

Topic Page: [Mauritius](#)

Definition: **Mauritius** from *Collins English Dictionary*

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1 an island and state in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar: originally uninhabited, it was settled by the Dutch (1638–1710) then abandoned; taken by the French in 1715 and the British in 1810; became an independent member of the Commonwealth in 1968. It is economically dependent on sugar. Official language: English; a French creole is widely spoken. Religion: Hindu majority, large Christian minority. Currency: rupee. Capital: Port Louis. Pop: 1 322 238 (2013 est). Area: 1865 sq km (720 sq miles) Former name (1715–1810): **Île-de-France**



Image from: [The flag is unique in having four equal... in Philip's World Factbook 2008-2009](#)

Summary Article: **Mauritius**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(môŕīsh'ēəz, -əz), officially Republic of Mauritius, republic (2015 est. pop. 1,259,000), 790 sq mi (2,046 sq km), in the SW Indian Ocean. It is part of the Mascarene Islands, c.500 mi (800 km) E of Madagascar. The island of Rodriguez and two groups of small islands, Agalega and Cargados Carajos, are dependencies of Mauritius. The capital is Port Louis.

Land and People

Mauritius is surrounded by coral reefs. A central plateau is ringed by mountains of volcanic origin, which rise to c.2,700 ft (820 m) in the southwest. The island has a tropical, rainy climate. Mauritius is divided into nine districts.

Over two thirds of the population are of Indian descent, and over 25% are creole (of mixed French and African background). There are also small Chinese and French communities. About half of the people are Hindu, while 30% are Christian (mainly Roman Catholic), and most of the remainder are Muslim. English is the official language, although most of the people speak a creole dialect; other languages include Bojpoori, French, Hindi, Urdu, and Hakka.

Economy

Mauritius has had one of the world's faster-growing economies since the early 1980s, in part because of its success in attracting foreign investors. Sugarcane is the chief crop. Tea, flowers for the florist trade, and food crops are also grown, cattle and goats are raised, and there is a fishing industry. Since independence, the country has decreased its dependence on sugar (though most of the arable land remains devoted to it), diversified its industrial base to include mining and manufacturing, and adopted free-trade economic policies. Financial services and tourism are important industries, and data processing and call centers also contribute to the economy. Clothing and textiles, sugar and molasses, cut flowers, and fish are the major exports. Manufactured goods, capital equipment, foodstuffs, petroleum products, and chemicals are imported. The country's chief trading partners are Great Britain, France, China, and the United States.

Government

Mauritius is governed under the constitution of 1968, as amended. The president, who is head of state,

is elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term and is eligible for a second term. The government is headed by the prime minister, who is appointed by the president. The unicameral legislature consists of the 70-seat National Assembly; 62 members are elected, and eight, representing ethnic minorities, are appointed by the election commission. All serve five-year terms. Administratively, Mauritius is divided into nine districts and three dependencies.

History

Mauritius was probably visited by Arabs and Malays in the Middle Ages. Portuguese sailors visited it in the 16th cent. The island was occupied by the Dutch from 1598 to 1710 and named after Prince Maurice of Nassau. The French settled the island in 1722 and called it Île de France. It became an important way station on the route to India. The French introduced the cultivation of sugarcane and imported large numbers of African slaves to work the plantations. The British captured the island in 1810 and restored the Dutch name. After the abolition of slavery in 1835, indentured laborers were brought from India; their descendants constitute a majority of the population today.

Politics on Mauritius was long the preserve of the French and the creoles, but the extension of the franchise under the 1947 constitution gave the Indians political power. Indian leaders in the 1950s and 60s favored independence, while the French and creoles wanted continuing association with Britain, fearing domination by the Hindu Indian majority. In 1965, Britain separated the strategic Chagos Archipelago (see British Indian Ocean Territory) from Mauritius, but Mauritius continues to claim the islands and has sought their return. The 1967 election gave a majority in the assembly to Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam's proindependence Labor party. Independence was granted in 1968, and Ramgoolam became the first prime minister. Mauritius joined the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations.

The 1960s saw the rise of left-wing militancy, while in the 1970s and 80s political coalitions formed along ethnic and class lines. The economic crisis of the late 1970s and early 80s, after Cyclone Claudette and a drop in world sugar prices, intensified internal disputes.

In 1982 the left-wing Mauritius Militant Movement (MMM) came to power, and Anerood Jugnauth became prime minister. The following year a split in the MMM led Jugnauth to form the Mauritius Socialist Movement (MSM). Jugnauth headed a series of coalition governments. In 1992, Mauritius became a republic, with Cassam Uteem as its first president. In 1995, Navinchandra Ramgoolam, son of the former prime minister, and a Labor-led coalition came to power after defeating Jugnauth in a landslide, but in Sept., 2000, Jugnauth and an MSM-MMM coalition returned to power in a similar landslide.

President Uteem resigned in 2002; Karl Offmann was elected by the national assembly to succeed him. In Sept., 2003, Jugnauth resigned and his MMM coalition partner, Paul Bérenger, became prime minister. Bérenger became the first person not of Indian descent to hold the post. The following month Offman was succeeded as president by Jugnauth. In the July, 2005, national assembly elections, Ramgoolam's Labor-led Social Alliance won a majority of the seats, and he became prime minister. He and his coalition were returned to power in the May, 2010, elections, but in 2011 and 2014 coalition partners of the Labor party withdrew from the government.

Jugnauth resigned in Mar., 2012, to return to active party politics; Rajkeswar Purryag was elected to succeed him as president in July. In Sept., 2014, Labor and MMM agreed to an electoral alliance that

would campaign in support of constitutional changes that would split executive powers between a popularly elected president and the prime minister. The December elections resulted in a win for the MSM-led coalition, and Jugnauth again became prime minister. President Purryag resigned in May, 2015; Ameenah Gurib-Fakim was elected to succeed him the following month. In Jan., 2017, Pravind Jugnauth, the finance minister and Anerood Jugnauth's son, succeeded his father as prime minister. In Mar., 2018, President Gurib-Fakim resigned after reports of possible financial improprieties; Vice President Barlen Vyapoory became acting president.

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