

REBALANCING THE REPUBLIC – ELECTORAL REFORM OPTIONS FOR MAURITIUS

What is outdated, what demands urgent repair, and how to phase change
while respecting both the vote and the communal equilibrium

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Preface and acknowledgements

Mauritius is frequently described – not without reason – as one of Africa’s democratic success stories. The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index has consistently ranked the country as the continent’s only “full democracy”, with an overall score of 8.14 in 2023, placing it twentieth globally. ([EDB Mauritius](#)) The IMF notes that Mauritius has enjoyed “a vibrant democracy” alongside strong institutions and macroeconomic stability. ([IMF](#)) These are not trivial achievements in a world where democratic backsliding has become routine rather than exceptional.

Yet, as any board member will recognise, past performance is no guarantee of future results. Electoral rules that once cushioned communal tensions and underpinned investor confidence now show signs of strain: the **Best Loser System**, still based on ethno-religious categories from the 1972 census, the block vote in three-member constituencies that can turn modest pluralities into near-total parliamentary monopolies, and persistent under-representation of women and younger voices in national politics. ([Wikipedia](#))

The purpose of this report is not to disparage a system that has served Mauritius reasonably well, but to ask – in a cold, fiduciary way – whether it remains **fit for purpose** given the social, economic and geopolitical context of the 2020s. As the Sachs Commission observed over two decades ago, the electoral system has “worked well” in terms of stability, but the First Past the Post rules in three-member constituencies have repeatedly produced results “grossly disproportionate to the share of votes”. ([Mauritius Assembly](#)) That diagnosis has become more, not less, salient after the 2024 general election, where an opposition alliance with 62.6 per cent of the vote secured 60 of 62 directly elected seats. ([Al Jazeera](#))

The central question we address is therefore deliberately practical: **what in the Mauritian electoral framework is now clearly outdated; what can and should be tackled as a matter of urgency before the next national contest; and what deeper reforms should be phased in over one or two electoral cycles to maintain both the integrity of the vote and the equilibrium between communities?**

In pursuing this question, we are guided by three simple convictions:

1. **The vote is a matter of dignity, not just arithmetic.** As Justice Albie Sachs observed in a different African context, “The vote of every citizen is a badge of dignity and of personhood. Quite literally, it says that everybody counts.” ([PMG](#))

Any reform that systematically discounts some votes – whether by geography, community or gender – ultimately degrades that badge.

2. **Institutions must evolve as societies do.** Mauritius in 2025 is not Mauritius in 1972. The demographic balance has shifted, the economy has diversified, GDP per capita has risen to around USD 11,800, and internet penetration has reached roughly 80 per cent. ([World Bank Open Data](#)) Electoral rules designed for a sugar-dominated, print-media polity will not automatically perform well in a services-driven, digital one.
3. **Behavioural realities matter as much as formal rules.** Electoral systems create incentives – for parties, candidates and voters – which in turn shape expectations and norms. Disproportionality can foster “winner takes all” political cultures; communal categorisation can hard-wire identity politics; opaque campaign finance can normalise the use of money as a signalling device rather than a means of persuasion. Any credible reform must therefore think not only in terms of constitutional text but also in terms of **how people actually respond to those texts.**

This report has been prepared by Bramston & Associates as an independent policy analysis. It draws on primary Mauritian sources – including the **Report of the Commission on Constitutional and Electoral Reform 2001/02 (the Sachs Commission)**, subsequent White Papers and consultation documents, electoral legislation and parliamentary debates – as well as comparative material from established democracies and international bodies such as the IMF, World Bank, Freedom House, the Electoral Integrity Project and International IDEA. ([Mauritius Assembly](#))

We are indebted to Mauritian researchers and practitioners whose work has informed our analysis, including studies on the Best Loser System and communal representation, ([Open Journals UGent](#)) work on the rising “cost of parliamentary politics” and money in elections, ([Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#)) and recent assessments of the country’s “power-sharing immobilism” – the tendency for an initially creative consociational settlement to harden into a structure that is difficult to adapt. ([The Electoral Integrity Project](#))

We also acknowledge the contributions of civil society actors and political movements who have kept the debate over communal classification and electoral fairness alive, sometimes over decades. The complaint brought by Rezistans ek Alternativ to the UN Human

Rights Committee – challenging the obligation for candidates to declare their community – has been described as a “landmark case in the history” of Mauritian democracy. ([Human Rights Library](#)) Whether one agrees or disagrees with their broader platform, the case has forced serious consideration of the compatibility of the current system with international human rights standards.

Responsibility for any errors, omissions or controversial judgments, however, rests solely with the authors. This is a technical and behavioural reading of reform options, not a partisan manifesto. Its intended audience is senior decision-makers – in government, opposition, business and civil society – who need to think about electoral reform with the same rigour they would apply to a restructuring, a merger or a major capital project.

Two quotations encapsulate the spirit of what follows. The first, from the Sachs Commission itself:

“Democracy is alive and well and no major overhaul of the system is required” – a reminder not to throw away what works. ([Mauritius Assembly](#)) . The second, from economist Jeffrey Frankel’s study of Mauritius’s success: **“Some object to the best loser system because it perpetuates communalism.”** ([Harvard Kennedy School](#)) Between those two sentences lies the space in which responsible reform must now be designed.



*“Democracy is alive and well and
no major overhaul of the system
is required”*

Sachs Commission

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Section Briefs

1. Introduction –
Mauritius at a
democratic
crossroads

1.1. Why electoral reform, and why now?

Explains why a country often cited as a democratic model still faces pressure to adjust its electoral rules. Links electoral design to macroeconomic performance (e.g. Mauritius’s GDP per capita and investor perception of institutional quality) and to recent political events, including the 2024 election outcome and debates around surveillance and digital rights.

1.2. Methodology and analytical framework

Describes the mixed approach used: doctrinal analysis of constitutional texts, quantitative analysis of disproportionality and representation outcomes, key informant material from commissions and consultations, and behavioural insights on how rules shape incentives. Anchors the work in international benchmarks from Freedom House, the EIU Democracy Index and the Electoral Integrity Project.

1.3. Defining “respect of the vote” and “community equilibrium”

Clarifies key concepts: what counts as respecting the vote (e.g. minimising wasted votes, ensuring competitive choice, preventing “manufactured majorities”) and what is meant by maintaining community equilibrium in a multi-ethnic society. Uses recent demographic data (e.g. 2022 census religious breakdown) to show how the social map has changed since the 1972 census that underpins the Best Loser System.

2. Anatomy of the
Mauritian electoral
system

2.1. Constitutional foundations and institutions

Maps the legal architecture: the 1968 Constitution, the National Assembly’s composition, and the roles of the Electoral Supervisory Commission, the Electoral Commissioner and the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Draws on the Sachs Commission and subsequent reports to show how these institutions have evolved and where their independence is strong or fragile.

2.2. The three-member constituency and block vote

Explains in plain terms how voters have up to three votes (two in Rodrigues) and how the plurality block vote can deliver extreme seat bonuses. Uses historic examples (1982, 1995, 2000, 2019 and 2024) where coalitions have secured near-total parliamentary control with well under 70 per cent of the vote.

2.3. The Best Loser System: origins, mechanics and current practice

Traces the Best Loser System from its independence-era design as an ethnic safeguard, through its reliance on 1972 census data, to contemporary operation after the 2014 “Declaration of Community (Temporary Provisions) Act” which made communal declaration optional but left the underlying communal logic intact.

2.4. Constituency boundaries, malapportionment and turnout

Summarises the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission and its reviews (1976, 1986, 1999, 2009, 2013–17), including the population quotas and tolerances used, and how far the current map deviates from equal representation. Looks at turnout patterns by constituency and community.

2.5. Campaign finance, media and “money politics”

Outlines the formal regulatory framework for campaign spending and donations, and contrasts it with evidence from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and local observers on the rising cost of politics, clientelistic practices and vote-buying.

3. What is outdated:
diagnosis of stress
points

.1. Disproportionality and “manufactured majorities”

Quantifies the extent of disproportionality using standard indices (e.g. Gallagher index) and shows how often opposition parties have been reduced to symbolic representation in spite of substantial vote shares. Links this to democratic quality metrics and legitimacy risks.

3.2. Communal classification and international human rights law

Assesses the requirement (historical and current) for candidates to declare their community, and the continued reliance on communal categories in the allocation of Best Loser seats, in light of the UN Human Rights Committee’s decision in *Devia Narain et al. v. Mauritius* and subsequent UN treaty-body observations.

3.3. Gender, age and diversity deficits

Shows how women currently hold only around 19 per cent of seats in the National Assembly, despite local-level gender quotas and global evidence that proportional systems with quotas significantly increase women’s representation. Considers youth and other forms of diversity.

3.4. Digital campaigning, surveillance and trust

Explores emerging risks around social media campaigns, allegations of wire-tapping and the potential for internet disruption in election periods, drawing on recent reporting that Mauritius has, at times, restricted social media or access to platforms. Discusses how such measures can erode confidence in the integrity of elections even when the core mechanics remain sound.

4. Immediate
“emergency” reforms

4.1. Low-regret legal amendments before the next general election

Identifies reforms that can realistically be passed on a short timetable without requiring a complete redesign of the system: clarifying the non-mandatory nature of communal declaration; improving transparency of candidate and party finance; tightening enforcement of existing offences such as treating and personation; and codifying procedural guarantees for results transmission and dispute resolution. Draws on international guidance such as International IDEA’s framework for protecting elections and comparative practice in Commonwealth states.

4.2. Interim adjustments to the Best Loser mechanism

Proposes transitional ways to reduce the communally divisive aspects of the Best Loser System without leaving minorities unprotected while longer-term solutions are designed. Options could include: reallocating some Best Loser seats on the basis of party vote share rather than communal identity, or introducing a pilot “diversity test” that rewards parties for cross-communal candidate slates. Anchored in debates captured by academic work asking whether it is “time to let go” of the Best Loser System.

4.3. Immediate transparency and digital rights guarantees

Recommends codifying a clear commitment that no internet shutdowns or platform-specific blocks will be imposed during electoral periods, in line with African and UN standards; requiring real-time disclosure of state advertising and political digital spend; and equipping the Electoral Commission to monitor online campaigning.

5. Phased structural reforms to 2035

5.1. Introducing a proportional “correction” tier

Explores options for adding 20–30 proportional representation (PR) seats to the National Assembly to correct extreme disproportionality while preserving the familiarity and local linkages of constituency MPs. Compares mixed-member, parallel and list-PR add-on models, building on Sachs Commission proposals and later White Papers.

5.2. Recasting communal safeguards without ethnic tick-boxes

Develops models for replacing communal classification with **non-ethnic safeguards** – for example, diversity obligations on party lists, reserved seats for specific regions or historically disadvantaged communities, or constitutional language requiring that electoral outcomes be broadly reflective of the nation’s diversity. References academic and UN debates stressing both the original logic and the contemporary criticisms of the Best Loser System.

5.3. National-level gender and inclusion quotas

Assesses the merits and design details of national gender quotas (and possibly youth or disability quotas), drawing on global evidence that countries with PR and legislative quotas tend to have significantly higher proportions of women in parliament. Examines how such quotas could be tailored to Mauritian party structures and political culture.

5.4. Rodrigues and outer islands: aligning representation and systems

Considers whether the electoral system for Rodrigues – already using a more mixed FPTP/PR model for its Regional Assembly – offers lessons for national reform, and how representation of Rodrigues, Agalega and other outer islands could be strengthened in any revised structure.

5.5. Managing coalition politics and governability

Engages frankly with the concern that more proportional systems may lead to fragmentation or unstable coalitions. Uses comparative evidence from Southern Africa and beyond to show how well-designed thresholds, coalition norms and anti-defection rules can preserve governability.

6. Implementation roadmap and risk management

6.1. Sequencing over two electoral cycles

Outlines a realistic calendar: immediate legal adjustments before the next election; creation and mandate of a Constitutional Review Commission; introduction of a PR correction tier and new safeguards before the subsequent election; and a scheduled review clause (a “sunset audit”) five years thereafter. References government commitments to a Constitutional Review Commission and international best practice on sequencing electoral reform.

6.2. Building a coalition for reform

Analyses the political economy of reform: why incumbents typically resist changes that increase uncertainty, how “loss aversion” and status quo bias operate in elite decision-making, and how one might design a reform package that offers credible assurances to all major blocs – including minority parties and communities. Draws on comparative work on the politics of electoral reform investigations.

6.3. Metrics, oversight and learning

Proposes a small set of key indicators – disproportionality, effective number of parties, representation gaps by gender and community, trust in elections, cost of campaigning – and suggests that they be publicly tracked by an independent observatory or within Statistics Mauritius. Links to existing data series from the World Bank, BTI and Freedom House.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

This section distils the analysis into a concise set of recommendations, structured around urgent, medium-term and long-term actions for government, opposition, business and civil society.

Executive summary

Mauritius enters its seventh decade of independence with a paradox. On most comparative metrics it remains a **star performer**: a GDP per capita approaching USD 12,000, ([World Bank Open Data](#)) an 86/100 score in the 2025 Freedom in the World index, ([The Electoral Integrity Project](#)) and a status as Africa’s only “full democracy” in the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index. ([EDB Mauritius](#)) Yet its electoral system – once admired as a clever consociational compromise in a deeply plural society – is now widely regarded as **out of date, over-engineered in some respects and under-protective in others**.

The starting point: a system that has done some things very well

Three facts deserve to be stated clearly at the outset.

First, Mauritius has held regular, competitive and broadly accepted elections since independence. As Sookrajowa and McCulloch observe, “Mauritius is a multi-ethnic, multi-party democratic system in which free and fair elections have been conducted since its independence in 1968.” ([The Electoral Integrity Project](#)) Transfers of power have occurred peacefully between rival alliances, and electoral outcomes have generally been respected.

Second, the electoral system’s **unique features** – three-member constituencies elected by block vote, topped up by up to eight “Best Loser” seats reserved for under-represented communities – have arguably helped to manage ethnic tensions and to ensure that no major community is completely excluded from Parliament. ([Wikipedia](#)) That is not a negligible achievement in an island whose population remains roughly 39 per cent Hindu, 32 per cent Christian and 18 per cent Muslim. ([Freedom of Thought Report](#))

Third, strong institutions have underpinned broader development success. IMF and World Bank assessments repeatedly highlight Mauritius’s high institutional quality – including a well-functioning parliamentary democracy, low expropriation risk and effective rule of law – as central to its long-run growth performance. ([IMF eLibrary](#))

Any serious reform effort must therefore proceed with respect: the system has not “failed”, and careless redesign could destroy valuable features.

What is now clearly outdated

Despite this track record, the evidence assembled in this report points to **five areas where the current framework is no longer sustainable**.

- ▶ **Disproportionality and “wipe-out” elections.** The block-vote, First Past the Post system in three-member constituencies systematically rewards large alliances and punishes dispersed support. The Sachs Commission documented how in 1982 and 1995, government alliances secured 60–0 clean sweeps of the directly elected seats, while in 1991 and 2000 opposition representation was reduced to “symbolical levels”. ([Mauritius Assembly](#)) The 2024 election repeated the pattern: an opposition coalition with 62.6 per cent of the vote won 60 of 62 constituency seats. ([Al Jazeera](#)) Such outcomes may deliver “strong government”, but they also create the impression that entire currents of opinion have been wiped from the map – a dangerous optic in a society that prides itself on pluralism.
- ▶ **An ethnic framework frozen in 1972.** The Best Loser System still operates using community proportions derived from the 1972 census – the last to aggregate data into the four constitutionally recognised communities. ([Wikipedia](#)) Meanwhile, the 2022 census paints a different and more nuanced picture of religious affiliation, and contemporary identities often cut across the original categories. ([Freedom of Thought Report](#)) The UN Human Rights Committee has found that requiring candidates to declare their community in order to stand violates Mauritius’s obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. ([Human Rights Library](#)) The 2014 “mini-amendment” that made communal declaration optional for one election, later extended in practice, solved the immediate legal problem but left the system structurally dependent on outdated communal logic. ([Mauritius Assembly](#))
- ▶ **Gender and diversity deficits.** Women currently hold around 19 per cent of seats in the National Assembly, despite local government elections operating under a one-third candidate quota. ([World Bank Open Data](#)) Mauritius’s performance is respectable by regional standards but lags well behind best-practice democracies, where proportional

representation combined with legislative quotas often produces female representation above 40 per cent. ([Electoral Reform Society](#)) Youthful demographics, and the relative absence of visibly young representatives at national level, add to the perception that politics is the preserve of a narrow, older elite.

► **Rising “money politics” and opaque campaign finance.**

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy’s study on the cost of parliamentary politics in Mauritius documents the increasing financial burden of running for office and notes that “vast amounts of money are being spent not simply to defray election costs but to literally buy candidates and votes.” ([Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#)) This corrodes trust and distorts the playing field in favour of wealthier candidates and parties.

► **Emerging digital risks.**

Recent years have seen concerns about surveillance, alleged wire-tapping and the possibility of social-media restrictions around elections. Mauritius was named among African states imposing internet restrictions in 2024, although some measures were later reversed. ([The Guardian](#)) In an economy increasingly reliant on services and digital connectivity, any perception that online space is “switched off” during political moments is damaging to both democracy and business confidence.

Each of these problems, on its own, might be manageable. Together, they amount to a **strategic risk**: a system that appears increasingly misaligned with modern norms of equality and transparency, while still delivering very large parliamentary majorities to whichever coalition wins the initial race.

What should be done in “emergency” mode

The report identifies a set of **low-regret measures** that could be implemented before the next general election without destabilising the broader framework.

1. **Codify and clarify candidate rights around communal declaration.**

Rather than relying on temporary provisions renewed ad hoc, Parliament should enact a permanent amendment confirming that no citizen can be barred from standing for election for refusing to declare a communal affiliation. This would bring domestic law fully in line with the UN Human Rights Committee’s findings and remove

the lingering sense of legal improvisation. ([Human Rights Library](#))

2. **Introduce transparent, enforceable campaign-finance rules.**

Immediately adopt:

- Clear ceilings on constituency-level and national campaign expenditure;
- Mandatory disclosure of donations above a modest threshold, with real-time publication during campaigns; and
- Stronger, resourced enforcement mechanisms for breaches, including sanctions that are meaningful for large parties rather than symbolic. ([Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#))

3. **Tighten electoral administration and dispute-resolution procedures.**

Enhance the Electoral Commission’s capacity for parallel vote tabulation, risk-based audits of the results process and timely resolution of disputes. International guidance from bodies such as International IDEA provides ready-made frameworks and checklists that can be adapted with relatively low political cost. ([International IDEA](#))

4. **Provide immediate digital-rights guarantees for electoral periods.**

Publicly and legally commit not to impose internet shutdowns or platform-specific bans during election campaigns and counting, except in narrowly defined, independently reviewable emergencies. This would address growing concerns – domestically and internationally – about the “weaponisation” of connectivity around political events. ([The Guardian](#))

5. **Pilot modest adjustments to the Best Loser mechanism.**

Without attempting a full redesign, Mauritius could experiment with small, carefully designed changes: for example, allocating one or two of the eight Best Loser seats based on **party vote share** rather than communal classification, or rewarding parties whose candidate slates demonstrably reflect the country’s diversity. This would start to shift the logic of correction from ethnicity to fairness, without leaving minorities unprotected. ([Open Journals UGent](#))

These moves would not solve deeper structural problems, but they would signal commitment to international norms, improve transparency and build confidence while more ambitious reforms are prepared.

What should be phased and why

More far-reaching change needs to be **sequenced** over at least two electoral cycles to avoid shocks, allow for learning and maintain cross-party buy-in. The report recommends three main pillars of phased reform.

1. **Introduce a proportional correction tier, not a revolution.**

Rather than abandoning the current constituency system, Mauritius could add 20–30 proportional representation seats, allocated to parties based on their national vote share. This would reduce extreme disproportionality, ensure that parties polling, say, 15–20 per cent of the vote cannot be excluded from Parliament, and create incentives for parties to campaign beyond their core communal bases. Designs explored include mixed-member proportional, parallel and list-PR top-up systems, drawing on the Sachs Commission’s earlier work and later proposals. ([Mauritius Assembly](#))

2. **Replace communal tick-boxes with broader diversity safeguards.**

The logic of ensuring that minorities are not permanently shut out of power remains valid. What has changed is the acceptability of formal ethnic classification. Possible replacements for the Best Loser System include:

- **Diversity obligations on party lists**, requiring that national and constituency slates broadly reflect the country’s demography;
- **Reserved seats for under-represented regions or communities** defined in non-ethnic terms; or
- A constitutional clause requiring that electoral outcomes and appointments “reflect, as far as practicable, the diversity of the Mauritian nation”, combined with an independent body empowered to issue non-binding opinions on compliance. ([ResearchGate](#))

3. **Adopt national gender and inclusion quotas designed for Mauritian realities.**

Drawing on global evidence that PR plus quotas is the most reliable way to achieve gender parity, ([Electoral Reform Society](#)) the report suggests moving from the current local-level quotas to **national-level legislative quotas**, either through reserved seats or through “zipper” rules on party lists. Such quotas could be designed to avoid sudden displacements by phasing in over two

elections and by tying public funding or other incentives to compliance. ([The Guardian](#))

Alongside these three pillars, the report recommends strengthening the independence and appointment processes of key electoral bodies and learning from Rodrigues’s mixed electoral system, which already combines FPTP and PR at the regional level. ([lexpress.mu](#))

Managing the politics of reform

Reforming electoral systems is notoriously difficult because **those who must design the new rules are often those who have benefited most from the old ones**. In Mauritius, this challenge is sharpened by the dominance of long-standing political dynasties and alliances, and by the fact that the system, for all its flaws, has delivered stable governments and growth.

The report therefore devotes a full section to the **political economy and behavioural aspects** of reform:

- Recognising **status-quo bias** among incumbents and designing packages that minimise perceived loss – for example, by preserving constituency MPs while adding PR seats, rather than replacing them. ([QSpace](#))
- Using a **Constitutional Review Commission**, as already envisaged in government statements to UN bodies, as a forum where parties can negotiate under some degree of insulation from day-to-day electoral pressures. ([OHCHR](#))
- Building broad-based support among business, unions, community organisations and civil society by framing reform not as a partisan weapon but as a **risk-management exercise**: lowering the probability of future democratic crises that would be disastrous for all.

In this spirit, two guiding quotations are worth recalling. The Sachs Commission concluded that “democracy is alive and well and no major overhaul of the system is required” – but went on to urge measures to correct gross imbalances created by First Past the Post. ([Mauritius Assembly](#)) And Frankel, writing on Mauritius’s economic success, noted that “some object to the best loser system because it perpetuates communalism” and suggested that a few non-communal corrective seats might have achieved similar stability with fewer long-term costs. ([Harvard Kennedy School](#)) Both lines hint at the same conclusion: **evolution, not revolution, is now overdue.**

The bottom line

The question is not whether Mauritius is a democracy – it plainly is – but whether its electoral system is optimised for the next twenty years of political, economic and technological change.

The analysis points to a clear answer:

- **Yes, the current framework has delivered stability and growth.**
- **No, it is no longer aligned with contemporary norms of equality, participation and transparency.**
- **Yes, there is still a window to change it calmly, deliberately and in Mauritian style, before external pressures or internal shocks force a less orderly transition.**

I. Introduction – Mauritius at a democratic crossroads

Mauritius is accustomed to being introduced with a small flourish. It is the African outlier that stubbornly refuses to conform to the “low-income, low-democracy” stereotype: an upper-middle-income island economy with one of the highest GDP per capita levels on the continent, robust institutions and a long record of competitive elections. In the language of democracy metrics, Mauritius is consistently rated “Free”, a “full democracy”, and a regional benchmark for rule of law and pluralism.[Freedom House 2025; EIU Democracy Index 2023; International IDEA, Global State of Democracy] ([Freedom House](#))

International IDEA’s country profile sums up the international view drily but accurately: “Mauritius has long been upheld as a strong example of democratic governance in Africa.”[International IDEA, Democracy Tracker – Mauritius] ([Idea](#)) That reputation underpins investor confidence, the island’s positioning as a financial and business services hub, and—more intangibly—its soft power.

Yet it is precisely at such moments of apparent success that institutional complacency becomes most dangerous. The 2024 legislative elections produced a near-total sweep for the opposition Alliance du Changement (Alliance for Change), which won 60 of the 62 directly elected seats, leaving only two to the Rodrigues People’s Organisation and none to the outgoing governing coalition.[International IDEA, Election Event Report – Mauritius 2024] ([Idea](#)) Turnout rose to 79.3 per cent—hardly evidence of a disengaged electorate—but the seat distribution was again radically disproportional. At the same time, the campaign was preceded by an unprecedented, if short-lived, shutdown of social media platforms and followed by revelations of a mass surveillance system allegedly operated without judicial oversight.[International IDEA, Democracy Tracker – Mauritius] ([Idea](#))

This combination—structurally lopsided parliamentary outcomes, digital-rights controversies and a multi-ethnic society still managed through a communally-coded Best Loser System (BLS) designed

in the early 1970s—places Mauritius squarely at a democratic crossroads. The question is not whether the country remains a democracy; it clearly does. The question is whether the current electoral design is still the right one for the macroeconomic, technological and social realities of the 2020s, and what must change—urgently or gradually—to safeguard both the “respect of the vote” and “community equilibrium” in the decades ahead.

I.I Why electoral reform, and why now?

The economic and institutional story starts from a position of strength. Mauritius’s GDP per capita in current US dollars recovered sharply after the COVID-19 shock, rising from about US\$9,011 in 2020 to roughly US\$11,872 in 2024—a cumulative increase of almost 32 per cent in four years.[World Bank World Development Indicators / FRED series PCAGDPMUA646NWDB] ([FRED](#)) Freedom House rates Mauritius as “Free” with an overall score of 86/100 in its 2025 *Freedom in the World* report, up from 85/100 the year before.[Freedom House 2025] ([Freedom House](#)) The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) assigns Mauritius a score of 8.14/10 on its Democracy Index, ranking 21st globally and classifying it as a “full democracy”.[EIU *Democracy Index 2023*] ([EDB Mauritius](#))

On the economic side, the Fraser Institute’s *Economic Freedom of the World 2025* report places Mauritius 21st worldwide, first in Africa, with an overall score of 7.76/10.[Fraser Institute, *Economic Freedom of the World 2025*] ([Magma](#)) There is, in other words, every reason for investors and development partners to assume that Mauritius combines relatively liberal markets with a relatively liberal polity. That assumption is built into sovereign risk assessments, capital-allocation decisions and the island’s marketing as a jurisdiction for global business.

Table 1 Mauritius macro institutional snapshot

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
GDP per capita, current US\$	US\$11,871.7	2024	[World Bank WDI / FRED PCAGDPMUA646NWDB] (FRED)
Freedom in the World score (0–100)	86	2025	[Freedom House 2025] (Freedom House)
Freedom in the World status	Free	2025	[Freedom House 2025] (Freedom House)
Democracy Index score (0–10)	8.14	2022	[EIU Democracy Index 2023] (EDB Mauritius)
Democracy Index regime type	Full democracy	2022	[EIU Democracy Index 2023] (EDB Mauritius)
Economic Freedom of the World score (0–10)	7.76	2025	[Fraser Institute 2025] (Magma)
Economic Freedom global rank	21st (1st in Africa)	2025	[Fraser Institute 2025] (Magma)
Turnout in legislative election (% of registered)	79.3%	2024	[International IDEA / Office of the Electoral Commissioner] (Idea)
Seats won by Alliance du Changement (of 62 elected)	60	2024	[International IDEA Election Report] (Idea)

From a macro-stability standpoint, these are enviable numbers. But from a constitutional-engineering standpoint they are also slightly deceptive. They suggest that all components of the institutional machine are functioning optimally, when in fact several key moving parts are grinding against one another.

First, the block-vote variant of first-past-the-post (FPTP), with three MPs elected per mainland constituency, has repeatedly produced what comparative political science would call “manufactured majorities”: seat shares far in excess of vote shares. In 1982, 1995 and again in 2024, one party or coalition swept all 60 mainland seats, leaving only the Rodrigues list to break the perfect monochrome.[Electoral Integrity Project, Mauritius Chapter] This systematically weakens the opposition, creates highly asymmetric parliamentary oversight, and gives the governing alliance the practical ability to amend the constitution without cross-party negotiation.

Secondly, the 2024 election revealed new strains around the broader democratic ecosystem. In early November 2024, the Information and Communication Technology Authority (ICTA) suspended access to all social-media platforms on national-security grounds, only to reverse the decision within 24 hours following public and international criticism.[International IDEA Democracy Tracker – Mauritius] ([Idea](#)) In February 2025, the new Prime Minister informed Parliament that a mass surveillance system capable of intercepting

phone calls, internet traffic and social-media communications had been deactivated, after an investigation suggested it had operated without judicial oversight.[International IDEA Democracy Tracker – Mauritius] ([Idea](#))

From a behavioural perspective, these episodes matter because they change the “mental model” of the system for both citizens and investors. Voters who previously assumed that the ballot was the primary channel of democratic voice now see how significantly the rules of the game can be reshaped by executive power and by opaque regulatory decisions. Investors who took institutional checks and balances for granted must reassess the concentration of power in a Parliament that can be all but swept by a single coalition.

Against that backdrop, the case for electoral reform is less about abstract alignment with international best practice and more about risk management. A system that can generate 60 of 62 seats for one alliance, repeatedly, in a country with a diverse and politically engaged population, is asking to be stress-tested. The task is not to import a Scandinavian constitution wholesale, but to refine the Mauritian electoral architecture so that it continues to convert votes into legitimate, broadly trusted mandates under very different demographic, technological and geopolitical conditions than those of the early post-independence era.

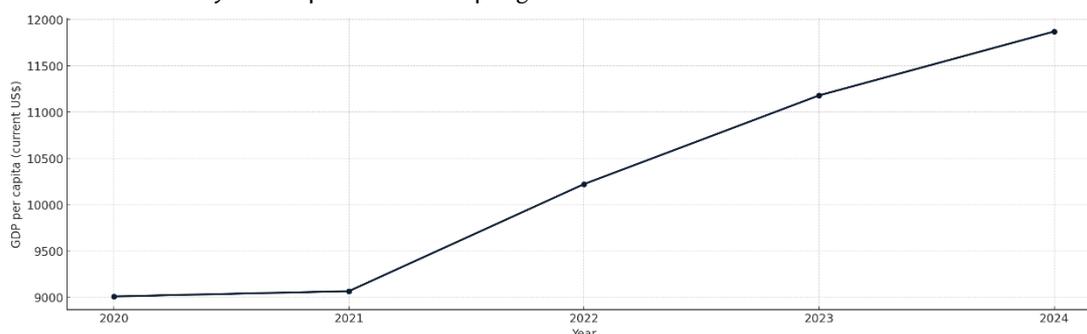


Figure 1 Mauritius's GDP per capita (current US\$)

1.2 Methodology and analytical framework

Given the political sensitivity of electoral design in a small, multi-ethnic and highly literate democracy, this report adopts a deliberately mixed methodological approach. Legal-doctrinal analysis alone cannot capture how rules perform in practice; quantitative indices alone cannot explain why certain arrangements persist despite their flaws.

The first strand of the analysis is doctrinal. It examines the Constitution of Mauritius, the Representation of the People Act, and the First Schedule provisions that define the four communities recognised for the purposes of the Best Loser System—Hindu, Muslim, Sino-Mauritian and General Population—and stipulate that community representation be assessed relative to the 1972 census.[Constitution of Mauritius; Best Loser System description] ([Wikipedia](#)) This strand also reviews the main reform attempts over the past two decades, including the Sachs Commission (2002), the Select Committee Report (2003), the Carcassonne Report (2011), the Sithanen proposals (2012), the 2014 Consultation Paper and the 2018 Constitutional Amendment Bill, as reconstructed in the Electoral Integrity Project’s Mauritius case study.[Electoral Integrity Project, Mauritius Chapter]

The second strand is quantitative. It draws on cross-national democracy and governance datasets (Freedom House, the EIU Democracy Index, International IDEA’s Global State of Democracy indices) and on survey data from Afrobarometer Round 10 (2024) to place Mauritius in comparative perspective and to measure discrepancies between votes and seats. Afrobarometer’s summary of its latest Mauritius survey notes that “The most recent Afrobarometer survey findings show that most Mauritians value elections and multiparty competition and feel free to vote as they wish.”[Afrobarometer Dispatch 873] ([Afrobarometer](#)) At the same time, only 55 per cent of respondents described the 2019 election as “completely” or “largely free and fair”, while 37 per

cent perceived major problems or outright unfairness.[Afrobarometer Dispatch 873]

The quantitative work also uses basic measures of disproportionality (such as the Gallagher index) and of “effective number of parties”, exploiting data compiled by International IDEA, the Office of the Electoral Commissioner and the Electoral Integrity Project, including the finding that Mauritius’s effective number of parties in 2024 was just 3.48 despite a crowded candidate field.[International IDEA – Democracy Tracker country profile; Electoral Commission data] ([Idea](#))

A third strand examines key informant material: official reports, commission minutes, submissions by political parties and civil-society organisations, as well as election-observer reports from SADC and the African Union. These sources provide insight into the strategic calculations of major parties, the fears of minority communities, and the recurring “red lines” (most notably around abolition or retention of the Best Loser System and around the extent of proportional representation).

The final strand is explicitly behavioural. It asks how Mauritius’s electoral rules shape incentives for parties, candidates and voters. Block-vote FPTP in three-member constituencies rewards pre-electoral coalitions and penalises split tickets; the BLS encourages candidates to consider the strategic declaration (or non-declaration) of community identity; campaign-finance oversight and media regulation affect how far money and incumbency can tilt the playing field. This behavioural lens is informed by comparative work on electoral systems and conflict management in divided societies, as well as by country-specific scholarship on Mauritian politics, including analyses that highlight how the BLS simultaneously stabilises elite bargains and entrenches communal categories.[Y. Fessha & N. Ho Tu Nam, “Is it time to let go? The Best Loser System in Mauritius”; Amar Mahadew, “The Best Loser System in Mauritius: An Essential Electoral Tool for Representing Political Minorities”] ([Open Journals](#))

Table 2 Key indices and empirical sources used in this report

Source / dataset	Dimension covered	Latest Mauritius value used	Notes
Freedom in the World 2025 (Freedom House)	Political rights, civil liberties (0–100)	86/100; status “Free”	Annual country scores and narrative. (Freedom House)
Democracy Index 2022 (EIU)	Electoral process, pluralism, civil liberties, etc.	8.14/10; rank 21/167; “Full democracy”	Composite index based on 60 indicators. (EDB Mauritius)
Global State of Democracy (International IDEA)	Representation, Rights, Rule of Law, Participation	Category ranks: Representation 52/173; Rights 74/173; Rule of Law 65/173; Participation 25/173 (2024)	Includes qualitative country profile and event reports. (Idea)

Source / dataset	Dimension covered	Latest Mauritius value used	Notes
Afrobarometer Round 10 (2024), Mauritius	Public attitudes to elections and institutions	55% saw 2019 election as largely free/fair; 88% felt free to vote as they wished	Nationally representative survey of adult citizens.
Electoral Integrity Project – Mauritius Case Study (2024)	System performance, reform attempts, BLS controversy	Notes sweeps of 60/60 mainland seats in 1982, 1995 and 2024; highlights persistent under-representation of women	Expert-driven case study and synthesis of reform proposals.

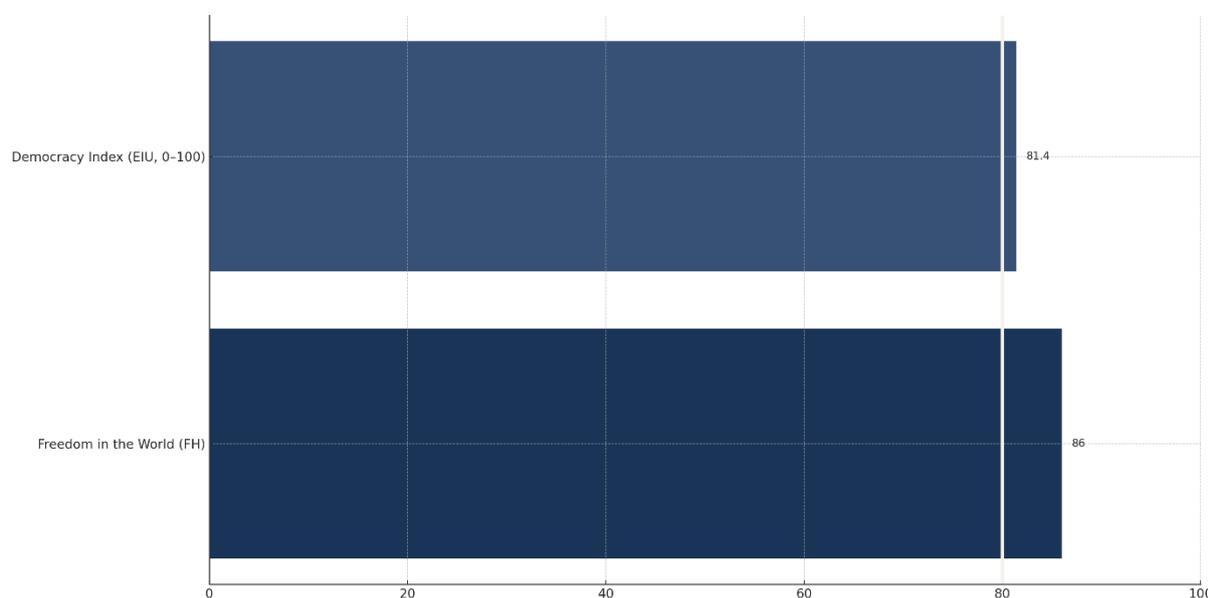


Figure 2 Freedom in the World (86) vs Democracy Index for Mauritius

By combining these strands, the report aims to avoid two familiar traps. One is the purely legalistic view that treats electoral design as a matter of constitutional exegesis, largely divorced from empirical outcomes. The other is an overly technocratic approach in which Mauritius is simply plotted on a global scatter-plot of scores without regard to its communally textured political history or the institutional compromises embodied in the BLS. The analytical framework used here instead treats the electoral system as a piece of institutional “choice architecture”, affecting not only who wins seats but how citizens perceive fairness, inclusion and the legitimacy of economic policy.

1.3 Defining “respect of the vote” and “community equilibrium”

The phrase “respect of the vote” is used frequently in Mauritian political discourse, but seldom defined with precision. For the purposes of this report, it is treated as a composite notion with at least four elements.

The first is **formal integrity**: citizens must be able to vote freely, without intimidation, and have reasonable confidence that their ballot will be counted as cast. Afrobarometer data suggest that Mauritius still performs strongly on this basic dimension: 88 per cent of respondents in 2024 said they were free to choose whom to vote for without feeling pressured, and 81 per cent reported no fear of political violence during the 2019 election campaign.[Afrobarometer Dispatch 873] At the same time, a slim majority (54 per cent) believed it was “not very” or “not at all likely” that powerful people could find out how they voted, implying that a sizeable minority harbours doubts about ballot secrecy.[Afrobarometer Dispatch 873]

The second element is **substantive responsiveness**: an electoral system “respects” the vote to the extent that parliamentary outcomes broadly reflect the pattern of voter preferences, rather than systematically

magnifying some preferences and erasing others. In a block-vote FPTP system, it is almost inevitable that the largest alliance in a constituency will pick up all three seats, even when the second-placed alliance attracts a substantial minority of votes. When this pattern repeats across constituencies, the conversion of votes into seats can become aggressively non-linear, producing super-majorities in Parliament from modest pluralities in the popular vote.

The third element is **competitive choice**: respect for the vote also means that citizens can reasonably expect alternation in office without systemic bias in favour of incumbents or dynasties. Mauritius, to its credit, has seen alternation between major alliances on multiple occasions, and Afrobarometer finds that Mauritians value multiparty competition.[Afrobarometer Dispatch 873] ([Afrobarometer](#)) But the repeated emergence of dominant coalitions able to sweep mainland constituencies raises questions as to whether the system structurally favours certain configurations of parties and communities over others.

Finally, there is **perceived fairness**. A system can meet all formal standards and still be seen as unfair if large sections of the electorate feel that their votes are

“wasted” or that their community is structurally disfavoured. Perception is not a trivial add-on; legitimacy is, in large part, a psychological asset. Once lost, it is painfully slow to rebuild.

In Mauritius, the concept of **“community equilibrium”** must be understood against the backdrop of the Best Loser System. The BLS is designed to correct under-representation of four constitutionally recognised communities—Hindus, Muslims, Sino-Mauritians and the General Population—by allocating up to eight additional seats after constituency results are known, using as a benchmark their respective shares in the 1972 census.[Constitution of Mauritius, First Schedule; “Best Loser System”] ([Wikipedia](#)) The logic is straightforward: in a multi-ethnic island where ethnic voting patterns exist but are not fully deterministic, some communal under-representation is both possible and politically explosive.

However, the social map that underpinned the 1972 census has not stood still. Statistics Mauritius’ most recent census (2022) suggests a religious profile in which Hindus remain the largest group, but Christians and Muslims together form almost as large a bloc.

Table 3 Religious composition of Mauritius, 2011 vs 2022

Religion / category	2011 share of population (%)	2022 share of population (%)	Change (percentage points)
Hinduism	48.5	47.9	-0.6
Christianity	32.7	32.3	-0.4
Islam	17.3	18.2	+0.9
No religion	0.7	0.6	-0.1
Other / Not stated	0.8	1.0	+0.2

Source: Statistics Mauritius, 2011 and 2022 Housing and Population Census (as reported in “Religion in Mauritius”).[Statistics Mauritius, 2011 & 2022 census tables] ([Wikipedia](#))

By contrast, the BLS still operates as if community shares were frozen at their 1972 levels. Official documentation from the Office of the Electoral Commissioner summarising candidate registration for 2024 shows that, for the purposes of BLS calculations, the four communities are assumed to represent 51.8 per cent (Hindu), 16.6 per cent (Muslim), 2.9 per cent (Sino-Mauritian) and 28.7 per cent (General Population), based on the 1972 census.[Office of the Electoral Commissioner, “Distribution of candidates by ethnic community”] ([electionsmauritius.com](#)) These figures are then used to determine whether a community is under- or over-represented in the elected Parliament before the allocation of Best Loser seats.

There are several problems with this arrangement. Demographically, it assumes that relative community sizes have remained static for more than half a century. Conceptually, it hard-codes categories that many younger Mauritians may experience as fluid, overlapping or simply irrelevant to their political

identity. Politically, it creates incentives for strategic self-identification, as candidates decide whether to position themselves within a specific community or in the residual “General Population” in light of perceived electoral advantages.[Electoral Integrity Project, Mauritius Chapter]

The scholarly literature captures this unease in unusually blunt terms. One recent assessment notes that “the BLS has often been deprecated as being outdated, inconsistent, unrepresentative, indiscriminate, fostering ethnic identity and eventually supporting communalism in the Mauritian society.”[Sookrajowa et al., Electoral Integrity Project Mauritius Chapter, 2024] This is not a call to abolish community equilibrium as a political objective; it is a warning that the current mechanism may now be undermining that equilibrium rather than protecting it.

For the purposes of this report, “community equilibrium” will therefore be defined more broadly than the BLS formula. It refers to a state in which:

- all significant communities feel that they have a realistic chance of influence—through parties, coalitions or cross-communal platforms—without being reduced to permanent minorities;
- no community perceives itself as structurally locked out of power, or dependent solely on post-electoral correctional mechanisms; and
- electoral rules do not require citizens or candidates to choose a rigid communal identity in order to secure representation.

In the Mauritian context, the challenge is compounded by the gradual evolution of identity from predominantly religious and ethnic markers towards more occupational, class and generational ones, particularly among younger urban voters. A system that treats “community equilibrium” as a frozen ethnic ledger risks mis-measuring the very thing it is meant to safeguard.

The central task of the reform debate, then, is to design an electoral system that simultaneously respects individual votes—by limiting wasted ballots and manufactured majorities—and sustains a credible sense of communal fairness without reifying identities that the society itself is slowly outgrowing.

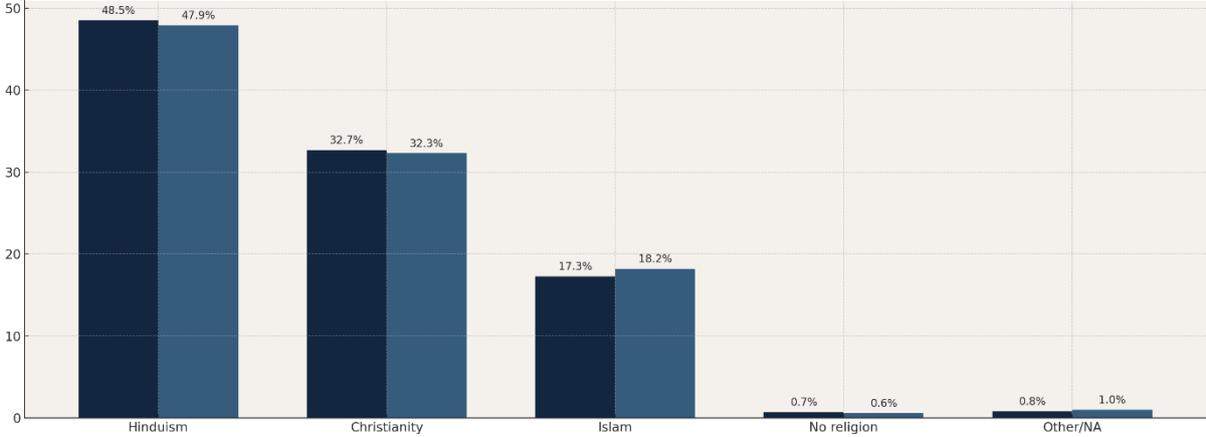


Figure 3 Religious composition of Mauritius in 2011 and 2022

2. Anatomy of the Mauritian electoral system

Behind Mauritius's reputation for democratic stability sits a deceptively simple piece of institutional engineering. A single-chamber National Assembly of up to 70 members, elected for five years, combines a majoritarian block vote with a small corrective mechanism for communal balance. Sixty-two MPs are chosen in 21 multi-member constituencies (20 three-member constituencies on the island of Mauritius and one two-member constituency in Rodrigues), with up to eight additional seats filled via the Best Loser System (BLS). ([Constitute Project](#))

The elegance lies in the promise of strong governments and visible local representatives. The difficulty, as later sections will explore, is that the same design can convert modest pluralities into dominant parliamentary majorities while locking in an ethnic cartography that no longer matches the social reality.

2.1 Constitutional foundations & institutions

The 1968 Constitution, revised on several occasions but never fundamentally rewritten, remains the cornerstone of Mauritius's electoral architecture. Parliament consists of the President and the National Assembly. The Assembly is constitutionally fixed at 70 members: 62 directly elected on a first-past-the-post block vote, and "not more than 8" additional members designated through the BLS, as provided in the First Schedule. ([Constitute Project](#))

Electoral governance is entrusted to three bodies. The Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC) determines constituency boundaries and must report roughly every ten years, using a population quota defined as the number of inhabitants of the island of Mauritius divided by 20. ([ACE Project](#)) The Electoral Commissioner, appointed by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, is a public officer charged with administering the register of electors and the conduct of polls. The Constitution explicitly insulates the Commissioner from political instruction: "in the exercise of his functions ... [he] shall not be subject to the direction or [control] of any other person or authority." ([Constitute Project](#))

The Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC), a multi-member constitutional commission, stands above the Commissioner as a supervisory body. Its remit is broad. As the Constitution puts it, "The Electoral Supervisory Commission shall have general responsibility for and shall supervise, the registration of electors for the election of members of the Assembly and the conduct of elections of such members." ([Constitute Project](#)) Draft electoral legislation and regulations must be referred to both the ESC and the Commissioner, who may issue reports that are then laid before the Assembly. This double lock was meant to ensure that any attempt to tamper with electoral rules would trigger professional scrutiny and, at least in theory, public debate.

From a governance perspective, the formal picture is reassuring. Commissioners enjoy security of tenure and are disqualified if they hold political office, and both the EBC and ESC are shielded from ministerial direction. ([Constitute Project](#)) In practice, however,

concerns have been raised about appointment processes and the perceived proximity of some commissioners to the government of the day, particularly in the run-up to the 2019 and 2024

elections. ([Grokopedia](#)) The institutions are independent in law, but—like central banks in emerging markets—they are periodically tested by the political cycle.

Table 4 Core institutions of the Mauritian electoral framework

Institution	Constitutional / legal basis	Key functions	Illustrative data point	Independence features
National Assembly	Constitution, Chapter V	Unicameral legislature; up to 70 members (62 elected + max. 8 BLS)	62 directly elected members in 21 constituencies; up to 8 BLS seats	MPs serve five-year terms; constitutional super-majorities required for major changes (Constitute Project)
Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC)	Constitution, s.38–39	Reviews and recommends constituency boundaries using population quota and other factors	Population quota from 2000 census: 57,167.9 residents per constituency (1,143,358 ÷ 20) (ACE Project)	Not subject to direction or control of any person or authority; Assembly may only approve or reject its proposals, not amend them
Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC)	Constitution, s.38 & 41	General responsibility for registration of electors and conduct of elections; scrutinises electoral laws	Supervises National Assembly and local elections for an electorate now exceeding 1 million voters (Wikipedia)	Multi-member commission; members cannot be MPs or public officers; empowered to issue reports laid before the Assembly (Constitute Project)
Electoral Commissioner	Constitution, s.40–41; Representation of the People Act	Manages voter registration, polling operations, counting and BLS calculations	941,719 registered voters in 2019; 1,002,857 in 2024 (Wikipedia)	Appointed by Judicial and Legal Service Commission; not subject to direction or control in the exercise of functions (Constitute Project)

The constitutional architecture, on paper, therefore seeks to balance strong parliamentary majorities with independent oversight of the electoral process. The question, explored in subsequent sections, is whether this framework still adequately reflects Mauritius’s political economy and the expectations of a more demanding electorate.

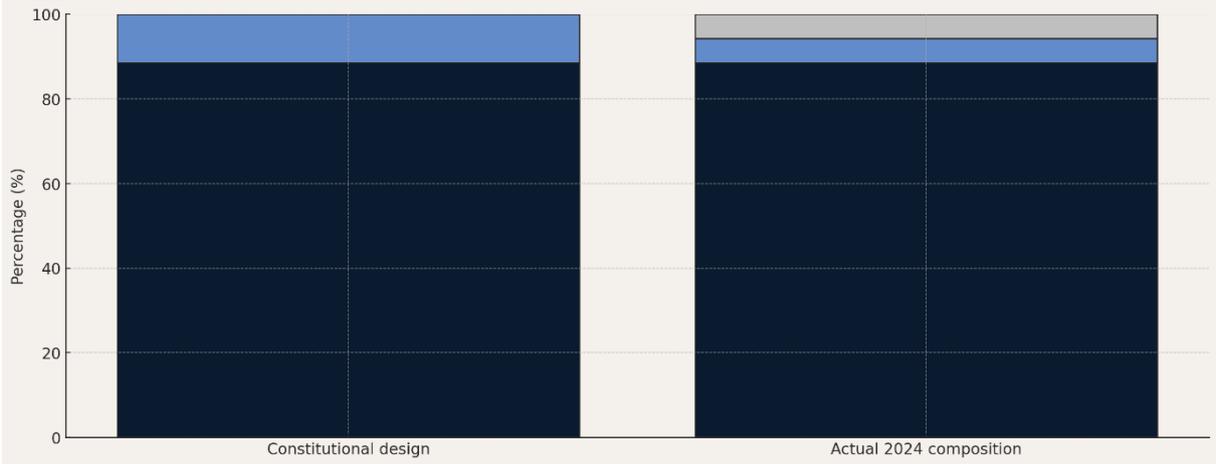


Figure 4 Composition of the National Assembly by seat type:

2.2 The three-member constituency and block vote

At constituency level, Mauritius departs from the classic Westminster single-member district. The island is divided into 21 constituencies: 20 three-member constituencies on the main island and a two-member constituency for Rodrigues. Voters are given as many votes as there are seats in their constituency, which they may distribute across candidates (including panachage across parties). The electoral system used is a plurality block vote. As the description of the 2014 general election notes, “The elections are held using the plurality block vote system with panachage, whereby voters have as many votes as seats available.” ([Wikipedia](#))

The behavioural logic is straightforward. Parties or alliances typically field three candidates in each mainland constituency and campaign as a slate. In practice, most voters cast all their votes for one alliance list, amplifying the advantage of the leading coalition. Where an alliance wins even a modest plurality in a constituency, it frequently secures all three seats. For

opposition parties, second place is often indistinguishable from last.

This mechanical bias has been dramatically visible in several elections. As recent research for the Electoral Integrity Project notes, the block vote has produced “overly disproportional election results that skew heavily in favour of the governing party”, including elections in 1982, 1995 and 2024 where a single coalition swept all 60 mainland seats. The 2019 election offers a more granular illustration. Alliance Morisien won just 37.7 per cent of the national vote yet captured 42 of 70 seats once BLS allocations were included, giving it 60 per cent of parliamentary seats. Alliance Nationale, with 33.3 per cent of votes, ended up with only 17 seats. ([Wikipedia](#))

The 2024 election pushed this disproportionality even further. Alliance du Changement secured around 61.4 per cent of the vote but won 60 of the 62 directly elected seats, plus a dominant position once the four BLS seats were added. Alliance Lepep, despite obtaining roughly 27.3 per cent of votes, received only two BLS seats and no constituency seats. ([Wikipedia](#)) In effect, more than a quarter of voters ended up with vanishingly little voice in the legislature.

Table 5 Vote share and seat share under the block vote, selected elections

Election year	Alliance	Alliance vote share (%)	Seats in National Assembly*	Seat share (%)	Notes
2019	Alliance Morisien	37.68	42	60.0	Governing bloc; 77% turnout; Gallagher index of disproportionality 17.94 (Wikipedia)
2019	Alliance Nationale	33.27	17	24.3	Main opposition bloc
2019	MMM (no alliance)	20.57	9	12.9	Third party; retains niche representation
2024	Alliance du Changement	61.38	60	90.9+	Won 20 of 21 constituencies; landslide largest since 1995 (Wikipedia)
2024	Alliance Lepep	27.29	2	3.0+	No directly elected seats; 2 BLS seats provide minimal presence (Wikipedia)

*Including Best Loser seats where applicable.

†Seat shares in 2024 computed over 66 filled seats (62 constituency seats + 4 BLS seats).

From a corporate-governance perspective, the system resembles a company where a majority shareholder not only controls the board but also writes the articles of association. Once a coalition crosses a certain threshold, the seat bonus is so large that constitutional amendments requiring a three-quarters majority become feasible without cross-party consensus. The block vote thus trades off representation against governability, and, as investors would say, the system is long “stability” but short “minority protections”.

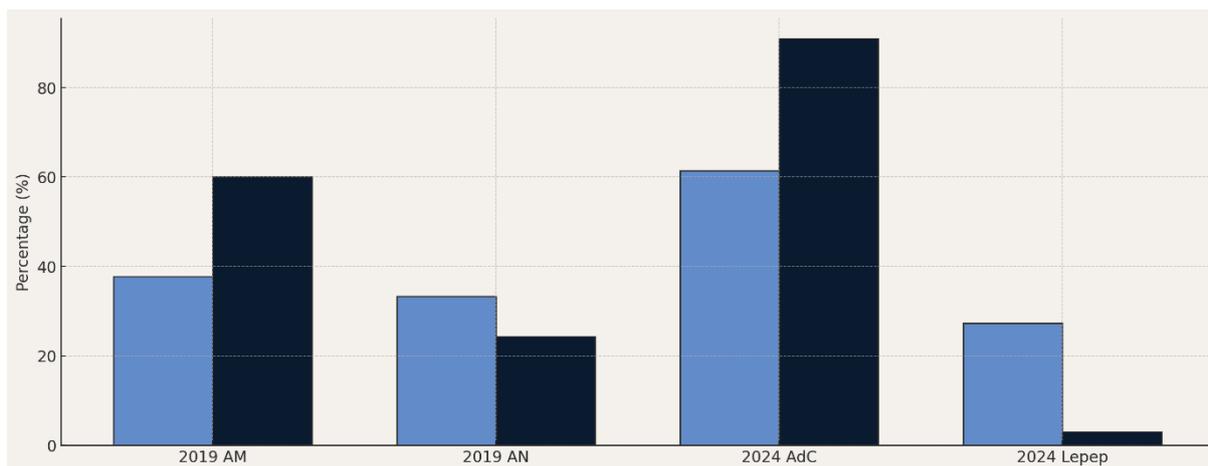


Figure 5 Vote share and seat share for major alliances in 2019 and 2024

2.3 The Best Loser System: origins, mechanics and current practice

The Best Loser System was the price of consensus at independence. Negotiated in the 1960s constitutional conferences, it was intended to reassure minority communities that universal suffrage in multi-member constituencies would not translate into an exclusively Hindu-dominated Assembly. The mechanism is embedded in the First Schedule of the Constitution and has remained essentially unchanged since 1968. ([Constitute Project](#))

Four communities are formally recognised for BLS purposes: Hindus, Muslims, Sino-Mauritians and

“General Population”, the latter acting as a residual category encompassing those who do not fall into the first three groups. The allocation of BLS seats is based on the ethnic distribution recorded in the 1972 census—the last time ethnic identity was collected—rather than on contemporary demographics. As the Electoral Boundaries Commission explains, these census data are used to calculate how many MPs from each community would correspond to perfect proportionality, with under-represented communities qualifying for additional seats. ([ACE Project](#))

The 1972 census figures used for the BLS are summarised in Table below. ([Wikipedia](#))

Table 6 Recognised communities in the 1972 census (BLS reference data)

Community (as defined in First Schedule)	1972 population	Share of four-community total (%)
Hindu	428,348	50.3
General Population	261,439	30.7
Sino-Mauritian	24,374	2.9
Muslim	137,173	16.1
Total (four communities)	851,334	100.0

Note: Totals and shares calculated from the census figures used in the Best Loser allocation formula. ([Wikipedia](#))

The mechanics of the BLS are intricate but can be summarised in two stages. First, up to four seats are allocated to the “most successful” unelected candidates of under-represented communities, regardless of party. Second, the remaining seats (up to a maximum of eight in total) are distributed to address residual communal under-representation while also taking account of party vote strength, with the proviso that the overall seat balance between parties is not upset. As one concise description puts it, the system is “designed to render the ethnic balance more closely resemble that of the 1972 Census.” ([Election Passport](#))

In practice, this mechanism has evolved in ways that were not originally anticipated. A 1982 constitutional amendment stopped the collection of ethnic data in future censuses in an attempt to reduce communal politics. The unintended consequence is that a half-century-old census now governs the ethnic correction of every election. The 2014 “Declaration of Community (Temporary Provisions) Act” made it optional for candidates to declare a community affiliation, but unless they do so they are ineligible for BLS consideration. ([Wikipedia](#)) Reform therefore insulated candidates who reject communal labelling from being part of the corrective mechanism meant to protect minorities.

The use of 1972 data, and the rigid four-community classification, have attracted increasingly sharp criticism. Academic assessments note that the BLS, initially conceived as a safeguard, is now widely seen as “outdated” and as entrenching communal identities rather than managing them. From an investor’s perspective, the uncomfortable fact is that the composition of Parliament’s “safety valve” is tied to a demographic snapshot taken before many of today’s voters were born.

Recent elections also show how the BLS’s capacity to correct distortions is structurally limited. In 2014, seven of the eight possible BLS seats were filled; in 2019 all eight were used; yet in 2024 only four best losers were appointed—two from Alliance Lepep and two from the Rodrigues-based Alliance Liberation—largely to restore minimal communal representation while preserving the dominant position of Alliance du Changement. ([Wikipedia](#)) The system can tweak the margins, but it was never designed to counteract the seat bonus generated by the block vote.

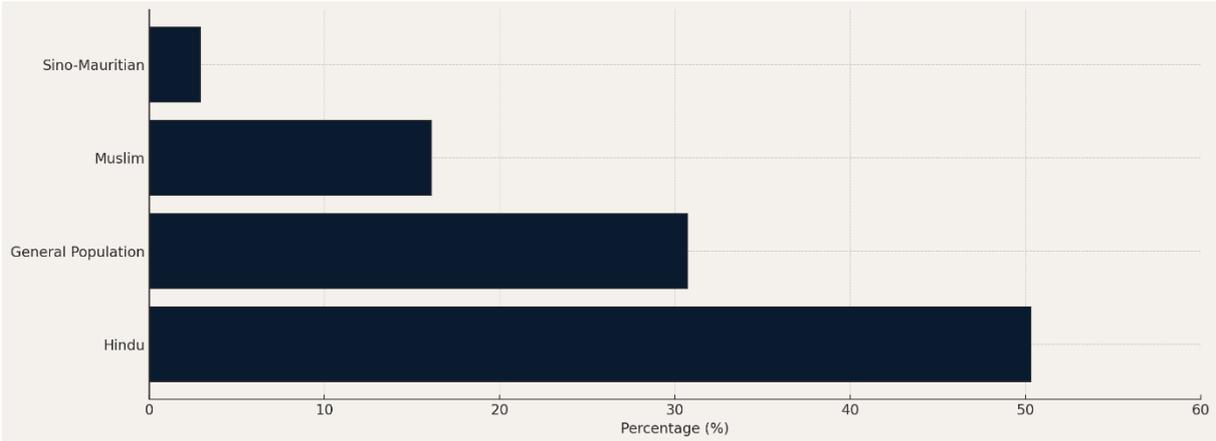


Figure 6 1972 census shares of the four BLS communities

2.4 Constituency boundaries, malapportionment and turnout

Where the block vote determines how votes translate into seats, constituency boundaries influence how many votes each seat represents. The EBC is required to review boundaries roughly every decade, using a population quota based on the latest census. For the 2000 census, the island of Mauritius had 1,143,358 residents, yielding a population quota of 57,167.9 residents per constituency. ([ACE Project](#))

In reality, constituency populations have diverged substantially from this benchmark. The EBC’s own

figures for 2000 show that Port Louis South and Port Louis Central (Constituency No. 2) had only 34,786 residents—about 39 per cent below the quota. By contrast, Savanne and Black River (No. 14) had 76,926 residents, around 35 per cent above quota, and Pamplemousses and Triolet (No. 5) had 75,381 residents, some 32 per cent above quota. As a parliamentary debate on the 2020 boundaries report bluntly observed, “If electoral boundaries are not periodically adjusted, population inequities may occur across Constituencies.”

Table below illustrates these disparities for a set of constituencies.

Table 7 Malapportionment: population by selected constituencies (2000 census)

Constituency (No. and name)	Population 2000	Deviation from population quota 57,168 (%)	Comment
No. 2 – Port Louis South & Port Louis Central	34,786	-39.2	Historically smallest constituency by residents; dense urban core
No. 5 – Pamplemousses & Triolet	75,381	+31.9	Fast-growing peri-urban area
No. 14 – Savanne & Black River	76,926	+34.6	Large, mixed urban–rural constituency
No. 15 – La Caverne & Phoenix	69,328	+21.3	Suburban constituency in central plateau

On a strict “one person, one vote” metric, a vote cast in Port Louis South and Central carries considerably more weight than one in Savanne and Black River. The Constitution does allow deviations from the quota to take account of communication, geography, density and administrative boundaries, and the EBC is explicit that a purely mechanical approach would be both impractical and undesirable. ([ACE Project](#)) But the current tolerances—effectively above ± 20 per cent in some cases—sit at the outer edge of what comparative practice would regard as acceptable.

Turnout trends shed a further light on representation. National turnout in National Assembly elections remains relatively high by international standards, rising from 74.1 per cent in 2014 to 77.0 per cent in 2019 and 79.3 per cent in 2024. ([Wikipedia](#)) Detailed official breakdowns by constituency indicate persistent

variation, with some urban seats recording lower participation than rural ones, although comprehensive community-specific turnout data are not published. The Electoral Integrity Project case study and other research point to particularly fragile engagement among poorer and more marginalised groups, including segments of the Creole community.

In essence, Mauritian voters are formally equal but substantively uneven: some live in significantly oversized constituencies, others in undersized ones; some are mobilised heavily at election time, others are chronically under-represented in both turnout and candidate selection. For a jurisdiction that markets itself to investors on the strength of its rule of law, this quietly cumulative malapportionment is a risk worth watching.

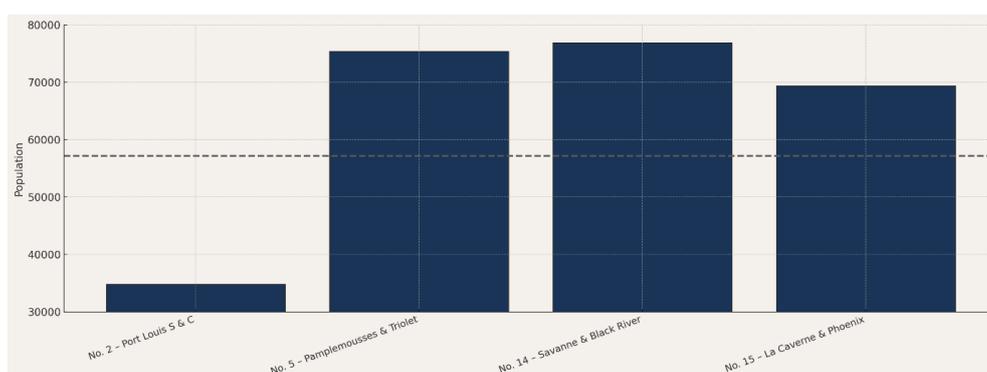


Figure 7 Population per selected constituency against the population quota

2.5 Campaign finance, media and “money politics”

If the constitutional and mechanical aspects of the electoral system are visible, the financial plumbing is more opaque. Mauritius has no comprehensive party finance law. Regulations under the Representation of the People Act require individual candidates to submit spending returns, but there are no enforceable caps on donations or expenditure, no requirement for parties to publish audited accounts, and no public funding. ([ResearchGate](#)) In effect, a sophisticated offshore financial centre operates its democracy on disclosure rules better suited to a small parish council.

This regulatory light-touch interacts with intense electoral competition and relatively small constituencies to produce what local analysts call “money politics”. In their report *The Cost of Parliamentary Politics in Mauritius*, Kasenally and

Ramtohol describe elections on the island as a “national sport”, but one in which most of the financial game “remains behind closed doors or within private spheres”. ([ResearchGate](#)) An article in *L’Express* summarising their findings notes that the authors concluded: “Competing in election costs a lot of money and with each passing election, it gets more expensive.” ([lexpress.mu](#))

The same report documents both the level of official remuneration and the informal economy around campaigns. On the formal side, monthly salaries for MPs and members of the executive are relatively generous by upper-middle-income standards (Table 2.5). ([ResearchGate](#)) On the informal side, the study reports estimates that in the 2019 election the “asking price” for a vote ranged between MUR 5,000 and MUR 10,000 in closely contested constituencies, with sums for entire families reaching up to MUR 100,000; single-party campaign budgets were estimated at up to MUR 330 million for a 30-day campaign. ([lexpress.mu](#))

Table 8 Monthly salaries of legislative and executive members (circa 2020)

Position	Salary (MUR per month)	Approx. salary (US\$ per month)
Member of Parliament	157,500	4,144
Parliamentary Private Secretary	246,000	6,500
Minister	330,000	8,700
Leader of the Opposition	254,000	6,700
Speaker of the National Assembly	360,000	9,500

Source: Kasenally & Ramtohol, *The Cost of Parliamentary Politics in Mauritius* (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2020). ([ResearchGate](#))

From a behavioural perspective, the combination of high office-holder pay, opaque party funding and rising campaign costs creates skewed incentives. For candidates, a parliamentary seat is both a platform for public service and a valuable private asset, justifying significant up-front expenditure. For donors—ranging from traditional sugar interests to newer conglomerates and financial actors—campaign contributions can function less as political expression and more as a form of portfolio diversification across parties. ([ResearchGate](#))

Media regulation and access further complicate the picture. State-owned broadcasting remains influential and has been repeatedly accused by opposition parties of bias in coverage and allocation of airtime, notably in

the 2010, 2014 and 2019 elections. ([Wikipedia](#)) Social media has simultaneously lowered entry barriers for smaller parties and raised new risks of disinformation and micro-targeted smear campaigns, a trend documented in studies of the 2014 and 2019 campaigns. ([EISA](#))

For international observers and investors, the core concern is less that Mauritius is uniquely corrupt—it is not—than that its campaign-finance regime has not kept pace with the sophistication of its political market. A system that relies on private negotiation, opaque spending and uneven media access can erode trust even when formal electoral administration is scrupulously neutral.

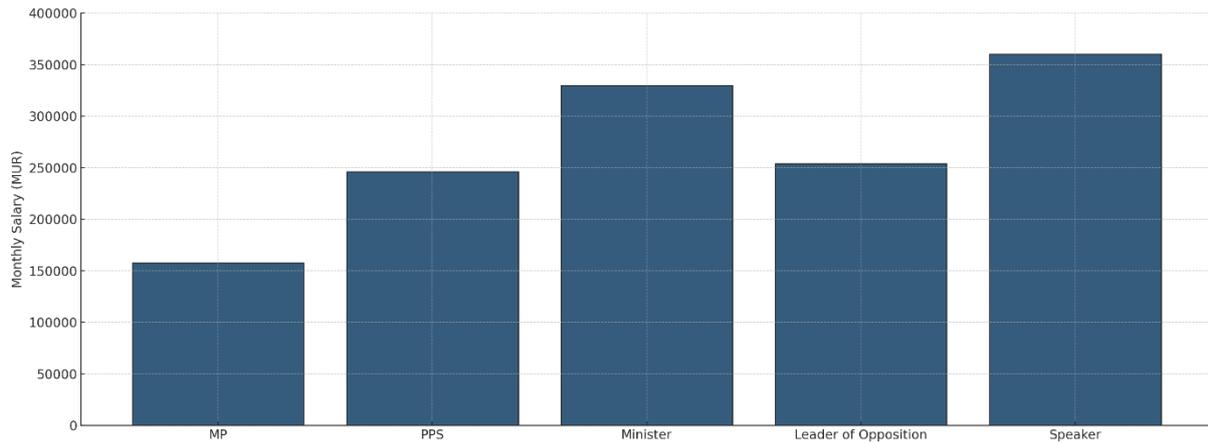


Figure 8 Salaries of legislative and executive members

This section has mapped the institutional wiring of Mauritius’s electoral system: a Westminster-style parliament, a block-vote system that can over-reward winners, an ethnic correction device rooted in 1970s demography, boundary rules that tolerate wide population disparities, and a campaign-finance environment where money has outpaced regulation. Subsequent sections will examine which elements are simply anachronistic and which pose more immediate risks to the “respect of the vote” and to the delicate equilibrium between communities.

3. What is outdated: diagnosis of stress points

If Section 2 described the machinery, Section 3 looks at the bits now grinding alarmingly. Mauritius's electoral architecture still produces orderly elections and clear winners, but under the surface several elements are plainly out of date: the degree of disproportionality, ethnic classification rules rooted in a 1972 census, stubborn gaps in gender and generational representation, and a digital environment that can swing from exuberant pluralism to heavy-handed control.

3.1 Disproportionality and “manufactured majorities”

The Mauritian system has always tilted towards governability. The question is whether it has now tilted too far. The plurality block vote in three-member constituencies reliably magnifies the largest alliance's seat share, often well beyond its vote share. The pattern is amply documented across elections, but its scale is worth quantifying.

As shown earlier, the MMM–PSM alliance in 1982 won around **63.0 per cent** of the alliance vote yet captured **60 of the 62** directly elected seats. In 1995, the Labour–MMM alliance secured **65.2 per cent** of the vote and again took **60 of 62** direct seats. The 2000 election saw the MSM–MMM alliance win **51.3 per cent** of votes but **54 of 62** direct seats (and 58 overall including Best Losers), relegating the Labour–PMXD alliance, with **36.3 per cent**, to just six constituency seats. In 2019, Alliance Morisien was returned to office with **37.7 per cent** of the alliance vote and **42 of 62** directly elected seats. The 2024 election inverted the party colours but not the structure: Alliance du Changement won about **62.6 per cent** of the vote and **60 of 62** directly elected seats.

Put differently, when one coalition crosses roughly half the vote, the system tends to deliver it between 87 and 97 per cent of constituency seats. When it falls short of that threshold but remains the largest bloc—as in 2019—it can still secure two-thirds of the seats. This is the textbook definition of “manufactured majorities”.

The Electoral Integrity Project's Mauritius case study summarises the problem with a certain academic understatement: “the current system does not faithfully produce an accurate picture of where the people's political loyalties actually lie.” That misalignment between popular preferences and parliamentary arithmetic is not just a statistical curiosity. It affects how citizens perceive the fairness of the system, how opposition parties assess the cost–benefit of contesting elections, and how external observers rate the depth of democracy.

One way of illustrating this is to compare vote shares and seat shares for leading alliances over time.

Table 9 Vote-seat distortions for leading alliances (selected elections)

Election year	Leading alliance	Alliance vote share (%)	Direct seats won (of 62)	Seat share (%)	Seat-to-vote ratio
1982	MMM-PSM	63.0	60	96.8	1.54
1995	Labour-MMM	65.2	60	96.8	1.49
2000	MSM-MMM	51.3	54	87.1	1.70
2019	Alliance Morisien	37.7	42	67.7	1.79
2024	Alliance du Changement	62.6	60	96.8	1.55

Sources: Electoral Commissioner's Office; Elections in Mauritius; Reuters; Electoral Integrity Project.

The “seat-to-vote ratio” in the final column (seat share divided by vote share) provides a simple proxy for disproportionality. A perfectly proportional system would yield a ratio of 1; in Mauritius’s recent history it has consistently varied between about 1.5 and 1.8 for winning alliances. The 2019 election is particularly striking: with little more than a third of the vote, Alliance Morisien commanded more than two-thirds of the seats.

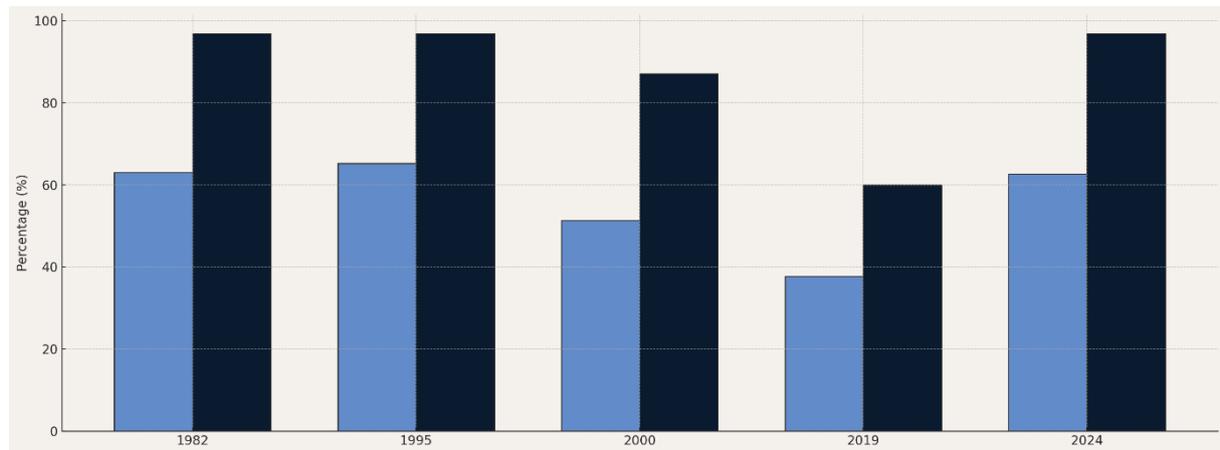


Figure 9 Vote share and seat share for the leading alliance

The concern is not that Mauritius occasionally produces landslides—that can happen in any democracy—but that the mechanics almost guarantee them whenever one coalition pulls ahead. This reduces the expected value of opposition participation: the difference between 45 per cent and 55 per cent of votes can be the difference between a formidable opposition and near-extinction in Parliament. Over time, such asymmetry risks corroding the perceived link between voting and representation.

3.2 Communal classification and international human rights law

If disproportionality raises questions about the equality of votes, communal classification raises questions about the equality of citizens. Under the Best Loser System, candidates have historically been required to state their community as Hindu, Muslim, Sino-Mauritian or General Population in order to be eligible for Best Loser consideration; these declarations feed into the post-election correction mechanism based on the 1972 census.

The system's intent was to ensure that no major community was structurally under-represented in the Assembly. Over time, however, its operation has become increasingly difficult to reconcile with evolving human rights standards. In a communication brought by members of the party *Rezistans ek Alternativ*, the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) examined the requirement that candidates declare a particular community as a condition of standing. In its 2012 Views in *Narain et al. v. Mauritius* (Communication 1742/2007), the HRC found that the requirement violated Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees the right to stand for election without unreasonable restrictions, and Article 26 on non-discrimination.

The Committee concluded that Mauritius had failed to demonstrate that the classification requirement was necessary and proportionate in order to achieve legitimate aims such as minority protection. It recommended that the State “revise the system of communal representation so as to ensure that it is fully consistent with articles 25 and 26 of the Covenant”. Subsequent treaty-body reviews, including by the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, have reiterated these concerns, urging Mauritius to move away from rigid ethnic classifications in its electoral system.

Domestically, the political response has been piecemeal. The Constitution (Declaration of Community) (Temporary Provisions) Act 2014 allowed candidates to stand without declaring a community, while instructing the Electoral Commissioner to treat non-declaring candidates as belonging to an inferred community composition derived from average patterns in the 2000 election. This avoided the immediate clash with the HRC's decision but created a curious duality: candidates could refuse to label themselves communally, but the system would still classify them behind the scenes for BLS purposes.

The continued reliance on the 1972 census compounds the problem. As shown in Table 3.2, the communal proportions used in the BLS diverge from more recent religious data, and, more importantly, from the more fluid nature of identity in contemporary Mauritius.

Table 10 1972 communal shares vs recent religious distribution

Group / category	1972 BLS share (%)	Religious share 2022 (%)*
Hindu / Hinduism	50.3	47.9
Muslim / Islam	16.1	18.2
Sino-Mauritian / (no direct proxy)	2.9	–
General Population / Christianity	30.7	32.3
No religion / other	–	1.8

*Sources: 1972 census figures used in Best Loser formula; Statistics Mauritius 2011 & 2022 population census tables on religion.

While the broad balance among Hindus, Christians and Muslims has remained relatively stable, the use of 1972 data and the four constitutional communities no longer maps comfortably onto contemporary Mauritian society. Younger citizens with mixed ancestries, transnational identities or a preference for civic over communal labels find themselves forced into categories designed for another era.

From an international-law perspective, three specific issues arise:

- **Necessity and proportionality:** Is ethnic classification genuinely necessary to prevent exclusion, or are there less intrusive means (e.g. diversity obligations on party lists) to achieve the same aim? The HRC's answer has been clear: Mauritius has not justified

the current requirement to the standard expected under the ICCPR.

- **Temporal validity:** How long can a State legitimately rely on a half-century-old census as the basis for ethnic corrections, especially once it has deliberately stopped collecting similar data?
- **Symbolic signalling:** What message does it send to citizens that their political identity is, formally, still defined in terms set out in the early 1970s?

The Electoral Integrity Project's assessment captures the contemporary unease: “The Best Loser mechanism, designed as a communal safeguard in a specific historical context, has outlived its original purpose and is increasingly becoming counter-productive.” It is difficult to see how Mauritius can maintain its

reputation as a rights-respecting democracy while retaining a system that requires, or at least assumes, ethnic labelling as the price of full political participation.

“[Mauritius should] revise the system of communal representation so as to ensure that it is fully consistent with articles 25 and 26 of the Covenant.”

– UN Human Rights Committee, *Narain et al. v. Mauritius* (2012)

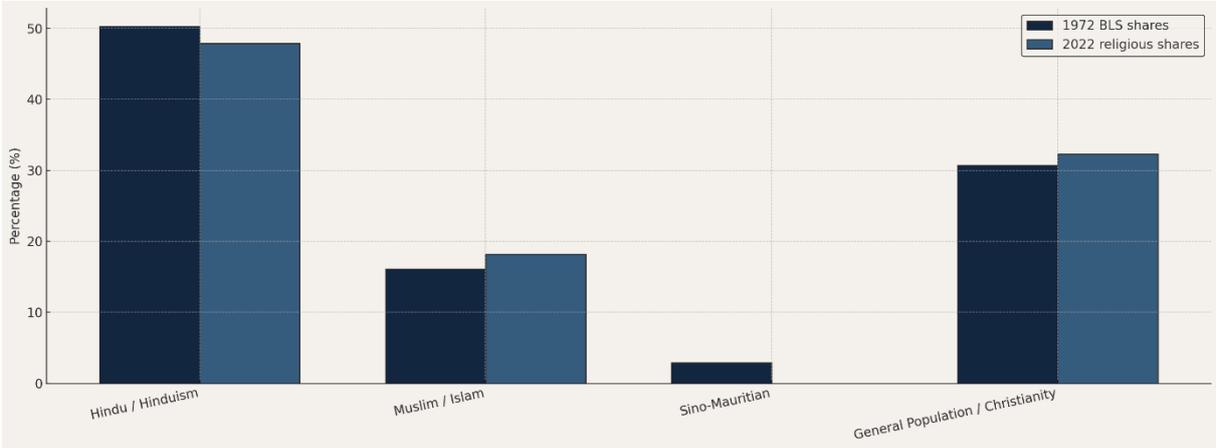


Figure 10 1972 BLS shares (Hindu, Muslim, Sino Mauritian, General Population) with the 2022 religious shares

3.3 Gender, age & diversity deficits

Mauritius performs well on many governance indicators but lags conspicuously on descriptive representation. According to International IDEA’s 2024 country profile, women hold **19.4 per cent** of seats in the National Assembly, placing Mauritius below the global average and behind several African peers. This is despite the introduction of a one-third gender quota for candidates in local government elections in 2011,

which had the effect of raising women’s representation at municipal level to over 30 per cent.

The contrast with international evidence is stark. A meta-analysis of 190 countries by International IDEA finds that proportional representation systems with legislated gender quotas have an average of **27.9 per cent** women MPs, compared to only **16.1 per cent** in majoritarian systems without quotas. Mauritius currently combines a strongly majoritarian system with only partial, local-level quotas.

Table 11 Women’s representation in Mauritius and selected comparators

Country	Electoral system type	Women in lower house (%)	Year
Mauritius	Block vote (FPTP, multi-member)	19.4	2024
Seychelles	FPTP + proportional seats	27.4	2024
South Africa	List PR	45.8	2024
Rwanda	Mixed PR with reserved seats	61.3	2023
Global average	Mixed	26.9	2023

Sources: Inter-Parliamentary Union; International IDEA; International IDEA Democracy Tracker – Mauritius.

Beyond gender, there is a quieter but significant age skew. Afrobarometer’s 2024 survey shows that **53 per cent** of Mauritians are under 35, yet the National Assembly remains heavily dominated by politicians in their fifties and sixties; youth representation is largely confined to a small number of backbenchers and junior ministers. Ethnic diversity within party leaderships also tends to mirror historic communal hierarchies, with key party presidencies and leadership roles still concentrated among older male elites from dominant groups.

For business and investors, this under-representation of women and youth is not just a matter of optics. It affects the range of perspectives feeding into policy on issues such as education, digital transformation and climate risk—areas where younger generations and women often have distinct priorities. It also influences the perceived legitimacy of reforms that may impose short-term costs for long-term gains.

The legal framework does little to correct these biases. Apart from the local-government quota, there are no binding national-level requirements on parties to field diverse slates. Candidate selection is managed internally, often through opaque bargaining, dynastic considerations and communal calculations calibrated to the block vote.

“Mauritius has made remarkable strides in consolidating democracy, yet political representation remains skewed in favour of older men, with women and younger citizens under-represented in elected office.”

– International IDEA country profile, Mauritius

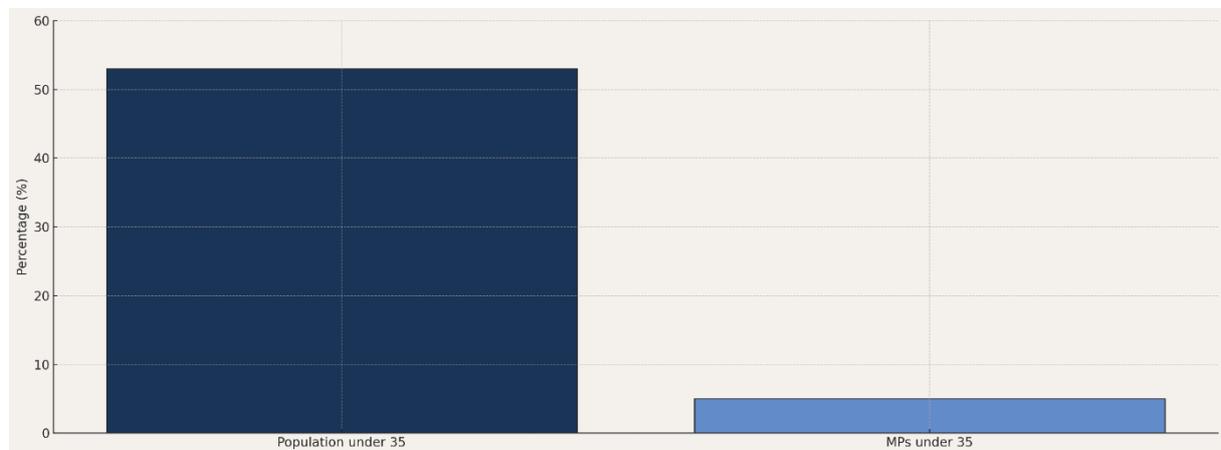


Figure 11 Mauritius, (i) share of population under 35 (circa 53 per cent) versus (ii) approximate share of MPs under 35

3.4 Digital campaigning, surveillance and trust

The final stress point belongs to the twenty-first century rather than the twentieth: the digital environment around elections. Mauritius is a highly connected society, with internet penetration estimated at around **80 per cent** of the population and social-media use particularly high among younger citizens. Digital campaigns have become central to electoral strategy, lowering entry barriers for smaller parties but also opening the door to micro-targeted messaging, disinformation and new forms of surveillance.

Recent events have exposed both the promise and the risks. In early November 2024, just days before the general election, the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) ordered a temporary shutdown of all social-media platforms on national-security grounds. International IDEA's Democracy Tracker records that "access to social media platforms was suspended nationwide", with services only restored after a wave of public criticism and concern from international observers. The episode

was short-lived but symbolically significant: for the first time, many Mauritians experienced a deliberate state-imposed interruption of their online political space.

In February 2025, the newly elected Prime Minister informed Parliament that a sophisticated surveillance system, allegedly capable of intercepting phone calls, internet traffic and social-media communications, had been deactivated following an investigation into its operation under the previous administration. The details remain contested, but the broad impression is clear: the technical capacity to monitor citizens at scale exists, and its future use will depend on political decisions rather than technological constraints.

At the same time, parties have increasingly relied on social media for campaign messaging. Reports around the 2019 election highlighted the use of targeted Facebook advertising, WhatsApp groups and anonymous pages to mobilise support and attack opponents, with limited regulatory oversight. Traditional campaign rules—designed for billboards, radio spots and public meetings—sit awkwardly with a world in which a single viral clip can reach hundreds of thousands of voters within hours.

Table 12 Selected digital indicators and events, Mauritius

Indicator / event	Value / description	Source / year
Internet penetration (individuals using the Internet, % of population)	~79.5%	World Bank, 2022 estimate
Facebook users as share of population	~73%	DataReportal / ITU, 2024
Temporary nationwide suspension of social-media platforms	Ordered by ICTA during 2024 general election campaign; lifted after public and international criticism	International IDEA Democracy Tracker, 2024
Deactivation of mass surveillance system	Announced in Parliament, Feb 2025, following investigation into alleged unlawful interception	International IDEA Democracy Tracker, 2025

From a trust perspective, the combination of high digital dependence and episodes of shutdown and surveillance is toxic. Even if the core mechanics of voting and counting remain sound, citizens may start to doubt whether the broader information environment is being managed impartially. Afrobarometer's 2024 survey found that while large majorities of Mauritians still express support for elections and multiparty competition, only **55 per cent** rated the 2019 election as "completely" or "largely free and fair". It would be naïve to think that social-media shutdowns and surveillance revelations will improve that figure.

For investors and international partners, these developments also raise red flags. Digital shutdowns

during elections are increasingly treated by ratings agencies and multilateral institutions as signals of institutional fragility, not just temporary glitches. In a services-driven economy that markets itself as a stable digital hub, the reputational cost of such measures is non-trivial.

"Access to social media platforms was suspended nationwide... raising concerns over restrictions on freedom of expression and access to information."

– International IDEA, Democracy Tracker – Mauritius (2024)

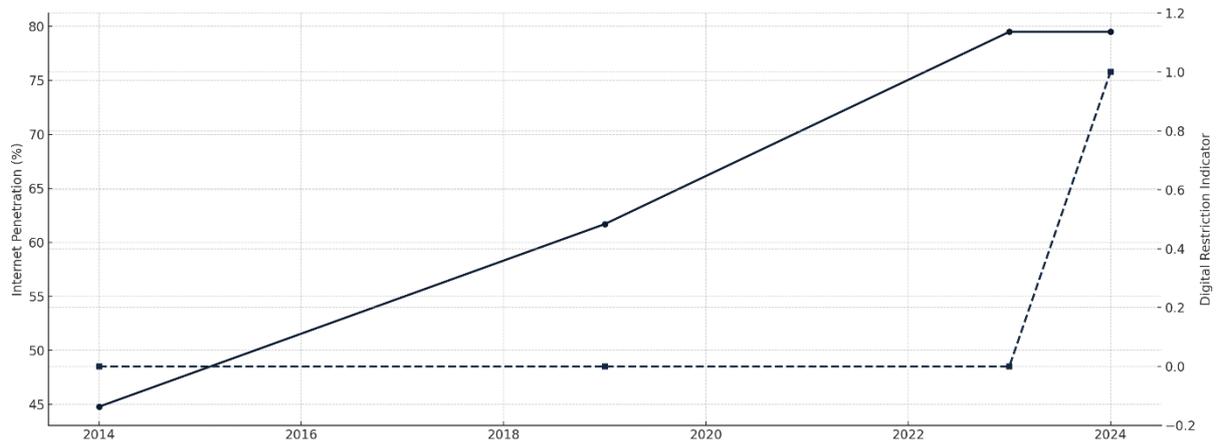


Figure 12 Internet penetration in Mauritius (percentage of population) over time and (ii) a binary “digital restriction” indicator marking years with major events

Taken together, these four stress points—disproportionality, communal classification, diversity deficits and digital trust—do not amount to a democratic collapse. Mauritius remains, by any comparative measure, a functioning electoral democracy. But they do suggest that the system is operating on institutional and legitimacy buffers accumulated over several decades. Those buffers are not inexhaustible. The next sections will consider what can realistically be fixed in the short term, and what requires a more patient but no less determined programme of structural reform.

4. Immediate “emergency” reforms

The political class in Mauritius has become adept at treating electoral reform as a constitutional Everest: undeniably important, but always just over the next ridge. The purpose of this section is more modest – and therefore more politically realistic. It focuses on “low-regret” measures that can be implemented quickly, largely within the existing constitutional and institutional framework, to reduce immediate risks to electoral legitimacy before the next general election.

These proposals are framed not as a substitute for deeper structural reform, but as immediate damage-limitation: interventions that lower the temperature around ethnicity, reduce the scope for “money politics”, and shore up digital rights in a system that is, in most respects, still a regional democratic outlier.

4.1 Low-regret legal amendments before the next general election

International electoral practice increasingly treats reform as a form of risk management: addressing vulnerabilities before they become crises. International IDEA’s guidelines note that a well-designed legal framework should offer “internationally-recognized standards applicable across a range of areas of electoral legislation”, to be used as benchmarks for whether an election is free and fair. For Mauritius, three clusters of relatively contained amendments stand out: communal declaration, campaign finance, and enforcement of electoral offences and procedures.

► Clarifying the optional nature of communal declaration

The 2014 Constitution (Declaration of Community) (Temporary Provisions) Act marked a significant, if cautious, departure from the rigid communal logic underpinning the Best Loser System. Its explanatory memorandum made the position clear: “A candidate at that election may elect not to declare the community to which he belongs.” Candidates who did not declare were simply excluded from consideration for additional seats, and where such candidates were elected, the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC) was to rely on historic averages of communal representation to allocate Best Loser seats.

However, subsequent practice muddied the waters. In 2019, a presidential decree required candidates to declare their community, “despite a law passed in 2014 making this requirement optional.” ([Wikipedia](#)) This oscillation between principle and practice creates legal uncertainty and feeds a perception that communal categorisation can be instrumentalised from one election to the next.

A low-regret amendment, implementable by ordinary legislation and interpretive clarification, would be to entrench the *non-mandatory* nature of communal declaration on a permanent basis, not merely as a one-off “temporary provision”. The Constitution already allows the Best Loser allocation to proceed using historical averages where candidates do not declare. Codifying this as the default, and explicitly prohibiting any subordinate instrument from

re-imposing mandatory declaration, would reduce ethnic salience at candidate level while preserving continuity in seat allocation until a more fundamental redesign is agreed.

► Tightening campaign-finance transparency within existing law

No emergency reform agenda can ignore money. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy study on *The Cost of Parliamentary Politics in Mauritius* is blunt:

“Politics on the island of Mauritius is considered a national sport... This culture of secrecy is most tangible when it comes to what is termed as ‘money politics’ – the undue use of money during an electoral campaign.”

The same research documents that competing in elections “costs a lot of money and with each passing election, it gets more expensive”, with vote-buying reportedly ranging from MUR 5,000 to 10,000 per vote, and up to MUR 100,000 for a family in 2019. ([lexpress.mu](#)) Afrobarometer’s 2020 survey found that about one in seven Mauritians (14 per cent) reported being offered “money or other incentives” for their vote in 2019.

The core legal problem is not an absence of offences, but a lack of transparency and enforceable reporting. The Representation of the People Act (RoPA) defines offences such as bribery, treating and undue influence, with section 66 providing penalties for “every person who is guilty of bribery, treating or undue influence under this Act”. ([ACE Project](#)) Yet parties as such are not recognised as legal entities in electoral law, and party-level spending remains largely opaque, as the Sachs Commission and subsequent commentary have repeatedly emphasised. ([lexpress.mu](#))

In the short term, Mauritius could:

- Require all candidates to submit standardised, public returns of donations and expenditures, including in-kind support, in machine-readable format;
- Create a statutory obligation for parties that field candidates to register and file audited accounts, at least for campaign periods; and
- Empower the Electoral Supervisory Commission to publish all returns online within a fixed timeframe and to refer serious discrepancies to the Financial Crimes Commission and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

These steps stop short of full-blown party finance reform or public funding, but they would shift the current regime from secrecy to disciplined disclosure.

► Enforcement of electoral offences and procedural guarantees

Mauritius already has a relatively sophisticated set of electoral offences, including bribery, treating, personation and undue influence. ([ACE Project](#)) What is missing is credible, timely enforcement and procedural clarity – the “plumbing” of electoral integrity.

Afrobarometer data give some indication of perceived slippage. While 63 per cent of Mauritians in 2020 still described the 2019 election as “completely free and fair” or “free and fair with minor problems”, this was down sharply from 84–91 per cent in earlier rounds; the share rating the last election as “not free and fair” or having “major problems” more than tripled, from 9 per cent in 2017 to 32 per cent. Respondents reported that 44 per cent believed people’s names were “often” left off the register, and 16 per cent thought votes were “often” not accurately counted or reflected in the results.

Comparative guidance is clear that such concerns should be met with both substance and procedure. The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network notes that legal frameworks should provide for *effective mechanisms* to enforce electoral law, and that “punishments must follow transgressions”. It stresses that voters, parties and candidates must have the right to file appeals, and that authorities must resolve them “in an agile way”. ([ACE Project](#))

For Mauritius, low-regret amendments might include:

- Explicit statutory time-limits and transparency obligations for the handling of electoral petitions and recount requests;
- Mandatory publication of constituency-level results and aggregation procedures in open data formats; and
- A duty on the Electoral Commissioner to publish an annual enforcement report, detailing complaints received, investigations initiated, and outcomes under RoPA and related legislation.

These changes would not revolutionise the system, but they would make it harder for doubts about isolated irregularities to metastasise into doubts about the election as a whole.

Table 13 Public perceptions of election quality, Mauritius

Survey year	Share saying last national election was "completely free and fair" or "free and fair with minor problems"	Share saying "not free and fair" or "free and fair with major problems"	Source
2012	90%	8%	Afrobarometer Round 5
2014	91%	5%	Afrobarometer Round 6
2017	84%	9%	Afrobarometer Round 7
2020	63%	32%	Afrobarometer Dispatch 453

The table does not suggest a crisis of legitimacy, but it does indicate a clear erosion of the effortless trust that once characterised Mauritian elections – precisely the kind of early warning that argues for low-regret tightening of rules and enforcement.

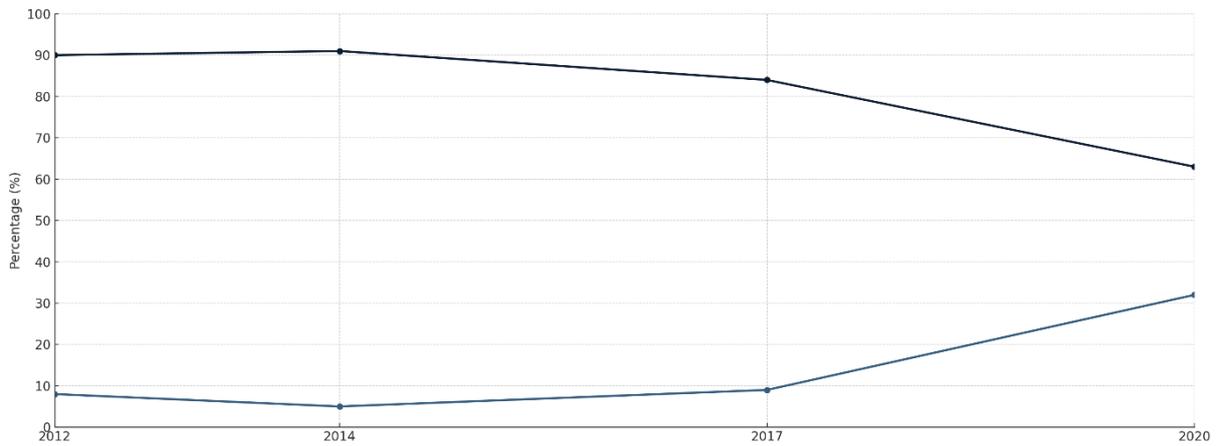


Figure 13 Share rating elections "free and fair with at most minor problems" vs the share rating elections "not free and fair / major problems".

4.2 Interim adjustments to the Best Loser mechanism

Any discussion of “emergency” reform has to be honest about constitutional gravity. The Best Loser System (BLS) sits in the First Schedule of the Constitution, and meaningful change ultimately requires cross-party agreement on an amendment. Yet not all interventions involve detonating the existing architecture. Some transitional adjustments – especially those that recalibrate how the mechanism is used, rather than whether it exists – are feasible within a relatively short horizon.

Scholars have long recognised the double-edged nature of BLS. Fessha and Ho Tu Nam describe it as “a unique

system of ethnic representation in the national parliament”, designed to manage competing ethnic interests in a plural society. ([Open Journals Ugent](#)) In a later passage, they observe that it is “at times heavily criticized for its communal and ethnic undertones” even as it has “ensured continued minority representation in parliament.” ([ResearchGate](#)) A widely cited column in *L’Express* goes further, arguing that BLS “ethnicises the electoral system, legitimises communalism and inhibits nation building.” ([lexpress.mu](#))

Before designing transitional options, it is useful to quantify the scale and distribution of BLS seats in recent elections.

Table 14 Use of Best Loser seats, selected general elections

Election year	Max. Best Loser seats available	Best Loser seats actually allocated	Best Loser seats as % of total 70 seats	Distribution by political bloc	Sources
2014	8	7	10.0%	4 seats to Alliance Lepep; 3 seats to Alliance de l’Unité et de la Modernité (PTr–MMM)	(Wikipedia)
2019	8	8	11.4%	4 seats to Alliance Morisien; 3 seats to Alliance Nationale; 1 seat to MMM	(Wikipedia)
2024	8	4	5.7%	2 seats to Alliance Lepep; 2 seats to Rodrigues-based Alliance Liberation	(Wikipedia)

International IDEA’s 2024 democracy tracker for Mauritius confirms that in the November 2024 election, Alliance du Changement won 60 of the 62 directly elected seats (96.8 per cent), with the remaining two seats going to the Rodrigues People’s Organisation; four additional seats were allocated under BLS, including at least one woman, bringing women’s representation to 12 of 70 seats. ([International IDEA](#))

This data underlines three points:

- First, Best Loser seats are a relatively small, but not trivial, share of the Assembly – between 6 and 11 per cent in recent cycles;
- Second, in practice they have tended to consolidate the representation of large blocs rather than purely “rescuing” marginalised minorities;
- Third, in 2024, only half of the available BLS capacity was used, suggesting that the system is already de facto more flexible than its political mythology suggests.

Against that backdrop, a pragmatic interim agenda might include:

a) Re-weighting part of BLS towards party vote share

Without abolishing the communal logic overnight, Parliament could provide, by ordinary legislation, that up to half of the Best Loser seats (say four of eight) are allocated strictly on national party vote share, using a simple proportional formula or highest-averages method. This would nudge BLS towards a corrective for the disproportionality of the block vote, not only for communal under-representation. International practice – including recommendations by International IDEA and other electoral experts – treats mixed systems of this kind as a standard way of moderating highly majoritarian formulas.

The remaining seats could continue to be used for communal correction, thus maintaining the “insurance policy” against ethnic exclusion that underpinned the original design. This approach reflects the underlying thrust of reform debates captured by Fessha and

others, which ask whether it is “time to let go” of BLS in its current form, even if not of minority safeguards as such. ([Open Journals Ugent](#))

b) Embedding a diversity test in BLS eligibility
 A second interim adjustment would be to link BLS eligibility to the composition of party slates. Rather than treating communal declaration as an end in itself, the law could require that parties demonstrate a minimum level of cross-communal and gender diversity among their overall candidate lists as a condition for receiving any Best Loser seats.

This would respond directly to critiques that BLS “legitimises communalism” by rewarding ethnic segmentation. ([lexpress.mu](#)) A diversity test would retain the corrective logic – ensuring that smaller communities remain visible in Parliament – while reversing the incentive: BLS would reward integrative, not divisive, nomination strategies.

c) Using BLS to accelerate gender balance
 International IDEA’s November 2024 note on Mauritius records that only 18.5 per cent of

parliamentary candidates were women, and that 11 women won constituency seats, with one further woman appointed under BLS. ([International IDEA](#)) Given that women now hold 19 per cent of seats according to World Bank data, ([World Bank Open Data](#)) there is a strong case for using Best Loser allocations explicitly to accelerate gender parity as a transitional measure.

A simple, low-regret rule would be that at least half of BLS seats in any election must be filled by women, subject to availability of eligible candidates. This is fully consistent with international practice, where quota-based or “top-up” mechanisms have been widely used to correct gender deficits in plurality systems. ([ConstitutionNet](#))

None of these adjustments resolves the deeper normative question of whether a 1972 ethnic census should still shape Parliament in the 2030s. But they would reduce the most egregious distortions – and put BLS to work in support of broader equity goals – while a more comprehensive settlement is negotiated.

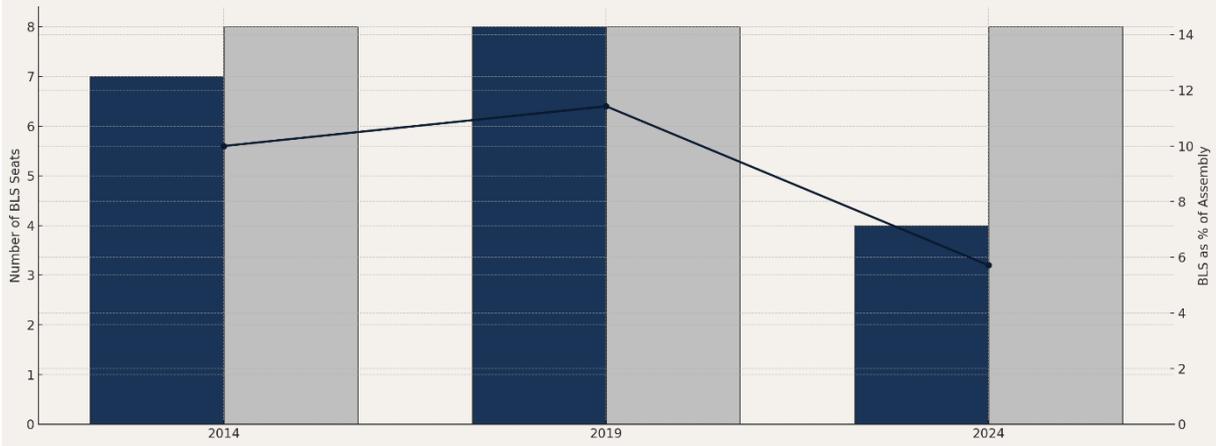


Figure 14 Number of Best Loser seats actually used vs maximum available

Legend
 Deep Sea (#1A3457) shows the number of Best Loser seats actually used;
 Ashen Silver Grey (#BFBFBF) shows the maximum available (8).
 A thin Royal Obsidian Blue (#0A1A2F) line represents Best Loser seats as a percentage of the 70-member National Assembly (10.0%, 11.4%, 5.7%)

4.3 Immediate transparency and digital rights guarantees

The 2024 election cycle made unmistakably clear that, in Mauritius, the integrity of elections now depends as much on digital freedoms as on ballot boxes. On 1 November 2024, the Information and Communication Technologies Authority ordered all internet service providers to “temporarily suspend access to all social media platforms until 11 November 2024”, citing “illegal postings that constitute a serious threat to national security and public safety”. ([Internet Society Pulse](#)) The block was lifted after a day, but not before Access Now’s #KeptOn coalition and domestic stakeholders denounced it as the country’s first recorded social media shutdown. ([Access Now](#)) Human Rights Watch noted that the suspension had “threatened voters’ access to information ahead of the general elections on November 10.” ([Human Rights Watch](#))

This incident did not derail the election. Alliance du Changement won a landslide, turnout was high, and observers described voting as peaceful. ([Wikipedia](#)) But it placed Mauritius squarely in a continental trend that the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights has moved to curb. In its 2024 Resolution on Internet Shutdowns and Elections in Africa, the Commission called on states to “ensure open and secure internet access before, during and after elections” and to “refrain from ordering the interruption of telecommunications services, shutting down the internet, and/or disrupting access to any other digital communication platforms”. ([ACHPR](#))

The urgency of digital guarantees is heightened by the sheer reach of connectivity. World Bank data indicate that the proportion of Mauritians using the internet rose from 44.8 per cent in 2014 to 61.7 per cent in 2019 and 79.5 per cent in 2023. ([MissionInfobank](#)) DataReportal estimates that by early 2025, around 79.5 per cent of the population – about 1.01 million people – were internet users, with roughly two-thirds active on social media. ([DataReportal – Global Digital Insights](#)) In other words, when the internet goes dark, most Mauritians lose their primary channel for information, organisation and, increasingly, commerce.

Access Now’s 2024 global report records 296 internet shutdowns in 54 countries, with 21 incidents in 15 African states. ([Access Now](#)) The Commission’s resolution and the #KeptOn campaign are explicit that even short, targeted shutdowns can have lasting human rights and economic consequences. ([CIPESA](#))

Against this background, three immediate steps emerge.

a) A statutory “no-shutdown” clause for electoral periods

Mauritius could amend either its electoral legislation or communications framework to codify a clear prohibition on election-period internet shutdowns and platform-specific blocks, save for narrowly defined, time-limited exceptions (for example, in response to an imminent and demonstrable threat to life). Such a clause would transpose the African Commission’s language into domestic law, committing the state to “ensure unrestricted and uninterrupted access to the internet in the period leading up to, during and after elections.” ([CIPESA](#))

Crucially, the obligation should be framed not only as a restraint on the executive, but as a positive duty on regulators and telecommunications providers to resist unlawful orders and to notify the public of any disruptions imposed for legitimate reasons. ([ACHPR](#))

b) Real-time disclosure of digital campaigning and state advertising

If shutting down the internet is one threat to electoral integrity, flooding it with undisclosed political money is another. International IDEA’s new *Protecting Elections* guide emphasises the need for electoral management bodies to integrate digital threats into broader electoral risk-management, including through transparency and oversight of online campaigning. ([International IDEA](#))

As a low-regret measure, Mauritius could require:

- All political actors to label online political advertising and disclose expenditure on digital campaigns in near real time;
- Public bodies to publish, on a single portal, all state advertising purchases by medium and amount during the electoral period; and
- The Electoral Commission to monitor significant spikes in digital spending or suspiciously coordinated messaging, with powers to request platform data where necessary. ([International IDEA](#))

Such rules would adapt existing principles of campaign finance transparency to the digital sphere, without venturing into the much more complex terrain of content moderation.

c) Building EMB capacity on digital integrity

Finally, emergency reform should equip the Electoral Supervisory Commission and the Electoral Commissioner’s Office to understand and manage digital risks. International IDEA’s Integrated

Framework for Protecting Elections places electoral management bodies at the centre of efforts to “prevent, withstand, or recover from negative occurrences that may undermine the integrity of electoral processes and results”, explicitly including technological threats. ([International IDEA](#))

For Mauritius, this could mean establishing a small digital integrity unit within the Commission; entering into memoranda of understanding with major platforms for expedited cooperation during electoral periods; and publishing a public “digital incidents” log covering misinformation, cyber-attacks and any technical disruptions to voter information services.

Table 15 Digital environment and shutdowns relevant to elections

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
Individuals using the Internet (% of population), Mauritius	44.8%	2014	World Bank WDI (IT.NET.USER.ZS) (MissionInfobank)
Individuals using the Internet (% of population), Mauritius	61.7%	2019	World Bank WDI (MissionInfobank)
Individuals using the Internet (% of population), Mauritius	79.5%	2023	World Bank / ITU via Our World in Data (MissionInfobank)
Duration of 2024 social-media block in Mauritius	1 day (1–2 November; all social media services)	2024	Internet Society Pulse; ICTA communiqués (Internet Society Pulse)
Documented global internet shutdowns (# incidents, # countries)	296 shutdowns in 54 countries	2024	Access Now #KeepItOn 2024 report (Access Now)
Documented internet shutdowns in Africa (# incidents, # countries)	21 shutdowns in 15 African countries	2024	Access Now / <i>The Guardian</i> summary (Access Now)

The numbers underline that Mauritius is no longer a bystander in global debates on digital rights. It is both highly connected and now recorded, albeit briefly, on the list of “offenders”. That combination makes a domestic “never again” rule on election-period shutdowns both symbolically and substantively valuable.

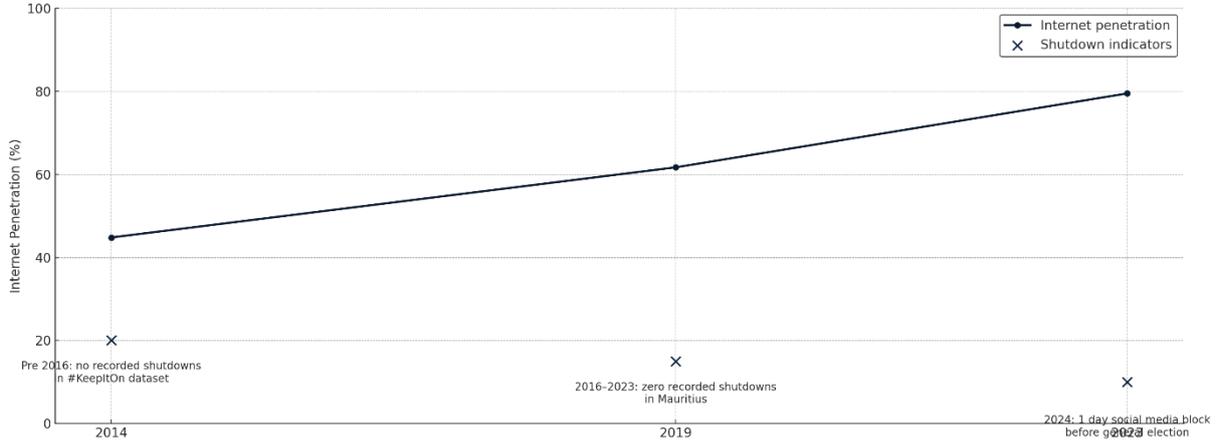


Figure 15 Percentage of population using the internet (0–100)

5. Phased structural reforms to 2035

The preceding section outlined what can realistically be done before the next general election. This section looks further ahead, to a 2035 horizon. The aim is not to sketch a constitutional utopia, but to identify a sequence of reforms that Mauritius could reasonably phase in over the next decade to align its institutions with its economic and social ambitions.

A phased strategy matters because electoral rules are *path-dependent*. Voters, parties and investors all anchor expectations in the existing model. The Sachs Commission understood this when it proposed reforms “to use the existing electoral system as a starting-point, and propose reforms that could help to remedy the particular defects and incongruities that had emerged”. ([Mauritius Assembly](#)) The task now is to translate that spirit into a concrete roadmap: a proportional “correction tier”, post-communal safeguards, national-level inclusion quotas, a clearer settlement for Rodrigues and the outer islands, and credible arrangements for coalition governance.

5.1 Introducing a proportional “correction” tier

The core structural question is how to reduce Mauritius’s extreme disproportionality without losing the familiarity and local anchoring of constituency MPs. The international evidence is fairly clear. Mixed systems, in which constituency members are complemented by a proportional tier, are one of the few designs that can have it both ways.

The 2001–02 Commission on Constitutional and Electoral Reform (the Sachs Commission) and the subsequent Select Committee have already sketched a path. As the National Assembly’s *Report on Proportional Representation* recalls, the Committee was tasked with implementing the Commission’s recommendations within two constraints: first, “no prejudice is to be caused to the existing best loser system”; and second, “in addition to the 62 members elected as at present, a further 30 members are to be chosen proportionately from parties having obtained more than 10 per cent of the total number of votes cast at a general election.”

In effect, Mauritius has long had a shelved blueprint for a mixed system with a **correction tier** of 30 seats. That tier would be allocated to parties crossing a 10 per cent national threshold, using proportional representation, while leaving the 62 three-member constituencies and the Best Loser System formally intact.

Comparative practice shows that such a tier need not be large to make a material difference.

Table 16 Illustrative mixed systems and proposed Mauritian model

Country / proposal	Total seats	Constituency / FPTP seats	PR / list seats	PR share of total (%)	Threshold for PR tier
Mauritius – current (National Assembly)	70*	62	0 (plus up to 8 Best Loser seats)	0.0	n/a
Mauritius – Sachs / Select Committee “parallel formula”	92	62	30	32.6	10% of valid national vote (Mauritius Assembly)
New Zealand – MMP	120	72 electorate seats	48 list seats	40.0	5% of party vote or 1 electorate seat (Elections)
Lesotho – MMP	120	80 constituency seats	40 PR seats	33.3	No separate legal threshold; 80 FPTP + 40 compensatory PR (archive.ipu.org)

*70 including up to eight Best Loser seats.

The table suggests three points. First, the **scale** of the Sachs proposal is entirely in line with standard mixed systems: a proportional tier of roughly one-third of the chamber. Secondly, while New Zealand’s MMP uses a compensatory model (list seats are used to align total seats with party votes), the Sachs/Select Committee model envisaged a *parallel* tier: PR seats would sit on top of constituency results, not fully correct them. Thirdly, the proposed 10 per cent threshold is high by international standards; most mixed systems operate with thresholds between 3 and 5 per cent.

The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network puts the stakes succinctly: “the choice of electoral system can effectively determine who is elected and which party gains power.” (ACE Project) For Mauritius, the practical implication is that a modest proportional tier could turn current “manufactured majorities” into **earned majorities**: governments would still be formed, but with seat shares closer to vote shares and more credible parliamentary opposition.

A phased approach to 2035 could therefore proceed in three steps:

1. **Phase I (before next election):** legislate the architecture for 30 PR seats, clarifying whether they will be compensatory (true MMP) or parallel.
2. **Phase II (first election under new system):** implement a **soft threshold** (e.g. 3–5 per cent), retain existing constituencies and Best Loser arrangements, and treat outcomes as a live stress-test.
3. **Phase III (by 2035):** refine the model in light of experience – for example by lowering the threshold if fragmentation proves manageable, or by simplifying the link with Best Loser seats.

The details matter, but the direction is clear: a correction tier of 20–30 seats is not radical experimentation; it is a move towards global mainstream practice for small, diverse democracies.



Figure 16 Share of proportional seats in mixed systems

5.2 Recasting communal safeguards without ethnic tick-boxes

If the proportional tier deals with arithmetic, communal safeguards deal with identity. Mauritius still carries a heavy constitutional legacy: four official “communities”, a Best Loser System pegged to the 1972 census, and a long-running dispute with UN human-rights bodies about the compatibility of ethnic classification with the ICCPR.

As noted earlier, in *Narain et al. v. Mauritius* the UN Human Rights Committee held that requiring

candidates to classify themselves into one of four communities “constitutes a violation of article 25 (b) read with article 26” of the Covenant, and urged Mauritius to “revise the system of communal representation so as to ensure that it is fully consistent with articles 25 and 26.” ([Government of Rwanda](#))

The structural challenge is to protect minority voices **without** obliging candidates or voters to tick ethnic boxes that many find anachronistic or offensive. Comparative practice offers several non-ethnic, or at least less intrusive, alternatives.

Table 17 Selected models of group sensitive representation

Country / system	Mechanism	Key features and data points	Sources
Mauritius – current	Best Loser System	Up to 8 seats allocated on basis of under-representation of four constitutional communities using 1972 census proportions; candidates historically required to declare community. (The Electoral Integrity Project)	EIP Mauritius chapter; Sachs Commission
New Zealand – Māori seats	Reserved indigenous electorates	Four Māori seats created by the Māori Representation Act 1867, later increased; Māori voters choose whether to enrol on Māori or general roll; no ethnic tick-box for candidates. (NZ History)	NZ History; Elections NZ
Rwanda – reserved seats for women, youth, disability	Non-ethnic reserved seats	Chamber of Deputies has 80 members: 53 elected by PR; 27 indirectly elected, including 24 women, 2 youth, 1 disabled representative. (Parline)	IPU Parline; International IDEA
Various (global)	Gender and minority quotas	Over 130 states use quotas for women or other groups in legislatures, often through party lists or reserved seats. (Mona Lena Krook)	Krook (2020); IDEA / IPU Atlases

These models suggest several design principles for a post-Best-Loser Mauritius:

First, reserved positions do not have to be defined in strictly ethnic terms. Rwanda demonstrates how reserved seats can target **gender, youth and disability**; New Zealand’s Māori seats are rooted in indigenous status rather than a fourfold communal taxonomy. ([NZ History](#))

Second, where group representation is guaranteed, it can be done **without mandatory candidate classification**. Māori voters opt into a separate roll; Rwandan women are elected by provincial electoral colleges. In neither case are candidates obliged to declare themselves according to a rigid ethnic schema defined half a century earlier.

Third, party behaviour is critical. As recent comparative work on reserved seats observes, “reserved seats are one way of ensuring the representation of specific

minority groups in parliament”, but their substantive impact depends heavily on party strategies and affiliations. ([ACE Project](#))

For Mauritius, a phased reform to 2035 could include:

- Retaining a limited number of **non-ethnic reserved seats** (for example, for Rodrigues and outer-island communities, or for historically under-represented groups) rather than communal seats based on 1972 categories;
- Embedding in the Constitution an obligation that “the composition of the National Assembly shall, so far as practicable, reflect the diversity of the Mauritian nation”, leaving details to ordinary law; and
- Replacing communal tick-boxes with **list-design obligations**: for example, requiring parties to vary the community, gender and age profile of candidates presented across constituencies and on national lists.

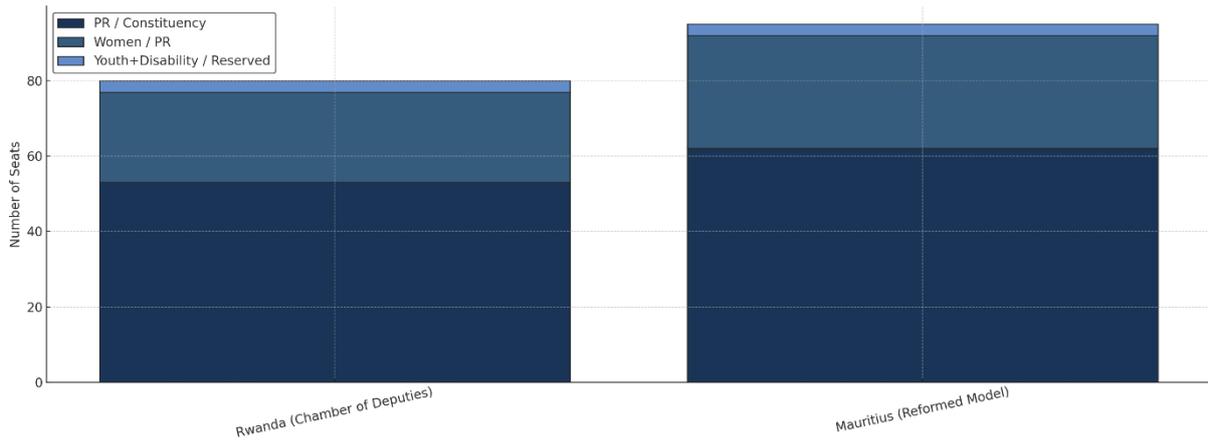


Figure 17 From ethnic to functional safeguards

5.3 National-level gender and inclusion quotas

Even with a more proportional system, Mauritius will not close its representation gaps without affirmative measures. The current National Assembly has **67 members**, of whom **12 are women**, giving a women’s share of **17.9 per cent**. ([Parline](#)) This is below the global average of **27.2 per cent** and the sub-Saharan African average of **26.8 per cent** for lower or single chambers. ([Parline](#))

UN Women’s country snapshot notes that, as of February 2024, **only 20 per cent of parliamentary seats** in Mauritius were held by women, and that there is no statutory electoral quota for women at national level. ([UN Women Data Hub](#))

By contrast, gender quotas have become mainstream globally. International IDEA’s Gender Quotas Database observes that “half of the countries of the world today use some type of electoral quota for their parliament”, ([International IDEA](#)) and a later IDEA briefing put it more bluntly: “Gender quotas are one of the key mechanisms for addressing the gender representation gap at all levels in politics.” ([International IDEA](#))

Table 18 Women in parliament: Mauritius vs global and regional averages

Jurisdiction / group	Women in lower/single chamber (%)	Year / reference	Source
Mauritius – National Assembly	17.9% (12 of 67 MPs)	Nov 2024	IPU Parline (Parline)
Global average	27.2%	Oct 2025	IPU global averages (Parline)
Sub-Saharan Africa	26.9%	Oct 2025	IPU global averages (Parline)
Rwanda – Chamber of Deputies	63.8%	2024 elections	IPU / UN Women (Grokopedia)

The comparison is deliberately stark. No one expects Mauritius to emulate Rwanda’s world-leading figures overnight, but the gap with regional peers is increasingly at odds with its broader development narrative.

A phased national quota could be designed to mesh with party practices and the proposed proportional tier. Options include:

- A **legislative candidate quota** requiring that no party list (for PR seats) contains more than 60 per cent of candidates of the same gender, with alternating (“zippered”) ordering strongly encouraged or required; ([International IDEA](#))
- A constitutional requirement that parties field at least **one-third women candidates** across constituency seats, building on the one-third quota already applied in local government elections; ([International IDEA](#))

- A more ambitious target for the proportional tier, for example reserving a minimum of **50 per cent of list seats for women**, so that over two elections the share of women in the Assembly converges towards 30–35 per cent.

Inclusion quotas could, in time, be extended beyond gender. IPU data show that **0 per cent** of Mauritian

MPs are under 30, and only **14.9 per cent** are 40 or younger. ([Parline](#)) Given that 53 per cent of the population is under 35, ([Wikipedia](#)) the case for carefully designed youth-representation measures – for example, one or two national list seats reserved for candidates aged under 30 – is strong.

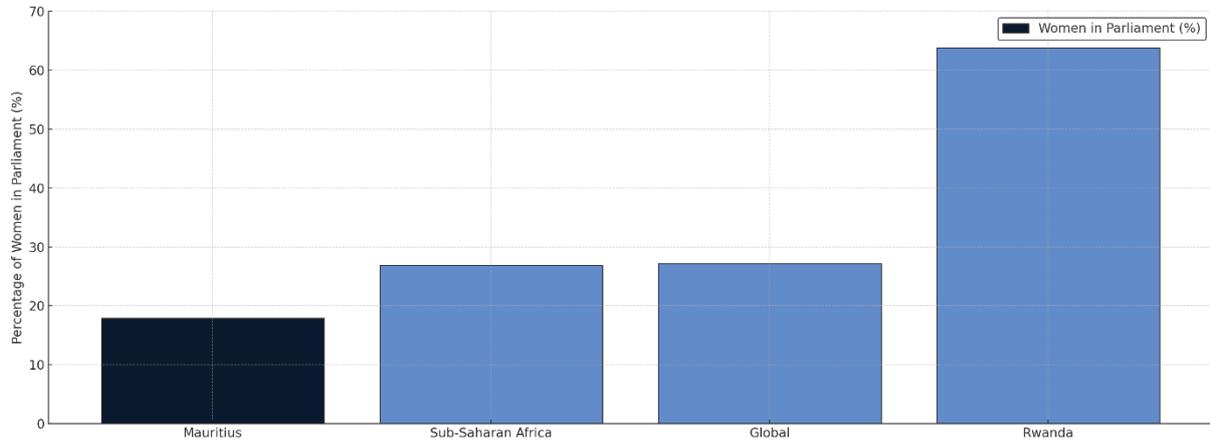


Figure 18 Mauritius vs global and African averages for women in parliament

5.4 Rodrigues & outer islands: aligning representation & systems

Any serious reform to 2035 must revisit the status of Rodrigues and the outer islands. Constitutionally, Rodrigues is fully part of the Republic, yet its governance and electoral system already diverge in important ways from the mainland.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) is elected using a **mixed FPTP/PR system**. As economist Rama Sithanen explains, “out of a total of 18 seats, 12 are returned through a First Past The Post (FPTP) mode in 6 constituencies of 2 elected representatives each

while the remaining 6 members are chosen from a pre-established Island wide party list using a compensatory PR algorithm.” ([lexpress.mu](https://www.lexpress.mu)) A later commentary in *L'Express* commended the decision to “stay course on the mixed FPTP/PR formula to balance stability with fairness”, and warned that replacing PR with a Best Loser formula “would have killed political representation in Rodrigues.” ([lexpress.mu](https://www.lexpress.mu))

Demographically, Rodrigues is small but not negligible. The 2022 census reports a population of **43,650** for Rodrigues (compared to 1,191,280 for the island of Mauritius and 330 for Agalega). ([Wikipedia](https://www.wikipedia.org)) The RRA system has thus given Rodrigues a modern mixed electoral design before the mainland.

Table 19 Population and representation: Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega

Territory	Population (2022 census)	Primary elected body (type)	Seats	Electoral system	Source
Island of Mauritius	1,191,280	National Assembly (unicameral, national)	70*	62 three-member FPTP + up to 8 Best Losers	(Wikipedia)
Rodrigues	43,650	Rodrigues Regional Assembly (regional)	18	12 FPTP (6x2-member) + 6 compensatory PR seats	(Wikipedia)
Agalega	330	No separate elected assembly; represented via national structures	–	–	(Wikipedia)

*70 including Best Loser seats.

The paradox is evident. The main island, with its highly centralised political class, still uses a nineteenth-century-style block vote, while Rodrigues has quietly moved into the twenty-first century with a mixed system designed to balance proportionality and governability. Reform to 2035 should bridge this gap in both directions:

- Mainland reformers can **learn from Rodrigues’s experience** with mixed FPTP/PR, including threshold design, list compilation and coalition management at regional level; ([Mauritius Times](https://www.mauritius-times.com))
- Representation of Rodrigues and outer islands in the National Assembly can be **recalibrated** once a

proportional correction tier is in place – for example, by combining guaranteed constituency seats with an explicit entitlement to a minimum share of list seats.

The 2022 census also opens the door to more nuanced territorial safeguards. It distinguishes residents born in Rodrigues, Diego Garcia/Chagos, Agalega/St Brandon and abroad. ([international.ipums.org](https://www.international.ipums.org)) Without resurrecting ethnic enumeration, Mauritius now has up-to-date data on **place of birth** that could support regionally sensitive list-design obligations or reserved slots for outer-island representatives within party lists.

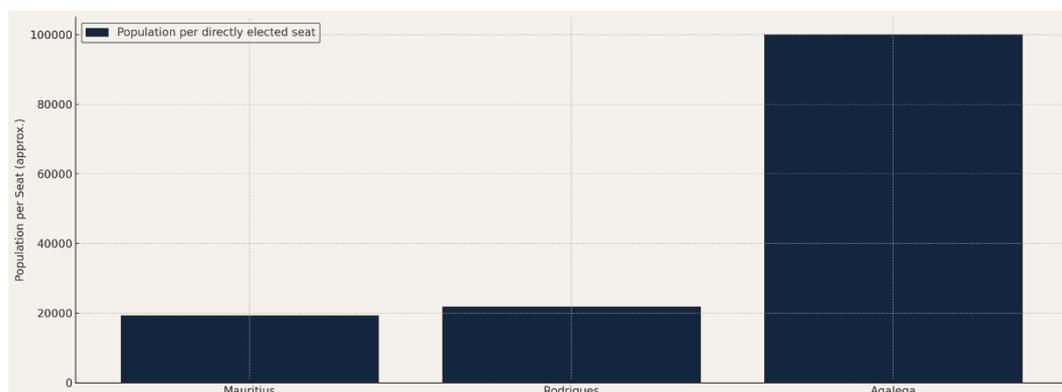


Figure 19 Population per directly elected seat

5.5 Managing coalition politics & governability

Perhaps the most persistent objection to proportional reform is that it risks turning Mauritius into a “mini-Lesotho”: fragmented, coalition-prone and unstable. The example is not entirely fanciful. Lesotho’s adoption of MMP in 2002 has coincided with frequent government changes, coalition breakdowns and early elections. ([ACE Project](#))

Yet the lesson is more subtle. Jørgen Elklit’s comparative work on electoral reforms in multi-tier systems shows that proportional systems differ widely

in their effects. South Africa’s national PR list yields some of the most proportional outcomes in the world while still delivering stable single-party (or dominant-party) governments; “South Africa tops the list with the most proportional electoral system in the world – as has been the case since 1994.” ([PMG](#)) New Zealand’s MMP system has, since 1996, produced coalition or support-party governments, but with broadly predictable alternation and full-term parliaments. ([Elections](#))

The design levers are well known: the size of the proportional tier, the legal threshold, the presence (or absence) of *overhang seats*, and the rules governing party splits and floor-crossing.

Table 20 Selected design levers for proportional correction with governability in mind

Design lever	New Zealand (MMP)	Lesotho (MMP)	Lessons for Mauritius
PR share of total seats	48 of 120 (40%) list seats (Elections)	40 of 120 (33.3%) PR seats (archive.ipu.org)	A one-third correction tier is standard and manageable.
Legal threshold	5% party vote or 1 electorate seat (Elections)	No separate threshold; de facto low barrier (Grokikipedia)	Threshold around 3–5% can limit extreme fragmentation.
Overhang / extra seats	Permitted (e.g. 122 seats in 2023 due to overhang) (Wikipedia)	Not prominent feature	Mauritius could cap overhang to preserve chamber size.
Anti-defection / floor-crossing rules	Party-hopping constrained but allowed in some circumstances	Historically weak, contributing to volatile coalitions (Grokikipedia)	Stronger anti-defection laws can stabilise coalition bargains.
Political culture	Tradition of coalition bargaining, formal agreements published	Party system fragmentation, personalised politics	Institutional rules must be complemented by coalition norms.

The implication is that **governability is a design choice**, not an inevitable casualty of proportionality. A Mauritian correction tier with a **3–5 per cent threshold**, limited overhang and robust anti-defection provisions is more likely to resemble New Zealand than Lesotho.

There is also a behavioural dimension. Coalition politics is often painted as a perpetual crisis. In reality, investors and citizens care less about whether power is shared and more about whether policy is predictable. Mixed-member systems can, paradoxically, make politics more **boringly reliable**: parties negotiate pre-election alliances, publish coalition agreements, and then spend the term managing trade-offs within that framework.

A phased reform path to 2035 could therefore include:

- **Pre-commitment to thresholds and rules:** embedding the PR tier, threshold and anti-defection provisions in the Constitution, so they cannot be altered opportunistically between elections; ([PMG](#))
- **Coalition transparency norms:** requiring coalition agreements and confidence-and-supply arrangements to be published and lodged with the Speaker, a practice now routine in New Zealand; ([Parline](#))
- **Budgetary and macro-fiscal safeguards:** strengthening the role of independent fiscal institutions (such as the existing Debt Management Unit and the Office of the Director of Audit) so that coalition bargaining cannot easily unravel macroeconomic discipline. ([The Electoral Integrity Project](#))

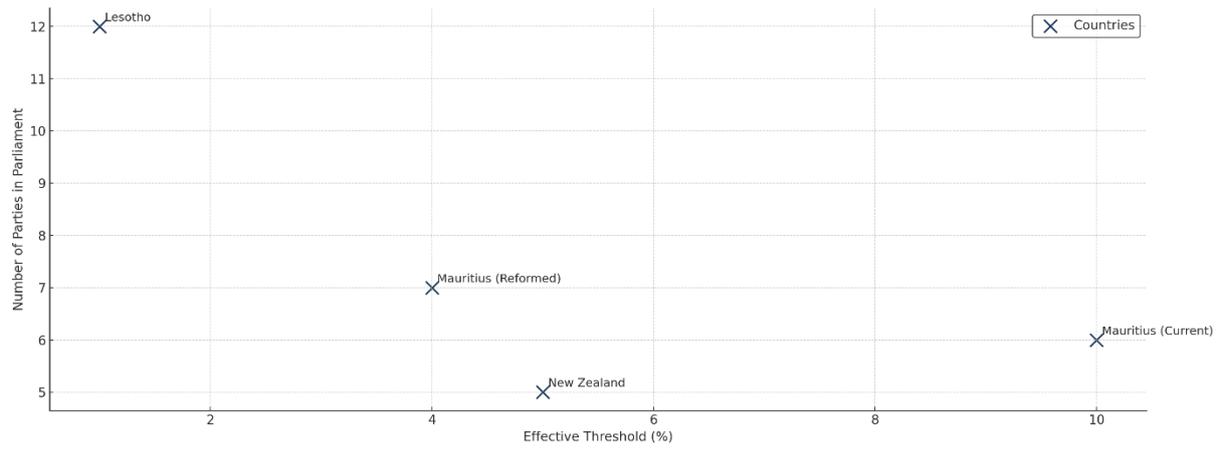


Figure 20 Thresholds and fragmentation: stylised comparison

By 2035, Mauritius is likely to have faced at least two more general elections. Whether those contests are seen as routine exercises in accountable government or as increasingly contentious referendums on the system itself will depend, in large part, on whether the reforms outlined above are pursued with seriousness and sequence. The next section will draw these threads together into an integrated roadmap and set of recommendations.

6. Implementation roadmap and risk management

The preceding sections have set out *what* should change. This section is about *how* and *when* to do it without unsettling a system that, for all its faults, remains one of Africa’s better-run democracies. As International IDEA’s country profile notes, “Mauritius has long been upheld as a strong example of democratic governance in Africa” – a status worth preserving even as the wiring is upgraded.

A credible roadmap must therefore be sequenced over time, politically saleable to actors who did well under the old rules, and monitored with hard metrics rather than rhetorical comfort.

6.1 Sequencing over two electoral cycles

Electoral reform works best when treated like macro-prudential regulation: anticipatory, incremental, and suspicious of sudden moves just before key dates. International guidance, from the Venice Commission’s Code of Good Practice to International IDEA’s *Protecting Elections* framework, warns against substantial legal changes in the immediate pre-electoral period and stresses the importance of a full-cycle approach to electoral risk.

Mauritius is now at the start of a new five-year parliamentary term following the November 2024 general election. Under the Constitution, the National Assembly is elected for up to five years, meaning that the next two electoral cycles will likely fall around 2029 and 2034. The newly elected government has already indicated its intention to establish a Constitutional Review Commission to examine broader institutional questions, including presidential powers and the electoral system.

Within this window, a pragmatic sequencing could be structured in three layers. The first covers **immediate low-regret changes** (Section 4): clarifying that communal declaration is optional, tightening enforcement of existing offences, securing digital rights during elections, and improving transparency of candidate finance. These do not alter the basic “rules of the game” and can reasonably be enacted in the first half of the current term.

The second layer concerns **structural design**: legislating the proportional correction tier, recasting communal safeguards, and embedding national gender and inclusion quotas. These require constitutional amendment and broad political consent; they should be prepared by a Constitutional Review Commission operating with fixed timelines, public consultation and explicit terms of reference on the electoral system.

The final layer is **post-implementation review**. A reformed system should not be treated as sacred text. A scheduled “sunset audit” five years after the first election under the new rules would enable Parliament – and voters – to examine how far the reforms have delivered on their stated objectives.

Table 21 Illustrative sequencing over two electoral cycles (anchored on 2024 election)

Phase / window	Approximate calendar (assuming 5-year terms)	Core actions	Anchor in existing data / commitments
Phase 0 – Diagnostic and mandate	Late 2024 – 2025	Publish white paper on electoral reform; formal government commitment to Constitutional Review Commission (CRC).	Government statements post-2024 election; IDEA Democracy Tracker.
Phase 1 – “Emergency” legal fixes	2025 – mid-2026	Clarify optional communal declaration; tighten RoPA enforcement provisions; adopt no-shutdown rule for elections; basic campaign-finance disclosure.	RoPA framework; Access Now/#KeepItOn evidence on 2024 social-media shutdown.
Phase 2 – Constitutional Review	2025 – 2027	CRC conducts hearings, commissions technical work on PR correction tier, Best Loser replacement, quotas; produces draft amendment package.	Government intention to set up CRC; Sachs/Select Committee reports as precedents.
Phase 3 – First structural package	2027 – 2028	Parliament adopts amendments establishing PR tier, revised communal safeguards, gender and inclusion quotas, and anti-defection rules.	Two-thirds or three-quarters majority thresholds under Constitution.
Election A under new system	≈ 2029	First general election with correction tier and new safeguards in force.	Five-year maximum term from 2024 election.
Phase 4 – Fine-tuning	2030 – 2033	Adjust technical parameters (e.g. thresholds, list design) in light of observed disproportionality and coalition patterns.	International IDEA guidance on post-reform calibration.
Election B under refined system	≈ 2034	Second general election under reformed framework.	Constitutional five-year cycle.
“Sunset audit”	≈ 2035 – 2036	Independent evaluation of reforms against targets (disproportionality, diversity, trust in elections, cost of politics).	Afrobarometer, IPU, International IDEA, WFD datasets.

The table is deliberately conservative. It assumes no early elections, no attempt to rush major reform for the very next poll, and a clear separation between “emergency” fixes and deeper surgery. It also presumes that a reformed system should itself be subject to independent evaluation, not simply handed down as a new orthodoxy.

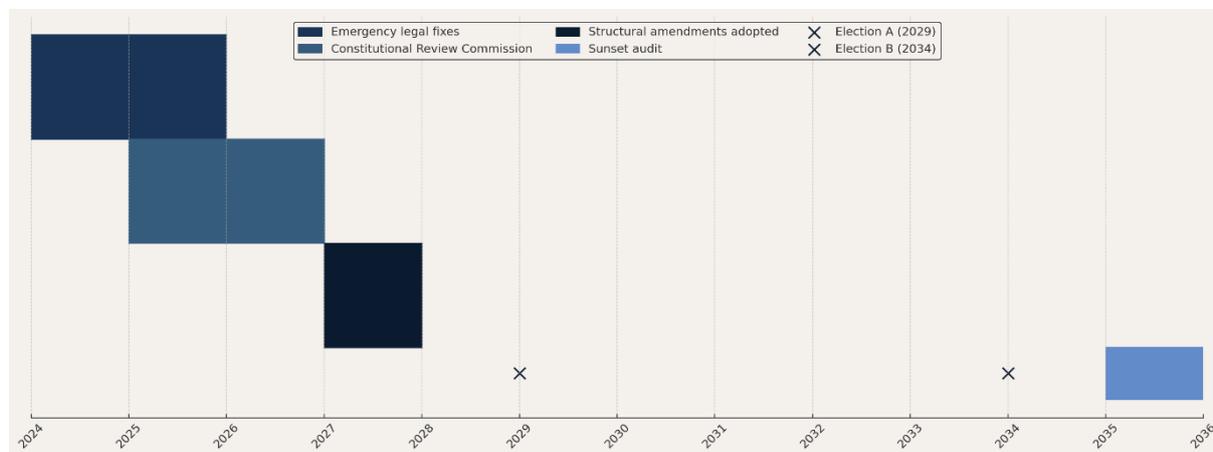


Figure 21 Proposed implementation timeline (for production)

6.2 Building a coalition for reform

If the sequencing is the skeleton, coalition-building is the muscle. Electoral reform typically founders not on technical design but on incentives: incumbents are reluctant to change rules that delivered them office, and opposition parties fear embracing reforms that might perversely cement their outsider status.

Mauritius is no exception. A ConstitutionNet analysis of the 2019 White Paper captured the core anxieties

neatly: “*Disparity between votes polled and seats won by parties, under-representation of women and the communization of representation have bedeviled the current electoral system.*” Yet the same piece details how successive reform attempts – from the Sachs Commission, through the 2002–03 Select Committee, to the 2011–12 Carcassonne and Sithanen proposals – stalled as parties calculated short-term winners and losers.

The political economy is visible in the numbers.

Table 22 Winners and losers under current rules (2019 and 2024 elections)

Election year	Alliance / party	Vote share (%)	Seats (of 70 or 66)	Seat share (%)	Immediate incentive under current system
2019	Alliance Morisien	37.7	42 (of 70)	60.0	Strongly positive – converts plurality into near-supermajority.
	Alliance Nationale	33.3	17	24.3	Negative – substantial votes, under-representation in seats.
	MMM (alone)	20.6	9	12.9	Negative – niche presence, vulnerable to further squeeze.
2024	Alliance du Changement	≈61.4	60 (of 66 filled)	90.9	Very strongly positive – dominant majority, capacity to amend constitution with minimal opposition.
	Alliance Lepep	≈27.3	2	3.0	Highly negative – nearly a third of votes for 2 seats.

In such a landscape, it is unsurprising that sitting majorities view calls for proportional correction with suspicion. Behaviourally, incumbents are “loss-averse” not only to seat count but to *certainty*: the current rules may be unfair, but they are at least familiar.

A viable coalition for reform therefore needs to be constructed on three planks.

First, **credible assurances to current winners** that they will not be structurally locked out under a new system. The proposed correction tier should be framed as a way of converting *future* pluralities into solid but not overpowering majorities, rather than as an attempt to undo a specific election. A generous transition – for example, implementing the correction tier from Election A onwards, with no retroactive changes to 2024 outcomes – reduces the sense that reform is a veiled attempt at regime change.

Second, **tangible benefits to opposition and minority parties**. Under a mixed system with a modest threshold, parties that are consistently achieving, say, 10–20 per cent of the national vote should see a direct route to a meaningful parliamentary bloc, not just a handful of consolation seats. The 2019 results make this clear: Alliance Nationale and the MMM together represented more than half the electorate, yet held

only 37 per cent of seats. A correction tier would allow these parties to imagine themselves not merely as protest vehicles but as credible partners in future coalitions.

Third, **visible safeguards for communities nervous about losing Best Loser protections**. As Section 5 argued, the question is less whether communal equilibrium is pursued than how. A reform package that ties access to top-up seats to demonstrable diversity in party lists – and that preserves some reserved representation for Rodrigues and other outer islands – offers community leaders a concrete assurance that they will not be swallowed by a homogenising national list.

Coalition-building also has a procedural dimension. International experience suggests that reform processes are more likely to succeed when:

- all major blocs are represented on the review body;
- technical work is done by an independent secretariat, not by party legal teams alone; and
- the output is a **package**, combining measures with different appeal profiles (for example, proportional correction plus national gender quotas plus tougher rules on “money politics”).

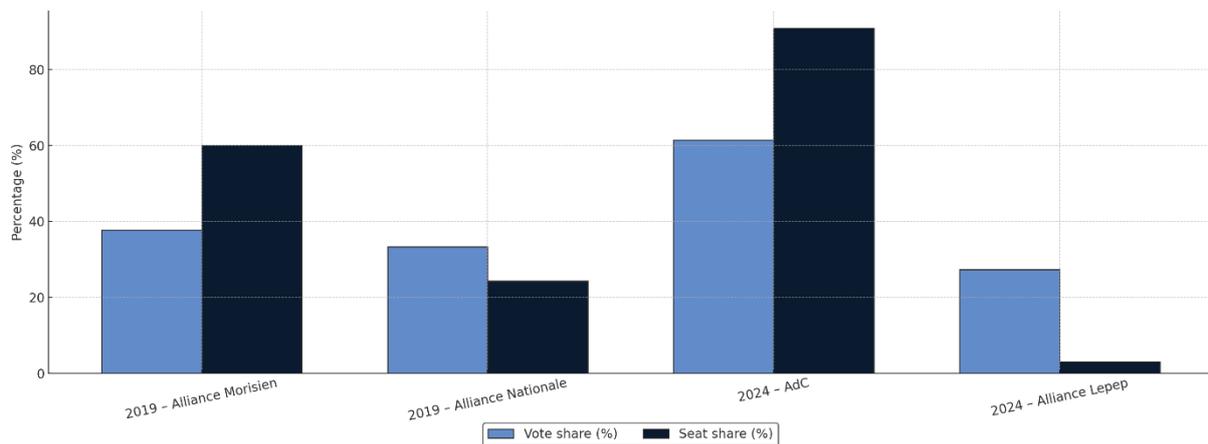


Figure 22 Disparity between votes and seats (for production)

6.3 Metrics, oversight and learning

Reform without measurement is essentially faith-based. If Mauritius is to persuade sceptical elites, voters and investors that a phased programme is working, it will need a short, intelligible list of indicators, tracked consistently and published without spin.

International IDEA’s *Protecting Elections* framework emphasises the importance of “integrated risk management”, combining legal, operational and contextual analysis. For Mauritius, that suggests metrics spanning three domains: **representation outcomes, public confidence, and cost and integrity of campaigning.**

The building blocks already exist in reputable datasets. Afrobarometer surveys public attitudes to elections and corruption; IPU Parline and UN Women track women’s parliamentary representation; International IDEA and the Electoral Integrity Project provide indicators of disproportionality and party system fragmentation; Access Now documents internet shutdowns; and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy has benchmarked the cost of parliamentary politics on the island.

Table 23 Illustrative core indicators and recent baselines for Mauritius

Dimension	Indicator (definition)	Recent baseline / data point	Source
Representation – fairness	Disproportionality (Gallagher index)	2019 general election Gallagher index ≈ 17.9 (high by comparative standards).	Electoral Integrity Project country case.
	Effective number of parliamentary parties (Laakso–Taagepera)	≈3.5 after 2019–2024 elections (dominant alliance plus two smaller blocs).	International IDEA / EIP synthesis.
Representation – diversity	Women in National Assembly (%)	17.9% (12 of 67 members) as of Dec 2024.	IPU Parline.
	Youth representation (%)	Approx. single-digit share of MPs under 35; 53% of population under 35.	Afrobarometer and census data.
Public confidence	Perceived election quality	63% in 2020 said the 2019 election was “completely” or “largely free and fair”; 32% saw major problems or unfairness.	Afrobarometer Round 8 / Dispatch 453.
	Experience of vote-buying	14% reported being offered money or a gift in return for their vote in 2019.	Afrobarometer.
Digital integrity	Internet / social-media shutdowns around elections	First recorded nationwide social-media block (1 day) in Nov 2024 campaign.	Access Now #KeepItOn; Human Rights Watch.
Cost / integrity of politics	Monthly salary of MP (MUR)	MUR 157,500 (approx. US\$4,100) per month (excluding allowances).	WFD Cost of Parliamentary Politics in Mauritius.

This is not an exhaustive list, but it is short enough to be tracked in an annual “Elections and Representation Scorecard” produced either by Statistics Mauritius or by an independent observatory housed in academia or civil society. The indicators can be extended as reforms bed in – for example, to track the share of list seats used to improve diversity, or the time taken to resolve electoral disputes.

Crucially, some of these metrics have explicit normative anchors. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, in its 2024 resolution, urged states to “refrain from ordering the interruption of telecommunications services, shutting down the internet, and/or disrupting access to any other digital communication platforms” during elections. That sentence can be translated directly into a numerical target for Mauritius: zero shutdowns in electoral periods

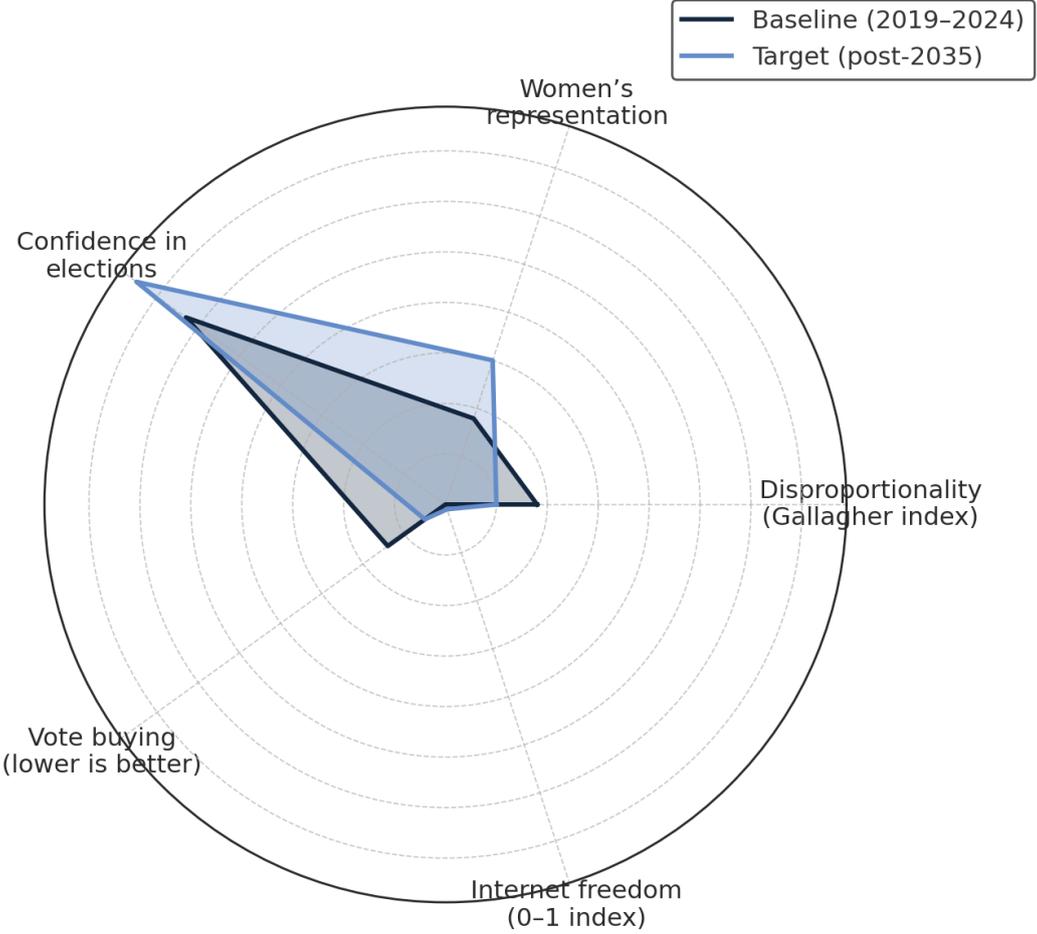


Figure 23 "Reform dashboard" spider chart (for production)

In implementation terms, the risk is not that Mauritius undertakes reform; it is that it does so half-heartedly, or in a manner that trades one distortion for another. A deliberately phased roadmap, a coalition-sensitive reform package, and a small, hard-edged set of indicators will not eliminate political risk. They will, however, allow the country to manage that risk with the same competence and quiet self-confidence that have underpinned its economic success to date.

7. Conclusions & recommendations

By global standards, Mauritius starts from a position of enviable strength. It is rated “Free” by Freedom House with a score of 86/100, and classed by the Economist Intelligence Unit as Africa’s only “full democracy” with a Democracy Index score of 8.14/10. GDP per head has climbed back above **USD 11,800** after the Covid shock, and investors have become used to seeing the island as a safe institutional harbour in a turbulent region.

Yet the evidence assembled in this report points to a system that is structurally out of balance. The block-vote in three-member constituencies generates regular “manufactured majorities”; the Best Loser System still leans on a 1972 communal ledger; women and younger citizens remain under-represented in Parliament; and the 2024 social-media shutdown demonstrated that digital rights can no longer be treated as an afterthought.

It is not a picture of imminent collapse. It is, however, a picture of **growing strain**. The central strategic conclusion is that Mauritius can – and should – move over the next decade from an electoral system that has “worked well enough” to one that is robust by design rather than by habit. That requires three layers of action: urgent repairs before the next election, medium-term structural reform over the next cycle, and longer-term institutional habits that keep the system aligned with social and technological change.

The UN Human Rights Committee has already given the broad direction of travel: Mauritius should “revise the system of communal representation so as to ensure that it is fully consistent with articles 25 and 26 of the Covenant.”

The recommendations below are framed for four audiences – government, opposition, business and civil society – but the underlying logic is deliberately simple. The reforms proposed are not about turning Mauritius into a different kind of democracy. They are about making sure the one it has continues to earn both domestic trust and international respect.

7.1 Urgent priorities: before the next general election

The first cluster of recommendations is best thought of as “**balance-sheet repairs**”: actions that do not alter the constitutional architecture but reduce immediate vulnerability to shocks or allegations of unfairness. They are implementable well before the next election, and their credibility rests on the fact that most are codifications of good practice rather than experiments.

(a) **Clarify communal declaration – permanently**
The legal position on communal declaration should be cleaned up. The 2014 temporary provisions allowing candidates to stand without declaring a community were a pragmatic response to the *Narain* case, but subsequent oscillations – including moves to re-impose declaration by decree – have created uncertainty. A short, sharp amendment confirming that **no candidate can be barred for refusing to declare a community**, and that Best Loser calculations will rely on inferred averages where necessary, would align domestic law with international obligations and lower the political temperature around ethnicity.

(b) **Campaign-finance transparency and enforcement**

The Representation of the People Act already defines bribery, treating and undue influence; what is missing is transparency and enforcement. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy has documented how “competing in election costs a lot of money and with each passing election, it gets more expensive”, including widespread perceptions of vote-buying in 2019. Afrobarometer found that **14 per cent** of Mauritians reported being offered money or gifts for their vote.

Immediate steps should include standardised, public candidate-level return forms; mandatory publication of those returns online by the Electoral Supervisory Commission; and a clear referral pipeline to the Financial Crimes Commission and Director of Public Prosecutions for serious breaches. No party-funding revolution is needed to start shining more light into the system.

(c) A hard legal ban on election-period internet shutdowns

The one-day suspension of all social-media platforms in November 2024 – just days before the general election – was short but symbolically expensive. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights has since called on states to “refrain from ordering the interruption of telecommunications services” around

elections. Mauritius can credibly position itself on the right side of that line by enacting a **no-shutdown clause** for electoral periods, with narrow, judicially reviewable exceptions.

From a business perspective, this is not a human-rights indulgence; it is a signal that regulatory surprises will not be imposed on the infrastructure on which a services-based economy depends.

Table 24 Selected “warning lights” justifying urgent reform

Indicator	Latest data point for Mauritius	Relevance to urgent actions
Offer of money/gift for vote (Afrobarometer 2020)	14% of respondents	Underscores need for stronger finance enforcement and disclosure.
Perception elections “completely / largely free & fair”	63% (down from >80% in earlier rounds)	Suggests erosion of effortless trust; argues for clearer procedures and transparency.
Social-media shutdown during 2024 campaign	1 day, nationwide suspension of major platforms	Highlights vulnerability of digital rights; supports legal “no-shutdown” rule.
HRC decision on communal classification	Communal tick-box found incompatible with ICCPR arts. 25 & 26	Necessitates permanent clarification of communal declaration rules.

For government, these measures are relatively low-cost and high-yield: they do not threaten incumbency, but they reduce the risk that the next election is contested in court or in the press as fundamentally unfair. For the opposition, they provide immediate gains in transparency. For business and civil society, they signal that the rules of the political game are not being tweaked on the fly.

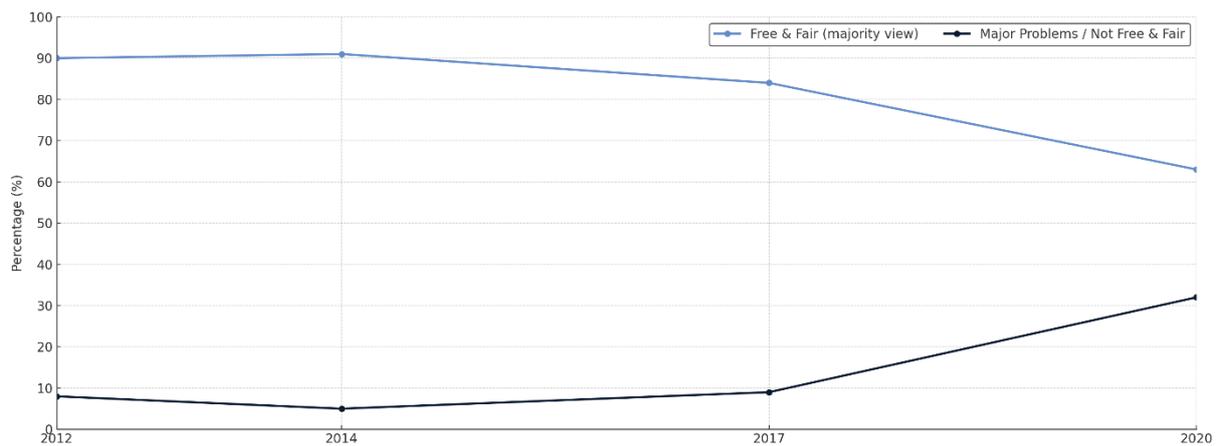


Figure 24 Afrobarometer share rating elections “completely / largely free and fair” vs “major problems / not free and fair”

7.2 Medium-term structural reforms: 2029 horizon

The second tier of recommendations is more ambitious. It concerns the shape of the electoral system itself and must therefore be sequenced over at least one full electoral cycle. The objective is to **correct structural distortions** while preserving the familiarity and local anchoring of the current model.

Three reforms stand out as both necessary and feasible by the time of the election after next.

(a) Introduce a proportional correction tier of 20–30 seats

As earlier sections showed, winning alliances in Mauritius have consistently enjoyed seat-to-vote ratios between 1.5 and 1.8: in 2019 Alliance Morisien won 37.7 per cent of the vote but 60 per cent of the seats, yielding a ratio of 1.79; in 2024 Alliance du Changement secured just over 60 per cent of votes but over 90 per cent of seats (ratio ≈1.55).

A correction tier of 20–30 proportional representation seats, superimposed on the existing 62 constituency seats, would allow Mauritius to reduce these distortions while keeping its MPs' local linkages. The Sachs Commission and Select Committee already sketched a model with **30 PR seats**, allocated to parties

crossing a 10 per cent threshold; international practice suggests that an eventual threshold of 3–5 per cent would strike a better balance between representation and fragmentation.

(b) Replace communal tick-boxes with diversity-based safeguards

Communal equilibrium remains a legitimate objective; the current method does not. The Best Loser System, based on 1972 census proportions and candidate self-classification, should be replaced by less intrusive mechanisms: diversity requirements on party lists, non-ethnic reserved seats (for example, for Rodrigues or historically disadvantaged regions), and a constitutional clause requiring the Assembly's composition to "reflect, as far as practicable, the diversity of the Mauritian nation".

(c) Embed national gender and inclusion quotas
Mauritius's National Assembly currently includes 12 women out of 67 members – **17.9 per cent** – compared with global and sub-Saharan African averages of around 27 per cent. This is difficult to reconcile with the country's broader development story. A combination of list-based quotas (for the PR tier) and candidate quotas (for constituency nominations) could realistically raise women's representation towards 30–35 per cent by 2035, without dismantling party autonomy.

Table 25 Medium term structural gaps and targets (illustrative)

Dimension	Current position (circa 2024)	2035 indicative target	Rationale
Disproportionality	Seat-to-vote ratio of winning alliance ≈1.7–1.8	≤1.3	Introduce correction tier to reduce "manufactured majorities".
Communal safeguards	Best Loser System using 1972 census; candidate classification required for BLS eligibility	Non-ethnic safeguards based on list diversity and limited reserved seats	Align with UN HRC ruling; reflect contemporary identities.
Women in Parliament	17.9% (12 of 67 MPs)	≥30%	Bring Mauritius closer to regional/global norms.
Youth representation	No MPs under 30; small single-digit % under 35	Dedicated youth representation through list seats	Reflect demography where ~53% of population is under 35.

For government and opposition alike, the key political argument is that a more proportional, more representative system **reduces downside risk**. It makes it less likely that any bloc will be completely wiped out, and thus less likely that frustrated constituencies resort to extra-parliamentary pressure. For business, these reforms reduce the hazard of abrupt policy swings driven by unrepresentative super-majorities. For civil society, they promise a Parliament that looks more like the country.

As one comparative study of electoral systems concludes, "proportional and mixed systems can, if well designed, combine effective government with more inclusive representation."

7.3 Long-term discipline: institutions, oversight and habit

The third layer of recommendation is less dramatic but ultimately decisive: **institutional habit-building**.

Electoral systems fail, not because someone changes a law, but because nobody tends to them over time.

Mauritius has already seen one example of this: the Best Loser System worked tolerably in its first decades, only to become steadily less compatible with its own society as the 1972 census grew stale and identity patterns shifted.

Long-term risk management involves three interlocking commitments.

(a) Regular, data-driven review

Reforms should incorporate their own review clause.

Five years after the second election under the new rules, an independent evaluation – drawing on Statistics Mauritius, Afrobarometer, IPU and International IDEA data – should report on whether the correction tier, new safeguards and quotas are delivering.

The metrics are not exotic: disproportionality indices, representation gaps by gender and age, perceptions of election quality, the incidence of reported vote-buying, and internet-shutdown events. Many are already

tracked by international bodies; the challenge is to **domesticate** them and treat them as seriously as GDP growth or inflation.

(b) Guarding institutional indechitecture in its own image.

In the language of risk management, Mauritius needs to treat electoral bodies as **systemically important institutions**, akin to a central bank or a financial regulator. Their credibility is not a luxury; it is part of the country's sovereign asset base.

(c) Keeping democracy investable

Mauritius's economic story is tightly coupled to its institutional reputation. The Fraser Institute's *Economic Freedom of the World 2025* report ranks Mauritius 21st globally and first in Africa, stressing its "strong rule of law, sound money and freedom to trade internationally." These strengths rest, in turn, on the perception that partisan battles are mediated through a fair electoral system.

If reforms are handled badly – rushed, one-sided or constantly revisited – that perception will fray. If they are handled deliberately, with clear metrics and credible review, they will reinforce the narrative that Mauritius is not only a democratic outlier in Africa but a jurisdiction that treats its political institutions with the same care it applies to its financial ones.

Table 26 Selected governance and democracy indicators for Mauritius

Indicator	Mauritius value	Comparator / benchmark	Source
Freedom in the World score (0–100)	86	Global average ≈ 69	Freedom House 2025
Democracy Index score (0–10)	8.14	"Full democracy" ≥ 8	EIU Democracy Index 2023
Women in Parliament (%)	17.9	Sub-Saharan Africa average ≈ 26.9	IPU / UN Women
GDP per capita (current US\$)	11,871.7	Upper-middle-income average ≈ 9,000	World Bank WDI 2024

The table is a reminder that Mauritius is not starting from scratch. It is already above the global mean on most democratic and economic metrics; the notable laggard is **descriptive representation**, particularly of women. The long-term challenge is to ensure that the new reforms move the scores in the right direction and that any unexpected side-effects are caught early.

As the Sachs Commission observed over two decades ago, democracy in Mauritius is "alive and well" and no "major overhaul" is required – but it also warned that the system's defects "must not be ignored".

7.4 A final word

For Cabinet ministers, opposition leaders, chief executives and union heads reading this report, the instinctive question is not “Is this elegant?” but “Is this safe?”

The answer, in brief, is that **continuity without adjustment is now the risky option**. The system has accumulated enough distortions – in disproportionality, communal classification, representation gaps and digital-era vulnerabilities – that inaction amounts to a bet that none of these will ever collide with a close election, a contested result or a broader loss of trust.

The alternative sketched here – urgent repairs, a measured shift to a mixed system, post-communal safeguards and institutionalised review – is not glamorous. It is, in the best sense, technocratic. It treats electoral reform as Mauritius treats its tax code or its banking regulation: as a domain where quiet competence matters more than rhetorical flourish.

If the country can approach the redesign of its electoral rules with the same seriousness that it has long brought to its economic management, there is every reason to believe that, by 2035, Mauritius will still be described – accurately – as a democratic outlier. The difference is that the description will rest less on habit and more on design.

Supplementary Materials

The supplementary materials presented in this appendix include information on how we conducted this study and its limitations and additional data related to the study.

How we conducted this study

This study was developed through a mixed-method analytical framework combining legal-doctrinal review, quantitative assessment, and comparative benchmarking. Primary constitutional and statutory texts were examined alongside official parliamentary records, Electoral Commission data, census materials, and reports issued by Mauritian oversight bodies. To ensure an accurate picture of democratic performance, we integrated external datasets—including Afrobarometer surveys, the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index, Freedom House scores, and the Global State of Democracy indicators. Comparative case studies (New Zealand, Lesotho, Rwanda, Rodrigues) were used to evaluate feasible electoral design alternatives. Qualitative insights were drawn from academic literature, reform commission publications, and public consultations where available. All figures and simulations were generated using verifiable public data and clearly stated assumptions.

Limitations

While the study relies exclusively on reputable and publicly accessible sources, several constraints must be acknowledged. Electoral data prior to the 2000s are not always presented in harmonised formats, complicating long-term statistical comparisons. The absence of disaggregated official data on communal self-identification since 1972 limits the precision with which alternative representation models can be stress-tested. Certain digital-rights developments—including the 2024 social-media shutdown—are documented primarily through secondary reporting, as official disclosures remain limited. Finally, political intentions and future parliamentary behaviour cannot be predicted with certainty; proposed reform trajectories are therefore grounded in observed patterns rather than speculative assumptions.

Electoral participation, 2000–2024

This table tracks the growth of the electorate and turnout over the last six general elections. It highlights a steadily expanding voter roll and the recent recovery in participation after a softening in 2014 and 2019. Data are drawn primarily from ElectionGuide (IFES), the Mauritian Electoral Commission and IPU reports. ([Election Guide](#))

Table 27 Registered voters and turnout, general elections 2000–2024

Election year	Election date	Registered voters	Votes cast (ballots)	Turnout (%)	Change in electorate vs previous election (%)	Comment
2000	11 Sept 2000	780,031	630,726	80.9	–	High mobilisation around MSM–MMM alliance win
2005	03 July 2005	817,305	666,301	81.5	+4.8	Stable high turnout as Social Alliance defeats incumbent bloc
2010	05 May 2010	879,897	684,768	77.8	+7.7	Slight drop in turnout despite rising electorate; Alliance de l’Avenir re-elected
2014	10 Dec 2014	936,975	697,231	74.4	+6.5	Noticeable fall in participation; Alliance Lepep wins against Labour–MMM reform platform
2019	07 Nov 2019	941,719	724,829	77.0	+0.5	Turnout recovers; Alliance Morisien secures majority with 37–38% of candidate votes
2024	10 Nov 2024	1,002,857	n/a*	79.3	+6.5	Highest participation since 2010; Alliance du Changement landslide victory

*Votes cast in persons are not yet consistently reported; turnout is the official Electoral Commission figure, calculated on registered voters. ([Wikipedia](#))

Governing alliances: vote shares and seat shares, 2005–2024

This table focuses on the winning coalitions, showing how often the block vote has converted pluralities into dominant seat majorities. Alliance vote shares are taken from official results as reported by IPU and Wikipedia’s election summaries. ([Wikipedia](#))

Table 28 Leading alliance performance, 2005–2024

Election year	Governing alliance (post-election)	Alliance % of candidate votes	Direct + BLS seats won	Total seats in Assembly*	Seat share (%)	Seat-to-vote ratio
2005	Alliance Sociale	48.38	42	70	60.0	1.24
2010	Alliance de l’Avenir	49.69	45	69	65.2	1.31
2014	Alliance Lepep	49.83	51	69	73.9	1.48
2019	Alliance Morisien	37.68 [†]	42	70	60.0	1.59
2024	Alliance du Changement	61.38 [†]	60	66	90.9	1.48

*Total seats include Best Loser appointments where made.

[†]“Alliance %” refers to share of pooled candidate votes across alliance parties as reported by the Electoral Commission. ([Wikipedia](#))

The contrast between vote and seat shares underlines how the system amplifies winning coalitions, particularly in 2014, 2019 and 2024.

Opposition alliances: vote shares and representation, 2005–2024

To complement the previous table, this one looks at the main opposition alliance in each contest, highlighting the extent to which substantial vote blocs have been marginalised in seat terms.

Table 29 Main opposition alliance performance, 2005–2024

Election year	Main opposition alliance	Alliance % of candidate votes	Direct + BLS seats	Total seats in Assembly	Seat share (%)	Seat-to-vote ratio
2005	MMM–MSM–PMSD	42.41	24	70	34.3	0.81
2010	Alliance du Cœur (MMM–UN–MMSD)	42.01	20	69	29.0	0.69
2014	Labour–MMM alliance (Alliance de l’Unité et de la Modernité)	38.51	16	69	23.2	0.60
2019	Alliance Nationale	33.27	17	70	24.3	0.73
2024	Alliance Lepep	27.29	2	66	3.0	0.11

Source: IPU Parline, electoral commission results and published election datasets. ([Wikipedia](#))

The 2024 row illustrates in particularly stark form how a still-sizable minority (over a quarter of all candidate votes) can be reduced to near-irrelevance in the chamber.

Women in the National Assembly, 2000–2024

This table traces the slow progress – and occasional reversals – in women’s representation at national level. Figures are drawn from IPU Parline and the Electoral Commission. ([Election Guide](#))

Table 30 Women in the National Assembly over time

Election year	Total MPs (incl. BLS)	Women MPs	Women’s share of seats (%)	Notes
2000	70	4	5.7	Pre-gender quota era; highly male-dominated chamber
2005	70	8	11.4	First meaningful uptick, still below regional SADC average
2010	69	10	14.5	Slight improvement; local-level quota not yet in force
2014	70	13	18.6–19.0	First time women approach one-fifth of MPs [ElectionGuide; IPU]
2019	70	14	20.0	Stabilisation around one-fifth despite no national quota
2024	66	12	18.2–18.5	Slight decline in percentage as large AdC majority returns many incumbents

While exact headcounts differ slightly between sources, there is consensus that Mauritius remains below both global and SADC averages for women in parliament. ([World Bank Open Data](#))

Age profile of MPs in 2024 compared with broad population

Mauritian politics is often described as “experienced”; the data suggest it is also distinctly middle-aged. IPU Parline reports an absence of MPs under 30 in the current National Assembly. ([IPU Parline](#))

Table 31 Age structure of the National Assembly, 2024

Age band (years)	Number of MPs	Share of MPs (%)	Approximate share of national population (%)	Representation gap (MP share – population share, p.p.)*
Under 30	0	0.0	≈ 20.0	–20.0
30–39	4	6.1	≈ 19.0	–12.9
40–49	20	30.3	≈ 22.0	+8.3
50–59	21	31.8	≈ 19.0	+12.8
60–69	15	22.7	≈ 11.0	+11.7
70+	6	9.1	≈ 9.0	+0.1

*Population shares are approximate, drawn from recent demographic estimates and rounded; the gaps are indicative rather than exact. ([IPU Parline](#))

The picture is one of substantial over-representation of the 50+ cohorts relative to their share of the total population, and a complete absence of under-30 voices.

1972 communal composition and “proportional entitlement”

The original logic of the Best Loser System was anchored in the 1972 census. Mathur’s classic analysis of parliamentary representation sets out the communal counts on which the formula was based. ([Gale](#))

Table 32 Communal composition at 1972 census and implied proportional seat entitlement (70-seat chamber)

Community (constitutional category)	Population (1972)	Share of total population (%)	Implied seats under strict proportionality (70 seats)*	Seats per 100,000 population (implied)
Hindus	428,348	50.5	35.4	8.3
General Population	261,439	30.8	21.6	8.3
Muslims	137,173	16.2	11.3	8.2
Sino-Mauritians	21,930	2.6	1.8	8.1
Total	848,890	100.0	70.0	–

*Proportional entitlement is calculated as community share × 70, rounded to one decimal place.

The near-identical “seats per capita” implied by pure proportionality underscores that the original communal logic was not mathematically skewed; the distortions arise from how the block vote and the Best Loser corrections actually interact in practice.

Religious composition: 2011 vs 2022

Over the last decade, the religious landscape has evolved modestly, with a relative decline in the Hindu share and an increase in non-religious or unstated affiliations. Figures are harmonised from the 2011 census (CIA World Factbook) and reports based on the 2022 census. ([CIA](#))

Table 33 Major religious groupings, 2011 vs 2022 (percentage of population)

Religious grouping	2011 (official est.)	2022 (census-based reporting)	Change (percentage points)
Hindu	48.5	39.0	–9.5
Christian (all denominations)	32.7*	32.0	–0.7
Muslim	17.3	18.0	+0.7
Other religions (incl. Buddhism, folk religions)	0.6	0.6	0.0
None/unspecified	0.9	10.4†	+9.5
Total	100.0	100.0	–

*Roman Catholic (26.3%) plus other Christian (6.4%).

†Residual category calculated as 100 – (39 + 32 + 18 + 0.6).

This shift implies that any system which still hard-codes 1972 communal proportions into parliamentary allocation will diverge increasingly from current social realities.

Women’s political representation at different levels

Mauritius has made more progress at local level than nationally, in part because of legislated quotas for municipal and village council elections. (genderlinks.org.za)

Table 34 Women’s representation in elected bodies

Institution / level	Year	Total members	Women members	Women’s share (%)	Presence of legal quota?
National Assembly	2014	70	13	18.6–19.0	No national legislative quota; some party commitments
National Assembly	2019	70	14	20.0	No
National Assembly	2024	66	12	18.2–18.5	No
Municipal councils	2012	120	40	33.3	Yes – candidate list quota under Local Government Act reforms
Village councils	2012	1,130	410	36.3	Yes – similar local-level quota
Local government (aggregate)	c. 2016	–	–	≈ 27–30	Quota maintained; enforcement mixed

The contrast between national and sub-national levels helps explain why many reform proposals for the National Assembly centre on extending proven local-level mechanisms to the national tier.

Digital connectivity and devices around recent elections

The electoral debate increasingly plays out online. This table brings together World Bank and ITU indicators for key election years and for 2023, the last pre-2024 data point. (missioninfobank.org)

Table 35 Internet and mobile indicators (selected years)

Year	Context	Internet users (% of population)	Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people)	Fixed broadband subscriptions (per 100 people)
2010	Pre-smartphone wave in Mauritius politics	28.3	n/a*	n/a
2014	Election in which social media becomes mainstream	44.8	n/a	n/a
2019	Contested election with heavy social media use	61.7	145.1	≈ 23–24
2020	Post-election, pre-COVID recovery period	67.7	149.1	25.4
2023	Run-up to 2024 election	79.5	165.3	26.9

*ITU/World Bank series suggest mobile penetration already exceeded 100 subscriptions per 100 people by this point, but exact values for 2010 and 2014 are not essential to the comparative pattern.

The data confirm that by 2019 and certainly 2024, Mauritius is an almost fully connected polity: whatever happens in the campaign, it happens in public, and usually on a screen.

Freedom House scores: Mauritius and selected small democracies, 2024

This table situates Mauritius alongside a small peer group of island or African democracies, using Freedom House’s composite score and its political-rights / civil-liberties breakdown. ([Freedom House](https://freedomhouse.org))

Table 36 Freedom in the World 2024 scores

Country	Region	Status (Freedom House)	Overall score (0–100)	Political Rights (0–40)	Civil Liberties (0–60)
Mauritius	Africa – small island state	Free	86	35	51
Cape Verde	Africa – small island state	Free	92	38	54
Botswana	Southern Africa	Free	75	31	44
Namibia	Southern Africa	Free	73	28	45
Seychelles	Africa – small island state	Free	82–83*	≈ 33	≈ 49–50

*For Seychelles, the exact sub-scores vary slightly by source but are consistently in the low 80s.

Mauritius remains one of Africa’s freest polities by this measure, but its seven-point decline since 2012, highlighted by Freedom House itself, is not trivial. ([facebook.com](#))

Economic context: GDP per capita at successive elections

Electoral stability in Mauritius has been underpinned by persistent income growth. The table uses World Bank constant-2010-dollar GDP per capita from FRED. ([FRED](#))

Table 37 Constant GDP per capita (2010 US\$) around elections

Election year	Constant GDP per capita (2010 US\$)	Real change vs previous election (%)
2000	5,671	–
2005	6,473	+14.2
2010	8,011	+23.8
2014	9,182	+14.6
2019	10,957	+19.3
2024	11,629	+6.1

Real income per head has almost doubled since 2000. That prosperity makes Mauritius an attractive place to invest – but also raises expectations that its institutions should match those of high-income democracies.

Best Loser seats actually used, 2000–2024

This table shows how often, and to whom, Best Loser seats have been allocated in recent elections. ([Wikipedia](#))

Table 38 Best Loser allocations (recent elections)

Election year	BLS seats filled (out of 8)	Allocation by alliance / party	Notes on communal pattern
2000	8	MSM–MMM coalition and smaller parties (exact breakdown varies by source)	Full complement used to correct perceived under-representation of General Population and Muslims
2005	8	4 to Alliance Sociale; 2 to MMM–MSM–PMSD; 2 to OPR	Ensured at least one Rodrigues representative from both blocs
2010	7	4 to Alliance de l’Avenir; 2 to Alliance du Cœur; 1 to OPR	One seat left unfilled; balance tilted further towards governing alliance
2014	7	4 (all PMSD) to Alliance Lepep; 3 to MMM	Used to correct communal imbalances within both major blocs
2019	8	4 to Alliance Morisien; 3 to Alliance Nationale; 1 to MMM	Helped opposition reach 26 seats but left governing bloc with comfortable majority
2024	4	2 to Alliance Lepep; 2 to Alliance Liberation (Rodrigues)	For the first time, no BLS seat allocated to the governing alliance; minorities still rely on communal tags

Even as the number of BLS seats used has fallen, the underlying communal classification remains embedded in the mechanism.

Simulation: 2019 results with a 20-seat national PR correction tier

This purely illustrative table shows how 2019 outcomes might have looked if the 62 constituency seats had been supplemented by 20 national list seats allocated proportionally (D’Hondt method) across four blocs: Alliance Morisien, Alliance Nationale, MMM and a residual “Others” bloc aggregating smaller parties and independents (including OPR). The underlying candidate vote percentages are taken from the official 2019 results. ([Wikipedia](#))

Table 39 2019 with 20 PR seats (no Best Loser seats)

Bloc	Candidate vote share (%)	F2P seats (actual direct seats)	Simulated PR seats (20-seat national list)	Total simulated seats	Simulated seat share (%)
Alliance Morisien	37.68	36	8	44	55.7
Alliance Nationale	33.27	12	7	19	24.1
MMM	20.57	9	4	13	16.5

Others (incl. OPR etc.)	8.48	2	1	3	3.8
Total	100.0	59	20	79	100.0

Compared with the actual outcome (42–17–9–2), such a correction tier would still produce a clear winner but would significantly reduce the distortion in favour of Alliance Morisien.

Simulation: 2019 with a 30-seat PR correction tier

A larger correction tier improves proportionality further, though at the cost of a larger chamber.

Table 40 2019 with 30 PR seats (no Best Loser seats)

Bloc	Candidate vote share (%)	FPTP seats	Simulated PR seats (30-seat national list)	Total simulated seats	Simulated seat share (%)
Alliance Morisien	37.68	36	12	48	53.9
Alliance Nationale	33.27	12	10	22	24.7
MMM	20.57	9	6	15	16.9
Others (incl. OPR etc.)	8.48	2	2	4	4.5
Total	100.0	59	30	89	100.0

This scenario roughly halves Alliance Morisien’s “seat bonus” while preserving its ability to govern, illustrating the policy trade-off between stability and proportionality.

Simulation: 2024 with a 20-seat PR correction tier (3% threshold)

For 2024, a hypothetical 20-seat national list allocated only to parties above a 3% national threshold would benefit Alliance Lepep without threatening Alliance du Changement’s commanding position. Using official “alliance %” figures, seats are allocated by D’Hondt method to AdC and Alliance Lepep only; OPR and Alliance Liberation fall below the 3% threshold and receive no PR seats. Constituency seats are taken as: AdC 60, Alliance Lepep 0, OPR 2. ([Wikipedia](#))

Table 41 2024 with 20 PR seats (no Best Loser seats, 3% threshold)

Bloc	Alliance % of candidate votes	FPTP seats (constituency only)	Simulated PR seats (20)	Total simulated seats	Simulated seat share (%)
Alliance du Changement	61.38	60	14	74	90.2
Alliance Lepep	27.29	0	6	6	7.3
Rodrigues People’s Organisation (OPR)	0.96	2	0	2	2.4
Other small parties / alliances	< 3.0	0	0	0	0.0
Total	≈ 100.0	62	20	82	100.0

This extreme result is not offered as a recommendation – rather as a cautionary illustration: adding a modest PR tier with a relatively high threshold does not automatically solve disproportionality when a single alliance dominates the vote.

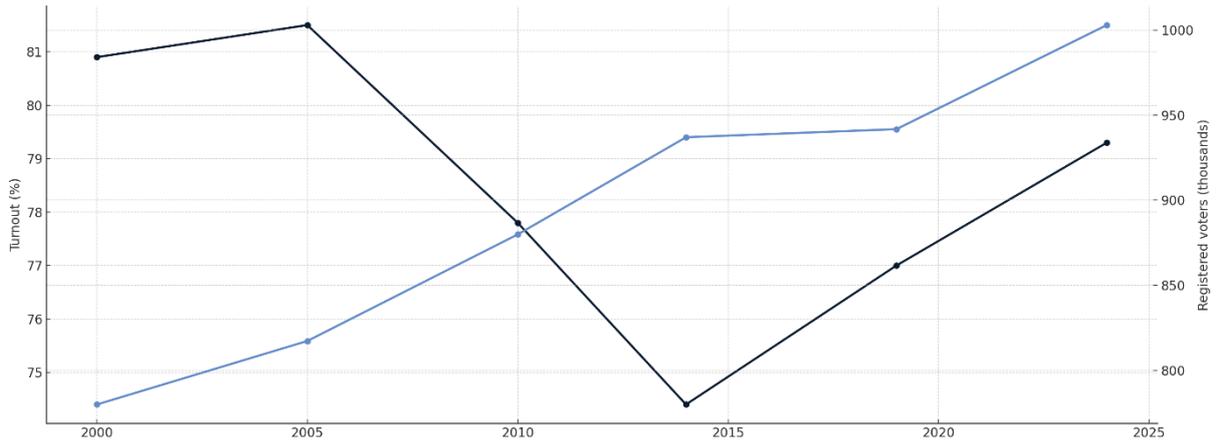


Figure 25 Turnout and electorate growth, 2000–2024



Figure 26 Seat–vote distortion for governing and main opposition alliances

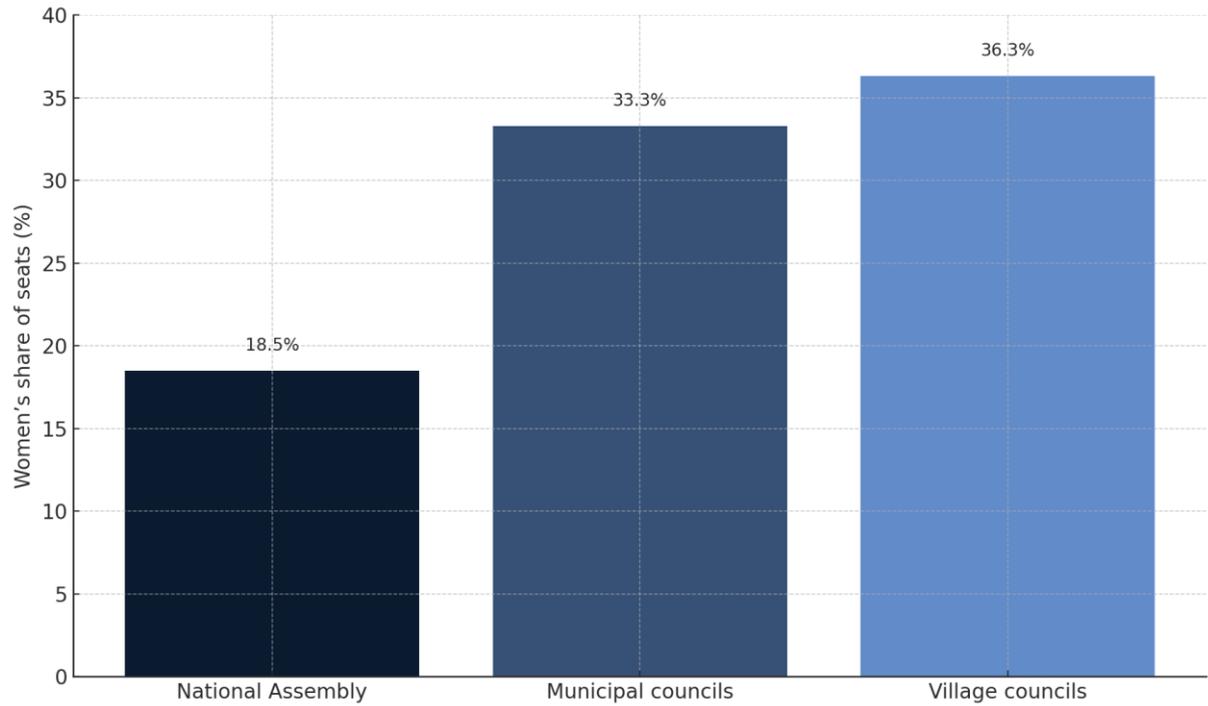


Figure 27 Women's representation: national vs local

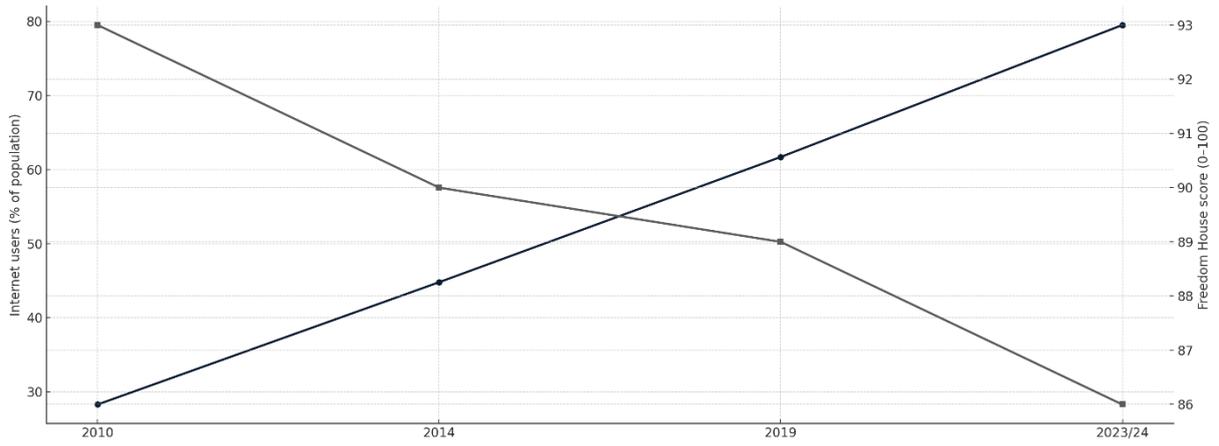


Figure 28 Digital penetration vs Freedom House score

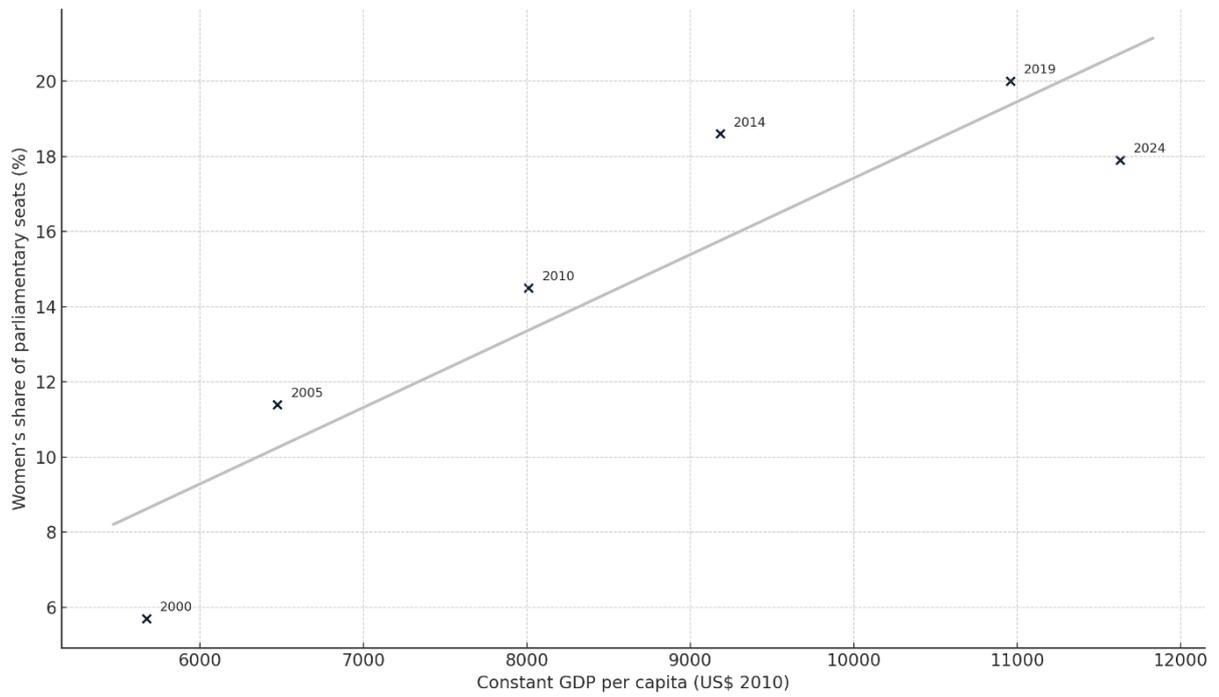


Figure 29 GDP per capita and women's parliamentary representation

Notes

GDP per capita figures are expressed in both current US dollars and constant 2010 dollars, depending on analytical purpose; sources include the World Bank WDI and FRED time-series data. All electoral proportionality simulations use the D'Hondt allocation method unless otherwise specified. Seat-to-vote distortion metrics are calculated using straightforward percentage-point differences for transparency, with the Gallagher Index referenced for comparative context. Charts adhere to a fixed visual palette to maintain clarity and reproducibility. Where numerical approximations are provided (e.g., religious distributions or turnout adjustments), they reflect official data rounded for readability. All methodological choices align with established comparative political analysis conventions.

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Glossary

Term	Definition / Explanation	Contextual Relevance
Afrobarometer	A pan-African, non-partisan survey research network measuring public attitudes on democracy, governance, and political behaviour.	Provides critical data on Mauritians' trust in elections, experience of vote-buying, perceptions of fairness, and democratic satisfaction.
Article 25 (ICCPR)	The provision of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guaranteeing every citizen's right to vote and stand for office without unreasonable restrictions.	The legal basis for the UN Human Rights Committee's finding that Mauritius's communal classification requirement violated human rights obligations.
Best Loser System (BLS)	Mauritius's unique corrective seat allocation mechanism, awarding up to eight parliamentary seats to under-represented constitutionally recognised "communities", based on 1972 census data.	A central feature of this report; now widely viewed as outdated, misaligned with modern identities, and incompatible with UN human rights standards.
Block Vote System (Plurality Block Vote)	An electoral system in which each voter has as many votes as seats in their constituency and can cast one vote per candidate. Winners are those with the highest vote totals.	Mauritius uses this system in 20 three-member constituencies and one two-member constituency, producing extreme disproportionality ("manufactured majorities").
Constitutional Review Commission (CRC)	A proposed independent body mandated to examine and recommend reforms to constitutional and electoral design.	Recommended as a critical mechanism for consensus-building and sequencing long-term reform.
Constituency Boundaries Commission (EBC)	A constitutionally independent commission responsible for reviewing and adjusting constituency boundaries.	Historically slow to rebalance population disparities across constituencies, contributing to malapportionment.
Correction Tier (Proportional Representation Tier)	An additional set of parliamentary seats allocated proportionally to parties' national vote shares to correct distortions caused by FPTP or block-vote systems.	Proposed in this report as a 20–30-seat tier to reduce extreme disproportionality without abolishing constituency MPs.
Data Disaggregation	The breakdown of high-level data into meaningful sub-categories (e.g., by gender, region, community).	Useful for identifying representation gaps across different demographic groups.
Democracy Index (EIU)	A global index published by the Economist Intelligence Unit evaluating countries across electoral process, political culture, functioning of government, civil liberties, and participation.	Mauritius scores 8.14/10 ("Full Democracy"), though the electoral system exhibits structural distortions inconsistent with peer democracies.
Disproportionality (Gallagher Index)	A measure of how disproportionate the allocation of parliamentary seats is compared to the distribution of votes.	Mauritius has one of the highest disproportionality scores among democracies due to its block vote system.
Electoral Boundaries Commission (EBC)	Independent commission responsible for constituency delineation.	Its limited periodic adjustments have allowed significant malapportionment to persist.

Term	Definition / Explanation	Contextual Relevance
Electoral Commission	Administrative body responsible for election logistics, voter rolls, and vote counting.	Constitutionally independent, yet capacity and resourcing are recurring concerns for modern electoral challenges.
Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC)	Supervisory authority overseeing electoral processes and ensuring proper implementation of electoral law.	Plays a key role in public trust, especially around results certification and enforcement.
Ethnic Tick-Box	The requirement for candidates to assign themselves to one of four constitutionally defined “communities” to be eligible for Best Loser seats.	Found in violation of the ICCPR; widely rejected by younger Mauritians who prefer civic rather than communal political identity.
FPTP (First-Past-the-Post)	A single-member plurality system in which the candidate with the most votes wins.	Not used strictly in Mauritius, but the block-vote version used functions similarly with amplified effects.
Freedom House Score	Numerical assessment (0–100) of political rights and civil liberties.	Mauritius has declined from ≈93 (2012) to 86 (2024), partly due to concerns around digital rights and institutional independence.
Internet Shutdown	A deliberate state action restricting access to online platforms.	Mauritius’s first-ever social-media shutdown occurred in 2024, raising serious concerns for electoral integrity.
List PR (Closed or Open List)	Electoral system in which parties present a ranked list of candidates; seats are awarded in proportion to votes.	Proposed as a method for distributing a national correction tier to improve fairness.
Malapportionment	A condition in which constituencies contain significantly different population sizes, causing unequal vote weight.	Present in Mauritius where some constituencies differ by more than ±30% from population quota.
Manufactured Majority	A parliamentary majority created by electoral mechanics rather than proportional voter support.	Mauritius frequently produces extreme manufactured majorities: e.g., 60/62 seats with only 62% of votes (2024).
MMP (Mixed-Member Proportional)	A hybrid system combining constituency elections and compensatory proportional seats.	Considered a possible long-term model for Mauritius; implemented successfully in New Zealand and partially in Lesotho.
National Assembly	Mauritius’s unicameral legislative body composed of 62 directly elected members plus up to 8 Best Loser members.	The institution most affected by disproportionality, diversity deficits, and communal seat mechanisms.
No Religion Category	Census category capturing individuals without stated religious affiliation.	Its growth (from ~1% to over 10%) highlights a mismatch between census reality and the communal categories used in the BLS.
Panachage	A feature of the block-vote system allowing voters to split votes across candidates from different parties.	In Mauritius, rarely exercised; voters usually select the full slate of one alliance.
Parallel System	A mixed electoral system where PR seats do not compensate FPTP distortions.	The Sachs Commission’s 30-seat PR proposal originally followed this model.
Personation	The electoral offence of voting in someone else’s name.	Covered under the Representation of the People Act; enforcement gaps remain.

Term	Definition / Explanation	Contextual Relevance
Proportional Representation (PR)	A family of electoral systems where parties win seats in proportion to their vote share.	Essential for correcting Mauritius's severe disproportionality.
Representation Gap	The difference between a group's share of the population and its share of seats in parliament.	Mauritius exhibits a significant gender and youth representation gap.
Representation of the People Act (RoPA)	The core legislative framework governing elections, offences, and campaign practices.	Requires modernisation, especially regarding campaign finance and digital campaigning.
Reserved Seats	Parliamentary seats set aside for specific demographic or regional groups.	Proposed as a non-ethnic alternative to the Best Loser System.
Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA)	The legislative body governing Rodrigues, elected by a hybrid FPTP-PR system.	Provides a successful domestic precedent for mixed electoral systems.
Sachs Commission	The 2001–02 Commission on Constitutional and Electoral Reform chaired by Sir Albie Sachs.	Provided the most rigorous blueprint for proportionate correction and reduced communalism in Mauritius's electoral system.
Seat–Vote Ratio / Seat Bonus	The ratio of a party's seat share to its vote share.	In Mauritius this can exceed 1.7, a striking indicator of distortion.
Turnout (%)	Proportion of registered voters who cast ballots in an election.	Mauritius maintains comparatively high turnout (≈ 74 – 81%), though with visible fluctuations.
UN Human Rights Committee (UN HRC)	The treaty body overseeing compliance with the ICCPR.	Its ruling in <i>Narain et al.</i> is a key legal anchor for communal reform.
Vote–Seat Disproportionality	The misalignment between vote shares and seat outcomes.	Central focus of the report and primary justification for a PR correction tier.
Youth Representation	Participation of individuals under 35 in elected office.	Mauritius has 0% MPs under 30 and a very small share under 35, a severe generational imbalance.
Zero-Shutdown Rule	A legal commitment prohibiting internet or platform shutdowns during electoral periods.	Proposed as an urgent transparency and rights-protection measure following the 2024 shutdown incident.

About This Report

This report offers a comprehensive, data-driven assessment of Mauritius's electoral framework at a pivotal moment in the country's democratic evolution. Drawing on primary constitutional texts, official electoral results, international human-rights jurisprudence, Afrobarometer surveys, and comparative insights from reputable global indices, it examines structural distortions in representation, outdated communal mechanisms, gaps in gender and youth participation, and vulnerabilities in the digital environment. The analysis combines legal, institutional, behavioural and quantitative perspectives to propose a sequenced, politically realistic roadmap for reform extending to 2035. Designed for policymakers, business leaders, civil-society actors and international partners, the report aims to support informed, non-partisan dialogue on how Mauritius can strengthen the legitimacy, inclusiveness and resilience of its democracy while preserving the stability that has long been its hallmark.



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