

# Island Profile: Aitutaki

## Economic Development Strategy

### Background

Aitutaki is an ‘almost’-atoll consisting of 3 volcanic and 12 coral islets. The island is characterised by its wide sandy beaches and one of the most picturesque lagoons in the Cook Islands.

Aitutaki has eight villages: Amuri, Ureia, Reureu, Nikaupara, Vaipae, Tautu, Vaipeka, and Arutanga - the main village located on the west side of the island.

In 2016 the total population on Aitutaki was recorded at 1,941 residents. Nearly 500 people have left the island in the 20 years following the 1996 census which recorded a population of 2,389. There were a total of 503 dwelling units as per the 2016 census.

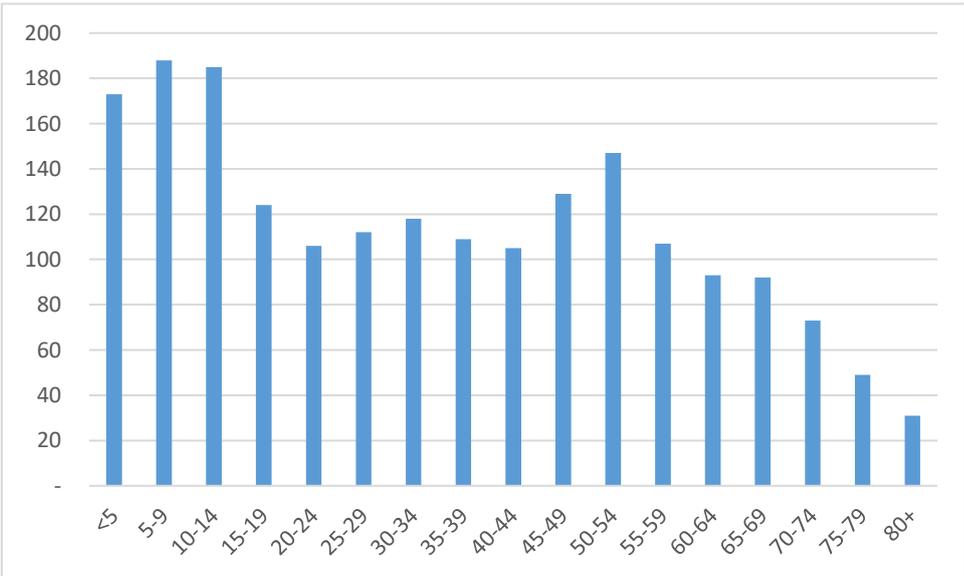
Aitutaki is currently working on the implementation of the Aitutaki Community Sustainable Development Plan 2016 – 2020 (CSDP) which is an extension of the CSDP 2013 – 2018. The plan is designed to take into account the Island’s limitations while capitalising on its strengths to improve the wellbeing of Aitutaki and its people.

### Demographics

The figure below shows the demographic distribution in Aitutaki at the time of 2016 census. 35 per cent of the population were children and youth under the age of 19, of which the residents in the 15 to 19 age group were the least represented.

The 20 to 59 age group made up 48 per cent of the total population of the island. Senior citizens aged 60 and over made up the remaining 17 per cent.

Figure 1: Age profile - Aitutaki



## Education

The only secondary school in Aitutaki is the Araura College, which caters to approximately 200 students. Araura Primary and Vaitau Primary are two government schools on the island. Tekaarua Primary is a private school sponsored by the Seventh Day Adventist Church. All schools follow the Cook Islands curriculum framework.

In 2019, eight students from Aitutaki were enrolled in the USP Cook Islands Campus.

## Labour statistics

The total active labour force in Aitutaki in 2016 was 748 people aged 15 and over.

The proportion of the labour force employed by the public sector (Island Government or National Agencies) in Aitutaki was 21 per cent of the total labour force. Of the remaining population, 64 per cent were employed by the private sector, and 11 per cent reported as self-employed.

The restaurant and accommodation sector employed 36 per cent of the total labour force while 18 per cent was employed by wholesale and retail sectors. Seven per cent of the labour force were employed at the public administration, 6 per cent worked in education and 4 per cent worked in healthcare and social services.

Agriculture, forestry and fishing had a total of 44 employees which accounted for 6 per cent of the total labour force.

According to the Census, average income on the island was around \$10,000. While 127 people aged 15 and over reported zero income.

## Industry

Aitutaki is the leader of tourism in the Pa Enua. Of visitors travelling to the Pa Enua, 84 per cent go to Aitutaki. In 2018 the island received 38,777 visitors which was a 5 per cent increase compared to 2017.

Aitutaki is also working towards developing its agricultural sector. There has been an increase in the number of hydroponic farms and summer house facilities on the island. This has been aided by the Ministry of Agriculture extending new agricultural varieties to Aitutaki to increase the variety and supply of the produce on the island.

## Information Technology

At the time of 2016 Census, of the total population aged 10 and over, 49 per cent indicated that they had access to cellular phones and 44 per cent had landlines. Internet was accessed by 34 per cent of the population. Eight per cent reported having no access to any of the above forms of information technology.

## Budget

In 2019/20 the net operating appropriation of \$2 million was allocated to the Aitutaki Island Administration. The total appropriation was to cover \$1.2 million of personnel expenditure and \$0.5 million of operating expenditure. In addition to direct Island Government funding, it is estimated that \$2.4 million of welfare support will be provided to residents of Aitutaki in 2019/20.

## Major Capital Projects

The Orongo Development Master Plan is expected to be implemented in 2019/20, with total funding of \$500,000. The new development of the southern marina area will aid in the growth of the tourism sector.

The government has also appropriated \$200,000 for the establishment of new water galleries for Vaitupa, Tautu and Vaipae villages to provide Aitutaki with secure access to safe drinking water.

---

### 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](mailto:natalie.cooke@cookislands.gov.ck)

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