THE COOK ISLANDS
Demographic, economic and gender profile
Factsheet

Land area
237 km²

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and prices
GDP (million, current NZD, 2019): 575.4 million
GDP (million, current USD, 2019): 379.2
GDP per capita (current NZD, 2019): 28486
GDP per capita (current USD, 2019): 18775
GDP growth rate (% annual 2017-19): 6.7

Population
Total (2019): 20200
Density (per km², 2019): 85
Urban (% of total, 2016): 75
Life expectancy (years, 2016, male/female): 74/80

Human Development
Human Development Index (HDI): …
HDI rank: …
Population below income poverty line (%): …
Gini Index¹ (2015): 36
UN LDC group: No

KEY FACTS

- Services remain the main source of employment in the Cook Islands.
- As in the other 9PICs,⁴ the Cook Islands’ small market prevents it from enjoying the potential benefits of economies of scale. This, combined with geographical remoteness, creates difficulties for the country to integrate into international markets.

Sources: GDP and population figures are from CISO (2020a),² urban population ratio is calculated using data from the Cook Islands 2016 census, life expectancy figures are from UNFPA Pacific Subregional Office (2014), Gini index is from CISO (2018a).²
Note: The NZD to USD conversion for GDP figures is done using the 2019 annual average exchange rate retrieved from the Federal Reserve website.

The Cook Islands’ sectoral structure of economic activity (percentage shares of GDP)

Source: Data from Table 4 in GDP Statistics Highlights 2019, CISO (2020)

Note:
¹ The Gini coefficient measures the deviation of the distribution of income among individuals or households from a perfectly equal distribution. A coefficient of 0 represents perfect income equality (all persons or households have the same income) and a value of 100, perfect income inequality (all income is concentrated by one person or one household).
⁴ Nine Pacific Island Countries Signatories of the PACER Plus (9PICs): Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, the Cook Islands and Niue.
Trade profile

The Cook Islands’ membership in trade agreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA)</td>
<td>Progressive reduction/elimination of tariffs among member countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICTA Trade in Services Protocol (PICTA-TIS)</td>
<td>Preferential trade among the parties on a range of services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus</td>
<td>Trade in goods and services, temporary movement of skilled workers, investment, development and economic cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Scheme of Preferences (GSP)</td>
<td>Beneficiaries have duty free or preferential access to the donor country markets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNCTAD Secretariat

- In 2019, Cook Islands had total exports of 26.5 million NZD and total imports of 204.4 million NZD. Exports corresponded to 13 percent of imports resulting in a large trade deficit as in most SIDS.

- Fresh or chilled fish dominate the exports of the Cook Islands with a total export share of 77 percent in 2019, even though it fell in share over the last five years. Noni juices were the other major export product of the Cook Islands corresponding to 19.9 percent of total exports (CISO, 2020).

- The imports of Cook Islands are distributed across a wide range of products as in most SIDS. Food and live animals (24 percent), machines and transport equipment (22 percent), mineral fuels (14 percent), basic manufactured products (13 percent), miscellaneous manufactured goods (11 percent), and beverages and tobacco (7 percent) were the main import product groups in 2019.

- Export partners show differences across years in the Cook Islands. In 2019, New Zealand was the top export market (30 percent), followed by Japan (26 percent) and China (21 percent). On the contrary, origins of imported products are consistent over time. New Zealand is by far the main provider of imports to the Cook Islands corresponding to close to two-thirds of total imports in 2019.

- The Cook Islands is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF).

The Cook Islands’ international trade measures (thousand NZD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exports</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Trade Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>20,162</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>29,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>157,176</td>
<td>177,899</td>
<td>-137,014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CISO, Overseas Trade Statistics Table 1, April 2020

The Cook Islands’ top exports by products (percentage share)

Source: UNCTAD calculations using data from CISO, Overseas Trade Statistics Table 2, April 2020.

Note:
2CISO (2020b)
The Cook Islands’ top imports by main product groups (percentage share)

- Food and live animals
- Beverages & tobacco
- Crude materials
- Minerals, fuels, etc.
- Chemicals
- Basic manufactures
- Machines transport & equip.
- Misc. manufactured goods

Source: UNCTAD calculations using data from CISO, Overseas Trade Statistics Table 5, April 2020.

The Cook Islands’ top export markets (percentage share)

- Other
- United States
- New Zealand
- Japan
- China
- Hawaii
- Australia

Source: UNCTAD calculations using data from CISO, Overseas Trade Statistics Table 4, April 2020.

Gender profile

- School enrolment rate was close to 100 percent for both girls and boys at the compulsory education ages of 5-15. Among the population at ages 15 and above, around 50 percent of women and 43.8 percent of men had secondary qualifications, and 11.2 percent of women and 9.7 percent of men had tertiary qualifications. Overall, gender parity is achieved in educational outcomes in the Cook Islands.

- 77 percent of working-age men and 67 percent of women participated in the labour market in the Cook Islands; unemployment rate was higher among women (6.8 percent) than among men (5 percent) in 2016. The female average annual income from all sources was 85 percent of that of men among the adult population (ages 15 and above).

- In the Cook Islands, 94 percent of employed women were in services; 4 percent in industry, and 2.5 percent in agriculture in 2016. A lower share of men was employed in services (76 percent), and higher shares of them in industry (16 percent) and agriculture (8 percent) according to the 2016 Census.

- Women were mainly employed in the following services (out of the 94 percent) according to the 2016 census: restaurants and accommodation (27 percent), wholesale, retail trade and repair (17 percent), public administration (13 percent), education (10 percent), finance (8 percent), health and
social work (7 percent), and transport and communication (5 percent), arts, recreation, other services (4 percent), and information and communication (2 percent).

- In 2016, 54 percent of women were employed as paid employees as opposed to 50 percent of men; 17 percent of women carried out home duties compared to 6 percent of men; a higher share of men (7 percent) were self-employed than women (4 percent).

- A higher share of women was engaged in unpaid domestic work and care including child care, elderly care and housework than men; men were involved in unpaid agricultural work such as gardening, livestock tending and fishing to a greater extent than women in 2016.

- The Cook Islands’ Constitution acknowledges that all people have fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right to equality before the law and freedom from discrimination based on sex.

- The Cook Islands’ National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment and Strategic Plan of Action 2011–2016 prioritizes the following areas: gender-responsive government programmes and policies, equitable participation of women and men in decision-making and governance systems, enabling an environment for the full participation of women in economic development, improving women’s capacity to contribute to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies, improving the capacity of women to address health issues, and elimination of violence against women.

### Distribution of employed population by economic activity (2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Activity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNCTAD calculations using data from Table 4.11 of the Cook Islands 2016 Census.

### Distribution of employed population by work status (2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Status</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family business or own-use production</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home duties</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNCTAD calculations using data from Table 4.01 of the Cook Islands 2016 Census.

Note: The retired category includes those who are too old to work; the other category includes students, volunteer workers and the disabled.

### Share of population (ages 15+) engaged in unpaid work by type of activity (2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking after children</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after elderly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housework</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicraft making</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tending the Livestock</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNCTAD calculations using data from Table 4.13 of the Cook Islands 2016 Census.
Number of women and men in the national parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pacific Women in Politics Cook Islands country profile

The Cook Islands’ gender inputs

**Ratified International Conventions or Commitments**

**Gender in trade policy**
- The Cook Islands Trade Policy Framework - August 2015 introduces trade and gender as part of trade-related issues.9

**Other Gender Programmes and Laws toward gender equality**
- Employment Relations Act 2012
- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012
- National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment and Strategic Plan of Action 2011–201610
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Gender Policy 201811
- Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Plan 2007-2010
- Family Protection and Support Act 2017

Note:

9See the link for the full document: https://policycookislands.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/2015_ci-trade-policy-framework_final.pdf