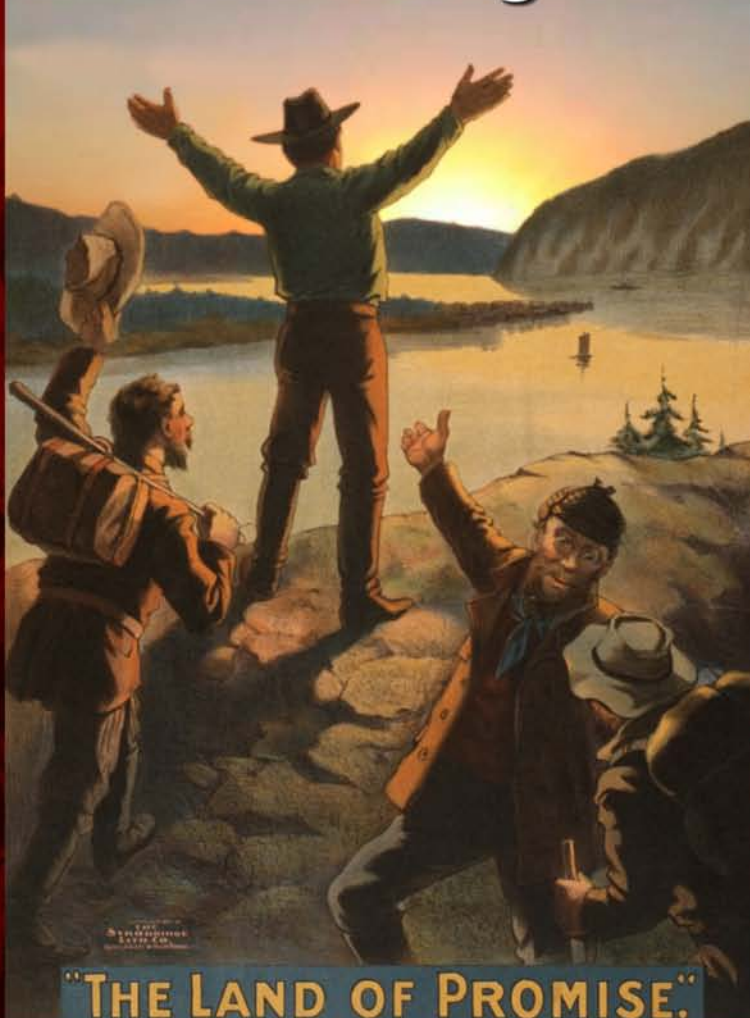


ALASKA ECONOMIC **TRENDS**

JUNE 2009

The U.S. Economy and Alaska Migration



WHAT'S INSIDE

Yakutat

Fishing then, fishing now

Alaska's Direct Care Jobs

Home health care aide occupations are growing fast



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Sarah Palin, Governor
Commissioner Click Bishop

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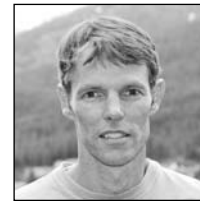
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Alaska's Migration and Job Seekers

By Governor Sarah Palin

Alaska's economy has been weathering the national recession better than most states. This month's *Trends* discusses our state's job seekers and the fact that thousands of people move to and from Alaska each year. Yet our commitment remains strong to continue improving Alaska's resident hire rate.

Through training programs such as the State Training and Employment Program and the Denali Training Fund – a partnership with the federally funded Denali Commission – thousands of Alaska workers are able to increase their skills and incomes as they fill the needs of Alaska businesses.

For example, the 1,445 participants who exited STEP in 2007 increased their earnings by \$9.3 million to more than \$62 million in Alaska wages in the year following their training. Denali-funded workers earned more than \$92 million in Alaska last year.

Yakutat snapshot

This month's *Trends* also features Yakutat, which has the smallest population of any Alaska borough – with only 590 permanent residents – but is larger than the entire state of Connecticut.

Like most other small Alaska communities, Yakutat is accessible only by sea and air. It has a rich Native history and an economy tied to sport and commercial fishing. Its steelhead fishery on the Situk River is the largest in the state. Yakutat's commercial fisheries in 2008 landed 2.2 million pounds of fish worth about \$3.1 million.

Health care jobs

This month's *Trends* also highlights Alaska's expanding health care industry, particularly the need for home health care aide jobs. One reason is the projected increase of Alaskans who are 65 years and older – from just over 45,000 today to nearly 79,000 by 2016.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Alaska Vocational Technical Center (avtec.alaska.edu) created a certified nursing assistant program in 2001. The eight-week program that runs throughout the year is at capacity, training about 120 CNAs each year.

In 2003, AVTEC's Allied Health Department added the second rung of its nursing career ladder for CNAs to continue their training and become licensed practical nurses. The 10-month course graduates about 20 licensed practical nurses each year, about half of which will begin working toward becoming registered nurses.

With 100 percent placement, AVTEC's nursing graduates are helping to fill Alaska's health care needs.

The University of Alaska's enrollment in health and human services programs has grown by 73 percent since 2001. The university has expanded its nursing education programs from one to 11 communities and doubled the number of its nursing graduates.

The Department of Labor has created a publication about high-demand jobs in the health care industry called, "Hot Jobs in Alaska: Consider a Job in Health Care," (jobs.alaska.gov/hotjobs/index.html). The publication shows the different career pathways for 20 health care jobs and includes a list of training programs across Alaska.

A historical connection between the two

North to Alaska
Way up north, (North to Alaska.)
Way up north, (North to Alaska.)
North to Alaska,
They're goin' North, the rush is on.
North to Alaska,
They're goin' North, the rush is on.
— Johnny Horton, 1960

Historically, when national recessions have driven the U.S. unemployment rate above 7 percent, Alaska's population gains from migration have also spiked. (See Exhibit 1.) The U.S. rate has been above 7 percent since last December and reached 9.4 percent in May. For at least the next year any improvement in the nation's job-less picture is unlikely.

Despite the national recession, Alaska has fared relatively well so far. Through April, Alaska and North Dakota were the only two states still showing over-the-year job growth. Given this and other circumstances, it's hard to imagine that Alaska won't become a bigger draw for folks looking for job opportunities.

Even during normal times, Alaska has a lot of migration

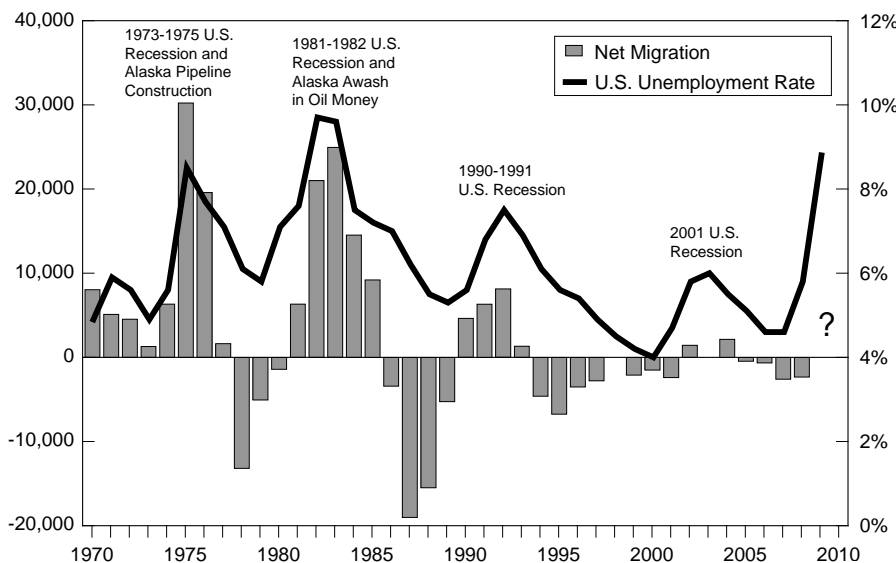
Thousands of people move to and from Alaska every year. Last year,¹ about 94,200 people either migrated in or out. That's a higher percentage of the state's total population than in any other state.

The 94,200 number breaks down into 45,800 people who moved to Alaska and 48,400 who moved out. That means the net change to the state's population from migration was -2,600. Military rotations explain much of the yearly coming and going and company relocations also contribute. But a substantial portion of the migration is the result of people simply looking for new or better opportunities.

Migration numbers have been more balanced in recent years

Since the late 1980s, there has been an absence in Alaska of big swings in net migration and both employment and total population growth² have been moderate. (See Exhibits 2 and 3.) During 12 of the past 20 years, slightly more residents left

1 A Noticeable Relationship Alaska net migration and U.S. unemployment rates



Note: Unemployment rates are the average monthly rates (not seasonally adjusted) for each year, except 2009. The 2009 rate is the average unadjusted rate for the first four months of the year.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

¹ Migration statistics are calculated from July 1 to June 30, so the 94,200 number is from July 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008.

² Alaska's population growth has come primarily from natural increase (births minus deaths) in the last 20 years.

the state than moved in, but the overall effect migration has had on the state's population has been muted.

This was not always typical of Alaska's migration patterns. Wild swings in how much migration added to or subtracted from the state's population occurred during the 1950s, 1970s and most recently in the 1980s. The swings can generally be traced to major economic events, including large military build-ups, the construction of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline, and the oil revenue boom and subsequent bust.

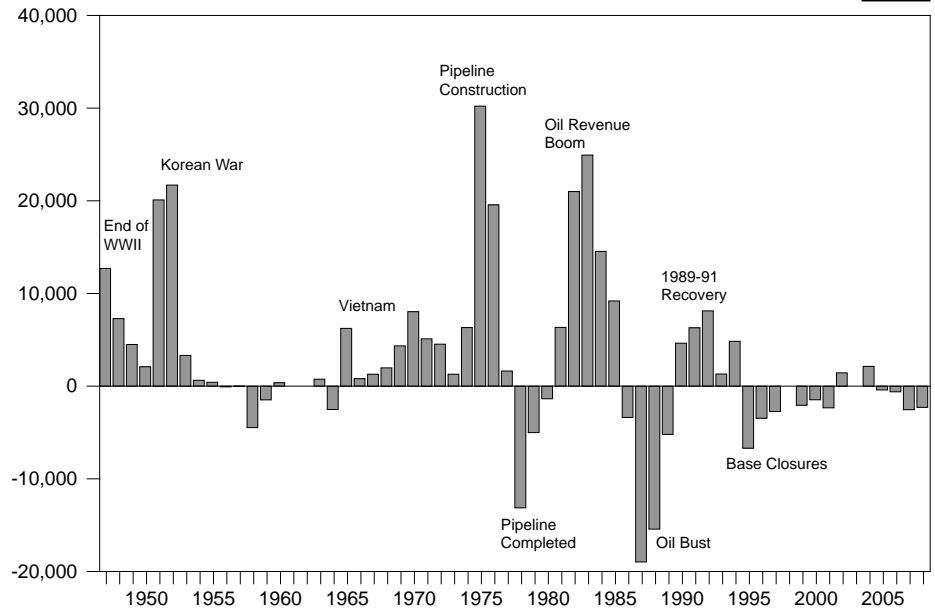
Two Alaska booms have coincided with U.S. recessions

The other major influence on migration trends has been national economic conditions. For example, during the oil revenue boom of the early 1980s when a record 60,000 jobs were created in Alaska over just a five-year period – about the same number that have been created in the last 14 years – the U.S. economy was going through its worst post-war recession.³

The national unemployment rate hit post-war highs of 9.7 percent⁴ in 1982 and was still at 9.6 percent in 1983. (See Exhibits 1 and 4.) So not only had millions of workers nationwide lost their jobs and become more likely to move in search of work, but Alaska had an especially strong economy with high wages and plentiful jobs.

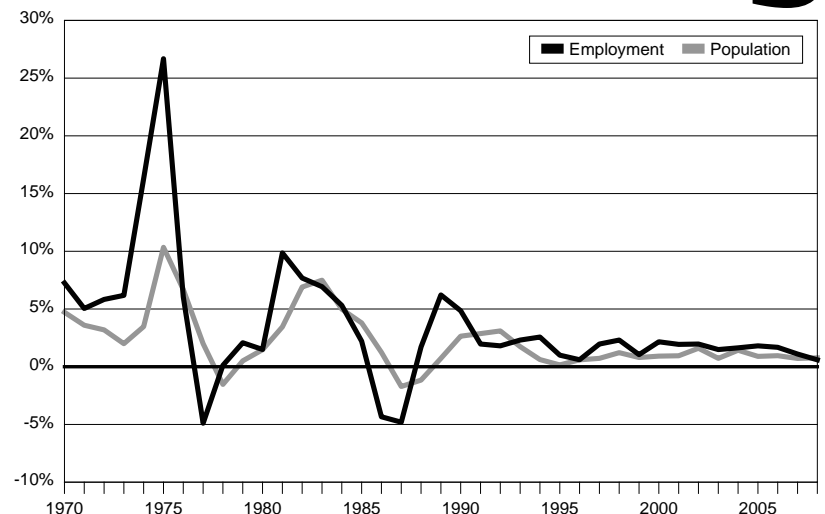
The story was similar during the construction of the oil pipeline in the mid-1970s – the state's second largest influx of people since statehood. The gold-plated paychecks handed out during pipeline construction were undoubtedly a major attraction, but the country was also in its second-deepest post-war recession, once again making it more likely that people would head to Alaska and that people already in Alaska would

Economic Events Explain Spikes Alaska net migration, 1947 to 2008 **2**



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

Population and Jobs Move Together Percent change, 1970 to 2008 **3**



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

be more likely to stay. Many of Alaska's current residents made their way to the state as economic refugees during one of these two national recessions.

Two milder recessions and a steady Alaska economy

The most recent time Alaska experienced significant gains from migration was during the U.S.

³ The current recession's severity is still being determined.

⁴ Unemployment rates cited in this article are the average monthly rates (not seasonally adjusted) for the year, unless otherwise specified.

4 Recessions Equal Migration Gains

Net migration and U.S. unemployment rates

Year ¹	Alaska Total Net Migration	U.S. Unemployment Rate
1970	8,040	4.9%
1971	5,107	5.9%
1972	4,533	5.6%
1973	1,287	4.9%
1974	6,320	5.6%
1975	30,222	8.5%
1976	19,576	7.7%
1977	1,637	7.1%
1978	-13,414	6.1%
1979	-5,289	5.8%
1980	-1,629	7.1%
1981	6,326	7.6%
1982	20,992	9.7%
1983	24,934	9.6%
1984	14,526	7.5%
1985	9,206	7.2%
1986	-3,646	7.0%
1987	-19,245	6.2%
1988	-15,710	5.5%
1989	-5,480	5.3%
1990	4,637	5.6%
1991	6,310	6.8%
1992	8,138	7.5%
1993	1,314	6.9%
1994	-4,840	6.1%
1995	-6,980	5.6%
1996	-3,741	5.4%
1997	-3,001	4.9%
1998	145	4.5%
1999	-2,337	4.2%
2000	-1,740	4.0%
2001	-2,622	4.7%
2002	1,430	5.8%
2003	87	6.0%
2004	2,142	5.5%
2005	-685	5.1%
2006	-884	4.6%
2007	-2,815	4.6%
2008	-2,560	5.8%

Note: Shaded areas represent unemployment rate increases during or following a U.S. recession.

¹ Migration numbers are from July 1 of the previous year to June 30 of the year listed. U.S. unemployment rates are the average monthly rate (not seasonally adjusted) for the calendar year listed.

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

recession of the early 1990s. But unlike during the previous two U.S. recessions, Alaska's economy was stable rather than booming. There was nothing major happening in the state to draw job seekers. Instead, Alaska simply became a relatively more attractive place economically because the nation's labor market deteriorated and Alaska's stayed about the same.

As a result, fewer Alaskans moved out of the state and more people from other states moved to Alaska. The net result was a gain of about 19,000 people over a three-year period. (See Exhibits 1 and 4.)

Most recently, the U.S. recession of 2001 appears to have turned several years of net migration losses into net gains. After losing a net of about 6,700 people from 1999 to 2001, the numbers turned positive for the next three years and the state added 3,700 people as a net result of migration from 2002 to 2004. The numbers are more subdued, but the pattern is still visible despite a relatively mild U.S. recession and an Alaska economy that was stable, but certainly not booming.

The job market is very ugly in most of the nation

May's 9.4 percent unemployment rate was a 26-year high and the nation has already lost 6 million jobs in what's developing into the worst post-war recession to date. That could mean Alaska is about to see migration numbers turn positive to a degree not seen in years.

Are there already signs?

Most of the evidence that Alaska is seeing more migration than average is anecdotal. For example, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's job centers are reporting an increase in the number of out-of-state job inquiries. The job centers are also noticing an increase in job applicants who are recent arrivals to the state. Employers tell a similar story.

Although the numbers are small, the number of people filing for unemployment insurance benefits whose base wages were earned in another state are up substantially from 2008. And Alaska's 8.0 percent unemployment rate in April was up 1.4 percentage points from the year-ago level.

Alaska hasn't seen the kind of job losses the nation has suffered, so the increase in unemployment is coming mostly from another source. Part of the explanation is probably that the number

of people actively seeking work in the state has risen because of new arrivals from out of state. Another likely possibility is that fewer people are leaving Alaska to seek job opportunities in the weak national job market.

States that send the most people to Alaska – and take the most in – are struggling

Not only have the national labor market numbers deteriorated over the past 18 months, but so have the economies of California, Washington and Oregon – three states that are the source of much of Alaska’s in-migration and the destination for much of Alaska’s out-migration.

California’s unemployment rate in April hit 11.0 percent, up from 6.6 percent in April 2008. California’s rates are the highest they’ve been since 1983.

Oregon’s unemployment rate moved into double-digit territory in February and in April the Beaver state’s unemployment rate hit 12.0 percent, more than double April 2008’s level. Like in California, unemployment rates haven’t been that high since the early 1980s.

In Washington, the state most economically aligned with Alaska, the April unemployment rate was 9.1 percent, a significant increase from April 2008’s 4.9 percent and a 25-year high.

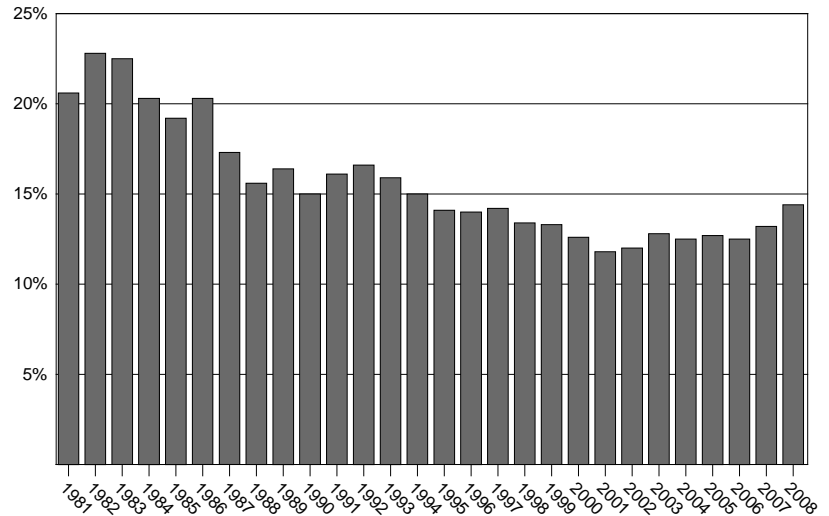
Combined, the number of unemployed in the three states grew from 1.5 million in April of last year to 2.6 million for the same month this year.

How many is a tough call

It’s hard to imagine there won’t be a migration response to the national recession, given its severity and breadth. But for a variety of reasons, it could be restrained.

One reason is the absence of a major billboard economic project on Alaska’s near-term horizon. The situation would be different if construction of the natural gas pipeline was imminent. In that case, there’s little doubt that Alaska would attract tens of thousands of job seekers.

Gross Migration has Moderated 5 Percent of population moving in or out



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

But Alaska’s job market is expected to be soft in 2009,⁵ so unlike the booms of the 1970s and 1980s, or even the stability of the 1990s, Alaska won’t have a plethora of jobs to fill.

Another factor is the decreasing mobility of the nation’s population. U.S. Census data show that the mover rate for the nation’s population fell to a 60-year low in 2008 and Alaska’s gross migration rate has also fallen noticeably since the early 1980s. (See Exhibit 5.) Explanations for the slowdown are numerous. One is the country’s aging population. During the 1970s and 1980s, the baby boomers – a disproportionately large share of the U.S. population – were young and young people move more frequently than older people do.

There’s also a higher percentage of families with two wage earners, which makes moving more difficult. And the most recent development is the deterioration of the country’s housing market. With declining house values and tighter controls on mortgage lending, selling a home is more difficult, which makes moving more difficult for homeowners.

That all said, given the very small size of Alaska’s population – it fits into the City of Seattle proper, with room to spare – even a muted migration

⁵ For more detail, see the January 2009 *Trends*.

response to the nation's economic woes could have a significant impact on the state. Interesting side notes are whether the well-publicized record 2008 Alaska Permanent Fund dividend, talk of a gas pipeline project, a famous governor and the popular TV series, "The Deadliest Catch," have kept Alaska in the public eye and in the minds of job seekers.

It's impossible to gauge precisely how potential job seekers outside the state perceive opportunities in Alaska, but with all that's going on, it will be an interesting few years.

A Safety Minute

Look at Your Worksite Now, So No One Gets Injured

Overexertion causes more than 25 percent of the most disabling workplace injuries – injuries that lead to more than six days away from work.

Analyze your worksite and talk to your employees to identify where excessive lifting, pushing, pulling, holding, carrying and throwing could contribute to injuries. Controlling these hazards can be accomplished by using several approaches:

- Mechanical aids are abundant to assist employees in these activities. Examples are dollies, tongs, hoists, carts and conveyor belts. Thousands of general and industry specific tools and devices are available to keep workers from overexerting themselves.
- Work procedures are another method of reducing overexertion. Changing work surface heights, moving less material at a time, asking for help and shortening work periods are good examples. Ergonomic improvements such as the leverage and position of your body relative to the exertion are helpful. Any change that reduces the weight, frequency and the duration of effort helps.
- Personal protective equipment is available to reduce the effect of exertion as well as protect against the consequences of an accident. The most common type of PPE to provide assistance is the right glove. There are dozens of styles of gloves that make activities easier to accomplish by increasing the grip and comfort while also protecting the hands. Appropriate cold weather and hot weather clothing may be needed to protect employees as well.

Lack of adequate water and food, and working in cold or hot temperatures are important to consider when analyzing your work site.

These are just a few examples of how a smarter work site can make every day safer, more productive and more enjoyable for your company and employees by identifying and preventing overexertion.

Safety consultants with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Occupational Safety and Health are available to provide free assistance and tools to help your worksite reduce injuries. AKOSH is within the Labor Standards and Safety Division. For more information, call (800) 656-4972.

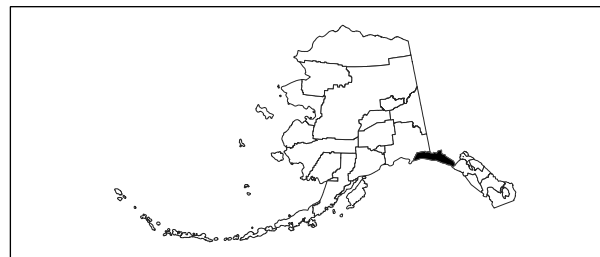
Fishing then, fishing now

Located halfway between Juneau and Anchorage, the isolated fishing borough of Yakutat, like many other small Alaska communities, is only accessible by air or sea. Yakutat has the smallest population of any borough in the state, only 590 year-round residents, but a lot of real estate. (See Exhibit 1.) With 7,650 square miles of land, the Yakutat City and Borough is larger than the state of Connecticut.

The Yakutat City and Borough¹ rests on an isolated stretch of coastline, connecting Southeast Alaska with the rest of the state. It gets 150 inches of rain a year and 200 inches of snow. Mount Saint Elias – at 18,008 feet high, it's the third-highest peak in North America²

¹ Yakutat became a city in 1948; the city was dissolved and it became the City and Borough of Yakutat in 1992.

² The highest peak is Denali, at 20,320 feet, and the second highest is Mount Logan, which is 19,551 feet high and 25 miles northeast of Mount Saint Elias, in Canada.



– is 67 miles northwest of Yakutat, on the border with Canada. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game calls Yakutat's Situk River the most productive river in Southeast Alaska; its steelhead run, the biggest in the state, is one of the largest remaining wild steelhead stocks on earth.

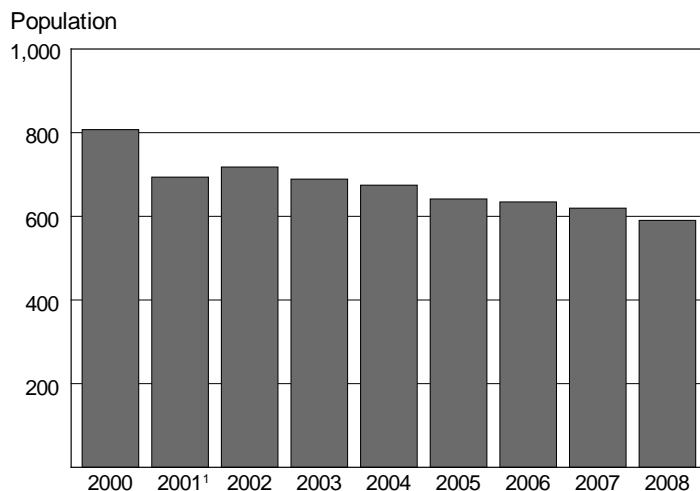
Hubbard Glacier, one of the world's few advancing glaciers, is 30 miles north of Yakutat. The tidewater glacier was in the news in 1986 and 2002 when it temporarily shut off Russell Fjord, creating the earth's largest glacier-dammed lake. Experts say if a future jam raised the lake level to 135 feet above sea level (it rose to 83 feet above sea level in 1986 and 61 feet above in 2002), it could flood the Situk River, possibly ruining its fisheries and impacting Yakutat's economy.

Surfing in Yakutat has also been big in the news: *Outside* magazine, *National Geographic Adventure* magazine, *Surfer* magazine, *CBS News* and *Newsweek* have written about professional surfers, film crews, locals and others going after waves coming off the Gulf of Alaska. The waves, usually 6- to 8-footers, turn into 15- to 20-footers several times a year.

Early on

Historically Tlingit, Eyak and Aleut tribes lived in various bays throughout what is now the City and Borough of Yakutat. Rich resources coupled

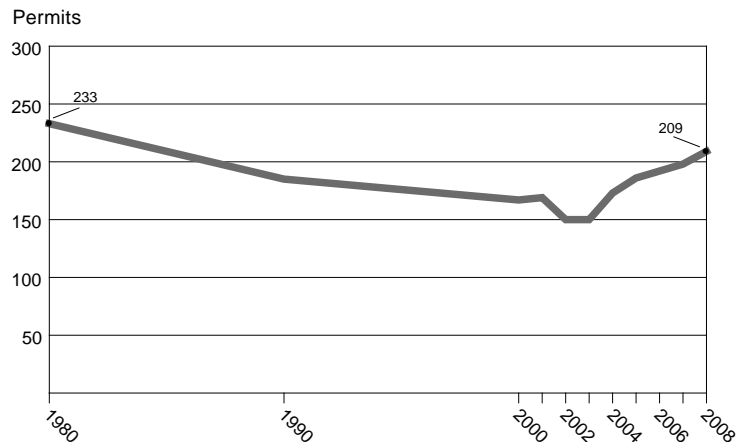
1 Yakutat's Population 2000 to 2008



¹ The closure of the Icy Bay logging camp in the early 2000s contributed to the decline in Yakutat's population since 2000.

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

2 Permit Numbers Near Historic Highs Yakutat resident fishing permits, 1980 to 2008



Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission

unlike the Sitka conflict, the Russians chose not to return to Yakutat.

One train and a lot of fish

Americans began to slowly trickle into Yakutat after the U.S. bought Alaska from Russia in 1867. Yakutat sits on Monti Bay, the only sheltered deep-water port in the Gulf of Alaska. In 1903, the Stimson Lumber Company, which later became the Yakutat and Southern Railroad Company, built a cannery in Yakutat and an 11-mile railroad.

Commercial fishing boats caught sockeye and silver salmon on the fishing grounds at the mouth of the Situk River, and the train transported the fish to the cannery to be processed. The railroad greatly reduced the cost of getting the fish to the cannery, which operated some 67 years before it closed in 1970.

The railroad had a second life when it was briefly used to transport construction materials for a U.S. Army Air Force aviation garrison during World War II. The airmen stationed there built a paved runway that is still used today as part of the Yakutat Airport.

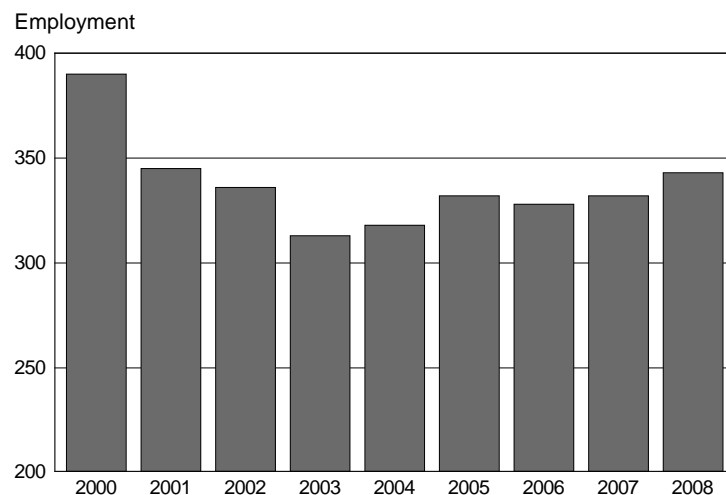
Today's economy resembles the past

Commercial fishing continues to dominate Yakutat's economy. Yakutat residents fished more than 200 commercial permits in 2008.³ (See Exhibit 2.) That includes 135 permits held by resident setnetters for all five species of salmon. Other commercially fished species in 2008 include rockfish, ling cod, king and Dungeness crab, halibut and shrimp. The fact that there are a lot of setnet permits in Yakutat sets it apart from many Southeast communities.

With such a large percentage of the population tied to commercial fishing, changes in fisheries earnings ripple through Yakutat's economy. In the past 20 years or so, several years of persistent high or low earnings in the fishing industry

³ The 200 covers all permits with any recorded landings belonging to people listing Yakutat as their permanent address on their Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission registration, including interim-use permits and permits that were later revoked.

3 Small Employment Changes Yakutat payroll employment, 2000 to 2008



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

with trade and protection from landslides and tsunamis encouraged the settlement of Yakutat Bay. The bay provided shelter, fish and hunting for settlers.

In 1805, the Russian-American Company built a fort and began to harvest salmon and sea otter pelts, which were most of Yakutat's economy. After the company blocked the Tlingits' access to their traditional fishing grounds, the Tlingits attacked the Russians and burned their fort, killing nearly everyone. A similar conflict occurred in Sitka, a strategic location for the Russians. But

have been accompanied by gains or losses in payroll employment. (See Exhibits 3 and 4.)

The 2.2 million pounds of fish landed and roughly \$3.1 million earned in 2008 continue a trend of high gross earnings in Yakutat's fisheries. Recent earnings are far below the historic highs of the 1980s and 1990s but they're a decent recovery from the early 2000s. (See Exhibit 4.)

Big commercial fishing leads to big seafood processing. In the high harvest months of summer, close to 100 people work in seafood processing. Although seafood processing employment has declined a little in recent years, employment at the city's three seafood processors still makes up about 13 percent of total average monthly employment. (See Exhibit 5.) In comparison, the number of seafood processing jobs statewide represents only 3 percent of all employment.

Nonresident workers⁴ are a big part of Yakutat's seafood processing employment, but they represent a bigger part statewide. Nonresidents made up 33 percent of Yakutat's seafood processing work force in 2007, yet they made up 75 percent of the same work force statewide.

Yakutat in 2007 had the fourth-lowest percentage of nonresidents in seafood processing of all of the seafood-producing boroughs in Alaska.

One of the reasons nonresidents make up a smaller portion of Yakutat's seafood processing is because the industry is small enough that locals can supply a higher percentage of the required labor.

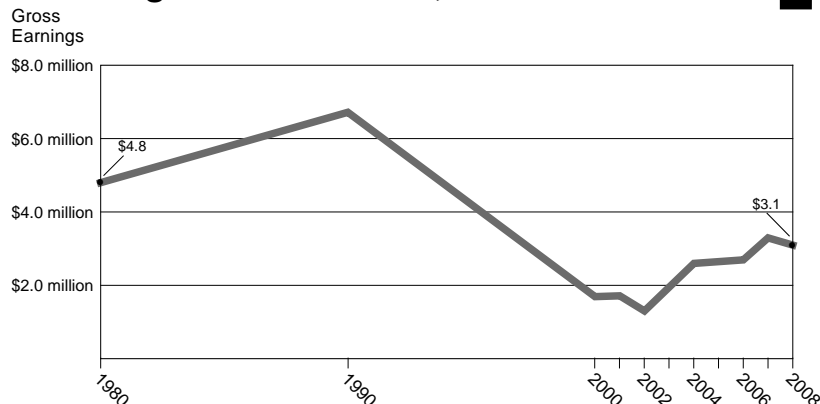
Across all private industries in Yakutat, 30 percent of all workers were nonresidents in 2007.

⁴ Alaska residency was determined by matching the Alaska Department of Revenue's Permanent Fund dividend data file with the Department of Labor's wage records file.

The PFD file is a list of Alaskans who applied for a PFD. Workers included in the wage file were considered Alaska residents if they applied for either a 2007 or 2008 PFD.

The wage records file contains quarterly reports submitted by every employer subject to the state's unemployment insurance laws. Those quarterly reports contain industry, occupation, wages and place of work for each worker.

A Modest Rebound in Fisheries Earnings in 2009 dollars, Yakutat fisheries **4**



Notes:

Gross earnings are estimated.

Data for 2003 and 2005 are omitted due to confidentiality.

Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission

Wage and Salary Employment Yakutat, 2008 **5**

	Average Monthly Employment in 2008	
	Yakutat	Alaska
Total Public and Private Employment	250-499	321,700
Total Private Employment	250-499	240,800
Natural Resources and Mining	10-19	15,900
Construction	5-9	17,300
Manufacturing	20-49	13,000
Seafood Processing	20-49	9,000
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	50-99	64,800
Retail Trade	20-49	36,200
Transportation and Warehousing	10-19	20,200
Utilities	5-9	1,900
Information	0	7,000
Financial Activities	20-49	14,800
Professional and Business Services	1-4	26,200
Educational ¹ and Health Services	0	37,600
Leisure and Hospitality	50-99	32,200
Other Services	10-19	11,700
Government	100-249	81,000
Federal Government ²	20-49	16,900
State Government ³	10-19	25,000
Local Government ⁴	50-99	39,100

¹ Private education only

² Excludes the uniformed military

³ Includes the University of Alaska

⁴ Includes the public school system

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

In comparison, 20 percent of all workers statewide were nonresidents.⁵ (See Exhibit 6.)

⁵ For more information, see "Nonresidents Working in Alaska 2007," which is produced by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section. Go to the section's Web site at laborstats.alaska.gov, click on "Employment" on the left, then "Resident Hire." Then click on the name of the publication in the middle of the page.

6 Yakutat's Nonresident Workers 2007

Industry	Number of Total Workers	Number of Nonresident Workers	Number of Resident Workers	Percentage of Total Workers Who Are Nonresidents	Percentage of Total Wages That Go to Nonresident Workers
Manufacturing	90	30	60	33.3%	23.4%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	79	13	66	16.5%	8.9%
Financial Activities	22	5	17	22.7%	11.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	98	43	55	43.9%	36.6%
State Government ¹	15	0	15	0.0%	0.0%
Local Government ²	145	20	125	13.8%	9.9%
Other	30	6	24	20.0%	17.6%

¹ Includes the University of Alaska

² Includes public school systems

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; Alaska Department of Revenue, Permanent Fund Dividend Division

Sport fishing attracts more people from out of state as tourists than as workers. Subsidized daily commercial jet service, an unusual bonus for such a small community, makes it easier for tourists to get to Yakutat. An Alaska Marine Highway System ferry stops in Yakutat about twice a month in the spring, summer and early fall. The visitors stay in the area's lodges and bed and breakfasts, many of them owner-operated.

Some visitors come to sightsee, hike or hunt, but most come for the fishing. The Situk River's popular steelhead fishery, as mentioned earlier, attracts anglers from all over the world. The river, like area streams and lakes, also has resident rainbow trout, cutthroat trout and Dolly Varden, among others. Sport fishermen catch all five species of salmon in freshwater and from charter boats in saltwater. Sockeye and silvers are the most popular. Sport fishermen on charter boats also go after halibut and ling cod in Yakutat Bay and the Gulf of Alaska.

With much of the private economy tied to sport and commercial fishing, it is not surprising that fisheries agencies account for one of the largest pieces of federal and state government employment. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Alaska Department of Fish and Game make up 26 percent, and the U.S. Forest Service makes up 28 percent. Others include the federal Travel Security Administration (15 percent) and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (15 percent).

High levels of government employment usually help stabilize job levels, but with fishing being the 800-pound gorilla in its economy, Yakutat is an exception to the rule. Even though nearly 40 percent of Yakutat's employment is in government, the community's employment isn't particularly stable. From 2000 to 2008, the total number of average monthly payroll jobs fluctuated

between 313 and 390. (See Exhibit 3.) Such a small range of employment would be considered stable in a larger economy, but in Yakutat it's nearly a quarter of total employment.

A little diversity

Yakutat's economy is undeniably fishing-dependant, but intermittent logging adds economic diversity. Industry employment varies dramatically with the availability of timber harvests. In the years since 2000, logging employment has been as much as 7 percent of all private employment, and in other years it has fallen to zero. The closure of the Icy Bay logging camp about 70 miles northwest of Yakutat in the early 2000s contributed to the decline in Yakutat's population since 2000. (See Exhibit 1.)

Yakutat's rather un-Alaska outdoor sport – surfing – draws in a few more tourists and gives Yakutat a touch more economic diversity. Along with waves big enough to surf, Yakutat gets a warm current from the Pacific that raises the summer water temperatures to the low 60s. Surfing with the snow-covered Mount Saint Elias as a backdrop offers surfers a novel experience that they can't get anywhere else. Logging and surfing give Yakutat a few more irons in the fire, but they don't change the fact that it's a fishing town.

Demographically different

Yakutat varies from the state as a whole in many ways. (See Exhibit 7.) The borough's median household income of \$46,786 is far below the

How Yakutat Compares Yakutat and Alaska residents, 2000



state's, and the percentage of families below the poverty line is 5 percent higher. Fuel oil is used for heat in 91 percent of Yakutat's homes – versus 36 percent of the homes statewide – so the recent high fuel prices have been particularly hard for Yakutat.

The racial makeup of Yakutat versus the state is quite different. The borough is 40 percent Alaska Native, more than double the statewide average – reflecting its deep roots as a Native settlement.

The borough has one of the lowest birthrates – the number of births per 1,000 in population – in Southeast, next to the Petersburg Census Area and the City and Borough of Wrangell. Yakutat's seven births in 2008⁶ (a birthrate of 11.6) has been typical since 1990. The state's birthrate, in contrast, has been around 16 since 1990.

Yakutat's low birthrates can be explained in part by Yakutat being nearly 60 percent male and having a high median age – 37 in Yakutat versus 32 statewide.

The Yakutat School had 121 students, kindergarten to grade 12, as of October 2008; it has had similar enrollment since 2003.

Yakutat has a lower percentage of college graduates compared to the state.

The borough and the state as a whole do have some demographical similarities. The two have similar percentages of residents who are veterans, and roughly 29 percent of both populations have attended some college but not received a degree.

What's in store

Yakutat's future, perhaps even more than its past, will expand and contract based on fishing. Yakutat's dependence on fishing results in an economy vulnerable to fluctuations in fish prices and stock levels. In the past, Yakutat has managed to ride out tough times in the fishing industry, and it's likely these strong relationships between the health of the fishing industry and the overall economy will continue well into the future.

	2000 Census	
	Yakutat	Alaska
Age		
Median age	37	32
Under 5 years	4.8%	7.6%
18 years and over	71.9%	69.6%
65 years and over	5.3%	5.7%
Race and Ethnicity		
White	50.4%	69.3%
Black or African American	0.1%	3.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native	39.6%	15.6%
Asian	1.2%	4.0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.7%	0.5%
Other	0.0%	1.6%
Two or more races	7.9%	5.4%
Hispanic (of any race)	0.7%	4.1%
Gender		
Female	40.7%	48.3%
Male	59.3%	51.7%
Marital Status		
Never married	34.3%	28.4%
Divorced	17.0%	11.7%
Veteran Status		
Percentage of population who are veterans	16.2%	17.1%
Born in Alaska		
Percentage of population born in Alaska	50.1%	38.1%
Residence		
Percentage of population who lived in the same house in 2000 as in 1995	54.2%	46.2%
Educational Attainment		
Less than 9th grade	2.3%	4.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	13.4%	7.5%
High school graduate	33.3%	27.9%
Some college, without degree	28.9%	28.6%
Associate degree	4.4%	7.2%
Bachelor's degree	11.3%	16.1%
Graduate or professional degree	6.3%	8.6%
Income		
Families below poverty level	11.8%	6.7%
Median household income	\$46,786	\$51,571
Per capita income		
Home Heating Fuel		
Utility gas	0.0%	45.9%
Bottled, tank or propane gas	1.5%	2.2%
Electricity	3.0%	10.2%
Fuel oil, kerosene and other	91.3%	35.8%
Coal or coke	0.0%	0.5%
Wood	3.4%	3.7%
Solar energy	0.0%	0.0%
Other fuel	0.8%	1.1%
No fuel used	0.0%	0.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

⁶ From July 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008

Home health care aide occupations are growing fast

Alaska's health care needs, like the rest of the country's, are expected to grow, especially as baby boomers – those who were born from 1946 to 1964 – are beginning to reach their 60s. Who will take care of them and other Alaskans who will need medical support services and personal care in the coming years?

Much of those services will be provided by direct care workers – those who provide the hands-on care and personal assistance for the elderly and disabled, and for people living with both acute (short-term) and chronic (long-term) medical conditions.

For the purposes of this article, direct care workers represents those in two occupations, often called home health aides and personal home care aides.

Home health aides work in residential facilities such as nursing homes, assisted living facilities

or group homes. Personal home care aides work with clients in the clients' homes or in daytime nonresidential facilities.

A lot of job openings are expected

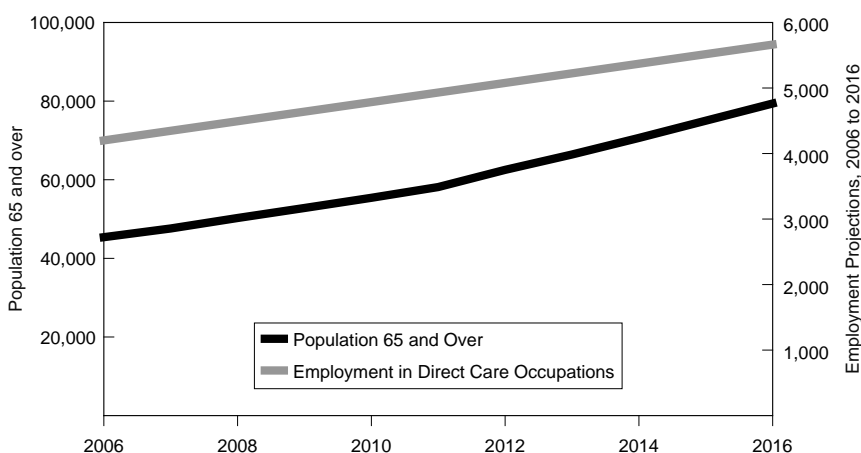
The two direct care occupations, home health aides and personal home care aides, are among the 10-fastest growing occupations in Alaska. Home health aides are projected to grow 35.3 percent over the 2006 to 2016 period; personal home care aides are expected to grow 34.6 percent.

Nationally, home health aides are projected to grow 48.7 percent over the same period, and personal home care aides are expected to grow 50.6 percent.

In Alaska over the 10-year period, one out of every 30 new jobs will be in the two direct care occupations. The combined job openings for direct care workers are expected to be 3.3 percent of the total projected growth for all occupations – 1,465 job openings.

Nationally over the same period, one out of 20 new jobs will be in the direct care occupations. That means the combined job openings for direct care workers are expected to be 5 percent of the total projected growth for all occupations – roughly 770,000 job openings.

1 The Direct Care Occupations Population and employment, Alaska 2006 to 2016



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

Yes, we're getting older

In 2000, 5.7 percent of Alaska's population was 65 years and older. Eight years later, 7.3 percent was 65 years and older. Alaska's population projections for the 2006 to 2016 period call for about a 75 percent increase,

from roughly 45,000 people 65 and older to 79,000. (See Exhibit 1.)

It's common knowledge that older people require more health care, but a 2008 national study¹ confirms that patients 65 or older tend to have more complex conditions and health care needs than younger patients. The study found the average 75-year-old American has three chronic conditions, such as diabetes or hypertension, and uses four or more prescription medications.

What makes an ideal direct care worker?

The primary task of direct care workers is to provide care for their clients and understand their needs. They need to be good listeners, give their full attention to what people are saying, understand the points being discussed and ask appropriate questions. They also need to communicate the needs of their clients to the clients' family members, their own supervisors, other direct care workers and other health care workers.

Direct care workers need to have empathy and treat their clients with dignity and respect. The workers need to be dependable at all times, but especially when they're working in private homes with family members depending on them to be on time.

Direct care workers need to be physically able to do the more strenuous job duties that are required, such as getting clients in and out of bed or bathing them safely. Organization is important. Direct care workers need to maintain accurate and timely medical and administrative records.

Job duties

The job duties of direct care workers vary depending on the workplace and each client's level of need. Job duties often include feeding,

bathing, dressing, grooming, changing linens, moving clients, monitoring medication and using medical equipment. If working in a private home, additional duties may include house-keeping, preparing meals, providing transportation and shopping.

Job satisfaction

Direct care workers often impact the lives of their clients in very positive ways by providing the assistance that their clients' families aren't able to provide. Direct care workers say that's the best part of their job.

The University of Alaska Anchorage's Center for Human Development earlier this year conducted a survey to better understand the needs and the motivations of direct care workers in Alaska.² More than 720 direct care workers took part in the survey; many of the respondents were employed by agencies that provide home care.

Most of those surveyed reported their work was challenging, rewarding and satisfying. Asked

²The survey, titled the "Direct Service Workers' Wage and Benefit Survey," is by Karen M. Ward, Curtis A. Smith, Susan L. Bales and Karin L. Sandberg. It was conducted for the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's Workforce Development Committee. The final survey results, in draft now, are expected to be complete in July. The survey was specifically for direct care workers who work primarily with clients with Alzheimer's and related dementias, developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, and behavioral health issues such as chemical dependency and mental illness. Forty-five percent of the respondents were women age 40 or older.

Top five reasons to look into a career as a direct care worker

1. There are excellent job opportunities in Alaska and the U.S.
2. Direct care workers say they like the job satisfaction they get from helping people who aren't able to do things for themselves.
3. You could potentially choose the hours you work and your clients.
4. Working in a direct care occupation gives you a jumping off point for later starting your own business related to direct care work and being your own boss.
5. It's fairly easy to qualify for the direct care occupations at the entry level.

¹The study, called "Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce," was released in April 2008. It's by the nonprofit Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, which was formed in 1970 as a component of the National Academy of Sciences.

why they became direct care workers, most (74 percent) said they wanted to help people, then, “I wanted to make a difference,” and “It gives me personal satisfaction,” (both were 61 percent). Interestingly, the least common reason for getting into the profession was, “It was an easy job to get,” (7.5 percent).

The wages

The Alaska median hourly wage³ in May 2008 for home health aides was \$13.72 and for personal home care aides, \$12.55.^{4,5} Though those wages are lower than Alaska’s median wage for all occupations (\$18.84), they’re still higher than the median wage for more than 50 other reported occupations in Alaska. A few of the 50 are child care workers (\$10.13), maids and housekeeping cleaners (\$10.76) and retail salespeople (\$11.49).

When compared to median wages for other states, Alaska’s direct care workers’ wages are the highest in the country.⁶

Direct care workers often also get intangible benefits. Depending on their employer, those may include the freedom to choose their clientele and the hours they work. The latter allows them to tailor their work schedules to what works best in their personal lives.

Training and advancement

Direct care workers don’t require formal training – just a high school education and specific training they get on the job. There is no state licensing for direct care workers in Alaska. However, personal home care aides who work with clients whose health care is covered by Medicare or

Medicaid are required to complete a state-approved personal care attendant program. In addition, employers often require certification in first aid, to operate specialized medical equipment or for something similar.

Additional education and training often helps in job advancement. One resource for evaluating a profession is the Alaska Department of Labor’s Alaska Career Ladder. The department tracked and analyzed actual occupation-to-occupation changes that Alaska workers made over a six-year period, from 2001 through 2006, to create the Alaska Career Ladder.⁷

The Alaska Career Ladder shows home health aides advancing to the occupational category of nursing aides, orderlies and attendants, which usually requires some type of postsecondary vocational training. The career ladder shows personal home care aides advancing to psychiatric technicians with a month to a year of on-the-job training, and to rehabilitation counselors, usually after getting a master’s degree.

Someone with an entrepreneurial spirit could also start his or her own company providing nonmedical home care. The expanding senior population and success of medical technology extending life expectancies are expected to increase demand for nonmedical home care, among other services.

The future

Considering the large employment associated with the direct care occupations, combined with an aging population and expected high growth rates in the occupations, the employment opportunities are excellent.

³ The median wage is where half the workers earn more than the median wage and half the workers earn less.

⁴ In contrast, the U.S. median wage in May 2008 for home health aides was \$9.84 and for personal home care aides, \$9.22.

⁵ Health insurance and other benefits aren’t included in this article because it’s based on the Occupational Employment Statistics program of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the OES program doesn’t collect benefit data.

⁶ The next highest median wages for home health aides were \$13.01 in Hawaii and \$13.23 in Connecticut. The lowest were \$7.55 in West Virginia and \$8.03 in Texas. The next highest median wages for personal home care aides were \$11.29 in Minnesota and \$11.50 in Massachusetts. The lowest were \$7.05 in Texas and \$7.35 in Mississippi. The wages are as of May 2008.

⁷ To get to the online Alaska Career Ladder, go to the Alaska Department of Labor’s Research and Analysis Section Web site at laborstats.alaska.gov. Click on “Occupational Information” on the left, then “Career Ladder.” For a detailed article about the Alaska Career Ladder, see the April 2009 *Trends*. Go to laborstats.alaska.gov and click on “Pubs/Manual/Surveys/News” on the left, then “Alaska Economic Trends.”

Unemployment rate falls to 8.0 percent

Alaska's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell four-tenths of a percentage point in April to 8.0 percent. March's rate was revised down one-tenth of a percentage point to 8.4 percent. (See Exhibits 1 and 3.)

What does the drop mean?

The decline in the unemployment rate interrupts what had been an upward trend stretching back to early 2007. The program that calculates the rates uses a relatively small monthly survey of Alaska households, though, so it will take a few more months before any solid conclusions can be drawn about a change in trend.

But the lower rate is intriguing, especially combined with some encouraging signs that the national economy could be moving closer to recovery. If the worst months of the recession do turn out to be from late 2008 through early 2009, Alaska will benefit from that timing.

Some of the state's seasonal industries – tourism in particular – are especially susceptible to short-term crises of consumer confidence and declines in discretionary spending. Tour-

ism in places like Hawaii was way down during the winter months, and it's still very uncertain how the 2009 summer season will turn out for Alaska, but national and international economic trouble in Alaska's off-season is less harmful to the state's economy than it would be during the peak summer months.

Payroll job growth has slowed

Two questions to consider when analyzing the health of Alaska's job market are, first, what's happening with seasonal jobs, and second, what's happening underneath the seasonality.

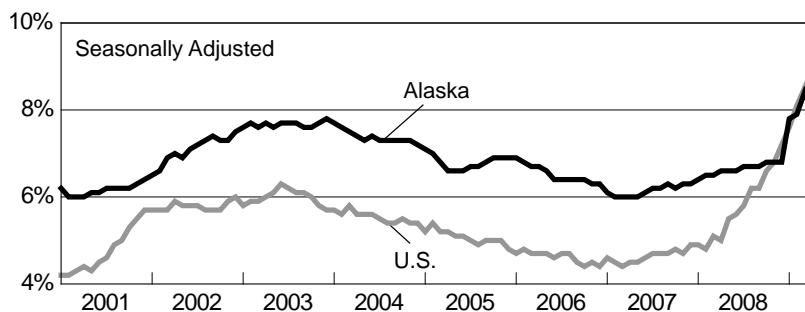
To answer the first question, the state's payroll job count increased by 3,600 in April, primarily due to hiring in construction and tourist-related industries. (See Exhibit 2.) Anchorage's municipal election also contributed to the increase. The April jump was smaller than normal, however, which leads to the second question.

The most common approach to looking at what's happening underneath Alaska's very seasonal job market is to look at over-the-year growth.¹ The state's April job count of 313,900 was up just 1,000 from April 2008's level, an increase of 0.3 percent. The growth rates have been slowing noticeably through the first four months of the year after averaging 1.4 percent in 2008.

That shouldn't be surprising given the sharp fall in jobs nationwide and the inclusiveness of the recession. Few industries or states have avoided the downturn. In fact, only North Dakota, Alaska and the District of Columbia had more jobs in April than they did a year earlier.

¹ The analysis of national numbers, and also of numbers from most other states, tends to focus on seasonally adjusted data. Alaska's more extreme – and most importantly, slightly unpredictable – seasonality makes that more difficult to do with any dependability.

1 Unemployment Rates, Alaska and U.S. January 2001 to April 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:	
	4/09	3/09	4/08	3/09	4/08
Alaska					
Total Nonfarm Wage and Salary¹	313,900	310,300	312,900	3,600	1,000
Goods-Producing ²	40,400	41,300	41,100	-900	-700
Service-Providing ³	273,500	269,000	271,800	4,500	1,700
Natural Resources and Mining	15,400	15,400	14,800	0	600
Logging	300	200	300	100	0
Mining	15,100	15,200	14,600	-100	500
Oil and Gas	13,000	13,000	12,400	0	600
Construction	14,900	14,300	15,700	600	-800
Manufacturing	10,100	11,600	10,600	-1,500	-500
Wood Product Manufacturing	400	400	400	0	0
Seafood Processing	6,400	8,200	6,800	-1,800	-400
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	62,000	61,600	62,500	400	-500
Wholesale Trade	6,300	6,300	6,400	0	-100
Retail Trade	35,000	34,800	35,300	200	-300
Food and Beverage Stores	6,100	6,100	6,300	0	-200
General Merchandise Stores	9,500	9,500	9,300	0	200
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	20,700	20,500	20,800	200	-100
Air Transportation	6,000	5,900	6,300	100	-300
Truck Transportation	3,100	3,200	3,000	-100	100
Information	7,000	7,100	6,900	-100	100
Telecommunications	4,600	4,600	4,300	0	300
Financial Activities	14,500	14,400	14,600	100	-100
Professional and Business Services	25,500	24,600	25,400	900	100
Educational⁴ and Health Services	38,600	38,200	37,500	400	1,100
Health Care	27,700	27,500	27,000	200	700
Leisure and Hospitality	28,800	27,900	28,900	900	-100
Accommodations	6,700	6,400	6,700	300	0
Food Services and Drinking Places	18,100	17,500	18,300	600	-200
Other Services	11,300	11,200	11,400	100	-100
Government	85,800	84,000	84,600	1,800	1,200
Federal Government ⁵	16,400	16,200	16,500	200	-100
State Government	26,200	25,800	25,700	400	500
State Government Education ⁶	8,100	7,900	8,000	200	100
Local Government	43,200	42,000	42,400	1,200	800
Local Government Education ⁷	24,700	24,200	24,100	500	600
Tribal Government	3,500	3,500	3,400	0	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
	4/09	3/09	4/08
United States	8.9	8.5	5.0
Alaska Statewide	8.0	8.4	6.6
NOT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
United States	8.6	9.0	4.8
Alaska Statewide	8.4	9.2	6.6
Anchorage/Mat-Su Region	7.3	8.0	5.6
Municipality of Anchorage	6.7	7.1	5.1
Mat-Su Borough	9.8	11.2	7.5
Gulf Coast Region	10.6	11.7	8.1
Kenai Peninsula Borough	11.4	12.5	8.5
Kodiak Island Borough	7.4	7.4	5.1
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	10.9	13.0	9.4
Interior Region	8.2	9.2	6.5
Denali Borough	11.6	16.8	11.4
Fairbanks North Star Borough	7.3	8.3	5.7
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	10.8	12.4	9.1
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	16.3	17.9	14.6
Northern Region	9.6	9.6	8.1
Nome Census Area	13.1	12.7	10.2
North Slope Borough	4.7	5.0	4.0
Northwest Arctic Borough	13.5	13.6	12.5
Southeast Region	8.5	10.5	6.6
Haines Borough	13.4	17.5	10.6
Juneau Borough	6.1	7.2	4.5
Ketchikan Gateway Borough ¹	8.4	10.2	6.2
Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan CA ¹	17.6	21.7	13.9
Sitka Borough	6.2	7.9	5.7
Skagway-Hoonah-Angoon CA ¹	19.6	26.8	15.9
Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area ¹	12.2	15.3	11.0
Yakutat Borough	9.0	17.5	6.4
Southwest Region	15.6	13.6	12.8
Aleutians East Borough	8.3	8.1	7.1
Aleutians West Census Area	10.3	4.1	7.9
Bethel Census Area	16.8	16.3	14.1
Bristol Bay Borough	12.0	15.6	9.3
Dillingham Census Area	13.0	12.9	9.7
Lake and Peninsula Borough	12.5	13.1	9.1
Wade Hampton Census Area	24.5	24.2	20.8

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:	
	4/09	3/09	4/08	3/09	4/08	3/09	4/08
Anch/Mat-Su	170,000	167,400	168,700	2,600	1,300	1.6%	0.8%
Anchorage	151,100	149,200	150,700	1,900	400	1.3%	0.3%
Gulf Coast	27,150	26,500	27,650	650	-500	2.5%	-1.8%
Interior	44,000	42,600	44,100	1,400	-100	3.3%	-0.2%
Fairbanks ⁸	37,300	36,900	37,600	400	-300	1.1%	-0.8%
Northern	20,350	20,500	19,450	-150	900	-0.7%	4.6%
Southeast	35,150	33,650	35,350	1,500	-200	4.5%	-0.6%
Southwest	17,600	19,600	17,700	-2,000	-100	-10.2%	-0.6%

For more current state and regional employment and unemployment data, visit our Web site. We have a new address:

laborstats.alaska.gov

Employer Resources

What Employers Like About the Alaska Job Center Network

A recent survey of Alaska employers shows they think the most important services the Alaska Job Center Network offers are the ability to post their job openings on ALEXsys (the online Alaska Labor Exchange System), the support services they get from job center staff and the fact that they find qualified workers through ALEXsys.

Other services that employers rated as important include the ability to have job center staff prescreen applicants, employers' access to applicant resumes through ALEXsys and the ability to hold job recruitment events at job centers. The employers said they also like being able to have potential workers tested at the job centers, participating in job fairs and getting tax credits for hiring workers through special programs.

Job seekers who were surveyed said the most important services in their view are the free employment and training services they get, the ability to connect with employers through ALEXsys and help from job center staff in creating a professional resume.

The Alaska Job Center Network, at jobs.alaska.gov on the Internet, is a network of the state's 23 Alaska Job Centers. The AJCN and job centers are a part of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

The AJCN Web site has links to ALEXsys, apprenticeship opportunities, "Hot Jobs" (jobs in high demand that pay well), Workplace Alaska (for state government jobs), and specific links for health care, seafood and forestry jobs.

The AJCN site has links to labor market information (ranging from local economic data and wage trends to typical training for different jobs). The site also has links for those who have a disability, veterans, youth and older workers, among others.

For more information about AJCN, additional employer services or help with ALEXsys, go to the jobs.alaska.gov Web site, stop by an Alaska Job Center or call (877) 724-2539 (ALEX). For job center locations, go to the Web site or call the 877 number.

