

## Building bridges? Cape Verdeans value regional ties, U.S. model, China's influence

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Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 161 | Thomas Isbell

### Summary

As a small-island middle-income country, Cape Verde is seeking closer ties with mainland African countries to sustain economic growth and development (Daily Graphic, 2017; ECOWAS, 2017). And beyond Africa, Cape Verde is tapping into the economic ambitions of China for investment and technical assistance, especially in the "blue economy" of the country's abundant maritime sector (Vreÿ, 2017; Addamah, 2017).

How do ordinary Cape Verdeans feel about their country becoming more closely entwined with mainland neighbours and China? Findings from Afrobarometer's Round 6 (2014) survey suggest that Cape Verdeans value the contributions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) but are divided in their views on free cross-border movement of people and goods. The United States is the most popular model for Cape Verde's development, but China is widely perceived as exerting a significant and positive influence.

### Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Six rounds of surveys were completed between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 surveys (2016/2017) are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of 1,200 or 2,400 respondents.

This dispatch reports on findings of the Round 6 survey in Cape Verde, which was conducted in November and December 2014. The national Afrobarometer team, led by AFROSONDAGEM, interviewed 1,200 adult Cape Verdeans. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of sampling error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level. Previous Afrobarometer surveys were conducted in Cape Verde in 2002, 2005, 2008, and 2011.

### Key findings

- Most Cape Verdeans see ECOWAS and the AU as helpful to their country, although three in 10 citizens say they don't know enough about these organizations to form an opinion.
- Citizens are divided on how easy or difficult it is to cross international borders and on whether governments should allow free cross-border movement of people and goods. Only one-third (33%) of Cape Verdeans think governments "have a duty to try to guarantee free elections and prevent human rights abuses in other countries in the region."

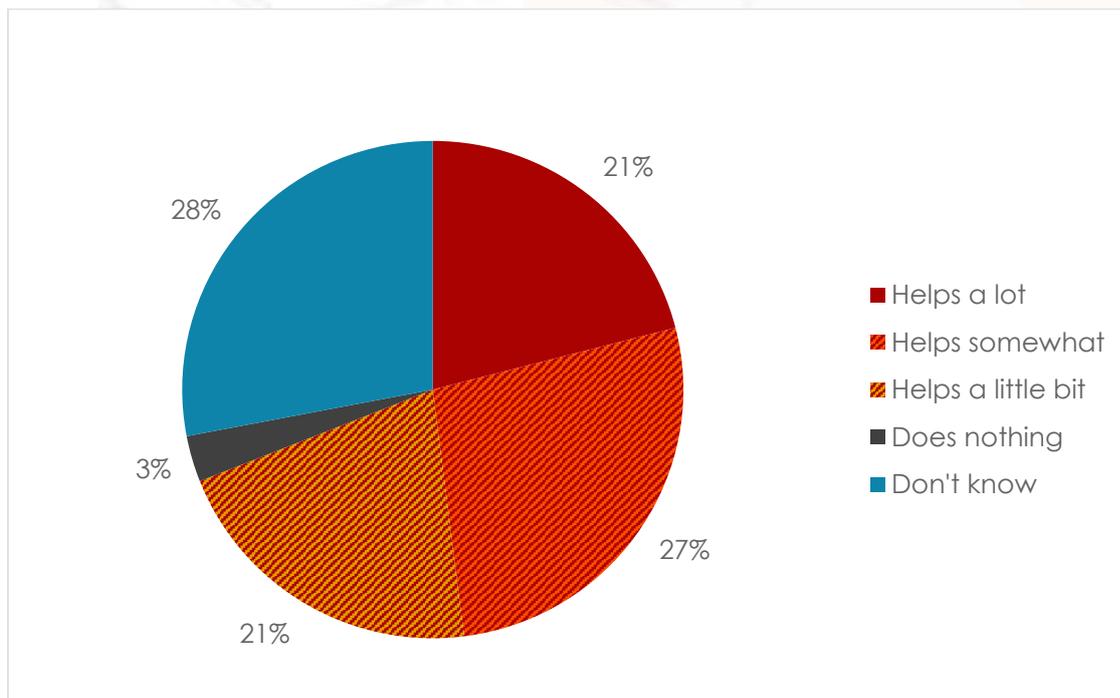
- The most popular model for Cape Verde's future development is the United States, favoured by 52% of respondents – more than twice the proportion who prefer China as a model (21%). The United States is also most widely seen as the most influential country in Cape Verde (31%), though China (27%) and Portugal (25%) follow closely.
- Overwhelmingly, Cape Verdeans see China as having “some” or “a lot” of influence on their national economy (78%) and perceive that influence as “somewhat” or “very” positive (79%).

### ECOWAS, AU win positive reviews

Overall, Cape Verdeans express far more positive than negative assessments of the impact of ECOWAS and the AU on their country, but a substantial number of citizens don't know enough about these organizations to offer an opinion.

About half (48%) of respondents say ECOWAS helps their country “somewhat” or “a lot,” while another two in 10 (21%) say it helps “a little bit” (Figure 1). Only 3% say ECOWAS does nothing to help Cape Verde. Almost three in 10 (28%) plead ignorance.

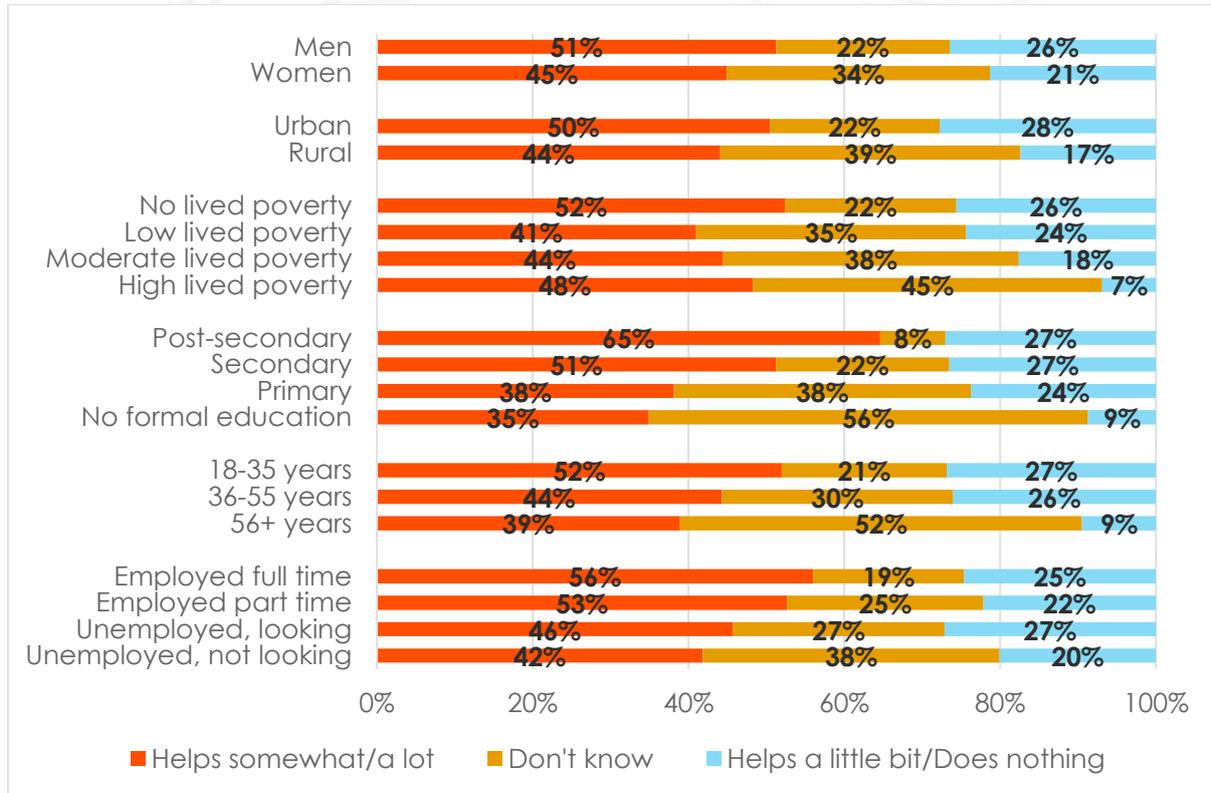
**Figure 1: How helpful is ECOWAS? | Cape Verde | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say: ECOWAS?*

When we compare perceptions of ECOWAS' helpfulness by key socio-demographic groups, the clearest pattern is that male, urban, wealthier, better-educated, young, and employed respondents are significantly more likely to know enough about ECOWAS to have an opinion (i.e. less likely to say they “don't know”) than female, rural, poorer, less-educated, older, and unemployed citizens (Figure 2). The most striking gap is between those with no formal education (56% say they “don't know”) and those with post-secondary qualifications (8% “don't know”). Generally, both positive responses (helps “somewhat” or “a lot”) and negative responses (helps “a little bit” or “does nothing”) increase as the proportions of citizens providing substantive responses increase.

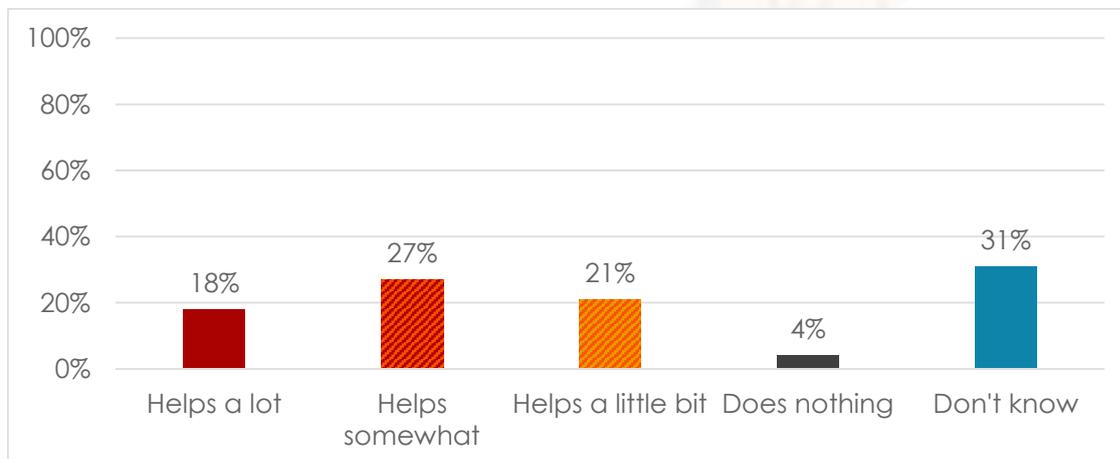
**Figure 2: Regional organization (ECOWAS) helps country | by socio-demographic factors | Cape Verde | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say: ECOWAS?

Cape Verdeans' assessments of how much the AU helps their country follow a similar pattern: Close to half (45%) say it helps "somewhat" or "a lot," 21% say it helps "a little bit," and only 4% say it "does nothing" (Figure 3). Again, three in 10 (31%) say they don't know," with the same pattern of greater knowledge among male, urban, wealthier, better-educated, young, and employed respondents.

**Figure 3: How helpful is the AU? | Cape Verde | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say? African Union

## Attitudes regarding regional benefits and obligations

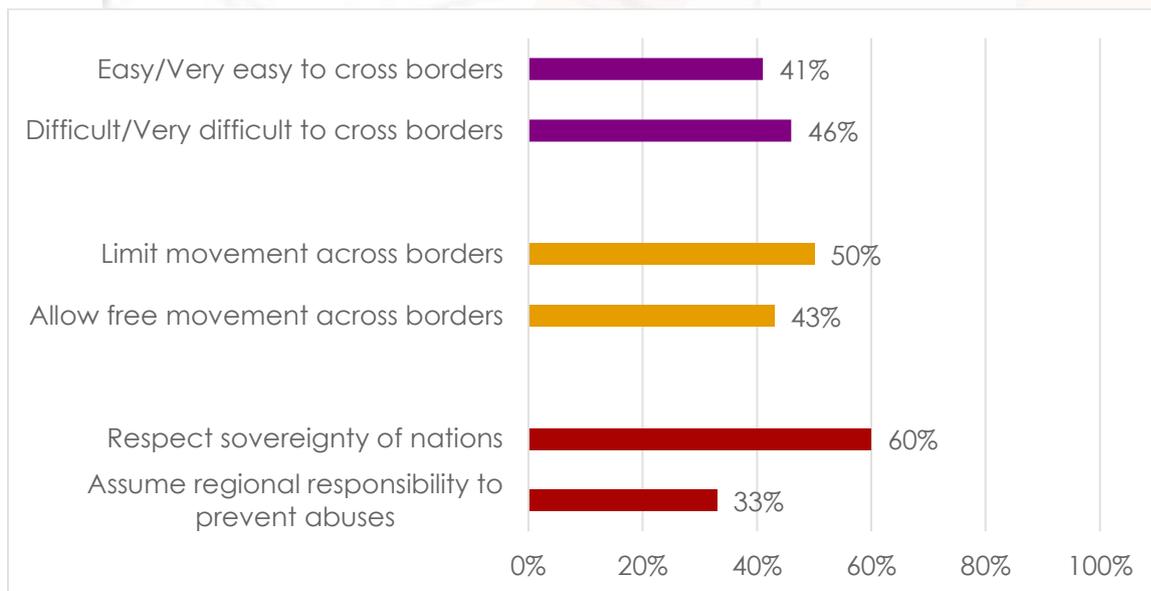
While Cape Verdeans hold generally favorable views of the help provided by ECOIWAS and the AU, they express mixed attitudes regarding regional benefits and obligations (Figure 4).

Respondents split almost evenly on the question of how easy or difficult it is for West Africans to cross international borders: 41% say it is "easy" or "very easy," while slightly more (46%) think it is "difficult" or "very difficult."

When asked whether governments should "protect their own citizens" from foreign workers and traders by limiting cross-border traffic, half of Cape Verdeans say yes (50%), while 43% favour free movement of people and goods across borders.

On a question pitting national sovereignty against regional responsibility to ensure democracy and human rights, only one-third (33%) of Cape Verdeans "agree" or "agree very strongly" that governments "have a duty to try to guarantee free elections and prevent human rights abuses in other countries in the region, for example by using political pressure, economic sanctions, or military force." Six in 10 (60%) instead endorse countries' right "to make their own decisions about how their country should be governed."

**Figure 4: Attitudes regarding regional benefits and obligations | Cape Verde | 2014**



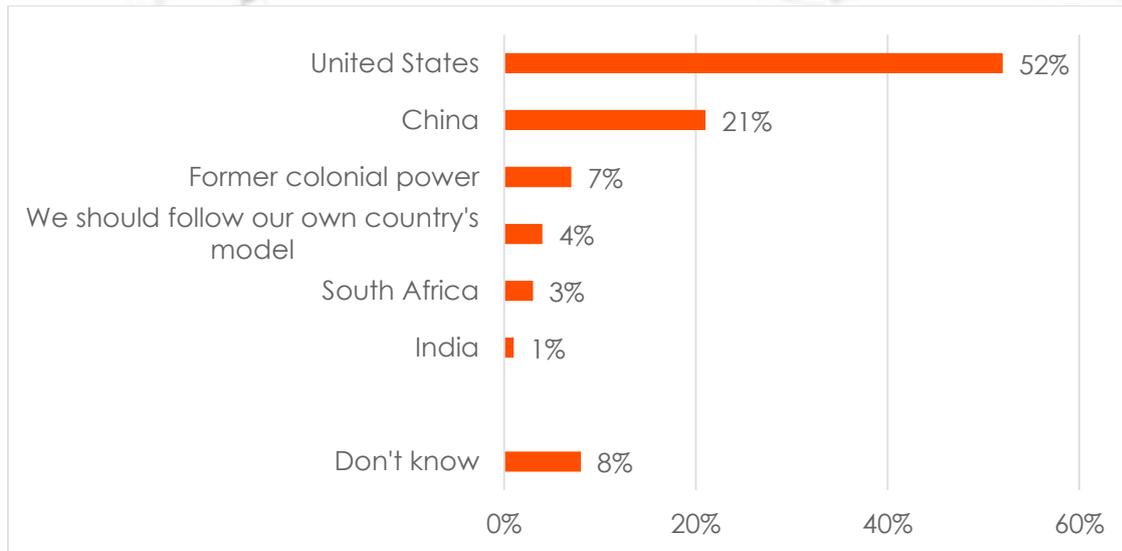
### Respondents were asked:

- In your opinion, how easy or difficult is it for people in West Africa to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other countries, or haven't you heard enough to say?
- Which of the following statements is closest to your view? (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)  
 Statement 1: People living in West Africa should be able to move freely across international borders in order to trade or work in other countries.  
 Statement 2: Because foreign migrants take away jobs, and foreign traders sell their goods at very cheap prices, governments should protect their own citizens and limit the cross-border movement of people and goods.
- Which of the following statements is closest to your view? (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)  
 Statement 1: The governments of each country in West Africa have a duty to try to guarantee free elections and prevent human rights abuses in other countries in the region, for example by using political pressure, economic sanctions or military force.  
 Statement 2: Each country in this region should respect the independence of other countries and allow them to make their own decisions about how their country should be governed.

### Most influential countries

While Cape Verdeans generally appear supportive of their country's ties with ECOWAS and the AU, most would like their country to follow the United States of America as a model for development. A majority (52%) of respondents prefer the U.S. as a model – more than twice as many as favour China (21%) (Figure 5). Fewer than one in 10 see former colonial power Portugal (7%) or others as the best model.

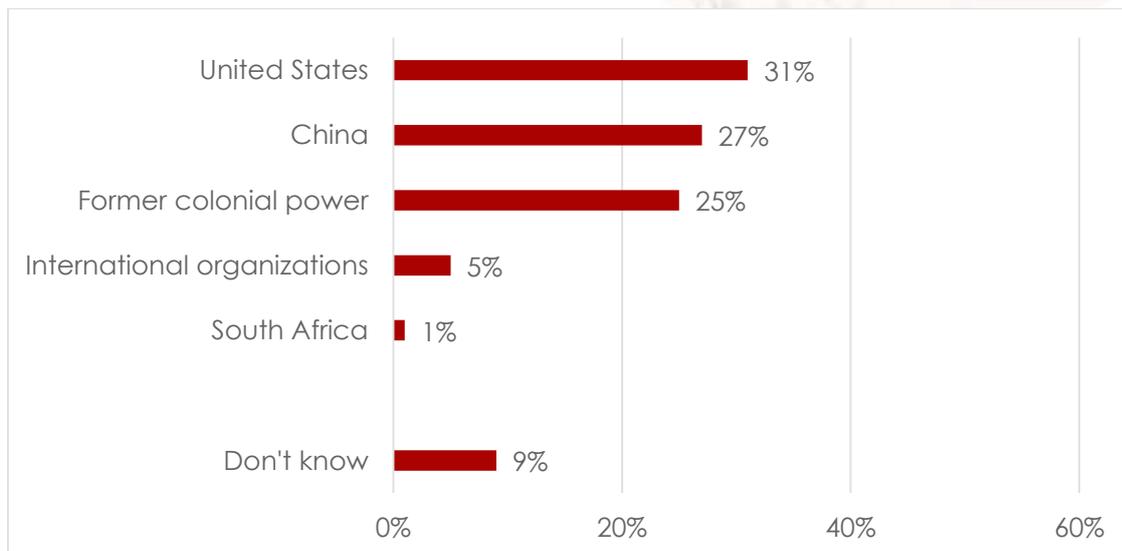
**Figure 5: Model for country's development | Cape Verde | 2014**



**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?*

Responses are more evenly divided when the question is which country has the most influence on Cape Verde. While the U.S. still leads (31%), China (27%) and Portugal (25%) follow closely (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Country with the most influence | Cape Verde | 2014**

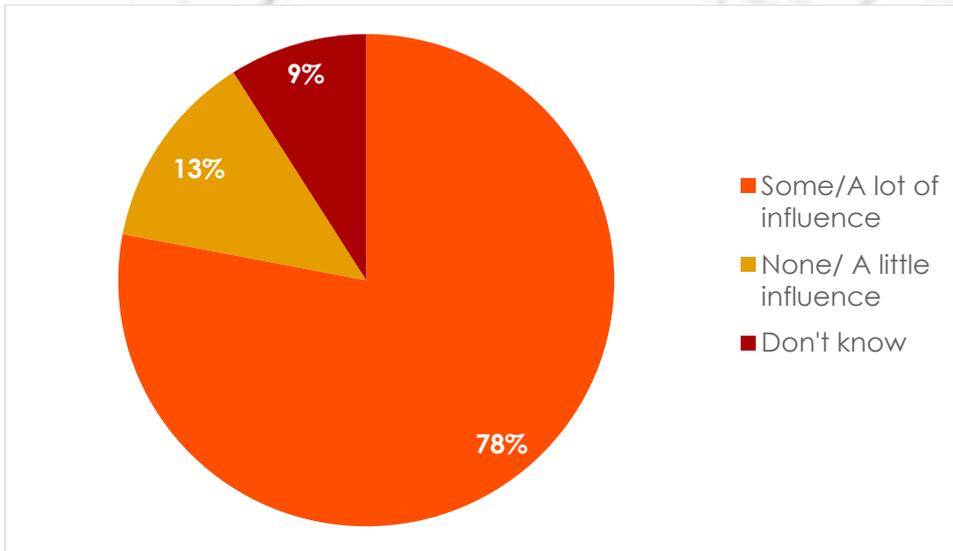


**Respondents were asked:** *Which of the following do you think has the most influence on Cape Verde, or haven't you heard enough to say?*

### Perceptions of China

Confirming China's strong showing among countries that Cape Verdeans consider most influential, more than three-fourths (78%) of respondents say that China's economic activities in Cape Verde has "some" or "a lot" of influence on their economy. Only 13% say China has little or no influence (Figure 7).

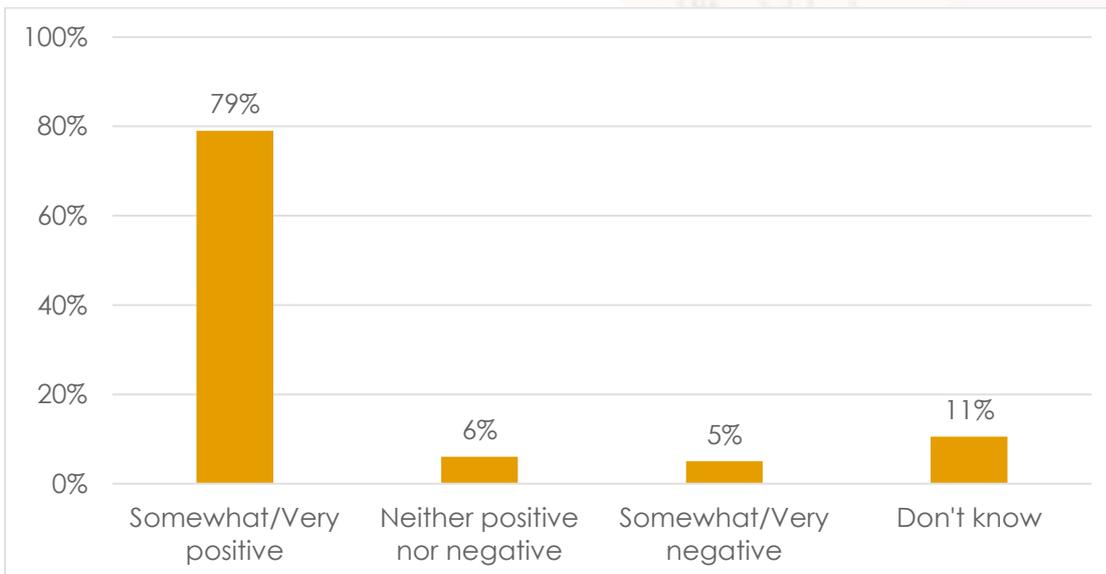
**Figure 7: China's influence on national economy | Cape Verde | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** How much influence do you think China's economic activities in Cape Verde have on our economy, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Moreover, almost eight of 10 respondents (79%) see China's economic and political influence on Cape Verde as "somewhat" or "very" positive, while only 5% consider it as somewhat/very negative (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Is China's influence positive or negative? | Cape Verde | 2014**

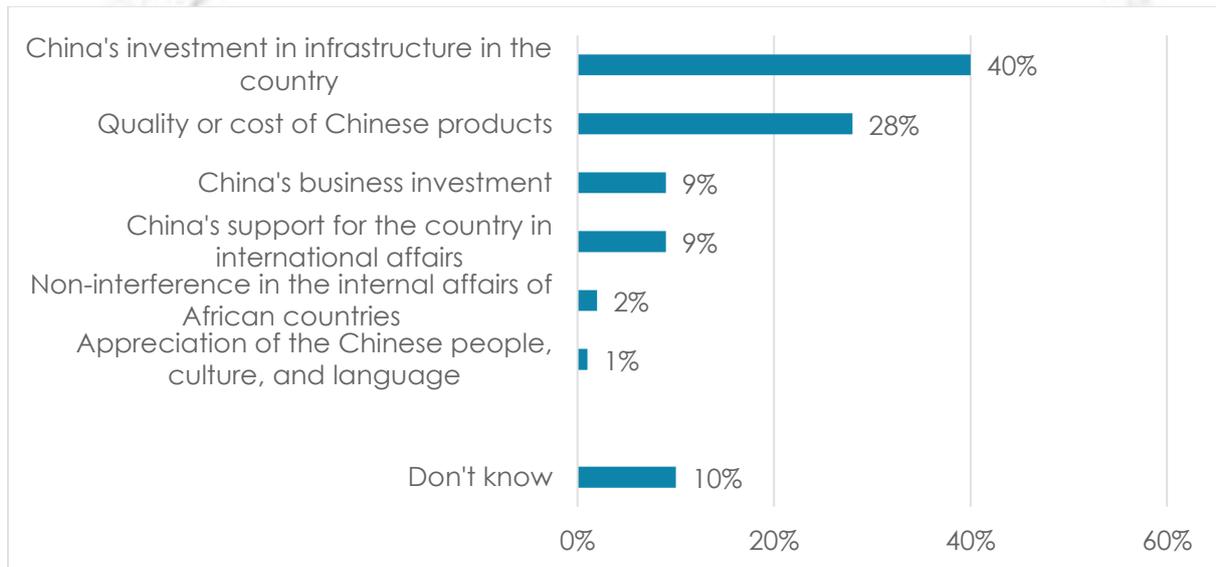


**Respondents were asked:** In general, do you think that China's economic and political influence on Cape Verde is mostly positive, or mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Asked which factors contribute most to a positive image of China in Cape Verde, respondents most frequently cite China's investments in the country's infrastructure (40%), followed by the quality or cost of Chinese products (28%). About one in 10 respondents mention China's business investment and support for Cape Verde in international affairs (each 9%) (Figure 9).

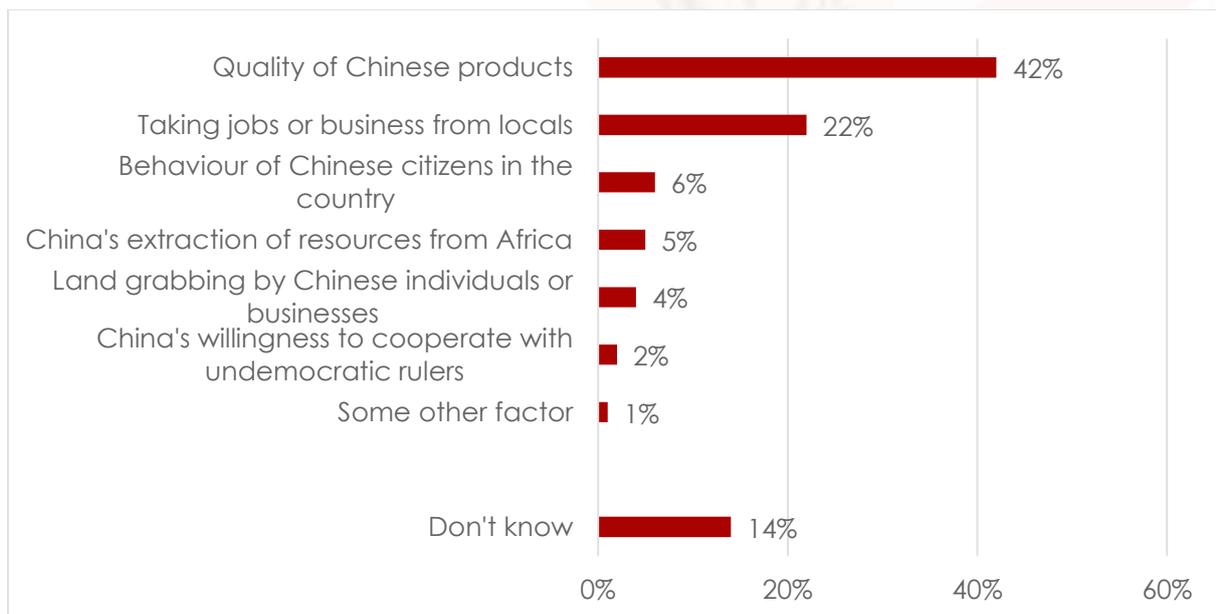
As for factors that contribute to a negative image of China in Cape Verde, 42% cite the quality of Chinese products, while 22% focus on Chinese taking jobs and businesses away from Cape Verdeans (Figure 10).

**Figure 9: Contributors to a positive image of China | Cape Verde | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following factors contributes most to a positive image of China in Cape Verde, or haven't you heard enough to say?

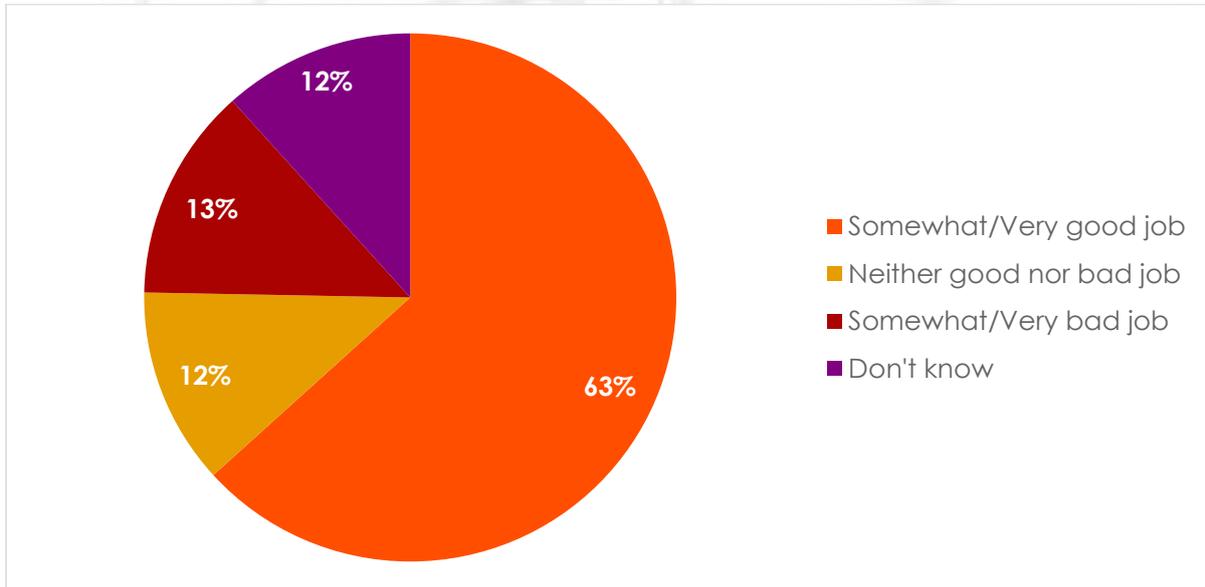
**Figure 10: Contributors to a negative image of China | Cape Verde | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following factors contributes most to negative images of China in Cape Verde, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Overall, more than six in 10 respondents (63%) say China's economic development assistance does a "somewhat" or "very" good job of meeting their country's needs, while only 13% see it as doing a poor job (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: China's assistance meets country's needs | Cape Verde | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, does China's economic development assistance to Cape Verde do a good job or a bad job of meeting the country's needs, or haven't you heard enough to say?*

### Conclusion

Seeking new partnerships to secure investments and markets, Cape Verde has been tying knots with both regional and global players. Cape Verdeans generally appear to value regional memberships, although about three in 10 citizens don't know enough about ECOWAS and the AU to form an opinion about whether they're helpful to their country. While the United States is most commonly seen as the best model to follow for Cape Verde's development, China is perceived as playing a substantial – and overwhelmingly positive – role in Cape Verde's economy.

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Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in 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 the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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