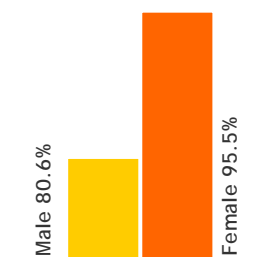
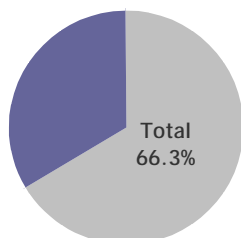


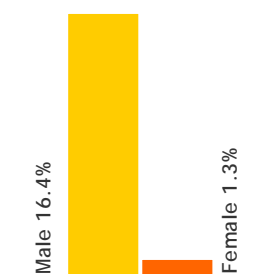
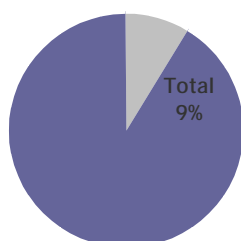
MARSHALL ISLANDS (THE)

Last year abstainers



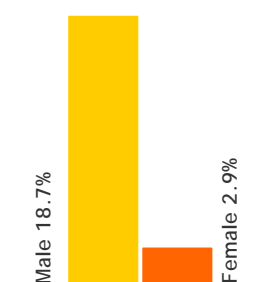
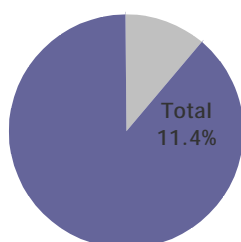
Survey of subjects 15 years and older. Total sample size $n = 363$; males $n = 322$ and females $n = 41$.¹

Problem drinkers



Survey of subjects 15 years and older. Total sample size $n = 169$; males $n = 157$ and females $n = 12$. Definition of problem drinking used: consumption of five or more drinks at least twice a month OR having two or more drinks nearly every day OR going on a binge (defined as a drinking spree lasting more than one day) at some time during the month previous to the survey.¹

Youth drinking (last year alcohol users)



Survey of youths aged 15 to 19 years.¹

Traditional alcoholic beverages

The beverage *jimanun*, fermented from coconut sap (*jekaro*), can be psychoactive because of the alcohol content (less than 15% depending upon the added yeast and time of fermentation), and if a sufficient amount is consumed, it can be intoxicating. Records as far back as 2000 years of early European visitors indicate that the Marshallese did not ferment alcohol from coconut sap before the arrival of these outsiders. It thus appears that prior to contact, the Marshall Islands was one of the few places in the world where no psychoactive substances were consumed, either because the necessary plants were not present (e.g. tobacco or marijuana) or because the process of obtaining an intoxicating drink from an existing plant was not part of the cultural inventory.²

Morbidity, health and social problems from alcohol use

During the years 1991 to 1995, 3.5% of all deaths recorded were alcohol-related (varying between 1.3% in 1993 to 4.9% in 1991).¹ Drunk driving was reportedly a major cause of the increase in traffic accidents on Majuro, and was directly related to a growing number of fatalities.¹

In 1995 the hospitals on Ebeye and Majuro reported a total of 23 admissions for conditions related to the use of alcohol. In 1996, the hospitals reported 67 such admissions.¹

Research done on suicide victims since 1965 has discovered that well over half of the suicide cases in the Marshall Islands occur when the victim is inebriated. For the period between 1991 and 1995, 38 of 56 suicides occurred when the victim was intoxicated. Hence, 68% of all suicides were occasioned by alcohol use.¹

Arrests data for the years 1991 to 1995 show that in total 85% of all total arrests were connected to alcohol: either because they were committed by persons while intoxicated (as in most cases of aggravated assault, homicide, disorderly conduct, driving under the influence of alcohol) or because they were motivated by the desire to obtain money for drinking (as with many crimes of theft, breaking and entering, and larceny).¹

Country background information

Total population 2003	56 429	Life expectancy at birth (2002)	Male	61.1
Adult (15+)	38 936		Female	64.6
% under 15	31	Probability of dying under age 5 per 1000 (2002)	Male	46
Population distribution 2001 (%)			Female	36
Urban	66	Gross National Income per capita 2002	US\$	2270
Rural	34			

Sources: Population and Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat, World Bank World Development Indicators database, The World Health Report 2004

References

1. Hezel FX. *Alcohol and drug use in the Republic of the Marshall Islands*. Micronesian Seminar on behalf of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (<http://www.micsem.org/pubs/articles/socprobs/alcrmi/crmiintro.htm>, accessed 26 November 2003).
2. Nandwani D, Dasilva EJ. Traditional knowledge and medicine in the Marshall Islands. *AGRO Food Industry hi-tech*, 2003, 14(4):42–46.