

ALASKA ECONOMIC **TRENDS**

JUNE 2026

How Alaskans are managing their debt

ALSO INSIDE

Modernizing unemployment
insurance benefits in Alaska



FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Connecting service members with great jobs in Alaska

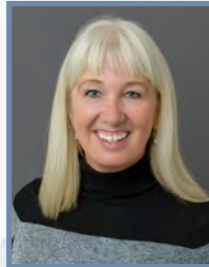
By Catherine Muñoz, Commissioner

The federal government is increasing military investment in Alaska. Eielson Air Force Base has expanded, with new aircraft and crews for refueling capabilities in the Arctic. Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson is undergoing a multi-billion dollar modernization to expand its training capabilities. Barracks and dining facilities are being upgraded at Fort Wainwright, and Coast Guard icebreakers are coming.

The May 2025 issue of *Trends* reported that nearly 22,000 active-duty service members are stationed in Alaska, with nearly 30,000 dependents.

One of the priorities for the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development over the past eight years has been to connect veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses with employment in Alaska. In 2024, the department partnered with the U.S. Department of War SkillBridge Program. SkillBridge assists members of all branches of the military to transition into the civilian workforce for up to six months through internships, industry training, apprenticeships, or work experience with SkillBridge partner employers. The Department of War covers the transitioning service member's wages during the six-month program.

Many highly qualified SkillBridge interns have been hired into permanent employment at the Alaska Department of Labor, representing transitioning service members from the U.S. Air Force, the Marine Corps, the Army, and the Air National Guard. We are not the only employer participating in the SkillBridge Program in Alaska. Transitioning service members can also apply for opportunities at Lynden Air Cargo,



Matson Navigation Company of Alaska, and Northern Industrial Training, among others.

Importantly, our department serves as a partner for Alaska-based employers interested in hiring transitioning service members. Employers wanting to learn more or receive assistance with the application

process to become an approved industry partner can contact the Business Connections team at (907) 269-4777 or anchorage.employers@alaska.gov.

The SkillBridge Program accepts new industry partners twice a year: once in the fall from Oct. 1 to Dec. 1, and again in the spring from Feb. 1 to April 1.

The military plays a vital role in our state, and Alaska benefits from the large number of veterans who chose to make Alaska home. The department is committed to supporting transitioning service members, military spouses, and veterans with career training, recognition of military credit toward certificate of fitness credentialing, or help getting a great job. It's the least we can do to recognize their service to our country and to encourage veterans to continue contributing to the growth and prosperity of our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Muñoz". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Contact Commissioner Catherine Muñoz at (907) 465-2700 or commissioner.labor@alaska.gov.



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SARA WHITNEY
Editor

DAN ROBINSON
Chief, Research
and Analysis

Design by Sara Whitney

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ALASKA
DEPARTMENT of LABOR
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DEVELOPMENT

Governor
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Catherine Muñoz

Trends is a nonpartisan, data-driven magazine that
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Debt in Alaska hits a decade low

Despite that decline, rising delinquency is a trend to watch

By ROB KREIGER

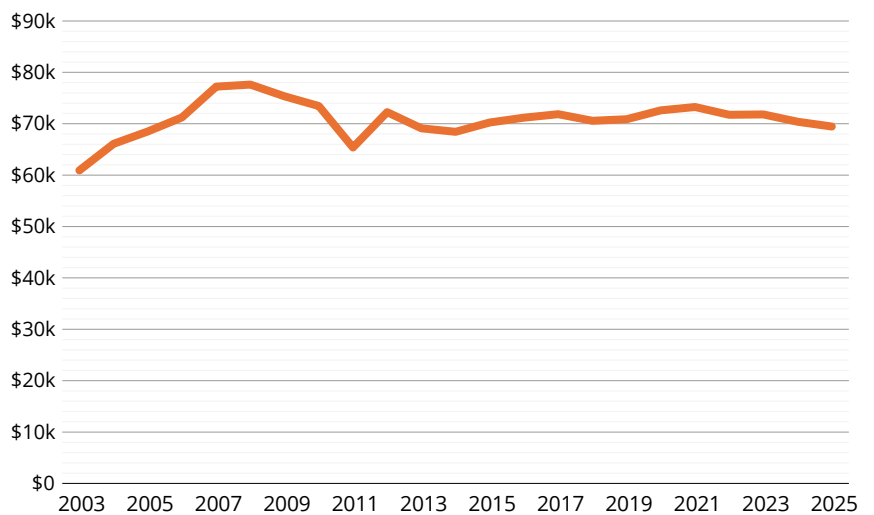
The average amount of debt per person in Alaska households hit a decade-plus low in 2025. Adjusted for inflation, per capita debt fell to \$69,460, the lowest level since 2014.

While debt has been trending downward since 2021, the percentage of balances that are 90 days past due has been rising, suggesting households are having a harder time managing their debt. Delinquency rates in every major category — auto loans, credit cards, mortgages, and student loans — increased in 2025.

Federal student loan payments, which were suspended during the pandemic, restarted in October 2024. Since then, delinquency rates on student loans have jumped from less than 1 percent to near pre-pandemic levels.

Although Alaska's delinquency rates rose across the board in 2025, the other increases were small.

Per capita debt* in Alaska, 2003-2025

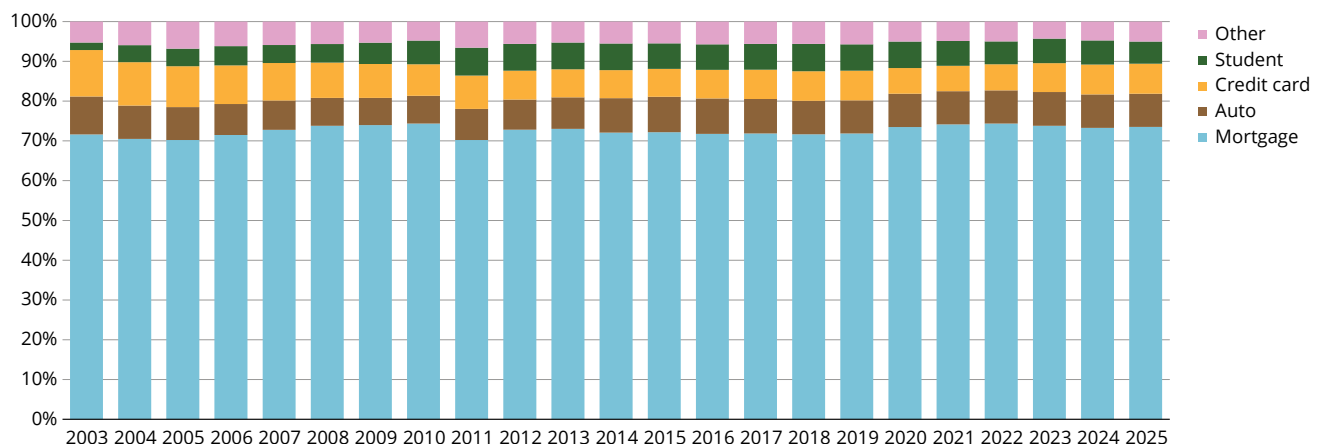


*Adjusted for inflation
Source: State Level Household Debt Statistics 2003-2025, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, February 2026

However, Alaska credit card debt delinquency has risen to its highest level in more than 20 years, and auto and mortgage loan delinquency rates have also crept up to multi-year highs.

Despite rising delinquency, Alaskans are managing

Alaska debt by type, 2003 to 2025



Source: State Level Household Debt Statistics 2003-2025, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, February 2026

debt better than Americans overall. Alaska's debt delinquency rates tend to follow U.S. patterns, but national rates are typically higher, particularly for auto loans and credit cards.

Why debt matters

On its own, the amount of debt a household has doesn't reflect its financial stability. A household can have high debt levels but also high incomes, for example, and a low debt-to-income ratio. On the other hand, debt can be low even when income is low, so the relative debt load can be high and create a greater financial strain.

What matters more is how debt is being managed; that is, whether people are paying it off in a timely way. Regardless of debt or income levels, falling behind on payments signals strain and has consequences.

In extreme cases, missed payments can result in repossession of vehicles or other assets, or foreclosure on homes. But just missing a payment or two can result in higher interest rates, less ability to borrow, and lower credit scores, consequences that can further strain finances.

Alaskans' debt hit its lowest level in more than a decade

Alaska's inflation-adjusted per capita household debt peaked at \$77,619 in 2008, and began to drop during the national Great Recession as credit access tightened. In subsequent years, debt levels rose but remained within a tight range.

Household debt consists of five major categories. In addition to mortgage, credit card, auto loan, and student loan debt, the "other" category includes personal loans and retail or store credit cards.

Mortgage debt is the biggest by far, at 73.5 percent of the total in 2025.

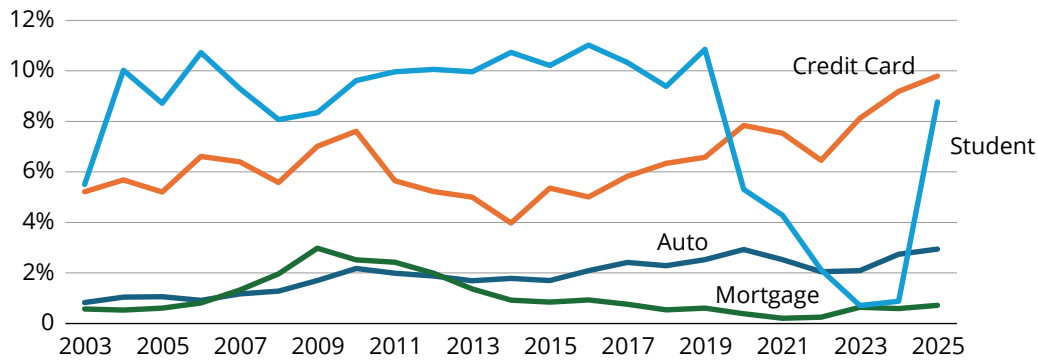
Auto loans and credit card debt have typically been second or third over the years. In 2025, auto loans were the second-largest category at 8.3 percent, followed by credit cards at 7.6 percent. Student loans and "other" were the smallest at 5.6 percent and 5 percent, respectively.

Debt and delinquency by state, 2025

State	Debt per capita	Delinquency rates			
		Auto	Credit card	Mortgage	Student
D.C.	\$102,400	13.6%	11.2%	1.0%	5.6%
Colorado	\$92,690	4.0%	11.1%	0.8%	7.5%
California	\$87,850	4.8%	13.2%	0.6%	7.5%
Washington	\$85,880	3.8%	9.3%	0.6%	6.2%
Hawaii	\$83,480	3.7%	10.2%	0.6%	8.4%
Utah	\$83,350	3.0%	9.5%	0.7%	5.9%
Maryland	\$81,390	6.0%	11.7%	1.1%	8.2%
Massachusetts	\$77,400	2.6%	10.3%	0.7%	5.7%
Virginia	\$77,060	4.6%	9.9%	0.7%	6.7%
Nevada	\$71,260	6.2%	16.3%	0.9%	8.4%
Arizona	\$70,850	5.6%	13.7%	0.9%	8.1%
Oregon	\$69,640	3.6%	9.5%	0.6%	6.9%
New Jersey	\$69,550	4.2%	11.4%	1.1%	7.3%
Alaska	\$69,460	2.9%	9.8%	0.7%	8.8%
Idaho	\$69,450	3.3%	9.5%	0.7%	6.2%
Connecticut	\$67,530	3.1%	10.5%	1.0%	9.1%
New Hampshire	\$66,480	3.0%	9.8%	0.6%	4.8%
Delaware	\$66,170	6.1%	12.2%	1.1%	9.3%
Minnesota	\$63,860	3.0%	8.6%	0.6%	5.8%
U.S.	\$63,200	5.2%	12.4%	0.9%	8.3%
Georgia	\$62,070	7.0%	13.9%	1.3%	10.7%
Florida	\$61,890	5.5%	14.9%	1.4%	9.2%
N. Carolina	\$61,070	6.1%	12.5%	0.9%	10.7%
Rhode Island	\$60,090	3.5%	11.4%	1.0%	7.2%
Texas	\$60,020	5.8%	14.2%	1.2%	9.5%
S. Carolina	\$59,460	6.2%	13.4%	1.2%	11.1%
New York	\$59,420	4.3%	12.9%	1.4%	7.7%
Montana	\$58,390	4.0%	9.8%	0.5%	9.9%
Wyoming	\$57,120	3.5%	10.5%	0.8%	9.6%
Tennessee	\$56,690	5.7%	11.6%	0.7%	7.6%
Illinois	\$54,050	5.6%	11.6%	1.2%	7.8%
Maine	\$53,360	3.1%	9.8%	0.8%	5.6%
N. Dakota	\$53,300	2.9%	9.0%	0.9%	7.3%
Vermont	\$52,910	2.8%	9.0%	0.6%	7.5%
S. Dakota	\$52,270	3.7%	9.1%	0.8%	5.8%
Pennsylvania	\$50,360	4.8%	12.3%	1.1%	7.8%
Nebraska	\$49,530	3.3%	9.8%	0.7%	7.2%
Missouri	\$49,420	5.6%	11.4%	0.8%	6.8%
Indiana	\$49,330	6.3%	11.7%	1.1%	8.4%
New Mexico	\$49,260	6.1%	11.9%	1.0%	7.9%
Wisconsin	\$49,210	3.6%	8.0%	0.5%	4.3%
Alabama	\$48,910	6.6%	12.2%	1.2%	11.2%
Louisiana	\$48,250	6.6%	14.2%	1.8%	11.9%
Michigan	\$48,050	6.3%	11.3%	0.9%	7.7%
Iowa	\$47,410	3.5%	10.3%	0.8%	6.6%
Ohio	\$46,780	5.3%	11.1%	1.0%	8.5%
Kansas	\$46,720	4.0%	10.7%	0.8%	10.0%
Oklahoma	\$43,170	5.5%	13.3%	1.3%	8.8%
Kentucky	\$43,160	4.9%	11.8%	1.0%	9.2%
Arkansas	\$43,090	5.6%	13.8%	1.1%	7.6%
Mississippi	\$41,450	7.7%	13.4%	1.7%	13.4%
West Virginia	\$37,850	5.3%	13.7%	1.2%	10.8%

Source: State Level Household Debt Statistics 2003-2025, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, February 2026

Alaska debt delinquency rates by category, 2003 to 2025



Source: State Level Household Debt Statistics 2003-2025, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, February 2026

About the data

Per capita debt is a measure of total debt divided by a state's population. However, a "per person" debt amount doesn't reflect personal levels of mortgage, student loan, or other debt.

For example, the average Alaska mortgage holder owes significantly more than the average \$51,070 mentioned in this article, because the per capita numbers include people who don't hold mortgage debt, such as children, renters, and people who have paid off their homes. Similarly, the average of \$3,860 in student loan debt per capita is much less than the average owed by people who *have* student loan debt.

While other data sets show how a person's student loan debt compares with other students and the average level of mortgage debt among mortgage borrowers, the numbers in this article are for broad, population-wide comparisons over time for Alaska.

Debt highest in D.C., lowest in W. Virginia

Debt varies widely by state. The two highest in 2025 were Washington, D.C., at \$102,400, and Colorado at \$92,690. Alaska was 14th at \$69,460. The two lowest were West Virginia at \$37,850 and Mississippi at \$41,450. (See the table on the previous page.)

On their own, these rankings don't show how well a state's residents are managing debt. Adding delinquency rates to the equation can make places with similar debt levels, such as D.C. and Colorado, look different.

Delinquency rates clarify the picture

Delinquency rates in this article are the percentage of the total debt balance at least 90 days past due in 2025.

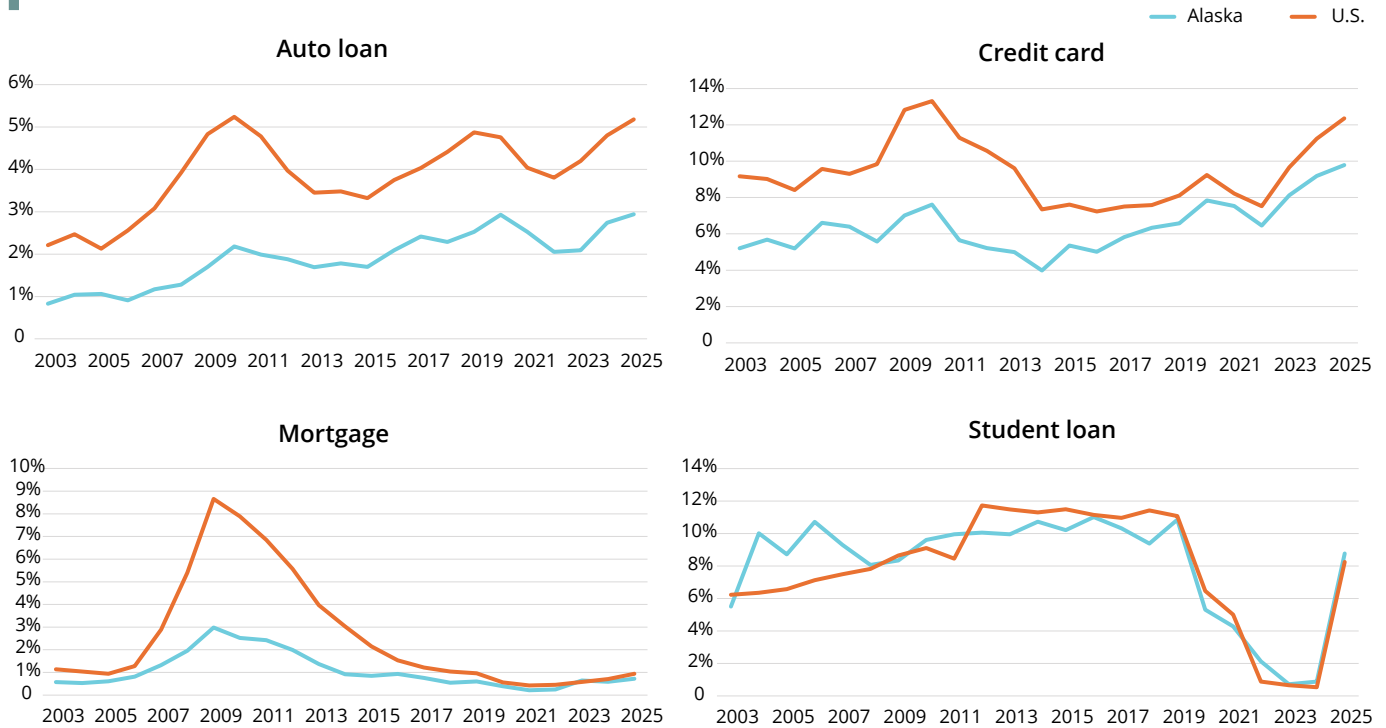
In D.C., where overall debt was highest in the country, auto loan delinquency was also highest at 13.6 percent, about two-and-a-half times the U.S. rate. Mortgage delinquency was slightly higher than the national average, and credit card and student loan debt were lower. Together, these factors suggest that D.C. households have high levels of debt, and auto loan payments are a challenge.

Auto loan delinquency in Colorado was just 4 percent, and rates in all other categories were also below national averages, despite Colorado having the second-highest overall debt level in the country, suggesting Colorado households are managing their debt relatively well.

On the other hand, West Virginia and Mississippi had higher-than-average delinquency rates in every category, despite having the lowest debt per capita, so borrowers in these states were more likely to be behind on payments across the board.

In Alaska, delinquency rates were lower than average in auto loans, credit cards, and mortgages, but student loan

How Alaska and the nation compare for delinquency rates by category



Source: State Level Household Debt Statistics 2003-2025, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, February 2026

delinquency was slightly higher. For the most part, Alaska's delinquency trends have tracked with the nation over time, although Alaska's rates have remained below the national averages in most debt categories.

Still, delinquency rates in Alaska and nationally have risen in recent years, and both hit multi-year highs in all categories in 2025.

Delinquency up broadly in Alaska

Each delinquency category in Alaska rose in 2025. While rates fell in 2021 and 2022 during the pandemic, they began to creep up in 2023, except for student loans. Federal student loan payments remained on pause most of that year as part of pandemic relief.

Aside from student loans, Alaska credit card delinquency rates rose the most from 2022 to 2025, followed by auto loans and mortgages. Although the delinquency rate increase for credit cards has slowed since 2023, delinquency recently hit its highest level in more than 20 years.

Alaska auto loan delinquency has been rising since 2023, and last year the rate tied its previous high of

2.9 percent in 2020.

Mortgage delinquency has remained under 1 percent for more than a decade. After peaking at 3.0 percent in 2009, the rate declined steadily for years and then settled into a tight range. The rate increased in 2025, but marginally.

The federal moratorium on student loan repayments ended in October 2023, and borrowers had an "on-ramp" period for additional protection over the following year.

Because payments were paused, student loan delinquency in Alaska fell from 10.9 percent in 2019 to under 1 percent in 2023 and 2024. As payments resumed in late 2024 and 2025, the delinquency rate spiked, although not as high as it was in 2019.

Lower delinquency in Alaska for most debt categories

The graphs above show how Alaska's delinquency rates compare to the national numbers.

Auto loan delinquency rates are a good example of the way Alaska's pattern tends to match the U.S.,

but at lower rates.

In 2025, the U.S. rate hit its previous peak of 5.2 percent, set in 2010 in the wake of the nationwide financial crisis. Although Alaska's auto loan delinquency picked up in 2010, it remained far below the national rate.

Auto delinquency in Alaska hit its highest level in 2020 and 2025, at 2.9 percent.

Credit card debt in Alaska and the nation has been on an upward trajectory since 2022. After dropping in the two years after COVID-19 hit, credit card delinquency climbed rapidly, and in 2025, Alaska's rate reached a new peak of 9.8 percent. As with auto loans, the late 2000s were harder on the rest of the nation; U.S. credit card delinquency peaked at 13.3 percent in 2010.

Mortgage delinquency in Alaska has been almost identical to the nation in recent years, but it looked very different in the mid-to-late 2000s, again

because of the national housing crash, which didn't hit Alaska as hard. In short, Alaska had less speculative real estate development and subprime lending, which contributed to the housing bubble that burst in the late 2000s. Nationally, mortgage delinquency peaked at 8.7 percent in 2009. Alaska also peaked that year, but at just 3.0 percent. Rates for both have also risen in recent years, but only slightly.

Alaska's student loan debt delinquency is close to the nation's, although it's also the only category where Alaska's rate was higher last year. Delinquency rose across the U.S. as payments were restarted. Delinquency shot up to 8.8 percent in Alaska and 8.3 percent nationally in 2025.

While student loan delinquency wasn't high historically in 2025, resumption of federal student loan payments added a layer of debt obligation to Alaska households they hadn't had since 2020.

Rob Kreiger is an economist in Juneau. Reach him at (907) 465-6031 or rob.kreiger@alaska.gov.

Updating the jobless benefits system

Why the fund has grown so large and what is proposed

By LENNON WELLER

The Social Security Act of 1935 created the unemployment insurance system, a worker safety net that remains in place today.

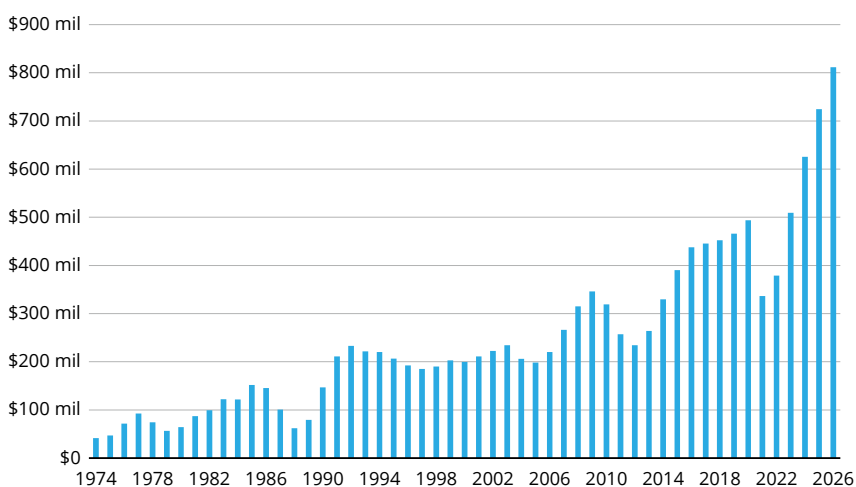
The program was intended to partially replace workers' wages after losing a job. On a broader level, keeping money in people's pockets also protects the economy by allowing them to continue buying necessities, supporting consumer demand.

Structured as a federal-state hybrid, the program provides a framework with a few required elements, giving states the flexibility to otherwise customize their programs to fit their local labor market needs.

For example, each program must mandate work search requirements for claimants and create experience ratings for employers, but each state can decide how to best fulfill those requirements.

For decades, this program has paid benefits to

Balance of the trust fund from 1974 to 2026



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

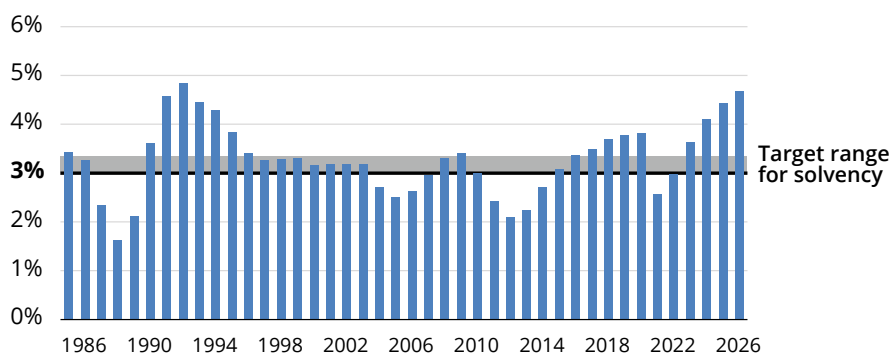
tens of thousands of Alaskans every year. In stable times, unemployment insurance benefits provide a bridge for those looking for a different job and those out of work seasonally. In uncertain times, it becomes a key economic stabilizer that provides high "bang for the buck," as benefits are largely spent quickly on basic needs.

Multiple national studies have determined that every dollar in benefits the government pays a claimant during a downturn generates up to \$2 in subsequent economic activity as that money circulates through the economy.

Alaska's system was set up for stability

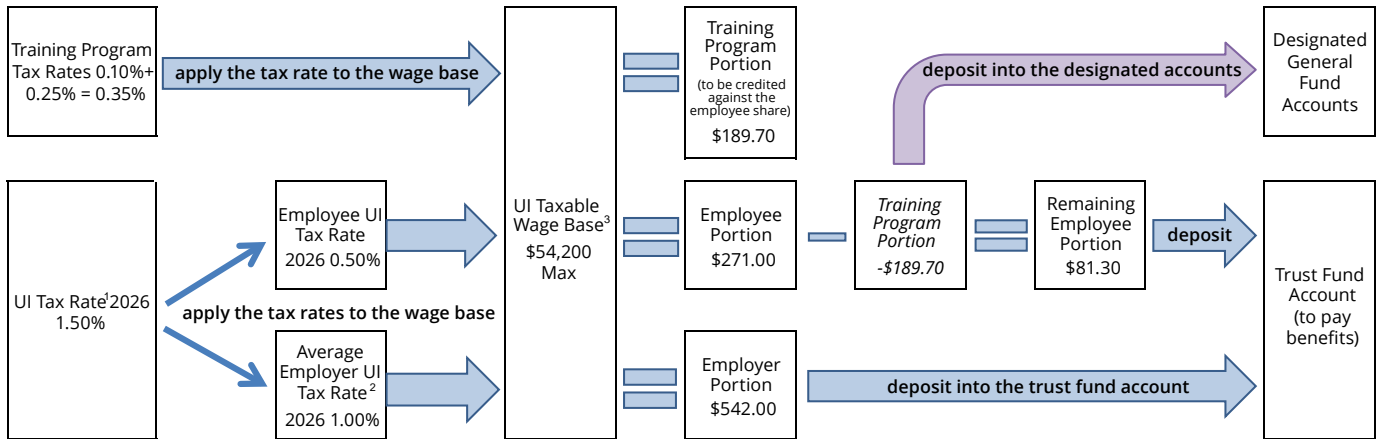
The system was designed to be self-financed. Employers and employees pay into a system that covers costs while maintaining a reserve to handle downturns in the economy.

The trust fund is well over the solvency target



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

How the unemployment insurance financing system works in Alaska



¹The tax rate is calculated each year to ensure fund solvency and cover benefit payments.
²The rate varies by employer, so the rate provided here is the average.
³The maximum taxable wage base is 75 percent of the average annual Alaska wage.

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

This system has served Alaska well for decades, never having had to borrow to pay benefits the way most states have.

However, while parts of the system are self-adjusting, others require regular updating to keep the system functioning and balanced, as it was intended. In recent years, with rapid wage growth, outdated parts of the system have grown the trust fund far beyond what it needs to pay benefits and remain solvent.

How the finances work and performed historically

Alaska's unemployment insurance system is financed through employer and employee payroll taxes. State statutes dictate the minimum and maximum tax rates that employers and employees are charged: between 0.5 percent and 1.0 percent of wages for employees and 1.0 percent to 6.5 percent for employers.

The taxable wage base is set at 75 percent of the average Alaska wage during the most recent fiscal year, so the base in 2026 is \$54,200. Any wages above that in a year are not taxed by the unemployment insurance system.

Taxes are calculated using a rate schedule that aims to recapture costs and keep the fund within a targeted solvency range. In Alaska, that's enough

money to pay between 3 and 3.3 percent of all wages covered by the system, a range based on what has been necessary to pay benefits during past historical downturns. The reserves must be sufficient to meet both seasonal filing needs and to cushion significant economic shocks.

The biggest shock so far came in the mid-to-late 1980s, when oil prices collapsed on the back end of a ramp-up in global petroleum production after the 1970s Middle East oil embargo.

For Alaska, this came when the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System was nearing its peak throughput of roughly 2 million barrels a day, amplifying the shock.

When prices fell, the state budget constricted and the unemployment rate shot up to a peak of 11.3 percent in the summer of 1986. Tales of the collapse are legendary and include Alaskans walking into local banks and handing them the keys to a house they'd purchased, or simply leaving their keys in the mailbox, before leaving the state.

Even during that time, the unemployment insurance system responded as intended, paying out the largest benefit load relative to wages covered by the program in its history.

For a full breakdown of the program and how rates are calculated on an annual basis, see the Unemployment Insurance Handbook we publish every year at live.laborstats.alaska.gov/article/unemployment-insurance-research-program.

Taxes only pay benefits, with one major exception

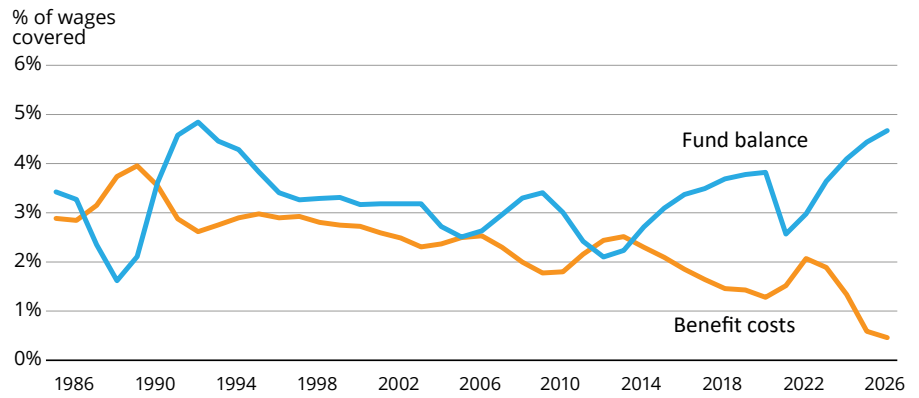
While federal statute dictates that employer taxes can only be used to pay benefits, it doesn't prohibit diverting employee contributions, which most states do not collect. Their systems are financed entirely by employer taxes.

For years, the Alaska Legislature has allowed certain workforce-related programs to draw from the employee UI funding stream. The two current recipients of that funding are the State Training and Employment Program, or STEP, and the Technical Vocational Education Program, or TVEP, which support noncompetitive grants to technical and vocational training institutions across the state.

Given that the statutory tax contribution to the fund is 73 percent from employers and 27 percent from employees, employers already cover most of the program's costs and fund the reserves. In practice, though, it's nearly all, as most employee contributions are diverted to the two training programs.

Historically, the uniform employee tax rate has

Benefit costs, fund balance continue to diverge



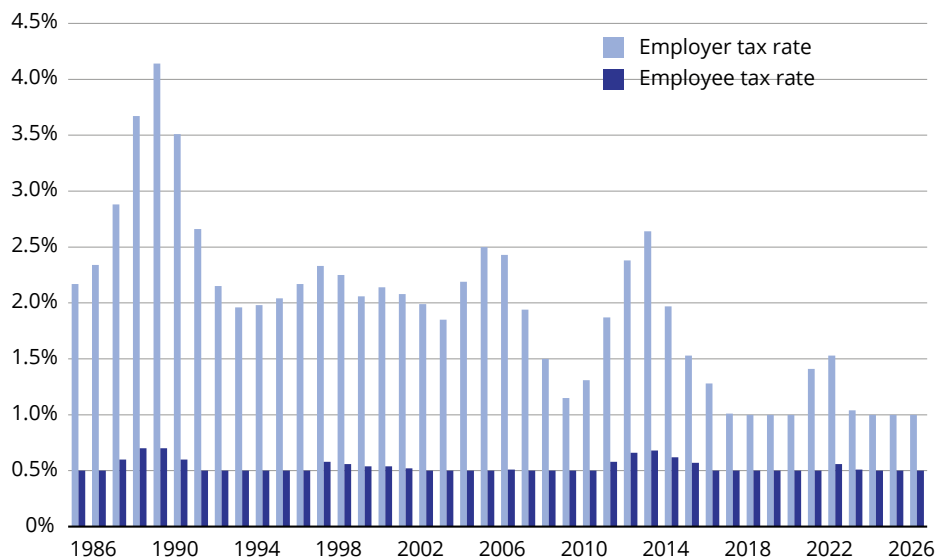
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

remained low and stable while the employer rates have done most of the system's adjustment work, as well as bearing costs. The system wasn't designed for that imbalance, but it has had enough flexibility to manage the distortion.

Benefits are increasingly low, and tax rates can't adjust

For the system to remain functional and actuarially sound, it needs to balance benefit costs with revenue needs in a structured and sound way.

Employer, employee UI tax rates over time



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

For decades, unemployment benefit amounts have been based on a table set in statute. The table provides minimum and maximum weekly amounts, currently \$56 for at least \$2,500 in annual wages, up to a maximum of \$370 based on at least \$41,750 earned. While there's an additional dependent benefit for some claimants, the weekly amount doesn't increase for earnings above \$41,750 a year.

Between the minimum and maximum wage, for every additional \$250 in wages, the weekly benefit increases by \$2. These amounts have not been updated since 2009. Wages have risen by about 59 percent since then.

While this structure is simple and efficient to administer, one tradeoff is that it requires periodic updates to the amounts as wages rise. Another is that the longer any fixed maximum remains in place, the more it drives down costs as a percentage of covered wages.

Because these amounts have not been updated since 2009, and the system also has mandatory minimum tax rates, the fund has been taking in far more than it needs to pay these benefits and keep reserves within the targeted range.

Since 2009, the state has weathered two national recessions: the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic. The unemployment insurance system weathered both without borrowing or even approaching insolvency, then emerged from each by quickly exceeding the needed reserves.

As mentioned earlier, the statutorily targeted reserve ratio, which is the share of all covered Alaska wages the fund would be able to pay, is between 3 and 3.3 percent. When 2026 tax rates were calculated last fall, the ratio was 4.67 percent. In dollar terms, the fund had about \$240 million more than it needed for solvency, and the balance continues to grow.

The financing system was never intended to accommodate benefit costs this low. With a benefit schedule frozen in 2009 and minimum tax rates, the system can't adjust downward to match lower costs. Diverting most employee contributions to training programs also forces the employer rate to carry nearly all the system's adjustments. The result is a financing structure that continues to over-collect, pushing the fund balance further over its intended reserves.

Proposals on the table

.....

Several proposals before the Legislature aim to update Alaska's unemployment insurance system, each addressing different parts of the structural

issues described above. Broadly, they fall into two categories: those that would restore the original mechanics of the system, and those that would expand it to address broader worker and family support goals.

While the following proposals reflect competing visions for how Alaska should modernize its unemployment system, recognition of the need to rebalance the system is widely shared.

1. Increasing benefits

Multiple bills (SB 217 and HB 193) propose increasing the maximum weekly benefit amount and adjusting the wage bands to reflect today's labor market.

Supporters argue that benefits have fallen too far behind wages, reducing the program's value to working families. Updating benefit amounts would also align taxes with actual benefit costs.

Most proposals would use the state's current average wage as the new maximum. Other proposals would change the static wage schedule to one that's indexed to allow benefits to automatically keep up with wage growth.

At the end of the 2026 regular session in May, the Alaska Legislature approved increasing the maximum weekly benefit by \$100, to \$470, and increasing the allowance for dependents to from \$24 to \$72. It also indexes benefit amounts to the percent rise in the taxable wage base, which would increase benefit amounts every year by roughly the same percentage as the average wage. The legislation now goes to the governor's desk for the final decision on whether to make it law.

2. Reducing employer tax rate minimums

Employers paying a minimum of 1.0 percent is the main reason the system can't align revenue with costs and solvency right now.

Current proposals would set the minimum to zero, allowing the system to collect only what it needs on a three-year basis.

3. Adjusting the tax split between employers and employees

Another proposal would modify the 27/73 split to reflect the reality that most employee contributions are diverted to workforce training programs.

This could be achieved by simply eliminating the employee cost share to explicitly tax employers for

100 percent of program costs. Employee taxes would go entirely to the training programs, eliminating the distortion and complexity of the diversion and then the credit.

4. Expanding the training programs it funds

Some suggest expanding the training programs currently funded through the employee tax diversions. Proponents view these programs as essential workforce development tools in a state facing worker shortages and increasing percentages of nonresident workers.

If the required minimum employer tax rate for the unemployment insurance system were lowered to zero, that would give the flexibility to enact these new taxes with no additional burden on employers or the labor market.

5. Creating a paid parental leave program

HB 193 proposes using the fund to pay a statewide parental leave benefit. While that isn't a traditional UI function, supporters argue that it would help retain workers and support families.

Again, though, the only portion of the fund that could be used for anything but unemployment benefits is what was paid by employees. Employer taxes can only be used for benefits, by federal law.

The system fits into a broader debate about Alaska's future

The debate over how to manage the unemployment insurance trust fund reflects a larger conversation about Alaska's economic direction as it faces persistent worker shortages, persistent net migration losses, and a smaller share of the population participating in the workforce. Ongoing demographic challenges affecting the entire country include an aging population and, as a result, fewer working-age adults.

The unemployment insurance trust fund, once a relatively quiet corner of state government, has become a focal point for competing visions of how Alaska should support workers, families, and the economy under these changing conditions.

Whether Alaska chooses to modernize the system, expand its mission, or both, the underlying need is the same: a financing system calibrated to today's labor market rather than the one we had in the past. As is, the state's system is actuarially imbalanced, collecting and holding more money than required to pay existing claims.

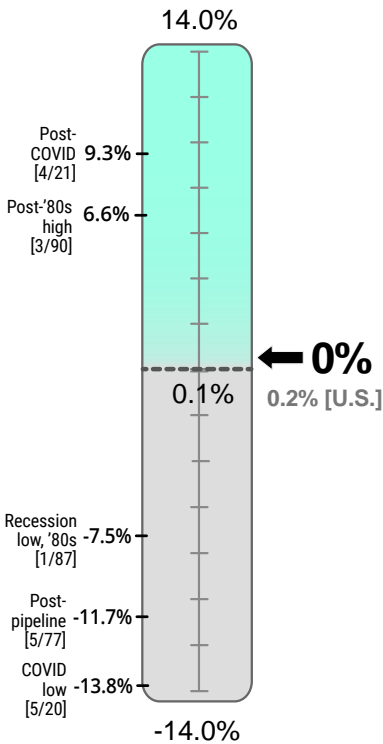
Lennon Weller, an economist in Juneau, serves as the U.I. actuary. Reach him at (907) 465-4507 or lennon.weller@alaska.gov.

Gauging The Economy



Job Growth

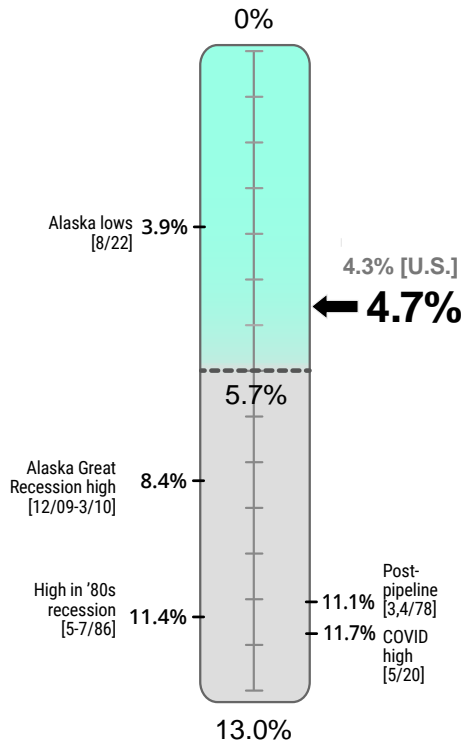
April 2026
Over-the-year percent change



Alaska's April employment was 0.03 percent above last April. U.S. employment was up by 0.2 percent.

Unemployment Rate

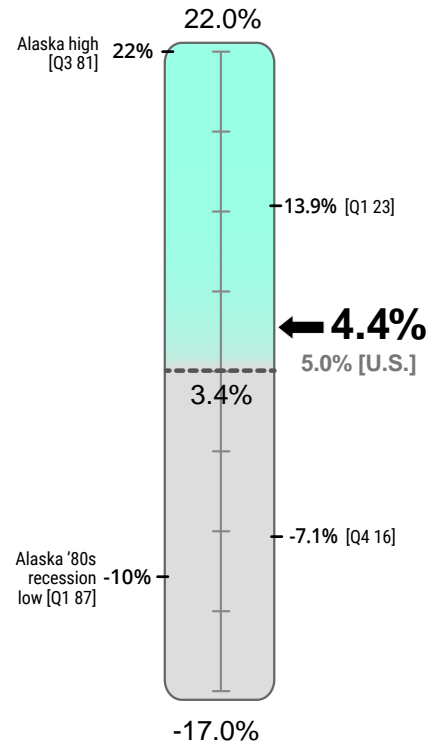
April 2026
Seasonally adjusted



Alaska's unemployment rate has climbed about one percentage point since mid-2022 but remains well below its 10-year average.

Wage Growth

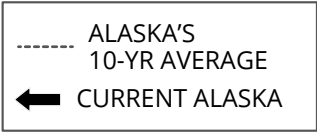
4th Quarter 2025
Over-the-year percent change



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

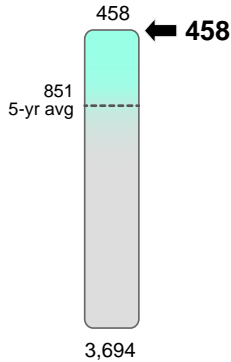
Wages were up 4.4 percent from year-ago levels in the fourth quarter of 2025 and 33.9 percent above the fourth quarter of 2019, before the pandemic.

Gauging The Economy



Initial Claims

Unemployment, week ending April 11, 2026*

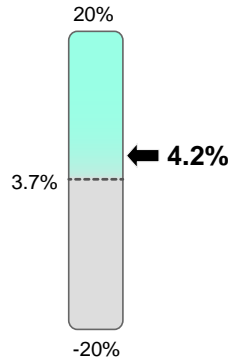


Pandemic-driven high claims loads have fallen, and new claims for benefits are well below their long-term average.

*Four-week moving average ending with specified week

GDP Growth

4th Quarter 2025
Over-the-year percent change*

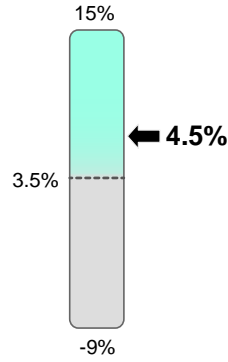


Gross domestic product is the value of the goods and services a state produces. It's an important economic measure but also a volatile one for Alaska because commodity prices influence the numbers so much — especially oil prices.

*In current dollars

Personal Income Growth

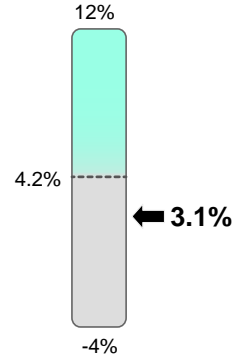
4th Quarter 2025
Over-the-year percent change



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).

Change in Home Prices

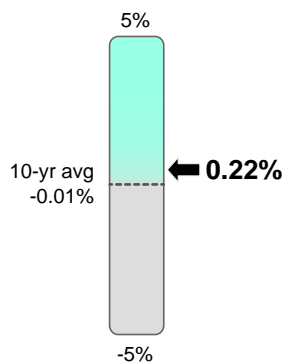
Single-family, percent change from prior year, Q2 2025



Home prices shown include only those for which a commercial loan was used. This indicator tends to be volatile from quarter to quarter.

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.

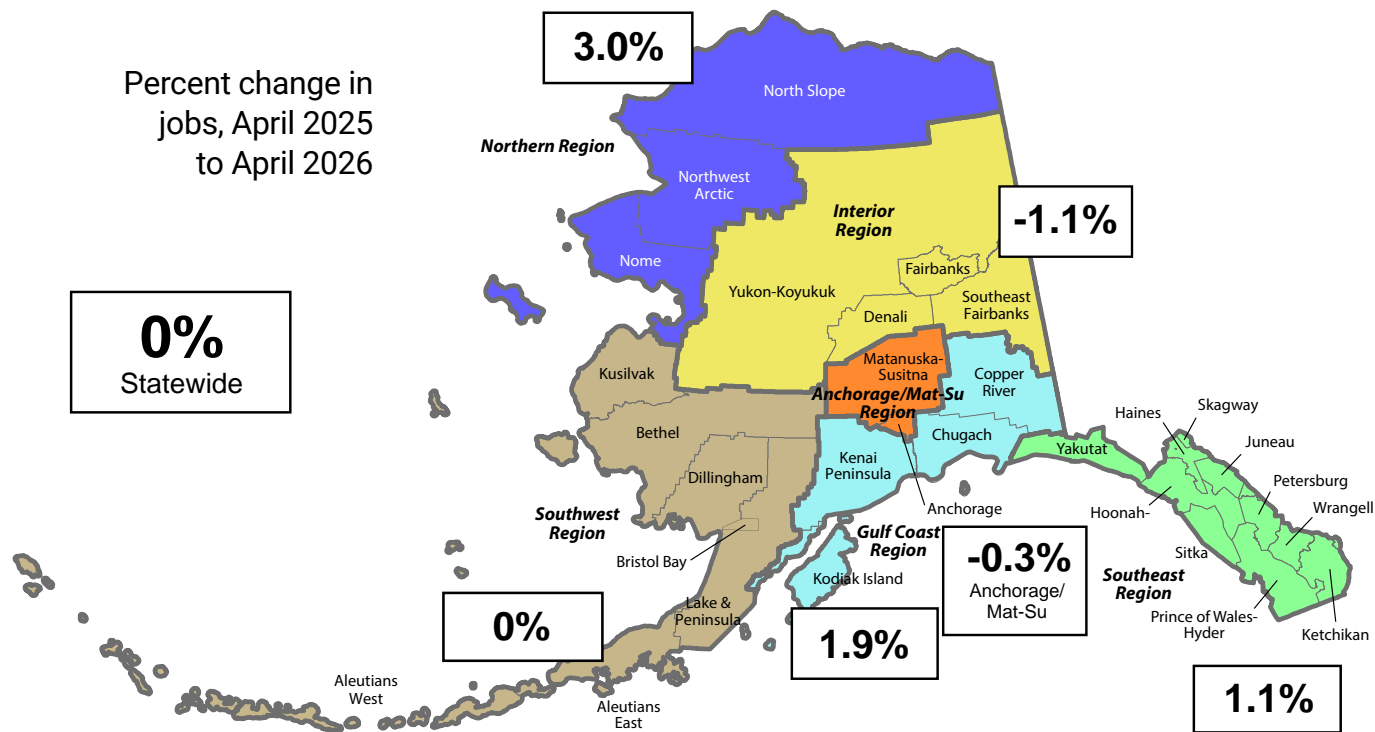
Net Migration

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
	4/26	3/26	4/25
United States	4.3	4.3	4.2
Alaska	4.7	4.7	4.6

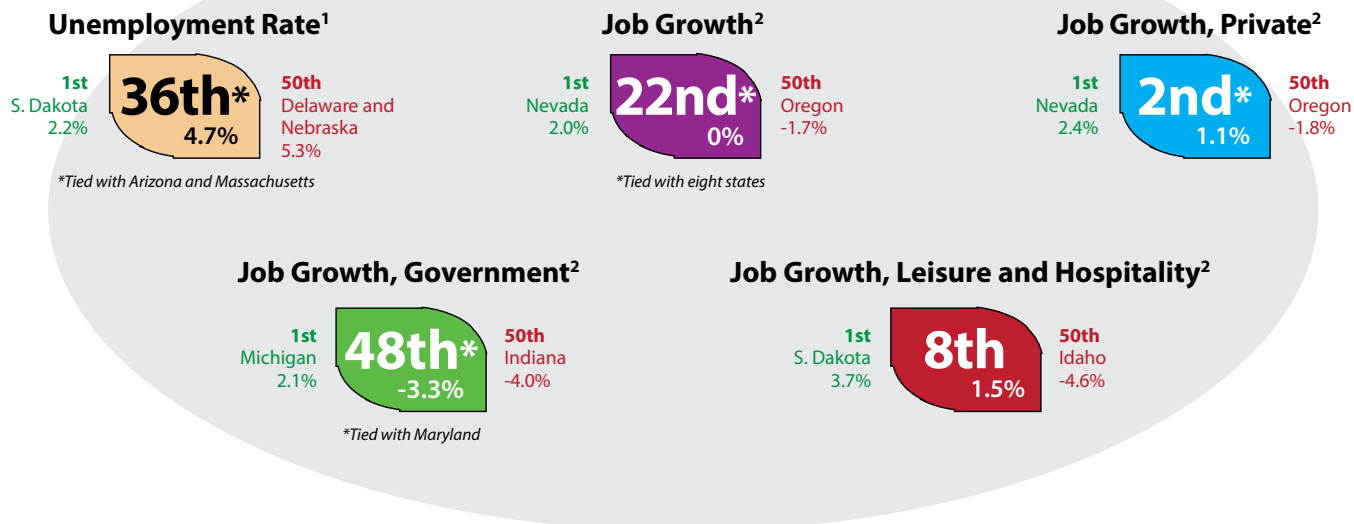
Not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.		Revised
	4/26	3/26	4/25
United States	4.0	4.3	3.9
Alaska	4.9	4.8	4.7

Regional, not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.			Revised				Prelim.			Revised		
	4/26	3/26	4/25	4/26	3/26	4/25		4/26	3/26	4/25	4/26	3/26	4/25
Interior Region	5.0	4.8	4.5	5.0	4.8	4.5	Southeast Region	4.5	5.0	4.5	4.5	5.0	4.5
Denali Borough	9.5	11.2	7.4	9.5	11.2	7.4	Haines Borough	10.8	11.8	10.2	10.8	11.8	10.2
Fairbanks N Star Borough	4.4	4.1	4.0	4.4	4.1	4.0	Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	7.3	10.5	7.2	7.3	10.5	7.2
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	7.2	7.8	7.0	7.2	7.8	7.0	Juneau, City and Borough	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.5
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	10.9	12.2	9.2	10.9	12.2	9.2	Ketchikan Gateway Borough	4.1	5.0	4.5	4.1	5.0	4.5
Northern Region	6.5	6.9	6.1	6.5	6.9	6.1	Petersburg Borough	4.2	3.6	6.4	4.2	3.6	6.4
Nome Census Area	9.2	10.1	8.6	9.2	10.1	8.6	Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	9.0	10.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	7.7
North Slope Borough	3.3	2.9	3.0	3.3	2.9	3.0	Sitka, City and Borough	3.3	3.1	3.5	3.3	3.1	3.5
Northwest Arctic Borough	9.5	11.2	9.0	9.5	11.2	9.0	Skagway, Municipality	9.9	17.4	7.9	9.9	17.4	7.9
Anchorage/Mat-Su Region	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.3	Wrangell, City and Borough	5.5	6.5	5.5	5.5	6.5	5.5
Anchorage, Municipality	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	Yakutat, City and Borough	6.2	7.8	4.8	6.2	7.8	4.8
Mat-Su Borough	5.2	5.0	5.2	5.2	5.0	5.2							
Southwest Region	8.6	8.5	8.3	8.6	8.5	8.3	Gulf Coast Region	5.5	5.7	5.6	5.5	5.7	5.6
Aleutians East Borough	3.1	2.1	3.2	3.1	2.1	3.2	Kenai Peninsula Borough	5.4	5.8	5.6	5.4	5.8	5.6
Aleutians West Census Area	2.7	1.9	2.8	2.7	1.9	2.8	Kodiak Island Borough	4.0	3.2	3.9	4.0	3.2	3.9
Bethel Census Area	11.0	11.4	11.0	11.0	11.4	11.0	Chugach Census Area	6.7	8.3	6.9	6.7	8.3	6.9
Bristol Bay Borough	8.1	8.2	6.5	8.1	8.2	6.5	Copper River Census Area	10.7	11.7	10.0	10.7	11.7	10.0
Dillingham Census Area	9.0	8.8	7.9	9.0	8.8	7.9							
Kusilvak Census Area	17.3	19.6	15.4	17.3	19.6	15.4							
Lake and Peninsula Borough	9.0	9.6	6.1	9.0	9.6	6.1							

How Alaska Ranks



Note: Government employment includes federal, state, and local government plus public schools and universities.

¹April seasonally adjusted unemployment rates

²April 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)	273.487	2nd half 2025	268.039	+2.0%
Commodity prices				
Crude oil, Alaska North Slope,* per barrel	\$111.17	April 2026	\$69.02	+61.1%
Natural gas, Henry Hub, per thousand cubic feet (mcf)	\$2.68	April 2026	\$3.42	-21.8%
Gold, per oz. COMEX	\$4,546.80	5/20/26	\$3,280.30	+38.6%
Silver, per oz. COMEX	\$76.60	5/20/26	\$32.98	+132.3%
Copper, per lb. COMEX	\$6.34	5/20/26	\$4.62	+37.2%
Bankruptcies				
	66	Q4 2025	37	+78.42%
Business	10	Q4 2025	2	+400.35%
Personal	56	Q4 2025	35	+60%
Unemployment insurance claims				
Initial filings	2,426	Mar 2026	2,658	-8.7%
Continued filings	24,408	Mar 2026	24,090	1.3%
Claimant count	5,362	Mar 2026	5,910	-9.3%

*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

Apprenticeships benefit workers, businesses in Alaska

To build a trained workforce, job centers throughout Alaska are supporting employers and workers through registered apprenticeships. This method has been proven to increase productivity, reduce turnover, and retain workers by investing in technical training and hands on learning through mentorship.

With more than 1,000 occupations eligible for apprenticeship through the United States Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship, employers can explore solutions to meet their training and staffing needs. Some of the industries that employ Alaskan apprentices are the trades, allied health, construction, and education, using models that support small independent businesses to large multi-employer organizations.

The learn-while-you-earn model ensures that all staff are gaining the same skills while meeting milestones toward their final credential.

Alaska Job Center staff can help connect employers with

OA staff to develop apprenticeship standards, post open positions, and enroll workers in grant-funded related instruction programs to help reduce training costs.

Since related instruction happens during non-work hours, little disruption takes place during the workday. Many employers take advantage of this type of training because new employees need mentorship and training anyway, and this ensures all employees are learning the same things in a structured format.

To learn more about how registered apprenticeship can support employers and workers, visit <https://awib.alaska.gov/apprentice/> or contact your local job center at <https://jobs.alaska.gov/offices/> and ask to speak to the apprenticeship staff.

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