



Maldives

Republic of Maldives

Asia

Geography

Area 298 sq km. 1,200 coral islands in 20 administrative groups, 600 km southwest of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean. Only 202 islands are inhabited. These have an average size of less than 1 sq km. Average elevation is one metre.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	313,920	1.43%
2020	361,689	1.39%
2030	402,807	0.96%

Population figures for the Maldives section generally do not include non-Maldivians.

Capital Malé 126,000. **Urbanites** 40.5%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 28%. **Life expectancy** 71.1 yrs.

Peoples

Indigenous 80%. Maldivians of South Asian Dravidian origin.

Foreign 20%. Indian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and some Westerners, almost entirely in temporary employment. In reality, foreign worker population possibly exceeds 80,000.

Literacy 97.2%. **Official language** Dhivehi of Sanskrit origin. **All languages** 2. **Languages with Scriptures** 1w.i.p.

Economy

Tourism and fishing dominate the economy. Lack of fertile soil and fresh water and the high population density keep most people at subsistence level. The 2004 tsunami damaged significant agricultural and tourism infrastructure, while the worldwide economic

downturn has hampered tourism significantly. **HDI Rank** 95th/182. **Public debt** 32.9% of GDP. **Income/person** \$3,654 (8% of USA).

Politics

The nominal British protectorate was terminated in 1965. A non-party republic since 1968. An autocracy since 1978, ruled by one president who has cultivated a very poor human rights record. An independent judiciary has recently been established. Significant pro-reform demonstrations, international pressure and desire to portray itself as a developing republic all pulled the Maldives toward multiparty democracy, which was realized in the 2008 presidential election. The opposition's victory brought some limited freedoms – but not in the religious sphere.

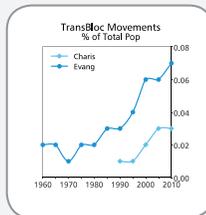
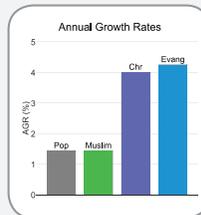
Religion

Islam is the only recognized religion. The open practice of all other religions is forbidden. Sunni Islam is strongly promoted for national unity and preservation of the government's power, but a more fundamentalist brand of Islam has rapidly grown in size and influence in recent years. Almost all adherents of other religions are foreigners.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Muslim	99.04	310,906	1.4%
Buddhist	0.40	1,256	0.5%
Hindu	0.35	1,099	2.6%
Christian	0.17	534	4.0%
Non-religious	0.04	126	1.4%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	1	0.06	<200	4.6%
Independent	1	0.02	<100	3.7%
Catholic	1	0.09	<300	3.9%

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	0.1	235	4.3%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	<0.1	99	6.1%



Challenges for Prayer

1 The fragile ecosystem of the Maldives is threatened by rising sea levels that could flood and destroy. Coral mining and rises in sea temperatures have killed much of the coral that is the foundation of these islands. The 2004 tsunami and the 2008-2009 economic downturn demonstrated how fleeting life on these islands could be; pray that this would cause many to seek eternal assurance obtainable only through Christ.

2 Behind the facade of island paradise lies a darker reality. Freedom of expression and belief is strongly curtailed by powerful societal and regulatory forces. One of the highest divorce rates in the world, rising crime and gang activity, abuse of children and endemic drug use among teens (possibly up to 70%) indicate that all is not well. Beyond Islamic beliefs lies a widespread adherence to pre-Islamic occult practices called *fanditha*. Pray for the light of the gospel to shine into the lives of Maldivians. Pray against strongholds of pride, fear, duplicity and sensuality.

3 The desire to honour human rights and increase freedoms has been expressed by the current government, but freedom of religion is highly unpopular and violent opposition to it has been promised. Grassroots religion has shifted in a decidedly Islamist and Arabized direction, losing its indigenous Maldivian roots. Pray for the future of the people of the Maldives, torn between oppressive religion and empty freedoms.

4 The Maldivians are still among the least evangelized on earth. Neither mission work nor Christian literature has ever been allowed. Paradoxically, the government denies the existence of Christianity among Maldivians while arresting those who do believe. The perception of Christianity is so bad (largely due to Western media and tourist immorality) that political opponents use the term “Christian” to slander one another. Pray for the true name and nature of Jesus to be made known in this nation. Pray that the state’s contradictions and heavy-handedness toward Christianity would generate great curiosity.

5 Persecution of believers is intense. Any Maldivian practicing Christianity can expect mockery, ostracism, incarceration and even torture. Pray for those who believe – for their protection, their courage in the face of great trials and for opportunities to grow in and spread their faith. On numerous occasions expatriate believers have been expelled, especially for sharing their faith.

6 Other means of witness – pray for lasting fruit through:

a) **Witness to Maldivians in other lands.** Many travel outside the Maldives as sailors or students, some to seek medical care or for other reasons. Also, there are Maldivian communities in Sri Lankan, Indian and Malaysian cities.

b) **The Scriptures** being translated into Dhivehi. Remarkably, a translation of the Gospels was completed and subsequently lost or destroyed in 1811! Only the Gospel of Luke and Acts are currently available. Pray for the progress of translation efforts and for ways people can freely access the Word in their heart language. Pray also for ways to import Scriptures and Christian literature – totally illegal at the moment.

c) **Christian video and audio messages** and web pages in Dhivehi are available on the Internet – for those clever or persistent enough to find their way past the government’s blockages.

7 Minicoy is part of the Indian-ruled Lakshadweep Islands to the north of the Maldives, but its population is ethnically Maldivian. Pray for an open door for the gospel.