

# “RELEVANT, MEANINGFUL, RELIABLE, ACCESSIBLE”

Institute assembles a set of island indicators



## ISLAND INDICATORS

*A Report by the Island Institute*

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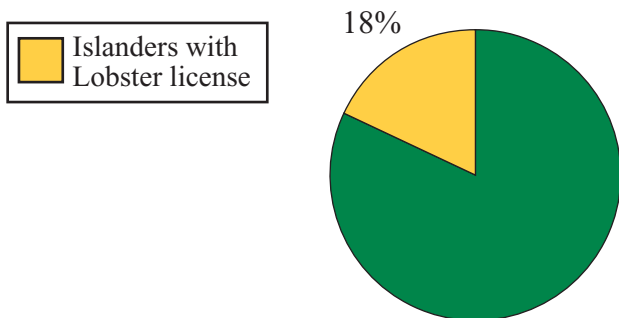
**A**n indicator is a gauge that says something about a community's condition, much as a thermometer tells us the temperature outside. The indicators described in the *Island Indicators Report*, assembled in 2006 by the Island Institute for Maine's 15 year-round island communities, convey a glimpse of island realities; they provide a snapshot, if you will, of what the islands look like today. Over time the data will change; thus, the Island Indicators Report will serve as a baseline against which to measure future change.

Some of the information was remarkably difficult to come by. Often, data were not available for all year-round islands. State statistics, for example, are often collected at the municipal level, which excludes Cliff, Peaks, Great Diamond and Chebeague islands, as they are (or were formerly) part of larger mainland municipalities. Census data, while often the best demographic information available, have limitations as well, because findings are based on a sample. For small communities, this can result in distortions. In addition, census data were not available at all for Great Diamond Island, for example.

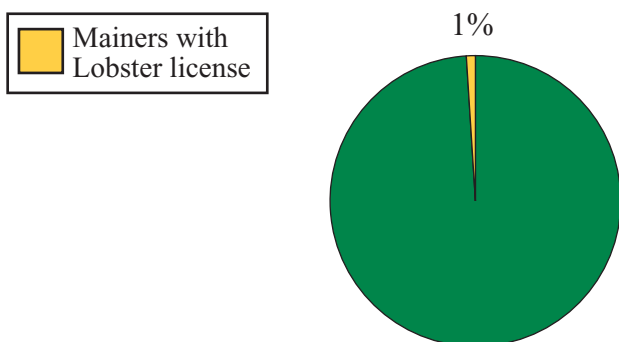
Despite these limitations, the available facts were assembled and sorted; what was most useful was selected using several criteria: it must be relevant, meaningful, reliable, and accessible. Several themes began to emerge and these key conclusions were formed:

- **Economics:** The heavy reliance of island economies on lobster fishing and tourism threatens their ability to weather downturns in either sector.
- **Income:** In contrast to popular perception, the median household income of most island communities falls below the state average.
- **Demographics:** While island populations are growing, the residents' median age is older than the state average, reflecting an influx of more retirees and fewer young people.
- **Education:** Island schools are highly valued and critically important to their communities' ability to attract and retain young families.
- **Affordability:** The rapid rise in residential property values and taxes is placing enormous pressure on year-round islanders to move off-island.

### Percentage of Islanders with Lobster License



### Percentage of Mainers with Lobster License



Source: U.S. Census 2000 and Maine Department of Marine Resources.

## ISLAND FACTS

- Maine's year-round island communities have seen a slight net increase in population over the past 30 years.
- With more than 1,200 residents, Vinalhaven is the most populated of Maine's year-round island communities. The least populated is Frenchboro, with just 38 residents according to the most recent census.
- According to community estimates, all of the islands experience at least a doubling of population in the summer; most have three to five times as many people during the summer as they have in winter.
- More than 23 miles from its ferry port in Rockland, Matinicus is the least accessible island. It also has the least amount of ferry service, with just one ferry a month in the winter.
- The median age on each of Maine's year-round island communities is higher than that of the state.
- While Maine's overall level of postsecondary attainment (22.9 percent) is lower than the national average (24.4 percent), Maine's island communities (31.6 percent) exceed the national average by more than 7 percent.
- On average, more than half of the islands' annual taxable sales occur in the third quarter (between July and September).
- On both Matinicus and Frenchboro, more than half of the population holds a lobstering license.
- On Cliff, Matinicus, Islesboro, Great Cranberry and Islesford, lobster licenses accounted for more than 90 percent of all fishing licenses in at least one of the years between 2001 and 2005.
- An islander earning the median income cannot afford the median house on any of Maine's year-round islands.
- On a scale of 1 to 10, the insurance industry gives six of Maine's 15 year-round island communities a Fire Protection Code (PC) Rating of 10, the lowest rating possible, which directly increases premium costs and makes acquiring homeowner's insurance more difficult (if possible at all). Portions or all of six other islands are rated a 9.