

# Decade of Broad Wage Growth

Inflation-adjusted wages went up in most of the state

By **NEAL FRIED**

Inflation-adjusted wages increased across nearly all of Alaska over the past decade. Between 2006 and 2016, average adjusted wages grew by 5 percent statewide, or \$2,370.

These gains were broad, with 21 of the 24 measured areas making real wage gains. Growth varied from 39 percent for the Aleutians East Borough to 1 percent for the Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area. Three of the five areas with double-digit gains have significant employment in seafood processing.

Yakutat and Kodiak lost a small amount of ground, and wages in the Lake and Peninsula Borough were flat.

Average annual wages by area are nearly as wide-ranging as they are by industry, and an area's industry mix is the main reason wages vary so much across the state.

An extreme example is the North Slope Borough with its high average earnings — nearly twice the statewide average — because of its large share of oil and gas em-

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## 1 Average Adjusted Wages by Area

ALASKA, 2006 AND 2016, IN 2016 DOLLARS\*

Area**	2006	2016	Change	Percent change
Alaska	\$50,790	\$53,160	\$2,370	5%
Aleutians East Borough	\$36,489	\$50,772	\$14,283	39%
Aleutians West Census Area	\$46,013	\$55,896	\$9,883	21%
Anchorage, Municipality	\$54,078	\$55,668	\$1,590	3%
Bethel Census Area	\$37,860	\$40,452	\$2,592	7%
Bristol Bay Borough	\$46,544	\$51,624	\$5,080	11%
Denali Borough	\$41,812	\$44,268	\$2,456	6%
Dillingham Census Area	\$38,966	\$42,456	\$3,490	9%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	\$49,581	\$50,508	\$927	2%
Haines Borough	\$34,602	\$35,748	\$1,146	3%
Juneau, City and Borough	\$47,915	\$51,012	\$3,097	6%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	\$44,200	\$46,908	\$2,708	6%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	\$44,126	\$45,264	\$1,138	3%
Kodiak Island Borough	\$43,138	\$42,480	-\$658	-2%
Kusilvak Census Area	\$24,931	\$26,100	\$1,169	5%
Lake and Peninsula Borough	\$36,681	\$36,696	\$15	0%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	\$39,954	\$41,808	\$1,854	5%
Nome Census Area	\$40,411	\$47,376	\$6,965	17%
North Slope Borough	\$90,464	\$96,324	\$5,860	6%
Northwest Arctic Borough	\$53,488	\$64,464	\$10,976	21%
Sitka, City and Borough	\$41,369	\$43,392	\$2,023	5%
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	\$62,644	\$64,332	\$1,688	3%
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	\$52,279	\$53,160	\$881	2%
Yakutat, City and Borough	\$40,087	\$39,540	-\$547	-1%
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	\$38,317	\$38,748	\$431	1%

\*Inflation adjustments based on the Anchorage Consumer Price Index for All Consumers (CPI-U)

\*\*No data exist for some areas because of changes to geographic boundaries over this decade: Hoonah-Angoon, Petersburg Borough, Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area, Municipality of Skagway, and City and Borough of Wrangell.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

## WAGES INCREASE

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ployment. The North Slope is also an outlier in that most of the oil-related wages paid there go to people who live elsewhere. Unlike income, which is based on where workers live, wages are based on the location of the job, although most places with high average earnings also have high incomes.

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

### About the data

This data set has a few important limitations. First, while some wage change is a real increase in the amounts paid to workers, a combination of other factors can come into play, such as changes in the overall industry or occupational mix or in hours worked.

This data set also counts jobs, not workers, and it doesn't distinguish between part-time and full-time jobs or include self-employment. And because it's an average and not a median, any extremes would have a disproportionate effect on the average value.

## POPULATION

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nearly to the degree people sometimes expect. The gender disparity has narrowed considerably with time, but still, our ratio of 107 males to every 100 females is the highest in the United States.

At one time, the stereotype that Alaska was mostly men was true. In 1900, during the Gold Rush, Alaska had 259 males for every 100 females. That narrowed to about 162 in 1950, at the beginning of the state's military buildup. The ratio was 113 to 100 by 1980 and it's declined gradually since, bringing Alaska closer to national norms.

Alaska's special mix of industries contributes to the state's relatively large share of men; these include oil, construction, fishing, and the military.

### Military especially important

The military's outsized role in the state's economy largely began with the state's geographic importance during World War II. Today, the state has more than 20,000 active duty service members and 30,000 dependents: about 55 percent are Army, 35 percent are Air Force, and 9 percent are Coast Guard.

While the military has a presence around the state, it's an especially large part of the populations in Fairbanks and Kodiak at 19 percent and 17 percent of their respective populations. In terms of numbers, though, Anchorage has the most.

Alaska's veteran population also reflects this historical importance. On a per capita basis, Alaska has more than 1.5 times as many veterans as the U.S. overall.

Sara Whitney is the editor of *Trends*. Reach her in Juneau at (907) 465-6561 or [sara.whitney@alaska.gov](mailto:sara.whitney@alaska.gov).

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