



United States

Chicago Council on Global Affairs/Knowledge Networks

Globalization and Trade

Most Americans believe that globalization is beneficial for the United States, and that trade is good for them as consumers. However only relatively modest majorities believe it is good for the US economy. The US public has some of the largest majorities think that international trade is bad for American workers.

- Three out of five Americans (60%) say that the globalization is “mostly good” for the United States.
- Substantial majorities feel that trade is good for consumers like themselves (70%) and for their own standard of living (64%).
- Modest majorities of Americans see international trade as good for the US economy (54%) and for American companies (52%), though these majorities are smaller than in the other countries polled.
- Americans are second only to the French in their belief that trade hurts employment. A majority believes that international trade is bad for “creating jobs” in the United States (60%) and bad for the “job security” of American workers (67%).
- Nine out of 10 (93%) support including “minimum standards for working conditions” in trade agreements.
- Slightly more Americans see trade as bad for the environment (49%) than see it as good (45%).
- An overwhelming majority (91%) wants countries that sign trade agreements to be required to maintain environmental protections.
- Three-fourths of Americans (73%) say that the US government should comply with World Trade Organization rulings.

Climate Change

A large majority of Americans favor taking steps to address the problem of global warming, while a plurality is willing to support steps that are costly. Two out of three favor giving foreign aid to help developing countries limit their emissions.

- Four in five Americans (80%) say action is needed to address climate change. This includes 43% who think immediate steps should be taken “even if this involves significant costs” and 37% prefer a less costly,

go-slow approach. Only 17% say expensive measures should be avoided “until we are sure that global warming is really a problem.”

- A robust majority (85%) of Americans see global warming as a possible threat to the United States in the next 10 years.
- Americans tend to support foreign aid for developing countries that agree to limit greenhouse gas emissions: 64% say developed countries should be ready to give “substantial aid.”
- Americans believe nearly unanimously (93%) that improving the global environment should be a US foreign policy goal. A majority (54%) calls this very important.

Genocide and Darfur

Americans are among those most supportive of a strong UN role to prevent severe human rights abuse both in general and in the specific case of Darfur, where militias linked to the Sudanese government are accused of massacring civilians.

- More than four out of five (83%) Americans say that the UN Security Council should have the right to authorize the use of force to prevent violations of human rights.
- 74% say that the Security Council has the “responsibility to authorize the use of force” in such cases.
- Americans show strong support for UN action in Darfur: 83% say the Security Council has the responsibility to act (48%) or the right to do so (35%).
- Americans favor sending US troops to join “an international peacekeeping force to stop the killing in Darfur” (65%).

Future of the United Nations

Americans show strong support for giving significant new powers to the United Nations and believe more strongly than most other publics polled that the Security Council has the right to authorize the use of military force in a variety of situations. But they express somewhat lukewarm feelings about the United Nations itself, perhaps because they feel it has not lived up to its potential.

- Robust majorities favor giving the UN the authority to establish a standing UN-managed peacekeeping force (72%), investigate human rights violations within countries (75%) and regulate the international arms trade (60%).
- Americans however lean toward opposing allowing the UN to fund its activities by “imposing a small tax on such things as the international sale of arms or oil,” though only by a rather small 50% to 45% margin.
- Most Americans believe that the UN Security Council should be able to authorize the use of force “to defend a country that has been attacked” (83%) and “to stop a country from supporting terrorist groups” (76%).
- A majority of the US public says the Security Council should be able to use force to stop nuclear proliferation: 62% believe it should have the right to prevent new countries from acquiring nuclear weapons and 57% believe it should have the right to use force to prevent countries from producing nuclear fuel that could be used to produce nuclear weapons.
- A more modest 57% agree that the Security Council should be able to authorize force to restore “a democratic government that has been overthrown.”
- Most Americans (60%) think that the United States should be “more willing to make decisions within the United Nations” even if it means agreeing to a policy that is not their country’s first choice.

- Americans feel only somewhat warmly toward the United Nations (55°), a bit better about the World Health Organization (59°) and a bit on the cool side toward the World Court (46°).

US Leadership

Americans do not believe the United States should be the preeminent world leader and want their country to play a more cooperative role in the world. The United States is among the countries most convinced that the “United States is playing the role of world policeman more than it should be.”

- Most Americans (75%) believe the United States should do its share to solve world problems together with other countries. Very few support the idea that the United States should either withdraw from most international efforts (12%) or remain the preeminent world leader (10%) in solving international problems.
- Three-quarters say “United States is playing the role of world policeman more than it should be” (76%) and equally (75%) reject the idea that the United States has an obligation to play this role.
- A majority of Americans feel the United States should either maintain its current number of overseas bases (53%) or increase them (15%). Only 27% think the United States should have fewer.

Rise of China

Americans tend to believe that China will catch up with the United States economically and they are unconcerned about this even though most do not trust China to act responsibly in the world.

- 60% of Americans believe that China’s economy will eventually reach the size of the United States’ economy.
- Only one in three (33%) say that China’s catching up would be mostly negative. A majority (54%) says that it would be “equally positive and negative” for China to catch up with the US, while an additional 9% say it would be mostly positive.
- A majority of americans (58%) do not trust China to act responsibly in world affairs. In contrast most do trust Japan to act responsibly (71%).
- Three out of five (60%) say that China does not consider US interests in making foreign policy. About the same numbers (58%) think Japan does.
- Americans rate China and Japan as equally influential in the world: both get an average rating of 6.4 out of 10. But both are considered more influential than India (4.8)
- The most common view among Americans is that relations with China are staying about the same (47%), though a third (30%) say that relations are improving. A majority sees relations with Japan as stable (55%).
- A majority opposes free trade with China (56%) and only one-third (34%) is in favor. In contrast a slight plurality favors such an agreement with Japan (47% to 43%).