

# COOK ISLANDS

## EMPLOYMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY FACT SHEETS 2019

The *Employment and Environmental Sustainability Fact Sheets* series provides key features of employment and environmental sustainability performance. Jobs that are green and decent are central to sustainable development and resource productivity. They respond to the global challenges of environmental protection, economic development and social inclusion. Such jobs create decent employment opportunities, enhance resource efficiency and build low-carbon, sustainable societies. The fact sheets include the most recently available data for selected indicators on employment and environmental sustainability: (i) employment in environmental sectors; (ii) skill levels; (iii) vulnerability of jobs; (iv) jobs in renewable energy; (v) scoring on the Environmental Performance Index; and (vi) air quality.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

The Cook Islands<sup>1</sup> encompasses 15 small low-lying islands in the southern Pacific Ocean (Fig. 1). It is a self-governing parliamentary democracy in free association with New Zealand. Its population is mostly urban and growing, with a fertility rate of 2.19 children and life expectancy of 76 years. Around 67 per cent of the population is of legal working age (15–64 years) (Fig. 2).

Figure 1. Map of the Cook Islands

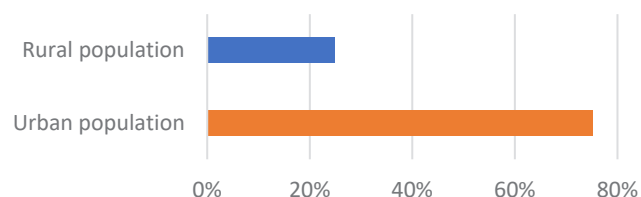


Figure 2. Cook Islands population statistics

Population:<sup>2</sup> 0.2 million



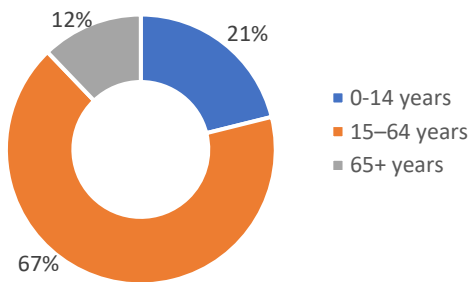
Population growth rate	Fertility rate	Life expectancy at birth
1.1%	2.19 children	76 years



<sup>1</sup> The Cook Islands became a member of the International Labour Organization in 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Population data based on 2017 data.

### Population age categories



Note: Data is for 2017, except: population growth rate - 2015 data; and fertility rate and life expectancy - 2018 data.

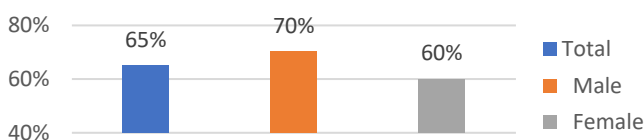
Source: ILO compilation using World development indicators, last updated: 28/06/2018; <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators#> and UN ESCAP Statistics. [http://data.unescap.org/escap\\_stat/](http://data.unescap.org/escap_stat/) (accessed on 23 November 2018).

### LABOUR FORCE

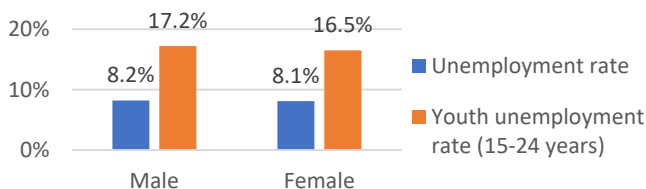
In 2011, the labour force participation rate was 71 per cent and the employment-to-population ratio was 65.2 per cent. Both these rates are more than 10 percentage points higher for men than for women. The total unemployment rate was 8.2 per cent, and the youth unemployment rate in 2011 was 16.9 per cent, with gender parity. Employment is heavily reliant on services but there is no data available on employment by occupation (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Basic employment statistics for the Cook Islands, 2018

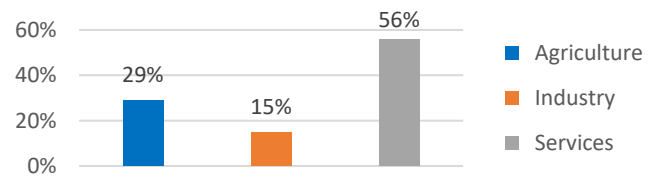
### Employment -to-population, 2011 (15+ years)



### Unemployment, 2011



### Employment by sector, 1995 (15+ years)



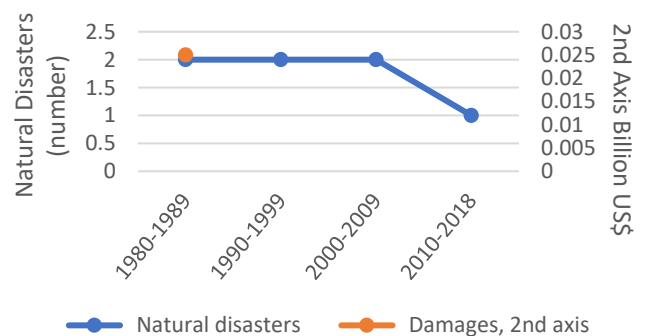
Note: Labour force participation rate and unemployment: aged 15 years and older. Youth unemployment: aged 15-24 years.

Source: Data from CIA, 1995 (Employment by sector). UNFPA Economic Activity and Labour Force Report, Cook Islands Government, February 2015. [www.mfem.gov.ck](http://www.mfem.gov.ck) (Unemployment rate).

### CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

According to the *Emergency Events Database*,<sup>3</sup> there was a decrease in natural disasters<sup>4</sup> between the 1980s and 2018 (Fig. 4). The natural disasters in that time were mostly tropical cyclones, storms and droughts. Developing preventative measures to limit infrastructure and property damage and increase institutional capacity to respond to climate events, particularly for small businesses, can be a source of decent job creation while building resilience.

Figure 4. Natural disaster occurrence and damage costs in the Cook Islands



Note: Natural events include climatological, hydrological and meteorological disasters.

Note: Damage costs data is available for 1980 to 1989 only.

Source: EM-DAT: The emergency events database - Universite catholique de Louvain (UCL) - CRED, D. Guha-Sapir - [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be), Brussels, Belgium. Data accessed on: 23 November 2018.

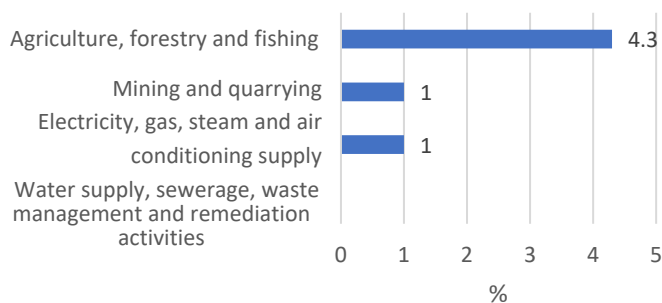
### GREEN JOBS POTENTIAL

In 2011, 4.3 per cent of total employment was in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector (Fig. 5). Although reliance on agriculture is not significant, there are opportunities for job creation in sustainable production and organic farming.

<sup>3</sup> EM-DAT: The emergency events database - Universite catholique de Louvain (UCL) - CRED, D. Guha-Sapir - [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be), Brussels, Belgium. Data accessed on: 20 July 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Climatological, hydrological and meteorological disasters.

**Figure 5. Employment in sectors with strong green jobs potential in 2011**

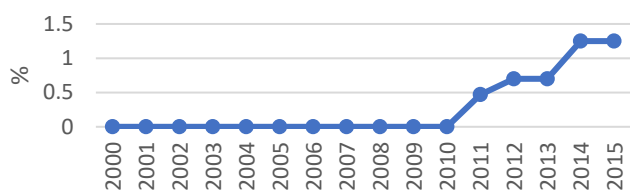


Note: These sectors have the most potential for green job opportunities. Employment by selected 1-digit sector level (ISIC - Rev. 4, 2008).

Source: ILO estimates and compilation using ILOSTAT, [www.ilo.org/ilostat](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat) (accessed 29 October 2018).

In 2016, 84 per cent of the population relied primarily on clean fuel and technology, in the sense that these do not create pollution within the home.<sup>5</sup> The share of renewable energy in total energy consumption has not kept pace with overall consumption. In 2000, it was 0 per cent and remained 0 per cent in 2010 and, after some fluctuation, reached 1.25 per cent in 2015 (Fig. 6). However, renewable energy electricity generation has increased over the last 16 years, with solar energy being the main renewable energy source in 2016 (Fig. 7). The country's employment rate in electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning was only 1.0 per cent in 2011 (Fig. 5). With the push for increasing reliance on renewable energy, there is the potential for decent job opportunities in the future.

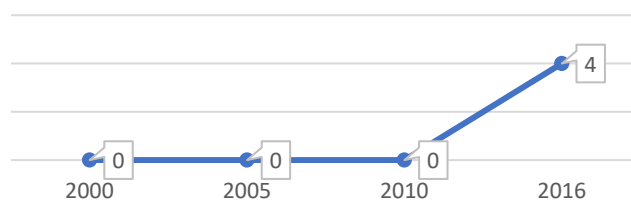
**Figure 6. Renewable energy share in total energy consumption, 2000-15**



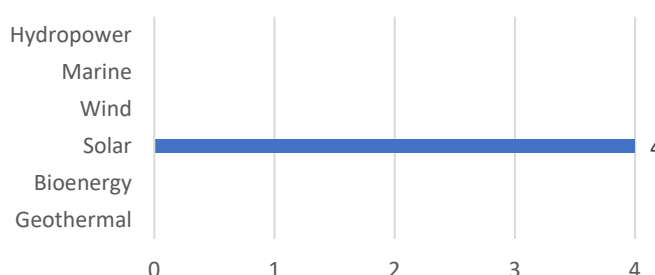
Source: ILO compilation using United Nations statistics division. SDG indicators: Global database. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (accessed on 23 November 2018).

**Figure 7. Renewable energy electricity generation, 2000-2016**

**Total renewable energy electricity generation (gigawatt hours - GWh)**



**Renewable energy electricity generation (GWh) in 2016, by technology**



Source: ILO compilation using source: IRENA (2018); Renewable electricity capacity and generation statistics, June 2018. Available at: <http://resourceirena.irena.org>.

Better data collection relating to the green economy and the environmental sector would be very valuable for policy-makers in Asia-Pacific countries. In particular, better data on green and decent jobs is needed to assess the impact of climate change and climate-related policies on social inclusion. Without better data it will be difficult to determine what policy changes are needed to ensure a just transition to environmental sustainability and to monitor progress going forward.

<sup>5</sup> The proportion of the population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology is calculated as the number of people using clean fuels and technologies for cooking, heating and lighting divided by the total population reporting any cooking, heating or lighting, expressed as a percentage. "Clean" is defined by the emission rate targets and specific fuel recommendations (against unprocessed coal and kerosene) included in the normative World Health Organization guidelines for indoor air quality; see the data for household fuel combustion, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-07-01-02.pdf>.



Disclaimer: These factsheets are collated on a bi-annual basis and use the most up-to-date available data that meets ILO data collection standards. The designations used in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the International Labour Office concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.