

STATE OF THE MEDIA

REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

RESEARCH BRIEF

ABC
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT



PACMAS
Pacific Media Assistance Scheme



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AT A GLANCE



1. Print media remains the most trusted source of news



2. Connectivity challenges persist for audiences in remote islands



3. Interest in a representative industry body to promote media freedom and training



4. Rise of social media and increased digitisation create new challenges and opportunities

5. Media's role in passing on generational knowledge and culture

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This report provides a detailed, up-to-date snapshot of the state of the media in the Republic of the Marshall Islands ("Marshall Islands" hereafter). It is part of the State of the Media project, which comprises 12 country reports and one regional report. These reports serve as an accessible resource for media, civil society, and government organisations in support of development goals in the region.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a multi-method approach. The research team began with a deskbased review of relevant primary and secondary literature. Additionally, seven detailed stakeholder interviews were conducted. At each step, feedback and advice were sought from the Marshall Islands media expert advisers, Divine Waiti and Hilary Hosia, who crosschecked the accuracy of findings and co-authored this report. The research was approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee, and steps were taken to mitigate risks to all research participants, including maintaining their anonymity.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Print media remains the most trusted source of news

Media practitioners and audiences consider print media to be the most credible source of news and information. The country's only print newspaper, The Marshall Islands Journal, has been operating for more than five decades and has sustained its reputation as a trusted source of news. Although increased digitisation poses a threat to the resilience of print media, perceived increases in mis/disinformation have reinforced the value of print journalism that upholds accuracy, impartiality, and independence.

2. Connectivity challenges persist for audiences in remote islands

There are persistent challenges to media connectivity, reach, and access in the Marshall Islands, especially for audiences in the remote outer islands. Key contributing factors are the country's geographical spread across numerous atolls and islands and the slow pace of media infrastructure development. The state-owned AM radio station, V7AB Radio Marshall, has the farthest reach. Some media practitioners travel long distances to obtain interviews and audio recordings in remote communities.

3. Increased interest in a representative industry body to promote media freedom and training

There is increased interest in developing a dedicated media association in the Marshall Islands that actively represents the interests of practitioners. The Marshall Islands is recognised for having one of the most free and independent media sectors in the world. Following the establishment of the Pacific Media Institute (PMI) in 2022, which advocates for free press and democracy, there has been growing interest in having a representative industry body in the country that can also protect media freedom, develop journalistic standards, and provide trainings to media professionals.

4. Rise of social media and increased digitisation create new challenges and opportunities

The emergence of social media and the digitisation of information and communications are creating new challenges and opportunities for the Marshallese media. Respondents report a rise in misinformation and disinformation on social media but acknowledge that there are new opportunities to connect more extensively with dispersed Marshallese audiences, especially the large and growing diaspora.

5. Media's role in passing on generational knowledge and culture

Media in the Marshall Islands, aside from providing public-interest news and information, plays an important role in passing cultural and historical knowledge to younger and future generations. This ranges from preserving and communicating cultural knowledge relating to traditional dances to collecting stories from survivors of the nuclear weapons testing, to capturing images of rapidly changing landscapes impacted by climate change and sea-level rise.

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Disclaimer: Any opinions represented in this report are those of the authors and research participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation or the University of Adelaide.