

## KEY FACTS

**Official name:** Republic of Mauritius

**Head of State:** President Rajkeswur (Kailash) Purryag (from 21 Jul 2012)

**Head of government:** Prime Minister Navinchandra (Navin) Ramgoolam (Parti Travailiste (PT) (Labour Party)) (5 Jul 2005)

**Ruling party:** Coalition Alliance de L'Avenir (Alliance of the Future) led by Parti Travailiste (PT) (Labour Party), with Parti Mauricien Social-Démocrate (Mauritius Social Democratic Party) and Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien (Mauritian Socialist Movement)

**Area:** 1,865 square km

**Population:** 1.30 million (2012) (1,286,051; 2011, initial census result)

**Capital:** Port Louis

**Official language:** English and French

**Currency:** Mauritian rupee (MR) = 100 cents

**Exchange rate:** MR30.75 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

**GDP per capita:** US\$8,850 (2012)\*

**GDP real growth:** 3.30% (2012)\*

**GDP:** US\$11.47 billion (2012)\*

**Labour force:** 581,000 (2010)

**Unemployment:** 8.00% (2012)\*

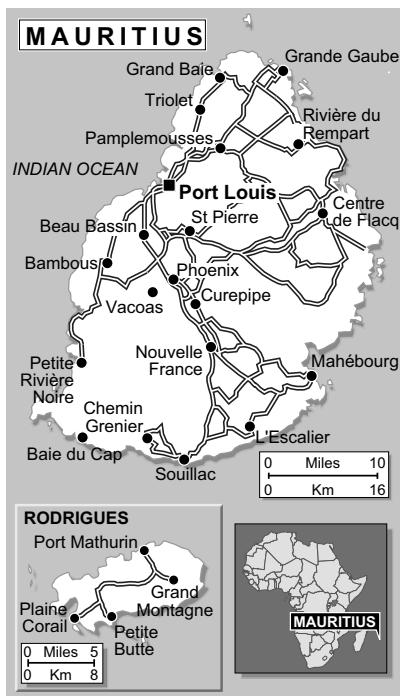
**Inflation:** 3.84% (2012)\*

**Balance of trade:** -US\$2.28 billion (2011)

**Visitor numbers:** 980,000 (2010)

\* estimated figure

# Mauritius



**M**auritius has undergone noticeable structural transformation over the past three decades. This has helped the island nation move from a low-income country (LIC) status to an upper middle-income country (MIC). The transformation has been characterised by a development path from a single-crop economy completely dependent on sugar to diversification into the secondary (manufacturing) and tertiary (services) sectors. Tertiary sector expansion is attributed to booming tourism services coupled with the strong growth in transport and communication; financial services and the real estate sector. Consequently, the gross domestic product (GDP) share of the primary sector has declined from 12 per cent in 1990 to 4 per cent since 2010.

In the early stages of the transformation, much of Mauritius' growth was labour intensive. The *African Economic Outlook 2013* (AEO), published jointly by the African Development Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, notes that the transformation has been accompanied by shifts in labour across sectors. In 1990, almost half

of the country's workers were employed in the agricultural or manufacturing sectors – mostly sugar and textiles. The textile firms, in particular, were fast growing due in part to support by policy reforms that aimed at reducing the cost of labour and supporting absorption of new workers. This facilitated growth while creating employment. However, the ratio of employment growth over GDP growth fell from 1.0 in 1985 to 0.2 in 2002 reflecting emerging limits of an incentivised labour-intensive export-oriented textile industry. The sugar and textile sectors were affected by the phase out of trade preferences by the euro-zone. For example, both industries shed labour between 2000 and 2008, while emerging sectors, such as tourism, ICT and retail, absorbed workers. Between March 2010 and March 2012, the economy created a net of 4,693 jobs with the largest contribution from wholesale, retail trade, real estate and financial intermediation businesses. Overall employment reduced in both agriculture and manufacturing.

Against a background of consistent and strong reform performance, Mauritius continues to pursue innovative solutions for greater structural transformation. A 36 per cent fall in the price of sugar between 2006 and 2010 led the authorities to support reforms to promote diversification in the sector. Energy potential of sugarcane was viewed as one of the solutions to the country's energy challenges through production of ethanol from molasses and electricity from bagasse leading to the establishment of independent power producers (IPP). The IPPs have been producing and exporting electricity to the national grid since 2008 and now contribute up to 60 per cent of the requirement. They produce power from bagasse during the cropping season and from coal during the off-season. The green energy produced from bagasse contributes about 17 per cent of national electricity production and has the potential to increase to 25 per cent. The utilisation of bagasse allows Mauritius to save on the import of an equivalent of 375,000 tonnes of coal, thus preventing the emission of 1,200,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).

In addition, the sugar industry has also diversified from being a sole producer of raw sugar into production of value-added products such as refined sugar and specialty sugars as a means to increase revenue. Mauritius is now the largest exporter of special sugars to the European market. Some 19 different types of special sugars are produced mainly by Belle-Vue, Beau Champ and FUEL milling companies. Terra Milling Ltd, a subsidiary of HFL, produces up to 75,000 tonnes of speciality sugars for the international market.

In terms of natural resources, Mauritius is totally devoid of what may be termed as 'hard commodities' as well as 'energy commodities'. At an estimated 600 inhabitants per square kilometre, land is a major constraint, although the country boasts of a very impressive ocean exclusive economic zone estimated at 1,000 times the country's land size. Onshore, the main natural resource is its relatively fertile soil used mainly for agriculture. Land is under tremendous pressure due to increasing demand for development. With no known oil, natural gas or coal reserves, Mauritius depends on imported petroleum products to meet most of its energy requirements. As a net importer, the energy dependency index is high, estimated at 83 per cent in 2011. A few 'soft commodities' such as cane sugar and seafood comprise the main agro-based natural resources from which the government derives export revenues. Currently, sugar and seafood export revenues account for some 13 per cent and 16 per cent of total export revenues respectively. In the 2013 budget, the authorities have announced plans to develop the ocean economy and establish strategic partnerships to embark on mineral resource exploratory activities on the Mascarene Plateau believed to have meaningful deposits.

Despite the island's obvious natural resource constraints, successive governments have been able, through targeted policy measures, to maximise the benefits from the available natural resources. Two different approaches have been used. On the one hand, there has been a substantial transformation from within as regards the sugar industry, and on the other, there has been the unearthing of a completely new avenue with the upsurge of real estate via the Integrated Resort Scheme (IRS)1 and the Real Estate Scheme (RES)2. The real estate sector in Mauritius is particularly attractive due to the absence of any capital gains, estate or inheritance taxes. As a result, FDI in the real estate sector, as a proportion of total FDI, has increased from

23.5 per cent in 2006 to 60.8 per cent in 2012. In 2012, it contributed about 13.5 per cent to the GDP compared to 10.2 per cent in 2006.

### The economy

The Mauritian economy has held up well against the global economic downturn, although the growth momentum has continued to moderate. A persistent sovereign debt crisis and record level unemployment in the euro-zone continue to pose downside risks to the domestic economy, particularly in the export sector. Estimates for 2012 show a real GDP growth rate of 3.3 per cent down from 3.8 per cent for 2011 as external demand and investments remain muted.

Sugar dominates the primary sector with sugarcane occupying about 90 per cent of total land under cultivation. Representing 3.5 per cent share of GDP in 2012, the primary sector contracted by 0.2 per cent as sugarcane production fell by 7.0 per cent.

In the short term, weak external demand is expected to continue slowing the pace of export sector growth, particularly in the textile and tourism sectors. Subdued export sector performance and weak investments should combine to reduce the country's prospects for a quick return to robust pre-crisis growth. Nonetheless, the government made concerted efforts to penetrate new markets in Africa and Asia, supported by

an accommodative monetary policy should help anchor growth while the euro-zone economy stabilises. The government is also motivated to contain the unemployment rate, which averaged 8.0 per cent in 2012, up from 7.9 per cent in 2011. Projections show that the economy will pick up in 2013 with real GDP growth rate forecast at 3.7 per cent. A modest recovery in the tourism sector and continued resilience of the financial and insurance services sector will drive growth; growth will also be supported by the emerging sectors of ICT and seafood. The number of tourist arrivals in 2013 is projected to improve slightly to stand just above the 1 million mark, which is expected to accelerate growth in the accommodation and food activities sector to 3.5 per cent from near stagnation in 2012. Financial and insurance services are expected to maintain a growth rate of 5 per cent as in 2012, while textile manufacturing is expected to grow by 2 per cent following a no-growth in 2012. Projections show that sugar production will continue underperforming, falling by 3 per cent. The construction sector will fall by 2 per cent due to implementation capacity bottlenecks in the public sector and low expected private sector infrastructure investments.

The AEO points out that the authorities have announced a number of budget measures aimed at stimulating domestic demand and harnessing long-term

		KEY INDICATORS	Mauritius				
	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	
Population	m	1.27	*1.28	1.30	*1.29	*1.30	
Gross domestic minus gold	US\$bn	8.70	8.80	9.70	11.30	*11.47	
GDP per capita	US\$	6,872	6,838	7,593	8,777	*8,850	
GDP real growth	%	5.5	3.0	4.2	4.1	*3.3	
Inflation	%	8.8	2.5	2.9	6.5	*3.8	
Unemployment	%	7.3	7.2	7.7	8.3	*8.0	
Industrial output	% change	5.0	2.9	2.7	-	-	
Agricultural output	% change	3.1	8.8	-1.3	-	-	
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	2,399.5	1,942.0	2,261.5	2,646.5	*2,672.8	
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	4,398.9	3,498.8	4,157.3	4,925.4	*5,104.2	
Balance of trade	US\$m	-1,999.4	-1,556.9	-1,895.8	-2,278.9	*-2,431.4	
Current account	US\$m	-761.0	-674.5	-1,005.8	-1,421.8	*-1,149.0	
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	1,742.7	2,178.8	2,441.8	2,713.8	*2,836.7	
Foreign exchange	US\$m	1,693.4	2,001.5	2,254.2	2,508.5	*2,631.4	
Tourist numbers	'000	930.5	871.4	980.0	-	-	
Exchange rate	per US\$	28.45	31.96	30.78	28.64	30.81	
* estimated figure							

competitiveness. They have reduced taxes and have expanded the on-going small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) financing scheme by MR0.25 billion (US\$8.22 million) and doubled the value added tax (VAT) registration threshold to MR4 million (US\$0.13 million) to bolster small businesses. Public infrastructure investment is expected to reach MR28.6 billion (US\$0.94 billion) in 2013, almost double that of 2012. Other measures include strengthening trade links with the rest of Africa and accelerating investment in ICT development. To consolidate diversification in the tourism sector, the government plans to increase the frequency of weekly direct flights to China and introduce a weekly flight to Russia.

## Elections coming

With parliamentary elections due in 2015 strategic political manoeuvring began as far back as 2011 when Pravind Jugnauth and his Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien (MSM) (Mauritian Socialist Movement) withdrew from the governing coalition. There were allegations of corruption, which he denied, saying the move was politically motivated. Nevertheless, he was charged by the independent Commission against Corruption. This move was followed in March 2012 by the resignation of President Sir Aneerood Jugnauth, who just happens to be Pravind Jugnauth's father. Sir Aneerood cited concerns with the state of the economy and law and order as his reasons for resigning. He was soon back in politics, taking over the leadership of the MSM and forming a coalition with the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) (Mauritian Militant Movement), the largest opposition party.

In what might be seen as a foretaste of things to come, the MSM/MMM opposition coalition won a majority of seats in the December 2012 municipal elections (54 to 35 for the government). Nevertheless, Prime Minister Ramgoolam continues to resist calls for early elections. Instead, to address some of the concerns raised by the opposition, the 2013 budget provides for increased spending for social sectors and micro and small businesses. However, the slim parliamentary majority and the rejuvenated opposition could slow down the pace of reforms.

## Risk assessment

Politics	Fair
Economy	Good
Regional stability	Fair

## COUNTRY PROFILE

### Historical profile

1598 A Dutch squadron landed at Grand Port and named the island Mauritius.

1638 Mauritius was settled by the Dutch. The island became an important port of call for Dutch, English and French trading ships. The Dutch introduced sugar cane and imported slaves to harvest it.

1710 The Dutch abandoned their settlement.

1721 France claimed the island; it also imported large numbers of slaves to harvest sugar cane, cotton and other crops.

1810 Britain defeated a French naval squadron and the island was ceded to Britain at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

1835 Slavery was abolished. Most freed slaves left the plantations and settled in coastal towns; workers had to be imported from the Indian sub-continent to take their place, most of whom opted to remain on the island at the end of their contracts.

1936 The Labour Party (LP) was formed and organised strikes and protests between 1937–45.

1953 A group of Mauritians under Seewoosagur Ramgoolam rose to the leadership of the LP, which won the elections to the Legislative Council. Most Creoles joined the Parti Mauricien Social-Démocrate (PMSD) (Social Democratic Party of Mauritius).

1959 New political parties emerged including the Muslim Committee of Action (CAM). CAM formed an alliance with the LP.

1968 Mauritius gained independence from Britain.

1969 Ramgoolam's LP-CAM (Muslim) ruling alliance was strengthened when a coalition with the PMSD was formed. In response, the Mouvement Militante Mauricien (MMM) (Mauritian Militant Movement) was established.

1982 The LP lost power as the MMM, in alliance with the Parti Socialiste Mauricien (PSM), gained power under the premiership of Aneerood Jugnauth.

1983 The MMM split and Jugnauth formed the Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien (MSM) (Mauritian Socialist Movement) which formed a government with the LP.

1990 The MMM and the MSM formed a political alliance.

1991 In December the Legislative Assembly approved the transition to a republic within the Commonwealth.

1992 Cassam Uteem was elected president.

1995 An alliance of the LP and the MMM, led by Navinchandra (Navin) Ramgoolam (son of the late Sir

Seewoosagur Ramgoolam) and Paul Berenger, won the parliamentary elections. Ramgoolam became prime minister.

1997 The LP-MMM coalition broke up when the MMM left government and became the official opposition. Even so, the LP continued to hold an outright majority in the legislature and for the first time since independence, Mauritius was governed by a single party. Cassam Uteem was re-elected president.

2000 The opposition, MSM/MMM, won the parliamentary election. Sir Aneerood Jugnauth, leader of the MMM, became prime minister for the second time. Mauritius revived a claim to sovereignty over Diego Garcia, the British Indian Ocean Territory.

2001 The WTO trade policy review encouraged Mauritius to further liberalise and diversify its economy. A constitutional amendment was introduced, allowing Rodrigues Island to have two representatives in the National Assembly and its own regional assembly.

2002 President Uteem resigned and Vice President Angidi Chettiar became interim president, but he also resigned; both men had refused to sign into law controversial anti-terrorism legislation. The National Assembly elected Karl Offman as president. On Rodrigues Island, the Rodrigues People's Organisation (RPO) won 10 seats out of 18 and the Mouvement Rodriguez (MR) (Rodrigues Movement) won eight seats in the first Rodrigues Regional Assembly election. The Rodrigues Regional Assembly opened with Jean Daniel Spéville as chief commissioner.

2003 Serge Clair became chief commissioner of Rodrigues Island. Sir Aneerood Jugnauth resigned and Paul Bérenger replaced him as prime minister. Parliament elected Jugnauth as president.

2005 In parliamentary elections the opposition Alliance Sociale (AS) (Social Alliance) won 49 per cent of the vote (38 out of 62 constituencies) and the incumbent coalition MSM and MMM won 43 per cent (22). Turnout was 81.5 per cent.

Navin Ramgoolam (Parti Travailiste (PT) (Labour Party)) became prime minister.

2006 Former residents of Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago, evicted by the British for the island to be turned into a US military air base in the 1960s and living since in Mauritius, which also claims Diego Garcia, won the right to visit their island.

2007 The British High Court ruled that families of the expelled Diego Garcia islanders could return home.

2008 Le Morne Mountain was added to the list of Unesco World Heritage sites. The mountain was an important site of shelter and became a symbol of freedom

for runaway slaves fleeing the eastern slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Anerood Jugnauth was unanimously re-elected president by the national assembly. Chagos residents lost their rights to return to Diego Garcia in a legal battle with the UK government.

2009 The United States and Mauritius began negotiations towards a bilateral investment treaty. The intention was to strengthen investor protection in Mauritius and encourage market-oriented economic reforms.

2010 The world's largest marine reserve, around the Chagos Islands, was created by the British government. The 545,000 square kilometre reserve protects a rich marine ecosystem, including 220 coral species and over 1,000 species of reef fish. It excludes commercial fishing. There were objections from the Chagossian diaspora as the banning of commercial fishing makes it almost impossible for exiled Chagossians to return and earn a living from fishing. The Alliance de L'Avenir (Alliance of the Future) a coalition of three political parties led by the ruling PT won parliamentary elections. Prime Minister Ramgoolam remained in office.

2011 A national census took place between 20 June–31 July. In July Air Mauritius launched its first scheduled flight service to Shanghai (China).

2012 Anerood Jugnauth resigned from the ceremonial post of President of Mauritius on 31 March so that he could compete in party politics and challenge Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam for control of the governing coalition. The coalition had accused Jugnauth of meddling in Mauritian politics. Monique Ohsan-Bellepeau Gosk became acting president from 31 March. On 21 July, parliament elected Rajkeswur (Kailash) Purryag as president (40 votes in favour). President Purryag took office on 21 July.

2013 The Puntland government has signed piracy-transfer agreements with the governments of Seychelles, Mauritius and Maldives, to bring convicted Somali pirates to complete their prison sentences in Puntland prisons. Puntland Counter-Piracy Director Abdirizak Mohamed Dirir has said. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has overseen a prison construction project in Bosaso and Garowe for the purpose of housing convicted pirates. Prime Minister Ramgoolam said he would not be attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Sri Lanka in November in protest over alleged human rights abuses.

## Political structure

### Constitution

Mauritius is a republic with a president as head of state.

The president is elected by a simple majority of all the members of the National Assembly for a five-year term. The National Assembly is the supreme body that votes laws. The president's agreement and signature is required to sign legislation into law.

### Form of state

Republic

### The executive

Executive power is vested in the prime minister, leader of the majority parliamentary party.

There is a Council of Ministers consisting of the prime minister and not more than 24 other ministers.

### National legislature

The unicameral National Assembly has 70 members in total, of which 62 seats are elected in single seat constituencies for five years terms; eight members are appointed by the Supreme Court to represent minority ethnic and religious groups. The official language of the National Assembly is English but any member may address the Chair in French.

### Last elections

5 May 2010 (parliamentary); 19 September 2008 (presidential)

**Results:** Presidential: the National Assembly re-elected Sir Anerood Jugnauth. Parliamentary: Alliance de L'Avenir (Alliance of the Future; three political parties) won 41 seats (out of 62), Alliance du Coeur (Alliance of the Heart; three political parties) 18; three other political parties won less than three seats each, 29 other political parties and an independent failed to win any seats. Turnout was 78 per cent.

### Next elections

2015 (parliamentary)

## Political parties

### Ruling party

Coalition Alliance de L'Avenir (Alliance of the Future) led by Parti Travailiste (PT) (Labour Party), with Parti Mauricien Social-Démocrate (Mauritius Social Democratic Party) and Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien (Mauritian Socialist Movement)

### Main opposition party

Coalition of Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien (MSM) (Mauritian Socialist Movement) and Mouvement Militante Mauricien (MMM) (Mauritian Militant Movement)

### Population

1.30 million (2012) (1,286,051; 2011, initial census result)

The population is expected to reach 1.4 million by 2025. Approximately 26 per cent of the total population is under 15 years.

**Last census:** 2011: 1,286,051 initial census result

**Population density:** Population density: 588 per square km. The population densities of the island of Mauritius and the island of Rodrigues are 624 and 345, respectively. Urban population 42 per cent (2010 Unicef).

**Annual growth rate:** 1.0 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

### Ethnic make-up

Indentured workers were brought from India to work on sugar estates and their descendants form a majority of the population, followed by Creoles (of mixed, predominantly African, origin), Muslim Indians, Chinese and Europeans. Hindu Indo-Mauritian (51 per cent), Creole (27 per cent), Muslim Indo-Mauritians (17 per cent), Chinese (2 per cent).

### Religions

Hinduism (51 per cent), Christianity (Roman Catholic) (31.3 per cent), Muslim (16.6 per cent).

## Education

Education is modelled on the English school system. Primary schooling lasts for six years until the age of 12; lower secondary schooling lasts for five years and upper secondary schooling for a further two years. Examinations are undertaken at each transition.

The expenditure allocated to education by central government was 16 per cent (Unicef estimates 1992–1999).

**Literacy rate:** 85.3 per cent total; 82.3 per cent female, adult rates (World Bank).

### Compulsory years:

Five to 12. **Enrolment rate:** 93.6 per cent net primary enrolment, of the relevant age group; 62.9 per cent net secondary enrolment (World Bank).

**Pupils per teacher:** 24 in primary schools.

## Health

**Life expectancy:** 72 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

**Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate:** 1.6 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef)

**Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000):** 15 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012); about 15 per cent of children aged under five are malnourished (World Bank).

**Head of population per physician:** 1.06 physicians per 1,000 people, 2004 (WHO 2006)

## Main cities

Port Louis (capital, estimated population 158,965 in 2012), Beau Bassin/Rose Hill (112,215), Vascoas-Phoenix (108,103), Curepipe (85,259), Quatre Bornes (81,979).

## Languages spoken

Creole and Bhojpuri are the predominant languages in everyday life.

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## Official language/s

English and French

## Media

Freedom of the press is guaranteed by the constitution.

### Press

Two media groups, Le Mauricien and La Sentinel are dominant in the market. The French language predominates in newspapers but most either have online editions in English or have locally produced editions in other languages. There are several dailies including *l'Express* ([www.lexpress.mu](http://www.lexpress.mu)), *Le Matinal* ([www.lematinal.com](http://www.lematinal.com)), *L'Hebdo* ([www.defimedia.info](http://www.defimedia.info)) and *Le Mauricien* ([www.lemauricien.com](http://www.lemauricien.com)), which also publishes a Sunday edition. Weekly newspapers include, in English *Mauritius Times* ([www.mauritiustimes.com](http://www.mauritiustimes.com)), *Sunday Vani* (<http://sundayvani.intnet.mu>) also in Creole and in French *Star* ([www.mauriweb.com/star](http://www.mauriweb.com/star)) and *Weekend* ([www.lemauricien.com/weekend](http://www.lemauricien.com/weekend)).

### Broadcasting

The state-owned Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) ([mbc.intnet.mu](http://mbc.intnet.mu)), which is funded by both a license fee and advertising. Locally produced and imported programmes are broadcast in French, English, Hindi, Creole, Chinese and a number of indigenous Indian languages.

**Radio:** MBC ([mbc.intnet.mu](http://mbc.intnet.mu)) operates seven stations including Radio Maurice (RM) 1 and 2, Taal FM and Kool FM. Other private, commercial radio stations include Radio One ([www.r1.mu](http://www.r1.mu)), Top FM ([www.topfmradio.com](http://www.topfmradio.com)) and Radio Plus.

**Television:** Digital TV services have become operational ahead of the total switch over from analogue to digital signals in 2011. MBC ([mbc.intnet.mu](http://mbc.intnet.mu)) operates 12 TV channels, two of which are digital and free-to-air.

### Other news agencies:

APA: [www.apanews.net](http://www.apanews.net)

Panapress: [www.panapress.com](http://www.panapress.com)

Reuters Africa: <http://africa.reuters.com>

## Economy

Mauritius' economy, one of the most vibrant in Africa, is founded on tourism, financial services, textiles and sugarcane. GDP growth was 5.5 per cent in 2008, falling to 3.0 per cent in 2009 as the global economic crisis cut visitor numbers, but recovering in 2010 with growth of 4.1 per cent, which was estimated to have remained the same in 2011.

The government, in response to globalisation, initiated a reform strategy over 2006–09 to correct fiscal weaknesses and open up the economy to facilitate business and improve the investment climate. The strategy encouraged foreign direct investment (FDI) and expertise with

FDI jumping from US\$41.8 million in 2005 to US\$106.8 million in 2006 and averaging US\$352 million per annum over 2007–10. The information and communication technology (ICT) and software development sector has expanded to over 350 ICT business entities, including French-speaking call centres. In 2012 the World Bank's ease of doing business table ranked Mauritius as 23 (of 183) countries in the world.

Building on existing freeport facilities of logistics and distribution, Mauritius is also promoting itself as a seafood hub for the region. With the end of textile quotas and preferential sugar sales these sectors have been restructured and modernised. The number of sugar plantations has been increased to 50–80 per cent of total land cultivated so that sugar can be processed into ethanol and other by-products to alleviate the islands' energy needs.

The service sector constitutes over 67 per cent of GDP, agriculture around 4 per cent and industry less than 30 per cent, of which manufacturing is around 20 per cent. Tourism is an important sector and one the government regards as a growth industry. It has increased the number of airlines allowed to arrive in high-season, while encouraging conference and retail investment.

## External trade

Mauritius was one of the founding members of the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa), and operates a free trade area (FTA) with eight out of the 20 Comesa members. Internal duties were eliminated in 2000 and common external tariffs were introduced in June 2009 for some member states. Mauritius is also a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the objectives of which include reducing trade barriers, achieving regional development and economic growth and evolving common systems and institutions.

The importance of sugar as an export commodity has been replaced by services, which generate more than 33 per cent of total foreign exchange earnings; tourism contributes the largest share and is growing.

## Imports

Principal imports are manufactured goods, manufacturing equipment, food-stuffs, petroleum products and chemicals.

**Main sources:** India (22.5 per cent of total in 2012), China (16.1 per cent), France (8.3 per cent).

## Exports

Principal exports are clothing and textiles, sugar, cut flowers and molasses.

**Main destinations:** UK (18.8 per cent of total in 2012), France (16 per cent), US (10.1 per cent).

## Agriculture

The agricultural sector contributes around 6 per cent to GDP and employs 13 per cent of the workforce.

Sugar cane cultivation dominates the sector. Approximately 70 per cent of all cultivated land is devoted to the crop, and the sugar industry as a whole employs the majority of the workforce and accounts for 3 per cent of GDP. Cultivation is undertaken both on large plantations and by smallholders.

The other major export crop is tea, grown by tenant farmers. Mauritius is the fourth-largest producer of tea per capita in the world. Around 75 per cent of tea production (green leaf) is controlled by the Tea Development Authority, whose commercial activities are privately run. Tobacco is grown for the home market. Main food crops include potatoes and other vegetables, output of which is sufficient to meet domestic demand.

Much of the island's meat requirement is imported. Around 75 per cent of food requirements are also imported.

All fish-farming production and 90 per cent of marine fishing provides about 40 per cent of the nutritional requirement of the Mauritian population. Commercial aquaculture includes cultivation of giant freshwater prawns and oysters. Mauritius is a hub for longline tuna fishing fleets that dock to offload their cargo on to freezer ships for transhipment and provides the local economy with foreign currency.

Total fish catches amount to over 10,000 tonnes per year with another 70 tonnes of other sea food. Over 70,000 cultivated oysters are produced each year.

Sports fishing has become a major influence, along with reef diving, which not only drives the local tourist industry but also employs boats and crews formerly used in fishing that were less capable of competing with modern replacement ships and mechanisation.

In a meeting of African ministers in Namibia, held on 2 July, members discussed illegal and unregulated fishing, which is estimated to cost Africa US\$1 billion per annum in lost revenue and the threat to stocks and local artisan fishing. Annual estimated production: 13,500 cubic metres (cum) roundwood, 3,000cum sawnwood, 5,000cum sawlogs and veneers, 6,000cum woodfuel, 100mt charcoal.

## Industry and manufacturing

The industrial sector contributes around 30 per cent to GDP and employs 28 per cent of the workforce.

The industrial sector is based on the Export Processing Zones (EPZ) which were opened in the 1970s to take advantage

of the preferential treatment which Mauritius receives under the Cotonou Agreement.

Production of textiles, and in particular knitwear, has become the most significant EPZ industry, and Mauritius is the world's third-largest exporter of pure new wool products. The EPZ textiles industry employs 91 per cent of the industrial workforce, accounts for 68 per cent of EPZ enterprises and 80 per cent of EPZ exports. The EPZs generate 23 per cent of GDP. In 2001, the knitwear industry moved towards high-fashion apparel as part of the effort to modernise. Diversification is being encouraged to help get over the loss of preferential treatment in textiles. Other industries include the manufacture of watches and clocks, jewellery, spectacle frames and leather goods.

Informatics Park for foreign companies specialising in information technology was opened in 1994. Mauritius has plans to develop into a 'cyber island' and will receive assistance from the IMF as part of its upgrade.

### Tourism

Mauritius is an island country that attracts wealthier tourists, which typically come from Western Europe (over 65 per cent of total), particularly France, which has a historic connection. However, since the downturn in the global economy the number of visitors from India has grown, totalling around 50,700 in 2010. The tourism ministry began a campaign in 2011 to attract visitors from less traditional markets such as Russia and China.

Travel and tourism plays a vital role in the economy of Mauritius, providing 28.5 per cent of GDP in 2011. This was a fall from the record 35.7 per cent of GDP in 2007, before the global economic crisis. Employment in the industry has, likewise, been affected by the downturn. In 2007, 33.2 per cent of all jobs (174,200) were provided by tourism, whereas in 2011 the number had fallen to 151,600 jobs (26.9 per cent of total employment). The government reported that tourist arrivals in the first quarter of 2012 had grown by 3.1 per cent over the 2011 figure, as Mauritius attracted more visitors from Asia. The forecast for the total number of visitors in 2012 was one million, the growth of which has been attributed to the new airport terminal (completed in 2011), with an increase in capacity for Air Mauritius.

Plans for a new development that includes a new cruise ship terminal close to Port Louis have been published but, in early 2012, lack detailed construction dates. There are no known oil or natural gas reserves. Consumption of oil was 23,000

barrels per day (bpd) in 2008, all of which was imported. The State Trading Corporation has a monopoly on importing strategic products, including petroleum.

Any use of natural gas is commercially insignificant.

Over 300,000 tonnes of coal is typically imported for use in power generation.

### Energy

Total installed generating capacity was 688MW in 2007, producing over 2.2 billion kilowatt hours. Around 75 per cent of power is produced by conventional thermal stations using fossil fuels, the remainder is largely produced from bagasse (waste material from the sugar cane crop). Renewable sources, including hydro and wind generation, account for a very small percentage of production. The state-owned Central Electricity Board is responsible for generation, transmission, distribution and sales of electricity.

### Financial markets

#### Stock exchange

The Stock Exchange of Mauritius

### Banking and insurance

In 1989 tax and duty incentives were introduced for foreign banks licensed to engage in offshore banking. Mauritius launched Africa's first offshore banking centre at the end of 1989 which continues to expand.

#### Central bank

Bank of Mauritius.

#### Main financial centre

Port Louis.

### Time

GMT plus four hours

### Geography

Mauritius lies in the Indian Ocean. The principal island, from which the country takes its name, lies about 800km (500 miles) east of Madagascar. The other main islands are Rodrigues, the Agalega Islands and the Cargados Carajos Shoals (St Brandon Islands).

The island of Mauritius is volcanic with a coastal plain sharply rising to a plateau of 275–580 metres (m). Piton de la Rivière Noire is the highest peak, at 828m and the Grand River South East is the longest river. Coral reefs surround the island from hundreds of metres to several kilometres off the coast.

#### Hemisphere

Southern

### Climate

Maritime – tropical in summer (November–April), and sub-tropical for the rest of the year. High humidity especially in inland areas. Summer temperatures average 25–30 degrees Celsius (C) with maximum 35 degrees C in February.

Highest rainfall occurs in summer (when cyclones are likely). From May–November, drier and warm with temperatures 19–27 degrees C. Lowest rainfall from September–November. Inland areas generally 5 degrees C cooler than coast and with higher rainfall.

### Entry requirements

#### Passports

Passports must be valid for six months from date of entry.

#### Visa

Required by all except citizens of most Commonwealth countries, plus EU, US and others. For a full list and further information see [www.gov.mu/portalsite/passportSite](http://www.gov.mu/portalsite/passportSite) and follow link from passport and visa requirements. From 2009 EU citizens may make a short-stay visit, for up to three months, without a visa. Business travellers may visit with a tourist visa, obtained in advance. An application should include details of sufficient funds for the length of trip, an employer's letter of accreditation and an invitation from a local company or organisation.

A proposed tourist univisa (a single visa to visit all 15-member states of SADC: Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Seychelles, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) is expected to be in use by 2013. Visitors should check with the appropriate consultates to confirm start of univisas and their scope before beginning a tour of southern Africa.

All travellers must have return/onward passage.

#### Currency advice/regulations

The import and export of local and foreign currency is unlimited.

Travellers cheques are accepted in banks, hotels and authorised dealers.

#### Prohibited imports

Sugar cane, invertebrates and soil micro-organisms and illegal drugs.

Firearms and ammunition require import permits and must be declared on arrival.

#### Health (for visitors)

##### Mandatory precautions

Yellow fever and cholera vaccination certificates are required if arriving from infected areas.

##### Advisable precautions

Typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A and polio vaccinations. Water precautions should be taken.

### Hotels

There is a wide choice available but relatively expensive. A value added tax of 15 per cent is added to hotel and restaurant bills. Tip is not compulsory.

## Credit cards

International credit and charge cards are acceptable in many establishments. ATMs are available.

## Public holidays (national)

### Fixed dates

1–2 Jan (New Year), 1 Feb (Abolition of Slavery Day), 12 Mar (National Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 2 Nov (Arrival of Indentured Labourers), 25 Dec (Christmas Day).

### Variable dates

Thaipoosam Cavadee (Jan/Feb), Chinese New Year (Jan/Feb), Maha Shivaratri (Feb/Mar), Ougadi (Mar/Apr), Ganesh Chaturthi (Aug/Sep), Diwali (Oct/Nov), Eid al Fitr.

There are a diversity of cultures, each with their own set of holidays. Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu festivals are timed according to local sightings of the moon and its phases.

## Working hours

### Banking

Mon–Thu: 0915–1515; Fri: 0915–1530; Sat: 0915–1115. Some banks open Mon–Fri: 0900–1700.

### Business

Mon–Fri: 0830–1615, Sat: 0900–1200.

### Government

Mon–Fri: 0900–1600; Sat 0900–1200 (minimal staff only).

### Shops

Mon–Sat 0930–1930.

## Telecommunications

### Mobile/cell phones

GSM 900 and 3G services cover almost the entire area of Mauritius and Rodrigues.

### Electricity supply

220V AC, 50 cycles.

## Weights and measures

The metric system is in general use, but certain obsolete French measures are still used in connection with the measurement of land.

## Getting there

### Air

**National airline:** Air Mauritius.

**International airport/s:** Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International (MRU) 3km from Mahébourg, 48km south-east of Port Louis; duty free, currency exchange, post office, shops, car hire, banks.

**Airport tax:** Departure tax: MR500

### Surface

**Main port/s:** Port Louis is the island's only commercial port with five deep water quays. Its free port status underpins the island's offshore banking system.

## Getting about

### National transport

**Air:** Air Mauritius operates inter-island service between Mauritius and Rodrigues and Réunion. Two Air Mauritius Bell Jet helicopters are available for transfer from airport to hotel and tours.

**Road:** There is an extensive network throughout the island. About 93 per cent of the road network is paved. Occasional congestion. A dual highway links Port Louis and Phoenix, Port Louis and Ma-pou/Pamplemousses.

**Buses:** Good bus services cover the main island.

### City transport

**Taxis:** Operate in all towns, villages and resorts. Generally unmetered so it is advisable to agree a fare before starting the journey. Tipping is not usual.

### Car hire

Widely available. International or foreign licence accepted; traffic drives on the left.

## BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

### Telephone area codes

The international dialling code (IDD) for Mauritius is +230, followed by subscriber's number.

### Useful telephone numbers

Emergency 999

Fire 995

Police 208-7018

### Chambers of Commerce

Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 3 Royal Street, Port Louis (tel: 208-3301; fax: 208-0076; e-mail: mcci@intnet.mu).

### Banking

African Asian Bank Limited, Office 5, 8th Floor, Max City Building, Corner Louis Pasteur & Remy Ollier Streets, Port Louis (tel: 240-7002, 240-7350; fax: 240-7009).

Bank of Baroda, African Asian Bank Limited, PO Box 553, Sir William Newton Street, Port Louis (tel: 208-1504; fax: 208-3892).

Banque Nationale de Paris Intercontinentale, 1 Sir William Newton Street, Port Louis (tel: 208-4147/8/9, 208-4151/2; fax: 208-8143).

Delphis Bank Limited, 16 Sir William Newton Street, Port Louis (tel: 208-5061; fax: 208-5388).

Development Bank of Mauritius Ltd, PO Box 157, Chaussée, Port Louis (tel: 208-0241; fax: 208-8498).

Indian Ocean International Bank Ltd, 34 Sir William Newton Street, Port Louis (tel: 208-0121; fax: 208-0127).

Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd, 9–15 Sir William Newton St, Port Louis (tel: 202-5000; fax: 208-7054).

South East Asian Bank Ltd, 26 Bourbon Street, PO Box 13, Port Louis (tel: 208-8826/7/8, 212-2884/6/7; fax: 208-8825).

State Bank of Mauritius Ltd, PO Box 152, State Bank Tower, 1 Queen Elizabeth II Ave, Port Louis (tel: 202-1111; fax: 202-1234).

### Central bank

Bank of Mauritius, Sir William Newton Street, Port Louis (tel: 208-4164 fax: 208-9204; e-mail: bomrd@bow.intnet.mu).

### Stock exchange

The Stock Exchange of Mauritius  
www.stockexchangeofmauritius.com

### Travel information

Air Mauritius, Rogers House, 5 President John F. Kennedy Street, PO Box 441, Port Louis (tel: 208-7700; fax: 208-8331).

### Ministry of tourism

Ministry of Tourism, Emmanuel Anquetil Bldg, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam St, Port Louis (tel: 201-2286).

### National tourist organisation offices

Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, 11th Floor, Air Mauritius Centre, President John Kennedy Street, Port-Louis (tel: 210-1545; fax: 212-5142; e-mail: mtpa@intnet.mu; Internet: www.mauritius.net).

### Ministries

Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, NPF Bldg, 9th Floor, Port Louis (tel: 212-7946; fax: 212-4427).

Ministry of Arts, Culture, Leisure and Reform Institutions, Government Centre, Port Louis (tel: 201-2032).

Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Employment, Government Centre, Port Louis (tel: 201-1035; fax: 212-9528).

Ministry of Co-operatives and Handicraft, Life Insurance Corporation of India Bldg, 3rd Floor, John Kennedy St, Port Louis (tel: 208-4812; fax: 208-9265).

Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Emmanuel Anquetil Bldg, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam St, Port Louis (tel: 201-1576; fax: 212-4124).

Ministry of Education and Science, Sun Trust Bldg, Edith Cavell St, Port Louis (tel: 212-8411; fax: 212-3783).

Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Postal Services, Government Centre, Port Louis (tel: 201-1087; fax: 208-6497).

Ministry of the Environment and Quality of Life, Barracks St, Port Louis (tel: 212-8332; fax: 212-9407).

Ministry of External Affairs, Government Centre, Port Louis (tel: 201-1416; fax: 208-8087).

Ministry of Finance, Government Centre, Port Louis (tel: 201-1145; fax: 208-8622).

Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Port Louis.

Ministry of Health, Emmanuel Anquetil Bldg, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam St, Port Louis (tel: 201-1910; fax: 208-0376).

Ministry of Housing, Lands and Town and Country Planning, Moorgate House, Port Louis (tel: 212-6022; fax: 212-7482).

Ministry of Industry and Industrial Technology, Government Centre, Port Louis (tel: 201-1221; fax: 212-8201).

Ministry of Information, Government Centre, Port Louis (tel: 201-1278; fax: 208-8243).

Ministry of Internal and External Communications, Emmanuel Anquetil Bldg, 10th Floor, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam St, Port Louis (tel: 201-1089; fax: 212-1673).

Ministry of Justice, Jules Koenig St, Port Louis (tel: 208-5321).

Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations, Ming Court, cnr Eugène Laurent and GMD Atchia Sts, Port Louis (tel: 212-3049; fax: 212-3070).

Ministry of Local Government, Government Centre, Port Louis (tel: 201-1215).

Ministry of Manpower Resources and Vocational and Technical Training, Jade House, Remy Ollier St, Port Louis (tel: 242-1462).

Ministry for Rodrigues Island, Fon Sing Bldg, Edith Cavell St, Port Louis (tel: 208-8472; fax: 212-6329).

Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity, cnr Maillard and Jules Koenig Sts, Port Louis (tel: 212-3006).

Ministry of Trade and Shipping, Government Centre, Port Louis (tel: 201-1067; fax: 212-6386).

Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare, Rainbow House, cnr Edith Cavell and Brown Sequard Sts, Port Louis (tel: 208-2061; fax: 208-8250).

Ministry of Works, Treasury Bldg, Port Louis (tel: 208-0281; fax: 212-8373).

Ministry of Youth and Sports, Emmanuel Anquetil Bldg, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam St, Port Louis (tel: 201-1242; fax: 212-6506).

Prime Minister's Office, Government Centre, Port Louis (tel: 201-1001; fax: 208-8619).

#### **Other useful addresses**

British High Commission, Commercial Section, 7th Floor, Les Cascades Building, Edith Cavell Street, Port Louis (tel: 208-9850/1; fax: 212-8470).

Export Processing Zone Development Authority, 5th Floor, Les Cascades, Edith Cavell St, Port Louis (tel: 212-9760; fax: 212-9767).

Mauritius Embassy (USA), Suite 441, 4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20008 (tel: (+1-202) 244-1491; fax: (+1-202) 966-0983; e-mail: mauritius.embassy@prodigy.net).

Mauritius Employers' Federation, Cerné House, Chausse, Port Louis (tel: 212-1599; fax: 212-6725).

Mauritius Export Processing Zone Association, 42 Sir William Newton St, Port Louis (tel: 208-5216; fax: 212-1853).

Mauritius Free Port Authority, 2nd Floor, Deramann Tower, Sir William Newton St, Port Louis (tel: 212-9627; fax: 212-9629).

Mauritius Industrial Development Authority, Level 2, BAI Bldg, 25 Pope Hennessy St, Port Louis (tel: 208-7750; fax: 208-5965; e-mail: mida@media.intnet.mu).

Mauritius Offshore Business Activities Authority, 1st Floor, Deramann Tower, 30 Sir William Newton St, Port Louis (tel: 212-9650; fax: 212-9459).

Mauritius Standards Bureau, Ministry of Industry and Industrial Technology, Réduit (tel: 454-1933; fax: 464-7765).

**Other news agencies:** APA: [www.apanews.net](http://www.apanews.net)

Panapress: [www.panapress.com](http://www.panapress.com)  
Reuters Africa: <http://africa.reuters.com>

#### **Internet sites**

Africa Business Network: [www.ifc.org/abn](http://www.ifc.org/abn)  
AllAfrica.com: <http://allafrica.com>

African Development Bank: [www.afdb.org](http://www.afdb.org)  
Business Directory: [www.mauritius.co.uk/](http://www.mauritius.co.uk/)