

News release

Teachers, school policies, and parents share blame for high failure rate in exams, Mauritians say

Mauritians blame poor teaching, an inadequate curriculum, lax promotion policies, and a lack of parental motivation for the high failure rate in the 2019 School Certificate Level exams, according to a new Afrobarometer survey.

The high failure rate was an unwelcome shock for the education sector of Mauritius. The latest Afrobarometer survey data, collected in November 2020, show that Mauritians distribute responsibility for secondary school students' poor performance widely, blaming teachers who don't execute their duties to required levels, the government policy of allowing students to proceed to the next grade even if they have not met all requirements of the current grade, an insufficient curriculum, and parents' lack of support for academic achievement.

The pass rate for School Certificate Level exams dropped to 71% in 2019, from 79% in 2005. Concerns are heightened by the fact that more than 50% of secondary school students failed their second-semester examinations at the end of 2020, likely in part because of a three-month-long lockdown, from mid-March to mid-June 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The most recent exam results suggest that any further lockdowns may have a significant negative impact on education in Mauritius unless there are targeted interventions.

Even so, Mauritians overwhelmingly agree that closing the schools in 2020 was necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Key findings

- The most frequently cited reason for the high failure rate in the 2019 School Certificate Level exams is teachers who do not execute their duties to required levels (24%), followed closely by the government's policy of allowing all students to proceed to the next grade even if they have not fulfilled all requirements for the current grade (23%) (Figure 1).
 - One in five Mauritians (21%) blame an inadequate school curriculum, while the same proportion (21%) hold parents responsible for not motivating their children to academic achievement.
- Young respondents are more likely than their elders to attribute the high failure rate to the policy of promoting failing students to the next grade (cited by 30% of those aged 18-25 years). Senior citizens are more likely to blame the parents (Figure 2).
- A third (32%) of Mauritians with post-secondary education ascribe the high failure rate to the government's policy of promoting students to the next grade even when they do not meet the requirements of the current grade (Figure 3). Among citizens with primary or less schooling, only one in 10 (10%) agree; these respondents are more likely to cite a lack of parental motivation for academic achievement as the main reason (32%).

- Despite the potential negative impact on student achievement, more than nine in 10 Mauritians (93%) support the government's decision last year to close schools due to COVID-19, including 71% who "strongly support" the move (Figure 4).
 - Views on the duration of the school closure are mixed: 43% say it was about the right length of time, while the same percentage believe it was too long (Figure 5).

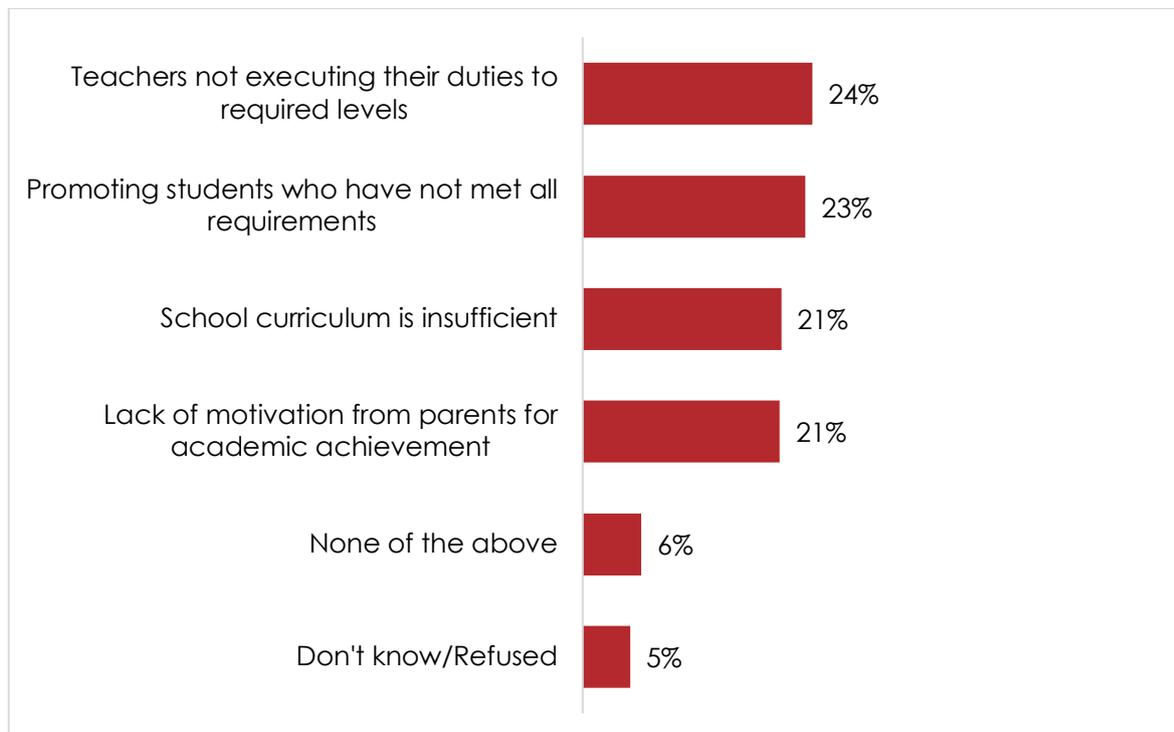
Afrobarometer survey

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 planned in 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.

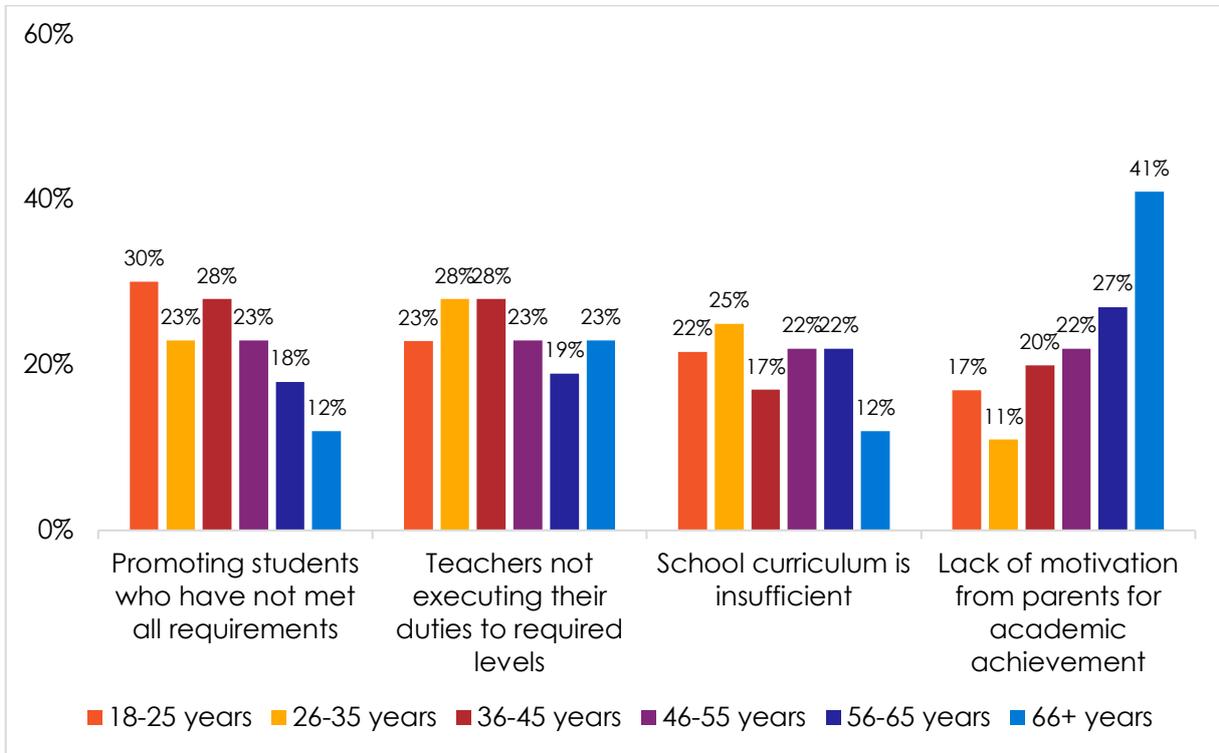
Charts

Figure 1: Main reason for high failure rate at School Certificate exams | Mauritius | 2020



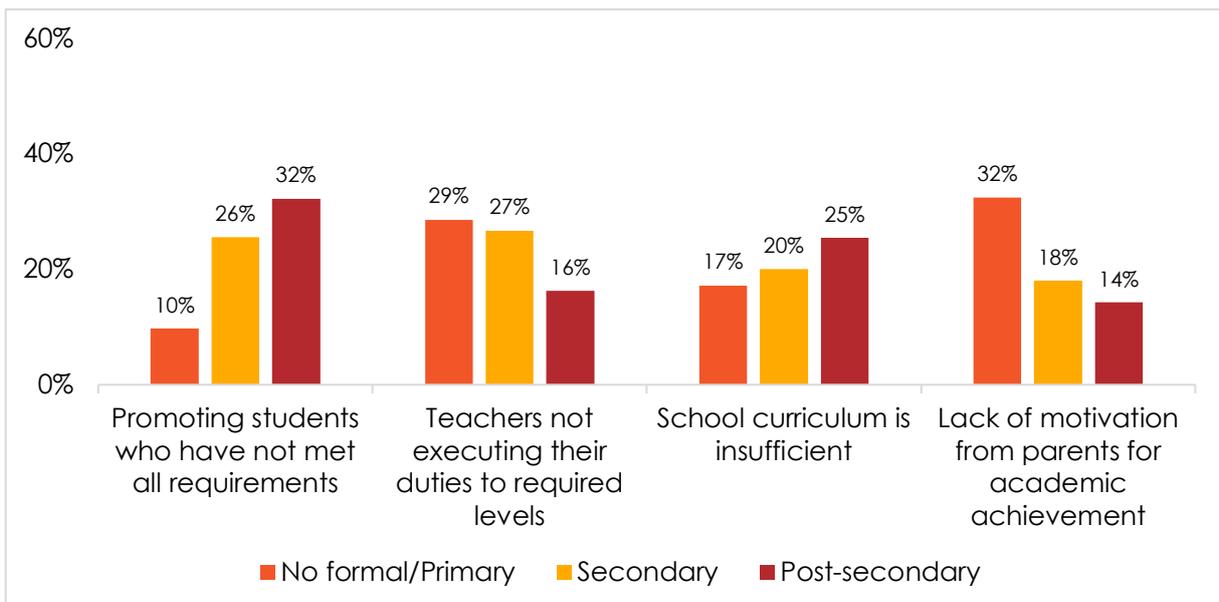
Respondents were asked: Recently, there have been series of debates about the high rate of failure of secondary school students at School Certificate exams, also known as Form V. Which of the following factors would you say is the main reason for the high secondary school failure rate?

Figure 2: Main reason for high failure rate at School Certificate exams | by age group | Mauritius | 2020



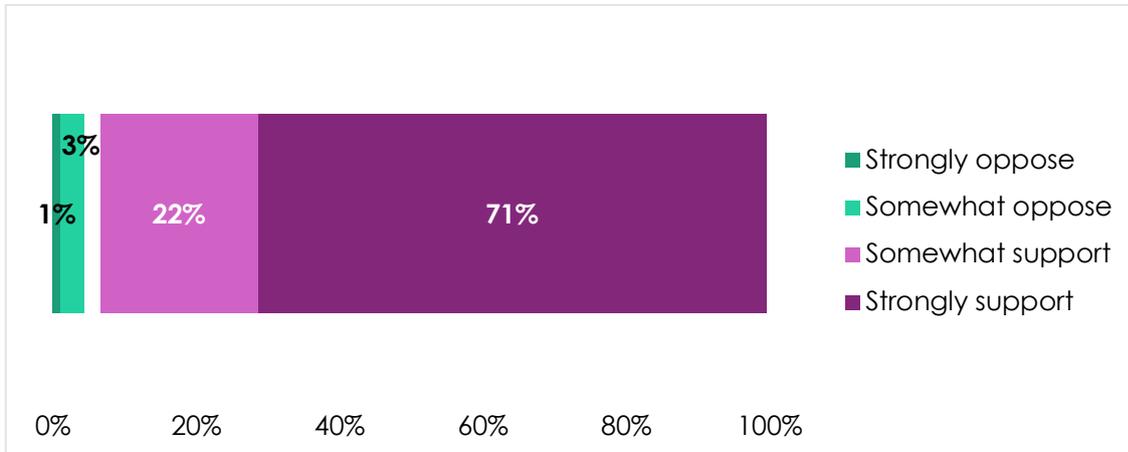
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Figure 3: Main reason for high failure rate at School Certificate exams | by education level | Mauritius | 2020



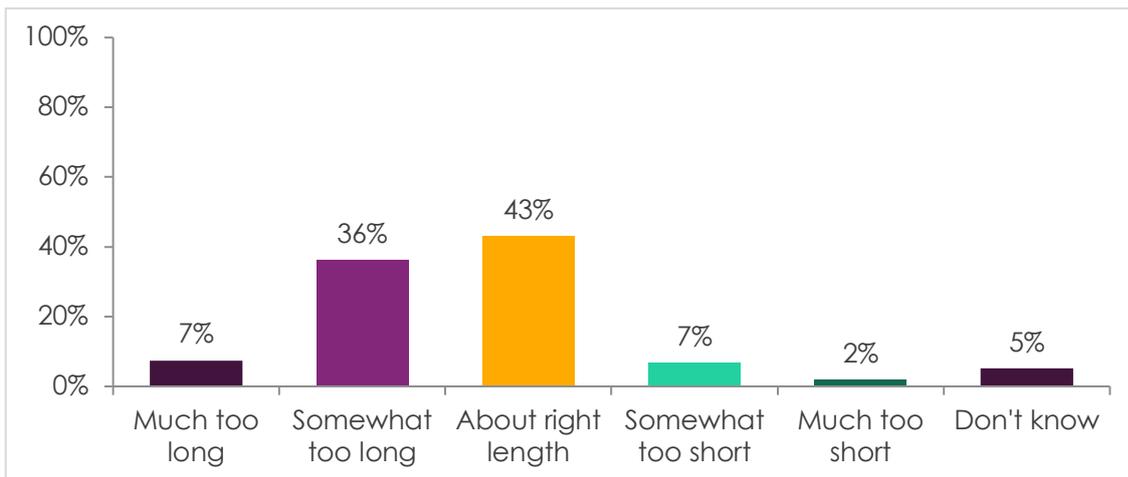
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Figure 4: Support for school closures | Mauritius | 2020



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 5: Length of school closures | Mauritius | 2020



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, was the period during which schools were closed too long or too short?

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