

# A Statistical Overview of Ebeye

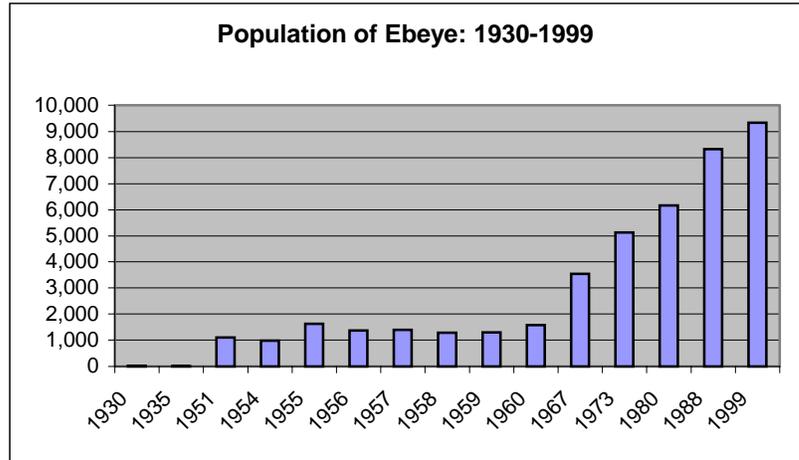
## Part One: Educational Attainment, Employment and Wages

By Ben Graham and Charles Paul

(This is the first in a series of short essays focusing on social and economic changes on the island of Ebeye<sup>1</sup>)

Few other islands have experienced as rapid population growth as has Ebeye. Today, Ebeye is possibly the most densely populated island in all of the Pacific.

Throughout the first half of the 1900s, Ebeye had fewer than 100 people. After WWII, and particularly with the development of the US military base on Kwajalien Atoll, however, Ebeye’s population began to explode. By the end of the century, Ebeye’s population had grown over 100-fold, to nearly 10,000.



The most rapid period of growth started in the late 1960s. A 1967 census collected by the Peace Corps, four subsequent censuses and two sample surveys conducted through early 2002, gathered data on Ebeye. These data show major social and economic changes in Ebeye’s population.

This essay, the first of a series on Ebeye, analyzes educational attainment, employment and wage trends over the past several decades.

### Educational Attainment

Between 1967 and 2002, the percentage of adults (25 years and over) with elementary education nearly tripled. While only about one-third of Ebeye adults completed at least elementary school in 1967, close to 90% were elementary-educated in 2002.

Educational Attainment of Ebeye Adults (age 25+): 1967-2002						
Subject	1967	1973	1980	1988	1999	2002
Educational attainment						
Percent Elementary graduates or higher	31.0	32.4	60.5	75.8	88.4	88.1
Percent HS graduates or higher	9.3	9.2	29.4	36.3	44.3	39.3
Percent Associate degree or higher	4.1	--	7.0	--	3.6	4.2
Percent Bachelor degree or higher	3.7	--	2.2	--	1.5	0.6
Notes: -- means data not available						
2002 figures based on 20% sample						
Source: Insular Areas Statistical Enhancement Program						

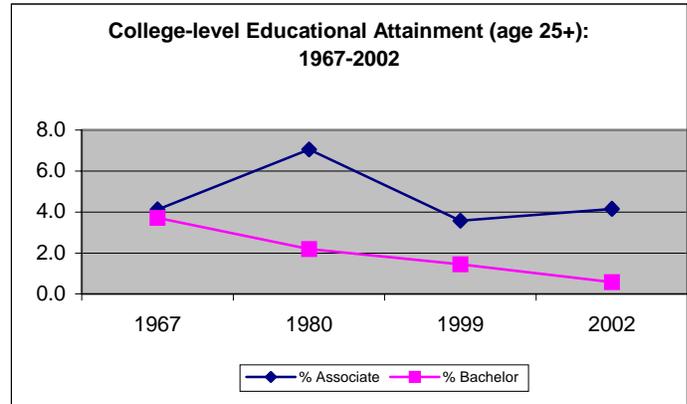
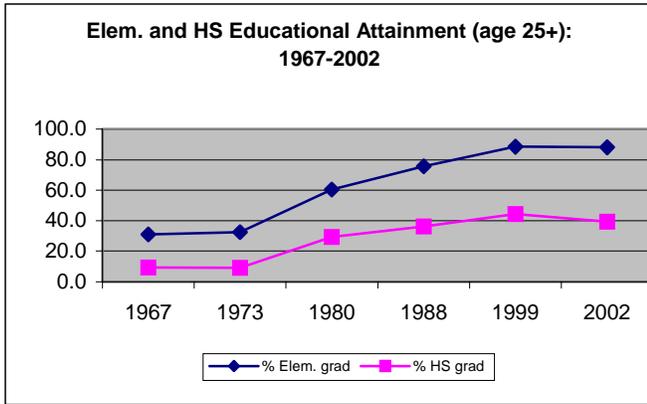
The percentage of adults with high school diplomas increased four-fold since 1967. About four in ten adults on Ebeye were high school educated in 2002, on par with the RMI national average of 39.8%.

At the college level, some stagnation occurred at the associate level while an overall decline took place at the bachelor level. Aside from 1980, the percentage of adults with associate level degrees or higher hovered at around 4%.

<sup>1</sup> For those who do not already know, Ebeye Island, in Kwajalein Atoll, is the second most populated island in the RMI. Nearly 10,000 Marshallese reside on Ebeye, many of whom work on the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site.

The percentage of adults holding bachelor or higher degrees, meanwhile, declined steadily. While four in every 100 adults in 1967 held bachelor (or higher) degrees, the rate was only one in 100 in 2002.

This may suggest that many (if not most) of the people from Ebeye who left the island to attain their college degrees did not return home.



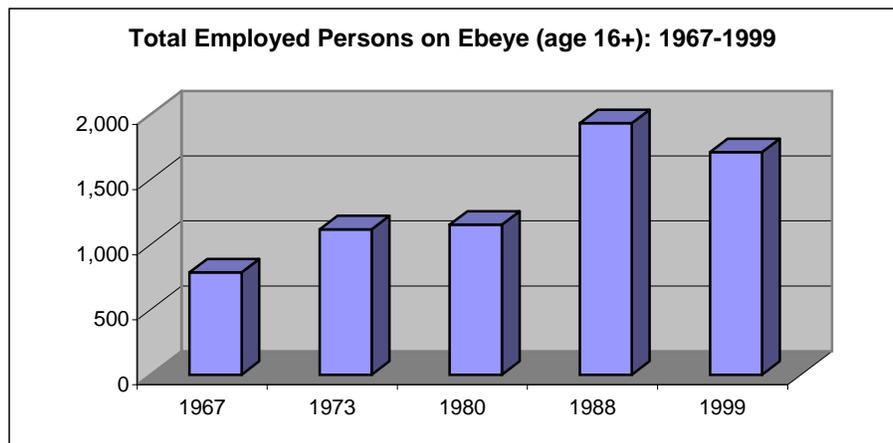
### Employment

The population over the age of 16 on Ebeye (those considered in the “working age”), increased three-fold during the past several decades. The total number employed, however, only slightly more than doubled, meaning unemployment increased during the period. Whereas close to half of all people over the age of 16 were employed in 1967, only about 34% were employed in 1999.

Employment on Ebeye (age 16+): 1967-1999					
Subject	1967	1973	1980	1988	1999
Population 16 years and over	1,751	2,644	2,929	4,359	5,028
Total employed	787	1,117	1,151	1,932	1,710
Percentage 16 and over employed	44.9	42.2	39.3	44.3	34.0
Female to male employment ratio	0.33	0.26	0.39	0.33	0.40

Notes: "Employed" indicates adults who did paid work in government, private sector or who were employers or self-employed  
 Source: Insular Areas Statistical Enhancement Program

Currently, the US Army and its various private contractors employ an estimated 1,200 Marshallese. If this estimate is accurate, then approximately 500 of the employed persons on Ebeye worked on Ebeye itself in 2002. For every one employee working on Ebeye, two were working on the Kwajalein base.



The female to male employment ratio (the number of female employees for every male employee) rose steadily during the period, from .33 to .40. For every 10 male workers, there were about 4 female workers in 1999.

## Wages

In the past two decades, the mean annual wage for Ebeye workers doubled.

However, prices in the RMI (according to the RMI consumer price index, or CPI) also doubled during this period.

This means that real wages for Ebeye employees have remained the same for 20 years.

Alternatively, if the RMI uses the US CPI to calculate the change in real wages during this period, then the net change

will have been negative. Based on the US CPI, an Ebeye resident earning \$5,406 in 1980 would have to earn about \$12,000 in 2002 to preserve his or her purchasing power. The mean wage of Ebeye workers in 2002 was \$10,758.

Mean Wages of Ebeye Employed (age 16+): 1980-2002			
Subject	1980	1998	2002
Mean annual wages	5,406	10,027	10,758
Males	6,480	10,998	11,696
Females	2,677	7,225	8,459
Female to male wage ratio	0.41	0.66	0.72

Notes: Figures not adjusted for inflation  
2002 figure preliminary  
Source: Insular Areas Statistical Enhancement Program

## Conclusion

This analysis (while very brief), illustrates that significant changes have taken place on Ebeye over the past several decades with regard to educational attainment, employment and wages.

These are just three of the many basic indicators by which countries (or islands) can measure their development over time. The next few essays will identify other major historic trends on Ebeye through analysis of other social and economic indicators.



An aerial view of Ebeye Island. Total land mass: 0.14 square miles

Special thanks to Dr. Michael Levin

Note: This essay is produced under the auspices of the Insular Areas Statistical Enhancement Program and is not an official RMI or US Census Bureau report. For questions or comments, email: [benjamin.m.graham@census.gov](mailto:benjamin.m.graham@census.gov)