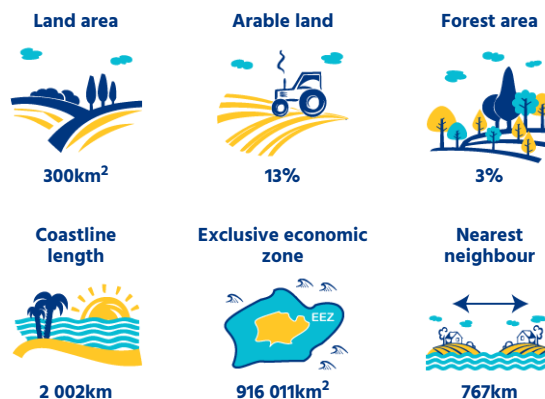# Maldives

- › **Capital:** Malé (4°10´N, 73°30´E)
- › **International airport(s):** Velana International Airport, also known as Malé International Airport, Malé
- › **Official language(s):** Maldivian (Dhivehi)
- › **Currency:** Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR)
- › **Time:** UTC +5
- › **Region:** Atlantic and Indian Ocean

Land area	Arable land	Forest area
300km^2	13%	3%

Coastline length	Exclusive economic zone	Nearest neighbour
2 002km	916 011km^2	767km

GEOGRAPHY

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 km^2. The atolls and islands run in a north south direction and are scattered over a vast area of 90 000 km^2, 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 warning.

CLIMATE

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 patters, 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.

ECONOMY

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 over 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.

CULTURE

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
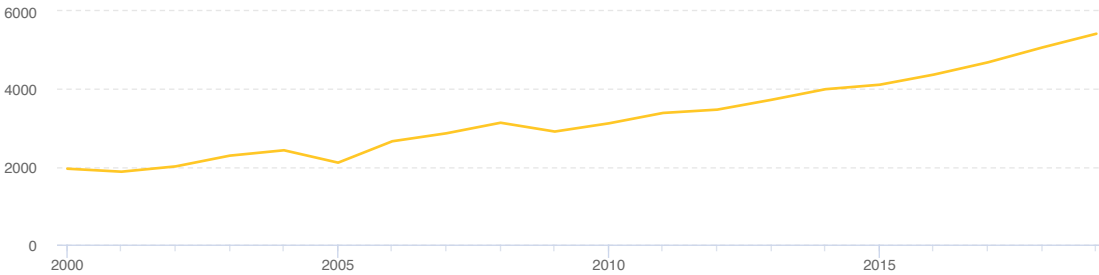
GDP per capita
2019

US$10 626

Productive Capacity Index
2018

34.1

Economic and environmental vulnerability index
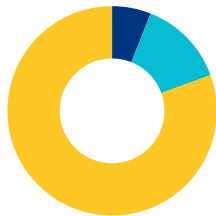2019

44

Consumer Price Index growth
2019

1.3%

Unemployment rate
2016

Total 6.1%
Female 5.6%, Male 6.4%
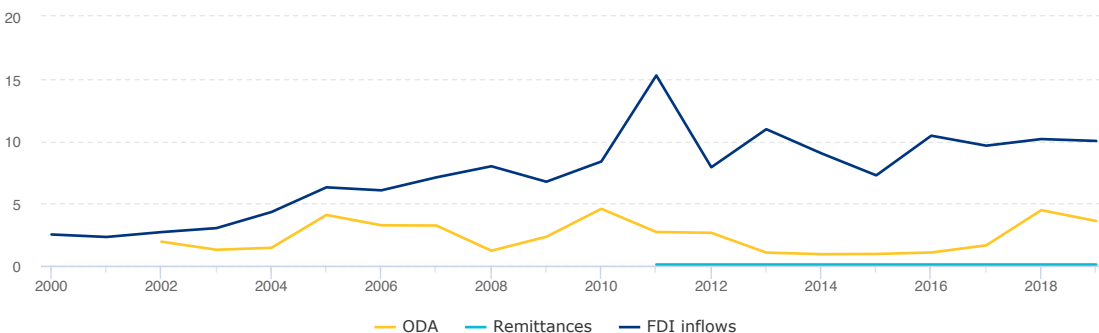
Main economic sectors, 2019
Percentage of GDP

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

Tourist arrivals
Thousands of tourists, percentage of GDP

Number of tourists — Percent of GDP

External financial resources
Percentage of GDP

ODA — Remittances — FDI inflows

Public debt as % of GDP
2018

68.0%

MARITIME TRANSPORT

Fleet size
Number of ships

Ship type	2011	2019
Total fleet	1 407	1 407
Oil tankers	264	266
Bulk carriers	311	333
General cargo	161	77
Container ships	52	49
Other types of ships	619	682

Port performance
Ranked by 2019 data within SIDS group

Indicators	2019	SIDS Ranking
Number of port calls	303	25
Median time in port (days)	2	4
Average age of vessels	21	7
Average size (GT) of vessels	10 232	25

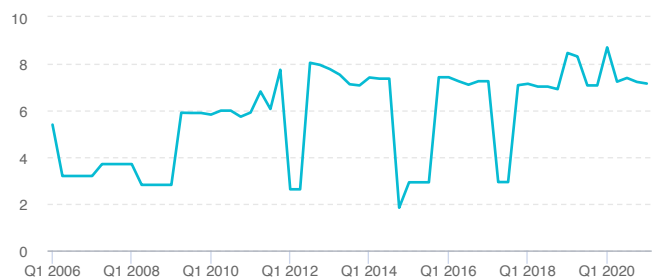### Container port throuput
2019

107 728 TEU

Bilateral connectivity index, 2019
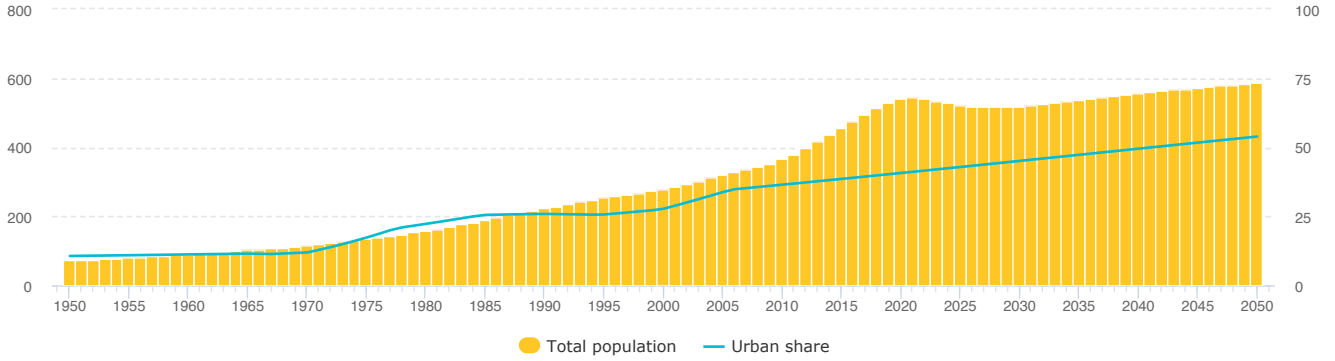Top 5 partners
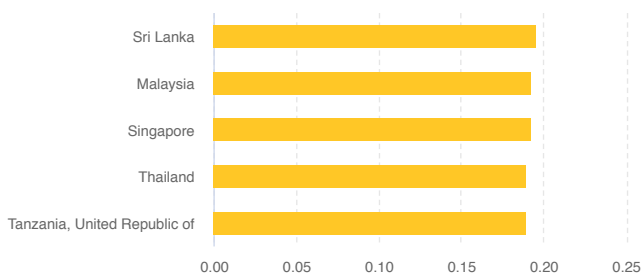
Liner shipping connectivity index
Maximum China Q1 2006=100

POPULATION

Total population
Thousands of people, share of urban population

Total population   — Urban share

Population development indicators

Indicators	Period	Value
Poverty headcount (% of population)	2016	..
Human development index	2018	0.7
Human assets index	2020	87
Adult literacy rate (15+ years, both sexes %)	2016	97.3
Gender inequality index	2019	0.4

Life expectancy at birth
2019

79 years

Population density
2019

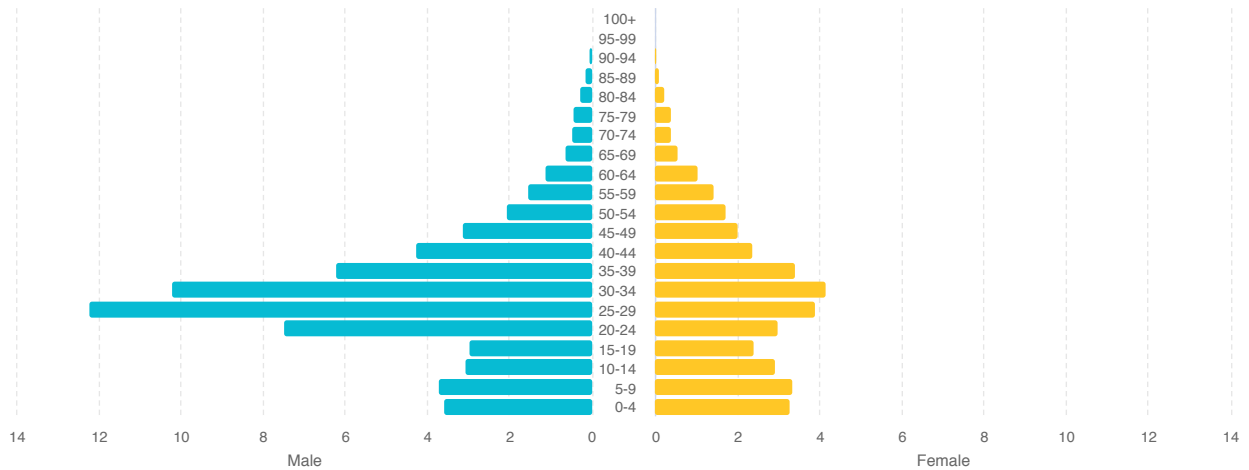**1 770 persons per km^2**

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

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

Trade openness Goods and services
2019

68% of GDP

Export concentration index
2019

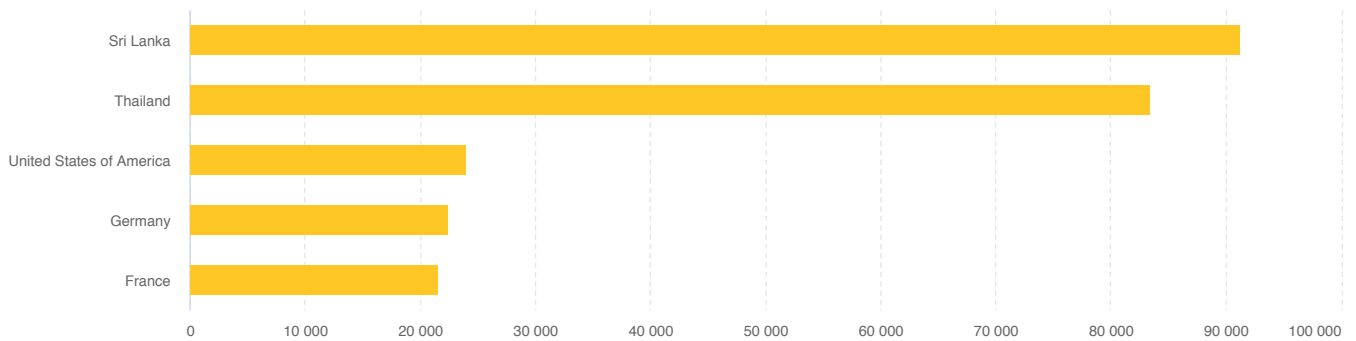0.55

Food import dependency
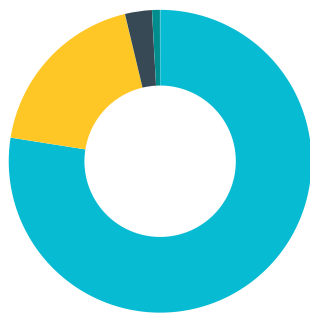**Average 2015-2019**

6.26

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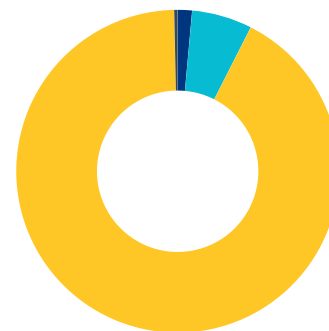Exports in millions US dollars

Merchandise exports by product group, 2019

- Agricultural raw materials
- All food items
- Fuels
- Manufactured goods
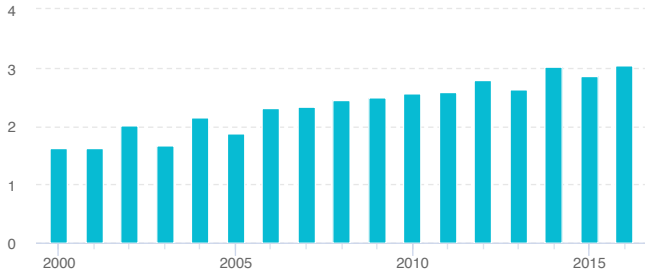- Ores, metals, precious stones and non-monetary gold

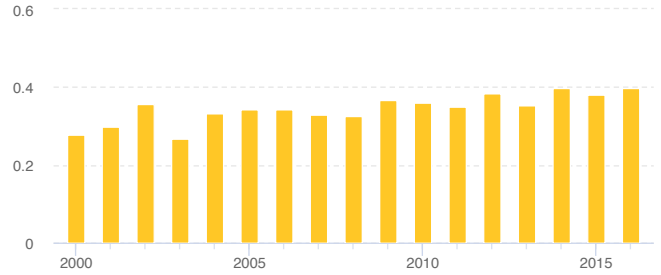### Services exports by category, 2019

- Telecommunications, computer, and information services
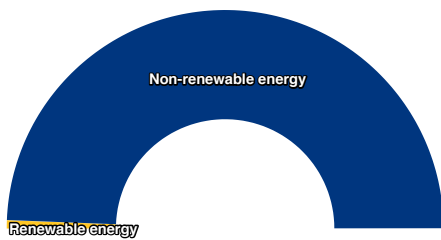- Transport
- Travel
- Other

ENVIRONMENT

CO$_2$ emissions per capita
Kg per capita

CO$_2$ emissions per GDP
Kg per 2010 US$ of GDP

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

Non-renewable energy

Renewable energy

Material footprint per capita 2016	Terrestrial protected area 2018	Marine protected area 2018
28.9kg	1.2%	0.05%

Disasters indicators

Data not available

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Trade in ICT goods 2018	Trade in ICT services 2019	Share of internet users 2017
Exports: 0% Imports: 4.5%	Exports: 1.4% Imports: 0.0%	63%

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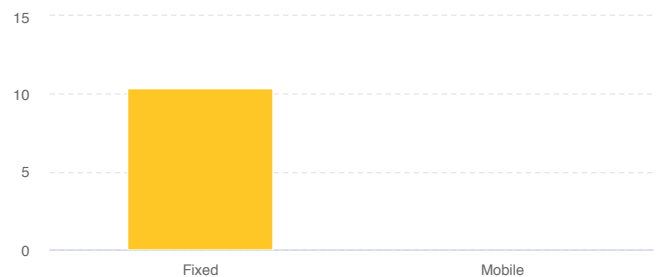
Sources

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

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- Exclusive economic zone: Sea Around Us (2016) http://www.seaaroundus.org/
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