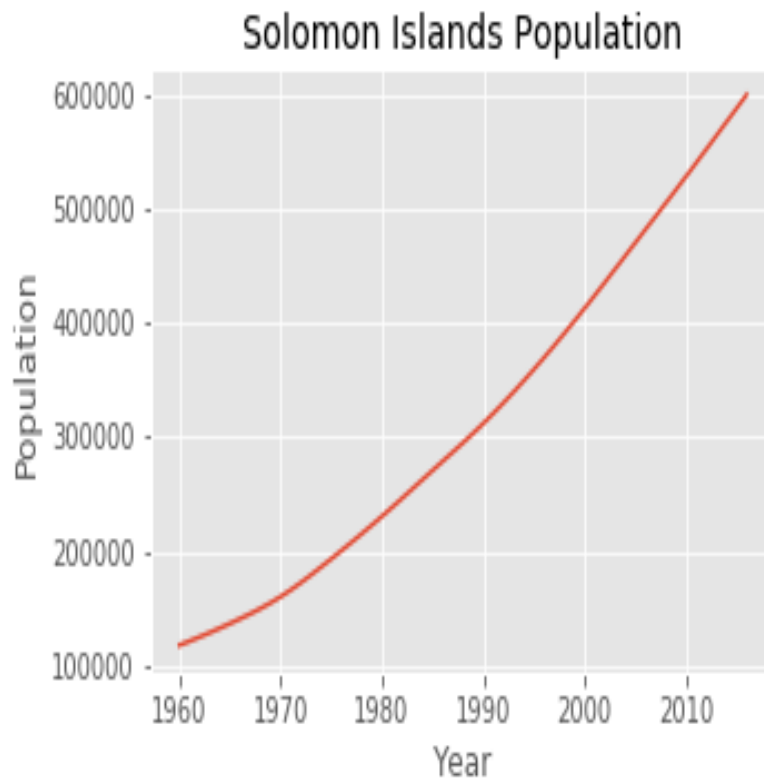


Solomon Islands



Coordinates: 8°S 159°E / 8°S 159°E / -8; 159Solomon Islands is a sovereign country consisting of six major islands and over 900 smaller islands in Oceania lying to the east of Papua New Guinea and northwest of Vanuatu and covering a land area of 28,400 square kilometres (11,000 sq mi). The country's capital, Honiara, is located on the island of Guadalcanal. The country takes its name from the Solomon Islands archipelago, which is a collection of Melanesian islands that also includes the North Solomon Islands (part of Papua New Guinea), but excludes outlying islands, such as Rennell and Bellona, and the Santa Cruz Islands. The islands have been inhabited for thousands of years. In 1568, the Spanish navigator Álvaro de Mendaña was the first European to visit them, naming them the Islas Salomón. Britain defined its area of interest in the Solomon Islands archipelago in June 1893, when Captain Gibson R.N., of HMS Curacoa, declared the southern Solomon Islands a British protectorate. During World War II, the Solomon Islands campaign (1942–1945) saw fierce fighting between the United States and the Empire of Japan, such as in the Battle of Guadalcanal.