



Bermuda — Va-PoReg Country Report

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01/01/1684 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom]: Bermuda was discovered in the early 1500s and had no indigenous population. In 1612 the Virginia Company established a colonial government of the settler colony under Richard Moore, the first Governor of Bermuda.¹ In 1615, the colony was passed on to the Somers Isles Company. In 1649 the British royalists ousted the Somers Isles Company's Governor and elected John Trimingham as their leader.² In 1684 the colony became administered by the British crown, as crown colony.³ As the Bermudians invested in smuggling and trade with America amid the War of Independence, the relationship between Bermuda and the United Kingdom began to break down. Upon the death of George Bruere in 1780, the governorship passed to his son, George Jr., an active loyalist. Under his leadership, smuggling was stopped, and the Bermudian colonial government was populated with crown loyalists. During the War of 1812 between Britain and the United States, the British attacks were planned and launched from Bermuda.⁴ In 1815 the colonial capital was transferred from St. George to Hamilton on Main Island. In the 20th century the colony developed thriving industries in tourism and international finance. The U.S. government acquired lease for military bases in 1941, their military presence lasted until 1995. The British army garrison was withdrawn in 1957, a Canadian base closed in 1993, and a small remaining Royal Navy base ceased operating in 1995.⁵ In 1960 universal adult suffrage and the development of a two-party political system was promulgated, before that suffrage was dependent on a certain level of property ownership. The first Bermudian political party, the Progressive Labour Party (PLP), organized in 1963, claimed to represent the non-white citizens.

06/02/1968 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: Universal suffrage and a parliamentary democracy was adopted under the Bermuda Constitution Act 1967 of the United Kingdom, that came into effect on 06/02/1968. The constitution provides the island with formal responsibility for internal self-government, while the British Government retains responsibility for external affairs, defense, and security. The Bermudian Government is always consulted on any international negotiations affecting the territory.⁶ Additionally, it granted the elected leader of the majority political party in the legislature significant authority. The multiracial United Bermuda Party (UBP) won the May 1968 elections. When local Black Power militants killed the governor, Sir Richard Sharples, in 1973 amid civil upheaval, political tensions escalated. Official attempts to remove de facto racial discrimination and start independence negotiations were prompted by the ensuing political upheaval and rioting. However, about three-fourths of voters in an August 1995 referendum were against independence. Jennifer Smith, the head of the PLP, became the first PLP premier of Bermuda when the party won the 1998 elections.⁷ On 05/21/2002 the British Overseas Territories Act changed the status of Bermuda to overseas territory with significant autonomy⁸ and additionally granted full British citizenship to Bermudians, which would not automatically accrue to citizens of an independent Bermuda.⁹ Bermuda officially is the oldest self-governing British Overseas Territory. In 2004 full independence from Great Britain was still an issue and the PLP government established a commission to reach independence, but they found no support among the population.¹⁰ Even though the PLP dominated the political landscape for much of this time, there have been peaceful transitions of power and changes in government.¹¹ Fair and free general elections were held in October 2023, with voter turnout at 55%.

According to our observations, multiparty legislative and executive elections were present during this period. The PLP maintained its dominance, securing 62% of the votes and 83% of parliamentary seats, David Burt became the acting premier of Bermuda.¹² The general election on 02/18/2025 resulted in the ruling Progressive Labour Party (PLP), led by Premier Edward David Burt, securing a third consecutive term. The PLP won 25 of the 36 seats, but their majority was notably reduced as the opposition One Bermuda Alliance (OBA) successfully increased its seat count from six to eleven.¹³ FH, LIED and V-Dem do not provide data for Bermuda.

Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy] as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Bermuda

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bermuda>

³ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bermuda/History>

⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bermuda>

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bermuda/History>

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Bermuda

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bermuda/History>

⁸ <https://2009-2017.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/bermuda/82716.htm>

⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bermuda/History>

¹⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bermuda>

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Bermudian_general_election

¹² <https://bermudaelection.com/all/2020-general-election-results/>

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_Bermudian_general_election