have higher incomes overall.

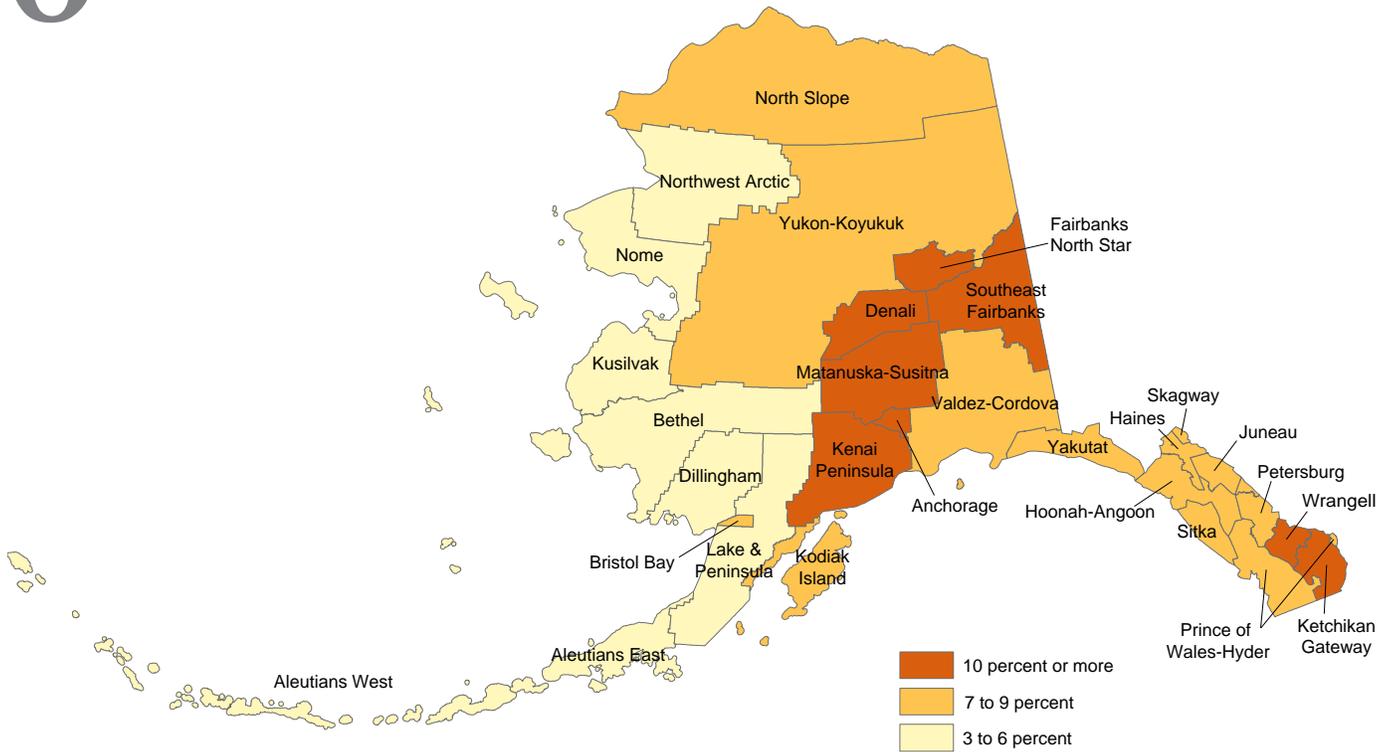
Poverty data also reflect this age structure. While about 10 percent of nonveteran adults were in poverty from 2010 to 2014, just 5 percent of veterans were. Statewide, adults in the younger age groups have the highest rates of poverty, and those 50 or older have lower rates.

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6

More Veterans per capita in Southcentral

ALASKA, 2010 TO 2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 to 2014 American Community Survey

For more on veterans

U.S. Census Bureau, Data on Veterans: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/veterans/data/>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics: <http://www.va.gov/vetdata/>

ALASKA'S FIREFIGHTERS

Job requires grueling training and work, pay and duties vary widely

By **ALYSSA RODRIGUES**

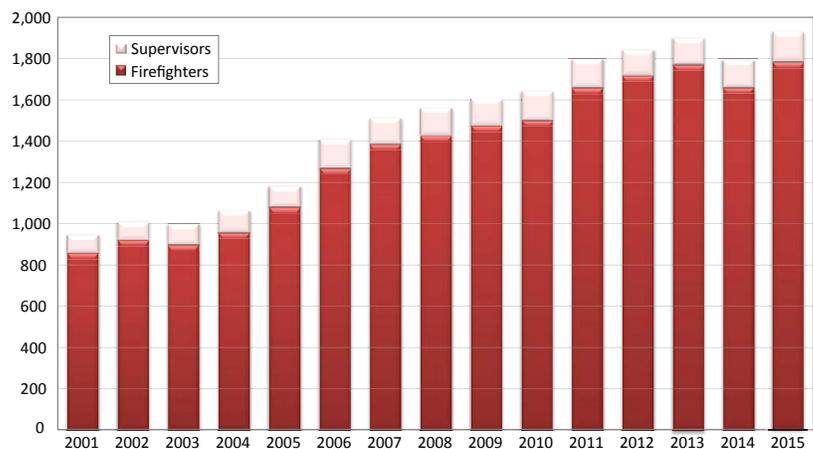
The number of firefighters in Alaska has steadily climbed in recent years and has doubled since the early 2000s. (See Exhibit 1.)

Alaska had almost 2,000¹ firefighters in 2015, not including federal firefighters. They included everything from community firefighters recognizable by their quintessential red trucks to those who respond to industrial accidents and wildfires. (See Exhibit 2.)

Firefighters have a reputation for being tough, and all the more so in Alaska. In addition to the typical hazards from smoke, fire, and injuries, some fight wildfires over especially large and wild swaths of land and in harsh conditions. They

¹Although federal firefighters aren't included in the data in this article, they would roughly double the total of 1,959 firefighters presented here. Federal forest firefighting crews made up 56 percent of all forest firefighting crews in 2015.

1 Number of Firefighters Has Climbed ALASKA, 2001 TO 2015



Note: Excludes federal firefighters

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

also often face grueling tests to qualify for the job.

Many residential firefighters have to pass both physical and educational tests. For example, Anchorage municipal firefighters must complete 11 stations that

involve crawling, dragging, and climbing in eight minutes and 27 seconds while wearing full firefighting gear and carrying a 30-pound pack.

Alaska's wildland firefighters must be over 18 and have successfully completed a "pack test" at its most difficult level. The test has three levels: light, moderate, and arduous. To pass the arduous level required in Alaska, firefighters have to carry a 45-pound pack while hiking three miles in 45 minutes or less.

Even fire personnel who do not fight fires — for example, administrative personnel working in the staging area — are required to pass the pack test at the light level, which is walking one mile without a pack in 16 minutes or less.

Wildland fires

Alaska's climate and terrain can be particularly brutal, and the fire season has been starting earlier. While cold and snow preclude wildland fires during much of the year, less snow in recent years has meant earlier fires. The first wildland fire of 2015 began April 23 as a small grass fire in the interior, and in 2016, the first fire started February 22.

Humans started approximately 46 percent of all wildland fires in 2015 while the remaining 54 percent were caused by lightning strikes. Lightning-caused fires burned approximately 5.1 million acres in 2015, whereas human-caused fires burned around 27,000 acres.

Due to limited resources, not all fires can be fully suppressed. Remote fires that pose no immediate threat

About volunteer firefighters

A large number of Alaska's community firefighters are volunteers. Although they play a major role in fighting fires across the state, they aren't included in the employment and wage data. However, volunteer fire departments are included in the count of total statewide fire departments in Exhibit 5.

2

Firefighters By Type

ALASKA, 2015

Type	Number
Firefighters	1,772
Firefighting Supervisors	155
Fire Inspectors and Investigators	30
Forest Fire Inspectors/Prevention Specialists	2
Total Number of Firefighters	1,959

Note: Excludes federal firefighters
 Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

to life or property are often closely watched while being allowed to burn, resulting in higher burned acreage in remote areas than those close to communities and on the outskirts of settlements, where human-caused wildfires are more common. Because these pose an immediate threat to life and property, firefighters tend to fight them aggressively as soon as they're identified.

Fighting wildland fires requires a diverse crew of workers, including administrators, pilots flying planes and dropping fire retardant, and firefighters on the ground cutting down trees and looking for hotspots.

These fire responders and fire managers are most often employed by government. (See Exhibit 3.) State government had more than 500 wildfire-related jobs at the summer peak.

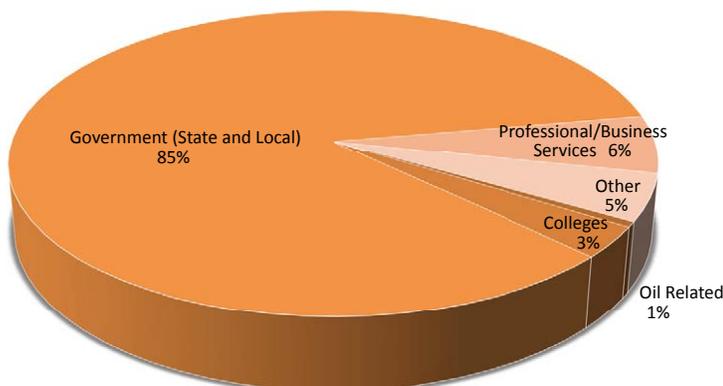
Residential responders

Residential firefighters responding to emergency calls face a range of hazards as well. In 2014, 66 were injured on the job. Thirty-seven per-

3

Most Work in Government

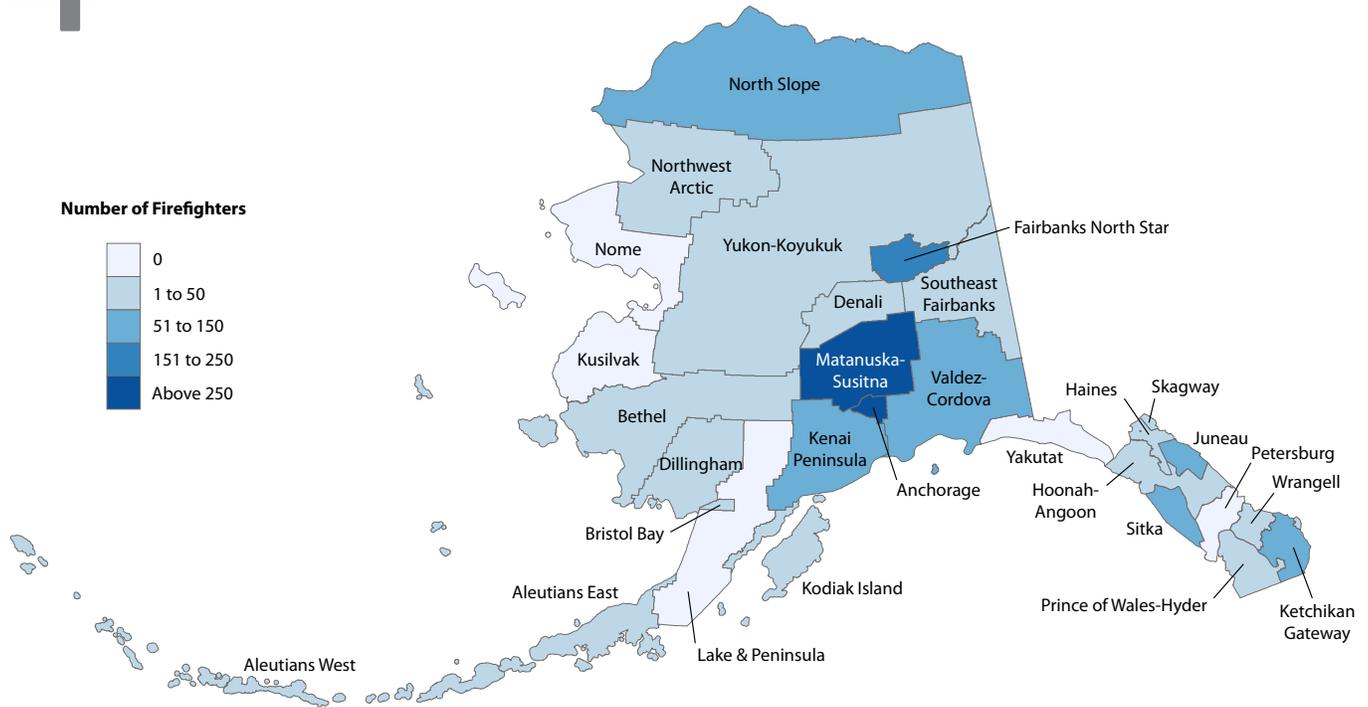
ALASKA, 2015



Note: Excludes federal firefighters
 Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

4 Heavily Clustered in Southcentral

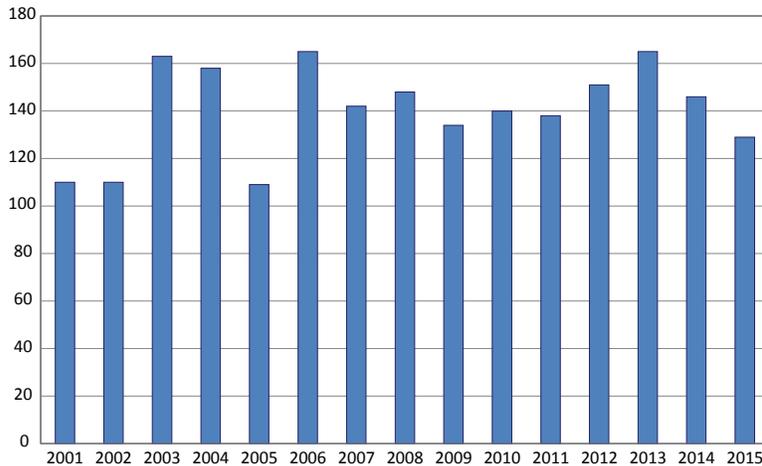
ALASKA, 2015



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

5 Number of Fire Departments Fluctuates

ALASKA, 2001 TO 2015



Note: These numbers include volunteer fire departments.

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

cent of all injuries occurred while extinguishing a fire. Seventy-four percent of injuries were strains, sprains, or smoke inhalation.

But for those working in the more than 100 registered fire departments across the state, fighting fires is only part of the job. (See Exhibit 5.) In 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, fire departments responded to more than 56,000 nonfire calls, including rescue and emergency medical services, hazardous conditions, and false alarms. Of these, nearly 70 percent were rescue or emergency medical calls. At the same time, fire departments responded to 2,500 fire calls, over a quarter of which were structure fires.

Oil industry still pays the most

While firefighters are heavily concentrated in government, they work in a handful of other industries, including oil and gas and colleges/universities. In terms of total wages, state and local governments paid out the most: more than \$65 million in 2015. The highest average wages went to those working in oil and gas at more than \$120,000, but oil and gas employed just 1 percent of all firefighters.

Among local governments, Anchorage had the highest-paid, at approximately \$90,000 per year for working an average of just over three quarters. In the lowest-paid borough, Denali, firefighters worked an average of just one quarter and earned \$3,000.

Firefighters in population centers

Anchorage has the most firefighters in the state and Mat-Su has the second most. A combined 45 percent of all Alaska's firefighters are in one of those two areas. The Fairbanks North Star Borough has the third most. (See Exhibit 4.)

Oil-rich boroughs, such as North Slope, tend to have high numbers of firefighters as well. The Kenai Peninsula Borough, with an active oil industry and several large forest fires in recent years, had 7 percent of Alaska's firefighters.

All ages

The median age for all firefighters was 38 in 2015, but age varies drastically by industry and geography. Nonresident firefighters were the oldest at 50, while firefighters working for colleges and universities were the youngest at 23.

Women firefighters tended to be younger than men, at 36 years old versus 39, respectively.

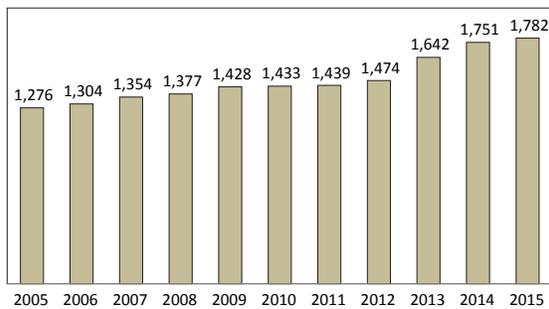
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The Corrections Industry

In Alaska, this fast-growing industry is mostly state-run

1 Corrections Gains Jobs

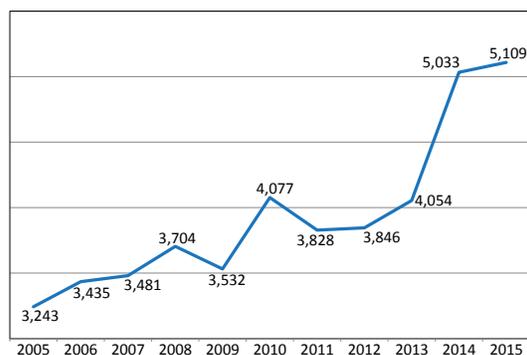
ALASKA, 2005 TO 2015



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

2 Rise in Inmate Population

ALASKA, 2005 TO 2015



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

By NEAL FRIED

States often have a considerable number of county jails and federal prisons, but in Alaska, nearly all adult prisons are run by the State. In 2015, the state employed nearly 1,800 workers in the Department of Corrections, which represented 10 percent of all state government employment.

Alaska also has 15 community or regional jails run by local governments in towns such as Kotzebue, Sitka, and Kodiak, but even these are largely state-funded. These facilities typically hold people for a short time for processing or while they await trial, but eventually transfer prisoners to Department of Corrections facilities.

It has grown fast

The corrections industry has grown rapidly in recent years, largely due to the increase in the prison population, which rose by 58 percent over the past decade. (See exhibits 1 and 2.) Much of that increase came in 2013 and 2014 when the Goose Creek Correctional Center in the Mat-Su Borough was built and began housing prisoners that had previously been incarcerated out of state.

During that time, corrections employment grew by nearly 40 percent, or 500 jobs. That's nearly five times faster than state government employment overall, which rose 8 percent. As a result, 36 percent of all state government job growth was in the Department of Corrections.

A broad and often vital presence

Corrections has a significant presence in 8 Alaska communities (see Exhibit 3), and its total payroll in 2015 was more than \$100 million. In many places, it's one of the largest employers.

The average corrections job paid \$57,964 in 2015. In communities where other work is scarce, these stable and often well-paid jobs are vital to the local economy.

Anchorage has the largest corrections workforce at 570 and is home to the Anchorage Correctional Complex and Hiland Mountain Correctional Center in Eagle River.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough comes in a close second with more than 500 employees, which makes corrections one of the borough's largest employers. Mat-Su has two prisons: the Mat-Su Pretrial in Palmer and the state's largest and newest prison, Goose Creek Correctional Center on Goose Bay. The latter has more than 1,500 beds. Mat-Su is also home to Wasilla's Point Mackenzie Correctional Farm, near Goose Bay, where some low-security inmates grow food and raise animals to provide for institutions around the state.

Ranking third at 300 jobs is the Kenai Peninsula Borough, which has the state's only maximum security facility — Spring Creek in Seward, with capacity for 500 inmates — and the Wildwood Correction Complex in Kenai. Juneau (Lemon Creek Correctional Center) and Fairbanks (Fairbanks Correctional Center) are the other two communities with more than 100 corrections workers.

Some rural parts of the state have a sizeable presence as well, such as Nome with its Anvil Mountain Correctional Center and Bethel with the Yukon Kuskokwim Correction Center.

Most positions are officers

Well over half of corrections workers are correctional officers and jailers, representing 1,000 jobs. (See Exhibit 4.) That number includes entry-level correctional officers up to correctional superintendents. The next-largest occupational group was probation officers, at 11 percent.

Numerous other occupations keep the industry operational, including nurses, food service workers, office assistants, and maintenance workers. In some ways prisons represent separate, fully functional communities.

Neal Fried is an economist in Anchorage. To reach him, call (907) 269-4861 or email neal.fried@alaska.gov.

3 Corrections Jobs by Area

ALASKA, 2015

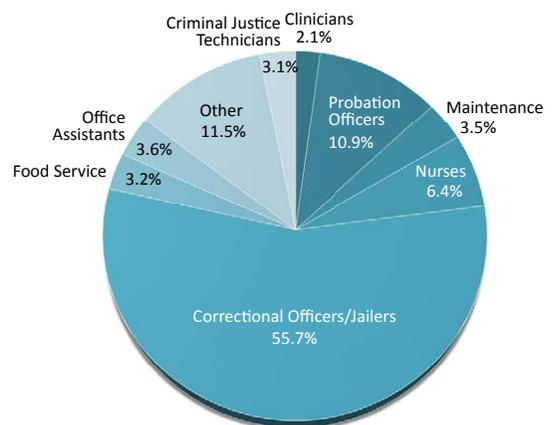
Anchorage, Municipality (Includes Eagle River)	570
Matanuska-Susitna Borough (Palmer, Goose Bay)	532
Kenai Peninsula Borough (Seward and Kenai)	300
Juneau, City and Borough	126
Fairbanks North Star Borough	115
Bethel Census Area	54
Ketchikan Island Borough	40
Nome Census Area	38
Dillingham Census Area	2
Kodiak Island Borough	2
Aleutian West Census Area	1
North Slope Borough	1
Sitka, City and Borough	1

Total 1,782

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis Section

4 Most Are Officers or Jailers

ALASKA CORRECTIONS INDUSTRY, 2015



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

The Month in Numbers

Unemployment Rates

	Prelim.		Revised
	4/16	3/16	4/15
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
United States	5.0	5.0	5.4
Alaska Statewide	6.6	6.6	6.4
NOT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
United States	4.7	5.1	5.1
Alaska Statewide	6.9	7.3	6.6
Anchorage/Mat-Su Region			
Municipality of Anchorage	5.3	5.5	5.0
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	8.6	9.2	7.9
Gulf Coast Region			
Kenai Peninsula Borough	8.9	9.6	8.1
Kodiak Island Borough	4.7	4.5	4.5
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	10.0	11.5	9.9
Interior Region			
Denali Borough	16.9	20.0	16.2
Fairbanks North Star Borough	5.9	6.2	5.3
Southeast Fairbanks CA	11.1	12.4	10.9
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	17.2	19.7	18.2
Northern Region			
Nome Census Area	13.5	13.1	12.7
North Slope Borough	5.9	5.7	5.3
Northwest Arctic Borough	17.8	17.1	16.5
Southeast Region			
Haines Borough	11.8	15.0	10.7
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	14.9	19.1	16.6
Juneau, City and Borough	4.4	4.8	4.6
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	7.1	8.5	7.3
Petersburg Borough	9.2	10.7	9.8
Prince of Wales-Hyder CA	12.4	14.9	12.9
Sitka, City and Borough	4.7	5.2	4.5
Skagway, Municipality	12.5	22.8	12.7
Wrangell, City and Borough	7.3	9.5	7.4
Yakutat, City and Borough	5.7	11.0	8.0
Southwest Region			
Aleutians East Borough	2.4	2.3	2.8
Aleutians West Census Area	3.5	2.4	4.3
Bethel Census Area	14.7	14.8	15.2
Bristol Bay Borough	11.0	15.3	14.2
Dillingham Census Area	10.9	10.7	10.0
Kusilvak Census Area	22.8	23.7	24.8
Lake and Peninsula Borough	17.2	16.4	15.5

How Alaska Ranks

Unemployment Rate¹



Job Growth²



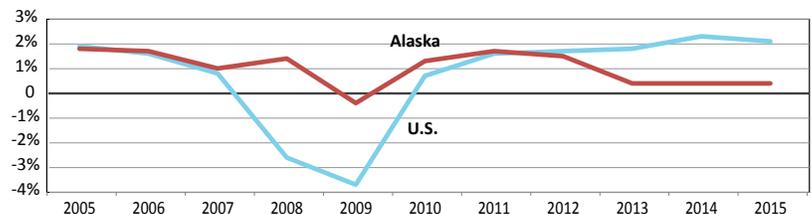
State Government Job Growth²



Average Hourly Earnings, Private¹



Job Growth in Alaska and the Nation³



All data sources are U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, unless otherwise noted.

¹April 2016

²April 2016, over-the-year percent change

³Annual average percent change

Safety Minute

OSHA revises 45-year-old limit on silica dust exposure

Crystalline silica is a common mineral that 2.3 million workers in the United States interact with every day. It's found in buildings, roads, and sidewalks, and is the main component of sand, rock, bricks, and mortar.

Workers who cut, saw, drill, or crush rock, stone, or concrete are commonly exposed to silica dust. However, this exposure isn't limited to the construction industry. Other work sites and tasks with possible exposure include:

- Abrasive blasting
- Glass manufacturing
- Pottery, clay, concrete products
- Dental laboratories
- Painting and coatings
- Jewelry production
- Oil and gas operations

Inhaled silica particles can penetrate a worker's lungs and, over time, cause silicosis and other deadly diseases such as pulmonary and kidney disorders.

These negative effects of chronic exposure to silica

dust have been known for many years. The first research into its long-term effects began more than 80 years ago, when evidence mounted of the possible dangers.

Forty-five years ago, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration published the first permissible exposure limits for silica dust to protect the workers whose livelihoods relied on exposure. That limit, based on data collected in the 1960s and earlier, was in effect until March 2016 when OSHA released an updated PEL for general industry at 50 percent of the original limit and 20 percent of the original PEL for the construction industry. With new medical research to support the change, OSHA estimates these new standards will save the lives of more than 600 workers a year and prevent more than 900 cases of silicosis.

For more information, visit www.osha.gov or contact your team at Alaska Occupational Safety and Health: (800) 656-4972.

Safety Minute is written by the Labor Standards and Safety Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Employer Resources

Functional Affirmative Action Plans for federal contractors

Under Executive Order 11246, any company with 50 or more employees and a service or supply federal contract of \$50,000 or more is required to develop a written Affirmative Action Plan for each of its worksites. But rather than establish a different plan for each worksite, contractors can submit Functional Affirmative Action Plans organized along a company's functional or business units (such as sales, operations, or accounting), combining similar functions into one plan across different worksites.

The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Federal Contractor Compliance Programs released a directive in April that identifies the guidelines for applying for and maintaining FAAPs, which requires a prior written agreement with OFCCP. To meet the basic criteria for a FAAP, each included business unit or function must:

- Exist and operate autonomously

- Include at least 50 employees
- Have its own managing official
- Have the ability to track and maintain its own personnel activity

A FAAP can be more manageable and efficient. A contractor might have 20 worksites, 15 of which conduct sales. It may be easier to manage those 15 through one FAAP than through 20 separate AAPs. The remaining five might use established or combined AAPs.

To learn more about FAAPs, email OFCCP_FAAP-UNIT@dol.gov or visit <https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/faap/index.htm>.

Employer Resources is written by the Employment and Training Services Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.