



Mauritius — Va-PoReg Country Report

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12/03/1810 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom]: Since 12/03/1810 Mauritius was de facto a British colony. This was de jure confirmed in 1814 by the Treaty of Paris. Mauritius's society is ethnically diversified, with the Hindu community being the largest and most influential, alongside the small Franco-Mauritian minority. The Creole community, mostly descendants of slaves, has historically been marginalized, although over time efforts have been made to improve their situation, such as the introduction of Creole as a formal language in schools and the establishment of a Truth and Justice Commission to investigate the country's past and the consequences of slavery. The 1885 constitution already created a Legislative Council, but suffrage was restricted to men and property and education qualifications were given.¹ According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period. A new constitution in 1947 paved the way for internal self-government ten years later. According to LIED political liberties were absent. V-Dem's PCLI classifies political liberties as ambiguous until 1936 and as somewhat present from 1937 onward. For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE is classified as robust, indicating strong and regular judicial oversight. Concurrently, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which can be cautiously interpreted as indicating an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

08/09/1948 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: The 1948 Mauritian general election was the first instance when any adult who could write their names in any of the island's languages was allowed to vote, without property qualifications for voters.² In 1958, the Mauritian Labour Party (MLP) led by Seewoosagur Ramgoolam won the first elections under universal suffrage (Turner 2014b). The election on 03/09/1959 was the first one in which women were also allowed to vote.³ According to LIED universal suffrage was already introduced in 1950. According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period. Political liberties were absent according to LIED. V-Dem's PCLI classifies political liberties as somewhat present until 1957 and as present from 1958 onward. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were comprehensive.

03/12/1968 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy: Mauritius became independent within the British Commonwealth with the British Crown as ceremonial head of state and Ramgoolam was sworn in as the first prime minister. This regime change event is coded as a negotiated transition because the United Kingdom's granting of independence was conditional upon Mauritius ceding the Chagos Archipelago, which was retained as a sovereign British territory. This bargain, sovereignty for Mauritius in exchange for territory for the UK, constitutes a formal, negotiated agreement with institutional guarantees for the departing colonial power. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. On 03/12/1992 Mauritius achieved republic status. Mauritius is in this period a parliamentary representative democracy that holds free, fair and competitive multiparty elections (see also LIED). The general election, marked by intense political tension and widespread public debate, was held on 11/10/2024. Navin Ramgoolam, leader of the Labour party, won the election and was sworn in as prime minister on 11/13/2024. The campaign period saw large rallies, heated exchanges between rival parties, as

well as growing frustration among citizens over economic challenges and allegations of corruption. In the days following the vote, there were reports of demonstrations and strong reactions on social media, prompting an increased police presence in key areas.⁴ From 1968 to 2019 V-Dem's CEI indicate constant clean elections. Since 2020 the indicates an ambiguous state. Moreover V-Dem's EF&FI underlines free and fair elections until 2018. Since 2019, the overall conditions are considered as ambiguous. While constitutional liberties are generally protected certain issues persist, including corruption, freedom of press and expression. Journalists regularly face harassment and restrictions.⁵ Mauritius has faced growing challenges in maintaining its democratic qualities since 2018, with significant declines in fundamental rights, social group equality, freedom of expression, and predictable enforcement since 2018. In addition to that LIED confirms the presence of political liberties from 1993 to 2019. Since 2020 political liberties are absent again. V-Dem's PCLI scores full political liberties since Mauritius independence. Since 2020, the scores decrease to somewhat present. Although it continues to perform well in terms of representative government, recent electoral irregularities and dissatisfaction with governmental transparency and accountability have sparked concern.⁶ Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust in 2014 and from 2021-2023 and otherwise comprehensive, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust from 2021-2023 and otherwise comprehensive. Per FH, for this regime period, the country scores between 2 and 4 as free, which we also interpret as free.

Electoral Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Krennerich 1999, Metz 1994b)

Notes

¹ <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/MUS>; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritius#>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Mauritian_general_election

⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/mauritius/freedom-world/2023>

⁶ <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/mauritius>

References

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