

**MISSIONS ATLAS PROJECT
NORTHWEST PACIFIC OCEAN
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**

Snapshots Section

Commonwealth Name: Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

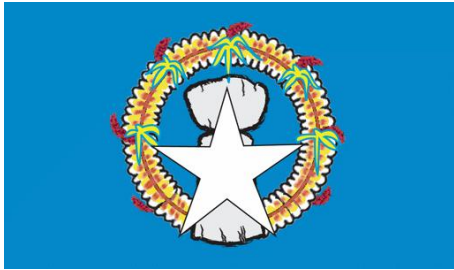
Commonwealth Founded in: 1978

Population: 88,662 (2009 estimate)

Government Type: Commonwealth of the United States with a locally elected governor, lieutenant governor, and legislature.

Geography/location in the world: These islands are located in the northwest Pacific Ocean to the east of the Philippines and to the north of Papua New Guinea.

Number of people groups: 12



Picture of flag:

Religion Snapshot: Catholic 60%, Baptist 3%, United Church of Christ 2%, Independent churches 2%, Presbyterian 1%, Pentecostals 1%.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php?rog3=CQ>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cq.html>

Country Profile

Basic Facts

Country Name: Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Demographics:

The population is 88,662. About 91 percent of the population lives in urban areas. 18 percent of the population is 14 years of age or younger. 80 percent of the population is between 15 and 64 years of age. Less than two percent is 65 or older.

Life expectancy is 74 years for men and 79 years for women. The birth rate is about 19 births per 1,000 people; the death rate is about 2 per 1,000 people.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cq.html>

Language:

Various Philippine languages are spoken on the Mariana Islands, as well as Chinese, Chamorro, English, and other Pacific island languages.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cq.html>

Society/Culture:

Western culture has influenced life in the Northern Mariana Islands, but the Chamorro and Carolinian people still celebrate their own heritage through dance, songs, local crafts, and food. One dessert is called *apigigi* and is made with coconut wrapped in banana leaves.

Festivals

Another way they celebrate their culture is through a variety of festivals. The *Flame Tree Arts Festival* features the traditional warrior dance called the Carolinian Stick Dance. The *Taste of the Marianas*—each Saturday during May—allows visitors to eat different local and international foods made by chefs on the islands and features live music, dance, and crafts. The *Liberation Day Festival* on the island of Saipan celebrates freedom from occupation during World War II. Lasting over the course of three days, it includes a parade and a carnival.

<http://www.mymarianas.com/html/display.cfm?sid=1044>

Internet

The latest information on Internet usage in the Northern Mariana Islands is from July 2003. At that time, about 10,000 people had Internet access, which accounted for approximately 19% of the population.

<http://www.internetworldstats.com/pacific.htm#mp>

Holidays

New Year's Day – January 1
Martin Luther King Day
President's Day – February 16
Commonwealth Covenant Day – March 24
Good Friday
Easter
Memorial Day – March 25
Independence Day – July 4
Labor Day – Different days each year
Commonwealth Cultural Day – October 12
Citizenship Day – November 3
Veterans' Day – November 11
Public Holiday – November 23
Thanksgiving
Constitution Day – December 8
Christmas

http://www.qppstudio.net/publicholidays2009/northern_mariana_islands.htm

Government:

The Northern Mariana Islands are a commonwealth of the United States with a locally elected governor, lieutenant governor, and legislature. Because the islands form an unincorporated territory, people cannot vote in U.S. presidential elections. However, they are allowed to vote in primary elections.

Executive - The chief of state is the United States president. The head of government is Governor Benigno R. Fitial. He has held that office since January 9, 2006. The lieutenant governor is Eloy S. Inos; he has been in that office since May 1, 2009. The cabinet members are appointed by the governor with approval from the Senate.

Legislative - The Northern Mariana Islands have a bicameral legislature. The Senate has nine seats, and members are elected to four-year terms in office. There are 20 seats in the House of Representatives, and members are elected to two-year terms in office.

Judicial - The judicial system of the Northern Mariana Islands consists of a Commonwealth Supreme Court, a Superior Court, and a Federal District Court.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cq.html>

<http://www.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/20091123/BREAKING01/91123047/Governor+wins+reelection+in+U.S.+Commonwealth+of+the+Northern+Mariana+Islands>

Economy:

The economy of the Northern Mariana Islands receives financial assistance from the United States, but local revenues have grown. The tourist industry provides employment for at least 50 percent of the work force.

Agriculture products include vegetables, melons, fruits, nuts, ornamental plants, livestock, poultry, eggs, and fish. Major industries include banks, construction, fishing, garment production, tourism, and handicrafts.

The major export products from the Northern Mariana Islands are garments. Major imports include food, construction equipment and related materials, and petroleum products.

The currency is the U.S. dollar.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cq.html>

Literacy: The literacy rate in the Northern Mariana Islands is, at least, 97 percent.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cq.html>

Land/Geography:

The Northern Mariana Islands are located 1,300 miles south of Tokyo, Japan, 1,400 miles east Manila in the Philippines, 2,900 miles north of Sydney, Australia, and 3,200 miles west of Honolulu, Hawaii.

There are 14 islands that make up the Northern Mariana Islands stretching across 400 miles of the Pacific Ocean. The islands are next to the Marianas Trench, which is the deepest known part of the ocean (10,915 meters; 35,810 feet).

The largest island is Saipan. Most people live there or on the islands of Rota and Tinian. Ten of the islands are called the Northern Islands; very few people live on these islands and some are uninhabited.

There are several active volcanos in the area, such as Pagan Island. The volcano on Anatahan, north of Saipan, has been erupting from time to time since 2003.

The climate is warm and sunny, and occasionally very windy. The average temperature all year is 29°C (84°F) with a humidity of 79%. The ocean is typically 27°C (82°F). There are occasional droughts from December to June. The wettest season is from July to October.

<http://www.cnmi-guide.com/info/>

<http://www.cnmi-guide.com/info/>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/4598376.stm

<http://www.mymarianas.com/html/display.cfm?sid=1050>

History

The Northern Mariana Islands, including Guam, were settled about 3,000 years ago. Evidence of a well-developed culture include the huge, heavy, mushroom-shaped Latte (or Taga) Stones, which some believe were carved and used by the upper class as foundations for their homes. However, when Magellan explored the area in 1521, that society had been long forgotten.

Magellan is said to have named the islands “The Island of the Latine Sails” because the locals had triangle-shaped sails on their canoes, which were similar to sails used on Mediterranean boats. However, as the story is told, some of the locals apparently stole some property from his ship. After that, Magellan renamed the islands “The Islands of the Thieves.” That name remained for many years and was even used on maps of the territory. Another name change came in 1668. The islands were called “Las Marianas” to honor Mariana of Austria, the widow of Philip the 4th of Spain.

The name was not the only change. There was conflict between the islands' earlier inhabitants and the Spanish. The islanders were also exposed to new diseases. There were an estimated 50,000 locals when Europeans first made contact with them. By the year 1700, there were only about 2,000 left. Those remaining islanders were called Chamorros who later married Spanish troops from Mexico, Tagalog, and Spain.

In the early 1800s, people from nearby Caroline Islands (in what is now called the Federated States of Micronesia) were given permission to settle on the island of Saipan, becoming the second indigenous people group in the Marianas.

During the Spanish/American War, Guam was captured by the United States. After the war, Spain sold the remaining islands of the Marianas to Germany.

During World War I, Japan kicked the Germans off the the islands. After the war, the League of Nations gave Japan authority to administer the Marianas. Thousands of Japanese civilians began to settle there and started commercial fishing and producing sugar cane.

During World War II, the Americans and Japanese fought over the Marianas. The planes that dropped atomic bombs on Japan to end WWII took off from one of those islands—Tinian—in August 1945. After the Japanese surrendered, the American Navy administered the islands. Later the islands were transferred to the United Nations as a trust territory. Eventually, the people on the islands were allowed to govern themselves.

In 1975, the people from the Northern Marianas voted to become a Commonwealth of the United States. The remaining islands were divided into the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

In 1986, U.S. citizenship was officially given to people in the Northern Mariana Islands.

In 2008, the first delegate to the United States House of Representatives was elected. Because the Northern Mariana Islands is a Commonwealth and not a state, the delegate is not allowed to vote on legislation.

<http://www.mymarianas.com/html/display.cfm?sid=1046>
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/4598376.stm
<http://www.cnmi-guide.com/history/>

Christian History

The Spanish introduced Christianity to the Northern Mariana Islands. They started the first Catholic church in 1668. Other Christian churches now on the islands did not start until after World War II, and most were begun in the 1980s.

World Christian Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, 2nd ed. ISBN: 0195103181

Religion

Non Christian

Buddhism - During the mid-90s, there were 2,250 Buddhists in the Northern Mariana Islands.

Baha'I - There were about 140 followers of the Baha'i faith during the mid-90s.

Confucianists - There were about 140 Confucianists in the Northern Mariana Islands during the mid-90s.

Jehovah's Witness - The Jehovah's Witnesses began around 1980. As of 1995 there were 2 congregations and 400 members; 1,200 people were affiliated with the church.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) - The Mormons moved into the Northern Mariana Islands around 1980. As of 1995 there was one congregation and 120 members; 200 people were affiliated with the church.

New Religionists - As of 1995 there were about 450 New Religionists in the Northern Mariana Islands.

Catholic/Orthodox

The Catholic Church began in 1668. As of 1995 there were 13 congregations and 19,000 members; 52,000 people were affiliated with the church.

Christian/Evangelical

Baptists

Filipino Baptist Churches began around 1985. As of 1995 there were 2 congregations and 1,000 members; 1,670 people were affiliated with the church.

General Baptist Churches started in 1947. As of 1995 there was one congregation and 250 members; 500 people were affiliated with the church.

Independent Baptist Churches began around 1975. As of 1995 there were 4 congregations and 100 members; 222 people were affiliated with the church.

Korean Baptist Church began around 1985. As of 1995 there were 2 congregations and 250 members; 400 people were affiliated with the church.

Church of Christ

The Church of Christ started around 1980. As of 1995 there was one congregation and 500 members; 1,000 people were affiliated with the church.

United Church of Christ began around 1950. As of 1995 there were 10 congregations and 1,000 members; 2,000 people were affiliated with the church.

Methodists

Korean Methodist Church began around 1985. As of 1995 there was one congregation and 150 members; 200 people were affiliated with the church.

The Methodist Church began around 1985. As of 1995 there was one congregation and 15 members; 50 people were affiliated with the church.

Pentecostals

Assemblies of God began around 1975. As of 1995 there was one congregation and 200 members; 500 people were affiliated with the church.

The United Pentecostal Church started around 1975. As of 1995 there were 2 congregations and 100 members; 200 people were affiliated with the church.

Presbyterian

Korean Presbyterian Church began around 1980. As of 1995 there were 4 congregations and 500 members; 850 people were affiliated with the church.

Seventh-day Adventist

The Seventh-day Adventist Church began around 1980. As of 1995 there were 2 congregations and 130 members; 260 people were affiliated with the church.

Independent churches found in the country

Chinese Churches began around 1975. As of 1995 there were 3 congregations and 200 members; 333 people were affiliated with the church.

International Church started around 1975. As of 1995 there was one congregation and 120 members; 160 people were affiliated with the church.

Chuuk Church began around 1980. As of 1995 there were 3 congregations and 400 members; 800 people were affiliated with the church.

Palau Evangelical Church began around 1980. As of 1995 there was one congregation and 300 members; 600 people were affiliated with the church.

World Christian Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, 2nd ed. ISBN: 0195103181

People Groups

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Americans, U.S. (4,000)

Most of the Americans are Christian, but the number of evangelical believers is unknown. The Bible, *Jesus* film, Gospel recordings, and Christian radio are available.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=110448&rog3=CQ>

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British (100)

Most of the British are Christian, but the number of evangelical believers is unknown. The Bible, *Jesus* film, Gospel recordings, and Christian radio are available.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=102927&rog3=CQ>

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Carolinian (5,900)

Most of the Carolinian people are Christians, but the number of evangelical believers is unknown. Neither the Bible nor the *Jesus* film has been translated into their primary language. There are no Gospel recordings or radio broadcasts available, either.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=101890&rog3=CQ>

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Chamorro (24,000)

Most of the Chamorro people are Christians, but the number of evangelical believers is unknown. Portions of the Bible have been translated into their primary language, but the *Jesus* film and other Gospel recordings have not; there are no radio broadcasts.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103498&rog3=CQ>

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Deaf (unknown)

Most of the deaf in the Northern Mariana Islands are Christian, and about 10 percent are evangelical believers.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=114916&rog3=CQ>

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Filipino (27,000)

Most of the Filipino people are Christian, but the number of evangelical believers is unknown. The Bible, *Jesus* film, Gospel recordings, and Christian radio are available in their primary language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=109692&rog3=CQ>

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Han Chinese, Mandarin (7,300)

Most of the Chinese people are not religious. About 25 percent are Buddhists, and about 40 percent are Christian. The number of evangelical believers is unknown. The Bible, *Jesus* film, Gospel recordings, and Christian radio are available in their language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=103686&rog3=CQ>

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Japanese (2,300)

Most of the Japanese people are Buddhists. Only about five percent are Christian. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The Bible, *Jesus* film, Gospel recordings, and Christian radio broadcasts are available in Japanese.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=104189&rog3=CQ>

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Korean (6,500)

The Korean people are primarily Christian; the number of evangelical believers is unknown. About 25 percent are Buddhists. The Bible, *Jesus* film, Gospel recordings, and Christian radio are available in their primary language.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=105225&rog3=CQ>

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Palauan (3,500)

Most of the Palauan people are Christian, but the number of evangelical believers is unknown. The New Testament has been translated into their primary language, and the *Jesus* film and other Gospel recordings are available.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=107776&rog3=CQ>

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Tanapag (4,900)

Most of the Tanapag people are Christians, but the number of evangelical believers is unknown. Neither the Bible nor the *Jesus* film has been translated into their primary language. There are no Gospel recordings or radio broadcasts available. These resources are available in the primary languages of the country.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=210190&rog3=CQ>

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Woleaian (2,000)

Most of the Woleaian people are Christian, but the number of evangelical believers is unknown. Neither the Bible nor the *Jesus* film has been translated into their primary language. There are no Gospel recordings or radio broadcasts available. These resources can be accessed in the major languages of the country.

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=110854&rog3=CQ>

Missiological Implications

The Northern Mariana Islands are mostly Christian. Before considering mission work there, check with the local churches to see what they are already doing to minister to people. Then see if there is something you can do to help them in their work.

Links

BBC News Country Profiles

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/4598376.stm

CIA World Factbook – Northern Mariana Islands

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cq.html>

The CNMI Guide – The History of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

<http://www.cnmi-guide.com/history/>

Joshua Project – Northern Mariana Islands

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php?rog3=CQ>

Nations Online – Northern Mariana Islands

http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/northern_mariana_islands.htm