

Jobless claimants with dependents

Amount increased, cap lifted in 2020 with the pandemic

Claimants and dependents, 2011-2020

	Total claimants	Claimants w/ dependents	Percent w/ dependent	Dependent benefit amt
2011	61,449	22,157	36.1%	\$12,435,480
2012	57,532	20,871	36.3%	\$11,166,600
2013	55,265	20,201	36.6%	\$10,886,424
2014	49,826	18,254	36.6%	\$9,563,832
2015	42,138	15,301	36.3%	\$7,577,808
2016	43,017	15,427	35.9%	\$8,055,648
2017	38,086	13,576	35.6%	\$6,785,184
2018	33,664	11,758	34.9%	\$5,741,976
2019	28,781	9,757	33.9%	\$4,787,112
2020	86,307	25,210	29.2%	\$45,682,056

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

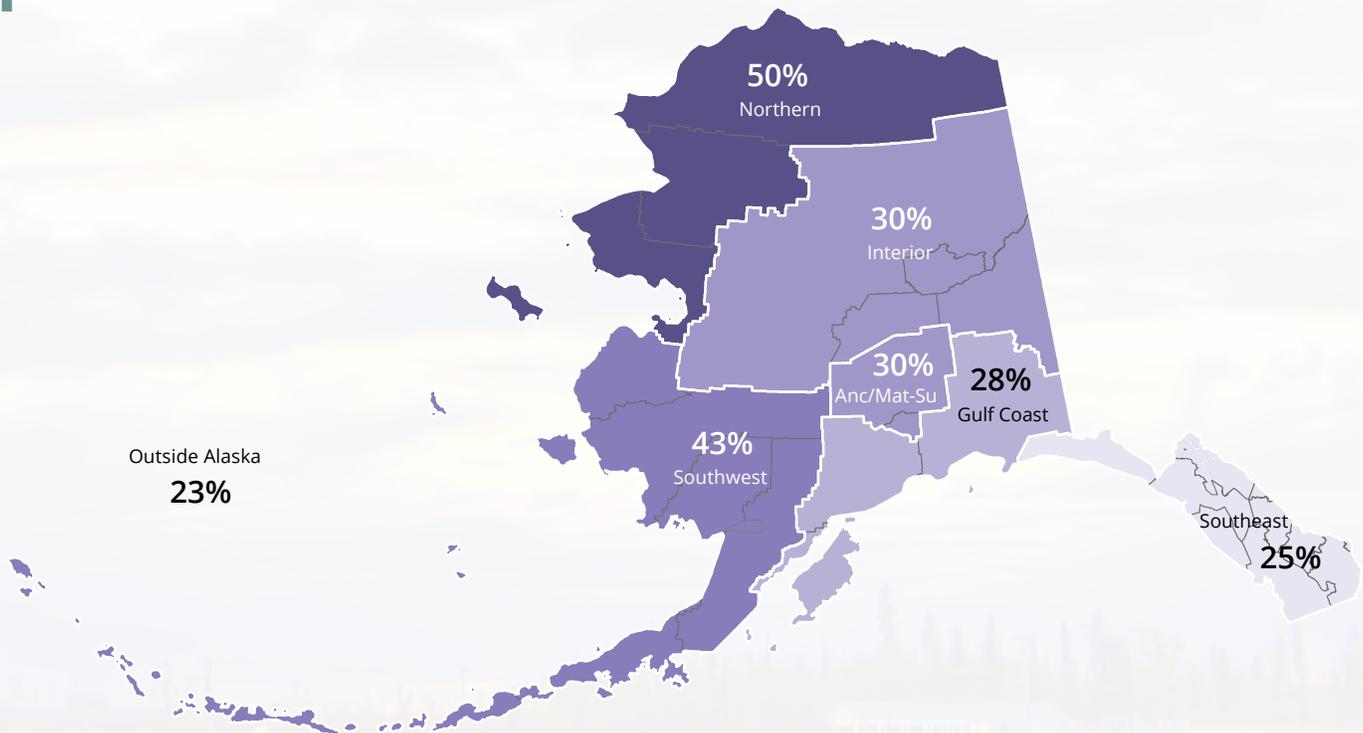
By LENNON WELLER

In addition to the regular weekly benefit, unemployment insurance claimants in Alaska can collect a flat amount per dependent. The dependent allowance, intended to help those who are out of work and supporting children,¹ has been in effect since October 1980. Until last year, it provided an additional \$24 per week per dependent, to a maximum of three.

In March 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, the Alaska Legislature increased the per-dependent benefit from \$24 to \$75 and

¹A family member over 18 in a claimant's care can qualify as a dependent if that person has a permanent disability.

Percent of unemployment claimants with dependents, by area, 2020



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

lifted the cap on the number of dependents a person can claim.

Typically, the amount paid out in dependent benefits for Alaska claimants ranges from \$5 million to \$13 million a year. With the pandemic and the increases in the amounts allowed, Alaska's unemployment insurance system and the federal pandemic relief extension programs² paid out about \$55 million for dependents last year. For context, that amount is roughly half of what total benefits cost the year before.

More than 86,000 people collected at least one week of unemployment benefits in 2020 — up from 28,781 the year before — and roughly 25,210 of those claimed at least one dependent.

Industries affected changed the percentage with dependents

Over the past decade, the proportion of yearly claimants with at least one dependent had been stable at around 35 percent. In 2020, it fell to just over 29 percent.

The industries hit hardest by the pandemic were the main reason the percentage declined, as they were also the industries whose workers were least likely to have dependents. These included the arts, accommodations, food service, retail, and seafood processing industries, which have more part-time positions and younger workers and are more likely to be seasonal.

The industries with high percentages of dependent claims were health care and social assistance, and finance and insurance.

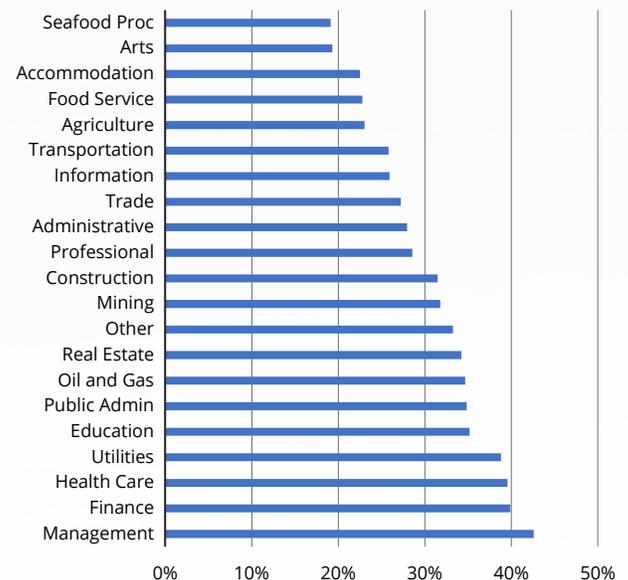
Increase in allowance bumped wage replacement up to 90%

With the dependent allowance raised to \$75 per child, these claimants' dependent allowances alone amounted to an average of 75 percent of their regular weekly benefit amount.

The larger dependent allowance also bumped up the wage replacement rate from 47 percent to 90

²Does not include Pandemic Unemployment Compensation, or PUA. For more on these programs, which covered people who exhausted their regular benefits or otherwise weren't eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits, see the February 2021 issue of *Trends*.

Rate of claimants with dependents varied by Alaska industry, 2020



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

percent last year, and that's not including the \$600 per week in pandemic relief the federal government tacked on to all benefit payments. In other words, average claimants with dependents in 2020 received about 90 percent of what they'd been making at work before losing their job, plus a \$600 per week federal add-on.

Digging further into the data shows the proportion of claimants with dependents varied considerably by area and gender as well as industry.

Regional percentages varied

The Anchorage/Matanuska-Susitna Region had the largest *numbers* of total filers in 2020 (42,938) and claimants with dependents (12,710), in line with the large population.

However, the percentages who had dependents varied by region, as the map on the previous page shows.

The Northern and Southwest regions had the highest percentages with dependents. These regions are young, with larger households. Industry makeup is another factor, as the industries affected most by the pandemic were concentrated in urban areas. In the rural Southwest and Northern regions, job losses were spread more evenly.

The lowest rate was among filers from outside the state. Nonresidents are more likely than residents to hold remote or seasonal jobs such as seafood processing or oilfield work.

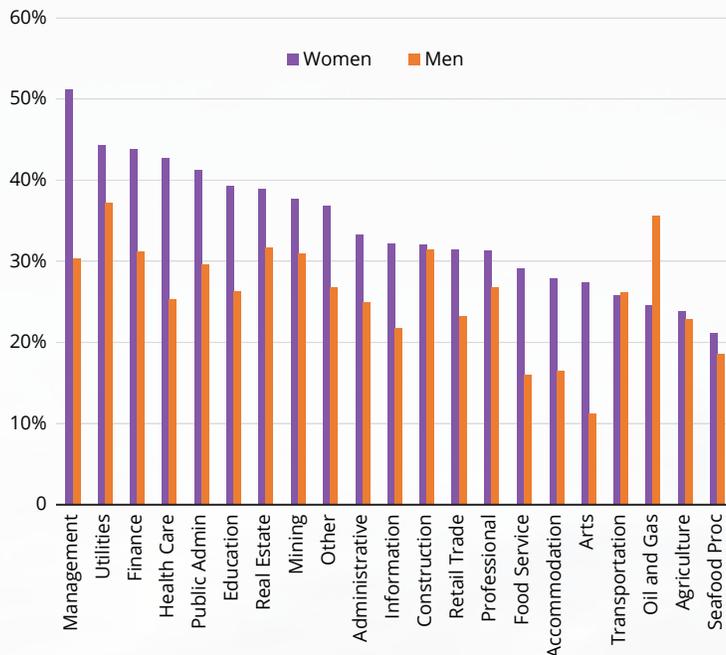
Women more likely to claim dependents

Twenty-five percent of men claimed a dependent in 2020 (11,768) and 34 percent of women did (13,442). Overall, women filed more dependent claims than men, both in numeric and percent terms, reflecting that women are more likely to be children’s primary caregivers.

Only oil and gas and transportation — industries whose workers are mostly men — had higher shares of men claiming a dependent.

Lennon Weller is an economist in Juneau. Reach him at (907) 465-4507 or lennon.weller@alaska.gov.

Percent with dependents by gender, industry



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

TRANSPORTATION AND THE PANDEMIC

Continued from page 12

Ground transit fell more, but trucking also lost jobs

The ground transportation and transit category includes mass transit such as subways or elevated rail — which don’t exist in Alaska — as well as buses, taxis, limousines, and shuttles, which do. School buses are in this category as well, and they represent a significant number of ground transit jobs in Alaska. This category took a hit last year from school

closures and less travel and lost around 300 jobs, which was about 18.6 percent.

Trucking is the second-largest transportation category in Alaska, and about three-quarters of its jobs are centered in Anchorage and Fairbanks. While trucking moves goods rather than people, it too lost a modest number of jobs in 2020. Trucking employment fell about 4.2 percent, or around 100 jobs.

Sara Teel is an economist in Juneau. Reach her at (907) 465-6027 or sara.teel@alaska.gov.