

Port Louis, Mauritius  
5 May 2021

## News release

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### **Mauritians value unrestricted access to the Internet and social media, Afrobarometer study shows**

A majority of Mauritians want unrestricted access to the Internet and social media, Afrobarometer's recent national survey finds.

While a small share of citizens believe that the use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp makes people more susceptible to fake news and intolerance, a large majority say social media informs them about current events and helps them have an impact on political processes.

The share of Mauritians who use social media every day has more than doubled over the past six year, from 32% in 2014 to 69% in 2020. Overall, citizens believe the effect of social media on society is positive.

#### **Key findings**

- Two-thirds (66%) of Mauritians say unrestricted access to the Internet and social media should be protected as it helps people to be more informed and active citizens (Figure 1). Only 21% of Mauritians say that access should be regulated by the government.
  - Support for unrestricted access to the Internet and social media is particularly strong among young Mauritians (78% of 18- to 35-year-olds) and those with secondary (73%) or post-secondary education (78%) (Figure 2).
  - Even among older and less educated Mauritians, only about one in four favour government regulation of Internet and social media access.
- Among the 92% of Mauritians who say they have heard of social media, large majorities say it makes people more informed about current events (87%) and helps them have more impact on political processes (69%) (Figure 3).
  - Smaller majorities believe that social media makes people more likely to believe false news (62%) and more intolerant toward those with different political opinions (53%).
  - More than four in 10 Mauritians (44%) say social media users "often" spread information that they know is false. More respondents blame fake news on social media users than on politicians and political parties (37%) or journalists (27%) (Figure 4).
- Overall, almost two-thirds (64%) of Mauritians say the effect of social media on society is "somewhat positive" or "very positive" (Figure 5).
- While radio and television remain the most common sources of daily news for Mauritians, seven in 10 citizens (69%) now say they get news every day from social media and the Internet (Figure 6). Daily use of social media as a news source has more than doubled since 2014 (32%) (Figure 7).
- Almost all young Mauritians (94% of 18- to 35-year-olds) say they use social media on a daily basis to access the news, compared to just a quarter (27%) of those aged 56 and above (Figure 8).

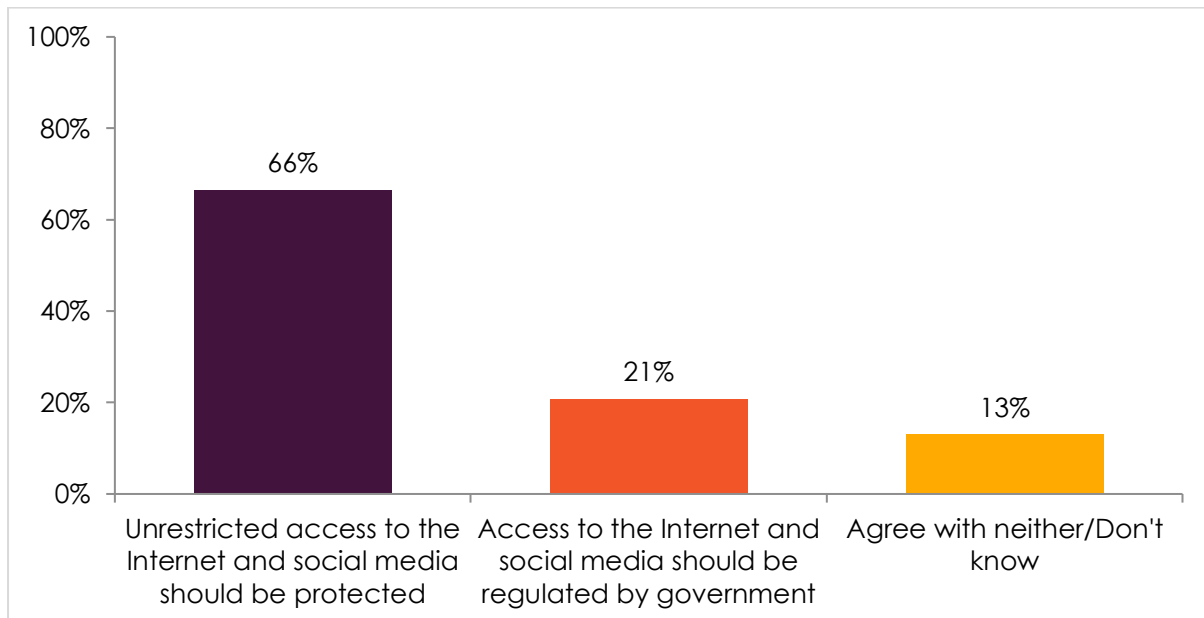
## Afrobarometer survey

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 are underway and will cover at least 35 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.

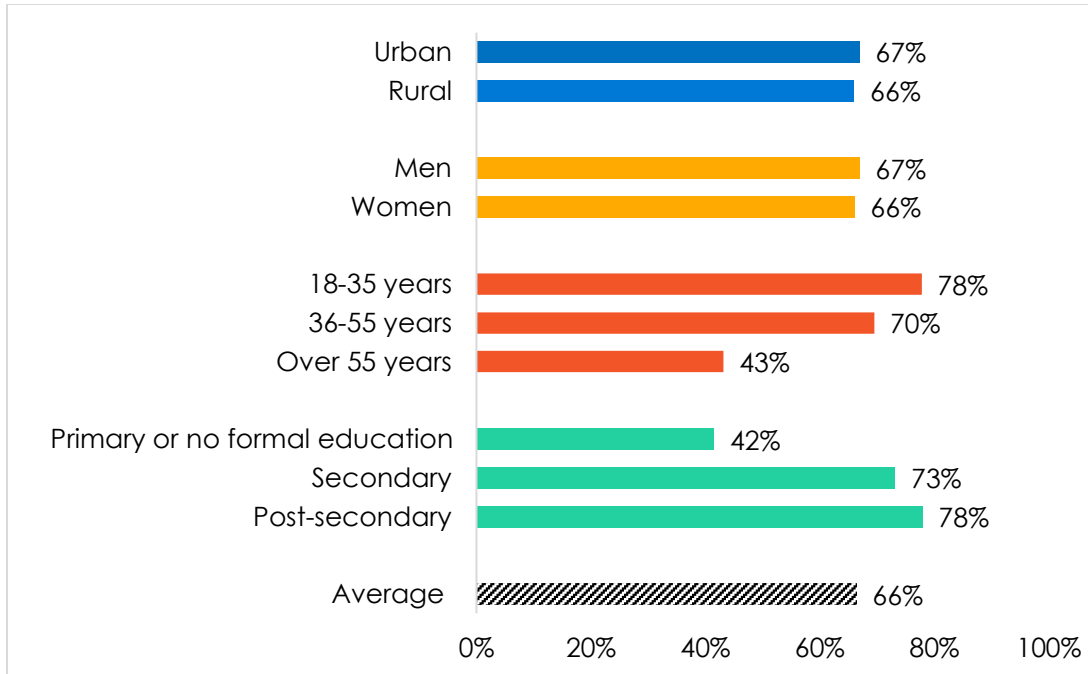
## Charts

**Figure 1: Should access to the Internet and social media be protected or regulated?**  
 | Mauritius | 2020



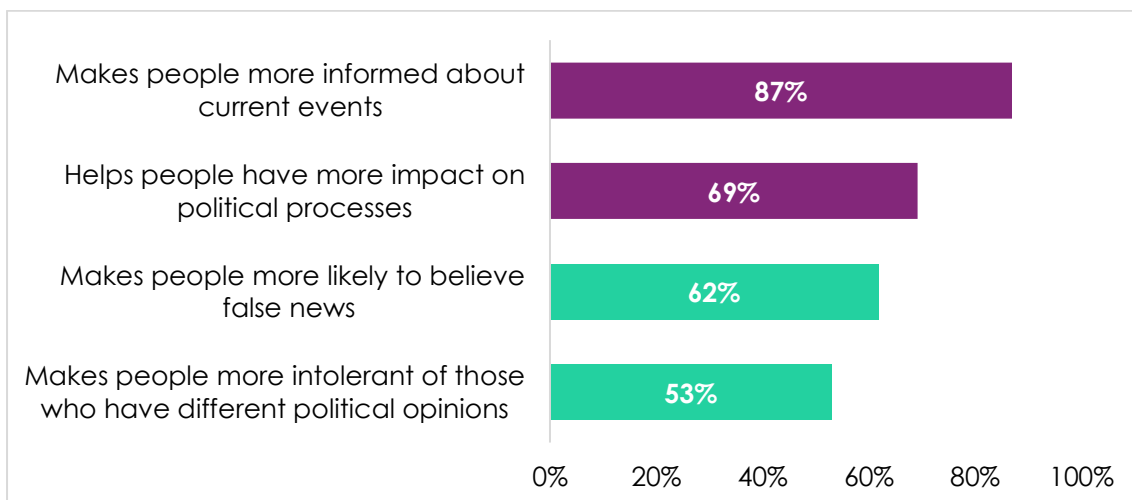
**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
 Statement 1: Unrestricted access to the Internet and social media helps people to be more informed and active citizens, and should be protected.  
 Statement 2: Information shared on the Internet and social media is dividing Mauritians, so access should be regulated by government.  
 (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

**Figure 2: Support for unrestricted access to the Internet and social media | by socio-demographic group | Mauritius | 2020**



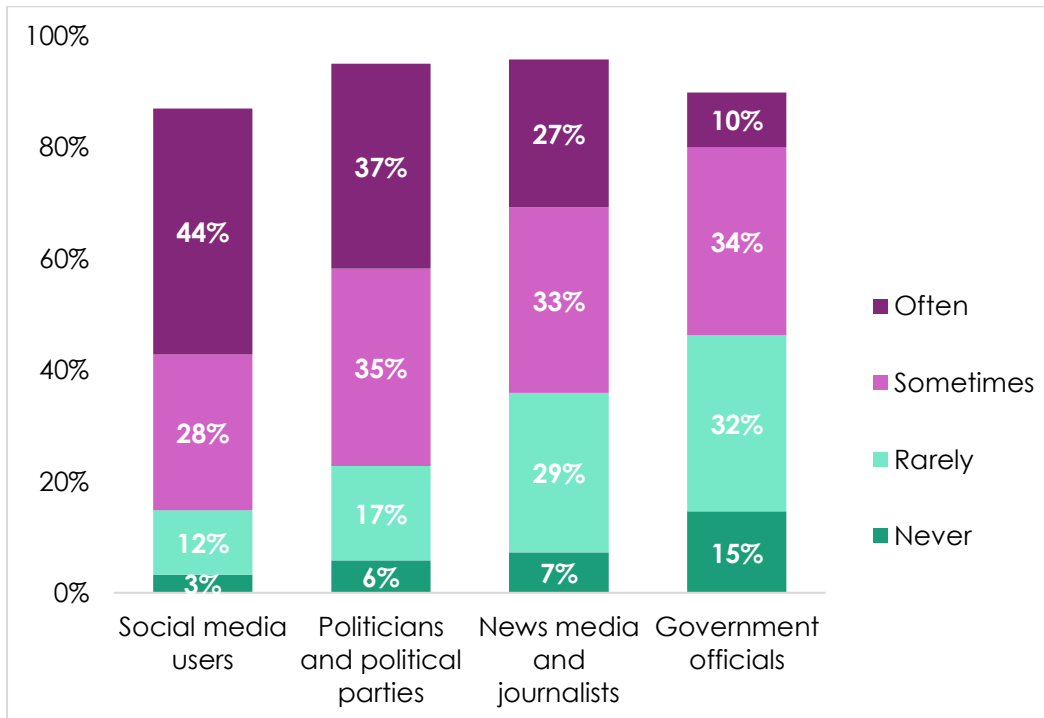
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 Statement 1: Unrestricted access to the Internet and social media helps people to be more informed and active citizens, and should be protected.  
 Statement 2: Information shared on the Internet and social media is dividing Mauritians, so access should be regulated by government.  
 (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with Statement 1)

**Figure 3: Views on the impact of social media | Mauritius | 2020**



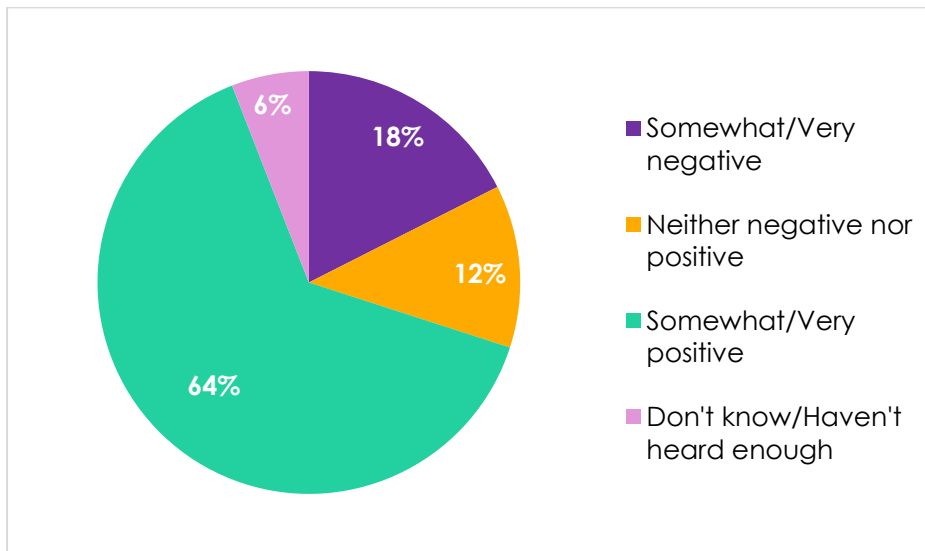
**Respondents who said they had heard of social media were asked:** Regardless of whether you personally use social media yourself, please tell me whether you agree or disagree that social media:  
 Makes people more informed about current events?  
 Makes people more likely to believe false news?  
 Helps people have more impact on political processes?  
 Makes people more intolerant of those who have different political opinions?  
 (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

**Figure 4: Who spreads false information? | Mauritius | 2020**



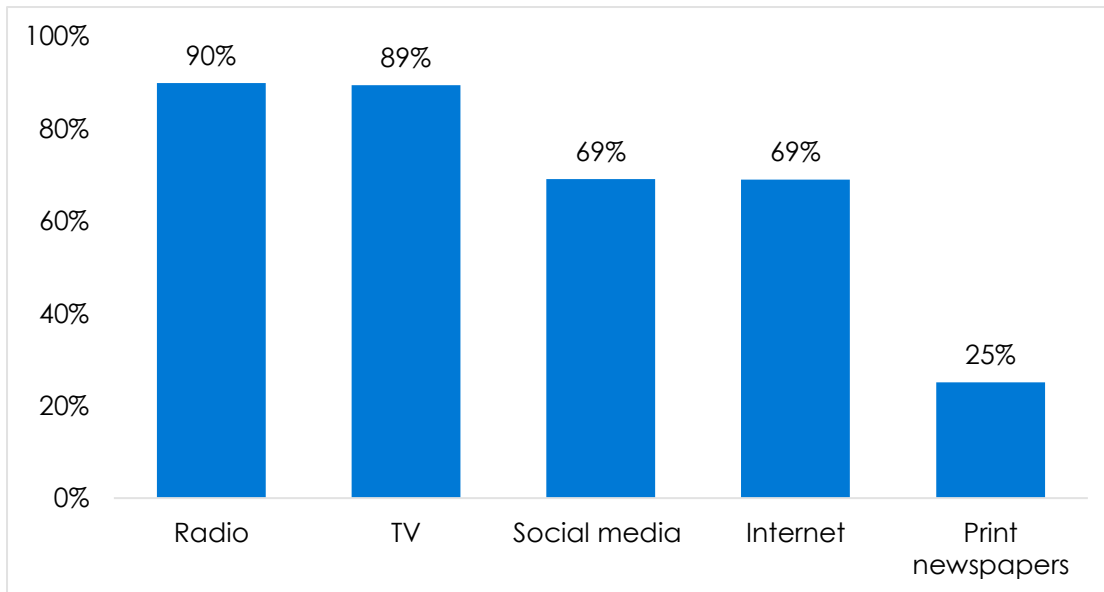
**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me how often, in this country, you think people from each of the following groups spread information that they know is false?

**Figure 5: Is social media good or bad for society? | Mauritius | 2020**



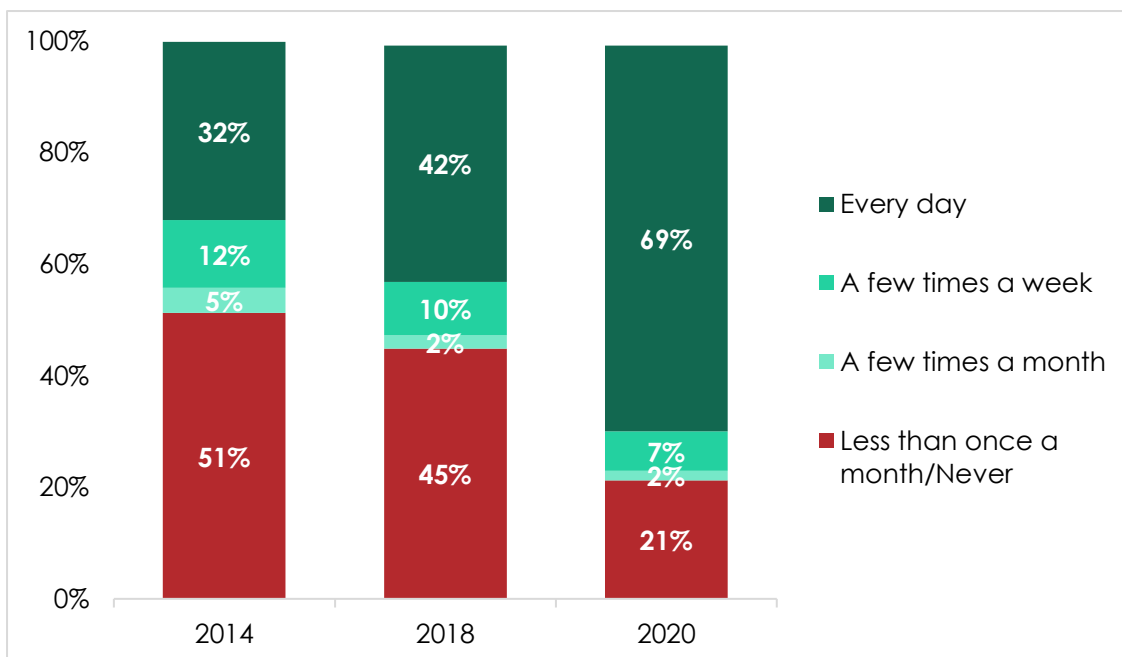
**Respondents who said they had heard of social media were asked:** Overall, do you think that the effects of social media on society are mostly positive, mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say?

**Figure 6: Sources of daily news | Mauritius | 2020**



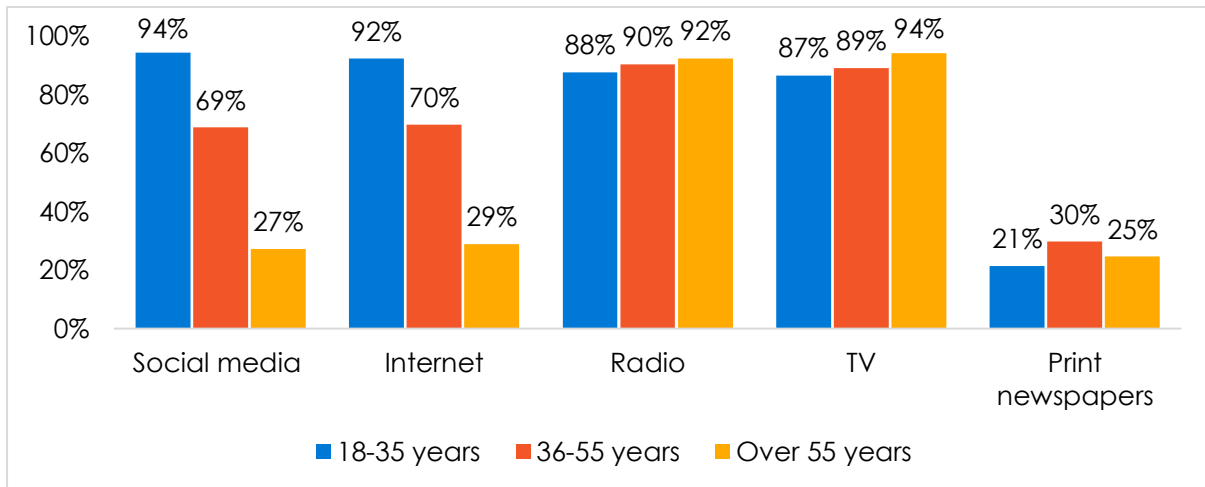
**Respondents were asked:** How often do you get news from the following sources? (% who say “every day”)

**Figure 7: Use of social media as source of news | Mauritius | 2014-2020**



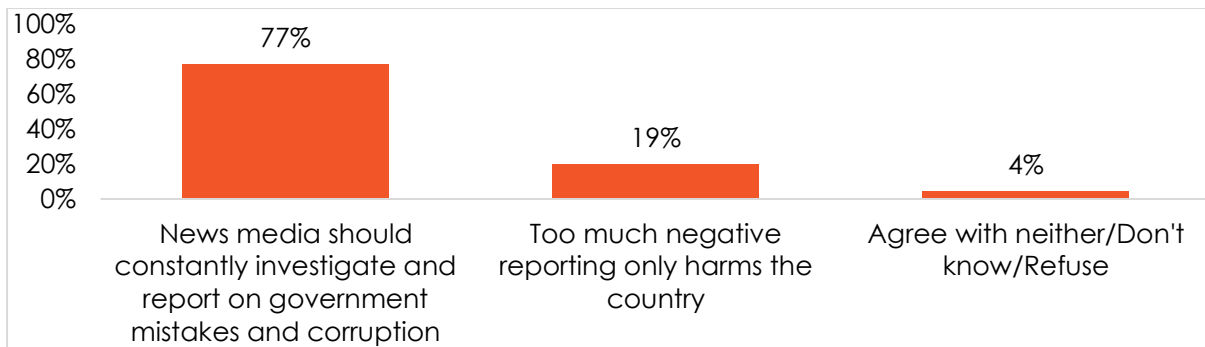
**Respondents were asked:** How often do you get news from the following source: Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, or others?

**Figure 8: Sources of daily news** | by age group | Mauritius | 2020



**Respondents were asked:** How often do you get news from the following sources? (% who say “every day”)

**Figure 9: Media reporting on government** | Mauritius | 2020



**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
 Statement 1: The news media should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption.  
 Statement 2: Too much reporting on negative events, like government mistakes and corruption, only harms the country.  
 (% who “agree” or “agree very strongly” with each statement)

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