

# Marshall Islands

## Geography

Location: Oceania, group of atolls and reefs in the North Pacific Ocean, about one-half of the way from Hawaii to Papua New Guinea

Area:

total area: 181.3 sq km

land area: 181.3 sq km

comparative area: slightly larger than Washington, DC

note: includes the atolls of Bikini, Eniwetak, and Kwajalein

Land boundaries: 0 km

Coastline: 370.4 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 24 nm

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm  
territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: wet season May to November; hot and humid; islands border typhoon belt

Terrain: low coral limestone and sand islands

Natural resources: phosphate deposits, marine products, deep seabed minerals

Land use:

arable land: 0%

permanent crops: 60%

meadows and pastures: 0%

forest and woodland: 0%

other: 40%

Environment:

current issues: inadequate supplies of potable water

natural hazards: occasional typhoons

Note: two archipelagic island chains of 30 atolls and 1,152 islands; Bikini and Eniwetak are former US nuclear test sites; Kwajalein, the

famous World War II battleground, is now used as a US missile test range

## People

Population: 56,157 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 51% (female 13,950; male 14,547)

15-64 years: 47% (female 12,801; male 13,470)

65 years and over: 2% (female 740; male 649) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 3.86% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 46.03 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 7.48 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 48 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:  
total population: 63.49 years  
male: 61.94 years  
female: 65.11 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 6.89 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:  
noun: Marshallese (singular and plural)  
adjective: Marshallese

Ethnic divisions: Micronesian

Religions: Christian (mostly Protestant)

Languages: English (universally spoken and is the official language), two major Marshallese dialects from the Malayo-Polynesian family, Japanese

Literacy:  
total population: 93%  
male: 100%  
female: 88%

# Government

## Names:

conventional long form: Republic of the Marshall Islands

conventional short form: Marshall Islands

former: Marshall Islands District (Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands)

Type: constitutional government in free association with the US; the Compact of Free Association entered into force 21 October 1986

Capital: Majuro

Independence: 21 October 1986 (from the US-administered UN trusteeship)

National holiday: Proclamation of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, 1 May (1979)

Constitution: 1 May 1979

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: blue with two stripes radiating from the lower hoist-side corner - orange (top) and white; there is a white star with four large rays and 20 small rays on the hoist side above the two stripes

## Economy

Overview: Agriculture and tourism are the mainstays of the economy. Agricultural production is concentrated on small farms, and the most important commercial crops are coconuts, tomatoes, melons, and breadfruit. A few cattle ranches supply the domestic meat market. Small-scale industry is limited to handicrafts, fish processing, and copra. The tourist industry is the primary source of foreign exchange. The islands have few natural resources, and imports far exceed exports. The US Government provides about 70% of the budget.

Industries: copra, fish, tourism; craft items from shell, wood, and pearls; offshore banking (embryonic)

Agriculture: coconuts, cacao, taro, breadfruit, fruits, pigs, chickens

Transportation

Railroads: 0 km

Highways:  
total: NA

Ports: Majuro

Airports:  
total: 16

Defence Forces

Note: defence is the responsibility of the US