

Fairbanks City

People and Place

Location

Fairbanks is centrally located in Alaska. This centrality though, seems more geographical than social or economical. The city was founded on the banks of the Chena River in the Tanana Valley and in the very heart of interior Alaska.

Fairbanks is a 45 minute flight from Anchorage, and a 3 hour flight from Seattle. It lies 358 road miles north of Anchorage. The area encompasses 31.9 square miles of land and 0.8 square miles of water. The arctic daylight variations have an important impact on Fairbanks lifestyle: 21 hours of daylight between May 10th and August 2nd each summer, and less than 4 hours of daylight between November 18th and January 24th each winter.

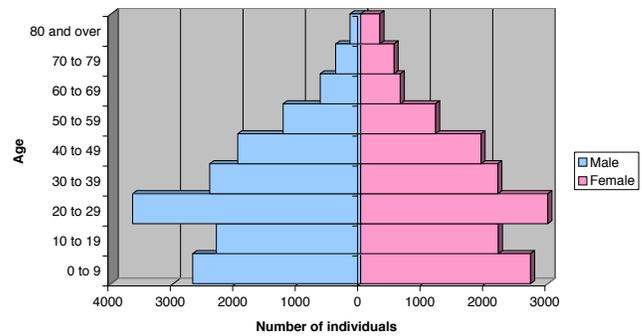
Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Fairbanks, one of Alaska's main cities, had 30,224 inhabitants. The Fairbanks North Star Borough in general contains 84,791 inhabitants, the second largest concentration of population in Alaska after Anchorage. In the city of Fairbanks, 93.7% of the population lived in households, while 6.3% lived in group quarters. This 6.3% was composed of army personnel, institutionalized individual, and people employed seasonally by the fishing industry. According to the census, 9.9% of the population was Alaska Native or American Indian, 66.7% White, 11.2% Black, 2.7% Asian, 0.5% Pacific Islanders, 2.4% "Other," and 6.6% identified with two or more races. A total of 13.3% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. Finally, 6.1% of the population identified as Hispanic.

The gender composition of Fairbanks was fairly balanced in comparison to most other Alaskan communities: 48.7% females and 51.3% males. These percentages presented an important difference with most Alaskan communities which are characterized by an overwhelming male presence. This may be attributed to the urban character of the area. The median age in Fairbanks was 27.6 years, quite different when compared to the national median (35.3 years in 2000). Fairbanks' age structure had some striking similarities to many young rural communities with a large amount of the population between the ages of 20 to 29. In that

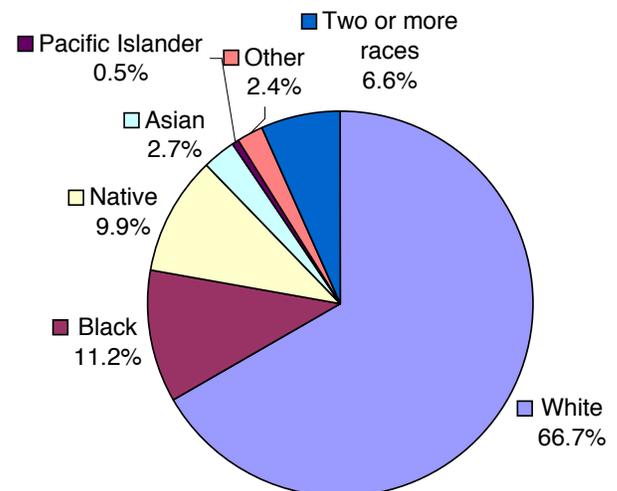
**2000 Population Structure
Fairbanks**

Data source: US Census



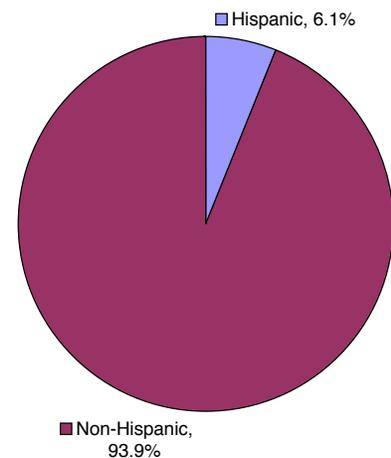
**2000 Racial Structure
Fairbanks**

Data source: US Census



**2000 Hispanic Ethnicity
Fairbanks**

Data source: US Census



sense it differs from Anchorage whose age structure did not substantially differ from the national average. Of those age 25 and over in Fairbanks about 88.9% of the population had graduated from high school or gone on to further schooling, 19.4% had obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 11.1% never completed 12th grade.

History

The Fairbanks region, in the Tanana Valley, had been inhabited by Tanana Athabascans for thousands of years prior to European contact. Tanana Athabascans were strictly territorial and used hunting and gathering practices in their semi-nomadic ways of life and dispersed habitation patterns. The boundaries of such systems of life were, presumably, fairly fluid, which might explain some references to the presence of Koyukon Athabascans, the northwest neighbors.

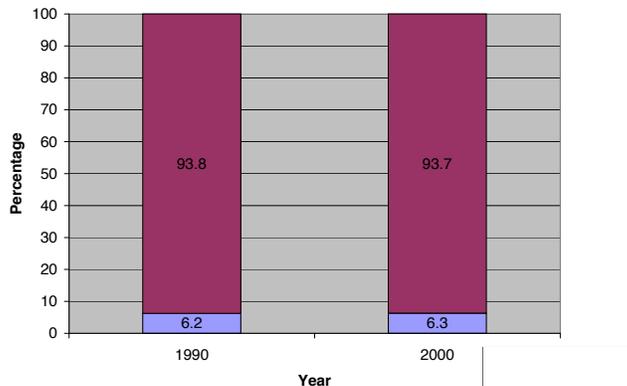
Central Alaska was at the center of the race between British, Russian, and American control of the Yukon River from Norton Sound and Saint Michael to Fort Yukon and the current Canadian border.

In the year 1901 a trading post was established on the Chena River. Soon after, gold was discovered in the area and a new wave of the gold rush was underway. Prospectors inundated the place and the city of Fairbanks emerged around the old steamboat landing banks. The town, named after Indiana Senator Charles Fairbanks, boomed along with many other mining field communities. The passage of a local government law in 1900, which regularized incorporation procedures and authorized the use of certain fees by city councils and school districts, gave Fairbanks the security and tools to avoid the collapse that other boom towns had suffered after the gold rush. By 1910, the official population had grown to 3,541, although more than 6,000 miners lived and worked their claims on creeks north of town.

During the twentieth century, two major events transformed Fairbanks and the rest of Alaska: WWII and the oil boom of the 70s. In both cases major resource flows and infrastructure construction fueled the growth and consolidation of Fairbanks as one of the main urban centers of the state. In the 1940s, initiated by the war effort and concern about the Japanese threat, the Alcan Highway was built. In the 1970s, coinciding with a world’s oil shortage, the Trans-Alaska oil pipeline was established.

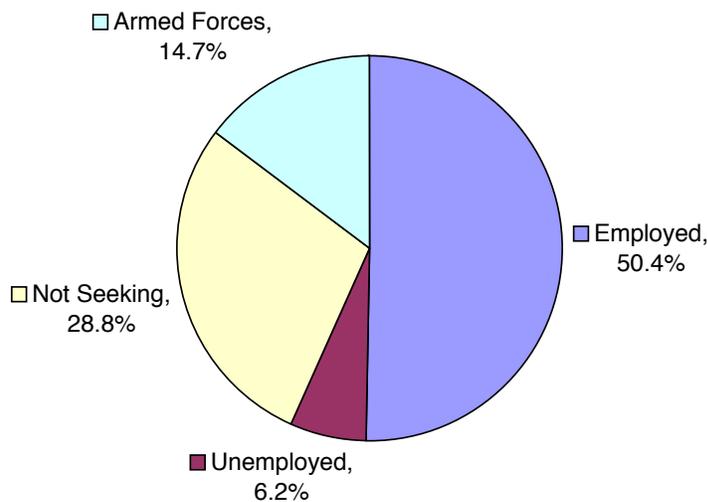
% Group Quarters Fairbanks

Data source: US Census



2000 Employment Structure Fairbanks

Data source: US Census



Infrastructure

Current Economy

Fairbanks provides supplies as well as private and public services to most of interior Alaska and thus plays a central role in the community. This centrality is fundamental to understanding the organization and composition of Fairbanks economic system.

By virtue of its centrality, Fairbanks has a high density of public institutions: city, borough, state, and federal government services of all sorts. In fact, about 50% of the total employment is in government services including Eielson Air Force Base and Fort Wainwright personnel. The University of Fairbanks is also a large employer as are public services such as transportation, communication, manufacturing, financial, and regional medical services.

On a more local basis, tourism, mining, and fishing are also a significant part of the economy. The recently developed tourism sector attracts 325,000 visitors each summer. The mines, one of the oldest economic endeavors of the city, still produce large amounts of gold. In 2000, 126 city residents held commercial fishing permits and 180 households held salmon harvest subsistence permits.

The employment structure from the 2000 U.S. Census shows that 50.4% of the total workforce was employed, 6.2% was unemployed, 14.7% worked with the armed forces, and 28.8% of those eligible to work were not seeking a job. In 2000, a fairly high 10.5% of the population lived below the line of poverty. The community showed a per capita income of \$19,814 and a median household income of \$40,577.

Governance

Fairbanks was incorporated in 1903 and became a Home Rule City. It has a strong mayor form of government supported by a six-member local council. The city imposes a 0.065% property tax and an 8% tax on tobacco. The Borough also implements property and tobacco taxes: 0.15% and 8% respectively.

Alaskan institutions in the area include regional and local corporations as well as village councils: Denakkanaaga Inc. (regional Native non-profit-Tribal Elders Council for Doyon Region), Doyon Ltd. (regional Native corporation), Fairbanks Native Association (regional Native non-profit providing social services), and the Tanana Chiefs Conference (regional health corporation-non-profit for Doyon Ltd). Other local or regional institutions of the area are the Interior Regional Housing Authority, the Alaska Sea Otter Commission, and the Fairbanks Community Food Bank.

Permanent offices of both the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) are located in Fairbanks, the nearest National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) office is in Anchorage.

Facilities

Fairbanks connects Anchorage with the north, the interior, and Canada. It lies at the confluence of the Richardson Highway, George Parks Highway, Steese Highway, and Elliott Highway. Another major route, the Dalton Highway (formerly the North Slope Haul road) to Prudhoe Bay, begins about 75 miles north of

town. The railway connects Fairbanks to Anchorage and Seward at the shoreline of the Gulf of Alaska.

The city is also easily reachable by air. The State-owned Fairbanks International Airport is regularly serviced by Alaska Airlines, Air North, Warbelow's Air Ventures, Larry's Flying Service, Marina Air, Frontier Flying Service, Arctic Circle Adventure, Midnight Sun Aviation, Interior Alaska Adventures, Tanana Air Service, Tatonduck Outfitters, and Wright Air Service. The facility has an 11,800 foot asphalt runway, a heliport, and a seaplane landing strip. A public seaplane base is also located on the Chena River. In addition, there are several privately-owned airstrips and heliports in the vicinity.

Due to its geographic and climatic features, Fairbanks must import most of the goods that its population consumes. Goods are transported to Fairbanks by air and truck along the Alaska Railroad. The city has its own municipal transportation system, cab companies, and rental car availability. Each summer, this city receives more than 300,000 visitors and has a correspondingly wide variety of accommodation possibilities.

Fairbanks has 23 schools with a total of 10,610 students and 577 teachers. Healthcare services in Fairbanks are provided by the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, the Interior Neighborhood Health Clinic, Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center/HIS, Bassett Army Community Hospital/Ft. Wainwright. In addition specialized care is provided by FNA Regional Center for Alcohol & Other Addictions, Fairbanks Pioneers' Home, and the Denali Center. The town, in addition, has its own city police department as well as a state troopers post.

Fairbanks has centralized water and sewage systems and power is provided by the Golden Valley Electric Association and Aurora Energy. City water, sewer, and electric systems were sold to a private company in 1997. Services are also distributed to the greater Fairbanks area.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Although the city is more than 300 miles away from the shoreline, Fairbanks is included in this profile as a "fishing community" by virtue of its long distance involvement in the industry. This

illustrates how pervasive and important the fishing industry of Fairbanks is for Alaska as a whole. In 2000, 126 commercial fishing permits were held by residents of Fairbanks, pertaining to a total of 164 commercial fishing permits, only 58 of which were fished that year. Additionally, 83 inhabitants of Fairbanks were registered as crewmen. Four owners of federally managed fisheries vessels and 14 owners of salmon vessels were also residing in the community. Fairbanks' fleet fished mainly halibut and salmon. Its residents also held permits to catch sablefish, herring, groundfish, and shellfish.

Salmon: Most of the permits issued pertained to salmon: 125 issued, and only 46 fished. The reports show 13 permits issued for drift gillnet: one fished permit for the Southeast, 6 fished permits for Bristol Bay, 4 permits for Cook Inlet (3 fished), and 2 permits for Prince William Sound (one fished). There were four permits to fish with purse seine, three for Prince William Sound and one for Kodiak (none fished). There were 15 statewide permits for hand troll fishing (one fished). The remaining 51 permits were for set gillnet: 12 for Bristol Bay (11 fished), 12 for the Lower Yukon River (8 fished), 2 non-fished permits for Kotzebue, 3 for Yakutat (one fished), one fished permit for Prince William Sound, 2 for Cook Inlet (one fished), one non-fished permit for Kuskokwim, and one non-fished permit for Norton Sound. Finally, there were seven permits to use power gurdy troll statewide, six of those fished that year.

Halibut: Residents of the community held 20 permits for halibut (8 fished): 15 permits for longline vessels under 60 feet (6 fished), 3 for longline vessels over 60 feet (2 fished), and 2 non-fished permits for statewide hand trolling.

Herring: The city issued nine permits to catch herring (two fished). There were five non-fished permits to catch herring roe with gillnet: one on Nelson Island, two in Bristol Bay, and two in Norton Sound. The remaining permits were to harvest spawn on kelp by the pound, which pertained to two non-fished permits in Prince Williams Sound and two fished permits in northern southeast.

Other finfish: This small group was composed of only two permits, none of which were fished in 2000.

Both permits were to catch freshwater fish statewide, one to fish with beach seine and the other with set gillnet.

Other groundfish: This fishery encompassed five statewide permits to catch miscellaneous saltwater finfish with longline vessels under 60 feet.

Other shellfish: In 2000, this group included two permits, one to catch shrimp with pot gear in vessels under 60 feet and one statewide permit to harvest clams with shovels (not fished).

Sablefish: There was only one non-fished permit to catch sablefish in Prince William Sound with fixed gear in a vessel of a maximum length of 35 feet.

Fairbanks, has one processing plant owned by the Interior Alaska Fish Processors, Inc. Due to its geographic location, Fairbanks does not report landings. Its fleet delivers to harbors which may be proximate to fishing grounds.

Sport Fishing

In 2000 the community issued 16,387 sport fishing permits: 12,362 of them were bought by Alaska residents. Although the proportion of locals is high, it does not preclude the possibility that the area could have been visited by numerous outsiders who obtained their permits elsewhere. Due to the inland geographic location of Fairbanks, saltwater sport fishermen must travel a great distance to the coast. In 2002 the city had 33 freshwater and one saltwater guide business license related to sport fishing as a tourist activity.

Subsistence Fishing

The ADF&G does not have systematic and reliable surveys on the subsistence activities of most urban areas of Alaska.

An estimate of the ADF&G situates Fairbanks' yearly wild food harvest at over 16 lbs per person per year. This figure testifies to the importance of subsistence practices for the local economy, especially taking into account the 30,000 inhabitants of the community (the entire community harvests 480,000 lbs per year). The community also held 180 household permits to catch subsistence salmon, accounting for 9,300 fish, mainly sockeye and chum.