



AEDC
Anchorage Economic
Development Corporation

ANCHORAGE CONSUMER OPTIMISM INDEX

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Introduction

Anchorage has experienced significant economic and social change over the last decade. Population shifts, inflation, housing affordability challenges, workforce shortages, and national economic uncertainty have shaped how residents view their community and financial future. At the same time, many traditional economic indicators (employment, jobs, cost of living, etc.) suggest that Anchorage remains relatively stable compared to many peer communities.

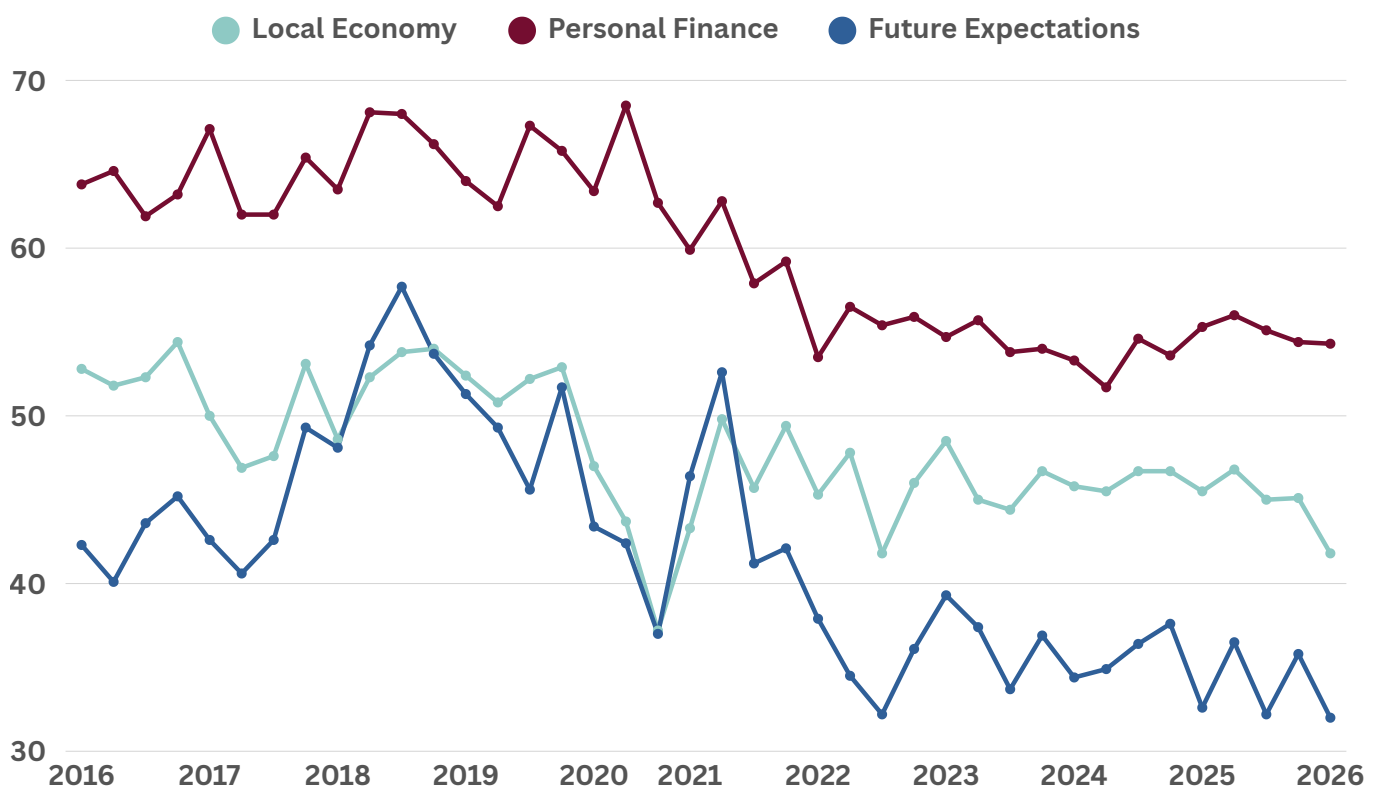
To better understand how residents perceive economic conditions, AEDC partnered with Alaska Survey Research to conduct the Spring 2026 Anchorage Economic Confidence Survey. More than 1,000 Anchorage residents were surveyed about current economic conditions, future expectations, and their personal financial situation. This survey has been conducted quarterly since 2010 and reflects consumer confidence in Anchorage for over a decade.

The results reveal an important disconnect between perception and reality. Despite widespread pessimism about Anchorage's economy and future outlook, many economic indicators suggest conditions are more mixed than public perception indicates. Understanding this gap is critical because economic confidence influences consumer spending, business investment, workforce decisions, and population retention. This report examines Anchorage resident sentiment based on survey data from Alaska Survey Research, compares those perceptions with broader economic trends, and explores what these findings could mean for Anchorage's future.

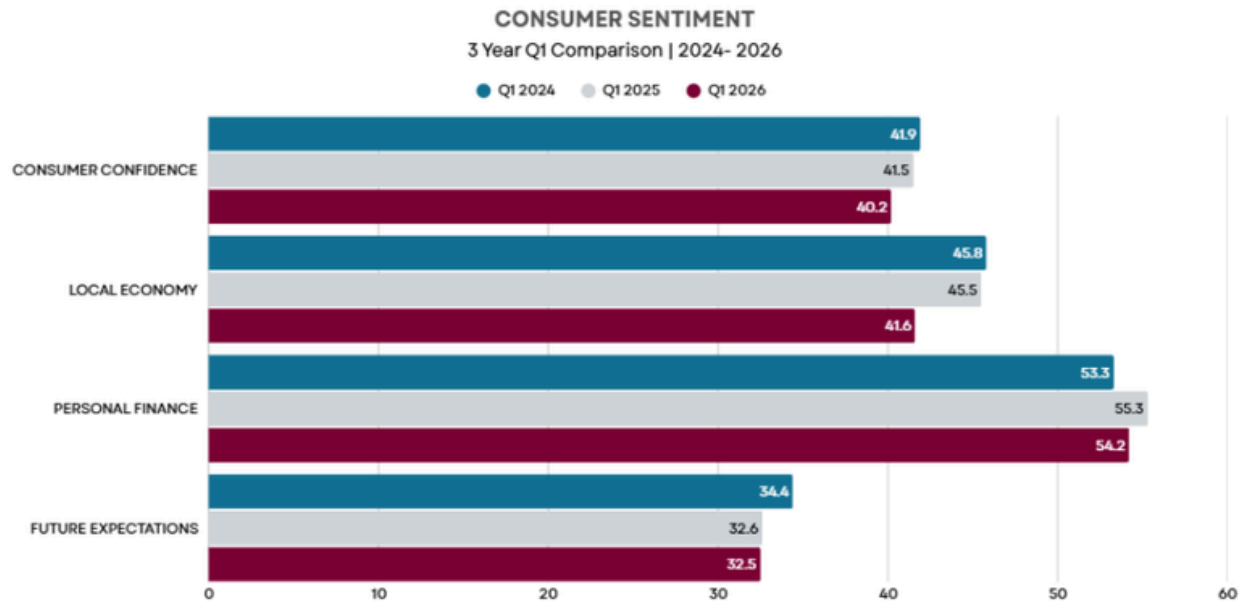
I. Anchorage and Alaska Consumer Confidence

The Anchorage Economic Confidence Index registered 40.2 out of 100, reflecting generally pessimistic views about the local economy and future economic conditions. Residents rated current economic conditions in Anchorage at 2.67 out of 5, while Alaska's economy received an even lower rating of 2.55 out of 5, reflecting broadly negative perceptions of economic conditions at both the local and state levels.

Anchorage Consumer Confidence Indexes



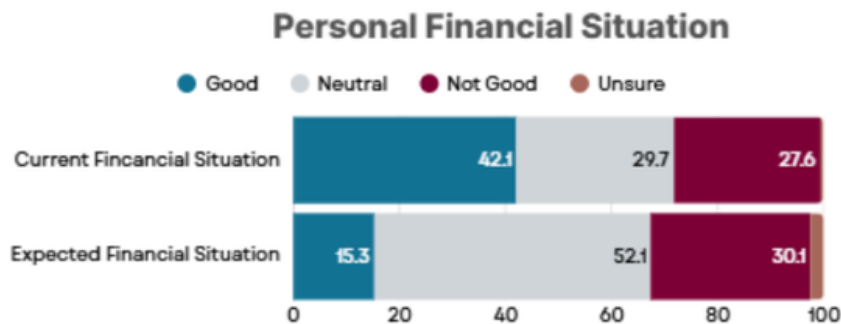
Perhaps more concerning than current conditions are future expectations. More than 60 percent of respondents believe both Anchorage's economy (60.6%) and Alaska's economy (62.9%) are getting worse. Future Expectations scored just 32.5 out of 100, making it the weakest component of the overall confidence index.



Despite concerns about the broader economy, residents expressed greater confidence in their own financial situation. Personal Financial Confidence scored 54.2 out of 100, indicating that many households feel relatively secure even while expressing concerns about economic conditions around them.

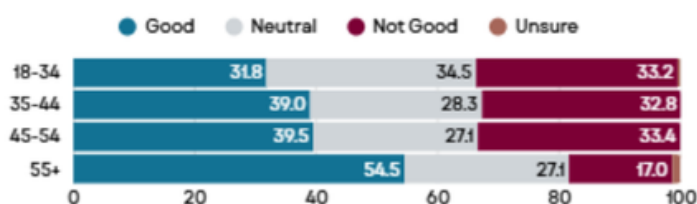
Who Feels Most Optimistic?

Economic confidence varies significantly across demographic groups.



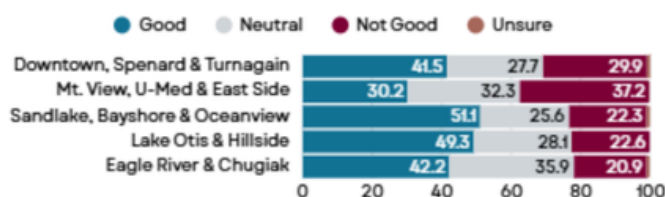
One of the most important findings is the disconnect between personal and public economic sentiment. Personally, 42.1% of residents rated their family situation positively compared to 27.6% who view it negatively. The mean financial confidence in this bracket is 3.17 out of 5, substantially higher than public perceptions of the economy overall. However, future expectations are looking grim, as only 15.3% think their personal finance is looking good, and a large majority of people moved to unsure.

Personal Economic Outlook by Age



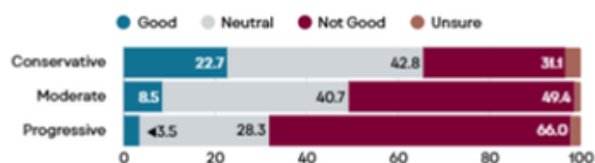
Older residents consistently reported higher confidence levels than younger age groups. Residents over age 55 were more likely to rate both Anchorage's economy and their personal financial situation positively. This may reflect greater financial stability, homeownership rates, and reduced exposure to some of the economic pressures facing younger households.

Personal Economic Outlook by Area

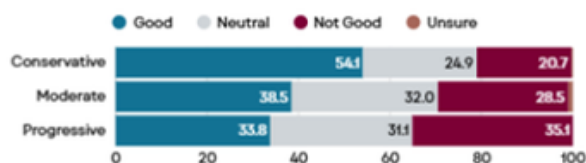


The large amount of optimism in the 55+ year old age category along with the higher optimism found in Sandlake [correct], Bayshore & Oceanview and the Lake Otis & Hillside communities demonstrates contrasting views between those beginning and those ending their professional careers, as younger groups express markedly lower personal confidence, potentially from facing increased stressors in beginning the pursuit of financial stability and building community relationships.

Alaska's Economy Confidence by Political Ideology

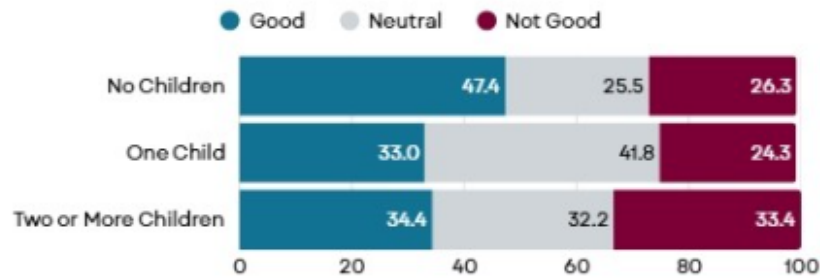


Personal Finance Confidence by Political Ideology



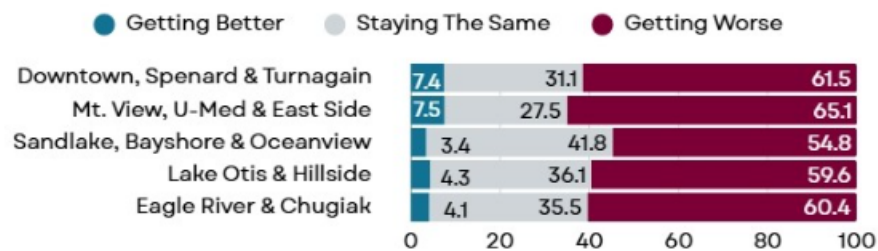
Political ideology also played a significant role in perceptions. Conservative respondents reported substantially higher confidence levels than moderate or progressive respondents across nearly every economic measure. While political differences shape perceptions nationwide, the magnitude of these differences highlights how economic sentiment is often influenced by factors beyond local economic conditions alone.

Personal Finance Confidence By Households With/Without Children



Households with children generally reported lower levels of financial confidence than households without children. Rising housing costs, childcare expenses, and everyday living expenses may be placing greater pressure on working-age families.

Community Economic Outlook by Area



Interestingly, perceptions were relatively consistent across Anchorage's geographic regions. While some variation existed between neighborhoods, pessimism regarding future economic conditions was widespread throughout the municipality, suggesting concerns extend beyond any single part of Anchorage. The survey suggests that University/Mountain View/East Anchorage consistently shows weaker sentiment and could benefit from targeted investment, small business support, neighborhood revitalization, and workforce programs.

2. Comparing Confidence with Other Economic Data

The survey results contrast with other economic data AEDC regularly tracks, such as the monthly employment reports. The report for April can be found [here](#).

Anchorage continues to maintain relatively low unemployment levels by historical standards. Employment remains near record highs despite recent year-over-year fluctuations, and many industries continue to report workforce shortages rather than workforce surpluses. Healthcare, transportation, logistics, and construction employers continue to seek workers, and job openings remain elevated compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Major public and private investments are also occurring throughout the community. Significant projects at the Port of Alaska, Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, JBER investment, healthcare facilities, housing developments, and transportation infrastructure represent billions of dollars in current or planned investment. Hotel development and remodeling indicates confidence in the private sector. These projects support jobs, attract capital, and contribute to long-term economic growth.

Anchorage also remains Alaska's economic center, serving as the state's primary hub for transportation, healthcare, professional services, tourism, and logistics. Yet despite these positive indicators, residents remain skeptical.

This divergence is not unique to Anchorage. National consumer confidence surveys have shown similar trends in recent years, where strong labor markets coexist with concerns about affordability, inflation, housing costs, and broader economic uncertainty. Residents often evaluate economic conditions based not on employment data or investment announcements, but on what they experience on social media platforms, and online discussions, which tend to have a negative theme.

The survey suggests that while Anchorage's economy may be performing better than many residents believe, perceptions are being shaped by cost pressures and uncertainty about the future.

3. Reality Versus Perception

The findings raise an important question: Why do residents feel so negative about the economy when many indicators remain relatively stable?

The answer may lie in the difference between economic performance and economic experience. Which can be found in AEDC's recent [Cost of Living Index report](#).

Anchorage residents continue to face significant affordability challenges. Housing costs remain substantially higher than they were just a few years ago. Childcare costs continue to strain working families. Inflation has increased the cost of everyday necessities, and many households feel that wages have struggled to keep pace with rising expenses.

As a result, residents may perceive economic conditions negatively even while employment remains strong, and major investments continue.

The survey demonstrates this phenomenon clearly. Respondents rated their personal financial situation considerably higher than the economy overall. In other words, many residents believe they are doing reasonably well personally while simultaneously believing the broader economy is performing poorly.

From a business standpoint, businesses are not substantially more optimistic than the public overall. Among Alaska business owners, 61% believe the local economy is getting worse. This aligns with the state economy as well as 60.3% believe Alaska as a whole is getting worse.



This distinction suggests that public sentiment may be influenced not only by local conditions, but also by national economic narratives, political discussions, and broader concerns about affordability and quality of life.

Understanding this difference is important because perceptions often influence behavior. If residents believe opportunities are limited, they may be more likely to leave the community, delay major purchases, or become less engaged in local economic development efforts, regardless of what traditional economic indicators suggest.

4. Why This Matters

Economic confidence is more than a measure of public opinion; it is an indicator of how residents experience Anchorage and how they view its future.

For AEDC, these findings provide valuable context that cannot be captured through employment statistics, economic output, or investment data alone. Resident sentiment helps identify areas where economic growth may not be translating into improved public confidence and highlights challenges that continue to affect quality of life.

The results reinforce several themes that have emerged through AEDC's broader research efforts, including concerns about affordability, workforce retention, population migration, and the long-term competitiveness of Anchorage.

At the same time, the report provides reasons for optimism. Despite negative perceptions of the broader economy, residents continue to express moderate confidence in their own financial situation. Anchorage remains a community with significant economic assets, a diverse industry base, ongoing investment, and opportunities for growth.

Ultimately, a strong economy is measured not only by jobs, wages, and investment, but also by whether residents, businesses, investors, and policymakers believe their community is moving in the right direction. Understanding these perceptions is critical, as they influence decisions about where people choose to live, where businesses choose to expand, and where investment dollars are deployed. This report serves as a benchmark for tracking community confidence and economic sentiment, providing valuable insight for AEDC, business leaders, investors, and policymakers as they work to strengthen Anchorage's economic future.

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