



ALASKA ECONOMIC
TRENDS
DECEMBER 2021

First look at the 2020 Census

ALSO INSIDE Alaska's job openings rise in 2021

FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Thank you to those who embodied the spirit of service

By Dr. Tamika L. Ledbetter, Commissioner

As 2021 comes to a close, I dedicate this column to the employees of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the many accomplishments they made over the last couple of years. Serving Alaskans is our mission, and we strive to be the best each and every day.

To the department's 759 employees, thank you for connecting Alaskans to employment and training, fostering safe working conditions, and assisting with replacement income and medical indemnity through workers' compensation when times are difficult.

At the height of the pandemic in the summer of 2020, approximately 65,000 Alaskans filed for unemployment benefits. To process the sudden flood of claims, the unemployment insurance team worked around the clock with the assistance of 240 nonpermanent workers brought on to meet the enormous demand. It's an understatement to say it was an all-hands-on-deck response. Thank you to this extraordinary team, whose efforts the Alaska State Legislature recognized in June of 2021.

The At-Risk-Youth team also deserves a special shout-out. One of my first priorities as commissioner was to ensure Alaska's youth can access the employment and training services they need to end cycles of poverty. The ARY team actively and successfully engages with youth throughout the state.

To our workforce services team members, thank you for implementing Alaska's state-of-the-art integrated AlaskaJobs platform. You were many steps ahead of the pandemic curve and swiftly transitioned to online platforms for job recruitment, training, workshops, and interviews when employment conditions changed overnight.

To the team at Alaska's premier vocational technical school, AVTEC, thank you for making the Alaska Vocational Technical Center in Seward one of the nation's best returns on investment. Named by the U.S. Department of Transportation as a Center of Excellence in Maritime Training, AVTEC offers a variety of excellent career pathways with trainings that



take less than a year.

To our Workers' Compensation and Labor Standards and Safety team members, thank you for continuing to bring down workers' compensation insurance costs while improving workplace safety.

To our Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, thank you for making Alaska a leader among states in employment services for people who experience disabilities. The range of assistive technologies and employment support is among the best in the nation.

To our Research and Analysis group, creators of the premier publication *Alaska Economic Trends* and purveyors of up-to-date economic information and analysis, thank you for your balanced and accurate presentation of data for the public.

None of this would be possible without the technical support and responsiveness of our Administrative Services Division, which enables us to efficiently and effectively serve the public.

At a recent Military Veterans and Spouses Job Fair, I had the opportunity to recognize three outstanding employees. I presented Paul Meyer of the Fairbanks Job Center with the Veterans Performance Incentive Award for his dedication and support during the Veterans and Military Spouses Virtual Job Fair in 2020. I commended Juan Gonzalez from the Anchorage Midtown Job Center for providing exemplary individualized services to veterans, and Melanie MacPherson — also from the Anchorage Midtown Job Center — for her commitment to assisting Alaska's veterans.

All of these people embody our department's spirit of service. It is an honor to serve at the helm of such a distinguished group. I wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Contact Dr. Tamika L. Ledbetter, Commissioner, at (907) 465-2700 or commissioner.labor@alaska.gov.



Follow the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development on Twitter (twitter.com/alaskalabor) and Facebook (facebook.com/alaskalabor).

DECEMBER
2021

Volume 41 Number 12
ISSN 0160-3345

SARA WHITNEY
Editor

DAN ROBINSON
Chief, Research
and Analysis

Design by Sara Whitney

ON THE COVER:

This crowd photo was taken by
Flickr user Thomas Hawk at Gold-
en Gate Park in San Francisco.
License: [creativecommons.org/
licenses/by-nc/2.0/](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/)

ALASKA
DEPARTMENT of LABOR
and WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

Governor
Mike Dunleavy
Commissioner
Dr. Tamika L. Ledbetter

ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS

4 2020 CENSUS

13 ALASKA'S JOB
OPENINGS RISE

14 GAUGING
THE ECONOMY

Trends is a nonpartisan, data-driven magazine
that covers a range of economic topics in Alaska.

ON THIS SPREAD: The background image for 2021 is a cloudy sunset in Wasilla.
Photo by Flickr user krypton83 License: creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/

If you have questions or comments, contact the authors listed at the end of each article or the editor at sara.whitney@alaska.gov
or (907) 465-6561. This material is public information, and with appropriate credit it may be reproduced without permission.
To sign up for a free electronic subscription, read past issues, or purchase a print subscription, visit labor.alaska.gov/trends.

A first look at the 2020 Census

Data show the least amount of growth since statehood

By ERIC SANDBERG, DAVID HOWELL, and LIZ BROOKS

The 2020 Census results released so far¹ provide a first look at how Alaska's population changed over the past decade. Population growth during the 2010s was the lowest since territorial days. The state added the smallest number of people since the 1930s and grew at the slowest rate since the 1910s.

Between 2010 and 2020, Alaska added a little more than 23,000 people for a total population of 733,391. The overall growth rate of 3.3 percent was far below the previous post-World War II decades.

Growth in the 2010s was a post-statehood low

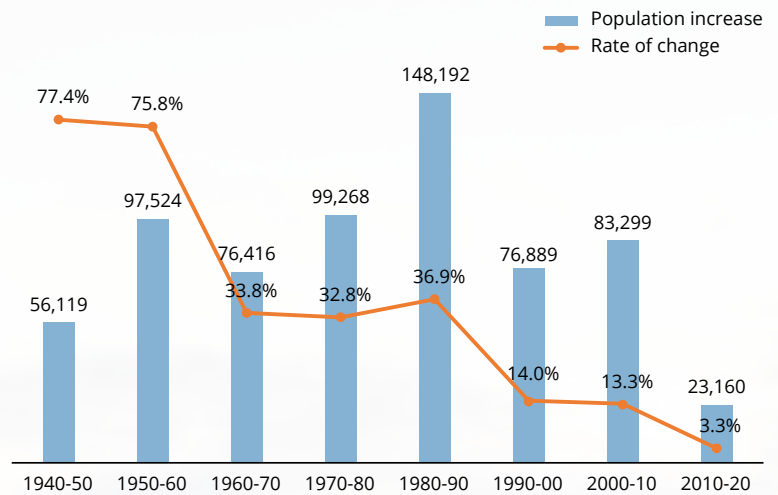
In the 1940s and 1950s, when military build-ups for World War II and the emerging Cold War brought in a flood of servicemen and a building boom, Alaska's population grew by over 75 percent each decade.

In the three decades after statehood, the emerging oil economy kept the state expanding by about a third each decade, even with the increasingly larger population. Decade growth peaked in the 1980s at nearly 150,000 additional people, then moderated after 1990. The state added around 80,000 people in both the 1990s and the 2000s, for growth between 13 and 14 percent.

The 2010s were a turning point. The 1930s were the last time Alaska gained so few people (13,000). In

¹Data released from the new decennial census for redistricting purposes have so far been limited to total population, totals by race, totals for the population 18 and older, and some housing characteristics. More data are expected in mid-2022, including detailed age structure and composition of households. The pandemic and a new process of adding random statistical "noise" for privacy purposes slowed the original release timeline.

A low decade for Alaska population growth



Source: U.S. Census Bureau decennial censuses for Alaska

terms of the rate, the recent decade was a century low. Alaska's population declined by 14 percent in the 1910s with World War I. At that time, the population was transient and male. With the war declared in 1917, most left for the army or war industries and fewer migrated back after the armistice.

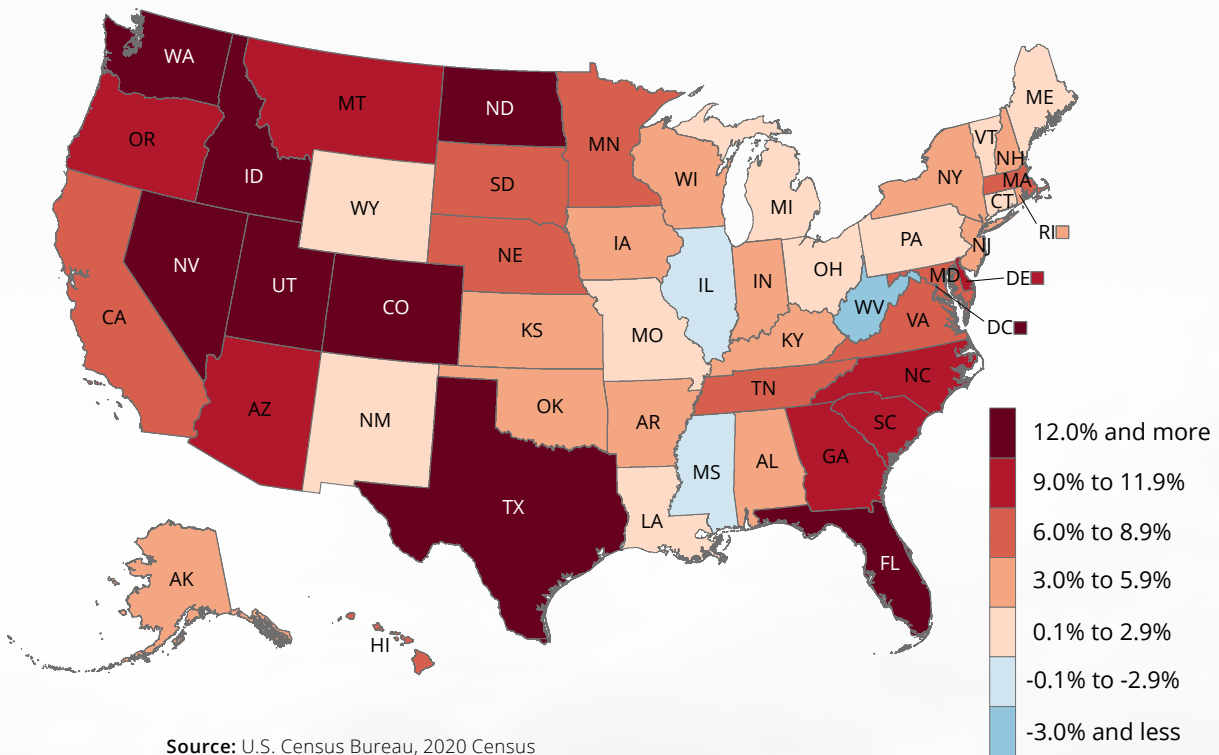
... but still outpaced 14 states

The U.S. population grew 7.4 percent during the 2010s, from 308,700,000 people to 331,400,000. While that was more than twice Alaska's rate, it was also the slowest growth for the nation since the 1930s.

The map on the next page shows growth varied around the country. Alaska's rate, while slow, still outpaced 14 other states. Three states lost population over the decade, with West Virginia coming in last at a 3.2 percent drop. The 11 other states that lagged Alaska were mostly in the Northwest and Midwest.

The fastest-growing states were mainly in the West and South Atlantic Coast. Utah grew 18.4 percent,

Percent population change by state between 2010 and 2020



followed by Idaho (17.3 percent), Texas (15.9 percent), North Dakota (15.8 percent), and Nevada (15 percent). Three other states and the District of Columbia grew at least 14 percent (Colorado, Washington, and Florida).

The U.S. grew at twice Alaska's rate, but that was the nation's slowest growth since the 1930s.

Rates varied widely around Alaska

Within Alaska, 15 areas grew while 14 shrank. One, Yakutat, remained the same. This pattern resembled the 2000s when 16 boroughs and census areas added people and 14 lost them. Only 10 grew during both decades, and six were in Northern or Southwest Alaska. (See the maps on the next page.)

Anchorage and Fairbanks represented over half of the state's growth during the 2000s, when they added 45,000 people, but both got smaller during the 2010s. Their losses were small percent-wise, but the lack of growth in the two most populated areas at the start of the decade hampered the statewide numbers.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough gained more than 18,000 people to surpass Fairbanks as the second-largest county equivalent after Anchorage.

Mat-Su accounted for 78 percent of the state's

growth, but even Mat-Su grew slower than in past decades. The fastest-growing borough from the 1970s through the 2000s fell into second place behind Skagway during the last decade.

On a regional level, Northern and Southwest grew at the fastest pace. The Northern Region population increased 9 percent, with its North Slope Borough leading at 17 percent. Southwest grew 5 percent, and the Kusilvak and Bethel census areas topped its list at 12 percent and 10 percent.

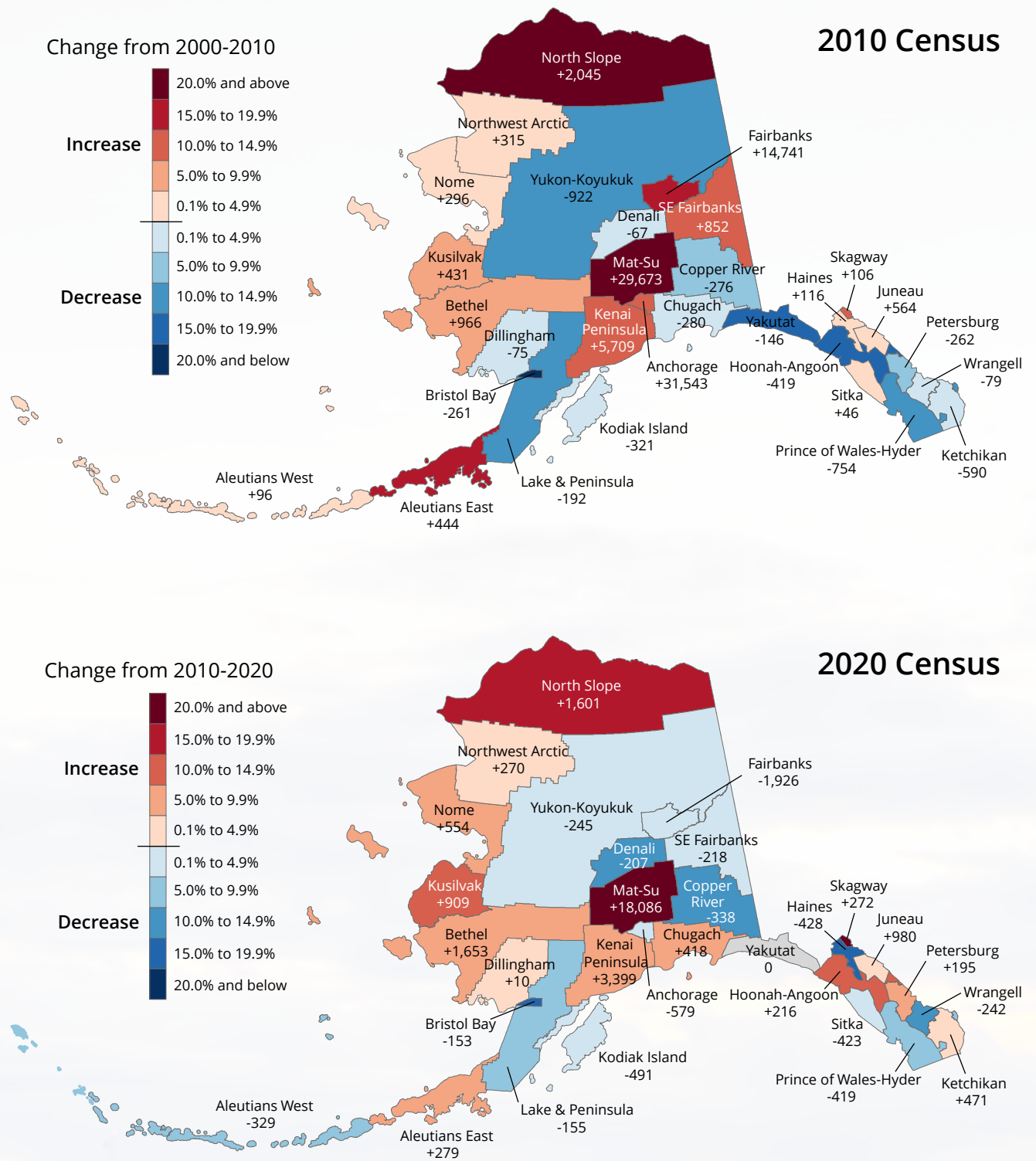
The Interior was the only region to shrink. Every borough and census area, including Fairbanks, lost population.

Change at the community level

The 2020 Census covered 355 communities in Alaska,

Text continues on page 7

How population change by area differed between 2010 and 2020 censuses



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census and 2020 Census

The 20 most populated places in the state each decade, 1980 to 2020

1980			1990		2000	
Rank	Place	Population	Place	Population	Place	Population
1	Anchorage Municipality*	174,431	Anchorage Municipality*	226,338	Anchorage Municipality*	260,283
2	Fairbanks City	22,645	Fairbanks City	30,843	Juneau City and Borough*	30,711
3	Juneau City and Borough*	19,528	Juneau City and Borough*	26,751	Fairbanks City	30,224
4	Sitka City and Borough*	7,803	College CDP (UAF area)	11,249	College CDP (UAF area)	11,402
5	Ketchikan City	7,198	Sitka City and Borough*	8,588	Sitka City and Borough*	8,835
6	Eielson Air Force Base CDP	5,232	Ketchikan City	8,263	Ketchikan City	7,922
7	Kodiak City	4,756	Kodiak City	6,365	Knik-Fairview CDP	7,049
8	Kenai City	4,324	Kenai City	6,327	Kenai City	6,942
9	College CDP (UAF area)	4,043	Eielson Air Force Base CDP	5,251	Lakes CDP	6,706
10	Bethel City	3,576	Bethel City	4,674	Kodiak City	6,334
11	Adak Station CDP	3,315	Adak Station CDP	4,633	Kalifornsky CDP	5,846
12	Valdez City	3,079	Valdez City	4,068	Bethel City	5,471
13	Petersburg City	2,821	Wasilla City	4,028	Wasilla City	5,469
14	Soldotna City	2,320	Sterling CDP	3,802	Eielson Air Force Base CDP	5,400
15	Nome City	2,301	Homer City	3,660	Tanaina CDP	4,993
16	Homer City	2,209	Nome City	3,500	Meadow Lakes CDP	4,819
17	Barrow City	2,207	Soldotna City	3,482	Sterling CDP	4,705
18	Wrangell City	2,184	Barrow City	3,469	Barrow City	4,581
19	Palmer City	2,141	Petersburg City	3,207	Palmer City	4,533
20	Kotzebue City	2,054	Unalaska City	3,089	Nikiski CDP	4,327

including 149 incorporated cities, four unified city-boroughs, and 206 unincorporated settlements called census designated places for statistical purposes.

About 68 percent of the population lived in a city or city-borough, down from 77 percent in 1980 and 73 percent in 2000. Just 2.6 percent lived in a place with no local government, down from 5 percent in 1980.

The 20 largest communities list included an increasing number of CDPs in the Mat-Su, Fairbanks, and Kenai Peninsula boroughs between 1980 and 2020.

During the 2010s, for the first time, the majority of the 20 largest communities were unincorporated. The outer areas of their boroughs had been growing, and some of these CDP designations didn't exist in past censuses.

Over the years, Anchorage, the City of Fairbanks, and the City

2010			2020	
Rank	Place	Population	Place	Population
1	Anchorage Municipality*	291,826	Anchorage Municipality*	291,247
2	Fairbanks City	31,535	Fairbanks City	32,515
3	Juneau City and Borough*	31,275	Juneau City and Borough*	32,255
4	Badger CDP	19,482	Knik-Fairview CDP	19,297
5	Knik-Fairview CDP	14,923	Badger CDP	19,031
6	College CDP (UAF area)	12,964	College CDP (UAF area)	11,332
7	Sitka City and Borough*	8,881	North Lakes CDP	9,450
8	Lakes CDP	8,364	Meadow Lakes CDP	9,197
9	Tanaina CDP	8,197	Wasilla City	9,054
10	Ketchikan City	8,050	Tanaina CDP	8,817
11	Kalifornsky CDP	7,850	Kalifornsky CDP	8,487
12	Wasilla City	7,831	Sitka City and Borough*	8,458
13	Meadow Lakes CDP	7,570	Ketchikan City	8,192
14	Kenai City	7,100	Kenai City	7,424
15	Steele Creek CDP	6,662	Steele Creek CDP	6,437
16	Kodiak City	6,130	Bethel City	6,325
17	Bethel City	6,080	Chena Ridge CDP	6,015
18	Palmer City	5,937	Sterling CDP	5,918
19	Chena Ridge CDP	5,791	Palmer City	5,888
20	Sterling CDP	5,617	Gateway CDP	5,748

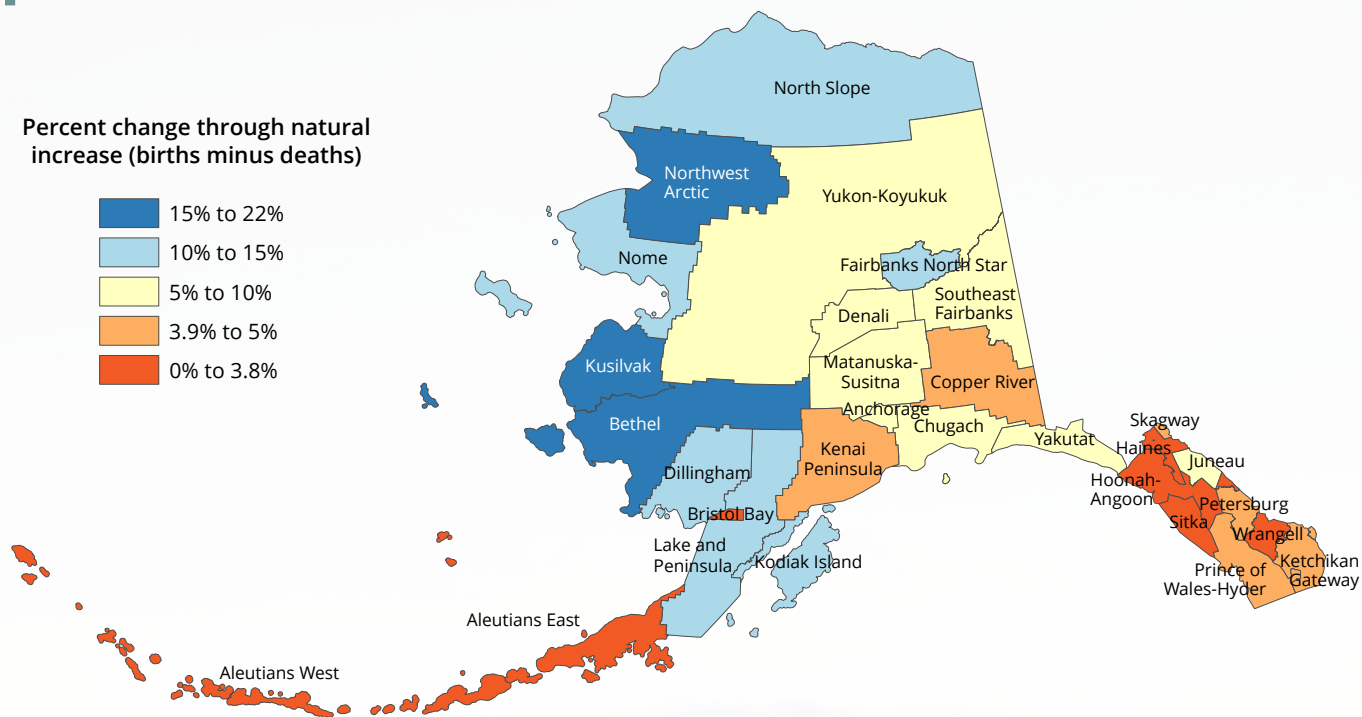
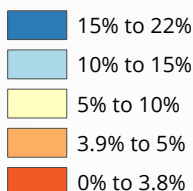
*Unified city-boroughs

Note: CDP stands for census-designated place. The Census Bureau creates these designations for unincorporated communities for statistical purposes.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau decennial censuses for Alaska

Natural increase by Alaska area from 2010 to 2020

Percent change through natural increase (births minus deaths)



Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census

and Borough of Juneau have remained in the top three spots. Seven of the next eight are now unincorporated places, with Mat-Su's Knik-Fairview in fourth with a population of more than 19,000.

The next two CDPs, Badger and College, are part of the Fairbanks North Star Borough. While they remain high on the list for total population, they both shrank during the last decade.

The rankings become more static when we only look at cities. Just 22 cities have cracked the top 20 at some point since 1980.

While the top three cities remain the same, Wasilla became the fourth-largest in 2020. Wasilla, formed in the mid-1970s and not among the top 20 in the 1980s, passed the long-time fourth-largest city Sitka, which lost population during the 2010s.

Following Ketchikan, Kenai, and Bethel were Palmer and Kodiak, both of which lost people during the 2010s. Kodiak's population declined about 9 percent and ended up 12 percent smaller than its 1990 peak.

The second half of the top 20 shows similar cities to previous decades, most with small gains or losses in the 2010s. Overall, the top 20 cities were more widely spread around the state than the list that includes

unincorporated places. Seven of the largest 20 cities were in the Gulf Coast Region. The Anchorage/Mat-Su, Southeast, Southwest, and Northern regions each had three, and the Interior had one.

The last decade marked by significant net migration losses

Large numbers of people migrating into and out of Alaska have been the yearly norm since statehood. Every year since 1990, 41,189 people have moved to the state on average while 42,701 have left. That was about 1,500 more movers lost than gained each year for 31 years.

Between 1990 and 2000, Alaska lost just under 5,000 people to net migration, mostly through military base closures and realignments. The loss during the most recent decade was starker. Alaska lost nearly 44,000 people to migration between 2010 and 2020, an average of 4,400 annually.

Unlike the '90s, the losses in the 2010s didn't stem from a single source.

The aging of the large baby boom generation was one factor. Alaska has historically lost population starting

around age 50 and continuing into the 70s, but these age groups were a small share of Alaska's population in the past. That changed over the last couple of decades as boomers — born between 1946 and 1964 — reached retirement age and left the state in large numbers.

The other reason is the number of people who move here each year has dropped significantly.

The net migration losses during the 2010s add up to a 6.6 percent drop. To give some national context to that number, at -6.6 percent, Alaska had the lowest net migration rate of any state. Illinois followed at -5.7 percent, then New York at -4.4 percent. States with the highest net migration rates were retiree destinations: Florida (13.1 percent), Nevada (10.5 percent), and Arizona (10.5 percent).

Births increased in the last decade, and so did deaths

Natural increase buffered most net migration loss during the past decade. More Alaskans were born between 2010 and 2020 than during either of the two preceding decades.

The jump in births was largely due to the population's age structure.

In the 1990s, most baby boomers surpassed their 20s and early 30s, which are the highest-fertility ages. Generation X followed them into the child-bearing years, but X was a much smaller generation. Fewer women meant fewer babies born in the 1990s and 2000s.

By 2010, most of the baby boomers' children — the millennials — had reached the high-fertility age range. The millennial generation is bigger, so despite millennials having relatively fewer children, births increased during the 2010s.

Deaths also track with age structure. Older baby boomers entered the higher-mortality age groups during the 2010s, so that decade had 10,000 more deaths in Alaska than the 2000s and 15,000-plus over the 1990s level.

Despite more deaths, Alaska's natural increase — births outnumbering deaths — was strong between 2010 and 2020. Alaska gained 67,000 people through natural increase, which offset the decade loss of 43,840 people to net migration for a total population gain of 23,160.

Alaska represents both extremes for concentrations of children, 2020

The 20 U.S. counties with the fewest children

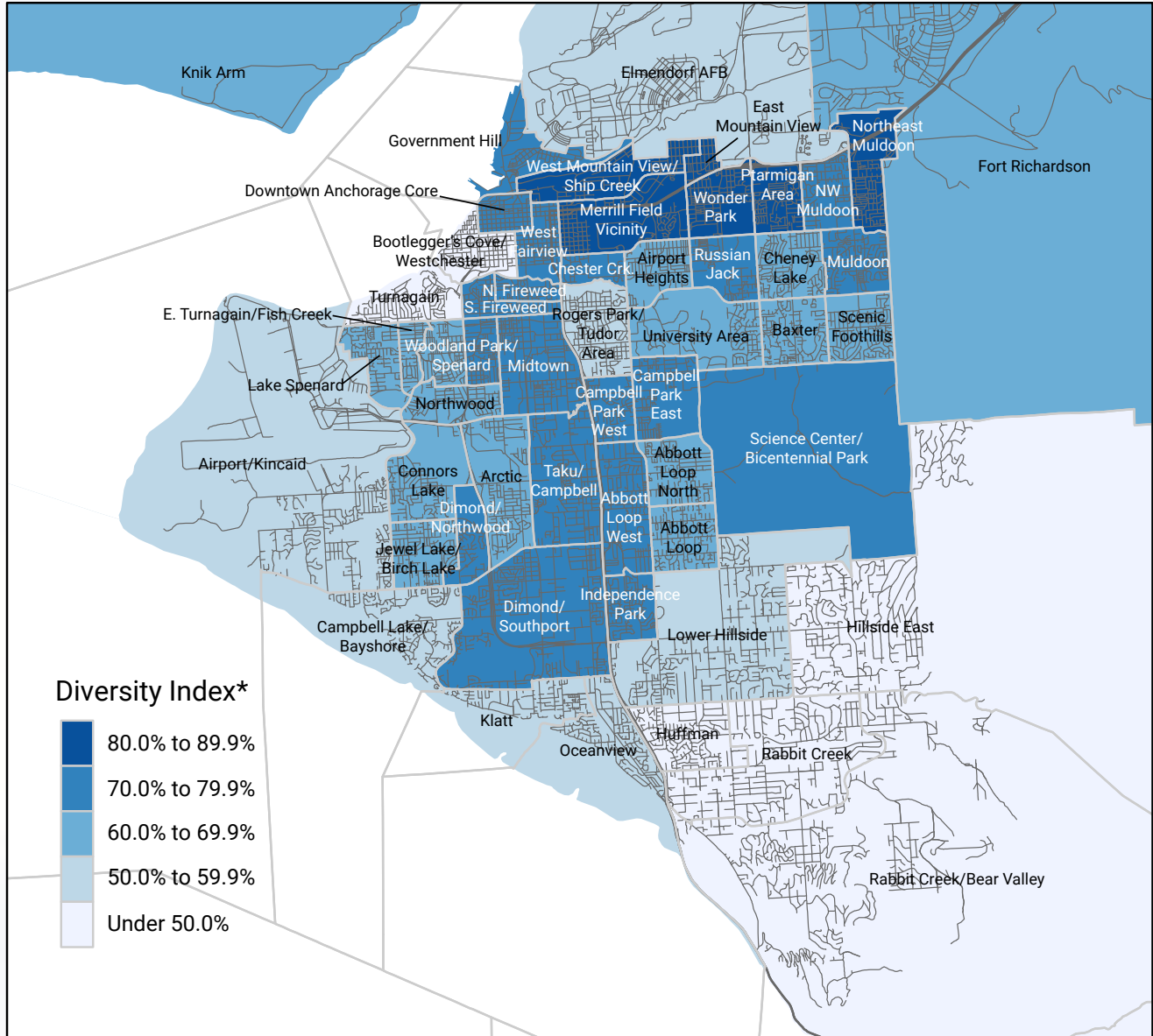
Area	Total Population	Population 17 and under	Percent 17 and under
Sumter County, Florida	129,752	9,056	7.0%
Aleutians East Borough, Alaska	3,420	300	8.8%
Forest County, Pennsylvania	6,973	650	9.3%
Williamsburg City, Virginia	15,425	1,515	9.8%
Catron County, New Mexico	3,579	363	10.1%
Mineral County, Colorado	865	92	10.6%
Crowley County, Colorado	5,922	638	10.8%
Lexington City, Virginia	7,320	831	11.4%
McCormick County, South Carolina	9,526	1,084	11.4%
Ontonagon County, Michigan	5,816	669	11.5%
Charlotte County, Florida	186,847	22,607	12.1%
Kalawao County, Hawaii	82	10	12.2%
Jefferson County, Washington	32,977	4,026	12.2%
Aleutians West Census Area, Alaska	5,232	653	12.5%
Towns County, Georgia	12,493	1,570	12.6%
San Francisco County, California	873,965	113,227	13.0%
Hamilton County, New York	5,107	666	13.0%
Stewart County, Georgia	5,314	697	13.1%
Alcona County, Michigan	10,167	1,346	13.2%
Lyon County, Kentucky	8,680	1,163	13.4%

The 20 U.S. counties with the most children

Area	Total Population	Population 17 and under	Percent 17 and under
Kusilvak Census Area, Alaska	8,368	3,421	40.9%
Todd County, South Dakota	9,319	3,704	39.7%
Buffalo County, South Dakota	1,948	752	38.6%
Loving County, Texas	64	24	37.5%
Oglala Lakota County, South Dakota	13,672	5,067	37.1%
Northwest Arctic Borough, Alaska	7,793	2,807	36.0%
Bethel Census Area, Alaska	18,666	6,536	35.0%
Morgan County, Utah	12,295	4,299	35.0%
Ziebach County, South Dakota	2,413	843	34.9%
Sioux County, North Dakota	3,898	1,354	34.7%
Corson County, South Dakota	3,902	1,351	34.6%
Gaines County, Texas	21,598	7,463	34.6%
Juab County, Utah	11,786	4,030	34.2%
Benson County, North Dakota	5,964	2,038	34.2%
Jefferson County, Idaho	30,891	10,519	34.1%
Adams County, Washington	20,613	6,983	33.9%
Thurston County, Nebraska	6,773	2,263	33.4%
Big Horn County, Montana	13,124	4,377	33.4%
LaGrange County, Indiana	40,446	13,426	33.2%
Uintah County, Utah	35,620	11,774	33.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census

Anchorage has some of the country's most diverse neighborhoods, 2020



*The diversity index shows the percent chance that two people selected randomly from a given area will be from different racial or ethnic groups.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census

That was Alaska's lowest natural increase since the 1970s, but at 9.4 percent, it still ranked second among states. Utah was highest at 11.2 percent over the last decade, and Texas followed Alaska at 7.4 percent.

At the low end, West Virginia and Maine sustained natural *decrease* — more deaths than births — losing an estimated 1.7 percent and 1.1 percent, respectively.

While no borough or census area in Alaska had natural decrease between 2010 and 2020, Wrangell

came close with only 20 more births than deaths, and Haines had just 30 more births. Southeast tends to grow less through natural increase than the rest of the state because its older population means a lower birth rate.

The much-younger western and northern parts of the state grew most through natural increase because of their higher birth rates. Overall, 23 of Alaska's 30 boroughs and census areas had higher rates of natural increase than the U.S. average of 3.8 percent for the last decade.

1 million fewer children in U.S., 8,000 fewer in Alaska

The 2020 Census counted 8,000 fewer children in Alaska — a 4 percent drop — and a million fewer nationwide than in 2010. Twenty-seven states and Puerto Rico had fewer children in 2020.

Puerto Rico's drop was steepest at -38 percent. The territory's total population also fell 12 percent after a series of hurricanes destroyed infrastructure and accelerated a decades-long trend of migration losses.

Alaska areas stand out for high and low concentrations of children

Alaska is unique in that it represents both extremes. The state has areas that rank among the nation's highest for concentrations of children *and* areas that rank among the lowest — and all are in the west.

At the high end, 40 percent of the Kuskilvak Census Area was 17 or younger in 2020, the highest proportion of any U.S. county equivalent. Western Alaska is young and mostly Alaska Native, and it has high birth rates. Kuskilvak grew over the decade despite net migration losses because so many babies were born there: three births per 100 people on average, or twice the statewide rate.

Aleutians East Borough had the second-lowest share of children in the nation because of its large seafood processing facilities. Nearly two-thirds of the 3,420 people counted in Aleutians East Borough were adults living in employee housing for processing plants. They also skewed male and were more racially diverse than Alaska overall.

Only Sumter County, Florida, had a lower concentration of children than Aleutians East. Sumter County is home to the booming retirement community The Villages, and half its residents were 69 or older in 2019.

Sumter County is unique in several ways. Despite being old, it was also among the fastest-growing places in the country, thanks to in-movers. That's unusual because the likelihood of moving declines after

Race and diversity became more complex with the 2020 Census

Decennial censuses have recorded the racial and ethnic identities of Americans since the first census in 1790. But concepts of race have shifted over time and so have the Census Bureau's questions.

Changes to the way the Census Bureau collected race and ethnicity information in 2020 were subtle, but comparing the sizes of racial and ethnic groups between decades requires at least a cursory understanding of what has changed.

More — not fewer — identified as White in 2020

August headlines said the 2020 Census showed a decline in U.S. residents who identified as White but missed important nuance by solely considering the U.S. population who identified as White alone. In fact, 4.4 million *more* Americans identified as White in 2020 than in 2010 because many more identified as White in combination with another race.

The 2020 Census questionnaire included more write-in boxes for race and ethnicity and nudged respondents to add write-in detail for the first time, which likely led to more people being counted in more than one group. For example, respondents who selected only the Black checkbox and wrote in "Egyptian" would be counted as both White and Black because people of Middle Eastern or North African origin are part of the White racial category.

Similarly, Alaska counted 1,400 fewer people who identified as Black alone in 2020 but 2,300 more people who identified as Black alone or in combination with another race than in 2010. Five percent of Alaskans were Black alone or in combination with another race in 2020.

The Census Bureau also expanded the write-in spaces from 30 characters max to 200 and coded up to six identities for each space, up from two in 2010.

Hispanics often categorized as 'some other race'

A growing number of people don't identify with any of the official U.S. Office of Management and Budget race categories, which the Census Bureau is required to use, so an increasing number of respondents specify "Some Other Race."

SOR was intended as a small catch-all category for people who didn't identify with the other options. But in 2020, SOR alone or in combination with another race was the second-largest race group in the nation, having more than doubled over the decade. Hispanics make up 90 percent of this category, as Hispanic or Latino is considered an ethnicity rather than a race.

young adulthood. Further reducing Sumter County's share under 17 is its mostly male prison population of 8,100.

Most movers between states are young adults, who are also the most likely to have children. That's why net migration is a determinant of an area's child population. Areas with more people moving in than out tend to see their child populations grow — North Dakota was an example during the last decade — while areas with net out-migration lose a disproportionate number of children. Examples include Puerto Rico, Alaska (especially Anchorage), Illinois, and California.

North Dakota led the nation for growth in its 17-and-younger population for this census, up 22 percent since 2010, followed by D.C., up 13 percent. Four western states were next: Utah (9 percent), Idaho (8 percent), South Dakota (7 percent), and Washington (6 percent).

Increasing diversity nationwide, but some due to process changes

Another trend the 2020 Census revealed was increasing diversity nationwide. Two Alaskans picked at random had a 63 percent chance of being from different race and ethnicity groups, which was close to the national index of 61 percent. Hawaii, California, and Nevada were the most diverse states in 2020.

In Alaska, 70 percent identified as White in 2020, and 22 percent said they were Alaska Native. Asian is the third-largest racial group at 8 percent.

Since 2000, the Census Bureau has allowed people to select more than one race on their census forms. Most people identify as only one race, but multi-race has grown threefold nationally since 2010. Some of the increase came from the way the Census Bureau tabulated responses on the 2020 Census questionnaire, though, rather than true demographic change. (See the sidebar on the previous page.)

Twelve percent of Alaskans selected more than one race in 2020, and 40 percent of them were Alaska Native and White.

Alaskan children are more diverse than adults. Two children picked at random have a 72 percent chance of being from different race or ethnic groups compared to 59 percent for any two adults. Alaskans 17 and younger were twice as likely as adults to be multiracial in 2020, at 20 percent and 10 percent.

Aleutians more diverse than any other county-equivalent in the country

The Aleutians also stood out nationally in 2020 for their diversity. The Aleutians East Borough and Aleutians West Census Area were the most diverse county equivalents in the U.S. Two people selected at random had an 80 percent chance of being from different racial or ethnic groups.

Because seafood processors recruit internationally and workers live at the job site, the Census Bureau counted nearly 5,000 people living in worker dorms in the Aleutians, which was a little over half of the area's population. This trend goes back decades.

In contrast to Alaska overall, 33 percent of Aleutians residents were White in 2020, 28 percent were Asian, and 21 percent were Alaska Native. Sixteen percent were Hispanic or Latino.

Kusilvak was the least diverse area in the state. Almost everyone in Kusilvak is Alaska Native; two people picked at random had only a 10 percent chance of being from different racial or ethnic groups.

Nationally, 120 counties were less diverse than Kusilvak. The lowest was Starr County, Texas. Almost all 66,000 people living there in 2020 identified as Hispanic. The 19 least-diverse counties that followed were majority White.

Anchorage has some of the nation's most diverse neighborhoods

Anchorage had some of the most diverse neighborhoods in the country, especially in the Mountain View area and near Merrill Field. (See the map on page 10.)

The four most diverse tracts in the nation are East Mountain View, West Mountain View/Ship Creek, Merrill Field Vicinity, and Wonder Park. Two random people in those areas had an 82 to 85 percent chance of being from different racial or ethnic groups in 2020.

The next four neighborhoods on the diversity list were all in Queens, New York.

David Howell is the state demographer. Reach him in Juneau at (907) 465-6029 or david.howell@alaska.gov.

Eric Sandberg is a demographer in Juneau. Reach him at (907) 465-2437 or eric.sandberg@alaska.gov.

Liz Brooks is a research analyst in Juneau. Reach her at (907) 465-5970 or liz.brooks@alaska.gov.

Alaska's job openings rise in 2021

New state-level data confirm shortage of willing workers

By NEAL FRIED

A new state-level data set called JOLTS¹ is the first comprehensive measure of Alaska's job openings. Openings are getting more attention this year as employers nationwide struggle to find enough workers, and JOLTS shows Alaska's trends are similar.

While JOLTS can't tell us *why* people are leaving the labor market, it can spotlight these patterns and provide another way to identify and track the "churn" in the job market. (See the sidebar on page 18 for definitions and more on JOLTS.)

Openings low in 2020, but the drop was brief

For 2020, JOLTS tells a story similar to other types of economic data, confirming what we already know about the pandemic's effects on employment.

April 2020 showed the steepest drop in Alaska's

¹Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey

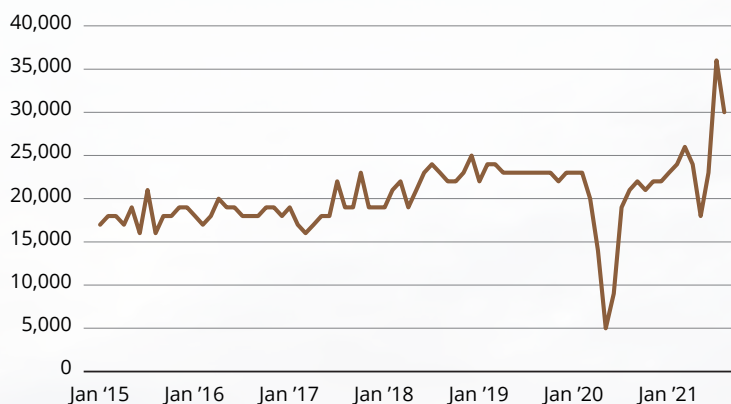
High job market 'churn' in Alaska, August 2021

	Alaska	U.S.	Alaska's state ranking
Job openings rate	9.0%	6.6%	Highest
Hires rate	6.6%	4.3%	2nd highest
Separations rate	4.3%	4.1%	2nd highest
Quits rate	3.9%	2.9%	4th highest
Layoffs rate	1.6%	0.9%	2nd highest

Notes: Seasonally adjusted. See sidebar on page 18 for definitions.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey

Alaska job openings tank in '20, spike in '21



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey

job openings since the data's inception in 2011, and Alaska's decline from February through May was the largest among states.

Alaska's number of job openings dropped from 20,000 in March to 14,000 in April, then to just 5,000 in May. June wasn't much higher.

Despite these numbers' severity, they aren't a surprise during a pandemic. A lack of job openings usually signals a weak labor market where employment is falling or stagnant and unemployment is high, which was true as COVID-19 took hold last spring. Alaska lost 38,800 jobs in April, the largest monthly loss on record, and May was almost as bleak.

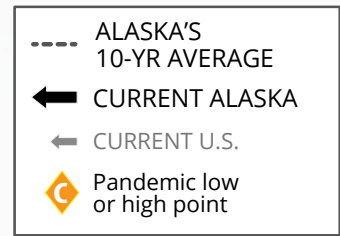
By August 2020, however, the number of job openings in Alaska had not only increased but had climbed back to pre-pandemic levels.

In 2021, as the peak employment season warmed up and the labor market began to recover, dramatic JOLTS numbers appeared that reinforced employers' reports that it was becoming hard to find and keep workers.

By July, Alaska's proportion of open jobs was again

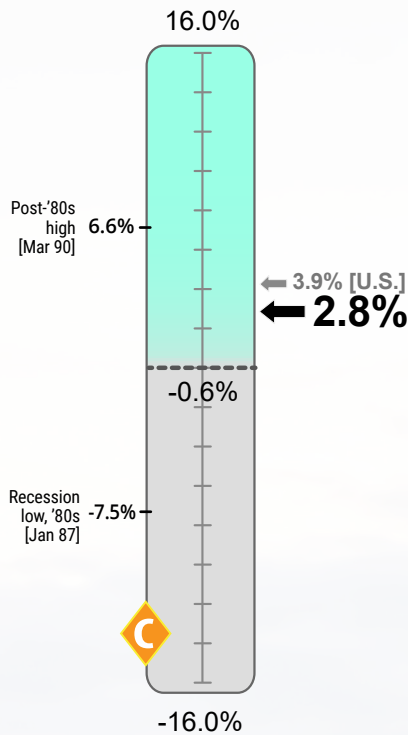
Continued on page 18

Gauging The Economy



Job Growth

October 2021
Over-the-year percent change



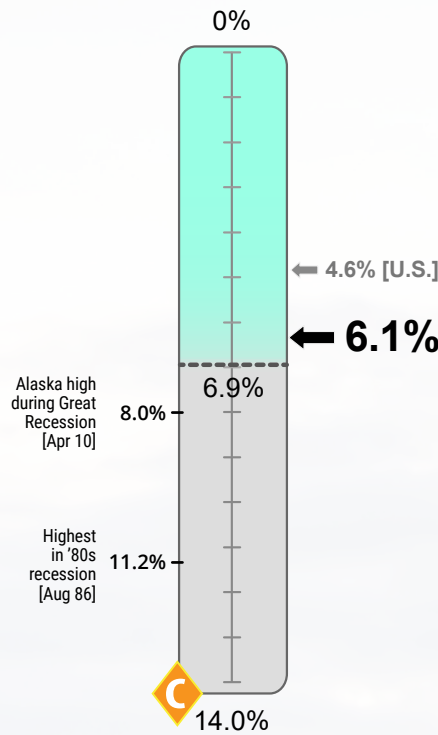
The spread of COVID-19 caused a rapid drop in employment beginning in early 2020. April 2021 marked the first comparison to a month in 2020 that had COVID-related job loss.

Although employment is up significantly from 2020 levels, it was still 4.8 percent below the same month's job levels in 2019.

U.S. employment levels, which were up 3.9 percent from October 2020, were still 2.2 percent below October 2019.

Unemployment Rate

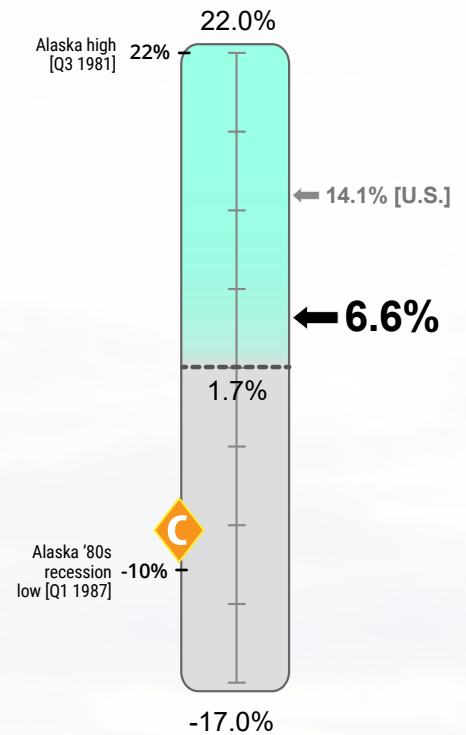
October 2021
Seasonally adjusted



Alaska's unemployment rate has been difficult to calculate during the pandemic and has been less useful as an economic measure than it normally would be.

Wage Growth

2nd Quarter 2021
Over-the-year percent change



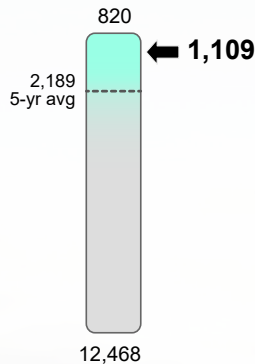
After being well down during the second and third quarters of 2020, total wages paid by Alaska employers climbed above year-ago levels in the fourth quarter. Wages were up 6.6 percent from year-ago levels in the second quarter of 2021.

Gauging The Economy



Initial Claims

Unemployment, week ending Nov. 6, 2021*

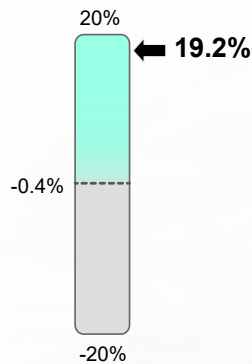


Unemployment claims jumped in the spring of 2020 with the pandemic as many businesses shut down or limited services. Pandemic-driven claims loads are on the decline, and new claims for benefits are back below the long-term average range.

*Four-week moving average ending with specified week

GDP Growth

2nd Quarter 2021
Over-the-year percent change*

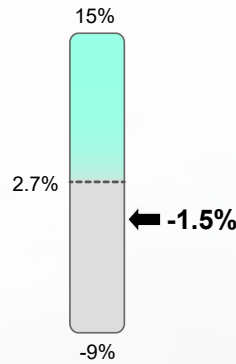


Gross domestic product is the value of the goods and services a state produces. Alaska's GDP dropped significantly when COVID-19 hit and oil prices dropped, but was well above year-ago levels in the second quarter of 2021.

*In current dollars

Personal Income Growth

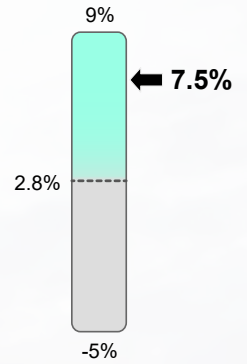
2nd Quarter 2021
Over-the-year percent change



Personal income jumped early this year, largely because of federal COVID-19 relief funding, and has since fallen.

Change in Home Prices

Single-family, percent change from prior year, Q2 2021*

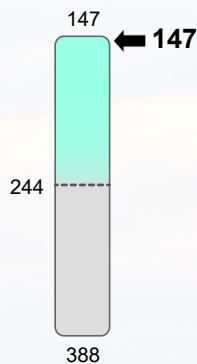


Home prices include only those for which a commercial loan was used. This indicator tends to be volatile from quarter to quarter.

*Four-quarter moving average ending with specified quarter

Foreclosures

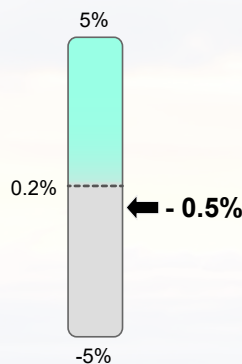
1st Quarter 2020



Foreclosure moratoriums have kept these numbers low during the pandemic.

Population Growth

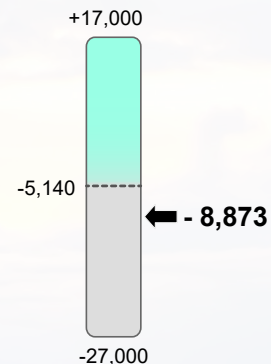
2019 to 2020



This was the fourth straight year of population decline.

Net Migration

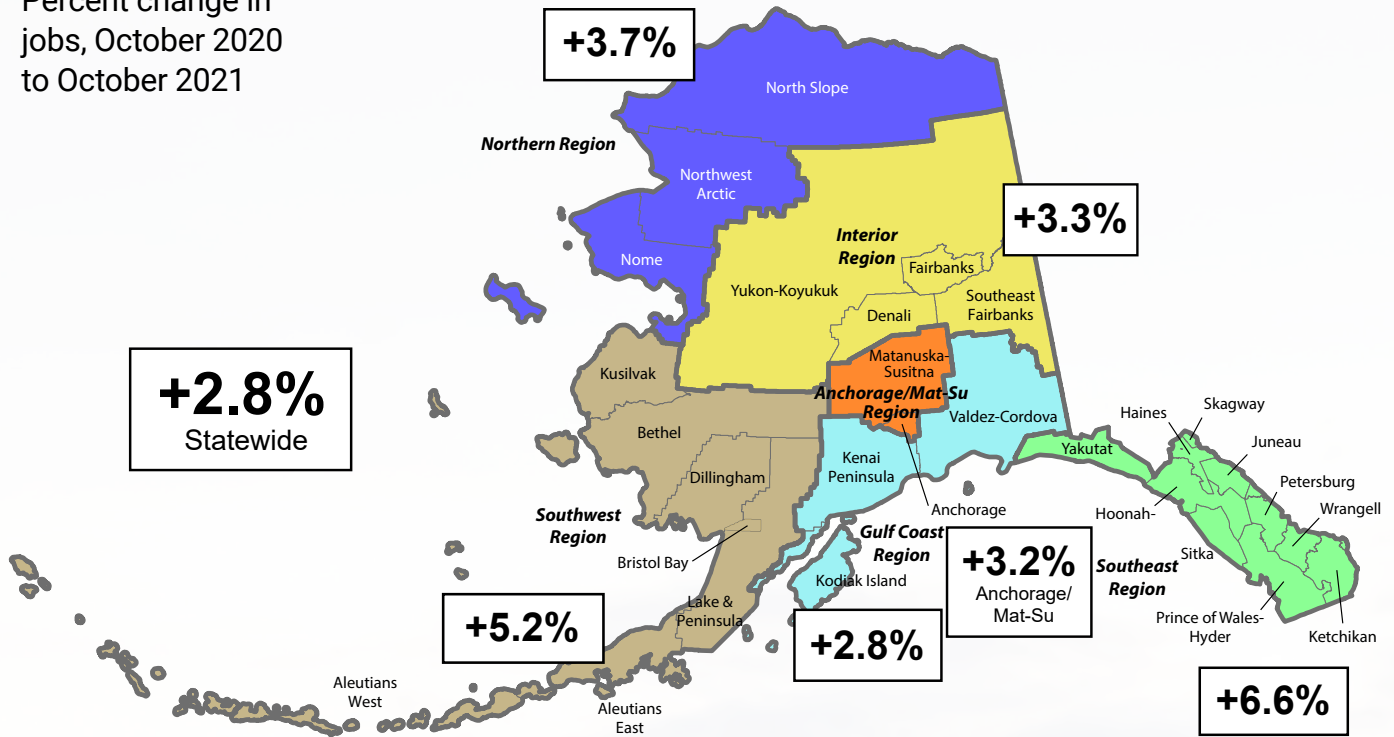
2019 to 2020



The state had net migration losses for the eighth consecutive year in 2020. Net migration is the number who moved to Alaska minus the number who left.

Employment by Region

Percent change in jobs, October 2020 to October 2021



Seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised	
	10/21	09/21	10/20
United States	4.6	4.8	6.9
Alaska	6.1	6.3	6.5

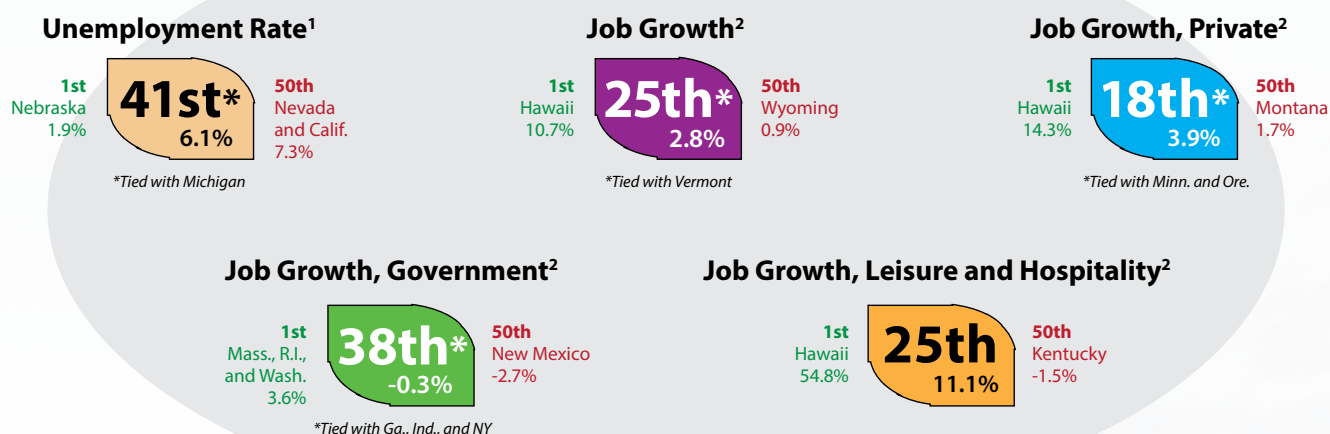
Not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised	
	10/21	09/21	10/20
United States	4.3	4.6	6.6
Alaska	5.3	5.3	5.9

Regional, not seasonally adjusted

	Prelim.	Revised			Prelim.	Revised			Prelim.	Revised	
	10/21	09/21	10/20		10/21	09/21	10/20		10/21	09/21	10/20
Interior Region	4.9	4.7	4.9	Southwest Region	8.5	8.0	7.2	Southeast Region	5.0	4.6	5.9
Denali Borough	12.4	9.0	10.2	Aleutians East Borough	2.5	2.0	1.9	Haines Borough	8.6	7.8	10.4
Fairbanks N Star Borough	4.4	4.3	4.7	Aleutians West	3.7	2.6	2.9	Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	7.7	6.5	10.2
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	5.9	5.8	5.4	Bethel Census Area	11.1	11.1	9.4	Juneau, City and Borough	3.7	3.6	4.9
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	9.1	9.4	7.7	Bristol Bay Borough	7.0	5.4	7.4	Ketchikan Gateway Borough	5.8	5.6	6.8
Northern Region	8.1	8.5	7.6	Dillingham Census Area	7.7	7.0	6.5	Petersburg Borough	7.2	5.6	6.0
Nome Census Area	8.3	8.9	7.7	Kusilvak Census Area	15.5	15.8	12.4	Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	6.3	6.3	6.2
North Slope Borough	6.5	6.6	6.0	Lake and Peninsula Borough	7.7	7.2	6.9	Sitka, City and Borough	4.0	3.3	4.8
Northwest Arctic Borough	9.3	9.9	8.9	Gulf Coast Region	6.1	5.7	6.5	Skagway, Municipality	10.5	9.3	15.3
Anchorage/Mat-Su Region	4.9	5.0	5.8	Kenai Peninsula Borough	6.1	6.0	7.1	Wrangell, City and Borough	6.5	6.4	5.4
Anchorage, Municipality	4.7	4.9	5.8	Kodiak Island Borough	5.0	4.9	3.8	Yakutat, City and Borough	7.5	6.4	6.8
Mat-Su Borough	5.6	5.6	6.0	Valdez-Cordova Census Area	7.2	5.6	6.6				

How Alaska Ranks



Note: Government employment includes federal, state, and local government plus public schools and universities.

¹October seasonally adjusted unemployment rates

²October employment, over-the-year percent change

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Other Economic Indicators

	Current		Year ago	Change
Urban Alaska Consumer Price Index (CPI-U, base yr 1982=100)	232.679	1st half 2021	225.049	+3.4%
Commodity prices				
Crude oil, Alaska North Slope, * per barrel	\$84.37	Oct 2021	\$40.42	+108.73%
Natural gas, Henry Hub, per thousand cubic feet (mcf)	\$5.58	Oct 2021	\$2.89	+96.48%
Gold, per oz. COMEX	\$1,864.00	11/4/2021	\$1,861.50	+0.13%
Silver, per oz. COMEX	\$24.96	11/4/2021	\$24.16	+3.31%
Copper, per lb. COMEX	\$4.31	11/4/2021	\$3.22	+33.85%
Zinc, per lb.	\$1.47	11/4/2021	\$1.26	+16.67%
Lead, per lb.	\$1.02	11/4/2021	\$0.91	+12.09%
Bankruptcies				
	65	Q2 2021	76	-14.47%
Business	6	Q2 2021	5	+20.00%
Personal	59	Q2 2021	71	-16.90%
Unemployment insurance claims				
Initial filings	6,779	Oct 2021	21,647	-68.68%
Continued filings	29,899	Oct 2021	78,945	-62.13%
Claimant count	7,428	Oct 2021	23,373	-68.22%

*Department of Revenue estimate

Sources for this page and the preceding three pages include Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Energy Information Administration; Kitco; U.S. Census Bureau; COMEX; NASDAQ; Alaska Department of Revenue; and U.S. Courts, 9th Circuit

Definitions and more about the JOLTS data

A new state-level labor market measure tells us how many job openings there are, how many people have quit their jobs in the most recent month, and how many people moved to new jobs.

The Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey — or JOLTS — is getting more attention this year as employers struggle to find workers and more people remain on the sidelines. Nationally, these numbers are showing record hiring levels, quits, and turnover.

The state-level series came out in October and includes historical data back to 2011. JOLTS has been available at the national level for nearly two decades, and for the national data set, the Bureau of Labor Statistics produces industry-specific numbers. Industry information isn't available for the state-level data because of smaller sample sizes and statistical challenges.

The bureau tries to shore up the small sample size through model-based estimates and other statistical methods, which increases volatility and is further complicated by Alaska's pronounced seasonal job pattern. The estimates are also rounded to a thousand, which adds even more chunkiness to Alaska's already-small numbers. Because of these problems, JOLTS' longer-term trends for Alaska are a better choice for analysis than any month-to-month changes.

The most recent numbers, used in this article, are for August. In the future, data will be released on the third Friday of every month.

Job openings include all positions for which businesses are actively recruiting as of the last business day of the reference month. To meet this definition, an existing job needs to begin within 30 days. Job openings can be full-time or part-time and can be permanent, short-term, or seasonal.

Hires are *all* additions to an employer's payroll, full-time or part-time.

Separations include all severance from an employer's payroll during the reference month. They include quits, layoffs, retirements, transfers to other jobs, terminations, and deaths.

JOB OPENINGS

Continued from page 13

the highest in the nation. Job openings statewide spiked to 36,000, then dipped to 30,000 in August. Before this summer, Alaska's largest number of monthly openings had been in March of this year, at 26,000.

The swing between 2020 and 2021 is another example of the chaotic, mysterious, and seemingly contradictory trends in the national and Alaska job markets, which will take some time to understand.

The hire and quit numbers are less reliable, but still worth a look

As a subset of the job openings data, JOLTS includes the numbers of hires and quits. These numbers are extra "noisy" because of the even smaller sample size and seasonality, but they can add context to the numbers of job openings.

Hiring rates typically climb with rising openings and a growing job market. Hiring dropped to record lows some months in 2020 but bounced back as people returned to work.

The numbers of people quitting their jobs are more revealing. Typically, quit rates fall when the job market is weak — people are more likely to stay put when they think it would be hard to find another job — and quits climb during a healthy job market when opportunities abound.

National quits hit a record high recently, which also tracks with employers' difficulty finding workers. Alaska's numbers are similar, with far higher quit rates in 2021 than in 2020.

In the shrinking job market of 2020, the number of people quitting in Alaska dropped sharply and hit a new low in May. In 2021, workers became emboldened with new opportunities as the job market improved, and quits hit a record high in July.

In August, Alaska's quit rate was the fourth-highest in the U.S. at 3.9 percent. The U.S. average was 2.9 percent.

Neal Fried is an economist in Anchorage. Reach him at (907) 269-4861 or neal.fried@alaska.gov.

EMPLOYER RESOURCES

Rapid Response services mitigate layoff impacts

Many Alaska employers, like those nationally, have faced a host of obstacles during the COVID-19 pandemic with temporary or permanent business closures, worker layoffs, and now worker shortages.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Rapid Response team is focused on helping employers and employees when times get tough – during a layoff, to keep a layoff from happening in the first place, or even to help keep a business going.

Rapid Response's mission is to provide proactive customized strategies, support, and assistance to businesses, communities, families, and individuals to minimize the impact of job loss and closures.

The Rapid Response team responds to announcements of layoffs and business closures by quickly

coordinating services and providing immediate aid to companies and their affected workers to ensure the workers get new jobs as fast as possible.

The team works with the employer to set up an informational meeting for the employees on or off the worksite, or through a webinar. The team brings in people who specialize in unemployment insurance, employment services through the Alaska Job Centers, and training program options.

For more on Rapid Response, please visit <https://jobs.alaska.gov/RR/rrteam.htm>, email dol.rrteam@alaska.gov, call (907) 465-5934, or contact your local Alaska Job Center by going to <https://jobs.alaska.gov/offices/index.html>.

Employer Resources is written by the Employment and Training Services Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.