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.\(^2\)

Youth drinking (last year alcohol users)

Survey of youths aged 15 to 19 years.\(^1\)

Traditional alcoholic beverages

The beverage \textit{jimanun}, fermented from coconut sap (\textit{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). 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.

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.

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.

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).

Country background information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total population 2003</th>
<th>56 429</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth (2002)</th>
<th>Male 61.1</th>
<th>Female 64.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult (15+)</td>
<td>38 936</td>
<td>Probability of dying under age 5 per 1000 (2002)</td>
<td>Male 46</td>
<td>Female 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% under 15</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Gross National Income per capita 2002</td>
<td>USS 2270</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>34</td>
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References