

Trilateral Survey US

제임스김

J. James Kim

2025.08.28



EAI
EAST ASIA INSTITUTE

The logo icon for the Korea Economic Institute (KEI) features a red and blue swoosh shape. To its right, the letters "KEI" are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

The logo icon for the Asia-Pacific Initiative (API) features a blue stylized 'P' and 'I' shape. To its right, the letters "i" and "nitiative" are written in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font.

Methodology

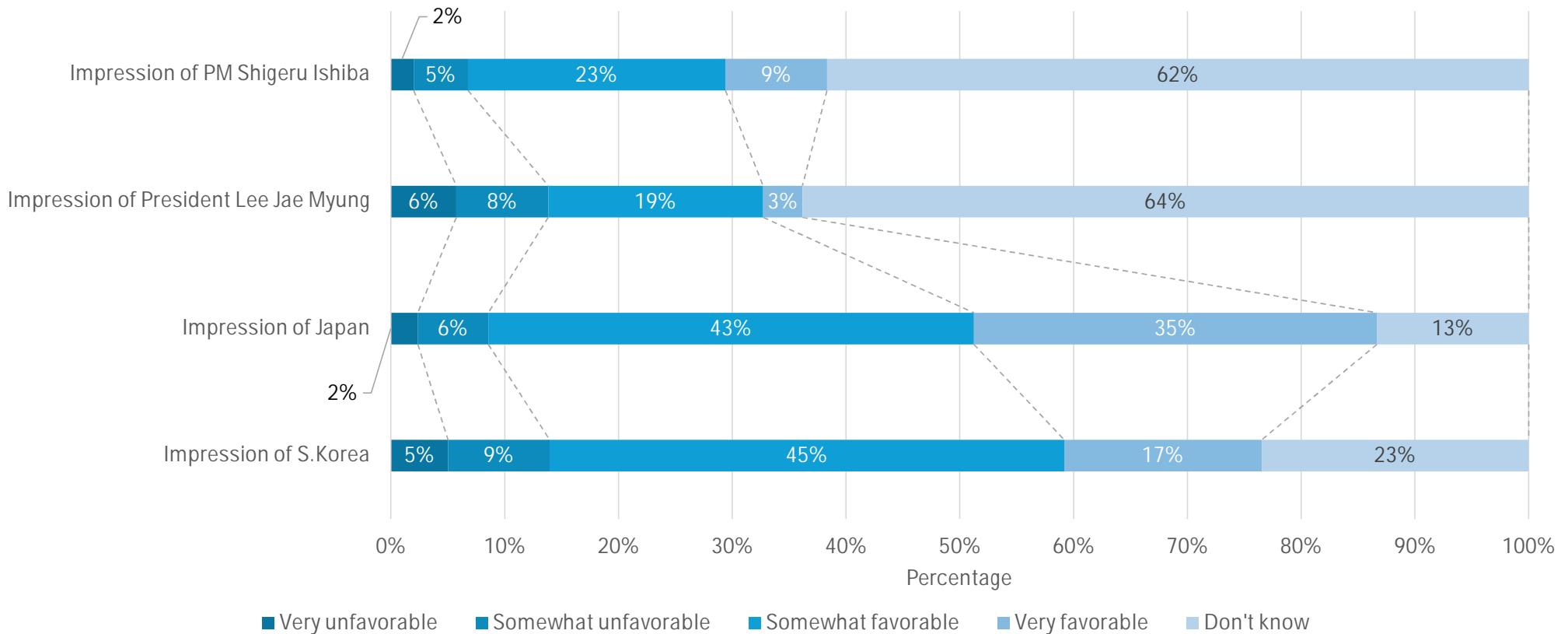
- Survey Organization: YouGov
- National sample based on interview of 1,658 which was matched and weighted down to 1,500
- Online survey
- Dates: August 8 – 19, 2025
- Margin of Error: $\pm 2.95\%$ at 95% Confidence Interval

Favorability and Alliance Relations

Americans tend to see Japan and Korea favorably but they do not know much about the leaders from these countries

Q: What is your impression of South Korea / Japan?

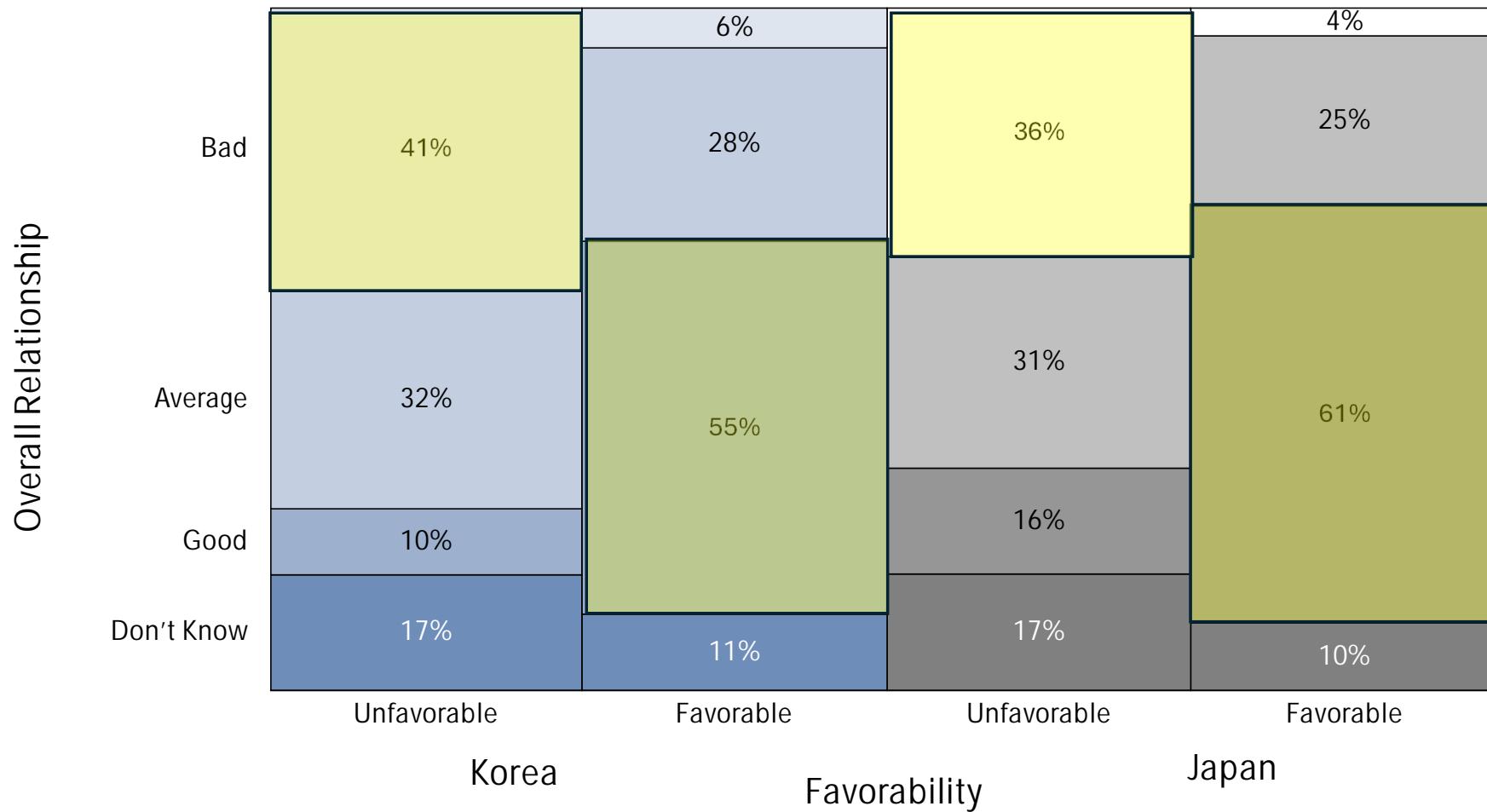
Q: What is your impression of President Lee Jae Myung / Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba?



Americans that view allies favorably, also tend to think the relationship is “good”

Q: What is your impression of South Korea?

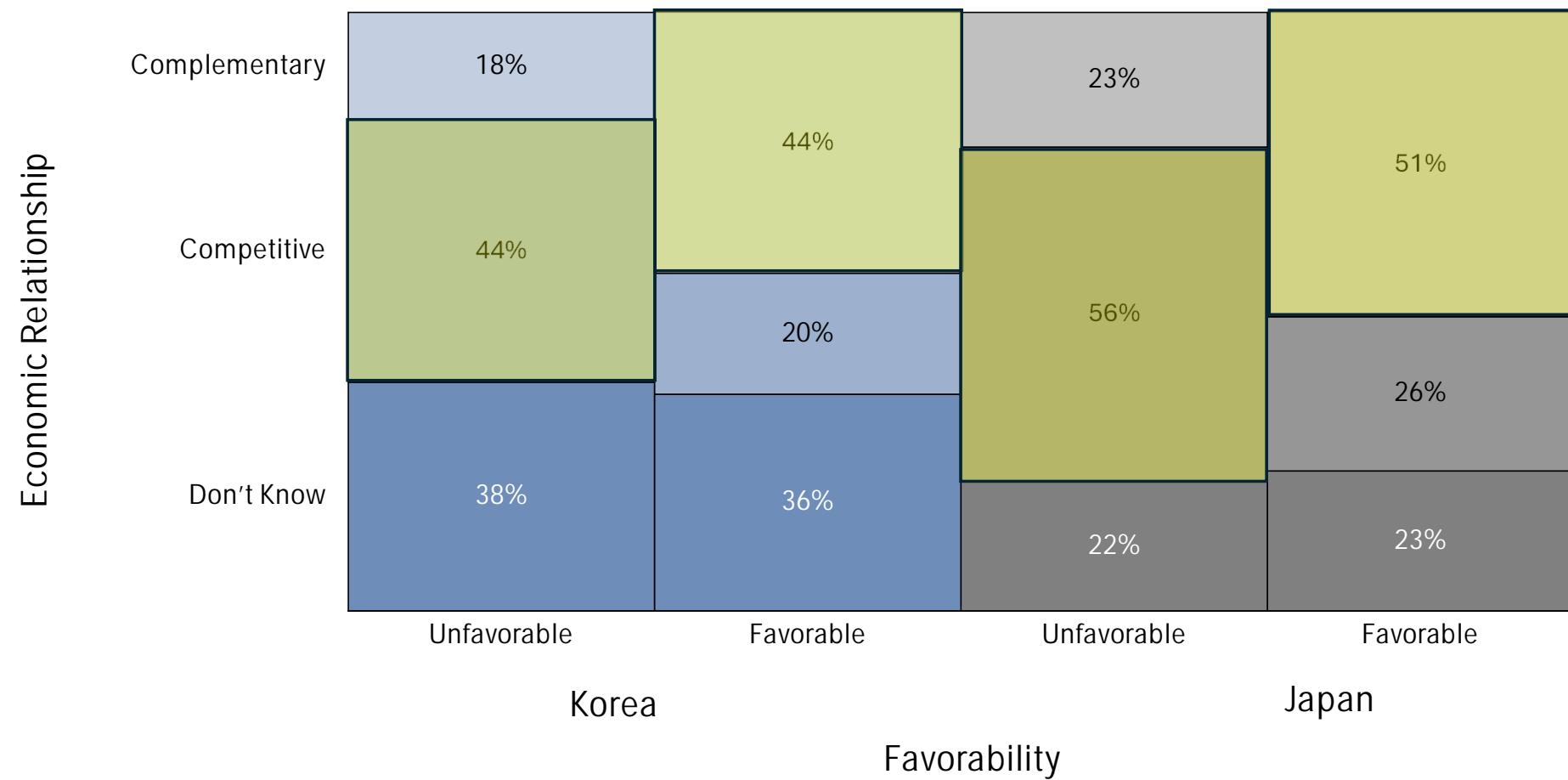
Q: What do you think of the current relationship between South Korea and the United States?



Americans that view allies favorably, tend to also think they are *partners*; Americans that view allies unfavorably, tend to also think they are *competitors*.

Q: What is your impression of South Korea?

Q: In terms of the economic relationship between South Korea / Japan and the United States, which do you think is closer to A or B? (A) The economies of the two countries are complementary (B) The economies of the two countries are competitive



Why favorability matters?

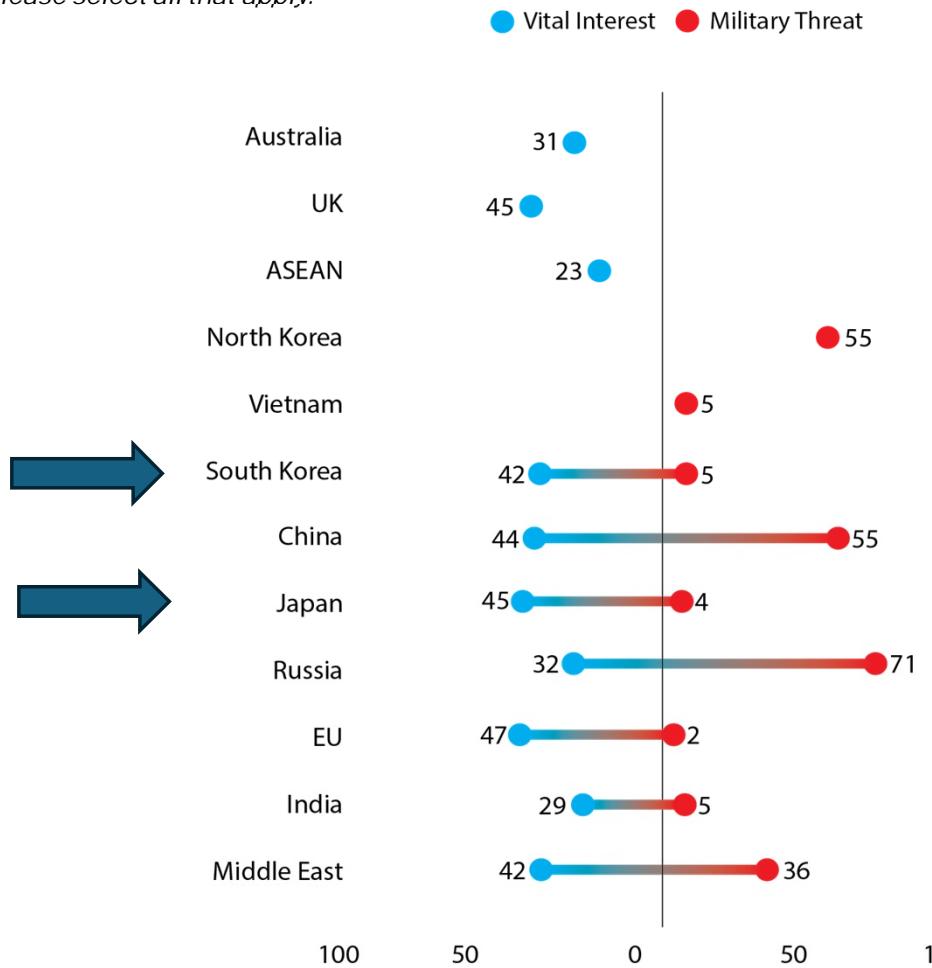
- Implication: aside from policy substance and alliance coordination, the public cares about connections and identifiability.

Interests, Threats, and Trust

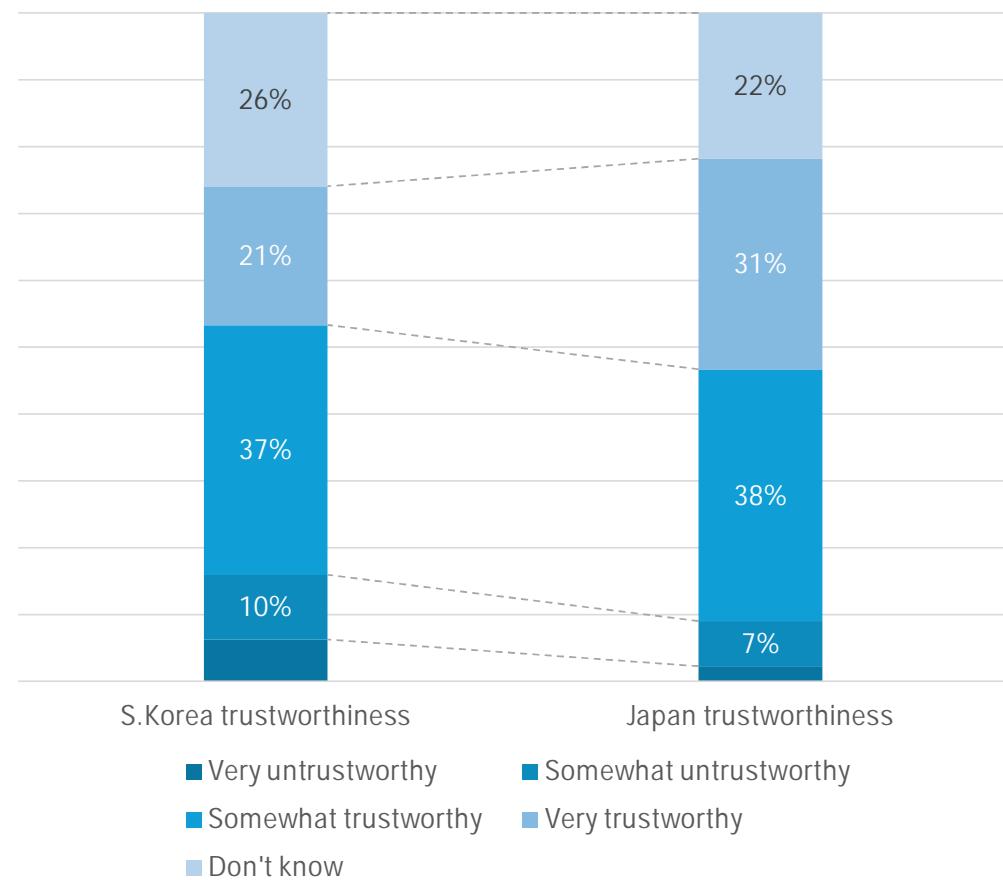
Despite what you may have heard from Washington, Americans think that Korea and Japan are vital to the interests of the United States and are trustworthy partners in the region.

Q: Which country or region do you think is of most vital interest to the United States? Please select all that apply.

Q: Which country or region do you think poses a military threat to the United States? Please select all that apply.

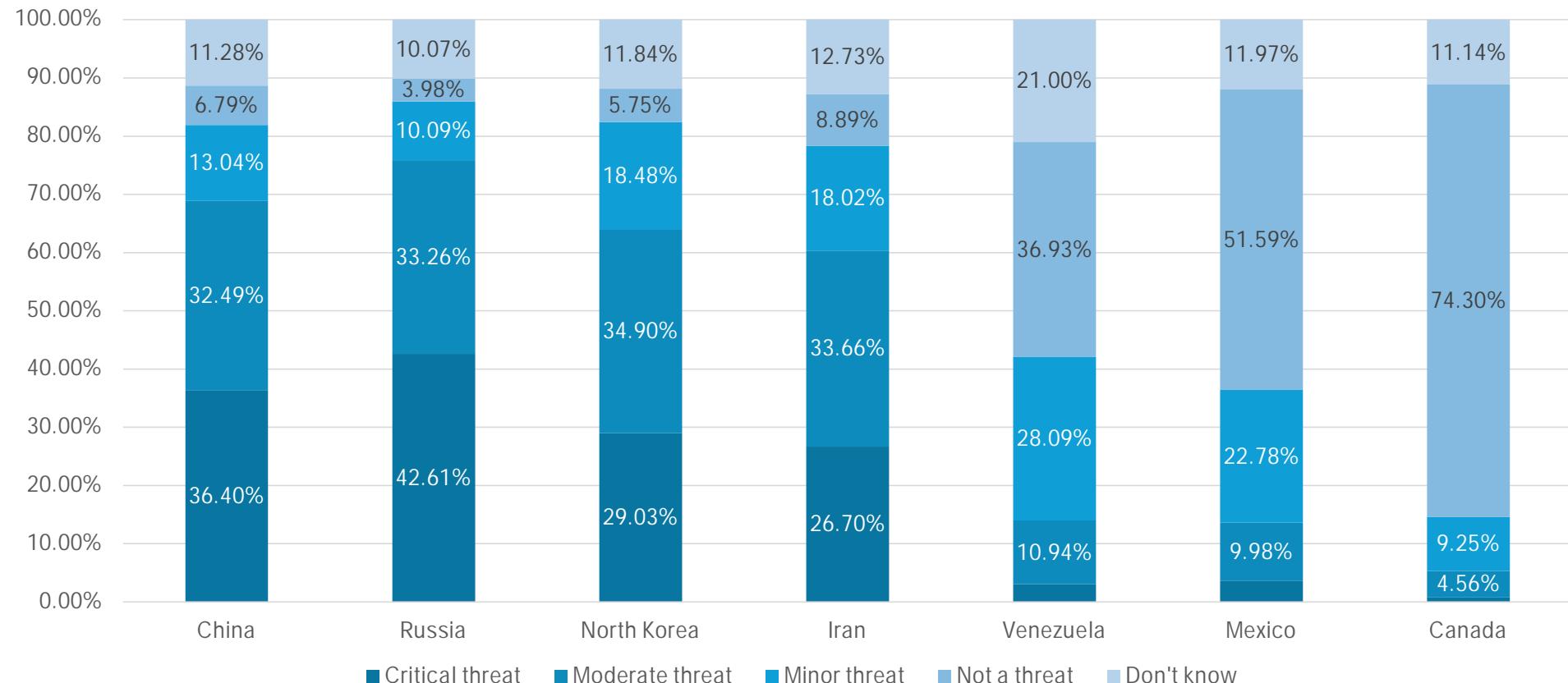


Q: Do you think South Korea / Japan is a trustworthy partner for the United States?



Drilling Down on Threat Perception: 42.6 percent of Americans think Russia is the “critical threat” followed by China (36.4 percent) and North Korea (29 percent).

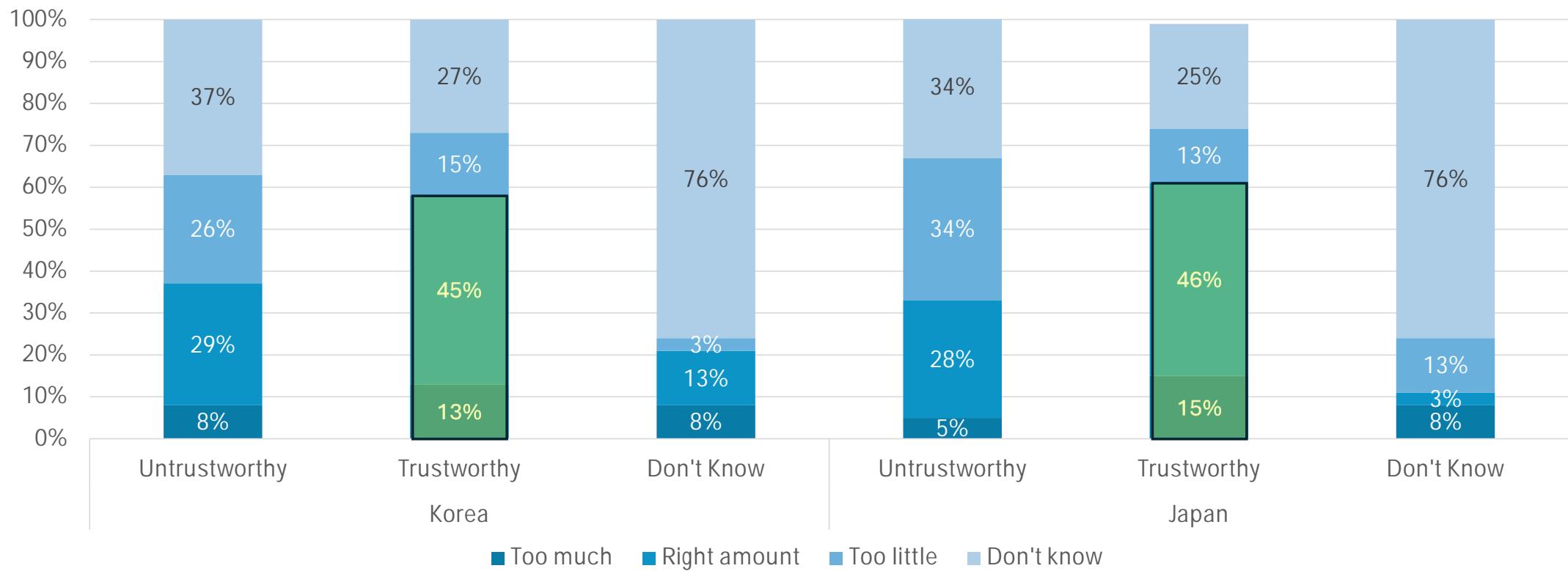
Q: How would you rate the threat posed by the following countries?



Americans who view allies as more “trustworthy partners” tend to see them contributing either the “right amount” or “too much” to U.S. troop basing.

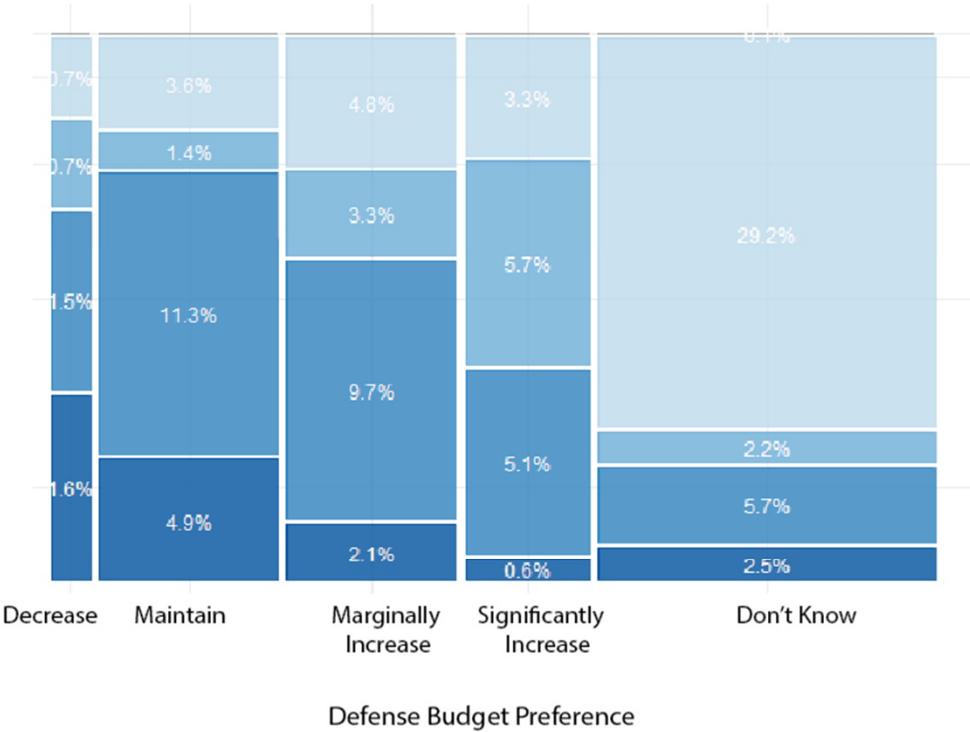
Q: Do you think South Korea / Japan is a trustworthy partner for the United States?

Q: South Korea / Japan pays about \$1 billion / \$2 billion annually for the cost of stationing U.S. troops in Korea / Japan. What do you think about the current level of def

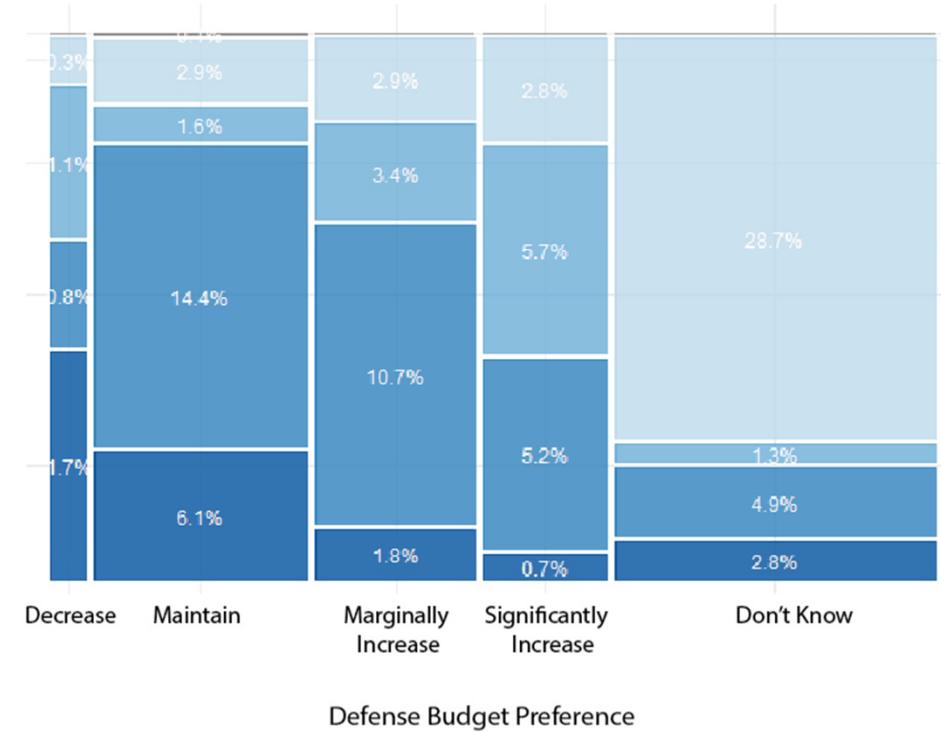


Interestingly, Americans believe that South Korea and Japan should increase their defense budget but they also believe that they are paying too much or the right amount for U.S. troops based in their countries.

South Korea: Defense Budget vs Cost-Sharing



Japan: Defense Budget vs Cost-Sharing

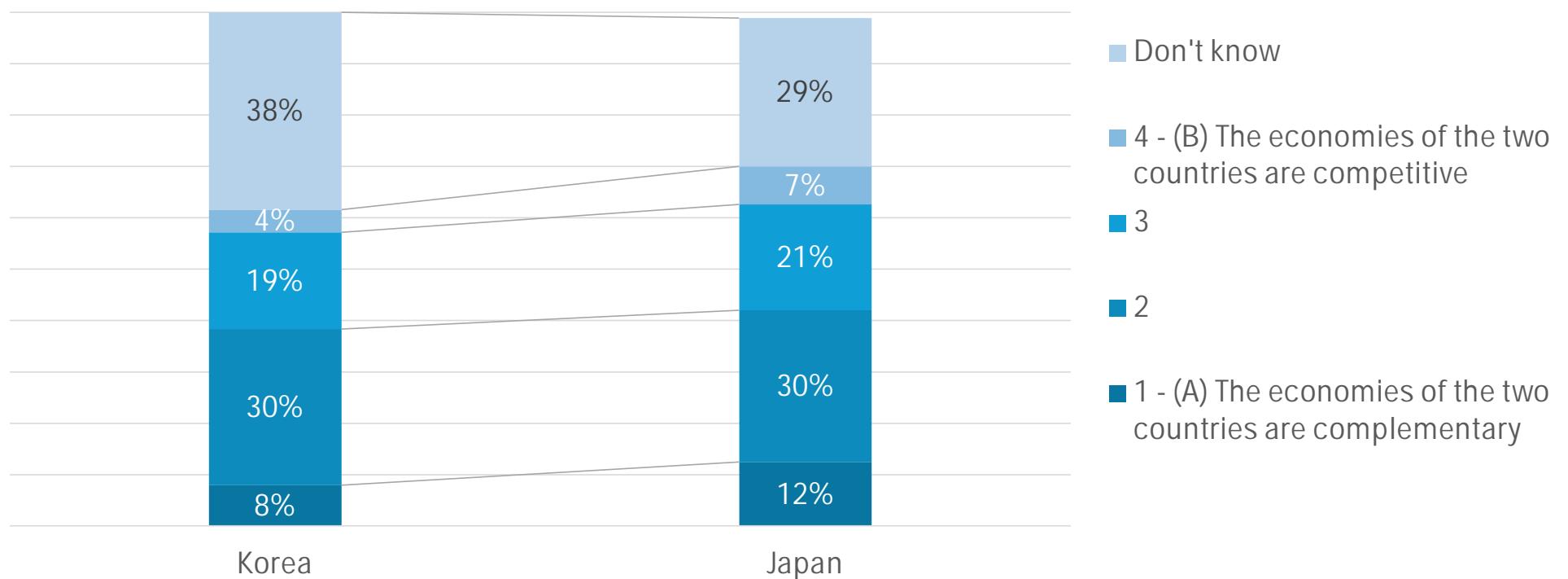


Cost-Sharing Opinion Paying too much Paying the right amount Paying too little Don't know NA

Trade and Investment

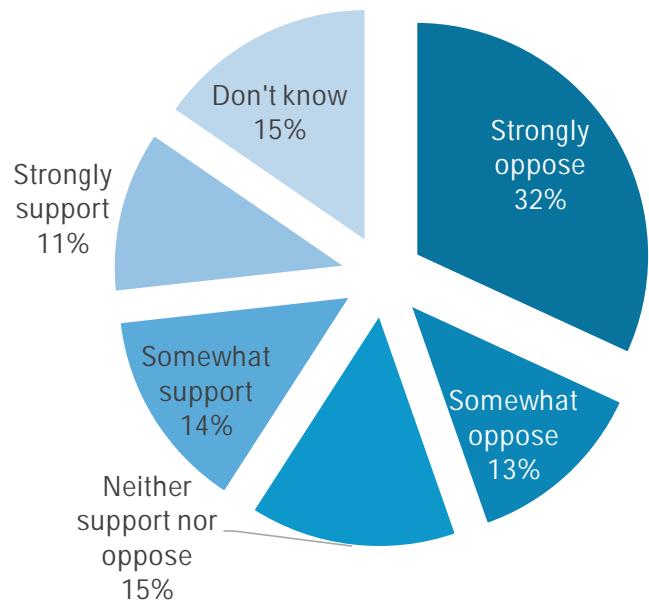
Americans generally think that Korean and Japanese economies are complementary to that of the United States

Q: In terms of the economic relationship between South Korea / Japan and the United States, which do you think is closer to A or B?

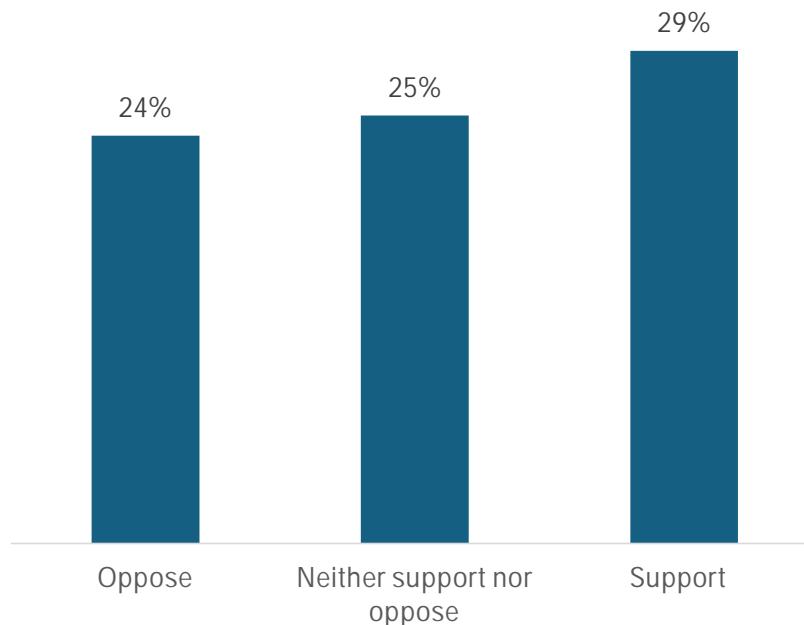


43% of Americans are *opposed* to Trump tariffs against Korea and Japan; and are split on the question of exercising influence over Japan and South Korea when it comes to their trade and investment practices with China.

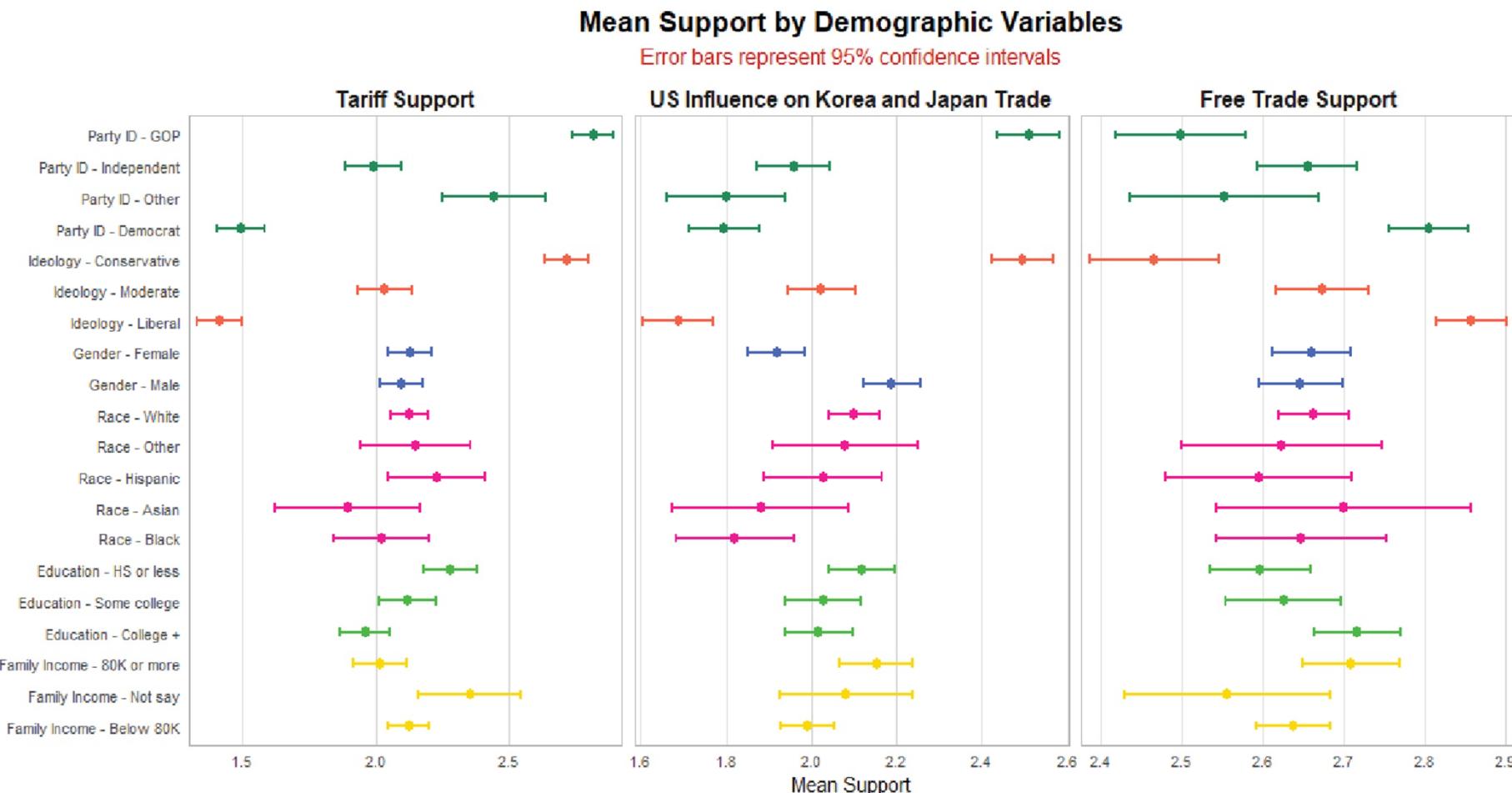
What do you think about the Trump administration's second term tariffs on Korea / Japan exports (e.g., steel, aluminum, automobiles)?



Do you support or oppose the U.S. having influence over Japan and South Korea's trade and investment relationships with China?



Drilling Down Deeper: Average support for tariff and free trade rule differs mostly along partisan and ideological lines. As previous studies have also shown gender differences might also matter.

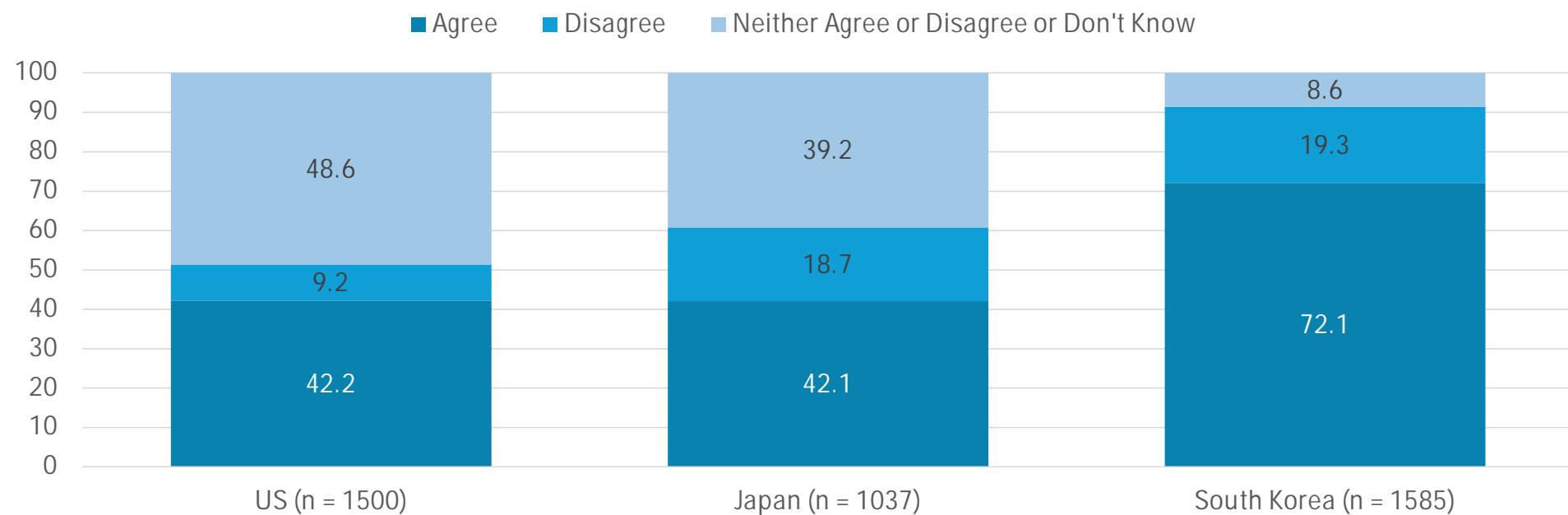


Note: the categories were

The Taiwan Question

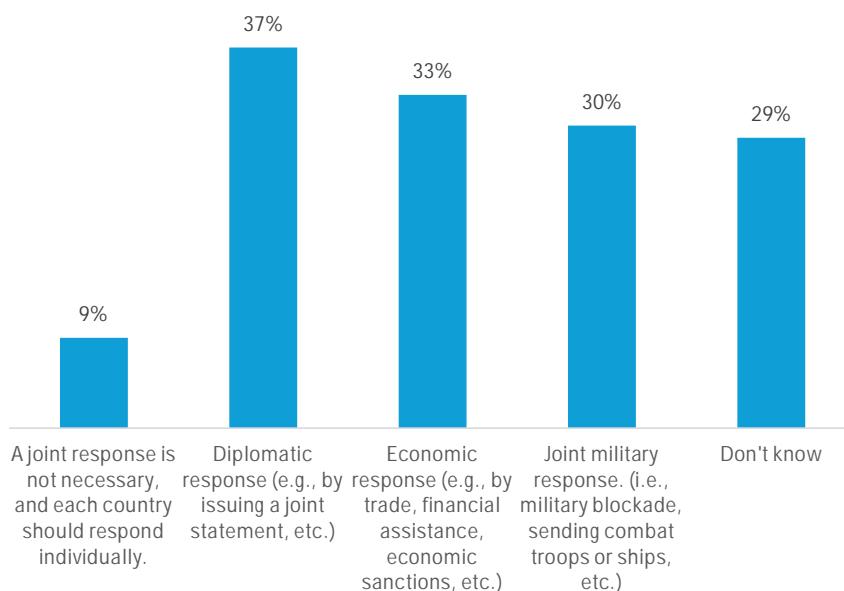
42% of Americans and Japanese believe that Taiwan contingency is likely in the near future but 72% of Koreans think the same. Of the three, *most Koreans appear to see the Taiwan contingency as inevitable*. So what is the Korean and Japan public willing to do about this, if anything at all? For the U.S., the question of Taiwan is less about whether it will happen but what to do if it does.

Do you agree or disagree? China will engage in a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait or nearby area in the near future

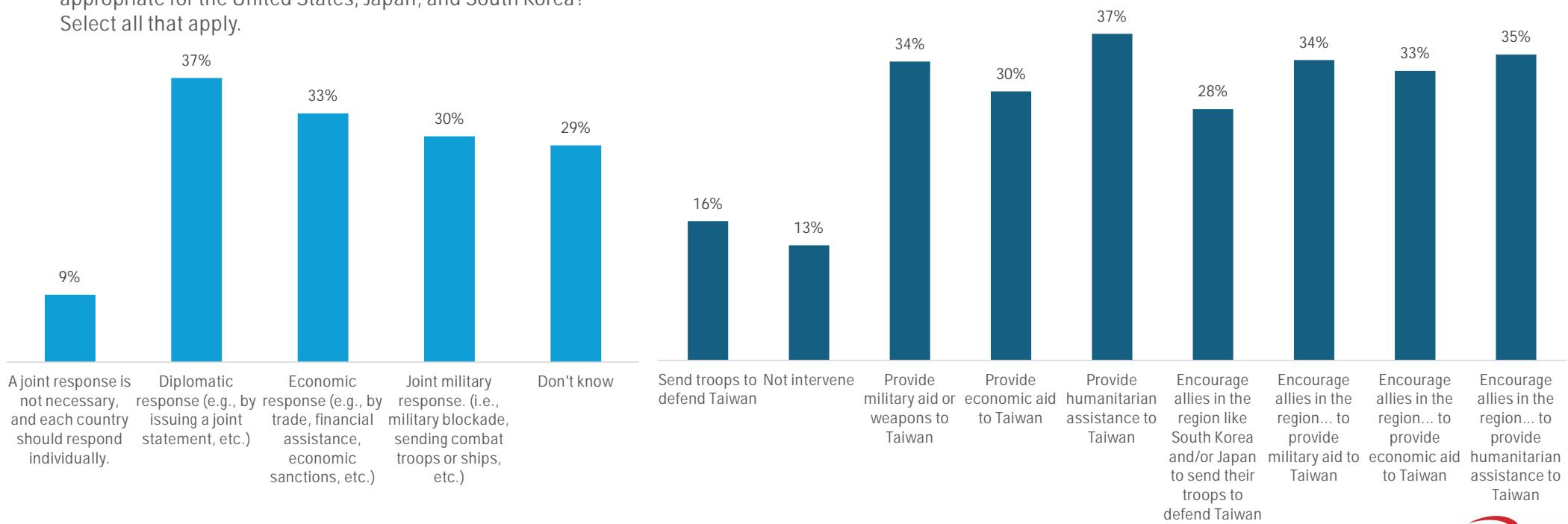


Americans appear split in terms of what to do about the Taiwan contingency if it arises. But no response and direct military intervention through troop deployment are the least preferred response.

In the event of a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait (the body of water separating the island of Taiwan from China), in your opinion what level of joint response is most appropriate for the United States, Japan, and South Korea? Select all that apply.

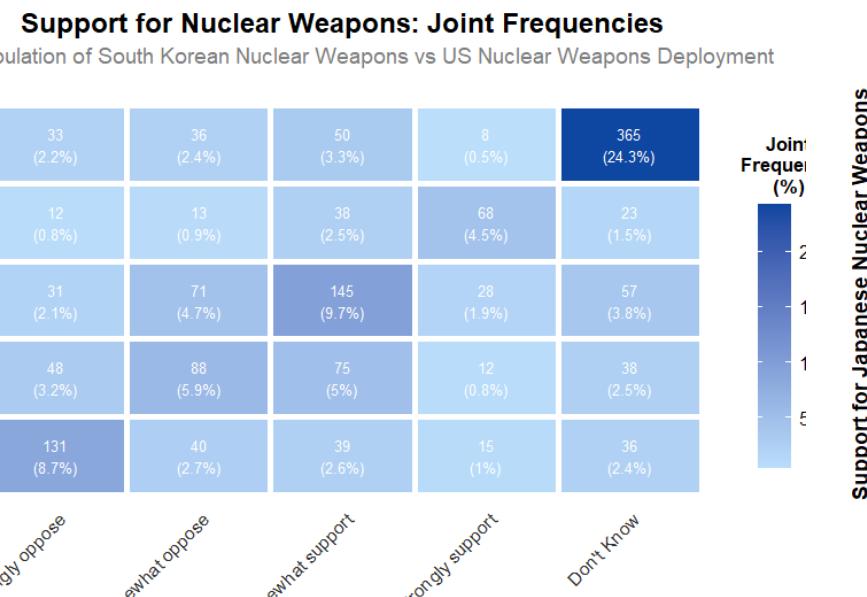


In the event of a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait (the body of water separating the island of Taiwan from China), what should be the response of the United States? Select all that apply.



For most Americans there is little to no difference when it comes to the question about indigenous nuclear development or basing of US nuclear weapons in South Korea and Japan. Shown below are correlation between the two variables that show close correspondence.

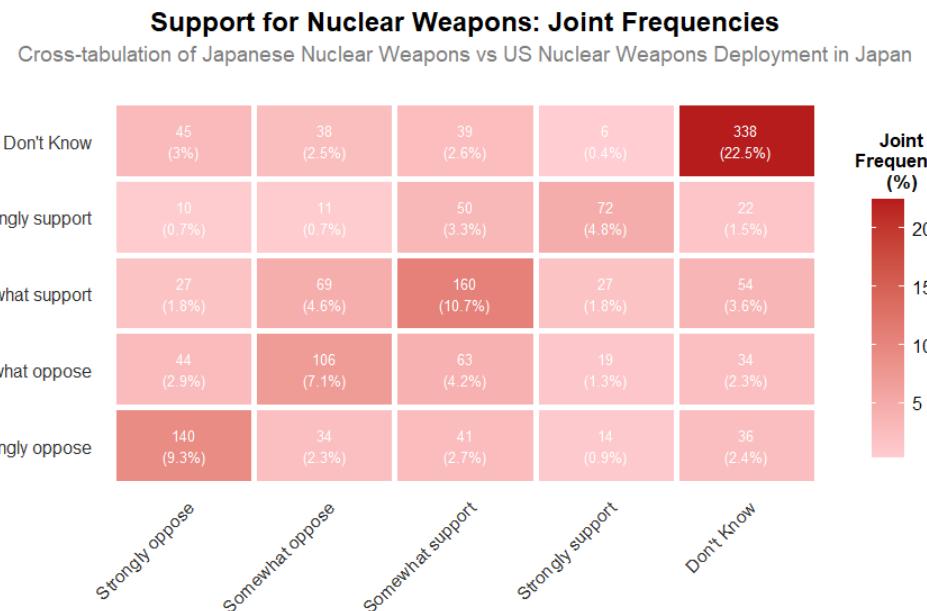
Support for South Korean Nuclear Weapons



Support for US Nuclear Weapons in South Korea

Numbers show count and (percentage) of respondents

Support for Japanese Nuclear Weapons



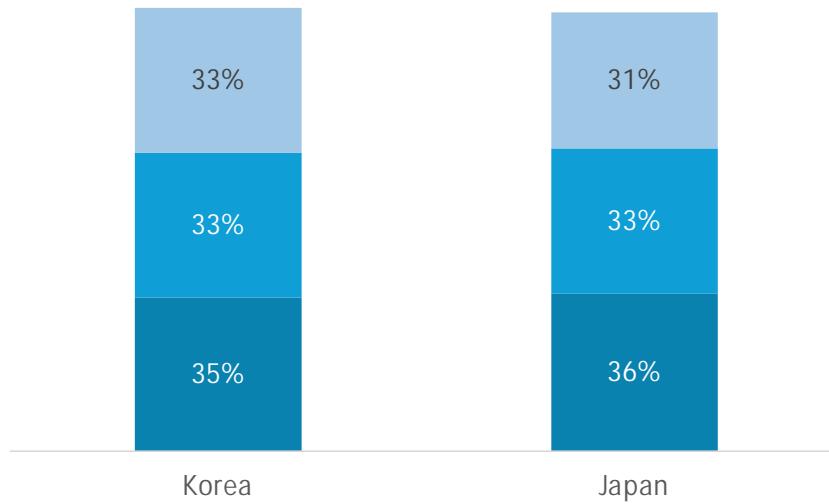
Support for Deployment of US Nuclear Weapons in Japan

Numbers show count and (percentage) of respondents

Americans appear split on the question about development of indigenous nuclear weapons or basing of US nuclear weapons in Korea and Japan.

If North Korea does not abandon its nuclear program, do you/would you support or oppose South Korea / Japan developing its own nuclear weapons?

■ Oppose ■ Support ■ Don't Know



Do you/would you support or oppose basing U.S.-controlled and operated nuclear weapons in South Korea / Japan?

■ Oppose ■ Support ■ Don't Know

