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News release

Mauritians support proportional representation, split on other reforms

Mauritians favour a proportional representation system for National Assembly elections but remain divided regarding two other proposed reforms – introducing an elected president with greater executive powers and eliminating National Assembly representation based on ethnic and religious affiliation, a new Afrobarometer survey reveals.

Amidst ongoing discussions about reform of the Mauritian electoral system, respondents in the nationally representative survey expressed support for a more equitable system based on proportional representation. But regarding a shift, proposed by a coalition of leading political parties, to a Second Republic with a strong elected president, Mauritians are divided between reform and the status quo. Similarly, public opinion remains divided on the question of whether to continue representation based on ethnic and religious belonging.

Key findings

- By a 2-to-1 ratio, Mauritians support the introduction of proportional representation (PR) for the National Assembly, with 51% in favour vs. 25% opposed (Figure 1). A plurality (42%) is in favour of setting the threshold of eligibility to 10% of votes for political parties to get a seat in the National Assembly under PR (Figure 2).
- Almost half (46%) of citizens are in favour of the current system of representation in the National Assembly based on ethnic or religious belonging, while 40% support reform (Figure 3).
- Opinions are divided between those who believe that the prime minister should retain his executive powers (43%) and those who think that there should be an elected president with more powers (45%) (Figure 4). Rural residents voice stronger support for more powers to the president (51%) than their urban counterparts (35%).

Afrobarometer

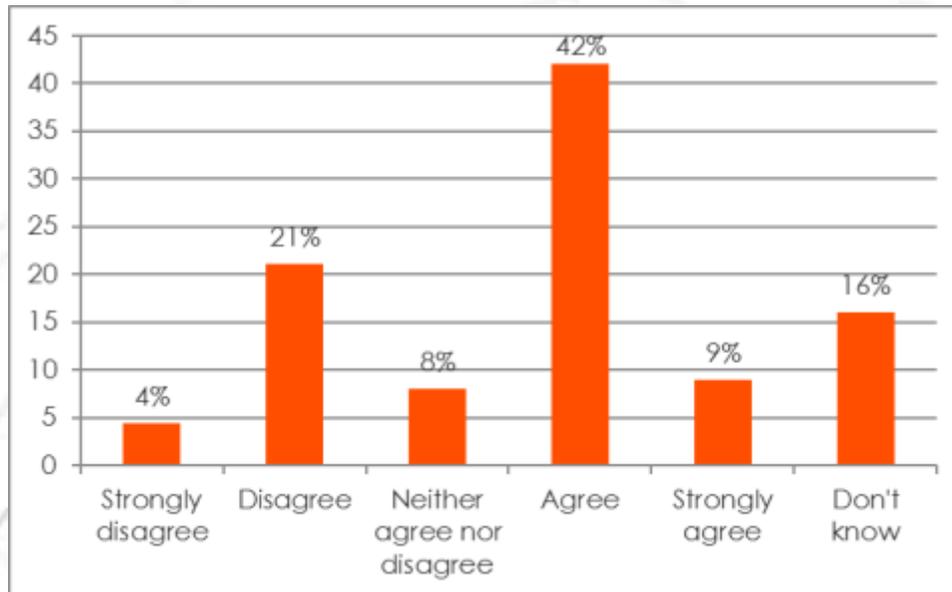
Afrobarometer is an African-led, non-partisan research project that has measured countries' social, political, and economic atmosphere since 1999. In its sixth survey round (2014-15), it is covering 35 countries. In Mauritius, face-to-face interviews of 1,200 adults were conducted by StraConsult. Afrobarometer is funded by the UK Department of International Development (DFID), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Mo Ibrahim Foundation, and World Bank.

The Afrobarometer team in Mauritius, led by StraConsult, interviewed 1,200 adult Mauritians in June and July 2014. A sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level. A previous survey was conducted in Mauritius in 2012.

Charts

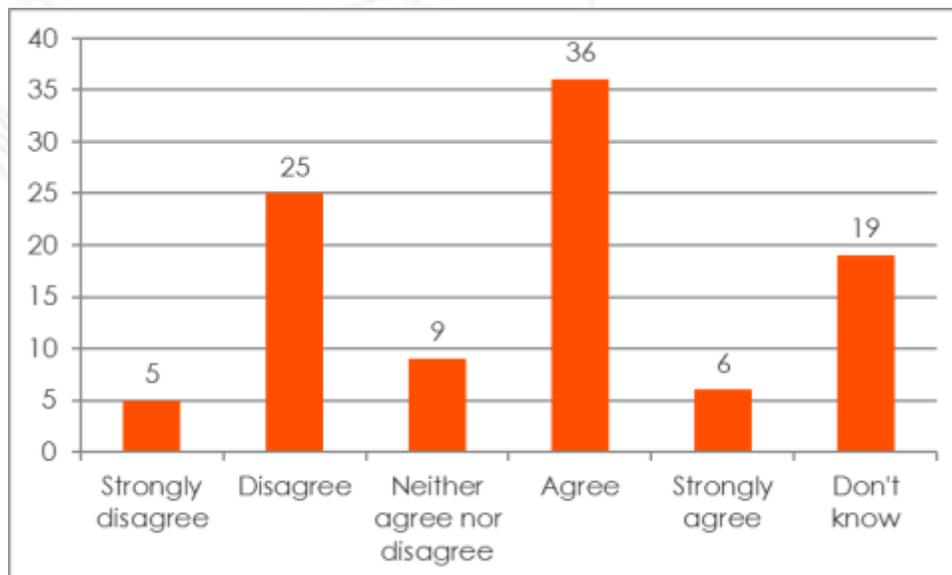
All figures for the following tables are percentages rounded to whole numbers. Due to rounding, the figures may not add to exactly 100%.

Figure 1: Introduction of proportional representation



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with [the following proposal] or haven't you heard enough about [it] to say? "We should change the current system of electing Members of Parliament in favour of one where political parties are assigned seats in proportion to their share of the vote in elections."

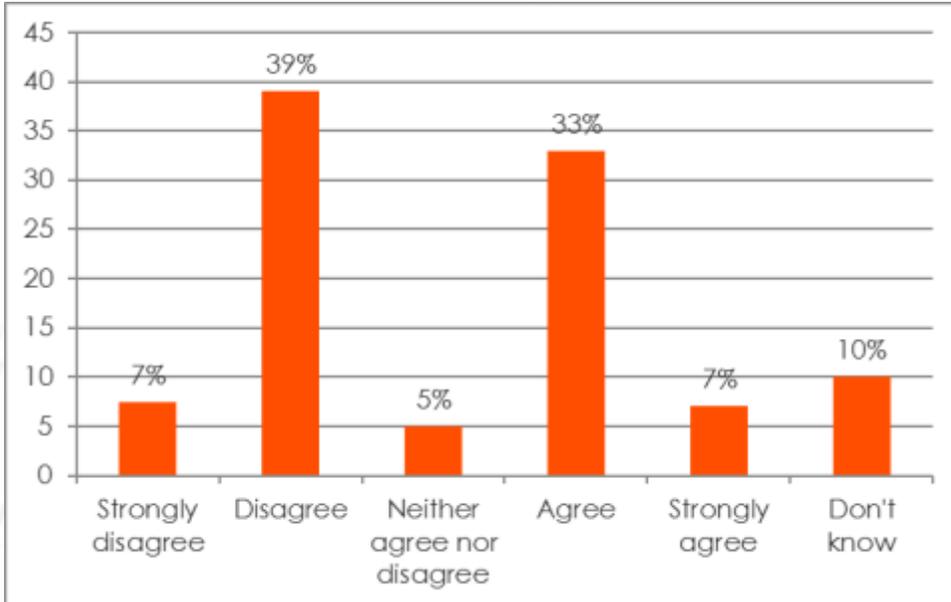
Figure 2: Introduction of PR – 10% eligibility threshold



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with [the following proposal] or haven't you heard enough about [it] to say? "In order to promote government stability, the law should

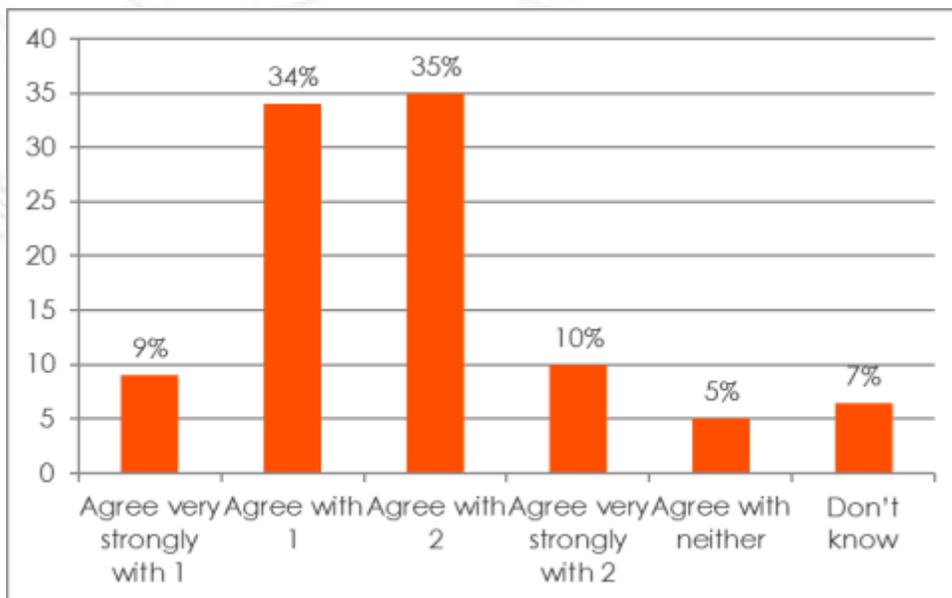
stipulate that political parties that get less than 10% of votes in elections should not be eligible to get seats in the National Assembly."

Figure 3: Reform of ethnic and religious representation



Respondents were asked: Now I would like to talk to you about a number of proposals that have been made about reforming the electoral system in this country. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following proposal or haven't you heard enough about them to say? "The electoral system should be reformed to eliminate representation in the National Assembly based on ethnic or religious belonging."

Figure 4: Executive powers for the prime minister vs. the president



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: "The current government system which gives all executive powers to the prime minister has served Mauritius well and should be maintained."
 Statement 2: "The Constitution should be changed to

grant more executive powers to an elected president as a way of promoting greater government accountability."

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