

Nome

People and Place

Location

The City of Nome is Alaska’s oldest first-class city, incorporated on April 9, 1901. Nome is located on the south coast of the Seward Peninsula facing Norton Sound and part of the Bering Sea. It lies 539 air miles northwest of Anchorage (a 75-minute flight) and 102 miles south of the Arctic Circle, 161 miles east of Russia.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the city of Nome had 3,505 inhabitants. The racial composition of Nome was as follows: 51% Alaska Native, 37.9% White, 1.5% Asian, 0.9% Black, 0.1% Hawaiian Native, 0.4% “Other,” and 8.2% identified with two or more racial groups. A total of 58.7% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. At the same time, 2.1% of the population identified themselves as having Hispanic origin. The median age of this community is slightly younger than the national average: 32.4 years versus 35.3 years. In 2000, the largest age group, 46.6%, fell between 25 and 54 years old, and a significant 34.4% of the population was under 19 years of age.

This community has a fairly skewed gender ratio: 53.5% male and 46.5% female. In 2000, 202 individuals of the community lived in group quarters. The rest of the population, 85.7%, lived in households. Of those age 25 years and over in Nome, about 80.1% had graduated from high school or gone on to further schooling and 20.3% had obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher. About 19.9% of the population never completed high school or received their diploma.

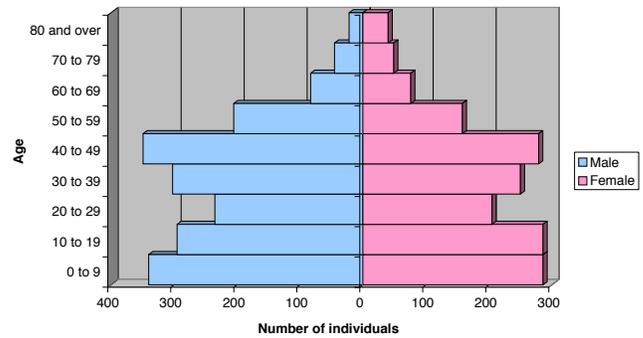
History

Different Inupiat groups have inhabited the Seward Peninsula for hundreds of years. A complex and environmentally adapted culture has allowed Malemiut, Kauwaramiut and Unalikmiut Eskimos to survive on a subsistence economy based on several forms of hunting, fishing, and harvesting.

Gold was discovered in the area around the 1860s by prospectors. Soon, thousands of miners attracted by these discoveries flooded the area. Almost overnight an isolated stretch of tundra fronting the beach was transformed into a tent-and-log cabin city of 20,000

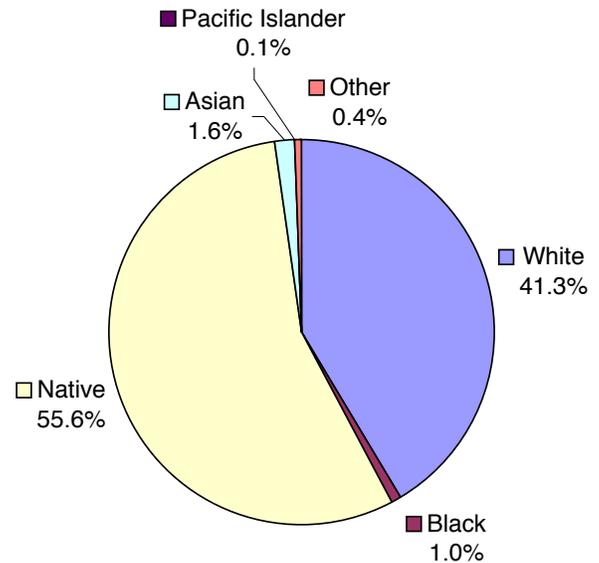
2000 Population Structure Nome

Data source: US Census



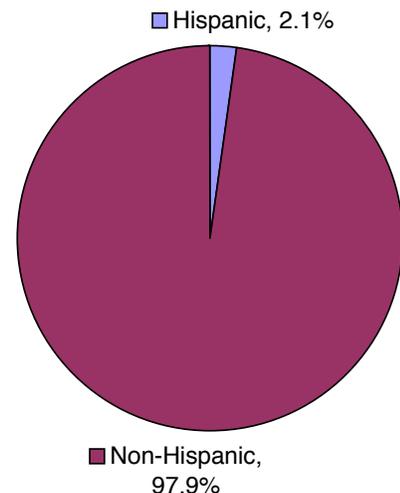
2000 Racial Structure Nome

Data source: US Census



2000 Hispanic Ethnicity Nome

Data source: US Census



prospectors, gamblers, claim jumpers, saloon keepers, and prostitutes. The gold-bearing creeks had been almost completely staked, when some entrepreneur discovered the “golden sands of Nome.” This new situation affected the traditional Eskimo way of life. For instance, a fundamental resource of the peninsula, the caribou, started to decline around the 1870s. This fact initiated a shift in local diets. Many more changes followed.

At the turn of the century, Nome was connected by railroad and telephone to Anvil Creek. The City of Nome was officially formed in 1901. A few years later the chaotic gold rush was taken over by powerful and more organized mining companies.

The main negative phenomena that affected Nome during the first half of the 20th century were gold depletion, the influenza epidemic (1918), the depression, and a major fire that almost destroyed the city in 1934. Alternatively, WWII - with Alaska located centrally on the Pacific front - the expansion of the fishing industry, oil discovery in the North Slope, and the slowly growing tourism industry were positive factors in Nome’s re-consolidation in the second half of the century.

Although, as seen in the demographic section, Nome is currently populated by all sorts of “racial” groups, subsistence activities still play a fundamental role in the local economy. Nome is also the place where many of the former inhabitants of King Island resettled. Nome is the finish line for the 1,100-mile Iditarod Sled Dog Race from Anchorage, held each March.

Infrastructure

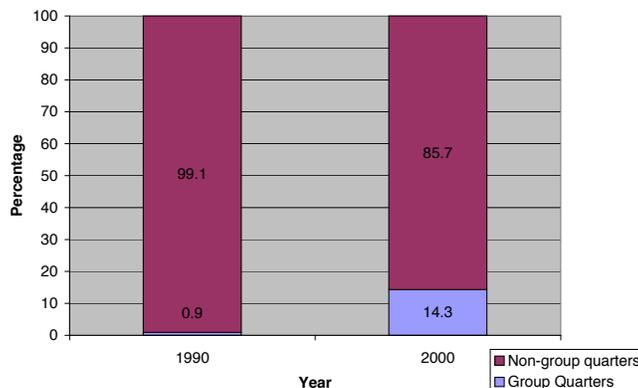
Current Economy

Nome’s economy is complex. It needs to be understood not just as a self-contained unit but as a regional commercial center that supplies all sorts of services to the Bering Strait area. The range of services includes transportation, supplies, government, and so on. An important part of the employment is provided by government services but Nome also has mining and oil extraction businesses, and tourism is slowly developing.

Nome is also a fishing community with 60 commercial permit holders, 151 subsistence salmon harvest permits, and is the headquarters and home

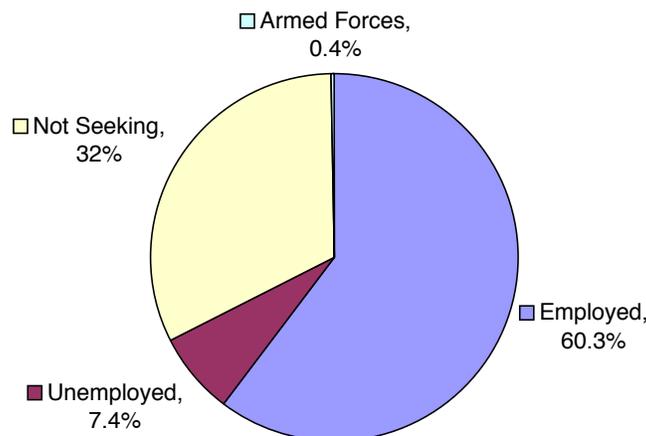
**% Group Quarters
Nome**

Data source: US Census



**2000 Employment Structure
Nome**

Data source: US Census



of a processing plant of the Norton Sound Seafood Products. Subsistence activities are an important complement to local household diets and economies.

The employment structure illustrated by the 2000 U.S. Census shows that 60.3% of the total workforce was employed, 7.4% was unemployed, 0.4% worked with the armed forces and 32% of the workforce was not seeking jobs. In 2000, 6.3% of the population lived below the line of poverty. The community showed a per capita income of \$23,402 and a median household income of \$59,402.

Governance

Nome is a first-class city and was incorporated in 1901. It has a “strong mayor” form of government with a seven-member council. The city, which is not

organized under a borough, has a 4% sales tax, 4% accommodation tax, and a 0.126% property tax.

The Sitnasuak Native Corporation is the local Native corporation managing approximately 240,000 acres under ANCSA. The regional Native corporation, a for-profit organization, with its headquarters in Nome, is the Bering Straits Native Corporation, which operates a series of businesses including the Bering Straits Development Company and the non-profit Bering Strait Foundation. Its counterpart in the area, the regional Native non-profit institution, is the Kawerak, Inc. The CDQ of the area, located in Anchorage, is the Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC). NSEDC operates Norton Sound Seafood Products (NSSP).

Nome is also home to the headquarters of the Bering Straits Housing Authority and the Norton Sound Health Corporation (regional health corporation serving the Bering Strait villages). In addition, the Eskimo Walrus Commission, the regional non-profit organization which serves 19 communities in the western coast, is also located in Nome.

Nome has its own Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) offices. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has its closest office in Anchorage.

Facilities

Nome, as a regional center, is readily accessible by air and sea. The town acts as a transport distribution center for most of the Norton Sound area. The city has two State-owned airports. The Nome Airport has a two paved runways, one 6,000 feet in length, and the other at 5,500 feet. An \$8.5 million airport improvement project is nearing completion. Scheduled jet flights are available, as well as charter and helicopter services. Flights are operated by Baker Aviation, Bering Air, Alaska Airlines, Cape Smith Air Service, Hageland, Olson, Grant, Artic Transportation Services, Frontier, Northern Air Cargo, and Evergreen Helicopters. Lynden, Alaska Cargo Express and Everest all provide freight service to Nome. The price of a roundtrip ticket from the community to Anchorage in early September of 2003 was \$369.

Nome's seaward side is protected by a 3,350-foot-long sea wall. A port and berthing facilities accommodate vessels up to 18 feet of draft. Cargo services are provided to communities of the area from

this harbor. Local development groups and the City are currently funding harbor dredging, two seasonal floating docks, and a boat launch. Local roads lead to Teller, Council, and the Kougarok River.

Visitor accommodations are provided by several lodging services. Nome has four schools that in total have 739 students and 48 teachers. Healthcare services in Nome and neighboring communities are provided by the Norton Sound Regional Hospital. Alternative healthcare services are provided by the Nome Volunteer Ambulance Department, the Norton Sound Health Corporation, Medevac Service, and Quyanna Care center. The town, in addition, has its own city police department as well as a state trooper post.

Nome obtains its water from a well at Moonlight Springs. This water is treated at the Snake River Power Plant. The water and the sewage systems, covering almost the entire city, are owned and operated by the city.

Involvement with North Pacific fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Nome is not a significant player in the North Pacific fishing industry; however, the limited extent to which the town does engage in the industry is significant to its economy. According to official records from 2000, Nome had 60 commercial permit holders with 83 permits for commercial fisheries, 28 of which were fished that year. In Nome, 19 individuals were registered as crewmen and there were six federal fisheries vessel owners plus two owners of salmon vessels. Nome's fleet was involved in most of the Alaskan fisheries: Crab, Halibut, Herring, other Groundfish, and Salmon. Fishing permits are specific to species, size of the vessel, type of gear and fishing area.

Salmon: A total of 28 permits were issued for the salmon fishery, 9 of which were fished in 2000. These pertained to three permits for drift gillnet: one permit for Cook Inlet (not fished) and two permits for Bristol Bay. There was also a non-fished statewide permit for hand troll. The remaining 25 permits were for set gillnet: one for the Bristol Bay, 2 for the Lower Yukon, 3 for Kotzebue (2 fished) and 19 for Norton Sound, of which only 2 were fished in 2000.

Crab: In 2000 the bulk of the permits issued in Nome pertained to king crab. There were 34 permits

of which only 15 were fished that year: 29 for pot gear in vessels under 60 feet in Norton Sound (11 fished) and 5 with the same gear were given to the YDFDA (4 fished).

Halibut: There were 14 statewide permits to catch halibut with longline gear in vessels under 60 feet of which only 3 permits were fished.

Herring: Only four permits were issued for herring in 2000: two to catch herring roe with gillnet in the Norton Sound (one fished), two permits for food/bait with gillnet in Kotzebue and Norton Sound respectively (none fished).

Other finfish: There was one statewide permit to catch freshwater fish with beach seine (not fished). Two permits were issued to catch the miscellaneous saltwater fish with longline, one with a vessel under 60 feet and the other for a vessel over 60 feet (none fished).

In 1993 the NSEDC, the regional CDQ, in partnership with the Glacier Fish Company, decided to begin supporting local fisheries. In 1995 the NSEDC founded the Norton Sound Seafood Products (NSSP). The targeted species were salmon, halibut, herring and crab. Although the operations of the NSSP spread all across the Sound, they are centralized in Nome with the Crab Plant and the newly constructed Norton Sound Seafood Center.

In accordance with confidentiality regulations, landings data for the community are unavailable. The city of Nome received a direct allocation of \$1,166.27 in federal salmon disaster funds. These allocations were to compensate for losses due to prices plummeting in the international market. The NSEDC (the regional CDQ) also received \$78,598.76 to reduce the impact of Steller sea lion protective regulations that came up after this species appeared on the Endangered Species List. Of this sum, Nome received \$20,000 in community benefits. This allocation, under ESA regulations, was implemented in 2002.

Sport Fishing

In 2000 the community issued 1,209 sport fishing licenses: 935 were bought by residents of Alaska. Although the proportion of locals is high, it does not preclude the possibility that the area could have been visited by numerous outsiders obtaining their permits elsewhere. In 2002 the village had five freshwater guide businesses licenses related to sport fishing as a tourist activity. Only one of these businesses does not have its headquarters in Nome.

Subsistence Fishing

The ADF&G does not have systematic and reliable surveys on the subsistence activities of most of the Norton Sound communities, included Nome. However, evidences from similar communities in similar environments point out that these practices are fundamental to understand the economy and social structure of these communities.

An estimate of the ADF&G situates Nome's daily wild food harvest over 0.6 lbs per person. Such a quantity is an evidence of the importance of such practices for the local economy, especially taking into account its 3,500 inhabitants (the entire community, in average harvests 2,400 lbs per day).

Two more elements that help speculate the importance of subsistence activities in Nome are, on the one hand, the existence in the community of 151 household permits to catch subsistence salmon, accounting for 1,353 fish, mainly chum, and, on the other hand, the fact that the village inhabitants (as part of a tribe and/or part of a rural community) are eligible for the Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificate (SHARC). These allocations are based on recognized customary and traditional uses of halibut. Regulations to implement subsistence halibut fishing were published in the Federal Register in April 2003 and became effective May 2003.