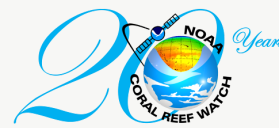




Maldives - Central (Male Atolls / Ari / Vaavu)



Regional summary of 37 dive sites. Figures are averages across the sites that report them (n = sites with a value); each site's own page has its individual values. Part of the [Maldives](#) overview.



Coral Health Index: TBD

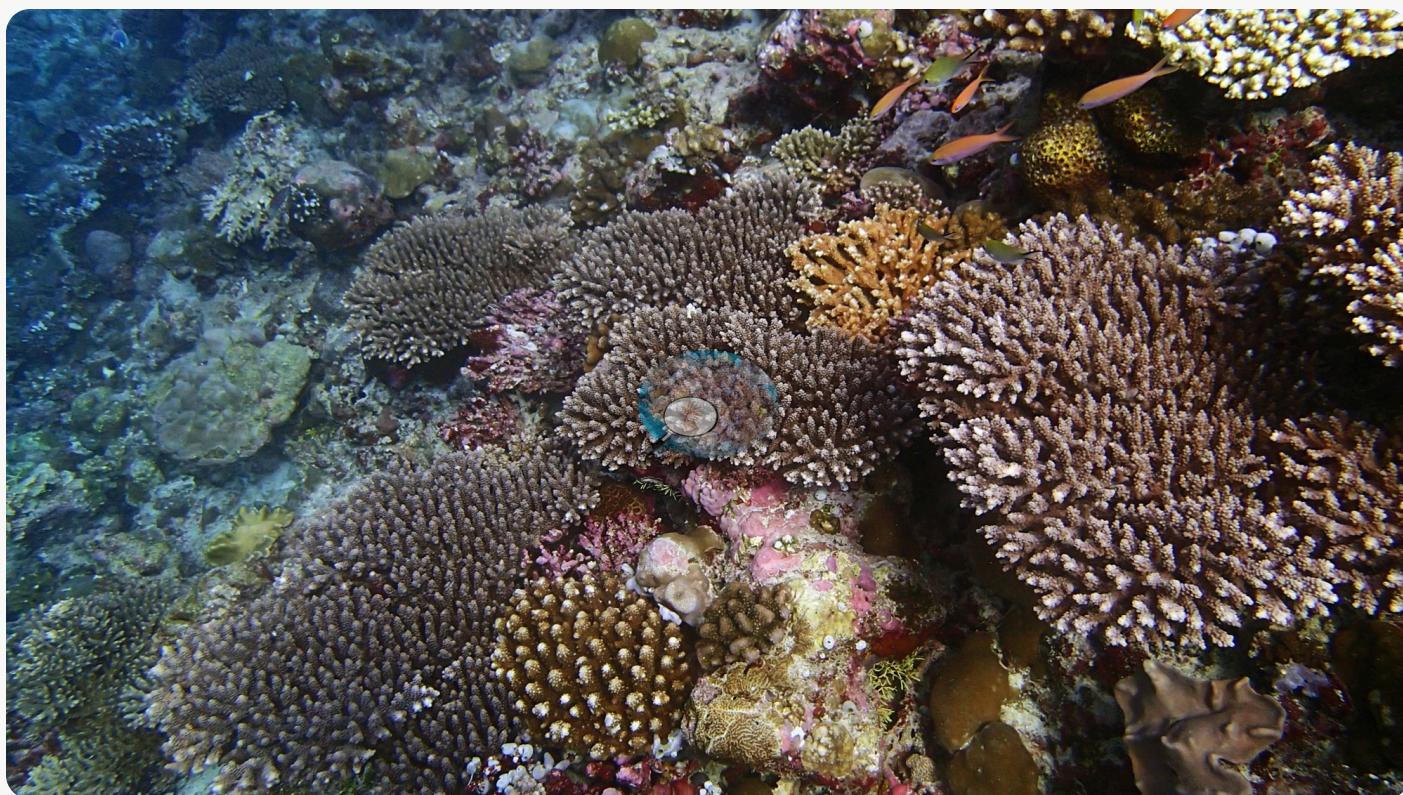


Photo: Anderson Mayfield/Coral Reef Diagnostics — [Maldives](#) - Ari Atoll south tip

COUNTRY

Maldives

SITES

37

each linked below

HARD CORAL COVER
(REGIONAL MEAN)

19% ± 6.6% (std. dev.)

n = 30 of 37 sites. range 8.1–35%

WATER TEMP. DURING
SURVEYS (REGIONAL MEAN)

—

n = 0 of 37 sites

CORAL HEALTH INDEX
(REGIONAL MEAN)

not yet scored

n = 0 of 37 sites

MOST RECENT WATER
TEMPERATURE RECORD

29.7°C

16 Sep 2026 · [Maldives](#)

MOST RECENT HEAT STRESS RECORD



0.0°C-weeks

16 Sep 2026 · below alert level

MEAN ANNUAL MAX DEGREE HEATING WEEKS (DHW), LAST 5 YEARS

2.2°C-weeks

2021–2025 · Maldives

HIGHEST ANNUAL HEAT STRESS

10.9°C-weeks

in 2016 · Maldives

SEVERE HEAT-STRESS YEARS

3

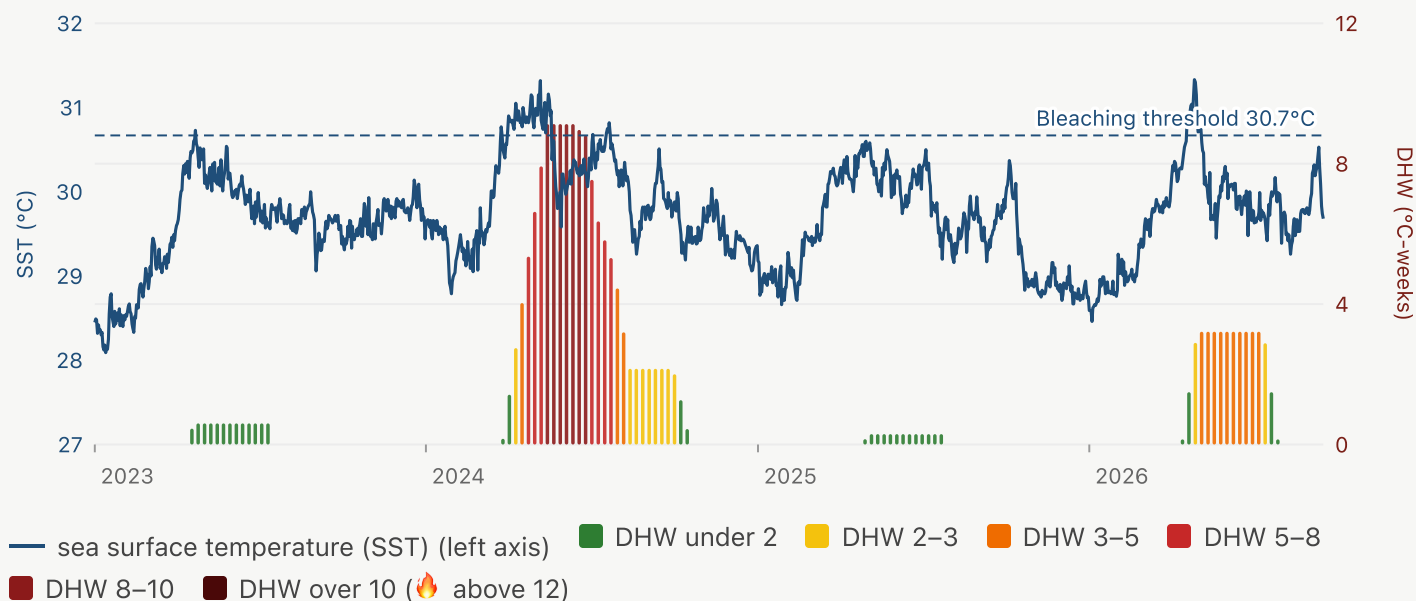
1985–2025 · 2 in the last 10 years

Heat-stress figures: [NOAA Coral Reef Watch](#) — [Maldives](#) 5-km virtual station. Each pill links its source record and carries the values behind it.

REGIONAL SUMMARY

Bank reefs, thilas, channels, and walls in the central Maldives atolls were first dived in January 2016 and resurveyed that April, when most recorded colonies at several sites had bleached. Later dives found crown-of-thorns starfish at ten sites and young corals recolonizing rubble.

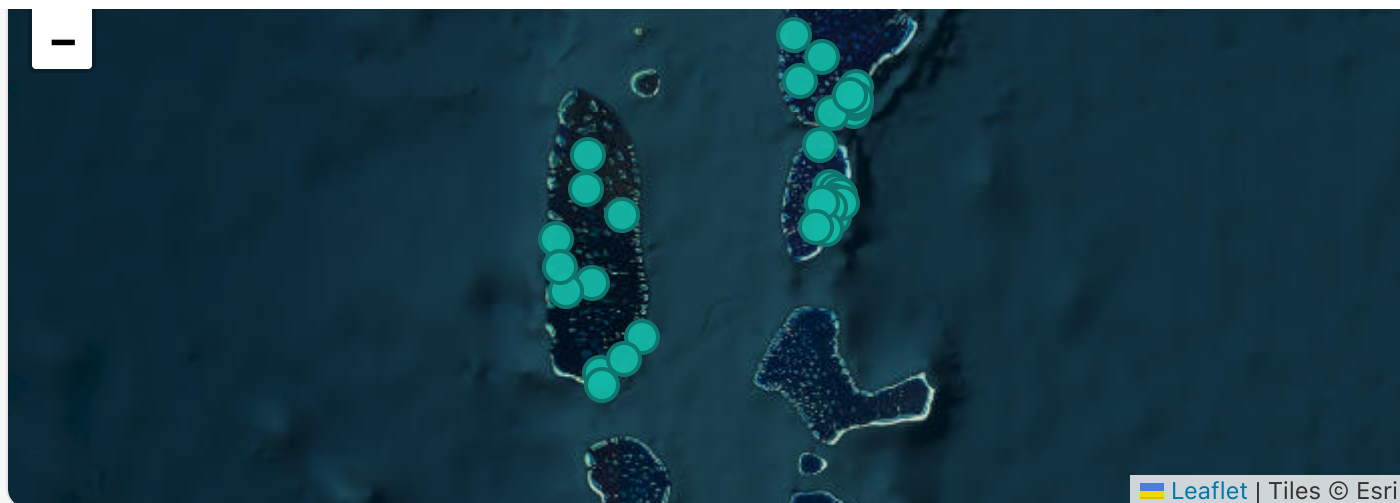
Heat stress



Daily SST (line) and weekly maximum Degree Heating Weeks (bars), Jan 2023–Sep 2026, [NOAA Coral Reef Watch](#) 5-km Maldives virtual station. Dashed line: bleaching threshold (maximum monthly mean $29.7^{\circ}\text{C} + 1^{\circ}\text{C}$). $\text{DHW} \geq 4$: bleaching likely; ≥ 8 : severe bleaching and mortality likely. A bar is drawn only where DHW exceeds zero, so a stretch with no bar is accumulated heat stress of zero, not missing data — the SST line runs the full period.

Long-term record: 3 years since 1985 reached 8 or more °C-weeks at [NOAA's](#) Maldives station. [Download the annual DHW data \(CSV\)](#).





37 sites in this region — click a marker to open that site.

Read this summary in:

English

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Regional setting

The central atolls sit midway along the Maldives chain, 22 atolls stretching some 800 km north to south on the Chagos–Laccadive Ridge, a volcanic trace of the Réunion hotspot ([Spalding et al. 2001](#)). The atlas uses an [aerial view](#) of this area to show the two parallel rows in which the atolls are aligned, and illustrates a typical Maldivian lagoon with Felidu and Wataru atolls, just south of South Male, crowded with patch reefs and faros, ring-shaped reefs resembling small atolls that are unusual outside this country. Rims are broad reef flats cut by deep channels and topped with islands and sand cays, and lagoons range from 15 to 55 m deep. When the first protected areas were gazetted in 1995, as protected dive sites, most lay in North Male, South Male, and Ari atolls, among them Banana Reef, HP Reef, Fish Head, and Maaya Thila; more followed in 1999. Before 1998, coral cover on atoll edges, faros, and lagoon knolls exceeded 60% to at least 20 m, but the 1998 bleaching was among the worst recorded and killed up to 90% of hermatypic corals in some areas. Coral mining for building material, estimated at 200,000 to 1 million m³ a year in the early 1990s, was later confined to a few designated reefs. [Spalding et al. \(2001\)](#) estimate about 8,920 km² of reef for the Maldives as a whole, and [Souter et al. \(2021\)](#) give 6,372 km² for the Maldives ecoregion.

As of 2001, Spalding et al. listed the localized effects of the resort-based tourism industry: diver and [anchor damage](#), groynes and jetties that disrupt sand movement, sewage discharged into lagoons, warm effluent from desalination plants, and solid waste. Summarizing the 2004 status report, [Wilkinson \(2006\)](#) notes encouraging recovery after 1998, many marine protected areas run by resorts, and heavy 2004 tsunami damage to shorelines and islands, with reefs less affected. [Souter et al. \(2021\)](#) show Maldivian coral cover recovering until about 2015, then falling

after the [2016 bleaching](#), which killed over 42% of living hard coral across South Asia; localized bleaching continued from 2017 to 2019. All nine of the region's long-term monitoring sites are in the Maldives, and of 30 long-term sampling units that had lost at least a fifth of their coral, 28 had not regained 90% of their earlier cover.

Overview

The central Maldives unit covers North and South Male, Ari, and Vaavu. Seven atoll-level pins carry only nearby-survey context, and the rest are individual dive sites from two periods of fieldwork. In January 2016, research dives tagged and measured coral colonies at Small Sand Bank, Raaeundi Reef, Veli, Stage, Maafushi, and Big Sand Bank, and the Anantara Dhigu house reef was dived on the same trip. A later liveaboard covered thilas, channels, walls, and wrecks, including two night dives in May 2017.

The January 2016 frames show bank reefs, flats, and slopes of cauliflower [Pocillopora](#), staghorn and table [Acropora](#), and massive [Porites](#), with tiered tables at Veli and the Anantara Dhigu house reef. Raaeundi was already a flat of algae-gray staghorn skeletons with living colonies scattered over it. On the liveaboard, Dhega Thila, Hodeli Bodu Giri, and Camel Point carried dense staghorn and table gardens, while Dhigga Thila and Vaadhoo Caves were draped in [soft corals](#). Fish Tank, Fish House, Ghuli Faru, and Moofushi Kandu had little coral. Photo-derived cover indices ran from 8.0% at Fish Tank to 34.7% at Veli. These are computer-vision estimates, and the two methods disagree by as much as 18.9 percentage points at Maafushi.

The pins record the 2016 bleaching directly. At the April 2016 resurvey, every recorded colony at Raaeundi was bleached, as were more than nine in ten at Stage, about 95% at Maafushi, and four in five at Small Sand Bank. The sheltered Veli Lagoon reef escaped almost untouched. Tagged colonies at Big Sand Bank were largely dead by May 2017. Later frames show algae-covered table skeletons at Dhigga Thila and Lohosfushi Corner, along with [Pocillopora](#) recruiting across rubble at Back Faru and small colonies recolonizing Miyaru Bay. [Crown-of-thorns starfish](#) were recorded at ten sites. At Ari Atoll's south tip the photographer labeled it an outbreak, and at Hodeli Bodu Giri the crew removed [starfish](#) with a collection stick.

Highlights

- January 2016 baseline, then April 2016 resurvey: all recorded colonies bleached at Raaeundi Reef, more than nine in ten at Stage, and about 95% at Maafushi.

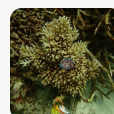


photo: Maldives - Raaeundi Reef

- Crown-of-thorns starfish at ten sites, with an outbreak label at Ari Atoll's south tip and manual removal

at Hodeli Bodu Giri.



photo: Maldives - Hodeli Bodu Giri

- Dense staghorn and table gardens at Dhega Thila, Hodeli Bodu Giri, and Camel Point; soft-coral-draped walls at Dhigga Thila and Vaadhoo Caves.



photo: Maldives - Hodeli Bodu Giri

- Lankan Faru is a manta cleaning station; a whale shark was photographed at Ari Atoll's south tip.



photo: Maldives - Lankan Faru

- Signs of recovery: Pocillopora recruiting at Back Faru and young table corals at Lohosfushi Corner.

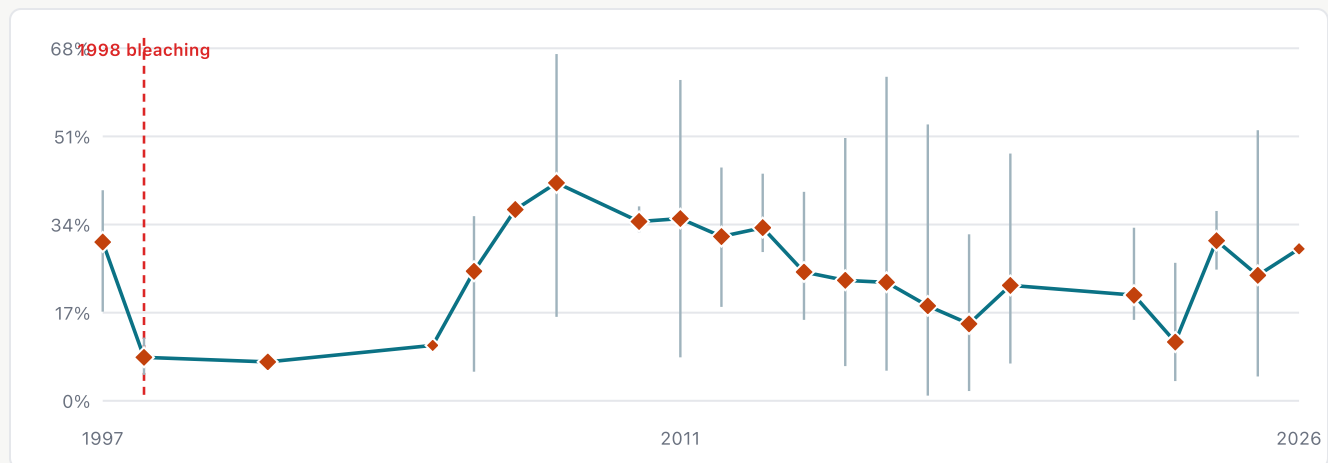


photo: Maldives - Lohosfushi Corner

► Notable observations (18)

Coral cover over time (pooled)

One point per year: the mean of every hard coral cover value available for this region that year — Anderson's own dives and every independent survey station within 5 km of them. The vertical bar is the full range behind that mean. Different programs use different methods at different stations, so this is a regional summary, not a single comparable series. Three values above 70% were excluded as best-patch figures rather than site means. Years resting on fewer than three values are drawn as smaller points (2005, 2026). Non-CRD points are from [Reef Check Foundation](#) and [XL Catlin Seaview Survey \(University of Queensland\)](#).



► Sites in this region (37)

Nearby external survey stations

141 independent survey records within 5 km of a site in this region (deduplicated across sites).

► Show all 141 records

All images from [Coral Reef Diagnostics](#). Data are from Coral Reef Diagnostics and [Reef Check Foundation](#) and [XL Catlin Seaview Survey \(University of Queensland\)](#).



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References

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