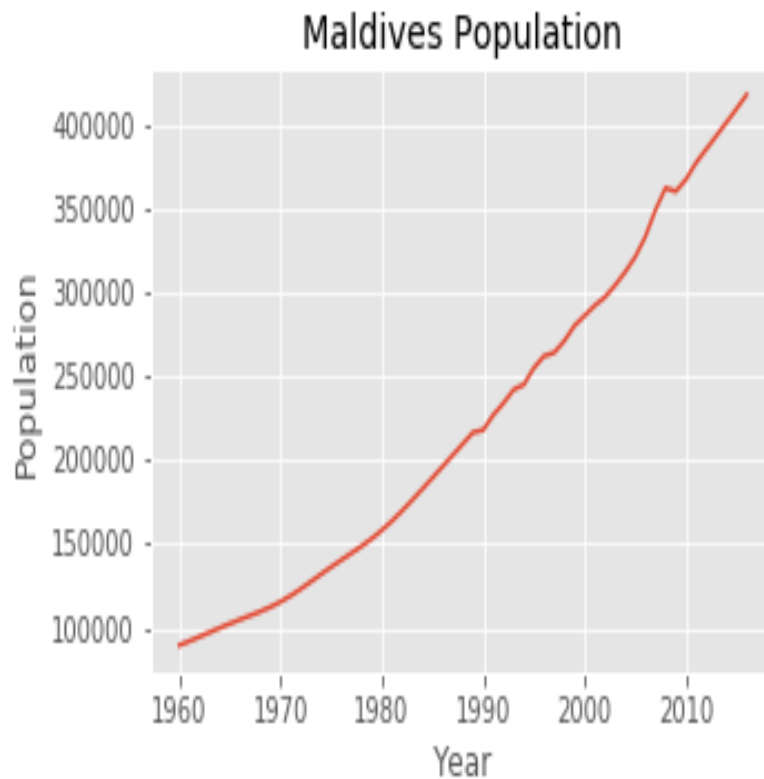


# Maldives



The Maldives (/ˈmɒlˈdiːvz/, /ˈmɔːlˈdiːvz/, /ˈmɑːlˈdaːvz/ ( listen) or /ˈmældaːvz/), officially the Republic of Maldives (Dhivehi Raa'jeyge Jumhooriyya), is a South Asian island country, located in the Indian Ocean, situated in the Arabian Sea. It lies southwest of Sri Lanka and India. The chain of 26 atolls stretches from Ihavandhippolhu Atoll in the north to the Addu City in the south. Comprising a territory spanning roughly 298 square kilometres (115 sq mi), the Maldives is one of the world's most geographically dispersed countries, as well as the smallest Asian country by both land area and population, with around 427,756 inhabitants. Malé is the capital and most populated city, traditionally called the "King's Island" for its central location. The Maldives archipelago is located atop the Chagos-Maldives-Laccadive Ridge, a vast submarine mountain range in the Indian Ocean, which also forms a terrestrial ecoregion, together with the Chagos and the Lakshadweep. With an average ground-level elevation of 1.5 metres (4 ft 11 in) above sea level, it is the world's lowest country, with even its highest natural point being the lowest in the world, at 2.4 metres (7 ft 10 in). Due to the consequent risks posed by rising sea-levels, the government pledged in 2009 to make the Maldives a carbon-neutral country by 2019.[needs update]