[Template:Use British English](/wiki/Template:Use_British_English" \o "Template:Use British English) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) **Maldives** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en), [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en), [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en) or [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en)),[[1]](#cite_note-1) officially the **Republic of Maldives** ([Template:Lang-dv](/wiki/Template:Lang-dv), *Dhivehi Raa'jeyge Jumhooriyya*), is an [island country](/wiki/Island_country) in the [Indian Ocean](/wiki/Indian_Ocean). It lies southwest of [India](/wiki/India) and [Sri Lanka](/wiki/Sri_Lanka). The chain of [twenty six atolls](/wiki/Atolls_of_the_Maldives) stretches from [Ihavandhippolhu Atoll](/wiki/Atolls_of_the_Maldives) in the north to the [Addu Atoll](/wiki/Atolls_of_the_Maldives) in the south. The centrally located capital [Malé](/wiki/Malé) is traditionally called the "[King's Island](/wiki/List_of_sultans_of_the_Maldives)".

Historically linked with the [Indian subcontinent](/wiki/Indian_subcontinent), the Maldivian archipelago was [Islamised](/wiki/Islam) in the 12th century. The islands were ruled by [Sultans](/wiki/List_of_Sultans_of_the_Maldives) for many centuries. It had a strong maritime trade network with Asia and Africa. From the mid 16th-century, the region came under the influence of [colonial powers](/wiki/Colonialism), including the Portuguese, Dutch and British. The Maldives gained [independence](/wiki/Second_Republic_of_the_Maldives) from the [United Kingdom](/wiki/United_Kingdom) in 1965 and become a [republic](/wiki/Republic) in 1968. The country has a [presidential government](/wiki/Presidential_government) with an elected [People's Majlis](/wiki/People's_Majlis). It is ranked by [Freedom House](/wiki/Freedom_House) as "Partly Free".[[2]](#cite_note-2) These coral reefs are home to a variety of marine ecosystems that vary from [planktonic](/wiki/Planktonic) organisms to whale sharks. Sponges have gained importance as five species have displayed anti-tumor and anti-cancer properties.[[63]](#cite_note-63) In 1998, sea-temperature warming of as much as [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) due to a single [El Niño phenomenon](/wiki/El_Niño-Southern_Oscillation) event caused [coral bleaching](/wiki/Coral_bleaching), killing ⅔ of the nation's coral reefs.<ref name=Wheatley>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

In an effort to induce the regrowth of the reefs, scientists placed electrified cones anywhere from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) below the surface to provide a substrate for larval coral attachment. In 2004, scientists witnessed corals regenerating. Corals began to eject pink-orange eggs and sperm. The growth of these electrified corals was five times faster than ordinary corals.<ref name=Wheatley/> Scientist Azeez Hakim stated:

before 1998, we never thought that this reef would die. We had always taken for granted that these animals would be there, that this reef would be there forever. El Niño gave us a wake-up call that these things are not going to be there for ever. Not only this, they also act as a natural barrier against the tropical storms, floods and tsunamis. Seaweeds grow on the skeletons of dead coral.<ref name=scuba/>

Recent scientific studies suggest that the faunistic composition can vary greatly between neighbor atolls, especially in terms of benthic fauna. Differences in terms of fishing pressure (including poaching) could be the cause.[[64]](#cite_note-64)

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## Government[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Independence Square in Malé](/wiki/File:JumhooreeMaidan.JPG) Maldives is a [presidential](/wiki/Presidential_system) republic, with the President as [head of government](/wiki/Head_of_government) and [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state). The President heads the executive branch and appoints the cabinet which is approved by the [People's Majlis (Parliament)](/wiki/Majlis_of_the_Maldives). Following the introduction of a new constitution in 2008, direct elections for the President take place every five years, with a limit of two terms in office for any individual. The current President is [Abdulla Yameen](/wiki/Abdulla_Yameen).[[65]](#cite_note-65) Members of the [unicameral](/wiki/Unicameralism) Majlis serve five-year terms, with the total number of members determined by atoll populations. At the [2009 election](/wiki/Maldivian_parliamentary_election,_2009), 77 members were elected. The People's Majlis, located in Male, houses members from all over the country.<ref name=r1>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

The republican constitution came into force in 1968, and was amended in 1970, 1972, and 1975. On 27 November 1997 it was replaced by another Constitution assented to by the President [Gayoom](/wiki/Maumoon_Abdul_Gayoom). This Constitution came into force on 1 January 1998. All stated that the [president](/wiki/President_of_the_Maldives) was the Head of State, Head of Government and the Commander-in-Chief of the [Armed Forces](/wiki/Maldives_National_Defence_Force) and the Police of the Maldives. A third [Constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_the_Maldives) was ratified in 2008, which separated the [judiciary](/wiki/Judiciary) from the head of state.

### Law[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

According to the [Constitution of Maldives](/wiki/Constitution_of_Maldives), "the judges are independent, and subject only to the Constitution and the law. When deciding matters on which the Constitution or the law is silent, judges must consider Islamic [Shari'ah](/wiki/Sharia)". Article 15 of the Act Number 1/81 (Penal Code) gives provision for [hudud](/wiki/Hudud) punishments.[[66]](#cite_note-66) Article 156 of the constitution states that law includes the norms and provisions of sharia.[[67]](#cite_note-67) Islam is the official religion of the Maldives and open practice of any other religion is forbidden and liable to prosecution. Article 2 of the revised constitution says that the republic "is based on the principles of Islam". Article nine says that "a non-Muslim may not become a citizen"; article ten says that "no law contrary to any principle of Islam can be applied". Article nineteen states that "citizens are free to participate in or carry out any activity that is not expressly prohibited by sharia [Islamic law] or by the law".

The requirement to adhere to a particular religion and prohibition of public worship following other religions is contrary to Article 18 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](/wiki/Universal_Declaration_of_Human_Rights) and Article 18 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](/wiki/International_Covenant_on_Civil_and_Political_Rights) to which Maldives has recently become party[[68]](#cite_note-68) and was addressed in Maldives' reservation in adhering to the Covenant claiming that "The application of the principles set out in Article 18 of the Covenant shall be without prejudice to the Constitution of the Republic of the Maldives."[[69]](#cite_note-69)

### Human rights[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

Human rights in the Maldive is a contentious issue, in its 2011 [Freedom in the World](/wiki/Freedom_in_the_World) report, [Freedom House](/wiki/Freedom_House) declared the Maldives "Partly Free", claiming a reform process which had made headway in 2009 and 2010 had stalled.[[70]](#cite_note-70) The [United States Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor](/wiki/Bureau_of_Democracy,_Human_Rights_and_Labor) claims in their 2012 report on human rights practices in the country that the most significant problems are corruption, lack of [religious freedom](/wiki/Freedom_of_religion), and abuse and unequal treatment of women.[[71]](#cite_note-71)

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

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[thumb|Former Maldivian Defense Minister](/wiki/File:Maldivian_Defence_Minister_Mohamed_Nazim_addressing_an_audience_in_Kochi.jpg) [Mohamed Nazim](/wiki/Mohamed_Nazim) at an Indian naval base in [Kochi](/wiki/Kochi). Since 1996, the Maldives has been the official progress monitor of the [Indian Ocean Commission](/wiki/Indian_Ocean_Commission). In 2002, the Maldives began to express interest in the commission but [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of) had not applied for membership. Maldive's interest relates to its identity as a small island state, especially economic development and environmental preservation, and its desire for closer relations with France, a main actor in the IOC region. The Maldives is a founding member of the [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation](/wiki/South_Asian_Association_for_Regional_Cooperation), SAARC. The republic joined the [Commonwealth](/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations) in 1982, some 17 years after gaining independence from Great Britain. The Maldives enjoys close ties with Commonwealth members [Seychelles](/wiki/Seychelles) and [Mauritius](/wiki/Mauritius). The Maldives and [Comoros](/wiki/Comoros) are also both members of the [Organisation of Islamic Cooperation](/wiki/Organisation_of_Islamic_Cooperation).

### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

[thumb|Fire & Rescue Service boats.](/wiki/File:Maldives-vaixells_de_bombers.jpg)

The Maldives National Defence Force is the combined security organisation responsible for defending the security and sovereignty of the Maldives, having the primary task of being responsible for attending to all internal and external security needs of the Maldives, including the protection of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the maintenance of peace and security. The MNDF component branches are the Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Special Forces, Service Corps and the Corps of Engineers.

As a water-bound nation much of the security concerns lie at sea. Almost 99% of the country is covered by sea and the remaining 1% land is scattered over an area of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) × [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), with the largest island being not more than [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). Therefore, the duties assigned to the MNDF of maintaining surveillance over Maldives' waters and providing protection against foreign intruders poaching in the EEZ and territorial waters, are immense tasks from both logistical and economic view points.

The Coast Guard plays a vital role in carrying out these function. To provide timely security its patrol boats are stationed at various MNDF Regional Headquarters. The Coast Guard is also assigned to respond to the maritime distress calls and to conduct search and rescue operations in a timely manner. Maritime pollution control exercises are conducted regularly on an annual basis for familiarization and handling of such hazardous situations.

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

[thumb|right|Each administrative atoll is marked, along with the](/wiki/File:Atolls_of_the_maldives.png) [thaana](/wiki/Thaana) letter used to identify the atoll. Natural atolls are labelled in light blue. [Full view of the map](/wiki/Media:Atolls_of_the_maldives.png). The Maldives has twenty-six natural [atolls](/wiki/Atolls_of_the_Maldives) and few island groups on isolated reefs, all of which have been divided into twenty-one administrative divisions (twenty administrative atolls and [Malé](/wiki/Malé) city).[[72]](#cite_note-72) Each atoll is administered by an elected Atoll Council. The islands are administered by an elected Island Council.

Between 2008 and 2010 the Maldives had 7 provinces each consisting of the following administrative divisions (the capital Malé is its own administrative division):

1. [Mathi-Uthuru Province](/wiki/Mathi-Uthuru_Province); consists of [Haa Alif Atoll](/wiki/Haa_Alif_Atoll), [Haa Dhaalu Atoll](/wiki/Haa_Dhaalu_Atoll) and [Shaviyani Atoll](/wiki/Shaviyani_Atoll).
2. [Uthuru Province](/wiki/Uthuru_Province); consists of [Noonu Atoll](/wiki/Noonu_Atoll), [Raa Atoll](/wiki/Raa_Atoll), [Baa Atoll](/wiki/Baa_Atoll) and [Lhaviyani Atoll](/wiki/Lhaviyani_Atoll).
3. [Medhu-Uthuru Province](/wiki/Medhu-Uthuru_Province); consists of [Kaafu Atoll](/wiki/Kaafu_Atoll), [Alifu Alifu Atoll](/wiki/Alifu_Alifu_Atoll), [Alifu Dhaalu Atoll](/wiki/Alifu_Dhaalu_Atoll) and [Vaavu Atoll](/wiki/Vaavu_Atoll).
4. [Medhu Province](/wiki/Medhu_Province); consists of [Meemu Atoll](/wiki/Meemu_Atoll), [Faafu Atoll](/wiki/Faafu_Atoll) and [Dhaalu Atoll](/wiki/Dhaalu_Atoll).
5. [Medhu-Dhekunu Province](/wiki/Medhu-Dhekunu_Province); consists of [Thaa Atoll](/wiki/Thaa_Atoll) and [Laamu Atoll](/wiki/Laamu_Atoll).
6. [Mathi-Dhekunu Province](/wiki/Mathi-Dhekunu_Province); consists of [Gaafu Alifu Atoll](/wiki/Gaafu_Alifu_Atoll) and [Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll](/wiki/Gaafu_Dhaalu_Atoll).
7. [Dhekunu Province](/wiki/Dhekunu_Province); consists of [Gnaviyani Atoll](/wiki/Gnaviyani_Atoll) and [Addu City](/wiki/Addu_City).

In addition to a name, every administrative division is identified by the Maldivian code letters, such as "[Haa Alif](/wiki/Haa_Alif)" for [Thiladhunmati Uthuruburi](/wiki/Northern_Thiladhunmathi_Atoll) (Thiladhunmathi North); and by a Latin code letter. The first corresponds to the geographical Maldivian name of the atoll; the second is a code adopted for convenience. As there are certain islands in different atolls that have the same name, for administrative purposes this code is quoted before the name of the island, for example: Baa Funadhoo, Kaafu Funadhoo, Gaafu-Alifu Funadhoo. Since most Atolls have very long geographical names it is also used whenever the long name is inconvenient, for example in the atoll website names.[[73]](#cite_note-73) The introduction of code-letter names has been a source of much puzzlement and misunderstandings, especially among foreigners. Many people have come to think that the code-letter of the administrative atoll is its new name and that it has replaced its geographical name. Under such circumstances it is hard to know which is the correct name to use.[[73]](#cite_note-73)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|Malé harbour](/wiki/File:The_western_side_(382669110).jpg) [thumb|Graphical depiction of Maldives's product exports in 28 color-coded categories.](/wiki/File:Maldives_treemap.png)

In ancient times the Maldives were renowned for [cowry shells](/wiki/Cowry_shell), [coir](/wiki/Coir) rope, dried [tuna](/wiki/Tuna) fish (Maldive Fish), [ambergris](/wiki/Ambergris) (Maavaharu), and [coco de mer](/wiki/Coco_de_mer) (Tavakkaashi). Local and foreign trading ships used to load these products in Sri Lanka and transport them to other harbours in the Indian Ocean.

Historically Maldives provided enormous quantities of [cowry](/wiki/Cowry) shells, [an international currency of the early ages](/wiki/History_of_money). From the 2nd century AD the islands were known as the 'Money Isles' by the Arabs.[[74]](#cite_note-74) [*Monetaria moneta*](/wiki/Monetaria_moneta) were used for centuries as a currency in Africa, and huge amounts of [Maldivian](/wiki/Maldive_Islands) cowries were introduced into Africa by western nations during the period of [slave trade](/wiki/Slave_trade).[[75]](#cite_note-75) The cowry is now the symbol of the [Maldives Monetary Authority](/wiki/Maldives_Monetary_Authority).

The Maldivian government began an [economic reform](/wiki/Economic_reform) program in 1989, initially by lifting import quotas and opening some exports to the private sector. Subsequently, it has liberalised regulations to allow more foreign investment. Real GDP growth averaged over 7.5% per year for more than a decade. Today, the Maldives' largest industry is tourism, accounting for 28% of GDP and more than 60% of the Maldives' foreign exchange receipts. Fishing is the second leading sector.

The Maldivian economy is to a large degree based on tourism. In late December 2004, the [major tsunami](/wiki/2004_Indian_Ocean_earthquake) [left more than 100 dead](/wiki/Effect_of_the_2004_Indian_Ocean_earthquake_on_the_Maldives), 12,000 displaced, and property damage exceeding $400 million. As a result of the tsunami, the GDP contracted by about 3.6% in 2005. A rebound in tourism, post-tsunami reconstruction, and development of new resorts helped the economy recover quickly and showed an 18% increase on 2006. 2013 estimates show Maldivians enjoy the highest GDP (PPP) per capita $11,900 (2013 est) among south Asian countries.

Agriculture and manufacturing continue to play a lesser role in the economy, constrained by the limited availability of cultivable land and the shortage of domestic labour. Tourism gave a major boost to the country's fledgling traditional [cottage industries](/wiki/Cottage_industries) such as mat weaving, [lacquer](/wiki/Lacquer) work, [handicraft](/wiki/Handicraft), and coir rope making. New industries that have since emerged include printing, production of [PVC](/wiki/Polyvinyl_chloride) [pipes](/wiki/Pipe_(material)), brick making, marine engine repairs, bottling of [aerated water](/wiki/Aerated_water), and garment production.

### Tourism[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[thumb|left|Filitheyo island beach with tall palm trees and blue lagoons](/wiki/File:Filitheyo_bar.jpg)

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

The Maldives remained largely unknown to tourists until the early 1970s. Only 185 islands are home to its 300,000 inhabitants. The other islands are used entirely for economic purposes, of which tourism and agriculture are the most dominant. Tourism accounts for 28% of the GDP and more than 60% of the Maldives' foreign exchange receipts. Over 90% of government tax revenue comes from import duties and tourism-related taxes. The development of tourism fostered the overall growth of the [country's economy](/wiki/Economy_of_the_Maldives). It created direct and indirect employment and income generation opportunities in other related industries. The first tourist resorts were opened in 1972 with Bandos island resort and Kurumba Village (the current name is Kurumba Maldives),[[76]](#cite_note-76) which transformed the Maldives economy.

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:Landaa_Giraavaru_vue_du_ciel.JPG) [resort island](/wiki/Resort_island) of [Landaa Giraavaru](/wiki/Landaa_Giraavaru) (Baa atoll) According to the [Ministry of Tourism](/wiki/Ministry_of_Tourism_(Maldives)), the emergence of tourism in 1972 transformed the economy, moving rapidly from dependence on fisheries to tourism. In just three and a half decades, the industry became the main source of income. Tourism was also the country's biggest foreign currency earner and the single largest contributor to the GDP. [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), 89 resorts in the Maldives offered over 17,000 beds and hosted over 600,000 tourists annually.[[77]](#cite_note-77) The number of resorts increased from 2 to 92 between 1972 and 2007. [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), over 8,380,000 tourists had visited Maldives.[[78]](#cite_note-78)  
Visitors to Maldives do not need to apply for a visa pre-arrival, regardless of their country of origin, provided they have a valid passport, proof of onward travel, and the money to be self-sufficient while in the country.<ref name=doi>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

Most visitors arrive at [Malé International Airport](/wiki/Malé_International_Airport), on [Hulhulé](/wiki/Hulhulé) Island, adjacent to the capital Malé. The airport is served by flights to India, Sri Lanka, [Doha](/wiki/Doha), [Dubai](/wiki/Dubai), Singapore, Istanbul, and major airports in South-East Asia, as well as charters from Europe. [Gan Airport](/wiki/Gan_International_Airport), on the southern atoll of [Addu](/wiki/Addu_City), also serves an international flight to [Milan](/wiki/Milan) several times a week. British Airways offer direct flights to the Maldives around 2–3 times per week.

### Fishing industry[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|A mechanised traditional inter island dhoni stripped of its sails](/wiki/File:Doni_aux_Maldives_cropped.jpg)

For many centuries the Maldivian economy was entirely dependent on fishing and other [marine](/wiki/Ocean) products. Fishing remains the main occupation of the people and the government gives priority to the fisheries sector.

The [mechanisation](/wiki/Mechanisation) of the [traditional fishing boat](/wiki/Traditional_fishing_boat) called [*dhoni*](/wiki/Dhoni) in 1974 was a major milestone in the development of the fisheries industry. A fish canning plant was installed on [Felivaru](/wiki/Felivaru) in 1977, as a joint venture with a Japanese firm. In 1979, a Fisheries Advisory Board was set up with the mandate of advising the government on policy guidelines for the overall development of the fisheries sector. Manpower development programs began in the early 1980s, and fisheries education was incorporated into the school curriculum. [Fish aggregating devices](/wiki/Fish_aggregating_device) and navigational aids were located at various strategic points. Moreover, the opening up of the [Exclusive Economic Zone](/wiki/Exclusive_Economic_Zone) (EEZ) of the Maldives for fisheries has further enhanced the growth of the fisheries sector.

[Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), fisheries contributed over 15% of the country's GDP and engaged about 30% of the country's work force. Fisheries were also the second-largest foreign exchange earner after [tourism](/wiki/#Tourism).

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Refimprove section](/wiki/Template:Refimprove_section) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Male-total.jpg)[Malé](/wiki/Malé), the capital of the Maldives

The Maldivian ethnic identity is a blend of the cultures reflecting the peoples who settled on the islands, reinforced by religion and language. The earliest settlers were probably from [southern India](/wiki/Southern_India) and Sri Lanka. They are linguistically and ethnically related to the people in the [Indian subcontinent](/wiki/Indian_subcontinent). They are ethnically known as [Dhivehis](/wiki/Dhivehi_people).

Some social stratification exists on the islands. It is not rigid, since rank is based on varied factors, including occupation, wealth, Islamic virtue, and family ties. Instead of a complex [caste](/wiki/Caste) system, there was merely a distinction between noble (bēfulhu) and common people in the Maldives. Members of the social elite are concentrated in Malé.

The population doubled by 1978, and the [population growth](/wiki/Population_growth) rate peaked at 3.4% in 1985. At the 2006 census, the population had reached 298,968,[[79]](#cite_note-79) although the census in 2000 showed that the population growth rate had declined to 1.9%. Life expectancy at birth stood at 46 years in 1978, and later rose to 72. Infant mortality has declined from 12.7% in 1977 to 1.2% today, and adult literacy reached 99%. Combined school enrollment reached the high 90s. The population was projected to have reached 317,280 in 2010.[[80]](#cite_note-80) As of April 2008, more than 70,000 foreign employees, along with 33,000 illegal immigrants, comprised more than one third of the Maldivian population.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed). There are 40,000 [Bangladeshis](/wiki/Bangladeshis) in Maldives making them the largest group of foreigners working in that country.[[81]](#cite_note-81)

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Template:Bar box](/wiki/Template:Bar_box) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

[thumb|left|Mosque in](/wiki/File:Mosque_of_Hulhumalé.jpg) [Hulhumalé](/wiki/Hulhumalé) After the long Buddhist[[82]](#cite_note-82) period of Maldivian history, Muslim traders introduced [Sunni](/wiki/Sunni) Islam. Maldivians converted to Islam by the mid-12th century. The islands have had a long history of [Sufic](/wiki/Sufi) orders, as can be seen in the history of the country such as the building of tombs. They were used until as recently as the 1980s for seeking the help of buried [saints](/wiki/Saint). They can be seen today next to some old mosques and are considered today as [cultural heritage](/wiki/Cultural_heritage). Other aspects of [tassawuf](/wiki/Tassawuf), such as ritualised [dhikr](/wiki/Dhikr) ceremonies called Maulūdu ([Mawlid](/wiki/Mawlid)) — the [liturgy](/wiki/Liturgy) of which included recitations and certain supplications in a melodical tone—existed until very recent times. These Maulūdu festivals were held in ornate tents specially built for the occasion. At present Sunni Islam is the official religion of the entire population, as adherence to it is required for citizenship.

According to Moroccan traveller [Ibn Battuta](/wiki/Ibn_Battuta), the person responsible for this conversion was a Sunni Muslim visitor named [Abu al-Barakat](/wiki/Abu_al-Barakat), sailing from [Morocco](/wiki/Morocco). He is also referred to as [Tabrizugefaanu](/wiki/Tabrizugefaanu). His venerated tomb now stands on the grounds of the Friday Mosque, or [Hukuru Miskiy](/wiki/Malé_Friday_Mosque), in Malé. Built in 1656, this is the country's oldest mosque.

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

The official and common language is [Dhivehi](/wiki/Dhivehi_language), an [Indo-Aryan language](/wiki/Indo-Aryan_language) having some similarities with [Elu](/wiki/Elu), the ancient [Sinhalese](/wiki/Sinhala_language) language. The first known script used to write Dhivehi is [Eveyla akuru](/wiki/Eveyla_akuru) script which is found in historical recording of kings ([raadhavalhi](/wiki/Raadhavalhi)). Later a script called [Dhives akuru](/wiki/Dhives_akuru) was used for a long period. The present-day script is called [Thaana](/wiki/Thaana) and is written from right to left. Thaana is said to have been introduced by the reign of [Mohamed Thakurufaanu](/wiki/Muhammad_Thakurufaanu_Al_Auzam). [English](/wiki/English_language) is used widely in commerce and increasingly in government schools.

### Population by locality[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[Template:Largest cities of the Maldives](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_the_Maldives) [thumb|Population by locality (2012)](/wiki/File:Largest_cities_or_towns_of_Maldives_(2012).png)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [Template:Refimprove section](/wiki/Template:Refimprove_section) [thumb|Thaana script](/wiki/File:Dhivehiscript.svg) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:Malé_Mosque.JPG) [Islamic Centre](/wiki/Islamic_Centre_(Maldives)), housing the mosque *Masjid-al-Sultan* [*Mohammed Thakurufaanu-al-A'z'am*](/wiki/Mohammed_Thakurufaanu-al-A'z'am)

Since the 12th century AD there were also influences from [Arabia](/wiki/Arabia) in the language and culture of the Maldives because of the conversion to Islam and its location as a crossroads in the central Indian Ocean. This was due to the long trading history between the [far east](/wiki/Far_east) and the middle east. [Somali](/wiki/Somali_people) travellers discovered the island for gold in the 13th century, before the Portuguese. Their brief stay later ended in a bloody conflict known by the Somalis as "Dagaal Diig Badaaney" in 1424.

However, unlike the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka and most of the Arabs, Africans and Europeans whose influence can be seen in borrow-words, material culture, and the diversity of Maldivian phenotype, Maldivians do not have the highly embedded patriarchal codes of honor, purity, corporate marriage, and sedentary private property that are typical of places where agriculture is the key form of subsistence and social relations have been built, historically, around tribute taking.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Reflective of this is the fact that the Maldives has had the highest national divorce rate in the world for many decades. This, it is hypothesized, is due to a combination of liberal Islamic rules about divorce and the relatively loose marital bonds that have been identified as common in non- and semi-sedentary peoples without a history of fully developed agrarian property and kinship relations.[[83]](#cite_note-83)

## Transportation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[thumb|TMA Terminal](/wiki/File:TMA_Terminal.JPG) [Ibrahim Nasir International Airport](/wiki/Ibrahim_Nasir_International_Airport) is the principal gateway to the Maldives. International travel is available on a number of major airlines. Two Maldives based airlines also operate international flights. Privately owned [MEGA Maldives Airlines](/wiki/MEGA_Maldives_Airlines) has Boeing 757 and 767 aircraft and operates frequent services to Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. Government owned [Island Aviation Services](/wiki/Island_Aviation_Services) (branded as Maldivian) operates to nearly all of Maldives domestic airports with several Dash-8 aircraft and one A320 with international service to Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram, India, and Dhaka, Bangladesh.

In Maldives there are three main ways to move around: by domestic flight, by [seaplane](/wiki/Seaplane) or by boat.[[84]](#cite_note-84) For several years there were two seaplanes companies operating: TMA, [Trans Maldivian Airways](/wiki/Trans_Maldivian_Airways), and [Maldivian Air Taxi](/wiki/Maldivian_Air_Taxi), but these merged in 2013 under the name TMA. The seaplane fleet is entirely made up of DHC-6 "Twin Otters." There is also another airline, flyMe, which operates using ATRs to domestic airports, principally Maamagili and some others. The typical Maldivian boat is called [dhoni](/wiki/Dhoni). Depending on the distance of the destination island to the airport, resorts organise domestic flight plus boat transfers, seaplane flights directly to the resort island jetty, or speedboat trips for their guests. There are also locally run ferries by large dhoni boats. Speedboats and seaplanes tend to be more expensive, while travel by dhoni, although longer, is relatively cheaper and convenient.

## Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

The [Maldives National University](/wiki/Maldives_National_University) was inaugurated on 15 February 2011. Previously known as the Maldives College of Higher Education, it was established on 1 January 1999, as part of a restructuring and rationalization of all government-run post-secondary education in Maldives. It is the only public degree-granting institution in the nation and offers a range of degrees, diplomas, and certificates, with particular emphasis on engineering, health science, education, tourism, and management.[[85]](#cite_note-85)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

* [Outline of Maldives](/wiki/Outline_of_Maldives)
* [Index of Maldives-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_Maldives-related_articles)
* [Commonwealth of Nations](/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations)
* [List of island countries](/wiki/List_of_island_countries)
* [27596 Maldives](/wiki/27596_Maldives), a minor planet named after the nation
* [Maldives Ancient Desalination System](/wiki/Desalination#Maldives)

## Notes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

## Further reading[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

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* [Clarence Maloney](/wiki/Clarence_Maloney), *People of the Maldive Islands*, Orient Black Swan, 2013
* [Xavier Romero-Frias](/wiki/Xavier_Romero-Frias), *The Maldive Islanders : a study of the popular culture of an ancient ocean kingdom*, NEI, 1999
* Xavier Romero-Frias, *Folk Tales of the Maldives*, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2012
* Djan Sauerborn, [*The Perils of Rising Fundamentalism in the Maldives*](http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?id=168645), International Relations and Security Network (ISN), Zürich, September 2013
* Djan Sauerborn, [*Failing to Transition: Democratization under Stress in the Maldives*](http://sadf.eu/new/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/SauerbornD.-SADF-Comment-Nr.1-FEBRUARY-2015.pdf)*,* South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF), February 2015

## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links)

* [Official tourist information](http://www.visitmaldives.com/)
* [Presidents Office](http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/)
* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [Maldives](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/for/maldives.htm) from *UCB Libraries GovPubs*
* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [Maldives](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12651486) from the [BBC News](/wiki/BBC_News)
* [Template:Wikiatlas](/wiki/Template:Wikiatlas)
* [Key Development Forecasts for the Maldives](http://www.ifs.du.edu/ifs/frm_CountryProfile.aspx?Country=MV) from [International Futures](/wiki/International_Futures)
* [Constitution of the Republic of Maldives](http://www.majlis.gov.mv/en/wp-content/uploads/Constitution-english.pdf)

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[Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord)

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