

MONTSERRAT GENERAL ELECTION

OCTOBER 2024

CPA BIMR ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION FINAL REPORT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The British Islands and Mediterranean Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conducted an election observation mission for the Montserrat general elections in October 2024.
- Montserrat's legal framework provides an adequate basis for democratic elections, yet several deficiencies should be addressed to align it fully with international standards.
- A bloc voting system is used, in which voters select up to nine candidates for a single multi-member, island-wide constituency. This system is well understood; however, some advocate for a return to the pre-2001 electoral system with multiple constituencies.
- The current electoral commission prepared for these general elections in a relatively short time frame, adapting to new legal changes and dealing with an urgent reprinting of ballot papers.
- The five-yearly door-to-door voter enumeration exercise in 2023 resulted in 3,464 registered voters, a decline of 10% from the 2019 general elections.
- Candidate eligibility criteria may not be fully in line with international principles, and there is no effective mechanism to verify that all candidates meet the requirements to stand for office.
- Voters were offered a diverse pool of choices, with 34 candidates vying for office, including 15 women candidates and eight incumbents seeking re-election. Three political parties and seven independent candidates competed.
- The election campaign was lively, competitive, and peaceful, although no public debates between political parties or candidates were broadcast. The campaign is unregulated with no clear campaign start date and no code of conduct for candidates.
- There are no laws regarding campaign finance, and there is no mention of political parties in Montserrat's electoral laws. Political parties and candidates could potentially accept unlimited and undisclosed donations, including foreign contributions.
- ZJB Radio Montserrat is the primary media outlet, and it reports directly to the cabinet, which limits its independence from political influence. With traditional print media in decline, citizens increasingly turned to social media for election information.
- The 2024 general elections showed an improvement in some aspects of inclusivity and diversity, with a record number of women candidates and a mobile polling station to engage vulnerable groups in society. However, there was a noticeable low engagement of young people, and misogynistic remarks towards women candidates went unaddressed.
- Election day was calm, and well-trained staff ensured polling went smoothly. Voter education was effective, keeping invalid ballots low, and party agents ensured there was oversight of polling. The closing of polls and the handover process to assistant returning officers would have benefitted from additional training.

- The counting process was conducted with a high level of professionalism and transparency, providing the public with live, real-time updates both online and at the counting centre.
- Voter turnout increased by 5% when compared to 2019, up to 67.5%. The new premier and leader of the opposition were sworn in the day following election day.
- The complaints and appeals process complies with international principles of judicial review and second instance, and confidence in the electoral dispute resolution mechanisms does not seem to be an issue of concern. During the 2024 electoral process, there were two cases brought before the court.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **INTERNATIONAL TREATIES:** Extend the UNCAC, CEDAW, and CRPD international treaties to Montserrat. Amend domestic law to ensure compliance with these instruments, as necessary, prior to extension. This would align the territory's legal obligations more closely with global standards for democratic elections, anti-corruption measures, gender equality, and the rights of persons with disabilities in political participation.
2. **ELECTORAL LEGISLATION:** Conduct a comprehensive review and reform of Montserrat's electoral legislation. This should take place well in advance of the next general elections to allow for public consultation, and an updated legal text should be made available to all stakeholders.
3. **ELECTORAL PROCEDURES:** Review and update electoral procedures, including a) adding guidelines that explain how a recount or a further run-off election should be carried out; b) extending the minimum time period between nomination day and election day; c) making provision for a greater portion of polling station tasks to be delivered not only by the presiding officer but also by the poll clerks.
4. **CLARIFY TERMINOLOGY:** Clarify in law the terms domiciled and resident, to ensure a common understanding of voter eligibility and a consistent application of the right to vote.
5. **VOTING FOR PRISONERS:** Remove the blanket ban on voting for prisoners serving sentences over 12 months. Instead, the suspension of voting rights should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Voting rights suspension could be limited to specific serious offences that undermine democratic processes.
6. **VOTER REGISTRATION:** Review the voter registration procedures and consider what additional measures can be put in place to verify the accuracy of the register. It may be valuable to learn how other small jurisdictions carry out this process. This review should include the introduction of a procedure to officially inform persons if they have been removed from the voter register.
7. **CANDIDATE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:** Amend the constitution to align candidate eligibility criteria with international standards. This should include removing the distinction between natural-born and naturalised citizens, reviewing and clarifying the requirements on dual citizenship to ensure it does not impose unreasonable restrictions on participation, and considering a more inclusive approach towards civil servants running for office.
8. **VERIFYING CANDIDATE ELIGIBILITY:** Amend legislation and guidance to create clear mechanisms for checking if candidates are eligible to stand. There should be a formal way to challenge nominations, a review process to confirm the candidates can stand, the roles of those involved should be clearly defined, and candidates could be required to submit standard forms proving their eligibility.
9. **CAMPAIGN FINANCE:** Introduce legislation to require political parties and candidates to timely disclose donations and expenditures, including all foreign donations, to restrict anonymous contributions, and to entrust an independent body to oversee compliance.

10. **MEDIA:** Consult with media stakeholders on what steps can be taken to increase the independence of media outlets and the number and diversity of these outlets. Review and update the media guidelines for general elections in consultation with the media and publish these updated guidelines in good time ahead of the next general elections.
11. **WOMEN CANDIDATES:** Consider measures that would support a greater number of women to stand as candidates, including taking steps to challenge misogynistic comments against women in politics.
12. **MOBILE POLLING STATIONS:** Investigate the further use of mobile polling stations to increase the inclusion of other groups in Montserratian society, such as visiting individuals who have difficulty leaving their homes. Consult with disability rights organisations to identify further steps that can be taken.
13. **YOUNG PEOPLE:** Engage and politically educate younger and first-time voters. Implement voter registration campaigns specifically targeted at young people.
14. **CLOSING POLLING STATIONS:** Increase training for presiding officers and assistant returning officers in the procedures for closing polling stations, reconciling ballot papers, and handing over sensitive materials to ensure an orderly process.
15. **MINIMUM ELECTION THRESHOLD:** Amend, or consider removing, Article 53 of the Elections Act to ensure clarity of the minimum election threshold for a candidate to be elected, enhancing the integrity of the election results.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MISSION

The British Islands and Mediterranean Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA BIMR) conducted an election observation mission for the Montserrat general elections on 24 October 2024. This mission was present in Montserrat from 16 October to 26 October 2024.



The election observation mission launching the Preliminary Statement after election day.

The mission was composed of seven observers, including three Commonwealth parliamentarians, as follows:

- Head of Mission: Hon. Shellya Rogers-Webster MHA (Anguilla)
- Deputy Head of Mission: Jamie Greene MSP (Scotland)
- Short-Term Observer: Steve Aiken MLA (Northern Ireland)
- Election Analyst: Merce Castells (Spain)
- Election Analyst: Armin Rabitsch (Austria)
- Election Coordinator: Martin Vickery (UK)
- Election Administrator: Nicky Davis (UK)

CPA BIMR was invited to facilitate an election observation mission by the Governor, in her capacity as the Head of State's representative on Montserrat, and with the support of the government and opposition. The mission conducted an impartial and independent assessment of the Montserrat general elections against international legal standards, commitments, and obligations, as well as domestic laws. All three political parties and several independent candidates engaged with the mission.

This is the third time CPA BIMR has observed general elections in Montserrat, with previous missions in 2014 and 2019. Each mission provided recommendations in their final reports. CPA BIMR encourages stakeholders to consider any past recommendations that have not been implemented to date. The 2019 mission made 17 recommendations. Five of these recommendations had been accepted and implemented to some extent by election day in 2024.¹

¹ These five recommendations from the 2019 [final report](#) were implemented for the 2024 general elections: Recommendation 3: Qualifying prisoners were allowed to exercise their right to vote in the mobile polling station. Recommendation 6: The functions of the supervisor of elections and the chairperson of the electoral commission had been separated. Recommendation 7: There was evidence of voter education, as indicated by the low number of invalid votes. Recommendation 13: This was partially implemented. Media guidance was created, but there was no consultation with the media, and it was published only one week before election day. Recommendation 14: A mobile polling station was introduced.

The mission arrived in Montserrat eight days before election day and met a wide range of key stakeholders in Montserrat. These included candidates, the electoral commission, members of the judiciary, the attorney general, the registering officer, a wide range of civil society groups, young people in a college, an advocacy group for persons with disabilities, election officials, and the media. The mission observed several rallies and motorcades from the three political parties in various locations in Montserrat.

On election day, the mission visited the 12 polling stations across the six divisions of the island, plus it observed the mobile polling station in all three of its locations. The mission was present at the count from the arrival of the ballot boxes to the publishing of the election results.

The mission is independent in its composition, findings, and conclusions, adhering to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers signed at the United Nations in 2005.



St Peter's, Montserrat (left), and a view over northern Montserrat taken from Lookout (right).

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The 2024 general elections in Montserrat marked a significant moment in the political landscape of this British Overseas Territory in the eastern Caribbean. Situated 27 miles off the coast of Antigua, Montserrat operates under a system of internal self-governance, with executive power vested in the Crown through an appointed governor. The governor retains key responsibilities in areas such as security, external affairs, defence, public service, and offshore finance.

The governor chairs the cabinet, which has general control of the direction of government. The cabinet includes the premier and three ministers, all of whom are elected members of the Legislative Assembly of Montserrat. The legislative assembly consists of nine elected representatives from a single island-wide constituency. Elections are held every five years. The premier is appointed by the governor from among the elected members and must have the support of a majority in the assembly. The attorney general and the financial secretary also participate in the legislative assembly and in the cabinet as ex officio members.

Montserrat's recent history has been profoundly shaped by natural disasters, particularly the Soufrière Hills volcanic eruptions from 1995 to 2010 and several hurricanes. The Soufrière Hills volcano became active in July 1995 after being dormant for centuries. About two-thirds of the island's population was forced to evacuate. The eruptions destroyed Plymouth, the capital city, and rendered the southern part of the island uninhabitable. This area is now designated as an

Exclusion Zone with restricted access. The main airport and port in Montserrat were also destroyed. These events have had a lasting impact on the island's demographics and economy, reducing the habitable area to roughly one-third of the island and causing a significant population decline, from over 11,300 residents prior to the eruptions to around 4,000, according to the last census of 2023.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of ferry services to the island, further reducing the limited access there was to Montserrat and compounding its isolation. The airport has a runway that is only big enough to receive very small aircraft. Key challenges the island continues to face include very limited access to the island by sea or air, limited economic development, and depopulation, especially of qualified individuals. Montserrat's dependence on UK budgetary aid is significant in shaping the political context. Recent financial commitments from the UK government, including increased budget support and funding for essential infrastructure projects, underscore the ongoing economic challenges and the territory's reliance on external support for development and essential services.

Montserrat has strong regional links within and around the Caribbean. It is a full member of CARICOM and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. Montserrat is an associate member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and it also has strong connections in the Americas and the Commonwealth.

Montserrat's political landscape features several parties that do not adhere strictly to defined ideologies. The absence of a formal registry of political parties or regulations governing their establishment and functioning adds to the fluidity of the political landscape and party affiliations. Montserrat's political system reflects the island's small size and close-knit community, prioritising adaptability and personal connections over party structures and ideologies. This system often leads to highly contested and unpredictable electoral outcomes.

In 2019, Easton Taylor Farrell was sworn in as the new premier of Montserrat after leading his Movement for Change and Prosperity (MCAP) party to victory, securing five of the nine seats. The People's Democratic Movement (PDM) won three seats, and one seat was secured by an independent candidate.

The 2024 general elections were called within the constitutional timeframe. Governor Sarah Tucker signed the proclamation on 22 August 2024 and dissolved the parliament on this date, setting the general elections for 24 October 2024. Three political parties competed in this election: MCAP, led by Dr Samuel Joseph, former Deputy Premier and Minister of Communication, Works, Energy, and Labour; PDM, led by opposition leader Paul Lewis and including Donaldson Romeo, former premier and independent member of the outgoing Assembly; and United Alliance, a newly established party, led by Reuben T. Meade, who previously served as the Chief Minister (1991-1996 & 2009-2010) and the Premier of Montserrat (2010-2014).²

² In 2010 the position of chief minister was replaced with the position of premier.



The mission visited the Exclusion Zone to gain an increased understanding of the impact of the volcanic eruptions. These images show a devastated church and buildings in the former capital, Plymouth.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The main legal instrument that contains the international standards for the conduct of democratic elections, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), has been extended to Montserrat. However, several other important international treaties that are relevant to elections and democratic governance have not been extended. These include the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). These international instruments applicable in the UK are not automatically applicable to British Overseas Territories.³ The extension of these treaties to Montserrat would significantly enhance the legal framework for elections and strengthen protections for various groups in the electoral process. Nonetheless, international human rights law creates obligations concerning the conduct of elections in Montserrat.

Recommendation 1: Extend the UNCAC, CEDAW, and CRPD international treaties to Montserrat. Amend domestic law to ensure compliance with these instruments, as necessary, prior to extension. This would align the territory's legal obligations more closely with global standards for democratic elections, anti-corruption measures, gender equality, and the rights of persons with disabilities in political participation.

Notwithstanding the recommendation to extend these treaties, the legal framework for the 2024 general elections provides an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections, in line with international standards and the commitments extended to Montserrat.⁴ It primarily comprises the Montserrat Constitution Order, 2010; the Elections Act, 1952 (last amended 2024); and the Electoral Commission Act, 2012, and is supplemented by regulations and guidelines issued by the electoral commission.

Fundamental rights and the freedoms of association, assembly, movement, and expression are enshrined in the constitution. The Elections Act covers key aspects of the electoral process, including the registration of voters and candidates, the campaign, election day procedures,

³ UN ICCPR Committee (2015) CCPR/C/GBR/CO/7 noted with concern that human rights instruments applicable to the UK are not directly applicable to the British Overseas Territories.

⁴ These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

complaints and appeal mechanisms, election offences, and election administration. The Electoral Commission Act establishes an independent electoral commission responsible for overseeing elections, ensuring they are conducted fairly and impartially.

The Elections Act has been amended more than 20 times since it was first adopted. Since the 2019 elections, two sets of amendments have been enacted, in July 2023 and in April 2024. Legal changes were made to address some of the recommendations offered by the previous CPA BIMR mission in 2019, including new provisions for a mobile polling station and the separation of the roles of the electoral commission chairperson and the supervisor of elections. Other amendments provide for the position of assistant returning officers and changes to the candidate registration fee, increasing it to \$1,000 XCD and stipulating that it is no longer refundable.

Despite these improvements, several legal deficiencies persist. Several of these are listed here and will be further detailed throughout this report.

The requirements for voter eligibility and candidate criteria are overly restrictive and may not align with international standards. There are inadequate verification mechanisms for voter and candidate registration, which affects the consistent and fair application of legal criteria for voting and standing for office. There are no campaign regulations, which hinders transparency and accountability and does not ensure a level playing field for candidates. The guarantee of a secret ballot is not adequately protected, as the system allows a ballot to be traced back to a voter in certain circumstances. There is a lack of independent media, and no regulations require public media outlets to provide equal opportunities for all candidates to campaign.

There are no established regulations for citizen or international observation of elections, which is a valuable safeguard for transparency and integrity in the electoral process. The conditions for being a member of the election administration and their removal are not clearly defined, which can affect the independence and effectiveness of the electoral body. Terms such as *ballot*, *vote*, *domicile*, and *resident* are not defined in the legislation, risking confusion during elections and potential inconsistencies in their interpretation and application. Furthermore, the lack of a consolidated legal text available to stakeholders undermines accessibility and clarity in understanding electoral laws.

These deficiencies highlight the need for a comprehensive review and reform of Montserrat's electoral legislation to enhance democratic practices and ensure compliance with international norms.

Recommendation 2: Conduct a comprehensive review and reform of Montserrat's electoral legislation. This should take place well in advance of the next general elections to allow for public consultation, and an updated legal text should be made available to all stakeholders.

The electoral commission has updated the regulatory framework by reissuing an elections manual, a handbook for electoral staff, and a booklet on election offences in 2024. On 18 October 2024, new guidelines for the media were also released. However, there was no consultation with media outlets regarding this new guidance, and it is yet to be published on the electoral commission's website.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Montserrat uses a bloc voting electoral system with a single multi-member constituency, known by voters as voting at large. There is a provision for a run-off election for those candidates who have not met a threshold of 6% of total votes cast. Voters can choose up to nine candidates from those standing for either a political party or as independent candidates. The electoral system is well understood by parties, candidates, and voters. Some candidates have been advocating a return to the electoral system Montserrat had in place prior to the volcanic eruptions. Before 2001, the island had seven electoral constituencies. Future electoral reform continues to be a topic of debate. There are also discussions about whether Montserratians in the diaspora should be included in the electoral system.



The mission met with the three political parties and several independent candidates. Clockwise from top left: MCAP, PDM, and United Alliance.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The constitution establishes an electoral commission with four commissioners. The current commission was appointed by the governor in May 2023 for a five-year period. The governor appoints the chairperson, and the constitution states that one commissioner is appointed on the advice of the premier, one on the advice of the leader of the opposition, and one member representing the public interest, following consultation with civil society representatives. These consultations were reportedly not conducted with the vibrant, albeit small, civil society that exists on the island. The newly appointed commissioners viewed their role as an act of public service to the community; they had not applied for the positions, but rather they were asked to carry out these roles.

An electoral amendment passed in 2023 provides for the appointment of a supervisor of elections by the governor, on the recommendation of the electoral commission. This was prompted by a recommendation by the CPA BIMR Election Mission in 2019. In practice this meant that the

chairperson of the commission became the supervisor of elections, and the electoral commission was reduced to three commissioners, with one position left vacant.

There was no opportunity for a handover from the previous electoral commission to this new one, though the commission's 2019 election report provided some guidance. The new commissioners had very little time for improvements ahead of the next general elections but reportedly worked together as a committed team, preparing for and conducting these elections only 16 months after their appointment.

The governor appoints the returning officer on the recommendation of the supervisor of elections. The governor may also at any time revoke this appointment, which does jeopardise the independence of the returning officer. Assistant returning officers conduct the count of ballot boxes under the supervision of the returning officer.

Some of the challenges faced by the electoral commission were due to the very tight electoral timeline. There is only a minimum of ten days between nomination day and election day, which adds tremendous logistical pressure if there are any successful appeals against who is or is not nominated as a candidate.

The electoral commission made a commendable effort to train the polling and counting staff in the procedures of election day. The vast majority of these staff were women. The mission could see a high level of civic duty on display, motivating staff to deliver a professional and well-organised election.

Some of the regulations and procedures for polling outlined in the Electoral Act appear outdated and seem to overly complicate the tasks, especially those of the polling station presiding officers. A significant portion of procedures in polling stations are only done by the presiding officer, rather than being shared among polling staff. If there was a requested recount or a further run-off election, the Electoral Act is silent on the procedures that would facilitate these two processes, and no provisions exist for further guidance.

Recommendation 3: Review and update electoral procedures, including a) adding guidelines that explain how a recount or a further run-off election should be carried out; b) extending the minimum time period between nomination day and election day; c) making provision for a greater portion of polling station tasks to be delivered not only by the presiding officer but also by the poll clerks.

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Eligibility criteria for voting is laid out in the Elections Act. Voters must be at least 18 years old, of sound mind, and be either a Montserratian or a Commonwealth citizen who has resided in Montserrat for at least 36 months prior to registration or be domiciled in Montserrat and be resident at the date of registration. Domiciled students studying abroad can be registered even if they are not residents at the date of registration. This provision aligns with the spirit of ensuring voter rights for those temporarily absent.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO VOTE

To be eligible to vote, one must be:

- 18+ years old,
- Of sound mind,
- Be either a Montserratian or a Commonwealth citizen,
- And have resided in Montserrat for at least 36 months prior to registration, or be domiciled in Montserrat and be resident at the date of registration.

However, it is important to note that there is no legal definition of *domiciled* and *resident* in Montserrat's electoral legislation. This has led to varying interpretations of voter eligibility and some contention among stakeholders, including during this election. While some claimed that it should suffice to have business interests, property, and pay taxes in Montserrat to qualify to vote, others argue that the law requires one to be physically in the territory.

Recommendation 4: Clarify in law the terms *domiciled* and *resident*, to ensure a common understanding of voter eligibility and a consistent application of the right to vote.

The Elections Act disqualifies those serving a prison sentence of over 12 months from voting. The disenfranchisement of prisoners in this manner goes against international human rights standards, which discourage blanket bans on prisoner voting. Aside from the right to liberty, imprisonment does not automatically strip individuals of their fundamental human rights, including political rights. Instead, each case should be looked at individually. A rule that automatically stops all people in jail for more than 12 months from voting, without considering the nature and severity of the offence or allowing judicial discretion, does not follow these international guidelines for protecting human rights as outlined in the ICCPR and interpreted by relevant legal bodies.⁵

Recommendation 5: Remove the blanket ban on voting for prisoners serving sentences over 12 months. Instead, the suspension of voting rights should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Voting rights suspension could be limited to specific serious offences that undermine democratic processes.

⁵ See ICCPR Article 14 and Paragraph 14 of its General Comment No. 25. See also the European Court of Human Rights, in the case of *Hirst v. United Kingdom* (2005), that agrees that being in prison alone isn't a reason to take away all basic rights, emphasising that a blanket ban on voting for all prisoners is too broad and unfair.



The mission observing a training session for counting clerks ahead of election day. Members of the electoral commission and the supervisor of elections were present.

VOTER REGISTRATION

To vote in Montserrat one must be on the voter register. To update this register, an enumeration exercise is conducted every five years. In 2023 the registering officer, appointed by the supervisor of elections, supervised and managed the enumeration team to review all the entries of the previous voter register and create a new voter register. During the ten-day door-to-door exercise, the enumeration teams had the right to enter any premises during the hours of daylight to make enquiries for obtaining information for a person who is qualified to be registered as a voter. The enumeration exercise was not publicly announced due to the late appointment of the new electoral commission. Reportedly some people refused to be registered due to a sense of frustration at the political situation, but no data about the number of non-registered eligible voters exists. It was reportedly a challenge to complete the enumeration exercise within this short ten-day timeframe.

The previous voter register had some flaws, as some names of non-Commonwealth citizens, who were not qualified to vote, were included. The registering officer collaborated with the Montserrat Social Security Department, the Immigration Department, and some members of the community to verify entries, as some persons had migrated or were deceased. Montserrat does not have a population or civic register, and there is no electronic database of births and deaths. Those individuals who were taken off the voter list did not receive any official notification of this deregistration. The preliminary registered list of voters was posted publicly following the enumeration exercise and then once again after additional voters had been added.

From September 2023 to September 2024, a continuous voter registration process took place for those whose names were missing from the register and for those who turned 18 years of age. This resulted in the governor proclaiming a final voter list of 3,464 registered voters. This represents a decline of 10% from the 3,858 registered voters in the 2019 elections. The total population of Montserrat is 4,386 persons, including non-national residents, as recorded in the latest population census in 2023.

The voter register has newly been made accessible online, and it includes voters' names, professions, and areas of residence, but not their detailed addresses, genders, dates of birth, or whether a voter has a disability. Reportedly, no complaints were received about the voter registration process.

According to reports, the registering officer and those involved in this exercise showed a conscientious and committed approach to ensuring this list was as accurate as possible. However, this process of manually re-registering voters every five years is a considerable administrative exercise. The lack of a population or civic register, or any voter identification, limits the verification checks that can be performed on the voter register. For example, if there were two identical register entries, the registering officer would investigate whether this was two different persons with the same name or a duplication, but there was limited data available to verify these decisions.

Recommendation 6: Review the voter registration procedures and consider what additional measures can be put in place to verify the accuracy of the register. It may be valuable to learn how other small jurisdictions carry out this process. This review should include the introduction of a procedure to officially inform persons if they have been removed from the voter register.

THE RIGHT TO STAND FOR ELECTION

The right to stand for election is a fundamental aspect of democratic governance. It ensures that citizens have the opportunity to participate in the political process. In Montserrat the eligibility criteria for candidates seeking election are defined by the constitution, including citizenship status, residency, and restrictions for civil servants. Some of these requirements may not comply with international standards set by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and its General Comment No. 25.

Under Montserrat's constitution, only Montserratian nationals by birth can run for office. This excludes naturalised citizens. Candidates must be at least 21 years old, have lived in Montserrat for at least 12 months in the last five years, and be registered voters. Those with dual citizenship must renounce their second citizenship within ten days of nomination. Furthermore, there are specific disqualifications outlined in the constitution. Individuals with certain criminal convictions or who have been declared bankrupt are barred from running. Additionally, holders of public office are prohibited from becoming candidates. Civil servants wishing to run for election must resign from their positions. This last requirement is particularly significant, as civil servants reportedly constitute about 60% of the workforce in Montserrat.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO STAND FOR ELECTION

To stand for election, one must be:

- Montserratian by birth,
- 21+ years of age,
- Have lived in Montserrat for at least 12 months in the last five years,
- And be a registered voter.

There are additional disqualifications set out in the constitution, including holders of public office, dual citizenship, certain criminal convictions, and bankruptcy.

ICCPR Article 25 states that every citizen has the right to participate in public affairs, vote, and stand for election in genuine, periodic elections based on universal and equal suffrage, and that these rights should not face "unreasonable restrictions." It specifies that citizens should not face

distinctions based on birth, national origin, or property, and that any conditions placed on the right to run for office must be objective, reasonable, and free from discrimination.⁶

Certain aspects of Montserrat's eligibility criteria appear to conflict with these international standards. Firstly, the citizenship requirement creates a distinction between natural-born and naturalised citizens that contradicts the principle of non-discrimination outlined in the ICCPR.

Secondly, the requirement for candidates with dual citizenship to renounce their second nationality may be overly restrictive and may not be consistently applied. In these general elections, at least two candidates hold two passports, and they were not disqualified from standing. This may highlight a lack of enforcement.

There were a variety of interpretations among those the mission met of the issue of dual citizenship. For some, a distinction was made between those who acquired the second citizenship through birth and those who acquired it by choice. Also, the extent to which an individual actively used or benefitted from their dual status and the motivations behind obtaining or maintaining dual citizenship were seen as important factors. The absence of agreement on these points can lead to a case-by-case evaluation of this matter and raises the concern of how one ensures equality before the law.

Finally, while the prohibition against civil servants running for office aims to maintain neutrality within the public service, it affects a significant portion of Montserrat's workforce. This restriction may hinder qualified individuals from participating in political life, and there is consensus among those the mission met that it should be reviewed. A more inclusive approach could be considered, such as allowing certain civil servants a temporary leave of absence while running for office. All eligibility requirements should be objective and reasonable, ensuring they do not discriminate against any group of citizens.

Recommendation 7: Amend the constitution to align candidate eligibility criteria with international standards. This should include removing the distinction between natural-born and naturalised citizens, reviewing and clarifying the requirements on dual citizenship to ensure it does not impose unreasonable restrictions on participation, and considering a more inclusive approach towards civil servants running for office.

CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

The 2024 Montserrat general elections showcased a vibrant and diverse political landscape, with a total of 34 candidates vying for office. This included 15 women candidates standing and 8 incumbents seeking re-election. The three political parties that competed, the Movement for Change and Prosperity (MCAP), the People's Democratic Movement (PDM), and the United Alliance, each fielded a full slate of nine candidates. Additionally, seven independent candidates entered the race, further enriching the choices available to voters.

The candidate registration process, known as nomination day, took place on 10 October 2024. Candidates, regardless of their party affiliation or independent status, were required to register individually. Each candidate had to be nominated by at least two registered voters, pay a non-

⁶ Article 25 ICCPR General Comment 25 Paragraph 3 states that no distinctions should be made between citizens based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

refundable fee of \$1,000 XCD, and submit their application to the returning officer within specified time frames.

Initially, all 34 nomination papers were accepted without any challenges. However, on 13 October, the returning officer disqualified a candidate from United Alliance for not meeting the 12-month residency requirement.⁷ This decision was appealed to the High Court, which upheld the returning officer's ruling and barred the candidate from competing. The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court overturned the High Court judgement on 21 October 2024. The Supreme Court did not rule on whether eligibility criteria had been met. The Supreme Court's decision was based on the argument that the returning officer had exceeded their authority by invalidating the nomination without formal objections from other candidates.⁸ The candidate participated in the election, and ballot papers were reprinted just three days ahead of election day with the candidate's name included.

While the Supreme Court's ruling resolved the immediate issue, it also exposed a critical weakness in the electoral system: the lack of a clear mechanism for verifying candidate eligibility. This loophole needs to be addressed through legislative changes to ensure that candidates competing meet the legal requirements to run for office.

Ensuring that all candidates are thoroughly vetted before nomination day will contribute to a more transparent and equitable electoral system.

Recommendation 8: Amend legislation and guidance to create clear mechanisms for checking if candidates are eligible to stand. There should be a formal way to challenge nominations, a review process to confirm the candidates can stand, the roles of those involved should be clearly defined, and candidates could be required to submit standard forms proving their eligibility.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN

There is no clear start to the election campaign. The campaign was perceived to be underway in Montserrat before the government formally called the general elections. This led to a blurring of lines between regular political broadcasting sessions on the radio and actual campaign activities. Prior to elections being called, both the government and the official opposition received two hours of free radio airtime weekly. This was often perceived as campaign time even before elections were officially announced.

Campaign regulations are absent from legislation, and there is no code of conduct for candidates. The three parties and seven independent candidates campaigned primarily through door-to-door canvassing, radio broadcasts, posters, motorcades, and rallies across the island. Campaign materials, such as posters and stands, had to be removed before election day, with all campaigning prohibited on the day itself.

⁷ According to immigration records checked by the returning officer, they had spent 94 days in Montserrat in the past five years.

⁸ Elections Act, article 22.2(d): Any person entitled to be present at nomination proceedings may challenge the validity of any other candidate's nomination paper. In addition thereto, the returning officer shall have the right on his own motion to hold a nomination paper invalid on the ground either that the particulars concerning the candidate or the persons subscribing to the nomination are not as required by law or that the nomination paper is not subscribed as required by law.



The mission observed rallies held by all three political parties. Pictured are United Alliance (left) and MCAP (right).

Without an official campaign schedule, parties were required to inform the police of planned rallies on a first-come, first-served basis. In cases of conflicting schedules, the police encouraged parties to negotiate and coordinate. In one reported case of overlapping rallies at nearby venues, the parties failed to reach an agreement, leading to the cancellation of both events as the police were unable to ensure security.

Key campaign issues included improving transport links to the island via ferry services and larger aircraft, addressing the rising cost of living, and pursuing greater financial independence. Long-standing plans for a new harbour and hospital were important matters. Additionally, the governor's powers and a perceived increase in their involvement in Montserratian domestic matters were regularly raised. Following the merger of the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK, the governor both retains reserved powers and has significant responsibility over development aid, with reportedly 60% of Montserrat's budget funded by HM Treasury.

Political parties released manifestos and purchased radio airtime to elaborate on their platforms. While freedoms of expression and assembly were respected, Montserrat's limited media landscape and lack of independent journalism restricted public debate. No party leader debate was organised, limiting voters' understanding of the parties' differing proposals.

Mission interlocutors reported misogynistic and sometimes malicious remarks, particularly towards female candidates, which went unaddressed. This reportedly took place both in-person and online, with the online abuse being particularly prevalent. This underscores the need for stronger regulation of the digital campaign space to ensure that victims do not bear the sole responsibility of pursuing justice in court.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Political parties and independent candidates in Montserrat are not subject to any regulations concerning political or campaign finance. As a result, both parties and candidates are free to accept unlimited donations and spend money on their campaigns without any restrictions or requirement for transparency. There are no legal obligations to disclose funding sources or campaign expenditure. Additionally, the law does not address potentially controversial matters, such as the acceptance of foreign donations or the involvement of non-Montserratian nationals in the campaign process.

The lack of legal status for political parties, coupled with the absence of accountability measures, represents a significant gap in the regulatory framework. This legal deficiency undermines transparency and accountability in the electoral process, leaving room for the potential abuse of campaign finance and possible outside influence.

There was no evidence of the misuse of state resources brought to the attention of the mission.

Recommendation 9: Introduce legislation to require political parties and candidates to timely disclose donations and expenditures, including all foreign donations, to restrict anonymous contributions, and to entrust an independent body to oversee compliance.

MEDIA

Montserrat has no media and broadcasting legislation and no independent media authority. The Info-Communications Development Act covers info-communications networks and services, including conditions for fair competition in such markets, and establishes the Info-Communications Authority. In 2022, the government introduced social media guidelines,⁹ and the electoral commission issued media guidelines for elections just one week before election day. These guidelines restricted media coverage to two accredited journalists and specified that only those attending an electoral commission briefing would be accredited to cover events at polling and counting centres. A specific code for ZJB Radio Montserrat, the territory's main media outlet, was drafted in 2022 but never passed.

As a non-statutory entity within the civil service, ZJB Radio Montserrat reports directly to the cabinet, which limits its independence from political influence, a concern raised by several of those the mission met. ZJB Radio Montserrat provides both radio and TV services, and the Government Information Unit, under the Premier's Broadcasting Unit, broadcasts a televised newscast once a month. Although ZJB Radio Montserrat aimed to cover the election campaign in a balanced way, it operates without the structural protections typically afforded to public broadcasters. Its twice-weekly, partially unmoderated call-in programme, *What's on Your Mind*, was discontinued, reportedly due to accusations of hate speech and criticism of the government.

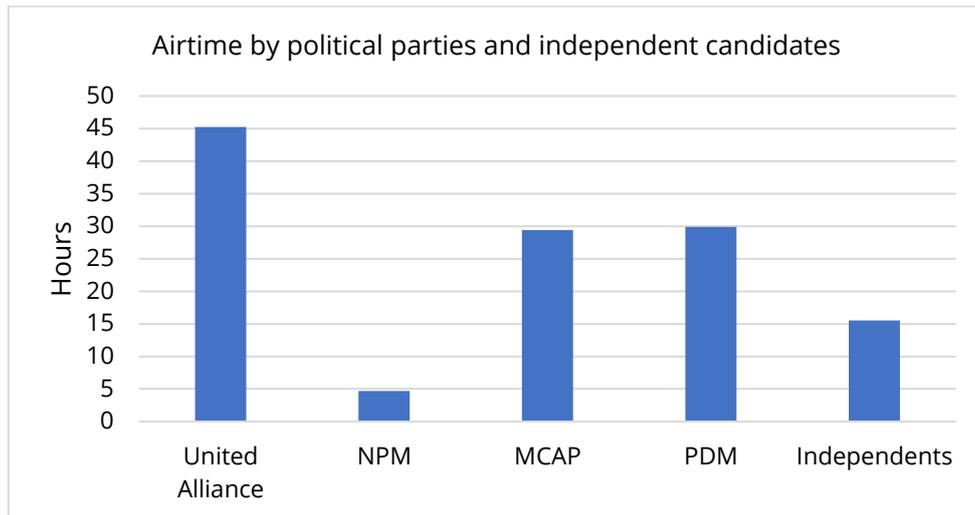
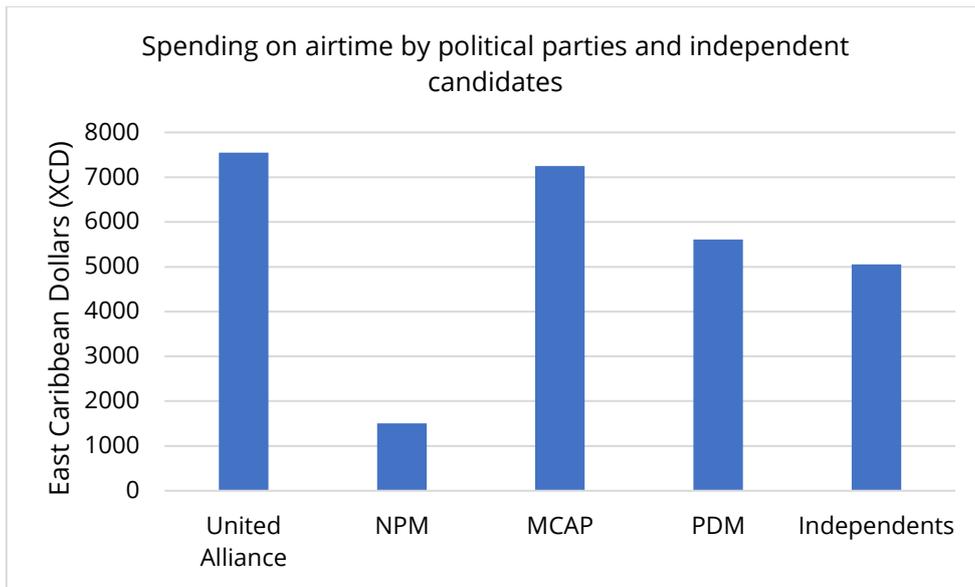
This reduction in media opportunities for expressing public discontent with government policies was described to the mission as a restriction on media freedom. Reported plans to merge the Government Information Unit with ZJB Radio Montserrat raised concerns among some about a reshaped media landscape, with the risk that radio content is perceived as solely representing government views. There were reported concerns that this merger may have been expedited before the elections. Concerns were also raised about the government and the governor's treatment of the media. In the past year, a journalist was summoned to the deputy governor's office five times to answer questions on radio programming and news content. Some viewed this as an unprecedented occurrence, reportedly creating an atmosphere of intimidation.

Opposition parties raised concerns about a perceived self-censorship by ZJB Radio Montserrat and the privileging of the governing party and its candidates in the radio's election coverage. ZJB Radio Montserrat had to decide for itself when to start charging for campaigning by government and opposition parties in the absence of regulations. There is no provision of free airtime during the election campaign. Parties and candidates purchased airtime slots, each prefaced and concluded

⁹ See: <https://www.gov.ms/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Government-of-Montserrat-SOCIAL-MEDIA-GUIDELINES.pdf>.

with a disclaimer, at commercial rates on a first-come, first-served basis. Sometimes, political parties booked particular time slots days or weeks in advance. Rates for campaigning via radio were rather moderate: \$25 XCD for 5 minutes, \$100 XCD for an hour, and \$20 XCD for an advertisement announcement.¹⁰

The charts below illustrate radio campaigning expenditure and airtime by the political parties and independent candidates. The political parties each spent similar amounts on radio airtime; if one adds together the expenditure of PDM with the National Progressive Movement (NPM), that later merged with PDM. United Alliance had the highest amount of airtime hours at just over 45 hours. PDM and MCAP both had just under 30 hours. The independent candidates spent less and had the fewest hours of airtime.



ZJB Radio Montserrat proposed a debate among all party leaders; however, some candidates declined to participate. As a result, no broadcasted debates were organised to avoid any perception of bias.

¹⁰ United Alliance purchased 45.23 hours of airtime for XCD 7,500, the National Progressive Movement (prior to its merger with PDM) 4.66 hours for XCD 1,505, the Movement for Change and Prosperity 29.41 hours for XCD 7,250, the People's Democratic Movement 29.91 hours for XCD 5,610, and Independents 15.52 hours for XCD 5,055.

With the *Montserrat Reporter* ceasing publication and the weekly *Alliouagana Express* newspaper (in hardcopy only) having a very limited circulation, citizens increasingly turn to social media for information. Online there are the news blogs *Discover Montserrat* and *Montserrat Focus*. In Montserrat, internet penetration stands at about 55%, with 62% of the population being social media users. Facebook is the most popular platform, and TikTok is becoming increasingly popular.¹¹

ZJB Radio Montserrat's stated mission is to be a trusted and indispensable source of information, actively engaging listeners through high-quality community radio programming that is educational, entertaining, and service-orientated. However, its current structure lacks critical legal safeguards to ensure its independence and impartiality. Strengthening these protections is essential to preserve the station's credibility, prevent external influence, and uphold its commitment to serving the public interest.

Recommendation 10: Consult with media stakeholders on what steps can be taken to increase the independence of media outlets and the number and diversity of these outlets. Review and update the media guidelines for general elections in consultation with the media and publish these updated guidelines in good time ahead of the next general elections.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The constitution affords protection from discrimination on any grounds, including "sex, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, or other status."

The 2024 general elections in Montserrat showed an increase in some aspects of inclusivity and diversity compared to previous general elections. This was particularly in women's participation and the participation of vulnerable groups. However, there was a noticeable low engagement of young people.

Women's Participation

There are no legal or administrative barriers preventing women from participating in elections as voters or candidates. Although all three parties contesting were led by men, the 2024 general elections demonstrated a remarkable increase in women's involvement. A record number of 15 women ran for office out of 34 total candidates, nearly doubling the proportion of women candidates from 22.9% in 2019 to 44.1% in 2024. Three women were elected to the legislative assembly, a threefold increase on the single woman elected in 2019. This increases women's representation in the legislature from 11% to 33.3%. This progress is commendable and represents a positive step towards greater gender balance in Montserrat's politics.

It is notable that the overwhelming majority of the election administration at all levels were women. This includes all members and the chairperson of the election commission, the returning officer, and most poll clerks and counting officials. Important public office positions were also held by women, including the deputy governor, attorney general, and registering officer.

¹¹ See: Dataportal, <https://dataportal.com/reports/digital-2024-montserrat>; and Statcounter, <https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/montserrat>.

Despite this progress, women still do not constitute half of the candidates or elected members, indicating that work should continue to achieve gender equality in Montserrat's politics. Candidates did not specifically target women voters or campaign on gender issues. The mission expresses regret over negative campaigning specifically aimed at women candidates.

Recommendation 11: Consider measures that would support a greater number of women to stand as candidates, including taking steps to challenge misogynistic comments against women in politics.

Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

Montserrat has made commendable steps in promoting inclusive elections for persons with disabilities, reflecting a commitment to ensuring that all citizens can participate in the democratic process. Notable measures include the establishment of a mobile polling station that visits elderly care facilities and the hospital, as well as the installation of ramps at polling locations to facilitate access for voters with mobility challenges. Additionally, provisions for assisted voting are in place, allowing individuals who require help to cast their ballots with dignity and independence. These efforts demonstrate a proactive approach to enhancing accessibility and participation for voters with diverse physical abilities.

Recommendation 12: Investigate the further use of mobile polling stations to increase the inclusion of other groups in Montserratian society, such as visiting individuals who have difficulty leaving their homes. Consult with disability rights organisations to identify further steps that can be taken.

Youth Involvement

Youth participation was notably limited in these general elections. Very few younger voters were observed voting on election day. Younger Montserradians who met the mission had opted not to register for elections, with some citing a lack of information about the voter registration process. This low youth participation suggests a need for increased efforts to engage and politically educate younger and first-time voters. It's crucial to address this issue to ensure a more representative democracy and to cultivate civic engagement among the younger generation.



The mission meeting with students at Montserrat Community College.

Recommendation 13: Engage and politically educate younger and first-time voters. Implement voter registration campaigns specifically targeted at young people.



Mission observers present at a polling station (left) and inside the counting centre (right).

ELECTION DAY: VOTING

The seven mission observers monitored election procedures across all 13 polling stations nationwide, including accompanying the mobile polling station to all three of its locations. The observers rated the overall process largely as very good.

In compliance with legislation, all campaign posters were removed prior to election day, and no active campaigning was observed during polling day. The mission was aware of one candidate who raised a complaint with the electoral commission regarding another party's campaign posts on Facebook during election day. The mission is not aware of this complaint being resolved, and this instance highlights the lack of regulation surrounding online campaigning and the absence of digital campaign guidelines from the electoral commission.

Polling stations observed generally opened on time at 07:00h in the morning, and the day proceeded smoothly and peacefully, with all polling materials in place. Most polling staff were women. Polling staff in all observations demonstrated strong procedural knowledge. In a recent provision by the electoral commission, polling staff were added to the voter register of the division where they were stationed, ensuring their ability to vote. Police, and occasionally military personnel, were stationed at every polling station and at the counting centre, performing their duties in full compliance with the law and contributing to an orderly voting environment.

The identification process of voters was not always consistent, with the information or name spellings on identification documents sometimes not matching the person's entry in the voter register. The electoral commission and political parties put significant effort into voter education, focusing on marking the ballot correctly with a cross or an "X" for up to nine candidates. Voter guidance continued at polling stations, where presiding officers provided additional instructions before issuing ballot papers. There was minimal ballot spoilage and a low rate of invalid ballots (43 votes, 1.8%), indicating a robust understanding of the detailed criteria for ballot validity by the voters.

All ballot papers and counterfoils have serial numbers, and the poll book number of the voters is written on the counterfoil. Such a numbering system can trace ballots back to individual voters if the ballots, counterfoils, and voter register are brought together after general elections. Used ballots are stored securely and separately from other sensitive polling materials after the elections, but the documents can be brought together by a court order. This raises concerns about upholding the secrecy of the vote, and both previous CPA BIMR missions recommended procedures are changed to remove traceability. Used ballot papers are destroyed after one year.

Accessibility of polling stations and polling materials remains challenging for persons with disabilities. The provision of ramps and the mobile polling station noted above are commendable provisions, but not all polling stations are independently accessible to persons with physical disabilities, and no voting aids, such as a magnifier for persons with limited eyesight, are available. Background colours behind candidates' pictures, however, provide voters with an easier way of identifying the candidates of a preferred party.

These general elections saw the introduction of a mobile polling station for the first time. This innovative development was professionally and securely conducted and provided a considerable number of older, hospitalised, and imprisoned voters with the opportunity to cast their vote in a more dignified and accessible manner. Such provisions could be extended and developed for future elections to increase the inclusion of different groups in Montserrat, such as those with limited mobility who would benefit from voting in their private homes.

Agents of all three parties were present in all polling stations, and in most locations, the polling layout protected the secrecy of the vote. The closing of polling stations observed prior to the transfer of materials to the counting centre was less orderly than the polling process. This process of closing, reconciling ballots, and handing sensitive materials on to the assistant returning officer would benefit from further training and attention.

Recommendation 14: Increase training for presiding officers and assistant returning officers in the procedures for closing polling stations, reconciling ballot papers, and handing over sensitive materials to ensure an orderly process.

ELECTION DAY: VERIFICATION AND COUNT

The counting process was conducted with a high level of professionalism and transparency, providing the public with live, real-time updates both online and at the counting centre. The count was open to the public, including the media, though the presence of party agents was limited. This high level of transparency greatly reinforced public confidence in the accuracy of the election outcome. The count for each of the seven polling divisions was overseen by an assistant returning officer, supported by two tally clerks and one electronic tally clerk working nonstop up to 04:00h the next morning.

Each ballot was displayed to any party agents present, the votes announced aloud, and recorded on paper and online, with a reconciliation performed after every ten ballots. Disputed ballots were examined by the assistant returning officer and, if necessary, reviewed by the returning officer. The Electoral Act states that the ballot number on the back of the ballot paper should be hidden from those present. This was not hidden in all cases observed.

Otherwise, election laws were applied rigorously, even in cases where voter intent appeared clear. The Elections Act (§46.3) mandates that voters mark their ballots "with a black lead pencil and not otherwise a cross within the space opposite the name of the candidate for whom he intends to vote." This strict wording lacks the flexibility to accept ballots where the voter's intent is clear, potentially leading to the unnecessary disqualification of votes. None of the parties, candidates, or their agents questioned decisions about the validity of ballot papers.

In addition, there are no guidelines for a recount. The electoral commission could have decided to have a recount if there was a difference of up to three votes between the 9th and 10th ranked candidates. If there had been an equal number of votes the law provides for a run-off election between these candidates.

The increased voter turnout was 67.5% (2,338 voters), up by 5% from 62.5% in 2019.¹² This increased turnout demonstrates strong civic engagement among Montserratians and gives a solid mandate to the incoming government. The election resulted in a clear victory for United Alliance, one of the opposition parties, which won five of the nine seats and formed the new cabinet. The PDM candidates secured three seats, and the remaining seat was won by a candidate of the former ruling party, MCAP, who has since joined the government. Montserrat witnessed a peaceful election day, and no incidents were reported during polling, counting, and following the announcement of results.

Under the Electoral Act (§53), for a candidate to be elected to the Assembly, they must be among the nine candidates with the most votes, and they must receive at least 6% of the total votes cast. This minimum threshold refers to 6% of the total ballots cast, rather than 6% of all the votes cast on each ballot. As highlighted by previous CPA BIMR missions, this minimum threshold provision could be open for interpretation and should be reviewed and clarified. This is important as only those meeting the threshold are declared elected, and a run-off election would be required for the remaining seats.

Recommendation 15: Amend, or consider removing, Article 53 of the Elections Act to ensure clarity of the minimum election threshold for a candidate to be elected, enhancing the integrity of the election results.

ELECTORAL JUSTICE

Montserrat's judiciary operates under the framework of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, which is the highest court for the territory. The judicial system is independent of the executive and legislative branches. There is one magistrate court and one high court judge on the island. The Supreme Court sits in Saint Lucia.

The complaints and appeals process complies with international principles of judicial review and second instance. The right to redress is granted to voters and candidates, who can lodge a complaint for irregularities with the electoral commission, the supervisor of elections, and the returning officer. Their decisions can be appealed before the High Court, whose rulings can be challenged before the Supreme Court. The High Court has jurisdiction over petitions on returns. The legislation codifies procedures and legal deadlines.

The Electoral Act outlines a number of electoral offences and their corresponding sanctions that range from fines to jail and the suspension of electoral rights. Offences include, for example, personation, bribery, treating, and campaigning on election day. While confidence in the electoral dispute resolution mechanisms does not seem to be an issue of concern, there has never been an electoral offence reported.

¹² The turnout increased, but the number of registered voters and the number of people who voted decreased. In 2019 there were 3,858 registered voters and 2,410 people voted, a turnout of 62.5%. In 2024 there were 3,468 registered voters and 2,338 people voted, a turnout of 67.5%. See the table at the end of this report for further detail.

During the 2024 electoral process, before election day, only one case pertaining to the registration of candidates was brought before court. As outlined above, the case was promptly resolved both before the High Court and on appeal before the Supreme Court. The mission commends the speed at which this matter was addressed, with the rulings being handed down expeditiously.

After election day, a petition was filed by two unsuccessful independent candidates requesting that the election be declared null and void, arguing that none of the nine elected members of parliament met the 6% threshold of the votes required by law. As explained above, the mission recommends that the minimum threshold provision be clarified. At the time of writing the report, the court has not delivered a decision.



A crowd gathered outside the counting centre to watch the live updates of the count in progress.

RESULTS

Candidates Elected

	Name	Political Party	Votes
1	BUFFONGE, Crenston	MCAP	1,093
2	BUFFONGE, Ingrid Ann	United Alliance	1,086
3	MEADE, Reuben T.	United Alliance	1,068
4	OSBORNE, John P.	United Alliance	1,067
5	DORSETTE-HECTOR, Veronica "Kaye"	United Alliance	983
6	LEWIS, Paul J.	PDM	976
7	ROMEO, Donaldson R. E.	PDM	849
8	HIXON, Dwayne	United Alliance	786
9	MULCARE, Nyota N. C.	PDM	785

Votes cast in 2024:

	Polling Divisions							Mobile	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Registered Voters	620	479	683	555	528	551	52	3468	
Voter Turnout	435	337	436	357	367	372	34	2338	
Ballots Counted	435	337	436	357	367	372	34	2338	
Good Ballots Cast	429	332	423	347	363	367	34	2295	
Rejected Ballots	6	5	13	10	4	5	0	43	
Total Ballots Cast	435	337	436	357	367	372	34	2338	

Votes cast comparison over the past three general elections:

	2014	2019	2024
Number of registered voters	3,878	3,858	3,468
Number of ballots cast	2,753	2,410	2,338
Voter turnout (%)	71%	62.5%	67.5%
Number of valid ballots	2,703	2,364	2,295
Number of rejected (invalid) ballots	50	46	43
Number of rejected (invalid) ballots (%)	1.8%	1.9%	1.8%

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The CPA BIMR election observation mission wishes to express its gratitude to all those who supported the work of the mission, including election officials, candidates, and civil society organisations. We are grateful to our observers and analysts for participating.

CPA BIMR ELECTION OBSERVATION SERVICES

The first objective of the BIMR strategy is to strengthen parliaments and the skills of their members. As part of this work, CPA BIMR facilitates election observations when invited to do so.

For more information about these services, please contact the CPA BIMR Secretariat at: cpabimr@parliament.uk.



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