



# Research on Awareness, Knowledge and Challenges of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) among African workers

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Alexander Preko and Hod Anyigba

Report 12. 2023

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## Executive summary

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) represents a beacon of promise, heralding a new era of economic integration across the African continent. Launched in 2018, this ambitious initiative aims to establish a unified market encompassing 55 African Union member states, uniting approximately 1.3 billion people in a collective pursuit of economic growth and prosperity.

The AfCFTA promises broader and deeper economic integration that will attract investment, boost trade, provide better jobs, reduce poverty, and increase shared prosperity in Africa. Despite these promises, there exists a notable dearth in comprehending the nuanced implications, challenges, and opportunities that the AfCFTA presents specifically for African workers. The interactions between the trade agreement and informal sector workers, rural laborers, women, youth, and other marginalized groups are areas that are unexplored and require investigation. To bridge this knowledge gap, this study delves into the specifics of assessing awareness and understanding of African workers, exploring concerns, perceptions, and examining the relevance and engagement of workers in the framework AfCFTA. The results highlight the need to increase awareness and knowledge levels about AfCFTA among African workers. For instance, it is evidenced that workers in the Central African region have the lowest awareness and knowledge level about AfCFTA among the five regions sampled for the survey. Also, close to half of the participants indicated concerns with the trade agreement while about 86.7% affirmed that the trade agreement would create opportunities for youth and women.

AfCFTA appears to be more relevant to skilled workers, considered winners, while the unskilled African labour force is perceived as the losers. It is recommended that more public awareness and knowledge to deepen workers understanding of the processes of AfCFTA should be spearheaded by ITUC-Africa, by leveraging social and traditional media amidst other tools. Furthermore, ITUC-Africa should foster collaboration with local trade unions, chamber of commerce, ministries of trade, private sector associations, trade advocacy institutions, and other stakeholders to spearhead the promotion of AfCFTA's goals among African workers, including women and the youth.

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## **List of abbreviation**

- African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)
- European Union (EU)
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- African Development Bank (ADB)
- African Union (AU)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) represents a pivotal trade initiative across the African continent, inaugurated in 2018 with the ambitious goal of establishing a unified marketplace for goods and services throughout Africa. Its primary objective is to expedite intra-African trade and bolster economic growth. Facilitating free movement across borders is also a cornerstone of this trade agreement. Spanning 55 African Union member states, AfCFTA encompasses approximately 1.3 billion people, positioning it among the world's largest trading blocs alongside entities like Asia-Pacific, EU, US-Mexico-Canada trade blocs. Ultimately, AfCFTA will cover a market of approximately 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of approximately US\$ 3.4 trillion. Its mandate includes eliminating trade barriers and boosting intra-Africa trade.

Further, the AfCFTA promises broader and deeper economic integration and would attract investment, boost trade, provide better jobs, reduce poverty, and increase shared prosperity throughout Africa. However, the attainment of AfCFTA's objectives heavily depends on the engagement, understanding, and perspectives of Africa's workforce who constitute the backbone of the continent's economies.

The AfCFTA's objectives are resoundingly clear: eliminate trade barriers, foster intra-African trade, attract investments, and uplift nations by creating better job opportunities, reducing poverty, and stimulating shared prosperity<sup>1</sup>. At its core, this trade agreement seeks to revolutionize the continent's economic landscape. However, amid the grand aspirations lie complexities and gaps in understanding, particularly concerning the role and impact on the backbone of Africa's economies: its workforce.

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1 African Union Commission. (2018). Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.

AfCFTA is poised to significantly bolster intra-African trade, fostering economic growth and potentially generating employment opportunities across various sectors<sup>22</sup>. The agreement's objectives encompass streamlining trade processes, slashing tariffs, and cultivating an environment conducive to thriving businesses within the continent<sup>3</sup>. The potential positive outcomes on a macroeconomic level have been well-documented in existing literature<sup>4</sup>.

While there is a broad understanding of the agreement's overarching objectives, a notable gap exists in comprehending the intricate implications, challenges, and opportunities that the AfCFTA specifically presents for African workers. The existing literature predominantly outlines the agreement's macroeconomic implications but lacks depth in analyzing its specific impacts on the diverse spectrum of workers scattered across the continent<sup>5</sup>. Although recognized that AfCFTA could generate employment opportunities, the specific sectors that will benefit, the types of jobs to be created, and how these opportunities will be distributed among various segments of the workforce remain inadequately explored. Interactions between the trade agreement and informal sector workers, rural laborers, women, youth, and other marginalized groups are areas that necessitate more profound investigation<sup>6</sup>.

To address this knowledge gap, it is crucial to delve into the intricate dynamics of how AfCFTA interacts with African workers. Understanding their needs, challenges, aspirations, and preparedness is essential to ensure an equitable distribution of the agreement's benefits and the creation of an inclusive economic landscape across the continent<sup>7</sup>. This research endeavors to uncover the multifaceted dimensions of AfCFTA concerning African workers. Through empirical analysis, quantitative assessments, and data-driven insights, this study aims to uncover the awareness and knowledge dynamics of AfCFTA among African worker. By focusing on African workers, this research intends to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of AfCFTA's potential and the uncharted territories that require attention for inclusive and sustainable economic development.

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2 African Development Bank Group. (2021). African Economic Outlook 2021: From Debt Resolution to Growth: The Road Ahead for Africa.

3 World Bank Group. (2020). The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Implications for Eastern and Southern Africa.

4 Ibid.

5 African Union Commission. (2018). Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.

6 World Bank Group. (2020). The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Implications for Eastern and Southern Africa.

7 International Labour Organization. (2021). African Continental Free Trade Area: Challenges and Opportunities for Labour.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) stands as a transformative initiative with the potential to reshape the economic landscape of the African continent. However, despite its promising vision, the successful realization of AfCFTA's objectives hinge significantly on the engagement, understanding, and perspectives of the African workforce, the backbone of the continent's economies.

One critical issue is the level of awareness and knowledge among African workers about AfCFTA. A substantial portion of the workforce remains unaware or inadequately informed about the specifics of this ground-breaking agreement. This knowledge gap has far-reaching consequences. Uninformed workers may miss opportunities to benefit from the trade agreement, such as *accessing new markets or participating in value chains that could enhance their livelihoods*. Moreover, lacking preparedness to navigate the changes accompanying increased trade integration, might impact job security and working conditions.

Another facet of the problem concerns the perceptions – or the absence thereof – among African workers regarding AfCFTA. While AfCFTA promises significant economic growth and job creation, *it also raises legitimate concerns*. Without expressing platform to express these concerns, workers might feel marginalized and excluded from vital discussions that affect their livelihoods. Their perceptions of AfCFTA may vary widely, from seeing it as a catalyst for positive change to viewing it with scepticism or even apprehension.

The lack of dialogue platforms and constructive engagement could result in a fragmented labour force, exhibiting varying degrees of support or resistance toward AfCFTA's objectives. Moreover, the issue of gender and youth dimensions of AfCFTA are crucial considerations. Persistent gender disparities in many African labour markets necessitate an assessment of whether AfCFTA provides opportunities for women or exacerbates gender inequalities. Additionally, AfCFTA's potential to create jobs and stimulate economic activities has implications for the youth. Exploring whether the youth perceive AfCFTA as a source for opportunities and whether they possess the skills and knowledge to harness these opportunities is essential.

Understanding the perceived relevance of AfCFTA to ordinary workers in Africa is also pivotal. If most workers view AfCFTA as a distant and abstract concept that does not impact their daily lives, garnering broad-based support and participation might be challenging. Recognizing whether ordinary workers see AfCFTA as relevant to their aspirations and needs is fundamental for ensuring the trade agreement translates into tangible benefits for the masses.

Lastly, the consequences of limited awareness, knowledge, concerns, and perceptions among African workers about AfCFTA are multifaceted. They extend beyond individual workers to encompass collective labour representation, policy advocacy, and equitable economic growth. Workers

inadequately informed or engaged may not actively participate in shaping the discourse around labour protocols within AfCFTA or advocate for their rights and interests, potentially diminishing the role of workers and trade unions, which could have repercussions for the overall effectiveness and inclusivity of AfCFTA's implementation. In summary, the challenges posed by the insufficient awareness, knowledge, concerns, and perceptions of African workers regarding AfCFTA are complex and multifaceted.

Addressing these issues is imperative for AfCFTA to realize its potential as a catalyst for economic growth, job creation, and equitable development across the African continent. Failure to do so may result in missed opportunities, unequal benefits, and potential discord, impeding the attainment of AfCFTA's overarching goals.

In the context of this study, awareness of AfCFTA refers to the basic understanding or consciousness among African workers about the existence, purpose, and fundamental aspects of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It involves knowing that AfCFTA exists, its general objectives, and its potential implications for trade and economies within the continent. Lack of awareness implies a lack of basic understanding or knowledge about AfCFTA's existence or its fundamental workings. Knowledge of AfCFTA goes beyond awareness. It encompasses a deeper understanding and familiarity with the specifics, provisions, implications, and potential impacts of AfCFTA on various aspects such as trade, job opportunities, market access, economic growth, and potential challenges. Workers possessing knowledge about AfCFTA are aware of its details, including procedures to participate in trade, and potential effects on their livelihoods and are better equipped to navigate the changes and challenges that might arise due to increased trade integration.

The difference lies in the depth and breadth of understanding of the processes to participate. Awareness is the basic understanding or consciousness of the existence and broad objectives of AfCFTA, while knowledge involves a more comprehensive understanding of its specifics, processes, implications, and potential impacts on various aspects of the economy and individual livelihoods.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has emerged as a transformative initiative with the potential to reshape the economic landscape of the African continent. However, despite its lofty vision and the hopes pinned on it, the successful realization of AfCFTA's objectives hinges significantly on the engagement, understanding, and perspectives of the African workforce – those who constitute the backbone of the continent's economies.

### **1.2.1 Consequences of limited awareness and knowledge**

An urgent concern revolves around the level of awareness and knowledge among African workers about AfCFTA. A substantial portion of the workforce remains either unaware or inadequately informed about the specifics of this groundbreaking agreement. This lack of awareness and knowledge has far-reaching consequences. Workers who are unaware of AfCFTA's provisions may miss out on opportunities to benefit from the trade agreement, such as *accessing new markets or participating in value chains that could enhance their livelihoods*. Furthermore, they may remain unprepared to navigate the changes and challenges that come with increased trade integration, which could impact their job security and working conditions.

### **1.2.2 Impact of insufficient concerns and perceptions**

Another critical aspect lies in the concerns and perceptions – or the lack thereof, among African workers regarding AfCFTA. While AfCFTA holds the potential for significant economic growth and job creation, *it also raises legitimate concerns*. In the absence of avenues these concerns, workers may feel disenfranchised and excluded from critical discussions that affect their livelihoods. Their perceptions of AfCFTA may vary widely, from seeing it as a vehicle for positive change to viewing it with scepticism or even apprehension. The absence of platforms for dialogue and constructive engagement could lead to a fragmented labour force, with varying degrees of buy-in or resistance toward AfCFTA's objectives.

### **1.2.3 Gender and youth dimensions**

The gender and youth dimensions of AfCFTA are equally pertinent. Gender disparities persist in many African labour markets, and it is vital to assess whether AfCFTA presents opportunities for women in the workforce or, conversely, exacerbates gender inequalities. Additionally, AfCFTA's potential to create jobs and stimulate economic activities has implications for the youth. It is essential to explore whether the youth perceive AfCFTA as a source of opportunities and whether they possess the skills and knowledge to harness these opportunities.

### **1.2.4 Relevance to ordinary workers**

The perceived relevance of AfCFTA to ordinary workers in Africa is also a crucial consideration. If the majority of the workforce perceives AfCFTA as a distant concept that does not directly impact their daily lives, there may be challenges in garnering broad-based support and participation. Understanding whether ordinary workers see AfCFTA as relevant to their

aspirations and needs is fundamental in ensuring that the trade agreement translates into tangible benefits for the masses.

### **1.2.5 Implications of limited awareness and engagement**

The consequences of limited awareness, knowledge, concerns, and perceptions among African workers regarding AfCFTA are multifaceted. They extend beyond individual workers to encompass collective labour representation, policy advocacy, and equitable economic growth. Workers who are insufficiently informed or engaged may not actively participate in shaping the discourse around labour protocols within AfCFTA or advocating for their rights and interests. Consequently, the diminished role of workers and trade unions could have repercussions for the overall effectiveness and inclusivity of AfCFTA's implementation.

## 2. Project Objectives

The primary objectives of this survey are as follows:

1. **Assessing awareness and understanding:** To evaluate the level of awareness and understanding of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) among African workers. This objective aims to determine how well workers are informed about AfCFTA and its implications for their livelihoods.
2. **Exploring concerns and perceptions:** To explore the concerns, perceptions, and attitudes of African workers regarding AfCFTA, understanding how workers perceive the potential benefits and challenges associated with AfCFTA and whether they have any specific concerns or reservations.
3. **Examining Relevance and Engagement:** To examine the perceived relevance of AfCFTA to ordinary workers in Africa and their level of engagement with the trade agreement. This objective aims to assess whether workers consider AfCFTA as relevant to their daily lives and whether they feel empowered to participate in discussions and actions related to AfCFTA.

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1 Awareness and understanding of AfCFTA among African Workers

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) represents a transformative force poised to reshape economic dynamics in Africa. However, its reception among African workers reveals a spectrum of awareness levels. Karingi et al.<sup>8</sup> illuminate this spectrum, highlighting a dichotomy between well-informed individuals acquainted with AfCFTA's objectives and a significant segment lacking adequate knowledge. Factors such as accessibility to information, educational backgrounds, and exposure to trade-related concepts underscore this disparity in awareness levels.

AfCFTA's impact on the livelihoods of African workers is multifaceted and pivotal. Beyond mere awareness, an in-depth comprehension of AfCFTA's implications becomes a linchpin for workers' preparedness in navigating the evolving trade landscape. Nkamleu and Kuunsi<sup>9</sup> emphasize the crucial role of understanding potential outcomes, such as *job creation avenues, skill requirements, and access to markets*. This comprehension significantly influences workers' adaptability and readiness to embrace the changes ushered in by AfCFTA.

Addressing the awareness gap demands strategic interventions. Research advocates for targeted educational campaigns and capacity-building programs tailored to the needs of African workers<sup>10</sup>. These initiatives play a pivotal role in augmenting workers' understanding of AfCFTA's implications for their livelihoods. By disseminating relevant information, clarifying trade-related concepts, and fostering an environment conducive for knowledge acquisition, these programs bolster workers' readiness to engage with and benefit from AfCFTA.

Ensuring comprehensive awareness and understanding necessitates a concerted effort towards inclusive information dissemination. Beyond formal education, creating platforms for accessible and comprehensive information-sharing becomes imperative.

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8 Karingi, S., Oulmane, N., Lang, R., & Sadni Jallab, M. (2019). Assessing the Impact of AfCFTA on Africa's Trade. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. [https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/afcfta\\_report\\_eng\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/afcfta_report_eng_final_web.pdf)

9 Nkamleu, G. B., & Kuunsi, L. (2020). Economic and Welfare Implications of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on African Countries: A Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) Analysis. *Journal of African Trade*, 7(1-2), 89-107.

10 Nkamleu, G. B., & Kuunsi, L. (2020). Economic and Welfare Implications of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on African Countries: A Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) Analysis. *Journal of African Trade*, 7(1-2), 89-107.

Equitable access to information empowers workers across diverse educational backgrounds and sectors, fostering a more inclusive and informed workforce capable of leveraging the opportunities presented by AfCFTA<sup>11</sup>.

The spectrum of awareness surrounding AfCFTA among African workers underscores the significance of knowledge dissemination and understanding of trade policies. Bridging the awareness gap through targeted educational campaigns, capacity-building initiatives, and inclusive information dissemination not only enhances workers' preparedness but also equips them to harness the transformative potential of AfCFTA for their livelihoods. Ultimately, informed workers are poised to navigate the changing trade dynamics and contribute significantly to the continent's economic advancement under AfCFTA.

## **3.2 Challenges Faced by African Workers in the Context of AfCFTA**

### **3.2.1 Employment dynamics and job displacement**

AfCFTA's implementation introduces complexities in employment dynamics across African countries. While the agreement presents opportunities for job creation, it also engenders concerns about potential job displacement in less competitive sectors. The African Development Bank Group's report identifies<sup>12</sup> sectors such as agriculture, textiles, and low-skilled manufacturing might face challenges due to increased competition from other African countries. Reputable newspapers like *The Economist* and *The Financial Times* highlight instances of job displacement in specific regions. For instance, Nigeria's manufacturing sector which employs a substantial portion of the workforce, might face challenges in competing with more established industries in neighboring countries<sup>13</sup>.

### **3.2.2 Informal sector integration and regulatory hurdles**

A significant proportion of African workers operate within the informal sector, constituting a substantial challenge in integrating this segment into the formal economy under AfCFTA. The lack of formalization, limited access to resources, and regulatory hurdles pose barriers to their seamless integration.

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11 Karingi, S., Oulmane, N., Lang, R., & Sadni Jallab, M. (2019). Assessing the Impact of AfCFTA on Africa's Trade. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. [https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/afcfta\\_report\\_eng\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/afcfta_report_eng_final_web.pdf)

12 African Development Bank Group. (2020). The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Implications for Eastern and Southern Africa.

13 *The Economist*. (2021, February 6). "Job losses feared as African free trade begins." *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2021/02/06/job-losses-feared-as-african-free-trade-begins>

Studies by Mkenda<sup>14</sup> and opinion pieces in The New York Times emphasize the plight of informal workers, underscoring the need for tailored policies to integrate and support this sector within AfCFTA frameworks.

### 3.2.3 Gender disparities and inclusivity

Gender disparities persist within AfCFTA's framework, reflecting broader challenges faced by women in trade-related activities across the continent. According to data from the International Labour Organization (ILO), women in Sub-Saharan Africa are disproportionately represented in the formal economy. Researchers also highlight quite frequently, the importance of addressing gender disparities within AfCFTA to ensure equitable participation and access to opportunities for women.

### 3.2.4 Statistics reflecting challenges in specific African countries

**Nigeria** - As Africa's most populous country, Nigeria faces challenges in protecting its manufacturing sector. The Financial Times reported a decline in employment within the country's textile industry due to competition from cheaper imports post-AfCFTA implementation<sup>15</sup>.

**Ghana** - In Ghana, concerns arise over the informal sector's integration. The Daily Graphic highlighted the struggles of informal traders to adhere to formal trade regulations, hindering their participation in the formal economy<sup>16</sup>.

**Kenya** - A study by the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) indicated concerns about potential job losses in the manufacturing sector due to increased competition post-AfCFTA.

## 3.3 Potential and Opportunities for African Workers within AfCFTA

### 3.3.1 Economic empowerment

AfCFTA is poised to be a catalyst for economic empowerment across Africa, offering promising prospects for the continent's workforce. Adeyemi et al.<sup>17</sup> emphasize the transformative potential of AfCFTA in stimulating economic growth, creating employment opportunities, and nurturing skill development. The agreement's establishment of a single market enhances the prospects

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14 Mkenda, B. (2021). "AfCFTA and the Informal Economy in Africa: Challenges and Prospects." African Economic Research Consortium.

15 Financial Times. (2021, March 17). Nigeria fears job losses as free trade deal takes off. Financial Times. <https://www.ft.com/content/50a302d6-b29e-49e8-ae50-8ef57243e8a5>

16 Daily Graphic. (2021, July 10). Informal traders struggle to meet AfCFTA's standards. Daily Graphic <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/informal-traders-struggle-to-meet-afcfta-standards.html>

17 Adeyemi, O., Anyanwu, J., Okeahalam, C., & Mnisi, S. (2020). African Continental Free Trade Area: Opportunities and Challenges. African Development Bank Group.

for increased trade volumes and business activities, which, if harnessed effectively through policies and targeted interventions, could significantly uplift the workforce.

### **3.3.2 Inclusivity and Gender Equality**

The promotion of inclusivity and gender equality is pivotal within the AfCFTA framework to ensure equitable opportunities for all segments of the population, particularly women. The World Bank Group<sup>18</sup> emphasizes the importance of addressing gender disparities and fostering inclusivity in trade policies to empower women in the workforce. Gender-sensitive policies are imperative to bridge the gender gap and mitigate barriers that hinder women's participation in trade-related activities.

Research by Oulmane and Sadni Jallab<sup>19</sup> provides insights into the potential impacts of AfCFTA on gender equality, suggesting that the agreement could lead to increased female labour force participation and contribute to narrowing the gender wage gap in African countries. These findings underscore the need for policies that not only promote gender inclusivity but also capitalize on the economic potential of an empowered female workforce.

### **3.3.3 Opportunities in specific sectors: Agriculture**

AfCFTA presents opportunities for the agricultural sector, a significant source of employment in Africa. A study by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)<sup>20</sup> highlights the potential for increased agricultural productivity, value addition, and market access under AfCFTA. The removal of trade barriers could lead to expanded markets and increased demand for agricultural products, thereby providing employment opportunities and improving livelihoods, particularly in rural areas.

### **3.3.4 Manufacturing and industrial development**

The manufacturing sector, critical for economic diversification and job creation, stands to benefit from AfCFTA. The African Development Bank Group<sup>21</sup> discusses the potential for industrial development and increased manufacturing activities facilitated by AfCFTA. However, the report also notes the importance of addressing infrastructure challenges and enhancing competitiveness to maximize the sector's potential for job creation and economic growth

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18 World Bank Group. (2020). Promoting Gender Equality in the Context of AfCFTA: Policy Implications.

19 Oulmane, N., & Sadni Jallab, M. (2019). The African Continental Free Trade Area: Potential Economic Impacts and Challenges. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

20 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (2021). Unlocking the full potential of agriculture under AfCFTA.

21 African Development Bank Group. (2020). The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Implications for Eastern and Southern Africa.

## **4. Methodology**

This study's survey utilized a semi-structured questionnaire, administered to a diverse sample of African workers, representing various sectors, educational levels, and geographic regions. Data collection utilized both online and offline methods. The study adopted several essential approaches to accomplish its objectives:

### ***Step 1: Literature Review/ Desk Review***

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to aid an in-depth understanding into existing knowledge and insights related to AfCFTA, labour issues, and trade agreements in Africa. Various sources, including relevant academic papers, reports, government publications, and secondary data were identified and meticulously reviewed in-line with the goals of the study. Specifically, the review included AfCFTA documents such as "A New Era for Global Business and Investment in Africa 2023", AfCFTA Secretariat's "AfCFTA Private Sector Engagement Strategy, 2022–2032", Africa Legal Network's "Agriculture Under the African Continental Free Trade Area 2022", AfCFTA Agreement, AfCFTA Implementation Documents (Protocols, Annexes, and Decisions), AfCFTA Progress Reports, National Trade Policies and Strategies, African Union (AU) Documents, Case Studies on the Implementation of AfCFTA, World Trade Organization Reports, among others.

### ***Step 2: Questionnaire Development***

During this phase, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed to align with the study's objectives. Adjustments were made, including the addition of two demographic questions and modifying certain questions to allow multiple responses. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended questions and multiple-response questions with predefined options ensuring simplicity, clarity, conciseness, and cultural sensitivity. To ensure inclusivity, the questionnaire was translated into major languages like French, Spanish, Portuguese to facilitate participation from all member states in Africa and to overcome language barriers during the data collection sessions. The questionnaire sections covered demographics, AfCFTA awareness and knowledge, perceptions and concerns about the treaty, focus on gender and youth, AfCFTA's impact on Africa's growth and relevance to ordinary workers, popularity and awareness, winners and losers of AfCFTA, and trade facilitation and free movement.

### ***Step 3: Sampling Strategy***

The target population consisted of African workers from various sectors, educational backgrounds, and regions across multiple countries on the continent. This included workers from both formal and informal sectors within the member states of AfCFTA. The sampling approach utilized

convenience sampling with focus on a representative selection method.

The convenience sampling method is suitable in sampling participants who are willing, ready and available<sup>22</sup> to complete a questionnaire. Based on Roscoe's 1975 recommendation<sup>23</sup> in the literature, the survey aimed to include between 30 to over 500 samples for the quantitative survey. As per this guideline, the survey gathered data from 2,896 participants across five regions: West Africa, East Africa, North Africa, Southern Africa and Central Africa. The classification of the member states into regions facilitated cross-tabulation analysis, providing insight into awareness and knowledge levels across the continent.

#### ***Step 4: Data Collection***

Data collection involved administering of questionnaire to both formal and informal workers from the 47 state parties of AfCFTA. The survey employed licensed Kobo Toolbox software for data collection, prioritizing ethical considerations, confidentiality, and respondent privacy throughout the process.

#### ***Step 5: Data Analysis***

Collected data were analyzed using statistical software, including Excel for generating pie charts and graphs to illustrate participant demographics, awareness levels, concerns, and perceptions. Additionally, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was utilized to conduct non-inferential statistics analysis, specifically the chi-square test, to examine the relationship between participants' awareness and knowledge of AfCFTA across the surveyed regions.

#### ***Step 6: Report Compilation***

The survey findings were compiled into a comprehensive report, encompassing an executive summary, methodology, literature review, survey results presented in tables, charts and graphs, along with recommendations and conclusions. Visual representations such as charts and graphs were utilized to effectively convey key findings.

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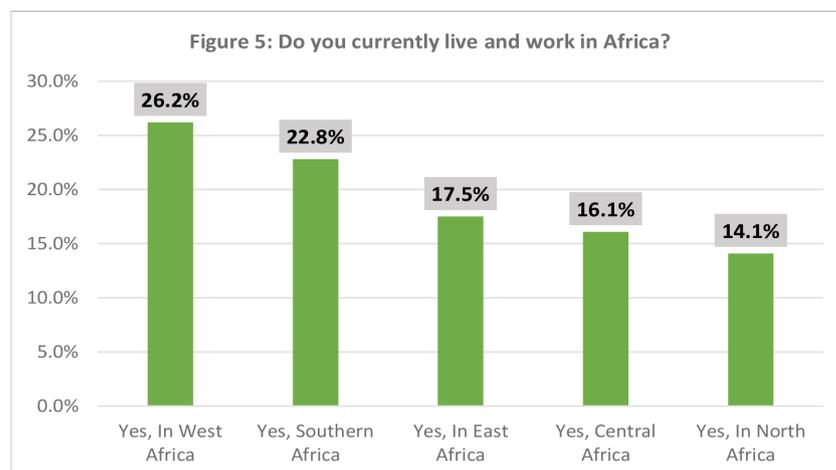
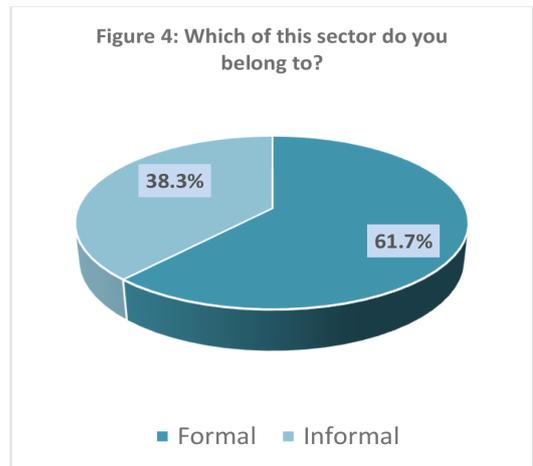
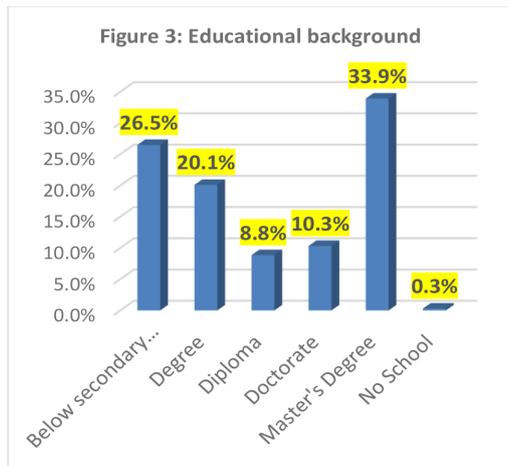
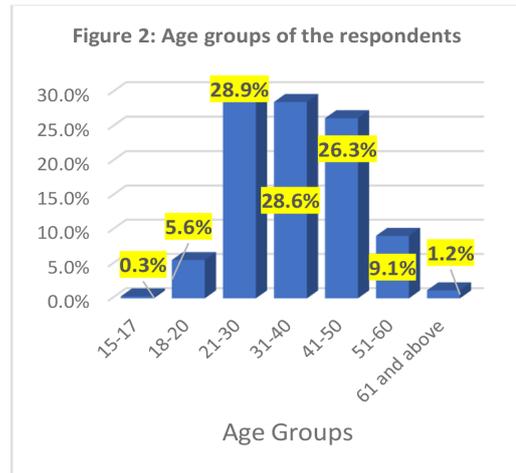
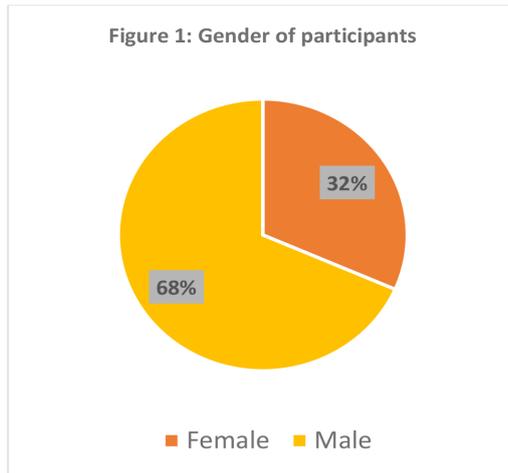
22 Creswell, J. W. & Plano Clark, V. L., 2011. *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. Los Angeles (2nd): Sage.

23 Roscoe, J. T. (1975). *Fundamental research statistics for the behavioral sciences* (Second ed.). New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

## 5. Descriptive Statistics

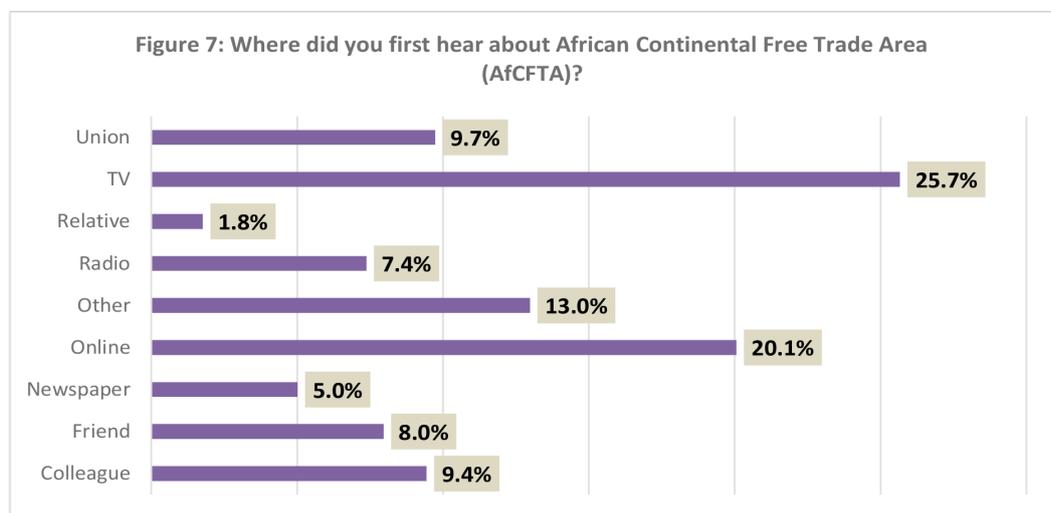
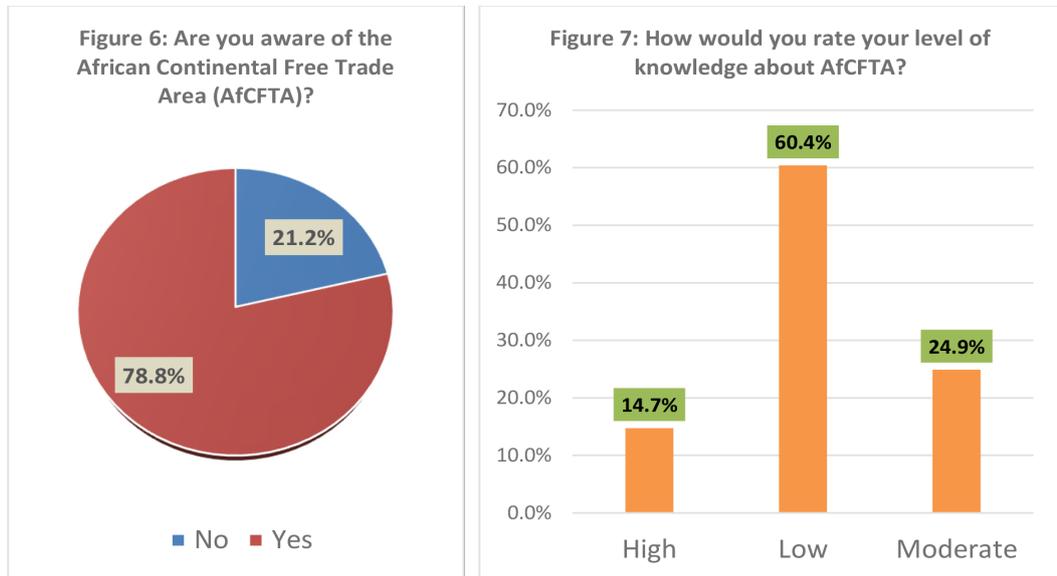
### 5.1 Demographics

The demographics section, represented in Figures 1 to 5, highlights characteristics of the participants. Among the 2896 voluntary survey participants, 68% were male, 28.9% fell within the age group 21-30 years, 33.9% held degrees, 61.7% worked in the formal sector, and 26.2% currently lived and worked in Africa.



## 5.2 Awareness and Knowledge

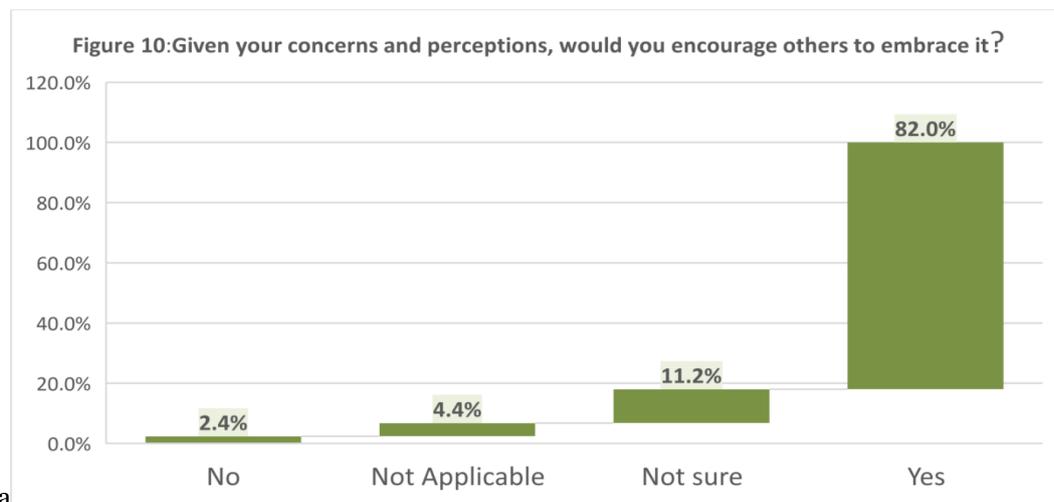
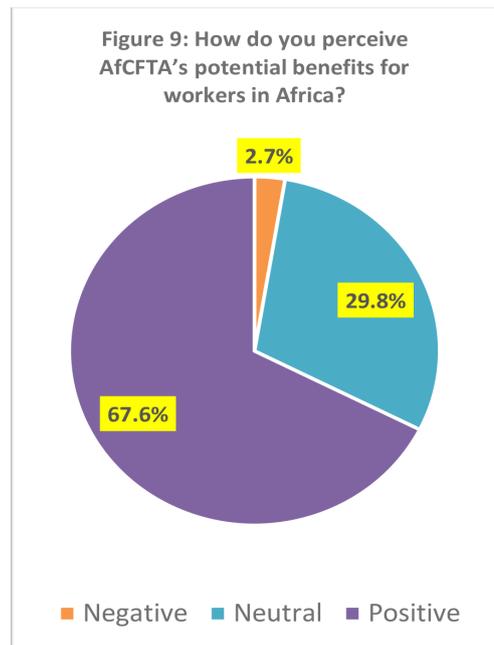
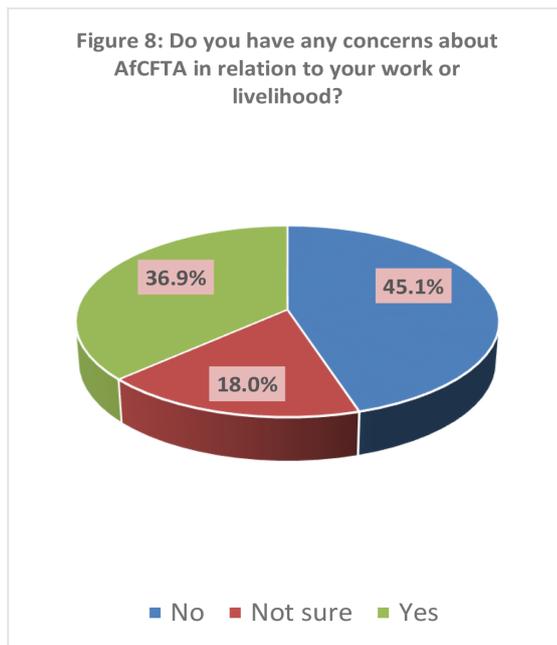
This section addresses participant awareness levels, their rating of AfCFTA knowledge, and where they first encountered information about AfCFTA. According to Figure 6, 78.8% of participants affirmed their awareness of AfCFTA. However, 60.4% rated their level of knowledge about AfCFTA as low, with 25.7% indicated that they first heard about AfCFTA from television broadcasts in their respective countries.



## 5.3 Concerns and Perceptions

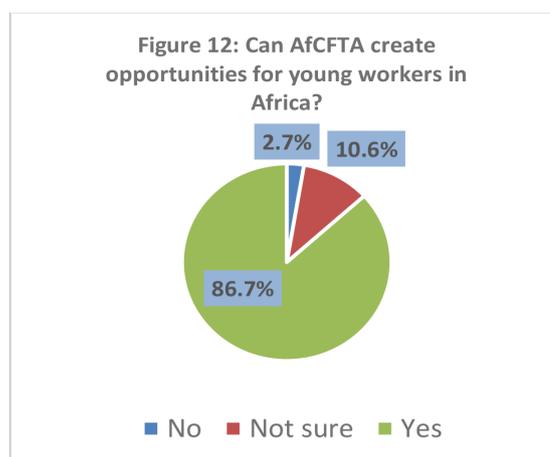
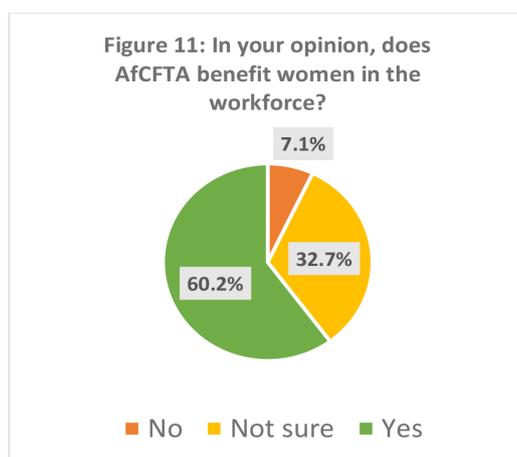
Participants also provided insights into their concerns and perceptions regarding AfCFTA's impact on their work or livelihood, its potential benefits for African workers, and their readiness to encourage others to embrace it. Notably, 45.1% reported having no concerns about AfCFTA in relation to their work. Figure 9 showed that 67.6% of the participants held a positive perception AfCFTA's potential benefits for workers in Africa, while an

overwhelming 82% expressed willingness to encourage others to embrace it (Figure 10).



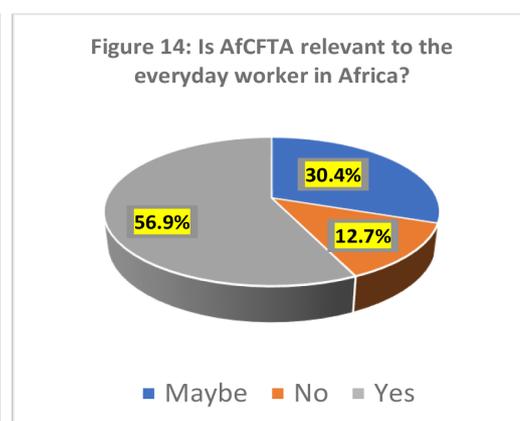
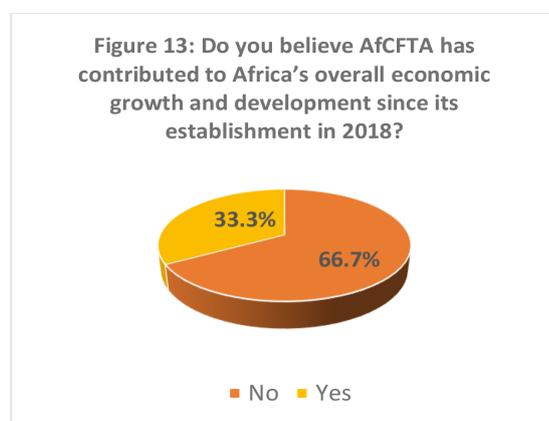
## 5.4 Gender and Youth Focus

This survey delved into the roles of gender and youth in AfCFTA participation. Questions were aimed at gauging whether AfCFTA benefits women in the workforce and if it creates opportunities for young African workers. The findings illustrated participants’ perspectives, with 60.2% believing AfCFTA will benefit women in the workforce and a substantial 86.7% expressing that AfCFTA can create opportunities for young workers in Africa as shown in Figures 11 and 12 respectively.



## 5.5 AfCFTA contribution to Africa’s growth and relevance to ordinary workers

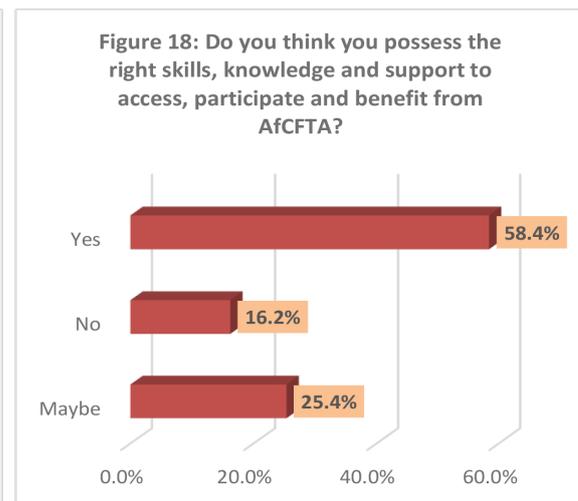
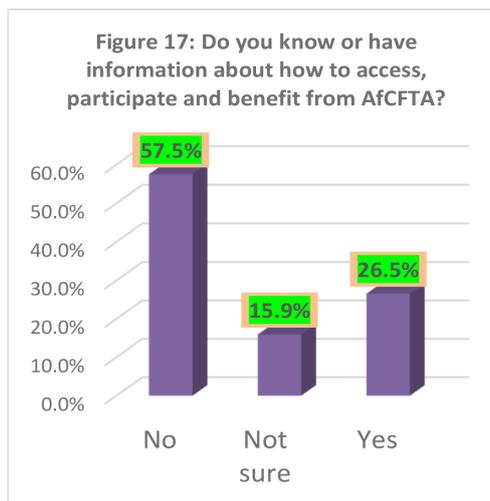
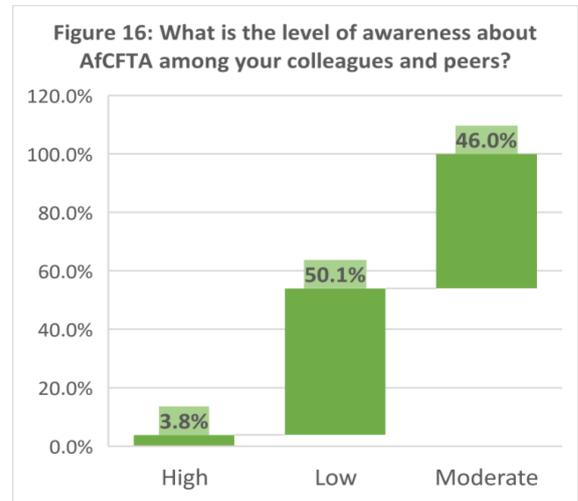
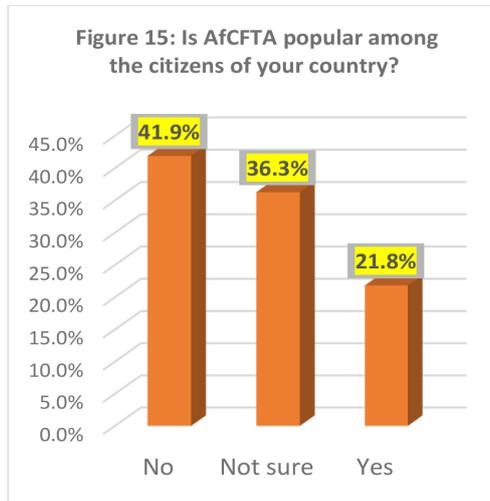
The extent to which AfCFTA can contribute to Africa’s growth was examined in terms of the overall economic growth and development since its establishment in 2018. The relevance of the AfCFTA to the ordinary African workers was also assessed. As depicted in Figure 13, a majority of participants (66.7%) expressed disbelief that AfCFTA has contributed to Africa’s overall economic growth and development since its establishment. Regarding its relevance to the everyday worker in Africa, 56.9% of the participants indicated a possibility (maybe), suggesting that AfCFTA might hold some level of relevance.



## 5.6 Popularity and Awareness among peers

Figures 15 to 19 of the survey unearthed insights into AfCFTA’s popularity and awareness among participants’ colleagues and peers, access to information on participation and benefits from AfCFTA, as well as the possession of requisite skills and knowledge. The survey revealed that 41.9% of respondents stated that AfCFTA is not popular among citizens in their respective countries. Additionally, 50.1% believed that the level of awareness about AfCFTA among colleagues and peers is low (as indicated in Figure 16). Figure 17 demonstrated

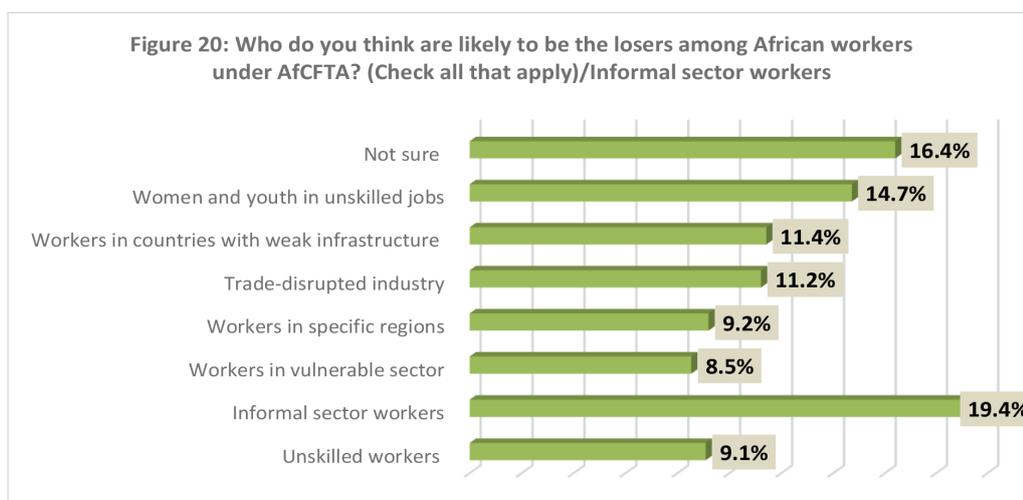
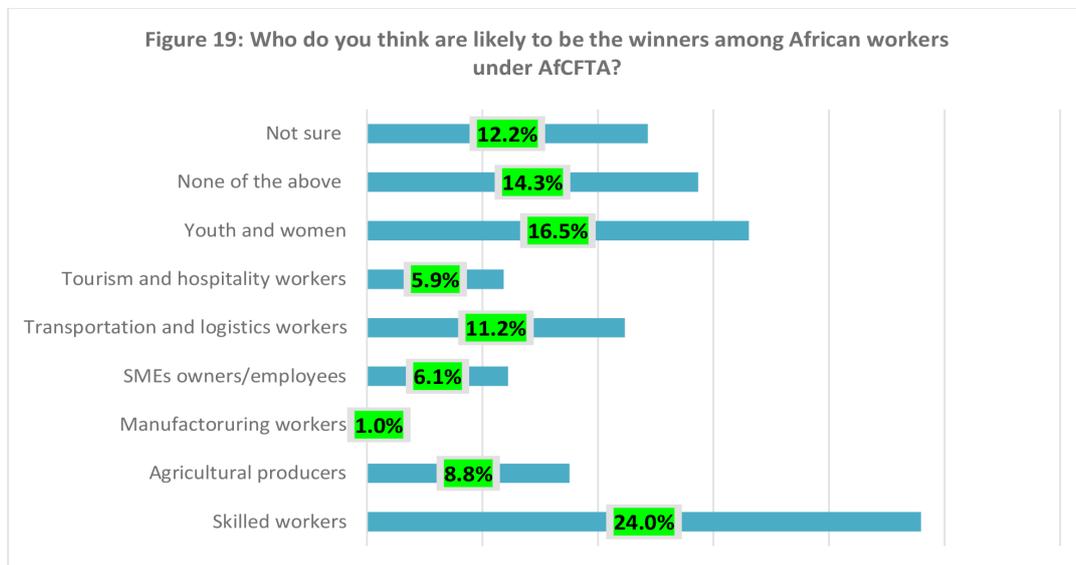
that 57.5% of respondents lacked information about accessing, participating and benefiting from AfCFTA. However, Figure 18 highlighted that 58.4% believed they possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to engage and benefit from AfCFTA.



## 5.7 Winners and Losers

This segment delves into the beneficiaries and those adversely affected by AfCFTA. The survey employed multiple-response questions, enabling participants to select multiple answers that deal with the benefits of AfCFTA. This method allows for ranking frequency or considering the top three factors chosen by participants. According to Figure 19, the three primary winners of the trade protocol are skilled workers (24.0%), followed by youth and women (16.5%), and transportation and logistics workers. While “none of the above” and “not sure” scored relatively high, they are not specified winners; hence, the subsequent winner was considered for the third position.

On the other hand, in terms of the losers among the African workers, respondents identified three categories: informal sector workers (19.4%), women and youth in unskilled jobs (14.7%), and workers in countries with weak infrastructure (11.4%). Though “not sure” recorded 14.7%, It does not represent a specific type of worker but rather reflects the respondents’ uncertainty or opinion.



## 5.8 Facilitating Trade and Free Movement

This section explores how trade can thrive without the free movement of people across borders within the scope of the AfCFTA, the role of free movement in facilitating trade, and participants’ awareness of the number of African countries that have signed the free movement protocol. As per Figure 21, 68.1% of participants indicated that trade can thrive without the free movement of people across borders. Additionally, a substantial 95% believed that free movement facilitates trade. Moreover, 38.6% of respondents reported hearing that 1-10 countries in Africa have signed the free movement protocol.

## 5.9 Cross tabulation analysis

The survey conducted cross-tabulation analysis to understand the frequency distribution across the five African regions (Figure 5) and their respective levels of awareness and knowledge about AfCFTA. Additionally, chi-square analysis was utilized to determine significant associations between selected survey variables. The results are detailed in the tables below. Regarding awareness of AfCFTA among African countries, the findings revealed that 31.3% of participants in Central Africa responded negatively, while 22.8% of respondents from Southern Africa indicated awareness of AfCFTA protocols. The non-inferential statistical outcomes aligned with the Pearson chi-square findings, indicating a significant [ $\chi^2=363.815$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p<0.001$ ] association between participants residing and working in African countries and their level of awareness. In Table 2, assessments showed that 26.0% of participants in Southern Africa rated their knowledge of AfCFTA as high, with 27.8% indicating “low” and another 27.8% assessing it as “moderate” in Central Africa. Statistically, this indicated a significant [ $\chi^2=354.942$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p<0.05$ ] association between participants living and working in Africa countries and their level of knowledge about AfCFTA. Table 3 depicts responses from African Countries regarding AfCFTA’s creation of opportunities for young workers in Africa, with 24.4% in West Africa, 22.1% in East Africa and 32.4% in Central Africa, illustrating the regional responses. Furthermore, Table 4 presents frequencies of 24.9% for West Africa, 34.7% for Central Africa and 23.5% for Southern Africa respondents. This implies that the West Africa region exhibited the highest awareness percentage about AfCFTA among colleagues and peers. The chi-square test indicated a significant [ $\chi^2=352.089$ ,  $df=10$ ,  $p<0.001$ ] association between participants residing and working in African countries and the level of awareness about AfCFTA among their colleagues and peers

Table 1: African Countries and participants’ awareness level of AfCFTA

Question		Do you currently live and work in Africa?				
		Central Africa	East Africa	North Africa	West Africa	Southern Africa
Are you aware of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)?	No	32.0%	24.2%	2.4%	22.2%	19.2%
	Yes	11.92%	21.8%	21.6%	21.7%	22.8%
<i>P-value=363.815, df=5, p=0.001</i>						

Source: ITUC-Africa Survey, November 2023

Table 2: African Countries and level of rating AfCFTA knowledge

Question		Do you currently live and work in Africa?				
		Central Africa	East Africa	North Africa	West Africa	Southern Africa
How would you rate your level of knowledge about AfCFTA?	High	12.9%	24.0%	22.0%	24.0%	26.0%
	Low	29.6%	18.8%	18.7%	16.8%	16.0%
	Moderate	23.0%	19.8%	19.8%	19.9%	17.5%
<i>P-value=354.942, df=5, p=0.05</i>						

Source: ITUC-Africa Survey, November 2023

Table 3: African Countries and level of awareness about AfCFTA among your colleagues and peers

Question		Do you currently live and work in Africa?				
		Central Africa	East Africa	North Africa	West Africa	Southern Africa
What is the level of awareness about AfCFTA among your colleagues and peers?	High	14.9%	20.1%	18.7%	24.9%	21.4%
	Low	34.7%	18.2%	14.8%	15.8%	16.5%
	Moderate	21.2%	21.6%	11.9%	20.8%	23.5%

Table 4: African Countries and AfCFTA creation of opportunities for young workers in Africa

Question		Do you currently live and work in Africa?				
		Central Africa	East Africa	North Africa	West Africa	Southern Africa
Can AfCFTA create opportunities for young workers in Africa?	No	12.1%	22.2%	21.3%	24.4%	19.9%
	Not sure	10.6%	22.16%	22.6%	20.6%	22.8%
	Yes	36.5%	18.8%	11.0%	18.9%	15.8%
<i>P-value=371.819, df=10, p=0.001</i>						

Source: ITUC- Africa Survey, November 2023

## 5.10 Proposed Awareness and knowledge index about AfCFTA

The survey results proposed the development of awareness level index and knowledge index of AfCFTA. The averages of the percentages were calculated for awareness, and knowledge about AfCFTA. The average of the percentages for awareness recorded 77% [High] which is 0.77 in decimal and 87% indicated that they have low knowledge which is 0.87. In all, the figure 24

to 28 displayed “high” awareness among all the regions while figure 29 to 33 showcased “low” knowledge about AfCFTA in all the regions.

The proposed index will be interpreted in the following ways:

- Band 1 - 0-50% represents “poor”;
- Band 2 - 51-50% “fair”;
- Band 3 - 71-80% “satisfactory”;
- Band 4 - 81-90% “very good”; and
- Band 5 - 91-100 “excellent”.

Based on the interpretation of the data, the average score for knowledge about AfCFTA was 12.6% , i.e **Band 1** - 0-50% indicating there is poor knowledge about AfCFTA in all the regions in Africa. In addition, the average percentages of awareness recorded 77% which is interpreted as satisfactory (**Band 3**) awareness among the African workers on the continent.

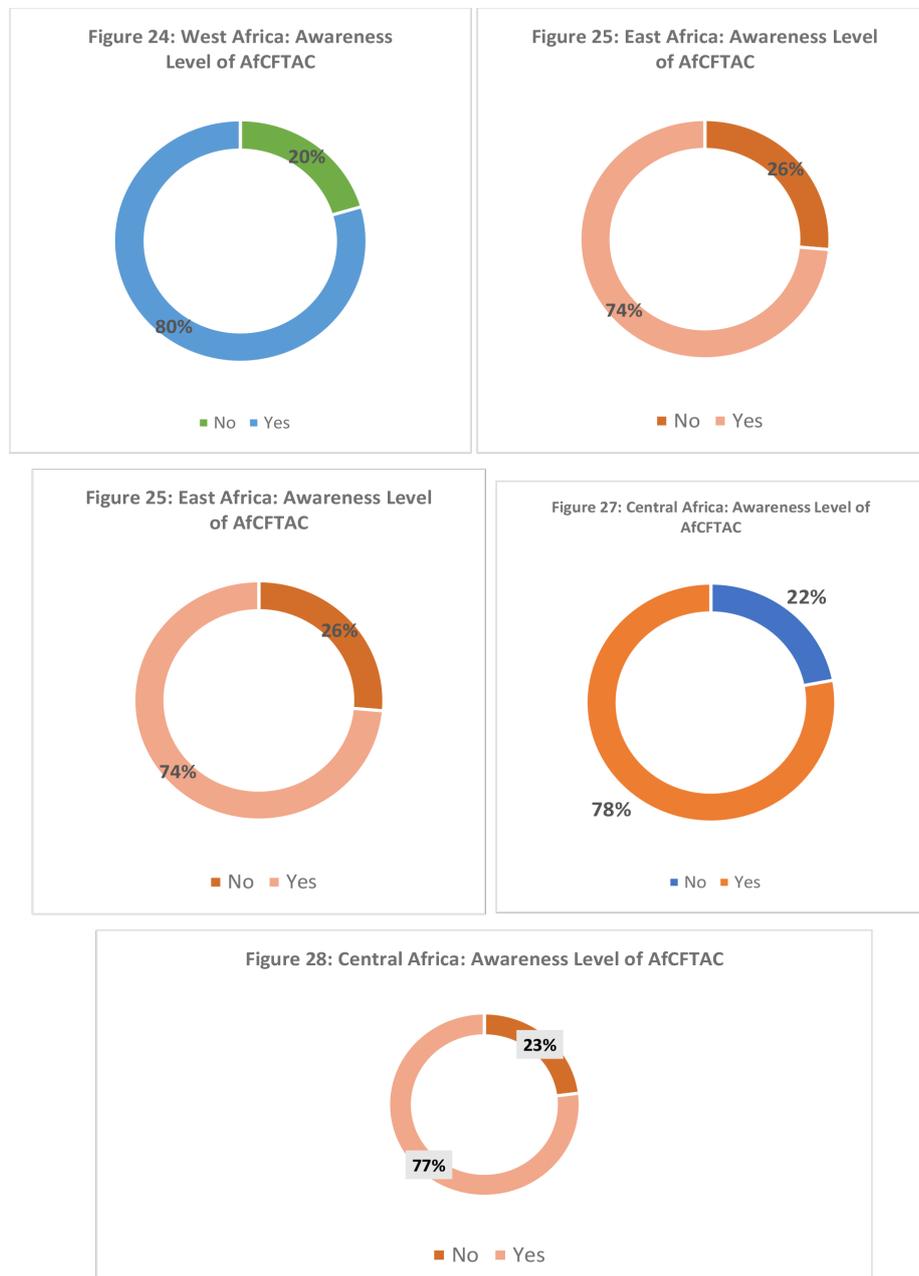


Figure 29: West Africa: Knowledge about AfCFTA

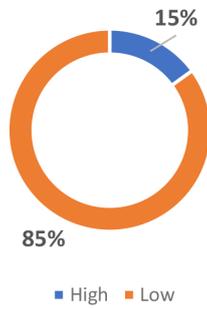


Figure 30: East Africa: Knowledge about AfCFTA

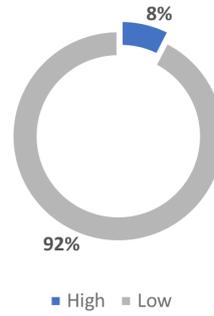


Figure 31: South Africa: Knowledge about AfCFTA

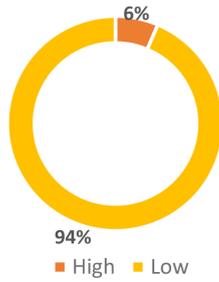


Figure 32: Central Africa: Knowledge about AfCFTA

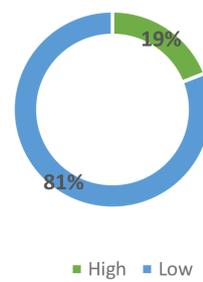
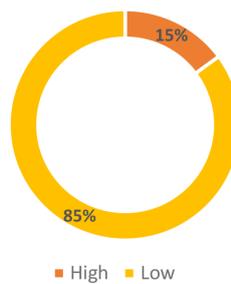


Figure 33: North Africa: Knowledge about AfCFTA



## **6. Conclusion**

This project investigated awareness, knowledge and challenges of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) for African Workers. The conclusion of the findings aligns with the specific aims of the survey.

### **6.1 Assessing Awareness and Understanding**

In line with the first objective of the project, the results revealed that a significant majority, accounting for 78.8% of participants, are aware of the trade agreement. However, a notable 60.4% rated their knowledge regarding AfCFTA as low. This outcome might stem from a lack of specific knowledge in areas such as trade in goods and services, import-export procedures, investment nuances, intellectual property rights and the associated benefits linked with AfCFTA. Additionally, 78.2% and 50.1% of participants indicated low levels of awareness and knowledge about AfCFTA among citizens, peers and colleagues. To reinforce the evaluation of awareness and knowledge among African workers, 57.7% explicitly stated that they lack information on accessing, participating in, and benefiting from the trade agreements. Nonetheless, 58.4% believed they possessed the requisite skills to support accessing and participating in gaining benefits from AfCFTA protocols. Regionally, the findings revealed that the Central Africa region registered a high percentage of 31.3% with no awareness, contrasting sharply with 2.4% in the Northern Africa region (Refer to: Table 1). Regarding the rating of knowledge levels about AfCFTA, the Southern Africa region displayed the highest level of knowledge (26.0%), while Central Africa region still recorded 29.6% as a low rating of knowledge about AfCFTA (Refer to: Table 2). Table 3 highlights that the West Africa region established the highest percentage of high awareness levels about AfCFTA among peers and colleagues, whereas the Central Africa region revealed 34.7% as having a high percentage of low level of awareness among peers and colleagues. In conclusion, the Central Africa region stands out with the lowest awareness and knowledge ratings about AfCFTA among all the regions assessed.

### **6.2 Exploring Concerns and Perceptions**

The second objective of the study was to explore concerns and perceptions of African workers. The findings revealed that 45.1% expressed concerns regarding the trade agreement. However, a substantial 67.6% of respondents perceived that AfCFTA holds potential benefits for African workers. Encouragingly, a majority of participants (82%) expressed willingness to advocate for embracing the AfCFTA's agenda across the continent. Overall, these results indicate a positive attitude among participants, endorsing AfCFTA's establishment. Notably, 60.2% held the view that AfCFTA would benefit women in the workforce, while an overwhelming 86.7% said it would create opportunities for young African workers, suggesting significant

positive implications for these demographics. Consequently, AfCFTA appears poised to become one of the largest trading blocs on the African continent, fostering gender equality and youth employment. Importantly, considering that more than 72 million<sup>24</sup> youths in Africa are currently not engaged in education, employment or training, with a majority being young women, AfCFTA could play a pivotal role in addressing youth inactivity and gender disparities, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goal 8 on decent work for all by 2030. Regionally, the perception that AfCFTA could create opportunities for the young workers was highest in the Central Africa region (36.5%) contrasting with only 11.0% in North Africa regions, while 22.16% in East Africa region expressed uncertainty about AfCFTA's potential for young Africans.

### **6.3 Examining Relevance and Engagement**

Regarding the relevance and engagement with the trade agreement, the results proved that AfCFTA holds more relevance for skilled workers, youth and women. However, a segment believes it is not relevant to African workers overall. Specifically, in terms of trade in services, AfCFTA is deemed more pertinent to transportation and logistics workers, with only 1.0% foreseeing benefits for workers in the manufacturing sector. This suggests a dichotomy, with winners and losers emerging among African workers across different sectors. In summary, the results confirm that informal sector workers (19.4%), women and youth in unskilled jobs, workers in countries with inadequate infrastructure, and those in specific regions are perceived as the losers with the AfCFTA framework.

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24 ILO Statistics, African youth face pressing challenges in the transition from school to work, October, 2023. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/african-youth-face-pressing-challenges-in-the-transition-from-school-to-work>

## 7. Recommendations

The survey results highlight the need for specific recommendations. The following suggestions are proposed:

1. ITUC-Africa, together with its affiliates should identify appropriate tools for raising awareness of African workers, utilizing appropriate media tools (traditional and new media) and channels that are targeted to various groups at the national levels to promote AfCFTA's objectives. Additionally, organizing trade exhibitions, fairs, and expositions could prove beneficial.
2. Collaborative efforts between ITUC-Africa and various Ministries of Trade, AfCFTA secretariat, chambers of commerce, private sector associations, and other trade bodies in different regions are necessary. This collaboration should focus on conducting seminars, conferences, and workshops aimed at enhancing knowledge about AfCFTA among the African workers, especially for the youth, women and workers in the informal sector.
3. ITUC-Africa should intensify efforts to increase awareness and knowledge dissemination about AfCFTA, by embracing and implementing the proposed awareness and knowledge indexes about AfCFTA introduced by this survey. The indexes will serve as thresholds for all awareness and knowledge creation efforts and campaigns on AfCFTA in individual countries as well as at the regional level in Africa.
4. ITUC-Africa should periodically (yearly) initiate and support survey or research into awareness and knowledge about AfCFTA to validate the proposed awareness and knowledge index on the continent. The goal will be to improve on awareness and knowledge of AfCFTA year-on-year. By so doing, AfCFTA will be able to tackle labour related issues that will promote the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in Africa. Additionally, sectoral reports on awareness and knowledge should be commissioned periodically based on need.
5. ITUC-Africa together with its affiliates and partners should initiate specialized programs that promote the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth within the context of AfCFTA.
6. Together with the Africa Labour Research and Education Institute (ALREI), ITUC-Africa should address concerns about how regions can effectively access African markets through trade in goods and services.
7. There is the need to conduct research into potential employment opportunities under AfCFTA, including research into the specific sectors that will benefit, the types of jobs to be created, and how these opportunities will be distributed among various segments of the workforce.
8. Together with its affiliates and partners, ITUC-Africa should effectively promote AfCFTA agenda to benefit all African workers. Thus, no group of workers on the continent would be considered as losers among African workers under AfCFTA.



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