

# Job numbers show partial recovery

## April jobs up from last year but still well below 2019 level

By KARINNE WIEBOLD

**A**laska's job count increased over the year for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic, up 19,100 in April from the same month last year. That doesn't mean something changed between March and April, though. April marks the first month that we're making a year-ago comparison to a month in 2020 that had pandemic-related job losses.

Starting with the April job numbers, we can start to see how much we've recovered from those losses. In percent terms, we'd recovered about 40 percent of the jobs we lost last April. But while April's job count was a jump from last spring's sudden plunge, it was well below April 2019 levels.

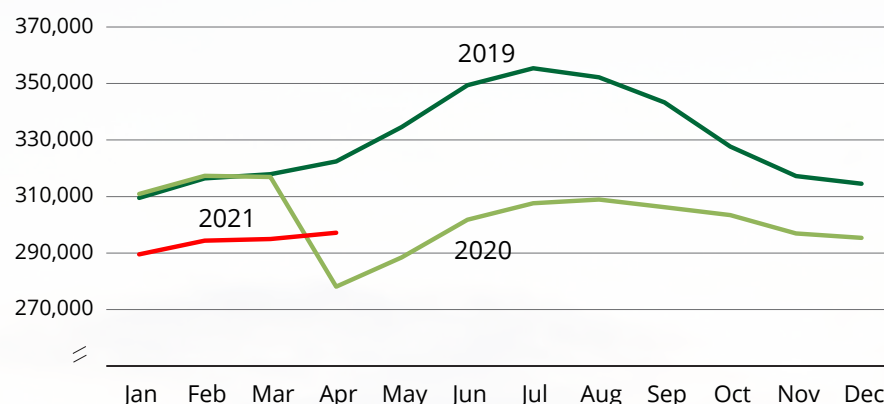
Summer is the economy's busiest season, and employment in a normal year jumps about 15 percent from the winter low to the summer high. The pandemic interrupted our seasonal upswing last April and muted typical job gains throughout the summer, leaving us nearly 50,000 below year-ago levels in June and July.

Last summer was devoid of cruise ships, and local demand for eating out and intrastate travel was curtailed. Summer is also the peak for seafood harvesting and processing, and the pandemic hampered hiring and transporting workers to job sites.

### Positive signs for summer 2021

Several developments are on the horizon for this

### 2021 employment up, but well below 2019 levels



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

summer, however. A growing percentage of the population is vaccinated, and in late May, Congress passed an exemption to the 1886 Passenger Vessel Services Act that temporarily frees cruise companies from making mandatory stops in Canada, which has prohibited large cruise ships from entering its waters since spring of 2020.

Cruise ship companies responded quickly to the exemption, which lasts until February 2022, selling tickets for Alaska cruises that could reach our ports as soon as late July.

Job numbers this summer will easily exceed the lows of last summer, but the extent of the recovery will depend on the strength of local demand, the number of visitors and their spending habits, and the availability of nonresident seasonal workers — particularly for seafood processing.

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