



Nye County, Nevada

45 languages

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Coordinates: 38°05′N 116°45′W

Nye County is a county in the U.S. state of Nevada. As of the 2020 census, the population was 51,591.^[1] Its county seat is Tonopah.^[2] At 18,159 square miles (47,030 km²), Nye is Nevada's largest county by area and the third-largest county in the contiguous United States, behind Coconino County of Arizona and San Bernardino County of California.

Nye County comprises the Pahrump Micropolitan Statistical Area, which is included in the Las Vegas-Henderson Combined Statistical Area.

In 2010, Nevada's center of population was in southern Nye County, near Yucca Mountain.^[3]

The Nevada Test Site and proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository are in southwestern Nye County, and are the focus of a great deal of controversy. The federal government manages 92% of the county's land. A 1987 attempt to stop the nuclear waste site resulted in the creation of Bullfrog County, Nevada, which was dissolved two years later.

The county has several environmentally sensitive areas, including Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, the White River Valley, several Great Basin sky islands and part of Death Valley National Park. Visitors to Death Valley often stay at Beatty or Amargosa Valley.

Nye County is one of 10 Nevada counties where prostitution is legal. The county has no incorporated cities. The seat of government in Tonopah is 160 miles (260 km) from Pahrump, where about 86% of the county's population resides.

History

Nye County was established during the American Civil War in 1864 and named after James W. Nye, the first governor of the Nevada Territory and later a U.S. Senator after it was admitted as a state. The first county seat was *Ione* in 1864, followed by *Belmont* in 1867, and finally Tonopah in 1905.

The county's first boom came in the early 20th century, when Rhyolite and Tonopah, as well as Goldfield in nearby Esmeralda County, had gold and silver mining booms. In 1906, Goldfield had 30,000 residents, Tonopah nearly 10,000, and Rhyolite peaked at about 10,000. These cities were linked by the Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad.^[4]

After the boom died, Nye County withered. By 1910, the population had plummeted to about 7,500 before sinking to near 3,000 in the middle of the century.^[5] With development at the military test site and increasing employment and resources the population stabilized. After the 1990s, when Pahrump became a bedroom community for Las Vegas, it had high rates of population growth.

There have periodically been discussions of moving the county seat to Pahrump, or splitting off the southern portion of the county, but neither of these ideas appears to have sufficient support in the county or state government.^[6]

From 1987 to 1989, Bullfrog County, Nevada, was split off from Nye County to form a separate political region. Its population was zero; its creation was an attempt to stop a nuclear waste storage facility from being built in the region.^[7]

Geography

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has an area of 18,199 square miles (47,140 km²), of which 18,182 square miles (47,090 km²) is land and 17 square miles (44 km²) (0.09%) is water.^[8] The highest and most topographically prominent mountain in the county is Mount Jefferson at 11,949 feet (3,642 m).^[9]

Nye County is in south-central Nevada. It is Nevada's largest county and the third-largest county in the contiguous United States, after San Bernardino County in California and Coconino County in Arizona. Nye County's land area of 11,560,960 acres (46,785.5 km²) is larger than that of Maryland, Hawaii, Vermont, and New Hampshire, and larger than the combined area of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Delaware. Of this vast land area, only 822,711 acres (3,329.39 km²), or just over 7%, is private land; most of it is public land managed by the federal government. Before the Treaty of Ruby Valley, the whole area was controlled by the Western Shoshone people, who say they never ceded territory here. According to the United States Census Bureau the county's Census Tract 9805, with a land area of 4,225.415 square miles (10,943.77 km²), comprising the Nevada Test Site and Nye County's portion of the Nevada Test and Training Range, is the country's largest census tract that has no resident population (as of the 2000 census).

Las Vegas, in Clark County, is 100 miles (160 km) southeast of Yucca Mountain. Many Pahrump residents commute 60 miles (97 km) each way to Las Vegas via Nevada State Route 160, which for most of its length is a four-lane divided highway.

Major highways

Nye County has a long stretch of U.S. Route 95, the main road connecting Las Vegas with the state capital, Carson City. Beatty and Tonopah both rely heavily on through traffic to sustain their economies. As of 2006, an average of 2,000 cars daily traveled U.S. 95 near Tonopah.^[10]

- Interstate 11 (Future)
- U.S. Route 6
- U.S. Route 95
- State Route 160
- State Route 267
- State Route 318
- State Route 361
- State Route 372
- State Route 373
- State Route 374
- State Route 375
- State Route 376
- State Route 377
- State Route 379
- State Route 844

Adjacent counties

- Churchill County - northwest
- Lander County - north
- Eureka County - north
- White Pine County - northeast
- Lincoln County - east

- Clark County - east
- Esmeralda County - west
- Mineral County - west
- Inyo County, California - south

National protected areas

- Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge
- Death Valley National Park (part)
- Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (part)
- Spring Mountains National Recreation Area (part)

Demographics

2000 census

At the 2000 census there were 32,485 people, 13,309 households, and 9,063 families in the county. The population density was 2 people per square mile (1/km²). There were 15,934 housing units at an average density of 1 per square mile (0/km²). The racial makeup of the county was 90.0% white, 1.18% Black or African American, 1.96% Native American, 0.78% Asian, 0.32% Pacific Islander, 2.98% from other races, and 3.15% from two or more races. 8.35%^[10] were Hispanic or of any race.

In 2006 there were 42,693 people living in Nye County, representing a growth of 31.3% since 2000. This was slightly faster growth rate than recorded during the same period for Clark County, where Las Vegas is located.

Even as the Pahrump area grew thanks to its proximity to Las Vegas, the racial makeup of Nye County was very different from that of Clark County. Non-Hispanic whites now constitute 82.7% of the county population. African-Americans were now 1.7% of the population, which meant actual increase of the number of African Americans residing in the county was over 50%. Native Americans were only 1.8% of the population now. Asians were a full one percent of the population. Pacific Islanders were 0.5% of the population and Latinos made up 11.0% of the population.^[11]

Of the 13,309 households 16.40% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 26.30% were married couples living together, 7.40% had a female householder with no husband present, and 31.90% were non-families. 25.70% of households were one person and 10.30% were one person aged 65 or older. The average household size was 2.42 and the average family size was 2.90.

The age distribution was 3.70% under the age of 18, 5.40% from 18 to 24, 24.00% from 25 to 44, 58.50% from 45 to 64, and 18.40% 65 or older. The median age was 43 years. For every 100 females there were 105.10 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 104.70 males.

The county's median household income was \$36,024, and the median family income was \$41,642. Males had a median income of \$37,276 versus \$22,394 for females. The county's per capita income was \$17,962. About 7.30% of families and 10.70% of the population were below the poverty line, including 13.10% of those under age 18 and 8.30% of those age 65 or over.

Like many rural counties of the western United States, Nye County experiences a relatively high suicide rate.^[18] According to the Centers for Disease Control, the annual suicide rate in Nye County averaged 28.7561 per 100,000 people during 1989–1998, the most recent period for which data is available. This was the third-highest rate among Nevada counties, behind White Pine (34.3058) and Lyon County (30.8917), but ahead of the overall rate of 22.96 for Nevada, which leads the nation.

2010 census

At the 2010 census, there were 43,946 people, 18,032 households, and 11,929 families in the county.^[19] The population density was 2.4 inhabitants per square mile (0.93/km²). There were 22,350 housing units at an average density of 1.2 per square mile (0.46/km²).^[20] The racial makeup of the county was 85.9% white, 2.0% black or African American, 1.6% American Indian, 1.3% Asian, 0.5% Pacific Islander, 5.2% from other races, and 3.5% from two or more races. Those of Hispanic or Latino origin made up 13.6% of the population.^[19] In terms of ancestry, 18.6% were German, 15.8% were English, 14.7% were Irish, 10.3% were American, and 6.1% were Italian.^[21]

Of the 18,032 households, 25.1% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 51.5% were married couples living together, 9.3% had a female householder with no husband present, 33.8% were non-families, and 26.8% of households were made up of individuals. The average household size was 2.42 and the average family size was 2.90. The median age was 48.4 years.^[19]

The median household income was \$41,181 and the median family income was \$50,218. Males had a median income of \$51,574 versus \$32,152 for females. The per capita income for the county was \$22,687. About 14.2% of families and 18.9% of the population were below the poverty line, including 27.8% of those under age 18 and 9.8% of those age 65 or over.^[22]

Education

The Nye County School District serves all of Nye County and Esmeralda County. The Districts Headquarters is in the county seat of Tonopah. The superintendent of the NCSD is Dr. Warren Shillingburg.

Communities

Unincorporated towns

- Amargosa Valley
- Beatty
- Gabbs
- Manhattan
- Pahrump
- Round Mountain
- Tonopah (county seat)

Unincorporated communities

- Carvers
- Crystal
- Currant
- Duckwater
- Hadley
- Mercury
- Scotty's Junction
- Sunnyside
- Tybo
- Yomba

Ghost towns

- Belmont
- Bonnie Claire
- Bullfrog
- Berlin
- Cactus Springs
- Carrara^[23]
- Gold Center
- Grantsville
- Ione
- Lockes

Historical population

Census	Pop.	%±
1870	1,087	—
1880	1,875	72.5%
1890	1,290	−31.2%
1900	1,140	−11.6%
1910	7,513	559.0%
1920	6,504	−13.4%
1930	3,989	−38.7%
1940	3,606	−9.6%
1950	3,101	−14.0%
1960	4,374	41.1%
1970	5,599	28.0%
1980	9,048	61.6%
1990	17,781	96.5%
2000	32,485	82.7%
2010	43,946	35.3%
2020	51,591	17.4%

^{U.S. Decennial Census}^[11]

¹⁷⁹⁰⁻¹⁹⁶⁰^[12] ¹⁹⁰⁰⁻¹⁹⁹⁰^[13]

¹⁹⁹⁰⁻²⁰⁰⁰^[14] ²⁰¹⁰⁻²⁰²⁰^[1]



Gold specimen from the Round Mountain Gold Mine



2017 Revelle Wild Horse Release by BLM, about 50 miles east of Tonopah and 12 miles south of Warm Springs, Nevada



Road from Carrara, Nevada, towards the marble quarry in the background

United States presidential election results for Nye County, Nevada^{[24][25]}

Year	Republican		Democratic		Third party	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2020	17,528	69.07%	7,288	28.72%	562	2.21%
2016	13,324	68.00%	5,094	26.00%	1,177	6.01%
2012	10,566	60.30%	6,320	36.07%	636	3.63%
2008	9,537	54.53%	7,226	41.31%	728	4.16%
2004	8,487	58.49%	5,616	38.70%	407	2.80%
2000	6,904	56.68%	4,525	37.15%	752	6.17%
1996	3,979	43.20%	3,300	35.83%	1,932	20.97%
1992	2,743	34.19%	2,561	31.92%	2,718	33.88%
1988	3,619	64.59%	1,748	31.20%	236	4.21%
1984	3,573	71.62%	1,269	25.44%	147	2.95%
1980	2,387	64.17%	973	26.16%	360	9.68%
1976	1,027	42.53%	1,261	52.22%	127	5.26%
1972	1,287	61.61%	802	38.39%	0	0.00%
1968	843	40.70%	728	35.15%	500	24.14%
1964	822	39.15%	1,276	60.82%	0	0.00%
1960	763	43.45%	993	56.55%	0	0.00%
1956	946	55.81%	749	44.19%	0	0.00%
1952	1,037	64.65%	567	35.35%	0	0.00%
1948	722	51.94%	595	42.81%	73	5.25%
1944	723	43.40%	943	56.60%	0	0.00%
1940	729	37.67%	1,206	62.33%	0	0.00%
1936	464	23.69%	1,495	76.31%	0	0.00%
1932	506	28.08%	1,296	71.92%	0	0.00%
1928	958	46.04%	1,123	53.96%	0	0.00%
1924	884	39.69%	454	20.39%	889	39.92%
1920	1,576	54.36%	1,007	34.74%	316	10.90%
1916	1,019	32.15%	1,601	50.50%	550	17.35%
1912	345	14.62%	869	36.84%	1,145	48.54%
1908	1,124	40.53%	1,219	43.96%	430	15.51%
1904	511	50.74%	389	38.63%	107	10.63%

In popular culture

Nye County was the site of the primary broadcast locations of American veteran radio broadcaster Art Bell, who was famous for creating and hosting *Coast to Coast AM*, *Art Bell's Dark Matter* and "Midnight in the Desert", the last of which is still broadcast on the Dark Matter Digital Network by a replacement host, Dave Schrader, chosen by Bell. He lived in the county until his death on April 13, 2018.^{[26][27]}

See also

- National Register of Historic Places listings in Nye County, Nevada
- South Egan Range Wilderness
- Weepah Spring Wilderness



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External links

- Official website
- Nye County Nuclear Waste Repository Project Office
- Nye County and Census Tract 9805, Nye County United States Census Bureau

Places adjacent to Nye County, Nevada	[show]
↖ Municipalities	