



MALDIVES POPULATION PROJECTION

2022-2062



Maldives population projection 2022-2062

October 2025

Maldives Bureau of Statistics
Ministry of Finance & Planning



Maldives Bureau of Statistics (MBS) is the National Statistical Office of the Maldives providing the public with reliable and timely statistics and cater to all data demands nationally and internationally. We publish all our census and survey data on <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv>.

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Table of content

Contents

Table of content	6
List of Figures	9
List of Tables	11
Preface	12
Foreword	14
Acknowledgements	15
Executive Summary	17
Terms and Definitions	18
Acronyms and Abbreviations	21
Key Indicators	22
Map of Maldives	24
Part A: Maldives Population Projections, Methodology and Assumptions	24
1. Introduction	26
2. Data Source, Projection scope and Method	27
2.1 Data source	27
2.2 Projection scope and period	27
2.3 Projection methodology	28
2.4 Population projection variants	29
2.5 Projection limitations	29
3. Administrative hierarchy used in projection	30
4. Base Population	30

5. Resident Maldivians ----- 32

5.1 Maldivians residing in administrative islands- assumptions and scenarios -----	33
5.1.1 Assumptions on Total Fertility Rate (TFR) -----	33
5.1.2 Assumptions on Age Specific Fertility Rate (ASFR)-----	37
5.1.3 Assumptions on Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)-----	38
5.1.4 Assumptions on Life Expectancy at Birth (LE) -----	40
5.1.5 Assumptions on Migration-----	42
5.2 Maldivians residing in non-administrative islands-----	45
5.3 Adjusting sub-national results to national totals-----	45

6. Resident Foreigners ----- 46

7. Aggregating projections to compile Resident population ----- 47

Part B: The Analysis----- 24

1. Introduction----- 49

2. Resident Population (Resident Maldivian and Foreigners) ----- 49

2.1 Resident Population in Numbers -----	49
2.2 Share of Resident Population, 2022 & 2062-----	50
2.3 Growth rate of the resident population -----	51
2.4 Age-sex structure of the resident population -----	51
2.5 Sex Ratio of the resident population-----	53
2.6 Resident population by broad age groups -----	54
2.7 Resident Population distribution across Maldives -----	55
2.8 Resident population by broad age group between Malé and Admin Islands-----	57
2.9 Distribution of resident population across administrative islands -----	58
2.10 Share of resident population across Admin islands -----	59
2.11 Resident population in administrative islands -----	60
2.12 Resident population in non-administrative islands-----	61

3. Resident Foreigners ----- 62

3.1 Growth of foreign population -----	63
3.2 Distribution of foreign population-----	64
3.3 Resident foreigners by age and gender-----	64
3.4 Age composition of the Resident Foreigners, 2022 & 2062 -----	66
3.5 Distribution of foreigners between admin and non-admin islands -----	67

4. Resident Maldivian Population ----- 68

4.1 Overall trend in resident Maldivian population and annual growth rate -----	68
4.2 Changes in the Age structure of Maldivian population -----	69
4.3 Changes in the local age groups -----	70
4.4 Resident Maldivian population by locality -----	71
4.5 Changes in the Age-sex composition between Malé and Atolls -----	73
4.6 Changes in resident Maldivians across Admin Islands -----	75
4.7 Maldivians living in non-admin islands -----	77
4.8 Changes in key socio-economic dimensions-----	78
4.8.1 Education-----	78
4.8.2 The workforce – demographic window of opportunity period -----	79
4.8.3 Women- future reproductive age group -----	80
4.8.4 Elderly – period of ‘aged’ and ‘super-age’-----	81
4.8.5 Ageing measures -----	83

Part C: Policy Implications and Way Forward -----24

5.1 Introduction-----	87
5.2 Key Results of the Population Projections 2022–2062 -----	88
a) Population size and growth-----	88
b) Ageing and super-aged status-----	88
c) Urbanization -----	88
d) Uncertainty about future fertility and migration -----	89
e) Fertility:-----	89
f) Foreign migration -----	89
g) Internal migration-----	89
5.3 Policy Implications of the Projections -----	90
5.4 The Way Forward for Policy Formulation and Implementation -----	90
Strategic directions-----	91
Expanding Research and Projections-----	91
Enhancing Advocacy and Awareness -----	92
5.5 Conclusion -----	92

References----- 93

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Methodological flow chart for projecting Resident population	28
Figure 1.2: Total Fertility Rate, 1995-2022	33
Figure 1.3: TFR and years below TFR of 1.9 by country.....	34
Figure 1.4: Assumed TFR for the Republic based on 3 scenarios, 1995-2062	36
Figure 1.5: Age Specific Fertility Rates, 2000-2022	37
Figure 1.6: Sex Ratio at Birth (boys per 100 girls) by locality, Census 2022	39
Figure 1.7: Life expectancy at birth, 2010-2020	40
Figure 2.1: Resident Population of Maldives, 2022-2062	50
Figure 2.2: Growth rate of resident population, 2022-2062.....	51
Figure 2.3: Population pyramid of resident population, 2022	52
Figure 2.4: Population pyramid of resident population, 2032	52
Figure 2.5: Population pyramid of resident population, 2042	52
Figure 2.6: Population pyramid of resident population, 2052	52
Figure 2.7: Population pyramid of resident population, 2062	52
Figure 2.8: Resident population by broad age groups, 2022-2062	55
Figure 2.9: Share of resident population in Malé vs Atolls, 2022- 2062	56
Figure 2.10: Resident population by broad age group in Malé, 2022-2062	57
Figure 2.11: Resident population by broad age group in Admin Islands, 2022-2062---	57
Figure 2.12: Share of Maldivian and foreign population in administrative islands, 2022 & 2062	60
Figure 2.13: Share of foreign and Maldivian population in non-admin islands, 2022 & 2062	61

Figure 3.1: Population and growth rate of resident foreigners, 2022-2062-----	63
Figure 3.2: Resident foreign population by locality, 2022-2062 -----	64
Figure 3.3: Population pyramid of resident foreigners, 2022-2062 -----	65
Figure 3.4: Resident Foreigners by broad age group, 2022 & 2062-----	66
Figure 3.5: Share of foreigners in admin and non-admin islands, 2022 & 2062-----	67
Figure 4.1: Population size and growth rate of resident Maldivians, 2022-2062 -----	68
Figure 4.2: Resident Maldivian population by 5-year age group, 2022 -----	69
Figure 4.3: Resident Maldivian population by 5-year age group, 2032 -----	69
Figure 4.4: Resident Maldivian population by 5-year age group, 2042-----	69
Figure 4.5: Resident Maldivian population by 5-year age group, 2052 -----	69
Figure 4 6: Resident Maldivian population by 5-year age group, 2062-----	70
Figure 4.7: Resident Maldivian population by local age groups, 2022-2062 -----	70
Figure 4.8: Share of resident Maldivian between Malé and Atolls, 2022-2062 -----	72
Figure 4.9: Resident Maldivians in Malé by broad age groups, 2022-2062 -----	73
Figure 4.10: Resident Maldivians in Admin Islands by broad age groups, 2022-2062 -	73
Figure 4.11: Population pyramid of Malé and Atolls, 2022-----	74
Figure 4.12: Population pyramid of Malé and Atolls, 2032 -----	74
Figure 4.13: Population pyramid of Malé and Atolls, 2042-----	74
Figure 4.14: Population pyramid of Malé and Atolls, 2052-----	74
Figure 4.15: Population pyramid of Malé and Atolls, 2062 -----	74
Figure 4.16: Resident Maldivians by broad age groups, 2022-2062 -----	80
Figure 4.17: Changes in the elderly population, 2022-2062 -----	81
Figure 4.18: Breakdown of elderly population, 2022-2062-----	82
Figure 4.19: Share of elderly men and women, 2022-2062 -----	82
Figure 4.20: Median age of Maldivian population, 1980- 2062 -----	83
Figure 4.21: Overall dependency ratio, Child dependency ratio and Old dependency ratio, 1990-2062 -----	84

List of Tables

Table 1.1: Comparison of count of resident population through different sources, 2022 -----	30
Table 1.2: Whipple's Index, Census 2022 -----	31
Table 1.3: Retro-projection application to Census 2022 -----	32
Table 1.4: Sex Ratio at Birth (boys per 100 girls), 1995-2022 -----	38
Table 1.5: Life Expectancy, 2020 & 2062 -----	41
Table 1.6: Net Migrants (international) among Maldivians, 2022-2062 -----	42
Table 2.1: Share of Resident Maldivian and Foreign Population, 2022-2062 -----	50
Table 2.2: Sex ratio among resident population, 2022-2062 -----	54
Table 2.3: Distribution of resident population by locality and growth rate, 2022-2062	56
Table 2.4: Distribution of population by atoll, 2022 & 2062 -----	58
Table 2.5: Distribution of resident population by Atolls (Admin islands), 2022 & 2062 -	59
Table 4.1: Distribution of resident Maldivian population by locality, 2022-2062 -----	71
Table 4.2: Resident Maldivian population by locality and change over time, 2022 & 2062 -----	76
Table 4.3: Atolls by Resident Maldivian population size, 2022 & 2062 -----	77
Table 4.4: Maldivians residing in non-admin islands and their share, 2022-2062 -----	77
Table 4.5: Breakdown of child population, 2022-2062 -----	79
Table 4.6: Share of reproductive age women, 2022-2062 -----	80
Table 4.7: Ageing Index, 2022-2062 -----	84

Preface



The Maldives Bureau of Statistics (MBS) is pleased to present the Population Projections for the Maldives, 2022–2062, based on the 2022 Population and Housing Census. This report provides essential estimates of future population size and structure (by age and sex) for the next four decades. It also outlines the methods and assumptions used, presents the key findings, and highlights policy implications and recommendations derived from the results.

Population projections are a critical tool for planning and policy formulation. They are widely used by policymakers, planners, researchers, and academics to anticipate and address future demands across all key sectors. The data is critical for budget allocation, resource planning for health and education services, infrastructure development, and designing social protection programs to address an aging population or high youth dependency.

This report supersedes the previous population projections (2014–2054) by offering updated and revised population estimates extending from 2022 to 2062. It provides detailed projections by sex and age group for every year of the period. The results are displayed in both tabular and graphical formats, accompanied by along with explanations of the methodology. The full projection data is now available as a downloadable dataset on our website for the first time, significantly enhancing its utility for all the users.

Future population size and age structure are projected by making assumptions about trends in fertility, mortality, and migration. These projections mainly use data from the 2022 Population and Housing Census, which is enhanced by administrative records and information on ongoing and planned development projects expected to affect the population growth, distribution, and composition. This work was undertaken in close consultation with relevant stakeholders.

To maintain the accuracy of these projections over time, it is essential to update and refine them regularly. When developing these projections, key data limitations, such as gaps in administrative records, coverage, and data quality were carefully considered. Future revisions and improvements to the underlying assumptions will require updated data on the number of Maldivians and foreigners residing in administrative islands, resorts, and industrial islands.

Given the accuracy of population projections rely on the soundness of their underlying assumptions and regular updates, the Maldives Bureau of Statistics will prioritize to resolve the existing data gaps. Strengthening statistics and improving the data required to generate SDG indicators also remains a high priority for the current administration.

We hope this report proves to be useful informative for all stakeholders including ministries, departments, agencies, development partners, individuals, researchers, academia, civil society organizations and the public in general. In essence, the hope is that this report moves beyond a technical document to become a shared knowledge base that supports collective decision-making for the country's sustainable future.



Aishath Hassan
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Foreword



It is with immense pleasure that I present the Population Projections Report Maldives, 2022-2062. This comprehensive analytical exercise, anchored in the 2022 Population and Housing Census, offers invaluable insights into the anticipated demographic shifts and dynamics that will shape the future of the Maldives over the next four decades.

Beyond the statistical figures and projections contained within this report, it is crucial to remember that each data point represents a human life, a family, and a community. These are the children who will soon require access to quality education and well-equipped schools, the vibrant young women and men who will enter the workforce seeking fulfilling employment opportunities, and the esteemed older persons who deserve to live with dignity, respect security, good health and a sense of purpose and contribution. Their aspirations, challenges, and well-being are at the very heart of this endeavour.

Population projections are vital for strategic planning, revealing community evolution and its implications. They guide us in expanding education, strengthening health services, developing housing, and creating livelihoods. These projections offer an evidence base for policy, resource allocation, anticipating needs, mitigating challenges, and seizing opportunities.

At UNFPA - UN's Sexual and Reproductive Health Agency, our core philosophy is to enable governments to plan for changing population needs, so people including the women, girls, and youth can thrive today and in the future. This report is therefore more than just a compilation of data; it is a vital resource intended for all stakeholders – policymakers entrusted with governance, community leaders guiding local initiatives, civil society organizations advocating for change, and indeed, every citizen of the Maldives. It invites us all to collectively reflect on how we can collaboratively shape a future where every individual, with particular emphasis on empowering women and nurturing the potential of young people, can not only survive but truly thrive.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our esteemed partners and dedicated national institutions, especially the Maldives Bureau of Statistics, whose unwavering commitment, expertise, and diligent efforts were instrumental in the successful production of this significant report. Their meticulous work has provided us with a robust foundation for understanding our demographic landscape. I earnestly invite all readers to delve into these profound insights, to critically engage with the data, and to actively utilize this knowledge to collaboratively build a more inclusive, equitable, and hopeful tomorrow for the Maldives.

Phuntsho Wangyel
Officer In Charge
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This report has been prepared by the Maldives Bureau of Statistics. The preparation of this Population Projection Report would not have been possible without the dedication, expertise, and support of numerous individuals and institutions. We extend our profound gratitude to all those who contributed their time and knowledge to this vital undertaking.

We express our sincere appreciation to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for their invaluable technical assistance and sustained financial support throughout the census implementation and preparing the Maldives Population Projection. Their commitment to strengthening national statistical capacity was fundamental to the successful execution of this project.

We would also like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our consultant, Mr. Tim Miller for his invaluable contribution and dedication in formulating the projection assumptions and sharing his technical expertise in producing the results. In addition to his technical support in preparing this report, Mr. Miller has played a key role in strengthening the national technical capacity of MBS in population projection methodologies.

We are grateful to the various government ministries, departments, and key stakeholders for their active participation and valuable input. Their attendance and contributions during the consultation workshops provided essential data, insights, and contextual information that greatly enriched the assumptions and analysis contained within this report.

We would like to sincerely thank all the staff of the Demographic and Social Statistics Division at the Maldives Bureau of Statistics (MBS) for their dedication and tireless effort in completing this work.

A special note of thanks goes to the dedicated staff of the ICT and Data Management Division at the Maldives Bureau of Statistics.

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Executive Summary

The Maldives population projection determine the future demographic profile in terms of size and structure of the population based on trends in fertility, mortality, and migration. The Maldives is entering a new demographic era (2022-2062). With population growth slowing, citizens rapidly ageing, and urbanization accelerating, these powerful trends are set to fundamentally remake the economy, social structures, and environment, mandating foresightful policy action. These projections provide critical insights into future trends in labour, education, and other socio-economic aspects of the population, making them an invaluable tool for planning and policy development.

The population projection is derived from the Maldives Population and Housing Census 2022. Projection assumptions for Resident Maldivians and foreigners were formulated separately, taking into account the levels and trends of the key components of population change. In 2022, the Maldives had a mid-year population of about 547,651 people, made up of 381,436 Maldivians and 166,215 foreign residents. By 2062, the total population is expected to reach around 678,024, with Maldivians making up three-fifth and foreigners as two-fifth.

Population growth will slow down significantly over the next four decades. In the past (2014–2022), growth averaged 2.3% per year, driven mostly by foreigners working in the country. Maldivians grew much more slowly, at 1.6% per year. Looking ahead, foreign population growth will ease, while the Maldivian population will eventually start to decline in the late 2050s due to low fertility. From 2052 onwards, the population enters into a phase of negative growth.

The age structure of the resident Maldivians will change dramatically. Children (0-17 years) will make up a much smaller share, falling from 31% in 2022 to 16% in 2062, while the elderly population will grow sharply. In 2022, just 5% of resident Maldivians were aged 65 or older. Between 2026 and 2044, Maldives becomes an ageing population, where the share of elderly doubles to more than 10%. Between 2045 and 2051, Maldives becomes an aged population. The year 2052 marks Maldives entry into the ranks of super-aged societies- with almost 1 in every 4 Maldivians aged 65 years or above by 2062.

Migration will also reshape where people live. In 2022, about 41% of Maldivians lived in Malé. By 2062, more than two-thirds of Maldivians are expected to reside in the capital, reflecting increasing urbanization and job opportunities in the Greater Malé region.

These shifts, slowing growth, declining fertility, rising life expectancy, ageing, and urbanization, will reshape the economy, society, and environment, creating both risks and opportunities. The country must act now—by integrating population into development strategies, reforming social protection, strengthening institutions, and investing in women and youth. With foresight, demographic change – rather than an obstacle - can become a foundation for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Terms and Definitions

Terms	Definitions
Administrative Islands	Where the local communities live and have their own local governing Council.
Aged	when the share of the elderly population (65+) is between 15-20 per cent.
Ageing	when the share of elderly population (65+) is between 7-14 per cent
Ageing Index	The ageing index is calculated as the number of persons 60 years old and over per hundred persons under age 15.
Age Specific Fertility Rate (ASFR)	The annual number of births to women of a particular age group per 1,000 women in that age group.
Annual Growth Rate	The rate at which a population is increasing (or decreasing) in a given year due to natural increase and net migration, expressed as a percentage of the base population.
Childbearing ages	Women of reproductive age (15-49 years)
Child Dependency Ratio	The child dependency ratio is the ratio of the population aged 0-14 to the population aged 15-64, presented as the number of dependents per 100 persons of working age (15-64).
Cohort- component projection method	In the cohort-component method, the components of population change (fertility, mortality, and net migration) are projected separately for each birth cohort (persons born in a given year). The base population is advanced each year by using projected survival rates and net international migration.
Demographic bonus	The period occurs when the percentage of children (0-14 years) is lower than 30% and the percentage of the elderly (65+ years) is lower than 15%.
Demographic Dividend	Demographic dividend occurs when the proportion of working people in the total population is high because this indicates that more people have the potential to be productive and contribute to economic growth.
DemProj	Demographic Projections, developed by the Spectrum System of Policy Models which project the population for an entire country or region based on assumptions about fertility, mortality and migration. https://www.avenirhealth.org/software-spectrummodels.php#demproj

Dependency ratio	The dependency ratio measures the proportion of dependent individuals, such as children and elderly people to the working age population. A high dependency ratio suggests that a country has a greater number of children and elderly people to the working age population. In contrast, a low age dependency ratio indicates that a country has a smaller proportion of dependents and a larger proportion of people who are capable of working.
Elderly population	Population 65+ years.
Internal Migrant	Migration within the country, from one island to another
International Migrant	Migration of Maldivian by crossing international borders
Life Expectancy at birth (LE)	The average number of years that a newborn could expect to live, if he or she were to pass through life exposed to the sex- and age-specific death rates prevailing at the time of his or her birth, for a specific year, in a given country, territory, or geographic area.
Median Age	The median age is the age that divides a population into two numerically equal groups - that is, half the people are younger than this age, and half are older. It is a single index that summarizes the age distribution of a population.
Migrant	A person who has ever changed his/her island of usual residence. In other words, if a person has resided for 1 year or more on another island or country other than his/her current usual place of residence, then that person is considered as a migrant. In cases where the duration is less than 1 year, then his/ her or intention is considered.
Mid-year population	Used as July 1 of each projected year
Net Migrants	The difference between the number of immigrants and emigrants among Maldivians
Non-Administrative Islands	Non-Administrative Islands include tourist resorts, industrial islands, and islands used for other purposes.
NTA	The National Transfer Account (NTA) system provides an understanding of the age or generational dimension of economies at the national or subnational level. It integrates population and economic accounts, measures how different generations acquire and use economic resources and is consistent with UN System of National Accounts. Source: UN National Transfer Account Manual
Old Dependency Ratio	The old dependency ratio is the ratio of the number of elderly people at an age when they are generally economically inactive (i.e., aged 65 and over), compared to the number of people of working age (i.e., 15-64 years old).

Population Ageing	A process in which the proportions of adults and the elderly increase in a population, while the proportions of children and adolescents decrease. This process results in a rise in the median age of the population. Ageing occurs when fertility rates decline while life expectancy remains constant or improves at the older ages.
Population by broad age groups:	Includes Children (0-14 years), Working age group (15-64 years), Elderly (65+)
Population by local age groups	Includes Children (0-17 years), Youth (18-35 years), Adult (36-64 years), and Elderly (65+).
Place of Usual Residence	The island where the person resided at the time of census. Usual residence is determined based on the duration of one year or more. If the person has lived in that island for less than one year, but intends to live for one year, that island is considered as the usual residence of the person.
Population Projection	Estimates of total size and/or composition of a population in the future.
Resident Maldivian Population	Maldivians who has been living in Maldives for more than one year or intends to live in Maldives for 1 year or more. Maldivians who are permanently living abroad is excluded from here.
Resident Population	Population who has been living in Maldives for more than one year or intends to live in Maldives for 1 year or more. This includes Resident Maldivian Population and Resident Foreign Population.
Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)	The number of male births for a specific area and during a specified period divided by the number of female births for the same area and period. The sex ratio is an important demographic indicator of the distribution of boys and girls at birth.
Super-aged	when the share of the elderly population (65+) is ≥ 21 per cent.
Total Fertility Rate (TFR)	The sum of age-specific fertility rates for females aged between 15 and 49 years during a specified period, usually one year. It is an estimate of the average number of children a cohort of women would bear if they went through their childbearing years experiencing the same age-specific fertility rates.
Working Age Group	Population between the ages 15-64 years.
Work Force	Defined as the working age group.
Whipple's Index	Whipple's Index is a demographic measure used to evaluate the accuracy of reported age data by detecting the tendency of respondents to round their ages to numbers ending in 0 or 5 (a phenomenon known as age heaping).

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym / Term	Full Form / Definition
ASFR	Age-Specific Fertility Rate
DemProj	Demographic Projections
LE	Life Expectancy
MBS	Maldives Bureau of Statistics
NTA	National Transfer Account
SRB	Sex Ratio at Birth
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nation's Population Fund
VRS	Vital Registration System

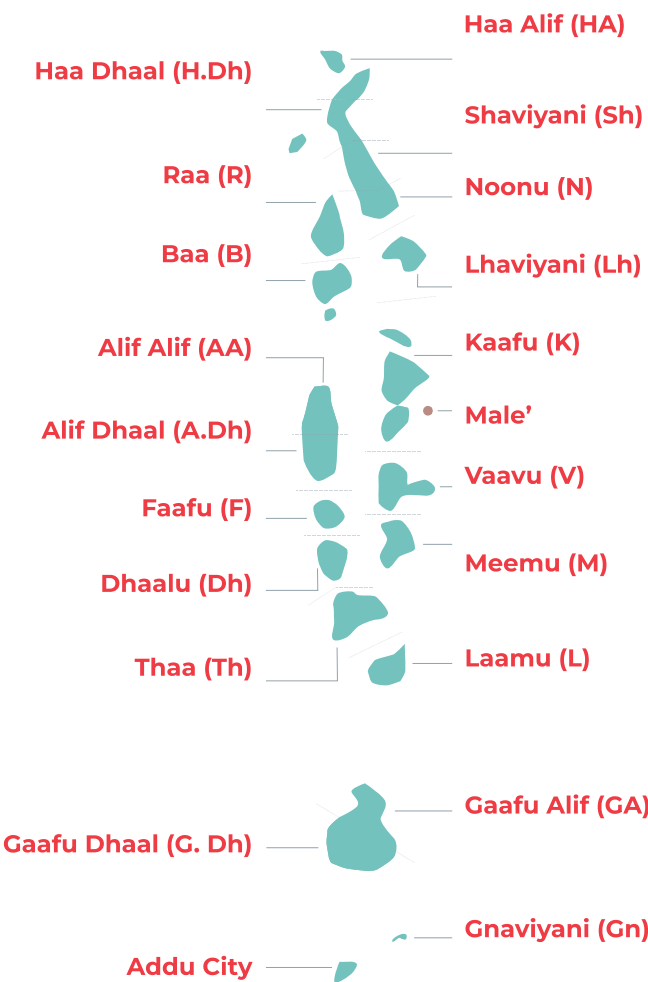
Key Indicators

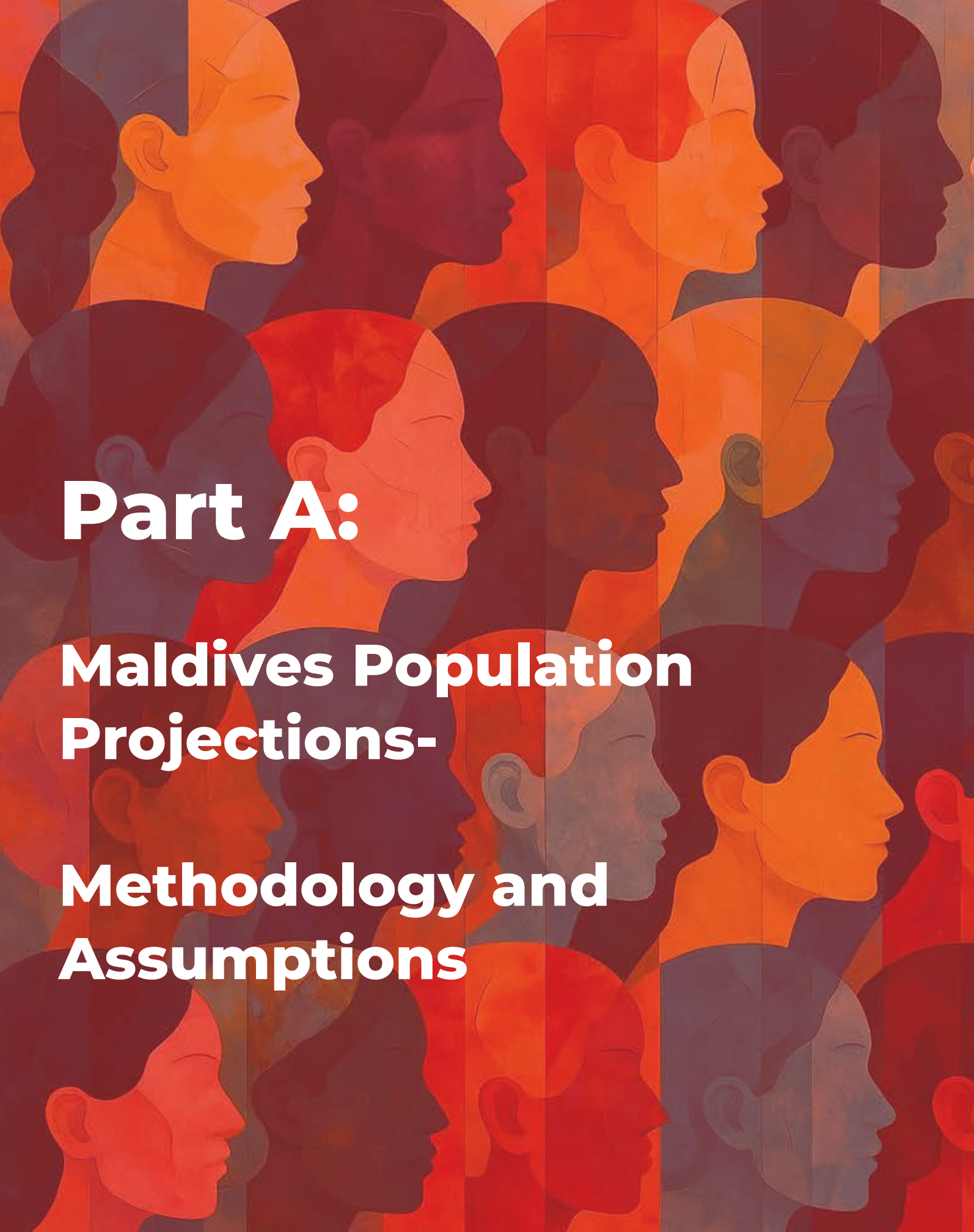
Key Indicators from Maldives Population projection 2022-2062

Indicators		Year				
		2022	2032	2042	2052	2062
Projection Indicators						
Resident Population						
Total Population	Resident Population	547,651	641,710	680,237	687,605	678,024
	Resident Maldivian	381,436	408,030	423,554	427,578	414,679
	Resident Foreigners	166,215	233,680	256,683	260,027	263,345
Annual Growth Rate	Resident Population	-	1.3	0.2	0	-0.3
	Resident Maldivian	-	0.5	0.3	-0.1	-0.5
	Resident Foreigners	-	2.8	0.1	0.1	0.1
Share of Resident Population between Maldivian and Foreigner	Resident Maldivian	70	64	62	62	61
	Resident Foreigners	30	36	38	38	39
Resident Population by broad Age group (%)	Child Population (0-14)	103,637	80,222	69,034	66,538	58,348
	Working Age Population (15-64)	423,222	523,733	552,826	529,867	499,967
	Elderly Population (65+)	20,792	37,754	58,377	91,200	119,701
Resident Population	Republic	547,651	641,710	680,237	687,605	678,025
	Male'	227,613	288,063	324,340	346,629	361,576
	Atolls (Administrative Islands)	247,874	256,497	251,309	237,567	213,819
	Atolls (Non-Administrative Islands)	72,164	97,150	104,588	103,409	102,630
Resident Foreigners						
Resident Foreign Population	Republic	166,215	233,680	256,683	260,027	263,345
	Male'	70,886	102,074	112,121	113,582	115,032
	Atolls (Administrative Islands)	38,761	53,148	58,380	59,140	59,895
	Atolls (Non-Administrative Islands)	56,568	78,459	86,182	87,305	88,419
Resident Foreigners by broad Age Group	Child Population (0-14)	2,449	3,331	3,659	3,634	3,680
	Working Age Population (15-64)	163,464	229,938	252,572	255,863	259,128
	Elderly Population (65+)	302	411	452	458	464

Indicators		Year				
		2022	2032	2042	2052	2062
Projection Indicators						
Resident Maldivian						
Resident Maldivian Population	Republic	381,436	408,030	423,554	427,578	414,679
	Male'	156,727	185,989	212,219	233,047	246,544
	Atolls (Administrative Islands)	209,114	203,349	192,930	178,427	153,924
	Atolls (Non-Administrative Islands)	15,595	18,691	18,406	16,105	14,211
Share of Resident Maldivian between Male' and Atolls	Male'	41	46	50	55	59
	Atolls	59	54	50	45	41
Resident Maldivian by broad Age group	Child Population (0-14)	101,188	76,892	65,376	62,832	54,594
	Working Age Population (15-64)	259,758	293,795	300,254	274,005	240,839
	Elderly Population (65+)	20,490	37,343	57,925	90,742	119,246
Size of Work Force (Resident Maldivian)	Number	259758	293795	300254	274005	240839
	Percent (Out of Total Resident Maldivian Population)	68	72	71	64	58
Education	Pre-School (2-5 yrs considered)	25,334	18,526	17,399	16,495	13,648
	Primary Age (6-12 yrs considered)	50,739	37,142	30,161	29,899	26,430
	Secondary Age (13-16 yrs considered)	26,434	25,502	18,559	16,895	16,264
	Higher Secondary Age (17-19 yrs considered)	15,604	20,894	15,218	12,419	12,372
Education (in %)	Pre-School (2-5 yrs considered)	7	5	4	4	3
	Primary Age (6-12 yrs considered)	13	9	7	7	6
	Secondary Age (13-16 yrs considered)	7	6	4	4	4
	Higher Secondary Age (17-19 yrs considered)	4	5	4	3	3
Women in reproductive age	Female Population (Resident Maldivian)	187,483	201,046	209,230	211,618	205,648
	Reproductive Age women (15-49 yrs)	104,439	111,633	97,969	88,949	78,538
	Women in reproductive age (%)	56%	56%	47%	42%	38%
Dependency Ratio	Overall Dependency Ratio	47	39	41	56	72
	Child Dependency Ratio	39	26	22	23	23
	Old Dependency Ratio	8	13	19	33	50
Median Age	In Years	30	36	40	43	48
Ageing Index	Elderly persons per 100 Children	20	49	89	144	218

Map of Maldives





Part A:

**Maldives Population
Projections-**

**Methodology and
Assumptions**

1. Introduction

Population projections are critical tools for planning and policy-making, providing insights into future demographic trends based on current data and assumptions. Adequate, timely and accurate population information is necessary to properly and effectively formulate future development policies that are based on population data from the past, present, and projected for the future.

The population projections of Maldives aim to provide estimates of the population size and structure at both national and sub-national levels for the period 2022–2062. Recognizing the need for detailed demographic data that goes beyond the national level to support localized policy planning, projections are done at the Atoll and island level.

The population projection in Maldives has been carried out by the Maldives Bureau of Statistics (MBS) based on the data from Population and Housing Censuses (hereafter referred to as census). The Census 2022 served as the base population, with projections developed based on specific assumptions regarding fertility, mortality, and migration trends.

Part A of this report details the methodology employed and the key assumptions underpinning the projections.

It is important to note that projections are not predictions; rather, they reflect what the future population could be under specified assumptions about fertility, mortality, and migration trends. As such, they should be updated regularly as new data become available.

2. Data Source, Projection scope and Method

2.1 Data source

This projection uses data from Census 2022 to predict the population size and structure by nationality, age and sex at the national, atoll and island level. In addition, administrative data sources have been incorporated to support the assumptions used in doing projection.

Furthermore, government policy directives have been taken into account to construct different projection scenarios based on current expectations. The development of these scenarios was informed by feedback received during stakeholder consultations held at both technical and policy levels in December 2024 and January 2025.

2.2 Projection scope and period

The population projection has been done for the Resident Population which includes resident Maldivians and resident Foreigners. The projection covers a 40-year period, spanning from 2022 to 2062.

Projections have been produced for the following hierarchy as below:

- National
- Malé (4 wards, Hulhumale, Villimale and with Thilafushi and Gulheefalhu as non-administrative zone of Malé)
- Atolls (all 20 atolls combined)
- Atoll (each atoll, eg: HA Atoll)
- Island level

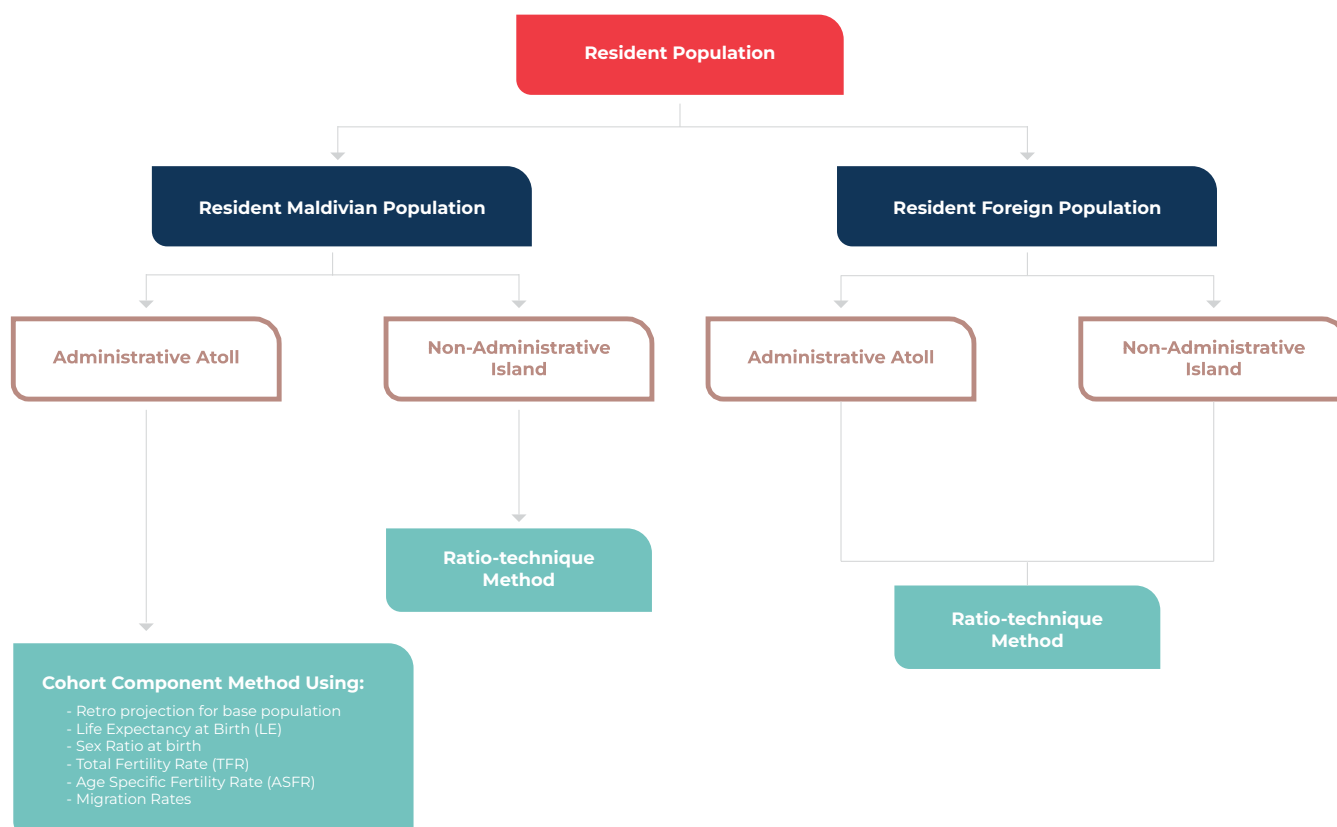
At the national and atoll levels, projections are disaggregated by age and sex, while at the island level, only total population by sex and nationality are presented. The projections take into account both administrative and non-administrative islands within each atoll.

2.3 Projection methodology

For the population projection of Maldives, step-by-step calculation is done to derive projection for the resident population. In the first step of the population projections, the population of Resident Maldivians was calculated. Similar to the previous round of projection (MBS, 2019), the cohort-component method is applied to the Resident Maldivians living in the administrative islands (of each atoll), as well as to the national-level population of all Resident Maldivians regardless of place of residence. Resident Maldivians living in non-administrative islands are projected using a proportional adjustment method by applying fixed age/sex/atoll-specific proportions (based on the 2022 Census) to the national Resident Maldivian population. These proportions gradually increasing over the first 10 years of the projection to reflect recent trends. For the Resident Foreign population, we assume the net migration rate is fixed at its current level (12 per 1,000 Maldivian) for the first 10 years of the projection before decline to low levels (0.6 per 1,000), with foreign migrants distributed by age, sex, and atoll based on 2022 Census data.

Resident Maldivians living on non-administrative islands primarily reside there for employment purposes. As a result, the population in these locations are mainly within the working age group (mostly within the age group of 15-64 years). The same demographic pattern applies for the foreign population residing in the country, who are present in the country for work. Because both groups reflect short-term, employment-based migration, they are not projected using a full cohort-component model. Instead, we model them using simplified proportional methods that account for their unique demography.

Figure 1.1: Methodological flow chart for projecting Resident population



DemProj (Demographic Projections), developed by the Spectrum System of Policy Models¹ is used to project the Resident Maldivian Population residing in administrative islands in each Atolls. DemProj projects the population for an entire country or region by age and sex, based on assumptions about fertility, mortality, and migration.

The population projections are conducted in 2 phases; the first set (hereafter referred as 'for Republic') is prepared for the whole country which includes assumptions at the national level and the second set is prepared for subnational, which includes Malé and 20 atolls (hereafter referred as 'sub-national'), which sums up to the national level. The results of the Republic projection are used as a macro-level control, and the subnational projections are adjusted proportionally to align with national totals, ensuring consistency across geographic levels. These adjustments are minimal—less than 1%—and preserve the integrity of the subnational demographic trends.

2.4 Population projection variants

The population projections are done for low, medium and high fertility variants for the Republic. For subnational projection, the medium variant of fertility applied at Republic is used with assumptions applied for internal migration taking place within the country.

2.5 Projection limitations

The assumptions used for the population projections are based on the trends identified from past and present demographic data, as well as future plans outlined in government policy directives. Population change is influenced by a range of social and economic factors, many of which are highly dependent on policy decisions made at the central level. There remains uncertainty regarding the timing and implementation of these policies, particularly in ways that may affect patterns of population mobility within the country.

In developing these assumptions, the Maldives Bureau of Statistics (MBS) consulted with relevant ministries through one-to-one meetings and conducted stakeholder consultations at both technical and policy levels to arrival at a consensus on the assumptions. However, it is important to acknowledge that even the most carefully developed assumptions cannot fully anticipate changes that may occur over the next few years due to shifts in government priorities. Such changes are inherently difficult to incorporate into the projection model.

Additionally, there are critical data gaps that must be addressed to strengthen future projections. These include:

- Changes in the employed population in resorts (at atoll level, for both resident Maldivians and foreigners);
- Number of foreigners residing in the Maldives
- Patterns of internal migration within the country, particularly towards Malé
- Indirect assessment of internal migration through housing developments and other major infrastructure projects.

Given these uncertainties and data gaps, it is recommended that the population projections be revisited and updated every two years to provide more realistic and timely estimates for planning and policy-making purposes.

1

<https://www.avenirhealth.org/software-spectrummodels.php#demproj>

3. Administrative hierarchy used in projection

Maldives is a low-lying island nation in the Indian Ocean. For administrative purpose, the country is divided into 20 administrative islands, with Malé being the capital City.

In the projection, results are presented according to the administrative hierarchy as stated below:

- Republic
- Malé. Administrative islands include wards as Malé, Hulhumale, villimale and Hulhule. Non-administrative island includes: Thilafushi and Gulheefalhu
- Atolls (includes admin and non admin islands within the 20 atolls)
- Administrative islands (includes only the administrative islands in an atoll. Administrative islands are those with island councils and where local community lives)
- Non-administrative islands (these islands include resorts, industrial islands, resorts under renovation, islands given out for commercial purpose, or any island where a person resides and which is not being used for administrative purpose)

Note: Malé is located within Kaafu Atoll, but the results presented for Kaafu Atoll excludes Malé. (refer to map of Maldives as the begining)

4. Base Population

The Census 2022 is used as the base population to project up to 2062. The Census 2022 enumeration was carried out based on the concept of resident population. The reference date for Census 2022 was 00hrs of September 13 of 2022 and recorded a total resident population of 515,132 individuals (MBS, 2022).

The population count from the census 2022 was close to the population reported in 'World Population Prospects in 2022, with the census figure being approximately 8,900 persons lower than what was estimated². However, when compared to the previous national population projections, the census 2022 enumerated a population that was 11,000 individuals fewer than projected (MBS, 2019)³.

Table 1.1: Comparison of count of resident population through different sources, 2022

Detail	Census 2022	Previous Projection (2022)	World Population Prospect (2022)
Population	515,132	512,922	524,107

2 <https://population.un.org/wpp/downloads?folder=Standard%20Projections&group=Most%20used>

3 The huge difference is due to high fertility assumptions used in the projection while census recorded a below replacement level fertility

The completeness and coverage of Census 2022 were assessed by validating the enumerated count against administrative data sources, including records from the Vital Registration System (VRS) and work visa payment data. Based on this comparison, the census count was found to fall within an acceptable range, supporting its reliability as the base population for projections.

It is generally observed that the age reporting in census enumerations often suffer from digit preference. In such situations, the age distributions need to be smoothed. Age misreporting can also vary by sex. In order to see how large age misreporting was there in the census 2022, it was validated during the census analysis.

The Census 2022 measured age data accuracy by using Whipple’s Index. In demographic studies, Whipple’s Index is a widely used measure for assessing age heaping. It identifies a tendency towards reporting ages ending in ‘0’, ‘5’, or both, which may indicate inaccuracies or biases in age reporting. According to Whipple’s Index, the age data is highly accurate for the Maldives as the figure for Males stands at 105, females stand at 101, and the total for both sexes stands at 103 (MBS, 2022). In view of this, the age-sex distribution in the Census 2022 was accepted as the baseline for the projections without any smoothing.

Table 1.2: Whipple’s Index, Census 2022

Sex	Locality		
	Republic	Malé	Atolls
Both Sexes	103.0	103.4	101.5
Male	105.0	104.0	101.6
Female	101.0	102.8	101.3

Source: Population dynamics in the Maldives, Census 2022

To align the base population with the mid-year point (July 1, 2022), we retro projected the population from September 13 to June 30, using the exponential formula $P(t) = P_0 * e^{(rt)}$, where t represents the time interval (75/365 days between July 1 and September 13), and r is the annual growth rate.

Adjustment of the Census 2022 population to mid-year population was done for both resident Maldivians and foreigners based on their place of usual residence. This was done for Republic, Malé and at each Atoll level for both admin and non-islands.

Census recorded a Resident Maldivian population of 382,639 and 132,493 as foreigners. Using the above formula the population is moved back from 13 September 2022 to 1 July 2022 based on the assumed rate of growth of 1.53% for the Maldivians. The foreign population was moved back to mid-year using the assumed growth rate of 3.7%.

Table 1.3: Retro-projection application to Census 2022

Detail	Resident Maldivian	Resident Foreigners
Census 2014 population	338,434	97,774
Census 2022 (22 Sept 2022)	382,639	132,493
Annual Growth Rate (%)	1.5%	3.7%
Days between July 1 and Census Day (13 September 2022)	75	75
Adjustment factor used - Pop (Jul 1)/ Pop (Sept 22)	0.9968	0.9924
Mid-year population (2022)	381,436	131,486

The next step involved using this adjustment factor across ages recorded in the Census 2022 to move the respective population to mid-year. The same approach was applied when adjusting census population to mid-year for each atoll. To do that, the population of each atoll (Census 2014 & 2022) and growth rate is used to derive the adjustment factor.

5. Resident Maldivians

The projection of the Resident Maldivian population applies both cohort component method and the proportional ratio method. The cohort-component method is applied for Maldivians residing in administrative islands while the proportional ratio technique method is used for projecting Maldivians in non-administrative islands.

To produce population projections using the cohort-component method, assumptions of total fertility rate (TFR), age-specific fertility rates (ASFR), sex ratio at birth (SRB), life expectancy and migration information are required for each year of the projection period. In order to do that, in this section we present the trends overtime for each component and different assumptions we have used at national and sub-national level. At the end it explains the proportional ratio method used for Maldivians in non-administrative islands.

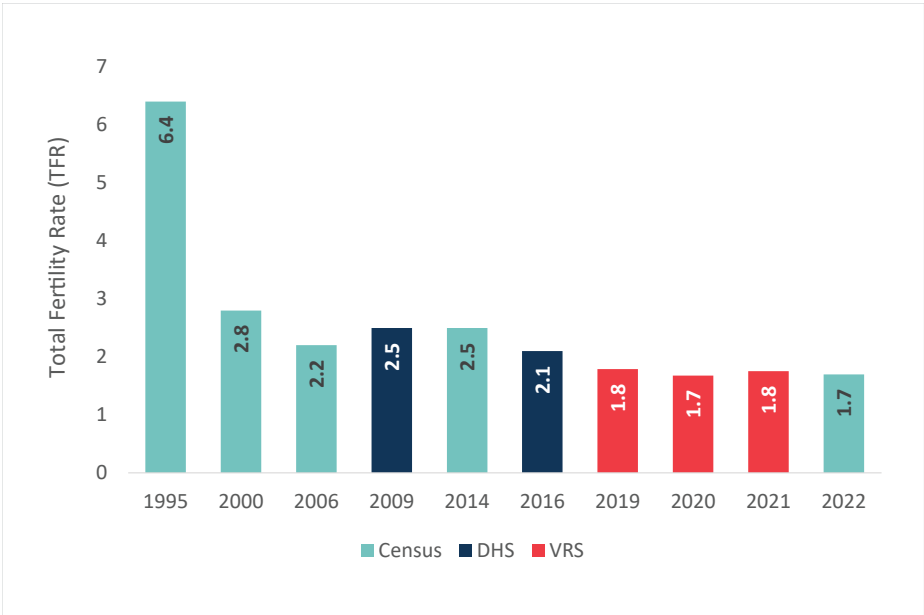
5.1 Maldivians residing in administrative islands- assumptions and scenarios

5.1.1 Assumptions on Total Fertility Rate (TFR)

Trends in fertility

The year 1995 marked the peak of fertility in the Maldives, with a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 6.4 children per woman—the highest level recorded. The TFR represents the average number of children a woman would have over her lifetime if she were to experience the current levels of age-specific fertility throughout her life. Since then, fertility has declined, falling sharply by 2000, before levelling between 2.8 to 2.5 children per woman in the years 2000-2014. After 2016, TFR continued to fall below the replacement level in the years 2019-2021. In 2021 TFR reached 1.8 children per woman and declined to 1.7 in Census 2022.

Figure 1.2: Total Fertility Rate, 1995-2022



Source: VRS Report, 2024

Future estimates:

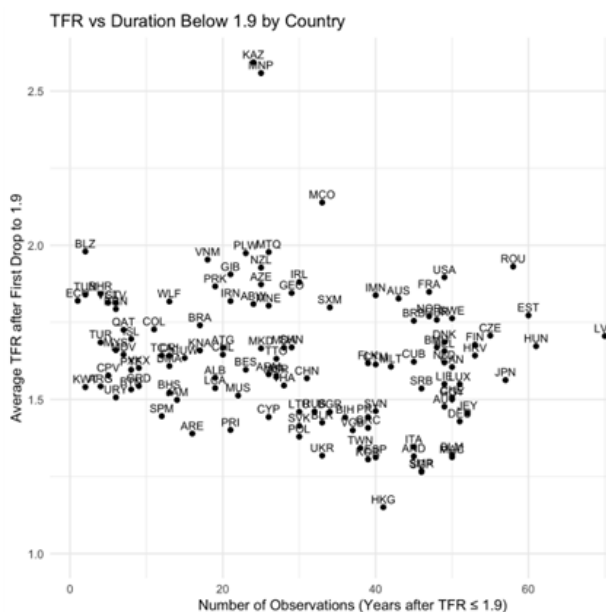
To project future fertility in the Maldives, we adopted three alternative TFR trajectories: 1.3, 1.5, and 1.7. These values were selected to reflect the range of plausible long-term outcomes based on international experience with fertility decline.

The values were derived from the distribution of countries that have already experienced fertility below 1.9. Specifically:

- 1.3 represents a low-fertility outcome, approximately the 10th percentile of these countries, meaning only 10% of countries fell below this level.
- 1.5 is almost at median value (50th percentile) of countries with sub-1.90 fertility.
- 1.7 represents a high-fertility scenario, approximately the 70th percentile, where only 30% of countries maintained higher levels after dipping below 1.90.

This percentile-based approach anchors the Maldives' fertility assumptions in the actual distribution of international fertility experiences. The figure below plots the average TFR after a country's first drop below 1.9 against the number of years it remained below that threshold, based on historical data from a wide range of countries. The Maldives is highlighted among countries with relatively recent sub-1.9 fertility. The graph shows that most countries do not return to higher fertility levels once they fall below 1.9; instead, they tend to stabilize at or below 1.5, with some remaining close to 1.3 or even lower. This pattern supports the choice of 1.3, 1.5, and 1.7 as plausible long-term TFR scenarios, with 1.5 representing the global median experience and 1.3 capturing the possibility of sustained low fertility observed in many countries with extended durations below 1.9.

Figure 1 3: TFR and years below TFR of 1.9 by country



Assumed Total Fertility Rates

This marks the first time the Maldives is projecting its population under a below-replacement-level fertility rate. Census 2022 recorded a TFR of 1.7— a level previously assumed to be reached beyond 2054 in earlier projections. Reaching this demographic milestone earlier than expected presented a significant challenge for us.

The task was further complicated by the absence of a national population policy outlining the government's stance or future direction regarding fertility trends. In the absence of such policy guidance, the fertility assumptions for this projection were developed through consultations with relevant stakeholders and reviewing UN Population Division estimates.

To develop future fertility scenarios for the Maldives, we analyzed the distribution of average TFR values among countries after they first reached a TFR of 1.9. Based on this distribution, we defined three scenario values. These values represent plausible long-term fertility outcomes informed by the experience of other countries that have undergone similar fertility transitions.

For Republic:

Scenario 1: a low fertility scenario of 1.3, corresponding to the 10th percentile (i.e., 10% of countries fall below this level). This scenario also assumes that if the government does not have population policies to ensure the maintenance of the replacement level fertility, the TFR would reach as low as 1.3. This is similar to higher-income Asian countries such as Singapore, Japan and the Republic of Korea⁴.

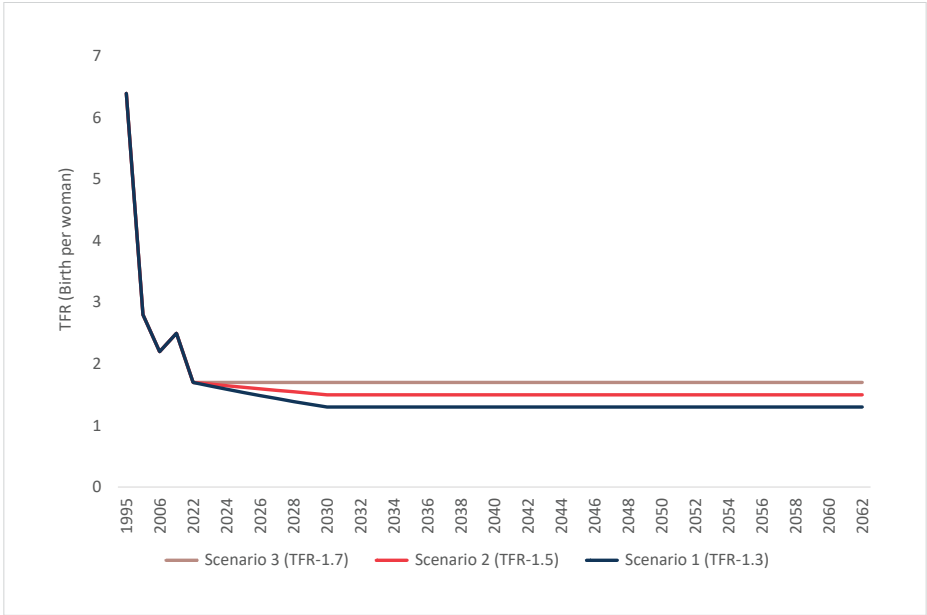
Scenario 2: a central scenario of 1.5, the median across countries, and estimating TFR to hold some middle ground. It is also close to that median forecast by the UN Population Division (at 1.55).

Scenario 3: a high-fertility scenario of 1.7, which maintains the current TFR recorded in Census 2022.

Note: In all three national-level scenarios, the TFR is adjusted over time using a constant exponential rate of change. Starting from the 2022 baseline TFR of 1.70, the TFR either increases or decreases annually by applying a fixed growth rate so that each scenario reaches its target level by 2030. The High, Middle, and Low scenarios follow annual exponential rates of approximately +1.4%, -0.75%, and -3.3% respectively. From 2030 onward, the TFR is held constant at its scenario-specific level: 1.70 (High), 1.50 (Middle), or 1.30 (Low).

⁴ [https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/population-projections-australia/latest-release#:~:text=Australia's%20population%20in%202022%20\(26,between%2043.8%20and%2047.6%20years.](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/population-projections-australia/latest-release#:~:text=Australia's%20population%20in%202022%20(26,between%2043.8%20and%2047.6%20years.)

Figure 1.4: Assumed TFR for the Republic based on 3 scenarios, 1995-2062



For sub national:

To produce future TFR projections at sub-national level, we used the medium scenario target derived for the Republic. However, to converge towards national TFR equivalent to 1.5, a relative scaling approach was applied; each atoll's TFR in 2022 was expressed as a ratio to the national average, and this ratio was assumed to converge linearly to 1.0 by 2062. Multiplying the converging relative ratio to respective atoll TFR presented projected TFR path for each atoll from 2022 to 2062. This methodology ensures that atoll-specific estimates are both stable and responsive to national demographic trends.

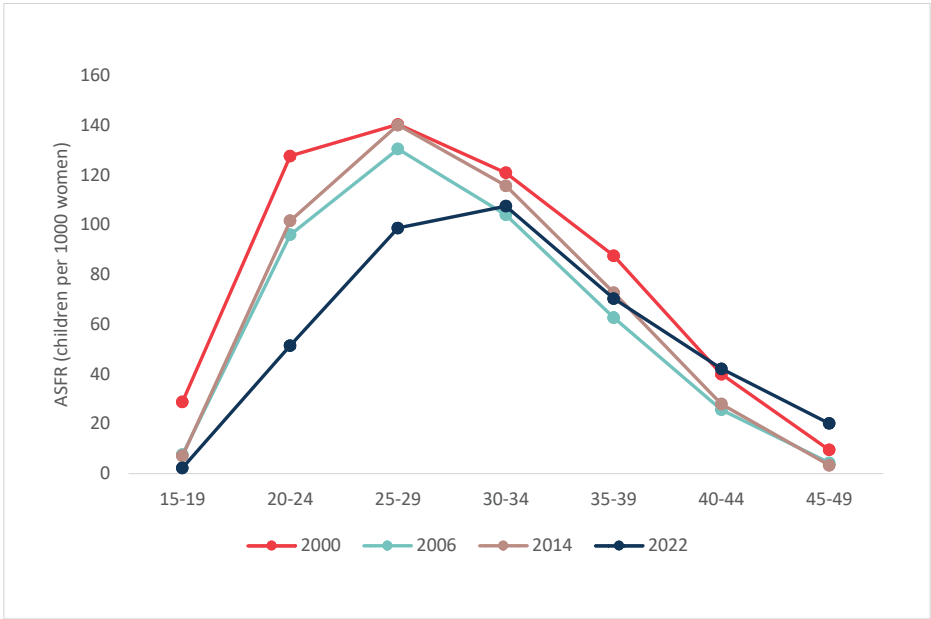
5.1.2 Assumptions on Age Specific Fertility Rate (ASFR)

Trends in Age Specific Fertility Rate

While total fertility rate changes over time, fertility patterns (also known as age-specific fertility rates) also change. The Age Specific Fertility Rate (ASFR) is an important measure that helps us understand fertility patterns in different age groups of women. It calculates the number of live births per 1,000 women within a specific age range over a set period, usually a year.

The distribution of births in the Maldives experienced a notable shift over the years. Between the years 2000-2014, ASFR peaked among women aged 25-29 years. In 2022, a significant majority of births occurred among women aged 30-34 years, marking a departure from the previous censuses. This shift in fertility patterns underscores the evolving dynamics of reproductive behavior, reflecting changes in societal norms, economic factors, and potentially, the postponement of childbirth to slightly older ages (MBS, 2024).

Figure 1.5: Age Specific Fertility Rates, 2000-2022



Source: Maldives Population and Housing Censuses, 2000-2022

Assumed Age Specific Fertility Rates

Using the past trends in ASFR, the following assumptions are applied:

For Republic:

To project ASFR into the future, we analysed historic data for the past two decades. During this period, ASFRs have declined among younger women (under 25 years), while increasing among women aged 25 years and above —indicating a continued shift in fertility toward older age groups. Census 2022 further confirmed this pattern, recording a below-replacement level TFR and identifying the peak fertility age group as 30–34 years. Based on these observations, it is assumed that this shift will persist into the future, and the age pattern of fertility will remain constant throughout the projection period.

As required by the DemProj model, we converted ASFR into an age distribution of fertility—expressed as a percentage share for each age group, with the total summing to 100%. This age distribution was held constant and applied across all projection years.

For sub-national level:

The fertility trend observed at the national level was also reflected in Malé, where the highest age-specific fertility rate (ASFR) in the 2022 Census was recorded among women aged 30–34 years. However, fertility patterns varied across the 20 atolls, primarily due to small population sizes resulting in fluctuations in ASFR.

To minimize the impact of these fluctuations, future fertility trends are assumed to follow the national ASFR pattern. Accordingly, the age distribution of fertility observed at national level was held constant throughout the projection period for all the atolls.

5.1.3 Assumptions on Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)

Trends in sex ratio at birth

The sex ratio of the human life course starts with the sex ratio at birth. The sex ratio at birth shows the number of boys to girls in the population. The sex ratio at birth is normally around 105.

The sex ratio at birth has remained within the normal ranges for the past Census years in Maldives except for Census 2014. Census 2022 showed that there are 103 boys per 100 girls being born.

Table 1.4: Sex Ratio at Birth (boys per 100 girls), 1995-2022

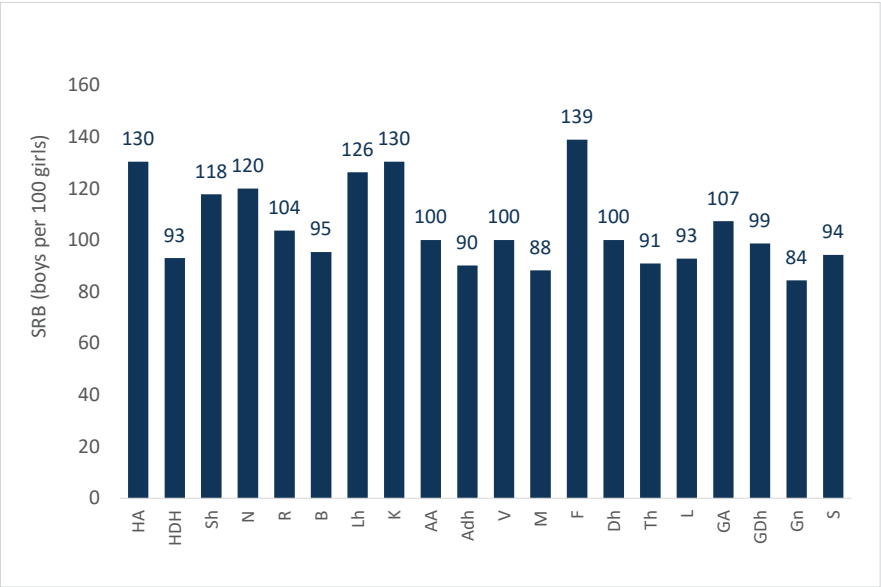
Locality	SRB				
	1995	2000	2006	2014	2022
Republic	104	102	103	108	103

Source: *Leave no one Behind- Children in Maldives, Census 2022*

When it comes to Malé, more girls than boys are born with an SRB of 97. In Atolls, Census 2022 recorded an SRB of 105 boys per 100 girls.

The sex ratio at birth at the Atoll level shows varying results. In 2022, 7 atolls had a higher sex ratio at birth than the normal range. These high sex ratios might be due to a small number of births that occur within certain atolls. Interestingly, populous atolls such as HDh, B, Gn (Fuvahmulah City) & S (Addu City) had more girls being born than boys. Comparison with previous censuses shows changing patterns in SRB over time (MBS, 2024).

Figure 1.6: Sex Ratio at Birth (boys per 100 girls) by locality, Census 2022



Assumed Sex Ratio at Birth

Using the past trends in SRB, the following assumption is applied:

For Republic:

Historically, the sex ratio at birth fluctuated between 101 to 106. Taking this into account and to reflect Census 2022 results, a constant ratio of 103 boys per 100 girls is used for the duration of the projection period.

For sub-national level:

While the total of all Atolls showed a sex ratio within normal range (at 105), sex ratio varied across individual atoll level. To avoid such variation overtime, it is assumed that SRB for Malé and 20 Atolls will follow the national trend and a constant ratio of 103 boys per 100 girls is used throughout the projection period.

5.1.4 Assumptions on Life Expectancy at Birth (LE)

Trends in Life Expectancy

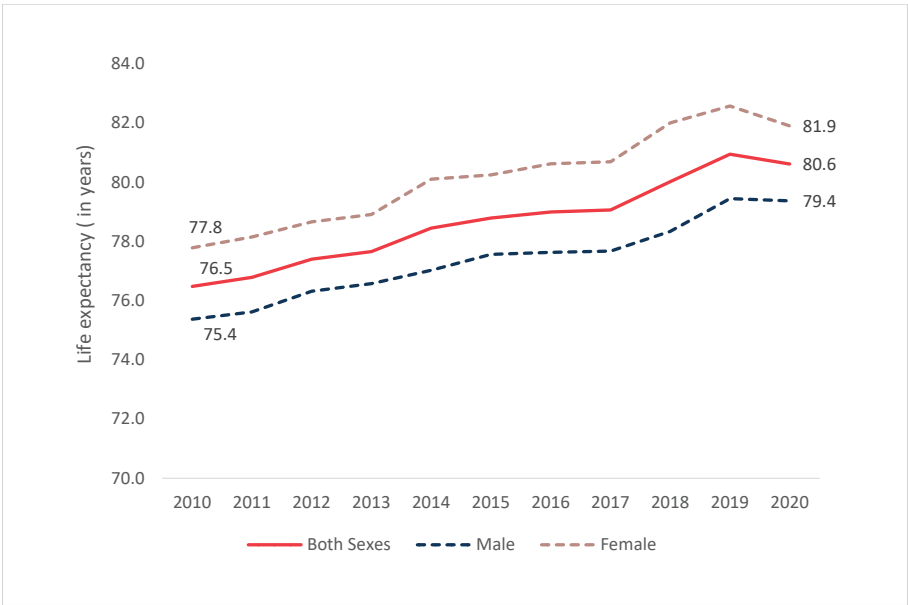
Life expectancy in the Maldives has steadily increased over the last decade. This is largely driven by the reductions in mortality among older age groups and health gains Maldives has achieved over the years.

In 2010, the life expectancy at birth in the Maldives was 76.5 years for both sexes. By 2020, this has increased to 80.6 years, reflecting an overall improvement of 4.1 years in life expectancy at birth nationwide.

Life expectancy has shown a consistent improvement over the years for both men and women, with women experiencing a slightly higher improvement compared to men. The life expectancy at birth for men was 75.4 years in 2010 while it was 79.4 years in 2020, reflecting an overall gain of 4.0 years. The life expectancy at birth for women rose from 77.8 years in 2010 to 81.9 years in 2020, marking an increase of 4.1 years. Female outlived men by 2.5 years in 2020.

While life expectancy showed improvement over the years, the pandemic might have led to increased mortality in 2020, the impact of this seen in lower life expectancy at birth in 2020 for both sexes and female.

Figure 1.7: Life expectancy at birth, 2010-2020



Assumed Life Expectancy

Using the past and future trends in LE, the following assumptions are applied:

For Republic:

Life expectancy in the Maldives has steadily increased over the years and significant future gains are likely. The UN Population Division projects a median life expectancy of 87.4 years for the Maldives in 2062, with a 90% uncertainty range from 84.6 to 90.6 years. These projections are generated using a Bayesian hierarchical model, which combines historical mortality trends from the Maldives with those of other countries to produce probabilistic forecasts. This method captures both global patterns and country-specific dynamics, allowing for uncertainty in future mortality improvements (United Nations, 2024a).

A projected life expectancy of 87.0 would maintain the Maldives’ current ranking among the top 18% of countries worldwide. In contrast, a value of 84.0 would represent a modest decline in rank, placing the Maldives in the top 33% of countries. This level also aligns with Japan’s current life expectancy, one of the highest globally. In consultation with experts, a more conservative figure of 84.0 was chosen as the target for 2062. Similar values of life expectancy are predicted by the United Nations for the United States (84.8), Sri Lanka (83.9), and Thailand (83.6) (Source: United Nations, 2024b).

The next step involves establishing target life expectancy values for male and female for the year 2062. To compute this, the gap between female and male observed in the national life expectancy values was used to derive the following targets. This gap of 2.5 years was kept constant throughout the projection period to reach the target values.

Table 1.5: Life Expectancy, 2020 & 2062

Year	Both Sexes	Male	Female
2020	80.6	79.4	81.9
2062 (projected)	84.0	82.8	85.3

After establishing the target life expectancy values for male and female for the year 2062, the next step is applying a methodology to forecast the life expectancy from now to ensure the target values are reached by 2062. To do that, we ‘blended’ the slow pace and medium pace forecasts from the UN. The relative weights are chosen to ensure the target values are reached in 2062. To do this, the UN forecasts for slow, medium and fast pace change in life expectancy for Maldives are derived from United Nations’s template for the projection of the total fertility rate (UN, 2021).

The forecast of male life expectancy is a combination of 55% slow pace and 45% medium pace. The forecast of female life expectancy is a combination of 71% slow pace and 29% medium pace.

For sub-national level:

In the Maldives, life expectancy is computed at national level and sub-national life expectancy is not yet constructed.

Considering this, it is assumed that life expectancy at sub-national level will also follow the same trend as at the national level, i.e; female life expectancy will reach 85.3 years by 2062, while male life expectancy will rise to 82.8 years by the same year.

Note: DemProj requires the selection of a model life table to be used in the projection process. For this purpose, UN model lifetable has been selected from the programme.

5.1.5 Assumptions on Migration

Trends in Migration

It is difficult to determine patterns in migration in Maldives. Getting accurate data on migration is a challenge and the only available source is through the census.

Starting from Census 2014, migration is measured based on the concept of change in usual residence. In other words, if a person has resided for 1 year or more in another island or country other than his/her current usual place of residence, then that person is considered as a migrant. In cases where the duration is less than 1 year, then his/her intention is considered. Migration within country, from one island to another is considered as internal migration while migration of Maldivians by crossing international borders is considered as international migration (MBS, 2024).

Census 2022 also identifies migrants based on this definition.

Assumed Migration pattern

Using the current pattern of migration observed in census, the following assumptions have been applied:

For Republic:

At national level, **international migration of the Maldivian nationals has been taken in account**. From Census 2022, this has been derived based on the return migrants who had previously lived abroad and whose duration in current residence is less than 1 year.

According to the census 1,308 Maldivians returned to the country within the past one year- a figure that remained consistent over the past three consecutive years. This number is used as a benchmark for estimating annual in-migrants.

Table 1.6: Net Migrants (international) among Maldivians, 2022-2062

Year	Maldivian in-migrants			Maldivian out-migrants			Net migrants		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
2022	1,308	624	684	2,180	1,040	1,140	-872.00	-416.00	-456.00
2062	1,744	832	912	2,471	1,179	1,292	-726.67	-346.67	-380.00

The Census does not collect information on Maldivians who have emigrated from the country. To address this gap, we consulted Department of Immigration and Emigration to obtain additional insights. However, the Immigration Department currently faces challenges in generating comprehensive data on emigration among Maldivian nationals.

Following series of consultative meetings and feedback received during the stakeholder workshop, it was indicated that the number of Maldivians leaving the country likely exceeds the number returning. Based on this, we assumed that the number of out-migrants is approximately two-thirds the number of in-migrants.

Once the total number of out-migrants was estimated, the next step involved disaggregating this figure by sex. This was done using the observed sex distribution among in-migrants in the Census 2022, with the same proportion applied to

derive the number of male and female out-migrants.

To estimate the number of in-migrants for the year 2062, the declining fertility rate and ageing of Maldivian population is taken into consideration. As such, it is assumed that the number of in-migrants (or return migrants) will be one-third of the in-migrant count recorded in 2022. Accordingly, the number of out-migrants in 2062 is assumed to follow the same proportional relationship observed in 2022, where out-migrants represented two-thirds of in-migrants. To calculate in-out migrants by sex, the share of men and women observed in Census 2022 is kept consistent.

Once we derive the in and out migrant, net migrants by sex was calculated. Since the number of out-migrants is more than in-migrants, a negative value is observed for the projection period for both men and women.

The values for 2022 and 2062 are used as inputs to run DemProj and interpolation is done in DemProj to derive the net migrants for the projected years.

For sub-national level:

The flow of in-migrants to Male' are used as a proxy for out migrants from each respective administrative atoll (from admin islands). To estimate the number of net migrants from each Atoll, we used a multi-step procedure based on the assumption that the primary flow of net migration is from the 20 atolls.

1. First, we calculate the number of recent in-migrants to Male from each atoll, disaggregated by sex. 'Recent' is defined as having resided in Malé for less than 1 year.
2. For each sex, we compute the percentage distribution of these in-migrants by dividing the number from each of the 20 Atolls by the total from all 20 atolls combined. Migrants to Malé from abroad or from non-administrative areas are excluded from this calculation.
3. This percentage distribution (by sex) is applied to our projected total number of net migrants to Male': 826 males and 998 females, for a combined total of 1,824 migrants. These yield estimated counts of net out-migrants for each Atoll by sex.
4. These numbers were then rounded to the nearest whole number⁵.

When estimating the net migrants for the future, the following developments within the country was taken into account:

- The current administration has placed strong focus on expanding housing availability in the Greater Malé area, through the 'Rasmale' project. It is the largest land reclamation initiative to date and expected to provide over 65,000 housing units and alleviate the housing shortage in the greater Male' area⁶. Upon completion of this project, the Greater Malé Region is projected to house an additional 260,000 residents.
- The government has designated seven islands as urban centres as part of its Sustainable Regional Development Policy⁷, aiming to foster balanced economic growth and improve infrastructure across the nation. The islands identified for this initiative include R. Ungoofaru, B. Eydhafushi, Lh. Naifaru, ADh. Mahibadhoo, F. Nilandhoo, Dh. Kudahuvadhoo, and L. Fonadhoo. Each of these regional urban centers is expected to serve a catchment population of approximately 50,000 people. This development anticipates a significant population shift toward selected atoll communities, driven by stronger pull factors compared to those of Malé. While the 'Rasmale' project is expected to increase population concentration in the Greater Malé area, this initiative assumes that

⁵ This rounding can lead to a minor discrepancy between the total number of net in-migrants to Malé and the total number of net out-migrants from the Atolls (typically off by one person). To correct for this, we adjust the count for HA Atoll—the Atoll with the highest number of net migrants—by adding or subtracting one person to ensure totals remain consistent.

⁶ <https://mvrepublic.com/news/president-muizzu-launches-maldives-largest-ever-land-reclamation-project-ras-male/>
<https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/31629>

⁷ <https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/32076>
<https://corporatemaldives.com/maldives-government-designates-seven-islands-as-urban-centres-under-new-development-policy/>

emerging opportunities and developments in the atolls will lead to increased outward migration from Malé and other atolls, ultimately reversing the trend of urban centralization. However, no official documentation is currently available outlining when these plans will be rolled out —such as whether they will be developed simultaneously or in phases.

To arrive at the projected net migrant, the following approach is used:

- The number of net migrants for each atoll is kept constant throughout the projection period (and using the assumptions explained above for TFR, mortality and life expectancy). Using this constant migration scenario, the projected population figures are derived.

Male – female distribution:

DemProj requires percentage distribution of male and female migrants by sex to run the projection model. The age and sex distribution of in-migrants to Malé from Census 2022 was used for this. This observed distribution is assumed to be the same across all atolls and will remain constant throughout the projection period.

5.2 Maldivians residing in non-administrative islands

The non-administrative islands (non-admin islands) in the Maldives includes resorts, industrial islands, resorts under renovations, and islands given out for commercial purpose. Resident Maldivians primary resides in these islands for employment purpose and are within the working age group (mostly within the age group of 15-64 years).

We produced two national-level projections using the cohort-component method: one using a base population that includes all Maldivians, including those temporarily residing in non-administrative islands and the other using a base population that only includes those living in administrative islands. The difference between these projections represents the number of Maldivians temporarily living in non-administrative islands who are expected to return to administrative areas. We redistribute these individuals back to their home atolls at the start of the projection, using 2022 Census data on place of previous residence. This step ensures alignment between the national and subnational base populations and accounts for short-term residence away from home.

To estimate the number of Maldivians who will reside in non-administrative islands in future years, we apply fixed proportions by age, sex, and atoll to the projected national population. These proportions are derived from the 2022 Census and reflect the demographic profile of Maldivians residing temporarily in non-administrative islands, primarily for employment.

To reflect growth in demand for temporary labor, we allow these proportions to increase by 1.4% per year for the first 10 years of the projection. After that, the proportions are held constant. This results in an expanding stock of non-admin residents during the early projection period. While this method does not explicitly model migration flows, it implicitly captures their effect through annual reallocation of population shares.

5.3 Adjusting sub-national results to national totals

To recap, two sets of projections have been prepared in Spectrum; the national total and sub-national results (20 atolls and Malé). Although national forecast and the aggregate of the 21 sub-national forecasts are based on similar assumptions, there are differences in the results. This is due to heterogeneity at sub-national level. For instance, national forecasts apply a single average TFR to the total female population, whereas sub-national forecasts apply each Atoll's specific TFR to its female population. If higher TFRs occur in smaller populations and lower TFRs in larger ones, the sub-national forecast will tend to produce fewer births overall. In the case of the Maldives, these differences are minimal – amounting to less than 1%. To ensure consistency, we proportionally adjusted the sub-national results to match the national totals.

6. Resident Foreigners

Similar to Maldivians residing in the non-administrative islands, the foreign population living in Maldives is a temporary workforce and is concentrated within the working ages.

Census 2022 recorded a total of 132,493 foreigners. This included 83,723 foreigners as living in administrative islands and 48,770 foreigners living in non-administrative islands. There are more men working in the country than women, creating a huge imbalance in sex ratio (779 men per 100 women).

The foreign worker population is projected using a net migration rate model, with net foreign migration defined relative to the size of the resident Maldivian population. Specifically, we apply a net migration rate of 12 foreign workers per 1,000 Maldivians, consistent with intercensal trends between 2014 and 2022. This rate is held constant for the first 10 years of the projection, then declines linearly over 7 years to a long-term rate of 0.6 net migrants per 1,000 Maldivians, which remains fixed thereafter. This assumption aligns with practices used by the UN Population Division in modeling foreign labor migration to Gulf States with large foreign populations like the Maldives.

Once the total number of foreign residents is calculated each year, it is distributed across atoll, age, and sex using the structure observed in the 2022 Census. This distribution is held constant over time, meaning the foreign worker population does not age in place but is replenished each year with a population of similar demographic characteristics. This approach is consistent with the short-term, circular nature of most foreign labor migration to the Maldives.

After completing the above step, a second set of iterations is done to adjust the foreign numbers recorded in administrative registers in 2025. The Maldives government has initiated a nationwide program called 'Operation Kurangi' to collect biometric data from the foreign population and as of November 2025, over 191,700 foreigners had their biometric details collected⁸. These numbers are adjusted to estimate foreign count for mid-year in 2025.

To achieve this, the baseline value (mid-year population of 2022) was adjusted to increase the estimates of foreigners for the following years to derive an estimate that is close to the mid-year population in 2025. Thereafter, the foreign population is adjusted using a fixed growth rate for the remaining years.

7. Aggregating projections to compile Resident population

So far, we have produced separate population estimates for Maldivians residing in administrative islands, Maldivians residing in non-administrative islands, and the foreign resident population. As the final step, these individual projections were consolidated into a single dataset to derive the total resident population of the Maldives.

The background of the slide is a complex, layered composition of human profiles. These profiles are rendered in a variety of warm colors, including shades of orange, red, and brown, and are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement. The profiles are mostly facing right, but some are facing left, and they overlap each other, creating a dense, textured effect. The overall style is abstract and artistic, with a focus on human form and color.

Part B:

The Analysis

1. Introduction

This section presents the results of the population projection based on the medium variant, which assumes a total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.5 by 2062. The projections provide an assessment of the future population growth of the Maldives.

This chapter analyses the resident and foreign population followed by a more in-dept analysis of the resident Maldivian population. In this chapter we present a brief analysis of the changing population dynamics, population growth and age-sex structure of different populations. The analysis provides insights into how the population is changing over time and across atolls, with important socio-economic implications for the future.

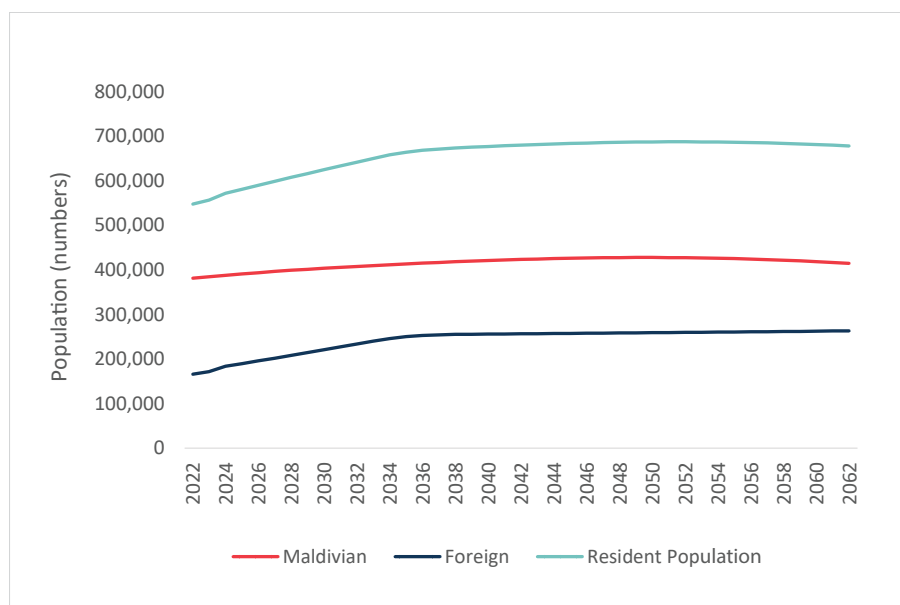
2. Resident Population (Resident Maldivian and Foreigners)

2.1 Resident Population in Numbers

The mid-year population of 2022 accounted for a total of 547,651 people residing in the country. This includes 381,436 Maldivian and 166,215 foreign residents. By 2062, the resident population of the Maldives is expected to reach 678,024, comprising 414,679 resident Maldivians and 263,345 resident foreigners.

Figure 2.1 shows the Resident Population in numbers, including Resident Maldivians and Resident Foreigners. The number of resident Maldivians is projected to exceed 400,000 by 2029. Thereafter, the population continues to grow, reaching a peak of around 428,000 in 2050, before entering a phase of gradual decline. On the other hand, steady growth of the foreign population is observed up to 2036, with the population remaining nearly stable thereafter.

Figure 2.1: Resident Population of Maldives, 2022-2062



2.2 Share of Resident Population, 2022 & 2062

Table 2.1: Share of Resident Maldivian and Foreign Population, 2022-2062

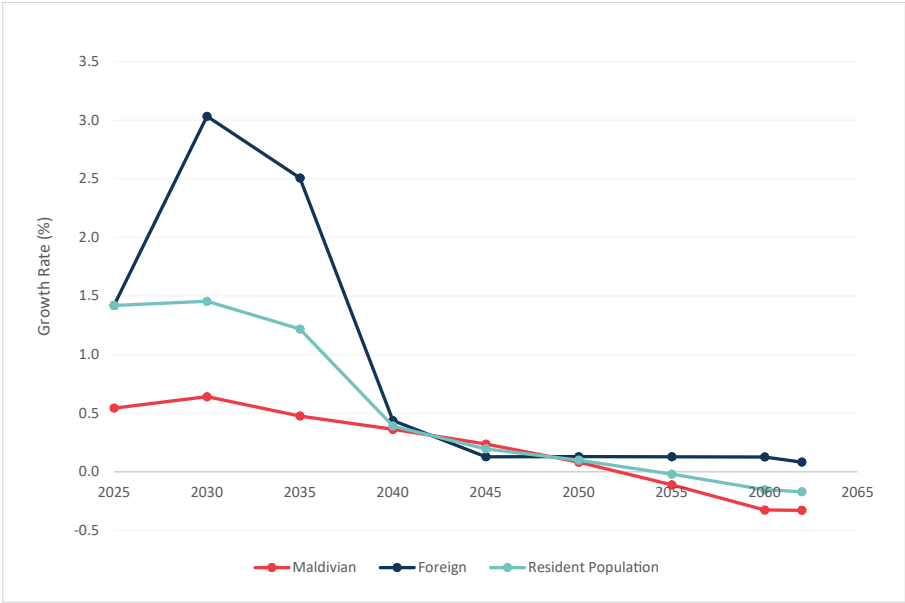
Year	Maldivian	Foreign	Resident Population	Share of Maldivian Population	Share of Foreign Population
2022	381,436	166,215	547,651	30%	70%
2032	408,030	233,680	641,709	36%	64%
2042	423,554	256,683	680,237	38%	62%
2052	427,578	260,027	687,605	38%	62%
2062	414,679	263,345	678,024	39%	61%

In 2022, the foreign population accounted to 30% of the population, or one third of the population while resident Maldivians accounted to 70% of the resident population. By 2062, the share of Maldivians is projected to 61%, while the foreign population rises to 39%. In other words, by 2062, two in every 5 residents in Maldives will be foreigners.

2.3 Growth rate of the resident population

Between 2014 and 2022, the resident population growth rate was as at 2.27%. This was mainly driven by the high growth rate of the foreign population which grew at 4.23% while the Maldivian population growth remained low at 1.65%. The resident population is expected to decline over the years, with foreigners being the main source of growth in the short run. By 2055, the overall resident population growth rate is projected to fall below 1%, reflecting a sharp slowdown in foreign population growth, which is assumed to be low by then. The resident Maldivian growth rate is expected to decline progressively over the years. By 2052, resident Maldivians experiences a negative growth rate due to the low fertility assumptions that is expected to prevail in the country and reaches its lowest by 2062. As a result, the resident population also experiences its first ever negative growth of the population in 2053 and continues onwards despite the positive growth of the foreign population.

Figure 2.2: Growth rate of resident population, 2022-2062



2.4 Age-sex structure of the resident population

The age-sex structure of the Resident Population is depicted through the population pyramids of 2022, 2032, 2042,2052 and 2062 presented below.

Figure 2.3: Population pyramid of resident population, 2022

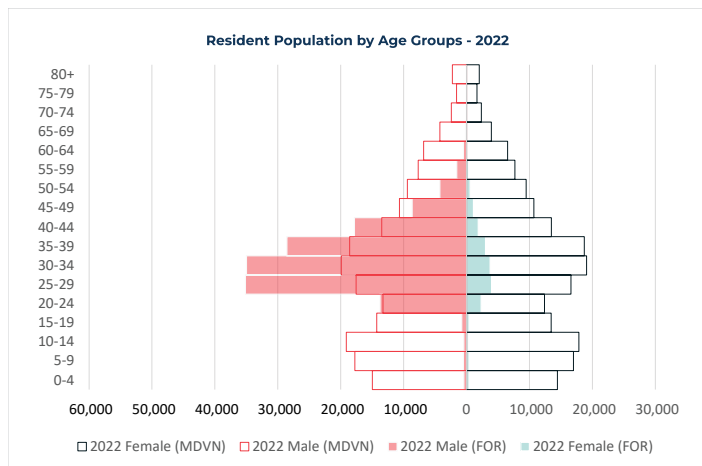


Figure 2.4: Population pyramid of resident population, 2032

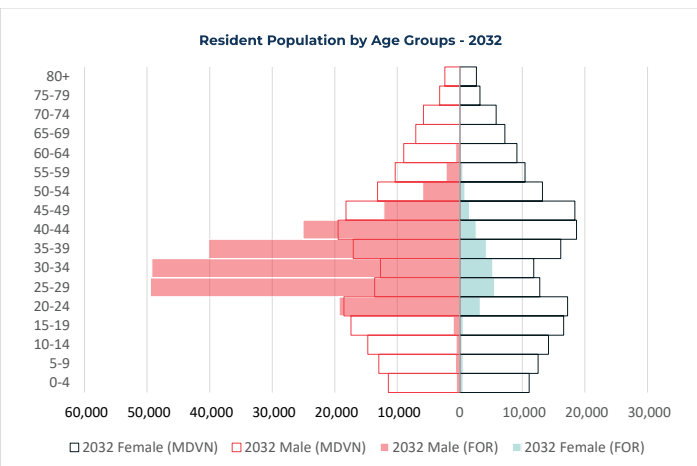


Figure 2.5: Population pyramid of resident population, 2042

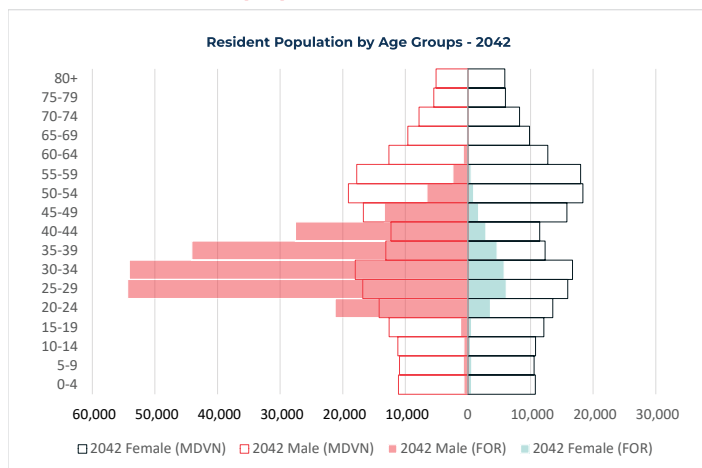


Figure 2.6: Population pyramid of resident population, 2052

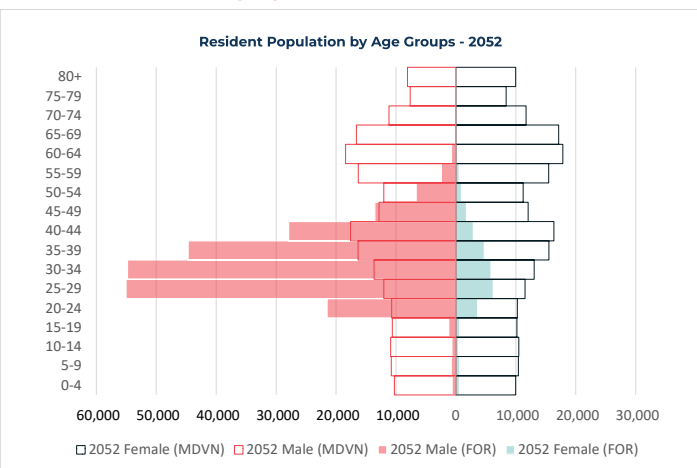
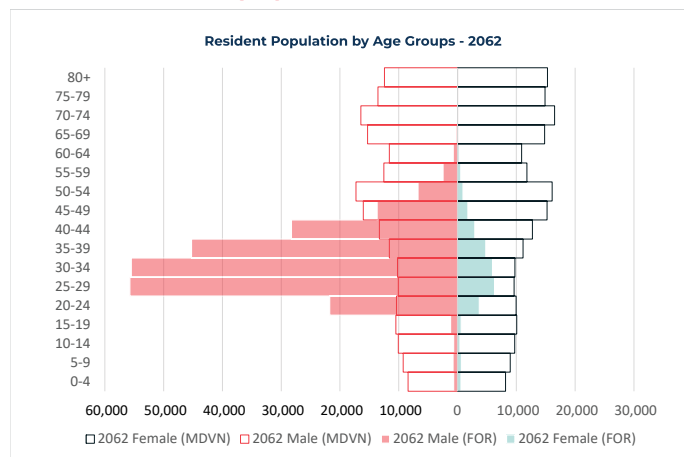


Figure 2.7: Population pyramid of resident population, 2062



The 2022 pyramid reveals a younger demographic structure, with sizable Maldivian cohorts in the 20–34 age group and a notable number of foreign workers, particularly men in the 25–39 age range. The foreign men outnumber Maldivian men in the prime working-ages, a pattern similar to other labour receiving countries, such as the Gulf region. As a result, there is a gender imbalance in the distribution, with men outnumbering women. The base of the pyramid is narrow due to low fertility, while the elderly population remains relatively small.

The population of the Maldives is still balanced in 2032. Each age group under 20 years makes up a noticeable portion of the population, consisting of many young people. The elderly population increases in size, indicating signs of an ageing population.

By 2042, the Maldivian population pyramid is projected to narrow further at its base compared to 2022, reflecting the low fertility assumptions used in the projections. While the foreign population remains concentrated in the prime age of working, the Maldivian population becomes more evenly distributed between young adults aged 25–34 and older adults aged 50–64. With population ageing and increasing life expectancy, a growing proportion of Maldivians are expected to live beyond age 65.

By 2052, the population structure changes significantly, showing clear signs of population decline and aging. The share of children and youth (0–19 years) is smaller than in 2032, reflecting the decline in births, while the foreign population continues to increase in size. The working-age cohorts (20–49 years), which were dominant in 2032, also decline in size, reducing the labor force capacity. At the same time, the older age groups expand considerably: Maldivian females in the age group of 60–74 years range reach between 15,000–17,000, making them one of the largest cohorts in the population. Finally, when we reach 2062, for the resident Maldivian population, the base (0–14) is much narrower than in previous years. The number of elderly (80+) has grown significantly compared to 2022, indicating increase in life expectancy but also heavier aged dependency ratios for this population. In contrast, the foreign population remains concentrated within the working age and remains the same.

2.5 Sex Ratio of the resident population

The sex ratio provides an indication of the balance between men and women in a population. In 2022, the sex ratio of the Maldivian population stood at 103, meaning there were 103 men for every 100 women. This ratio is projected to remain stable throughout the projection period, bringing a balance between men and women among the Maldivian population.

In contrast, the sex ratio among foreigners shows a significant imbalance, with more than 700 men for every 100 women in 2022. This disparity reflects the nature of labor migration to the Maldives, where demand is concentrated in male-dominated, labor-intensive industries (MBS, 2024).

Table 2.2: Sex ratio among resident population, 2022-2062

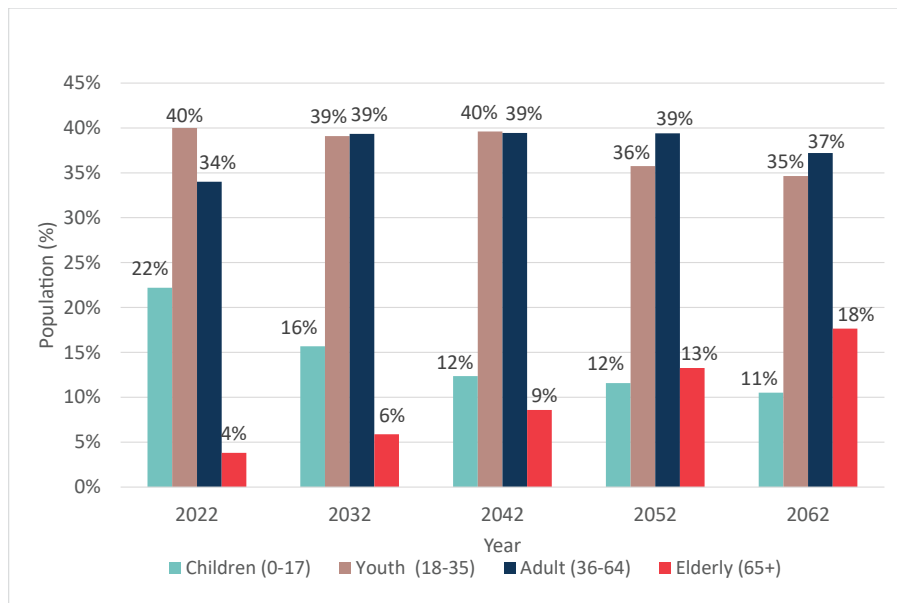
Year	Resident Population		Maldivian		Foreigner		Sex ratio (Males per 100 female)		
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Resident	Maldivian	Foreign
2022	206,195	341,456	187,483	193,953	18,712	147,503	166	103	788
2032	227,295	414,414	201,046	206,983	26,249	207,431	182	103	790
2042	238,062	442,175	209,230	214,324	28,833	227,850	186	102	790
2052	240,826	446,779	211,618	215,961	29,208	230,819	186	102	790
2062	235,229	442,796	205,648	209,031	29,581	233,764	188	102	790

2.6 Resident population by broad age groups

One of the most significant trends observed is the steady decline in the proportion of children (aged 0–17). In 2022, children accounted for 22% of the population. However, this share decreases to 12% by 2042 and further to just 11% by 2062. This decline indicates a continued drop in birth rates, which may result in a smaller future workforce and reduced demand for education and child-related services. Similarly, the proportion of youth (aged 18–35) also declines over time, falling from 40% in 2022 to 35% in 2062. This share remains more consistent than other broad age groups because of the foreign population in the country.

In contrast, the proportion of elderly residents (aged 65 and above) increases significantly. While they made up only 4% of the population in 2022, their share grows to 9% by 2042 and reaches 18% by 2062. This marks a clear shift towards an aged population, with longer life expectancy and lower fertility rates contributing to a growing elderly demographic. The adult population (aged 36–64) also experiences a gradual rise, increasing from 34% in 2022 to 37% in 2062. This age group is expected to bear much of the economic and caregiving responsibilities, supporting both the younger and older segments of the population.

Figure 2.8: Resident population by broad age groups, 2022-2062



2.7 Resident Population distribution across Maldives

In 2022, the resident population was distributed across the country, with 42% living in Malé, 45% in administrative islands, and 13% in non-administrative islands. By 2032, the distribution shifts further towards Malé, which accounts for 45% of the total population living in the capital city. By 2052, the number of residents in Malé surpasses 346,000, with half of the population living in the capital city. By the end of the projection period, this share reaches 53%, while the population in the administrative islands declines to 213,000, lower than its initial figure in 2022. The share of the resident population living in Admin Islands reaches its lowest at 32% by 2062.

In 2022, Malé recorded the highest population growth rate at 4.1%. Between 2014 and 2022, however, the fastest growth rate of the resident population was observed in non-administrative islands, at 6.4%. By 2042, due to constant migration of resident Maldivians towards capital city, admin islands experience negative growth and record the highest decline in growth rate by 2062. The same is observed for non-admin islands. While population growth in Malé is also projected to decline over time, it is expected to remain positive through the end of the projection period.

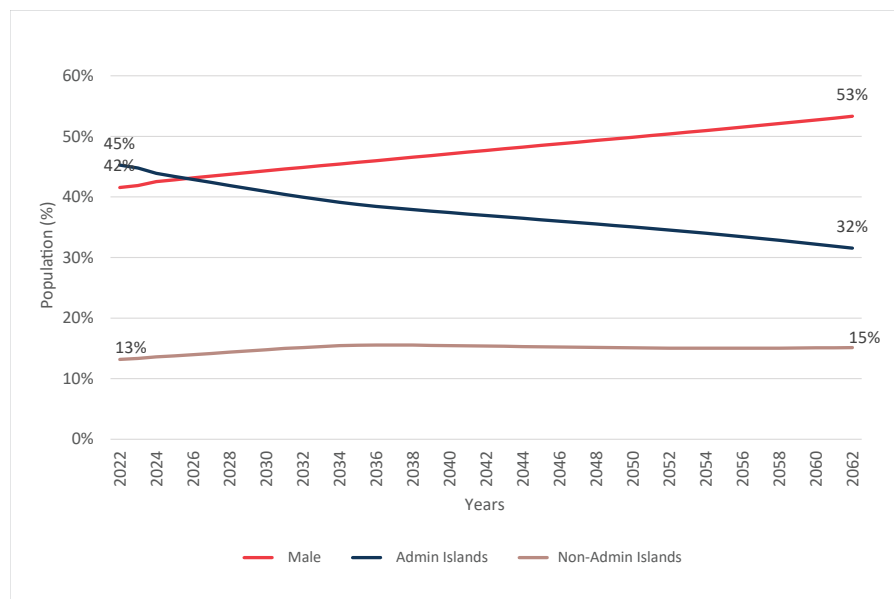
Table 2.3: Distribution of resident population by locality and growth rate, 2022-2062

Year	Mid- year Population (numbers)				Population (%)			Population Growth Rate(%)		
	Male'	Admin Islands	Non-Admin Islands	Total	Male'	Admin Islands	Non-Admin Islands	Male'	Admin Islands	Non-Admin Islands
2022	227,613	247,874	72,164	547,651	42%	45%	13%	4.1	1.7	6.4
2032	288,063	256,497	97,150	641,709	45%	40%	15%	2.4	0.3	3.0
2042	324,340	251,309	104,588	680,237	48%	37%	15%	1.2	-0.2	0.7
2052	346,629	237,567	103,409	687,605	50%	35%	15%	0.7	-0.6	-0.1
2062	361,576	213,819	102,630	678,024	53%	32%	15%	0.4	-1.1	-0.1

Figure 2.9 gives a detailed illustration of the projected shift in the distribution of the resident population between Malé and the Atolls from 2022 to 2062. In 2022, approximately 45% of the population resided in the Atolls, while 42% lived in Malé. By 2026, the resident population becomes evenly divided between Malé and Admin islands. However, over the next four decades, the proportion of residents living in Malé gradually increases, while de-population occurs in atolls. This outcome reflects the assumption of a constant number of migrants moving from the Atolls to Malé throughout the projection period.

By 2062, the population distribution becomes more uneven, with 53% residing in Malé and 32% in the admin islands.

Figure 2.9: Share of resident population in Malé vs Atolls, 2022- 2062



2.8 Resident population by broad age group between Malé and Admin Islands

In 2022, the resident population of Malé primarily composed of youth (18–35 years) and adults (36–64 years). Over time, the age composition is projected to shift. By 2062, one in every three residents in Malé will be a youth, while the share of children will decline to 12%.

In the administrative islands, youth and adults made up the largest share of the population in 2022. Over the projection period, these islands are expected to undergo a marked demographic shift. The share of children declines to less than half of its 2022 level, reflecting the low fertility assumption, while the youth population (18–35 years) also contracts significantly. At the same time, the elderly (65+) represent an increasingly large share (27%), not only due to population ageing but also because many of their adult children are assumed to migrate to Malé, leaving older cohorts concentrated in the Atolls.

Figure 2.10: Resident population by broad age group in Malé, 2022-2062

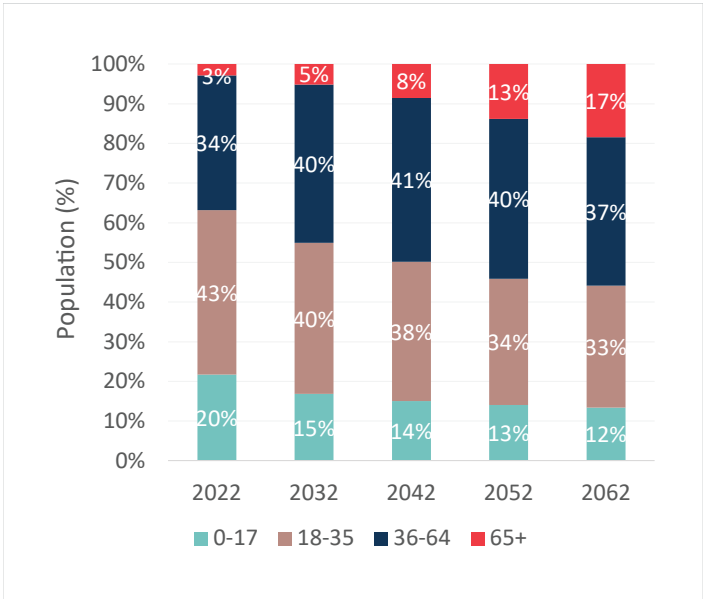
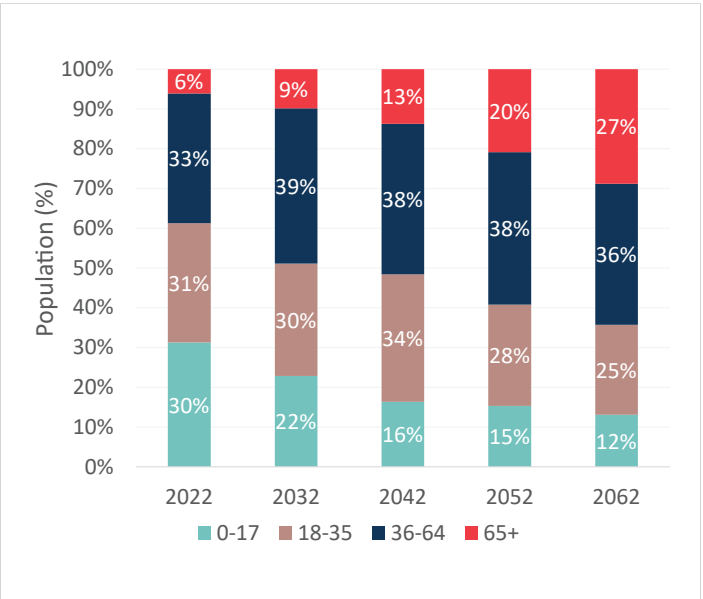


Figure 2.11: Resident population by broad age group in Admin Islands, 2022-2062



Similarly, the composition of men and women in the resident population undergoes significant changes.

2.9 Distribution of resident population across administrative islands

In 2022, a larger share of the resident population was concentrated in the northern and southern atolls of the country, with Addu City (S) accounting for 11 percent of the population. The second-largest population share was recorded in Haa Dhaalu (HDh) Atoll, while Kaafu (K) Atoll and Raa (R) Atoll each accounted for more than 6 percent.

By 2062, the population of HDh & Kaafu (K) Atoll is projected to increase, equaling that of Addu City.

Table 2.4: Distribution of population by atoll, 2022 & 2062

Atoll	Resident Population (Number)		Resident Population (%)	
	2022	2062	2022	2062
HA	15,155	11,108	6%	5%
HDh	23,040	21,024	9%	10%
Sh	14,199	12,707	6%	6%
N	13,089	11,750	5%	5%
R	18,351	16,036	7%	7%
B	11,208	9,652	5%	5%
Lh	9,434	6,962	4%	3%
K	18,773	20,525	8%	10%
AA	8,439	9,313	3%	4%
ADh	11,182	9,978	5%	5%
V	2,211	1,624	1%	1%
M	5,798	3,705	2%	2%
F	5,053	4,486	2%	2%
Dh	6,973	5,860	3%	3%
Th	10,724	7,394	4%	3%
L	15,152	13,563	6%	6%
GA	9,800	7,685	4%	4%
GDh	12,994	9,136	5%	4%
Gn	9,868	9,151	4%	4%
S	26,432	22,160	11%	10%
Total	247,874	213,819	100.0%	100.0%

2.10 Share of resident population across Admin islands

As the population in the atolls decline over time, notable shifts emerge in the balance between Maldivian and foreign residents. Atolls that had a higher share of Maldivian in 2022 are expected to fall by 2062, in some cases reaching as low as 58%. For instance, in Addu City (S), Maldivians accounted for 78% of the population in 2022, but this proportion is expected to decline to 59% by 2062. The steepest decline is projected for Vaavu Atoll, where the Maldivian share falls from 71% in 2022 to just 39% in 2062—meaning two fifth of the resident population will be Maldivian.

On the other hand, some atolls had a significant presence of foreigners even in 2022 and increases in its share by 2062. For instance, the share of foreigners in Vaavu Atoll increases from 29% in 2022 to 61% by 2062. The same is observed for Kaafu Atoll. However, the increase in the share of foreigners is more prominent for atolls that had a relatively lower foreign presence in 2022.

Table 2.5: Distribution of resident population by Atolls (Admin islands), 2022 & 2062

Atoll	2022			Population share		2062			Population share		Absolute change	
	Foreigner	Maldivian	Total	Foreigner	Maldivian	Foreigner	Maldivian	Total	Foreigner	Maldivian	Foreigner	Maldivian
HA	1,559	13,596	15,155	10%	90%	2,390	8,719	11,108	22%	78%	831	(4,877)
HDh	2,538	20,502	23,040	11%	89%	3,890	17,134	21,024	19%	81%	1,352	(3,369)
Sh	1,307	12,892	14,199	9%	91%	2,003	10,703	12,707	16%	84%	696	(2,189)
N	1,629	11,459	13,089	12%	88%	2,498	9,252	11,750	21%	79%	868	(2,207)
R	1,969	16,382	18,351	11%	89%	3,018	13,018	16,036	19%	81%	1,049	(3,364)
B	1,855	9,353	11,208	17%	83%	2,844	6,808	9,652	29%	71%	989	(2,545)
Lh	1,249	8,185	9,434	13%	87%	1,914	5,048	6,962	27%	73%	665	(3,137)
K	5,300	13,472	18,773	28%	72%	8,602	11,922	20,525	42%	58%	3,302	(1,550)
AA	1,566	6,873	8,439	19%	81%	2,401	6,912	9,313	26%	74%	835	39
ADh	2,452	8,730	11,182	22%	78%	3,759	6,219	9,978	38%	62%	1,307	(2,511)
V	651	1,560	2,211	29%	71%	998	626	1,624	61%	39%	347	(934)
M	915	4,883	5,798	16%	84%	1,403	2,302	3,705	38%	62%	488	(2,580)
F	514	4,539	5,053	10%	90%	787	3,699	4,486	18%	82%	274	(840)
Dh	1,131	5,842	6,973	16%	84%	1,734	4,127	5,860	30%	70%	603	(1,716)
Th	1,326	9,398	10,724	12%	88%	2,033	5,362	7,394	27%	73%	707	(4,036)
L	1,891	13,260	15,152	12%	88%	2,899	10,663	13,563	21%	79%	1,008	(2,597)
GA	1,529	8,272	9,800	16%	84%	2,343	5,342	7,685	30%	70%	815	(2,929)
GDh	1,876	11,119	12,994	14%	86%	2,875	6,260	9,136	31%	69%	1,000	(4,858)
Gn	1,574	8,294	9,868	16%	84%	2,413	6,738	9,151	26%	74%	839	(1,557)
S	5,930	20,502	26,432	22%	78%	9,091	13,069	22,160	41%	59%	3,160	(7,433)
Total (Admin Islands)	38,761	209,114	247,874	16%	84%	59,895	153,924	213,819	28%	72%	21,134	(55,190)

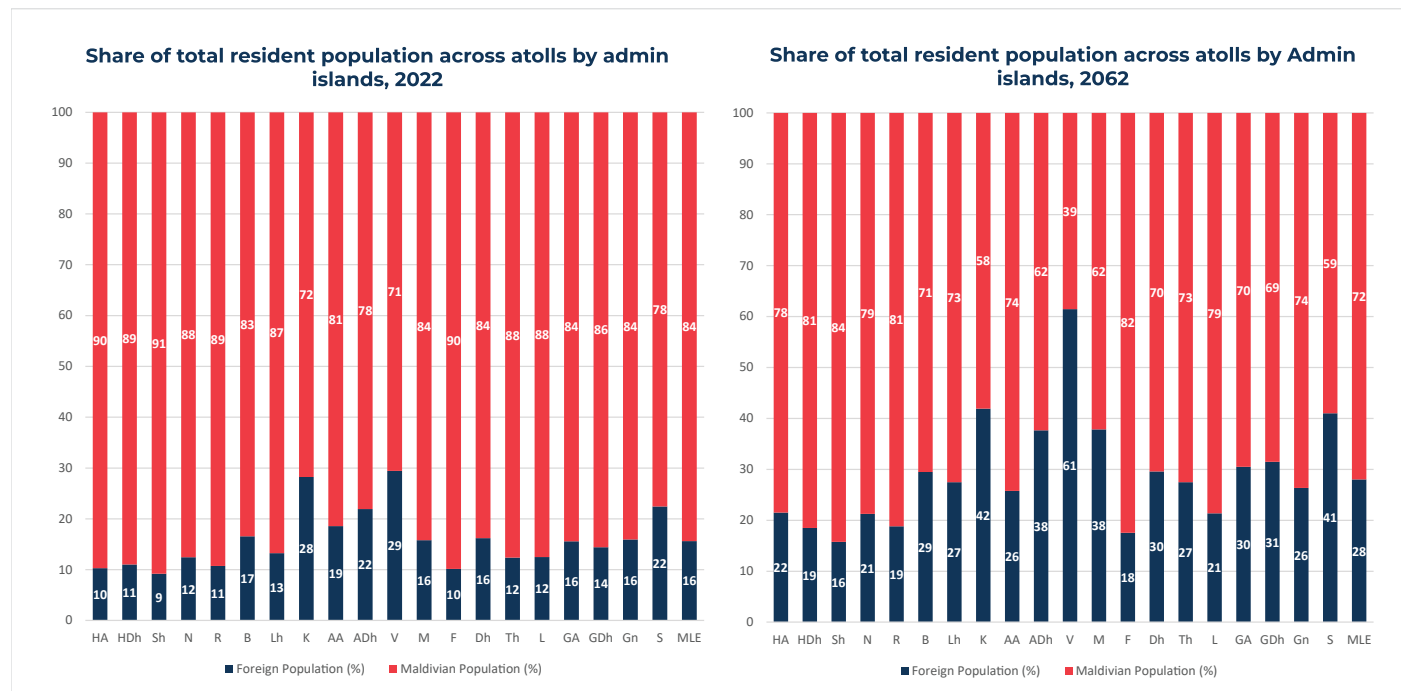
2.11 Resident population in administrative islands

As more people migrate to Malé and non-administrative islands, most administrative islands experience a significant loss of resident Maldivians by 2062. The share of foreign residents grows noticeably across most atolls from 2022 to 2062, with some places seeing especially rapid increases. In 2022, only a few atolls had foreign populations above 20% including Vaavu (29%), Alifu Dhaalu (22%), Kaafu (28%), and Addu City (22%). In most other atolls, the proportion of foreigners was still quite low, usually under 15%.

But by 2062, the picture looks very different. In several atolls, foreigners are expected to make up a large part of the population. For example, Vaavu is projected to have the highest share, with more than half of its residents being foreigners (61%) meaning every second person would be a foreigner. Similarly, Seenu (41%), Meemu (38%), Alifu Dhaalu (38%), and Kaafu (42%) are each expected to have about one in every three residents as a foreigner.

Even in atolls like Haa Alifu and Lhaviyani, where the foreign population was small in 2022 (just 10% and 13%), notable increases are projected by 2062, rising to 22% and 27% respectively.

Figure 2.12: Share of Maldivian and foreign population in administrative islands, 2022 & 2062

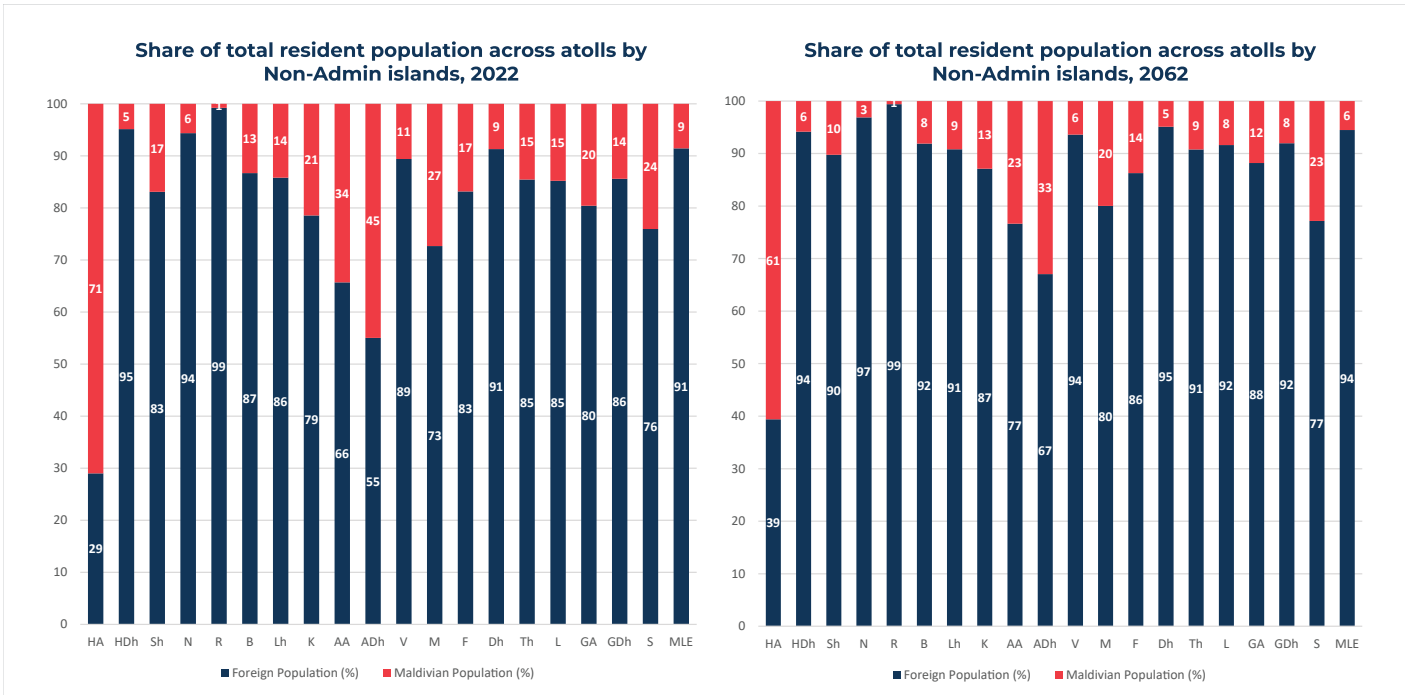


2.12 Resident population in non-administrative islands

The distribution of Maldivian and foreign residents across non-administrative islands shows notable growth between 2022 and 2062. In 2022, most non-admin islands were already dominated by foreigners, with shares above 70% in the majority of atolls. In several atolls such as Raa (99%), Haa Dhaalu (95%), Noonu (94%), and Mal  (91%) foreigners accounted for the overwhelming majority of residents. Only one atoll had Maldivians forming a larger share; Haa Alifu where Maldivians made up 71% of the population.

By 2062, the dominance of foreigners becomes even stronger. In many atolls, foreigners make up more than 80% of the non-admin population. Even in places where Maldivians held the majority in 2022, their share falls significantly by 2062. Alif Dhaal shifts to 67% foreign, while Haa Alifu remained as the only atoll where Maldivians still outnumber foreigners, at 61%. Overall, the data confirm that by 2062, non-admin islands are overwhelmingly populated by foreign workers, reflecting their concentration in resorts, industrial islands, and other non-administrative islands.

Figure 2.13: Share of foreign and Maldivian population in non-admin islands, 2022 & 2062



3. Resident Foreigners

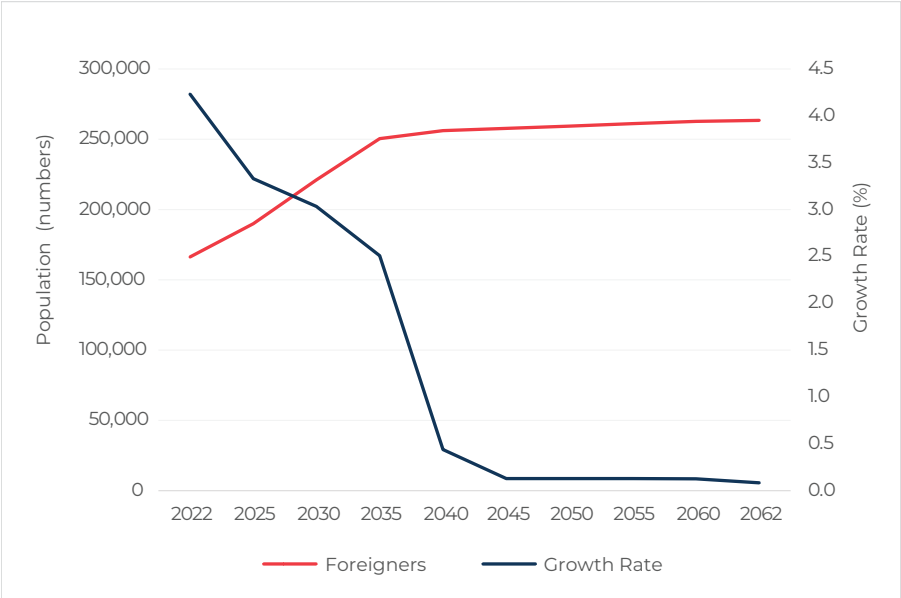
The 2022 Census recorded 132,493 resident foreign nationals in the Maldives, of whom 117,432 were males and 15,061 were females. This highlights a heavily male-dominated, working-age labor force. According to Census 2022, these migrants are primarily employed in tourism, construction, wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, and other service sectors. They are distributed across both administrative and non-administrative islands, reflecting economic demand. When considering the population share aged 15 years and above, Census 2022 shows that Malé alone hosted nearly 39 percent of this population, while 38 percent resided in non-administrative islands (which includes resorts, industrial islands, etc.) and 23 percent in administrative islands.

Before undertaking the projection, the foreign population of 2022 was adjusted backwards to account for the undercount of foreigners relative to administrative records in 2025. Following this adjustment, the revised mid-year foreign population for 2022 was estimated at 166,215. For projection purposes, the foreign resident population is assumed to maintain the same age–sex composition as recorded in the 2022 Census, on the basis that ongoing labour migration replenishes these groups rather than allowing them to age in place.

3.1 Growth of foreign population

The resident foreign population is projected to increase from a mid-year population of 166,215 in 2022 to approximately 250,488 by 2035, marking a 50% increase over a decade. The growth of foreign population is expected to be high throughout 2030s, with annual increases above 3%, but slows after 2035 as migration assumptions change. By 2035 the growth rate is expected to decline and reach less than 2%, and by 2040 it levels off at 0.1%. From then onward, the population stabilizes, reaching around 263,345 by 2062. This flattening reflects the projection assumptions, where net migration is gradually reduced and then fixed at a low level after 2040.

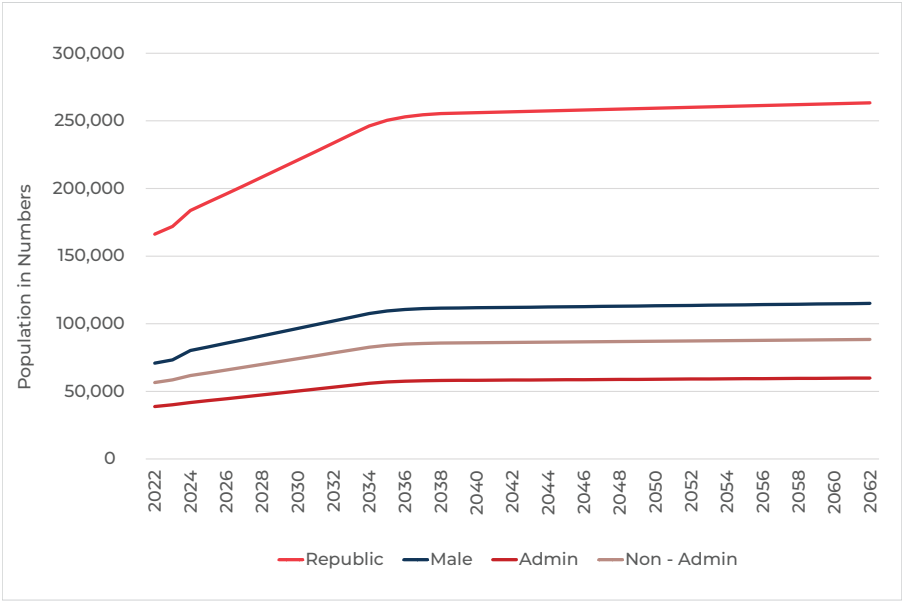
Figure 3.1: Population and growth rate of resident foreigners, 2022-2062



3.2 Distribution of foreign population

Throughout the projection period, foreign residents in Malé consistently outnumber those in Admin islands, reflecting a larger concentration of foreign population within the capital city. Both localities follow a similar growth pattern rising through the 2020s and early 2030s, then leveling off as net migration rates decline. It is notable that the number of resident foreigners in non-administrative islands already exceeded that in administrative islands in 2022, and this relationship is projected to persist throughout the projection period. The distribution of the foreign population across the country remained consistent throughout the projection period; 43% of the foreign population in Malé, 23% in Admin islands and 34% in non-admin islands.

Figure 3.2: Resident foreign population by locality, 2022-2062



3.3 Resident foreigners by age and gender

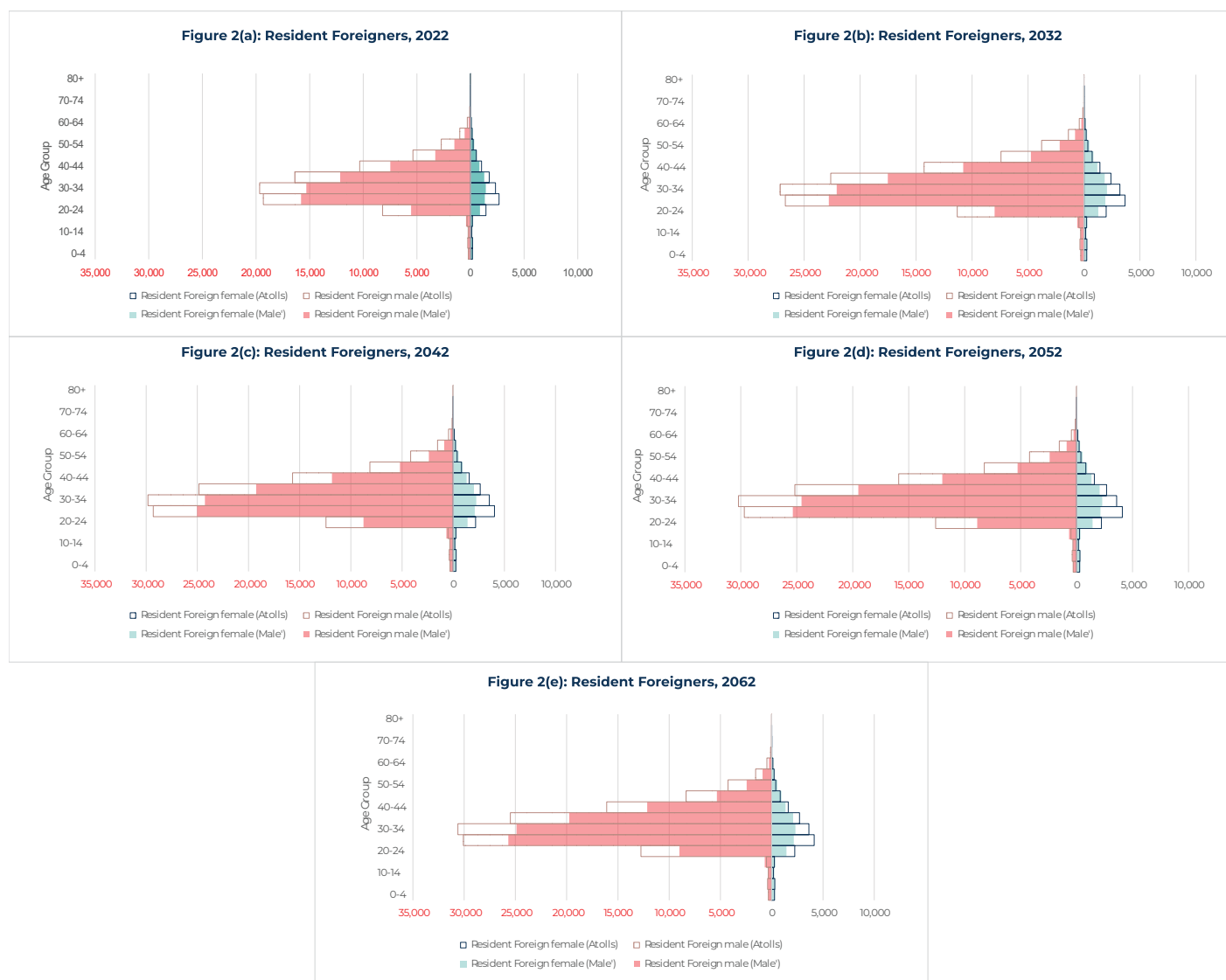
This section provides an analysis of the resident foreign population pyramids from 2022 to 2062, based on projected data disaggregated by sex and locality (Malé and Atolls). The population structure across the projection period highlights a stable pattern of male-dominated, working-age foreign residents.

From 2022 to 2062, the resident foreign population consistently shows a strong concentration in the working-age groups, particularly between ages 25 and 44. Foreign men dominate this structure, especially those residing in the atolls. This reflects the labor demand in tourism, resort operations, construction, and related sectors. The concentration of foreign workers in these industries is linked to the continued development of new resort islands and the expansion of tourism

infrastructure, which remain central to the Maldivian economy.^{8,9} Foreign women remain fewer in number and are more evenly distributed across younger adult age groups, with many employed in service roles. This results in a marked gender imbalance among foreign residents, with roughly 700 men for every 100 women.

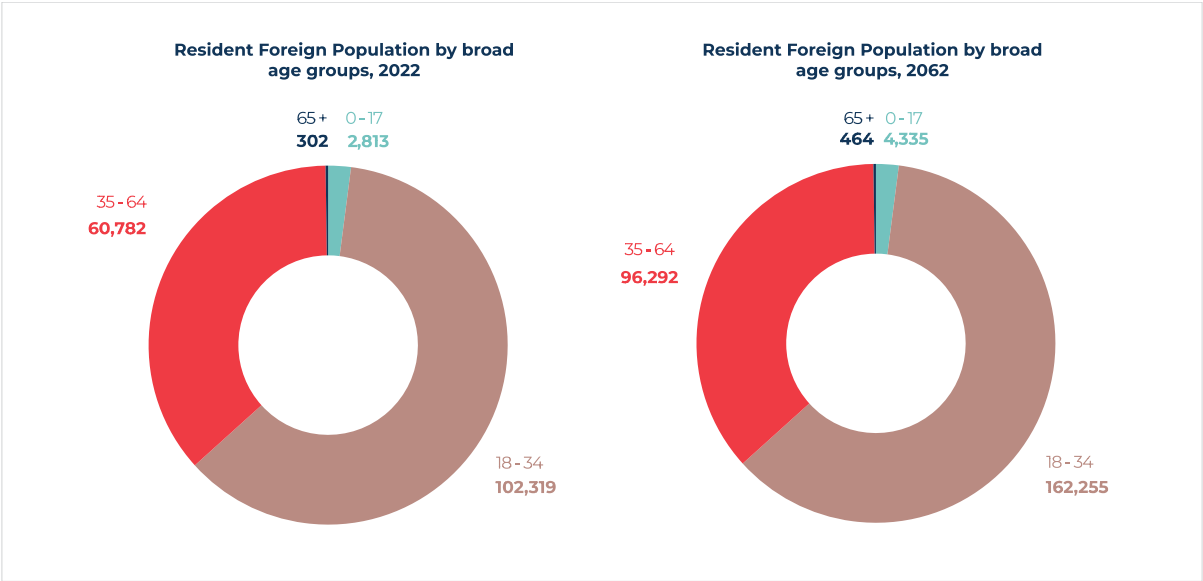
The pyramids remain wide in the middle and narrow at both ends, showing minimal presence of foreign children or elderly residents. Foreign males in the atolls (including admin and non-admin islands) continue to represent the largest share.

Figure 3.3: Population pyramid of resident foreigners, 2022-2062



3.4 Age composition of the Resident Foreigners, 2022 & 2062

Figure 3.4: Resident Foreigners by broad age group, 2022 & 2062



The age composition of the resident foreign population living across both administrative and non-administrative islands remains overwhelmingly concentrated within the working-age brackets. Throughout the projection period, more than 98% of this population consistently falls within the 18–35 and 36–64 age groups, reflecting a demographically stable and economically active foreign workforce.

The 18–35 group holds the largest share, followed closely by those aged 36–64. This structure remains almost unchanged from 2022 to 2062, due to the assumptions included in the projection.

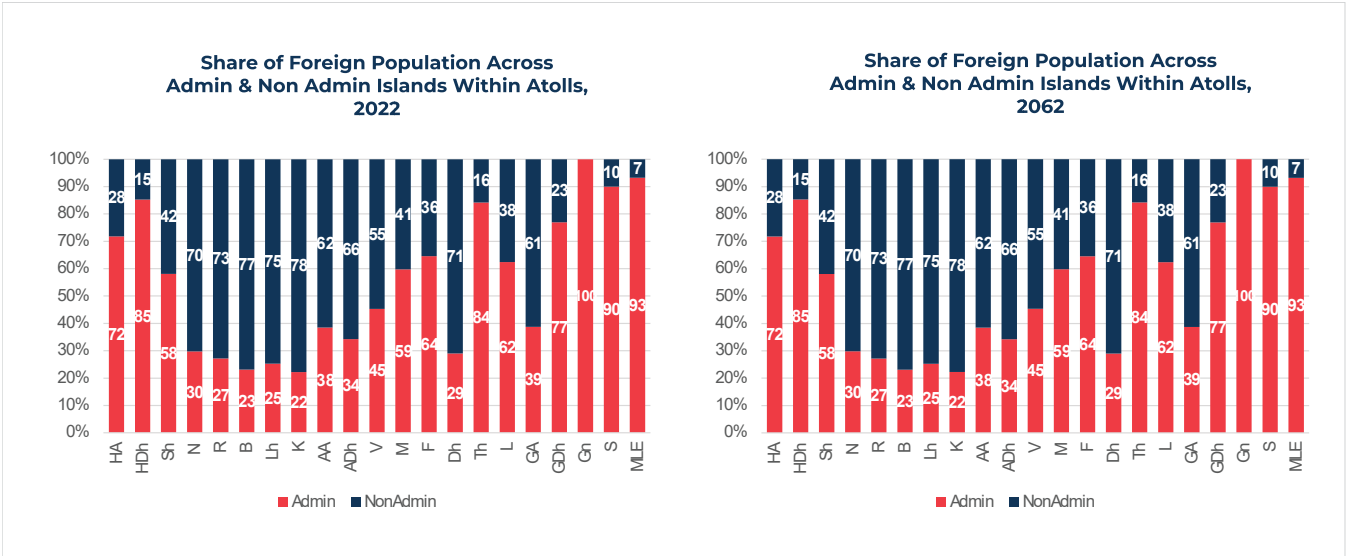
In contrast, the youngest (0–17) and oldest (65+) age groups together account for only about 1.9% of the total foreign population almost throughout the projection period. This very small proportion highlights that most foreign residents are not accompanied by children, nor do they tend to remain in the country into old age.

3.5 Distribution of foreigners between admin and non-admin islands

The distribution of foreigners across administrative and non-administrative islands in 2062 shows clear differences in how it was in 2022 between atolls. In several atolls, the vast majority of foreigners are concentrated in non-administrative islands, particularly Kaafu (78%), Baa (77%), Lhaviyani (75%), Raa (73%), Dhaalu (71%), and Alifu Alifu (62%). These patterns reflect the heavy reliance on foreign workers in resorts and industrial islands.

In contrast, several atolls show a high concentration of foreigners in administrative islands. Fuvahmulah with 100% foreigners in administrative islands as the atoll is one island with no non-administrative islands. This is followed by Malé (93%), Seenu (90%), Haa Dhaalu (85%), and Thaa (84%). Other atolls, including Gaafu Dhaalu (77%) and Haa Alifu (72%), also record relatively high concentrations of foreigners in administrative islands. These variations highlight the differing settlement patterns of foreign residents across atolls, largely influenced by the location of economic activities and resort developments.

Figure 3.5: Share of foreigners in admin and non-admin islands, 2022 & 2062



Note: refer to terms and definitions for non-administrative boundary of Malé

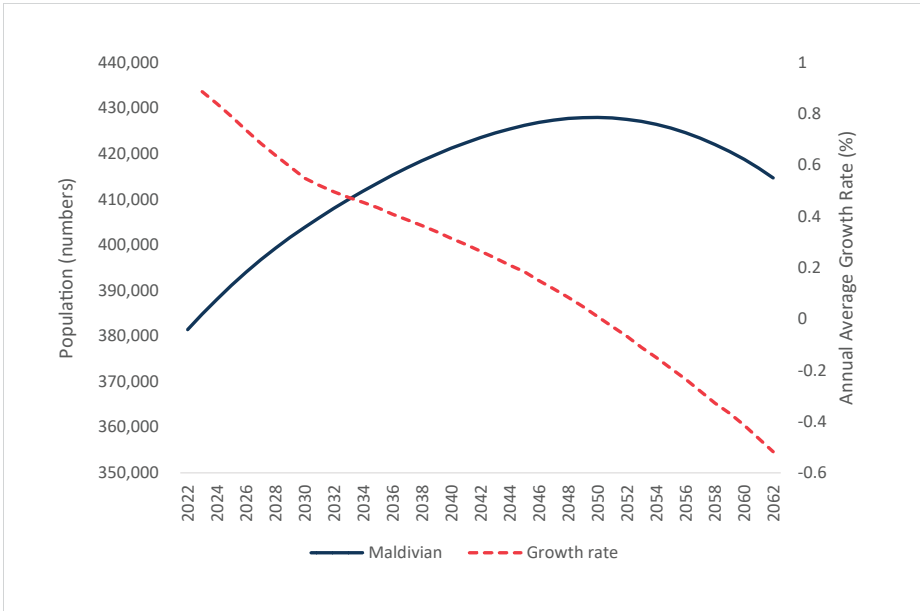
4. Resident Maldivian Population

4.1 Overall trend in resident Maldivian population and annual growth rate

From 2022 to 2050, the resident Maldivian population is expected to grow in numbers, adding up to 46,000 people and reaching a peak of 427,994 people in 2050. After this point the population begins to gradually decrease in numbers by around 1000 people per year over the following decade. Between 2050 and 2062, the population is projected to shrink by more than 13,000 people, falling to 414,679 Maldivians by 2062.

While the population continues to increase in absolute numbers until mid-century, the population growth rate steadily declines over the years. The projection indicates that the growth rate approaches zero around 2050, when the population reaches its peak. Following this point, growth rates turn negative, reaching –0.5% by 2062. This marks a transition towards long-term population decline, driven by the assumed low fertility in the country.

Figure 4.1: Population size and growth rate of resident Maldivians, 2022-2062



4.2 Changes in the Age structure of Maldivian population

As depicted in the graphs below, the population of Maldives in 2022 is predominantly young, with the largest cohort in the age group of 30-34 years and with a significant number of children within the age group of 5-14 years. In contrast, the number of individuals aged 65 years and above is relatively small compared to other age groups.

Over time, the share of the population in the adult age groups is projected to increase while the child population declines. In the future, Maldivians across different age groups are expected to coexist for longer periods. By 2062, a larger share of the population will be in the adult and elderly age groups, reflecting an extended span of generations living alongside of one another.

Figure 4.2: Resident Maldivian population by 5-year age group, 2022

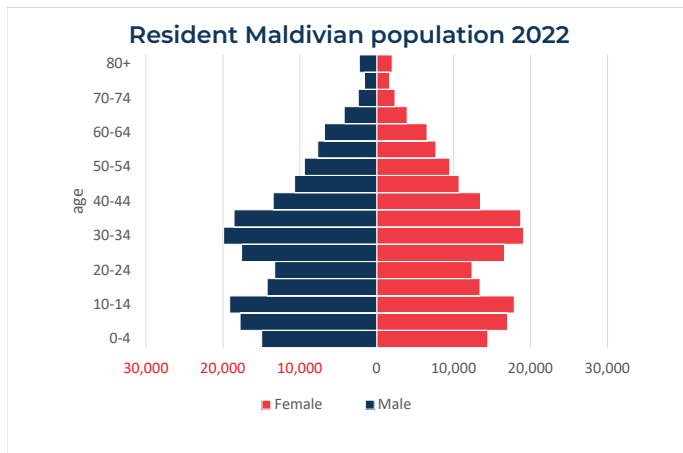


Figure 4.3: Resident Maldivian population by 5-year age group, 2032

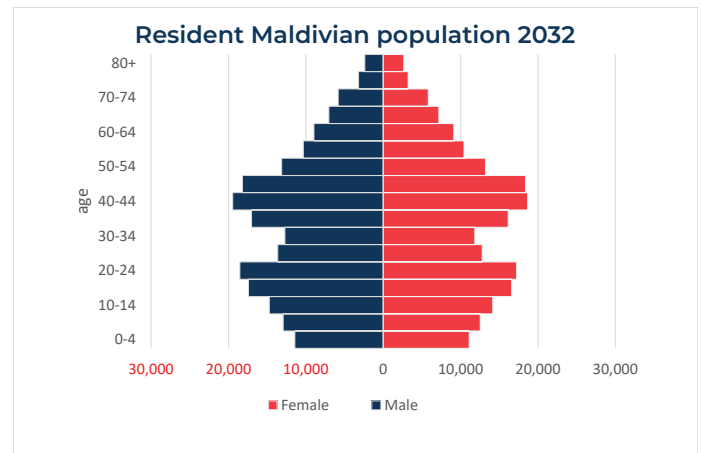


Figure 4.4: Resident Maldivian population by 5-year age group, 2042

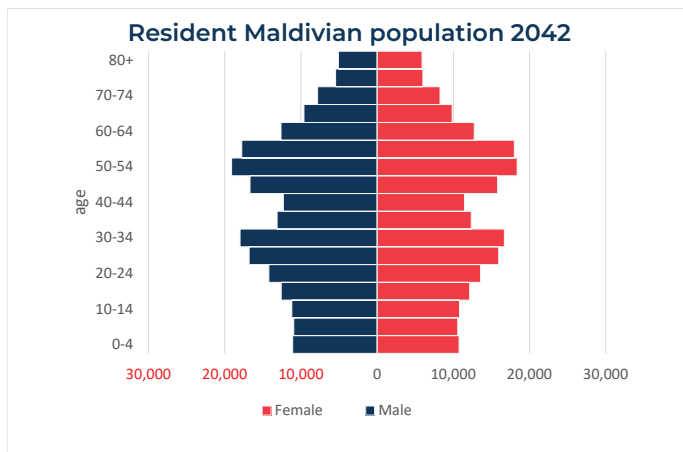


Figure 4.5: Resident Maldivian population by 5-year age group, 2052

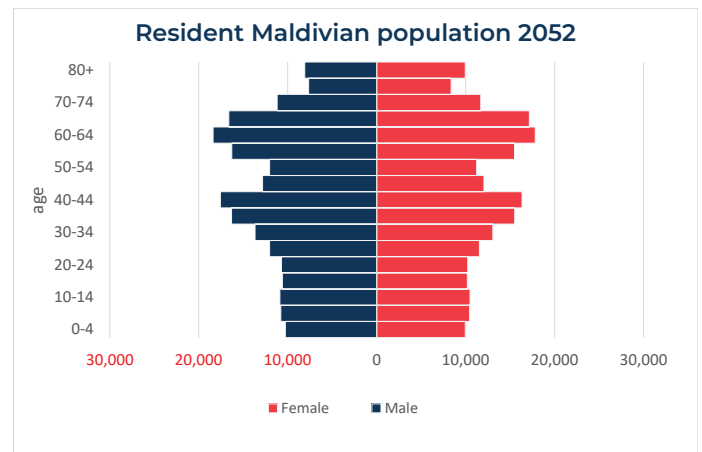
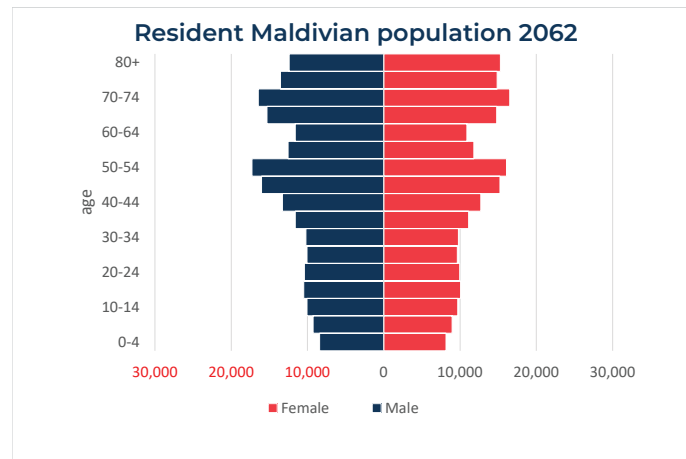


Figure 4 6: Resident Maldivian population by 5-year age group, 2062



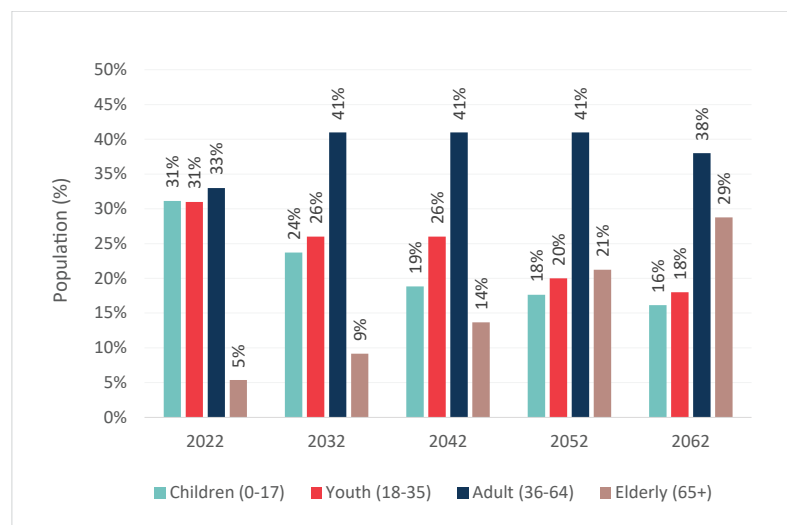
4.3 Changes in the local age groups

In 2022, the Maldivian population is characterized as a young population. Children (aged 0–17) accounted for 31% of the population, and youth (18–35 years) made up 31%. Together, they made up 60% of the population. This indicates a significant proportion of the population are in pursuit of education and with young adults ready to transition into the workforce. Adults (36–64 years) comprised of 33%, and only 5% of the population were elderly (65 years and older).

By 2062, a major shift in the age structure is projected. The child population declines and reaches almost half of its 2022 level by 2062. The same is observed for the youth population. The share of the adult population remains relatively the same, around 38%, as most of the current youth and children enter this cohort. However, the overall size of the work force will increasingly depend on foreign immigrants.

The elderly population increases sharply to 29%, surpassing the share of both children and youth. This transition signifies that by 2062, the Maldives will become a super-aged society, with more than one in four people aged 65 or older.

Figure 4.7: Resident Maldivian population by local age groups, 2022-2062



4.4 Resident Maldivian population by locality

The population projection is prepared to highlight the impact of assumed levels of mortality, fertility and migration on the population at different localities.

In 2022, Malé was home to 41% of the Maldivian population, with 156,727 Maldivians residing in the capital. The majority, 209,114 Maldivians, lived in the administrative atolls, while 15,595 resided in resorts, representing 4% of the resident Maldivians.

Over time, this distribution is projected to shift, reflecting increasing urbanization, with 59% of the Maldivians in Malé. By the end of the projection period, the number of Maldivians living in the administrative atolls will have fallen below the Maldivian population of Malé in 2022. The share of Maldivians residing in non-administrative islands is expected to decline slightly, reaching 3% by 2062.

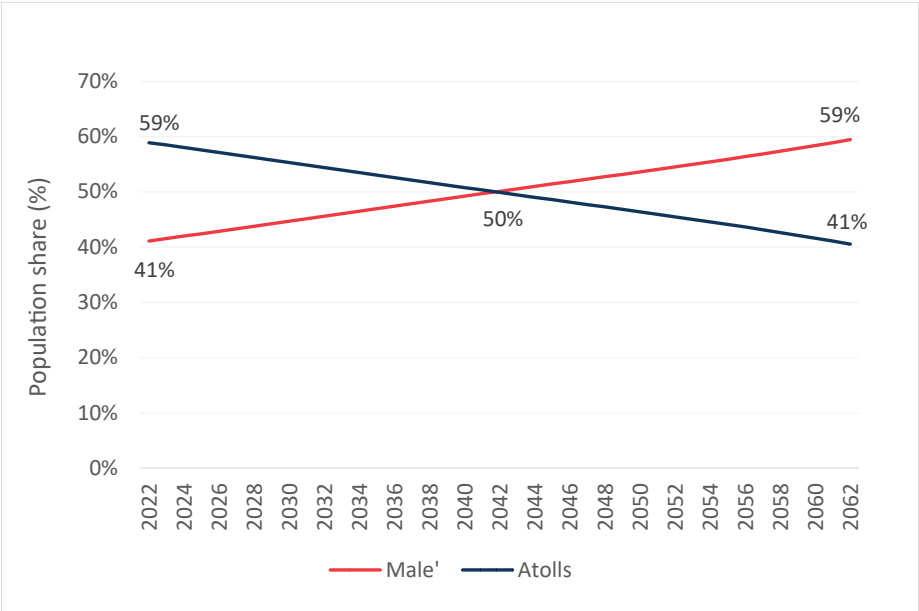
Despite the increase in absolute numbers, the population growth rate in Malé tends to decline, reaching its lowest at 0.6% by 2062. The decline in the Atolls is significant, reaching a negative growth rate as early as 2032 as a result of higher outmigration than in migration and low fertility rates.

Table 4.1: Distribution of resident Maldivian population by locality, 2022-2062

Year	Mid- year Population (numbers)				Population (%)			Population Growth Rate(%)		
	Male'	Admin Islands	Non-Admin Atolls	Total	Male'	Admin Islands	Non-Admin Atolls	Male'	Admin Islands	Non-Admin Atolls
2022	156,727	209,114	15,595	381,436	41%	55%	4%	2.6	0.9	1.9
2032	185,989	203,349	18,691	408,030	46%	50%	5%	1.7	-0.3	1.8
2042	212,219	192,930	18,406	423,554	50%	46%	4%	1.3	-0.5	-0.2
2052	233,047	178,427	16,105	427,578	55%	42%	4%	0.9	-0.8	-1.3
2062	246,544	153,924	14,211	414,679	59%	37%	3%	0.6	-1.5	-1.3

Figure 4.8 presents a detailed view of the change in the distribution of the population if internal migration in the country continues at its current level. By 2041, the resident Maldivian population will be almost evenly divided between Malé and the Atolls, and Malé will continue to gain population thereafter. By 2062, close to two-thirds of the resident Maldivians will live in Malé, urban centre, while one third of the resident Maldivians will live in the Admin Atoll.

Figure 4.8: Share of resident Maldivian between Malé and Atolls, 2022-2062



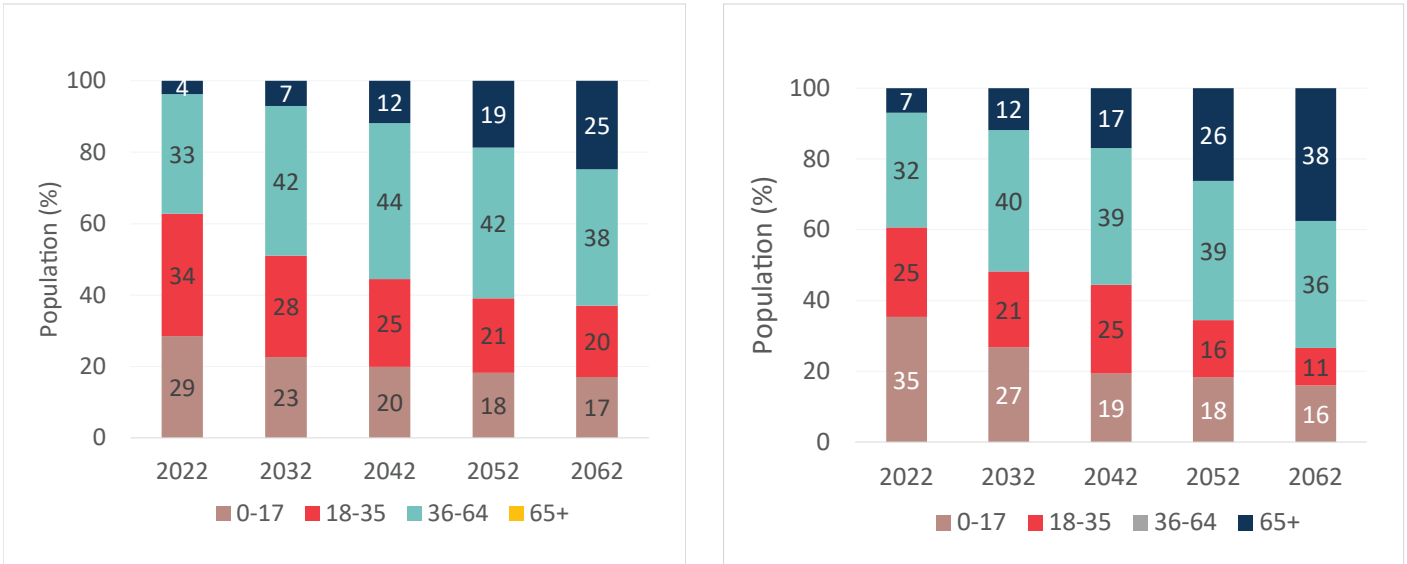
4.5 Changes in the Age-sex composition between Malé and Atolls

This population shift between Malé and the atolls is accompanied by significant changes in age composition. In 2022, children made up 29% of Malé’s population, but their share is projected to fall to 17% by 2062. Over time, Malé will see a rising proportion of adults and a sharp increase in the elderly population, with one in every four Maldivians in the capital expected to be aged 65 or older by 2062.

In the Atolls, children accounted for 35% of the population in 2022. However, ongoing youth outmigration and population ageing is projected to transform this structure. By 2062, the elderly will make up 38% of the Maldivian population in the atolls—meaning one in every 3 Maldivian will be over 65 years.

Figure 4.9: Resident Maldivians in Malé by broad age groups, 2022-2062

Figure 4.10: Resident Maldivians in Admin Islands by broad age groups, 2022-2062



The age sex structure between Malé and Atolls in 2022 showed distinct differences. The atolls had a higher share of children and adults, while Malé had a higher concentration of youth. By 2042, the share of children in both Malé and the atolls is projected to become nearly equal, although the elderly population will grow more rapidly in the atolls. Women of young and adult ages are expected to continue migrating to Malé, reflecting current internal migration patterns.

By 2052, the base of the population pyramid narrows considerably, with a larger share of children residing in Malé and a higher proportion of elderly in the atolls. By 2062, the base is projected to become even narrower due to low fertility assumptions. At this stage, Malé’s population will be characterized primarily by children, youth, and adults, while the atolls will increasingly consist of elderly residents.

Figure 4.11: Population pyramid of Malé and Atolls, 2022

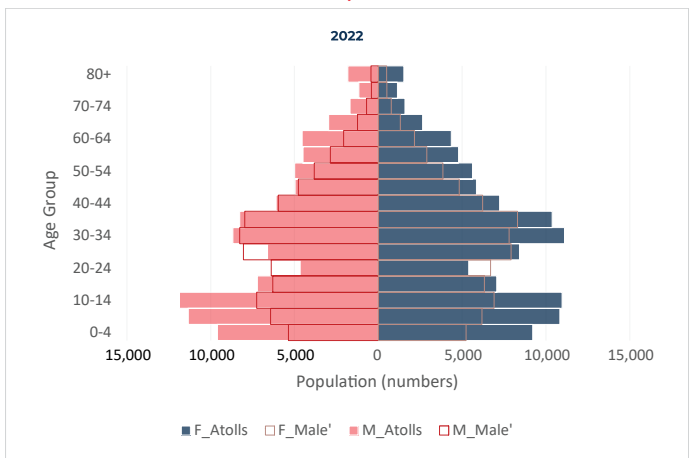


Figure 4.12: Population pyramid of Malé and Atolls, 2032

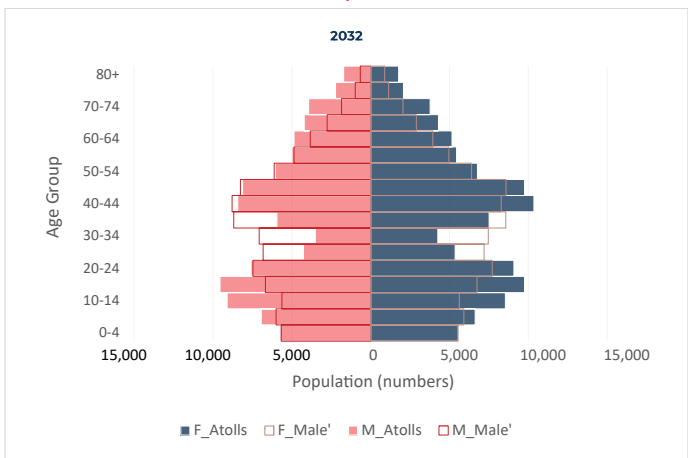


Figure 4.13: Population pyramid of Malé and Atolls, 2042

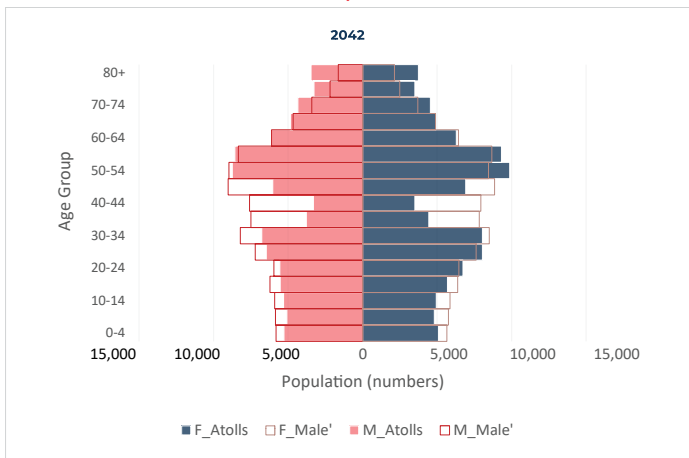


Figure 4.14: Population pyramid of Malé and Atolls, 2052

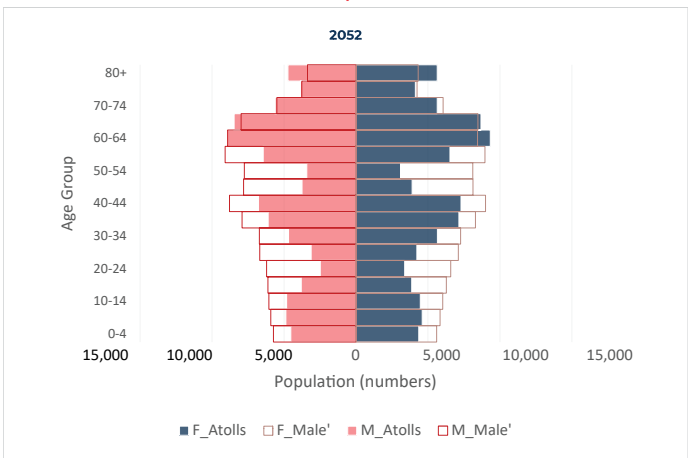
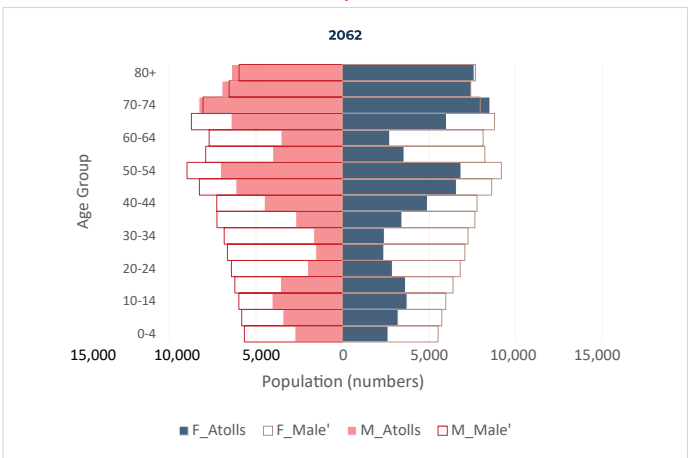


Figure 4.15: Population pyramid of Malé and Atolls, 2062



4.6 Changes in resident Maldivians across Admin Islands

By 2062, the population distribution across the Maldives is expected to undergo major changes. In 2022, HDh and Addu City had the highest number of Maldivians living within the admin islands. In 2062, only six atolls will have a Maldivian population exceeding 10,000, with HDh. Atoll projected to have the largest Maldivian community, followed closely by Addu City.

At the same time, migration within the country is reshaping the population. As more Maldivians move to urban centers, especially to Malé, the space left behind in smaller islands is increasingly filled by foreigners. This means that in some atolls, foreigners will exceed Maldivians in their share. For example, by 2062, over half the people living in V. Atoll will be foreigners, while in Addu City, more than one third of the population will be foreign residents.

Another important aspect is the scale at which Maldivian population decline in the future. Several atolls will experience very sharp declines: Vaavu is projected to lose more than half its people (-60%), followed by Meemu (-53%), and both Gaafu Dhaalu and Thaa more than 40% each. Many other atolls, including Shaviyani, Raa, Laamu, and Gaafu Alif, are projected to lose around one-fifth or more of their residents. Even some of the larger atolls such as Haa Dhaalu and Kaafu will see significant decreases, though less severe compared to the smaller ones. Alif Alif Atoll retains relative stability, with almost no population loss (1%).

In contrast, Malé will see a dramatic increase of 57%.

Table 4.2: Resident Maldivian population by locality and change over time, 2022 & 2062

Atoll	2022		2062		Population change (2022-2062)	% change in population between 2022- 2062	Maldivian Share (%)	
	Maldivian	Total	Maldivian	Total			2022	2062
HA	13,596	15,155	8,719	11,108	(4,877)	-36%	90%	78%
HDh	20,502	23,040	17,134	21,024	(3,369)	-16%	89%	81%
Sh	12,892	14,199	10,703	12,707	(2,189)	-17%	91%	84%
N	11,459	13,089	9,252	11,750	(2,207)	-19%	88%	79%
R	16,382	18,351	13,018	16,036	(3,364)	-21%	89%	81%
B	9,353	11,208	6,808	9,652	(2,545)	-27%	83%	71%
Lh	8,185	9,434	5,048	6,962	(3,137)	-38%	87%	73%
K	13,472	18,773	11,922	20,525	(1,550)	-12%	72%	58%
AA	6,873	8,439	6,912	9,313	39	1%	81%	74%
ADh	8,730	11,182	6,219	9,978	(2,511)	-29%	78%	62%
V	1,560	2,211	626	1,624	(934)	-60%	71%	39%
M	4,883	5,798	2,302	3,705	(2,580)	-53%	84%	62%
F	4,539	5,053	3,699	4,486	(840)	-19%	90%	82%
Dh	5,842	6,973	4,127	5,860	(1,716)	-29%	84%	70%
Th	9,398	10,724	5,362	7,394	(4,036)	-43%	88%	73%
L	13,260	15,152	10,663	13,563	(2,597)	-20%	88%	79%
GA	8,272	9,800	5,342	7,685	(2,929)	-35%	84%	70%
GDh	11,119	12,994	6,260	9,136	(4,858)	-44%	86%	69%
Gn	8,294	9,868	6,738	9,151	(1,557)	-19%	84%	74%
S	20,502	26,432	13,069	22,160	(7,433)	-36%	78%	59%
MLE	156,274	222,322	246,083	353,255	89,809	57%	70%	70%

If internal migration continues at the current rate, the population distribution across Atolls will differ as well. In 2022, three atolls had fewer than 5000 Maldivians (refer to Table 4.3), and projected to rises to four by 2062. The number of atolls with population between 5000-9999 Maldivians is expected to increase from eight to ten. Similarly, atolls with a population size of 10,000 – 14,999 reduces from 6 to 5 atolls. The number of atolls with 15,000–19,999 people will fall from two to just one.

The most interesting change is observed at the higher end of the distribution. In 2022 HDh and Addu City had a population exceeding 20,000 people but by 2062 no atoll is projected to have more than 20,000 Maldivians. As shown in Table 4.2, Addu City is expected to lose population at a faster pace than HDh atoll.

Table 4.3: Atolls by Resident Maldivian population size, 2022 & 2062

Population Size	2022				2062			
	Number of Atolls	Atolls	Population Share	Population Share (%)	Number of Atolls	Atolls	Population Share	Population Share (%)
Less than 5,000 people	3	V, M, F	10,982	5%	4	V, M, F, Dh	10,754	7%
5,000 - 9,999 people	8	B, Lh, AA, ADh, Dh, Th, GA, Gn	64,947	31%	10	HA, N, B, Lh, AA, ADh, Th, GA, GDh, Gn	66,660	43%
10,000 -14,999 people	6	GDh, HA, K, L, N, Sh	75,798	36%	5	Sh, R, K, L, S	59,376	39%
15,000 - 19,999 people	1	R	16,382	8%	1	HDh	17,134	11%
More than 20,000 people	2	HDh, S	41,005	20%	0			

4.7 Maldivians living in non-admin islands

In 2022, around 16,000 Maldivians resided in non-admin islands. The resident Maldivians contributed to 21% of population residing in non-admin islands. Over time, the number of Maldivians living in non-admin islands is projected to decline, reaching its lowest share by 2062. This decline is offset by an increase share of foreigners, who are expected to reach their highest share by 2062. While tourism will continue to be the key industry in the Maldives, retaining Maldivians in these areas will require targeted incentives and investment in developing a skilled local workforce.

Table 4.4: Maldivians residing in non-admin islands and their share, 2022-2062

Year	Resident Population in non-admin islands			Resident Population in non-admin islands (%)	
	Maldivian	Foreign	Total	Maldivian	Foreign
2022	16,048	61,407	77,455	21%	79%
2025	16,758	69,424	86,183	19%	81%
2030	18,669	80,791	99,460	19%	81%
2035	19,490	91,578	111,069	18%	82%
2040	19,266	93,602	112,867	17%	83%
2045	18,388	94,208	112,596	16%	84%
2050	17,141	94,821	111,962	15%	85%
2055	15,974	95,433	111,407	14%	86%
2060	15,021	96,040	111,060	14%	86%
2062	14,672	96,279	110,951	13%	87%

4.8 Changes in key socio-economic dimensions

The changing population dynamics of the Maldives call for adjustments in social and economic policies to address emerging challenges. This section provides a brief analysis of key demographic indicators and the anticipated shifts resulting from changes in population structure. Population projections are particularly valuable for understanding future trends in workforce size, education needs, dependency ratios, and population ageing. These projections highlight the scale of socio-economic demands the Maldives will face in the coming decades. While short-term changes may appear modest, the long-term transformations are expected to be profound and far-reaching.

4.8.1 Education

Throughout Maldives, education is important to children, parents, caregivers and families. The value placed on it is evident in the progress the country has made towards achieving near-universal attendance in pre-primary, primary school and lower-secondary education¹⁰. According to Census 2022, 74% of the children are enrolled in early learning stages (2-4 years), 99% in school between 5-15 years and attendance rate averages at 55% for 16-19 years.

In this section, we will focus on these age groups and see the projected changes for the future and their implications. The pre-school population is about 25,334 Maldivians and constitute 7% of the resident Maldivians. The primary age population share is the highest at 13% while lower secondary & higher account to 7% and 4% of the resident Maldivians.

Because of declining birth rates, the population share of these age groups is projected to decline by half while those in higher secondary decline by one percentage point. By 2062, the number of children eligible for pre-school will fall to just 13,648, with similar declines observed across other school-age groups. This means that only half the number of classrooms currently in use will be required to accommodate a future cohort of children, allowing for single session schooling across the country. The demand for pre-school, primary and secondary education will fall. In some atolls, the number of children in certain age groups may even be too few to fill a single classroom (see Annex). Hence, these changes points to the need to reassess education spending, human resources and infrastructure, with a stronger emphasis on improving the quality of education rather than expanding capacity in future.

11 <https://www.unicef.org/maldives/what-we-do/learning>

Table 4.5: Breakdown of child population, 2022-2062

Year	Resident Maldivians (Numbers)					Resident Maldivians (%)			
	Pre-school (2-5 years considered)	Primary age (6-12 years considered)	Secondary age (13- 16 years considered)	Higher Secondary age (17- 19 years considered)	Total	Pre-school (2-5 years considered)	Primary age (6-12 years considered)	Secondary age (13- 16 years considered)	Higher Secondary age (17- 19 years considered)
2022	25,334	50,739	26,434	15,604	381,436	7%	13%	7%	4%
2025	22,144	47,169	29,772	18,880	391,162	6%	12%	8%	5%
2030	19,629	39,646	27,069	22,013	403,898	5%	10%	7%	5%
2035	17,552	34,502	22,391	19,182	413,631	4%	8%	5%	5%
2040	17,345	30,749	19,730	15,494	421,210	4%	7%	5%	4%
2045	17,415	29,999	17,285	13,866	426,240	4%	7%	4%	3%
2050	16,900	30,058	16,860	12,498	427,994	4%	7%	4%	3%
2055	15,750	29,286	16,967	12,420	425,645	4%	7%	4%	3%
2060	14,249	27,401	16,610	12,479	418,783	3%	7%	4%	3%
2062	13,648	26,430	16,264	12,372	414,679	3%	6%	4%	3%

4.8.2 The workforce – demographic window of opportunity period

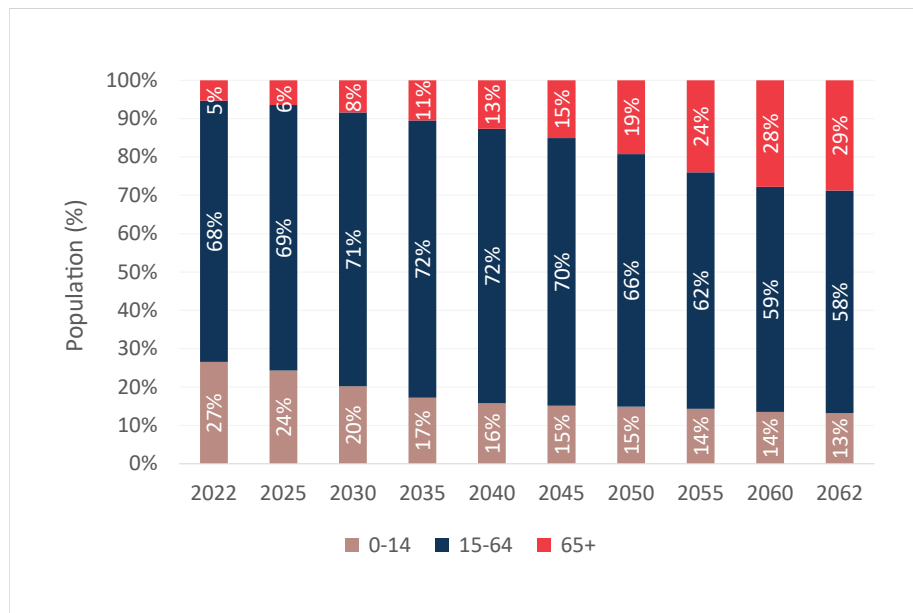
The size of the working age population (15-64 years) determines the potential of the future workforce. In 2022, 68% of the resident Maldivians were within this age group. And shown from Figure 4.14, between 2030 and 2045 the Maldives will have the highest of share working age population. The workforce gradually declines after the year 2045 and overtime loses 10% of its initial share by 2062.

This trend highlights the importance of generating sufficient employment opportunities and reducing unemployment before the working age population reaches its peak in 2035. Having a large workforce while at the same time the elderly population is small provides an opportunity to realize its demographic dividend.

The demographic bonus period occurs when the percentage of children (0-14 years) is lower than 30% and the percentage of elderly (65+ years) is lower than 15%. According to MBS (May, 2016), Maldives entered this window of opportunity between 2005 and 2010. By 2046, Maldives will end the period of demographic window of opportunity and ageing will set in.

The key challenge, therefore, will be to effectively absorb the working-age population into the labor force while simultaneously investing in education, skills development, and training to sustain productivity in the face of an aged society.

Figure 4.16: Resident Maldivians by broad age groups, 2022-2062



4.8.3 Women- future reproductive age group

During the projected period, successive generations are born, grow and enter the childbearing ages, contributing to the next generation. In 2022, more than half of the female population was within reproductive age. This share is expected to remain stable until 2030. However, as fertility declines and fewer children are born, the number of women entering childbearing age also decreases over time. By 2062, women of reproductive age are projected to account for only 38% of the total female population with one in every three women within childbearing age.

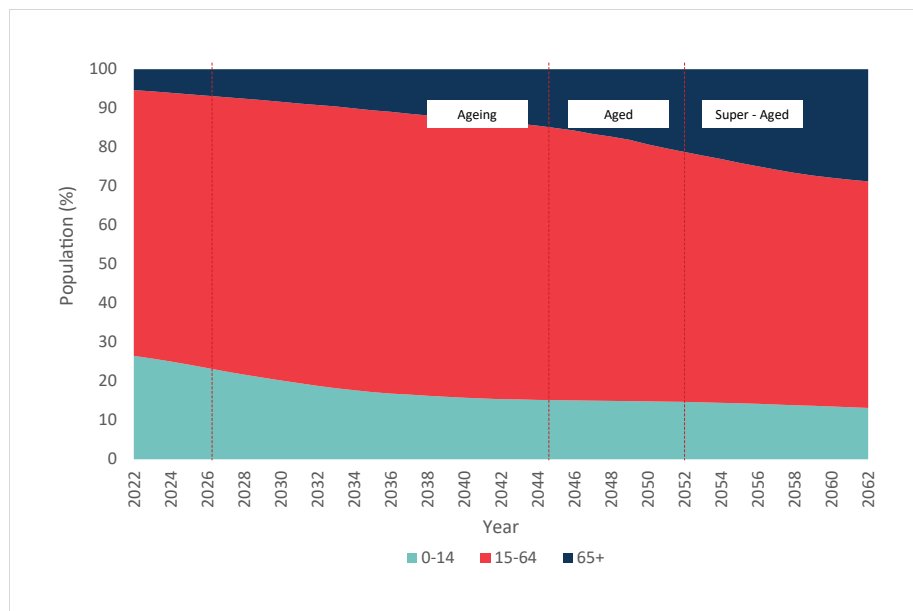
Table 4.6: Share of reproductive age women, 2022-2062

Year	Female population	Reproductive age women	Share of women in reproductive age
2022	187,483	104,439	56%
2025	192,422	107,897	56%
2030	198,916	111,964	56%
2035	203,962	108,859	53%
2040	207,969	101,151	49%
2045	210,689	93,704	44%
2050	211,749	89,606	42%
2055	210,775	87,524	42%
2060	207,592	81,712	39%
2062	205,648	78,539	38%

4.8.4 Elderly – period of ‘aged’ and ‘super-age’

The Maldives is experiencing rapid population aging. In 2022, just 5% of resident Maldivians were aged 65 or older. Between 2026 and 2044, Maldives becomes an ageing population, where the share of elderly doubles to more than 10%. Between 2045 and 2051, Maldives becomes an aged population. The year 2052 marks Maldives entry into the ranks of super-aged societies- with almost 1 in every 3 Maldivians aged 65 years or above by 2062. This is a milestone that around half of all countries are projected to reach by that time.

Figure 4.17: Changes in the elderly population, 2022-2062

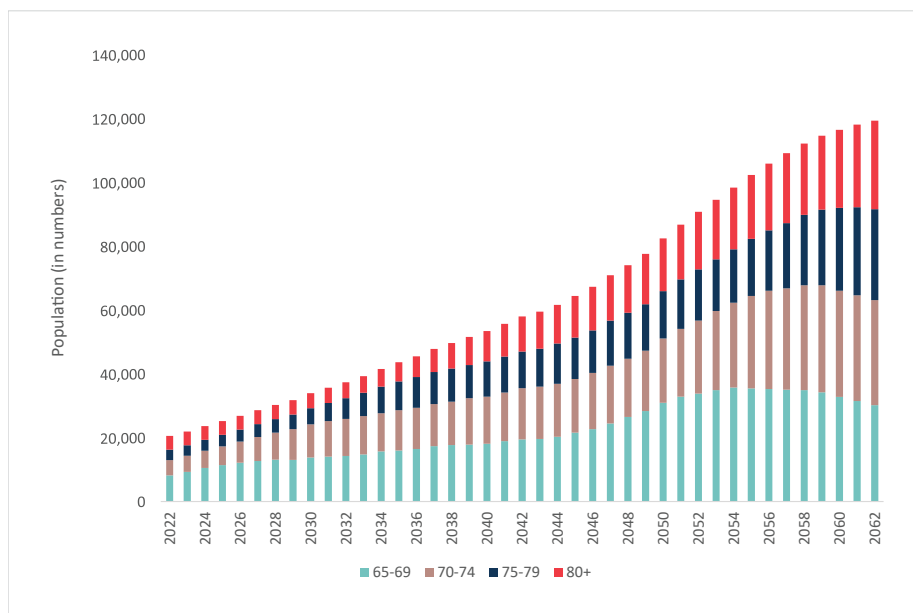


In 2022, the elderly population consisted of around 20,000 people. By 2062, this figure is projected to increase sixfold, reaching 120,000 elders. With this increase in their share, the composition within the elderly population also changes.

Within this group, the share of the oldest elderly (80+) is expected to grow at the fastest pace, especially after 2040, while the 65–69 age group is projected to peak mid-century before declining slightly. The steady rise of those aged 70–74 and 75–79 also contributes to the ageing structure.

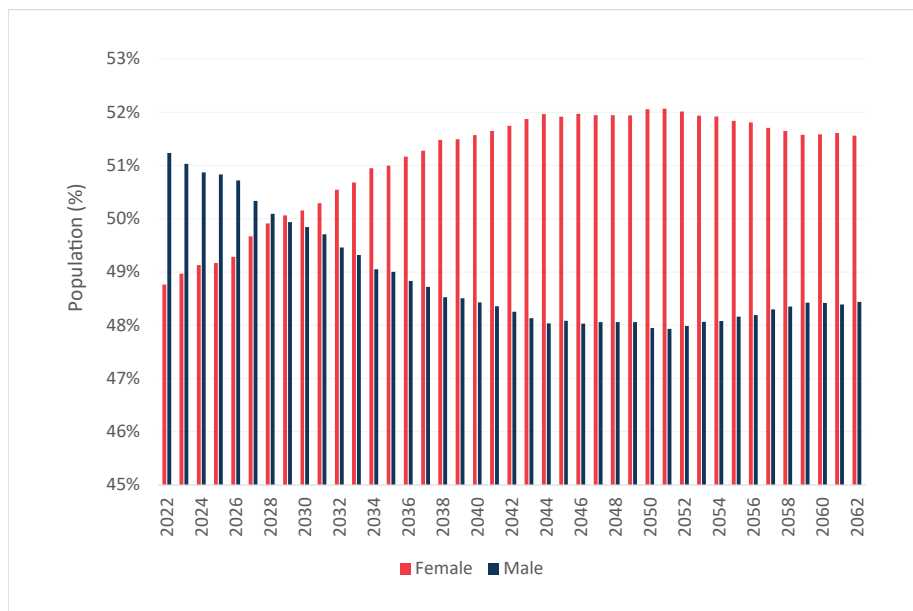
This pattern signals that not only is the elderly population expanding in number, but it is also aging within the elderly group itself.

Figure 4.18: Breakdown of elderly population, 2022-2062



In 2022, despite women having a higher life expectancy, the elderly population included more men than women. However, from 2029 onward, women begin to outnumber men in this age group, a trend that continues throughout the projection period. Over time, this gap widens, with women projected to comprise 52% of the elderly population compared to 48% for men by 2062.

Figure 4.19: Share of elderly men and women, 2022-2062

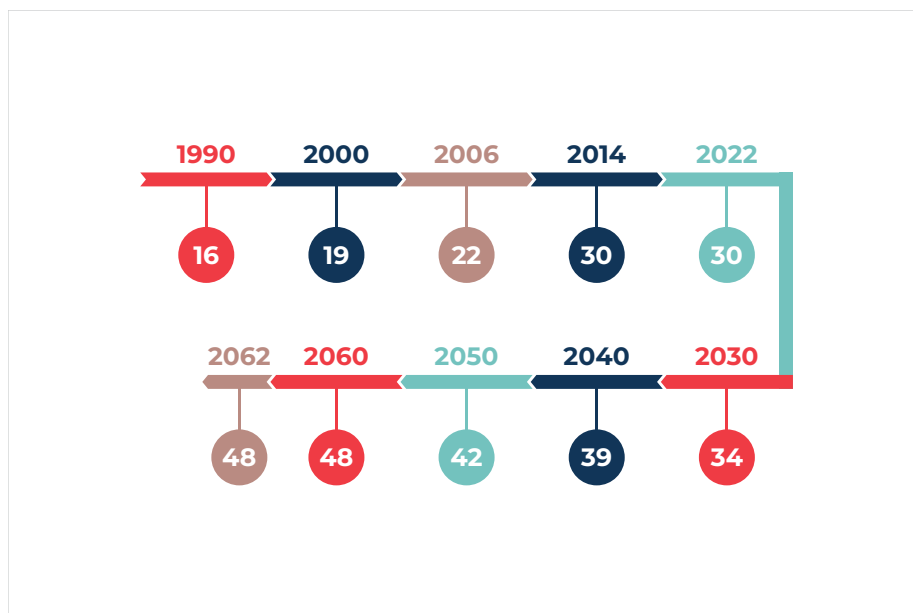


4.8.5 Ageing measures

Various indicators are used to measure population ageing with more accuracy. A crude indicator is often given by the median age. The median age is the mid-point of a population's age distribution and defines exactly the age at which half the population is older and the other half is younger than the median age. The median age is often used to describe a population as 'young', 'old', or 'ageing'.

The median age of the Maldivian population has been rising steadily from 1985 to 2062, indicating a clear trend toward an ageing population. In 1985, the median age was 17 years, reflecting a largely young population. By 2006, it had increased to 22 years, and then rose more sharply to 30 years by 2014, a level that remained constant through 2022. Looking ahead, the median age is projected to continue increasing, reaching 34 years by 2030, 37 years by 2040, 42 years by 2050, and 48 years by 2062. This upward trend highlights the growing proportion of older individuals within the population.

Figure 4.20: Median age of Maldivian population, 1980- 2062

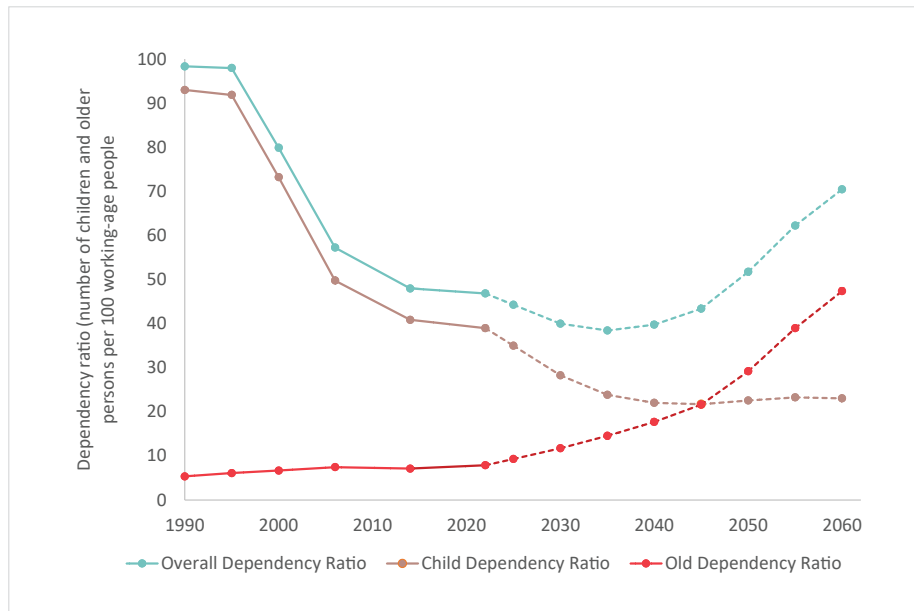


The dependency ratio is a way to compare how many people need support, like children and older people, with how many people are working. When the number is low, it means there are fewer people to take care of. When the number is high, it means more people need help from working people.

The Maldivian population is currently young, giving the country a low dependency ratio and a unique opportunity for economic growth. In 2022, there was roughly one dependent for every two people of working age.

However, in the long term, population ageing will push the dependency ratio higher, mainly because of an increase in the elderly population. By 2045, older people will outnumber children as dependents. By 2062, the dependency ratio is projected to rise to 70, meaning that for every three working-age individuals, there will be two dependents. This shift will place greater pressure on the workforce and on social support systems.

Figure 4.21: Overall dependency ratio, Child dependency ratio and Old dependency ratio, 1990-2062



More refined indicators of population ageing include the ageing index, which is sometimes referred to as the “elder-child ratio”. The ageing index is defined as the number of people age 65 and over per 100 youths under age 15 (Gavrilov and Heuveline, 2003: 33). The ageing index compares the number of elderly people to the number of children and reflects the long-term decline in fertility as well as the improvement of survival in the older ages. Thus, the higher the index is, the older the population results. Therefore, the ageing index is a good indicator of changes in the age structure within the population.

Table 4.7: Ageing Index, 2022-2062

Year	Children (0-14 years)	Elderly (65+)	Ageing Index
2022	101,188	20,490	20
2025	94,903	25,171	27
2030	81,527	33,899	42
2035	71,282	43,574	61
2040	66,456	53,401	80
2045	64,624	64,333	100
2050	63,608	82,387	130
2055	61,041	102,258	168
2060	56,643	116,428	206
2062	54,594	119,246	218

The ageing index shows that in 2022 there were 20 elderly persons for every 100 children. In 2045, for every child there is an elderly person in the country. By 2062, the index doubles, indicating there will be slightly more than two elderly people for every young child in Maldives. This shift carries significant policy implications for the economy and social planning. As the share of the pre-productive population (0–14 years) declines and the post-productive population (65+ years) grows, the gap in the labour force could increasingly be addressed by extending the participation of older generations through changes in the retirement age, as well as upskilling and reskilling initiatives targeted at the elderly population. However, this can only be realized if future elderly populations remain active and healthy, enabling their continued participation in social and economic life.

The background of the slide is a dense, abstract composition of overlapping human profiles. The profiles are rendered in a variety of warm colors, including shades of orange, red, and brown, creating a sense of depth and movement. The profiles are facing right, and their features are simplified, focusing on the outline and the play of light and shadow. The overall effect is a textured, layered visual that suggests a diverse and interconnected community.

Part C:

**Policy Implications and
Way Forward**

5.1 Introduction

The Maldives is entering a new demographic era. Having experienced rapid growth over the past three decades, the country is now approaching a period of slower expansion, followed by stabilization and eventual decline in population size. This transition is shaped by two profound forces: the steady advance of population ageing and the increasing concentration of people in the capital city. Together, these shifts will define the economic and social landscape of the Maldives in the coming decades.

These changes are not unique to the Maldives. Across the Asia–Pacific region, many countries are grappling with similar dynamics: slowing population growth, ageing populations, and heightened urban concentration. Yet the Maldives faces distinctive challenges as a small island nation with a high concentration of residents in the capital and an economy heavily reliant on tourism and foreign labor.

Population projections suggest that the Maldives will reach its demographic peak around mid-century, after which the resident population will gradually contract. At the same time, the share of older persons will rise rapidly, propelling the country into the ranks of “super-aged” societies by 2052. These trends carry significant implications for economic growth, public finances, and the sustainability of support systems that rest on both families and the state. Unlike high-income countries such as Japan, which entered super-aged status with strong institutions and wealth, the Maldives will confront these shifts at a much earlier stage of development, with fewer resources to cushion the transition.

Addressing these challenges will require policies that anticipate long-term needs while also seizing the opportunities created by slower growth and longer lives. A favorable demographic structure in the near term provides scope for greater investment in human capital, while the longer-term ageing transition demands reforms to ensure the adequacy and sustainability of health, pension, and social protection systems. These projections underscore the importance of forward-looking, integrated policy responses that place demographic change at the center of national development planning. The policy challenge is to anticipate these transformations and respond proactively, embedding demographic realities into the country’s development strategy.

5.2 Key Results of the Population Projections 2022–2062

a) Population size and growth

The resident Maldivian population is expected to reach its peak around the middle of the century. Between 2022 and 2052, the population is projected to increase by about 14 percent, adding more than 50,000 people and reaching a high of approximately 435,000 residents. After this point, growth will give way to gradual decline, with the population shrinking by roughly 1,000 person per year over the following decade.

This trajectory represents a dramatic departure from the past three decades, during which the population expanded by more than 70 percent, adding over 150,000 people. The shift from rapid growth to stabilization and eventual contraction signals a new demographic era for the Maldives—one in which the implications of ageing and migration will weigh more heavily than simple increases in population size.

b) Ageing and super-aged status

The most transformative feature of these projections is the pace of population ageing. In 2022, only 5 percent of resident Maldivians were aged 65 or older. By 2034, that share will double to 10 percent; by 2045 it will reach 15 percent; and by 2051, almost one in every three Maldivians will be 65 or above. At that point, older persons will outnumber youth, marking the Maldives' entry into the ranks of "super-aged" societies.

This milestone is part of a broader global transition: by mid-century, nearly half of all countries in the world are expected to become super-aged. Japan reached this stage as early as 2005, while countries such as Thailand and China are projected to arrive there in the 2040s. The Maldives will experience this transition later than Japan but much earlier in its development trajectory, with fewer institutional resources and at a lower income level. This underscores the urgency of preparation, as the economic and social consequences of ageing will be more difficult to absorb in a small island economy that is heavily reliant on tourism and external labor.

c) Urbanization

The spatial distribution of the population is shifting markedly. In 2022, just over two in five Maldivians resided in the capital, Malé. Within two decades, half of the country's population is expected to live there, and by mid-century nearly three in five Maldivians will call Malé home.

Another way to view this transformation is by considering absolute growth. Driven largely by migration from the atolls, Malé is projected to expand by 54 percent over the projection period, adding nearly 90,000 people. By contrast, populations outside the capital are expected to decline in size by nearly 30 percent, reflecting sustained out-migration and limited opportunities in the atolls.

This sharp divergence mirrors broader Asia–Pacific trends, where urbanization is reshaping societies at an unprecedented pace. ESCAP projects that the region's cities will absorb more than a billion additional residents by mid-century, concentrating growth in capitals and large metropolitan centers. For the Maldives, however, the challenge is amplified

by small-island geography: Malé's limited land and infrastructure must accommodate rapid growth, while outlying atolls risk depopulation and economic stagnation. Managing this imbalance will require policies that balance the efficiencies of urban concentration with strategies to sustain vitality and opportunity in the atolls.

d) Uncertainty about future fertility and migration

A further source of complexity in the Maldives' demographic outlook is the uncertainty surrounding future fertility and migration. These factors introduce significant variation into long-term projections and complicate policy planning.

e) Fertility:

Whether fertility in the Maldives remains at its current level of 1.7 births per woman or falls toward 1.3, the effect will be to alter only the speed of population ageing. Higher fertility could slow the transition slightly, and lower fertility could accelerate it, but in either case the Maldives is on course to complete the shift to an aged society. In the short to medium term, however, fertility changes could affect dependency ratios and the resources required for education and child health.

f) Foreign migration

Future foreign migration flows are even harder to predict and will be decisive for the labor force. The Maldives relies heavily on foreign workers, particularly in tourism, construction, and services. By 2050, the size and composition of the labor force will depend greatly on the scale of immigration. The baseline projection forecasts a working-age population (ages 20-64) in 2050 of 454,000 people – comprised of 42% foreign workers. But if the foreign worker population was maintained at its current size, the working-age population in 2050 would be 389,000 – comprised of 32% foreign workers. With no foreign workers, the working-age population in 2050 would be 261,000 people. So, the potential labor force in 2050 could reasonably range from 261,000 to 454,000. This large variability complicates long-term planning for education, labor markets, and social protection, underscoring the need for flexible policies that can adjust to changing conditions.

g) Internal migration

Recent migration patterns from the atolls to Malé varied a lot from year-to-year – due to the sharp reduction during the COVID epidemic. Our projections assume that internal migration maintains its current level throughout the projection period. This migration assumption is the main reason for the rapid growth of Malé and the eventual de-population of the atolls. This trend is highly uncertain and at the same time very impactful on population size and age structure in the Atolls.

5.3 Policy Implications of the Projections

The demographic changes projected for the Maldives will bring wide-ranging consequences for economic growth, social protection, and environmental sustainability. Several key implications emerge:

- **Super-aged society.** The Maldives must prepare for a profound shift in age structure. Rising numbers of older persons will place new demands on health systems, pensions, and social protection, while a smaller working-age population will limit the resources available to sustain them. Long-term planning must therefore focus on the adequacy and sustainability of healthcare, pension arrangements, and eldercare systems.
- **Human capital investment.** One of the main opportunities provided by population ageing is the smaller cohorts of youth which enable significantly higher investments in the current and future generations. This offers scope to deepen investments in children's education, health, and skills, thereby raising future productivity and resilience. Investing in youth and women, in particular, will be critical to offset the impact of a shrinking labor force as the country ages.
- **Urban concentration.** Migration to Malé will continue to intensify, requiring major investments in housing, infrastructure, and service provision. Policymakers must anticipate rising pressures on land, housing affordability, and public services in the capital, while also pursuing balanced development in the atolls to prevent deepening disparities between the capital and outer islands.
- **Migration uncertainty.** The Maldives' heavy reliance on foreign labor underscores the importance of proactive migration management. Future labor force size and composition will depend on the inflow of foreign workers, particularly in tourism and construction. At the same time, policies must prioritize the development of the domestic workforce, especially women and youth, to ensure long-term economic resilience and reduce vulnerability to external shocks.

5.4 The Way Forward for Policy Formulation and Implementation

The Maldives must act decisively to prepare for the demographic transformations that lie ahead. Population and development policies cannot be pursued in isolation but must be embedded within the country's broader development strategy. Strengthening institutions will be essential, particularly those responsible for pensions, healthcare, migration, and urban planning. Without robust institutional capacity, the country risks falling behind the pace of demographic change.

Strategic directions

The Maldives now stands at a pivotal demographic juncture. The new population projections provide clear evidence of the transitions to come, and the policy response must be equally clear and proactive. Addressing these findings requires an approach in which reforms are mutually reinforcing policies on ageing, migration, human capital, and urban development must be pursued together, rather than separately. Only by integrating demographic realities into long-term development planning can the Maldives ensure that population change becomes a driver of resilience and opportunity, rather than a source of vulnerability.

Key priorities moving forward include:

- **Integrating population issues** into national development strategies, particularly as the Maldives navigates the twin transitions of ageing and urbanization.
- **Strengthening institutions** to manage demographic change, including bodies responsible for health, pensions, migration, and urban planning.

Expanding Research and Projections

Given the uncertainties surrounding fertility, migration, and urbanization, demographic projections must be updated regularly and expanded in scope. Reliable and timely forecasts are critical to ensure that policy remains aligned with demographic realities and responsive to emerging trends. This effort should include:

- **Frequent updates of population projections**, using the latest data on fertility, mortality, and migration, so that national and sectoral planning is always grounded in the most current evidence.
- **Scenario-based planning for foreign labor**, linking demographic projections with expected developments in tourism and related industries. Stronger integration of data from economic planners and housing authorities would help anticipate internal labor flows as well as demand for foreign workers.
- **Island- and atoll-level projections** that capture localized dynamics. Because uncertainty is greater at the subnational level, these forecasts should draw on multiple data sources such as school enrollment records, administrative registers, and potentially even big data streams (e.g., mobility or communications data) to track internal migration and population movements in near-real time.

Strengthening the research base in this way will not only improve the accuracy of population projections but also ensure that they remain directly relevant for policymaking in areas such as housing, labor markets, tourism, and social protection.

Enhancing Advocacy and Awareness

Raising awareness of demographic change will be essential to building consensus around reforms that may be politically or socially sensitive. Policymakers and the public alike must understand that population ageing and urban concentration are not distant possibilities but near-term realities that require preparation today.

- **National Transfer Accounts (NTAs)** can play a critical role in this effort. By showing how different age groups contribute to and draw on economic resources, NTAs translate abstract demographic trends into concrete evidence of intergenerational flows. For example, they can demonstrate how much working-age adults transfer to children and older persons through taxes and family support, and how this balance will shift as the population ages. Such visual and accessible tools can help explain the urgency of reform.
- **Public engagement** through awareness campaigns, education curricula, and dialogue with civil society can foster understanding of the challenges and opportunities that come with an ageing society.
- **Policy advocacy** should also highlight how demographic realities intersect with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring that population issues remain central to national and international development agendas.

By enhancing advocacy and awareness, the Maldives can build the political and social support needed to implement difficult but necessary reforms, while also empowering citizens to see demographic change as part of a shared national future.

5.5 Conclusion

By mid-century, the Maldives will be a super-aged society. Ageing and urbanization will reshape the economy, society, and environment, creating both risks and opportunities. The country must act now by integrating population into development strategies, reforming social protection, strengthening institutions, and investing in women and youth. With foresight, demographic change rather than an obstacle can become a foundation for sustainable and inclusive growth.

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