

Port-Louis, Mauritius
11 August 2022

News release

Mauritians voice growing demand for media freedom, strong support for public access to government information, Afrobarometer study shows

Large and growing majorities of Mauritians say the country's news media should be free of government interference and should play the role of a watchdog over government, a recent Afrobarometer survey indicates.

Although only half of citizens support public access to government information in general, strong majorities believe that specific types of information – regarding local government budgets, bids and contracts, and salaries of local government officials and teachers – should be made publicly available.

Key findings

- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Mauritians say the country's news media is "somewhat free" or "completely free" to report on news without censorship or government interference (Figure 1).
- More than eight in 10 citizens (85%) support media freedom, representing a 23-percentage-point increase since 2017. Only 12% endorse a government right to prevent publication of information it disapproves of (Figure 2).
 - Support for media freedom is particularly strong among younger respondents (86%-91% among 18- to 44-year-olds), the economically less well off (89%), and those with secondary (86%) or post-secondary (88%) education (Figure 3).
- A similar majority (86%) insist that the media should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption, representing a 13-percentage-point increase since 2020 (Figure 4).
- About half (49%) of Mauritians say the public should have access to government information, while 40% believe that such information should be used only by government officials and should not be shared with the public (Figure 5).
- But large majorities say that local government budgets (92%), government bids and contracts with businesses (88%), and the salaries of local government officials and teachers (71%) should be shared with the public (Figure 6).

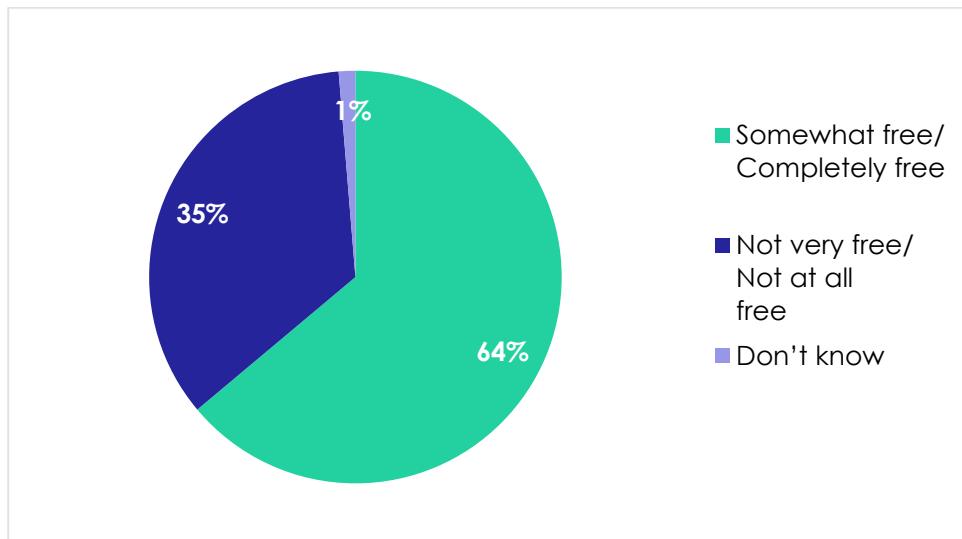
Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight survey rounds in up to 39 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2022) are currently underway. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Mauritius, led by StraConsult Ltd., interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Mauritians in March 2022. 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 were conducted in Mauritius in 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2020.

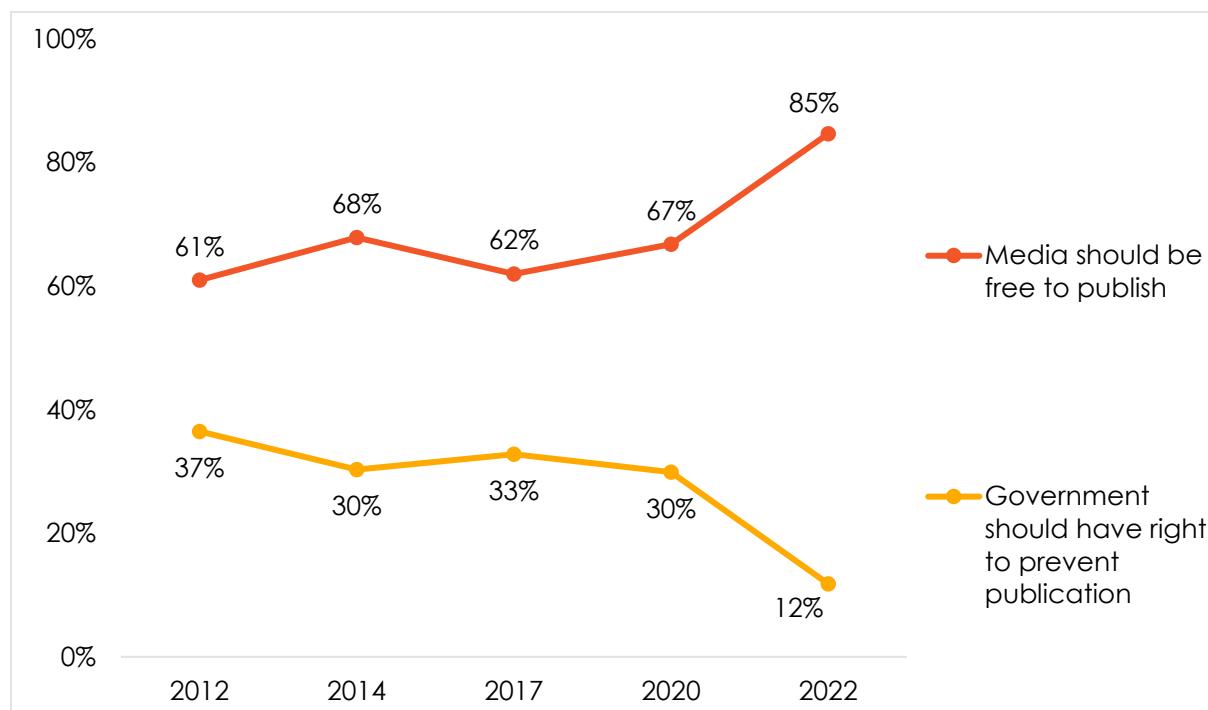
Charts

Figure 1: How free is the media? | Mauritius | 2022



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how free is the news media in this country to report and comment on the news without censorship or interference by the government?

Figure 2: Support for media freedom | Mauritius | 2022



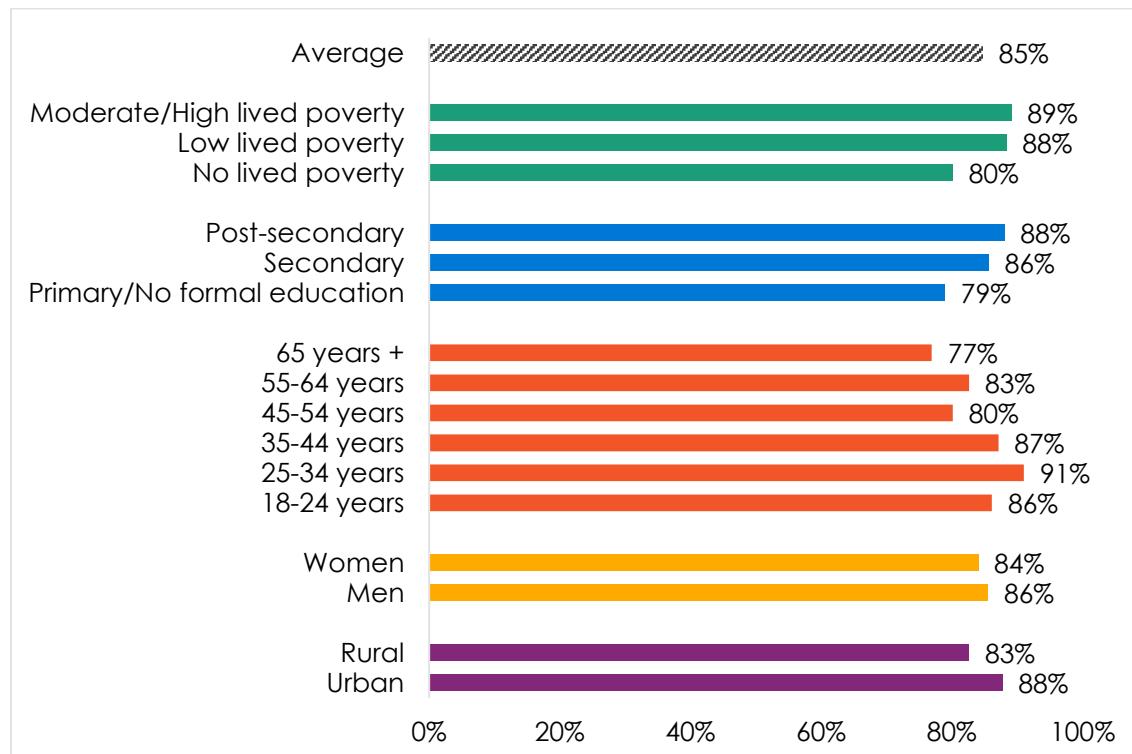
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.

Statement 2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it disapproves of.

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

Figure 3: Support for media freedom | by demographic group | Mauritius | 2022



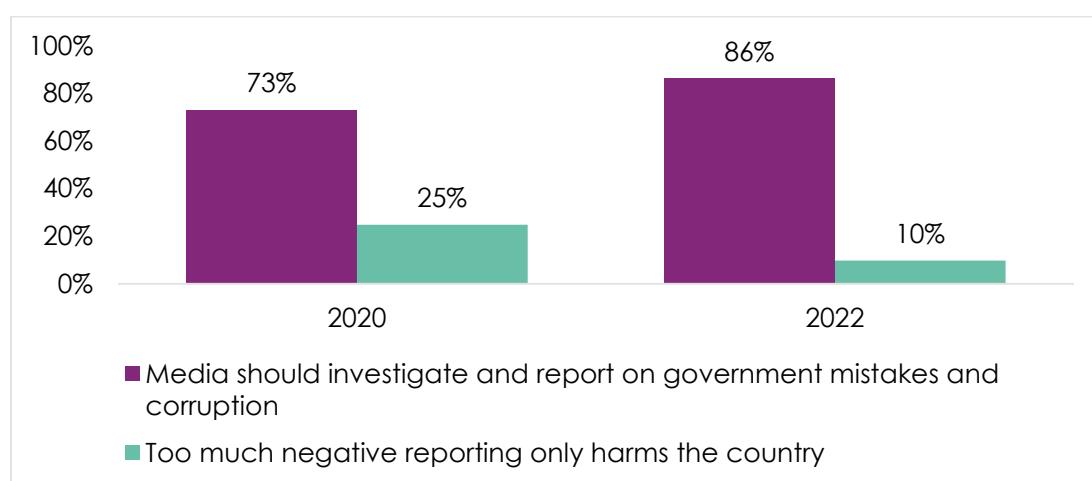
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.

Statement 2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it disapproves of.

(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with Statement 1)

Figure 4: The role of media as watchdog over government | Mauritius | 2020-2022



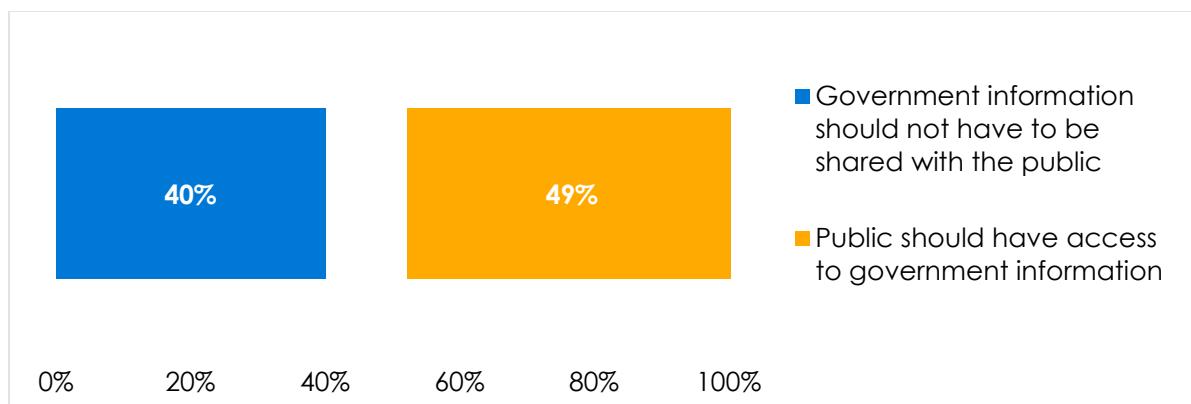
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

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.

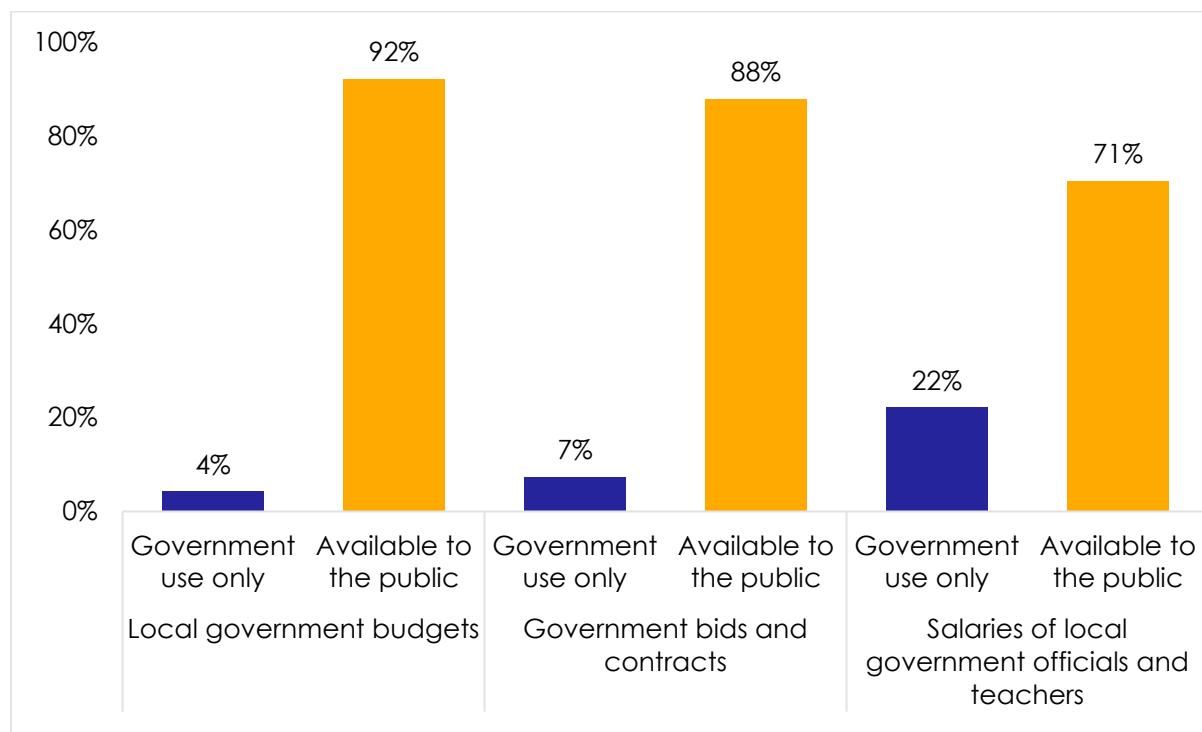
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

Figure 5: Should government share information with citizens? | Mauritius | 2022



Respondents were asked: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Information held by public authorities is only for use by government officials; it should not have to be shared with the public? (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" vs. "disagree" or "strongly disagree")

Figure 6: What information should be made public? | Mauritius | 2022



Respondents were asked: For each of the following, please tell me whether ordinary citizens and news media should have the right to obtain this information from government, or whether government should be allowed to keep the information away from the public:

Budgets and expenditures for the municipality or district council?

All bids and contracts with businesses that have competed for government-funded projects or purchases?

Salary information for teachers and municipality or district council officials?

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