

PACIFIC ISLANDS REPORT

ASAMOA
2000
census

SAMOA'S POPULATION GROWING, BUT VERY SLOWLY

By Fili Sagapolutele

PAGO PAGO, American Samoa (December 13, 2001 - Samoa News)---Samoa is booming, according to some reports. Tourism is on the up, fisheries is on the up, urban development is on the up, electrification in rural areas is on the up. Higher education is on the up. Athletic facilities development is on the up. Etc.

But Samoa's population is not booming, according to preliminary census results released this week.

From 1991 to 2001, the population of the independent nation grew by 8%, from 161,000 to 174,000. That is the equivalent of an annual increase of about 0.8%, which is far slower than the rate of natural increase due to births and deaths.

By comparison, American Samoa's population grew at a rate almost three times as fast during that same period, as we saw local residents increase by 22.5%, from 46,773 residents in 1990 to 57,291 residents in 2000.

The Samoan government believes the low rate of population growth there was the result of Samoans migrating overseas.

"Citizens of the Independent State of Samoa migrate to live permanently mostly in New Zealand, American Samoa and Australia" as well as America and other countries, said government statistician Sifuiva Reupena in a statement from Samoa.

Although the U.S. Census Bureau said that 91,376 residents of the fifty United States identified themselves as Samoans in the 2000 census, the census does not indicate whether they are from American Samoa or (Western) Samoa.

New Zealand, the former colonial ruler of Samoa, currently allows 1,100 Samoans to in-migrate yearly under its increasingly restrictive quota system. Large numbers of Samoans have migrated to New Zealand in the past 40 years.

American Samoa also has an annual quota established by the Fono to limit the in-migration of Samoans to the Territory. The quota is "250" units, but the Immigration Office has allowed a "unit" to refer to a family, not an individual, and the quota has also been set aside as necessary to help the two tuna canneries find enough workers.

The majority of the canneries' workforce is from Samoa. In 1990, 52% of the population of American Samoa between the ages of 25 and 44 were born in Samoa.

The new Samoan population numbers were released yesterday following tabulation of its 2001 census. The census, which took place over the past six weeks, involved 1,000 people.

(If that seems like a short tally period, you're right. American Samoa's census figures were released by the federal government well over a year after the census was conducted. Samoa will release final census results in the next few months, while American Samoa is still waiting for its detailed census profile, 18 months after the census was conducted).

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