



Zomba, Malawi
04 November 2021



News release

In Malawi, perceptions of China's influence, though positive, are on the decline

China is seen as an important economic player in Malawi, although its perceived influence has declined considerably since 2014, according to Afrobarometer's most recent survey (in late 2019) in Malawi.

Citizens who consider China's economic and political influence in their country positive outnumber those who see it as negative. China's low-cost products and infrastructure and business investments are the main drivers of positive perceptions, while the poor quality of its products is the main reason for negative views.

Among Malawians who are aware that their country receives loans or development assistance from China, a majority think Malawi has borrowed too much from China.

Key findings

- Only about one in three Malawians (36%) think that China's economic activities have "some" or "a lot of" influence on Malawi's economy, a decline from 59% in 2014 (Figure 1).
- Half (50%) of Malawians see China's economic and political influence in their country as positive; one in seven (14%) think it is negative (Figure 2). According to Afrobarometer's 2014 survey, China's low-cost products and its infrastructure and business investments are the main drivers of positive perceptions (Figure 3), while poor-quality products are the main reason for the negative assessments (Figure 4).
- Fewer than half (46%) of Malawians are aware that their country receives loans or development assistance from China. Among those who are aware of Chinese loans/assistance, a majority (56%) think Malawi has borrowed too much from China (Figure 5).
- In a comparison with other countries and organizations, China ranks fourth in perceived influence in Malawi, behind the United States, South Africa, and the United Kingdom (Figure 6).
- China ties with the United States as a development model preferred by Malawians, trailing only South Africa (Figure 7).

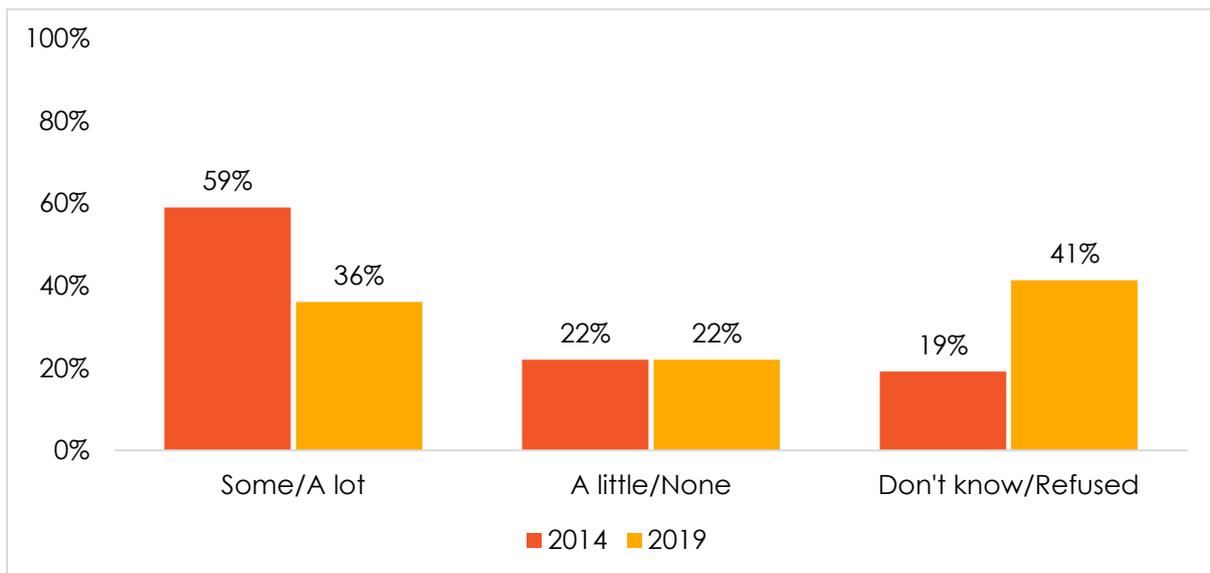
Afrobarometer surveys

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 with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Malawi, led by the Centre for Social Research at the University of Malawi, interviewed 1,200 adult Malawians in November-December 2019. 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 1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2017.

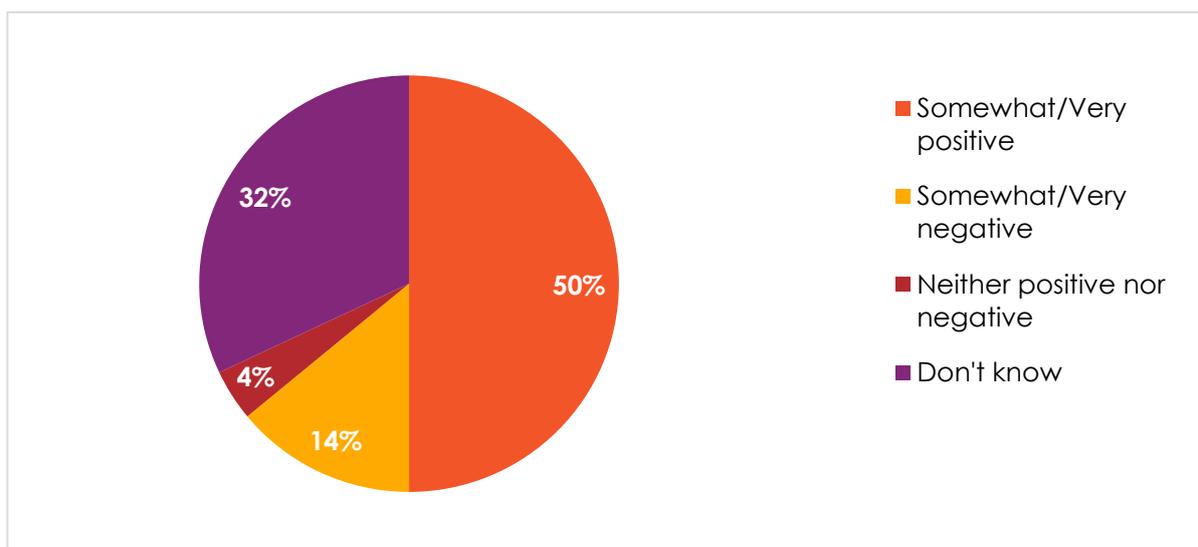
Charts

Figure 1: Influence of China's economic activities | Malawi | 2014-2019



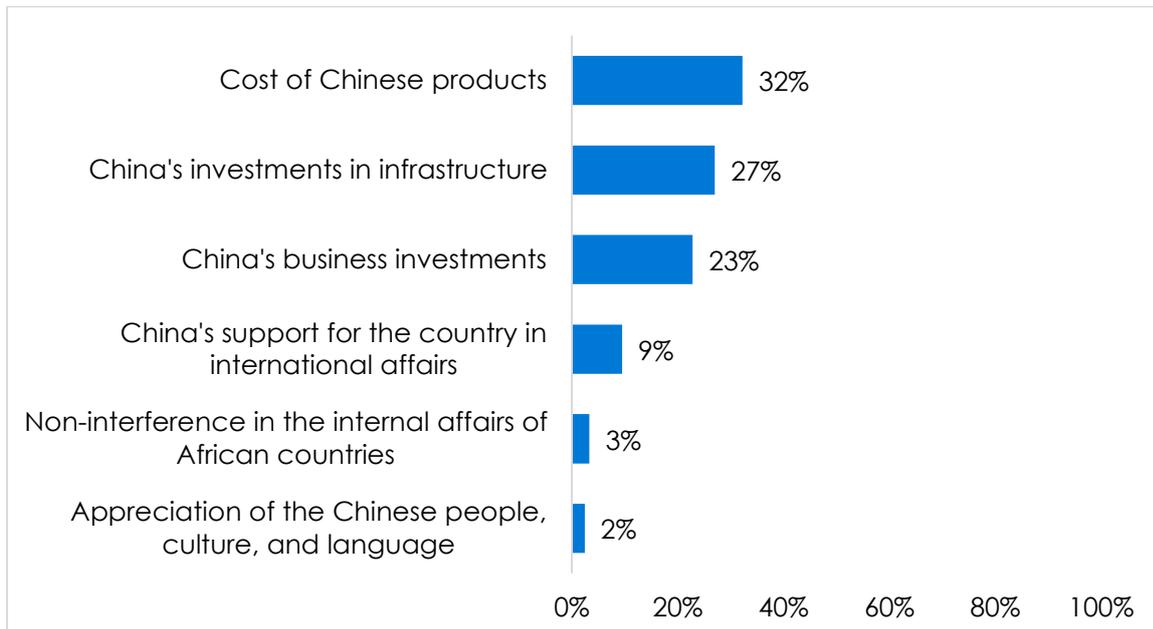
Respondents were asked: How much influence do you think China's economic activities in Malawi have on our economy, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Figure 2: China's economic and political influence: Positive or negative? | Malawi | 2019



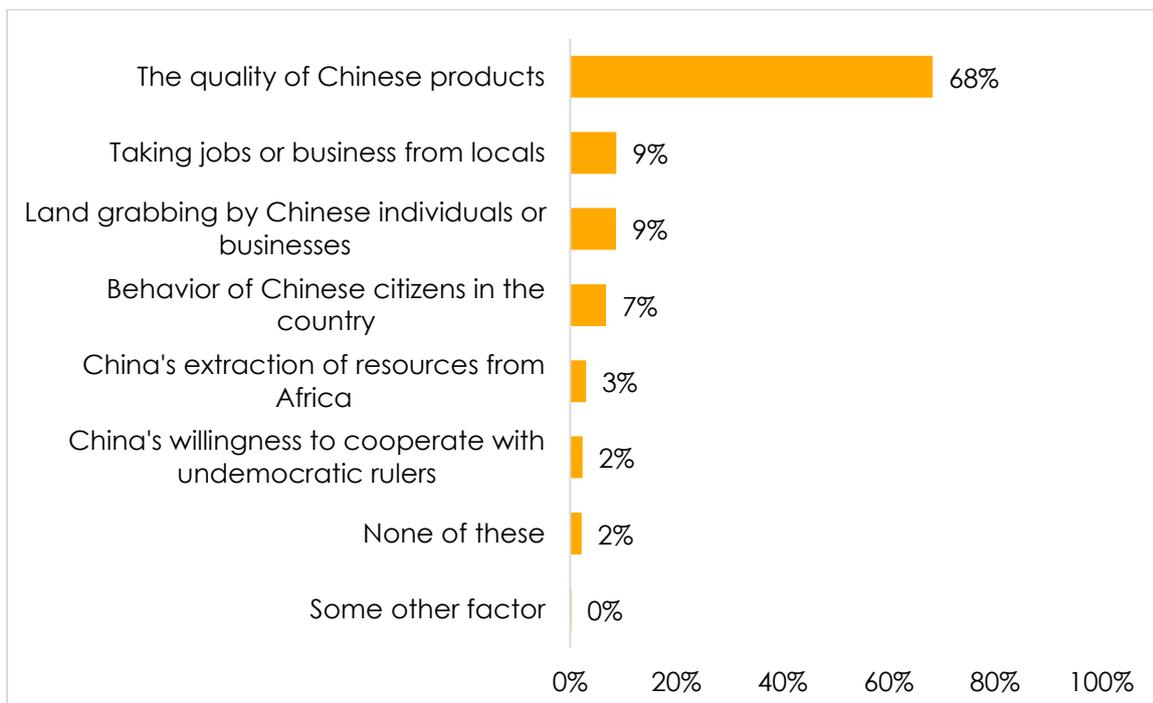
Respondents were asked: In general, do you think that China's economic and political influence on Malawi is mostly positive or mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Figure 3: Reasons for positive image of China | Malawi | 2014



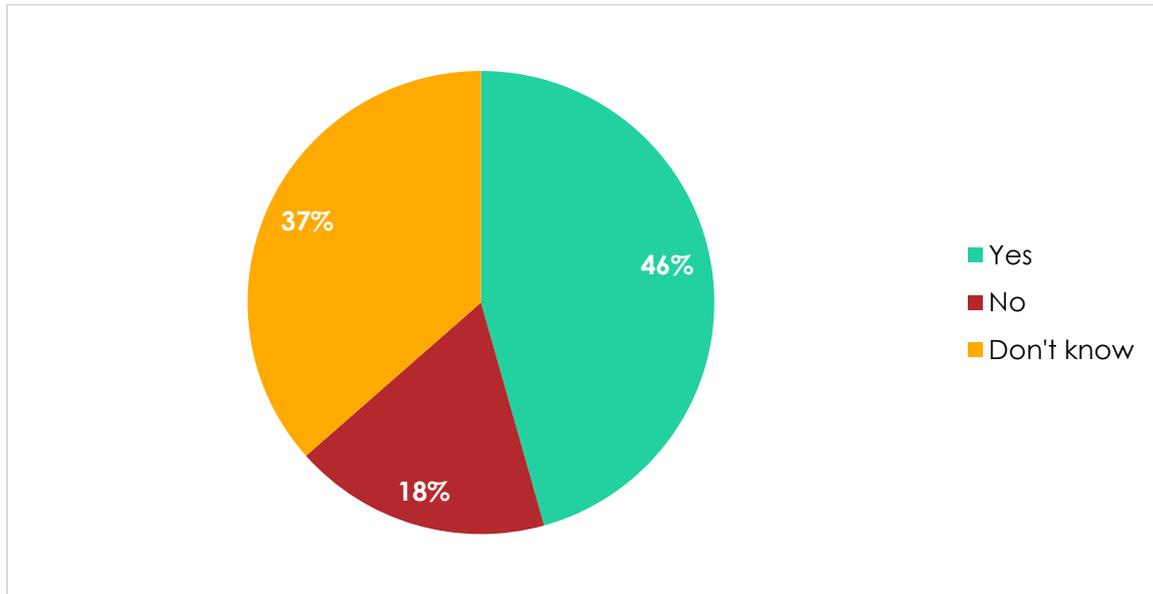
Respondents were asked: Which of the following factors contributes most to a positive image of China in Malawi, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Figure 4: Reasons for negative image of China | Malawi | 2014



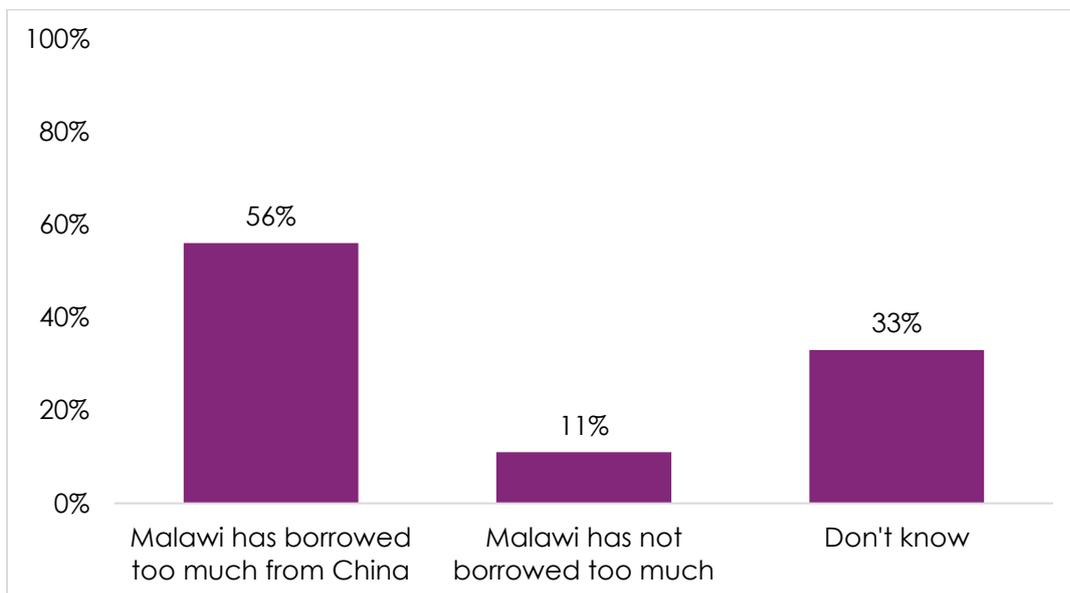
Respondents were asked: Which of the following factors contributes most to negative image of China in Malawi, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Figure 5: Awareness of China's development assistance | Malawi | 2019



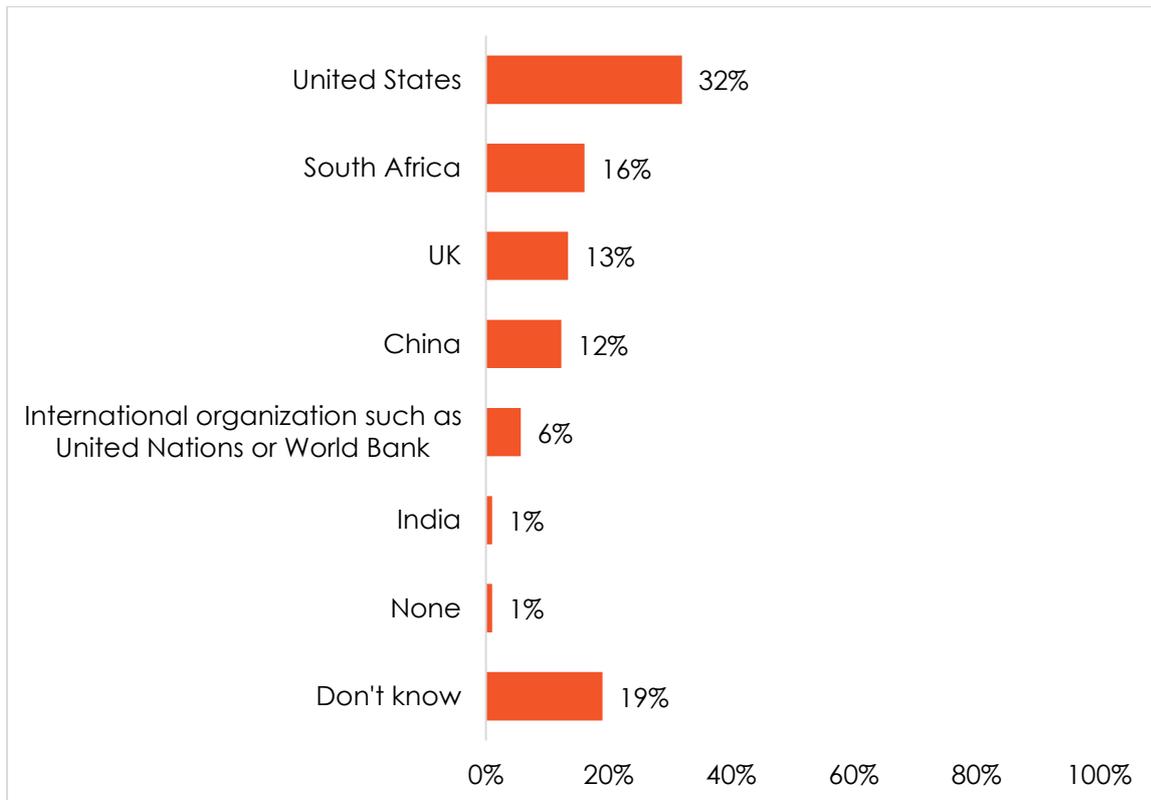
Respondents were asked: To your knowledge, does China give loans or development assistance to our country's government, or haven't you had a chance to hear about this?

Figure 5: Has Malawi borrowed too much from China? | Malawi | 2019



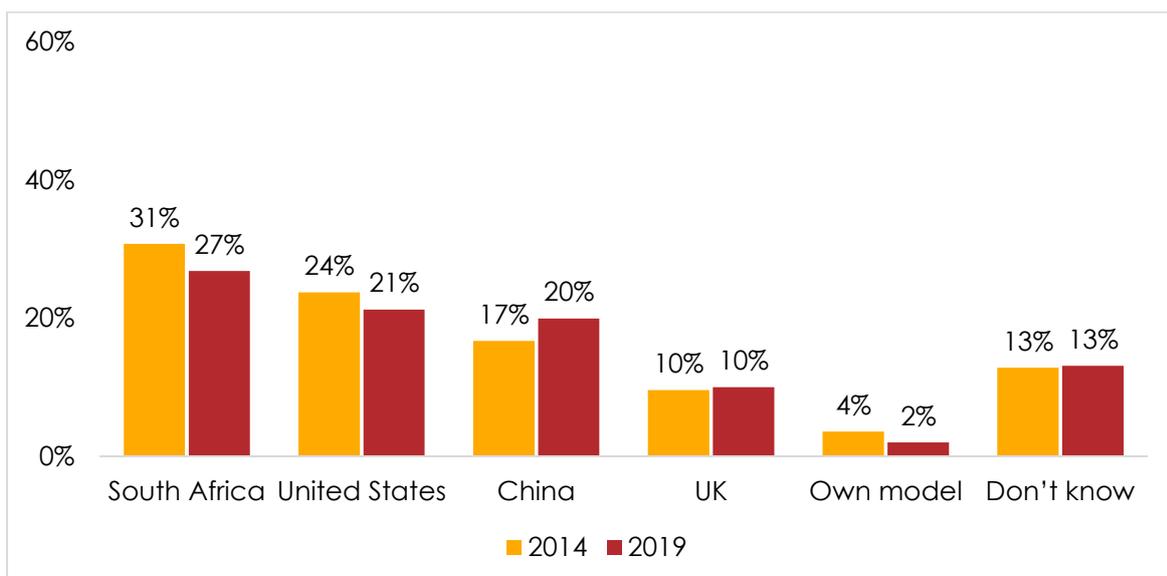
Respondents were asked: Do you think our government has borrowed too much money from China, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Figure excludes respondents who did not know that China gives loans or development assistance to Malawi.)

Figure 6: Greatest influence on Malawi | Malawi | 2014



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

Figure 7: Best development model | Malawi | 2014-2019



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? (Note: In 2014, the phrase "or is there some other country in Africa or elsewhere that should be our model" was not included in the question.)

For more information, please contact:

Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi
Maxton G. Tsoka
Telephone: +265884656000
Email: mtsoka@cc.ac.mw

Visit us online at:
www.csrunima.mw
www.afrobarometer.org

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.

