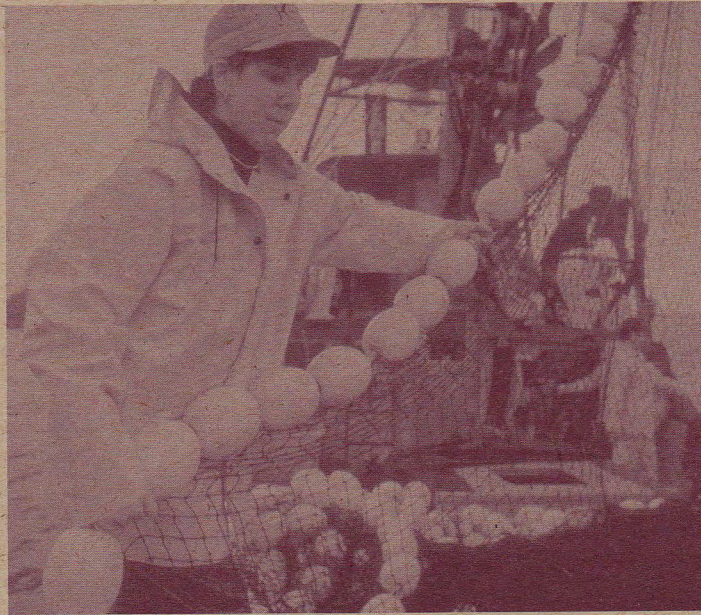


Sitka Community Indicators

A Profile of
Community
Well-Being



1999

About *Sitka Community Indicators*

Thanks for taking a look at *Sitka Community Indicators*. The Island Institute and Sitka's Turning Point project, partners in the creation of the report, offer it as a broad profile and assessment of the well-being of Sitka. In it you'll find information on population characteristics, the economy, social and health concerns, environmental issues, schools, and crime—all things that affect the quality of life in Sitka.

This project falls in line with grassroots efforts that have popped up in neighborhoods, urban centers, suburbs, and small rural towns around the country. People share common concerns about maintaining or improving the quality of life in their community for future generations. Many are finding community indicators to be the tools they need to help measure progress toward healthy and sustainable communities.

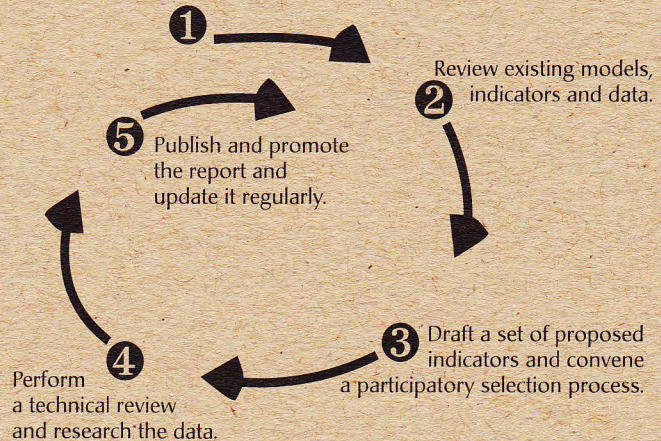
What are indicators? They help us measure something which is not directly measurable. For example, we cannot measure the weather. Instead we measure indicators of weather, e.g. temperature, pressure, rainfall. The same is true for the economy. We can't measure it directly, but can get a sense of how the economy is doing by looking at such things as the unemployment rate, average income, or job trends. Likewise, we can get a sense of community health by tracking physical, social, and environmental indicators—such things as causes of death, crime rates, or waste generation.

*The Community Indicators Handbook*¹ describes indicators as “instrument panels that provide citizens with clear and honest information about past trends and current realities, and assist them in steering their communities on their desired course. They help civic leaders clarify key issues and challenges, or prioritize spending when budgets are tight. Indicators can point a community toward specific initiatives or policy changes that will have a real effect on quality of life. Community indicators don't just monitor progress; they help make it happen.”

The *Handbook* also notes that the process of developing indicators is as important as the indicators themselves. “Good indicators are developed by a broad spectrum of community members. By convening citizens to consider how to measure their overall well-being, the community as a whole is spurred to create new visions of the future, develop new working relationships across old boundaries, and define its assets, problems, and opportunities in new ways.” The diagram here illustrates the steps of the process and how it can be perpetuated to become an ongoing measure of community vitality. The process used to develop *Sitka Community Indicators* followed this model and is described on page 20.

Process of Developing Community Indicators

Form a working group, clarify its purpose and identify your community's shared values and vision.



Our effort to gather community indicators for Sitka is in its infancy. We have a lot to learn about how to choose good measures, how to describe and assess them, and how to present them effectively so they get the attention they deserve. We welcome community perspectives on this. And we hope this will be the first of a series of indicator reports that Sitkans will be able to use to better understand their community—its strengths and its weaknesses and the ways we might work together to ensure its vitality into the future.

¹ Redefining Progress, 1997

Table of Contents

Characteristics of Sitka's Population

Sitka's Population Growing, But More Slowly Than State and Region	2
Changing Demographics: More Elders, Fewer Young People	2
Racial Composition Enriches Sitka	3
Half of Sitkans Vote	3

Windows on Sitka's Economy

Number of Sitka Jobs and Businesses Growing	4
Economy Adjusts After Mill Closure	4
Employment by Industry Shifts in Sitka	5
Wages Up After Three Year Plateau	5
Total Personal Income Climbs in Sitka	6
Per Capita Income Equals State After Four Year Slump	6
Flow of Cruise Ship Passengers Down in 1997 and 1998	7
Food Costs Remain Relatively Stable	7
Sitka Mortgages Fluctuate While Rents Remain Stable	8

Environmental Factors in Lives of Sitkans

Peak Winter Electricity Demand Taxes Hydro Capacity	8
Per Capita Waste Generation Increasing	9
Decrease in Halibut Prompts Local Collaborative Planning	9
Harvest of Wild Foods Important to the Community	10
Subsistence Foodstuffs Reach a Majority of Sitka Households	11

Sitka School Snapshots

Student Population Returns to Level of 1980s	12
High School Options Prove Important	12
One-Fourth of Sitka Students Apply for School Lunch Assistance	13

Health Issues for Sitkans

More Assisted Living But Fewer Nursing Facilities for Sitka Seniors	13
Sitkans Seek More Health Care Assistance	14
Heart Disease and Cancer Leading Causes of Death	15
Falls Lead List of Injuries Requiring Hospitalization	15
Teenage Pregnancies in Sitka Lower Than State	16
Reports of Harm to Children Higher Than Nation	16
Prenatal Health Care Strong	17

Sitka's Crime Scene

Half of Violent Crimes in Sitka Alcohol Related	18
Number of Non-Violent Crimes Declines Since 1995 Peak	18
Domestic Violence A Continuing Concern	19
Drunk Driving Arrests Down But Minor Consuming Common	19

Background on This Report and Its Sponsors

How <i>Sitka Community Indicators</i> was Developed	20
About the Sponsors of This Report	21

Population

Sitka's Population Growing, But More Slowly than State and Region

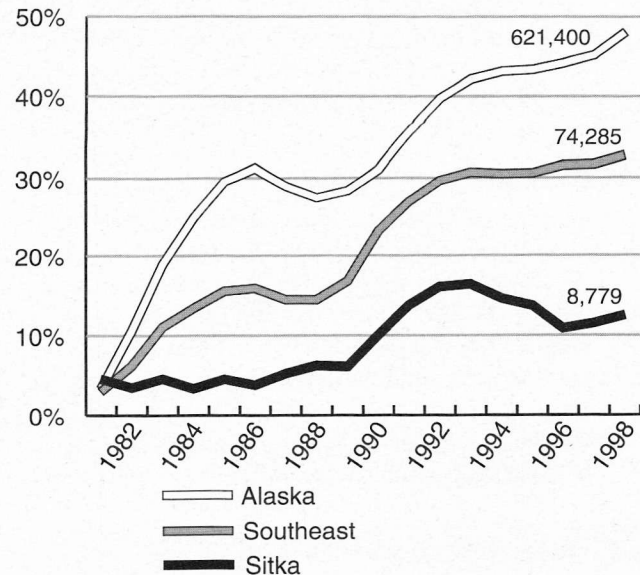
How are we doing?

Sitka's population has grown 13% since 1980 and has recently increased after three years of loss. This growth rate is slower than the Southeast region, 33%, and the State of Alaska at 48%.

Why is this important?

Population growth and loss can both reflect and cause changes in the economy, character of the community, the need for services such as education and health care, and the demand for and use of natural resources.

Population Trend Since 1982



Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis Section, Demographics Unit

Changing Demographics: More Elders, Fewer Young People

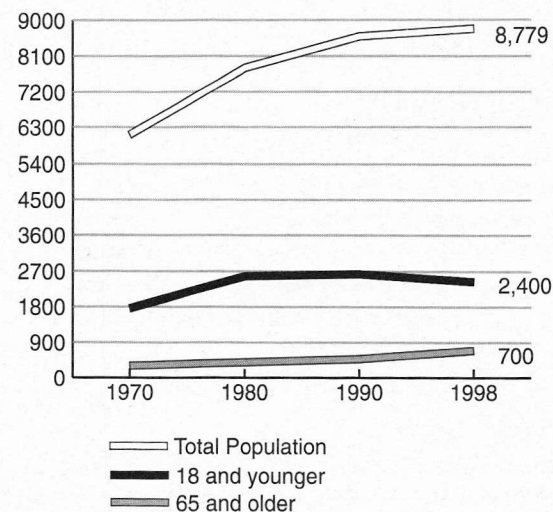
How are we doing?

As in the state and region, the average age of Sitka's population is rising. It has risen from 30 to 36 since 1990, while the average age in Alaska has risen from 29 to 32. In 1998, the percentage of persons 65 and older was 5% in Alaska and 8% in Sitka. Southeast Alaska as a region is among those with the highest percentage of elders in the state. It is projected that the number of elders will double over the next 15 years. As the proportion of older Sitkans increases, the proportion of young people is decreasing. Persons under 18 years of age have decreased from a peak of 33% in 1980, to 28% in 1998.

Why is this important?

Sitka's population shift will affect the size of the labor force and the number of students attending schools, as well as the demand for health care facilities, social services, and recreational opportunities.

Sitka Population by Age



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Alaska Dept. of Labor

Racial Composition Enriches Sitka

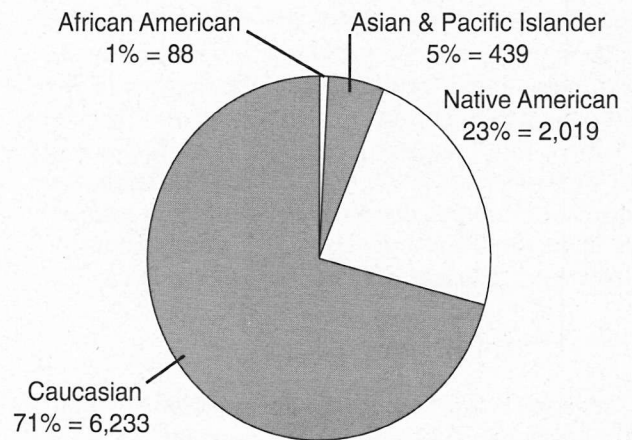
How are we doing?

Sitka's racial/ethnic makeup has changed little over the last two decades. The estimate shown here of the number of Native Americans is considered low by the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. Their estimate shows the number to be as much as 300 higher, making the Native American population as much as 28% of Sitka's total population.

Why is this important?

Cultural diversity is a strong point of any community. Sitka's unusual mix of cultural traditions and history, both Native and non-Native, enrich the quality of life and bring tourists to the area. Cultural diversity also presents challenges, however, and increases the need for tolerance of other people's points of view.

Sitka Population by Race in 1998



Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis Section, Demographics Unit

Half of Sitkans Vote

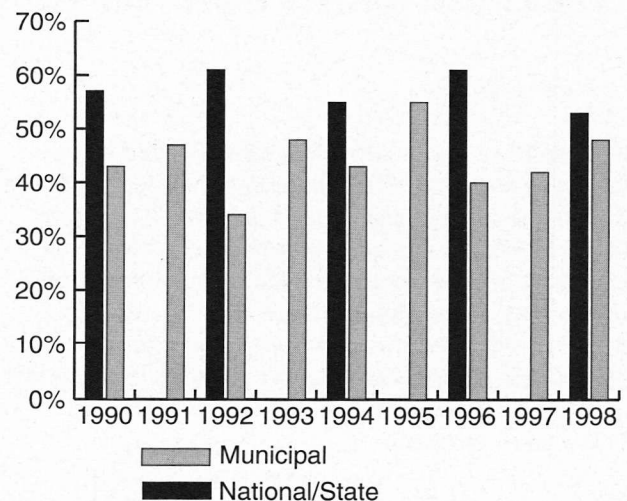
How are we doing?

In the 1998 election, only an estimated 53% of persons 18 years of age and over voted in the State/National elections while only 48% voted in the local municipal election.

Why is this important?

Voter participation levels signal citizens' involvement and investment in the making and implementation of public policies. The vote helps to ensure that representatives and other public servants respond to the needs and concerns of their constituencies. It is fundamentally important to democratic government.

Percentage of Sitkans Who Vote in Municipal, State and National Elections



Sources: Alaska Division of Elections and City and Borough of Sitka

Note: An additional 10% was added to the National/State ballot totals to attempt to account for absentee ballots that are not separated for Sitka from Wrangell and Petersburg by the ADOE.

Economy

Number of Sitka Jobs and Businesses Growing

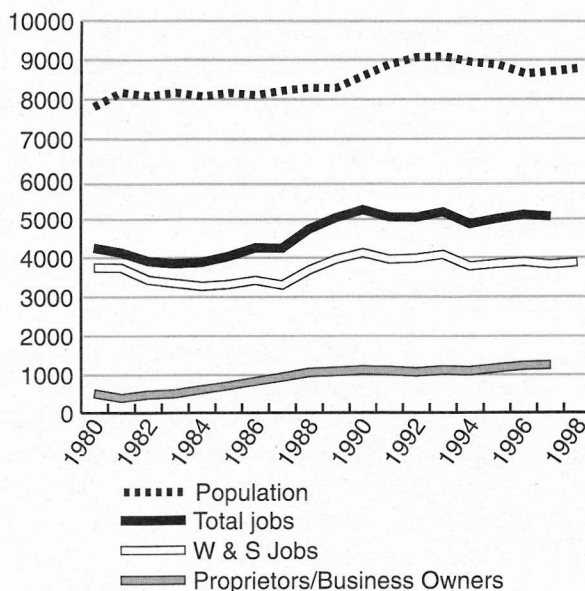
How are we doing?

The number of full and part-time jobs grew in 1998 after eight years of no growth or job loss. The exception to this trend has been the number of Sitkans who are self-employed or own businesses. The number of these jobs has risen consistently from 13% of all jobs in 1980 to 33% in 1997. Sitka also hosts a significant number of nonresident workers. In 1997, nonresident workers made up as much as 22% of the labor pool, with average wages only half that of residents.

Why is this important?

The number of jobs in Sitka is an important indicator of the health of Sitka's economy. The number of jobs generated by a company or government agency is often cited as its contribution to the local economy. It's important to note that proprietorships and wage and salary jobs refer to numbers of full and part-time jobs, not numbers of people employed. Many Sitkans work more than one job and many jobs do not necessarily pay a living wage. Despite fluctuations in the number of jobs in Sitka, a pretty consistent 50% of the population has been employed at any one time over the last decade.

Sitka Job and Population Trends



Source: Wage and Salary job information came from the Alaska Department of Labor. The number of business owners was calculated using data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Economy Adjusts after Mill Closure

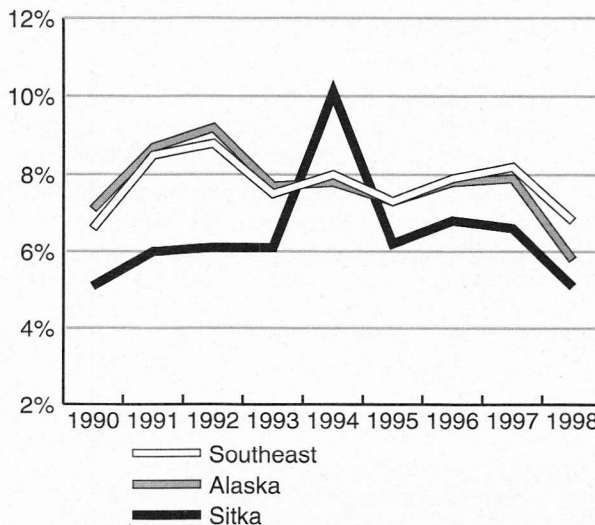
How are we doing?

In 1998, Sitka's unemployment rate dropped to its lowest level since 1990. This low rate likely reflects the tight national labor market and the overall economic health of Sitka. The unemployment rate has consistently been one of the lowest in the state, except for a brief rise to over 10% following the 1993 APC mill closure. It should be noted that unemployment rates do not include those whose unemployment benefits have run out.

Why is this important?

The unemployment rate reflects the number of people looking for work but not finding it. Despite its relatively low level, Sitka's unemployment rate remains above many areas in the lower 48. This is likely due to the seasonal nature of many industries in Sitka, which leads to higher unemployment in the winter and a higher average rate for the year.

Sitka Unemployment Trending Downward



Source: Alaska Dept. of Labor

Employment by Industry Shifts in Sitka

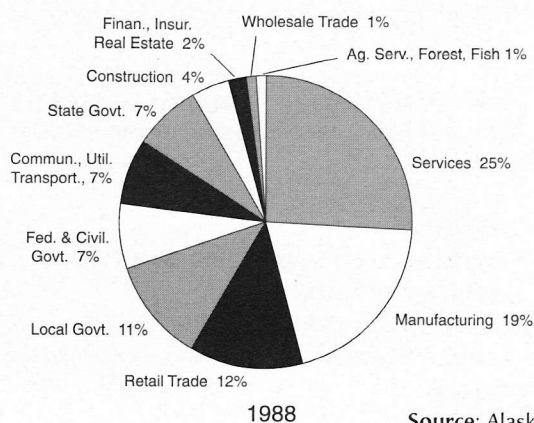
How are we doing?

A lot of Sitkans are working at different jobs than they were ten years ago. The most obvious changes are in the service and manufacturing areas. Manufacturing jobs, which include timber processing, have dropped 67%; service jobs, including most in the health field, have grown 33% over the same time period. While manufacturing, wholesale trade, and federal government sectors have lost jobs, the retail trade, service, local and state government and construction sectors have contributed a net addition of 330 jobs to the economy.

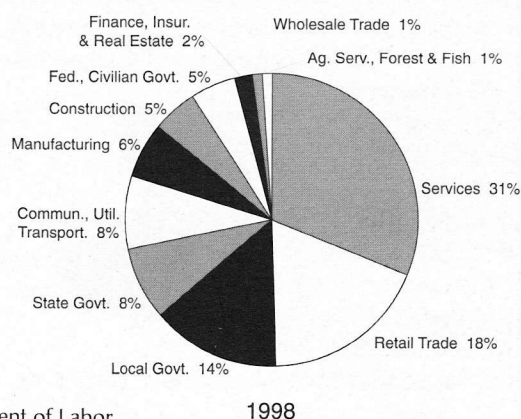
Why is this important?

The shift away from relatively high paid manufacturing and federal government jobs has meant a depression of wages. These are just now beginning to rise. The greater the diversity of the economy, the more resilient it is when one or another sector weakens. This diversity proved a strength when the APC mill shut down in 1993. It should be noted that shrinkage of Sitka's manufacturing sector and growth of the services sector is not unique; it mirrors a national trend of recent years.

A Comparison of Sitka Wage and Salary Employment by Sector for 1988 and 1998



Source: Alaska Department of Labor



Wages Up After Three-Year Plateau

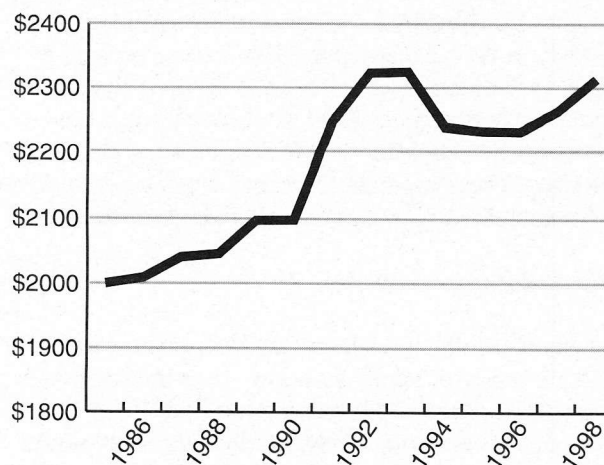
How are we doing?

After the 1993 closure of the APC mill, average wages among wage and salary employees fell and remained unchanged for three years. In 1998, the average wage increased by 2.2%, the largest percent increase since 1992.

Why is this important?

Trends in wage growth affect Sitkans who are not self employed or owners of their own businesses. Average monthly wage is a strong indicator of how the average working aged family is faring economically.

Sitka Average Monthly Wage



Source: Alaska Dept. of Labor, Research and Analysis Division
Note: The 1998 average monthly wage number is preliminary.

Economy

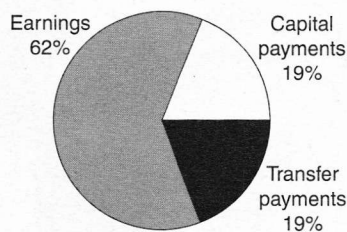
Total Personal Income Climbs in Sitka

How are we doing?

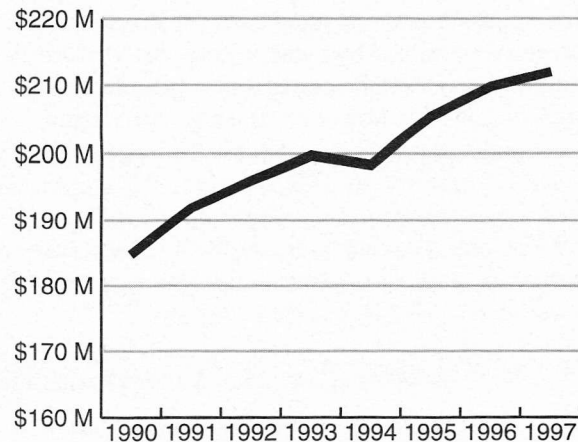
The total personal income generated by all persons living in Sitka has increased 15% since 1990. Total personal income includes the earnings (wages and salaries, other labor income, business owners' income), dividends, interest, and rent, and transfer payments (such as social security) received by residents of Sitka. Both transfer and capital payments have grown as Sitkans retire and the stock market booms.

Why is this important?

When evaluating the health of Sitka's economy and the buying power of its citizens, it is important to consider all sources of wealth. As Sitka changes demographically, it is likely that an even larger percentage of total personal income will come from transfer payments like Social Security and investments that are often liquidated after retirement. This shift is likely to lend more stability to the local economy because this income is not subject to local economic conditions.



Sitka Total Personal Income (dollars in millions)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System.

Definitions

Transfer Payments: Social Security, welfare, disability, and unemployment insurance.

Capital Payments: Dividends, interest, and rent income.

Earnings: Wages, proprietor's earnings, and other labor earnings.

Per Capita Income Equals State After Four Year Slump

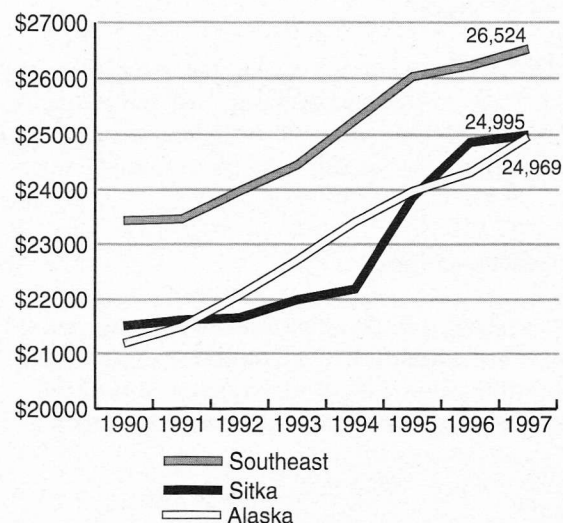
How are we doing?

Sitka's per capita income is the total personal income generated divided by the number of Sitka residents. At \$24,995 in 1997, Sitkans' per capita income is roughly equal to Alaska as a whole, but \$1,529 lower than the Southeast region. Since 1990, per capita income has increased 16% for Sitka, 13% for Southeast, and 18% for the state. The comparative strength of per capita income in Southeast is largely due to higher wages in Juneau.

Why is this important?

Per capita income is a key measure of personal wealth and the vitality of Sitka's economy. Over the last twenty years, Alaska's per capita income has been lower than that of the nation as a whole, mostly because of slower wage growth. Sitka's per capita income has gained relative strength after a wage slump associated with the APC mill closure.

Trends in Per Capita Income



Source: Alaska Dept. of Labor

Flow of Cruise Ship Passengers Down in 1997 and 1998

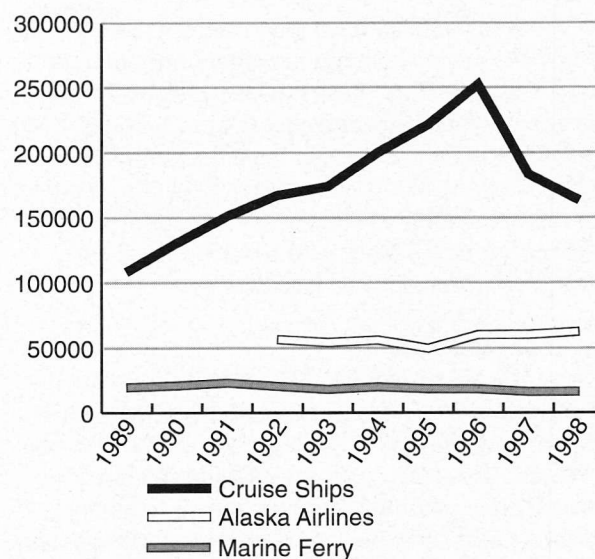
How are we doing?

The estimated number of cruise ship passengers visiting Sitka has fallen 35% from the high of 252,000 passengers in 1996. There has also been a decrease in marine ferry passengers of 17% since 1989. The number of Alaska Airlines passengers has increased 10% over 1992 levels. In the case of airline and marine highway passengers, the figures do not distinguish between travel by locals and visitors. The number of convention goers tracked by the Sitka Convention and Visitors Bureau has increased 300% from 1,780 in 1993 to 7,216 visitors in 1998.

Why is this important?

Tourism has been a controversial issue among communities in Southeast. Many Sitkans appreciate the economic value of tourism, but some have misgivings about the impact large scale tourism can have on the small town feel of the community.

Visitors to Sitka



Source: Alaska Airlines, Alaska Marine Highway System Sitka Ferry Terminal (unofficial), Cruiseline Agencies/Southeast Stevedoring. Prepared by Sitka Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Food Costs Remain Relatively Stable

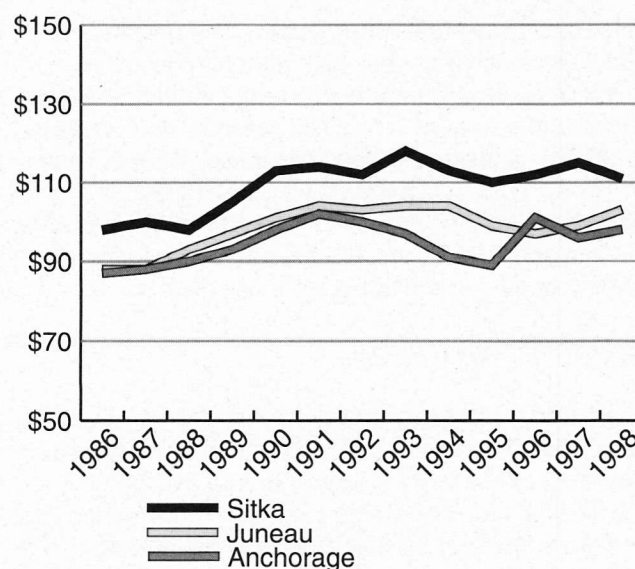
How are we doing?

Over the last five years the relatively volatile cost of food has remained largely unchanged. Food remains more expensive in Sitka than in larger communities like Juneau and Anchorage, as well as the country as a whole. While the cost of commodities like food is still more expensive in Alaska than the country as a whole, the margin is not as large as it used to be. Sitkans also enrich their diets with subsistence resources which helps to keep grocery bills down.

Why is this important?

Beyond the cost of housing, the cost of food is the largest monthly expenditure for many families. The cost of food index is the price of a basic basket of groceries estimated to feed a family of four with teenaged children. While the index does not reflect all the items at the grocery store, it is a good measure of how the price of food changes over time.

Cost of Food per Week



Source: Alaska Cooperative Extension's Food Cost Survey, UAF

Sitka Mortgages Fluctuate While Rents Remain Stable

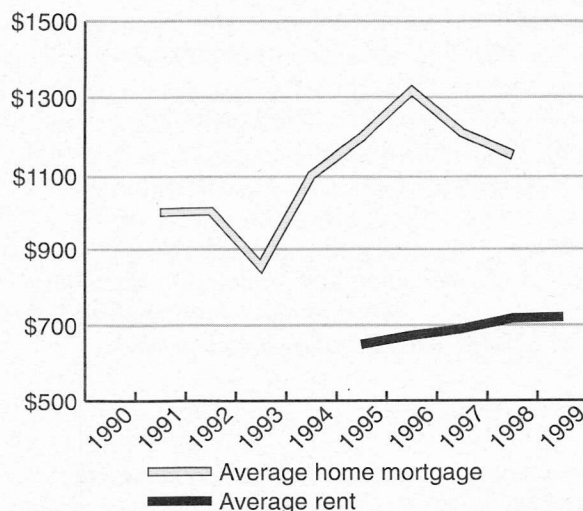
How are we doing?

Average rents in Sitka have increased \$50 or 8% over the last five years while the average mortgage has risen 15% since 1991. Rent has been relatively stable over the last five years, increasing at or below the rate of inflation, while mortgages have fluctuated. The average rent in Sitka is average for the entire Southeast region. Rents in Sitka are on average \$140 lower than Juneau, \$20 higher than Ketchikan and \$80 higher than Wrangell and Petersburg.

Why is this important?

Housing is the single largest constant cost for most families, and affordable housing is of major concern to Sitkans. Housing costs are relatively high across Alaska because of high construction, maintenance, and land costs. The average rent and mortgage data that is available is inadequate for judging long-term trends, but it is a good indicator of housing costs for most Sitkans over the last five years.

Average Monthly Mortgage and Median Rent



Rent

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation

Mortgage

Source: "The Numbers Story," Charles Horan, Horan Corak and Co.

Peak Winter Electricity Demand Taxes Hydro Capacity

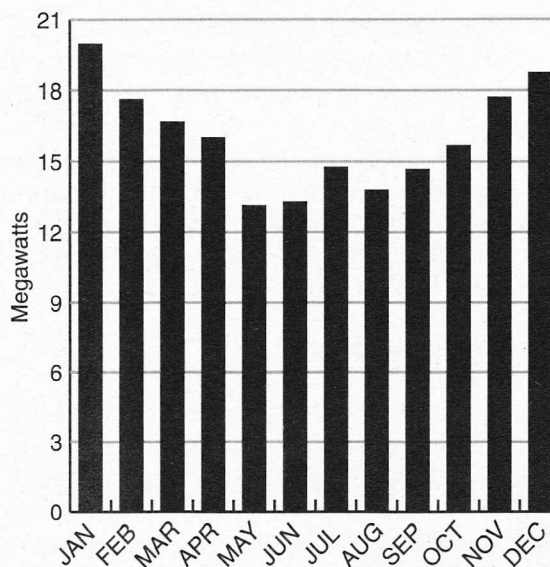
How are we doing?

Sitka's hydrogeneration capacity is 19.4 megawatts. Total electrical usage has been down in recent years. Both usage and generating capacity are highly dependent on the weather as well as personal and business practices. January peak loads frequently exceed average hydrogeneration capacity, thus requiring use of Sitka's diesel generation. Peak loads typically occur from 7 to 10 a.m and 5 to 7 p.m. The need to expand infrastructure depends on providing for these peak times.

Why is this important?

Electricity is a primary energy resource needed to maintain Sitka's economy and quality of life. The relatively low cost of electricity is largely due to hydropower facilities at Blue and Green Lakes. In future years, as the population of Sitka and commercial electrical demands grow, new solutions, whether they be innovative practices by residents and businesses or new generating infrastructure, will be needed to provide for peak consumption.

Peak Electrical Demand Patterns for 1996



Source: City and Borough of Sitka Electric Department

Per Capita Waste Generation Increasing

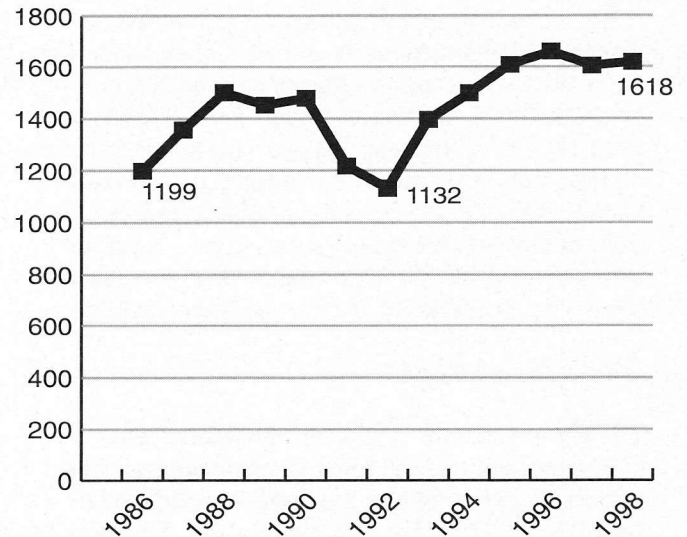
How are we doing?

The amount of solid waste incinerated in Sitka has been increasing almost every year since 1993. Both in total weight and per capita, waste generation has been on the rise. In 1998, residents and businesses sent the equivalent of 1,618 pounds per Sitka resident to the incinerator, 35% more per capita than in 1992.

Why is this important?

Solid waste disposal is an issue of growing importance to Sitkans. In the near future the municipal incinerator will be shut down and waste will be disposed of in city land fill sites and exported. Fees for disposal of waste have increased and options for local disposal are few. Community concerns about land fill locations, recycling, and waste management costs are growing.

Sitka Solid Waste Generation Per Capita



Source: City and Borough of Sitka

Decrease in Halibut Prompts Local Collaborative Planning

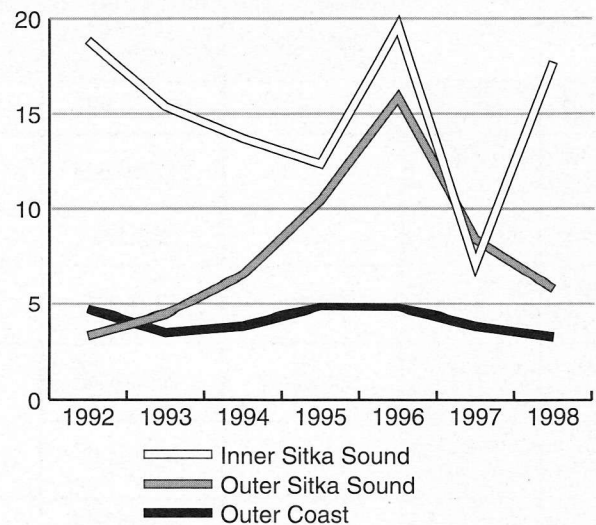
How are we doing?

Reports from fishermen and other anecdotal information indicate that the availability of Pacific halibut in Sitka Sound has decreased. From 1992 to 1997, harvest rates of halibut in the marine sport fishery in inner Sitka Sound (i.e. Eastern Channel, Nakwasina and Krestof Sounds, Middle Island, etc.) were lower than those for surrounding areas. This situation prompted formation of a task force comprised of representatives of all major interests participating in Sitka Sound halibut fisheries. The task force successfully developed a local area management plan, outlining zones and staggered fishing openings for sport and commercial interests, in order to reduce pressure on halibut stocks in inner Sitka Sound.

Why is this important?

Halibut are an important resource for commercial, sport, and subsistence fishing. Sitka's response to the diminishing halibut stocks is a responsible step toward conserving this natural resource on which the community depends.

**Hours Needed to Catch a Halibut
(non-guided sport-caught fishery)**



Source: Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game

Harvest of Wild Foods Important to the Community

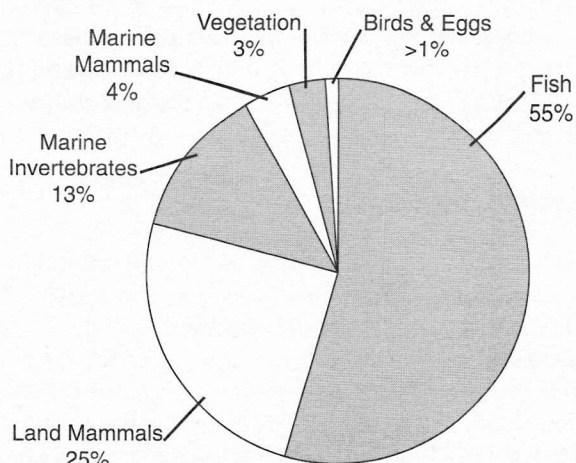
How are we doing?

A significant majority of Sitkans supplement their grocery baskets with foods gathered in the wild. This represents an estimated value of over \$2,000 per household (see chart below). Subsistence foods are not only part of important cultural traditions, but they are also part of an informal economy that helps to stretch the financial resources of many families. The information presented here is based on a random sample survey of 100 Sitka households conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in 1996.

Why is this important?

The harvest of wild foods has significant social, economic, and cultural value to many Sitkans. The activity of gathering and the foods themselves are factors contributing to individual health. Subsistence practices are dependent on the health and productivity of the land and sea. There is an apparent abundance of natural resources around Sitka to provide for people's subsistence needs, but it is also important that we work to sustain the life of these resources.

Categories of Wild Resources Harvested by Sitkans, February 1996 - January 1997



Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence Household Surveys, 1996

Estimated Economic Value of Wild Resources Harvested by Sitkans, February 1996 - January 1997

Wild Resource	Total lbs. harvested	Dollar value of harvest @ \$4/lb.	Average lbs. per household	Dollar value per household	Pounds per person	Dollars per person
Fish	953,207	\$3,812,827	312	\$1,249	112	\$447
Deer & other land mammals	434,971	\$1,739,884	142	\$570	51	\$204
Birds & Eggs	5,069	\$20,276	2	\$7	1	\$2
Shellfish, sea cucumber, etc.	234,496	\$937,985	77	\$307	27	\$110
Seals, sea otter, sea lions	62,358	\$249,434	20	\$82	7	\$29
Plants, berries, mushrooms, etc	56,362	\$225,447	18	\$74	7	\$26
TOTALS	1,746,463	\$6,985,854	572	\$2,288	205	\$819

Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence Household Surveys, 1996

Note: Pounds refer to usable weight.

Subsistence Foodstuffs Reach a Majority of Sitka Households

How are we doing?

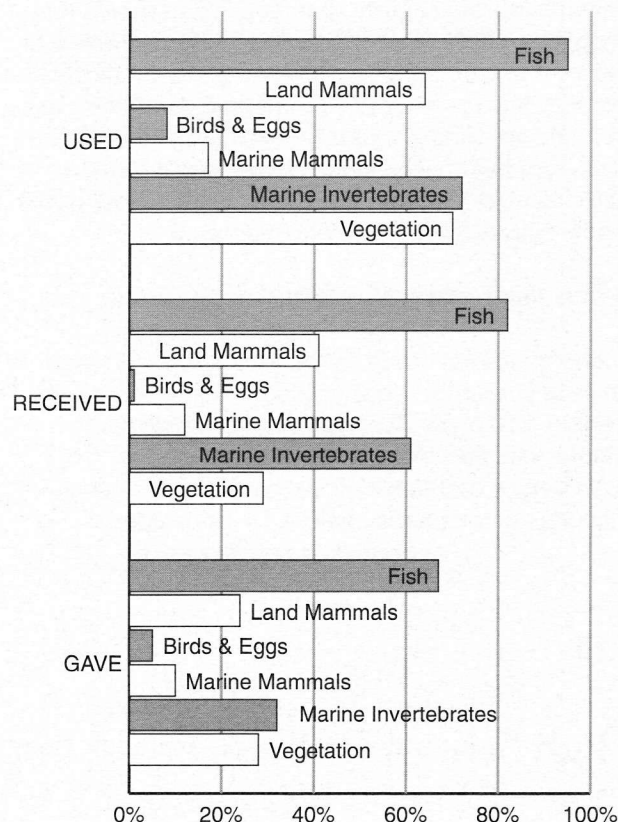
Sitkans are generous in sharing foods they gather in the wild. These links maintain important connections not only between people, but between people and the surrounding natural world. The practice of sharing appears to be a vital part of community life in Sitka.

The information presented here is based on a random sample survey of 100 Sitka households conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in 1996. It showed that 97% of the surveyed households used at least one wild food resource, while 83% took an active part in the harvesting of at least one of these resources.

Why is this important?

The sharing of subsistence foods helps to maintain long-standing cultural traditions. Those who can go out to hunt, fish, and gather often provide for those who can't. This sharing is a strong catalyst for strengthening a sense of community. It also enables many Sitkans to live comfortably with modest cash incomes.

Sitka Households Using, Receiving or Giving Subsistence Foods February 1996-January 1997



Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence Household Surveys, 1996

Schools

Student Population Returns to Level of 1980s

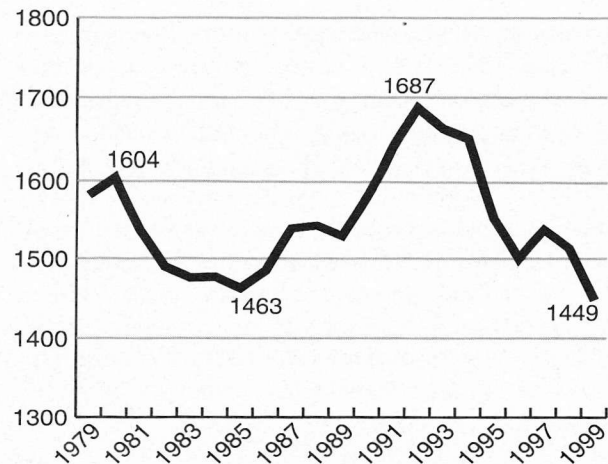
How are we doing?

The number of students attending Sitka schools has dropped by 10% since it peaked in 1992, returning to the level of enrollment of the 1980s. Although this is a significant drop, it is not the first time enrollment has gone down without a parallel decrease in the city's total population. The figures here do not include enrollment in Kindergarten, Pacific High School or the Home School/Correspondence program.

Why is this important?

Lower enrollment impacts the public school budget and the size of the labor pool in years to come. A drop in school enrollment typically reflects demographic changes in the population which may be a reflection of changes in employment opportunities or a change in the median age of the population.

Sitka School District Enrollment



Source: Sitka School District

High School Options Prove Important

How are we doing?

About one out of five Sitka High School students choose alternative educational options or drop out of school. Nationally, 25% of those who enter as freshmen do not graduate four years later. Sitka's dropout numbers have recently shown a decline. Pacific High School and the GED program probably contribute to this decline. The last column of the chart shows the proportion of total class enrollment of students who have left Sitka High from 1990-1999.

Why is this important?

A high school diploma is considered a necessary credential for going into the job market or going on to further education. Behind the credential are the educational attainment and skills needed to begin a productive adult life. Educational attainment leads to better job opportunities, higher income, and greater productivity. Civic participation is higher and the need for social services is lower for those with a high school education.

Sitka High School Enrollment and Tenure Patterns

4-Year Class of	Total Enrolled	Drop-outs	Pacific High School	GED	% Who Choose Alternatives
1990	132	23			17%
1991	156	17			11%
1992	147	25	3	7	20%
1993	150	20	6	3	19%
1994	157	28	11		25%
1995	183	17	11	7	19%
1996	136	16	18		25%
1997	163	15	21	1	23%
1998	186	14	17	2	18%
1999	191	9	21	4	20%

Source: Sitka High School and Pacific High School

One-Fourth of Sitka Students Apply for School Lunch Assistance

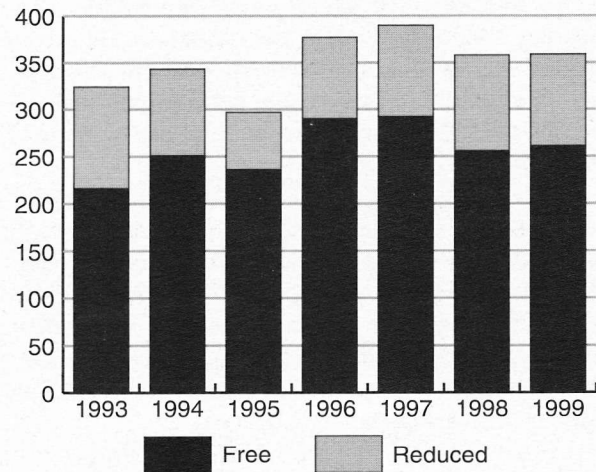
How are we doing?

From 1996–1999, a quarter of Sitka students have received school lunch assistance, a higher percentage than the preceding three years. While the number of students served by this program has varied, the percentage of the total student population receiving assistance has remained constant for the last four years.

Why is this important?

The qualifications for free and reduced lunches are related to family size and income, and have not changed significantly since 1993. The number of students participating in the program reflects an economic need among families with school-aged children.

Students Receiving School Lunch Assistance



Source: Sitka School District

More Assisted Living But Fewer Nursing Facilities for Sitka Seniors

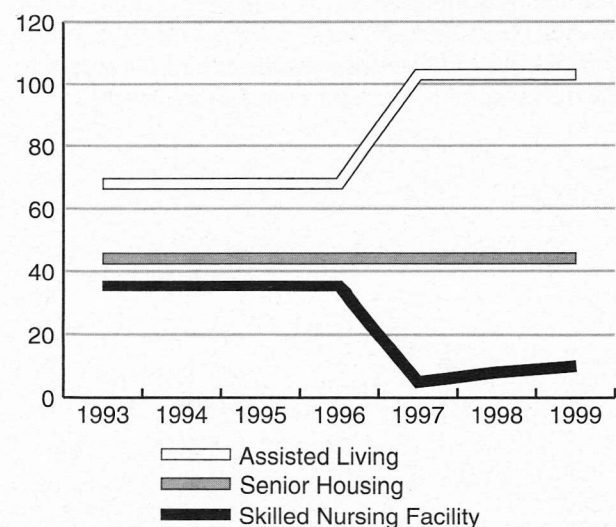
How are we doing?

Changes at the Sitka Pioneer Home have resulted in less skilled nursing care and more assisted living accommodations for seniors. With the increase in Sitka's elderly population, more adequate senior living facilities are needed. Expansion plans underway at Sitka Community Hospital will help to meet this need. Some seniors are presently forced to leave Sitka to find adequate living facilities.

Why is this important?

A community made up of mixed generations is a stronger one. Options for elderly people to live comfortably in Sitka contribute to that strength. Elders offer a sense of history and community memory that can be vital to the shaping of Sitka's future.

Number of Senior Living and Long Term Care Rooms



Source: Sitka Community Hospital, Sitka Pioneer Home, Senior Housing

Sitkans Seek More Health Care Assistance

How are we doing?

In 1997 and 1998, the total number of persons receiving various types of public assistance climbed to the level immediately following the APC mill closure. The components of this change are complex and sometimes related to changes in these government programs.

One important change was that, in 1997, AFDC/ATAP and Medicaid were separated, so that a family could get Medicaid without applying for AFDC/ATAP. This increased the number of people applying for Medicaid. The rising number of uninsured Americans and the rising cost of health care probably also contribute to the growing demand for Medicaid.

The number of AFDC/ATAP and AF/AT - FS cases has dropped. This is partly because of policy changes such as work requirements and the limited time a family can receive assistance.

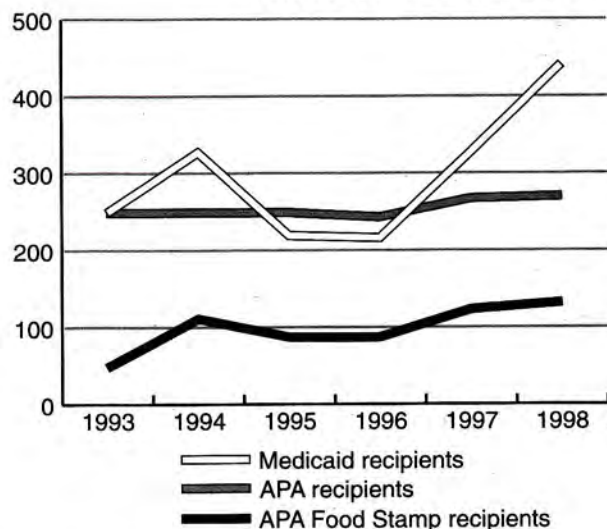
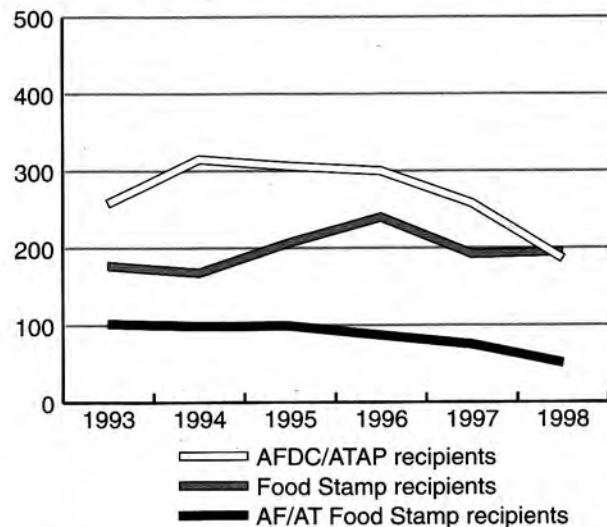
The two programs not affected by significant policy changes are Food Stamps and Adult Public Assistance. The number of families served by these programs has increased slightly over the last two years.

Why is this important?

Even when the economy as a whole is performing relatively well, there are those who do not share in the benefits. The total number of people receiving some form of public assistance is a measure of the extent to which Sitkans require help to meet basic needs.

Sitka Recipients of Public Assistance

Total	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Recipients	1083	1269	1167	1173	1242	1275



Source: Alaska Division of Public Assistance

Definitions:

AFDC/ATAP: Aid to Families with Dependent Children, which has been changed to Alaska Temporary Assistance Program.

AF/AT - FS: Families who receive both AFDC/ATAP and Food Stamps. The categories are mutually exclusive. If a family receives AFDC/ATAP and Food Stamps they are listed only in the AF/AT - FS category and would not be included in the individual categories of AFDC/ATAP or Food Stamps.

APA: Adult Public Assistance

Heart Disease and Cancer Leading Causes of Death

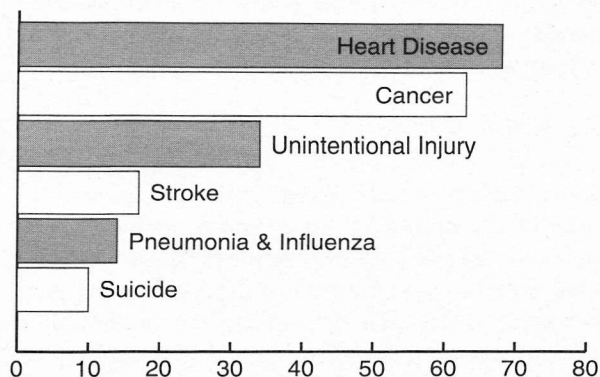
How are we doing?

Heart disease, cancer and stroke are the three leading causes of death in the United States, accounting for 40% of all deaths. In Alaska, injuries related to our occupations and environment are a leading cause, and in Sitka, these injuries rank in third place. Drowning is highest on Sitka's list of injury-related deaths.

Why is this important?

The reasons for our illnesses are often related to the way we live our lives—our physical activity levels, our eating habits, and our emotional health. These are greatly influenced by our environment—the availability of safe recreational opportunities, heart-healthy foods, and a strong network of friends and social services.

Sitka Resident Deaths by Cause, 1992-1997



Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, Annual Reports 1992-1997

Falls Lead List of Injuries Requiring Hospitalization

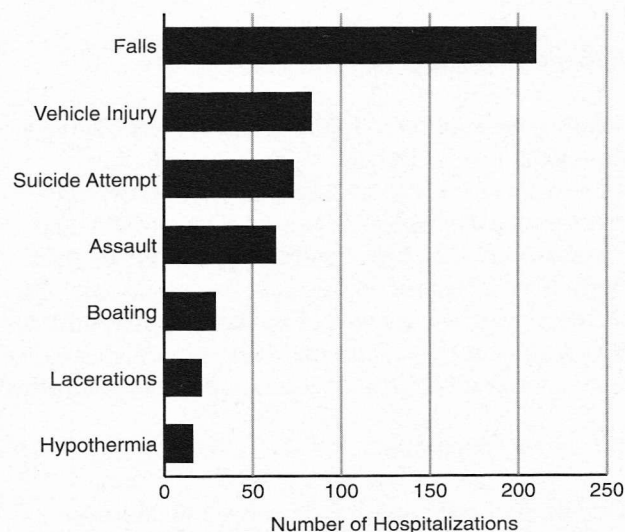
How are we doing?

Injuries were the cause of 540 hospitalizations from 1990-1996. This amounted to 251 hospital days per year. Alcohol was a contributing factor in 32% of these hospitalizations. Falls were three times as common as any other injury requiring hospitalization. 64% of all these hospitalizations involved men. Most of the suicide attempts involved ingestion of pharmaceuticals. 62% of the suicide attempts were by females.

Why is this important?

Injury hospitalizations cost Sitka in terms of health care services, emergency services, and time off work and away from school. Injuries affect young people in our community with 10-49 year olds being most at risk. Unintentional injuries such as falls and vehicle or boating accidents can be prevented through home safety checks and use of seat belts and personal flotation devices.

Sitka Injury Hospitalizations 1990-1996



Source: Alaska Trauma Registry

Health

Teenage Pregnancies in Sitka Lower Than State

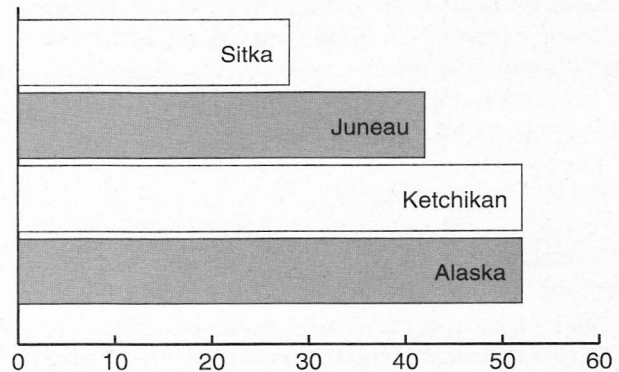
How are we doing?

The teen birth rate in Sitka is lower than other communities in Southeast Alaska such as Ketchikan and Juneau, and lower than Alaska as a whole.

Why is this important?

Children of adolescent parents are more likely to suffer health problems, lag behind academically and socially in school, and experience behavior problems. They are also more likely to become teen parents themselves. Most adolescents are not emotionally or financially prepared for the rigorous demands of parenthood. Their own developmental growth is often stalled as they struggle to meet the needs of their child and family. Adolescent parents risk losing educational, career, social, and financial opportunities for themselves and their children. Their frequent dependence on social service programs such as Medicaid and welfare increase the cost of those services across our society.

**Teen birth rates per 1,000 females ages 15-19,
1995-1997**



Source: Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, 1997 Annual Report

Reports of Harm to Children Higher Than Nation

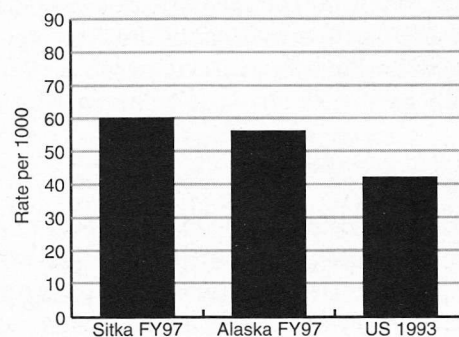
How are we doing?

Sitka's rate of reported harm to children is 50% higher than what it is for the nation, and close to rates statewide. Child neglect accounts for 46% of these reports, physical abuse 30%, sexual abuse 17%, and mental injury 7%. Reports of all these kinds of child harm have increased in Alaska in the last decade. This increase may be the result of increased public education regarding child abuse as well as the willingness of more individuals to report suspected cases to authorities.

Why is this important?

One third of child abuse victims become abusive parents themselves. There is a strong correlation between domestic violence and child abuse, with both these forms of violence frequently occurring in the same household. 90% of juvenile delinquents and adult prisoners report having been abused as children. Changing this situation for children and families in Sitka requires new partnerships between community members, schools, and law enforcement, state and health care agencies to break this repetitive cycle.

**Rates of Harm to Children
18 Years and Younger**

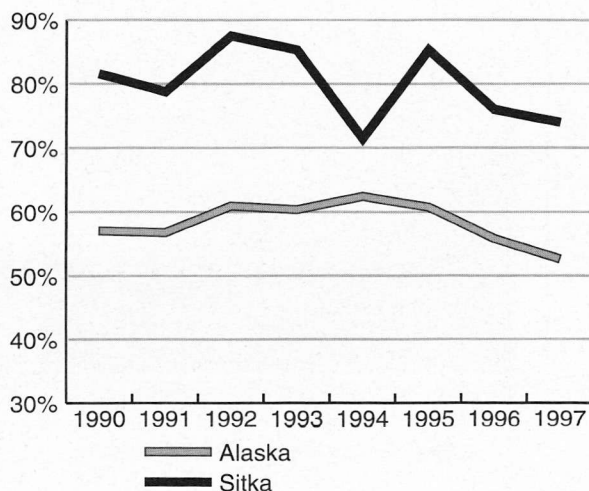


Sitka Reports of Child Harm	FY1997
Neglect	94
Physical Abuse	62
Sexual Abuse	36
Mental Injury	14
Abandonment	1
Total	207

Source: State of Alaska Division of Family and Youth Services

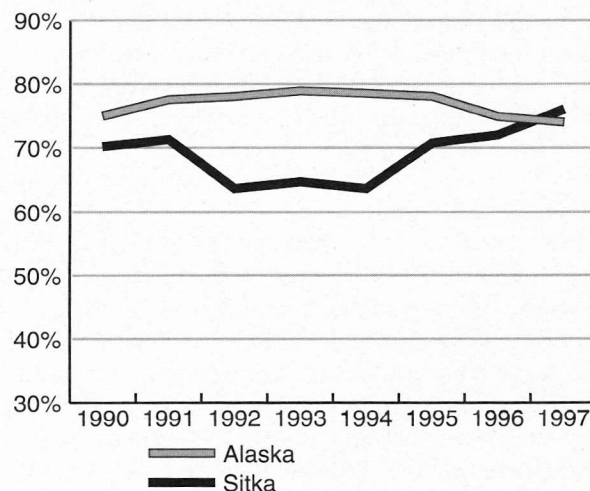
Prenatal Health Care Strong

Sitka Native Births with Adequate Prenatal Care



Source: Bureau of Vital Statistics, Alaska DHSS

Sitka Non-Native Births with Adequate Prenatal Care



Source: Bureau of Vital Statistics, Alaska DHSS

How are we doing?

Prenatal health care is strong among both Alaska Natives and Caucasians in Sitka. Among Alaska Natives, the trend appears variable perhaps because of the small number of births. Despite the slight overall decline over the last seven years, the percentage of moms who received adequate health care is 74%, 21% above that of other Alaska Natives in Alaska.

While the rate of adequate prenatal care has decreased among Alaska Natives, it has increased among non-Natives. Throughout the period for which data was available, non-Natives in Sitka have had lower rates of adequate prenatal care than both other Sitkans and non-Natives in the rest of Alaska. In 1997, about 75% of both Alaska Natives and non-Natives received adequate prenatal care, a rate higher than their counterparts in the rest of Alaska.

Why is this important?

Obtaining early and comprehensive prenatal care is the single best thing a woman can do for her health and the health of her baby. Prenatal care provides more than physical health assessment. It also looks at the nurturing environment, parent readiness, and the emotional environment. An infant's capacity to learn is directly linked to brain development in utero.

Reducing infant mortality, birth defects secondary to smoking, poor nutrition, alcohol and other drugs, and low-birth weight helps promote an optimal start for our infants. Low-birth weight infants (2500 grams or less) are significantly more likely than normal weight infants to have neurodevelopmental delays and disabilities. The effects of alcohol leading to FAS, the leading cause of mental retardation and the only cause that is 100% preventable, are well documented in Alaska.

Crime

Half of Violent Crimes in Sitka Alcohol Related

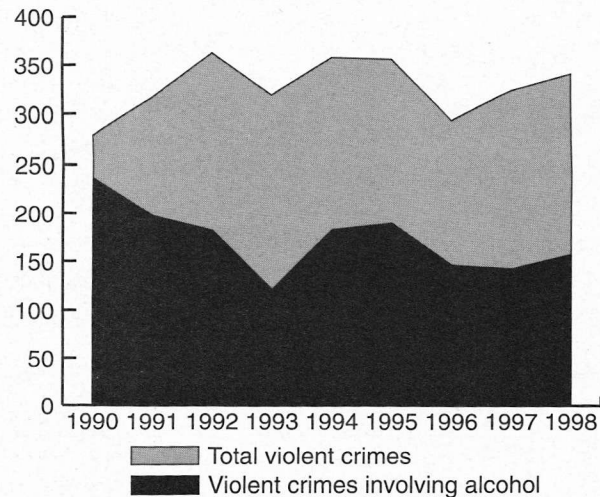
How are we doing?

The 339 violent crimes reported in 1998 were overwhelmingly domestic and other assaults and, to a lesser extent, sexual abuse cases. According to the Sitka Police Department, alcohol was involved in at least 50% of the cases, but they believe the percentage is probably much higher.

Why is this important?

The number of crimes reported is the best gauge of the level of crime in the community. Violent crime, and domestic assault in particular, has a painful and destructive effect on families throughout the community. Furthermore, crime creates fear and suspicion of one's neighbors that undermines the small town atmosphere that we all value so highly.

Violent crimes reported in Sitka



Source: Sitka Police Department.

Number of Non-Violent Crimes Declines Since 1995 Peak

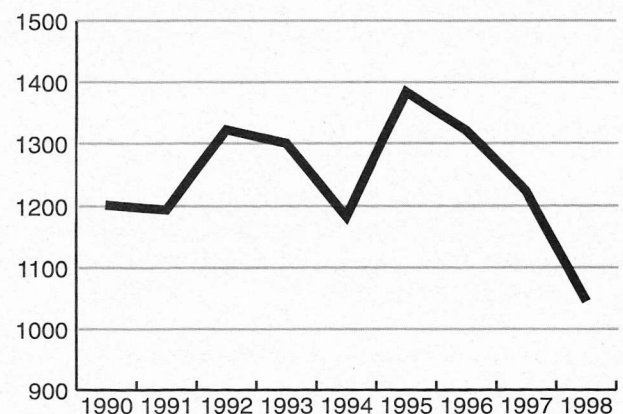
How are we doing?

The 1,046 non-violent crimes reported in 1998 were thefts, DWI, traffic crimes, criminal mischief, and minor consuming alcohol. The number of non-violent crimes has declined since its height in 1995 at 1,384 crimes reported. The Community Involved Policing effort may be one factor that has contributed to this decline.

Why is this important?

Non-violent crime has an impact on the overall quality of life in Sitka. Crime levels are an important reflection of the social fabric and health of the community. Efforts to curb crime can be an important catalyst to strengthen bonds between citizens and heighten their interest in and commitment to their community.

Non-violent crimes reported in Sitka



Source: Sitka Police Department.

Domestic Violence a Continuing Concern

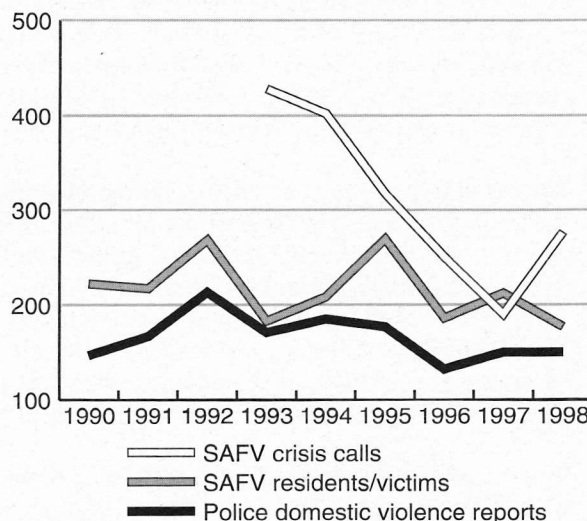
How are we doing?

Although the trends in crisis calls made to SAFV and the number of women and children seeking shelter are not conclusive, the number of those seeking shelter was lower in 1996 when the Domestic Violence and Victim Protection Act became law. This law provides victims more safety to remain in their home. For those women who sought shelter at SAFV, the average stay increased to 13 nights from 5 nights in 1991. This trend suggests that it is difficult for women to find affordable housing and employment after leaving an abusive household.

Why is this important?

Domestic violence is a very real and prevalent threat to our community, affecting hundreds of families. The demand for SAFV's services and the number of reports made to the police are the best indicators we have of the level of domestic violence in the community. At the same time, these indicators only reflect how often victims seek help, not actual levels of domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Calls, Reports and Victims in Need of Assistance



Source: Sitkans Against Family Violence (SAFV), Sitka Police Department.

Drunk Driving Arrests Down But Minor Consuming Common

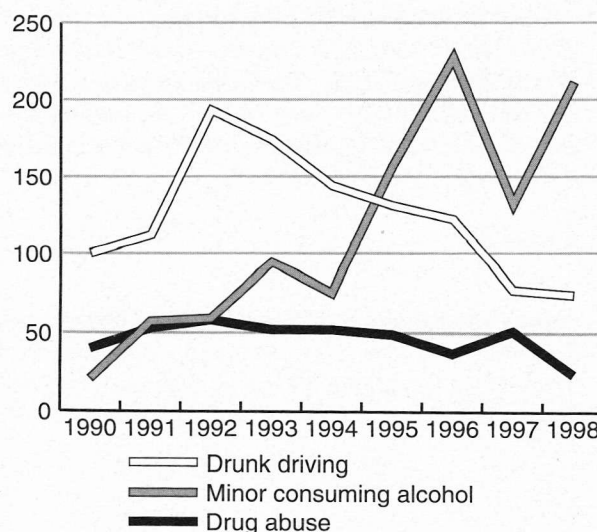
How are we doing?

Since its height in 1992, the number of drunk driving cases reported has dropped from 193 to 74 cases in 1998. At the same time the police department has made a more aggressive effort to pursue minors consuming alcohol. The number of minor consuming reports has risen from just a few dozen in 1990 to 211 in 1998. This trend may have more to do with police enforcement than an increase in drinking, but it suggests that alcohol consumption by minors is commonplace in Sitka.

Why is this important?

Drugs and alcohol are involved in at least half the cases of violent crime and are an all too common cause of death.

Reported Substance-Related Crimes in Sitka



Source: Sitka Police Department.

How *Sitka Community Indicators* was Developed

The Island Institute's Initiative on Community Indicators

When the Alaska Pulp Corporation closed its Sitka mill in 1993, the Island Institute shared the interest of many Sitkans in how our town would cope with the change. As time went on, there were lots of different assumptions and reports—some of them conflicting—about how the community was doing. Most of them related to Sitka's economy. A few had to do with social issues. However, the information tended to be in separate pieces. What seemed to be missing was an integrated view of overall community well-being.

The Institute began to consider a community indicators project as a tool to better understand what was happening in Sitka. We wanted the project to consider the relationships between economic factors, social issues, and environmental concerns. In the fall of 1997 we held a series of meetings—involving some 40 Sitkans—to identify possible indicators that would provide a broader picture of what was happening in the community. Well over a hundred were identified. These were evaluated and pared down to about two dozen. Institute staff gathered data and, with the help of a dozen local volunteers, evaluated and organized the information. Two public meetings were held to explain the project and invite comment and, early in 1998, a draft report was put together and circulated for further comment.

Publication of a final report in Spring, 1998, was stalled due to financial and staff constraints at the Institute. A year later, the project was resurrected, thanks to a growing collaboration with Sitka's Turning Point project.

The Involvement of Sitka's Turning Point Project

Sitka's Turning Point project is part of a three-year coordinated national, state, and community planning effort called *Turning Point: Collaborating for a New Century in Public Health*. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson and Kellogg Foundations, the project aims to transform and strengthen the capacities of and methods employed by state and local agencies to protect and improve the public's health in the 21st century. Alaska is one of 14 states and 41 community partnerships involved, and Sitka is one of four participating Alaska communities.

One of the goals of the Sitka Turning Point project is to collect information that provides a clear picture of the health status of our community and use this information to inform the public and assist organizations in their planning efforts. The Island Institute's Sitka Indicators project had already collected a good deal of information about the community. By adding some specific health indicators, the Sitka Indicators Report could fulfill Turning Point's goal. Thus the collaboration between Turning Point and The Island Institute.

This Report

Sitka Community Indicators presents a broad profile of Sitka, prepared by Sitkans, reflecting important information about our community. We hope it will be the first in a series of such reports, and will serve as a useful tool for Sitkans to use in evaluating the overall health of our community and shaping a sustainable future.

About the Sponsors of this Report

The Island Institute

The Island Institute is a private nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide frameworks for collaboration and creative thinking about

- how people can best live together in community
- how people can best inhabit the places they live.

This mission rests on a recognition of the dynamic tension between human social and economic systems and the natural systems of the earth. The Institute works to fulfill this mission by integrating the perspectives of the arts, humanities, and sciences in specific programs that recognize and explore community values.

Institute activities are organized under three broad headings:

- Fostering a Literature of Place and Community
- Fostering Civic Engagement and Civil Discourse
- Fostering Local and Regional Communication

The Island Institute • Box 2420, Sitka, AK 99835 • Phone: 907-747-3794 • E-mail: island@ptialaska.net

Turning Point Towards Health

Turning Point is a partnership of diverse Sitka organizations and individuals whose mission is to engage the residents of Sitka and seize the opportunity to create a new approach to community health.

Its task is to evaluate the many issues that affect community vitality and engage the public in a collaborative process to improve and sustain that vitality. Specific planning activities include

- examining the systems—physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, environmental, socio-cultural—that contribute to community health
- gathering relevant and reliable information
- actively seeking diverse public involvement in the project.

Turning Point is not incorporated or directed by any one organization, but is a volunteer working group of people with varied backgrounds and perspectives. It has no staff. Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium serves as fiscal agent and provides administrative support.

Contact information: Turning Point Towards Health, 222 Tongass Drive, Sitka, AK 99835

Executive Committee: Althea Buckingham, 747-8534
Kaats Saa Waa Della Cheney, 747-2589
Maureen Northway, 747-1719

Nancy Cavanaugh, 747-6777
Penny Lehmann, 747-3253
Lisa Sadleir-Hart, 966-8736

Acknowledgments

Many Sitkans have assisted in this indicators project and we extend our thanks to all of them. In the early phase of the project, a group of ten community members worked with Island Institute staff on data sources and presentation of indicators information. We are grateful to all of them: Harry Chartier, Donna Donohoe, Bob Ellis, Jim Franzel, Dan Falvey, Phyllis Hackett, Jill Hanson, Jeff Pearson, Bobi Rinehart, and Karla Zervos.

Abe Cambier served as Research Specialist for the project. Shawn Newell gathered and analyzed data. Nancy Knapp also gathered and analyzed data and offered invaluable advice and review. Reber Stein did additional indicators research and graphic design. Dorik Mechau and Carolyn Servid staffed the Island Institute's effort in the project. Maureen Northway headed up Turning Point's involvement.

The Institute is also grateful for financial support for its indicators work from the following sources: Alaska Conservation Foundation, Greenville Foundation, Henry P. Kendall Foundation, Interrain Pacific, Kongsgaard-Goldman Foundation, Leighty Foundation, and Skaggs Foundation.