

Gender, Population and Housing Census Report

Republic of the Marshall Islands



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By

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The Republic of the Marshall Islands is comprised of twenty-nine coral atolls and five reef islands, divided into two parallel chains, the Ratak (Sunrise) and the Ralik (Sunset), located 2,000 miles west of the Hawaiian Islands in the West-Central Pacific, seven degrees north of the equator. It is one of the most urbanized countries in the Pacific, with almost seventy percent of the total population living on two small atolls. The current estimated population of the Republic is over 53,000, of which 51% are men and 49% are women. Significantly, 52% of the population is under the age of 20. The ethnic makeup is mostly Marshallese (over 90%), with small percentages of Asians, Filipinos, Americans, and other Pacific Islanders. Most households are headed by men (76%). In urban areas 33% of households have nine or more members; and 25% in rural areas. Most households use only one room for sleeping. Almost one quarter (23.2%) of Marshallese children under 18 years old are not living with either parent.

Majuro Atoll, in the Ratak Chain, is the center of government and commercial activity, with several high schools, a community college, a university extension center, an 80-bed hospital, and an international airport. An estimated 35,000 people live on Majuro, with a population density in excess of 3,500 persons per square mile. Kwajalein, in the Ralik Chain, is the largest atoll in the world, and is home to about one quarter (13,000) of the total population. The remainder of the population inhabits twenty-four outer atolls scattered across a vast ocean area. This geographic isolation is a barrier to equitable distribution of development resources and efficient delivery of public services.¹

RMI education indicators are not encouraging. Primary school attendance is described as “reasonably high” but still not universal: 81% of children age 6-12 in urban areas attend primary school; 87% in rural areas. Basic education is required by the Constitution, but remains a major challenge. Drop-out rates are

very high: only 36 out of 100 children will finish Grade 12 (a 64% non-completion rate). Only 40% of adults have completed secondary school.²

As the Marshall Islands continues to move from a subsistence economy to a cash economy, adherence to traditional social values and structures is diminishing. The increasing pressure of the cash economy is escalating stress and conflict within families. People continue to report that families are “not as happy as they used to be” and attribute this to strained relationships, often related to alcohol abuse, unemployment and financial pressures, women being required to be involved in income-related activities, and an overall decline in women’s status within families and communities. Many Marshallese people believe that customary power is shifting in favor of men, and the loss of respect for women seems to parallel a loss of respect for elders and chiefs. Urbanization, westernization and dependency on international aid are considered largely responsible for the breakdown of traditional norms and values, and the often apathetic public response to widespread social issues, including violence against women. Traditional safety nets no longer offer adequate security, leading to increased vulnerability and marginalization.

Data collection was never a strong activity within the RMI government Ministries and agencies until recently. The RMI government had its last census in 1999, but gender consideration was not seen as important thus gender issues were overlooked when the last census questionnaires were created. However, the NGO women’s group WUTMI and the Women in Development office are part of the committee that created the RMI census questionnaires in the 2011. Thus Gender is included in the upcoming census questionnaire.

1. Census Organization

- What organization is responsible for the census?
 - The Economic, Policy, Planning and Statistics Office (EPPSO)
- What is its relationship to the other organizations in the national statistical system?
 - EPPSO is the hub of the national statistical system. This is the organization primarily responsible for the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistics for the Republic of the Marshall Islands government.
- How many persons in the organization are directly involved in the design, data collection, data processing, data analysis and data dissemination of the census?
 - Given the nature and circumstances of EPPSO, all staff will be involved in all areas in one way or the other – total number at the moment, 3 persons.
- Who serve as census enumerators? What are the criteria for selecting enumerators?
 - Posts will be advertised and testing and interviews will be undertaken – any person who's had experienced (and we do have a small pool of individuals who've taken part in other surveys) will be given priority. All others will be interviewed and tested (basic comprehension, reading, writing and mathematics skill test).
- Who serve as census supervisors? What are the criteria for selecting supervisors?
 - Again, individuals who have worked with EPPSO before on prior surveys will be given the priority. Selection criteria will be similar to those of the enumerators, except test will be more comprehensive.

2. The Census of Population and Housing

- When will the national census be conducted as part of the 2010 round?
 - Pilot testing is scheduled for October of 2010, and actual enumeration is scheduled to take place April 2011.

- What are the broad objectives of the census?
 - Perform a complete enumeration
- How are the census results used in government?
 - Budget allocation
 - Establishment of projects and programs
- What is its geographic coverage? Are any parts of the population excluded?
 - Full coverage. Everyone is to be enumerated.
- What data items are (to be) included in the census: See attached questionnaire

Data Items	100 Percent	Sample
On persons	X	
On households	X	
On housing	X	

- Does the organization responsible for the census consult data users in the determination of the data items and questions to be included in the census? If yes, describe briefly how this is done and what broad groups of data users are consulted?
 - Yes it does. Questionnaire has been emailed out to national, regional and international users for comments. A census steering committee is in the process of being established – it is to be comprised of national government secretaries as well as representatives from the local governments, private sector and the NGOs.
- Based on your experience, who are the actual respondents – women or men?
 - Both. Questions pertaining to household and income are mostly answered by men. Questions pertaining to individuals – date of birth, education etc. – are answered mostly by women.

- How will the respondents be informed about the census? Describe briefly the messages, target audiences and media to be used?
 - All media available will be used – local newspaper, radio stations and brochures – to promote all census activities. Schools will be engaged in a census logo contest as well as a promotional activity. Messages will briefly state the activity, where and when, and the importance and will be translated in languages currently being used in the Republic - Marshallese, English, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalo, etc.
- Describe briefly the plan for census data analysis.
 - Every question will be accounted for in the analysis. We are anticipating to extract as much information out of the data as possibly can.
- What information are (to be) included in the census reports? Do you (plan to) have census report about specific areas or groups of persons>
 - As detailed as we are permitted, providing time and allocation of resources – both by specific areas or/and groups of persons.
- How will the census results be disseminated?
 - Through workshops conducted at specific places at specific times.
- What is the government organization or body primarily responsible for gender concerns?
 - Women in Development desk under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.
- Does the census organization have any links or coordination mechanisms with this organization or body?
 - At the moment, no concrete mechanism is in place.
- Does the national statistical system (NSO) have a unit responsible for the gender statistics? If yes, describe this unit and its relations to the census organization briefly.
 - There is no specific unit responsible for the gender statistics, however, the main statistical unit under the NSO also values and is responsible for the gender statistics.

- Does the census organization conduct training on gender and development for its personnel? If yes, describe briefly.
 - No in-house training on gender and development has been conducted for its personnel. However, personnel from EPPSO have attended regional trainings in such area. EPPSO realizes the importance of this area and ensures gender and development training opportunities are not foregone.

3. Gender Concerns.

Describe the following briefly.

- Does the government have a gender and development action plan? If yes, describe the three most important issues being addressed in the plan.
 - Currently the government does not have a gender and development action plan, however, considerations are being taken to change the Women's Policy, and consider it as Gender Development Policy.
- What is the government organization or body primarily responsible for gender concerns?
 - The Women In Development (WID) Office under the Community Development Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs undertakes Gender Development in the RMI.
- Does the census organization have any links or coordination mechanisms with this organization or body?
 - Yes, there is an ongoing coordination of technical assistant from the census organization to the WID's Office, and vice versa as with other organization in the government to assist in analysis and providing of data and statistics.
- Does the national statistical system (national statistical office) have a unit responsible for gender statistics? If yes, describe this unit and its relationship to the census organization briefly.
 - None specifically. Gender is considered in the Census, but gender has not been separated as one major area to be on its own and to have a focus on itself.
- Does the census organization conduct training on gender and development for its personnel? If yes, describe briefly.
 - No