

Island Profile: Atiu

Economic Development Strategy

Background

Atiu is a raised volcanic island with a circumference of roughly 30 kilometres. The island’s high central plateau rises to about 70 metres and is surrounded by low swamps, beaches, and a 20-meter-high coral reef. The island is very unique in terms of its jungle landscape and underground caves making it an ideal home for a number of unique bird species.

There are five villages in Atiu: Teenui, Mapumai, Tengatangi, Ngatiarua and Areora.

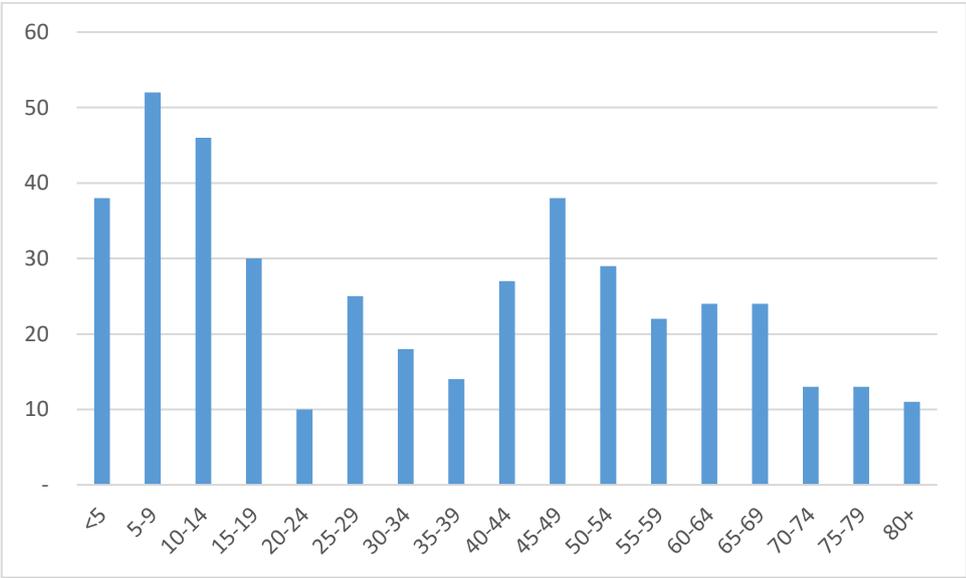
The population on the island has nearly halved in the 20 years following 1996 census (956). At the time of 2016 census the total resident population was reported at 434. The total number of dwelling units was 131 with nearly 90 per cent built with at least 4 rooms.

Atiu is currently working on the implementation of the Atiu Community Sustainable Development Plan 2016–2020 which is focused on bringing together the resources required for comprehensive and responsive ways of servicing the local community.

Demographics

Figure 1 represents the demographics of Atiu in 2016. Thirty-eight per cent of the island’s population were children and youth under 19 years of age. The least populated age bracket was 20 to 24 - the result of students moving to Rarotonga and overseas to acquire higher education. Residents in their 20s and 30s made up a relatively small per cent of the total island’s population. Following children and youth the highest numbers of residents were in their 40s and 50s. All together adults between 20 and 59 years of age made up 42 per cent of the island’s population. Residents aged 60 and over accounted for 20 per cent of the total population.

Figure 1: Age profile – Atiu



Education

According to 2016 data the education sector in Atiu provided schooling for children from ECE level up to year 13. There were a total of 135 students enrolled in the school system.

In 2019 three students from Atiu were enrolled in the USP Cook Islands Campus.

Labour statistics

The total active labour force in Atiu was comprised of 141 people aged 15 years and over in 2016. Fifty per cent were employed by the public sector, a significantly lower proportion compared to the rest of the Pa Enua. The second biggest employer was the private sector, employing 27 per cent of the total labour force. Twenty-two people were self-employed.

Managers and professionals made up 25 per cent of the labour force, 15 per cent were clerical support workers, 23 per cent were skilled agriculture and fishery workers, 8 per cent were in crafts and related trades work, 4 per cent were plant and machine operators, and 13 per cent were in elementary occupations.

Out of all the unpaid work reported in the census, the highest number of people (214) were engaged in housework, followed by gardening (211). Subsistence fishing was reported by 103 people.

Twenty-eight per cent of the total labour force was employed by the public administration, 17 per cent were in agriculture and fishing, 9 per cent were in the wholesale and trade, 7 per cent were employed by restaurants and accommodation services. Education and health employed 16 per cent of the total labour force.

Industry

The main employer on Atiu is the Government. Private sector activities are limited and include shops, lodge and one motel. The island's economy is supported through the production and sales of local and imported product and services. Shops generally generate revues from sales of imported foods, government and tourism services.

Residents are mostly reliant on imported goods although basic produce is grown locally. Atiu's important economic crops include taro, coffee, coconuts and coconut products, and flowers. At the time of the census the local production scale was not sufficient for commercial purposes.

Fishing in Atiu is conducted on semi commercial basis where fishermen sell their excess catch. The supply of fish on the island is not constant and often falls below the local demand.

Atiu has a small but growing tourism industry. In 2018, 2,667 people visited the island making Atiu second most visited outer island following Aitutaki. Opportunity for increased tourism needs to be explored to create a viable and sustainable tourism industry on the island.

Information Technology

At the time of the 2016 census, 48 per cent of the resident population aged 10 years and over had cellular phones and 53 per cent had phone lines. Forty-three per cent of the population had access to the internet while only 32 per cent had internet connection at home. Four per cent reported no access to any of the outlined forms of information technology.

Budget

In 2019/20 budget \$1,471,397 was appropriated to the Atiu island administration to cover personnel expenditure of \$851,976 and operating expenditure of \$427,184.

Atiu's Outer Island Small Capital Fund amounted to \$12,000 to allow for small capital purchases such as ICT equipment and machinery parts.

Welfare Payments for Atiu summed to a total of \$688,000.

Infrastructure Cook Islands is working with the Atiu Island Government on the road upgrades to improve access between key infrastructure points as well as to improve connections between villages. Funding of \$570,000 has been made available in 2019/20 to complete the road improvement program on the island.

Another major project in 2019/20 is the Atiu School Building Project which received a funding of \$480,000. The project aims to provide plumbing and electrical upgrades for the local school.

Atiu is also a part of the Infrastructure Projects to improve Health Services in the Cook Islands. This projects includes the replacement of the Atiu doctors' residence to accommodate visiting specialists to the island as well as support the "Flying Doctors" programme.

The government allocated \$100,000 in funding to upgrade Atiu's tennis courts and lawn bowl facilities in preparation for the next Manea Games scheduled to be hosted by the island.

Atiu has access to additional support by a number of Agencies though the National and Pa Enea initiatives such as the Government IT Network.

For further information contact:

Natalie Cooke, Director
Economic Planning Division
Ministry of Finance and Economic Management
PO Box 120, Avarua, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

Telephone: +682 29511 ext. 8314

Email: natalie.cooke@cookislands.gov.ck

Website: <http://www.mfem.gov.ck/economic-planning/economic-development-strategy>