

Citizens hold mixed views on Nigeria's international relations

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 43 | Nengak Daniel Gondyi, Raphael Mbaegbu, Oluwole Ojawole, and Peter Lewis

Summary

The international community is watching with intense interest as Nigeria's new government settles in and begins to pursue its development priorities, which are centred on fighting corruption; creating employment, especially for young people; and improving security. How do Nigerians, in turn, perceive the international community and its role in their country's development?

Using data from the latest Afrobarometer survey, this analysis examines the views of Nigerian citizens on migration, regional integration, and international assistance and trade. The data suggest that while Nigerians believe in free movement across national borders in West Africa, they find migration in the region to be difficult. Most Nigerians say they do not receive remittances from abroad. They hold mixed views on regional responsibilities vs. national sovereignty and on how helpful the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are to their country. The preferred development model is the United States, but most Nigerians also welcome China's contributions as a business and development partner.

Afrobarometer survey

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. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and Round 6 surveys are currently under way (2014-2015). Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Nigeria, led by Practical Sampling International (PSI) in collaboration with the CLEEN Foundation, interviewed 2,400 adult Nigerians between 5 and 27 December 2014. (For 80 cases, supplementary interviews were conducted on 18-19 January 2015.) A sample of this size yields national-level results with a margin of sampling error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level.

The sample covered 33 of Nigeria's 36 states, as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). It was not possible to conduct interviews in three states in the North East zone – Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe – due to unrest in the region, so substitutions of sampling units were made from neighbouring states in the same zone. Thus, each of the country's zones is represented in proportion to its share of the national population.

Previous Afrobarometer surveys have been conducted in Nigeria in 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008, and 2012.

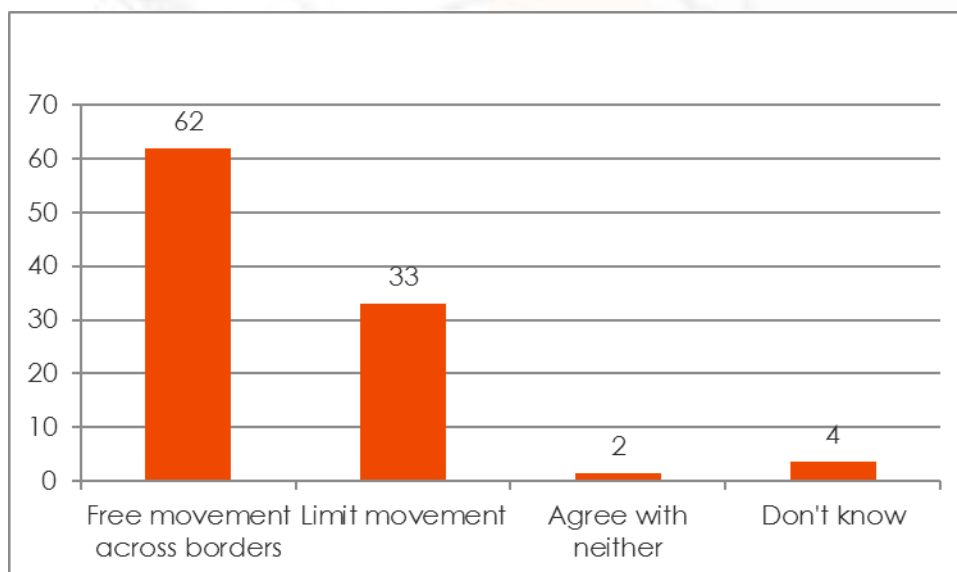
Key findings

- Six in 10 Nigerians (62%) say West Africans should be able to move freely across international borders in order to trade or work in other countries. But more than half (54%) say that crossing international borders in West Africa is difficult.
- The United States is the preferred development model for Nigeria, favoured by 43% of respondents, followed by China (25%).
- Two-thirds (67%) of Nigerians perceive China's economic and political influence on Nigeria as "very positive" or "somewhat positive."
- Two-thirds (67%) say they did not receive remittances from friends or relatives living outside of the country during the previous year.

Regional migration and integration

West Africans have a tradition of regional migration and trade, and the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Residence, and Establishment (1979) affirms their rights to enter, reside, and establish themselves in the territories of member states. In Nigeria, a majority (62%) of survey respondents agree that West African nationals should be able to move freely across international borders in order to trade or work in other countries (Figure 1). One-third (33%) say that movement of West Africans across international borders should be restricted.

Figure 1: Free movement across borders in West Africa | Nigeria | 2014



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2. (%)

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.

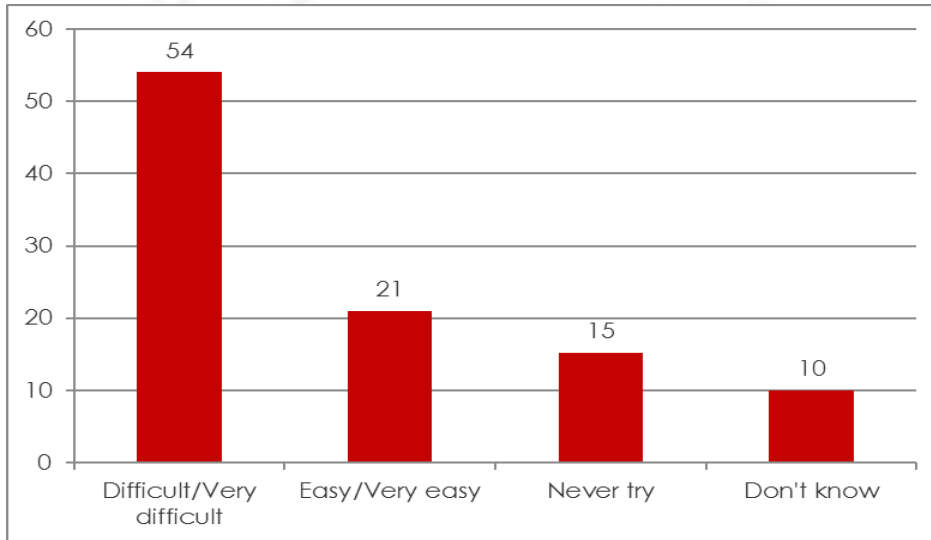
Statement 2: Because foreign migrants take away jobs, and foreign traders sell their goods at very cheap prices, governments should protect their own citizens and limit the cross-border movement of people and goods.

(Note: Due to rounding, the sum of category percentages may not always total 100%.)

While many West Africans have been taking advantage of their right to migrate in the region, more than half (54%) of respondents say it is "difficult" or "very difficult" to cross international borders within ECOWAS (Figure 2). Only one in five (21%) say cross-border movement is "easy" or "very easy." Remarkably, only 15% say they have never attempted to

cross an international border. The difficulty reported by a majority suggests that more needs to be done to remove barriers and promote free movement and trade in the region.

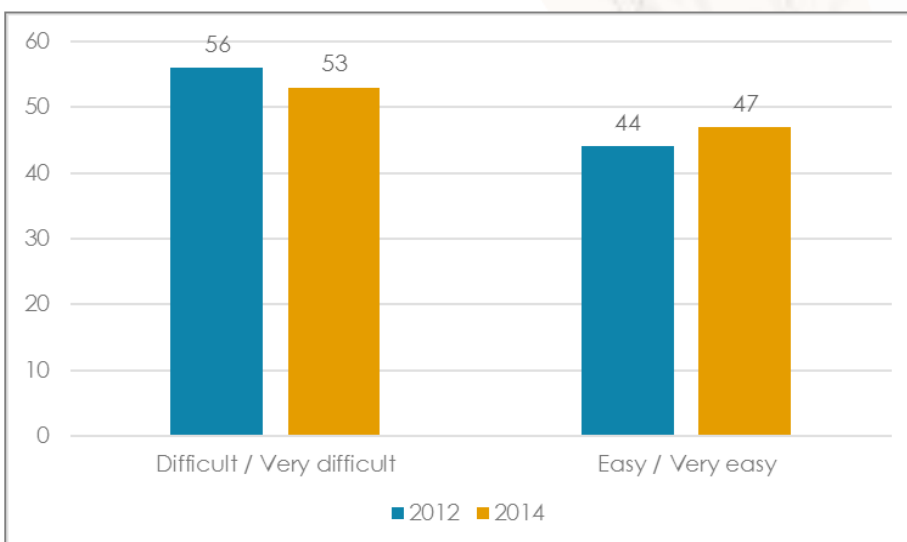
Figure 2: Difficulty of crossing West African borders | Nigeria | 2014



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? (%)*

Related to this is the difficulty faced in procuring identity documents in Nigeria. More than half (53%) of respondents who tried to obtain an identity document in the year preceding the survey say the process was "difficult" or "very difficult" (Figure 3), down only slightly from 56% in the 2012 survey.

Figure 3: Difficulty of obtaining identity document | Nigeria | 2012-2014

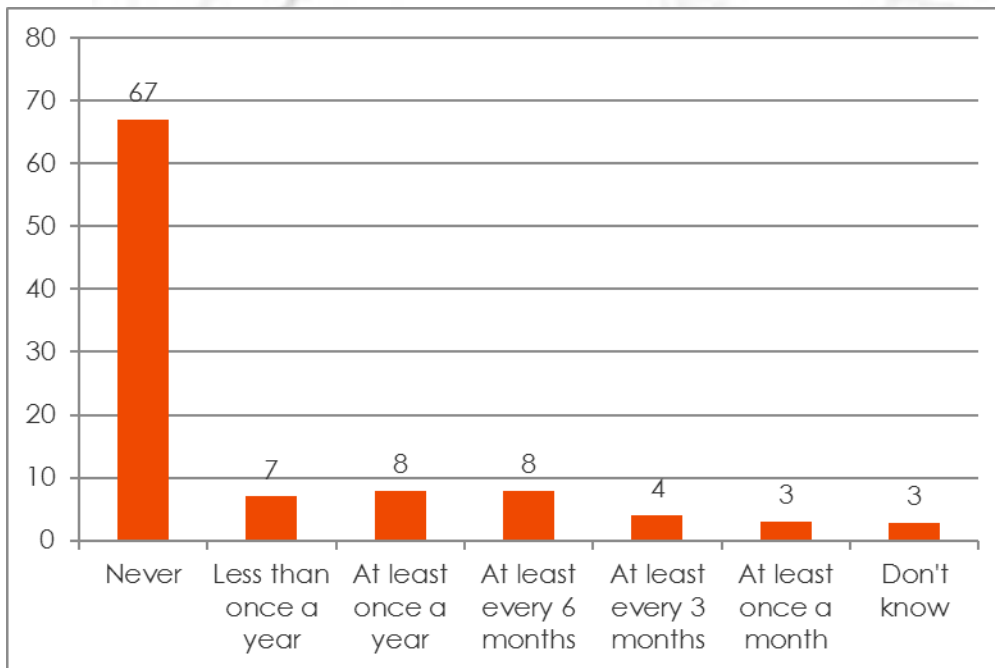


Respondents were asked: *In the past 12 months, have you tried to get an identity document like a birth certificate, driver's license, passport or voter's card, or a permit, from government? If yes: How easy or difficult was it to obtain the document you needed? (%)*

Remittance flow to Nigeria

While many Nigerians cross borders for trade and work, less than one-third say they receive remittances from abroad. Two-thirds (67%) of respondents say they never receive such remittances (Figure 4). Perhaps the contribution of remittances to development, which is believed to be high, does not often come through individuals.

Figure 4: How often received remittances | Nigeria | 2014

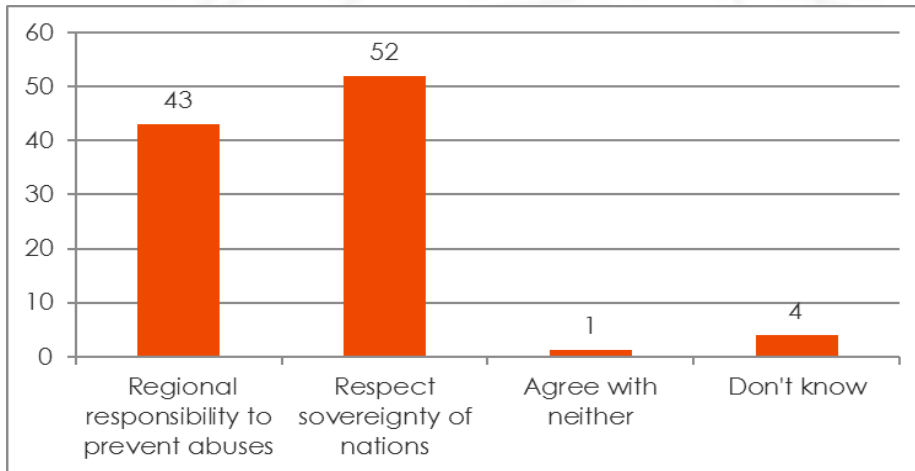


Respondents were asked: How often, if at all, do you or anyone in your household receive money remittances from friends or relatives living outside of the country? (%)

Neighbours, ECOWAS, and the African Union

Respondents hold mixed views on the relative value of foreign intervention to ensure free elections and human rights in neighbouring countries vs. the need to respect other countries' sovereignty. More than half (52%) of Nigerians say national sovereignty is paramount, agreeing that governments should respect "the independence of other countries and allow them to make their own decisions about how their country should be governed." However, a large minority (43%) say West African governments should use political pressure, economic sanctions, and even military force "to guarantee free elections and prevent human rights abuses in other countries in the region" (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Responsibility to prevent abuses vs. respect sovereignty of nations
 Nigeria | 2014



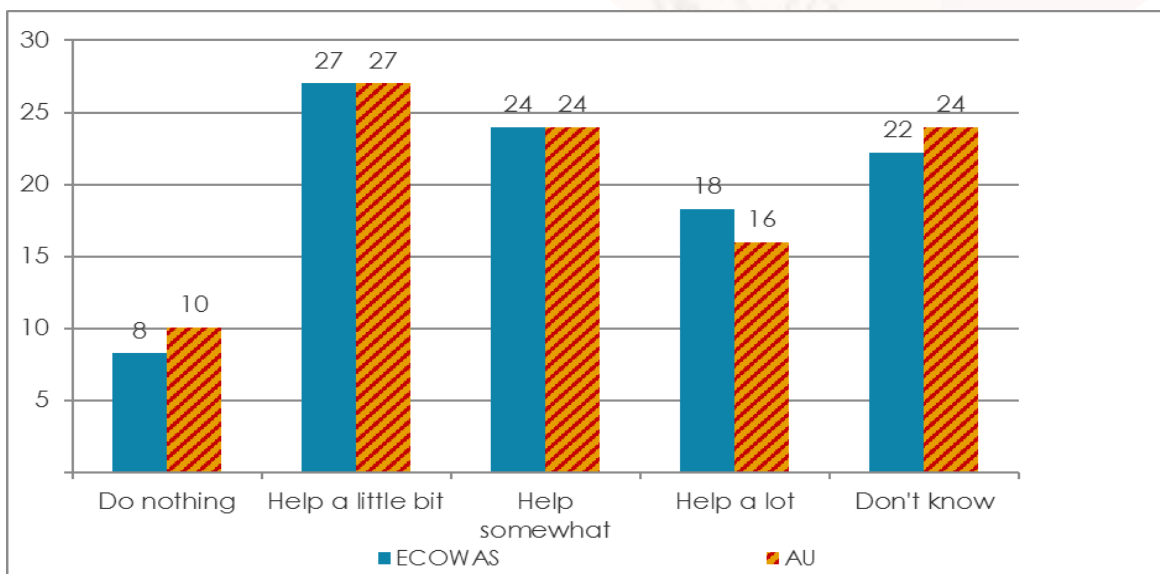
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2. (%)

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.

Views are equally mixed on how helpful regional and continental bodies – ECOWAS and the AU – are to Nigeria. A comparative analysis of respondents' opinions shows a remarkable similarity between the perceived assistance received from the AU and that from ECOWAS (which is headquartered in Nigeria) (Figure 6). A majority of respondents say the two organisations “help a little” or “help somewhat,” while less than one in five say they “help a lot.” For both ECOWAS and the AU, nearly one-fourth of respondents say they “don't know” whether organisations have been of any assistance to Nigeria.

Figure 6: Perceptions of ECOWAS and AU assistance to Nigeria | 2014



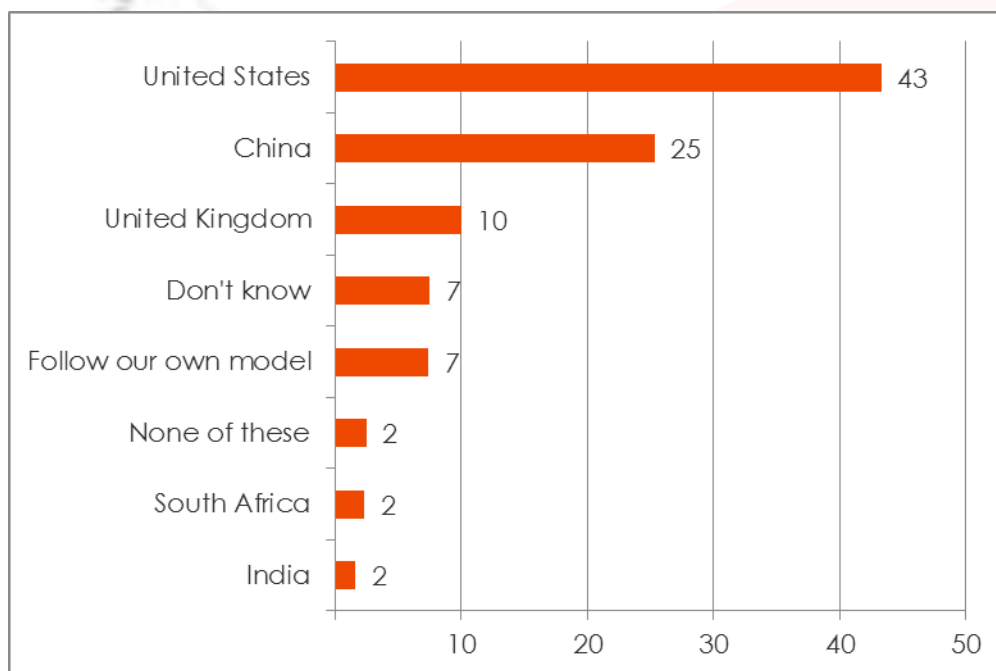
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how much does each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say: a) The Economic Community for West African States or ECOWAS? b) The African Union?

Modelling development

For a developing country such as Nigeria, other countries can provide models and examples worth emulating. Indeed, Nigeria abandoned the Westminster parliamentary system of government in favour of the U.S.-style presidential government in 1979.

Asked which country presents the best development model for Nigeria, 43% of respondents choose the United States (Figure 7). In recent times, Nigeria has enjoyed warm diplomatic relations with the United States, including a state visit to Washington by Nigeria's new president in July 2015. In second place is China, preferred by 25% of respondents. Only 10% prefer the United Kingdom, Nigeria's colonial administrator, while 7% urge Nigeria to chart its own course in developing a model and 2% point to South Africa and India as models for Nigeria's development.

Figure 7: Best model for development | Nigeria | 2014

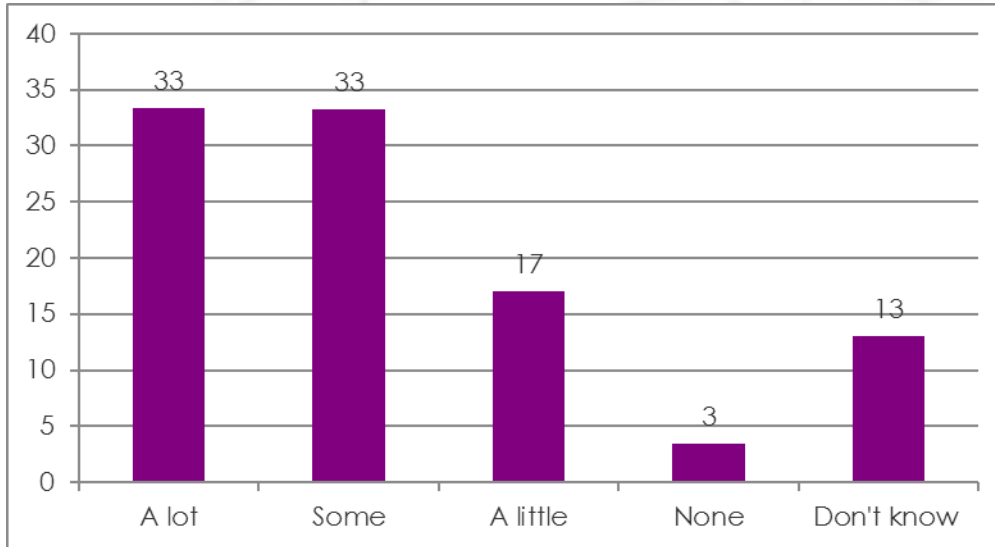


Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, which of the following countries, if any, would be the best model for the future development of our country? (%)*

The 'China question'

The role of China in Africa's development has been under close observation in recent years. In addition to placing second among preferred development models, well ahead of the United Kingdom, South Africa, and India, China is perceived as having "a lot of influence" (33%) or "some influence" (33%) by a majority of Nigerians (Figure 8). Only 3% believe that China has no influence on Nigeria's economy.

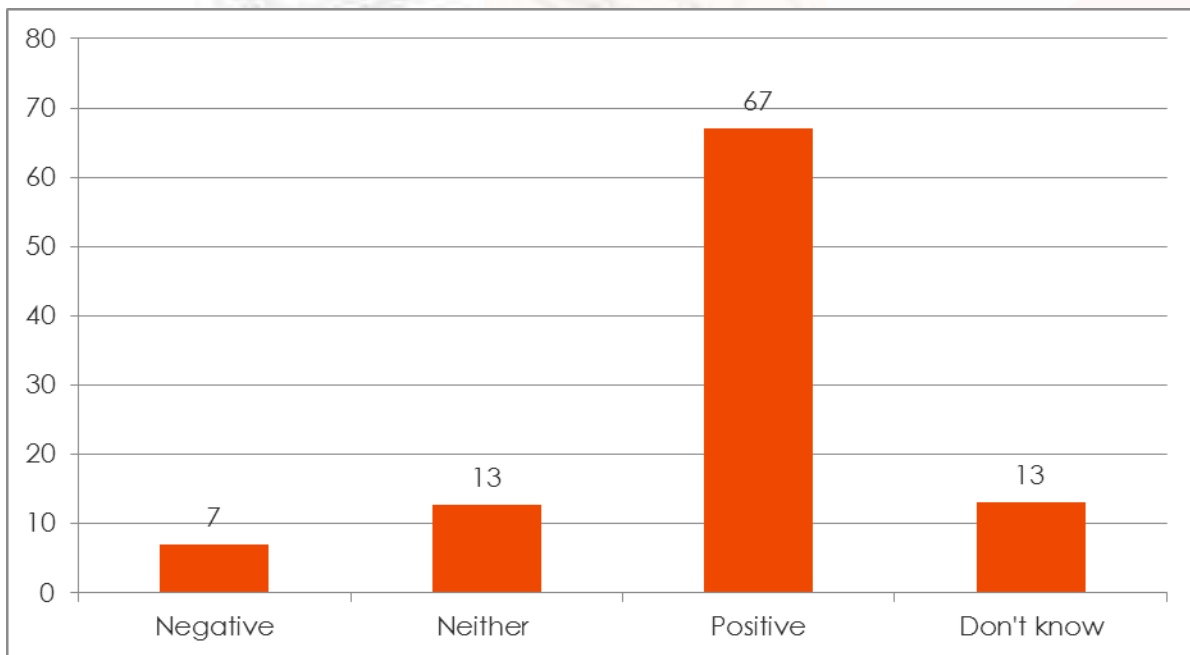
Figure 8: China's influence on Nigeria's economy | 2014



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

Two-thirds (67%) of Nigerians view China's economic and political influence on Nigeria as mostly positive, and only 7% believe it is mostly negative (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Perceptions of China's economic and political influence on Nigeria | 2014

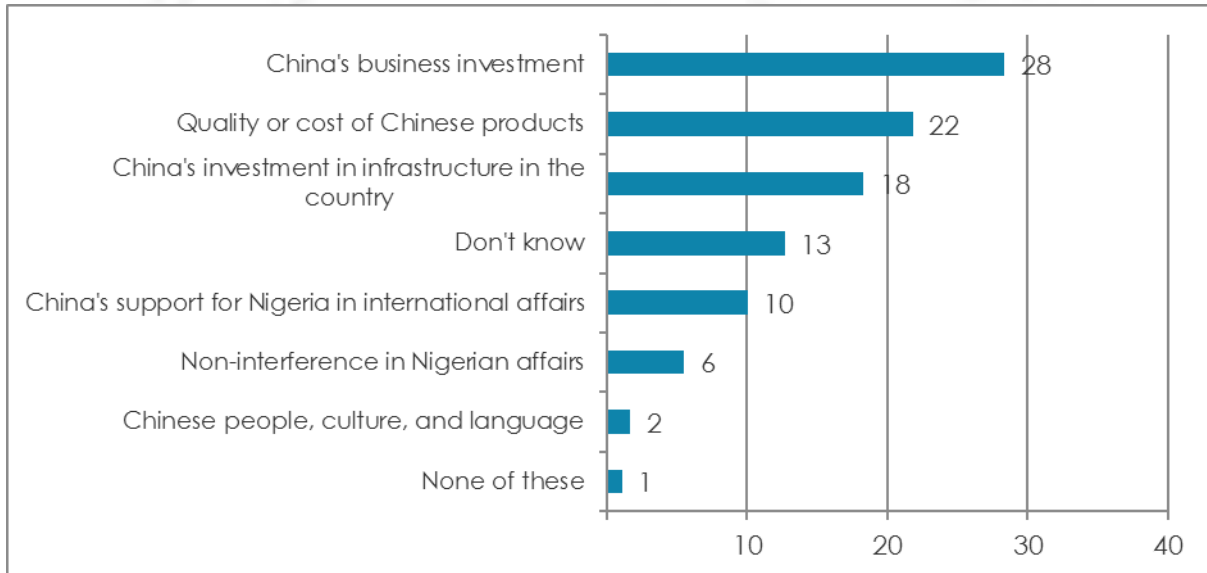


Respondents were asked: In general, do you think that China's economic and political influence on Nigeria is mostly positive, or mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say? (%)

People, language, and culture do not play significant roles in shaping China's positive image in Nigeria (Figure 10). The lead factors identified by respondents are: China's business investment in Nigeria (cited by 28% of respondents), the quality or cost of Chinese products (22%), and China's investment in infrastructure in the country (18%). On the other hand, in shaping the negative image of China in Nigeria, Nigerians are unconcerned about alleged

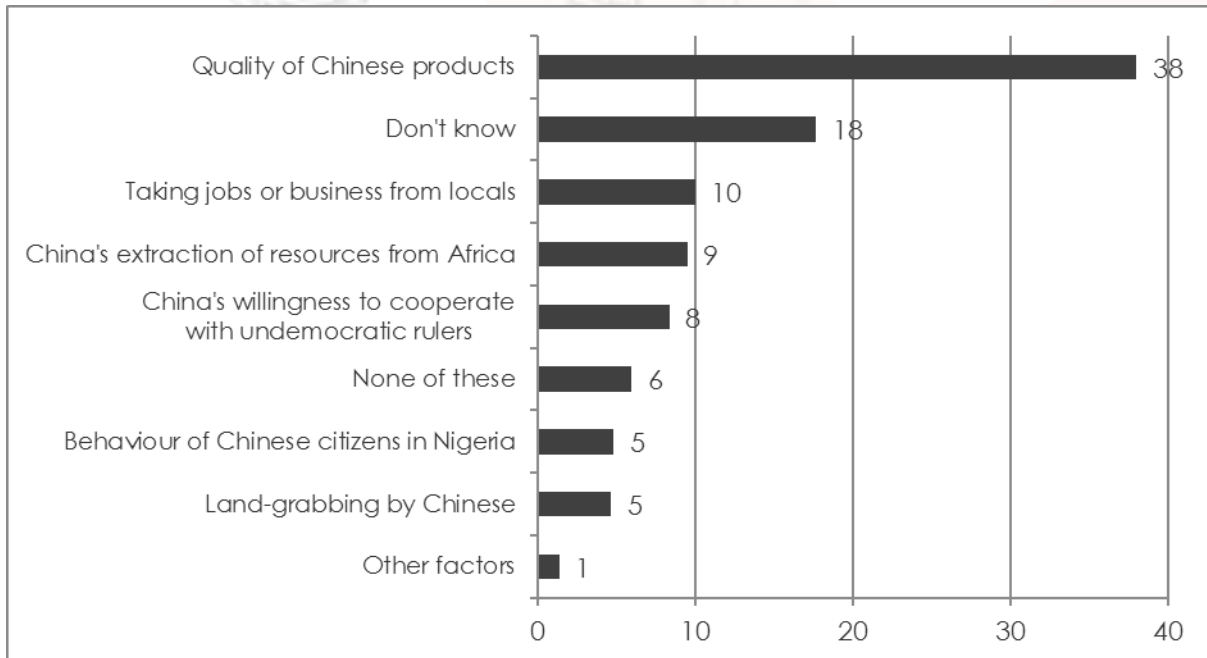
land-grabbing by Chinese in Africa; what counts most is the poor quality of Chinese products (38%) and the taking of jobs or businesses from locals by Chinese nationals (18%) (Figure 11).

Figure 10: Contributors to China's positive image in Nigeria | 2014



Respondents were asked: Which of the following factors contributes most to positive images of China in Nigeria, or haven't you heard enough to say? (%)

Figure 11: Contributors to China's negative image in Nigeria | 2014



Respondents were asked: Which of the following factors contributes most to negative images of China in Nigeria, or haven't you heard enough to say? (%)

To further explore data from Nigeria, please visit
 Afrobarometer's online data analysis facility at
www.afrobarometer-online-analysis.com.

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

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