

Typical Characteristics of UI Claimants – 1985 to 1988

By Thom Wylie

In Calendar Year 1988, just over 51,000 Alaskans received one or more weeks of Unemployment Insurance (UI) compensation.

Table 1 contains the most recent data available on the specific characteristics of these claimants — their sex, age, number of dependents, ethnic background, industry, occupation, income, and geographic area.

The Largest Proportion of Alaska's 1988 Claimants Lived in Anchorage

Table 1 also reports on the location of all claimants — by census area or census subarea, and by the local Alaska Job Service offices at which they filed claims. (Alaska has 12 local offices serving UI claimants. The Job Service's central office in Juneau processes most claims submitted by rural and out-of-state claimants.)

The largest proportion of 1988 claimants — over 24% — lived in Anchorage and filed through the Anchorage Job Service Office.

Twenty-three percent of all claimants were those filing from outside the state.

Rural residents filed over 14% of all 1988 claims.

Construction Industry's Decline Caused Dynamic Changes in UI Claimant Characteristics Between 1985 and 1988

Among those industries that experienced decline during the most recent recession it was the construction industry that was responsible for the most dynamic changes in UI claimant characteristics. (See Figure 1.)

Between 1985 and 1988, the most obvious changes in the characteristics of UI claimants showed up in six categories: number of claimants, industry, sex, earnings, race, and age.

Between 1985 and 1988 the total number of individuals claiming UI compensation declined by over 20% (nearly 13,000).

In these three years, the number of UI claimants who had been employed in the construction industry declined from 17,200-plus (in 1985) to nearly 9,200 (in 1988). Translated, this 8,000-plus decline represented a 62% drop in the share of all UI claimants since 1985.

Most 1988 claimants were:

- Male (over 63%),
- Between the ages of 25 and 44 (69%),
- Without dependents (over 62%), and
- White (over 77%).

Those claiming UI benefits last year had been employed most recently in:

- Service industries (21%),
- Construction industries (18%),
- Trade industries (over 17%).

By occupation, the greatest number of the 1988 jobless claiming UI compensation had been most recently employed as:

- Structural workers (27%), and
- Clerical and Sales workers (over 21%).

Among structural workers:

- Over 7,800 claimants were in construction occupations, and
- Over 2,100 claimants were in occupations related to excavating, grading and paving.

Among clerical and sales workers:

- Most claimants (over 3,500) were in computing and account recording

Most 1988 claimants' income from work covered by UI placed them at the low end of the income scale:

- Over 62% earned less than \$20,000, and Over 30% of all claimants earned less than \$10,000.

At the high end of the income scale:

- Less than 4% of all UI claimants (over 2,000) earned \$50,000 or more.

Table 1

1988 UI Claimant Characteristics

Characteristics of claimants from all industries	All Claimants Calendar Year 1985		All Claimants Calendar Year 1988		Characteristics of claimants from all industries	All Claimants Calendar Year 1985		All Claimants Calendar Year 1988	
	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total		No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total
TOTAL	63,991	100.0	51,002	100.0					
SEX:					AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS:				
Male	43,732	68.3	32,278	63.3	\$ 0- 999	9	0.0	2	0.0
Female	20,259	31.7	18,724	36.7	1,000- 9,999	18,367	28.7	15,564	30.5
AGE:					10,000-19,999	20,108	31.4	16,164	31.7
Less than 21	2,218	3.5	1,348	2.6	20,000-20,999	11,520	18.0	9,844	19.3
21-24	7,641	11.9	4,311	8.5	30,000-39,999	6,396	10.0	4,987	9.8
25-34	25,864	40.4	20,229	39.7	40,000-49,999	3,687	5.8	2,439	4.8
35-44	15,173	23.7	14,965	29.3	50,000-59,999	1,847	2.9	1,196	2.3
45-54	7,398	11.6	6,905	13.5	60,000-69,999	1,038	1.6	466	0.9
55-64	3,658	5.7	2,723	5.3	70,000-79,999	563	0.9	215	0.4
65+	2,039	3.2	521	1.0	80,000-89,999	304	0.5	95	0.2
					90,000+	152	0.2	30	0.1
NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS:					GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION:				
0	41,269	64.5	31,816	62.4	Total	63,991	100.0	51,002	100.0
1	9,517	14.9	7,740	15.2	Aleutian Islands Census Area	118	0.2	153	0.3
2	8,261	12.9	7,092	13.9	Anchorage Borough	17,304	27.0	13,429	26.3
3+	4,944	7.7	4,354	8.5	Bethel Census Area	859	1.3	614	1.2
ETHNIC BACKGROUND:					Bristol Bay Borough	68	0.1	70	0.1
Alaska Native/American					Dillingham Census Area	282	0.4	243	0.5
Indian	8,012	12.5	7,037	13.8	Fairbanks North Star Borough	7,603	11.9	5,995	11.8
Asian and Pacific Islander	1,630	2.5	1,665	3.3	Haines Borough	248	0.4	179	0.4
Black	1,995	3.1	1,795	3.5	Juneau Borough	2,449	3.8	1,652	3.2
Hispanic	1,072	1.7	828	1.6	Kenai Peninsula Borough	4,374	6.8	4,188	8.2
White	50,636	79.1	39,312	77.1	Ketchikan Gateway Borough	1,551	2.4	1,193	2.3
No Information	646	1.0	365	0.7	Kobuk Census Area	469	0.7	464	0.9
INDUSTRY:					Kodiak Island Borough	1,140	1.8	843	1.7
Ag., Forestry and Fishing	318	0.5	318	0.6	Matanuska-Susitna Borough	4,940	7.7	3,741	7.3
Mining	2,094	3.3	2,655	5.2	Nome Census Area	649	1.0	613	1.2
Oil and Gas	1,667	2.6	2,266	4.4	North Slope Borough	435	0.7	231	0.5
Other Mining	427	0.7	389	0.8	Prince of Wales-Outer Ketch.	797	1.2	740	1.5
Contract Construction	17,247	27.0	9,199	18.0	Sitka Borough	967	1.5	579	1.1
Manufacturing	6,192	9.7	5,789	11.4	Skagway-Yakutat-Angoon				
Food Products	3,539	5.5	3,489	6.8	Census Area	575	0.9	563	1.1
Lumber and Wood					Southeast Fairbanks	565	0.9	506	1.0
Products	1,292	2.0	1,306	2.6	Valdez-Cordova Census Area	831	1.3	772	1.5
Paper Products	544	0.9	302	0.6	Wade Hampton Census Area	377	0.6	321	0.6
Other Manufacturing	817	1.3	692	1.4	Wrangell-Petersburg	881	1.4	704	1.4
Trans., Comm. and Utilities	5,568	8.7	3,878	7.6	Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	1,037	1.6	845	1.7
Trade	10,219	16.0	8,811	17.3	Total In-State	48,519	75.8	38,638	75.8
Finance, Ins. and R.E.	2,283	3.6	2,457	4.8	Total Out-of-State	15,472	24.2	12,364	24.2
Services	11,793	18.4	10,719	21.0	LOCAL OFFICE:				
Public Administration	7,680	12.0	6,708	13.2	Total	63,991	100.0	51,002	100.0
Unclassified	597	0.9	468	0.9	Anchorage	17,386	27.2	12,415	24.3
OCCUPATION:					Central - Interstate Claims	14,577	22.8	11,702	22.9
Ag., Forestry and Fishing	1,324	2.1	1,342	2.6	Central - Mail Claims	10,145	15.9	7,395	14.5
Benchwork	401	0.6	278	0.5	Eagle River	1/	1/	1,444	2.8
Clerical and Sales	12,072	18.9	10,988	21.5	Fairbanks	7,647	12.0	6,019	11.8
Machine Trades	3,139	4.9	2,124	4.2	Homer	1/	1/	792	1.6
Processing	2,425	3.8	2,209	4.3	Juneau	2,448	3.8	1,658	3.3
Prof., Tech. and Managerial	9,210	14.4	8,364	16.4	Kenai	3,042	4.8	2,750	5.4
Service	7,217	11.3	6,239	12.2	Ketchikan	1,435	2.2	1,120	2.2
Structural Work	20,871	32.6	13,787	27.0	Kodiak	1,032	1.6	782	1.5
Miscellaneous and Unknown	7,332	11.5	5,671	11.1	Matanuska-Susitna	4,704	7.4	3,582	7.0
					Seward	607	0.9	527	1.0
					Sitka	968	1.5	583	1.1
					Valdez	1/	1/	233	0.5

Note: 1/ - These local offices were not in operation in 1985.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis, 1985 and 1988, RESP 8003, Claimant Characteristics Tape, Calendar Year 1985 and 1988.

For the sake of comparison, the service sector sustained a decline of only 1,000-plus claimants over the past three years, which amounted to about 8% of the total decline.

As Figure 2 illustrates, the number of male and female claimants has moved 10 full percentage points towards one another between 1985 and 1988.

While this change partly indicates growing numbers of women in the work force (and also their subsequent claims to UI benefits), the rising proportion of females is more a result of the large loss of male jobs (and claimants) due to the construction industry's decline. (See Figure 3.)

The number of male UI claimants from the construction industry fell from over 16,200 in 1985 to 8,500-plus in 1988. This drop of 7,600-plus claimants accounted for more than two-thirds of the total decline in male claimants during this three-year period. (See Table 2 for further detail on the characteristics of UI claimants from the construction industry.)

In 1988 there were proportionately fewer claimants (compared to those in 1985) whose 'base period earnings' were over \$50,000. (Defined, 'base period earnings' are earnings gained during the first four quarters of those five quarters which occurred prior to an individual's initial application for UI compensation.) Of the 1,900 fewer claimants in this earnings category, 74% (over 1,400) had been employed in the construction industry. (See Figure 3.)

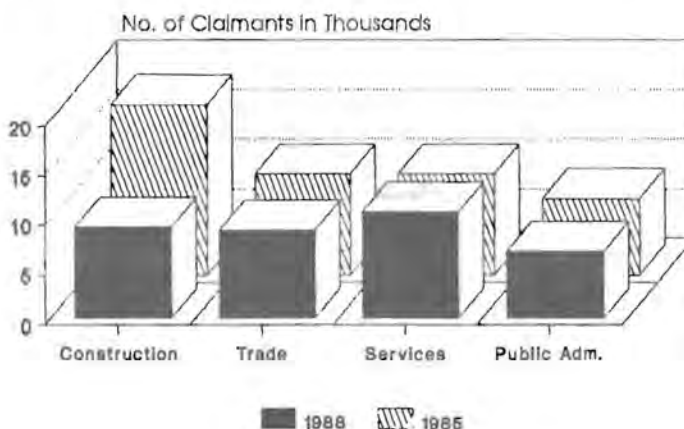
Natives' Share of Total Claims Rose Between 1985 and 1988

The racial mix of UI claimants has also changed in the last three years. Alaska natives have increased their share of total claimant numbers. Although the number of both native and white claimants has lessened, whites' UI claims have decreased at nearly twice the rate as that of Alaska natives.

The primary reason for the 11,300-plus drop in white UI claims is due to the construction industry decline. The construction industry's 1985 white claimants numbered over 15,000; the industry's 1988 white claimants numbered only 8,004. This drop accounts for 62.4% of the total decline in the number of whites claiming UI since 1985. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 1

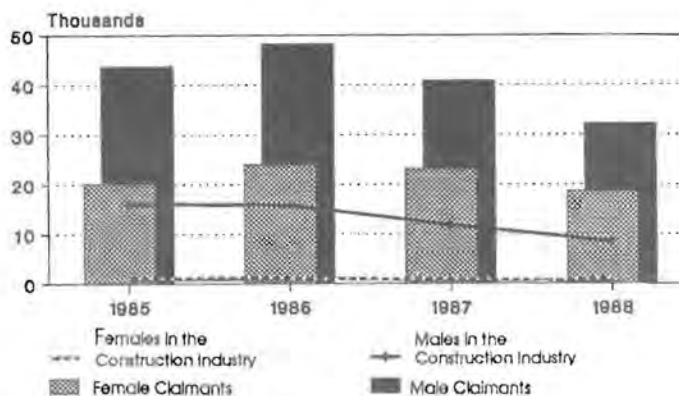
UI Claimant Characteristics Among the Four Leading Industries of 1985



Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis

Figure 2

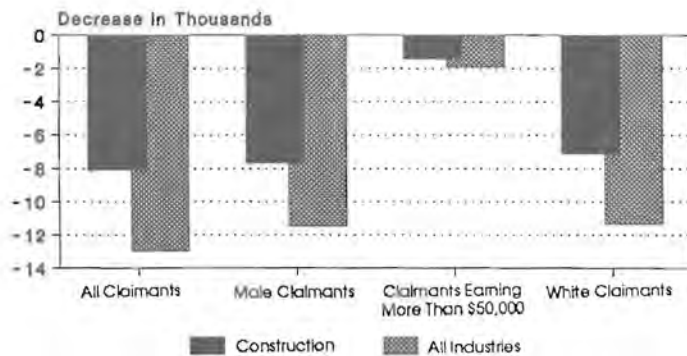
UI Claimants, Male & Female, 1985-1988



Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis

Figure 3

Total Decline in Claimants – Construction & All Industries, 1985 to 1988



Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis

Changes in claimants' ages between 1985 and 1988 also prove interesting. Although their total numbers have dropped slightly, the number of claimants aged 35 to 54 has grown in proportion to the whole. This is true for the general claimant population and for construction industry claimants. The percentage of construction industry claimants in this age group grew from 41.2% in 1985 to 49.7% in 1988.

Future Claimant Characteristic Changes Will Come More Slowly

Without doubt the most recent recession and its effects on Alaska's construction industry carries nearly all responsibility for the way claimant characteristics have changed during the past four years.

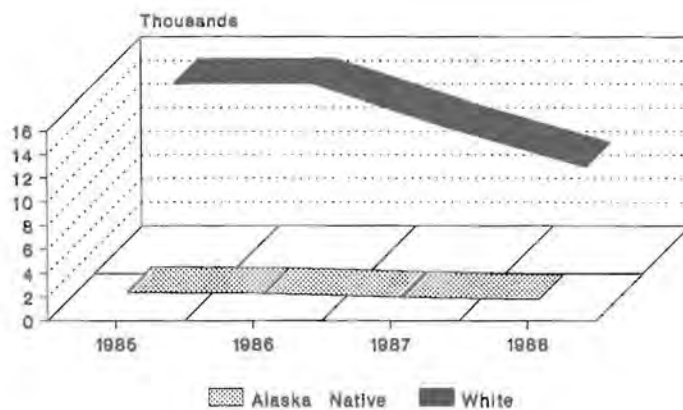
If employment within the construction industry continues to decline in relation to other Alaska industries, then current trends will also continue.

However, if the price of oil rebounds sufficiently, there could develop a large rise in the state's capital construction budget, and with that an elimination of some regions' housing surpluses. If this scenario were to occur, the construction industry could be rebuilt, and recent claimant characteristic trends could stabilize or reverse.

Either way, future changes in UI claimant characteristics will occur less rapidly than the changes of recent years.

Figure 4

Claimant Characteristics – Construction Industry by Race



Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis

About the Author:

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1988 Characteristics of UI Claimants from the Construction Industry

Characteristics of claimants from all industries	All Claimants Calendar Year 1985		All Claimants Calendar Year 1988		Characteristics of claimants from all industries	All Claimants Calendar Year 1985		All Claimants Calendar Year 1988	
	No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total		No.	% of Total	No.	% of Total
TOTAL	17,247	100.0	9,199	100.0	AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS:				
SEX:					\$ 0- 999	8	0.0	0	0.0
Male	16,205	94.0	8,557	93.0	1,000- 9,999	2,470	14.3	1,496	16.3
Female	1,042	6.0	642	7.0	10,000-19,999	4,289	24.9	2,466	26.8
AGE:					20,000-20,999	3,786	22.0	2,218	24.1
Less than 21	373	2.2	109	1.2	30,000-39,999	2,677	15.5	1,397	15.2
21-24	1,431	8.3	423	4.6	40,000-49,999	1,827	10.6	844	9.2
25-34	6,656	38.6	3,524	38.3	50,000-59,999	1,035	6.0	485	5.3
35-44	4,596	26.6	3,113	33.8	60,000-69,999	543	3.1	181	2.0
45-54	2,522	14.6	1,461	15.9	70,000-79,999	319	1.8	76	0.8
55-64	1,204	7.0	505	5.5	80,000-89,999	187	1.1	23	0.3
65+	465	2.7	64	0.7	90,000+	106	0.6	13	0.1
NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS:					LOCAL OFFICE:				
0	10,584	61.4	5,311	57.7	Total	17,247	100.0	9,199	100.0
1	2,540	14.7	1,362	14.8	Anchorage	4,838	28.1	2,511	27.3
2	2,543	14.7	1,495	16.3	Central - Interstate Claims	3,277	19.0	1,363	14.8
3+	1,580	9.2	1,031	11.2	Central - Mail Claims	2,055	11.9	905	9.8
ETHNIC BACKGROUND:					Eagle River	/ ¹	/ ¹	377	4.1
Alaska Native/American Indian	1,479	8.6	864	9.4	Fairbanks	3,116	18.1	1,698	18.5
Asian and Pacific Islander	89	0.5	38	0.4	Homer	/ ¹	/ ¹	175	1.9
Black	260	1.5	128	1.4	Juneau	550	3.2	254	2.8
Hispanic	213	1.2	129	1.4	Kenai	991	5.7	557	6.1
White	15,070	87.4	8,004	87.0	Ketchikan	261	1.5	124	1.3
No information	136	0.8	36	0.4	Kodlak	188	1.1	90	1.0
					Matanuska-Susitna	1,712	9.9	947	10.3
					Seward	107	0.6	72	0.8
					Sitka	152	0.9	95	1.0
					Valdez	/ ¹	/ ¹	31	0.3

Note: /¹ - These local offices were not in operation in 1985.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis, 1985 and 1988, RESP 8003, Claimant Characteristics Tape, Calendar Year 1985 and 1988.