Job projections by industry

Health care and mining top the growth list from 2024 to 2034

By PAUL MARTZ

The last decade has been tumultuous for Alaska's economy. The oil price crash of 2015 and subsequent recession were followed quickly by the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. Over those five years, the state's job count fell from a peak of 338,579 to 303,046.

Employment has nearly recovered to that 2015 high, helped by major oil developments. However, the upheaval of the last decade fundamentally, and potentially structurally, changed major parts of the economy.

Here is how we project Alaska's major industries will fare for job growth through 2034, starting from 2024 employment levels.

Cannabis brought big agricultural gains, but that has flattened out

Cannabis legalization in 2015 spurred major employment growth in the small agriculture sector, starting in 2017. Since then, the "greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production" category has added 520 jobs, peaking in 2022 at 812 jobs.

Since 2025, the cultivation side of the cannabis industry has settled around 750 jobs, about where we expect it to stay through 2034.

We also project the rest of the agriculture sector to remain essentially flat, netting just seven additional jobs over 10 years, with small amounts of growth for other types of crops buffering overall losses in the greenhouse category.

Oil and gas industry not likely to regain its 2015 peak

The oil and gas sector brings outsized revenues, wages, and jobs to Alaska, but its susceptibility to global market disruptions and uncertainty make it more volatile than most of the economy.

Oil and gas' transformation over the last decade has been stark, and the industry's history provides context on the magnitude of that shift.

For almost two decades after the 1980s recession, oil and job counts were stable. From 1990 to 2005, the sector averaged 9,000 jobs per year, plus or minus about 850 jobs in some.

Then, from 2006 to 2015, industry employment grew steadily, from 10,500 jobs to 15,309, a 46 percent gain. Then in just two years, the post-2015 recessionary era mentioned previously wiped out almost all those gains.

By 2017, oil and gas had fallen to 2006 employment levels. Losses stabilized the following year, and the addition of 357 jobs in 2019 looked like the start of a recovery. That window was short-lived, with the pandemic pushing employment back down to just 8,330 jobs the next year. The low was 7,086 jobs in 2021.

Recovery began slowly in 2022, picking up in 2023 with a final investment decision for the Pikka project, followed by the Willow project go-ahead. Oil and gas continued to add jobs over the next two years, but even with substantial projects providing a tailwind, the industry remained about 1,000 jobs below its 2019 count and 5,900 jobs below the 2015 peak. No other industry saw an employment shift that large during the last decade.

Looking toward 2034, we project oil and gas employment to rise to 9,996, which would be a 12.2 percent gain from 2024.

Some job loss will follow Pikka and Willow wrapping up in the near term, but additional satellite projects will likely use the new infrastructure. Those types of projects won't create as many jobs as Pikka and Willow, but the combination of secondary construction and field operation jobs will contribute to growth.

Even with recent growth, however, oil and gas is unlikely to regain its 2015 peak by 2034. As of 2025, the job count remained 6,000 below that high, even

Alaska job projections by industry[1], 2024 to 2034

	2024 est jobs[2]	2034 projected	Change, 2024-34	% change, 2024-34[3]
Total Employment[4]	**335,157**	**343,733**	**8,577**	**2.6%**
Goods-Producing	44,699	46,394	1,695	3.8%
Natural Resources and Mining	14,639	16,652	2,014	13.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1,578	1,585	7	0.4%
Mining	13,061	15,068	2,007	15.4%
Oil and Gas[5]	8,912	9,996	1,084	12.2%
Oil and Gas Extraction	2,992	3,604	611	20.4%
Mining (except Oil and Gas)	3,784	4,654	870	23.0%
Support Activities for Mining	6,285	6,810	525	8.4%
Construction	17,670	16,799	-871	-4.9%
Construction of Buildings	5,311	4,868	-443	-8.3%
Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	4,518	3,982	-536	-11.9%
Specialty Trade Contractors	7,841	7,949	108	1.4%
Manufacturing	12,390	12,942	552	4.5%
Food Manufacturing	8,185	8,859	674	8.2%
Seafood Product Preparation and Packaging	7,396	7,958	562	7.6%
Manufacturing, All Other	4,205	4,084	-122	-2.9%
Services-Providing	290,309	297,134	6,825	2.4%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	69,326	70,753	1,427	2.1%
Wholesale Trade	6,409	6,397	-13	-0.2%
Retail Trade	35,096	35,031	-65	-0.2%
Transportation and Warehousing[6]	25,223	26,692	1,469	5.8%
Air Transportation	6,444	6,765	321	5.0%
Water Transportation	1,164	1,168	3	0.3%
Truck Transportation	3,119	2,824	-295	-9.5%
Transportation and Warehousing, All Other	14,496	15,936	1,440	9.9%
Utilities	2,598	2,633	36	1.4%
Information	4,541	4,011	-530	-11.7%
Financial Activities	11,795	11,546	-249	-2.1%
Finance and Insurance	6,027	5,538	-489	-8.1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	5,768	6,008	240	4.2%
Professional and Business Services	27,641	27,994	353	1.3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	13,688	13,572	-116	-0.9%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,377	2,553	176	7.4%
Admin, Support and Waste Mgmt/Remediation Svcs	11,576	11,869	294	2.5%
Education and Health Services	79,960	85,199	5,239	6.6%
Educational Services, Public and Private[7]	27,886	27,172	-714	-2.6%
Elementary and Secondary Schools, Public/Private	19,237	18,126	-1,111	-5.8%
Educational Services, Public and Private, All Other	8,649	9,046	396	4.6%
Health Care and Social Assistance, Public and Private[8]	52,074	58,028	5,954	11.4%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	23,182	25,610	2,428	10.5%
Hospitals	16,640	18,544	1,904	11.4%
Health Care and Social Assistance, All Other	12,252	13,874	1,621	13.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	36,102	37,367	1,265	3.5%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	5,311	5,673	362	6.8%
Accommodation and Food Services	30,791	31,695	904	2.9%
Accommodation	8,303	8,791	488	5.9%
Food Services and Drinking Places	22,488	22,903	416	1.8%
Other Services (Except Government)	12,439	12,282	-157	-1.3%
Total Government	48,506	47,983	-523	-1.1%
Federal Government[9]	13,477	13,116	-361	-2.7%
State Government[10]	16,689	16,589	-99	-0.6%
Local Government[11]	18,339	18,277	-62	-0.3%

[1]Industry categories differ from other data sets we publish, largely because these combine public and private jobs.
[2]May not sum to total employment due to rounding
[3]Percent change may be inconsistent with employment change due to employment rounding.
[4]Excludes self-employed workers, fishermen, domestic workers, unpaid family workers, and nonprofit volunteers
[5]Includes oil and gas exploration and oilfield services
[6]Includes U.S. Postal Service employment
[7]Includes local and state government education employment
[8]Includes public sector hospital employment
[9]Excludes uniformed military, postal service, and hospital employment
[10]Excludes university, railroad, and hospital employment
[11]Excludes public school and hospital employment

with significant temporary construction employment for the new projects.

Mining future mostly in existing operations and exploration

The opening of the Red Dog and Greens Creek mines in 1989 and Fort Knox in the mid-1990s ushered in the modern era of large-scale mines in Alaska. Between 1990 and 2025, the mineral mining industry expanded from 1,184 jobs to 3,893.

Two distinct periods of expansion followed the early days. Pogo and Kensington openings nearly doubled the industry's employment from 2005 to 2013. The 2018-2025 period pushed employment up another 35 percent, to nearly 4,000 jobs.

Manh Choh is the only new recent mine, and most new mining jobs have been in exploration to extend the lives of existing mines as well as exploration and development for potential new mines.

We project mining employment to increase by 23 percent over 10 years, based on sustained growth in potential mine development and existing mines rather than any specific new project.

This projection also excludes any anticipated mine closures over the next 10 years, but future rounds of projections will capture new developments or closures based on lead times and investments in continued exploration.

Construction employment projected to be flat long term

Even with strong ties to the mining and oil and gas industries, construction was diverse enough to weather both recessions. After the 1980s downturn, employment grew robustly through the mid-2000s (79 percent from 1990-2006, or 7,990 new jobs).

As the housing market in the Lower 48 began to soften in 2006 before the bubble burst and spurred the U.S. Great Recession, Alaska's residential construction industry also began to contract, and the loss continued through 2011. The industry stabilized after that, through 2019.

When the pandemic hit the following year, residential construction employment gradually climbed as mortgage rates fell and homeowners spent more on renovations. From 2020 to 2025, the residential category added 239 jobs (15 percent).

We project flat employment from 2024 to 2034. The short-to-medium term could bring employment spikes if recently announced investment at Anchorage military installations comes to fruition. However, population trends, interest rates, and material and labor costs will likely weigh on the industry moving forward.

Nonresidential construction employment is projected to decrease by about 13 percent over the decade, a loss of 449 jobs, bringing it down to pre-pandemic levels. The industry grew substantially in 2024 and 2025 with new projects on the North Slope. Additional projects tied to the recent developments will rely on existing infrastructure.

Specialty trade contractors also spiked with recent large-scale projects, and the category has added 412 jobs since 2023. This part of the construction sector serves other industries in Alaska, so it recovered much quicker after COVID with the transition to residential projects. We project 1.4 percent growth over the 10-year period.

Heavy and civil engineering construction has benefited considerably from the Pikka and Willow developments, adding 1,482 jobs between 2022 and 2025 (44.3 percent). As current projects wrap up, we expect employment to slowly return to previous levels. The projected 3,982 total jobs in 2034 would be close to 2014, pre-oil-recession levels. Significant utility

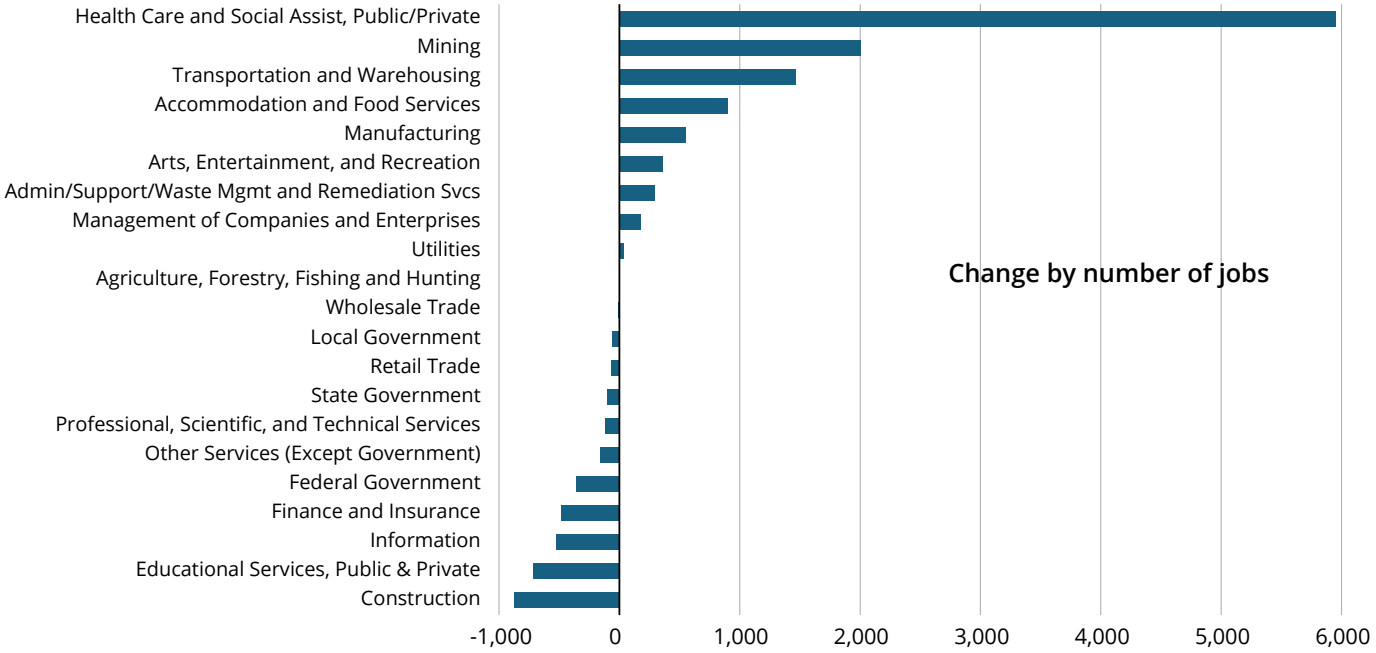
About the effects of AI

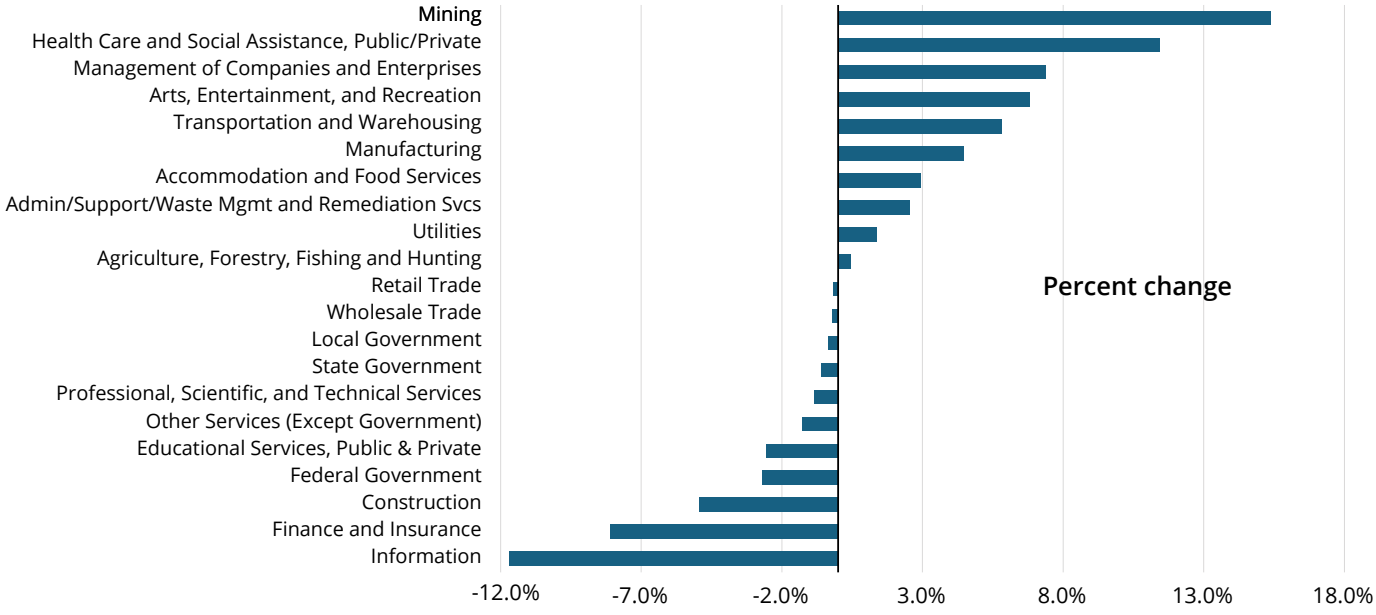
Artificial intelligence will touch much of Alaska's labor force over the next decade, but we can't accurately attribute any current broad shifts to AI.

While technology is improving rapidly and AI is being adopted at an increasing rate, it's still too early to predict the magnitude of the change over the next decade.

We do expect industries that have transitioned to online services over the last couple of decades to be the most vulnerable to automation in the near term, particularly finance and insurance. While other industries will certainly be affected, we expect impacts mostly in specific occupations across multiple parts of the economy.

Projected job change by Alaska industry, 2024 to 2034





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

projects on the horizon will stabilize employment, as will ongoing infrastructure-related construction.

Seafood processing likely to stabilize at a lower new normal

Seafood processing has always been volatile. Between 1990 and 2025, 18 years — about half — were loss years. The longest uninterrupted growth streak was from 2002 to 2006, when the industry expanded from 7,525 to 9,337 jobs.

Processing has continued to struggle since the pandemic. The industry has been hit by recent U.S. tariffs, policy uncertainty, and retaliation from China.

The industry lost 1,075 jobs from 2023 to 2024 as the market wore on processors, resulting in closures and consolidations. Employment bounced back up to 7,972 jobs in 2025, a recovery of about half the previous year's loss, but remained well-below pre-pandemic levels.

After six years of lower employment, processing appears to have absorbed the changes. We expect it to stabilize around 7,958 jobs by 2034.

Wholesale, retail outlook is mixed

Wholesale trade weathered previous downturns well, although like most industries, its employment has leveled off.

Wholesale employment dipped with the oil recession in 2016 and began to recover in 2019 before dropping sharply in 2020 and 2021 with COVID.

Growth has been modest since, and in the long term we expect employment to be flat: -0.2 percent between 2024 and 2034.

Retail trends are harder to isolate because of the range of retailers and the industry's vulnerability to changes in consumer preferences rather than global commodity prices.

Since 1990, the warehouse clubs and supercenters category has expanded by 194 percent, offset by losses in traditional grocery and convenience retailers (-35 percent). The net gain has been 4,905 jobs between those two categories.

From 2024 to 2034, we project the grocery side will decline by 17.8 percent and the supercenter side will increase by 5.9 percent.

Motor vehicle and parts dealers gained some ground after the Great Recession but did not fare well during Alaska's two most recent recessions. The industry has been mostly flat over the last few years, and we expect it to remain flat through 2034.

Jobs in building material and supply dealers, which were stable until 2019, jumped during the COVID home improvement era, then dropped back down by almost the same amount. We project very slight growth through 2034, to about 3,586 total jobs.

Clothing, accessories, shoe, and jewelry retailers are projected to see the largest percentage increase over the decade at 12.2 percent (200 jobs).

These types of retailers started to gain momentum in 2025, adding 77 jobs. We project 2034 employment will be on par with pre-pandemic employment (1,848). Tourism is a driver for this industry and has likely buffered it from settling at a lower job count.

Transportation growth in sightseeing and air cargo

Tourism boosted scenic and sightseeing transportation and air transportation in recent years, and that will likely continue. We project 19.5 percent and 5 percent growth, respectively, through 2034.

Truck transportation is projected to decline by 295 jobs (-9.5 percent). Oil and gas projects boosted this category over the last few years, but employment will decline as those projects wind down. However, ore trucking for mining projects, a relatively new phenomenon in Alaska, has generated a significant number of jobs in recent years. We expect that growth to continue to 2034.

Employment for couriers and express delivery services, along with warehousing and storage, is expected to grow by 544 jobs (13.3 percent). Some will be linked to cargo storage at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, but delivery employment overall has made a strong showing recently, growing by 36.5 percent from 2020 to 2025.

Professional services industry set to end up slightly smaller

We project a 0.9 percent job loss for the professional, scientific, and technical services sector by

2034, with legal services being the biggest drag. Softening employment in accounting and other professional services will also contribute to the losses.

Architecture and engineering are set to remain mostly flat after leveling off after the 2016 and 2020 declines. A mixture of other engineering, environmental, and testing services are likely to grow — these components feed into design and permitting projects across a range of Alaska industries.

We project nontechnical administrative and other business support services will increase by 2.5 percent. This industry supports a broad mix of other industries from which we expect both growth and loss.

The boost will come from tourism-related travel arrangement and facility support services. The former will increase by a projected 13.3 percent as tourism continues to expand, and the latter will likely decline by about 3.5 percent as projects on the North Slope wind down.

Online services will continue to shrink finance and insurance

Banking and related services haven't recovered since 2016 and are projected to make up 75 percent of the projected losses in the finance and insurance sector (-8.1 percent total). Banking online will continue to cut jobs, but it isn't clear how much AI will accelerate this trend. (See the sidebar on page 6.)

The broader insurance industry did well early in the century and appeared to approach stability in 2016 before continuing to lose jobs through 2025. We expect that decline to continue over the decade, with another 8.1 percent loss. Like banking, insurance is also susceptible to AI-induced losses, but it's too uncertain to project this year.

Jobs in public schools to fall to late-1990s levels

Declines in public school employment have picked up since the last round of projections, a response to population changes and budgetary pressures.

Before the pandemic, the 20-year average was just shy of 21,000 jobs per year. That dropped to 18,870 when COVID hit, and from there things moved toward what looked like a reduced new normal of around 19,300 jobs in 2024.

However, in 2025, public schools lost another 417 jobs as more districts closed or consolidated schools.

It would be oversimplifying to attribute the job losses solely to fewer children, but the declines in that population are a major factor. The number of kids aged 5 to 18 in Alaska rose by 23.3 percent from 1990 to 2001, to 152,865. Over that period, education employment rose 21 percent in Alaska.

Then, from 2001 to 2025, the state's school-aged population declined by 7.7 percent and school employment dropped by 5.8 percent.

Over the projection period, the school-age population is projected to fall by 9.8 percent, and education employment by 5.8 percent. This would put elementary and secondary school employment levels at late-1990s levels.

Strong, broad growth continues for the health care industry

Health care will grow by a projected 11.4 percent over the next decade, or 5,954 new jobs.

The largest category, at 44 percent of the sector, is ambulatory health care, consisting of nonhospital services such as doctor's offices and outpatient clinics. Between 1990 and 2025, ambulatory health care averaged 500 new jobs per year, or around 4 percent annually, except during the pandemic. This category is projected to grow by 10.5 percent over the decade.

Hospitals, the second largest component, will add a projected 11.4 percent. Hospitals expanded from 6,425 jobs in 1990 to 16,911 in 2025 (16.3 percent), or about 300 new jobs a year.

Upcoming federal funding through the Rural Health Transformation program will likely drive growth, but hospital employment was already rising after stalling somewhat from 2018-2022.

With a growing population over age 65, nursing and residential care is expected to grow the most, by 25.4 percent through 2034. Over that period, the senior population will rise by a projected 18.5 percent, and the cohort that's at least 85 years old is expected to double.

State budget cuts and the pandemic caused an

employment lull from 2016 to 2022, but by 2025, employment in this category had regained its 2016 high-water mark and continued to grow.

Social assistance, public and private, grew significantly from 1990 to 2013, roughly doubling. After that, federal, state, and local funding all began to shrink, pushing employment down modestly to 8,374 total jobs the following year, where it mostly held until the pandemic sank it further, to 7,289.

Since then, employment has stabilized. We project a modest 6.3 percent gain for social assistance by 2034, which would put the job count around pre-pandemic levels.

Restaurants, accommodations to grow as bars, gambling shrink

Leisure and hospitality, which serves tourists as well as locals, is projected to grow about 3.5 percent between 2024 and 2034.

The largest drag on growth in recent years has been bars and bingo/pull tab establishments, while gains have come from restaurants, accommodations, and amusement and recreation services.

Long-term losses projected across all types of government

Government is projected to lose jobs at all levels through 2034.

Federal employment is difficult to predict with the political climate and strategic decisions continuing to shift, and Alaska's modern federal job history also reflects that susceptibility.

Between 1990 and 1993, the federal government added 1,242 jobs in Alaska, ending at a high of 16,811. Then, employment declined sharply, and declines continued throughout the 1990s. Alaska lost 3,260 federal jobs from 1993 to 1999, bringing the total to a period low of 13,552.

Closures of Cold War-era military facilities after the fall of the Soviet Union, most notably Naval Air Facility Adak, were the main reason. The Clinton administration's federal reform program, the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, also cut across agencies, including the Department of Defense, land management agencies (Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and U.S. Forest Service), the Department of Energy, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Decennial census data collection in 2000 temporarily reversed the declines, adding 502 jobs, but employment truly began to rebound when the U.S. entered a post-9/11 national defense expansion era that created the Transportation Security Agency and boosted federal civilian employment at military installations. Over the 2000s, federal employment in Alaska rose by 1,391.

Then, Alaska lost 2,390 federal jobs through 2014, the result of post-Great Recession budget tightening under the Budget Control Act of 2011, referred to as sequestration.

Federal employment has been mostly stable since 2014, hovering between 13,000 and 15,000 jobs, with some volatility before and after COVID.

The largest uncertainty remains the sweeping actions of the second Trump administration in 2025 and the creation of the Department of Government Efficiency. From 2024 to 2025, federal employment fell by about 2.7 percent, although most of the losses won't show up until 2026 data are available and the full effects of the deferred resignation program are clear.

Right now, we assume employment will be down by 2.7 percent overall by 2034, but we will adjust future projections to reflect any upcoming structural shifts. As history has shown, Alaska's federal employment is highly sensitive to rapid changes in federal policies governing military and civilian agencies alike.

We project a slight loss of state government jobs through 2034 (-0.6 percent), continuing a long-term structural shift. State of Alaska employment peaked in 2014 at 18,086 jobs after a strong run of high oil prices and flush budgets.

By 2017, the state had cut 1,639 jobs. Cuts continued until the pandemic pushed employment down further, to 16,208. A brief rebound in 2021 was followed by additional losses through 2023.

The tide turned in 2024, when state government employment rose by 3.2 percent and then another 1.3 percent in 2025. The sources for that growth are unclear beyond temporary increases necessary to carry out federal projects, and we expect employment to level out around 16,589 total jobs by 2034.

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How we create 10-year industry and occupational projections

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section creates 10-year industry and occupational projections for Alaska every other year. These projections are the product of four steps:

Step 1: Project industry employment using a base year with solid data

We use data from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages to determine the number of jobs for each industry during the first year, or "base year," of the projection period. We used 2024 as the base year because it's important to begin with a solid set of numbers that won't be revised further rather than to use newer but preliminary data.

Estimates and projections do not include self-employed workers, private household workers, most agricultural workers and fishermen (who are self-employed), and others not covered by the state's unemployment insurance program. We combine certain types of public sector employment — such as education, hospitals, rail transportation, and the U.S. Postal Service — with private sector industries because their underlying drivers differ from most government employment.

We create projections for each industry based primarily on historical trends, Alaska and U.S. population projections, and other industry-specific variables. The projections also factor in knowledge of specific projects, if certain, and observations of the current economic climate.

Step 2: Determine the occupational makeup, or staffing pattern, of each industry

To estimate base year employment for each occupation, we determine the occupational staffing pattern of each industry. Most industries have a variety of occupations. The staffing pattern is the breakdown of each occupation's share of the industry's total employment, referred to as "staffing ratios."

Employers in Alaska report their workers' occupations when they submit unemployment insurance quarterly contribution reports, which form the basis of Alaska's Occupational Database. We use an analysis of the data that corresponds to the projections' base year, the most recent Occupational Employment Statistics data available, and a baseline of historic industry staffing patterns to calculate occupational staffing ratios for the industries.

Step 3: Calculate base year and projected occupational employment

For each occupation, we multiply each industry's estimated base year employment by the staffing ratio, and then sum the results to get the base year estimate. We make some adjustments to staffing ratios within an industry, called "change factors." Change factors are multipliers that increase or decrease an occupation's estimated share of industry employment based on factors other than an industry's projected employment change. Examples include changes in consumer demand, technology, or business practices.

We then multiply each industry's projected employment by the adjusted staffing ratio for each occupation, and then sum the results by each occupation to get the projections.

Step 4: Estimate job openings

Job openings for an occupation result from new jobs and vacated positions, called separation openings. An occupation's growth openings are equal to its change over the projection period. Estimates of separation openings are based on rates provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics that account for labor force exits and occupational transfers. For more on separations, see https://www.bls.gov/emp/documentation/separations-methods.htm.

In contrast, construction and extraction occupations pay approximately double at $75,604, and 60 percent require a diploma or GED. Even among the 40 percent of construction jobs that don't require any formal education, 42 percent still require moderate on-the-job training.

Alaska's top jobs over the decade

Long-term occupation projections are a vital planning tool for workforce development agencies, job placement and counseling professionals, job seekers, and education and training providers. To help them determine which occupations to focus on, we publish Alaska's Top Jobs list, which ranks the occupations we expect to fare well and pay well over the projection period. The list begins on the next page.

To make the top jobs list, an occupation must essentially pay higher-than-average wages plus have higher-than-average growth or many openings.

Out of 798 occupations in Alaska, 50 made the list this round. Twenty-three require a bachelor's degree, and six require an associate degree or some type of postsecondary education, such as a vocational certification or some college attendance.

Of the 20 top jobs that require a high school diploma or less, 15 require additional on-the-job training or an apprenticeship.

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BY INDUSTRY

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We project local government, which excludes public schools in these projections (discussed separately above) but includes tribal governments, will dip by 0.3 percent through 2034, which is about 62 fewer jobs.

As state revenues shrank with falling oil prices in 2014 and 2015, state support for local governments declined. Local governments slowly added jobs from 2015 to 2019 as they took over those services. Then, employment jumped by 1,173 between 2020 and 2025 as federal money flooded in for pandemic relief and then Infrastructure Act spending.

The Infrastructure Act buoyed job levels as pandemic funding waned, but much of the continued growth has come from federal funding for tribal governments through the BIA and Indian Health Service.

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