

Port Louis, Mauritius
23 February 2021

News release

Mauritians approve of government's COVID-19 response but are concerned about possible corruption, new Afrobarometer study shows

A large majority of Mauritians commend the government's handling of the response to the COVID-19 but about half also believe that resources allocated to the pandemic response were lost or stolen, according to a new Afrobarometer survey.

Most Mauritians approve of the government's response, even though they found it difficult to comply with lockdown and curfew restrictions. Despite this, they believe the measures – including school closures – were necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19.

A quarter of all Mauritians say a household member lost a source of income during the pandemic, and slightly more report that they received government assistance.

Mauritians are concerned about the government corruption that may have occurred during the pandemic response and they are also worried that politicians will use the pandemic for political gain.

Almost three out of four Mauritians say they are likely to try to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Key findings

- More than nine out of 10 Mauritians (94%) consider themselves “somewhat” or “very” well informed about the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A quarter (25%) of all Mauritians report that a household member lost a job, business, or primary source of income due to the pandemic.
- While almost two-thirds (63%) of Mauritians say that complying with lockdown and curfew restrictions was difficult, most citizens (83%) believe these measures were necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19.
- School closures enjoy even greater public support: 93% of Mauritians endorse the government's decision to close the schools, though almost half (43%) believe they should have reopened sooner.
- Almost one-third (31%) of Mauritians say their household received pandemic-related assistance from the government. A slight majority (53%) think government assistance was distributed fairly.
- An overwhelming majority (85%) of citizens view the government's handling of the pandemic in a positive light. But more than half (54%) believe that “some” or “a lot” of resources intended for responding to the pandemic were lost or stolen due to government corruption. In addition, more than two-thirds (69%) say they are worried that politicians might use the pandemic as an opportunity to increase their power and authority.

- While only half (51%) of respondents say they trust the government to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe, almost three-fourths (72%) say they are likely to get vaccinated when a vaccine becomes available.
 - Poor citizens, who are less likely to be informed about COVID-19 and more likely to report having lost income during the pandemic, are also less likely to be willing to get vaccinated.
- Six in 10 Mauritians (60%) say that a pandemic does not justify government measures that infringe democratic freedoms by censoring media reporting. In contrast, most Mauritians (78%) consider the use of police and security forces to enforce public health mandates justified.
- Looking ahead, more than half (55%) of Mauritians say the government should invest more in preparations for health emergencies like COVID-19, even if that would mean fewer resources for other health services.

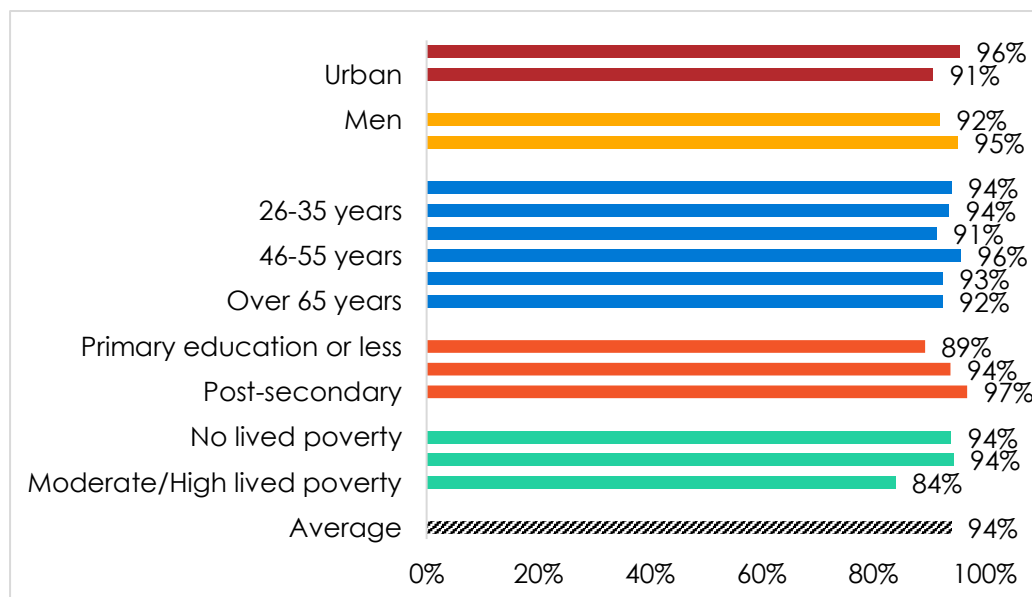
Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions and related issues across Africa. Eight rounds of surveys were completed in up to 35 countries between 1999 and 2020. Afrobarometer conducts face to face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Mauritius, led by Straconsult Ltd, interviewed 1200 Mauritian adults in November 2020. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points of a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Mauritius in 2012, 2014 and 2017.

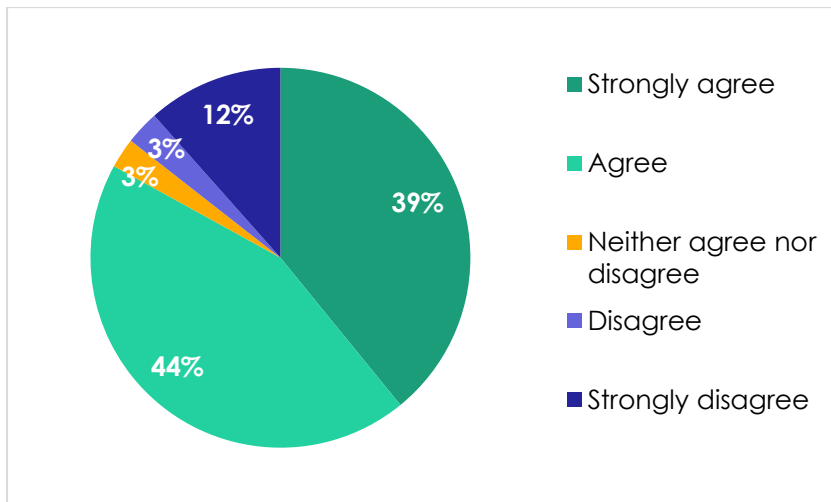
Charts

Figure 1: Awareness of COVID-19 | by socio-demographic group | Mauritius | 2020



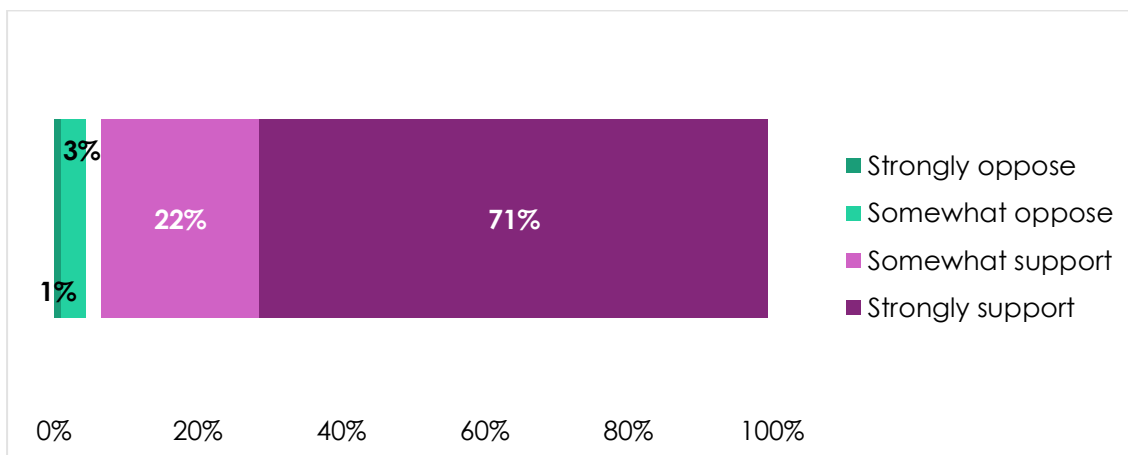
Respondents were asked: How well informed would you say you are about the coronavirus, or the COVID-19 pandemic, and efforts to combat it? (% who say "very well informed" or "somewhat well informed")

Figure 2: Support for lockdown | Mauritius | 2020



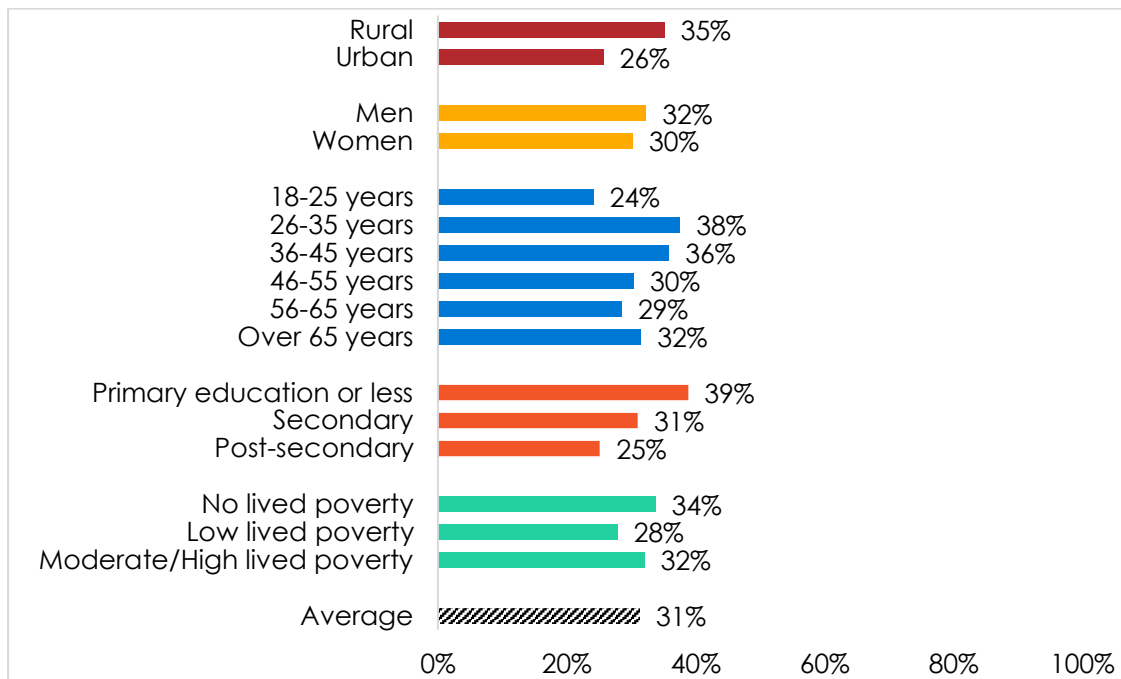
Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Even if the lockdown or curfew had negative impacts on the economy and people's livelihoods, it was necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Figure 3: Support for school closures | Mauritius | 2020



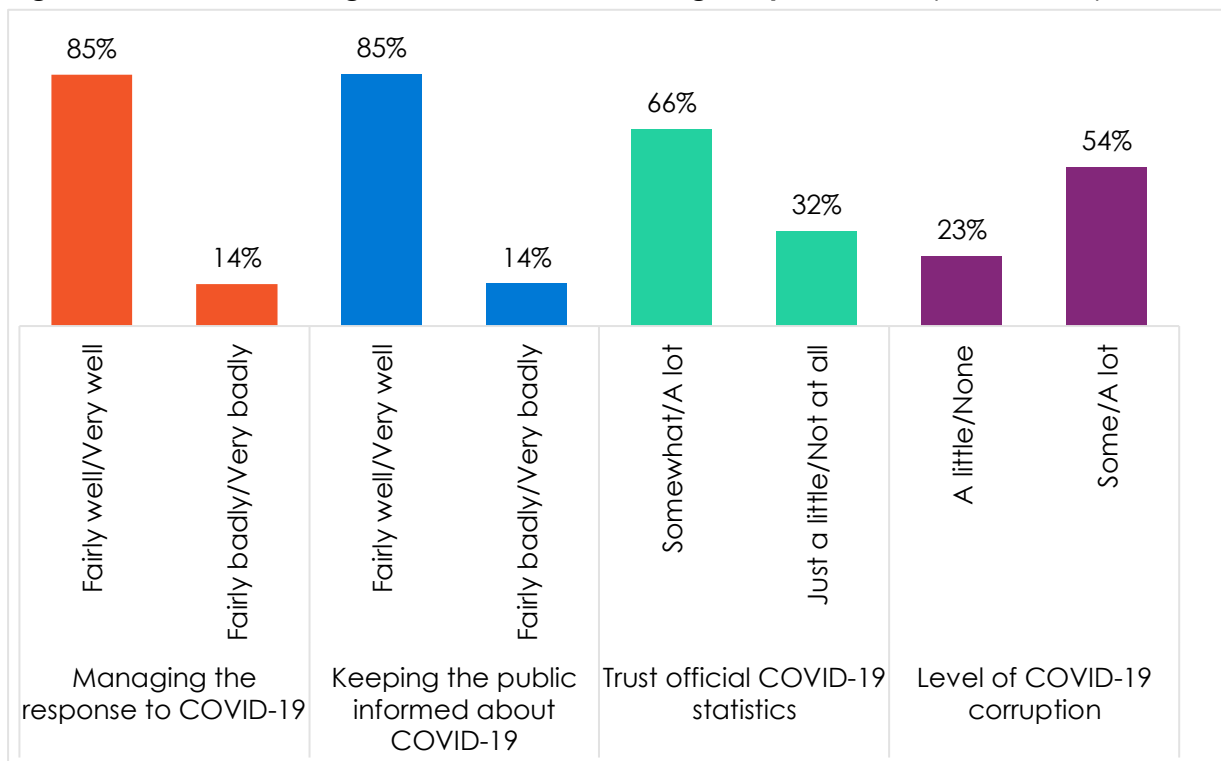
Respondents were asked: Did you support or oppose the government's decision to close schools in an effort to limit the spread of COVID-19?

Figure 4: Received government assistance | by socio-demographic group
 | Mauritius | 2020



Respondents were asked: Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you or your household received any assistance from government, like food, cash payments, relief from bill payments, or other assistance that you were not normally receiving before the pandemic? (% who say “yes”)

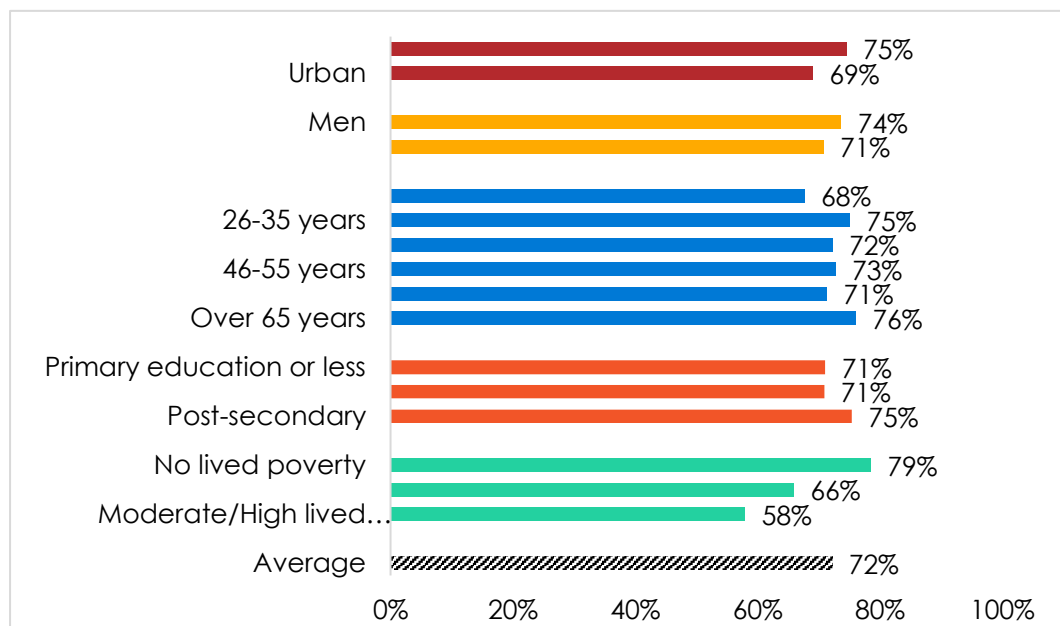
Figure 5: Assessment of government efforts during the pandemic | Mauritius | 2020



Respondents were asked:

How well or badly would you say the current government has handled the following matters since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, or haven't you heard enough to say? Managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic? Keeping the public informed about COVID-19? How much do you trust the official statistics provided by government on the number of infections and deaths due to the COVID-19 pandemic? Considering all of the funds and resources that were available to the government for combatting and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, how much do you think was lost or stolen due to corruption among government officials?

Figure 6: Likely to try to get vaccinated | by socio-demographic group | Mauritius | 2020



Respondents were asked: If a vaccine for COVID-19 becomes available and the government says it is safe, how likely are you to try to get vaccinated? (% who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely") And seven in 10 (70%) believe that postponing elections or limiting political campaigning is justified during a health emergency.

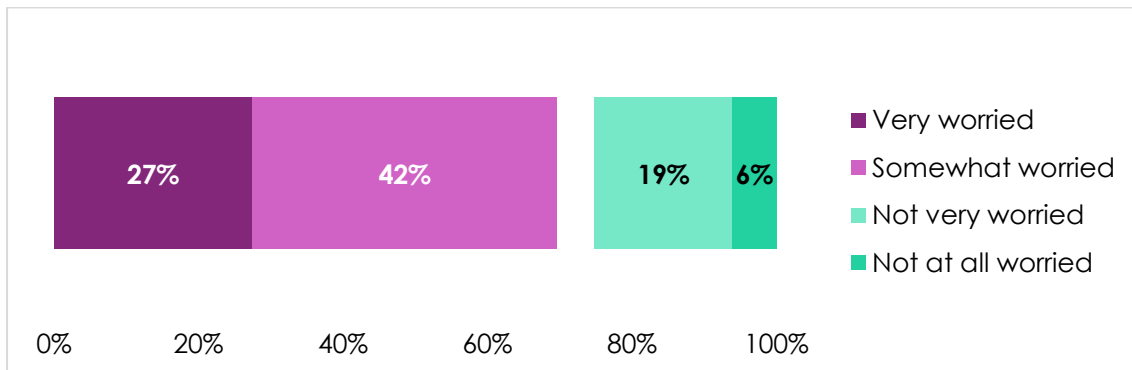
Despite their approval of limiting political activities, more than two-thirds (69%) of Mauritians say they are "somewhat worried" or "very worried" that politicians are using, or might use, the pandemic as an opportunity to increase their power and authority (Figure 17).

Censoring media reporting?

Using the police and security forces to enforce public health mandates like lockdown orders, mask requirements, or restrictions on public gatherings?

Postponing elections or limiting political campaigning?

Figure 7: Worried about politicians' intentions | Mauritius | 2020



Respondents were asked: *In some countries, people have been worried that governments and politicians are trying to take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to increase their wealth or power, or to permanently restrict freedoms or political competition. What about you? How worried are you, if at all, that the following things are taking place or might take place in Mauritius: Politicians are using the pandemic as an opportunity to increase their power and authority?*

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