

# Country Profile: Mauritius

**The island has maintained one of the developing world's most successful democracies and has enjoyed years of constitutional order.**

## HISTORY

Mauritius was uninhabited when the Dutch took possession in 1598. Abandoned in 1710, it was taken over by the French in 1715 and seized by the British in 1810. It gained independence in 1968 as a constitutional monarchy, with executive power nominally vested in the British monarch. It became a republic in 1992. The island of Rodrigues and other smaller islets also form part of the country. Mauritius claims sovereignty over the Chagos islands, which lie around 1,000 km to the north-east. The British territory, which was separated from Mauritius in 1965, is home to the US military base on Diego Garcia. The British government oversaw the forced removal of the Chagos islanders to Mauritius to make way for the base. The dodo - a flightless bird and a national symbol - was hunted into extinction in the 17th century.

## RECENT SITUATION

Mauritius has a reputation for stability and racial harmony among its mixed population of Asians, Europeans and Africans. It has preserved its image as one of Africa's few social and economic success stories, being a sugar and clothing exporter and a centre for upmarket tourism. But Mauritian exports have been hit by strong competition from low-cost textile producers and the loss of sugar subsidies from Europe. The country is home to some of the world's rarest plants and animals. But human habitation and the introduction of non-native species have threatened its indigenous flora and fauna. Policy shift aims to break down barriers to investment. Erosion of preferential trade arrangements for sugar and textiles have undermined growth. Mauritius claims the Chagos Islands, administered by Britain and home to a US military base on Diego Garcia.

## FACTS

- **Full name:** The Republic of Mauritius
- **Population:** 1.3 Million (UN 2007)
- **Capital:** Port Louis
- **Area:** 2,040 sq km (788 sq miles)
- **Internet domain:** .mu
- **International dialling code:** +230
- **Major religion:** Hinduism, Christianity, Islam
- **Major languages:** English, French (both official), Creole, Indian languages
  
- **HDI value\*<sup>1</sup>:** 65. Mauritius (0.804) [1. Iceland (0.968)] (2005)
- **Human Poverty Index (HPI-1)\*<sup>2</sup>:** 82. Mauritius (11.4) [1. Chad (56.9)] (2005)
  
- **Life expectancy at birth (years) :** 72.4
- **Probability of not surviving past 40 (%):** 5.1%
- **Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births):** 15 (2005)
- **HIV prevalence (% aged 15-49):** 0.6 [0.3-1.8] (2005)



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## Education.

- **Combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (%):**
  - **77. Mauritius (75.3)** [1. Australia (113.0)] (2005)
- **Adult Literacy Rate: (% ages 15 and older):**
  - **78. Mauritius (84.3)** [1. Georgia (100.0)] (2005)

## Economy and Trade.

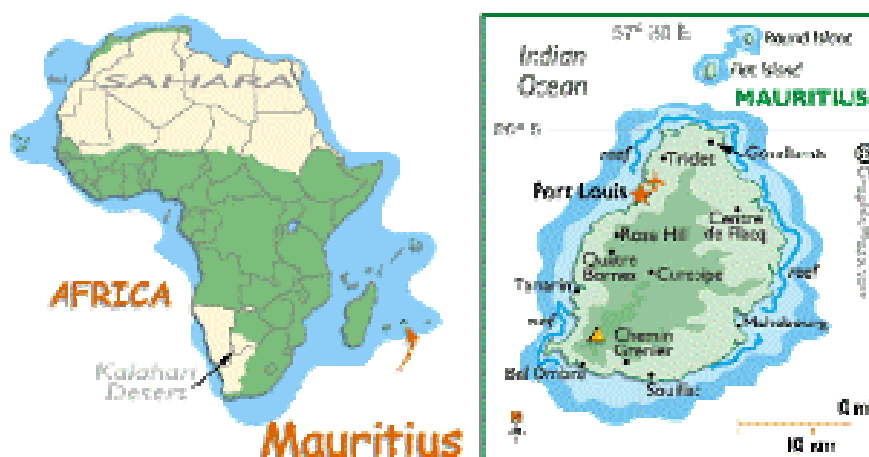
- **GDP per capita:** No. of people lived below the national poverty line. (PPP US\$):
  - **52. Mauritius (12,715)** [1. Luxembourg (60,228)] (2005)
- **GNI Per Capita:** **US \$5,260** (World Bank, 2006)
- **Gini Coefficient \*<sup>3</sup>:** **Mauritius (n/a)** [126. Denmark (24.7)] (2007)
- **Monetary unit:** 1 Mauritian rupee=100 cents
- **Main exports:** Sugar, clothing, tea, jewellery
- **CO<sub>2</sub> emissions share of world total (%):** **0.0 (2004)** [0.0 (1990)]

## Water, sanitation and nutritional status

- **Population without access to an improved water source (%):** **0**
- **Population using improved sanitation (%):** **94 (2004)** [0 (1990)]
- **Population Undernourished (% of total population):** **5 (2002-2004)** [6 (1990-1992)]

## Politics

- **Government:** Social Alliance
- **President:** Sir Anerood Jugnauth
- **Prime minister:** Navin Ramgoolam
- **Year Women received right to vote:** **1956**
- **Internally displaced people (thousands, 2006):** **n/a**



\*<sup>1</sup> The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated (measured by adult literacy and enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary level) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity, PPP, income).

\*<sup>2</sup> The Human Poverty Index for developing countries (HPI-1), focuses on the proportion of people below a threshold level in the same dimensions of human development as the HDI.

\*<sup>3</sup> The **Gini coefficient** is most prominently used as a measure of inequality of wealth distribution. A value of 0 represents absolute equality, and a value of 100 absolute inequality.

\*<sup>4</sup> Rankings are out of a total of 177.