

Africans welcome China's influence but maintain democratic aspirations

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 489¹ | Josephine Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny and Edem Selormey

Summary

Home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies (Mitchell, 2019), Africa has attracted the attention of leaders and economic strategists everywhere, including China. Over the past two decades, political and economic relations between China and Africa have grown rapidly, with trade volumes increasing from about \$11 billion in 2000 to \$192 billion in 2019 (Amoah, Hodzi, & Castillo, 2020; China Africa Research Initiative, 2018; Thomas, 2021). While the United States is still the continent's largest aid donor, China is the leading provider of financial support for infrastructure development in Africa (Muchira, 2018; Shepherd & Blanchard, 2018).



However, China's investments and dealings with Africa have been a topic of widespread scrutiny and debate. Because China's financial support for Africa is often in the form of long-term loans rather than grants, it has been criticized as a "debt trap" that China may use to gain strategic advantages on the continent (Green, 2019). Some argue that African countries that borrow from China may lose key assets if they are unable to pay back their loans (Brautigam, 2019; Brautigam & Kidane, 2020; Sun, 2014). Others are concerned that China is using its influence to promote its political ideas on the continent (Scott, 2021).

How do ordinary Africans perceive China's engagement with their countries and economies?

Afrobarometer's national surveys in 34 African countries in 2019/2021 show that Africans hold positive views of China's assistance and influence on the continent, though its perceived level of influence on African economies has waned over the past five years. Positive views of China's influence do not appear to affect Africans' attitudes toward democracy. China remains second to the United States as the preferred development model for Africans. And majorities of those who are aware of Chinese loans and development assistance to their countries are concerned about being heavily indebted to China.

Afrobarometer surveys

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. Eight rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 39 countries since 1999. Round 8 surveys (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

¹ An earlier version of this dispatch, based on data from 18 countries surveyed before the COVID-19 pandemic forced a pause in Round 8 fieldwork, was published as Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 407.

Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

This 34-country analysis is based on 48,084 interviews (see Appendix Table A.1 for a list of countries and fieldwork dates). The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size). Due to rounding, reported totals may differ by 1 percentage point from the sum of sub-categories.

Key findings

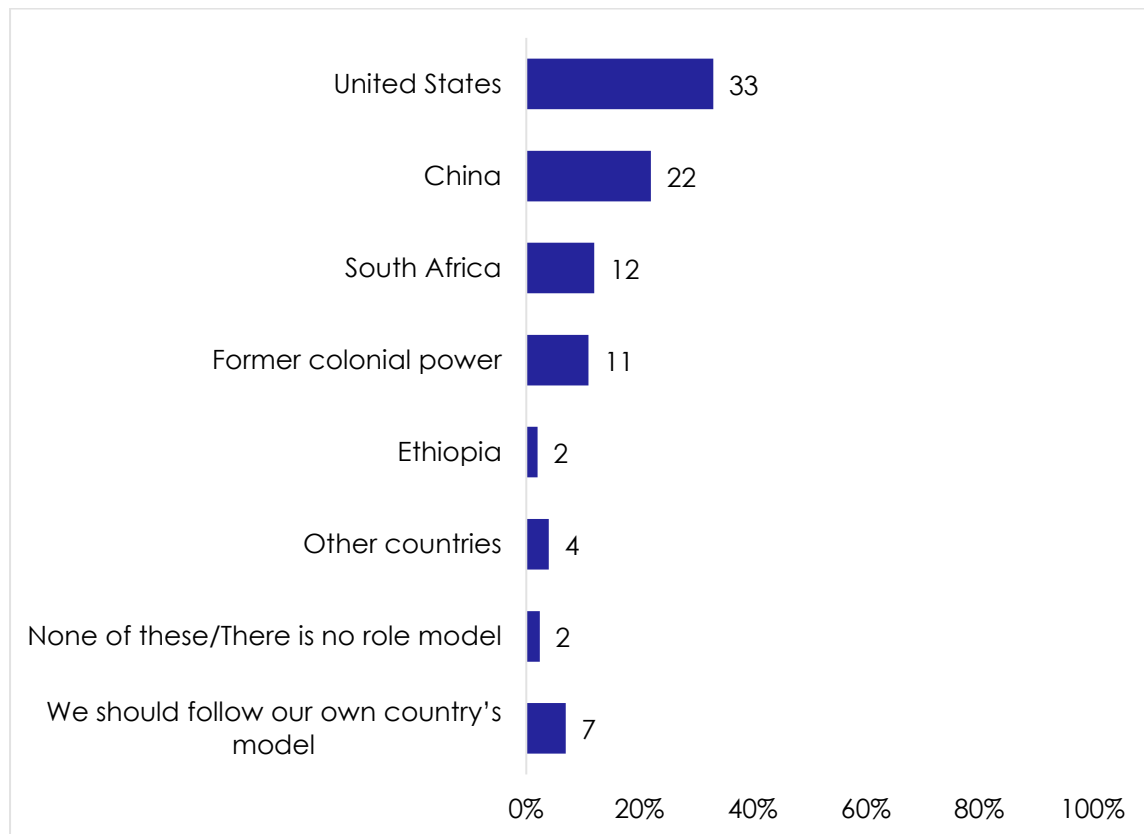
- On average across 34 countries, China trails the United States as Africans' preferred development model (33% vs. 22%), followed by South Africa (12%) and former colonial powers (11%).
 - The United States ranks at the top in 23 of 34 surveyed countries, while China is No. 1 in five countries: Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Botswana.
 - While the overall averages have changed little over the past five years, some countries record substantial changes, including Benin (a 21-percentage-point increase in preference for China) and Liberia (an 18-point increase in preference for the United States).
- Almost two-thirds (63%) of Africans say the economic and political influence of China in their country is "somewhat positive" or "very positive," while only about one in seven (14%) consider it negative. Views on U.S. influence are almost identical (60% vs. 13%).
 - On average across 30 countries surveyed in both 2014/2015 and 2019/2021, positive views of China's political and economic influence have not changed significantly.
- While a majority (59%) of Africans say China's economic activities in their country have "some" or "a lot" of influence on their economy, that proportion has declined sharply over the past five years (from 71%).
 - Perceptions of Chinese influence declined in 24 countries, including huge drops in Sierra Leone (-37 percentage points), Zimbabwe (-29 points), Botswana (-24 points), Malawi (-21 points), Niger (-21 points), and Mali (-20 points).
- Among the 47% of African citizens who are aware of Chinese loans or development assistance to their country, a majority (57%) say their government has borrowed too much money from China.
- Views on whether China or the United States is preferable as a development model do not appear to affect Africans' support for democracy or democratic norms.
- Seven in 10 Africans (69%) say English is the most important international language for young people to learn. Only 3% prefer Chinese.

Best model for development

Afrobarometer asks Africans which country provides the best model for the future development of their own country. As in the 2014/2015 survey (Lekorwe, Chingwete, Okuru, & Samson, 2016), China ranks second across 34 countries in 2019/2021, trailing the United States (22% vs. 33%) (Figure 1). About one in 10 respondents cite South Africa (12%) or their former

colonial power (Britain, France, Portugal, or Germany) (11%), while 7% say they should follow their own country's model.

Figure 1: Best model for development | 34 countries | 2019/2021



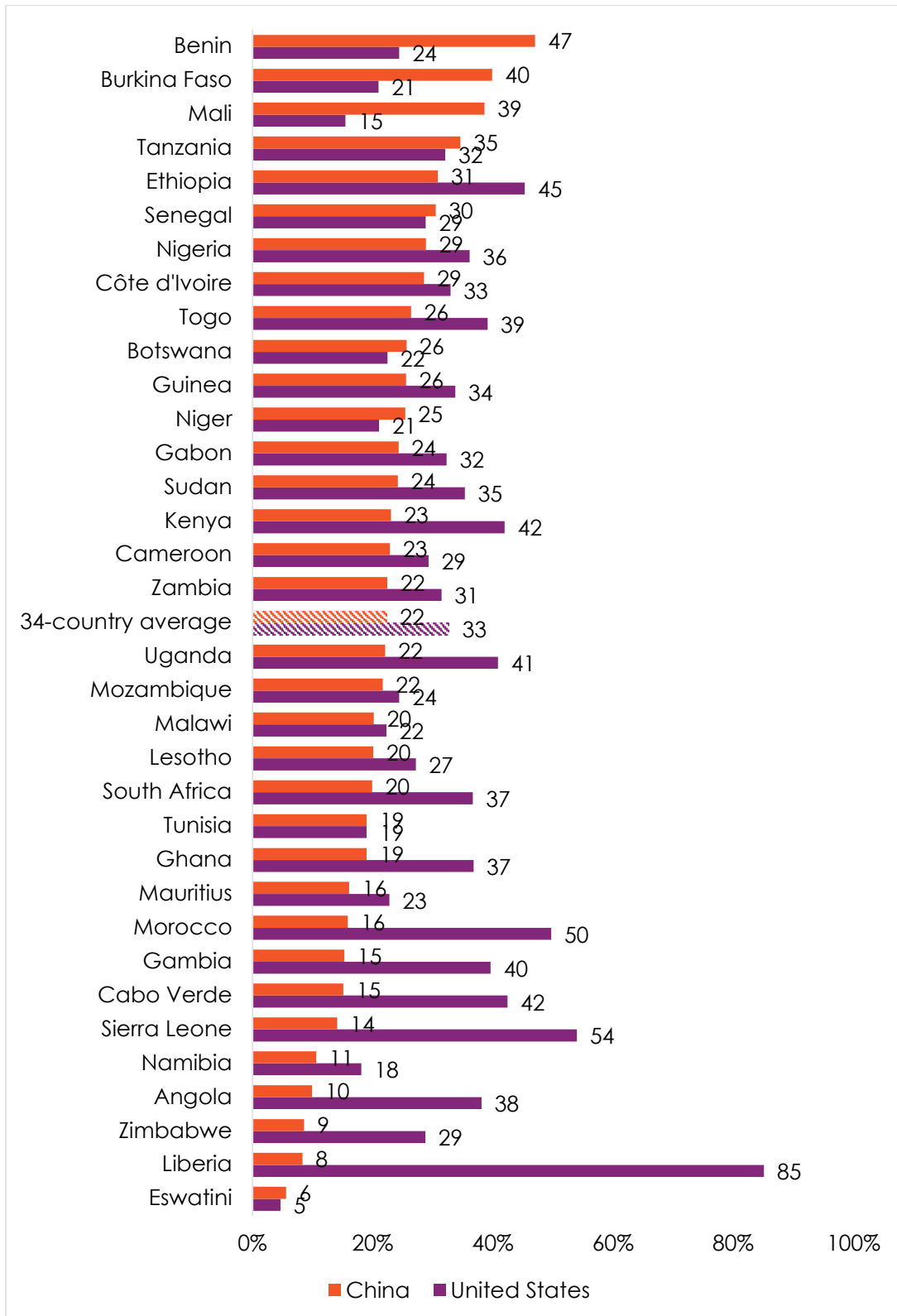
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, which of the following countries, if any, would be the best model for the future development of our country, or is there some other country in Africa or elsewhere that should be our model?*

In 23 of the 34 countries, citizens prefer the U.S. model to China's, including large gaps in Liberia (77 percentage points), Sierra Leone (40 points), Morocco (34 points), Angola (28 points), Cabo Verde (27 points), the Gambia (24 points), and Zimbabwe (20 points) (Figure 2). China outstrips the United States in five of the 34 countries: Benin (by 23 percentage points), Mali (23 points), Burkina Faso (19 points), Niger (4 points), and Botswana (4 points). Tanzania, Senegal, Tunisia, Eswatini, Malawi, and Mozambique show equal preference for both models.

Given that China is the newcomer in this global competition, it is notable that younger Africans are more likely than their elders to favor the U.S. model (36% of those aged 18-25 vs. 26% of those over age 55), while regard for the Chinese model is fairly steady across all age groups (Figure 3). Men and women are equally likely to prefer the United States, but more men than women prefer China (25% vs. 19%). Respondents' education level and experience with poverty² seem to make only a modest difference in their preferred development model.

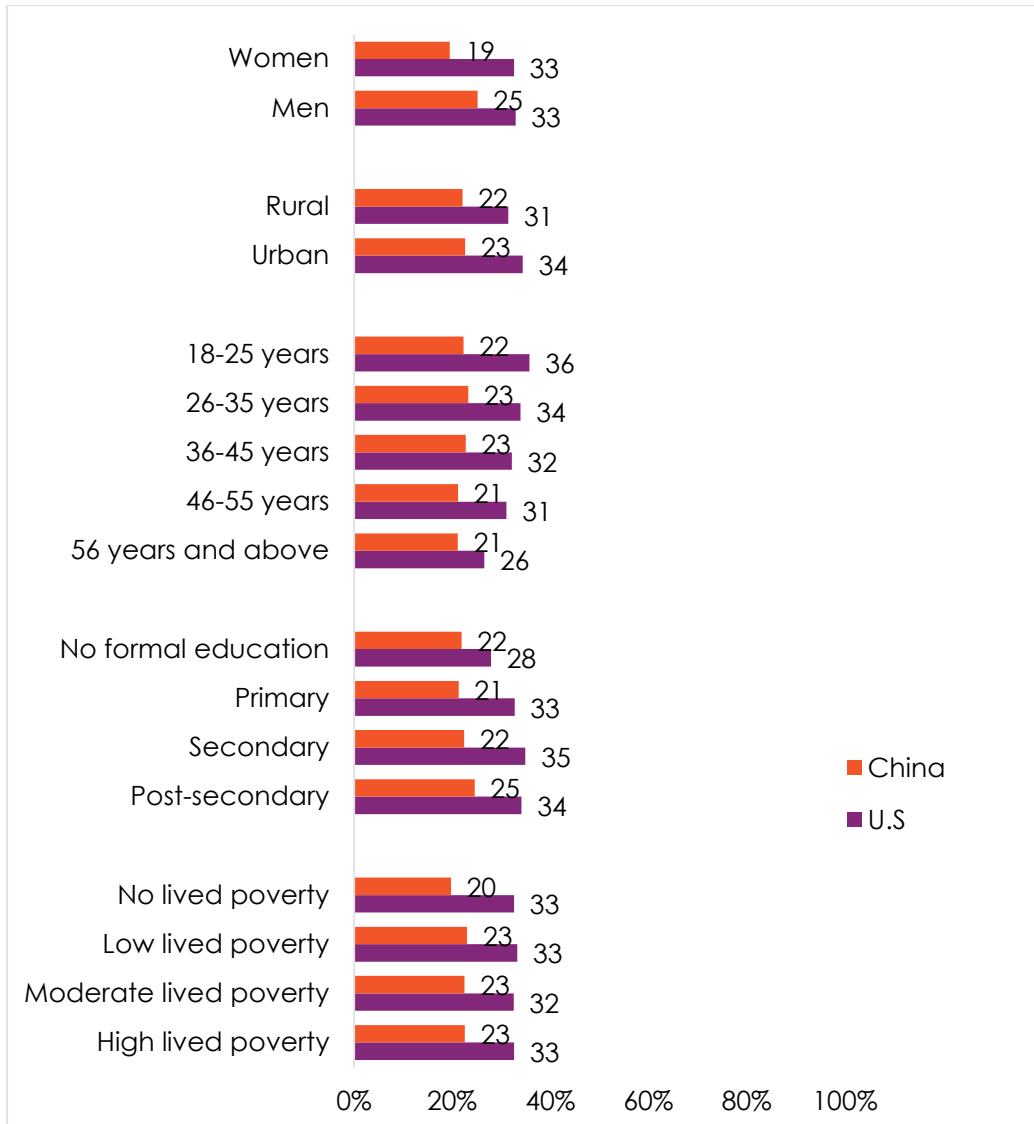
² Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food and water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes (2020).

Figure 2: Best model for development: China vs. U.S. | 34 countries | 2019/2021



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, which of the following countries, if any, would be the best model for the future development of our country, or is there some other country in Africa or elsewhere that should be our model?*

Figure 3: Best model for development: China vs. U.S. | by socio-demographic group
 | 34 countries | 2019/2021

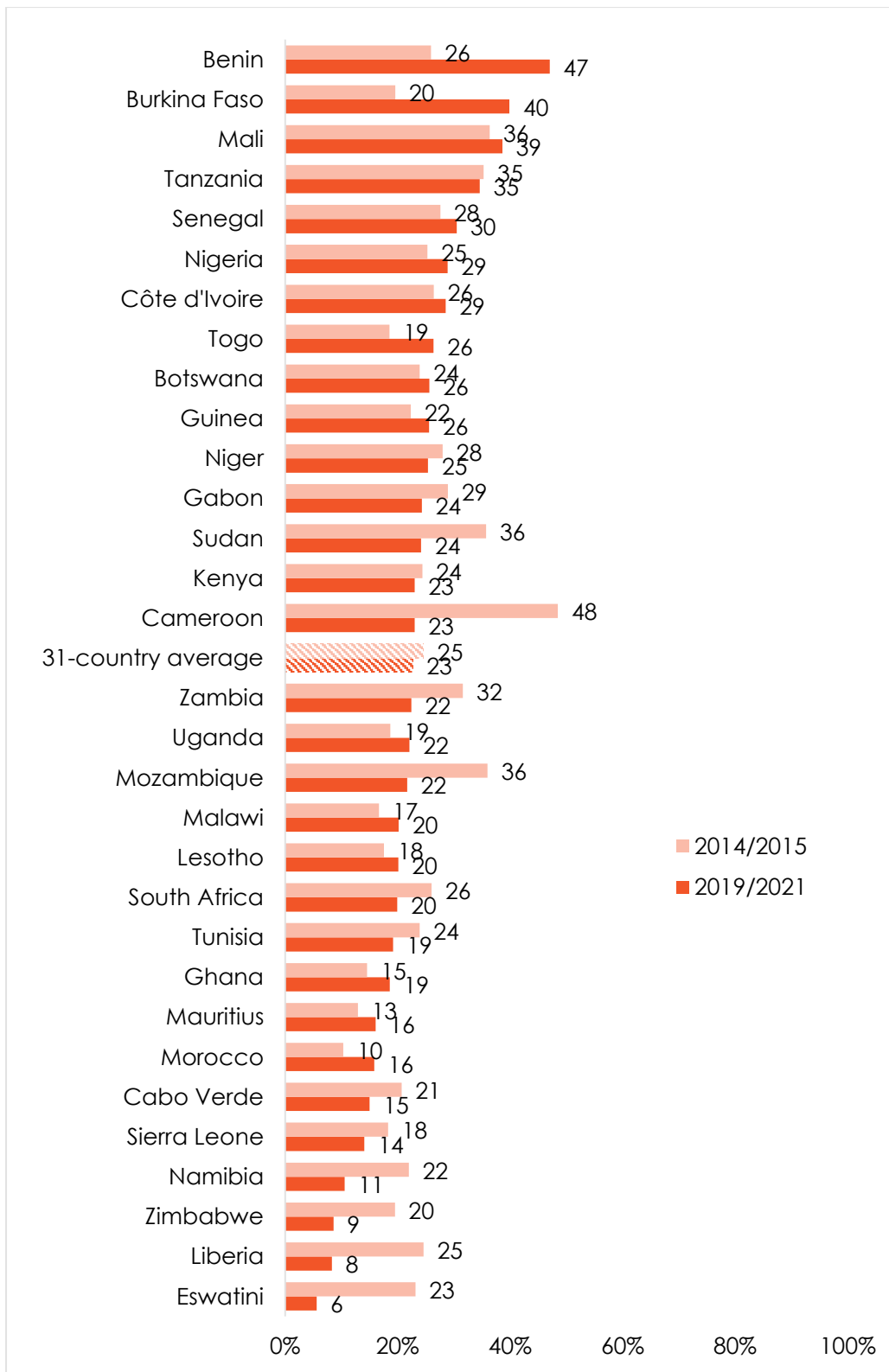


Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, which of the following countries, if any, would be the best model for the future development of our country, or is there some other country in Africa or elsewhere that should be our model?*

On average across the 31 countries in which this question was asked in both 2014/2015 and 2019/2021, preferences for China and the United States as the best model for development remain largely unchanged, though the U.S. advantage increased marginally from 6 to 9 percentage points. A few countries, however, recorded substantial changes. Benin and Burkina Faso show increases of 21 and 20 percentage points, respectively, in preference for China, while Cameroon, Eswatini, and Liberia record significant decreases (-25, -17, and -17 percentage points, respectively) (Figure 4).

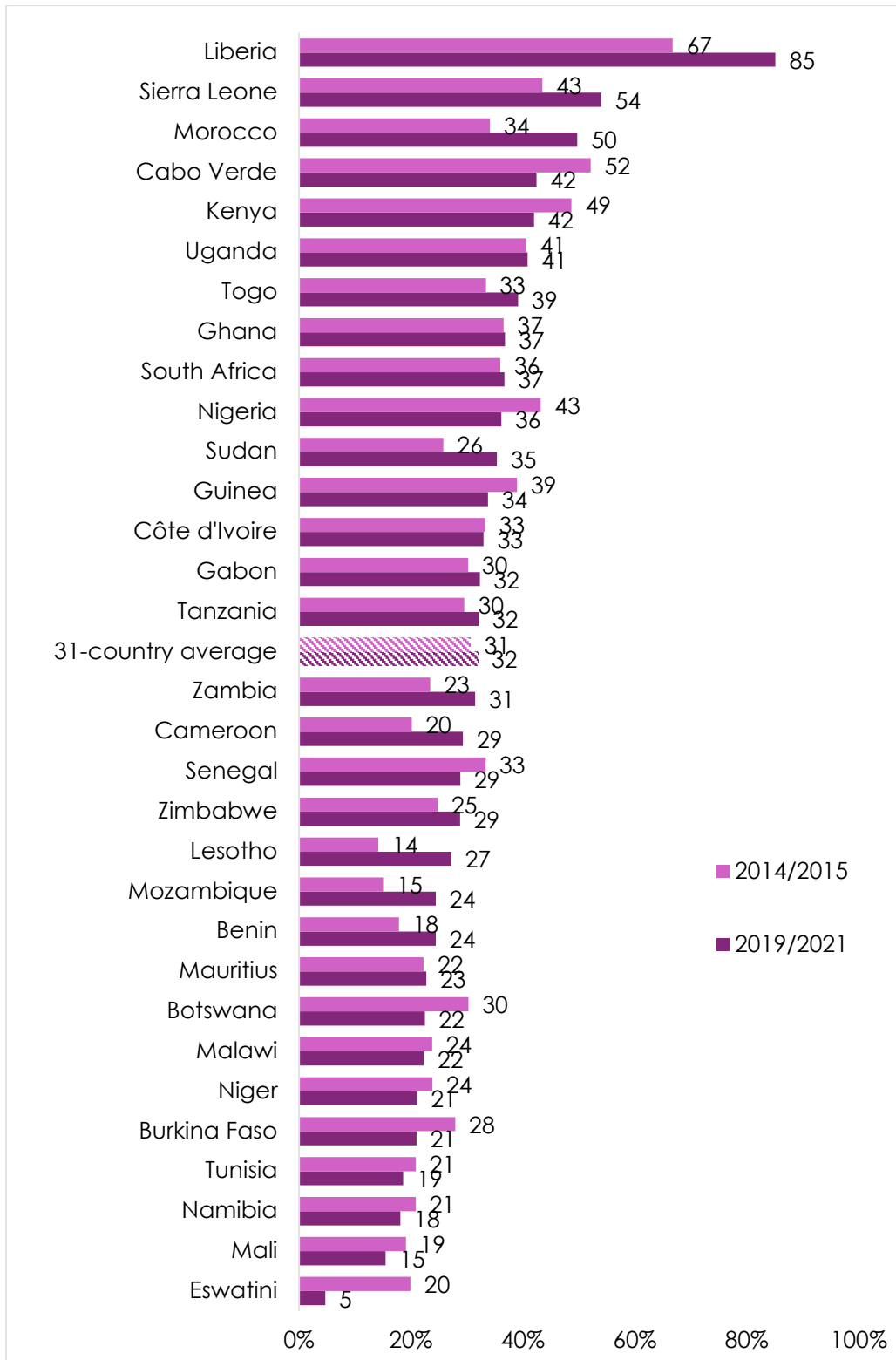
As for the U.S. model, preference doubled in Lesotho (from 14% to 27%) and increased sharply in Liberia (by 18 percentage points), Morocco (+16 points), and Sierra Leone (+11 points) while decreasing in nine other countries, including Eswatini (-15 points) and Cabo Verde (-10 points) (Figure 5).

Figure 4: China as the best model for development | 16 countries | 2014-2021



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, which of the following countries, if any, would be the best model for the future development of our country, or is there some other country in Africa or elsewhere that should be our model? (% who say China)

Figure 5: U.S. as the best model for development | 31 countries | 2014-2021



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, which of the following countries, if any, would be the best model for the future development of our country, or is there some other country in Africa or elsewhere that should be our model? (% who say United States)

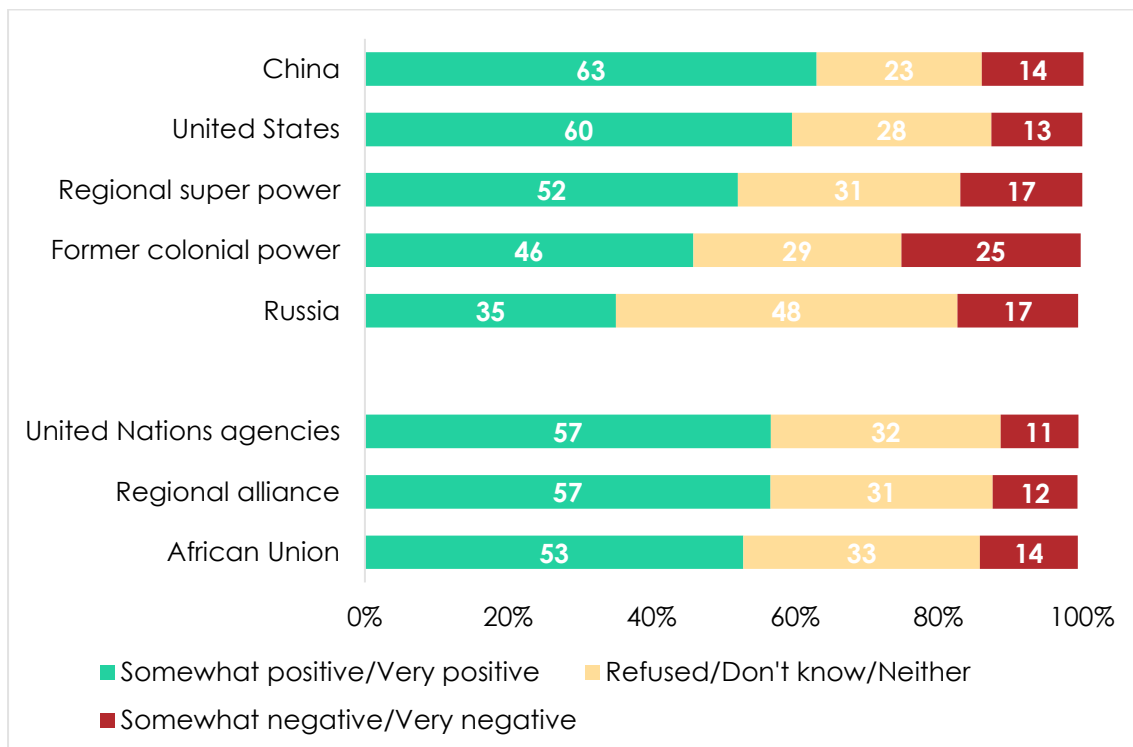
External influences

China's economic and political influence in Africa, like that of the United States, is far more widely seen as a good than a bad thing. On average, almost two-thirds (63%) of Africans say China's influence in their country is "somewhat positive" or "very positive," while only about one in seven (14%) consider it negative. Views on U.S. influence are about the same (60% vs. 13%) (Figure 6).

Pluralities welcome the influence of their regional superpower (52%), their former colonial power (46%), and Russia (35%).

Positive assessments also far outnumber negative views of the influence of United Nations agencies (57% vs. 11%), regional organizations (57% vs. 12%), and the African Union (53% vs. 14%).

Figure 6: External influences: positive or negative? | 34 countries | 2019/2021

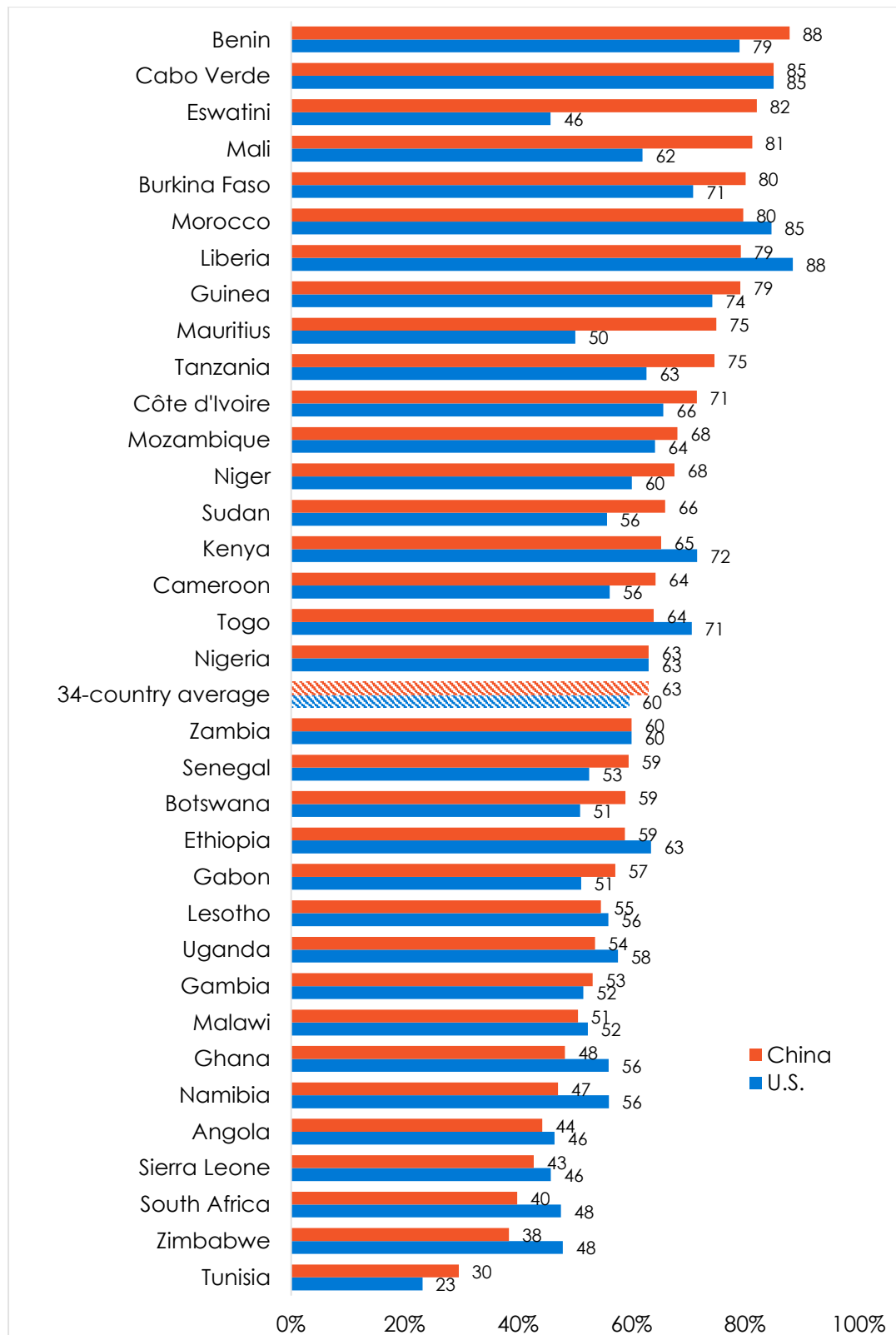


Respondents were asked: *In general, do you think that the economic and political influence of each of the following countries/organizations on [your country] is mostly positive, mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say?*

Respondents who feel positively about the influence of China are more likely to hold positive views of U.S. influence as well – i.e. the two views are strongly and positively correlated. This suggests that for many Africans, U.S.-China “competition” may not be an either-or proposition, but a win-win.

However, we see differences within countries. In 16 of the 34 countries, China's influence is more widely seen as positive than that of the U.S., including a 36-percentage-point gap in Eswatini (82% positive for China, 46% for the U.S.), a 25-point gap in Mauritius (75% vs. 50%), and a 19-point gap in Mali (81% vs. 62%) (Figure 7). The U.S. is more widely perceived as having positive influence than China in 10 countries, but Zimbabwe is the only country with a two-digit gap (48% for the U.S. vs. 38% for China).

Figure 7: Positive influence: China vs. U.S. | 34 countries | 2019/2021



Respondents were asked: Do you think that the economic and political influence of each of the following countries on [your country] is mostly positive, mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "somewhat positive" or "very positive")

On average across 30 countries in which this question was asked in both 2014/2015 and 2019/2021, the perceived positive influence of China has not changed significantly (66% vs. 63%). Seventeen countries record declines, including steep drops in Gabon (-21 percentage points), Namibia (-19 points), Cameroon (-16 points), and Niger (-16 points). Only six countries show significant increases in the proportion of citizens who see Chinese influence as positive: Morocco (+45 percentage points), Benin (+18 points), Ghana (+14 points), Lesotho (+7 points), Cabo Verde (+4 points), and Tanzania (+4 points) (Figure 8).

Despite these declines, majorities in 27 of 34 countries surveyed in 2019/2021 hold positive views of China's economic and political influence, reaching 88% in Benin, 85% in Cabo Verde, 82% in Eswatini, 81% in Mali, and 80% in Burkina Faso and Mali. Positive assessments of China's influence are in the minority in seven countries, most strikingly in Tunisia (30%).

Figure 8: Changes in perceived positive influence of China (percentage points)
 | 30* countries | 2014-2021

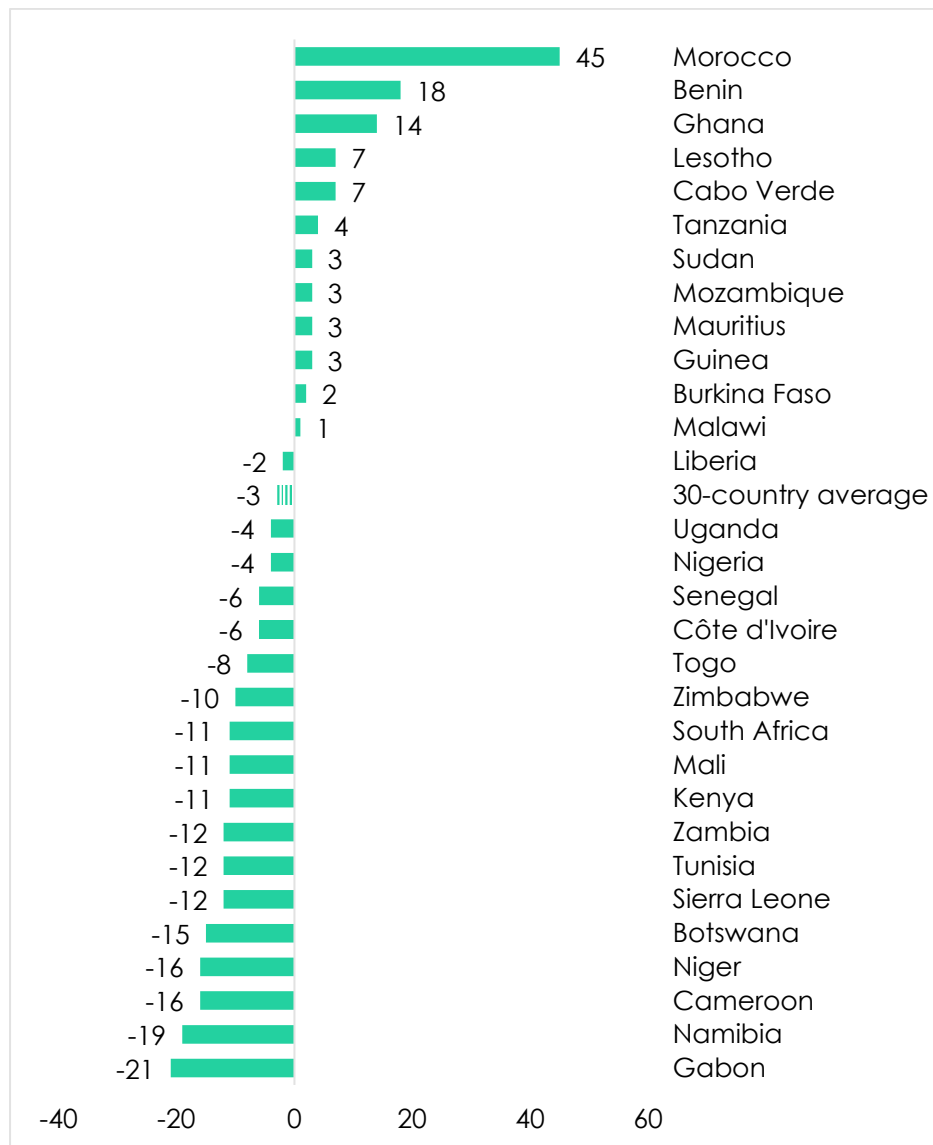
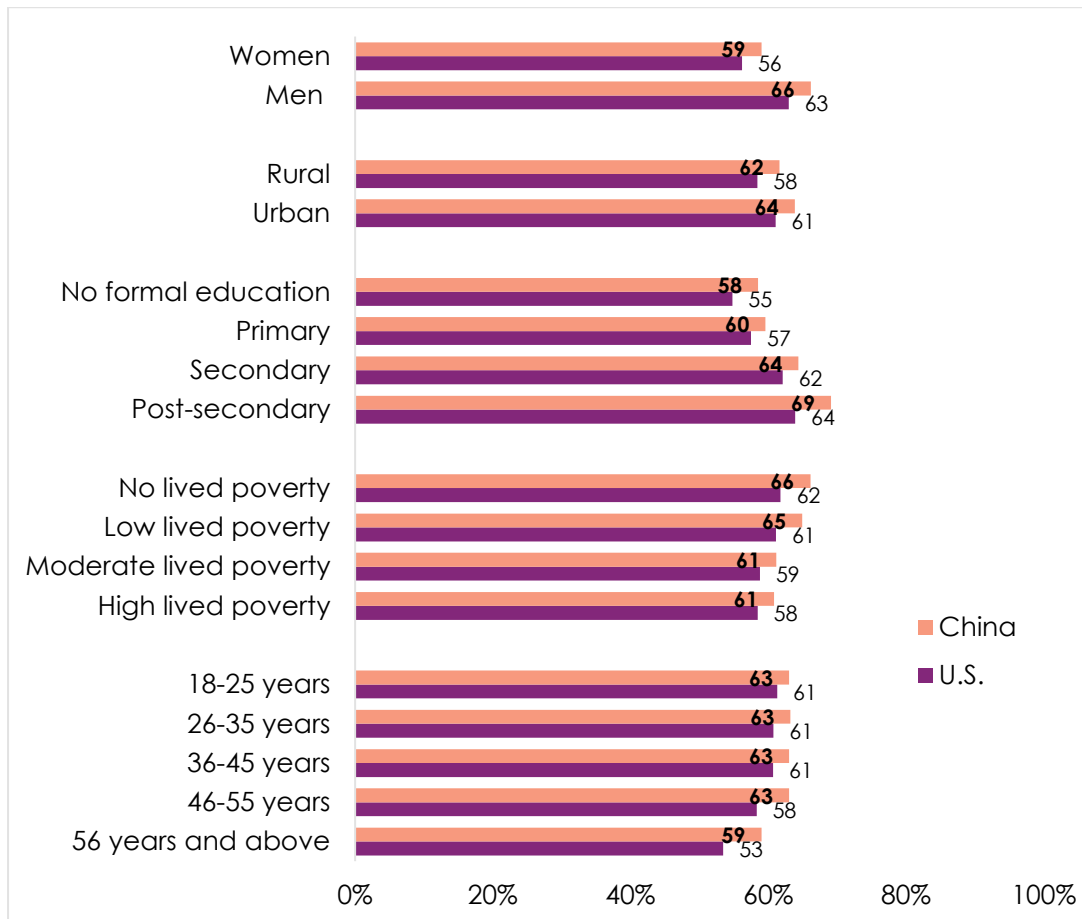


Figure shows the change, in percentage points, between 2014/2015 and 2019/2021 in the proportion of respondents who say China's economic and political influence on their country is "somewhat positive" or "very positive." *Question was not asked in Eswatini in 2014/2015.

Positive perceptions of Chinese and U.S. influence follow similar patterns across key socio-demographic groups. For both countries, men and highly educated citizens are somewhat more likely than women and less educated citizens to see the influence as positive (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Perceived positive influence of China and U.S. | by socio-demographic group | 34 countries | 2019/2021



Respondents were asked: In general, do you think that the economic and political influence of each of the following countries/organizations on [your country] is mostly positive, mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "somewhat positive" or "very positive")

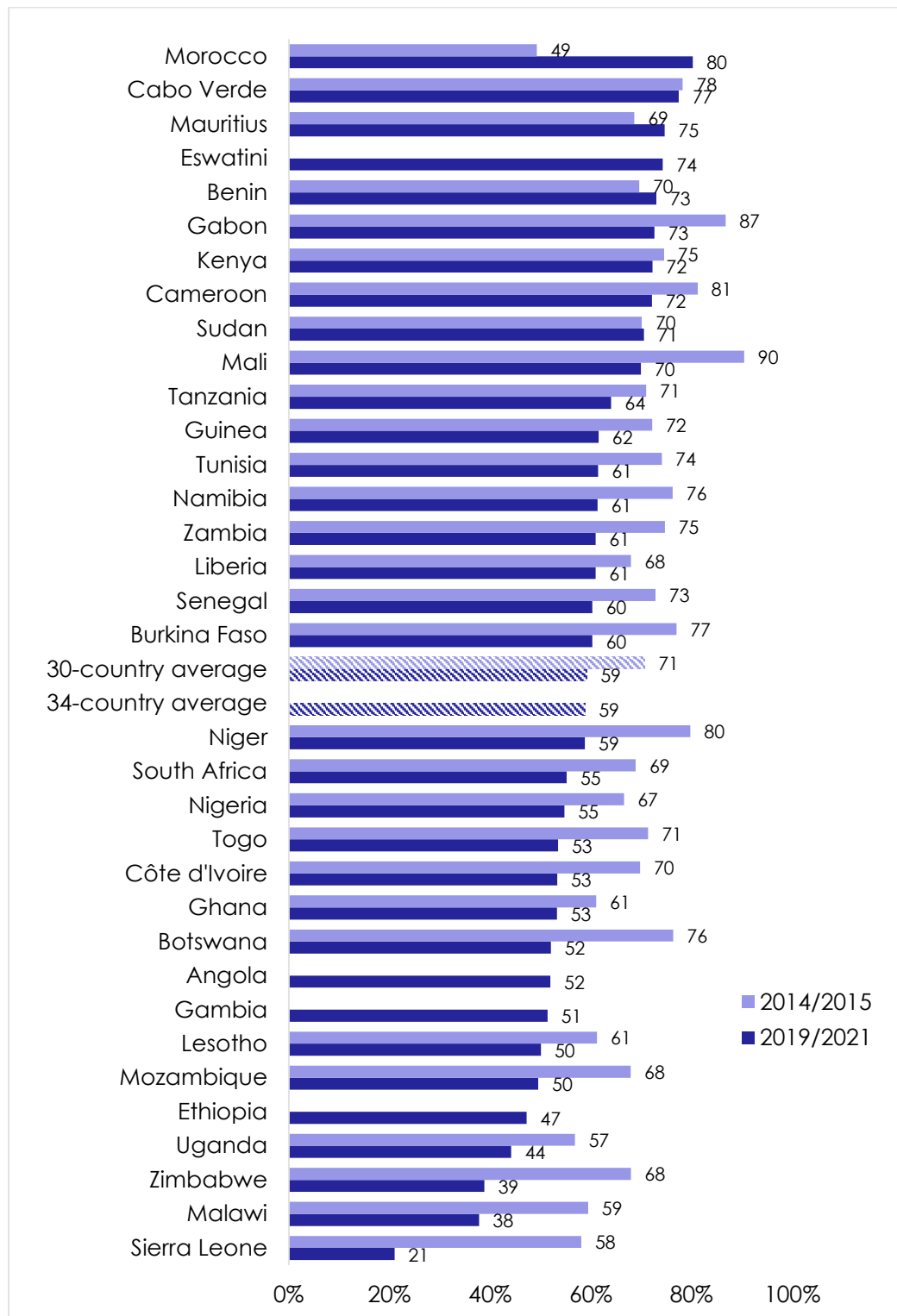
While views of China's economic and political influence are largely favorable, assessments of how much influence China's economic activities have in African countries have dropped sharply. On average across 34 countries, 59% say China's economic activities in their country have "some" or "a lot" of influence on their economy. But this reflects a major decrease over the past five years, from 71% to 59% across 30 countries surveyed in both 2014/2015 and 2019/2021.

Perceptions of the influence of China's economic activities declined in 24 of these 30 countries, including huge drops in Sierra Leone (-37 percentage points), Zimbabwe (-29 points), Botswana (-24 points), Malawi (-21 points), Niger (-21 points), and Mali (-20 points) (Figure 10). Only Morocco and Mauritius record significant increases in China's perceived economic influence.

The proportions who see China's economic activities as influential still exceed two-thirds in Morocco (80%), Cabo Verde (77%), Mauritius (75%), Eswatini (74%), Benin (73%), Gabon (73%), Kenya (72%), Cameroon (72%), Sudan (71%), and Mali (70%). But fewer than half of

citizens agree in Ethiopia (47%), Uganda (44%), Zimbabwe (39%), Malawi (38%), and Sierra Leone (21%).

Figure 10: Extent of China's influence | 34 countries | 2014-2021

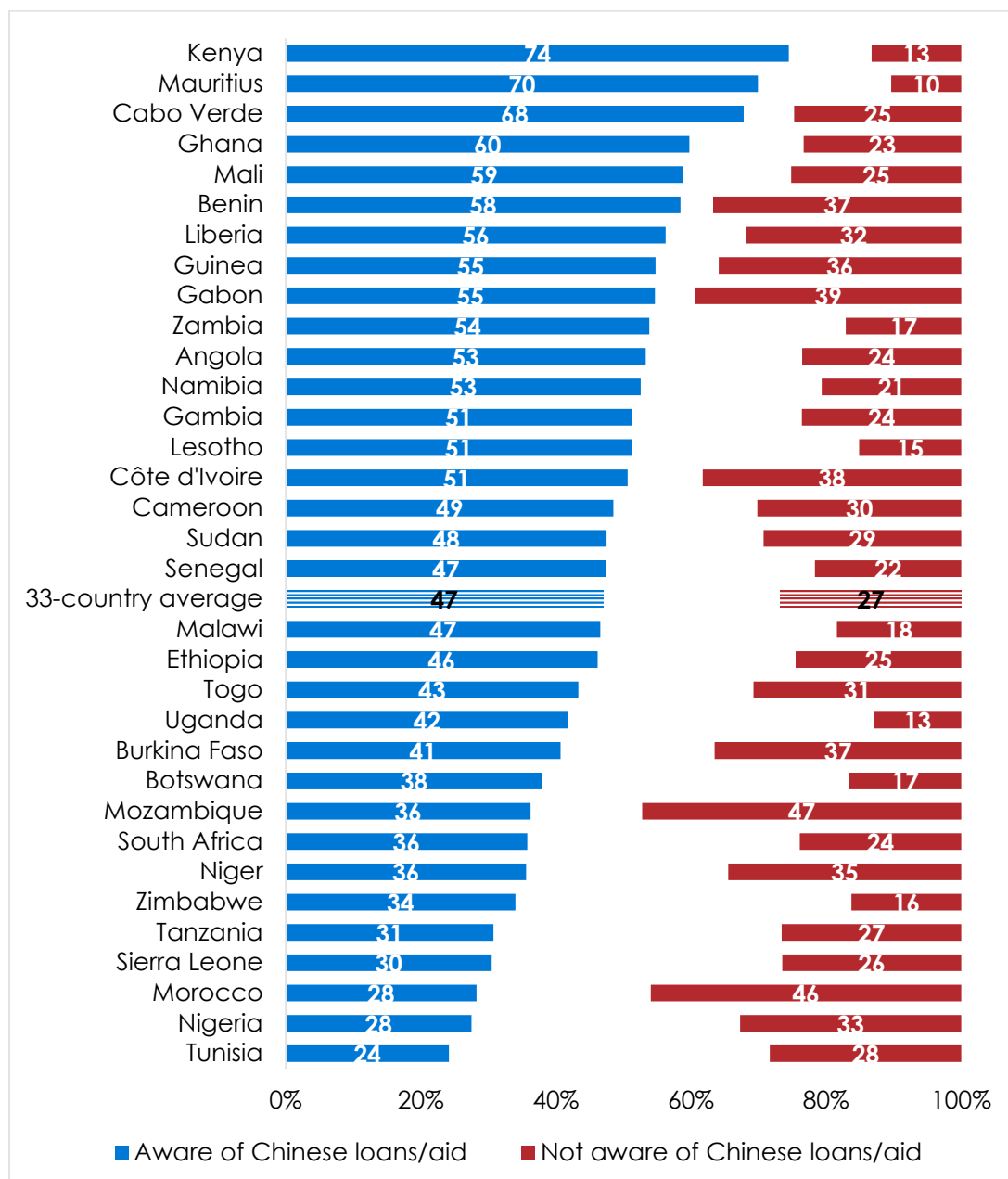


Respondents were asked: How much influence do you think China's economic activities in [our country] have on our economy, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "some" or "a lot")
 Question was not asked in Eswatini in 2014/2015.

Views on development assistance from China

Between 2000 and 2019, China granted loans of about \$153 billion to African countries (Pairault, 2021). In spite of China's increasing investments and support, fewer than half (47%) of Africans are aware that China gives loans or development assistance to their countries (Figure 11). Awareness of such funds varies from more than two-thirds in Kenya (74%), Mauritius (70%), and Cabo Verde (68%) to fewer than one-third in Sierra Leone (30%), Morocco (28%), Nigeria (28%), and Tunisia (24%).

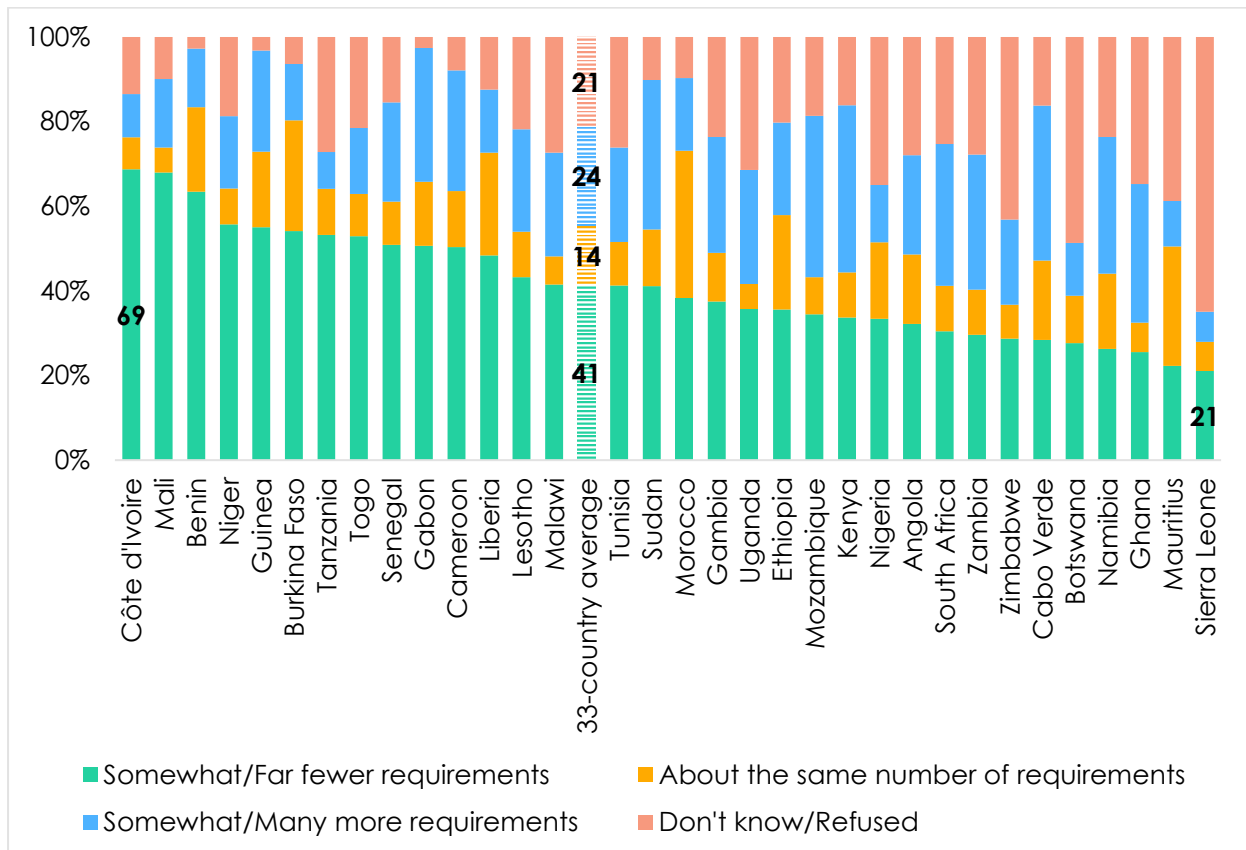
Figure 11: Heard of Chinese loans/development assistance | 33* countries
| 2019/2021



Respondents were asked: To your knowledge, does China give loans or development assistance to our country's government, or haven't you had a chance to hear about this?
*Question was not asked in Eswatini.

Among citizens who are aware that their countries receive loans or development assistance from China, a plurality (41%) think China attaches “somewhat fewer” or “far fewer” conditions to its assistance than other countries. A quarter (24%) think Chinese assistance comes with more strings attached, while 35% say they “don’t know” or refused to answer the question (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Conditionality on loans/assistance | 33* countries | 2019/2021

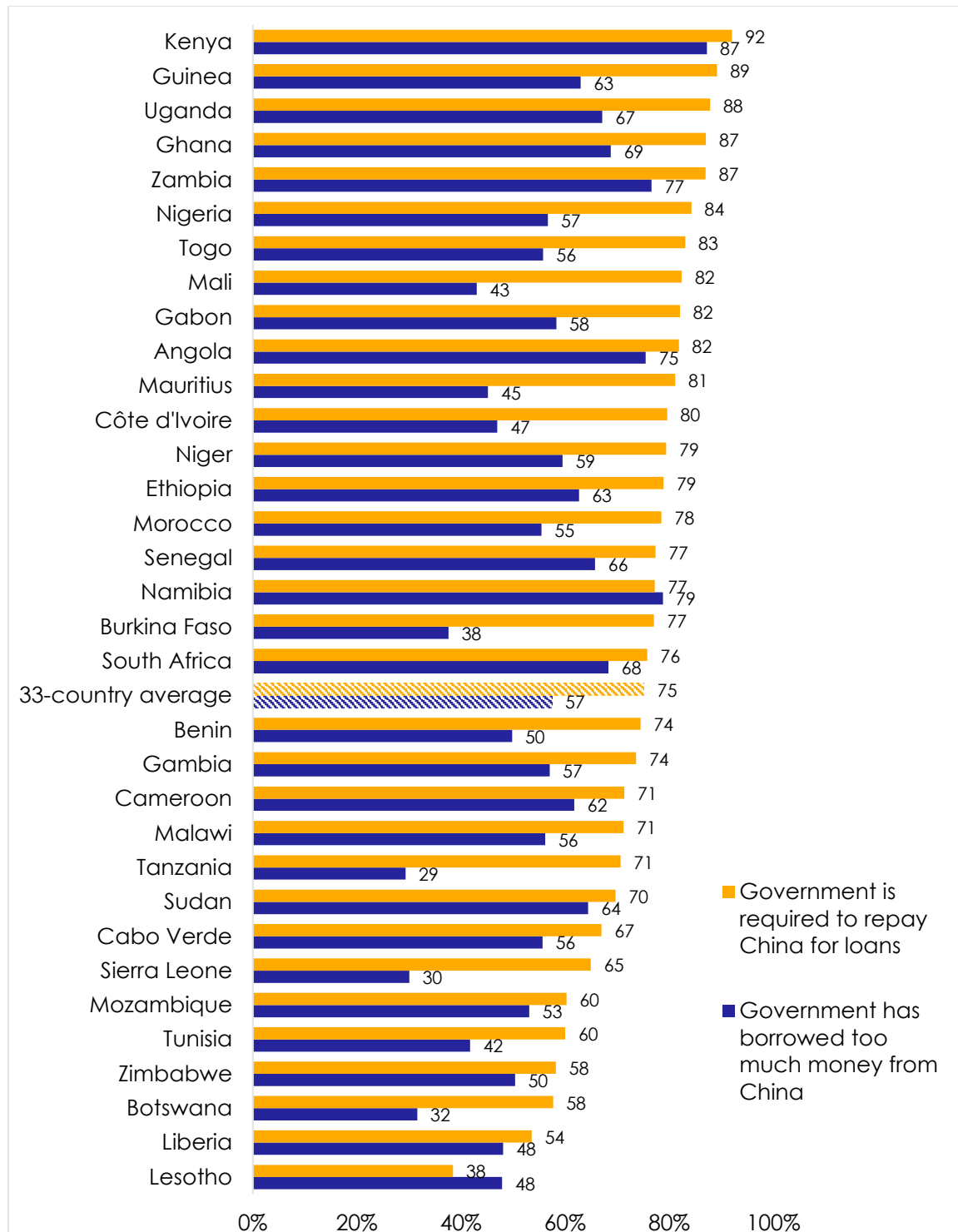


Respondents who said they are aware of Chinese loans or development assistance were asked: When the government of China gives loans or development assistance to [our country], do you think they put more requirements or fewer requirements on our government compared to other donor countries, or haven't you heard enough to say?
 (Note: Respondents who are not aware of Chinese loans or development assistance are excluded.)
 *Question was not asked in Eswatini.

About three-quarters (75%) of those who are aware that their countries receive loans or development assistance from China are also aware that their governments will likely be required to repay loans (Figure 13). Except for Lesotho, majorities in all surveyed countries are aware of this obligation, including about nine in 10 citizens in Kenya (92%), Guinea (89%), Uganda (88%), Ghana (87%), and Zambia (87%).

And a majority (57%) of those aware of China's assistance say their countries have borrowed too much from China. Kenyans (87%), Namibians (79%), Zambians (77%), and Angolans (75%) are particularly concerned about their government's indebtedness to China, while only three in 10 Tanzanians (29%), Sierra Leoneans (30%), and Batswana (32%) express such concerns. This suggests that the U.S. government and other development partners may be meeting with some success in their efforts to remind Africans that even if money from China and other non-traditional development partners comes with fewer strings, they are in danger of being lured into a deepening debt trap.

Figure 13: Views on loans/development assistance from China | 33* countries
 | 2019/2021



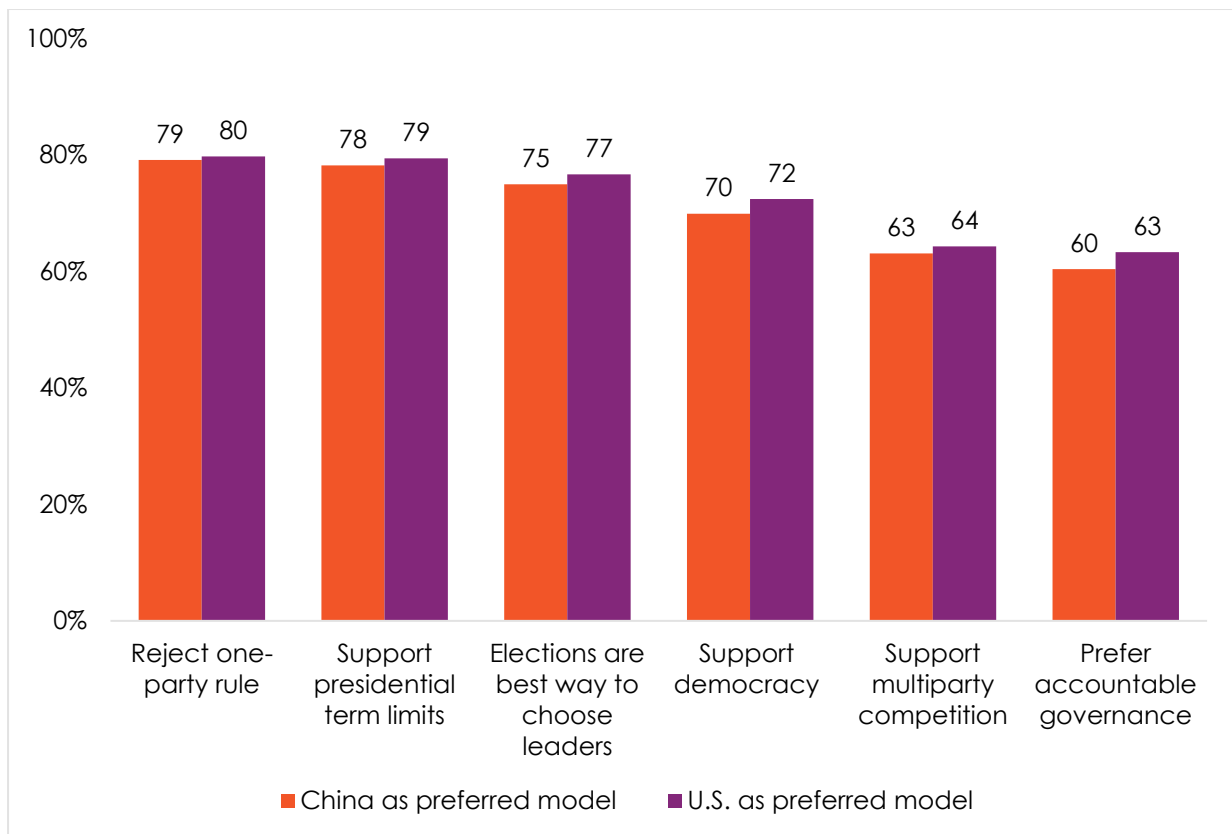
Respondents who said they are aware of Chinese loans or development assistance were asked:
 Do you think that our government is required to repay China for the loans and development assistance it provides to [our country]?
 Do you think our government has borrowed too much money from China?
 (Note: Respondents who are not aware of Chinese loans or development assistance are excluded.)
 *Question was not asked in Eswatini.

Do views on China affect African attitudes toward democracy?

Views on whether China or the United States is preferable as a development model do not appear to have any significant effect on Africans' support for democracy or democratic norms. Respondents who prefer China as a developmental model are just as likely as those who prefer the U.S. model to favor democracy over other kinds of governance systems (70% vs. 72%) (Figure 14).

They are also equally likely to reject one-party rule, endorse presidential term limits, support elections as the best way to choose their country's leaders, support multiparty competition, and prioritize an accountable government over an efficient one.

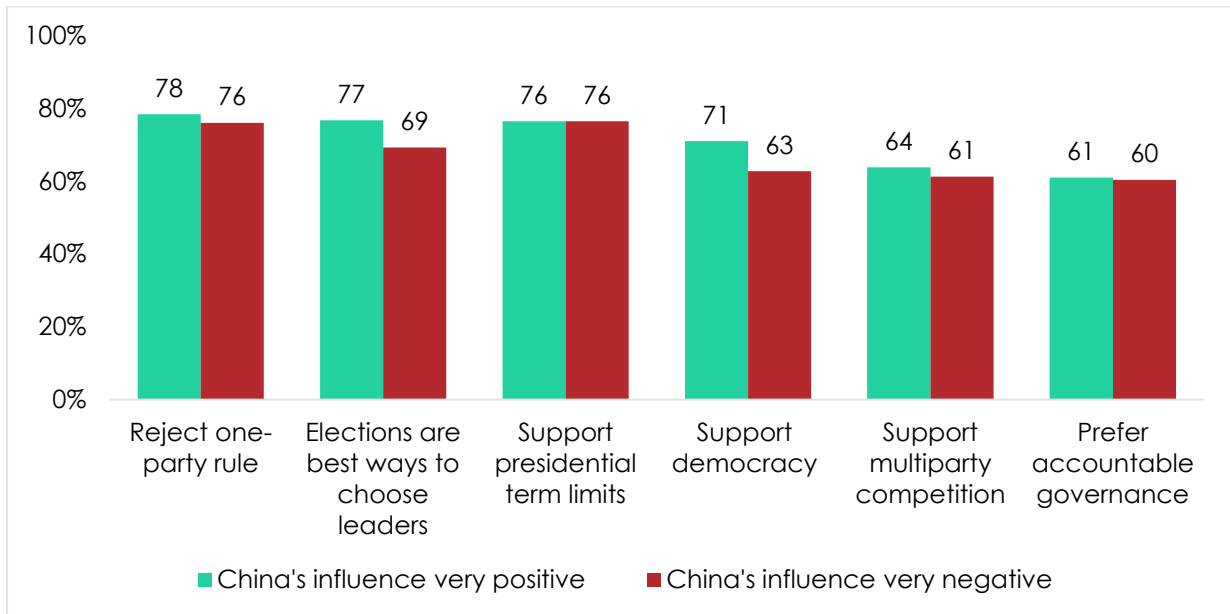
Figure 14: Support for democratic norms and institutions | by preference for China or U.S. as development model | 34 countries | 2019/2021



See question texts in the Appendix.

Contrary to concerns that China's influence in Africa might weaken demand for democracy, respondents who rate China's influence as "very positive" are actually *more* likely than those who rate it as "very negative" to say they prefer democracy over other forms of governance (71% vs. 63%) and to support elections as the best way of choosing leaders (77% vs. 69%) (Figure 15). There are no significant differences when it comes to views on other democratic norms and institutions.

Figure 15: Support for democratic norms and institutions | by perceptions of China's influence | 34 countries | 2019/2021

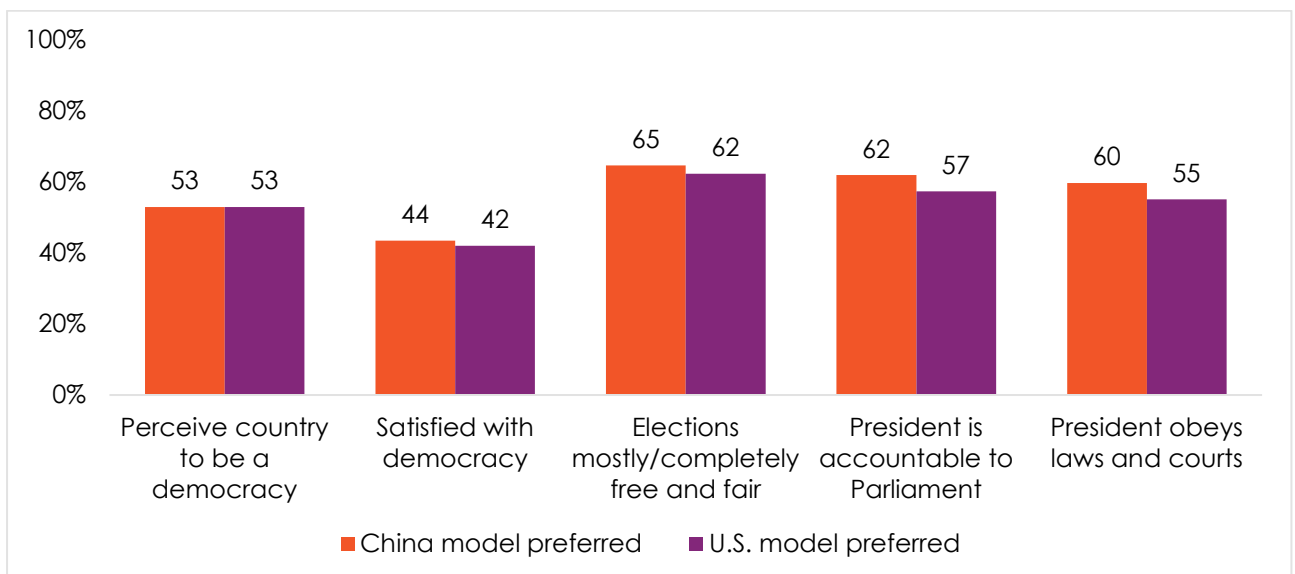


See question texts in the Appendix.

When it comes to how much democracy Africans are getting, we do see modest evidence that when citizens admire China as a development model, they feel slightly better about their own country's democratic governance.

In evaluating the extent of democracy in their countries, citizens who prefer the China model do not differ from those who prefer the U.S. model (Figure 16). But on measures of election quality and presidential accountability to Parliament and to the courts, Africans who prefer the China model evaluate democratic conditions in their own country a bit more positively.

Figure 16: Assessments of supply of democracy | by preference for China or U.S. as development model | 34 countries | 2019/2021

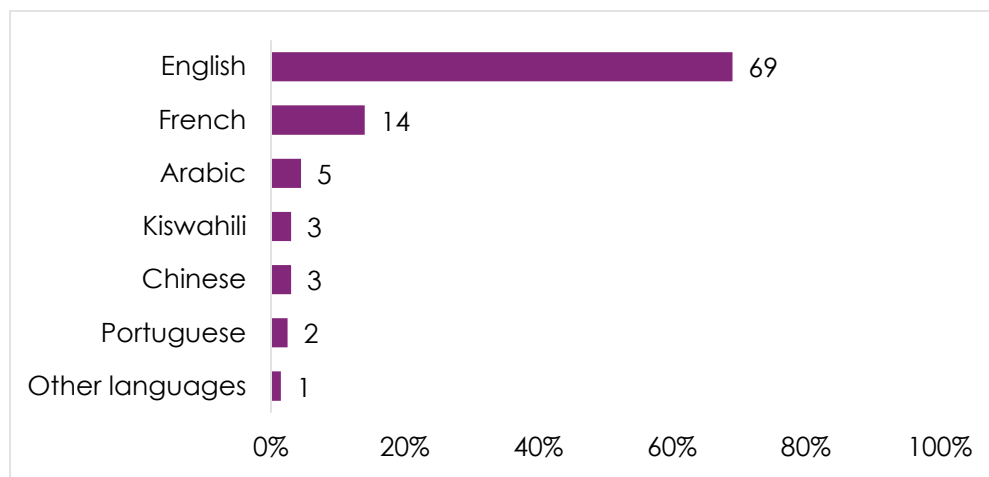


See question texts in the Appendix.

Best international language for the future

China's pursuit of cultural "soft power" (Nantulya, 2018), for example via an expanding network of Confucius Institutes across the continent (BBC, 2019), appears to be making little progress. Asked which international language they think is most important for young Africans to learn, seven in 10 respondents (69%) cite English, while only 3% choose Chinese (Figure 17). English is particularly valued by Africans with at least a secondary education (77%-79%).

Figure 17: Most important international language to learn | 34 countries
 | 2019/2021



Respondents were asked: *In thinking about the future of the next generation in our country, which of these international languages, if any, do you think is most important for young people to learn?*

Conclusion

Recent Afrobarometer surveys show that Africans generally hold positive views of both Chinese and U.S. economic and political influence on the continent. Moreover, attitudes toward the two countries are positively rather than negatively correlated, i.e. people who feel positive toward China are also more likely to view the United States positively, and vice versa. Importantly, Africans' views on China do not appear to affect their support for democracy and democratic norms.

China's perceived influence has decreased over the past five years, and many citizens are concerned about their government's indebtedness to China. In the end, Africans still prefer the United States over China as a development model for their country, and English remains the international language of choice across much of the continent. But Africans appear to welcome foreign engagement that meets their priorities, whether it originates in China or the United States.

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

- Amoah, P. A., Hodzi, O., & Castillo, R. (2020). Africans in China and Chinese in Africa: Inequalities, social identities, and wellbeing. *Asian Ethnicity*, 21(4), 457-463.
- BBC. (2019). Confucius Institutes: The growth of China's controversial cultural branch. 6 September.
- Brautigam, D. (2019). A critical look at Chinese 'debt-trap diplomacy': The rise of a meme. *Area Development and Policy*, 5(1), 1-1430 October.
- Brautigam, D., & Kidane, W. (2020). China, Africa, and debt distress: Fact and fiction about asset seizures. China Africa Research Initiative. Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.
- China Africa Research Initiative. (2018). Data: China-Africa trade. Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.
- Green, M. (2019). China's debt diplomacy. Foreign Policy. 25 April.
- Lekorwe, M., Chingwete, A., Okuru, M., & Samson, R. (2016). China's growing presence in Africa wins largely positive popular reviews. Afrobarometer dispatch.
- Mattes, R. (2020). Lived poverty on the rise: Decade of living-standard gains ends in Africa. Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 62.
- Mitchell, J. (2019). IMF: African economies are the world's fastest growing. FDI Intelligence. 17 October.
- Muchira, N. (2018). New \$60b US fund to rival Chinese push into Africa. East African. 7 November.
- Nantulya, P. (2018). Grand strategy and China's soft power push in Africa. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. 30 August.
- Pairault, T. (2021). China's presence in Africa is at heart political. Diplomat. 11 August.
- Scott, C. D. (2021). Does China's involvement in African elections and politics hurt democracy? Democracy in Africa. 27 September.
- Shepherd, C., & Blanchard, B. (2018). China's Xi offers another \$60 billion to Africa, but says no to 'vanity' projects. Reuters. 3 September.
- Sun, Y. (2014). China's aid to Africa: Monster or messiah? Brookings. 7 February.
- Thomas, D. (2021). What can Africa expect from FOCAC 2021? Africa Business. 6 October.

Appendix

Table A.1: Afrobarometer Round 8 fieldwork dates and previous survey rounds

Country	Round 8 fieldwork	Previous survey rounds
Angola	Nov.-Dec. 2019	N/A
Benin	Nov.-Dec. 2020	2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017
Botswana	July-August 2019	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017
Burkina Faso	Dec. 2019	2008, 2012, 2015, 2017
Cabo Verde	Dec. 2019	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017
Cameroon	Feb.-March 2021	2013, 2015, 2018
Côte d'Ivoire	Nov. 2019	2013, 2014, 2017
Eswatini	March-April 2021	2013, 2015, 2018
Ethiopia	DDc. 2019-Jan. 2020	2013
Gabon	Feb. 2020	2015, 2017
Gambia	Feb. 2021	2018
Ghana	Sept.-Oct. 2019	1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017
Guinea	Nov.-Dec. 2019	2013, 2015, 2017
Kenya	August-Sept. 2019	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016
Lesotho	Feb.-March 2020	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017
Liberia	Oct.-Dec. 2020	2008, 2012, 2015, 2018
Malawi	Nov.-Dec. 2019	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017
Mali	March-April 2020	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017
Mauritius	Nov. 2020	2012, 2014, 2017
Morocco	Feb. 2021	2013, 2015, 2018
Mozambique	May-July 2021	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018
Namibia	August 2019	1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017
Niger	Oct.-Nov. 2020	2013, 2015, 2018
Nigeria	Jan.-Feb. 2020	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017
Senegal	Dec. 2020-Jan. 2021	2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017
Sierra Leone	March 2020	2012, 2015, 2018
South Africa	May-June 2021	2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018
Sudan	Feb.-April 2021	2013, 2015, 2018
Tanzania	Feb.-March 2021	2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017
Togo	Dec. 2020-Jan. 2021	2012, 2014, 2017
Tunisia	Feb.-March 2020	2013, 2015, 2018
Uganda	Sept.-Oct. 2019	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017
Zambia	Nov.-Dec. 2020	1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017
Zimbabwe	April-May 2021	1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017

Question texts for Figure 14 and Figure 15 (support for democratic norms and institutions)

Respondents were asked:

Reject one-party rule

There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office? (% who "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove")

Support presidential term limits

Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: The Constitution should limit the president to serving a maximum of two terms in office. Statement 2: There should be no constitutional limit on how long the president can serve.

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

Elections are best way to choose leaders

Which of the following statements is closest to your own opinion?

Statement 1: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections.

Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.

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

Support democracy

Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?

Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.

Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.

(% who choose Statement 1)

Support multiparty competition

Which of the following statements is closest to your own opinion?

Statement 1: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in [country].

Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that [citizens] have real choices in who governs them.

(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with Statement 2)

Prefer accountable governance

Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: It is more important to have a government that can get things done, even if we have no influence over what it does.

Statement 2: It is more important for citizens to be able to hold government accountable, even if that means it makes decisions more slowly.

(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with Statement 2)

Question texts for Figure 16 (assessments of supply of democracy)

Respondents were asked:

Perceived country to be a democracy

In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [country] today? (% who say "a full democracy" or "a democracy with minor problems")

Satisfied with democracy

Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]? (% who say "fairly satisfied" or "very satisfied")

Elections mostly/completely free and fair

On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last general election, held in [year]? (% who say "completely free and fair" or "free and fair with minor problems")

President is accountable to Parliament

In your opinion, how often, in this country does the president ignore the [national legislature] and just do what s/he wants? (% who say "rarely" or "never")

President obeys laws and courts

In your opinion, how often, in this country does the president ignore the courts and laws of this country? (% who say "rarely" or "never")

Josephine Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny is knowledge translation manager for Afrobarometer.
Email: jappiah@afrobarometer.org.

Edem Selormey is director of research at the Ghana Center for Democratic Development.
Email: edem@cddgh.org.

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 (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

Financial support for Afrobarometer Round 8 has been provided by Sweden via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) via the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Donations help Afrobarometer give voice to African citizens. Please consider making a contribution (at www.afrobarometer.org) or contact Bruno van Dyk (bruno.v.dyk@afrobarometer.org) to discuss institutional funding.

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.



Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 489 | 15 November 2021