

# THE PACIFIC ISLANDS MATTER FOR AMERICA MATTERS FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS



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EAST-WEST  
CENTER

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The **Office of Insular Affairs (OIA)** carries out the Secretary of the Interior's responsibilities for the US territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the US Virgin Islands. Additionally, OIA administers and oversees federal assistance under the Compacts of Free Association to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. OIA also administers a discretionary Technical Assistance Program for all the insular areas. Find information about OIA and its work on [www.doi.gov/oia](http://www.doi.gov/oia), Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube @InsularAffairs.

The United States has interests and relations across the Pacific Islands region. The highlighted portions of the cover map denote the eleven US territories and three countries with which the US has Compacts of Free Association.

## THE PACIFIC ISLANDS MATTER FOR AMERICA/AMERICA MATTERS FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

This project maps the trade, investment, employment, business, diplomacy, security, education, tourism, and people-to-people connections between the United States and the Pacific Island countries, including the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau as well as the US territories of American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam at the national, state, and local levels. The *Asia Matters for America* initiative is a collaborative partnership with US and Indo-Pacific government, private sector, and civil society stakeholders to recognize and advance the robust and dynamic US-Indo-Pacific relationship.

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**[AsiaMattersforAmerica.org/Pacific](https://AsiaMattersforAmerica.org/Pacific)**

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## Highlights

### THE PACIFIC REGION IN PROFILE

#### The Pacific Islands Region Spans 15% of the World's Surface Area

The region has a combined exclusive economic zone (EEZ) area of over 8 million square miles, and a combined land area smaller than the US state of Texas.

### PACIFIC ECONOMIES

#### Pacific Island Economies Have a Combined GDP of \$139 Billion

International trade is vital for economic prosperity for Pacific Island countries with trade making up an average of 108% of GDP.

### THE UNITED STATES AND THE PACIFIC

#### US Relations with the Pacific Span Over 150 Years

In the Pacific, there are 11 US territories, of which 10 are unincorporated. Of the 11, three have indigenous populations: American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands. In addition, the United States has signed Compacts of Free Association with three Pacific countries: the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Marshall Islands, and Palau.

### SECURITY

#### The United States Partners with Pacific Militaries and Law Enforcement

The US Coast Guard partners with 11 Pacific Island countries and the Cook Islands through maritime law enforcement agreements known as "Shiprider Agreements" which help combat illicit maritime activity in each country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

### AID

#### Under the Pacific Pledge, the US Government has Committed About \$350 Million in Assistance to the Pacific Island Countries

The United States provides significant levels of assistance under the Compacts to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau—approximately 80% of total annual US assistance to the region.

### TRADE

#### The United States Exports Over \$400 Million in Goods to Pacific Island Countries

Two-way trade between the United States and Pacific Island countries amounts to nearly \$832 million in a year.

## Highlights

### TRAVEL AND TOURISM

#### Over 250,000 US Tourists Visit Pacific Island Countries Annually

A majority of US tourists visit Fiji, contributing over \$100 million to the local economy.

### EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE

#### 57% of US Students who Studied in the Pacific Islands Studied in Fiji

Approximately 575 international students from Pacific Island countries studied in the United States. Tonga made up 28% of these students while Fiji accounted for 15%.

### POPULATION

#### California and Hawai'i Host Nearly 50% of the Pacific Islander Population in the United States

The population of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders is the 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest growing ethnic population after Asian alone at almost 73% and today's population is estimated to be about 1.4 million.

### SISTER PARTNERSHIPS AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

#### The United States Shares Eight Sister City Partnerships With Five Pacific Island Countries

The United States hosts more than 39 permanent exhibits across 16 states focused on art from the Pacific region.

# The Pacific Islands Region Spans 15% of the World’s Surface Area

A community grouped by ethno-geographic areas of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, the region has a combined exclusive economic zone (EEZ) area of over 8 million square miles and a combined land area smaller than the state of Texas. Despite occupying a significant share of the earth’s surface area, the countries and territories of the Pacific Islands region account for less than one percent of global population or GDP.

The region includes 12 Pacific Island Countries, namely: Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The nations of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau maintain a special relationship with the United States as Freely Associated States (FAS).

## MAP OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION



In addition to the state of Hawai’i, there are 11 US territories in the Pacific, including American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands. France has three overseas collectivities in the Pacific: New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and the Wallis and Futuna Islands. The United Kingdom and New Zealand also have territories in the region— the Pitcairn Islands and Tokelau, respectively.

Sources: 2019 Data unless otherwise noted from the World Bank; CIA World Factbook; The Sea Around Us; US Census; Hawai’i Health Matters.

Numbers rounded throughout. All monetary values are in US\$ unless otherwise noted. Whenever possible, the most recent available data is used. All Land and EEZ areas converted from km² using the formula km²/2.59.

Note: This report will focus on the 12 Pacific Island member countries of the United Nations listed above in addition to the US State of Hawai’i and US territories of American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam.



■ = US Territory ■ = US State ■ = US Freely Associated States/Sovereign Countries  
■ = Pacific Island Countries

## THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

Total Regional Population: 13 million

Average Regional Life Expectancy for the Region: 73.7 years

Major Religions: Protestant; Roman Catholic; Evangelical

Total Regional GDP (Current USD): \$139 billion; Average Regional GDP Per Capita: \$12,000

Total Land Area for the Region: 210,573 mi<sup>2</sup>; Total EEZ Area for the Region: 8,044,197 mi<sup>2</sup>

### AMERICAN SAMOA



Capital: Pago Pago

Population: 55,000

Political Regime: Unincorporated

Unorganized Territory of the US

Major Religion: Christian

Official Language: Samoan (Common)

Life Expectancy: 72.3 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$636 million (2018)/

\$11,467 (2018)

Land Area/EEZ Area: 77 mi<sup>2</sup>/156,126 mi<sup>2</sup>

### FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA



Capital: Palikir

Population: 114,000

Political Regime: Federal Republic in Free

Association with the US

Major Religions: Roman Catholic; Congregational

Official Language: , Chuukese, Pohnpeian,

Kosraen, and Yapese

Life Expectancy: 73.9 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$401.93 million (2018)/

\$3,568 (2018)

Land Area/EEZ Area: 271 mi<sup>2</sup>/1,155,373 mi<sup>2</sup>

### HAWAII



Capital: Honolulu

Population: 1.4 million

Political Regime: One of the States of the United States

Major Religions: Evangelical Protestant; Unaffiliated

Official Languages: English; Hawaiian

Life Expectancy: 81.3 years (2018)

GDP/Per Capita: \$95.74 billion/\$58,981

Land Area/EEZ Area: 6,423 mi<sup>2</sup>/955,476 mi<sup>2</sup>

### FIJI



Capital: Suva

Population: 890,000

Political Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Major Religions: Methodist; Hinduism

Official Languages: English; Fijian

Life Expectancy: 73.7 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$5.5 billion/\$6,175

Land Area/EEZ Area: 7,078 mi<sup>2</sup>/494,866 mi<sup>2</sup>

### GUAM



Capital: Hagåtña

Population: 167,000

Political Regime: Unincorporated Organized Territory of the US

Major Religion: Roman Catholic

Official Languages: English (Common); Filipino

(Common); Chamorro (Common)

Life Expectancy: 77 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$5.92 billion (2018)/

\$35,713 (2018)

Land Area/EEZ Area: 209 mi<sup>2</sup>/85,675 mi<sup>2</sup>

### KIRIBATI



Capital: Tarawa

Population: 118,000

Political Regime: Presidential Republic

Major Religions: Roman Catholic; Kiribati

Uniting Church

Official Languages: English, I-Kiribati (Common)

Life Expectancy: 67.5 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$194.65 million/\$1,655

Land Area/EEZ Area: 313 mi<sup>2</sup>/1,327,078 mi<sup>2</sup>

### MARSHALL ISLANDS



Capital: Majuro

Population: 59,000

Political Regime: Constitutional Government in Free Association with the US

Major Religions: United Church of Christ;

Assembly of God

Official Languages: Marshallese; English

Life Expectancy: 74.1

GDP/Per Capita: \$221.28 million (2018)/

\$3,788 (2018)

Land Area/EEZ Area: 70 mi<sup>2</sup>/769,120 mi<sup>2</sup>

### NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS



Capital: Saipan

Population: 57,000

Political Regime: A commonwealth in political union with and under the US

Major Religions: Roman Catholic

Official Languages: English; Chamorro

Life Expectancy: 76.1 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$1.32 billion (2018)/

\$23,259 (2018)

Land Area/EEZ Area: 176 mi<sup>2</sup>/289,138 mi<sup>2</sup>

### PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Capital: Port Moresby

Population: 8.8 million

Political Regime: Parliamentary Democracy under a Constitutional Monarchy

Major Religions: Roman Catholic; Evangelical

Official Languages: Tok Pisin, English, Hiri Motu

Life Expectancy: 67.8 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$24.83 billion/\$2,829

Land Area/EEZ Area: 178,703 mi<sup>2</sup>/925,319 mi<sup>2</sup>

### SOLOMON ISLANDS



Capital: Honiara

Population: 670,000

Political Regime: Parliamentary Democracy under a Constitutional Monarchy

Major Religions: Church of Melanesia; Roman

Catholic; South Sea Evangelical

Official Languages: English; Melanesian pidgin (lingua franca)

Life Expectancy: 76.2 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$1.59 billion/\$2,374

Land Area/EEZ Area: 10,900 mi<sup>2</sup>/616,395 mi<sup>2</sup>

### TUVALU



Capital: Funafuti

Population: 12,000

Political Regime: Parliamentary Democracy under a Constitutional Monarchy

Major Religion: Congregational Christian Church of Tuvalu

Official Languages: Tuvaluan; English

Life Expectancy: 67.9 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$47.27 million/\$4,059

Land Area/EEZ Area: 10 mi<sup>2</sup>/290,221 mi<sup>2</sup>

### NAURU



Capital: Yaren

Population: 13,000

Political Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Major Religions: Nauru Congregational; Roman

Catholic

Official Languages: Nauruan; English (Common)

Life Expectancy: 68.4 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$118.22 million/\$9,397

Land Area/EEZ Area: 8 mi<sup>2</sup>/119,114 mi<sup>2</sup>

### PALAU



Capital: Ngerulmud

Population: 18,000

Political Regime: Presidential Republic in Free Association with the US

Major Religions: Roman Catholic; Evangelical

Official Languages: Palauan; English

Life Expectancy: 74.1 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$268 million (2018)/

\$15,859 (2018)

Land Area/EEZ Area: 171 mi<sup>2</sup>/233,302 mi<sup>2</sup>

### SAMOA



Capital: Apia

Population: 197,000

Political Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Major Religions: Congregational; Roman

Catholic; Church of Latter-day Saints

Official Languages: Samoan (Polynesian); English

Life Expectancy: 74.7 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$852.25 million/\$4,324

Land Area/EEZ Area: 1,133 mi<sup>2</sup>/50,786 mi<sup>2</sup>

### TONGA



Capital: Nuku'alofa

Population: 105,000

Political Regime: Constitutional Monarchy

Major Religions: Free Wesleyan Church;

Church of Latter-day Saints; Roman Catholic;

Free Church of Tonga

Official Languages: Tongan; English

Life Expectancy: 77 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$512.35 million/\$4,903

Land Area/EEZ Area: 289 mi<sup>2</sup>/256,661 mi<sup>2</sup>

### VANUATU



Capital: Port Vila

Population: 300,000

Political Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Major Religions: Presbyterian; Anglican;

Seventh Day Adventist

Official Languages: Bislama (official; creole);

English; French

Life Expectancy: 74.6 years

GDP/Per Capita: \$934.24 million/\$3,115




Land Area/EEZ Area: 4,742 mi<sup>2</sup>/319,547 mi<sup>2</sup>

# Pacific Island Economies Have a Combined GDP of \$139 Billion

Economic development in the Pacific Islands region varies greatly between nations. Excluding Hawai'i, Papua New Guinea has the largest GDP at \$23.4 billion and Tuvalu the smallest at just under \$43 million. The per capita GDP also varies widely with Palau having the largest (\$15,859) and Kiribati the smallest (\$1,655). The per capita GDP of US territories average \$32,156.

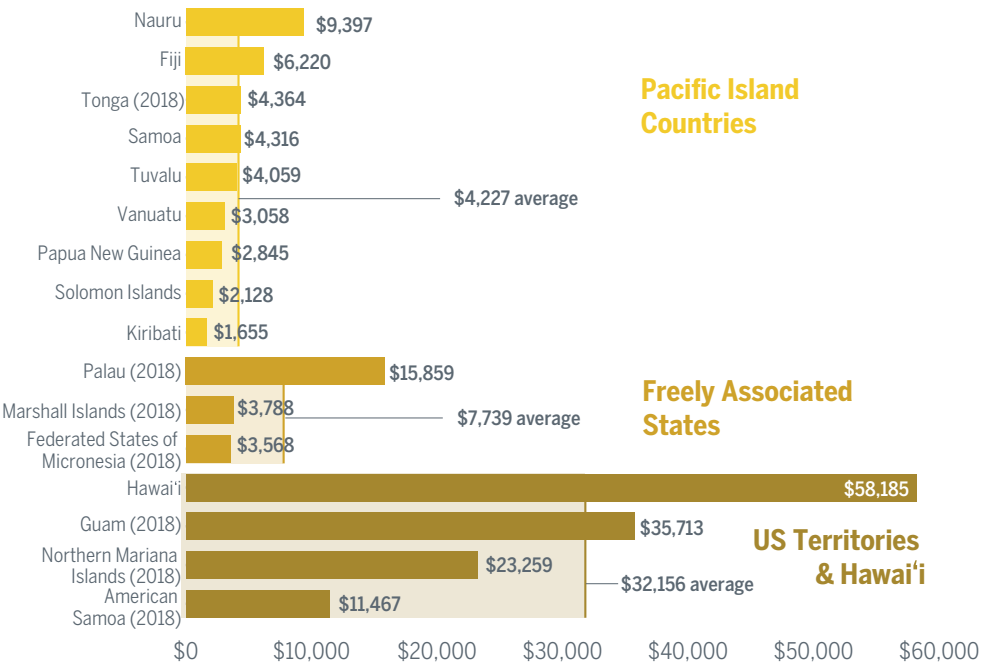
Currency usage in the region shows the strong relationships between Pacific Island countries and international allies. The Freely Associated States of the United States utilize the US Dollar while the former British protectorates of Kiribati and Tuvalu use the Australian Dollar along with Nauru, a former Australian Trust Territory. Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Samoa, Vanuatu, and Tonga all mint their own currencies which are

## REGIONAL CURRENCIES USAGE

 <p><b>Australian Dollar</b> AUD Floating</p> <p>Kiribati Nauru Tuvalu</p>	 <p><b>Fiji Dollar</b> FJD Pegged (Basket)</p> <p>Fiji</p>	 <p><b>Kina</b> PGK Floating</p> <p>Papua New Guinea</p>	 <p><b>Solomon Islands Dollar</b> SBD Pegged (Basket)</p> <p>Solomon Islands</p>
 <p><b>Tālā</b> WST Pegged (Basket)</p> <p>Samoa</p>	 <p><b>Tongan pa'anga</b> TOP Pegged (Basket)</p> <p>Tonga</p>	 <p><b>US Dollar</b> USD Floating</p> <p>Marshall Islands Federated States of Micronesia Palau American Samoa Guam The Northern Mariana Islands Hawai'i</p>	 <p><b>Vatu</b> VUV Floated (Basket)</p> <p>Vanuatu</p>

pegged to a basket of currencies including the US Dollar, Australian Dollar, Japanese Yen, and Euro. The Papua New Guinea Kina is the only free-floating currency in the Pacific with the Vanuatu Vatu floated within a basket of currencies.

## GDP PER CAPITA



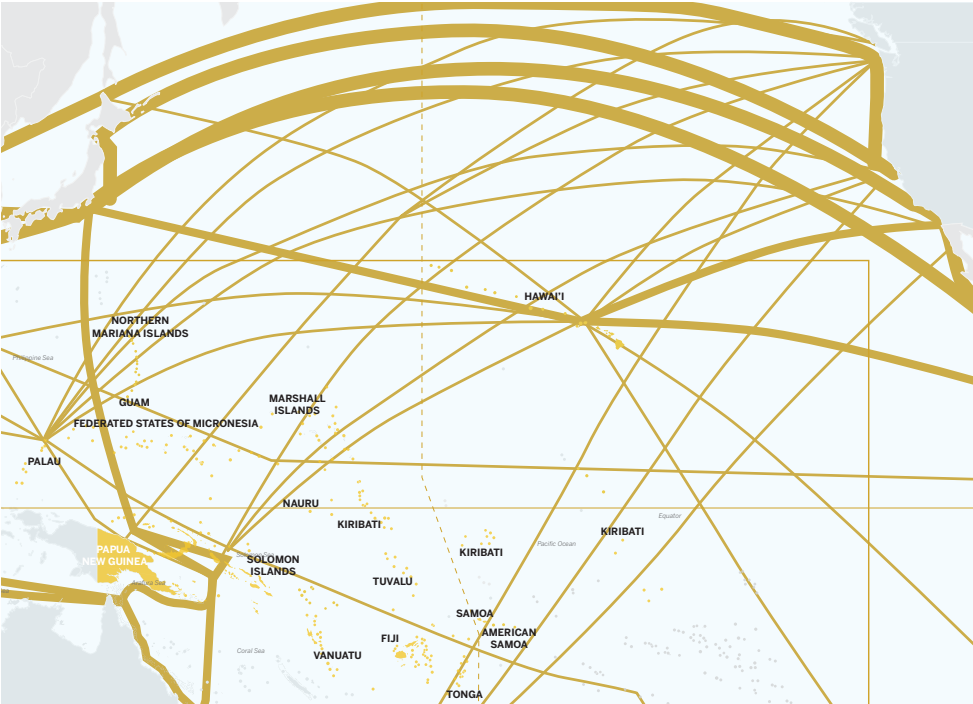
Sources: World Bank GDP Per Capita, 2019 data used unless otherwise noted

As global maritime trade expands, the Pacific Island economies have some of the world's lowest container shipping connectivity rates and infrequent port calls. Comparatively low trade volumes have discouraged investments in better maritime transport connectivity and the region is continuously bypassed by the major Trans-Pacific East-West container routes which runs north of Hawai'i.

The Port of Honolulu in Hawai'i serves as a major transshipment stop for container shipments between the United States and the Pacific region. The Commercial Port of Guam serves as the transshipment hub of the West Pacific seeing over 100,000 containers annually and serving over 500,000 residents in the Western Pacific. Ports in both Fiji and Papua New Guinea also act as strategic transshipment hubs for cargo traded between Pacific Island countries and Australia and New Zealand.

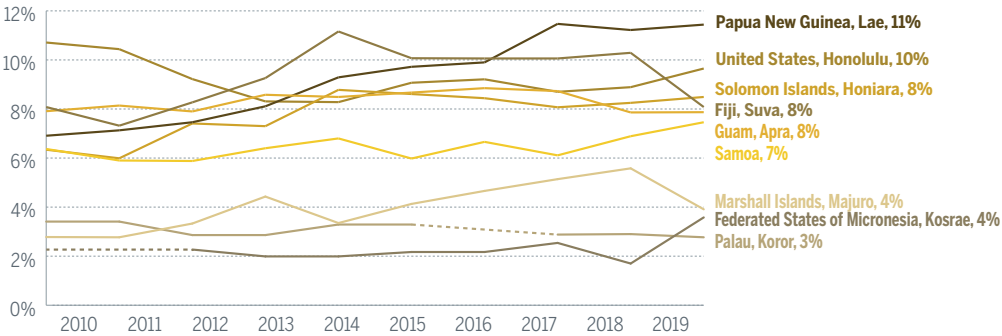
International trade is vital for economic prosperity for Pacific Island Countries, with trade making up an average of 108% of GDP. Despite exports making up a sizable portion of most Pacific Island Countries' economies, imports and exports per capita remain some of the lowest in the world.

MAJOR SEA LANES IN THE PACIFIC

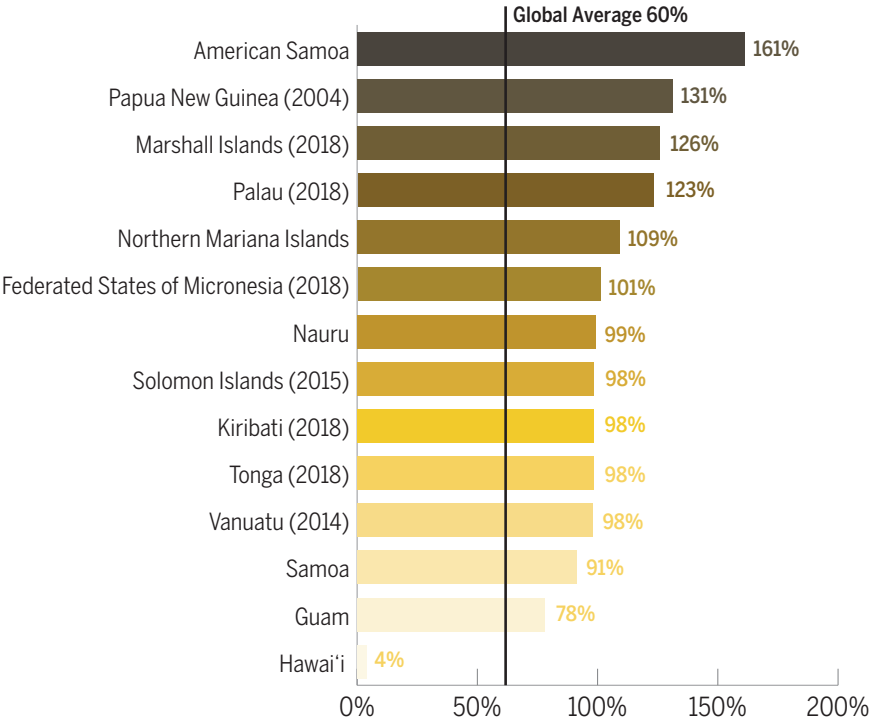


Source Shipping Connectivity: UNCTAD Linear Shipping Connectivity Index

SHIPPING CONNECTIVITY IN THE PACIFIC REGION



TRADE AS A SHARE OF GDP IN THE PACIFIC REGION



Note: The table presents the liner shipping connectivity index (LSCI), which indicates a country's integration level into global liner shipping networks. The LSCI is an index set at 100 for the maximum value of country connectivity in the first quarter of 2006, which was China.

# US Relations with the Pacific Span Over 150 Years

The United States has eight embassies in the Pacific, which serve 14 Pacific Island countries including Australia and New Zealand.

International affairs between the United States and Pacific Island countries are handled by the State Department's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs as well as US embassies located in the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, and Samoa. As set forth in the Compacts of Free Association, the United States provides significant assistance to the Freely Associated States. This assistance is overseen by the Department of the Interior and its Office of Insular Affairs.

The US Congressional Pacific Islands Caucus and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus work to represent Pacific interests in Congress, along with two representatives, and two senators, from Hawai'i and one non-voting representative each from the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

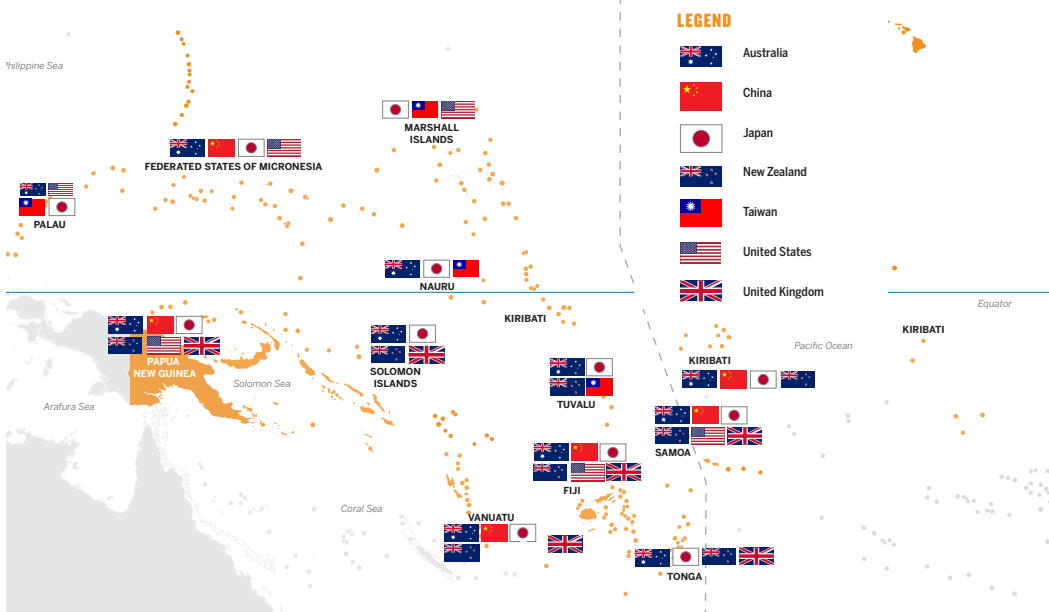
The United States is also a member of Pacific regional bodies including the Pacific Island Conference of Leaders, the Pacific Community (SPC), the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The United States is a Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Dialogue Partner and meets annually with PIF members at senior levels. The United States also works with the Pacific Island countries within international institutions such as the United Nations. Despite low voting concurrence with the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) voting bloc, the United States and PSIDS agree on a number of key issues revolving around the Law of the Sea and support for PSIDS regional institutions.

The United States cooperates closely with a number of likeminded partners in the Pacific Islands, including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Taiwan. In 2018, the United States joined the governments of Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea to launch the Papua New Guinea Electrification Partnership to bring electricity to 70% of Papua New Guinea by 2030. Taiwan and the United States partner through the Pacific Island Dialogue to explore ways to meet the development needs of Taiwan's four diplomatic partners in the Pacific: Marshall Islands, Palau, Tuvalu, and Nauru. In 2018, the United States and Japan held the 2<sup>nd</sup> US-Japan Pacific Dialogue, at which the United States and Japan exchanged views on a wide range of common regional challenges facing the Pacific region, and discussed ways to strengthen cooperation among Japan, the United States, Pacific Island countries, and other regional partners and organizations in areas such as maritime law enforcement and quality infrastructure and best value solutions.

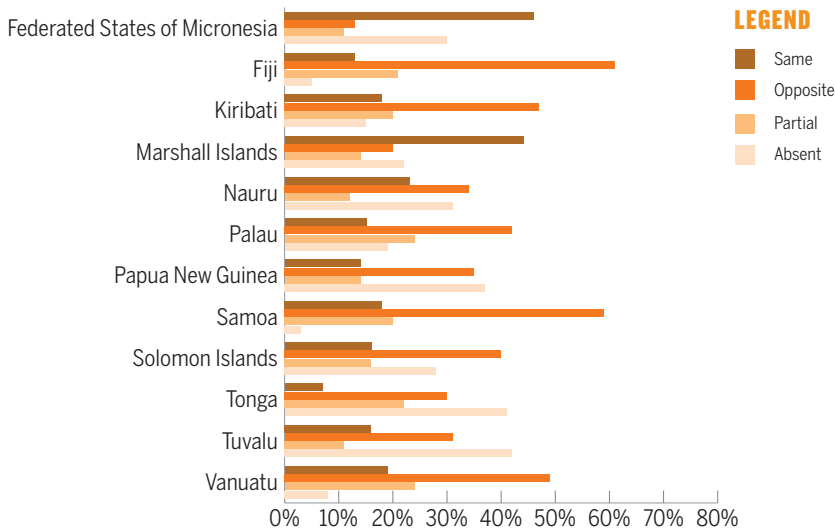
Sources: Embassy websites of China, Japan, Australia, and the US. Taiwan list of diplomatic partners; United Nations Digital Library 2019 data.

## EMBASSIES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Locations of embassies from major Indo-Pacific economies as of 2020



## UNITED NATIONS VOTING CONCURRENCE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

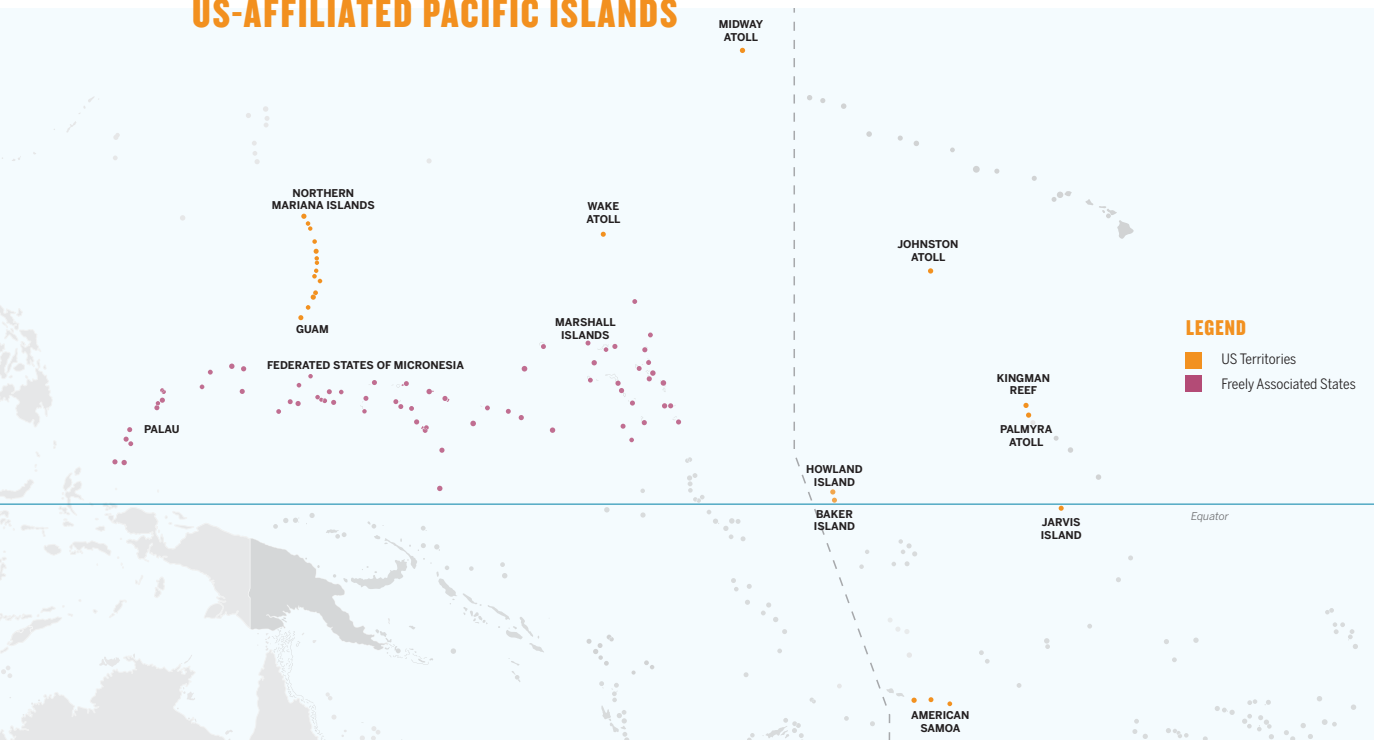


US TERRITORIES IN THE PACIFIC

In the Pacific there are 11 US territories, of which ten are unincorporated: American Samoa, Baker Island, Guam, Howland Island, Jarvis Island, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef, Midway Atoll, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Wake Atoll. With a limited, non-indigenous population, Palmyra Atoll is the only incorporated US territory. Formerly the Mariana Islands District of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI), the Northern Mariana Islands voted in 1975 to enter into permanent union with the United States, and its status as a TTPI district ended in 1986.

Three Pacific Island countries, also known as the Freely Associated States (FAS), which are the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau, were also part of the former TTPI. These islands also voted on their status and now hold special relationships with the United States deriving from their respective Compacts of Free Association (Compact). Each Compact gives the United States responsibility for security and defense matters in or relating to each of the three countries, including the ability to deny other countries’ militaries and their personnel access to those countries. These agreements cover a number of other matters, and as part of these broad agreements, the FAS also receive annual US grant assistance. The United States contributes to jointly established Trust Funds for the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands and has made contributions to Palau’s Trust Fund. Citizens of the FAS are allowed visa-free entry into the United States and enlist in the US military in numbers disproportionate to the size of their populations.

US-AFFILIATED PACIFIC ISLANDS



Source: US Department of the Interior

UNITED STATES SOVEREIGNTY IN THE PACIFIC		
Country	Date	Designation
Jarvis Island	1856	US Territory
Baker Island	1857	US Territory
Howland Island	1857	US Territory
Johnston Atoll	1858	US Territory
Kingman Reef	1860	US Territory
Midway Atoll	1867	US Territory
Palmyra Atoll	1898	US Territory
Wake Atoll	1899	US Territory
Guam	1898	US Territory
American Samoa	1900	US Territory
Hawai'i	1898	US State
Northern Mariana Islands	1986	US Commonwealth



# Historical Timeline

1893

**On January 17, the Committee of Safety proclaimed itself to be the Provisional Government of Hawai'i.** Supported by US Minister to Hawai'i John Stevens and a contingent of Marines from the USS Boston warship, the Committee overthrew the Hawaiian Kingdom's Queen Lili'uokalani in a bloodless coup.

1900

**American Samoa Becomes a US Territory** when the *matai* (chiefs) of Tutuila and Aunu'u sign the Deed of Cession for their islands. *Tui* (King) Manu'a ceded his islands in 1904. The US Congress acknowledged US sovereignty over Swains Island in 1925.

1946

**Nuclear Testing** begins at the Bikini and Enewetak atolls in the Marshall Islands. They became the main sites of the "Pacific Proving Grounds" and Operation Ivy in 1952, which saw the first test of a hydrogen bomb. In 1958 the US Department of Defense ended its nuclear weapons testing in the Marshall Islands.

1959

**Hawai'i Becomes the 50<sup>th</sup> US State**

1980

**The Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders (PICL) summit** is founded as a forum for Pacific Islands leaders to address shared issues, learn from each other's experiences, and develop common approaches to policy.

1994

**The Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Ends** after Palau votes to enter into a Compact of Free Association with the United States. The Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia voted similarly in 1986, and the Northern Mariana Islands voted to become a US Commonwealth rather than seek independence in 1974.

1850 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020

1838

**US Scientific Expedition Explores the Pacific**, mapping islands and collecting plant samples over the course of four years.

1853

**The US Establishes Its First Diplomatic Mission to the Kingdom of Hawai'i.**

1856

**The Guano Act is Passed**, allowing the US to annex Baker Island, Howland Island, Jarvis Island, and the Johnston Atoll.

1899

**Spanish-American War Peace Treaty is Signed**, ceding control of Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam to the US.

1941 - 1945

**In WWII and the Pacific Theater**, over 104,000 American servicemen die, 200,000 are wounded, and 52,000 go missing.

1947

**The Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands is Created** by the United Nations and administered by the United States.

1986

**The Pacific Island Health Officers' Association is Established**

2014

**The Pacific Pathways Program is Launched** to improve US Army readiness through a series of multinational military exercises based in the Pacific.

1941

**DECEMBER 7, 1941**  
**Bombing of Pearl Harbor**

1942

**MAY 4-8, 1942**  
**The Battle of Coral Sea**

**JUNE 4-7, 1942**  
**Battle of Midway**

1943

**AUGUST 7, 1942 - FEBRUARY 9, 1943**  
**The Battle of Guadalcanal**

**NOVEMBER 20-23, 1943**  
**Battle of Tarawa**

1944

1945

**SEPTEMBER 2, 1945**  
**Japan Formally Surrenders**

1966

**The First Pacific Peace Corps Program** is established in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Marshall Islands, and Palau. Though the Program is no longer active in FSM and Palau, it continues in the South Pacific.

2019

**The US Government Announces More Than \$100 Million in New US Assistance to the Region** under the Pacific Pledge of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, representing the US commitment to the Pacific Islands. In 2020, the United States announces more than \$200 million in new funding as part of the Pacific Pledge.

2019

**The Freely Associated States Make First White House visit** when Palau President Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr., then-RMI President Hilda C. Heine, and FSM President David W. Panuelo are invited by the US president. This is the first time that all three leaders from the Freely Associated States are hosted together at the White House by a United States president. The leaders also meet the Secretary of the Interior in affirmation of the DOI's unique role and responsibilities in the relationship.

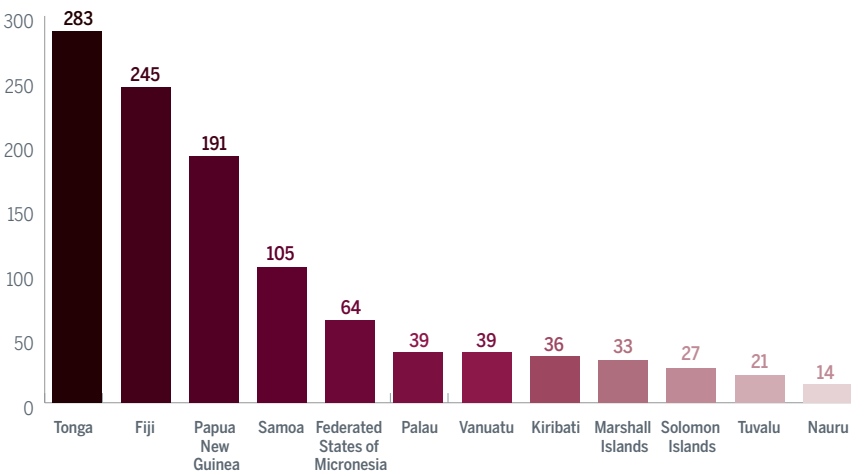
# The United States Partners with Pacific Militaries and Law Enforcement

There are three Pacific countries with standing militaries – Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga – and the United States partners with each. This includes multilateral exercises such as Koa Moana and the Pacific Pathways Programs, and bilateral partnerships such as shiprider agreements, defense agreements, and training and engagement activities.





Additional cooperation includes National Guard State Partnership programs between two US states and three Pacific Island Countries, as well as one between the US territory of Guam and the Philippines. The US Coast Guard partners with 11 Pacific Island countries through shiprider agreements which help enforce global maritime law enforcement gaps and combat illegal activity in each country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The US Coast Guard is planning to send new fast-cutters to US territories in the Pacific. The US Department of Defense has also trained more than 1,000 students from Pacific Island Countries as part of their foreign military training and engagement activities since 2010.

The largest US combatant command, US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) is based in Hawai'i. Bases on the US territory of Guam support 5,000 soldiers and serve as a strategic hub for operations and logistics for the region. A Marine Air Ground Task Force of 5,000 US Marines is also set to be established by 2025 as part of the US-Japan realignment plan. The United States also operates the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site, which conducts long-range missile testing and provides space surveillance to US forces on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

## STUDENTS BY COUNTRY PARTICIPATING IN US FOREIGN MILITARY TRAINING AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES SINCE 2010



## US-PACIFIC SECURITY ALLIES AND PARTNERS

THE FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES Compact of Free Association		
Federated States of Micronesia	Marshall Islands	Palau
		
DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT		
Fiji		
		

## MULTILATERAL EXERCISES AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE PACIFIC

Pacific Pathways Program				Koa Moana Exercise		
						
Fiji	Guam	Hawai'i	Palau	Palau		
US Coast Guard Shiprider Program						
						
Cook Islands	Fiji	Kiribati	Marshall Islands	Micronesia	Nauru	Palau
						
Samoa	Tonga	Tuvalu	Vanuatu			
NATIONAL GUARD STATE PARTNERSHIPS						
Fiji and Nevada		Tonga and Nevada		Papua New Guinea and Wisconsin		Guam and the Philippines
						

Sources: INDOPACOM; US Marine Corps, US Coast Guard, US National Guard  
Source: Foreign Military Training and DOD Engagement Activities of Interest publications 2009-2019

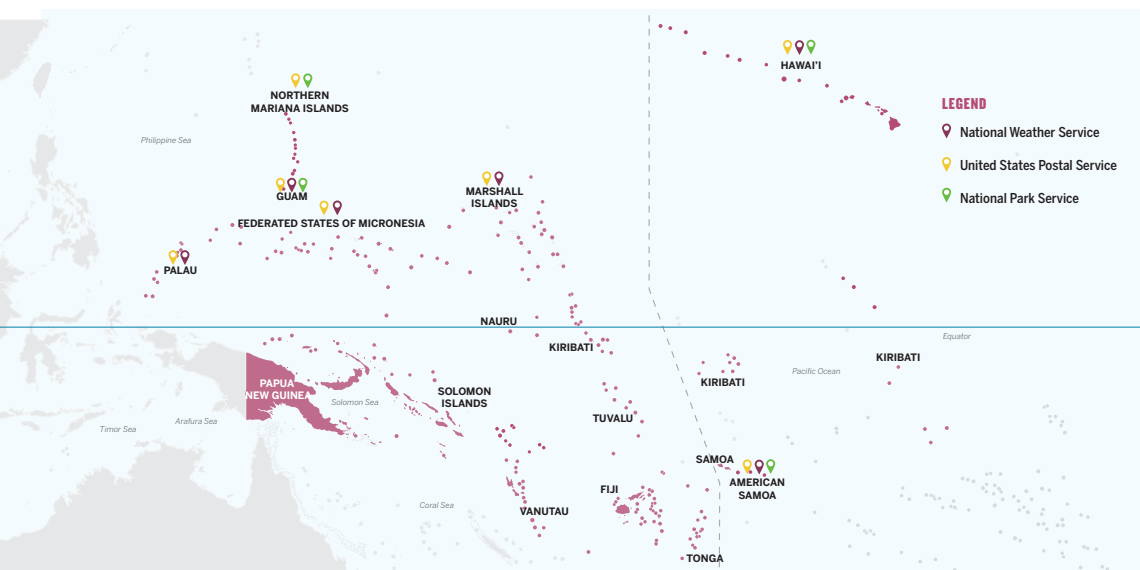
## Under the Pacific Pledge, the US Government has Committed About \$350 Million in Assistance to the Pacific Island Countries

In 2020, the United States provided \$130 million for COVID-19 response and \$78 million for security, governance, and economic programs. This assistance is on top of the approximately \$350 million annually that US agencies invest in projects, assistance, and operations to build a more prosperous future for people in the region.

The United States provides significant levels of assistance under the Compacts to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau—approximately 80% of annual US assistance to the region. These three countries are also eligible for a large number of federal government programs, grants, and services typically available only to US states and territories.

The Department of State provides \$21 million annually to the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and countries across the region to support economic development, fisheries, and environmental cooperation related the 1987 Treaty on Fisheries (South Pacific Tuna Treaty).

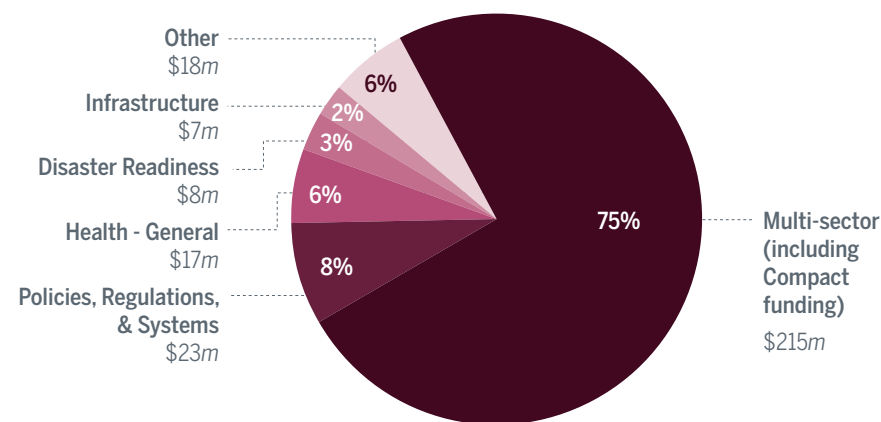
### FEDERAL SERVICES IN THE PACIFIC



Aid to US territories comes in the form of grants, with Guam and American Samoa receiving \$37.4 million and \$28.6 million, respectively, accounting for 93% of grants given to US territories in the Pacific. These grants often go towards programs such as coral reef protection, measles prevention and vaccination, and ferry repairs. US territories received approximately \$14 million through the CARES Act which delivered support for infrastructure, technology, and training to combat COVID-19.

The National Weather Service (NWS) maintains its Pacific Region Headquarters in Honolulu, Hawai'i with branch offices in American Samoa, Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau. The United States Postal Service serves both US territories and the Freely Associated States as domestic locations. The National Park Service maintains parks in American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

### SECTOR BREAKDOWN OF US AID TO PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES



Sources: USAID Aid by Country FY2018, Department of Interior 2020, National Weather Service, National Park Service, US Postal Service, NOAA



ENVIRONMENTAL AID

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) engages in a Pacific Regional Climate Services program that delivers tools and information to communities and businesses to reduce climate risk and improve resiliency.

The US Geological Survey, USAID, and NOAA actively support monitoring and provide early warning systems for natural hazards in the Pacific. NOAA also provides training so that weather forecasters and emergency managers from Pacific countries can make use of the most advanced meteorological data available.

USAID programs in the Pacific Islands bolster the region’s ability to mitigate and prepare for natural disasters, improve health outcomes, empower women, and strengthen democratic institutions. USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, the Defense Department, and the US Coast Guard support humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exercises in the Pacific. USAID assistance to the Pacific totaled nearly \$53 million in FY2019, including more than \$15 million in disaster assistance and disaster risk reduction programming.

In 2019, the United States committed \$10 million in new State Department assistance to improve disaster resilience, weather forecasting, and to address environmental challenges to increase prosperity and safeguard economic security in the Pacific region. Through this program, the Department of State works with interagency partners—including NOAA, the US Forest Service, US Department of Agriculture, and US Environmental Protection Agency—to support resilience work with the Pacific Islands.

SELECTED STORY: PACIFIC RISA

The Pacific Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments (RISA) program is a NOAA research grant based at the East-West Center in Hawai‘i works with resource managers, policymakers, and communities throughout Hawai‘i and the US-Affiliated Pacific Islands (USAPI) to enhance Pacific communities’ abilities to understand, plan for, and respond to changing climate conditions. Since 2010 Pacific RISA has run more than 30 unique projects, most of which span between two to five years and work with a diverse network of regional decision-makers and natural resource managers. Since 2015, the program has tracked an average of seven instances of policy applications per year.

Pacific RISA has 55 team members and partners across the US-Affiliated Pacific Islands and has produced four Pacific Islands Regional Climate Assessment (PIRCA) reports.

PEACE CORPS

Since 1966, the Peace Corps have worked in 10 Pacific Island countries. However only four programs in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu remain active. The Peace Corps and Solomon Islands announced plans for the re-establishment of a Peace Corps program in 2021, almost 20 years after the previous program closed.

Over 13,000 volunteers have served in Pacific Island countries since the program’s inception. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which halted all Peace Corps activities in the region, volunteers in Pacific Island countries accounted for 5% of all Peace Corps volunteers globally. Active projects in the region include education and English literacy, health, and youth development.

PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS IN THE PACIFIC REGION*		
Country	Dates Active	Volunteers to Date
Federated States of Micronesia & Palau	1966-2018	4,416
Fiji	1968–1998, 2003–Present	2,558
Kiribati	1974-2008	491
Marshall Islands	1966-1996	149
Papua New Guinea	1981-2001	698
Samoa	1967-Present	1,904
Solomon Islands	1971-2000	742
Tonga	1967-Present	1,730
Tuvalu	1977-1997	43
Vanuatu	1990-Present	855

\* All Peace Corps activity has been halted due to the COVID-19 crisis  
Source: Peace Corps, 2020

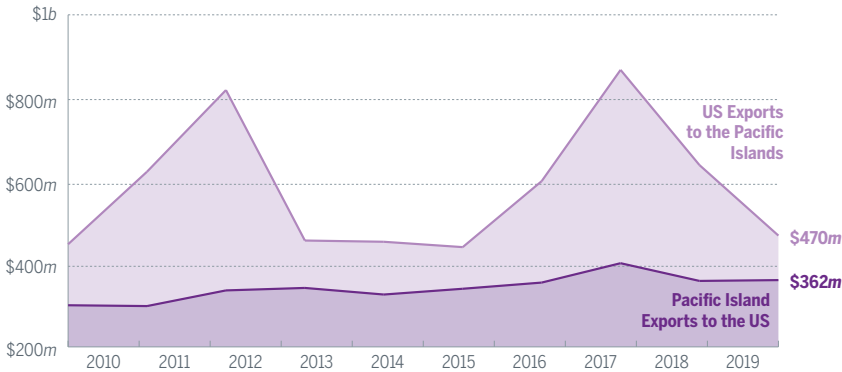
# The United States Exports Over \$400 Million in Goods to Pacific Island Countries

Two-way trade between the United States and Pacific Island Countries amounts to nearly \$832 million in a year. The United States’ largest trade partner in the Pacific Islands region is Fiji with \$350 million in trade. The Marshall Islands is the largest recipient of US exports in the region with over \$105 million in goods. The United States maintains a positive trade balance with the Pacific Islands region, exporting \$108 million more than it imports. Hawai’i and the US territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands are key trade partners with Indo-Pacific and Pacific Island Countries, with all four conducting over 50% of their international trade with Asian or Pacific trade partners.

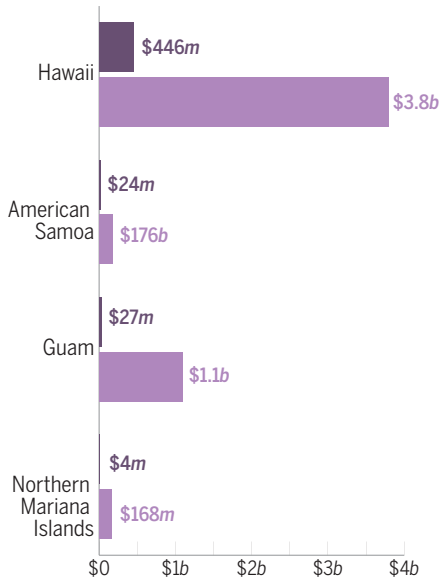
## PACIFIC ISLAND GOODS EXPORTS TO THE UNITED STATES BY COUNTRY



# US TRADE WITH THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION



## IMPORTS/EXPORTS

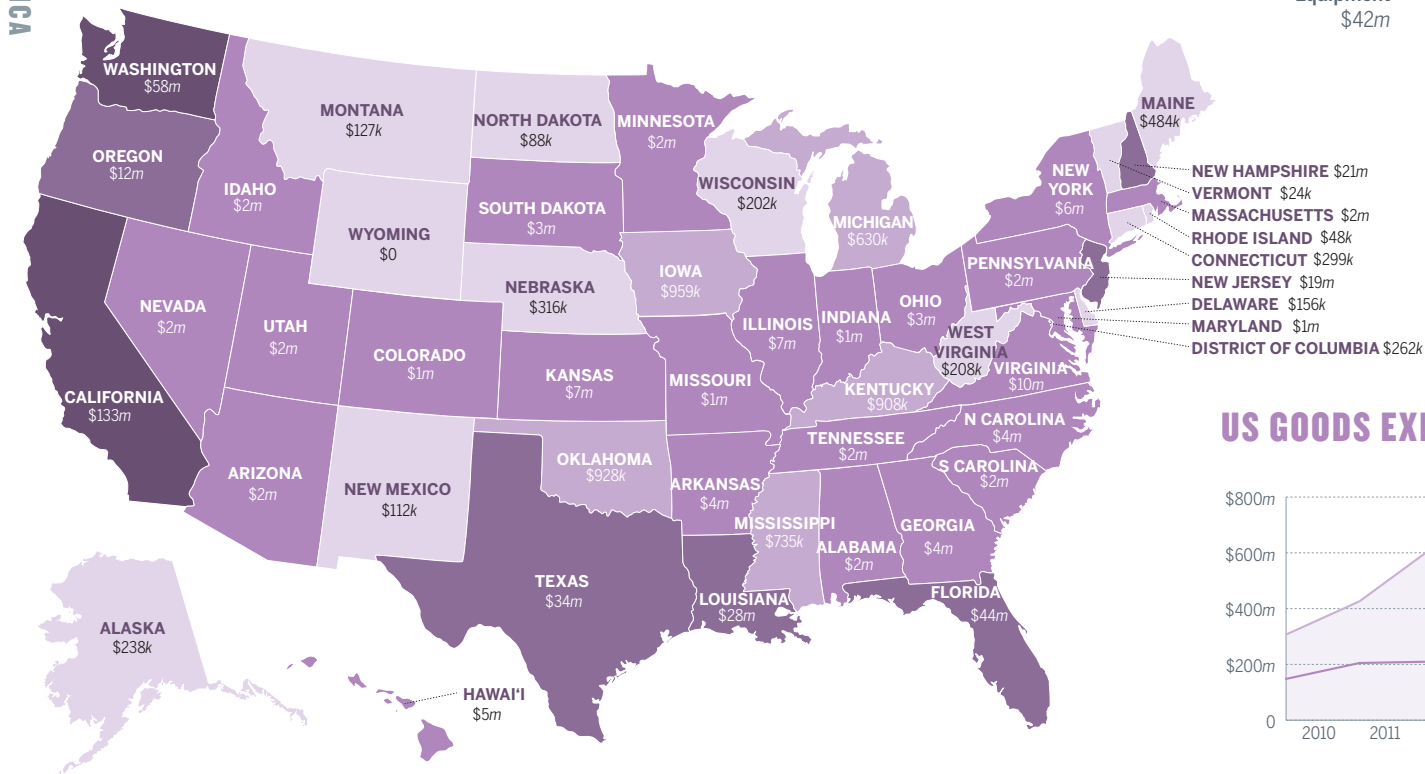


Sources: International Trade Administration, 2019 data; Office of US Trade Representative

California is the top exporter of goods to the Pacific Islands Countries, exporting \$128 million in goods in a year. California's goods exports make up over 30% of US goods exports to Pacific Island Countries. With the addition of Washington, the two states combined make up 46% of US goods exports to the Pacific Islands.

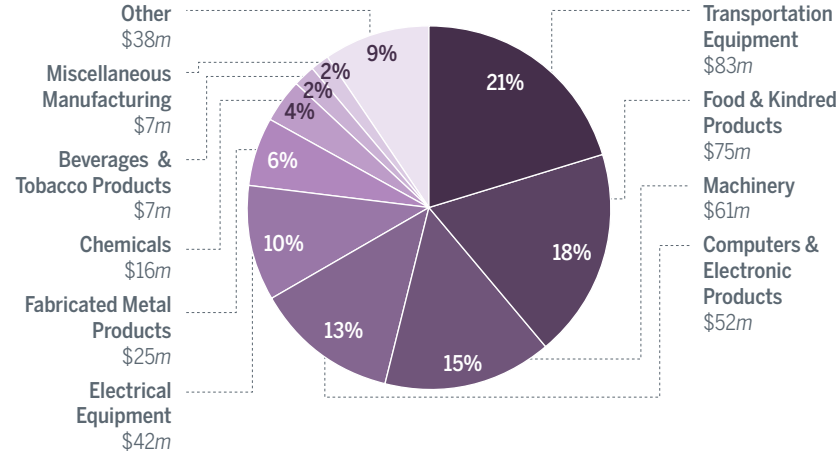
Transportation equipment is the largest export sector to Pacific Island Countries, accounting for 20% of all US exports to the region. Food, machinery, computers, and electrical equipment each account for more than 10% of exports.

### US GOODS EXPORTS TO PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES BY STATE



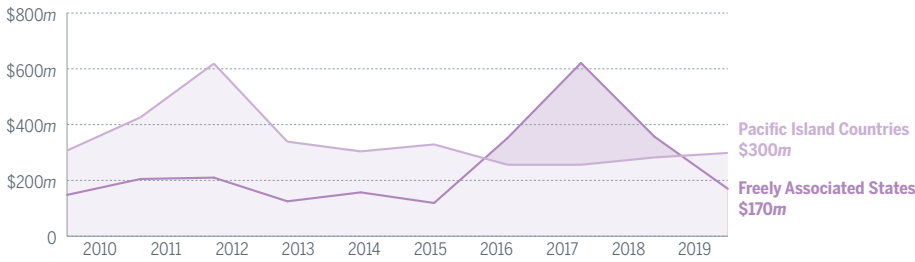
Source: Estimated by the Trade Partnership (Washington, DC), 2019 data

### US GOODS EXPORTS TO THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION BY SECTOR



- LEGEND**
- \$499 thousand or less
  - \$500 - 999 thousand
  - \$1 - 10 million
  - \$11 - 50 million
  - \$51 million or more

### US GOODS EXPORTS TO PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

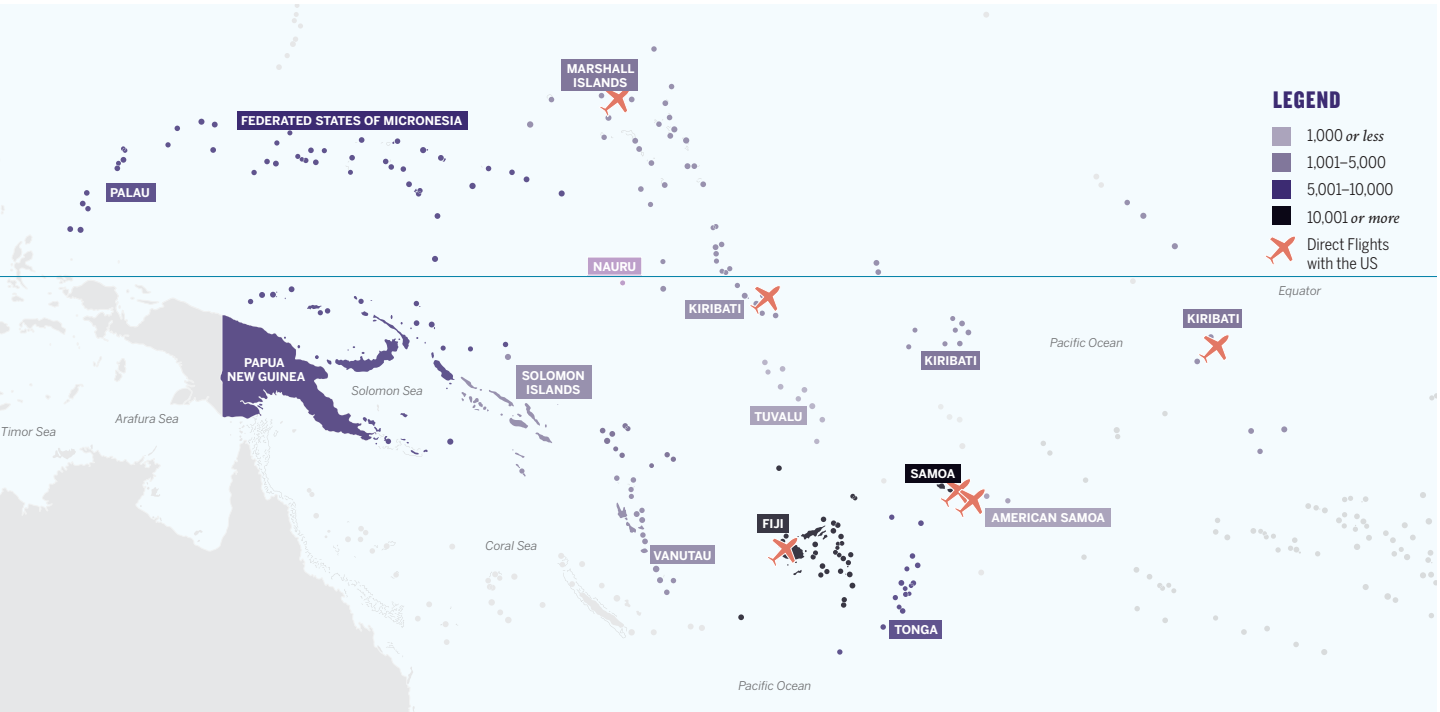


# Over 250,000 US Tourists Visit Pacific Island Countries Annually

A majority of US tourists visit Fiji, contributing over \$100 million to the local economy. Tourism is a significant export of many Pacific Island Countries. In Fiji, the tourism sector accounts for 17% of GDP. The small country of Tuvalu is the least visited country in the world, with less than 2,000 visitors a year—mainly from Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji. Fewer than 200 Americans visit Tuvalu a year.

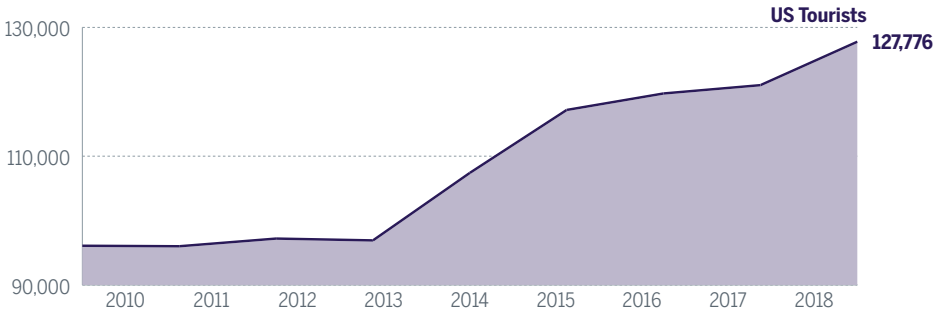
US tourism to Pacific Island Countries has been growing for a decade. The top countries visited include Fiji, Samoa, and Papua New Guinea. Palau receives the most US tourists of the Freely Associated States with over 7,000 visitors a year. Direct flights connect California and Hawai'i to four Pacific Island Countries: Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, and Samoa.

## US TOURISTS TO PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

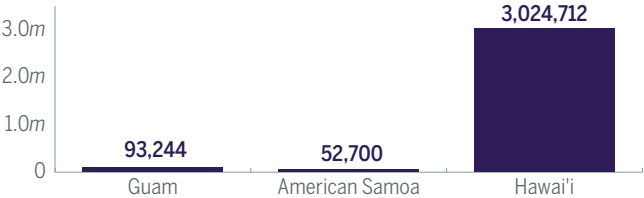


Sources: Fiji Government Website, UNWTO 2019

# GROWTH OF US TOURISM TO THE PACIFIC ISLANDS



## INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS TO US TERRITORIES AND HAWAII



## SELECTED STORIES: PACIFIC ISLANDS TOURISM FELLOWSHIP

Since 2018, the East-West Center's Pacific Islands Tourism Professional Fellows Program has welcomed 96 tourism industry professionals from Pacific Island countries to build upon professional skills and develop tourism connections between the US and the Pacific. Grants for this program have totaled to approximately \$2.2 million.



Pacific Island Tourism Professional Fellows visit the East-West Center's Washington, DC office  
Photo: East-West Center

## 57% of US Students who Studied in the Pacific Islands Studied in Fiji

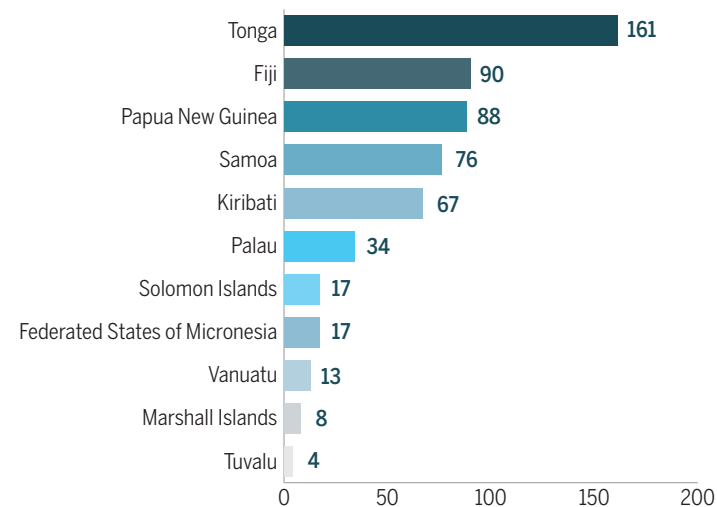
Approximately 575 international students from Pacific Island Countries studied in the United States. Tonga made up 28% of these students while Fiji accounted for 15%. Of the Freely Associated States, only Palau saw an increase in students in the United States with a growth of 30% year-on-year, while the Marshall Islands and Micronesia witnessed decreases of 50% and 61% respectively.

The majority of US students studying abroad in Pacific Island countries, 245 out of 456, studied in Fiji. Fiji hosts the University of the South Pacific, which ranks in the top 10% of universities globally and serves the region by offering educational and research opportunities. The Freely Associated States only accounted for 14% of US study abroad to the Pacific Islands, with the Federated States of Micronesia maintaining the same number of students as the previous year and the Marshall Islands declining from eight students to none while Palau saw growth of 41%.

### US STUDY ABROAD IN PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES



## STUDENTS STUDYING IN THE US FROM PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES



## SELECTED STORIES: PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN US PACIFIC UNIVERSITIES

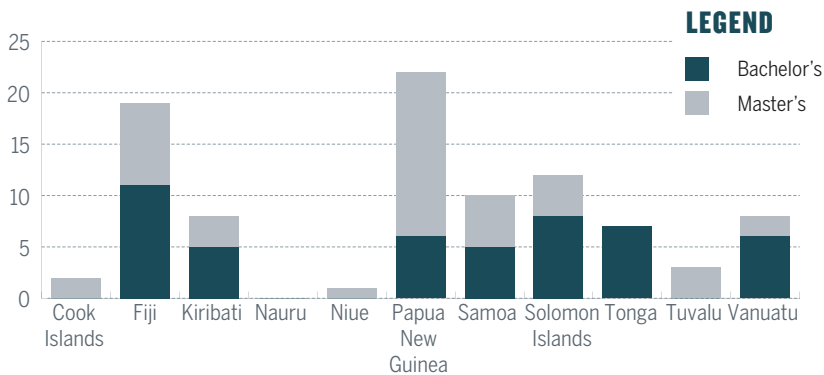
Universities in Hawai'i and Guam have high numbers of international students from Pacific Island Countries. At the University of Hawai'i - Hilo, international students make up 6% of the student population with the largest number students coming from the US Freely Associated States and Japan. At the University of Guam, 46% of the student population is of a Pacific Islander ethnicity. Most are Guam natives, but 15% of students are non-Guamanian Pacific Islanders.

Sources: Institute of International Education, Open Doors report 2020  
University of the South Pacific

US SOUTH PACIFIC SCHOLARSHIP

Since 1995, a total of 93 scholars from the Pacific Islands have completed the United States South Pacific (USSP) Scholarship Program. The scholarship program provides opportunities for Master’s and Bachelor’s degree study at the University of Hawai‘i in fields that are directly relevant to the development needs of Pacific Island Countries. These students return home with the skills and insights to lead in economic, social, and political development in their nations.

USSP PARTICIPANTS: COUNTRY AND ACADEMIC LEVEL



Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands are currently members of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), a Section 501(c)(3) non-profit organization created by Congress in 1953 to help Western States and institutions address higher education and regional workforce issues. In 2020, the remaining US-affiliated Pacific Islands have been exploring options to also join WICHE for the educational and workforce benefits.

FULBRIGHT PROGRAM

Total applications and awards given to Fulbright applicants to study in Pacific Island countries have remained between 12 and 16 annually, with Fiji accounting for most of these applications. Six applicants looking to study, teach, or do research in Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tonga have received awards since 2018.

FULBRIGHT AND THE PACIFIC ISLANDS COUNTRIES

COUNTRY	2018/2019		2019/2020		2020/2021	
	Applications	Awards	Applications	Awards	Applications	Awards
FIJI	5	1	4	1	8	*
KIRIBATI	1	0	0	0	1	*
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	2	0	0	0	1	*
SAMOA	2	1	3	1	3	*
SOLOMON ISLANDS	3	1	2	0	1	*
TONGA	0	0	2	1	1	*
TUVALU	0	0	1	0	0	*
VANUATU	1	0	0	0	1	*
PACIFIC TOTAL	14	3	12	3	16	*

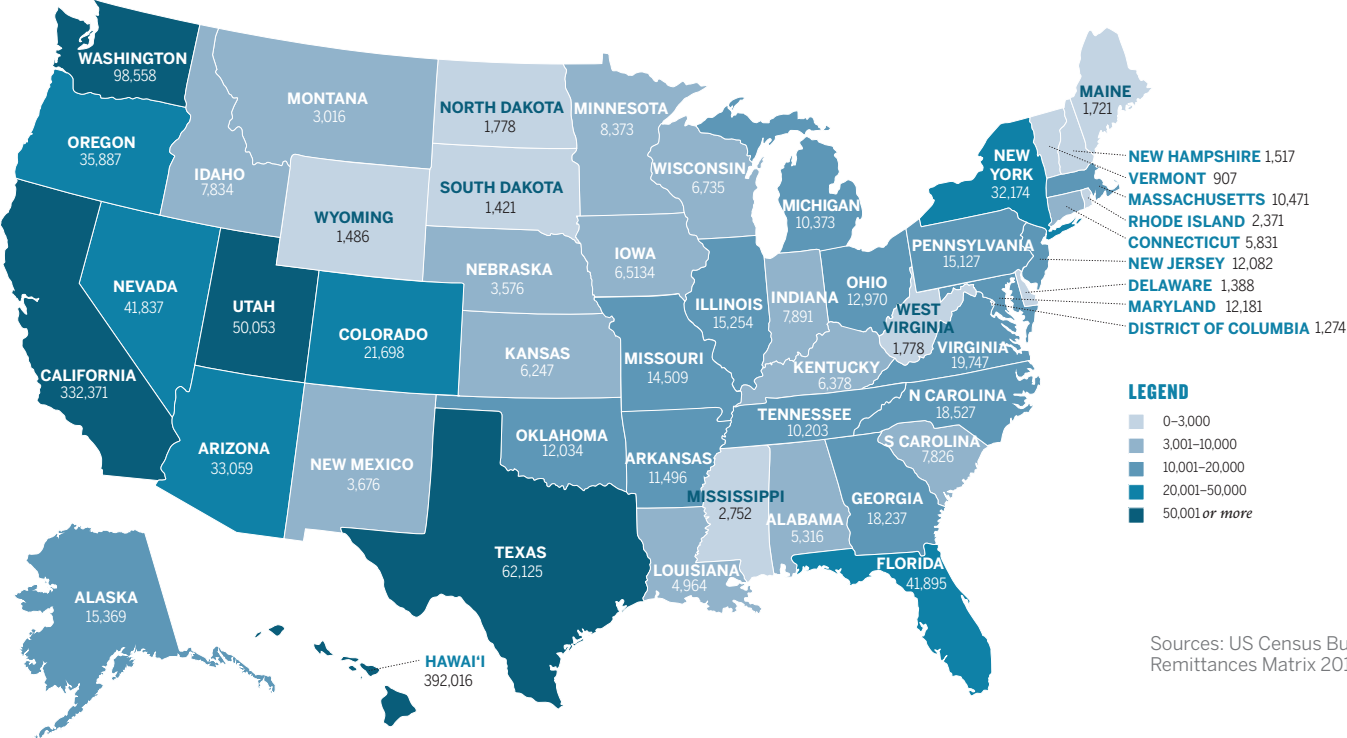
\* Awards have not yet been decided for the 2020/2021 academic year at the time of publication.

# California and Hawai'i are Home to Nearly 50% of the Pacific Islander Population in the United States

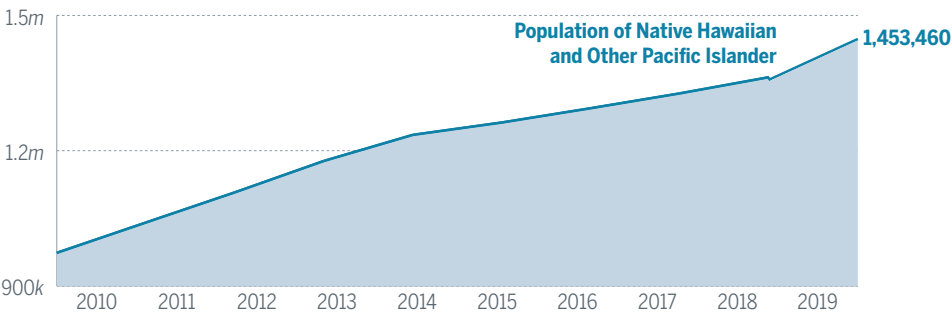
Since 2010, the population of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders has increased from 1.2 million to nearly 1.5 million.

Of the Pacific Islander Americans in the United States, Hawai'i and California together make up approximately 50% of the population with totals of 392,016 and 332,371 Pacific Islanders, respectively. While Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander populations are predominantly found in California and Hawai'i, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander populations live in every single state of the United States. Beyond Hawai'i and California, the states with the largest Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations include Washington (98,558), Texas (62,125), and Utah (50,053).

## NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES

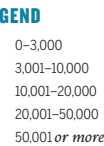


## GROWTH OF US NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER POPULATION



## TOP 5 STATES

SHARE OF PACIFIC ISLANDER POPULATION		
1	Hawai'i	26%
2	Alaska	2%
3	Washington	1.6%
4	Utah	1.4%
5	Nevada	1.3%



Sources: US Census Bureau American Community Survey, DHS Yearbook 2019, World Bank Bilateral Remittances Matrix 2018



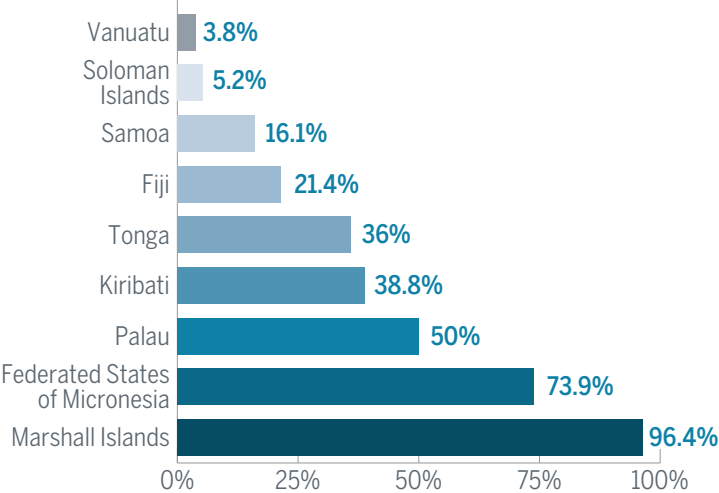
Out of the 1,755 total Pacific Islanders naturalized in the United States, a majority come from Fiji. Tonga comes in 2<sup>nd</sup> with 354 naturalizations, while American Samoa comes in 3<sup>rd</sup> with 279. Since FY2018, the number of naturalizations has seen a 7% increase, with Palau increasing to 32 total and the Federated States of Micronesia boasting 39.

Approximately 30% of Pacific Islanders who migrate overseas live in the United States and its territories, totaling just over 138,000 people. As of 2018, approximately 94,000 of these migrants come from the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau. Half of this population lives and works on the US mainland, while the other half live in US territories and the state of Hawai‘i.

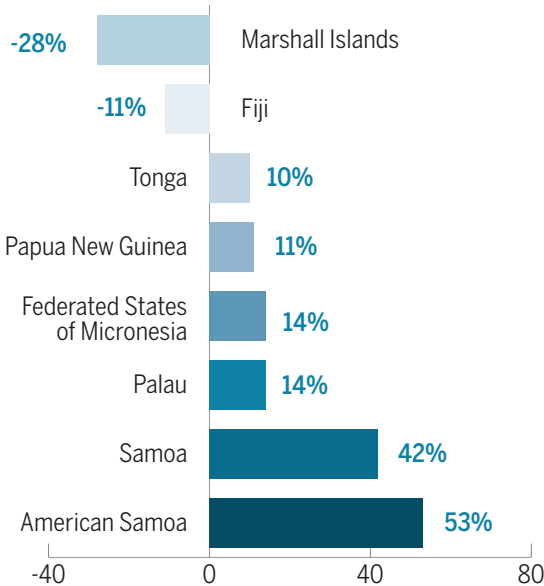
In 2019, an estimated 67% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders were in the US workforce, with an employment to population ratio of 62%. This number is expected to decrease due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many Pacific Islanders are typically employed in service and hospitality sectors. However, others were in occupations such as meat-processing, warehousing, and care giving - designating them as essential workers. Additionally, Pacific Island populations serve in the US military at a much higher per capita rate compared to populations of the mainland United States and consequently have a higher concentration of veterans.

The estimated average income for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders is \$24,951. The income earned by these populations is important for their families back home, as Pacific Island economies are largely dependent on remittances sent from migrant workers abroad. In 2019, remittances accounted for 7% of GDP on average for Pacific Island nations, however remittance flows to Pacific Islands are expected to decrease by an average of 4% in 2020 due to the impacts of the pandemic.

US REMITTANCES AS SHARE OF TOTAL REMITTANCES



PERCENT CHANGE IN NATURALIZATIONS OF PACIFIC ISLANDERS SINCE 2018



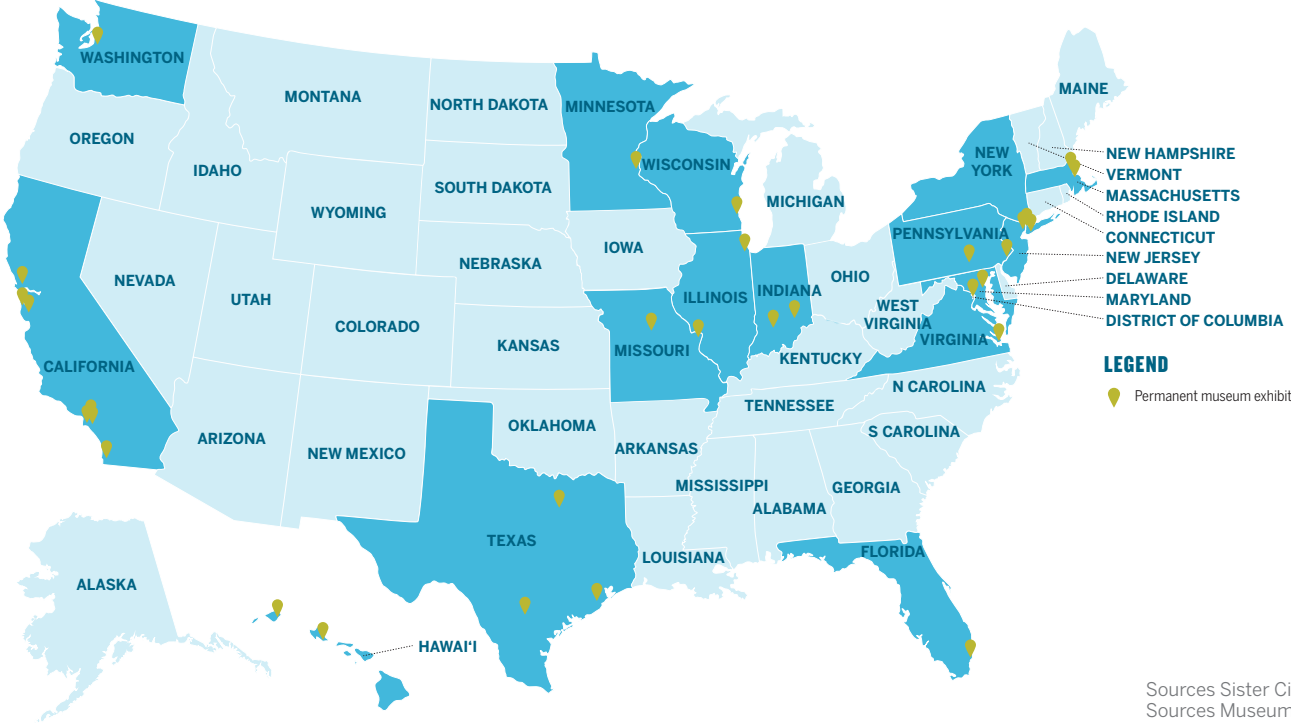


# The United States Shares Eight Sister City Partnerships With Five Pacific Island Countries

Sister city partnerships are agreements between cities, counties, provinces, prefectures, and states which promote cultural and commercial ties. California has the most sister city relationships with Pacific Island countries with three—one with Palau, and two with Samoa. In addition to its one connection with the Marshall Islands, the state of Hawai'i also shares two connections with the US territories of American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands.

The United States hosts 38 permanent exhibits scattered across 16 states focused on art from the Pacific Islands region. The Pacific also hosts eight memorials dedicated to American soldiers who fought in the region during World War II.

## PERMANENT PACIFIC ISLAND MUSEUM EXHIBITS IN THE UNITED STATES



Beginning in the mid-1600s, religion in the Pacific Islands was fundamentally transformed by Western Christian influences, and Christianity continues to be the most prevalent religion in the Pacific Region with over 60% of people in all countries and territories associating with a Christian church. Among them are many large American churches, including: the Church of Latter-day Saints, which is practiced by over 15% of people in both Samoa and Tonga; Seventh Day Adventist, practiced by more than 10% of people in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu; United Church of Christ, practiced by 10% of the populations of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, and 47% of the population in the Marshall Islands; and Wesleyan Church, which accounts for 13% of Solomon Islanders and 35% of Tongans.

## UNITED STATES SISTER CITY CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

US	PACIFIC ISLANDS
Gilroy, CA	Koror, Palau
Oceanside, CA	A'ana, Samoa
Compton, CA	Apia, Samoa
Honolulu, HI	Majuro Atoll, Marshall Islands
Des Plaines, IL	Nailuva, Fiji
Neosho, MO	Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia

Sources Sister Cities: Sister Cities International; individual sister city associations  
Sources Museums: Friendsofethnart.org; Individual museum websites



## ASSOCIATED PUBLICATION



## PUBLICATION DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION

TOP SHELF DESIGN  
Washington, DC  
[www.topshelfdesign.net](http://www.topshelfdesign.net)

## THE ASIA MATTERS FOR AMERICA INITIATIVE

*Asia Matters for America/America Matters for Asia* is an interactive resource for credible and nonpartisan information, graphics, analysis, and news on US-Indo-Pacific relations at the national, state, and local levels.

[AsiaMattersforAmerica.org](http://AsiaMattersforAmerica.org)

# THE PACIFIC ISLANDS MATTER FOR AMERICA/AMERICA MATTERS FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

This project maps the trade, investment, employment, business, diplomacy, security, education, tourism, and people-to-people connections between the United States and the Pacific Island countries, including the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau as well as the US territories of American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam at the national, state, and local levels. The *Asia Matters for America* initiative is a collaborative partnership with US and Indo-Pacific government, private sector, and civil society stakeholders to recognize and advance the robust and dynamic US-Indo-Pacific relationship.

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