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> " Being a hardware or software engineer in Mauritius is tantamount to being a computer technician."
>
> **—Mauritian IT manager**

> " The younger generation, aged 12 to 20, is making the most use of computers and [the] Internet. This bodes well for the future."
>
> **—Mauritian IT executive**

The growth and stability of the Mauritian economy has been a sustained success story in Africa over the past two decades. Having progressed so far in such a short period of time, the newly elected government pledged in September 2000 to diversify the economy further, moving away from cyclical, lower-wage jobs in agriculture and manufacturing to service industries with better international potential. A large part of this effort has been tied to information and communication technologies. Mauritius is ranked fifty-first overall in Readiness for the Networked World.

The new government has rejuvenated the Ministry of IT and Telecommunications, with a directive to help move Mauritius into the Networked World (Ranking in ICT as Government Priority: 11) and make the nation into a regional technology and commerce hub, a "Singapore of Africa."[1]

As of May 2001, Mauritius was one of only two countries in Africa that maintained a legal monopoly telecommunications market (Ranking in Effect of Telecommunications Competition: 75). The ISP sector has been liberalized by law, but has yet to see competition in practice. Several potential ISPs have received licenses to operate, and their operation would diversify and improve the quality of offerings to consumers and businesses. However, they are being hamstrung instead by high prices for leased lines and service from Mauritius Telecom, the incumbent and owner of the fixed-line infrastructure. An independent regulator exists as a department of the Ministry for IT and Telecommunications, and has imposed price controls on the leased-line infrastructure, hoping to enable ISPs to begin service soon (Ranking in Effect of ISP Competition: 74).

Building on the success of the Export Processing Zones for manufactured goods, an ICT-Free Zone (ITFZ) is being established to attract foreign multinationals in technology and banking. The ITFZ features first-class facilities, with high-speed network connectivity and direct international backbone connections as well as tax and legal incentives for business.

Training programs, both at the university level and in continuing education for adults, have been identified as necessary to enable Mauritians to compete for the new opportunities that will be attracted to the island (Ranking in Quality of IT Education: 64). Current school systems lack an ICT infrastructure and face challenges in retaining students through high school. To this end, the government has established a fund of US$54 million aimed at ICT skills development, from primary through continuing adult education.[2] Additional funds and cooperation are expected from the private sector.

As Mauritius develops its workforce to fill the growing need for ICT workers, the government is trying to accommodate the needs of companies that need staff immediately. A Green Visa concept for ICT professionals has been somewhat successful in helping companies attract ICT workers from other countries (Ranking in IT Brain Drain: 47).

There are signs that the government's efforts may be rewarded (Ranking in Effectiveness of Government ICT Programs: 20). IBM has established a regional headquarters in Port Louis, citing the quality of the Mauritian workforce and its bilingual ability as reasons for other companies to follow suit.[3] By autumn of 2001, it was estimated that more than 250 ICT-related companies had emerged in this small, island nation.[4] Many in the Mauritian ICT industry hope that such signs of activity will induce further foreign direct investment, since, in spite of its economic success, Mauritius has had difficulties attracting high levels of foreign direct investment (Ranking in Business and Economic Environment micro-index: 43).

Key Facts

Population	1,185,900
Rural population (% of total population) 1999	58.86 %
GDP per capita (PPP)	US$9,512
Global Competitiveness Index Ranking, 2001–2002	32
UNDP Human Development Index Ranking, 2001 (adjusted to GITR sample)	46
Main telephone lines per 100 inhabitants	23.68
Telephone faults per 100 main telephone lines	45.77
Internet hosts per 10,000 inhabitants	27.62
Personal computers per 100 inhabitants	9.28
Piracy rate	66.00 %
Percent of PCs connected to Internet	0.75 %
Internet users per host	26.56
Internet users per 100 inhabitants	7.34
Cell phone subscribers per 100 inhabitants	10.49
Average monthly cost for 20 hours of Internet access	US$15.45

RANK

Networked Readiness Index	**51**
Network Use component index	**51**
Enabling Factors component index	**54**
■ **Network Access**	**54**
Information Infrastructure	58
Hardware, Software, and Support	50
■ **Network Policy**	**53**
Business and Economic Environment	43
ICT Policy	63
■ **Networked Society**	**47**
Networked Learning	51
ICT Opportunities	44
Social Capital	45
■ **Networked Economy**	**55**
e-Commerce	71
e-Government	61
General Infrastructure	34