ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS

SEPTEMBER 2026

Rental costs up this year

ALSO INSIDE

An update on housing affordability in Alaska

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

FROM THE COMMISSIONER

New gas line analysis helps plan for high worker demand

By Catherine Muñoz, Commissioner

A new Alaska LNG project workforce analysis updates a 2018 plan commissioned by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board by considering "the broader development environment, including other large-scale projects that generate overlapping workforce demand" (p. 6).

Released on Aug. 10, the updated report is intended to be used as a workforce planning and decision-support tool.

Stretching from the North Slope to Nikiski in Southcentral, the Alaska LNG pipeline would be one of the largest proposed construction projects in state history. Assuming both phases progress concurrently as planned, demand for workers would peak at 4,500 about halfway through the five-year timeline (2026-2031).

Including other major construction initiatives during the same period, such as the Donlin Gold and Graphite One projects, would require an additional 2,490 to 2,740 workers.

According to the report, strategic investment in workforce development is the best way to increase training capacity to meet this projected demand. Early investments in short-cycle state and private vocational training programs should be balanced with longer-term trade apprenticeships to meet near-term construction needs while building the workforce for the future (p. 33).

Because the maximum training capacity in most critical trades falls short of the anticipated peak demand, nonresident workers would have to fill the deficit. The report advocates for a realistic Alaska Hire strategy by setting achievable workplace participation targets focusing on occupations for which training capacity could best be scaled.

Alaska's low unemployment rate and vastly dispersed population mean expanding our workforce can't rely solely on more training capacity.

Supporting rural workers seeking vocational training in their regions by providing travel, relocation, temporary housing, and other related costs will help reduce barriers.

Expanding participation in high school career and technical education programs and strengthening transitions from high school to vocational training and apprenticeships is also a key way to increase workforce participation.

Any construction project of this scale faces unique challenges in Alaska, but approaching it with a clear strategy and the resolve to see it through can turn these challenges into opportunities to strengthen Alaska's workforce well beyond the completion of a single project.

To quote the 2026 AKLNG factbook, "Alaska Hire should be understood as a long-term workforce outcome shaped by sustained system alignment rather than a single measurable target tied solely to project construction timelines" (p. 31).

Keeping this perspective in mind gives us an opportunity to leverage growing demand for Alaska's resources to make sustained investments in a trained and ready Alaskan workforce.

Sincerely,

Catherine Muñoz

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

Follow the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development on X and Facebook.

SEPTEMBER
2026

Volume 46 Number 9
ISSN 0160-3345

SARA WHITNEY
Editor

DAN ROBINSON
Chief, Research
and Analysis

Design by Sara Whitney

ON THE COVER:

A tree swallow box in the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, photo by the Alaska Region U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Creative Commons license

ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS

ALASKA
DEPARTMENT of LABOR and WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Governor
Mike Dunleavy

Commissioner
Catherine Muñoz

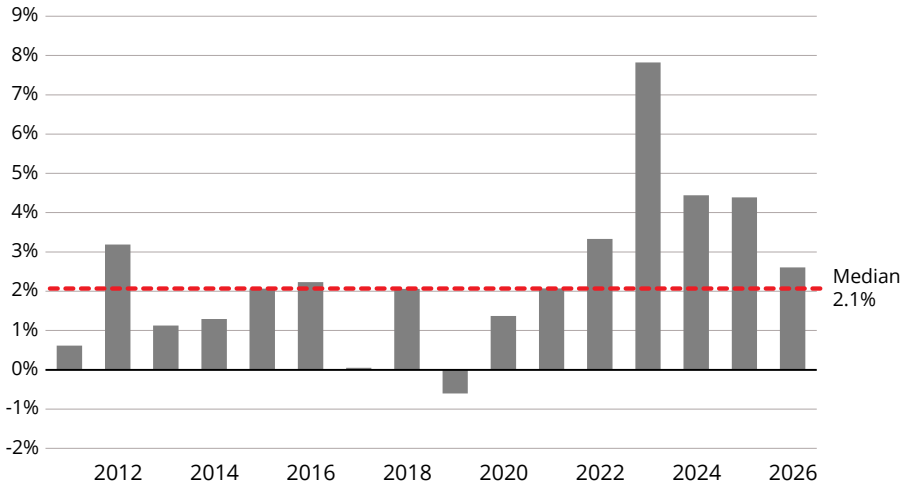
Trends is a nonpartisan, data-driven magazine that covers a variety of economic topics in Alaska.

ON THIS SPREAD: The background image for 2026 is by Erik Cooper under Creative Commons license.

Rental costs up in our spring survey

Median increase lowest in 5 years; vacancy rate holds steady

Median changes in 2-bedroom apartment rents



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

By GUNNAR SCHULTZ

In March, median rents plus utilities for two-bedroom apartments ranged from less than $1,300 a month in Wrangell-Petersburg to more than $2,000 in Bethel.

Among surveyed areas, the median rent increase for this unit type was 2.6 percent. That was the smallest increase in the past five years.

Rent increases in most places were close to that median, but the Matanuska-Susitna and Kenai Peninsula boroughs were outliers at 13 percent and 11 percent, respectively. Rent in both places

About the rental survey

Every March, we survey thousands of landlords and property managers in selected areas of Alaska, in cooperation with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation.

All rents and rent changes in this article are median adjusted rents for two-bedroom apartments. Two-bedroom apartments are the most common unit type in our survey results. Adjusted rent is the contract rent (the amount paid to the landlord) plus estimated monthly utility costs not included in the rent payment. This improves comparisons across areas and over time by accounting for differences in unit types and types of utilities included.

March vacancy rates are for all units surveyed in an area, and are the percentage of units that were vacant or anticipated to be vacant the week of March 11, including temporarily unavailable units.

In 2023, we added the Bethel Census Area to the original 10 covered areas, and 2025 was the first year utility adjustment data were available for Bethel. Historical comparisons of rent changes and March vacancy rates in the article exclude Bethel, for consistency over time.

The survey combines the Wrangell and Petersburg boroughs because of their small sample sizes. Changes can be volatile in small areas and for unit types with small sample sizes.

Rental survey results back to 2010 will be available on our website by mid-September and will include average and median contract and adjusted rents, March vacancy rates, and the percentages of units with utilities included in contract rent by area, building type, and number of bedrooms.

For areas our rental survey doesn't cover, five-year estimates are available from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. The most recent release is for 2020-2024.

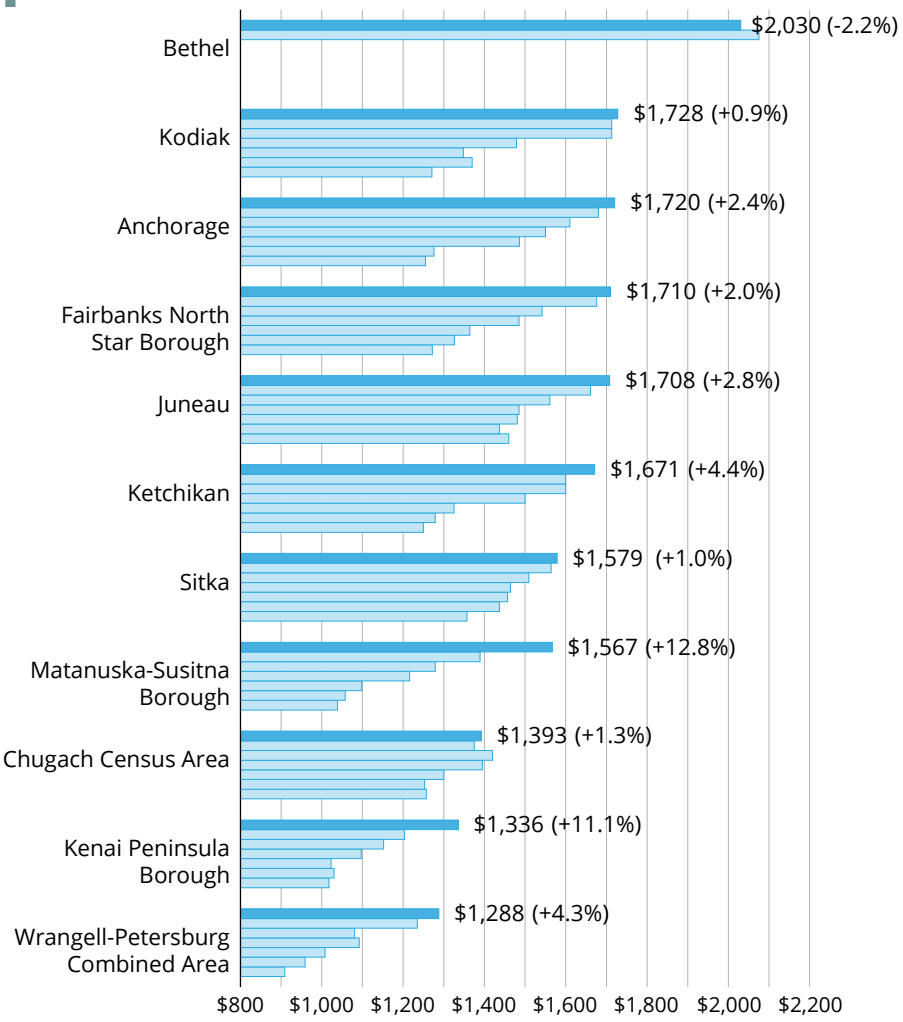
rose considerably last year, then posted record increases in 2026.

On the low end, rents ticked up about 1 percent in Kodiak, Sitka, and the Chugach Census Area; around 2 percent in Anchorage and Fairbanks; 3 percent in Juneau; and 4 percent in Ketchikan and Wrangell-Petersburg.

Increases in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau were all their lowest in recent years.

While Bethel's rent *fell* about 2 percent this year, that was driven by sample turnover rather than a decrease in rents for existing units.

Rent for 2-bed apartments by area, 2020-26



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

March vacancy rates ranged from 1%-10%

Excluding Bethel, the median vacancy rate for all unit types in March was 5.4 percent — about the same as last year and the fourth straight year within a percentage point of 5 percent. The median since 2010 is 5.5 percent.

Fairbanks had the highest vacancy rate at 10.1 percent, and Wrangell-Petersburg was lowest at 1.1 percent.

While vacancy varied by area, rates were not much higher or lower than usual in most areas this year aside from Sitka and Wrangell-Petersburg.

Vacancy trends in largest areas

Vacancy in Anchorage fell to 4.9 percent in March after three consecutive years of increases that brought it to 5.6 percent in 2025. However, the city's rate remained higher than its long-term median of about 4 percent (since 2010).

Mat-Su's vacancy was 3.5 percent for three of the last four years, hovering just below its long-term median of 4 percent.

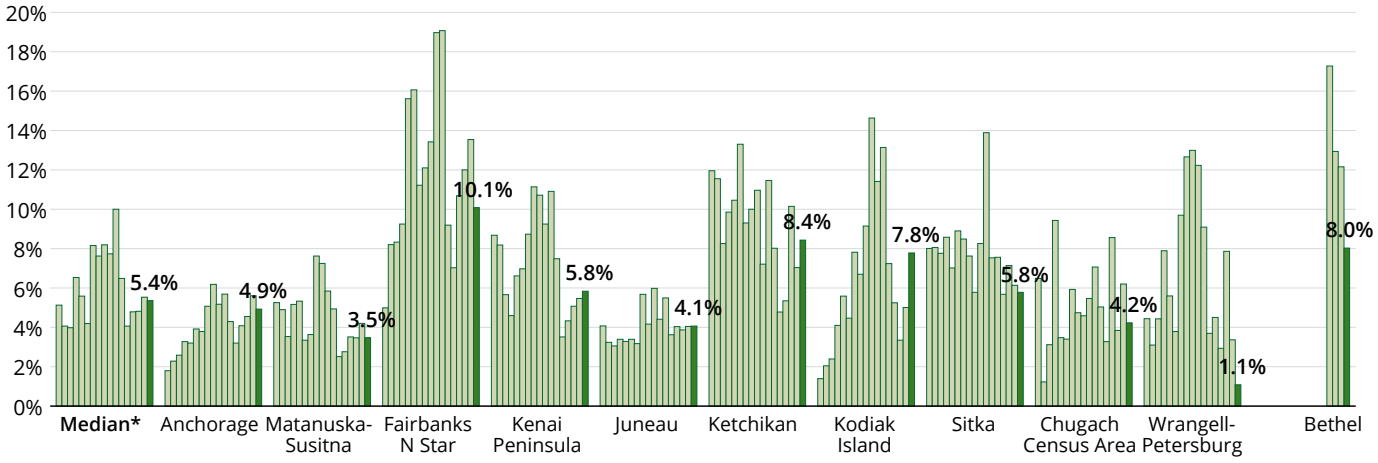
While rates in both places have moved similarly — rising in the late 2010s, falling early in the pandemic, gradually increasing after, then falling this year — Mat-Su's March rate has remained at least somewhat lower than Anchorage's since 2020.

Vacancy increased in Fairbanks for three straight years, hitting 13.5 percent in 2025 before dropping to 10 percent this spring (about 1 percent below its long-term median).

The Kenai Peninsula Borough's rate increased for four straight years, from 3.5 percent in 2022 to 5.8 percent in 2026. However, this year's increase was small, and the rate remains about 1 percent below the area's long-term median.

Juneau's vacancy rate has held steady for the past five years at around 4 percent, on par with its long-term median.

March vacancy rates by survey area, 2010 to 2026



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

Census Bureau estimates an annual statewide vacancy rate

While our survey doesn't produce a statewide or annual vacancy rate, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates a rental vacancy rate each year for Alaska from its Housing Vacancy Survey.

The 2025 estimate for the state was about 5 percent, but the margin of error suggests the actual rate was between 3.5 and 6.3 percent. This was similar to the previous four years but significantly tighter than 2014-2020.

Last year's estimate was also below the historical median (since 1986) of 6.8 percent.

What influences rents, vacancy

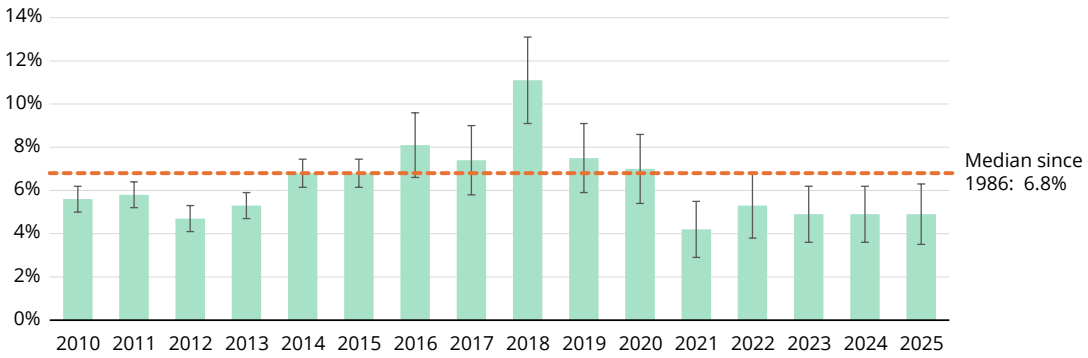
Rents and vacancies are influenced by many competing factors we have data for — employment and population trends, homebuying conditions, and new building — as well as factors we don't, such as how many units entered or exited the rental market in the areas we survey.

The remainder of the article focuses on the factors for which we do have data, to provide context to this year's survey results.

Wages rose notably as job growth slowed

Last year, Alaska's job count increased for the fifth year in a row since the pandemic downturn, but at

Annual statewide rental vacancy rates from U.S. Census Bureau



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Housing Vacancy Survey

a much slower pace than in other recent years.

Employment grew about 1 percent, the slowest of the last five years, while total and average wages continued to increase faster than usual. Total wages rose about 6 percent, and the average wage increased by about 5 percent.

Growth in jobs and wages tends to increase rental demand, which can push rents up and tighten vacancy.

The table on the right shows employment and wage growth for 2025 among surveyed areas.

Mat-Su and the Kenai Peninsula Borough were the two largest markets that stood out for above-average job growth. Employment rose much more slowly in Anchorage and barely moved in Fairbanks and Juneau.

Meanwhile, wage growth was robust across the rental survey areas.

Growth in jobs, wages by area, 2024 to 2025

Area	Avg job growth	Total wage growth	Avg wage growth
Anchorage, Municipality	0.5%	5.1%	4.5%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	1.4%	6.3%	4.9%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	0.0%	3.5%	3.5%
Juneau, City and Borough	0.1%	5.2%	5.0%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	1.4%	7.5%	6.1%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	-0.3%	5.0%	5.3%
Kodiak Island Borough	2.8%	5.8%	2.9%
Sitka, City and Borough	0.8%	7.9%	7.0%
Chugach Census Area	0.2%	4.8%	4.6%
Petersburg Borough	3.1%	7.6%	4.4%
Wrangell, City and Borough	2.4%	8.4%	5.8%
Alaska	0.8%	5.7%	4.8%

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

A bigger adult population through more aged 65-plus, and net migration losses

Alaska's adult population increased for the fifth consecutive year in 2025, up by 0.5 percent, as a growing 65-plus population offset a slight decline in the working-age population.

Meanwhile, Alaska's negative net migration streak extended to 13 consecutive years, but the loss remained significantly smaller than in most of those years, especially 2020 and the late 2010s.

The table below shows changes in adult populations and net migration — in-migrants minus outmigrants — in 2025 among the areas we survey.

Increases in the adult population and net migration gains can also increase demand for rentals, which can push rents up and decrease availability, while the opposite is true for shrinking adult populations and net migration losses.

The adult population increased everywhere we surveyed in 2025 except the Chugach Census Area, although many areas' increases were modest or near zero.

Mat-Su and the Kenai Peninsula Borough continued to buck the statewide net migration loss trend, although Kenai's net migration has moved closer to flat over the last two years.

Multi-year net migration loss streaks ended in Ketchikan, Sitka, and Wrangell. Net loss streaks *continued* in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kodiak, Chugach, and Bethel.

Adult population and migration, 2025

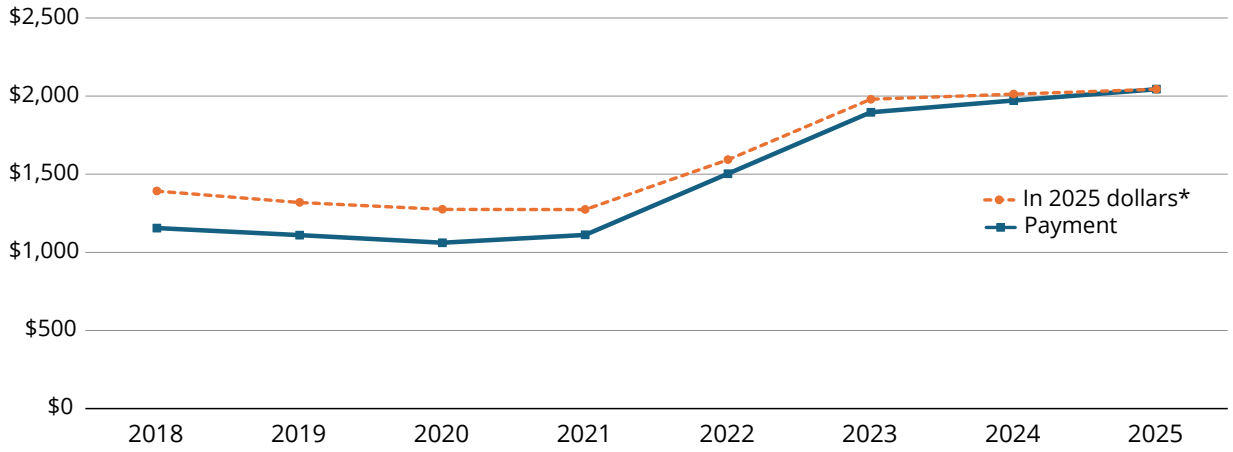
Area	Pct chg, adult population	Net migration rate, 2024-25
Anchorage, Municipality	0.1%	-0.5%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	2.0%	1.0%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	0.6%	-0.5%
Juneau, City and Borough	0%	-0.7%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	0.8%	0.3%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	0%	0.2%
Kodiak Island Borough	0.1%	-1.0%
Sitka, City and Borough	0%	0.1%
Chugach Census Area	-1.9%	-2.3%
Wrangell, City and Borough	1.3%	1.0%
Petersburg Borough	1.0%	1.2%
Bethel Census Area	1.0%	-1.2%
Alaska	0.5%	-0.2%

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

More renters living alone

According to the most recent estimates from the American Community Survey, which cover 2020-2024, living alone became more common. During that period, 39 percent of Alaska renters lived alone, compared to around 34 percent during the 2010s. Fewer people per rental unit can also increase demand.

The amount of a typical new mortgage payment in Alaska since 2018



*Urban Alaska Consumer Price Index
Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation; U.S. Census Bureau, CPI-U for Urban Alaska

Higher homebuying costs and fewer new mortgages

Since 2023, the cost of a new mortgage for a typical home has remained drastically higher than before and early in the pandemic, and borrowing has remained below pre-pandemic levels. These are trends nationally as well as across Alaska.

More restrictive homebuying conditions can increase rental demand, as fewer renters can or choose to buy.

In 2025, the estimated monthly principal and interest payment was about $2,050 for a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage on a median-valued home in Alaska ($415,000), with the median interest rate for this mortgage type (6.25 percent) and a 20 percent down payment.

That mortgage payment was 84 percent higher than in 2019, before home values and rates jumped.

From 2019 to 2025, the median home value increased by about 41 percent, from just under $300,000 to $415,000, while the median interest

Mortgage lending and payments by area, 2019 to 2025

	Estimated monthly payment			New mortgages*		
Area	2019	2025	Change, 2019-25	2019	2025	Change, 2019-25
Anchorage, Municipality	$1,185.00	$2,093.44	77%	3,513	2,643	-25%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	$1,034.52	$2,093.44	102%	1,820	1,537	-16%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	$996.90	$1,748.64	75%	1,168	950	-19%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	$959.28	$1,896.41	98%	624	515	-17%
Juneau, City and Borough	$1,373.09	$2,388.98	74%	398	294	-26%
Kodiak Island Borough	$1,335.47	$2,290.47	72%	98	76	-22%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	$1,185.00	$2,093.44	77%	76	61	-20%
Chugach Census Area**	NA	$1,945.67	NA	NA	46	NA
Sitka, City and Borough	$1,523.57	$2,783.04	83%	40	30	-25%
Bethel Census Area	$1,297.85	$2,191.95	69%	32	19	-41%
Petersburg Borough	$996.90	$1,994.92	100%	14	9	-36%
Wrangell, City and Borough	$959.28	$1,847.15	93%	12	3	-75%
Alaska	$1,110	$2,044	84%	8,067	6,390	-21%

*Primary residence mortgage originations reported under the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act
**The Chugach Census Area was formed in recent years from part of the Valdez-Cordova Census Area.
Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section: and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

rate rose from under 4 percent to 6.25 percent.

Also during that period, median interest rates ranged from just under 3 percent in 2020 and 2021 to 6.5 percent in 2023.

These estimates don't include additional home ownership costs such as utilities, property taxes, insurance, maintenance, or the down payment. Further, most borrowers in Alaska put less than 20 percent down, which means a higher monthly mortgage payment and often requires mortgage insurance. These exclusions understate the difference in costs between buying and renting.

Higher mortgage costs have also slowed borrowing in recent years. Mortgage originations for primary residences have remained well below pre-pandemic levels since 2023, the first full year the median interest rate topped 6 percent.

Mortgage interest rates aren't historically high right now — the five-decade median is 7 percent — but they haven't been this high since the late 2000s.

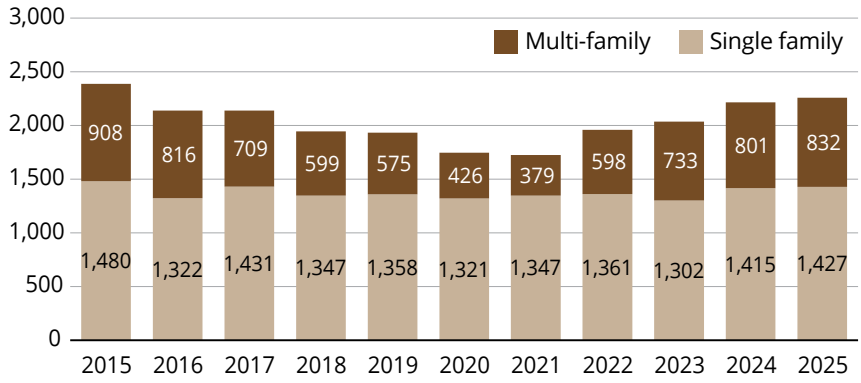
See the table on the previous page for area-specific estimated monthly mortgage payments and the numbers of new mortgages and how they have changed since 2019.

New units by type and area, 2025

Area	Total*	Single family	Multi-family
Anchorage, Municipality	404	170	234
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	949	729	220
Juneau, City and Borough	157	36	121
Fairbanks North Star Borough	259	179	80
Kenai Peninsula Borough	215	148	67
Chugach Census Area	40	11	29
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	74	52	21
Sitka, City and Borough	30	12	18
Wrangell, City and Borough	13	6	6
Kodiak Island Borough	9	9	-
Petersburg Borough	6	6	-
Bethel Census Area	6	6	-
Alaska	2,261	1,427	832

*Mobile homes account for the difference between total units and the sum of single-family and multi-family units.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

New housing units in Alaska, 2015 to 2025



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

New home construction hits 10-year high

We survey communities around the state each year for the number of units permitted in areas that issue permits and the number built in non-permit-issuing areas.

In 2025, our survey recorded 2,261 new units in the state: 1,427 single-family homes and 832 multi-family units. These were the highest total and multi-family units since 2016, and the most single-family homes since 2018.

New homes, especially multi-family, can slow rent growth and increase vacancy by expanding the rental supply.

Mat-Su accounted for about 40 percent of total new units in 2025, followed by Anchorage (18 percent), Fairbanks (11 percent), the Kenai Peninsula Borough (10 percent), and Juneau (7 percent).

More multi-family units being built

About 96 percent of the 832 new multi-family units were in areas we survey. Anchorage and Mat-Su accounted for more than half, with more than 200 new multi-family units each. Juneau, Fairbanks, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough had the next-largest shares. (See the table on the left.)

Anchorage permitted 234 units, the most in eight years. Mat-Su permitted 220, including 42 in Wasilla and 178 outside of Wasilla and Palmer. Mat-Su's count was lower than in the previous two years but more than in any year from 2018-2022.

Fairbanks recorded 80 new multi-family units in 2025, which was on par with 2024. While it was significantly

fewer than in 2022 and 2023, last year's count was higher than any year from 2012 to 2021.

Juneau permitted 121, the most since 2020 and the fourth-highest since at least 2005.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough permitted 67, more than any year since at least 2005, including 32 in Soldotna and 24 in Kenai.

The Chugach Census Area permitted 29, more than any year since at least 2005 by far, with 20 in Valdez and nine in Cordova.

Ketchikan permitted 21 after adding 33 in 2024, which was its highest in at least two decades.

Sitka permitted 18, which was on par with recent years.

Wrangell permitted six, the most in more than a decade.

Inflation remained low in 2025

Inflation in Alaska's consumer price index, which measures price changes in the Anchorage/Mat-Su area, remained close to 2 percent for the third year in a row after hitting a four-decade high in 2022.

As a result, inflation probably didn't push rents up last year as much as it did earlier in the decade. In fact, continued moderate inflation may have been a reason rent hikes slowed in some areas, as many landlords consider inflation when adjusting rents.

Inflation may become a bigger factor again in the near future if early-year trends continue. In the first half of 2026, prices were up almost 3 percent from the same period last year, the highest semiannual inflation reading since the first half of 2023.

Because of timing, higher oil prices probably didn't play a significant role either

Because the survey came shortly after the initial oil price spike this spring and most rents from the survey are for existing leases, higher heating oil prices likely had little effect on this year's results in areas where oil heat is common, such as Fairbanks, Kodiak, Chugach, Bethel, and parts of Southeast. However, higher heating oil prices will likely be a bigger factor next year, as prices have remained elevated.

In July, national heating oil prices were up more than 30 percent from July 2025 and January 2026, but down almost 10 percent from April and May 2026, when prices reached their highest levels since late 2022.

Gunnar Schultz is an economist in Juneau. Reach him at (907) 465-6038 or gunnar.schultz@alaska.gov.

Small changes in housing affordability

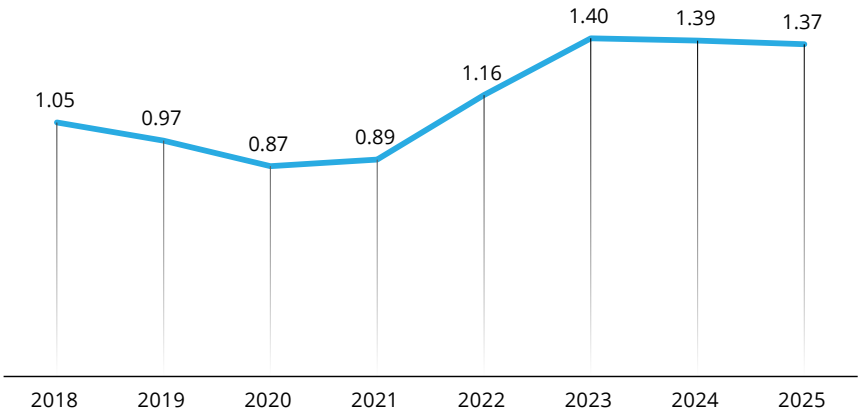
Marginal affordability boost in 2025, but rates volatile in 2026

By ROB KREIGER
and GUNNAR SCHULTZ

Buying a home in Alaska became slightly more affordable for a second consecutive year in 2025. A mortgage interest rate decline made the difference.

The Alaska Affordability Index was 1.37 in 2025, down marginally from 2023's high point of 1.40. (A lower index value indicates more affordable housing. See the sidebar on the next page for more on how the index is calculated.)

Homebuying slightly more affordable in 2025

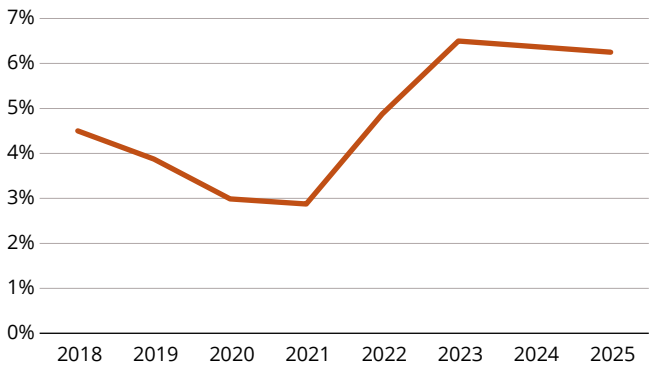


Note: Value represents the number of average earners required to afford a typical home.
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

The index value represents the number of people earning the average monthly wage it would take to afford mortgage payments on a median-valued home.

A lower value means purchasing a home requires fewer people's earnings, making housing more affordable; rising index values mean housing is becoming less affordable. The index hit a record high in 2023.

Interest rates dip but stay high



Source: Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Home Mortgage Disclosure Act

While declining interest rates were the main driver last year, rates have been volatile in recent months, which makes affordability in 2026 unclear.

Interest rates were the most influential factor in affordability

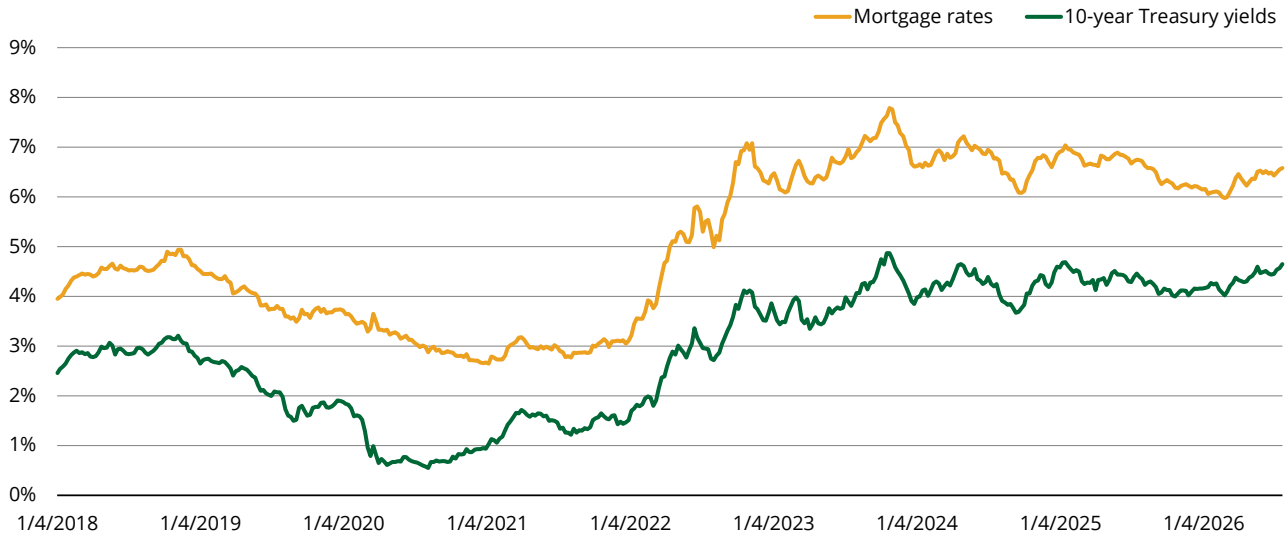
Wages and home values rose equally last year, so, of the three major components of the housing affordability index — mortgage rates, monthly wages, and median home values — interest rates had the biggest impact.

In 2025, the median interest rate on a 30-year mortgage for single-family homes and condominiums in Alaska was 6.25 percent — down from 6.38 percent in 2024 and the multi-year high of 6.5 percent in 2023.

But while the index values show housing has become marginally more affordable in recent years, they remain high relative to the historic lows of 2020 and 2021 and the years before the pandemic.

So while a dip in interest rates did provide some relief to prospective homebuyers last year, the benefit was negligible.

Mortgage interest rates and U.S. Treasury yields, 2018 to 2026



Sources: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and Freddie Mac

About the Alaska Affordability Index

We calculate the Alaska Affordability Index by first determining the monthly principal and interest payment for a 30-year fixed rate mortgage to buy a single-family home or condo with the median home value, median interest rate, and a 20 percent down payment.

We determine the required monthly income for the mortgage by dividing the monthly principal and interest payment by 24 percent, which is the monthly income for which the monthly mortgage payment accounts for 24 percent, a conservative percentage that leaves room for other monthly costs.

The index values are then determined by dividing that required monthly income by the average monthly wage from our own data. When required monthly income and average monthly wages are the same, the index value is 1.0, meaning one person earning the average wage can afford a typical home. As the gap between required monthly income and average wages increases, the index value increases, indicating less affordable housing as more wages are needed. As the gap narrows, housing is more affordable, requiring less in wages.

The average wage is based on what employers report to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development each quarter when they submit their mandatory unemployment insurance tax reports.

The estimated monthly mortgage payment is based on the loan amount to purchase the median-valued single-family home or condominium and the median 30-year fixed-rate mortgage interest rate reported by lending institutions on Home Mortgage Disclosure Act filings.

The Alaska Affordability Index is available at:
https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/housing/index.html

Interest rate volatility clouds affordability picture in 2026

For housing to become significantly more affordable in the short run, interest rates would need to drop much lower; home values and wages don't change that quickly.

Nationally, rates approached 6 percent toward the end of 2025 — even dipping below 6 percent in late February 2026. Then in March, rates rose quickly, hitting 6.46 percent in early April.

As of late July 2026, rates had approached 6.7 percent, the highest since August 2025.

Many factors cause mortgage rates to rise and fall, but rates on 30-year fixed-rate mortgages track closely with yields on 10-year U.S. Treasury notes, which are influenced by economic uncertainty and expectations about inflation, among other things. (See the graph on this page.)

Changing how we collect data

Explaining this year's results includes detailing a recent change in how we collect the numbers we need to calculate the index.

The Research and Analysis Section has published the Alaska Affordability Index since the 1990s, and for decades, we used mortgage data from a quarterly survey of Alaska housing lenders. Although this method produced reliable numbers for many years, changes in home mortgage lending made the survey antiquated and it risked becoming obsolete.

A major issue was more homebuyers seeking financing online rather than at banks and credit unions, which handled most mortgage lending across the state until online financing grew in the 2010s.

The change in the lending landscape made data collection increasingly challenging, resulting in us capturing a shrinking segment of the market over time.

We determined the mortgage loan data that lenders report to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau under the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act was the best alternative. The HMDA requires most financial institutions, including credit unions, to compile and disclose data about home purchase loans, home improvement loans, and refinancings that they originate or purchase, or for which they receive applications.

Unlike a survey, which is voluntary, data reported through the HMDA are required for most lenders, including those based outside Alaska but loaning within the state.

One key difference between HMDA data and our survey is that the new source doesn't distinguish between single-family houses and condominiums, nor does it detail whether loans are new or for existing construction. As a result, the median home values and loan amounts we now use to calculate the Alaska Affordability Index represent houses and condos combined.

While HDMA data have been around for many years, the inputs required to calculate the index have only been published since 2018, so the new series begins with that year.

Index values we published before 2018, or for later years in previous *Trends* articles, are not directly comparable to the numbers in this article.

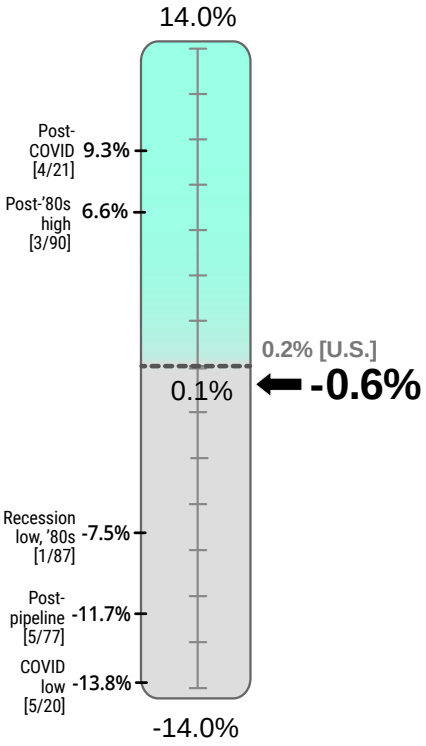
The numbers tell the same story as the previous series, though, even if the index values have changed: Housing affordability has been volatile since 2020, with homes being the most affordable in 2020 and 2021, then much less affordable since.

Rob Kreiger and Gunnar Schultz are economists in Juneau. Reach them at (907) 465-6031, (907) 465-6038, rob.kreiger@alaska.gov, or gunnar.schultz@alaska.gov

Gauging The Economy

Job Growth

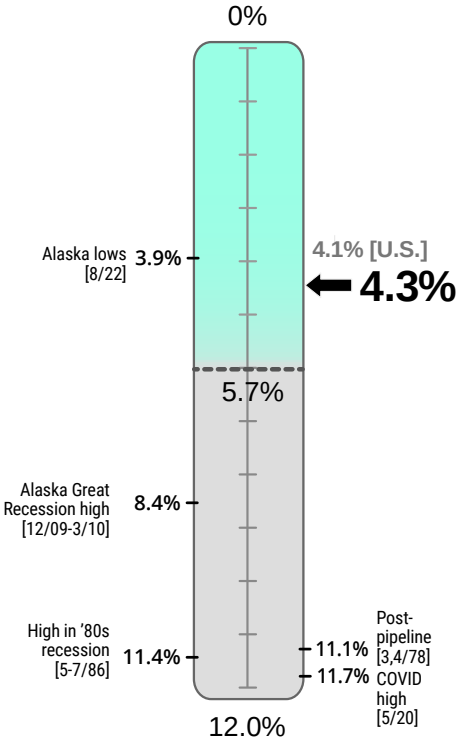
July 2026
Over-the-year percent change



Alaska's July employment was down by 0.6 percent from last July. U.S. employment was up by 0.2 percent.

Unemployment Rate

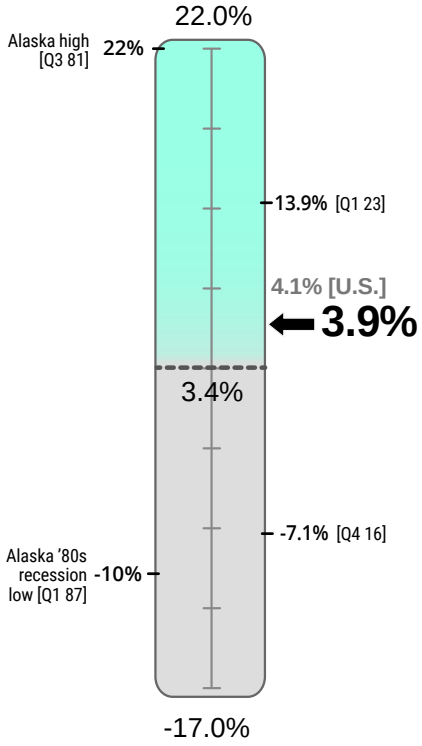
July 2026
Seasonally adjusted



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

Wage Growth

1st Quarter 2026
Over-the-year percent change



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

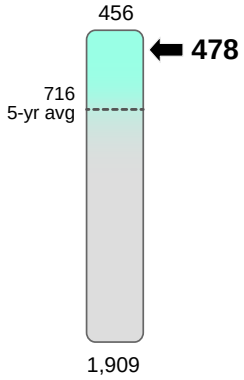
Wages were up 3.9 percent from year-ago levels in the first quarter of 2026.

Gauging The Economy

ALASKA'S 10-YR AVERAGE
CURRENT ALASKA

Initial Claims

Unemployment, week ending Aug. 8, 2026*

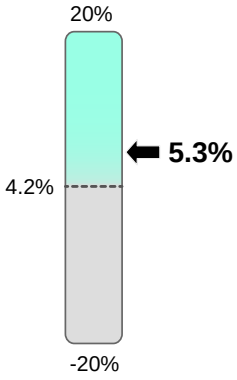


Pandemic-driven high claims loads have fallen, and new claims for benefits are well below their long-term average.

*Four-week moving average ending with specified week

GDP Growth

1st Quarter 2026
Over-the-year percent change*

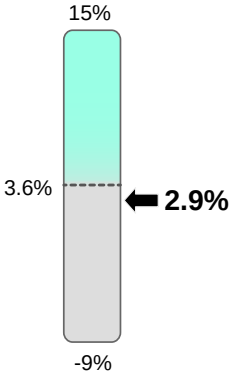


Gross domestic product is the value of the goods and services a state produces. It's an important economic measure but also a volatile one for Alaska because commodity prices influence the numbers so much — especially oil prices.

*In current dollars

Personal Income Growth

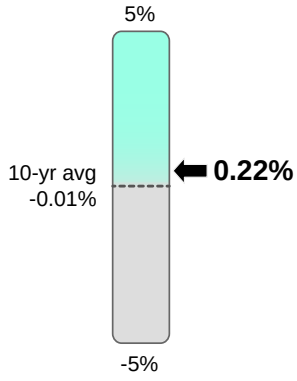
1st Quarter 2026
Over-the-year percent change



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

Population Growth

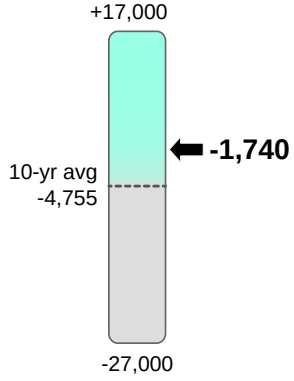
2024 to 2025



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

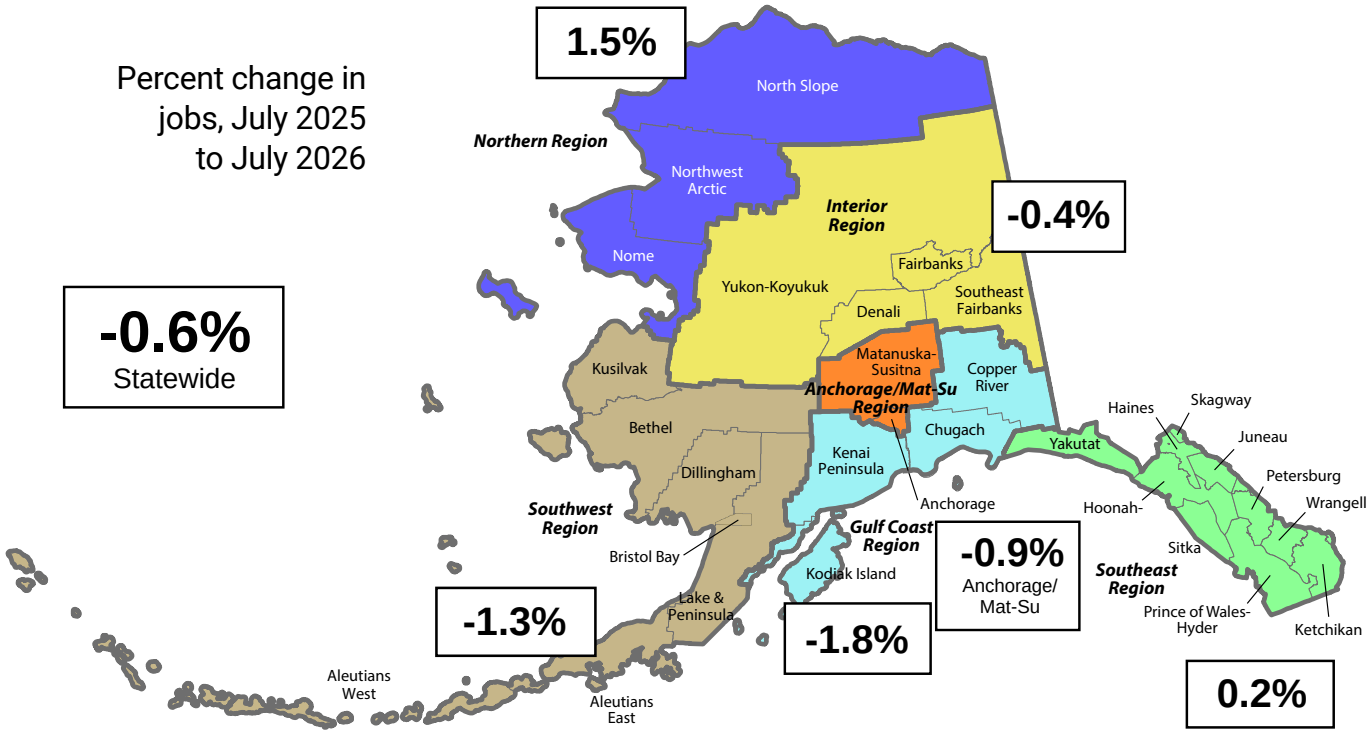
Net Migration

2024 to 2025



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

Employment Growth by Region



Unemployment Rates

Seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised	
	7/26	6/26	7/25
United States	**4.1**	4.2	**4.3**
Alaska	**4.3**	4.4	**4.6**

Not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised	
	7/26	6/26	7/25
United States	4.4	4.4	4.6
Alaska	3.7	4.1	4.1

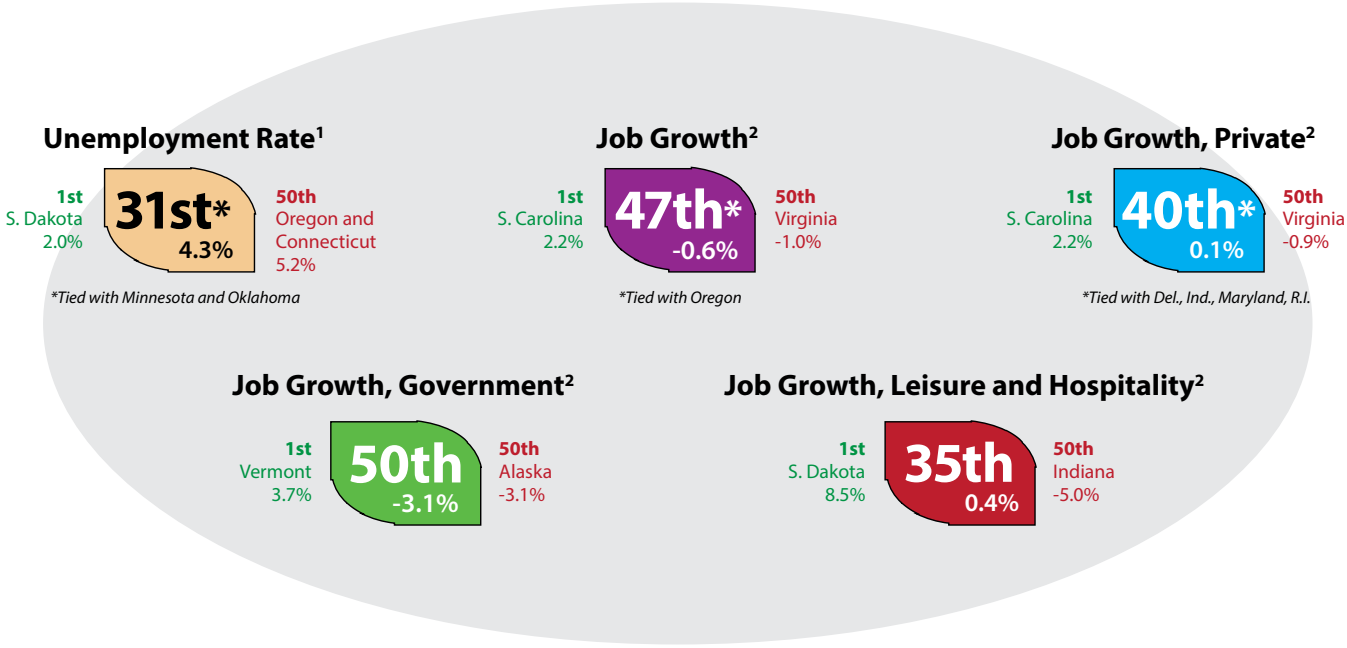
Regional, not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised	
	7/26	6/26	7/25
Interior Region	**3.7**	**4.1**	**3.9**
Denali Borough	1.9	2.2	1.6
Fairbanks N Star Borough	3.3	3.8	3.5
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	5.5	6.0	6.1
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	9.2	8.7	8.7
Northern Region	**6.1**	6.5	**6.9**
Nome Census Area	8.6	8.9	10.6
North Slope Borough	2.9	3.3	3.2
Northwest Arctic Borough	9.6	9.4	9.6
Anchorage/Mat-Su Region	**3.3**	3.8	**3.8**
Anchorage, Municipality	3.2	3.6	3.5
Mat-Su Borough	3.8	4.5	4.5

	Prelim.	Revised	
	7/26	6/26	7/25
Southwest Region	**7.2**	8.1	**8.2**
Aleutians East Borough	1.8	2.6	1.7
Aleutians West Census Area	2.1	3.1	2.3
Bethel Census Area	10.7	10.5	13.4
Bristol Bay Borough	1.1	2.3	0.9
Dillingham Census Area	5.4	7.3	5.9
Kusilvak Census Area	21.0	19.2	20.4
Lake and Peninsula Borough	4.3	5.8	4.7
Gulf Coast Region	**3.5**	4.0	**3.9**
Kenai Peninsula Borough	3.7	4.1	4.2
Kodiak Island Borough	2.5	3.1	3.0
Chugach Census Area	2.9	3.8	3.2
Copper River Census Area	5.2	6.1	4.9

	Prelim.	Revised	
	7/26	6/26	7/25
Southeast Region	**2.9**	3.4	**3.2**
Haines Borough	5.3	6.3	5.3
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	4.2	4.0	3.7
Juneau, City and Borough	2.5	2.9	2.8
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	2.6	3.0	3.1
Petersburg Borough	2.3	2.8	3.8
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	7.2	7.3	7.4
Sitka, City and Borough	2.1	2.5	2.0
Skagway, Municipality	2.6	3.0	2.2
Wrangell, City and Borough	3.7	4.2	4.0
Yakutat, City and Borough	4.4	4.7	3.5

How Alaska Ranks



Note: Government employment includes federal, state, and local government plus public schools and universities.
[1]July seasonally adjusted unemployment rates
[2]July 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)	298.409	1st half 2026	270.441	+2.9%
Commodity prices				
Crude oil, Alaska North Slope,* per barrel	$78.62	July 2026	$73.02	+7.7%
Natural gas, Henry Hub, per thousand cubic feet (mcf)	$2.94	July 2026	$3.30	-11.0%
Gold, per oz. COMEX	$4,516.30	8/20/26	$3,343.40	+35.1%
Silver, per oz. COMEX	$68.03	8/20/26	$37.71	+80.4%
Copper, per lb. COMEX	$6.46	8/20/26	$4.43	+46.0%
Bankruptcies	92	Q2 2026	54	+70.4%
Business	12	Q2 2026	7	+71.4%
Personal	80	Q2 2026	47	+70.2%
Unemployment insurance claims				
Initial filings	2,041	July 2026	2,164	-5.7%
Continued filings	13,586	July 2026	14,771	-8.0%
Claimant count	3,343	July 2026	3,634	-8.0%

*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

Older workers are an invaluable, often underutilized talent pool

Across Alaska, older workers play a vital role in sustaining a strong, skilled, and resilient workforce. Their decades of experience, deep professional knowledge, and commitment to excellence strengthen employers, communities, and the state. As Alaska faces labor shortages and works to expand equitable access to employment, older adults remain an invaluable and often underutilized talent pool.

Older workers bring extensive experience shaped by long careers across government, tribal organizations, nonprofits, health care, maritime industries, and resource-based sectors. Their seasoned problem solving, steady judgment, and ability to navigate industry cycles enhance operational continuity and reduce costly errors. Employers consistently report high reliability, strong work ethic, retention, and adaptability to new technologies.

Their value extends beyond individual job duties, though. Older workers mentor emerging employees, preserve institutional knowledge, and help maintain organizational culture.

Generational diversity enriches problem solving, creativity, and customer service.

Alaska's MASST program, part of the Senior Community Service Employment Program, demonstrates these benefits clearly. Despite significant employment barriers, MASST participants contribute tens of thousands of hours in community service each year, showing both resilience and the substantial impact older workers bring to local agencies.

Hiring older workers is more than good practice — it's a strategic advantage. Their expertise, mentorship, dependability, and diverse perspectives build stronger organizations and support a thriving, resilient workforce across Alaska.

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