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Does local infrastructure determine trust in local government councils? Evidence from Cameroon

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Abstract

The relationship between infrastructure and trust in local government is under-researched yet relevant for many countries. This paper examines how proximity to local infrastructure relates to public trust in local governments. Using data from the sixth round of the Afrobarometer survey in Cameroon, we construct an infrastructure indicator index to measure respondents' proximity to local infrastructure. The index considers whether the respondent lives in a primary sampling unit (PSU) with access to electricity, water, cell phone service, and a sewerage system. It also takes into account whether the respondent lives in a PSU with paved roads where a school, police station, and health centre are within walking distance. We examine causality by using the presence or absence of a bank in the respondent's PSU as an instrumental variable for local infrastructure. The study shows a robust positive and statistically significant relationship between proximity to infrastructure and public trust in local government. The results suggest that Cameroonians' willingness to reward infrastructure in their neighbourhoods by trusting their government officials who might provide these facilities is indicative of a desire for bottom-up political accountability in the absence of citizens' ability to hold top government officials accountable due to limited levels of democracy. Infrastructure provision and its variations have become an important measure of government performance, with communities that have better access to infrastructure conditions expressing greater trust in local government officials.

Introduction

In Africa, political trust emerges as an essential mechanism for democratic governance, democratic consolidation, and even economic development (e.g. Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Malephane, 2019). Empirical evidence also indicates that political trust positively affects individual well-being, social capital, and interest in public affairs (Dalton, 2004; Catterberg & Moreno, 2005; Thomassen, 2015). The extant scholarship on political trust has broadly used factors such as governance (e.g. Nkobou & Ainslie, 2021; Macdonald, 2020), cultural factors such as religion, ethnicity, and colonial history (e.g. Nunn & Wantchekon, 2011; Robinson, 2017), and demographic characteristics (age, education, and occupation) to explain political trust and its effects on different independent variables. While a considerable amount of research has been conducted on political trust globally, there is little understanding of how infrastructure development and distribution induce trust. Assessing trust in local government through the lens of infrastructure development is a critical step in initiating future discussions on strengthening local government with a focus on democratic governance (Naraidoo & Sobhee, 2021; World Bank, 2003).

This paper argues that infrastructure development can affect constituents' perception of government institutions and state representatives. Due to the undersupply of infrastructure in many African countries, coupled with an ever-increasing population, communities with access to specific infrastructure, such as roads and electricity, could reward their ruling governments by having more trust in them. Thus, infrastructure provision variations can emerge as an essential source of community trust in government institutions and state representatives. To examine the relationship between infrastructure and political trust, we study the Central African country of Cameroon. Cameroon is an interesting case because of President Paul Biya's extended period of rule. Biya has served as president since 1982 and is, as of March 2023, the second-longest-ruling president in Africa, the oldest head of state in Africa, and the longest-ruling non-royal leader in the world. Thus, long-term regime stability in Cameroon can provide consistency in infrastructure provision, which is an inherently political act of creation.

Our research draws on Afrobarometer's Round 6 survey data, which sampled the economic, political, and social attitudes of citizens aged 18 or older in 36 African countries in 2014/2015. Afrobarometer conducts nationally representative surveys based on face-to-face interviews in national and local languages with random samples of 1,200-2,400 adults. The survey data contain geocoded information and other individual characteristics such as education, occupation, and quality of living conditions. Afrobarometer's Round 6 survey in Cameroon was conducted in January 2015 with a random sample of 1,200.

To measure the proximity of the respondent to local infrastructure, we created an infrastructure index. The index takes into account whether the respondent lives in a primary sampling unit (PSU) that has access to an electricity grid, a water line, cell phone service, and a sewerage system. It also considers whether the respondent lives in a neighbourhood with paved roads where a school, police station, post office, and health clinic are within walking distance. These data come from the field manager's observations for each PSU.

Our analysis strongly suggests that local infrastructure development increases trust in local elected officials. Results indicate that a one-unit increase in the infrastructure index in the respondent's neighbourhood increases the probability of trusting an elected local official by an average of 50%, a result that is statistically significant at the 1% level. To address the endogeneity problem posed by possible reverse causality, we use a dummy variable indicating whether a bank is located within walking distance of the respondent's home. Banks are a type of financial infrastructure located in areas that have other local infrastructure such as roads, electricity, water pipes, police stations, and cell phone and Internet service. Moreover, most banks in Cameroon are commercial and foreign-owned (Bikai, Kenkouo, Essiane, & Mama, 2022), and banks are expanding their branches to meet market demand and generate profits (Zhang, Arora, & Colombage, 2021; Ansong, Chowa, & Adjabeng, 2015). It follows that banks and bank distribution cannot directly influence citizens' trust in an elected local official except through the development of local infrastructure.

We found that the observed effects on trust are not specific to the elected government council, as they can be generalized to other local institutions such as the parliament (i.e., the National Assembly and the Senate), the tax department and Election Cameroon. These findings from Cameroon suggest that political trust can emerge even where the political landscape demonstrates repressive rule and little effort is made to liberalise the political order. Infrastructure provision and its variations are an important measure of government performance, with communities that have better access to infrastructure conditions expressing greater trust in local government representatives.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 discusses the literature on political trust, roughly dividing it into cultural and governance factors, and identifies gaps in the literature. The next section begins with a discussion of infrastructure development in Africa, followed by a discussion of infrastructure politics in Cameroon to help contextualise the study. Section 4 discusses the empirical strategy and data sources. Section 5 presents and interprets the results. Section 6 discusses robustness checks. Section 7 discusses the econometric problem, including a falsification exercise. Section 8 examines the impact of local infrastructure on other trust outcomes, and Section 9 concludes the paper.

2. Literature review

2.1. Determinants of political trust

The political trust literature has recently received much attention and seen a growing number of empirical studies (e.g. Robinson, 2017; Nunn & Wantchekon, 2011; Zerfu, Zikhali, & Kabenga, 2008; Levi & Stoker, 2000; Burbidge, 2019). The concept of political trust itself, while receiving empirical consideration, is contested. For instance, Levi and Stoker (2000) assert that trust is relational, involving an individual being vulnerable to another individual, group, or institution that can cause harm or betray that trust. Trust is rarely unconditional; it is given over specific domains and can be conjectured dichotomously (trust or no trust) or in a more classified fashion (a degree of trust) (Levi & Stoker, 2000). Trust involves a judgment that considers beliefs about the trustworthiness of the other person (or group or institution). Its judgments are expected to inspire courses of action; distrust, for instance, may encourage attentiveness in and monitoring of a relationship, uncooperative behaviour, or the severing of a relationship. Scholars have broadly used factors including governance, culture (religion, ethnicity, and colonial history), and demographics (age, education, and occupation) to explain political trust and its variations. Some of these factors are examined below.

2.2. Cultural factors: Ethnicity, slavery, and religion

Scholars have established that cultural factors are important in predicting political trust. The cultural mechanisms become more crucial in contexts such as Africa, where ethnicity is understood to affect political interactions. Scholars view ethnicity as a form of expanded nepotism that categorises people into distinct ethnic groups based on race, nationality, language, tribe, religion, or caste. Ethnicity is defined as socialising oneself with a particular ethnic group rather than society. Thus, ethnic nepotism may increase or reduce generalised trust levels, depending on the in-group and out-group dynamics. Evolutionary theories of kin selection claim that members favour their in-group over out-group members because of kinship (Vanhanen, 1999; Silverman & Case, 2001). The tendency to favour kin over non-kin becomes critical when people of different group backgrounds compete for scarce resources.

For instance, Zerfu et al. (2008) studied the relationship between ethnicity and generalised interpersonal trust using 2001 World Values Survey Wave 8 data for African countries. Their findings revealed that ethnicity has a compelling influence on trust levels. In another study, ethnic diversity at the local, regional, and national levels resulted in higher interpersonal trust among co-ethnics than non-coethnics (Robinson, 2017). This study used public opinion data from 16 African countries to examine this relationship and found that people in ethnically diverse countries, on average, conveyed more ethnocentric trust. However, regional ethnic

diversity is associated with less ethnocentric trust, revealing that diversity damages intergroup trust only at the national level when ethnic groups are spatially isolated. This entails that national diversity alone does not undercut interethnic trust but, when combined with segregation, produces more significant ethnic trust prejudice (Robinson, 2017, p. 218).

Like ethnicity, the African slave trade and colonial medical campaigns also influenced contemporary trust levels. Analysing low trust levels in Africa, Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) evaluated survey data on trust perceptions and contrasted these with the extent of slave-trade penetration. This study established that individuals who belonged to ethnic groups most subjected to the slave trade demonstrate low trust levels in their local governments, coethnics, neighbours, and relatives today. Nunn and Wantchekon's (2011) evidence revealed that trust increases farther away from the coastal communities where the slave trade was often most concentrated across Africa. They suggested that this is consistent with the historical fact that even by the conclusion of the slave trade, it was still widespread for individuals to be sold into slavery by family members. Lowes & Montero (2021) analysed the long-term effects of medical campaigns organised by French colonial governments in Central Africa between 1921 and 1956. They found that trust in medicine, as measured by willingness to consent to a blood test, declines in areas that were exposed to more campaigns in the past.

Africans' religious attitudes, beliefs, and norms also constitute a potent force on people's way of life and social interactions. Studies have examined the place of religion in contemporary African politics (e.g. Marshall, 2009), with some finding that charismatic religious movements have "Pentecostalised" politics in some African countries (McCauley, 2013, McCauley, 2019). While Africa has emerged as the world's most religious continent, the empirical evidence on religion's influence on political trust is divided. A study from Ghana relying on individual-level Afrobarometer survey data from 2008, which explored the relationship between religious affiliation and religious importance and trust (interpersonal and institutional), uncovered a positive association, although the overall effect of religion on trust was weak, and weaker for institutional trust (Addai, Opoku-Agyeman, & Ghartey, 2013). Likewise, evidence suggested that African citizens who emphasised religion were more likely to trust their presidents and to be interested in public affairs (McCauley & Gyimah-Boadi, 2009). However, in other contexts, evidence indicates that even though religious leaders are perceived as more trustworthy and less corrupt than any other group of public leaders, they have no practical effect on support for political leadership. Evidence from cross-national and longitudinal data suggests that while Africans strongly identify with religion, express tolerance of people of other faiths, and trust religious and other leaders, these positive perceptions have weakened somewhat in recent years (Howard, 2020).

2.3. Governance and political trust

Political trust has long been viewed as a significant predictor variable for assessment of political performance and confidence in state institutions. Scholarly research on political trust has historically focused on the relationship between citizens and their institutions of government, and the understanding is that the performance of state institutions affects citizens' trust (e.g. Listhaug & Jakobsen, 2017). Political trust mechanisms are perceived as indicators of support for political actors. In its broadest sense, political trust entails citizens' appraisals of the core institutions of the polity (e.g. Levi & Stoker, 2000). According to Levi and Stoker (2000), trust requires a responsibility to act in the best interest of the trust-giver and invokes moral values that emphasise keeping a promise. On a positive continuum, it can bring about credibility in policy making, and in a more practical sense, it involves citizens' assessment that their government will protect their well-being (Evans, Holtemeyer, & Kosec, 2019; Miller & Listhaug, 1990; Isbell, 2023). When citizens have confidence in their governments, they are more likely to comply with rules and regulations (Murphy, 2004; Marien & Hooghe, 2011).

On this front, scholars have empirically examined the effects that political performance wields on political trust (Fjeldstad, 2004; Askvik, 2008, 2010; Lavallée, Razafindrakoto,

& Roubaud, 2008; Hutchison & Johnson, 2011; Listhaug & Jakobsen, 2017; Chukwuma, Bossert, & Crokeb, 2019; Macdonald, 2020; Nkobou & Ainslie, 2021). For instance, Listhaug and Jakobsen (2017) researched links between political trust and effective governance and found that political trust increased when a government delivered results and outcomes that met the citizens' expectations. Empirical analyses confirmed that political trust positively affected people's attitudes toward their governments and significantly influenced their propensity, for instance, to comply with government directives (Caferra, Colasante & Morone, 2020). Governments with low levels of citizens' trust have worse policy outcomes. On the other hand, citizens can extend trust to reward governments for meeting key expectation metrics.

Empirical evidence from several African countries, including Tanzania, Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, and Ethiopia, indicates that governance effectiveness or perceptions of effective governance increased trust in government institutions and government representatives (Hutchison & Johnson, 2011; Godefroidt, Langer, & Meuleman, 2017; Chukwuma et al., 2019; Beshi & Kaur, 2020; Nkobou & Ainslie, 2021). In Tanzania, perceiving state representatives as irresponsible in protecting the land rights of rural dwellers created resentment toward public institutions and state representatives (Nkobou & Ainslie, 2021). However, pursuing policies that protect the land rights of communities disenchanted by unfulfilled large-scale land investment led to increased political support for and trust in the late President John Magufuli. Thus, political trust depended on people's expectations of public institutions' effectiveness in holding land investors accountable. Therefore, when Magufuli framed developmental nationalism as a fight for the poor against corrupt political and business elites, it increased political trust in his regime. The execution of poor-friendly land policies was an answer to the systemic exclusion of smallholders from a capitalist-oriented economy; the political practices around land-investment norms promoted trust and support for public institutions.

In Ghana, scholars established that the most significant predictor of political trust is the evaluation of government effectiveness (e.g. Godefroidt et al., 2017, p. 918). In Ethiopia, evidence suggests the vital role of good governance in constituents' trust in local government. Constituents who perceived governance transparency, accountability, and responsiveness had greater confidence in the city administration. Thus, to regulate its credibility and competitiveness and, most notably, to uphold public trust, a government should play its part in adequately managing the demands of its citizens (Beshi & Kaur, 2020, p. 348). Relatedly, Listhaug and Jakobsen (2017) established that the size of political gaps between the citizens and elites is an essential element in political representation, and they assume that political trust decreases when the gaps increase.

Effective service delivery is also an important mechanism for political trust. Chukwuma et al. (2019) examined how effective public service delivery affected trust in political leaders. Using data from national health and social intervention programmes with increased financial support from 500 primary health-care facilities across Nigeria, along with Afrobarometer survey data from 2003 to 2015, the authors found that proximity to improved maternal and child health services increased trust in the president and the ruling party. An earlier study that used cross-national Afrobarometer data from 16 countries found that higher institutional competence is linked to increased individual trust in government across African countries (Hutchison & Johnson, 2011). More importantly, this study demonstrated that this outcome is independent of other individual-level factors such as socio-economic characteristics and a state's prior internal conflicts. Thus, efficient governments are more likely to increase political trust. Another cross-national study using Afrobarometer data further revealed that experienced corruption and low public service quality decreased political trust (Lavallée et al., 2008).

In South Africa, studies evaluated how effective service delivery influenced trust in local governments and how government performance affected trust in political representatives. Examining determinants of service-charge collection in South Africa, Fjeldstad (2004) established that refusal to pay service charges did not emanate from incapability to pay but from whether citizens perceived the government as acting in their interest. Furthermore,

Askvik (2008, 2010) found that performance evaluations are an important source of political trust, highlighting that assessments of government performance offer essential insights for understanding how trust in government varies substantially among different groups of people. Even when accounting for the effect of racial identity on institutional trust, Askvik (2010) asserted that citizens' perceptions of institutional effectiveness are the most critical mechanisms influencing their trust in institutions such as the national government, Parliament, and the civil service.

While studies have examined how different governance mechanisms influenced citizens' support for institutions and state representatives, there is little understanding of how infrastructure provision affects citizens' trust. Like other variables explaining trust, infrastructure provision varies significantly between and within states, which can have important implications for citizens' attitudes and perceptions of the effectiveness of the government and its representatives. Thus, assessing how political trust is nurtured through successful local infrastructure development projects can expand knowledge within the African political trust literature.

2.4. Infrastructure and trust in Africa

Infrastructure is a broad term that, in its simplest form, includes basic facilities and installations necessary for a community's functioning and well-being (Ghimire, Zhang, & Chen, 2019; Park & Lee, 2018; Harvey & Knox, 2012). It is the backbone of any society, comprising the physical and institutional systems that support economic and social development (Zhang, Li, Chen, & Li, 2019). Infrastructure includes sectors such as transportation, communication, energy, and water supply systems; facilities such as roads, bridges, and ports; and social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and housing. Infrastructure enables commerce, drives businesses, connects workers to their jobs, creates opportunities for distressed communities, and protects the population from an increasingly unpredictable natural environment (Puentes, 2015). Infrastructure (especially road infrastructure) embodies how state power is territorialised and transmitted across the landscape (Herbst, 2000). Infrastructure and all its connected metaphors and practices can become a form of state monumentality through which the state's influence is projected and spatialised (James & Gupta, 2002, p. 981). Masquelier (2002) argued that road infrastructure can increase social memory. Similarly, Vansina (1985) portrayed roads as history etched into the landscape, with symbols that offer a window into how people use roads as reminder devices to articulate history, understand changes, and imagine the future.

The salience of infrastructure in the political landscape of Africa can have implications for how constituents perceive their government institutions and representatives. For instance, in Kenya, evidence suggested that a road project linking a historically marginalised region to interstate road infrastructure made the people believe that the government "remembered" them, making the Kenyan state more visible and present (Kochore, 2016, p. 504). This road became political capital as the government and politicians at different levels described its construction to elicit votes and engage in discourses of national integration. In Kochore's (2016) view, the road was a profoundly political project, a key strategy to reinvigorate nation-building, and was presented as mending fault lines between the central state and marginalised peripheral areas like northern Kenya.

Beyond roads, infrastructure connects households across metropolitan areas to higher-quality opportunities for employment, health care, and education (Puentes, 2015). Social infrastructure, such as schools, markets, hospitals, and water supply systems, have important implications for citizens' well-being and quality of life. For instance, families that live near a school will not have difficulty sending their children to that school. This also applies to hospitals and markets, as those who live closer will find it easier to send their ill for health care and their goods for sale.

3. Infrastructure politics in Cameroon

The geographical entity of Cameroon emerged from a colonial encounter that began with formal occupation by Germany from 1884 to 1916. Germany's defeat in World War I led to the division of the territory into three League of Nations mandates and United Nations trust territories. Great Britain controlled northern and southern Cameroon, while France supervised eastern Cameroon. Eastern Cameroon gained independence in 1960 and became the République du Cameroun. By United Nations regulations, the three territories held a referendum in 1961 that allowed Northern Cameroon to join Nigeria, while Southern Cameroonians voted overwhelmingly to merge with the République du Cameroun, forming the Federal Republic of Cameroon (Fonchingong, 2006; Eyoh, 1998). The country has since transitioned to the United Republic of Cameroon and finally the Republic of Cameroon, a decentralised unitary state.

Cameroon's infrastructure, and access to it, are below average for Africa in certain geographic areas. With about 26 million inhabitants (2020 figures) and a population density of 56 people per km^2, the country's infrastructure shows significant gaps in quantity, quality, and access, according to a World Bank scorecard (Calderón, Cantú, & Chuhan-Pole, 2018), and is concentrated in urban areas, particularly in and around Douala and Yaoundé (Dominguez-Torres & Foster, 2011).

Infrastructure provision highlights Cameroon's contested national politics. Orock (2015) emphasises the links between elites, development, and issues of moral agency in contemporary Cameroon, noting that development, including infrastructure provision, is not only a process by which elites in Cameroon are socially produced but is primarily about how they are held accountable by their local village or ethnic and regional communities. Incorporating careful observations of elites and popular debates about elites in Cameroon, Orock contextualises the meaning of development as a means through which social inequality between elites and non-elites is internalised, negotiated, and legitimised. Orock contends that expectations in Cameroon that require elites to be seen as "doing development" are critical to joint engagement between elites and their local communities, mainly through local development associations in which elites and would-be elites are expected to assume leadership roles. In asserting that (infrastructural) development is fundamental to the cultural practices of elite power in Cameroon, Orock draws attention to the dynamics between development and patrimonial politics, e.g. kinship, ethnicity, and clientelism, as forms of redistribution in which elites are implicated. Orock's overarching claim is that doing development, or being seen as doing it, is part of the expectations that non-elites have of elites in Cameroon, especially political leaders.

For instance, infrastructure provision is so central to the Cameroonian polity that some northern elites submitted a letter of protest to President Paul Biya's government in 2003 lamenting the decay and collapse of roads, bridges, and other infrastructure in their region. In response to these calls for infrastructure development, the government promised projects such as roads, water pipes, and health facilities (Fonchingong, 2006). There is also evidence that Cameroonian communities readily accept direct development projects, such as schools, hospitals, roads, or the provision of water pipes as rewards for supporting the president and related policies (Mbuagbo & Akoko, 2004).

Because infrastructure in Cameroon is in high demand by an ever-growing population, local areas that benefit from the provision of infrastructure can reward their local political representatives by placing political trust in them. According to Kochore (2016), infrastructure has fostered development and progress, and people use it to rebuild their relationships with the state and the country. Voters can internalise the provision of infrastructure throughout the country and in historically marginalised regions as an attempt by the government to balance fault lines between the central state and the electorate, including those marginalised by the government. Thus, differences in infrastructure provision and gaps in access across communities may become significant predictors of political trust in local political representatives.

4. Empirical strategy and data

To examine whether local infrastructure affects trust in local government representatives, we draw on data from Afrobarometer Round 6.[1] We use a linear probability model (LPM) to analyse the relationship between infrastructure provision and trust in local government. The dependent, independent, and covariate variables are explained below.

4.1 Independent variable: Exposure to local infrastructure

We created an index to measure respondents' proximity to local infrastructure. The index takes into account whether the respondent lives in a primary sampling unit (PSU) with access to an electricity grid, a piped water system, cell phone service, and a sewerage system. We also consider whether the respondent lives in a neighbourhood with paved roads and where a school, police station, post office, and health clinic are within walking distance. The respondent's PSU characteristics data is based on the observations of survey enumerators. Each variable in a respondent's PSU is coded as a dummy, i.e. yes or no. The dichotomous structure of these variables allows us to calculate an additive index ranging from 0 to 1, where 0 means that the respondent's PSU does not include any of the infrastructure under consideration and 1 means that the respondent's PSU includes all of the items. To determine how the variables in the index correlate, Cronbach's alpha measure is used, and a scale reliability coefficient of 0.635 is obtained.

Almost all respondents in the data set lived in an area that had access to some of the items. Only 0.67% of all respondents lived in a PSU with the lowest infrastructure index score (0.33), 5.41% lived in a PSU with a score of 0.55, while 33.48% lived in a PSU with the highest infrastructure score.

Table 1: Distribution of local infrastructure across regions of Cameroon

Regions	Infrastructure index score							Average infrastructure index score
	0.33	0.44	0.55	0.66	0.77	0.88	1	
Adamawa	0	0	0	13%	49%	13%	25%	**0.83**
Centre	0	17%	0	8%	8%	8%	59%	**0.75**
Centre-Yaoundé	0	0	0	0	0	13%	87%	**0.94**
East	0	0	0	16%	0	16%	67%	**0.85**
Extreme-North	0	0	0	4%	62%	16%	18%	**0.83**
Littoral	0	0	0	0	17%	33%	50%	**0.88**
Littoral-Douala	0	0	0	0	25%	25%	50%	**0.88**
North	0	6%	19%	6%	44%	19%	6%	**0.71**
North-West	7%	0	22 %	42%	22%	0	7%	**0.66**
South	0	0	0	0	20%	20%	60%	**0.88**
South-West	0	18 %	18%	9%	55%	0	0	**0.66**
West	0	36%	0	21%	0	21%	21%	**0.74**

Source: Authors. Number of observations=1,182.

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[1] We focus on Round 6 because we wanted to use a comprehensive data set collected just before Cameroon's ongoing anglophone crisis.

As shown in Table 1, at the regional level, of the 201 respondents in the Extreme-North region, 62% lived in a PSU with a score of 0.77, and 18% lived in a PSU with a score of 1. Of the 120 respondents in the Centre-Yaoundé region, 13% lived in a PSU with a score of 0.88, while 87% lived in a PSU with a score of 1. However, in the South-West region, none of the respondents lived in a PSU with the highest and lowest scores; more than half lived in a PSU with a score of 0.77.

Regarding the average infrastructure score, Centre-Yaoundé (0.94), Littoral (0.88), Littoral-Douala (0.88), South (0.88), and East (0.85) share the highest scores. The North-West and South-West regions have the lowest average infrastructure score (0.66).

4.2. Dependent variable: Trust in elected local government council

According to Cameroon's 1974 Law on the organisation of councils, local government is defined as a decentralised public authority that has the status of a public corporation (Chofor Che, 2019). Section 4(1) of Law No. 2004/17 on the orientation of decentralisation states that the mission of local government councils is to "promote economic, social, health, educational, cultural, and sports development in their respective jurisdictions" (Ngalim, 2014; Cheka, 2007; Kofele-Kale, 2011; Bang, 2013).

Afrobarometer Round 6 measured trust in public figures, including local political leaders, by asking, *"How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?"* The main responses were: "not at all," "just a little," "somewhat," and "a lot." Of the 1,182 respondents, 25% expressed no trust at all in their elected local government council, while 28% said they trusted their council "just a little," 28% "somewhat," and 13% "a lot."

We recoded this variable into a dummy variable, with "not at all" and "just a little" corresponding to lower trust and "somewhat" and "a lot" corresponding to higher trust. More than four in 10 respondents (43%) had higher confidence, while 57% had lower confidence (Table 2). Among respondents with the highest scores for infrastructure, around 43% expressed higher trust in local government, while about 57% recorded lower trust in local government. Among respondents with the lowest infrastructure scores, 75% expressed a higher level of trust in local government, while 25% had a lower level of trust. These descriptive statistics – greater trust in areas with lower infrastructure scores – suggest a rather unexpected relationship between trust in elected local government and the infrastructure index, which shall be investigated further.

Table 2: Infrastructure index and trust in elected local government councils

	Infrastructure index score							
	0.33	0.44	0.55	0.66	0.77	0.88	1	Total
Lower trust in local government	25%	71%	53%	61%	52%	57%	57%	57%
Higher trust in local government	75%	29%	47%	39%	48%	43%	43%	43%

Source: Authors. Number of observations=1,128

4.3. Relevant covariates

One of the most consistent findings in the current political economy literature is that poverty, ethnicity, and education correlate with political trust (Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017; Zerfu et al., 2009). In the Afrobarometer survey, respondents answered several relevant questions about determinants of trust in local political figures, which we used as control variables. Control variables used in this study include ethnicity, education level, experienced poverty,

exposure to news, age, gender, and proximity to political parties. For this study in Cameroon, it is important to account for the nature of the national polity; as such, we controlled for respondents' perceptions of who sponsored the Afrobarometer survey and trust in the president.

To control for ethnicity, we used the survey question, *"What is your ethnic community, cultural group or tribe?"* Since there are multiple ethnic groups in the country, we recoded this variable as a dummy variable. Thus, it is 1 if the respondent belongs to the same ethnic group as the president (Beti) and 0 if not. Of the 1,182 respondents, 13% are from the Beti ethnic group, while 87% belong to other ethnic groups.

To measure years of schooling, we used the survey question, *"What is your highest level of education?"* Responses ranged from 0 to 9, with 0 representing no formal schooling and 9 representing a university degree. This variable is ordinal; thus, we did not change it.

To measure proximity to political parties, we used the survey questions, *"Do you feel close to any political party?"* and, if the answer was yes, *"Which party is that?"* Of the 1,182 respondents, 46% said they felt close to a political party (up from 42% in 2013), while 47% said they did not. Among those who said they felt close to a political party, 72% identified with the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), 11% with the Social Democratic Front, and 3% with the National Union for Democracy and Progress.

The poverty variable is Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index, an additive experiential measure of individual poverty. The variables used to construct this item are derived from the following questions: *"Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?"* Responses were "never," "just once or twice," "several times," "many times," "always," and "don't know." We recoded the variable and deleted the "do not know" responses. From these five poverty measures, we calculated an additive index called "lived poverty" that ranges from 0 to 4 and has 20 outcomes.

In addition to years of schooling, lived poverty, and ethnicity, we measured respondents' access to media, as a proxy for the reception of news about local government performance in maintaining or expanding local infrastructure. From, respondents' self-reported ownership of news-consumption devices (radio, television, and cell phone), we formed an additive index ranging from 0 to 1. The descriptive statistics of this index show that 25% of respondents owned all three of these devices, while 10% owned none. Since location may also correlate with infrastructure and affect citizen trust, we also considered whether the respondent lived in an urban or rural area.

Finally, we hypothesised that respondents' answers may be strongly influenced by who they think commissioned the survey. For example, respondents might hesitate to express their opinions if they do not know who is behind the survey. Therefore, we controlled for the survey's principal in the regression equation. The questionnaire asked, *"Just one more question: Who do you think sent us to do this interview?"* We recoded this variable as a dummy with a value of 1 if the respondent believed that the survey commissioner was the government, a political party, or a politician, and a value of 0 for other responses. The descriptive statistics show that of the 1,182 respondents, 35% believed that the government, a political party, or a politician funded the survey. We further controlled for trust in the head of state. Given that there has not been a change of power in Cameroon for more than four decades and that some people may fear retaliation for speaking out on political issues, the trust placed in local elected officials may depend on trust in the president. As shown in Table 3, 89% of respondents have confidence in the head of state, while 11% have no confidence. Moreover, we find that respondents living in the PSUs with the lowest infrastructure index score all express some trust in the president.

Table 3: Infrastructure index and trust in the head of state

	Infrastructure index score							
	0.33	**0.44**	**0.55**	**0.66**	**0.77**	**0.88**	**1**	**Total**
No trust in the head of state	0	12%	9%	13%	12%	14%	9%	11%
Trust in the head of state	100%	88%	91%	87%	88%	86%	91%	89%

Source: Authors. Number of observations=1,140

4.4. Analytical approach

Since the outcome variable is a dichotomous variable, we used a linear probability model (LPM) to test the relationship between infrastructure development and trust in elected local government officials. The LPM assumes a linear relationship between the outcome variable and the independent variable of interest and allows for fixed effects in the regression equation. Using LPM, parameter estimates can be interpreted directly as the "mean marginal effect" of the covariates on the outcome. For the analysis that follows, we estimate the following specification:

$$Trust_{ij} = \alpha + \beta\, Index_j + \gamma X_{ij} + \tau + \epsilon_{ij}$$

where $Trust_{ij}$ is the outcome of interest for respondent i in the PSU j. $Index_j$ is the index of local infrastructure in the PSU j. X_{ij} is a vector of covariates for individual i in the PSU j such as age, gender, media access, years of schooling, or location. τ is the region dummy, capturing whether the respondent lives in Centre-Yaoundé or Littoral-Douala. We created this dummy because Yaoundé and Douala are the two largest cities in Cameroon (Ngoran & Xue, 2015), and we do not want the effect we established to be related in any way with the city size. β is the parameter of interest. It captures the marginal effect of local infrastructure on trust in elected local leaders. A positive estimate of this parameter suggests that exposure to good infrastructure is more likely to increase trust in elected local government.

5. Results and discussion

Table 4 shows the results of infrastructure's effect on respondents' trust in elected local governments. In the first column, which controls for lived poverty, location (urban vs. rural), access to media, years of schooling, age, and gender, we find that a one-unit increase in the infrastructure index increases the probability of trusting an elected local official by 37%, on average. In the second column, which includes all controls from the first column as well as religious affiliation and a dummy for whether the respondent is Beti, the estimated coefficient shows that a one-unit increase in the infrastructure index in the respondent's neighbourhood increases the probability of trusting an elected local official by 43%, on average. Column 3 includes a control for partisanship, a dummy variable that captures whether the respondent lives in Centre-Yaoundé or Littoral-Douala, and all controls from the second regression. The results in this column reveal that a one-unit increase in the infrastructure index increases the probability of trusting an elected local official by 47%. Finally, controlling for the survey sponsor and trust in the president in columns 4 and 5 (in addition to the previous control variables), the coefficient on the infrastructure index drops from 47% to 36% (Column 4) and 35% (Column 5). All coefficients are statistically significant at the 1% level. The drop in magnitude observed in the last column shows that the previous estimates of trust in elected local politicians were influenced by trust in the head of state. Therefore, the last column shows the net effect of local infrastructure on trust in the local government council.

These results show that Cameroonians reward local politicians who provide local infrastructure, and that this is important for their trust. Citizens who rate the performance of local governments positively are more likely to trust these politicians.

Table 4: Infrastructure and trust in elected local government representatives | OLS estimates.

	Estimates of trust in local elected leaders				
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**
Infrastructure index	0.373*** (0.104)	0.430*** (0.110)	0.465*** (0.113)	0.358*** (0.121)	0.354*** (0.120)
Lived Poverty Index	-0.0751*** (0.0165)	-0.0761*** (0.0167)	-0.0794*** (0.0176)	-0.0742*** (0.0191)	-0.0788*** (0.0189)
Location (Urban=1)	0.129*** (0.0359)	0.135*** (0.0369)	0.124*** (0.0411)	0.110** (0.0441)	0.100** (0.0436)
Media	-0.0681 (0.0495)	-0.0845* (0.0502)	-0.104** (0.0521)	-0.0940* (0.0558)	-0.0775 (0.0550)
Ethnic group (Beti=1)		-0.0559 (0.0465)	-0.0554 (0.0477)	-0.0675 (0.0507)	-0.0666 (0.0499)
Feeling close to a political party			0.0597* (0.0319)	0.0722** (0.0342)	0.0607* (0.0337)
Survey sponsor (By government=1)				-0.0607* (0.0347)	-0.0458 (0.0342)
Trust president					0.295*** (0.0505)
[pweight=withinwt]	N	N	N	N	N
N	1,104	1,070	989	873	867
R-squared	0.039	0.043	0.051	0.046	0.084

*Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<.01. [pweight=withinwt] is the sampling weight. The other control variables include media access, religious affiliation, gender, and age.*

Cameroonians' approval of local government performance has not remained constant over time. As shown in Figure 1, the proportion who "approved" or "strongly approved" of local government performance was 35% in 2013, then rose to 48% and 45%, respectively, in 2015 and 2018, with the "strongly approved" category showing the same pattern.

A plausible explanation for the increase in the proportion of people who thought local government performance was good or very good could be the implementation of an infrastructure development plan in 2015. As a result of significant government investments in infrastructure projects, several improvements in transport, telecommunications, and energy were observed in 2015. The year was marked by the first impoundment of the Lom Pangar dam, the commissioning of the Kribi deepwater port, and the construction of the first 80 km section and the first concrete layers of the 215 km highway connecting the economic capital, Douala, with the political capital, Yaoundé (Investir au Cameroun, 2015).

As shown in Figure 2, the proportion of respondents who thought the local government did a good job of maintaining local marketplaces was also higher in 2015 (43%) than in 2013 (36%).

Figure 1: Assessment of local government performance | Cameroon | 2013-2018
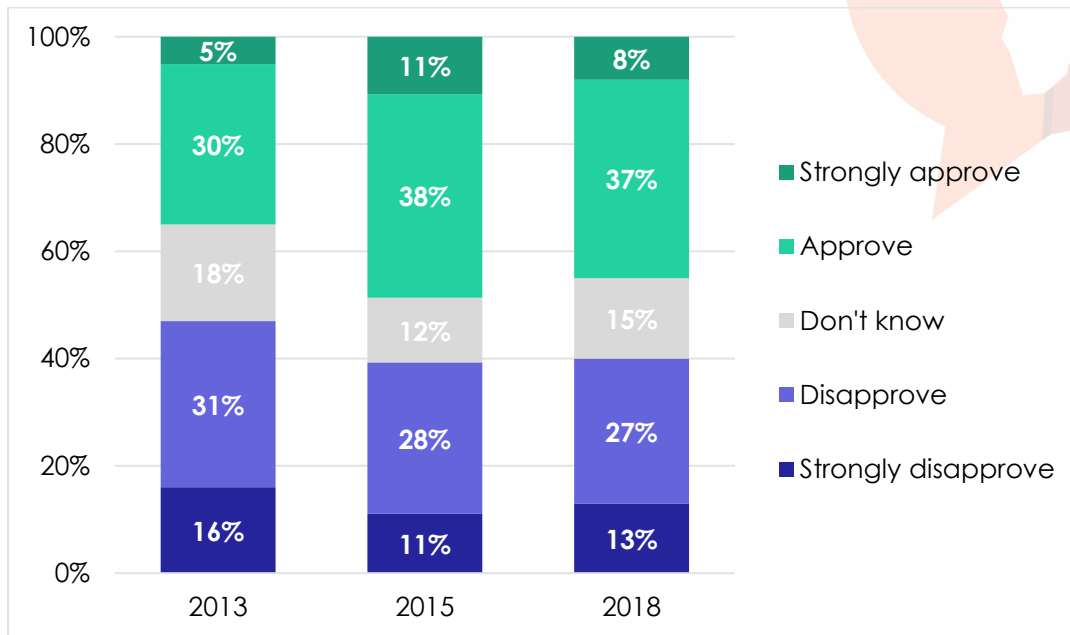
Source: Afrobarometer Round 5 (2013), Round 6 (2015), and Round 7 (2018)
Respondents were asked: Do you approve or disapprove of the way the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Your local government councillor?

Figure 2: Assessment of local government's handling of marketplace maintenance | Cameroon | 2013-2015
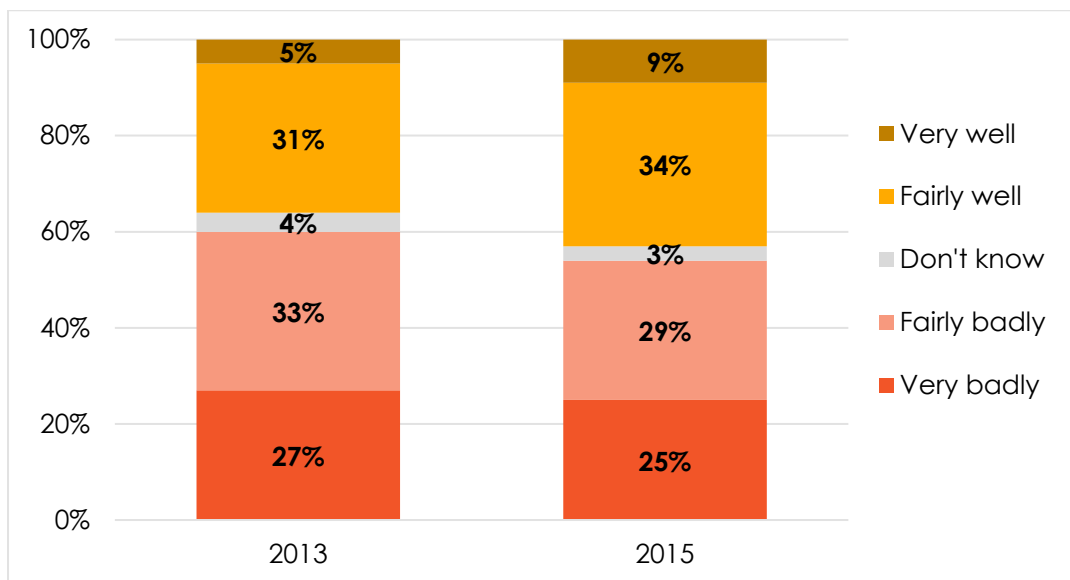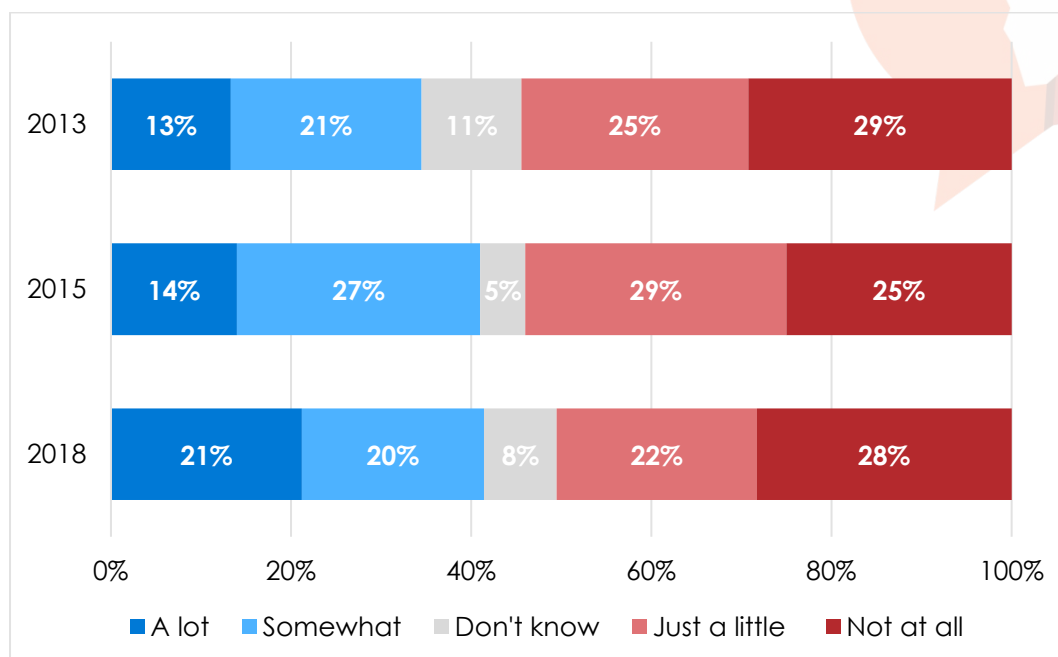

Source: Afrobarometer Round 5 (2013) and Round 6 (2015)
Respondents were asked: What about local government? I do not mean the national government. I mean your municipal or local government council. How well or badly would you say your local government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Maintaining local marketplaces?

Like approval of local government performance, popular trust in local government increased in 2015 and 2018 over 2013 levels (Figure 3). While 34% of respondents in 2013 said they

trusted their elected local government council "somewhat" or "a lot," that proportion rose to 41% in the following two survey rounds.

Figure 3: Trust in local government | Cameroon | 2013-2018

Source: Afrobarometer Round 5 (2013), Round 6 (2015) and Round 7 (2018)
Respondents were asked: *How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Your elected local government council?*

In contrast to empirical evidence in the literature, this study found that ethnicity does not affect political trust in Cameroon. All regression specifications in Table 4 show that belonging to the Beti ethnic group does not increase but actually decreases trust in local political leaders, although the relationship is not statically significant. According to the last column of Table 4, holding all other variables constant, the probability of trusting an elected local government council decreases by around 7% if one belongs to the Beti ethnic group. Although ethnicity and neopatrimonial tendencies continue to drive much of the political process on the continent, the data from Cameroon suggest that Africans are willing to see through them and hold political representatives accountable based on their performance.

Other important determinants of trust in local elected leaders include lived poverty and location. All regressions show that lived poverty is negatively correlated with trust in local government officials, and this correlation is statistically significant. In addition, all the regression specifications show that living in an urban area increases trust in local government officials, and this relationship is also statistically significant. As shown in the last column of Table 4 a one-unit increase in the Lived Poverty Index decreases trust in elected local government officials by 8%, while living in an urban area increases trust by 10%.

Party affiliation also has a significant relationship with trust in local government officials. According to Column 5 of Table 4, feeling close to a political party increases the probability of trusting the local council by an average of 6%. This result is statistically significant at the 10% level.

Finally, respondents' trust in local government councillors is not related to perceptions of the survey sponsor. According to Column 5 of Table 4, if the respondent believes that the survey was commissioned by the government, a political party, or a politician, reported trust in elected local politicians decreases by 5%, on average, but this finding is not statistically significant.

6. Alternative explanations

The literature discusses several variables associated with trust in political leaders that could affect the relationship we identify. For example, observed trust in an elected local politician could result from trust in another respected figure in the community who is close to the local politician. In addition, a respondent might trust the elected local government member only because the member belongs to the ruling party and the respondent has high trust in the ruling party. To test whether the relationship we discovered is robust even when these possibilities are considered, we controlled for trust in the ruling party, religious leaders, and traditional leaders.

In addition, the respondent's trust may be affected by whether the local politician is involved in corruption scandals or by the extent to which the local politician listens to citizens. Finally, trust may also result from respondents' perceptions of the local politician's performance. For example, how citizens perceive the local politician's maintenance of local infrastructure, such as roads and markets, might shape their perceptions of good governance, which, according to governance theory, promotes trust in government.

Tables 5 and 7 show the results of the tests for alternate explanations. In both tables, Column 1 controls for the index of lived poverty, location (urban vs. rural), years of schooling, access to media, age, gender, and respondents' assessment of whether the local leader generally listens to citizens. In addition to the controls in the first column, Column 2 includes controls for trust in the ruling party, religious affiliation, local leaders' perceived involvement in corruption, and a dummy variable for whether the respondent's ethnic group is Beti. Column 3 includes all previous control variables plus party affiliation, a dummy variable capturing whether the respondent lives in Centre-Yaoundé or Littoral-Douala, and respondents' perceptions of local leaders' maintenance of local markets. Column 4 includes all the controls from Column 3 and adds controls for trust in religious leaders, trust in traditional leaders, and respondents' perceptions of local leaders' maintenance of local roads. In contrast to Table 4, all regressions include the comprehensive Afrobarometer and accurate within-country weights to correct for over- or under-sampling.

The results in Table 5 confirm that infrastructure has a positive and statistically significant impact on respondents' trust in elected local governments. Column 1 shows that a one-unit increase in the infrastructure index increases the likelihood of trusting an elected local official by 40%, on average. In Column 2, the estimated coefficient shows that a one-unit increase in the infrastructure index in the respondent's neighbourhood increases the probability of trusting an elected local official by 38%. The results in Column 3 show that a one-unit increase in the infrastructure index increases the probability of trusting an elected local official by 44%. Finally, in the last column, the coefficient for the infrastructure index decreases from 44% to 31%, and the relationship is positive.

Table 5 shows that trust in local politicians in Cameroon is influenced by whether respondents believe the politicians are involved in corruption and whether they see the politicians as willing to listen to citizens. Results indicate a negative and statistically significant relationship between respondents' corruption perceptions and trust in local government. Positive perceptions of local politicians' responsiveness to citizens increase trust by about 14%, on average, as shown in the last column of Table 5. Our results also confirm Table 4 findings that the negative correlation between belonging to the Beti ethnic group and trust is statistically insignificant and that identifying with a political party has almost no effect on trust in the local government council. Based on these results, we can assert that the relationship between local infrastructure provision and trust in local government officials is positive, statistically significant, and robust.

Table 5: Infrastructure and trust in elected local government councils
| OLS estimates, robustness checks

Trust in local elected government councils				
Infrastructure index	0.399***	0.381***	0.438***	0.306**
	(0.123)	(0.131)	(0.138)	(0.153)
Lived poverty	-0.0939***	-0.0637***	-0.0605***	-0.0406*
	(0.0203)	(0.0202)	(0.0212)	(0.0231)
Location (urban=1)	0.0981**	0.0863*	0.105**	0.0856
	(0.0434)	(0.0458)	(0.0496)	(0.0544)
Media	-0.0531	-0.0680	-0.0903	-0.0600
	(0.0604)	(0.0564)	(0.0572)	(0.0634)
Respondent's evaluation of local elected government council				
Local government listen (Listen=1)	0.215***	0.174***	0.147***	0.138***
	(0.0361)	(0.0362)	(0.0399)	(0.0435)
Local government corrupt (Corrupt=1)		-0.210***	-0.163**	-0.155**
		(0.0656)	(0.0663)	(0.0697)
Ethnic group (Beti=1)		-0.0140	-0.0303	-0.0299
		(0.0522)	(0.0531)	(0.0580)
Feeling close to a political party			0.00648	0.00194
			(0.0370)	(0.0391)
Respondent's trust in …				
Ruling party		0.309***	0.297***	0.231***
		(0.0355)	(0.0372)	(0.0468)
Traditional leaders				0.0943
				(0.0521)
Religious leaders				0.0547
				(0.0541)
Respondent's evaluation of local elected government council performance on …				
Maintaining local markets			0.148***	0.0729
			(0.0406)	(0.0520)
Maintaining local roads				0.130**
				(0.0591)
Survey sponsor (By government=1)				-0.0667*
				(0.0396)
[pweight=withinwt]	Y	Y	Y	Y
N	1,042	929	867	765
R-squared	0.101	0.211	0.233	0.230

*Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<.01. [pweight=withinwt] is the sampling weight. The other control variables include media access, religious affiliation, gender, and age.*

7. Econometric issue: Endogeneity of local infrastructure

Endogeneity is a concern in any estimated relationship between local infrastructure and trust. The provision of infrastructure could be influenced by current levels of trust in elected local governments or by other (unobserved) contemporary characteristics that also influence trust. To address this potential issue, we used the presence of a bank in a respondent's PSU as an instrumental variable. This instrumental variable is motivated by social welfare theory and the theory of the political connection with banking activity (Hakenes, Hasan, Molyneux, & Xie, 2015; Atkinson & Stiglitz, 1980; Damette & Kouki, 2022; Shen & Lin,

2012; Jackowicz, Kowalewski, & Kozłowski, 2013).[2] This instrumental variable is a dummy indicating whether a bank is located within walking distance of the respondent's home and is based on Afrobarometer field managers' observations for each respondent's PSU. Of the 1,182 respondents in the data set, 59% lived near a bank, while 41% did not.

The size of Cameroon's economy and its central location on the African continent make it an influential country in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) (Talla, 2013; Bikai et al., 2022). The Central African Banking Committee (COBAC), housed in Bank of Central African States offices in Yaoundé, regulates the banking sector within CEMAC. The Cameroonian financial sector is dominated by banks, which hold almost 80% of the financial assets of the entire sector and are mostly foreign-owned (Bikai et al., 2022; Kimah, 2022).[3] The banking sector is one of the main drivers of the Cameroonian economy. In fact, recent studies found a strong long-term positive relationship between financial-sector development and economic growth in Cameroon (Agbor, 2016; Piabuo, 2015).

Financial institutions such as banks are a critical type of financial infrastructure that relies heavily on other infrastructure to function. They are normally built in areas that have access to electricity, water, cell phones, sewerage systems, and post offices. For example, access to electricity ensures reliable and efficient lighting and facilitates bank operations, and the Internet allows customers to conduct their banking transactions online. If the bank has access to mobile phone service, it can offer financial transactions through a mobile banking service. Banks are typically also located in areas that have access to police stations, considering the risk of robbery, and schools. For these and other reasons, there is a correlation between the presence of banks and of other infrastructure.

Tables 6 and 7 show that our instrumental variable is positively correlated with the infrastructure index: PSUs with access to a nearby bank are more likely to also have some or all of the following: an electricity grid, a water line, cellular service, a sewerage system, a paved road, a school, a police station, and a health facility. Moreover, the instrumental variable is far from weak. Stock, Wright, and Yogo (2002) suggest that the F-statistic should exceed 10 for inferences based on the two-stage least squares estimator to be reliable when there is one endogenous regressor. In Table 6, all regression specifications have an R-squared of at least 0.57, and the F-statistic for each regression specification is greater than 128. The same performance is observed in the robustness checks of the second-stage regressions in Table 7. All regression specifications have an R-squared of at least 0.6, and the F-statistics for all specifications are at least 86.

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[2] Social welfare theory assumes that the role of state-owned banks is to invest in and maximise social welfare to compensate for market failures (Atkinson & Stiglitz, 1980). The theory of the political connection with banking activity states that bank profitability is determined not only by economic factors, but also by political factors and constraints (Damette & Kouki, 2022; Djankov, La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, & Shleifer, 2002).

[3] Foreign banks, domestic private banks, state-owned banks, and microfinance banks operate in the country (Talla, 2013; Bikai et al., 2022; Kimah, 2022).

Table 6: Infrastructure and trust in elected local government representatives | instrumental variable analysis.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Second-stage regression: Estimate of trust in local elected leader					
Infrastructure index	0.471*** (0.170)	0.511*** (0.190)	0.563*** (0.183)	0.551*** (0.194)	0.504*** (0.192)
Lived Poverty Index	-0.0764*** (0.0166)	-0.0769*** (0.0167)	-0.0807*** (0.0176)	-0.0758*** (0.0191)	-0.0799*** (0.0188)
Location (urban=1)	0.148*** (0.0439)	0.150*** (0.0469)	0.144*** (0.0502)	0.151*** (0.0542)	0.132** (0.0538)
Media	-0.0708 (0.0495)	-0.0868* (0.0502)	-0.107** (0.0520)	-0.101* (0.0558)	-0.0833 (0.0549)
Ethnic group (Beti=1)		-0.0653 (0.0497)	-0.0675 (0.0506)	-0.0929* (0.0542)	-0.0865 (0.0534)
Feeling close to a political party			0.0615* (0.0319)	0.0738** (0.0340)	0.0621* (0.0335)
Survey sponsor (by government=1)				-0.0562 (0.0346)	-0.0423 (0.0341)
Trust president					0.293*** (0.0502)
First-stage least square: Infrastructure index					
Bank in the PSU	0.205*** (0.00797)	0.193*** (0.00827)	0.205*** (0.00833)	0.211*** (0.00896)	0.211*** (0.00907)
F-statistics	223.64	179.28	160.24	141.94	128.97
Prob > F	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
R-squared	0.576	0.592	0.632	0.656	0.658
N	1,156	1,119	1,036	906	882
[pweight=withinwt]	N	N	N	N	N
N	1,104	1,070	989	873	867
R-squared	0.038	0.043	0.051	0.043	0.082

*Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<.01. [pweight=withinwt] is the sampling weight. The other control variables include media access, religious affiliation, gender, and age.*

Table 7: Infrastructure and trust in elected local government representatives
| instrumental variable estimates, robustness checks.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Estimates of trust in local elected government councils				
Infrastructure index	0.449** (0.195)	0.547*** (0.208)	0.529*** (0.201)	0.494** (0.223)
Lived Poverty Index	-0.0944*** (0.0203)	-0.0646*** (0.0200)	-0.0609*** (0.0210)	-0.0413* (0.0227)
Location (Urban=1)	0.107** (0.0499)	0.117** (0.0541)	0.122** (0.0573)	0.124* (0.0645)
Media	-0.0549 (0.0602)	-0.0750 (0.0559)	-0.0944* (0.0565)	-0.0722 (0.0629)
Respondent's evaluation of local elected government council				
Local government (Listen=1)	0.214*** (0.0369)	0.173*** (0.0359)	0.147*** (0.0397)	0.139*** (0.0433)
Local government (Corrupt=1)		-0.214*** (0.0660)	-0.164** (0.0660)	-0.156** (0.0698)
Ethnic group (Beti-1)		-0.0307 (0.0542)	-0.0399 (0.0546)	-0.0525 (0.0610)
Feeling close to a political party			0.00808 (0.0367)	0.00386 (0.0388)
Respondent's trust in …				
Ruling party		0.309*** (0.0353)	0.297*** (0.0369)	0.234*** (0.0462)
Traditional leaders				0.0916* (0.0520)
Religious leaders				0.0478 (0.0529)
Respondent's evaluation of local elected government council performance on …				
Maintaining local markets			0.149*** (0.0403)	0.0773 (0.0516)
Maintaining local roads				0.129** (0.0586)
Survey sponsor (By government=1)				-0.0646* (0.0390)
First-stage least square: Infrastructure index				
Bank in the PSU	0.216*** 0.00859)	0.213*** (0.0095)	0.223*** (0.0099)	0.228*** (0.0106)
F-statistics	169.28	118.29	109.78	86.48
Prob > F	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
R-squared	0.63	0.66	0.69	0.716
N	1,065	939	876	773
[pweight=withinwt]	Y	Y	Y	Y
N	974	929	867	765
R-squared	0.108	0.209	0.232	0.228

*Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<.01. [pweight=withinwt] is the sampling weight. The other control variables include media access, religious affiliation, gender, and age.*

The next condition for validating an instrumental variable is the exclusion restriction, i.e. the presence of a bank in a respondent's PSU should not directly affect respondents' confidence in elected local officials unless local infrastructure is involved. Thus, the location of a bank should not be associated with anything that could potentially affect support or trust in local government. To show that the exclusion restriction is satisfied, we have drawn on work in the literature on the determinants of bank locations in Africa.

In South Africa, for instance, evidence indicates that aggregate income is a statistically significant determinant of the number of bank branches in a community. Core banks tend to concentrate their branches in high-income areas, implying the possibility of oligopolistic collusion (Okeahalam, 2009). Evidence from Ghana and India also shows that characteristics such as deposit or asset size, workforce size, population size, the proportion of the population living in urban areas, and literacy levels influence decisions about how and where to expand branch networks (Zhang et al., 2021; Ansong et al., 2015). Banks make rational decisions to attract high-income earners and focus their efforts to attract new customers on high-income areas with more potential depositors and a higher probability of deposits (Ansong et al., 2015, p. 204). Thus, quite independent of government policy interventions, as population and income increase in an area, banks increase their branch presence to meet market demand.

Commercial banks are typically established by private companies without government intervention, aside from regulatory policies. Nor are political considerations a determining factor in the establishment and location of state-owned banks in Africa, according to an analysis that covers 50 African countries, including Cameroon (Damette & Kouki, 2022). In Cameroon, local government councils do not have power to directly influence banks' activities (Talla, 2013; Bikai et al., 2022), and local politicians do not interfere in banking policies, including the determination of locations. Because commercial banks prioritise profits, rural communities in developing countries are often marginalised. Poor rural areas of Cameroon, where banks do not exist, may be financially excluded for a variety of reasons, including limited infrastructure, low deposit base, and low profit potential (Osborne, 2016).

While the location of a bank might not have a direct impact on popular trust in local politicians, banks can influence trust in local politicians in several ways, such as by supporting local charities, sponsoring community events, and investing in local infrastructure projects. Banks offer a variety of options to increase governance effectiveness. In addition, banks can improve access to credit and project financing for small and medium-sized enterprises. In Cameroon, local banks are important for people who participate in rotating savings and loan associations (Onomo & Nkakleu, 2022; Kemayou, Tadjuidje, & Madiba, 2011).

Results shown in tables 6 and 7 confirm the OLS estimation results from tables 4 and 5. There is a robust and statistically significant relationship between exposure to good infrastructure and trust in elected local officials; a one-unit increase in the infrastructure index increases the likelihood of trusting an elected local official by an average of 50% (Table 6) and 49% (Table 7). In addition, most of the second-stage regression results for other control variables also confirm the results of the OLS estimates. For example, those who reported being closer to a political party and having higher trust in the head of state are also more likely to trust elected local governments. Finally, experienced poverty and urban residence are also negatively and positively correlated, respectively, with trust in elected local government.

7.1. Falsification exercise

It is important to emphasise that although the instrumental-variable results support our hypotheses, we cannot claim that this completely adresses the endogeneity problem, since banks do not happen to be randomly located in respondents' PSUs. Indeed, one could argue that the assumption of the exclusion restriction is not satisfied, as local politicians could use local bank branches to make direct payments to citizens that directly affect their trust, or citizens' trust in local politicians could be directly affected by banks in some way.

In this section, we present a computed and powerful method for assessing the validity of the exclusion-restriction assumption underlying our instrumental variable. Rural communities in

Cameroon are characterised by high levels of poverty, poor living conditions, and a lack of economic, social, and physical infrastructure (Mbah & Franz, 2022; Dominguez-Torres, & Foster, 2011; Bougna & Noumba Um, 2022). In line with the distribution of economic activity and population, the country's roads, electricity, water supply, and information and communications technology networks are concentrated in urban areas (Dominguez-Torres, & Foster, 2011; Bougna & Noumba, 2022). This gap in infrastructure provision between rural and urban Cameroon provides a falsification test for our instrumental variable. If the effect of banks on trust is through local infrastructure provision, and infrastructure provision is lower in rural areas, we should see a significantly stronger predictive relationship between bank location and trust in urban than in rural areas. We can test this by estimating the reduced-form effect of the instrument on trust in elected local government officials in urban and rural areas separately.

Table 8 shows the results for the reduced form. In urban areas, banks significantly predict trust in elected local governments whether we add control variables or not, and this finding is statistically significant. The same prediction persists when we replace the control variables in Column 5 of Table 4 with the control variables in Column 4 of Table 5. In rural areas, there is no statistically significant relationship between the instrument and trust in elected local governments.

It can be concluded that banks influence citizens' trust through their influence on infrastructure development. Combining this result with the previously observed correlation between banks and the local infrastructure index, we find that the presence of a bank in a respondent's PSU is a plausible instrumental variable when examining a causal relationship between infrastructure provision and trust in local politicians.

Table 8: Falsification test for bank in the PSU (reduced form)

	Estimates of trust in local elected government councils					
	Urban area			Rural area		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Bank in the PSU	**0.085*** (0.045)	**0.12**** (0.058)	**0.14*** (0.075)	**0.06** (0.053)	**-0.026** (0.067)	**0.076** (0.073)
R-squared	0.006	0.11	0.28	0.002	0.08	0.20
[pweight=withinwt]	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Control variables of Column 5, Table 4	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
Control variables of Column 4, Table 5	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
Observations	390	390	345	579	477	420

*Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<.01. [pweight=withinwt] is the sampling weight.*

8. Other trust outcomes

To understand whether the observed effects on trust are specific to the elected local government council or generalisable to some other institutions, we examine Afrobarometer data on trust in Parliament (i.e. the National Assembly and the Senate), the tax department, Elections Cameroon (ELECAM, the national election-management body), and traditional and religious leaders. Table 9 presents estimates for the effects of local infrastructure provision on these institutions. We use all control variables in Column 5 of Table 4, so we control for trust in the head of state in all regression models.

The coefficient on the infrastructure index is negligible and not significant in the last two columns. This indicates that local infrastructure has no effect on trust in religious and

traditional leaders. However, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between the provision of local infrastructure and trust in Parliament, the tax authority, and ELECAM, with trust in Parliament showing the strongest link. Political party affiliation in Cameroon appears to significantly increase trust in Parliament, ELECAM, and traditional and religious leaders. Lived poverty shows a negative and statistically significant relationship with trust in Parliament, the tax authority, ELECAM, and traditional leaders, and place of residence has a significant impact on trust in Parliament and the tax department. In sum, this regression suggests that local infrastructure can affect not only trust in the elected local council, but also trust in other bodies, especially Parliament, which has the power to enact laws, raise taxes, and approve government spending.

Table 9: Infrastructure and trust in other types of institutions | OLS estimates

	Estimates of trust in institutions				
	Parliament	**Tax department**	**ELECAM**	**Traditional leaders**	**Religious leaders**
Infrastructure index	0.367*** (0.116)	0.274** (0.115)	0.229** (0.117)	0.046 (0.113)	0.0093 (0.120)
Lived Poverty Index	-0.110*** (0.0181)	-0.056*** (0.018)	-0.090*** (0.0183)	-0.00542 (0.0178)	-0.051*** (0.0192)
Location (Urban=1)	0.0906** (0.0420)	0.105** (0.0417)	0.0624 (0.0424)	0.0317 (0.0413)	0.061 (0.0445)
Media	-0.0449 (0.053)	-0.0123 (0.0532)	-0.00105 (0.0538)	-0.015 (0.0519)	-0.0159 (0.0561)
Ethnic group (Beti=1)	-0.0296 (0.0385)	-0.0394 (0.0473)	-0.00156 (0.0482)	-0.0736 (0.0467)	-0.00738 (0.0506)
Feeling close to a political party	0.0671** (0.0325)	0.0531 (0.0323)	0.109*** (0.0329)	0.0813** (0.0318)	0.0610* (0.0344)
Survey sponsor (By government=1)	-0.0126 (0.0330)	-0.0619* (0.0328)	-0.104*** (0.0334)	-0.089*** (0.0323)	-0.099*** (0.0349)
Trust president	0.477*** (0.0488)	0.240*** (0.0486)	0.386*** (0.0494)	0.229*** (0.0484)	0.222*** (0.0518)
[pweight=withinwt]	N	N	N	N	N
N	867	865	864	868	876
R-squared	0.156	0.066	0.137	0.056	0.057

*Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<.01. [pweight=withinwt] is the sampling weight. The other control variables include media access, religious affiliation, gender, and age. The first column is trust in parliament, the second is trust in the tax department, the third is trust in election Cameroon, the fourth is trust in religious leaders, and the last column is trust in traditional leaders.*
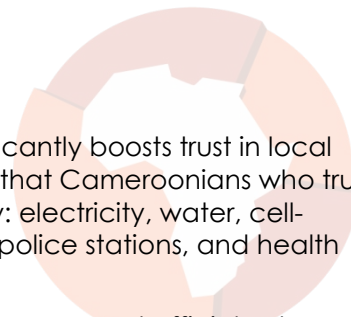
9. Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that infrastructure provision significantly boosts trust in local government representatives in Cameroon. Our findings suggest that Cameroonians who trust do so based in part on tangible infrastructure in their community: electricity, water, cell-phone service, sewerage, social infrastructure (such as schools, police stations, and health clinics), and paved roads close to home.

Results show that Cameroonians develop political trust in local government officials who can drive development and provide infrastructure. All regression models show a significant relationship between infrastructure provision and trust in local government officials: After controlling for trust in the president and the survey sponsor, a one-unit increase in the infrastructure index increases the likelihood of trust in local government officials by an average of 50%. We found that the observed effects on trust are not specific to the elected government council, as they can be generalised to other institutions such as Parliament, the tax department, and ELECAM.

Although the evidence from Cameroon may not be representative of other cases on the continent, our results suggest that political trust can emerge even when political processes are repressive, with minimal space for public discourse. Because executive power has been in the hands of a single president for more than four decades, discussions about how to hold that executive accountable are almost impossible. But Cameroonians seek accountability elsewhere, as they reward good infrastructure in their communities by trusting local government officials who lead its provision. Thus, we find a desire for bottom-up political accountability even when citizens cannot hold top-level politicians accountable.

While they do not rule out the role of ethnicity and neopatrimonialism in African politics and resource allocation, our findings indicate that the influence of these factors on trust is muted. They also illustrate the importance of decentralising governance and development projects, especially in systems where political authority revolves around a few individuals. Consistent with its 1996 Constitution (Kofele-Kale, 2011), Cameroon has recently decentralised major government tasks formerly handled by the central administration. But significant problems remain regarding the effectiveness of the process, including issues related to funding and the fiscal autonomy of municipalities (Myerson, 2022). Despite these challenges, the strong relationship between infrastructure provision by local government and political trust means that decentralisation can allow Cameroonians to properly control local governance and exert influence over local political representatives.

Finally, given relatively low levels of infrastructure provision in Cameroon and relatively high levels of trust in elected local governments found in the data, it is important to emphasise that we are not theorising that infrastructure is the only or even the most important determinant of trust. Rather, it is a factor that affects trust, and differences in infrastructure help explain differences in trust.
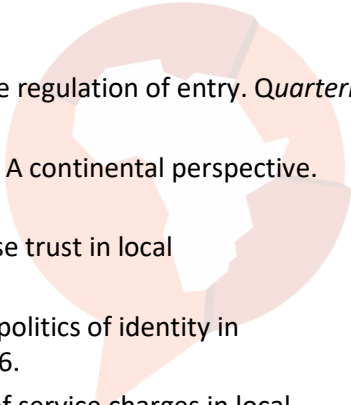
An important research direction would be to examine whether the impact of infrastructure on trust may be heterogeneous by place of residence (urban or rural) and to understand the mechanism by which the provision of local infrastructure influences citizens' trust in their elected local government.
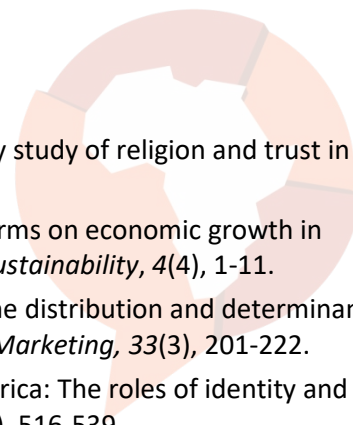
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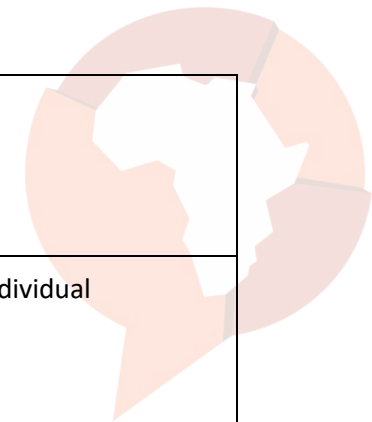Nunn, N., & Wantchekon, L. (2011). The slave trade and the origins of mistrust in Africa. *American*

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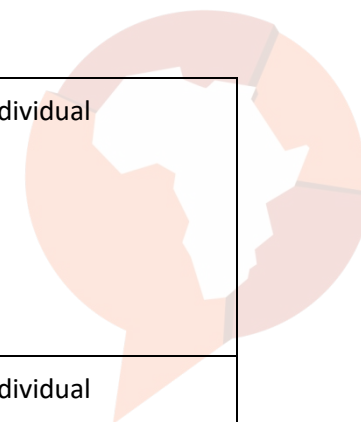
Appendix

**Table A. 1: Independent variable: Definitions and related questions**

	Question	Scale	Manipulation	Measurement level
Main independent variable Index of infrastructure indicators Continuous variable	***Present in the respondent's neighbourhood:*** *Electricity grid; piped-water system; sewerage system**; c**ell-phone service; school; police station; post office; health clinic.* *Road condition (0=impassable, very poor, poor; 1=fair, good, very good)*	Dummy: 1 or 0	Yes Additive index or principal component analysis (PCA)	PSU
Main outcome variable: Trust in local government	*How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say:* ***Your elected local government council?***	Not at all=0; Just a little=1; Somewhat=2; A lot=3 (ordinal) Recode: Lower trust=0, 1; higher trust=2, 3	Yes	Individual
Trust in ruling party	*How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say:* ***The ruling party?***	Not at all=0; Just a little=1; Somewhat=2; A lot=3 (ordinal)	Yes	Individual

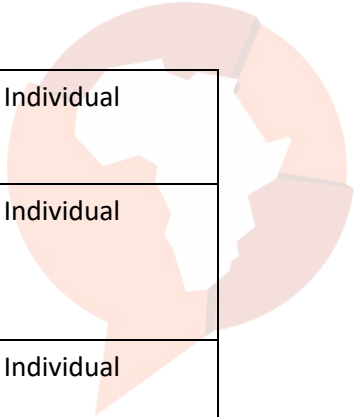|		Recode: No trust=0; trust=1, 2, 3		
Trust in traditional leaders	*How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say:* **Traditional leaders?**	Not at all=0; Just a little=1; Somewhat=2; A lot=3 (ordinal) Recode: No trust=0; trust=1, 2, 3. As a dependent variable, I recode the it as: : Lower trust=0, 1; higher trust=2, 3	Yes	Individual
Trust in religious leaders	*How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say:* **Religious leaders?**	Not at all=0; Just a little=1; Somewhat=2; A lot=3 (ordinal) Recoded as: No trust=0; trust=1, 2, 3. As a dependent variable, I recode the it as: : Lower trust=0, 1; higher trust=2, 3	Yes	Individual

| Trust Parliament	*How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say:* ***Parliament (i.e., the National Assembly and the Senate)?***	Not at all=0; Just a little=1; Somewhat=2; A lot=3 (ordinal) Recode: Lower trust=0, 1; higher trust=2, 3	Yes	Individual
Trust tax department	*How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say:* ***Tax department?***	Not at all=0; Just a little=1; Somewhat=2; A lot=3 (ordinal) Recode: Lower trust=0, 1; higher trust=2, 3	Yes	Individual
Trust Elections Cameroon or Elecam	*How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say:* ***Elecam?***	Not at all=0; Just a little=1; Somewhat=2; A lot=3 (ordinal) Recode: Lower trust=0, 1; higher trust=2, 3	Yes	Individual
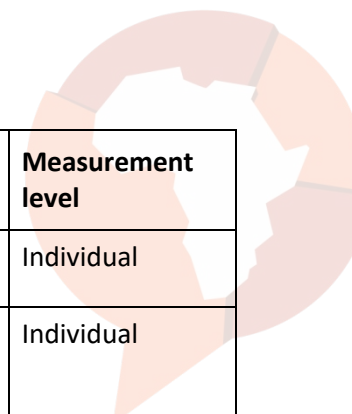
Table A.2: Explanatory variables: Definitions and related questions

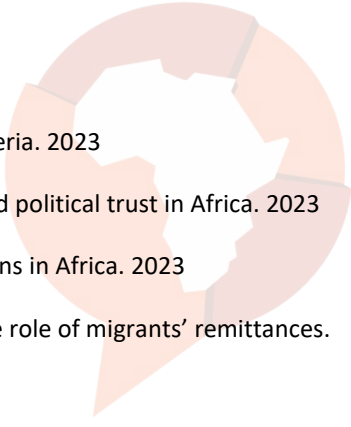| Main explanatory variable	Question	Scale	Manipulation	Measurement level
Age	How old are you?	Continuous: 18-85	No	Individual
Area of living: Urban or rural		Dummy: 1=urban; 0=rural	No	Individual
Gender	Respondent's gender	Dummy: 1=male; 0=female	No	Individual
Religious affiliation	What is your religion, if any?	Dummy: 1=Christian; 0=others	Yes	Individual
Ethnic group	What is your ethnic community, cultural group, or tribe?	Dummy: 1=president's ethnic group; 0=otherwise	Yes	Individual
Party membership	Do you feel close to any political party? If yes, which party is that?	Dummy: 1=Yes, 0=No	Yes	Individual
Perceived survey sponsor	Who do you think sent us to do this interview?	Dummy: 1=government, political party, or politician sent; 0=otherwise	Yes	Individual
Lived poverty. index	Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?	Continuous	Yes. Same construction as In Afrobarometer.	Individual

Years of schooling	What is your highest level of education?	Continuous: from 0 (no education) to 9 (post-university)	No	Individual
Respondent's region during interview (not region of origin)		Dummy: 1=Centre-Yaoundé and Littoral-Douala. 0=otherwise	Yes	Individual
Local govt. councillors maintain local roads	What about local government? I do not mean the national government. I mean your municipal or local government council. How well or badly would you say your local government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: **Maintaining local roads?**	1=very badly, 2=fairly badly, 3=fairly well, 4=very well Recode: 1, 2=0, bad; 3, 4=1, well	Yes	Individual
Local govt. councillors maintain local markets	What about local government? I do not mean the national government. I mean your municipal or local government council. How well or badly would you say your local government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: **Maintaining local markets?**	1=very badly, 2=fairly badly, 3=fairly well, 4=very well Recode: 1, 2=0, bad; 3, 4=1, well		
Local govt. councillors listen	How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say: **Local government councillors?**	Continuous: from 0 to 3 0=never, 1=only sometimes, 2=often, 3=always Recode: 0=0, and 1,2,3=1	Yes	Individual
Local govt. councillors corrupt	How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: **Local government councillors?**	0=none, 1=some of them, 2=most of them, 3=all of them, Recode: 0=0, and 1,2,3=1	Yes	Individual
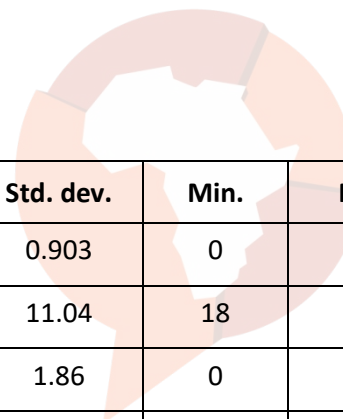
Table A.3: Summary statistics

	Observations	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.
Lived poverty	1,166	1.815	0.903	0	3
Age	1,179	32.401	11.04	18	85
Level of education	1,180	4.48	1.86	0	9
Media access	1,175	0.609	0.308	0	1
Infrastructure index	1,182	0.819	0.171	0.333	1
Gender	1,166	Male=50%; female=50%			
Location	1,179	Rural=48%; urban=52%			
Beti ethnic group	1,182	Beti=13%; other=87%			
Religious affiliation	1,142	Christian=83%; Muslim=15.5%; No religion=1.5%			
Partisanship	1,095	Close to a party=49%; Not close=51%			
Survey sponsor	1,022	Sponsored by government=40.02%; Not sponsored by government=59.98%			
Region dummies	1,182	From Centre-Yaounde or Littoral Douala=30%; other=70%			
Local govt. councillors listen	1,089	Listen=61%; don't listen=39%			
Local govt. councillors corrupt	1,065	Involved in corruption=93% Not involved in corruption=7%			
Trust traditional leaders	1,148	Trust=81%; no trust =20%			
Trust religious leaders	1,140	Trust =89%; no trust=11%			
Trust ruling party	1,114	Trust=69%; no trust=31%			
Trust head of state	1,140	Trust=89%, no trust=11%			
Trust local government council	1,128	Lower trust=43%; Higher trust=57%			
Local govt. councillors maintain roads	1,155	Maintain roads=32%; don't maintain roads=68%			
Local govt. councillors maintain markets	1,159	Maintain markets=46%; don't maintain markets=54%			
Infrastructure index score	1,182	0.33= 0.68%; 0.44=6.77%; 0.55=5.41%; 0.66=10.15%; 0.77=28.6%; 0.88=14.89%; 1=33.5%			
Trust parliament	1,122	Lower trust=47%; Higher trust=53%			
Trust tax department	1,122	Lower trust=66%; Higher trust=34%			
Trust Election Cameroon	1,118	Lower trust=55%; Higher trust=45%			

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