

Port Louis, Mauritius
8 July 2021

News release

Mauritians value national identity and social tolerance, but report unfair treatment by government based on ethnicity

Mauritians express a strong sense of national identity and believe there is strength in diversity, according to the latest Afrobarometer survey.

Most citizens do not experience unfair treatment by other Mauritians based on ethnicity, religion, or economic status, but a sizeable minority do.

And almost half of Mauritians say the government treats their ethnic group unfairly, at least “sometimes,” a perception that’s especially common among urban residents and young citizens.

A majority of Mauritians express tolerant attitudes toward people of a different religion, ethnicity, nationality, and sexual orientation. The share of citizens who express tolerance toward people in same-sex relationships has increased in recent years.

Key findings

- Nearly nine out of 10 Mauritians (87%) say their national identity is at least as important to them as their ethnic-group identity (Figure 1).
 - Self-identification as “only Mauritian” or “more Mauritian than (ethnic group),” selected by 32% overall, is more pronounced among urban residents (36%) than among their rural counterparts (29%) (Figure 2).
- About three out of 10 Mauritians say other citizens treated them unfairly at least once during the previous year based on their ethnicity (30%), economic status (31%), or religion (32%) (Figure 3).
- While almost half (48%) of citizens say that members of their ethnic groups “never” experience unfair treatment by the government, 16% say this occurs “often” or “always”, while one-third (32%) say it happens “sometimes” (Figure 4).
 - The proportion of citizens who say their ethnic group is “often” or “always” treated unfairly by the government increased by 7 percentage points from 2018 (9%) but is similar to the level recorded in 2012 (13%) (Figure 5).
 - The perception that their ethnic group is “often” or “always” treated unfairly by the government is higher among urban residents (24%) compared to their rural counterparts (10%) and among those aged 18-35 (20%) than among their elders (12%-14%). It increases with citizens’ level of lived poverty, ranging from 11% among the economically best-off citizens to 33% among poor citizens (Figure 6).
- A majority of Mauritians say that communities made up of different ethnic groups, races, and religions are stronger than homogeneous communities (61%) (Figure 7) and that there is more that unites Mauritians than divides them (61%) (Figure 8).
- An overwhelming majority of Mauritians express tolerant attitudes toward people from different religions (93%) and ethnic groups (92%), saying they “would somewhat like

it”, “would strongly like it,” or “would not care” if they had such people as neighbours (Figure 9).

- A smaller majority express tolerance toward immigrants or foreign workers (66%) and people in same-sex relationships (59%).
- The proportion of Mauritians who say they would “like it” or “would not care” if they lived next to people in same-sex relationships increased by 9 percentage points from the 2014 survey.

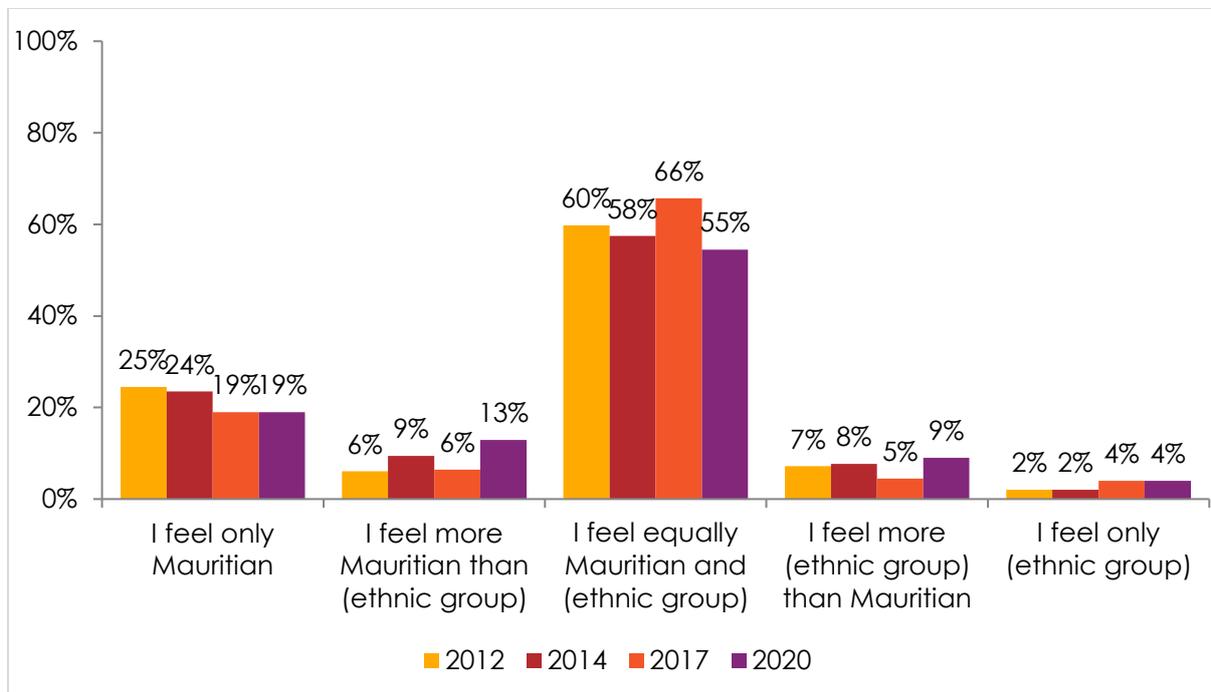
Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys in 2019/2021 cover 34 countries. 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 1,200 adult Mauritians in November 2020. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Mauritius in 2012, 2014, and 2017.

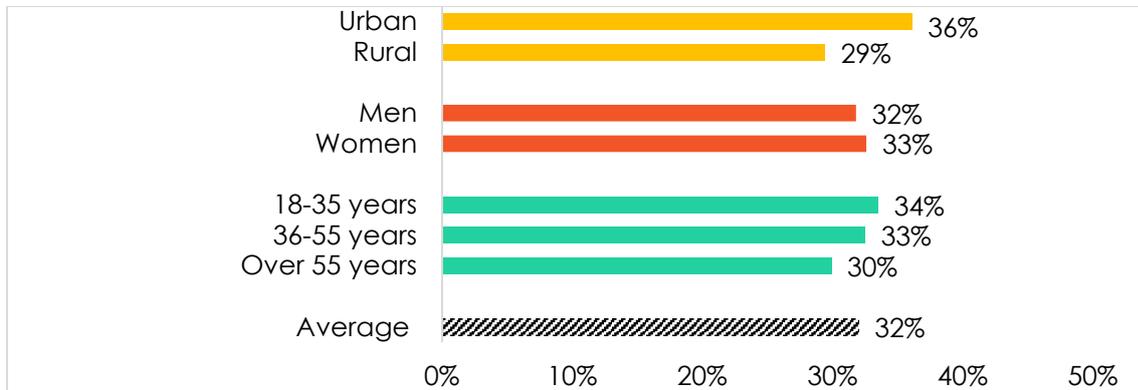
Charts

Figure 1: Citizens’ choice of identity: ethnic or Mauritian | Mauritius | 2012-2020



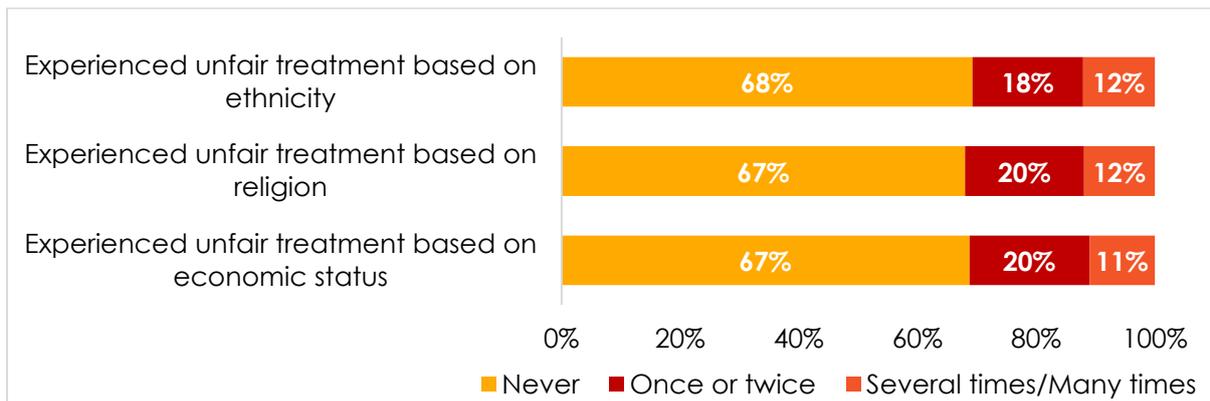
Respondents were asked: Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a Mauritian and being a _____ [respondent’s ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?

Figure 2: Feel only or more Mauritian | by demographic group | Mauritius | 2020



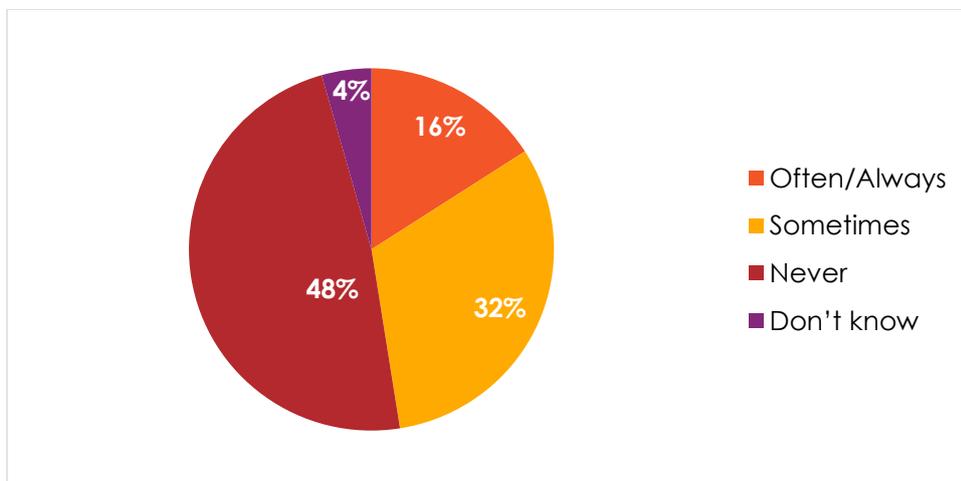
Respondents were asked: Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a Mauritian and being a _____ [respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings? (% who say they "feel only Mauritian" or "feel more Mauritian than (ethnic group)")

Figure 3: Unfair treatment by other Mauritians | Mauritius | 2020



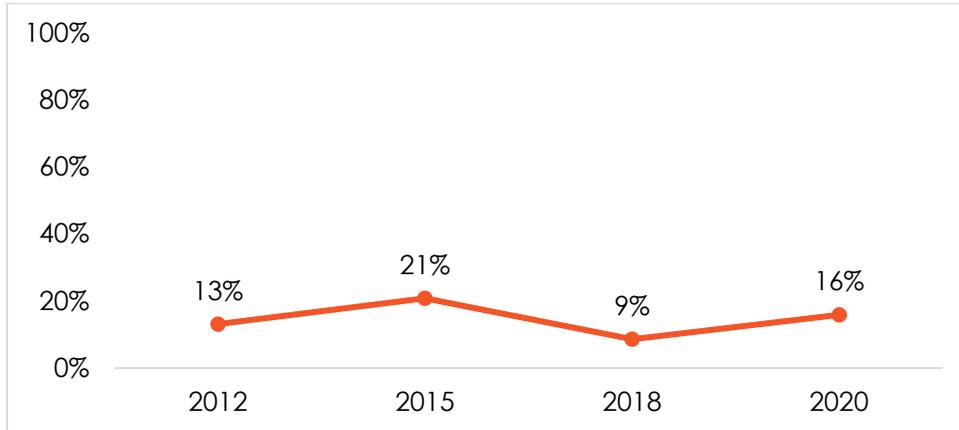
Respondents were asked: In the past year, how often, if ever, have you personally been treated unfairly by other Mauritians based on: Your economic status, that is, how rich or poor you are? Your religion? Your ethnicity?

Figure 4: Unfair treatment of ethnic groups by government | Mauritius | 2020



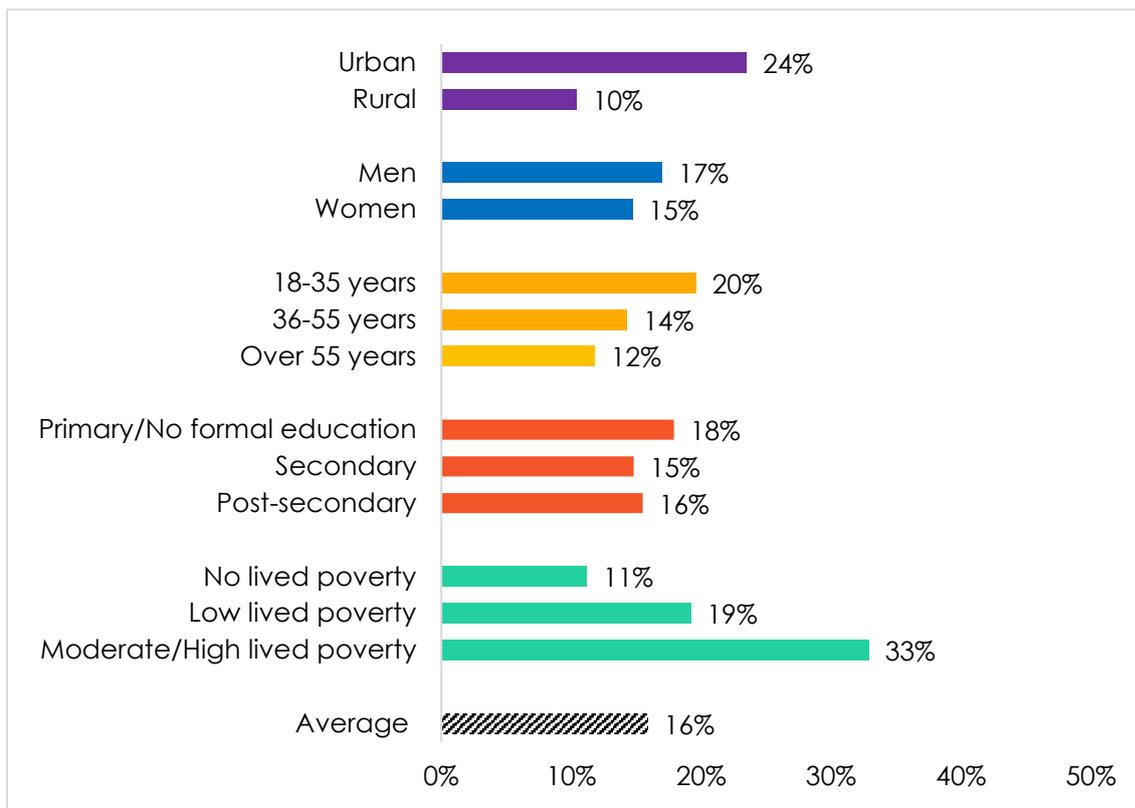
Respondents were asked: How often, if ever, are _____s [respondent's ethnic group] treated unfairly by the government?

Figure 5: Frequent unfair treatment of ethnic groups by government | Mauritius
 | 2012-2020



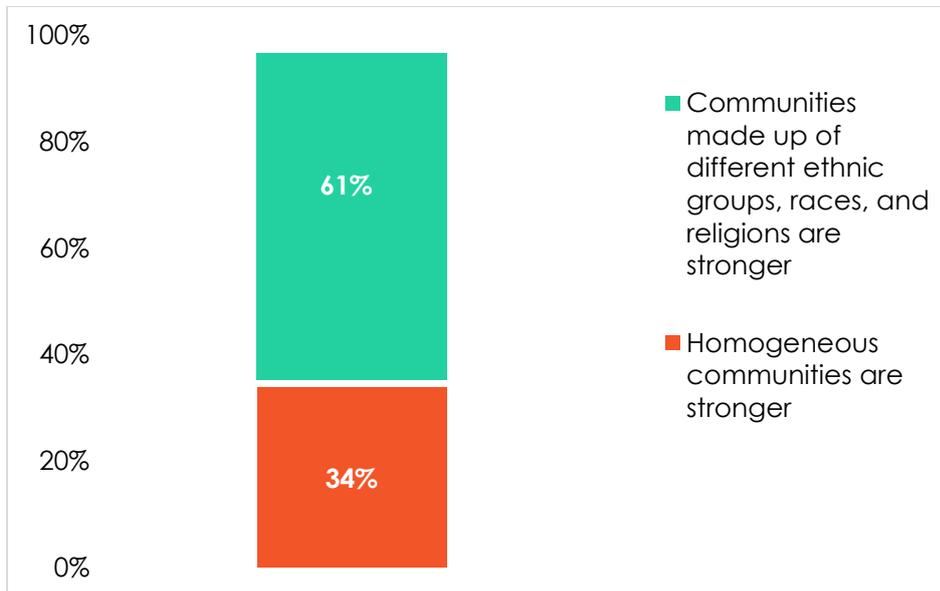
Respondents were asked: How often, if ever, are _____s [respondent's ethnic group] treated unfairly by the government? (% who say "often" or "always")

Figure 6: Frequent unfair treatment of ethnic groups by government | by demographic group | Mauritius | 2020



Respondents were asked: How often, if ever, are _____s [respondent's ethnic group] treated unfairly by the government? (% who say "often" or "always")

Figure 7: Diverse vs. homogeneous communities | Mauritius | 2020



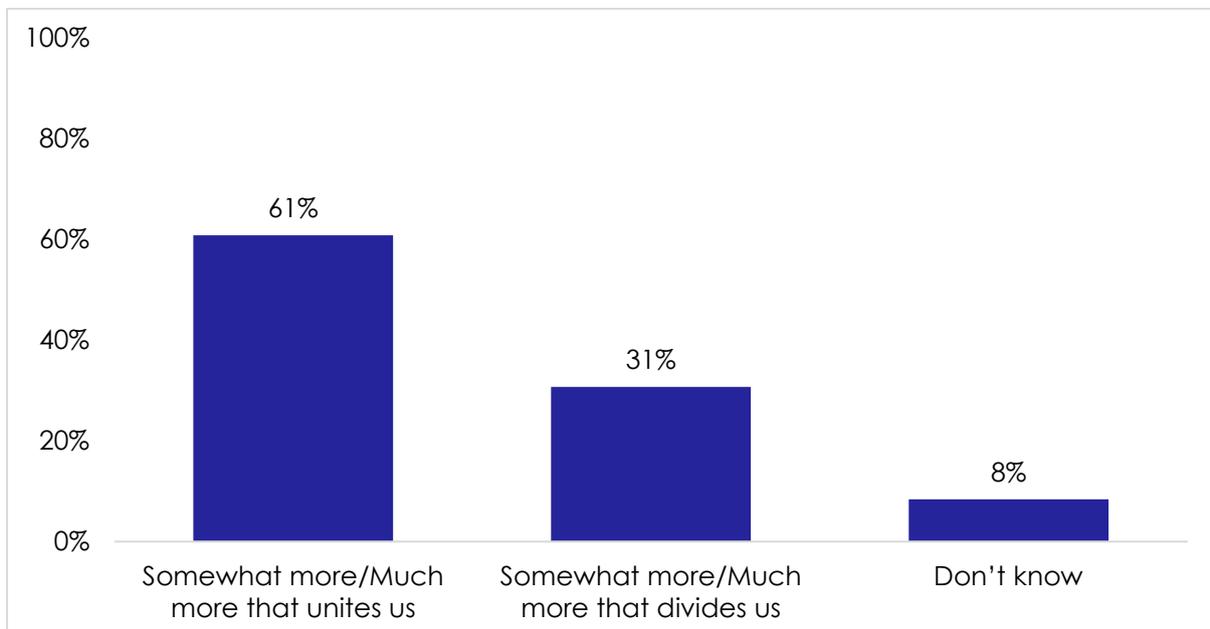
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: Communities are stronger when they are made up of people from different ethnic groups, races, or religions.

Statement 2: Communities are stronger when they are made up of people who are similar to each other, that is, people from the same ethnic group, race, or religion.

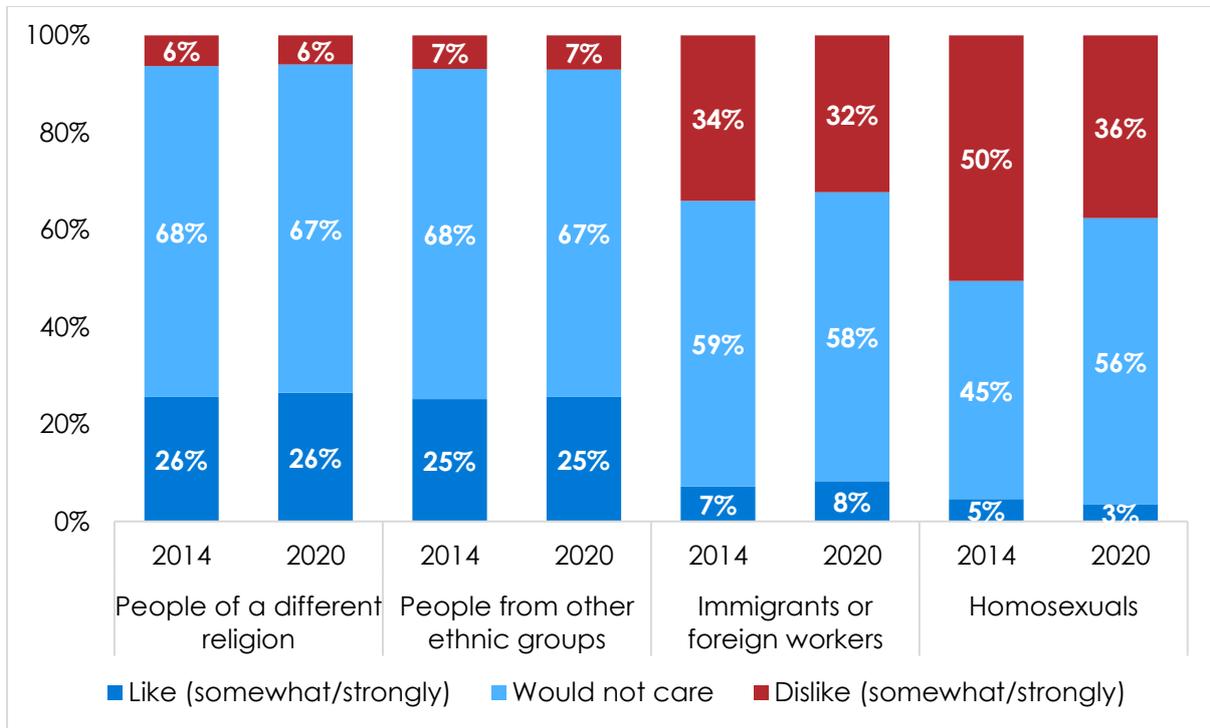
(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

Figure 8: More that unites or divides Mauritians? | Mauritius | 2020



Respondents were asked: Mauritians are very diverse. They come from different religions, ethnic groups, political parties, and economic and social backgrounds. Overall, would you say that there is more that unites all Mauritians as one people, or more that divides them?

Figure 9: Social tolerance | Mauritius | 2014-2020



Respondents were asked: For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: People of a different religion? People from other ethnic groups? Homosexuals? Immigrants or foreign workers?

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