



South Korea

East Asia Institute/Hankook Research Company

Globalization and Trade

Most South Koreans believe that globalization is good for their country and that international trade has mainly positive effects, except on the environment. They do not favor complying with adverse WTO decisions, however.

- Nearly nine in 10 South Koreans (86%) say that globalization is “mostly good” for their country, the largest majority after the Chinese.
- A large majority (79%) sees international trade as good for South Korea’s economy, for its companies (78%) and for creating domestic jobs (60%).
- Attitudes are also positive about trade’s effect on individuals: 68% agree that international trade is good for “consumers like you” and 56% believe it benefits “your own standard of living.”
- Only 51% think trade is good for South Korean workers’ job security (47% disagree).
- South Koreans are divided about international trade’s effect on the environment: 49% say it is bad and 47% good.
- A slim majority (52%) believes South Korea should not “as a general rule” comply with adverse World Trade Organization rulings. Only 37% say it should and 10% say it depends. It is the only country among the nine polled where a majority favors noncompliance.

Climate Change

South Koreans are overwhelmingly convinced that global warming could become a threat to their country’s vital interests in the next decade.

- Nearly all respondents (96%)—the highest percentage among the 10 publics asked—say they consider climate change an important threat and two-thirds (67%) call it a critical threat.
- South Koreans are also nearly unanimous (96%) in their belief that “improving the global environment” should be one of their country’s foreign policy goals, including 60% who say it should be very important.

Genocide and Darfur

Most South Koreans believe the UN Security Council has the right to authorize military intervention to stop genocide.

- Three-fourths (74%) say the UN Security Council should be allowed to use force to “prevent severe human rights violations such as genocide.”

Future of the United Nations

South Koreans show very strong support for many proposals to give the United Nations more power, but oppose allowing the UN Security Council to authorize force to prevent nuclear proliferation.

- Nine in 10 South Koreans (90%) consider “strengthening the UN” an important foreign policy goal, the second largest percentage among the countries polled.
- Three-quarters of South Koreans support allowing the United Nations to regulate the international arms trade (75%) and to enter countries to investigate violations of human rights (74%).
- Seven in 10 (68%) favor having a standing “peacekeeping force selected, trained, and commanded by the United Nations.”
- 53% feel that the UN should be allowed to impose a small tax on international arms or oil sales in order to fund its activities.
- South Koreans believe the UN Security Council should have the right to authorize the use of force if a country has been attacked (76%), to prevent severe human rights violation such as genocide (74%) and to stop a country from supporting terrorist groups (61%).
- Majorities believe the UN should not have the right to use force to prevent a country from acquiring nuclear weapons (55%) or from producing nuclear fuel that might be used as weapons (56%).
- South Koreans (65%) reject allowing the Security Council to use force to restore a democratic government to power.
- South Koreans are divided—48% agree, 49% disagree—about whether their government should be more willing to make decisions within the UN, even if it means sometimes compromising on their preferred policies.
- Feelings about the UN are quite warm on average (70°). South Koreans also have warm feelings towards the World Health Organization (74°) and slightly cooler ones toward the World Court (63°).

US Leadership

South Koreans overwhelmingly reject the idea that the United States should continue as the world’s preeminent leader and they are somewhat doubtful they can trust the United States to act responsibly in global affairs.

- Only 14% of South Koreans favor the US continuing to play the role of preeminent world leader. Nearly four out of five (79%) feel the US should “do its share in efforts to solve international problems together with other countries.”
- Three-quarters (73%) agree that the United States plays the role of “world policeman” more often than it should. A majority (60%) rejects the idea that the US “has the responsibility” to play this role.
- A modest majority (53%) of South Koreans does not trust the United States to act responsibly, though nearly half say they do (46%).

- About their country's relations with the United States: 56% see them as "staying about the same," although one-third (34%) says they are getting worse.
- Feelings about the United States overall are somewhat warm (58°).
- 54% favor a free trade agreement with the US.

Rise of China

South Koreans believe China's economy will catch up with the US economy. They express significant doubts about the trustworthiness of China and Japan and believe that relations with Japan are deteriorating.

- A majority of South Koreans (61%) believe that China's economy will eventually grow to be as large as the United States' while only 37% believe that the US economy will always stay larger than China's.
- 61% of South Koreans do not trust China to act responsibly in the world. Views of Japan are more negative with 81% expressing such mistrust.
- South Koreans rate China's world influence as a 6.7 on a 10-point scale, while they give Japan a 6.5. Both are considerably below the US rating of 8.5
- Most South Koreans think relations with China are either stable (47%) or getting better (38%). In contrast, a majority (61%) believes that relations with Japan are getting worse.
- On average South Koreans express fairly warm feelings about China (57 degrees) and the United States (58°). Attitudes toward North Korea are cooler (49°) and they are quite cold toward Japan (39°).
- Many South Koreans favor a free trade agreement with China (66%). This is more than those who support such pacts with either the United States (54%) or Japan (50%).