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Who supports the African Union? Understanding the determinants of citizens' opinion for African integration

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Abstract

The objective of the paper is to investigate the legitimacy of the African Union by examining the socio-demographic determinants of citizens' support of African integration. To do this, we use Rounds 4, 5, 6 and 8 of the Afrobarometer survey data corresponding to more than 110 000 respondents. Using logistics regressions, we find that individual characteristics such as living area, education, employment status, political membership, freedom, living condition and Living Poverty Index (LPI) are significantly related to the probability of supporting African integration. The findings are largely robust to dynamics of regional integration, the African Union and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Thus, since African citizens' trust in the unification could be considered as a condition of legitimacy in the process, our results suggest that more efforts should be done to gain credibility, especially as it pertains to the benefits of African integration.

Keywords: Institutional support, Afrobarometer survey, African Union
JEL Classification: C23, O55

1. Introduction

During these last decades, the debate on the AU and regional integration has been revived both by policymakers and scholars. According to the Treaty of Abuja, the final objectives of the AU entail: an economic integration, a unified continental market and a monetary union (Asongu et al., 2017; Diop et al., 2024). To achieve this ultimate goal, many institutions such as African Economic Community, African Development Bank Agenda 2063 have been created to provide a framework to carry out this mission. The Organization of African Unity (renamed the African Union since the year 2000) articulated in its Charter, fundamental goals of monetary union and economic integration. It was formalised in the Treaty of Abuja (Nigeria) in June 1991. "*It shall be implemented gradually in six stages: (i) establishing economic communities in regions where they do not exist, (ii) strengthening sectoral integration, coordinating and harmonising activities among the existing and future economic communities, (iii) establishing a free trade area of tariff barriers and non-tariff barriers to intra community trade and the establishment of a customs union by means of adopting a common external tariff, (iv) coordinating and harmonizing tariff and non-tariff systems among the various regional economic communities with a view to establishing a customs union at the continental level by means of adopting a common external tariff, (v) harmonizing monetary, financial and fiscal policies, (vi) implementing the final stage for the setting up of an African monetary union, the establishment of a single African central bank and the creation of a single African currency and for the setting up of the structure of the Pan-African Parliament" (Abuja Treaty, 1991, p.10).* The underlying is Article 6 of the Treaty of establishing the African Economic Community.

Besides this framework, eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are recognized by the African Union. The eight RECs include the: Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Eastern African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The principle is the creation of different RECs is to reinforce the economic cooperation within and between RECs in order to enhance the AU process.

Despite all these political emphasise, the project of the AU has now stalled and there have been several postponements in the schedule of the integration process. For example, in ECOWAS, the creation of the common West African currency (ECO) which was initially set for 2003 was

postponed in 2005, 2009 and 2020. Indeed, the targeting date for full political and economic integration in 2019 of the African Economic Community was not respected (Asongu, 2021; Tchamyou et al., 2023).

The extant scholarly literature on the problem statement can be discussed in two main strands, notably: studies on economic integration and the corresponding literature on monetary integration. On the one hand, concerning the importance of trade integration, in accordance with Tchamyou et al. (2023), countries in Africa have a substantial potential for enhanced trade among them as well as with the global market. According to the narrative, trade in Africa at the regional level could be fundamental in engendering the following externalities, *inter alia*: boosting of economic prosperity and reducing of extreme poverty; creation of opportunities for youth employment, energy security and food delivery as well as reduction of dependence in exports and improvement of economic diversification (Aranda, 2018; Asongu & Odhiambo, 2019; Diop et al., 2024; Efobi et al., 2018; UN News, 2018; World Bank, 2013). In essence, according to Tchamyou et al. (2023), intra-African trade currently accounts only for about 15% of the total trade in the continent; a % that is comparatively low in relation to those of other continents in the world. To put this in more perspective, according to the narrative, intra-regional trade represents, *inter alia*: 67% of trade in Europe, 58% in Asia and 48% in North America (ABM, 2018). Moreover, it also projected that when the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is effective, intra-regional trade in the continent will increase to about 50% within the first-five years (ABM, 2018).

On the other hand, departing from the perspective of trade integration, there is yet no consensus in the literature on monetary feasibility and advantages of monetary integration (Asongu & Diop, 2023). According to the corresponding literature (Asongu et al., 2017; Coulibaly & Gnimassoun, 2013; Masson & Patillo, 2004), the plausibility of most of the potential monetary unions is yet to be established, namely: African Monetary Union (AMU), West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ), East African Monetary Union (EAMU) and Southern African Monetary Union (SAMU). The underlying perspective is supported in a comprehensive literature review by Asongu et al. (2017) and recently confirmed by Asongu and Diop (2023) who have proposed an Index of African Monetary Integration (IAMI) in the light of apparent shortcomings from the extant literature.

Extant literature on the African Union has not focused on the problem statement being considered within the remit of the present study, not least, because the attendant literature has

mostly focused on grey studies which have largely been concerned with, *inter alia*, conflict management and prevention (Desmidt, 2019); greater citizen participation for a people-oriented African Union (Kinkoh et al., 2023a); evolution of the AU over the past 20 years (Kinkoh et al., 2023b), navigating nexuses that are essential for effective relations between the AU and its partners (Kinkoh et al., 2023c) and how macroeconomic variations influence support for the AU (Diop et al., 2024).

Moreover, as apparent in Section 2.1, the majority of studies on determinants in the trust of institutions have been concerned with institutions in developed countries such as the EU and European Central Bank (ECB) in the EU (Brouwer & Haan, 2022; Bursian & Fürth, 2015; Farvaque et al., 2017; Hayo & Neuenkirch, 2014; Hudson, 2006; Melina & Schmidt, 2018).

The present study therefore complements the extant literature by focusing on the AU within the remit of evaluating the determinants of support of the institution. In essence, the positioning of the present exposition on citizens' opinions of the AU is further motivated by the position of Olapade et al. (2016) who opine that support for African integration is limited. According to the narrative, only one in four citizens say that they can easily cross international borders in Africa and about three in ten citizens do not know enough about the African Union and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Moreover, according to Kinkoh et al. (2023a), despite some promising progress over the past 20 years, the participation of citizens in AU affairs has not been well organised and systematic. Moreover, the extant contemporary literature on African integration has not focused on the problem statement being considered in this study (Abdulkareem et al., 2023; Billon et al., 2023; Iorember et al., 2022; Jiahao et al., 2022; Majune et al., 2023).

In the light of the above, it is important to note that the success of the AU depends on public support and trust, which is the main focus of the present exposition. In effect, public opinion matters. Accordingly, it is in this spirit that the following question is asked within the remit of the present study: who supports African integration? It follows that the objective of this paper is evaluated if African citizens' support for integration depends consistently on individual-level characteristics such as education, political knowledge, living conditions, *inter alia*. This question seems important particularly as its response will enable researchers as well as policy makers to understand whether the African Union's communication policy is in line with general public opinion.

To the best of our knowledge, other than insights from Afrobarometer dispatches to disseminate their descriptive statistics after every round, there is no empirical study on supporting the AU based on survey data or using micro-level data. Indeed, contemporary studies on the feasibility of economic integration are only focused on macroeconomic data and public opinion is not taken into account. The present study therefore contributes to the existing literature by assessing the determinants of supporting African integration.

The remainder of the study is organised as follows. Section 2 presents the literature review. Section 3 describes the data used and presents the econometrics methodology. The main findings are provided in Section 4 while Section 5 concludes with implications and future research directions.

2. Theoretical underpinnings and further insights

2.1Theoretical underpinnings of the African Union

The theoretical underpinning motivating determinants of the African Union are broadly consistent with theoretical underpinning of the European Union, especially as it pertains to, *inter alia*, the Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST), the Transnationalism and Complex Interdependence (TCI) underpinnings and the Theory of Economic Integration (TEI) (Diop & Asongu, 2023; Keohane & Nye, 1974; Tchamyou et al., 2023; Tripathi, 2015). These theoretical insights are expanded in the same chronology as highlighted.

First, consistent with the HST, hegemony plays a fundamental role in economic stability and openness and thus, countries adopt a thesis based on a collective force from member states within a single body in order to enhance leverage on the international economic and political systems of power. According to the narrative, such integration in view of forming counteracting unions is usually motivated by existing unions that are wielding more politico-economic power at the international level. It is on this theoretical premise that the plan for European integration were encouraged after the EU states witnessed the constructive leadership of the USA, especially the Mashall Plan it benefited from after the Second World War (Tripathi, 2015). The formation of the AU has also been motivated by the need for African countries to have more say in world economics and politics, amid the EU and US hegemonic tendencies (Diop *et al*., 2024).

Second, the TCI is a mainstream theory on interdependence, especially is it pertains to the importance of enforcing transnational relations within the remit of pluralism in order to better contribute to world politics (Keohane & Nye, 1974). According to the narrative, for a group of countries to have more influence in international affairs, *inter alia*, cross-border transactions and travels should be consolidated in view of promoting the synergy from transnational relations. While the underlying advantages are already apparent in the USA and EU, the AU has been improving its policies for better integration, as apparent by the recent the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) which has as main objective to substantially boost intra-African trade upon effective implementation (Tchamyou et al., 2023).

Third, TEI is an extension of the neoclassical welfare economics which is premised on the basis that the primary motivation for economic activities is to boost welfare within and across nations. Such tendencies according to the theory are better put in perspective when cross-country and within-country procedures are adopted to abolish within country and cross-country economic discrimination. This is essentially because the anticipated welfare gains are higher when countries are integrated compared to when countries are isolated (Tripathi, 2015). The underpinnings have motivated various forms of economic integration within Africa, that will ultimately engender a strong African Union (Asongu & Diop, 2023).

2.2 Using the Eurobarometer

The question on the determinants of support of institutions has been widely debated in Europe. The most important discussion is oriented towards the European Union (EU) and the European Central Bank (ECB). Using the Eurobarometer survey, Fischer and Hahn (2008) measure trust in the ECB. The authors find that macroeconomic variables such as the lagged gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and GDP growth positively impact trust in the ECB while employment has an insignificant effect. Regarding micro data from surveys, Hudson (2006) confirms that several demographic indicators such as education, age and gender are related to support of the ECB. Bursian and Fürth(2015) find that citizens' education level, political orientation and employment status are the main determinants of trust in the ECB. These findings thus confirm those of Farvaque et al. (2017). Other authors such as Hayo and Neuenkirch (2014), Melina and Schmidt (2018) suggest that there is evidence of a nexus between knowledge of the institution and trust in the ECB. Using a survey among Dutch households, Brouwer and Haan (2022) recently analysed trust in the ECB. Their findings reveal a positive association between individuals' ideology, their knowledge in other European Institutions on

the one hand and on the other, trust in the ECB. In addition to this result, the authors also find that respondents who were bank clients who received government aid during the global financial crisis trust the ECB more than others. Finally, another interesting finding is that inflation expectations of individuals who trust the central bank are more in accordance with the inflation target.

3. Data and model specification

3.1. Data presentation

To evaluate the determinants of support in an institution or a project, survey data on public opinion attitudes may be useful. The data are from the Afrobarometer survey covering the period 2008-2021. It is a large survey related to public opinion relative to politics and socio-economic conditions of individuals in Africa. The survey depicts people perception of public goods and services, institutions, corruption, politics, *inter alia*. Our dependent variable is support of the African Union. To measure support, we create our variable from responses to questions asked in the Afrobarometer Round 4 (2008/2009), Round 5 (2011/2013), Round 6 (2014/2015), and Round 8 (2019/2021) survey. It is important to note that Round 7 is not integrated in the data because the question on the African Union or regional alliance is not asked in the corresponding round. The question is defined as follows in Round 4, Round 5 and Round 6:

"In your opinion, how much do African Union to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say?".

The possible answers are on a four-step Likert-scale and range from *"do nothing, no help"* to *"help a lot"*. The responses are recorded in a binary manner: 1 if the respondent answered by *"help somewhat"* or *"help a lot"* and 0 for the responses *"do nothing to help"*, *"help a little bit"*. The other responses such as "refused", "don't know" are added on missing values.

According to Round 8, the question is formulated as follows:

"In general, do you think that the economic and political influence of each of the following organizations (on your country) is mostly positive, more negative, or haven't you heard enough to say? African Union"

The possible answers are on a five-step Likert-scale and range from *"very negative"* to *"very positive"*. We construct our dependent variable by defining a binary variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent answered by *"somewhat positive"* or *"very positive"* and 0 for the

responses *"very negative"*, *"somewhat negative"* and *"neither positive nor negative"*. The other responses such as "refused", Don't know" are coded as missing values.

It should be kept in mind that the Afrobarometer is not a true panel. In other words, individuals are changed in each round of survey. We combine the datasets of rounds 4, 5, 6 and 8 by adding observations to the existing variables. Since there is no fixation of individuals, we do not merge the data but we append the datasets because we have data for different individual through different rounds. This method of combining repeated survey data is popular and has been already used in the previous studies. For example, Konte and Vincent (2021) append round 3, 4,5 and 6 of Afrobarometer surveys to investigate the local effect of mining on the quality of public services. Moreover, De Neve et al. (2018) applied this procedure for Eurobarometer surveys over four decades to explore the relationship between well-being and economic growth. Appending data from different round present some advantages. Firstly, we would have a large number of degrees of freedom because the number of observations increase widely. Secondly, we would appreciate the evolution of the phenomenon through time at a country level in descriptive statistics. Finally, in the regressions, as is standard in panel data, both country and time (round) fixed effects are controlled to take into account unobserved time-invariant country heterogeneity and unobserved aggregate shocks that could provoke omitted variable bias and some concerns related to statistical inference. After the baseline results, we will run the estimations round by round to evaluate the robustness of our findings.

Regarding the sampling size, in recent rounds (from round 4), the Afrobarometer has collected additional data in order to improve its calculation of weighting factors. This approach allows us to have much more comprehensive and accurate within country weights computations. Depending on the country, the sample includes 1200 or 2400 cases which is representative with a margin of sampling error of $\pm 2.8\%$ and $\pm 2.0\%$ points at 95% confidence level, respectively. The weighting is identified in the data and is taken into account.

Table 1 presents the distribution of the respondents by round and by Regional Economic Community (REC) represented in the Afrobarometer survey. We note that more than half of the interviewees (58.78%) support the African Union when we consider all rounds in the 38 countries. When we divided the sample into six RECs, we note a difference in the responses. The level of support in the AU is higher in the East African Community (EAC) (64.47%) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (59.91%) where people tend to

support the AU while only a bit more than one-third of people agreed with the statement that AU helps in the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) countries (34.68%).

Regarding the evolution of the proportion, it appears clear that support of the AU is become stronger during the last round (Round 8) in all RECs. The proportion evolved from 61.18% (Round 4) to 70.65 (Round 8) in Africa, 52.03% (Round 4) to 83.82% (Round 8) in the EAC and 59.30% (Round 4) to 71.12% (Round 8) in the ECOWAS. It is thus reasonable to infer that individuals tend to trust the AU more with the unfolding of time.

Table 1: Distribution of support of the African Union (% by REC)

	Africa	ECOWAS	SADC	EAC	ECCAS	AMU	COMESA
Round 4 (2008/2009)	61.18	59.30	66.87	52.03	-	-	-
Round 5 (2011/2013)	45.82	44.15	39.62	56.69	65.15	-	-
Round 6 (2014/2015)	53.81	55.56	56.19	62.93	45.68	24.67	49.03
Round 8 (2019/2021)	70.65	71.12	75.30	83.82	58.92	47.63	65.88
Round 4,5,6, 8	58.78	59.91	58.32	64.47	54.32	34.68	59.48
#Countries	38	14	11	4	4	3	2
# Observations	112 029	40 925	36 209	18 363	7 333	4 345	4 854

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States. SADC: Southern African Development Community. EAC: East African Community. ECCAS: Economic Community of Central African States. AMU: Arab Maghreb Union. COMESA: Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa.
Sources: authors from Afrobarometer survey data

The independent variables are defined in Table 2 with their descriptive statistics.

Table 2: Variables and descriptive statistics

Variable	Description	# Obs	Mean	Std.Dev	Min	Max	Round
Support	Support to African Union	112 029	0.588	0.492	0	1	4,5,6 and 8
Urban	Urban area, 1 if yes	181 319	0.406	0.491	0	1	4,5,6 and 8
Age(ln)	Age (natural logarithm)	180 236	3.539	0.379	2.890	4.787	4,5,6 and 8
Educ 1	Education, 1 if non formal	181 319	0.197	0.398	0	1	4,5,6 and 8
Educ 2	Education, 1 if secondary and above	181 319	0.500	0.500	0	1	4,5,6 and 8
Empl	Employment status, 1 if fully employed at the time of the survey	180 590	0.500	0.500	0	1	4,5,6 and 8
News	How often get news from television, 1 if every day	180 699	0.479	0.500	0	1	4,5,6 and 8
Pol_Party	Close to a political party, 1 if yes	167 790	0.569	0.495	0	1	4,5,6 and 8
Presi_Lim	Presidential two term limit vs no term limits, 1 if two term limits	176 236	0.502	0.500	0	1	4,5,6 and 8
Freedom	Freedom to say what you think, 1 if completely free	178 256	0.492	0.500	0	1	4,5,6 and 8
Living_Cond	Your present living conditions, 1 if fairly or very good	180 433	0.316	0.465	0	1	4,5,6 and 8
Lived_Poverty	Lived poverty index (categorical)	47 595	1.672	0.934	0	3	8

3.2.Determinants of support in the AU: an empirical strategy

To capture the determinants of support in the AU, we propose the following equation:

$$Support_{ijt} = f\left(Dem_{ijt}', Pol_{ijt}', Eco_{ijt}', News_{ijt}, freed_{ijt}, C_j, T_t, \alpha_0\right) + \varepsilon_{ijt},$$

where $Support_{ijt}$ denotes the response of the individual i living in country j and who is interviewed in survey round t.

Dem_{ijt} is a vector containing a continuous age variable and binary variable such as urban area, education level of the respondent, and employment status:

$$Dem_{ijt}' = \left(Urban_{ijt}, Age_{ijt}, Educ_{ijt}, Empl_{ijt},\right)'$$

Pol_{ijt} is the political characteristics of the respondent. This vector contains two variables namely closeness to a political party and his/her opinion to the statement on two presidential term limits versus (vs) no term limits:

$$Pol_{ijt}{}' = \left(Pol\_Party_{ijt}, Presi\_Limit_{ijt}\right)'$$

Eco_{ijt} is a vector of socioeconomic conditions of the interviewees. It entails variables on the present living conditions as well as the Lived Poverty Index(LPI) of the respondent:

$$Eco_{ijt}{}' = \left(Living_{ijt}, LPI_{ijt}\right)'$$

The other covariates are freedom to say what to think ($freed_{ijt}$) and access to news from television ($News_{ijt}$). We also introduce in the regressions, country fixed effects (C_j) and round fixed effects (T_t) in addition to the constant term α_0, ε_{ijt} is the error term of the regression. The introduction of the fixed effects enables the study to pick up the unobserved time-invariant country heterogeneity and to control the unobserved aggregate shocks over time. Since the support of the AU is likely dependent on national characteristics such as culture, history and institutions, the introduction of the fixed effects could capture these unobserved heterogeneities. It is important to keep in mind that the data are appended and Afrobarometer survey is not a true panel. In effect, the respondents are not followed over time and they change in each round. The coefficients of the model are estimated by the logit model in accordance with extant literature on the behaviour of the outcome variables (Brouwer & Haan, 2022; Farvaque et al., 2017; Melina & Schmidt, 2018).

4. Empirical results

In this section, we firstly present the baseline estimations of the determinants of support of African integration. Secondly, we engage with the robustness checks.

4.1.Baseline estimations

Table 3 reports the estimations results of the determinants of support of African integration in seven specifications (Columns 1 to 7). In Column 1, we introduce only demographic variables. In Columns 2-7, we run the same regression by sequentially controlling the news, political characteristics, freedom variables and the variable representing economic conditions. In all

regressions, the sign of the coefficients does not differ and the corresponding significance change slightly. The coefficients associated with urban area are negative and significant at the 1% level in all regressions suggesting that individuals living in urban areas have a lower probability to support African integration. Age is not significant and this finding is confirmed in all other specifications. Education appears as a significant determinant of support to the AU. It is important to note that two levels of education are considered. Education 1 is a binary variable coded 1 if the respondent has no formal education and 0 otherwise. Education 2 is code 1 if the individual has a secondary level of education and above. The estimated coefficient of Education 1 is negative and significant at the 1% or 5% levels contrarily to Education 2 which is positive and significant at the 5% or 10% levels.

This finding suggests that people formally educated (secondary school and above) support African integration while those with a non-formal schooling have a lower probability of a positive appraisal of trust in the economic integration. This finding might have been expected given that the more the respondent is educated formally, the more he is able to appreciate the benefits and the roles of African unification. Furthermore, support for African integration increases when the respondent is employed. In effect the estimated coefficient associated with this variable is significant and positive in five out of seven specifications. Regarding the variable related to news access via television, the results indicate that its influence is positive and significant in six out of seven regressions. When we consider the political variables, the results indicate that the estimated probability of support increases when the respondent is close to a political party and if he states that the president must have only two term limits. This finding corroborates the fact that interesting political activity and democracy increase the likelihood of people supporting integration. This last finding is confirmed by the variable freedom. In effect, the estimated coefficient associated to this variable is positive and significant at 1% level.

Finally, the living condition of citizen significantly impacts the likelihood to support African integration. The estimated coefficient of living is positive and significant. Accordingly, people who are presently living in good conditions are more likely to report a positive appraisal of support for the AU than those who are not living in good conditions. In contrast to the political indicators, the PLI of the interviewee (i.e. proxied by lack of basic necessities) affects their opinion negatively. More precisely, support of the AU monotonically decreases as one goes from not deprived, to deprived in all necessities such as food, cooking fuel, water and medicine.

The findings can be discussed as follows. Overall, the findings suggest that individual characteristics such as living area, education level, employment status, political membership, freedom, living conditions and LPI are significantly related to their probability of supporting African integration. Thus, since African citizens' trust in the unification could be considered as a condition of legitimacy for the progress to attain the ultimate goal, people's perception indicate that more efforts should be done to gain credibility on the necessities of the integration.

These results are particularly insightful in the African integration process and for its legitimacy. In effect, the findings indicate that citizens' opinions matter in the process of creating economic, political and monetary integration and by extension, unification for a continental market.

Table 3: Baseline regressions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Urban	-0.097***	-0.115***	-0.110***	-0.112***	-0.110***	-0.110***	-0.207***
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.029)
Age(ln)	0.014	0.015	0.004	0.004	-0.013	-0.000	-0.142
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.035)
Educ 1	-0.068***	-0.062***	-0.052**	-0.054**	-0.052**	-0.057**	-0.047***
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.041)
Educ 2	0.039**	0.030*	0.038**	0.037**	0.037**	0.030*	0.105***
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.033)
Empl	0.047***	0.043***	0.038**	0.038**	0.033**	0.023	0.020
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.034)
News		0.063***	0.072***	0.070***	0.067***	0.0548***	0.086
		(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.031)
Pol_Party			0.161***	0.164***	0.153***	0.152***	0.175***
			(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.027)
Presi_Lim				0.039***	0.037***	0.043***	-0.029
				(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.026)
Freedom					0.199***	0.187***	0.220***
					(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.027)
Living						0.204***	
						(0.015)	
LPI							-0.109***
							(0.015)
Constant	0.725***	0.686***	0.642***	0.625***	0.575***	0.502***	1.869***
	(0.022)	(0.078)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.149)
Wald Chi2	8530.58***	8540.53***	7789.50***	7727.13***	7843.39***	7959.06***	2217.28***
Pseudo R^2	0.062	0.062	0.061	0.061	0.062	0.064	0.061
# Observations	111 253	111 006	104 015	102 762	102 039	101 714	33 137
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Round FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: significance level: ***P<0.01, **P<0.05, **P<0.10, Robust standard errors are in parentheses

4.2.Robustness checks

After the presentation of the baseline results, we check their robustness with three alternatives approaches. Firstly, we test the model by round. Thus, we estimate the same model in Round 4, Round 5, Round 6 and Round 8. Secondly, instead of using the African Union as dependent variable, we utilize the REC in which the respondent is living. The corresponding question in the Afrobarometer survey is:

"In general, do you think that the economic and political influence of each of the following organizations on (your country) is mostly positive, mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say? Regional alliance (SADC, ECOWAS, ECCAS, AMU, IGAD (the Intergovernmental Authority on Development), COMESA, EAC and CEN-SAD (the Community of Sahel–Saharan States)".

Table 2: Robustness Checks 1

	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Round 8
Urban	-0.169***	0.025	-0.108***	-0.203***
	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.026)	(0.029)
Age(ln)	0.023	0.146***	-0.035	-0.129***
	(0.050)	(0.046)	(0.003)	(0.035)
Educ 1	-0.067	-0.216***	0.001	-0.054
	(0.060)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)
Educ 2	-0.002	-0.008	0.016	0.100***
	(0.043)	(0.041)	(0.030)	(0.033)
Empl	0.083*	-0.108***	0.058**	0.012
	(0.043)	(0.040)	(0.027)	(0.033)
News	-0.063	-0.063	0.095**	0.082***
	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.030)	(0.031)
Pol_Party	0.149***	0.091**	0.165***	0.173***
	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.025)	(0.027)
Presi_Lim	0.066*	0.024	0.040*	-0.022
	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.024)	(0.026)
Freedom	0.320***	-0.016	0.236***	0.214***
	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.025)	(0.027)
Living	0.189***	0.053	0.251***	0.212***
	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.025)	(0.028)
LPI				-0.080***
				(0.016)
Constant	0.377***	0.319***	-0.278***	1.709***
	(0.201)	(0.196)	(0.141)	(0.151)
Wald Chi2	914.71***	3000.63***	2614.82***	2251.29***
Pseudo R^2	0.050	0.154	0.065	0.062
# Observations	15 931	18 813	33 657	33 104
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: significance level: ***P<0.01, **P<0.05, **P<0.10, Robust standard errors are in parentheses

The same codification is used (i.e. 1 if the respondent answered by *"somewhat positive"* or *"very positive"* and 0 otherwise). Thirdly, we use sub-samples of countries within the remit of the six RECs namely: ECOWAS, SADC, EAC, ECCAS, AMU and COMESA.

The results of the first alternative are presented in Table 4. As can be seen, the main results found previously still strongly hold. In effect, the estimated coefficient of urban area is negative and significant in Rounds 4, 6 and 8. The negative effect of no formal education is confirmed in Round 5 while Education 2 (formal education) is only positive and significant in Round 8. The employment status maintains its positive and significant sign in Rounds 4 and 6. However, its sign becomes negative and significant in Round 5. Indeed, the results of political party, freedom, living conditions and LPI are fundamentally similar to the preceding ones when we consider all rounds.

Table 3: Robustness Checks 2 (REC as dependent variable)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Urban	-0.127***	-0.156***	-0.151***	-0.152***	-0.149***	-0.150***	-0.186***
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.030)
Age(ln)	0.000	-0.001	-0.011	-0.009	-0.032	-0.018	-0.126***
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.036)
Educ 1	-0.022	-0.014	-0.013	-0.016	-0.014	-0.020	-0.054
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.042)
Educ 2	0.086***	0.068***	0.071***	0.071***	0.068***	0.058***	0.113***
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.034)
Empl	0.086***	0.079***	0.090***	0.089***	0.083***	0.071***	0.055*
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.033)
News		0.106***	0.104***	0.105***	0.100***	0.085***	0.083***
		(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.031)
Pol_Party			0.147***	0.148***	0.134***	0.135***	0.154***
			(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.027)
Presi_Lim				-0.000	-0.004	0.003	-0.059**
				(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.026)
Freedom					0.263***	0.245***	0.213***
					(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.028)
Living						0.259***	
						(0.017)	
LPI							-0.111***
							(0.016)
Constant	0.696***	0.693***	0.659***	0.652***	0.586***	0.507***	2.040***
	(0.087)	(0.087)	(0.089)	(0.089)	(0.090)	(0.090)	(0.154)
Wald Chi2	7186.83***	7211.15***	6632.56***	6545.09***	6710.62***	6880.06***	2210.64***
Pseudo R^2	0.070	0.070	0.068	0.068	0.071	0.073	0.061
# Observation	90 927	90 722	85 437	84 562	84 043	83 779	33 884
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Round FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: significance level: ***P<0.01, **P<0.05, **P<0.10, Robust standard errors are in parentheses

The second series of robustness checks are provided in Table 5. With the exception of age which has a negative and significant effect in the 7th regression, president term limit and no formal education which are not significant, there is no significant differences between these results and the previous ones.

Table 4: Robustness Checks 3 (estimations by RECs)

	ECOWAS	SADC	EAC	ECCAS	AMU	COMESA
Urban	-0.162*** (0.045)	-0.243*** (0.067)	-0.283*** (0.092)	-0.077 (0.096)	-0.144 (0.110)	-0.330*** (0.092)
Age(ln)	-0.193*** (0.053)	-0.041 (0.082)	-0.055 (0.117)	-0.039 (0.105)	-0.129 (0.145)	-0.201* (0.120)
Educ 1	0.033 (0.058)	0.051 (0.129)	0.400** (0.165)	-0.668*** (0.160)	-0.043 (0.165)	-0.296** (0.117)
Educ 2	0.009 (0.053)	0.276*** (0.079)	0.137 (0.097)	0.243** (0.160)	-0.027 (0.116)	0.115 (0.110)
Empl	-0.077 (0.051)	-0.048 (0.075)	0.100 (0.099)	-0.035 (0.099)	0.114 (0.116)	0.300*** (0.106)
News	0.052 (0.047)	0.140* (0.074)	-0.065 (0.096)	0.169* (0.093)	0.409*** (0.156)	0.039 (0.095)
Pol_Party	0.228*** (0.040)	0.135** (0.061)	-0.048 (0.088)	0.156** (0.075)	0.250* (0.130)	0.245** (0.098)
Presi_Lim	-0.145*** (0.040)	0.069 (0.060)	0.178** (0.086)	0.077 (0.074)	-0.202** (0.099)	0.158* (0.082)
Freedom	0.174*** (0.042)	0.344*** (0.063)	0.189** (0.085)	0.574*** (0.093)	-0.081 (0.102)	0.043 (0.082)
Living	0.378*** (0.044)	0.092 (0.067)	0.092 (0.091)	0.032 (0.083)	0.338*** (0.106)	0.040 (0.087)
LPI	-0.035 (0.024)	-0.141*** (0.037)	-0.207*** (0.051)	0.048 (0.043)	-0.246*** (0.047)	-0.132*** (0.047)
Constant	1.878*** (0.215)	1.446*** (0.333)	1.698*** (0.442)	0.183 (0.403)	0.447 (0.539)	1.410*** (0.440)
Wald Chi2	780.21***	359.20***	134.25***	120.33***	95.11***	60.36***
Pseudo R^2	0.049	0.050	0.036	0.028	0.042	0.017
# Observations	14 040	6 477	4 389	3 432	1 836	2 930
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Round FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: significance level: ***P<0.01, **P<0.05, **P<0.10, Robust standard errors are in parentheses

The third series of robustness checks is executed to understand what happens if we split up the respondents by REC. As can be seen in Table 6, our results are mostly robust for LPI, freedom, political party and urban area. In contrast for other variables, we note some differences between RECs. For example, age negatively and significantly affects support of African integration only

in the ECOWAS and COMESA. People with no formal education have a highest rate of positive appraisal in supporting integration compared to others while in the ECCAS and COMESA, no formal education is negatively related to the support. Formal education is positive and significant in the SADC and ECCAS. Employment status positively and significantly impacts support only in the COMESA. Information/news by television is positively correlated to the support in the SADC, ECCAS and AMU while the results of living conditions are fundamentally similar to the first ones in the ECOWAS and AMU.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to provide a response to the following question: who supports African integration? To respond to this question, we have employed logistic regressions on Rounds 4, 5, 6 and 8 of the Afrobarometer survey. Overall, the empirical findings suggest that people's characteristics such as living area, education level, employment status, political membership, freedom, living condition and Living Poverty Index (LPI) are significantly related to their probability of supporting the African Union.

These results are particularly insightful in the African integration process in order to implement and formulate a strategy of communication between African institutions and citizens. In effect, the findings indicate that citizens' opinions matter in the process of boosting economic, political and monetary integration as well as the unification of the continental market. Thus, since African citizens' trust in the unification could be considered as a condition of legitimacy for the progress to attain the ultimate goal, people's perceptions indicate that more efforts should be done to reinforce the credibility and the legitimacy of the institutions by implementing a better strategy of communication.

It is important to indicate that our study has some limits and leaves room for future research especially in the light of complementing the microeconomic analysis in the present study with an understanding the macroeconomic determinants of African integration. For this purpose, a contextual model that takes into account the heterogeneities of the economic environment can be used. Another way is to investigate if optimism (expecting living standards) and the perception of economic performance are significantly related to the probability of positive appraisal of trust in African integration.

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