



Office of the Council for the  
Ongoing Government of Tokelau  
*Tokelau National Statistics Office*



# Atafu atoll profile: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings





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The Office of the Council for the Ongoing Government of Tokelau thanks Statistics NZ for their assistance with the 2016 Tokelau Census and publication of associated reports.

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## Information about the data

### Comparing information between censuses

The Tokelau population has a unique composition. A significant proportion of the population temporarily leaves the islands (eg for healthcare, education). In 2016, core demographic information for people who usually live in Tokelau but were away on census night was provided on their behalf by the head of the household. More detailed information was provided by each individual present on Tokelau on census day.

It should be noted that comparison of absentee numbers over the two censuses should be used cautiously when being used for analysis as the number of people absent from Tokelau at any one time can fluctuate substantially. Appropriate population measures were developed for the 2006 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings to ensure all usual residents were counted – including those who were not present in Tokelau on census night. This methodology was repeated for 2016.

Users of Tokelau census data can be confident about comparing census data between the 2006, 2011, and 2016 Censuses. However, final population and dwelling count comparisons are not recommended before 2006. Inconsistencies in collection methodology and population count calculations mean data from censuses earlier than 2006 is not directly comparable with 2016 Census data.

### Rounding procedures

Percentages are rounded to one decimal place.

### Confidentiality

Statistics NZ and the Tokelau National Statistics Office have used confidentiality rules to process the data in this profile. This means that no individuals can be identified from the data.

For more information on confidentiality, please contact the Tokelau National Statistics Office.

### Multiple response variables

Some variables in the 2016 Tokelau Census allowed respondents to indicate more than one response to a question (eg ethnicity, and where people have lived overseas). For these variables, counts and percentages will not add up to the totals reported in tables.

### Source

Statistics NZ and the Tokelau National Statistics Office were the source of the information in this profile. All data is from the 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings.

### More detail

For more information about the population counts, see [appendix](#).

## Contents

<b>List of figures and tables .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2 Atafu population.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3 Absentees .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Same number of male and female absentees .....	11
Most residents away for schooling and education purposes .....	11
<b>4 Migration .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Most Atafu residents were born there .....	14
Most residents lived on Atafu five years ago .....	14
Almost three-quarters had lived overseas before .....	15
<b>5 Social profile.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Decreasing proportion of Atafu residents that can speak English.....	16
Most residents can speak only one language .....	16
Tokelauan spoken most often .....	17
Most residents are full- or part-Tokelauan.....	17
Marital rate nears sixty percent.....	17
Over half of Atafu’s residents smoke regularly .....	17
<b>6 Quality of life .....</b>	<b>19</b>
Three-quarters of Atafu rated their life satisfaction as eight or higher out of ten .....	19
Most residents considered their health to be ‘good’ .....	19
<b>7 Education.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Most 3- to 5-year-olds are in early childhood education .....	21
Most adults had reached year 10 or higher .....	21
Most common highest qualification is a school qualification .....	21
<b>8 Labour force .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Just over half of the Atafu adult population are in paid employment.....	23
Most people employed as labourers, agriculture and fisheries workers.....	23
Over 90 percent of residents do unpaid work.....	24
<b>9 Housing.....</b>	<b>26</b>
Most houses had three occupants on census night.....	26
Most households had ‘just enough money’ .....	27

Few households on Atafu had outdoor shower and toilet facilities .....	27
Almost all households own freezers and washing machines .....	27
Increase in number of households with internet access .....	28
<b>Further information.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Appendix: Population count definitions .....</b>	<b>31</b>
De jure usually resident population .....	31
Usually resident population present in Tokelau on census night .....	31

# List of figures and tables

## List of tables

1 The most common reasons for absence from Atafu .....	12
2 The most common reasons for absence from Tokelau.....	12
3 Most common languages Atafu residents can have an everyday conversation in	16
4 Number of languages spoken by Atafu residents .....	16
5 Most common languages spoken most often .....	17
6 Most common ethnic group combinations on Atafu .....	17
7 Self-assessed health ratings for Atafu and Tokelau residents .....	20
8 Most common types of unpaid work on Atafu.....	25
9 Comparison of income adequacy between Atafu and whole of Tokelau.....	27

## List of figures

1 Atafu and Tokelau de jure usually resident population .....	9
2 Atafu age and sex distribution .....	10
3 Tokelau age and sex distribution .....	10
4 Atafu usually resident absentee population, by age and sex .....	11
5 Reason for absence from Atafu and Tokelau on census night .....	13
6 Place of birth for Atafu and Tokelau residents.....	14
7 Where Atafu and Tokelau residents lived five years ago.....	15
8 Life satisfaction for Atafu and Tokelau residents .....	19
9 Highest qualification for Atafu and Tokelau residents.....	22
10 Occupation groups for Atafu residents .....	24
11 Types of unpaid work done by Atafu residents, by sex.....	25
12 Number of occupants per dwelling for Atafu and Tokelau .....	26
13 Items owned by Atafu and Tokelau households .....	28
14 Type of internet access for Atafu and Tokelau .....	29

# 1. Introduction

Atafu is one of the three atolls in Tokelau. *Atafu atoll profile* is one of a series prepared by the Tokelau National Statistics Office and Statistics NZ for each of the atolls of Tokelau. This profile is based on the 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings held on 18 October 2016.

The atoll profiles provide basic comparisons between an atoll and Tokelau as a whole but do not compare the atolls with one another.

If you would like to know more about a topic found in the profile, please refer to one of the more detailed census reports available from the [Tokelau National Statistics Office](#).

Information on the other Tokelau census reports is at the end of this profile under [Further information](#).

## 2. Atafu population

On 18 October 2016, Atafu had a population of 541 people. This was a 9.5 percent increase from 2011 when Atafu had a population of 494 people.

Atafu was the most populated atoll on census day, home to 36.1 percent of Tokelau's population.

Atafu's population, shown in figure 1, was made up of:

- 413 usual residents who were in Tokelau on census night
- 106 usual residents who were away from Tokelau on census night
- 22 Tokelau Public Service (TPS) employees and their immediate families who are currently based in Apia, Samoa, but whose home atoll is Atafu.

Within Atafu, 20.4 percent of the usual population were absent from Tokelau on census night. This is slightly higher than the total proportion absent across Tokelau (17.5 percent). These percentages do not include TPS employees and their immediate families based in Apia.

### **De jure usually resident population**

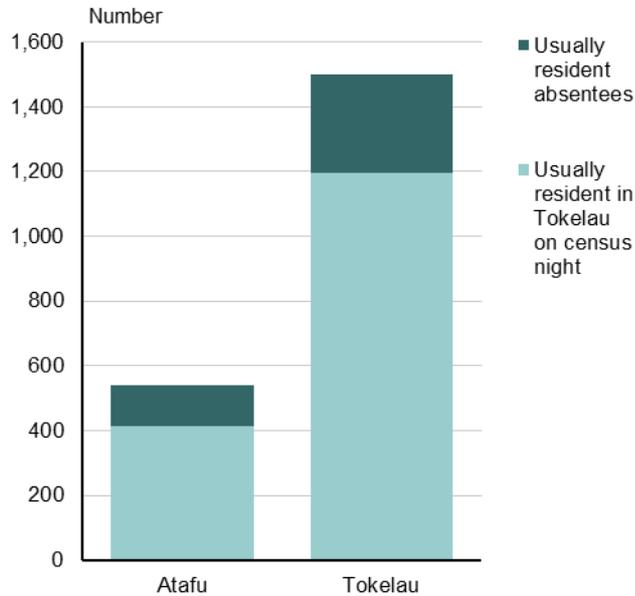
Tokelau's de jure population includes people who usually live in Tokelau but were absent on census night. See the appendix for a detailed definition.

The de jure population for Tokelau in 2016 was 1,499. This includes the usually resident population present in Tokelau on census night (1,197 people) and the usually resident absentee sub-population (302 people).

This sub-population of absentees includes those who qualify as usual residents under specific immigration criteria. Tokelau's sub-population of absentees is made up of 48 TPS employees and their immediate families counted in Apia, Samoa, and 254 other international absentees.

**Figure 1**

**Atafu and Tokelau de jure usually resident population  
2016 Tokelau Census**



Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

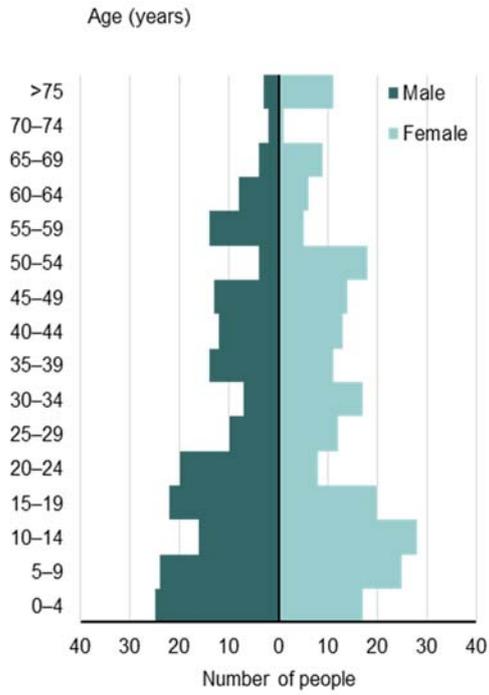
**Age and sex distribution**

Figure 2 shows the age and sex characteristics of Atafu’s population. The figure shows the following details.

- Atafu has a very youthful population – 32.7 percent of its population were under 15 years of age and 55.0 percent were under 30 years.
- A low proportion of residents on Atafu were 60 years and older (10.7 percent), with only 4.1 percent of this group aged 70 and older. This is clear from the narrowing in the population pyramid (see figure 2).
- There were differences between the number of males and females in each age group. The biggest difference was in the 50–54 age group where there were 14 fewer males than females. Overall there were more females than males.

Figure 2

**Atafu age and sex distribution<sup>(1)</sup>**  
2016 Tokelau Census

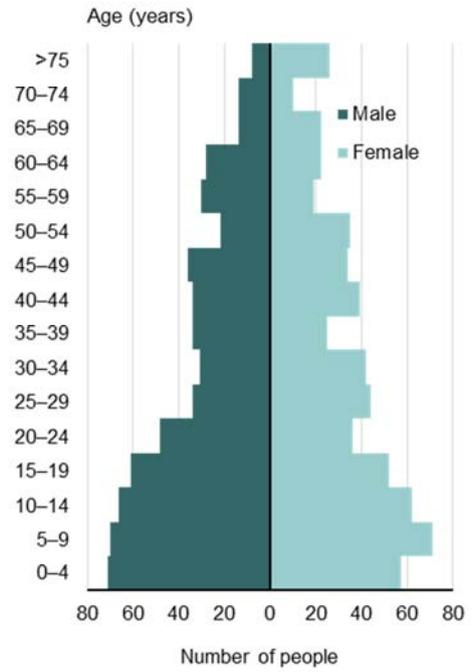


1. For usually resident population present in Atafu on census night.

Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

Figure 3

**Tokelau age and sex distribution<sup>(1)</sup>**  
2016 Tokelau Census



1. For usually resident population present in Tokelau on census night (excludes Samoa).

Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

### 3. Absentees

#### Same number of male and female absentees

Atafu had a total of 106 usual residents absent from Tokelau on census night (this excludes TPS employees and their immediate families in Samoa). This was a 9.3 percent increase from the 2011 Census (97 absentees).

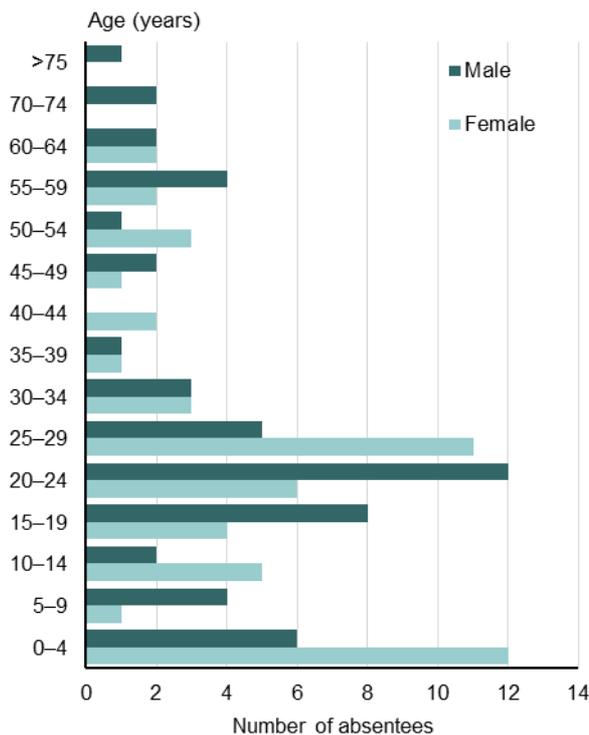
Of Atafu's absentees, 76 (71.7 percent) were under 30 years. The 0–4 and 20–24 age groups both had 18 absentees, the most for any age group.

Only seven absentees were aged 60 years and older.

There was the same number (53) of male and female absentees.

**Figure 4**

**Atafu usually resident absentee population<sup>(1)</sup>**  
By age and sex  
2016 Tokelau Census



1. Usual residents absent from Atafu on census night.

Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

#### Most residents away for schooling and education purposes

The most common reason for absence on census night was schooling and education. This is consistent with the whole of Tokelau. However, the second most common reason for absence differed as shown in tables 1 and 2 below.

**Table 1****The most common reasons for absence from Atafu**

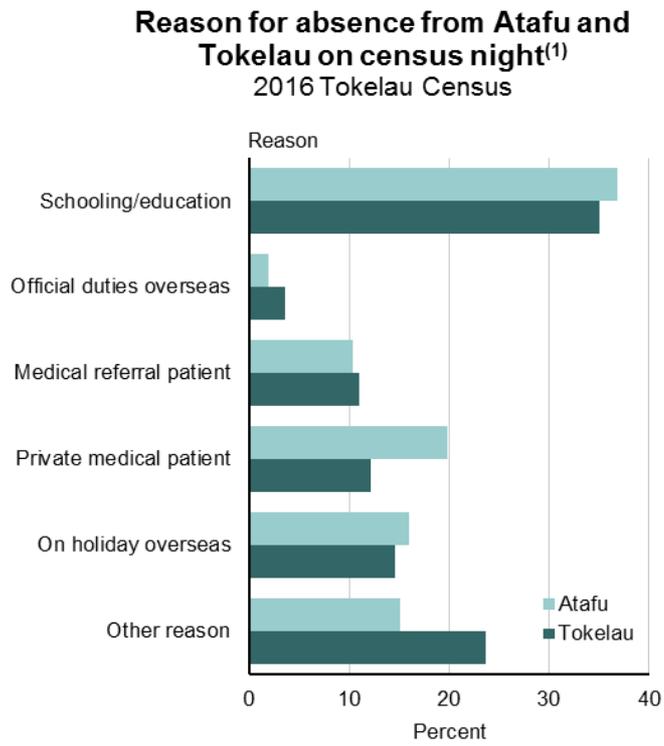
<b>Reason for absence</b>	<b>Percent of Atafu's population</b>
Schooling and education	36.8
Private medical patient	19.8

**Table 2****The most common reasons for absence from Tokelau**

<b>Reason for absence</b>	<b>Percent of Tokelau's population</b>
Schooling and education	35.0
On holiday overseas	14.6

Sixteen people had other reasons for their absence on census night. The most common 'other' reason was attending family duties overseas. Two residents were in New Zealand attending the Tokelau language week, and two babies had recently been born overseas.

Figure 5



1. Usually resident population absent from Tokelau on census night.

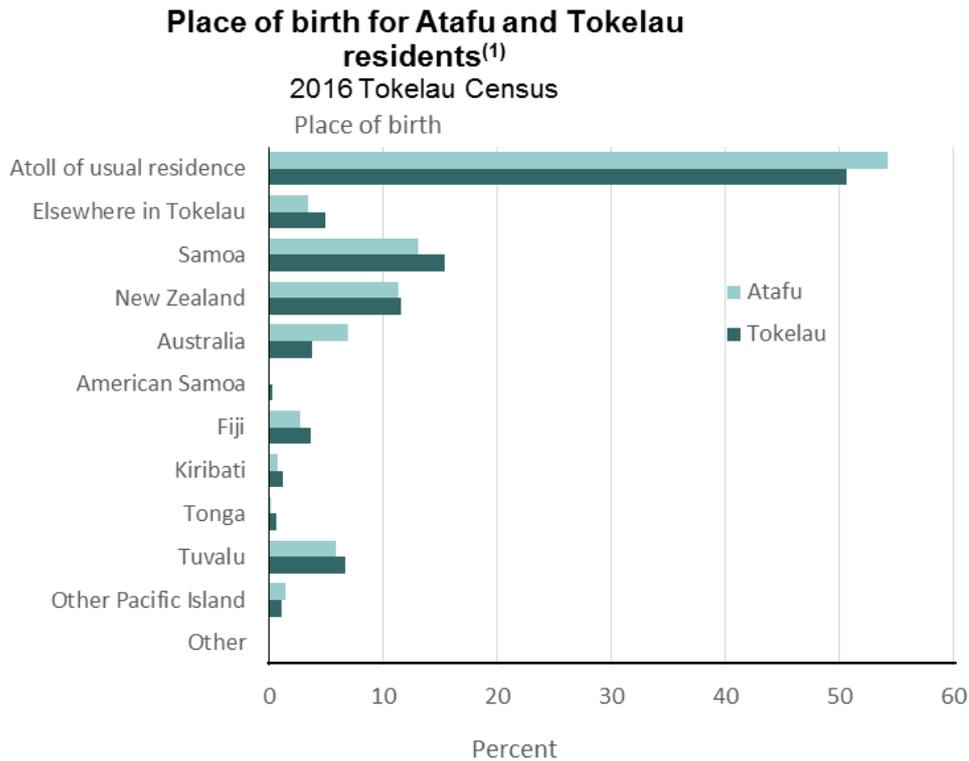
Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

## 4. Migration

### Most Atafu residents were born there

Of Atafu's usual residents, 54.2 percent were born there. The other most common birth places were Samoa (13.1 percent), New Zealand (11.3 percent), and Australia (6.9 percent).

**Figure 6**



1. For usually resident population present in Tokelau on census night.

Note: Percentages that are less than 1 percent do not show on the graph.

Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings.

### Most residents lived on Atafu five years ago

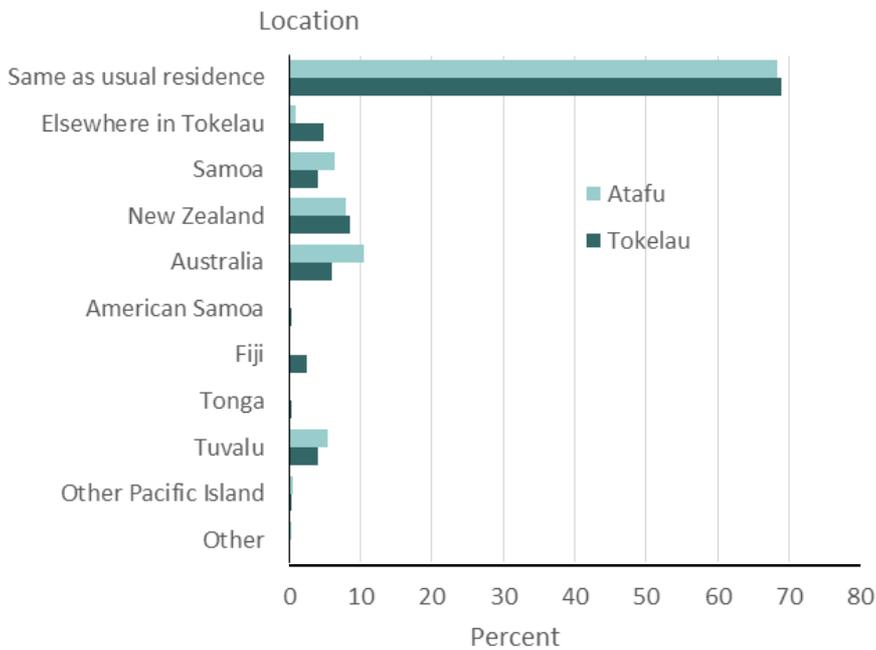
At the time of the 2011 Census, 68.3 percent of Atafu residents were on Atafu. 10.4 percent were in Australia, 7.9 percent in New Zealand, and 6.5 percent in Samoa.

Atafu had a higher proportion of residents in Australia five years ago compared to the whole of Tokelau (6.0 percent).

**Figure 7**

**Where Atafu and Tokelau residents<sup>(1)</sup> lived five years ago**

2016 Tokelau Census



1. For usually resident population present in Tokelau on census night.

Note: Percentages that are less than 1 percent do not show on the graph.

Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings.

**Almost three-quarters had lived overseas before**

Most of Atafu’s residents five years or older (72.5 percent) had lived overseas for at least six months. This is more than 10 percent higher than the proportion of Tokelau residents who had lived overseas before (59.2 percent) – an indication that Atafu’s population is highly mobile.

The main difference between Atafu and the whole of Tokelau was the proportion of residents who had previously lived in Australia. Almost twice the proportion of residents from Atafu had lived in Australia (37.4 percent) compared with the whole of Tokelau (18.9 percent).

Other common places Atafu residents had lived in were New Zealand (35.7 percent) and Samoa (21.9 percent).

## 5. Social profile

### Decreasing proportion of Atafu residents that can speak English

Most residents on Atafu can speak Tokelauan, with 88.7 percent able to have an everyday conversation in Tokelauan.

44.6 percent of residents who stated they were able to speak English. This is almost a 20 percent decrease from 2011 when 60.8 percent of its residents said they could speak English.

The most common languages people said they could have an everyday conversation in are shown in the table below.

**Table 3**

#### Most common languages residents can have an everyday conversation in

Language spoken	Number of people	Percent of Atafu's population
Tokelauan	360	88.7
English	181	44.6
Samoan	99	24.4
Tuvaluan	41	10.1

On census night in 2016, 11 people on Atafu were too young to speak.

### Most residents can speak only one language

On Atafu, most residents stated they could only have a conversation in one language (52.5 percent). This is higher than the overall percentage for Tokelau which was 47.7 percent.

The greatest number of languages spoken by any Atafu resident was five.

**Table 4**

#### Number of languages spoken by Atafu residents

Number of languages spoken	Number of people	Percent of Atafu's population
1	213	52.5
2	114	28.1
3 or more	79	19.5

## Tokelauan spoken most often

People were also asked what language they speak most often. Most Atafu residents stated they spoke Tokelauan most often (81.3 percent).

A slightly higher proportion of people on Atafu spoke Tuvaluan most often (6.4 percent) compared with the proportion of the total Tokelau population (4.8 percent).

**Table 5**

### Most common languages spoken most often

Language spoken	Number of people	Percent of Atafu's population
Tokelauan	330	81.3
English	34	8.4
Tuvaluan	26	6.4

## Most residents are full- or part-Tokelauan

On census night, most Atafu residents reported their ethnicity as being full- or part-Tokelauan. There were 15.8 percent who identified as part-Tokelauan. The proportion of people from each ethnic group on Atafu was similar to that for the whole of Tokelau.

**Table 6**

### Most common ethnic group combinations on Atafu

Ethnic group combination	Percent of Atafu's population
Tokelauan	71.4
Part Tokelauan/Samoan	7.6
Tuvaluan	6.7

## Marital rate nears sixty percent

Of the Atafu population who were 15 years and older, 58.9 percent of them were married. This is similar to the percentage for the whole of Tokelau, which was 58.2 percent.

The proportion of Atafu residents who had never been married was 33.5 percent.

## Over half of Atafu's residents smoke regularly

Of Atafu's population 15 years or older, 52.5 percent stated they smoked cigarettes on a regular basis. This is consistent with the proportion of Tokelau's population that smoked regularly, which was 51.3 percent.

Of Atafu residents who did not smoke regularly, 60.0 percent reported they had previously been a regular smoker. The percentage of previous smokers for Atafu was much higher than the percentage for the whole of Tokelau, which was only 33.3 percent.

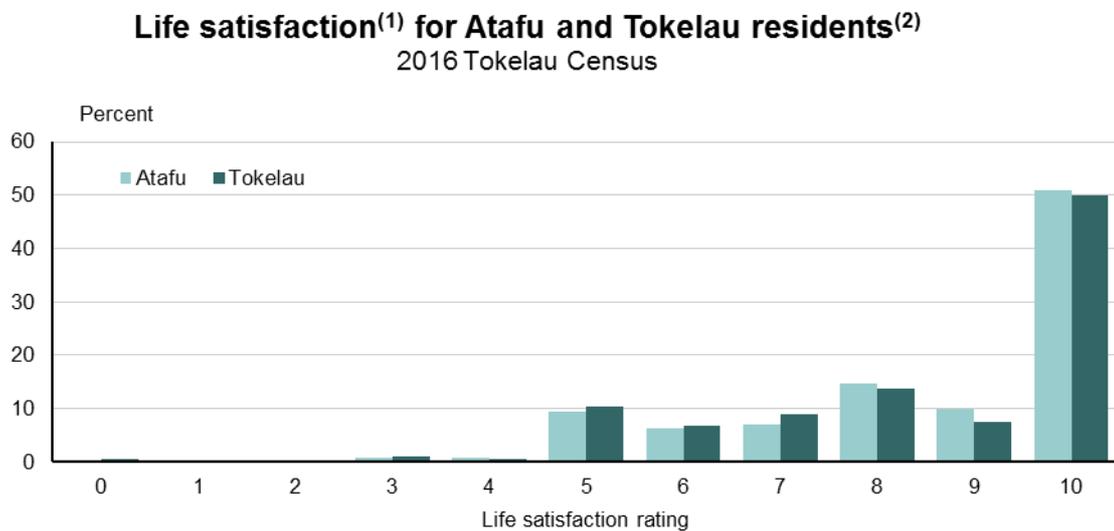
## 6. Quality of life

### Three-quarters of Atafu rated their life satisfaction as eight or higher out of ten

Adults 15 years and over were asked to rate their level of life satisfaction on a scale of 0–10, with 0 being completely dissatisfied with their life and 10 being completely satisfied with their life. On Atafu, 75.5 percent of residents reported their life satisfaction as 8 or higher, which was greater than the percentage for all of Tokelau (71.3 percent). Only 1.8 percent of residents reported their life satisfaction as being 4 or lower.

The most common response for Atafu was 10. See figure 8 for the breakdown of people's life satisfaction ratings.

**Figure 8**



1. The rating scale goes from 0-10, where 0 is 'completely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'

2. For usually resident population present in Tokelau on census night.

Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

### Most residents considered their health to be 'good'

Adults 15 years or older were asked to rate their own health on a five-point scale from poor to excellent. Table 7 shows the proportion of responses for each category.

**Table 7****Self-assessed health ratings for Atafu and Tokelau residents**

<b>Self-assessed health</b>	<b>Percent of Atafu's population</b>	<b>Percent of Tokelau's population</b>
Poor	2.9	1.6
Fair	20.5	20.3
Good	41.0	41.3
Very good	19.0	20.4
Excellent	16.5	16.5

## 7. Education

### Most 3- to 5-year-olds are in early childhood education

For the first time, some information on early childhood education was collected in the census. Of those Atafu residents who were aged between three and five years old, 71.0 percent were attending early childhood education at the time of the census.

### Most adults had reached year 10 or higher

Adults aged 15 years and over were asked what year level they reached at secondary school. The most common response was years 10–11, with 44.9 percent of Atafu residents stating this was the highest level of education they reached.

The second most common response was year 12–foundation (43.8 percent). Year 12–foundation are the highest year levels that could be reached at school. The rate of educational achievement is similar to the proportion for Tokelau as a whole where 42.2 percent of residents reached year 12–foundation.

On Atafu, only 3.9 percent of residents had the highest level of education of year 6 or below.

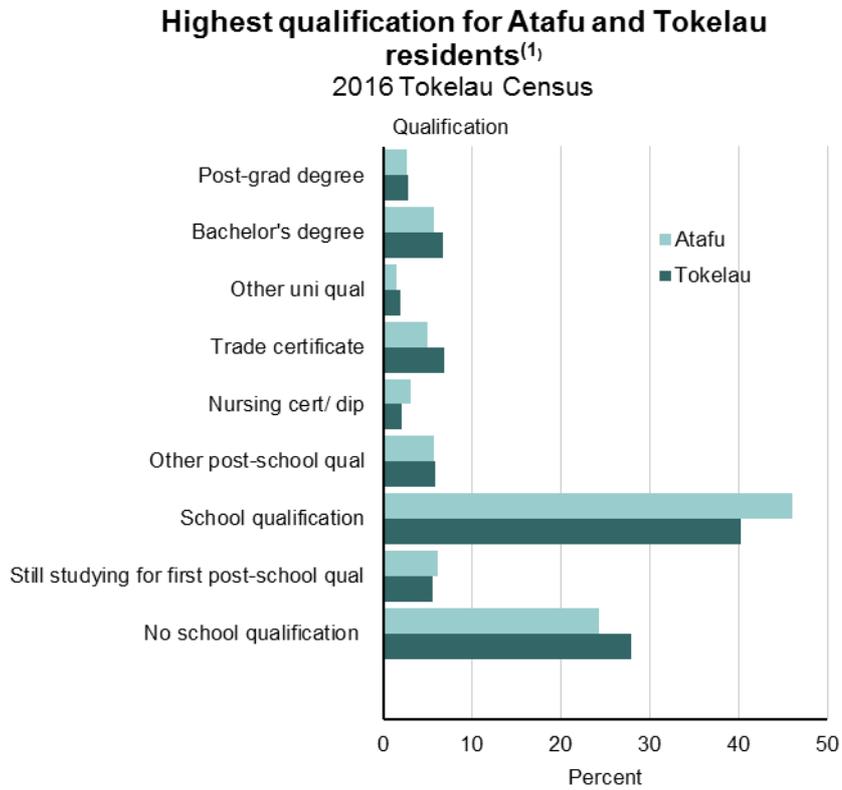
### Most common highest qualification is a school qualification

When looking at people's highest qualifications, 46.0 percent of Atafu adult residents stated theirs was a school qualification. There were 9.9 percent of residents who had attained a university qualification (bachelor's degree, post-graduate degree, or other university qualification), while 6.1 percent of residents were still studying towards their first post-school qualification.

More than one-fifth of the Atafu adult population had no school qualification (22.1 percent), which was slightly lower than the percentage for the whole of Tokelau (25.2 percent).

It is important to note that several people were absent from Atafu to gain further education. This is evident from schooling and education being the most common reason for people's absence on census night.

**Figure 9**



1. For usually resident population present in Tokelau on census night.

Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

## 8. Labour force

### Just over half of the Atafu adult population are in paid employment

On census night, 52.1 percent of the Atafu adult residents, 15 years and older, were in paid employment. This is lower than in all of Tokelau (59.8 percent).

The proportion of those in paid employment in Tokelau for 2016 was lower than for 2011, when 57.1 percent of Atafu residents were in paid work.

### Most people employed as labourers, agriculture and fisheries workers

Of the employed population for Atafu, 35.8 percent of them were labourers, and agriculture and fisheries workers. This group includes people working as:

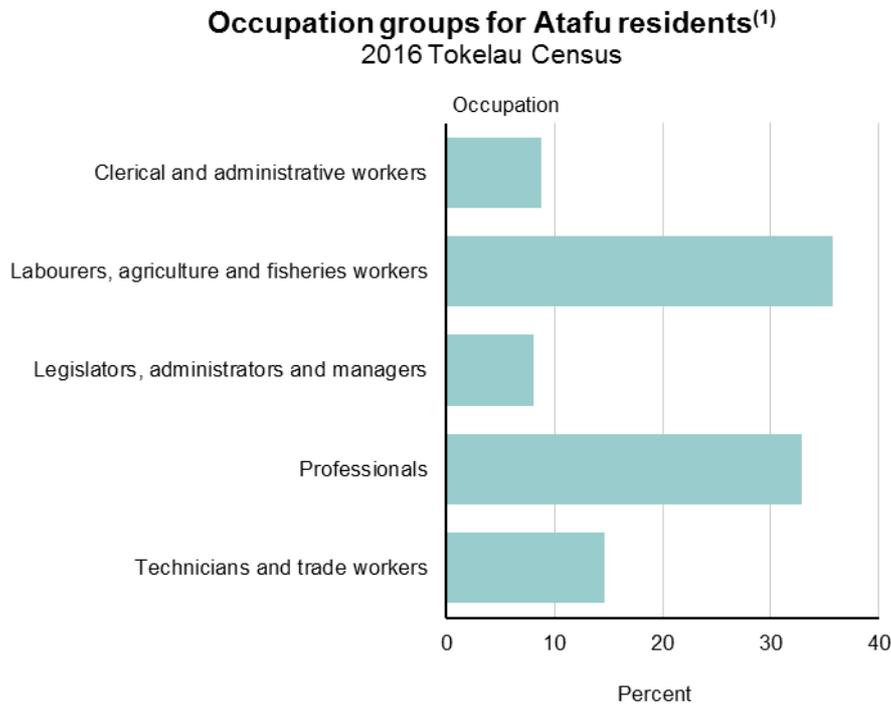
- village workers
- foremen
- machine operators
- drivers
- cleaners/porters.

The second most common occupation group was professionals (32.8 percent). The proportion of professionals on Atafu was equivalent to the proportion of professionals in Tokelau as a whole.

Professionals include people working as:

- doctors, dentists, dental nurses, or nurses
- teachers
- police officers
- finance officers, education officers, or environment officers.

**Figure 10**



1. For the employed usually resident population present in Atafu on census night, aged 15 years and over. 'Employed' means they were in paid employment.

Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

## Over 90 percent of residents do unpaid work

Unpaid work is an important part of Tokelauan culture. The importance of unpaid work is evidenced by the high numbers of people who undertake unpaid work. On Atafu, 90.9 percent of the adult population were involved in some kind of unpaid work. This is greater than the proportion of the overall adult Tokelau population who did unpaid work (79.2 percent).

Unpaid work in Atafu is highly gendered. More women were involved in village weaving and more men took part in village fishing. For other types of unpaid work, the numbers for men and women doing them were similar.

Table 8 shows the most common types of unpaid work people on Atafu did.

**Table 8**

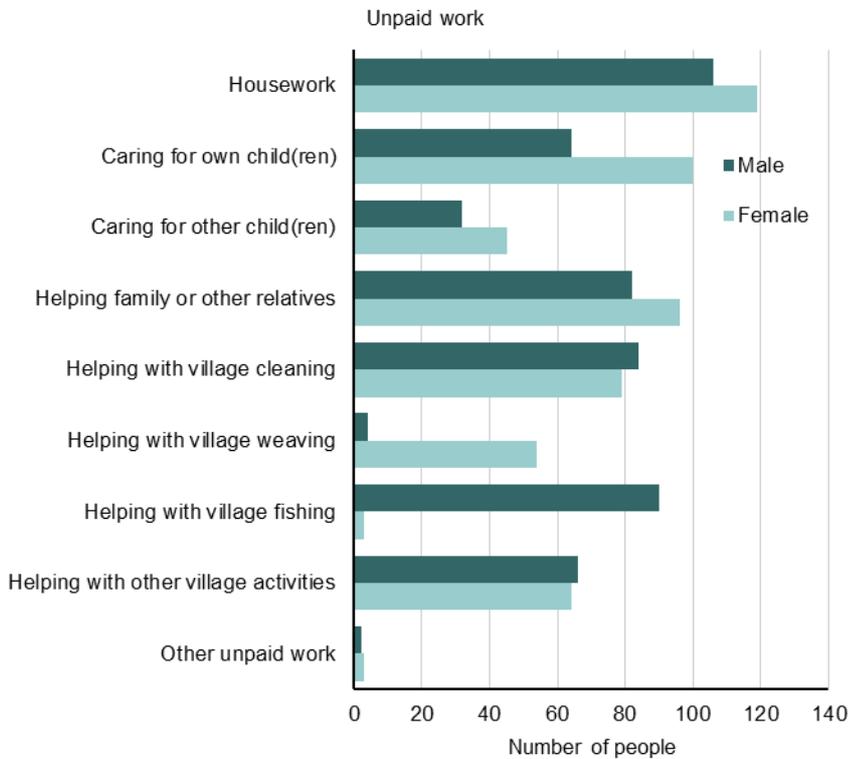
**Most common types of unpaid work on Atafu**

Type of unpaid work	Number of people	Percent of Atafu's population
Housework	225	85.6
Helping family or other relatives	178	67.7
Caring for own child(ren)	164	62.4

For all the different types of unpaid work that were asked about, except one, Atafu had a higher proportion of people who did them compared with the whole of Tokelau.

**Figure 11**

**Types of unpaid work done by Atafu residents<sup>(1)</sup>**  
By sex  
2016 Tokelau Census



1. For the usually resident population present in Atafu on census night, aged 15 years and over, who carried out unpaid work in the seven days before census day

Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

## 9. Housing

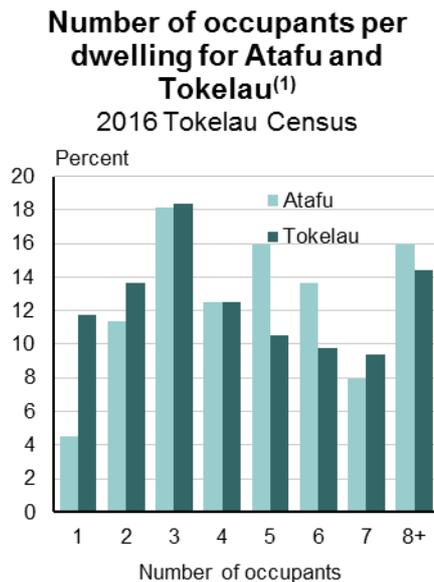
### Most houses had three occupants on census night

On census night, the most common number of occupants in a household on Atafu was three (18.2 percent of households).

On Atafu:

- 65.9 percent of households had four occupants or more, slightly higher than the whole of Tokelau (56.6 percent)
- only 4.5 percent of households had one occupant, compared with 11.7 for all of Tokelau
- 15.9 percent of households had eight or more occupants, compared with 14.5 percent of all households in Tokelau
- the greatest number of occupants in a household was 14.

**Figure 12**



1. For private occupied dwellings

Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

## Most households had ‘just enough money’

When households were asked whether they had enough money to meet their everyday needs, the most common response on Atafu was ‘only just enough money’ (37.9 percent). This compared with 34.1 percent that reported having ‘enough money’ or ‘more than enough money’.

Table 9 shows the income adequacy of Atafu households compared with the whole of Tokelau.

**Table 9**

### Comparison of income adequacy between Atafu and whole of Tokelau

Income adequacy	Percent of Atafu’s population	Percent of Tokelau’s population
Not enough money	27.6	22.4
Only just enough money	37.9	39.0
Enough money	28.4	32.3
More than enough money	5.7	6.3

## Few households on Atafu had outdoor shower and toilet facilities

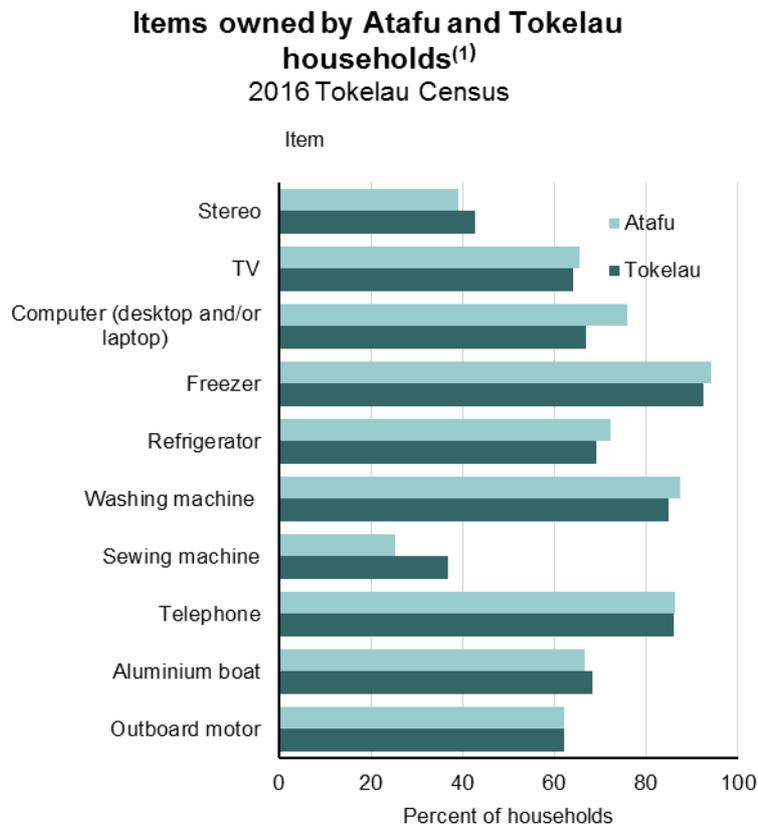
Compared with all of Tokelau, Atafu had a much lower proportion of households that still had outdoor shower and toilet facilities. On Atafu only 8.0 percent of households had their main toilet facility outside and 34.5 percent had their shower facility outside. This compares with 21.6 percent (outdoor toilet facility) and 47.1 percent (outdoor shower facility) of all households in Tokelau.

## Almost all households own freezers and washing machines

The most common item owned by households in Atafu was a freezer – 94.3 percent of households owned one. Washing machines were the second most common household item owned (87.4 percent of households).

Rates for ownership of the various household items were similar to that across all of Tokelau (see figure 13).

**Figure 13**



1. For private occupied dwellings

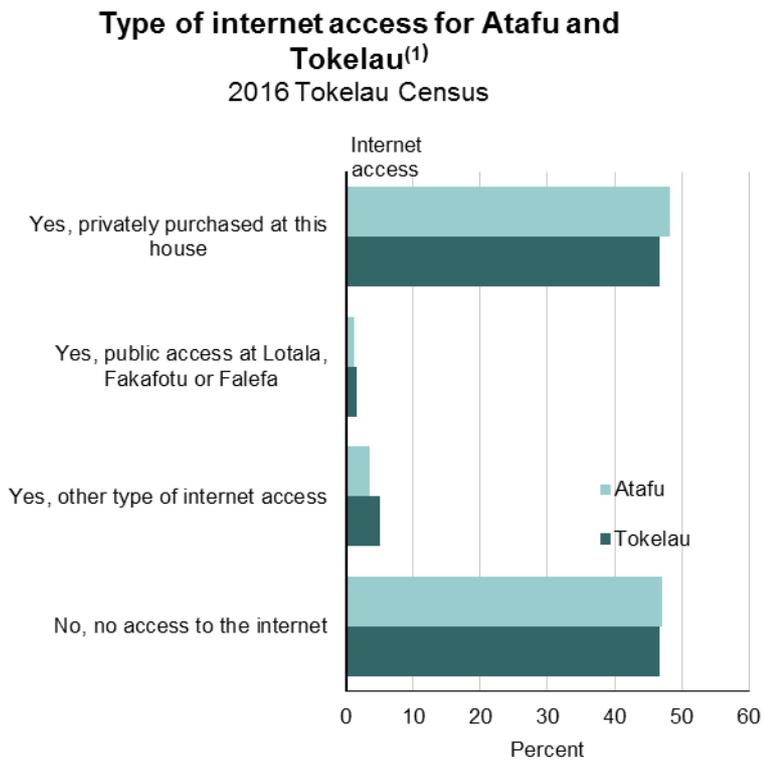
Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

## Increase in number of households with internet access

On Atafu 52.9 percent of households had access to the internet in some form. Internet access includes internet purchased privately, public access, or some other kind of access (eg through a neighbour's router). This is a considerable increase from 2011, when only 39.3 percent of households could access the internet.

The proportion of households (52.9 percent) that had internet access is similar to the rate for all of Tokelau (53.3 percent).

Figure 14



1. For private occupied dwellings

Source: 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings

## Further information

**Note:** From figure 6 onwards, all percentages exclude those people who did not respond to those particular questions (the 'not stated' category).

For more information about the 2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings, see the following documents, which are available as PDFs from [www.tokelau.org.nz](http://www.tokelau.org.nz) or [TokelauNSO.tk](http://TokelauNSO.tk):

- [2013 Population Count – Final Count](#) (available under heading 'Latest releases')
- [Usual Residence Criteria](#) (available under heading 'Counting the population').
- [Final population counts: 2016 Tokelau Census](#)
- [2016 Tokelau Census of Population and Dwellings.](#)

Or contact:

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## Appendix: Population count definitions

### De jure usually resident population

This population count includes the usually resident population present in Tokelau on census night plus usual residents who are temporarily overseas at the time of the census. Those temporarily overseas include Tokelauan employees of the Tokelau Public Service based in Apia and their immediate families and usual residents who are temporarily overseas.

### Usually resident population present in Tokelau on census night

The usually resident population present in Tokelau on census night is a count of all people who usually live in Tokelau on census night.

This count excludes visitors from overseas and excludes residents who are temporarily overseas on census night. Residents who are in Tokelau and were away from their usual address (ie another atoll) on census night are counted as part of the population of the atoll where they usually live.

While the other population counts provide national and atoll population counts, the usually resident population present in Tokelau on census night will be of most use to analysts and policymakers as it provides the widest range of information. The full set of census information was collected for these respondents, as they were present on census night.

Other population counts contain only limited information provided on behalf of absentees.

Data in chapters 4 to 8 in this report use the usually resident population present in Tokelau on Census night as the base for analysis.