



**Joint Publication of the**  
**United Nations Development Program**  
**and the**  
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# **A Geographical Analysis of Key Social, Environment and Economic Statistics of the Marshall Islands**

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## **Introduction**

In recent decades, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have become an invaluable tool in collating and processing Information and statistics in a geographic medium that is clear to understand and enables data and policy analysts to identify patterns and trends that would otherwise be difficult to determine if presented solely in raw number/data sets, or even in standard graphs and tables. Using a country's geography to illustrate differences in trends in key social, economic, political, geographic or even environmental statistics, GIS programs have successfully illustrated topics such as education attainment across a country, access to sanitation, income distribution, access to roads, schools and hospitals, distances from main centers of commerce, etc., and even highlights potential geographic and other constraints that might hamper development efforts. GIS information programs have been instrumental in highlighting areas and issues that have either been inadequately addressed in some areas of a country, or highlights those areas which have achieved the most successes. These types of information have, in turn, enabled both policy analysts and decision-makers to make informed decisions on where and how to better concentrate development efforts, and/or to identify those success stories that could be replicated in other areas. Overall, GIS programs have become a critical tool utilized by many developing countries to improve and better target development efforts.

Since 2002, the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC) has been developing a series of Population GIS (Pop GIS) programs catered specifically to the information needs and capacities of individual Pacific Island countries. SPC has since been providing in-country training to government and ministerial-level statisticians and staff members. This publication is a product of those trainings and is designed to provide a snapshot of the socio-economic status of the RMI based on information derived primarily from the 1999 Census of Population and Housing, the most recent and comprehensive set of statistics aggregated by geographic areas.

The information contained in this report has been gathered with the purpose of providing government officials with information that can support and inform the decision-making process. This report is the first of a series of similar reports that will be generated by the PopGIS program, and as more updated information is inputted into the system. This publication is a joint effort between the United Nations Development Program and the RMI Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office.

# **List of Abbreviations, Definitions and PopGIS Notes**

BCG = Baccillus, Calmette and Guerin Vaccine  
EPPSO = Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office  
Hib Pedvax = Haemophilus Influenza Type B Vaccine  
HSET = High School Entrance Test  
OPV = Oral Polio Vaccine  
RMI = Republic of the Marshall Islands  
SPC = Secretariat for the Pacific Community

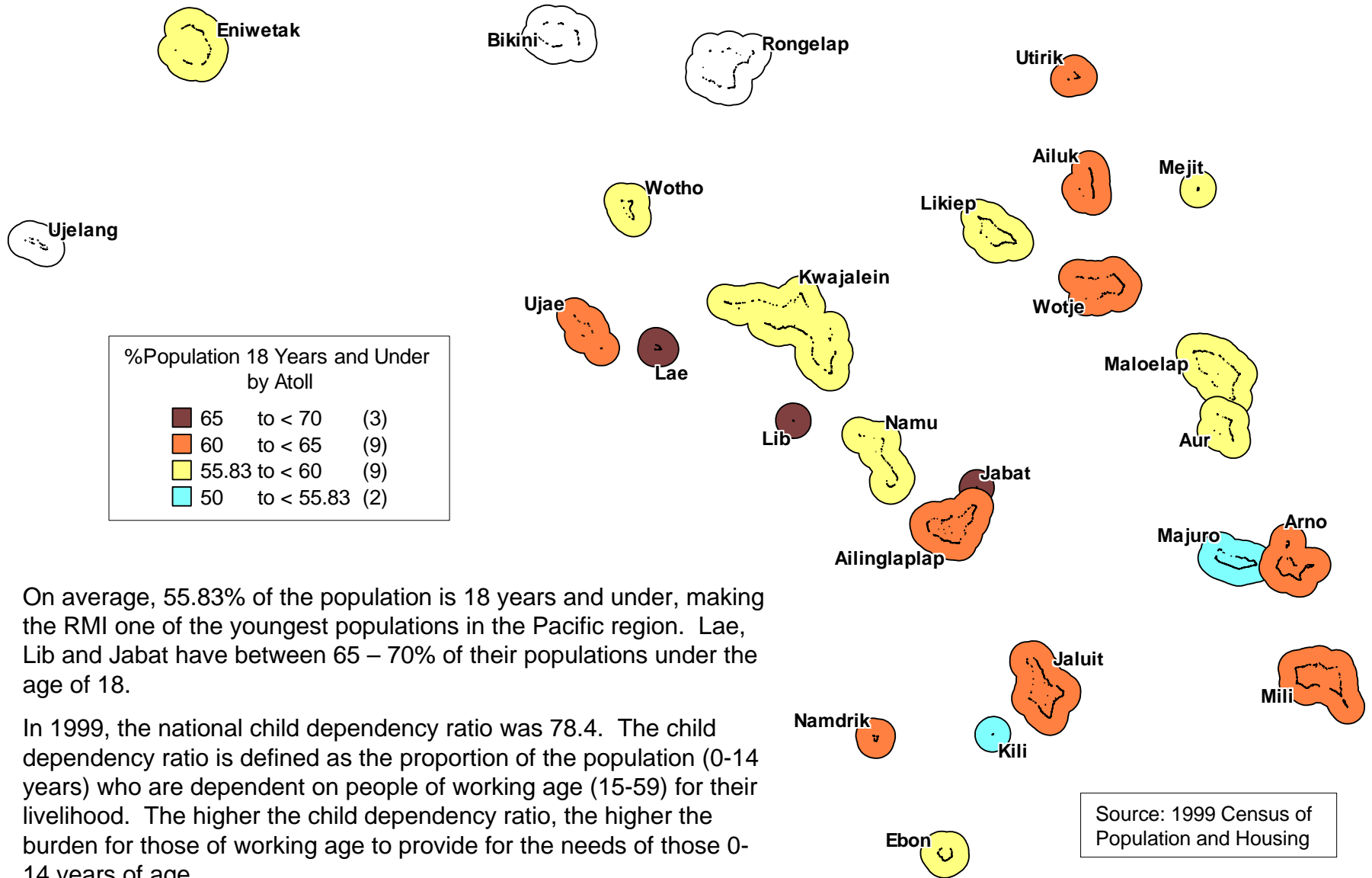
DTP = Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis Vaccine  
HepB = Hepatitis B Vaccine  
HS = High School  
MMR = Measles, Mumps and Rubella Vaccine  
PopGIS = Population Geographic Information System  
RMI EPA = RMI Environmental Protection Agency  
SY = School Year

Quality of Life = Quality of Life is a general term describing a set of conditions within which a population lives. A high or good quality of life usually means that a population is able to achieve a good or adequate standard of living, and is usually defined in terms of peoples' ability to obtain and have access to basic goods and services needed to lead a healthy and productive lifestyle.

Quality of Life Index= Often used to quantify the level of standard of living within a community or country by comparing a set of relevant indicators and ranking them relative to each other. Indicators often used include, but are not necessarily limited to the following: education attainment, income, employment, health status, access to sanitation and safe water, access to basic education, health, communication and transportation services, access to affordable and safe source of household energy or fuel, caloric intake and nutrition, etc. A Quality of Life Index is illustrated on page 19. Please note that the RMI Quality of Life Index is only a crude measurement. All of the indicators are weighted equally. Until more accurate and long-term data is collected to indicate the impacts and importance of the various indicators on the quality of life of communities, weights were not assumed. Please refer to pages 20 and 21 for additional definitions relating to the Quality of Life Index illustrated on page 19.

PopGIS Notes: a) Due to the small scale of the atolls/islands a ten-mile buffer was added around each. The actual atolls are the "worm-like" shapes within the buffer.  
b) Atolls that have no color (white) indicate that the atoll is uninhabited (Rongelap, Bikini and Ujelang). In some maps, white atolls/islands indicate that data is unavailable (see maps on pages 12-4).  
c) The numbers in brackets in the legends indicate the number of atolls or villages that fall into the respective categories.

# Proportion of the Population 18 Years and Under by Atoll, 1999

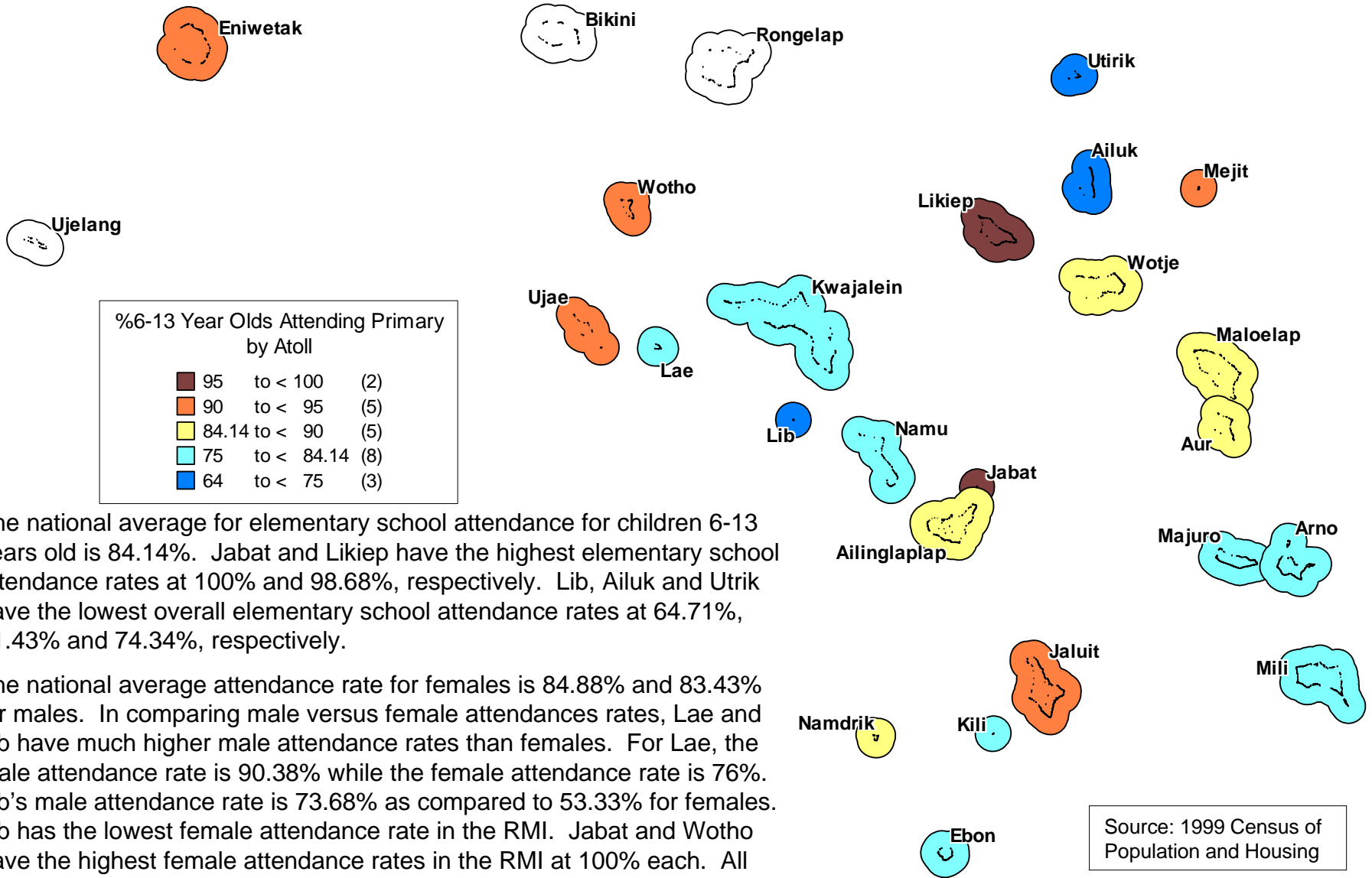


On average, 55.83% of the population is 18 years and under, making the RMI one of the youngest populations in the Pacific region. Lae, Lib and Jabat have between 65 – 70% of their populations under the age of 18.

In 1999, the national child dependency ratio was 78.4. The child dependency ratio is defined as the proportion of the population (0-14 years) who are dependent on people of working age (15-59) for their livelihood. The higher the child dependency ratio, the higher the burden for those of working age to provide for the needs of those 0-14 years of age.

Source: 1999 Census of Population and Housing

# Proportion of 6-13 Year Olds Attending Elementary School by Atoll, 1999



The national average for elementary school attendance for children 6-13 years old is 84.14%. Jabat and Likiep have the highest elementary school attendance rates at 100% and 98.68%, respectively. Lib, Ailuk and Utrik have the lowest overall elementary school attendance rates at 64.71%, 71.43% and 74.34%, respectively.

The national average attendance rate for females is 84.88% and 83.43% for males. In comparing male versus female attendances rates, Lae and Lib have much higher male attendance rates than females. For Lae, the male attendance rate is 90.38% while the female attendance rate is 76%. Lib's male attendance rate is 73.68% as compared to 53.33% for females. Lib has the lowest female attendance rate in the RMI. Jabat and Wotho have the highest female attendance rates in the RMI at 100% each. All other atolls and islands have roughly equivalent male versus female attendance rates with a few having much higher female attendance rates than males (Wotho, Aur, Maloelap and Kili).

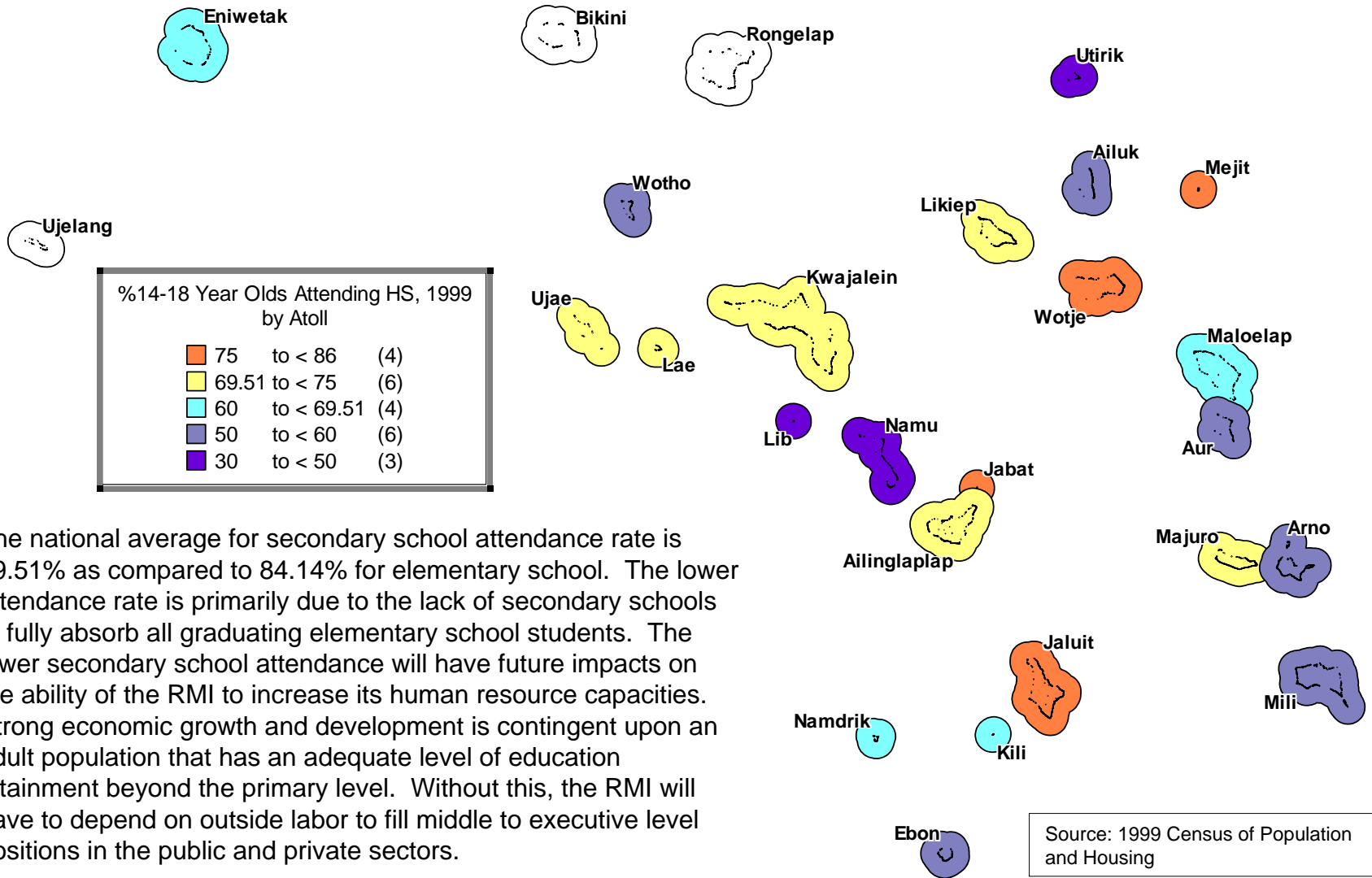
Source: 1999 Census of Population and Housing

# Proportion of 6-13 Year Olds Attending Elementary School on Ebeye and Majuro by Islet, 1999



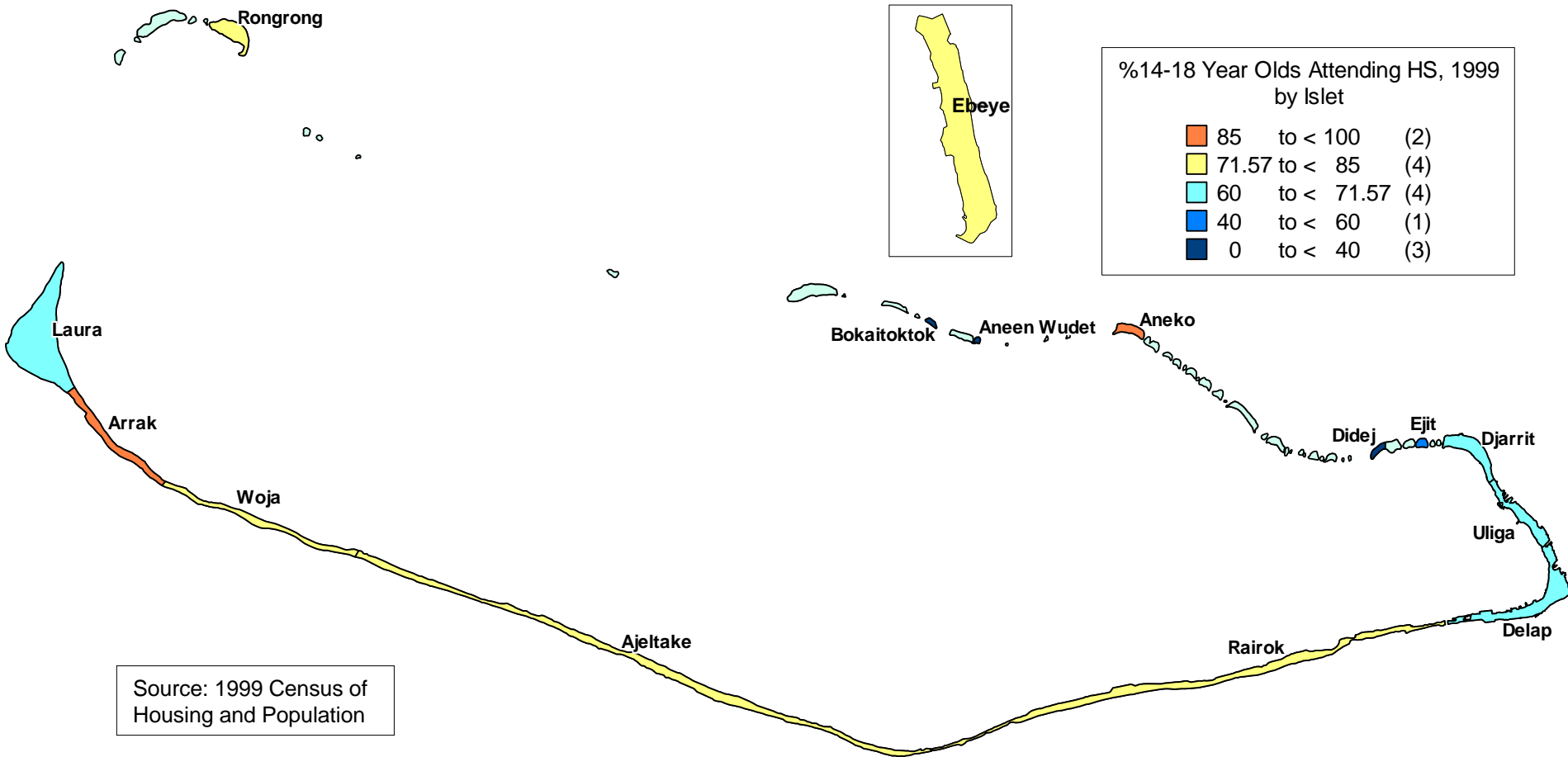
The RMI national average for elementary school attendance is 84.14% (refer previous map). Majuro falls slightly below the national average with an average elementary school attendance rate of 82.72%. In establishing the legend for the map on this page, Majuro's average has been used as the average of comparison to indicate variations in attendance rates across Majuro Atoll and Ebeye. On Majuro, there is a lot of variation in attendance rates ranging from 0-100%. Seven islets on Majuro Atoll have been left out as no children of primary school age live on these islets. Please note that Rongrong, Kolalen, Aneko, Anemonet, Kemmaan and Didej have less than 5 children who are between 6-13 years old. In comparing Majuro with Ebeye, Ebeye's average elementary school attendance rate is 82.44%, slightly below the national average and Majuro's average attendance rates.

# Proportion of 14-18 Year Olds Attending Secondary School by Atoll, 1999



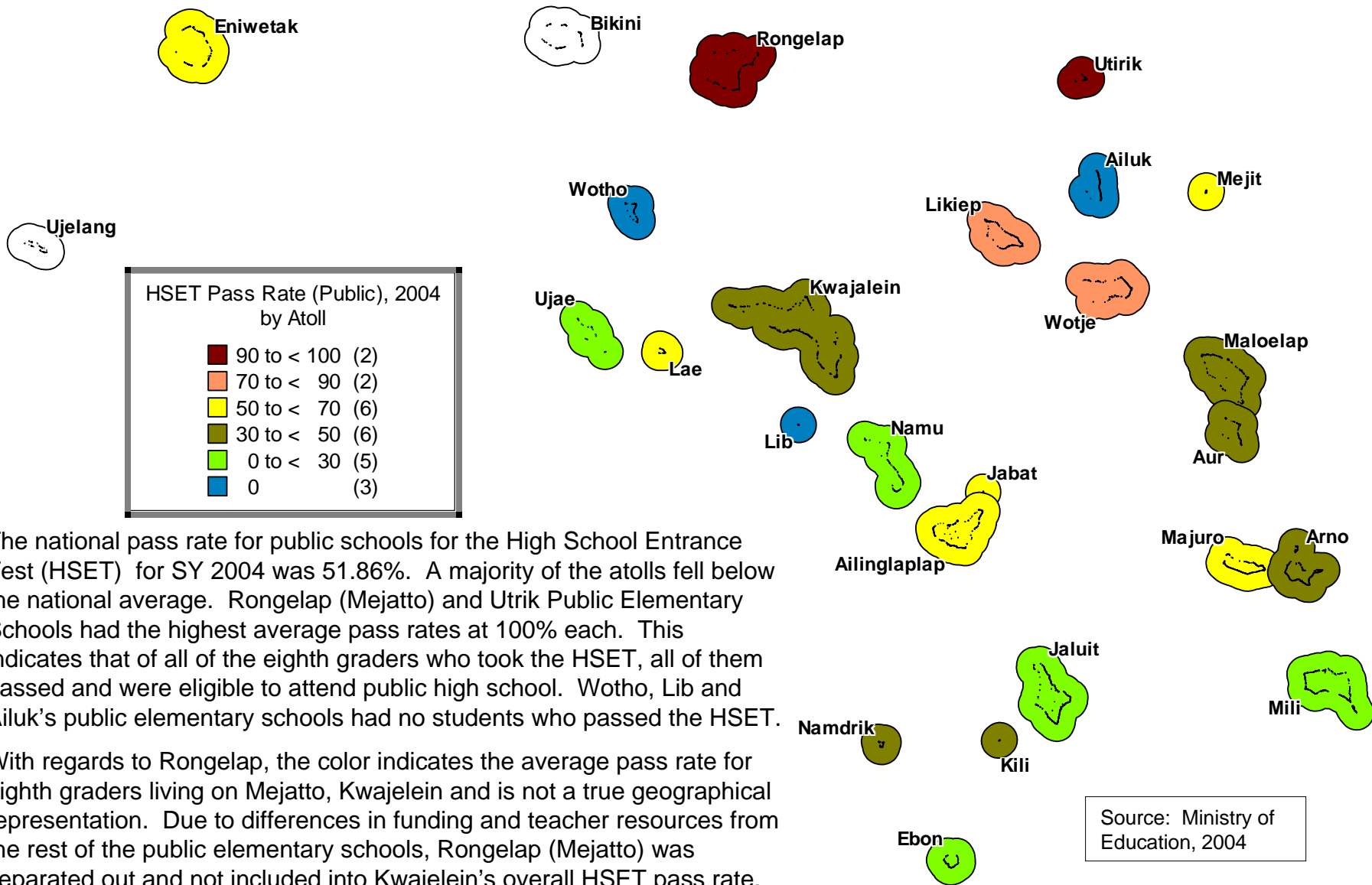
The national average for secondary school attendance rate is 69.51% as compared to 84.14% for elementary school. The lower attendance rate is primarily due to the lack of secondary schools to fully absorb all graduating elementary school students. The lower secondary school attendance will have future impacts on the ability of the RMI to increase its human resource capacities. Strong economic growth and development is contingent upon an adult population that has an adequate level of education attainment beyond the primary level. Without this, the RMI will have to depend on outside labor to fill middle to executive level positions in the public and private sectors.

# Proportion of 14 – 18 Year Olds Attending High School on Majuro and Ebeye by Islet, 1999



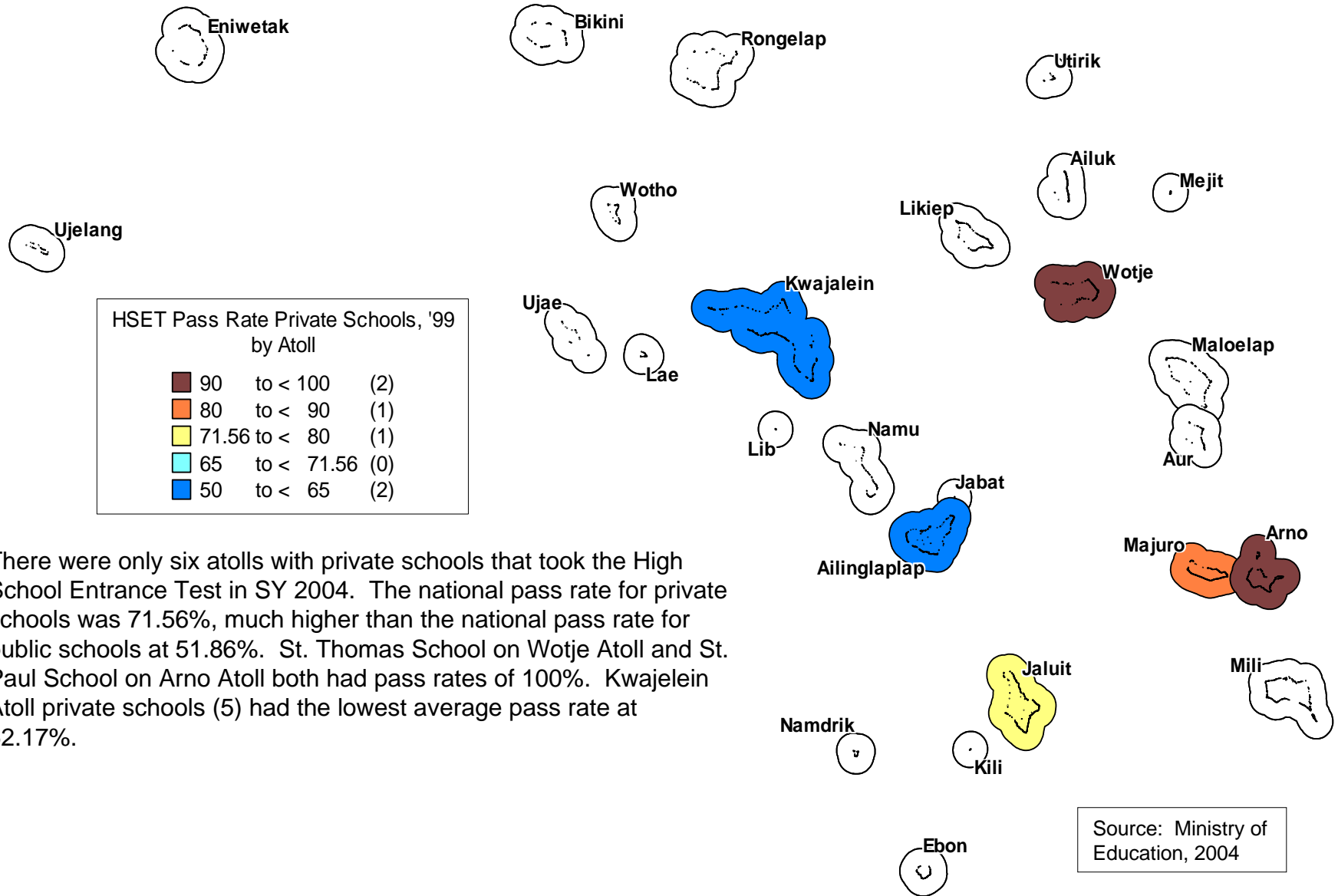
The average high school attendance rates for Majuro and Ebeye are 71.57% and 73.27%, respectively. Both are above the national average of 69.51%. However, in the more densely populated sections of Majuro (Delap, Uliga and Djarrit), only 60 – 71.57% of high school-age youths attend high school, falling below the national average high school attendance rate. In the urban centers, the primary cause of the lower high school attendance rate is a combined factor of high populations of 14-18 year olds along with insufficient numbers of high schools to fully absorb this population group. On Majuro, Rongrong, Didej, Aneen Wudet, Aneko and Bokaitoktok have less than 5 persons who are between 14-18 years of age.

# High School Entrance Test Pass Rates (Public Schools) by Atoll, 2004



Source: Ministry of Education, 2004

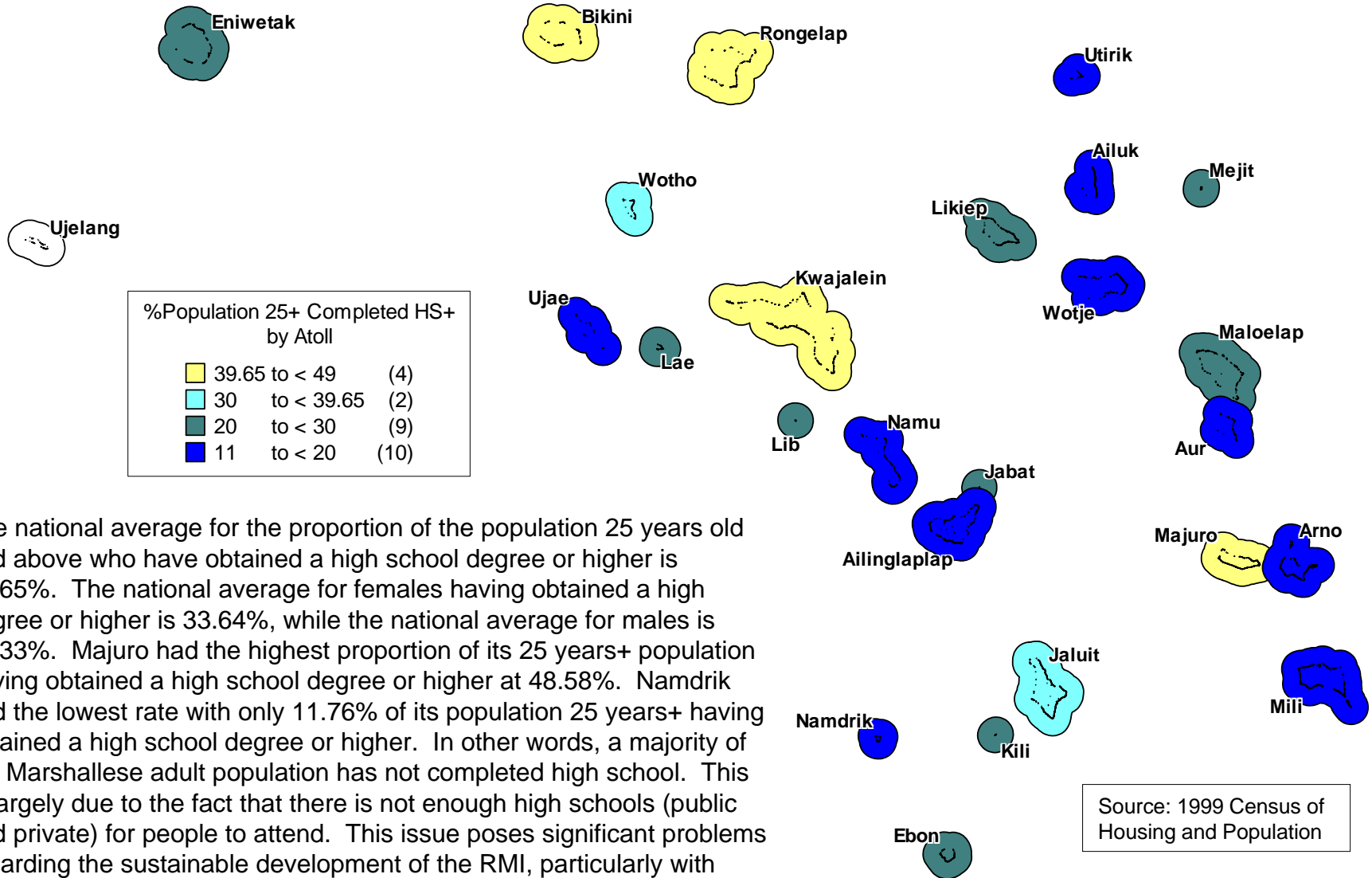
# High School Entrance Test Pass Rates (Private Schools) by Atoll, 2004



There were only six atolls with private schools that took the High School Entrance Test in SY 2004. The national pass rate for private schools was 71.56%, much higher than the national pass rate for public schools at 51.86%. St. Thomas School on Wotje Atoll and St. Paul School on Arno Atoll both had pass rates of 100%. Kwajalein Atoll private schools (5) had the lowest average pass rate at 52.17%.

Source: Ministry of Education, 2004

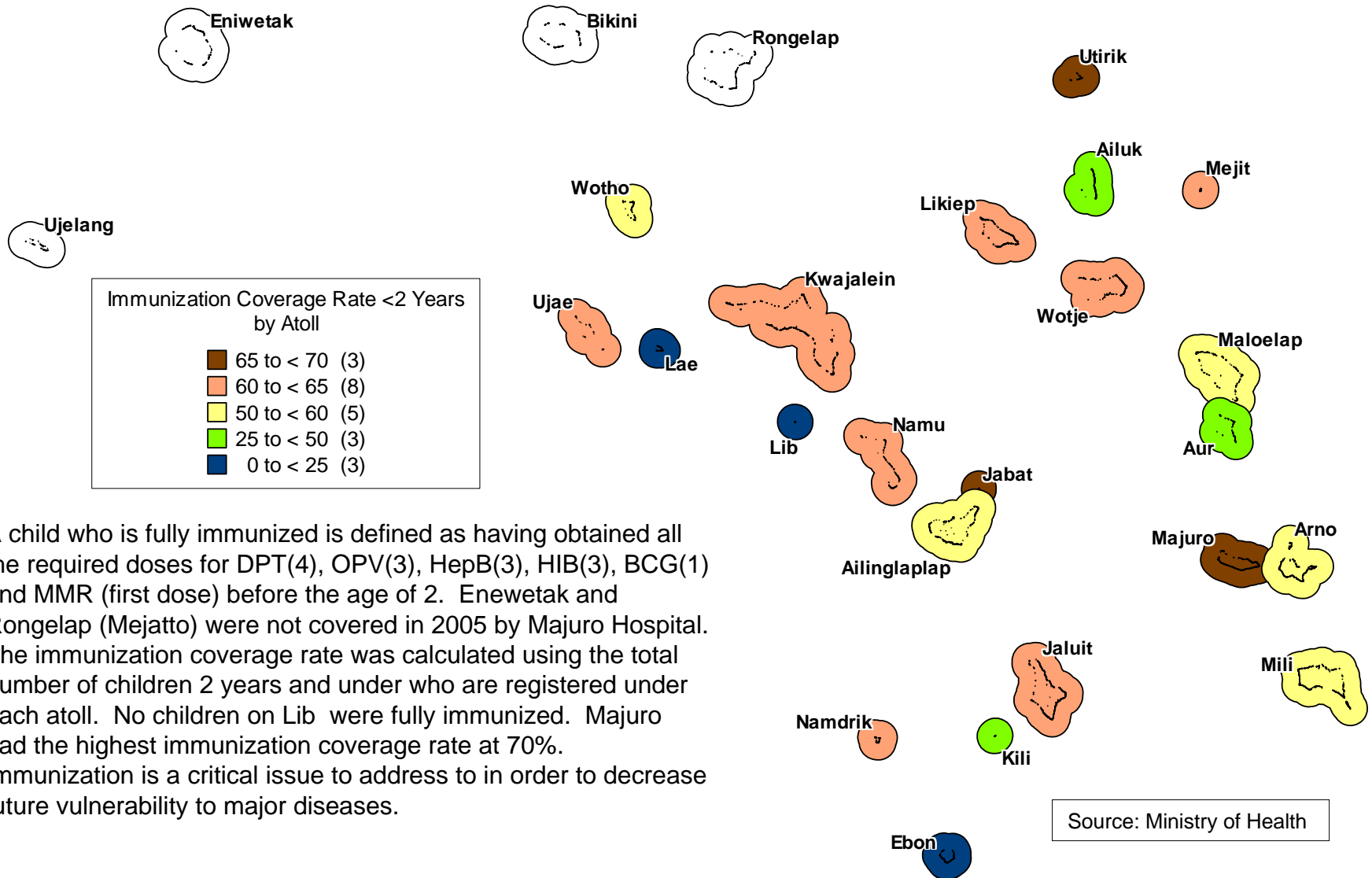
# Proportion of the Population 25+ Who have Obtained a High School Degree or Higher by Atoll, 1999



Source: 1999 Census of Housing and Population

The national average for the proportion of the population 25 years old and above who have obtained a high school degree or higher is 39.65%. The national average for females having obtained a high degree or higher is 33.64%, while the national average for males is 45.33%. Majuro had the highest proportion of its 25 years+ population having obtained a high school degree or higher at 48.58%. Namdrik had the lowest rate with only 11.76% of its population 25 years+ having obtained a high school degree or higher. In other words, a majority of the Marshallese adult population has not completed high school. This is largely due to the fact that there is not enough high schools (public and private) for people to attend. This issue poses significant problems regarding the sustainable development of the RMI, particularly with regards to human resource development.

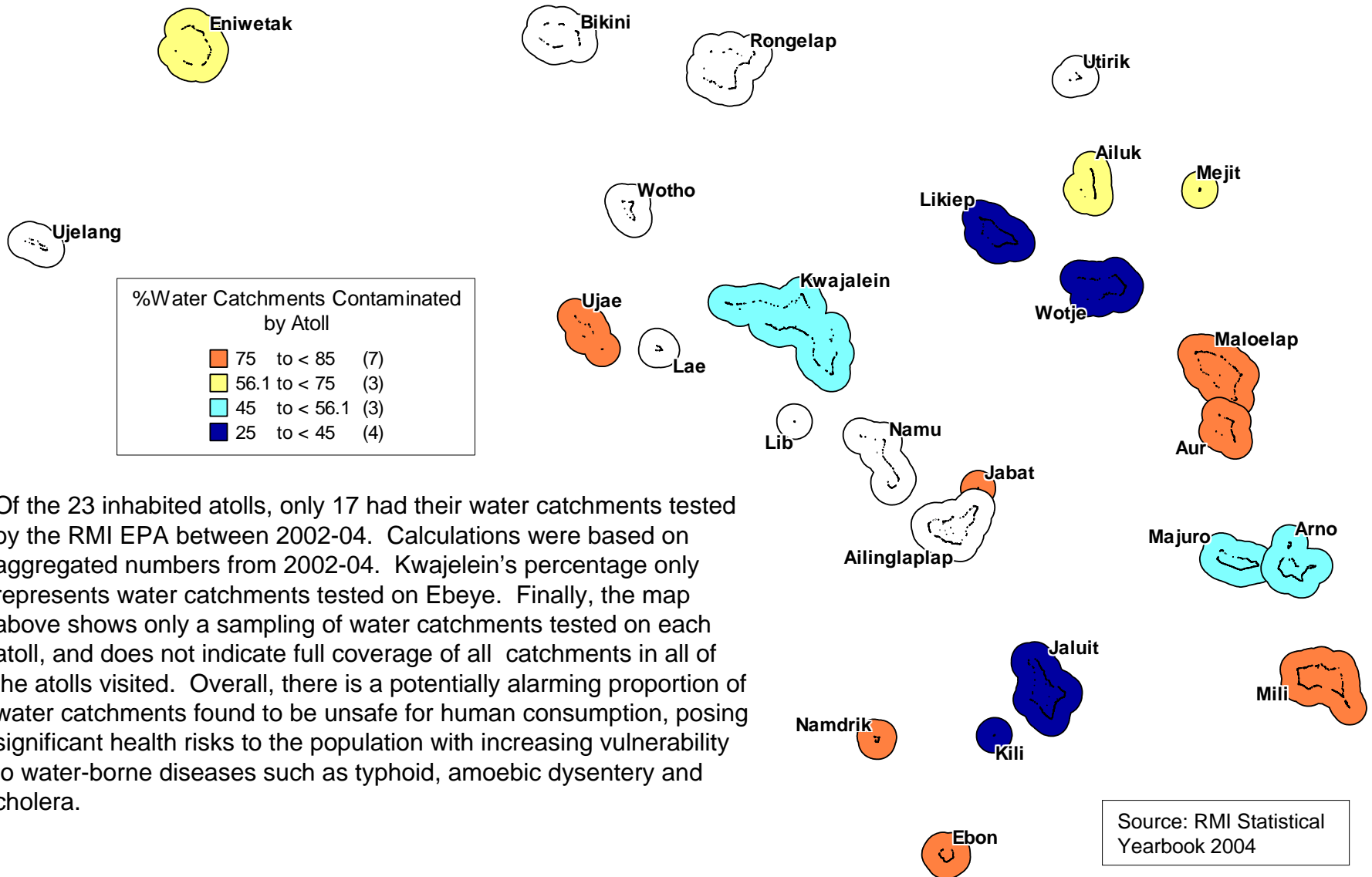
# Proportion of Children 2 Years and Under Who are Fully Immunized by Atoll, 2005



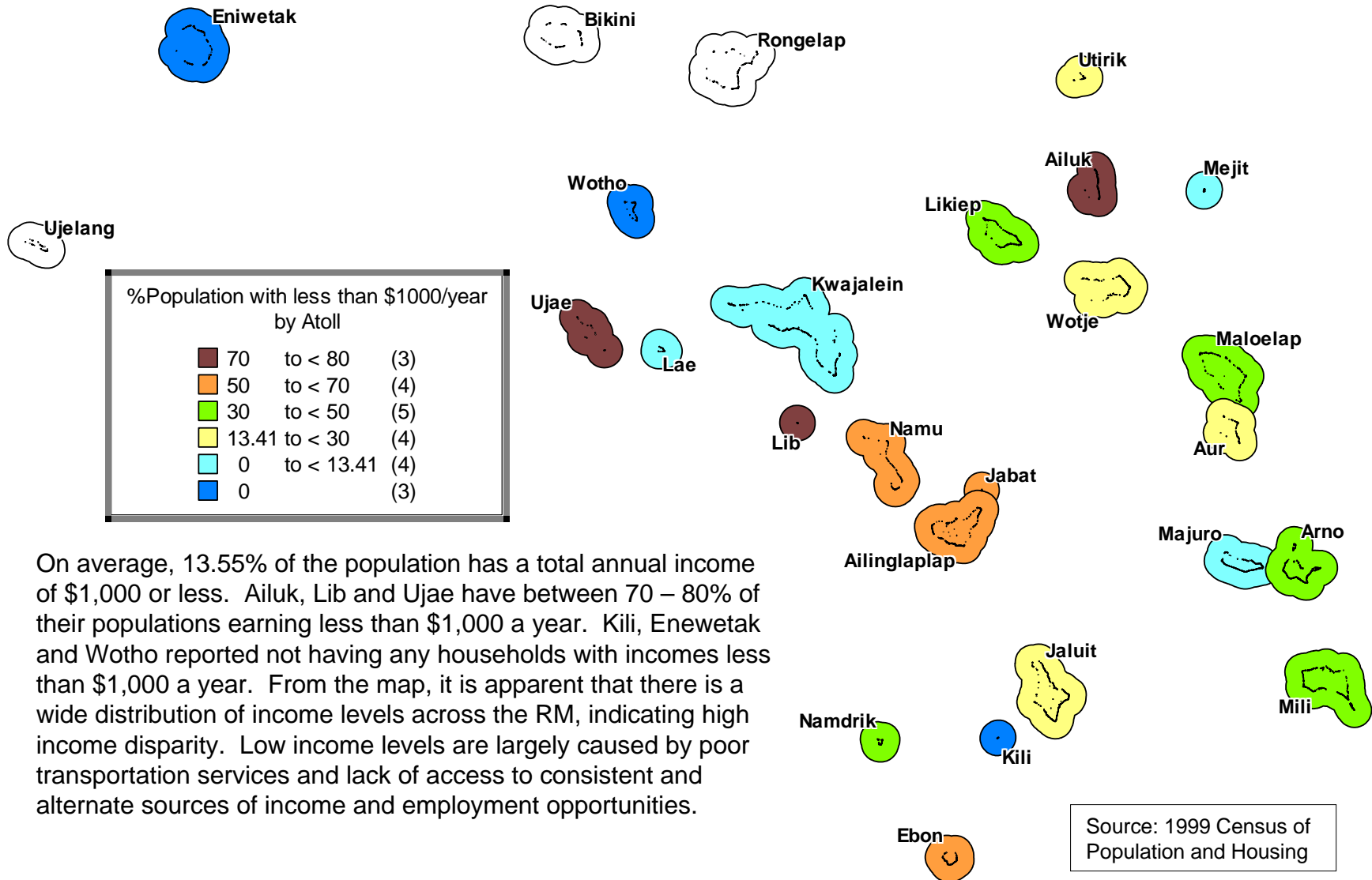
A child who is fully immunized is defined as having obtained all the required doses for DPT(4), OPV(3), HepB(3), HIB(3), BCG(1) and MMR (first dose) before the age of 2. Enewetak and Rongelap (Mejatto) were not covered in 2005 by Majuro Hospital. The immunization coverage rate was calculated using the total number of children 2 years and under who are registered under each atoll. No children on Lib were fully immunized. Majuro had the highest immunization coverage rate at 70%. Immunization is a critical issue to address in order to decrease future vulnerability to major diseases.

Source: Ministry of Health

# Proportion of Water Catchments Tested Found to Be Unsafe for Human Consumption, 2002-04



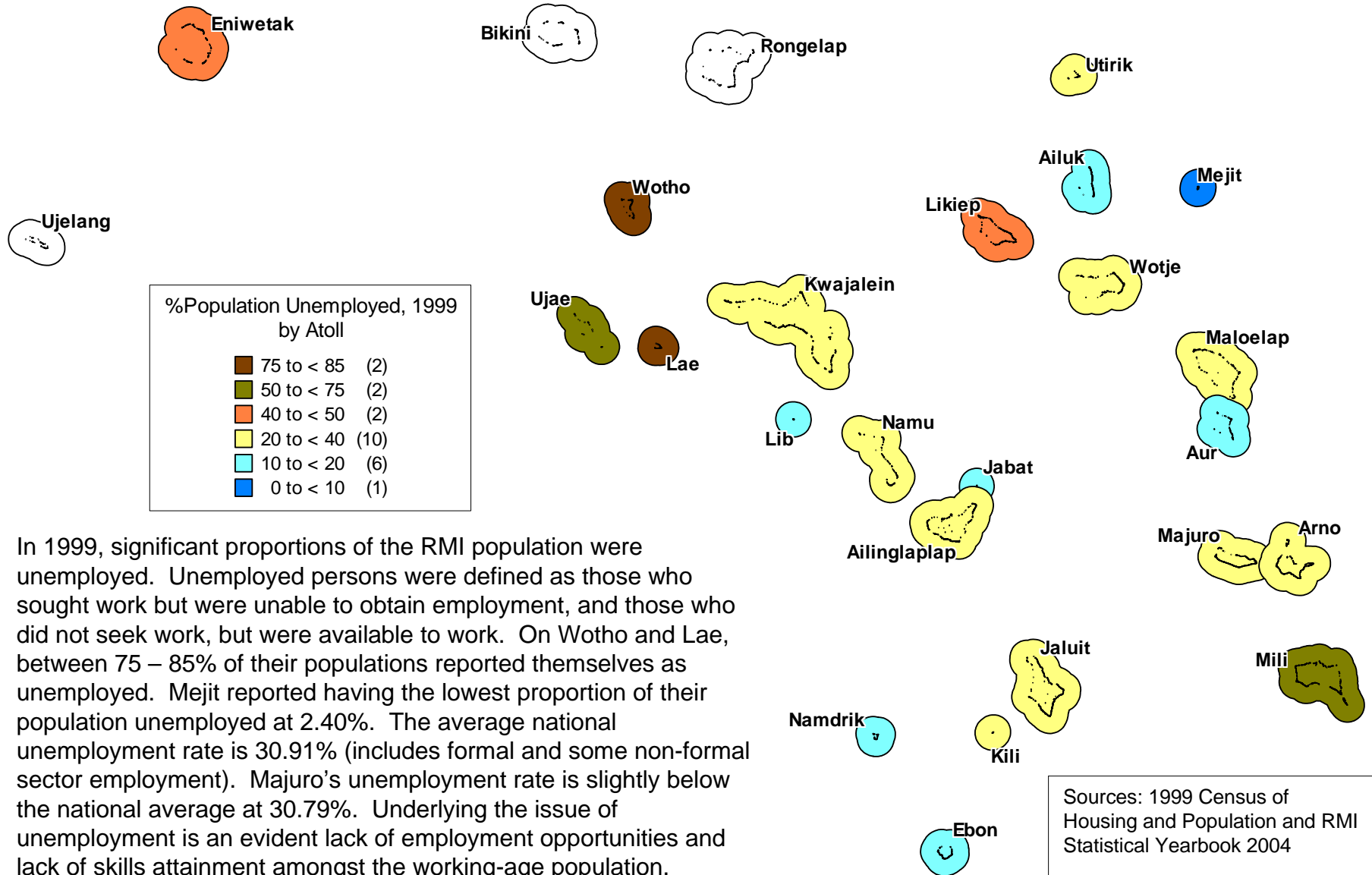
# Proportion of the Population with Annual Incomes of \$1,000 or Less by Atoll, 1999



On average, 13.55% of the population has a total annual income of \$1,000 or less. Ailuk, Lib and Ujae have between 70 – 80% of their populations earning less than \$1,000 a year. Kili, Enewetak and Wotho reported not having any households with incomes less than \$1,000 a year. From the map, it is apparent that there is a wide distribution of income levels across the RM, indicating high income disparity. Low income levels are largely caused by poor transportation services and lack of access to consistent and alternate sources of income and employment opportunities.

Source: 1999 Census of Population and Housing

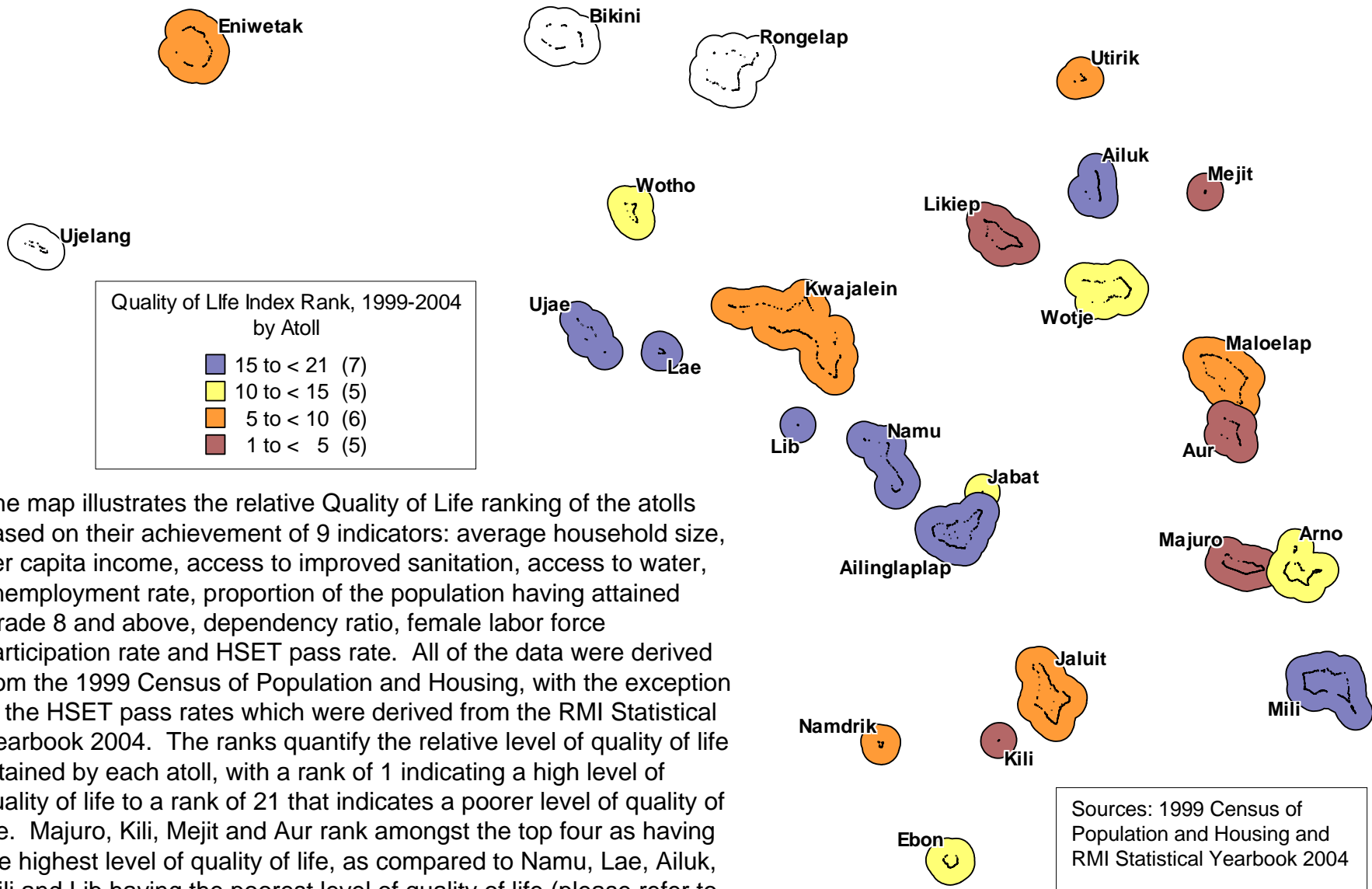
# Unemployment Rate For Population 15 Years and Above by Atoll, 1999



In 1999, significant proportions of the RMI population were unemployed. Unemployed persons were defined as those who sought work but were unable to obtain employment, and those who did not seek work, but were available to work. On Wotho and Lae, between 75 – 85% of their populations reported themselves as unemployed. Mejit reported having the lowest proportion of their population unemployed at 2.40%. The average national unemployment rate is 30.91% (includes formal and some non-formal sector employment). Majuro’s unemployment rate is slightly below the national average at 30.79%. Underlying the issue of unemployment is an evident lack of employment opportunities and lack of skills attainment amongst the working-age population. Despite increases in population, job creation has remained stagnant since the 1988 Census of Population and Housing.

Sources: 1999 Census of Housing and Population and RMI Statistical Yearbook 2004

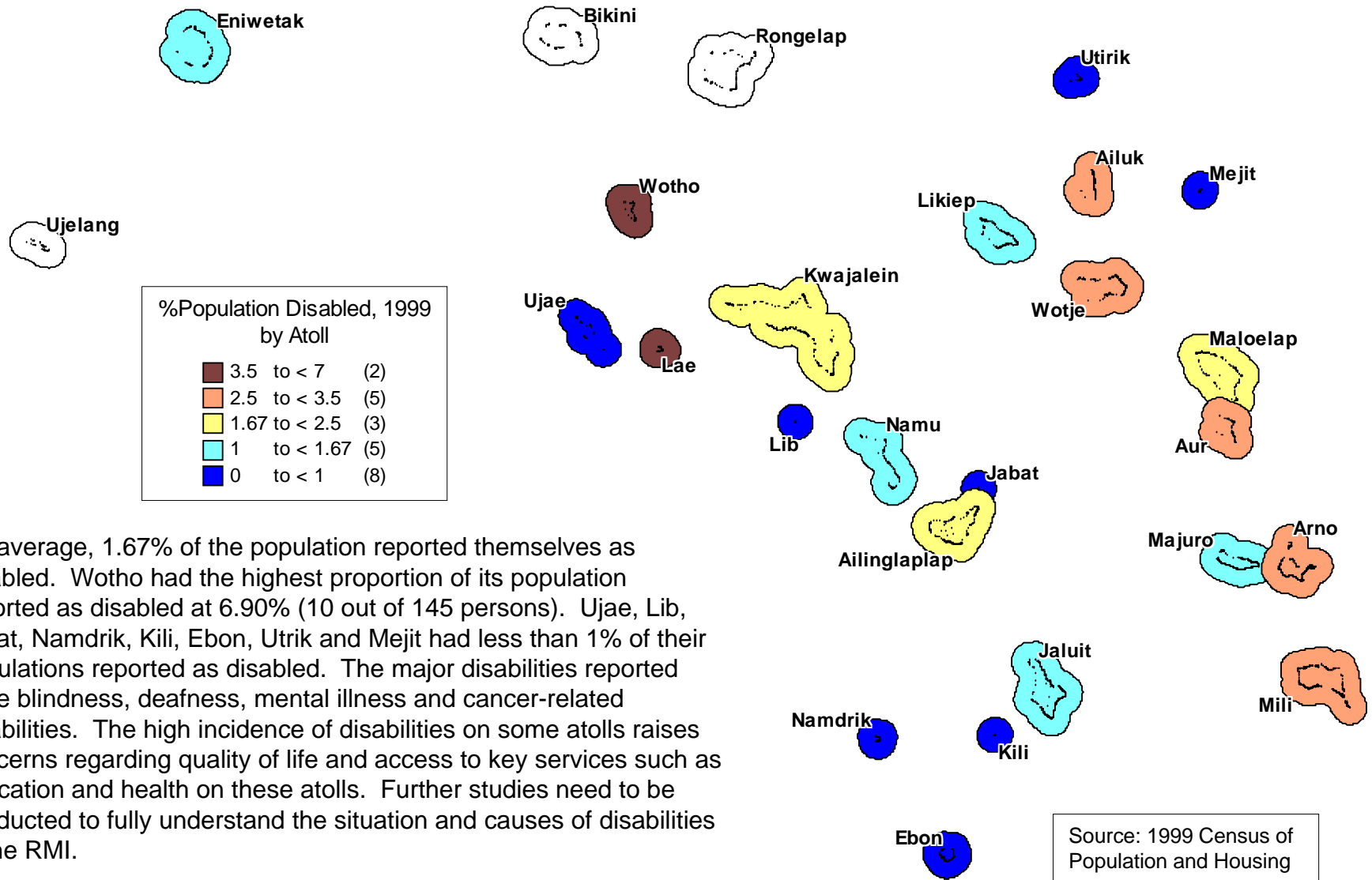
# Quality of Life Index by Atoll, 1999-2004



The map illustrates the relative Quality of Life ranking of the atolls based on their achievement of 9 indicators: average household size, per capita income, access to improved sanitation, access to water, unemployment rate, proportion of the population having attained Grade 8 and above, dependency ratio, female labor force participation rate and HSET pass rate. All of the data were derived from the 1999 Census of Population and Housing, with the exception of the HSET pass rates which were derived from the RMI Statistical Yearbook 2004. The ranks quantify the relative level of quality of life attained by each atoll, with a rank of 1 indicating a high level of quality of life to a rank of 21 that indicates a poorer level of quality of life. Majuro, Kili, Mejit and Aur rank amongst the top four as having the highest level of quality of life, as compared to Namu, Lae, Ailuk, Mili and Lib having the poorest level of quality of life (please refer to pages 4 and 19-22). Please note that this index is only a crude measure. All indicators were weighted equally.

Sources: 1999 Census of Population and Housing and RMI Statistical Yearbook 2004

# Proportion of the Population Reported as Disabled by Atoll, 1999



On average, 1.67% of the population reported themselves as disabled. Wotho had the highest proportion of its population reported as disabled at 6.90% (10 out of 145 persons). Ujae, Lib, Jabat, Namdrik, Kili, Ebon, Utrik and Mejit had less than 1% of their populations reported as disabled. The major disabilities reported were blindness, deafness, mental illness and cancer-related disabilities. The high incidence of disabilities on some atolls raises concerns regarding quality of life and access to key services such as education and health on these atolls. Further studies need to be conducted to fully understand the situation and causes of disabilities in the RMI.

# Atoll Rankings

Atoll	HH Size	Income	Sanitation	Water	Unemp.	Depend.	G8+	F LFPR	HSET	SUM	Rank
Majuro	12	2	3	5	11	1	2	10	4	50	1
Kili	14	4	1	1	7	2	10	9	12	60	2
Mejit	8	11	4	3	1	10	12	5	6	60	2
Aur	2	8	5	17	3	5	9	2	13	64	3
Likiep	4	6	17	6	14	15	4	6	2	74	4
Maloelap	2	9	11	13	10	6	5	9	10	75	5
Enewetak	13	3	6	1	15	8	7	18	7	78	6
Kwajalein	18	1	2	11	12	3	2	15	14	78	6
Jaluit	10	5	10	2	6	10	3	14	19	79	7
Utirik	7	7	16	12	13	14	12	7	1	89	8
Namdrik	5	13	14	7	3	16	15	8	11	92	9
Ebon	11	16	7	8	3	9	8	20	16	98	10
Jabat	3	18	15	1	2	21	14	16	9	99	11
Wotho	15	10	9	1	19	7	17	3	21	102	12
Wotje	14	12	8	14	9	13	13	17	3	103	13
Arno	17	17	8	3	8	17	7	12	15	104	14
Ailinglaplap	16	19	12	2	11	19	9	10	8	106	15
Ujae	6	21	6	4	17	18	6	11	20	109	16
Mili	12	15	18	9	16	11	10	4	18	113	17
Namu	9	20	19	10	11	4	13	11	17	114	18
Ailuk	1	22	13	16	5	12	16	13	21	119	19
Lae	20	14	19	15	18	22	11	1	5	125	20
Lib	19	23	20	1	4	20	1	19	21	128	21

# Quality of Life Table of Indicators and Statistics by Atoll

20

Atoll	Ave. HH Size	Per Capita Inc.	Access to San.	Access to Water	Unemp. Rate	Depend. Ratio	%Attained G8+	%Fem. LFPR	HSET Pass Rate
Ailinglaplap	8.3	\$ 221.00	17%	99%	31%	119.91	76%	36%	53.6%
Ailuk	5.8	\$ 165.00	16%	59%	19%	98.83	57%	30%	0.0%
Arno	8.5	\$ 264.00	37%	98%	24%	110.05	81%	31%	31.0%
Aur	6.2	\$ 494.00	42%	52%	15%	87.76	76%	89%	38.9%
Ebon	7.4	\$ 334.00	39%	91%	15%	97.78	80%	14%	20.9%
Enewetak	7.8	\$ 1,564.00	40%	100%	43%	95.19	81%	19%	57.1%
Jabat	6.3	\$ 259.00	13%	100%	11%	137.5	60%	27%	50.0%
Jaluit	7.2	\$ 672.00	31%	99%	21%	98.1	86%	29%	16.7%
Kili	8.0	\$ 1,149.00	100%	100%	22%	74.72	75%	40%	40.0%
Kwajalein	9.0	\$ 2,061.00	91%	79%	32%	82.38	88%	28%	34.0%
Lae	10.1	\$ 380.00	3%	63%	76%	137.78	73%	93%	68.4%
Lib	9.8	\$ 71.00	0%	100%	17%	133.33	93%	18%	0.0%
Likiep	6.4	\$ 644.00	10%	95%	41%	108.5	84%	57%	88.9%
Majuro	7.6	\$ 1,667.00	82%	96%	31%	71.2	88%	36%	69.7%
Maloelap	6.2	\$ 474.00	18%	67%	28%	89.58	83%	40%	47.8%
Mejit	6.9	\$ 438.00	60%	98%	2%	98.1	72%	67%	58.3%
Mili	7.6	\$ 367.00	9%	87%	50%	98.65	75%	69%	19.4%
Namdrik	6.5	\$ 405.00	15%	93%	15%	109.78	59%	41%	46.4%
Namu	7.1	\$ 220.00	3%	86%	31%	82.96	71%	33%	20.0%
Ujae	6.6	\$ 204.00	40%	97%	55%	114.63	82%	33%	15.4%
Utirik	6.7	\$ 537.00	11%	68%	37%	108.17	72%	56%	100.0%
Wotho	8.1	\$ 456.00	33%	100%	82%	90.79	37%	81%	0.0%
Wotje	8.0	\$ 419.00	37%	65%	27%	99.53	71%	20%	70.0%

## Explanation of Quality of Life Index and List of Indicators

**Average Household Size:** Household size has been identified as a factor in the ability of households to meet certain basic needs and has a significant impact upon the well-being of individual households. On average, households with a greater number of members often have increased difficulty in sufficiently meeting the needs of all household members, particularly in those circumstances where resources are often difficult to access or are of poor quality, and where there are only a few wage earners compared to the number of dependent household members. Large household sizes are often an indicator of hardship and poverty, especially in developing countries.

**Per Capita Income:** Per capita income is the average income earned per person per year. The international income poverty threshold is \$1/day or between \$280 - \$392 per year (1993 Purchasing Power Parity). By international standards, those living at or below this threshold is considered to be living in poverty. Taking into consideration the general cost of living in the RMI (cost of basic goods, services, transportation and utilities), this threshold may be higher. The RMI has yet to set a income poverty threshold. However, using the international standard of \$1/day as basic measurement of hardship still provides useful information in terms of measuring relative hardship and poverty in the RMI.

**Access to Sanitation:** Access to improved sanitation means that households have access to basic sanitation services such as household waste pick-up and disposal and human waste disposal (flush toilet facilities and septic system). Disposal has to be such that the impact to human health and the environment is minimized or eliminated. Access to improved sanitation is a major quality of life and poverty indicator due to the impact on human health, and is a strong reflection of the availability and quality of basic services to improve human and environmental health.

**Access to Water:** Access to water means that households have a consistent and safe source of water for human consumption and sanitation needs (e.g. water catchment, government hook-up, etc.). The data collected in the 1999 Census of Population and Housing is only in terms of access to water, and does not indicate whether the water source is safe for human consumption. In recent years, the RMI EPA has been testing water sources throughout the RMI, but has yet to achieve a 100% coverage rate for all atolls. As such, this data has yet to be incorporated into the Quality of Life Index. For now, the information from the 1999 Census is being used since, at a minimum, a consistent water source does have a positive impact upon the well-being of households.

**Unemployment Rate:** The unemployment rate measures the number of persons of employment age who are employed as compared to the total number of people who are in the labor force (employed and unemployed). The unemployment rate is a universally used indicator of poverty and quality of life, as it is a strong reflection of the availability of employment opportunities and/or the level of economic development in a community or country, and is directly related to household income and the ability of households to obtain basic goods and services.

**Dependency Ratio:** The dependency ratio measures the proportion of a population dependent on others for their livelihood (economic dependents) compared to the total number of people who are economically active (those 15 – 65 years of age). The definition of those who are dependent on others are those persons 0-14 years of age and those 65 years and above. A high dependency ratio means that there is a large number of people dependent on others for their livelihood. For example, a dependency ratio of 80 means that for every 100 persons in a population, 80 people are dependent on them for their livelihood. Due to the high population of under 15 year olds as compared to the total population of 15 – 65 year olds, the RMI has one of the highest dependency ratios in the Pacific region. The dependency ratio can be related to average household size, with large households often indicating a large number of dependents in comparison to the number of persons able to obtain employment. As with average household size, a high dependency is often an indicator of increasing stress on families to meet the needs of dependent family members, particularly when there are only a few wage earners.

**Proportion of Population Having Completed Grade 8 and Above:** This indicator measures the proportion of the population 25 years and above (at the time of the 1999 Census) who, at a minimum, have completed Grade 8. This includes people who have reached or completed high school, GED, college and above. Education attainment is a universally accepted indicator of poverty and quality of life as education attainment is directly related to a person's ability to gain employment, knowledge of better health and sanitation, further skills attainment and development, etc. These, in turn, are related to a person's income and ability to access and/or afford basic goods and services, and generally better living and health standards. A low percentage indicates that only a small section of the population 25 years and above have attained a minimum of a Grade 8 or above education, but conversely that a large percentage have not reached Grade 8 (or have not attended school at all).

**Female Labor Force Participation Rate:** This indicator measures the proportion of women (15 - 65 years) who are participating in the labor force (i.e. are employed under an employer, are self-employed or are employed in a family business). Female education attainment and ability to participate in the labor force have been increasingly identified by social researchers as having a significant impact upon the well-being of families and children. Studies have linked female education attainment and ability to earn income as directly impacting their family's and children's health, nutrition and education completion. As such, this indicator was added into the Quality of Life Index to provide a more broad-based analysis of household-level quality of life.

**High School Entrance Test Pass Rate:** Education attainment is a key indicator and measurement of quality of life and is directly related to income-related characteristics such as employability and ability to develop and sustain alternate income-generating activities (e.g. owning own business). In addition, education attainment is directly linked to other skills and knowledge that will enable a person to lead a good quality of life, particularly with regards to health (nutrition, family planning, personal hygiene, sanitation, etc.). The ability of students to pass the HSET is also an indicator of the quality of education service delivery, which in itself, is an indicator of quality of life.

## **General Observations**

First, it is important to note that the information and statistics contained in this report are primarily derived from the 1999 Census of Population and Housing, and as such, cannot be viewed as reflecting today's actual circumstances. However, what this report does highlight is that there are outstanding social, economic and environmental issues that do need to be considered and addressed. It is clear that the 1999 information has significant impact on and ramifications for the RMI's current socio-economic situation. This is especially the case as current statistics suggest that the findings or general conclusions presented in the maps and tables do not differ significantly from what is occurring today in the RMI. Poor education attainment, unequal access to income and employment opportunities, poor access to improved sanitation and safe water in the outer-islands, and lack of crucial health services are challenges that still need to be addressed today and in the future.

In terms of policy development, it is evident that more targeted and improved action must take place in order to improve and equalize standards of living across the RMI. Though the national government has the main burden of providing basic health, education and other services, the local governments also have a responsibility for developing and implementing national and local policies that affect the quality of life of their communities and atolls. This report clearly highlights this need as no other report has been able to do in the past.

Overall, there is a need for these types of reports to be more fully utilized by decision-makers at all levels to enable them to make improved decisions, and develop more appropriate policies that will have a more direct impact on all Marshallese. The primary purpose of this report has been to provide a baseline of information and data that provides a clear picture of social and economic conditions in the RMI. As such, this information will ensure that policy and decision-makers, alike, will develop and implement policies that address the real needs of the Marshallese people.