

MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT

SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS

COOK ISLANDS

Snapshot section

Country Name: Cook Islands

Country Founded in: 1888, claimed by Britain

Population: 11,870 (July 2009 estimate)

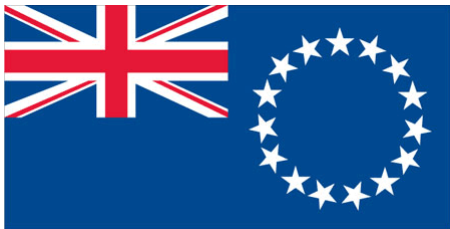
Government Type (national, regional and local): self-governing parliamentary democracy of New Zealand

Geography/location in the world:

Oceania, South Pacific Islands, about midway between Hawaii and New Zealand

Number of people groups: 8

Picture of flag:



Religion Snapshot:

Cook Islands Christian Church	55.9%
Roman Catholic	16.8%
Seventh-Day Adventists	7.9%
Mormon	3.8%
Protestant (other)	5.8%
Other	4.2%
Unspecified	2.6%
None	3%

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/CW.html>

Government Interaction with Religious Activities:

This government is tolerant of all religions.

Country Profile

Basic Facts

Country Name: Cook Islands

Formerly: Harvey Islands

Demographics:

The estimated population of Cook Islands is 11,870 (as of July 2009). Children up to fourteen years of age account for 27.1% of the population. There are 1,704 male children between the ages of newborn to fourteen years of age. There are 1,508 female children between these same ages. Adults between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four years of age account for 63.7% of the population. There are 3,898 males in this age category and 3,664 females. In the last age category, sixty-five years and above, there are 540 males and 556 females. This 65 and over group accounts for 9.2% of the population. The median age for males is 29.8 years, and the median age for females is 31.1 years. The population is decreasing by 3.302% every year.

The birth rate is 16.18 births for every 1,000 people (2009 estimate). There are an estimated 2.49 children born to every woman. The infant mortality rate is 16.9 deaths for every 1,000 live births. The death rate is not available. The life expectancy for the total population is 74.22 years. The life expectancy for males is lower at 71.46 years while the life expectancy for females is higher at 77.13 years.

Language:

English is the official language. Maori, also called Rarotonga, is spoken as well. It is similar to Maori that is spoken in New Zealand and Tahiti.

Society/Culture:

Music and dance are very important in the Cook Island tradition and culture. From early on in life, boys and girls are taught the dance of their island. Many will compete to be the best dancer on their island and then in the country. The drums beat is very rhythmic, so the 'hura' dance is very sensual and fierce. Singing is also a popular past time for islanders. They are known to be very harmonious whether singing church music and hymns or modern, secular music. Music is played at weddings, funerals, church services, and for tourists at hotels, restaurants and concerts.

Women work together to make their own *tivaevae* or quilts. Although this was brought over by the missionary wives from the 19th & 20th century, the island women have truly made it their own with designs including birds, flowers, trees, and animals. They will present these quilts to family and friends and for special occasions.

Weaving is often practiced on the island for both islanders and tourists. Mats, basket ware, and hats are the most common things produced on the islands. The hats are a hot-item on the market, especially for visiting Tahitians.

Children are raised with love and affection and early on are taught Christian values including respecting their elders. The society is divided into family clans. The islanders developed this system many centuries ago and it still thrives today. Each native family on an island can trace their ancestry based on their clans. Marriage is viewed and practiced similarly to western marriages. One can freely choose their spouse and separation/divorce is somewhat common. A couple will move into one set of family sometimes for their whole life or just until they get enough money to support themselves. It is not uncommon for extended families to live together in one house.

Constitution Day has been celebrated the first Monday in August every year since 1965.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Cook-Islands.html>

http://www.pacificislandtravel.com/cook_islands/about_destin/culture.html

For more information about holidays they celebrate, visit:

http://www.pacificislandtravel.com/cook_islands/about_destin/holidays.html

Government:

The capital is *Avarua*. The legal system is based on New Zealand and English common law. Suffrage is for people 18 years of age and older. In 1965, citizens chose to be freely associated with New Zealand while being self-governed. This means they elect their own officials to run the island while enjoying citizenship and military protection from New Zealand.

The Cook Islands are a self-governing state in free association with New Zealand. Queen Elizabeth II presides over Britain; therefore presides over New Zealand and therefore over the Cook Islands. The Queen is considered the chief of state, but Prime Minister Jim Marurrai is considered the head of government. The Prime Minister chooses the cabinet positions in which all positions and people are voted on by the members of Parliament. The Prime Minister is chosen through voting elections; however, the winner is usually the leader of the majority party or the leader of the majority coalition.

The legislative branch consists of two parts: House of Ariki and Legislative Assembly. The House of Ariki, the upper house, is made up of traditional leaders. They advise on traditional matters and are highly influential, but have no legislative voting rights or powers. The Legislative Assembly, the lower house, has 24 seats and members, serving a four-year term, are elected by popular vote.

Economy:

There are four main aspects to the Cook Islands' economy: agriculture, tourism, industry, and remittances from families living mainly in New Zealand. The agriculture sector provides work for a little over one-quarter of the working people. Products include copra, citrus, pineapples, tomatoes, beans, pawpaws, bananas, yams, taro, coffee, pigs, and poultry. Copra and citrus fruit are commonly exported. Tourism accounts for about half of the labor force of the Cook Islands. The small industrial sector, approximately 15% of working islanders, is mainly involved in fruit processing, fishing, clothing, and handicrafts. Many families living on the islands have relatives

who have moved to New Zealand and other countries. They send money back to their families to help support their living needs.

Literacy:

The population of people who can read and write in Cook Islands is approximately 95%. Children attend school for ten years between the ages of five and fifteen. If further education is desired, one can attend the University of the South Pacific which has a campus in Avarua (the capital). Scholarships are provided for students who want to attend school abroad, commonly New Zealand, Australia, or other South Pacific countries.

Land/Geography:

The group of islands are located in Oceania in the South Pacific Ocean about half way between Hawaii and New Zealand at coordinates 21 14 S, 159 46 W. The total land area is 236.7 square kilometers, which is approximately 1.3 times the size of Washington, DC, with 120 kilometers of coastline. There are seven, low coral atolls in the northern Cook Islands which are sparsely populated and eight fertile, volcanic islands in the southern which includes the largest island Rarotonga. The highest point on the island is Te Manga at 652 kilometers.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/CW.html>

History

The islands were originally settled by migrants from islands nearby, currently French Polynesia and Samoa, in the 1400's. Captain James Cook, of whom the islands are named after, sighted them in 1770 and later that decade, landed and surveyed several of them.

The French were taking over many islands in the South Pacific and the people of the Cook Islands feared they were the next to be attacked by the French. They sent letters and requests to the British, from the 1840s to 1888, seeking protection from the French. During that time, *Queen Makea* came to be the head chief over the islands. She led the islands for several years of prosperity, diminishing previous debts. In 1888, she again formerly requested the islands to be set up as a Protectorate under the British and the British accepted.

Pressure mounted from New Zealand and local European residents for New Zealand to take control of the Cook Islands. Queen Makea did not favor this step as she enjoyed the freedom of religion and missionaries that came to the islands while under the British flag. In 1900, the Cook Islands were annexed by New Zealand. The chiefs, *ariki*, signed the deed of cession.

In 1965, citizens chose to be freely associated with New Zealand while being self-governed. This means that they elect their own officials to run the island while enjoying citizenship and military protection from New Zealand.

Christian History

In 1821, missionaries from the London Missionary Society arrived in Cook Islands. John Williams used the help of Tahitian Christians in the Cook Islands. They had many converts, especially from the chiefs and other important people of the communities. They helped eliminate cannibalism, infanticide, and idol worship among the people.

Introducing written script of their language, Maori, reading and writing, and schools were part of the missionaries work. The missionaries did not try to culturally change the islanders. However, many of the islanders died due to contact with European diseases such as small pox and measles.

Christianity is still a large part of the society. Ministers have a lot of respect and responsibility on the Cook Islands, especially in their congregations. Services are still commonly held in the Maori language and singing is a very important part of the service.

http://www.pacificislandtravel.com/cook_islands/about_destin/religion.html

Religion

Non Christian

Roman Catholic

Approximately 15%, or 3,000 adherents to the Roman Catholic faith can be found on Cook Islands. In 1896, the first Roman Catholic Church was dedicated.

Baha'i

Baha'i report 195 members with a growth rate of + 5.2% annually

Jehovah's Witnesses

Less than 1% of the population follow's Jehovah's Witness, approximately 135 adherents. They have three places of worship where they meet.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints – Mormons

Approximately 920 Mormons meet in seven temples in the Cook Islands.

Christian or Evangelical

98% of the population claims to follow Christian practices and beliefs.

Ekalesia Keresitiano ote Kuki Airani

The Christian Church in Cook Islands started when John Williams (from the London Missionary Society) sent a Tahitian missionary in 1821. After that, the Gospel spread through the islands and the Bible was translated. Local Cook Islanders even went to Tacamoa Theological College to study to become missionaries to other island nations.

They have 34 parishes with a total membership of 10,898. It is the largest church denomination in the country.

<http://www.reformiert-online.net/adressen/detail.php?id=12153&lg=eng>
http://www.adherents.com/adhloc/Wh_79.html#196

People Groups

100357

Anglo-New Zealander

There are between 549-800 Anglo-New Zealanders on the Cook Islands. These people are considered mostly Christian adherents (80%) with about 20% of those being evangelical. The other 20% is non-religious. They speak English and have the Bible and many other Christian resources available to them.

102927

British

It is estimated that there are about 50 British people living in the Cook Islands. Most British consider themselves Christian; however it is unknown how many of them on the islands are considered evangelical. They speak English and have the Bible and many other Christian resources available to them.

101712

Bukabukan

It is unknown exactly how many Bukabukan people live in the Cook Islands, but estimates vary from 689-1,100. The Bukabukan people speak Pukapuka and belong to the larger grouping of people called Pacific Islanders. English is a second language for most of them. About 22% of the population is Roman Catholic and the other 78% is Protestant with about 8% identified as evangelical. Neither the Bible, the *Jesus* film, or other materials are available in the Pukapuka language.

102284

Cook Islands Maori, Rarotonga

The Cook Islands Maori people group is the largest group on the islands with between 11,000-13,000 people. Their primary language is Rarotongan. About 67.5% of the population is Protestant Christian with approximately 12% of those being considered evangelical. About 16% of the people follow Roman Catholic traditions and 14.5% follow 'other' religious segments. The whole Bible is available in Rarotongan, but no other resources are available in that language.

102966

Euronesian, Part-Maori

There are between 1,000-2,300 Euronesian (Part-Maori) people living on the Cook Islands. Their

primary language is English. Sixteen percent follow Roman Catholic practices, another 14.5% are following other religious practices, and 4.5% are Independent adherents. 65% are Protestant with about 12% of those considered evangelical. The Bible, the *Jesus* film and many resources are available in English.

107346

Niuean

Of the 150-200 Niueans that live in the Cook Islands, over 5% are considered evangelical Christians. About 5% follow Roman Catholic traditions, 26% follow Orthodox Christianity traditions, and 9% follow Anglican or independent traditions. Sixty percent call themselves Protestant. The primary language is Niue. The Bible has been translated into that language as well as Gospel recordings resources.

107977

Penrhyn, Tongareva

The Penryhn people only live in the Cook Islands numbering between 400-500 total. They belong under the umbrella of 'Pacific Islanders.' Their primary language is Penrhyn. There may be portions of the Bible translated. Approximately 8% of the population is considered evangelical. The other 91% claim to follow Christian traditions, but out of the total population somewhere between 5-16% claim to follow Roman Catholic traditions.

108282

Rakahanga-Manihiki

There are approximately 2,100-2,500 Rakahanga-Manihiki people in the Cook Islands. This is also the name of their language. Neither the Bible nor any other resources are available in that language. Out of the population, approximately 8% are considered evangelical Christian.

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should praise God for the progress that Christianity has made in these islands. Evangelicals should, however, realize the danger of nominalism in these churches.
2. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek ways to reach people from the Cook Islands who have moved to New Zealand and Australia.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should be mindful of the many smaller islands in the region that have no evangelical witness. Local Christians and churches should be aided in plans for witnessing and church planting in the remote spots.
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should aid the local believers to resist the growing move toward secularism and other global evils.

5. Evangelical Christians and churches should be concerned and pass this concern on to local believers that the Baha'i and non-religious groups, though small, are increasing at around 5.2% per year while Christianity shows no more than 0.6% increase.

Links

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

<http://www.peoplegroups.org/MapSearch.aspx?country=Cook+Islands>

<http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Cook-Islands.html>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cw.html>