

A photograph of three men in dark blue suits shaking hands. The man on the left is older with white hair, the man in the middle is younger with glasses, and the man on the right is also younger. They are all smiling and looking at each other. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# KEI: 2023 Report on American Attitudes Toward the Korean Peninsula

# 2023 Report on American Attitudes Toward the Korean Peninsula

This study on American Attitudes Toward the Korean Peninsula surveyed 1,177 Americans in August of 2023. 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 177 Americans who specifically follow international news, to ensure a sample size of over 500 such respondents across the main and oversample. 316 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 22<sup>nd</sup> to August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023**



**Average Survey Length: 15 minutes**

	Margin of Error
US Adults	+/- 3.5%
Int'l News Followers	+/- 4.7%

# Demographics: By Sample Type



## Region

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
Northeast	17%	20%
Midwest	20%	20%
South	38%	37%
West	24%	23%

## Education

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
High school or less	39%	26%
Some college, 2 year	28%	28%
4-year	22%	27%
Post-grad	11%	19%

## Income



	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
Less Than \$29,999	26%	18%
\$30,000 - \$49,999	15%	12%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	29%	34%
\$100,000 or More	19%	27%
Prefer not to say	12%	9%

## Age

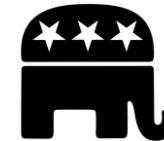


	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
18-29	22%	18%
30-44	24%	25%
45-64	34%	33%
65 or older	19%	24%

## Ethnicity

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
White	63%	66%
Black	12%	10%
Hispanic	16%	15%
Other	9%	9%

## Political Party:



	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
Democrat	31%	37%
Republican	26%	24%
Independent	29%	31%
Other/Not Sure	14%	8%

## Gender



	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
Male	51%	65%
Female	49%	35%



# Table of Contents

## Key Insights

### Americans' General Views on South and North Korea

### Americans' Views on Trade with South Korea

### Americans' Views on Military Alliance with South Korea

### Americans' Views on the North Korea Challenge



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

- South Korea continues to be viewed as one of the top 10 most influential countries in the world, with a rising number of Americans seeing it as influential. American views of the country are also strongly favorable (70%) - even more so among those who follow international news (87%).
- Despite its influence and favorability, a majority of Americans do not perceive South Korea as a “critical partner.” Only the UK, Canada, and the EU reach this threshold, with Japan coming close. For any partner, most Americans (65%) believe it is important for America’s allies to share democratic values.
- For those who perceive Japan and South Korea as critical partners of the US, two-thirds would like to see more trilateral cooperation between the US, Japan, and South Korea, especially focused on security in the region and on economic ties. Bilaterally, over half of Americans believe that the US and South Korea should focus on security in the region, supply chain issues, and North Korea.
- Ratings of the US administration’s handling of relations with South Korea are strong, showing a significant increase to 48% this year (and 65% among Americans who follow international news).
- North Korea continues to be viewed as a critical foreign policy challenge for the US. Americans name it as one of the top three challenges, after China and Russia, while Iran recedes slightly this year. Ratings of the US administration’s handling of relations with North Korea are low (26%), with more expressing disapproval than approval.



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

- Although awareness of a free trade agreement between the US and South Korea is relatively low (27%), the percent of Americans believing that trade with South Korea is beneficial grew significantly to 70% in 2023.
- Americans are increasingly engaging with exports of South Korean popular culture and entertainment. 26% of Americans now identify as a fan of some form of South Korean popular entertainment, such as music, television, movies, or beauty products. This represents two years of significant growth in this area.
- Support for the military alliance between the US and South Korea remains strong. Nearly 70% of Americans believe this alliance is in the national security interests of the US.
- 2023 showed a significant increase in the percent of Americans who would maintain the number of US troops currently in South Korea (from 48% in 2022 to 56% in 2023). An additional 10% would support increasing troop levels.
  - In the event of a nuclear arms agreement with North Korea, a plurality of Americans would still support maintaining or increasing US troop levels in South Korea, though the percent who would call for a reduction (25%) increased significantly in 2023.
- 70% believe that East Asia is a vital region for US national security interests. While countering the rise of China has been the top US foreign policy priority in East Asia in previous years, trade and economics now rank as equally important, reflecting a significant increase in importance for this issue in 2023.
  - The percent rating the defense of friends and allies in East Asia as the most important priority decreased to 24% in 2023. This may be linked to awareness of the costs of such alliances based on recent experience in Ukraine.



# KEY INSIGHTS: Americans' Views on the North Korea Challenge

- In general, there is decreasing support for any country to maintain nuclear weapons capabilities.
- Regarding North Korea's nuclear weapons capability, American attitudes have remained stable for several years. Nearly 90% Americans think it is important that North Korea give up its nuclear weapons program. But Americans do not think that relations with North Korea should focus exclusively on nuclear weapons.
  - 84% believe that the US should push for human rights improvements in North Korea.
  - A plurality (48%) believe that the US should provide humanitarian or civilian assistance to North Korean citizens.
  - Half of Americans support normalizing relations with North Korea and discussing issues other than denuclearization, even if North Korea refuses to give up its nuclear weapons capability.

## AMERICANS' GENERAL VIEWS ON SOUTH & NORTH KOREA

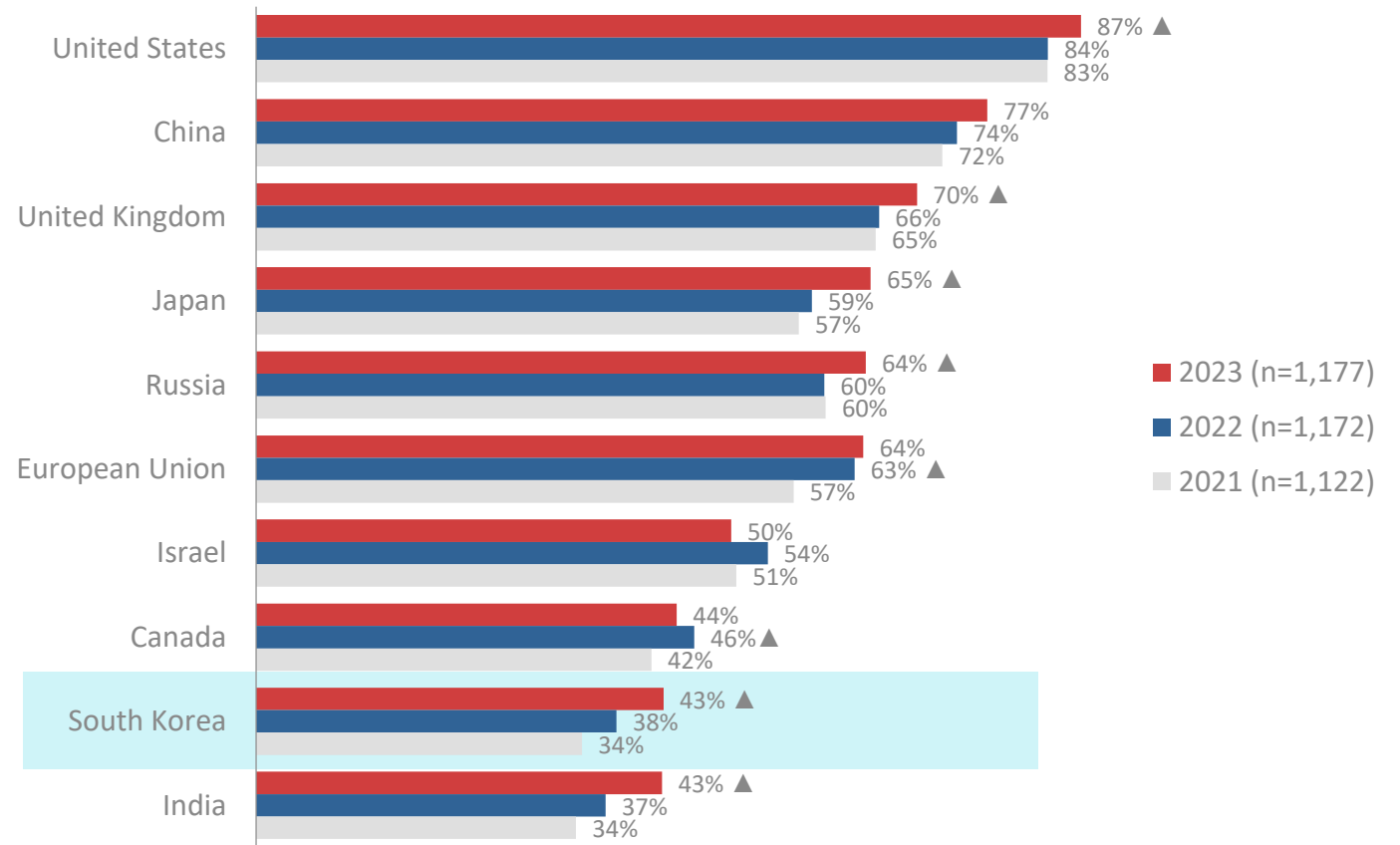
Over four in ten of all Americans view South Korea as a “partner” of the US and would like to see the two countries coordinate more on issues such as security in East Asia and the Indo-Pacific, supply chains, and North Korea. China and Russia continued to be viewed as the most critical foreign policy challenge to the US.



The US continues to be viewed as the most influential nation in the world. 43% of respondents see South Korea as a very/fairly influential nation in the world. This rate has increased significantly since 2022.

### National/Regional Influence in the World (Top 10)\*

Very/Fairly Influential



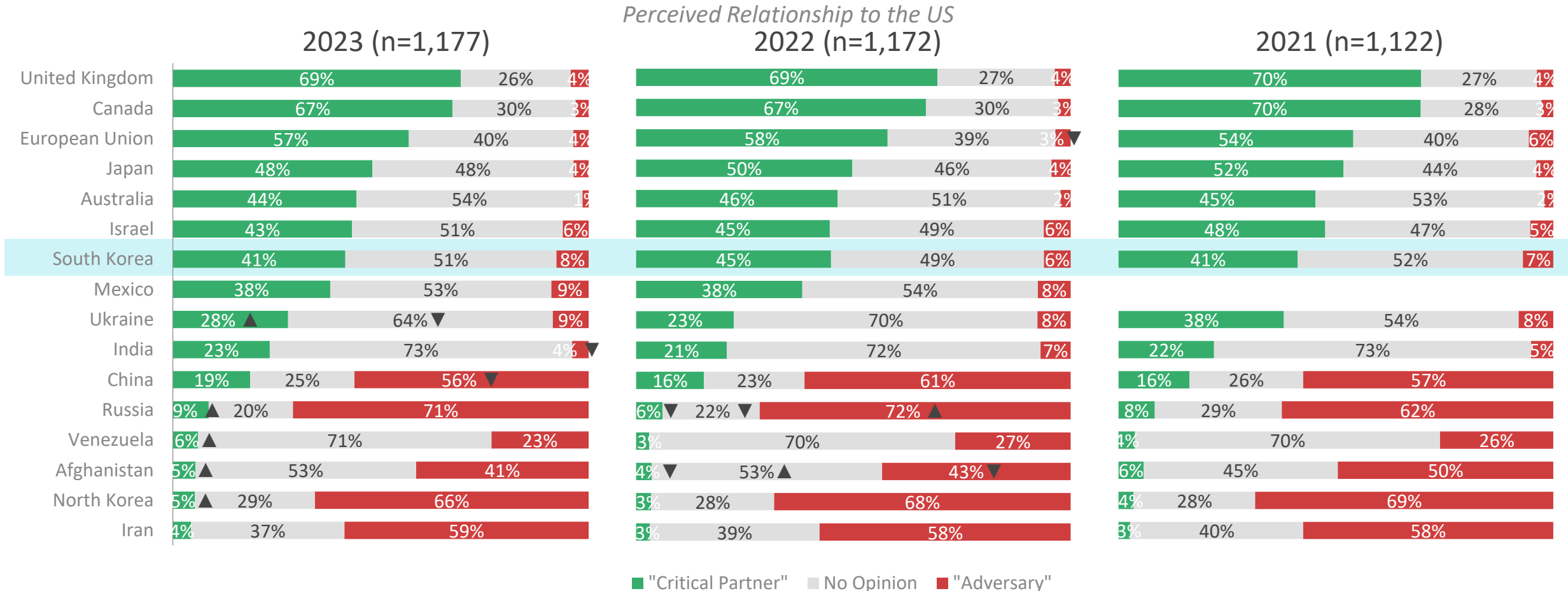
Q1: How influential do you think the following country or region is in the world? Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question.

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

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

## 4 in 10 Americans See South Korea as a Critical Partner

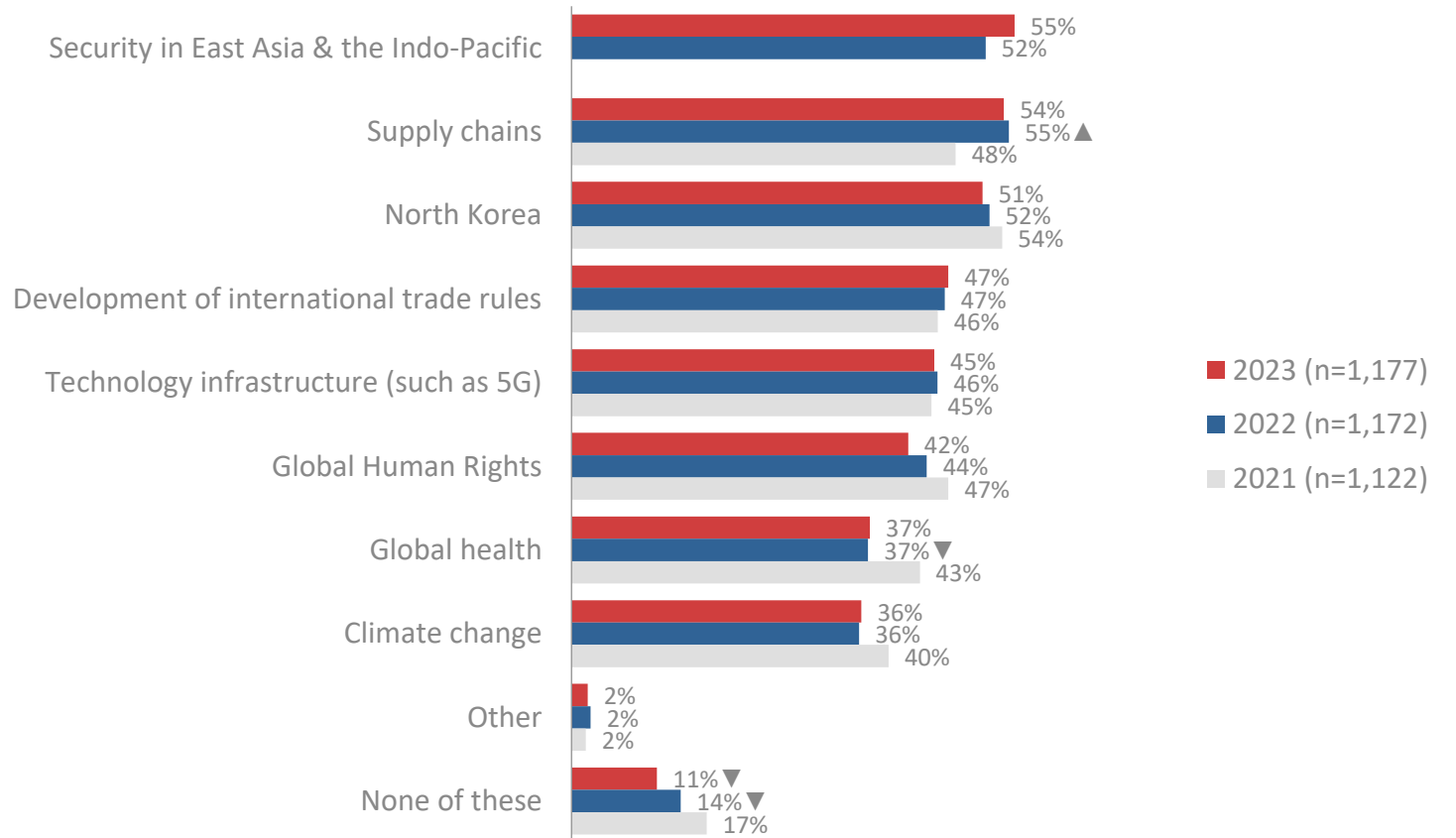
In 2023, the UK, Canada, and the EU continued to be most likely to be called "critical partners" of the US. 41% of respondents called South Korea a "critical partner" to the US, compared to 45% in 2022, however this decrease was not significant.



Over half of Americans would like to see the US and South Korea cooperate on security, supply chains, and North Korea.



### Issues on Which the US and South Korea Should Cooperate



Q16. In your view, on which of these issues, if any, do you feel it is important for the US and South Korea to cooperate? Please select all that apply.

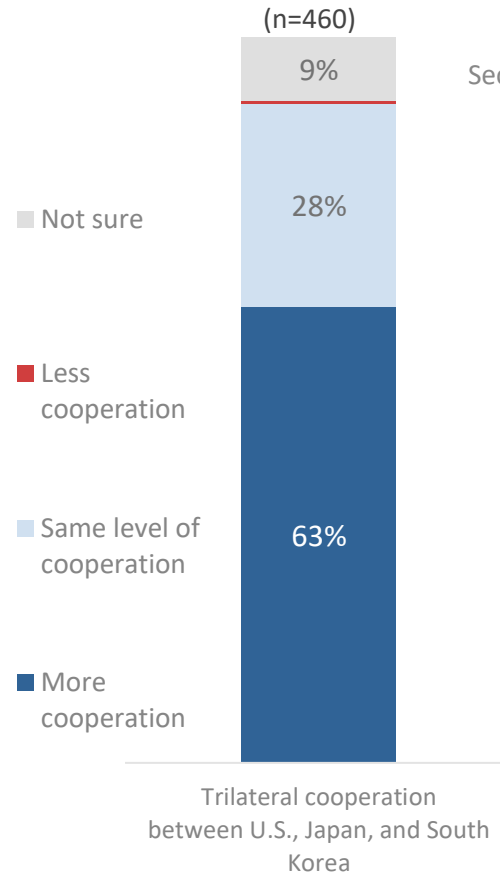
▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

## Support for Trilateral Cooperation Among Those Viewing Japan and South Korea As Critical Partners of the US

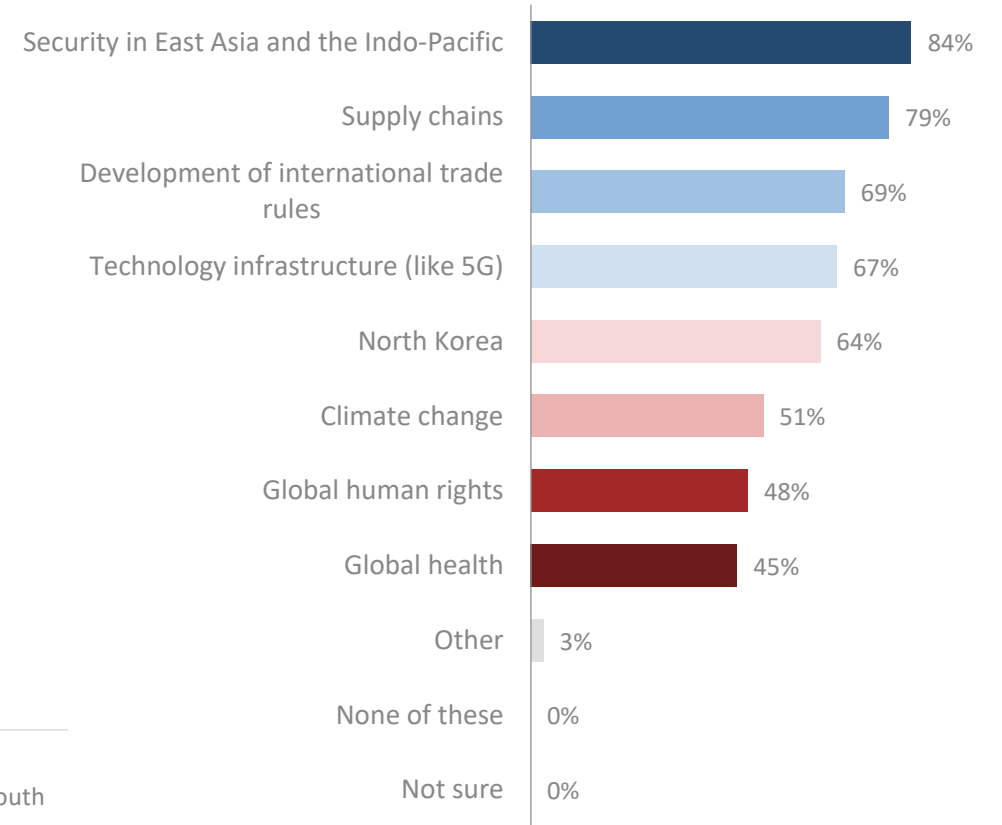
Added 2023

Almost 2 in 3 Americans who view South Korea and Japan as critical partners believe the US should exercise more trilateral cooperation. They advocate that this cooperation should be deepened within the areas of security, supply chains, and development of international trade rules.

How should the US approach three-way cooperation with Japan and South Korea? (n=460)



In what areas should the US deepen cooperation with Japan and South Korea? (N=294)



trilateral\_2023: If you view both South Korea and Japan as critical partners, how should the United States approach three-way cooperation with South Korea and Japan?

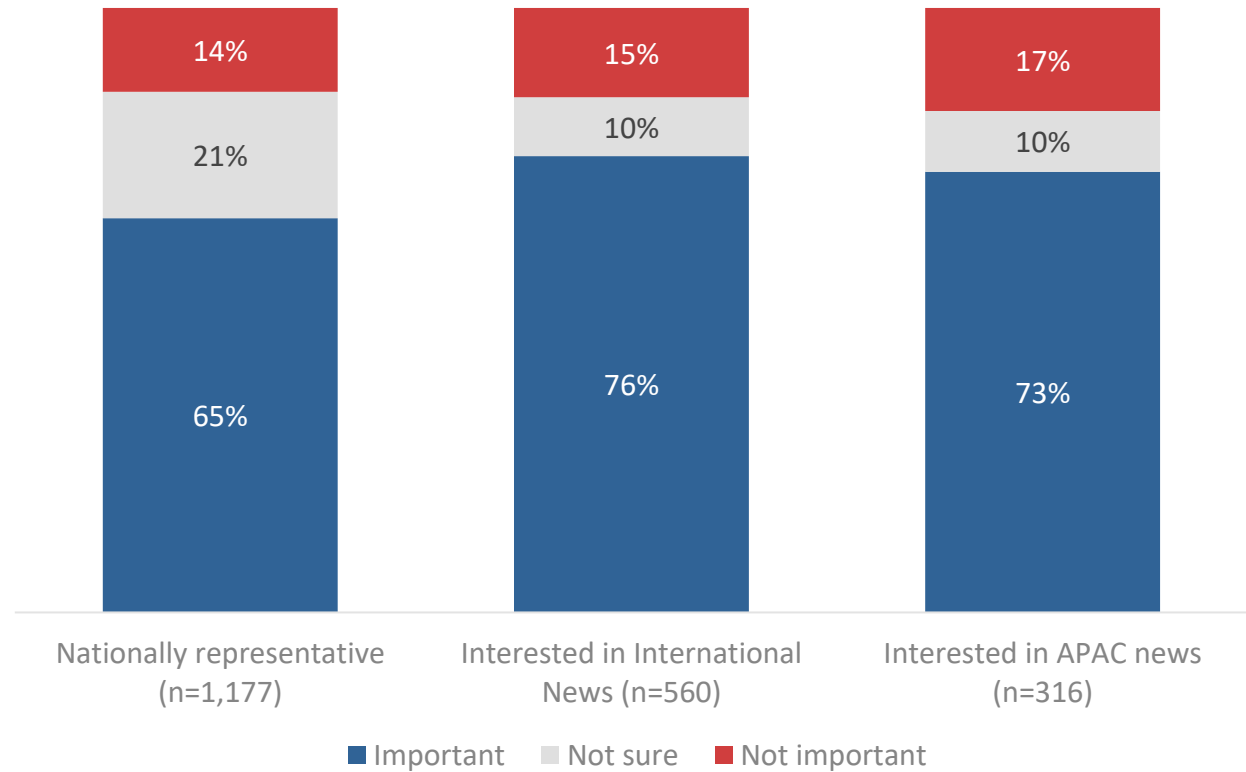
areas\_2023: In what areas should the United States, South Korea, and Japan deepen cooperation? Select all that apply.

Americans who are interested in international news or APAC news are more likely to believe in the importance of the US and its allies sharing democratic values.



## Importance of Shared Democratic Values between US and its Allies

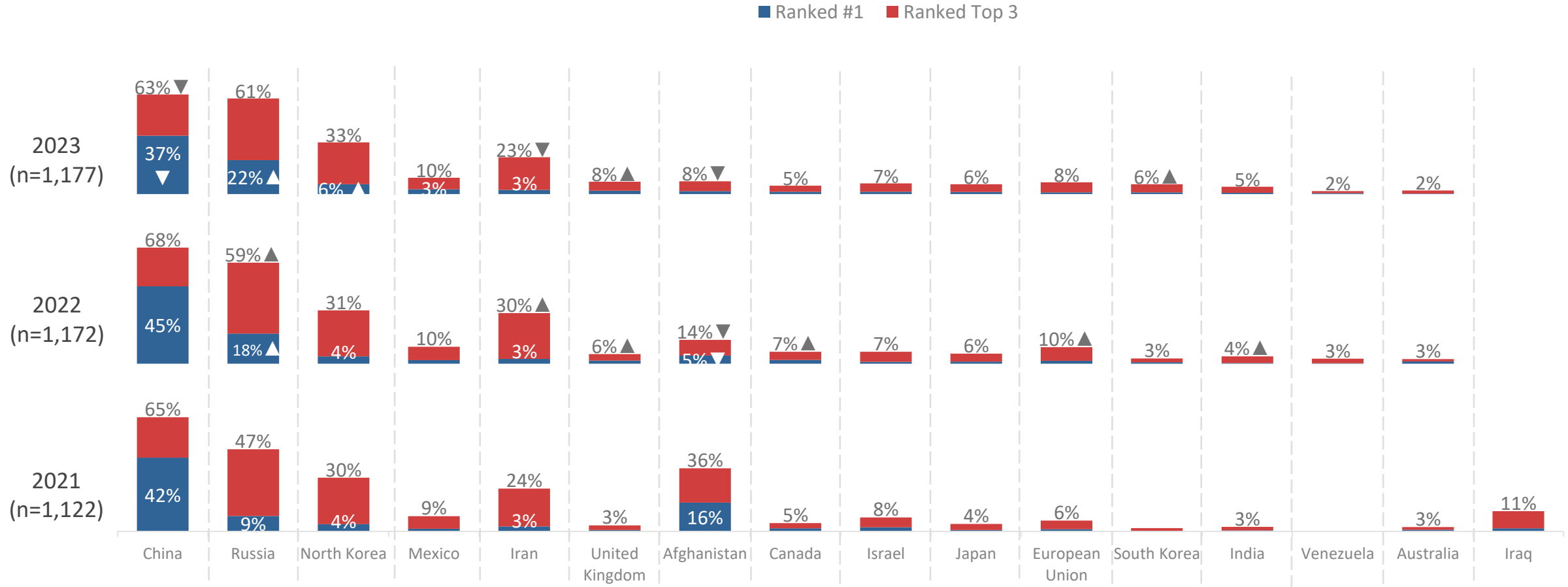
Added 2023



democratic\_values\_2023: In your view, is it important for the United States and its allies to share democratic values?

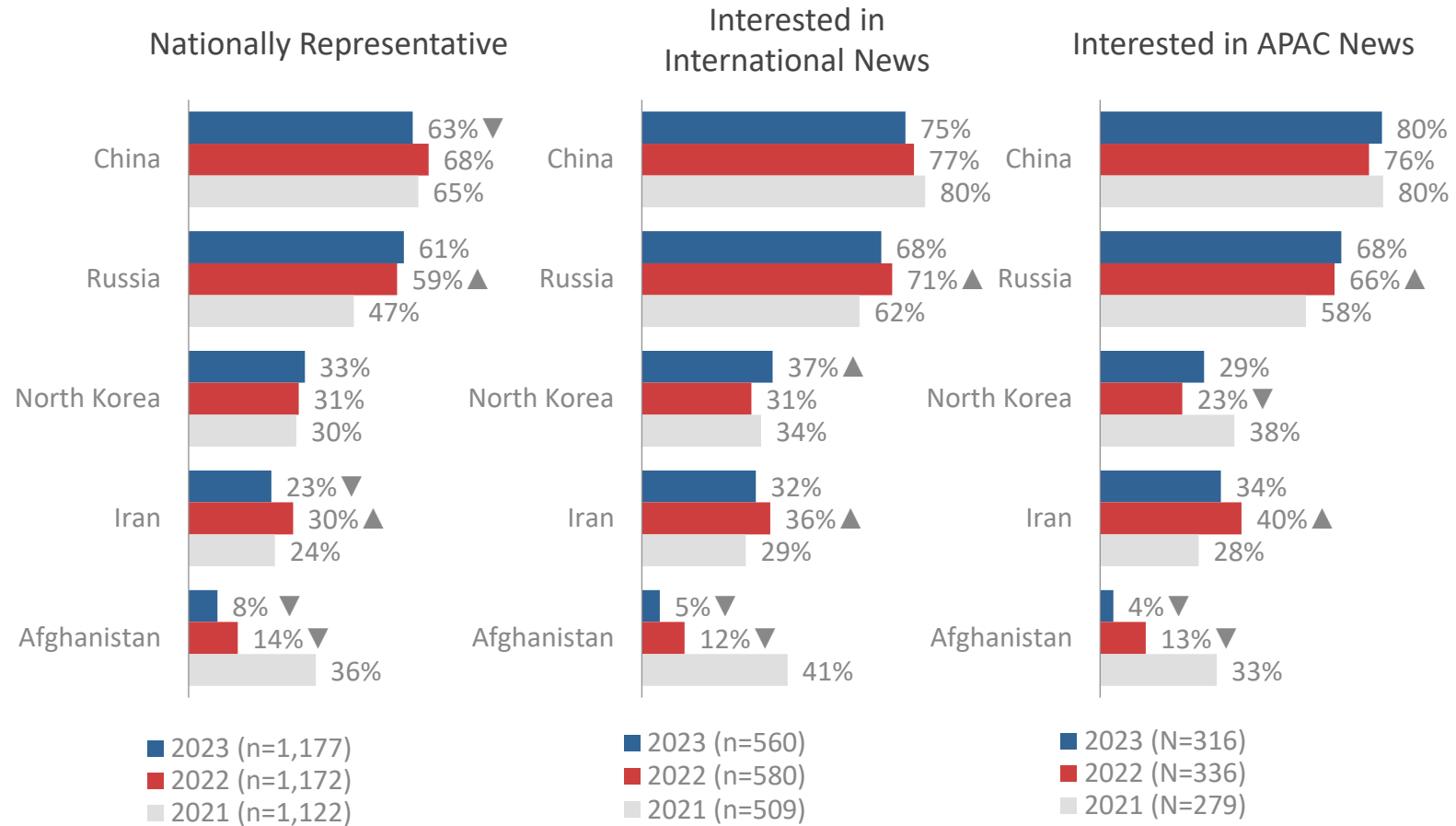
China, Russia, and North Korea continue to rank as the most critical foreign policy challenges to the US. Compared to last year, with Iran receding slightly compared to 2022.

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



Fewer Americans perceive China, Iran, and Afghanistan as critical challenges compared to previous years. Those interested in international news see a greater challenge from North Korea than in previous years.

### Countries/Regions Representing the Most Critical Foreign Policy Challenges to the US (Ranked in Top 3)

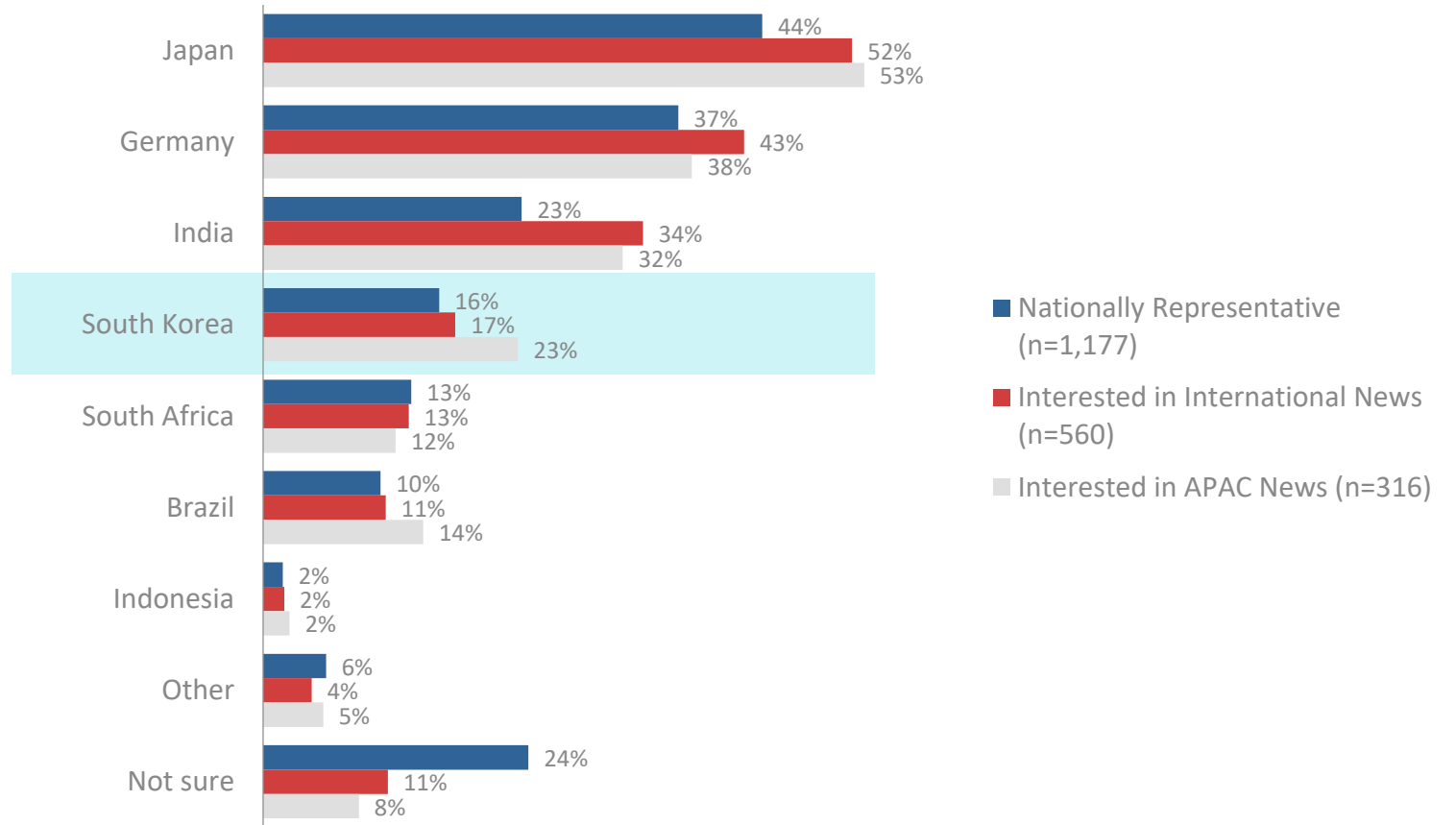


Q8: In your view, which of the following countries and/or geographic regions, if any, represent the most critical foreign policy challenges for the US? Please select up to three responses. Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question.  
 ▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

Japan, Germany, and India lead in countries that Americans believe should be added to the UN Security Council. Among those interested in international or APAC news, support for adding these countries is higher.

## Countries That Should Be Added to the United Nations Security Council

Added 2023

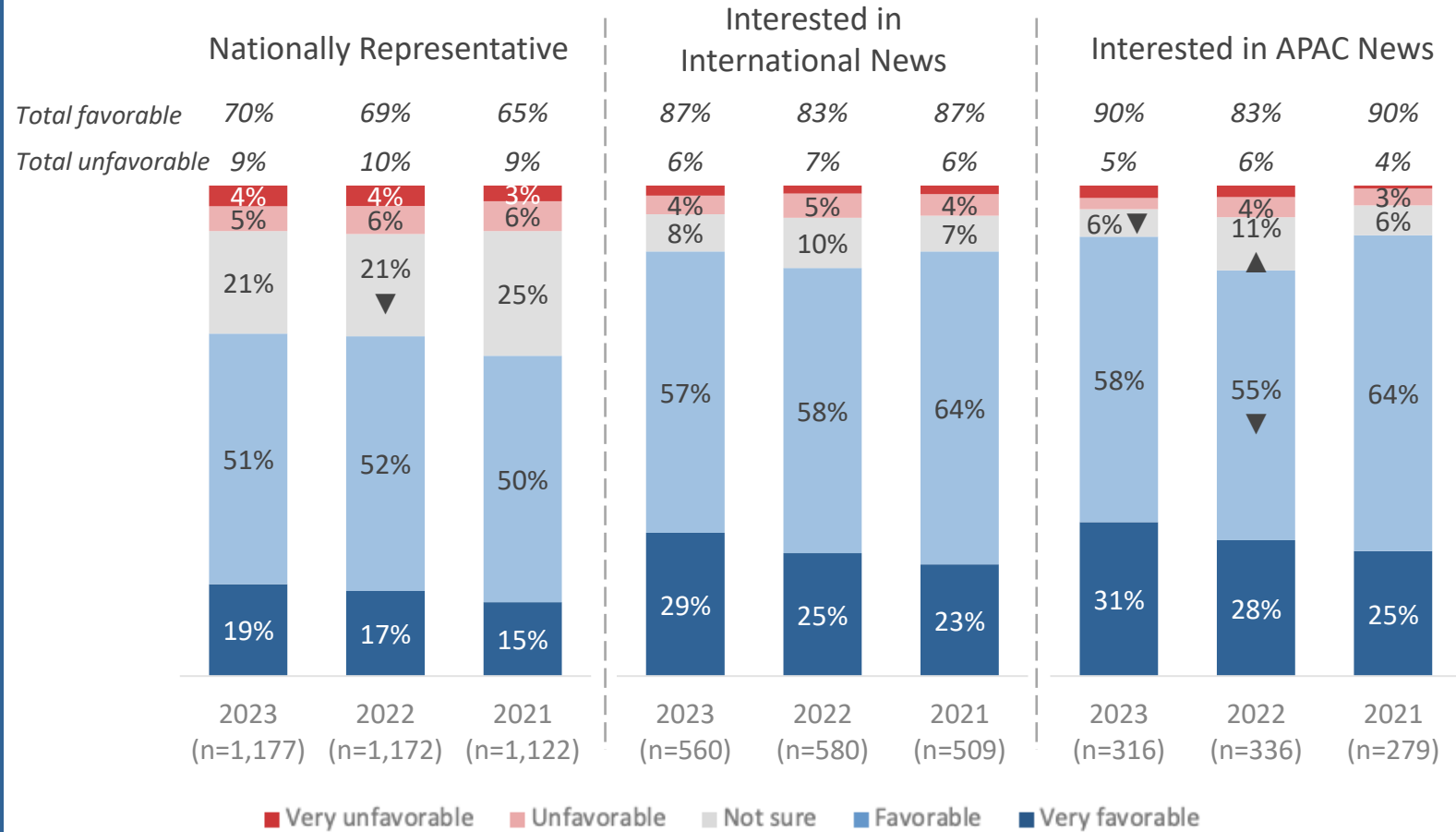


sec\_council\_add\_2023: The United Nations Security Council currently has five permanent members that have veto power: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and the People’s Republic of China. If the Security Council were to add two additional permanent members, which two countries should it add? *Select up to two.*



The overall opinion of South Korea remains highly favorable (70%), which is consistent with opinions in previous years. Among those who follow international or APAC news, favorability is at or near 90%.

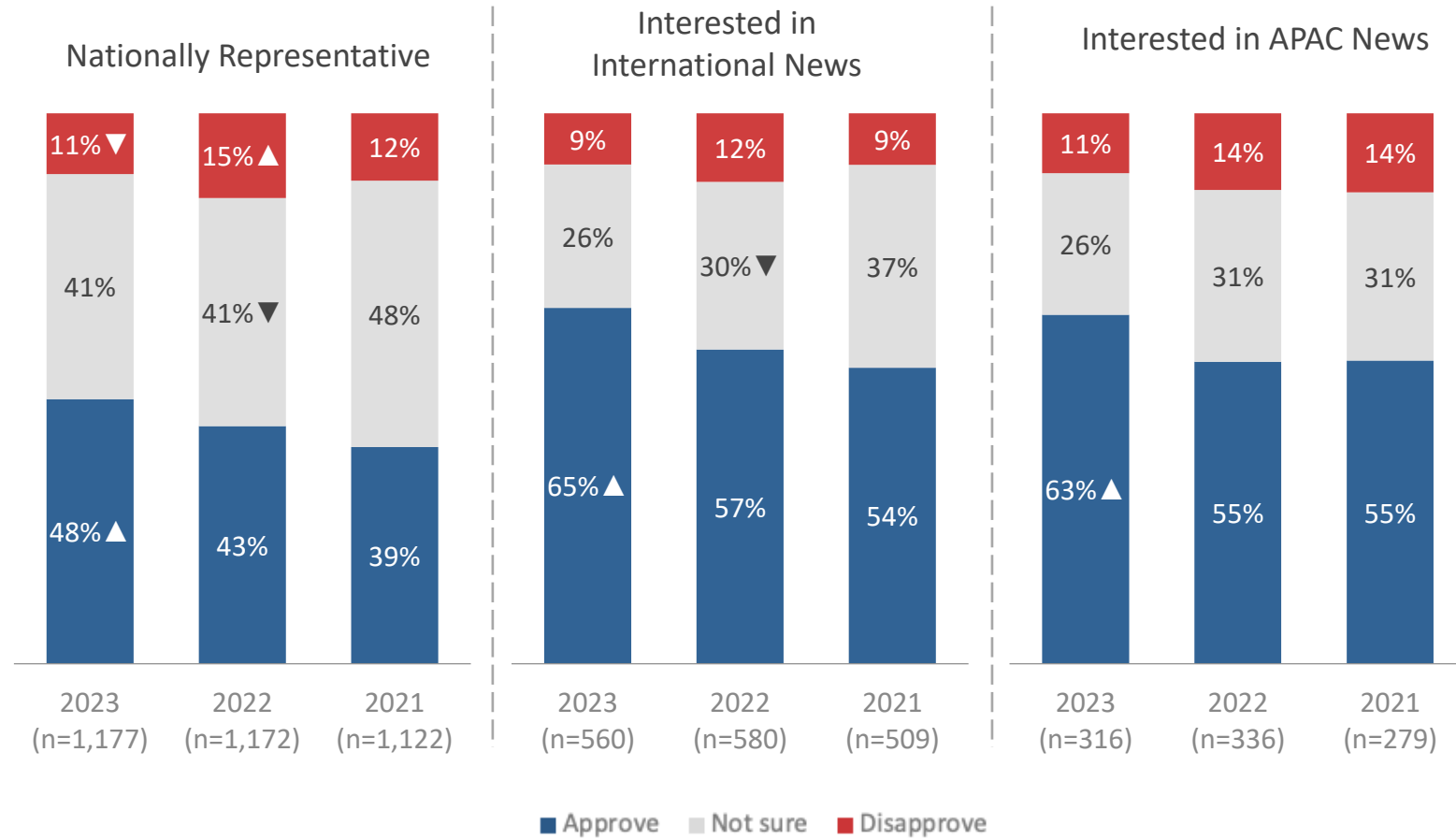
### Overall Opinion of South Korea



Q12. Overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable opinion of South Korea?  
 ▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

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

Among Americans, there is a significant increase in approval of the current administration's handling of relations with South Korea, which has risen steadily since 2021. Nearly 2 in 3 who follow international news express this approval.

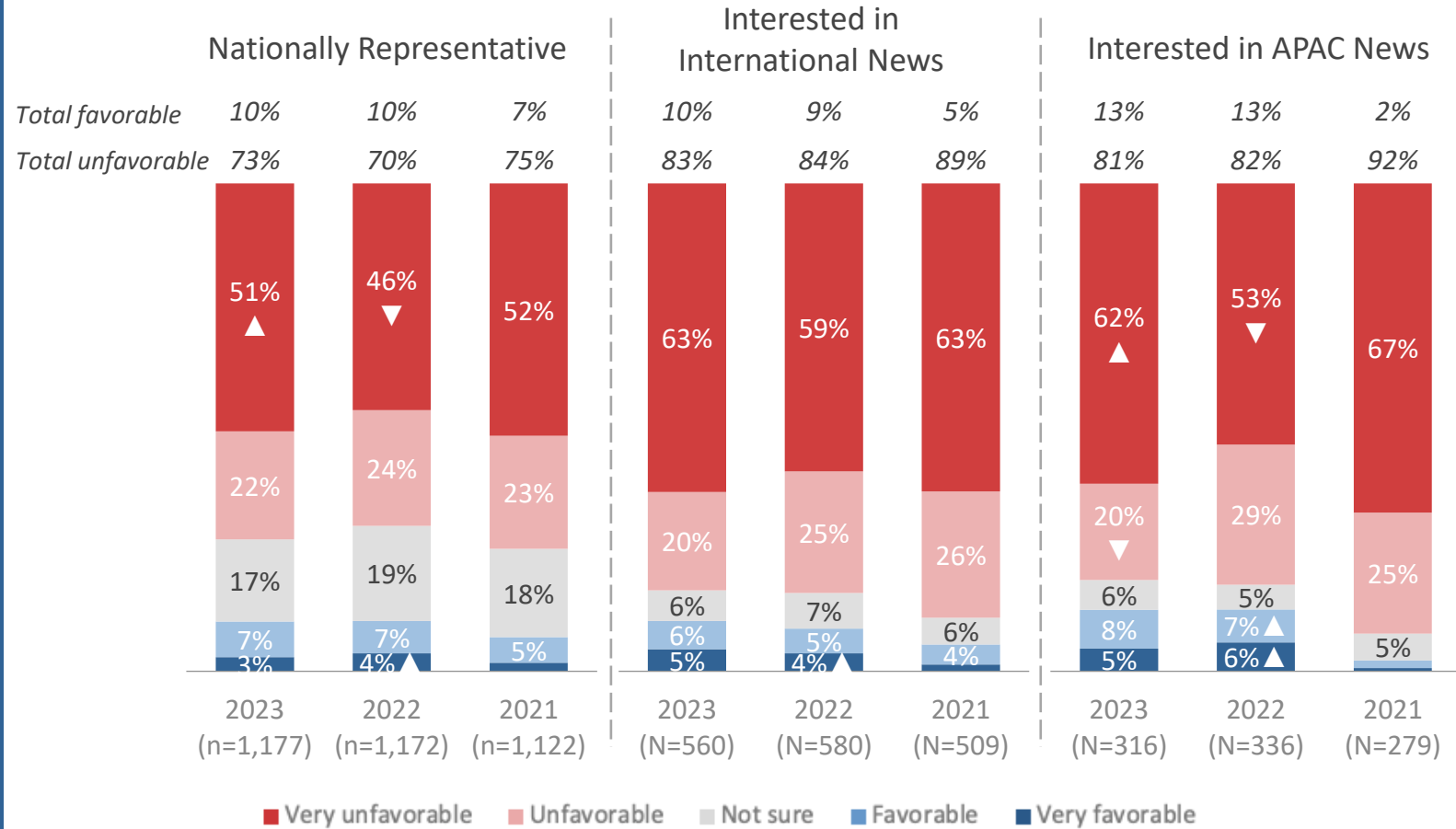


Q14. Now thinking about US and South Korea relations, do you approve or disapprove of the current US administration's handling of relations with South Korea?

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

More than half of Americans have a very unfavorable overall opinion of North Korea, an increase from 2022. The view is even more negative among those who are interested in international or APAC news.

### Overall Opinion of North Korea

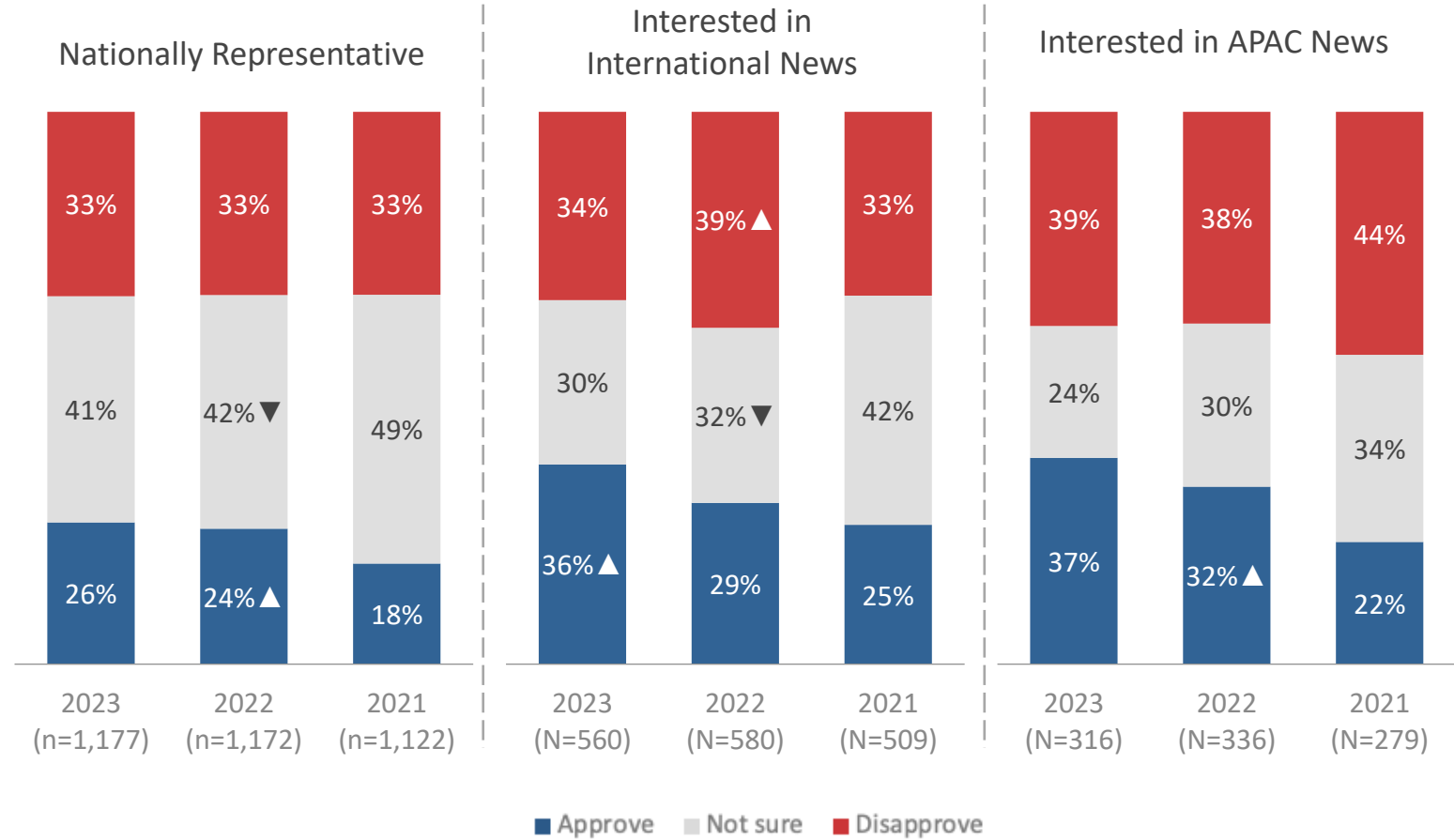


Q20. Now thinking about North Korea, overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable opinion of North Korea?  
 ▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

Approval of the current US administration's handling of relations with North Korea remained low compared to approval of its handling of relations with South Korea. Among those who follow international news, approval of the US administration's handling of North Korea went up.



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



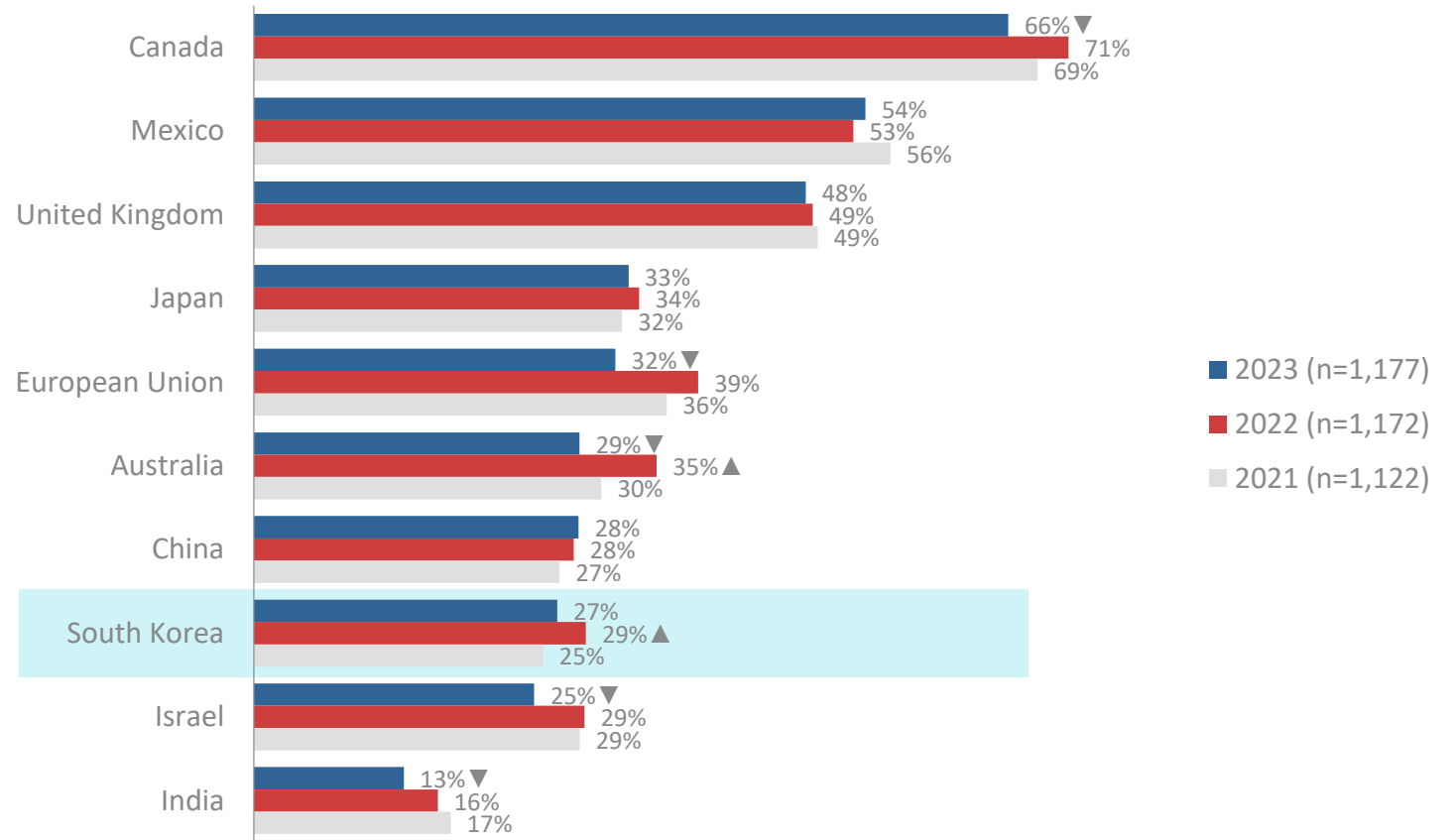
Q21. Do you approve or disapprove of the job the current US administration is doing handling relations with North Korea?  
 ▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

## AMERICANS' VIEWS ON TRADE WITH SOUTH KOREA

Almost 30% of Americans are aware of the free trade agreement between South Korea and the US. 70% of Americans see trade with South Korea as beneficial to the US. A quarter of Americans identify as fans of popular entertainment or beauty products from South Korea, reflecting multi-year growth in this area.

Canada, Mexico, and the United Kingdom continue to lead as countries Americans believe the US has a free trade agreement with. 27% of Americans are aware of the free trade agreement with South Korea, a rate that remains stable since 2022.

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.

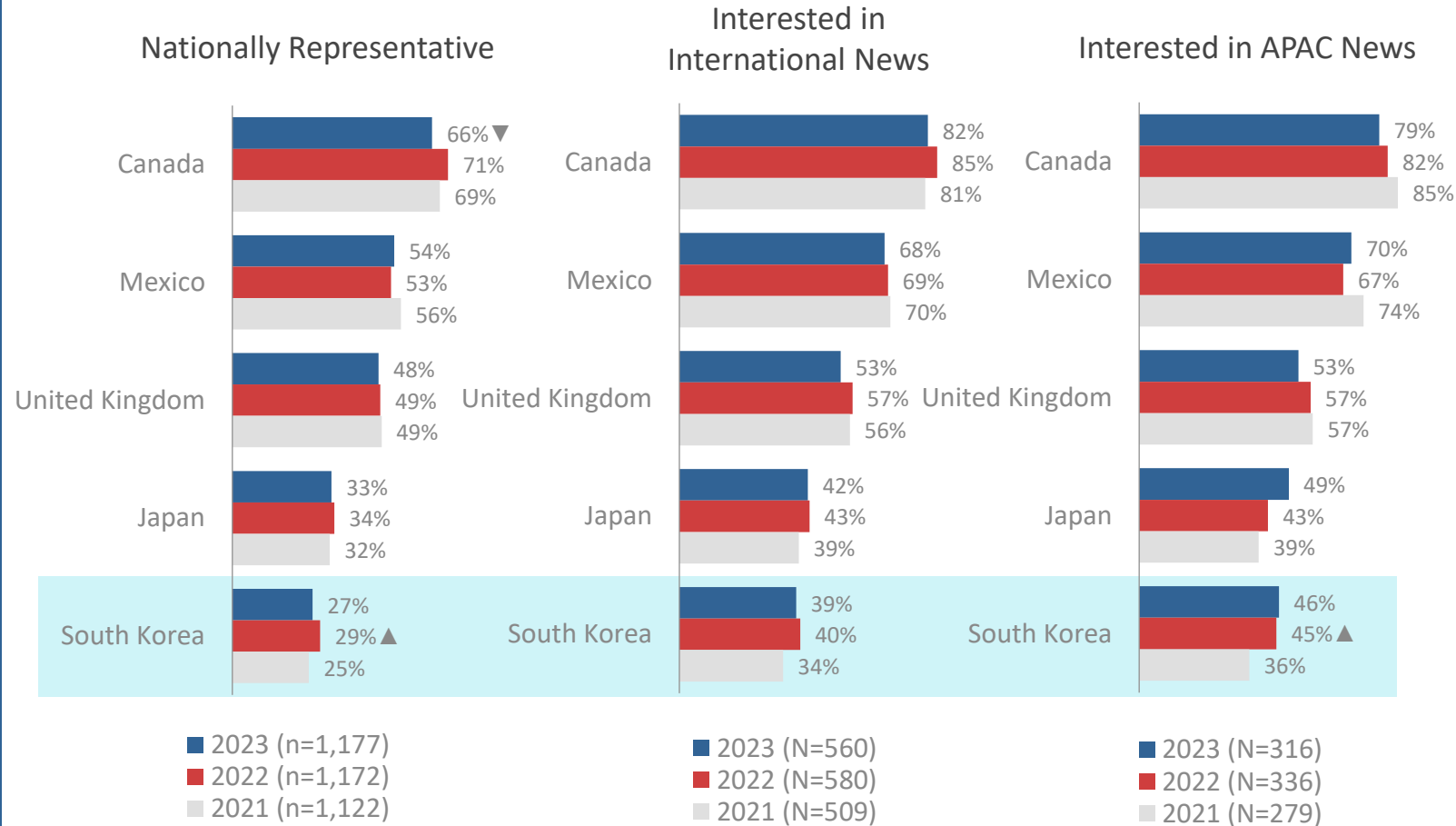
\*Only top ten out of seventeen countries are displayed on this slide.

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

# Awareness among Americans of a US-South Korea free trade agreement remains stable compared to 2022.



## Awareness of Countries That Have a Free Trade Agreement With the US\*



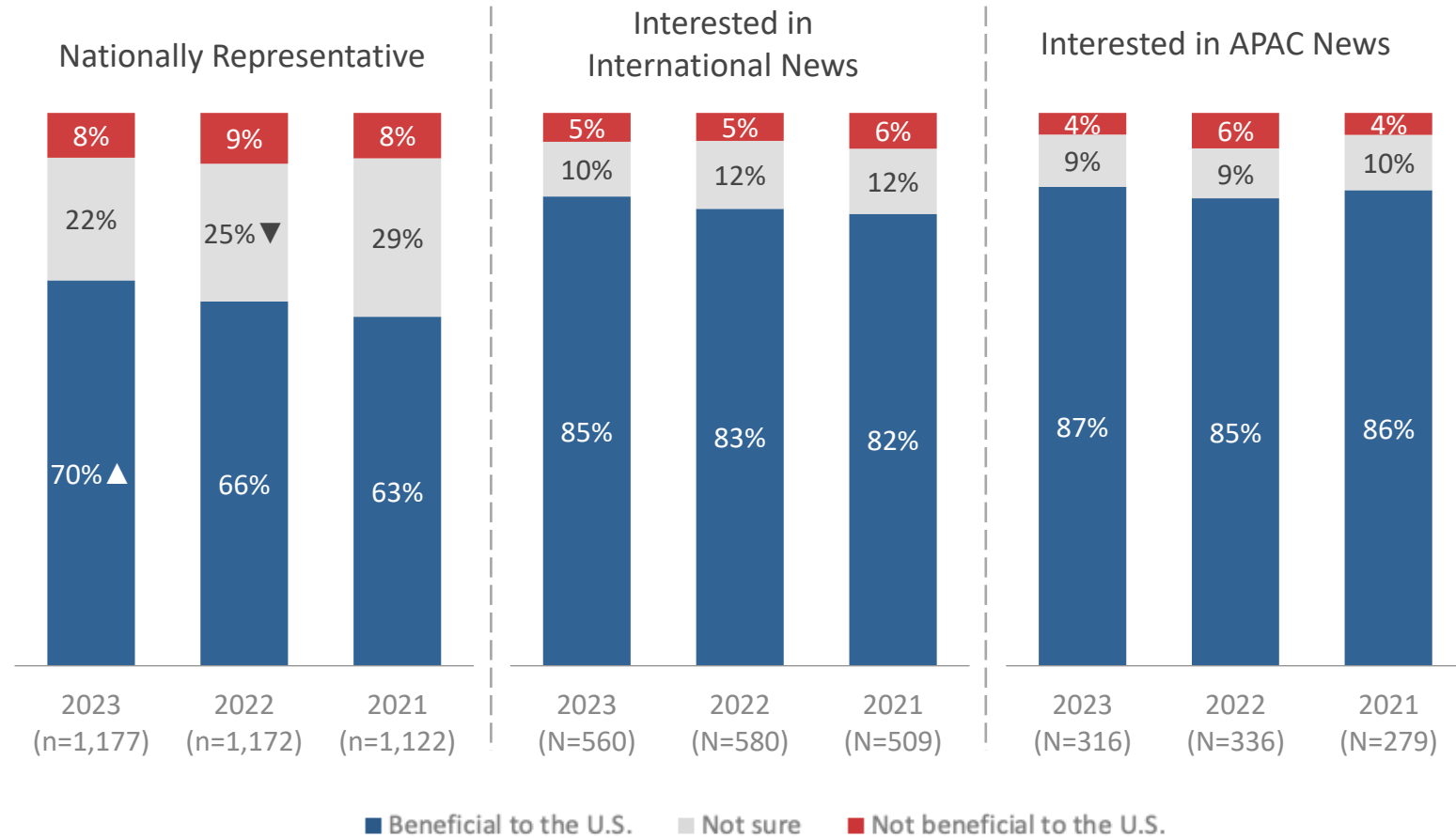
Q2. To the best of your knowledge, with which of the following countries/regions do you believe the US has a standing free trade agreement? Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question.

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

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

70% of Americans see trade with South Korea as beneficial to the US, a significant increase from 2022. Over 8 in 10 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



Q15. Do you believe trade with South Korea is beneficial to the United States, or do you not feel this way?

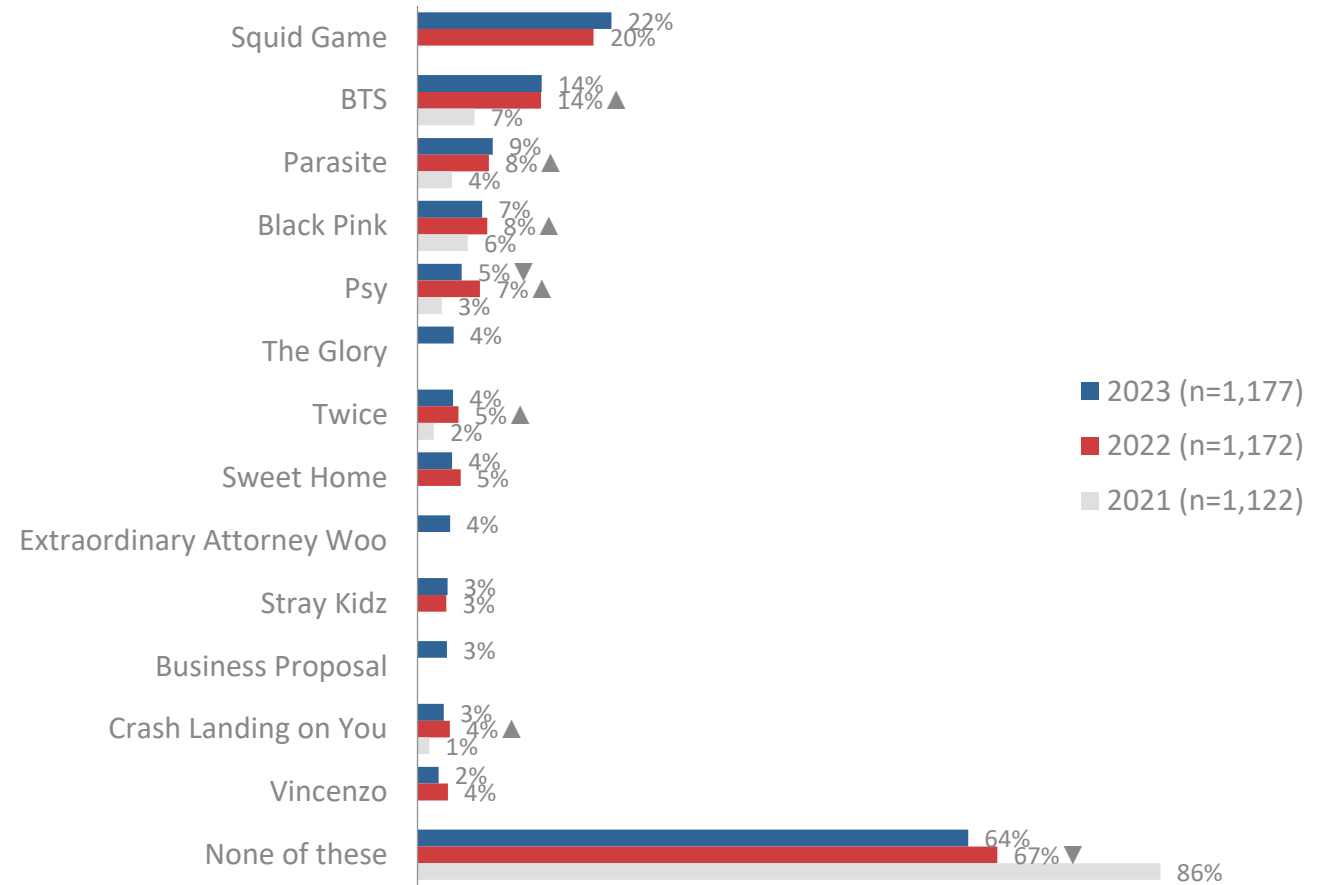
▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.



Engagement with Korean movies and music remains stable after a large increase in engagement in 2022.



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



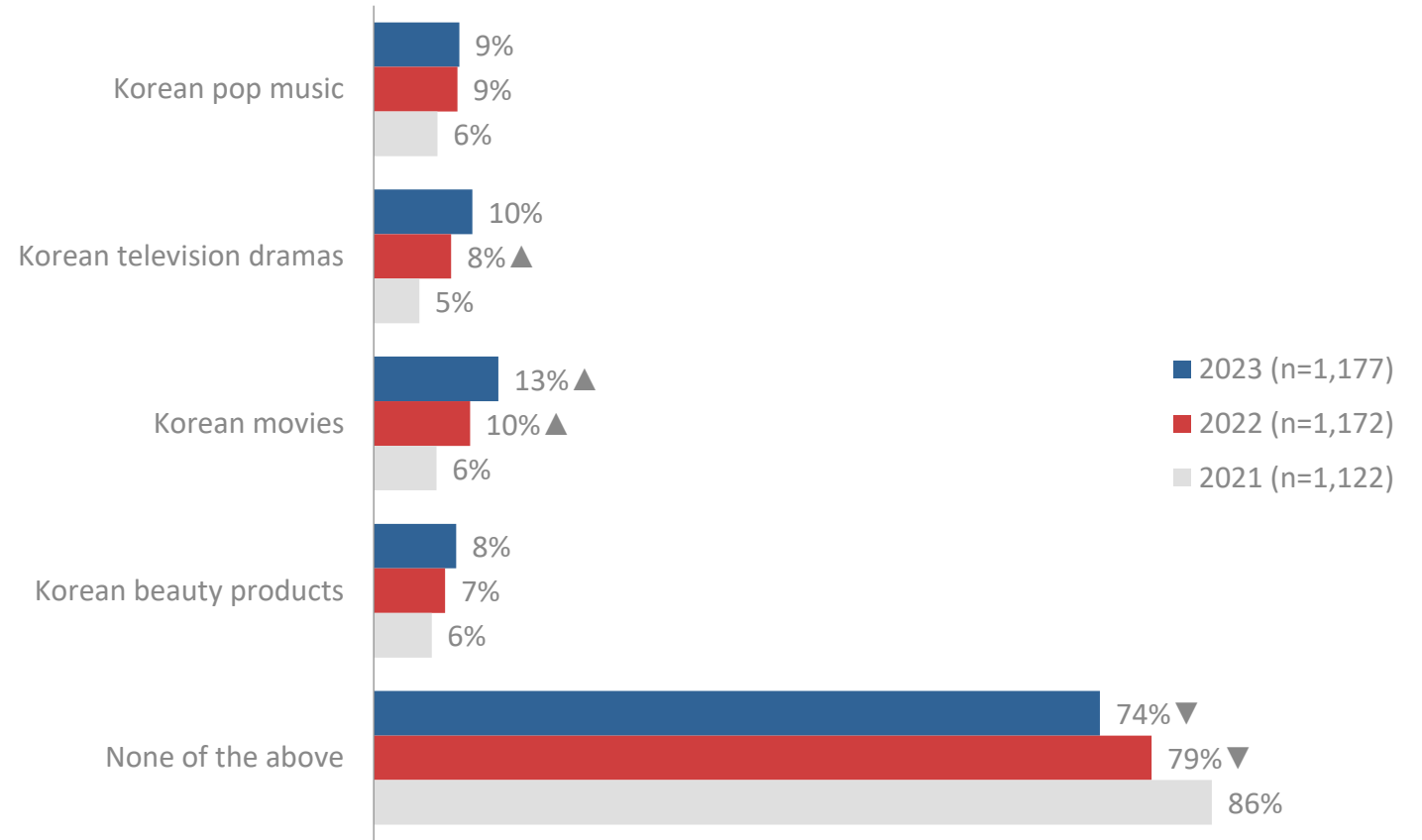
Q6. Which of the following musical artists, movies, or TV shows, if any, have you watched, listened to or followed in the past 12 months? *Select all that apply.*

Note: *The Glory*, *Extraordinary Attorney Woo*, and *Business Proposal* were added in 2023.

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

The percent of Americans identifying as fans of Korean movies showed year on year growth for two years. A quarter of Americans now identify as fans of at least one type of popular entertainment or beauty product from South Korea.

Fans of South Korean Popular Entertainment and Products



Q27. Do you identify as a fan of any of the following?  
 ▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

The increase in Americans who are fans of Korean movies also translated to an increased interest in learning about Korean culture.

## Fan of South Korean Popular Entertainment and Products



	Korean Pop Music			Korean Television Dramas			Korean Movies			Korean Beauty Products			
	Year	2023	2022	2021	2023	2022	2021	2023	2022	2021	2023	2022	2021
<i>N-size</i>		104	106	70	122	99	52	153	133	69	89	92	67
<b>Korean Language</b>		50%	47%	40%	49%	43% ▼	59%	43%	41%	36%	27%	25%	32%
<b>Korean Culture</b>		57%	51%	65%	74%	63%	74%	61% ▲	50% ▼	65%	48%	47%	58%
<b>Korean History</b>		34%	27%	33%	45%	54%	58%	45%	49%	41%	31% ▲	16%	24%
<b>Korean Politics</b>		15%	15%	19%	19% ▼	36%	34%	27%	28%	25%	10%	8%	15%
<b>Korean Foreign Affairs</b>		27%	19%	24%	16% ▼	30%	32%	15% ▼	33%	21%	16%	14%	16%
<b>None of the above</b>		15%	18%	21%	10%	19% ▲	5%	20%	15%	23%	39%	35%	26%

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?

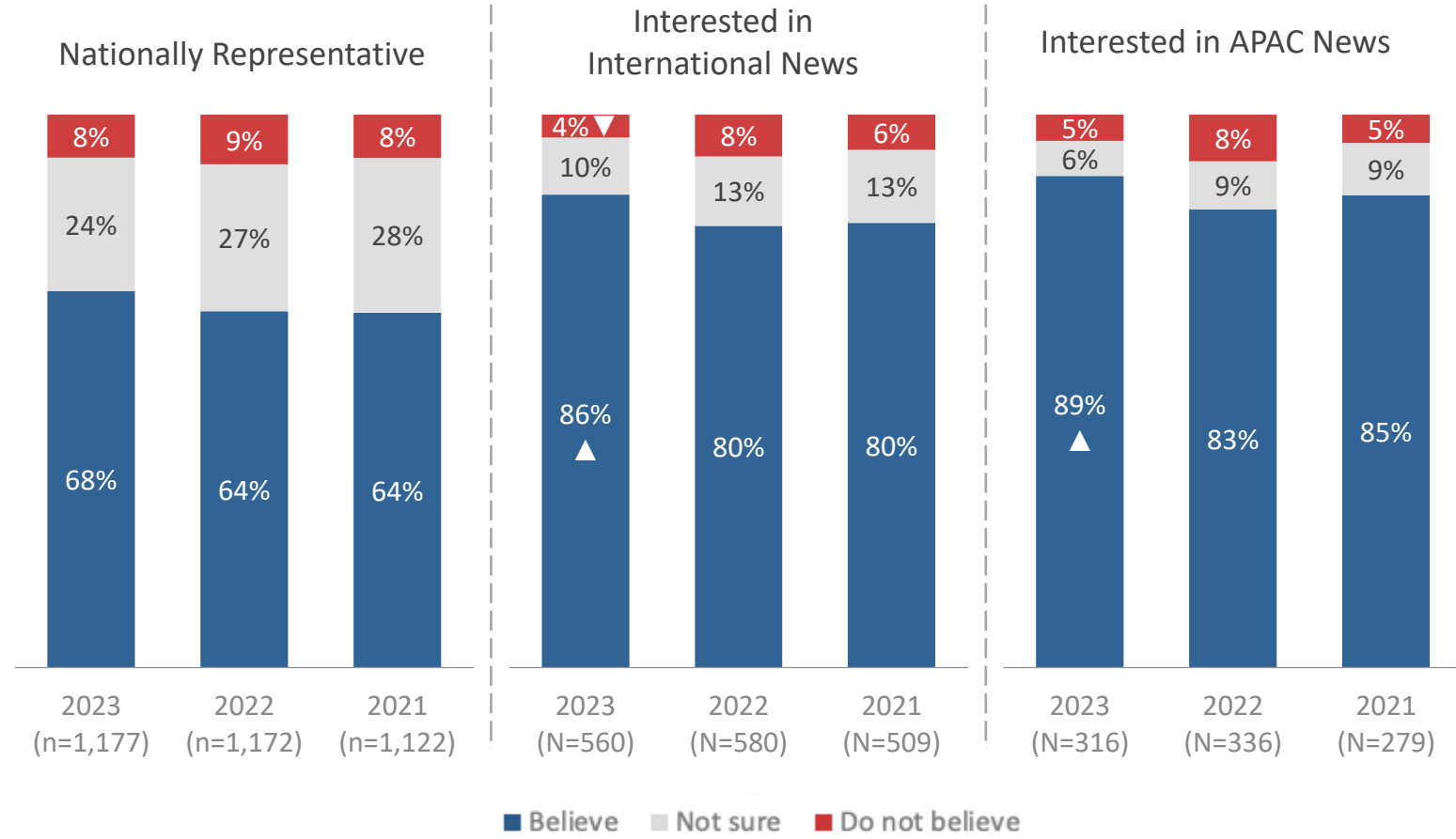
▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

# AMERICANS' VIEWS ON MILITARY ALLIANCE WITH SOUTH KOREA

Nearly seven 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 would like to see the US increase or maintain current troop presence in South Korea rose to 66% in this wave.

## Belief in National Security Importance of Military Alliance Between the US and South Korea

Nearly 7 in 10 Americans believe the US military alliance with South Korea is in the national security interests of the US. This support significantly increased from 2022 among those interested in national news or APAC news, with almost 9 in 10 viewing this alliance as beneficial to the US.

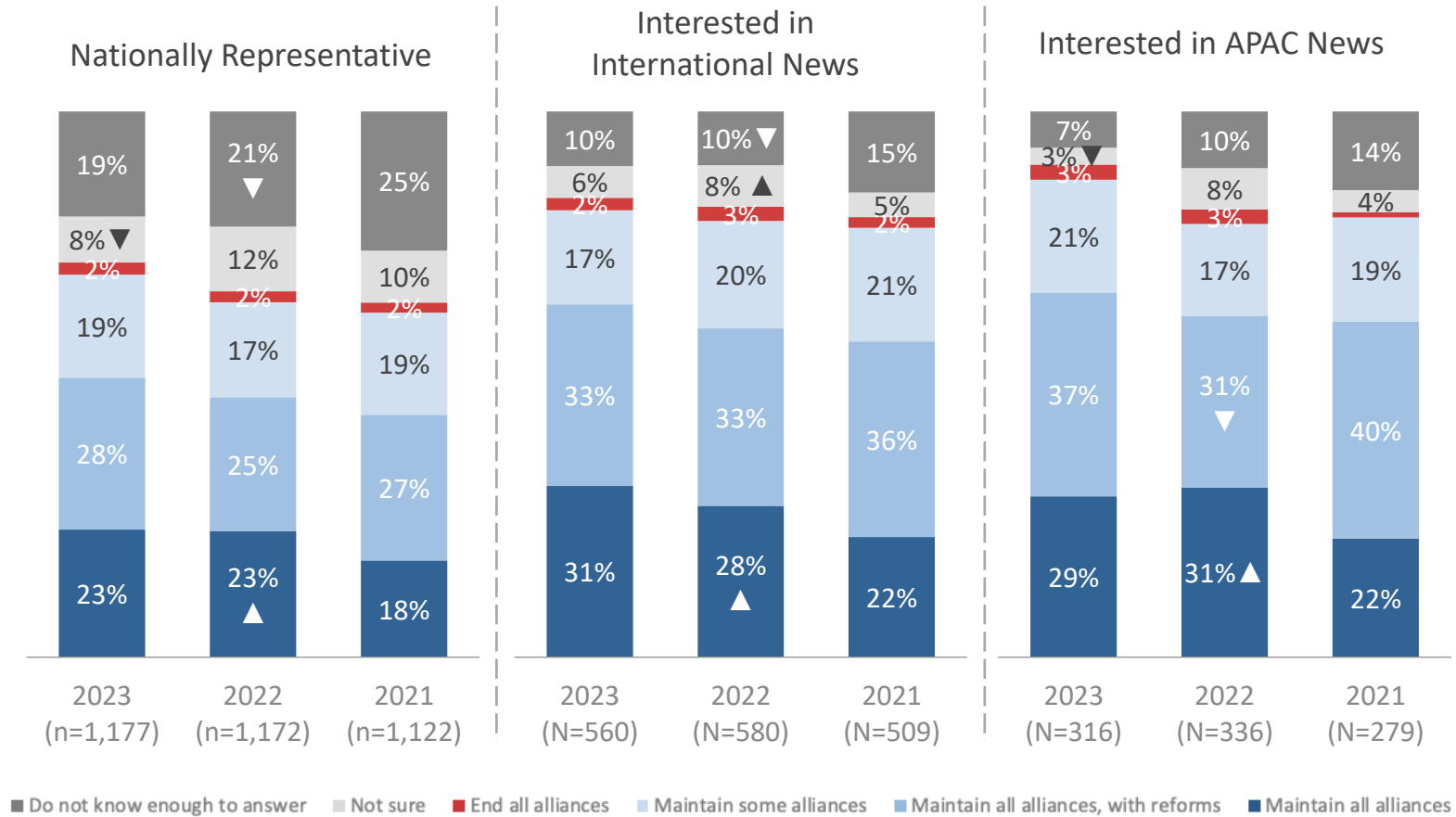


Q17. Do you believe the US military alliance with South Korea is in the national security interests of the US or do you not feel this way?

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

Almost a quarter of Americans want to maintain all current US military alliances worldwide, with a slight decrease in the percent of Americans who are unsure.

## Views on Current US Military Alliances

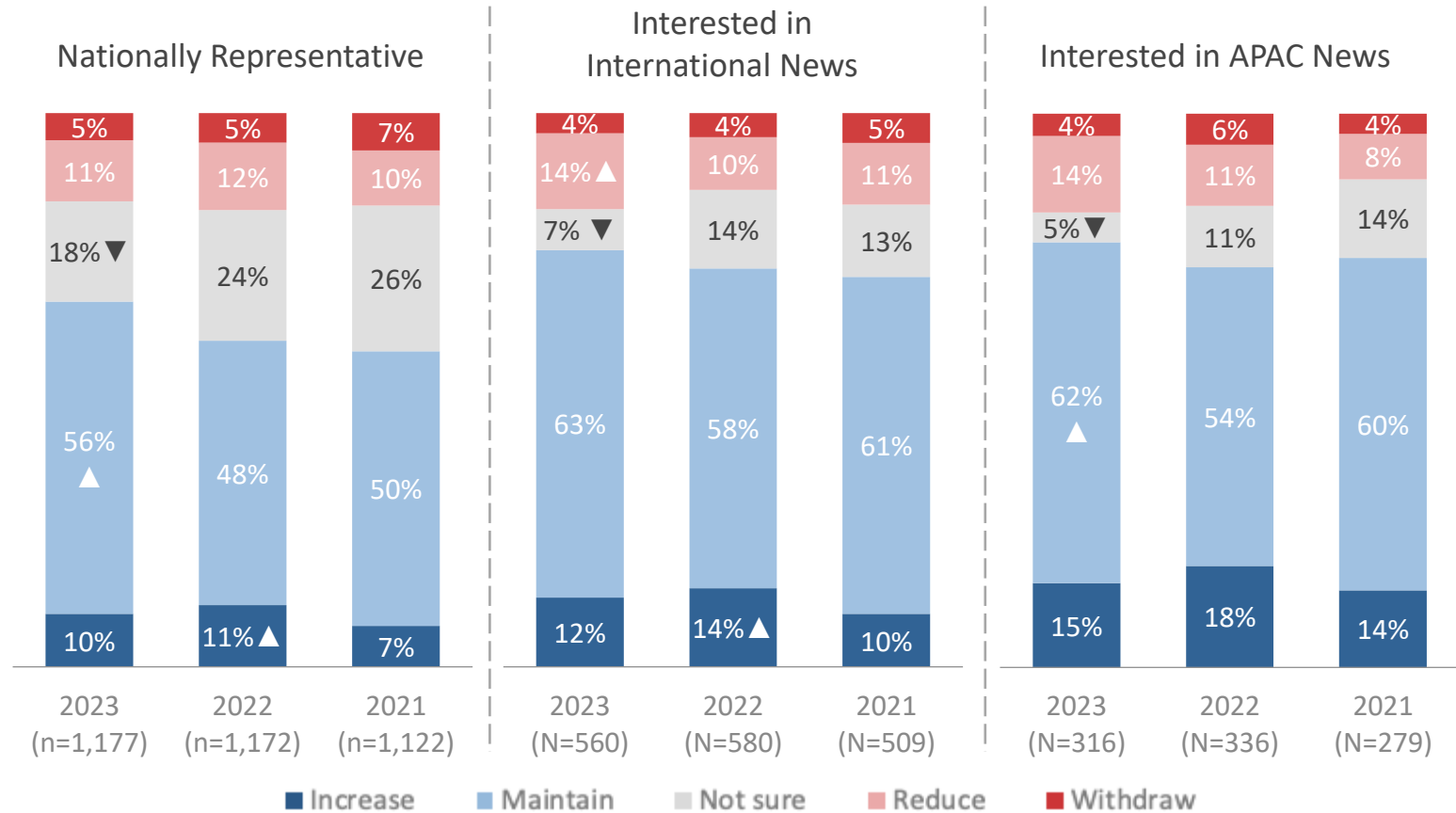


Q11. Which comes closest to how you feel about current US military alliances?  
 ▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

More than half of Americans would like to see the US maintain its current troop presence in South Korea, an increase from 2022.

Among Americans who follow APAC news, there was also an increase from 2022 in those who want to see the current US troop presence maintained.

### Views on US Troops in South Korea



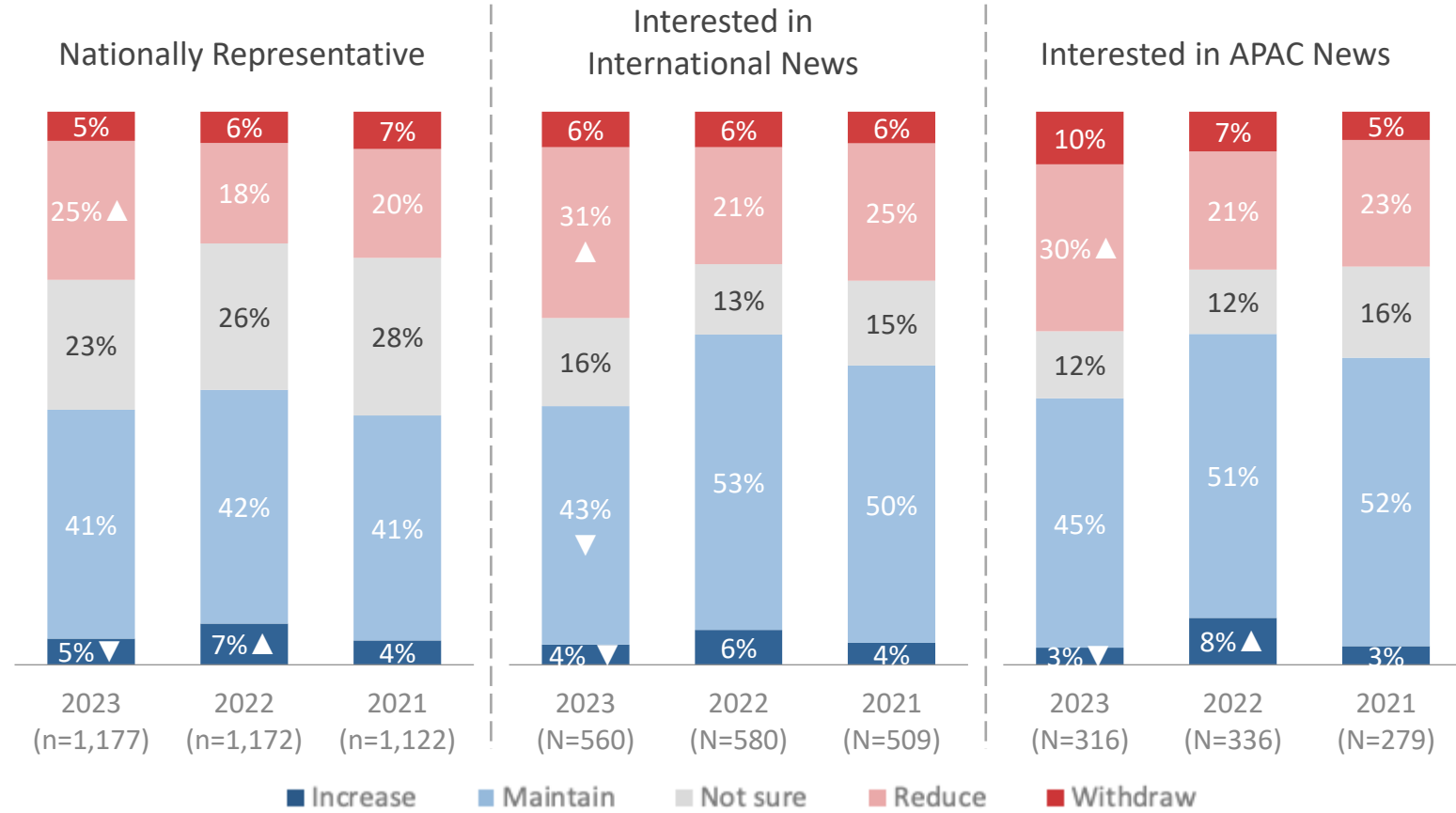
Q18. The US currently maintains 28,500 troops in South Korea. For context/comparison, the US also has 54,000 troops in Japan and currently has 35,000 troops in Germany. In your opinion, should the United States increase, maintain, reduce, or withdraw its military forces from South Korea?

Note: Troop numbers change year-to-year.

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

## Possible Impact of Nuclear Arms Agreement With North Korea on US Troop Levels in South Korea

46% of Americans would support maintaining or increasing troop levels in South Korea if a nuclear arms agreement were reached with North Korea. 30% would support a reduction or withdrawal, representing a significant increase from 2022.



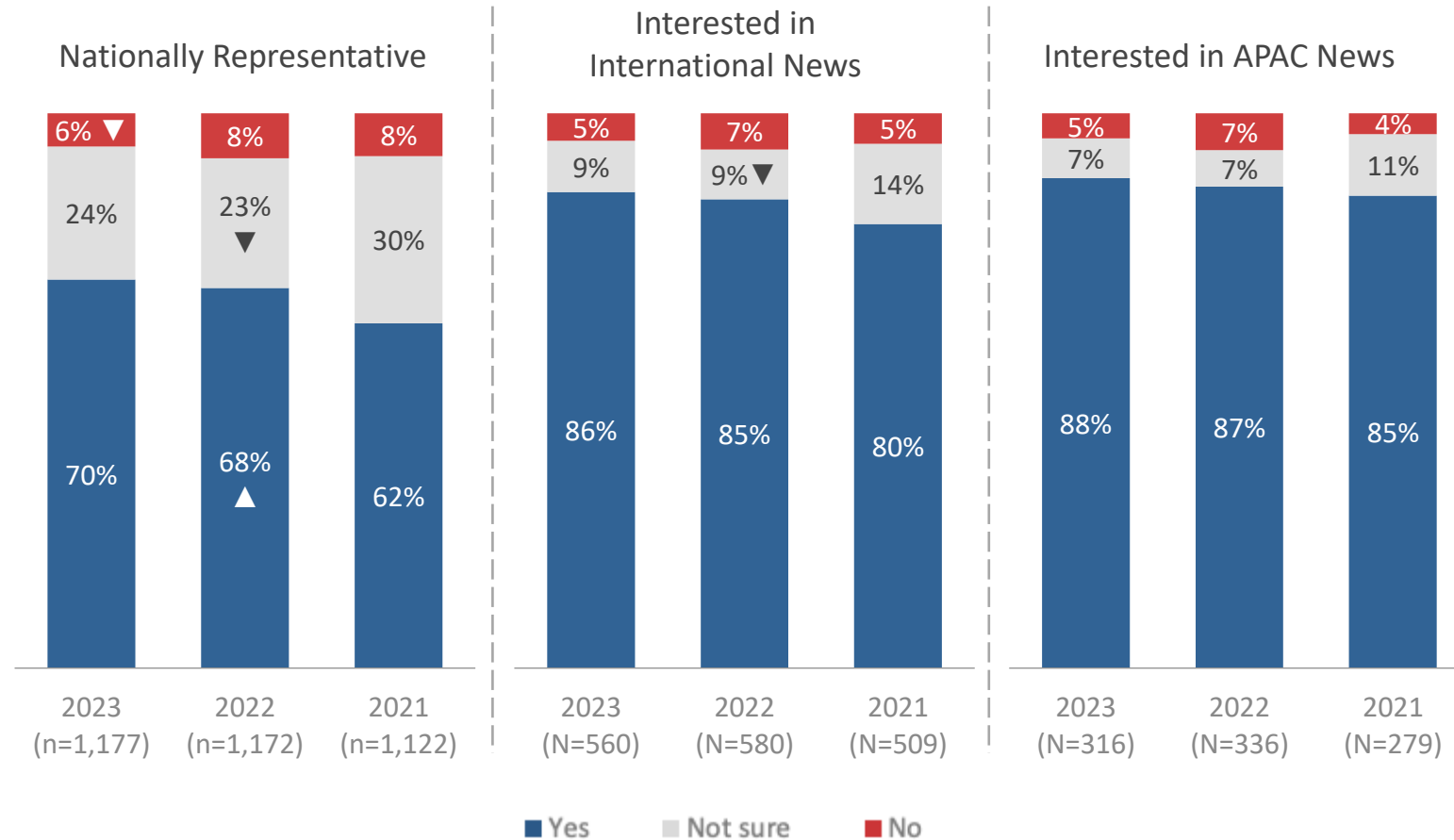
Q29. If the United States were to reach an agreement with North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons, should the US change its troop presence in South Korea?

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.



7 in 10 Americans believe East Asia is a vital region for the US. The rate is even higher among international news and APAC followers.

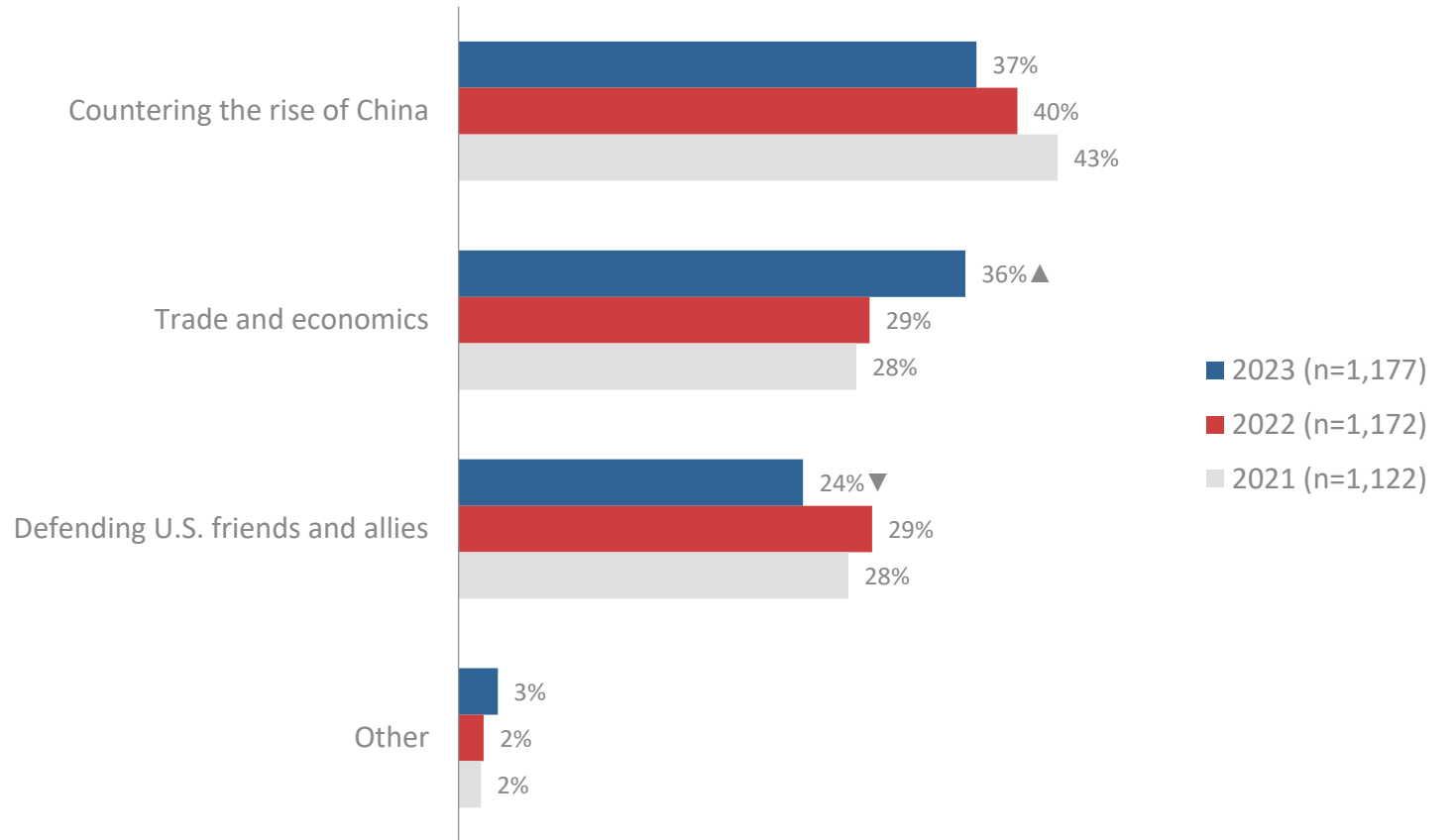
## Views on East Asia as a Vital Region for US National Interests



Q28. The United States has been active in the Asia-Pacific region since the Second World War. It has military alliances with South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, New Zealand, Australia, and Thailand, as well as long standing economic ties with countries in the region. As the United States reassesses its place in the world, do you believe that East Asia is a vital region for US national interests. ▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

2023 showed a significant increase in the percent of Americans who believe trade and economics is the most important interest for the US in East Asia. This is now tied with countering the rise of China as the top priority. The percent naming the defense of US friends and allies as the most important interest decreased significantly to 24% in 2023.

### Most Important US National Interest in East Asia

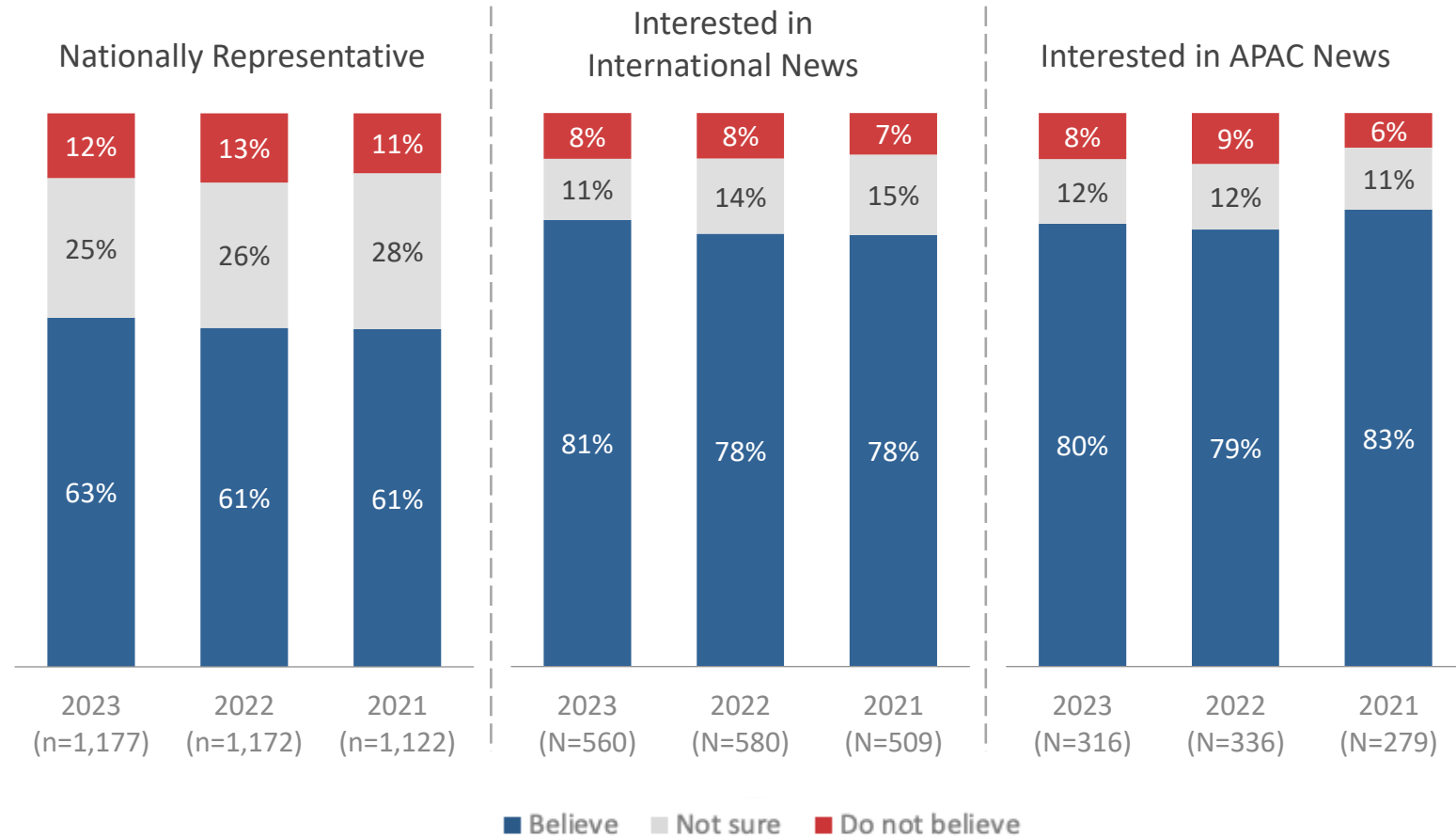


Q28b. What do you believe to be the most important interest for the United States in East Asia?

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

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

8 in 10 Americans who follow international news or APAC news believe the US should assist South Korea in the event of a cyber-attack from North Korea or China, compared to 6 in 10 among the general US public.

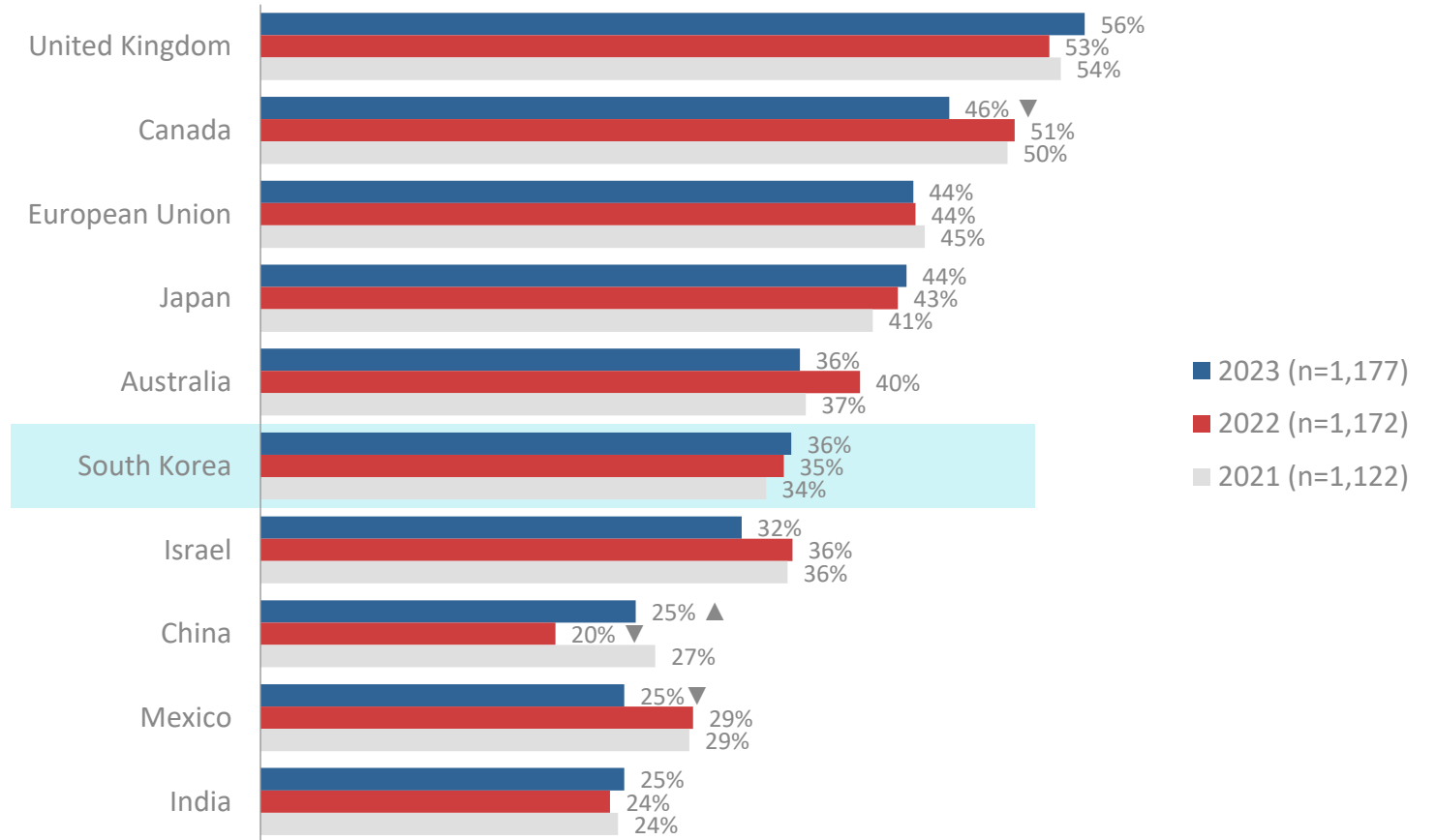


Q19. Do you believe that the US should assist South Korea in the event of a cyber-attack from North Korea or China, or do you not feel this way?

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

Over a third of Americans think the US should coordinate with South Korea on cyber issues. Americans continue to name the United Kingdom, Canada, and the EU as the top countries/regions with which the US should coordinate.

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



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.

\*Top ten out of seventeen countries are displayed on this slide.

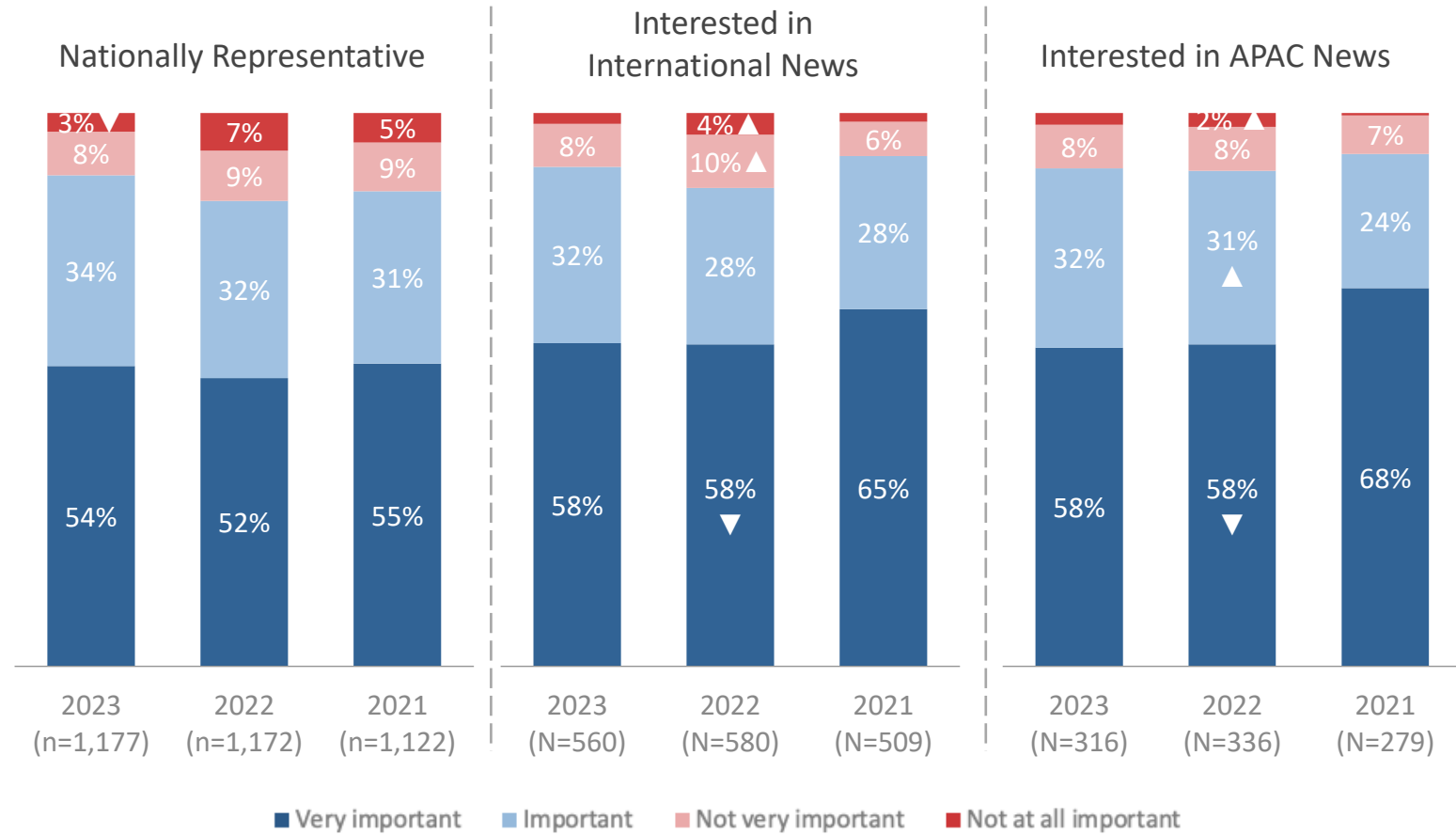
▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

## AMERICANS' VIEWS ON THE NORTH KOREA CHALLENGE

In 2023, nearly 90% of Americans think it is important for North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons, and there is a significant increase in Americans who believe that no country should have military nuclear capabilities. Half of Americans think the US should engage with North Korea on issues other than denuclearization, regardless of its willingness to give up nuclear weapons.

Almost 90% of Americans believe it is important for North Korea to give up its military nuclear capabilities, a percent which has remained stable since 2021.

## Importance of North Korea Giving Up Its Nuclear Capabilities



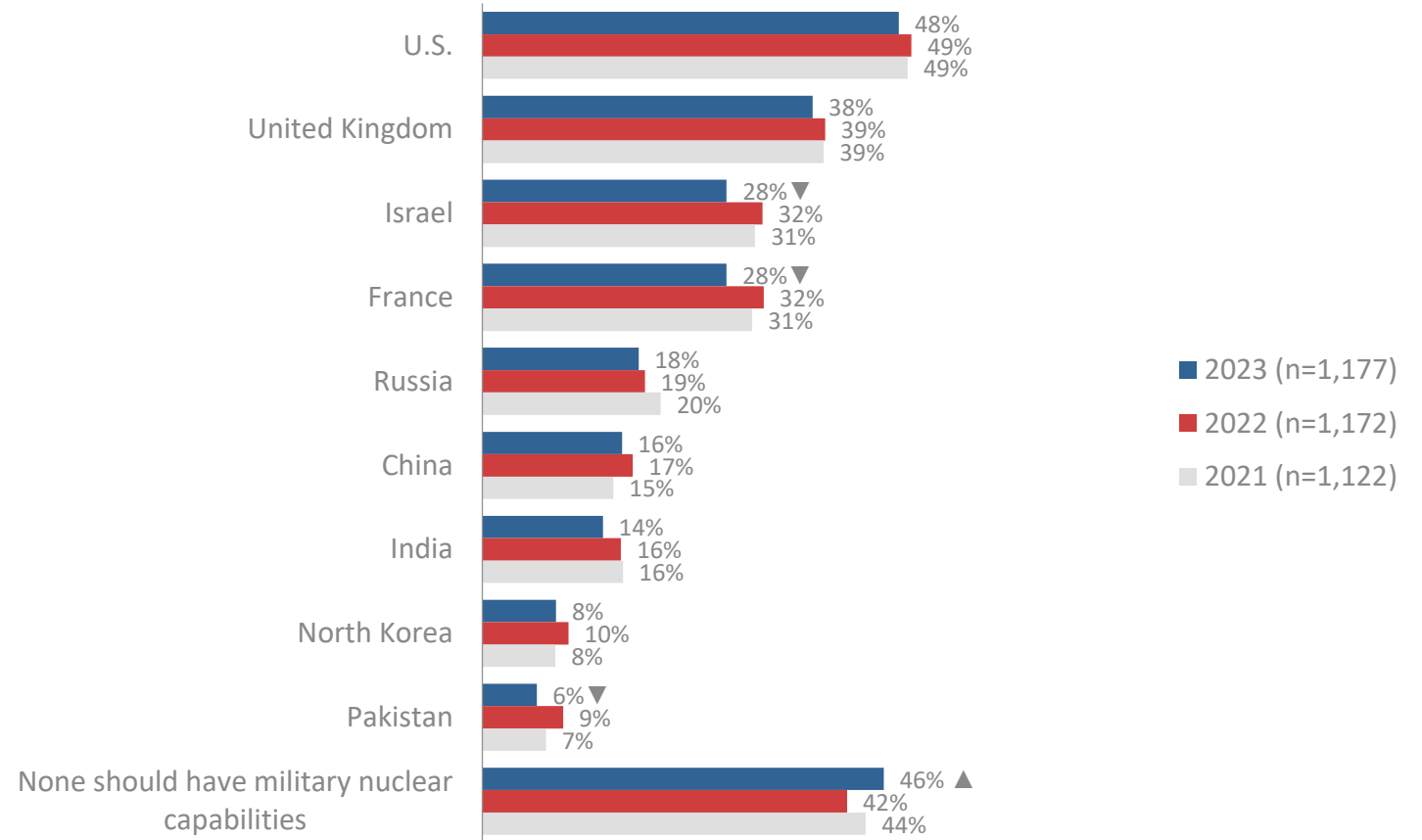
Q22. In your opinion, how important is it that North Korea give up its military nuclear capabilities?

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

Almost half of Americans believe that no country should have military nuclear capabilities, an increase from 2022.

8% of Americans believe North Korea should maintain its military nuclear capabilities.

### Countries That Should Maintain Military Nuclear Capabilities

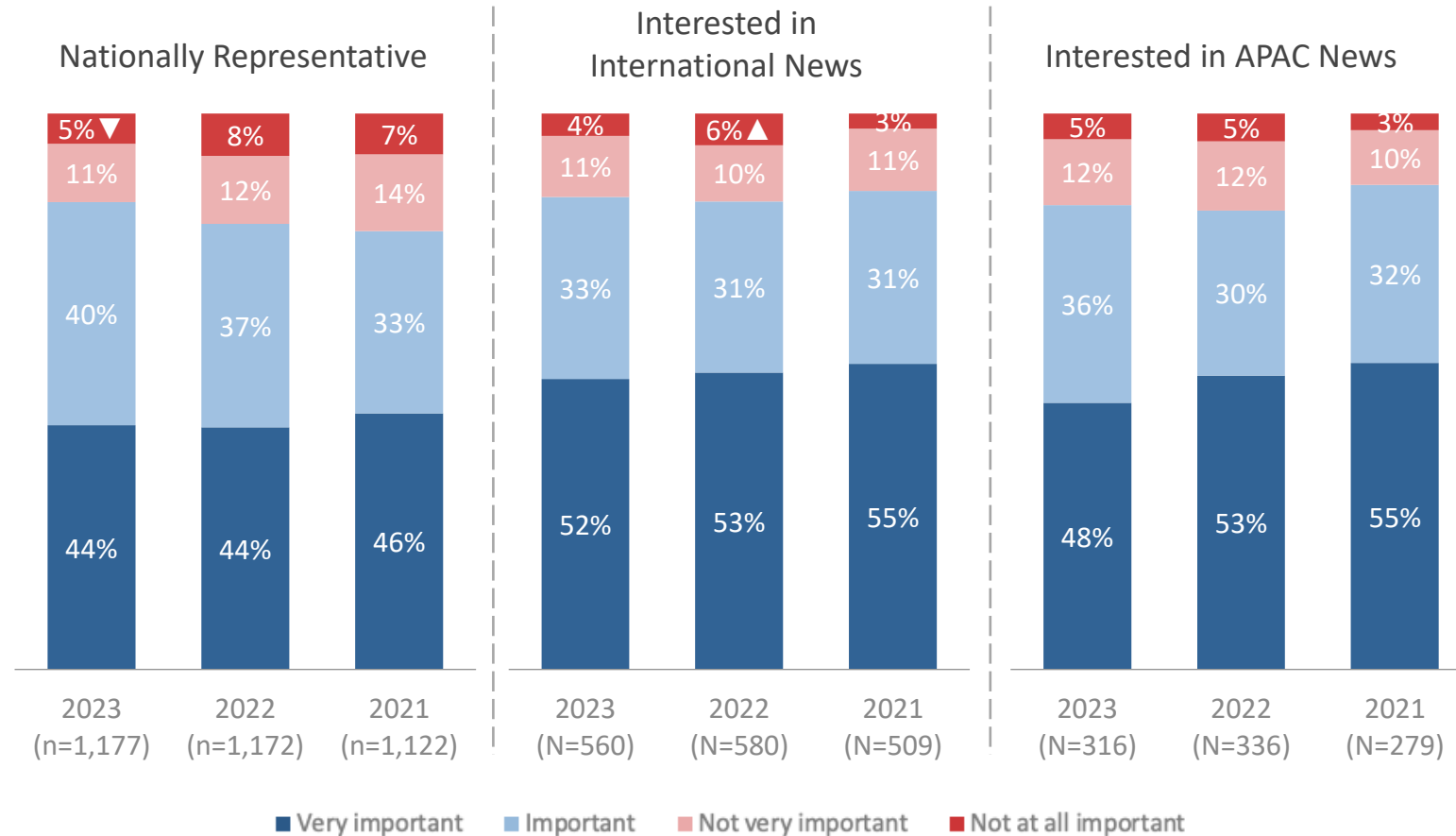


Q9. The following countries all have military nuclear capabilities. In your opinion, which of the following do you feel should be able to maintain its military nuclear capabilities? Please select all that apply. Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question.

▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

More than 8 in 10 Americans believe it is important that the US pushes for human rights improvements in North Korea. This sentiment is similar among those who are interested in international news or APAC news.

## 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?

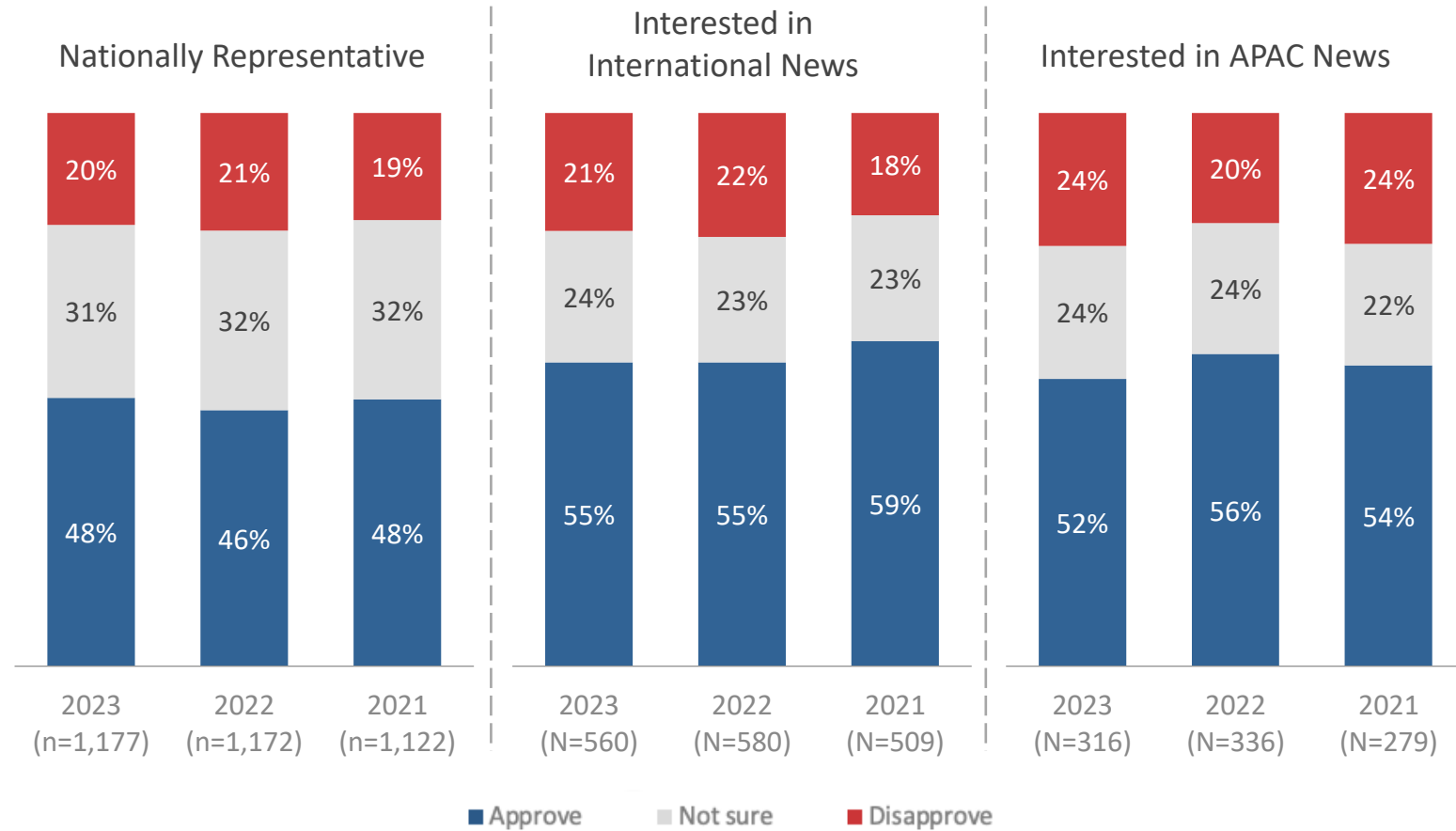
▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.



Nearly half of Americans approve of the US sending humanitarian assistance to North Korean citizens. This rate has remained stable in 2023.



## 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?

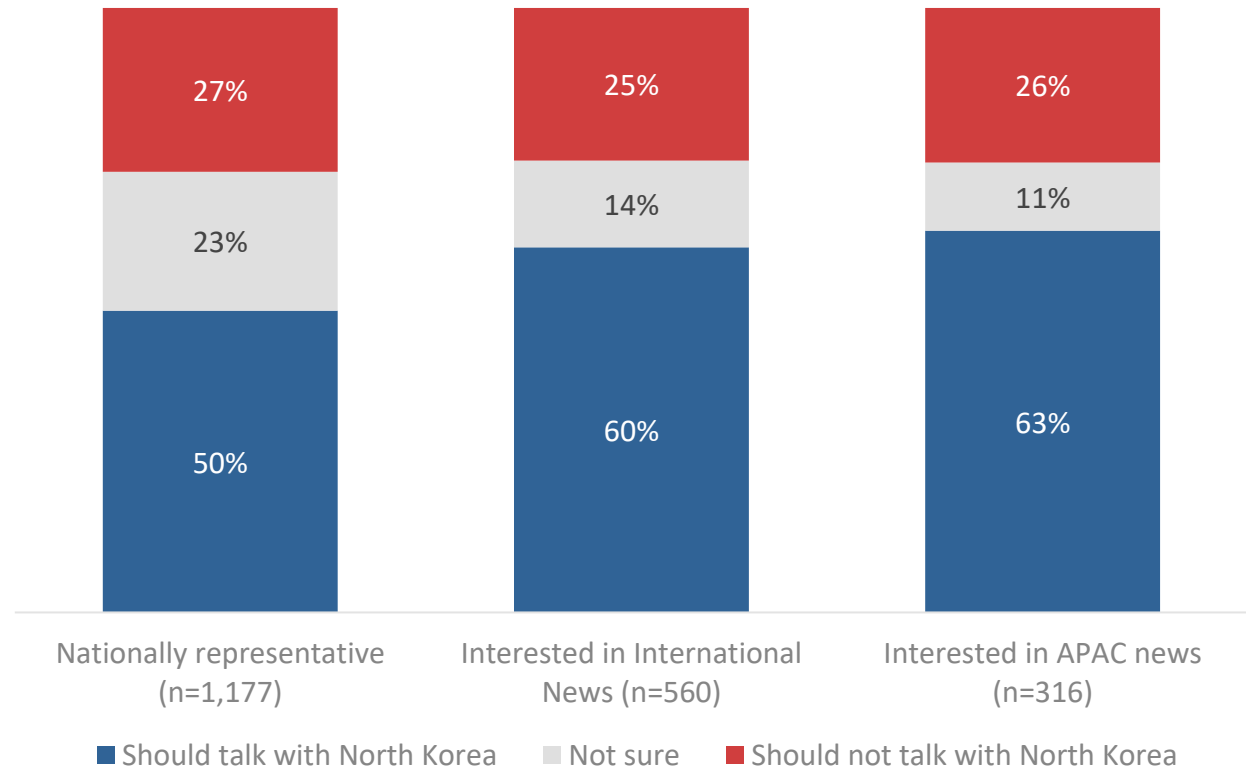
▲ ▼ indicates significant change from previous wave at 95% confidence.

Half of Americans believe the US should talk with North Korea about issues other than denuclearization regardless of its willingness to give up nuclear weapons. This sentiment is higher among those who are interested in international or APAC news.

## Whether the US should Talk with North Korea About Issues Other than Denuclearization if North Korea Refuses to Give Up Nuclear Weapons



Added 2023



normalize\_nk\_2023: Should the United States talk with North Korea about issues other than denuclearization if North Korea refuses to give up its nuclear weapons?

# Thank You