

# The World Factbook

## Reunion



### Introduction Reunion

**Background:** The Portuguese discovered the uninhabited island in 1513. From the 17th to the 19th centuries, French immigration, supplemented by influxes of Africans, Chinese, Malays, and Malabar Indians, gave the island its ethnic mix. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 cost the island its importance as a stopover on the East Indies trade route.

### Geography Reunion

**Location:** Southern Africa, island in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar

**Geographic coordinates:** 21 06 S, 55 36 E

**Map references:** World

**Area:** *total:* 2,517 sq km  
*water:* 10 sq km  
*land:* 2,507 sq km

**Area - comparative:** slightly smaller than Rhode Island

**Land boundaries:** 0 km

**Coastline:** 207 km

**Maritime claims:** *exclusive economic zone:* 200 NM  
*territorial sea:* 12 NM

**Climate:** tropical, but temperature moderates with elevation; cool and dry from May to November, hot and rainy from November to April

**Terrain:** mostly rugged and mountainous; fertile lowlands along coast

**Elevation extremes:** *lowest point:* Indian Ocean 0 m  
*highest point:* Piton des Neiges 3,069 m

**Natural resources:** fish, arable land, hydropower

**Land use:** *arable land:* 13.2%  
*permanent crops:* 2%  
*other:* 84.8% (1998 est.)

**Irrigated land:** 120 sq km (1998 est.)

**Natural hazards:** periodic, devastating cyclones (December to April); Piton de la Fournaise on the southeastern coast is an active volcano

**Environment - current issues:** NA

**Geography - note:** this mountainous, volcanic island has an active volcano, Piton de la Fournaise; there is a tropical cyclone center at Saint-Denis, which is the monitoring station for the whole of the Indian Ocean

## People Reunion

**Population:** 755,171 (July 2003 est.)

**Age structure:** *0-14 years:* 31.3% (male 121,119; female 115,501)  
*15-64 years:* 62.8% (male 233,607; female 240,502)  
*65 years and over:* 5.9% (male 18,036; female 26,406) (2003 est.)

**Median age:** *total:* 26.4 years  
*male:* 25.2 years  
*female:* 27.5 years (2002)

**Population growth rate:** 1.47% (2003 est.)

**Birth rate:** 20.17 births/1,000 population (2003 est.)

**Death rate:** 5.49 deaths/1,000 population (2003 est.)

**Net migration rate:** 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2003 est.)

**Sex ratio:** *at birth:* 1.05 male(s)/female  
*under 15 years:* 1.05 male(s)/female  
*15-64 years:* 0.97 male(s)/female

*65 years and over: 0.68 male(s)/female*  
*total population: 0.98 male(s)/female (2003 est.)*

**Infant mortality rate:** *total: 8.13 deaths/1,000 live births*  
*female: 7.34 deaths/1,000 live births (2003 est.)*  
*male: 8.89 deaths/1,000 live births*

**Life expectancy at birth:** *total population: 73.43 years*  
*male: 70.03 years*  
*female: 77 years (2003 est.)*

**Total fertility rate:** 2.53 children born/woman (2003 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:** NA%

**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:** NA

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:** NA

**Nationality:** *noun: Reunionese (singular and plural)*  
*adjective: Reunionese*

**Ethnic groups:** French, African, Malagasy, Chinese, Pakistani, Indian

**Religions:** Roman Catholic 86%, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist (1995)

**Languages:** French (official), Creole widely used

**Literacy:** *definition: age 15 and over can read and write*  
*total population: 88.9%*  
*male: 87%*  
*female: 90.8% (2003 est.)*

## **Government Reunion**

**Country name:** *conventional long form: Department of Reunion*  
*conventional short form: Reunion*  
*local short form: Ile de la Reunion*  
*local long form: none*  
*former: Bourbon Island*

**Dependency status:** overseas department of France

**Government type:** NA

**Capital:** Saint-Denis

**Administrative divisions:** none (overseas department of France); there are no first-order administrative divisions as defined by the US Government, but there are 4 arrondissements, 24 communes, and 47 cantons

**Independence:** none (overseas department of France)

**National holiday:** Bastille Day, 14 July (1789)

**Constitution:** 28 September 1958 (French Constitution)

**Legal system:** French law

**Suffrage:** 18 years of age; universal

**Executive branch:** *chief of state:* President Jacques CHIRAC of France (since 17 May 1995), represented by Prefect Gonthier FRIEDERICI (since NA)  
*elections:* French president elected by popular vote for a five-year term; prefect appointed by the French president on the advice of the French Ministry of the Interior; the presidents of the General and Regional Councils are elected by the members of those councils  
*head of government:* President of the General Council Jean-Luc POUYROUX (since NA March 1998) and President of the Regional Council Paul VERGES (since NA March 1993)  
*cabinet:* NA

**Legislative branch:** unicameral General Council (49 seats; members are elected by direct, popular vote to serve six-year terms) and a unicameral Regional Council (45 seats; members are elected by direct, popular vote to serve six-year terms)  
*elections:* General Council - last held 15 and 22 March 1998 (next to be held NA 2004); Regional Council - last held 15 March 1998 (next to be held NA 2004)  
*election results:* General Council - percent of vote by party - NA%; seats by party - various right-wing candidates 13, PCR 10, PS 10, UDF 8, RPR 6, other left-wing candidates 2; Regional Council - percent of vote by party - NA%; seats by party - PCR 19, UDF 9, RPR 8, various right-wing candidates 4, various left-wing candidates 5  
*note:* Reunion elects three representatives to the French Senate; elections last held NA 2001 (next to be held NA 2006); results - percent of vote by party - NA%; seats by party - NA; Reunion also elects five deputies to the French National Assembly; elections last held 9 June-16 June 2002 (next to be held NA 2007); results - percent of vote by party - NA%; seats by party - UMP-RPR 1, UMP 1, PCR 1

**Judicial branch:** Court of Appeals or Cour d'Appel

**Political parties and leaders:** Communist Party of Reunion or PCR [Paul VERGES]; Rally for the Republic or RPR [Andre Maurice PIHOUEE]; Socialist Party or PS [Jean-Claude FRUTEAU]; Union for French Democracy or UDF [Gilbert GERARD]

**Political pressure groups and leaders:** NA

**International** FZ, InOC, WFTU

**organization  
participation:**

**Diplomatic  
representation  
in the US:** none (overseas department of France)

**Diplomatic  
representation  
from the US:** none (overseas department of France)

**Flag  
description:** the flag of France is used

**Economy            Reunion**

**Economy -  
overview:** The economy has traditionally been based on agriculture, but services now dominate. Sugarcane has been the primary crop for more than a century, and in some years it accounts for 85% of exports. The government has been pushing the development of a tourist industry to relieve high unemployment, which amounts to one-third of the labor force. The gap in Reunion between the well-off and the poor is extraordinary and accounts for the persistent social tensions. The white and Indian communities are substantially better off than other segments of the population, often approaching European standards, whereas minority groups suffer the poverty and unemployment typical of the poorer nations of the African continent. The outbreak of severe rioting in February 1991 illustrates the seriousness of socioeconomic tensions. The economic well-being of Reunion depends heavily on continued financial assistance from France.

**GDP:** purchasing power parity - \$4.174 billion (1999 est.)

**GDP - real  
growth rate:** 2.5% (2002 est.)

**GDP - per  
capita:** purchasing power parity - \$5,600 (2002 est.)

**GDP -  
composition by  
sector:** *agriculture: 8%*  
*industry: 19%*  
*services: 73% (2000 est.)*

**Population  
below poverty  
line:** NA%

**Household  
income or  
consumption by  
percentage  
share:** *lowest 10%: NA%*  
*highest 10%: NA%*

**Inflation rate  
(consumer  
prices):** NA%

<b>Labor force:</b>	309,900 (2000)
<b>Labor force - by occupation:</b>	agriculture 13%, industry 12%, services 75% (2000)
<b>Unemployment rate:</b>	36% (1999 est.)
<b>Budget:</b>	<i>revenues:</i> \$1.26 billion <i>expenditures:</i> \$2.62 billion, including capital expenditures of \$NA (1998)
<b>Industries:</b>	sugar, rum, cigarettes, handicraft items, flower oil extraction
<b>Industrial production growth rate:</b>	NA%
<b>Electricity - production:</b>	1.08 billion kWh (2001)
<b>Electricity - production by source:</b>	<i>fossil fuel:</i> 55.5% <i>hydro:</i> 44.5% <i>other:</i> 0% (2001) <i>nuclear:</i> 0%
<b>Electricity - consumption:</b>	1.005 billion kWh (2001)
<b>Electricity - exports:</b>	0 kWh (2001)
<b>Electricity - imports:</b>	0 kWh (2001)
<b>Oil - production:</b>	0 bbl/day (2001 est.)
<b>Oil - consumption:</b>	18,000 bbl/day (2001 est.)
<b>Oil - exports:</b>	NA (2001)
<b>Oil - imports:</b>	NA (2001)
<b>Agriculture - products:</b>	sugarcane, vanilla, tobacco, tropical fruits, vegetables, corn
<b>Exports:</b>	\$214 million f.o.b. (1997)
<b>Exports - commodities:</b>	sugar 63%, rum and molasses 4%, perfume essences 2%, lobster 3%, (1993)
<b>Exports - partners:</b>	France 74%, Japan 6%, Comoros 4% (2000)
<b>Imports:</b>	\$2.5 billion c.i.f. (1997)
<b>Imports - commodities:</b>	manufactured goods, food, beverages, tobacco, machinery and transportation equipment, raw materials, and petroleum products

**Imports - partners:** France 64%, Bahrain 3%, Germany 3%, Italy 3% (2000)

**Debt - external:** \$NA

**Economic aid - recipient:** \$NA; note - substantial annual subsidies from France

**Currency:** euro (EUR)

**Currency code:** EUR

**Exchange rates:** euros per US dollar - 1.06 1.0626 (2002), 1.1175 (2001), 1.0854 (2000), 0.9386 (1999); French francs per US dollar - 5.8995 (1998)

**Fiscal year:** calendar year

### Communications Reunion

**Telephones - main lines in use:** 268,500 (1999)

**Telephones - mobile cellular:** 197,000 (September 2000)

**Telephone system:** *general assessment:* adequate system; principal center is Saint-Denis  
*domestic:* modern open-wire and microwave radio relay network  
*international:* radiotelephone communication to Comoros, France, Madagascar; new microwave route to Mauritius; satellite earth station - 1 Intelsat (Indian Ocean)

**Radio broadcast stations:** AM 2, FM 55, shortwave 0 (2001)

**Radios:** 173,000 (1997)

**Television broadcast stations:** 35 (plus 18 low-power repeaters) (2001)

**Televisions:** 127,000 (1997)

**Internet country code:** .re

**Internet Service Providers (ISPs):** 1 (2000)

**Internet users:** 10,000 (2000)

### Transportation Reunion

**Railways:** 0 km

**Highways:** *total:* 2,724 km  
*paved:* 1,300 km (including 73 km of four-lane road)

*unpaved*: 1,424 km (1994)

**Waterways:** none

**Ports and harbors:** Le Port, Pointe des Galets

**Airports:** 2 (2002)

**Airports - with paved runways:** *total*: 2  
*2,438 to 3,047 m*: 1  
*914 to 1,523 m*: 1 (2002)

## **Military Reunion**

**Military branches:** no regular indigenous military forces; French forces (including Army, Navy, Air Force, and Gendarmerie)

**Military manpower - military age:** 18 years of age (2003 est.)

**Military manpower - availability:** *males age 15-49*: 198,341 (2003 est.)

**Military manpower - fit for military service:** *males age 15-49*: 101,116 (2003 est.)

**Military manpower - reaching military age annually:** *males*: 6,795 (2003 est.)

**Military - note:** defense is the responsibility of France

## **Transnational Issues Reunion**

**Disputes - international:** none

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