

# ALASKA ECONOMIC **TRENDS**

MARCH 2011



## **Social Assistance**

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**How Alaskans Get to Work**

A look at ACS commuter data



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Governor Sean Parnell  
Commissioner Click Bishop**

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# Social assistance fosters jobs, community connection



**By Commissioner  
Click Bishop**

This month's *Trends* focuses on the impact of social assistance in Alaska. Representing 3 percent of our workforce, private sector social assistance makes up a small but integral part of our economy. Additionally, a significant percentage of workers provide social assistance through the public sector.

Social assistance, more commonly known as social services, provides a gamut of services including personal care assistance, day care for children and adults, foster care and adoption, and crisis intervention and counseling services.

One major category is vocational rehabilitation, which includes job counseling and training, work experience, and on-the-job support such as coaching to help people with disabilities obtain and retain employment.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Vocational Rehabilitation Division works with a variety of community rehabilitation providers across the state to meet the employment needs of Alaskans with disabilities.

The division provides funding to agencies to help Alaskans with significant disabilities remain independent in their homes and communities, including specific funding for older people who are blind. The division also funds assistive technology such as voice-activated software for accessing a computer.

Vocational Rehabilitation is a partner with the Alaska Workforce Investment Board on a \$2.7 million grant that is a bridge to critical ongoing support services that help people with disabilities retain their jobs.

The Disability Employment Initiative grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Training Administration, will improve education, training and employment opportunities, and outcomes for youth and adults who are unemployed and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits.

Alaska was one of nine states to receive a DEI grant in October 2010, and partner agencies include the Department of Labor, Alaska Job Center Network (One Stop Job Centers across the state), the Department of Health and Social Services' Division of Public Assistance, and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education.

The goal is a sustainable employment network that ensures that people with disabilities who contact a job center will receive accurate, appropriate, and current information and direction in developing a plan for their specific conditions of employment.

Disability resource coordinators will develop an integrated system of case plans that are braided to funding streams and address the needs of employers. These coordinators will emphasize outreach to people with disabilities and to the employers and community organizations that serve them. Another critical component will be multiagency and multidisciplinary collaborations to secure and stabilize employment of people with disabilities.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation:  
[labor.alaska.gov/dvr/home.htm](http://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/home.htm)

Alaska Job Center Network:  
[www.jobs.alaska.gov](http://www.jobs.alaska.gov)

# Social Assistance in the Private Sector

## A small, seldom-examined industry with a large reach

The term “social assistance” is rarely used in conversation, but if you substitute “services” for “assistance,” it may sound more familiar.<sup>1</sup> What’s more, employment trends in this industry often get lost in the limelight of its more prominent cousin, health care. This is because in most data series, the two are paired in the broader industry category of “health care and social assistance.”

However, as a standalone industry, social assistance is an impressive performer. In 2009, it generated approximately 8,925 jobs in Alaska, or 3 percent of total wage and salary employment. (See Exhibit 1.)

<sup>1</sup>“Social services” is a common term, but it isn’t an accurate description of this category. Social assistance encompasses multiple types of child care, including after-school and day care that parents pay for themselves, which are not considered social services.

Early estimates for 2010 put the number even higher, at nearly 9,500 jobs, with payroll exceeding \$250 million. These are very conservative numbers, because they only include private-sector employment — most of it in nonprofits. Public-sector social assistance employment is significant, but is outside the scope of this article because it isn’t represented in these data.

The University of Alaska Anchorage recently conducted a study of nonprofit agencies. Of the 1,180 public charities they identified, 492 were social service providers — the largest category of nonprofits — with a workforce of 9,352 and about \$820 million in expenditures.

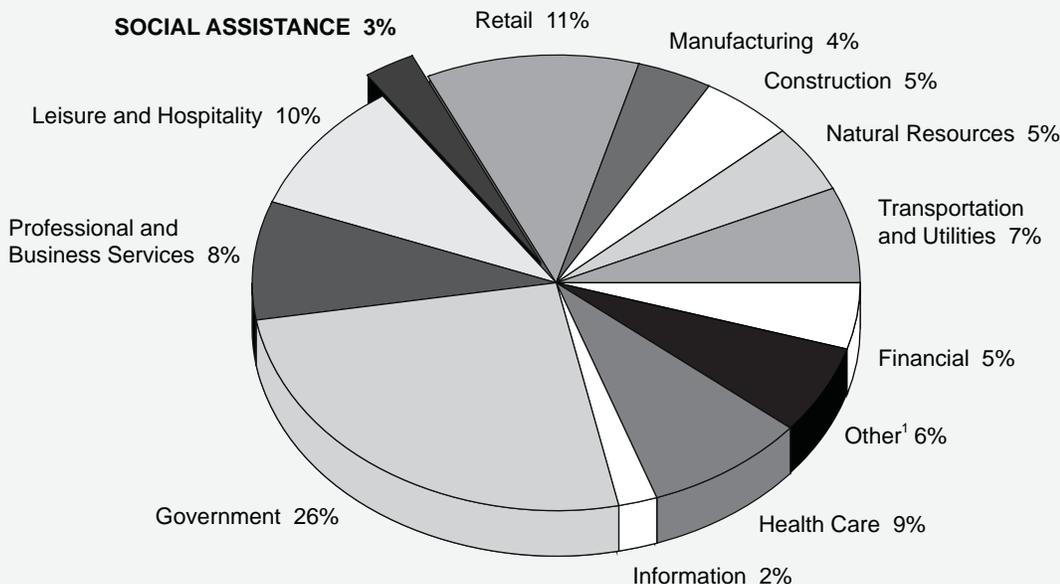
### What makes up social assistance

There are four major categories of social assistance: individual family services, vocational rehabilitation, community relief (food, housing, and emergency services), and child care. (See Exhibit 2.)

With the exception of child care,<sup>2</sup> the broad role of social assistance is to provide support to at-risk populations — the mentally and physically disabled, the elderly, and the economically disadvantaged.

<sup>2</sup>See the previous footnote for an explanation of “child care” and why it does not fall under the broader mission of the other social assistance subcategories.

### 1 A Slice of Total Wage and Salary Employment Alaska, 2009



Note: Social assistance includes only private-sector jobs.

<sup>1</sup>Includes other services, private education services, wholesale trade, and unclassified

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

## Individual family services

Individual family services has the widest range of the social assistance categories — it is also the largest. Its overarching mission is to provide for the welfare of children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. It includes foster care, adoption agencies, youth centers, day care for the elderly, senior centers, nonmedical home care, social activities, and a variety of services to improve the quality of life for vulnerable populations.

The category also comprises crisis intervention, hotlines, self-help organizations, and independent living centers whose services allow people to remain in their homes and stay connected to their communities.

Two examples of large Alaska organizations are Access Alaska and Cook Inlet Tribal Council. (See Exhibit 3.) The help they give often goes beyond the definition of this category.

## Vocational rehabilitation

The second-largest group, vocational rehabilitation, is relatively well-defined. Its mission is to help people return to the workforce, and it primarily provides job counseling, job training, and work experience to people with disabilities as well as to the unemployed.

This category includes rehabilitation/habilitation facilities, which create a work environment with ample supervision and assistance for people with mental or physical disabilities.

Assets, Inc., one of the state's premier providers of vocational rehabilitation, prints *Alaska Economic Trends* in a habilitation facility located in its print shop and bindery. Assets is the state's second-largest social assistance employer and the largest in the vocational rehabilitation category. It provides employment and training for those with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses, among other support services.

## Community relief

Community relief is the smallest of the four categories. The housing, food, and emergency services it provides targets low income individuals and those affected by natural disasters, fires, temporary economic setbacks, or displacement. These

## 2 Social Assistance Employment<sup>1</sup> Alaska, 2000 and 2010

	2000	2010*	Change 2000-2010
Individual Family Services	2,169	4,384	102%
Community Relief (Food, Housing, and Emergency)	579	1,009	74%
Vocational Rehabilitation	1,136	2,330	105%
Child Care	1,503	1,769	18%
Total	5,387	9,492	76%

<sup>1</sup>Includes only private-sector jobs

\*preliminary

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

agencies distribute food, clothing, and medical supplies as well as provide temporary shelter, transitional housing, and housing repair.

In 2009, 71 Alaska organizations fit into this category. The quintessential community relief organization in Alaska is The Salvation Army, the fourth-largest social assistance employer in the state. The Salvation Army provides all of the above services plus many beyond this category.

## Child care

Child care services<sup>3</sup> includes day care as well as care for preschoolers and older children when they are not in school. In 2010, 142 child care businesses reported paid employees. However, there are many small, family-run child care providers without paid employees that aren't represented in these numbers.

From the 1960s to 1990, this industry exploded as mothers began to enter the job market in record numbers. However, since the 1990s, female participation in the workforce hasn't changed much. As a result, growth is now more closely tied to changes in the population of younger children.

## Impressive industry-wide growth

Although health care's share of the health care and social assistance category typically gets all the

<sup>3</sup>As noted earlier, "social assistance" as a category includes all forms of child care, including for-profit day care and after-school care that parents pay for themselves. These distinctions make child care as a category different from most of the other social assistance categories, which exist to serve at-risk or vulnerable populations.

### 3 Top 50 Social Assistance Providers<sup>1</sup> Alaska, 2009

Rank	Organization Name	Employment
1	Job Ready, Inc.	500-749
2	Assets, Inc.	250-499
3	Access Alaska	250-499
4	The Salvation Army	250-499
5	Cook Inlet Tribal Council	250-499
6	Frontier Community Services	250-499
7	REACH, Inc.	100-249
8	Fairbanks Resource Agency	100-249
9	Mat-Su Services For Children and Adults	100-249
10	Tanana Chiefs Conference	100-249
11	Kawerak, Inc.	100-249
12	Bristol Bay Native Association	100-249
13	Catholic Community Services	100-249
14	Progressive Personal Care, Inc.	100-249
15	Community Connections	100-249
16	Chugach Government Services, Inc.	100-249
17	Alaska Island Community Services	100-249
18	Center For Community	100-249
19	Easter Seals Alaska	100-249
20	Southeast Regional Resource Center	100-249
21	Alzheimer's Disease Resource Agency	100-249
22	Anchorage Community YMCA	100-249
23	Chugach McKinley, Inc.	100-249
24	Gentle Care Services	100-249
25	Bright Beginnings	50-99
26	Alaska Family Services	50-99
27	Aleutian Pribilof Island Association, Inc.	50-99
28	Catholic Social Services	50-99
29	Focus	50-99
30	Juneau Youth Services	50-99
31	Adult Learning Programs of Alaska	50-99
32	Covenant House Alaska	50-99
33	Family Centered Services of Alaska	50-99
34	Alaska Care Group, Inc. (Comfort Keepers)	50-99
35	Kids' Corp, Inc.	50-99
36	Acacia Personal Care Services	50-99
37	Vladi & Associates LLC	50-99
38	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alaska	50-99
39	Connecting Ties, Inc.	50-99
40	Chugiak Children's Services, Inc.	1-49
41	Palmer Senior Citizens Center	1-49
42	Chugiak Senior Citizens', Inc.	1-49
43	SeaView Community Services	1-49
44	Little Red School House	1-49
45	Juneau Alliance For Mental Health, Inc. (JAMHI)	1-49
46	Crossroads Counseling and Training Services	1-49
47	Play N Learn	1-49
48	Mat-Su Activity & Respite Center	1-49
49	Home Instead Senior Care	1-49
50	Safe and Fear Free Environment, Inc. (SAFE)	1-49

<sup>1</sup>Includes only private-sector jobs  
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

glory when it comes to growth, social assistance has been no slacker. Over the past decade, social assistance employment nearly doubled, from 5,387 in 2000 to 9,492 in 2010 — a growth rate of 76 percent. (See Exhibit 5.) These are impressive numbers, given that during the same time period, overall employment grew by only 13 percent, and even the dynamic health care industry only expanded by 57 percent.

Employment more than doubled in vocational

### 4 Regional Employment<sup>1</sup> Alaska social assistance, 2009

Area	Number of Jobs
Statewide	8,925
Aleutians East Borough	*
Aleutians West Census Area	15
Anchorage, Municipality of	3,955
Bethel Census Area	*
Bristol Bay Borough	*
Denali Borough	*
Dillingham Census Area	*
Fairbanks North Star Borough	919
Haines Borough	20
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	*
Juneau, City and Borough of	780
Kenai Peninsula Borough	726
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	218
Kodiak Island Borough	110
Lake and Peninsula Borough	*
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	998
Nome Census Area	*
North Slope Borough	*
Northwest Arctic Borough	*
Petersburg Census Area	*
Prince of Wales Census Area	*
Sitka, City and Borough of	102
Skagway, Municipality of	8
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	*
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	116
Wade Hampton Census Area	*
Wrangell, City and Borough of	*
Yakutat, City and Borough of	*
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	*

<sup>1</sup>Includes only private-sector jobs  
\*Confidential or zero employment. For more on data suppression, see the box on page 8.

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

rehabilitation and individual family services, and the community relief category was not far behind. Child care employment has also grown more rapidly than the overall workforce, but moderately compared to the other players in social assistance.

## Big employers around the state

In the *Alaska Economic Trends* 2010 list of the 100 largest private-sector employers in the state, seven were social assistance agencies. Because need exists everywhere, there are social assistance employment opportunities in all regions of the state — and often in places where economic opportunities are scarce. (See Exhibit 4.)

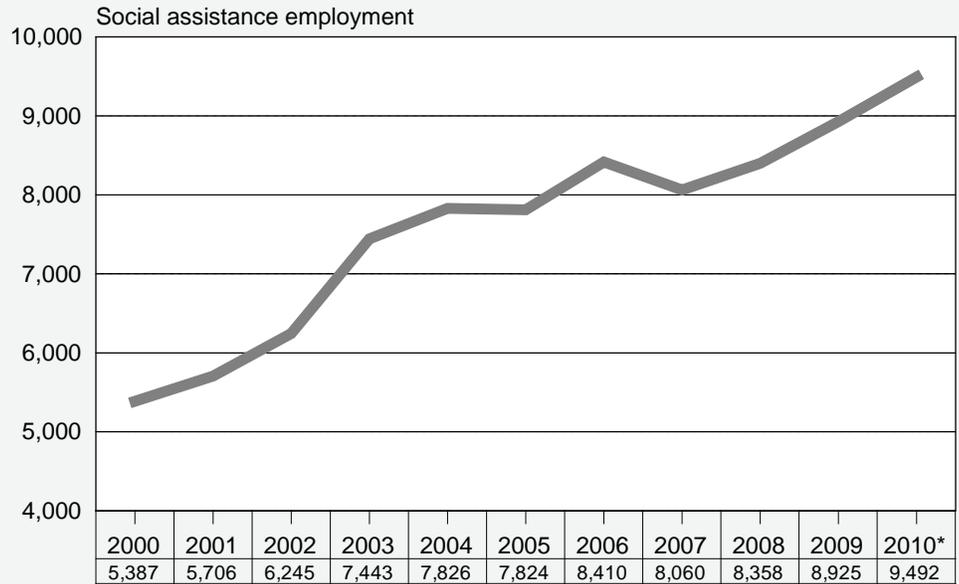
In some of Alaska’s smallest communities, where there may be only a handful of jobs, a few are often in social services. In some communities, these employers are among the largest in their area.

For example, Kawerak, Inc., and the Bristol Bay Native Association are the second-largest and fourth-largest employers in Nome and the Dillingham Census Area, respectively. Also, Tanana Chiefs Conference is the third-largest employer in the Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area and is also one of Fairbanks’ largest employers. Mat-Su Services for Children and Adults is the eleventh-largest employer in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Further benefits of this industry are employment opportunities at every level of training and education, and the fact that they tend to be year-round jobs.

## Social Assistance Employment Nearly Doubled<sup>1</sup> Alaska, 2000 to 2010

# 5



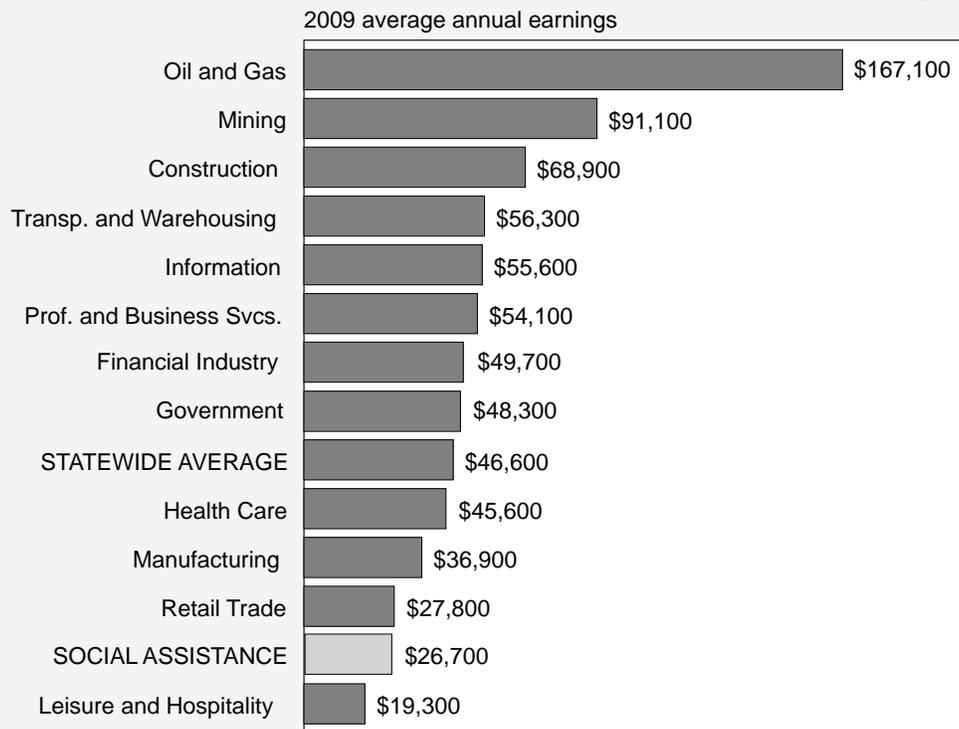
<sup>1</sup>Includes only private-sector jobs

\*estimated

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

## Social Assistance Earnings Tend to Be Low<sup>1</sup> Alaska, 2009

# 6



<sup>1</sup>Includes only private-sector jobs

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

## Earnings tend to be low

Social assistance is known for paying low wages, and the data support this conclusion. The average annual earnings for social assistance in 2009 were \$26,700:<sup>4</sup> among the lowest for all industries. (See Exhibit 6.) In contrast, the yearly average among all industries was \$46,600.

The biggest occupations in this industry help explain the average low pay. These jobs include child care workers, teacher assistants, personal and home care aides, social and human service assistants, preschool teachers, and home health aides — all jobs with typically low wages. The large number of part-time jobs in these areas is also a factor.

Some occupations in social assistance have above-average earnings — such as psychologists and computer specialists — but they are the exception.

## The outlook is hard to predict

The future of social assistance is uncertain. If we only consider the demographic outlook for Alaska, it appears the demand for these services could only grow.

According to the department's population projections, highlighted in the December 2010 issue of *Alaska Economic Trends*, Alaska's senior population — a big consumer of these services — will be the fastest-growing age group in the state. By 2024, those age 65 and over are projected to more than double. The state's younger population, also major recipients of social services, are also forecasted to grow faster than the overall population.

However, economic conditions are also a factor in the sector's future, and they are harder to predict. A lack of public funding could curb this industry's growth and even reduce its services. Most of these providers are nonprofits whose funding comes from public sources, so they are subject to the current battle to reduce the federal deficit.

<sup>4</sup>Average monthly earnings are obtained by dividing total earnings by 12. This data source cannot distinguish between part-time jobs, full-time jobs, or hourly data. These are overall industry earnings and not occupational wage data. For occupational wage data, see our Web site at [laborstats.alaska.gov](http://laborstats.alaska.gov).

## Why certain employment data are suppressed

By SARA WHITNEY  
Trends Editor

In employment data tables, categories are sometimes marked with an asterisk (\*) or "ND" to indicate nondisclosable or suppressed information. For example, among many of the smaller areas, boroughs, and census areas in Exhibit 4 of this issue's social assistance profile, there are slightly more categories marked as suppressed than there are actual numbers.

This is because of the Bureau of Labor Statistics' disclosure rules for the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, which protect the confidentiality of specific employers' numbers and identity when releasing these figures. Data are typically suppressed in small geographic areas or in an industry dominated by a single employer. This is because if the pool is small enough, it may be possible to distinguish the results of a single or handful of entities.

There are two types of data omission. Primary suppression is required when an employer's identity or data can be directly inferred from the numbers. Primary suppression in a category is determined by a BLS formula based on the number of establishments, the total employment, the number of employers, and the contribution of the largest employers to total wages and jobs.

Secondary suppression is necessary when looking at certain figures may make it possible to infer the value or identity of other withheld employment. In that case, both categories must be withheld to protect anonymity.

For more on the BLS's QCEW data methods, see the frequently asked questions at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewfaq.htm>.

# New ACS Data and the Census

## How to use the American Community Survey



For decades, only the decennial census provided detailed social and economic data for small areas and specific population groups. These numbers have been used to identify community needs and plan for housing, senior citizen centers, roads, health clinics, schools, and child care centers. However, their major drawback was they were only available every ten years. By each decade's end, the numbers were out of date and often no longer represented community characteristics accurately.

To provide more timely information, the U.S. Census Bureau replaced the "long form" of the census with the American Community Survey, compiled from a monthly sample of household surveys with detailed questions.

The recently released 2005-2009 ACS 5-Year Estimates are the first new small-area data since the 2000 Census. However, it's important to remember that although the ACS is a Census Bureau product, it is not the decennial census. State agencies, local governments, and nonprofits who use the ACS data for planning, grant proposals, or "snapshots" of communities should approach these data with caution.

When comparing data, it's important to look at similar data sets. While we can reliably compare results from one census to another to track changes in population, labor force, income, or poverty, we should be aware of the differences between the categories (see Exhibit 1) and calculation methods for the ACS and census data sets.

### 1 Comparing Data Characteristics: ACS Estimates and 2000 Census Alaska, 2005 to 2009

#### Comparable Characteristics and Their Differences\*

Ancestry	Occupation (T)
Citizenship Status (T)	Class of Worker (T)
Nativity	Rooms and Bedrooms (Q)
Year of Entry	Cost of Utilities
Place of Birth	House Heating Fuel
Journey to Work (T)	Kitchen Facilities (Q)
Grandparents and Grandchildren	Monthly Rent
School Enrollment	Mortgage Status
Educational Attainment	Occupants/Room (Q)
Language	Owner Costs (T)
Income and Earnings (RP)	Plumbing Facilities (Q)
Poverty (RP)	Tenure
Veteran Status and Period of Military Service	Units in Structure
Employment Status (Q)	Home Value (Q)
Hours and Weeks Worked	Vehicles Available
Industry (T)	Group Quarters Population (U)

#### Characteristics That Shouldn't Be Compared

Migration
Marital Status
Disability Status**
Contract Rent and Gross Rent
Gross Rent as Percentage of Household Income
Real Estate Taxes
Telephone Service
Year Moved In
Year Structure Built

\*These characteristics appear in both the ACS data and the census; however, the letter in parentheses shows there's a difference between the two in how that characteristic is defined or calculated. They show differences in: Q = question wording, RP = reference period, T = tabulation, U = universe. "Universe" refers to the entire group considered eligible to receive a survey.

\*\*Data will be available in the 2008-2012 ACS.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009 Comparison Quick Guide

## The American Community Survey

For decades, people would fill out census questionnaires that asked ten basic questions, and a smaller sample of the population would also answer questions about education, income, and employment. This was referred to as the “long form,” and data were tabulated for all geographic areas.

The U.S. Census Bureau has replaced the long form questionnaire with the American Community Survey, a monthly survey of a sample of households. The ACS uses questions similar to the census long form, and adds questions to address current social and economic conditions.

The ACS data are tabulated for geographic areas according to population size. In Alaska, the 2009 ACS 1-Year Estimates (collected over 12 months) are available for areas with a population of 65,000 or more: the state, the Municipality of Anchorage, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

The 2007-2009 ACS 3-Year Estimates (collected over 36 months) also include areas with 20,000 or more people, and add the City and Borough of Juneau and the Kenai Peninsula Borough to the above list.

The most recent release of the 2005-2009 ACS 5-Year Estimates (collected over 60 months) is available for all 347 communities in the state,<sup>1</sup> incorporated and unincorporated. These include the smallest areas in Alaska, such as census tracts and block groups. Exhibit 2 shows the differences in the one-year, three-year, and five-year estimates, and which set might be most useful.

### Evaluating the data

Because the ACS is a major departure from decennial census data, the department is still evaluating its accuracy and how to best guide its users. Exhibit 1 shows the data topics and the categories for the 2000 Census and the ACS. There are differences in the universe,<sup>2</sup> wording of the questions, residence rules, and reference period.

For example, data from the decennial census are

<sup>1</sup>Although all communities are included, some data may not be reported, and may be listed as zero. See the next section, “Evaluating the data,” for more information.

<sup>2</sup>“Universe” refers to all people who are eligible to receive a survey.

## 2 Using ACS Estimates 1-Year, 3-Year, and 5-Year

### One-Year Estimates

12 months of data collected  
Data available for geographic areas of 65,000+  
Smallest sample size  
Less reliable than three-year or five-year data  
Most current data

### Three-Year Estimates

36 months of data collected  
Data for geographic areas of 20,000+  
Larger sample size than one-year  
More reliable than one-year; less reliable than five-year  
Less current than one-year and more current than five-year

### Five-Year Estimates

60 months of data collected  
Data for all geographic areas  
Largest sample size  
Most reliable  
Least current

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Guidance for Data Users

“point-in-time,” and identify the state’s population as 710, 231 as of April 1, 2010. However, the ACS five-year estimates are averages of the monthly results over five years, and report an Alaska population of 683,142.

We have also found that although the ACS provides detailed geographic levels, data are not available for all places in the state. This may be due to sample size or the time of year they are collected.<sup>3</sup>

The data from the 2005-2009 ACS estimates reflect the geographic boundaries for boroughs and census areas as of 2009. This means, for example, that data are available for the Municipality of Skagway and the City and Borough of Wrangell, both incorporated since 2000. However, numbers for cities and unincorporated places, Alaska Na-

<sup>3</sup>The Census Bureau has divided the state into “Remote Alaska” and “Non-Remote Alaska.” In 2007, most of the Alaska Native Village Statistical Areas were added to the sample for “Remote Alaska.” In most of the state, the Census Bureau collects data over a period of three months through a mailed questionnaire and a telephone follow-up. In “Remote Alaska,” field representatives conduct in-person interviews over a four-month period.

## ACS 5-Year Characteristics and Margins of Error

### Selected Alaska areas, 2005 to 2009

# 3

Geography	Total Population	Margin of Error	Unemp. Rate	Margin of Error	Persons Below Poverty	Margin of Error	Median Household Income	Margin of Error	Per Capita Income	Margin of Error
Anchorage, Municipality of	280,389	*****	7.3%	+/- 0.5%	21,466	+/- 1739	\$70,151	+/- \$1,348	\$33,436	+/- \$698
Bear Creek CDP	1,770	+/- 419	0%	+/- 2.7%	45	+/- 74	\$73,969	+/- \$12,032	\$25,156	+/- \$4,711
Bethel city	6,384	+/- 19	8.9%	+/- 3.7%	307	+/- 207	\$85,841	+/- \$7,671	\$27,616	+/- \$2,814
Chase CDP	0	+/- 109	-	**	0	+/- 109	-	**	N	N
College CDP	14,148	+/- 1063	8.9%	+/- 2.5%	1,543	+/- 473	\$69,144	+/- \$4,179	\$30,706	+/- \$4,226
Deltana CDP	1,829	+/- 311	11.6%	+/- 5.6%	149	+/- 107	\$73,720	+/- \$5,110	\$25,533	+/- \$4,180
Dillingham city	2,348	+/- 175	6.9%	+/- 3.4%	232	+/- 114	\$73,833	+/- \$16,461	\$34,816	+/- \$3,132
Dot Lake CDP	12	+/- 16	-	**	0	+/- 109	-	**	N	N
Ester CDP	1,976	+/- 574	2.5%	+/- 3.9%	367	+/- 307	\$54,813	+/- \$8,466	\$24,809	+/- \$7,824
Fairbanks city	34,688	+/- 35	6.2%	+/- 1.6%	3,322	+/- 615	\$51,365	+/- \$3,087	\$25,757	+/- \$1,057
Flat CDP	0	+/- 109	-	**	0	+/- 109	-	**	N	N
Fritz Creek CDP	1,865	+/- 284	10%	+/- 4.8%	148	+/- 74	\$44,773	+/- \$9,673	\$20,694	+/- \$3,007
Haines CDP	1,887	+/- 235	5.7%	+/- 6.3%	44	+/- 39	\$43,952	+/- \$6,734	\$28,801	+/- \$7,158
Juneau, City and Borough of	30,777	*****	6.1%	+/- 1.2%	2,014	+/- 435	\$76,437	+/- \$4,382	\$34,880	+/- \$1,477
Karluk CDP	53	+/- 32	63.3%	+/- 38.6%	38	+/- 29	\$6,250	+/- \$26,895	\$7,502	+/- \$4,480
Lowell Point CDP	50	+/- 46	0%	+/- 38.6%	0	+/- 109	\$54,732	+/- \$382,736	\$71,554	+/- \$16,723
Nikolai city	87	+/- 40	39.6%	+/- 17.2%	62	+/- 41	\$17,500	+/- \$5,734	\$6,872	+/- \$2,217
Nome city	3,604	+/- 16	6.6%	+/- 3.8%	132	+/- 119	\$70,664	+/- \$14,695	\$32,338	+/- \$5,890
Port Clarence CDP	394	+/- 637	0%	+/- 28.6%	0	+/- 109	-	**	\$29,776	+/- \$265
Portage Creek CDP	0	+/- 109	-	**	0	+/- 109	-	**	N	N
Sitka, City and Borough of	8,811	*****	7.6%	+/- 2.7%	577	+/- 225	\$58,895	+/- \$3,740	\$30,013	+/- \$2,251
Unalaska city	3,502	+/- 758	2.3%	+/- 2%	382	+/- 210	\$76,989	+/- \$5,829	\$25,694	+/- \$3,466

CDP = Census Designated Place

- indicates either no sample observations or too few sample observations were available to compute an estimate or ratio.

N indicates the data for this geographic area cannot be reported because the sample is too small.

\*\* indicates either no sample observations or too few sample observations were available to compute a standard error and thus the margin of error.

\*\*\*\*\* indicates that a statistical test for sampling variability is not appropriate.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005-2009 5-Year Estimates

tive Village Statistical Areas, census tracts, and block groups have been calculated for this release according to 2000 Census geographic boundaries.

The 2006-2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates will reflect the geographic changes as of 2010. Because the ACS is a monthly survey with data released annually, boundary changes to boroughs and cities will be provided to the Census Bureau to ensure the ACS reflects the current boundaries.

Finally, users should also note the margin of error for each number or percentage, which may be significant. Exhibit 3 shows randomly selected boroughs and communities with frequently requested categories, and the related margins of error.

## The 2010 Census

Last year, the Census Bureau conducted the 2010 Census across the state. All residents received the standard questionnaire with ten questions.

The data have been tabulated, and when released to the state will show total population; population by race, age, and households; types of households (e.g., married couples and single-parent families); and whether homes are occupied or vacant.

The 2010 Census will not include poverty, income, education, veteran status, labor force, or detailed housing characteristics, which were eliminated with the long form and are now part of the ACS.

Data from the 2010 Census will be released in mid-March beginning with the redistricting file, followed by demographic profiles in May and detailed population characteristics in June.

Just as social and economic characteristics from the recent ACS data aren't comparable to the 2000 Census, they also can't be compared to the 2010 Census. To analyze changes in demographic population characteristics — such as age, sex,

## Technical Documentation

The Census Bureau provides lengthy documentation on the ACS, including the accuracy of the data, subject definitions, sample size, data quality, and changes from one data set to another.

**Methodology:**

[http://www.census.gov/acs/www/methodology/methodology\\_main/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/methodology/methodology_main/)

**Sample size and quality:**

[http://www.census.gov/acs/www/methodology/sample\\_size\\_and\\_data\\_quality/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/methodology/sample_size_and_data_quality/)

**Accuracy of the data and subject definitions:**

[http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/documentation\\_main/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/documentation_main/)

**Geography and the ACS:**

[http://www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance\\_for\\_data\\_users/geography/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance_for_data_users/geography/)

**User notes:**

[http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/user\\_notes/index.php](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/user_notes/index.php)

race, Hispanic or Latino origin, household type and relationship, and housing vacancy — compare the 2010 Census data to the 2000 Census figures.

For the most recent ACS data, see our Web site at <http://labor.alaska.gov/research/census/acs.htm>. This site reflects any new data or changes to the methods or geographic areas.

By NEAL FRIED, Economist

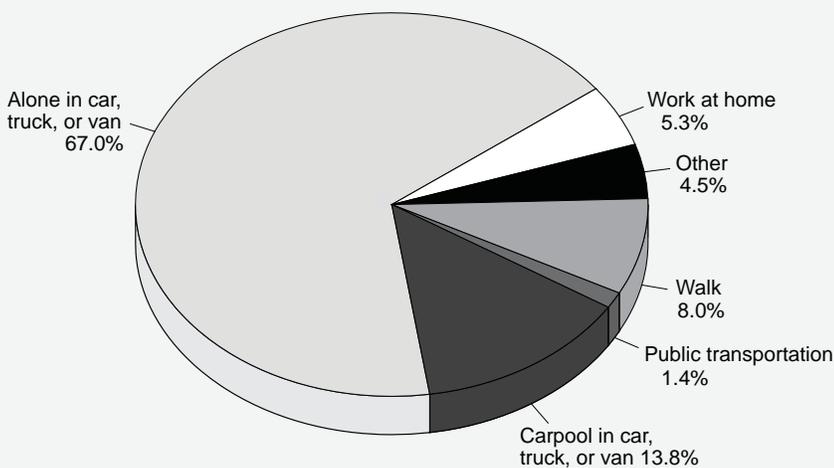
# How Alaskans Get to Work

## A look at American Community Survey Commuter Data

Most Alaskans drive their cars or trucks to work, just like their fellow Americans — but what sets Alaska apart is the range of other ways we commute.

More people nationwide use public transportation. But recent American Community Survey data<sup>1</sup> show that Alaskans, especially those in rural areas, tend to walk or use alternative methods of transportation far more often than their U.S. counterparts. These include riding bikes, motorcycles, snowmachines, four-wheelers, dog sleds, planes, or boats. Also, more of us simply go nowhere — that is, we work at home.

### 1 Most Alaskans Drive to Work Alone Alaska, 2005 to 2009



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

### Most of us drive to work, alone

Like a majority of Americans, most Alaskans commute to work daily by car, truck, or van — alone. (See Exhibits 1 and 2.) In fact, two-thirds of Alaskans travel to our jobs this way, and if we combine this group with those who drive with at least one other person (the U.S. Census Bureau calls this carpooling), the number grows to nearly 81 percent. This is no surprise when we consider that there were 451,100 cars and 214,000 pickups registered in Alaska in 2010. We either love our cars and pickups,

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed description of the ACS and how it compares to census data, please see the preceding article on page 9 of this issue: "New ACS Data and the Census."

or we feel it's our only choice for getting to work each day.

## However, many also walk

Surprisingly, the next largest commuting group in Alaska is walkers. Maybe this is only remarkable to those who live in the state's larger communities of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, where only a small percentage walk to work. (See Exhibit 3.)

However, a majority of residents walk to their jobs in other places such as the Northwest Arctic Borough, home to Kotzebue and ten other villages. In these small communities, cars and trucks are scarce, incomes are often low, and these areas tend to be physically compact. In 11 of the state's boroughs and census areas, over a third of the working population walk to work.

## Some go "nowhere"

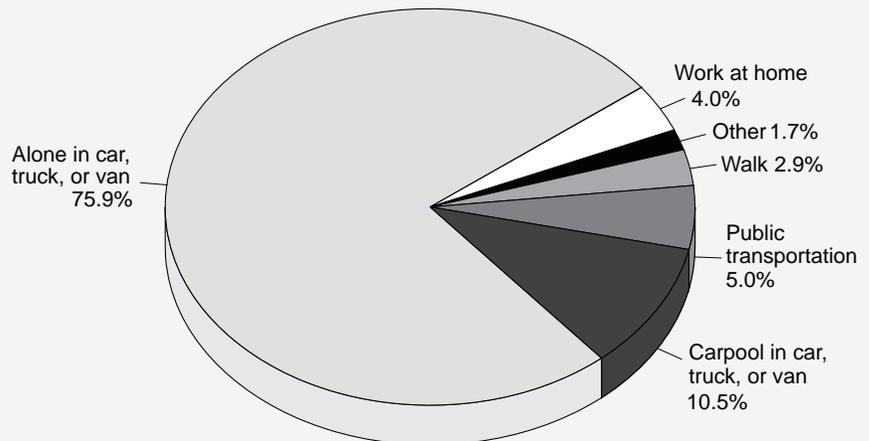
After driving and walking, the most popular mode of commuting in the state is "none," because a sizeable number of people work at home. The current stereotype of the "modern" stay-at-home worker is the telecommuter, a typically urban professional whose location is not important for the work, and these workers do exist in Alaska. However, the stay-at-home worker is far more prevalent in smaller communities.

In places such as Haines, Petersburg, Skagway, Nome, and the Aleutians, over 10 percent of the labor force work from their homes. Although some may fit the telecommuter description, they are more likely to be operating small home businesses. Examples are restaurants, retail, production and sale of art, tourism, repair shops, day cares, clinics, herbalists, small professional operations such as legal or accounting offices, and agricultural businesses.

## Other types of vehicles are popular

The balance of Alaska's commuters ride the bus or use some "other" form of transportation to get to work, including the aforementioned bicycles, planes, snowmachines, four-wheelers, taxis, dog sleds, and boats. The "other" category often ex-

## More People Nationwide Use Public Transit **2** United States, 2005 to 2009



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

ceeds 10 percent in Alaska's remote communities. In places like the Wade Hampton Census Area and the Lake and Peninsula and Northwest Arctic boroughs, over 20 percent of commuters are in this category, with a likely prevalence of snowmachines and four-wheelers. According to the Department of Motor Vehicles, 52,697 snowmachines were registered in Alaska in 2010.

## A surprising contrast to the nation

When the commuting habits of Alaska and the nation are compared, the results are sometimes eerily similar, and in other cases dramatically different. (See Exhibits 1, 2, and 3.)

For example, if we compare Anchorage to national data, the commuting patterns are similar. In addition, most of the more urban places in Alaska mirror the national averages, more or less.

On the other hand, the nation and much of rural Alaska are noticeably different — these residents make Alaska exceptional. Because of the different modes of transportation in rural areas, Alaskans as a whole are two-and-a-half times more likely than the rest of the U.S. to walk to work, and more than twice as likely to travel within the "other" category.

Next month, *Trends* will explore how long it takes these commuters to get to work.

### 3 Methods Alaskans Use to Commute to Work

2005 to 2009

	Car, truck, or van (alone)	Car, truck, or van (carpool)	Public transportation	Walk	Other*	Work at home
United States	75.9%	10.5%	5.0%	2.9%	1.7%	4.0%
Alaska	67.0%	13.8%	1.4%	8.0%	4.5%	5.3%
Aleutians East Borough	9.5%	3.1%	0.0%	71.7%	3.0%	12.8%
Aleutians West Census Area	11.5%	8.4%	0.6%	54.3%	0.7%	24.5%
Anchorage, Municipality of	75.9%	13.0%	1.4%	2.8%	3.0%	3.9%
Bethel Census Area	25.3%	13.3%	0.1%	38.1%	18.9%	4.4%
Bristol Bay Borough	62.6%	19.4%	0.0%	8.7%	1.9%	7.4%
Denali Borough	49.25	10.4%	8.2%	25.8%	1.6%	4.8%
Dillingham Census Area	39.5%	22.0%	0.4%	20.9%	13.8%	3.5%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	71.1%	14.4%	1.1%	4.3%	2.4%	6.7%
Haines Borough	45.4%	12.6%	3.2%	18.2%	5.8%	14.9%
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	35.8%	6.5%	2.7%	33.9%	14.6%	6.6%
Juneau, City and Borough of	60.8%	17.0%	5.7%	9.0%	3.8%	3.7%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	71.0%	10.1%	0.9%	5.8%	5.7%	6.5%
Ketchikan-Gateway Borough	61.9%	17.5%	3.3%	8.0%	5.6%	3.7%
Kodiak Island Borough	59.5%	23.1%	0.7%	7.9%	4.5%	4.3%
Lake and Peninsula Borough	19.6%	10.9%	2.1%	33.1%	26.1%	8.2%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	70.1%	16.0%	0.5%	2.7%	4.9%	5.7%
Nome Census Area	25.5%	9.7%	0.3%	36.5%	16.2%	11.8%
North Slope Borough	27.0%	29.4%	0.2%	33.3%	7.7%	2.5%
Northwest Arctic Borough	9.2%	7.9%	0.7%	55.8%	22.2%	4.1%
Petersburg Census Area	53.2%	11.1%	0.0%	16.7%	9.1%	9.9%
Prince of Wales Census Area	56.1%	14.8%	0.9%	19.3%	4.9%	3.9%
Sitka, City and Borough of	56.9%	18.1%	1.2%	11.2%	7.7%	4.9%
Skagway, Municipality of	44.0%	4.2%	0.6%	35.5%	5.0%	10.7%
Southeast Fairbanks CA	62.2%	18.8%	1.0%	6.7%	3.5%	7.9%
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	67.3%	11.3%	0.2%	10.7%	3.8%	6.8%
Wade Hampton Census Area	10.7%	1.7%	0.0%	60.8%	24.6%	2.2%
Wrangell, City and Borough	62.7%	12.4%	1.4%	4.9%	15.7%	3.0%
Yakutat, City and Borough of	61.2%	14.8%	1.5%	11.2%	5.1%	6.1%
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	26.1%	11.4%	0.4%	37.5%	16.9%	7.7%

\*"Other" includes bicycles, four-wheelers, snowmachines, taxis, planes, dog sleds, motorcycles, and boats.

Source: U.S Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005-2009

#### Where is Employment Scene?

Because of the annual benchmarking and revision process, the data we typically use to generate the monthly unemployment rate and Employment Scene were not available before publication of this month's *Trends*. The Research and Analysis Section plans to release two months' employment statistics and unemployment rates in March: the January 2011 rate on March 10, and the February rate on March 23.

# Employer Resources

## Trade Adjustment Assistance helps employers, displaced workers

If you're an employer facing potential layoffs because of competition from increased imports, the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program may provide benefits and services to ease the transition. This federal program, administered by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, was created to help workers who lose their jobs because of foreign trade — either competition from import of a similar product, or the shifting of jobs overseas.

For workers who qualify, the TAA program 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 when 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 <http://www.doleta.gov/tradeact/petitions.cfm>. Submit the completed forms by mail, e-mail, or FAX to Heidi Carl-

son, Alaska's Trade Adjustment Assistance coordinator.

To learn more about the Trade Adjustment Assistance program and who may apply, visit [www.doleta.gov/tradeact/](http://www.doleta.gov/tradeact/) or contact Heidi Carlson at [heidi.carlson@alaska.gov](mailto:heidi.carlson@alaska.gov) or (907) 465-1805.

### Consider On-The-Job Training

Businesses trying to grow may benefit greatly from the On-The-Job Training program. An OJT allows a job seeker who needs training to "earn while you learn." An established OJT also helps the employer design a training plan to suit the needs of the business.

For employers focused on the bottom line, the valuable benefit of an OJT is the partial reimbursement of wages by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The reimbursement benefits both employers and workers. By establishing an OJT, the employer invests in the business' future and in a loyal worker whose skills are tailored to the employer's needs.

The recruitment, screening, and training begin when an employer contacts an employment specialist at an Alaska Job Center. To reach an employment specialist at one of Alaska's 23 Job Centers, call (877) 724-2539.

\*Funding for the Trade Adjustment Assistance and On-The-Job Training programs depends on availability.

# A Safety Minute

## Free AKOSH safety consultation can reduce injuries and costs

As spring draws near and businesses gear up for the busy summer season, evaluating work site safety becomes even more important. Nationally, the most disabling workplace injuries and illnesses cost \$53.42 billion in direct workers' compensation in 2008, averaging more than \$1 billion per week.<sup>1</sup>

Safety consultants with the Occupational Safety and Health Consultation and Training Section provide free assistance and tools to reduce work site injuries and illnesses and their associated costs. At an employer's request, AKOSH consultants will travel to work sites, evaluate and identify hazards, develop or improve written programs, and provide any OSHA-required training. They can also evaluate and monitor noise, vapors, fumes, and particulate hazards.

Most employers see a reduction in their workers' compen-

sation insurance costs and an increase in employee productivity after working with AKOSH consultants. In 2010, AKOSH Consultation and Training performed 513 site visits and trained more than 3,500 employees, and the overwhelming majority of employer feedback was positive.

All consultations are confidential and separate from the AKOSH Enforcement Section. Employers who request a consultation do not receive citations or penalties, but are required to address any serious identified hazards. Employers with an exemplary safety and health management system may also be eligible for a one-year exemption from scheduled general enforcement visits.

AKOSH is part of the Labor Standards and Safety Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. For more information, call (800) 656-4972, or visit our Web site: [labor.alaska.gov/lss/oshhome.htm](http://labor.alaska.gov/lss/oshhome.htm).

<sup>1</sup>Source: Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index