

ALASKA ECONOMIC **TRENDS**

OCTOBER 2009



The Unemployment Rate

WHAT'S INSIDE

Unemployment Claims and the Insured Rate

What are they saying about Alaska's economy?

Alaska Local and Regional Information

A snapshot of an area's work force



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Sean Parnell, Governor
Commissioner Click Bishop

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Alaska's Unemployment Rate Better than the National Average

By Commissioner Click Bishop

More jobs – and more people working – generally translates to a healthier economy. This month's *Trends* takes a look at what the unemployment rate really means.

Although the current economic downturn has affected Alaska, our seasonally adjusted unemployment rate is 1.6 percentage points above last year, compared to a national rate that has climbed 3.5 percentage points.

Those numbers translate to an August unemployment rate, the latest numbers available, of 8.3 percent. That number looks better than the national rate of 9.7 percent – but it represents Alaskans and Alaska families who are feeling the negative effects of our economic times.

A bright spot is Alaska's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. Compared to many states that have insolvent UI trust funds – the source of unemployment benefits – Alaska's fund balance is a healthy \$330 million.

The trust fund system was created during the 1930s to provide economic stability for both individuals and businesses. Almost every dollar of UI benefits is returned to the economy, which helps strengthen businesses and stabilize the work force.

Alaska is one of only three states where employees help fund the trust, which pays "regular" unemployment benefits of up to 26 weeks. Employers now pay for 76 percent of the benefit costs and 24 percent is paid by employees. The federal government also funds programs that extend benefits beyond the regular 26 weeks. This year, due to various state and federal benefit extensions, unemployed Alaska workers were eligible to receive up to 79 weeks of benefits.

In addition to funding unemployment benefits, a portion of employee UI contributions is set aside for the State Training and Employment Program. Created in 1989 and made permanent by the Alaska Legislature last spring, STEP provides a "leg up" to workers by investing in job training to help reduce current and future claims against unemployment benefits. STEP also fosters the creation of new jobs, increases training opportunities to protect against economic fluctuations and prepares workers for technological changes in the workplace.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section tracks STEP participants for a full year after training to accurately evaluate the program. The 1,445 participants who exited STEP in 2007, the latest numbers available, increased their annual earnings by \$9.3 million – more than twice the \$4.4 million cost for the program that year. Eighty-nine percent of participants were employed in the first quarter after they completed the program and 91 percent of participants remained in Alaska a year after training.

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board's STEP Task Force, which was created in March 2008, has recommended offering services to an expanded pool of workers who may be displaced and streamlining the grantee application and reporting process.

Alaska Local and Regional Information

This month's *Trends* also introduces a new online system that provides an economic snapshot of places in Alaska. From the Aleutians to Barrow to Craig, a new system called ALARI provides economic information from the local level to Alaska statewide. ALARI, the Alaska Local and Regional Information system, was created by Department of Labor economists and researchers. The system shows the resident work force of each specific area and includes information on occupations, age, gender, industry and major employers. ALARI also identifies the number of Alaskans with work experience in one of the 113 gasoline-related occupations, from the statewide to the local level.

A frequently used and occasionally misunderstood economic indicator

People interested in the economy – and who isn't these days? – know that the U.S. unemployment rate has soared over the last year and a half. The Federal Reserve, investors and politicians are among those watching the rate closely for signs that the country is emerging from a deep national recession.

In Alaska, there's also been heightened interest in the unemployment rate as a signal of how the broader economic troubles are affecting things here. Although the state's unemployment rate is up noticeably, the overall increase has been smaller than in most other parts of the country.

Aside from the insight it gives into the health of the economy, over \$60 billion in federal dollars are distributed throughout the country each year based on unemployment rates. The money goes for everything from job training and economic development to emergency food and housing assistance.

An economic headliner

Nationally, only the jobs report, which is released with the unemployment numbers on the first Friday of every month, rivals the attention given to the unemployment rate as an indicator of the country's general economic health.¹ A rising rate is generally considered a sign of a weakening economy and a falling rate suggests that things are getting better, although there are exceptions in both cases.

Understanding what the rate means

Despite the unemployment rate's prominence, it may not be obvious what the rate represents. Alaska's 7.2 percent August unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted²) does not mean, for example, that 7.2 percent of the state's working-age population is not working.

What it does mean is that 7.2 percent of the labor force is unemployed. The key concept is that the population is made up of three parts: people who are employed, people who are unemployed, and people who are not part of the labor force. (See Exhibits 1 and 2.)

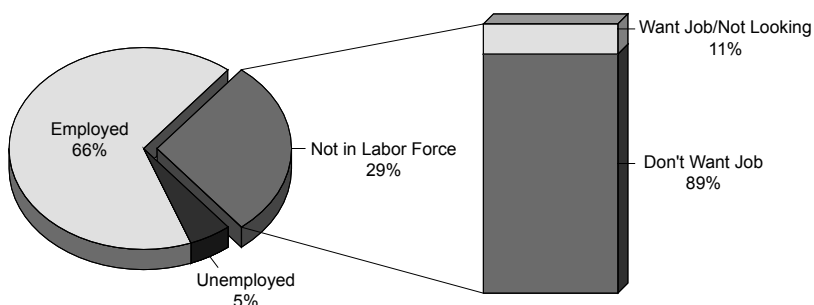
Only the people actively looking for work are considered unemployed. Retirees, for example, and stay-at-home parents who choose not to work, are among those considered outside of the labor force.

A little more than a third of the nation's 16-and-older population falls into this category, or about

¹ The gross domestic product is also a critical indicator, especially during recessionary periods, but GDP data are only available quarterly and with a longer lag than either the jobs numbers or the unemployment rate.

² August's seasonally adjusted rate was 8.3 percent.

1 Three Parts of the Population¹ Alaska, August 2009



¹ Ages 16 and older

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

Two Parts of the Labor Force Alaska, August 2009 **2**

80 million Americans. That means that if a supermarket line had 15 people in it, and those 15 people represented the U.S. population with its nearly 10 percent unemployment rate, 9 of the people in line would have jobs, 1 would be unemployed, and the remaining 5 would not have jobs but would also not be looking for work.

Alaska's younger labor force

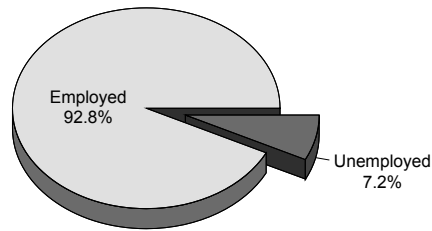
In Alaska, the numbers are slightly different because a smaller share of the state's population is retirement-aged. In August, for example, 71 percent of the state's 16-and-older population was either working or actively seeking a job. Of the remaining 29 percent not in the labor force – about 145,000 people – an estimated 89 percent said they didn't want a job and the remaining 11 percent did want to work but hadn't been actively looking for a job for a variety of reasons. (See Exhibit 1.)

Unemployment rates in rural Alaska are understated

People who did not work but said they wanted a job are a relatively small but important group. That's a part of the population that is sometimes considered the uncounted unemployed. It's an issue particularly in rural Alaska, where unemployment rates are often already among the highest in the nation. A significant percentage of these areas' working-age populations can disappear from the important calculation because they stop looking for work when they believe there is simply no work available.

The exclusion of these people from the unemployment rate is also an issue nationally – some claim that the unemployment rate should count people who say they would like to work but have become discouraged and stopped looking for a job³ – but to a lesser degree because in most parts of the country job seekers can expand their job searches to neighboring towns

³ The Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes what they call "alternative measures of labor underutilization" that calculate rates that do count discouraged workers and others who are not counted as being part of the labor force in the official unemployment rate. The measure with the most expansive definition in the numerator of the calculation is called "U-6" and the national U-6 rate in August 2009 was 16.8 percent (seasonally adjusted).



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

and cities if job prospects are limited locally. In rural Alaska, much of which is off the road system, commuting to a job in another town or city is more complicated.

What's called the unemployment rate is sometimes something else

In casual exchanges about unemployment rates in some of Alaska's economically distressed villages, extraordinarily high unemployment rates of 70 percent and higher are sometimes cited despite the fact that official rates very rarely rise above 30 percent.⁴ What is most likely meant when someone says that a certain Alaska village has a 70 percent unemployment rate is that only 30 percent of the population has jobs.

And in fact the percentage of a population that is working is sometimes more meaningful in assessing an area's economic health than the official unemployment rates. That's because when enough people become discouraged and stop looking for work the unemployment rate actually falls – even though nothing positive has happened for the economy – because those people drop out of the labor force and are no longer counted as being unemployed.

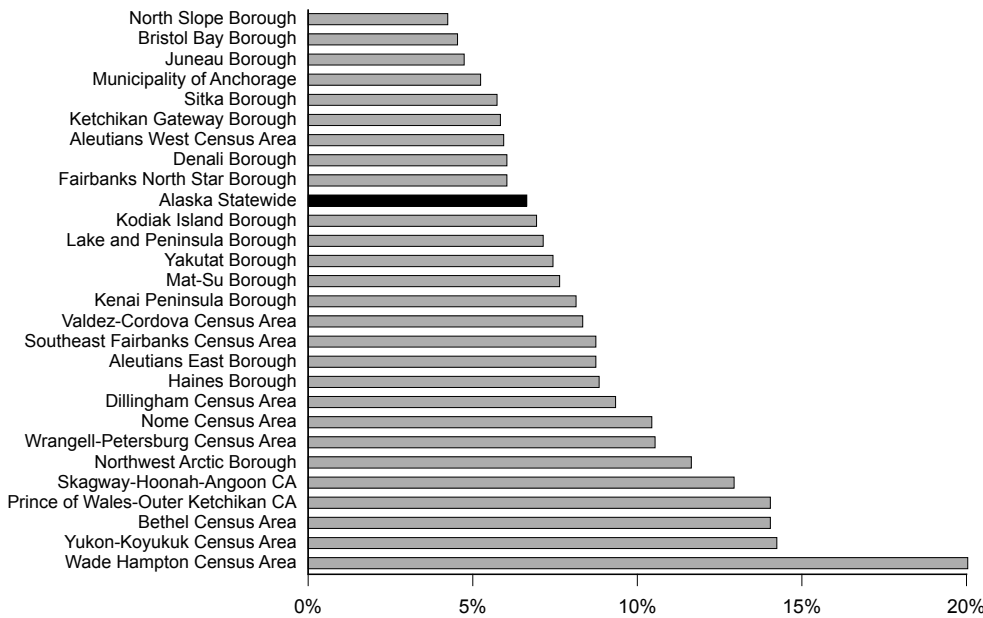
How the rates are calculated

It would be easy to calculate a precise unemployment rate if you could account for what every person living in Alaska was up to every

⁴ It's unlikely that 30 percent of the labor force would be actively seeking work for more than a very short period of time; when unemployment rises to those levels, people tend to move to where jobs are more plentiful, or drop out of the labor force and figure out how to manage without a job.

3 A Wide Range of Rates

Average monthly unemployment rates, 2008



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

month. But that’s a lot to ask for. It would mean knowing about the guy who works on the North Slope who moved from Anchorage to Palmer last month and also about the woman who used to be self-employed designing jewelry but who decided to take a few months off to take care of her grandkids.

It would take knowing those kinds of things for about half a million working-age people living in Alaska. And since the unemployment rate is produced just a few weeks after a month ends, you’d have to know those things right away.

That’s obviously not practical so the state and federal agencies responsible for producing the unemployment rate⁵ piece together the information they have on employment and unemployment and supplement it with a monthly survey of about 1,000 Alaska households.⁶

The use of a survey, in addition to the imprecision of the other information used, means that

⁵ Because so much federal money is distributed based on unemployment rates, the methods are tightly controlled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics so as to be consistent throughout the country.

⁶ The entire survey, called the Current Population Survey, includes about 60,000 households nationwide.

the unemployment rate is an estimate – and a rather rough one – rather than an exact calculation. For Alaska, the error range of the statewide unemployment rate is plus or minus a full percentage point.⁷

Pitfalls to avoid

Given that it’s an estimate, one of the most frequent misuses of unemployment rates is to read too much into small monthly changes. Even at the state level, a single month’s change is very rarely large enough to be statistically significant. For smaller areas, including a relatively high population area like Anchorage, it’s even less likely that a single month’s change

will be big enough to indicate real economic change with certainty.

So rather than trying to read something into small changes to the unemployment rate or the specific rate for a single month, it’s better to look for trends in the rate over several months. To meaningfully analyze the differences between Alaska’s boroughs and census areas, it’s best to average the rates over a full calendar year to even out the rates’ inherent volatility.

High unemployment in Wade Hampton

With those caveats in mind, the average monthly 2008 rates for Alaska’s boroughs and census areas indicate that the North Slope Borough had the lowest unemployment rates and the Wade Hampton Census Area had the highest. (See Exhibit 3.) And over the first eight months of 2009, every borough and census area has recorded higher rates.

What’s also sufficiently clear is that the Bristol Bay Borough, Juneau and Anchorage are among the areas that have lower than average rates and

⁷ The error range is calculated at a 90 percent confidence interval.

that the Yukon-Koyukuk, Bethel and Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan census areas all have relatively high rates.

Comparing Alaska's numbers with other states'

For the state as a whole, recent unemployment rates provide insight into the impact the recession has had on Alaska compared to other states. (See Exhibit 4.) From the start of the national recession in December 2007 through August 2009, the most recent data available, the unemployment rates in all 50 states have risen by significant amounts.

Some of the increases have been dramatic, particularly in Nevada and Michigan, where rates have climbed about eight percentage points. At the other end of the spectrum, North Dakota had the smallest increase over that period at just 1.2 percentage points and Alaska had the second smallest at 2.0.

Other than Alaska, the other states that have fared relatively well are predominantly inland states, several of which share Alaska's dependence on oil and gas as an economic driver. Among these are North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana. The other common thread is that they are states where housing prices neither soared nor subsequently plummeted as they did elsewhere.

At the other end of the spectrum are states that have been particularly exposed to the bursting housing bubble – Nevada, California and Florida, among others – and those that depend heavily on manufacturing jobs – Michigan being the most obvious.

The Recession's Scorecard **4**

Change in unemployment rates

	Percentage Point Increase December 2007 to August 2009
North Dakota	1.2
Alaska	2.0
Arkansas	2.2
South Dakota	2.2
Nebraska	2.3
Montana	2.8
Vermont	2.8
Iowa	3.0
Kansas	3.0
Oklahoma	3.0
Utah	3.0
Colorado	3.2
Connecticut	3.2
Minnesota	3.2
Virginia	3.2
Mississippi	3.4
New Hampshire	3.4
Maryland	3.6
Texas	3.6
Wyoming	3.7
Louisiana	3.9
Maine	3.9
New Mexico	3.9
Pennsylvania	4.0
Hawaii	4.1
Missouri	4.2
Delaware	4.3
Wisconsin	4.3
Illinois	4.4
New York	4.4
Massachusetts	4.6
Washington	4.6
West Virginia	4.7
Arizona	4.8
Ohio	5.0
Georgia	5.1
New Jersey	5.2
Idaho	5.3
Indiana	5.4
Tennessee	5.5
Kentucky	5.6
South Carolina	5.7
North Carolina	5.8
Florida	5.9
California	6.3
Alabama	6.6
Rhode Island	6.8
Oregon	6.9
Michigan	7.9
Nevada	8.0

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

Unemployment Claims and the Insured Unemployment Rate

By Lennon P. Weller,
Economist

What are they saying about Alaska's economy?

As Harry Truman once famously remarked, "It's a recession when your neighbor loses his job; it's a depression when you lose yours." Whatever you call it, it's been a difficult period for the U.S. economy and Alaska hasn't been immune either. Claims for unemployment insurance are way up and a variety of special programs have been created to extend benefits and help workers get by until they find new jobs.

The unemployment insurance program is similar to other types of insurance in that it protects against a loss due to a specific risk in exchange for regular payments into a collective fund. The risk being insured against is the loss of a job and if the risk becomes a reality, unemployed work-

ers make claims on the system and receive unemployment insurance benefit checks.

Similar to what insurance companies do, states manage the unemployment insurance system by depositing the money that employers and employees are required to pay in unemployment insurance taxes into a trust fund so that there will be enough to pay the claims of qualified unemployed workers. Over the last few years, there's been a sizeable increase in claims.

Nearly every industry has seen increases

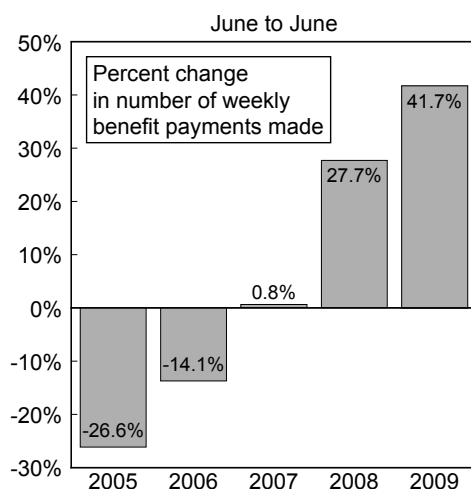
Claims and benefit payments¹ began rising in 2008 and have continued to climb in 2009. (See Exhibit 1.) In June, the number of weekly payments made to claimants² was 42 percent higher than a year earlier. (See Exhibit 2.)

The largest percentage increase – more than 200 percent – came from the industry category that includes the oil and gas and mining industries. That's a bit of a mystery because although mining employment has fallen a little, the total number of oil and gas jobs in Alaska hasn't changed much during the national recession.

¹ Claims aren't exactly the same thing as benefit payments because some claims are denied. The virtue of claims as a data set is that they can be counted as soon as they're made and provide important information about the current state of the labor force and economy. Actual unemployment insurance payments are more important to managing the program for obvious reasons. Because the dominant majority of claims become payments, the two terms are used somewhat interchangeably in this article.

² Unless stated otherwise, all references to claimants in the text of this article are to Alaska's in-state claimants only, with the exception of the sections on the insured unemployment rate, where references to claimants are to all Alaska's claimants – in-state and those who file from outside the state. An example of the latter would be a construction worker who works in Alaska for six months, then moves to Washington and collects Alaska unemployment insurance benefits. Typically, Alaska's out-of-state claimants make up roughly 15 percent to 20 percent of total claimants.

1 Weeks Paid Up in 2008 and 2009 Over-the-year percent change, 2005 to 2009



Note:

This exhibit shows the number of unemployment insurance benefit weeks paid to Alaska's in-state regular claimants only.

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

More data and a closer look at the numbers will be required to figure out why weeks paid have gone up so much in these industries.

Other major categories with large increases include construction, and wholesale and retail trade. The increase in payments to nearly every industry is most likely a reflection of the national economic situation.

Is there enough money to pay the extra claims?

Keeping the trust fund sufficiently funded is one of the most important jobs of any unemployment insurance system. Occasionally, a recession may be severe enough that money taken out of the fund to pay benefits exceeds revenues and, in extreme cases, total fund reserves. If a state's fund runs out of money, that state may borrow from the federal government. Alaska was the first state to borrow money – it did so in the late 1950s – but it hasn't had to borrow more since the 1960s.

During the current recession, 22 states have had to borrow money from the federal government to keep their trust funds afloat. As of Sept. 28, the federal government has loaned \$16.7 billion to those states, including \$3.9 billion to California alone.

Alaska has managed to keep its trust fund in good shape despite higher claims in 2008 and 2009. (See Exhibit 3.) Its trust fund has decreased roughly 3 percent, or \$11 million, in the current recession.

Alaska's trust fund is managed conservatively. That includes statutory and regulatory protec-

Number of Weeks Paid, by Industry

Alaska's unemployment insurance benefits,¹ 2008 to 2009

	June 2009	Change from May 2009 to June 2009	Change from June 2008 to June 2009	Percent Change from June 2008 to June 2009
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	3,591	686	2,454	215.8%
Information	819	143	418	104.2%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	693	78	304	78.1%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	6,789	764	2,450	56.5%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	1,743	212	629	56.5%
Unclassified	1,010	72	359	55.1%
Construction	8,288	-1,883	2,687	48.0%
Administrative, Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services	3,134	232	990	46.2%
Accommodations, Food Services and Drinking Places	4,449	101	1,292	40.9%
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	1,423	141	394	38.3%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,373	829	657	38.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	3,929	1,106	1,075	37.7%
Finance and Insurance	1,135	197	287	33.8%
Health Care and Social Assistance	5,048	1,292	1,145	29.3%
Educational ² Services	1,380	299	285	26.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting ³	165	-56	24	17.0%
Public Administration ⁴	4,934	405	496	11.2%
Manufacturing ⁵	4,026	44	305	8.2%
Utilities	207	-27	0	0.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	29	6	-24	-45.3%
Total	55,165	4,641	16,227	41.7%

Notes:

This exhibit shows the number of weeks paid to Alaska's in-state regular claimants only. The number of weeks paid to claimants who file from out-of-state are excluded.

The industry categories are the two-digit level from the North American Industry Classification System, or NAICS. For more information, on the Web go to www.census.gov/naics.

The numbers for a specific month are as of the last day of the month.

¹ The majority of Alaska workers who are paid wages are covered by the state's unemployment insurance laws. Those who aren't covered include the self-employed, business owners, fishermen, unpaid volunteers or family workers and private household workers. Federal workers are also not covered.

² Includes public and private education

³ This category tends to be mostly loggers.

⁴ Local (except teachers), state and federal government

⁵ Includes seafood processing

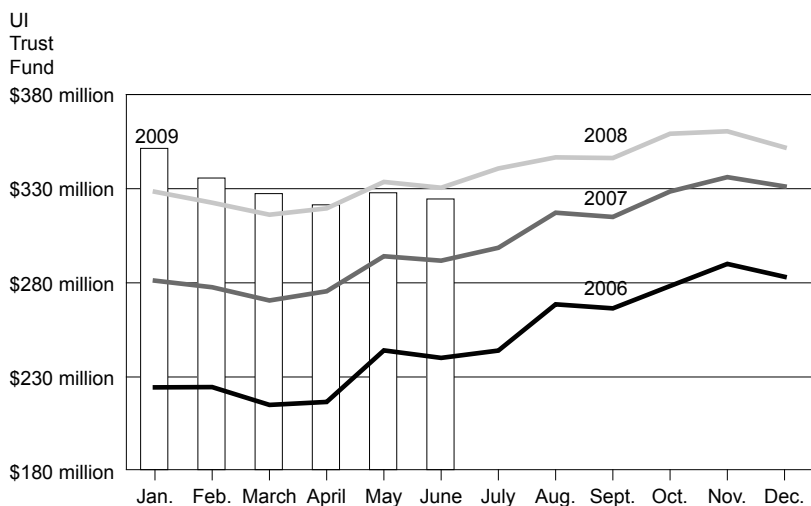
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

tions that limit changes to both the employee and employer tax rates and share of the total tax burden. Changes to tax rates are made once a year and are also subject to limits on a year-to-year basis. Changes to benefit amounts are changed even less frequently.

The insured unemployment rate – a management tool and an economic indicator

Unlike the total unemployment rate, which is used to assess the health of the economy and distribute billions of dollars in federal assistance, the "insured unemployment rate" was created as a management tool to signify the level of

3 The UI Trust Fund Balance Alaska, 2006 to 2009



Note:
The numbers for each month are as of the last day of the month.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

demand on unemployment insurance benefits. Federal lawmakers determined that a 6 percent IUR showed sufficient demand on the system to warrant extending benefits; it's known as the 6 percent trigger mechanism. Alaska's IUR, at 4.2 percent as of Sept. 12, might reach 6 percent by the end the year, but the state's extended benefits are already in place due to other trigger mechanisms.

A secondary use of the IUR is as an economic indicator. Both the rate itself and the inputs that allow it to be calculated can tell us quite a bit about what's been happening in the state's economy. (See Exhibit 4.)

Alaska's IUR has been on a downward long-term trend since the early 1990s. The average annual IUR, which was at 6.5 percent in 1992, has fallen in 11 of the last 17 years. In fact, the average annual rate has been below 5 percent for eight of the past 10 years.

The downward trend in the IUR is one indication that Alaska's job market has become more diversified and less dependent on seasonal jobs.

Since 1988, covered employment has increased consistently every year while the claimant population has stagnated and even fallen in the past

six years. Industries such as retail trade, health care and other services have grown substantially. As a result, seasonal industries such as construction and seafood processing have come to represent a smaller share of total employment in recent years. That phenomenon has worked to consistently lower the IUR over time.

However, after the beginning of the year, the IUR increased by nearly two percentage points from 3.8 percent in January to 5.8 percent in late April – almost a full percentage point higher than the 2008 IUR peak of 4.8 percent. (See Exhibit 5.) Since hitting 5.8 percent, the rate has been declining, as is normal, through late spring and into summer. Given the current trend, the average IUR for 2009 will most likely end up being around a full percentage point higher than the average 2008 rate of 3.7 percent.

Special extension programs expand benefits

As with other types of insurance, the unemployment insurance program limits the amount that can be claimed in benefits. In addition to the limit on how much claimants are paid for each week they're unemployed, there's also a limit on how many weeks they can collect benefits.

Extended benefits are federally funded programs³ to extend the normal number of weeks someone can collect unemployment. Some types of extended benefits programs are triggered automatically when certain conditions are met and others are specifically enacted when there's a special need.

The federal government, in light of the current recession, has expanded the extended programs. Alaska claimants can normally collect up to 26 weeks of regular unemployment insurance benefits. Yet, under the extended benefits in place now, that 26 weeks can increase to as much as 79 weeks.

³ The extended benefit programs currently in place have been available in one form or another beginning in June 2008. Traditionally, the federal government pays the full cost of Congressionally approved emergency extended benefit programs, with the exception of the standard extended benefit program. For that one, the federal government and each state usually split the cost 50-50, but with the current recession, the federal government has picked up the entire tab.

Extension programs' effect on the insured unemployment rate

As a management issue, extended benefits don't have a direct effect on the IUR. The IUR is calculated using regular claims and it excludes extended benefits.⁴ But as an economic indicator, considering extended benefits as part of the IUR is useful for what it says about the economy.

For analytical purposes, we calculated a hypothetical IUR that includes the weeks claimed under all the current extension programs. (See Exhibit 5.) That makes the IUR substantially higher – 7.3 percent for 2009's peak rate. For the week of April 25, the difference between the hypothetical IUR with the extended benefits and the IUR without extended benefits is 1.6 percent.

While the purpose of the unemployment insurance program is to help Alaskans between jobs, it's important to note that a growing number of people are continuing to collect benefits through each of the extension programs. For example, in June 2009, 30 percent of the total in-state weeks paid fell under one of the extension programs. (See Exhibit 6.) Of the total 54,743 people who had filed a claim during the 2009 state fiscal year,⁵ 10,126 people went on to collect extended benefits.

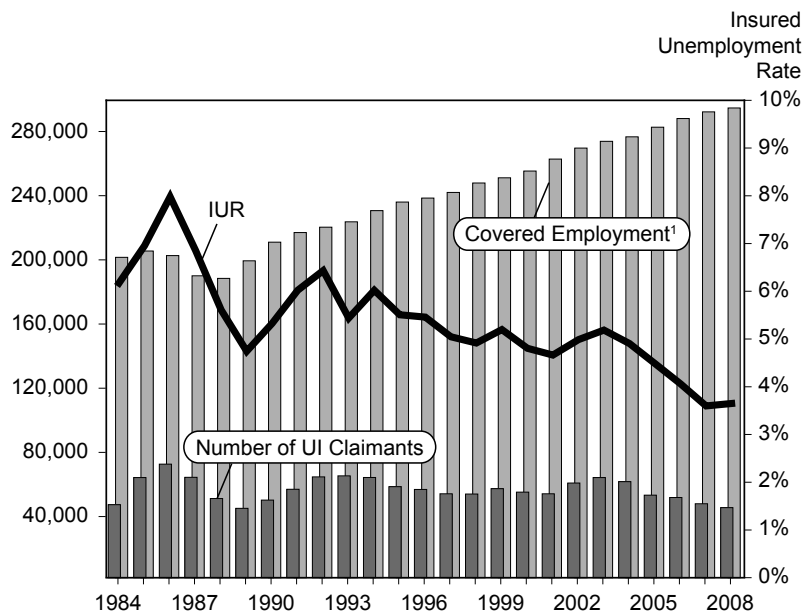
If vast numbers of claimants continue to collect benefits well into the extension programs, many will simply not have qualifying wages in the near term and so won't be eligible during the normal claim cycle. The result would be a substantially lower IUR in the coming year that would be misleading if interpreted to mean the economy had improved.

Just as the total unemployment rate sometimes drops even though economic conditions have worsened – for instance, when people who had been counted as unemployed drop out of the

⁴ Once claimants have moved on to collecting benefits under an extension program, they're not counted in the IUR calculation. The main justification is to maintain comparability in the rate over time, as extended programs are triggered sporadically. And, as mentioned earlier, the federal government pays for the extended benefits (at least for now) so no money is coming out of Alaska's trust fund.

⁵ From July 1, 2008, to June 30, 2009

Alaska's Average Annual IUR Insured unemployment rate, 1984 to 2008



Notes:

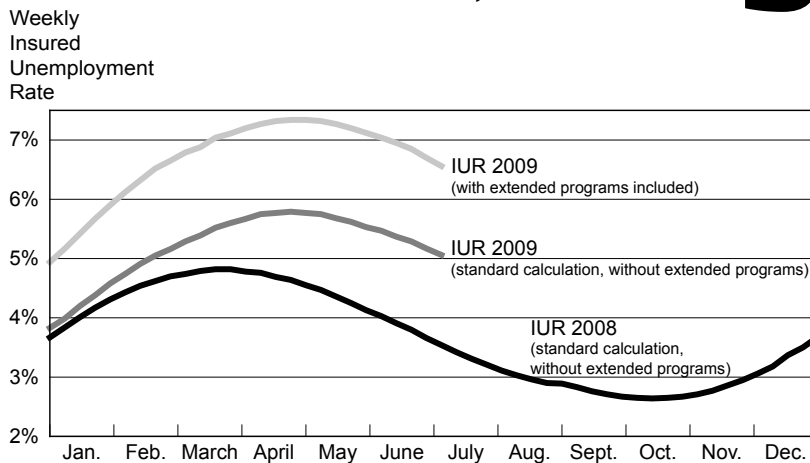
The average annual insured unemployment rate, or IUR, is the sum of all weekly IUR values divided by the number of weeks in the year (52 or 53).

This exhibit shows all Alaska's claimants: in-state claimants and claimants who file from out of state.

¹ The majority of Alaska workers who are paid wages are covered by the state's unemployment insurance laws. Those who aren't covered include the self-employed, business owners, fishermen, unpaid volunteers or family workers and private household workers. Federal workers are also not covered.

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

The Insured Unemployment Rate Alaska, 2008 and 2009



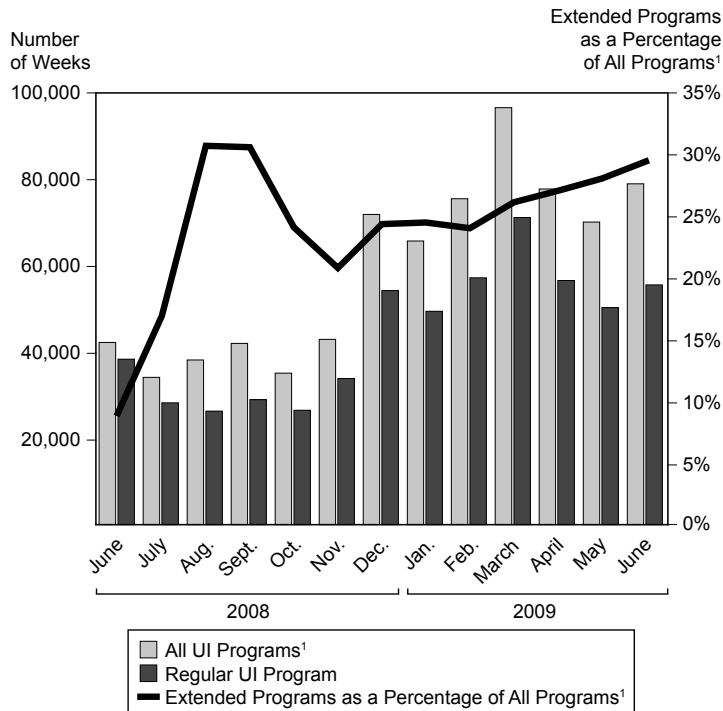
Notes:

The insured unemployment rates, or IURs, for 2009 reflect data through the week ending July 4, 2009, to capture the moving 13-week average showing the end of the state fiscal year (June 30).

This exhibit shows all Alaska's claimants: in-state claimants and claimants who file from out of state.

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

6 Benefit Weeks Paid to Claimants June 2008 to June 2009



labor force because they decide it's pointless to continue looking for work – the IUR could drop because fewer people had worked enough to become eligible for benefits. Therefore, it will be important in the coming year or two not to oversimplify what indicators like the IUR are saying about the state's economy and the unemployment insurance program.

Notes for Exhibit 6:
This exhibit shows only Alaska's in-state claimants. The numbers for each month are as of the last day of the month. ¹"All Programs" refers to both the regular unemployment insurance program and extended benefit programs.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

A Safety Minute

Employers: H1N1 Awareness

In spring of 2009, a novel influenza virus first caused illness in Mexico and then in the United States. It wasn't long before the swine flu – named that because it was related to a respiratory disease in pigs – was reported around the country. The virus, later renamed the H1N1 flu, was so prolific in its spread that by June the World Health Organization signaled a global pandemic was underway.

The President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology recently said a plausible scenario is that an H1N1 flu epidemic this fall and winter could send 1.8 million Americans to the hospital and cause 30,000 to 90,000 deaths, many of those children and young adults.

The people who are considered at risk for complications from the flu are pregnant women, children under age 5, adults 65 or older, infants under six months, residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities, anyone under age 19 on aspirin therapy, and anyone with a chronic medical condition such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes or any immune-compromising condition.

A link on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site gives information about the progress of the pandemic at cdc.gov/h1n1flu/update.htm.

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services has an Internet link that contains a lot of practical information about how to respond to the virus at pandemicflu.alaska.gov.

Vaccination with a strain-specific pandemic vaccine is considered one of the most effective countermeasures for protecting people in the event of a pandemic. However, H1N1 vaccines won't be available all at once, delivery from manufacturers will be staggered, and there will be difficulties in distribution. So, people in the risk groups will be given the shots first.

If an employee becomes sick with the flu, he or she should stay home. Everyone should practice good hygiene. Employers can help by providing employees with hand sanitizer and facial tissues. On the HSS link, click on "Facts and Guidelines" on the left, then "Questions and Answers: 2009 H1N1 (Swine Flu) and You."

A snapshot of an area's work force down to the community level

Have you ever wanted to know who employs the most residents of Goodnews Bay? Or the top industry in Galena? How about the top occupations in Shungnak?

For the first time, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section is publishing economic information at the local level for the entire state. It's on Research and Analysis' Web site under a program called ALARI – the Alaska Local and Regional Information.¹

At the heart of ALARI is unique resident employment information created by matching Alaska Permanent Fund dividend applicant files with employment data. These resident employment data differ from many of Research and Analysis' standard published employment series: the standard published series are based on where

people work and ALARI is based on where people live.²

For instance, oil and gas roustabouts who live in Kenai, but commute to work on the North Slope, are counted in the Kenai total for roustabouts because that's where they live.

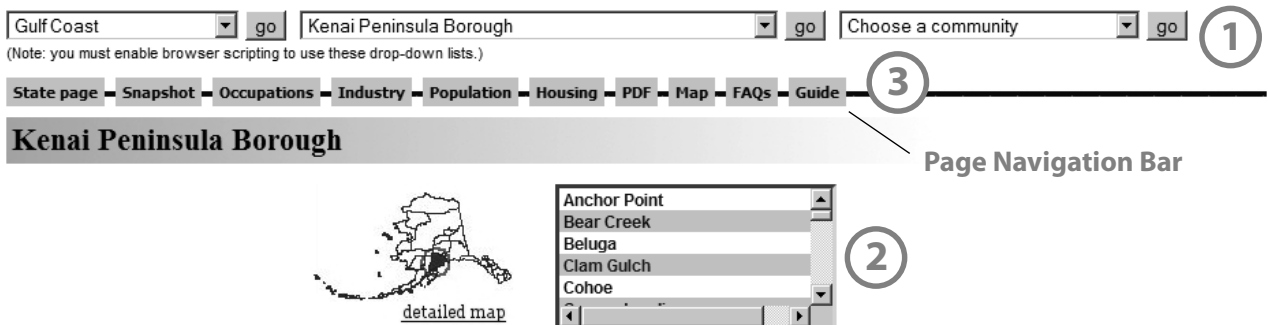
That makes ALARI essentially a snapshot of an area's resident work force rather than a snapshot of an area's economy – a community profile rather than an economic profile. It has information about the working people in an area: their ages, gender and occupations, and the industry they work in. It also has the area's major employers and total wages.

ALARI also provides information at the borough and census area, economic region and statewide levels.

¹ To get to ALARI, go to labor.alaska.gov/research/alari. Or go to Research and Analysis' Web site at laborstats.alaska.gov, click on "Local & Regional Information" on the far left, then "Alaska Local and Regional Information." The Alaska Department of Labor's Web site, labor.alaska.gov, also has a link to Research and Analysis' Web site. Click on "Researchers" in the gold ribbon at the top.

² There are two exceptions, both at the borough and census area levels: the occupations and industry tables. The columns on the far right on both tables use data based on where a person works. (See the "Top occupations and employers" section later in this article for more detail.)

1 Page Navigation Using the ALARI program



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

2 A Snapshot of Homer Using the ALARI program

Homer Resident Snapshot (2008)			
Working Age Residents		Wages	
Residents age 16+	3,263	Total wages	\$50,031,324
Resident Worker Characteristics		Resident Workers by Sector	
Total	1,695	Private	1,333
Male	805	State government	67
Female	887	Local government	295
Age 45+	795	Quarterly Number of Resident Workers	
Age 50+	612	Peak (2nd) quarter workers	1,483
Unemployment		Percent working all 4 quarters	62.0%
UI Claimants	280	Construction/AGIA Occupation Experience (2004-2008)	
New Hires		Some construction	311
New hires	618	At least 1 year construction	167
		At least 2 years construction	97
		Worked in an AGIA occupation	1,241

An asterisk (*) means data are suppressed. Numbers may not sum due to rounding. AGIA (Alaska Gasline Inducement Act) means the occupation has been identified as a core occupation involved in the gasline project. For explanations of these terms and data, click [here](#).

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

3 Top Occupations on the Kenai Peninsula in 2008 Using the ALARI program

Top Occupations

	Those Who Live in the Borough/Census Area (2008)			Those Who Work in the Borough/Census Area (2007)	
	Number employed	Percent female	Age 50+	% Non-local	% Non-Alaska Residents
Retail Salespersons	807	63.0%	229	7.8%	15.8%
Teachers and Instructors, All Other	781	68.5%	353	2.3%	5.2%
Cashiers	573	74.3%	165	4.5%	17.1%
Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	559	5.5%	82	11.2%	16.8%
Office Clerks, General AGIA	537	77.4%	169	6.6%	11.7%
Construction Laborers AGIA HOT JOB	442	14.1%	98	10.8%	24.3%
Home Health Aides	419	81.6%	139	3.7%	5.3%
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators AGIA HOT JOB	401	6.2%	149	12.1%	10.2%
Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	371	30.5%	67	5.5%	66.3%
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners AGIA	366	85.2%	79	9.1%	27.8%
Food Preparation Workers AGIA	360	50.3%	54	8.3%	21.3%
Registered Nurses HOT JOB	328	90.5%	157	1.7%	10.8%
Carpenters AGIA HOT JOB	313	0.6%	92	7.9%	15.2%
Waiters and Waitresses	307	89.9%	35	5.4%	30.7%
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand AGIA	305	9.9%	62	8.4%	14.4%
Receptionists and Information Clerks AGIA	300	93.0%	73	3.6%	10.1%
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks AGIA HOT JOB	297	91.6%	112	4.0%	5.9%
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	297	70.7%	14	4.6%	20.1%
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer AGIA HOT JOB	274	5.5%	117	1.8%	11.6%
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General AGIA	257	3.5%	117	4.0%	10.4%

An asterisk (*) means data are suppressed. AGIA (Alaska Gasline Inducement Act) means the occupation has been identified as a core occupation involved in the gasline project. HOT JOB means the occupation is projected to have a high growth rate and numerous openings, and has an above average wage. Nonresidency data for 2008 will be available in the third quarter of 2009. For explanations of these terms and data click [here](#).

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

The information will be useful to researchers, educators, policy makers, grant writers, consultants – anyone interested in the work force of a place.

Sources of ALARI's data

Individuals' place of residence, age and gender are from the Alaska Permanent Fund dividend

data file, which is a list of Alaskans who either applied for or received a PFD.

Worker characteristics, including the occupation, industry, employer, earnings and the number of quarters worked for each person in the database, are from Research and Analysis' Alaska Occupational Database, or ODB. The database is built from the unemployment insur-

ance contribution reports that employers submit each quarter.

The worker characteristics are available for wage and salary workers in the private sector, and state and local government. The data excludes those who aren't covered by unemployment insurance: the self-employed, most fishermen, military and civilian federal government workers, owners and officers of companies, and a few others.

The annual population estimates are generated by Research and Analysis' Demographics Unit. The 2000 census data are from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The count of unemployment insurance benefit claimants is from historical unemployment insurance claims files, which are part of the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics' program, PROMIS, or the Program to Measure Insured Unemployment Statistics.

Unemployment rates are determined by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Labor's Research and Analysis Section.

Site navigation

Navigating from page to page can be done in a number of ways. (See Exhibit 1.) The "go" button next to each of the three drop-down lists at the top of the page (see No. 1) will open the respective region, borough/census area or community Web page.³

The statewide and region pages have clickable maps to get to a specific region or borough/census area page. Each borough/census area page has a list of links to the communities within that borough or census area. (See No. 2.) The statewide page can be accessed from any page by clicking on the "State page" button on the left, just below the pull-down lists.

Besides a link to the statewide page, the page navigation bar (see No. 3) has links to various sections on the Web page and buttons for a

printable pdf of the page, a map,⁴ the Frequently Asked Questions page, and the ALARI Guide.

ALARI's data

Each Web page begins with a short narrative description of the area, which is followed by a "snapshot table" of summary data. (See Exhibit 2.)

The first item in the table, "Residents age 16+" (see No. 4), is from the PFD file. Next, ODB and PFD data are combined to produce the gender and age characteristics of the resident work force. (See No. 5.)

An indicator of unemployment, the number of unemployed insurance claimants (see No. 6) is a count of people in the area who had an active unemployment insurance claim in 2008. For the "New hires" total (see No. 7), the previous four quarters are examined for each worker. If there are no records indicating that the individual worked for his or her current employer in the previous year, the worker is counted as a new hire.

"Total wages" is on the right side of the snapshot table. (See No. 8.) It's a sum of all private-sector, state and local government wages paid to residents of the area that year.

Next, "Resident Workers by Sector" is broken out by employment sector: private, state and local government. (See No. 9.)

The quarterly statistics section (see No. 10) shows the peak quarter and the number of

What are the geographic areas in ALARI?

The geographic areas contained in ALARI include:

Statewide – The state of Alaska.

Economic Region – Anchorage/Mat-Su, Gulf Coast, Interior, Northern, Southeast and Southwest.

Borough/Municipality and Census Area – There are 16 boroughs, two municipalities and 11 census areas in Alaska. Most of Alaska is outside the boroughs and municipalities, and those areas are divided into census areas for statistical purposes.

Place (Community) – ALARI includes information for the 349 places identified by the U.S. Census Bureau for the 2000 Census. A place is a concentration of population. It can be incorporated, such as a village, town or city, but it doesn't have to be.

An unincorporated place is known as a Census Designated Place. A CDP resembles an incorporated place, but has no local government.

Regional Advisory Council – ALARI has one Web page representing the area included in the Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council. NARAC encompasses the 11 villages of the NANA Regional Corp. Inc., a regional Native corporation. More Regional Advisory Council pages may be added in the future.

³ JavaScript must be enabled in the browser to use this feature.

⁴ Detailed maps aren't available for the economic regions.

4 Homer's Top Employers Using the ALARI program

Top Employers

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
South Peninsula Hospital Inc.
Safeway Inc.
South Peninsula Behavioral Health Services Inc.
Homer, City of
State of Alaska Department of Administration
Lands End Resort
Homer Senior Citizens Inc.
Homer Electric Association Inc.
University of Alaska

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

workers during that quarter, and the percentage of working residents who were employed for all four quarters of the year.

The purpose of the last section of the snapshot table is to help educators and others prepare a work force to build and operate an Alaska gas line.

The "Some construction" (see No. 11) number is the count of the area's residents who were employed in the construction industry at any time in the last four years. The "At least 1 year construction" and "At least 2 years construction" are totals of those who worked in the construction industry for at least four quarters and at least eight quarters, respectively, in the last four years.

Lastly, there's a count of the area's residents who worked in an AGIA,⁵ or gas line, occupation in the last four years. (See No. 12.)

Top occupations and employers, plus demographics, housing costs

The top 20 occupations,⁶ ranked by number of workers, are listed in the "Top Occupations" table. (See Exhibit 3.) An occupation is further identified if it's one that would be required for gas line construction or is a "hot job" – a fast-

⁵ AGIA stands for the Alaska Gasline Inducement Act. There are 113 occupations that have been identified as being essential to the building and operation of a future gas line in Alaska. They're listed in the publication, *Alaska Gasline Inducement Act Training Strategic Plan: A Call to Action*. It's available on the Internet on the Alaska Department of Labor's Web site. Go to labor.alaska.gov and click on the plan, which is in the middle column. The AGIA occupations are also listed in *Trends*' May issue.

⁶ An occupation has to have at least five workers in that occupation to make the top 20 list; the list might have less than 20 occupations in areas with a small population.

growing occupation.⁷ (See No. 13.) Gender and age characteristics are listed for each occupation.

As mentioned earlier, the two places in ALARI where the data are based on the place of work rather than the place of residence are in the occupations and industry tables on the borough/census area pages. The two columns on the far right in both tables show the percentages of non-local residents (but Alaska residents) and Alaska nonresidents who were employed in a given occupation or industry. These statistics might indicate a shortage of workers in an area.

The top 10 employers⁸ section is based on the number of workers for each area. (See Exhibit 4.) This section is currently the only place where Research and Analysis regularly publishes the top employers at the community level.

ALARI also has a population-over-time graph for each area, along with demographic data on the median age, average household size, per capita income, median family and household incomes, and a breakdown of races. All but the region pages⁹ link to the U.S. Census Bureau's "Profiles of Selected Characteristics."

Nine borough and census area¹⁰ pages have rental tables. One table shows monthly average and median rental costs, and vacancy rates for single-family units and apartments. Percentages of different kinds of energy used for heating, hot water and cooking are in another table.

ALARI will continue to expand and evolve as new data become available, especially with the release of the detailed U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and 2010 Census data.

⁷ The "hot job" category means the occupation is projected to have a high growth rate and numerous openings, and has an above-average wage.

⁸ There is no minimum number of employees for an employer to make the top 10 list; sparsely populated areas, however, may have less than 10 employees.

⁹ Region Web pages lack the census profiles because the Alaska Department of Labor has defined the economic regions and the measures listed in the table aren't available from the U.S. Census Bureau.

¹⁰ The borough and census area pages that have rental tables are the Municipality of Anchorage; Fairbanks North Star, Juneau, Kenai Peninsula, Ketchikan Gateway, Kodiak Island, Matanuska-Susitna and Sitka boroughs; and the Valdez-Cordova Census Area.

Unemployment rate shows little change

Alaska's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose one-tenth of a percentage point in August to 8.3 percent and payroll job estimates continued to show small over-the-year losses.

Both the unemployment and job numbers suggest that the state's economy was battered a little during the summer by the U.S. recession, but the distress has been relatively mild overall.

The damage so far nationally

Since December 2007, the starting point of the recession, the nation has lost a total of 6.9 million jobs, or a hefty 5.3 percent. Two million of the jobs lost have been in manufacturing and another 1.4 million in construction. Shaky consumer confidence and a rattled banking system have contributed to additional losses of 900,000 retail jobs and 500,000 financial activities jobs.

Over that same period the nation's unemployment rate has climbed 4.8 percentage points to 9.7 percent, its highest level since 1983.

Comparing Alaska's numbers

Alaska's seasonally adjusted job count has actually increased by about 3,000 jobs since the recession began, although it appears to have reached a peak in late 2008 and fallen off slightly in 2009.¹

And although the state's unemployment rate has risen a full two percentage points since December 2007, every other state except North Dakota has seen larger unemployment rate increases.

The oil industry has been a stabilizer

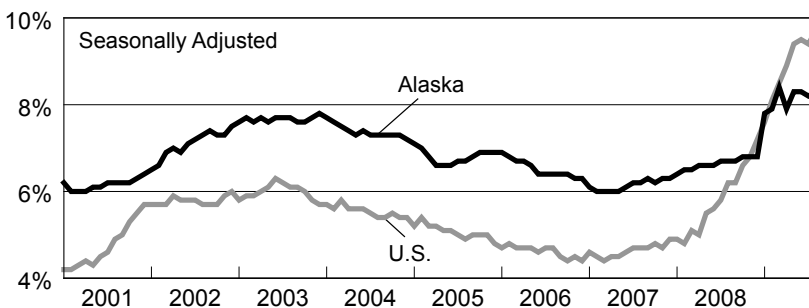
So far, Alaska's two dominant economic drivers, the oil industry and the federal government, have been significant contributors to Alaska's relative economic stability during a very shaky period for the nation and world.

It's worth remembering, though, that from 2003 to 2008 the oil industry added nearly 5,000 jobs and \$750 million in wages to the Alaska economy and that oil revenue to the state increased from about \$2 billion in 2003 to more than \$11 billion in 2008. Despite that vigorous growth and the considerable stimulus it had on the state's economy, overall job gains averaged just 1.5 percent over those five years.

Looking ahead, even if the oil industry maintains its current high job counts – which it has for about a year now – it's unlikely to contribute additional growth any time soon. And if it were to cut its labor force or reduce project spending by significant amounts, the state would be vulnerable to much bigger job losses than it has seen so far this year.

¹ Alaska's seasonally adjusted job numbers are more volatile than most other states' and the nation's because of Alaska's especially strong and occasionally shifting seasonal patterns. For that reason, analysts generally focus more on the not seasonally adjusted numbers and trends in the over-the-year gains and losses.

1 Unemployment Rates, Alaska and U.S. January 2001 to August 2009



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

2 Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment

	Preliminary	Revised	Revised	Changes from:	
	8/09	7/09	8/08	7/09	8/08
Alaska					
Total Nonfarm Wage and Salary¹	344,100	345,500	345,000	-1,400	-900
Goods-Producing ²	55,600	57,300	57,000	-1,700	-1,400
Service-Providing ³	288,500	288,200	288,000	300	500
Natural Resources and Mining	15,700	15,900	16,000	-200	-300
Logging	300	300	300	0	0
Mining	15,400	15,600	15,700	-200	-300
Oil and Gas	13,200	13,400	13,200	-200	0
Construction	20,300	19,700	21,100	600	-800
Manufacturing	19,600	21,700	19,900	-2,100	-300
Wood Product Manufacturing	300	300	400	0	-100
Seafood Processing	15,700	17,800	15,700	-2,100	0
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	68,700	68,800	69,500	-100	-800
Wholesale Trade	6,900	6,800	6,900	100	0
Retail Trade	37,000	37,700	37,600	-700	-600
Food and Beverage Stores	6,500	6,700	6,600	-200	-100
General Merchandise Stores	9,800	9,800	9,800	0	0
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	24,800	24,300	25,000	500	-200
Air Transportation	6,500	6,500	6,900	0	-400
Truck Transportation	3,400	3,400	3,400	0	0
Information	7,200	7,200	7,000	0	200
Telecommunications	4,700	4,700	4,400	0	300
Financial Activities	15,100	15,100	15,400	0	-300
Professional and Business Services	27,400	28,200	27,600	-800	-200
Educational⁴ and Health Services	39,000	38,900	37,700	100	1,300
Health Care	28,200	28,500	27,200	-300	1,000
Leisure and Hospitality	39,300	39,500	39,800	-200	-500
Accommodations	11,200	11,500	12,000	-300	-800
Food Services and Drinking Places	21,700	21,800	22,100	-100	-400
Other Services	11,700	11,700	11,700	0	0
Government	80,100	78,800	79,300	1,300	800
Federal Government ⁵	17,500	17,800	17,700	-300	-200
State Government	24,900	24,700	24,300	200	600
State Government Education ⁶	5,900	5,600	5,700	300	200
Local Government	37,700	36,300	37,300	1,400	400
Local Government Education ⁷	18,400	16,700	18,000	1,700	400
Tribal Government	3,900	3,800	4,000	100	-100

Notes for Exhibits 2 and 4:

¹ Excludes 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

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

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

⁴ Private education only

⁵ Excludes uniformed military

⁶ Includes the University of Alaska

⁷ Includes public school systems

⁸ Fairbanks North Star Borough

Sources for Exhibits 2 and 3: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Sources for Exhibit 4: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; also the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, for Anchorage/Mat-Su

3 Unemployment Rates By borough and census area

SEASONALLY ADJUSTED	Prelim.	Revised	Revised
	8/09	7/09	8/08
United States	9.7	9.4	6.2
Alaska Statewide	8.3	8.2	6.7
NOT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
United States	9.6	9.7	6.1
Alaska Statewide	7.2	7.3	6.0
Anchorage/Mat-Su Region	6.9	7.0	5.6
Municipality of Anchorage	6.5	6.5	5.2
Mat-Su Borough	8.6	8.8	6.8
Gulf Coast Region	7.7	7.8	6.0
Kenai Peninsula Borough	8.6	8.6	6.5
Kodiak Island Borough	5.7	6.1	4.7
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	6.0	6.2	5.4
Interior Region	6.7	7.0	5.8
Denali Borough	2.6	2.8	1.9
Fairbanks North Star Borough	6.4	6.6	5.5
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	8.3	8.4	7.3
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	13.5	14.5	12.8
Northern Region	9.5	10.0	8.4
Nome Census Area	13.0	13.7	11.4
North Slope Borough	5.3	5.2	4.4
Northwest Arctic Borough	12.4	13.3	11.4
Southeast Region	6.1	6.2	5.1
Haines Borough	5.2	5.3	4.8
Juneau Borough	5.3	5.4	4.3
Ketchikan Gateway Borough ¹	5.4	5.5	4.4
Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan CA ¹	13.8	14.1	11.4
Sitka Borough	5.4	5.7	4.9
Skagway-Hoonah-Angoon CA ¹	6.8	7.1	5.9
Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area ¹	7.7	7.9	7.1
Yakutat Borough	5.3	4.2	6.6
Southwest Region	11.8	11.2	11.4
Aleutians East Borough	7.9	7.3	6.6
Aleutians West Census Area	5.2	5.5	4.7
Bethel Census Area	16.3	15.9	15.8
Bristol Bay Borough	2.2	1.7	2.0
Dillingham Census Area	8.9	8.8	8.6
Lake and Peninsula Borough	6.3	5.1	5.9
Wade Hampton Census Area	21.4	22.8	21.4

¹ Because of the creation of new boroughs, this borough or census area has been changed or no longer exists. Data for the new borough and census areas will be available in 2010. Until then, data will continue to be published for the old areas.

4 Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment By region

	Preliminary	Revised	Revised	Changes from:		Percent Change:	
	8/09	7/09	8/08	7/09	8/08	7/09	8/08
Anch/Mat-Su	174,600	175,000	175,300	-400	-700	-0.2%	-0.4%
Anchorage	154,100	154,100	155,500	0	-1,400	0.0%	-0.9%
Gulf Coast	34,000	34,200	34,500	-200	-500	-0.6%	-1.4%
Interior	49,800	49,600	49,800	200	0	0.4%	0.0%
Fairbanks ⁸	40,200	40,000	40,200	200	0	0.5%	0.0%
Northern	20,550	20,200	20,650	350	-100	1.7%	-0.5%
Southeast	42,250	41,450	42,950	800	-700	1.9%	-1.6%
Southwest	22,250	23,850	22,150	-1,600	100	-6.7%	0.5%

For more current state and regional employment and unemployment data, visit our Web site:

laborstats.alaska.gov

Employer Resources

Census Alaska

The newly redesigned Census Alaska Web site is the place to go for all things census-related.

The site has new links for the upcoming 2010 Census and historical census data back to 1880. There are also links to maps, population estimates for all communities in the state, the American Community Survey, 2000 Census and frequently asked questions.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section's Web site on the census is at labor.alaska.gov/research/census. Or you can reach it from the Department of Labor Web site at labor.alaska.gov. Click on "Researchers" in the gold ribbon at the top, then "Population & Census" in the blue bar on the left, and pull down to Alaska Census Data.

The main reason for the redesign was to make the site more user-friendly.

Research and Analysis staff combed through their most frequently requested data to determine many of the links to the U.S. Census Bureau's Web site, and gathered Alaska data from the national site for others.

Research and Analysis has had a cooperative agreement with the Census Bureau since 1981 to help the Bureau with census geographic programs, and to disseminate data when it's released and answer data requests. Research and Analysis does that work, along with nine other state and local government agencies, through the Census and Geographic Information Network.

The U.S. Constitution requires a national census every 10 years. The 2010 Census, like the first one in 1790, will be a count of everyone – both citizens and non-citizens – in the U.S., including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Territories.

Originally, the census was designed to apportion taxes and determine state seat allotment in the U.S. House of Representatives. Today, it's no longer used for tax purposes, but it is used to establish legislative boundaries for elections for the U.S. House of Representatives. The boundaries are also used for elections for state legislatures, county or city councils, school boards and other entities.

The census population count will also be used to determine the distribution of more than \$400 billion in federal funds – more than \$3 trillion over a 10-year period – to states and government agencies.

The 2010 Census for the entire nation will officially begin in January in Noorvik, a primarily Inupiat Eskimo community of 642 residents 45 miles east of Kotzebue. The census is often begun in a northern community in Alaska to get an early start in the state's remote areas before spring breakup. Census Bureau Director Robert Groves will travel to Noorvik to personally count the first people for the census.

Census questionnaires will be mailed or delivered to households in February and March. For more information about the census, call Ingrid Zaruba, a research analyst in Research and Analysis, at (907) 465-2439, or email her at Ingrid.Zaruba@alaska.gov.

