

2 Population

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2.1 Growth

The historic trajectory of population on Rapa Nui is characterised by growth and extreme decline and, more recently, renewed growth. Oral traditions suggest that the island was initially settled by a single extended family. Pre-historic population estimations are a matter of heated debate and range between 4,000 and 12,000 inhabitants. Depending on the estimation considered, the island experienced a sudden decline before or after European contact. By 1877, prior to Chilean annexation, forced migration, voluntary migration and epidemics had reduced the population on the Island to around 110 people [1].

In 1934, 456 inhabitants were recorded in a census conducted by a French-Belgian mission [2]. Chilean national census first extended to Rapa Nui in 1952 when 809 inhabitants were recorded. Throughout the 20th century, the population grew steadily at an average rate of 2.9% per annum, as illustrated in Figure 2.1. Since 2002, however, the permanent population on the Island has been growing by around 3.7% per annum. The most recent census in 2017 recorded 7,750 inhabitants, including 7,096 permanent residents [3].

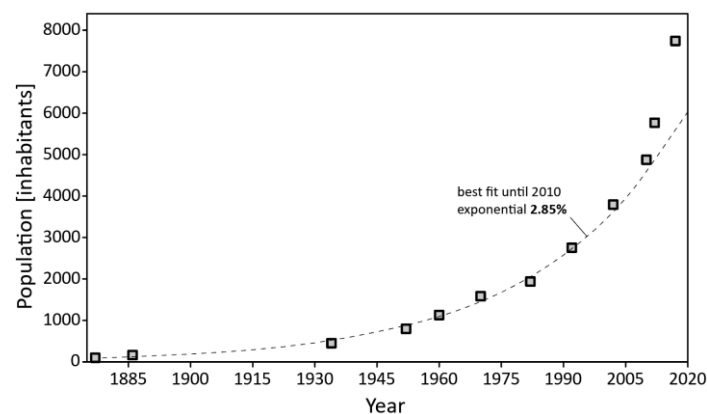


Figure 2.1 Population growth (based on reference data)

In addition to natural growth in the indigenous population, migration inflows have had a significant impact on population growth up to 2017. The 2017 census records that 46% of the 7,096 permanent residents were born on Rapa Nui. 24% of recorded residents had lived on the Island for more than five years, thus the remaining 30% of the resident population settled on the Island in the five years from 2011 [3]. Of these recent migrants, 95% are recorded in the census as having migrated from mainland Chile.

In recognition of the significant impact of migration on demographic composition and environmental sustainability, a law enacted in January 2018 restricts migration to Rapa Nui and regulates transit to and from the Island. The law places a 30-day limit on stays on the Island by individuals not belonging to the indigenous community, with exceptions for work-related visits. There is no provision for foreigners or continental Chileans to acquire permanent residence. The new law also defines protocols

to determine (and regularly update) the demographic carrying capacity of the Island, taking into account “latency” and “saturation” periods [4], when additional more stringent restrictions could be implemented. The new law requires the Ministry of Interior and Public Safety to define 4-year demographic load management plans and creates a Demographic Load Management Council comprised primarily of officials from the Rapanui people. Notwithstanding provisions enabling longer stays for workers, migration restrictions imposed by the new law are expected to impact seasonal tourism employment, with potential implications for the expansion of tourism and economic growth generally.

Based on the expected effect of the new migration law, the new proposal for the territorial structuring of the Island and Hanga-Roa in particular, considers two growth scenarios. The base scenario assumes that growth rate decreases compared to the previous years, settling at around 2.6% by 2040. The optimistic scenario assumes that growth rate remains at 3.1%. In the base scenario, population in 2040 is expected to reach around 11,300 inhabitants, whereas in the optimistic scenario it is expected to reach over 12,100 inhabitants [5].

2.2 Demographic composition

Beyond total population, demographic impacts of immigration to Rapa Nui are apparent in disaggregated census data. Figure 2.2 compares the demographic composition of permanent residents of Rapa Nui by sex and age with the composition of the broader national population. The figure illustrates a greater proportion of the Rapa Nui population in the 25-29 and 30-34 age brackets – particularly women – in comparison to the total Chilean population. The figure also suggests significantly lower proportions of the Rapa Nui population below 24 and above 44 years of age. The 2017 census summary data reinforces the suggestion of a relatively large proportion of working-age population, with 62.4% of the population of Rapa Nui within the range (15-64) compared to 54.1% for Chile as a whole. Results from the previous census (2002: 48.2% working-age [6]) indicate this difference in age composition may be attributable to the greater mobility, and hence more prevalent migration to the Island, of younger working age Chileans in the last 15 years.

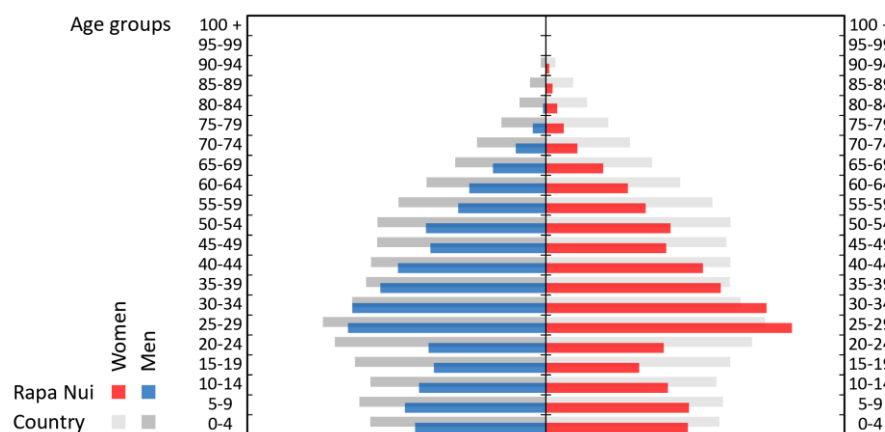


Figure 2.2 Demographic composition by sex and age – Rapa Nui (colour foreground) and Chile as a whole (grey background), data from [3].

Demographic differences between the Rapa Nui and broader Chilean population are also apparent in education and employment data. Secondary school completion rates are similar for Rapa Nui (76%) and Chile (75%). However, 39% of the Rapa Nui population have completed tertiary education, compared to 23% of the Chilean national population. In the 2017 census, 81% of the Rapa Nui working-age population declared to work, compared to 58% for Chile generally. The remaining 18% of the Rapa Nui working-age population stated that they study, compared to 20% studying in Chile generally. The average number of years of schooling for the population 15 years old or above is 12.5 years for Rapa Nui, compared to 11.1 years for Chile generally.

Demographics related to household compositions are also included within the 2017 census. Single person comprises 25% of households in Rapa Nui (compared to 18% for Chile as a whole); 46% are nuclear family households (compared to 54% for Chile as a whole), and 29% are extended households, including both extended family and extended non-family households (compared to 28% for Chile as a whole).

Results from the ethnicity self-identification questionnaire in the 2017 census show 47.0% of the population declares belonging to the Rapanui ethnic group, 6.3% declares belonging to various continental indigenous ethnics and 46.7% declares belonging to no indigenous group [6].

Due to the inexistence of urban sanitation in Hanga Roa, as of June 2017 almost 60% of the population on the Island was classified as “people without access to basic services” (compared to 14.4% for Chile as a whole) [6]. Crowded households, defined as those where there are more than 2.5 people per bedroom, comprise 15.8% of households in Rapa Nui (compared to 16.2% for Chile as a whole) [6]. Results from the 2013 CASEN socio-economic survey (*Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional*) carried out by the Ministry of Social Development, show 13.3% of population in poverty condition by income (compared to 14.4% for Chile as a whole) [7]. The same index was 23.3% in 2011 and over 44% in 2003 when considering only households of Rapanui ethnicity [8]. Among the population inscribed in the public health system in 2017 (4,304 people or approx. 61% of the resident population), 25.4% was without income (categorized as indigents), 30.6% was with a gross income below USD 4,500 a year, 14.6% was in the range USD 4,500 and USD 6,300 a year, and 29.4% was above USD 6,300 a year [6].

2.3 References

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