



KEI: 2021 Report on American Attitudes Toward the Korean Peninsula

2021 Report on American Attitudes Toward the Korean Peninsula

This study on American Attitudes Toward the Korean Peninsula surveyed 1,122 Americans in September of 2021. The survey was commissioned by the Korean Economic Institute of America and conducted by YouGov.

The goal of the report is to explore perceptions of Americans on the relationship with South Korea, the challenges presented by North Korea, and how the US should manage its relationship with the peninsula. This has been explored through direct questions concerning specific trade and military alliances in the region as well as how South and North Korea more generally fit into global international relations.

YouGov surveyed 1,000 respondents who were nationally representative of adults (18+) in the US. YouGov collected an additional oversample of 140 Americans who specifically follow international news, to ensure a sample size of over 500 such respondents across the main and oversample. Among those who follow international news, 279 respondents also indicate specifically following Asia-Pacific (APAC) news.

Results in this report are nationally representative unless otherwise noted on the slide. For any questions presented in this report measuring multiple countries or regions, respondents were given a predetermined list of country/regions to react to.



Survey conducted from August 30th to September 7th, 2021



Average Survey Length: 15 minutes

	Margin of Error
US Adults	+/- 3.25%
Int'l News Followers	+/- 5%

Demographics: By Sample Type

Education

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
High school or less	39%	28%
Some college, 2 year	33%	34%
4-year	19%	23%
Post-grad	11%	15%

Income



	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
\$20,000 - \$29,999	9%	7%
\$30,000 - \$49,999	18%	18%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	27%	34%
\$100,000 or More	15%	18%
Prefer not to say	15%	11%



Region

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
Northeast	17%	15%
Midwest	20%	20%
South	38%	36%
West	25%	29%

Age

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
18-29	21%	20%
30-49	31%	29%
50-64	26%	27%
65 or older	21%	23%



Ethnicity

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
White	63%	69%
Black	12%	9%
Hispanic	16%	14%
Other	9%	8%

Political Party:



	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
Democrat	34%	39%
Republican	27%	22%
Independent	30%	33%
Other/Not Sure	9%	7%

Gender



	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
Male	51%	57%
Female	49%	43%



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KEY INSIGHTS: Americans' General Views on South and North Korea

- This year, the UK, Canada, and the EU were most likely to be called "critical partners" of the US. Last year, when asked about "friends" as opposed to "critical partners," the UK, Canada, and the EU were also at the top. Somewhat more called South Korea a friend as opposed to a critical partner this year (41% in 2020 vs. 49% in 2021).
- Over half of Americans would like to see the US and South Korea cooperate on the North Korea issue. However, technology infrastructure, development of international trade, and Global health showed a notable decline as areas where the US and South Korea should cooperate.
 - The disapproval rate of the current US administration's handling of relations with South Korea had a statistically significant decline from 22% in 2020 to 12% in 2021, with more Americans shifting to "not sure" (41% in 2020 to 48% in 2021). Following the recent withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, there has been a statistically significant increase in the number of Americans rating Afghanistan as the most critical foreign policy challenge to the US in 2021 (10% in 2020 vs. 36% in 2021).
- Americans have an unfavorable view of North Korea (75%). This rate is higher among international news followers (89%) and APAC news followers (92%).
- The proportion of Americans who approve of the current US administration's handling of North Korea declined significantly from 31% in 2020 to 18% in 2021, while uncertainty grew (30% "not sure" in 2020 vs. 49% in 2021).
- The percent rating South Korea's handling of COVID-19 very well/well declined this year (42% in 2021 vs. 54% in 2020), while the US (39%) and Israel (48%) received statistically significant higher rates than they did in 2020. Canada occupied first place for handling COVID-19 very well/well (57%).



KEY INSIGHTS: Americans' Views on Trade & Military Alliance with South Korea

- Most Americans are aware of US free trade agreements with Mexico and Canada, while only a quarter are aware of the free trade agreement with South Korea.
 - 63% Americans see trade with South Korea as beneficial to the US. This rate is even higher among those who follow international and APAC news (82% and 86%).
- Nearly two thirds of Americans see the military alliance with South Korea as beneficial to the US.
 - The number of Americans who want to maintain all US alliances declined significantly from 22% in 2020 to 18% in 2021, while the number of those who want to maintain all alliances, but with reforms, increased (from 22% in 2020 to 27% in 2021).
 - For a plurality of Americans (35%), the withdrawal from Afghanistan had no impact on their views about maintaining other US security commitments abroad. 2 in 10 said it made them more likely to support such commitments.
 - 50% of Americans would like to see the US maintain the current troop presence in South Korea. This rate is especially high among those who follow international and APAC news (60%).
- Among Americans who believe that East Asia is a vital region for the US, 43% believe that the most important interest for the US there is countering the rise of China.
 - 61% of Americans believe the US should assist South Korea in the aftermath of a cyber-attack and over a third think the US should coordinate with South Korea on cyber issues.



KEY INSIGHTS: Americans' Views on the North Korea Challenge

- 9 in 10 Americans believe it is very important/important for North Korea to give up its military nuclear capabilities.
 - While nearly half of Americans think their own country should maintain its nuclear capabilities, only 8% think that North Korea should maintain its military nuclear capabilities. Almost half think no countries should have military nuclear capabilities.
 - 41% of Americans would like the US to maintain its troop presence in South Korea, if the United States were to reach an agreement with North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons.
 - This year, as last, about half of Americans approve of the US sending humanitarian assistance to North Korea.
 - The proportion of Americans who approve of the US sending humanitarian assistance to North Korean citizens declined from 53% last year to 48% this year. More Democrats approve of sending humanitarian assistance to North Korea compared to Republicans (60% vs. 38%).
 - In 2021, more Americans who follow international news approve of the US sending Covid-19 assistance to North Korean citizens than they did in 2020 (63% in 2021 vs. 55% in 2020).

AMERICANS' GENERAL VIEWS ON SOUTH & NORTH KOREA

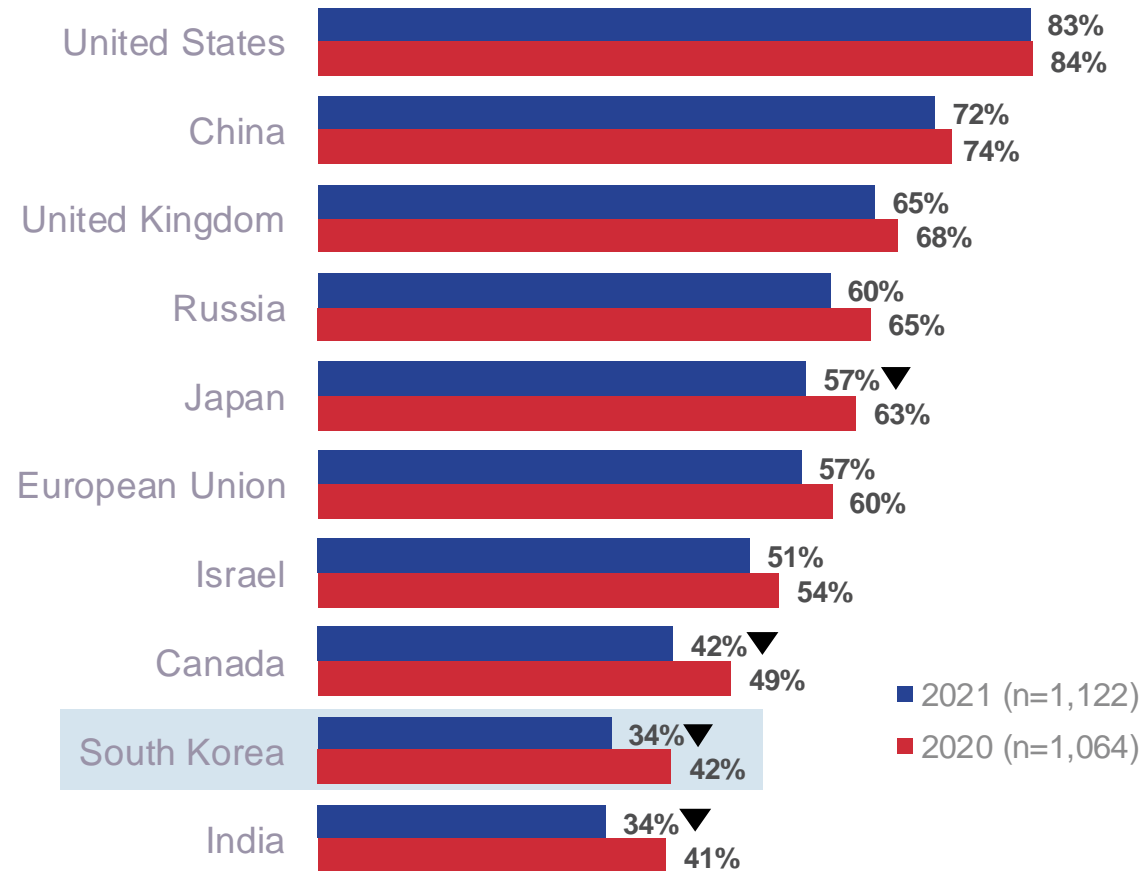
Over four in ten of all Americans view South Korea as a “partner” of the US and would like to see the two countries coordinate more on issues such as international peacekeeping, global health, trade rules, and technology infrastructure. North Korea, conversely, remains the top adversary to the US and is considered the fourth most critical foreign policy challenge to the US, with fewer than 10% of Americans having a favorable opinion of the nation. However, Americans in general and Americans following international news see a greater challenge from Afghanistan this year and significantly less of a challenge from North Korea than in 2020.

Over a third of respondents see South Korea as a very/fairly influential nation in the world. This rate has declined significantly in 2021. The US is viewed as the most influential nation in the world.



International News Followers are more likely to see South Korea as very/fairly influential (45%, vs. 28% among those who do not follow international news).

National/Regional Influence in the World (Top 10)* (very/fairly influential)



Q1: How influential do you think the following country or region is in the world?

*Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question

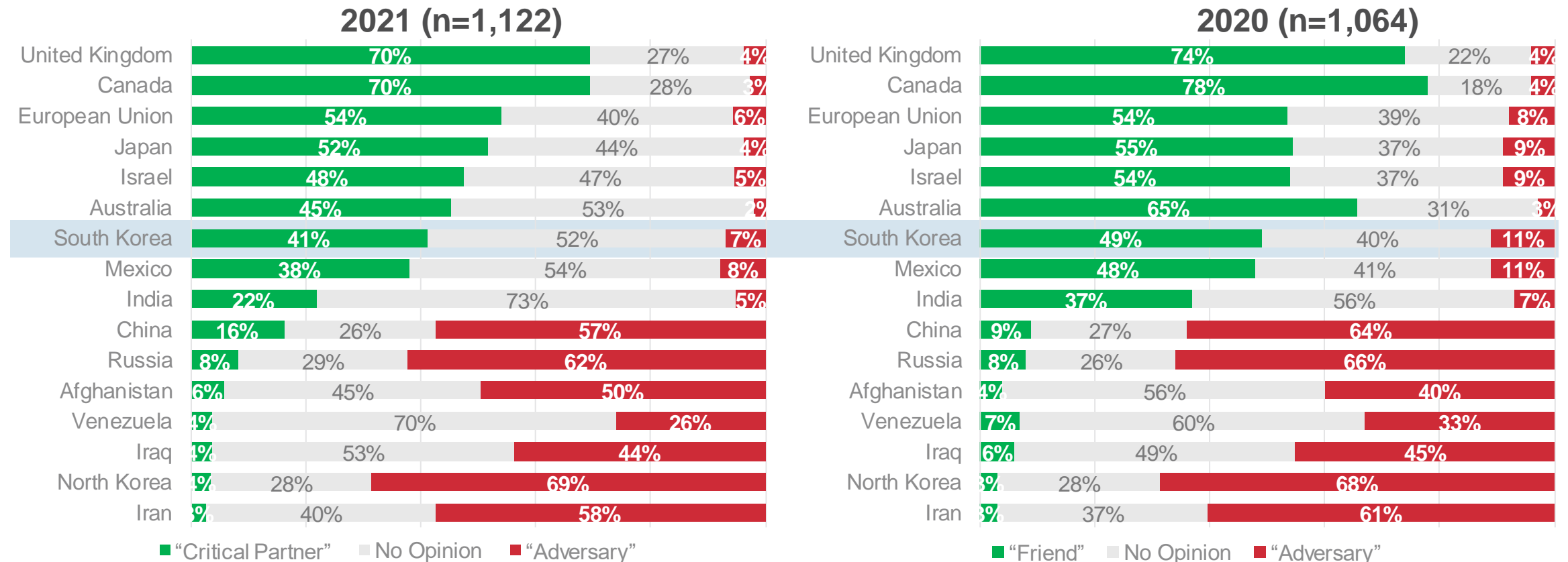
Note: Arrows indicate change found to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

Note2: *Only top ten out of seventeen countries are displayed on this slide.

4 in 10 Americans have a favorable view South Korea.

In 2021, the UK, Canada, and the EU were most likely to be called "critical partners" of the US. In 2020, when asked about "friends" as opposed to "critical partners," the UK, Canada, and the EU were also at the top. Somewhat more called South Korea a friend as opposed to a critical partner this year (49% vs. 41%). Across multiple countries, more respondents answered with "No opinion" this year than they did last year.

Perceived Relationship to the US



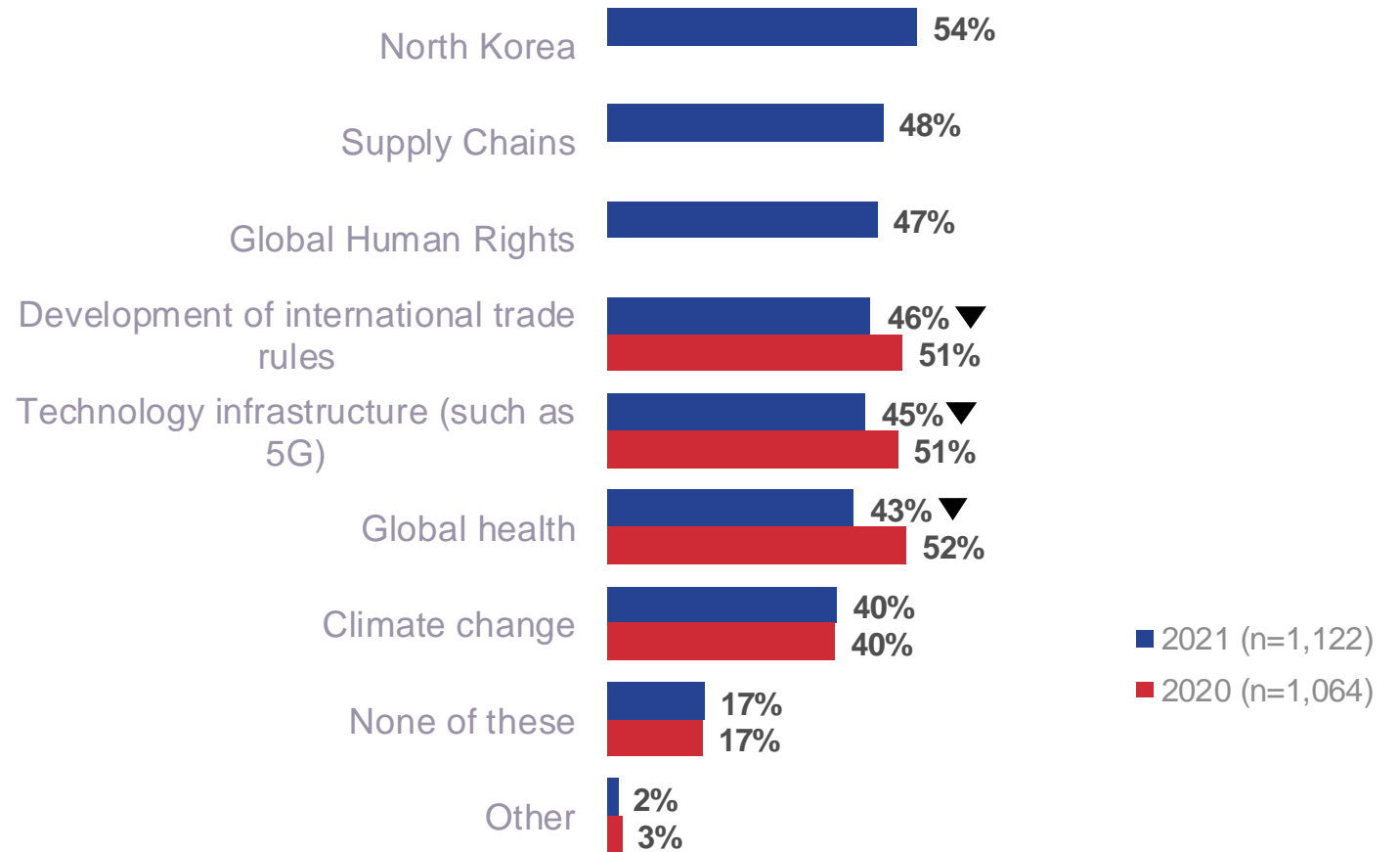
Over half of Americans would like to see the US and South Korea cooperate on the North Korea issue. Technology infrastructure, development of international trade, and global health showed a significant decline this year.

Compared to Republicans, Democrats are significantly more likely to want to see cooperation on:

- Global health (58% vs. 31%).
- Climate change (62% vs 14%).
- Technology infrastructure (49% vs. 38%).
- Global Human Rights (60% vs 34%).

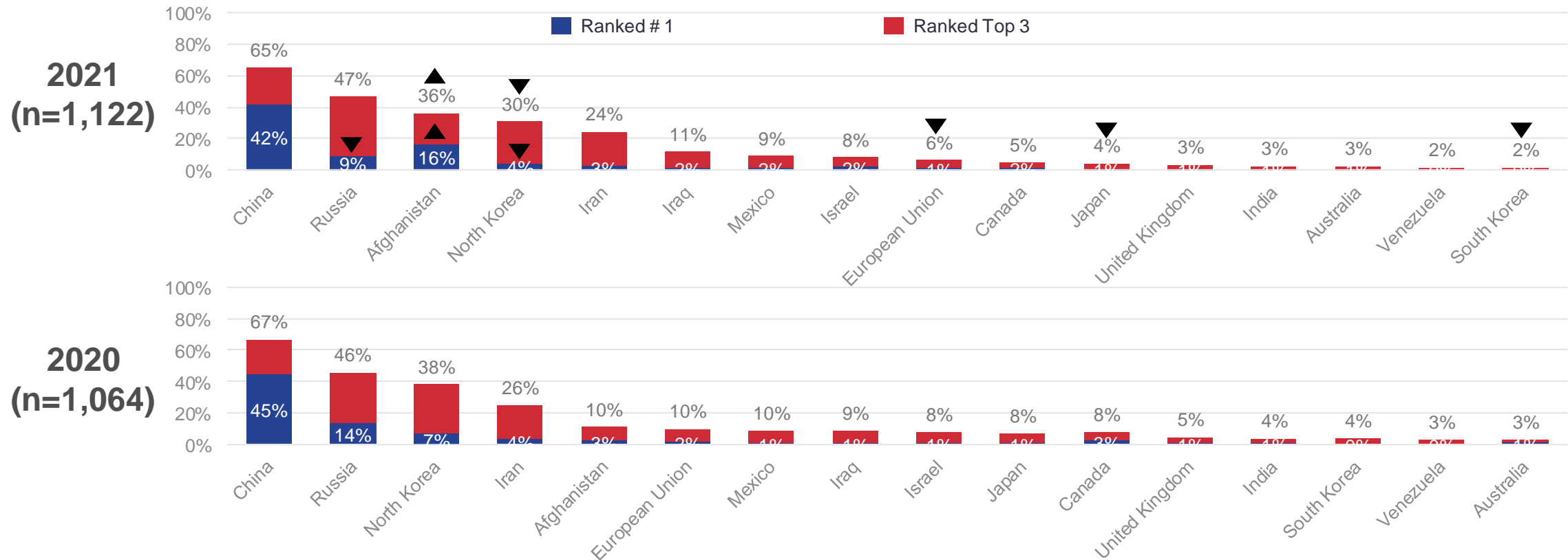


Issues that the US and South Korea Should Cooperate On



North Korea was ranked as the fourth most critical foreign policy challenge to the US, following only China, Russia, and Afghanistan. Compared to last year, those rates grew significantly for Afghanistan and declined for North Korea.

Countries/Regions Representing the Most Critical Foreign Policy Challenges to the US*



Americans in general and Americans following international news see a greater challenge from Afghanistan this year and a significantly smaller challenge from North Korea than in 2020.

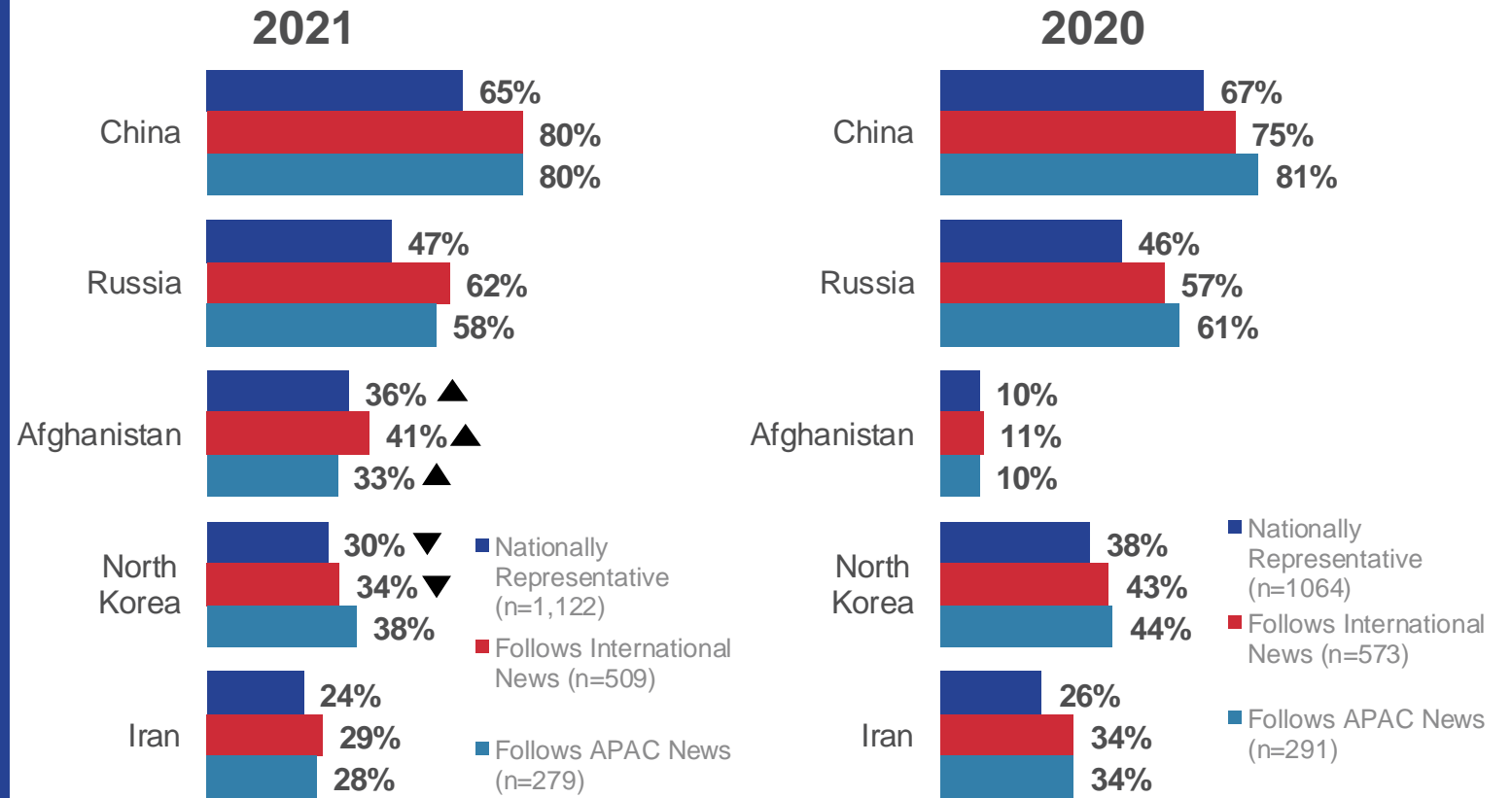


Over a third of Democrats and Republicans in America see Afghanistan as a greater challenge (36%).



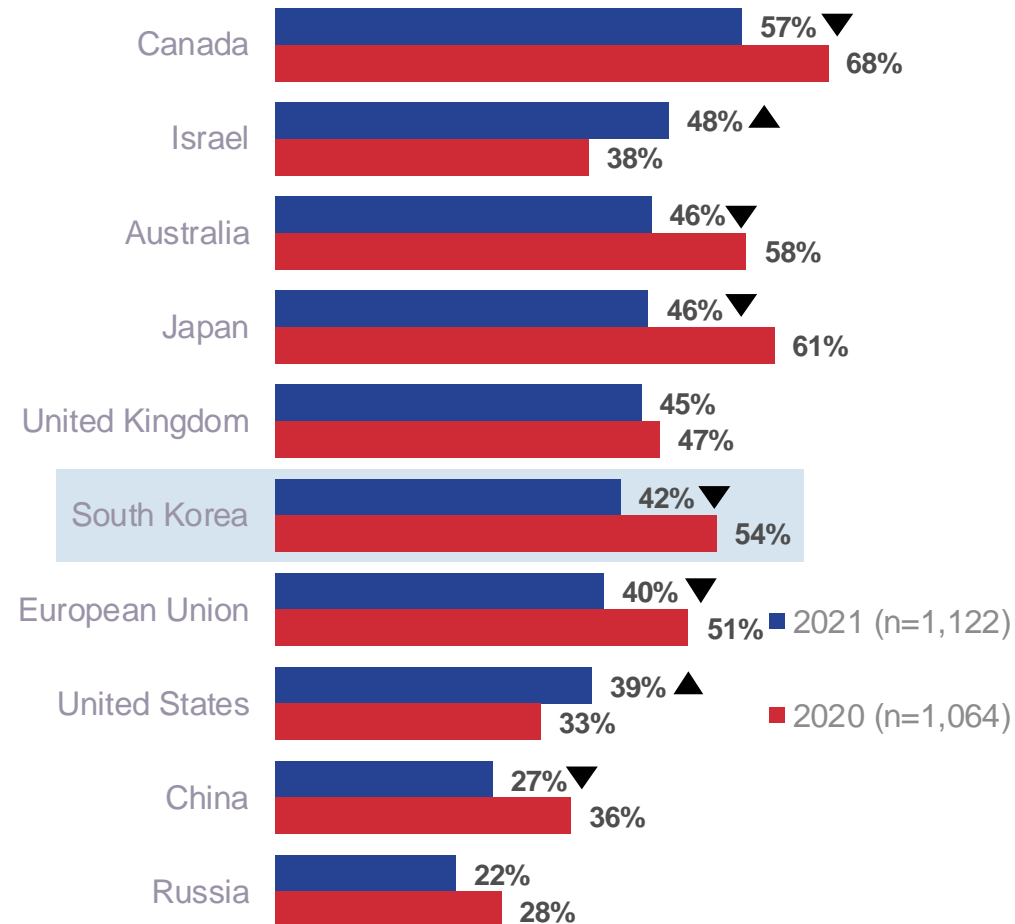
Republicans are more likely to view China as a greater challenge than Democrats (63% vs. 44%).

Countries/Regions Representing the Most Critical Foreign Policy Challenges to the US* (ranked in the top 3)



Over half of Americans say Canada handled Covid-19 very well/well. The US and Israel received significantly higher rates in handling COVID-19 very well/well than they did last year.

Perception of National/Regional Handling of Covid-19 (Top 10)* (very well/well)



Follows International News (n=509)

Canada	68%
Israel	64%
Japan	59%
South Korea	59%
Australia	57%
United Kingdom	51%
European Union	51%
United States	39%
China	32%
Russia	22%

Q7: How well do you think the following country or region has handled the outbreak of COVID-19? *Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question

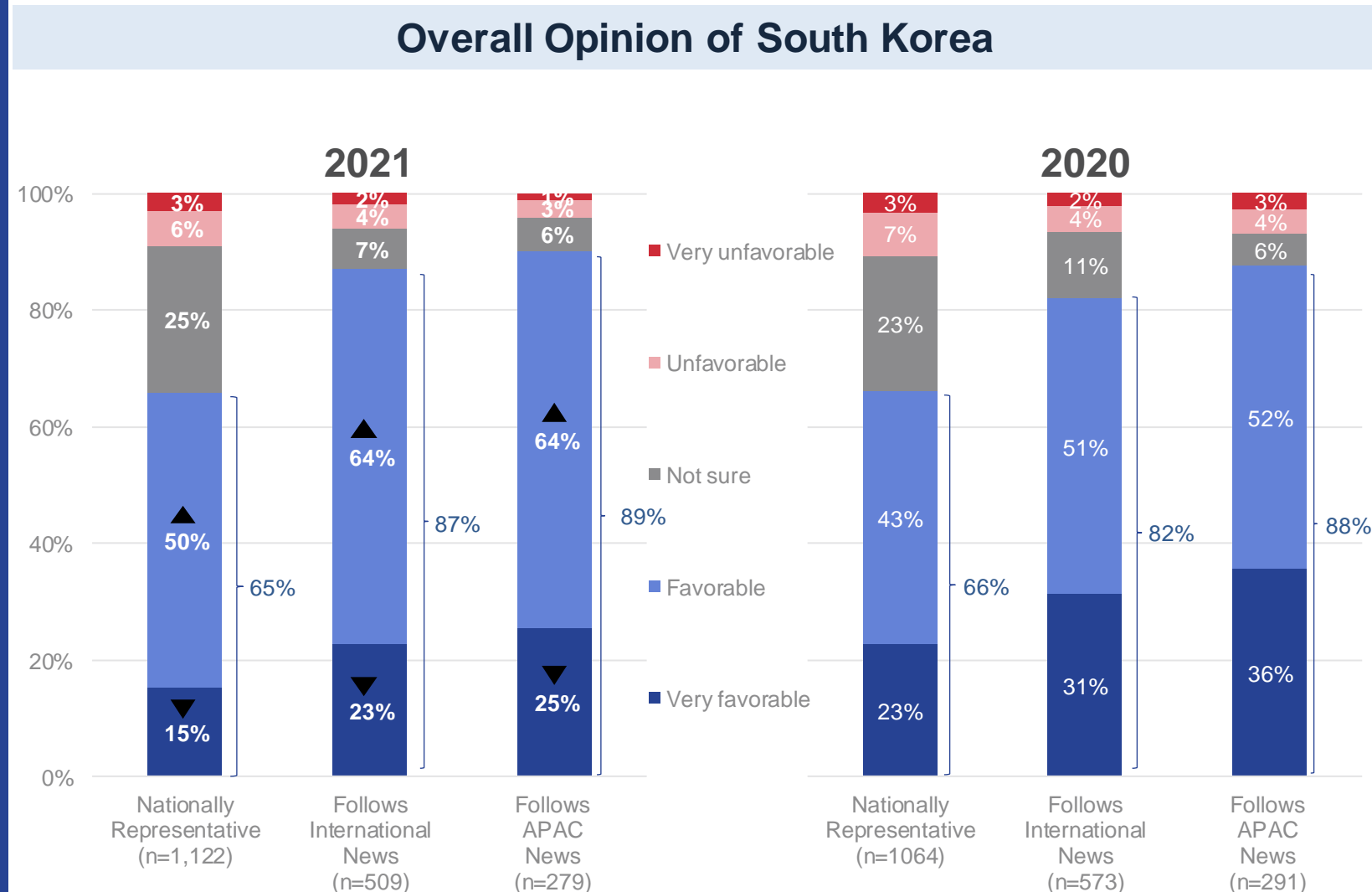
Note: Arrows indicate change found to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

Note2: *Only top ten out of seventeen countries are displayed on this slide.

While the percent who have a favorable or very favorable opinion of South Korea remained unchanged at 65%, there was a significant decrease in the percent who have a very favorable opinion.

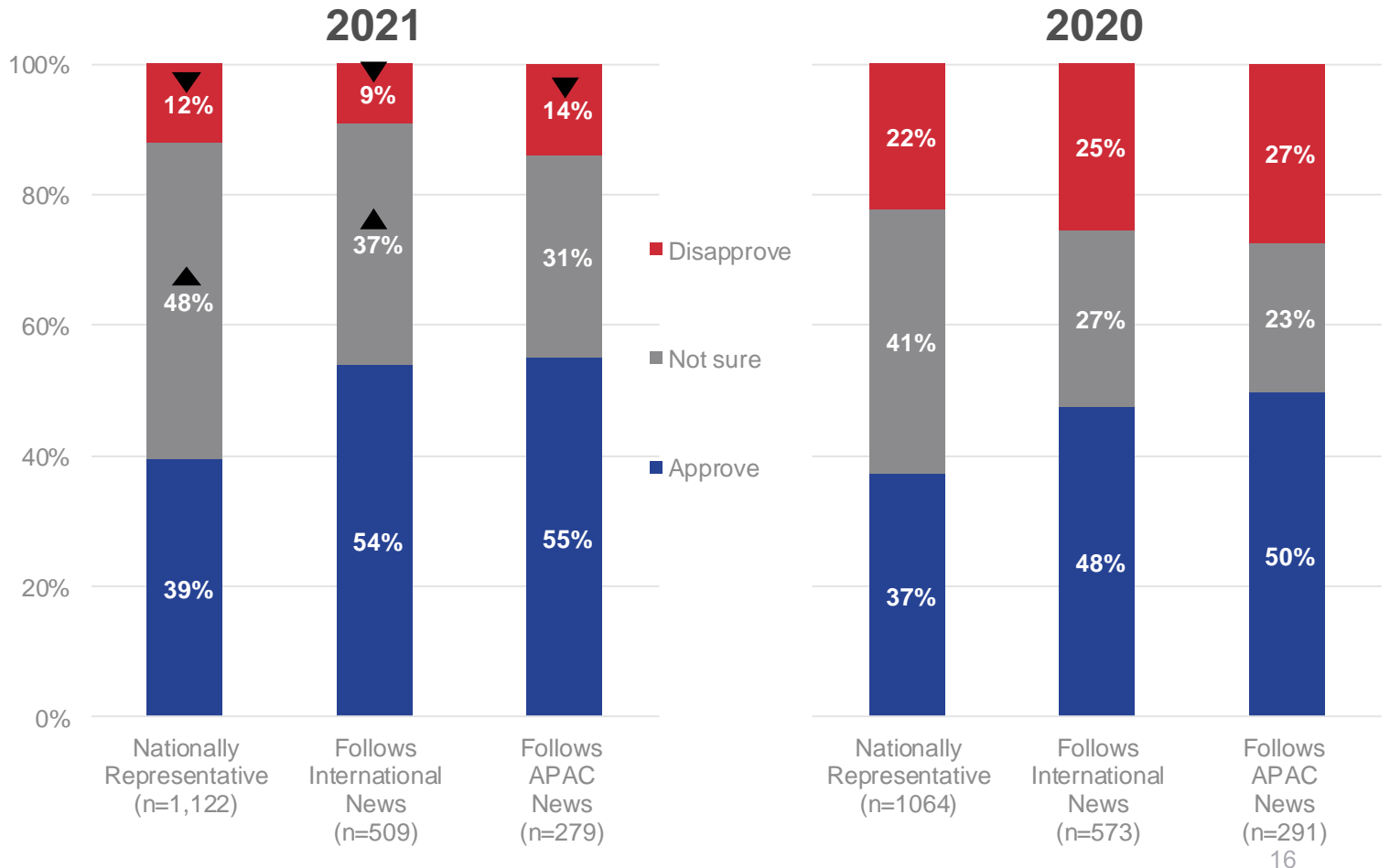


Among those who follow international news as well as among APAC news followers, nearly 9 in 10 have a favorable or very favorable view of South Korea.

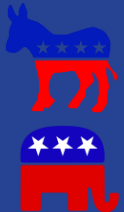


39% of Americans approve of the US administration's handling of relations with South Korea, with more shifting to "unsure" in 2021.

Approval of the Current US Administration's Handling of Relations with South Korea



Over half of those who follow APAC news approve of the administration's handling of South Korea.



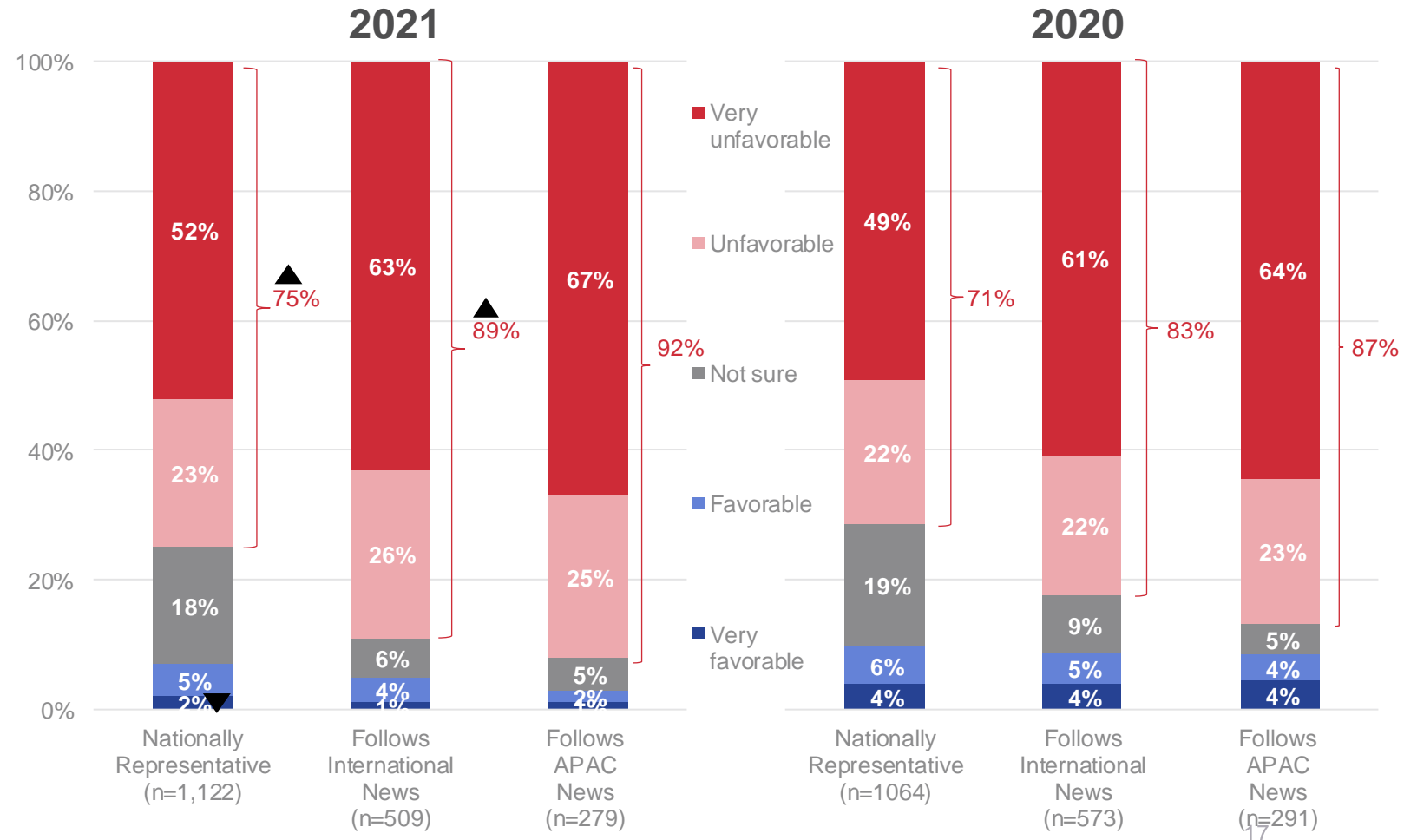
Democrats are significantly more likely to approve of the administration's handling of South Korea compared to Republicans (50% vs. 31%).

Three quarters of Americans have an unfavorable view of North Korea. This rate showed a statistically significant growth in 2021 compared to 2020.



In 2021, more Americans in general and Americans who follow APAC news have an unfavorable view of North Korea than in 2020.

Overall Opinion of North Korea



Q20. Now thinking about North Korea, overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable opinion of North Korea?
 Note: Arrows indicate change found to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

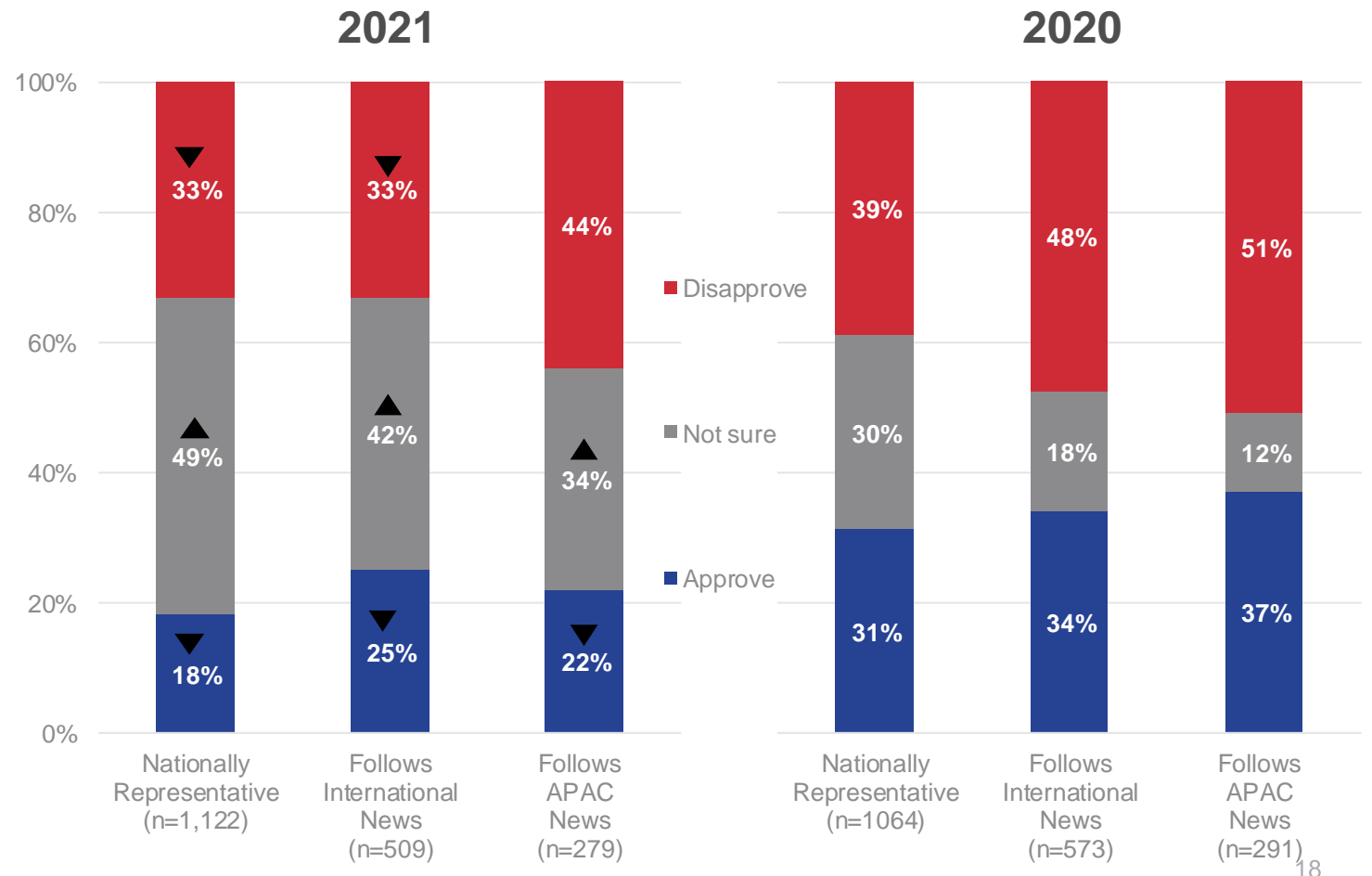
The percent of Americans who approve of the current US administration's handling of North Korea declined significantly in 2021 due to a significant jump in the number of those who are "Not sure".



33% of Democrats approve of the current administration's handling of relations with North Korea. This rate is significantly higher than that of Republicans, 7%.



Approval of the Current US Administration's Handling of Relations with North Korea



Q21. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the current US administration is doing handling relations with North Korea?
 Note: Arrows indicate change found to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

AMERICANS' VIEWS ON TRADE WITH SOUTH KOREA

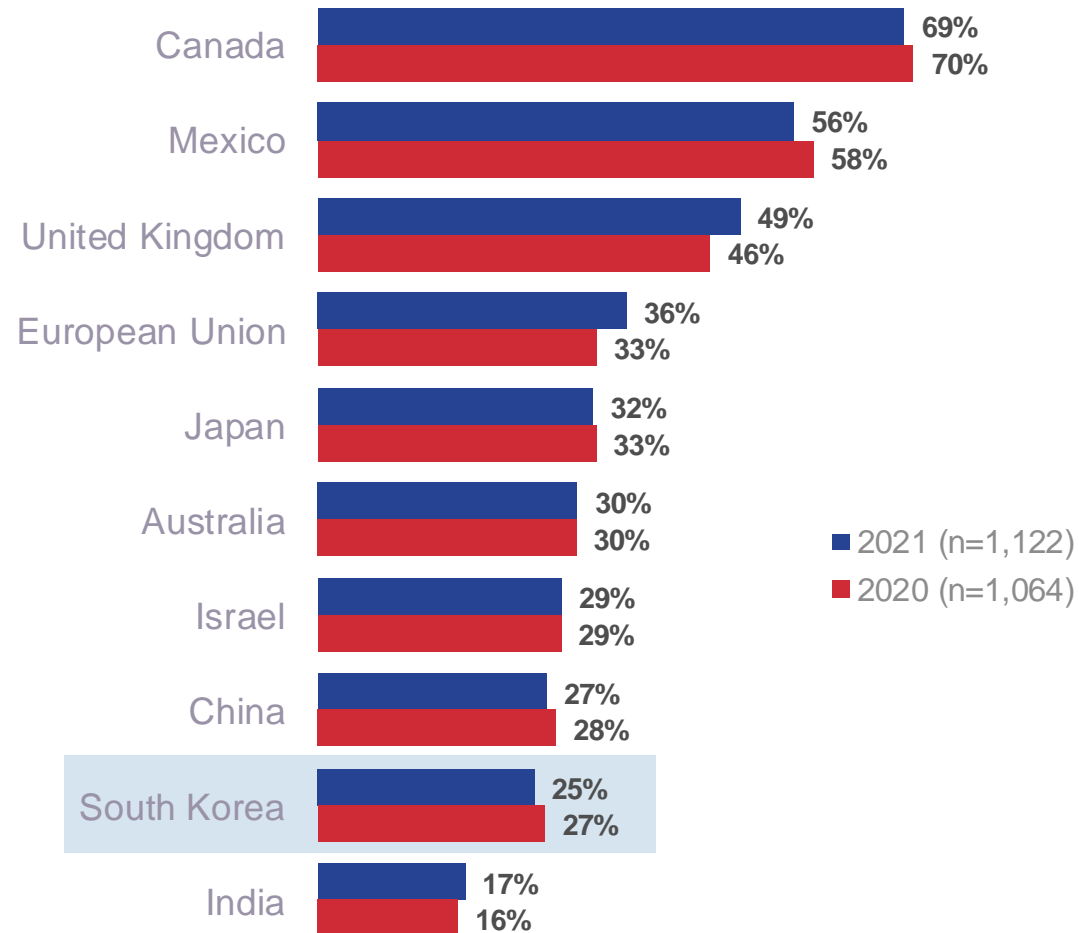
A quarter of Americans are aware of the free trade agreement between South Korea and the US. Over six in ten Americans see trade with South Korea as beneficial to the US.

A quarter of Americans are aware of the free trade agreement with South Korea.



Most Americans are aware of US free trade agreements with fellow North American neighbors – Mexico and Canada.

Awareness of Countries That Have a Free Trade Agreement with the US (Top 10)*



Q2. To the best of your knowledge, with which of the following countries/regions do you believe the US has a standing free trade agreement?

*Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question

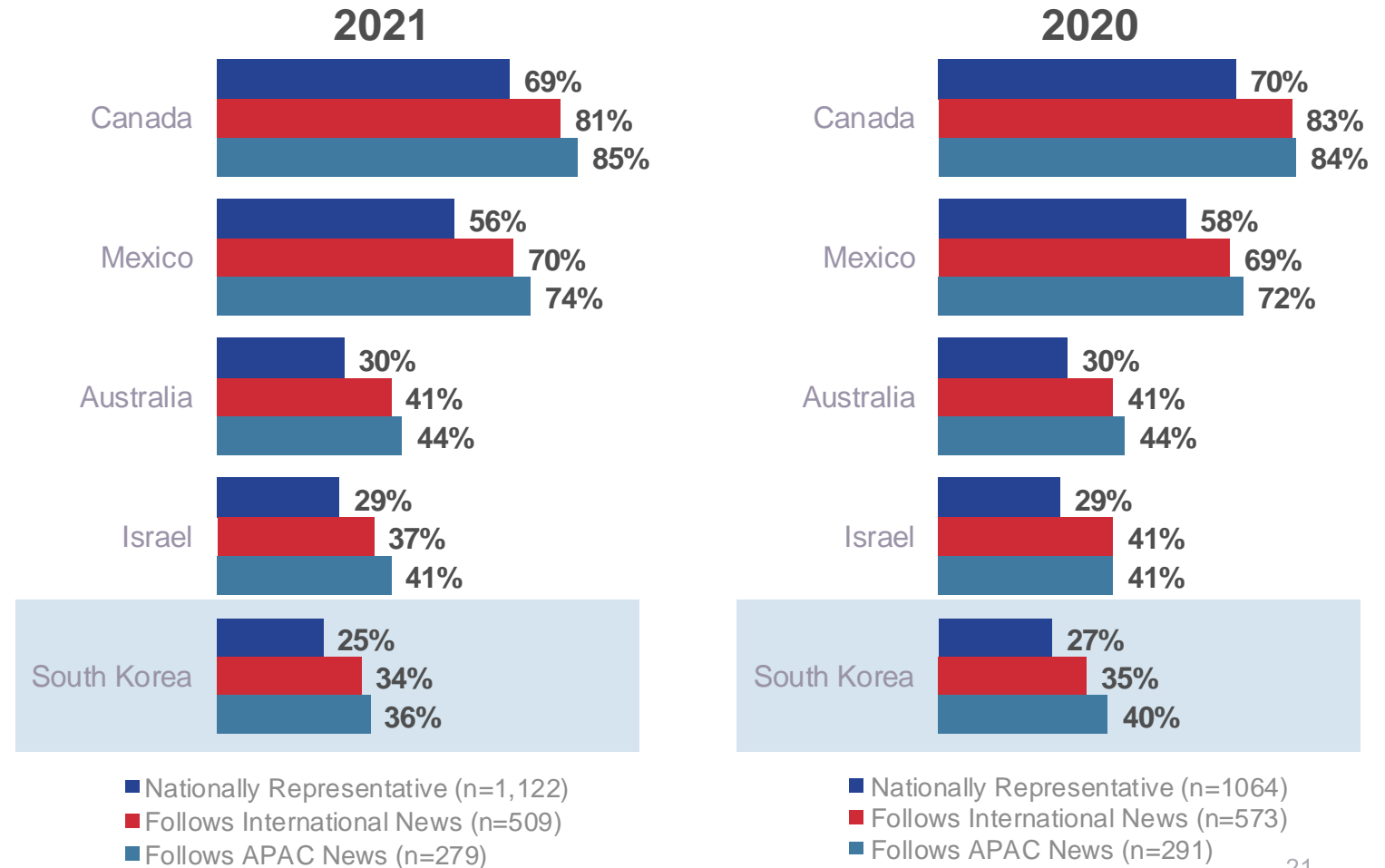
Note: Only top ten out of seventeen countries are displayed on this slide.

More Americans following international news and APAC news are aware of the US & South Korea free trade agreement.



This trend has been stable year over year.

Awareness of Countries That Have a Free Trade Agreement with the US*

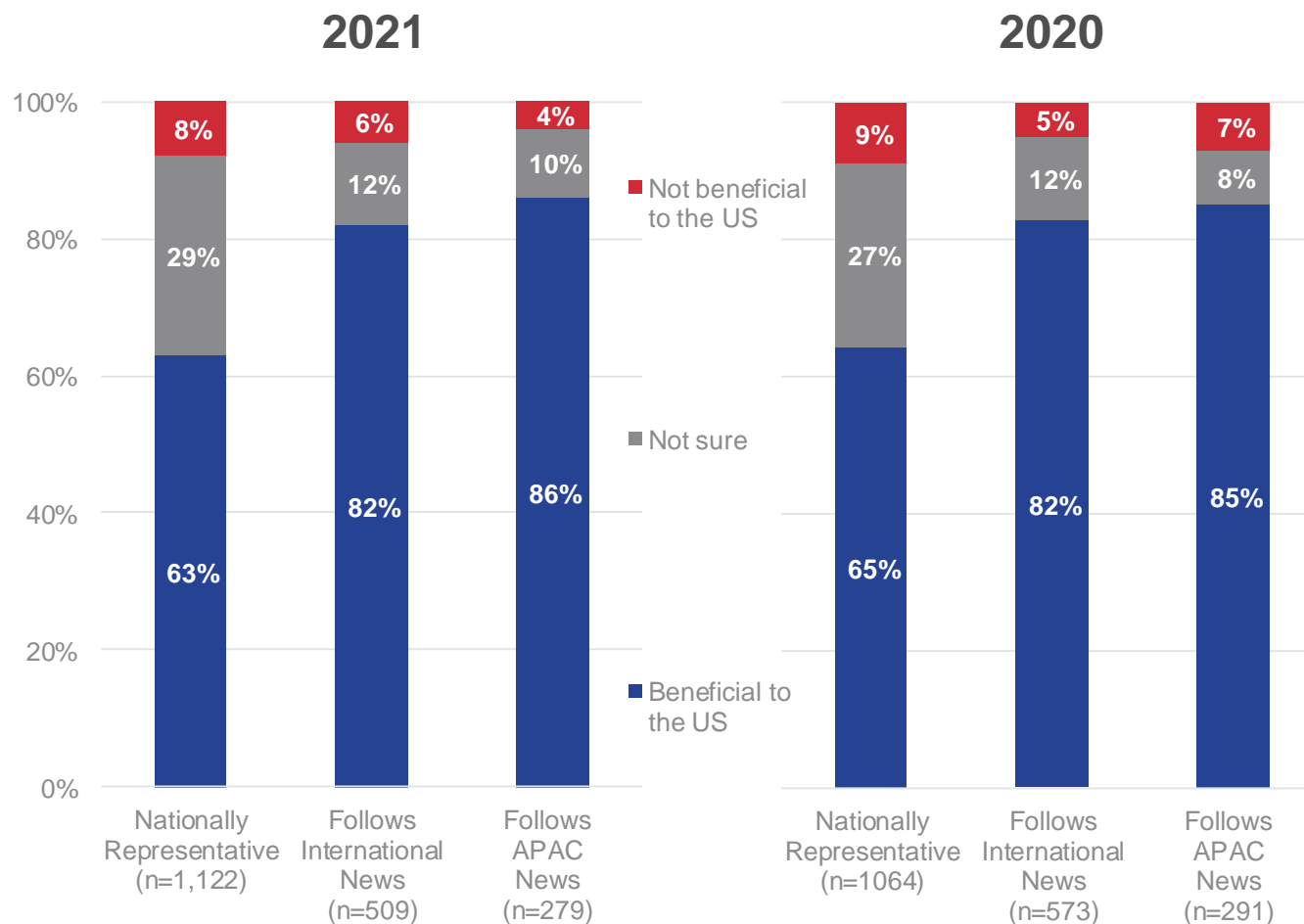


Nearly two thirds of Americans see trade with South Korea as beneficial to the US.



Over eight in ten Americans who follow international news or APAC news see trade with South Korea as beneficial to the US.

Views on Trade Between US and South Korea

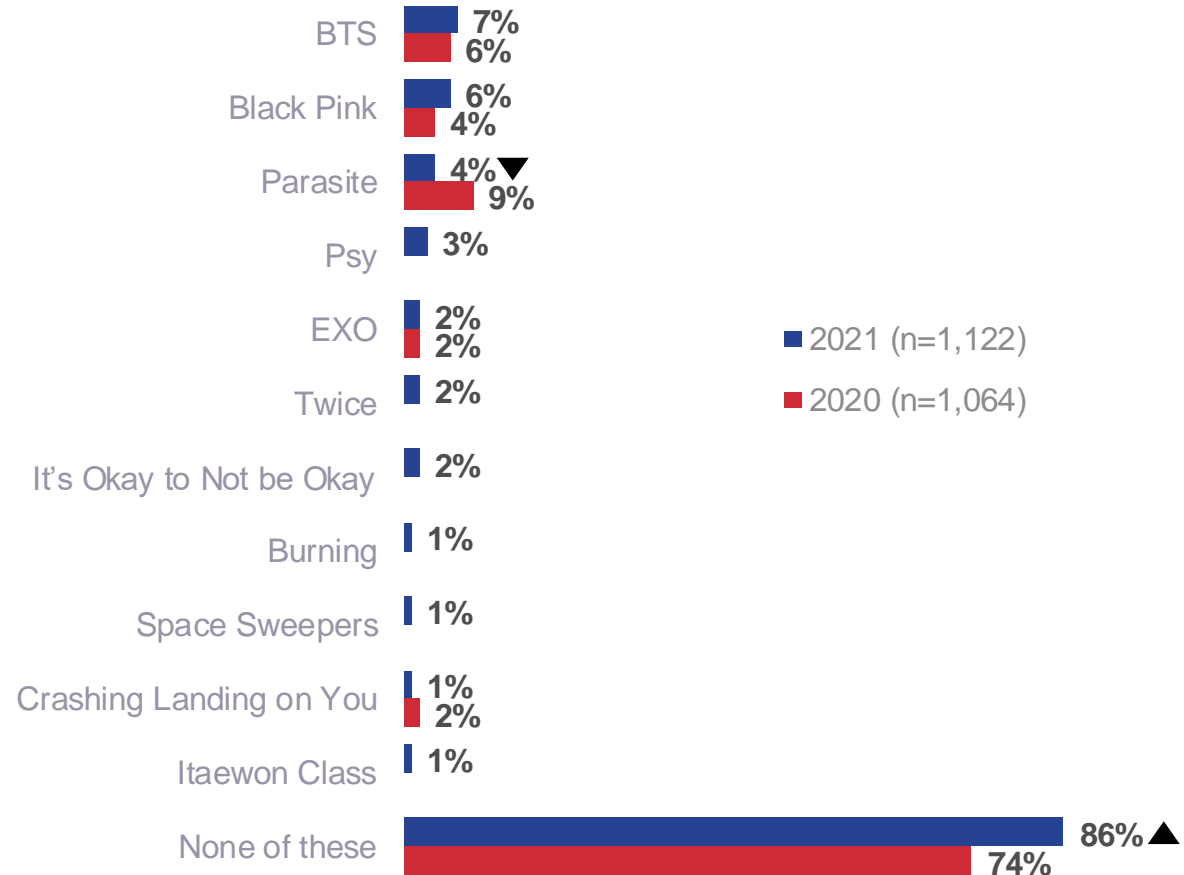


Awareness levels of Korean Movies and Music remained stable compared to the last wave except for Parasite, which declined significantly this year.



The percent of people saying they haven't watched any of these entertainment options increased significantly.

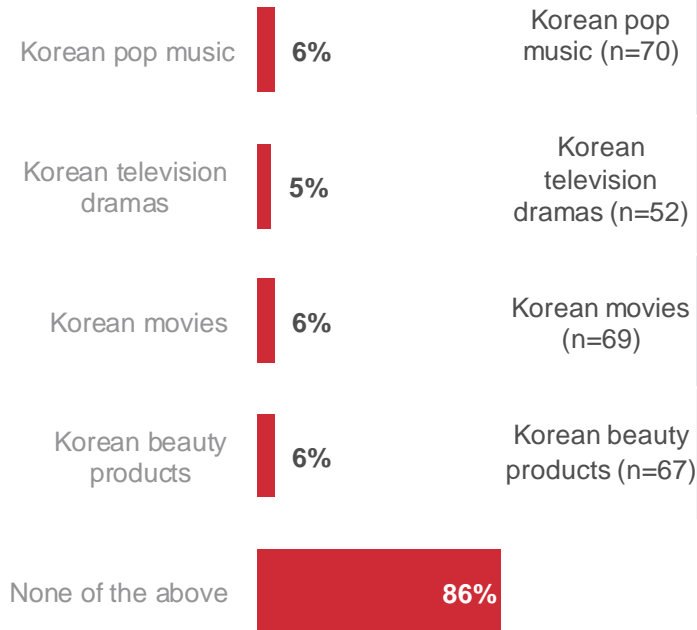
Viewing of South Korean Musical Artists, Movies, or TV Shows



Only about 5% of Americans are fans of Korean music, movies, TV and beauty products. Though the sample is small, being a fan appears to be associated with wanting to learn more about Korean culture.

Fan of South Korean Popular Entertainment and Products

Do you identify as a fan of any of the following? Select all that apply.
(n=1,122)



You identified as a fan of one or more of the options in the previous question. Has being a fan encouraged you to learn more about any of the following topics?

	Korean language	Korean Culture	Korean History	Korean Politics	Korean Foreign Affairs	None of The Above
Korean pop music (n=70)	40%	65%	33%	19%	24%	21%
Korean television dramas (n=52)	59%	74%	58%	34%	32%	5%
Korean movies (n=69)	36%	65%	41%	25%	21%	23%
Korean beauty products (n=67)	32%	58%	24%	15%	16%	26%

Q27. Do you identify as a fan of any of the following? (n=1,122)

Q27b. You identified as a fan to one or more of the options in the previous question. Has being a fan encouraged you to learn more about any of the following topics? (n=1,122)

AMERICANS' VIEWS ON MILITARY ALLIANCE WITH SOUTH KOREA

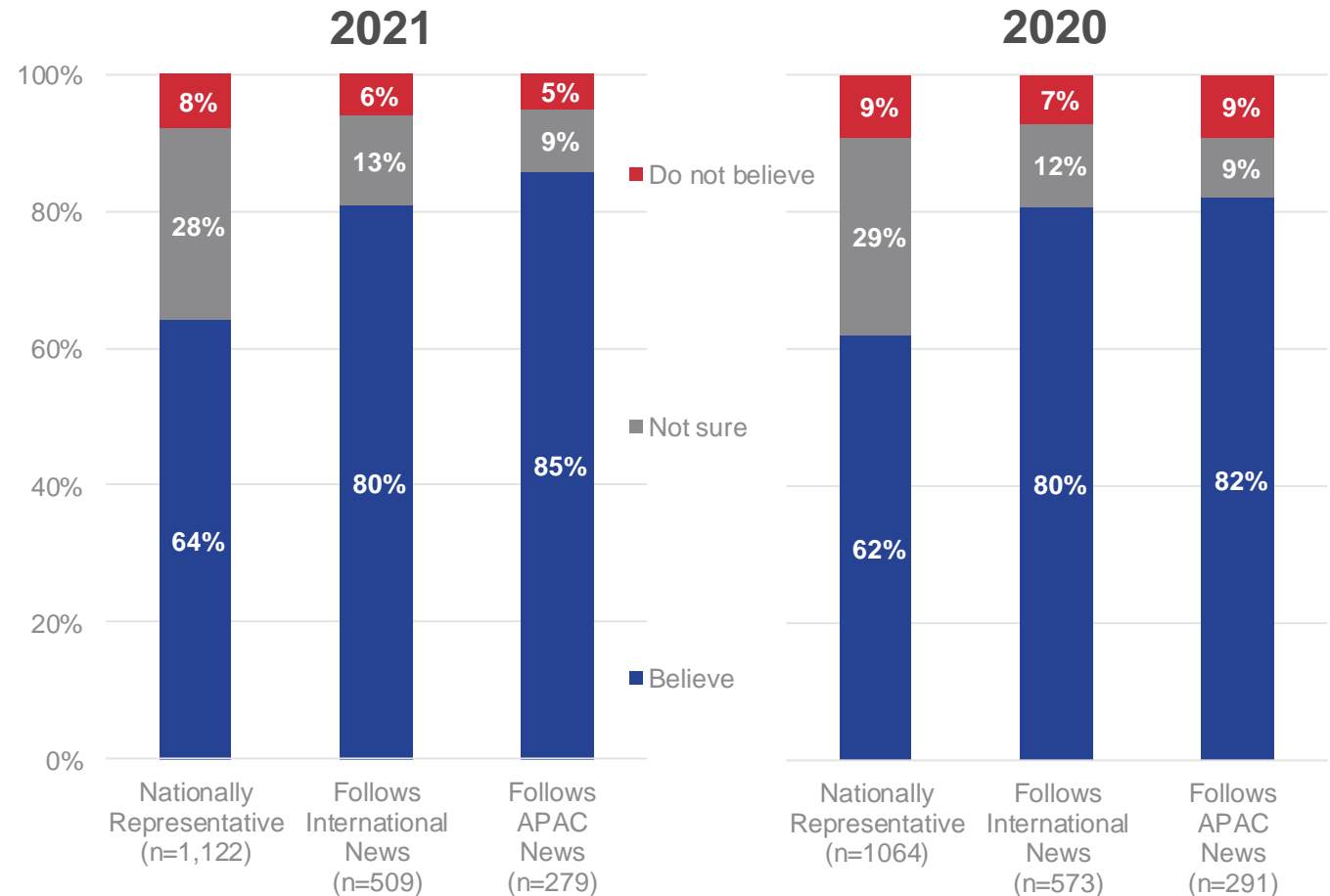
More than six in ten Americans believe the US military alliance with South Korea is in the national security interests of the US. The number of Americans who want to maintain all alliances, but with reforms, grew significantly this wave to 27%.

Over six in ten Americans see the military alliance with South Korea as beneficial to the US.




Over eight in ten Americans who follow international news or APAC news see the South Korean military alliance as beneficial to the US.

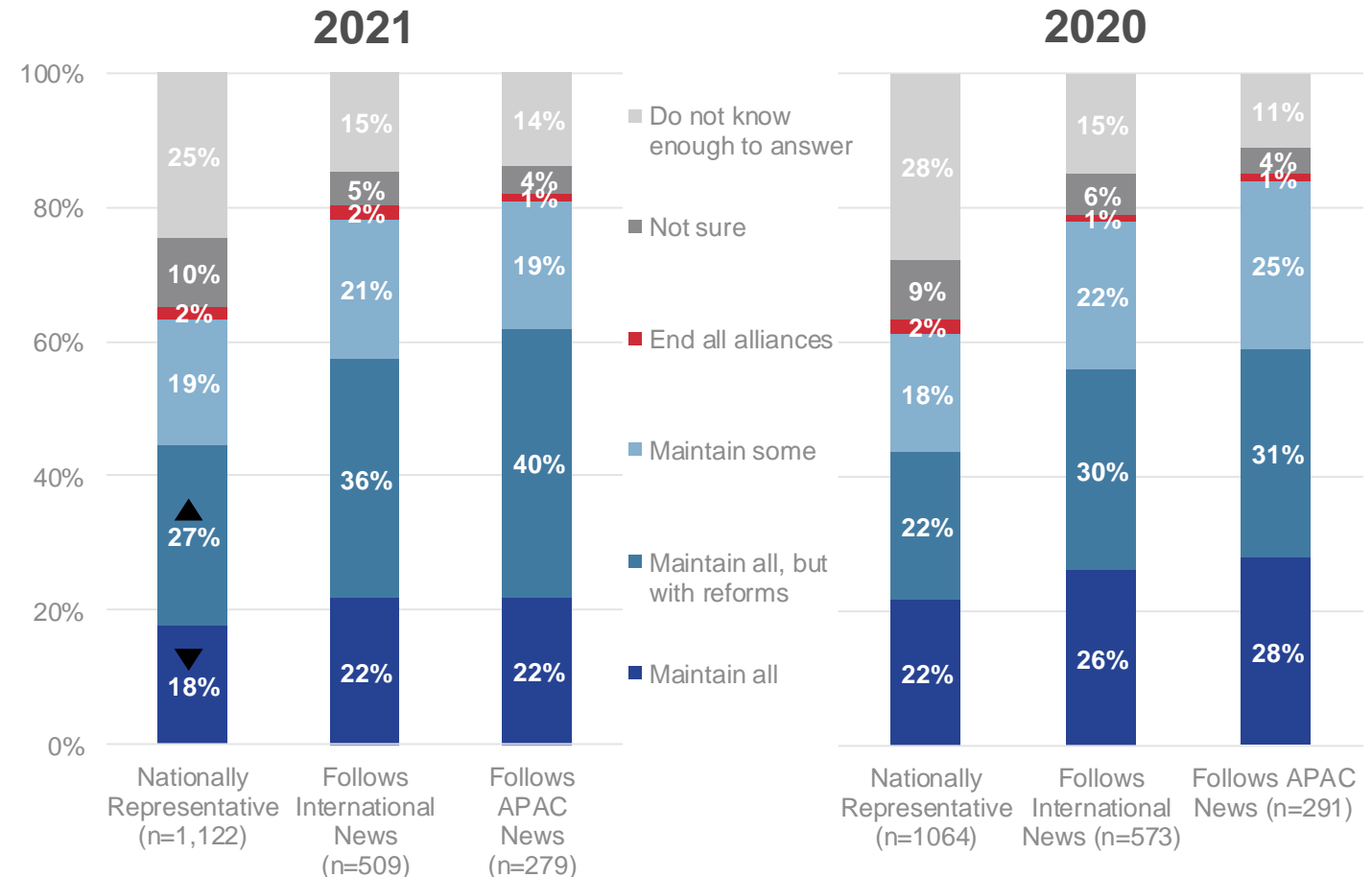
Views on Military Alliance Between the US and South Korea



Over the past year, there has been a shift away from Americans wanting to maintain all US alliances as is, toward maintaining all alliances, but with reforms.

 A plurality of Democrats favor keeping alliances as they are (23%), while a plurality of Republicans favor maintaining all alliances, with reforms (17%).

Views on Current US Military Alliances

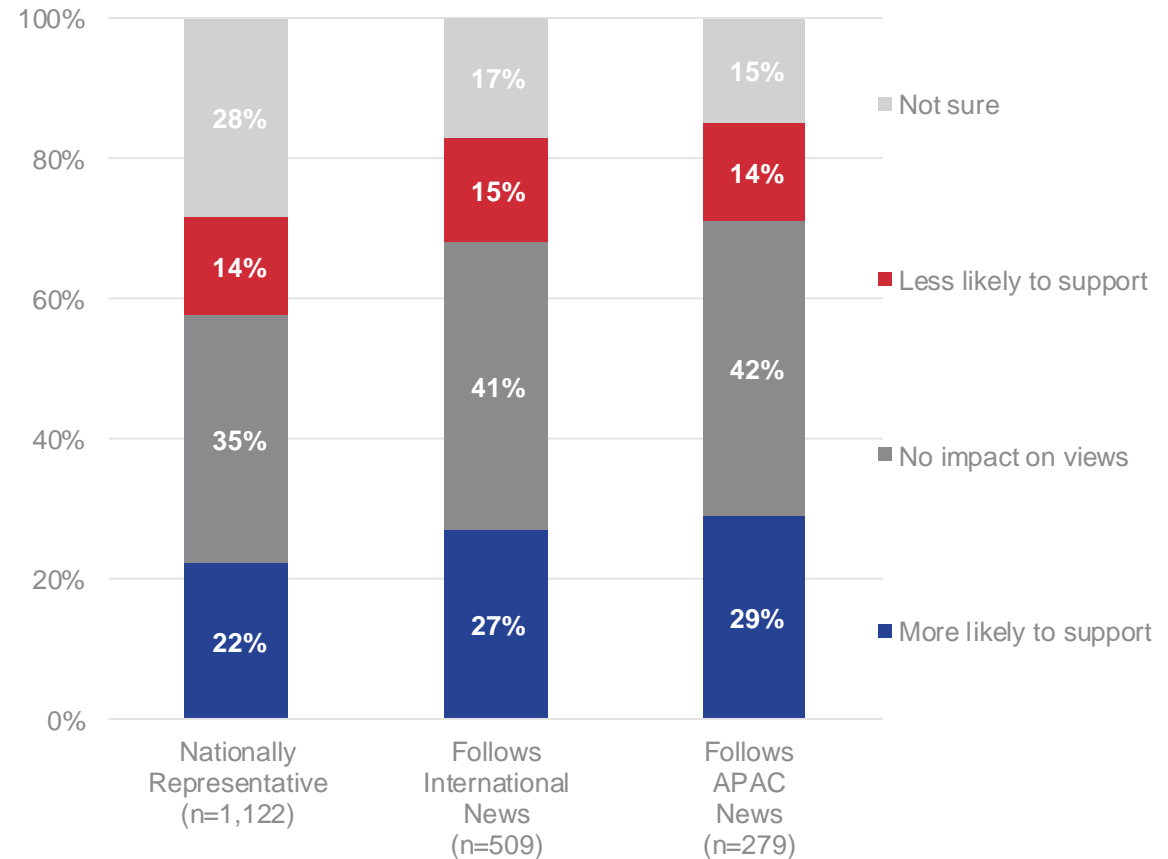


Q11. Which comes closest to how you feel about current US military alliances?
 Note: Arrows indicate change found to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

For many Americans, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan did not influence their views on maintaining US security commitment abroad.

Four in ten who follow international and APAC news did not change their views following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. More say it made them more likely to support US security commitments abroad than less likely to do so.

Views on US Decision to Withdraw from Afghanistan

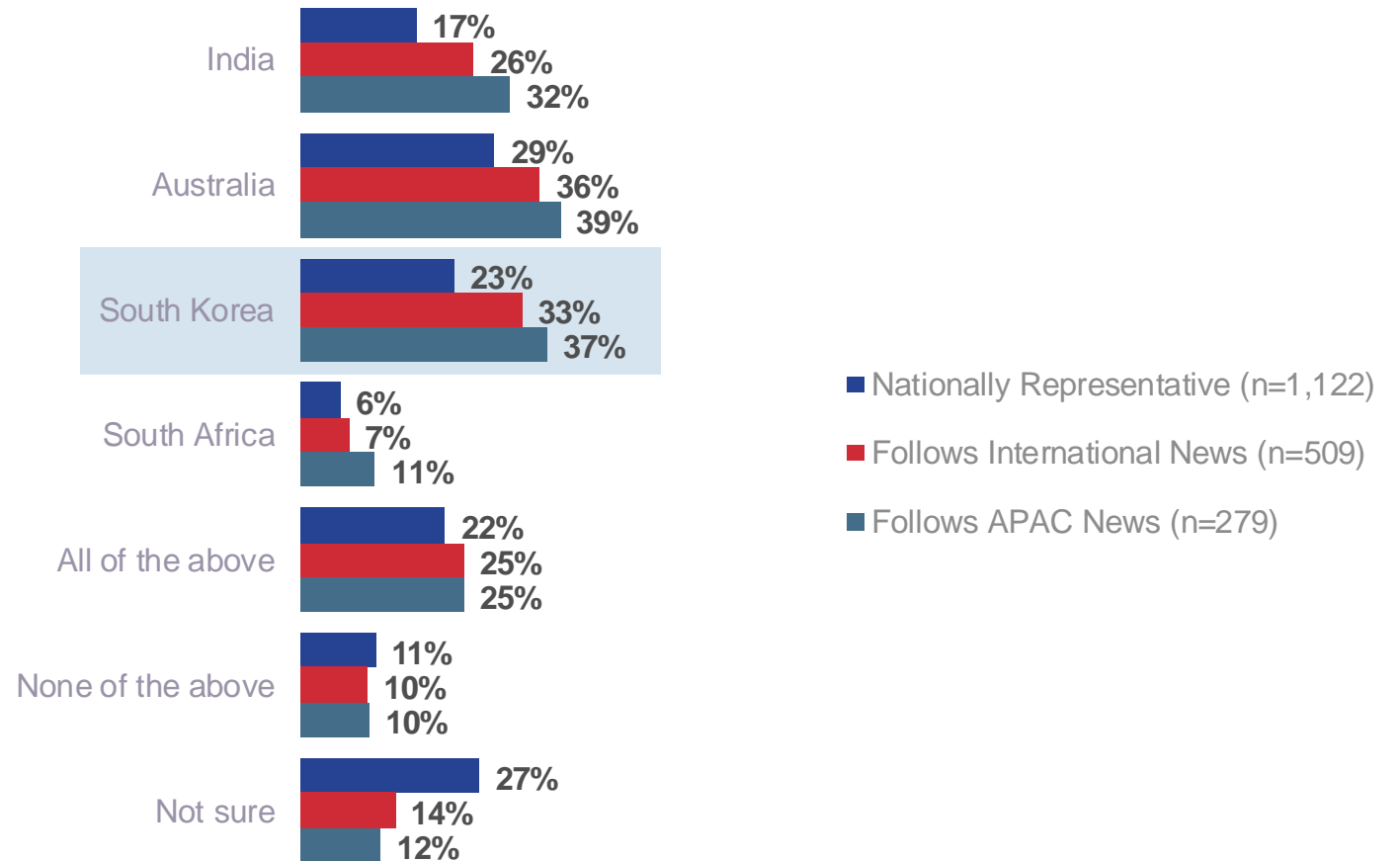


45% of Americans believe that South Korea should be added to the G-7, counting the 22% who believe that all countries listed should be added.



Four in ten of APAC news followers believe that South Korea should be added to the grouping.

Views on Which Countries to be Added to the G-7

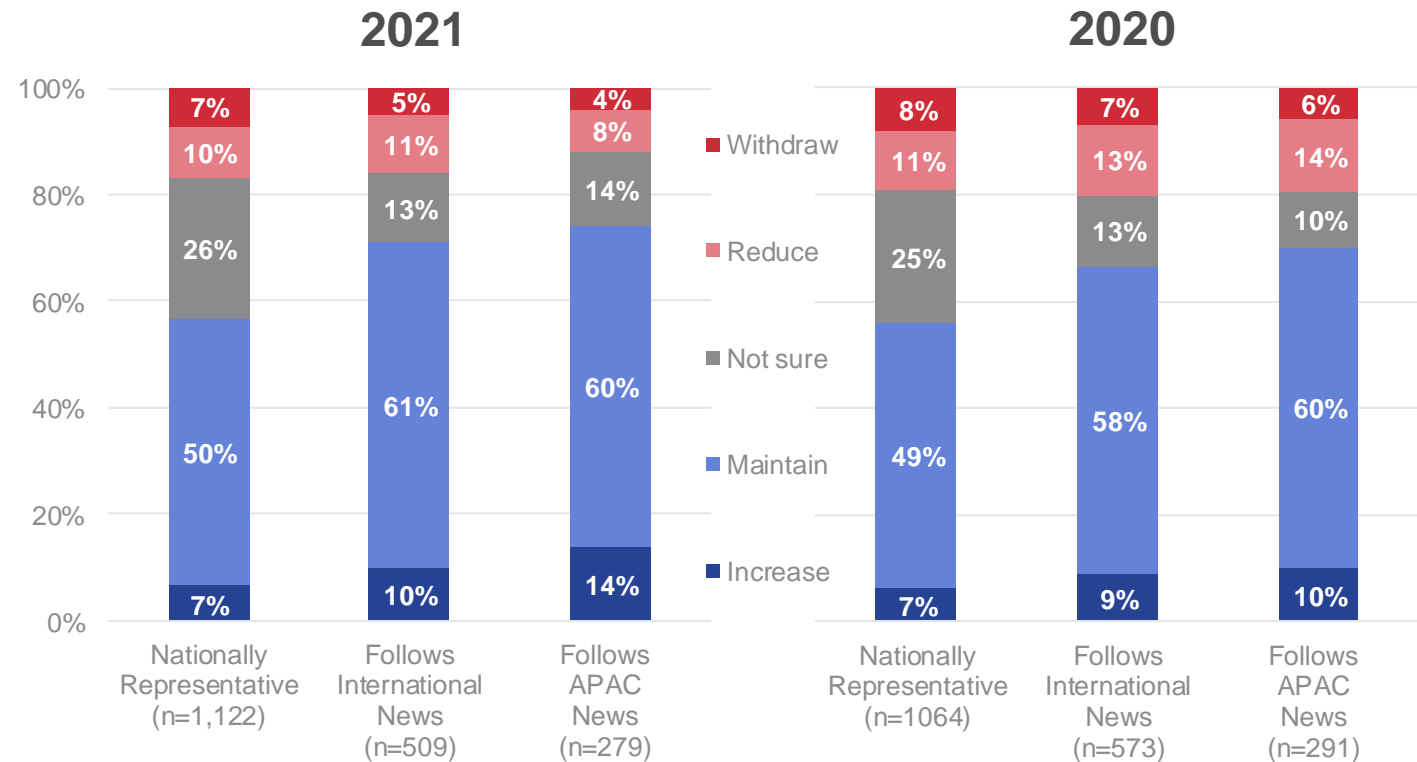


Half of Americans would like to see the US maintain current troop presence in South Korea.



Six in ten Americans who follow international or APAC news believe the US should maintain its troop presence in South Korea.

Views on US Troops in South Korea

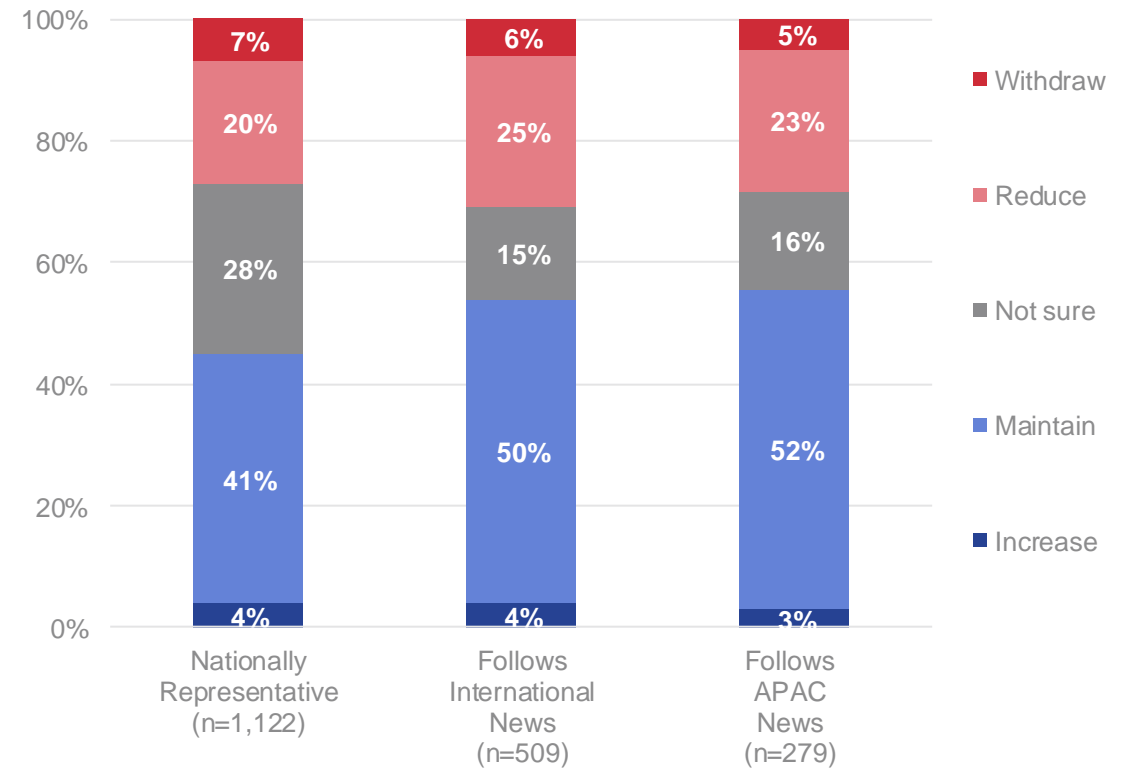


About four in ten Americans would like the US to maintain its troop presence in South Korea. Over a quarter of Americans reported being “Not sure”, which is a higher rate than that among Americans who follow international news and APAC news.



More Republicans would like the US to maintain its troops presence in South Korea than Democrats (51% vs. 37%).

Views on US Troops in South Korea Based on an Agreement with North Korea to Give Up its Nuclear Weapons

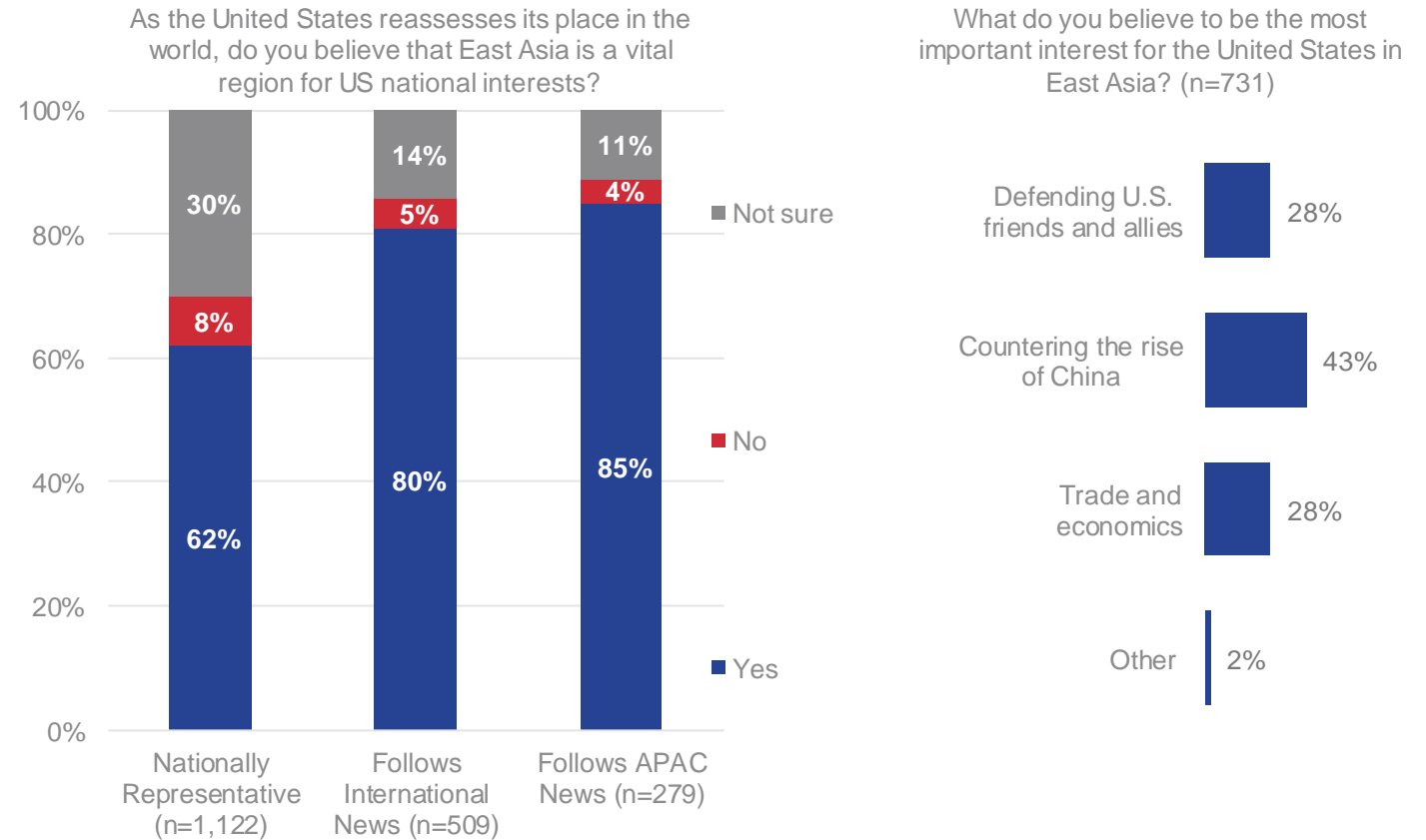


Over six in ten Americans believe that East Asia is a vital region for the US. This rate is even higher among international news and APAC news followers.



A plurality of Americans believe that the most important interest for the US in East Asia is countering the rise of China.

Views on East Asia as a Vital Region for US National Interests

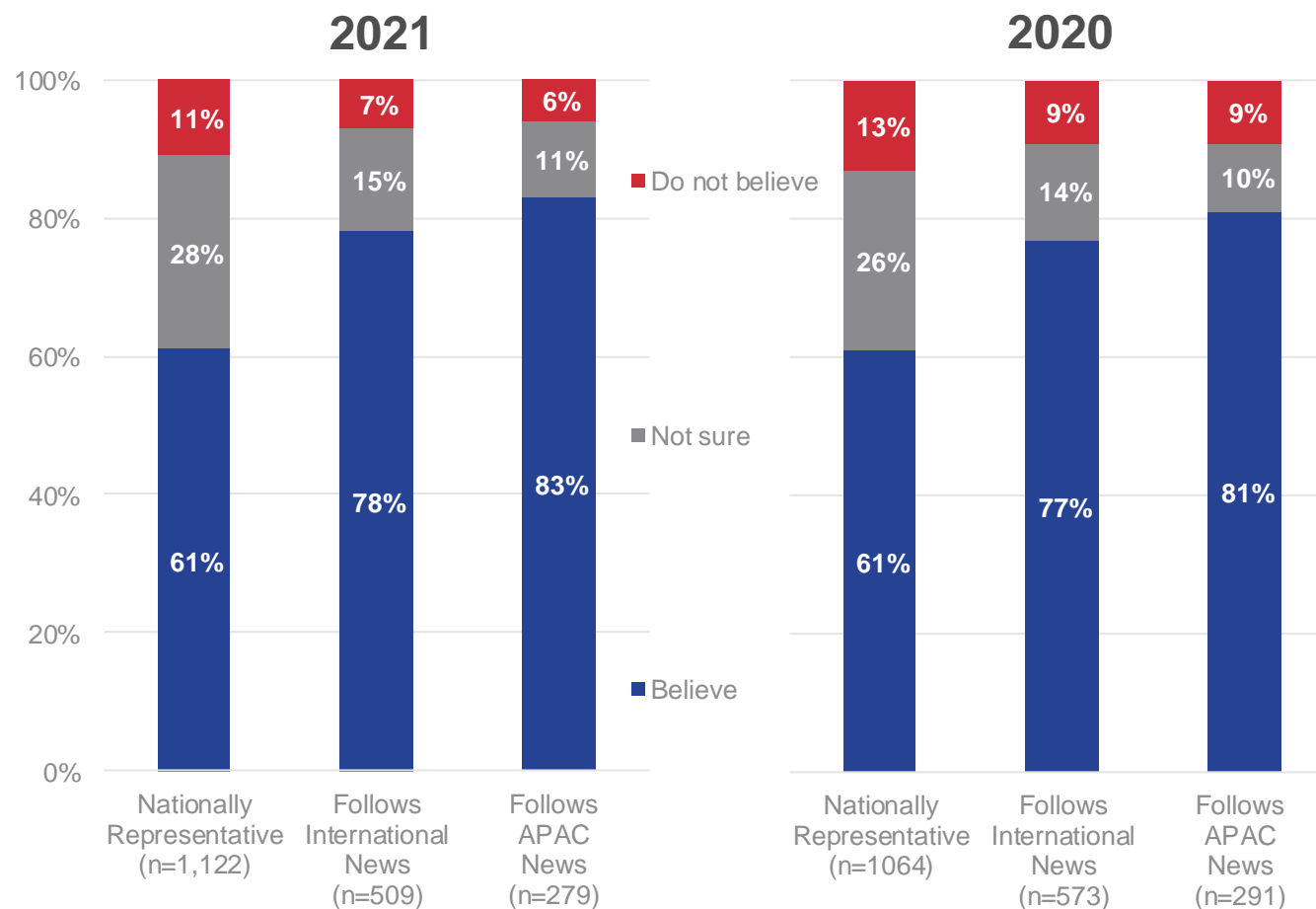


Six-in-ten believe the US should assist South Korea in the aftermath of a cyber-attack.



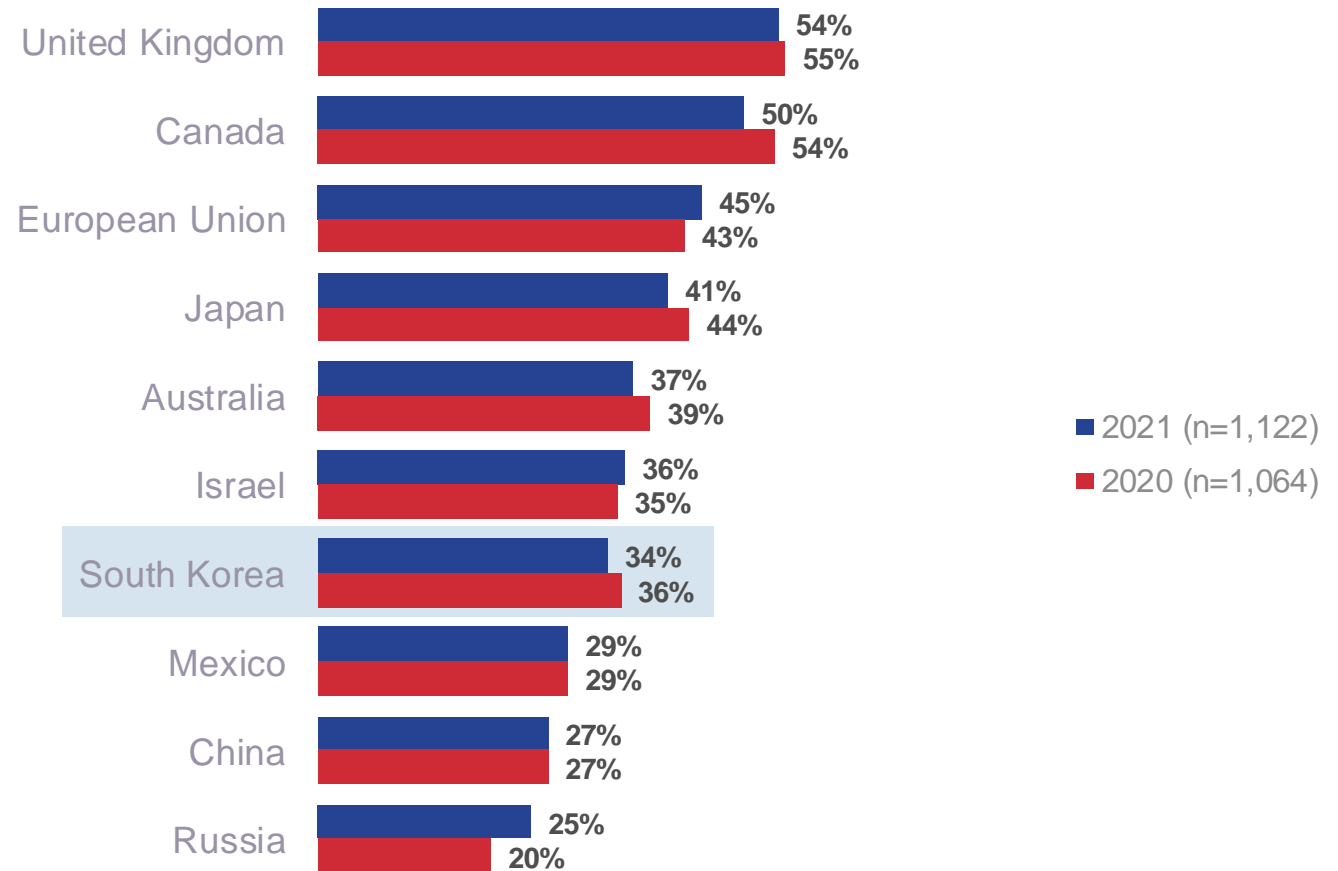
At eight in ten, the percent of Americans who follow international or APAC news and believe the US should assist in the event of a cyber-attack on South Korea is even higher than among the general public.

Views on Whether the US Should Assist South Korea in Event of a Cyber-Attack



Over a third of Americans think the US should coordinate with South Korea on cyber issues.

Countries/Regions the US Should Cooperate with on Cyber Issues (Top 10)*



Over half of Americans selected the UK as the country/region they would most like to see the US coordinate with on cyber issues.

Q3. As cyber-security becomes more of a focus for the international community in the years to come, which countries (if any) would you like to see the US cooperate with on cyber issues?

*Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question

Note: *Only top ten out of seventeen countries are displayed on this slide.

AMERICANS' VIEWS ON THE NORTH KOREA CHALLENGE

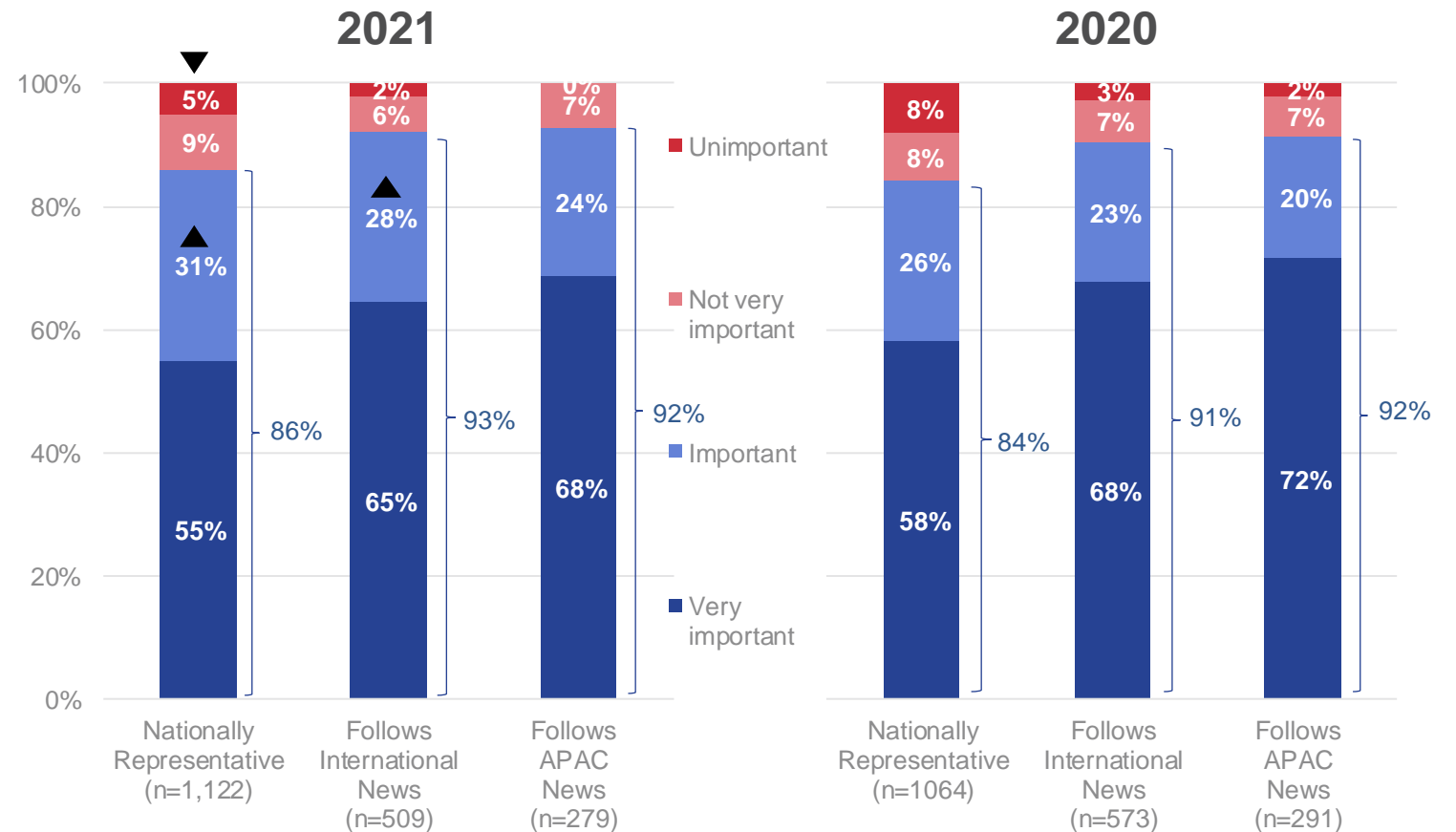
In 2021, significantly more Americans think it is important for North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons, while significantly fewer believe that it is very important for the US to push for human rights improvements in North Korea.

More Americans in general and Americans who follow international news believe it is important for North Korea to give up its military nuclear capabilities compared to 2020. The increase of those rate was statistically significant.



Republicans feel stronger about the importance of North Korea giving up its military nuclear capabilities than Democrats (64% vs. 57%).

Importance of North Korea Giving Up Its Military Nuclear Capabilities

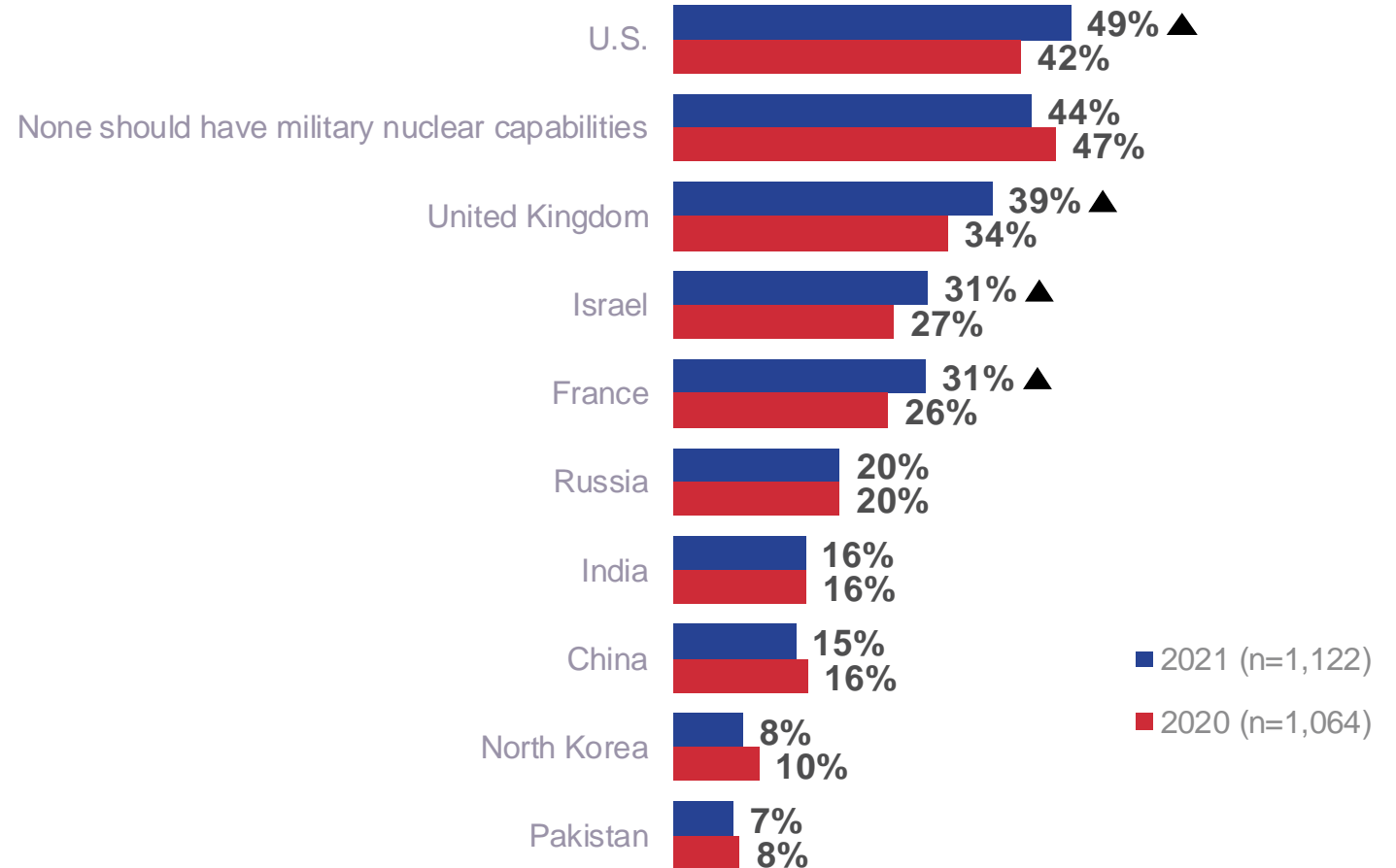


The number of Americans who believe the US, UK, Israel, and France should maintain their military nuclear capabilities grew significantly this wave.



Fewer than ten percent of Americans believe North Korea should maintain its military nuclear capabilities; almost half think no countries should have military nuclear capabilities.

Countries That Should Maintain Military Nuclear Capabilities*



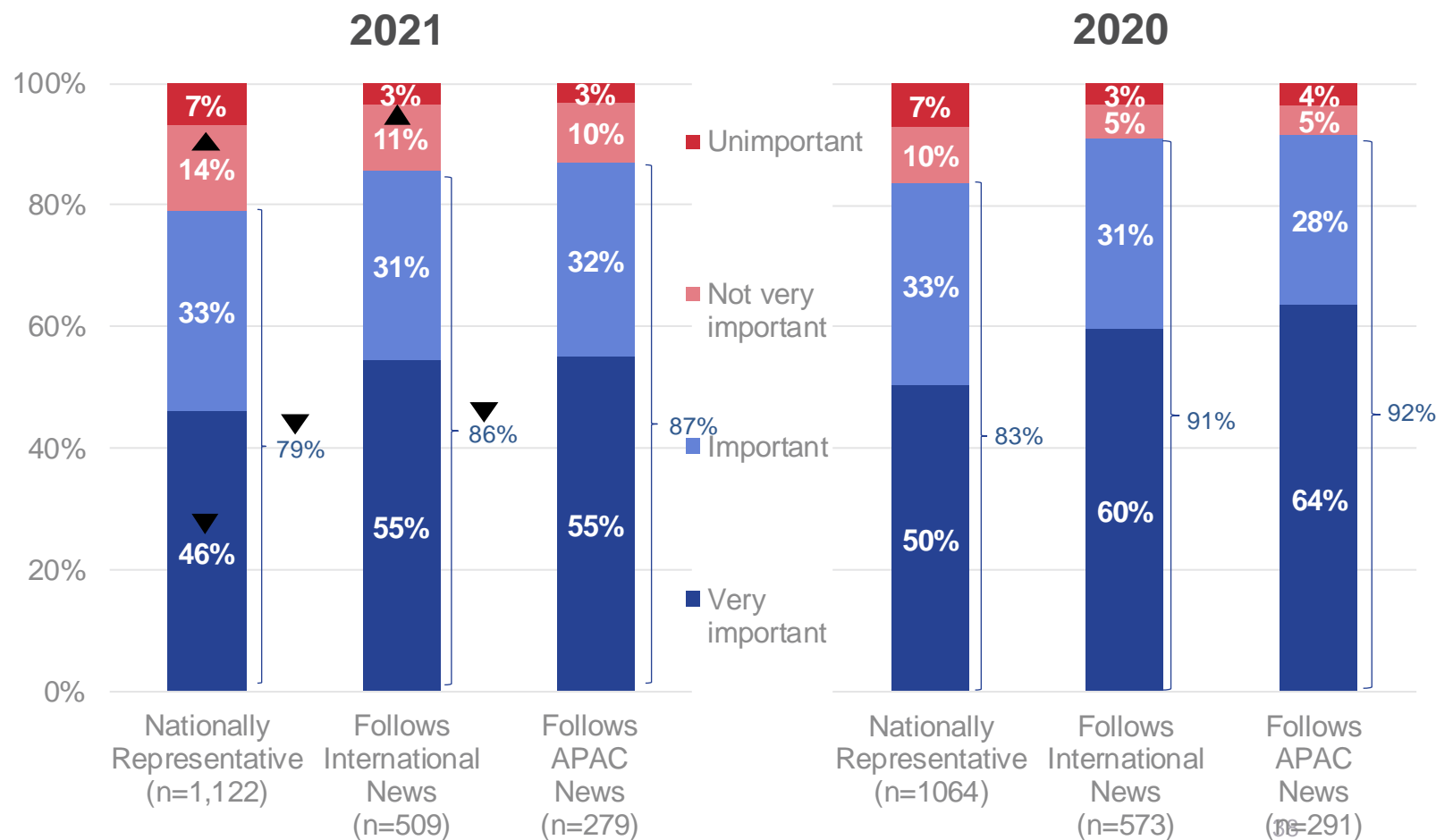
Q9. The following countries all have military nuclear capabilities. In your opinion, which of the following do you feel should be able to maintain its military nuclear capabilities? Please select all that apply.

*Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question.

Note: Arrows indicate change found to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

The percent of Americans who believe that it is very important for the US to push for human rights improvements in North Korea declined in 2021. This decline was statistically significant.

Importance of US Pushing for Human Rights Improvements in North Korea



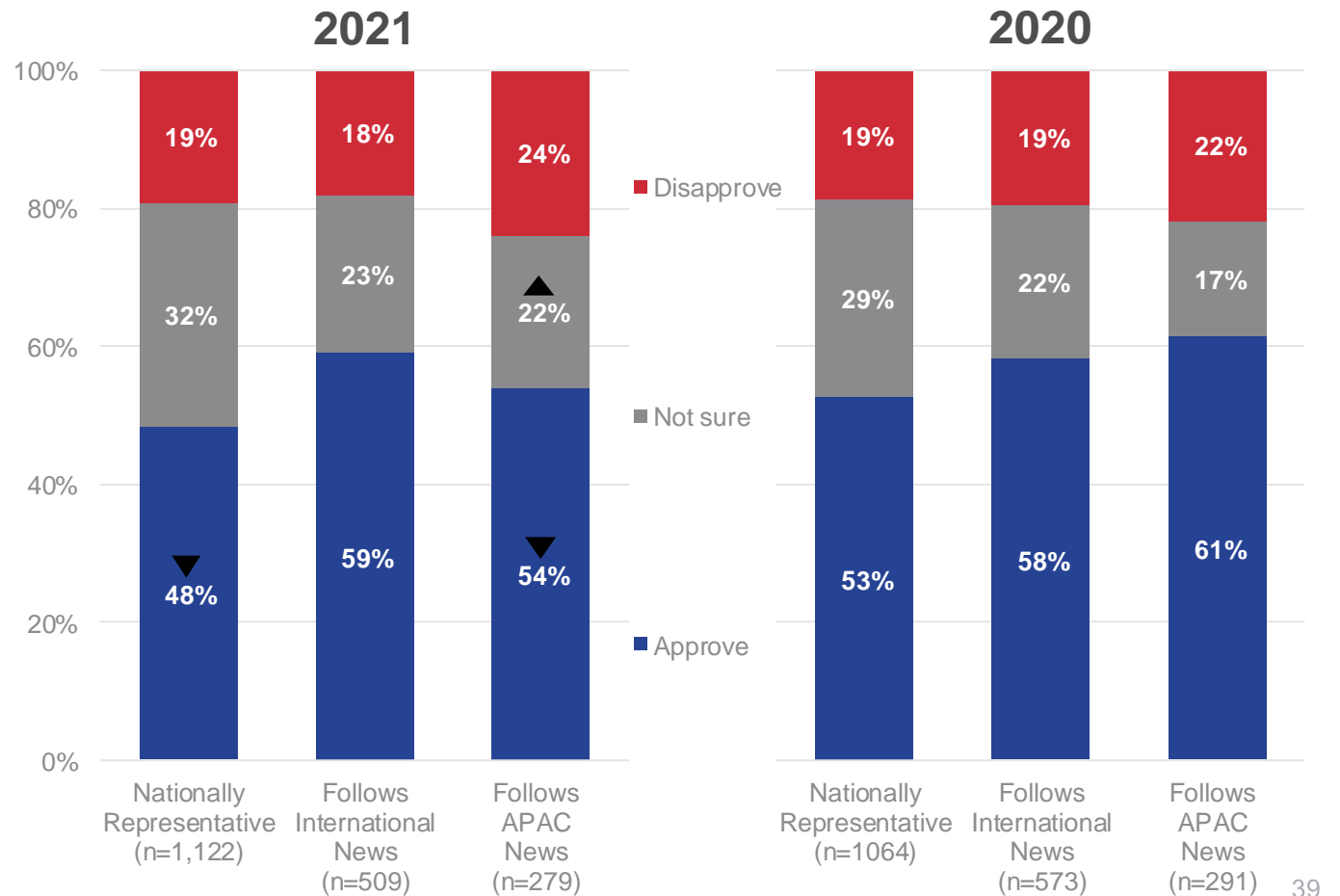
Q23. And how important is it that the US pushes for human rights improvements in North Korea?
 Note: Arrows indicate change found to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

Nearly half of Americans approve of the US sending humanitarian assistance to North Korean citizens. This rate has declined over the past year among Americans in general and among those who follow APAC news.



More Democrats approve of sending humanitarian assistance to North Korea compared to Republicans (60% vs. 38%).

Approval of US Providing Humanitarian Assistance to North Korean Citizens

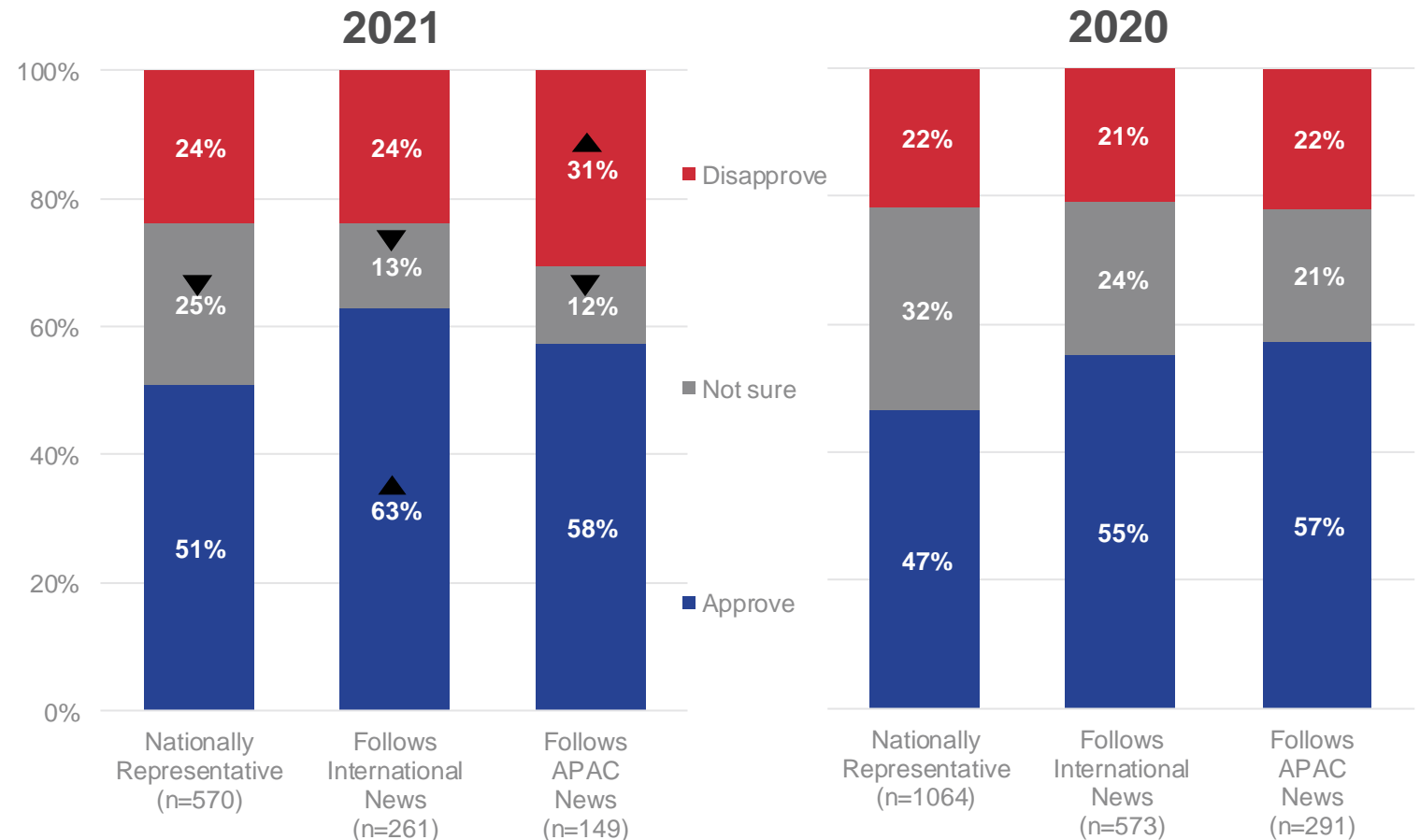


Q24. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the US providing humanitarian assistance such as food, medical supplies, or other civilian assistance to North Korean citizens?

Note: Arrows indicate change found to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

Compared to 2020, significantly more Americans who follow international news in 2021 approve of the US sending Covid-19 assistance to North Korean citizens. However, significantly more Americans who follow APAC news disapprove.

Approval of US Providing Covid-19 Assistance to North Korean Citizens



Q25. In your view, would you approve or disapprove of the US providing Covid-19 assistance to North Korea?

Note: Arrows indicate change found to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

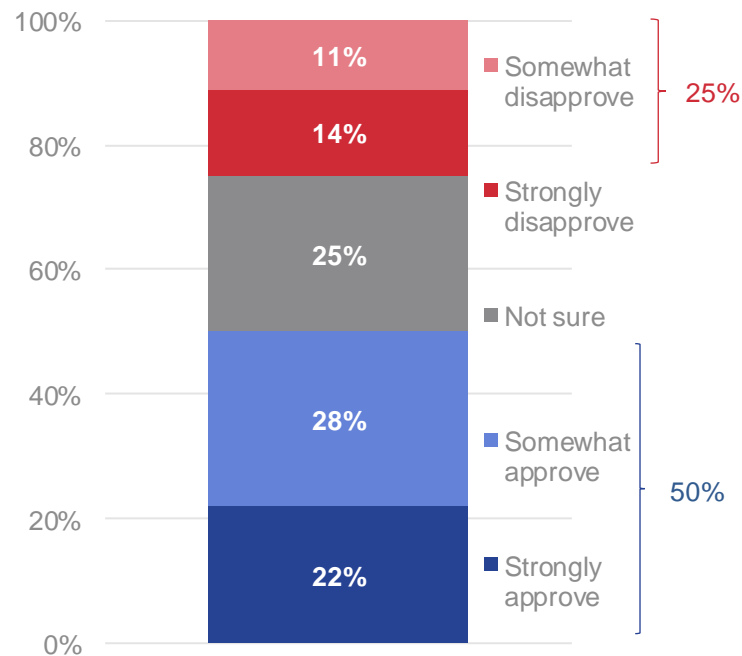
Note 2: Wording changed in 2020 and we are showing only the responses of those who saw the same wording as last year.

Half of respondents were asked directly about support for the US providing Covid-19 assistance to North Korea, while the other half were about their support after introductory text about the poor state of healthcare in North Korea and its likely vaccine shortage.

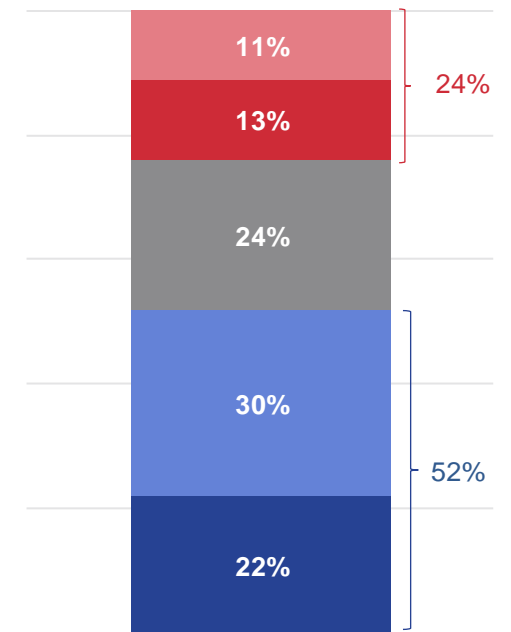
Half of Americans support providing assistance, regardless of how the question was stated.

Approval of US Providing Covid-19 Assistance to North Korean Citizens

In your view, would you approve or disapprove of the US providing Covid-19 assistance to North Korea?
(n=570)



[Intro about poor healthcare and vaccine shortage.] In your view, would you approve or disapprove of the US providing Covid-19 assistance to North Korea?
(n=552)



Thank You