ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS

NOVEMBER 2026



FISHING INDUSTRY ADDS JOBS

Number of harvesters up 4 percent in 2025

ALSO INSIDE *The capital city*

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT • **RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS**

FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Southeast Conference unites us around common goals

By Catherine Muñoz, Commissioner

I recently attended the Southeast Conference annual economic summit in Ketchikan, where I was invited to sit on a panel with fellow commissioners and present on the future of Alaska's workforce. This year's theme was Architects of Our Future. It included topics such as natural resource development and local infrastructure, and featured a panel with three of our candidates for governor.

This year marked the 68th Southeast Conference, and in recognition of its longstanding service to the state and Southeast communities, I'd like to take this opportunity to discuss the essential role the SEC and similar organizations play throughout Alaska.

Southeast Conference is the federally designated Economic Development District for Southeast Alaska, as well as the state-designated Alaska Regional Development Organization, or ARDOR.

The SEC was founded in 1958 when Southeast industry and community leaders gathered in Petersburg to advocate for what would become the Alaska Marine Highway System. It was inducted as the Southeast's regional development organization in 1989, only a year after the ARDOR program was formally established.

Nine ARDORs are spread across the state, with several regions such as the North Slope and large stretches of the Interior going without.

Robert Venables, executive director of Southeast Conference, said:

"ARDORs are the on-the-ground interface that facilitates and accelerates economic development. Southeast Conference is the regional planner and



connector for project development and effective partners for state and federal agencies as they develop infrastructure needed for private sector investment. Our board and membership reflect a balance of business and government individuals committed to strong economies, sustainable communities, and a healthy environment in our region and state."

ARDORs provide a public square for community leaders to advocate on behalf of their local economies. For example, this year Mason Villarma, borough manager for the City and Borough of Wrangell, highlighted developments in the construction of a deepwater shipyard designed to accommodate the needs of large commercial, defense, and government vessels.

Wrangell is one of 25 census tracts Governor Dunleavy nominated for the next generation of the federal Opportunity Zone program — an initiative driven by investments from private interests, which organizations like the SEC are especially well positioned to encourage.

As architects of our future, we must consider the economic diversity throughout Alaska. The early successes of the SEC highlight how important it is for communities to unite around challenges that are common but don't necessarily have a "one-size-fits-all" solution.

Sincerely,

Catherine Muñoz

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ON THE COVER:

A gillnetter in St. Herman's Harbor in Kodiak, photo by Flickr user LCDRDAN under Creative Commons license

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ALASKA
DEPARTMENT of LABOR and WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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Trends is a nonpartisan, data-driven magazine that covers a variety of economic topics in Alaska.

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Fishing jobs increase in 2025

4% gain was the largest in a decade, followed several loss years

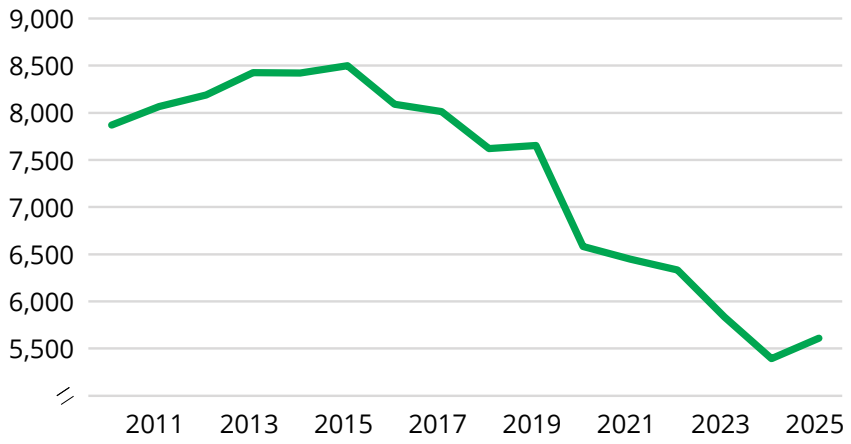
By JOSHUA WARREN

After losing jobs for five straight years, Alaska's seafood harvesting industry grew 4 percent in 2025. Over the year, that averaged 216 additional jobs.

While it was a small fraction of the 2,300 jobs the industry had lost since 2019, 2025's gain was the largest in more than a decade.

Recent years' losses came mostly from seasons that were cut short and closures of major fisheries such as Bering Sea crab harvesting. Some of the closed fisheries reopened in 2025.

Alaska fishing jobs increase after a long decline



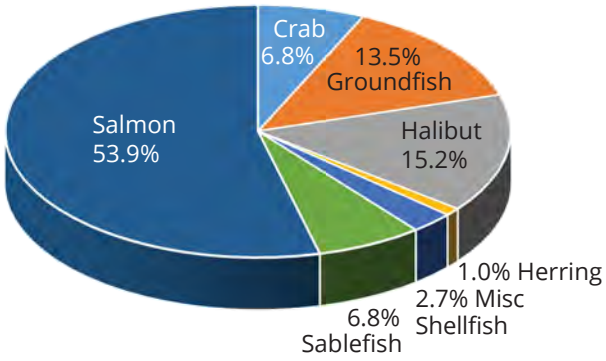
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Alaska also had a good salmon year, partly through a surge in odd-year pink salmon, and no other large fishery declined enough from 2024 to pull down the year's overall job count.

Monthly employment was up all year except in September and November. Employment in June, one of the busiest months, was more than 1,000 jobs higher than in June 2024.

July, the annual peak, also added 73 jobs. At about 17,400 total, however, July remained well below the historical peaks of around 24,000 in the mid-2010s.

Work-intensive salmon harvesting represents majority of jobs, 2025



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission, and National Marine Fisheries Service

Employment by species harvested

Salmon fishing jobs, which dominate the state's count, grew 7 percent over the year

Salmon is the most work-intensive species to harvest and represents more than half of the industry's jobs. Salmon fisheries employ about 3,000 over the year on average, and around 15,000 at the July peak.

Because salmon is such a heavyweight, the fishing industry's job count rarely grows without an increase in salmon fishing employment.

Salmon fishing employment increased 7 percent in 2025. The state gained about 190 salmon harvesting jobs after losing around 1,500 from 2019 to 2024.

Alaska seafood harvesting employment by month, 2001 to 2025

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Monthly Average
2001	2,972	4,286	4,505	4,681	7,053	18,884	21,571	13,921	8,095	6,194	2,617	726	7,959
2002	3,590	4,047	4,334	4,913	6,715	16,292	18,224	11,975	6,983	5,794	2,632	524	7,168
2003	3,284	3,609	4,378	5,797	6,233	17,610	19,670	11,922	7,191	5,969	2,660	526	7,404
2004	3,594	3,492	4,110	5,050	6,476	17,139	19,634	12,308	7,371	6,023	2,259	509	7,330
2005	3,561	3,150	4,227	5,115	6,283	18,169	20,566	12,889	7,192	4,958	2,768	953	7,486
2006	2,700	3,038	4,573	4,293	5,709	17,748	20,066	13,700	7,719	5,003	2,507	720	7,314
2007	2,584	2,966	3,930	4,348	5,949	17,528	20,137	13,567	7,500	4,738	3,080	791	7,260
2008	2,738	3,138	4,511	4,445	5,572	17,022	20,446	13,633	8,225	4,202	2,708	602	7,270
2009	2,527	3,817	3,126	4,874	5,693	17,609	20,076	13,687	7,148	4,593	2,388	507	7,087
2010	2,668	3,060	4,005	5,255	5,685	18,878	23,128	15,287	7,759	4,992	2,887	850	7,871
2011	2,898	3,214	4,010	4,729	5,642	20,112	23,824	15,586	7,918	5,721	2,303	849	8,067
2012	2,923	3,409	4,609	5,402	6,163	19,237	24,761	16,191	6,988	5,453	2,274	853	8,189
2013	2,736	2,930	4,091	5,516	6,270	22,012	25,351	15,419	7,559	5,496	2,780	930	8,424
2014	2,242	2,776	4,879	5,407	6,489	21,167	24,594	16,593	8,018	5,190	2,596	1,097	8,421
2015	2,520	3,247	4,961	5,029	6,749	21,164	24,649	16,283	8,232	5,252	2,661	1,264	8,501
2016	2,678	3,374	5,222	5,363	6,329	18,840	23,695	16,055	7,909	4,953	1,886	765	8,089
2017	2,205	3,076	4,444	5,026	5,646	19,881	23,541	15,407	8,562	5,334	2,292	754	8,014
2018	2,126	2,538	3,379	4,310	5,166	18,942	22,790	14,763	9,211	4,849	2,681	689	7,620
2019	2,347	2,548	3,637	4,372	4,721	18,154	23,440	15,632	8,664	5,201	2,443	679	7,653
2020	1,975	2,296	2,983	3,113	4,020	16,286	20,917	12,325	7,310	5,104	2,193	473	6,583
2021	1,573	2,339	3,305	4,017	3,997	15,732	20,627	11,616	6,995	4,017	2,268	902	6,449
2022	1,853	2,312	3,085	3,908	4,244	16,210	20,241	11,172	6,203	3,534	2,269	953	6,332
2023	1,643	2,313	3,184	3,583	4,152	14,540	18,204	11,055	5,286	3,742	1,757	562	5,835
2024	1,558	1,847	2,792	3,120	3,466	12,972	17,361	9,739	5,434	3,571	2,156	702	5,393
2025	1,628	2,228	3,067	3,419	3,665	14,016	17,434	10,098	5,289	3,645	2,034	793	5,609

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

The set and drift gillnet fisheries in Cook Inlet had stronger runs than forecasted, boosting job growth. Employment also spiked in Kodiak when its purse seine fishery had 20 more active permits than the previous year.

The winter had minor job losses, but relatively few people fish in those months, so they had little effect on the average.

Groundfish, the largest for poundage, had 14 percent more jobs in 2025

The species harvest that grew most in 2025 is also the largest by poundage. Harvesters took in more than 2 billion pounds of "other groundfish" last year, a category dominated by pollock. (Sablefish, or black cod, is categorized separately.)

Groundfish harvesting employment rose 14 percent over the year (93 additional jobs). That was enough to erase the previous year's loss and then some.

Most groundfish job growth came in the first months of 2025, mainly because December jobs rose back to historical levels after new regulations reduced employment the year before.

January recovered the previous year's loss, and February through April employment shot up to their highest levels in recent years. October was also strong.

Smaller crab, herring fisheries added jobs

Two other fisheries, crab and herring, added jobs in 2025.

Crab fisheries lost 20 percent of their jobs in 2022, mainly because of closures, and have been recovering slowly. A mix of gains and losses in 2025 netted about 20 additional jobs averaged over the year.

Although tanner crab harvests near Kodiak jumped in 2023, the 2025 catch limit was just 20 percent of the year before, at 560,000 pounds. It has closed for 2026 to help the stock recover.

Most crab fishery growth came from Bering Sea king crab harvests. Total crab harvesting employment rose about 5 percent in both 2024 and 2025.

Overall, the fall crab harvests have regained historical employment levels, but spring harvesting is still down by 11 percent from 2019 and down 35 percent from the 2016 peak.

How we use landings to estimate seafood harvesting jobs

Unlike the wage and salary job numbers we and our federal partner the Bureau of Labor Statistics publish each month, data on the employment fish harvesting generates are not readily available. Harvesters are considered self-employed, and permit holders aren't required to report the number of people they hire in the same way as employers subject to state unemployment insurance laws.

To estimate fisheries employment that's roughly comparable to wage and salary job numbers, we infer jobs in a given month from landings. A landing, or the initial sale of the catch, signals recent fishing activity.

Because fishing permits are associated with a specific type of gear, including boat size, we know roughly how many people a landing requires under various types of permits. The number of people associated with a certain permit is called the crew factor.

For example, a permit to catch king crab in Bristol Bay with pot gear on a vessel more than 60 feet long requires about six people, according to a survey of those permit holders. So when crab is landed under that permit, we estimate it generated six jobs that month. We count each permit once per month regardless of the number of landings, which is similar to the way wage and salary employees may work different numbers of hours but are still counted as having just one job..

Most permits designate where specific species can be harvested, so we assign jobs to the harvest location rather than the residence of the permit holder. This approach also best approximates wage and salary employment, which is categorized by place of work rather than residence. Jobs generated under permits that allow fishing anywhere in Alaska receive a special harvest area code and are estimated and allocated differently.

We produce the job counts by month because, as with location, that comes closest to wage and salary employment data. And because seafood harvesting employment is much higher in summer than winter, similar to tourism and construction, averaging employment across all 12 months allows for more meaningful comparisons among job counts in different industries.

The state lost about 40 percent of its herring harvesting employment in 2023 and 2024 — 31 jobs — and gained back 11 jobs in 2025.

Commercial herring harvesting is primarily in two Southeast fisheries: a purse seine fishery in March and a spawn-on-kelp fishery in April.

Herring harvesting employment was down in March as the purse seine fishery continued to struggle with economic viability. Most of its catch limit wasn't harvested because of low market demand.

However, April regained previous employment levels in the spawn-on-kelp fishery, reaching 490 jobs, the highest since 2022.

Three species categories lost jobs: halibut, shellfish, and sablefish

The three main remaining species harvested commercially in Alaska — halibut, miscellaneous shellfish, and sablefish — all continued to lose jobs.

Most fisheries sustained deep job losses in 2020 when COVID-19 hit, but halibut fishing employment recovered almost immediately. Since then, however, halibut harvesting has steadily shed jobs, and 2025 was its biggest loss yet. Halibut fisheries lost 60 jobs over the year, or almost 7 percent from 2024.

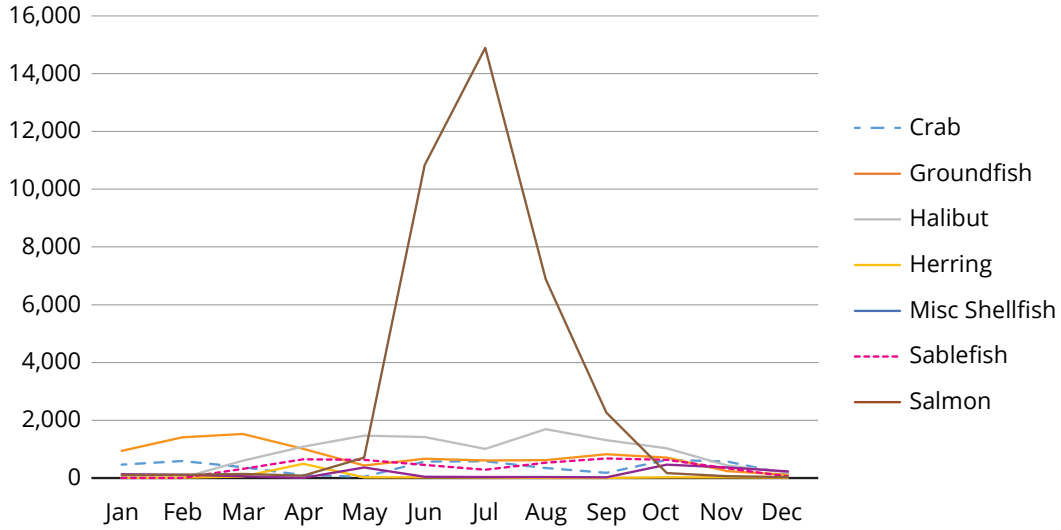
Unlike salmon's extreme seasonality, halibut harvesting's peak is evenly spread from April through October. In 2025, March and June employment increased somewhat, but the early fall brought larger losses. August and September jobs were both down by 400 from the previous year across all regions, with the heaviest losses in Southeast.

The small "miscellaneous shellfish" category rebounded in 2023 after outsized 2022 losses, because a new spring shrimp fishery opened. Over the last two years, however, miscellaneous shellfish lost all of that job growth despite the new fishery remaining active.

In 2025, the industry lost 12 shellfish harvesting jobs overall, or a little over 7 percent. Most months were lower, but April's loss was largest. April typically leads into peak employment in May, but this year April recorded just two jobs, when the previous April had more than 100. The Prince William Sound pot shrimp fishery, which typically opens in mid-April, didn't open until May 1 in 2025.

Jobs harvesting sablefish, or black cod, also slightly rebounded in the early 2020s, but the gains have been slipping away since. In 2025, the fishery lost 5 percent of its jobs (more than 20). The losses came during the peak fall months while the spring peaks stayed relatively flat. The spring and fall peaks each

Salmon harvests have the largest seasonal job peak in Alaska, 2025



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

used to represent more than 1,000 jobs, but they are now just shy of 700.

While sablefish are plentiful and the catch itself has almost doubled since 2019 — 2025's catch topped 40 million pounds — the number of permits being fished has declined.

Fishing employment by region

The Aleutians and Pribilof Islands were the only region to lose jobs

By region, only the Aleutians and the Pribilof Islands lost fishing jobs in 2025. The region is home to most of the state's groundfish harvesting employment. While groundfish represented one of the larger gains by species statewide, those came from other regions.

Overall, the region lost almost 4 percent of its fishing employment in 2025, hitting another low for a sixth straight year.

The Aleutians and Pribilofs followed the statewide growth trend for salmon and crab harvesting employment. Crab fishery growth was especially strong as the region continued to recover after multi-year closures.

The groundfish and halibut harvesting losses of about 50 jobs dragged down the region's other gains, however.

Bristol Bay growth, solely salmon, boosted statewide job numbers

Bristol Bay harvests are solely salmon. The region used to have other minor commercial harvests, but they all ended in recent years.

Bristol Bay's salmon fishing growth boosted the statewide numbers, but not in July, when Bristol Bay had about 200 fewer peak-month jobs than the year before.

The region's 1.4 percent growth came from June, a month that varies depending on when the season begins. June had been low for several years but was up by 559 jobs in 2025, and its total approached the historical average. That growth was partially offset by losses in July and August.

Kodiak harvesters increased by 7 percent

Kodiak is dominated by the two largest Alaska fisheries — salmon and groundfish — but also harvests most other commercial species. Halibut is a close third.

Following the statewide trends, Kodiak gained salmon and groundfish harvesting jobs in 2025. Over the year, the region recovered 30 of the 50 salmon fishing jobs it lost in 2024, with the summer peaks showing triple-digit job growth.

Groundfish gains were strongest in the first four months of 2025, and the growth was enough to more than cancel out 2024's losses.

Kodiak's other fisheries mostly held steady, although the crab fishery lost some jobs. Still, strong growth for other species added up to 7 percent more employment for Kodiak over the year.

Northern Region held steady overall

The Northern Region's harvests are small, with a handful of jobs harvesting salmon, herring, halibut, and crab. A mix of minor ups and downs equaled flat employment in 2025, at 69 total jobs.

Southcentral gained small number of fishing jobs after years of loss

Southcentral's robust job growth was a departure from the many years of losses that preceded it. Overall, the region's harvesting employment rose about 10 percent.

Southcentral followed the statewide trend for growth in salmon and groundfish harvesting, and none of its other small fisheries had a particularly bad year.

Salmon drove most of Southcentral's gains, with more than 100 additional jobs over the year, or 15 percent growth. Strong pink runs kept the fishery active later in the year, especially in August.

Across all species in Southcentral, August growth was strongest, up 600 jobs from 2024.

The region only gained about 13 groundfish harvesting jobs on average, reaching 40 total. Its job count hadn't been that high since 2017, though, and March's job count was second-highest historically.

Most other months were down slightly, but groundfish harvesting in the first three months more than made up those losses.

Southeast gained a handful of jobs after a major loss the year before

Southeast's harvesting employment was up by less than a percentage point in 2025, or about 14 jobs, after dropping by more than 8 percent the year before.

Southeast salmon and groundfish harvester counts ticked upward in 2025 while halibut and sablefish numbers went down by similar amounts.

Yukon Delta salmon harvesters at zero, with a few remaining jobs for groundfish

The Yukon Delta once had a vibrant summer salmon fishery, with more than 1,000 people fishing each month during the summer. Numbers started to dwindle in 2020 and zeroed out in 2022. Since then, the fishery hasn't rebounded enough for most subsistence harvesting, never mind commercial harvests.

The region faces several negative pressures, and even a near-ban on fishing the Yukon River hasn't been enough to boost the stock to previous levels. Cited factors include climate change reducing the amount of prey fish, river temperatures increasing mortality, and trawling bycatch.

Now, the region has just a small number of jobs harvesting groundfish. Groundfish employment also disappeared in 2024 but returned in 2025 to about the same historical level. Over the year, it represents about 11 total jobs, with just a few months of activity. In the 2010s, the Yukon Delta's groundfish harvesting peaked at 22 jobs a year.

Factors to watch in 2026

Alaska's salmon fishing employment numbers could decline slightly this year, given 2025's higher job numbers and the fact that odd years mean higher runs for some species.

However, no new closures have been announced so far in 2026 that would pull down the year's job numbers.

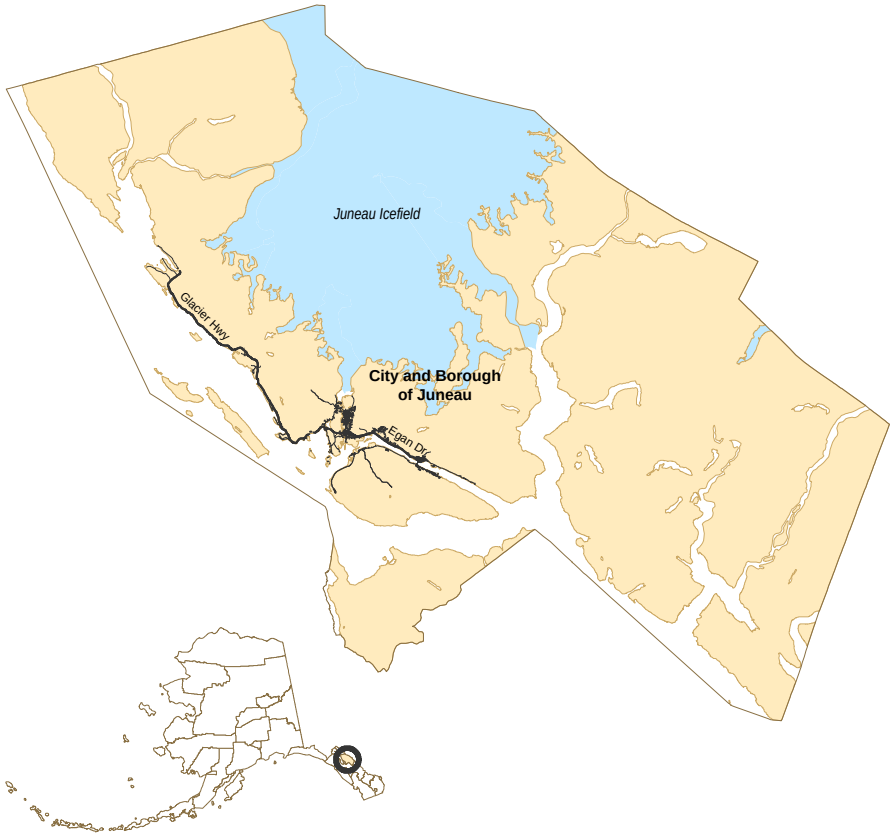
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The capital city's transformation

Juneau's economic journey from its start as a mining camp

By JOSHUA WARREN

Originally fishing grounds for the Áak'w Kwáan and T'aakú Kwáan and now Alaska's capital, Juneau has changed dramatically over the last two centuries.



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

Striking gold

Like many places on the country's west coast, the Gold Rush first brought European settlers to Juneau, and with it a bustling mining industry.

In the late 1800s, George Pilz, a German mining engineer who had worked throughout the United States, moved his way north into the new territory of Alaska. He settled near Sitka and enlisted local Tlingit in the search for new potential claims.

One was Kawa.ée, also known as Chief Kowee, whose gold samples prompted Pilz to send prospectors Richard Harris and Joe Juneau to what is now Juneau to explore.

When their efforts paid off in what is now Gold Creek, the men marked the area as a town site, and it quickly expanded into a mining camp with more than 100 people.

What's in the name

The camp's name changed several times in those early days, from Rockwell to Harrisburg, after Richard Harris, and finally to Juneau, after Joe Juneau.

The community has been Juneau ever since, except on a single day in 2016.

As part of an April Fool's Day joke and game promotion that year, the game and toy company Mattel reached out to the city. In exchange for renaming Juneau as "Uno" for one day, Mattel provided promotional materials and a $15,000 donation for at-risk youth in honor of Juneau Mayor Greg Fisk, who had died just after taking office.

Robust early growth with mining

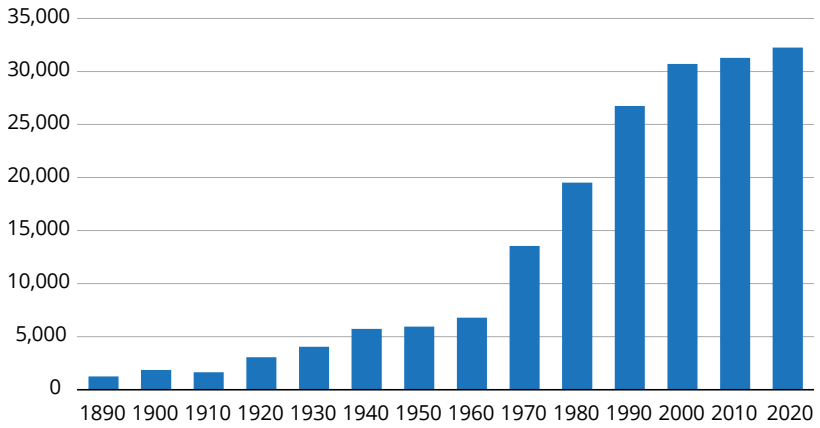
Several industries took root during Juneau's first few decades, turning it into the state's largest settlement.

The town grew quickly in its early years as a district, and in the 1920 Census, its population of 3,000-plus surpassed that of Fairbanks. Juneau remained Alaska's largest community until the 1950 Census, when Anchorage surpassed it.

As Juneau's economy grew with a robust mining industry, other industries sprung up to support it.

These included a vibrant dairy industry with multiple large herds raised in the part of downtown Juneau that now includes the Evergreen Cemetery.

Juneau's population growth since the gold rush



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

Later, as the town expanded, the dairy industry moved into the more plentiful land of the Mendenhall Valley. It continued to thrive until air transportation arrived in the 1940s, making it difficult to compete with imported dairy. (See the August 2025 issue for more on Alaska's dairy history.)

Employment and the population continued to grow as mining operations expanded early in the 20th century. The first complex at Treadwell, on neighboring Douglas Island, operated until 1922 even after a 1917 collapse flooded the tunnels. After that, the AJ Mine in what is now downtown Juneau became the dominant mine, and it operated until 1944.

World War II led to labor shortages, and gold was considered nonessential during the war, so AJ was closed by federal order in 1944. AJ's closure brought the era of mining dominance in Juneau to an end.

After mining declined, a range of industries continued to support the town — fisheries, timber, and the beginnings of tourism. But becoming the capital brought the strongest growth.

The journey to the capital

Becoming the capital of Alaska was the real turning point for Juneau.

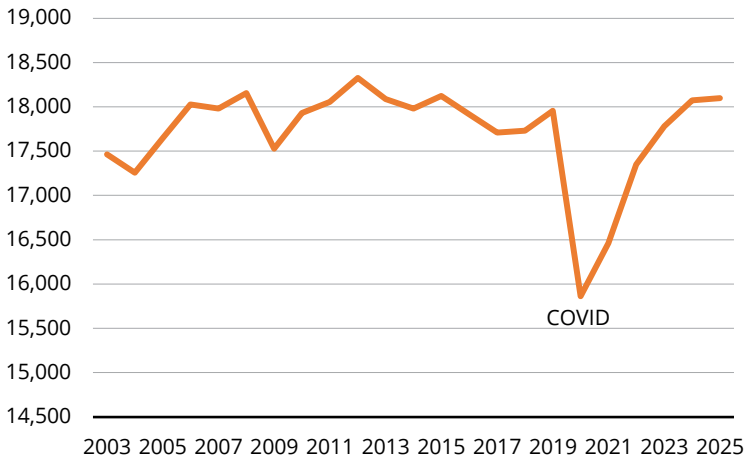
After the United States acquired Alaska in 1867, the territory was briefly governed by branches of the military before the U.S. declared it a civil and judicial district in 1884. At that time, Sitka was its temporary seat.

Congress named Juneau the capital of the district in 1900, then the territory in 1912, and finally the state in 1959 when Alaska was granted statehood.

The population growth pattern shown above reflects several changes as Juneau expanded from a mining town to the state's capital.

The growth between the 1960 and 1970 censuses included incorporating Douglas Island into Juneau's borders on July 1, 1970, creating the consolidated City and Borough of Juneau.

Juneau has fewer jobs than it had in 2012



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



Downtown Juneau, photo by Flickr user Susan Smith

After that, population growth came mostly from government expansion. This was especially true when 1970s oil money spawned substantially more government employment in the city, jobs that paid a premium wage.

Government and fishing receded over the decades

With the tighter budgets that followed oil prices dropping in the late 1990s, government growth grounded to a near-halt, and so did Juneau's population growth.

In the early 2000s, Juneau had more than 4,500 state government jobs. By 2025, that had dropped to just over 3,300. Most of the losses came in the last 10 years as the state faced budget deficits. The State of Alaska cut positions and has faced difficulty filling the remaining jobs, occasionally offering signing bonuses to attract more applicants.

Commercial fishing has also slowed over the last few decades. While the industry is vital to Southeast, its job count has never made it one of Juneau's main economic pillars. However, it still provides hundreds of jobs in the capital.

While seafood harvesters are considered self-employed and aren't included in our regular employment data sets, according to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission, Juneau had 295 commercial harvesters in 2000 and 175 in 2025. Gross earnings have not kept pace with inflation. However, the remaining harvesters are earning more on average.

Seafood processing jobs took the opposite trajectory, nearly doubling over those decades. While seafood processing around the state has struggled in recent years, Juneau has largely escaped most of that downturn. Most processing jobs in Juneau are with local independent processors instead of the large national chains that have taken a hit in recent years.

Mining resurgence, tourism reinvigorate the capital

Other parts of Juneau's economy have grown in the last couple of decades. Mining's return has contributed the most growth through its modern mines, Greens Creek and Kensington.

Kensington is 45 miles north of Juneau and produces mostly gold — more than 100,000 ounces last

year. Greens Creek is mainly a silver mine. Located 18 miles southwest of the city, it produces around 9 million ounces annually.

Twenty-five years ago, local mines employed around 300. Today, these two mines provide more than 1,000 jobs. Strong commodity prices suggest Juneau's mining employment will hold steady or grow in the near future.

Tourism is a major industry in Juneau today, with more than a million cruise passengers visiting each year. The city, which has about 32,000 residents, hosts up to 16,000 cruise ship tourists daily in the summer, with a new voluntary cap of 1.6 million for the 2026 season. For comparison, 950,000 visited during the summer of 2006.

While visitors spend money in the capital, cruise ships haven't prompted much job growth in recent years. Over the last 20 years, the leisure and hospitality industry has added just 200 jobs (the industry serves locals as well as visitors). While leisure and hospitality has not grown much, it represents almost 10 percent of Juneau's employment, at around 1,700 jobs in 2025.

Tourism also creates jobs in retail, transportation, and a handful of other industries. Sales tax revenue helps fund local government.



The Goldbelt Tram carries people up Mount Roberts from downtown Juneau. Photo by Flickr user Mark Hogan

Medical care and schools are changing shape

Local government has fared better in the capital than its state and federal counterparts. Parts of local government have taken a hit this decade; for example, the school district has lost jobs through the loss of state funding and lower enrollment. However, tribal organizations and the city-owned Bartlett Regional Hospital have added jobs in recent years.

Health care employment has grown in Juneau as it has nationwide. Outside of government-run medical care in Juneau, the large nonprofit regional provider SEARHC —SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium — has expanded considerably throughout the region this decade.

SEARHC began as a health group in 1975 under provisions of the Indian Self-Determination Act. The group's services have expanded not just geographically from serving mainly Alaska Natives to serving the public. SEARHC has also acquired many independent medical providers in the capital and built large new facilities in the Mendenhall Valley.

Tribal organizations have also expanded into new spaces and industries throughout the city. The largest is Tlingit and Haida, which purchased a downtown hotel, Driftwood Lodge, in 2023 and recently opened the Two Coppers casino on the road to Eaglecrest ski area on Douglas Island.

Goldbelt and Sealaska, two other large Alaska Native corporations, have also expanded, creating a major heritage center downtown and planning to build additional cruise ship docks on the far side of Douglas Island within the next couple of years (see the next section for more details).

School employment has declined, with school consolidations over the last few years and closures contributing. As student counts decreased and funding failed to keep up with costs, in 2024 the district consolidated its two high schools into one at Juneau-Douglas Yadaa.at Kalé High School and transformed what was Thunder Mountain High School into a middle school that hosts the city's two consolidated middle schools.

The city shuttered Floyd Dryden Middle School, and the Dzantik'I Heeni Middle School now houses alternative education programs. Local elementary schools also expanded to include the sixth grade, which was previously in middle school.

More closures are likely, as the population ages 0 to 4 continues to shrink. Juneau has about 20 percent fewer infants than 5-year-olds, making upcoming kindergarten classes smaller.

Population, jobs have settled, but major projects are on the horizon

Overall, Juneau's job and population numbers have settled. While the population grew rapidly over the first couple of decades of the 20th century, it hasn't changed much in the first two decades of the 21st. Total employment is now slightly lower than it was a decade ago.

Going forward, construction and leisure and hospitality are likely to add jobs with new docks and other tourist-centered projects, but most industries have seemingly moved into a steady state.

Still, some projects on the horizon could spur growth. The proposed dock on the far side of Douglas Island and a downtown dock expansion would expand Juneau's cruise ship capacity within the next couple of years. Right now, the city has docking space for four of the five allowed daily ships, and a fifth ship must bring passengers in by tender.

The downtown dock project, called Aak'w Landing, would expand capacity to a fifth ship. While the project has gotten smaller with rising costs from inflation and tariffs, construction is scheduled to start in 2027 with the dock opening in 2028.

The Douglas Island plans are still in the early permitting stages, but opening for the 2028 cruise season is possible. The project includes building out the area near those docks with stores and other amenities. That construction and those businesses will generate additional jobs if the project comes to fruition.

The U.S. Coast Guard will also port at least one Icebreaker in Juneau in the next few years. The Storis is currently home-ported in Seattle; it is expected to be home-ported in Juneau in 2029 when the facility is estimated to be completed.

The Coast Guard originally estimated the vessel would bring in 200 crew, but it reduced the estimate to 120, with 238 accompanying family members.

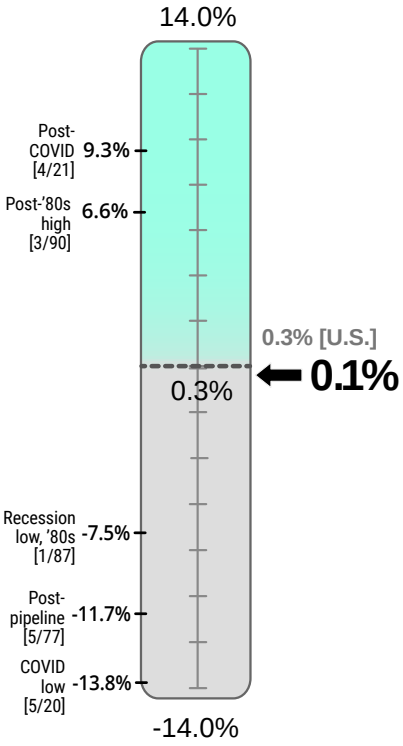
Joshua Warren is an economist in Juneau. Reach him at (907) 465-6032 or joshua.warren@alaska.gov.

Gauging The Economy



Job Growth

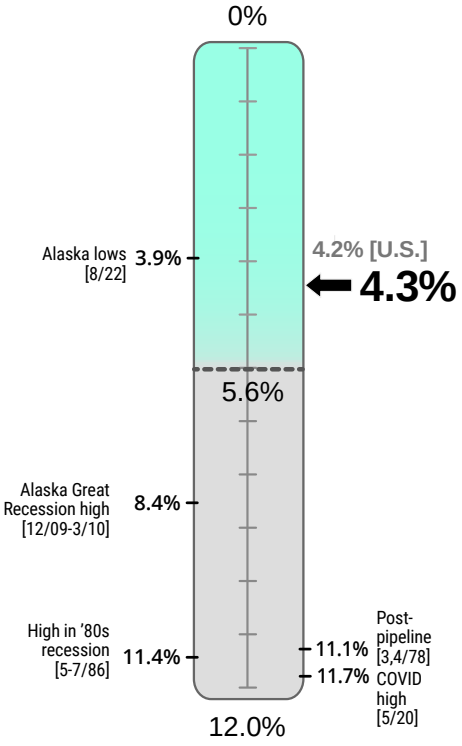
September 2026
Over-the-year percent change



Alaska's September employment was up by 0.1 percent from last September. U.S. employment was up by 0.3 percent.

Unemployment Rate

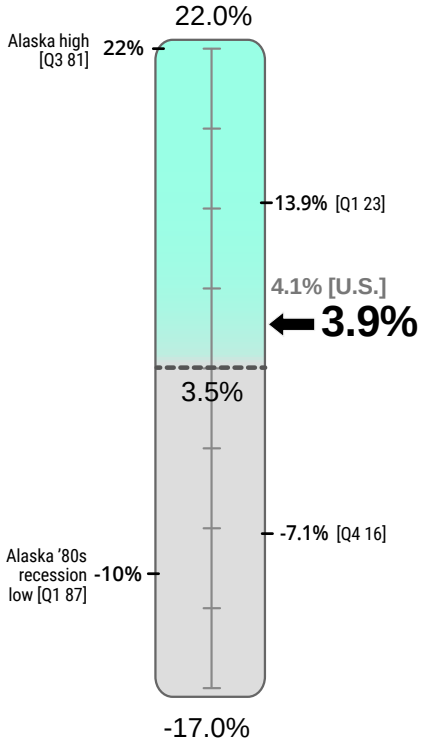
September 2026
Seasonally adjusted



Alaska's unemployment rate was up by about half of one percentage point from mid-2022 but remains well below its 10-year average.

Wage Growth

1st Quarter 2026
Over-the-year percent change



Total wages paid by Alaska employers have shown strong growth in recent quarters.

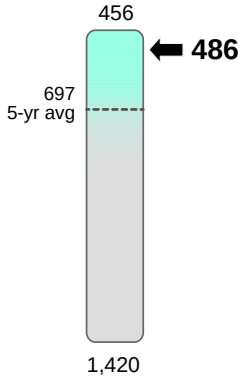
Wages were up 3.9 percent from year-ago levels in the first quarter of 2026.

Gauging The Economy

ALASKA'S 10-YR AVERAGE
CURRENT ALASKA

Initial Claims

Unemployment, week ending Sep. 5, 2026*

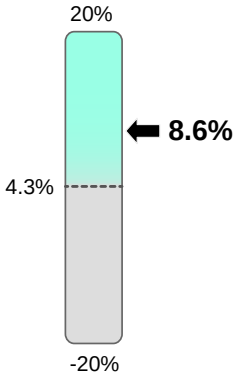


Pandemic-driven high claims loads have fallen, and new claims for benefits are well below their long-term average.

*Four-week moving average ending with specified week

GDP Growth

2nd Quarter 2026
Over-the-year percent change*

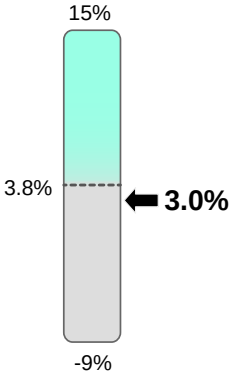


Gross domestic product is the value of the goods and services a state produces. It's an important economic measure but also a volatile one for Alaska because commodity prices influence the numbers so much — especially oil prices.

*In current dollars

Personal Income Growth

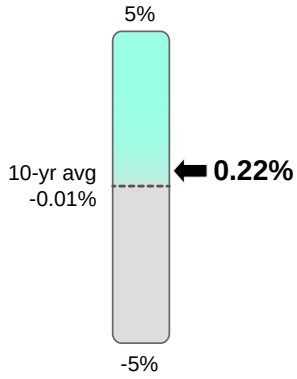
2nd Quarter 2026
Over-the-year percent change



Personal income consists of three main parts: 1) wages and salaries; 2) dividends, interest, and rents; and 3) transfer payments (payments from governments to individuals).

Population Growth

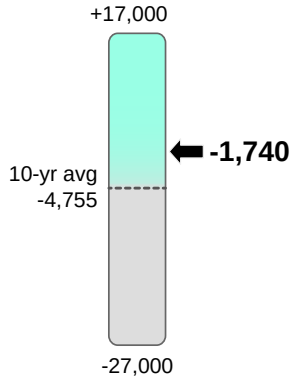
2024 to 2025



After an overall population loss from 2021 to 2022, Alaska's population has grown slightly over each of the last three years.

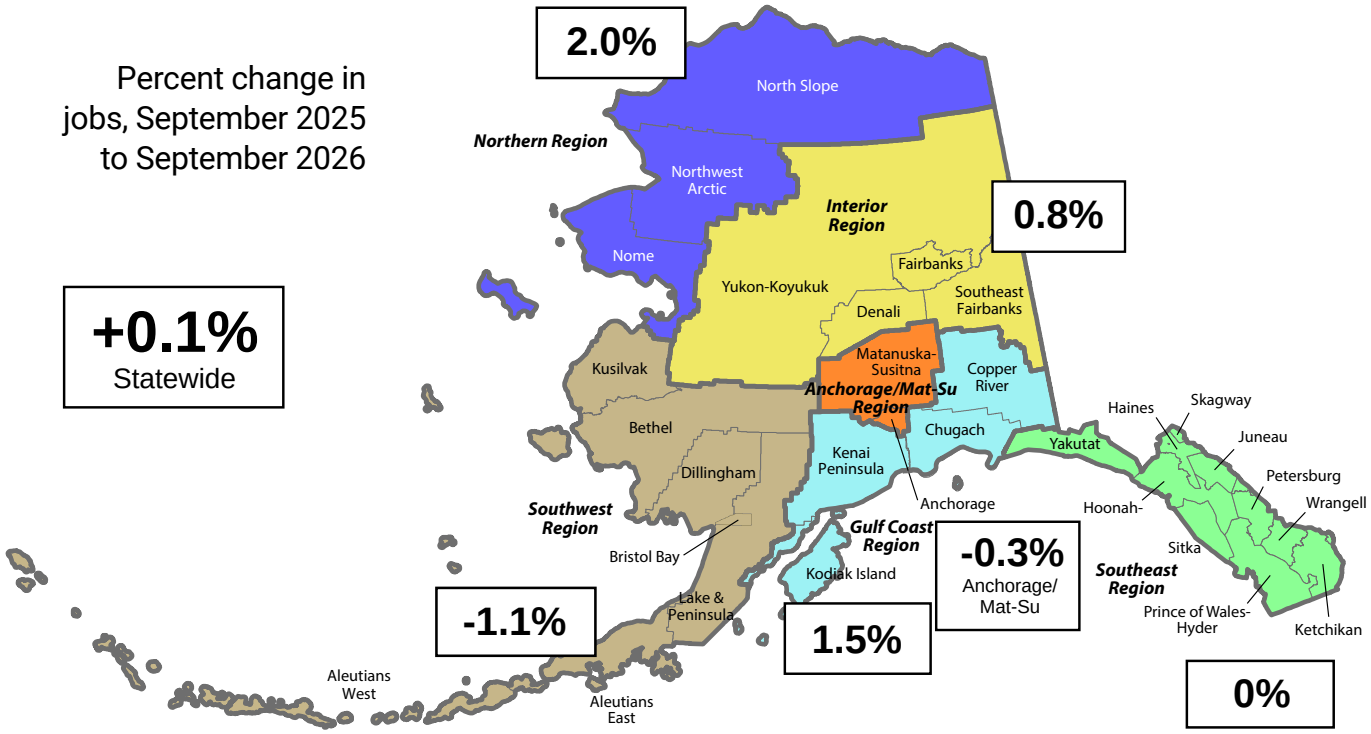
Net Migration

2024 to 2025



Net migration is the number who moved to Alaska minus the number who left.

Employment Growth by Region



Unemployment Rates

Seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised	
	9/26	8/26	9/25
United States	**4.2**	4.1	**4.4**
Alaska	**4.3**	4.3	**4.7**

Not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised	
	9/26	8/26	9/25
United States	4.0	4.3	4.3
Alaska	3.9	3.5	4.1

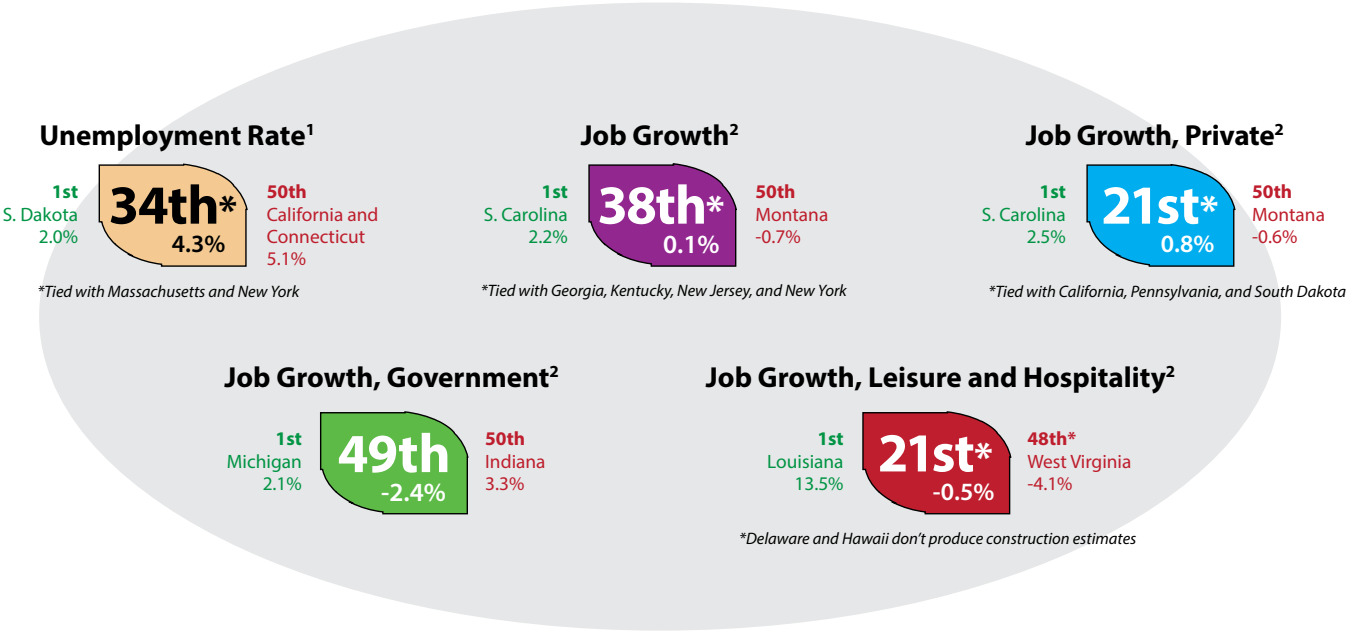
Regional, not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised	
	9/26	8/26	9/25
Interior Region	**3.8**	**3.4**	**3.9**
Denali Borough	2.1	1.8	2.1
Fairbanks N Star Borough	3.5	3.1	3.5
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	5.3	5.2	6.2
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	8.7	8.7	8.8
Northern Region	**6.0**	6.0	**6.6**
Nome Census Area	7.6	8.5	9.0
North Slope Borough	3.4	3.0	3.3
Northwest Arctic Borough	9.1	8.8	9.6
Anchorage/Mat-Su Region	**3.6**	3.1	**3.7**
Anchorage, Municipality	3.4	3.0	3.5
Mat-Su Borough	4.1	3.5	4.2

	Prelim.	Revised	
	9/26	8/26	9/25
Southwest Region	**7.8**	7.2	**8.2**
Aleutians East Borough	2.6	1.6	2.4
Aleutians West Census Area	2.3	2.0	2.3
Bethel Census Area	10.3	10.2	11.5
Bristol Bay Borough	4.2	2.2	2.7
Dillingham Census Area	7.1	6.1	7.0
Kusilvak Census Area	15.7	18.2	15.7
Lake and Peninsula Borough	6.4	5.3	5.6
Gulf Coast Region	**4.0**	3.3	**4.2**
Kenai Peninsula Borough	4.1	3.4	4.4
Kodiak Island Borough	3.0	2.4	3.4
Chugach Census Area	3.7	3.0	3.9
Copper River Census Area	6.7	5.3	5.3

	Prelim.	Revised	
	9/26	8/26	9/25
Southeast Region	**3.3**	2.7	**3.5**
Haines Borough	4.9	4.9	6.0
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	4.1	3.8	3.8
Juneau, City and Borough	2.9	2.3	3.0
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	3.0	2.5	3.7
Petersburg Borough	3.1	2.1	4.1
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	7.2	6.8	7.5
Sitka, City and Borough	2.7	2.1	2.4
Skagway, Municipality	2.5	2.3	1.9
Wrangell, City and Borough	4.1	3.0	5.0
Yakutat, City and Borough	3.6	4.0	3.7

How Alaska Ranks



Note: Government employment includes federal, state, and local government plus public schools and universities.
[1]September seasonally adjusted unemployment rates
[2]September employment, over-the-year percent change

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

Other Economic Indicators

	Current		Year ago	Change
Urban Alaska Consumer Price Index (CPI-U, base: 1982-84=100)	278.409	1st half 2026	270.441	+2.9%
Commodity prices				
Crude oil, Alaska North Slope,* per barrel	$105.54	Sep 2026	$68.89	+53.2%
Natural gas, Henry Hub, per thousand cubic feet (mcf)	$2.95	Sep 2026	$3.03	-2.5%
Gold, per oz. COMEX	$4,176.80	10/15/26	$4,201.60	-0.6%
Silver, per oz. COMEX	$57.71	10/15/26	$51.07	+12.2%
Copper, per lb. COMEX	$6.55	10/15/26	$4.97	+31.8%
Bankruptcies	92	Q2 2026	54	+70.4%
Business	12	Q2 2026	7	+71.4%
Personal	80	Q2 2026	47	+70.2%
Unemployment insurance claims				
Initial filings	2,024	Aug 2026	2,256	-10.3%
Continued filings	15,212	Aug 2026	15,960	-4.7%
Claimant count	3,690	Aug 2026	3,881	-4.9%

*Department of Revenue estimate

Sources for this page and the preceding three pages include Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; Bloomberg; U.S. Census Bureau; Yahoo Finance: COMEX; Alaska Department of Revenue; and U.S. Courts, 9th Circuit

EMPLOYER RESOURCES

The Alaska Seafood Office helps with a range of industry needs

The Alaska Seafood Office, located in the Anchorage Midtown Job Center, provides no cost support for all seafood industry workforce needs. Staff are trained to help employers create and post job orders in AlaskaJobs, publish flyers, and promote openings through online platforms, Facebook, email lists, press releases, community partners, and even local radio.

The office offers applicant orientation and skills assessments and can quickly verify rehire status to ensure employers receive the most qualified candidates. Employers can also benefit from the Traveling Seafood Workforce Program, which helps identify and recruit experienced Alaskan workers who have completed similar seasonal contracts.

Customized job fairs and recruitment events are available, with meeting space in Anchorage and interview rooms in job centers statewide. The office can also coordinate recruitments in rural communities when needed.

In addition, employers can participate in workshops focused on labor laws, hiring incentives, and market trends; connect with other seafood industry employers; receive guidance on apprenticeships and training for hard to fill jobs; and access the Seafood Employment Report to support recruitment planning and upcoming job fair participation.

Contact the Seafood Office today at dol.seafood@alaska.gov, (907) 269-0031, toll-free (800) 473-0688, or (800) 770-8973 for Relay Alaska.

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