



Montserrat — Va-PoReg Country Report

Kailitz, Steffen, et al., 2026: Varieties of Political Regimes (Va-PoReg). Country Report Montserrat, Dresden: Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/JYEL7U>

07/31/1667 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, as Part of British Leeward Islands]: In 1632, Irish settlers from Saint Kitts established farms on the island. The dominance of Anglo-Irish settlers raised questions about bringing Irish laws distinct from English ones. In 1666, the Irish, allied with the French, invited France to claim Montserrat. Although briefly occupied by the French, it was recaptured by the English, confirming English control under the Treaty of Breda signed on 07/31/1667. The island's legal status is a „colony acquired by settlement“ since the French gave up their claim at Breda. A neo-feudal colony emerged among the „redlegs,“ with Anglo-Irish colonists importing white and Sub-Saharan African slaves for labor. By the late 18th century, numerous plantations dotted the island.¹

02/20/1952 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: Universal suffrage was implemented in 1951, with the 1952 elections marking the inaugural instance where all adults on the island were eligible to vote for the Legislative Council. The Montserrat Labour Party won all five seats.²

01/03/1958 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy, as Part of British Leeward Islands]: From 1958 to 1962, Montserrat was a member of the brief Federation of the West Indies. In contrast to residents in many other British Caribbean colonies, Montserratians did not pursue associated statehood, a transitional stage toward independence.³ During the November 1978 general election, the People's Liberation Movement (PLM) secured victory in all seven seats of the Legislative Council. The party-maintained control in 1983, but the opposition strengthened during the 1987 election. The PLM leadership leaned towards eventual independence, with a priority on achieving greater economic self-sufficiency first.⁴ Montserrat functions as a self-governing overseas territory of the United Kingdom and is listed by the United Nations Committee on Decolonization as a non-self-governing territory. King Charles III serves as the island's head of state, represented by an appointed Governor. Executive authority lies with the government, and the head of government is the Premier, appointed by the Governor from the Legislative Assembly's nine elected members.⁵ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period. FH, LIED and V-Dem do not consider Montserrat in their datasets. Montserrat, as a British Overseas Territory, operates under a parliamentary-style democracy with democratic structures in place. However, certain challenges influence its democratic practice. One notable issue is limited sovereignty, as Montserrat remains under the oversight of the United Kingdom, which can constrain local decision-making and raise questions about self-determination. Reports to the UK Parliament have highlighted that this oversight structure can foster a culture of impunity, indicating potential democratic deficits. Additionally, institutional capacity poses challenges due to Montserrat's small population of around 4,200 people, which limits available human and institutional resources. This can affect the government's ability to independently develop and implement complex policies. Furthermore, Montserrat faces economic dependence on the UK, a legacy of the 1995 volcanic eruption that rendered much of the island uninhabitable. This reliance can restrict political autonomy and impact the government's responsiveness to citizens' needs.⁶

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

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montserrat#Early_European_period

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_Montserrat

³ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Montserrat-island-West-Indies/History>

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Montserrat-island-West-Indies/History>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montserrat#Politics_and_government

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