



Labour Force Survey, Male'

Quarter 1
(Jan-March 2025)

Release date:
9 September 2025





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MALDIVES BUREAU OF STATISTICS (MBS)
Ministry of Finance & Planning



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Developed by:

Maldives Bureau of Statistics

Report Compiled by:

Ms. Aishath Shahuda

Report Edited by:

Ms. Aishath Hassan

Mr. Antonio R. Discenza

Layout Design By:

Ms. Mushfiqa Ibrahim

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Chief Statistician, Maldives Bureau of Statistics

Labour force survey (LFS) was commenced by the Maldives Bureau of Statistics on October 28, 2024, in the capital, Male' City. The fieldwork for the survey, which targets randomly selected households of four wards of Male', Hulhumale', and Vilimale'.

The LFS is fully aligned to the new statistical labour standards adopted by the 19th, 20th, and 21st International Conferences of Labour Statisticians. It helps to improve our knowledge of the labour market and the world of work by more adequately reflecting people's participation in employment and unpaid work, their labour underutilization patterns, their work relationships, and their involvement in the informal economy. The alignment to the international standards ensures that results are full comparable with those of other countries in the region and worldwide, obtained with the same methodology and standards.

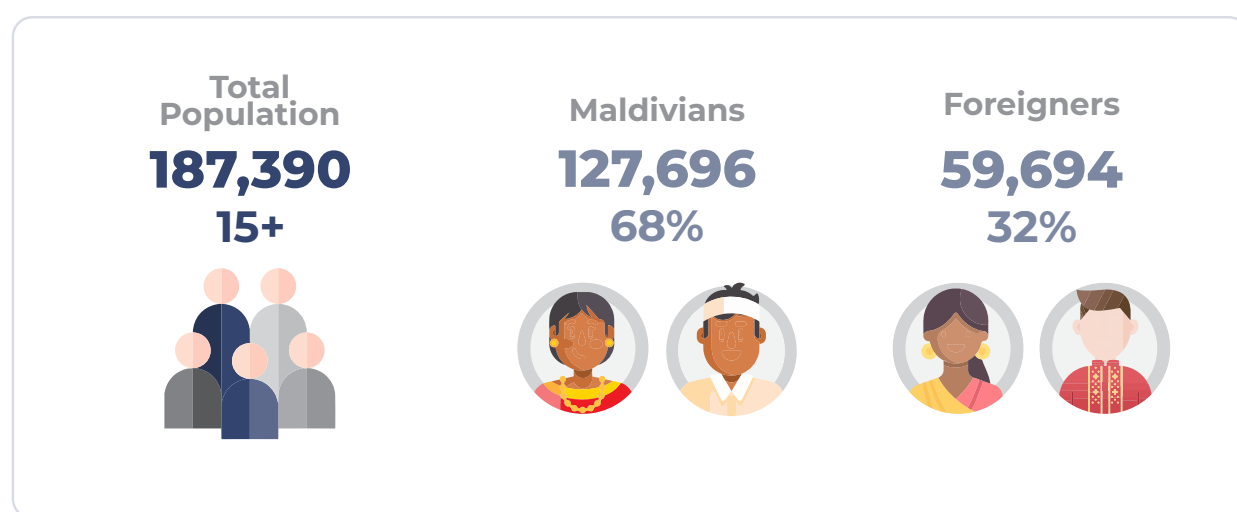
Labour market data was collected from all household members aged 15 years and above in the sample households throughout the three months of the reference quarter. LFS technical and administrative reports provide survey methodology and operational aspects of the survey.

This publication illustrates results of Q1-2025 (January to March 2025) and compares them with that of the previous quarter Q4-2024 (October to December 2024)

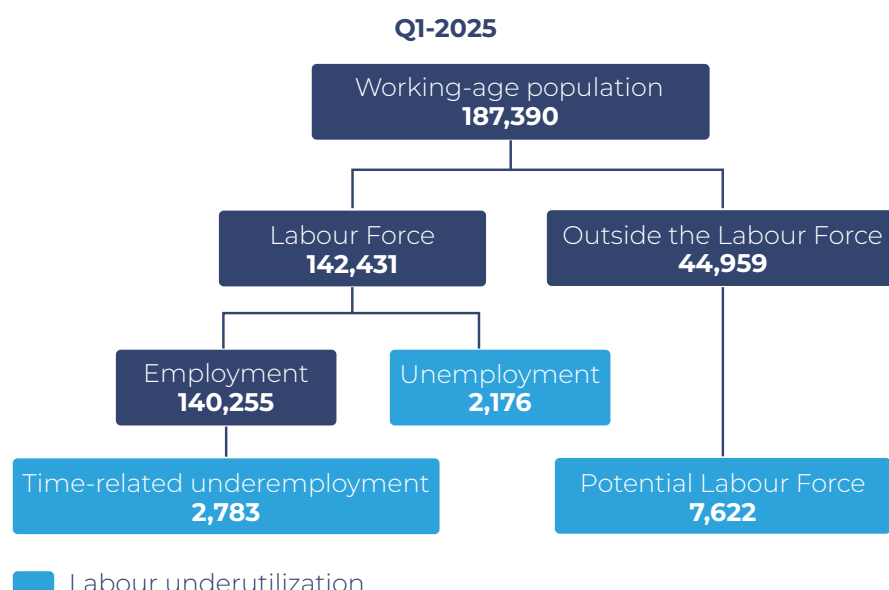
OVERVIEW OF Q1-2025

WORKING-AGE POPULATION

In Q1-2025, working-age population (15 years and older) living in Male' were estimated at 187,390. Maldivians totaled 127,696 (68.4%). One-third (59,694) were foreigners.



LABOUR FORCE STATUS OF THE WORKING AGE POPULATION



About three quarters (74.8 per cent) of the working-age population were employed (working for pay or profit) in Q1-2025, amounting to 140,255 people.

The overall employment-to-population ratio mentioned above is an average of very different ratios for different population groups.

Employment ratio is substantially higher among foreigners. It is 64.4 for Maldivians (82,306 people) and 97.1 per cent for foreigners (57,949 people).

Employment ratio is much lower among women. Globally, it is 87.6 for males and 53.7 per cent for females. Looking at the Maldivian population, the employment ratio is 77.5 for males and 51.6 for females. Looking at the foreigner population those are respectively 99.6 and 75.7.

The majority of the main jobs held by people resident in Maldives are with employers/business that are in the formal sector (93.9% of the employed people), and only a small part in the informal sector (4.5%) and household sector (1.6%). Despite that, many employed people have main jobs that are considered informal jobs (67,636 persons, corresponding to the 48.2% of all employed) according to the international classification. This is especially the case for foreign employed males who do not have social contribution paid by their employers.

Unemployment in Q1-2005 involves 2,176 persons, almost exclusively Maldivians (2,064 people) and slightly more women than men (1101 vs. 1075 persons respectively).

Unemployment rate (sometimes labelled as LU1 indicator in tables) in Q1-2005 is globally very low and equal to 1.5%. However, it reflects the fact that the foreign population is almost entirely employed. When looking at the Maldivian population only, the unemployment rate is equal to 2.5% overall, 1.9% for men and 3.2% for women. It is also 3.9% for Maldivians in the age group 15-34 and 1.3% for those in the age group 35 plus.

Given the very low unemployment, the labour force participation rate, which considers both employed and unemployed, is very close to the employment-to-population ratio. Globally it is 76%, but it is much higher for men (88.5%) than for women (55.3%), and is also much higher for foreigners (97.3%) than for Maldivians (66.1%).

Within people in employment, a small group of people (2,783 persons, corresponding to the 2% of all employed) are classified in Time-Related Underemployment (TRU) because they usually work less than 35 hours per week but would like to work more and are immediately available to do so. However, while TRU involves only 1% of the employed men, it involves 4.4% of the employed women, mostly Maldivians. Putting together the Unemployed and those in TRU we can calculate the LU2 indicator and

see that the gender gaps increases. In fact, while the total is 3.5%, it is only 2.1% for men but 7.1% for women.

Within people out of the labour force, an important group is classified as Potential Labour Force (PLF). These are people which are “close” to the unemployed because they: a) were available to take up a job but did not search for a job in the previous 4 weeks; or b) searched for a job but were not available to start immediately. In Q1 2025 the PLF in Maldives are 7,622 persons, more than 3 times the number of unemployed, and 54% of them are women.

Putting together the Unemployed, those in TRU and the PLF, we can calculate the LU4 indicator and see that the gender gap increases even further. In fact, while the total is 8.4%, it is only 5.3% for males but 15.9% for females.

OVERVIEW OF THE QUARTERLY VARIATIONS

Labour force status	Q1-2025 (nos)	Quarterly change (nos)	Quarterly change (%)
Labour force	142,431	-536	-0.4
Employed	140,255	584	0.4
Unemployed	2,176	-1,120	-34.0
Outside labour force	44,959	1,861	4.3
Total (15+)	187,390	1,325	0.7

Table 1: Key Labour market statistics, Q1-2025

Working-age population also increased over the quarter by a total of 1,325 persons (0.7%)

Persons in the labour force decreased slightly by 536 persons (0.4 percent) in Q1 2025 compared to Q4 2024.

Employment increased slightly by 584 persons (0.4 percent) over the quarter to 140,225 in 2025 Q1. This is mainly due to an increase among foreign men.

Unemployment decreased substantially over the quarter to 2,176 persons. This decline is mainly attributed to the decrease in unemployment among Maldivian men.

Persons outside labour force, increased over the quarter by a total of 1,861 persons (4.3%). This is mainly attributed to the decrease in Maldivian men in the labour force.

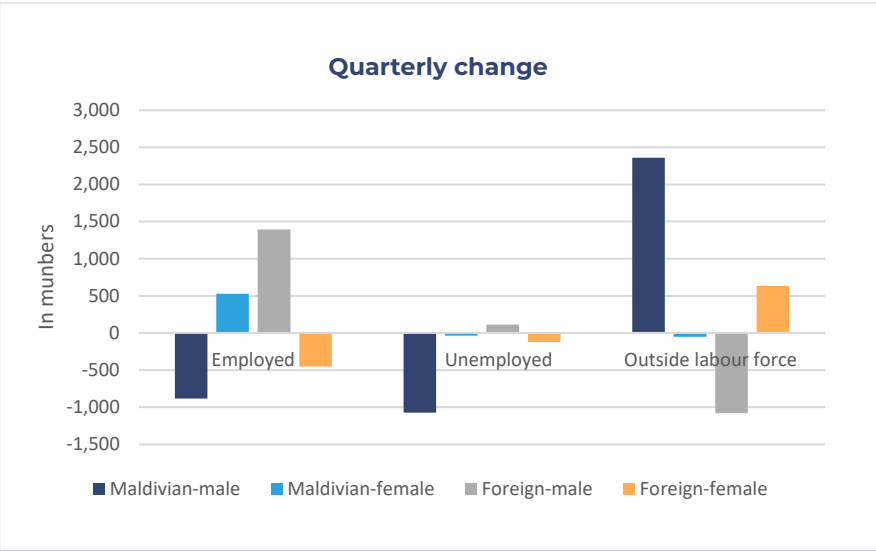


Figure 1: Quarterly change in key Labour market statistics, Q4-2024 to Q1-2025

Labour force participation rate decreased over the quarter by 0.8 percentage points to 76.0 percent in Q1-2025. Employment to population ratio also decreased slightly over the quarter (0.2 pts) to 74.8 percent.

Unemployment rate improved in Q1-2025 to 1.5 percent with a decrease of 0.8 percentage points over the quarter.

Key Indicators	Q1-2025 (nos)	Quarterly change (percentage points-pts)
Labour force participation rate	76.0	-0.8
Employment to population ratio	74.8	-0.2
Unemployment rate	1.5	-0.8

Table 2: Key Labour market indicators ,Q1-2025

Labour force participation rate is substantially higher among foreigners (96.5%) in Q1-2025 while it is much lower among women (85.7%).

Labour force participation rate among foreign men increased over the quarter (2.0 percentage points), while it decreased for Maldivian men (3.6 percentage points).

Decrease was most prominent among foreign women (10.0 percentage points), while a slight increase is seen for Maldivian women (0.4 percentage points).

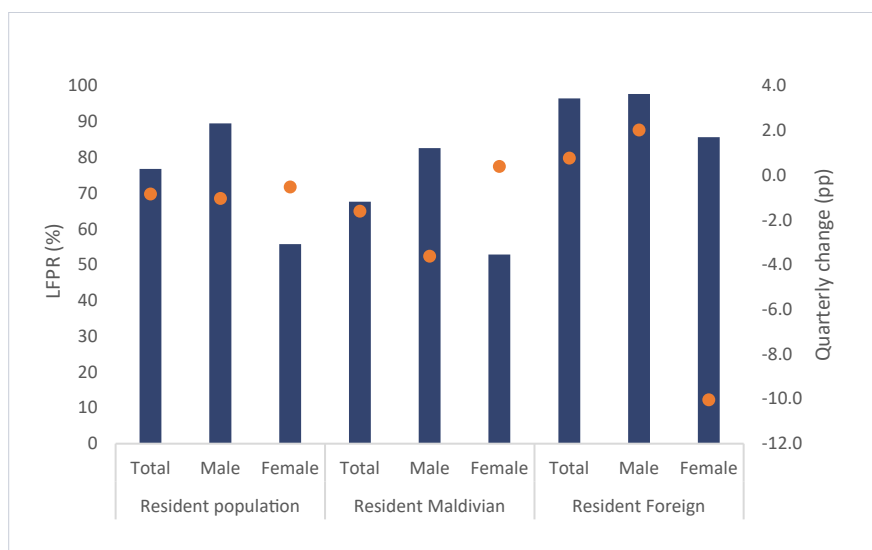


Figure 2: Labour force participation rate by nationality and sex, Q1-2025



EMPLOYED POPULATION BY INDUSTRY IN MALE' CITY

Maldivian economy is dominated by the tertiary industry. In Male' City, approximately 80 percent of the of employed persons were working in services industry in Q1-2025, followed by secondary industry (19%). Primary industry has few employed people as it is mainly concentrated in the Atolls.

It is important to keep in mind that Industry composition will differ in this survey, as it does not cover tourist resorts or other islands in the Atolls.

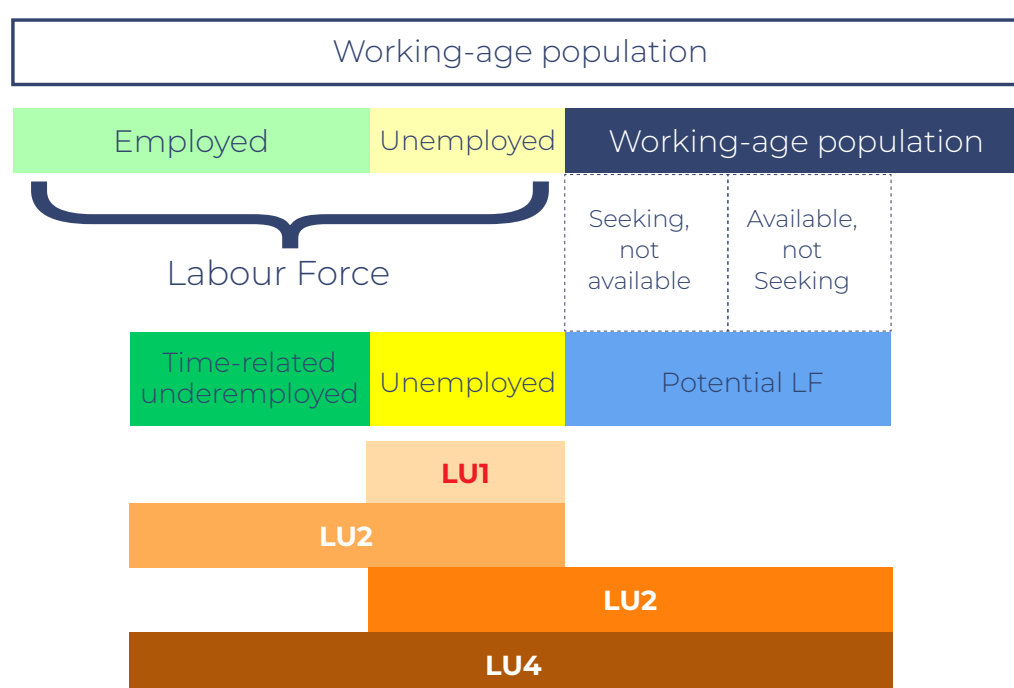
Employment gain over the quarter was solely from Tertiary industry with an increase of 2.7 percent in Q1-2025.

Industry	Q1-2025 (nos.)	Quarterly change (nos.)	Q1-2025 (% Share)
Primary	196	-269	0.1
Secondary	26,404	-2,352	18.8
Tertiary	113,412	2,992	80.9
Not Stated	243	213	0.2
Total	140,255	-269	100.0

Table 3: Employed population by broad industry groups, Q1- 2025

LABOUR UNDER-UTILIZATION INDICATORS

New Combined indicators of labour underutilization indicators (LU1-LU4) are shown in the diagram below. These indicators are to be used alongside unemployment rate to provide insights into the extent of labour underutilisation.



Labour underutilization	Q1-2025 (nos)	Quarterly change (nos.)	Quarterly change (%)
Time-related underemployed	2,783	-106	-3.7
Unemployed	2,176	-1,120	-34.0
Potential labour force	7,622	754	11.0
Total	12,581	-472	-3.6

Table 4: Components of labour underutilization, Q1- 2025

Unemployment rate remains the most commonly used labour underutilization indicator. Additional measures complementary are used alongside unemployment, to further explore the extent of labour underutilization. These include time-related underemployment and potential labourforce.

There is a general improvement in the unemployment situation, although there was a notable increase in the potential labor force.

There was the sharp decline in the number of unemployed individuals. The unemployment dropped by 1,120 persons, over the quarter to 2,176 in Q1-2025. This indicates a positive trend in the labour market.

The number of people in the potential labour force, who are not actively seeking employment but could be available for work, grew by 754 persons to 7,622. This suggests that while formal unemployment is down, a larger pool of individuals is on the sidelines of the labour market.

The number of time-related underemployed individuals, or those who want to work more hours, saw a slight decrease of 106 persons, moving to 2,783 in Q1-2025. This figure remained relatively stable between the two quarters.

The total number of people in the combined categories (unemployed, underemployed, and potential labor force) decreased by 472 persons, to 12,581 in Q1-2025. The large drop in unemployment outweighed the increase in the potential labor force, leading to an overall positive trend in this broader measure.



Figure 3: Quarterly change in Labour underutilization by sex, Q4-2024 to Q1-2025

Looking at the Labour underutilization by sex over the quarter shows an increase in time-related underemployed among women.

Sex	Lu1	Lu2	Lu3	Lu4
	%			
Both Sexes	1.5	3.5	6.5	8.4
Male	1.0	2.1	4.3	5.3
Female	2.8	7.1	12.1	15.9
	Quarterly change (percentage points)			
Both Sexes	-0.8	-0.8	-0.3	-0.3
Male	-1.0	-1.2	-0.2	-0.5
Female	-0.4	0.0	-0.3	0.1

Table 5: Labour underutilization indicators by sex, Q1-2025

Improvement in unemployment is higher among men. Potential labour force comprises of more men, indicating a higher potential labour supply of men that can be tapped.

Other labour underutilization indicators are much higher compared with unemployment rate.

In Q1-2025, LU4 was substantially higher at 8.4 percent compared to LU1 (unemployment rate) of 1.5 percent. LU4 was substantially higher among women (15.9%).

All the indicators show a much higher level of underutilization of women in the labour market.



Figure 4: Labour underutilization indicators by sex, Q1-2025



PERSONS OUTSIDE LABOUR FORCE

In 2025-Q1 over a third (36%) of the working-age Maldivian population accounting for a total of 44,959 individuals are not part of the labor force. This means they are neither employed nor actively seeking employment. There was an increase of over one thousand individuals (1,861) among those outside labour force over the quarter.

Among those outside labour force 7,622 (17%) are in the potential labor force category in Q1-2025. An 11 percent increase is observed in this category over the quarter. Potential labour force comprises of unavailable jobseekers and available potential jobseekers.

The remaining 37,337 individuals (83%) fall under the category “Others outside the labor force” They are neither actively seeking jobs nor available for employment and do not want to work at the time of the survey. Among those are working-age population comprising of students, homemakers, sick and elderly population who are unable to work. They also include individuals who have chosen not to participate in the labor market and do not want to work for various reasons.

Outside labour force	Quarterly change (nos)	Quarterly change (%)
Potential labour force	754	11.0
Others outside labour force	1,107	3.1
Total (15+)	1,861	4.3

Table 6: Persons outside labour force, Q1-2025

High proportion of women fall into the category of others outside labour force accounting for 27,464 women (73.6%) compared to 9,873 men in Q1-2025.

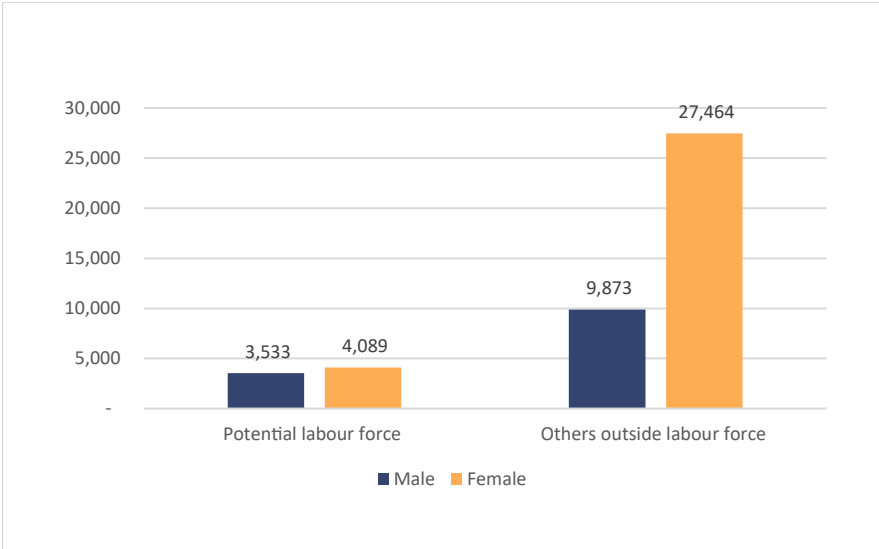


Figure 5: Persons outside labour force by sex, Q1-2025

Main activity status as to what best describes what they were doing was asked for individuals in this category and taken as self-declared.

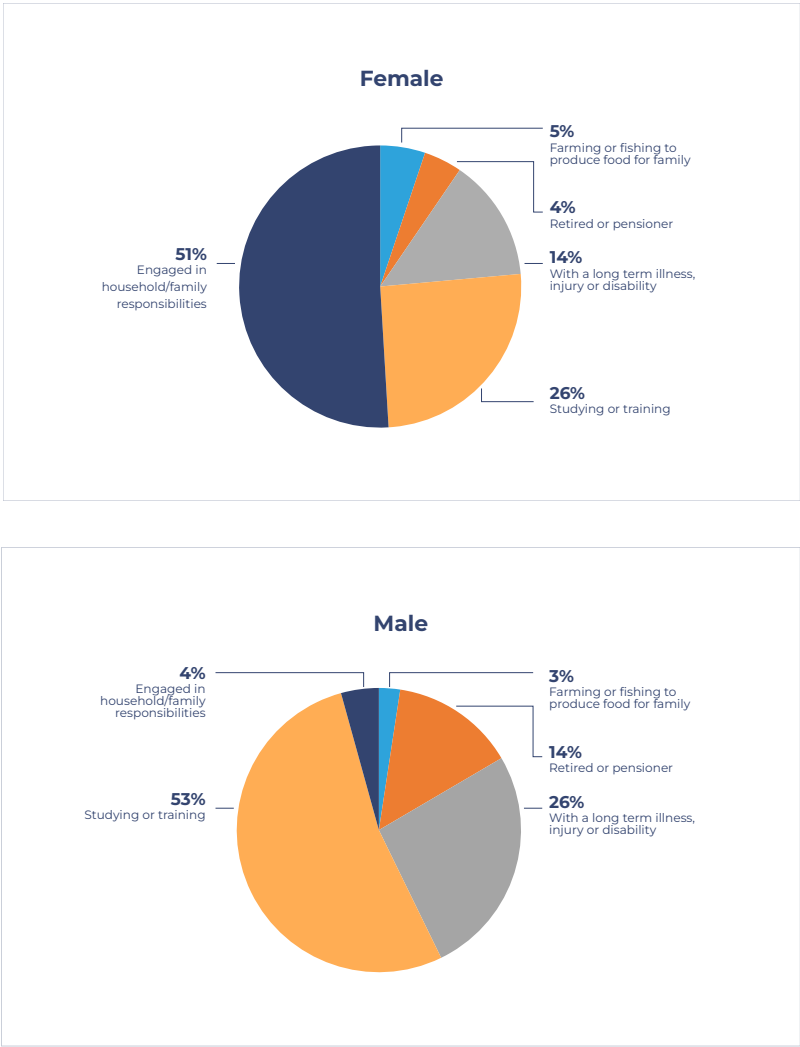


Figure 6: What best describes activity for others outside labour force by Sex, Q1-2025

Over half the women states “engaged in household or family responsibilities” as what best describes what they were doing at the time of the survey. This was followed by “studying or training”.

What men identified were quite different with over half the respondents stating “studying or training, followed by “with a long-term illness, injury or disability”. Unlike women a very few men (4%) stated “engaged in household or family responsibilities”. This difference is due to the care responsibilities that are mainly carried out by women in the society and is perceived as such.

Several of the people outside labourforce are also engaged in productive activities in forms of work other than employment. These include Own-use production work, Volunteer work, Unpaid trainee work, as described in the Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (19th ICLS). These are not explored in detail in this survey and will be captured through a proper time-use module in the upcoming surveys.



ANNEX I: DEFINITIONS

- 1. Working Age Population:** The population aged 15 years and older.
- 2. Labour Force:** The sum of all persons of working age who are employed and those who are unemployed.
- 3. Employed:** Persons in employment are defined as all those of working age who, during a short reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit.
- 4. Unemployed:** Persons in unemployment are defined as all those of working age who were not in employment, carried out activities to seek employment during a specified recent period and were currently available to take up employment given a job opportunity.
- 5. Potential Labour Force:** Individuals of working age who are not part of the labour force but may become part of it due to their willingness and ability to work.
- 6. Unavailable jobseekers:** Actively seeking employment, even though job opportunities are not readily available.
- 7. Available potential jobseekers:** Not currently seeking employment but are available and ready to commence work.
- 8. Persons Outside the Labour Force:** Individuals of working age who are not part of the labour force, including those not seeking employment and not available for employment.
- 9. Labourforce Participation Rate:** The labour force participation rate expresses the labour force as a percent of the working-age population.
- 10. Employment -to- population ratio/employment rate:** Expresses the number of persons who are employed as a percent of the total working age (15+) population.
- 11. Unemployment Rate:** Calculated by expressing the number of unemployed persons as a percentage of the total number of persons in the labour force.
Unemployment Rate = (Persons Unemployed / Labour Force) x 100 where Labour Force = (Persons Employed + Persons Unemployed)

12. Time-related underemployed – Employed, but with insufficient working time

13. Labour underutilization indicator (LU1) $= \{(\text{Unemployed person}) / (\text{Labour force})\} \times 100$

14. Labour underutilization indicator (LU2) $= \{(\text{Unemployed person}) + \text{Persons in time-related underemployment}\} / (\text{Labour force}) \times 100$

15. Labour underutilization indicator (LU3) $= \{(\text{Unemployed person}) + \text{Potential labour force}\} / (\text{Labour force} + \text{Potential labour force}) \times 100$

16. Labour underutilization indicator (LU4) $= \{(\text{Unemployed person}) + \text{Persons in time-related underemployment} + \text{Potential labour force}\} / (\text{Labour force} + \text{Potential labour force}) \times 100$



MALDIVES BUREAU OF STATISTICS

Ministry of Finance & Planning
Dharul Eman Building (7, 8, 9th Floor),
Majeedhee Magu,
Male 20345,
Republic of Maldives

info@stats.gov.mv
<http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv>