

Demography in districts of Bonaire, yesterday and today

Meredith Daantje-Cecilia¹ and Frank van der Linden²

In the last decade the population of Bonaire has grown by almost 50 percent. In the preceding thirty years, the increase of 10 percent per decade was much smaller. The population growth is mainly the result of immigration. Immigrants have preferences for certain neighbourhoods.

This article examines the composition of the population by districts and neighbourhoods. It describes size, growth and country of birth. It also gives the history of the districts.

History

Around the year 1000, Bonaire was inhabited by members of the Caiquetio from Venezuela, an Indian tribe of the Arawak people. In 1499 the island came into the possession of Alonso de Ojeda and Amerigo Vespucci from Spain.

In late March or early April 1636, the island was conquered by the Dutch West India Company (WIC). The island was especially important for the Company because of its salt production, raw materials for paint, and corn cultivation.

The island fell temporarily under English rule in 1804 and 1805, and again from 1807-1816. In 1810, the English rented out Bonaire to private individuals.

From 1816 the island returned to the Dutch. Until 1868 it served as a government plantation where individuals were not allowed. Subsequently, the land was sold to private parties. This was four years after slavery had been abolished as a result of the *Emanicipatieregeling* on neighbouring island Curacao.

The island's government forms changed rapidly between 1940 and 1948. Eventually, in 1947 a petition for the extension of the democratic rights of citizens of the Antilles and Suriname was granted. In 1948, the name 'Curaçao and dependencies', under which the islands were known, was replaced by 'Netherlands Antilles'.

The Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands of 15 December 1954 recorded that the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname were equal political entities that together constitute the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Suriname became independent in 1975. Since 10 October 2010, together with Saba and St Eustatius, Bonaire has the status of a special municipality of the Netherlands.

¹ Manager of Statistics Netherlands' Dutch Caribbean office

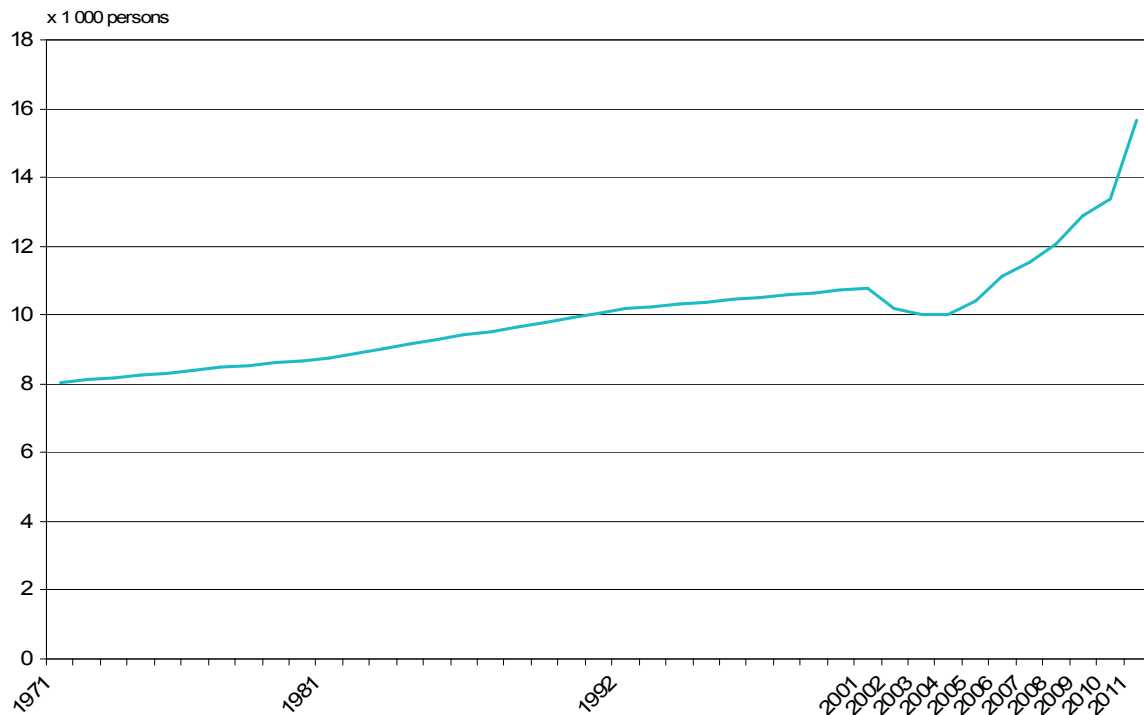
² Statistical researcher, Statistics Netherlands

Population growth on Bonaire

In the past forty years, the population of Bonaire has almost doubled. Especially in the last decade, the population has grown very substantially: in the period 2001-2011 the increase was 50 percent. Previous population growth was moderate, with an increase of 10 percent per decade. By way of comparison: in the Netherlands the population has increased by one quarter in the past forty years, and by 4 percent in the period 2001-2011.

There was a notable decrease in the population of Bonaire in the period 2001-2003, which can be attributed to the method of observation. The 2001 figure comes from the census in that year, while the figures for subsequent years are taken from the population register. As a result of under-registration in the administration of the former Netherlands Antilles, the censuses of 1971 and later give larger population numbers than the population register. In the years immediately following a census, the results are calculated from that census and population records. As a result, the numbers fall initially and then gradually increase again.

Population of Bonaire, 1971-2011



Source: 1971, 1981, 1992, 2001: Census CBS-Netherlands Antilles
2002-2010: CBS-Netherlands Antilles
2011: CBS

Smallest population growth in Playa Rincon

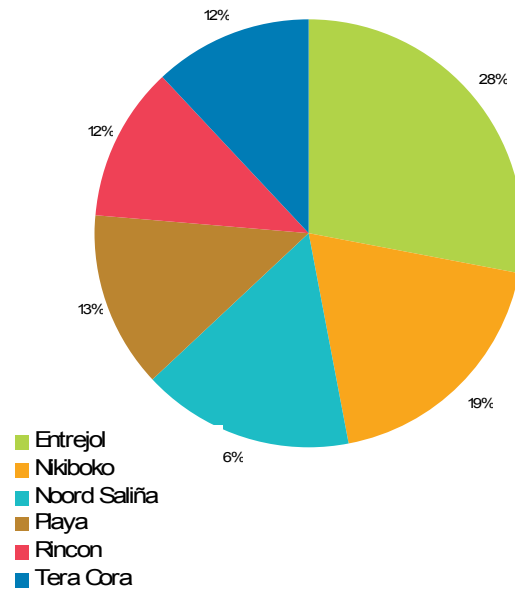
Bonaire has six districts: Entrejol, Nikiboko, North Salina, Playa Rincon and Tera Cora.

Nearly half of all inhabitants of Bonaire live in the districts Entrejol and Nikiboko.

Population growth has not been equal in all districts in the past thirty years: Playa and Rincon have lagged far behind in terms of population growth.

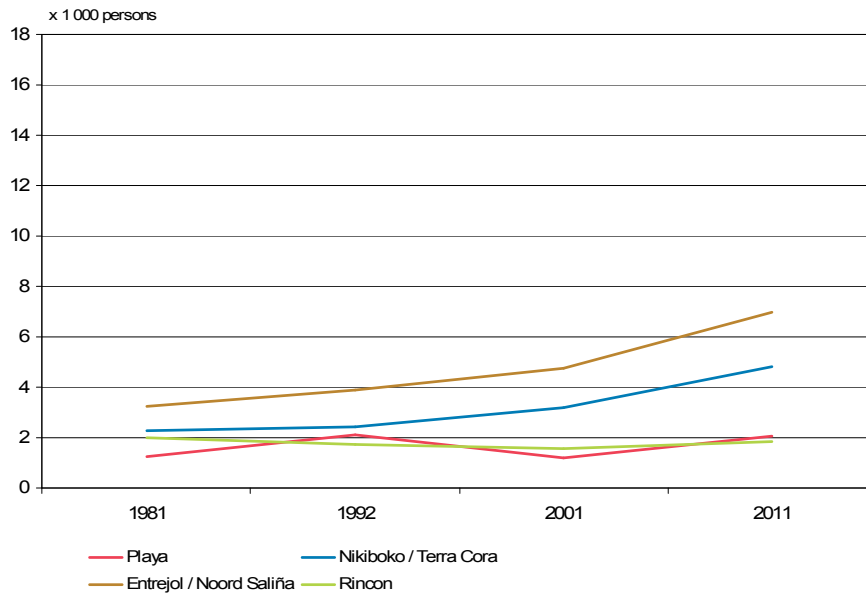
Population distribution by district, Bonaire, 2011

Total: 15 666 persons



Source: CBS

Population of Bonaire by district, 1981-2011



Source: 1981, 1992 en 2001: Census CBS-Netherlands Antilles
2011: CBS

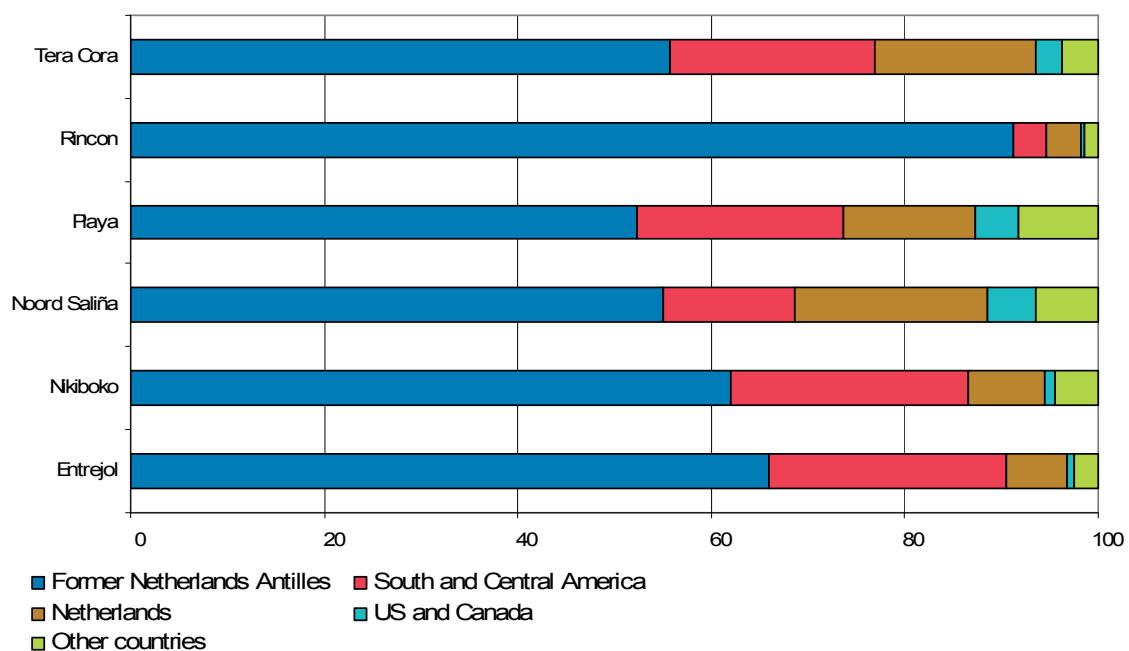
Fewer Antilleans on Bonaire

The population of Bonaire has mainly increased as a result of immigration. The demand for labour in the growing tourism sector has been a major driving force in this respect.

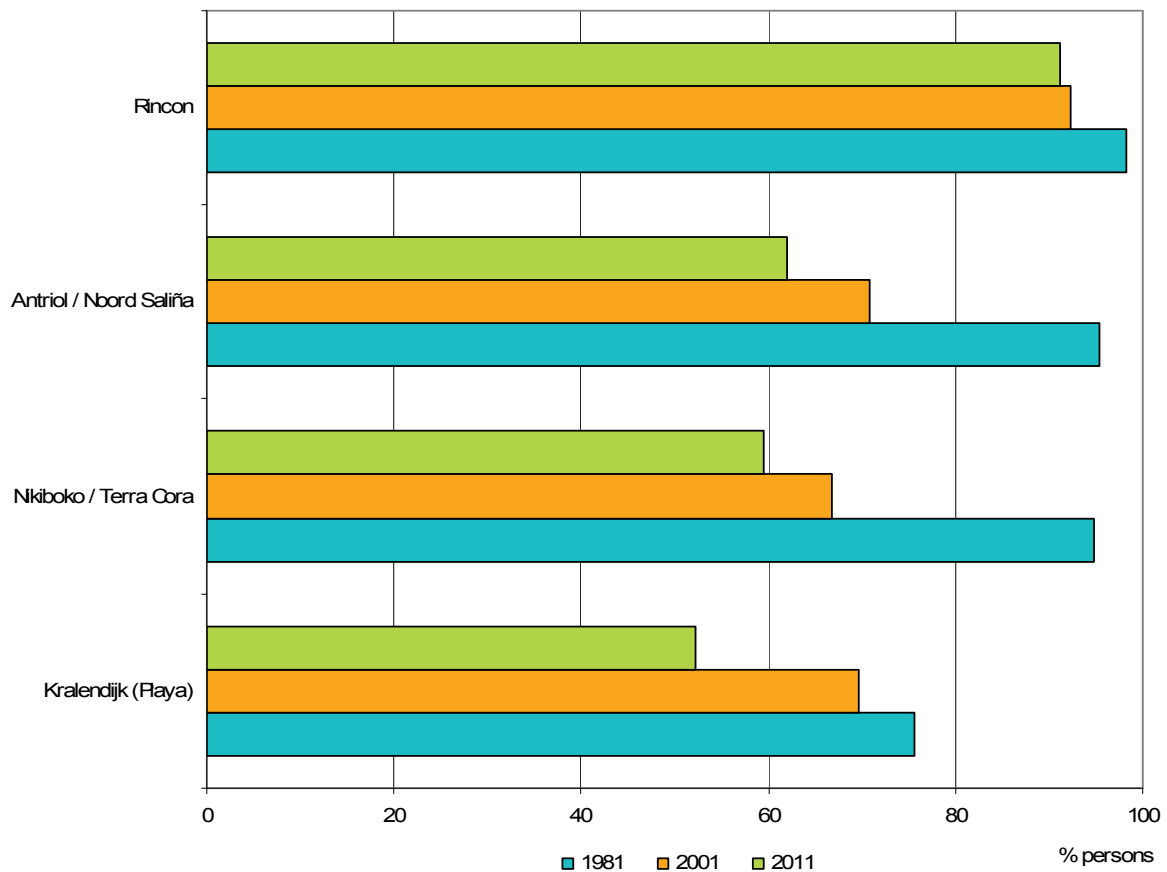
In 2011, 63 percent of the population were born Antilleans, compared with 93 percent thirty years ago. Again, there are differences between the districts. Rincon has the largest share of Antilleans, while Playa has the highest percentage of foreigners. The migrants on Bonaire come mainly from South and Central America, and also from the Netherlands.

In the district of Playa one quarter of the population were foreign-born in 1981, in other districts this was 5 percent or less. In the district of Rincon this share had risen to nearly 10 percent in 2011. In the other districts the share had increased even more substantially, in some places reaching 40 or even 50 percent.

Population of Bonaire by district and country of birth, 2011



Percentage of residents of Bonaire born in the Netherlands Antilles



Source: 1981 en 2001: Census CBS-Nederlandse Antillen
2011: CBS

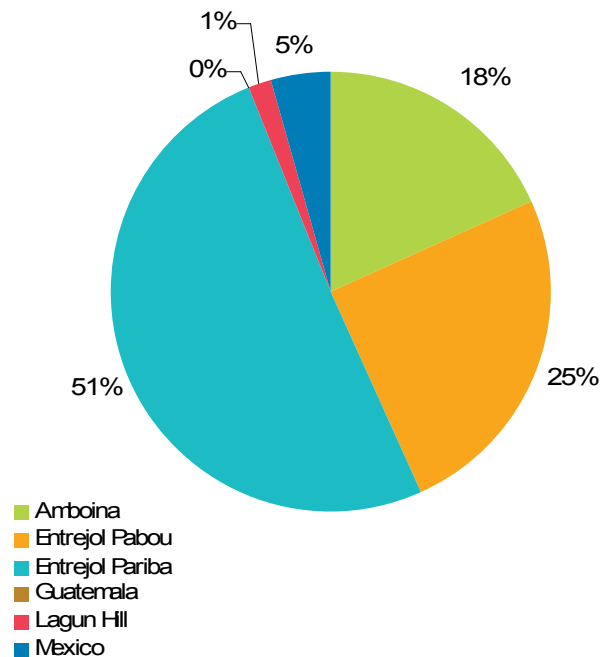
Districts: characteristics and history

Entrejol

With 4,406 inhabitants in 2011, Entrejol is Bonaire's largest district. The largest neighbourhoods in this district are Entrejol Pariba and Entrejol Pabou. Entrejol was created in 1626 when a group of Spaniards and Portuguese were deported to Bonaire and settled inland or 'al interior'. 'Al interior' was later corrupted to Entrejol, and later still to Antriol.

Population in district Entrejol by neighbourhood, 2011

Total: 4 406 personen



Source: CBS

Nikiboko

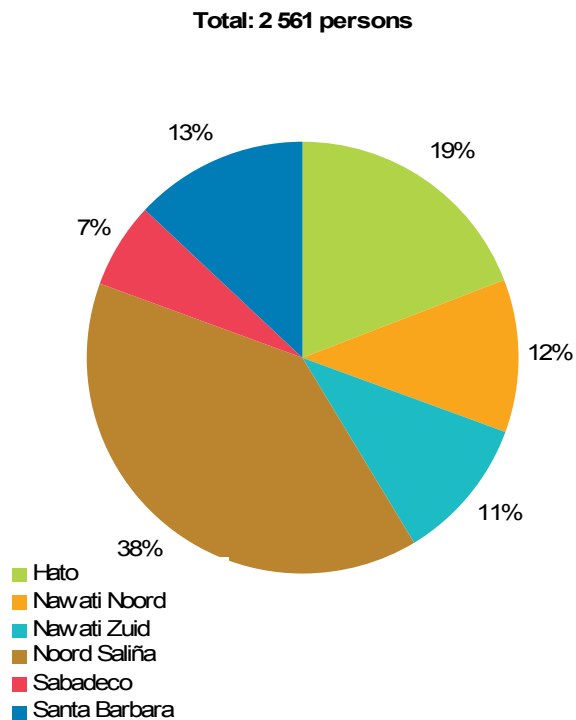
In 2011 Nikiboko numbered 2932 inhabitants. It is the second largest district of Bonaire, after Entrejol. Nikiboko used to be spelt differently. On a map of 1825, it is written as Nokoboki.

North Salina

The district of North Salina had 2,561 inhabitants in 2010, and had the highest growth rate. Residents of this district are characterised by their Indian appearance. Most homes in North Salina feature a *cacique*, a replica of the headdress of a Caiquetio Indian chief from whom most residents of North Salina are descended.

The name North (Nort'i) Saliña means 'north of the salt pans'. On the map drawn by Conradi and Jarman in 1866, North Salina is called Kunuku Bieu. This term is still used in 2012.

Population in Salina by neighbourhood, 2011



Source: CBS

Playa

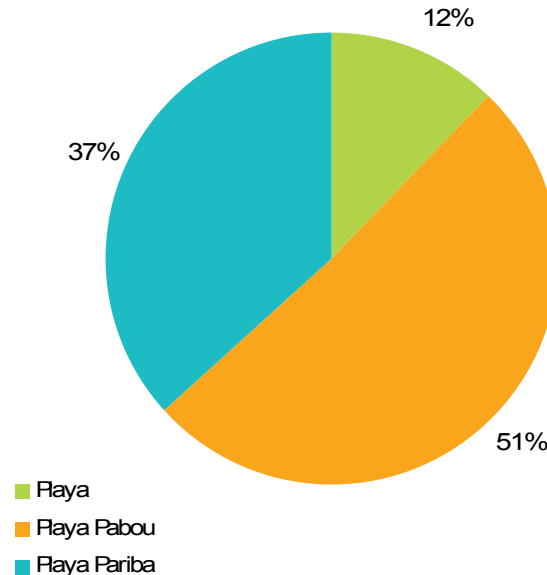
Among the local population, Playa (which means beach) is the name commonly used for the centre of Bonaire. In 2011 the district had 2,065 inhabitants. The official name for the capital of Bonaire is Kralendijk, and this is often also used to refer to the district Playa. The name Kralendijk is a corruption of *korallengedijk* which means coral dike, and refers to the coral soil on which the city is built.

After their conquest of Bonaire in 1636, the Dutch built a fort stone here, called Fort Oranje. From 1816 onwards Fort Oranje was the residence of the Lieutenant-Governor and Kralendijk became the centre of government and commerce. Kralendijk still has this function today. Playa district is divided into Playa (centre), and Playa Pariba and Playa Pabao.

Bonaire is located to the west of the uninhabited island of Klein Bonaire. Klein Bonaire is a nature park and falls under the management of Bonaire National Parks Foundation.

Population in Playa by neighbourhood, 2011

Total: 2 065 persons



Source: CBS

Rincon

Rincon, with 1,841 inhabitants in 2011, has a special place in the history of Bonaire. It is the oldest town on the island and was the first Spanish settlement in 1527. The name Rincon probably means 'back corner'. Rincon is divided into South and North Rincon. The district has been inhabited since the 16th century and today is a village of small houses and buildings dating back to over one hundred years. The land in the valley near the village, the kunuku, is used for extensive arable and livestock farming. The pattern of fields, roads and drinking places, as in the hamlet of Fontein, is part of the cultural heritage of the island. For the residents of Bonaire, Rincon is still considered as the cradle of the island's culture, which is celebrated in folk festivals such as Simadan, San Juan, San Pedro and Bari Rincon.

Tera Cora

The district Tera Cora (Kòrá) had 1,861 inhabitants in 2011. In the early 20th century this district was named after the special red colour of the soil. Before that it was called Mundu Nobo.

In 1850 Lieutenant-Governor Jan Schotborgh Claas Son ordered 45 families to be moved from Rincon to Mundu Nobo. After a time, a group of slaves was also moved to Mundu Nobo, from where they could walk to the salt pans and work in the salt production at Pekelmeer or Salina.

Table 1. Population Bonaire by district and land of birth, 2011

	Total	Former Netherlands Antilles	South and Central America	Netherlands	US and Canada	Other countries
	persons	%				
Total	15 666	63	19	11	2	4
District						
Entrejol	4 406	66	25	6	1	2
Nikiboko	2 932	62	25	8	1	5
Noord Saliña	2 561	55	14	20	5	6
Playa	2 065	52	21	14	4	8
Rincon	1 841	91	3	4	0	1
Tera Cora	1 861	56	21	17	3	4
Neighborhood						
Entrejol						
Amboina	806	80	15	3	1	1
Entrejol Pabou	1 109	59	32	6	1	2
Entrejol Pariba	2 224	65	26	6	0	3
Guatemala	2	x	x	x	x	x
Lagun Hill	64	9	6	69	6	9
Nikiboko						
Mexico	201	78	13	7	0	1
Nikiboko	2 254	61	26	8	1	4
Sabana	678	64	22	7	1	6
Noord Saliña						
Hato	489	47	13	20	11	9
Nawati Noord	296	52	7	29	5	7
Nawati Zuid	277	73	14	9	1	3
Noord Saliña	999	70	18	6	2	4
Sabadeco	167	8	14	55	15	8
Santa Barbara	333	32	6	46	5	11
Playa						
Playa	250	54	25	7	5	10
Playa Pabou	1 056	56	19	12	5	8
Playa Pariba	759	46	24	19	3	8
Rincon						
Rincon Noord	833	91	3	4	1	1
Rincon Zuid	1 008	92	4	3	0	1
Tera Cora						
Belnem	419	44	13	29	6	7
Lima	191	17	13	54	8	8
Tera Kora	1 251	65	25	7	1	2

Source: CBS

Sources

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