

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Mauritius

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2009</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2010</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>10</td> <td>10</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>10</td> <td>10</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td colspan="3">42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td colspan="3">No</td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	Polity:	10	10	0	Democ:	10	10	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:	42			Tentative:	No			<p style="text-align: center;">Authority Trends, 1968-2010: Mauritius</p>
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Polity:	10	10	0																						
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Durable:	42																								
Tentative:	No																								
SCODE	MAS	CCODE	590	Date of Report	1 June 2011																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	7	5	5																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date			Begin Date																						
			12 March 1968 (Ind.)																						
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution		1968 (1992)																							
Executive(s)		Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam; since 5 July 2005																							
Legislature		Unicameral: National Assembly (70 seats; 62 directly elected, 8 appointed by the Supreme Court to ensure ethnic representation; most recent elections, 5 May 2010) Alliance of the Future (AF): 41 (+4 appointed) Alliance consists of Mauritian Labor Party (MLP), Mauritian Militant Socialist Movement (MSMM), Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD), Republican Movement Alliance MSM-MMM: 18 (+2 appointed) Alliance consists of Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM), Militant Socialist Movement (MSM), Mauritian Social Democrat Party (PMSD) Other parties: 4																							
Judiciary		Supreme Court																							

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

Since gaining independence from Britain in 1968, Mauritius has recruited its chief executive through competitive multiparty elections, although the 1972 elections were cancelled as the government clamped down on labor unrest. The majority party (or majority coalition) in the National Assembly selects the prime minister. Members of the legislature are popularly elected.

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

In an alliance made during the September 2000 election, opposition parties MMM and the MSM formed a coalition bloc to challenge the ruling Labour Party. As part of this agreement it was decided that Anerood Jugnauth (MSM) would serve a prime minister for three years with Paul Berenger (MMM) as his deputy prime minister. Jagnauth would then step down in 2003 and allow Berenger to take over the position of prime minister for the remaining two years of his term. Jagnauth took up the largely ceremonial post of the presidency while Berenger assumed office on 30 September 2003 as the first non-Hindu prime minister of this country. In elections on 3 July 2005 a coalition led by the Labour Party regained control of Parliament, and elected Navinchandra Ramgoolam, who held the post previous between 1995 and 2000, as prime minister on July 5.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

The parliamentary structure of government found in Mauritius places significant constraints on the political autonomy of the chief executive. The prime minister is directly accountable to the legislature. The coalition-based nature of governance in Mauritius further limits the independence of executive action. The judiciary is independent from executive influence.

Political Participation: Institutionalized Open Electoral Competition (10)

At the time of independence the prospects for political stability in Mauritius seemed bleak. Ethnic pluralism and economic stagnation culminated in violent communal riots around the time of independence from Britain. However, over the past thirty years Mauritius has developed a reputation as one of the most stable and democratic countries in Africa. Moreover, its impressive economic growth has made it a model for African development. Key to both its economic and political success has been the ability of the country's ethnically diverse populations to balance their communal interests in a multicultural setting.

Mauritius has no indigenous population. Nearly one-third of Mauritius's population (the so-called Creoles) are descendants of slaves brought from the African mainland by French colonizers in the 18th century to work on the island's sugar plantations. Most Creoles have remained near the bottom of the country's socioeconomic ladder while the small Franco-Mauritius elite continue to dominate the island's largest financial and business institutions. About fifteen percent of the population is Muslim, whose ancestors hailed from India and who now reside primarily in southern Mauritius. However, the majority ethnic group is comprised of Hindu descendents of Indian plantation workers brought to the island after the British seized control of the country in 1810 and abolished slavery in 1833. Indo-Mauritians comprise over seventy percent of the population and have been the dominant political class since independence in 1968. The major fault line that divides Indo-Mauritians separates Hindus (of northern Indian origin) from Tamils (from the Dravidian south). The caste system has been replicated in a modified form in Mauritius. While there is no "untouchable" caste in Mauritius, the Vaish caste of Hindu society (a caste just below the Brahmins) dominates the highest levels of government.

Historically, national identity has been weak in Mauritius and political parties have tended to coalesce around ethnic identities and strong political families. Despite the dearth of Mauritian nationalism and multiethnic parties in this country, the Mauritian political system has historically forged governing alliances mitigating ethnic, religious, and ideological cleavages through parliamentary compromises and coalition building. Moreover, democracy in this country has been bolstered by the presence of a common language (Kreol), the lack of a standing army and the existence of a vibrant and healthy civil society that cuts across cultural cleavages. Additionally, the electoral system, which guarantees up to eight seats in the seventy-member parliament for two non-elected candidates from each of the four constitutionally recognized ethnic or religious communities (Hindu, Muslim, Chinese and "Creole"), has also worked to facilitate political stability. However, as the ethnic-based riots and communal violence of 1999 demonstrated, this harmony remains delicately balanced.