

INTRO

As the world is standing at a historic crossroads, the international order is undergoing the most significant changes since the end of the Cold War, among which China is undoubtedly in the firing line. The rest of the world is now watching China with curious eyes full of hope, doubt or anxiety. What is China like? How do Chinese people view the world? How will China utilize its growing strength? China has been trying to answer these questions, but there are still many confusions, misunderstandings and misinterpretations in the outside world. To reduce the “information deficit” in the dialogue between China and the rest of the world, research institutions in China need to adopt scientific methods to present the world with a “filter-free” picture of China in a continuous, accurate and objective way.

The Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University (CISS) strives to promote, elucidate, and spread China’s perspectives, aiming to enhance the international community’s understanding of China. In November, 2022, CISS organized public opinion polls on the topic of “Chinese Outlook on International Security”.

The opinion polls show that Chinese people are somewhat optimistic about the current situation of international security as well as China’s global influence. The respondents are highly supportive of globalization, and expect China’s diplomatic posture to be more proactive. At the same time, the older and better-educated reserve a more cautious or complicated attitude.

The online questionnaire-based survey took a stratified random sample of 2,662 Chinese mainland citizens over 18 years old, with a confidence level of 99 percent and a confidence interval of 2.5 percent. The results were weighted to adjust for variation in the sample relating to gender, age, regions and census register (urban or rural) based on the seventh national census. Finally, 2,661 samples were actually recovered, including 1,331 male samples and 1,330 female samples, or 1,543 samples aged 18-44, 932 samples aged 45-60 and 186 samples aged over 60.

Note: The sum of rounded data may not be equal to the total (100%).

KEY FINDINGS

Chinese people are highly concerned about international security issues

Chinese people are somewhat optimistic about general international security

Chinese people remain somewhat optimistic about China's international security environment

Chinese people are highly supportive of globalization and international cooperation

Pandemics, territory and relations between major countries are Chinese people's main concerns

Chinese people have full confidence in China's global influence

Chinese people expect China's diplomatic posture to be more proactive

Chinese people are most concerned about impact caused by the United States and most favorable to Russia

1 • Chinese People are Highly Concerned about International Security Issues

Over 80 percent of the respondents hold that they “know” international security issues, and over 60 percent believe that international security has a “very great” or “somewhat great” impact on themselves.

There is a basic trend that the better-educated, starting from junior high school education, think they know better about international security issues and are under greater influence of international security. Compared with people living in towns and villages, urban residents are more concerned about the impact of international security on individuals.

Figure 1: How much do you know about international security issues?

% by percentage

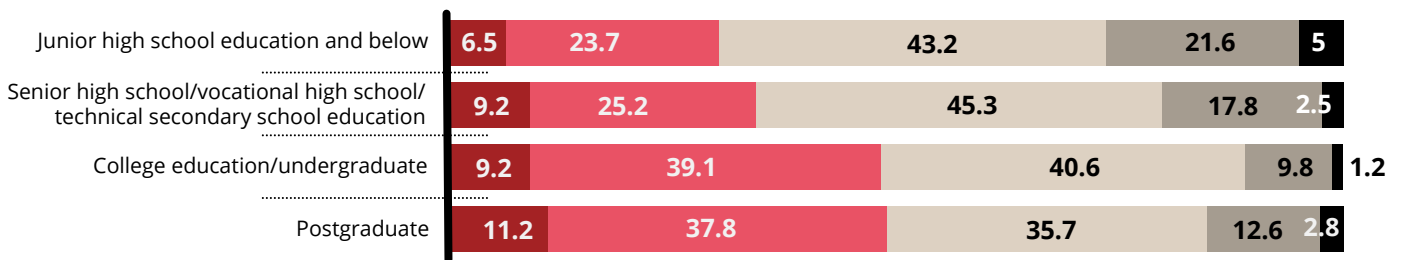
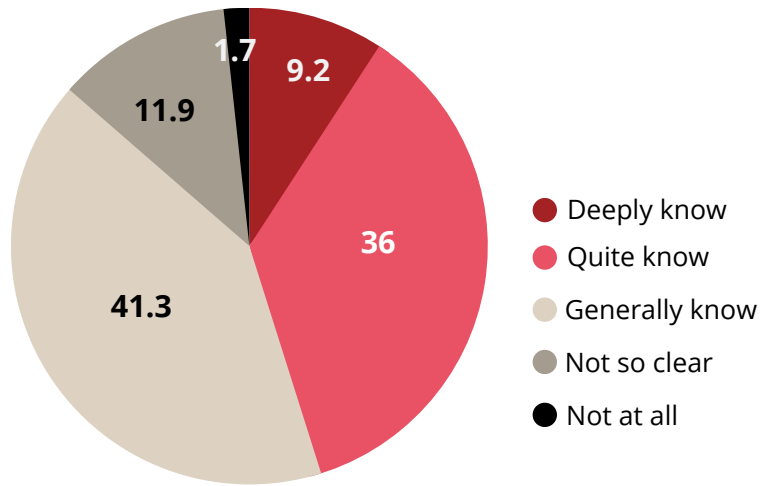
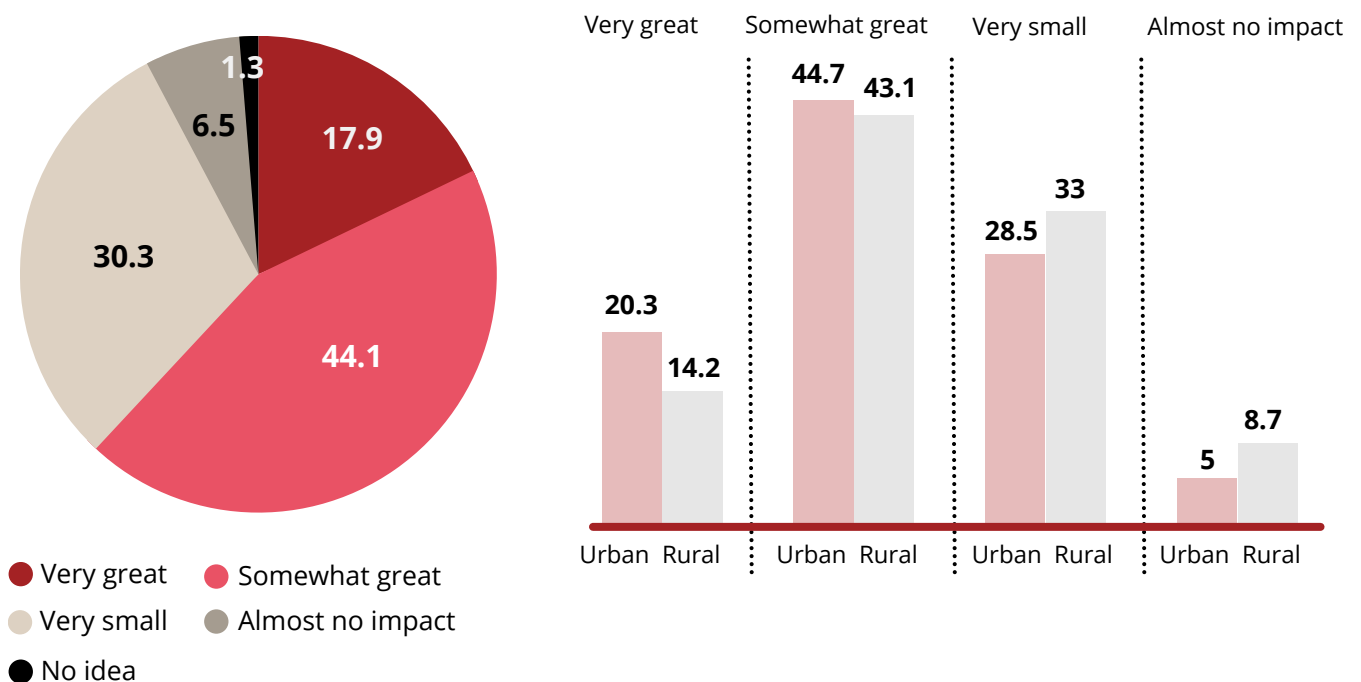


Figure 2: What do you think about the impact of international security on your life?

% by percentage





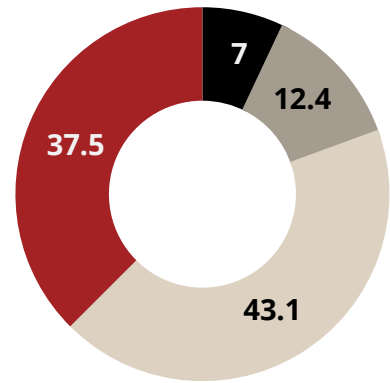
How do Chinese people define international “security”? The absence of war is merely the basic condition of “security”

The absence of war is merely the basic condition of “security” (only 7 percent of respondents regard it as a sufficient condition). The sound operation of economy and finance, the absence of large-scale uncontrollable man-made risks (such as climate change, data privacy, etc.) and the absence of ideological conflicts are also included in the significant conditions of “security”.

However, the older have a simpler view on “security”. 12.4% respondents over the age of 60 define it as “without any kind of wars across the globe,” slightly exceeding that of other age groups. The better-educated hold a more complicated view on “security” with more conditions attached. Under the same conditions, people in South China hold the simplest view of “security”.

Figure 3: What is your definition of international security?

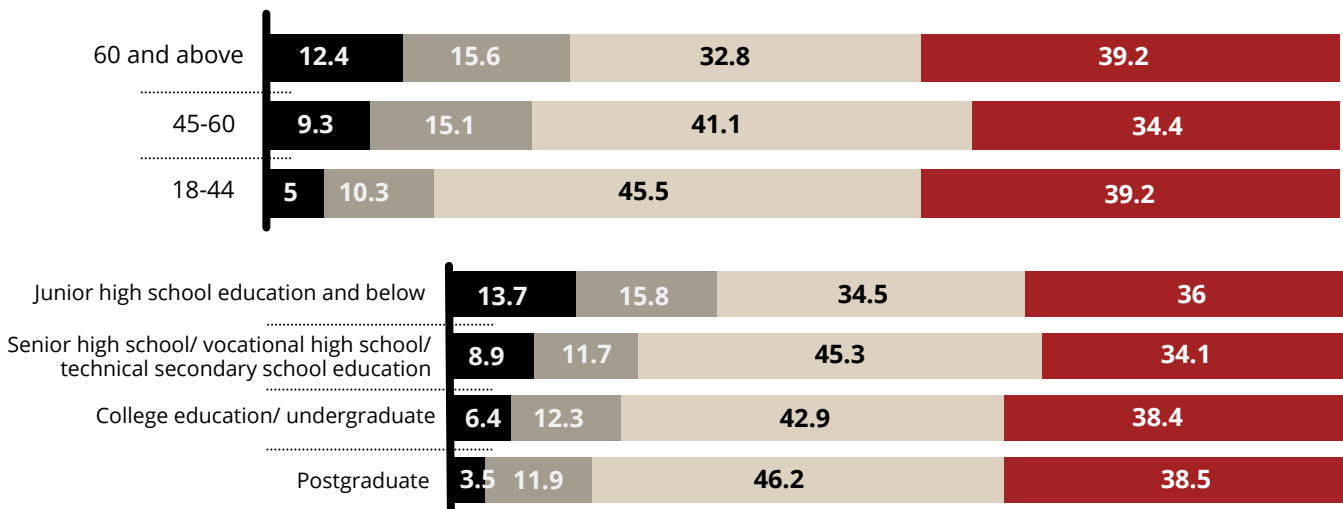
% by percentage



People in South China hold the simplest view of “security” 26.5 percent of the respondents are in favor of the first two definitions

Figure 4: Definitions of international security according to people in different age groups/with different education degrees

% by percentage



- Without any kind of wars
- With a sound operation of economy and finance and no any kind of wars
- With a sound operation of economy and finance and no any kind of wars and large-scale uncontrollable man-made risks (such as climate change, data privacy, etc.)
- With a sound operation of economy and finance and no any kind of wars, large-scale uncontrollable man-made risks and ideological conflicts



How do Chinese people learn about International Security?

Nearly 40 percent of the respondents regard the state-run media (*Xinhua News Agency*, CGTN, *People's Daily* and *People.cn*) as the main channel to obtain information on international security, followed by social media such as WeChat, Weibo, and official government websites or Apps.

Figure 5: How do you learn about international security?

% by percentage

State-run media (*Xinhua News Agency*, CGTN, *People's Daily* and *People.cn*)



WeChat Moments, WeChat group, Weibo, online forums, etc.



Government websites, WeChat official account/Weibo account, Douyin account, Apps, etc.



Commercial media (commercial websites, Internet client, WeChat official account, video website, newspaper, etc.)



Local media (TV station, newspaper, etc.)



Information from family members/friends



Notice/announcement issued by primary-level governments or the villagers committees



Foreign websites/self-media (Twitter, Facebook, etc)



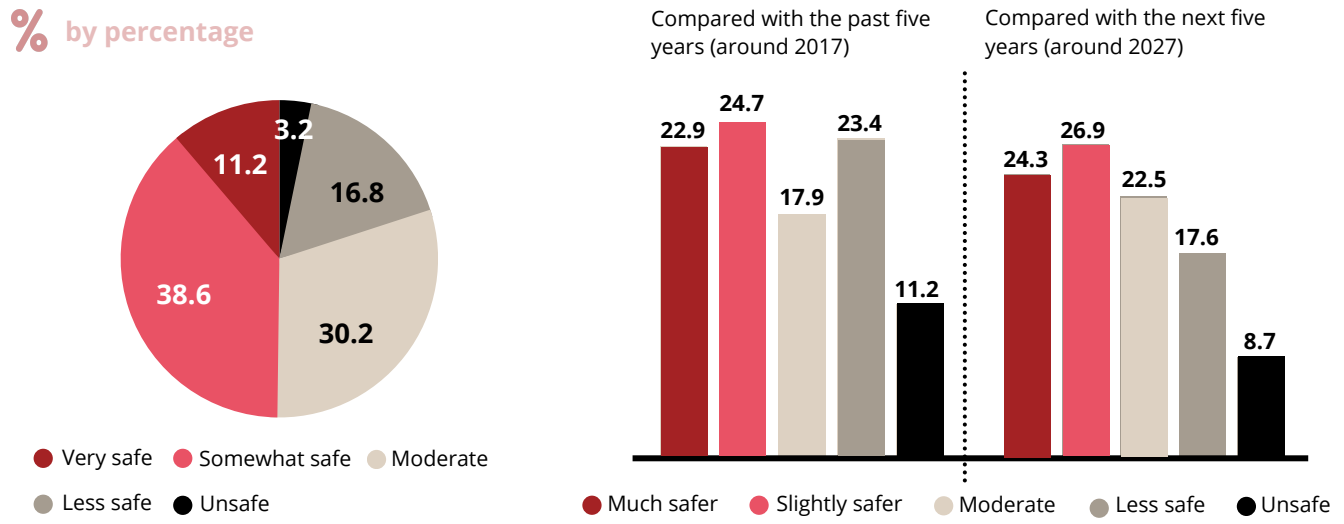
Nearly 40 percent of the respondents regard the state-run media as the main channel to obtain information on international security



2. Chinese People are Somewhat Optimistic about General International Security

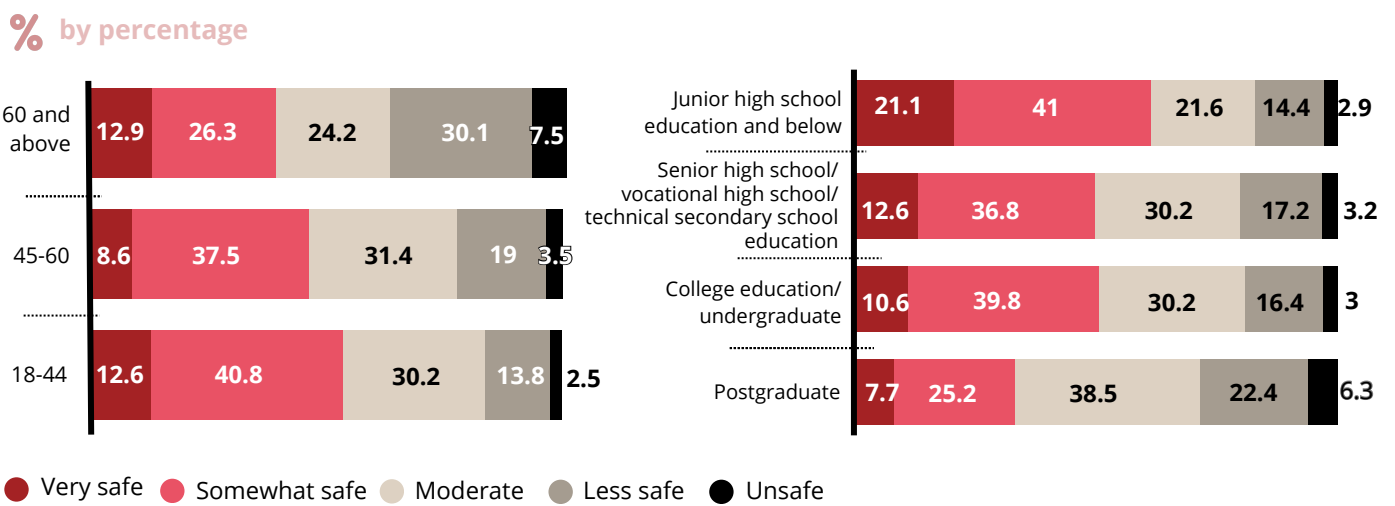
“
Nearly half of the respondents think that the world today is “safe” 49.8%

Figure 6: Do you think the world is generally safe now? How does/will the international security change compared with the past/next five years?



Nearly half of the respondents (49.8 percent) think that the world today is “safe”, far exceeding the proportion (19.9 percent) of people who believe that the world is “unsafe” and “less safe”. Nearly 50 percent of the respondents believe that the world today is safer than what it was five years ago, and more than 50 percent have a positive outlook on international security in the next five years.

Figure 7: Views on international security according to people in different age groups/with different education degrees



59%

Compared with other regions, people in South China are more optimistic. 59 percent of the respondents view the world today as generally “very safe” or “somewhat safe”.

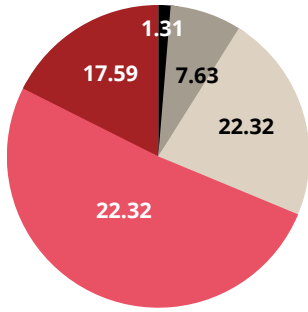
3 • Chinese People Remain Somewhat Optimistic about China's International security environment



Nearly 40 percent of the respondents consider China's international security environment as "safe"

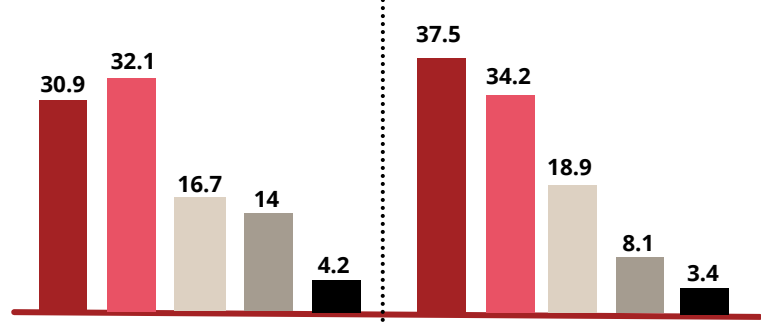
Figure 8: What do you think about China's international security environment? How does/will it change compared with the past/next five years?

% by percentage



Compared with the past five years (around 2017)

Compared with the next five years (around 2027)



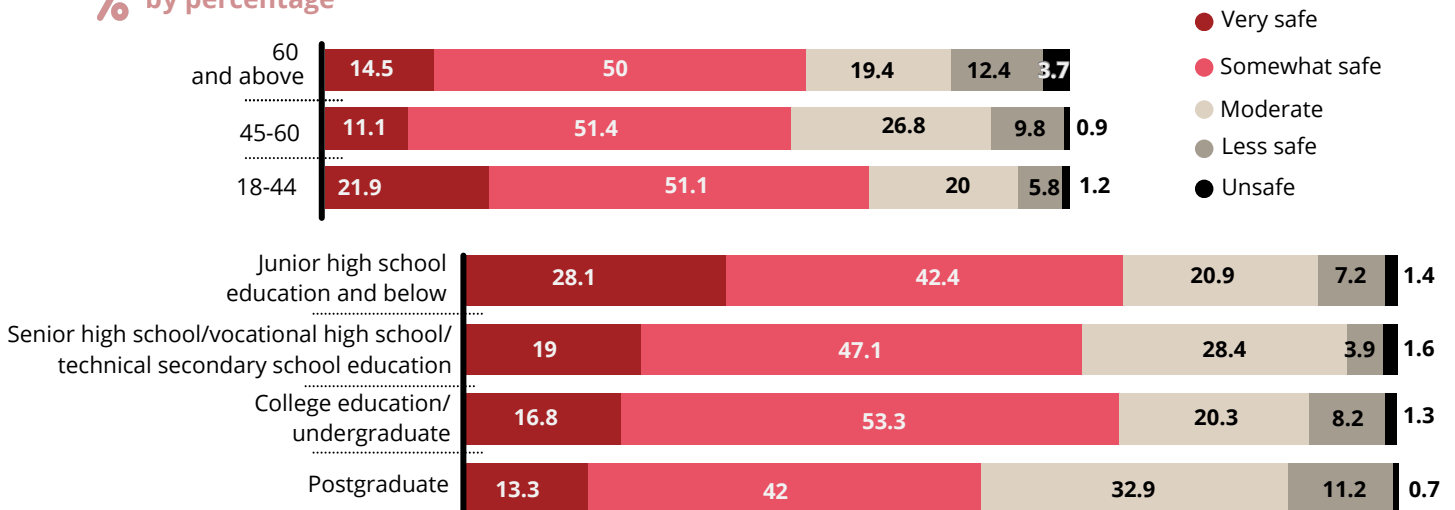
- Very safe ● Somewhat safe ● Moderate ● Much safer ● Slightly safer ● Moderate ● Less safe ● Unsafe
- Less safe ● Unsafe

Nearly 40 percent of the respondents consider China's international security environment as "safe". Nearly 70 percent of the respondents think that China's security situation has improved and will continue to do so in the next five years.

People of different age groups and with different education degrees have distinguished views on relative issues. Overall, people with higher education degrees usually find China's international security environment less secure. From the perspective of age, youngsters have a higher sense of security. Younger respondents aged 18-44 have a more positive view of China's international security environment, with 73 percent considering it "very safe" or "somewhat safe," compared to less than 65 percent of those aged 45-59 and over 60. Over 80 percent of respondents with junior high school education and below believe China's international security environment is "very safe" or "somewhat safe", while those with a master's or doctoral degree are more likely to have a pessimistic view. Overall, people with higher education degrees usually find China's international security environment less secure.

Figure 9: Views on China's international security environment according to people in different age groups/with different education degrees

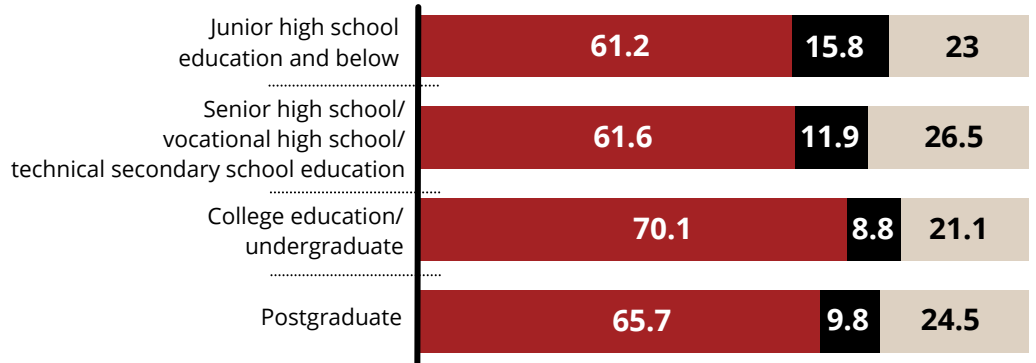
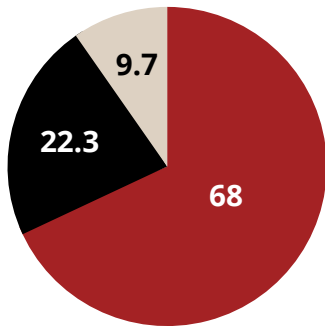
% by percentage



4 • Chinese People Are Highly Supportive of Globalization and International Cooperation

Figure 10: What do you think about the globalization for China's development?

% by percentage

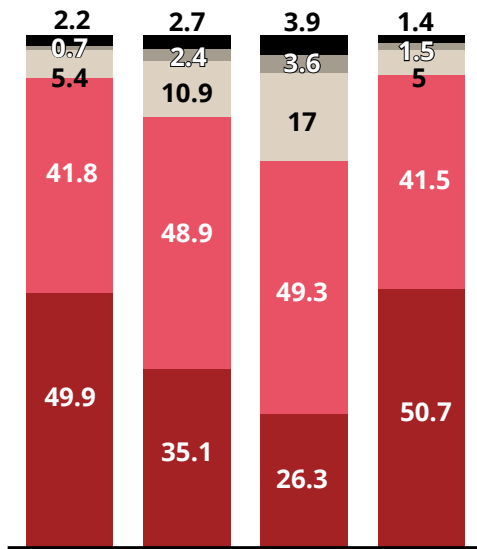


● Bring more advantages ● Half and half ● Bring more disadvantages

Nearly 70 percent of the respondents believe that the advantages of globalization outweigh its disadvantages for China's development. Among respondents of different ages, education degrees and income levels, those who believe that the advantages of globalization outweigh its disadvantages for China's development are far more than those who hold neutral or negative attitudes.

Figure 11: Chinese people's view on opening up and international cooperation

% by percentage

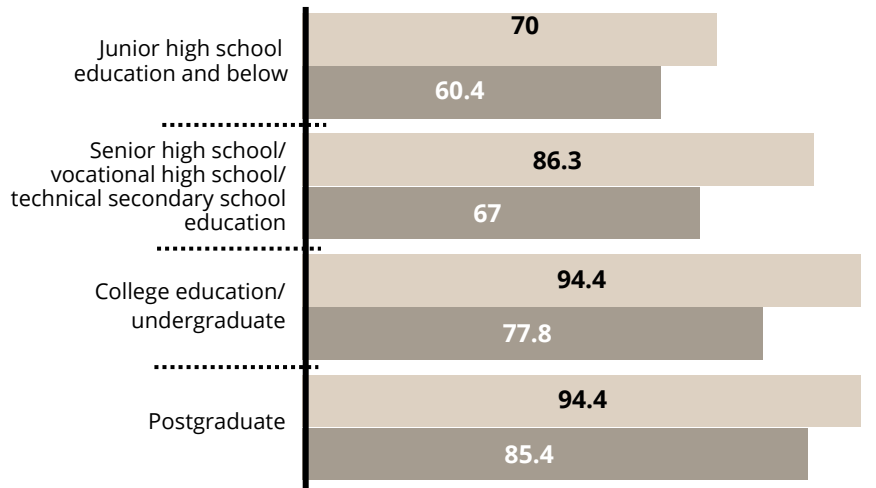


Expand foreign trade Welcome foreigners to engage in work, study, and other exchanges in China Encourage Chinese students to study abroad in Europe and America Continue its international cooperation on scientific research

● Strong approval ● Basic approval ● Basic disapproval
● Strong disapproval ● Not sure

Figure 12: The proportion of respondents who strongly or basically agree to encourage Chinese students to study abroad in Europe and America or continue the international cooperation on scientific research in terms of different education degrees

% by percentage



● Agree to continue its international cooperation on scientific research
● Agree to encourage Chinese students to study abroad in Europe and America

More than 80 percent of the respondents hold a positive attitude towards expanding foreign trade, foreigners studying in China, engaging in work and business exchanges, and participating in international scientific and technological research cooperation. Among the four measures mentioned above, the most controversial one is "whether to encourage Chinese students to study in European and American countries," with 16.95 percent indicating their "basic disapproval", compared with more than 75 percent of the seconders. More people with higher education degrees favor Chinese students studying abroad in Europe and America and international scientific and technological research cooperation.

5. Pandemics, Territory and Relations Between Major Countries Are Chinese People's Main Concerns

Figure 13: How do you think the international security threats on China? % by percentage

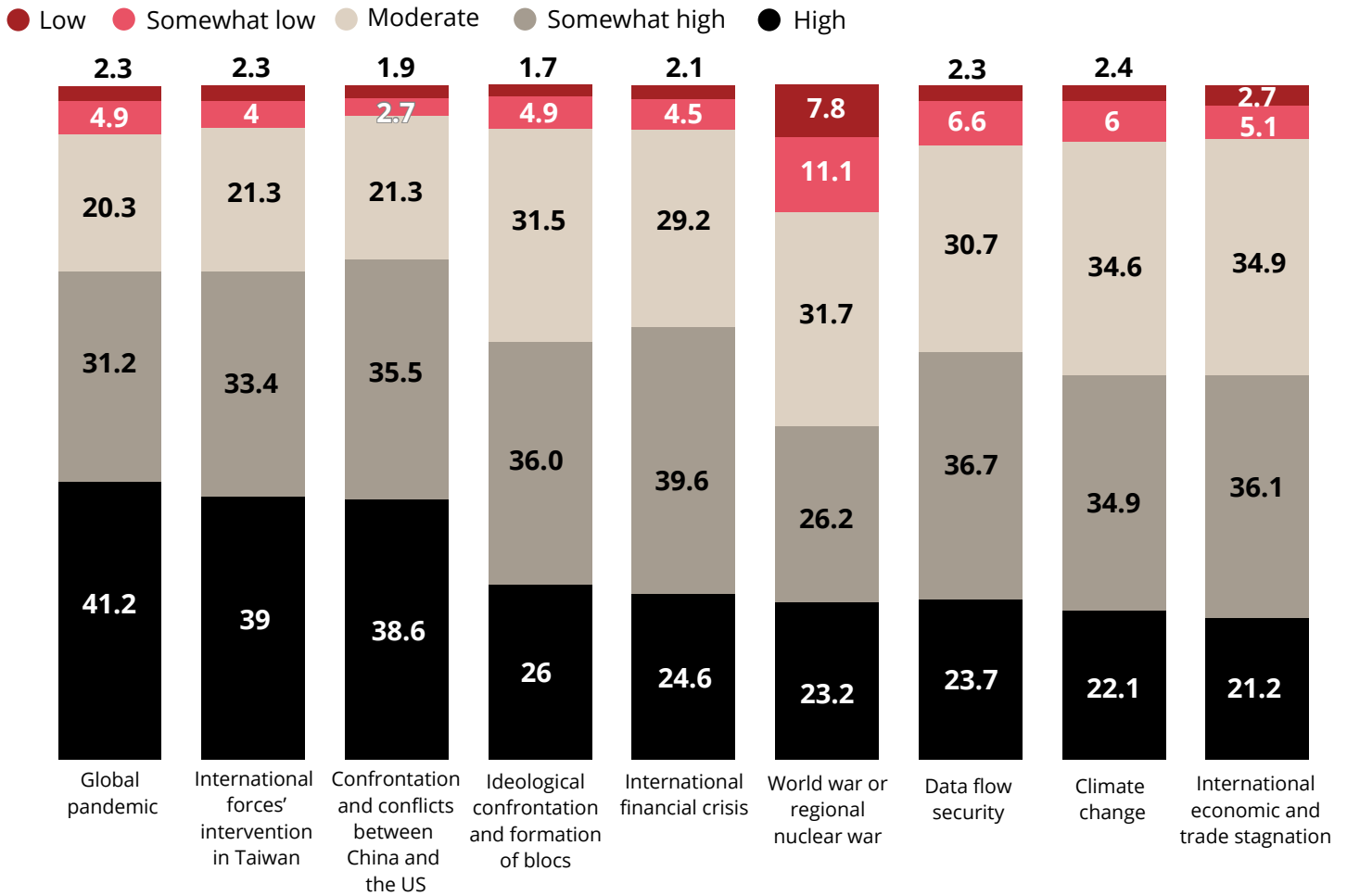
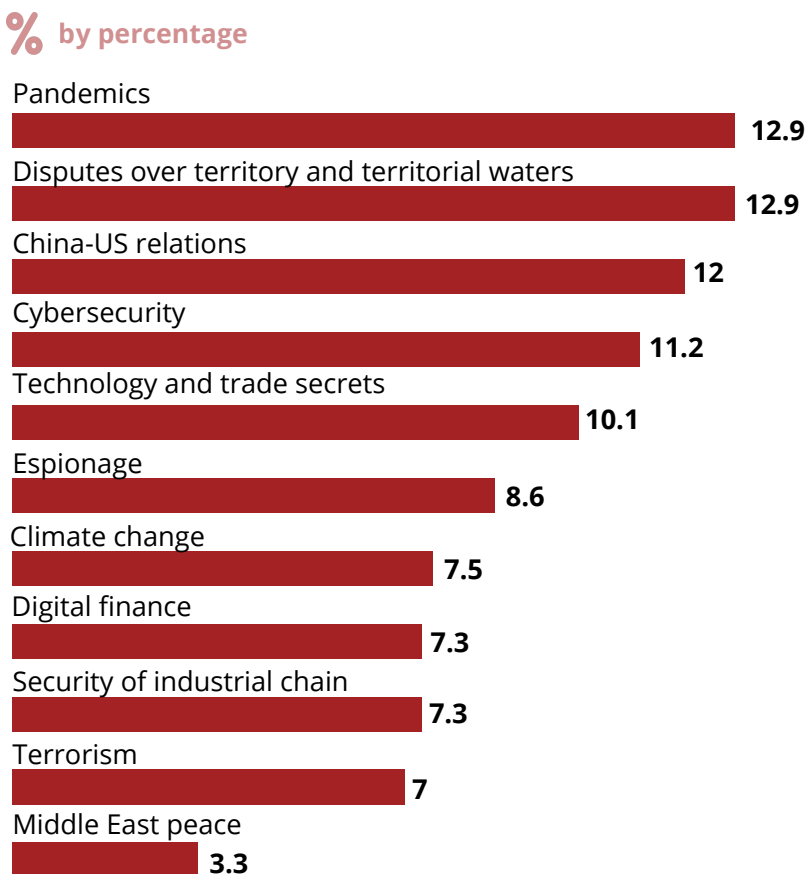


Figure 14: What is China's top priority among the international security issues below? % by percentage



The results, subject to the influence of the times, show that pandemics rank first among Chinese people's various concerns about the international security, followed by international forces' intervention in Taiwan and the rivalry between China and the United States (US). In contrast, people are relatively less threatened by climate change and international economic and trade stagnation.

Correspondingly, Chinese people regard pandemics, disputes over territory and territorial waters, and China-US relations as the three major international security issues that should be given top priority. Middle East peace and terrorism receive the least attention among the 11 options.



Will China-US relations improve?

Nearly half of the respondents believe that there will be improvement

Although rivalry between China and the US is one of the most concerned international security issues among Chinese people, nearly 50 percent of the respondents believe that China-US relations will improve in the future, compared with 24.76 percent of the pessimists.

Nearly 40 percent of the respondents attribute the challenges in China-US relations to US factors only, represented by the older and less-educated group, while nearly an equal proportion of those blame for the conflicting interests between China and the US, comprising of better-educated youngsters and middle-aged people.

Figure 15: What is the future of China-US relations in the next five years?

% by percentage

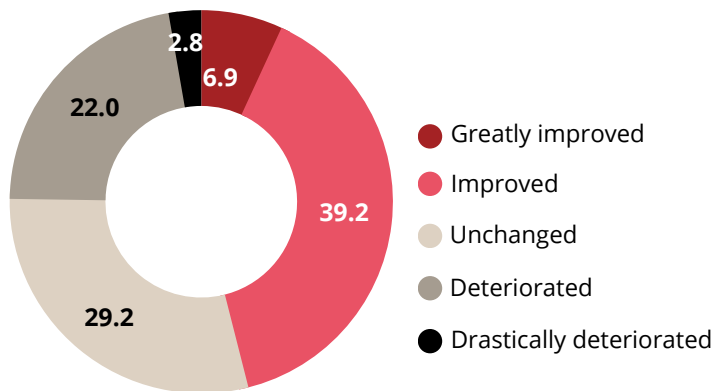


Figure 16: What is the main reason for the tension between China and the US ?

% by percentage

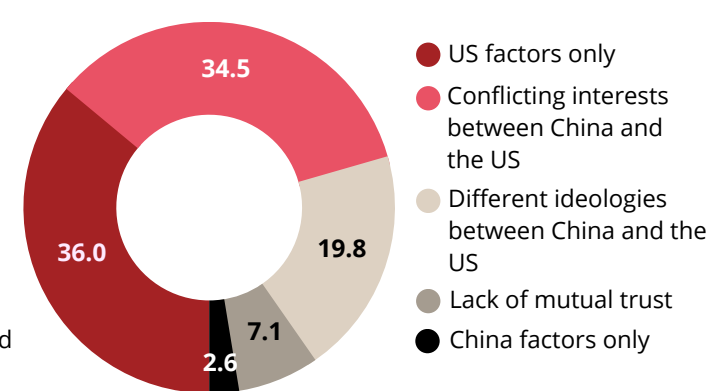
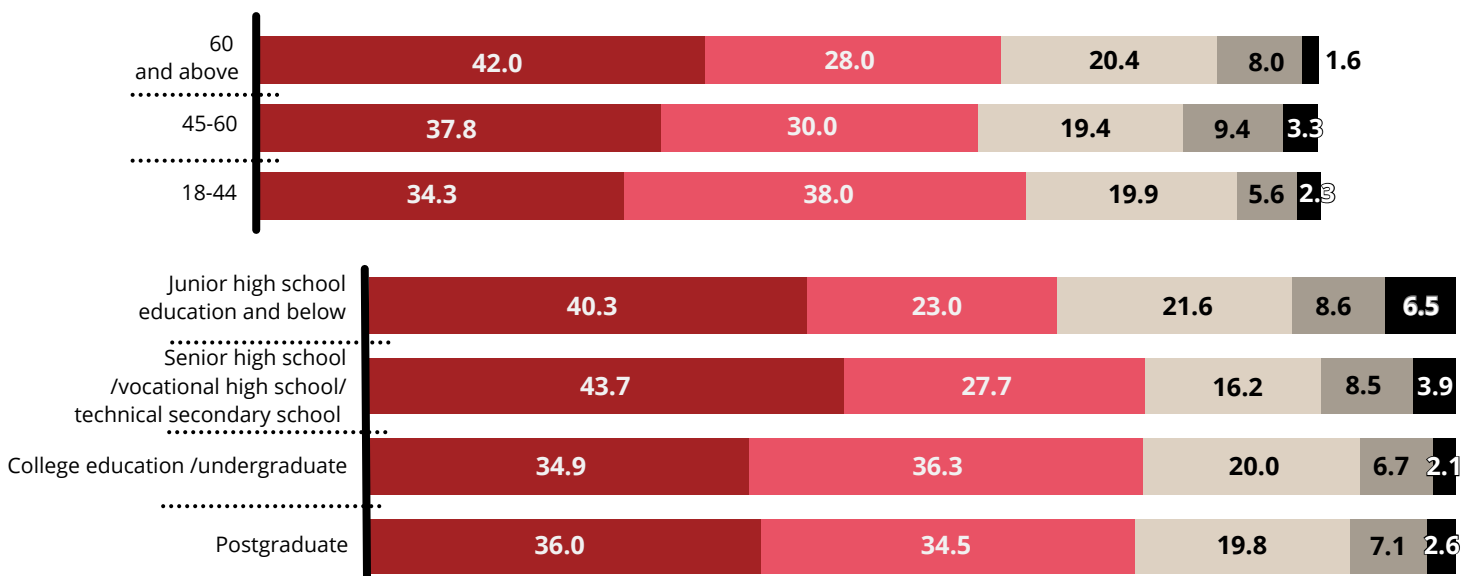


Figure 17: The main reason for the tension between China and the US according to people in different age groups/ with different education degrees

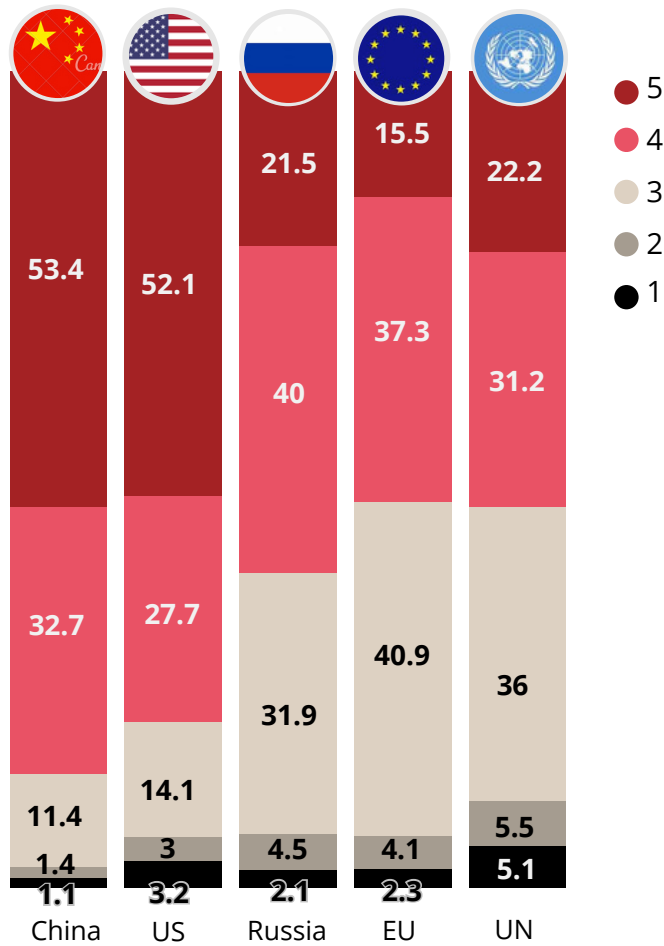
% by percentage



6. Chinese People Have Full Confidence in China's Global Influence

Figure 18: What do you think about the global influence of major countries (organizations) in the world? (score 1-5)

% by percentage



The respondents regard China as the most influential actor in the world

Chinese people regard China as the most influential actor in the world among the major countries or international organizations, including China, the US, Russia, the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN), with an average score of 4.36 (out of 5) among the 2,661 respondents.

Figure 19: How does China's global influence change compared with that five years ago (around 2017)?

% by percentage

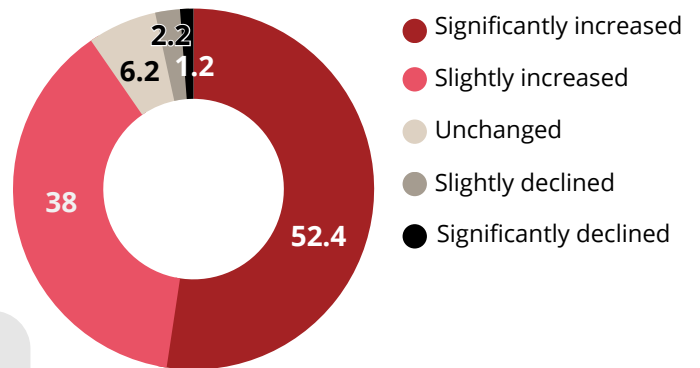
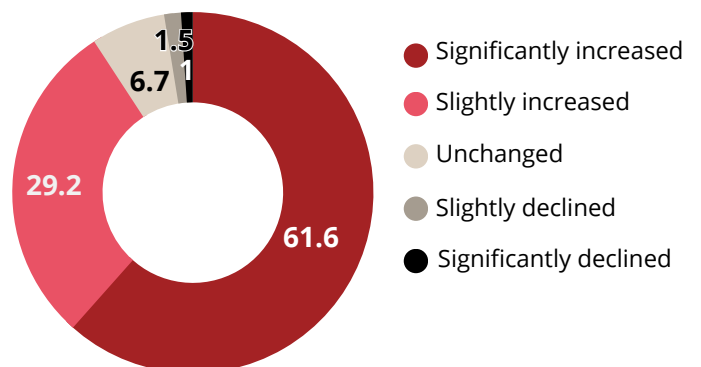


Figure 20: How will China's global influence change in the next decade (around 2032)?

% by percentage



Nine out of ten Chinese people think that China's global influence has increased compared with what it was five years ago

Nine out of ten (90.4 percent) Chinese people think that China's global influence has increased compared with what it was five years ago and 90.8 percent of the respondents believe that it will continue to make progress in the next ten years. Youngsters and urban people are more optimistic, while those aged 45-60 are more cautious.

Figure 21: Views on China’s global influence compared with that five years ago according to people in different groups

% by percentage

- Significantly increased
- Slightly increased
- Significantly declined
- Unchanged
- Slightly declined

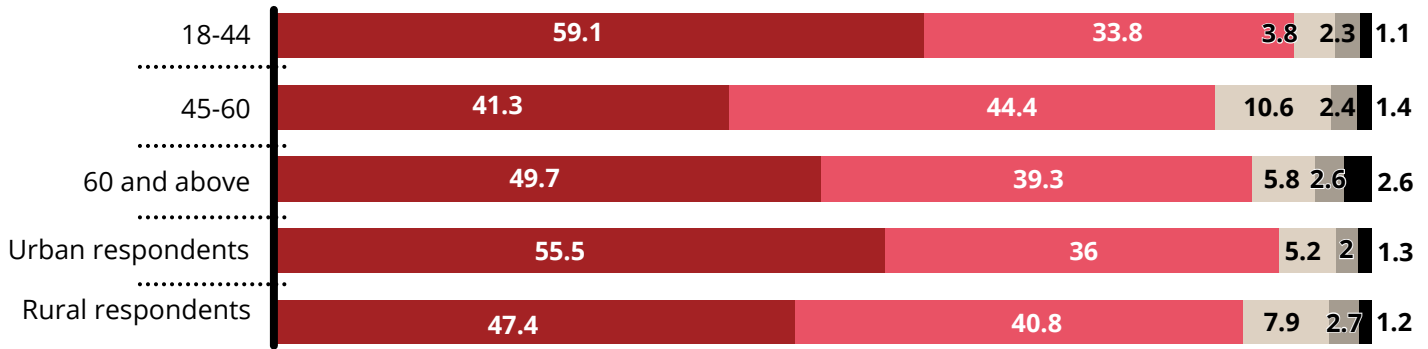


Figure 22: Views on China’s global influence compared with that in the next decade according to people in different groups

% by percentage

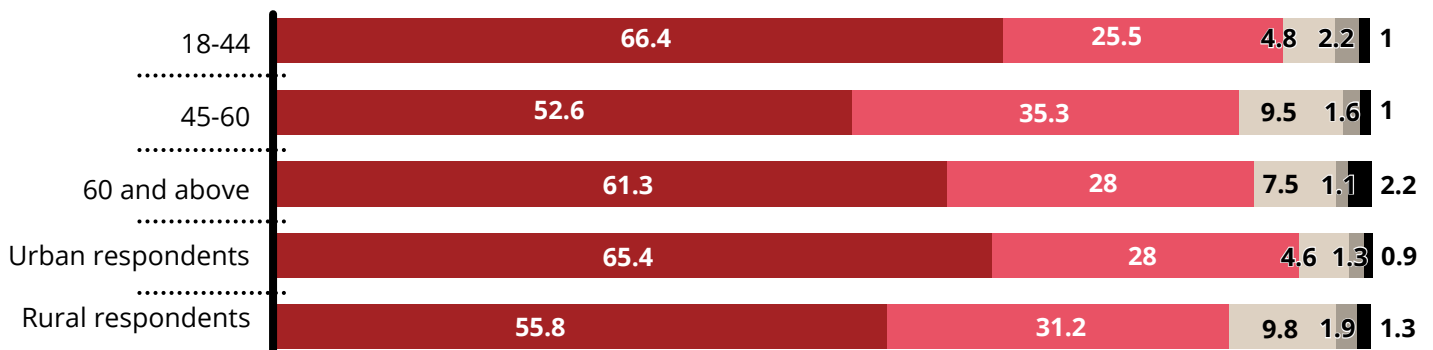
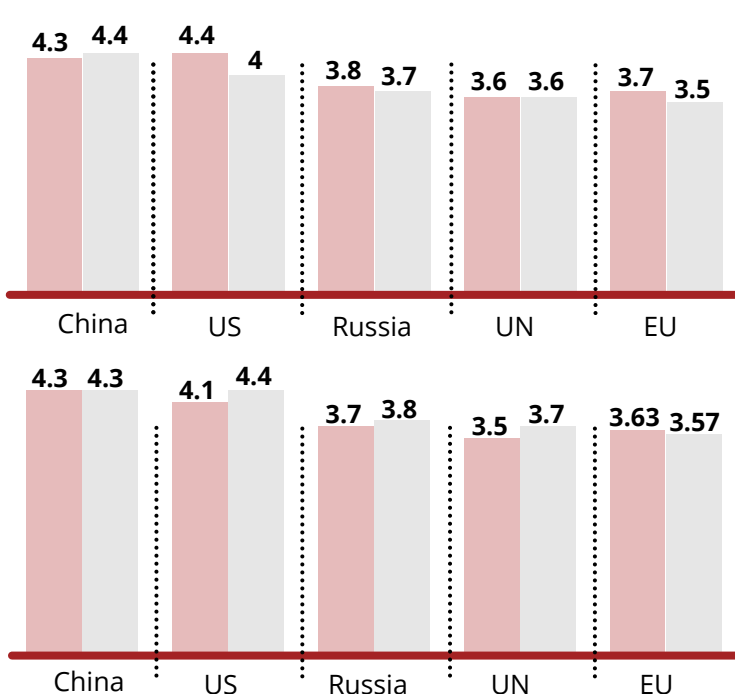


Figure 23: Views on the global influence of major countries (organizations) in the world according to respondents in different genders/with different education degrees (score 1-5)



- Undergraduates and above
- Undergraduates and below

The US, seen as the second most influential actor in the world, scores 4.22 on the average. However, the respondents with a bachelor’s degree or above believe that the influence of the US is slightly higher than that of China.

- Female
- Male

Interestingly, the scores given by different gender groups are slightly different, and female respondents give higher score than male respondents only to the EU.

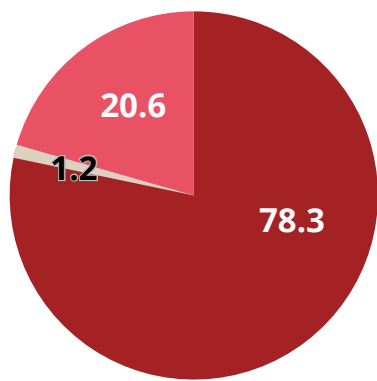


Around 78 percent of the respondents think that China’s general posture on foreign strategies should be more proactive in the next decade.

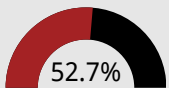
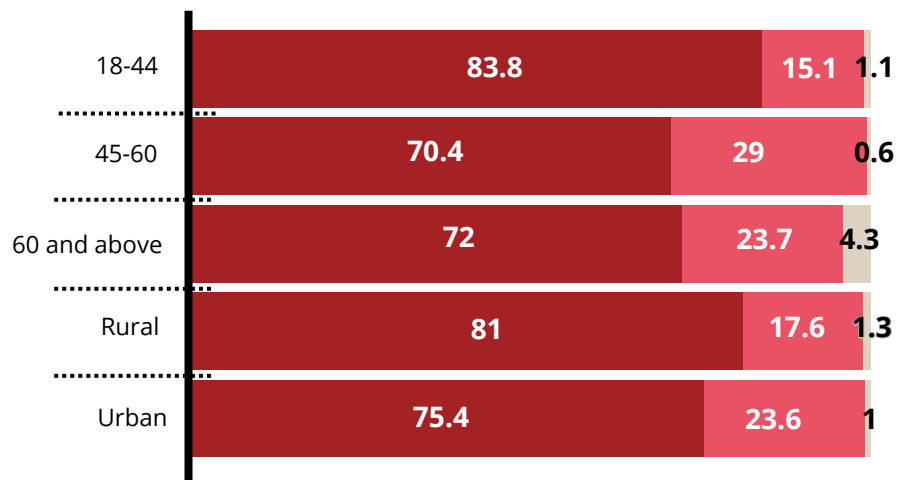
Other respondents hold ideas of “being more stable” and “making progress while maintaining stability”, etc.

Figure 24: What kind of China’s foreign strategies should be in the next decade (2022-2032)?

% by percentage



● More proactive ● More restrained ● Others



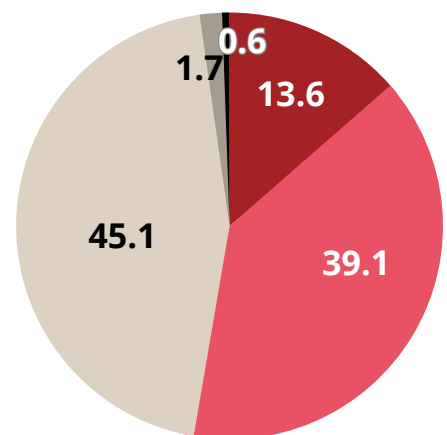
More than 50 percent of the respondents believe that China has provided slightly excessive or excessive foreign aid

On specific foreign policy issues, more than 50 percent of the respondents believe that China has provided slightly excessive or excessive foreign aid. However, the number of the respondents in favor of excessive foreign aid from China decreases with higher education degrees. Most of the respondents (91.54 percent) agree to impose sanctions on countries, entities or individuals that harm China’s interests. 74.93 percent of the respondents hold that it is necessary for China to set up overseas military bases for its own safety. 90.34 percent of the respondents believe that China should use military forces overseas in severe situations such as the large-scale kidnapping of Chinese nationals.

Figure 25: What do you think about China’s foreign aid?

% by percentage

● Excessive
● Slightly excessive
● Moderate
● Slightly insufficient
● Significantly insufficient



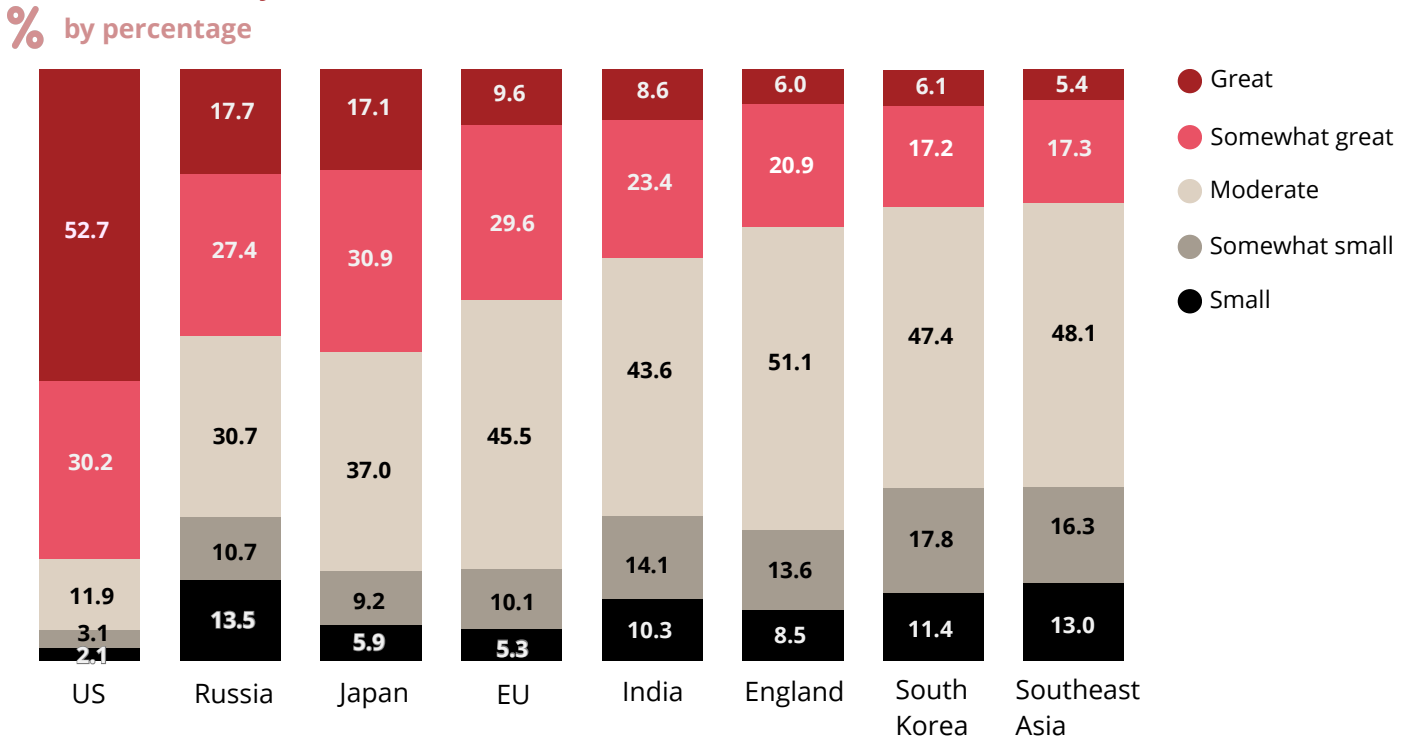
8.

**Chinese People Are
Most Concerned About
Impact Caused by the US
and Most Favorable to Russia**



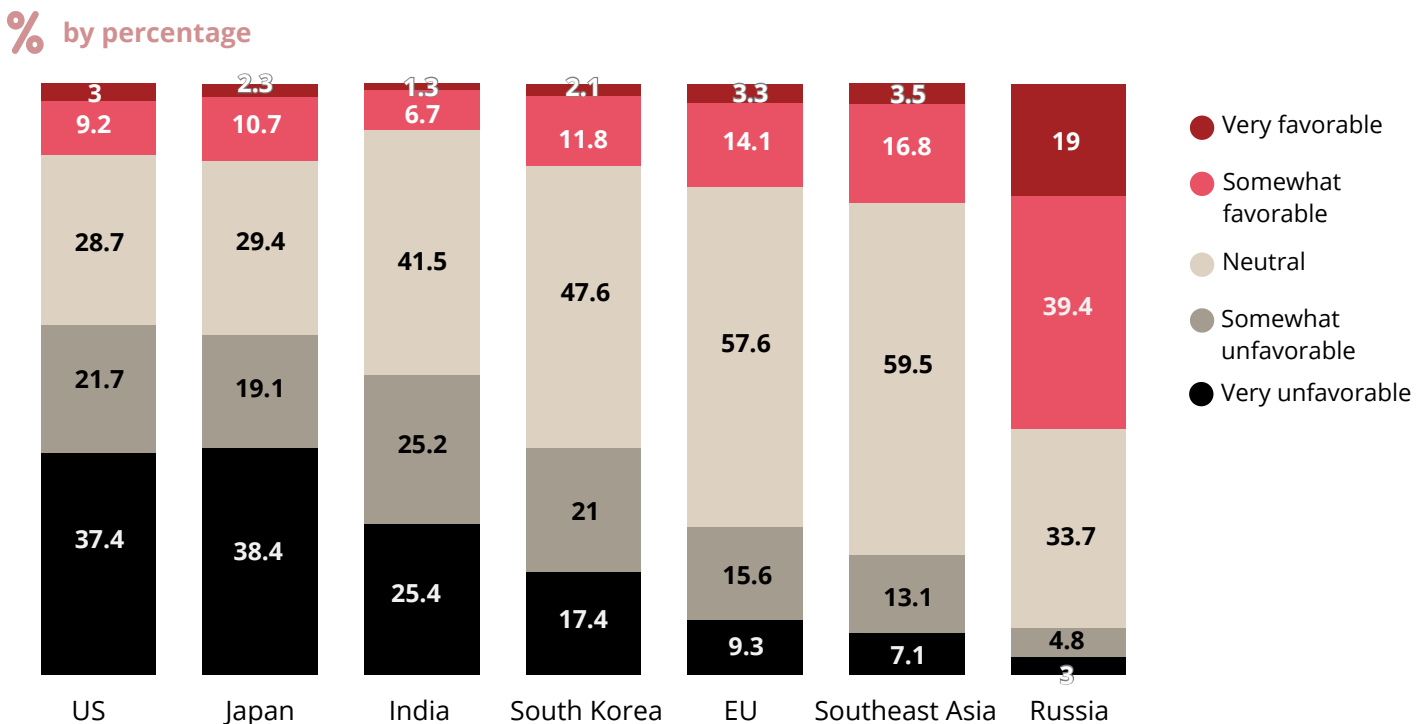
The vast majority of the respondents believe that the US exerts the greatest impact on China's security

Figure 26: What do you think about the impact of countries or regions below on China's security?



The vast majority of the respondents believe that the US exerts the greatest impact on China's security, followed by Japan, Russia, and EU. Chinese People are most favorable to Russia, and about 60 percent of the respondents have "very favorable" or "somewhat favorable" impression on Russia. More than half of the respondents have "very unfavorable" or "somewhat unfavorable" impression on the US and Japan.

Figure 27: What is your impression on the countries or regions below?





The most important issue in the Ukrainian crisis is the impact of the war on civilian life

Regarding the Ukrainian crisis, about 80 percent of the respondents believe the US and Western countries should be held most accountable, while less than ten percent of the respondents argue that Russia is mainly responsible.

The respondents generally believe that the most important issue in the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the impact of the war on civilian life. Besides, respondents are more concerned about the safety and economic interests of Chinese people in Ukraine and the impact on global energy supply.

Figure 28: Which country or region should be held most accountable in the Ukrainian crisis?

% by percentage

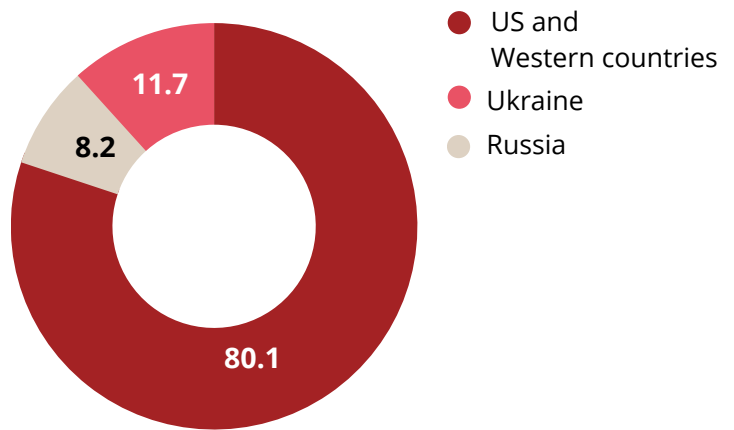
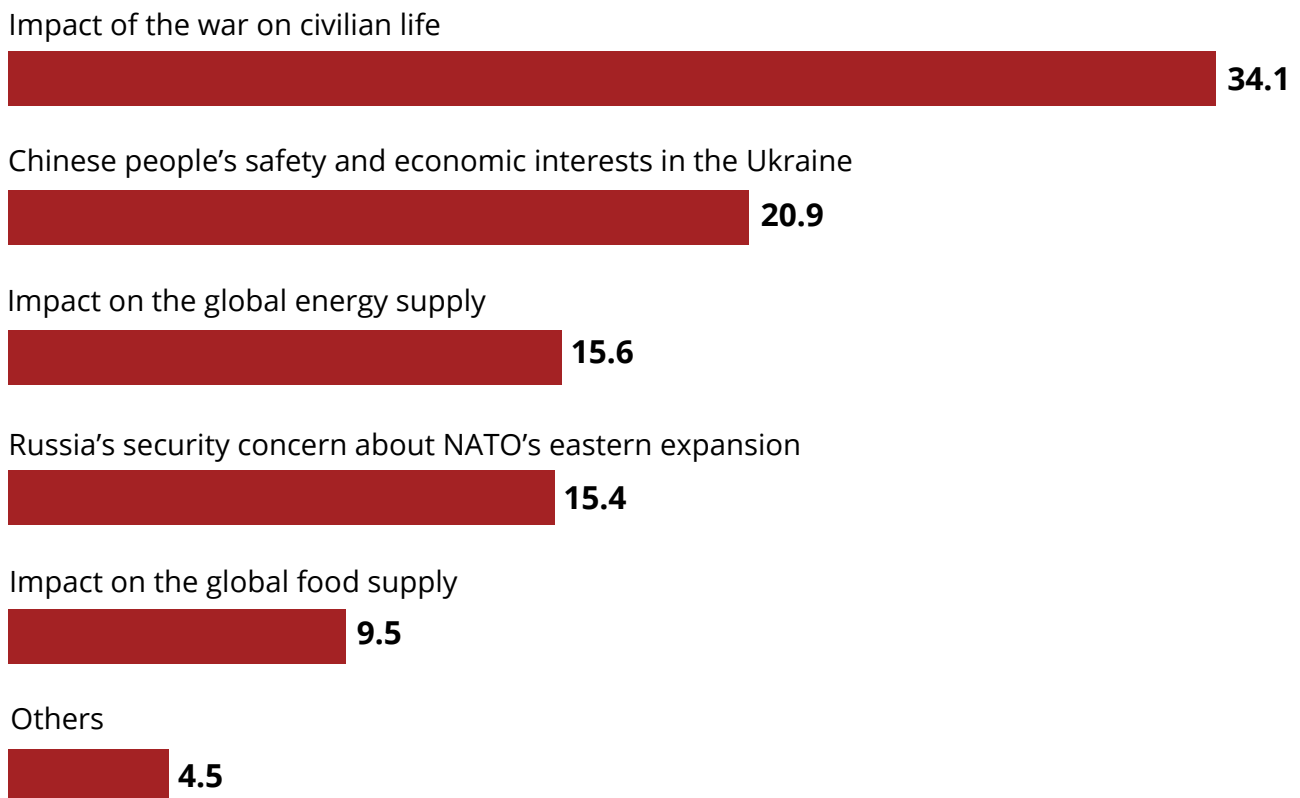


Figure 29: What is the most important issue in the Ukrainian crisis?

% by percentage



ABOUT US

Established on November 7, 2018, the Center for International Security and Strategy (CISS) of Tsinghua University is a university-level research institution in the field of international security and strategy. CISS aims to remain current with the changes in global dynamics, offering policy suggestions for decision-makers through researches on topics of foreign affairs, international relations, and security and strategic studies. It strives to promote, elucidate, and spread China's perspectives and policy views by carrying out various forms of knowledge exchanges and cooperation internationally, aiming to enhance the international community's understanding of China and improve Tsinghua's global influence in the fields of international relations and strategic studies.

CISS mainly focuses on issues such as security and strategy, diplomacy and global relations. It studies major security and strategic issues, including global order, global security governance, artificial intelligence and national security.

With FU Ying, former Vice Foreign Minister of China, being its Founding Chair, CISS has an Academic Committee that serves as the academic advisory body, and consists of five divisions, including the Research Project on the US and Europe, the Research Project on Global Governance, the Research Project on Eurasia, the "CISS Youth" Research Exchange Program, and the Secretariat of China Forum.

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YANG Haoting

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清华大学战略与安全研究中心

CENTER FOR
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND STRATEGY
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WeChat Official Account



CISS Podcast



TouTiao Account



Tel
010-62771388



E-mail
ciss@tsinghua.edu.cn



Website
<http://ciss.tsinghua.edu.cn>



Address
Room 428A, Mingli Building,
Tsinghua University