

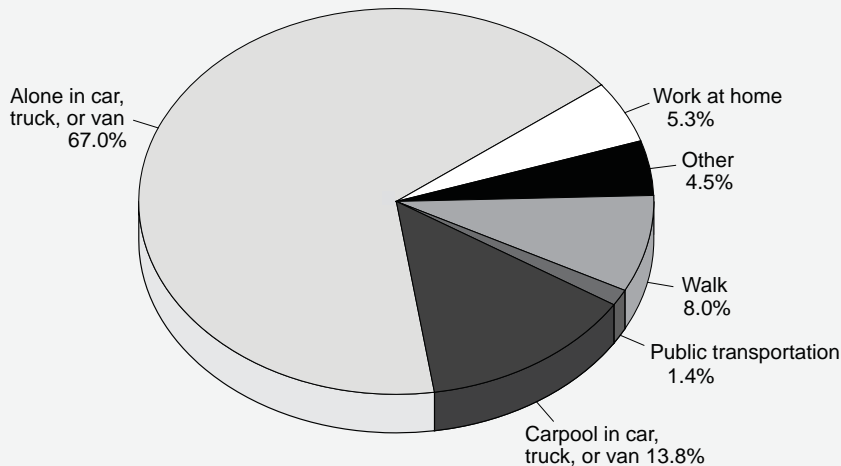
How Alaskans Get to Work

A look at American Community Survey Commuter Data

Most Alaskans drive their cars or trucks to work, just like their fellow Americans — but what sets Alaska apart is the range of other ways we commute.

More people nationwide use public transportation. But recent American Community Survey data¹ show that Alaskans, especially those in rural areas, tend to walk or use alternative methods of transportation far more often than their U.S. counterparts. These include riding bikes, motorcycles, snowmachines, four-wheelers, dog sleds, planes, or boats. Also, more of us simply go nowhere — that is, we work at home.

1 Most Alaskans Drive to Work Alone Alaska, 2005 to 2009



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

Most of us drive to work, alone

Like a majority of Americans, most Alaskans commute to work daily by car, truck, or van — alone. (See Exhibits 1 and 2.) In fact, two-thirds of Alaskans travel to our jobs this way, and if we combine this group with those who drive with at least one other person (the U.S. Census Bureau calls this carpooling), the number grows to nearly 81 percent. This is no surprise when we consider that there were 451,100 cars and 214,000 pickups registered in Alaska in 2010. We either love our cars and pickups,

¹ For a detailed description of the ACS and how it compares to census data, please see the preceding article on page 9 of this issue: "New ACS Data and the Census."

or we feel it's our only choice for getting to work each day.

However, many also walk

Surprisingly, the next largest commuting group in Alaska is walkers. Maybe this is only remarkable to those who live in the state's larger communities of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, where only a small percentage walk to work. (See Exhibit 3.)

However, a majority of residents walk to their jobs in other places such as the Northwest Arctic Borough, home to Kotzebue and ten other villages. In these small communities, cars and trucks are scarce, incomes are often low, and these areas tend to be physically compact. In 11 of the state's boroughs and census areas, over a third of the working population walk to work.

Some go "nowhere"

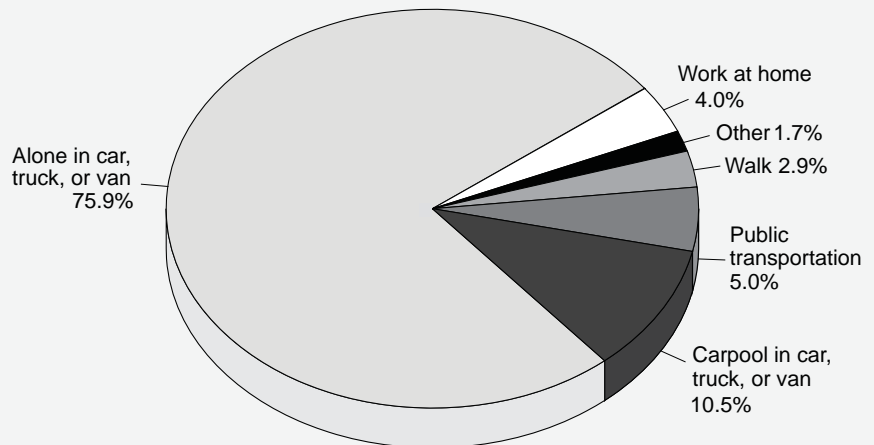
After driving and walking, the most popular mode of commuting in the state is "none," because a sizeable number of people work at home. The current stereotype of the "modern" stay-at-home worker is the telecommuter, a typically urban professional whose location is not important for the work, and these workers do exist in Alaska. However, the stay-at-home worker is far more prevalent in smaller communities.

In places such as Haines, Petersburg, Skagway, Nome, and the Aleutians, over 10 percent of the labor force work from their homes. Although some may fit the telecommuter description, they are more likely to be operating small home businesses. Examples are restaurants, retail, production and sale of art, tourism, repair shops, day cares, clinics, herbalists, small professional operations such as legal or accounting offices, and agricultural businesses.

Other types of vehicles are popular

The balance of Alaska's commuters ride the bus or use some "other" form of transportation to get to work, including the aforementioned bicycles, planes, snowmachines, four-wheelers, taxis, dog sleds, and boats. The "other" category often ex-

More People Nationwide Use Public Transit **2** United States, 2005 to 2009



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

ceeds 10 percent in Alaska's remote communities. In places like the Wade Hampton Census Area and the Lake and Peninsula and Northwest Arctic boroughs, over 20 percent of commuters are in this category, with a likely prevalence of snowmachines and four-wheelers. According to the Department of Motor Vehicles, 52,697 snowmachines were registered in Alaska in 2010.

A surprising contrast to the nation

When the commuting habits of Alaska and the nation are compared, the results are sometimes eerily similar, and in other cases dramatically different. (See Exhibits 1, 2, and 3.)

For example, if we compare Anchorage to national data, the commuting patterns are similar. In addition, most of the more urban places in Alaska mirror the national averages, more or less.

On the other hand, the nation and much of rural Alaska are noticeably different — these residents make Alaska exceptional. Because of the different modes of transportation in rural areas, Alaskans as a whole are two-and-a-half times more likely than the rest of the U.S. to walk to work, and more than twice as likely to travel within the "other" category.

Next month, *Trends* will explore how long it takes these commuters to get to work.

3 Methods Alaskans Use to Commute to Work

2005 to 2009

	Car, truck, or van (alone)	Car, truck, or van (carpool)	Public transportation	Walk	Other*	Work at home
United States	75.9%	10.5%	5.0%	2.9%	1.7%	4.0%
Alaska	67.0%	13.8%	1.4%	8.0%	4.5%	5.3%
Aleutians East Borough	9.5%	3.1%	0.0%	71.7%	3.0%	12.8%
Aleutians West Census Area	11.5%	8.4%	0.6%	54.3%	0.7%	24.5%
Anchorage, Municipality of	75.9%	13.0%	1.4%	2.8%	3.0%	3.9%
Bethel Census Area	25.3%	13.3%	0.1%	38.1%	18.9%	4.4%
Bristol Bay Borough	62.6%	19.4%	0.0%	8.7%	1.9%	7.4%
Denali Borough	49.25	10.4%	8.2%	25.8%	1.6%	4.8%
Dillingham Census Area	39.5%	22.0%	0.4%	20.9%	13.8%	3.5%
Fairbanks North Star Borough	71.1%	14.4%	1.1%	4.3%	2.4%	6.7%
Haines Borough	45.4%	12.6%	3.2%	18.2%	5.8%	14.9%
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	35.8%	6.5%	2.7%	33.9%	14.6%	6.6%
Juneau, City and Borough of	60.8%	17.0%	5.7%	9.0%	3.8%	3.7%
Kenai Peninsula Borough	71.0%	10.1%	0.9%	5.8%	5.7%	6.5%
Ketchikan-Gateway Borough	61.9%	17.5%	3.3%	8.0%	5.6%	3.7%
Kodiak Island Borough	59.5%	23.1%	0.7%	7.9%	4.5%	4.3%
Lake and Peninsula Borough	19.6%	10.9%	2.1%	33.1%	26.1%	8.2%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	70.1%	16.0%	0.5%	2.7%	4.9%	5.7%
Nome Census Area	25.5%	9.7%	0.3%	36.5%	16.2%	11.8%
North Slope Borough	27.0%	29.4%	0.2%	33.3%	7.7%	2.5%
Northwest Arctic Borough	9.2%	7.9%	0.7%	55.8%	22.2%	4.1%
Petersburg Census Area	53.2%	11.1%	0.0%	16.7%	9.1%	9.9%
Prince of Wales Census Area	56.1%	14.8%	0.9%	19.3%	4.9%	3.9%
Sitka, City and Borough of	56.9%	18.1%	1.2%	11.2%	7.7%	4.9%
Skagway, Municipality of	44.0%	4.2%	0.6%	35.5%	5.0%	10.7%
Southeast Fairbanks CA	62.2%	18.8%	1.0%	6.7%	3.5%	7.9%
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	67.3%	11.3%	0.2%	10.7%	3.8%	6.8%
Wade Hampton Census Area	10.7%	1.7%	0.0%	60.8%	24.6%	2.2%
Wrangell, City and Borough	62.7%	12.4%	1.4%	4.9%	15.7%	3.0%
Yakutat, City and Borough of	61.2%	14.8%	1.5%	11.2%	5.1%	6.1%
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	26.1%	11.4%	0.4%	37.5%	16.9%	7.7%

*"Other" includes bicycles, four-wheelers, snowmachines, taxis, planes, dog sleds, motorcycles, and boats.

Source: U.S Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005-2009

Where is Employment Scene?

Because of the annual benchmarking and revision process, the data we typically use to generate the monthly unemployment rate and Employment Scene were not available before publication of this month's *Trends*. The Research and Analysis Section plans to release two months' employment statistics and unemployment rates in March: the January 2011 rate on March 10, and the February rate on March 23.