



Diaspora engagement mapping MALDIVES

Facts & figures

Terminology: In the 2014 census, the government referred to their diaspora as 'non-resident' Maldivians.

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections
for citizens residing abroad²



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **0.08%**
Remittances inflow (USD billion): **5.65**

Voting from abroad³:

At embassies/consulates



Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from UNDESA (2024) and remittances from the [World Bank](#) (2024).

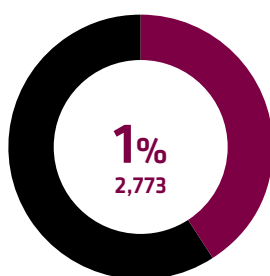
Emigration



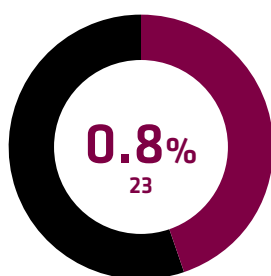
% of emigrants in
total population



% of which
in the EU



♂ 41%
♀ 59%



♂ 43.5%
♀ 56.5%

Top countries of destination



Sri Lanka	1,424
Australia	712
India	574
Seychelles	38
Denmark	14

1 Maldivian Citizenship Act Law No. 1/95, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/58d3c59b4.pdf>

2 https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_maldives_parliamentary_elections_faqs_april_2019.pdf

3 Ibid.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2006** ● **Seventh National Development Plan** included a policy on boosting the training of the labour force through education and training for sectoral development. The first strategy under this policy was to maximise the utilisation of overseas fellowships for education and training. The Ministry of Higher Education has since listed a range of scholarships and loans on their website to encourage students to go abroad for either undergraduate or postgraduate studies, and 85 of these have been taken up. This shows the government encouraging its students to study abroad.⁴
- 2019** ● **Strategic Action Plan:** Designed around five priority areas, Blue Economy, Caring State, Dignified Families, Jazeera Dhiriulhin, and Good Governance, the SAP includes one specific reference to the diaspora under policy 4 “to provide a quality and efficient consular service to Maldivians abroad,” including easing travel and facilitating visas.

Practices

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Maldives Climate Change Policy Framework 2015

One of the key targets of the framework is capacity building and leading advocacy at climate negotiations by inculcating climate change advocacy and awareness cross-sectorally nationwide as well as in the international arena. The framework suggests that, in order to do this, Maldives should seek to host, both in the Maldives and in their missions abroad, frequent seminars/workshops/interactive dialogues designed to promote Maldives' advocacy on climate change for climate vulnerable/frontline states.

The Registry of Maldivian Students Abroad 2024 - ongoing

The registry has been launched by the Ministry of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development as an effort to compile a register of Maldivians studying abroad, covering both government scholarship holders and self-funded students. This compiled register aims to facilitate the management of students studying overseas to ensure better support.

The BML Student Portal 2024 - ongoing

The Bank of Maldives (BML) has launched the BML Student Portal to facilitate the registered overseas Maldivian students' access to increased monthly foreign transaction limit of up to USD 1,200 starting from November 2024. Students can register through the portal by providing the necessary information and documents, including a copy of the passport, valid student visa, a university's enrolment letter including personal details, the course of study, and the study duration. The approval process is expected to be completed within one business day and students can monitor their application status through the portal and the BML Mobile App. This initiative was launched to address the financial restrictions previously faced by Maldivians studying abroad as their debit allowance was limited to only USD 1,000 due to US dollar shortage in the Maldives.

⁴ <https://mohe.gov.mv/scholarship-loan>

E-Passport and National ID issuance service in Malaysia for Maldivian Diaspora

The Maldives launched e-passport and national ID card issuance services in Malaysia, accessible through the Maldivian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur. This marks the first time such services have been made available outside the Maldives, aimed at improving access for Maldivians residing abroad.

» Observations

The “Observations” and “Obstacles” sections contain additional information on the context of diaspora engagement that does not fit directly into the other sections. They are based on a combination of literature review and comments from the authors. New information is incorporated during the annual updates. Readers are invited to verify the relevance of the information at the time of reading, as the context may have evolved.

Given the relatively low number of Maldivians living abroad, engaging with them has proven challenging and therefore diaspora engagement has not been a priority for the Maldivian government. As a result, there have been no schemes to encourage the return of Maldivians who emigrated abroad. Maldivian migrants are mainly those seeking employment, students and asylum seekers/refugees. The shortage of degree-level programmes in the country has compelled Maldivians who wish to study at degree and postgraduate degree levels to seek their university education abroad. According to the 2014 Census, 5,589 people were identified as “non-resident” Maldivians (citizens living or intending to live abroad for at least 1 year).⁵

In April 2024, the Ministry of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development introduced the registry of Maldivian students abroad, aiming to ensure better support and monitoring (see Spotlight section). As of December 2024, according to the ministry, a total of 2,116 students have registered in the system.

Obstacles



- **Limited contact:** The diaspora seldom self-report to an embassy and thus there is limited contact between them and their home country.
- **Low priority:** There are very few Maldivians living abroad and engaging them is a challenge. Neither the Maldives, nor destination countries can prioritise contributing to an active diaspora policy for such a small part of their population. Even in Sri Lanka, which houses almost 50% of the Maldivian diaspora, Maldivians represent only 3.5% of the foreign population.⁶
- **Lack of data:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not collect data on the Maldivian diaspora. There is limited capacity and collaboration in data collection, analysis and exchange among the various organizations that manage migration in Maldives. The three databases - XPAT, PISCES, and CBN - managed by Maldives Immigration are not integrated as different developers created them. Records are also only available since 2013, when Maldives Immigration was created.

⁵ Migration in Maldives: A Country Profile 2018

⁶ IOM, “Migration in Maldives: A Country Profile 2018”, (2018)

Annex:

List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

International Organisation for Migration 2013

Maldives became a member state of IOM in 2011 and IOM established its office in Malé in 2013. IOM has one staff member based in Malé and it has worked with the government to promote safe migration.

- **National institutions**
 - At ministerial level

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The MFA supports nationals abroad via its Consular Services Departments, including to obtain visas through missions accredited to the Maldives.

Ministry of Economic Development 1979

The Ministry formulates and regulates economic and trade policies. It promotes trade and investment, immigration and emigration, labour, maritime and land transport sectors. Since 2014, the Ministry has also been involved in labour management, in addition to migration management and anti-human trafficking victim support services.

- At local level

Maldivian Red Crescent 2009

A non-profit, volunteer-run humanitarian organisation with the governing board having a mix of Maldivian diaspora and Maldivians on the ground. The organisation has not produced reports or data on migration, but has been involved in several projects on the ground.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Maldivian Students' Association UK (MSAUK) 2015

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

A non-profit student association that represents the Maldivian students in the UK. The group hosts events to bring together Maldivian students in the UK. The association also conducts workshops and sessions for students in Maldives who are sitting for their GCSE (formerly 'O' level) and A-level examinations (British academic qualifications for secondary education, usually taken at the ages of 16 and 18 respectively). The International Maldivian Students Association (IMSA) is an informal collective of Maldivian students associations/communities across the world. On behalf of IMSA, MSAUK has helped organise a fundraising appeal to help Maldives overcome the Covid-19 pandemic. The appeal calls upon Maldivian families living abroad and the international community at large to provide monetary donations.

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Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 520+ institutions](#)



Read more about diaspora organisations in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora organisation](#)"

