

# ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS

AUGUST 2011



## Alaska's Health Care Industry

### WHAT'S INSIDE

2011 Alaska Rental Survey

Costs around the state for various types of homes

Employment Scene

Unemployment rate at 7.5 percent in June



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Governor Sean Parnell  
Commissioner Click Bishop

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Cover:  
Jeff Chisholm of Anchorage demonstrates his nursing duties for his young daughter.  
Photo by Debbie McDonald

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Alaska's Health Care Industry	4
Employment and costs continue their rapid rise	
2011 Alaska Rental Survey	13
Costs around the state for various types of homes	
Employment Scene	17
Unemployment rate at 7.5 percent in June	

## Correction

In the July *Trends* 100 article, Exhibit 9 should show Maniilaq Association as the Northwest Arctic Borough's largest private-sector employer, with employment between 500 and 749.

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# Health care industry continues to grow in Alaska



**By Commissioner  
Click Bishop**

This month's *Trends* spotlights Alaska's fastest growing industry, health care. The 2010 Census reports that Alaska's population has grown to more than 710,000, an increase of about 13 percent since 2000 when we had just under 627,000 residents. More people mean a greater need for health care — as an article by Erik Stimpfle and Dean Rasmussen points out, we are all potential customers.

The latest census also reports there were 55,000 senior citizens in Alaska in 2010, and we predict the number of us who are over age 65 will increase by an astounding 127 percent by 2034.

For the last 10 years, the health care industry has created 10,000 new jobs in Alaska, more than any other industry. Based on two factors — the increase in our population and the rise in the number who are 65-plus — we expect the number of health care jobs to grow 26 percent from 2008 to 2018, the current 10-year forecast period.

Entities across Alaska are focused on the human pipeline we'll need to fill the jobs in this expanding industry.

The Alaska Health Workforce Planning Coalition developed the Alaska Health Workforce Plan, which is available at [http://labor.alaska.gov/awib/forms/Healthcare\\_Workforce\\_Plan.pdf](http://labor.alaska.gov/awib/forms/Healthcare_Workforce_Plan.pdf). The plan, the result of a year-long industry-led effort with involvement from education and government, is a consensus of the strategies necessary to meet Alaska's need for more health care workers.

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board is further developing the Health Workforce Plan under a \$150,000 planning grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration. The outcome will include support for career pathways for students and adults (including dislocated workers), industry skill standards for high schools, entry into postsecondary education, and various credentials and licensing.

Health care provides jobs at every level of training and education, most with a clear path

for advancement. For example, a certified nurse assistant can become a licensed practical nurse and then a registered nurse, with the appropriate education and training.

Even in Alaska's smallest rural communities, where jobs are often scarce, health care offers year-round employment opportunities.

The University of Alaska system offers more than 90 health programs statewide in allied health, public health, nutrition and dietetics, behavioral health, health information and management, medical billing and coding, nursing, and nurse practitioner. Partnership programs with other universities include medicine, pharmacy, physician assistant, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology. About half these programs use online or other technology-based learning. Since 2001, the number of students with health-related majors increased 91 percent, to 2,800. UA now awards more than 800 health-related degrees each year.

AVTEC—Alaska's Institute of Technology, part of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, offers health care-related training at its Allied Health Campus in Anchorage, including certified nursing assistant and licensed practical nurse. The eight-week CNA program certifies 120 graduates each year, and the 10-month LPN program produces 20. Both programs have a 100 percent placement rate.

Under a new partnership with Cook Inlet Tribal Council, AVTEC will provide training for careers in the health care industry, including medical coding and billing specialist, CNA, and LPN. The partnership is also developing a career ladder that would lead to a degree in nursing.

Employers use registered apprenticeships to build a health care workforce. A partnership between the Alaska Office of Apprenticeship and the U.S. Office of Apprenticeship created the nation's first apprenticeship in surgical technology.

To meet employer demand, we will continue to develop ways to help Alaskans pursue careers in this growing industry.

# Alaska's Health Care Industry

## Employment and costs continue their rapid rise



**H**ealth care is an indispensable service, just like running water, electricity, public education, police and fire protection, roads and highways, and other hallmarks of developed nations. Because everyone needs a doctor at some point, it's an industry with a guaranteed customer base.

In 2010, the health care industry accounted for about 9 percent of jobs in Alaska. (See Exhibit 1.) It was the fourth-largest industry, with 31,800 jobs and a payroll of \$1.53 billion.

### Alaska's fastest growing industry

During the past 10 years, health care has created more new jobs than any other sector of Alaska's economy. Between 2001 and 2010, the industry added 10,000 jobs, outpacing all other large industries. (See Exhibit 2.)

During the most recent recession, many of Alaska's industries lost jobs or were stagnant. But health care continued to add jobs, proving it was an industry that could withstand a storm of economic uncertainty.

This upward trend is expected to continue. Between 2008 and 2018 — the current 10-year forecast period — health care is forecasted to grow by 26.1 percent and add more than 7,000 jobs. In

### How this article counts health care jobs

The health care industry, as defined for this article, includes outpatient health care services (NAICS 621),<sup>1</sup> hospitals (NAICS 622), and nursing and residential care facilities (NAICS 623).

It does not include social assistance (NAICS 624), because large portions of its employment are in occupations outside direct health care. However, social assistance does include employment for behavioral health-related jobs. A recent article discussing social assistance employment in the private sector was published in the March 2011 issue of *Alaska Economic Trends*.

The industry numbers used throughout this article are conservative because they don't include the positions of military personnel who provide health care or the jobs held by the many providers who own their practices and are considered self-employed.

In addition, health care jobs in federal, state, and local governments aren't counted here because they're part of departments or units whose primary activity is something other than health care. For example, a job as a school nurse would be counted as part of the school district under local government education, and a job as a nursing aide at one of the six state-run pioneer homes would be counted under general state government.

Exhibit 8 lists the number of workers employed in health care-related occupations. The data are based on the 2008 to 2018 Alaska Occupations Forecast. Additional data for 2009 employment are available at: <http://labor.alaska.gov/research/occs/askaoccs/home.htm>.

<sup>1</sup>The North American Industry Classification System is used by business and government to classify establishments according to the type of economic activity (process of production) in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

contrast, retail trade — the second biggest gainer — is projected to create 3,000 new jobs.

### An increasing customer base

An aging population is one of the main reasons for the anticipated job growth in health care, as an increasing population of senior citizens is likely to generate demand for services. As more baby boomers turn 65, Alaska will have more

senior citizens than at any other time in history. (See Exhibit 3.)

In the 2010 Census, Alaska had 54,938 senior citizens. If current projections are accurate, there could be 124,857 people ages 65 and older by 2034. During the last 20-year period, from 1990 to 2010, the senior population grew by roughly 32,000 people. But between 2010 and 2030, this group is expected to increase by 69,000.

Everyone is a potential health care customer, and population growth all but ensures an expanding customer base. Alaska's current population of 710,231 is projected to grow to 862,750 by 2034, an increase of 21 percent.<sup>1</sup>

## How Alaskans pay for health care

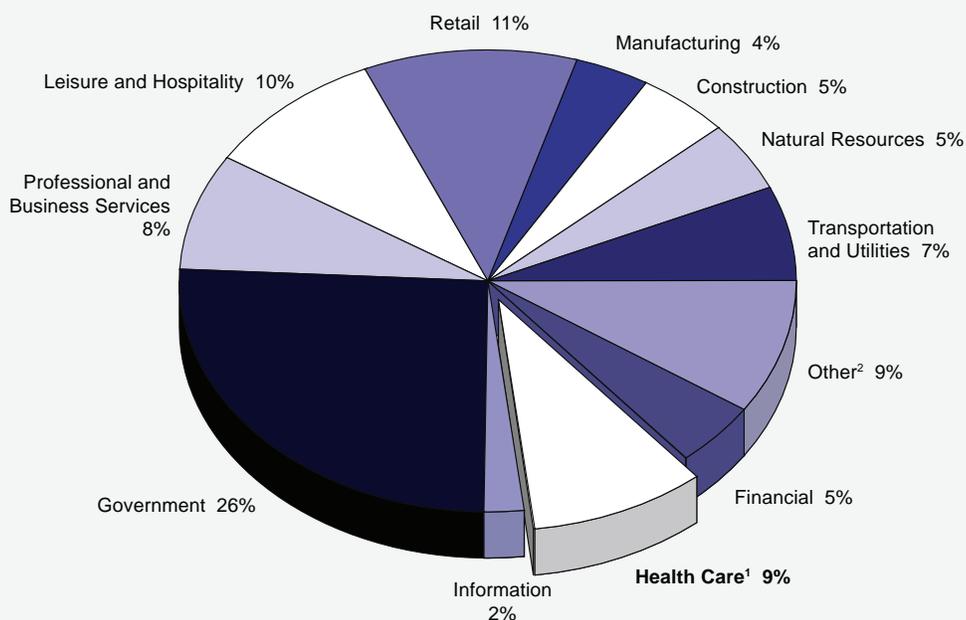
Buying a house or a car typically involves securing a loan and shopping around for the best deal. However, most of us pay for health care as part of a collective rather than paying full price.

The health care industry benefits from a large base of insured customers, and about 81 percent of Alaskans are covered by some type of insurance.<sup>2</sup> This includes private coverage, veteran and military benefits, Medicare, and Medicaid. That leaves 19 percent of the population classified as uninsured.

Alaska Natives who rely solely on Indian Health Services for their coverage are counted as uninsured by the U.S. Census Bureau — a distinction that isn't entirely accurate. Indian Health Services provides health care to

## Nearly One in 10 Jobs is in Health Care **1**

Alaska, 2010



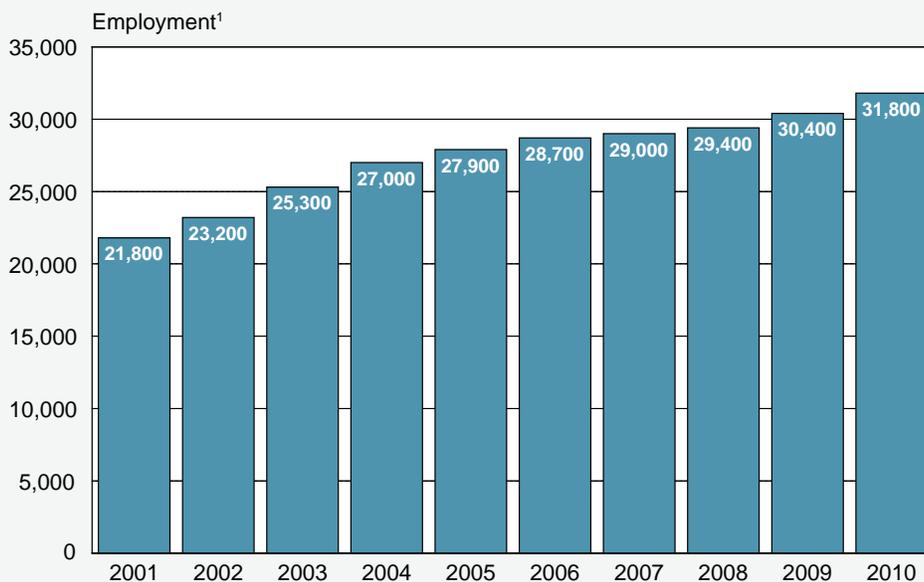
<sup>1</sup>Includes private and public sectors

<sup>2</sup>Includes other services, private education, social assistance, and wholesale trade

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

## Nine Years of Growth in Health Care **2**

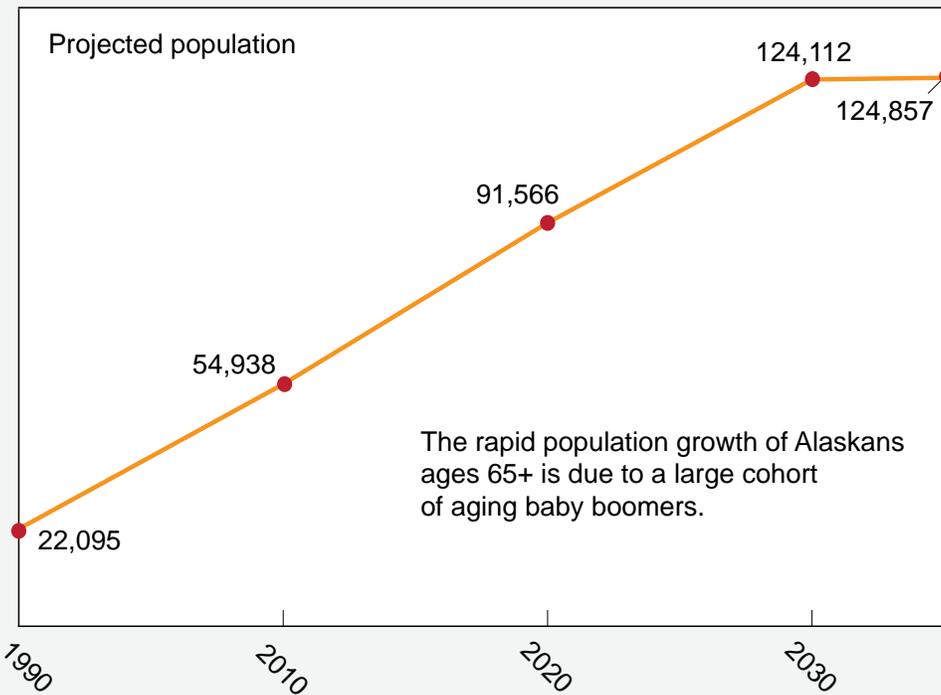
Alaska, 2001 to 2010



<sup>1</sup>Employment for public and private sectors, NAICS 621, 622, and 623.

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

### 3 Rapid Growth in Population of Senior Citizens Alaska, 1990 to 2034<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Data for 1990, 2000, and 2010 are from the decennial censuses; 2020, 2030, and 2034 are based on median population projections from Alaska Population Projections, 2010 to 2034.  
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

all Alaska Natives and their descendants. The Alaska Tribal Health System includes seven hospitals, 36 health centers, and 166 village clinics. In prior years, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services reported that 21,000 Alaska Natives, who are covered through Indian Health Services, were counted as uninsured.<sup>3</sup>

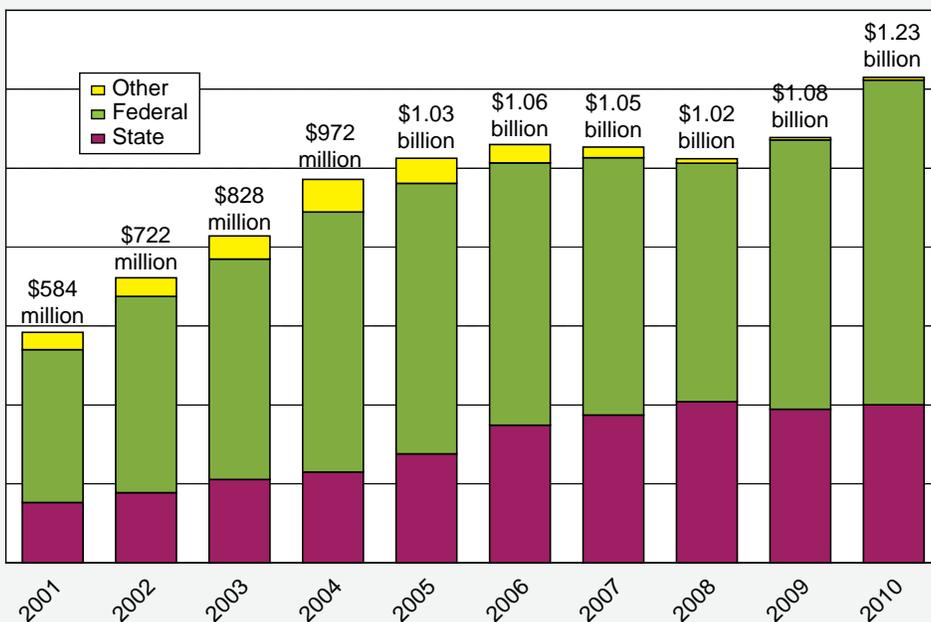
Ultimately, most Alaskans have some shelter from paying out of pocket for health care. Most of us pay just a portion of the actual costs — and that's fortunate, because they're very high.

### Medical costs rise faster than any other

The United States is known for having the most expensive health care system in the world. According to data provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Alaskans spend more per capita on health care than most other states. The average annual growth rate in spending was 7.3 percent from 1991 to 2004, outpaced by only Maine and Vermont. Per capita spending in 2004 was \$6,450 per person: fifth-highest in the nation.

Rising costs are further documented by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index, which tracks medical costs for Anchorage residents. Anchorage is the only community in Alaska that is surveyed as part of the CPI data, but we know that health care isn't cheaper in other parts of the state.

### 4 Medicaid Expenditures on the Rise Alaska, 2001 to 2010



Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest million.  
Source: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, FY 2010 Budget Overview

Between 2000 and 2010, medical costs in Anchorage increased by 54 percent, while U.S. prices rose by 49 percent. Going back to 1990 shows Anchorage's medical costs have increased by 160 percent during that 20-year period.

Medical costs have risen more than any other category covered by the CPI. In the same period, food prices increased by 55 percent, energy costs by 127 percent, and housing by 69 percent.

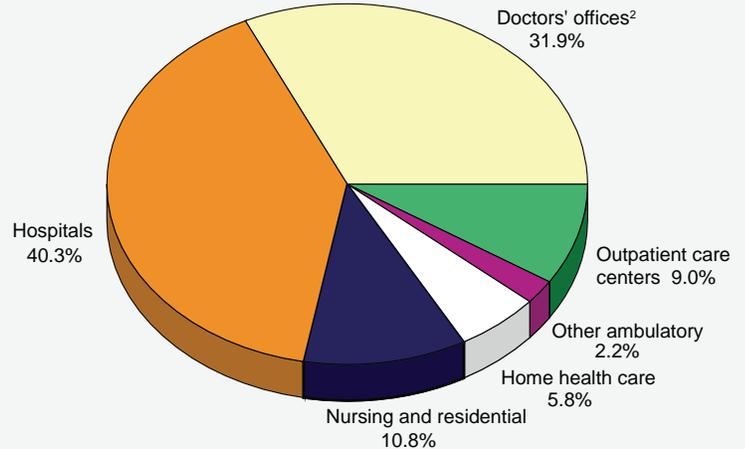
## Health care reform uncertain

The Affordable Care Act, passed in March of 2010, changed the landscape of our nation's health care system. The law requires the uninsured to purchase health insurance by 2014.

This mandatory insurance clause hasn't become law yet. However, other key provisions of the law have already taken effect. For example, young adults are now eligible for coverage on their parents' policies

## Where Health Care Jobs Are<sup>1</sup> Alaska, 2010

# 5



<sup>1</sup>Includes private and public sectors

<sup>2</sup>Includes offices of physicians, dentists, and other health care practitioners

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

## Hospitals are Largest Employers Alaska's private-sector health care, 2010

# 6

	Average monthly employment <sup>1</sup>
Providence Health & Services*	4,000+
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC)*	1,500 to 1,749
Banner Health (mostly Fairbanks Memorial Hospital)*	1,250 to 1,499
Southcentral Foundation*	1,250 to 1,499
Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation*	1,000 to 1,249
Alaska Regional Hospital*	750 to 999
Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC)*	750 to 999
Hope Community Resources	750 to 999
Central Peninsula Hospital*	500 to 749
Mat-Su Regional Medical Center*	500 to 749
Alaska Consumer Direct Personal Care	500 to 749
Maniilaq Association*	500 to 749
Bartlett Regional Hospital*	250 to 499
Norton Sound Health Corporation*	250 to 499
Ketchikan General Hospital*	250 to 499

	Average monthly employment <sup>1</sup>
North Star Behavioral Health System*	250 to 499
Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation*	250 to 499
The Arc of Anchorage	250 to 499
South Peninsula Hospital*	250 to 499
Immediate Care	250 to 499
Alaska Specialty Hospital*	150 to 249
Alaska Children's Services	150 to 249
Peninsula Community Health Services	150 to 249
Fairbanks Native Association	150 to 249
Tanana Valley Medical-Surgical Group	150 to 249
Consumer Care Network	150 to 249
Juneau Youth Services	150 to 249
South Peninsula Behavioral Health Services	150 to 249
Sitka Community Hospital*	150 to 249
Alaska Heart Institute	150 to 249
Anchorage Community Mental Health Services	150 to 249

Note: Exhibit does not include federal or state employment.

<sup>1</sup>These are employment ranges. However, the ranking is based on the specific employment number, which is not disclosable due to confidentiality restrictions.

\*These firms operate a hospital.

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

until age 26; previously, they could be taken off at age 19. This provides an additional seven years of health coverage for young adults who might have become uninsured, but who may now create greater demand for health care.

## Increased Medicaid spending

The Affordable Care Act also provides for increases in Medicaid spending, which are scheduled to take effect in 2014. Medicaid is only one piece of the government spending pie, but it provides a good example of increasing expenditures for health care-related programs. Between FY 2001 and FY 2010, Alaska expenditures grew from \$584 million to \$1.23 billion. (See Exhibit 4.) Spending is forecasted to increase to \$1.51 billion by 2012.

During fiscal year 2010, 135,086 Alaskans — 19 percent — were enrolled in Medicaid.<sup>4</sup> This program provides health coverage for low-income people and the disabled, including the elderly and children. The changes planned for 2014 would ease income restrictions, making more people eligible for services. Under the new law, states would receive 100 percent federal funding for the first three years to support expanded coverage, phasing to 90 percent federal dollars in subsequent years.

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services reported that during FY 2010, the cost for Medicaid’s direct medical benefits was roughly

\$671.8 million. Those dollars paid for hospital visits, prescription drugs, physician services, dental services, and other related expenses. Of those claims, 63.6 percent of payments provided medical services for children.

## Hospitals are large employers

Hospitals are the largest employers in Alaska’s health care industry, accounting for 40 percent of health care jobs. They are also among the largest employers in the state. (See Exhibits 5 and 6.) Alaska has 26 licensed hospitals of various sizes in 20 communities.

Hospitals are labor-intensive operations, requiring workers to be present 24 hours a day, seven days per week. In addition to the skilled medical staff, hospitals require a small army of support staff to keep everything running smoothly — these include accountants, housekeepers, security guards, and food service workers.

The economic impact of a hospital goes beyond its walls. For example, Norton Sound Health Corporation, based in Nome, is building a new 144,000-square-foot hospital that is scheduled to open in 2012. The project was partially funded by \$152 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and provided about 200 new construction jobs in Nome.<sup>5</sup>

Nome is a regional hub for the surrounding villages, and Norton Sound Health Corporation provides health care for the region. Its Village Health Services program has clinics in 15 surrounding villages, serving 6,000 people.<sup>6</sup> Hospitals in regional hubs typically provide services to surrounding villages, and this is especially true for Alaska’s seven tribal hospitals. Nome is just one example of numerous projects statewide. Hospitals around Alaska continually expand their facilities and maintain or upgrade their equipment.

## Outpatient health care

Outpatient health care services are a second portion of the industry, classified under the term “ambulatory health

## 7 Employment by Category Alaska, 2010

Industry	2001	2010	Percent change
Outpatient health care services	10,717	15,570	45%
Physicians' offices	4,633	5,907	27%
Dentists' offices	1,838	2,182	19%
Other health care practitioners' offices	1,559	2,056	32%
Outpatient care centers	2,086	2,875	38%
Medical and diagnostic laboratories	99	259	162%
Home health care services <sup>1</sup>	167	1,839	–
Other ambulatory health care services	335	452	35%
Hospitals	9,339	12,838	37%
Nursing and residential care facilities	1,744	3,429	97%
Total	21,800	31,837	46%

Note: Includes private and public sector employment

<sup>1</sup>Part of home health care services' growth was due to the reclassification of a larger employer in 2009; which added roughly 393 jobs.

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

# Projected Employment, Wages, and Demographics

## Alaska health care occupations, 2008 to 2018



Health Care Practitioners and Technical Occupations	Projected Employment, 2008 to 2018					Wages and Demographics <sup>1</sup>		
	Occupational title	2008	2018	Percent growth	Projected openings	2008 % in health care <sup>2</sup>	Average 2010 wage	2009 non-residents
<b>Registered Nurses</b>	5,032	6,400	27.2%	2,511	71.8%	\$38.15	16.9%	42.6%
<b>Physicians and Surgeons (Includes Psychiatrists)</b>	957	1,186	23.9%	372	89.2%	\$102.27	21.9%	NA
<b>Licensed Practical Nurses</b>	641	832	29.8%	351	62.4%	\$22.65	20.3%	44.0%
Pharmacy Technicians	532	722	35.7%	274	22.6%	\$18.85	7.1%	13.4%
<b>Pharmacists</b>	361	495	37.1%	229	25.2%	\$56.76	19.8%	34.7%
<b>Radiologic Technologists and Technicians</b>	431	530	23.0%	189	78.9%	\$31.19	12.8%	34.5%
<b>Physician Assistants</b>	378	480	27.0%	177	72.5%	\$44.14	26.7%	41.9%
Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	389	480	23.4%	170	83.0%	\$24.81	8.3%	NA
Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technicians	288	360	25.0%	168	71.2%	\$21.40	15.0%	26.2%
Health Care Practitioners and Technical Workers, All Other	367	455	24.0%	164	42.0%	\$29.02	5.8%	NA
Medical Records and Health Information Technicians	404	500	23.8%	156	71.3%	\$18.89	8.0%	24.4%
Medical and Clinical Lab Technologists	236	295	25.0%	142	74.6%	\$30.73	13.8%	40.9%
<b>Dental Hygienists</b>	489	575	17.6%	133	96.1%	\$43.62	9.2%	30.8%
<b>EMTs and Paramedics</b>	303	383	26.4%	130	51.8%	\$23.10	10.2%	15.8%
<b>Physical Therapists</b>	338	422	24.9%	118	76.6%	\$44.58	17.7%	23.2%
Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners, All Other	212	263	24.1%	107	55.2%	\$42.89	8.2%	NA
Respiratory Therapists	146	195	33.6%	106	73.3%	\$30.64	20.4%	44.2%
Speech-Language Pathologists	172	196	14.0%	72	23.3%	\$41.08	11.3%	43.2%
Occupational Health and Safety Specialists	185	208	12.4%	69	2.2%	\$37.89	24.9%	44.6%
Recreational Therapists	146	164	12.3%	62	75.3%	\$21.96	13.5%	38.8%
Opticians, Dispensing	126	157	24.6%	60	69.0%	\$18.37	13.7%	29.1%
Psychiatric Technicians	207	230	11.1%	59	75.8%	\$15.44	8.6%	30.1%
Dietitians and Nutritionists	118	135	14.4%	57	61.0%	\$28.75	8.8%	28.3%
Occupational Therapists	151	184	21.9%	56	57.0%	\$36.83	17.3%	33.1%
Dentists, General	121	142	17.4%	41	91.7%	\$92.76	19.4%	39.3%
Surgical Technologists	82	105	28.0%	34	98.8%	\$23.80	21.1%	19.4%
Therapists, All Other	67	80	19.4%	26	77.6%	\$35.87	3.7%	NA
Occupational Health and Safety Technicians	74	85	14.9%	25	5.4%	\$36.19	21.6%	18.8%
Athletic Trainers	76	83	9.2%	21	26.3%	NA	8.6%	4.8%

Health Care Support Occupations	Projected Employment, 2008 to 2018					Wages and Demographics <sup>1</sup>		
Occupational title	2008	2018	Percent growth	Projected openings	2008 % in health care <sup>2</sup>	Average 2010 wage	2009 non-residents	2009 workers ages 50+
Home Health Aides	1,887	2,780	47.3%	1,214	51.5%	\$14.06	10.2%	28.0%
Health Care Support Workers, All Other	1,936	2,490	28.6%	983	59.0%	\$18.90	8.0%	NA
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	1,999	2,450	22.6%	737	68.3%	\$16.45	6.6%	23.4%
<b>Dental Assistants</b>	959	1,130	17.8%	470	93.0%	\$20.20	9.0%	14.4%
Medical Assistants	828	1,070	29.2%	433	90.3%	\$18.15	6.8%	10.9%
Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers	202	240	18.8%	94	0.0%	\$12.70	14.1%	NA
Massage Therapists	184	217	17.9%	82	52.7%	\$41.47	12.2%	19.4%
Medical Transcriptionists	140	155	10.7%	49	82.9%	\$21.22	11.9%	41.7%
Psychiatric Aides	102	111	8.8%	24	19.6%	\$19.15	3.2%	30.4%
Pharmacy Aides	60	69	15.0%	20	35.0%	NA	13.4%	17.1%

Other Health Care Related Occupations	Projected Employment, 2008 to 2018					Wages and Demographics <sup>1</sup>		
Occupational title	2008	2018	Percent growth	Projected openings	2008 % in health care <sup>2</sup>	Average 2010 wage	2009 non-residents	2009 workers ages 50+
<b>Medical and Health Services Managers</b>	1,112	1,294	16.4%	399	46.8%	\$40.37	4.8%	44.1%
Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists	91	101	11.0%	30	17.6%	\$36.77	18.9%	42.3%
Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorder Counselors	247	299	21.1%	120	51.0%	\$21.87	13.5%	51.0%
Mental Health Counselors	230	267	16.1%	95	55.2%	\$26.70	13.3%	55.2%
Rehabilitation Counselors	303	349	15.2%	123	9.9%	\$23.17	7.7%	9.9%
Health Educators	175	207	18.3%	68	18.3%	\$20.49	5.0%	33.9%
Health Specialty Teachers, Postsecondary	62	69	11.3%	24	17.7%	NA	5.4%	59.2%
Medical Secretaries	338	400	18.3%	131	88.8%	\$16.99	7.7%	27.2%
Dental Laboratory Technicians	52	61	17.3%	25	46.2%	\$26.34	0.0%	27.8%

Notes: The self-employed are excluded from these wage rate determinations, which may understate wages for some occupations (for example, self-employed physicians). Employment numbers are based on 2008 to 2018 projections. Includes occupations with >50 employment in 2008. NA=Not available. **Occupations in bold are top jobs.** These occupations must: 1) rank in the top two wage quartiles, 2) have projected growth of at least 75 jobs and greater percentage growth than all occupations combined, or 3) be among the 50 occupations with the most projected openings (of those with wages in the top two quartiles). See this article's endnotes for a definition of nonresidency.

<sup>1</sup>Average hourly wages are based on 2010 OES wage estimates for Alaska. Nonresidency and age data are from 2009.

<sup>2</sup>Percentage of health care workers in 2008 includes NAICS 621 Ambulatory health care services, 622 Hospitals, and 623 Nursing and residential care facilities.

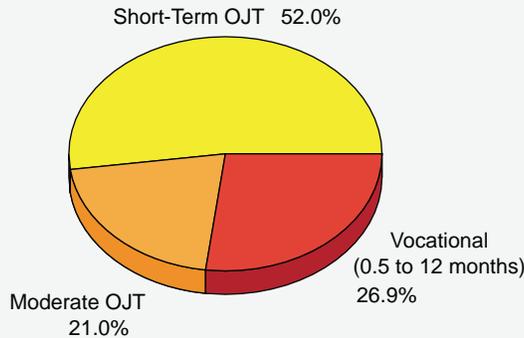
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

## 9 Training for Future Health Care Jobs<sup>1</sup>

By required education level,<sup>2</sup> Alaska 2018

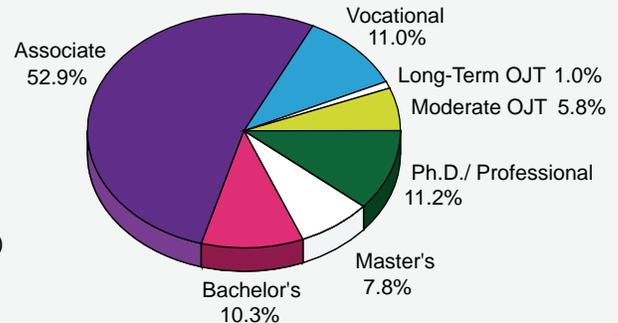
### Health Care Support Occupations

Average Annual Wages = \$37,180 (2010)



### Health Care Practitioner and Technical Occupations

Average Annual Wages = \$85,900 (2010)



Notes: Percentages do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding. OJT stands for "on-the-job training." Short term OJT is one month or less, moderate OJT is one to 12 months, and long-term OJT is more than a year.

<sup>1</sup>Percentages are based on projected total openings in 2018 for health care occupations listed in Exhibit 8.

<sup>2</sup>Training levels are based on minimum training needed to get the position.

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

care services." This sector includes offices for doctors, dentists, chiropractors, optometrists, and other health care practitioners. It also includes home health care providers, outpatient care centers, and medical labs. (See Exhibit 5.)

Home health care service providers have grown rapidly since 2001, and it's a trend that's likely to continue as the senior population increases. (See Exhibit 7.) It's cheaper for the elderly to remain at home than to live in a nursing home or hospital, and many consumers prefer to stay at home as long as they are able.

### Nursing, residential care

Employment in nursing and residential care facilities nearly doubled during the last decade, adding roughly 1,600 jobs. Nursing facilities serve mostly the elderly, and residential care facilities include services for the disabled and children. The facilities in this group include a variety of residential and assisted living homes.

The employment numbers are understated for nursing facilities because they don't include employment at Alaska's six pioneer homes. Those state-run facilities are classified as part of state government. As with most of the health care industry, growth is likely to be driven by the

expanding need for services for Alaska's senior citizens.

### Occupational outlook

Seventeen of the 20 fastest growing occupations in Alaska are related to health care, according to the most recent occupation forecast that covers the period between 2008 and 2018. Occupations are grouped into categories based on their similarities. The two main groups for health care are health care practitioner and technical occupations, and health care support occupations. (See Exhibit 8.) Data are also provided for a handful of other health care occupations that fall outside the two main groups.

### Health care support occupations

Employment in health care support occupations is projected to grow 29.1 percent by 2018 — nearly three times faster than the growth rate of 10.5 percent for all occupations.<sup>7</sup>

Health care support occupations pay less, but also require less training. In most cases, training is less than one year to obtain employment, with most occupations requiring on-the-job or vocational training. (See Exhibit 9.) Average wages

for most of these occupations are less than \$17 per hour.

Employment for home health aides is expected to grow 47.3 percent between 2008 and 2018, adding roughly 890 jobs. With the anticipated expansion of the home health industry, this is the fastest growing occupation in the state.

## Health care practitioners

In 2008, more than 13,000 people held these highly skilled jobs, many of which require a professional license: nurses, doctors, pharmacists, dentists, physician assistants, chiropractors, and dental hygienists. The occupations not licensed in Alaska usually require professional certification from a national organization. These jobs take longer to prepare for, but workers are rewarded with higher wages. The average annual wage in this occupational group is \$85,000.

Registered nurses accounted for most of the workers in this group, with 5,032 employed in 2008.<sup>8</sup> The forecasted growth rate of 27.2 percent means employment could reach 6,400 by 2018.

In 2009, about 17 percent of Alaska's nurses were nonresidents, and this suggests employers have difficulty recruiting in-state workers. Also, 42 percent of Alaska's registered nurses are past age 50, so many will retire or leave the occupation over the next 15 years. (See Exhibit 8.)

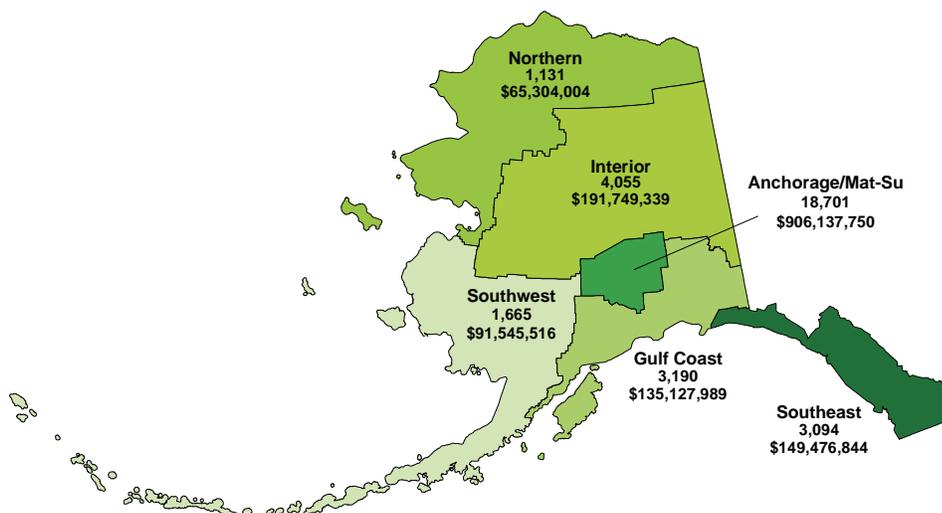
## Nonresident hire

In 2009, just 10.9 percent of workers in the health care industry were nonresidents,<sup>9</sup> and that rate has held steady over the past decade. The nonresidency rate is low in comparison to other industries. However, the numbers are based on all types of health care workers — as in most industries, skilled workers are more difficult to find.

## Health Care's Employment and Total Wages

By economic region, Alaska 2010

# 10



Note: Average annual employment

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

Overall, about 15 percent of workers in health care practitioner and technical occupations are nonresidents, but many individual occupations' rates are higher. This means there are many job opportunities available for local workers who have the right training.

The rate of nonresidency is highest for licensed physicians. Obstetricians and gynecologists were from out of state at a rate of 39.3 percent, internists at 32.3 percent, and family and general practitioners at 24.4 percent. Health care planners have known about the shortage of primary care physicians for a while, and the search isn't expected to get easier. The shortage of skilled candidates is a nationwide problem.

## A stable producer of jobs

Health care has been a boon to overall job growth in the state, and is an important economic contributor in every region. (See Exhibit 10.) The industry created 10,000 new jobs during the last 10 years, with work available at nearly every educational level and in every part of the state. Expanding facilities and increasing demand make the industry a continued excellent choice for those seeking career opportunities.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>This number is based on the middle or median range for projected population growth.

<sup>2</sup>Data are based on a two-year average of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. See [statehealthfacts.org](http://statehealthfacts.org).

<sup>3</sup>This figure is based on 2005 to 2007 data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, and is not directly comparable to current data.

<sup>4</sup>According to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, based on projected enrollment from fiscal year 2010.

<sup>5</sup>Source: Anchorage Daily News, "Stimulus funds aid new Nome Hospital," Feb. 24, 2009

<sup>6</sup>Source: Norton Sound Health Corporation's 2009 Annual Report

<sup>7</sup>Occupational forecasts are not directly comparable to industry forecasts. Occupational forecasts are based on projected growth across all industries, including those outside health care.

<sup>8</sup>Data include registered nurses and advanced nurse practitioners.

<sup>9</sup>Residency is calculated by matching workers reported by Alaska employers with the two most recent Alaska Permanent Fund dividend files (2009 and 2010). If workers applied for a dividend in 2009 or 2010, they are considered residents in this report. Occupational data for nonresident workers are available at: <http://labor.alaska.gov/research/reshire/reshire.htm>.

# 2011 Alaska Rental Survey

## Costs around the state for various types of homes

**T**alk about housing in Alaska often focuses on the price of buying a home, but the effect of renting on the economy is substantial — maybe even more so in Alaska than in the rest of the United States. According to the 2010 Census, 36.9 percent of all homes in Alaska are rentals, and most adults have rented a house or apartment at some time in their lives. The most recent U.S. housing data show 31.6 percent of housing units as renter-occupied.<sup>1</sup>

The high percentage of rentals in Alaska is likely due to a relatively young population, high population turnover, a large number of military personnel, and the high costs of home ownership.

Every March, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development surveys Alaska’s landlords for residential rental unit information for the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. This year’s survey showed the median adjusted rent for all surveyed areas and building types combined rose 1 percent from 2010, to \$1,042 per month.

While Alaska’s prices are high overall, it costs much more to live in some regions than others. As in the past, Kodiak is the most expensive place in the state to rent, at \$1,172 a month for all types of homes — 11 percent higher than the survey total.

Kodiak was followed by Valdez-Cordova Census Area at \$1,090 a month. The Kenai Peninsula Borough had the lowest monthly rent in the state, affordable in comparison at \$835 — about 40

**All Building Types and Unit Sizes**  
Median adjusted monthly rent, Alaska, 2011



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, 2011 Rental Market Survey

percent less than Kodiak. (See Exhibit 1.)

### How rental costs are determined

For each rental unit surveyed, property owners and managers reported the monthly contract rent, building type, number of bedrooms, energy sources, and the utilities included in the rent. The respondents also reported whether the unit was vacant during the week that included March 11 of this year. “Contract rent” is the amount the tenant pays to the landlord each month, and it may or may not include some utilities.

**Median adjusted rent:** The middle value of the rent paid to a landlord, plus the estimated additional utilities.

This survey measured rental costs in terms of “median adjusted rent.” The median is the middle value of all reported prices, where half the results

are higher and half are lower. Using the median instead of the average tends to smooth out a data series, as an average can be skewed by extremely high or low values.

The “adjusted” component of the median adjusted rent refers to the rent as if all utilities were included. Because the types and costs of utilities included in contract rent may vary, using contract rent makes it difficult to compare the numbers. Adding the estimated costs of all utilities to the adjusted

rent values makes the units more comparable.

## Apartments are pricey in Kodiak

Kodiak had the highest median adjusted rent for two-bedroom apartments, the most common size apartment in the survey. Kodiak’s rent weighed in at \$1,231 per month, with Anchorage and Juneau following at \$1,202 and \$1,182, respectively. The City and Borough of Sitka and the Ketchikan Gateway Borough also reported rents above \$1,000 per month.

The rates in Anchorage were about 40 percent higher than its nearest neighbor, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, where similar units cost just \$871.

As with the results of all building sizes combined, Kenai Peninsula Borough was the cheapest place to rent a two-bedroom apartment, at \$847 a month.

## Single-family rent rose in most areas

Among three-bedroom single-family rental homes, rent rose in seven of 10 areas in the state in 2011. The largest increase was in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, where the rent increased by \$164 over the year and was the highest in the state at \$1,938. The most affordable three-bedrooms were found in the Wrangell-Petersburg area, at \$959 per month. (See Exhibit 3.)

Rental rates for three-bedroom homes fell in Wrangell-Petersburg, Anchorage, and Sitka in 2011.

## Low vacancy means high prices

Among all surveyed areas and

## 2 Two-Bedroom Apartments

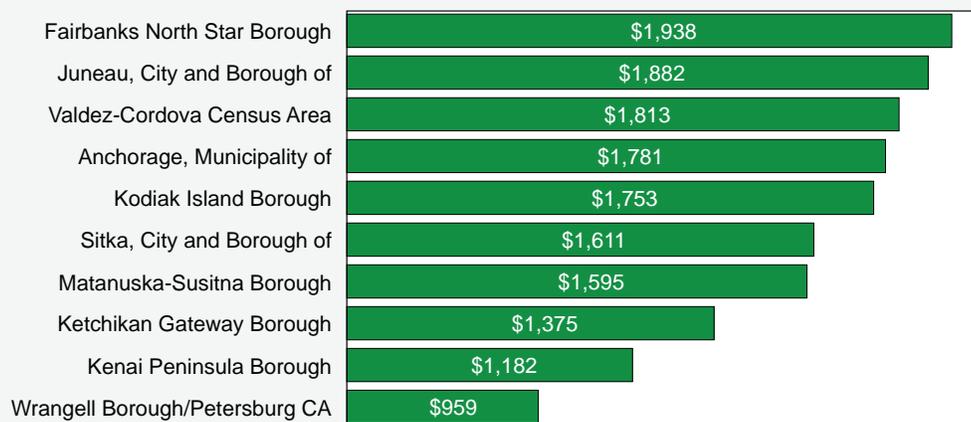
Median adjusted rent, Alaska, 2011



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, 2011 Rental Market Survey

## 3 Single-Family Homes

Median adjusted rent, Alaska, 2011



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, 2011 Rental Market Survey

building types, 4.4 percent were vacant in 2011, up from 3.9 percent in 2010. However, the 2011 figures remain well below the 10-year average of 6.7 percent.

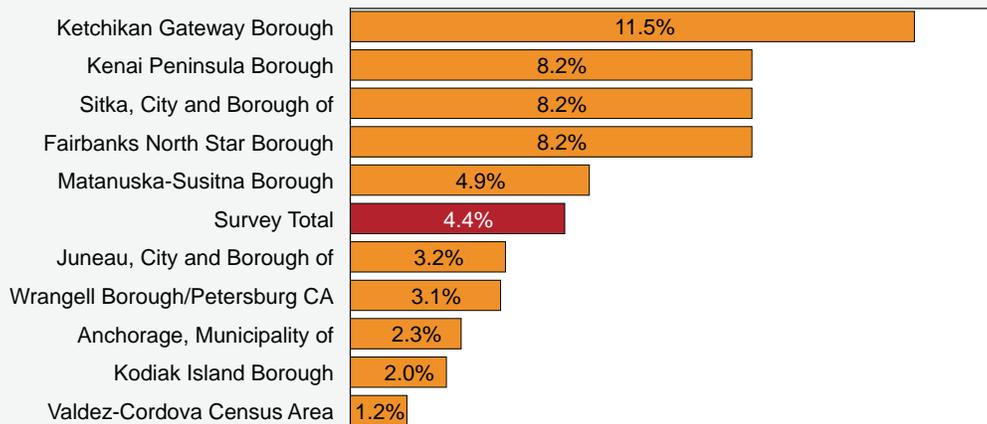
Areas with high rental rates tend to have low vacancy, as greater numbers of tenants competing for available homes may drive up costs. Conversely, areas with low monthly rent often have higher vacancy rates as landlords maintain competitive prices to attract tenants. Vacancy also fluctuates from year to year because of changes in housing stock inventory, seasonal factors, and other local economic conditions.

## It's hard to find units in Valdez-Cordova

Only 1.2 percent of units were reported vacant in the Valdez-Cordova Census Area in 2011, followed by the Kodiak Island Borough at 2.0 percent. As expected, Kodiak and Valdez-Cordova also reported the two highest rent amounts for all building types in 2011. (See Exhibit 4.)

## Vacancy Rates 4

All building types and unit sizes, Alaska, 2011



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, 2011 Rental Market Survey

Anchorage, Wrangell-Petersburg, and Juneau had vacancy rates below 4 percent at 2.3 percent, 3.1 percent, and 3.2 percent respectively. Rent was third-highest in Anchorage and fourth-highest in Juneau, while Wrangell-Petersburg was the second-least expensive.

Vacancy was highest by far in Ketchikan Gateway Borough for the second year in a row, at 11.5 percent in 2011. In 2010, Ketchikan had a 12.0

## Types of Energy Use 5

Select Alaska boroughs and census areas, 2011

	Heat				Hot Water				Cooking			
	Natural gas	Oil	Electric	Other	Natural gas	Oil	Electric	Other	Natural gas	Oil	Electric	Other
Anchorage, Municipality of	96.6%	0.1%	3.2%	—	94.8%	0%	5.2%	—	4.9%	—	95.1%	0%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	10.9%	88.5%	0.5%	0.1%	10.2%	66.5%	22.8%	0.5%	0.9%	—	97.3%	1.8%
Juneau, City and Borough of	—	70.2%	29.3%	0.5%	—	50.0%	48.8%	1.2%	—	—	97.2%	2.8%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	71.9%	18.0%	6.7%	3.4%	67.7%	7.3%	23.1%	1.9%	34.1%	—	59.7%	6.2%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	—	84.6%	13.2%	2.2%	—	48.5%	49.3%	2.2%	—	—	98.0%	2.0%
Kodiak Island Borough	—	100.0%	—	—	—	84.0%	15.2%	0.9%	—	—	96.5%	3.5%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	89.6%	4.6%	5.1%	0.7%	82.9%	0.9%	15.7%	0.5%	35.8%	—	60.5%	3.7%
Sitka, City and Borough of	—	74.3%	25.3%	0.3%	—	43.1%	55.9%	1.0%	—	—	98.0%	2.0%
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	4.3%	92.0%	1.8%	1.8%	5.5%	76.1%	16.6%	1.8%	—	—	94.5%	5.5%
Wrangell Borough/ Petersburg Census Area	—	46.9%	53.1%	—	—	24.1%	75.9%	—	—	—	93.2%	6.8%

Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, 2011 Rental Market Survey

percent vacancy rate. Aside from Ketchikan, no other surveyed area had a vacancy rate above 8.2 percent.

The second highest vacancy rate was a three-way tie at 8.2 percent, shared by Fairbanks North Star Borough, Kenai Peninsula Borough, and the City and Borough of Sitka. The largest increase in vacancy was in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, where the rate climbed from 5.0 percent to 8.2 percent over the year, likely due to the spring deployment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team from Fort Wainwright.

Vacancy rates for apartments were generally lower than those for single-family rentals, suggesting apartments are in greater demand.

### **Natural gas popular when available**

Across the state, natural gas was the preferred energy source for heat, hot water, and cooking when available, especially in Anchorage, Mat-Su, and Kenai. (See Exhibit 5.)

Where natural gas wasn't available, oil was the second most popular source of heat. Oil heat was most common in Kodiak, where all surveyed units use it. Oil also predominated in Fairbanks North Star Borough (89 percent), Valdez-Cordova Census Area (92 percent), and Ketchikan Gateway Borough (85 percent).

In areas that lack natural gas but have inexpensive hydro-powered electricity, electric heat was used more frequently than in other areas. In Wrangell-Petersburg, 53 percent of surveyed units used electric heat, followed by Juneau (29 percent), and Sitka (25 percent).

The most common utilities included with contract rent in 2011 were sewer and garbage collection, provided in 89 and 86 percent of the surveyed units, respectively. Electricity was the least likely utility to be included in the rental price, at only 23 percent of surveyed homes.

### **Complete results are online**

Complete results of the 2011 Rental Market Survey as well as other published data on Alaska's housing market are available at the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation's Web site at: <http://www.ahfc.state.ak.us/reference/reference.cfm>.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009 American Housing Survey. These are the most recent national housing data figures available, as 2010 Census renter information is not yet available. Therefore, this figure may not be directly comparable to Alaska's 2010 renter percentage.

# Employment Scene

## Unemployment rate at 7.5 percent in June



Alaska's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for June was 7.5 percent, a statistically insignificant increase from May's rate of 7.3, which was revised down from 7.4 percent. The comparable nationwide rate in June was 9.2 percent, slightly up from May's rate of 9.1 percent.

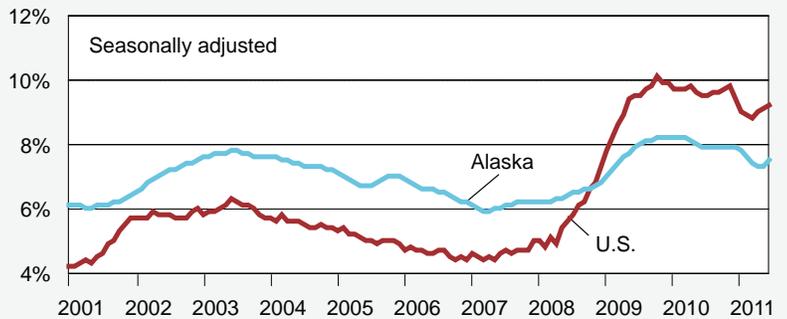
In Alaska and nationwide, unemployment rates remain below year-ago levels. However, the national jobless rate has trended slowly upward since April, and June marked the 32nd month in a row in which Alaska's unemployment rate was lower than the nation's.

In May, the most recent month for which individual state data are available, 31 states and Washington, D.C., had unemployment rates higher than Alaska's; 16 states had lower rates; and two reported the same rate. Nevada again had the highest jobless rate at 12.1 percent, and North Dakota remained the lowest at 3.2 percent. Only 24 states reported decreases in their unemployment rates in May, down from the 39 states whose rates decreased in April.

### Big differences statewide

Around Alaska, the not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates ranged from 2.0 percent in Bristol Bay to 23.5 percent in Wade Hampton Census Area. Bristol Bay represents a group of boroughs and census areas — including Skagway, Denali Borough, and Haines Borough — whose seasonal fishing and tourism employment prompts a sharp drop in joblessness each summer. As May was a month of low unemployment in many of these communities, the drop in June was not as dramatic as the previous month. Some decreases were noticeable, though, such as Denali Borough's decrease to 4.3 percent in June from an already-low rate of 6.0 percent in May. In Skagway, where summer employment far exceeds its resident population, unemployment fell from 4.4 percent to 3.1 percent. Bristol Bay's unemployment rate didn't have much farther to fall in June, when it went from 2.9 percent to 2.0 percent.

**Unemployment Rates** 1  
Alaska and U.S., January 2001 to June 2011



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

Some other areas of the state, such as Wade Hampton, experience chronically high unemployment due to a persistent lack of available jobs. Wade Hampton's joblessness has hovered around 20 percent for more than two years, and Bethel's rate has been in the double digits since 2003.

### Higher rates, new entrants

The labor force, which is the sum of the employed and unemployed, increased by nearly 7,000 people across Alaska over the year as the nationwide labor force declined. The labor force grew in 21 of 26 boroughs and census areas. In most of these cases, the increase came from higher numbers of both employed and unemployed people. This implies that those once considered not in the labor force — those not employed or actively seeking work — have entered the labor force.

About one-third of the unemployed in June were reentrants to the labor force. Because data on the reasons for their return are unavailable, the motivating force remains uncertain — the increase in unemployment could be a positive or negative indicator. Reentry to the labor force could mean increased confidence in the economy because people may now believe they can find a job, and this increases the unemployment rate until they are hired.

## 2 Statewide Employment

### Nonfarm wage and salary

	Preliminary		Revised		Year-Over-Year Change		
	6/11	5/11	6/10	6/10	90% Confidence Interval		
<b>Alaska</b>							
<b>Total Nonfarm Wage and Salary<sup>1</sup></b>	348,500	328,500	342,800	5,700	-1,683	13,083	
Goods-Producing <sup>2</sup>	51,600	41,700	50,000	1,600	-1,284	4,484	
Service-Providing <sup>3</sup>	296,900	286,800	292,800	4,100	-	-	
<b>Mining and Logging</b>	16,900	16,300	16,000	900	107	1,693	
Mining	16,500	15,800	15,700	800	-	-	
Oil and Gas	13,600	13,200	13,100	500	-	-	
<b>Construction</b>	18,500	16,200	18,600	-100	-2,683	2,483	
<b>Manufacturing</b>	16,200	9,200	15,400	800	-194	1,794	
Seafood Processing	12,200	5,600	11,600	600	-	-	
<b>Trade, Transportation, Utilities</b>	67,800	65,900	66,700	1,100	-1,272	3,472	
Wholesale Trade	6,500	6,200	6,500	0	-556	556	
Retail Trade	37,500	36,500	37,100	400	-1,628	2,428	
Food and Beverage Stores	6,500	6,300	6,500	0	-	-	
General Merchandise Stores	10,400	10,000	10,200	200	-	-	
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	23,800	23,200	23,100	700	-338	1,738	
Air Transportation	6,300	6,000	6,000	300	-	-	
Truck Transportation	3,400	3,300	3,400	0	-	-	
<b>Information</b>	6,500	6,500	6,400	100	-481	681	
Telecommunications	4,300	4,300	4,200	100	-	-	
<b>Financial Activities</b>	15,000	14,900	15,300	-300	-2,243	1,643	
<b>Professional and Business Services</b>	28,100	26,600	27,500	600	-1,193	2,393	
<b>Educational<sup>4</sup> and Health Services</b>	43,300	43,200	41,600	1,700	432	2,968	
Health Care	31,800	31,600	30,000	1,800	-	-	
<b>Leisure and Hospitality</b>	39,300	34,200	36,900	2,400	363	4,437	
Accommodations	7,800	7,100	10,200	-2,400	-	-	
Food Services and Drinking Places	23,500	21,700	21,400	2,100	-	-	
<b>Other Services</b>	12,100	11,700	11,800	300	-2,876	3,476	
<b>Government</b>	84,800	83,800	86,600	-1,800	-	-	
Federal Government <sup>5</sup>	17,800	17,300	19,000	-1,200	-	-	
State Government	25,700	25,300	25,700	0	-	-	
State Government Education <sup>6</sup>	6,400	7,000	6,400	0	-	-	
Local Government	41,300	41,200	41,900	-600	-	-	
Local Government Education <sup>7</sup>	23,100	23,900	23,200	-100	-	-	
Tribal Government	4,000	3,800	3,900	100	-	-	

## 4 Regional Employment

### Nonfarm wage and salary

	Preliminary		Revised		Changes from		Percent Change		90% confidence interval	
	6/11	5/11	6/10	5/11	6/10	5/11	6/10	Low	High	
Anch/Mat-Su	178,600	172,700	177,100	5,900	1,500	3.4%	0.8%	-2,052	5,052	
Anchorage	157,250	152,900	155,550	4,350	1,700	2.8%	1.1%	-	-	

A dash means confidence intervals aren't available at this level.

<sup>1</sup>Excludes the self-employed, fishermen and other agricultural workers, and private household workers. For estimates of fish harvesting employment and other fisheries data, go to [labor.alaska.gov/research/seafood/seafood.htm](http://labor.alaska.gov/research/seafood/seafood.htm).

<sup>2</sup>Goods-producing sectors include natural resources and mining, construction, and manufacturing.

<sup>3</sup>Service-providing sectors include all others not listed as goods-producing sectors.

<sup>4</sup>Private education only

<sup>5</sup>Excludes uniformed military

<sup>6</sup>Includes the University of Alaska

<sup>7</sup>Includes public school systems

Sources for Exhibits 1, 2, and 3: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Sources for Exhibit 4: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, for Anchorage/Mat-Su

## 3 Unemployment Rates

### Boroughs and census areas

	Prelim.			Revised		
	6/11	5/11	6/10	6/11	5/11	6/10
<b>SEASONALLY ADJUSTED</b>						
<b>United States</b>	9.2	9.1	9.5			
<b>Alaska Statewide</b>	7.5	7.3	7.9			
<b>NOT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED</b>						
<b>United States</b>	9.3	8.7	9.6			
<b>Alaska Statewide</b>	7.9	7.3	7.7			
<b>Anchorage/Mat-Su Region</b>	7.2	6.6	7.4			
Municipality of Anchorage	6.7	6.1	7.0			
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	9.0	8.4	8.7			
<b>Gulf Coast Region</b>	8.5	8.3	8.0			
Kenai Peninsula Borough	8.9	8.6	8.6			
Kodiak Island Borough	7.6	7.2	6.9			
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	7.6	8.0	6.5			
<b>Interior Region</b>	7.6	7.2	7.3			
Denali Borough	4.3	6.0	4.1			
Fairbanks North Star Borough	7.1	6.5	6.9			
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	10.0	9.5	9.3			
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	15.3	14.7	14.2			
<b>Northern Region</b>	11.0	9.3	10.6			
Nome Census Area	14.5	12.2	14.5			
North Slope Borough	5.2	4.2	5.5			
Northwest Arctic Borough	16.6	14.5	14.5			
<b>Southeast Region</b>	7.0	6.5	6.7			
Haines Borough	6.8	7.0	6.8			
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area <sup>1</sup>	13.3	13.0	10.7			
Juneau, City and Borough of	5.5	4.9	5.5			
Ketchikan Gateway Borough <sup>1</sup>	7.0	6.7	6.5			
Petersburg Census Area <sup>1</sup>	9.0	9.1	-			
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area <sup>1</sup>	15.7	13.1	-			
Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan CA <sup>1</sup>	-	-	12.9			
Sitka, City and Borough of <sup>1</sup>	6.5	5.7	6.1			
Skagway, Municipality of <sup>1</sup>	3.1	4.4	2.5			
Wrangell, City and Borough of <sup>1</sup>	7.6	7.8	-			
Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area <sup>1</sup>	-	-	9.5			
Yakutat, City and Borough of	8.9	9.6	9.0			
<b>Southwest Region</b>	13.3	14.3	12.4			
Aleutians East Borough	11.1	19.2	8.6			
Aleutians West Census Area	7.3	14.1	6.8			
Bethel Census Area	16.9	15.4	16.1			
Bristol Bay Borough	2.0	2.9	2.0			
Dillingham Census Area	11.2	11.1	10.0			
Lake and Peninsula Borough	6.6	8.2	6.7			
Wade Hampton Census Area	23.5	20.1	22.0			

<sup>1</sup> Because of the creation of new boroughs, this borough or census area has been changed or no longer exists. Data for the Municipality of Skagway and Hoonah-Angoon Census Area became available in 2010. Data for the City and Borough of Wrangell, Petersburg Census Area, and Prince of Wales-Hyder went into effect in January 2011. Prior to January, data were published for Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area and Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan Census Area.

### Changes in producing the estimates

Beginning with the production of preliminary estimates for March 2011, production of state and metropolitan area Current Employment Statistics estimates has transitioned from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Concurrent with this transition, the BLS implemented several changes to the methods to help standardize estimation across states. While these changes reduce the potential for statistical bias in state and metropolitan area estimates, they may increase month-to-month variability. More detailed information on the CES changes is available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/sae/cesprocs.htm>.

For more current state and regional employment and unemployment data, visit our Web site: [laborstats.alaska.gov](http://laborstats.alaska.gov)

# Employer Resources

## Fidelity Bonding Program shields employers from employee theft

The Fidelity Bonding Program allows an employer to insure an “at-risk” employee, at no cost, for six months against job-related theft, forgery, larceny, or embezzlement. Bond insurance reimburses employers for any loss of money or property, at or away from the work site, with no deductible.

The Fidelity Bonding Program, which is administered by the Employment Security Division of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, is the only program that bonds ex-offenders. It began as a federal program in 1966, and states began administering their own programs in 1998.

Full-time and part-time applicants who are eligible include ex-offenders, recovering substance abusers, welfare recipients, and those with poor credit. People who lack a work history or have been dishonorably discharged from the military may also be covered. Em-

ployees must be of legal working age in Alaska, and the self-employed are not eligible.

Bonds are typically issued for \$5,000; higher amounts depend on the particular job and employment circumstances, and must be approved by the program’s bonding coordinator. Bonds may also be issued to cover current employees who need bonding to prevent being laid off or to secure a job transfer or promotion.

Employers seeking bonding insurance can call their closest Alaska Job Center. To find the nearest job center, go to [jobs.alaska.gov](http://jobs.alaska.gov) and click on “Alaska Job Centers” on the left, or call (877) 724-ALEX (2539).

For more information about the program, visit the Fidelity Bonding Program Web site at [labor.alaska.gov/bonding](http://labor.alaska.gov/bonding).

# A Safety Minute

## New Alaska law protects patients by limiting overtime by nurses

Nurses who care for patients directly must always be available to meet their needs, but quality patient care can be compromised when nurses work unnecessarily long hours.

A new Alaska law that went into effect Jan. 1 limits the amount of overtime that registered nurses and licensed practical nurses can work in most health care facilities. It also gives nurses a voice in the decision-making process on working overtime, based on the needs of the facility and its patients. Except in certain cases, nurses may not be required to work past their predetermined and regularly scheduled shifts if they decide it would jeopardize their own safety or the well-being of their patients.

In addition to overtime limits, all health care facilities — with the exceptions of primary care outpatient, federal,

or tribal facilities — are now required to keep records of all hours nurses work beyond their scheduled shifts as well as the hours they were on call. Employers must report these data to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development twice a year.

The law also requires facilities to provide an anonymous way for patients and nurses to file complaints about overtime-related staffing levels and patient safety. If an issue can’t be resolved, nurses may file a formal complaint with the Wage and Hour Administration at the Department of Labor, and the law protects them from employer retaliation.

For more information, contact the Wage and Hour Administration at (907) 269-4900, or visit: <http://www.labor.alaska.gov/lss/whhome.htm>