



COOK ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE Cook Islands

ANALYSIS OF THE 2011 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS

FEBRUARY 2015



United Nations Population Fund
Pacific Sub-Regional Office

Cook Islands Government, 2015

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Foreword



This youth monograph provides in-depth analysis of the characteristics of young people in the Cook Islands, as captured through the 2011 Population and Housing Census. It examines the situation of young people compared to the total population, in particular, their transition to independence, education, health and wellbeing, and work and employment. It is one in a series of census monographs on topics where statistics and information are in high demand, the others being on migration, gender, population and labour force. This publication provides new information and analysis to complement these and the main report on the census published in December 2012.

This work is an initiative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (INTAFF) and the Cook Islands Statistics Office (CISO), made possible with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The main target audiences are planners, policy and decision makers within the Cook Island government, but the report should be of interest to anyone involved in youth and development issues. The findings and data can be used for policy and planning purposes, and the monitoring and evaluation of the Cook Islands National Youth Policy 2007-2010 (currently being updated), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other relevant national policies and programmes.

We would like to acknowledge the work of INTAFF and CISO staff, in particular, Vania Kenning (Director, Youth Division), Charlene Hoff (Youth Officer, Youth Division), and Kevin Hosking (Senior Statistics Officer), and the support provided by Jessica Gardner, UNFPA consultant, in the preparation of this report. The financial and technical support from our development partners for the 2011 census is greatly appreciated: the New Zealand Government through NZAID; the United Nations through UNFPA, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

Finally, appreciation goes to the people of the Cook Islands who participated in the census, for without them, this publication would not have been possible.

Bredina Drollet

Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs

February 2015

Taggy Tangimetua

Government Statistician



Introduction



Young people are a vital part of any society, the future of the country's social fabric, work force, and community. The transition from child to adult is an important time in life. This report focuses particularly on youth from age 15 through to 24, by when many are established as independent adults. This is a time when young people begin to make their own decisions about their education, social behaviour, work, and family life, which impact on their future opportunities.

Supporting young people to make good choices and become productive members of society is a national responsibility. A high-quality education system, which caters to different abilities and learning styles, is essential for providing young people with the skills they need to function effectively in the adult world. Being able to seek advice from a range of people, such as extended family members, school counselors, and community leaders, is an important aspect of young people exercising their independence in making decisions. Social activities, such as sports and spiritual groups, provide options for enjoying the company of others in a healthy environment, personal development, and spiritual growth.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Official statistics are an essential source of information to design appropriate policies and programs for young people. In addition to counting the number of people across the country, the population and housing census gathers detailed information on every person residing in the Cook Islands. It enables data on the situation of youth to be extracted and examined to reveal the role they play in society and the economy.

Census data can be used to answer questions like:

- How far through school do most young people get?
- If they finish school early, what are they doing now?
- Are young people active in the work force?
- What types of jobs are they doing?
- What is their income in comparison to the rest of the population?
- Are young people moving from the outer islands to seek education or work opportunities?
- Are young people moving from the Cook Islands to New Zealand and other countries to seek education or work opportunities?
- At what age are Cook Islanders getting married and starting a family?

This report looks into these and many more questions about young people in the Cook Islands. It aims to provide an informative overview for non-statisticians on the types of information available from the population census.



It presents findings under six themes:

1. Youth in the Cook Islands – brief overview of the national context
2. Youth population and transition
3. Health and wellbeing
4. Education
5. Work and employment
6. Information and communication technology (ICT)

WHY FOCUS ON THE POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS?

The population census is one of the most significant collections of official statistics in the Cook Islands, covering every household and person in the country. It gathers a wide range of information, but does so using a limited set of questions, as to include too many would be burdensome on respondents and limit the quality of information. Therefore, the data gathered through the census is extremely valuable, but it has limitations in terms of the extent to which it can measure complex concepts.

There are other sources of statistics that are needed to properly understand the situation of young people in the Cook Islands. These include data gathered by the Ministry of Education on school enrolments, teaching quality and student performance. Also, information collected by the Ministry of Health on the types of illnesses diagnosed, doctor visits and hospital admissions, and number and causes of death, are essential for monitoring health outcomes and providing services. Other sources of information include immigration data on migrant flows, records from the justice system on criminal activity and prosecutions, and information collected by the many public and private providers of goods and services across the country.

This report is limited in scope to what the 2011 population and housing census reveals about young people living in the Cook Islands. It does however, refer to other readily available sources of data where possible.

It is hoped that the information is provided in a way that can be easily understood by people with limited experience in using statistics. Technical explanations are avoided in an effort to make it engaging and interesting. Every attempt has been made to ensure the information is not misleading, and is factually correct.

This report makes an important contribution to providing government officials with evidence for targeting public policies and programs. It is part of the national strategy to improve analysis, dissemination and use of population and development data as a factual basis for planning.



Summary of Key Findings



YOUTH IN TRANSITION

- Young people will be seeking opportunities to work and study as they transition to adulthood.
- The population pyramid and migration patterns suggest a large number of Cook Islands youth were living overseas at the time of the census (Figure 2).
- In 2011, almost one third of resident youth had been living elsewhere in the country or overseas five year earlier (Figure 3).
- New Zealand, Australia, and to a lesser extent, Fiji, are the main countries where returning Cook Islander youth had been living (Figure 4).
- The majority of young people are remaining in school until age 17 (Figure 5).
- Most young people live with parents or other relatives until their mid- twenties (Figure 6).
- On average, men and women are getting married around the age of 32 (Figure 7).
- A significant number of women are starting a family at a young age (Figure 9).

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Teenage pregnancy is significant in the Cook Islands, with 18 per cent of women age 19 having given birth to at least one child (Figure 10).
- Early childbearing is more prevalent in Rarotonga than the Pa Enua (Figure 11).
- Around 3 per cent of adolescents aged 15-19 have some form of disability and over 5 per cent of those aged 20-34 (Table 1).
- The most common forms of disability experienced by youth relate to 'walking, lifting and bending', or 'learning, concentrating or remembering' (Figure 13).
- Most of the deaths of young people are in the preventable categories of transport accidents and suicide (Figure 15).
- Significant numbers of young people take risks with their health by smoking cigarettes and/or drinking alcohol, with this being more common among young men than women (Figure 16-Figure 17).

EDUCATION

- School attendance rates are close to 100 per cent for both boys and girls up to age 15 but decline rapidly after that (Figure 20).
- The rate of school attendance declines with age more quickly for boys than girls.
- According to self-reported abilities in the census, literacy rates are high for youth aged 15-24, with 81.4 per cent able to read and write in Cook Islands Maori, and 96 per cent in English (Table 2).
- Secondary attainment is more positive for girls than boys, except for teenage mothers (Table 3 and Figure 23).
- Five per cent of people aged 15-24 have some kind of vocational qualification.
- Obtaining qualifications seems to significantly increase the chances of obtaining employment (Figure 26).



- The main reasons young people gave for not getting a qualification or studying were lack of interest or lack of time (Figure 27).

WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

- Young people make up a significant proportion of the labour force with almost one in five (19%) of the labour force being aged 15-24 (Table 4).
- Most young people have joined the labour force by the time they are aged in their 20s (Figure 28). Note that the labour force includes everyone who is either employed or unemployed.
- Among 15-19 year olds, the main reason for not being in the labour force is that they are still students.
- Unemployment for those aged 15-19 is much higher than for others, with over a quarter of both teenage boys and girls who have entered the labour force being unemployed.
- It is important that young people have the opportunity to develop their skills and confidence. The 140 young men aged 15-19, and the 116 women, who are neither in education or work (Figure 30) may be lacking such opportunities.
- The most commonly held occupation for young men (age 15-24) is as labourers (general or agriculture or ground-keeping labourers) with one in five young men in this type of job (Table 5).
- Over a third of young women are bartenders, waitresses, salespersons, receptionists or information clerks (Table 5).
- The largest sector of employment of both male and female youth in the Cook Islands is in restaurants and accommodation. Wholesale and retail trade and public administration are other sectors that employ significant numbers of young people aged 15-24 (Figure 33).

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- Landline telephones continue to be the most commonly used ICT (of the three measured in the census) (Table 6).
- Young people are more likely than the overall adult population to be using cell phones and Internet, but less likely to be using landlines.
- It is at ages 15-19 when usage of cell phones and Internet begins to peak (Figure 34).
- Internet usage is highest in Rarotonga (56%), where the options for access and relative affordability are better.
- Few people in the Northern Pa Enua use the Internet (18%) and the rate is not much higher in the Southern Pa Enua (27%).
- Young Internet users are less likely to be online daily than older generations (Figure 35).
- There are small differences in the rates of use between males and females (Figure 36).
- Young people are more likely than older generations to be downloading music, movies, or using the Internet for education or learning activities (Figure 37).



Youth in the Cook Islands



Young people are an essential and vibrant part of the Cook Islands society. With a small population, investing in youth is recognized as key to creating a sustainable future. So, what are the main issues facing young people in the Cook Islands?

- **EDUCATION:** the school system is free and is compulsory from 5 until age 15.¹ Completing a secondary school qualification provides a stronger case for employment and the basis for going on to further study. Access to secondary education is particularly limited in some of the outer islands (called the Pa Enua in Cook Islands Maori). Limited options for tertiary education motivate some young people to migrate overseas to pursue further education.
- **SKILLS TRAINING:** readying young people for adult life with the skills they need. This includes providing technical and vocational training in areas where the local labour market has increasing demands, such as tourism and related services.
- **LIFE SKILLS** are also essential to ensure young people make good decisions and can cope with the challenges and joys in life. Particular support may be needed for those young people who choose to relocate from rural to urban centres, or to migrate overseas.
- **DEPOPULATION:** Cook Islanders have the possibility to live and work in New Zealand and Australia, and many are enticed away by wider opportunities, a more diverse labour market and higher salaries. This has seen the populations of outer island communities shrink in number and there are concerns about the impact on cultural heritage.
- **WORK EXPERIENCE:** it can be difficult for young people to get employment when they have no or little work experience. Apprenticeships and programs that provide a combination of work and training can be the start that young people need to establish a career.
- **TEENAGE PREGNANCY:** starting childbearing early has significant consequences on both parents and their children. It often limits their education and work opportunities, and can lead to poor health outcomes for young mothers and their children.

This report aims to provide evidence from the census that can be used to inform and monitor the work being done to address these issues.

DEFINITION OF 'YOUTH'

The Cook Islands National Youth Policy 2007-2010 previously defined youth as young men and women aged between 15 and 34, whereas international definitions concentrate on ages 15 to 24. This report presents information most relevant to understanding the situation of young people in the Cook Islands. This is mostly for the age group 15 to 24 years, from the time they reach adolescence at around age 15, through to their mid-20s, by when they are beginning to establish their independence.

¹ Cook Islands Education Act.



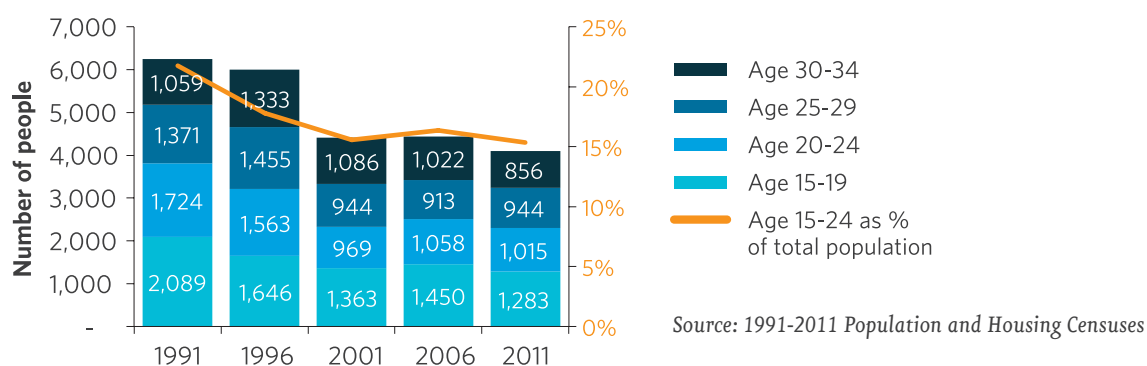
THE YOUTH POPULATION

The population of the Cook Islands has been decreasing over the last twenty years with a net migration rate of between -2 per cent and -5 per cent per annum. Every year from 2006 to 2011, about 280 more people have left the Cook Islands than have returned. Out-migration was much higher in the late 1990s, when the population was losing almost 900 people a year more than it gained. The tendency to migrate from the Northern and Southern groups is relatively higher than in Rarotonga.

This depopulation is reflected in the decreasing number of young people residing in the Cook Islands (Figure 1). In 2011, the number aged between 15 and 34 had fallen from 6,200 people in 1991, to 4,100. The target group for youth policies and programs tends to be those aged 15 to 24 years, and this represents around 15 per cent of the total population (1,200 young men and 1,100 young women). Providing adequate education and work opportunities to retain young people is an ongoing challenge.

The proportion of youth in the total resident population is decreasing

Figure 1 – Changes in youth population between 1991 and 2011, Cook Islands



NATIONAL GOALS

The goal of the 2007-2010 National Youth Policy is “To promote the development of young men and women of the Cook Islands so they can achieve the highest quality of life possible.”² An updated policy is currently under development and expected to be adopted in 2015.

The Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) 2011-2015 is also being revised.³ The existing plan has a number of strategies focused on youth:

- strong literacy and numeracy skills among young people
- skills and qualifications needed to contribute to the development of the Cook Islands
- equitable access for all learners to quality learning programmes
- optimum health for children and young people
- youth are given the opportunity to grow as valuable members of society

² Ministry of Internal Affairs. Cook Islands National Youth Policy 2007–2010, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

³ See <http://www.mfem.gov.ck/mfemdocs/amd/472-nsdp-2011-2015/file>



Once adopted, the new youth policy and national strategic plan will establish a solid framework for supporting young people to fulfil their potential and transition into adulthood with the skills and confidence needed to be productive members of society. The census and this report are providing input to this policy development process. It is an important source of evidence on the situation of young people at a point in time, which can be used to influence and prioritise youth development activities.

Successful policy implementation relies on cooperation and coordination between young people themselves, and the main actors in youth development. These are the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Youth Division), which is the government agency responsible for youth policy, non-governmental organizations for youth, and other key stakeholders, such as ministries of education, health, justice, and community leaders, churches and youth groups.



Youth in Transition



There are important transitions that young people go through as they become independent adults. A number of these events begin to occur between ages 15-24, such as leaving school and entering the work force. Other significant transition points are moving out from the family home to live independently, getting married and starting a family. This chapter looks at how young people fit in to the overall population structure of the Cook Islands and at what points they are likely to leave school, move from the family home to live independently, get married and start their own families.

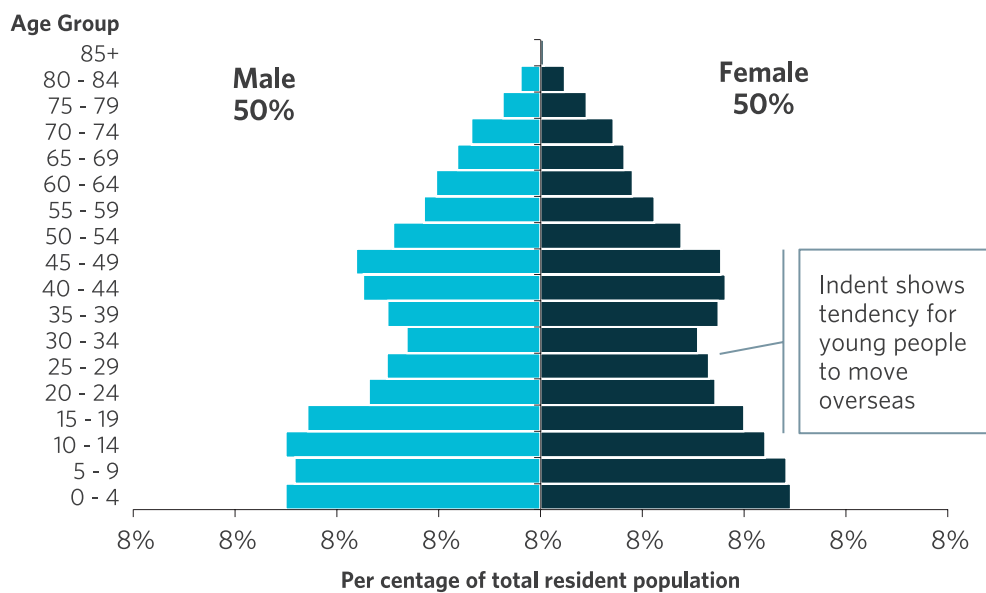
Key findings

- Young people will be seeking opportunities to work and study as they transition to adulthood.
- The population pyramid and migration patterns suggest a large number of Cook Islands youth were living overseas at the time of the census (Figure 2).
- In 2011, almost one third of resident youth had been living elsewhere in the country or overseas five year earlier (Figure 3).
- New Zealand, Australia, and to a lesser extent, Fiji, are the main countries where returning Cook Islander youth had been living (Figure 4).
- The majority of young people are remaining in school until age 17 (Figure 5).
- Most young people live with parents or other relatives until their mid- twenties (Figure 6).
- On average, men and women are getting married around the age of 32 (Figure 7).
- A significant number of women are starting a family at a young age (Figure 9).

The age-sex structure of the population (Figure 2) reveals important findings for the development of youth policies and programs. The dent visible for those aged 20-39 shows the high proportion of young people missing at the time of the census, most likely because they have moved overseas to New Zealand or Australia for work or education opportunities.

The number of children in each of the age groups below 15 is fairly even and reflects the fact that the Cook Islands fertility rate is more aligned with developed countries such as New Zealand and Australia, rather than other Pacific Island states. To illustrate, the average number of children ever born to Cook Islands women is 2.6; in New Zealand it is 2.2 and in the Solomon Islands, the average is 4.1 children per woman.

Figure 2 – Age-sex structure of the resident population, Cook Islands, 2011

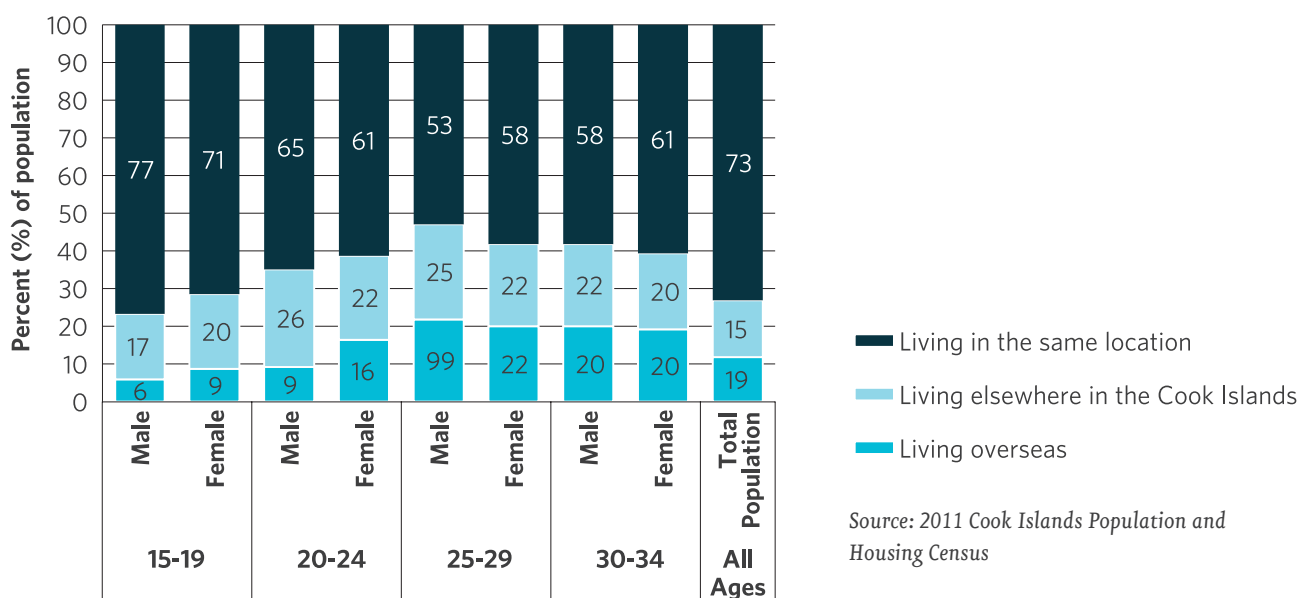


Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

Migration is a significant issue for Cook Islanders. While most young people were living in the same location in 2011 as they were in 2006, almost one third (31%) were living elsewhere in the country or overseas five years prior (Figure 3). This illustrates the large rural to urban drift of young people within the country. Also, the higher rates of people who had previously been living overseas evident among those aged in their 20s and 30s illustrates a tendency for people to migrate to, or return, to the Cook Islands. Among the 2,307 people aged 15-24, there were 486 young people were living elsewhere in the Cook Islands five years previously (21%), and another 224 were living overseas (10%). Differences between migration patterns of men and women are shown in the graph below.

Youth and migration – where were they living five years earlier?

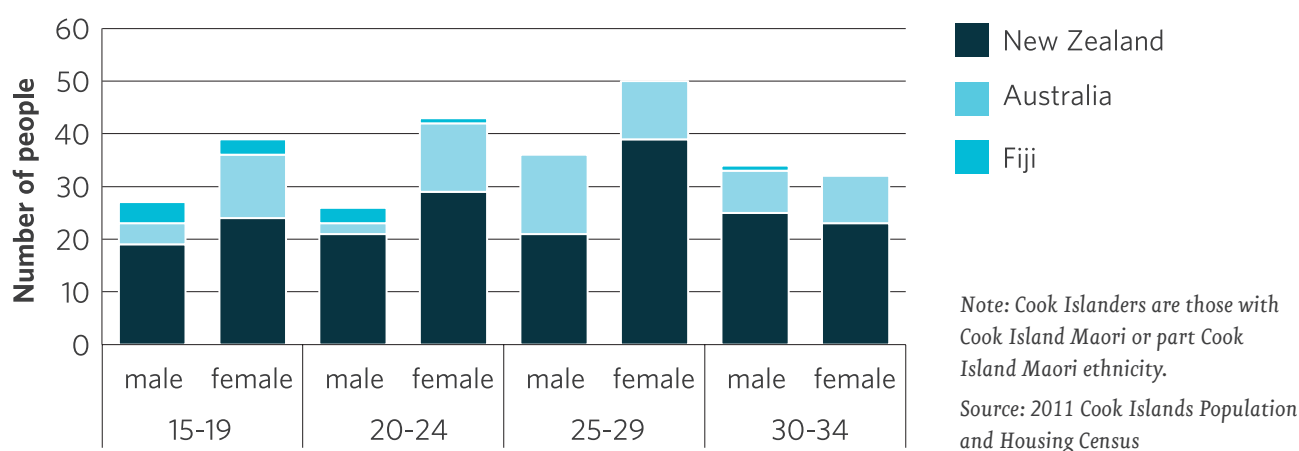
Figure 3 – Address five years before the census (2006), by sex and age, Cook Islands, 2011



Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

Of those 224 migrants aged 15-24 who had been living overseas in 2006, there are 135 who are Cook Islanders (Cook Island Maori or part Cook Island Maori ethnicity). Most had been living in New Zealand (Figure 4), with a significant but smaller proportion in Australia. A much smaller number again were living in Fiji. The reasons for being overseas were not asked.

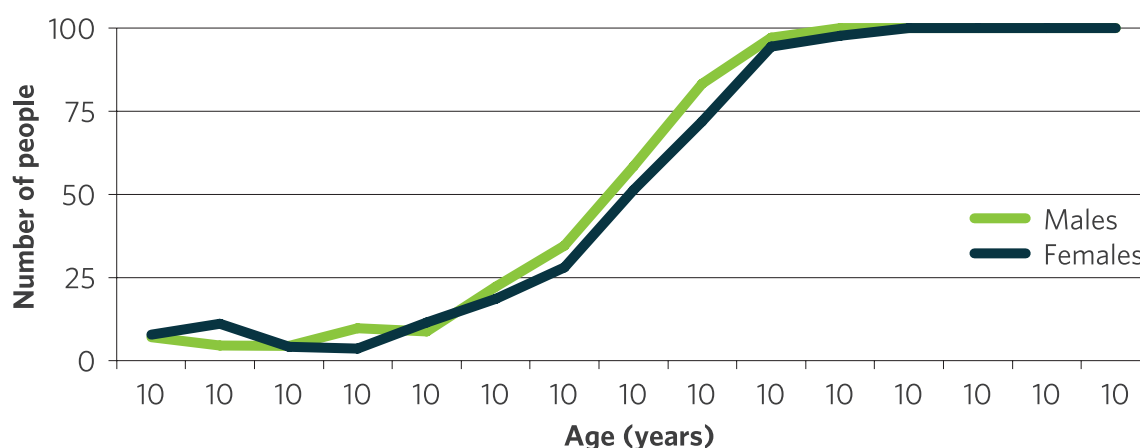
Figure 4 – Top three countries where young Cook Islanders were living in 2006, by country of residence, sex and age group, Cook Islands



LEAVING SCHOOL

Almost all young people in the Cook Islands have been to school and tend to remain there until at least the compulsory age of 16.⁴ The proportion of 13 and 14 year olds attending school were 99 and 98 per cent respectively. As Figure 5 shows, attendance starts to drop significantly after age 15 and by the age of 19, almost all have left school (94% of girls and 97% of boys).

Figure 5 – Proportion of young people who have left school, by age, Cook Islands, 2011



Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

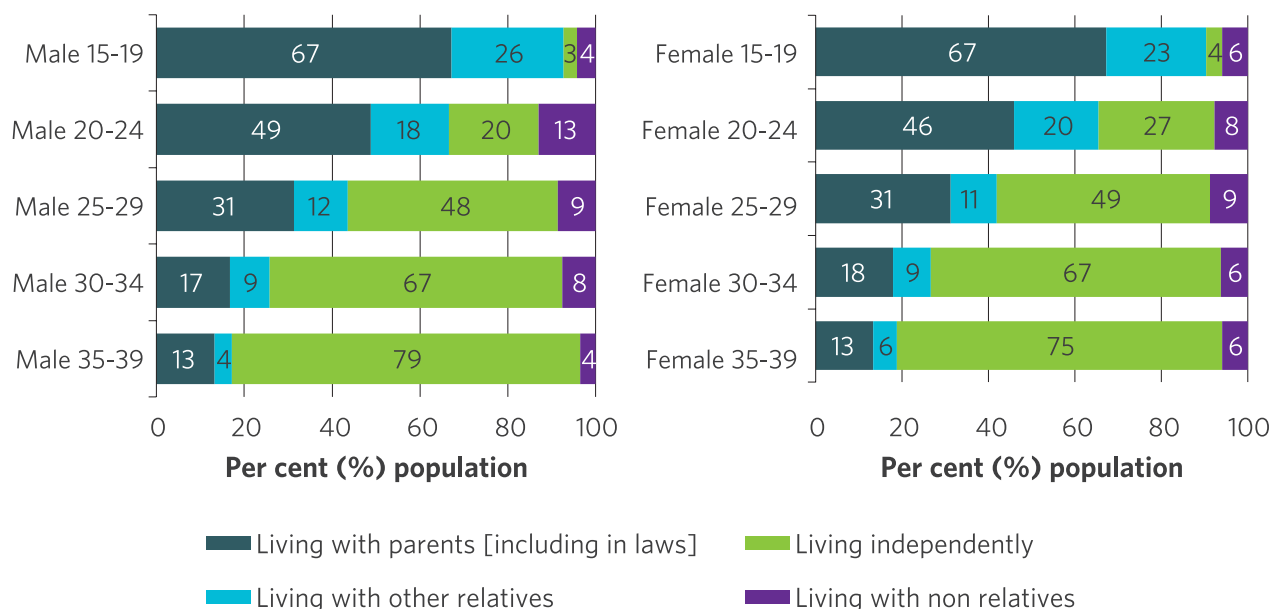
⁴ The compulsory age was 15 years until 2012 when the Education Act was revised to increase the age to 16 years.

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

Two thirds of boys and girls between 15 and 19 are living with their parents or in-laws, and a further quarter are living with other relatives. Less than 10 per cent are living independently or with non-relatives. Not surprisingly, the proportions change significantly for older age groups with smaller proportions continuing to live with their parents or other relatives (Figure 6).

Most young people live with parents or other relatives

Figure 6 – Living arrangements of people aged 15-39, by sex, Cook Islands, 2011



MARRIAGE

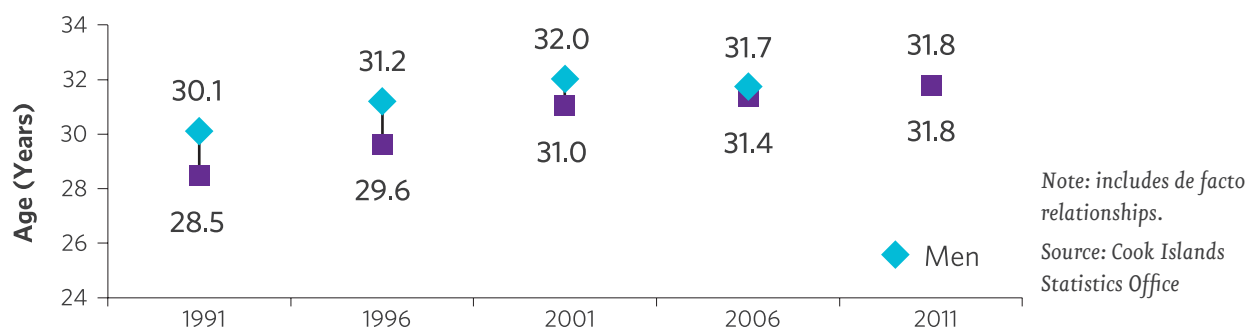
Marriage is a significant event in life, leading to the creation of a new family nucleus, with the birth of children often to follow. The earlier people get married, the more likely they are to start childbearing at a young age and have a larger number of children, both being a risk to maternal and child health.

Women and men tend to get married around the same age in the Cook Islands (Figure 7) and in 2011 the average age at first marriage was 31.8 years old for both men and women. This is older than other Pacific Island countries where the age at first marriage tends to be in the early twenties. By comparison, in 2006 in New Zealand, the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) was 27.0 years for men and 25.6 for women. For the same year in Australia, it was 31.6 for men and 29.7 for women. As shown in Figure 7, Cook Islands is following the global trend of an increasing mean age at first marriage.⁵

⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013). *World Marriage Data 2012* (POP/DB/Marr/Rev2012).

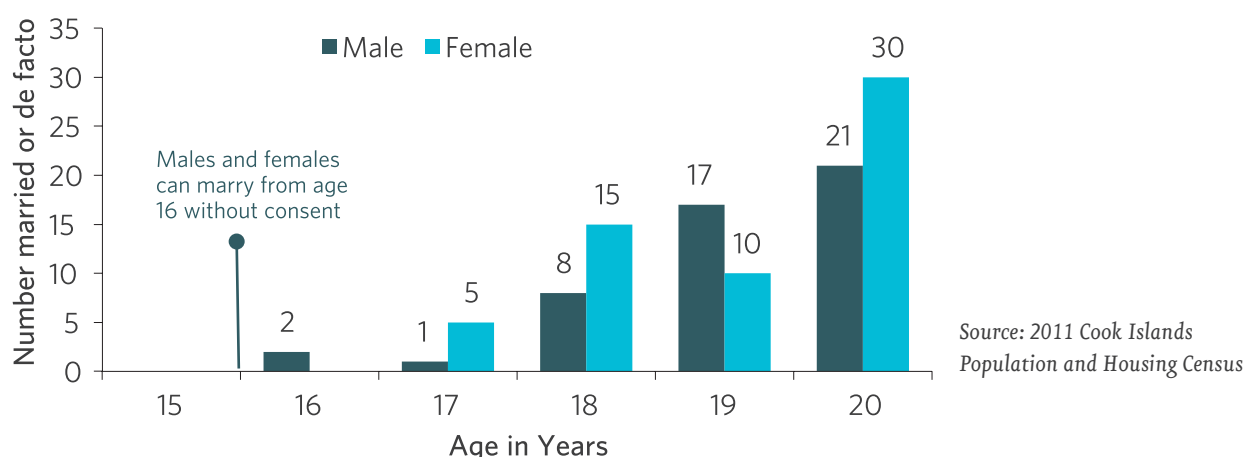
Women and men tend to get married at close to the same age

Figure 7 – Singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) by sex, Cook Islands, 1991-2011



The legal age for marriage for both males and females is 16 years, although the international recommended age is 18.⁶ Marriage before age 20 is not that common for both men and women (Figure 8). There were only 58 men and women aged under 20 who were married or de facto at the time of the census.

Figure 8 – Number of young people married or de facto, by sex, age 15-20 years, Cook Islands, 2011



BIRTH OF FIRST CHILD

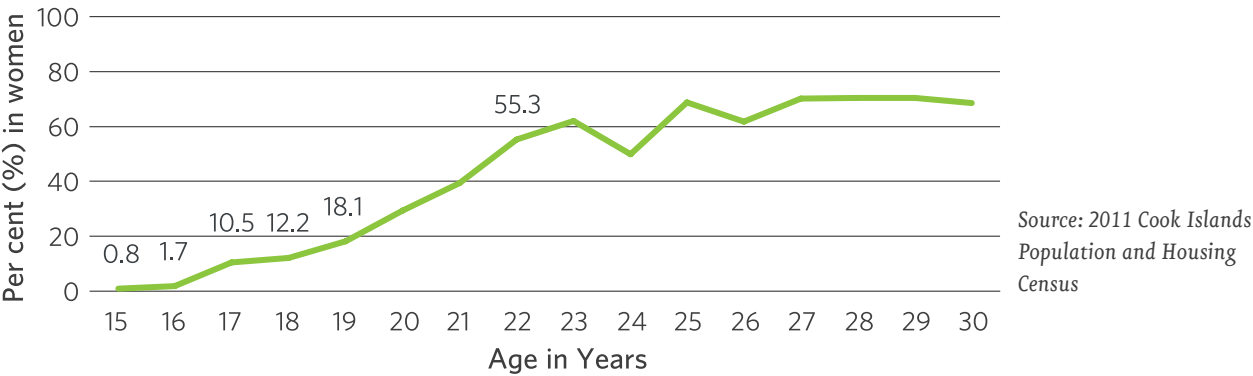
The arrival of the first child is a major event in the lives of young people. The census asks every woman aged 15 and above if they have ever given birth, so we know the situation for women, but not for men. Although Cook Islanders marry later (Figure 7), having children at a young age is fairly common for women. In 2011, around 18 per cent of women aged 19 have given birth to at least one child, and more than half (55%) of women have done so by age 22 (Figure 9).

As of 2011, the teenage fertility rate is 51 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19. This is relatively high in comparison to other Pacific Island countries, as discussed in the chapter on health and wellbeing below. However, teenage fertility has declined from 82 births per 1,000 women in 1996, to the 2011 figure of 51.

⁶ Marriage Act, 1973



Figure 9 – Proportion (%) of women aged 15-30 who have given birth, by age, Cook Islands, 2011





Health and Wellbeing



Good health is an essential ingredient for quality of life, social harmony and economic prosperity. The census provides limited data on health outcomes, with more detailed information available from administrative health systems maintained by the Ministry for Health. However, there are a number of important health-related indicators available from the population census. They include population figures that illustrate changes in demand for health services, adolescent fertility, alcohol consumption, smoking, and prevalence of different types of health conditions or disabilities.

Key findings

- Teenage pregnancy is significant in the Cook Islands, with 18 per cent of 19-year-old women having given birth to at least one child (Figure 10).
- Early childbearing is more prevalent in Rarotonga than the Pa Enua (Figure 11).
- Around 3 per cent of adolescents aged 15-19 have some form of disability and over 5 per cent of those aged 20-34 (Table 1).
- The most common forms of disability experienced by youth relate to 'walking, lifting and bending', or 'learning, concentrating or remembering' (Figure 13).
- Most of the deaths of young people are in the preventable categories of transport accidents and suicide (Figure 15).
- Significant numbers of young people take risks with their health by smoking cigarettes and/or drinking alcohol, with this being more common among young men than women (Figure 16-Figure 17).

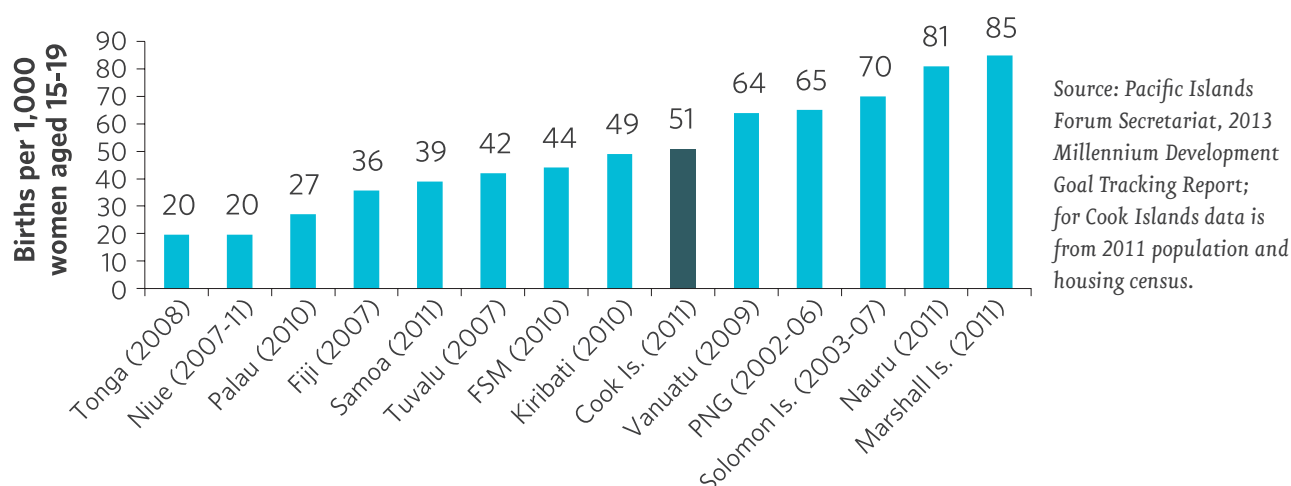
ADOLESCENT FERTILITY

Adolescent fertility refers to the proportion of young women aged 15-19 who have given birth. It is relatively high in Cook Islands at 51 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 (Figure 10). Starting childbearing at a young age can have a number of negative consequences. Research shows there are higher chances of mortality and morbidity for teenage mothers and their children.⁷ Teenage pregnancy and childbirth often results in young women ending their education early. Early childbirth also extends the period of time over which women have children, possibly increasing the fertility rate.

⁷ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 2012. *Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage*. New York.

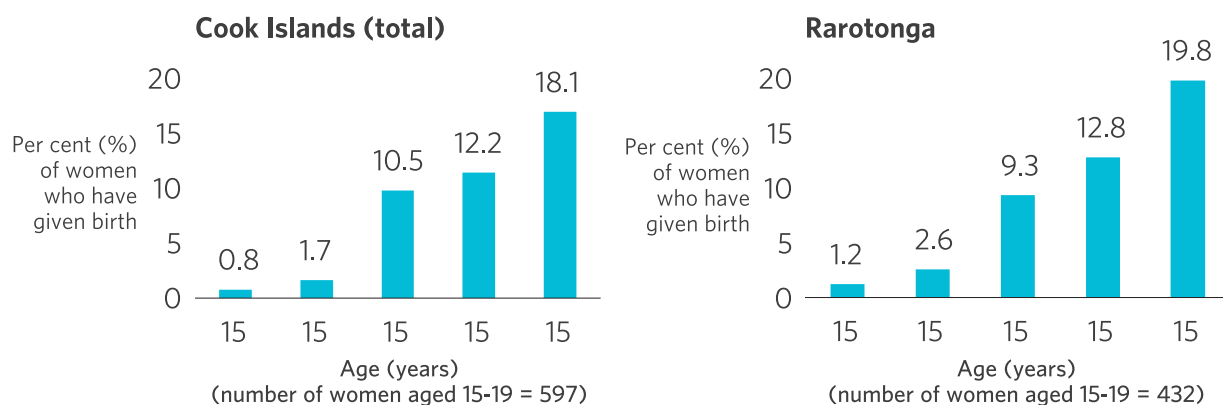
Teenage pregnancy is high in the Cook Islands

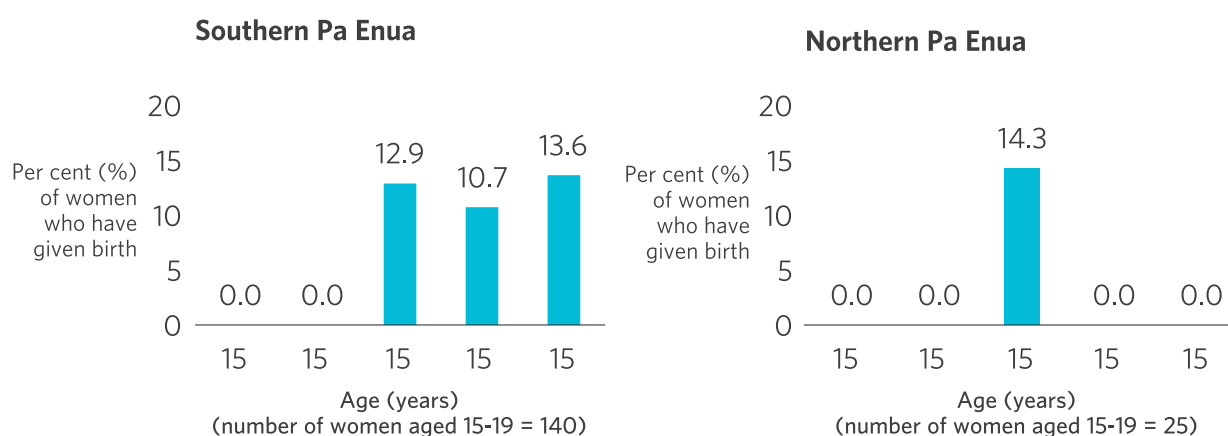
Figure 10 – Adolescent (age 15-19) fertility rate in Pacific island countries (latest year available)



Most teenage women who had given birth were aged 17-19, and by age 19, almost one in five (18.1%) of young women have given birth (Figure 11). Early childbearing is more prevalent in Rarotonga than the Pa Enua, where none of the women aged 15 or 16 reported having already given birth.

Figure 11 – Proportion (%) of women age 15-19 who have given birth, Cook Islands, 2011





NOTE: the population census only asks birth history of women aged 15 and above, hence birth rates for women under 15 years are not available from this source. The census does not ask about pregnancy, only whether the woman has ever given birth, even if the child later died. The Ministry of Health also maintains records on the age of women seeking antenatal and postnatal care that include clients aged less than 15 years.

Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Sexual and reproductive health is a key health concern for the youth population. As young people reach an age when they are ready to have sexual experiences, it is essential they have the knowledge to make informed decisions and the access to services they need to maintain good health.

The census provides limited information on sexual and reproductive health beyond the adolescent fertility information presented above. However, a study conducted by the Ministry of Health in 2012 provides some valuable insights into the issues surrounding youth and sexual behavior.⁸ It found the majority (77%) of young people aged 15-24 had been sexually active, and 40 per cent had sexual intercourse before the age of 15.

Thirteen per cent of respondents to the study had been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) at some point in the past. Furthermore, 17 per cent reported having STI symptoms in the last month, but less than a third (31%) sought treatment. The main reason for not seeking help at a health clinic was embarrassment (40% reported this as a reason), or that the health clinic too public (20%).

Access to information, contraception and general sexual and reproductive health services is closely linked to the issue of teenage pregnancy. The Cook Islands Family Welfare Association and the Ministry of Health are the main providers of these services.

⁸ Ministry of Health. 2012. Behavioural Surveillance Survey among youth in the Cook Islands.

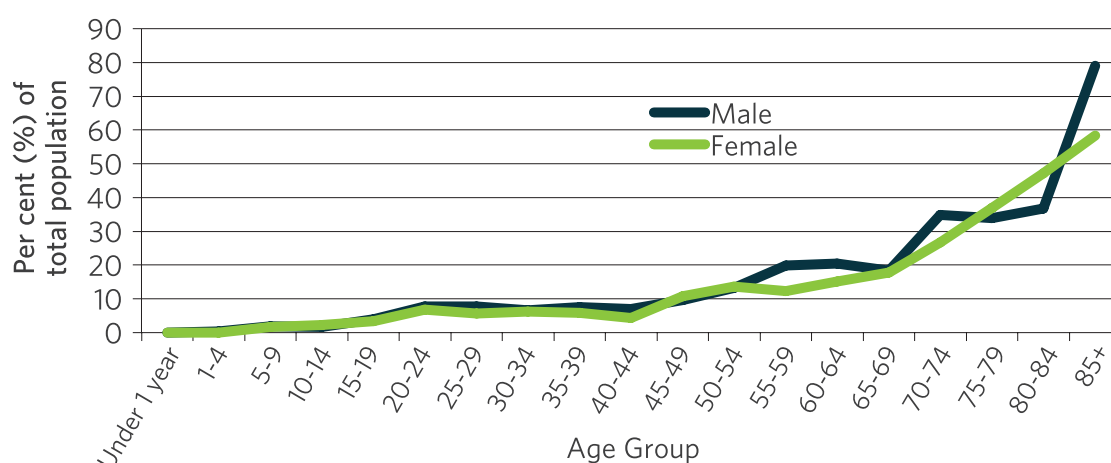
Sexual violence is another key issue for young people. This is not a topic appropriate for measurement through a population and housing census, but a dedicated survey on physical and sexual violence was conducted in the Cook Islands providing valuable evidence on the extent of violence. It revealed that an estimated 13 per cent of women have experienced sexual violence by their intimate partner (e.g. husband or boyfriend) in their lifetime. Furthermore, 5 per cent of women reported experiencing forced sex by a non-partner before the age of 15.⁹

DISABILITY

Depending on the level of severity, people with a disability can function well in society and enjoy the same opportunities as others. However, they may need particular tools or support to be able to do so. Just over 8 per cent of the total population reported some level of disability. The likelihood of disability increases significantly with age (Figure 12). Around 3 per cent of adolescents aged 15-19 have some form of disability and over 5 per cent of those aged 20-34. As shown in, disability is slightly more prevalent among young men than young women, and this gender gap also exists for older men and women.

Disability is closely related to ageing

Figure 12 – Proportion of the population with a disability, Cook Islands, 2011



Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

⁹ Ministry of Health. 2014. The Cook Islands Family Health and Safety Study. Available online at: www.intaff.gov.ck/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/30-June-Cook-Is-Family-Health-Final-Report.pdf

Table 1 – Prevalence of disability among youth compared to the total population, Cook Islands, 2011

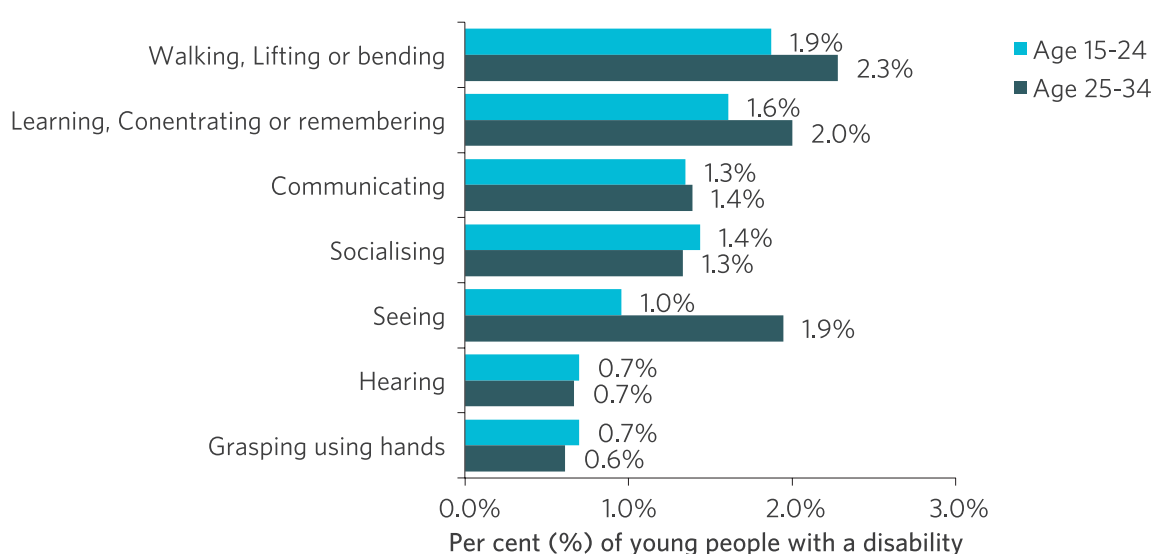
		NUMBER OF PEOPLE		PER CENT (%) OF POPULATION	
	Total population	With disabilities	Without disabilities	With disabilities	Without disabilities
MALE					
All ages	7,490	662	6,828	8.8	91.2
Age 15 - 19	685	27	658	3.9	96.1
Age 20 - 24	504	39	465	7.7	92.3
Age 25 - 29	452	35	417	7.7	92.3
Age 30 - 34	393	26	367	6.6	93.4
FEMALE					
All ages	7,484	609	6,875	8.1	91.9
Age 15 - 19	597	20	577	3.4	96.6
Age 20 - 24	512	35	477	6.8	93.2
Age 25 - 29	493	28	465	5.7	94.3
Age 30 - 34	462	29	433	6.3	93.7

Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

Young people indicated difficulties in all the domains on which disability information is collected in the census (Figure 13). The most common area of difficulty is 'walking, lifting and bending', or 'learning, concentrating or remembering'. The cause of disability is not asked in the census, so it is not clear whether the condition is congenital, or if it is related to an accident or other health problem.

Difficulties with mobility or learning are the most common forms of disability among youth

Figure 13 – Number of young people with some form of disability, by type and age range, Cook Islands, 2011



Note: people may have multiple forms of disability.

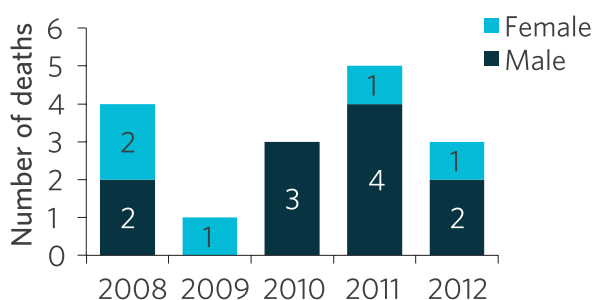
Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

CAUSES OF DEATH

Cause of death was not measured in the census, but administrative records show that there were 16 young people aged 15-24 who died between 2008 and 2012 (Figure 14). In 2012, 113 people died in the Cook Islands; the proportion of youth among all deaths ranges from 1 per cent in 2009, to six per cent in 2008. The leading causes of death of young people are in the preventable categories of transport accidents and suicide (Figure 15).

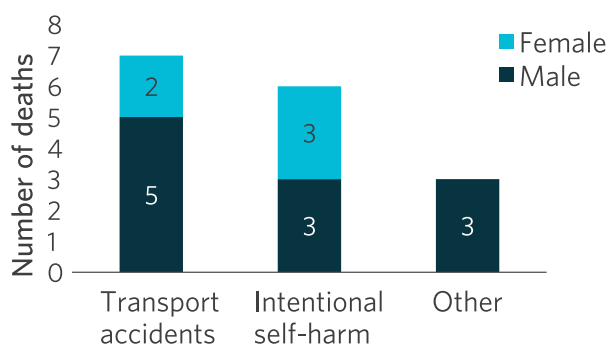
Attempts are being made to reduce traffic accidents through increased regulation and policing. In Rarotonga, the number of hospital admissions following transport accidents has been decreasing, as is discussed below. Suicide prevention has been the focus of communication and education campaigns. A Youth Hotline has been established to provide counseling and support services to young people and their families.

Figure 14 – Number of deaths of people aged 15-24 years, Cook Islands, 2008-2012



Source: Ministry of Health Statistical Bulletin 2012

Figure 15 – Causes of death for young people aged 15-24, Cook Islands, 2008-2012



Source: Ministry of Health Statistical Bulletin 2012

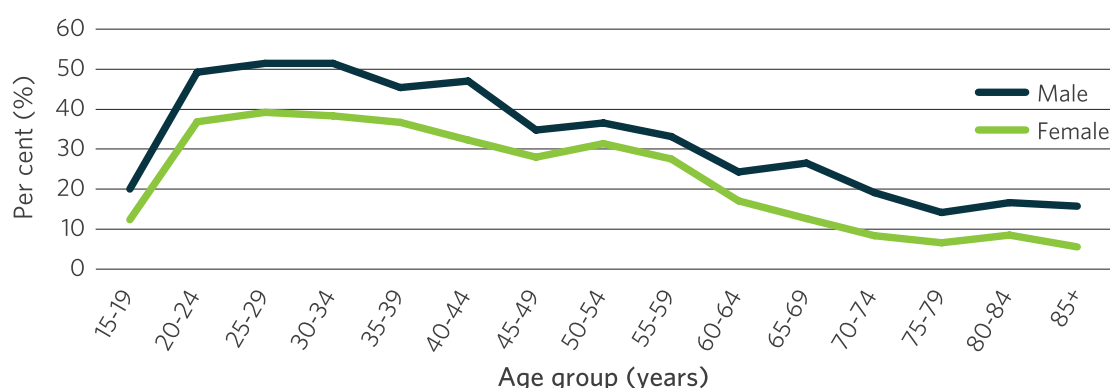
SMOKING

Almost one third (32%) of the population aged 15 and above are smokers, either regularly (one or more cigarettes per day), or occasionally. Smoking – for both males and females – is highest amongst young people aged 20-34 and then declines after 40 years of age (Figure 16). For all age groups, including youth, the proportion of male smokers is higher than female smokers.

The effects of smoking are generally accepted to be detrimental for health (see Box 1). According to census data, it appears that regular smokers are forming the habit in their early twenties, and less than 20 per cent of those aged 15-19 are smokers. However, the rate of smoking by 15-19 year olds could be understated, as a high proportion of teenagers are still living with parents and may therefore be reluctant to report their smoking habits. Of those aged 15-24 years, 33 per cent of males and 24 per cent of females smoke either occasionally or regularly.

Smoking is highest amongst younger people

Figure 16 – Proportion of population who smoke (regularly or occasionally), by age and sex, Cook Islands, 2011



NOTE: The census collected data on people who smoke occasionally or regularly. A regular smoker was defined as someone who smokes one or more cigarettes a day.

Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

BOX 1 – EFFECTS OF SMOKING ON YOUNG PEOPLE

The long-term health consequences of youth smoking are reinforced by the fact that most young people who smoke regularly continue to smoke throughout adulthood. Cigarette smokers have a lower level of lung function than those persons who have never smoked. Smoking reduces the rate of lung growth. In adults, cigarette smoking causes heart disease and stroke. Studies have shown that early signs of these diseases can be found in adolescents who smoke.

Smoking has significant negative effects on young people:

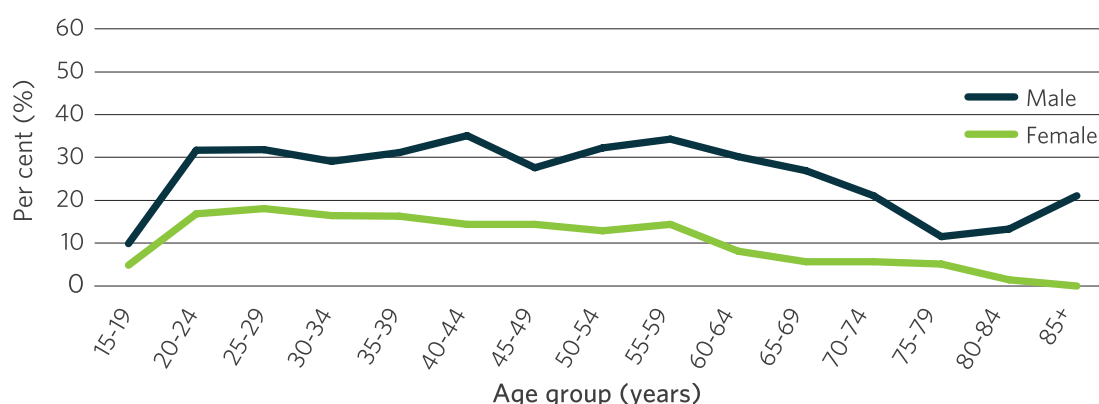
- Smoking hurts young people's physical fitness in terms of both performance and endurance—even among young people trained in competitive running.
- Respiratory and non-respiratory effects, addiction to nicotine, and the associated risk of other drug use.
- On average, someone who smokes a pack or more of cigarettes each day lives 7 years less than someone who never smoked.
- The resting heart rates of young adult smokers are two to three beats per minute faster than nonsmokers.
- Smoking at an early age increases the risk of lung cancer. For most smoking-related cancers, the risk rises as the individual continues to smoke.
- Teenage smokers are more likely to have seen a doctor or other health professionals for an emotional or psychological complaint.
- Teens who smoke are three times more likely than nonsmokers to use alcohol, eight times more likely to use marijuana, and 22 times more likely to use cocaine. Smoking is associated with a host of other risky behaviors, such as fighting, and engaging in unprotected sex.

World Health Organization (WHO) - http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/msbalcinuries.pdf

ALCOHOL

The proportion of young men aged 20-34 who drink alcohol on a regular basis is consistently over 30 per cent, but less than 20 per cent of young women drink regularly (Figure 17). As with smoking, less than 10 per cent of teenagers 15-19 drink regularly. The legal drinking age in the Cook Islands is 18 years. For the population aged 15-24 years, 19 per cent of males drink regularly, and 10 per cent of females.

Figure 17 – Proportion of the population who drink regularly (at least once per week), by age and sex, Cook Islands, 2011



Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

Based on other studies, it is likely the census results understate the prevalence of alcohol consumption amongst youth, possibly because the information is reported via parents or other family members involved in responding to the census questionnaire. A behavioural study on youth in the Cook Islands revealed alcohol consumption is high among young people, with 73 per cent of those aged 15-24 consuming alcohol in the past year, and 61 per cent of those aged 15-17 having consumed alcohol in the past year. The frequency and amount of consumption is also high, with more than one third (34%) drinking two or more times per week, and for 38 per cent of young people, the number of standard drinks usually consumed was 10 or more.¹⁰

The harmful use of alcohol is one of the main risk factors to health and is responsible for millions of premature deaths worldwide. Injuries from road traffic crashes, burns, poisoning, falls and drowning, as well as violence against oneself or others, account for more than a third of diseases attributable to alcohol consumption.¹¹ It may also play a role in increasing risk in terms of sexual and reproductive health.

The leading cause of death for young people aged 15-24 is transport accident related. Data from the Ministry of Health show that, in Rarotonga, hospital admissions due to transport accidents has been declining over recent years, but the proportion related to alcohol has increased. In 2006, there were 108 transport accidents that led to hospital admissions, with 50 per cent of these being alcohol related. By 2012, transport accidents had fallen significantly, to 43 in that year, but an increasing majority (63%) were alcohol related.

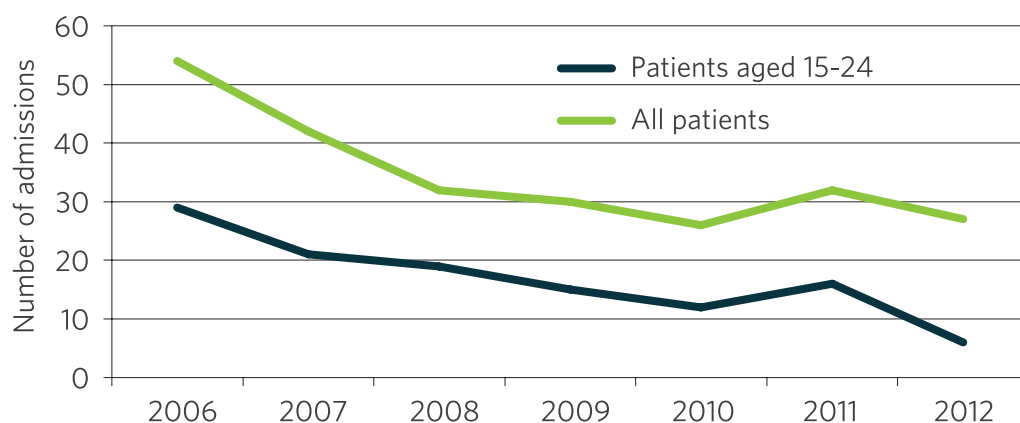
¹⁰ Ministry of Health. 2012. Behavioural Surveillance Survey among youth in the Cook Islands.

¹¹ World Health Organization (WHO). 2014. Global status report on alcohol and health 2014.

Young people are often the ones involved in alcohol related accidents. Between 2006-2012, almost half (49%) of the 243 patients admitted as a result of alcohol related transport accidents were aged 15-24. During this period, the number of young people being admitted has been declining, in line with the overall trend for all age groups (Figure 18).

Hospital admissions due to alcohol related transport accidents are declining

Figure 18 – Number of admissions due to alcohol related transport accidents, all ages and youth (age 15-24), Rarotonga, 2006-2012



Source: Ministry of Health. 2012 Statistical Bulletin.



Education



The Cook Islands education system follows that of New Zealand and has done so for a long time. Following revision of the Education Act in 2012, school attendance is compulsory between ages 5 and 16.¹² In 2011, when the census was completed, it was compulsory to remain in school until age 15. The school system comprises three levels:¹³

- Preschool / kindergarten (ages 3 ½ -5 years) – voluntary
- Primary school Grades 1-8 (age 5-12) – compulsory
- Secondary school Years 9-13 (ages 13-18) – compulsory until age 16

There are a total of 31 schools across 12 of the inhabited islands: 7 schools in the Northern Pa Enua, 9 in the Southern Pa Enua, and 15 in Rarotonga. Altogether, there are one stand-alone early childhood education centre (ECE), 11 primary schools (10 which have ECE centres attached), 4 secondary schools, and 15 areas schools (all with ECE centres). The majority are government operated through the Ministry of Education, with a total of 8 private schools (5 Church and 3 independent) that receive equivalent funding to government schools from the national budget.¹⁴

In 2011, tertiary education was available through four locally based institutions: Cook Islands Trade Training Centre (CITTC); Hospitality and Tourism Training Centre (HTTC); Cook Islands Sports Academy (CISA); and University of South Pacific (USP) campus. Cook Islands students pursuing a tertiary education sometimes undertake their studies overseas, and the New Zealand government provides Cook Islanders with up to nine scholarships each year for undergraduate and postgraduate study in New Zealand and other Pacific tertiary institutions.¹⁵ There are also up to 12 awards available for vocational and skills-based training in New Zealand for a period of less than one year.

Key findings

- School attendance rates are close to 100 per cent for both boys and girls up to age 15 but decline rapidly after that (Figure 20).
- The rate of school attendance declines with age more quickly for boys than girls.
- According to self-reported abilities in the census, literacy rates are high for youth aged 15-24, with 81.4 per cent able to read and write in Cook Islands Maori, and 96 per cent in English (Table 2).
- Secondary attainment is more positive for girls than boys, except for teenage mothers (Table 3 and Figure 23).
- Five per cent of people aged 15-24 have some kind of vocational qualification.
- Obtaining qualifications seems to significantly increase the chances of obtaining employment (Figure 26).
- The main reasons young people gave for not getting a qualification or studying were lack of interest or lack of time (Figure 27).

¹² Prior to 2012 the compulsory school age was 5 to 15 years old.

¹³ http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Cook_Islands.pdf

¹⁴ Ministry of Education. 2014. *Workforce Plan 2014 - 2023*.

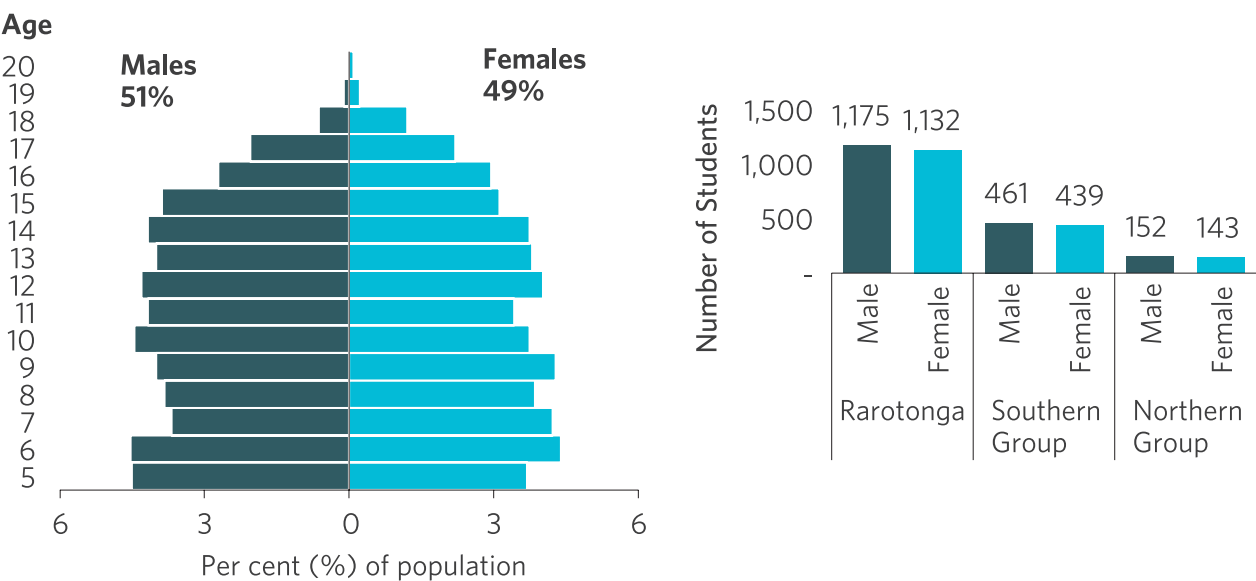
¹⁵ <http://www.aid.govt.nz/funding-and-contracts/scholarships/eligible-countries/cook-islands>



STUDENT POPULATION

At the time of the 2011 census there were 3,500 current school students aged between 5 and 19 years old (Figure 19). School attendance rates are close to 100 per cent for both boys and girls up to ages 15, but decline after that (Figure 20) and more quickly for males than females. By the age of 16, the school attendance rate is below three quarters (71%) for males but still 87 per cent for females. There is a similar pattern for the Pa Enua (both northern and southern group). Again, attendance declines more quickly for boys than girls as their age increases.

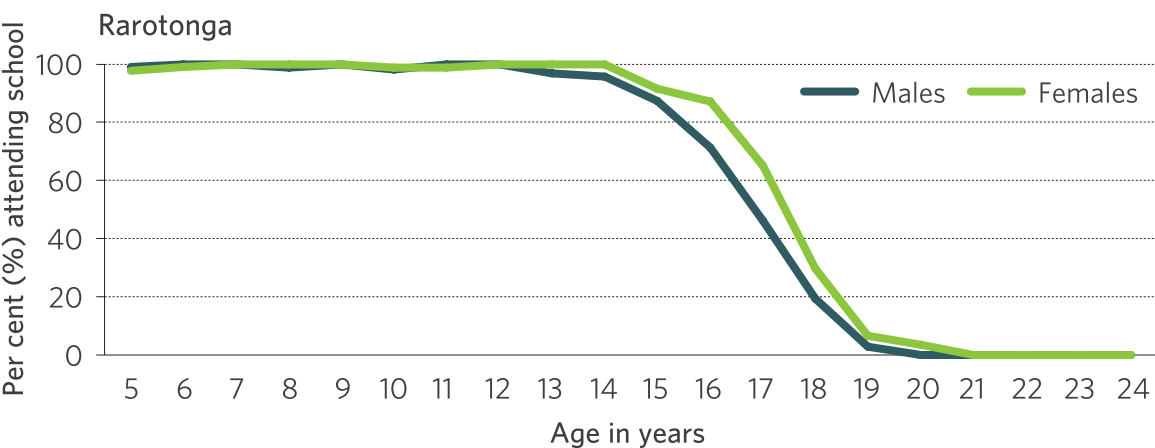
Figure 19 – Age-sex structure of current school students, Cook Islands, 2011

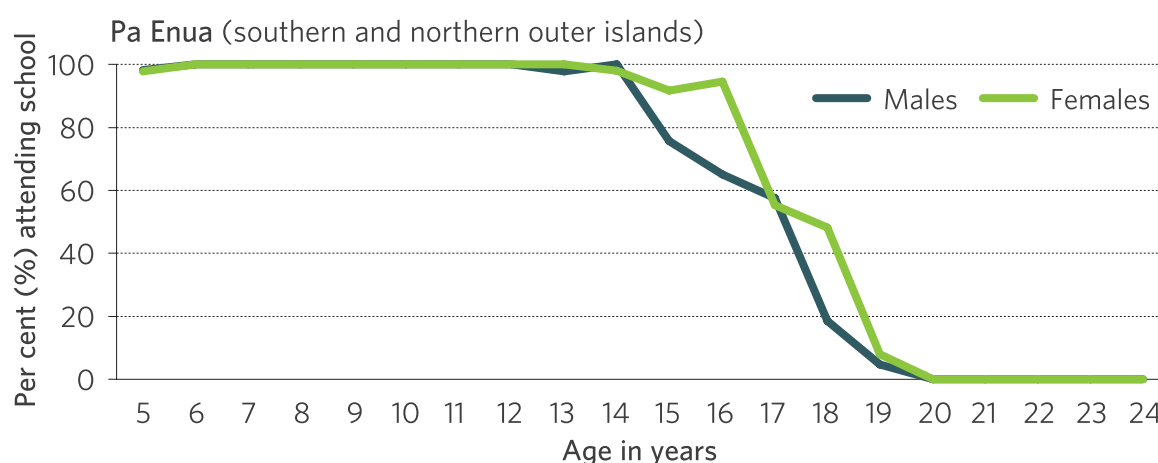


Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

School attendance begins to decline from age 15

Figure 20 – Age specific school attendance rates, Cook Islands, 2011





Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

LITERACY

The census asks of everyone aged 5 and above if they are able to read and write a simple sentence in Cook Islands Maori and English. The results show reasonably high levels of literacy in English among youth (age 15-24), with 95.1 per cent of males and 96.9 per cent of females being literate (Table 2). Literacy in Cook Islands Maori is lower than English, with 79 per cent of adults and 81 per cent of youths reporting they were able to read and write a simple sentence in the language. Higher levels of literacy among youths compared to adults suggest the education system has improved over time.

Youth literacy rates suggest improvements in education over time

Table 2 – Youth and adult literacy rates, Cook Islands, 2011

	COOK ISLANDS MAORI			ENGLISH		
	Male	Female	TOTAL	Male	Female	TOTAL
Youth literacy rate (age 15-24)	82.3	80.3	81.3	95.1	96.9	96.0
Adult literacy rate (age 15 and above)	77.5	79.6	78.6	92.9	93.6	93.2

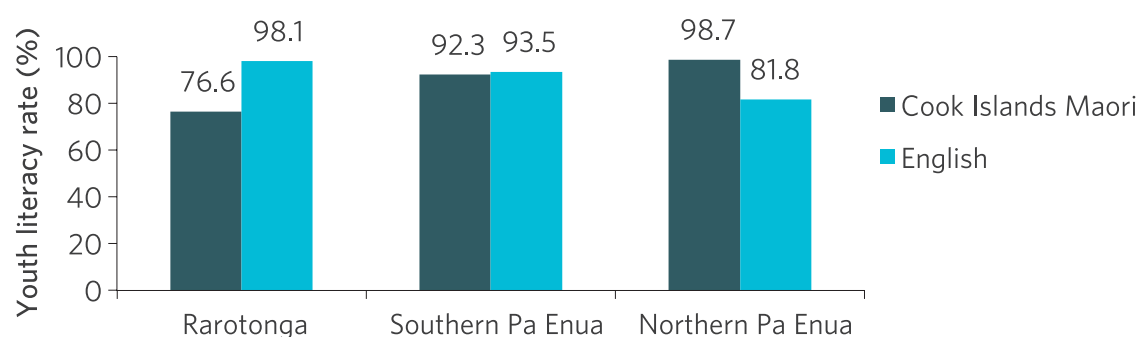
Note: Literacy is based on self-assessment and is not tested.

Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

Census results provide an extremely limited insight into the extent and nature of functional literacy and illiteracy amongst the population. The results are based on self-assessment in answer to the question “In which language can you read and write a simple sentence?” (a typical method for measuring literacy in a census). Literacy is not actually tested, nor is it explored beyond being able to read and write a “simple sentence”. Coupled with the fact that people may also be reluctant to report illiteracy due to embarrassment, the literacy rates may be overstated. However, examining literacy rates by language and location (Figure 21) lends some validity to what was reported, as they show a gap between Maori and English language skills that could be expected in urban Rarotonga versus the more traditional and isolated Northern Pa Enua.

Cook Islands Maori literacy higher in the Pa Enea

Figure 21 – Youth literacy rates (age 15-24) by language and location, Cook Islands, 2011



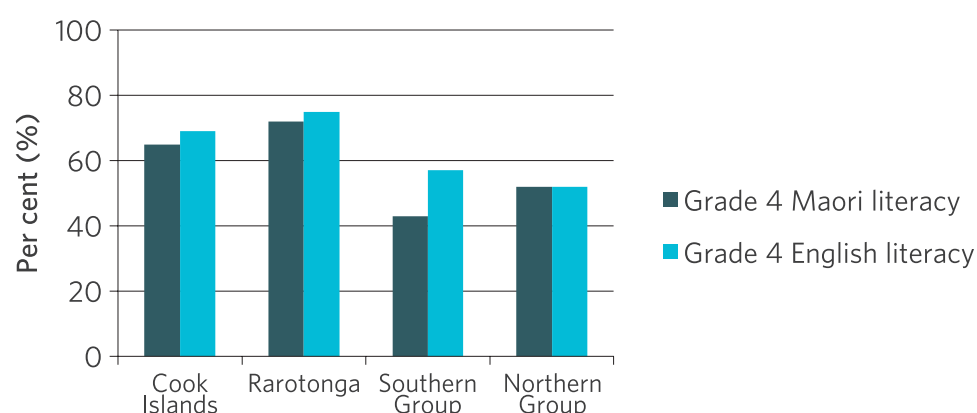
Note: literacy is based on self-assessment and is not tested.

Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

The Ministry of Education tests students' literacy in English and Cook Islands Maori in primary school at Grade 4 (around age 8) and Grade 8 (around age 12). National literacy tests are also conducted in Grades 6 and 8 and in Year 11 of secondary school (around age 16). The results revealed that in 2013, 87 per cent of the Year 11 students tested were assessed as being literate. Literacy rates of the Grade 4 students were much lower and varied considerably between Rarotonga and the Pa Enea (Figure 22 **Primary school tests of literacy provide an insight into actual performance** Figure 22). However, these students are closer to the start of their education and would be expected to make significant progress by the time they reach the youth age group of 15-24 years old.

Primary school tests of literacy provide an insight into actual performance

Figure 22 – Primary school Grade 4 (around age 8) literacy results, by language and location, Cook Islands, 2013



Source: Ministry of Education. 2014. Annual Report to Parliament 2013 – 2014.

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT OF SCHOOL LEAVERS

Census questions on the highest level of education completed reveal that nearly all young people have been to school, with most completing some level of secondary education (Table 3). While the vast majority of young people no longer attending school have at least some secondary education (over 97% for all age groups), there is a significant proportion of who have not completed secondary schooling or attained a qualification, discussed further below. Girls are more likely than boys to have completed secondary school for all age groups.

Young male school leavers risk being left behind

Table 3 – Highest level of education completed by those who have left school, by sex, Cook Islands, 2011

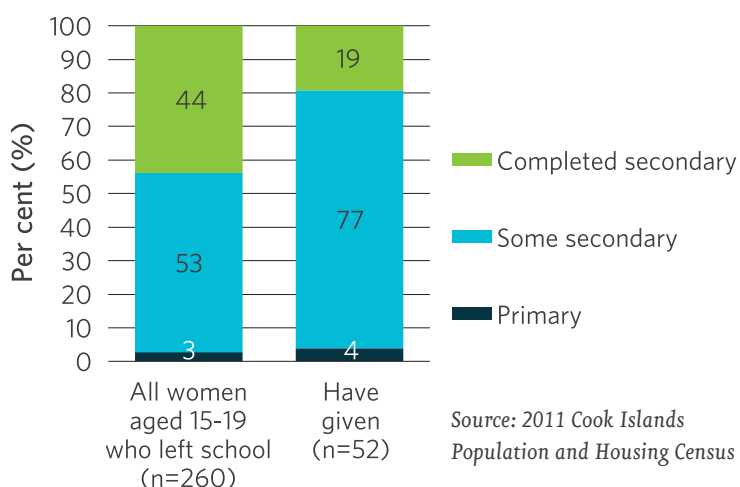
	AGE 15-19		AGE 20-24		AGE 25-29		AGE 30-34	
	Male (%) n=360	Female (%) n=260	Male (%) n=505	Female (%) n=499	Male (%) n=445	Female (%) n=488	Male (%) n=392	Female (%) n=498
No schooling	0	0	0	0	4	5	6	2
Primary	2	3	3	1	3	1	1	1
Some secondary	69	53	56	40	51	42	54	49
Completed secondary	28	44	41	58	41	52	39	48
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

While the situation for secondary attainment is more positive for girls than boys, it is not as encouraging for girls age 15-19 who have given birth. Few girls aged 15-19 who have given birth have completed secondary school (less than 20%), compared with 44 per cent of those who have not given birth (Figure 23). Given that virtually all girls 15-20 have some secondary education, it appears that giving birth is a significant inhibitor to continuing with schooling.

Teenage mothers have lower education attainment

Figure 23 – Highest level of education obtained by young women aged 15-19, Cook Islands, 2011

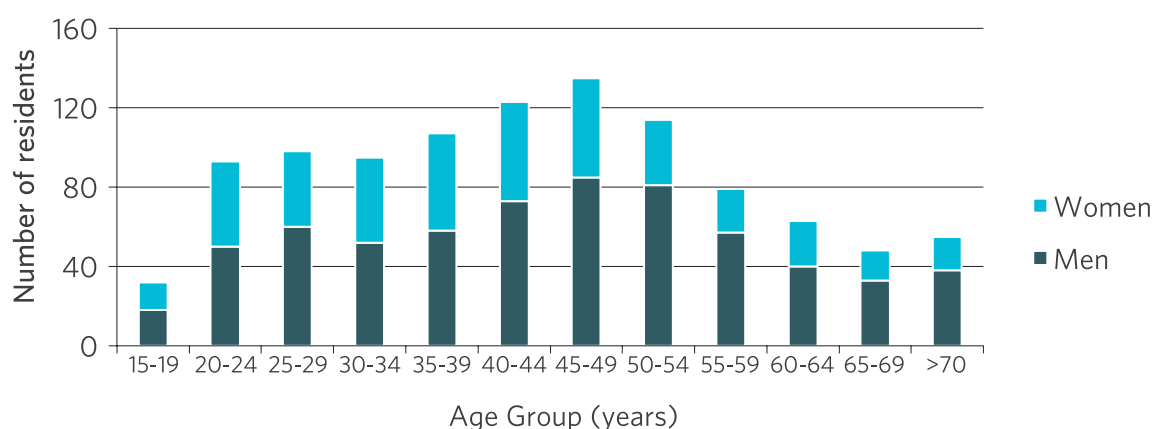


TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET)

There are about 640 men and 400 women with some kind of TVET qualification (Figure 24). About 15 per cent of these are young people aged 15-24.

Youth comprise 15 per cent of residents with a TVET qualification

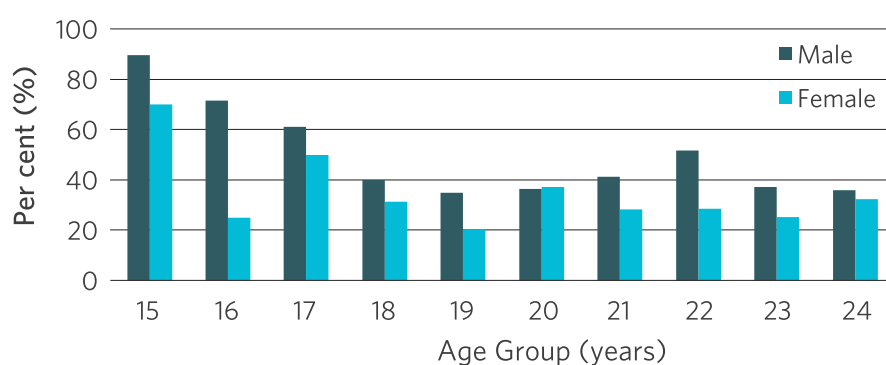
Figure 24 – Number of residents with a TVET qualification, by age and sex, Cook Islands, 2011



Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

Obtaining qualifications increases the chances of obtaining employment. Of those young people who have left school, a large proportion lack qualifications and are not doing any studies or training (Figure 25). The proportion of males with no qualification is higher than females for all ages. If the main activity of 15-24 year olds is examined (Figure 26), those with qualifications are much less likely to be unemployed than those without. Those with qualifications are mainly employed (81%) compared with 63 per cent of those without qualifications.

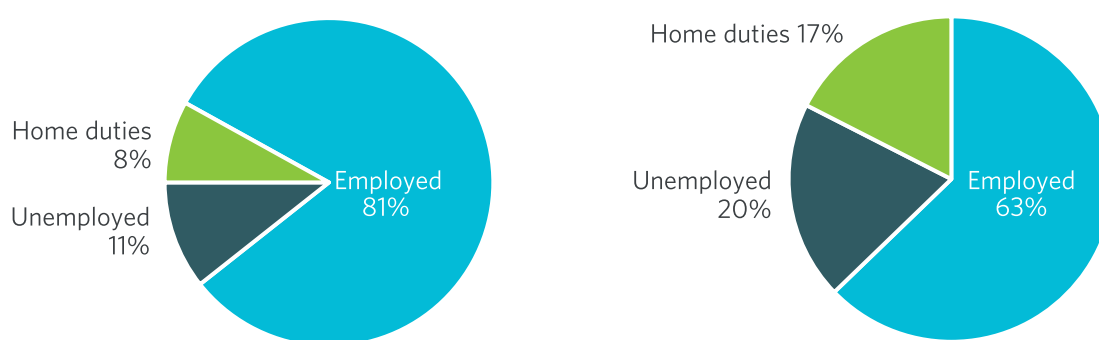
Figure 25 – Proportion of young people (non-students) with no qualifications, by sex, Cook Islands, 2011



Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census



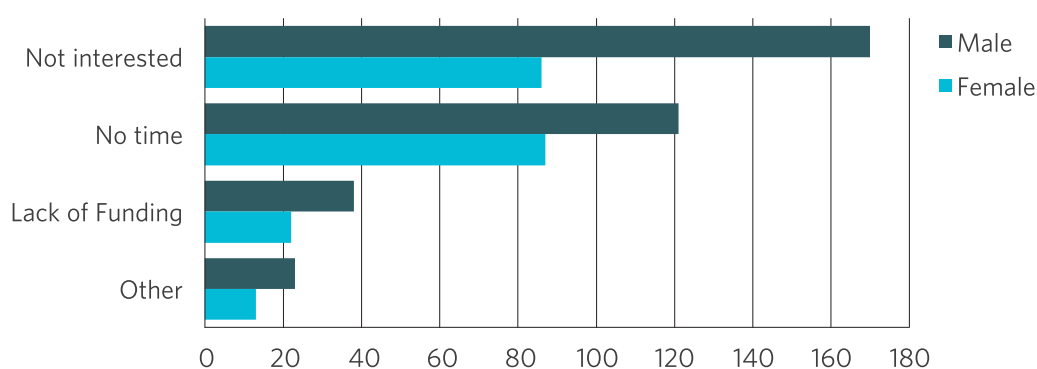
Figure 26 – Main activity of young people aged 15-24 with and without qualifications, Cook Islands, 2011



Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

Those not studying and with no qualifications were asked the reasons for not undertaking further studies or training (Figure 27). It was mainly due to a lack of interest or time, possibly indicating low motivation to obtain qualifications. Lack of funding is a relatively minor factor impacting on whether unqualified people undertake studies after leaving school, with only 11 per cent giving this as their reason. Among those who have a high school qualification, but are not doing further study, around 20 per cent gave lack of funds as their main driver. Altogether, there are around 200 young people (100 men and 100 women) who are not undertaking studies due to a lack of funding.

Figure 27 – Reason for not undertaking study or training given by those aged 15-24 with no qualifications, by sex, Cook Islands, 2011





Work and Employment



ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

As an upper middle-income country, the Cook Islands is at the top of the development scale among the 15 UNFPA programme countries in the Pacific sub-region.¹⁶ Provisional estimates show the gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 4.4 per cent in 2012, and contracted by 4.8 per cent in 2013 (GDP and constant prices).¹⁷

The economy is largely dependent on tourism and has been experiencing record numbers of tourist arrivals every year since 2001, with around 120,000 visitors in 2013/14, mainly from New Zealand and Australia. For growth to continue, the Cook Islands is dependent on sustaining and growing visitor numbers and maximising spending whilst in the country. In the short term, the government regards the prospects for growth as positive.¹⁸ Large capital works have also become a recent driver of economic growth. Other, less important drivers are the development of marine resources and agriculture.

The accessibility of New Zealand and Australia by way of the Cook Islands relationship with New Zealand has meant that there has, and continues to be, considerable outward migration, particularly of young people. The Cook Island diaspora living in New Zealand and Australia is estimated at four times the current Cook Island population. It is mainly young adults, aged 15-40 years, who have left to pursue education and economic opportunities overseas.¹⁹ Over recent years there has been an influx of foreign labour into the Cook Islands, particularly from New Zealand, Fiji and the Philippines, to address labour shortages.

Key findings

- Young people make up a significant proportion of the labour force with almost one in five (19%) of the labour force being aged 15-24 (Table 4).
- Most young people have joined the labour force by the time they are aged in their 20s (Figure 28). Note that the labour force includes everyone who is either employed or unemployed.
- Among 15-19 year olds, the main reason for not being in the labour force is that they are still students.
- Unemployment for those aged 15-19 is much higher than for others, with over a quarter of both teenage boys and girls who have entered the labour force being unemployed.
- It is important that young people have the opportunity to develop their skills and confidence. The 140 young men aged 15-19, and the 116 women, who are neither in education or work (Figure 30) may be lacking such opportunities.

¹⁶ UNFPA. 2014. *Population and Development Profiles: Pacific Islands Countries*.

¹⁷ Cook Islands Government. 2015. *Quarterly National Accounts: June Quarter 2014*. Available online at www.mfem.gov.ck/economic-statistics/national-accounts.

¹⁸ Cook Islands Government. 2014. *Budget Estimates 2014/2015: Book 1 Appropriation Bill – Appropriations and Commentary*. Available online at www.mfem.gov.ck/mfemdocs/treasury/budget-downloads.

¹⁹ UNFPA. 2014. *Population and Development Profiles: Pacific Islands Countries*.

- The most commonly held occupation for young men (age 15-24) is as labourers (general or agriculture or ground-keeping labourers) with one in five young men in this type of job (Table 5).
- Over a third of young women are bartenders, waitresses, salespersons, receptionists or information clerks (Table 5).
- The largest sector of employment of both male and female youth in the Cook Islands is in restaurants and accommodation. Wholesale and retail trade and public administration are other sectors that employ significant numbers of young people aged 15-24 (Figure 33).

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LABOUR FORCE

The census allows the population to be classified into three mutually exclusive categories: employed, unemployed or outside the labour force, gathering information from everyone aged 15 and above about they work do. There are more than 7,500 people (4,039 men and 3,515 women) participating in the labour force – meaning they are either employed or unemployed – representing about 70 per cent of the total resident population. Young people make up a significant proportion of those, with almost one in five (19%) of the labour force being aged 15-24 (Table 4).

Young people aged 15 to 24 comprise almost 20 per cent of the national labour force

Table 4 – Key labour force indicators, Cook Islands, 2011

	Total population (aged 15+)			Population (aged 15-19)			Population (aged 20-24)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Number employed*	3,708	3,230	6,938	222	157	379	436	375	811
Number unemployed	331	285	616	89	58	147	40	47	95
Labour force (employed + unemployed)	4,039	3,515	7,554	311	215	526	476	422	906
Total population	5,270	5,372	10,642	688	597	1,285	504	512	1,016
Labour force participation rate (%)	76.6	65.4	71.0	45.2	36.0	40.9	94.4	82.4	88.4
Paid employment to population ratio (%)	68.9	59.3	64.0	28.2	21.0	24.7	83.7	72.5	78.1
Unemployment rate (%)	8.2	8.1	8.2	28.6	27.0	27.9	8.4	11.1	9.7

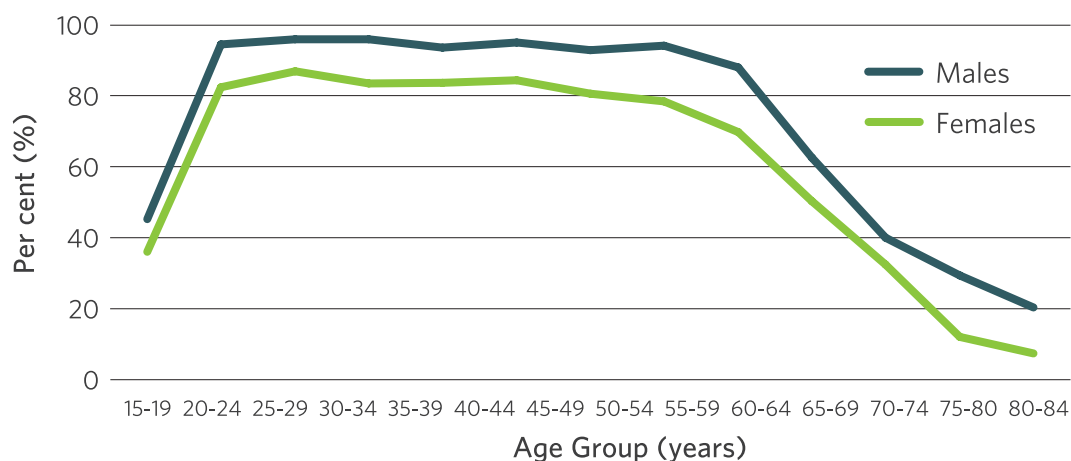
* Employment includes self-employed, employers, paid employees and those that work in a family business or farm without pay (i.e. unpaid family workers).

Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

Most young people have joined the labour force by the time they are aged in their 20s. As shown in Figure 28, there are distinct age differences in participation in the labour force. Although the average participation is 63.9 per cent for men and 53.4 per cent for women, it peaks at ages 25-34 for men (96% in the labour force) and ages 25-29 for women (87%).

Most young people have joined the labour force by their 20s

Figure 28 – Labour force participation rate, by sex and age group, Cook Islands, 2011

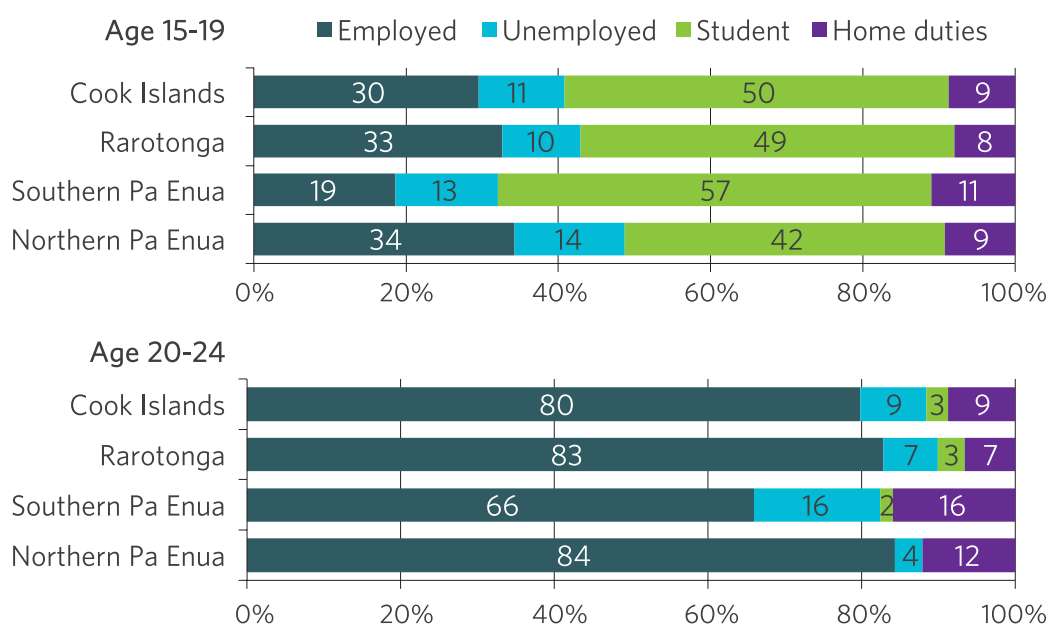


Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

There are clear differences in labour force participation amongst youth, depending on their age and location (Figure 29). Those aged 15-19 years are likely to be students (50%), and less than one third (30%) are employed. The proportion who are unemployed is quite high (11%), particularly in the Southern and Northern Pa Enua, where close to 15 per cent of teenagers are unemployed. The activity status of teenagers in the Southern Pa Enua differs significantly from Rarotonga and the Northern Group, suggesting opportunities for youth may be particularly restricted there.

Figure 29 shows that by the time young people reach their 20s, they are much more likely to be in employment than those aged 15-19. The proportion of those aged 20-24 who are unemployed is still much higher than for the overall adult population. This is particularly so in the Southern Pa Enua where 16 per cent for 20-24 year olds are unemployed, compared to 9 per cent of all adults aged 15 and above.

Figure 29 – Main activity status of young people, by location, Cook Islands, 2011

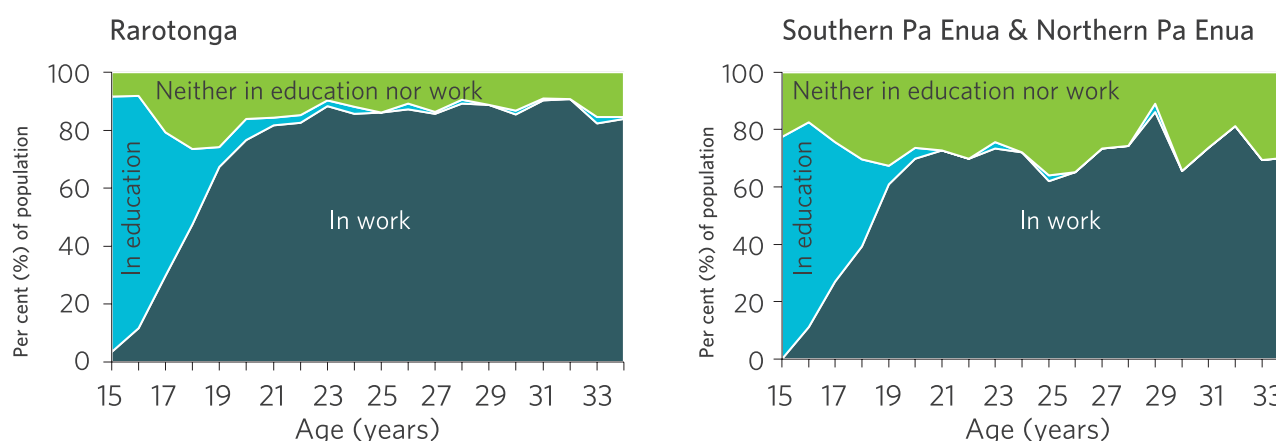


Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

It is important that young people have the opportunity to be engaged in study or employment so they spend their time productively and develop their skills and confidence. Figure 30 shows the proportion of people at age 15 through to 34 engaged in education, work or neither, in Rarotonga (graph on left) compared to the Pa Enua (graph on right). At the youngest end of the scale, the majority are in education in both areas, as shown by the mid-blue shading. The challenge youth face in gaining employment is evident in the graphs below. Most at risk are likely to be the 140 young men aged 15-19, and the 116 women, who are neither in education or work.

A large share of young people are neither studying or working

Figure 30 – Activity status, by age, Cook Islands, 2011



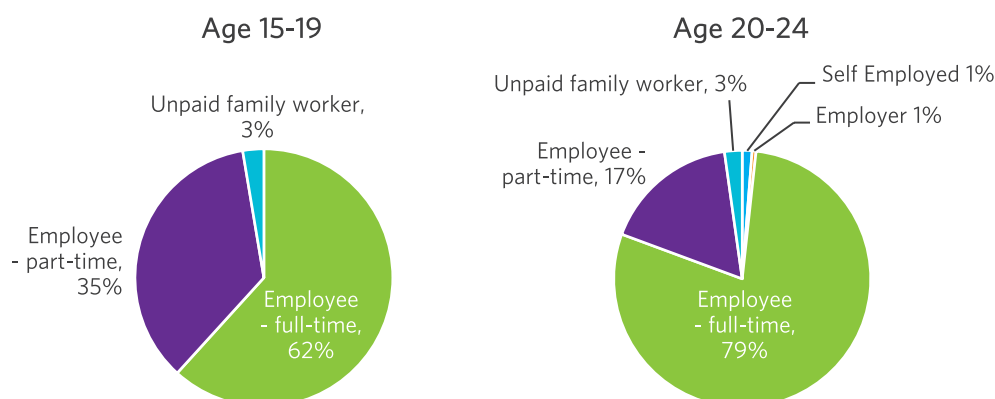
Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

TYPES OF WORK

There are many types of work, both paid and unpaid. Included in the national definition of employment is self-employment, employers, full and part-time employees, and unpaid work in a family business or farm. Unlike in many Pacific Island countries, subsistence production is not a major economic activity and people engaged in this type of work are not counted as being in the labour force.

The main employment status of young people is either as employees, unemployed, full-time homemakers, or students (Figure 31). The distribution of main activities is similar as for the total population, with the main differences being that young people are more likely to work part time (particularly those aged 15-19), and are less likely to be self-employed or an employer.

Figure 31 – Main type of employment of young people, Cook Islands, 2011



Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

UNEMPLOYMENT

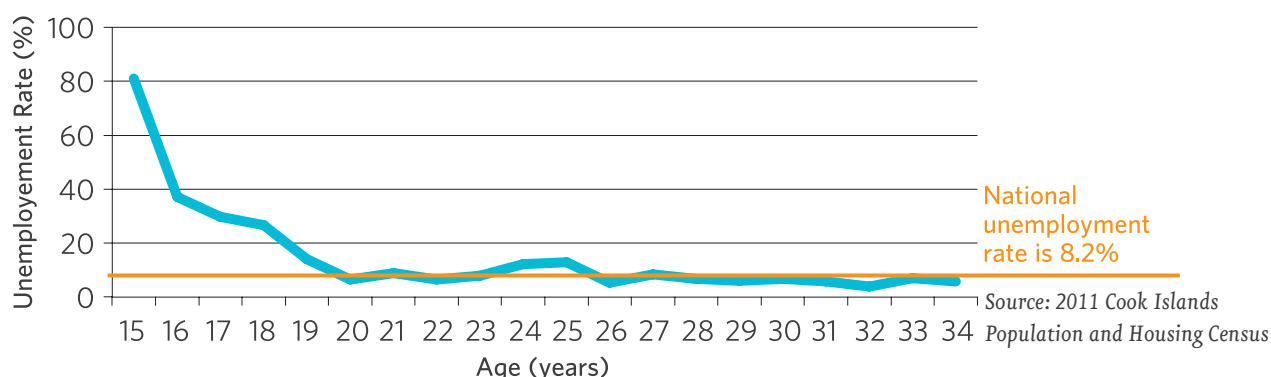
It is often difficult for school leavers, who have little or no work experience, to gain employment. This is especially so in Pacific Island countries where the economy is narrow and jobs are limited. According to international definitions, someone is unemployed if they do not have a job, they are actively looking for work and available to work should a job be offered to them.²⁰

Unemployment for young people is higher than the national average of 8.2 per cent (Figure 32). This is particularly so amongst teenagers, with over a quarter of both males aged 15-19 (28.6%) and females (27.0%) being unemployed (see Table 4 above). This finding is not unique to the Cook Islands and is typically due to the challenges young people face when transitioning from school to work when they are yet to acquire the skills and experience that make them valued in the workplace.

Current labour shortages in the Cook Islands suggest there might be opportunities to provide more options for teenagers to transition to the workplace. This is a particular challenge for the outer islands, where fewer opportunities exist and migration to Rarotonga, or elsewhere, increases the possibility for gaining work.

Unemployment is highest amongst young people

Figure 32 – Unemployment rate (%), by sex and age, Cook Islands, 2011



²⁰ International Labour Organization. 2013. 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization.

MAIN OCCUPATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The most commonly held occupation for young men (aged 15-24) is as labourers (general or agriculture or ground-keeping labourers), with one in five young men in this type of job (Table 5). Over a third of young women are bartenders, waitresses, salespersons, receptionists or information clerks.

Table 5 – Top ten occupations for women and men aged 15-24, Cook Islands, 2011

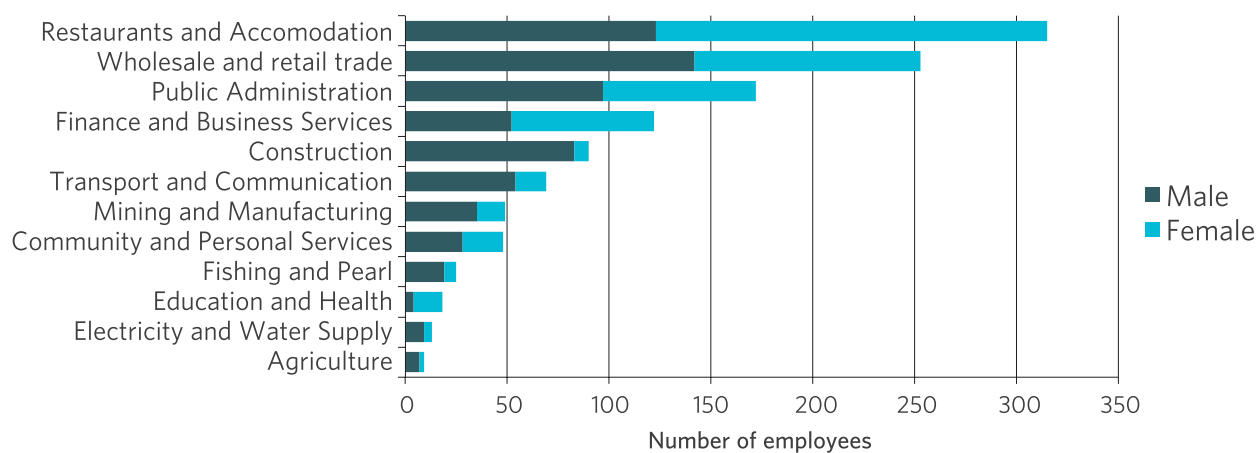
Men			Women		
Occupation	Number	% of employed men age 15-24	Occupation	Number	% of employed women age 15-24
General Labourers	83	12.6	Bartenders, Waiters, Waitresses	77	14.5
Agriculture or grounds keeping labourers	48	7.3	Salesperson	65	12.2
Salesperson	38	5.8	Receptionist & information clerks	43	8.1
Chefs and cooks	26	4.0	Cashiers and ticket clerks	22	4.1
Service Workers, Hotel Porters/ Kitchen Hand	25	3.8	Accountants, Auditors, Bankers, Financial Controllers	20	3.8
Motor vehicle drivers	22	3.3	Housekeepers & related workers, House - girls	20	3.8
Sales Workers	15	2.3	Agriculture or grounds keeping labourers	18	3.4
Bartenders, Waiters, Waitresses	14	2.1	Chefs and cooks	18	3.4
Hairdressers, Barbers, beauticians and related workers	14	2.1	Other Service Workers, Hotel Porters/Kitchen Hand	16	3.0
Construction carpenters and builders	14	2.1	Managers	16	3.0

Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

INDUSTRY

The largest sector of employment of both male and female youth in the Cook Islands is restaurants and accommodation – also the largest employer overall – which employs 123 young men and 192 young women. Wholesale and retail trade, and public administration also have significant numbers of young employees (Figure 33).

Figure 33 – Industries employing young people aged 15-24, Cook Islands, 2011



Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census



Information and Communication Technology



Technologies, such as cellular (mobile) phones and the Internet, are becoming increasingly important tools for modern life. The 2011 population census asked everyone whether he or she uses a cell phone, Internet and landline telephones, or none of these. It also asked the locations in which they are used, how frequently, and what the Internet is used for, in particular. As can be expected, age plays a role in the extent to which people engage with information and communication technologies (ICTs) and for what reasons.

Key findings

- Landline telephones continue to be the most commonly used ICT (of the three measured in the census) (Table 6).
- Young people are more likely than the overall adult population to be using cell phones and Internet, but less likely to be using landlines.
- It is at ages 15-19 when usage of cell phones and Internet begins to peak (Figure 34).
- Internet usage is highest in Rarotonga (56%), where the options for access and relative affordability are better.
- Few people in the Northern Pa Enua use the Internet (18%) and the rate is not much higher in the Southern Pa Enua (27%).
- Young Internet users are less likely to be online daily than older generations (Figure 35).
- There are small differences in the rates of use between males and females (Figure 36).
- Young people are more likely than older generations to be downloading music, movies, or using the Internet for education or learning activities (Figure 37).

Overall, landline telephones continue to be the most commonly used ICT of the three measured in the census, with 78 per cent of women and 75 per cent of men aged 15 and above using them (Table 6). Cell phones are also widely used, with 66 per cent of men and 65 per cent of women using them. The Internet is used by half of the women residing in the Cook Islands, and 45 per cent of the men. Young people are more likely than the overall adult population to be using cell phones and Internet, but less likely to be using landlines. This is the case in all areas of the country except for the Northern Pa Enua, where few youth have access to the Internet (5%).



Young people more likely to use cell phones and Internet, less likely to use landlines

Table 6 – Usage of ICTs by population aged 15-24 and 15+, by type, location and sex, Cook Islands, 2011

		Cook Islands			Rarotonga			Southern Pa Enua			Northern Pa Enua		
		Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Age 15-24	Cell phone	73	81	77	81	88	84	55	65	60	57	55	56
	Internet	47	59	53	57	68	62	30	42	36	4	6	5
	Landline	71	73	72	72	74	73	71	70	70	65	68	66
	None	8	5	6	6	3	5	11	8	10	18	13	16
Age 15+	Cell phone	66	65	65	75	74	75	42	43	42	43	37	40
	Internet	45	50	47	53	59	56	26	28	27	19	17	18
	Landline	75	78	77	75	79	77	74	76	75	77	76	77
	None	8	6	7	6	4	5	13	11	12	14	16	14

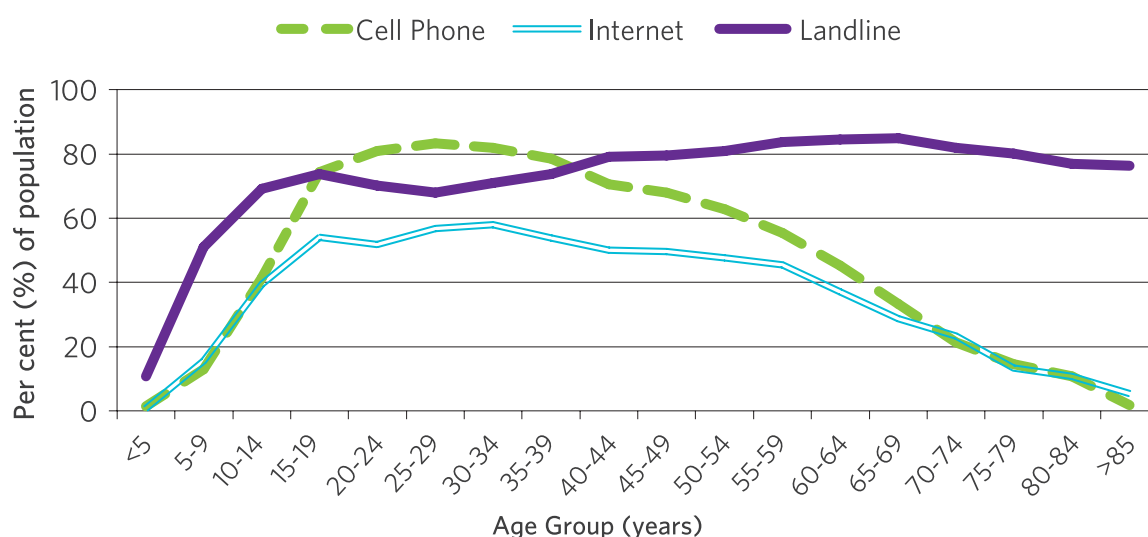
Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

The types of ICTs used differ significantly across areas of the country (Table 6). In Rarotonga, usage of cell phones is close to that of landlines. However, in the Pa Enua, there is a significant gap, with only around 40 per cent of the population using a cell phone compared to three quarters (77%) using landlines. Internet usage is highest in Rarotonga (56%), where the options for access and relative affordability are better. Few people in the Northern Pa Enua use the Internet (18%) and the rate is not much higher in the Southern Pa Enua (27%).

As shown in Figure 34 below, usage of ICTs varies considerably with age. Those aged between 15 and 59 are much more likely than younger or older generations to be using cell phones and the Internet. Landline usage remains common from ages 15 onwards. Cell phone usage is highest among those aged 25-29 where 83 per cent use them. It is also among this age group that the use of landlines is lowest for the adult population (68%), suggesting a decline in use of landlines in the future. Internet usage peaks among those aged 30-34, with 58 per cent of those people using it. By comparison, only 12 per cent of people aged 75 or above use a cell phone or the Internet.

Young people's use of cell phones suggest decline of landline use in future

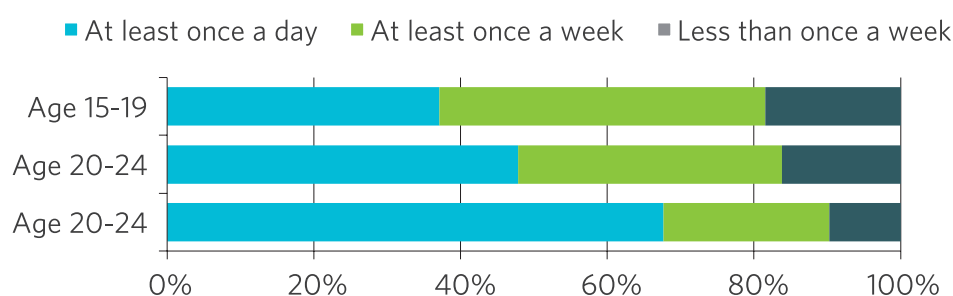
Figure 34 – Use of ICTs, by type and age group, Cook Islands, 2011



Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

Young Internet users are online less frequently than older generations (Figure 35). Most 15-19 year olds are using the Internet at least once per week, but not every day. Those aged 25 or above are much more likely to be using the Internet every day than younger people. This could be due to the relatively high costs that limit access outside of the workplace and wifi hotspots. It is not possible to clearly distinguish from the census results whether mobile phone usage includes access to the Internet via appropriately enabled phones (e.g. smartphones).

Figure 35 – Frequency of Internet usage, by age groups of Internet users, Cook Islands, 2011

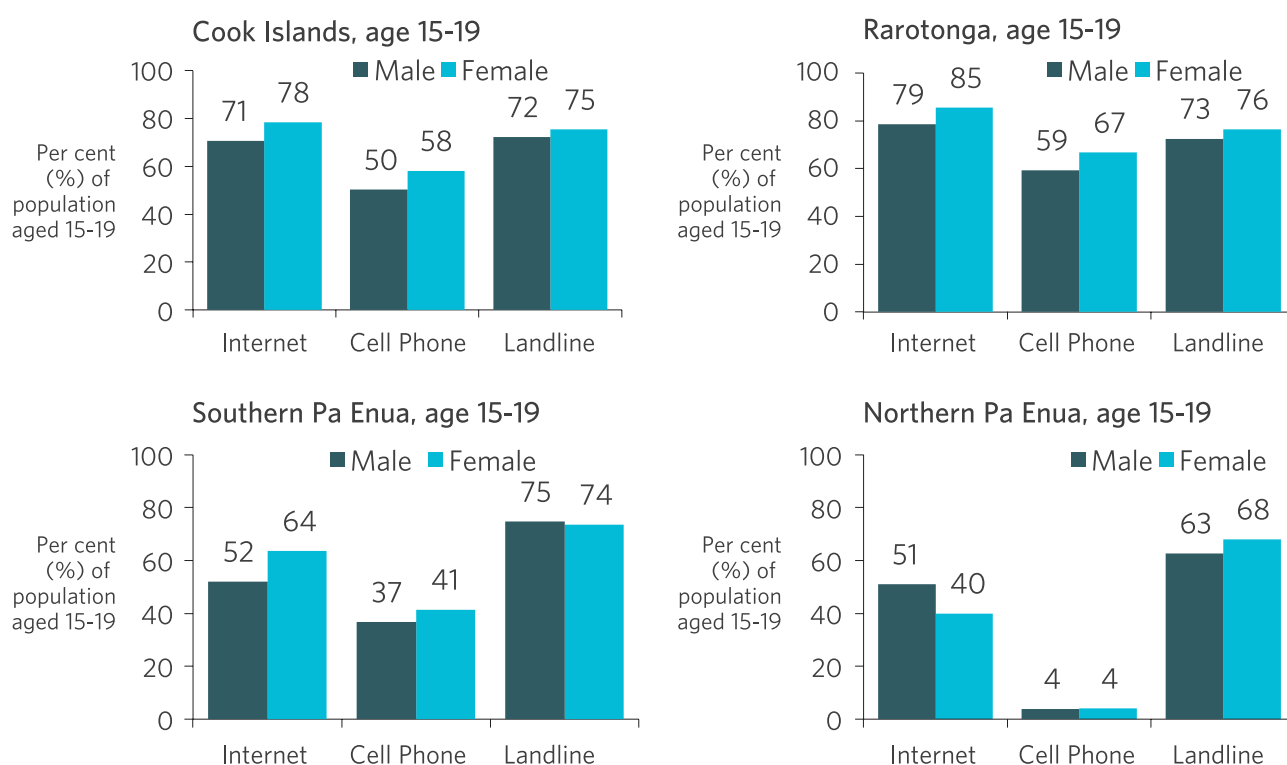


Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

As shown above, young people are high users of ICTs, particularly cell phones and Internet, and it is at ages 15-19 when usage of these technologies begins to peak. There are small differences in the rates of use between males and females. Among the 15-19 year age group, young women are more likely to be using cell phones, Internet and landlines than their male counterparts (Figure 36).

The gaps are mainly due to usage patterns in Rarotonga, although the trends are similar in the Southern Pa Enua, except for landline usage, which is much the same between young men and women (Figure 36). For the Northern Pa Enua, it may be that young men are using cell phones more than the young women residing there. However, the population in that age group is small (51 males and 25 females) and, therefore, per cent calculations are easily skewed.

Figure 36 – Use of ICT among population aged 15-19, by location and sex, Cook Islands, 2011



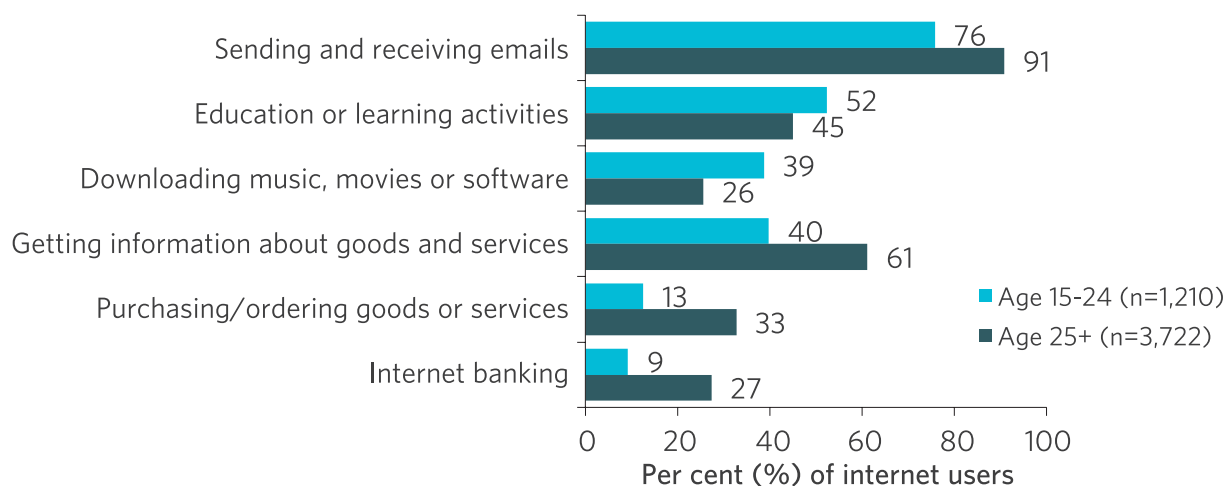
Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census

The types of activities people conduct using the Internet, for personal purposes, varies between age groups (Figure 37). Young people are more likely to be downloading music, movies, with 39 per cent of those aged 15-24 doing so, compared to 26 per cent of those aged 25 and above. Young people are also more likely to use the Internet for education or learning activities (52%) compared to older Internet users (45%). Older Internet users are more likely to be sending and receiving emails, getting information about, or purchasing goods and services, and doing Internet banking, than younger users.



Youth more likely to be downloading or learning online

Figure 37 – Private purpose activities conducted by Internet users, by age group, Cook Islands (excluding Northern Pa Enua), 2011



NOTE: The census questionnaire was limited to the six activities as listed in Figure 37 and respondents could select multiple activities. The Northern Pa Enua was excluded from analysis of Internet usage, given the low rates of usage there (less than 10 youth).

Source: 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing Census



Definitions



Economic inactivity rate (%) – number outside of the labour force / total population x 100

Employed – the standard international definition of employment relates to people who worked for pay or profit for at least one hour during the week before the census. The 2011 Cook Islands census used self-classification to determine if someone is employed, unemployed, or outside the labour force.

Employment to population ratio (%) – the proportion of the population that are employed (employed / total population x 100).

Labour force – everyone who is either employed or unemployed.

Labour force participation rate (%) – number in the labour force (employed + unemployed)/ total population x 100

Outside the labour force – those who are not employed or unemployed. The reasons for being outside the labour force were limited to full-time students, home duties or retired.

Paid employment – those who are employers, employers without employees (self-employed), or a paid employee (part-time or full-time)

Paid work to population ratio (%) – the proportion of the population that are in paid employment (based on above definition of paid employment) (paid employed / total population x 100)

Unemployed – by international definition, these should be people who are not employed (based on definition above), do not have a regular job to go to, are looking for work and are available to work should a job be offered to them. The 2011 Cook Islands census used self-classification to determine if someone is employed, unemployed, or outside the labour force (see Figure 38).



Figure 38 - Question used in the 2011 Cook Islands Population and Housing census to determine activity status

P28

Activity Status: *Mark ONE box* which best describe the status of your activity.

☐

Employer, own business/plantation without employees

☐

Employer, own business/plantation with employees

☐

A paid employee (full time)

☐

A paid employee (part time)

☐

working in a family business or farm without pay

☐

Full time students GO TO P32 and check P19 and P20

☐

Unemployed GO TO P36

☐

Home Duties GO TO P38

☐

Retired GO TO P38

Unemployment rate (%) – number of unemployed / total number in the labour force x 100

Vulnerable employment rate (%) – number of people in vulnerable jobs (i.e. self-employed or unpaid family workers) / total number employed x 100

Youth – people aged between 15 and 24 years old, inclusive.



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

The 2011 Cook Islands population and housing census is a valuable source of information on the youth population of the Cook Islands. This report highlights the type of evidence available from the census. It aims to inform economic and social development by strengthening the evidence base on young residents across the country.

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