Dispatch No. 932 | 8 January 2025

Majority of Mauritians want their MPs to prioritise voter demands rather than their own ideas

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 932 | Asafika Mpako and Stephen Ndoma

Summary

Mauritius' 2024 national election delivered a victory for the Alliance du Changement (ADC) coalition, enabling former Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam to return to the post to lead the country for a fourth term. Having won 62.6% of the vote, the ADC secured an astounding 60 of the 62 directly elected seats in the National Assembly (Al Jazeera, 2024). A further eight seats are apportioned via the best-loser system, a mechanism used to advance ethnic representation (Kasenally & Ramtohul, 2020).

Members of the National Assembly are supposed to represent all citizens, ensuring that the public interest drives the parliamentary agenda (Reddi, 2024). But critics argue that previous parliamentarians' disregard for House rules, the speaker's partiality, and the sidelining of opposition members of Parliament (MPs) have hampered the National Assembly's effectiveness (Mauritius Times, 2024).

As a new administration is ushered in, what do Mauritians look forward to from their national parliamentarians? The latest Afrobarometer survey sheds light on citizens' expectations of their elected office bearers.

Findings show that a majority of Mauritians want members of the National Assembly to prioritise voter demands rather than their own ideas. Based on their perceptions of parliamentarians in the past, a mere one-sixth of respondents say MPs often or always listen to what ordinary people have to say, and citizen-initiated contact with MPs is low, perhaps reflecting weak links between voters and their representatives.

Critically, most citizens support the legislature's roles in lawmaking and holding the prime minister to account for how tax monies are used.

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 in April-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.

Copyright ©Afrobarometer 2025

Key findings

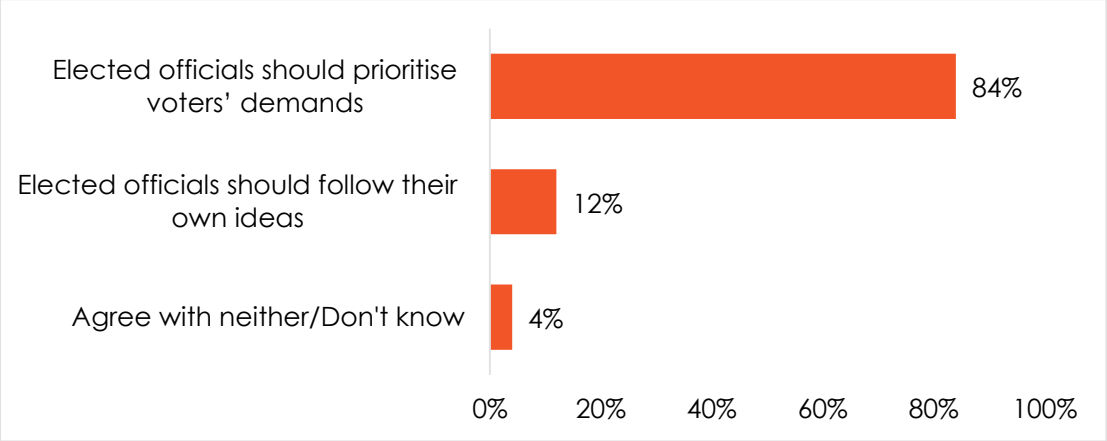
- More than eight in 10 Mauritians (84%) say elected officials should prioritise voter demands rather than their own ideas.
- Based on their perceptions of parliamentarians in the past – rather than newly elected MPs – only one-sixth (17%) of citizens say members of the National Assembly "often" or "always" listen to what ordinary people have to say. Four in 10 (41%) say they do so "only sometimes," while a similar share (39%) think they "never" do.
    - The view that MPs are open to hearing citizens' concerns is especially uncommon among urban residents (9%) and poorer respondents (6% of those experiencing moderate or high lived poverty).
- One-fifth (20%) of Mauritians say they contacted a member of the National Assembly in the past year about some important problem or to give them their views.
    - Men are twice as likely as women to say they initiated contact with their representatives (27% vs. 13%).
- A clear majority (62%) of citizens say the National Assembly should make the country's laws, even if it goes against the wishes of the prime minister.
- Almost eight in 10 (78%) think the prime minister should regularly explain to the National Assembly how his government spends taxpayers' money.

Should elected officials follow voter demands or their own ideas?

In a democracy, elected officials are expected to lead as well as to represent their constituents. When it comes to making difficult policy choices, should they follow their own instincts or the will of the people?

A large majority (84%) of Mauritians say their elected officials should prioritise voter demands rather than their own ideas (Figure 1). Only 12% believe elected officials should be guided primarily by their own ideas.

Figure 1: Should elected officials prioritise voter demands or their own ideas? | Mauritius | 2024

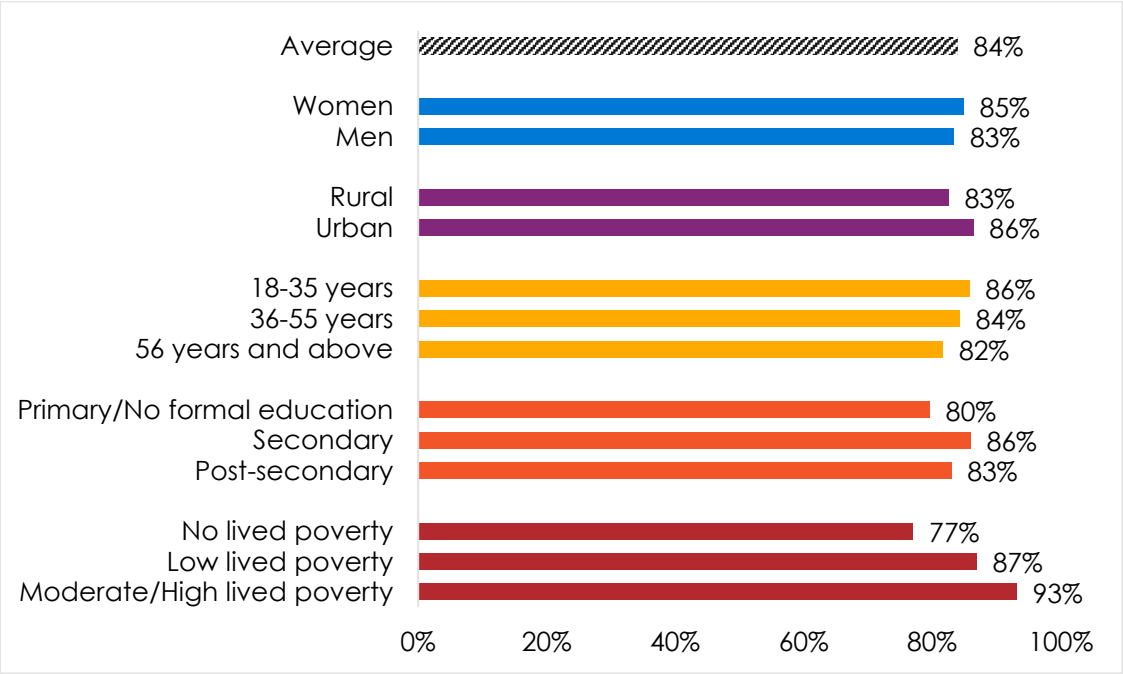


Respondents were asked: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*
Statement 1: Our elected officials should listen to voters' views and do what they demand.
Statement 2: Our elected leaders should follow their own ideas in deciding what is best for the country.

Copyright ©Afrobarometer 2025

The view that elected officials should prioritise voters' demands is strong across key demographic groups (Figure 2). Youth (86%) are slightly more likely than the elderly (82%) to support this view. Strikingly, the poorest respondents are most likely to say that elected officials should follow voter demands (93% of adults experiencing moderate or high lived poverty).[1]

Figure 2: Elected officials should prioritise voter demands | by demographic group | Mauritius | 2024



Respondents were asked: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*
Statement 1: Our elected officials should listen to voters' views and do what they demand.
Statement 2: Our elected leaders should follow their own ideas in deciding what is best for the country.
(% who agree with Statement 1)

Responsiveness of members of the National Assembly

To be guided by voters' demands requires hearing voters' demands. Do citizens believe that members of the National Assembly listen to their constituents?

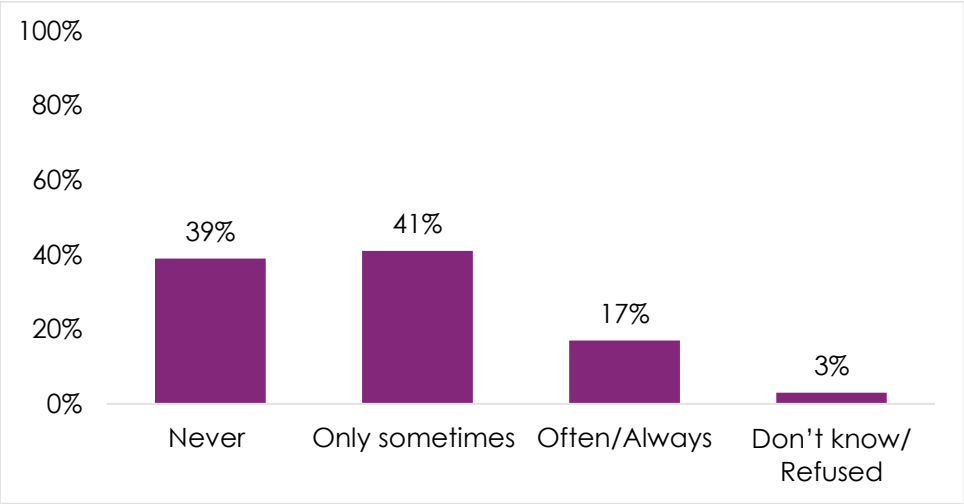
In assessments offered well before the election of the current National Assembly, four in 10 Mauritians (39%) say MPs "never" do their best to listen to what ordinary people have to say, while another 41% say they "only sometimes" do so (Figure 3). Only one-sixth (17%) of respondents say MPs "often" or "always" listen.

More than twice as many rural respondents (22%) as urbanites (9%) believe that members of the National Assembly are open to hearing citizens' concerns (Figure 4). The view that MPs listen to citizens is more widespread among the elderly than among younger generations (22% vs. 15%). Significantly, only a tiny minority (6%) of the poorest citizens agree.

[1] Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes and Patel (2022).

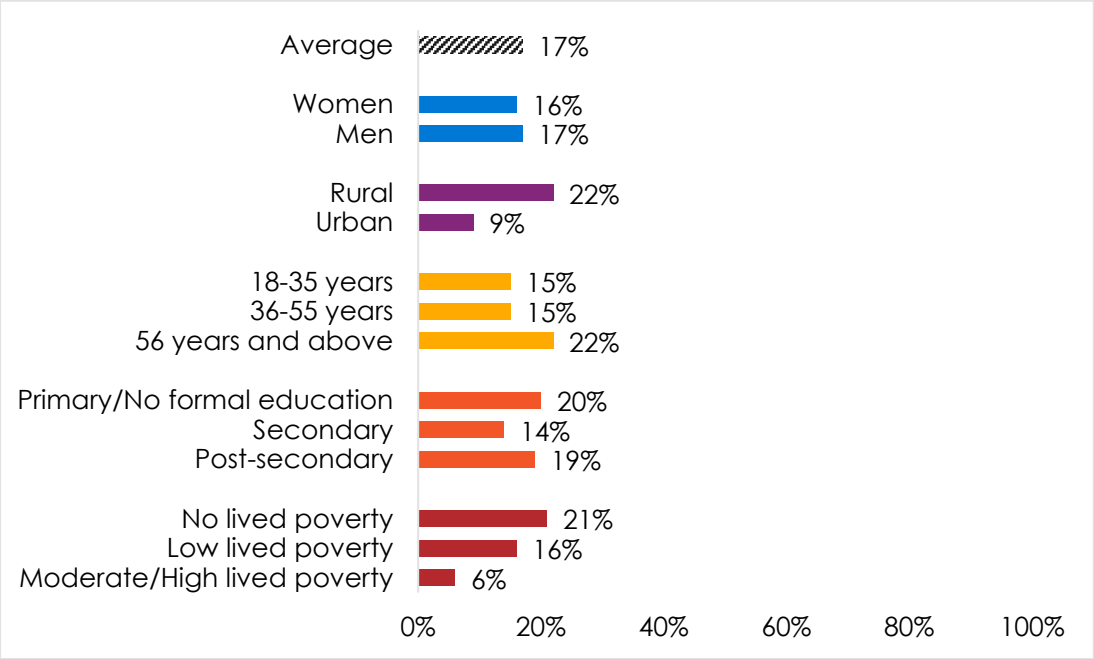
Copyright ©Afrobarometer 2025

Figure 3: Perceived responsiveness of members of the National Assembly | Mauritius | 2024



Respondents were asked: *How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what ordinary people have to say: Members of the National Assembly?*

Figure 4: Members of the National Assembly often/always listen | by demographic group | Mauritius | 2024



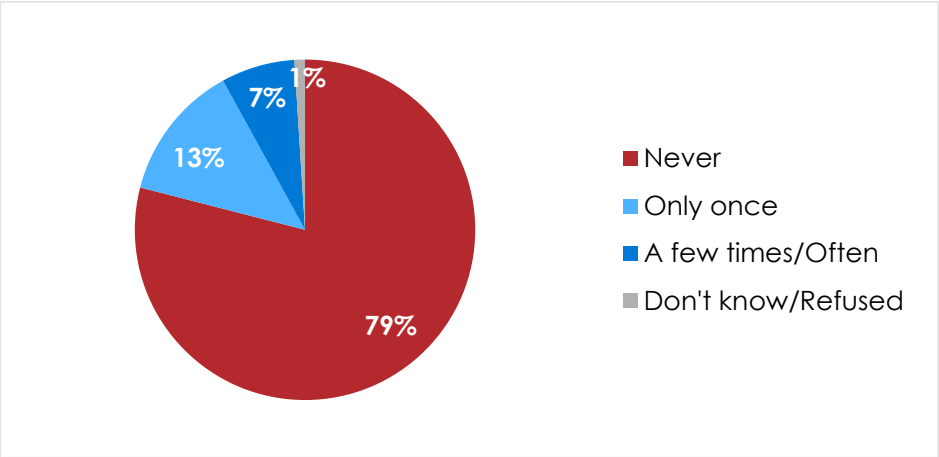
Respondents were asked: *How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what ordinary people have to say: Members of the National Assembly? (% who say "often" or "always")*

But when it comes to citizen-initiated contact with elected officials, only one in five respondents (20%) say they contacted their member of the National Assembly at least once during the year preceding the survey, while 79% report no contact (Figure 5).

Men are about twice as likely as women to say they contacted their MPs (27% vs. 13%), as are the poorest respondents (27%) compared to the best-off (15%) (Figure 6).

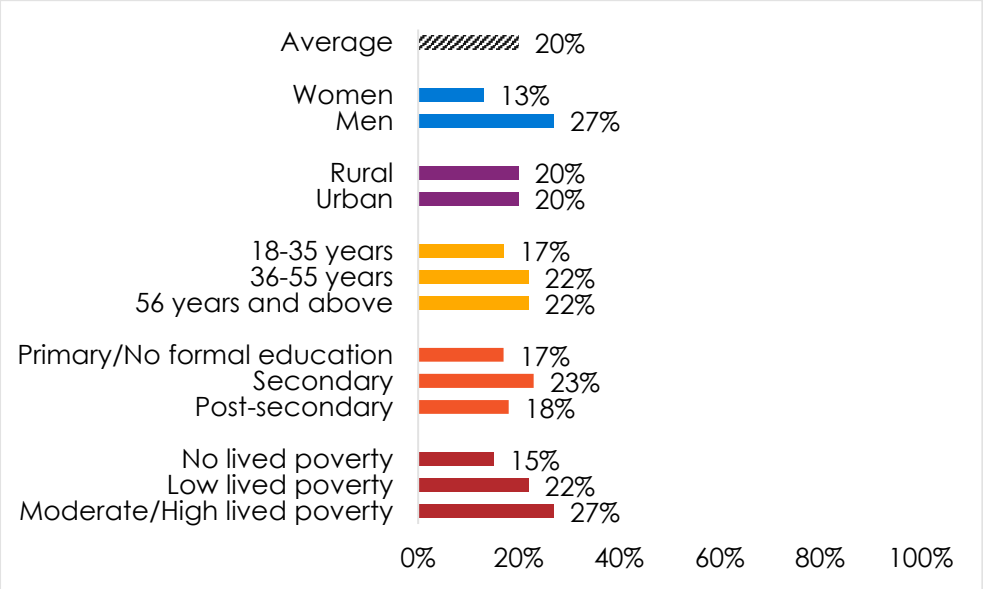
Copyright ©Afrobarometer 2025

Figure 5: Contact with members of the National Assembly | Mauritius | 2024



Respondents were asked: *During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views: A member of the National Assembly?*

Figure 6: Contact with members of the National Assembly | by demographic group | Mauritius | 2024



Respondents were asked: *During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views: A member of the National Assembly? (% who say "often," "a few times," or "only once")*

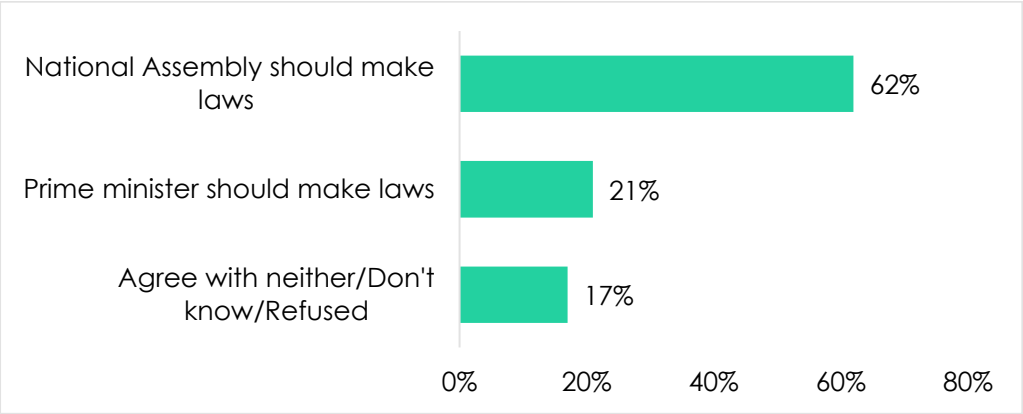
The National Assembly's roles and responsibilities

One of the critical challenges facing many countries is how to make governments work for the people by developing laws that respond to citizens' needs, using resources at their disposal efficiently, and delivering public goods and services.

Asked whether the National Assembly or the prime minister should make the country's laws, more than six in 10 Mauritians (62%) say it should be Parliament (Figure 7). About one-fifth (21%) instead believe that the prime minister should pass laws without worrying about what the National Assembly thinks.

Copyright ©Afrobarometer 2025

Figure 7: Should the National Assembly or the prime minister make the country's laws? | Mauritius | 2024

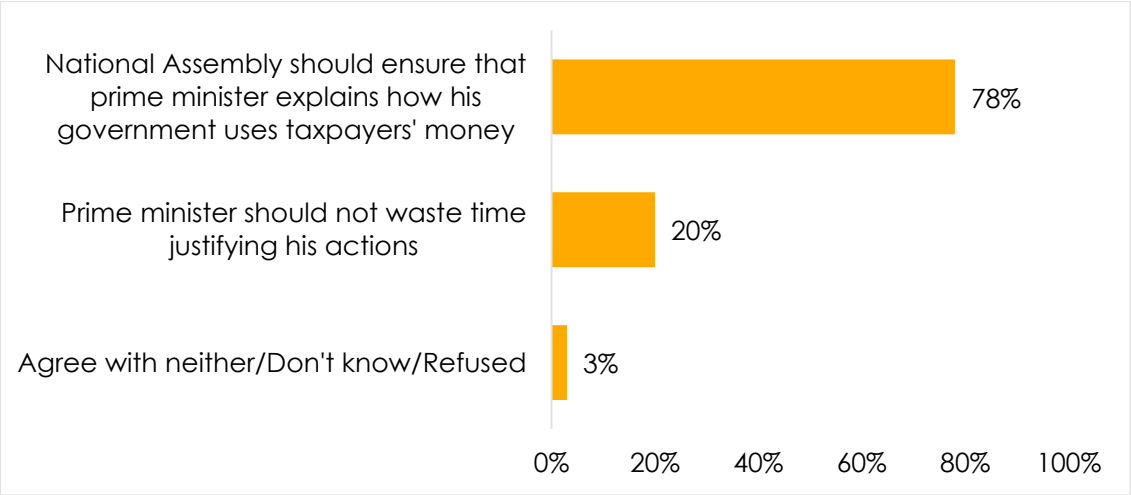


Respondents were asked: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*
Statement 1: Members of the National Assembly represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the prime minister does not agree.
Statement 2: Since the prime minister represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what the National Assembly thinks.

Do Mauritians want MPs to hold the prime minister accountable, or should he be free to act on his own? Nearly eight in 10 citizens (78%) say the National Assembly should ensure that the prime minister explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends taxpayers' money, while one-fifth (20%) think the prime minister should be able to devote his full attention to developing the country rather than wasting his time justifying his actions (Figure 8).

Urbanites (85%) are 12 percentage points more likely than rural residents (73%) to favour the legislature's oversight over the executive (Figure 9). Only seven in 10 (70%) among those with primary schooling or less agree, the lowest among key demographic categories.

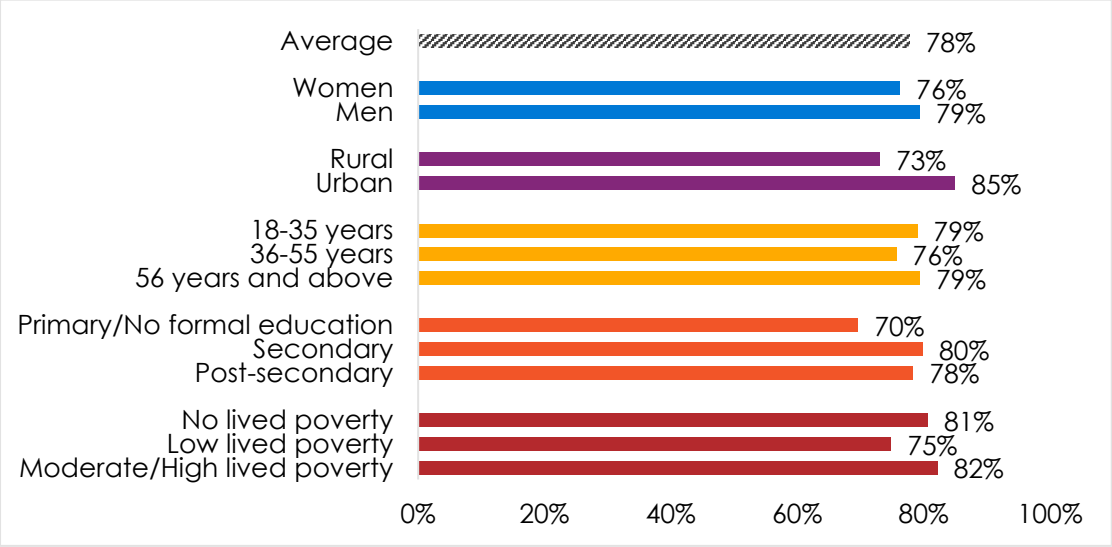
Figure 8: Should members of the National Assembly hold the prime minister accountable? | Mauritius | 2024



Respondents were asked: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*
Statement 1: National Assembly should ensure that the prime minister explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends taxpayers' money.
Statement 2: The prime minister should be able to devote his full attention to developing the country rather than wasting time justifying his actions.

Copyright ©Afrobarometer 2025

Figure 9: Members of the National Assembly should hold the prime minister accountable | by demographic group | Mauritius | 2024



Respondents were asked: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*
Statement 1: National Assembly should ensure that the prime minister explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends taxpayers' money.
Statement 2: The prime minister should be able to devote his full attention to developing the country rather than wasting time justifying his actions.
(% who agree with Statement 1)

Conclusion

As Mauritius emerges from a seismic election, a key demand from the electorate is worth keeping front and centre: that elected officials prioritise voter demands rather than their own ideas. Based on their perceptions of parliamentarians in the past, a mere one-sixth of respondents believe that MPs listen to what ordinary people have to say – a clear opportunity for new members of the National Assembly to improve on their predecessors' performance.

Only one-fifth of citizens say they contacted a member of the National Assembly in the past year about some important problem or to give them their views, suggesting that there is large scope for new MPs to forge closer links with their constituents.

Importantly, healthy majorities of citizens think that it's the National Assembly's job – rather than the prime minister's – to make laws and that its members should hold the prime minister accountable for how his administration spends taxpayers' money.

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question, for any country and survey round. It's easy and free at www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

References

Al Jazeera. (2024). Opposition secures landslide victory in Mauritius election. 12 November.

Kasenally, R., & Ramtohul, R. (2020). The cost of parliamentary politics in Mauritius. Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

Mattes, R., & Patel, J. (2022). Lived poverty resurgent. Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 84.

Mauritius Times. (2024). Has parliament turned into a "madhouse?" 19 April.

Reddi, S. (2024). Reviving democracy: Addressing the decay in our political system. Mauritius Times. 12 May.

Asafika Mpako is Afrobarometer's communications coordinator for Southern Africa. Email: ampako@afrobarometer.org.

Stephen Ndoma is Afrobarometer's assistant project manager for Southern Africa. Email: ndomarashe@gmail.com.

Afrobarometer, a nonprofit corporation with headquarters in Ghana, is a pan-African, non-partisan research network. Regional coordination of national partners in about 35 countries is provided by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Michigan State University, the University of Cape Town, and the University of Malawi provide technical support to the network.

Financial support for Afrobarometer is provided by Sweden via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) via the U.S. Institute of Peace, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation via the World Bank Think Africa Project, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations - Africa, Luminate, the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Mastercard Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the European Union Commission, the World Bank Group, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda, the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe, and GIZ.

Donations help Afrobarometer give voice to African citizens. Please consider making a donation to Afrobarometer. To make an online donation, kindly follow this link or this link. To discuss institutional funding, contact Felix Biga (felixbiga@afrobarometer.org) or Runyararo Munetsi (runyararo@afrobarometer.org).

For more information, please visit www.afrobarometer.org.

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.

Copyright ©Afrobarometer 2025