

# Job Hoppers in Alaska

## How many there are and what they have in common

**J**ob hoppers — workers who repeatedly move from employer to employer, never staying with a single one for an extended period — raise key questions about work, careers, and the intersection between what employers and employees want.

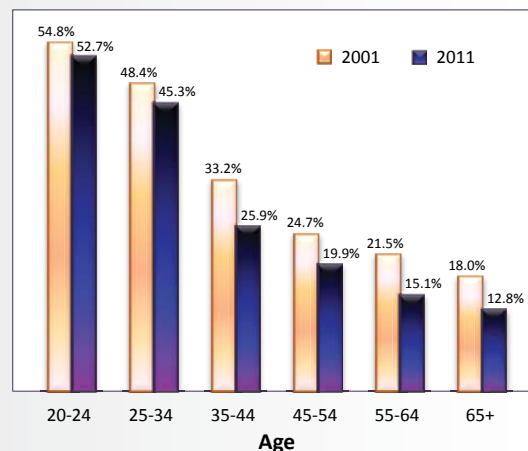
There are no regularly published national numbers or even a uniform definition of the term, but a preliminary analysis of Alaska’s data shows that: 1) job hopping is more common among younger age groups; and 2) the state had a smaller percentage of job hoppers in 2011 than in 2001. (See Exhibit 1.)

### Younger workers hop more

More than half of Alaska workers who were between 20 and 24 years old in 2011 could be considered job hoppers. The percentage declines moderately to 45 percent for the next age group, 25 to 34, before dropping precipitously to 26 percent for workers 35 to 44. The decline continues more gradually into the older age groups.

One obvious reason younger workers change jobs often is that many are in school or training programs while holding jobs they don’t expect to keep. Jobs with flexible hours, relatively low pay, and

### 1 Job Hopping Drops Alaska, 2001 and 2011



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

minimal training requirements tend to be disproportionately filled by younger workers and have higher-than-average turnover.

Even after obtaining degrees and training credentials, workers at the beginning of their careers tend to be more mobile as they figure out the combination of work, salary, and benefits that work best for them against the backdrop of current economic realities.

One of the questions going forward is whether the existing generation of young workers will settle into jobs and careers at the same rates as their predecessors, or whether they’ll remain job hoppers to a greater degree throughout their working lives.

### Less hopping in 2011 than 2001

For every age group, the percentage of Alaska workers who could be considered job hoppers fell from 2001 to 2011. That may not reveal a long-term trend, however, because workers are less likely to

## 2 Industries With the Most Job Hoppers Alaska, all age groups, 2011

Industry	% Job Hoppers in 2011
1. Construction	50.0%
2. Accommodation and Food Services	42.1%
3. Administrative Support and Waste Management	40.1%
4. Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	38.5%
5. Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	38.1%
6. Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing	36.6%
7. Other Services (except Public Admin.)	35.5%
8. Management of Companies and Enterprises	30.6%
9. Retail Trade	28.6%
10. Manufacturing	28.1%

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

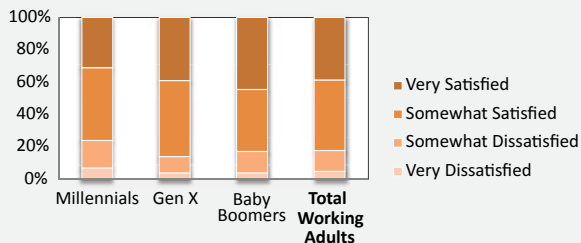
# National speculation about job hopping and the millennial generation

Although there are no consistently produced national numbers on job hopping or a widely accepted definition of the term, some studies and surveys have reported that members of the millennial generation leave their employers more frequently and may view their jobs differently than preceding generations.

A survey conducted by the company Future Workplace found that 91 percent of people born between 1977 and 1997 expected to stay in a job for less than three years. In the same survey, 39 percent of that generation listed workplace flexibility as the most important feature of a job, considerably higher than the 22 percent of managers who considered flexibility most important.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in 2012, the median number of years workers ages 25 to 34 had spent at their current job was just 3.2, and that the median for workers aged 20-to-24 was 1.3 years. (See the table below.)

## Less Job Satisfaction by Age



Source: Rutgers University and Net Impact, "The Talent Report: What Workers Want in 2012," May 2012

quit their jobs during recessions and in their aftermath, and one of the main reasons workers quit is to move to another job. Nationally, the number of workers who quit fell from a pre-recession high of nearly 3 million a month in 2007 to around 1.6 million in 2009. Four years, later the number is still only about 2 million a month.

Although the recession didn't have as large an effect on Alaska as elsewhere in the country, it did end the state's 21-year streak of job growth in 2009. The national mood also likely affected Alaska workers' willingness to leave their jobs.

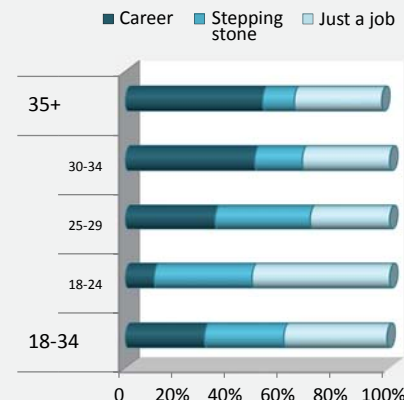
A survey done by the firm Net Impact and the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University found that millennial workers — defined in the study as those between 21 and 32 — reported higher dissatisfaction with their jobs than the other generations surveyed. (See the bar graph below.)

A 2012 Pew Research Center report found that 30 percent of workers between 18 and 34 considered their current job a career compared to a much higher 52 percent of workers 35 or older. (See the graph at right.) Similarly, 30 percent of the younger group considered their current jobs to be stepping stones compared to just 12 percent of the workers who were 35 or older.

Whether job hopping is a good or bad thing is subject to debate. In a Forbes article called "The Pros and Cons of Job Hopping," the author notes that while hiring managers have historically been wary of resumes that list several jobs of short duration, job hopping can benefit certain types of workers.

Those in technology, for

## Stepping Stone or Career?



Source: Pew Research Center, February 2012

example, gain technical knowledge from different workplaces and environments, and workers with diverse work experiences may benefit employers by providing new ideas.

On the negative side, employers may be hesitant to invest in a worker they don't expect to stay long, and short-tenured workers are often the first to go if layoffs become necessary.

## Median Years at Current Job

Age group	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
20 to 24 years	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.3
25 to 34 years	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.7	3.1	3.2
35 to 44 years	4.6	4.9	4.9	4.9	5.1	5.3
45 to 54 years	7.6	7.7	7.3	7.6	7.8	7.8
55 to 64 years	9.9	9.6	9.3	9.9	10	10.3

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

## What is a 'job hopper'?

For this article, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development defined a job hopper as someone who worked for at least three different employers in a 10-year period for less than two years each, and who never stayed with a single employer for four years or more during that time.

To be included in this report, a worker had to have been an Alaska resident at some point during the studied time period.

## 3 10 Occupations with the Highest Job Hopping Rates Alaska, 2011

AMONG YOUNGER WORKERS, AGES 20 to 34		AMONG OLDER WORKERS, AGE 35+	
Occupation	% Job Hoppers in 2011	Occupation	% Job Hoppers in 2011
1. Forest, Conservation, and Logging Workers	66.1%	1. Helpers, Construction Trades	49.1%
2. Supervisors of Production Workers	65.0%	2. Forest, Conservation, and Logging Workers	48.8%
3. Construction Trades Workers	64.1%	3. Construction Trades Workers	48.1%
4. Helpers, Construction Trades	61.1%	4. Entertainment Attendants and Related Workers	46.6%
5. Grounds Maintenance Workers	60.6%	5. Tour and Travel Guides	46.2%
6. Tour and Travel Guides	59.9%	6. Fishing and Hunting Workers	41.8%
7. Other Construction and Related Workers	59.8%	7. Grounds Maintenance Workers	39.4%
8. Motor Vehicle Operators	58.9%	8. Other Construction and Related Workers	36.5%
9. Cooks and Food Preparation Workers	58.8%	9. Cooks and Food Preparation Workers	36.1%
10. Other Food Preparation and Serving-Related Workers	58.1%	10. Other Food Preparation and Serving-Related Workers	

Note: Includes only occupations with 10 or more workers.

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

## 4 10 Occupations with the Lowest Job Hopping Rates Alaska, 2011

AMONG YOUNGER WORKERS, AGES 20 to 34		AMONG OLDER WORKERS, AGE 35+	
Occupation	% Job Hoppers in 2011	Occupation	% Job Hoppers in 2011
1. Lawyers, Judges, and Related Workers	16.8%	1. Rail Transportation Workers	1.4%
2. Supervisors of Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers	20.8%	2. Mathematical Science Occupations	2.0%
3. Mathematical Science Occupations	25.0%	3. Supervisors of Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers	4.7%
4. Engineers	26.0%	4. Lawyers, Judges, and Related Workers	4.8%
5. Computer Occupations	27.3%	5. Supervisors of Protective Service Workers	5.5%
6. Social Scientists and Related Workers	28.0%	6. Life Scientists	6.1%
7. Librarians, Curators, and Archivists	28.2%	7. Preschool, Primary, Secondary, and Special Education School Teachers	6.3%
8. Air Transportation Workers	28.5%	8. Computer Occupations	6.3%
9. Printing Workers	28.8%	9. Law Enforcement Workers	6.7%
10. Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners	29.0%	10. Religious Workers	6.7%

Note: Includes only occupations with 10 or more workers.

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

### Job hopping by industry

The construction industry had the highest concentration of job hoppers in 2011. (See Exhibit 2.) Construction work is often seasonal and project-oriented, so its higher percentage of job hoppers is not surprising.

Alaska's especially seasonal economy — with its dramatic summer-to-winter swings in construction, tourism, and fishing — makes analysis of job hopping different here than in most other states or nationally. It's one thing to move from job to job voluntarily in search of something new and different and another thing to move from job to job because work is simply unavailable during certain times of the year.

Several other industries with high percentages of job hoppers were also quite seasonal, relatively low paying, or both.

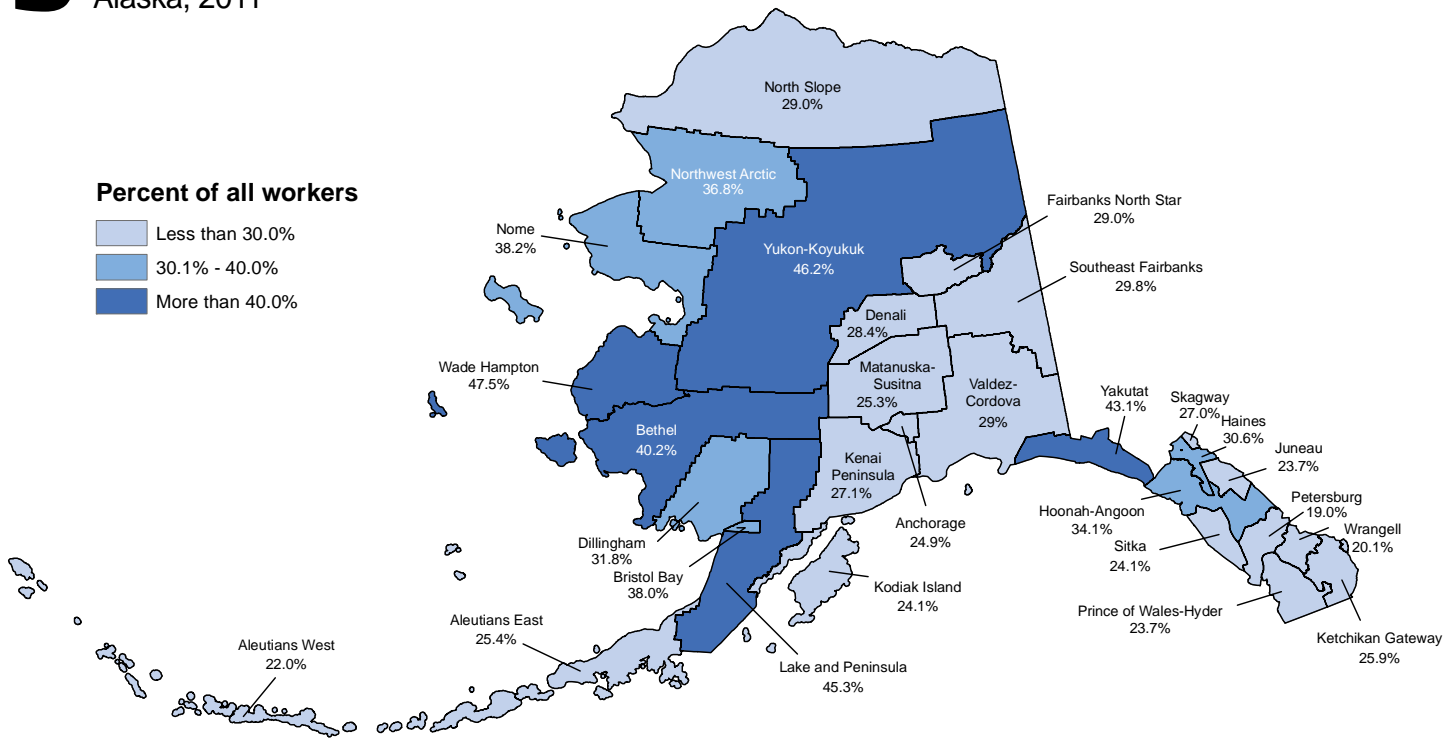
### Occupational highs and lows

Job hopping rates varied considerably by occupation, even among younger workers. (See Exhibits 3 and 4.) For the 20-to-34 age group, most of the occupations with high rates were seasonal and several were relatively low paying. However, the more telling data were for the occupations with the fewest job hoppers.

Several of those occupations required significant postsecondary education, and they were all relatively high paying; lawyers, judges, engineers, and

# 5 Job Hopping More Common in Rural Areas

Alaska, 2011



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

mathematical science occupations are examples. Both of those factors would presumably weigh against switching jobs frequently.

The same basic patterns emerge in the 35-plus age group — higher rates of job hopping for seasonal and often lower-paying occupations. Many of the occupations have higher job hopping rates for workers new to the occupation, but for those who discover they like the work, job hopping may become relatively scarce. Special education teachers and law enforcement workers could fall into that category. Those occupations are not for everyone, but those with the aptitude and temperament for the work may find it deeply satisfying. Again, ongoing

analysis of the workers as they age will allow for more specific conclusions.

## Job hopping around the state

Geographically, rural and remote Alaska generally had higher rates of job hopping. (See Exhibit 5.) Job hopping there, where jobs can be scarce, may be more a matter of necessity than choice. Those areas also tend to have high unemployment rates.

Southeast Alaska had some of the lowest job hopping rates, and it's probably not a coincidence that Southeast's population is older than the statewide average.