

OUTLINE



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KEY FINDINGS



- 1** Respondents are increasingly pessimistic about the current state and future of international security
- 2** Respondents feel relatively positive about China's current state and future of international security
- 3** Respondents are still supportive of China opening up to the world, although the support has slightly decreased
- 4** Respondents significantly value the use of China's economic power in diplomacy
- 5** Respondents believe that the United States is attempting to suppress China's development
- 6** Respondents' negative attitudes towards the United States are directed to the government and not ordinary people
- 7** Respondents are optimistic about China's potential to enhance its global status in the future

INTRODUCTION



In 2023, the Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University (CISS) conducted the inaugural “Chinese Outlook on International Security” survey study. Through the investigation, we found some important takeaways. For example, we found that Chinese people are generally optimistic about international security, and that they are highly supportive of globalization and opening up to the world. More importantly, we discovered that through the survey, we may be able to provide more information about China to the rest of the world, presenting a “filter-free” picture of China.

To reach that goal, in April 2024, we conducted the survey for this year. This year’s survey was carried out online. The survey’s target audience is China mainland residents over 18. Based on the results of the PRC’s Seventh National Population Census, a mixed sampling method was used, with sample proportions controlled according to gender, age, urban and rural areas, and regions. The survey lasted 15 days, with a total of 5646 participants, exceeding the planned quota by 2930 citizens. 54 citizens did not meet the screening criteria, and following further quality control, the investigation produced a final sample size of 2662.

The 2024 survey contains minor question and answer options adjustments from the 2023 survey. For the questions that had the neutral answer or no-answer options (e.g. “Neither agree nor disagree”, “I do not know”) removed, the report used proportional adjustment to ensure that the adjusted options maintained their relative weight, and to allow the survey results from both years to be compared.

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

Survey Sample:

Gender: a strict 1:1 ratio was followed, with 1331 male respondents and 1331 female respondents.

Age: Most respondents were aged 18-44, with a total of 1543 respondents (57.96%). The next largest age group is 45-60 with a total of 932 respondents (35.01%). 187 respondents were aged above 60 (7.02%).

Urban to Rural Ratio: Urban-rural respondent ratio in each region was controlled as much as possible according to the population distribution. Respondents from East China accounted for the majority of

respondents, with a total of 799 citizens (30%), followed by Central China (426 respondents, 16%), and Southwest China (399 respondents, 15%). Other regional distributions are as follows: South China (346 respondents, 13%), North China (320 respondents, 12%), Northwest China (186 respondents, 7%), and Northeast China (186 respondents, 7%). In every region, the urban-rural ratio is 6:4.

Highest Education Level Received: Most respondents have a highest education level received of Bachelor's or college vocational degree, accounting for a total of 2017 respondents (75.77%). 241 (9.05%) respondents have received a Master's degree, and 322 (12.1%) respondents have only completed high school. The smallest group is those with a middle school education or below, totaling 82 citizens (3.08%).

Occupation: The largest group of respondents are office workers, totaling 810 respondents (30.43%).. This was followed by professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, writers, journalists, etc., accounting for 430 respondents (16.15%). Freelancers made up the third-largest group with 377 respondents, (14.16%), while manual laborers accounted for 304 respondents (11.42%). Managers in private enterprises and multinational companies, including junior and senior levels, comprised 239 respondents (8.98%). Other categories included civil servants (2.63%), state-owned enterprise managers at various levels (5.33%), students (5.97%), and unemployed individuals (4.92%).

Political Status: Majority of respondents are the masses unaffiliated with any political party (1612 respondents, 60.56%). Communist Party and Communist Youth League members account for 562 respondents (21.11%) and 462 respondents (17.36%), respectively. Twenty-six (0.98%) respondents belong to the non-Communist parties.

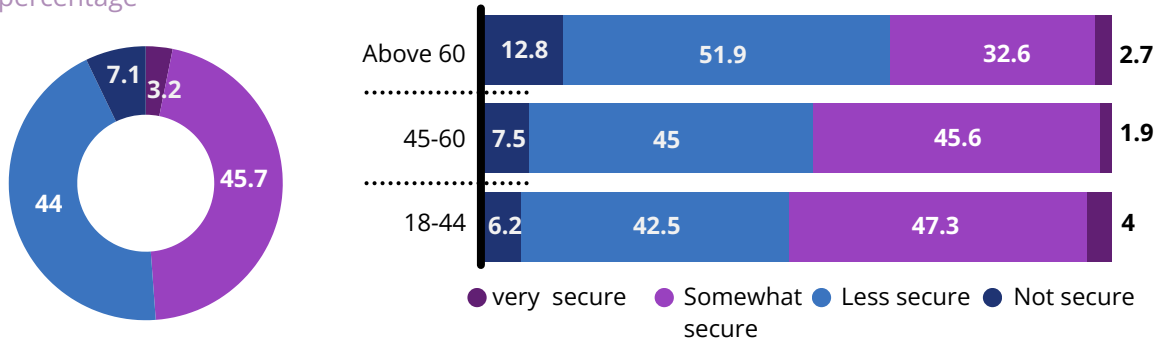
1. Is the World Secure?

“**Chinese people have become increasingly pessimistic about the current state and future outlook of international security**”

Compared to the 2023 survey, Chinese citizens’ pessimism regarding international security has noticeably increased. Over half of the respondents believe that the world today is “less secure” or “not secure”, slightly higher than the percentage of those who think the world is “very secure” or “somewhat secure”. The older the respondents, the stronger their perception of insecurity in the world today. Among respondents aged 18-44, 48.7% consider the current world to be “less secure” or “not secure”. This percentage rises to 52.5% among those aged 45-60, and further to 64.7% among those over 60 years old. Additionally, men’s sense of insecurity is higher than women’s by a margin of 6.9%.

Figure 1: Do you think the world is generally secure now?

% by percentage



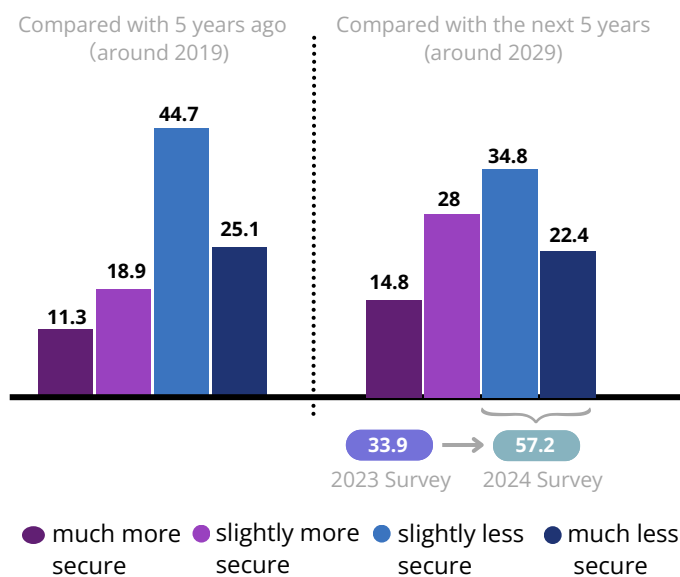
69.8% of respondents believe that the world today is less secure than it was five years ago (around 2019), marking a significant increase compared to the 2023 survey.

Regarding the future of international security, this year’s survey results similarly indicate a noticeable decline in Chinese citizens’ security expectations. More than half of the respondents believe that the world will be generally less secure five years from now. Among these respondents, the older they are, the higher their sense of insecurity; male respondents also feel less secure than female respondents.

Compared to the 2023 survey, people’s expectation of security has significantly decreased. The percentage of people who chose “much more secure” or “slightly more secure” dropped from 66.1% to 42.8%, while those who chose “much less secure” or “slightly less secure” correspondingly increased from 33.9% to 57.2%.

Figure 2: How does/will the international security change compared with the past/next five years?

% by percentage



2. Is China Secure in this World?

In stark contrast to the growing pessimism about global security, over 70% of respondents believe that China is “very secure” or “somewhat secure” currently in the international environment.

Older respondents, male respondents, and those with higher education levels tend to be more pessimistic about China’s international security situation. The percentage of respondents over 60 who choose “less secure” or “not secure” is about 14% higher than that of respondents aged 18-44. Male respondents are about 10% more likely to choose these options compared to female respondents, and the proportion of master’s/doctoral degree holders choosing these options exceeds that of respondents with a middle school education or lower by 6.2%.

Approximately 70% of respondents believe that China’s security situation has improved compared to five years ago (around 2019) (68.18%). Similarly, over 70% of respondents believe that China's security environment will become “somewhat secure” or “very secure” over the next five years (71.98%).

Among various security challenges, this year’s survey results show that respondents are most concerned about the challenges posed by “international forces intervening in the Taiwan question” and “tensions in China-U.S. relations”. Other issues that receive considerable attention include the “international financial crisis or economic crisis”, “the military use of Artificial Intelligence technology”, and “intervention by non-regional countries in the South China Sea”. Compared to the 2023 survey, respondents’ threat perception of international financial or economic crises has significantly increased, while the perceived threat of biosecurity issues such as pandemics similar to COVID-19 has notably decreased.

Over 70% of respondents believe that China is “very secure” or “somewhat secure” in the international environment.

Figure 3: Do you believe that China is secure currently in the international environment?

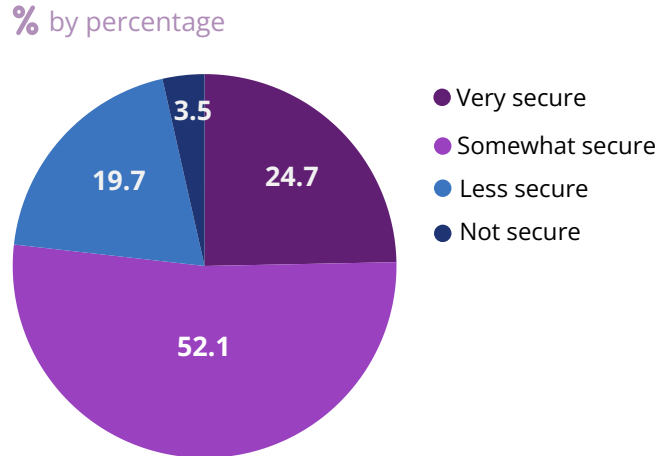
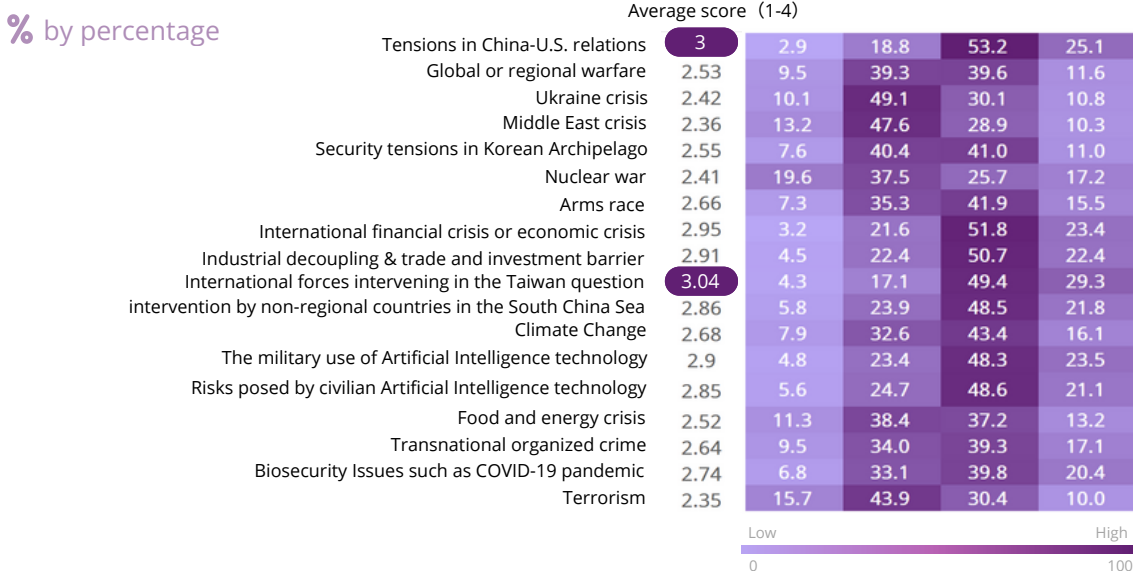


Figure 4: How do you think the extent of global security challenges listed below?



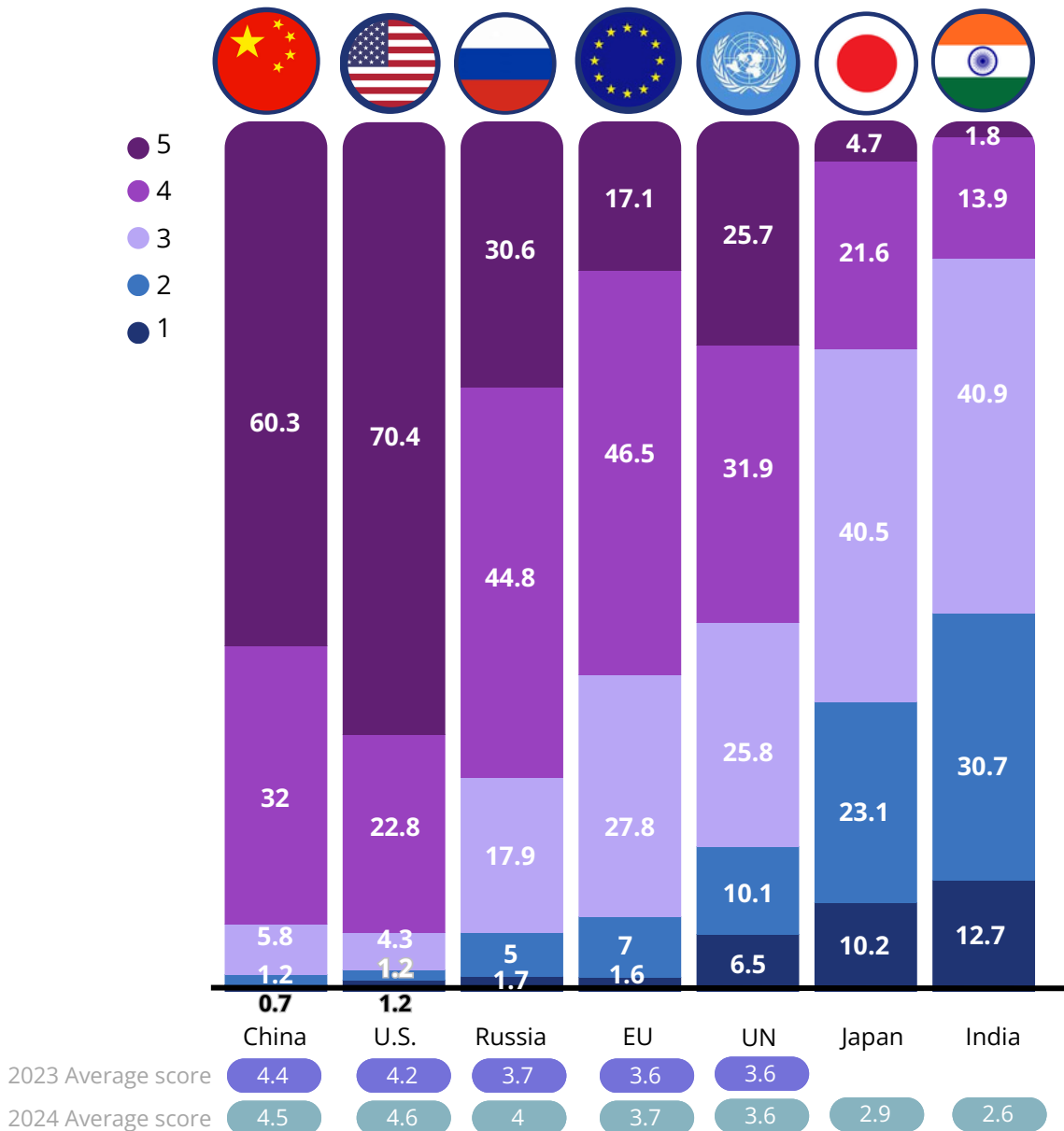
3. How Do Chinese Citizens View Other Countries?

Among various international actors (see Figure 5), respondents consider the U.S. as the most influential global actor. The average influence rating of the U.S. is significantly higher than that of Russia and the EU, while Japan and India are perceived as having comparatively weaker influence.

This survey also includes attitudes toward two international events: the Ukraine crisis and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. 42.41% of respondents believe that the Ukraine crisis is primarily the responsibility of “other third parties” beyond Russia and Ukraine, while those who think both sides (Russia and Ukraine) are responsible account for 35.57% of respondents. About 16% believe Ukraine bears the main responsibility, and 5.94% attribute the primary responsibility to Russia. Regarding the primary responsibility for the Israel-Palestine conflict, over half of the respondents (55.23%) believe that both sides are responsible or that other third parties bear the main responsibility. Around 39% believe Israel is mainly responsible, while only 5.48% think that the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) bears the primary responsibility.

Figure 5: What do you think about the global influence of major countries / organizations in the world?
 (5 represents “very big”, while 1 represents “small”)

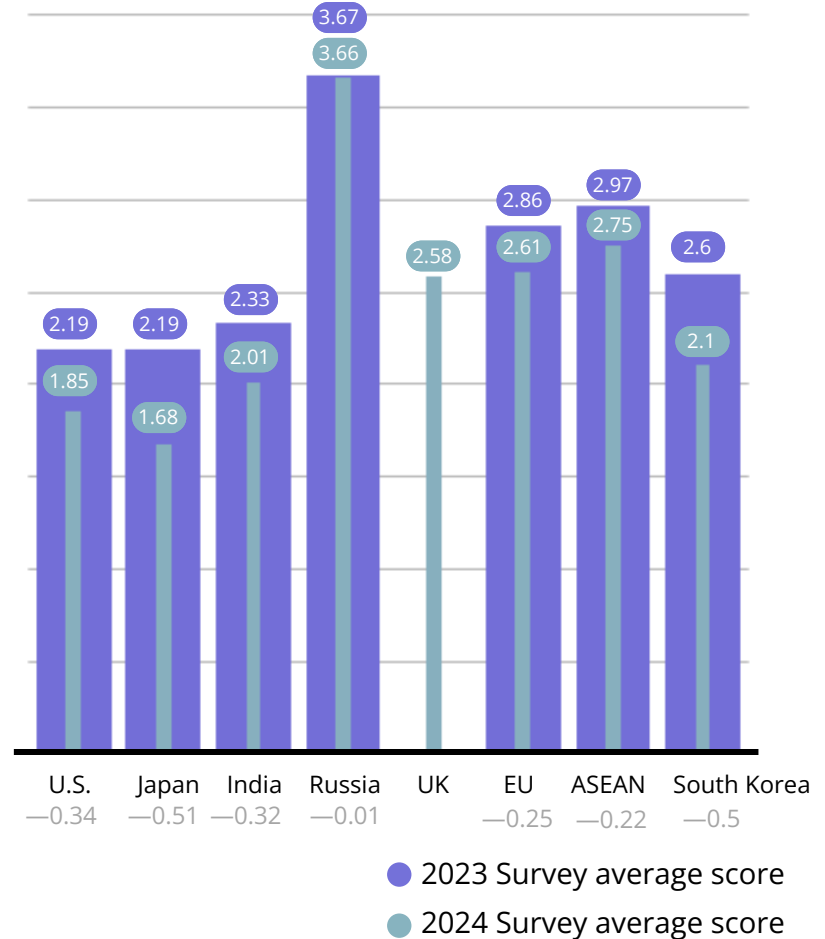
% by percentage



Consistent with the 2023 survey results, the 2024 survey shows that Chinese citizens have the highest favorability towards Russia and the lowest towards Japan and the United States. Nearly 66% of respondents expressed “very favorable” or “somewhat favorable” views toward Russia, while 75.92 and 80.24% of respondents expressed “somewhat unfavorable” or “very unfavorable” views towards the U.S. and Japan, respectively.

Respondents’ unfavorable sentiments toward the U.S. are primarily directed at the U.S. government rather than its citizens. Over 80% (81.71%) of respondents have a neutral or favorable attitude towards ordinary Americans, while 81.4% express “somewhat unfavorable” or “very unfavorable” views towards the U.S. government. Only a small fraction of respondents (1.8%) feels highly unfavorable towards the U.S. government and ordinary Americans.

Figure 6: What’s your impression on the countries or regions below?
 (5: Very favorable 4: Somewhat favorable
 3: Neither 2: Somewhat unfavorable 1: Very unfavorable)

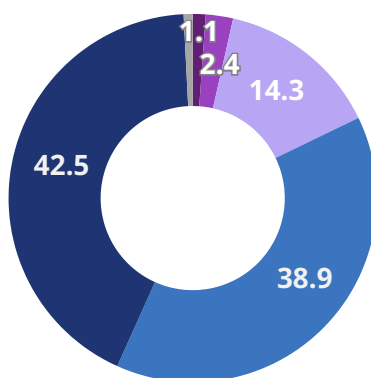
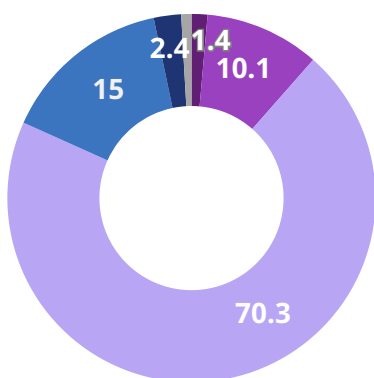


Over 80% of respondents have a neutral or favorable attitude towards ordinary Americans



Figure 7: What is your attitude towards ordinary Americans (left graph) and the U.S. government and its internal and foreign policy (right graph)?

% by percentage



- Very favorable
- Somewhat favorable
- Neither
- Somewhat unfavorable
- Very unfavorable
- I do not know

4. How Do Chinese Citizens Wish to See Security Issues Handled?

Regarding China’s overall foreign strategic stance for the next decade (2025-2035), the majority of respondents believe that China should adopt a more proactive stance rather than a more restrained one. However, compared to last year, the percentage choosing “more proactive” has decreased by 5%.

Approximately 60% of respondents believe that domestic affairs should take precedence over foreign policy and international affairs, while only 8.56% disagree. Among them, less than one percent strongly oppose this view. Female respondents prioritized domestic affairs less than male respondents.

Figure 8: What style of foreign strategy should China take in the next decade (2025-2035)?

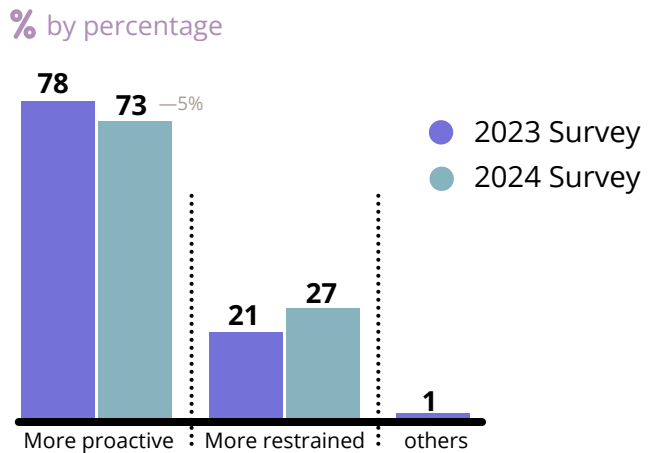
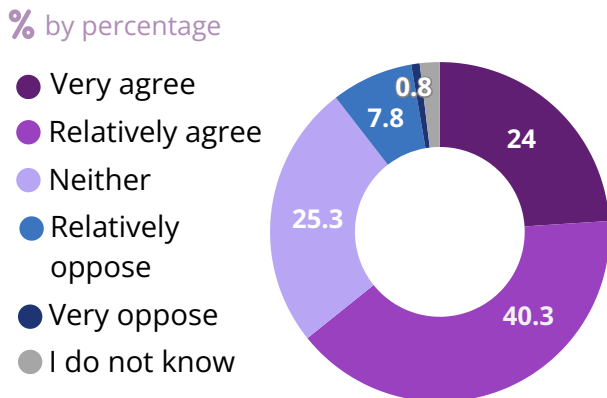


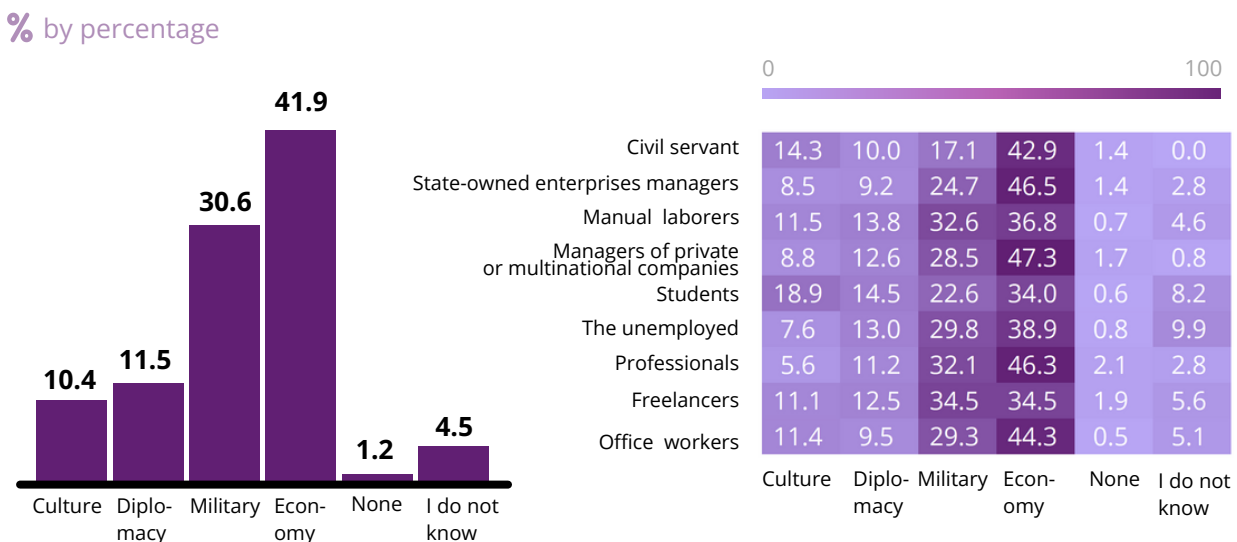
Figure 9: “For China, domestic affairs should take precedence over foreign policy and international affairs.” What do you think?



Respondents identified “economic power” as the primary force for achieving China's foreign policy goals, followed by military power, diplomatic power and cultural power.

Respondents exhibited different preferences across annual income, occupation, and age groups. Overall, those with annual incomes above 100,000 yuan, state-owned enterprise managers, professionals, and those over 60 years old are more likely to believe in “economic power”, whereas groups with lower annual income and students tend to prefer “cultural power”. Notably, students have the highest proportion choosing “diplomatic power” and “cultural power” compared to other occupational groups, and they have relatively lower proportion in choosing “military power” as the primary force.

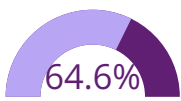
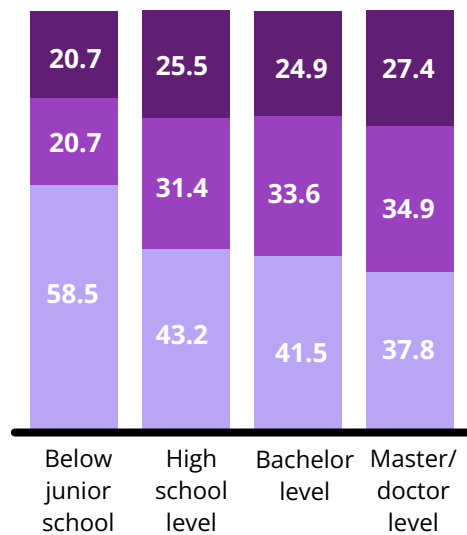
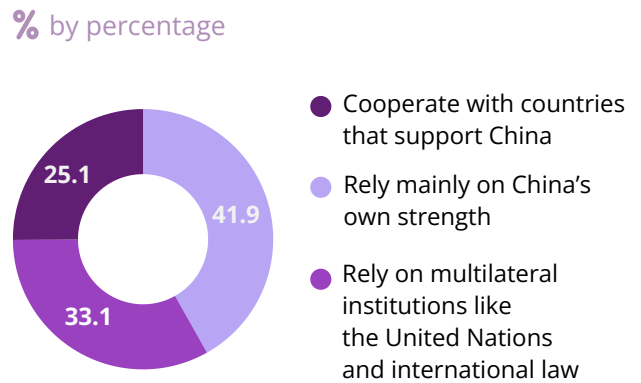
Figure 10: Which is the primary force for achieving China’s foreign policy goals?



The 2024 survey results show that 55.6% of respondents believe that China’s current foreign aid is excessive, which is a slight increase of 3.1% from the 2023 results, with the proportion choosing “significantly excessive” rising by about 6%. Most respondents still agree with China establishing overseas military bases for its own security (78.3%). Perhaps due to the impact of multiple international conflicts, there has been a noticeable decline in Chinese citizens’ support for “overseas military deployment”. The proportion of respondents choosing “strongly agree” or “generally agree” dropped from 92.57% to 76.82%.

If there are disagreements between China and other countries, 41.9% of respondents advocate relying on China’s own strength to resolve them, 33.1% advocate relying on multilateral institutions like the United Nations and international law, and 25.1% choose to cooperate with countries that support China. Cross-analysis reveals that those aged over 60 are more inclined to rely on China’s own strength, while the preference for relying on multilateral platforms and partner countries is weaker; a higher proportion of men (43.8%) chose to rely on China’s own strength compared to women (39.9%); the higher the educational level, the stronger the trend to rely on multilateral platforms and partner countries, while the lower the educational level, the more inclined they are to choose “rely on China’s own strength”, with 58.54% of respondents with middle school education or below choosing this option, compared to only 37.76% of respondents with a master’s or doctoral degree.

Figure 11: When disagreements exist among China and other states, what solutions should be taken?

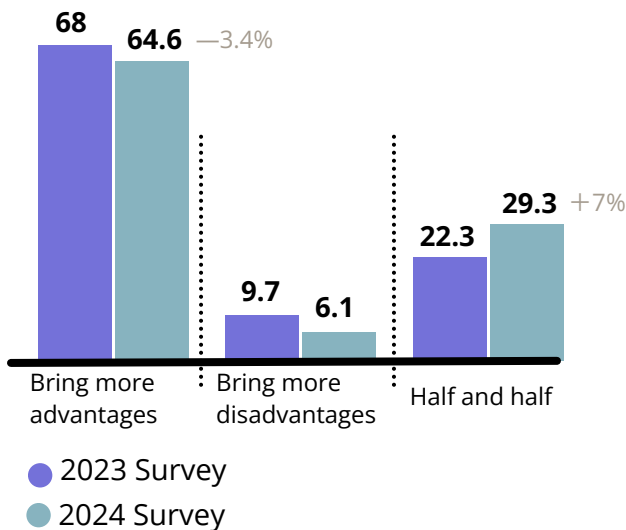


Chinese citizens remain relatively positive about the impact of globalization
Over 60% of respondents believe that the globalization brings more advantages

Compared to the 2023 survey results, Chinese citizens remain relatively positive about the impact of globalization, but their views are slightly more neutral. The proportion of citizens who believe that the impact of globalization on China brings more advantages than disadvantages has slightly decreased, but over 60% of respondents still hold this view. The proportion that believes globalization brings more disadvantages has also decreased by 3%, with more respondents indicating that the impact of globalization on China is “half and half”. Among various subgroups, the higher the educational level and the older the age, the more positive they are about the benefits of globalization for China. A lateral comparison across different regions of the country shows that respondents in the Southwest are most vocal about the benefits of globalization for China, while respondents in the Northeast are more likely to believe that the benefits and harms are balanced, and those in North China are most inclined to view globalization as more harmful than beneficial.

Figure 12: What do you think about the globalization for China?

% by percentage



Not only has the overall positive attitude towards globalization slightly decreased, but in four specific areas—economic and trade openness, foreigners coming to China, Chinese students studying in Europe and the U.S., and adherence to international scientific cooperation—respondents’ attitudes remain generally supportive, but the degree of support has decreased.

Firstly, respondents remain highly supportive of economic and trade openness, with a combined proportion of those choosing “strong approval” and “basic approval” at 93.4%. In all regions, the number of people supporting openness far exceeds those who disagree. At the same time, compared to the 2023 survey results, the proportion of respondents in 2024 who choose “strong approval” has decreased from 51.04% to 42.19%. Additionally, unemployed citizens show the lowest level of support (87.8%), while private/multinational company managers (97.07%) and students (95.6%) show the highest levels of support.

Secondly, while welcoming foreigners to study, work, and do business in China remains the mainstream view, the proportion has slightly decreased, from 86.37% to 81.44%, with the proportions of those who “basic disapproval” and “strong disapproval” both increasing. Furthermore, the trend is more evident that the higher the annual income, the more positive the attitude towards foreigners coming to China. The proportion of the group with lowest annual income (within 50,000 yuan) and those with the highest annual income (over 1 million yuan) that chose “strong approval,” are 26.47% and 42.86%, respectively.

Thirdly, concerning topics of studying abroad and scientific research cooperation, more than 70% of citizens (72.62%) still support China continuing to encourage students to study in Europe and the U.S., and over 90% of citizens support continuing international cooperation in scientific research. However, the proportion of respondents who strongly agree with China continuing to encourage its students to study in Europe and the U.S. has decreased by 7.84% compared to the 2023 survey results, and the strong support for China participating in international scientific research cooperation has also slightly declined.

5. How Do Chinese Citizens View China-U.S. Relations?

Respondents' view of China-U.S. relations remains stable compared with that of 2023. More respondents hold the belief that China's influence has increased (90.61%) while the U.S.'s influence has declined (59.05%) in the past five years, and are optimistic about China's potential in global development.

Nearly 67% of the respondents believe that the global status of America will decline significantly within the next ten years (around 2034), while 88.99% believe China's global status will increase continuously, in which 39% believe there will be a "significant increase".

Figure 13: How does the U.S. global influence change compared with 5 years ago (around 2019)?

% by percentage

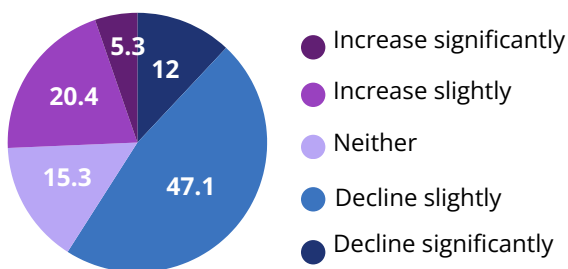
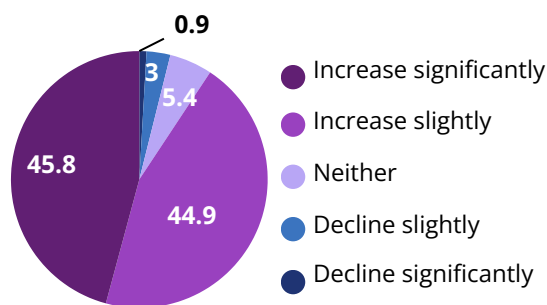


Figure 14: How does China's global influence change compared with 5 years ago (around 2019)?

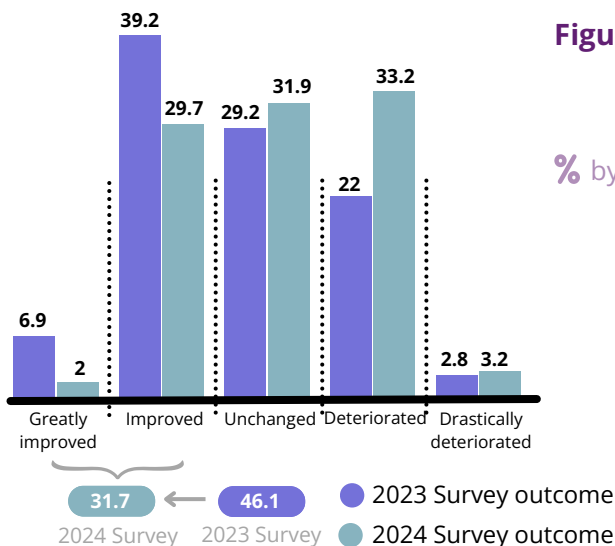
% by percentage



Respondents share a negative attitude towards the state of China-US. relations in the past year and for the next 5 years. Approximately 46% of respondents believe that the bilateral tie deteriorated since last year, and only 8.08% see it improved. Nearly 36% predict that bilateral ties will deteriorate in the next 5 years, surpassing the proportion that believes relations will improve (31.74%). Compared with the results in 2023, the confidence in improvements of the bilateral tie in the following 5 years has decreased. Among the group that believes China-U.S. relations have deteriorated the past year, more than half (54.69%) believe that the China-U.S. relationship will continue to deteriorate, while less than a fifth (19.67%) propose an improvement in relations.

Figure 15: How do you believe the state of China-U.S. relations in the next five years?

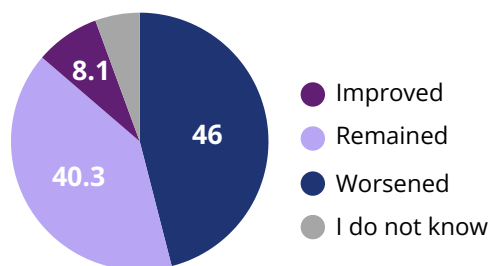
% by percentage



There has been a drop in the confidence of the improvement of China-U.S. relations in next five years among respondents

Figure 16: Do you think the China-U.S. relations is improving, worsening, or remaining stable since last year?

% by percentage



Concerning the U.S. strategic policies towards China, close to 90% of respondents believe that the U.S. is trying to contain China’s development, and over 40% believe that the U.S. is trying to conduct peaceful evolution on China. Both “The U.S. hopes to instigate healthy competition with China” and “The U.S. hopes to cooperate with China to achieve shared prosperity” account for 8.19% and 6.42% of respondents’ views, respectively.

Figure 17: Do you agree with the following statements on the U.S. strategic policies towards China? (Multiple choices)

% by percentage

The U.S. is trying to contain China’s development.



The U.S. is trying to conduct peaceful evolution on China.



The U.S. does not hope to have war or military competition with China.



The U.S. hopes to instigate healthy competition with China.



The U.S. hopes to cooperate with China to achieve shared prosperity.

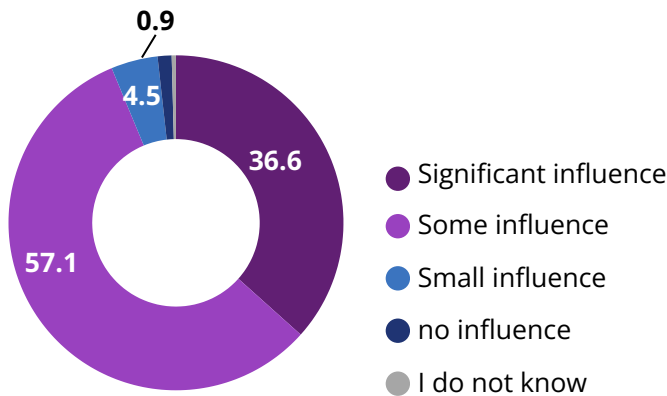


Figure 18: Without considering personal attitude towards the U.S. government, how much does the U.S. economy influences China?

% by percentage

In explaining the reason for changes in bilateral ties in the past five years, over half of the respondents (51.01%) believe that it lies in the differences of values and interests between the two countries. Even among those holding “hostility” towards the U.S.’s China Policy, this belief accounts for more than a half. Roughly 31% believe it is solely as result of the U.S.’s policies.

Without considering personal attitudes towards the U.S. government, 36.6% of interviewees believe that the U.S. economy has “significant influence” on China’s economy, 57.1% believes the U.S. has “some influence”, and 4.51% believe the influence is “small”.

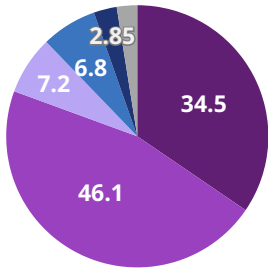


When asked “In which aspects does the U.S. serve as serious challenges to China’s internal stability”, respondents mainly selected two choices: “Influence of the U.S. economic policy towards the international system” and “The U.S. military capability and its global allies”. Less than 10% chose U.S. cultural values (7.21%), democracy and human rights (6.84%) as the most serious challenges.

Compared with other respondents, manual laborers possess less sentiment towards the influence of the U.S. economic policy on international systems, with 38.49% selecting this option, while other groups average at 47.03%. At the same time, they focus most on the U.S.’s cultural and value influences, with 10.53% of manual laborers choosing this option, which is 3.74% higher than other groups.

Figure 19: In which aspects does the U.S. serve as serious challenges to China’s internal stability?

% by percentage



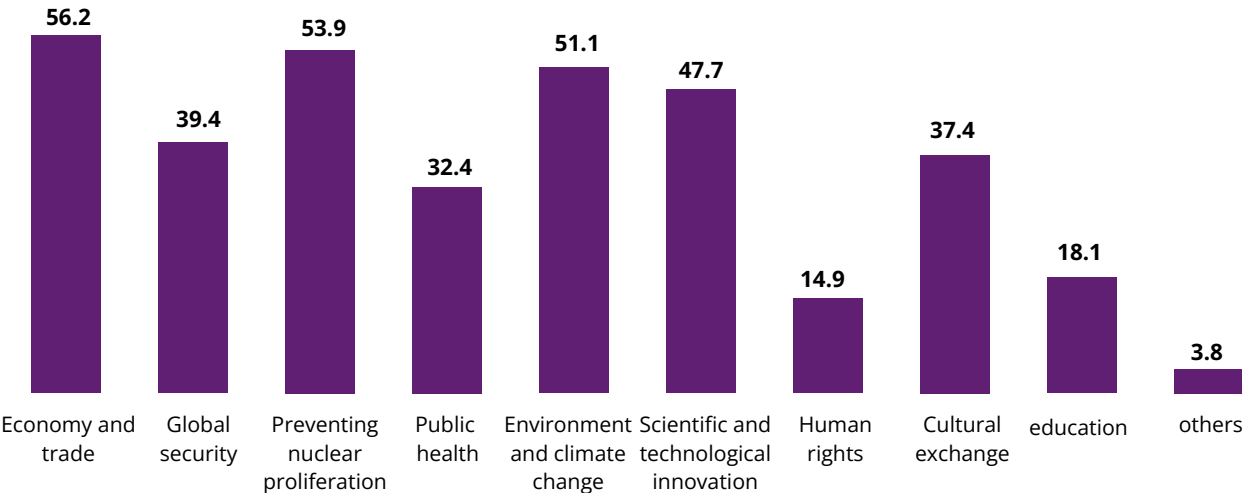
- The U.S. military capability and its global allies
- Influence of the U.S. economic policy towards the international system
- Influence of the U.S. cultural values
- Democracy and human rights
- None of these mentioned above
- I do not know

This survey also analyzed respondents’ views on common objectives between China and the U.S. Among the 10 choices on the survey, economy and trade, preventing nuclear proliferation, environment and climate change, scientific and technological innovation, and global security are listed as the five common objectives.

40% percent of the respondents reject the view that “China should do more in managing the bilateral differences between China and the U.S.” (13.82% choose “strongly oppose”). Only less than 30% believe that “China should do more” (27.72%). Most respondents who chose this option also advocate for a more proactive style of foreign strategies for China in the next decade.

Figure 20: In which aspects there are common objectives between China and the U.S.? (Multiple Choices)

% by percentage




ABOUT US



Established on November 7, 2018, the Center for International Security and Strategy (CISS) of Tsinghua University is a think tank in the field of international security and strategy. CISS has two objectives: one is to follow the changes in global dynamics, offering policy suggestions for decision-making through researches on topics of international order, international relations, and security and strategic studies while conveying rational and professional messages to the society; and the other is to elucidate and disseminate China's perspectives and policy propositions through various forms of international exchanges and cooperation, to enhance the international community's understanding of China, and to improve Tsinghua's global influence in the fields of international relations and strategic studies.

CISS consists of research divisions including the Research Project on the U.S. and Europe, the Research Project on Global Governance, the Research Project on Eurasia, and the Research Project on Artificial Intelligence Governance, sets up "China Forum", a sub-brand committed to international communication, organizes "CISS Youth" Research Exchange Program across top universities at home and abroad, and guides Tsinghua University Student Association of International and Strategic Studies (SAISS) and the Tsinghua University Student Association of China-U.S. People-to-People Exchange.



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