

Gig Harbor

People and Place

Location

Gig Harbor is on the Key Peninsula on the west side of Puget Sound across from Tacoma. The city encompasses 4.4 square miles of land. The nearest major U.S. city is Seattle, a 45-mile drive north. Gig Harbor's geographic coordinates are lat 47°19'46"N, long 122°34'44"W.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Gig Harbor's population was 6,465, a 99.8% increase since 1990. The gender composition was 54.4% female and 45.5% male. The median age of 44.6 was slightly higher than the national median of 35.3. In 2000 20.3% were age 17 or younger, 47.1% were between 22 and 59, and 23.0% were 67 or older. Of the population 18 years of age and older, 87.8% had a high school education (including equivalency) or higher, 29.0% had received a bachelor's degree or higher, and 9.5% had attained a graduate or professional degree. All were higher than the national averages of 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8%. For 23.2% a high school diploma or equivalency was the highest level of education.

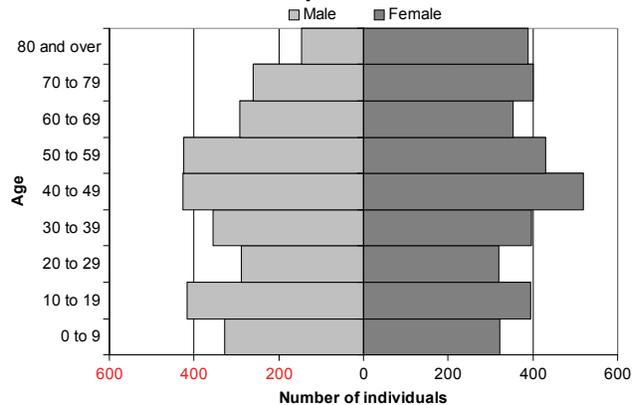
The vast majority of Gig Harbor's racial structure recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census was white (94.2%), followed by people identified as two or more races (1.8%), Asian (1.5%), black (1.1%), American Indian and Alaskan Native (0.6%), people identified as another race (0.5%), and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (0.2%). Ethnicity data indicate that 3.0% identified as Hispanic. In 2000 4.9% were foreign-born, with 21.5% from Canada, 16.8% from Malaysia, and 15.9% from Mexico.

In 2000, 76.2% lived in family households.

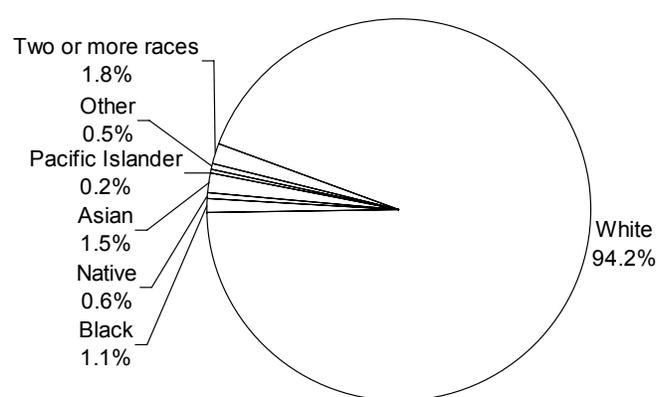
History

The Puyallup, Nisqually, and Steilacoom tribes, as well as smaller tribes, have historically inhabited the Tacoma Basin and southern reaches of Puget Sound. Prior to arrival of European American settlers, subsistence fishing was predominantly based on marine resources although it has since dwindled drastically. The Treaty of Medicine Creek was signed between the tribes and the United States in 1854, about 60 years after Lt. Peter Puget led the first recorded European tour of southern Puget Sound. The treaty implemented several social changes, including issues surrounding resource

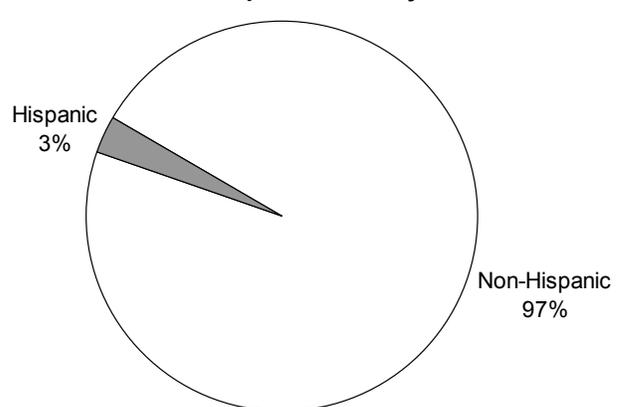
2000 Population structure



2000 Racial structure



2000 Hispanic ethnicity



access and land ownership. The following year territorial wars broke out in response to a proposed Nisqually reservation and other issues with the treaty. Several tribal members were interned, while others became laborers.¹

Gig Harbor earned its name in 1841 during a U.S. exploration expedition of Puget Sound. Some explorers, which included the captain's gig (i.e., rowboat) and several longboats, sought shelter there for the winter. By the late 1860s settlers from Norway, Sweden, and Croatia made up a burgeoning population based on the growing fishing industry. With the arrival of the transcontinental railroad to Tacoma in 1887, the area became an industrial hub. For the next 100 years, commercial fishing and related industries such as boat building dominated the local economy. The harbor and wharves were developed to serve a group of freight steamers known as the "Mosquito Fleet." In the early 1900s the lumber industry also was significant.

As the economy and population of the area thrived, regional transport networks connected Gig Harbor to nearby industrial centers. Steamboats arrived in the 1880s and by 1971 ferries were available to transport automobiles between Gig Harbor and Tacoma. The existing Narrows Bridge, which directly links Gig Harbor to Tacoma, was opened in 1950 following an unsuccessful earlier attempt.² With easy access across the water the community evolved into a suburban residential area but retains an important level of economic involvement with the fishing industry.

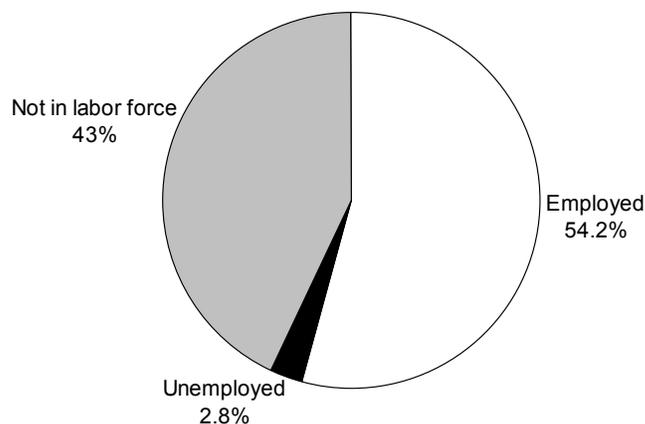
Infrastructure

Current Economy

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 54.2% of Gig Harbor's potential labor force 16 years of age and older were employed, 2.8% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 4.9% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 43.0% were not in the labor force, compared to the national average of 36.1%. The main employment sectors were educational, health, and social services (25.9%), local, state, and federal governments (15.9%), manufacturing (8.4%), accommodation and food services (6.7%), and retail trade (0.3%). Natural resources jobs, including agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, employed 2.6%, but this percentage may be artificially low given that many fishermen are self-employed and are underrepresented in these data.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the per capita income in 1999 was \$28,318 and the median household income was \$43,456. In 1999 9% lived below the poverty level, lower than the national average of 12.4%.

2000 Employment structure



In 2000 there were 3,085 housing units in Gig Harbor, with 58.9% owner occupied and 41.1% renter occupied. The housing unit vacancy rate was 6.6%, with 22.9% due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

Incorporated in 1946, the City of Gig Harbor has a mayor-council form of government. The city council is comprised of a mayor and seven council members. The mayor appoints a city administrator to oversee day-to-day operations and to carry out council policies. Gig Harbor levies an 8.4% sales and use tax and a variable lodging tax of 2-5%, depending upon the number of rooms in the establishment. See the Governance subsection (page 43) in the Overview section for a more detailed discussion of taxes affecting fisherman and processors in Washington.

The nearest National Marine Fisheries Service office and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services District Office are in Seattle. Meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management and North Pacific Fishery Management councils are routinely held in the Seattle-Tacoma area. The closest Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Regional Office is 76 miles southwest in Montesano. The 13th U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) District headquarters are in Seattle. There is a USCG office that serves as a Port Security Unit in Tacoma.

Facilities

Gig Harbor is accessible by land, air, and water. The city is on Washington Highway 16 west of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge that spans Puget Sound from Tacoma. The Tacoma Narrow Airport, with one 5,000-foot paved runway, is a public-use facility in Gig Harbor. The Tacoma-Seattle International Airport is the nearest major facility.

Gig Harbor is in the Peninsula School District, which has 15 schools and 9,200 students with an annual growth rate of 4–5%. Peninsula Light Company administers electricity service. The Washington Water Service Company, the City of Gig Harbor Water Department, and the Rainier View Water Company provide water. Puget Sound Energy provides natural gas service. The Gig Harbor Police Department and Pierce County Fire District No. 5 administer public safety. Tacoma General Hospital and Saint Joseph’s Medical Center in Tacoma and Saint Claire Hospital in Lakewood are the nearest medical centers. Several medical centers offering same-day appointments are based in Gig Harbor.

Despite the absence of port facilities within Gig Harbor itself, the city is closely tied to the Port of Tacoma, the West Coast’s second largest port behind Long Beach, California. Burlington Northern and Union Pacific provide rail service to the Port of Tacoma. The City of Tacoma operates the Beltline Railway that services industries in the port area. Eight small marinas in Gig Harbor supply a variety of boat services, including leasing, repair, surface ramp, pump-out station, equipment and sales, and charters.

Gig Harbor has several festivals and marine-related organizations. The Maritime Gig Festival runs for the first full weekend of June and is organized by the Gig Harbor Peninsula Area Chamber of Commerce, partnered with the City of Gig Harbor and the Gig Harbor Peninsula Historical Society and Museum. Gig Harbor has a local Fisherman’s Civic Club as well as several recreational associations. Gig Harbor is home to 14 bed and breakfast accommodations, 3 inns, and 2 family motels.³

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 there were no landings made in Gig Harbor. Residents owned 30 commercial vessels in 2000, including 23 that participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by Gig Harbor residents in 2000 that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 4/1/6, crab 3/0/0, groundfish 1/0/NA, highly migratory species NA/0/NA, salmon 15/2/0, shellfish NA/0/NA, and other species 3/0/0.⁴

In 2000 one Gig Harbor resident held one federal groundfish permit. The number of Gig Harbor residents holding permits in the given fisheries by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 7/1/9, groundfish 1/0/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 36/2/0, shellfish 0/0/NA, and other species 6/0/2.⁵

According to available data, there were at least 87 commercial fishing permits registered to Gig Harbor residents in 2000, including 86 with registered state permits. The number of state permits held by Gig Harbor residents in the given fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 14/1/17, groundfish 3/0/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 40/2/0, shellfish 0/0/NA, and other species 7/0/2.⁶

There was at least one seafood processor operating in Gig Harbor in 2000, primarily producing herring products. Specific data (estimated pounds of product/value of product) is confidential.

Sportfishing

There are two licensed vendors selling sportfishing permits in Gig Harbor. In 2003 Gig Harbor vendors made 6,329 sportfishing license transactions valued at \$110,257. The 2000–2001 sport catch in Catch Record Card Area 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island), based on catch-card records, was 14,212 fish, including 8,108 Chinook salmon, 6,054 coho salmon, and 50 chum salmon. Marine anglers made 72,194 trips in the sports fishery. In Area 11 six steelhead were caught. Boat-based anglers caught 2,611 fish in Area 11.

Subsistence

Subsistence harvest for marine species may exist in the Gig Harbor area. However the extent of subsistence harvesting is difficult to quantify due to a scarcity of data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 Gig Harbor residents owned 63 vessels that participated in North Pacific fisheries. Community members landed fish in the following North Pacific fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): crab confidential/confidential/3, Bering Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish confidential/confidential/2, other finfish confidential/confidential/3, Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish 1166 t/\$1,513,830/6, halibut 187 t/\$1,070,680/4, herring 220 t/\$127,330/4, and salmon 2,845 t/\$2,105,660/33.

Gig Harbor residents held 89 commercial fishing permits for North Pacific fisheries in 2000, including 49 individuals who held state permits and 27 individuals who held federal permits (note: it is possible for individuals to hold more than one permit at a time). Residents held 5 crab, 2 GOA groundfish, 12 BSAI groundfish, 5 halibut, 6 herring, 38 salmon, and 5

shellfish Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permits. Residents held three crab and eight groundfish License Limitation Program permits. Residents held 2,129,377 halibut and 4,274,178 sablefish individual fishing quota shares.

Gig Harbor residents held 73 crew member licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000.

Sportfishing

Gig Harbor residents purchased 453 Alaskan sportfishing licenses in 2000.

Notes

1. The Steilacoom Tribe. No date. Recent history. Online at http://members.shaw.ca/nyjack/steilacoom/recent_history.htm [accessed 31 January 2007].
2. Gig Harbor Chamber of Commerce. No date. The Gig Harbor story. Online at <http://www.gigharborchamber.com/history2.html> [accessed 31 January 2007].
3. Gig Harbor Chamber of Commerce. 2005. Accommodations. Online at <http://www.gigharborchamber.com/accommodations.html> [accessed 31 January 2007].
4. NA refers to data that were not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.
5. See note 4.
6. See note 4.