

Anchorage and Mat-Su jobs in 2026

Job growth modest for the city, slightly stronger for Mat-Su

By SAM TAPPEN

The economies of the Municipality of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough have long been connected. They were first joined by rail in 1916 and by road in 1936. Since then, Anchorage, with its numerous high-wage jobs, has attracted many workers from the neighboring borough.

In 2024, 26 percent of Mat-Su's employed residents worked in Anchorage, with about 33,000 vehicles traveling the Glenn Highway each day.

Mat-Su, with its relatively affordable and abundant housing supply within commuting distance of Alaska's largest city, was once known as the suburb of Anchorage. In recent years, however, much of Mat-Su's economy has diverged and diversified, fueled by rapid population growth. In each decennial census since 1970, Mat-Su's population has grown at

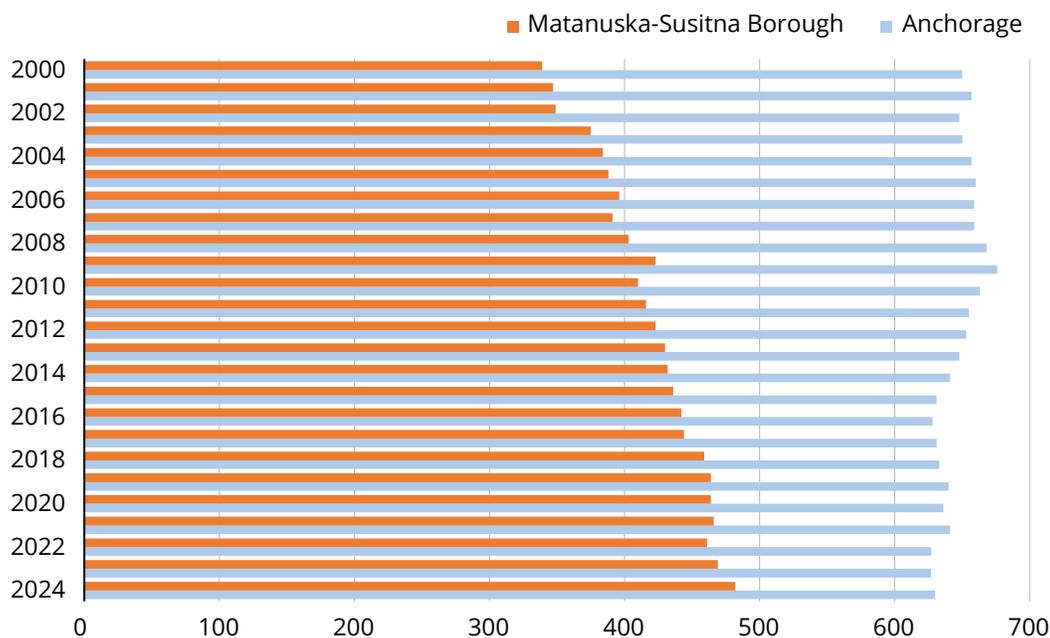
more than triple the Anchorage growth rate.

Mat-Su residents, including noncommuters, once made regular trips to Anchorage for goods and services unavailable locally. As the borough has grown, so has the local economy and its offerings. Not long ago, only basics such as groceries and gas were available in Mat-Su. Now, the borough rivals Anchorage for specialized products across industries.

The exhibit below shows the number of unique types of industries in both areas from 2000 onward. While Anchorage's industry count has slightly declined, Mat-Su has steadily matured, adding many of the goods and services residents used to buy in Anchorage.

Given Mat-Su's increasingly distinct economy, its growing role in driving the statewide economy, and strong demand from residents and local organizations, we have added the Mat-Su Borough to our annual employment forecast.

Numbers of unique industries in Anchorage and Mat-Su since 2000



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

Anchorage Forecast

The outlook for Anchorage in 2026

Changes include big projects, wider uncertainty

Anchorage remains the commercial and industrial hub of Alaska and represents about half of all jobs. Most of the state's largest employers are headquartered in Anchorage, and the city's technical and logistical expertise supports projects throughout Alaska.

As such, last year we expected Anchorage to add jobs at roughly the same pace as in recent years, driven by record federal spending, major natural resource development led by the Pikka and Willow oil projects, and ongoing investment in several reliable growth sectors.

However, 2025 introduced several unexpected dynamics that caused businesses to pause and reevaluate planned projects and investments. These included disruptions to anticipated federal funding and employment, unpredictable new trade policies and tariff impacts, backlash from key trading and tourism partner countries, and new restrictions on migrant labor.

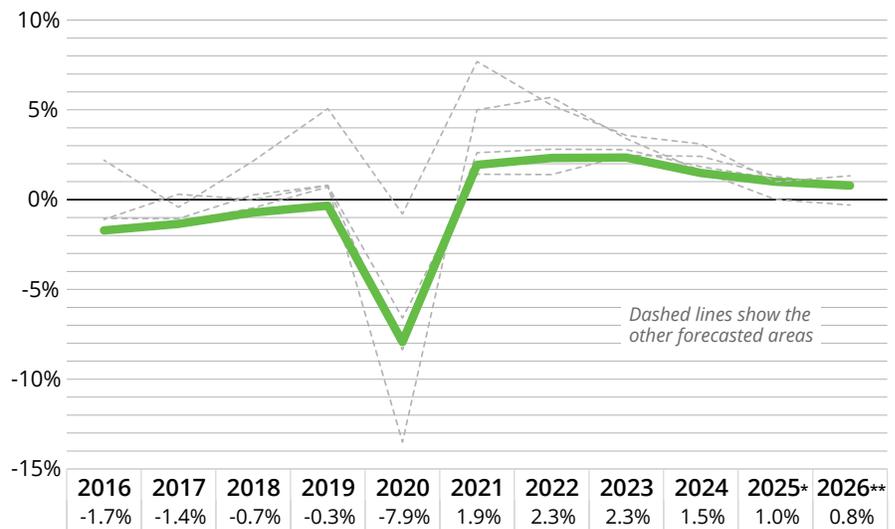
It's not yet clear how each industry will respond to these changes, but preliminary job numbers for 2025 show growth slowed to about 1 percent. (See the graph on this page.)

Longer-term trends influencing Anchorage

This year, we expect Anchorage to add about 1,200 jobs, for a growth rate of 0.8 percent. This slower growth will be the result of near-term uncertainty and longer-term trends that have weighed on Anchorage and the state since at least the 2015 recession. These include a shrinking working-age population driven by demographic change and 11 straight years of net migration losses as well as rising costs, particularly for housing and health care.

On the positive side, wage growth has outpaced price increases in recent years, lifting the average

Modest job growth forecasted for Anchorage



*Preliminary **Forecasted

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

Anchorage household's purchasing power. Alaska's natural resources are receiving renewed interest amid rising commodity prices, geopolitical competition for critical minerals, and supportive federal policies. Finally, employers in a few key sectors continue to invest heavily in Alaska, which will also boost those industries in Anchorage.

The exhibit on the next page breaks down the employment forecast by industry.

Details on notable Anchorage industries

Anchorage's oil and gas employment continued to grow last year but remains at about half of its 2015 peak of 3,800 jobs. Major exploration and production companies developing prospects on the North Slope and in Cook Inlet are headquartered in Anchorage and have been hiring locally. We forecast oil and gas will add another 100 jobs in 2026.

Construction appears vulnerable to the past year's economic shocks, adding just 200 jobs in 2025 after the previous two years' boom. The industry had gained 500 jobs in 2023 and 700 in 2024, but some planned projects were publicly delayed or canceled in 2025, and others have seen no updates.

Beyond projects already underway, new starts this year have been sparse and mostly in government. Examples include Phase 2 of the Port of Alaska Modernization, Phase 1 of the Joint Integrated

The outlook for jobs in Anchorage, by industry

	Monthly avg, 2024 ¹	Monthly avg, 2025 ¹	Change, 2024-25	Percent change	JOBS FORECAST		
					Monthly avg, 2026	Change, 2025-26	Percent change
Total Nonfarm Employment²	150,900	152,400	1,500	1.0%	153,600	1,200	0.8%
Total Private	123,100	124,500	1,400	1.1%	125,700	1,200	1.0%
Mining and Logging	1,900	2,000	100	5.3%	2,100	100	5.0%
Oil and Gas	1,800	1,900	100	5.6%	2,000	100	5.3%
Construction	8,400	8,600	200	2.4%	8,600	0	0%
Manufacturing	1,900	1,900	0	0%	1,900	0	0%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	33,400	33,800	400	1.2%	34,100	300	0.9%
Wholesale Trade	4,800	4,800	0	0%	4,800	0	0%
Retail Trade	15,200	15,200	0	0%	15,100	-100	-0.7%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	13,400	13,800	400	3.0%	14,200	400	2.9%
Information	2,700	2,600	-100	-3.7%	2,500	-100	-3.8%
Financial Activities	6,400	6,300	-100	-1.6%	6,100	-200	-3.2%
Professional and Business Services	18,400	18,500	100	0.5%	18,800	300	1.6%
Educational (private) and Health Services	27,600	28,400	800	2.9%	29,200	800	2.8%
Health Care	22,000	22,800	800	3.6%	23,500	700	3.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	16,700	16,700	0	0%	16,600	-100	-0.6%
Other Services	5,700	5,700	0	0%	5,800	100	1.8%
Total Government	27,800	27,900	100	0.4%	27,900	0	0%
Federal, except military	8,700	8,500	-200	-2.3%	8,300	-200	-2.4%
State, incl. University of Alaska	10,100	10,300	200	2.0%	10,500	200	1.9%
Local and tribal, incl. public schools	9,000	9,100	100	1.1%	9,100	0	0%

¹Preliminary and adjusted estimates. ²Excludes the self-employed, uniformed military, most commercial fishermen, domestic workers, and unpaid family workers.

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

Anchorage and Mat-Su Forecasts

Test and Training Center – Elmendorf, and several smaller air and surface transportation projects.

With the caveat that construction is the most uncertain industry in this year’s forecast, we predict flat construction employment for Anchorage in 2026.

The transportation, warehousing, and utilities sector will continue its strong growth trajectory, which began when global supply chain disruptions prompted renewed investment in Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, the world’s fourth-busiest cargo airport as of 2024. Despite new federal trade policies, the airport’s cargo volume rose during the last fiscal year, and all sorting and support facilities under construction remain on schedule. We forecast this sector will add 400 jobs in 2026.

Health care remains one of the city’s most resilient sectors, continuing to introduce specialized services once unavailable in Alaska and serving patients from across the state. A handful of new medical facilities will be completed within the next year, contributing to the 700 jobs forecasted for 2026.

The outlook for government employment growth in Anchorage is mixed.

Federal employment is expected to decline by 200, similar to the preliminary job losses in 2025. Amid higher University of Alaska Anchorage enrollment, state government will add a modest 200 jobs in the city where nearly half of state government employees work. Local government will remain flat amid stagnant population numbers, declining K-12 public school enrollment, and reduced state support.

The outlook for Mat-Su in 2026

Similar to its population trends, employment in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough has grown almost uninterrupted for decades.

Unlike the state as a whole, which shed more than 8 percent of its jobs in the 2020 pandemic recession, Mat-Su only lost about 0.7 percent. (See the exhibits on the next page.) Job growth in the borough has outpaced the state every year since, playing an outsized role in Alaska’s recovery from the 2020 recession.

We forecast Mat-Su will add about 400 jobs this year (1.3 percent), matching last year’s growth. The table on the next page breaks down projected job growth by industry. Despite slight losses in a few sectors last year, we expect stability in 2026, with no sectors forecasted to lose jobs.

Mat-Su Forecast

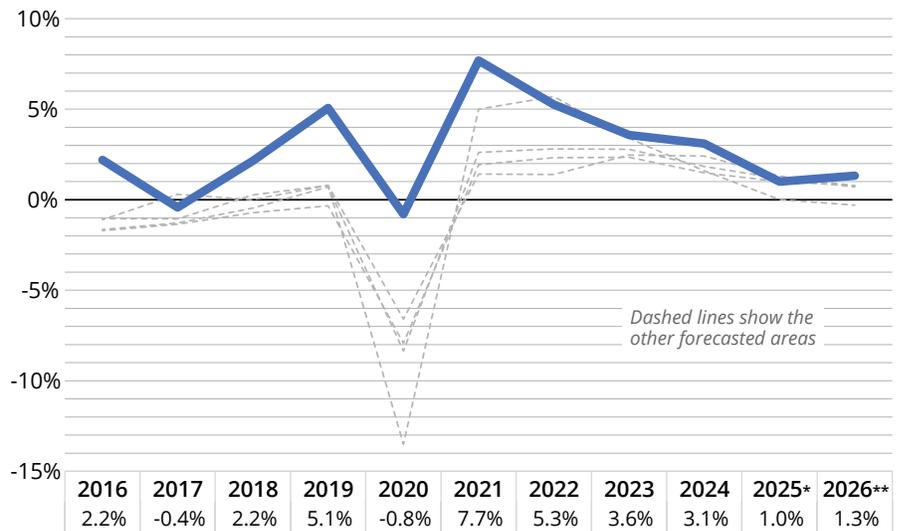
Like other areas of the state, Mat-Su construction will likely slow this year but still add 100 jobs. Projects starting in 2026 include the barge ramp project at the borough-owned Port MacKenzie, the Palmer library reconstruction, and numerous public transportation and utility projects aimed at addressing congestion in rapidly developing transportation corridors.

If Mat-Su Regional Medical Center's certificate of need is approved, construction will begin on a \$73 million free-standing inpatient behavioral health facility at the main campus.

Other sectors expected to grow this year include retail, financial activities, health care, and other services.

Mat-Su's government employment will likely remain stable, with no significant changes at the federal, state, or local levels this year. The borough has not

Mat-Su job growth forecasted at 1.3 percent



*Preliminary **Forecasted

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

seen significant public-sector cuts in any of the last five years.

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The outlook for jobs in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, by industry

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Total Nonfarm Employment²	29,900	30,200	300	1.0%	30,600	400	1.3%
Total Private	24,400	24,700	300	1.2%	25,100	400	1.6%
Mining and Logging	300	300	0	0%	300	0	0%
Construction	3,500	3,700	200	5.7%	3,800	100	2.7%
Manufacturing	500	600	100	20.0%	600	0	0%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	5,900	5,800	-100	-1.7%	5,800	0	0%
Wholesale Trade	200	200	0	0%	200	0	0%
Retail Trade	4,400	4,300	-100	-2.3%	4,400	100	2.3%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	1,300	1,200	-100	-7.7%	1,200	0	0%
Information	400	400	0	0%	400	0	0%
Financial Activities	900	900	0	0%	1,000	100	11.1%
Professional and Business Services	1,800	1,900	100	5.6%	1,900	0	0%
Educational (private) and Health Services	6,100	6,200	100	1.6%	6,300	100	1.6%
Health Care	5,700	5,800	100	1.8%	5,900	100	1.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	3,700	3,700	0	0%	3,700	0	0%
Other Services	1,100	1,100	0	0%	1,200	100	9.1%
Total Government	5,500	5,500	0	0%	5,500	0	0%
Federal, except military	300	300	0	0%	300	0	0%
State, incl. University of Alaska	1,600	1,600	0	0%	1,600	0	0%
Local and tribal, incl. public schools	3,600	3,600	0	0%	3,600	0	0%

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