



POPULATION AND ECONOMIC FORECAST

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY	1
1.1	Purpose of the Technical Memorandum	1
1.2	Methodology	1
2.0	BASELINE ECONOMIC INDICATORS	3
2.1	Population	3
2.2	Household Income	5
2.3	Cost of Living	5
2.4	Housing.....	7
2.5	Employment	8
3.0	KEY INDUSTRY TRENDS	12
3.1	Seafood.....	12
3.2	Mariculture	17
3.3	Tourism	20
3.4	Mining	24
3.5	Healthcare.....	27
3.6	Government	28
3.7	Forestry.....	31
3.8	Construction	33
3.9	Maritime and Shipyard Operations	34
4.0	POPULATION FORECAST.....	35
4.1	Economic Scenarios.....	35
4.2	Mid-Case Population Forecast	36
4.3	Population Forecast by Scenario.....	39

FIGURES

Figure 1: Southeast Alaska Population, 2015-2024.....	3
Figure 2: Population by Age Group, Southeast Alaska, 2024	4
Figure 3: Average Monthly Employment, Southeast Alaska, 2024	10
Figure 4: Worker Residency, Southeast Alaska, 2023.....	10
Figure 5: Locations of Private Non-Profit Salmon Hatcheries in Southeast Alaska	13
Figure 6: Fishing and Processing Workforce Trend in Southeast Alaska and Statewide, 2020-2024	14
Figure 7: Alaska Commercial Seaweed Harvest, 2017-2026 (thousands of wet pounds).....	19
Figure 8: Alaska Cruise Passenger Volume, 2015-2024(Millions)	21
Figure 9: Federal Civilian Employment, Southeast Alaska, 2015-2024	29
Figure 10: State Government Employment, Southeast Alaska, 2015-2024	30
Figure 11: Local and Tribal Government Employment, Southeast Alaska, 2015-2024	31
Figure 12: Alaska Timber Cut on U.S. Forest Service Lands, 1977-2024 (million board feet)....	32
Figure 13: Total Population, Southeast Alaska, 2010-2024 Actual and 2030-2045 Forecast.....	37
Figure 14: Population Projection by Age, Southeast Alaska, 2024 Actual and 2030-2045 Forecast	37

TABLES

Table 1: Population by Borough or Census Area, Southeast Alaska, 2024	4
Table 2: Median Household Income, 2023	5
Table 3: Regional Price Parities, 2024	6
Table 4: C2ER Cost of Living Indices, 2024	6
Table 5: Alaska Geographic Cost Differentials, 2008	7
Table 6: Average Single-Family Home Sales Price, 2024	7
Table 7: Median Monthly Rent by Borough or Census Area, 2025	8
Table 8: Average Annual Wage and Salary Employment by Industry, Southeast Alaska, 2024...9	
Table 9: Workers by Residency and Borough or Census Area, Southeast Alaska, 2023.....	11
Table 10: Top Southeast Alaska Commercial Species by Volume, 2021-2024 (million pounds)13	
Table 11: Cruise Visitors by Port, Southeast Alaska, 2024.....	22
Table 12: Population Forecast Scenario Descriptions	36
Table 13: Population Projections by Borough or Census Area, Southeast Alaska, 2030-2045 Forecast	38
Table 14: Population Forecast by Borough or Census Area and Scenario, 2030-2045 Forecast	39

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
AMHS	Alaska Marine Highway System
AMC	Alaska Mariculture Cluster
ANCSA	Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
ATIA	Alaska Travel Industry Association
BEA	U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
CBJ	City and Borough of Juneau
C2ER	Council for Community and Economic Research
CFEC	Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission
CLIA	Cruise Lines International Association
DCCED	Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
DNR	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
DOFFP	Alaska Division of Forestry and Fire Protection
DOLWD	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
EDA	U.S. Economic Development Administration
IHS	Indian Health Service
ISER	Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage
LRTP	Long-Range Transportation Plan
MLTF	Marine Log Transfer Facility
MMBF	Million Board Feet
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Area
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OBBA	One Big Beautiful Bill Act
PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkages
RPP	Regional Price Parities
SEARHC	Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium
SEATP	Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan
USCG	United States Coast Guard
USFS	U.S. Forest Service

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Purpose of the Technical Memorandum

The Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (SEATP) Population and Economic Forecast Technical Memorandum provides an overview of the region's economy and evaluates how key industries are expected to change over time. These trends are used to inform population projections across Southeast Alaska.

This memorandum describes current economic conditions, identifies major industry drivers, and presents population forecasts based on anticipated economic activity.

1.2 Methodology

This analysis draws on data from sources such as the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA), Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC), the University of Alaska Anchorage Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), among others. Interviews with industry representatives, local government leaders, and interested parties were conducted to provide perspective on the future paths of various industries and community-based economic development initiatives. Public press releases, permitting documents, and other information provided by developers were also referenced.

Population forecasts were developed by borough and census area. Population in this study aligns with the U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census definition of the word: the number of people whose "usual residence" is a community within the various boroughs/census areas. The U.S. Census Bureau provides the basis for DOLWD population estimates, which are used in the intervals between Decennial Census years and significantly influence the mid-case scenario population projections in this report. Decennial Census data used in this report is largely based on estimates gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau in spring 2020. The Census Bureau's definition of population generally excludes seasonal workers who reside in Southeast Alaska for only several months of each year, or who work a rotation schedule in-region but do not have official Alaska residency.

1.2.1 Economic Scenarios

The study team developed three economic scenarios to inform population forecasts.

- **Mid-case scenario** represents the most likely population projections. These projections are developed by DOLWD and incorporate age-cohort based estimates of fertility and life expectancy, and historic rates of migration. Economic developments – from new industry development to housing policy change – are not incorporated in these estimates. They represent an economic "status quo."
- **Low-case scenario** represents the population in the event of negative economic shocks or changes to key industries.
- **High-case scenario** represents the population in the event of new economic development or increased demand in key industries.

The low- and high-case scenarios were developed by the study team by borough or census area based on the most likely positive and negative forces expected to impact the key industries of Southeast Alaska in the next two decades. The expected employment and resulting population reductions and increases were incorporated for each borough or census area by industry, accounting for non-resident workforce participation patterns across the various sectors.

In the absence of likely positive or negative shocks to a particular borough or census area, the study team developed low- and high-case scenarios by assuming population projections deviate from mid-case projections by plus or minus five percent (+/-5 percent). Mid-case projections of plus or minus two-and-a-half percent (+/-2.5 percent) were used for boroughs/census areas with fewer than 1,000 residents in the absence of likely positive or negative shocks.

2.0 BASELINE ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Several core demographic and economic factors influence how businesses, local governments, and other organizations operate in Southeast Alaska. These include the number of year-round residents, participation of non-residents in the local workforce, household income, and the cost of living and doing business regionally.

The indicators below inform the population forecast and economic scenarios presented in this analysis.

2.1 Population

Residents are critical to the health of any economy; they support demand for local goods and services, participate in the workforce, and use the transportation links in Southeast to travel for medical care, recreation, and employment. In 2024, Southeast was home to 70,613 residents, down five percent from 74,629 in 2015 (Figure 1).

Southeast has experienced steady decline in population over the last decade, losing an average one percent of its population each year with net out-migration (more people moving out of the region than moving in) outweighing gains from natural increase (births minus deaths).

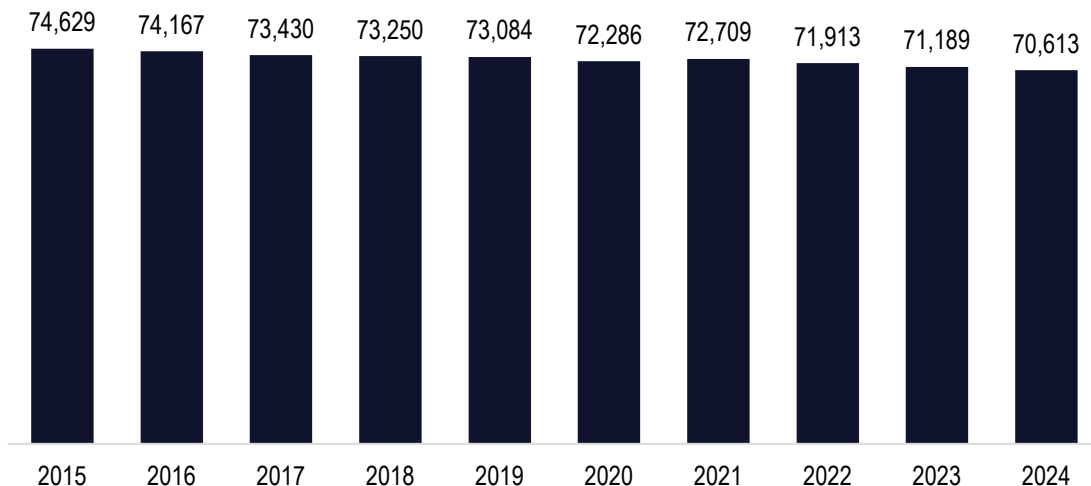


Figure 1: Southeast Alaska Population, 2015-2024

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

2.1.1 Population by Age

Working-age residents (age 20-64) represented 57 percent of the Southeast population in 2024. The children and adolescent population (under 20) represented 23 percent. Elders (65+) represented 20 percent of the Southeast population (Figure 2).

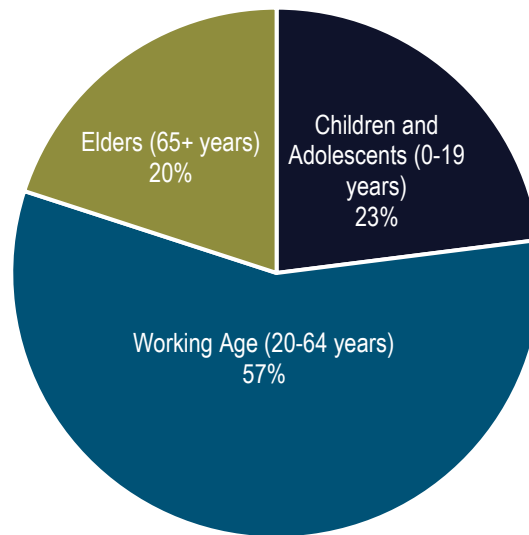


Figure 2: Population by Age Group, Southeast Alaska, 2024

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and McKinley Research Group estimates

2.1.2 Population by Borough or Census Area

Juneau is Southeast's main population center, with about 45 percent of regional residents. Ketchikan and Sitka are also regional hubs. Combined, about three quarters of Southeast residents lived in the City and Borough of Juneau, Ketchikan Gateway Borough, or the City and Borough of Sitka in 2024. Prince of Wales–Hyder Census Area represented another eight percent with more than half of the census area's residents in Metlakatla, Craig, and Klawock. The City and Borough of Yakutat, with just over 600 residents, made up one percent of total Southeast population in 2024 (Table 1).

Table 1: Population by Borough or Census Area, Southeast Alaska, 2024

BOROUGH/CENSUS AREA	POPULATION	PERCENT OF TOTAL
City and Borough of Juneau	31,436	45%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	13,420	19%
City and Borough of Sitka	8,063	11%
Prince of Wales–Hyder Census Area	5,740	8%
Petersburg Borough	3,379	5%
Haines Borough	2,537	4%
Hoonah–Angoon Census Area	2,248	3%
City and Borough of Wrangell	2,030	3%
Municipality of Skagway	1,123	2%
City and Borough of Yakutat	637	1%
Southeast Alaska	70,613	100%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

2.2 Household Income

Household incomes are a useful indicator to demonstrate the level of purchasing power in various communities. Table 2 shows that the Southeast average household income of \$90,338 was 15 percent higher than the national median and about the same as the \$89,336 Alaska median.

Table 2: Median Household Income, 2023

REGION	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	DIFFERENTIAL	
		U.S.=1.00	ALASKA=1.00
U.S.	\$78,538	1.00	0.88
Alaska	\$89,336	1.14	1.00
Southeast Alaska	\$90,338	1.15	1.01
City and Borough of Sitka	\$101,207	1.29	1.13
City and Borough of Juneau	\$100,513	1.28	1.13
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	\$89,155	1.14	1.00
City and Borough of Yakutat	\$80,625	1.03	0.90
Municipality of Skagway	\$78,594	1.00	0.88
Petersburg Borough	\$77,026	0.98	0.86
Haines Borough	\$72,607	0.92	0.81
City and Borough of Wrangell	\$64,545	0.82	0.72
Hoonah–Angoon Census Area	\$62,500	0.80	0.70
Prince of Wales–Hyder Census Area	\$59,079	0.75	0.66

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-year estimates and McKinley Research Group estimates

*Southeast average household income based on a weighted average

2.3 Cost of Living

Southeast Alaska's high cost of living is driven by geographic isolation, limited surface transportation connections, and reliance on marine and air freight. Southeast communities remain largely unconnected by road and only three communities — Skagway, Haines, and Hyder — are connected to the rest of Alaska and the Lower 48 via highways that link to the Alaska-Canada Highway. Juneau is the nation's only state capital inaccessible by road. Consistent with many regions across Alaska, Southeast communities are largely unconnected by the surface transportation system and rely heavily on marine and air transportation for passenger and freight movement. Inbound freight via barge, including groceries and consumer goods, arrives from the Lower 48 weekly or biweekly and just a few barge operators provide this service. Transportation costs are added to the cost of goods and are relatively high, impacting businesses and consumers.

Two primary data sources, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Price Parities (RPP) and the Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) cost of living index, are available to understand how prices in Alaska differ from elsewhere in the U.S. A third source, the Alaska Geographic Differential Study, provides cost of living differentials among Alaska communities and uses Anchorage as a benchmark. These data sources, as described below, offer different measures of prices. The first two sources indicate costs are higher in Alaska than nationally, and the third source shows that costs in rural communities generally exceed those of urban Alaska.

2.3.1 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Price Parities

Regional Price Parities (RPP) provide context for how prices in Alaska compare to national averages; however, RPP data are not available specifically for Southeast Alaska. Statewide estimates therefore serve as a baseline for understanding relative cost conditions in the region. Table 3 shows that in 2024 the average price level for goods and services across Alaska was approximately two percent higher than the national average. These higher costs are driven in part by factors that are also characteristic of Southeast Alaska, including geographic isolation, limited surface transportation connections, and reliance on marine and air freight for goods movement. RPP data for Alaska's urban areas, such as Anchorage and Fairbanks, indicate somewhat higher costs relative to the national average; however, these communities benefit from greater transportation connectivity than Southeast Alaska. Anchorage Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was about five percent higher than the national average, and about three percent higher in the Fairbanks MSA.

Table 3: Regional Price Parities, 2024

CATEGORY	ANCHORAGE MSA	FAIRBANKS MSA	ALASKA STATEWIDE	U.S. NATIONAL AVERAGE
Goods	107.3	107.3	106.3	100.0
Housing	109.9	92.6	93.8	100.0
Utilities	111.8	119.8	119.0	100.0
Other Services	103.3	103.3	102.2	100.0
All Items	105.4	103.2	102.4	100.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Note: Anchorage MSA includes the Municipality of Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Fairbanks MSA includes all communities in the Fairbanks North Star Borough

2.3.2 Council for Community and Economic Research Cost of Living Index

The Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) compares the cost of common household expenditure categories from 254 U.S. cities to the national average. The C2ER cost of living index assigns weights to categories based on spending by households with income in the top 20 percent and therefore cannot be compared to the BEA RPP. However, the index is a useful tool for comparing across communities on a nationwide scale.

The C2ER index indicates that, overall, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau have a higher cost of living than the national average. Juneau had the highest cost of living at 27 percent above the national average in 2024 driven by the relatively high cost of healthcare, utilities, and groceries. Table 4 shows C2ER cost of living index values by category for the three Alaska communities measured.

Table 4: C2ER Cost of Living Indices, 2024

CATEGORY	ANCHORAGE	FAIRBANKS	JUNEAU
Grocery	126.4	126.8	128.2
Housing	133.1	98.2	122.8
Utilities	112.6	203.4	142.5
Transportation	113.3	109.1	120.5
Healthcare	147.5	151.5	150.9
Miscellaneous	114.2	117.5	125.0
Composite Index	122.8	121.5	127.2

Source: The Council for Community and Economic Research

2.3.3 Alaska Geographic Differential Study

In contrast to the RPP and C2ER data previously described, the 2009 Alaska Geographic Differential Study provides a cost comparison between Anchorage and a variety of communities and regions across Alaska. Based on data from 2008, the differentials developed in the analysis are still relevant for considering relative costs across the state. The overall cost differentials in Table 5 describe prices as compared to Anchorage.

Table 5: Alaska Geographic Cost Differentials, 2008

DIFFERENTIAL SAMPLE AREA	OVERALL COST DIFFERENTIAL	TRANSPORTATION COST DIFFERENTIAL
Juneau	1.11	1.09
Ketchikan/Sitka	1.09	1.10
Southeast Mid-Size Communities	1.05	1.16
Southeast Small Communities	1.02	1.19

Source: Alaska Geographic Differential Study. Prepared for State of Alaska Department of Administration by McDowell Group (McKinley Research Group), April 2009

2.4 Housing

Housing costs are often a driver of high cost of living in Southeast Alaska and can influence the ability of communities to attract and retain residents.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) publishes average home sales price data based on a mortgage lender survey.¹ Table 6 reports average home sale prices in 2024. The average home sale price in Juneau was \$524,312, 14 percent higher than the statewide average of \$459,089. Similarly, the average home sale price in Ketchikan was 13 percent higher than the statewide average. Land constraints, a large seasonal workforce, and a rise in single occupancy households put pressure on housing availability, contributing to relatively high housing prices in both communities.²

Table 6: Average Single-Family Home Sales Price, 2024

REGION	AVERAGE SALES PRICE	DIFFERENTIAL ALASKA=1.00
Alaska	\$459,089	1.00
Juneau	\$524,312	1.14
Ketchikan Gateway	\$518,220	1.13

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and McKinley Research Group estimates

DOLWD administers an annual Rental Market Survey of residential units, asking landlords across the state to report monthly rent prices and housing unit characteristics. Since 2021, the survey indicates that rent across all types of housing in participating Southeast communities has increased by at least 15 percent. Rent in the City and Borough of Juneau was about \$1,500 in 2025, an increase of 28 percent since 2021. Ketchikan Gateway Borough rent was up 16 percent to \$1,203, the City and Borough of Sitka up 15 percent to \$1,150, and Wrangell-Petersburg up 19 percent to \$950 (Table 7).

¹ Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Single Family Alaska Loan Activity. <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/housing/loanarea/1>

² U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-year estimates

Table 7: Median Monthly Rent by Borough or Census Area, 2025

REGION	SINGLE-FAMILY	APARTMENT	% CHANGE IN MEDIAN RENT 2021-2025
City and Borough of Juneau			
One-Bedroom	\$1,500	\$1,200	
Three-Bedroom	\$2,100	\$2,000	
Median Rent Across All Housing		\$1,500	+28%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough			
One-Bedroom	\$1,000*	\$1,105	
Three-Bedroom	\$1,625	\$1,428	
Median Rent Across All Housing		\$1,203	+16%
City and Borough of Sitka			
One-Bedroom	\$1,200	\$1,000	
Three-Bedroom	\$1,775	\$1,500	
Median Rent Across All Housing		\$1,150	+15%
Wrangell-Petersburg			
One-Bedroom	\$1,000*	\$800	
Three-Bedroom	\$1,200*	\$1,075	
Median Rent Across All Housing		\$950	+19%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and McKinley Research Group estimates

Note: Median rent excludes utilities and includes all unit types

*2024 data, latest available

2.5 Employment

Employment represents the number of jobs by work location and is one measure of economic activity regionally. In 2024, an annual average of about 37,674 wage and salary jobs were based in Southeast Alaska. About one-third of all Southeast employment was in the public sector, including federal, state, and local government positions. Public sector employment was concentrated in Juneau and included occupations in public education and health care.

Table 8 describes the average annual employment and percentage of total wages in Southeast Alaska by industry. Leisure and hospitality jobs made up 12 percent of Southeast employment and were concentrated in cruise ports with the highest passenger volumes. Retail and wholesale trade also made up 12 percent of Southeast employment, private industry health care and social assistance made up 10 percent, and transportation and warehousing made up nine percent. Transportation occupations include air, truck, and water transportation, including commercial air and scenic and sightseeing tour operations. Manufacturing jobs made up five percent of total Southeast employment and were concentrated in Sitka, Ketchikan, and Juneau, largely attributable to seafood processing.

Table 8: Average Annual Wage and Salary Employment by Industry, Southeast Alaska, 2024

INDUSTRY	AVERAGE ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT	PERCENT OF TOTAL AVERAGE ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT
Government	12,313	33%
Leisure & Hospitality	4,535	12%
Retail & Wholesale Trade	4,409	12%
Health Care & Social Assistance	3,853	10%
Transportation & Warehousing	3,223	9%
Manufacturing (including seafood processing)	1,784	5%
Professional & Business Services	1,694	4%
Construction	1,459	4%
Mining	1,055	3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting	326	1%
All other	3,023	7%
Total Industries	37,674	100%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and McKinley Research Group estimates

Note: Excludes self-employment (e.g., commercial seafood harvest) and active-duty military

Wage and salary employment estimates exclude active-duty military personnel and self-employed workers – self-employed workers generally include commercial seafood harvesters. About 4,300 fishermen harvested seafood commercially in Southeast Alaska in 2024, and current estimates indicate about 300 active-duty military personnel were stationed in the region.

2.5.1 Seasonality

Employment in Southeast Alaska can be highly seasonal due to the timing of seafood harvesting and processing, an influx of visitors in the summer, and other weather-dependent activities. These seasonal and non-resident workforce dynamics are particularly pronounced in the region and may differ from statewide trends, which include more diversified and stable industry bases in other regions. Figure 3 illustrates monthly employment levels peaking between May and September, a result of the seasonal industries mentioned bringing many non-residents to the region. Manufacturing employment – including seafood processing – similarly peaks in June, July, and August.

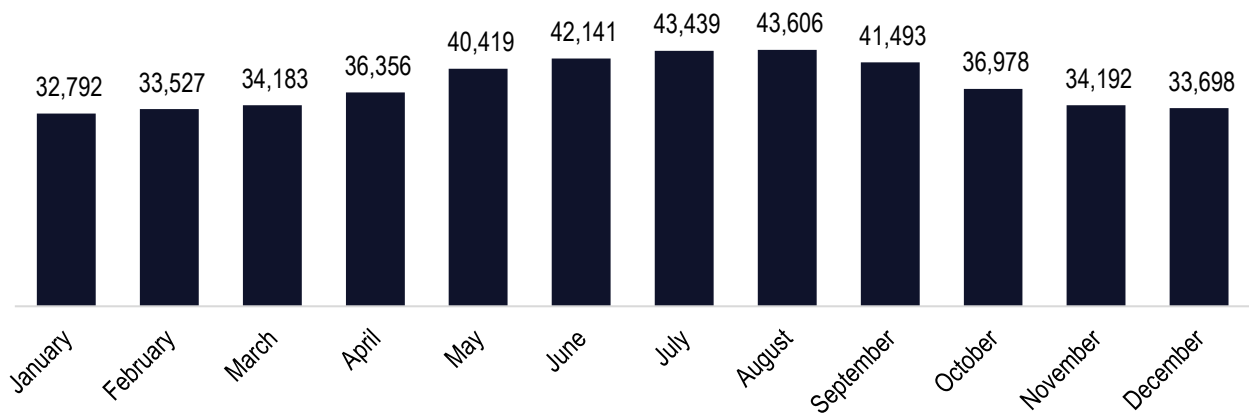


Figure 3: Average Monthly Employment, Southeast Alaska, 2024

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

2.5.2 Non-Resident Labor

Southeast residents and non-residents are employed in the wage and salary jobs described above. Figure 4 shows that almost two-thirds (63 percent) of 2023 Southeast employment was comprised of local resident workers - residents of the borough or census area in which they worked. Local resident employment was concentrated in state and local government, healthcare and social assistance, and retail trade.

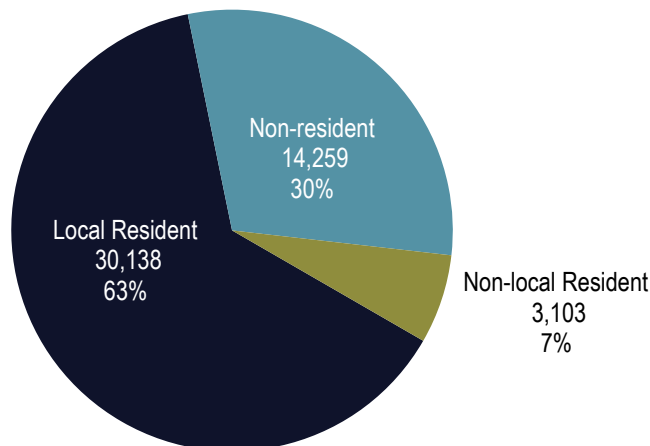


Figure 4: Worker Residency, Southeast Alaska, 2023

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Note: Estimates exclude federal workers, the self-employed, and active-duty military

Non-resident workers, those who work in Alaska but do not live in-state, represented 30 percent of 2023 employment in Southeast and were concentrated in the manufacturing and leisure and hospitality industries.

Non-local residents - those who live in Alaska but work outside of their home borough or census area - made up seven percent of Southeast employment in 2023. The highest numbers of non-local resident workers were employed by state and local government, healthcare and social assistance, and construction.

Given the scale of non-resident and non-local employment, reliable access to and within the region is essential. Except for Prince of Wales Island, where communities are connected by a local road network, Southeast Alaska communities are not connected by road, emphasizing the vital role aviation and marine transportation play in transporting workers to and from jobs.

2.5.2.1 Non-Resident Labor by Borough or Census Area

The rate at which non-residents participate in the Southeast Alaska labor force varies by borough or census area. Both Wrangell and Juneau had relatively low shares of non-resident workers – 21 and 23 percent respectively – whereas more than two-thirds (67 percent) of Skagway’s workers were non-residents in 2023 (Table 9).

Table 9: Workers by Residency and Borough or Census Area, Southeast Alaska, 2023

BOROUGH/CENSUS AREA	LOCAL ALASKA RESIDENTS	NON LOCAL ALASKA RESIDENTS	NON-RESIDENTS	% NON-RESIDENTS
Municipality of Skagway	461	105	1,136	67%
City and Borough of Sitka	3,498	369	2,815	42%
Hoonah–Angoon Census Area	696	155	618	42%
Petersburg Borough	1,114	93	749	38%
City and Borough of Yakutat	256	60	194	38%
Haines Borough	831	107	415	31%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	5,915	707	2,675	29%
Prince of Wales–Hyder Census Area	2,112	200	778	25%
City and Borough of Juneau	14,562	1,228	4,672	23%
City and Borough of Wrangell	693	79	207	21%
Southeast Alaska	30,138	3,103	14,259	30%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

3.0 KEY INDUSTRY TRENDS

Regional economies are broadly composed of two types of industries: core industries, which bring new money into the region, and support industries, which provide goods and services to core industries, residents, and visitors. Both core and support industries are necessary for a thriving economy.

Southeast Alaska's most significant core industries include seafood, tourism, and mining. Other sectors, such as healthcare and construction, bring significant economic activity to the region supported in part by federal and state funding. Federal, state, and local government employment also represents a major component of the regional economy. The following sections describe key industries including expectations or potential developments incorporated into this forecast.

3.1 Seafood

The seafood industry is among the largest sectors in Southeast in terms of workforce size and labor income. The two-year cycle of the regionally important pink salmon harvest results in predictable swings in employment with harvesting and processing peaking in odd-numbered years. In addition to producing seafood, roughly 40 percent of Alaska jobs related to federal or state fishery management, research, and salmon hatchery operation are located in Southeast.³

3.1.1 Species

Table 10 reports the key commercial seafood species in Southeast. Salmon, herring, sablefish, and halibut are the most prominent commercial species by volume. Other species with significant fisheries in the region include rockfish, crab, shrimp, and small-scale dive fisheries for sea cucumbers, urchins, and geoducks. Salmon and halibut are the pillars of recreational and personal-use fishing, including the charter (for-hire) sector that is a key part of the region's tourism industry. In 2024, salmon accounted for more than 90 percent of the region's commercial harvest volume. Seventeen salmon hatchery facilities are run by public or public/private operators. Hatchery production accounts for roughly 25 percent of the region's commercial salmon harvest.

³ *The Economic Value of Alaska's Seafood Industry. Prepared for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute by McKinley Research Group. May 2026*

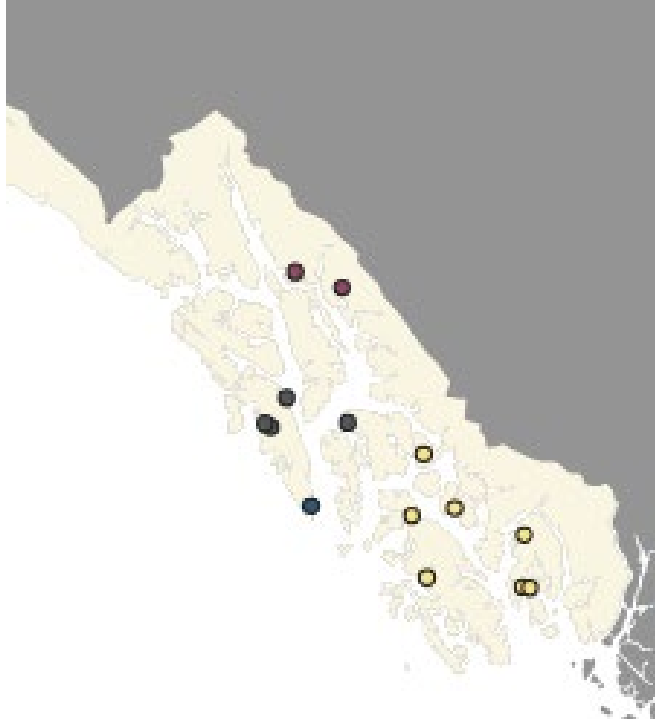


Figure 5: Locations of Private Non-Profit Salmon Hatcheries in Southeast Alaska

Source: McKinley Research Group. Made with Natural Earth

Table 10: Top Southeast Alaska Commercial Species by Volume, 2021-2024 (million pounds)

SPECIES	2021	2022	2023	2024	AVERAGE
Pink Salmon	126.1	110.0	102.9	41.1	95.0
Keta (Chum) Salmon	39.0	57.2	69.9	68.9	58.7
Herring	33.7	43.5	19.2	24.3	30.2
Sockeye Salmon	13.4	17.8	10.2	2.6	11.0
Sablefish (Black Cod)	9.1	11.8	10.7	8.5	10.0
Coho Salmon	7.4	6.5	7.3	4.4	6.4
Halibut	5.7	5.7	4.5	4.2	5.0
Chinook Salmon	2.2	2.4	1.6	1.0	1.8
Dungeness Crab	1.9	0.8	1.7	1.0	1.4
All Others*	2.7	3.2	2.9	2.2	2.8
Total	241.1	259.0	231.0	158.2	222.3

Source: Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Commercial Operators Annual Reports

*Other species with significant commercial harvest include sea cucumber, Tanner crab, geoduck (clam), lingcod, Pacific cod, and various species of rockfish and shrimp.

In 2023 and 2024, on average, Southeast accounted for roughly five percent of the volume of commercial seafood catch in Alaska but 13 percent of the landed value (\$190 million) due to the relatively high value of the species targeted in the region.⁴ Those figures represent a small increase compared to the four preceding years (three percent and 10 percent, respectively), though statewide harvest and value have trended slightly down. These summary numbers for Southeast reflect that the region's fisheries represent a small but valuable portion of a statewide seafood economy that has been slumping due to trade factors and harvest reductions for key species in other regions. Notable challenges in terms of the species important to Southeast include relatively weak salmon returns for pink salmon and king salmon – which are generally attributed to ecosystem factors – and extremely weak demand for herring products from the foreign markets to which they are traditionally exported.

3.1.2 Seafood Employment

During 2023 and 2024, the seafood industry in Southeast Alaska provided 8,300 total jobs each year. Roughly 50 percent of those jobs were in commercial harvesting, 40 percent were in seafood processing, and the remainder were in management, science, and hatchery operation. Figure 6 illustrates the seafood workforce trend in Southeast, as compared to the state as a whole. Due to the seasonal nature of key fisheries, peak employment is significantly higher than average monthly employment. On average, the industry directly provided 3,000 jobs per month and supported an additional 1,700 jobs per month in other sectors that are related by the seafood commerce chain.

Southeast is experiencing a continued decline in the number of active commercial fishermen and processing workers.⁵ From 2020 to 2024, total fishermen and processing workers combined in Southeast Alaska declined from about 7,500 to 5,900 workers.

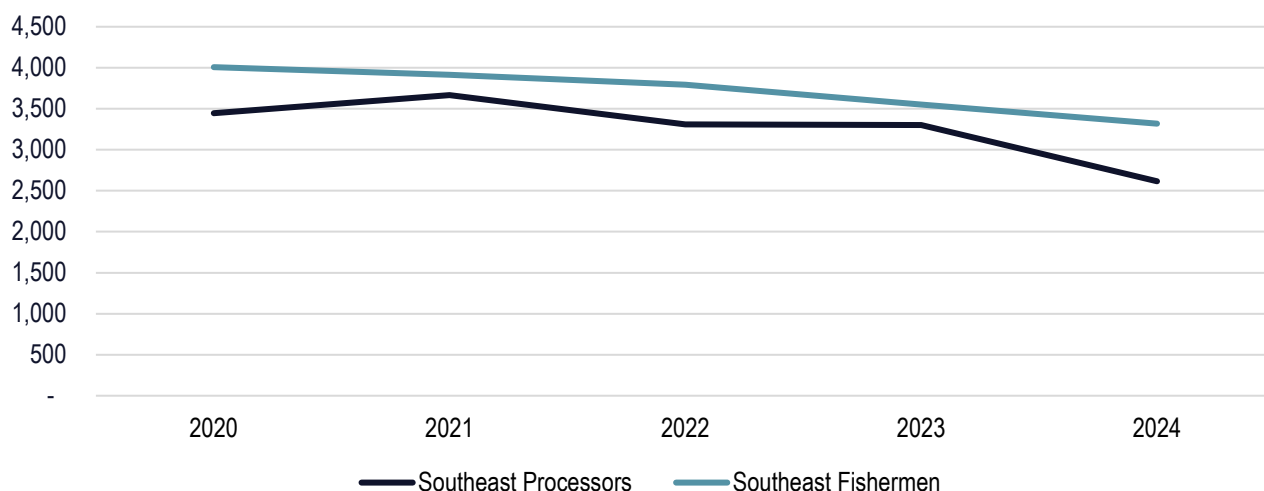


Figure 6: Fishing and Processing Workforce Trend in Southeast Alaska and Statewide, 2020-2024

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and McKinley Research Group estimates

⁴ *The Economic Value of Alaska's Seafood Industry. Prepared for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute by McKinley Research Group. May 2026.*

⁵ *The Economic Value of Alaska's Seafood Industry. Prepared for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute by McKinley Research Group. May 2026.*

The declining number of active fishermen is attributed to fewer fish available or a reduced demand for key species (salmon and herring), as well as poor economic performance for high-volume seafood products in some recent years. The profitability of fishing has also been impacted by increasing vessel operating costs, certain years of supply/inventory gluts that were not met by demand, product dumping by nations with competing fisheries (e.g., Russia), and export barriers such as periods of a strong U.S. dollar, reciprocal seafood tariffs, and export bottlenecks caused by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Alaska has an aging population of fishermen. This “greying of the fleet” may be more pronounced in Southeast due to its relatively slow population growth.

The number of seafood processing workers is changing in response to rising labor and operating costs, as well as consolidation within the processing sector. While Southeast has not experienced the widespread closure of major processing facilities observed in other regions, the processing sector has undergone consolidation since the early 2000s, with fewer companies operating a similar or reduced number of facilities.

3.1.2.1 Resident Seafood Employment

In 2024, 82 percent (2,450 out of 3,000) of seafood processing workers in Southeast were not Alaska residents. This aligns with the proportion of non-resident processing workers statewide, who accounted for 82 percent (15,350 out of 18,850) in 2024. The statewide 10-year average for non-resident processing workers is 78 percent.⁶ In Southeast, the percentage of non-resident workers has remained between 65 and 75 percent of total workers over the last 20 years. For the entire state, the proportion of non-resident workers had clearly increased by five to 10 percent for the years after the COVID-19 pandemic. As a region, Southeast Alaska ranks behind only the Aleutians (e.g., Unalaska/Dutch Harbor and Akutan) and Bristol Bay in non-resident workforce. While the region’s non-resident seafood processing workforce aligns with statewide levels, Southeast is more reliant on an annual influx of visiting workers than regions within the state that have more diversified fisheries (e.g., Kodiak and Southcentral) or remote regions with relatively small harvest volumes (e.g., rural Southwest and Northern Alaska).

The majority of non-resident Alaska seafood workers are U.S. residents from another state. However, processing workforces have long been supplemented by foreign workers on short-term, temporary visas for non-agricultural jobs (H-2B program). These workers do not contribute to year-round population, and they are frequently housed onsite. The duration of peak-processing visa workers in Southeast Alaska is short relative to other regions. For all of Alaska, H-2B employment in the seafood industry is around 2,500 to 3,500 workers per year. That number spiked to between 6,500 and 9,000 in 2020-2022 but has rapidly declined in recent years – down by more than 70 percent from the 2021 peak to between 2,000 and 2,500 workers in 2024 and 2025.⁷ Companies that have petitioned to hire this type of worker state that the program served a purpose for the seafood sector in unusual circumstances, but is not a viable replacement for a domestic workforce with a growing local-resident component. H-2B hiring is costly, entails higher wages, is risky in terms of when workers will be able to travel to Alaska due to many required applications and government approvals, and is generally less appealing in an era of uncertainty around U.S. immigration policies.

⁶ Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. February 2026. *Non-residents Working in Alaska, 2024*

⁷ U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *H-2B Employer Data Hub*

As companies face higher operating costs and less profitable fisheries in the near term, it is understood that processors would like to hire locally to the extent that the workforce population will allow. That said, Southeast stands out for its combination of peak processing activity and small local population bases. Companies that could be identified as doing at least a portion of their processing in Southeast accounted for almost 60 percent of temporary foreign-visa hiring from 2018 through 2025. That figure falls to 38 percent for only 2024 and 2025.⁸

3.1.3 Seafood Industry Trajectory

Several themes emerge when considering potential growth – or stabilization – of the Southeast seafood industry as it relates to transportation infrastructure and investment:

- Frequent and reliable access to the U.S.-Canadian road system for moving seafood products.
- Availability of large-scale cold storage in key locations.
- Regulatory uncertainty related to fishery management and environmental protection.

3.1.3.1 Road System Access

Across Alaska, and Southeast in particular, seafood industry is increasingly focused on value-added products rather than commodities. These products include fresh seafood products requiring frequent and reliable transportation, as well as fully processed, consumer-ready products that are most valuable when sold throughout Alaska and external markets. Growth opportunities depend on the availability and reliability of options – rather than speed alone. Even without new capital projects, improvement in the availability and reliability of freight space on ferries would increase the attractiveness of key hubs in Southeast as a port of landing for more vessels and local value-added processing. Dock development projects could benefit seafood producers by increasing the number of ship options, alleviating existing bottlenecks, or bringing vessels to remote communities at different times of the year.

Large capital projects that would provide access to the Alaska road system have obvious appeal, if not for direct access for seafood, then by freeing up space on the marine freight modes that the seafood industry currently uses. The seafood industry currently uses marine transport to access roads in Skagway, Haines, and British Columbia.

3.1.3.2 Cold Storage Capacity

The expansion of large-scale cold storage in the region would expand the year-round processing capacity and support additional demand for Alaska seafood. Technological improvements have improved the quality and marketability of frozen products, expanding opportunities beyond traditional sales.

Increased use of direct-to-consumer sales has also created new distribution channels, supported by advancements in online commerce and shipping logistics. Cold storage hubs in Southeast could reduce reliance on international marine shipments routed through external consolidation points such as Seattle, improving efficiency and lowering handling costs.

⁸ *Alaska Mariculture Industry Update. Prepared for Southeast Conference by McKinley Research Group. November 2025.*

Air freight is generally not a cost-effective option for most seafood products in a competitive global market. As a result, investments in cold storage and related shipping infrastructure provide a more viable pathway for improving product movement and market access. The availability of cold storage allows suppliers to weather market downturns, maintaining a more stable cost distribution over time. Increased cold storage capacity provides ancillary benefits to charter operators, guides, and lodges by improving options for transporting client-harvested seafood in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

3.1.3.3 Regulatory Uncertainty

Regulatory uncertainty affects the scale and profitability of Southeast seafood. Annual harvest limits are based on scientific stock assessments and are subject to short- and long-term variation. In most cases, fishery health and harvest opportunities are predictable within a range of several years, but not for decades in advance. Stock declines that close or curtail important fisheries, such as Chinook salmon, are less predictable but becoming more frequent. Another source of uncertainty affecting the volume of Southeast seafood is the variable size of salmon hatchery releases.

The application and enforcement of federal regulations introduce additional uncertainty for both fishing activity and related upland development, possibly impacting transportation and other regionally important sectors. For example, changes in federal environmental regulations or species protections may affect both fishing activity and the development or permitting of transportation infrastructure.

3.2 Mariculture

In 2022, Southeast Conference was awarded a \$49 million grant from U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Build Back Better Regional Challenge to accelerate the growth of mariculture in Alaska. The grant ends in 2026.⁹

With more coastline than the contiguous United States combined, Alaska has potential to significantly scale up seaweed and shellfish cultivation. Half of the state's authorized aquatic farm leases are in Southeast (38 of 76), and those leases represent 830 of 1,620 acres covered by permitted leases. Mariculture operations are highly dependent on reliable marine and intermodal transportation systems. Harvested products are perishable and typically require timely transport from remote growing areas to processing facilities and export markets. In many Southeast communities, this movement relies on a combination of small vessel transport, harbors, and connections to larger freight systems, including barge, air cargo, and the Alaska Marine Highway System. As with other coastal industries, limited road connectivity and variable weather conditions can introduce logistical challenges.

As of 2025, 43 proposed leases – totaling more than 2,000 acres – are in the permitting pipeline, and 70 percent of that proposed acreage is in Southeast.¹⁰ Currently permitted mariculture sites exist in the vicinities of Yakutat, Gustavus, Juneau, Sitka, Kake, Wrangell, Coffman Cove, Naukati Bay, Klawock, Craig, Ketchikan, and Metlakatla. This dispersed pattern reflects both the suitability of protected coastal waters and the industry's reliance on access to nearby communities for labor, staging, and processing.

⁹ Southeast Conference. *Alaska Mariculture Cluster*.

¹⁰ *Alaska Mariculture Industry Update*. Prepared for Southeast Conference by McKinley Research Group. November 2025.

3.2.1 Oyster Production and Demand

Alaska oyster harvest has fluctuated in recent years. From 2020 through 2025, the statewide harvest ranged from 550,000 oysters in 2020 to a peak of around 1.9 million in 2021 and 2022. Harvest declined in 2023 and 2024 to between 1.3 and 1.4 million but increased to an estimated 1.6 million in 2025. The forecasted harvest for 2026 is 2.0 million, which would be a record. The number of juvenile oysters imported to Alaska to seed production has increased every year since 2020, and the amount imported in 2024 exceeded the previous high mark set in 2018.¹¹

As of 2025, 13 aquatic farm permits allow the use of Floating Upweller Systems, which represent significant investment in nursery growth rates and oyster survival rates. Seven of the 13 farms that have applied to use that technology are in Southeast.

3.2.2 Seaweed Production

The peak of Alaska seaweed harvest occurred in 2022 (872,000 wet pounds), having grown rapidly from less than 100,000 pounds prior to 2019 (Figure 7). Harvests declined to a low of 156,000 pounds in 2024 but rebounded to roughly 344,000 pounds in 2025.

Production in 2026 is projected to increase significantly to the previous high of around 870,000 pounds, as industry participants reported scaled-up planting. The relatively disappointing sales in 2025 were partly attributed to poor timing in terms of the buying markets.

While production in 2026 and beyond is likely to grow, actual harvests depend greatly on yields from relatively new operations and the availability of buyers. Four of the 11 Alaska hatcheries authorized to produce seaweed seed are in Southeast, and three of those four are among the most recent permit recipients. Similar to advanced investment in oyster farming, Southeast is demonstrating high investment in farming capabilities relative to other regions.

One rapidly expanding market for Alaska seaweed is its use as a biostimulant in land-based farming operations. Biostimulants are products that help plants grow by improving nutrient absorption, root growth, and stress tolerance.

¹¹ *Alaska Mariculture Industry Update*. Prepared for Southeast Conference by McKinley Research Group. November 2025.

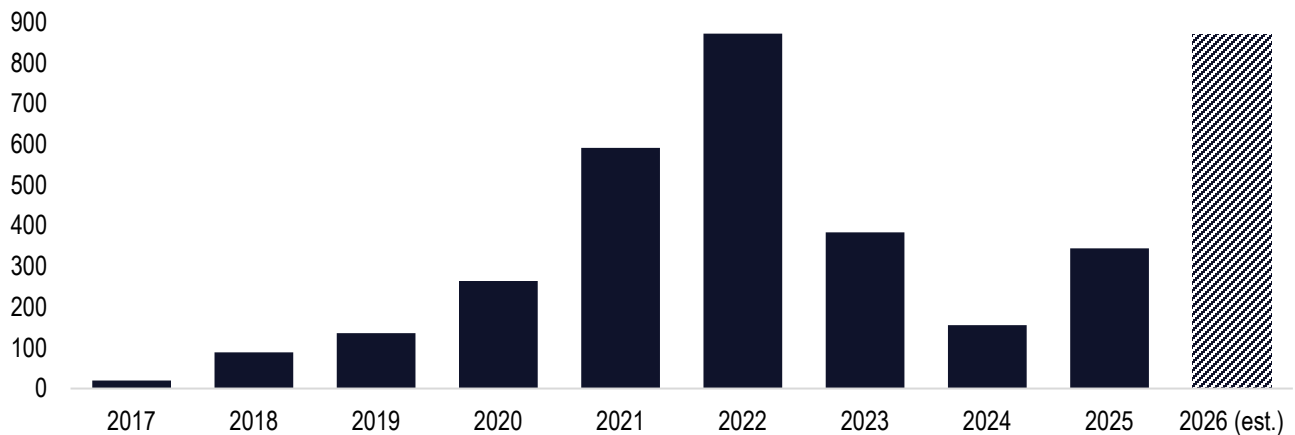


Figure 7: Alaska Commercial Seaweed Harvest, 2017-2026 (thousands of wet pounds)

Source: Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Aquatic Plants Production Data, and McKinley Research Group estimates

For both oysters and various types of seaweed, the recent trend in production, interest, and investment is positive. However, the fluctuations experienced over just a few years signify the complexities and challenges of the Alaska mariculture industry.¹² Although interest and investment in mariculture have increased in recent years, the industry remains relatively small in terms of overall economic contribution.

3.2.3 Mariculture Industry Trajectory

3.2.3.1 Product Demand

Oyster producers throughout the U.S. reported that demand weakened in 2025 for what is now generally considered a premium food product. This trend is attributed more to consumer price sensitivity than to an oversupplied market. That would indicate the market has room for Alaska oysters. However, the price cannot continue to rise as quickly as other comparable food items because it is nearing a ceiling beyond what consumers will pay. This structural market factor could be especially challenging in a state where operating and shipping costs are high.

3.2.3.2 Logistics

Aside from external factors such as weather and natural predation, other challenges in oyster production include labor supply and transportation logistics. Southeast could have a relative advantage in finding existing labor due to the high number of people familiar with working in a marine environment and the compatibility of the oyster production season with the summer salmon harvest, which is key to many annual incomes in the region. Oysters planted in the fall are harvested in the spring, covering periods that are often downtimes for fishermen.

Transportation challenges are similar to those for fresh fish marketers because oysters are a live product. Cooling capacity at local airports could expand marketing options. As with seafood products that rely on road access, the frequency, reliability, and capacity of short-trip shipping is key to growth in overall production and employment.

¹² Alaska Mariculture Industry Update. Prepared for Southeast Conference by McKinley Research Group. November 2025.

3.2.3.3 *Government Support and Policy*

In 2022, the Alaska Mariculture Cluster (AMC) was awarded a \$49 million Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant by the U.S. Economic Development Administration to catalyze development of a sustainable mariculture industry. The AMC project period is October 2022 to September 2026.

The federal One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) of 2025 included several provisions that might affect Alaska's mariculture industry. Potential positive aspects of the bill include expansion of tax credits for investments in processing equipment to include a broader array of seafood types. The OBBBA also included new mortgage interest tax deductions for seafood processing and aquaculture facilities. Those provisions could spur investment in the larger-scale shoreside processing capacity needed for the mariculture industry to grow and remain viable. A related federal action with potential downsides for the development of Alaska mariculture is the reduction in funding for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) climate and fisheries research. While the direct effect on mariculture is unclear due to the broad – and potentially reversible – nature of the funding cuts, sectors in their relatively early stages of development and expansion often rely on public sources of research and development.

3.2.3.4 *Economies of Scale*

A primary headwind for Southeast seaweed farming is the cost of production, processing, and distribution relative to the value of the product. A 2025 report to the AMC noted that farmers required prices close to \$1.00 per wet pound to operate, while processors' business models are viable when paying less than \$0.50. In recent years, some gaps have been filled with grant funding. The industry is likely to focus on reducing costs while also expanding production to achieve scale that can meet emerging market opportunities. Cost-reduction often requires large upfront investment. Cost and scalability are challenged by the remoteness of production areas and a lack of processing facilities with specialized equipment.

Commercial-scale drying capacity is key to selling products through a variety of transportation channels to markets farther from Alaska. In Southeast, moving seaweed products from remote production areas to processing facilities relies on barging and trucks on ferry service. Barge capacity in Southeast is tied to the seasonality of commercial fishing. Over-water transportation options are abundant during the summer peak of salmon harvesting, but those options are in high demand. Reliable, low-cost options to move products out of Alaska during the spring harvest period would help the mariculture industry grow.

3.3 **Tourism**

Alaska's visitor industry brings about three million visitors to the state each year and supports a significant number of jobs and wages in the economy. Visitors use a combination of roads, the marine highway, ports, and airports to access recreation opportunities around the state. Each year, close to 60 percent of the state's visitors arrive on cruise ships and more than one-third access the state via plane. A small share of non-resident visitors access the state via highway or ferry.

3.3.1 Cruise Travelers

The Alaska summer cruise season spans May through September with a few port calls in April and October. In 2024, 1.8 million cruise passengers visited the state with nearly all passing through Southeast: 1.7 million passengers visited Juneau, 1.5 million visited Ketchikan, and close to 1.3 million visited Skagway (Figure 8). Over time, larger ships have entered the Alaska market, increasing passenger capacity and volumes.

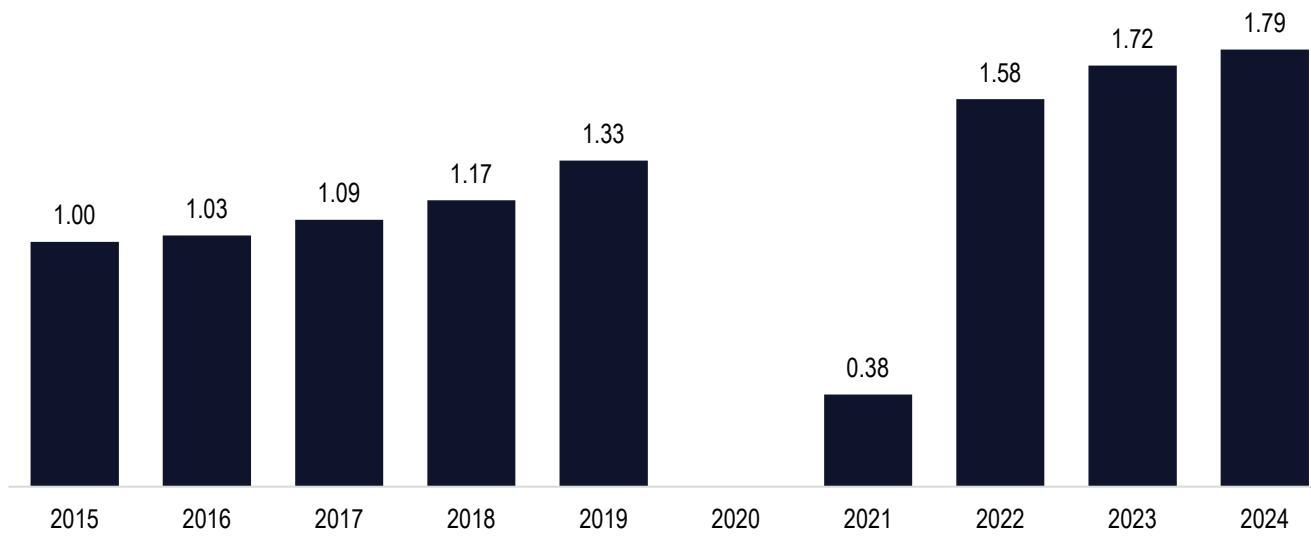


Figure 8: Alaska Cruise Passenger Volume, 2015-2024(Millions)

Source: Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska and McKinley Research Group estimates

In Southeast, cruise ship ports vary in their level of visitation. Table 11 shows the number of cruise visitors to each Southeast port in 2024. Haines hosted approximately 88,000 passengers, Wrangell 17,000 passengers, and Klawock just 3,400 while Juneau, Ketchikan, and Skagway each welcomed more than one million passengers. Aside from a decline in 2020 and 2021, cruise tourism has grown steadily since 2015. Growth rates have been uneven across the region. For example, growth rates have been steady in Juneau and Skagway (on average increasing six percent each year) while the volume of passengers brought to Sitka increased rapidly in 2023. Wrangell was the sole Southeast port with fewer passengers in 2024 compared to 2023.

Table 11: Cruise Visitors by Port, Southeast Alaska, 2024

PORT	CRUISE VISITORS	PERCENT OF STATEWIDE TOTAL
Juneau	1,732,000	97%
Ketchikan	1,497,700	84%
Skagway	1,257,000	70%
Sitka	602,600	34%
Icy Strait Point	541,200	30%
Haines	87,700	5%
Wrangell	16,900	1%
Klawock	3,400	<1%
Statewide Total	1,785,000	100%

Source: Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska and McKinley Research Group estimates

The small minority of cruise passengers who do not visit Southeast sail from Southwestern Alaska, taking round trip sailings out of the Port of Nome.

3.3.2 Other Travelers

Non-cruise visitors to Southeast use air travel, highway crossings from Canada, and the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) to visit the region, although they arrive in significantly lower volumes when compared to cruise visitors. Non-cruise visitors travel to Southeast for many of the same reasons as cruise passengers, with additional group travelers attracted by sportfishing opportunities not accommodated by a cruise schedule.

3.3.2.1 Air Travel

Nearly 350,000 air passengers caught outbound flights from a Southeast airport between summer 2023 and spring 2024. Most passengers (90 percent) caught outbound flights from Juneau, Ketchikan, or Sitka airports, while 10 percent flew from other smaller airports in Southeast including Wrangell, Petersburg, and Yakutat. About half of total air passengers were non-resident visitors to the state.¹³ These are independent travelers drawn to Southeast for its national parks, including Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, and Sitka National Historical Park; sportfishing and hunting opportunities; and other visitor experiences. Once in Southeast, visitors use seaplane bases or more rural airports to visit remote lodges or participate in other adventures.

3.3.2.2 Alaska Marine Highway System and Highway Travel

The Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) supports both resident and non-resident travel around Southeast Alaska. The AMHS fleet includes four mainline ferries and five day-boat ferries, with the largest ferry holding up to 499 passengers and 133 vehicles. In 2024, more than 130,000 passengers rode the ferry within Southeast, including to and from Bellingham, Washington. The AMHS service is currently used by a small portion of visitors to Alaska. In the 2024 summer tourist season, roughly 3,000 visitors exited the state via the ferry.

¹³ McKinley Research Group estimates

Southeast is home to two international highway border crossings, one on the South Klondike Highway in Skagway and the other on the Haines Highway. More than 130,000 personal vehicle passengers crossed into Southeast from Canada at these borders, three-quarters (97,000 passengers) into Skagway and the remainder (35,000 passengers) into Haines. An additional 220,000 motorcoach and commercial truck passengers crossed, almost all (99 percent) at the Skagway border.¹⁴ Note, Skagway motorcoach and personal vehicle passengers are typically on day trips to the Yukon Territory.

3.3.3 Tourism Industry Trajectory

3.3.3.1 Cruise Port Developments

In recent years, several ports have been developed in Southeast to accommodate larger vessels. Plans to expand port infrastructure is expected to drive any further industry growth in Southeast.

In Ketchikan, Ward Cove Dock Group and Norwegian Cruise Lines partnered to repurpose the former pulp mill site at Ward Cove, leading to a two-berth floating cruise ship dock. The site offers a welcome center, museum, theater, retail experiences, and several outdoor recreation-themed shore excursions. The first cruise ship arrived in summer 2021.

Hoonah's Icy Strait Point, owned and operated by Huna Totem Corporation, has been hosting cruise ships since 2004. Over the years the port has grown to include two deep water docks and a wide variety of tour offerings; it was the fifth most-visited port in Alaska in 2024.

In 2022, the private Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal expanded restaurant and retail offerings in its 40,000-square-foot terminal. The site includes a 270-degree, 20-meter dome theater offering several films and interactive presentations. Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal also extended its dock to accommodate two 1,000-foot cruise ships with a total capacity of 8,000 guests.

Port upgrades in Juneau in 2012 and 2016 added a port building and covered shelters to make embarkation and disembarkation more efficient. The Port of Juneau currently includes four cruise ship berths, owned and operated by a combination of the City and Borough of Juneau and private entities.

Additional Juneau port developments are in planning and development stages:

- Huna Totem Corporation (HTC) is obtaining tidelands permits for a fifth downtown Juneau cruise dock - Áak'w Landing. The proposed fifth dock, scheduled for completion for summer 2027, will improve port infrastructure and likely increase Juneau's appeal to cruise lines. In addition to extending the Seawalk and installing totem poles, the design includes several new commercial spaces and an Alaska Native art and culture center. Replacing the need for ships to anchor offshore, HTC's planned development would maintain Juneau's current five-berth capacity.
- Goldbelt Inc. is currently in permitting with the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) to develop Goldbelt Aaní, a cultural cruise destination on the Goldbelt-owned portion of Douglas Island. The plan includes a port with two cruise berths on the west side of Douglas, a cruise terminal facility, road and water infrastructure, and a small boat harbor. Goldbelt's plan would increase Juneau's cruise port infrastructure to seven berths.

¹⁴ U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Elsewhere in Southeast, Klawock's new cruise destination, Na-Dena', hosted ships at Port Klawock for the first time in 2024. Na-Dena' is a joint venture between HTC and Doyon Limited, in collaboration with Klawock's Heenya Corporation. The village on Prince of Wales Island welcomed six small cruise ships in 2024 and more than 20 in 2025.

The City and Borough of Wrangell and small, luxury-cruise line American Cruise Lines (ACL) are negotiating a lease agreement to allow ACL to invest in port infrastructure, indicating the line's commitment to Southeast. The plan includes a new dock funded by the cruise line; the proposed waterfront development would "support marine services, seafood production, and local employment."¹⁵

3.3.3.2 Capacity Constraints

In 2022, CBJ and Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) limiting port calls to five ships per day in Juneau, effective as of the 2024 Alaska cruise season. A subsequent agreement was signed capping daily visitors at 16,000 passengers with a 12,000-passenger limit on Saturdays, effective in 2026. CLIA and CBJ have agreed to meet annually to review visitor volume and ship schedules.¹⁶ Relative to 2025 capacities, published 2026 schedules show increased cruise passenger capacity at all Southeast ports except Haines.¹⁷

3.4 Mining

Mining provides high wage, year-round employment throughout Southeast, making it an important contributor to the regional economy. Large mines, such as Greens Creek and Kensington near Juneau, directly employ hundreds of workers and support additional employment in construction, transportation, and mining support services.

Because the operating mines are in remote areas, employees often live in communities other than the mine site, commuting to work using employer-provided transport by air, by water, or through a combination of transportation modes. Recent favorable commodity prices have led to an increase in statewide mining claims.¹⁸ Additionally, facilities expansion at Greens Creek and a lease extension at Dawson Mine indicate mining will continue to impact the region past the originally planned term.

3.4.1 Large Operating Mines in Southeast

3.4.1.1 Greens Creek Mine

Greens Creek Mine is a large, underground mine on Admiralty Island southwest of Juneau containing silver, zinc, gold, copper, and lead. Having produced 8.5 million ounces of silver in 2024, Greens Creek is the largest silver mine in the U.S. and directly employs more than 500 workers.¹⁹ The mine site is on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land and can only be accessed by boat. Workers are transported by employer-provided commuter ferry for their shifts. Greens Creek was recently granted

¹⁵ American Cruise Lines seeks long-term partnership with Wrangell some residents for it, others not. By Colette Czarnecki for Stikine River Radio. June 26, 2025.

¹⁶ City and Borough of Juneau Tourism Division

¹⁷ Alaska Cruise Ship Schedules Published by Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska and McKinley Research Group estimates

¹⁸ Alaska Department of Natural Resources

¹⁹ Mining in Alaska. Prepared for the Alaska Miners Association by McKinley Research Group. 2025.

permitting from the USFS, extending its mine life to at least 2043. Mine operators are expanding tailings storage to accommodate the extended mine life.²⁰

3.4.1.2 Kensington Mine

Kensington is a large underground gold mine 45 miles northwest of Juneau, situated on a mix of private and USFS land. Kensington produced more than 95,000 ounces of gold in 2024. The mine site is accessible only by boat and employs about 370 workers who use employer-contracted ferry transport to reach the mine site.²¹ Exploratory drilling continues at Kensington with recent success extending the mine's life through 2029. Plans to expand tailings and other waste storage are underway.²²

3.4.1.3 Dawson Mine

Dawson Mine is an underground gold and silver mine on Prince of Wales Island. In 2024, Dawson produced 9,400 ounces of gold and more than 14,000 ounces of silver. Dawson employs about 50 workers, and the site is accessible by paved highway.²³ A recent lease extension with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources has extended the life of Dawson Mine by 40 years.²⁴

3.4.2 Mining Industry Trajectory: Projects in Exploration

New mine development depends on resource estimates, commodity prices, land ownership and permitting processes, mining costs, and transportation access, among other factors. Exploration does not always lead to development of a mining operation, and many projects do not reach the economic evaluation or permitting phases. The following projects are those with indicated resource estimates or currently in economic evaluation or permitting. These projects represent the most likely mining projects to be developed in Southeast in this study period.

3.4.2.1 Bokan Mountain Project

The Bokan Mountain project is a rare-earth elements (REE) prospect in advanced exploration on the south end of Prince of Wales Island. The sole project owner, Canada-based UCore Rare Metals, plans to develop the site into a 1,500 metric ton per day underground mining operation with processing facilities on site. A 2013 preliminary economic assessment states an inferred mineral resource of 5.2 million metric tons of light and heavy rare-earth elements. Project owners expect a mine life of 11 years and anticipate supporting more than 100 on- and off-site jobs, including 50 direct employees at the mine. An existing road connects the mine site to tidelands, giving the project direct access to the deep waters of Kendrick Bay, though marine infrastructure is limited. The Bokan Mountain site is in a remote part of Southeast that requires significant road building for employees to commute within the Island. Ucore has plans for additional access and on-site roads.²⁵

²⁰ *Extending Greens Creek Mine production for 12 to 18 years gets final OK from Forest Service.* By Mark Sabbatini for Juneau Empire. November 6, 2024.

²¹ *Mining in Alaska.* Prepared for the Alaska Miners Association by McKinley Research Group. 2025.

²² *Gold exploration success extends Kensington Mine life for five years.* By Alix Soliman for KTOO. September 5, 2025.

²³ *Mining in Alaska.* Prepared for the Alaska Miners Association by McKinley Research Group. 2025.

²⁴ *A Good Neighbor: Dawson mine is Small but Significant.* By Jamey Bradbury for Alaska Business Magazine. November 3, 2025.

²⁵ *Preliminary Economic Assessment Bokan Mountain Rare Earth Element Project.* Ucore Rare Metals Inc. January 2013.

3.4.2.2 New Amalga Mine Project

The New Amalga Mine Project is a proposed underground gold mine just north of Juneau. Formerly known as Herbert Gold, the resource site is four miles from state-maintained Glacier Highway and 15 miles from waterfront access at Cascade Point.²⁶ A 2024 resource estimate suggests 4.7 million metric tons of indicated resource and 1.8 million metric tons inferred.²⁷ Preliminary plans assume employees will commute from home using new and existing overland transportation infrastructure to access the mine site.²⁸ Project owners plan to use new barge infrastructure at Cascade Point to ship ore overseas for processing. Located on land owned by Goldbelt, development of new infrastructure at Cascade Point would require an upgrade of the existing gravel access road from the end of Glacier Highway to the site. Project owners Grande Portage Resources are currently developing a preliminary economic assessment of the New Amalga Gold project.

3.4.2.3 Niblack Project

The Niblack copper-gold-zinc-silver project is a proposed underground mine in advanced exploration on Prince of Wales Island. A 2011 pre-feasibility study suggests a minimum 10-year mine life at Niblack, and an updated 2023 resource estimates suggest 5.8 million tons of indicated resource.²⁹ The site is on private land and is accessible by float plane and boat with road access to tidelands and existing barge landing infrastructure. During exploration operations, fuel and heavy freight are transported to the site by barge, while people and small freight are flown in.³⁰ Once operating, the mine could employ 200 workers.³¹ Other than site maintenance and upkeep there has been no exploration activity since 2021.³²

3.4.2.4 Palmer Project

The Palmer project, in the Haines Borough and accessible by road, has been in the exploration phase for several years. One analysis estimates 94 workers at the site if the mine advances to operation.³³ However, the newest project owner, American Pacific Mining Corp., recently announced plans to sell the project and focus on advancing a development in Montana.³⁴ The Palmer project is considered in a state of transition, with ongoing negotiations with potential buyers.

3.4.2.5 Canadian Mine Development

Skagway has historically served as a transshipment port for ore and other materials associated with mines in the Canadian Yukon. While that activity has not occurred since the Minto mine ceased operations in 2023, two projects are in the planning phase and may use Skagway as their port of transfer.

²⁶ *Advancing the New Amalga Gold Project*. Grand Portage Resources, Ltd. November 2025.

²⁷ *2025 Alaska Mining Industry Overview*. Alaska Department of Natural Resources. December 2025.

²⁸ *The Economic Potential of Alaska's Mining Industry*. By University of Alaska Anchorage, Institute of Social and Economic Research Bob Loeffler and Brett Watson. March 2022.

²⁹ *Niblack Exploration Project*. NexGold.

³⁰ *2024 Annual Report for Niblack Project Reclamation Plan Approval*. Prepared for Alaska Department of Natural Resources. April 2025.

³¹ *Major Mines in Alaska*. Alaska Miners Association.

³² *Alaska Department of Natural Resources*

³³ *The Economic Potential of Alaska's Mining Industry*. By University of Alaska Anchorage, Institute of Social and Economic Research Bob Loeffler and Brett Watson. March 2022.

³⁴ *A contentious mining project in Southeast Alaska just changed hands. Its new owner already wants to sell*. By Max Graham for the Northern Journal. May 12, 2025

Minto is expected to resume operations in 2028, with an expected 15-year mine life. Currently, the project is being rehabilitated from its previous shut-down and requires minimal construction to resume operations. Project owners plan to export 50,000 tons of ore per year from the Port of Skagway.

The Casino project in west-central Yukon is in the planning stage. Construction to develop the mine is expected to begin in 2032, with mining operations starting in 2036 and continuing for 27 years. Project owners expect to ship about 300,000 tons of ore annually from the Port of Skagway. Exporting ore from Yukon mines and shipping concentrate from Skagway's port will require ore-hauling operations, using both surface and port transportation infrastructure. In addition to outbound shipments, the mines will require inbound shipments of mining and construction supplies for development, maintenance, and operations.

Ascot Resources has been pursuing the Premier Gold Project, a restart of a historic gold mine site located near Stewart, British Columbia. The community of Stewart is connected by road to Hyder, Alaska. The project is on hold as of this plan development. If restarted, the project has potential to increase economic activity in Stewart and Hyder.

3.5 Healthcare

Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan are the three primary healthcare hubs in Southeast. Juneau is served by Bartlett Regional Hospital, owned and operated by CBJ, and Ethel Lund Medical Center, owned by the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC). SEARHC is a nonprofit tribal health organization that compacts with Indian Health Service (IHS) and serves 27 Southeast communities through two hospitals, several clinics and outpatient facilities, and telehealth services. In Sitka, the SEARHC Mt. Edgecumbe Medical Center serves as a critical access hospital with a range of emergency, medical, and surgical services. The SEARHC also operates the Petersburg Medical Center and Wrangell Medical Center. Ketchikan is served by PeaceHealth, which provides hospital and long-term care, as well as specialized medical and behavioral health services.

Southeast healthcare employment is divided into private employment, through entities such as SEARHC or the medical centers, and public employment, such as through Bartlett Regional Hospital. Jobs in the private healthcare sector have increased by one-third since 2015, from 2,100 to 2,800, despite a dip in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Public sector health care employment is more difficult to quantify due to differences in reporting across municipal, tribal, and nonprofit systems, but is estimated to account for approximately 1,000 additional jobs.

With more than 30 communities in Southeast and just five hospitals, residents of rural communities frequently use air and ferry service to travel to hub communities for emergency care, labor and delivery, and specialty services. The IHS beneficiaries are sometimes eligible for financial support for health-related travel, but due to limitations in funding, resources for travel support are not guaranteed. The SEARHC has departments dedicated to patient travel and employee travel, housing, and logistics since specialists and traveling providers are employed across their facilities.

Medicaid provides financial support for medically necessary travel throughout Southeast and, when necessary, out of the region. To be eligible for travel support, Medicaid patients must have a referral for services not available in their home communities.

3.5.1 Healthcare Industry Trajectory

Upcoming health care expansion in the region includes two significant SEARHC construction projects. The SEARHC plans to expand services in Haines by building a critical access hospital and medical center near Jones Point.³⁵ The project includes 24-hour emergency room and long-term care, medical clinic, dental clinic, behavioral health care, and physical therapy. Beyond hospital construction, plans include eight new units of employee housing in Haines and SEARHC expects to add 10-15 employees in the near term. In Wrangell, SEARHC is building eight new units of employee housing, though it does not anticipate adding new employees to its current roster.³⁶

3.6 Government

Civilian government employment represents 32 percent of total employment in Southeast. This level of employment is supported through Juneau's role as the Alaska state capital, federal agencies, and local and tribal governments spread across the region. Additionally, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) presence in Southeast supports population in communities such as Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka, and Petersburg and additional economic activity in these ports. Growth in civilian government is unlikely to be significant in the near term.

3.6.1 Federal Government

The federal government has a significant presence in Southeast with several federal agencies operating throughout the region. Entities such as the USFS, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and USCG focus on land management, tribal affairs, seafood and the environment, and marine safety and security.

The Alaska Region of the USFS is headquartered in Juneau and oversees both the Tongass and Chugach National Forests. The USFS manages bridges and roads within national forest boundaries, which are crucial for accessing both communities and forest resources. The Alaska Region office of BIA serves the tribes and villages of Southeast, along with Metlakatla, the single reservation in Alaska.

Figure 9 shows that the region's total civilian federal government employment has remained steady at 1,400 to 1,500 employees since 2015. This analysis does not factor in federal job losses and federal funding cuts that took place in 2025.

³⁵ SEARHC submits Haines hospital complex plans. By Will Steinfeld for Chilkat Valley News. October 7, 2025.

³⁶ SEARHC housings plans total \$3 million to build eight rental units. By Larry Persily for Wrangell Sentinel. March 11, 2026.

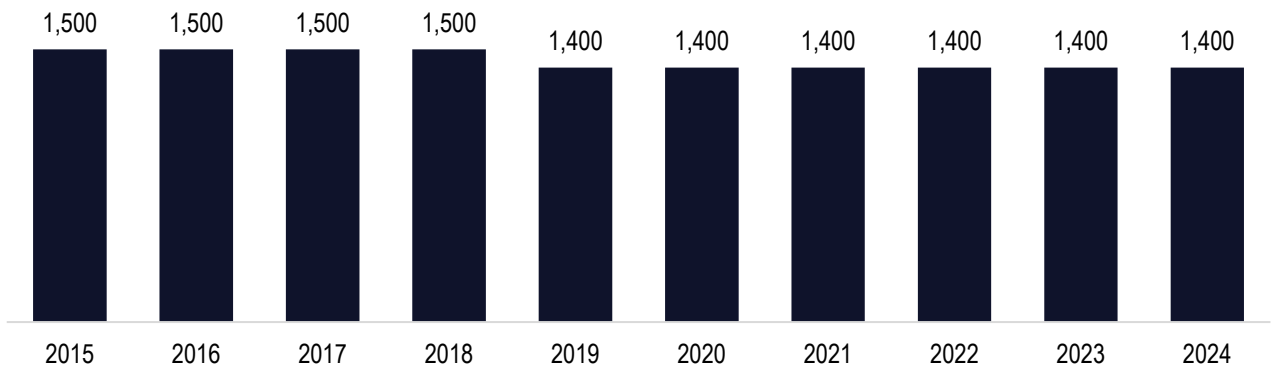


Figure 9: Federal Civilian Employment, Southeast Alaska, 2015-2024

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

3.6.1.1 Military

The USCG operates multiple facilities in Alaska including Sector Southeast, a multi-mission unit based in Juneau; Air Station Sitka, which provides search and rescue services for more than 12,000 miles of coastline; and Base Ketchikan, which serves as a homeport for two cutters and a buoy tender. The USCG employs about 300 Coast Guardsmen in Southeast.

Guided by the Arctic Strategic Outlook, the USCG will secure the Arctic border with long-term presence and partnerships. After a 2023 fleet-mix analysis found the agency lacks sufficient assets to support its polar missions, USCG has committed to bolstering its operational capabilities by adding several new icebreakers to its fleet.³⁷ Ahead of a new-build program, the acquisition and modification of a former oil exploration support vessel in 2024 bridged the immediate gap. The vessel was commissioned in 2025 as medium icebreaker Coast Guard Cutter *Storis*.³⁸ The vessel will be based in Juneau after completion of a \$300 million homeporting project that includes shore infrastructure work, and facilities for crew, support personnel, and their families. *Storis* will bring 190 active-duty personnel to the region.³⁹ Though homeport locations are undetermined, a memorandum of understanding between Finland and the U.S. will add up to 11 medium icebreakers to the USCG fleet, five commissioned as early as 2028.⁴⁰

Additionally, Ketchikan-based Coast Guard Cutter *Douglas Denman* will homeport in Sitka in 2028, following the completion of shore infrastructure improvements. The *Douglas Denman* will bring 25 active-duty personnel to Sitka.⁴¹

³⁷ Coast Guard Polar Security Cutter (Polar Icebreaker) Program: Background and Issues for Congress. Congressional Research Service. 2024.

³⁸ Breaking Ice. By Eric Haun for Workboat, December 2025, pp. 32-34

³⁹ USCGC *Storis* departs on maiden voyage. United States Coast Guard News. June 4, 2025.

⁴⁰ U.S. Coast Guard to Receive 11 New Icebreakers Under Landmark Finland Deal. By Malte Humpert for High North News. October 13, 2025.

⁴¹ Coast Guard awards contract for waterfront homeport improvements in Sitka, Alaska. United States Coast Guard News. August 27, 2025.

3.6.2 State Government

Many State of Alaska departments and agencies have a significant presence in Juneau, Alaska's capital. With the Alaska Legislature typically in session from January through May of each year, Juneau also sees an influx of seasonal residents such as lawmakers, legislative staff, lobbyists, and media personnel, along with constituents traveling for legislative and advocacy purposes. State government employment is also significant in Ketchikan, the homeport of the AMHS.

Figure 10 shows that the state government workforce based in Southeast was reduced by 17 percent, or 900 jobs in total, between 2015 and 2024. Most of this job loss happened in the first few years of the Alaska recession that began in 2015, because of low oil prices and reduced state budgets. Employment in this sector has ticked up slightly since 2023, though the current state hiring freeze means this is unlikely to be an area of employment growth for the region.

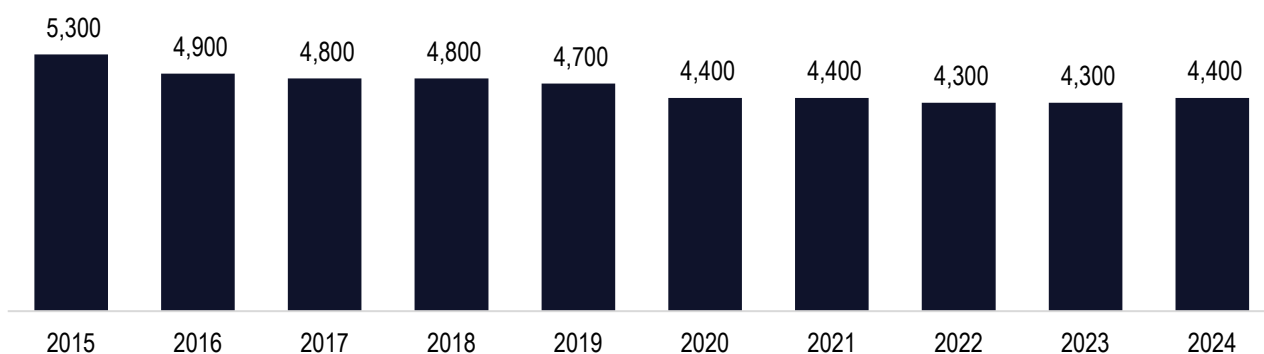


Figure 10: State Government Employment, Southeast Alaska, 2015-2024

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

3.6.3 Local and Tribal Government

Southeast is home to more than 30 communities and 20 federally recognized tribes. About 30 local governments – incorporated boroughs and municipalities, and first and second class cities – govern in Southeast. Many communities are also home to Native villages with tribal councils serving as governing bodies. Tribal governments provide their members with a variety of services either directly or through Alaska Native-owned non-profit entities. Services include healthcare, housing support, utility assistance, general financial assistance, small business counseling, childcare, judicial services, and workforce development.

Employment in both local and tribal government has generally increased since 2015 (Figure 11). Though this growth was temporarily hampered in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, total employment growth in this sector was more than 15 percent in the last decade. Local and tribal governments have added 1,200 jobs to the local economy since 2020.

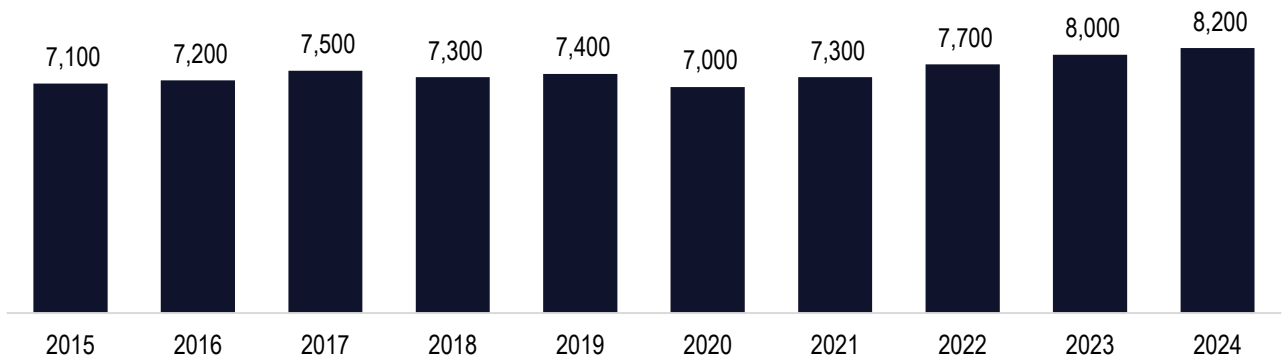


Figure 11: Local and Tribal Government Employment, Southeast Alaska, 2015-2024

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

3.7 Forestry

Historically, timber harvest in Southeast has occurred on federal, state, and privately-owned lands. Southeast is home to the world's largest intact temperate rainforest, the Tongass National Forest. Forestry and land management in Southeast are primarily focused on timber harvest, subsistence activities, outdoor recreation, conservation, and environmental stewardship. Alaska's timber industry is largely synonymous with the Southeast region. Since 2009, 99 percent of the timber sold from USFS land in Alaska came from the Tongass National Forest. Some timber sales are ongoing at Thomas Bay near Petersburg and Corner Bay near Sitka.

Some Southeast timber harvest also occurs on state and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporation land. The Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DOFFP) primarily manages state lands, prioritizing small-scale sales to local and regional harvesters generating value-added products, and operating on five-year timber sale schedules. In addition to conducting sales and enhancing forest resources for the benefit of Alaskans, DOFFP's mission includes the protection of water quality, fish, and wildlife habitat.

During decades of peak harvest, the primary species harvested were traditionally Sitka spruce and western hemlock, along with western red cedar and Alaska yellow cedar. Alaskan lumber exports hit an all-time high of 225.5 million board feet (MMBF), worth \$641 million in 1990, and have since declined significantly.⁴² Harvest has declined across federal, state, and ANCSA-owned land since the early 1990s (Figure 12).⁴³

⁴² *Forest Products Historical Overview*. Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development.

⁴³ *Timber Harvests in Alaska: 1910-2006*. United States Department of Agriculture. January 2009.

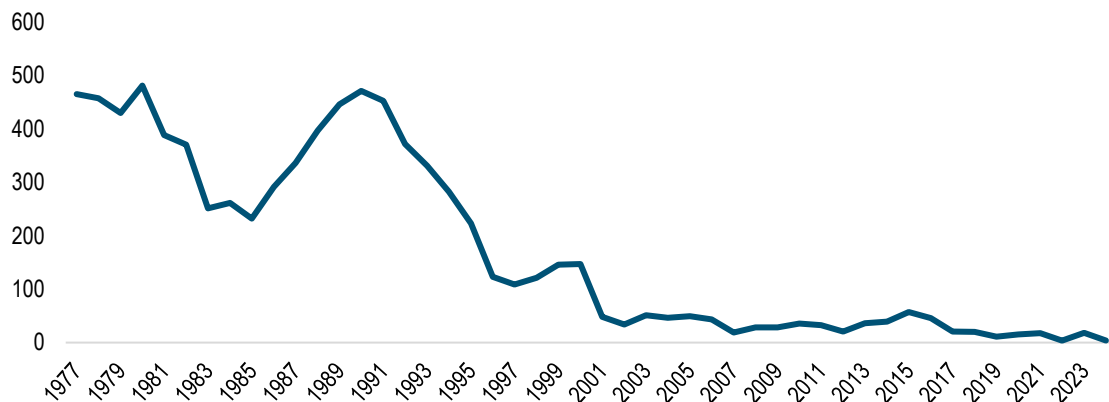


Figure 12: Alaska Timber Cut on U.S. Forest Service Lands, 1977-2024 (million board feet)

Source: United States Department of Agriculture

A notable anomaly amidst the production decline after the 1970s to 1990s pulp mill era occurred in 2014 when the USFS approved the Big Thorne timber sale in the Tongass National Forest. That sale was associated with a rebound in residential housing construction after the effects of the 2008 Great Recession and robust exports to China.

3.7.1 Federal Roadless Rule

With enactment of the Tongass Roadless Rule in 2001, timber harvest and road construction were significantly limited; roughly half of the 17 million-acre Tongass was designated with roadless protections. The Tongass Roadless Rule has faced several court challenges by parties including the State of Alaska and has been rescinded and reinstated several times over the last decade.⁴⁴ At present, prohibitions on timber road construction and Tongass timber harvesting are anticipated to be rescinded once again in 2026.

3.7.2 Southeast Timber Products

Sawmills that continue to operate in Southeast thrive on boutique and high-quality markets. Sitka spruce and hemlock from Prince of Wales Island are used in the piano soundboards and guitar tops of some of the most notable instrument manufacturers in the world. Finished lumber is often targeted for high-end architecture and trim as opposed to commodity production. Dried and compressed byproducts are used locally as a green energy heat source.

Sawmill operators in Southeast have increased their focus on producing logs for cabins and cabin kits, which are less exposed to transportation costs and international trade uncertainties.

⁴⁴ The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule prevented new roads and logging. In 2003, The Tongass National Forest was exempted from the 2001 rule. In 2011, a federal court in Alaska overturned the 2003 exemption and reinstated the 2001 rule. In 2020, the federal Executive Branch exempted the Tongass from the Roadless Rule. In 2023, the 2020 action was repealed, and the 2001 Roadless Rule for the Tongass was reinstated. In June 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced its intent to rescind the 2001 Roadless Rule. A final decision on that action is anticipated in 2026.

Southeast timber has been subject to international trade disputes in recent years. The major log export market of China was closed for much of 2025 in retaliation for U.S. tariff actions. Prior to the export ban, 90 percent of Southeast timber exports were destined for China. At times, Japan and South Korea have been the region's primary export market.

The halt in exports to China created losses for companies that faced higher costs of shipping to alternative markets and disrupted the first major timber sale from the Haines area since the 1970s. Trade with China was resumed in November 2025 under a 10 percent export tariff. A lack of certainty surrounds the future of timber exports to China.

3.7.3 Forestry Industry Trajectory

The greatest challenge for the timber industry in Southeast is the availability of harvest supply. Regulatory restrictions, such as the Roadless Rule, have limited the ability of operators to maintain or expand their operations.

Employment in the Alaska's logging industry – which is essentially confined to the Southeast region – is currently at a low level and is projected to decline further in the near-future. DOLWD counted 102 workers in the logging category in 2022, and forecasts that the number of workers in 2032 will be 94. "Forest and conservation workers" are predicted to rise modestly from 107 in 2022 to 113 in 2032.⁴⁵

State of Alaska timber sales are challenged by a lack of operating marine log transfer facilities (MLTF) in the Southeast region. MLTFs are specialized terminals that can move timber products from trucks to barges or ships. Access to marine transport is critical to shipping logs out of state. The Department of Transportation & Public Facilities is studying the feasibility of a ferry/road connection between Juneau and the Haines Highway – the Chilkat Connector. If pursued, this linkage could connect logging areas in Southeast to the Alaska and Lower 48 road system. An MLTF previously operated in the Haines State Forest area. An MLTF near the Haines State Forest, which has an extensive road system, could also put logs on the water for export.

In February 2026, the Governor of Alaska entered the DOFFP into a shared stewardship agreement with the USFS to support active forest management and increase economic opportunities for young growth timber while meeting market demand for old growth timber. This agreement stems from Presidential Executive Order 14225, "Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production". The agreement established an interagency team to identify goals and opportunities that enable the State of Alaska to conduct forest restoration projects on 300,000 acres of the Tongass National Forest, promoting economic opportunity and rural prosperity among other goals.

3.8 Construction

The Southeast construction industry operates in a challenging environment for acquiring materials, moving equipment and materials around the region, and deploying crews. Due to Southeast's geography and limited roads, the sector is faced with navigating complex shipping and transportation systems to manage construction projects in rural island communities. Seasonal considerations, such as short daylight hours and harsh winter weather, can impact construction, though not to the extent of other Alaska regions. Construction companies often use barge service to transport materials and equipment to job sites. High transportation costs significantly impact construction in Southeast.

⁴⁵ Alaska Occupational Projections 2022 to 2032. Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

3.8.1 Construction Industry Trajectory

The level of construction activity in Southeast is influenced by the following:

- State and federal transportation and other infrastructure dollars
- Seafood facility maintenance
- Healthcare and clinic funding
- Visitor infrastructure (including cruise docks)

Uncertainty in the funding level of state and federal transportation infrastructure programs can impact the level of construction employment and number of projects. The trajectory of other key sectors in Southeast (e.g. seafood, tourism, and mining) also influence construction industry demand for labor and transportation.

3.9 Maritime and Shipyard Operations

The maritime industry encompasses several sectors including construction, transportation, seafood harvesting, and professional services in both the public and private sectors. For the purposes of this study, the maritime industry includes occupations associated with marine services and shipyard operations.

3.9.1 Shipyard Industry Trajectory

In 2025, Seattle-based ship builder JAG Marine Group assumed operation of the state-owned shipyard in Ketchikan. As new operator of the facility, JAG expects to increase employment locally by 100 workers.⁴⁶ The City and Borough of Wrangell is negotiating the terms of a 50-year lease agreement for JAG to develop a similar operation on its waterfront.⁴⁷ Press releases state that JAG hopes to construct and operate a ship building and marine services facility at Wrangell's Six-Mile Mill property. The planned facility would be capable of accommodating large defense vessels and will operate as a full-capacity shipyard. The Borough estimates the new facility could support 400 jobs locally.

Recently, local trade school Generations Southeast Vocational Training Center signed a memorandum of understanding with JAG to promote workforce development for the shipyard. Through a partnership with the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA), the entities will collaborate with state agencies to develop industry-specific programs aimed at strengthening the local shipbuilding workforce. The school has campuses in Juneau and Klawock. Simultaneously, the federal government has appropriated substantial funding to bolster Arctic security-related infrastructure, as described in the Government section of this report. In the near future, demand will likely be high for new, skilled workers in the ship building trade.

⁴⁶ *Generations Southeast Vocational Training Center Signs Up to Fill Shipyard Workforce. Alaska Business. January 16, 2026.*

⁴⁷ *City and Borough of Wrangell & JAG Marine Group Expand Public-Private Partnership to Advance New State-of-the-Art Shipyard for Alaska. City and Borough of Wrangell. February 24, 2026.*

4.0 POPULATION FORECAST

This forecast considered three scenarios of population change by borough and census area in Southeast. Scenarios were informed by the trajectory of the various core industries described in the Key Industry Trends section of this report, interviews with employers and business operators in Southeast, and stakeholder input.

The midpoint scenario represents the DOLWD forecast. This detailed midpoint forecast is developed considering forward-looking fertility rates, life expectancy, and historic trends in in- and out-migration.⁴⁸ Low and high-case scenarios were constructed based on the potential economic changes (positive and negative) and their expected influence on resident populations across the varied communities of Southeast. The low-case scenario represents population in the event of negative economic shocks, while the high-case represents the population change that could occur given positive economic development.

4.1 Economic Scenarios

Table 12, below, describes the positive and negative economic changes incorporated into the forecast. These potential changes have varied influences by borough and census area because each community has a distinct mix of key sectors. Crucially, this forecast is focused on economic changes arising from industry demand, excluding the potential for new transportation links to induce development. While these effects are not explicitly modeled in this forecast, transportation infrastructure can and does influence industry growth. Improved ferry services can expand visitor access to communities, road infrastructure can unlock land for timber harvest or mine development, and air links to the Lower 48 can facilitate transport of temperature-sensitive seafood. Other components of the SEATP address these relationships.

Potential employment impacts related to each positive and negative economic development or change were considered by borough and census area. Increased industry demand and resulting employment do not always translate to an increase in resident population. As described in the Key Economic Indicators section of this report, about 30 percent of those working in Southeast do not live in Alaska year-round and seven percent do not live and work in the same borough or census area. These non-resident employees rely on the region's transportation infrastructure to commute to work sites across Southeast. Residency characteristics of each key sector and borough or census area were considered in conjunction with the economic changes to forecast resident population.

⁴⁸ Alaska Population Projections 2023 to 2050. Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Published July 2024.

Table 12: Population Forecast Scenario Descriptions

SCENARIO	DEFINITION	COMMON THEMES
Low-case	Population reduction from the mid-case scenario based on negative economic shocks or changes to key industries.	- Downside risk associated with seafood processing and harvest - Reduced tourism demand due to changes in the Lower 48 economy - Potential mine closures based on permitted mine life of currently producing mines - Changes in State of Alaska, federal, or local government hiring - Reductions in timber available for harvest, sawmill demand, and other forestry considerations - USCG personnel transfers
Mid-case	DOLWD population projection	- Fertility rates as applied to age group cohorts - Life expectancy by age group and male/female cohorts - Historic rates of in- and out-migration
High-case	Population increase in addition to the mid-case scenario based on new economic developments or increased demand in key industries.	- Increased in-region health care delivery - Mine development - USCG expansion and vessel homeporting based on potential federal strategic shifts - Increased tourism demand due to changes in the Lower 48 economy and local private dock development - Increased timber availability and product demand - Private industry shipyard development and operations - Mariculture (seaweed and oyster) industry development, farming and processing expansion - Increased post-secondary education offerings (including vocational offerings)

4.2 Mid-Case Population Forecast

The DOLWD uses existing population and long-term demographic trends, including fertility, migration, and death patterns to calculate statewide and regional population projections. This section will summarize published Southeast population trends and projections to 2045 by age and community.

The DOLWD projects a 12 percent decline in Southeast population between 2024 and 2045 (Figure 13). This would amount to a loss of 8,700 residents with natural decrease (higher number of deaths compared to births) and net outmigration (more residents moving out than in) as the key drivers. In contrast, the state is projected to experience a modest one percent population decline over the same period.

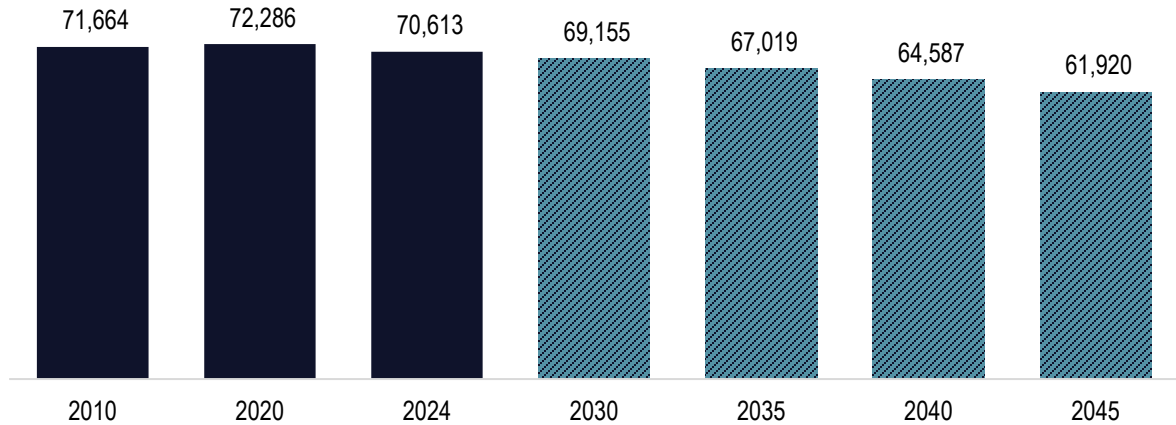


Figure 13: Total Population, Southeast Alaska, 2010-2024 Actual and 2030-2045 Forecast

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

4.2.1 Mid-Case Population Projection by Age

As Southeast's population declines, the region's age distribution is projected to shift: the share of children and adolescents will decrease, while shares of the working age and elder populations will grow, reflecting fewer births and continued outmigration (Figure 14).

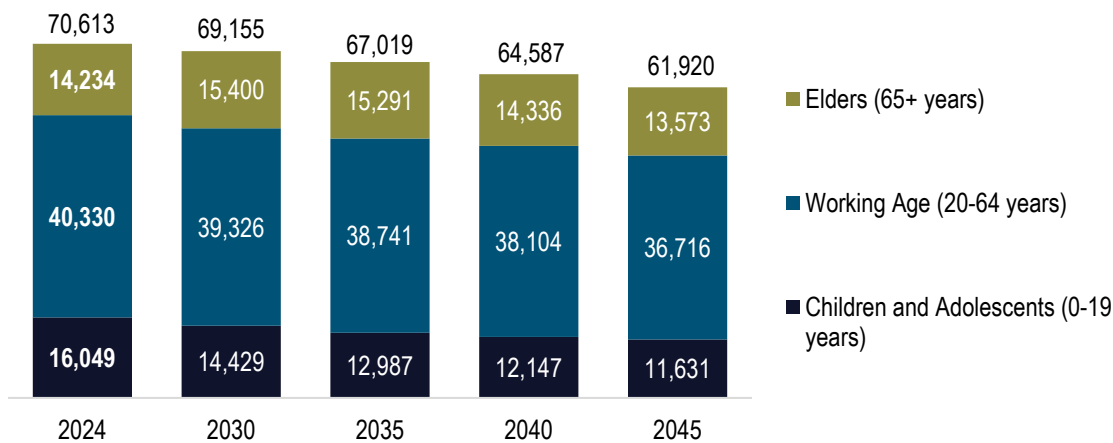


Figure 14: Population Projection by Age, Southeast Alaska, 2024 Actual and 2030-2045 Forecast

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

The youngest (under 20) population is projected to decline most, decreasing by 28 percent or 4,418 residents by 2045. The working age population is projected to decrease by nine percent, or by about 3,600, but will remain the region's largest share of residents. Though the share of elders will grow, the elder population is projected to decline by five percent, or 661 residents, by 2045 reflecting both aging and outmigration trends.

4.2.2 Mid-Case Population Projection by Borough or Census Area

Table 13 reports population projections by borough or census area. Population centers Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka are projected to lose 10 to 17 percent of their respective populations by 2045, roughly 6,500 fewer residents than in 2024. The City and Borough of Wrangell is projected to lose 29 percent of its population by 2045, or about 580 residents. The City and Borough of Yakutat is projected to experience a slight population increase of 28 residents by 2045; a four percent increase compared to 2024 estimates. Despite the decline, the geographic distribution across the region will remain largely unchanged.

Table 13: Population Projections by Borough or Census Area, Southeast Alaska, 2030-2045 Forecast

BOROUGH/CENSUS AREA AND COMMUNITY	2024	2030	2035	2040	2045	CHNG. 2024-2045	% CHNG. 2024-2045
Haines Borough	2,537	2,478	2,408	2,323	2,231	-306	-12%
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	2,248	2,269	2,216	2,150	2,078	-170	-8%
Angoon	350	344	335	325	315	-35	-10%
Elfin Cove	41	40	39	38	37	-4	-10%
Gustavus	659	647	631	613	593	-66	-10%
Hoonah	835	820	800	776	751	-84	-10%
Klukwan	84	82	80	78	76	-8	-10%
Pelican	89	87	85	83	80	-9	-10%
Tenakee Springs	123	121	118	114	111	-12	-10%
City and Borough of Juneau	31,436	30,975	30,270	29,378	28,334	-3,102	-10%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	13,420	13,006	12,522	11,991	11,408	-2,012	-15%
Petersburg Borough	3,379	3,297	3,225	3,140	3,045	-334	-10%
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area	5,740	5,639	5,416	5,191	4,973	-767	-13%
Coffman Cove	209	203	195	187	179	-30	-14%
Craig	972	944	906	868	831	-141	-14%
Hollis	155	151	144	138	133	-22	-14%
Hydaburg	354	344	330	316	303	-51	-14%
Kake	522	507	487	466	446	-76	-14%
Klawock	734	713	684	656	628	-106	-14%
Metlakatla	1,389	1,349	1,295	1,241	1,188	-201	-14%
Naukati Bay	125	121	117	112	107	-18	-14%
Thorne Bay	497	483	463	444	425	-72	-14%
City and Borough of Sitka	8,063	7,831	7,475	7,092	6,682	-1,381	-17%
Municipality of Skagway	1,123	1,147	1,112	1,081	1,053	-70	-6%
City and Borough of Wrangell	2,030	1,845	1,701	1,572	1,451	-579	-29%
City and Borough of Yakutat	637	668	674	669	665	28	4%
Southeast Alaska	70,613	69,155	67,019	64,587	61,920	-8,693	-12%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and McKinley Research Group estimates

4.3 Population Forecast by Scenario

The Southeast population is expected to contract over the next two decades. Table 14 provides the forecast by borough and census area. In the mid-case scenario, population is expected to decline by about 0.6 percent each year. Regional population aging and resulting impacts of higher number of deaths and lower births are significant drivers of this expected contraction.

Negative economic shocks or industry contractions have potential to increase the rate of decline to 0.7 percent per year. Economic development across the region's core industries has the potential to reduce the rate of decline to 0.5 percent each year.

Yakutat is the only borough or census area in which population is expected to increase, though at low annual rates. In general, boroughs/census areas whose population has a higher average age are expected to have the highest rate of population decline. Examples include Haines (median age 50.8 years) and Wrangell (48.5 years).

Table 14: Population Forecast by Borough or Census Area and Scenario, 2030-2045 Forecast

BOROUGH/CENSUS AREA AND SCENARIO	2024 (ACTUAL)	2030	2035	2040	2045	AVERAGE ANNUAL PERCENTAGE CHANGE
Haines Borough						
Low Scenario	2,537	2,354	2,288	2,207	2,119	-0.9%
Mid Scenario	2,537	2,478	2,408	2,323	2,231	-0.6%
High Scenario	2,537	2,548	2,478	2,393	2,301	-0.5%
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area						
Low Scenario	2,248	2,156	2,105	2,043	1,974	-0.6%
Mid Scenario	2,248	2,269	2,216	2,150	2,078	-0.4%
High Scenario	2,248	2,382	2,327	2,258	2,182	-0.1%
City and Borough of Juneau						
Low Scenario	31,436	30,475	29,770	28,878	27,834	-0.6%
Mid Scenario	31,436	30,975	30,270	29,378	28,334	-0.5%
High Scenario	31,436	31,575	30,870	29,978	28,634	-0.4%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough						
Low Scenario	13,420	12,886	12,302	11,771	11,188	-0.9%
Mid Scenario	13,420	13,006	12,522	11,991	11,408	-0.8%
High Scenario	13,420	13,106	12,647	12,116	11,533	-0.7%
Petersburg Borough						
Low Scenario	3,379	3,147	3,075	2,990	2,895	-0.7%
Mid Scenario	3,379	3,297	3,225	3,140	3,045	-0.5%
High Scenario	3,379	3,462	3,386	3,297	3,197	-0.3%
Prince of Wales-Hyder Census Area						
Low Scenario	5,740	5,504	5,281	5,056	4,838	-0.8%
Mid Scenario	5,740	5,639	5,416	5,191	4,973	-0.7%
High Scenario	5,740	5,779	5,556	5,331	5,113	-0.5%
City and Borough of Sitka						
Low Scenario	8,063	7,666	7,310	6,927	6,517	-1.0%
Mid Scenario	8,063	7,831	7,475	7,092	6,682	-0.9%
High Scenario	8,063	8,223	7,849	7,447	7,016	-0.7%

BOROUGH/CENSUS AREA AND SCENARIO	2024 (ACTUAL)	2030	2035	2040	2045	AVERAGE ANNUAL PERCENTAGE CHANGE
Municipality of Skagway						
Low Scenario	1,123	1,118	1,083	1,052	1,024	-0.4%
Mid Scenario	1,123	1,147	1,112	1,081	1,053	-0.3%
High Scenario	1,123	1,176	1,141	1,110	1,082	-0.2%
City and Borough of Wrangell						
Low Scenario	2,030	1,795	1,651	1,522	1,401	-1.8%
Mid Scenario	2,030	1,845	1,701	1,572	1,451	-1.6%
High Scenario	2,030	1,895	1,801	1,672	1,551	-1.3%
City and Borough of Yakutat						
Low Scenario	637	651	657	652	648	+0.1%
Mid Scenario	637	668	674	669	665	+0.2%
High Scenario	637	685	691	686	682	+0.3%
Southeast Alaska Region Total						
Low Scenario	70,613	67,752	65,522	63,098	60,439	-0.7%
Mid Scenario	70,613	69,155	67,019	64,587	61,920	-0.6%
High Scenario	70,613	70,830	68,745	66,286	63,291	-0.5%

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and McKinley Research Group estimates

