

# Government Jobs Vary by Area

Alaska has a high share of jobs in public sector, especially in rural areas

By **LENNON WELLER**

**G**overnment represented 80,188 jobs in Alaska in 2014, or 23.8 percent of total employment. That's a significant slice of the state's economy and considerably higher than the national average of 15.4 percent.

Though the number of government jobs in Alaska has grown, their percentage of total employment has decreased by about two percentage points since 2005 because the private sector has grown faster.

The public sector share of total wages also declined

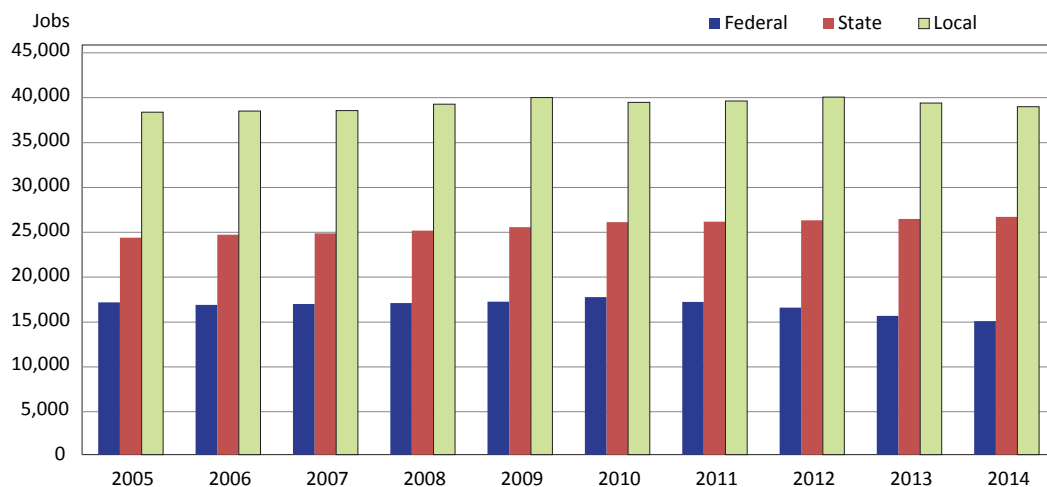
over that period, by 3.4 percentage points, to \$4.37 billion in 2014. Part of that shift is due to an increase in average yearly wages in the private sector, which were \$52,300 that year. The proportions of federal, state, and local government employment have also shifted, with higher-paying federal jobs declining as a percent of the total. In 2014, average federal wages were \$76,100, while state and local government paid \$54,800 and \$46,000, respectively.

## Different in rural, urban areas

While the statewide figures give a picture of overall

## 1 Government Job Proportions Have Remained Steady

ALASKA, 2005 TO 2014



Note: Local government includes tribal government.

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

# 2

## Jobs, Wages Mostly Local

ALASKA, 2014



Note: Local government includes tribal government.  
 Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

trends, the jobs and wages at the borough and census level-area look very different around the state, with some areas' economies relying heavily on government jobs. For example, total government employment ranges from a low of 12.9 percent in the North Slope Borough, home to most of the state's oil and gas jobs, to 68.3 percent in Kusilvak Census Area, a vast and sparsely populated area in western Alaska.

For most boroughs and census areas, local government is the largest share of their government employment, especially in rural places such as Denali Borough and the Southeast Fairbanks and Hoonah-Angoon census areas, because local government tends to provide

basic services such as public school. Local government also includes tribal government, which makes up about 9.5 percent of local government in Alaska.

The exception is the capital city, Juneau, where state government is the largest by far, at 24 percent of its total jobs and 61 percent of its government employment.

The presence of local government tends to have a large rural-urban disparity. Seventeen of the 29 areas have less than 20 percent local government, with Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau having the least. Nine areas have 30 percent or more, with four of those topping 40 percent. Small and geographically dispersed areas tend to have little commercial activity and rely on local government for job opportunities. It also takes proportionately more resources and personnel to

deliver services across large distances and to smaller populations.

### Anchorage has the most public jobs in all categories

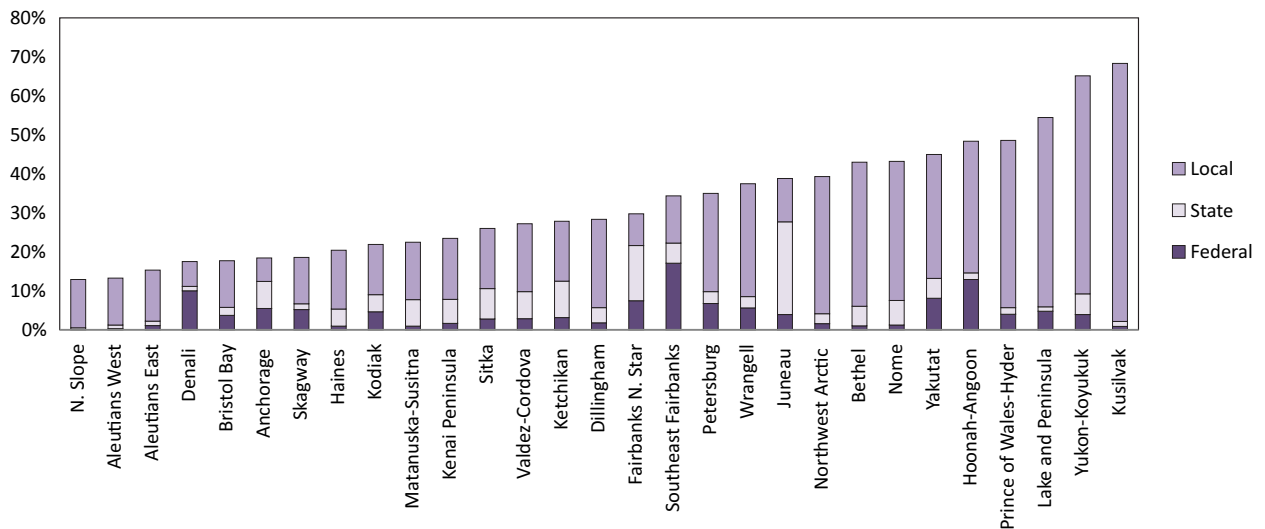
Anchorage is the economic center of the state, with the most people by far and the greatest number of private-sector jobs. It also has the most government employment, though Juneau is often considered the

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## Breakdown of Government Employment by Area

ALASKA, 2014

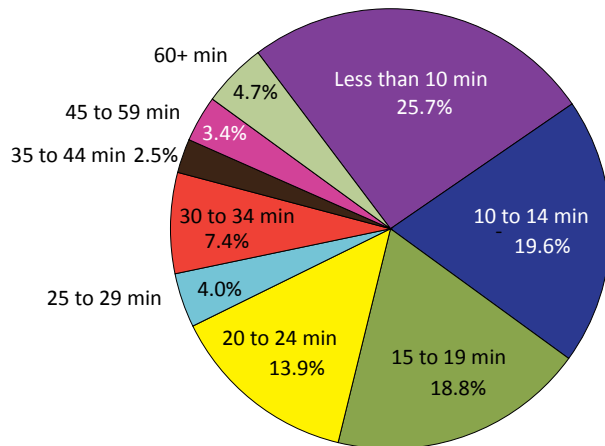


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 Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

# 2

## Most People Have Short Commutes

ALASKA, 2014



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

### Average By Area

United States	25.7 minutes
Alaska	18.9 minutes
Anchorage	19.4 minutes
Mat-Su	33.6 minutes
Fairbanks	19.4 minutes
Juneau	14.8 minutes
Bethel	7.4 minutes

rode the bus at a rate comparable to the United States as a whole, both at about 5 percent.

Another 1 percent of Alaskans bike to work, which is slightly higher than the national average.

### A few unconventional options

Alaskans stand out for a handful of unconventional commutes. Four percent of Alaskans use other methods, over three times the nation's rate. For the rest of the U.S., "other methods" almost always means motorcycles or taxis. In Alaska it often means by plane, typically to the North Slope. Three-quarters of Alaska residents working in the North Slope Borough live elsewhere in the state.

Other methods in Alaska include boats, four-wheelers, and snow machines. Nearly 50,000 snow machines were registered in Alaska in 2014.

### Alaskans' commutes shorter

The average commute time for Alaskans was 19 minutes each way, versus 26 minutes nationally. Travel time has remained steady in Alaska, increasing by only two minutes since 1980. Over a quarter of residents have commutes shorter than 10 minutes. (See Exhibit 2.)

Alaskans are mostly spared the longest commutes common elsewhere; just 18 percent have commutes over 30 minutes one way and 5 percent have commutes over an hour. Mat-Su residents are the outlier. Because it's common to commute to Anchorage, 22 percent spend over an hour getting to work.

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government center.

Anchorage has a relatively small percentage of its employment in local government, but it still has the highest number of these jobs because of the larger population being served — for example, more teachers are necessary for a higher number of students.

Anchorage also holds the largest share of federal and state government jobs. In 2014, the municipality had 8,437 federal jobs and 10,776 state jobs. Those numbers represent 56.6 percent and 40.6 percent of the state's total federal and state employment, respectively.

Juneau had 708 federal and 4,269 state government jobs in 2014, which ranked the city and borough third behind Fairbanks for its share of Alaska's federal and state employment. Although Juneau is the capital, the state's university system has a larger presence in Anchorage and Fairbanks, and some state services such as transportation and social services are in higher demand in the two larger cities.

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