

Port Louis, Mauritius
31 July 2024

News release

Mauritians rank drug abuse as second-most important problem facing the country, say government programmes are ineffective

Mauritians rank drug abuse and addiction as the second-most important problem facing the country, a recent Afrobarometer survey shows. Only the cost of living outranks the drug problem among citizens' priorities for government action.

Survey respondents indicate that if the government decided to increase its spending on programmes to help young people, social services to improve health and prevent drug abuse should be the second-highest priority for additional investment.

Majorities say the government's rehabilitation programmes and other efforts to address the drug crisis have been ineffective. Most believe the fight against drug abuse falls mainly on the shoulders of government and – to a lesser extent – of parents and families.

In Afrobarometer's previous survey in Mauritius, conducted in 2022, citizens indicated that the most effective strategies for reducing the problem of substance abuse would be to educate youth on the dangers of drugs, intensify efforts to reduce drug trafficking, and impose severe penalties for drug users.

In its 2021 National Survey Amongst People Who Use Drugs, the National Drug Secretariat found that 7.4% of the population aged 18-59 had used illicit drugs in the previous month. The ENACT Organised Crime Index for Africa ranks Mauritius No. 1 in the synthetic drug trade in the Southern African Development Community region and in the top 10 on the continent.

Key findings

- Drugs rank second, after cost of living, among the most important problems that Mauritians want their government to address, cited by 37% of respondents as one of their top three priorities (Figure 1).
- If the government could increase its spending on programmes to help young people, citizens' second-highest priority for additional investment would be social services for youth, for example to improve health and prevent drug abuse (Figure 2).
- More than seven in 10 citizens (71%) say the government's efforts to address the drug crisis in Mauritius have been "somewhat" or "very" ineffective. Two-thirds (66%) offer the same assessment of government rehabilitation programmes designed to help individuals recover from drug addiction (Figure 3).
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Mauritians say the government is primarily responsible for fighting the drug-abuse crisis in Mauritius, while 29% say parents or families must take the lead (Figure 4).
- In Afrobarometer's previous survey, in 2022, Mauritians were divided in their views on the most effective strategy for reducing the problem of drug abuse in Mauritian society: 30% would prioritise educating youth on the dangers of drug abuse, 29% would intensify efforts to reduce drug trafficking, and 28% would impose severe penalties for drug users (Figure 5).

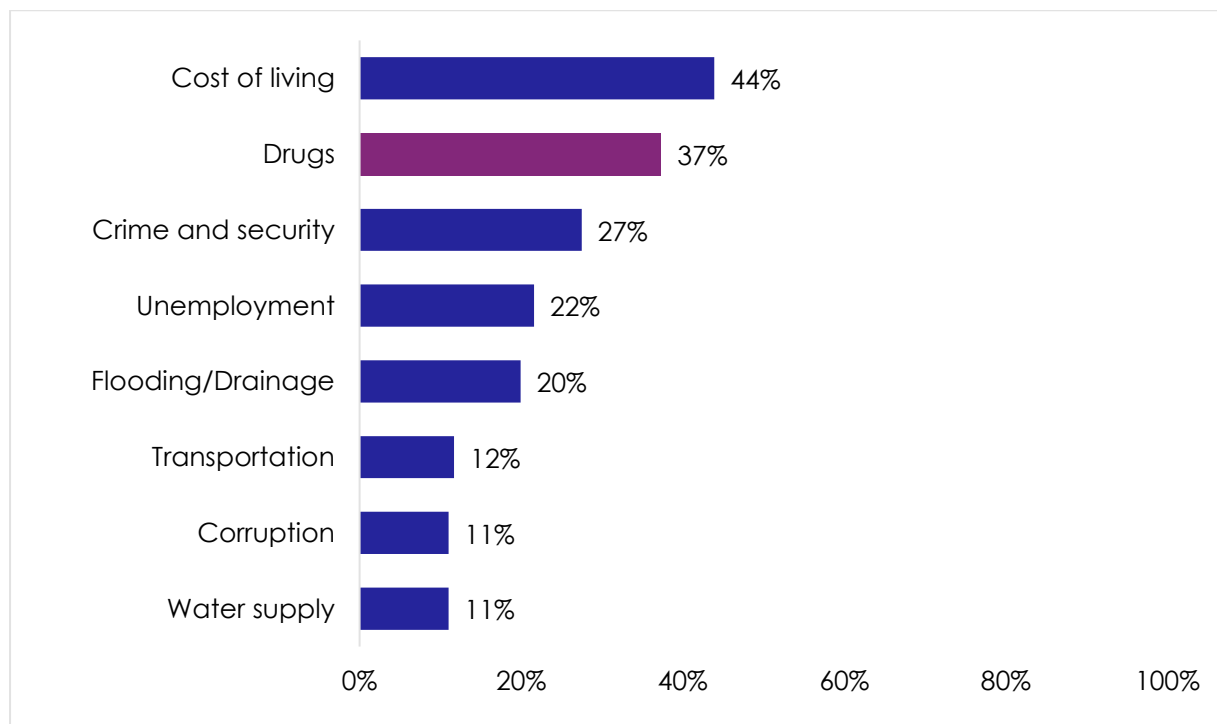
Afrobarometer surveys

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. Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 10 surveys 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, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Mauritians from 24 April to 11 May 2024. 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, 2020, and 2022.

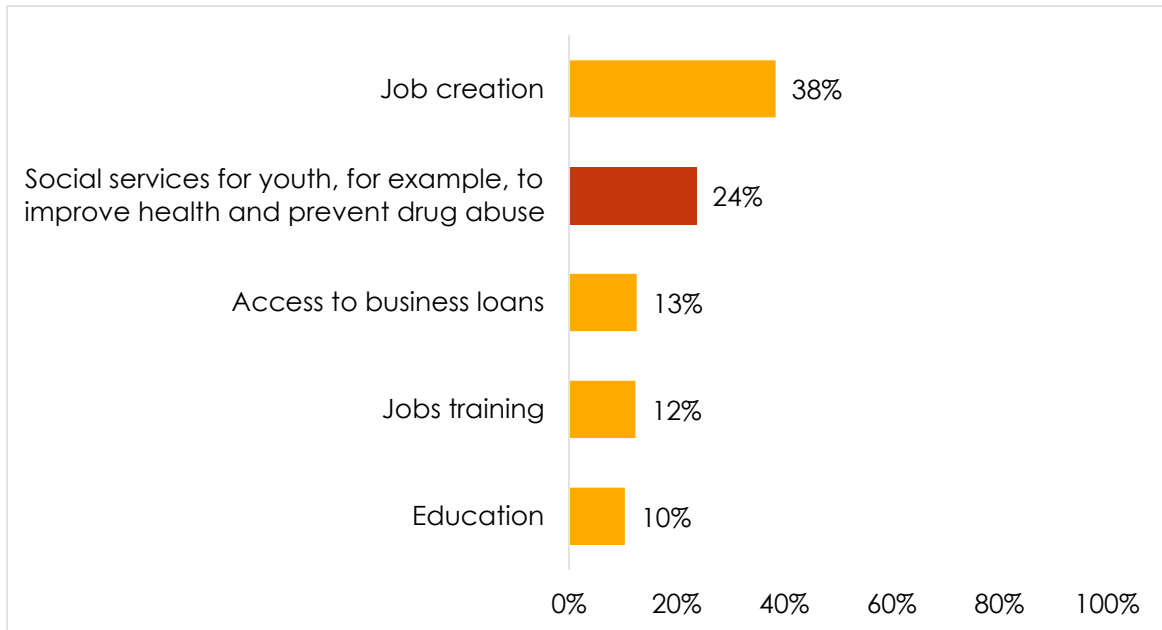
Charts

Figure 1: Most important problems | Mauritius | 2024



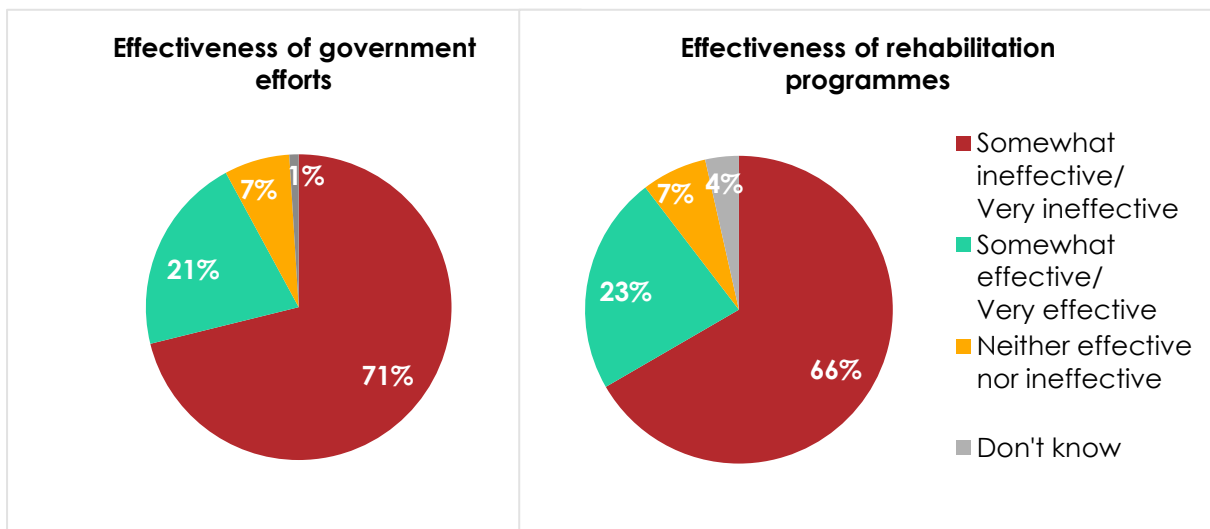
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three answers per respondent were recorded. The figure shows the % of respondents who cite each problem among their three priorities.)*

Figure 2: Government investments in programmes for the youth | Mauritius | 2024



Respondents were asked: *If the government could increase its spending on programmes to help young people, which of the following areas do you think should be the highest priority for additional investment?*

Figure 3: How effective is the fight against drugs? | Mauritius | 2024

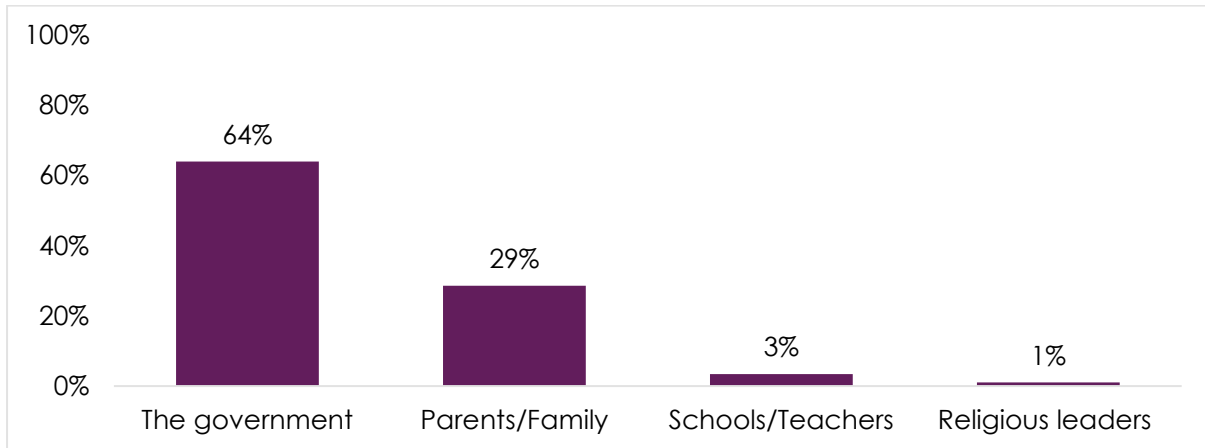


Respondents were asked:

How would you rate the effectiveness of the government's efforts to address the drug crisis in Mauritius?

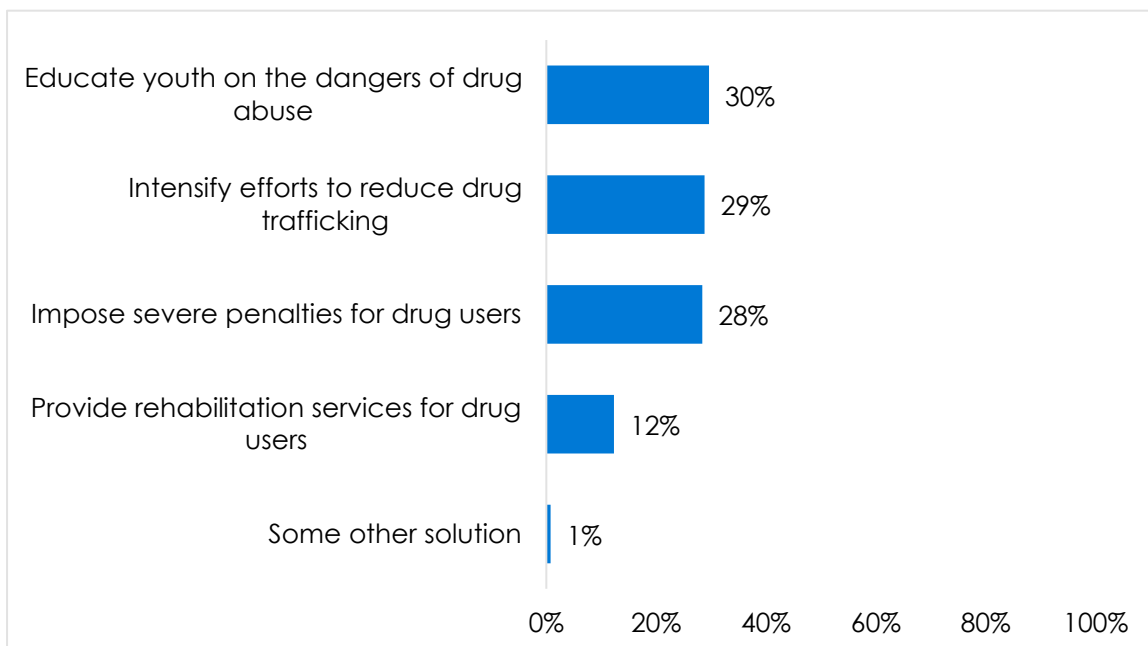
In your opinion, how effective are the rehabilitation programmes offered by the government for individuals to recover from drug addiction?

Figure 4: Who should have primary responsibility for handling the drug-abuse crisis?
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Respondents were asked: Who do you think should have the primary responsibility for handling the drug-abuse crisis in Mauritius today?

Figure 5: Most effective strategy for reducing the problem of drug abuse in Mauritian society
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Respondents were asked: In your opinion, which of the following proposals would make the most effective strategy for reducing the problem of drug abuse in Mauritian society today?

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