The Maldives consists of 1 192 coral islands, grouped in 26 ring-shaped clusters or atolls, along the Equator, in the middle of the Indian Ocean. About 99 per cent of the Maldives' territory is open ocean. It is one of the smallest Asian countries with a land area of 300 km². The atolls and islands run in a north-south direction and are scattered over a vast area of 90 000 km², making the Maldives one of the most geographically dispersed countries in the world.

The atolls sit atop a 960 km long submarine mountain range, called the Laccadives-Chagos Ridge. Safe navigation of vessels from one side of the Indian Ocean to the other is only possible towards the southern end of the country or through its territorial waters, where there are two open channels through the natural coral barricade to the open sea.

The Maldives is the world's flattest and lowest-lying country. The average ground level of the islands is 1.5 m above sea level. This makes the islands extremely vulnerable to rising sea levels due to global warming.

Maldives has a warm and humid tropical climate affected by its proximity to the Equator as well as the large South Asian landmass to the north. Two seasons dominate the Maldives' weather: the wet, rainy season which is brought by the southwest monsoon, and the dry season which is marked by the winter northeast monsoon. The monthly average temperatures vary very little around 28 °C (World Bank, 2020). Humidity is relatively high, around 80 per cent, and stable throughout the year. The average annual rainfall is generally below 2 400 mm: it is more abundant in the south than in the northern atolls. Due to the climate change, the Maldives has been experiencing greater variations in rainfall patterns, especially in the northern atolls, where dry seasons are becoming longer than usual, leading to shortages of fresh water. The Baa Atoll, comprised of 75 islands, was declared a World Biosphere Reserve in 2011 by UNESCO.

Since early 2000s, the Maldives have more than tripled its GDP per capita to reach almost US$11 000 in 2019, current prices. The economy is driven by commerce, travel and tourism with the service sector accounting for almost 80 per cent of GDP. (UNCTAD, 2021) The contribution of travel and tourism to the economy is significant in the Maldives with inbound tourism expenditure at 55 per cent of GDP in 2019 (UNWTO, 2021). Fisheries, boat building and boat repairing are important employment sectors. Tuna is the predominant catch, and accounts for the bulk of exports. Apart from boat building, industry in the Maldives consists of garment production and handicrafts, such as the making of coir (coconut-husk fibre) and coir products. The main export destinations include Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United States of America, Germany and France.

Recently, the country has been conducting large public infrastructure projects and new resort investments. Construction, therefore, accounts for about 10 per cent of GDP (UNCTAD, 2021). Higher imports associated with these investments worsened the country's external position despite strong tourism receipts prior to the global pandemic of 2020. Among the most ambitious recent projects is the 2.1 km China-Maldives Friendship Bridge, funded by China, which opened in August 2018. It is the first cross-sea bridge connecting the Maldivian capital of Malé with neighboring Hulhule and Hulhumalé Islands.

The name 'Maldives' may originate from 'Maale Dhivehi Raajje' ('The Island Kingdom Malé'). The island nation was identified with its capital Maale, and the locals were called Maldivian Dhivehin. Other scholars argue that the name 'Maldives' derives from the Sanskrit maladvipa, meaning 'garland of islands,' or from mahila dvipa, meaning 'island of women'.

The Maldivian ethnic identity is a mixture of Indian, Sri Lankan, Malaysian, Indonesian, Arab and even African cultures. A traditional Maldivian dance-song, dating back to the 11th century, the Boduberu, which means 'Big (bodu) Drums (beru), illustrates African influence on the culture and traditions of Maldivians.

Traditional Maldivian cuisine, also known as Dhivehi cuisine, is highly impacted by the Indian and Sri Lankan origins of the Maldivians. The inhabitants of the Maldives use a lot of peppers, chilis and curry in their cooking. Tuna is often the main component of Maldivian meals. Particularly popular is skipjack tuna, tuna frigate and yellowfin tuna, grilled or barbequed.
**ECONOMIC TRENDS**

**Gross domestic product**
US dollars at constant prices (2015) in millions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value (in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>8000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GDP per capita**
2019
US$10,626

**Productive Capacity Index**
2018
34.1

**Economic and environmental vulnerability index**
2019
44

**Consumer Price Index growth**
2019
1.3%

**Unemployment rate**
2016
Total 6.1%
Female 5.6%, Male 6.4%

**Main economic sectors, 2019**
Percentage of GDP

- Services
- Industry
- Agriculture, hunting, forestry, fishing

**Tourist arrivals**
Thousands of tourists, percentage of GDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of tourists</th>
<th>Percent of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**External financial resources**
Percentage of GDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>ODA</th>
<th>Remittances</th>
<th>FDI inflows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public debt as % of GDP**
2018
68.0%

Maldives
MARITIME TRANSPORT

**Fleet size**
Number of ships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ship type</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total fleet</td>
<td>1,407</td>
<td>1,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil tankers</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulk carriers</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General cargo</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container ships</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of ships</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>682</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Port performance**
Ranked by 2019 data within SIDS group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>SIDS Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of port calls</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median time in port (days)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age of vessels</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average size (GT) of vessels</td>
<td>10,232</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Container throughput**

2019

107,728 TEU

**Bilateral connectivity index, 2019**
Top 5 partners

- Sri Lanka
- Malaysia
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Tanzania, United Republic of

**Liner shipping connectivity index**
Maximum China Q1 2006=100

---

Maldives

3 of 7
POPULATION

Total population
Thousands of people, share of urban population

Population development indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty headcount (% of population)</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human development index</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human assets index</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy rate (15+ years, both sexes %)</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender inequality index</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Life expectancy at birth

2019
79 years

Population density

2019
1 770 persons per km²

Dependency ratio

2019
Child: 26
Old-age: 4.7

Age structure by gender, 2019
Percentage of total population
INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Merchandise and services trade
US dollars in millions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2019 (% of GDP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise exports</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise imports</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>1 091</td>
<td>1 896</td>
<td>2 888</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services exports</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>1 810</td>
<td>2 905</td>
<td>3 421</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services imports</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>1 324</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trade openness
Goods and services
2019
68% of GDP

Export concentration index
2019
0.55

Food import dependency
Average 2015-2019
6.26

Top 5 partners in merchandise trade, 2019
Exports in millions US dollars

Merchandise exports by product group, 2019
Services exports by category, 2019

COUNTRY PROFILES
Development and Globalization: Facts and Figures 2021

Maldives
ENVIRONMENT

CO₂ emissions per capita
Kg per capita

CO₂ emissions per GDP
Kg per 2010 US$ of GDP

Renewable energy share in total energy consumption, 2017
Percentage of total energy consumption

Material footprint per capita

Terrestrial protected area

Marine protected area

2016
2018
2018

28.9kg
1.2%
0.05%

Disasters indicators
Data not available

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Trade in ICT goods
Exports: 0%
Imports: 4.5%

Trade in ICT services
Exports: 1.4%
Imports: 0.0%

Share of internet users
63%

Fixed broadband vs Mobile broadband subscriptions
Number of subscriptions per 100 people

Maldives
Sources

Source of data: UNCTAD (2021) except indicators listed below.

- Adult literacy rate: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2021)
- Distance to nearest neighbour: [NO_PRINTED_FORM] (Package “cshapes,” 2016) https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/cshapes/index.html
- Economic losses due to disasters: United Nations (2021) https://www.sdg.org/datasets/1beb260e9ca14674b391b815e4874990_0
- Material footprint: UNEP (2021) https://environmentlive.unep.org/indicator/index/12_2_1

References

- UNEP (2011). 12.2.1 Material footprint, material footprint per capita, and material footprint per GDP. Available at https://environmentlive.unep.org/indicator/index/12_2_1 (accessed 13 January 2021).