



COOK ISLANDS

<<photo>>

2012

Gender Profile

GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION, MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
COOK ISLANDS STATISTICS OFFICE, MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

Secretary of the Pacific Community
Noumea, New Caledonia
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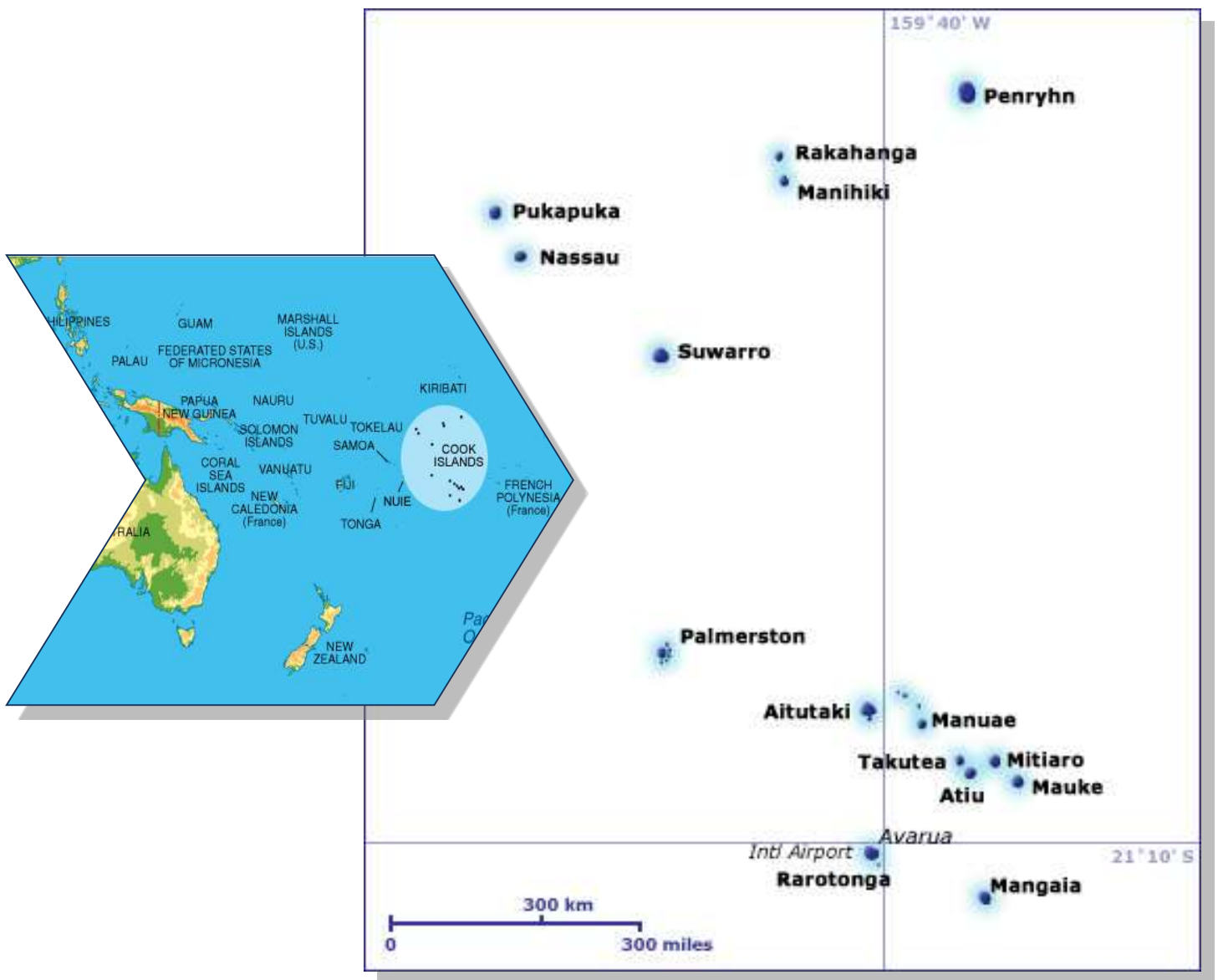
Much of the policy and background information about the indicators used in this report has been taken from the United Nations annual publication “The World’s Women, Trends and Statistics” over various years.

TERM USED: *Pa Enua* is the Cook Islands Maori term referring to the *Pa Enua* in the Southern and Northern island groups of the Cook Islands.

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FIGURE 1: THE COOK ISLANDS



Foreword

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

The first decade of the new millennium was tumultuous for the people of the Cook Islands. The migration of families to New Zealand and Australia after the government reform programme in the late 1990's and the movement of people from the *Pa Enua* to Rarotonga have changed the composition and location of our population and challenged the delivery of core services to remote islands and atolls. The global economic crisis late in the first decade affected the mainstays of the economy; tourism, agriculture and offshore banking; and recovery has been slow. This was combined with the millions of dollars required for repairs after two severe tropical cyclones.

Our people have risen to the challenges. Forever resourceful and creative, drawing on our culture and tradition, the self-sufficiency and resilience of Cook Islanders is evident. Significant achievements have been made particularly in education, health and expanding employment opportunities. The Cook Islands is on track to achieve the majority of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 - one of the few Pacific countries to do so.

The initiatives of Government are guided by the *Te Kaveinga Nui*, our National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) which sets the strategies and implementation framework for the years 2011 - 2015. *Te Kaveinga Nui* embodies the national vision for 2020 'to enjoy the highest quality of life consistent with the aspirations of our people, and in harmony with our culture and environment'. We will not achieve this vision without narrowing the gender gap and improving the status of women.

The gender gap is narrowing, with successes in health, education and employment. Progress has been made in addressing major issues of concern to society such as gender based violence and expansion in the coverage of the social welfare system. Women have been the drivers of much of this progress with their prominent roles in social and family life now much broader in being the drivers of reform based on societal concerns.

In each of the 10 areas covered in this report - population; households, families and housing; education; work and employment; public life and decision making; legislation and governance; environment; poverty; information and communications; and gender based violence - statistics were identified, compiled, and analysed, bringing to light findings on the differences between the status of girls and boys, women and men. Every effort was made to make the findings easy to interpret, with the extensive use of graphical presentation and non-technical language.

This report highlights the changes that women and men, girls and boys, have experienced since the start of the millennium from an engendered analysis of statistics. The Government recognises that more work is needed. In some areas the pace of change has slowed and in others work has stalled; and in still others we have no measures of change. However, the Government is committed to making more progress to meet the specific needs of Cook Islands women and men. Many challenges still remain, including providing a secure economic base for the country, dealing with environmental issues, and securing family safety. The policy implications highlighted in this report point the way forward to a reinvigorated assessment of progress towards achieving gender equality in the Cook Islands.

Honourable Mark Brown

Minister of Internal Affairs & Minister of Finance and Economic Management

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

The availability and accessibility of good quality and timely gender statistics is integral to the policy design and evaluation process; the development of research agendas; and the decision making processes of governments, organisations and communities. As gender policy and research agendas evolve, so too does the demand for statistical information.

This document, the Cook Islands Gender Profile, has been developed by the stakeholders in the Cook Islands government and non-government organisations. It is based on a shared understanding of the policy issue imperatives and agreement on the areas of priority for policy development. It outlines the policy and regulatory actions required to accelerate progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This profile used a range of statistical information, drawing heavily on the 2011 Census of Population and Housing and statistical information on health, education, welfare, finance and local government. It provides a start for gender analysts to understand the causes and processes undermining gender equality. There are considerable data gaps, and work is ongoing to develop collection and compilation processes to produce statistical indicators to allow for a fully informed gender analysis. This is a medium term objective and joint initiative of both the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

This is the first profile of women and men and their status in our society that has been systematically collected, compiled, processed and analysed by the Cook Islands government, and this kind of report will become a regular output of the national statistical system in the future as training and capacity building initiatives are implemented in the national statistical system and with NGO implementing partners.

The Cook Islands Gender Profile 2012 is intended to contribute to the benchmarking being done for the implementation of the Cook Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. It addresses critical aspects of life: population, families, mortality, education, work, power and decision-making, violence against women, environment and poverty. It finds that progress in ensuring the equal status of women and men has been made in many areas, including school enrolment, health and economic participation. At the same time, it makes clear that much more needs to be done, in particular to close the gender gap in public life and to prevent the many forms of violence to which women are subjected.

We take pride in our strong cultural beliefs and traditions that ensure the status of women and enable their voices to be heard. But we have to do more. The cash driven economy doesn't guarantee women the same rights and privileges as our traditional system, and the options for using customary protocols in the global economy are limited. It is my hope that this profile will be used to promote work to create the enabling socio-economic environment which guarantees equal treatment of all women and men which also maintains the pristine quality of our unique but highly vulnerable physical environment. The gaps identified in the Cook Islands Gender Profile should be addressed to better support the development of policies to implement a basic human rights principle: gender equality.

Honourable Nandi Glassie

Minister of Internal Affairs

Acknowledgements

MESSAGE TO THE REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

A great many thanks are due to a great many people who provided help and support during the drafting of this report. Without technical support and financial assistance from SPC this report would not have been possible.

This report reflects the dedication and professionalism of the stakeholders for sustainable development in the Cook Islands. This report is illustrative of their efforts in terms of policy and strategy information provided as well as their analysis of progress made and the way forward towards achieving equal participation in, and benefits from, sustainable development. This report relies heavily on the statistical information provided by CISO.

My deepest thanks goes to the government ministries and legislative bodies for providing a wide range of statistics for this report as well as for guiding the final drafting of this report with attention and careful thought. The Gender and Development Division within the Ministry of Internal Affairs initiated this project and this report reflects their knowledge, efforts and dedication.

I also thank the numerous technical experts and development partners here in the Cook Islands and SPC for their invaluable comments provided during the final stages of drafting. Without the constructive inputs of these individuals this report would not be as well rounded.

This report is all the richer for the many and varied contributions participants made during the stakeholder consultation workshop and again I thank these people for giving their time and their expert advice.

Meitaki ma'ata,

Bredina Drollet,

Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this report

This report presents and analyses statistics on the status of women and men, girls and boys. This report looks at the statistical data and indicators and research and reports about the Cook Islands and analyses these in terms of social and economic differences between women and men. It provides the information required to develop and review policies that address the possible different impacts of policies or programs and laws on women and men. This will then make sure that the planned outcomes are equal for women and men, boys and girls, in design and implementation. Sustainable social and economic growth and development is only possible if both women and men are fully involved and equally benefit.

This report does not contain all of the information required to fully assess the situation of boys and girls, women and men, in the Cook Islands. It was not possible to obtain the sex-disaggregated data about health, crime and justice when this report was drafted. Some of the information is not readily available in the areas of access to and control over resources like land and housing or access to credit. **These statistics will be compiled and reported on in the monitoring and evaluation framework for gender mainstreaming from 2015.**

The report has been written for policy makers and planners in the Cook Islands for policy review and development as well as future monitoring and evaluation. The statistical data and indicators used are part of a broad framework of gender statistics being promoted in the Pacific region by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. The Gender and Development Division in the Ministry of Internal Affairs with help from the Cook Islands Statistics Office (CISO) in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management will continue to update the statistical indicators used in this report and make the information available to analysts and researchers.

This report explores gender issues under 9 topics in keeping with the regional framework with additional analysis of important issues to the Cook Islands (excluding health and crime and justice). These topics have been chosen because of their relevance to current policy issues and the availability of statistical data. The themes are

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Population | 6. Legislation & governance |
| 2. Households, families & housing | 7. Environment |
| 3. Education | 8. Poverty |
| 4. Work & employment | 9. Information & communications |
| 5. Public life & decision making | 10. Violence against women |

Information is presented under each topic with an emphasis on describing key findings with clear text and graphs based on statistical data and indicators. The information is linked to current or possible government policies and priorities.

Every attempt has been made to ensure the information is not misleading, and is factually correct. Any conclusions are based on the data and stakeholders expert knowledge. The publication avoids detailed technical explanations in an attempt to make it engaging and interesting for non-statisticians.

Many of the conclusions will be known but perhaps have not been presented grounded in statistics in the past for evidence based decision making. It is hoped that the analysis is of value and stimulate further research and inquiry into the complex issues surrounding gender and the development or revision of gender inclusive policies, programs and plans. **The policy implications were developed with input from a group of gender and subject matter experts.**

Availability of gender statistics

The majority of Cook Islands government agencies are able to produce sex-disaggregated statistics on topics such as population, births and deaths, school enrolment, employment, hospital patients and parliamentary representation. In addition, gender statistics in some newer areas are becoming available. For example, **statistics on violence against women were released in 2014 and a chapter has been added to this report based on *Te Ata O Te Ngakau*, The Cook Islands Family Health and Safety Study and because this is such an important issue to address to achieve gender equality material has been included here.**

What is gender?

Sex = male and female

Gender = masculine and feminine

Gender relates to the roles women and men, girls and boys, play in public and private life and where similarities and differences exist. It is not the same as sex (biological characteristics of women and men) and it is not the same as women. Gender is determined by the conception of tasks, functions and roles attributed to women and men in society and in public and private life. Gender is not about women only; it is about both men and women.

At the same time, important developments within the Pacific region and internationally have improved the concepts and definitions used for data collection and analysis. For example the **Statistics for Development Division** at the SPC worked with national statistics offices in the region to adopt a standard questionnaire for use in the census of population and housing. This means that there is consistency in the definitions of employment and unemployment as well as education and disability and fertility for the first time. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) began annual monitoring of progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and countries are providing regular updates to the regional MDG database maintained by the PIFS. **Finally, and of direct relevance to gender statistics and analysis, the PIFS is developing the reporting framework to monitor progress towards achieving the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration across the Pacific region.**

Reliable statistical information is now collected more widely by government and NGOs as a requirement of donors for funding projects and programs. In addition government is working more closely and within a coordinated policy framework with NGOs as implementing partners. In the Cook Islands such partnerships exist in areas like women's civic education, reproductive health, technical and vocational education, counselling services and training and non-communicable diseases. This has increased the coverage, accuracy and reliability of statistical information in these areas.

But challenges remain. Statistics are not available or not detailed enough for a detailed gender analysis for areas like international migration, household decision making, access to and control of resources, hours in unpaid work in the home, access to and use of information and communication technologies, the informal sector and informal employment. The same is true of data on occupations, wages, unemployment and underemployment, access to credit, and household poverty. In sum, while considerable progress has been made in expanding the range of statistical information available for gender analysis there are still areas where information is very limited in the Cook Islands.

The Cook Islands

Cook Islands comprises 15 islands making up 240 square kilometres spread over 2.2 million square kilometres of ocean. The Cook Islands consists of two main groups, one in the north and one in the south. The southern group is nine "high" islands mainly of volcanic origin although some are virtually atolls. The majority of the population lives in the southern group. The northern group comprises six true atolls. Rarotonga, the main island, also the largest, is the hub of the Cook Islands and the main urban centre of Avarua is there. In reality the whole island of Rarotonga is considered to be urban and all other *Pa Enua* islands are rural.

The lack of physical resources and large distances combined with a small population results in high costs of service delivery and economic development costs. The economy is dominated by the services sector based mainly on tourism and the offshore banking industry with market oriented agricultural production the main source of income in some islands.

Indigenous Cook Islanders make up the most of the population with a steadily increasing population of expatriates largely composed of New Zealanders, Filipinos and people from Pacific Island countries, notably Fiji. English and Cook Islands Maori are the official languages, with Cook Islands Maori the main language of communication. Culturally, the population is mostly homogenous, with the traditional patrilineal and chief or clan system still the main social structures but with individual differences between islands. Like other Polynesian societies, women have status in relation to their roles as wives and mothers.

The government of the Cook Islands is modelled after the British Westminster parliamentary system with a bi-cameral legislature composed of two houses: the House of Ariki (Chiefs) and the Parliament. The Prime Minister is elected by popular vote. In all other islands the Island Council is elected by popular vote.

The Cook Islands is an independent nation in free association with New Zealand for the functions of defence and foreign affairs, although for the latter the Cook Islands is mostly independent. The free association means that all Cook Islanders are New Zealand citizens.

Population

<<insert image>>

Policy implications

The Cook Islands has a number of challenges regarding maintaining a stable population and an increasing proportion of older persons. There are slightly more males in the Cook Islands than females, although at age groups 25 - 44 years there are more females than males and in rural areas there are more women than men aged over 65 years.

The urban population in Rarotonga is younger than the rural *Pa Enua* one, and the population in rural areas is declining.

There are more males living in the *Pa Enua* than females who are more likely to live in Rarotonga than the *Pa Enua*.

1. POPULATION

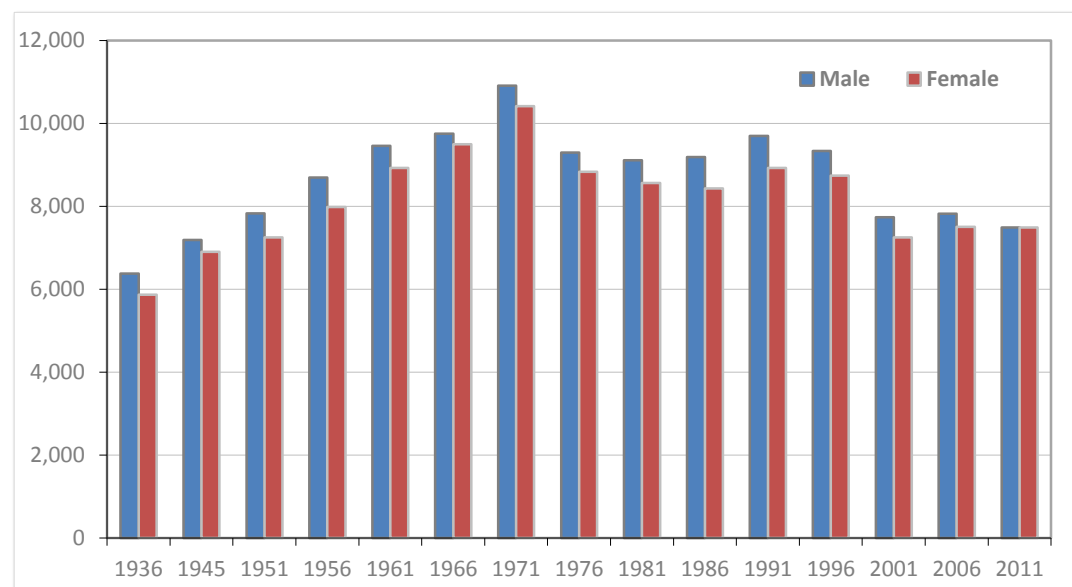
STATISTICAL INDICATORS

Indicator	2001		2006		2011	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Average annual rate of population change			0.2%	0.7%	-0.9%	0.0%
Rate of population change (rural)			-2.2%	-1.3%	-3.3%	-2.6%
Rate of population change (urban)			1.5%	1.7%	0.2%	1.1%
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	106.7		104.3		100.1	
Sex ratio - urban	105.3		104.2		99.7	
Sex ratio - rural	109.2		104.4		101.0	
Population, under 15	18%	16%	16%	15%	15%	14%
Population, 65+	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%	5%
Life expectancy at birth	76	69.4	73	71		
Births per year			161	143	139	123
Deaths per year					40	32

Source: CISO

A young population with declining fertility ...

FIGURE 2: COOK ISLANDS MALE & FEMALE POPULATION 1936 - 2011

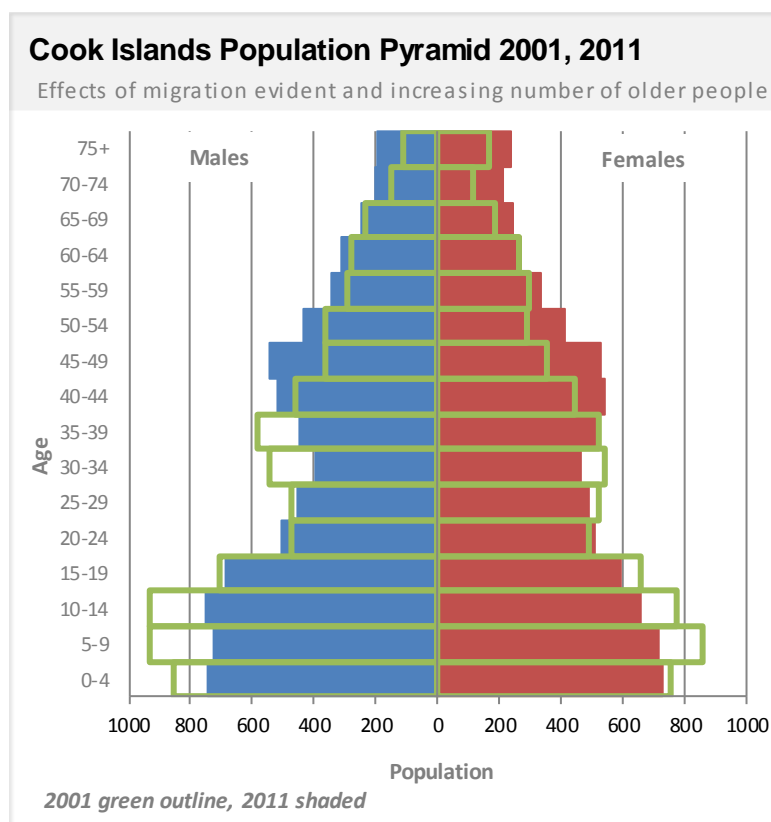


Source: CISO

Cook Islanders are New Zealand citizens and as such are free to migrate to New Zealand or Australia and live. Over the past 40 years the size and composition of the Cook Islands population has been shaped by emigration (people leaving the Cook Islands) and to some extent people moving from the *Pa Enua* to Rarotonga. These changes and trends in population growth, or decline, and distribution have affected living conditions across the Cook Islands. The population decline from 1971 - 1976 shows the outmigration of people after the international airport opened in 1974. The second major wave of mass exodus occurred between 1996 and 2001, a time when government restructuring and economic

reforms resulted in many families emigrating to New Zealand and Australia. In recent years Government has been bringing families back through an incentive based resettlement programme and this, combined with an expanding range of economic opportunities in the Cook Islands **along with an increasing migrant worker population**, seems to have slowed up the population loss through migration.

FIGURE 3: COOK ISLANDS MALE & FEMALE POPULATION 2001 AND 2011



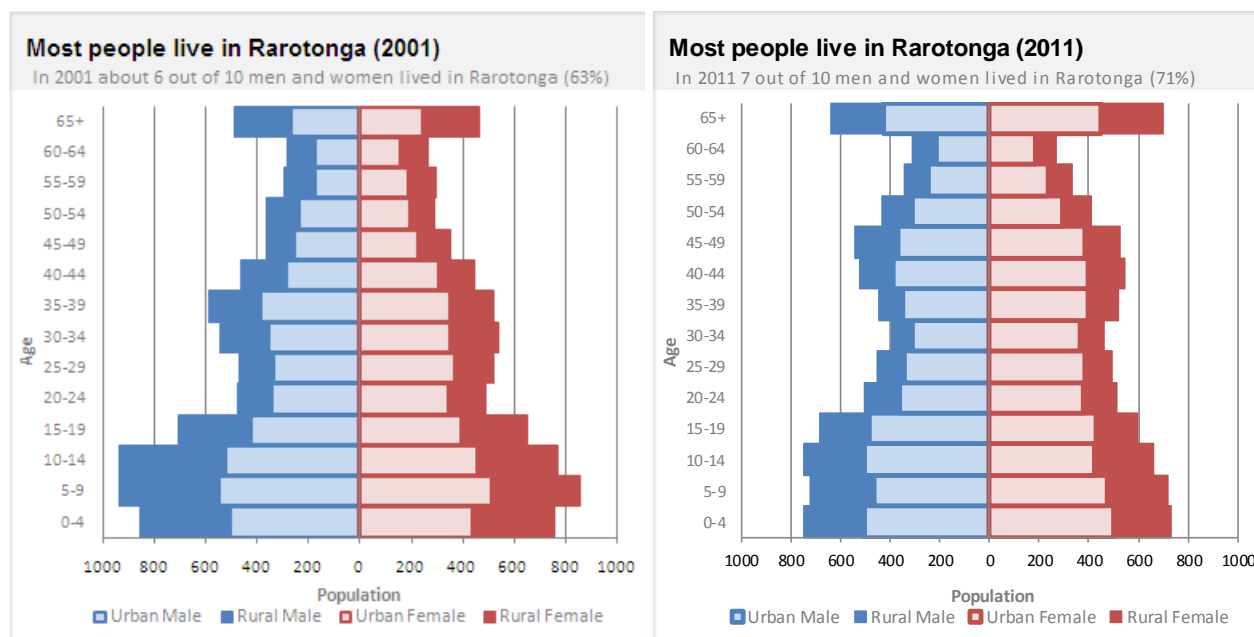
Source: CISO

The age and sex composition of the population shows the effects of declining fertility - there are fewer women in the Cook Islands having fewer children - and migration, especially for young women and men. In 2001 females aged less than 15 years made up 16% of the population, compared with 14% in 2011; while the proportion for young males aged less than 15 years decreased from 18% to 15% over the same 10 year period. The Cook Islands population is getting older, with women making up 5% of the 9% of people aged 65 years and over in 2011 compared with 3% for both sexes in 2001. These two factors mean that the burden of care is shifting away from children to older persons; although there is still a significant proportion of the population which is aged less than 15 years. At the same time that these shifts in the size and age structure have been happening, more people are choosing to live in Rarotonga than in the *Pa Enua*. The population of Rarotonga is 2.4 times larger than the *Pa Enua* for both women and men.

The population pyramid shows the number of people in five year age groups by male and female and is used to provide a picture of the age and sex composition of populations. The 2011 pyramid for the Cook Islands has a narrowing in the base for the 0 - 4 year age group showing the declining number of births, followed by a noticeable narrowing in the years through 20 - 39 for both males and females showing the effects of out migration. It shows that the population growth rate has decreased since 2001. The pyramid suggests that there are fewer people in the 30 - 39 year age group in 2011 compared to 2001. This is most likely caused by the international migration of people in this age group over the last 10 years.

In 2001 62% of men and 63% of women lived in Rarotonga and 10 years later this increased to 70% of both men and women living in Rarotonga. During this period the population density in Rarotonga increased by 13% while the number of people per square kilometre in the *Pa Enua* decreased by 29% from 33 people per km² to 26 people per km². This has implications for those 'left behind' in the *Pa Enua* particularly those who are able to provide care for older persons in remote island communities.

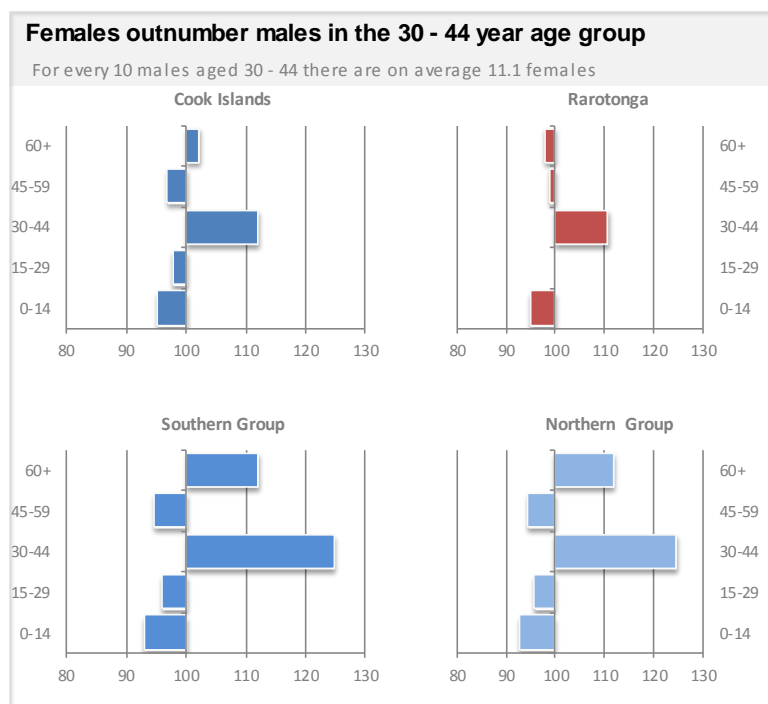
FIGURE 4: COOK ISLANDS MALE & FEMALE POPULATION 2001 AND 2011



Source: CISO

Since record keeping began in the late 19th century there have been more males than females in the Cook Islands and over the past 10 years (2001 - 2011) the sex ratio has been decreasing. In 2001 there were 107 males for every 100 females but by 2011 the sex ratio was 100.4, meaning there was the same number of men and women. But there are differences in the 2011 sex ratios between different areas and for different age groups. There are more females than males in the 30 - 44 year age group - presumably because more males migrate in this age group than females. In Figure 5 the sex ratios for the *Pa Enua* (Northern Group and Southern Group) show that women outnumber men in the 30 - 44 year age group and aged 60 years and over. For all other age groups men outnumber women and the sex ratio is less than 100.

FIGURE 5: SEX RATIO (NUMBER OF FEMALES FOR EVERY 100 MALES), 2011



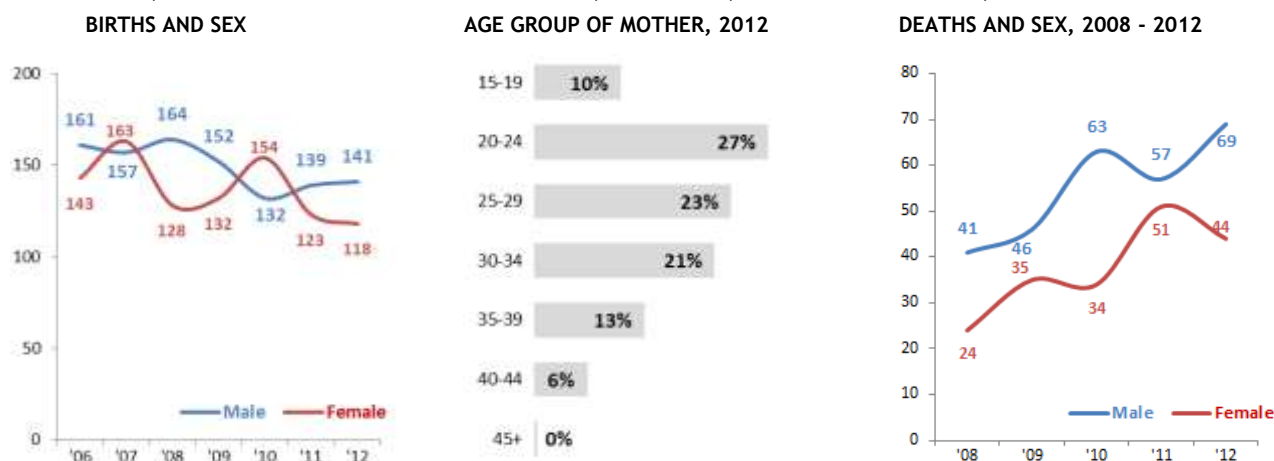
Source: CISO

The population of the Cook Islands has been around 15,000 since 2001; population growth from natural increase or births is balanced by out migration. The Cook Islands has a large proportion of its population, 29%, aged less than 15 years of age and a median age of 30 years, 29 for males and 30 for females in 2011.

The birth registration records from the Ministry of Justice and Lands show that there were 259 births in the Cook Islands in 2012, with the trend since 2006 of a slight annual decrease. More boys are born than girls, with an average of 12 more boys born a year since 2006 than girls.

Since 2008 about 10% of all mothers were aged 15 - 19 years, with about 40% or four out of every 10 mothers are aged under 25 years. A small number of births were reported to women aged over 45 years each year, ranging from 0 in 2009 to four in 2010 and one in 2012. Both young and older mothers face significant health risks for themselves, and often their baby.

FIGURE 6: SEX, NUMBER OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS PER YEAR, 2006 - 2012; AGE GROUP OF MOTHER, 2012

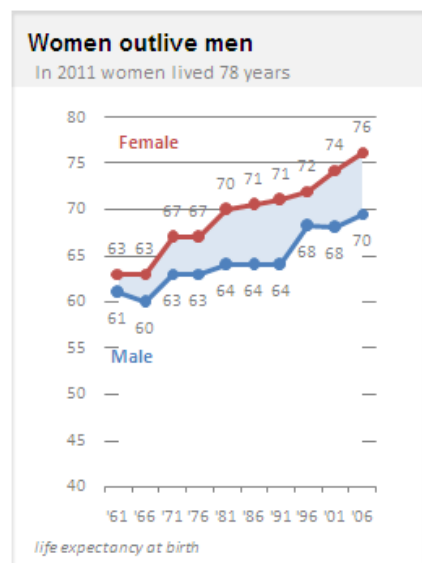


Source: CISO and Ministry of Health

Life expectancy at birth is an estimation of the average number of years a newborn child can expect to live given the current levels of mortality in a country. It is an indicator that can provide a picture of the overall health status of populations and also allows for investigating the longevity of women and men separately. In 1961 it was estimated that from birth a male would live to 61 years of age and a female would live slightly longer to 63 years. In 2001 life expectancy was 74 years for females and 68 years for males. This increased to 76 years for females and 70 years for males in 2006. In 2011 life expectancy was 78 for females and 74 for males.

Generally in the world women live longer than men. This biological advantage for women begins at birth. However, societal, cultural and economic factors can affect the natural advantage females have over males. Studies show that women’s exposure to risks associated with childbirth and disease can change this. This doesn’t seem to be happening in the Cook Islands although it is very difficult to tell because chronically ill girls and boys, men and women, many elderly and ‘high risk’ pregnant women migrate to New Zealand for long term treatment and statistics are not available about the health outcomes for these people.

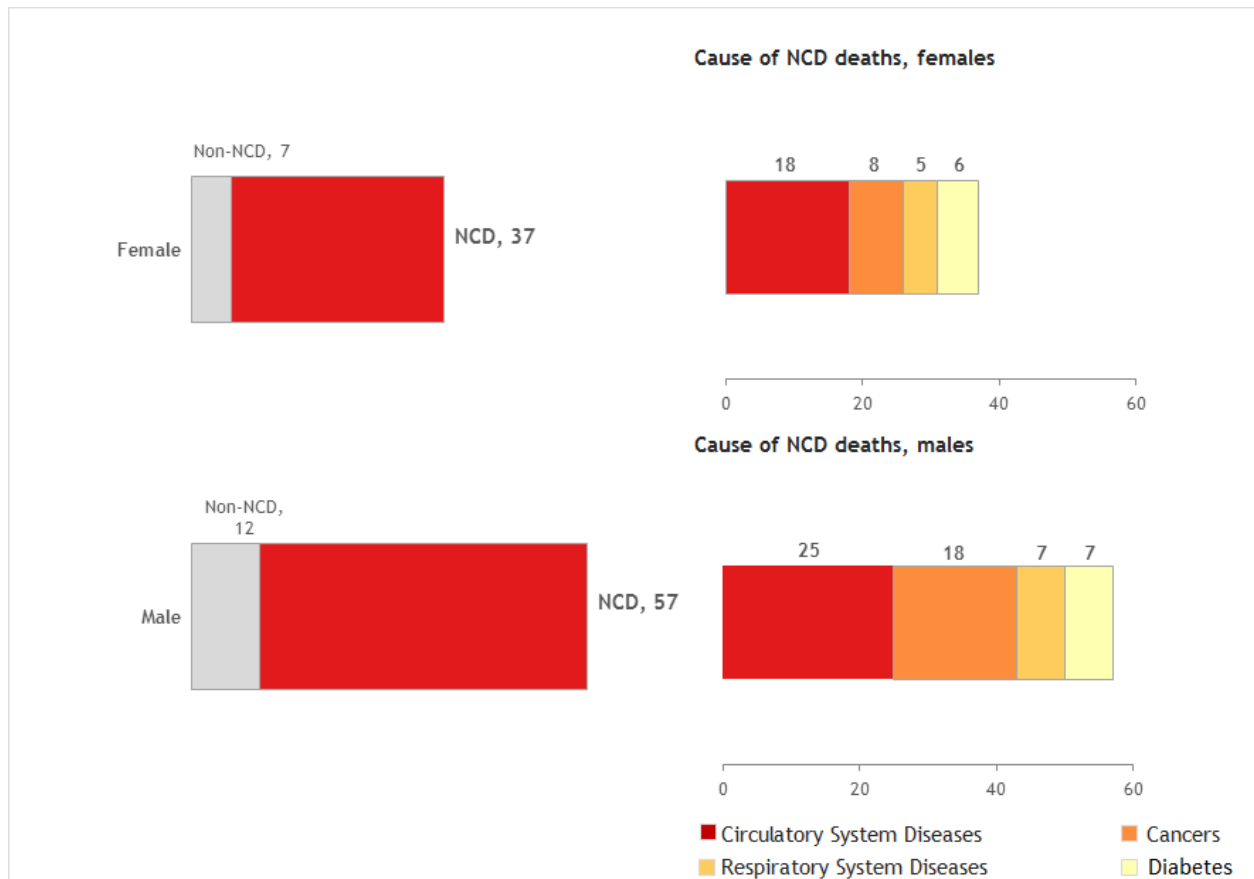
FIGURE 7: COOK ISLANDS LIFE EXPECTANCY FOR MALES & FEMALES, 1961 - 2011 CENSUS



Source: CISO

In 2012 there were 111 deaths¹ reported in health information system of the Cook Islands Ministry of Health, 68 males (61%) and 43 females; only one of these were aged less than 1 year old. On average, since 2008 60% of deaths recorded in the Cook Islands were male and 40% were female (residents only). In 2012 Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), in particular heart disease and hypertension are the main causes of deaths for both sexes while lung and prostate cancer are a significant cause of death for men.

FIGURE 8: COOK ISLANDS CAUSE OF DEATH FOR MALES AND FEMALES, 2012 MINISTRY OF HEALTH RECORDS



Source: Cook Islands Ministry of Health, Statistical Bulletin, 2012.

... A net loss of population due to international migration

The movement of people from one place to another is as old as humankind itself. These movements are the result of a whole set of different socio-economic, political and demographic circumstances. Migration of people across borders is difficult to measure in real time - especially in the Cook Islands where it is difficult to accurately collect statistics on the number of Cook Islanders permanently leaving. Consequently, the information on international migration is based on the census. In 2006 it was estimated that almost 100 people a year left the Cook Islands, mostly for post-secondary studies and work.

¹ Deaths of Cook Island residents only.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION IN 2011 (COOK ISLANDS RESIDENT POPULATION)

Island/Region	Number of people aged under 14 years		Number of people aged 15 – 59 years		Number of people aged over 60 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cook Islands	2,220	2,112	4,319	4,401	951	971
Urban	1,471	1,398	3,164	3,266	643	630
Rural	749	714	1,155	1,135	308	341
Southern Group	2,008	1,897	4,003	4,132	902	920
Rarotonga	1,471	1,398	3,164	3,266	643	630
Aitutaki	284	275	465	498	119	130
Mangaia	101	85	125	130	57	64
Atiu	74	78	114	118	40	44
Mauke	47	32	77	81	31	32
Mitiaro	31	29	58	39	12	20
Northern Group	212	215	316	269	49	51
Manihiki	43	28	82	63	10	12
Penrhyn	50	38	59	48	10	8
Rakahanga	6	12	26	22	6	5
Pukapuka	84	106	118	105	19	19
Nassau	18	17	17	18	1	2
Palmerston	11	14	14	13	3	5

Source: CISO

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Cook Islands has a major challenge with its loss of population to international migration combined with declining rates of population growth due to decreasing fertility. This is a challenge for the delivery of basic social services like health and education as well as ensuring that everyone in the Cook Islands has the opportunity for a sustainable livelihood through economic activity and access to land and other productive resources. **In an effort to prevent further reduction to the birth rate, the government increased the one-off 'new born' welfare payment to all mothers from \$300 to \$1,000. Anecdotal information suggests that this is an enticement *Pa Enua* women are benefitting from.**

The population structure presents real policy challenges if policies are to be implemented to try to limit out migration. Young people migrate in search of education, sporting opportunities, work, to join other family members and so on. These people have to cope with a number of major life changes. These can include leaving school, leaving the parental home and living with other relatives, finding work or a reliable livelihood, managing new health risks and taking part in the political system. The population data presented here do not show us enough about how these life changes youth go through are different for young women and men; but this theme will be traced through in other chapters. **Anecdotal information suggests that parents emigrating, or living overseas, leave or send their children with Cook Islands relatives until they complete their schooling: school enrolment is not decreasing at the same rate as the population is. This has implications for not only these children but their care givers and parents. Older persons migrate for medical care and to be with other family. Recent changes in New Zealand now mean that Cook Islanders are eligible to receive a New Zealand pension in the Cook Islands. This could encourage more older Cook Islanders to return home as well as easing some financial pressure on those living here who can now access New Zealand superannuation. Successive Cook Island governments have increased the pension for older persons in the Cook Islands, and from 2015 those aged over 70 years are entitled to \$640 per month.**

The rate of urbanisation, or the growth of the population in Rarotonga, needs to be addressed through a range of policy initiatives to ensure there is adequate housing and basic services in Rarotonga while creating opportunities and maintaining decent living conditions for families in the *Pa Enua*. **In some *Pa Enua* islands the Island Council has introduced rotational work schemes to provide much needed cash income for families. There is limited evidence about internal migration and the reasons why people are moving to Rarotonga - anecdotally people move because of educational opportunities for their children, mothers come to give birth and don't return, young people want to experience the urban life style. But in terms of developing policy to assist these people, or provide opportunities for them in the *Pa Enua*, there has been no research to provide the evidence about causal 'push' and 'pull' factors required.**

At the same time the proportion of the population in the older age groups is increasing and their needs for health care for age associated diseases, economic security, changing family structures and care systems, mobility and so on need to be catered for so they can continue to actively contribute to their community and society. Services need to be provided for the health and welfare of elderly women and their care givers in the *Pa Enua*.

The Cook Islands Action Plan to Prevent and Control NCDs 2009 - 2014 contains six objectives to implement community based comprehensive, integrated, multi-sectoral approach needed to reduce the incidence and impact of NCDs for individuals, families, communities and the country. It noted that the 2004 prevalence of hypertension was 30% in adults and almost one-in-four adults (24%) had diabetes with low levels of fruit and vegetable consumption and low levels of physical exercise. Overweight and obesity levels among participants were very high (89% and 61% respectively) and similar to previous screening activities held in the Cook Islands. The Action Plan addresses three of the four priority risk factors: - alcohol, food and nutrition (healthier eating), and physical activity with reducing tobacco use included in a separate strategy although some tobacco related activities are contained in the strategy. The range of interventions included legislative reform and enforcement, school curriculum changes and activities, community and NGO activities, media campaigns, clinical interventions, rehabilitation, pharmaceutical supplies and protocols. A national NCD prevalence assessment was undertaken again in 2013 (WHO STEPs survey) to measure progress in the implementation of the action plan.

Households, families and housing

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Policy implications

Most households headed by women are women living on their own, usually older widowed, women or a woman with children.

2. HOUSEHOLDS, FAMILIES AND HOUSING

STATISTICAL INDICATORS & INFORMATION

Indicator	2001		2006		2011	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Household head (%)	76%	24%	73%	27%	74%	26%
Urban	75%	25%	73%	27%	74%	26%
Rural	79%	21%	78%	22%	74%	27%
Singulate mean age at marriage (years)	32.0	31.0	31.7	31.4		
Annual number of marriages	92	92	66	66	85	85
Proportion pop. aged 15-19 ever married (legal)	<1%	1%	1%	2%	<1%	<1%
Proportion pop. aged 15-19 ever married (consensually)			2%	3%	4%	5%
Proportion population aged 60+, widowed	15%	38%	16%	34%	12%	33%
Proportion population aged 45+ never married	12%	7%	4%	2%	12%	9%
Proportion pop. aged 15-59, separated/divorced	4%	4%	3%	3%	1%	2%
Population without sufficient living space (more than 2 people per room)			6%	6%	7%	7%
Households living in privately owned housing					71%	72%
Legal age for marriage	18	16	Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act, 1988. S. 428 (a). Custom marriages are exempt from the age requirements.			

Source: CISO. There was no separate category for *de facto* or consensual marriage in the 2001 Census.

Women head one in four households

A household is defined as a group of people who usually live together and share resources like food and shelter; or one person living alone in a housing unit.

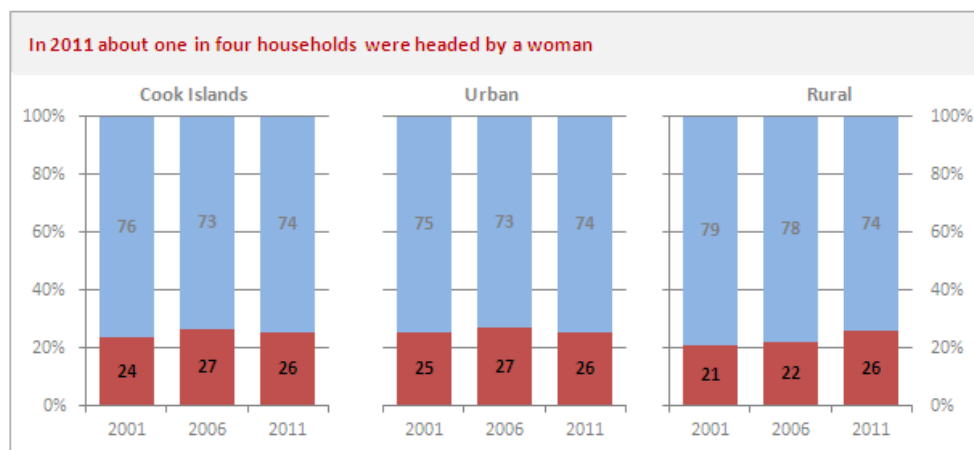
Households headed by women are increasing worldwide and much of the interest in household headship arises because of perceived differences between households headed by women and those headed by men. Household surveys like the census collect information about the head of the household and how the members of the household are related to this person by marriage, kinship or whether they are not related. The sex of the head of the household is used as a proxy to provide information about the differences between women and men because information on resource sharing within household members is not generally collected: we are not able to carry out detailed analysis of the socio economic status of household members based on the census information provided. This means that female headed households are used as a proxy for the missing gender breakdowns and the characteristics of these households are compared to those headed by men.

Females become household heads because they have been widowed, abandoned, divorced, their husbands have migrated either temporarily for work or permanently or that they are the oldest person in the household. Some women are heads of the household because their husbands suffer from disability or chronic disease including disability. Finally

in some countries women are heads of their households because of matrilineal customs and traditions. In sum, demographic, cultural, and economic changes are transforming the traditional household head notion, and in particular the female headship concept.

In the Cook Islands 2011 Census of Population and Housing the head of the household was the person who declared himself or herself in charge of the household. The Census data shows that most households are headed by men but an increasing proportion are headed by women, especially in the *Pa Enua*.

FIGURE 9: SEX OF THE HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD, 2001 – 2011 CENSUS



Source: CISO

The 2006 Census shows that throughout the Cook Islands female headed households were more likely to be one person households with 24% of all households headed by women one person households; with this increasing to 28% in 2011, with the increase in Rarotonga. One person households are considered vulnerable or at a social disadvantage associated with age. The risk of irregular or low income is increased at young ages when unemployment or availability of only casual jobs is high, and in the late phase of working age when unemployment increases. For elderly people living alone, the type of country-specific welfare regime affects the degree of poverty. Large proportions of one-person households depend on social transfer payments like the old age pension or the infirm pension. The research shows that the combined disadvantages of low income, high dependence on public support, high unemployment and bad health peak for people living alone at ages 40 to 55 years.²

TABLE 2: COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS AS A PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS HEADED BY WOMEN AND MEN, 2006 CENSUS

Household composition	Cook Islands			Rarotonga			Outer islands		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Couple	17	10	15	18	10	16	12	7	11
Couple + child(ren)	37	10	29	36	10	29	39	9	32
Couple + extended family	15	4	12	15	4	12	16	3	13
Couple + relative(s)	5	2	5	5	2	4	11	1	9
One person	15	24	17	15	23	17	12	26	15
Lone head + child(ren)	3	18	7	3	18	7	3	19	7
Lone head + extended family	4	19	8	4	19	8	3	26	8
Lone head + relative(s)	2	7	3	2	7	4	1	1	1
Non-related household	2	6	3	2	5	3	1	7	3
Unable to classify	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: CISO

The 2011 Census household composition includes the separate *Pa Enua* island groups and shows that almost one-third of female headed households in the Southern Group of islands comprise of the female head and extended family members. There were a large number of these households in the Northern Group (26%) with an equal number of female household heads living by themselves. Throughout the *Pa Enua*, male household heads and their spouse and children are the most common types of households.

² See Avramov, 2002.

TABLE 3: COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS AS A PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLD HEADED BY WOMEN AND MEN, 2011 CENSUS

Household composition	Cook Islands			Rarotonga			Southern Group			Northern Group		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Couple	18	8	15	20	9	17	16	5	13	7	6	7
Couple + child(ren)	36	10	29	37	10	30	31	8	25	35	13	30
Couple + relative(s)	21	6	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Couple + extended family	0	0	17	18	5	0	29	6	23	25	12	22
One person	15	28	19	15	29	19	15	27	18	17	24	19
Lone head + child(ren)	3	19	7	3	20	7	2	16	6	5	16	8
Lone head + relative(s)	4	22	3	2	5	7	1	5	2	4	4	4
Lone head + extended family	2	5	8	3	18	3	4	31	12	5	24	9
Non-related household	1	3	2	2	4	2	0	1	1	1	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: CISO

Almost all adults are married ...

Marriage, a social construct shared by all societies and people, is the act, ceremony or process that unites two people in a relationship that, in almost all cultures, is consensual and contractual and recognised as such by law. Marriage and union are in most cases a first step in establishing a family, often the essential unit in the composition and functioning of a society. Marriage and divorce are vital events that have important implications for the situation of women and men, for the organization of society, and for population change. As key events in the formation and dissolution of families, marriage and divorce strongly influence many aspects of the lives of women and men including their access to resources and opportunities and their living arrangements. In 2011 there were 85 marriages of residents in 2011, representing 2% of the population aged 15 years and over legally married in the Census. Legal marriage is the predominant form of union: 22% of residents aged 15 years and over in a union were living in a *de facto* relationship or consensual union compared with 88% living as legally married.

The Marriage Act, 1973 states that the legal age for marriage for both males and females is 16 years, although a Bill has been presented to parliament to increase this to 18 years for compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. From the census data it is possible to look at the proportion of the married population who are living in a consensual marriage which is living together without being married legally or by custom. The proportion of young people aged 15 - 19 who are married or living in a union is very small, with 5% of females and 4% of males aged 15 - 19 years reporting that they were married in 2011.

Women and men do not enter marriage at the same age. In fact, throughout history, the average age at marriage for women has always been lower, sometimes considerably so, than the average age for men. This is still apparent, although the average age of women at first marriage is now much higher, with young people worldwide marrying at older ages than their parents did. The average age at first marriage in the Cook Islands in 2006 (estimated from the Census) is relatively high for the Pacific region, with males marrying on average at 32 years and 31 years for females: on average men were one year older when they married than women.

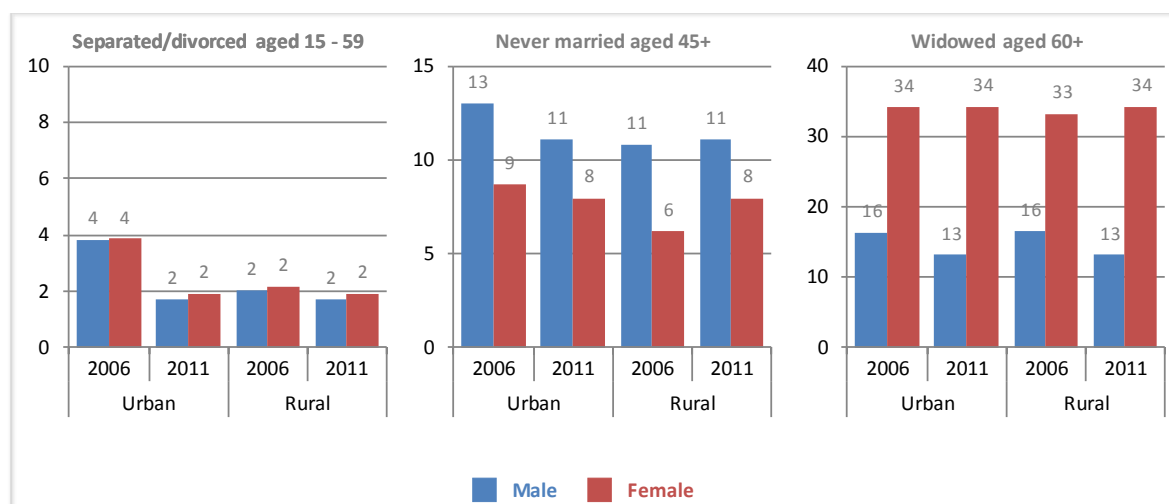
A much higher proportion of women aged 60 years and over are widowed compared with men. The proportion of men and women who are separated or divorced is about the same at 2% in 2011. These two categories are of interest because the 'lone' head of their household and responsible for providing for its members; or if elderly reliant for care and support from family members living in the household or elsewhere.

Marriage dissolution is not common

Under the law a legally married couple is required to go through a two year separation before filing for a divorce through the court. In the Cook Islands the legal requirements for divorce require fault-based provisions but there is equal division of property after divorce. The law does not provide for 'no fault' divorces and fault based criteria for divorce disadvantages women who are more likely to be in untenable situations and have difficulty establishing cruelty or adultery.

In the 2011 Census there were 359 people who declared themselves separated or legally divorced, just over 80% of whom lived in the urban area of Rarotonga. Women represented 55% of those who were separated and 54% of those who were divorced and most of these were in the urban area.

FIGURE 10: PROPORTION OF WOMEN AND MEN IN SELECTED MARITAL STATUS CATEGORIES, 2006 & 2011



Source: CISO

Families

As spouses, parents and caregivers, women take on the primary responsibility for ensuring the proper functioning of families and the provision of everyday care and maintenance. Preparing family meals, maintaining hygiene, caring for other family members and a myriad of other chores related to children consume a good part of the day for women in the world. While men are increasingly getting involved in the daily functioning of families, it is still predominantly women's responsibility.

TABLE 4: SEX OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD, AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS AND COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS, 2006 CENSUS

Household composition	Cook Islands			Rarotonga			Outer islands		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Couple	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Couple + child(ren)	4.5	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.5
Couple + relative(s)	3.8	4.1	3.8	3.8	4.1	3.8	3.8	3.0	3.8
Couple + extended family	6.6	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.3	5.0	6.3
One person	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Lone head + child(ren)	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.6	2.5	3.0
Lone head + relative(s)	3.2	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.8	3.5	3.0	2.0	2.8
Lone head + extended family	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	5.0	5.0
Non-related household	3.0	2.6	2.8	3.1	2.5	2.8	2.7	3.2	3.0
Unable to classify	3.6	2.3	3.2	2.7	2.3	2.5	5.3		5.3
Total	3.8	3.1	3.6	3.7	3.1	3.6	3.9	3.0	3.7

Source: CISO

TABLE 5: SEX OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD, AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS AND COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS, 2011 CENSUS

Household composition	Cook Islands			Rarotonga			Southern Group			Northern Group		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Couple	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Couple + child(ren)	4.4	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.8	4.4	4.8
Couple + relative(s)	5.8	5.6	5.8	6.0	5.9	6.0	5.0	3.0	5.4	4.0		4.0
Couple + extended family	5.3	3.7	4.9	5.5	4.0	5.2	5.4	5.1	4.0	6.2	5.1	6.2
One person	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Lone head + child(ren)	2.9	2.7	2.7	3.0	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.8	3.0	2.8
Lone head + relative(s)	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.4	4.9	4.7	2.1	3.2	4.2	3.0	2.7	3.0
Lone head + extended family	2.8	3.1	2.9	2.8	3.1	3.0	4.1	4.3	2.9	6.0	4.8	6.0
Non-related household	2.8	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.5	3.5	2.3	2.8	4.7		4.7
Total	3.6	2.9	3.4	3.6	2.9	3.4	3.7	3.0	3.5	4.2	3.3	4.2

Source: CISO

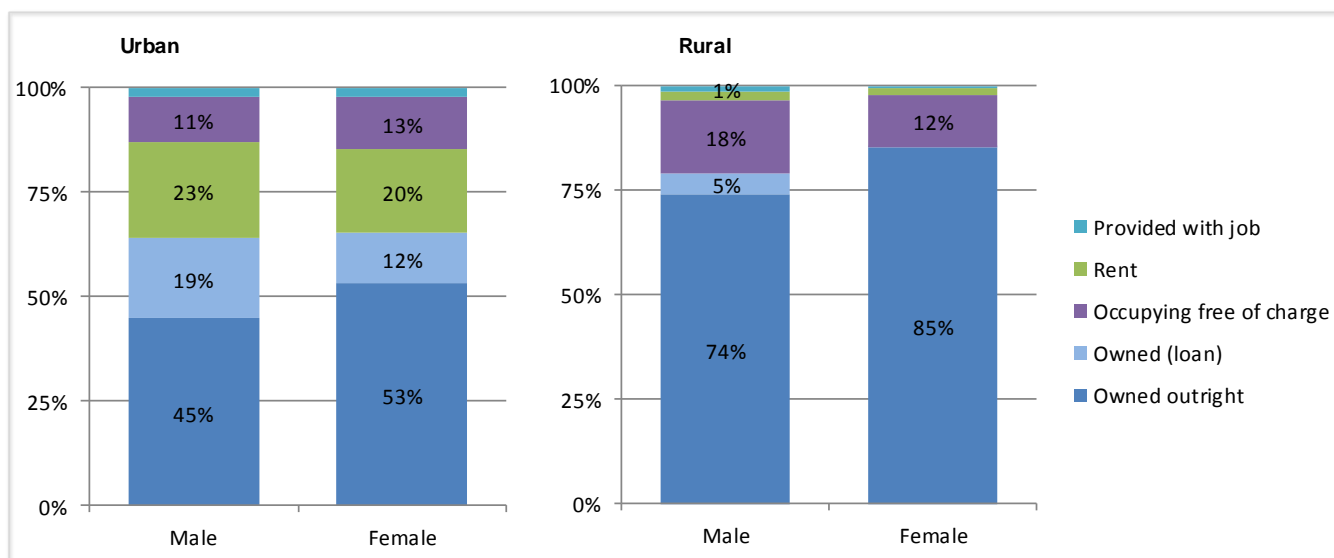
There is little difference in the average size of households, or the average number of people in each household based on the sex of the household head. In Rarotonga households with a female head with no spouse or partner (one person) and children or other relatives have slightly more people on average than similar households headed by men; but the difference is very small. **In the Southern Group of the Pa Enua there is a similar trend.**

Housing

There is no public assistance housing program in the Cook Islands; the government provides some housing for the relocation of families from the *Pa Enua* to Rarotonga but this is not part of a public housing policy. The overall standard of housing is good, as measured by household's which own their own home and do not living in crowded conditions. In 2011 there was overcrowding for 7% of males and females, an increase from 6% in 2006 and this is more common in rural areas where housing has 'communal' areas rather than separate rooms. Overcrowding is defined as when there are more than two people per habitable room in the house.

Another measure of the standard of housing is the proportion of households which have secure tenure on their house, meaning that the house is owned outright or with a loan or mortgage. In 2011 just over seven out of every 10 people lived in a house owned outright or with a mortgage or loan. There were no real gender differences in dwelling tenure and sex of the household head, with 62% of households headed by women owned outright compared with 53% for male headed households; most likely because these are older women in a "lone head" household. Households headed by males were more likely to have a mortgage or loan for their dwelling, with 15% compared with 9% for female headed households. Rates for secure tenure were higher in rural areas than urban ones, especially for female headed households.

FIGURE 11: TENURE OF DWELLINGS AND SEX OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD, RURAL AND URBAN AREAS, 2011



Source: CISO

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Data on households and families can improve understanding of the opportunities and resources available to women and men at different stages in life. Statistics on households are required for planning the supply, distribution and allocation of a wide variety of programmes, products and services, including such basic necessities as food and housing. When information such as the sex and age of the household head and the size of the household is available, household statistics can also be used to study gender differences in headship. A rise in female-headed households is a stated concern of the Platform for Action owing to the association between female-maintained households and hardship. **However for a thorough analysis of gender equality in households more information is needed about household decision making, and the different roles of women and men, girls and boys in households.**

Female-headed households cover a broad range of situations from one-person households, households of lone mothers with children and households of couples with or without children where the woman rather than the man is reported as the household head. They may include de jure female-headed households, where women do not have a male partner, or de facto female-headed households, where the male partner is temporarily absent and may or may not contribute remittances to the household's welfare. Similarly, male-headed households may include one-person households, households of lone fathers with children or households of couples with or without children.

Government provides housing support for the elderly through the provision of mobility aides as well as a subsidy for electricity. Persons living with disability are eligible to apply for modifications to their housing to meet their needs. There is an increasing proportion of housing which is rented in Rarotonga, and government assistance is provided for specific groups such as the poor and students from the outer islands. There is considerable demand for affordable rental accommodation in Rarotonga in the context of contract workers in the private sector and inflating house rental prices.

Education

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Policy implications

At senior secondary school girls are achieving better than boys, but boys have a wider range of local training opportunities than girls. The Ministry of Education needs to increase the number of male teachers at ECE and primary level. It is important that the quality of education in the *Pa Enua* is the same as that in Rarotonga.

3. EDUCATION

STATISTICAL INDICATORS & INFORMATION

Indicator / Information	2011		2012		2013	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Gross enrolment ratio in ECE education					85	82
Net enrolment ratio in ECE education					81	76
ECE school student enrolment	265	252	240	242	265	248
Gross enrolment ratio in primary education					102	101
Net enrolment ratio in primary education					96	94
Primary school student enrolment	954	907	962	912	904	889
Gross enrolment ratio in junior secondary education					95	105
Net enrolment ratio in junior secondary education					81	88
Secondary school student enrolment	875	929	910	886	862	884
Gross enrolment ratio in senior secondary education					64	82
Net enrolment ratio in senior secondary education					51	60
Gender Parity Index in primary level enrolment (NER)					0.98	
Gender Parity Index in senior secondary level enrolment (NER)					1.20	
Teachers in ECE education	1	32	0	34	0	33
Teachers in primary education	14	103	17	94	11	95
Teachers in secondary education	56	74	43	76	55	73

Indicator / Information	2001		2006		2011	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Adult (15+) literacy rate					100%	100%
Illiterate Population (15+)					0	0
Literacy Rate of 15-24 year-olds (self-reported)					100%	100%
School enrolment age (lowest age and no older than)	4 – 6 years of age Education Act 2012					
Minimum age of leaving school	16 years of age Education Act 2012					

Source: CISO for 2001, 2006 and 2011 Census. Ministry of Education for primary and secondary indicators with CISO population estimates for the school aged population. *Literate in Cook Islands Maori and/or English.

Access to basic education is good ...

In 2012 there were 29 co-educational schools on the 12 permanently populated islands. The Government operates most schools. Five church and three private schools are in operation. A high proportion (over 90%) of children are in school until Year 11, or about 15 years of age. Close to 60% continue to Year 12 and over 30% to Year 13. Cook Islands primary and secondary education is based on the New Zealand system in its structure, content and compulsory attendance although the curriculum is locally developed.³ It is difficult to assess the enrolment and drop-out rates in the Cook Islands because many students, especially at senior secondary level, transfer to New Zealand schools or into post-secondary education in New Zealand. There is no statistical information about these students. Both Cook Islands Maori and English are used as languages of instruction.

³ The Evaluation of the Cook Islands Education Sector Partnership, 29/03/2012; from http://www.education.gov.ck/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=558.

Post-secondary training courses available in the Cook Islands mostly provided through the Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute (CITTI), with faculties in Hospitality and Tourism, Nursing and Trade and Technology. There is also a University of the South Pacific (USP) campus with USP implementing its plan to increase the number of centres in the *Pa Enua*.

The Cook Islands Education Master Plan 2008-23, the strategic direction for education, is aligned to the Cook Islands second National Sustainable Development Plan 2011 - 2015 and regional and international commitments. It is an ambitious agenda to achieve literacy and numeracy targets in English and Cook Islands Maori while increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of education services and infrastructure to all children, especially those in the *Pa Enua* at secondary level in distance learning schools.

Education imparts skills and competencies that are central to human development and enhanced quality of life, bringing wide-ranging benefits to both individuals and societies. Investing in girls' and women's education in particular produces exceptionally high social and economic returns. Educated women invest more in their children and contribute to the welfare of the next generation. They are more likely to participate in the labour force, allowing them to earn an income, know and claim their rights, and attain greater influence in the household and public life. Education is essential for empowering women and for closing the gap between women and men in respect of socio-economic opportunities; it can reduce inequalities based on gender and alter the historical legacy of disadvantage faced by women.

Education has long been recognised as a fundamental right with far-reaching consequences for human development and societal progress. The right to education is proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various international covenants. The importance of education for the advancement of women was highlighted in the Beijing Platform for Action, in which it was identified as one of 12 critical areas of concern and affirmed as central for gender equality and women's empowerment. The Platform for Action called for eliminating discrimination in education on the basis of gender at all levels, eradicating illiteracy among women and improving women's access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education. With the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the aim of eliminating gender disparities in education has been further intensified as it is essential to the Goals' achievement. Goal 3 calls for achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education, preferably by the target date of 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

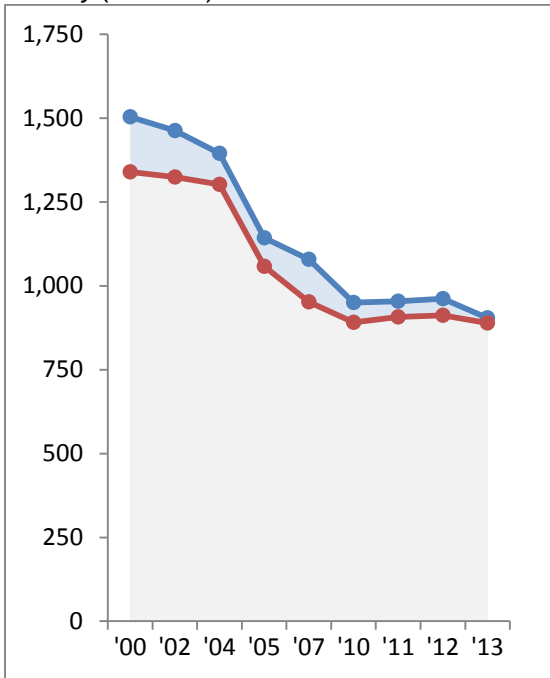
Participation is difficult to measure

Net enrolment ratios (NER) are lower for boys than girls, with Primary School NER in 2009 nationally 99% (97% boys, 1,015 girls) and Secondary School NER in 2009 nationally 83% (81% boys and 86% girls). Primary school enrolment in 2013 was 1,793, declining from 2,201 in 2005; secondary enrolment in 2005 was 1,899 compared with 1,746 in 2013. At primary and secondary level the general trend in enrolment of both boys and girls was a decrease until 2010 when it levelled off; with a decrease in enrolment again in 2013. It is very difficult to assess enrolment trends or make future estimates because of the strong effect of outward and inward migration of families to and from the Cook Islands on enrolment; not to mention the difficulties in assessing students transferring for overseas schooling or post-secondary training in the Cook Islands. However the school role is declining at a lower rate than the overall population, implying that parents leaving the Cook Islands leave children in the Cook Islands with other family members.

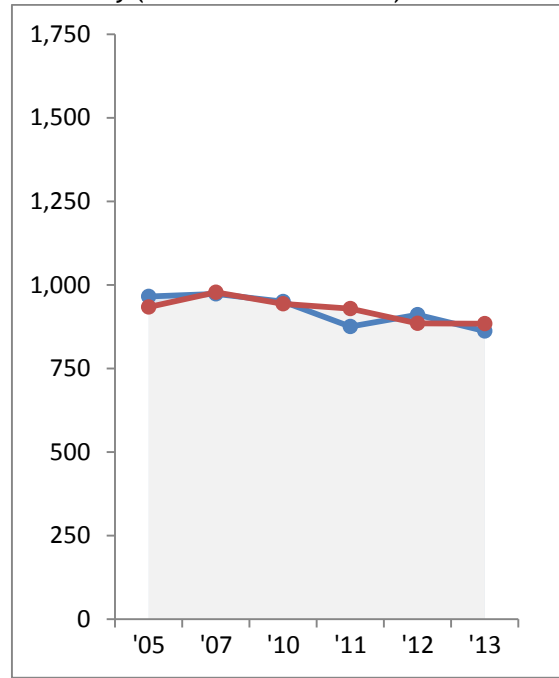
In the Cook Islands the primary cycle of education is Year 1 to Year 6 and secondary is from Form 1 to Senior Level 3 (the same as the New Zealand system). The majority of children enrolled in Year 1 have attended some form early childhood education, 90% in 2011. There are no real gender differences at the primary level: in 2011 the Gender Parity Index of the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) was 0.98 and that for the NER was 0.97 showing the slightly higher enrolment of boys than girls. Since 2005 the number of boys enrolled at primary level has decreased by 21% while there was a 16% decrease in the enrolment of girls; at secondary level there was an 11% decrease for boys and 5% decrease for girls over the same period. The enrolment statistics give no insight to the reasons why the enrolment of boys has decreased, nor does the composition of the population.

FIGURE 12: PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT OF GIRLS & BOYS, 1999, 2007 - 2011

Primary (Year 1-8)



Secondary (Form 1-Senior Level 3)

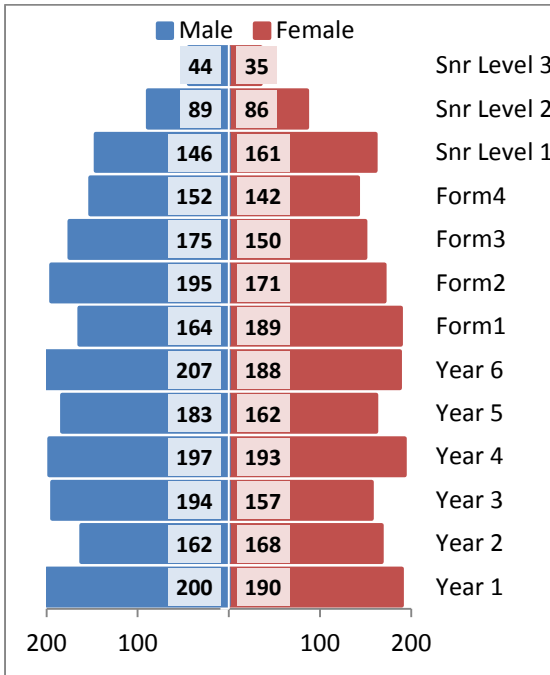


Source: Ministry of Education.

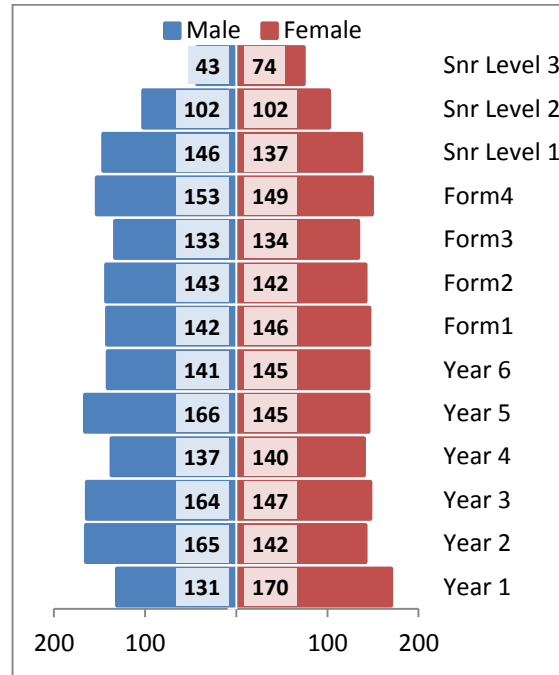
In 2005 there were some differences in enrolment for boys and girls by level, notably at secondary school. In 2013 these differences were not so apparent, with more girls enrolled at Senior Level 3 than boys. For each level of schooling there were slight variations in the number of boys and girls and the planning challenges are evident. For example most of the 74 female Senior Level 3 in 2013 students would, in theory, have been part of the 162 Year 5 students in 2005; likewise most of the 43 boys would have been part of the 183 boys in Year 5 in 2005. Are boys more likely to leave school, move overseas for higher education or pursue other training options in the Cooks Islands?

FIGURE 13: SCHOOL ENROLMENT OF GIRLS & BOYS, 2005, 2013

2005



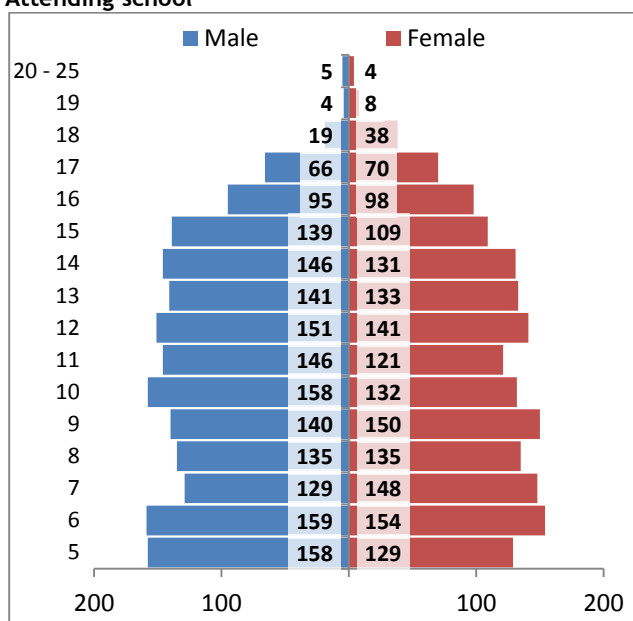
2013



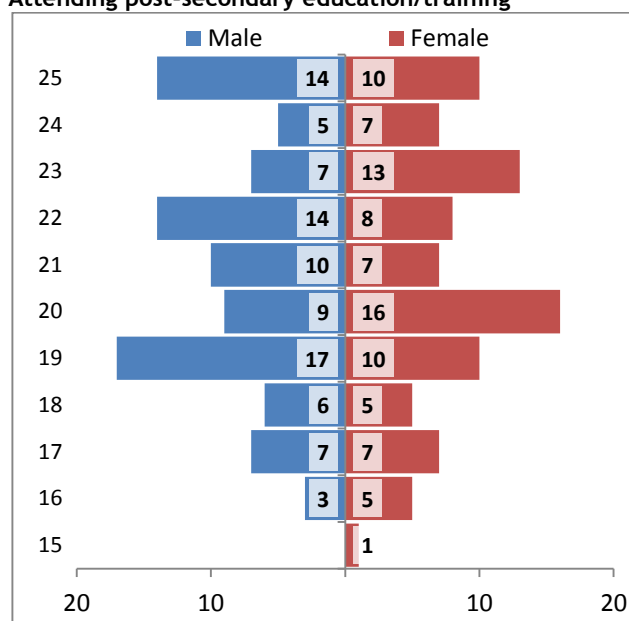
Source: Ministry of Education.

FIGURE 14: SCHOOL AND POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING ATTENDANCE, MALES & FEMALES, 2011

Attending school



Attending post-secondary education/training



Source: Cook Islands Statistics Office, *Census of Population and Housing 2011*.

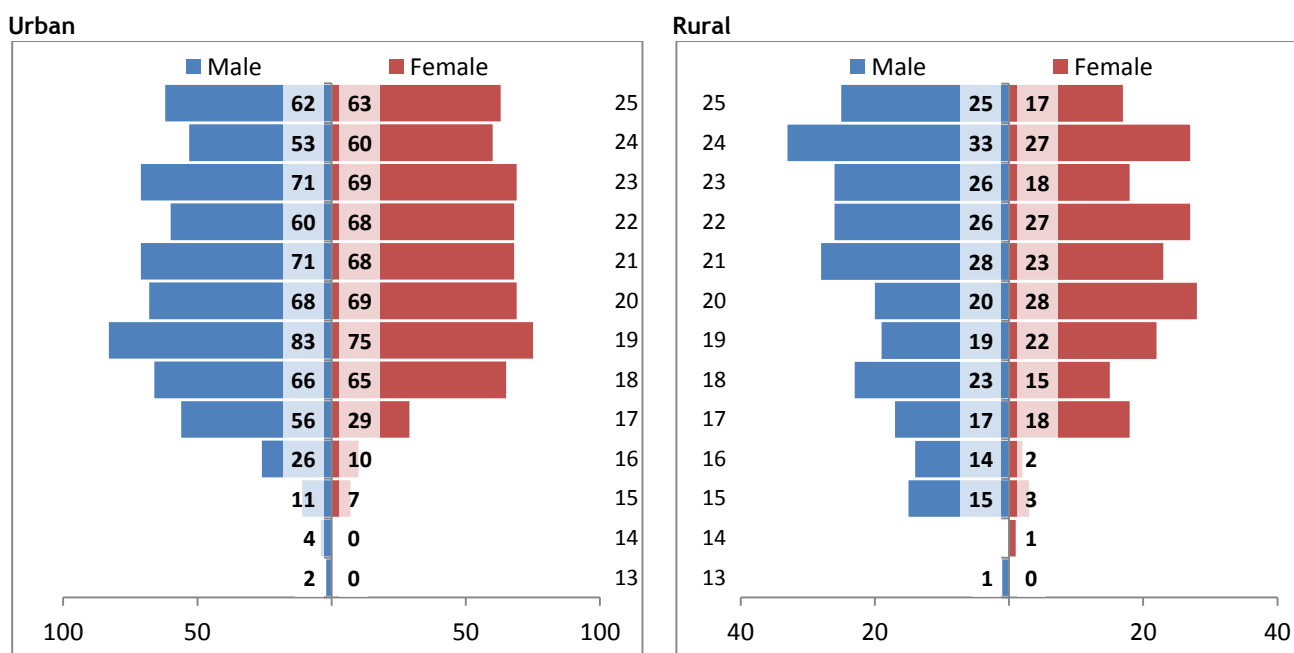
A slightly higher proportion of males aged 15-19 in rural areas, 44%, were not attending school or post-secondary education and training compared with 40% in urban areas. However for females aged 15-19, in rural areas 36% were not attending compared with 50% in urban areas: adolescent females living in Rarotonga are more likely to leave formal education than females in rural areas.

The enrolment information from the 2011 Census supports the Ministry of Education analysis that boys are more likely to drop out of school than girls; although the timing of the Census in early November after the completion of the school year resulted in a small proportion of both male and female students stating that they were not attending. However the statistics are clear - boys are more likely to be not attending higher secondary school than girls. At secondary level the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) for boys was 86% compared with 91% for girls, resulting in a Gender Parity Index (GPI) in favour of girls at 1.07 with 884 males attending secondary compared with 804 females (the higher GER for females is because there are more males in the secondary school age group than females). When attendance in post-secondary education is factored into enrolment the statistics do not change as post-secondary enrolment is approximately the same for males and females.

Gender Parity Index (GPI)

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is commonly used to measure progress towards gender parity in education. For a given indicator, the GPI is calculated as the ratio of the value for females to that for males. A GPI value equal to one indicates parity. In general, a value less than one indicates disparity in favor of men/boys, whereas a value greater than one indicates disparity in favor of women/girls. Gender parity is considered to have been attained when the GPI lies between 0.97 and 1.03.

FIGURE 15: MALES & FEMALES NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL OR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION & TRAINING, URBAN & RURAL, 2011



Source: Cook Islands Statistics Office, Census of Population and Housing 2011.

Girls are achieving better results than boys

In 2011 it was found that boys were lagging behind girls in every aspect of literacy tested in Cook Islands schools. Childhood literacy testing in the Cook Islands starts with English and Maori reading and at Year 4 where, in 2011, the gender gap was 13% for English and 7% for Maori. Further assessments at Years 6 and 8 which included listening as well as reading found consistent gaps with a peak of 18% at Year 8 reading.

The gender gap decreases when students are assessed for Literacy at NCEA Level One. However, at this stage comparisons become more complicated as the criteria are broader than those used for assessment in the earlier years and students can be assessed over two or three years. It is difficult to analyse the NCEA results because Cook Island students are relatively few in number (no more than 300 assessed at any level) and assessment conditions inevitably vary, given the scattered locations and different conditions in schools. The Ministry of Education concluded that the scattered locations of schools, low number of students per level and the need for ‘composite classes’, low achievement in distance learning for higher levels of secondary school, qualification and certification of teaching staff were more significant factors in learning outcomes than gender.

Participation in post-secondary education

There are multiple challenges in strengthening human resources in the Cook Islands to do with the small population and mobility for education, training and work in New Zealand and Australia; while local labour market demand is for a limited number but a wide range of skills. Since 2013 the Ministry of Education has established the Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute which focuses on the needs of employers and support training through the use of e-learning to better meet human resource needs. The Institute delivers skills across a wide range of areas customized to meet the needs of individual learners and individual employers. Three training schools come under the Institute umbrella: the Cook Island Trade Training Centre; the Hospitality Trade Training Centre; and Nursing. In addition the University of the South Pacific (USP) and public and private sector employers provide post-secondary education and training opportunities that are internationally benchmarked.

Progress has been made to match the needs of the labour market with people trained to a high standard in some sectors of the economy, but others have not been addressed. The broader TVET spectrum is constrained in terms of resources and types of training available in the Cook Islands. Programmes for transition from school and TVET to employment have increased with positive results in terms of employment of graduates, especially for males. Further challenges highlighted by the review of the education sector include a need to focus on transitions for the students who do not wish to travel to Rarotonga for training but stay on their home island.

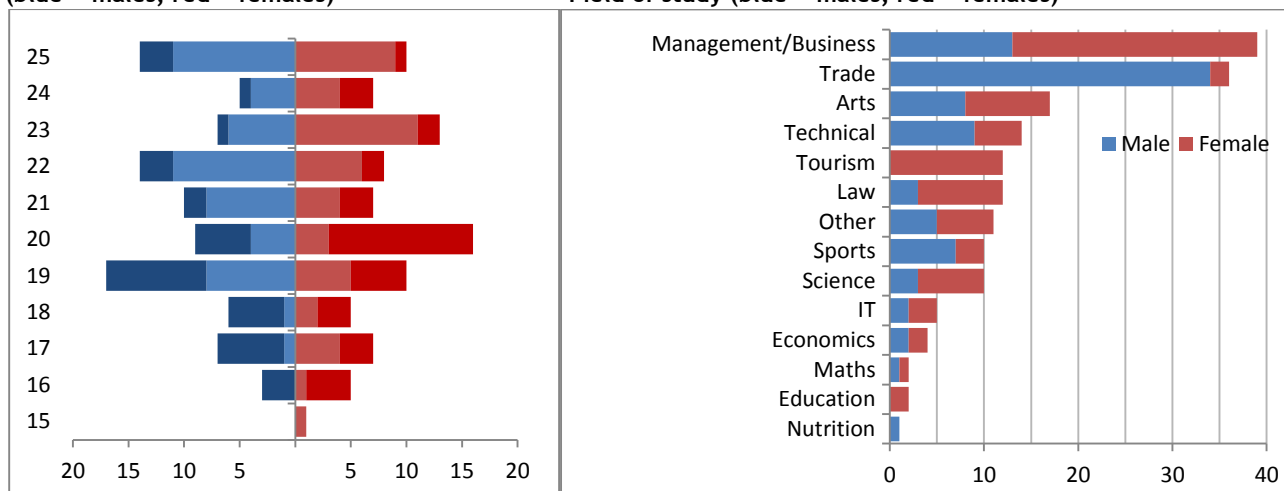
Both males and females aged 15-25 years were attending full- and part-time studies or training from the 2011 Census, with 181 reporting attendance; of which 51% were males. Slightly more, 57%, were attending part-time post-secondary

education; with 59% of males attending part-time compared with 56% of females. This partly reflects the type of training undertaken, with, for example, some USP courses offered on a part-time basis or students enrol on a part-time basis because of cost or other activities. Part-time students were likely to be older, aged 22-25 years, than full time students.

FIGURE 16: MALES & FEMALES POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION & TRAINING AGED 15 - 25 YEARS, FIELD OF STUDY 2011

Full time and part time, dark shading full time (blue = males, red = females)

Field of study (blue = males, red = females)

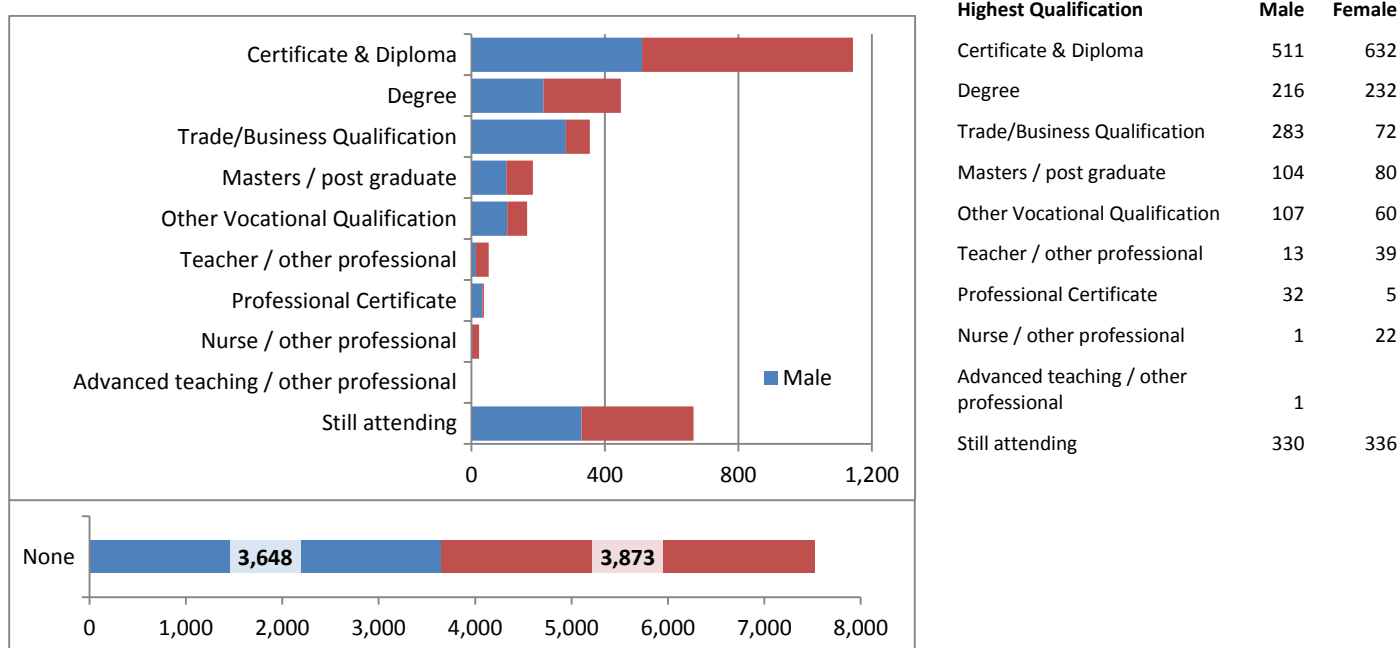


Source: Cook Islands Statistics Office, Census of Population and Housing 2011.

The Cook Islands follows the global trend where women still dominate traditionally “feminine” fields of study and are underrepresented in technical and trade related fields (construction, mechanical, electrical etc). The fields in which women have traditionally been dominant - education, health and welfare, humanities and arts, and social science, business and law - are still dominated by them. A different picture emerges when looking at women’s participation in the fields of construction and sports. Men’s participation in these fields is greater than that of women despite policies in the Cook Islands to encourage girls into technical and science related ‘non-traditional’ areas of study. However progress has been made in the area of science where women aged 15-25 years studying in the Cook Islands outnumbered men in 2011. All 12 students enrolled in tourism related training in November 2011 were female.

The results of the 2011 Census show that, for the population aged 15 years and over, slightly more females had lower level tertiary qualifications (certificate, diploma or degree) than males while males were more likely to have post graduate tertiary qualifications than females. There were almost four males with a trade or business qualification for every one female. About half (51%) of the adults with no qualification were female.

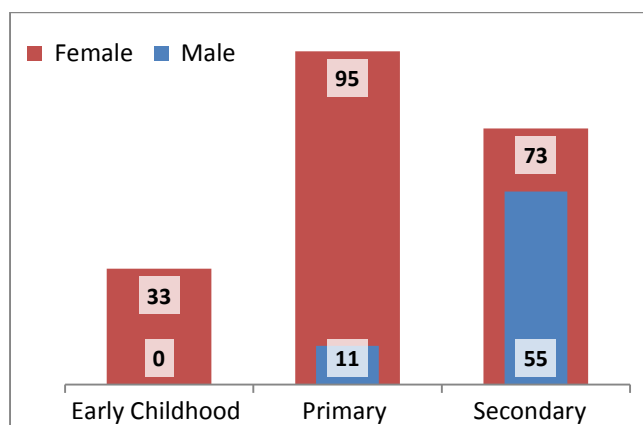
FIGURE 17: MALES & FEMALES AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER AND HIGHEST QUALIFICATION, 2011



Source: Cook Islands Statistics Office, Census of Population and Housing 2011.

Teaching staff

FIGURE 18: SEX OF TEACHING STAFF AND LEVEL TAUGHT, 2013



Source: Ministry of Education.

Several factors impinge on the quality of education and the learning environment in the Cook Islands, including lack of qualified teachers, limited availability of resources, composite classes (multiple grades for one teacher), insufficient instructional time and students challenged by distance learning at secondary level. Quality in education depends in large part on the quality of the teaching staff. Gender balance among the staff is critical for promoting gender parity and equality in access to, and achievement in, education and for creating a supportive and non-discriminating learning environment for both women and men. There is evidence that gender balance among teaching staff is closely related to the improvement of gender parity in enrolments. As the proportion of female teachers increases from low levels, girls' enrolments rise relative to boys. Likewise as the proportion of male teachers increases from low levels, boys' progression through junior secondary to higher levels increases. The "feminization" of the teaching profession, can serve as an empowering tool for young women to pursue their studies and for parents to choose to educate girls; or it can serve to segregate women in an occupation looking after young children, traditionally seen as a job for women.

There are a number of reasons for the low levels of male teachers at early childhood education and primary level including the received or real attraction of teaching as a career, remuneration packages below expectations, limited advancement opportunities, opportunities for on-going training, teaching regarded as a less secure or attractive job than other sectors and even the thought of being the only man in a female staff room.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In the education sector the policy focus is to improve access to quality education to better meet the human resource needs of the economy and the interests of students. The main policies are addressed at ensuring educational opportunities are the same for boys and girls regardless of whether they live in the main island of Rarotonga or a remote northern atoll from early childhood level to senior secondary and TVET. **Girls are performing better than boys at senior secondary levels but the statistics show that they are not moving into the labour force after completing schooling and more research is required to find out why this is happening in terms of their 'work readiness', the jobs available and the jobs they want to do and if remuneration doesn't meet expectations. Government and some private sector firms have work placement programmes for senior secondary school students.**

The Ministry of Education is committed to extending the range of alternative learning programmes to increase retention, particularly of boys with stronger links between junior secondary school and alternative learning pathways through TVET or senior secondary level. The Ministry of Education faces a considerable challenge in improving the gender balance of its early childhood education and primary school teachers, and to a lesser extent at secondary level. Strategies to increase the number of male teachers at all levels of education can only be developed when the underlying reasons that teaching is not considered to be a 'male' occupation are identified. It is imperative that the Ministry of Education has the financial and human resources required to continue to implement its very ambitious Cook Islands Education Master Plan and address the gaps **in its policy framework for inclusive education of girls including specific measures to increase the gender balance among teaching staff, girls' access to TVET as well as up-scaled efforts to reduce the drop out for boys.** The Ministry does have an inclusive education policy adhering to international standards where all students with special needs are eligible for assistance; with potential for refining the assessment of special needs children.

Improved numeracy and literacy outcomes for all learners are key goals for the Ministry of Education. This has meant a balancing of resources to make sure that teachers are able to provide the quality of instruction necessary to achieve the literacy and numeracy targets; with those for students including classroom materials and resources, school

refurbishment, libraries, laboratories and a curriculum matching the human resource needs of the Cook Islands. The commitment to improving the quality of education has resulted in increases in in-service training and the certification and qualification of teachers, improved assessment tools with standard testing procedures throughout the Cook Islands, improved Cook Islands Maori literacy, wider range of subjects offered to meet both the interests of students and skills and requirements of the workforce, increased access to higher levels of education for students in remote islands, increased use of on-line learning, provision of teacher aides for children with learning disabilities and more resources for career guidance and counselling. In terms of teaching staff, the Ministry of Education has introduced pay parity between primary and secondary school level teaching as part of a range of strategies to improve the gender balance in both levels of schooling.

Work and employment

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Policy implications

The Cook Islands has one of the highest female labour force participation rates in the Pacific region and women combine work for pay or profit with unpaid work in the home. A significant proportion of women work part time. Youth unemployment, while decreasing, is an issue given the use of contract migrant workers for technical, trade and tourism related jobs. Women are outnumbered in jobs with status, power and authority and in traditionally male blue-collar occupations. The proportion of women working in higher level occupations as senior officials and managers has increased at a faster rate than that for men, but men still outnumber women at this level.

4. WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

STATISTICAL INDICATORS & INFORMATION

Indicator	2001		2006		2011	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Labour force participation rate	76%	61%	76%	64%	77%	65%
Average annual rate of growth of the labour force			0%	1%	2%	1%
Female to male labour force participation		0.80		0.84		0.85
Unemployment rate	12%	15%	8%	9%	8%	8%
Youth unemployment rate (14 – 24 years)	21%	21%	18%	20%	16%	15%
Employment part-time (as % of paid employees)	5%	9%	11%	15%	11%	16%
Ratio of average female income to male income*		0.7		0.8		0.8
Self employed, no employees (own account worker)	8%	4%	8%	5%	9%	5%
Self employed, employees	8%	6%	8%	6%	6%	4%
Paid employee, full time	79%	80%	75%	76%	65%	66%
Paid employee, part time	4%	8%	7%	11%	10%	15%
Unpaid family worker	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector		38%		42%		49%
Legislators, senior officials and managers	64%	36%	58%	42%	52%	48%
Professional and technical workers	49%	51%	45%	55%	46%	54%
Clerical	24%	76%	22%	78%	23%	77%
Service & sales	36%	64%	35%	65%	36%	64%
Elementary occupations	67%	33%	64%	36%	70%	30%
Information						
Minimum wage	\$6.00 per hour					
Length of maternity leave	Government workers 6 weeks paid maternity leave					

Source: CISO 2001, 2006 and 2011 Census. * Estimate based on gross annual income from Census.

Women could be half of the workforce

Women constitute roughly half of the population of the world and thus potentially half of its work force. As a group they do as much work as men, if not more. However, the types of work they do - as well as the conditions under which they work and their access to opportunities for advancement - differ from men's. Women are often disadvantaged compared to men in access to employment opportunities and conditions of work; furthermore, many women forego or curtail employment because of family responsibilities. The removal of obstacles and inequalities that women face with respect to employment is a step towards realizing women's potential in the economy and enhancing their contribution to economic and social development.

The Beijing Declaration affirms nations' commitment to the inalienable rights of women and girls and their empowerment and equal participation in all spheres of life, including in the economic domain. The Beijing Platform for Action identifies women's role in the economy as a critical area of concern, and calls attention to the need to promote and facilitate women's equal access to employment and resources, as well as the harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men. Furthermore, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people, as part of MDG 1 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

The statutory minimum wage in the Cook Islands is NZ\$6.00 an hour, set in 2013. This was an increase of NZ\$5.00 per hour set in 2006 and \$4.00 in 2000. The 2006 increase was widely debated, with most lobby groups asking for NZ\$7.00 as a minimum wage linked to the cost of living. The low minimum wage means that many families rely on the income of more than one family member to make ends meet.

Many families rely on the income from working mothers but what rights do mothers have? A women's right to take time off her job to deliver a baby, paid or unpaid, and be able to return to that job is important for the health and wellbeing of both mother and baby. The ILO created the global standard aimed at protecting working women before and after childbirth: the Maternity Protection Convention. It calls for a minimum 12-week leave although a 14-week leave is recommended (1952). The Cook Islands Public Service Commission leave entitlements have the following provisions:

10. Maternity Leave

Six weeks on full pay shall be allowed to female employee for maternity leave.

Where additional leave is necessary, this may be taken from the employee's unused annual leave entitlements. If there is no other leave remaining, then limited Special Leave without pay may be taken. A medical certificate will be required under this provision.

The relevant details of the type of leave under this section must be indicated on OPSC leave records.

11. Paternity Leave

The CEO may grant up to 3 days on full pay to any male employee who is required to stay home to look after his under-school-age children because of his wife/partner giving birth.

When necessary, leave may also be granted to a male employee to care for first time mothers and/or their child where such need is established.

Where additional leave is necessary, the CEO may consider Compassionate Leave. If there is no other leave remaining, then this is taken as Special Leave without pay. This is to be arranged before the leave can be used.⁴

The PSC grants employees full pay during the maternity leave period which is to be commended; and in the 2011 personnel policy there is no provision for any qualifying time period to have been employed. There are no maternity or paternity leave provisions for part time employees.

Many private sector companies have paid maternity leave policies. The Employment Relations Act of 2012 introduced government funded maternity leave payments for women employed in the private sector at a rate equivalent to the minimum wage for six weeks, with no minimum employment service before entitlement. In the 2012-13 Budget Appropriation Government allocated NZ\$49,000 to cover private sector employees maternity leave provision, with NZ\$192,000 in 2013-14 budget. In addition all women receive a NZ\$1,000 "new born" allowance from government. Government paid maternity leave does not include female foreign workers so maternity leave provisions for such women employed in the private sector are the responsibility of each employer.

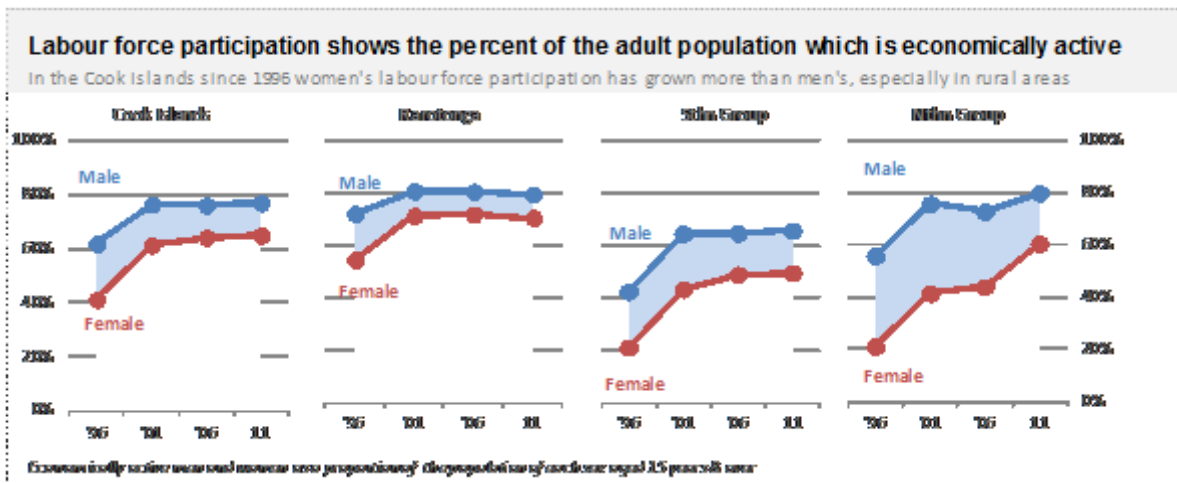
Labour force participation of women and men

The share of women in the labour force gives an indication of the extent of women's access to the labour market relative to men's, a value of 50% indicating gender parity. Since 2001 there has been a trend for an increasing number of women to be participating in the labour force, while between 1996 and 2001 the number of men in the labour force declined. The Cook Islands has almost achieved parity, with women making up 47% of the labour force in 2011.

Trends in women's labour force participation are mixed, with around 70% of women in Rarotonga and 80% of men being in the labour force since 2001. The most change has occurred in the *Pa Enua* where an increasing proportion of women and men are in the labour force since 1996.

⁴ Office of the Public Service Commissioner, Government of the Cook Islands, Personnel Policy 2011.

FIGURE 19: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES, 1996 - 2011

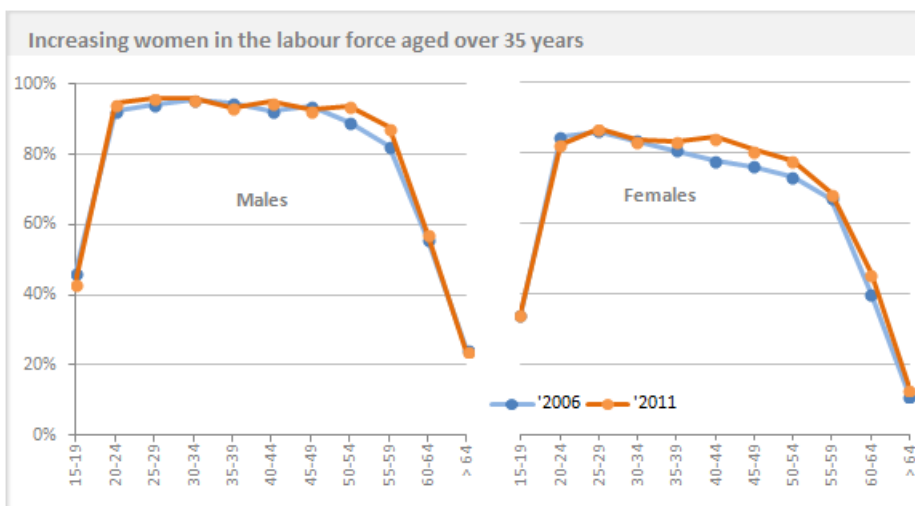


Source: CISO

Labour force participation across age groups shows that there has been an increase in labour force participation among women aged over 35 years and for men older than 50 years. Increased opportunities for secondary and higher education seem to have no affect at the age at which men and women enter the labour force. The changes over the last five years indicate that more women do not leave the labour force during the child bearing and rearing years but remain in their job or career.

Examining the labour force participation of women and men over the life cycle, four distinct patterns can be observed: the first two apply to both women and men and the last two to women. For women and men alike, the most common pattern is one of low participation at ages 15-19, sharply higher participation at ages 20-24, then continued gradual decrease with age, peaking somewhere between ages 25-29 for women (25-34 for men), maintaining the high participation rates until about age 54 and then beginning to decline. For women, this pattern indicates that those who are in the labour force remain in it during their reproductive years. The rates also show an older labour force which is more noticeable for women from age 40 until 60 years than men. The pattern described is typical for both women and men in most countries of the world.

FIGURE 20: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES AND AGE GROUP, 2006 - 2011



Source: CISO

The economic activities of women and men

For both women and men, the services sector as a source of employment continues to grow relative to the agricultural sector. This reflects the movement of the labour force globally from agriculture to industry and increasingly to services. In the Cook Islands women mostly work in the services sector. In 2001 82% of women wage workers worked outside agriculture and by 2011 95% of women were working outside agriculture.

In 2012 two of the 15 government ministries were headed by women, two of five legislated department heads were women and half of the 10 Crown agencies were headed by women.

Status in employment or the type of work of women and men

To understand women's and men's situation and position in the labour market, it is essential to identify their status in employment. This entails classifying jobs on the basis of the type of explicit or implicit contract of employment an individual has with her or his employer or other persons. A worker's type of contract, or status in employment, often determines the job's level of security, protection and rights.

Wage employment is the most common form of employment, but own-account work (that is being self employed and not having any employees) and contributing family work is increasing globally. Wage and salaried work constitute the majority of employed women and men; with 81% of women and 75% of men working as full- or part-time employees in 2011.

Persons working on their own account contribute income to the family when secure paid jobs are not available, generating employment not just for themselves but also for their family members, who are often not paid but work as "contributing family workers". Own-account employment allows more flexibility for women, who often have to combine family responsibilities with income-earning activities. However, unlike wage and salaried workers, own-account workers face high economic risks. The proportion of working women in the Cook Islands who are own-account workers has been increasing slightly over the past 10 years.

Women are equally likely than men to be contributing family workers - and this group of workers represents a very small proportion - 1% of women and 2% of men - of working people. Women who are working as own-account workers or contributing family workers are often employed as shop assistants, kitchen hands, street vendors or domestic workers in the homes of others.

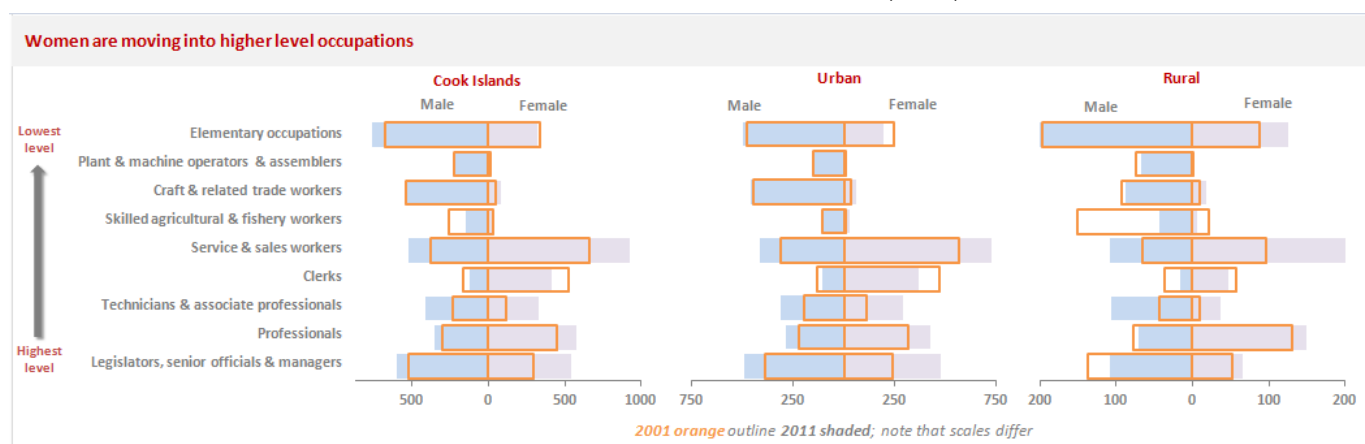
Occupational concentration

Women and men are concentrated in different types of occupations. The occupation groups in which they are employed vary widely across regions. Looking at the top two occupation groups that women and men engage in from the 2011 Census the largest number of women reported that they were housekeeping and restaurant service workers, general managers, and shop salespersons as well as college, tertiary (higher level) teaching occupations. For men the occupation with the largest number was transport labourers, followed by store managers.

Over the years women have entered various traditionally male-dominated occupations. However, they are still outnumbered in jobs with status, power and authority and in traditionally male blue-collar occupations. At the national level the proportion of women working in higher level occupations as senior officials and managers has increased at a faster rate than that for men but men still outnumber women at this level. Shifts in women's occupations, or the type of jobs they do, are evident in the decreased number of women in the *Pa Enua* performing elementary occupations of cleaning and unskilled labour, while more women than ever before are working as shop assistants and sales people.

The number of rural men employed as skilled agricultural and fishery workers has declined with the impacts of poor commodity prices combined with poor market access and limited production in the pearl industry.

FIGURE 21: NUMBER OF WORKING PERSONS AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER AND OCCUPATION, 2001, 2011



Source: CISO

However, to more fully understand the depth of occupational concentration, it is important to analyse each of the occupation groups in more detail. Major groups encompass a large number of occupations that are a mixture of male-dominated, female-dominated and neutral ones. For example, the group "professionals" includes both heavily male-dominated occupations (such as architects, engineers and related professionals) and heavily female-dominated

occupations (such as pre-primary, primary and secondary education teachers). The shift from primary sector - agriculture and fishing - to the service sector is evident for males living in rural areas and, to a lesser extent, females in rural areas. It has been observed that traditionally women are found in occupations with caring and nurturing functions or in jobs requiring household-related or low-level skills. Stereotypes, education and vocational training, the structure of the labour market and discrimination at entry and in work are among the causes often cited for gender segregation of occupations.

Part-time workers

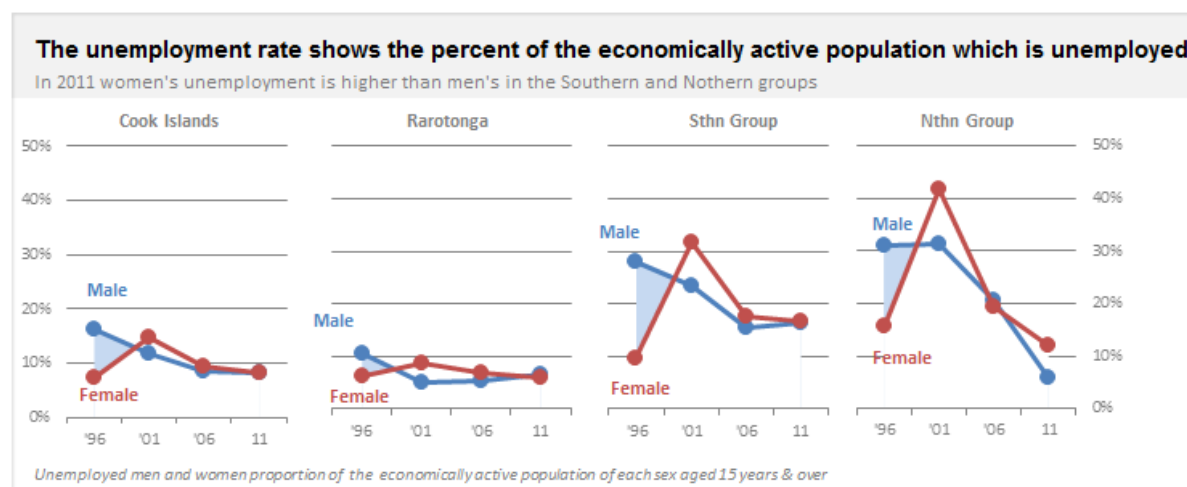
The costs of part-time employment can be great. Part-time employment is associated with lower income - with a long-term impact on pensions - and does not carry the same social benefits as fulltime employment. Career advancement of part time workers, who are predominantly women, is often jeopardised because the image persists that they are not serious about their jobs and careers. The types of part-time jobs available and the conditions of work are also a concern. Thus, although part-time work may be a solution for women reconciling work with family responsibilities, it reinforces the male breadwinner model, relegating women to a secondary role in the labour market.

Women make up just over half, 56%, of part-time workers in the Cook Islands. The census data from 2001 to 2011 indicates that the number of part time workers is growing for both women and men, although a higher proportion of women work part-time than men.

Unemployment

Unemployment is slightly higher among women than men in the *Pa Enua*; and unemployment is more common in the youth age groups and especially for young women in the *Pa Enua*. For young people aged 15-24, just over one in every four women in the *Pa Enua* was unemployed in 2011: unemployment is an acute problem. Unemployment amongst young people in Rarotonga was not as high as this at 7% for young urban men and women. Young women and men make up about one third of all unemployed men and women.

FIGURE 22: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES AND AGE GROUP, 1996 - 2011



Source: CISO

Migrant workers

Despite an overall unemployment rate in 2011 of 15% and 16% for young women and men aged 15 - 24 years there is a labour shortage in the Cook Islands. This is a result of migration of people for work, education, health care and other opportunities mostly in New Zealand and Australia. The unemployed might not have the necessary skills to find employment or other factors might prevent them from working such as perceived poor pay from low-skilled jobs, unsuitable working hours, and other commitments such as roles as care givers in the home. A small proportion of the unemployed would not be hired because of their criminal records.

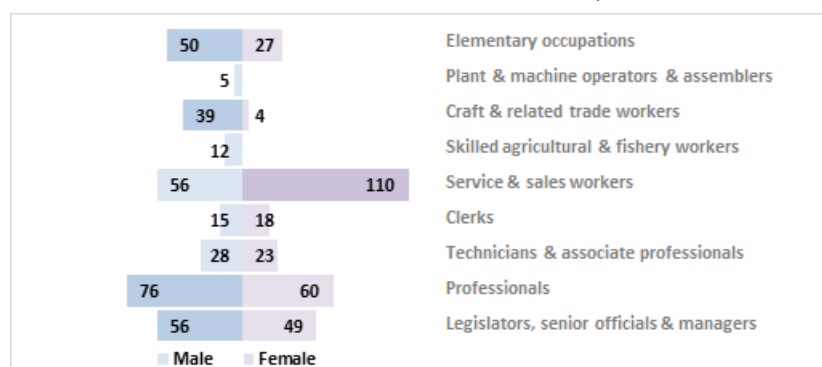
The 2011 Census collected information on contract workers. Contract workers were first recruited systematically around the mid-2000's to meet labour shortages in the tourism industry, and since then the scheme has broadened to include child care workers in private households, professional and technical occupations in health, education and aquaculture and the pearl industry. Contract workers are able to migrate with their families provided they meet the entry criteria.

At the time of the 2011 Census 647 people declared themselves to be temporary contract workers, of which 47% were female. There were an additional 233 dependent family members of a contract worker. Most contract workers were

Fijian nationals, followed by New Zealand and the Philippines. However within the overall sex distribution some noticeable variations occurred such as females making up 57% of the 137 contract workers from the Philippines. In terms of the age distribution, 51% of contract workers were aged between 25 - 39 years, 52% of male contract workers were in this age group and 50% of females. The average age of contract workers was 38 for both males and females.

There are gender differences in the occupations of contract workers. Male contract workers are more likely to have a managerial or professional occupation than women, with almost half (47%) of male contract workers classified as senior officials, managers, professionals and technicians, with a slightly lower proportion (43%) of female contract workers in these occupations. The 16% of female contract workers in the senior officials and managers group are mostly managers working in the retail and tourism sector whereas the 16% of male contract workers in this group are more likely to be managers outside of the tourism sector (finance, industry, construction, transportation etc). There were 110 female contract service and sales workers which represented just over one-third (36%) of the type of work done by female contract workers. In comparison there were 56 males contracted as service and sales workers representing 16% of the occupations of male contract workers.

FIGURE 23: OCCUPATION GROUPS OF CONTRACT WORKERS, 2011



Source: CISO

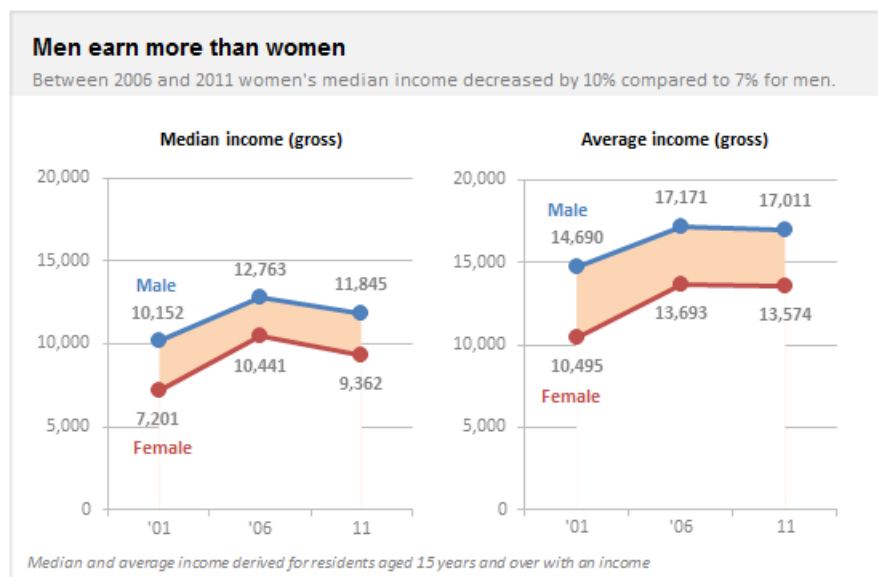
The gender pay gap

The gender pay gap reflects inequalities that affect mainly women, notably horizontal and vertical concentration and, to some extent, segregation of the labour market, traditions and stereotypes that influence the choice of education, professions and career paths, and the difficulty of balancing work and private life that often leads to part-time work and career breaks for women.

A simple indicator is used to examine trends in gender pay gap - the ratio of women's average earnings to men's average earnings, expressed per 100. A ratio of 100 indicates that there is no gender pay gap: women are paid the same as men. A ratio below 100 indicates that women earn less than men and a ratio above 100 that they earn more than men - in other words, the closer the ratio is to 100, the smaller the gap. The gender pay gap here is a crude measure based on differences in average gross income from all sources for women and men aged 15 years and over in the Cook Islands. This gap has narrowed from 71 in 2001 to 80 in 2011.

It should be noted that statistics of average wages from which the gender pay gap is derived cover only the "formal" sector of the economy. They do not shed light on earnings from self-employment or informal sector activities. Also, a simple indicator based on statistics of average gross earnings without controlling for occupation, qualifications, job grade, other sources of income or hours actually worked has been cited as causing misleading comparisons. Nevertheless, this "gross" measure reflects the realities of gender inequalities in the labour market, where higher proportions of women than men work part-time and are in the lower rungs of the occupation ladder.

FIGURE 24: MEDIAN AND AVERAGE GROSS INCOME OF ALL PERSONS AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER, 2001, 2006, 2011



Source: CISO

The minimum hourly wage in the Cook Islands is \$5.00 an hour, although in government there is no annual salary under \$15,000 which equates to approximately \$7.80 an hour. The 2011 Census data for all persons aged 15 years and over shows an average gross income of \$13,574 for females and \$17,011 for males, with male gross average income increasing by 16% since 2001 compared to a 29% increase for women. The average for females is the result of adding together all the reported incomes of women (using the middle value of the income range in the census) and dividing by the total number of women. The average is distorted by high and low incomes so it is presented alongside the median income. The median income is the middle of the income of women when the incomes are sorted from lowest to highest. The median income for males was \$11,845 and for females it was \$9,362 in 2011. This was a 17% increase from 2001 for males and a 30% increase for females. For men there was a significant difference between the average and median gross income which means that there were more males in the highest income bands than females.

This very crude analysis of the income data from the census point to a significant disparity in the incomes between women and men; because of the different nature of work done by women and men, with more women out of work, in part time work or in full time work with relatively lower earnings compared with males.

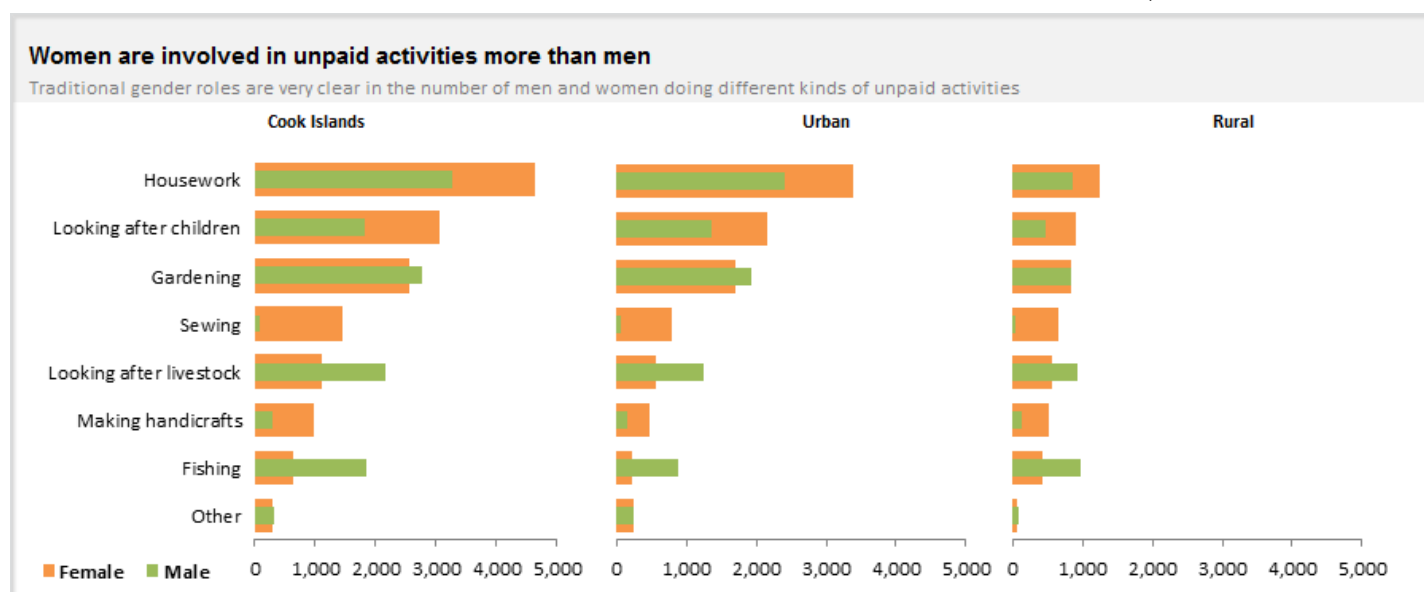
Work is one of women’s many roles

Time use statistics show that in all regions of the world, women dedicate much more time to domestic work than men do. In general, women’s increased participation in paid employment has not been accompanied by an increase in men’s participation in unpaid domestic work (comprised mainly of housework and caring for dependent household members).

In spite of the changes that have occurred in women’s participation in the labour market discussed above, women continue to bear most of the responsibilities for the home: housework, caring for children and other dependent household members, preparing meals and sewing. Those who carry the burden of work for the home - mainly women - enter the labour market from a highly disadvantaged position, as the time they spend on domestic work restricts their access to full and productive employment and also leaves them with less time for education and training, leisure, self-care and social and political activities.

For mothers with young children or other dependents, decisions regarding working hours - or whether to work at all - often depend on the availability of affordable and reliable care. In the past many workers were able to count on help from non-working relatives for childcare and other domestic tasks. Although such traditional family support still exists to a greater degree in the Cook Islands, it is becoming less available with urbanisation and the increased labour force participation of women.

FIGURE 25: ACTIVITIES DONE WITHOUT PAY IN THE LAST FOUR WEEKS OF ALL PERSONS AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER, 2011



Source: CISO

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Maternity protection for employed women is an essential element in equality of opportunity, enabling women to successfully combine their productive and reproductive roles. Essentially, maternity protection has two aims: to preserve the health of (and the special relationship between) the mother and her newborn; and to provide a measure of job security. The latter aim includes access to jobs by women of childbearing age, maintenance of wages and benefits during maternity, and prevention of dismissal during pregnancy, maternity leave and a period of time after return to work.

The current international standard for the duration of maternity leave as provided for in the Maternity Protection Convention 2000 (No. 183)⁵ is 14 weeks. This is an increase from the standard of 12 weeks specified in the previous Convention.⁶ The Cook Islands has not caught up to the new standard; the introduction of paid maternity leave in the private sector in late 2012 is an excellent start.

The right to continue breastfeeding upon return to work is important for both the health of the mother and especially that of her child. At present, more than 90 countries provide legislation for nursing breaks of at least an hour a day. In most countries the duration is one hour in total, and the most frequent provision is until the child reaches the age of one year. There is no legislated provision for this in the Cook Islands.

Paternity leave is a short period of leave taken by a father around the time of the birth of his child. Although there is no international standard for this, paternity leave provisions are becoming more common around the world, perhaps an indication of the increased awareness of men's parenting roles and their need to reconcile work and family life. Paternity leave benefits, when available, vary considerably in duration and compensation. Compared to maternity leave, they are much shorter and more often unpaid. Paid leave provisions other than paternity leave may also be used by a father at the time of the birth of his child.

Another option to further help working parents care for children is parental leave, a relatively long-term leave offered mainly in countries in the more developed regions that is available to either parent to enable them to take care of an infant or young child over a period of time, usually following the maternity or paternity leave period. Because parental leave is available to either parent, it encourages the sharing of family responsibilities, recognising that both mothers and fathers are responsible for raising their children. However, women are usually the ones who take parental leave once maternity leave is exhausted, and men's take-up rates are very low. The Public Service leave regulations allows five days paternity leave.

This chapter draws most of its conclusions based on the past 10 years of census data. It shows that women are increasingly active in the labour force in full- and part-time work. Two different groups of women are emerging: on the one hand some are well trained and educated career women breaking through the glass ceilings into highly skilled

⁵ Adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2000. The Maternity Protection Recommendation 2000 (No. 191) that accompanies the Convention proposes 18 weeks of maternity leave.

⁶ Maternity Protection Convention (Revised) (No. 103), adopted in 1952.

occupations; and on the other the majority of women work in relatively low skilled jobs in the retail and tourism sector. Both groups constantly juggle the demands of work and family responsibilities. The number of years women and men are economically active has become longer in the last 10 years, with fewer women and men retiring before age 65 years. The number of women and men in part-time work is increasing, as women and men find work to provide incomes and balance work and family life; although women still are the majority of part-time workers.

More research is required about the economic activities of women and men, particularly as part-time workers and whether they have more than one part-time job, whether they work reduced hours because of other family care obligations, what their relative earnings are and so on. Young people and women in the *Pa Enua* are looking for employment opportunities and economic empowerment and would prefer to stay on outer islands and use local products for handicrafts or agricultural produce and associated 'value added' products. However while the Rarotonga and export market demand is strong, challenges to address are the lack of skills and resources, weak supply chains, no quality standards, limited options for 'value added' processing and high costs of transport (shipping). The Gender and Development Division (GADD) is carrying out a number of research projects about the many dimensions of women's economic empowerment including access to credit and business and financial literacy, with the aim of implementing a policy and projects for enterprise based economic empowerment, notably for young women in the *Pa Enua*. There are a number of related initiatives including project funding for women and youth in the *Pa Enua* for sustainable livelihoods projects (home gardens) funded by the Strengthening the Resilience of our Islands to Climate Change (SRIC-CC). Coordination mechanisms for these related activities need to be established.

The Cook Islands face challenges in providing employment opportunities for young people with senior secondary level education or a tertiary qualification. In recognition of the need for these young people to acquire professional experience and training, some government ministries have internship programmes, although there is not a standard policy or programme across the whole of government.

Over the past 10 years the Census indicates that there has been a narrowing in the gender wage gap; but the gap remains. The Chamber of Commerce is about to do research in this area, although given that the Chamber is a private sector body and there is demand to increase the minimum wage from \$5.00 an hour to \$6.00 an hour it is important that the research objectives be very clear. The Public Service Commission has recently completed training for senior staff to enable 'job sizing' the entire public service which will highlight, among other areas, any gender differences where women and men who are doing the same type of work. The education and health sectors have predominantly female employees and more analysis and research is needed about pay disparities between women and men doing the same work in these significant areas of work for women. In recognition of this, the Ministry of Education has introduced pay parity between primary and secondary level teaching.

The Commissioner of Labour estimates that there are over 500 Filipina workers alone currently recruited on employment contracts in the Cook Islands, mostly in the services sector (tourism and hospitality) with some in the professional and technical area. There are concerns with the increasing number of foreign contract workers and the lack of resources allocated for ensuring compliance of employers with the Employment Relations Act as well as the relatively high costs of legal services if a contract worker has a grievance. Ensuring the human rights of contract workers so that they are not exploited is an area government needs to address.

Public life and decision making

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Policy implications

In 2014 four seats in the national parliament are held by women and the Speaker is a woman. Women are more involved at island government level in the *Pa Enua* but the rate is still low.

5. PUBLIC LIFE AND DECISION MAKING

STATISTICAL INDICATORS & INFORMATION

Indicator / Information	2004		2006		2010		2014	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Parliamentary seats occupied	92%	8%	87%	13%	96%	4%	83%	17%
Seats held in national parliament	22	2	21	3	23	1	20	4
Election candidates (parliament level)					60	10	45	7
Share of decision-making positions in government -Ministerial level			83% (5)	17% (1)	100% (6)	0%		
Women's share of decision-making positions in government -11 Select Committees				7% (2007)				
Share of decision-making positions in government –Island Government								17% (2013)
Information								
Right to vote			18 years of age for both men and women, universal					
Right to stand for election			18 years of age any registered elector					

Source: Government of the Cook Islands.

Democracy relies on equal representation of women and men

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises the right of every individual to take part in the government of her or his country.⁷ Equal access to power, decision-making and leadership at all levels is a necessary condition for the proper functioning of democracy. Ensuring women's freedom to participate in politics, both as voters and as representatives, has been central to international, regional and national efforts aimed at more inclusive and democratic governance. These freedoms and rights are not limited to politics but extend to participation and leadership in public life, the private sector and civil society in general.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) commits States Parties to act appropriately to ensure that women and men have equal rights in regards to voting, participation in the formulation of government policies, participation in non-governmental organizations and representation of their governments at the international level.⁸

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action states that the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status are essential for the achievement of transparent and accountable government that works for the benefit of both women and men. It recognises that women's empowerment and full participation on an equal basis with men in all spheres of life, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental to the achievement of equality, development and peace. In addition to setting out government commitments, the Platform for Action urges a range of actors to take measures in support of women's participation in all levels of power and decision making.⁹ These include political parties, the private sector, trade unions, national, regional and sub-regional bodies, employers' organizations, research and academic institutions and non-governmental organizations.¹⁰

⁷ United Nations, 1946. Article 21.

⁸ United Nations, 1979. Articles 7 and 8.

⁹ United Nations, 1995.

¹⁰ United Nations, 1995, section G, paragraphs 190-195.

Women in public life

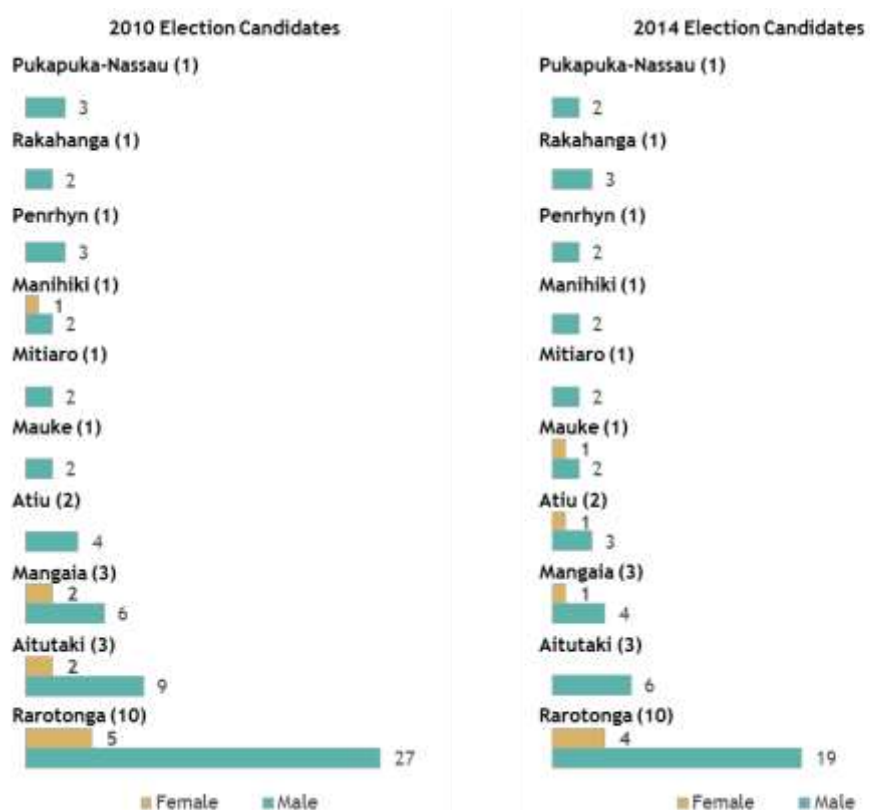
Public governance is one of the arenas where inequality between men and women is highly visible. Limited female participation in structures of governance where key policy decisions are made and resource allocations decided often has a negative impact on women's political, economic and social opportunities.

Although women make up about half of the electorate and have attained the right to vote and hold office in almost all countries of the world, they continue to be underrepresented as members of national parliaments. The importance of women's political empowerment has been recognized within the framework of the MDGs, with one of the indicators for monitoring Goal 3 (promote gender equality and empower women) being the proportion of seats held by women in lower or single houses of national parliaments.

As for the rest of the Pacific there has been no improvement in the representation of women in the national parliament of the Cook Islands. The Oceania region has been noted in a number of international reports for its continued low share of female parliamentarians with the average female participation in pacific island countries at 3% in 2010.¹¹

There were a record number of candidates in the 2010 general election but there was low representation of women. The number of candidates decreased in 2014, with commentators attributing this to the snap election. The data on women and men electoral candidates for the national parliament elections illustrate that the low proportion of women electoral candidates is directly correlated to women's limited representation in their parliaments. In 2010 10 women stood for the national election compared with 60 men: 86% of the candidates were men. This means that 38% of men standing were elected compared to 10% of women. In 2014 13% of the candidates were women and women represent 8% of those elected.

FIGURE 26: NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IN EACH ELECTORATE, SEX, NATIONAL ELECTIONS 2010 & 2014



Number in brackets beside name of island is the number of electoralates on the island. Source: Electoral Office, Ministry of Justice

The current Speaker is a woman appointed by the Prime Minister from outside of parliament, which could be seen as an astute political move to acknowledge the need for women and men to be involved at decision making at the highest level in the Cook Islands and recognising the traditional role of women in joint decision making with men. Or it could be that there was no suitably qualified member of parliament from the government side of the house and an outside appointment was necessary.

In general, women aspiring to careers in politics encounter difficulties, suggesting that the democratic principles of parity and equality continue to be hampered by structural and attitudinal barriers, including discrimination and gender

¹¹ For example see *The World's Women, 2010* pages 112 and 113.

stereotypes that disadvantage women in many regions of the world. The Cook Islands has two major political parties, the Cook Islands Party and the Democratic Party; two other parties contesting the 2014 election (One Cook Islands Movement Incorporated and *Titikaveka Oire* Incorporated).

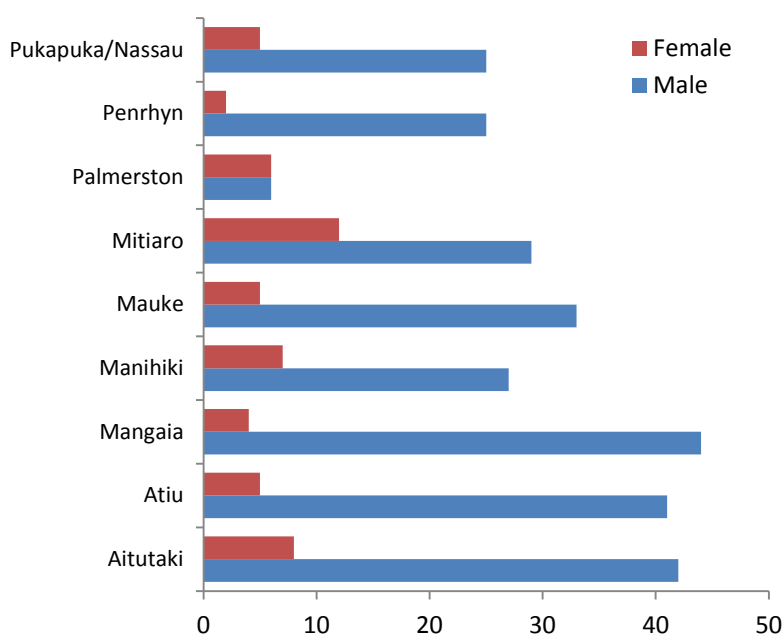
If there is to be any increase in the representation of women amongst the nation's leaders this must first be through increased representation as candidates endorsed by the two main political parties. The 2014 election was a snap election held seven months earlier than anticipated, resulting in a much shorter time period for the raft of activities and programmes to support women as candidates as well as the parallel education and information campaigns for women as voters.

In the 2010 general election the Cook Islands Party fielded 24 candidates, one of whom was a woman. The Democratic Party fielded 23 candidates, three of whom were female. The *Te Kura O Te Au Party* had six candidates, three of whom were women. Of the independent candidates not aligned to any political party, three of the 16 candidates were women.

Women in island administrations

Local government in the Cook Islands outside of the main island of Rarotonga consists of island administrations elected by popular vote. Women are under-represented in decision making at the local government level, with gender parity achieved only in the island of Palmerston where six of the elected representatives on the island council were female. In Mitiaro 12 of the 41 councillors were female (29%), the highest number of any island. In Mangaia only four of the 48 councillors were female (8%).

FIGURE 27: ISLAND GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, 31 MARCH 2013



Source: Cook Islands Government Budget Estimates, 2013/14, Book 1, Appropriation Bill, Appropriations and Commentary

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In many countries electoral gender quotas are considered to be an effective measure to improve gender balance in parliament. Generally, quotas for women require that women constitute a certain number or percentage of a body, such as a candidate list or a parliamentary assembly. Today quota systems aim at ensuring that women constitute at least 30 or 40%, or even a true gender balance of 50%, as opposed to only a few tokens.

Many countries in the world implement gender quotas to offset obstacles that women have faced in the electoral process. At present, at least 90 countries apply an electoral gender quota of some kind for the lower or single chamber of their national parliaments. The introduction of gender quotas, however, is not without controversy. While quotas compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats, it has been argued that they contradict the principles of equal opportunity since women are given preference over men. It has also been observed that quotas are hard to apply in 'single winner' systems such as in the Cook Islands, where each party nominates a single candidate per district. Furthermore, the re-election of parliament members restricts the rate of member turnover at each election, which makes gender quotas difficult to comply with. For example analysis by the

European Commission shows that around two thirds of members of parliament are re-elected at each election, leaving limited opportunities for new leaders and hence limited opportunities for progress towards gender balance.

The difficulties of combining family life, work life and politics remain a severe obstacle to women seeking political office. Among the political challenges that women face, the prevalence of the “masculine model” of political life and lack of party support feature prominently. In particular, the barriers to the political participation of women at the local level may be related to lack of community support, lack of family co-responsibility within households to release women from unpaid household work, little recognition and legitimacy allocated to their contribution within public power spheres, and the lack of economic resources to pursue a candidature.

In the Cook Islands discussions have been ongoing with the two main political parties and how to increase women’s participation in political life but no resolutions or commitments have been made. There have been some discussions about changing the electoral system from the current ‘first past the post’ model but at this initial stage there is no consensus about reforms to electoral and political processes.

The National Council of Women is implementing a project to increase women’s participation at local government - the *Pa Enua* Island Councils. Training workshops have been conducted to advance women’s participation in decision-making at the Island Council level; with outcomes expected to be increased representation of women when elections are held in late 2014. It is then hoped that once women become accustomed to local government and decision making, more women will move into the political arena at the national level.

Legislation & governance

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Policy implications

The Women's Development Division receives less than 1% of the recurrent government budget and is not adequately resourced to implement the national gender equality policy. If gender mainstreaming is implemented in government additional resources will be required. The Cook Islands has made some progress towards implementing laws and policies to meet the obligations under CEDAW but it has been slow.

6. LEGISLATION & GOVERNANCE

STATISTICAL INDICATORS & INFORMATION

Indicator	Information				
Year of ratification of CEDAW	2006 (Accession); Optional Protocol 2007				
CEDAW National action plan submitted to UN	Initial Report to CEDAW Committee 2007. No national action plan developed.				
National body to monitor the implementation of law and policy to foster the advancement of women	The CEDAW Committee				
Sexual harassment legislation	There is no specific sexual harassment legislation.				
Decriminalisation of solicitation (prostitution)	No. Crimes Act 1969, s 163 criminalises the sex worker.				
Government gender mainstreaming policy in place	No. Cook Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment & Strategic Plan of Action (2011 - 2016) contains gender mainstreaming as an output.				
Indicator	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Proportion of Government recurrent budget to Gender and Development Division	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Proportion of Ministry of Internal Affairs recurrent budget to Gender and Development Division	5%	6%	6%	6%	7%

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs. Budget information from Ministry of Finance and Economic Management Budget Appropriation (<http://www.mfem.gov.ck/treasury/budget-downloads>)

What is CEDAW?

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty that is part of the United Nations human rights' system. Sometimes referred to as the Women's Convention or the Women's Bill of Rights, it's a comprehensive international agreement that is intended to improve the status of women.

CEDAW promotes women's equal attainment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. It also establishes rights for women in areas that weren't previously subject to international standards. Moreover, it provides a universal definition of discrimination against women, so that those who would discriminate on the basis of sex can no longer claim that there isn't a clear definition of what this means.

CEDAW in the Cook Islands

In ratifying CEDAW, the Cook Islands committed to undertake all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Currently there is no national governance machinery for all human rights conventions the Cook Islands has ratified, with government considering various models for some kind of human rights commission or commissioner. One option which has reasonably strong backing is to make human rights the responsibility of the Office of the Ombudsman. However the function of developing the measures and policies to progressively implement CEDAW currently rests with the Gender and Development Division (GADD) in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. GADD is responsible for coordinating legislative reform, establishing mechanisms and mainstreaming the rights of women into sectoral strategies; recommending to Cabinet national strategic plans of action and other measures to implement CEDAW; ensuring that state reports for CEDAW are prepared in a timely manner and according to the relevant guidelines; and advocating for sufficient human and financial resources to carry out the above functions.

A number of initiatives are underway as a result of the government's commitment to CEDAW including domestic violence legislation and a periodic report on the status of implementing CEDAW. Legislative compliance reviews have been undertaken for the Crimes Act 1969 and the Marriages Act but the proposed revisions have stalled in parliamentary review committees.

Sexual harassment legislation

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. Laws against sexual harassment are designed to protect women and men from unwanted sexual advances. Both men and women can be sexually harassed by someone of the same or opposite sex.

Globally women are more likely to suffer from sexual harassment at their place of work, in education and training and in all aspects of life than men. Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexually determined behaviour such as physical contact and advances, sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography and sexual demands whether by words or actions. Such actions can be humiliating for the recipient and are discriminatory when they create a hostile work environment.¹²

Protection from sexual harassment is absent in the Cook Islands legislation and large employers like the government have no sexual harassment policy (sexual harassment is mentioned in the Personnel Manual of the Public Service Commission but only that it must be reported to the head of the ministry). The Employment Relations Act of 2012 contains provisions for sexual harassment and new protections around maternity leave, discrimination and termination.

Decriminalisation of solicitation (prostitution)

Decriminalisation of solicitation or prostitution is a step towards recognising the basic human rights of sex workers. Decriminalisation prevents the state from prosecuting adults for consensual, nonviolent sexual activity, whether or not money is exchanged. This is where laws already prohibit nonconsensual violent sex, as well as slavery, human trafficking, sex with a minor, rape, assault, extortion and robbery as is the case in the Cook Islands. Decriminalisation is no panacea for fixing the worst aspects of sex work, but it is a very important one.

A unified international sex workers' rights movement, consisting of thousands of members, have organised to demand their basic human rights to be recognised and for prostitution, a 'victimless crime', to be decriminalised. This activism has resulted in the decriminalisation of prostitution in countries like Australia and New Zealand.

The Crimes Act, 1963 criminalises the act of soliciting and living off sex work or operating brothels.

Gender mainstreaming

The concept of bringing gender issues into the mainstream of society was clearly established as a global strategy for promoting gender equality in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. It highlighted the necessity to ensure that gender equality is a primary goal in all areas of social and economic development. Mainstreaming is not about adding a "woman's component" or even a "gender equality component" into an existing activity. It goes beyond increasing women's participation; it means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to bear on the development agenda.

There have been several successful initiatives to address women's issues and reduce gender inequalities in the last few decades in several sectors. However, gender equality perspective is not systematically integrated in the policies and programs of the central and local government and through the sectors. The gender stocktake of the Government conducted in 2009-2010 reveals that gender issues are rarely discussed as development issues among government agencies and gender equality is not mainstreamed across the sectors. With the exception of the Education and Health sectors, there is little production and use of sex disaggregated data and gender analysis for guiding policy making, programs design and service delivery. There is no accountability system for mainstreaming gender at the institutional and individual levels. The technical capacity to conduct gender analysis and mainstream gender is generally low in all sectors. The coordination of initiatives for addressing women's human rights is weak and collaboration with the national women machinery is very limited. The financial and human resources for mainstreaming gender are largely insufficient.

This has meant that the Gender and Development Division in the Ministry of Internal Affairs is firstly working towards increasing capacity for gender mainstreaming of government policy makers, managers and professionals as well as its own capacity in its role of monitoring and evaluation, coordination and providing technical advice. The Gender and Development Division is working with development partners to assess how best to implement mainstreaming in government agencies in the Cook Islands. A cautious approach has been adopted being mindful of lessons learnt when

¹² CEDAW Committee General Recommendation 19.

the capacity of government agencies to mainstream gender and develop gender sensitive policies and analysis is not in place before mainstreaming is introduced.

Resources for achieving gender equality

Gender equality cannot be achieved without an adequately resourced and skilled national women's machinery in government with clear policy direction and regular monitoring and evaluation of progress made. In 1979 the Cook Islands government established the Women's Desk (since renamed the Women in Development Division) within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but failed to adequately resource it. The Cook Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2011-2016 includes a strategic action plan with clear policy direction, prioritisation and commitment to allocating resources for gender equality within a very confined fiscal space and limited technical capacity. A National Steering Committee, with representatives from all government ministries and some agencies including the national council of women, has been established to advise and monitor progress of the policy's implementation. There are several sectoral 'task forces' reporting to the National Steering Committee based on the six key areas in the policy:

- Gender mainstreaming;
- Leadership and governance;
- Economic empowerment;
- Climate change adaptation;
- Health; and
- Violence against women

Donor partners are working with the Women in Development Division to implement the policy. However funding and a priority for developing capacity within the Women in Development Division has meant that progress has been slow.

The government funding for gender equality, as shown by the recurrent budget allocation for the Women's Development Division (WDD) was about 0.3% from 2010 - 2012. Government basically pays the salary of the staff in WDD with very limited operational costs. Within the Ministry of Internal Affairs the WDD receives about 7% of the recurrent budget. With this funding commitment it is unlikely that substantial progress will be made towards implementing policies towards achieving gender equality nor the substantial research required into the underlying causes of inequality and the policy development to address these.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Ensuring that the legal and governance framework supports gender equality underpins all other efforts towards achieving gender equality. The reality is that the legislative reforms required for compliance with international treaty organisations such as CEDAW, CRC and CRPD is overwhelming small pacific nations. Countries like the Cook Islands need to set clear national priorities from the long list of change required and work gradually towards these through a whole of government approach. The Cook Islands is planning to submit a combined periodic CEDAW report to the United Nations in 2014. In 2014 the Cook Islands drafted its first Common Core Document and this should make the human rights reporting process more streamlined with treaty reports now able to focus on reporting progress against specific human rights treaty articles and the recommendations made by the United Nations (so called 'concluding comments').

Politicians, political parties, the judiciary, law enforcement officers and traditional leaders have to be involved in this process, a lesson learnt many times over when Bills are dismissed because the six month period allotted for any legislation introduced to parliament expires. Delays can occur during the select committee review process where legislation is referred back to the submitting agency for clarification or revision. But delays are caused by other reasons, such as parliament not meeting as scheduled or at all (as occurred prior to the 2010 general election). Potentially controversial legislation needs to be in the public arena well before it is presented to parliament with debate and discussion used to educate and inform.

Progress towards compliance with human rights treaties is being made, and the Crown Law office has a law reform programme to implement for CEDAW compliance. The Crimes Act is currently being reviewed with development partner assistance and the Family Law Bill should be tabled in parliament in mid-2015.

Regulations and policies regarding discrimination and sexual harassment are needed in both the public and private sectors. Sexual harassment and discrimination are mentioned in the Personnel Manual of the Public Service Commission but only that incidents must be reported to the head of the ministry and with no specific definitions or alternative avenues for complaints. The Employment Relations Act (2012) contains provisions for sexual harassment and new protections around maternity leave, discrimination and termination; and again the definitions are not precise or explicit. As is the case in countries with small populations, it is often individuals who fulfil roles which would be

typically outside their function: in the Cook Islands the former Ombudsman made herself available to receive complaints from the general public about sexual harassment and discrimination.

Some employee induction programmes in the private sector include information about the business's sexual harassment policy and procedures to follow. There is no such induction programme in the public sector. In general the level of awareness and knowledge about sexual harassment is low and in the public service employers apply the 'good employer' principle. Sexual harassment seems to be more prevalent in the private sector, although there is no data available to support this. Again this highlights the need for a human rights institution for people to access at minimal cost to get the support and services they need. If a person wants to pursue a sexual harassment or discrimination complaint barriers include the prohibitive cost of legal services, the requirement for mediation and arbitration and general and lack of knowledge about policies and regulations.

Progress has been slow with gender mainstreaming in government. Obstacles include the capacity of GADD to do the necessary policy review and implementation work with line ministries, the required institutional arrangements have not been formally established, low support and understanding at the technical level in most ministries and limited ownership by heads of ministries with the exception of health and education, limited statistical information for gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation and progress, and heavy reliance on development partner funding for operational activities in GADD. GADD will be working with the Public Service Commission in the next major round of heads of ministry recruitment to ensure that job descriptions have requirements for gender mainstreaming activities under the gender policy and selection processes are gender balanced. As a parallel process GAD and the Cook Islands Statistics Office are working with key stakeholders to develop a gender sensitive statistical indicator reporting framework with the assistance of development partners.

Environment

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Policy implications

Data on changes in women's and men's work burdens as a consequence of natural hazards like cyclones, droughts and floods are not available. Data to assess the capability of women and men to protect local natural resources are not available. There is little information on access to environment-related practical knowledge. Sex disaggregated data on participation in the management of local natural resources such as water or biodiversity are also lacking.

7. ENVIRONMENT

STATISTICAL INDICATORS & INFORMATION

Indicator / Information	2006		2011	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Population access to improved sanitation	92%	93%	99%	100%
Urban			100%	100%
Rural			87%	87%
Population access to improved drinking water	79%	78%	76%	76%
Urban			63%	63%
Rural			99%	99%
Percentage of population relying on traditional fuels for energy use	8%	8%	1%	1%
Urban over-crowding*	4%	4%	6%	5%
Rural over-crowding*	10%	10%	9%	9%

Source: CISO. Note: * measured using the UN Habitat definition as households with insufficient living space and more than 2 people per habitable room.

The statistical indicators are limited

The choice of issues examined in this chapter was constrained by availability of data. More statistical information on links between gender and the environment is needed in several areas. Data on changes in women's and men's work burdens as a consequence of droughts, floods, or deforestation, for example, are not available as there is no information about time use in the Cook Islands. Sex-disaggregated data on the effects of natural hazards on other human dimensions, such as education, health, food and economic security are also not available.

Monitoring the impacts of climate change on the lives of women and men is particularly challenging. On the one hand, the gendered effects may not be easily detectable at the level of larger geographical units - region, country or even urban/rural area - where the traditional systems of social statistics have been focused; hence, monitoring may need to take into account smaller areas that are particularly prone to climate change manifestations. On the other hand, separating the effect of climate change on women and men's lives from other environmental and socio-economic factors is difficult. Non-climate factors such as demographic pressure or over-exploitation of resources also increase the risk of environmental degradation and have an effect on access to natural resources and on human health and survival.

Finally, data to assess the capability of women and men to protect local natural resources are not available. There is little information on access to environment-related practical knowledge, including access to modern agricultural information and techniques. Sex disaggregated data on participation in the management of local natural resources such as water or biodiversity are also lacking.

Over crowding

The measure of overcrowding used here is where a household lives with more than two people per room because this measure can be derived from the Census data. Other measures are more sensitive to the physical condition of the housing unit or the sleeping arrangements. The Census data shows that overcrowding is not a major issue in the Cook Islands. In 2011 the average number of people per household was 3.5 in urban areas and 3.8 in rural areas. This compares with 3.6 people per urban household and 3.7 in rural households in 2006.

There was a slight increase in the population living in overcrowded housing in Rarotonga in the 2011 Census from 4% of women and men in 2006 to 5% of women and men in 2011 while overcrowding in rural areas decreased from 10% to 9% for both women and men, boys and girls. The larger incidence in rural areas is mostly due to the style of housing where the structure of the house itself is large but there are only few habitable rooms, typically a living room or some kind of shared area and one bedroom for the owner of the house.

Access to improved water

The MDG definition of improved drinking water excludes bottled or water that is purchased from a vendor. This is the reason why 37% of males and females in Rarotonga in 2011, almost four-in-ten of the population, did not have improved drinking water. Families buy drinking water because of concerns of the quality of the piped supply of drinking water in Rarotonga. The government is investing in improving the infrastructure for water delivery along with the quality of piped water. However these improvements will come at a cost and when the system is fully implemented users will be paying for piped water into their homes.

FIGURE 28: POPULATION WITH ACCESS TO IMPROVED DRINKING WATER, 2006, 2011

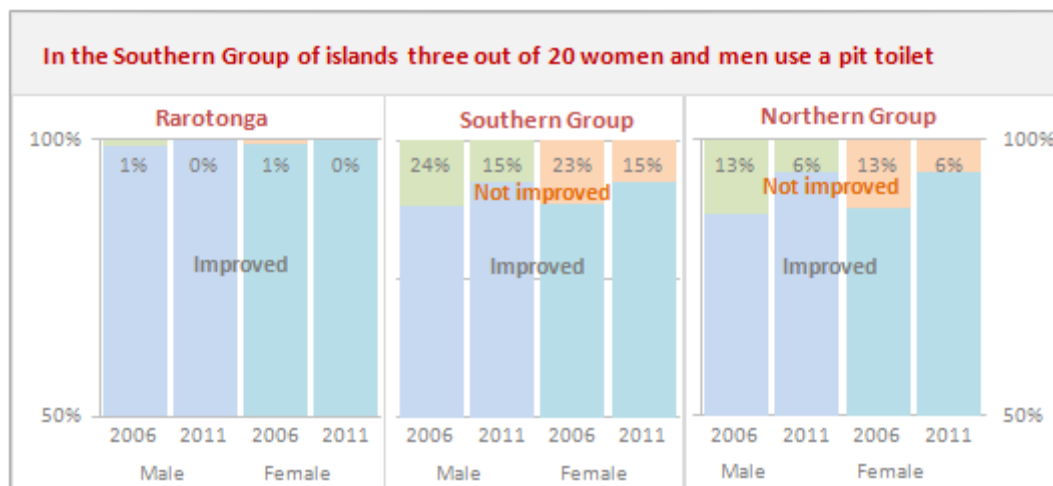


Source: CISO.

Access to improved sanitation

Progress is being made for access to improved sanitation, with 15% of males and females in the Southern Group and 6% of males and females in the Northern Group living in a house without a flush toilet in 2011.

FIGURE 29: POPULATION WITH ACCESS TO IMPROVED SANITATION, 2006, 2011

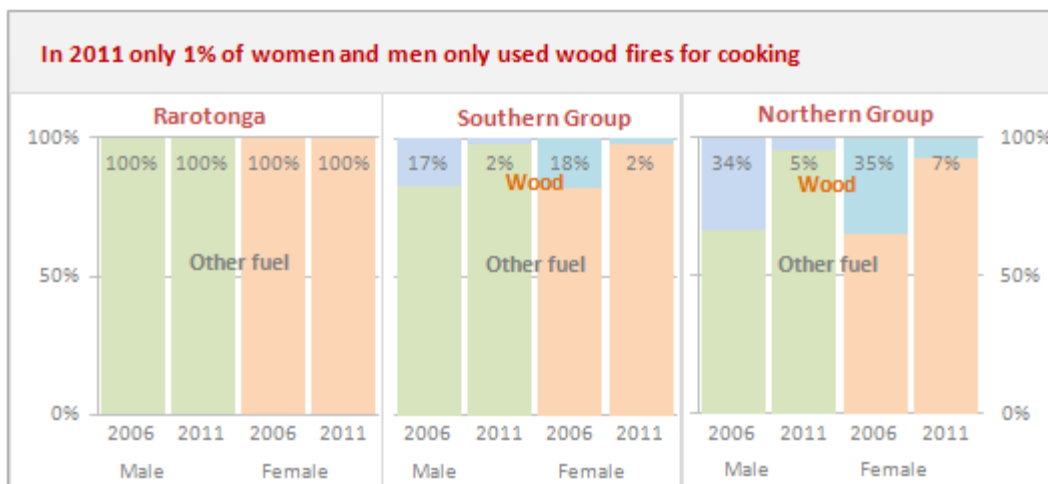


Source: CISO.

Use of solid fuels for cooking

In the less developed regions, a large proportion of households still use firewood for cooking and heating. This is not the case in the Cook Islands. In the last five years there has been a shift in the *Pa Enua*, especially the Northern Group away from wood as a cooking fuel to gas.

FIGURE 30: POPULATION USING ONLY FIREWOOD FOR COOKING, 2006, 2011

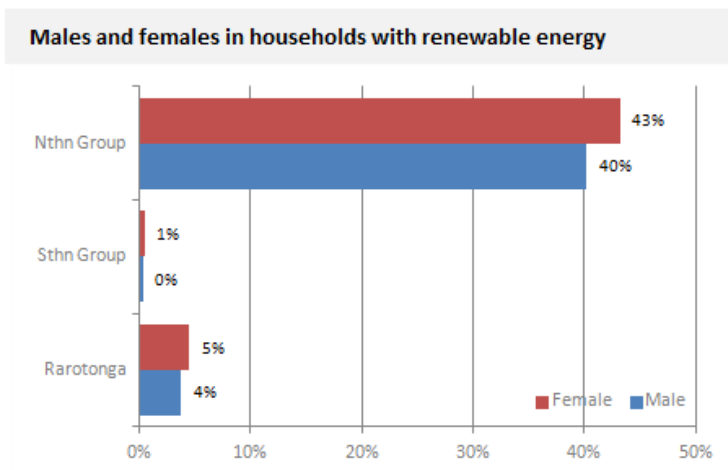


Source: CISO.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Involvement of women in environmental decision making at all levels is a key step in ensuring that women’s issues and gender perspectives on the environment are included in policy-making from local to national and global level. If the government is to achieve its goals of meeting energy needs from renewable energy women must be fully involved in the roll-out of such systems and know how to maintain them. It is not possible to monitor progress towards achieving this goal directly. The 2011 Census gives an indication of the shift in source of electricity away from traditional grid systems and generators. In the Northern Group 43% of females and 40% of males lived in households with some kind of renewable energy for electricity (solar or wind).

FIGURE 31: POPULATION IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH RENEWABLE ENERGY, 2011



The Cook Islands Government has committed to obtaining 50% of the country’s energy needs from renewable sources by 2015 and 100% by 2020. The Northern Islands are the first priority area to be followed by the Southern islands.

Source: CISO.

Women and the environment is one of the 12 critical areas of concern for achieving gender equality identified by the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. The Platform for Action recognises that environmental conditions have a different impact on the lives of women and men due to existing gender inequality. In particular, lack of access to clean water and energy, environmental degradation and natural disasters disproportionately affect women in terms of health, unremunerated work and well-being. Furthermore, the Platform for Action stresses that women’s role in sustainable development is hampered by unequal access to land, financial resources and agricultural information and technologies; unequal access to formal training in professional natural resources management; and limited involvement in policy formulation and decision-making in natural resources and environment management. All these barriers continue to exist to a lesser or greater extent 20 years after the Platform for Action was endorsed by governments.

There are also concerns that climate change may deepen environment-related gender inequality, particularly in small island developing states like the Cook Islands. The rise in temperature, the increasing risk of heat waves, droughts and floods, and the more frequent and more intense storms and tropical cyclones that are all part of climate change are

expected to have an overall negative impact on agricultural livelihoods, availability of food and human health and survival. Women are considered among the most vulnerable groups, as they tend to be more dependent on the natural resources threatened by climate change and have fewer assets to cope with the change.

Men and women have different roles in the family, community and work force, and they have different personal interactions, priorities, and strategies when it comes to environmental protection. Similarly, women and men are often differently affected by environmental degradation because the roles and work patterns of women and men (in both the workforce and the household) are likely to differ. Equal participation of men and women in environmental decision-making is a question of equal rights and responsibilities. Neither men nor women have a “natural predisposition” for environmental protection. But patterns regarding their roles in society may mean that strategies for promoting environmental protection need to target men and women differently. Better targeted policies (i.e. those that specifically take into consideration the needs, priorities and perspectives of different groups of men and women) are more effective policies - which means more efficient use of resources needed to implement these policies. Furthermore adopting a participatory approach to assessing environmental degradation, management and conservation contributes to build trust, credibility, and accountability, which in turn may elicit more commitment to environmental protection from the population in general.

The Cook Islands has an extensive Disaster Risk Management (DRM) network and associated activities for mitigating the impacts of climate change. However gender roles are not specifically or systematically addressed in these programmes and village disaster risk management committees, while infrastructure and welfare oriented, have not yet evolved to the stage where facilities are provided for women along with their young children and persons living with disability. A geoportal is being developed for communities to access weather services and disaster related information, however the limited number of households in the *Pa Enua* with internet connectivity due to high ongoing costs limit the effectiveness of this initiative.

The Strengthening the Resilience of our Islands to Climate Change (SRIC-CC) donor funded programme has implemented a number of sustainable livelihoods projects for women and youth in the *Pa Enua* based on the productive sector. While such initiatives take local knowledge and market demand into consideration, the ‘vote’ process in the allocation of these project ‘grants’ is not clear and coordination mechanisms are not established with other central government agencies. Climate change is a reality in the *Pa Enua*, certainly in the far north where anecdotal evidence suggests that climate change is forcing people from their island homes for food security and access to water amongst other reasons.

Government has a scheme which provides 6,000 litre water tanks to households for free, with other costs of water pumps or connections borne by the household. While this might suffice in Rarotonga and the Southern Group of islands in the *Pa Enua* in the drier north larger community tanks or catchment systems are needed during prolonged periods drought. Fortunately as yet no adverse health effects have been reported linked to inadequate drinking water in the *Pa Enua*.

Poverty

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Policy implications

Information about the income levels of households headed by women and men show substantial gender inequality between households, and female headed households are more likely to have lower incomes and be welfare dependent, from the government benefit system or broader family and community social protection or both. Women might not fully participate in decision-making on spending, and female and male members of the household do not always have equal access to household resources. Fewer women have cash income and they own land or other property less often than men.

8. POVERTY

STATISTICAL INDICATORS & INFORMATION

Indicator	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*	2011*
Gross Domestic Product \$NZ '000 (real, 2006)	234,604	275,875	289,680	289,097	278,937	268,977	273,012	277,107
Per Capita Gross Domestic Product (nominal)	12,528	17,013	18,933	20,351	21,879	21,858		
Per Capita Gross Domestic Product \$NZ (real, 2006)	14,572	18,102	18,933	18,970	18,375	17,789	18,201	18,084
Per Capita Gross Domestic Product \$US PPP (real)	8,368	10,390	11,038	10,440	10,177	9,608	10,081	10,016
Average annual growth rate real GDP	4.4%	20.6%	-4.7%	12.6%	-8.3%	-5.7%	1.5%*	1.5%*
	2001		2006		2011			
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Percent population without own income (by age group)								
15 – 24 years	40%	38%	39%	40%	37%	38%		
25 – 34 years	10%	6%	7%	5%	6%	10%		
35 – 44 years	10%	8%	7%	7%	6%	9%		
45 – 54 years	13%	16%	8%	14%	5%	12%		
55 – 64 years	9%	15%	9%	12%	7%	12%		
Percent population receiving benefits or pensions#								
15 – 24 years	2%	22%	2%	19%	2%	8%		
25 – 34 years	9%	63%	6%	52%	4%	16%		
35 – 44 years	9%	55%	6%	53%	4%	13%		
45 – 54 years	9%	35%	6%	30%	5%	13%		
55 – 64 years	56%	59%	42%	55%	41%	43%		
65 years and over	97%	100%	95%	95%	94%	97%		

Source: CISO. * GDP estimates for 2010 and 2011 assume a 1.5% annual growth rate. PPP estimates calculated by CISO. # Changes to the Census question in 2011 on source of income resulted in an undercount of persons receiving benefits (child benefit included as other).

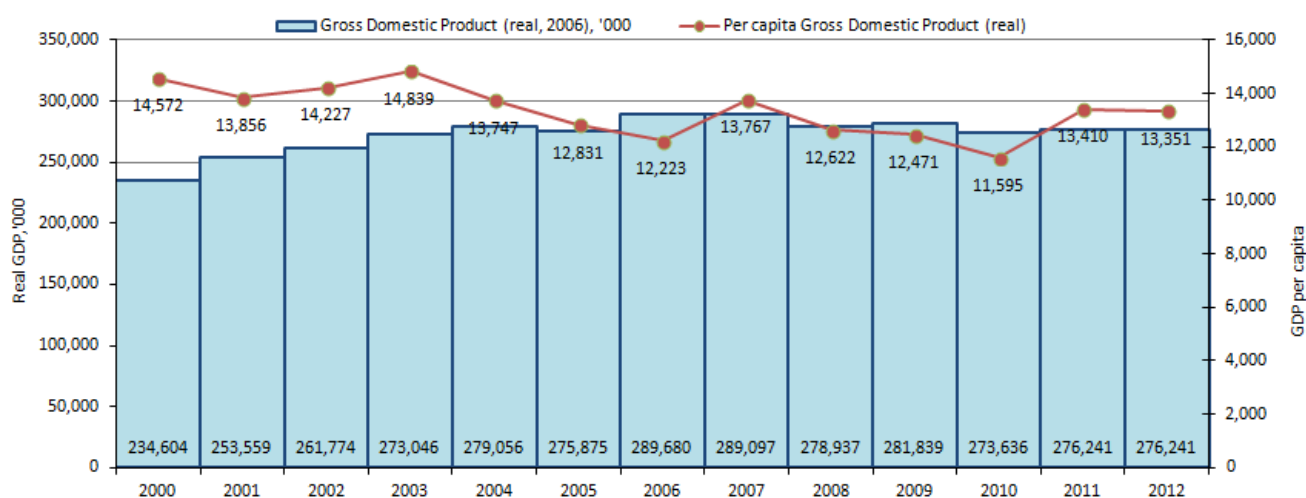
Relatively high GDP but slow growth

GDP, or Gross Domestic Product, is arguably the most important of all economic statistics as it attempts to capture the state of the economy in one number. GDP represents the total dollar value of all goods and services produced in a certain time period (year in the Cook Islands). Quite simply, if the GDP measure is up on the previous year, the economy is growing. If it is negative it is contracting. In the Cook Islands the economy is based on tourism, retail and wholesale trade, fishing and agriculture, while the money spent on government services also makes a significant contribution to GDP.

In 2011 the GDP of the Cook Islands was estimated to be NZ\$276 million which can be expressed on a per capita basis: if GDP was distributed equally each person in the Cook Islands would have received NZ\$12,789. In 2011 the Cook Islands Statistics Office estimated that GDP (real) grew by 1% based on increased income from tourism, modest growth in exports and expenditure on a number of large infrastructure projects. Much of this growth has been concentrated in a

small number of sectors and, as a result, there has been rising unemployment and financial hardship on many of the *Pa Enua*. Australia and New Zealand through the harmonised aid program contributed NZ\$18.1 million to the Cook Islands in the 2011-12 financial year, with China contributing a further NZ\$14 million: total aid from all partners contributed to about 12% of GDP.

FIGURE 32: COOK ISLANDS GDP (REAL, YEAR 2006) & REAL GDP PER CAPITA, 2000 - 2012



Source: CISO. 2011 data provisional; 2012 is an estimate.

However GDP growth does not necessarily mean that everyone gets wealthier. The 'trickle down' approach of economic growth advocates that the economically disadvantaged segments of the society ultimately reap the long-term benefits of economic growth. The measures of equality for the distribution of income in the Cook Islands support this and show a very unequal distribution of income with a large gap between the highest and lowest incomes.

Unequal distribution of wealth results in pockets of hardship

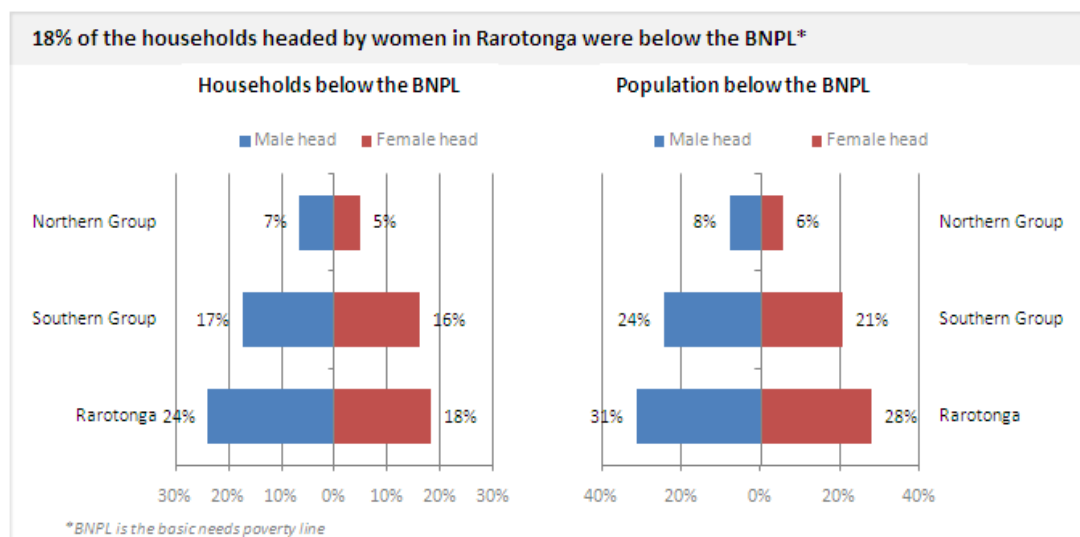
The Millennium Development Goals progress reports for 2005 and 2010 state that there is no extreme poverty in the Cook Islands; however the data indicate that there is a large proportion of the rural population heavily reliant on subsistence to meet their basic needs and a proportion of the urban population which depend on social welfare benefits to make ends meet. This is evident in the poverty indicators derived from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) of 2005-06, the Census data on the incomes of persons aged 15 years and over and social welfare payments made.

Three regions were used for poverty analysis of the HIES data - Rarotonga, Southern Group and Northern Group. The poverty line for Rarotonga was NZ\$117.95, in the Southern Group it was NZ\$74.91 and NZ\$49.23. This variation in the poverty lines shows the lower price values of subsistence food production in the rural areas, notably the north, the size and scope of the 'cash' or 'formal' economy in Rarotonga compared to the rural islands where it is not possible to purchase the range of goods and services as it is in Rarotonga.

Applying these poverty lines to the data and looking at the sex of the household head shows that the sex of the head of household is a not a good indicator of in poverty in Rarotonga, and to a lesser extent in the Southern Group. In Rarotonga 18% of the households headed by women were below the poverty line, compared with 24% of the households headed by males.

An analysis of the relative distribution of household income by the sex of the household head from 2005-06 showed that female headed households are living very closely to the poverty lines. In Rarotonga 27% of households were headed by women, but households headed by women made up 32% of the households in the lowest 20% of household expenditure in Rarotonga. This means that about three out of every 10 of the lowest spending households in Rarotonga had a female household head, and one in four had a female head in the Southern Group (25%).

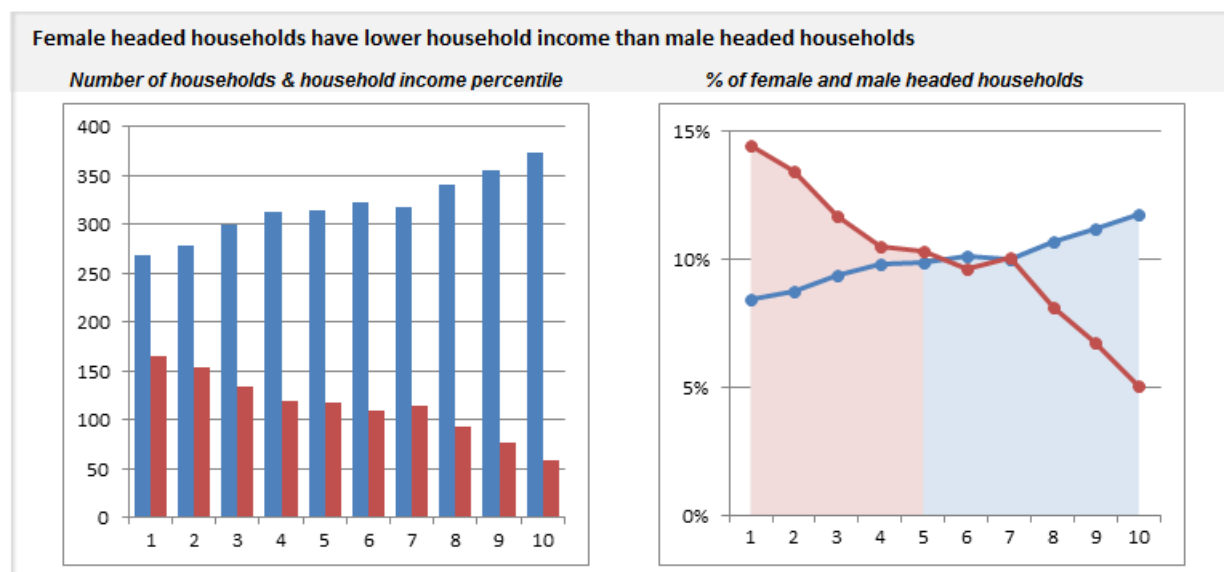
FIGURE 33: HOUSEHOLDS AND POPULATION LIVING BELOW THE BNPL*, 2005-06



Source: CISO.

A similar analysis based on household income estimates and sex of the household head from the 2011 Census shows that 28% of the households headed by females had household income in the lowest 20% compared with 17% of households headed by males. While there are more male households in the lowest income percentiles than female headed households, a higher proportion of female headed households are in this group.

FIGURE 34: SEX OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME PERCENTILE, NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS AND PERCENT OF EACH SEX, 2011



Source: CISO Census 2011. Income mid-points used for population aged 15 years and over.

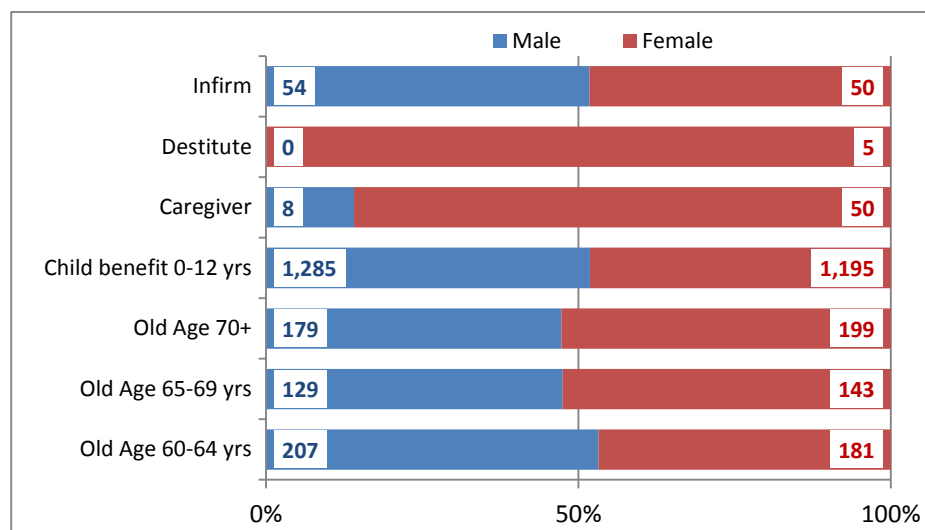
Households with low incomes or below the basic needs poverty line level will not necessarily be going hungry, although their diet is likely to be poor in nutrition. It means, more likely, that whilst they are probably not going hungry they are, nevertheless, struggling to meet their daily/weekly/monthly living expenses, particularly those that require cash payments (electricity, water, transport, costs of sending children to school, clothing, housing, medical costs etc). These families will be constantly trying to balance their incomes with their expenditure and frequently something has to be given up, a trade-off will have to be made between paying one bill and another, food or fees. They would be often, and in some cases constantly, relying on family, friends and neighbours for assistance.

Welfare benefits are not enough to support those without income

The Cook Islands is one of the few Pacific Island Countries to have a social welfare benefit system. There are programs in place through welfare benefits for people with low incomes, the elderly and the destitute. All mothers receive a one-off 'new born' allowance of NZ\$300; children aged under 12 receive NZ\$30 per fortnight (two weeks) child benefit;

an old age pension of NZ\$200 per fortnight is paid to those aged over 60. All beneficiaries receive a Christmas bonus. A payment of NZ\$75 per fortnight is available for those assessed as having no access to a livelihood as the destitute or infirm persons relief benefit and the same amount is paid to eligible caregivers occupied in caring for a disabled or destitute beneficiary. Welfare recipients assessed having a total income of less than NZ\$600 per month qualify for a subsidy payment for their electricity bill and there are limited funds available welfare recipients assessed as requiring extra help with their living conditions for things like essential home improvements and maintenance.

FIGURE 35: RAROTONGA: SEX OF BENEFIT PAYMENT RECIPIENT, TYPE OF BENEFIT AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS OVER 2011



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs administrative data averaged over 24 payments for each benefit type to give approximate annual number.

Welfare payments made in Rarotonga in 2011 reflect the national pattern. Women were more likely than men to receive the pension aged over 65 years as well as the caregivers allowance and made up the majority of the small number of destitute beneficiaries who are almost all single mothers. These benefit payments in 2011 in Rarotonga totalled just over NZ\$7 million, a significant portion of the government recurrent budget.

No national definition of poverty

Like the majority of pacific island countries, the Cook Islands does not have a national poverty reduction strategy or specific policies to alleviate poverty. Poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. The Beijing Platform for Action recognized that “poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life”. Thus, while the economic dimension remains central, other factors such as lack of opportunities, vulnerabilities and social exclusion are recognized as important in defining poverty. The use of a broad concept of poverty is considered essential for integrating gender into countries’ poverty reduction strategies as well as for monitoring, from a gender perspective, progress towards achieving the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

Women’s involvement in decision making on spending

This analysis is limited to the survey data available. It has shown that female headed households do not have, on average, as higher incomes as those headed by men. It is not possible to do any analysis of poverty in broader outcomes such as control over household resources as reflected by property ownership, cash income and participation in household decision-making on spending.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In summary, the information about the income levels of households headed by women and men presented in his chapter indicate that there is substantial gender inequality between households, and female headed households are more likely to have lower incomes and be welfare dependent, from the government benefit system or broader family and community social protection or both. Women might not fully participate in decision-making on spending, and female and male members of the household do not always have equal access to household resources. Fewer women have cash

income and they own land or other property less often than men. This lower access to resources increases women's economic dependency on men and make them more vulnerable to various economic and environmental shocks.

Government has to maintain a welfare benefits system to make those offered in New Zealand and Australia less attractive to Cook Islanders who are New Zealand citizens. There was a comprehensive review of the welfare system in 2010 and parts of this have been implemented after extensive national consultations and demographic and economic analysis and forecasting to make estimates of the cost of the welfare system. There was discussion that benefits should be adjusted annually based on inflation (the cost of living) and that higher payments are needed in the *Pa Enua* where items are more expensive. There were general analysis and conclusions made about the adequacy of the amount of benefit payments relative to the purpose of the payment. Much of the review focused on the old age pension and analysis was limited on the caregivers or destitute benefits of which women are the main recipients. Recent increases in pensions paid to the elderly have increased the divide in welfare payments.

It is important that the Cook Islands update their measures and incidence of poverty as these are now almost 10 years old. The income information collected in the 2011 Census indicates that the gap between the rich and poor is widening. The statistical household survey to collect the household income and expenditure information is an expensive undertaking, with a budget in the magnitude of \$500,000. Government has pledged it would meet 25% of the survey costs. Ideally such a survey would include time use statistics to inform policy makers about the 'triple' burden on women and men: work in the formal sector, work in the informal sector and their unpaid work in the home. This then could be analysed in the context of the incidence of poverty and hardship and the many dimensions of poverty, including poverty of opportunity.

Government fiscal and macro-economic policies are not analysed systematically from a gender perspective. For example, international research has demonstrated that goods and services taxes such as value added tax (VAT) are recursive: the burden of these taxes is much higher on poorer, less well-off households. The increase in VAT to 15% from 12.5% was justified in that at the same time government raised the exemption threshold for income tax, decreased tax on secondary incomes and raised the threshold on business turnover for tax exemption. This tax 'model' does not take into account the people in the Cook Islands who do not work for pay or profit, as well as those who are dependent on the welfare system (apart from the elderly although that is debatable since at the same time as pensions were increased a tax on pensions was introduced). Such choices bring into question the amount of community consultation and impact analysis undertaken. At the same time the price of imported items; food, household supplies and personal care items has been increasing.

However, government has been exploring options for providing better services to those less well off. With development partners' assistance welfare-based programmes were implemented on Atiu, Aitutaki, Mangaia, Mauke and a village in Rarotonga to provide a mix of carer support and relief for older persons and persons living with disability and a weekly meal ends service. Funding assistance ends in 2014, however the Cook Islands Government, through its Social Impact Fund, will provide continuing support in 2015 for Mangaia, Mauke and the Rarotonga village to provide rehabilitation services. The ongoing funding modalities for the food relief projects in Atiu and Aitutaki are being explored, including the possibility of the private sector sponsoring the food packages in Aitutaki and, in the absence of private sector sponsors, a nominal fee payment in Atiu for this service. However again there is no national policy or strategy to provide universal access to such goods and services which is something that needs to be addressed.

Information & communications

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Policy implications

In the Northern Group of the Cook islands women's ability to benefit equally from the opportunities offered by ICTs and to contribute fully to the knowledge-based economy is limited. To overcome the further marginalization of women, it is imperative to expand their access to and use of ICTs.

9. INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS

STATISTICAL INDICATORS & INFORMATION

Indicator / Information	2006		2011	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Telephone lines per 100 population*	79.8	82.2	78.4	79.5
Cellular phones per 100 population*	46.8	47.7	69.8	71.1
Personal computers in households per 100 population	30.2	31.0	52.2	52.8
Internet users per 100 population	22.5	23.9	43.2	44.0

Source: MIA. CISO. * Based on Census data population reporting to have access to telephone or cell phone at home or at work.

The knowledge divide

Use of the Internet and telephones are indicators of access to information and sharing of knowledge. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are pivotal for the development of knowledge societies. Advances in this area have been affecting the means of creating, transmitting and processing knowledge. The uneven distribution of access to and use of ICTs - known as the “digital divide” - has become a major barrier to development because of the risks it poses to economic and social marginalization and to the widening of the knowledge divide. The digital divide occurs along multiple and often overlapping lines: education, poverty, gender, age, disability, ethnicity and region. The gender digital divide represents a dimension in which a knowledge gap has emerged between women and men. Inequalities of access to information sources, contents and infrastructures can hamper the growth of knowledge societies. If left unaddressed, this could also further marginalize women and increase societal disparities.

There is one daily newspaper and two weekly newspapers. The Cook Islands News is published six days a week. Rarotonga's two weekly newspapers, the Herald and the Independent are owned by Elijah Communications, which also operates Cook Islands Television and Radio Cook Islands. None have regular features promoting gender equality.

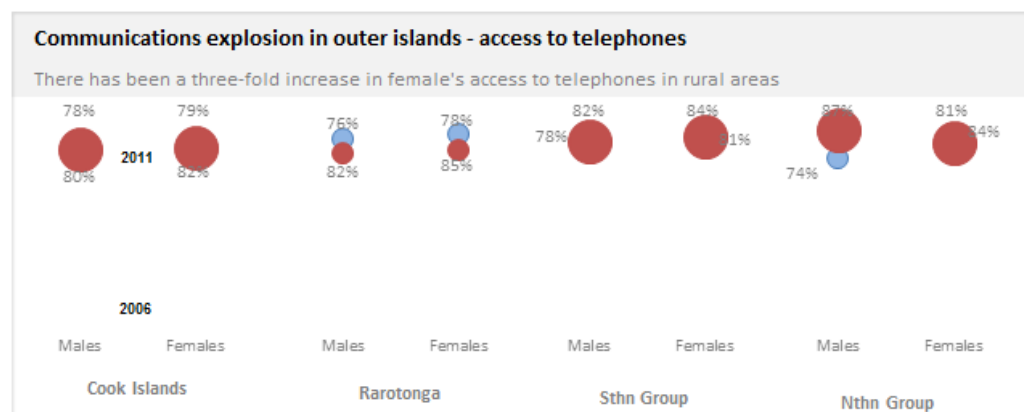
There are six radio stations in the Cook Islands with varying degrees of geographic coverage, operating hours and programming content. Radio Cook Islands, operates on both AM and FM channels 18 hours on Fridays and Saturdays and 17 hours the rest of the week with its AM signal having full coverage of the country. Until 2010 Cook Islands Television provided the sole local free-to-air channel for Rarotonga and some of the islands in the Southern Group. In 2002 Telecom Cook Islands entered a commercial agreement with its counterpart organisation in French Polynesia for the digital transmission of three television channels (24 hour news, movies and cartoons) but this is not free-to-air. Some islands are able to receive television broadcast from French Polynesia. In 2010 the second free-to-air channel, Vaka TV, began broadcasting on the island of Rarotonga. Local television program content is news, talk-back, sports and other events like dancing competitions. Most programs are from New Zealand, Australian and other overseas providers.

Access to communications

Communications access has greatly improved in the Cook Islands over the past five years especially in the *Pa Enua* although the Census data indicates that progress is slow for women in the Northern Group compared with women in other parts of the Cook Island women. Cellular telephones are replacing land-line telephones as the main means of communication in Rarotonga and the Southern Group but not in the Northern Group. The most effective means of communication for all women in the Cook Islands is still a fixed-line telephone.

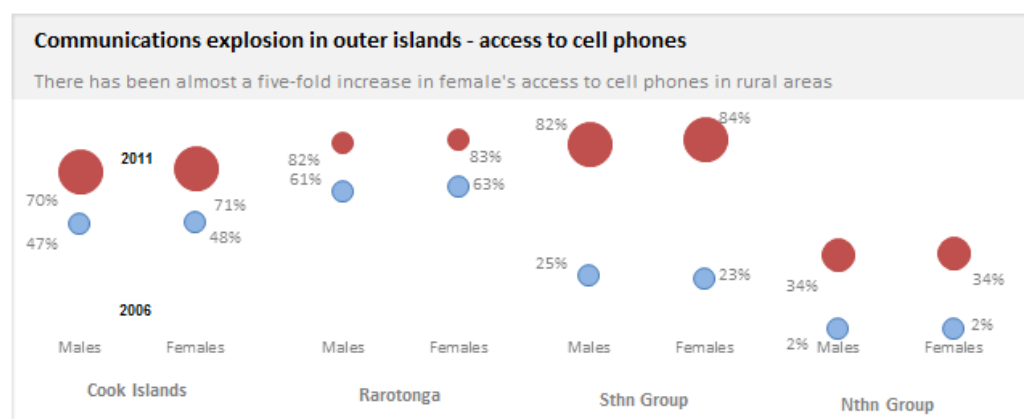
The Census of 2011 found that 79% of women lived in a house with a telephone or had a telephone at their place of work; 71% lived in a house with access to a cell phone or could use one at work and 44% had access to the Internet at home, their work or by using Internet cafés.

FIGURE 36: PERSONS LIVING IN PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACCESS TO TELEPHONES, 2006 & 2011



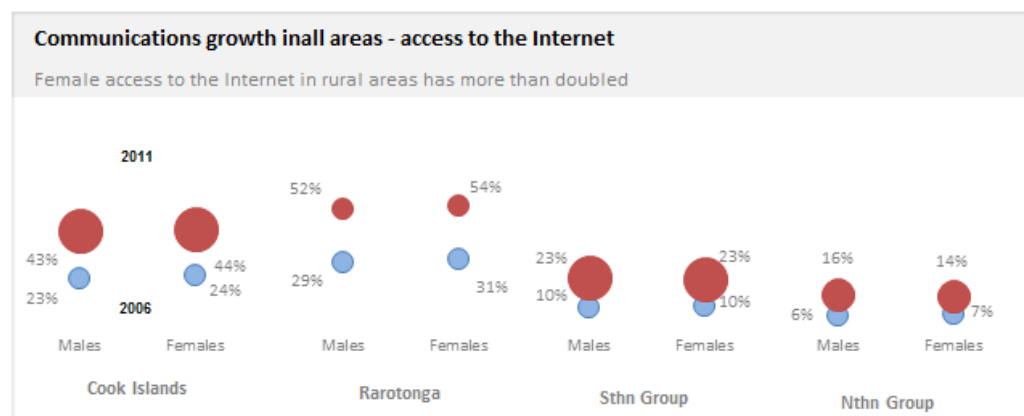
Source: CISO Census 2006 & 2011. Resident population living in private households where the household has access to telephone at home and/or at work. 2011 shown in red and 2006 shown in blue.

FIGURE 37: PERSONS LIVING IN PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACCESS TO A CELL PHONE, 2006 & 2011



Source: CISO Census 2006 & 2011. Resident population living in private households where the household has access to cell phone at home and/or at work. 2011 shown in red and 2006 shown in blue.

FIGURE 38: PERSONS LIVING IN PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACCESS TO THE INTERNET, 2006 & 2011

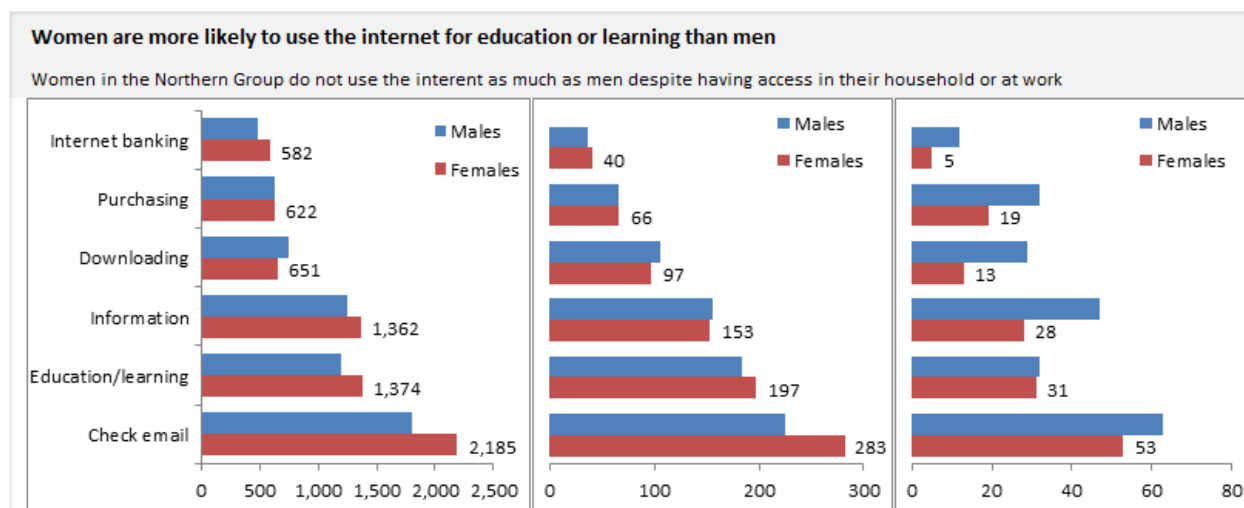


Source: CISO Census 2006 & 2011. Resident population living in private households where the household has access to the internet at home, and/or work, and/or at an internet café.

Use of the internet

While access to the Internet is not universal in the Cook Islands it is interesting to examine the different activities men and women, girls and boys do on the Internet. In the Northern Group very few females use the internet. In Rarotonga and the Southern Group more women than men use the Internet to check email for their own personal use, still the main means of communication and information sharing on the internet. In Rarotonga and to a lesser extent the Southern Group females are more likely to use the internet for education or learning than men. In the Northern Group the proportion is about the same for males and females, with high school students in the Northern Group use the Internet for their school work. Males, on the other hand, are slightly more likely to use the internet for downloading than females.

FIGURE 39: PERSONS USING INTERNET, TYPES OF ACTIVITIES (NON-WORK), 2006 & 2011



Source: CISO Census 2006 & 2011. Resident population using the Internet.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Many women face barriers in accessing ICTs. One is that they are more likely than men to lack basic literacy and computer skills. Another, in the less developed regions, may be gender-based cultural attitudes. The location of information centres or cybercafés in places that women may not be comfortable frequenting causes them to have less access to those ICT facilities that do exist. Even when access is not an issue, the paucity of Internet content that meets the information needs of women can lead to inequality in use. As a result of issues such as these, women’s ability to benefit equally from the opportunities offered by ICTs and to contribute fully to the knowledge-based economy is limited. To overcome the further marginalization of women, it is imperative to expand their access to and use of ICTs. However, while expanding access is necessary, it is not sufficient to close the gender digital gap. To do this requires policies containing specific measures for targeting and addressing the gender dimensions of ICTs.

A range of Government and Non-Government agencies use radio, television and social media broadcasts to educate the public and raise awareness about gender issues and most recently gender based violence. The broadcasts are not part of a broader information and education campaign designed around the national gender equality policy and tend to be specific to donor funded projects. **Some training and ongoing assistance has been provided to journalists to ensure that their reporting is gender sensitive, however this is sometimes done ‘after the fact’ where gender advocates like the National Council of Women ask the media to retract statements or news items and present them in a gender informative way. This indicates that standards, protocols or an ongoing training programme is required.**

Telecommunication access has improved significantly, however costs remain relatively high in terms of initial connection fees and ongoing charges. The telecommunications sector is undergoing change due to New Zealand wanting to sell its share in the national telecommunications provider; ideally the market would be deregulated to allow for competition in the sector with the ultimate aim to improve both service and cost to consumers.

Cook Islanders, young and old alike are active users of social media like Facebook and Twitter to keep in touch with family throughout the country and overseas. There is great potential for government to use social media to engage with people about social and economic policy and opinions. Likewise, gender equality advocates would be well advised to develop information and communications strategies to engage target audiences through social media.

Gender based violence

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Policy implications

Violence against women is an extreme manifestation of gender inequality and the power differences that exist between men and women; with the highest rates occurring in the Southern Group of Islands. The most widespread forms of violence against women are intimate partner violence and domestic violence in general. Support services are needed in the Southern Group of Islands, while the level of support in Rarotonga must be sustained and up-scaled.

10. GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

STATISTICAL INDICATORS & INFORMATION

Indicator	2013			
	Cook Is.	Rarotonga	Southern Group	Northern Group
Physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence against women prevalence, lifetime (%)	33%	30%	44%	24%
Physical intimate partner violence against women prevalence, lifetime (%)	30%	28%	40%	20%
Sexual intimate partner violence against women prevalence, lifetime (%)	13%	11%	22%	7%
Emotional intimate partner violence against women prevalence, lifetime (%)	27%	26%	31%	16%
Economic intimate partner violence against women prevalence, lifetime (%)	6%	7%	5%	2%
Physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence against women prevalence, last 12 months (%)	9%	9%	9%	11%
Physical and/or sexual violence by persons other than intimate partner since age 15 (%)	43%			
Physical violence by persons other than intimate partner since age 15 (%)	39%	36%	51%	29%
Sexual violence by persons other than intimate partner since age 15 (%)	7%	8%	5%	6%
Sexual violence by persons other than intimate partner before age 15 (%)	8%	9%	8%	2%

Source: *The Cook Islands Family Health and Safety Study report 2014.*

Research, data and statistics on violence against women

Gender based violence or violence against women (VAW) has been called “the most pervasive yet least recognised human rights abuse in the world”. Today, it is known that around the world as many as one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way - most often by someone she knows including her husband or another male family member. Globally one woman in four has been abused during pregnancy. This means that the family home cannot be considered a safe place for women and girls. VAW not only affects the victims, it has far reaching impacts on family members and communities.

The Beijing Platform for Action called on all governments and development partners to promote research, collect data and compile statistics relating to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women (especially domestic violence) and to encourage research into their causes, nature, seriousness and consequences as well as the effectiveness of measures implemented to prevent and redress violence against women.

Police and court statistics represent a potential source of statistics on violence against women. The value of police statistics for measuring violence against women is currently limited as this is often not reported to the authorities, especially in cases of domestic violence. But in the Cook Islands with the establishment of the Domestic Violence unit in the Police, statistics are available on a regular basis.

The health sector is another source of statistics on various forms of violence, as are records kept by non-governmental organizations involved with the protection of abused and battered women. It should be noted, however, that statistics from these sources might not be fully reliable. This is because information on the occurrences and consequences of violence is usually collected on a voluntary basis since recording incidents and reporting on victims of violence is not

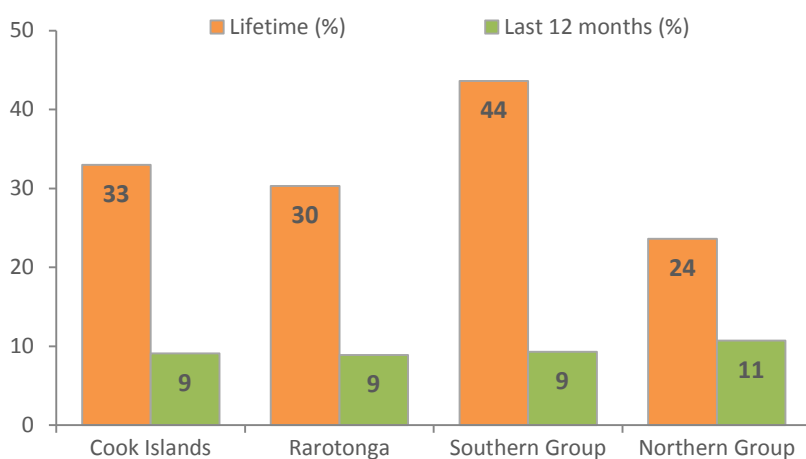
mandatory for health-care and other systems. It is not possible to separate a person with injuries from domestic violence from all the other cases of injuries treated in the health system.

This chapter highlights the key findings from The Cook Islands Family Health and Safety Study (FHSS) conducted in 2013 which used the WHO methodology for a nationally representative statistical survey for prevalence, effects of and causal factors for gender based violence. The study incorporated qualitative research into gender based violence.

Women are exposed to violence throughout their lifetime

The proportion of women exposed to intimate partner physical and/or violence in their lifetime ranges from 44% in the Southern Group to 22% in the Northern Group, with the rate for Rarotonga being 30%. The rate for physical and/or sexual violence experienced in the 12 months is, as you would expect, lower. Still, around one-tenth of women throughout the Cook Islands report recent abuse.

FIGURE 40: PREVALENCE OF LIFETIME AND CURRENT PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AMONG ALL EVER-PARTNERED WOMEN –2013 FHSS

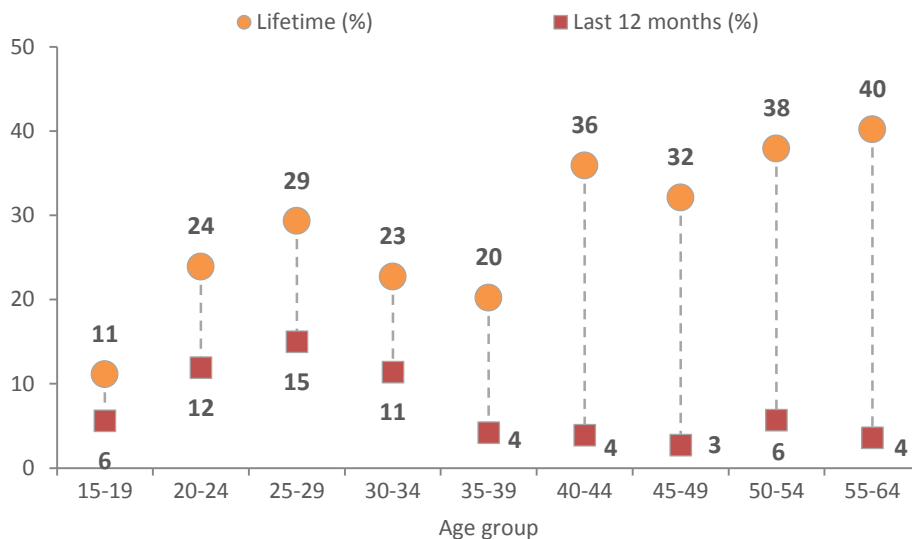


Source: *The Cook Islands Family Health and Safety Study (FHSS) report 2014.*

Intimate partner physical violence

Violence that women suffer from their intimate partners has very serious and often long-lasting consequences, as it tends to be repetitive and accompanied by emotional (psychological) and sexual violence as well. The percentage of ever-partnered or ever-married women that suffered physical violence perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner at least once in their lifetime ranges from 40% in the Southern Group to 20% in the Northern Group, with almost one-in-three or 28% of women in Rarotonga ever experiencing intimate partner physical violence. The proportion of women subjected to physical violence by their intimate partners in the last 12 months was 7% nationally and the same across all regions.

FIGURE 41: PREVALENCE OF LIFETIME AND CURRENT PHYSICAL INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE BY AGE GROUP –2013 FHSS



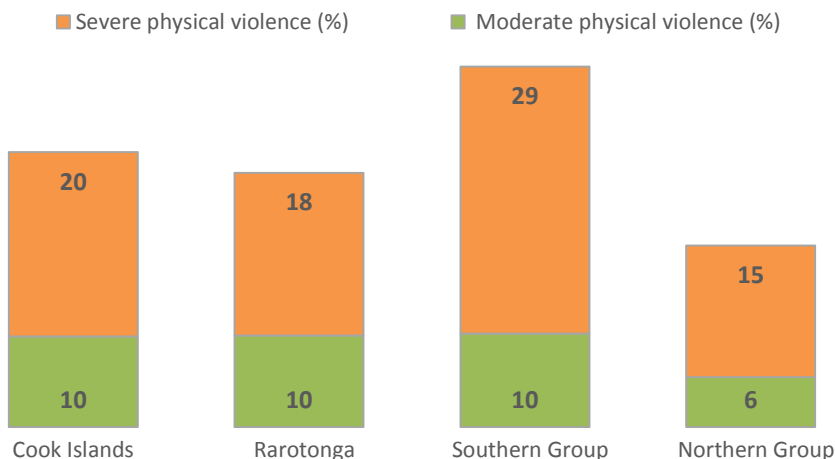
Source: The Cook Islands Family Health and Safety Study (FHSS) report 2014.

Older women have higher lifetime intimate partner physical violence prevalence rates than younger women as you would expect, however women aged in their 20’s are the most likely to have been the victims of recent physical abuse by their intimate partner and have relatively high lifetime rates of concern as well.

Severity and nature of physical violence

Women are subjected to both moderate and severe physical violence from their intimate partners, and this varies according to region. In all regions severe violence was experienced by many more women than those experiencing moderate physical violence; with women in the Southern Group almost three-times more likely to have ever experienced severe physical violence than moderate.

FIGURE 42: SEVERITY OF PHYSICAL INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AMONG EVER-PARTNERED WOMEN –2013 FHSS



Source: The Cook Islands Family Health and Safety Study (FHSS) report 2014.

Given the severity of intimate partner physical violence, it is no surprise that nearly half of all women victims of intimate partner violence (47%) said they were injured as a result with 22% needing health care and 16% reported that they lost consciousness.

Many women are sexually molested in their lifetimes

Although not as frequent as physical violence, sexual violence has consequences that almost always severely affect the victim for a prolonged period of time and often last a lifetime. The term “sexual violence”, broadly interpreted, may include aggressive and abusive behaviours of different intensity and consequences, from unwanted touching to forced intercourse and rape.

The percentage of women experiencing sexual violence by their intimate partner at least once in their lifetime ranges from just over one-in-five women in the Southern Group (22%) to 7% in the Northern Group and approximately one out of every ever partnered woman in Rarotonga has experienced sexual violence in her lifetime.

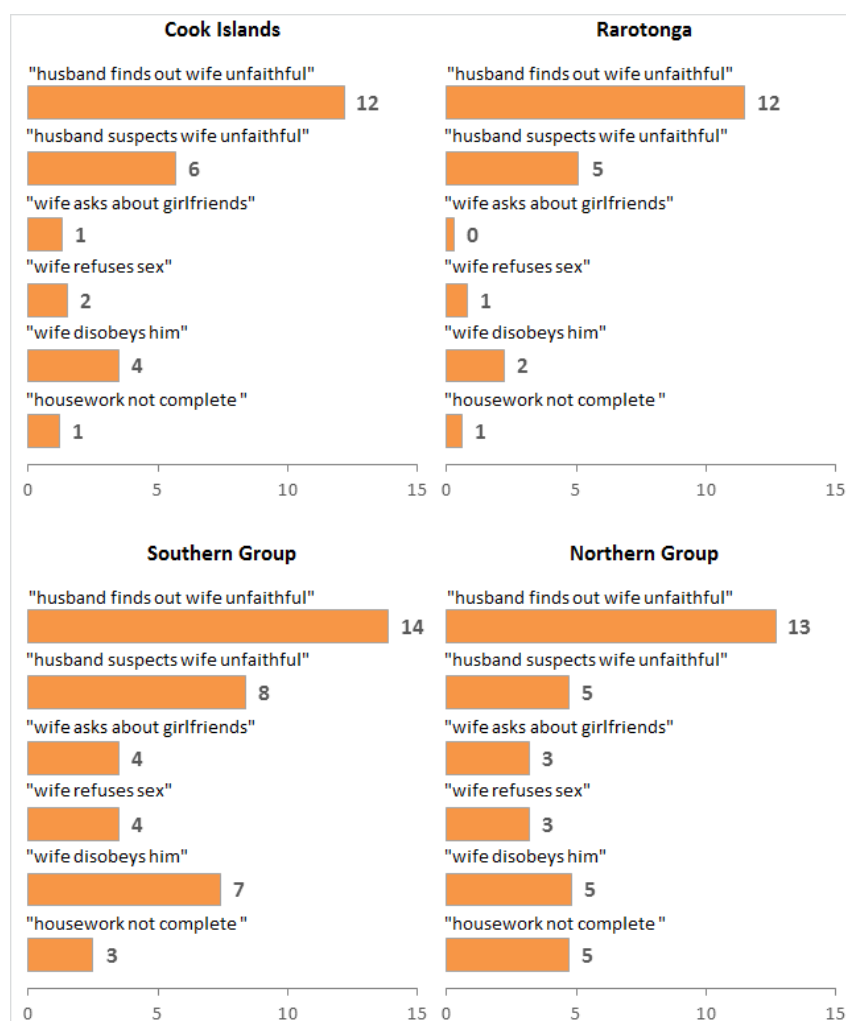
Like physical violence, sexual violence experienced by women in intimate partnerships places a heavy toll on the victim and the partnership. In the Cook Islands with traditional gender roles and attitudes toward marriage and family unification, it is difficult to leave a partner even if violent and women endure ongoing abuse. The low proportion of adults who are separated or divorced supports this (2%).

Women's attitudes towards wife-beating

Wife-beating is a clear expression of male dominance; it is both a cause and consequence of women's serious disadvantage and unequal position compared to men. The strength and weight of traditions in many countries is such that many women even find it justifiable to be physically punished in certain circumstances, with the FHSS finding that suspected or confirmed infidelity is commonly agreed my women as the most acceptable reason for wife beating.

It has to be stressed that not all women in the Cook Islands have the same attitudes towards physical intimate partner violence. Not is the rate of 'acceptance' high by regional comparison: in Vanuatu in 2011, 60% of women agreed with at least one of the "justifications" given for a man to beat his wife. Age, level of education completed and wealth certainly play a crucial role in determining these "entitlements to violence" granted to husbands.

FIGURE 43: ATTITUDES TOWARDS PHYSICAL INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, PERCENT OF WOMEN IN AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS –2013 FHSS



Source: The Cook Islands Family Health and Safety Study (FHSS) report 2014.

Non-partner physical and sexual abuse

Perpetrators of physical and sexual violence who were not an intimate partner can be male or female. Nearly four-out-of-ten women (39%) of women reported that persons other than an intimate partner were physically violent towards

them over their lifetime and 8% of women had experienced such physical violence recently (in the last 12 months). These perpetrators of physical violence were commonly family members, mainly parents (15% fathers/stepfathers and 24% mothers/stepmothers) as well as other male and female family members.

Overall findings suggest that this kind of physical violence is considered to be for child discipline and may not necessarily be because of gender. However it is difficult to fully assess this given that the study did not explore whether men experienced similar levels and types of physical violence as women do.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Violence against women is an extreme manifestation of gender inequality and the power differences that exist between men and women. The Cook Islands Family Health and Safety Study provided statistics on the prevalence of violence against women in terms of the magnitude, patterns, and forms of violence, attitudes towards violence, the impact of violence on women and families, and women's responses to domestic violence. The most widespread forms of violence against women are intimate partner violence and domestic violence in general.

Physical violence against women and girls perpetrated by men other than intimate partners is widespread, mostly by immediate family members, but not enough is known about whether this physical violence is a result of gender norms or because this is the prevalent form of discipline for both girls and boys by both males and females (although mothers or stepmothers are the most common perpetrators). Regardless, physical violence is not an acceptable form of discipline. This norm is changing: the 2012 Education Act bans any use of corporal punishment by staff towards students in education institutions. In addition, the issue of corporal punishment in the home is included in the Crimes Act Review policy paper; however it is not clear whether this will be included in the revision as the draft for the Revised Crime Acts is not yet available.

Policy responses need to take into account a range of factors to address the unequal power relations between men and women which constantly adapt and respond to social, economic and political factors. Such interventions must address the practical needs of victims of violence (in all forms) in terms of access to, and uptake of, services as well as the strategic needs to enable women and men to challenge inequality and transform gender relations. These policies must be developed inclusively to address different kinds and level of resistance from individuals, groups and the community at large. It is very important that interventions involve men, for example promoting role models of respectful masculinity to help partnered men resist the "peer pressure" to have a parallel relationship - a girlfriend which was identified as a high risk factor for VAW, for example.

Policies that promote women's power to enable them to participate more effectively in the wider process of development must respect women's dignity and social capital required for their own development, enable them to voice their development needs, and build their 'power' through skills training and provision of resources. This could involve developing vocational skills, leadership training, training to gain access to economic and social resources, and training them to use the legal and/or administrative system to challenge men and to assert their rights. This can only be achieved by leaders, politicians, government, women's organisations and men's organisations working together.

The FHSS identifies a number of risk factors associated with the likelihood of physical and/or sexual violence for such policies to use for targeting beneficiaries, who would include:

- **Current partnership status.** Women who were with a partner at the time of the interview were two and a half times more likely to experience lifetime violence and almost eight times more likely to experience current violence.
- **Nature of first sexual intercourse.** Women whose first sexual experience was forced were nearly seven times more likely to experience lifetime violence and five times more likely to experience current violence.
- **Partner's parallel relationships with other women.** Women whose partners were engaged in parallel relationships with other women were three and a half times more likely to experience lifetime partner violence and two times more likely to experience current partner violence.
- **Education level of the partner.** Women whose partners had higher education were 77% less likely to experience lifetime partner violence and 93% less likely to experience current partner violence.

Sexual violence against women has implications for their reproductive health, and health and human service professionals should be well-trained on how to appropriately and sensitively screen their clients for such violence so that any needed interventions may be put into place. Protocols and systems are required to make sure all agencies involved (Health, Police, counselling and support services) work as one to provide services to survivors of sexual violence. Likewise survivors of physical violence, and the perpetrator should have access to the required services, especially in the Southern Group of islands as well as Rarotonga and the Northern Group.

Working with men to change their attitudes and behaviour is an essential part of any solution to address violence against women. Strategies pursued by various agencies for men (*Rota'ianga* Men's Support Organisation, Uniformed Organisations, Church Youth Organisations) include programmes that encourage men to examine their assumptions about gender roles and masculinity, for them to become 'agents for change' and positive, non-violent role models in their communities by teaching other men about gender roles, gender equality, and masculinity.

Since the Domestic Violence Unit was established in 2007, police procedures for dealing with domestic violence have been revised in line with external and internal review recommendations. Training and mentoring for officers dealing with domestic violence incidents has been ongoing and sensitive to victim experiences. The number of complaints reported to the Domestic Violence Unit is increasing as awareness in the community grows that domestic violence is a crime, and although there is still a high level of underreporting and secrecy around the issue more victims are seeking assistance from the Police. An increasing proportion of relatives and neighbours are reporting domestic violence incidents to the Police, perhaps the beginning of a shift from the perception that domestic violence is a strictly private, family matter. Advocacy, awareness and community outreach activities are paying off and more women are receiving police assistance with associated referral to counselling and other social services.

Enacting the required legislation, and mobilizing the required resources and policies relies on political will and highlights the critical role parliamentarians have in championing women's rights, health and development. The Cook Islands is a member of the Standing Committee of Male Parliamentarians on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls established in 2009; which stimulates evidence-based policy actions, mutual learning on policy and advocacy issues, reviews outcomes of the action plans, examines the usefulness of the efforts, and increases actions taken by parliamentarians for prevention of violence against women and girls.

The Family Law Bill 2014, currently being reviewed by a select committee, encompasses violence against women and most specifically, domestic violence; as well as a range of sections to protect the human rights of women, children, victims and survivors. The Bill covers settlement of affairs for marriage and de facto relationship dissolution; duties and responsibilities of parents relating to the care, protection, welfare, best interests, and development of children; procedures for resolution of issues regarding family relations through negotiation and agreement; and the safety and protection of adults and children in domestic relationships. The Family Law Bill was drafted according to 'progressive realisation' principles and obligations of the Cook Islands as a signatory to CEDAW, CRC and CRPD.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ARI	Acute respiratory infection
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPRD	Convention on the Rights of People Living with Disability
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DOTS	Directly Observed Treatment Short–Course
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EPI	Expanded Programme of Immunisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GIR	Gross Intake Rate
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICT	Information and communication technology
IMCI	Integrated management of childhood illness
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
LDC	Least Developed Country
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MMR	Maternal Mortality Ratio
NCD	Non–communicable disease
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NGO	Non–Government Organization
NIR	Net Intake Rate
ODA	Overseas development assistance
PCR	Primary Completion Rate
PPP	Purchasing power parity
PSC	Public Service Commission
PWD	Public Works Department
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
SWAp	Sector wide approach
TB	Tuberculosis
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
U5MR	Under Five Mortality Rate
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USP	University of the South Pacific
WHO	World Health Organisation
CISO	Cook Islands Statistics Office
MinTAFF	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
RDC	Resource Development Committee
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

