

# Mauritians support sexuality education in school and access to contraceptives regardless of age

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**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 1146 | Preesha Ramtohul and Zuhayr Mustun**

## Summary

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 takes a comprehensive approach to gender equality by seeking not only to empower women to access higher spheres of decision making, but also to guarantee their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). According to the United Nations (2024) Sustainable Development Report, Mauritius still needs to address significant challenges in meeting the targets under SDG 5, including by facilitating access to modern methods of contraception.

The National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy 2022 and its Implementation Plan 2022-2027 are a step in that direction, aiming to help women and girls make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health (GIS, 2022). In addition, sexuality education has been integrated in the national school curriculum as a means to facilitate access to accurate SRHR information, especially for preteens and young adolescents at risk of unhealthy sexual practices (Haruna, Hu, Chu, Mellecker, Gabriel, & Ndekao, 2018). The most recent national contraceptive prevalence survey, in 2014, revealed that teachers were the primary source of information on sexual matters, underscoring the importance of sexuality education in the school setting (Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, 2016).

Knowledge of contraception is high in Mauritius: As of 2014, 99.6% of married women aged 15-49 were aware of at least one method of contraception, credited in part to the extensive network of family-planning service points across the island (Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, 2016). In that demographic group, unmet need for family planning was 12.5%.

A decade since the last national survey on the prevalence of contraceptives, reproductive-health perceptions and behaviour, and family planning, what do we know about the attitudes of Mauritians on SRHR issues? This dispatch reports on Mauritians' views on SRHR as recorded in a special Afrobarometer survey module in 2024.

Findings show that a majority of Mauritians support access to contraceptives for anyone who is sexually active regardless of age or marital status. Majorities also consider abortion at least "sometimes" justifiable if the pregnancy threatens the woman's life or health, resulted from rape or incest, would leave the woman economically unable to care for a child, or is unwanted "for any reason."

Mauritians overwhelmingly support the teaching of sexuality education in school, and most say pregnant girls should be allowed to continue their education.

Large majorities say that girls and women should be free to make their own decisions about whether and when to marry and about how many children to have and when to have them.

## 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. Ten survey rounds in up to 45 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 10 surveys (2024/2025) cover 38 countries. 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.

## Key findings

- Majorities of Mauritians say that contraceptives should be made available to anyone who is sexually active regardless of marital status (68%) or age (56%).
- Most citizens say that abortion is “sometimes” or “always” justified if a pregnancy threatens the woman's health or life (91%) or is the result of rape or incest (82%).
  - Majorities also consider abortion justifiable if the woman is economically unable to care for a child (61%) or doesn't want the pregnancy “for any reason” (53%).
- Two-thirds (66%) of Mauritians say pregnant girls should be allowed to stay in school.
- More than nine in 10 citizens (94%) say schools should teach sexuality education to help young people make informed decisions.
- Mauritians overwhelmingly support women's right to decide for themselves whether and when to marry (86%) as well as how many children to have and when to have them (77%).

Survey questions on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including questions on contraception, sexuality education, abortion, and women's autonomy, may be sensitive for some countries or groups of respondents, which raises potential challenges for data analysis and interpretation. These questions may generate *non-response bias* if respondents are uncomfortable providing answers or *social desirability bias* if they feel compelled to offer socially acceptable answers, rather than their true opinions.

We urge analysts and users of these data to recognise these challenges in their presentation and interpretation of the findings, especially by examining and reporting item non-response rates (“don't know” or refused to answer) when they exceed acceptable limits (usually 5%) and by conducting appropriate statistical tests of any proposed scales or indices generated. In most countries, non-response rates are well within acceptable limits, but in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, Morocco, and Tunisia, they often rise above these levels. Excluding non-responses in these cases could misrepresent public attitudes on these important issues.

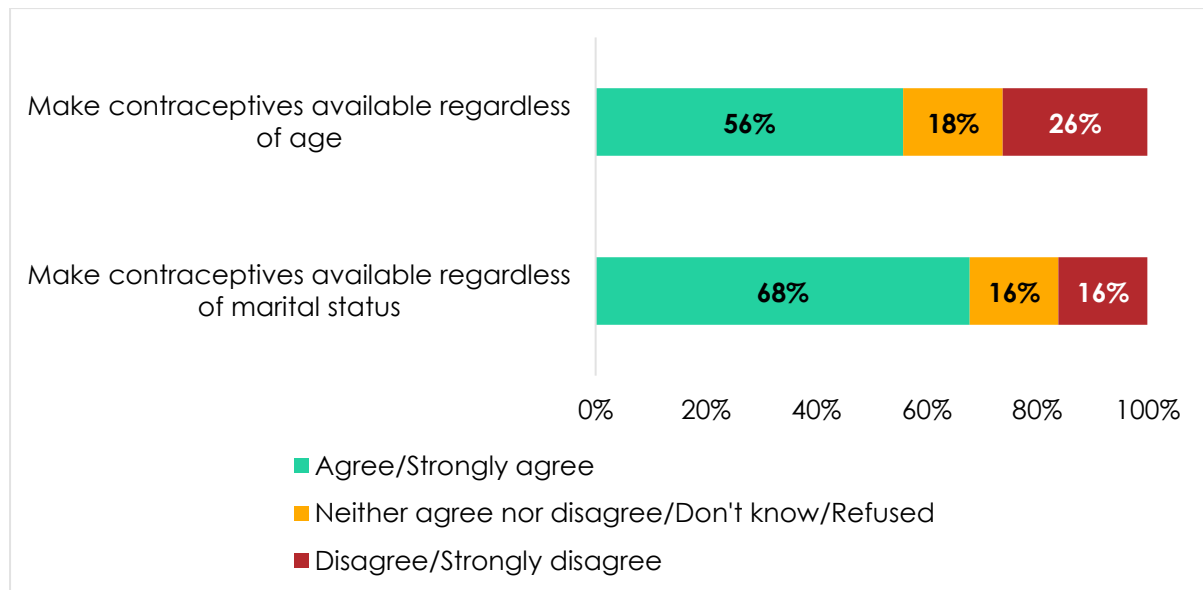
For a detailed analysis of these issues in the Afrobarometer Round 10 SRHR data, and a review of diagnostic tools that can be applied in the interpretation of the findings, we refer readers to [Afrobarometer Methods Note No. 5](#).

Finally, we note that the SRHR module originally included one additional question about potential punishment for women who obtain an abortion. However, early in the implementation of Round 10, Afrobarometer concluded that the question wording was unclear, making the responses difficult to interpret. Since the findings did not meet an acceptable standard for clarity and reliability, this question was dropped from the remaining Round 10 surveys, and the data from those countries where it was asked have been excluded from all final data sets.

## Views on contraceptives and terminating pregnancies

More than half (56%) of Mauritians say that contraceptives should be available to anyone who is sexually active irrespective of age (Figure 1). Even more (68%) support making contraceptives available to anyone regardless of marital status.

**Figure 1: Should contraceptives be made available to everyone regardless of age and marital status? | Mauritius | 2024**



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree.

Contraceptives should be available to everyone, regardless of marital status.

Contraceptives should be available to everyone who is sexually active regardless of age.

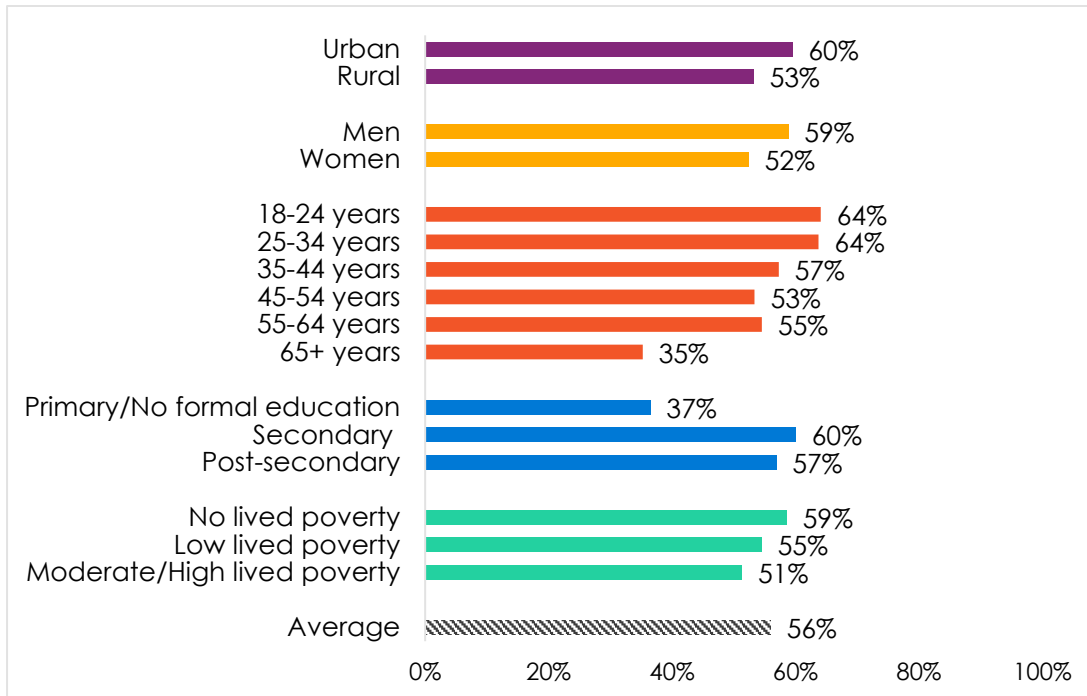
More urbanites (60%) and men (59%) than rural residents (53%) and women (52%) endorse making contraceptives available regardless of people's age (Figure 2). Younger respondents (64% of 18- to 34-year-olds) are also more likely than their elders (35%-57%) to endorse contraceptive availability regardless of age.

Support for this view increases as respondents' level of education increases, ranging from 37% of the least-educated to 57%-60% of those with secondary or post-secondary education.

Economically disadvantaged respondents show less support for making contraception available irrespective of age compared to their better-off counterparts (51% vs. 59%).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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 Lekalake (2025).

**Figure 2: Contraceptives should be made available to everyone who is sexually active regardless of age** | by demographic group | Mauritius | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Contraceptives should be available to everyone who is sexually active regardless of age. (% who “agree” or “strongly agree”)

Under the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act 2012, abortion is permitted in Mauritius in cases where the pregnancy is the result of unlawful sex, threatens the woman's health or life, or is likely to result in a child with grave physical or mental disability (Republic of Mauritius, 2012). When asked how often they think girls and women in their community terminate their pregnancies, more than four in 10 Mauritians say abortions “rarely” (24%) or “never” (19%) occur, while about one in five say that women and girls in their community “often” (5%) or “occasionally” (17%) terminate their pregnancies.<sup>2</sup> More than one-third say they “don't know” (34%) or refused to answer the question (1%) (Figure 3).

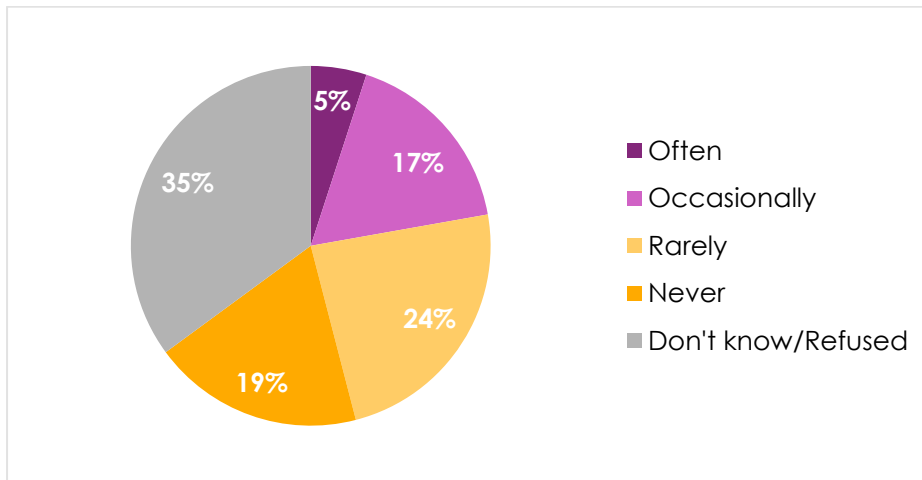
Large majorities say that abortion is “sometimes” or “always” justified if a pregnancy threatens the woman's health or life (91%)<sup>3</sup> or is the result of rape or incest (82%) (Figure 4).

Majorities also consider abortion justifiable if economic hardship would prevent the woman from caring for the child (61%) and if the pregnancy is unwanted “for any reason” (53%). Women are slightly (by 2-5 percentage points) more likely than men to consider abortion justifiable under these circumstances (Figure 5).

<sup>2</sup> Respondents' assessments and reports to interviewers of the frequency of abortion are likely to be highly susceptible to their social, cultural, religious, and legal context (Makleff et al., 2019). Whether or not people hear and are willing to talk about abortion depends not only on its prevalence but also on how openly it can be discussed within the society. Consequently, reported views about the frequency of abortion may signal its prevalence but cannot be assumed to reflect accurate prevalence estimates.

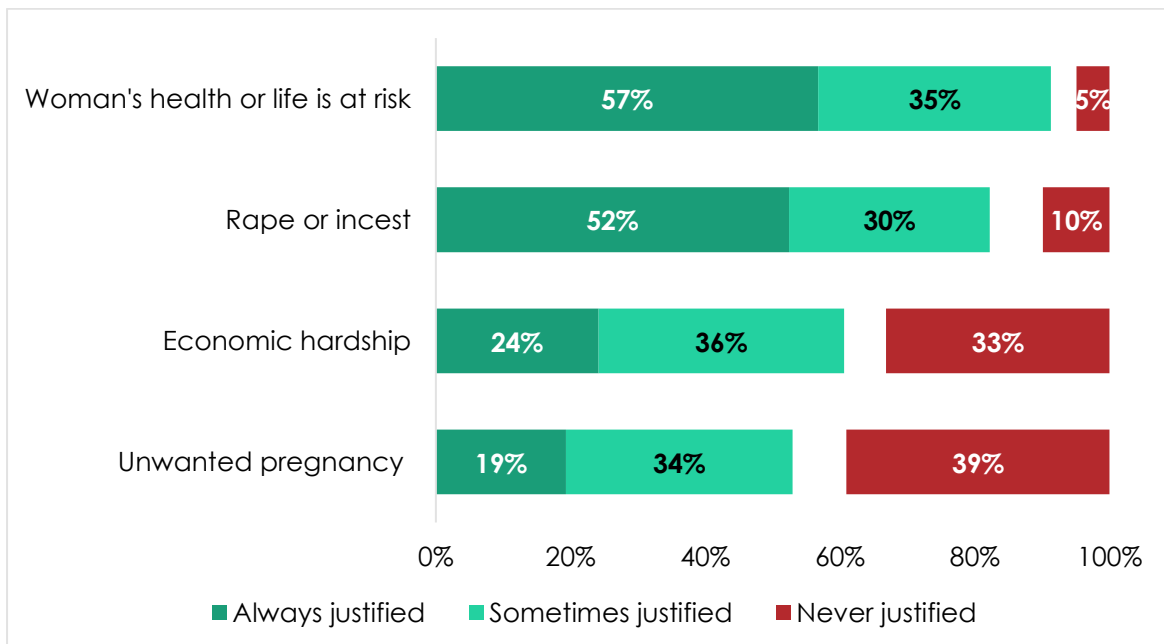
<sup>3</sup> Due to rounding, percentages for combined categories reported in the text may differ slightly from the sum of sub-categories shown in figures (e.g. 57% “always justified” and 35% “sometimes justified” sum to 91%).

**Figure 3: Frequency of pregnancy termination** | Mauritius | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how often, if ever, do women or girls in your community terminate their pregnancies?

**Figure 4: Justification for termination of pregnancies** | Mauritius | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following situations, please tell me whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified for a woman to terminate a pregnancy if:

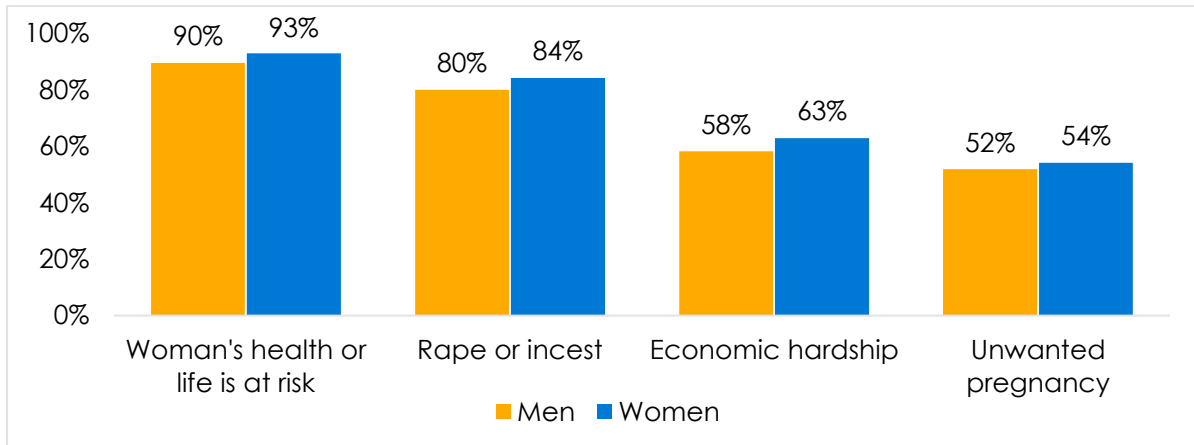
The pregnancy is as a result of rape or she has been impregnated by a close relative such as her father or brother?

Her health or life is in danger if she keeps the pregnancy?

She is going through economic hardships and cannot take care of a child?

She does not want to keep the pregnancy for any reason?

**Figure 5: Perception of pregnancy termination as sometimes/always justified**  
 | by gender | Mauritius | 2024/2025



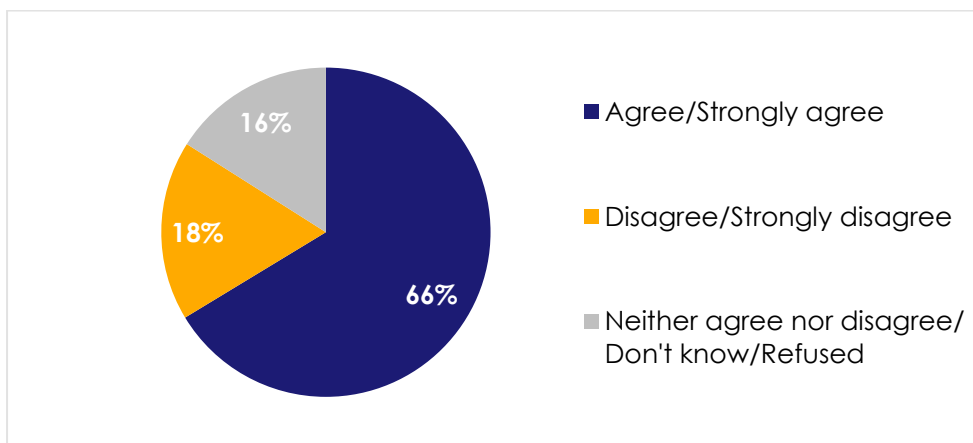
**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following situations, please tell me whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified for a woman to terminate a pregnancy if. ... (% who say "sometimes justified" or "always justified")

### Schooling and sexuality education

Although the number of teenage pregnancies registered at the Child Development Unit (a body operating under the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare) has decreased since 2020, it has nonetheless picked up over the recent years from 159 in 2022 to 170 in 2024 (Statistics Mauritius, 2025), which is a cause for concern as it might hinder school performance, attendance and overall educational attainment of young mothers (Mohr, Carbajal, & Sharma, 2019; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). To support the academic continuity of teenage mothers, psychological support and spaces for breastfeeding are provided in Mauritian schools (United Nations Human Rights, 2023).

Mirroring this approach, two-thirds (66%) of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that pregnant girls should be allowed to continue their education, while only 18% disagree (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Should pregnant girls be allowed to continue their education?** | Mauritius  
 | 2024

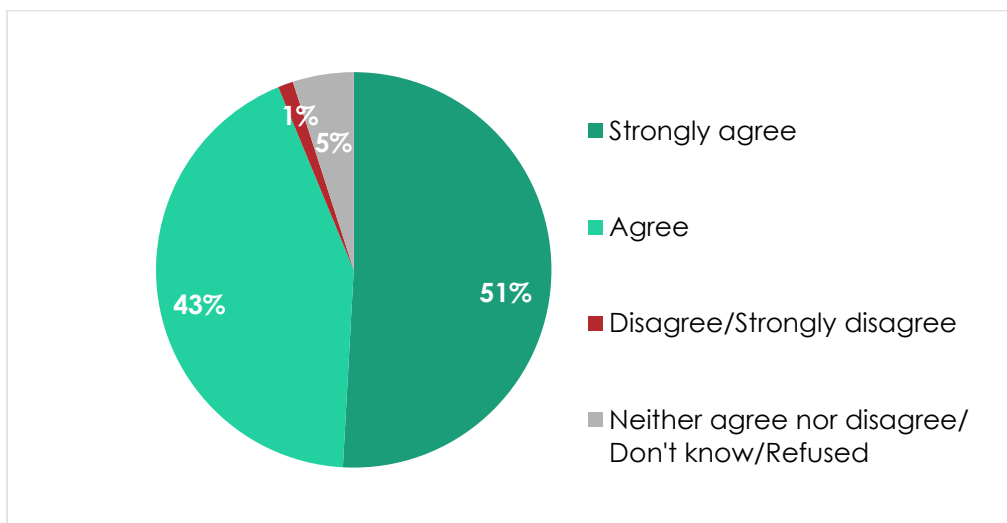


**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Girls should be allowed to continue their schooling even if they become pregnant or have children.

As part of the national school curriculum, sexuality education covers a broad range of topics, including puberty, marriage, sexual harassment, contraception, pregnancy, and sexual and reproductive health (Mauritius Institute of Education, n.d.). It is intended to equip adolescents to make good choices with respect to their sexual and reproductive health (UNESCO, 2023), providing knowledge that parents may find daunting to communicate (Emambokus & Oogarah-Pratap, 2019).

A remarkable 94% of Mauritians endorse the teaching of sexuality education in schools, while only 1% oppose it (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Should sexuality education be taught in schools? | Mauritius | 2024**



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Schools should teach sex education to young people to help them make informed decisions.

### Autonomy of women in marriage and childbearing decisions

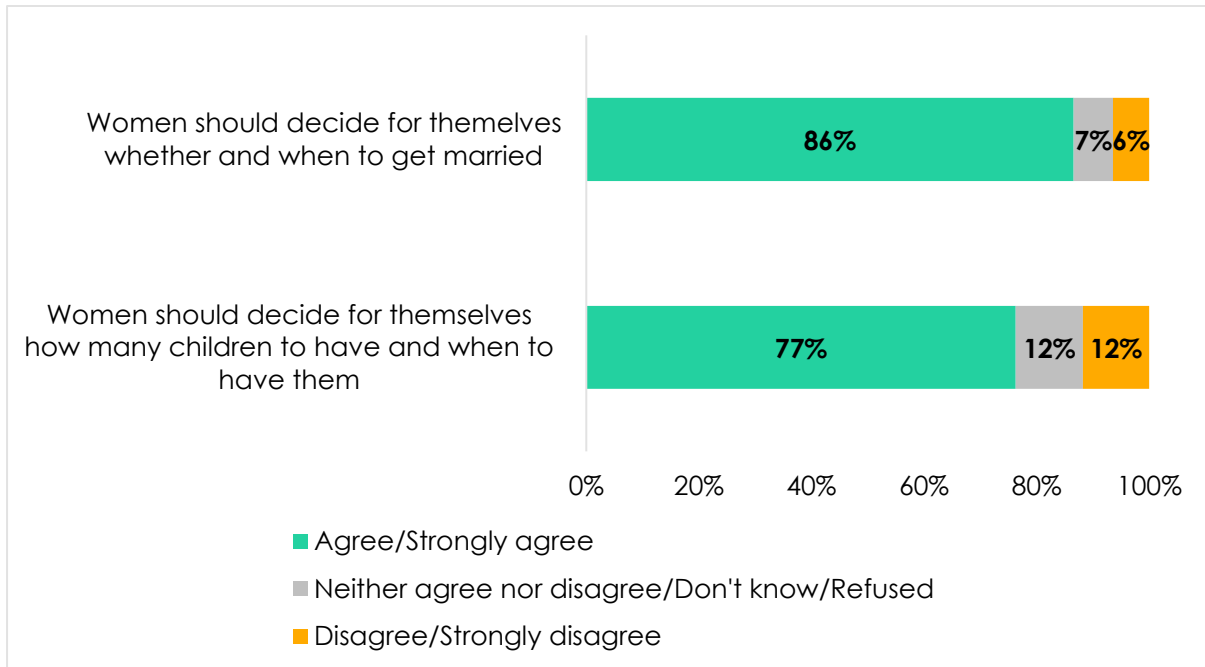
Mauritians strongly support women's autonomy in decisions about marriage and childbearing.

Large majorities “agree” or “strongly agree” that women and girls should be free to decide whether and when they should marry (86%) as well as how many children to have and when to have them (77%) (Figure 8).

On both fronts, women are stronger than men in endorsing their right to make their own decisions regarding marriage (92% vs. 81%) and childbearing (86% vs. 68%) (Figure 9).

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](http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis).

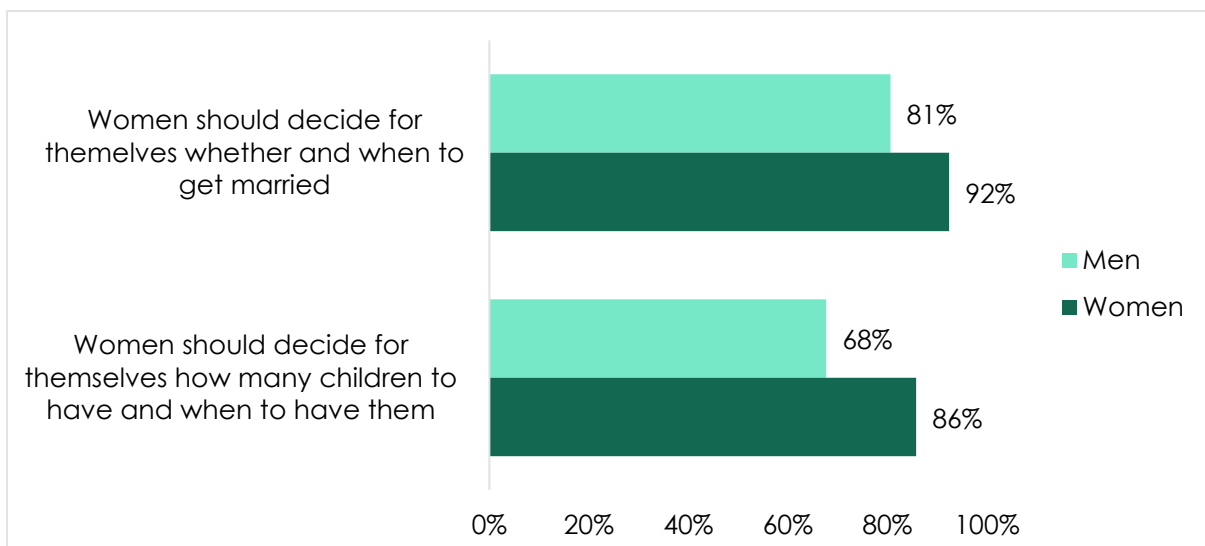
**Figure 8: Autonomy of women in marriage and childbearing decisions | Mauritius | 2024**



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

- Girls and women should decide for themselves whether and when they should marry.
- Women should decide for themselves when and how many children they want to have.

**Figure 9: Autonomy of women in marriage and childbearing decisions | by gender | Mauritius | 2024**



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

- Girls and women should decide for themselves whether and when they should marry.
  - Women should decide for themselves when and how many children they want to have.
- (% of respondents who say "agree" or "strongly agree")

## Conclusion

Findings from the most recent Afrobarometer survey show that a majority of Mauritians favour making contraceptives widely available, regardless of people's age or marital status, and see abortion as at least "sometimes" justifiable under a variety of circumstances.

Sexuality education in school has nearly unanimous public backing, and most citizens want girls who become pregnant to stay in school.

Most Mauritians endorse women's autonomy in making decisions about marriage and childbearing.

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Afrobarometer, a nonprofit corporation with headquarters in Ghana, is a pan-African, nonpartisan research network. Regional coordination of national partners in about 40 countries is provided by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and Innovante Recherche en Economie et Gouvernance (IREG) in Benin. Michigan State University and the University of Malawi provide technical support to the network.

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