

Groupe de Démographie Africaine

IDP_INED_INSEE_MINCOOP_ORSTOM

**POPULATION SIZE
IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES :
AN EVALUATION**

Volume I

Paris
1986

Le groupe de Démographie africaine IDP - INED - INSEE - MINCOOP-ORSTOM

est un organisme de liaison non officiel entre les statisticiens, démographes et autres techniciens qui s'intéressent aux questions de population dans les pays d'Afrique.

Il effectue des travaux de synthèse ou méthodologiques à partir des données recueillies ou des techniques mises en oeuvre dans ces pays ; il rend compte des travaux qui y sont réalisés dans le domaine de la démographie et d'une manière générale s'efforce d'informer les personnes intéressées par toute question ayant trait à la démographie africaine.

PUBLICATIONS DU GROUPE

- « Démographie africaine », bulletin de liaison :
 - n° 0 2^{ème} trimestre 1971 à n° 28 septembre-décembre 1978 (poursuite de cette publication à Yaoundé - IFORD)
 - numéros spéciaux 1 à 13.
- « Études et documents », prolongement des numéros spéciaux du bulletin de liaison.
- « Afrique Noire, Madagascar, Comores - Démographie comparée » tomes I et II - INSEE, INED, DGRST, Paris 1967.
- « Les enquêtes démographiques à passages répétés » Application à l'Afrique d'expression française et à Madagascar - Méthodologie - ORSTOM, INSEE, INED, Paris 1971.
- « Sources et analyse des données démographiques » - Application à l'Afrique d'expression française et à Madagascar - INED, INSEE, MINCOOP, ORSTOM, - Paris 1973-1977.
 - 1^{ère} partie : Sources des données
 - 2^{ème} partie : Ajustement de données imparfaites
 - 3^{ème} partie : Analyse des données (tomes I et II).
- « Le traitement informatique des enquêtes statistiques » - Groupe de démographie africaine, INSEE - Paris 1978.
- « Le recensement des nomades mauritaniens » - Yves PACCOU - Paris, 1979.
- « Recensements africains - 1^{re} partie : Monographies méthodologiques » - Paris, novembre 1980 et février 1981.
- « Recensements africains - 2^e partie : Synthèse méthodologique » - Paris, octobre 1981.
- « Les structures par sexe et âge en Afrique » - Gilles ROGER, Dominique WALTISPERGER et Christine CORBILLE-GUITTON - Paris, 1981.
- « L'évaluation des effectifs de la population des pays africains », tome I, Paris, janvier 1982.
- « L'évaluation des effectifs de la population des pays africains », tome II, Paris, octobre 1984.
- "Contribution à l'analyse des données démographiques imparfaites des pays africains" - Rémy CLAIRIN - Paris, octobre 1985

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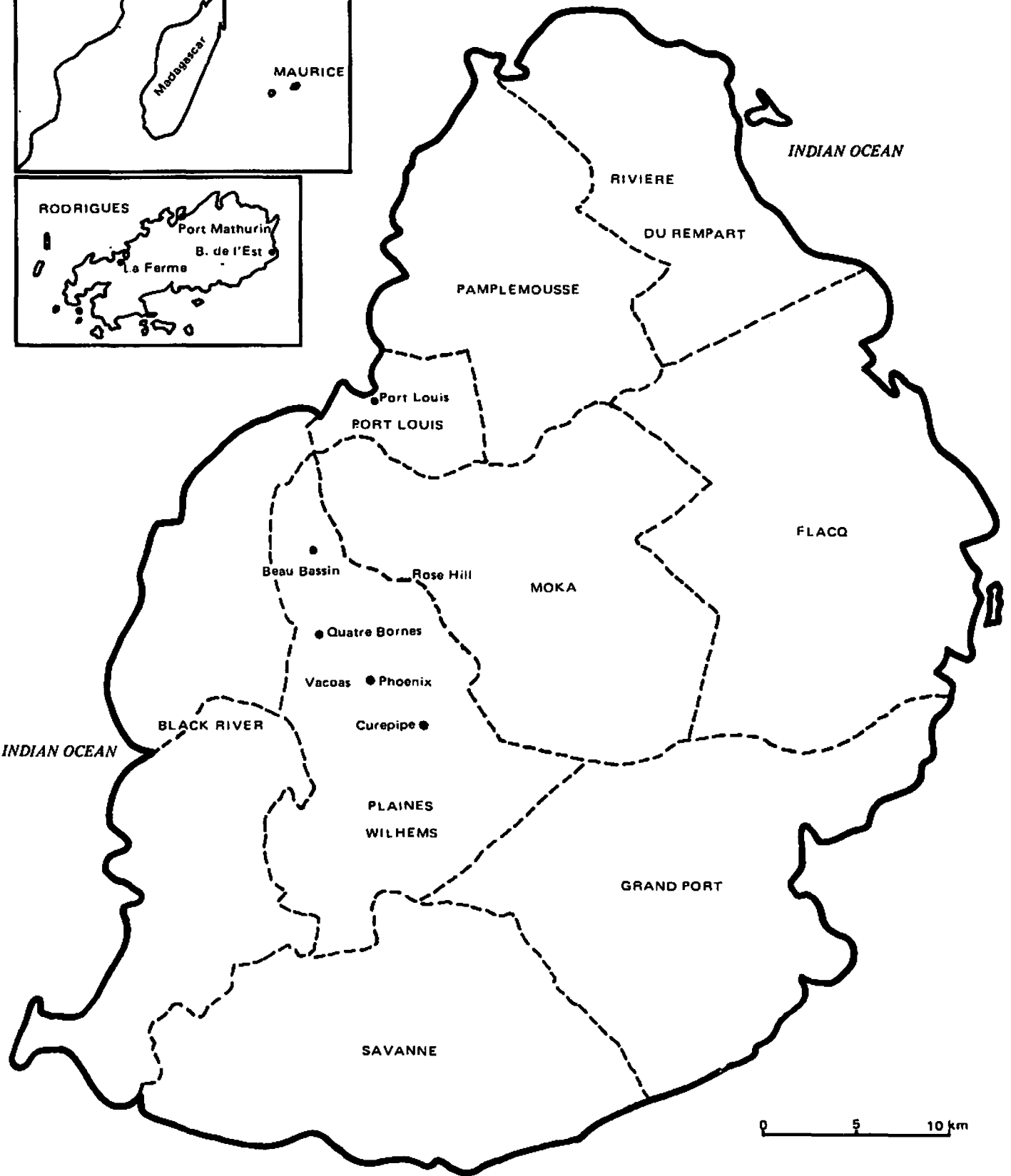
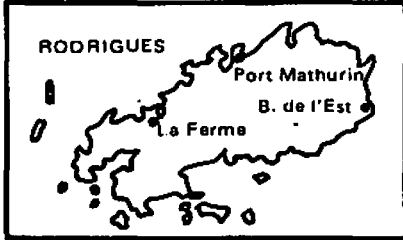
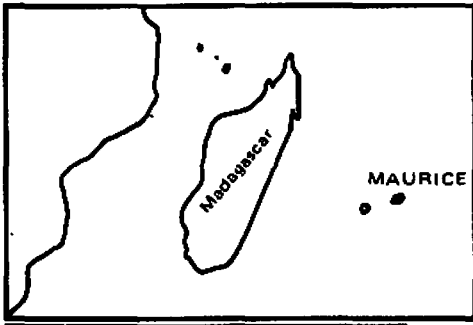
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MAURITIUS

Eric J.C. Vilquin

DECEMBER 1979

MAURITIUS



M A U R I T I U S

I. SOURCES OF DATA1) Early estimates

The history of demographic data in Mauritius is almost as old as human presence on the island.

As it had no native population, the country seems to have been only sporadically occupied before the 18th century. It was, in fact, uninhabited when it became French in 1715 and remained so until 1721, when colonisation really started. The first exhaustive enumeration took place less than fifteen years later in 1735: 838 inhabitants, comprising 190 European settlers and 648 African and Malagasy slaves (1). It is probable that from that time, enumerations became a relatively frequent administrative exercise. The results of enumerations made in 1767, 1776 and 1786 have been preserved. From 1786 onwards, the tradition was considerably reinforced since enumerations became yearly (1 January). It was to remain so until 1831; in the meantime, Mauritius became an English colony in 1810.

Charles Roquebain presents the results of certain enumerations, but notes that "precision does not signify accuracy":

- 1797: 59 020 inhabitants comprising 6 237 Europeans, 3 703 free Negroes and 49 080 slaves
- 1830: 91 826 inhabitants comprising 8 135 Europeans, 18 019 free Negroes and 64 919 slaves (753 are unaccounted for).

Until 1828, enumerations were explicitly linked with the levying of taxes. Obviously as a result, there must be a measure of doubt as to the sincerity of responses and therefore to the accuracy of results, especially as the number of slaves was used as a basis for the allocation of certain taxes.

After a break of fifteen years, statistical censuses proper began in 1846.

 (1) According to Charles Roquebain, who unfortunately does not mention the origin of his figure, the island had 213 inhabitants in 1725.

2) Statistical censuses

The Central Statistical Bureau of Mauritius includes censuses from that of 1 August 1846 onwards; the most recent (30 June 1972) is the fourteenth. There was one very ten years between 1851 and 1931. The Second World War interrupted this remarkable regularity (1944) but, since 1952, censuses have been taking place again every ten years and are carried out in the middle of the calendar year (see Table 61).

Table 61

MAURITIUS - POPULATION EXCLUDING DEPENDENCIES (1) ACCORDING TO CENSUSES SINCE 1846

Date of census	Population	Date of census	Population
1.8.1846	158 462	31.3.1911	368 791
20.11.1851	180 823	21.5.1921	376 485
8.4.1861	310 050	26.4.1931	393 238
11.4.1871	316 042	11.6.1944	419 185
4.4.1881	359 874	29.6.1952	501 415
6.3.1891	370 588	30.6.1962	681 619
1.4.1901	371 023	30.6.1972	826 199

(1) see paragraph on geographic coverage.

3) Other sources

Civil registration is also a long-established tradition in Mauritius and is used very frequently along with migratory statistics as a basis on which intercensal estimates of population are made.

As for demographic surveys, they all relate to family planning exercises. Their sample is always therefore carefully selected and they are never intended even as a secondary objective for population evaluation purposes.

Besides, as will be seen later, standard methods of measuring population have for many years been quite satisfactory and the authorities in Mauritius have felt no need to estimate population by indirect and less accurate methods.

II. CRITICAL STUDY OF SOURCES

All commentators are agreed on the excellent quality of demographic statistical data in Mauritius, which has in this respect no reason to envy the most advanced countries. Among the numerous tables in the demographic yearbooks of the United Nations, Mauritius is the only African country for which statistics are reckoned to be trustworthy.

1) Reference population

Recent censuses in Mauritius take into account all persons present on national territory on the date of the census, whether they are resident or not. It represents therefore the "de facto" population.

Very slight differences can be observed between various statements of the results of the censuses. They are due to the fact that certain sections of the population enumerated separately may or may not have been included in the total figures mentioned. They refer to the European military personnel stationed on the territory and the crews and passengers of ships moored in Port-Louis (a few hundred people in total); only the latter are excluded from the official 1972 census figure.

No mention is made of nationals living abroad and though the annual statistics of people entering or leaving the country by air or sea distinguish between migrants and tourists, they do not permit an evaluation of this number.

2) Geographical coverage

Mauritius is an archipelago which comprises the islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues and several scantily populated islets. The variation in geographical coverage from one census to another is due mainly to Mauritius alienating its sovereignty over one or more small islands, as was the case for example in 1965 when the Chagos islands ceased to belong to Mauritius.

The geographical coverage of censuses and of civil registration has for many years been complete, but civil registration in the "dependencies" has only recently been regularly carried out.

When various publications (not originating from the Central Statistical Bureau) quote official population figures, they often fail to specify whether they refer to the State of Mauritius or only to the island of Mauritius (without its "dependencies"). This is a frequent source of confusion which sometimes creates artificial inconsistencies.

3) Quality

There is abundant evidence of the excellent quality of censuses and civil registration in Mauritius. The coverage rates are very close to 100% (except for marriage registrations which for reasons specific to Mauritian society are very deficient).

Migration is subject to authorisation, which permits a measure of control, but it is likely that many migratory movements escape registration. This is certainly the source of the most important factor of uncertainty in the inter-censal estimates of population.

It must be noted that the quality of the 1952 census has been questioned by H.C. Brookfield who identified in it an under-enumeration of the number of children under seven, in the order of 6.7%, but his method of correction of the figures concerned is open to question and his revised figures never seem to have been used subsequently. C. Xenos also noted a measure of under-enumeration (0.6%) in the 1962 census.

III. CONCLUSIONS

For the 1 January and the 30 June of each year, the Central Statistical Bureau makes an estimate of the population of Mauritius based on the last census and data of civil registrations and migrations. Furthermore, it adjusts all estimates of population made during the decade preceding the census on the basis of the final results as soon as they become available. Estimates as at 30 June for the last twenty-two years are shown in Table 62 below which also lists the figures of the eight censuses carried out in the 20th century.

For 1 January 1975, the Central Statistical Bureau provided the following estimates:

- Mauritius	855 821
- Rodrigues	26 123
- Other dependencies	350

Total	882 294

In advance of the census of 1982 which will certainly entail modifications a posteriori, this estimate is without any doubt the best available at the moment.

Table 62

MAURITIUS - EVOLUTION OF THE POPULATION SINCE 1900, ACCORDING TO
CENSUSES AND INTER-CENSAL ESTIMATES BY THE
CENTRAL STATISTICAL BUREAU

Date	Mauritius	Rodrigues	Other dependencies	Total	Notes
1 April 1901	371 023	3 688		374 711	
31 March 1911	368 791	6 690		375 481	
21 May 1921	376 485	8 394		384 879	
26 April 1931	393 238	9 659		402 897	(a)
11 June 1944	419 185	11 885	1 578	432 648	
29 June 1952	501 415	13 333	1 752	516 500	(b)
30 June 1956	574 938				(c)
30 June 1957	593 070				(c)
30 June 1958	609 518				(c)
30 June 1959	627 249				(c)
30 June 1960	644 743				(c)
30 June 1961	662 368				(c)
30 June 1962	681 619	18 335	1 062	701 016	
30 June 1963	695 641	18 529			(c)
30 June 1964	716 298	18 974			(c)
30 June 1965	735 245	19 438			(c)
30 June 1966	753 276	20 084			(c)
30 June 1967	767 782	20 762			(c)
30 June 1968	781 615	21 832			(c)
30 June 1969	792 893	22 434			(c)
30 June 1970	805 489	23 433			(c)
30 June 1971	816 561	24 041			(c)
30 June 1972	826 199	24 769	366	851 334	(d)
30 June 1973	834 781	25 367	350	860 498	(c)
30 June 1974	845 755	25 709	350	871 814	(c)
30 June 1975	856 516	26 343	350	883 209	(c)
30 June 1976	867 885	26 539	350	894 774	(c)
30 June 1977	881 761	27 058	350	909 169	(c)

- (a) Doubtful results, census having taken place a few weeks after a hurricane.
- (b) Including European military personnel, but not including the crew and passengers of ships moored in Port-Louis.
- (c) Inter-censal estimate as at 30 June.
- (d) Not including the Chagos archipelago which has not been a dependency of Mauritius since 1965.

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Reference may also be made to the following:

- the official census publications (Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Central Statistical Office, Rose Hill)
- the official statistics of population movements: Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Central Statistical Office, Yearbook of Statistics (annual), then bi-annual Digest of Statistics (twice yearly since 1966)

* Documentation compiled by D TABUTIN