

# Island Profile: Rakahanga

## Economic Development Strategy

### Background

Rakahanga is a raised corral atoll located 44 kilometres north of Manihiki. It is comprised of two islands and seven small islets surrounding a rectangular lagoon. The island has five villages: Numahanga, Ruakiore, Purapoto, Niteiri and Matara. Matara is the main settlement and the seat of the Rakahanga Island Council.

In the 20 years leading up to the 2016 census the population on the island decreased from 249 to 83 residents, a nearly 70 per cent drop. The primary driver of the population drop can be attributed to the emigration of the young people to Rarotonga and overseas.

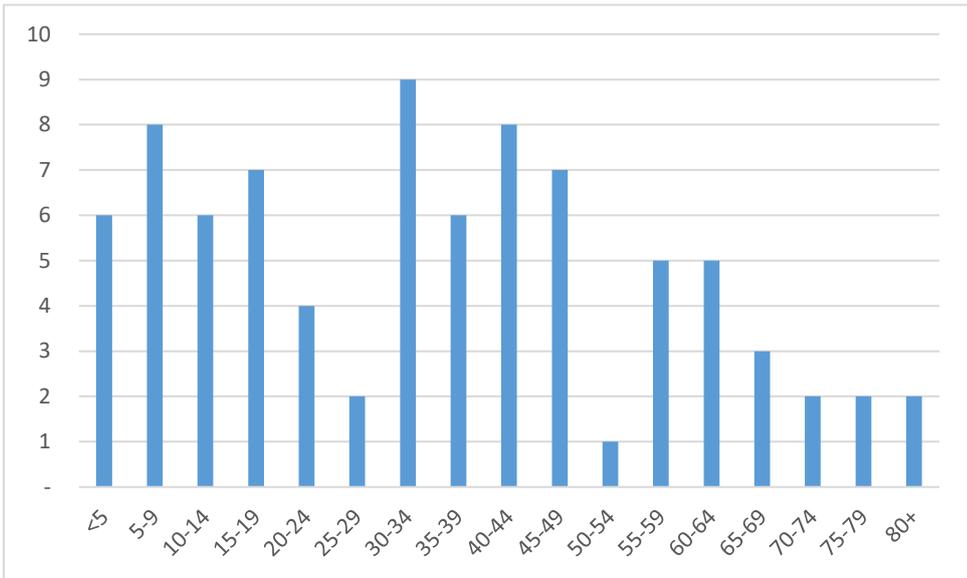
As per 2016 census there was a total of 25 dwelling units in Rakahanga.

The Island is currently working on the implementation of the Rakahanga Community Development and Sustainability Plan 2020. The plan is focused on the goals prioritised by the Cook Islands' Government.

### Demographics

Figure 1 represents the population on the island in 2016. Fifty-one per cent of the island were adults aged 20 to 59. Residents under 19 made up 32 per cent of the population while senior residents aged 60 and over made up the remaining 17 per cent.

**Figure 1: Age profile - Rakahanga**



## Education

In 2016 Rakahanga had a single school catering to 21 students from grade 1 to Form 2. Students seeking further education were required to move to Rarotonga.

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

## Labour statistics

At the time of the 2016 census 31 residents over the age of 15 comprised the active labour force in Rakahanga. Twenty residents were employed by the public sector with 75 per cent working for public administration. Four people were engaged in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries although half the island's population (43) declared fishing as their unpaid work. Education and health had 2 and 1 employees respectively. Two people reported employment in wholesale and retail trade.

Average income in Rakahanga in 2016 was reported at around \$12,500.

## Industry

Rakahanga is lacking a private sector which has a negative effect on the employment opportunities. Most of the residents are dependent on the income provided through the public sector. Previously Rakahanga and Manihiki were benefiting from the expanding pearl industry although over the years the industry has substantially declined.

Agriculture was once a regular source of income although low market prices and irregular shipping services led to the downfall of this industry as well.

Rakahanga has a very productive fisheries sector with a potential of creating alternative revenue source though exports to Rarotonga although this requires further development and improvement in the shipping infrastructure.

## Information Technology

In 2016 fifty-two per cent of the island residents over the age of 10 had cellular phones, 42 per cent had access to the internet and 55 per cent of the residents had land lines. Six people reported not having access to any of the above forms of information technology.

## Budget

In 2019/20 Rakahanga Island Administration was appropriated total funding of \$506,949 of which \$415,294 was allocated to personnel expenditure and \$59,249 to operational expenditure.

Rakahanga Small Capital Fund is \$8,000. The purpose of the fund is to enable the island to purchase small capital such as ICT equipment and machinery parts.

Welfare payments for Rakahanga totalled to \$128,040.

Rakahanga will not be undergoing any Island Specific Capital Projects in 2019/20.

In 2020/21 the island was appropriated funding of \$3,600,000 for the construction of a multi-purpose built cyclone centre.

Rakahanga is also provided support by a number of agencies through the national and Pa Enea initiatives such as the Government IT Network.

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