



Tuvalu — Va-PoReg Country Report

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10/09/1892 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom]: Between 10/09/1892 and 10/16/1892, a British protectorate was declared over all parts of the Ellice Islands.¹ Tuvalu was part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands since 1892 (see Kiribati). In 1967 universal suffrage was introduced.² On 10/01/1975 Ellice Islands separated as Tuvalu from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.³ On 08/27/1977 the first separate parliamentary elections for Tuvalu were held. Since there were no political factions, every candidate stood for election as an independent, and Toaripi Lauti retained his position as Chief Minister.⁴ LIED considers Tuvalu in its data only since 1975. LIED considers political liberties to be present since 1975.

05/01/1978 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime/Start (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: From this date on, there was a phase of internal autonomy and self-governance (former colonial authority retained responsibility for external affairs). On 10/01/1978 Tuvalu became an independent state (McIntyre 2012: 135-46). Since 1977, elections have been regularly held. Tuvalu is a parliamentary democracy with a unicameral parliament. While a governor represents the British monarch as head of state, the prime minister serves as the head of government.⁵ Only non-partisans are elected as there are no political parties. Tuvalu's legal system ensures democratic elections, with laws applied fairly and without bias. A government-appointed secretary oversees elections and manages voter registration. District polling officers have the authority to resolve election disputes, and there's a process for appeals. The September 2019 elections appear to have garnered acceptance from all pertinent stakeholders and constituencies.⁶ On 09/19/2019 Kausea Natano was elected prime minister through free and fair elections (Macmillan 2022c, Lansford 2021).⁷ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Since 1978, the elections are classified as competitive according to LIED. As part of a constitutional review expected to finalize by July 2019, the government proposed reserving two out of the legislature's 15 seats for women. During the balloting on 09/09/2019, nine incumbents retained their seats out of the 16 contested. Kausea Natano then secured victory over Sopoaga in the latter's attempt for reelection as prime minister on 09/10, with a vote count of 10–6. Natano assumed office on the same day, forming a new cabinet (Lansford 2021). According to FH, for the assessed regime period, the country is categorized as free with a score between 2 and 4, which corresponds to our interpretation of free. Political rights and civil liberties are generally upheld. LIED confirms that political liberties were present. All Tuvaluans aged 18 and older who are present in the country on election day are qualified to vote. Although women have equal political rights formally, political affairs are predominantly influenced by older men because of pervasive discriminatory biases. The judiciary operates independently.⁸ V-Dem does not list Tuvalu in its dataset.

(Monarchical) Electoral Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Somoza 2001)

Notes

- ¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Tuvalu
- ² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage
- ³ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Tuvalu_2010?lang=en
- ⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1977_Tuvaluan_general_election
- ⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tuvalu/freedom-world/2023>
- ⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tuvalu/freedom-world/2020>
- ⁷ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tuvalu/freedom-world/2020>
- ⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tuvalu/freedom-world/2023>

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