

Island Profile: Manihiki

Economic Development Strategy

Background

Manihiki is the second largest island in the Northern Group, located over 1,200 kilometres north of Rarotonga. It is one of the most remote islands in the Pacific Ocean. The nearest neighbour of Manihiki is Rakahanga located just 44 kilometres away. The island is an atoll made up of 40 tiny coral islets forming a ring around a deep blue lagoon. Manihiki sits on a mountain which rises 4,000 metres from the ocean floor, although the atoll itself is flat rising only 4 metres above sea level.

Manihiki has two villages: Tauhunu and Tukao. Each village has its own Government Administration Centre, school, harbour, health centre, power generating station and cyclone management centre. The airport is located in the village of Tukao.

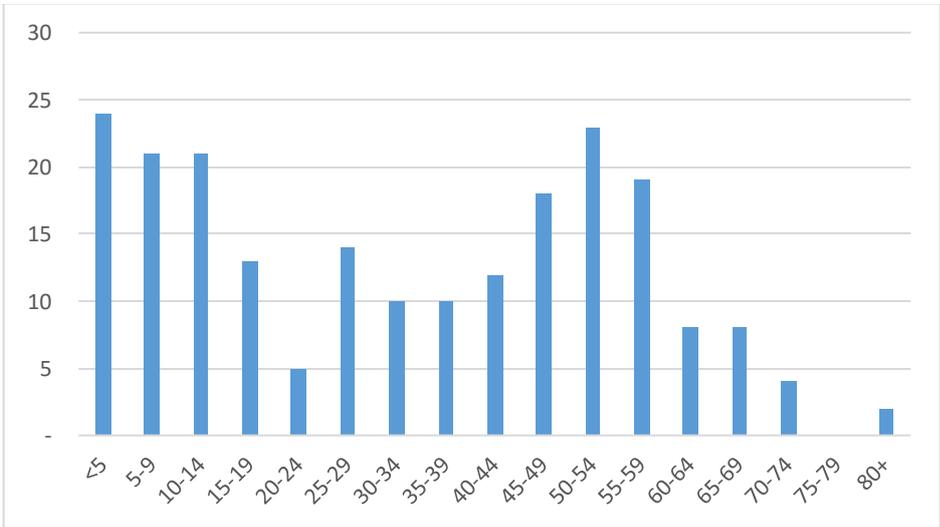
In 2016 the population of the island was 212 which represented a significant drop since 1996 when the population was 668. The major reason for the depopulation was Cyclone Martin which hit Manihiki in 1997 causing severe damage and resulting in 19 deaths. In the following years, more than half the island’s population migrated to Rarotonga. In 2016 a total of 71 dwelling units were reported on the island.

Currently the island is working on the implementation of the Manihiki Community Development Plan 2020 which carries over the strategies identified in the 2014-2019 version of the plan as well as some new initiatives.

Demographics

In Manihiki 37 per cent of the population were under 19 years of age. Twenty-eight per cent of the residents were in the 45 to 59 age bracket, 10 per cent of the resident population was over 60.

Figure 1: Age profile – Manihiki



Education

There are two schools in Manihiki, located in Ruamanu and Tukao, each catering to 31 students. Also Manihiki introduced an innovative learning system, Te Kura Uira (TKU). It allows secondary school students stay connected with their peers in Rarotonga and with the other schools connected to the programme.

In 2019 nine students from Manihiki were enrolled in the USP Cook Islands Campus.

Labour statistics

The active labour force in Manihiki was comprised of 94 people over the age of 15. Sixty-one per cent were employed by the public sector, 22 per cent by the private enterprise and 9 per cent reported as self-employed.

Most of the residents were working in public administration (36), followed by agriculture and fishing (28). Education, healthcare and social work employed 13 people.

Average income in Manihiki in 2016 was around \$12,500 which was higher compared to the other northern islands. Men comprised 57 per cent of the labour force and, on average, held higher paying positions compared to women.

Industry

The main industry in Manihiki is black pearl farming. Currently less than half of the active labour force is employed by the industry. Black pearl farming was at its peak in 2000 contributing \$18 million to the economy of the Cook Islands. In 2017/18, the value of pearl and pearl shell exports fell to \$122,000, down from \$211,000 in 2016/17. The decline was precipitated by unregulated farming practices, poor oyster health, poor environment and competition.

Efforts have been made to revive the industry. In 2017/18 the Manihiki Lagoon Clean-Up Project was successfully completed with a focus of reviving the lagoon and expanding the pearl farms.

Information Technology

At the time of the 2016 census, 62 per cent of the population ages 10 and over had cellular phones, 44 per cent had access to the internet and 52 per cent had landlines. Seven per cent reported not having any access to the outlined forms of information technology.

Budget

In 2019/20 Manihiki island administration was appropriated \$1,213,714, of which \$707,715 was allocated for personnel expenditure and \$150,616 for operating expenditure.

The Manihiki Small Island Fund totalled \$10,000 to enable the island to purchase small capital such as ICT equipment and machinery parts.

Welfare payments in Manihiki totalled \$270,000.

In 2019/20 Manihiki is not undergoing any island specific projects although the island received support by a number of agencies through a number of national and Pa Enea initiatives such as the Government IT Network.

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