

COUNTRY PROFILE: FIJI

Introduction

Located in the South Pacific, Fiji is an archipelago of more than 300 islands and the largest country of the Pacific Islands region. Its major islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, contain most of the population and make up about 87% of the total land area.

As most Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), it faces a number of constraints related to limited natural resources, narrowly-based economies, large distances from major markets, vulnerability to external shocks, and extreme vulnerability to the effects of climate change and natural disasters, such as cyclones and floods. In 2016, Tropical Cyclone Winston caused damage and losses equivalent to 29.2% of GDP. Fiji is an upper middle-income country according to the World Bank.

In 2017, The Fijian Government launched Fiji's National Development Plan (NDP), with the vision of "Transforming Fiji" through inclusive socioeconomic development.

National Development Plan 2017–2036¹

Launched in 2017, the NDP outlines both a 20-Year Development Plan (2017-2036) and a comprehensive 5-Year Development Plan (2017-2021). These plans work together, as the 5-Year Development Plan provides a detailed action agenda with specific targets and policies that are aligned to the long-term transformational 20-Year Development Plan.

Inclusive growth will help address remaining poverty and reduce inequalities while accelerating progress in gender equality. The NDP stresses the importance of sustained economic expansion supported by private sector investment and trade, and the enhanced provision of social services and public goods. It sets a strategy for Fiji to become a regional hub of the South Pacific for business, including by improving transport and digital connectivity, and developing a skilled workforce and productive jobs, which will contribute to regional cooperation and integration. The NDP is aligned with, and outlines strategies to achieve Fiji's global commitments, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The NDP proposes two mutually inclusive and mutually reinforcing development strategies:

- i) Inclusive Social-Economic Development which aims to further improve the living standards of Fijians; and
- ii) Transformational Strategic Thrusts which aim to cement Fiji as the regional hub of the South Pacific through continuing the momentum of key reforms and building on locational, infrastructural, and institutional advantages.

Population & Human Development

Fiji's HDI value for 2018 is 0.724— which put the country in the high human development category— positioning it at 98 out of 189 countries and territories. Between 1990 and 2018, Fiji's HDI value increased from 0.640 to 0.724, life expectancy at birth increased by 2.0 years, mean years of schooling increased by 2.5 years and expected years of schooling increased by 2.3 years. Fiji's GNI per capita increased by about 60.3 percent over the same period. Fiji's HDI is below the average for countries in the high human development group (0.750) and below the average for countries in East Asia and the Pacific (0.741)².

¹ Government of Fiji (2017). 5-Year & 20-Year National Development Plan – Transforming Fiji. Ministry of Economy, Republic of Fiji. <https://www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/15b0ba03-825e-47f7-bf69-094ad33004dd/5-Year-20-Year-NATIONAL-DEVELOPMENT-PLAN.aspx> Accessed January 2020

² UNDP (2019). Human Development Report 2019. Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century. Briefing note for countries on the 2019 Human Development Report. Fiji. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/FJI.pdf Accessed January 2020

In Fiji, women hold 19.6 percent of parliamentary seats and 78.3 percent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 70.2 percent of their male counterparts. Female participation in the labour market is 38.1 percent compared to 76.1 for men. In its Voluntary National Review 2019 - Fiji's progress report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals – the Fijian Government recognises gender equality as a key component of national development and economic growth. Since 2015, the Fijian Government has enacted, reviewed and introduced several pieces of legislation and policies such as the Gender Action Plan in the National Climate Change Policy (2017) and a National Gender Policy 5-Year Strategic Implementation Framework (2020-2025) under the Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation (2019)³. However, due to cultural traditions, the participation of indigenous women is limited. Only 10 out of the 51 members of Parliament are women.

Demographic and other development indicators			
Human Development Index (HDI)	0.724	Literacy rate (ages >15)(2017)	99%
HDI rank	98	Mean years of schooling (2018)	14.4
Inequality-adjusted HDI	n.a	School enrollment primary (2016)	105
Population size (2018)	883,483	School enrollment secondary (2012)	89
Population growth rate (2018)	0.68	Population living below income poverty line, PPP \$1.90 a day (2012)	1.4
Projected population in 2030 ⁴	966,000	GNI per capita, PPP (current int. \$)	10,140
Urban population (2018)	56.2%	Labour force (2018 est.)	356,596
Rural population (2018)	43.8%	Labour force participation rate (2018)	57.3
Life expectancy at birth (2018)	67	Unemployment rate (2018)	4.2
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births) (2017)	21.4	Political rights (1=Most Free, 7=Least free)	3
Population using basic drinking water sources (2017)	93.8%	Civil Liberties (1=Most Free, 7=Least free)	3
Population using basic sanitation services (2017)	95.1%	Corruption perception index	n.a.
Population with access to electricity (2017)	96%	CPIA gender equality rating (1=low to 6=high)	n.a

Political context

Fiji became independent from Britain in 1970. Frank Bainimarama led a military coup in 2006, and in 2014, national elections gave him the majority in parliament, and was sworn in as Prime Minister. Fiji's transition from a military to a democratically elected government received significant support from development partners, as central accountability mechanisms were rebuilt⁵. Since the restoration of democracy in 2014, government transparency and openness has improved – the government now organizes an annual briefing for civil society organizations on the budget and parliamentary sessions are broadcast live. In the November 2018 parliamentary elections, Prime Minister's FijiFirst Party won 50 percent of the total vote and 27 seats in the 51-member Parliament⁶. Fiji's next election is scheduled for 2022.

Fiji scores 61/100 in the aggregate freedom score (Freedom House), resulting in “partly free”.

³ Government of Fiji (2019). Voluntary National Review. Fiji's Progress in Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Republic of Fiji. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25011Fiji_VNR_2019_final.pdf Accessed February 2020

⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects 2019, custom data acquired via website. <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

⁵ Asian Development Bank (2019). Country Partnership Strategy. Fiji, 2019–2023 —Achieving Sustained, Inclusive, Private Sector-Led Growth <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/495256/cps-fiji-2019-2023.pdf> Accessed January 2020

⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/fiji> Accessed January 2020

In international relations, Fiji is usually aligned with: the G-77, and the AOSIS. The country belongs to the following international organizations and UN agencies (non-exhaustive list)⁷: ACP, ADB, ICRM, Interpol, IOC, ISO, PIF, SPC, WCO, FAO, IAEA, ICAO, IDA, IFAD, WBG, ILO, IMF, IMO, ITU, UNESCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO.

Economic Overview

Growth averaged 3.1% during 2010–2018, despite a downturn in 2016 due to tropical cyclone Winston, which caused considerable damage and losses. Overall growth has been driven by public investments and tourism, while private investment outside of the tourism industry has remained low.

Fiji's natural endowment of forest, agricultural, fishery and mineral resources has historically played a key role in supporting its economic development. The island nation enjoys a tropical climate that allows production of a wide range of food crops, both for local consumption and export, and provides one of the basic attractions for the tourism industry. Over a third of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and 70 percent of exports can be attributed to natural resource-related activities such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, and mining.

Fiji's small size, remoteness, and significant levels of disaster risk contribute to high costs of doing business. Fiji's rank in the World Bank's Doing Business report was 101st out of 190 countries in 2019⁸.

Economic indicators 2018 ⁹	
GDP (current US\$)	5,536,759,659
GDP growth (annual %)	3.53
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added (% of GDP)	10.75
Industry (including construction), value added (% of GDP)	15.56
Services, value added (% of GDP)	53.91
Domestic credit provided by financial sector (% of GDP)	70.4
Tax revenue (% of GDP)(2018)	24.2
Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)	5.1
Index of economic freedom in 2019 (rank in the world) ¹⁰	62.2 (81st)

Agriculture. The agricultural sector plays an important role in Fiji's economy. Patterns of crop planting are largely determined by variations in rainfall. Sugarcane is the main crop and was once the backbone of the Fiji's economy. However, in recent years the government has taken steps to decrease the economy's reliance on this crop by supporting the production of other major cash crop such as coconuts, bananas and cereals, with a focus on supplying the tourism industry. As a result, non-sugarcane crops contributed around three times more than that of sugar cane in 2010, although as a single export sugar continues to be one of the most profitable¹¹. Fiji has substantial mahogany and other hardwood plantations. Agricultural land accounts for 23% of total land area.

⁷ ACP: African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States, ADB: Asian Development Bank, ICRM: International Red Cross and Red Crescent, Movement, IOC: International Olympic Committee, ISO: International Organization for Standardization, PIF: Pacific Islands Forum, SPC: Secretariat of the Pacific Communities, WCO: World Customs Organization, FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency, ICAO: International Civil Aviation Organization, IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development, ILO: International Labor Organization, IMF: International Monetary Fund, IMO: International Maritime Organization, ITU: International Telecommunications Union, UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, WHO: World Health Organization, WIPO: World Intellectual Property Organization, WMO: World Meteorological Organization, WTO: World Trade Organization.

⁸ Asian Development Bank (2019).

⁹ World Development Indicators, the World Bank. Data retrieved December 2019

¹⁰ <https://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2019/countries/fiji.pdf> Accessed December 2019

¹¹ <http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-fiji/business/agriculture/>

Acknowledging the strong linkages between the agricultural sector and the rest of the economy, and the need to address new domestic and global challenges such as food and nutrition security and climate change led to the formulation of the Fiji 2020 Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda. The policy addresses “sustainable intensification”, climate-smart agriculture, and sustainable development while modernizing Fiji’s agricultural sector. The Fiji 2020 Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda complements the National Green Growth Framework¹².

Infrastructure. Fiji’s geography makes connective infrastructure and services essential for socioeconomic development. While its infrastructure compares favorably to other countries in the Pacific, there are still significant deficiencies in corresponding services. According to the Asian Development Bank, key constraints include (i) inadequate upgrading and maintenance of roads, (ii) low capacity at its main ports, (iii) limited connectivity infrastructure in remote areas and outer islands, and (iv) inadequate urban services. As the tourism sector continues to grow, infrastructure investment will also be needed to ensure that such growth is environmentally sustainable¹³. These challenges are addressed in Fiji’s NDP that plans investments in road infrastructure, transportation to be more environmentally friendly, air transportation, modernizing port infrastructure and inter-island sea-transport network.

Further, the NDP anticipates the use of innovative technologies will be adopted for industrial recycling, rainwater harvesting and storage, storm water and aquifer management and use of renewable energy for desalination plants. Building climate resilient water infrastructure will be a key aspect of all new projects.

Infrastructure			
Energy (2016)		Transportation	
Electrification total population	98.6%	Airports (with paved runway)	28 (4)
Electrification urban areas	99.2%	Railways (kms) (2008)	597
Electrification rural areas	98%	Roadways (unpaved) (kms)	3,440 (1,754)
Electricity generating capacity	338,000 kW	Waterways (kms)	203
Pipelines (kms)	n.a.	Major seaports	Lautoka, Levuka, Suva

Manufacturing. In 2018, 14% of all employed persons worked in the manufacturing industry¹⁴. The industry consists of textiles, garments, footwear, sugar, tobacco, food processing, beverages (including mineral water), and wood processing. The Government’s focus for 2017-2021 is to develop Fiji as a manufacturing hub for the Pacific, with more value addition and expansion into new areas of manufacturing. Among the policies and strategies to build a sustainable and globally competitive manufacturing industry, Fiji is encouraging the adoption of environmentally friendly technology and practices, sustainable use of water resources, conservation of biodiversity, and promoting energy efficiency.

Mining. Mining and exploration in Fiji has been dominated by gold production from Vatukoula mine. Other sector revenues come from industrial minerals such as sand and gravel, quarried stone and coral sand¹⁵. Vatukoula Gold Mines plc is the owner of the largest producing gold mine in Fiji¹⁶. In 2007 copper-gold deposits were discovered in joint exploratory venture between Nittetsu Mining, Mitsubishi Materials Corp and Newcrest Mining (Namosi Joint Venture), 30 kilometres off the coast of Suva. It was then thought to be one of the world’s largest undeveloped copper-gold deposits.

¹² Government of Fiji, Ministry of Agriculture (2014). Fiji 2020 Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda.

<https://pafpnet.spc.int/pafpnet/attachments/article/219/fiji-2020-agriculture-sector-policy-agenda.pdf> Accessed February 2020

¹³ Asian Development Bank (2019).

¹⁴ Fiji Bureau of Statistics (2020). Annual Paid Employment Statistics, 2018. <https://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/index.php/statistics/social-statistics/employment-statistics44> Accessed February 2020

¹⁵ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/dsd/dsd_aofw_ni/ni_pdfs/NationalReports/fiji/Mining.pdf Accessed February 2020

¹⁶ <http://www.vgmplc.com/> Accessed February 2020

Quarrying activities mainly focus on the production of materials for construction including limestone, sand and gravel¹⁷. The most important locally operated quarrying companies in Fiji are Fiji Industries Ltd and Standard Concrete Industries.

Fiji does not produce oil or gas, and as a result the country requires imports to meet its power demand. Refined petroleum is one of the top products imported into Fiji. The government, has granted licences to three companies for exploration rights in the country's sovereign waters – these companies are Akura Fiji, South Pacific Petroleum and Gas (SPPG), and Seo Tuinaivalu (SPMM). Other exploration licenses within Fiji are granted for gold, base metals, bauxite, limestone/marble, aggregate, petroleum and natural gas, and geothermal heat¹⁸.

Deep sea mining. Driven by the relatively high grade of deep sea minerals (DSM) including rare earth elements, and technological advances, deep sea mining is emerging as a new industry in the Pacific. Exploration of ocean minerals and resources is increasing globally, requiring regulatory and institutional capacities to catch up. Deposits of seafloor massive sulphides containing high concentrations of iron, copper, zinc, gold, silver, manganese, nickel and cobalt can be found in the EEZ of Fiji¹⁹.

Tourism. The services sector, in particular tourism, dominates Fiji's economy. Its share of GDP increased from 68.6% in 2010 to 71.2% of GDP in 2018²⁰, when tourist arrivals reached 870,309. Tourism is the country's largest contributor to economic growth, investment, and foreign exchange earnings, with nearly 17 percent of GDP derived from tourism-related activities. The Fijian Tourism 2021 development plan aims to grow the country's tourism industry from \$1.9 billion in 2017 to \$2.2 billion with 930,000 visitor arrivals by the end of 2021²¹.

Trade. Major exports are bottled water, fish, sugar, and garments. The trade deficit is offset by remittances and tourism earnings²².

Top-10 export markets for goods and export goods in 2018 (\$)			
Country		Exported goods	
USA	186,848,103	Mineral fuels, oils distillation products	207,681,918
Australia	134,400,907	Beverages, spirits and vinegar	134,374,325
Bunkers	83,401,430	Fish, crustaceans, molluscs, aquatic invertebrates	133,333,964
Japan	77,261,238	Pearls, precious stones, metals, coins, etc.	56,563,694
New Zealand	68,226,921	Wood and articles of wood; wood charcoal	53,356,323
Areas, nes	60,129,284	Electrical, electronic equipment	52,801,972
China	59,817,308	Sugars and sugar confectionery	45,146,463
Tonga	52,088,177	Apparel and clothing accessories; not knit or crochet	35,333,318
Vanuatu	30,431,442	Cereals, flour, starch, milk preparations and products	31,104,557
Samoa	24,388,996	Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes	24,497,392

Top-10 import markets for goods and import goods in 2018 (\$)	
Country	Imported goods

¹⁷ http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-fiji/business/mining_and_minerals/

¹⁸ <https://www.domegoldmines.com.au/about-fiji/mining-in-fiji/>

¹⁹ World Bank (2017) Pacific Possible: Long-term Economic Opportunities and Challenges for Pacific Island Countries. Washington, DC: World Bank. CC BY 3.0 IGO <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/168951503668157320/Pacific-Possible-long-term-economic-opportunities-and-challenges-for-Pacific-Island-Countries> Accessed February 2020

²⁰ Asian Development Bank (2019).

²¹ Government of Fiji. Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism. Fijian Tourism 2021. <https://mitt.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FT2021.pdf> Accessed February 2020

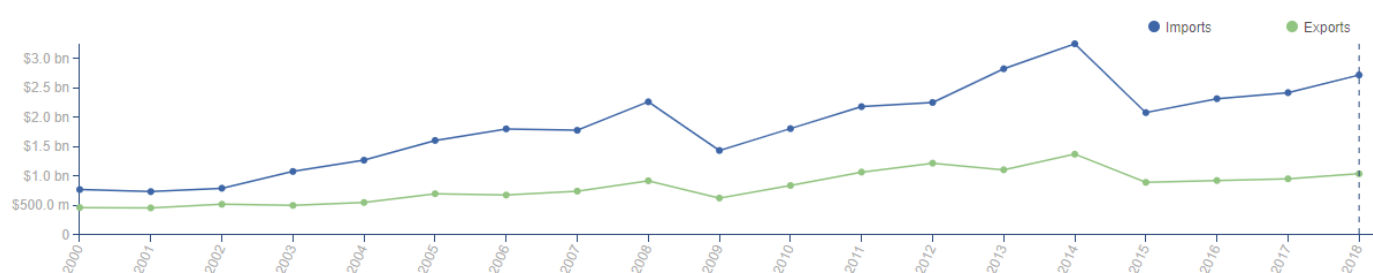
²² Asian Development Bank (2019).

Singapore	566,887,074	Mineral fuels, oils distillation products	565,408,297
China	443,829,622	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery	236,601,878
Australia	427,575,033	Vehicles other than railway or tramway	223,268,008
New Zealand	397,580,367	Electrical, electronic equipment	194,311,440
Japan	127,294,182	Aircraft, spacecraft and parts thereof	122,372,660
Rep. of Korea	88,630,324	Plastics and articles thereof	114,451,834
Thailand	77,534,956	Cereals	67,507,914
China, Hong Kong SAR	72,466,392	Paper and paperboard; articles of paper pulp, of paper or board	64,555,932
Malaysia	67,293,679	Iron and steel	60,893,485
India	66,347,486	Iron or steel articles	58,687,444

International Trade in Goods and Services based on UN Comtrade data.

<https://comtrade.un.org/data/> Accessed February 2020

Fiji trade in goods with the world since 2000



Environment

Fiji is a large archipelago with diverse landscapes and climate. More than 300 islands characterized by diverse ecosystems are scattered over 1.3 million sq. km of ocean. Fiji experiences a wet season from November to April and a dry season from May to October. In addition to seasonal variation, the country experiences high year-to-year variability associated with the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomena.²³

The larger islands within the Fiji archipelago have adequate supplies of water to meet the needs of the population thanks to abundant rainfall, a forest cover that allows capture and retention of water in underground aquifers, and the presence of important perennial rivers and streams,²⁴.

Geography and land-use data ²⁵	
Land area (sq. km)	18,333
Terrestrial protected areas (% of total land area); marine protected areas ²⁶	5.41; 0.92
Forest area (% of land area, 2017)	55.68
Primary Forest (% forest land, 2017)	40.45
Planted Forest (% forest land, 2017)	15.16
Other naturally regenerated forest (% forest land, 2017)	44.4
Cropland (% of land area) , 2017	13.68
Arable land (% of land area, 2011)	8.9
Agricultural land (% of land area, 2017)	23.26

²³ Asian Development Bank (2014). Country Partnership Strategy: Fiji, 2014-2018. Environment Assessment (Summary) <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cps-fij-2014-2018-ena.pdf> Accessed January 2020

²⁴ <https://www.sprep.org/att/IRC/eCOPIES/Countries/Fiji/15.pdf> Accessed February 2020

²⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAOSTAT <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/EL> Accessed December 2019

²⁶ UNEP-WCMC (2020). Protected Area Profile for Fiji from the World Database of Protected Areas, February 2020. Available at: www.protectedplanet.net

Wildlife and protected areas

Much of Fiji's biodiversity is unique to Fiji and many species are not found anywhere else in the world. Fifty per cent or more of Fiji's plants and birds, over 90% of some insect groups, such as cicadas and marine insects, are all endemic. The total number of vascular plants known is approximately 2,600, of which 1,600 are native and 1,000 introduced. Out of a total of 27 reptile species, 12 are endemic. Fiji also has an extensive and high diversity of marine habitats, including estuaries, sea grass, macro-algal assemblages, protected and exposed soft shores, lagoons, coral reefs and slopes. In particular, the country has the third largest area of mangrove within the Pacific Island region (517 sq km). While Fiji's marine biodiversity is not very well known, so far researchers have identified 1,198 species of fish, 1,056 marine invertebrates and approximately 1,000 coral reefs²⁷.

Almost half of Fiji's total area remains forested, while dry grasslands are found in western areas of the large islands. Forest coverage has been increasing in recent decades. In 2015, the total estimated hectares of forest were 1.1 million, covering 55.7 per cent of Fiji's total land area. This represents a 3.5 per cent increase since 1990. The total hectares of forest consist of 526,453 ha of native forest, 76,171 ha of pine forest and 54,000 ha of mahogany forest.²⁸ While these plantations are generally regarded to have had, on balance, positive environmental impacts, the rate of conversion of diverse natural forests into exotic mono-species plantations needs to be monitored and regulated, with greater attention paid to the role of natural forest cover in the protection of watersheds, streams, soil resources, and biodiversity.

Species with extinction risk assessments in Kenya published on the IUCN Red List		
Taxonomic group	Number assessed	Known threatened species
Amphibians	2	1
Birds	109	14
Fishes	1145	19
Mammals	26	6
Reptiles	27	15
Arachnids	1	0
Corals	416	87
Crustaceans	41	0
Insects	16	0
Molluscs	215	68
Other invertebrates	46	10
Ferns	1	0
Flowering plants	193	73
Gymnosperms	10	4
Total	2248	297
Total endemic species assessed/threatened	304	155

In terms of protected areas, the country counts over 100 Locally Managed Marine Protected Areas (LMMAs). Fiji has identified its Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and Important Bird Areas (IBAs), nationally significant wetland sites, fish aggregation and spawning sites. Ecosystem-based management is increasingly used and strict Environment Management and Monitoring Plans have been developed in relation to logging, quarry and sewage treatment plans²⁹.

²⁷ <https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile/?country=fj#facts>

²⁸ Government of Fiji (2019).

²⁹ <https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile/?country=fj#facts>

Fiji's fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) indicates there are 23 protected terrestrial areas that meet IUCN's definition of protected area and fall under national regulation. They include reserves, national parks, water catchments, sanctuaries and managed areas. Other terrestrial management areas in Fiji include proposed Key Biodiversity Areas, Important Bird Areas and Priority Forest-Areas. Protected sites only make up 2.7% of Fiji's land mass but proposed Key biodiversity Areas, Important Bird Areas, and Priority Forest Areas make up a further 15%. In 2008, Fiji established a National Protected Areas Committee (PAC) ³⁰.

The Fijian Government through its 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plans and the 2014 Green Growth Framework has explicitly set the target of achieving 30% Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by 2021.³¹

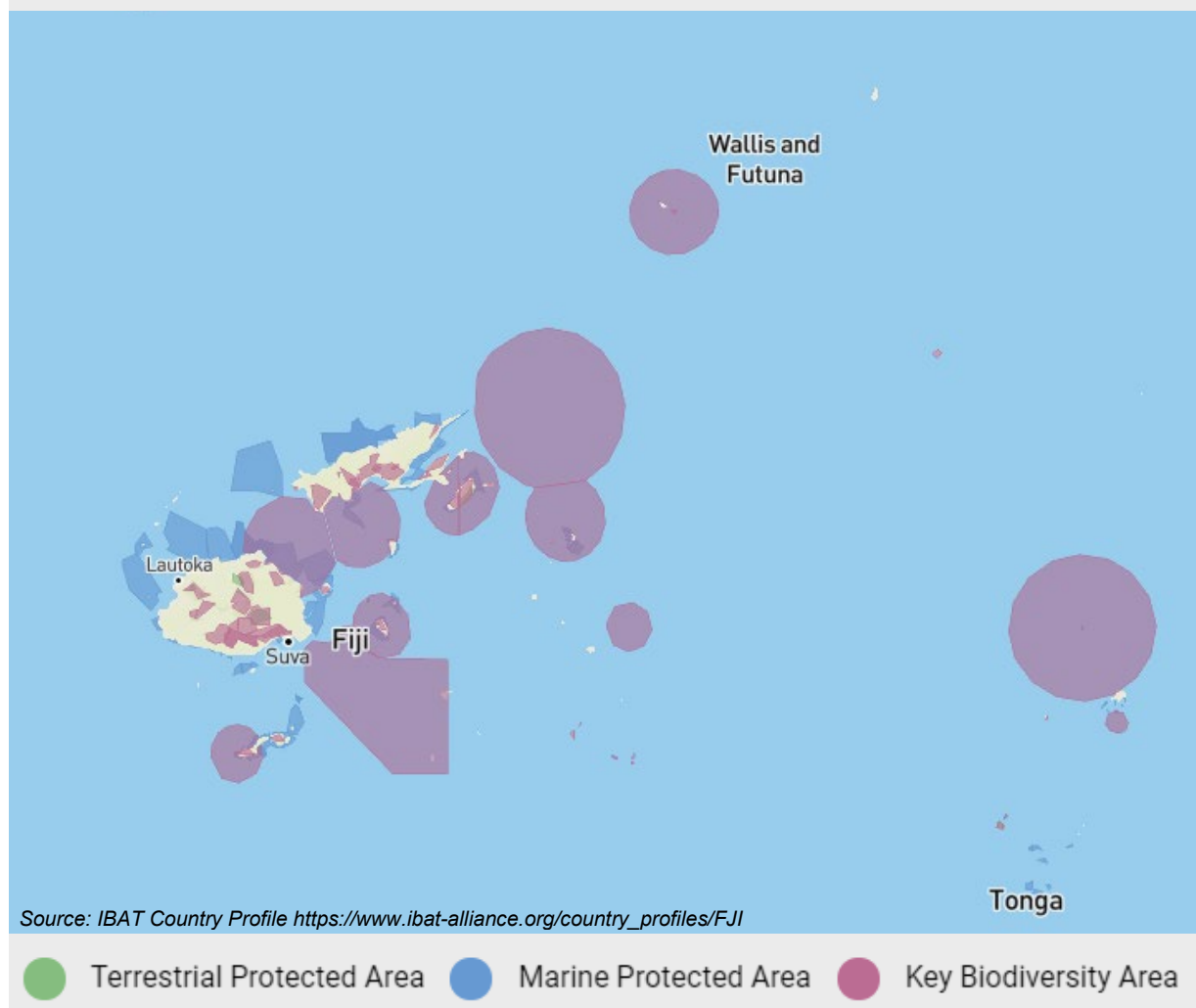
Protected Areas ³²	
Designation	Number
Conservation Reserve	1
Faunal Reserve	3
Forest Reserve	6
Forest Park	1
Heritage Park	1
Iguana Sanctuary	1
Locally Managed Marine Area	103
Marine Project	1
Marine Protected Area	9
National Park	1
Nature Reserve	6
Nature Reserve & Marine Reserve	1
Not reported	2
Recreation Reserve	1
Recreational Reserve	4
Water Dam	2
Ramsar Site	2
Coverage: 35.65% (terrestrial); 0.53% (Marine)	146
Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)	53

³⁰ Government of Fiji (2014). Fiji's Fifth National Report to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. Republic of Fiji. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/fj/fj-nr-05-en.pdf> Accessed February 2020

³¹ Government of Fiji (2019).

³² BirdLife International, IUCN and UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (2019). IBAT Country Profile for Fiji, Version 2019/1. Available at: <http://conservation.ibat-alliance.org> Accessed February 2020

Map showing the overlap between Key Biodiversity Areas and Protected Areas.



Main pressures and drivers of biodiversity loss

Fiji's fragile island ecosystem and biodiversity is under pressure from overfishing, unsustainable land use in agriculture, forest removal, mangrove cutting and poor planning. According to Fiji's Fifth National Report, the main driver of biodiversity loss is economic development resulting in over-exploitation of natural resources, pollution through agricultural and industrial wastes, urbanization, agricultural development and species introduction. Several species of fish, shellfish and crustaceans have notably been introduced into Fiji, mostly for aquaculture, as ornamentals, for sports fishing or biological controls³³.

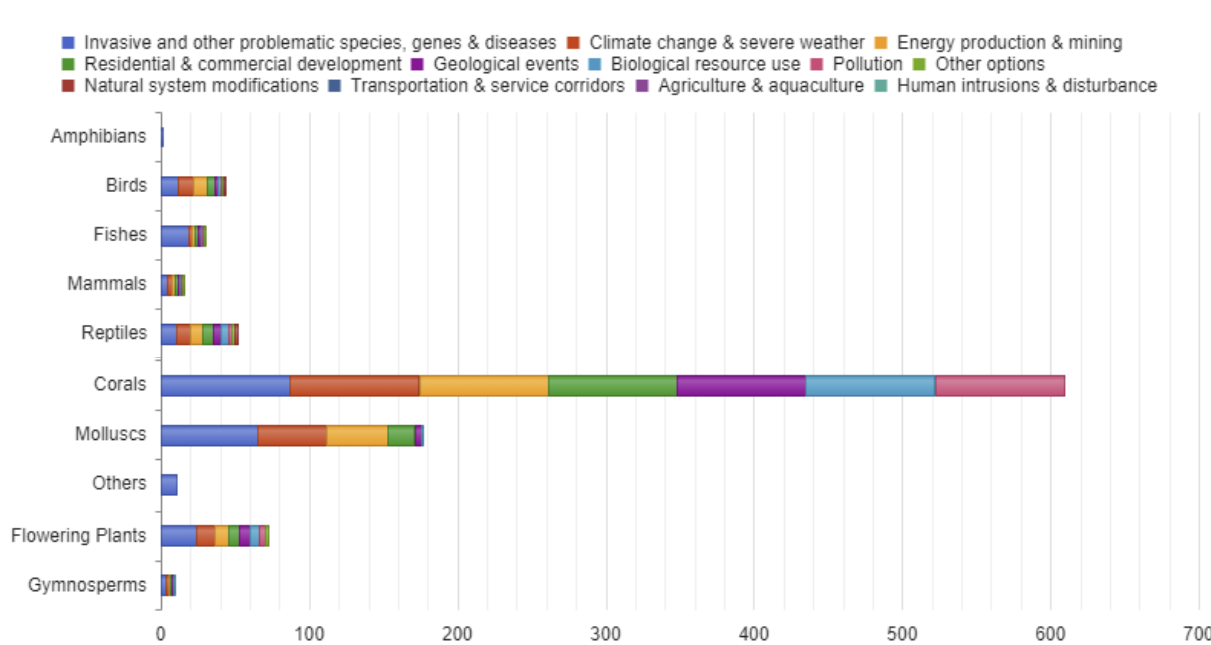
Further, major threats identified for Fiji's coastal resources are the increasing rates of coastal activities such as land reclamation, coral extraction, and river dredging, compounded by unregulated residential and tourism development. Fiji has the third largest mangrove area in the Pacific but coastal area and wetland reclamation have caused significant loss of mangrove areas and littoral forest, especially around heavily industrialized areas, towns, and cities. Coastal pollution from land-based activities and waste is also a major threat through increased siltation from reclamation, solid waste dump sites, eutrophication, and groundwater seepage. Fiji's reef systems are directly affected³⁴.

³³ Government of Fiji (2014).

³⁴ Asian Development Bank (2014).

In addition, Fiji faces serious environmental challenges related to climate change and extreme weather.

The Red List Index for Fiji exhibits a downward trend, indicating declining aggregate survival probability of the country's species, and it is currently at 0.669. Data provided by the IBAT Country Profile for Fiji identifies the global threats to species occurring in the country. The major threats for the majority of the different taxonomic groups assessed in Fiji relate to invasive species, climate change and severe weather, energy production and mining, among others



National legal environmental framework

The Department of Environment through the Environment Management Act 2005 and the Endangered and Protected Species Act (EPS Act) 2002 ensures the protection of Fiji's natural resources and biodiversity. The Department of Environment is the lead environmental agency in Fiji. The national Climate Change Unit is housed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and holds responsibility for delivering relevant policy and coordinating climate change programs and projects in Fiji³⁵.

Some of the most notable legislation and policies regarding biodiversity/environment concerns include³⁶:

- The Constitution (2013)
- The Environment Management Act (2005)
- The National Environment Strategy;
- The National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP) 2007; and
- The National Climate Change Policy 2012.
- The National Adaptation Plan Framework (2017)
- Fiji Low Emission Development Strategy 2018-2050
- Green Growth Framework for Fiji (2014)

Further, the National Development Plan has embedded environmental safeguards and best practices across all sectors of the economy that ensure Fiji upholds its environmental integrity. Fiji is currently in

³⁵ Asian Development Bank (2014).

³⁶ For an exhaustive list of natural resources and environment legislation: Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) (2018). Fiji: Review of natural resource and environment related legislation. Apia, Samoa. <https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/EMG/sprep-legislative-review-fiji.pdf> Accessed February 2020.

the process of developing a National Land Use Plan to improve land management to address desertification and reverse land degradation where present³⁷.

International legal framework

Fiji is party of the following conventions of which the following have impacts on biodiversity (non-exhaustive):

- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)
- Stockholm Convention
- Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)
- Montreal Protocol (Ozone Layer Protection)
- Ramsar (Wetlands)
- World Heritage Convention (WHC)
- Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
- International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (IWC)

Fiji held the UNFCCC COP23 Presidency.

National Commitments in Rio Conventions

In fulfilling its international obligations in these agreements, the country has submitted a number of national targets and/or plans to implement them.

Convention on Biological Diversity – NBSAP³⁸

The goal of Fiji's NBSAP is to conserve and sustainably use Fiji's terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity, and to maintain the ecological processes and systems which are the foundation of national and local development. A set of 19 principles also make integral part of the strategy.

The Plan outlines the current status of biodiversity resources in the country, and highlights several key areas that need greater attention in order to ensure the sustained viability of biodiversity: (i) community support, awareness, involvement, and ownership; (ii) improving the knowledge base; (iii) developing protected areas; (iv) species conservation; (v) control of invasive species; and (vi) capacity building and strengthening.

Fiji's NBSAP was complimented by an Implementation Framework 2010-2014 to translate the NBSAP into a practical management document and roadmap. This last document identifies 7 thematic areas (Forest conversion management; Invasive alien species; Inshore fisheries; Coastal development; Species conservation: Threatened and endangered species; Protected areas; Inland waters) and priority actions to be achieved on an annual basis³⁹.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - NDC⁴⁰

Fiji's current Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) is specific to the energy sector. The overall mitigation target in the NDC is to reduce CO₂ emissions by 30% from a BAU (Business As Usual) baseline scenario in 2030, 10% of which is unconditional and achieved through implementation of the Green Growth Framework for Fiji 2014, while 20% is conditional on external funding estimated at US\$ 500 million in 2015.

The 30% emission target will be achieved by striving to reach 100% renewable-energy power generation and through economy-wide energy efficiency. Furthermore, Fiji has achieved one of its National Development Plan

³⁷ Government of Fiji (2019).

³⁸ Government of Fiji (2007). Fiji Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. Republic of Fiji <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/fj/fj-nbsap-01-en.pdf> Accessed January 2020.

³⁹ Government of Fiji (2010). Implementation Framework 2010 – 2014 for the National Biodiversity Strategy And Action Plan 2007. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/fj/fj-nbsap-oth-en.pdf> Accessed January 2020

⁴⁰ Fiji's INDC

mitigation targets and its obligations under Article 4, paragraph 19, of the Paris Agreement by developing a mid-century, long-term low emission development strategy.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification⁴¹

Fiji has not currently set any land degradation neutrality target. It has however reported to the UNCCD other national targets that contribute to improving the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification/land degradation, promote sustainable land management and contribute to land degradation neutrality:

- By 2022, improve the adoption of Sustainable Resources Management and of climate smart agriculture;
- 20 km.sq of Degraded land to be restored by 2020
- By 2031, reducing Greenhouse gas emission by 30% and have 16% of Fiji's Forest area under long term conservation
- Establish MPAs targeting 30% of Fiji's marine areas by 2021.

Fiji will be sending its letter of intent in adopting the LDN. The country is also in the process of developing a National Land Use Plan to improve land management to address desertification and reverse land degradation where present.

⁴¹ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (2018). Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System, Report from Republic of Fiji. https://prais.unccd.int/sites/default/files/pdf_reports/unccd_Fiji_2018_0.pdf Accessed March 2020