

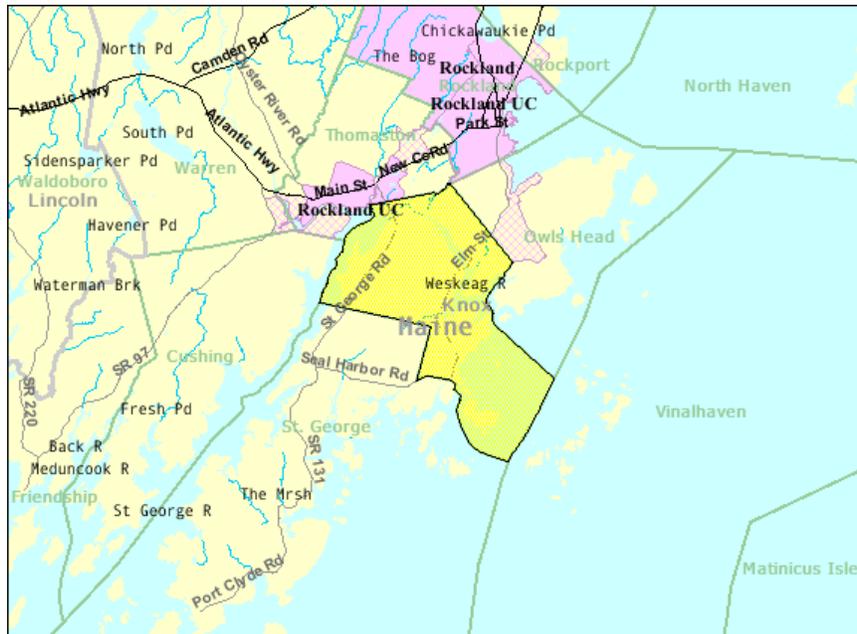
SOUTH THOMASTON, ME¹

Community Profile²

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Regional orientation

South Thomaston (44.02°N, 69.08°W) is located in Knox County, Maine in the Rockland Metro Area (State of Maine 2004). It is situated on the Atlantic Ocean it has a total area of 13.8 mi², 6.6 mi² of which is water. The village of Spruce Head is located partly in South Thomaston, and partly in the neighboring town of St. George. (*Note: Spruce Head is profiled separately.*)



Map 2. Location of South Thomaston, ME (US Census Bureau 2000)

Historical/Background

South Thomaston occupies the area known to Native Americans as “Wessaweskeag”. This name was shortened twice, first to Weskeag and then to simply Keag. It was first settled by Europeans in 1776. Part of current day South Thomaston was settled in 1765, but the town lines have shifted over time. The town was incorporated on July 28, 1848 (PBRCC 2008). The first industry in the town was lumber and several saw mills were erected soon after the town’s formation. The Baptist Church and meeting-house were established before 1800 (Varney 1886).

¹ These community profiles have been created to serve as port descriptions in Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for fisheries management actions. They also provide baseline information from which to begin research for Social Impact Assessments (SIAs). Further, they provide information relevant to general community impacts for National Standard 8 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and information on minorities and low income populations for Executive Order (E.O.) 12898 on Environmental Justice.

² For purposes of citation please use the following template: “Community Profile of *Town, ST*. Prepared under the auspices of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Fisheries Science Center. For further information contact Lisa.L.Colburn@noaa.gov.”

Demographics³

According to Census 2000 data⁴, South Thomaston had a total population of 1,416, up 15.4% from the reported population of 1,227 in 1990 (US Census Bureau 1990). Of this 2000 total, 48.2% were males and 51.8% were females. The median age was 41.1 years and 74.6% of the population was 21 years or older while 19.8% was 62 or older.

The most populous age group (Figure 1) for both men and women was the 40-49 year old grouping, followed closely by both the 30-39 and 50-59 age group. The number of females generally exceeded the number of males in the majority of the age groupings. South Thomaston also experiences a dip in the population of 20-29 year old residents, a trend seen in other fishing communities in the northeast U.S.

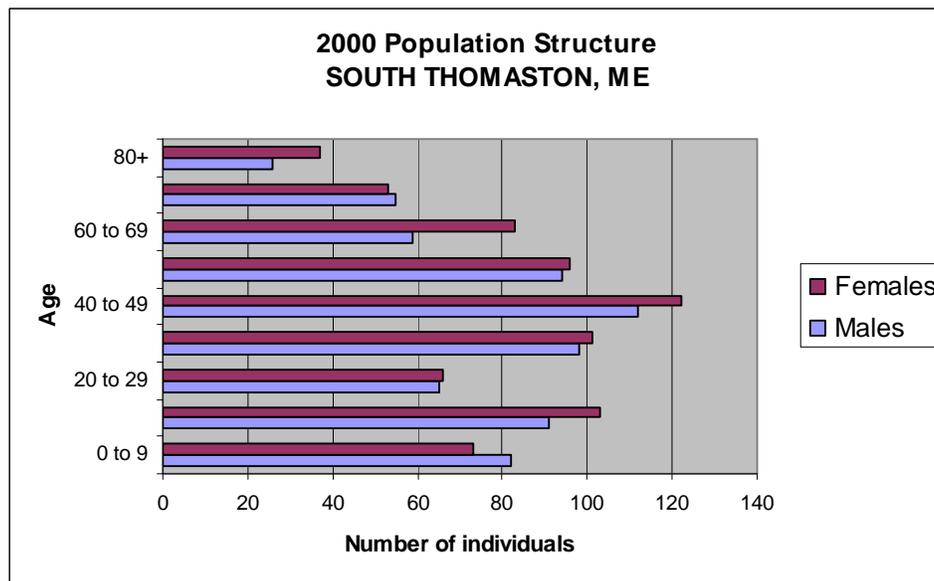


Figure 1. South Thomaston's population structure by sex in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

The majority of the population was white (99.1%), with 0.4% of residents black or African American, 0.4% Asian, 0.1% Native American, and none Pacific Islander or Hawaiian (Figure 2). Only 0.3% of the population identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (Figure 3). Residents linked their backgrounds to a number of different ancestries including: English (24.8%), Irish (14.0%), German (9.3%), and French (7.1%). With regard to region of birth, 67.3% were born in Maine, 29.8% were born in a different state and 2.0% were born outside of the U.S. (including 0.1% who were not United States citizens).

³ While mid-term estimates are available for some larger communities, data from the 2000 Census are the only data universally available for the communities being profiled in the Northeast. Thus for cross-comparability we have used 2000 data even though these data may have changed significantly since 2000 for at least some communities.

⁴ These and all census data, unless otherwise referenced, can be found at U.S. Census: American Factfinder 2000 <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html>; census data used are for South Thomaston town (cited Jul 2007)

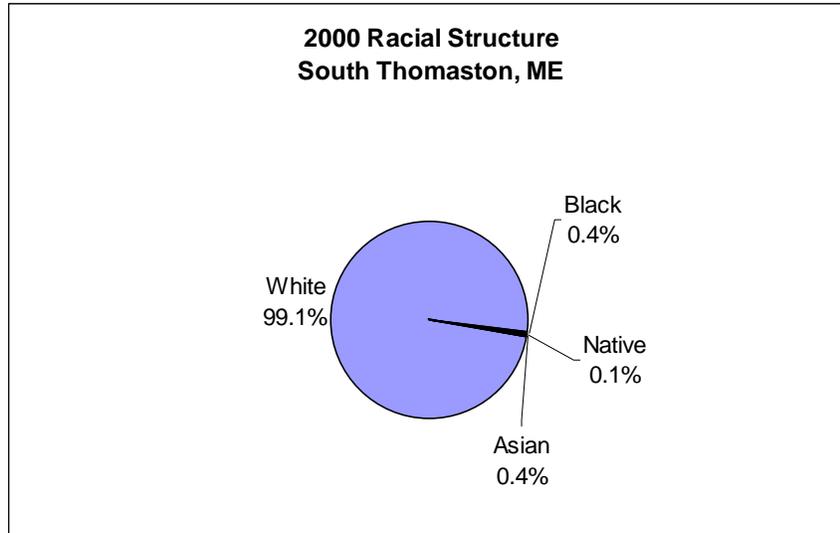


Figure 2. Racial Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

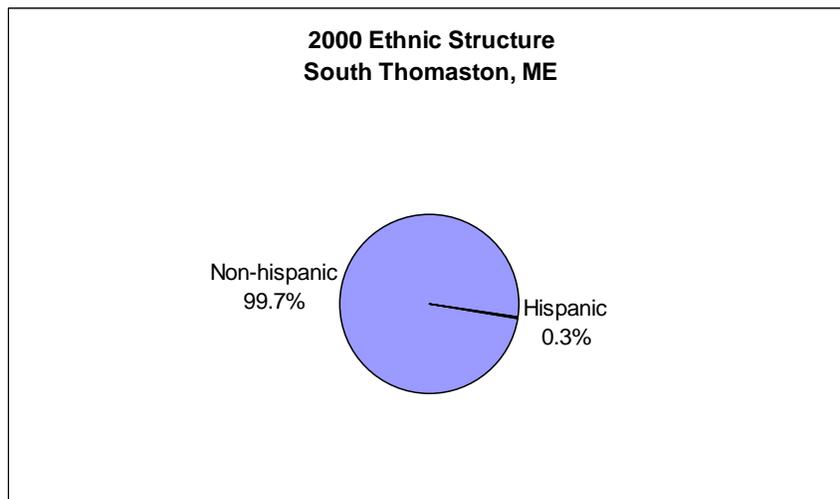


Figure 3. Ethnic Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

For 95.4% of the population, only English was spoken in the home, leaving 4.6% in homes where a language other than English was spoken, and including 1.6% of the population who spoke English less than “very well” according to the 2000 Census.

Of the population 25 years and over, 87.9% were high school graduates or higher and 20.6% had a bachelor’s degree or higher. Again of the population 25 years and over, 3.1% did not reach ninth grade, 9.0% attended some high school but did not graduate, 40.4% completed high school, 18.8% had some college with no degree, 8.0% received an associate’s degree, 14.9% earned a bachelor’s degree, and 5.7% received a graduate or professional degree.

Although religion percentages were not available through the U.S. Census, according to the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) in 2000, the religion with the highest number of congregations in Knox County was American Baptist USA with 11 congregations and 1,490 adherents. Other prominent congregations in the county were United Methodist (7 with 1,138 adherents) and Catholic (5 with 4,274 adherents). The total number of adherents to any religion was down 1.0% from 1990 (ARDA 2000).

Issues/Processes

To help rectify the ongoing problem of waterfront access throughout Maine, a \$2 million bond initiative was approved in 2005 to help fishermen buy their own waterfront access which would remain forever open to the fishermen. The lobstermen at Spruce Head Fishermen's Co-op applied for the funding. The 50 co-op members, who share a dock, office, and parking lot, have leased their waterfront site for 35 years. As of July 2007, the lobstermen prevailed and in exchange for their promise to preserve ocean access for fishermen into the future, the state is willing to give them \$475,000 of the nearly \$1 million they would need to purchase the quarter-acre waterfront site (Russell 2007).

In 2006, the State of Maine passed the Working Waterfront Tax Law, to address the problem of working waterfront property being heavily taxed based on its projected market value. The goal of this tax is “to encourage the preservation of working waterfront land and to prevent the conversion of working waterfront land to other uses as the result of economic pressures caused by the assessment of that land for purposes of property taxation.” The law requires the tax assessor to value the property based on what it is worth as working waterfront land, rather than what its market value would be if it were sold and converted to residential or other uses (State of Maine 2005).

Cultural attributes

The Art of the Sea Gallery is located on Rt. 73 in South Thomaston and has many visual arts relating to the ocean and sea side life (Maine Arts Commission 2007). Additionally, the Maine Watercraft Museum, which displays various boats and water-going vessels, is located in Thomaston (Maine Harbors 2007).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Current Economy

[The William Atwood Lobster Company](#), located in Spruce Head, is the largest lobster distributor in the state of Maine, selling about four million pounds of lobsters each year. Clients include Red Lobster and European restaurants and grocery stores in addition to many restaurants and stores in the United States. They employ 50 people during the summer months, and about 30-35 during the winter, making them the largest employer in Spruce Head.⁵

According to the U.S. Census 2000⁶, 62.7% (714 individuals) of the total population 16 years of age and over were in the labor force (see Figure 4), of which 1.6% were unemployed, 0.8% were in the Armed Forces, and 60.4% were employed.

⁵ Personal communication, Karen, William Atwood Lobster Co., 278 Island Road, South Thomaston, ME 04858, 1/24/06

⁶ Again, Census data from 2000 are used because they are universally available and offer cross-comparability among communities. Some statistics, particularly median home price, are likely to have changed significantly since 2000.

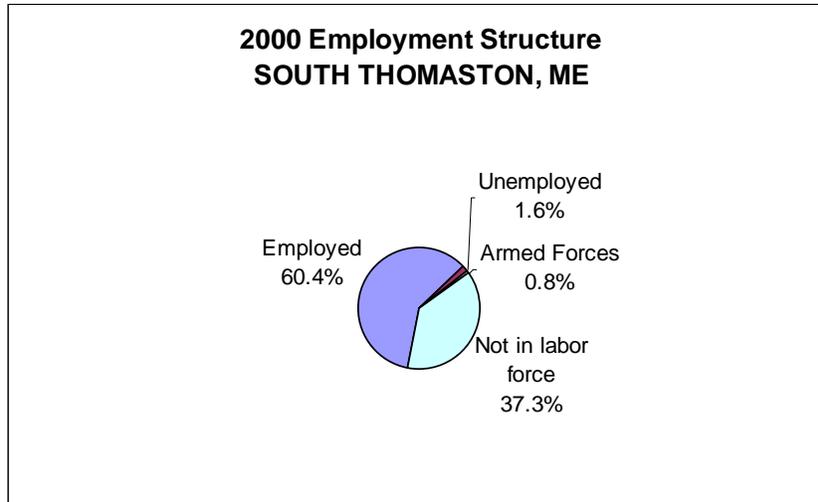


Figure 4. Employment Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

According to Census 2000 data, jobs in the census grouping which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining accounted for 5 positions or 0.9% of all jobs. Self employed workers, a category where fishermen might be found, accounted for 73 positions or 10.6% of jobs. Education, health, and social services (19.4%), retail trade (13.5%), manufacturing (11.2%), and finance, insurance, real estate and rental leasing (6.6%) were the primary industries.

Median household income in South Thomaston was \$43,594 (up 60.6% from \$26,402 in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and per capita income was \$21,303. For full-time year round workers, males made approximately 28.4% more per year than females.

The average family in South Thomaston consisted of 2.78 persons. With respect to poverty, 5.0% of families (up from 0.4% in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and 7.9% of individuals earn below the official U.S. Census poverty threshold. This threshold is \$8,794 for individuals and ranges from \$11,239 through \$35,060 for families, depending on number of persons (2-9) (US Census Bureau 2000a). In 2000, 30.2% of all families (of any size) earned less than \$35,000 per year.

In 2000, South Thomaston had a total of 804 housing units of which 73.9% were occupied and 85.6% were detached one unit homes. Just over one quarter (30.3%) of these homes were built before 1940. Mobile homes, boats, vans, RVs, etc. accounted for 10.6% of housing units; 89.6% of detached units had between 2 and 9 rooms. In 2000, the median cost for a home in this area was \$126,600. Of vacant housing units, 21.4% were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of occupied units, 17.3% were renter occupied.

Government

South Thomaston has a Town meeting-selectman form of government. There is an annual town meeting in March (Town of South Thomaston 2000).

Fishery involvement in government

There has been legislation passed in the town concerning the management of shell fish fisheries (Town of South Thomaston 2002). Additionally, the Chair of the Maine Commercial Fishing Safety Council is from South Thomaston (April 2007). There are 16 members on the

Council which is part of the Maine Department of Marine Resources (Maine DMR 2007). There is also a Harbormaster listed for Thomaston (about 4 miles from South Thomaston) (Maine Harbors 2006).

Institutional

Fishing associations

The [Maine Lobstermen's Association](#) (MLA) was founded in 1954, and works to protect the lobster resource and the lobstermen's way of life. The association was founded by lobstermen with a goal of empowering Maine's lobster industry by representing lobstermen with a united front. The MLA is the largest commercial fishing industry group on the east coast, and represents the interests of 1200 lobstermen.

The 'Keag Store in South Thomaston is a supporter of the MLA. Members often get discounts at affiliated businesses such as 'Keag Store (MLA 2007). MLA's president David Cousins is from South Thomaston (Russell 2006).

Fishing assistance centers

The Working Waterfront Coalition is a statewide collaboration of various industry associations, non-profits, and government agencies with the goal to support Maine's working waterfronts. The [Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program](#), administered by the Maine DMR, provides money to applicants such as municipalities, fishing co-ops, private commercial fisheries businesses and more, ranging from \$7,000 to \$475,000. The intention of the program is to preserve commercial fisheries working waterfronts and to help secure property for these businesses. As of December 2007, the \$2 million pilot program has reportedly supported over 400 jobs, 194 boats, and assured access to clam flats, parking, wharfage and fisheries in six towns (Maine DMR 2005). Voters [approved an additional \\$3 million](#) to continue the program in 2007.

Other fishing related organizations

The Chair of the Lobster Advisory Council resides in South Thomaston (Maine DMR 2007).

The [Maine Fishermen's Forum](#) was founded in 1976, and its goal is to provide continuous opportunities to educate the public and the fishing industry about marine resource issues and fisheries, as well as to provide a platform for discussion and decision making. The Forum also holds an annual three day event which focuses awareness on issues that affect the commercial fishing industry.

Physical

Located in Knox County, South Thomaston is located on Penobscot Bay and the St George's River. It is bordered on the North by the towns of Thomaston, Rockland, and St. George. Although the coast of the town is rocky, further inland it consists of fertile farmlands (Town of South Thomaston 2000). South Thomaston is four miles from Rockland, 30 miles from Belfast, and 78 miles from Portland. There is a municipal airport located in Owls Head (Knox County Regional Airport); the nearest commercial airports are the Portland International Airport and the Bangor International Airport, which is 68 miles from South Thomaston (MapQuest 2006).

The William Atwood Lobster Company has one dock in Spruce Head, where lobstermen sell their catch, and where they are provided with diesel and bait.⁷ There are several services listed for Thomaston (about 4 miles from South Thomaston). Jeff's Marine Service and Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding, as well as Maine Coast Custom Yacht Charters are located in the town. The town also offers 80 foot dock services, over night tie up, moorings, ramps, and parking (Maine Harbors 2007).

INVOLVEMENT IN NORTHEAST FISHERIES⁸

Commercial

Knox County is the smallest county in Maine but has the largest commercial fishing industry (Hall-Arber et al. 2001). Spruce Head (profiled separately) is a significant fishing community. [The William Atwood Lobster Company](#), located in Spruce Head, is a large lobster wholesale and retail facility, buying lobster from fishermen in Spruce Head, Tenants Harbor, and from the surrounding communities including St. George and Friendship.⁹ There were no reported federal landings for South Thomaston from 1997 through 2006; all landings were listed specifically for Spruce Head. However, South Thomaston does have a large number of vessels with owners living in South Thomaston, from a low of 18 in 1997 to a high of 33 in 2005. There are also a number of vessels home ported in South Thomaston, with the largest number 15 in 2004. These vessels had a minimal level of landings, however, with a high of just over \$11,000 in 1999 and no landings in several years (see Table 1). The high number of vessel owners in South Thomaston probably reflects owners who keep their vessels in Spruce Head, as well as the proximity of a number of larger fishing ports, including Rockland, Owl's Head, Tenants Harbor, and Port Clyde, all of which are a short distance away; residents may keep their vessels in one of these ports.

Please also see the community profile for Spruce Head.

⁷ Personal communication, Karen, William Atwood Lobster Co., 278 Island Road, South Thomaston, ME 04858, 1/24/06

⁸ In reviewing the commercial landings data several factors need to be kept in mind. 1) While both federal and state landings are included, some states provide more detailed data to NMFS than others. For example, shellfish may not be included or data may be reported only by county and not by port. 2) Some communities did not have individual port codes until more recently. Before individual port codes were assigned, landings from those ports were coded at the county level or as an aggregate of two geographically close small ports. Where landings were coded at the county level they cannot be sorted to individual ports for those earlier years, e.g., prior to 2000. 3) Where aggregated codes were used, those aggregate codes may still exist and be in use alongside the new individual codes. Here the landings which are still assigned to the aggregate port code cannot be sorted into the individual ports, so port level data are only those which used the individual port code. 4) Even when individual port codes exist, especially for small ports, landings may be coded at the county level. Here again it is impossible to disaggregate these to a port level, making the port level landings incomplete. 5) In all these cases, the per port data in this profile may under report the total level of landings to the port, though all landings are accounted for in the overall NMFS database.

⁹ Personal communication, Karen, William Atwood Lobster Co., 278 Island Road, South Thomaston, ME 04858, 1/24/06

Vessels by Year¹⁰

Table 1. All columns represent vessel permits or landings value combined between 1997-2006

Year	# Vessels (home ported)	# Vessels (owner's city)	Level of fishing home port (\$)	Level of fishing landed port (\$)
1997	11	18	2,925	0
1998	10	21	0	0
1999	11	22	11,194	0
2000	11	23	0	0
2001	10	24	0	0
2002	10	26	953	0
2003	12	28	1,952	0
2004	15	33	1,759	0
2005	14	33	0	0
2006	11	25	9,553	0

Vessels home ported = No. of permitted vessels with location as homeport

Vessels (owner's city) = No. of permitted vessels with location as owner residence¹¹

Level of fishing home port (\$) = Landed value of fisheries associated with home ported vessels

Level of fishing landed port (\$) = Landed value of fisheries landed in location

Recreational

There are both fresh and salt-water fishing available in South Thomaston. The Weskeag River is a popular spot to fish for striped bass, and there is access to the shore for saltwater fishing (Maine DMR 2006).

Subsistence

Information on subsistence fishing in South Thomaston is either unavailable through secondary data collection or the practice does not exist.

FUTURE

South Thomaston has a Comprehensive Planning Committee that meets once a month. The meeting is open to the public (Town of South Thomaston 2000).

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¹⁰ Numbers of vessels by owner's city and homeport are as reported by the permit holder on permit application forms. These may not correspond to the port where a vessel lands or even spends the majority of its time when docked.

¹¹ The Owner-City from the permit files is technically the address at which the owner receives mail concerning their permitted vessels, which could reflect the actual location of residence, the mailing address as distinct from residence, owner business location, or the address at which a subsidiary receives mail about the permits.

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