



ASIA PACIFIC
FOUNDATION
OF CANADA

FONDATION
ASIE PACIFIQUE
DU CANADA

2020
NATIONAL
OPINION POLL

CANADIAN VIEWS ON ASIA

NOVEMBER 2020

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ABOUT THE ASIA PACIFIC FOUNDATION OF CANADA



The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APF Canada) is a not-for-profit organization focused on Canada's relations with Asia. Our mission is to be Canada's catalyst for engagement with Asia and Asia's bridge to Canada.

APF Canada is dedicated to strengthening ties between Canada and Asia with a focus on seven thematic areas: trade and investment, surveys and polling, regional security, digital technologies, domestic networks, sustainable development, and Asia Competency.

Our research provides high-quality, relevant, and timely information, insights, and perspectives on Canada-Asia relations. Providing policy considerations and business intelligence for stakeholders across the Asia Pacific, our work includes Reports, Policy Briefs, Case Studies, Dispatches, and a regular Asia Watch newsletter that together support these thematic areas.

APF Canada also works with business, government, and academic stakeholders to provide custom research, data, briefings and Asia Competency training for Canadian organizations. Consulting services are available by request. We would be pleased to work with you to meet your research and business intelligence needs.

Contact us at info@asiapacific.ca or visit us online at www.asiapacific.ca.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 2020 has posed momentous challenges for the entire world, including Canada. As the country grows, both in terms of population and global standing, Canadians are closely watching the federal government's approach to foreign policy, its alliance with the United States, international trade and investment, and domestic policies that can foster economic growth. Canadians recognize the need for diversifying and building alliances that go beyond neighbourly relations. These, and other important subjects, are explored in APF Canada's 2020 National Opinion Poll (NOP), where 3,519 Canadian adults share their opinion on the current and future state of Canada-Asia relations.

In this year's NOP, we review various legacy questions from our past polls on subjects such as Asia Pacific identity, feelings toward Asia, the perceived economic importance of Asia for the future of Canada, support for free trade agreements, and provincial policies to foster better relations with Asian counterparts. The report traces the trajectory of Canadians' opinions over the past 15 years, highlighting continuing trends as well as significant shifts in Canadians' views on Asia.

The poll also poses new questions on current contentious topics, seeking Canadians' views on Asia in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, unsteady Sino-Canadian relations, immigration and Canadian identity, and, finally, anti-Asian racism in Canada.

2020 NATIONAL OPINION POLL: 17 KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1. Canadians are starting to feel less connected to the Asia Pacific.** Only 38% of respondents consider Canada a part of the Asia Pacific region, a five percentage-point drop from 2018. Since 2013, when agreement with this statement was at an all-time low of 18%, Canadians' perception of Canada as part of the Asia Pacific increased steadily. But 2020 shows a sharp turnaround.
- 2. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadian perceptions of the United States and China are worsening, while perceptions of other Asian countries remain largely unaffected. Two-thirds of Canadians are distrustful of China's initial response to the COVID-19 crisis.** Seventy-eight per cent said that their perception of the U.S. has worsened due to COVID-19, compared to 55% for China. Furthermore, a majority of Canadians (67%) disagree that the Chinese government acted responsibly at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, while 68% feel that Canada should support an independent inquiry into the origins of the COVID-19 virus.
- 3. Canadian views of China and the United States are growing unfavourable, hitting the lowest point since the question was introduced in APF Canada NOPs in 2010.** On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 meaning "very warm, favourable" feelings, China's average score has dropped to 3.6, and the United States to 4.9 in 2020. In comparison, feelings toward Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan have warmed slightly since 2018.
- 4. Despite unfavourable feelings, China remains important for Canada's future economic well-being, according to Canadians.** China's economic importance rating dropped from 5.6 in 2018 to 5.0 in 2020 (on a scale of 1 to 7), but it remains an important region for Canada's future economic well-being. Meanwhile, perceptions of the United States' economic importance have risen from 6.0 in 2018 to 6.1 in 2020.
- 5. China's rise is considered more of a threat than an opportunity by Canadians, while India's economic growth continues to be seen as more of an opportunity than a threat.** Canadians are growing wary of China, with only 35% of respondents agreeing that China's growing economic power is more of an opportunity than a threat, down from a 60% high in 2018. The majority of Canadians (83%) feel that Canada should stand up to China as Canadian national values such as the rule of law, human rights, and democracy are on the line.

- 6. Canadians want to see their government secure the two Michaels' release from China, whether with a stick or a carrot.** About 73% of Canadians feel that Canada should continue to engage China behind closed doors to secure the two Michael's release, 67% think Canada should work alongside the U.S. and other allies to pressure China, and about 67% also believe Canada should take a more aggressive approach towards China.
- 7. The majority of Canadians think Canada needs to diversify its trade relations away from the United States, but only 49% of Canadians believe that in 10 years, trade with Asia will be more important than trade with the United States.** The latter marks a significant decline since 2018, when 59% of Canadians believed that in 10 years, trade with Asia would be more important than trade with the United States. Nonetheless, 58% of Canadians think that the export of goods and services to Asia offers more of an opportunity than interprovincial trade.
- 8. Less than half of Canadians think Canada would benefit from more Asian investment, and while the majority support investments from Japan and South Korea, they are wary of investments from China.** Even though the proportion of Canadians who think Canada would benefit from more investment from Asia has dropped from 59% in 2018 to 47% in 2020, most Canadians remain open to more investment from Japan, South Korea, and India in the sectors of high-tech and biomedical. Conversely, investment from China receives 35% or less support for all sectors.
- 9. Most Canadians express support for their government to negotiate FTAs with India, ASEAN, and the Pacific Alliance.** Canadians support their government going forward on an FTA with India (63%) and the Pacific Alliance (76%). Sixty-eight per cent also support entering into an FTA with ASEAN countries, a five per cent increase since 2018. Furthermore, 68% of respondents support Taiwan joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).
- 10. Disenchantment with the United States continues to grow; more respondents think Canada should align more closely with other democracies than align its foreign policy with its southern neighbour.** Reflecting on Canada's foreign policy approach, 56% of respondents felt that Canada's topmost priority should be to align itself more closely with other like-minded democracies like Australia, Japan, South Korea, the EU, and the U.K. Interestingly, 53% ranked alignment with the United States as the fourth and last priority for the Canadian government.

11. Canadians are increasingly worried about cybersecurity issues and consider cyber warfare a critical threat to Canadian national interests.

Most Canadians feel cybersecurity issues (67%), environmental and climate change (63%), and public health issues (54%) are “very critical” areas of engagement with Asian economies. Interestingly, cyberattacks on Canadian networks are also top of mind for Canadians, as 74% think it is a critical threat to Canadian national interests in the next 10 years. Amid the COVID-19 crisis, 61% of respondents also find potential epidemics to be a critical threat, followed closely by the possibility of an international financial crisis (60%).

12. Canadians perceive a rapidly declining human rights situation in China, and six in seven think that the government of Canada must engage with Asia on democracy and human rights issues.

Only 20% of respondents believe the human rights situation in China has improved over the last 10 years. The proportion of Canadians who think the human rights situation in China is no better than it was 10 years ago has doubled over the past decade.

13. Canadians are mostly positive about immigration from Asia and believe that Canadian values and language proficiency are important for building a common Canadian identity.

Most Canadians (78%) feel immigration from Asia positively impacts the Canadian economy, and 64% feel that immigrants from Asia integrate well into Canadian society. In terms of integration, according to 72% of Canadians, immigrants should not be discouraged from maintaining their cultural identities, but newcomers should adopt core Canadian values, such as equality, democracy, and respect for minority rights.

14. Fifty-three per cent of respondents think Canadians of East Asian origin have been negatively treated since the COVID-19 outbreak.

Furthermore, 84% believe that anti-Asian racism existed in Canada since before the pandemic. To that end, 78% of Canadians think the authorities need to implement policies that address racial crime as punishable offences. This poll also finds 53% of Canadians feeling that even post-pandemic, Canada’s anti-Asian hostility will not go away.

15. Canadians largely support an increased emphasis on Asia in the provincial curricula and funding for more student exchanges.

Across all provinces, 60% or more Canadians support policies that would allow for added focus on Asia in the school curriculum and more funding for exchange and co-op programs for Canadian students to gain experience in Asia. However, about 50% of Canadians oppose the idea of provincial governments placing more emphasis on teaching Asian languages in schools to build stronger ties with Asia; Saskatchewanians and Manitobans are the most opposed.

16. Canadians are not wholly supportive of further investment from Asian countries in their province, but the majority support opening provincial trade offices in Asia and promoting twinning relations with Asian cities/provinces. In this poll, only 52% of Canadians support further investment from Asian countries, while 39% oppose it. Respondents from Ontario (55%) and the Atlantic provinces (57%) show the most support.

17. More than half of Canadians believe the media does not provide adequate information about current issues and developments in Asia. About 52% of Canadians disagree that Canadian news media offer adequate information on current Asian issues. Interestingly, news from traditional news sources is identified by Canadians as the top source of information about Asia/Asians.

SURVEY RESULTS

The following sections highlight the key findings from this year’s National Opinion Poll, and where relevant, we have tracked the trends in Canadian opinion over time. It is pertinent to note that the analysis presented in this report provides an overview of Canadian opinions, along with regional disparities. Variations in attitudes across population groups (gender, age, ethnicity, education, and language) require further analysis.

For the purpose of regional analysis and given the sample size (see Methodology for details), some provinces/territories were collapsed into one region, resulting in the following provinces/regions:

- British Columbia
- Alberta
- Saskatchewan & Manitoba
- Ontario
- Quebec
- Atlantic provinces
 - New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador

Provinces categorized as Northern Canada (Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut) had just seven respondents and are therefore not considered in the regional analysis.

For historical data and regional analysis, the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba have been grouped as “the Prairies” to account for smaller sample sizes in certain years.

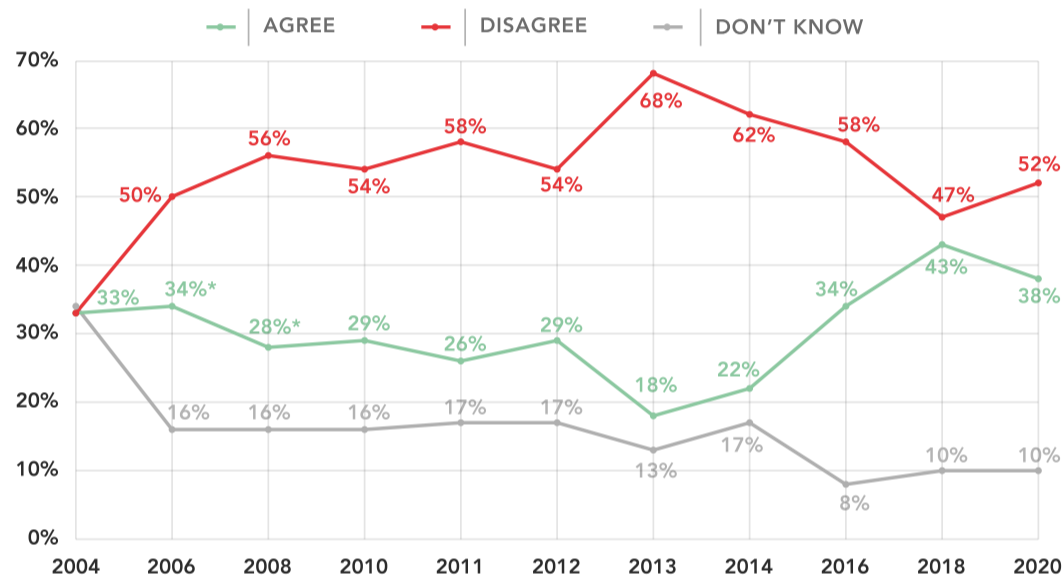
CANADA'S ASIA PACIFIC IDENTITY

More Canadians consider Canada a part of the Asia Pacific region in 2020 than 10 years ago, despite a recent setback.

FIGURE 1
I consider Canada to be part of the Asia Pacific region

Question: Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

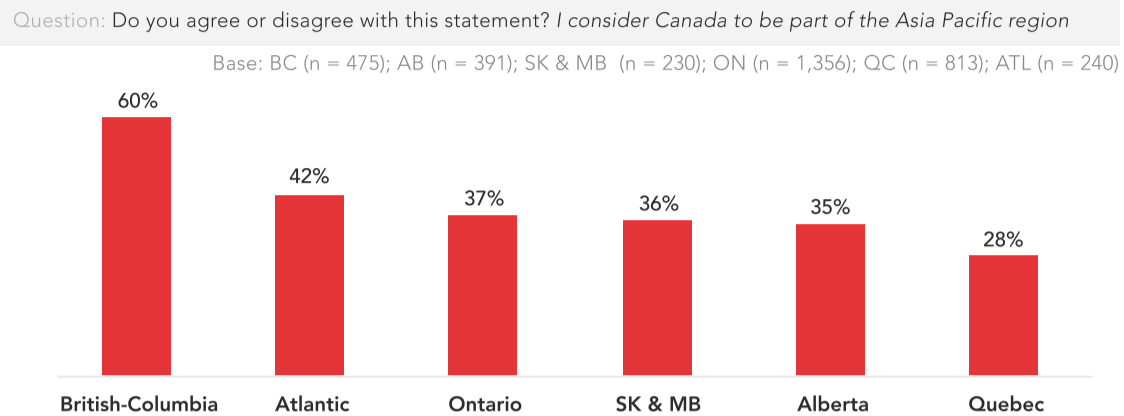
Base: All respondents, 2004 (n=529); 2006 (n=1,014); 2010 (n=2,903), 2011 (n=2,926), 2012 (n=3,129); 2013 (n=3,474); 2014 (n=3,487); 2016 (n=3,526); 2018 (n=3,561); 2020 (n=3,519)



*Data for 2006 and 2008 were adjusted for the lack of "don't know" option in the question for those years.

Although there has been a slight decline in 2020, Canadians continue to consider Canada a part of the Asia Pacific region more than they did before 2016. In 2020, 38% of Canadians consider Canada a part of the Asia Pacific, compared to 43% in 2018 (see Figure 1). The five-percentage-point drop marks the end of the growth in the share of Canadians considering Canada a part of the Asia Pacific that lasted since 2013, when it stood at only 18%. However, in every APF Canada National Opinion Poll since 2004, more Canadians have disagreed with the statement, “I consider Canada a part of the Asia Pacific region” than agreed with it, and 2020 is not an exception.

FIGURE 2
Share to consider Canada as part of the Asia Pacific region



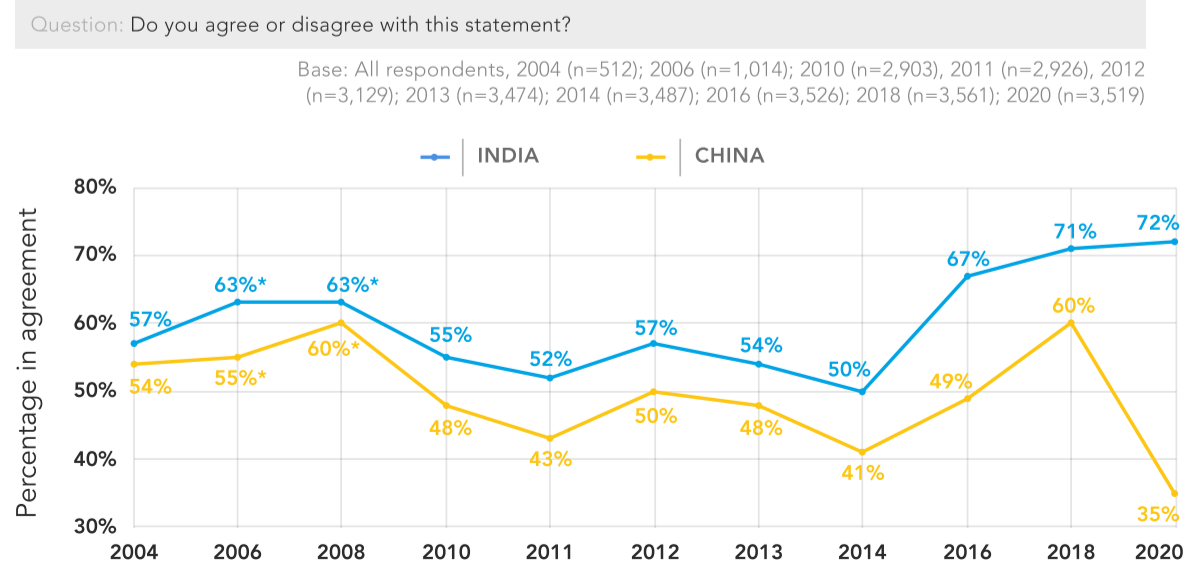
As seen in Figure 2, most British Columbians (60%) consider Canada part of the Asia Pacific, compared to 42% or less in the other provinces.

Canadians’ perceptions of India’s growing economic power contrasts with their perceptions of China’s growing economic power.

APF Canada has been tracking Canadians’ perceptions of China and India’s growing economic power since 2004. Between 2018 and 2020, the change in perceptions for China and India has followed opposing paths, something we have not observed before. While 72% of Canadians agree that the growing economic power of India more as an opportunity than a threat, a modest increase since 2018 (71%), only 35% of Canadians agree that the growing economic power of China more as an opportunity than a threat, down from 60% in 2018 (see Figure 3).

Exploring the number of Canadians who disagree with the statement, we find that 57% of Canadians disagree that China’s growing economic power presents more of an opportunity than a threat – the first time disagreement has reached the 50% mark. The share of disagreement that India’s growth offers more of an opportunity than a threat is at an all-time low, at 18%.

FIGURE 3
The growing importance of China and India as economic powers is more of an opportunity than a threat to Canada



Across Canadian provinces, the perception of China’s and India’s growing economic power has evolved similarly over the past decade, with two noticeable exceptions. First, as seen in Figure 4, between 2018 and 2020, there is a decline in the share of Quebecers who perceive India’s growing economic power more as an opportunity than a threat, while the opposite is true for other provinces. In 2020, Quebecers’ perceptions of India’s growing economic power more as an opportunity than a threat has dropped to 61%, while it has jumped to 79% for British Columbians. Second, the Atlantic provinces’ perception of China’s growing economic power more as an opportunity than a threat is the highest of any Canadian region in 2020, whereas it was by far the lowest in 2013 (see Figure 5). This reversal parallels the booming trade relationship between China and Atlantic Canada [since 2014](#).

FIGURE 4
*The growing importance of **India** as an economic power is more of an opportunity than a threat to Canada*

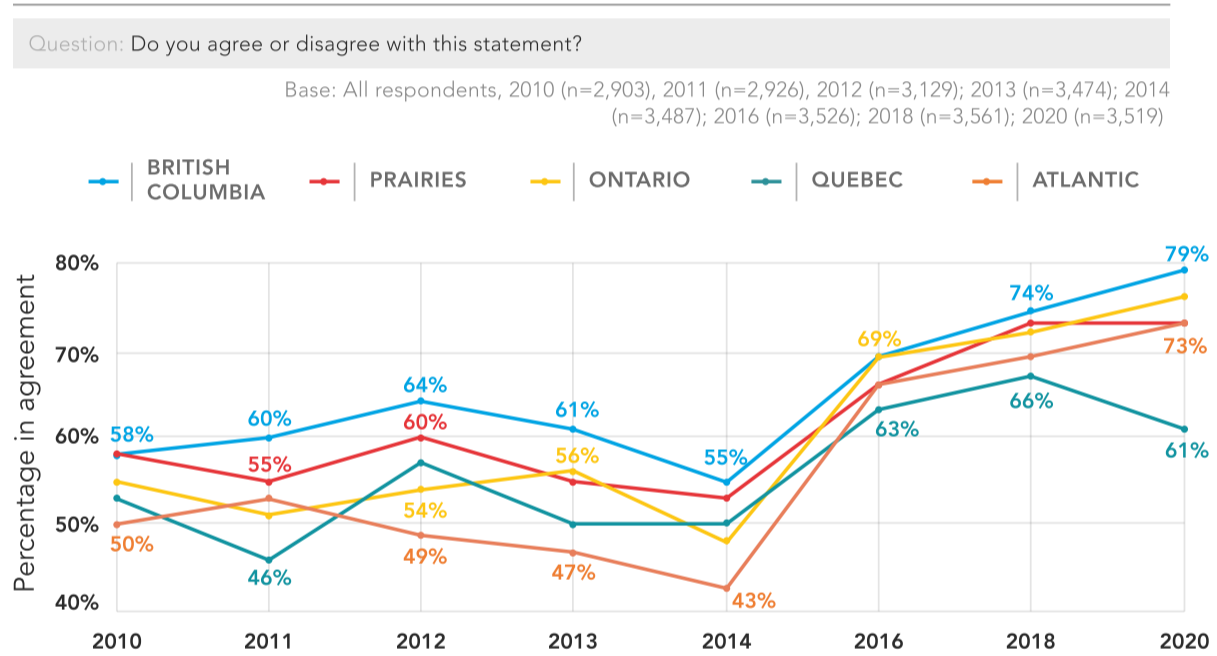
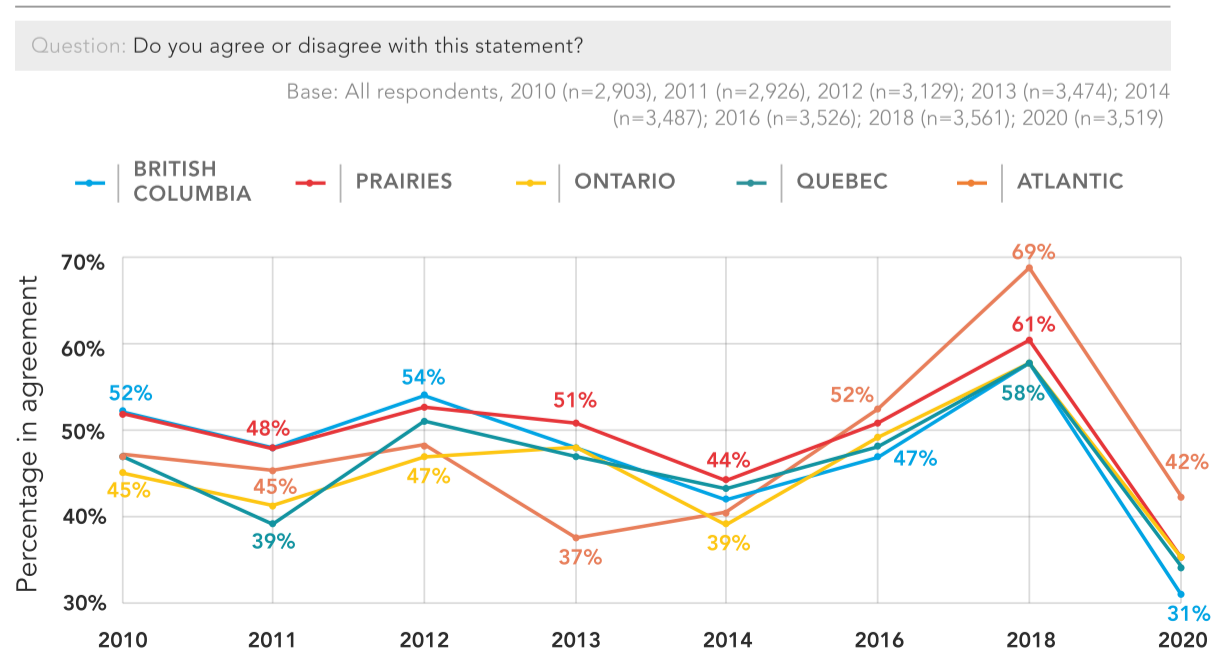


FIGURE 5
*The growing importance of **China** as an economic power is more of an opportunity than a threat to Canada*



FEELINGS TOWARDS ASIA

In light of the pandemic, four out of five Canadians say their perceptions of the United States have worsened, and about half say the same of China.

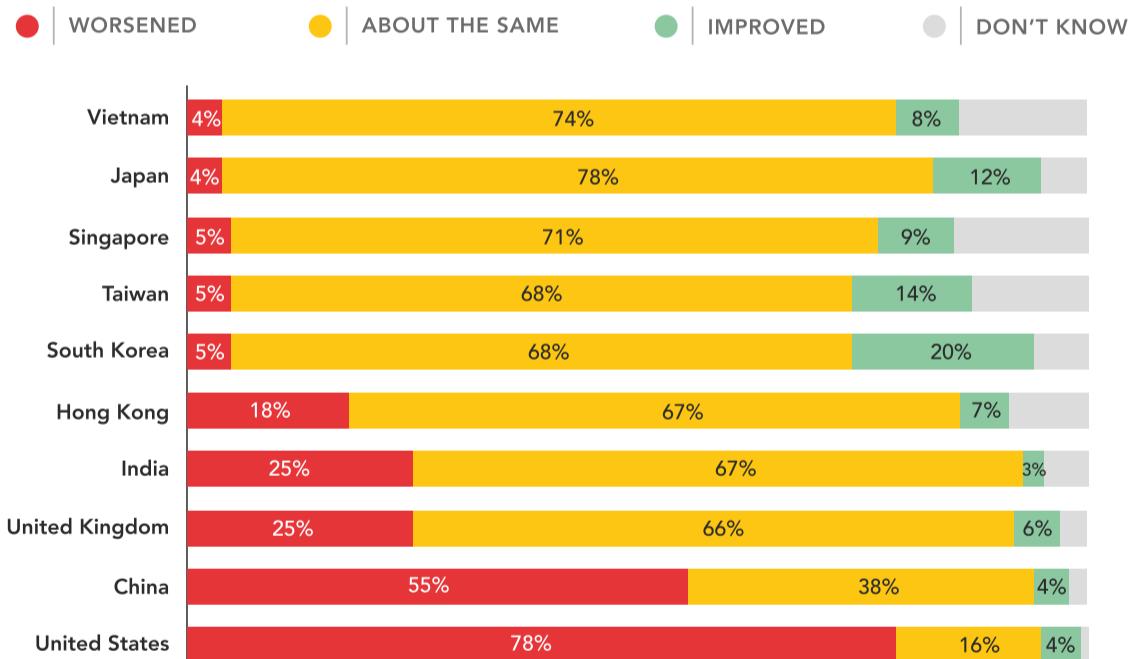
Foreign governments' responses to the COVID-19 outbreak seem to have dramatically affected Canadians' perceptions of foreign jurisdictions. Seventy-eight per cent of respondents said that their perceptions of the United States have worsened due to COVID-19; the country has the highest death toll globally. While China had a relatively effective response to COVID-19, the government has been highly criticized for its handling of the initial outbreak. As a result, 55% of Canadians said that their perceptions of China have worsened due to the pandemic.

FIGURE 6

Changing perceptions of jurisdictions in light of the COVID-19 pandemic

Question: In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, has your perception of the following jurisdictions improved, worsened, or has it stayed about the same as before the pandemic?

Base: All respondents (n = 3,519)



Twenty-five per cent of respondents said their perceptions of India and the United Kingdom have worsened due to their handling of the pandemic, two countries that have also struggled to contain COVID-19. But Canadians' perceptions have not dropped as significantly for these countries as they have for the United States or China.

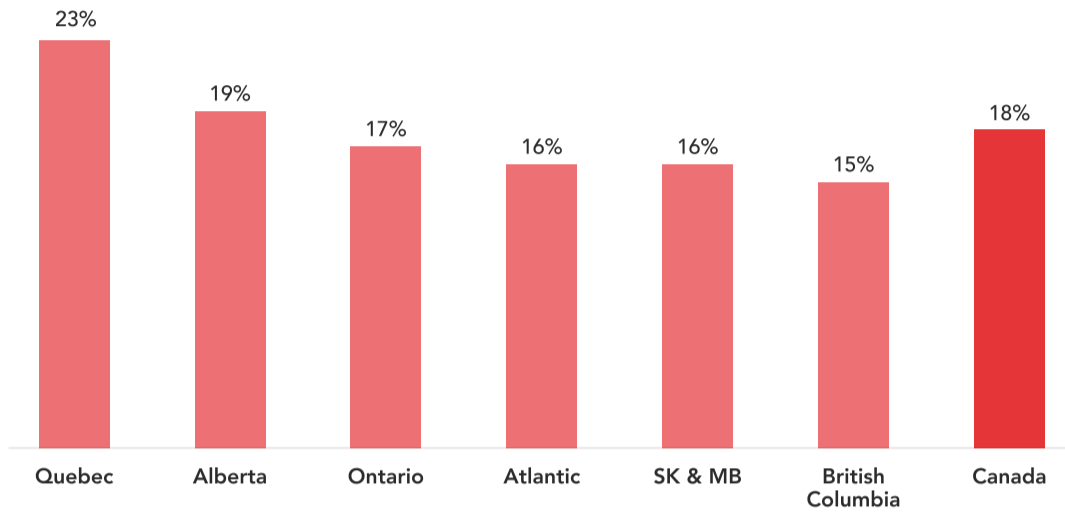
The story is different for South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, and Vietnam. All of these jurisdictions have been cited as good examples, at some point, for their response to COVID-19. Interestingly, only 4% to 5% of Canadians said their perceptions of these jurisdictions have worsened due to the pandemic (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 7

*Regional breakdown of **worsening** perception of Asia due to the COVID-19 pandemic*

Question: In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, has your perception of the following countries/regions/territories improved, worsened, or has it stayed about the same as before the pandemic?

Base: Canada (n = 3, 519), BC (n = 475); AB (n = 391); SK & MB (n = 230); ON (n = 1,356); QC (n = 813); ATL (n = 240)



Overall, 71% of Canadians said that their perceptions of Asia have remained the same as they were before the pandemic, 18% said they have worsened, 6% said they have improved, and 5% responded with “don’t know.”

Significantly more Quebecers (23%) and Albertans (19%) than Canadians of other provinces said that their perceptions of Asia have worsened due to the pandemic; in British-Columbia, only 15% said so (see Figure 7).



Source: Photo by macau-photo-agency on Unsplash

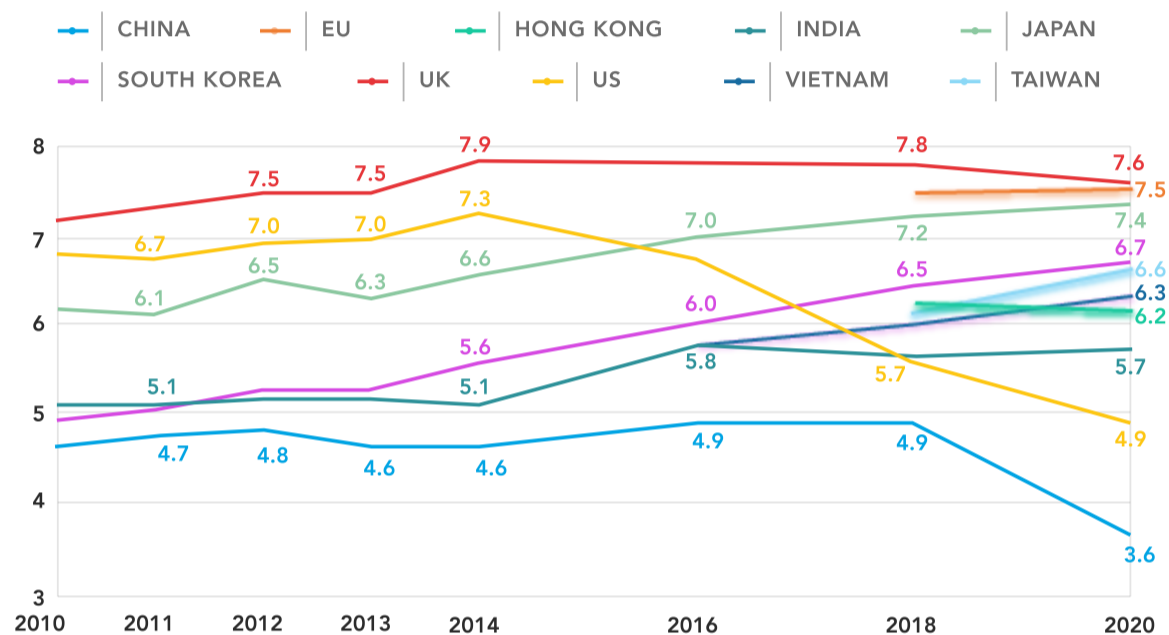
Canadians’ feelings toward Asia are warming, except their sentiments toward China, which dropped significantly in 2020 amid the pandemic and China-Canada tensions.

FIGURE 8

Canadians feelings towards each country, region, or territory, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 meaning a “very warm, favourable” feeling

Question: Please rate your feelings towards each of the following countries, regions, or territories, with 1 meaning you have a “very cold, unfavourable” feeling, and 10 meaning you have a “very warm, favourable” feeling. If you have no opinion of that country/region/territory, please also indicate this.

Base: All respondents, 2010 (n = 2,903); 2011 (n = 2,926); 2012 (n = 3,129); 2013 (n = 3,474); 2014 (n = 3,487); 2016 (n = 3,526); 2018 (n = 3,561); 2020 (n = 3,519)



Since 2010, APF Canada has surveyed Canadians on their general feelings towards Asia Pacific countries. Over the years, Canadians have expressed the warmest feelings toward Japan of all Asian countries identified in our NOPs (see Figure 8). On a scale of 1 to 10, feelings toward Japan, at 7.4, reached a new high in 2020 following a steady increase over the past 10 years. Similarly, feelings toward South Korea have improved steadily since 2010, reaching 6.7 in 2020, the second-highest among Asian countries.

The general feeling toward India has been stable over the past decade, except for a jump from 5.1 to 5.8 between 2014 and 2016. Over the past decade, the governments of India and Canada have been making efforts to build a mutually beneficial relationship, which can only prosper further if the Canadian public also holds a positive view. Today, Canadians’ feelings toward India stand at 5.7.

On the flip side, Canadians’ feelings toward China, which had been remarkably stable for the past decade until 2018, dropped from 4.9 to 3.6 in 2020. In comparison, the decline in sentiment toward the United States, over a more extended period, is even more pronounced. In 2014, feelings toward the United States ranked second behind the United Kingdom, at 7.3, but it has dropped to the second-lowest score in 2020, at 4.9. Potential factors driving the decline in

sentiment toward the United States and China may include the Donald Trump presidency and the trade war between the U.S. and China, tensions between Canada and China, China’s aggressive approach to international affairs, and, finally, the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, Quebecers (4.0) and Canadians in the Atlantic provinces (3.9) expressed warmer feelings toward China than the Canadian average. While British Columbians’ sentiments toward China (3.6) is on par with the Canadian average, British Columbians have warmer feelings toward South Korea (6.9), India (5.9), Vietnam (6.5), and Taiwan (6.8) compared to other provinces. Although small, the aforementioned differences are statistically significant (see Table 2)..

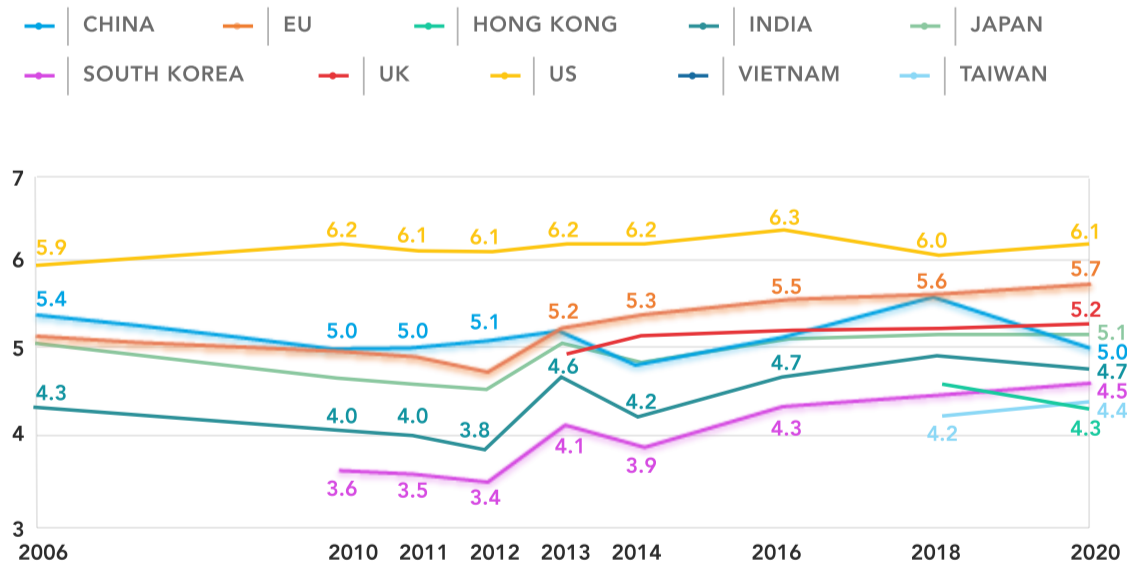
The perceived economic importance of the United States and China remains high despite drops in feelings, and Canadians also increasingly recognize the economic importance of other Asian nations.

FIGURE 9

Economic importance of each country, region, or territory, on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 meaning “very important”

Question: Would you say each of the following countries, regions or territories will be important to the economic well-being of Canada’s future generations? Please rate from 1 to 7, with 1 meaning “not important at all” and 7 meaning “very important.” If you have no opinion of that region, indicate this.

Base: All respondents, 2006 (n = 1,014); 2010 (n = 2,903); 2011 (n = 2,926); 2012 (n = 3,129); 2013 (n = 3,474); 2014 (n = 3,487); 2016 (n = 3,526); 2018 (n = 3,561); 2020 (n = 3,519)



During much of the past 14 years, Canadians have perceived China as the most important Asian economy for the economic well-being of Canada’s future generations (see Figure 9). However, in 2020, the perceived importance of Japan, which has remained steady at 5.1 since 2016, stands slightly higher than China (5.0). China’s economic importance score fell from a 5.6 high in 2018 back to its 2010 level, at 5.0. In contrast, the perceived economic importance of India (4.7) and South Korea (4.5) has been growing for most of the past decade.

The smaller economies of Hong Kong and Taiwan naturally hold less economic importance in the eyes of Canadians. Interestingly, Canadians' perceptions of the two economies have followed opposing paths since 2018. Taiwan's score rose from 4.2 to 4.4 today, while Hong Kong's score fell from 4.6 to 4.3. However, one could have expected a steeper decline in Canadians' perceptions of Hong Kong's economic importance, given the new national security law, which erodes the independence of institutions in Hong Kong and made headlines in Canada at the time of the survey.

The perceived economic importance of Canada's most important trade partner, the United States, has remained consistently at the top, at 6.1. However, Asian economies such as Japan, India, and South Korea have been narrowing the gap with the U.S. in terms of their importance for future Canadian generations' economic well-being.

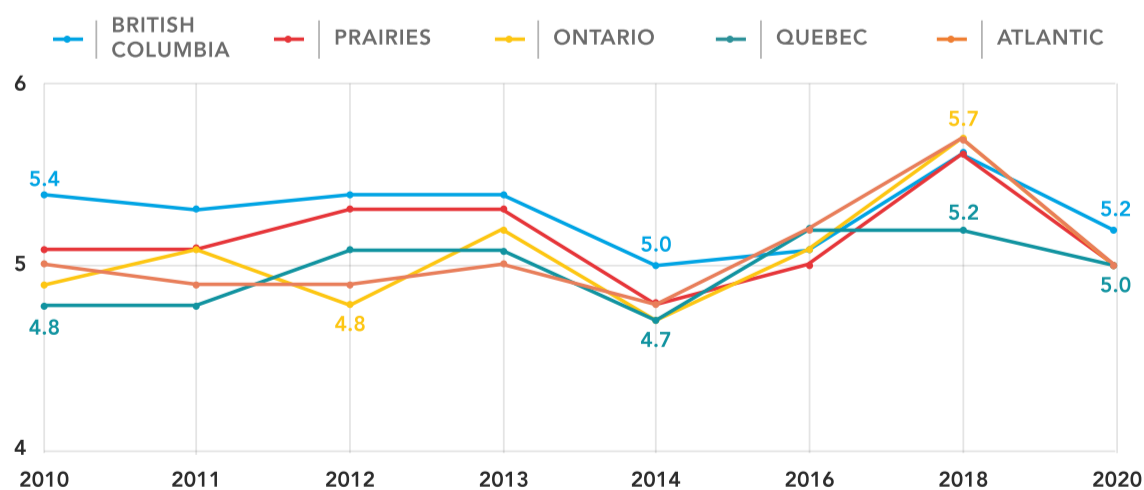
In 2020, the perceived economic importance of Japan, India, South Korea, and Taiwan is significantly higher in the minds of British Columbians and markedly lower for Quebecers. Most interestingly, Quebecers' perceived economic importance of India stands at only 4.3, while it stands much higher, above 4.9, in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia (see Table 3). This aligns with our finding that Quebecers perceive India's growing economic power more as a threat than an opportunity, more so than the rest of Canada.

FIGURE 10

Economic importance of China, by province, on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 meaning "very important"

Question: Would you say each of the following countries, regions or territories will be important to the economic well-being of Canada's future generations? Please rate from 1 to 7, with 1 meaning "not important at all" and 7 meaning "very important." If you have no opinion of that region, indicate this.

Base: All respondents, 2010 (n = 2,903); 2011 (n = 2,926); 2012 (n = 3,129); 2013 (n = 3,474); 2014 (n = 3,487); 2016 (n = 3,526); 2018 (n = 3,561); 2020 (n = 3,519)

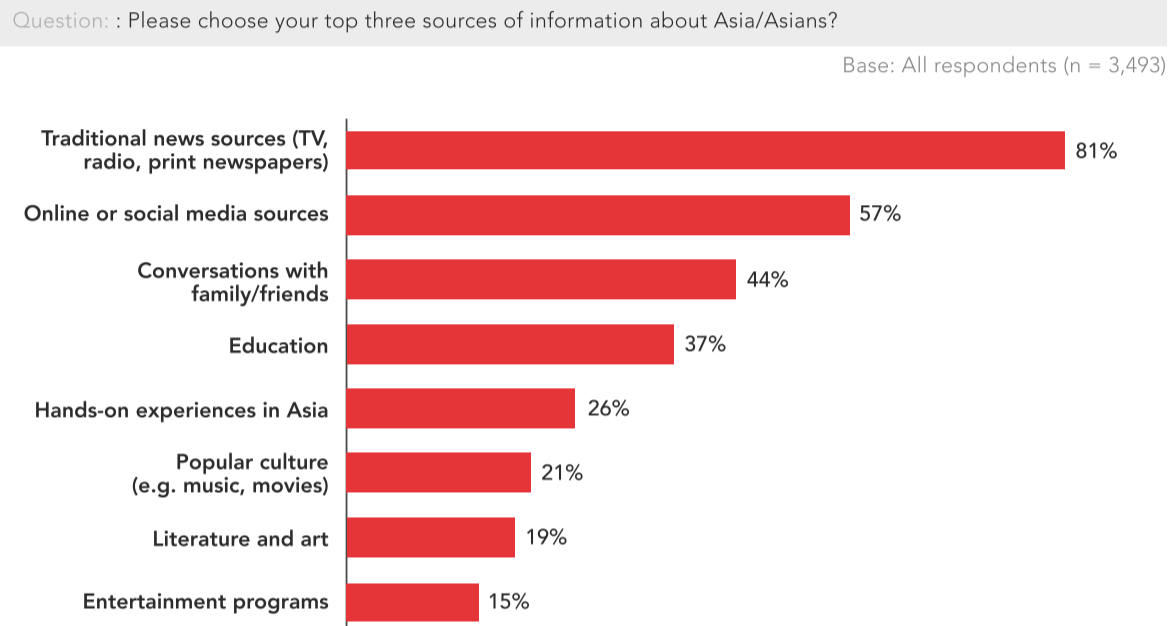


For China, at the beginning of the decade, there were large differences across provinces (see Figure 10), but the perceived economic importance of China across Canadian provinces has converged in recent years.

MEDIA RELATIONS

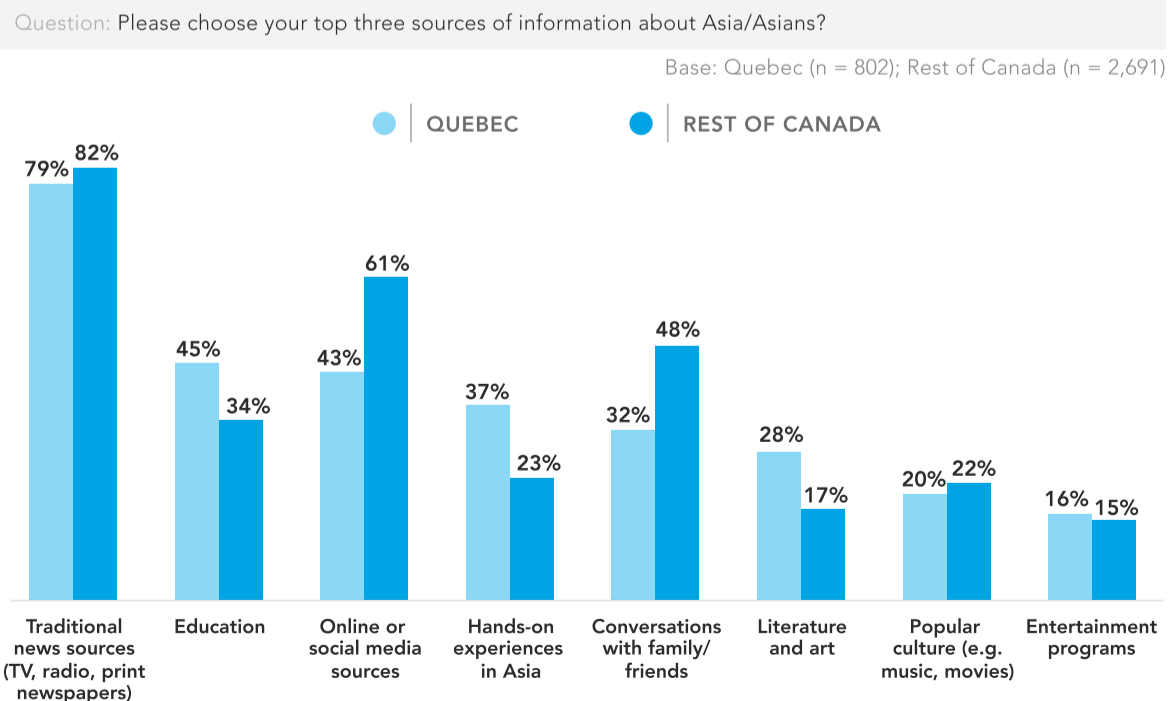
Traditional news sources such as television and newspapers are the top source of information about Asia and Asians for Canadians.

FIGURE 11
Canadians top sources of information about Asia/Asians



Eighty-one per cent of survey respondents included traditional news sources such as television, radio, and print newspaper in their top three sources of information about Asia (see Figure 11). Online or social media sources is the second most common source of information (57%), followed by conversations with family, colleagues, and friends (44%).

FIGURE 12
Top sources of information about Asia/Asians



In Quebec, the most common sources of information about Asia and Asians differ significantly. While traditional news sources remain the most common (79%), Quebecers identified online or social media and conversation (43%) in their top three sources of information about Asia markedly less often than the rest of Canadians (61%, see Figure 12). Similarly, only 32% said conversations were among the top three sources of information compared to 48% for the rest of Canada. Instead, education (45%) is second to traditional news sources in Quebec. Quebecers also identified hands-on experiences in Asia (37%) and literature and art (28%) in their top three significantly more often than the rest of Canada. This suggests that these sources have more relative importance in Quebecers' learning experiences about Asia and Asians. Perhaps this is because Quebec media features less content about Asia and because there are fewer Asians in [Quebec](#) (7.1% of the population compared to 17.7% in Canada).

A majority disagree that Canadian news media, the most common source of information about Asia, provide adequate information about Asia.

Most Canadians (52%) disagree that Canadian news media provide adequate information on current issues and developments in Asia, with 18% in strong disagreement (38% agree). Canadians in the Western provinces disagree more with this statement than Canadians in the Eastern provinces (see Figure 13). Canadians in the Atlantic provinces are the only ones to agree, more than disagree, with this statement.



Online or social media sources is the second most common source of information about Asia/Asians

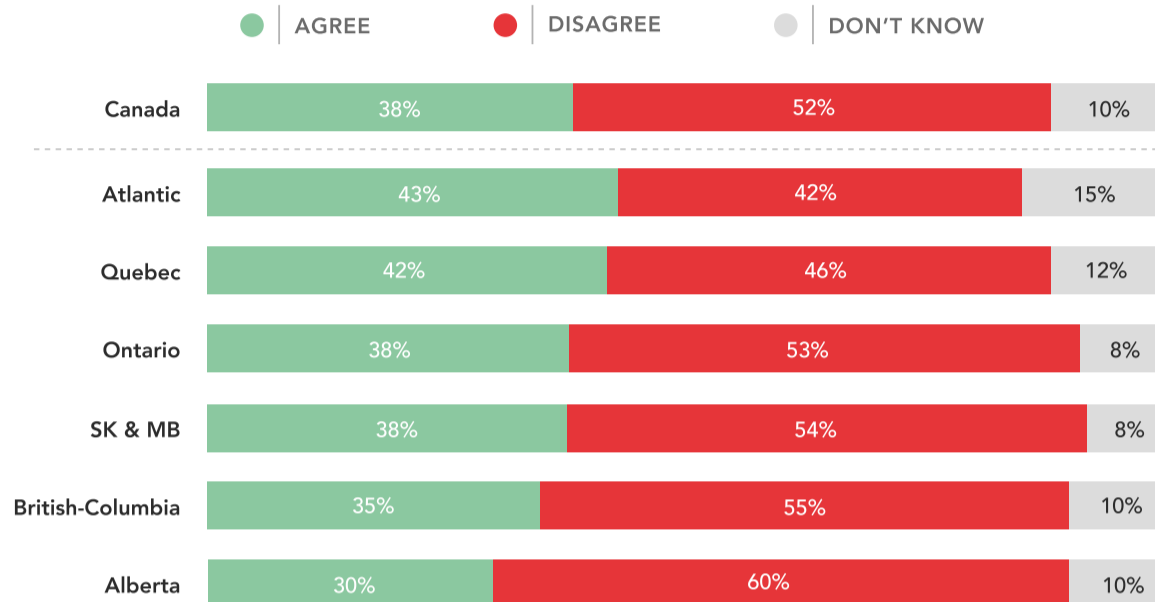
Source: Photo by Charles Deluvio on Unsplash

FIGURE 13

Most Canadians believe that Canadian news media does not provide adequate information on current issues and developments in Asia

Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following: Canadian news media provides adequate information on current issues and developments in Asia?

Base: Canada (n = 3,519); BC (n = 475); AB (n = 391); SK & MB (n = 230); ON (n = 1,356); QC (n = 813); ATL (n = 240)



In 2008, we asked Canadians whether they agreed, or not, that the Canadian media *does not* provide adequate information on current issues and developments in Asia. While there was not an option to respond with “don’t know,” responses were similar, as 73% agreed with the statement, and 37% disagreed.

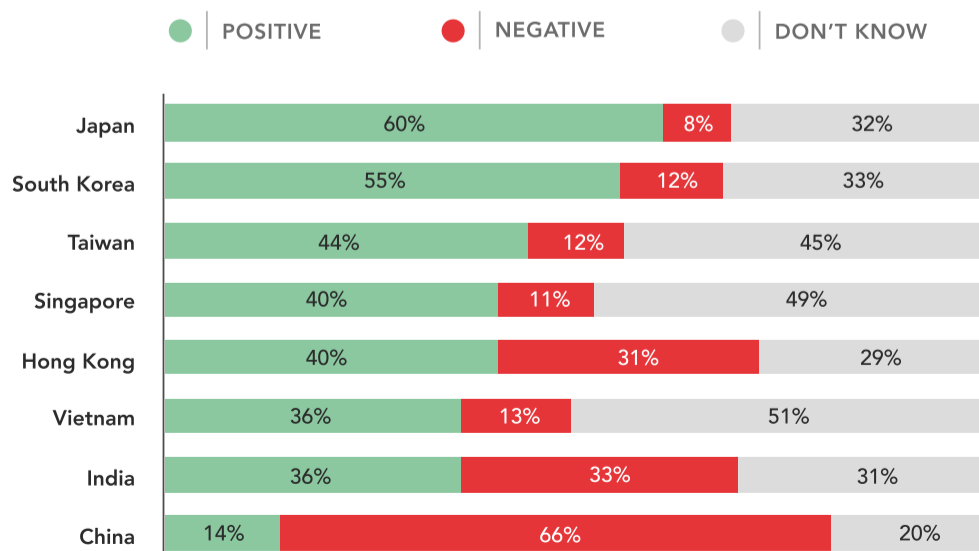
Media coverage of Asian jurisdictions positively impacts Canadian perceptions of these territories.

FIGURE 14

Impacts of Canadian media on Canadians' perception of Asian jurisdictions

Question: Does the Canadian media have a positive or negative impact on your perception of the following Asian jurisdictions?

Base: All respondents (n = 3,519)



A majority of Canadians agree that news coverage of current issues in Asia is inadequate, but that does not necessarily mean that the coverage is negatively biased. More Canadians believe that Canadian media coverage of Japan has a positive impact (60%) than a negative impact on their perception of Japan (see Figure 14). The same is true for Canadians concerning coverage of most Asian jurisdictions identified in our 2020 NOP. In contrast, a majority of Canadians believe that the Canadian media coverage of China has a negative impact on their perception of China, and only 14% believe it has a positive impact.

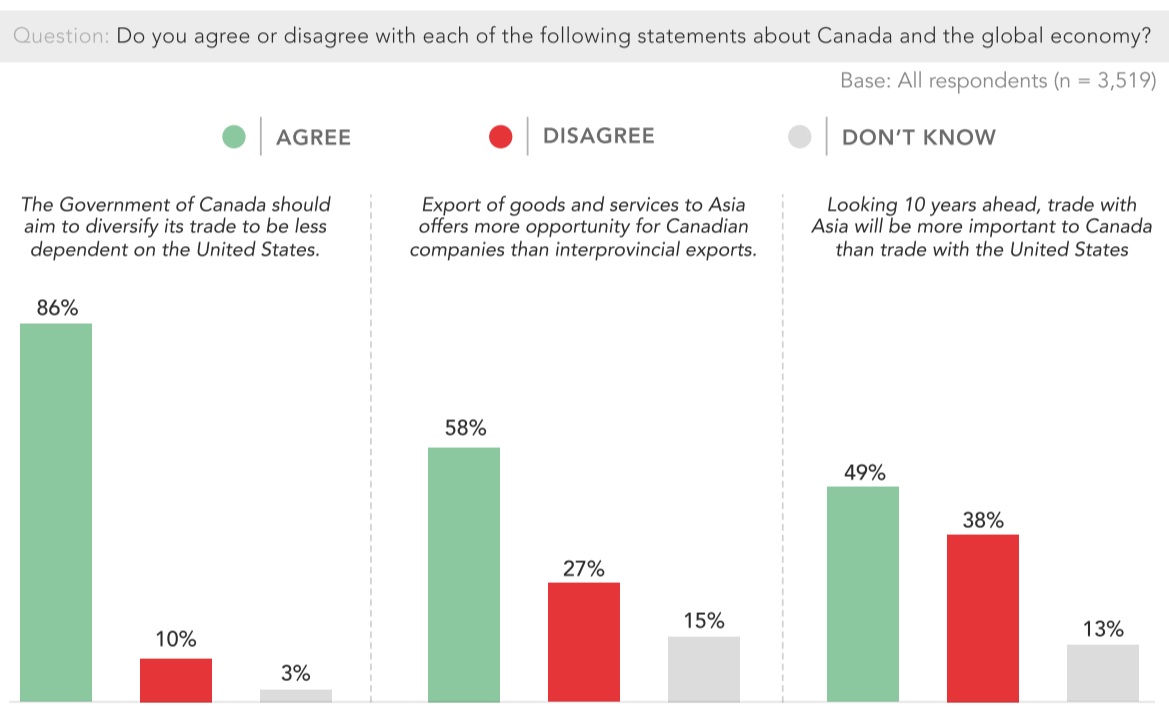
Our historical data shows that dissatisfaction with the Canadian media coverage of Asia, and the perception that media coverage of China in Canada is negative, is not new. Chinese government officials and Canadian policy-makers have often pointed to this perception as a detriment to Canada-China bilateral relations. In recent years, media content [research](#) identified a predominantly negative tone in Canadian news articles about China on financial markets and government topics.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Canadians increasingly understand the need to diversify trade away from the United States, and a high but decreasing share of Canadians believe Asia will become a more important trading partner than the United States.

Eighty-six per cent of Canadians agree that Canada should diversify its trade to be less dependent on the United States (see Figure 15). The level of agreement with this statement has always been high, but it has been increasing steadily since 2004 when it stood at 75%.

FIGURE 15
Canadian opinions on trade and global economy



Indeed, [71%](#) of Canada’s goods and services exports went to the United States in 2019, and [62%](#) of Canada’s imports came from the United States. The share of international exports and imports with the U.S. has remained remarkably stable for the past decade.

Source: Photo by Asael Pena on Unsplash

Canadians welcome the idea of diversifying trade relations beyond the U.S.



Concurrently, Canadians see a lot of potential for growth in trade flows with Asia. Looking 10 years ahead, 49% of Canadians agree that trade with Asia will be more important to Canada than trade with the United States (see Figure 15). That is significantly higher than the share of Canadians who disagree with this statement (38%), but is a decline from 59% agreement in 2018. Similarly, most Canadians (58%) believe exports of goods and services to Asia offers more opportunity for Canadian companies than interprovincial exports (see Figure 15).

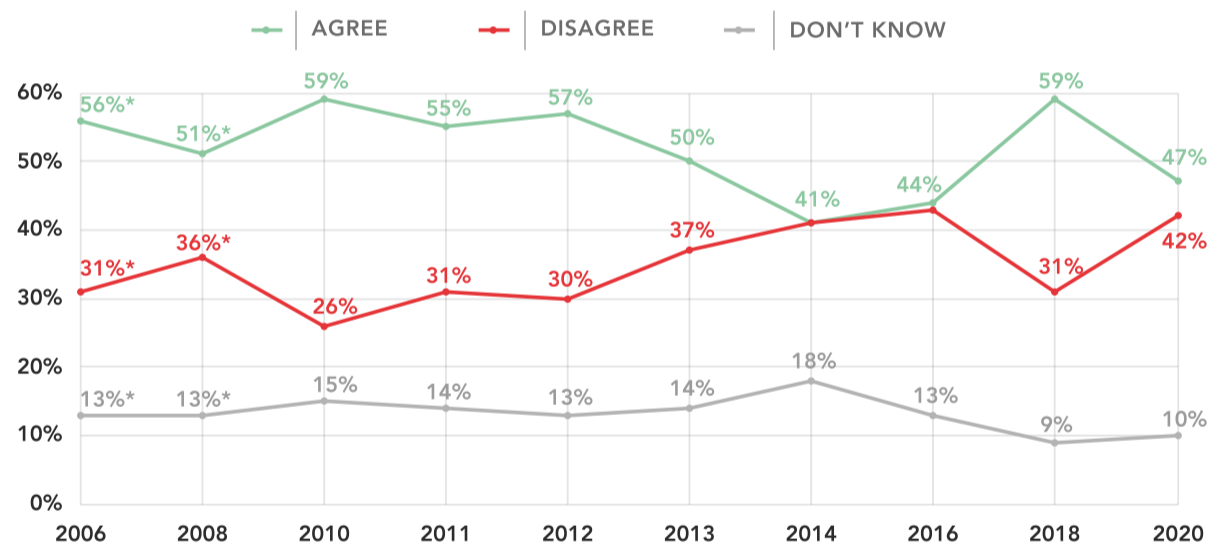
Canadians are increasingly divided on whether Canada would benefit from more FDI from Asia and if the government should encourage Canadian companies to set up operations in Asia.

FIGURE 16

Overall, Canadians believe Canada would benefit from more Asian investment in our country

Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Overall, Canada would benefit from more Asian investment in our country.

Base: All respondents, 2006 (n = 1,014); 2010 (n = 2,903); 2011 (n = 2,926); 2012 (n = 3,129); 2013 (n = 3,474); 2014 (n = 3,487); 2016 (n = 3,526); 2018 (n = 3,561); 2020 (n = 3,519)



*Data for 2006 and 2008 were adjusted for the lack of "don't know" option in the question for those years.
Note: The 2006 question specified "including in the energy sector"

More Canadians agree than disagree that Canada would benefit from more Asian investment in the country. That has been the case for the past 15 years, and this year, 47% agreed with the statement (see Figure 16).

While the value of foreign direct investment (FDI) to Canada from the Asia Pacific almost [quadrupled](#) between the periods 2004-2007 (C\$15B) and 2016-2019 (C\$56B), less than half of Canadians support encouraging more FDI from Asia into Canada. In terms of Canadian investment in Asia, 43% of Canadians agree (46% disagree) that Canada should provide economic incentives to encourage Canadian companies to set up operations in Asia compared with 44% in 2016.

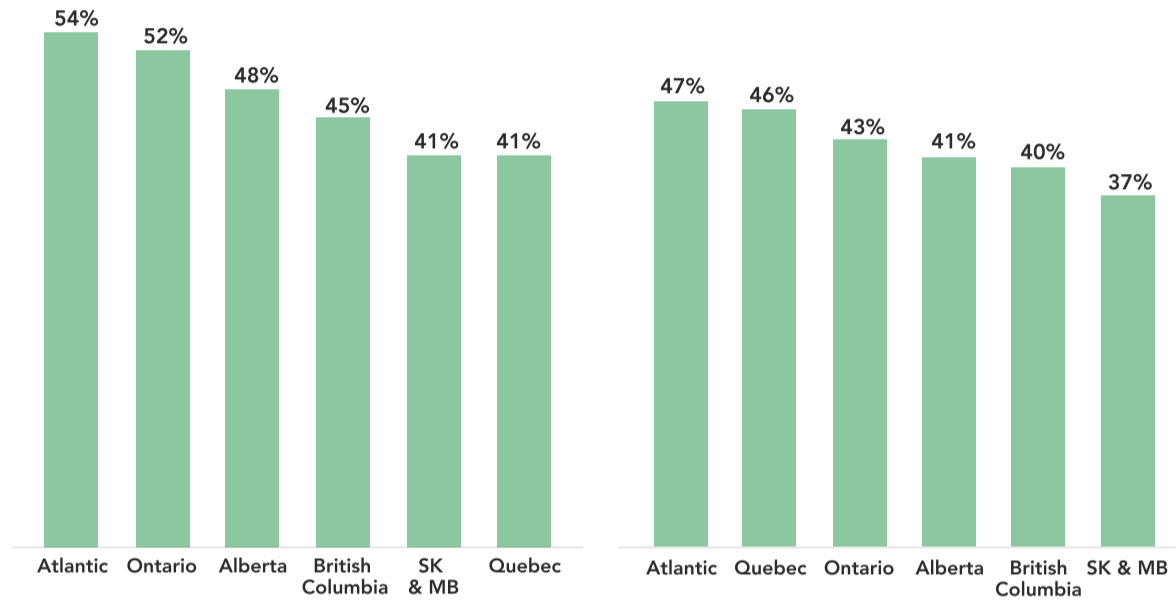
FIGURE 17
*Share of Canadians in **agreement** that Canada would benefit from more Asian investment in our country*

Question: Overall, Canada would benefit from more Asian investment in our country.

FIGURE 18
*Share of Canadians in **agreement** that Canada should provide economic incentives to encourage more Canadian companies to set up operations in Asia*

Question: Canada should provide economic incentives to encourage more Canadian companies to set up operations in Asia.

Base: BC (n = 475); AB (n = 391); SK & MB (n = 230); ON (n = 1,356); QC (n = 813); ATL (n = 240)



There are statistically significant differences across provinces in survey responses regarding Asian investment. First, more than half of Canadians in the Atlantic provinces (54%) and Ontario (52%) agree that Canada would benefit from more Asian investment (see Figure 17). In contrast, more people disagree than agree with this statement in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Quebec. Interestingly, Ontario received the most investment from the Asia Pacific in 2019 (C\$3.71B), according to APF Canada’s [Investment Monitor](#). British Columbia (C\$1.97B) and Quebec (C\$1.67B) were the second and third most important Canadian destinations for Asian investment. Second, Canadians in Eastern provinces agree more that Canada should provide economic incentives to encourage more Canadian companies to set up Asia operations (see Figure 18). In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, only 37% agree with this statement.

CANADIAN VIEWS ON INVESTMENT FROM ASIA

Amid the COVID-19 crisis and accelerated digitalization, Canadians show strong support for letting in more Asian FDI in the high-tech and the biomedical and health-care sectors.

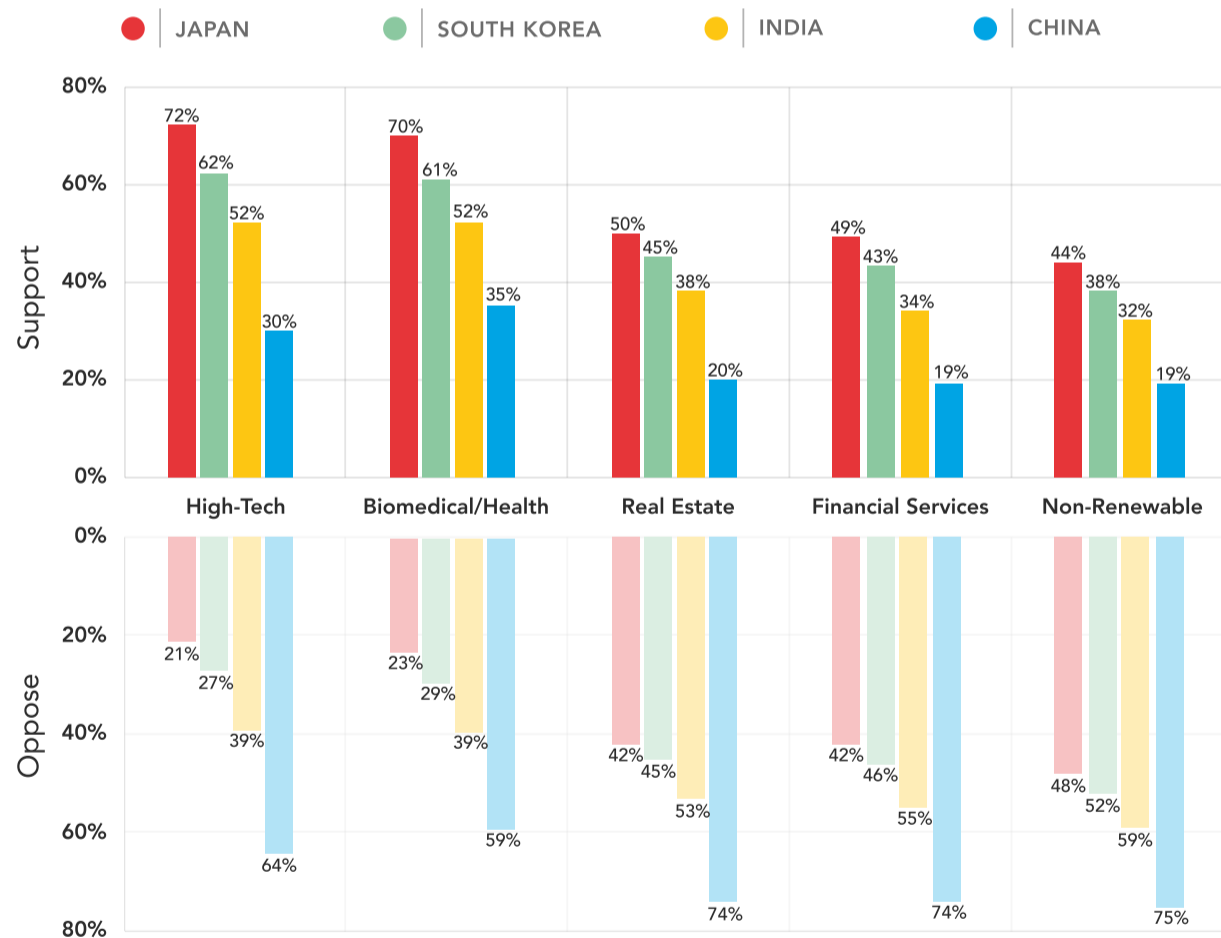
Canadians support more investment from Asia in the high-tech and biomedical and health-care sectors, except from China (see Figure 19). In those sectors, the majority of Canadians support allowing more investment coming from Japan, South Korea, and India, while 35% or less support more investment from China.

FIGURE 19

Share of Canadians who support and oppose the Canadian government allowing more FDI from these Asian economies into different sectors

Question: Would you support or oppose the Canadian government allowing more foreign direct investment from these Asian economies into the following sectors?

Base: All respondents (n = 3,519)



Generally, more Canadians oppose than support more Asian investment in the real estate and financial sectors in Canada. About 74% oppose more investment from China in those sectors, about 55% oppose if it comes from India, and around 46% oppose if it comes from South Korea. Japan is the only economy for which more Canadians support than oppose more investment in the real estate and financial sectors.

Finally, more Canadians oppose than support more FDI in the non-renewable energy sector for all countries. Seventy-five per cent oppose Chinese investment in the sector, and 48% oppose Japanese investment in the sector.

In 2019, APF Canada polled Canadians on inbound FDI from Asia. More than 50% of the respondents opposed the government allowing more FDI in each of the non-renewable, real estate, high-tech, and financial services sectors. When asked in 2020 about FDI coming from specific Asian economies, Canadians showed support for allowing more Asian FDI from Japan in almost all sectors and from South Korea and India in the high-tech and the biomedical and health-care sectors. The support for allowing more Asian investment in the high-tech sector was 41% in 2019, and the average support across Asian countries in 2020 is up to 56%, the most considerable change in support of all sectors between the years 2019 and 2020.



There is strong support for letting in more Asian FDI in the biomedical and health-care sectors

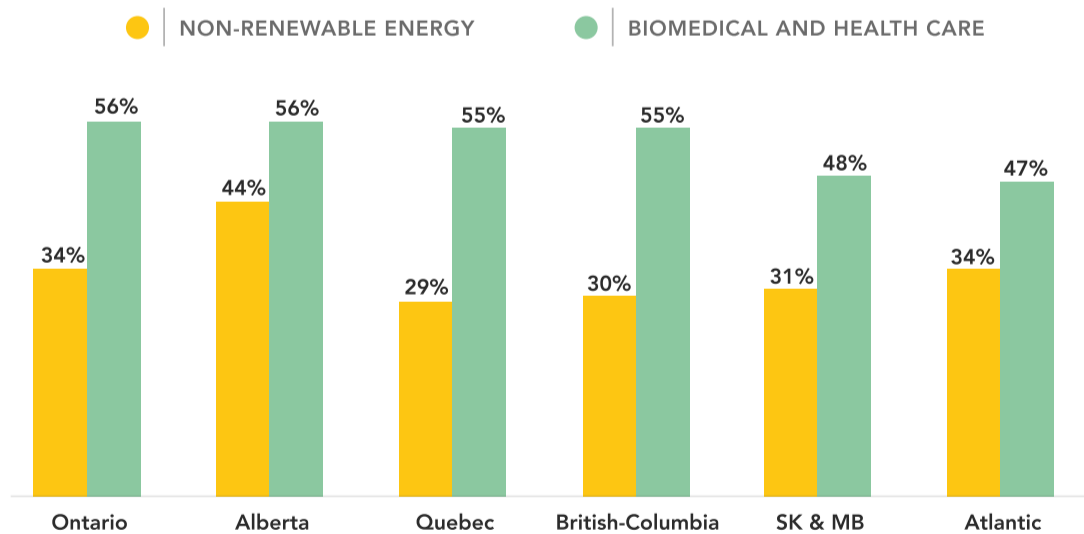
Source: Photo by Raeng on Unsplash

FIGURE 20

*Canadians' in **support** for allowing more Asian investment in the sectors of Non-renewable energy and Biomedical and health care*

Question: Would you support or oppose the Canadian government allowing more FDI from these Asian economies (Japan, South Korea, India, China) into the following sectors?

Base: BC (n = 475); AB (n = 391); SK & MB (n = 230); ON (n = 1,356); QC (n = 813); ATL (n = 240)



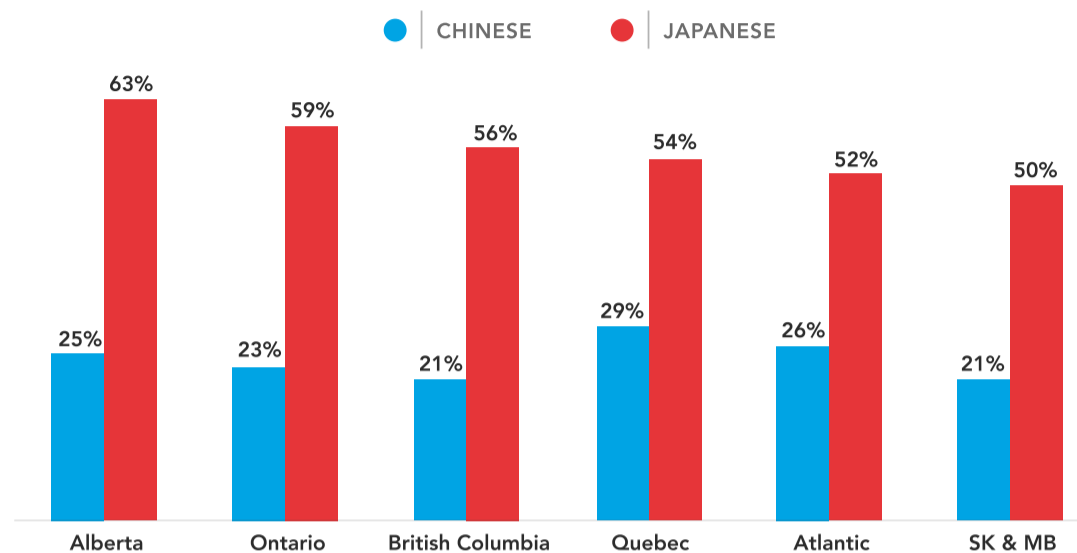
Canadians across provinces show support for different types of investment (see Figure 20). Most notably, Albertans are the most supportive of allowing more Asian investments in the non-renewable energy sector, although support is still low, at 44%. Canadians in the Atlantic provinces, meanwhile, are the least supportive (47%) for allowing more Asian investment in the biomedical and health-care sectors.

FIGURE 21

*Comparing Canadians' **support** for allowing more investment in Canada from China and Japan*

Question: Would you support or oppose the Canadian government allowing more FDI from these Asian economies (Japan, South Korea, India, China) into the following sectors?

Base: BC (n = 475); AB (n = 391); SK & MB (n = 230); ON (n = 1,356); QC (n = 813); ATL (n = 240)



For investment coming from specific Asian economies, there are statistically significant differences in opinion for investment coming from China and Japan (see Figure 21). Albertans and Ontarians are the most supportive of allowing more investment from Japan, while Quebecers are the most supportive of allowing more investment from China.

CANADIAN VIEWS ON FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS (FTAs)

Canadians' support for ratifying a Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN nations and India is booming.

This year, Canadians are the most supportive (76%) for Canada to enter an FTA with the Pacific Alliance, comprising Chile, Columbia, Mexico, and Peru. Ongoing FTA negotiations between Canada and the Pacific Alliance began in October 2017.

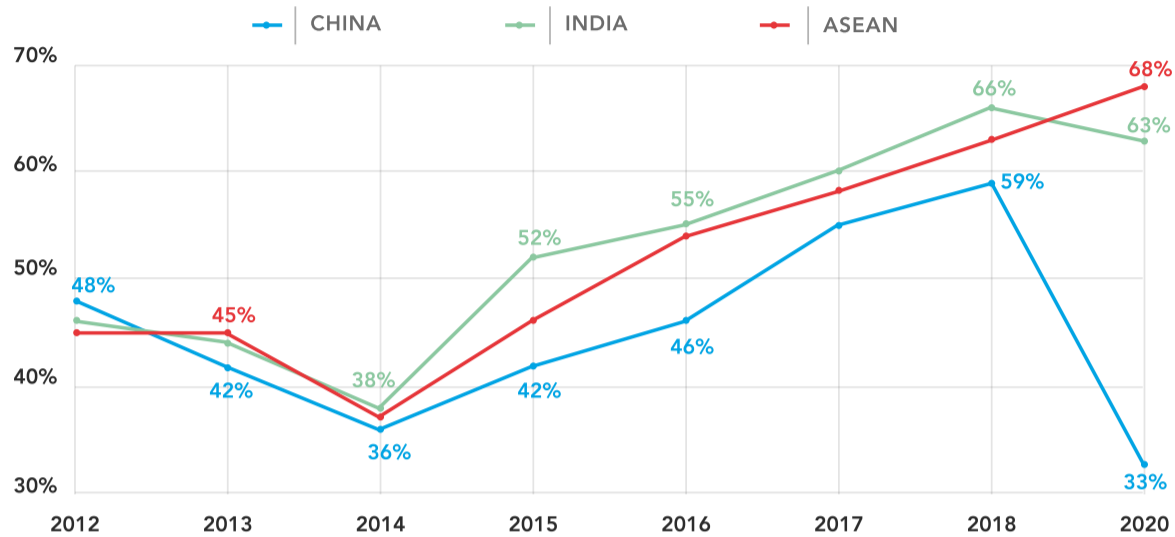
The Canadian government also held exploratory discussions for a possible [Canada-ASEAN FTA](#) between September 2017 and September 2019, and the Canadian government continues to engage on a possible agreement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. An increasing share of Canadians supports the government entering into an FTA with ASEAN. Sixty-eight per cent of respondents voiced their support for it in 2020, compared with 63% in 2018 (see Figure 22). Support for entering FTAs with both ASEAN nations and India has risen steadily since 2014.

FIGURE 22

Support for the Canadian government to ratify an FTA with...

Question: Would you support or oppose the Canadian government entering into/ratifying an FTA with...?

Base: respondents, 2012 (n=3,129); 2013 (n=3,474); 2014 (n=3,487); 2015 (n = 1, 554); 2016 (n=3,526); 2018 (n=3,561); 2020 (n=3,519)



Note: No observation for India in 2017, and for ASEAN in 2015 and 2017 (trend line). About 12% responded "don't know."

On September 19, 2020, Canada abandoned FTA negotiations with China due to the bilateral relationship's impasse. We polled Canadians on their support for a Canada-China FTA before the federal announcement to end talks. Nonetheless, general public opinion is in line with the government's decision. While more Canadians were supporting, rather than opposing, Canada entering into an FTA with China in 2017 and 2018 (55% and 59%, respectively), that is no longer the case in 2020. Only 33% of this year's respondents said they would support a Canada-China FTA, with 59% responding that they would not. This marks the lowest support for an FTA with China since we started polling Canadians on the subject in 2012.

CANADIAN VIEWS ON IMMIGRATION

Canadians’ perceptions of immigrants from Asia are largely positive.

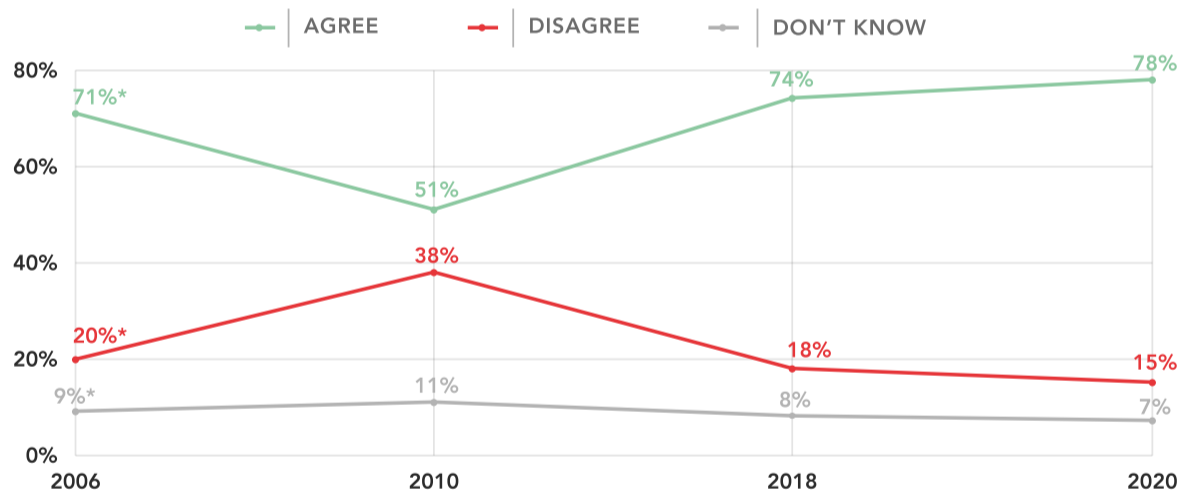
In a Gallup Poll, [Migrant Acceptance Index](#), published in 2020, Canada was considered the most-accepting country in the world for migrants in 2019, followed by Iceland and New Zealand. APF Canada’s 2020 National Opinion Poll shows a similar trend, as we find that Canadians are mainly positive about immigrants, particularly from Asia. This trend has grown increasingly positive over the last decade (see Figure 23).

FIGURE 23

Over the past decade, an increasing number of Canadians perceive immigrants from Asia have a positive impact on Canada

Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Overall, immigration from Asia has a positive impact on the economy of Canada.

Base: All respondents, 2006 (n=1,014); 2010 (n = 2,903); 2018 (n = 3,561); 2020 (n = 3,519)

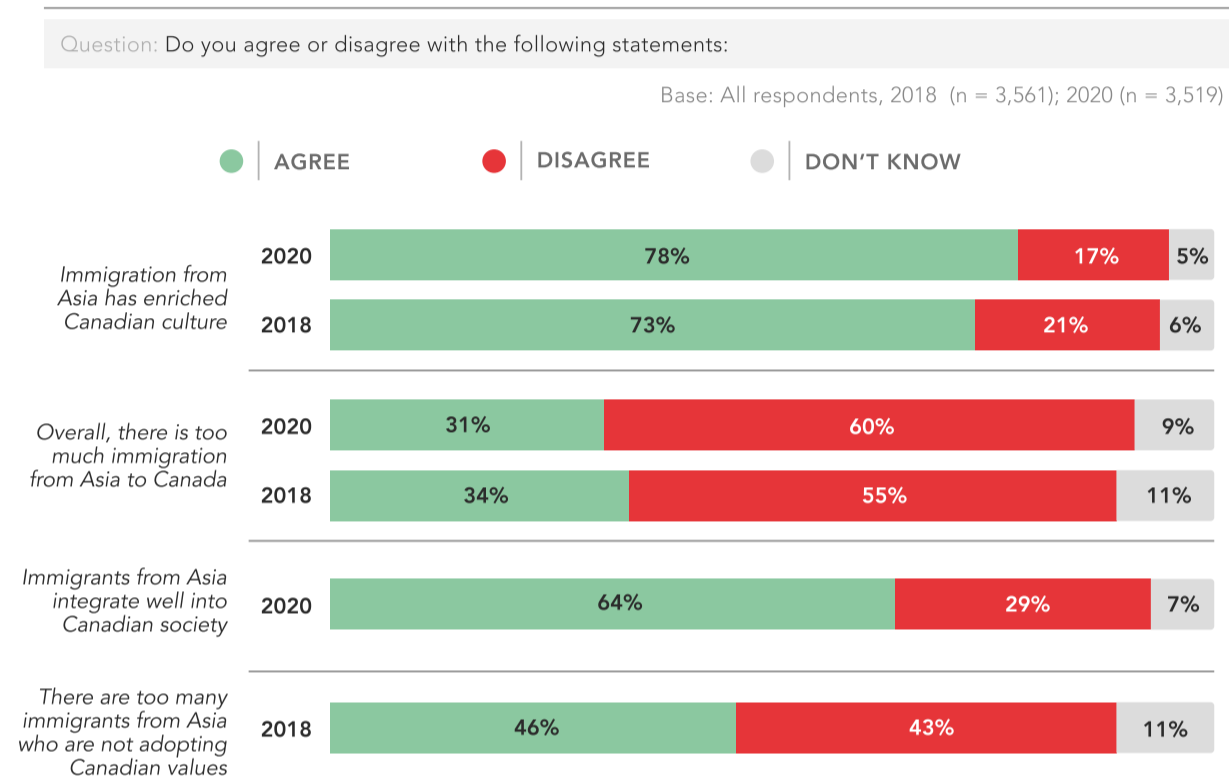


NOTE: Prior to 2018, the question asked: "The overall impact of Asian immigration on Canada is positive."
*Data for 2006 was adjusted for the lack of "don't know" option in the question for those years.

In our 2018 National Opinion Poll, we adapted four questions from the [Environics Institute for Survey Research](#) to assess Canadian perceptions of immigration from Asia. In 2020, we have revisited those questions and find that Canadians generally hold a positive attitude towards immigrants from Asia. In 2020, 78% of Canadians find immigration from Asia has enriched Canadian culture, and only 31% (3 percentage-point drop from 2018) feel that there is too much immigration from Asia to Canada (see Figure 24). Most provinces hold a similar view to the national average on these statements.

In 2018, we found that 46% of survey respondents felt that too many newcomers were not adopting Canadian values. In 2020, we asked a different question – about newcomers’ integration into Canadian society. We find that 64% of Canadians agree that immigrants from Asia are integrating well into Canadian society (see Figure 24).

FIGURE 24
Canadian views on immigration from Asia remains positive



PUSH AND PULL BETWEEN ASSIMILATION AND ACCOMMODATION

New immigrants are often faced with the need to strike a balance between assimilating into a new culture and maintaining their cultural roots. In 2019, there were 184,565 new permanent residents from the Asia Pacific, making it the largest source region for new immigrants to Canada.¹ This number has increased by almost 29% since 2015. This spike underscores the need to recognize and understand how Canadians perceive immigrants and what they expect from newcomers. To that end, we sought Canadian opinions on how best to balance building a common Canadian identity that encompasses the diversity of culture, language, and values that new immigrants bring to this country.

We find with this year’s survey that the majority of Canadians (72%) believe newcomers should not be discouraged from maintaining their cultural identities, but they should adopt core Canadian values on things like equality, democracy, and

¹ Asia Pacific region as defined by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Data sourced from IRCC.

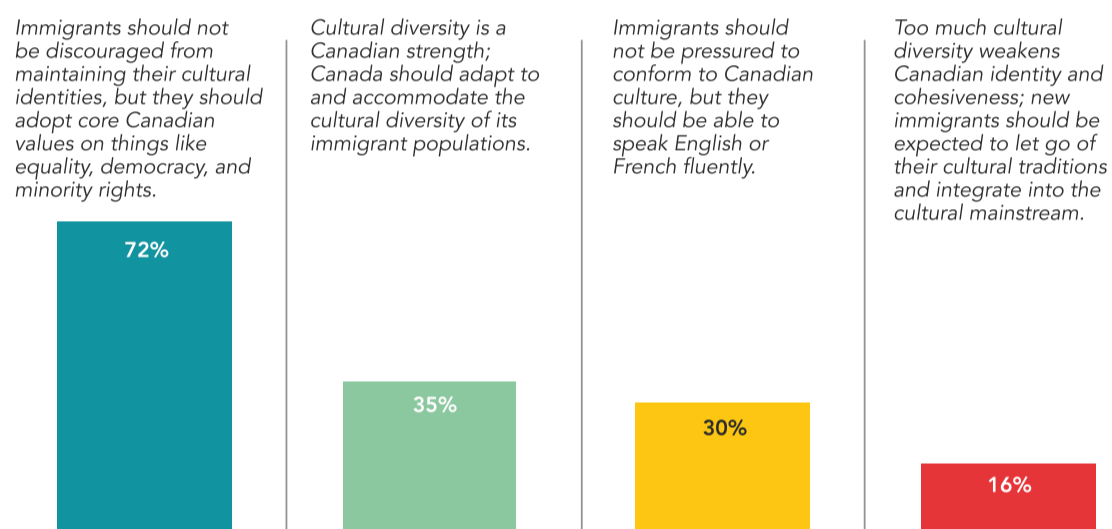
respect for minority rights (see Figure 25). About 35% of Canadians also believe that “cultural diversity is a Canadian strength” and that “Canada should adapt to and accommodate the cultural diversity of its immigrant populations,” while 30% believe that while immigrants need not conform to Canadian culture, they should be able to speak fluent English or French.

FIGURE 25

The majority of Canadians believe that immigrants should not be discouraged from maintaining their cultural identities, but adoption of core Canadian values is pertinent

Question: The 2016 Census shows that one-fifth of Canadians are foreign-born. In your opinion, what is the appropriate balance between building a common Canadian identity and accommodating differences in culture, language, and values?

Base: Canada (n = 3,519)



This trend remains the same across all provinces. However, 21% of Quebecers feel that new immigrants need to let go of their cultural traditions and integrate into the cultural mainstream, compared to less than 15% of Canadians outside Quebec.

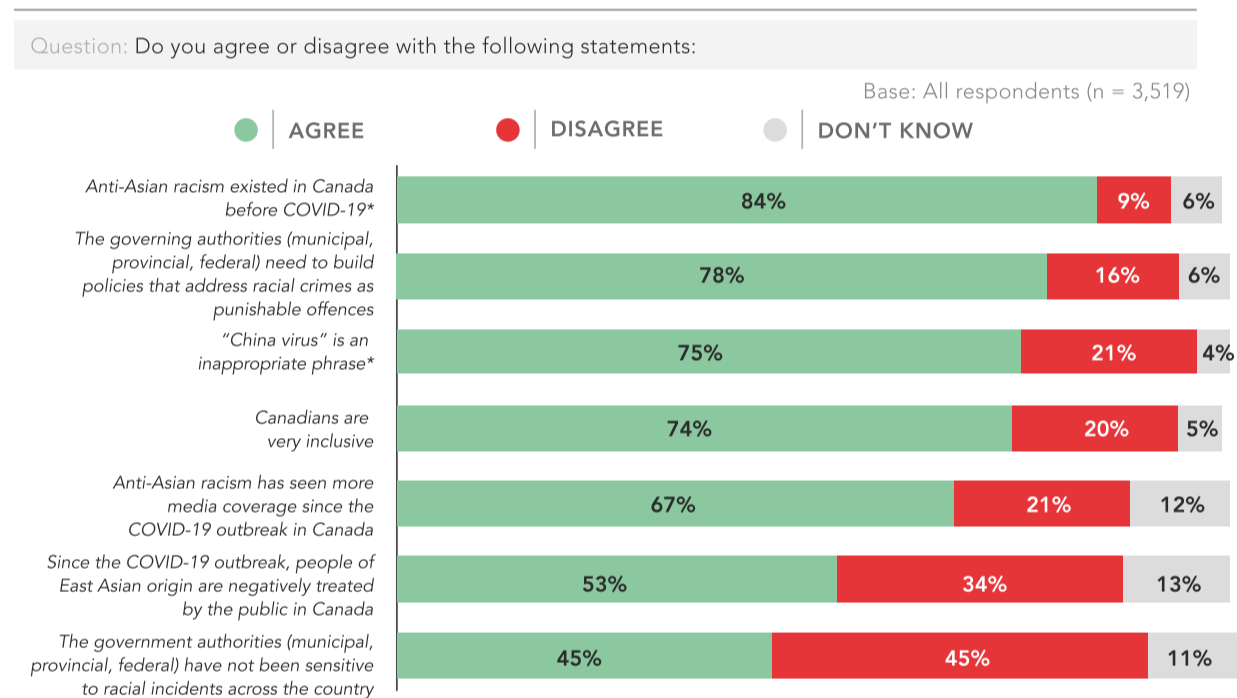
CANADIAN VIEWS ON ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

Most Canadians believe that anti-Asian racism existed in Canada before COVID-19 and feel that such racist attitudes are here to stay.

Aside from the pandemic, 2020 has seen a significant amplification of the public discourse around racism in North America. Race and ethnicity, or the social categorization of humans by their ethnic origins and skin colour, has never been a more pertinent topic that requires investigation and understanding of how we can tackle the issue at its very roots. In that vein, we asked Canadians for their opinions around racism in Canada, particularly anti-Asian racism, and how they view the roles of governing authorities' in addressing the issue.

Canadians are very inclusive – that is the view held by 74% of Canadians. Nevertheless, 84% of Canadians also believe that anti-Asian racism was present in Canada well before COVID-19 (see Figure 26). Sixty-seven per cent of respondents said anti-Asian racism has seen more media coverage since the COVID-19 outbreak, arguably due to the rise in racial incidents against Asians, and an increased conversation sparked by the Black Lives Movement in the U.S. and elsewhere. Furthermore, 53% feel that the public has negatively treated people of East Asian origin in Canada since the COVID-19 outbreak. We also find that 75% of Canadians find “China virus” an inappropriate phrase, but 21% feel it is acceptable.

FIGURE 26
Canadians believe Anti-Asian racism existed in Canada well before COVID-19 and there is a need for reform in policies against such hate crimes



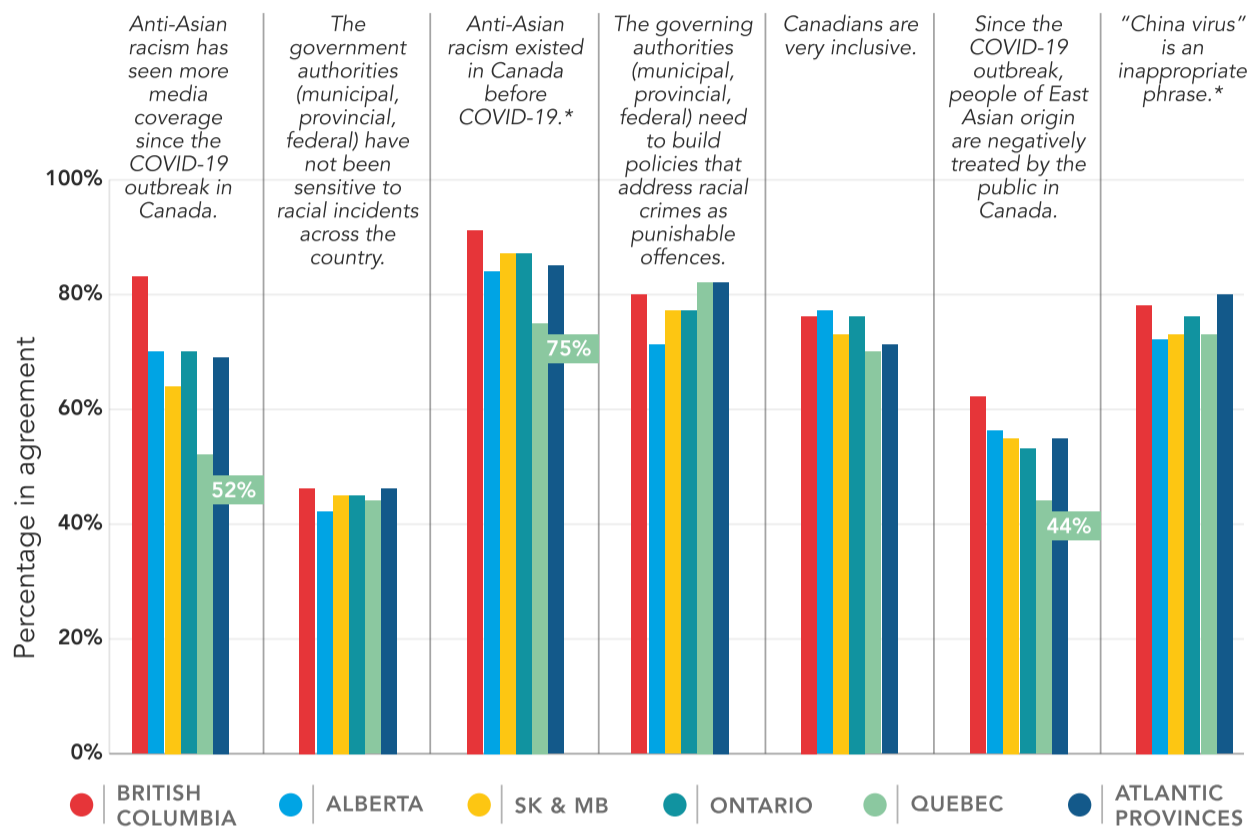
*This statement was reverse worded in the survey.

When asked if government authorities have been sensitive to racial incidents across the country, we find an equal proportion of Canadians agreeing and disagreeing (see Figure 26). Irrespective of where they stand on government sensitivity to racism, 78% of Canadians believe the authorities, at all levels – municipal, provincial, federal – need to build policies that address racial crimes as punishable offences.

FIGURE 27
Canadian views on anti-Asian racism varies across provinces

Question: Keeping in mind the current socio-political climate in Canada, do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Base: n = 1,088



NOTE: Provinces with their percentages marked have statistically significant difference in average opinion on the statement than other provinces. | *This statement was reverse worded in the survey.

There is a statistically significant difference in opinion across the provinces on some statements, particularly between Quebecers and the other provinces. While 52% of Quebecers agree that anti-Asian racism has seen more media coverage since the COVID-19 outbreak, significantly more British Columbians, Ontarians, and Albertans think the same (see Figure 27).

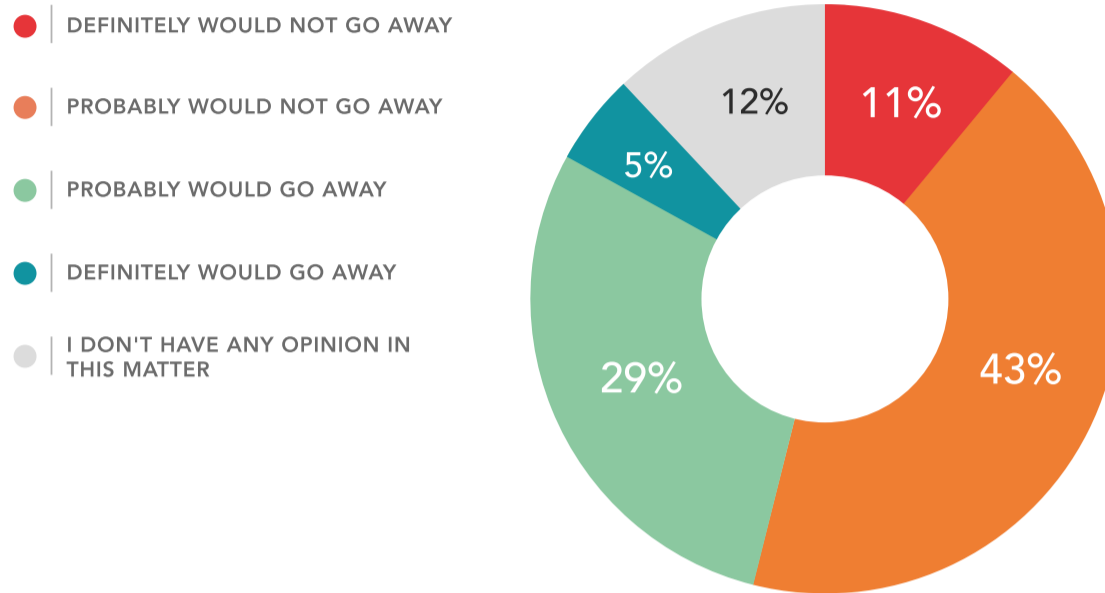
Quebecers also differ from other provinces on the issue of whether anti-Asian racism existed in Canada before COVID-19. Even though a majority (75%) of respondents from Quebec agree with the statement, the proportion of respondents in agreement is much lower than in other provinces. Forty-four per cent of Quebecers feel that people of East Asian origin have been negatively treated by the public in Canada since the COVID-19 outbreak, where more than 53% across the other provinces feel similarly. However, 82% of Quebecers feel government authorities need to build policies that address racial crimes as punishable offences, similar to most other provinces except Alberta – which has the lowest proportion of respondents in agreement, at 71%.

FIGURE 28

Post-pandemic, anti-Asian sentiment and hostility in Canada...

Question: Do you feel that the recent surge of anti-Asian sentiment and hostility in Canada will go away once the COVID-19 pandemic ends?

Base: All Respondents (n = 3,519)



Unfortunately, most respondents believe that the recent surge in anti-Asian racism and hostility in Canada is here to stay, and only 34% believe that such anti-Asian racism may diminish with the end of the pandemic (see Figure 28).

Among the provinces, Quebecers are the most optimistic, as 38% believe that anti-Asian racism will die down with the end of the pandemic, while 61% of British Columbians feel that these divisive and hateful attitudes will not go away.

FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES

A majority of Canadians disagree that Canada has “a lot” of impact on either global or Asian affairs.

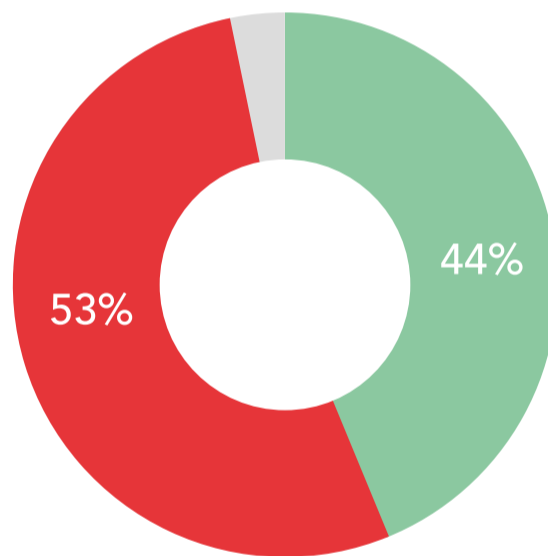
Canadians recognize that as a middle power, there are limits to Canada’s impact on global affairs. Just over half of Canadians (53%) disagree that Canada has a lot of impact on global affairs, while two-thirds of Canadians (66%) disagree that Canada has a lot of impact on Asian affairs (see Figure 29). Despite the perception that Canada does not have a lot of impact on Asian affairs, Canadians indicate that there is potential for engagement with Asian countries on specific issues.

FIGURE 29
*Canada has a lot of impact on **global** affairs*

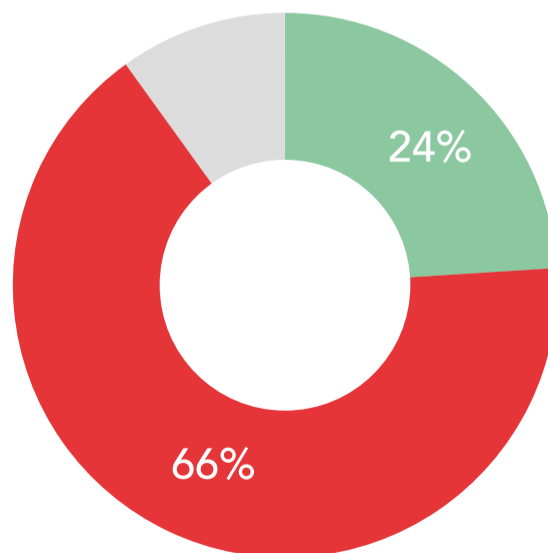
Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: (n = 3,519)

- AGREE
- DISAGREE
- DON'T KNOW

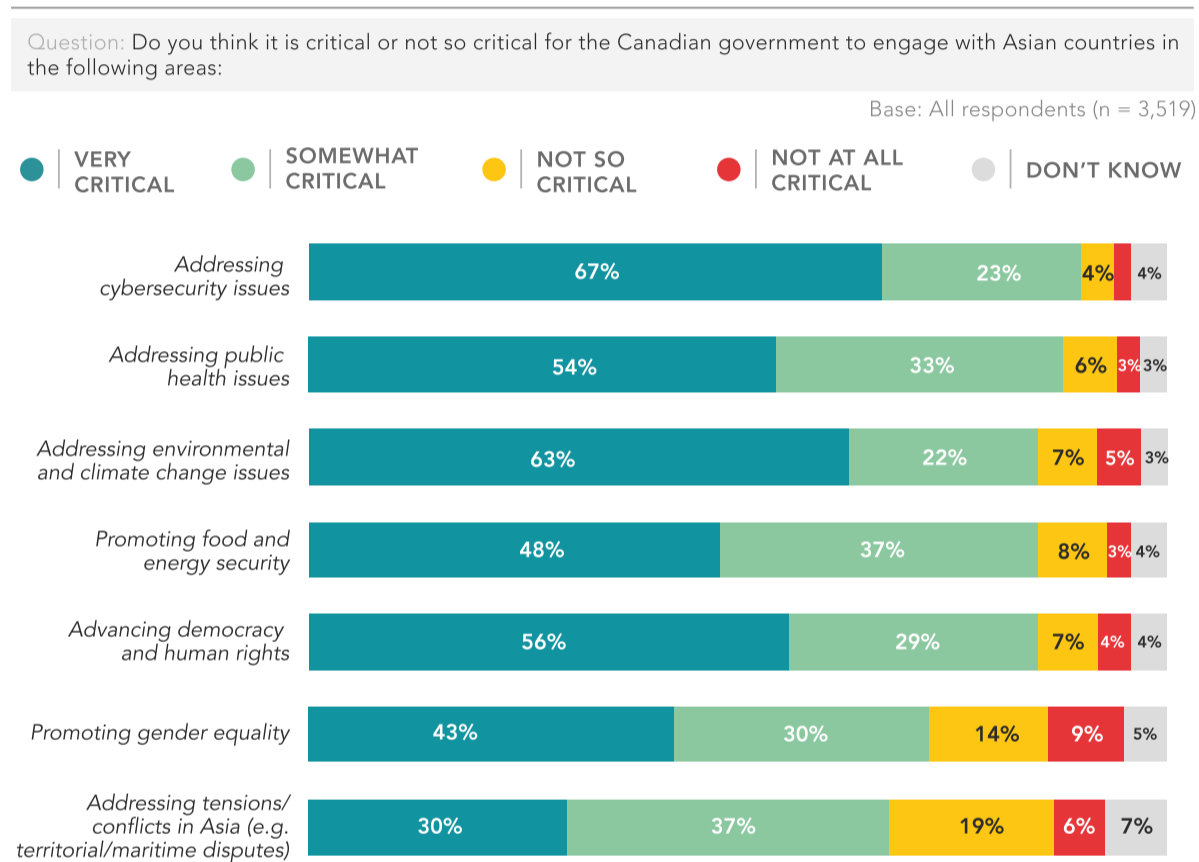


*Canada has a lot of impact on **Asian** affairs*



Among the seven areas identified as potential areas of engagement with Asian countries, the majority of respondents find all of the issues as “somewhat” to “very” critical areas of engagement. Cybersecurity (90%), public health (87%), and environmental and climate change (85%) are among the top three (see Figure 30). It is interesting to note here that cybersecurity also emerges as an important area of concern for Canada’s security, which is discussed later in this report. At the provincial level, we find statistically significant but small differences in average opinion.

FIGURE 30
Canadian Views on Areas of Engagement with Asian countries



CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH

Aligning foreign, trade, economic, and security policies more closely with other like-minded democracies should be Canada’s top priority, say Canadians.

Multilateralism and independence are at the core of Canada’s foreign policy approach. Currently, Canada is aggressively diversifying its trade and investment relations as the country grows in population and economic position globally. To that end, it is pertinent to understand public opinion on the Canadian government’s approach to foreign policies and international relations.



Source: Photo by National Cancer Institute on Unsplash

Canadians identify public health as an important area for engagement with Asia

This year, we asked Canadians to rank four such foreign policy approaches in order of priority – (1) Canada maintains its multilateral diplomacy; (2) Canada builds bilateral and regional networks in the Asia Pacific; (3) Canada aligns itself on trade, economic, security, and foreign policy with other like-minded democracies; and, (4) Canada prioritizes its alignment with the U.S.

We find that, on average, Canadians choose option three as the top priority: “Canada should align its foreign, trade, economic, and security policies more closely with other like-minded democracies such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, the European Union, and the United Kingdom.” The second highest priority is for Canada to continue treating “multilateralism” as the core of its foreign policy. The third-ranking priority is building bilateral trade and regional networks in the Asia Pacific through free trade agreements such as the CPTPP, or institutions like Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Aligning Canadian foreign, security, trade, and economic policies in line with the United States is considered the lowest priority by most Canadians.

To further elucidate the rankings (see Figure 31), 56% of NOP survey respondents choose aligning Canadian foreign policy closely with like-minded democracies as their first priority, whereas 53% choose alignment with the United States as the fourth priority. This trend is also reflected across all provinces.

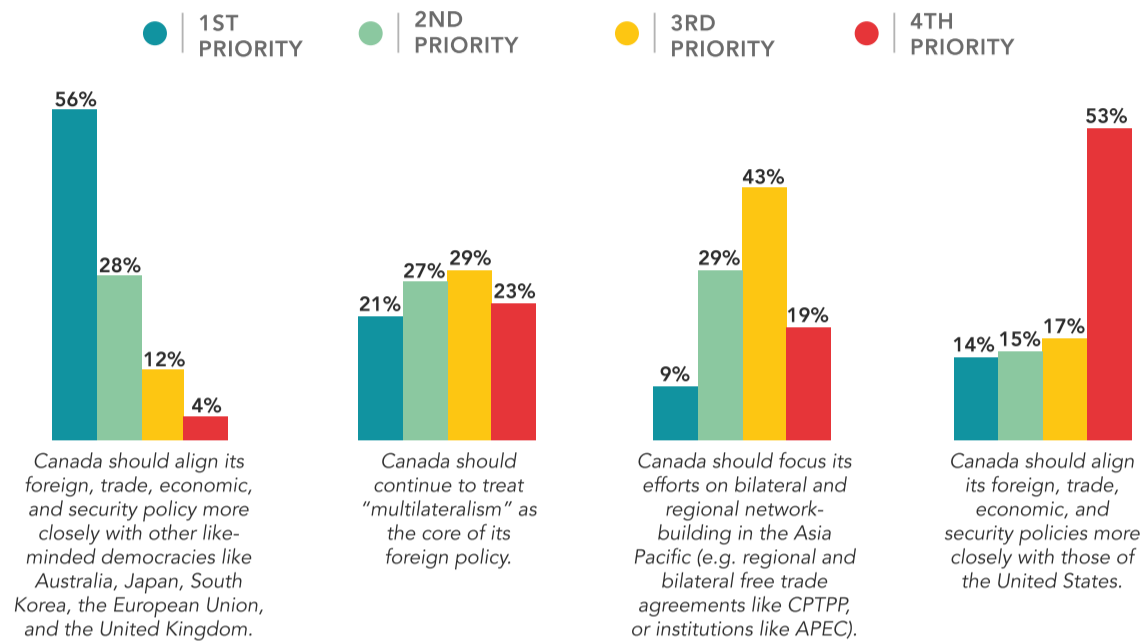
The options provided in this poll are by no means an exhaustive list of Canadian foreign policy considerations. However, they offer meaningful insight into public perceptions of Canadian international relations and policies. The responses, meanwhile, indicate a strong move away from the U.S. and de-prioritizing that relationship for the sake of building broader foreign relations and perhaps a more stable standing in the global economy.

FIGURE 31

Canadians prioritize Foreign Policy alignment with other like-minded democracies more than with the United States

Question: Reflecting on Canada's foreign policy approach, please rank the following statements in terms of priority:

Base: All Respondents (n = 3,519)



TOWARDS BUILDING BETTER RELATIONS WITH ASIA – PROVINCIAL POLICIES

Canadians support provincial policies that can foster better relations with Asia through twinning agreements and opening provincial trade offices in the region.

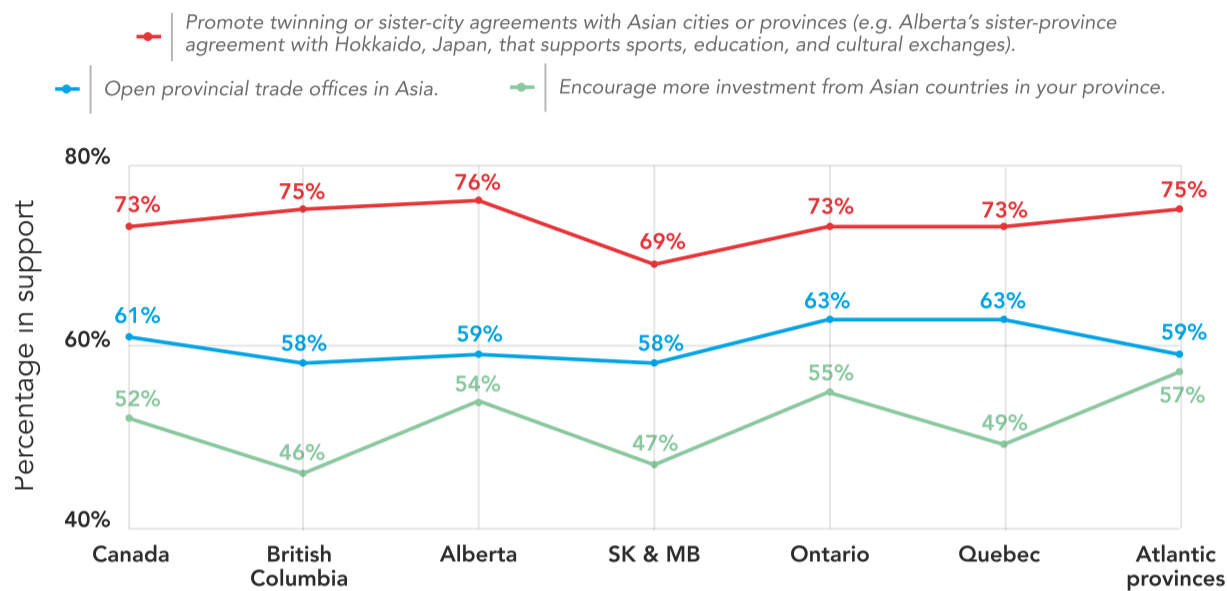
Most Canadians (61% support) would like to see their provincial governments open provincial trade offices in Asia, and 73% express support for their provincial governments promoting twinning relations with Asian cities or provinces. We find statistically significant differences in average opinion across provinces, but the differences are minimal, as shown in Figure 32.

FIGURE 32

Canadians would like to see their provincial government promoting more twinning agreements and opening provincial trade offices

Question: Would you support or oppose your provincial government doing each of the following to build stronger ties with Asia?

Base: Canada (n = 3,519); BC (n = 475); AB (n = 391); SK & MB (n = 230); ON (n = 1,356); QC (n = 813); ATL (n = 240)



Only 52% of Canadians support their provincial government encouraging more Asian investment in their provinces (see Figure 32). Intriguingly, overall support has dropped by eight percentage-points since 2018. This is in line with previous findings around the decreasing number of Canadians that approve of FDI from Asia (see Figure 16). There is also a statistically significant difference in average opinion held by Ontarians (55% support, 37% oppose) and respondents from Atlantic provinces (57% support, 33% oppose) on the one end, and British Columbians (46% support, 46% oppose) and Saskatchewanians and Manitobans (47% support, 44% oppose) on the other end.

Canadian Views on Provincial Policies on Education

Most Canadians support building Asia competency through education and exchange programs, but are not very approving of emphasizing Asian language studies in schools.

In APF Canada polls, we have consistently recorded Canadian opinions on including more Asia-focused curricula, Asian languages, and student exchange programs in our national education systems. Since 2012, we find steadily growing support for a more 'Asia competent' education program and more emphasis on teaching Asian languages.

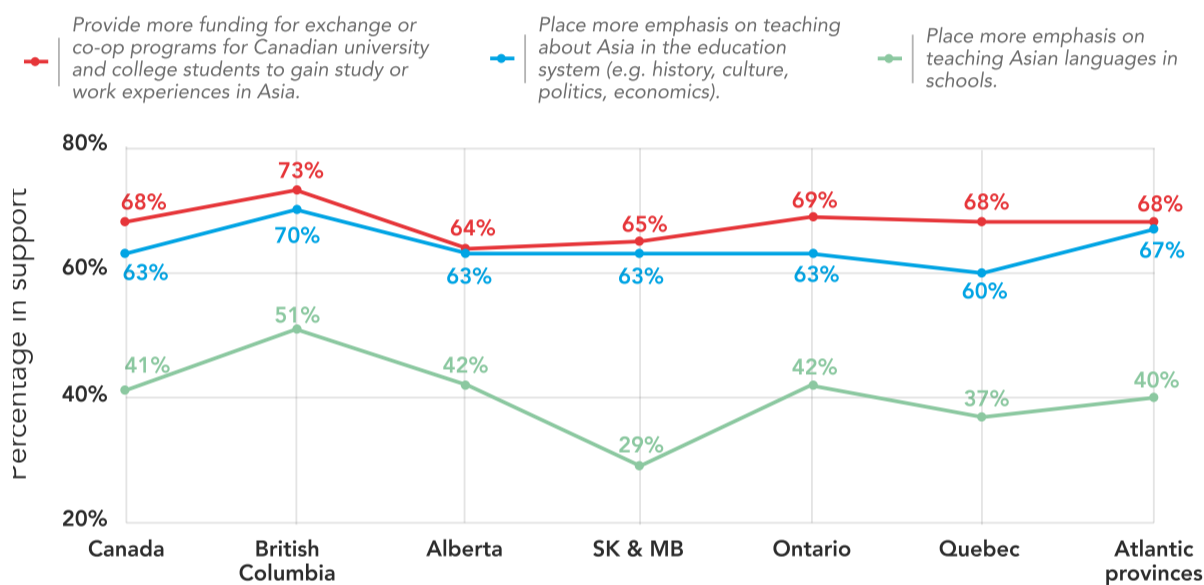
In our 2020 NOP, 68% of Canadians express support (25% oppose) for their provincial government providing more funding for exchange or co-op programs for Canadian university and college students to gain study or work experience in Asia. This is a decline of four percentage-points since 2018 (72% support, 21% oppose), but the average opinion is not significantly different.

FIGURE 33

Canadians support more funding for exchange programs and teaching about Asia in schools, but teaching Asian languages receives little support

Question: Would you support or oppose your provincial government doing each of the following to build stronger ties with Asia?

Base: Canada (n = 3,519); BC (n = 475); AB (n = 391); SK & MB (n = 230); ON (n = 1,356); QC (n = 813); ATL (n = 240)



Furthermore, 63% of Canadians in 2020 support their provincial government placing more emphasis on teaching about Asia in their education system (29% oppose). While there are differences in the proportion of respondents from each province supporting this policy, the average opinion is not significantly different (see Figure 33).

British Columbians significantly differ from the other provinces in supporting their provincial government in placing more emphasis on teaching Asian languages in schools (see Figure 33). While overall support for an increased emphasis on teaching Asian languages in school is relatively low, at 41%, we find that most British Columbians (51% support, 41% oppose) support their provincial government in emphasizing Asian languages in schools. Most Albertans (42% support, 50% oppose), Ontarians (42% support, 49% oppose), Quebecers (37% support, 52% oppose), and Saskatchewanians and Manitobans (29% support, 63% oppose) oppose their provincial government considering a policy that would encourage the opportunity to build Asian language skills. While determining if the support is low for all foreign languages or just Asian languages is beyond the scope of this opinion poll, this segment does indicate a need to take a closer

look at Canadians' perceptions of foreign languages and the reasons behind most Canadians' opposition to an emphasis on including Asian languages in schools.



There is support for teaching about Asia in Canadian schools

Source: Photo by NeONBRAND on Unsplash

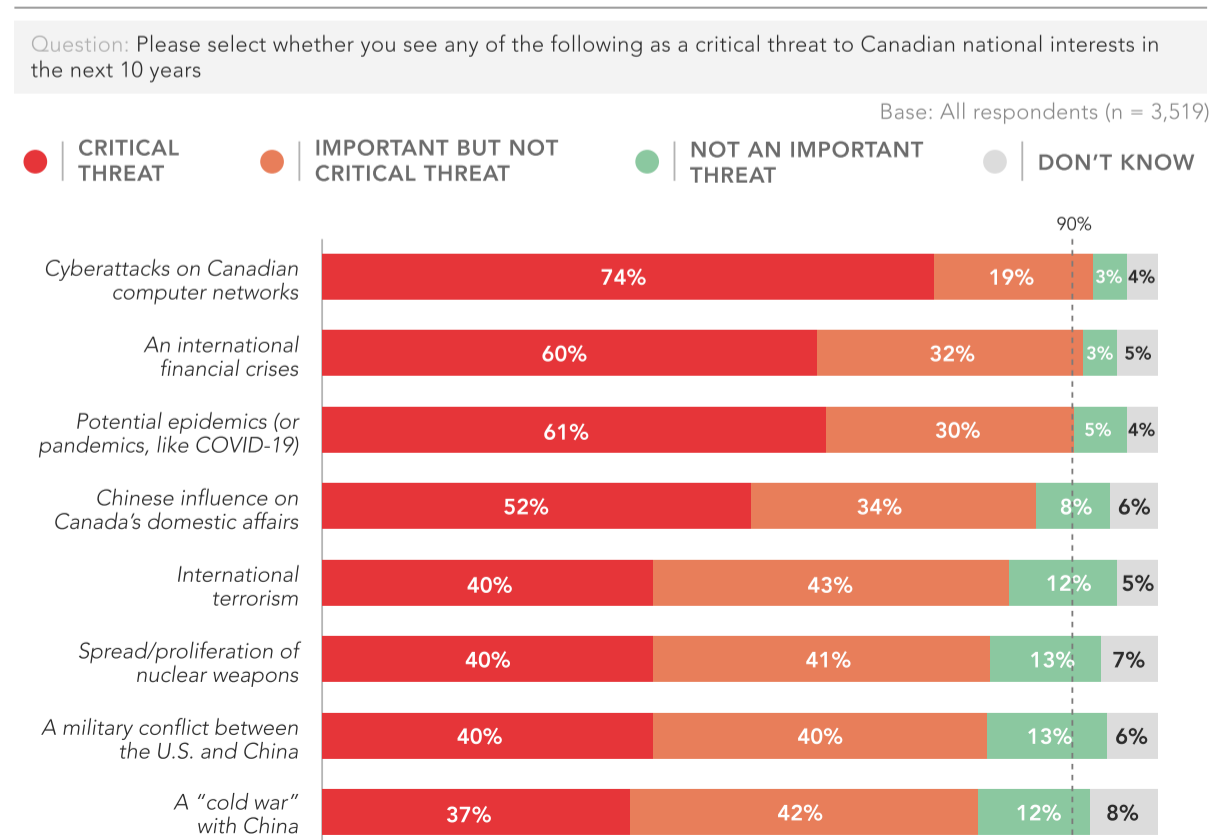
CANADIAN VIEWS ON SECURITY ISSUES

In the coming decade, Canadians perceive cyberattacks, an international financial crisis, and potential pandemics among the top threats to Canadian national interests.

Cyberattacks and cybersecurity are top-of-mind for most Canadians. While most Canadians feel that cybersecurity is a critical area of engagement with Asian countries (see Figure 30), we also find that 74% of Canadians consider that cyberattacks on Canadian computer networks will be the most “critical threat” to Canadian national interests in the next 10 years (Figure 34).

On average, Canadians indicate that each of the potential events identified in this poll will pose a significant threat to Canadian national interests in the coming decade. However, the nature of this threat being “critical,” as opposed to “important but not critical,” varies. More than 60% of Canadians believe cyberattacks, international financial crises, and potential pandemics such as COVID-19 will be a “critical threat” to Canadian national interests. Coupled with those who consider these as “important but not critical threat(s),” the proportion of respondents crosses 90% (see Figure 34).

FIGURE 34
Most Canadians consider cyberattacks, international financial crises, and potential epidemics as critical threats to Canadian national interests in the next 10 years



Overall, there is a statistically significant but minimal difference in average opinion between provinces for most threat statements. To underscore the most significant differences, we find that across all provinces, a potential epidemic or pandemic such as COVID-19 is considered an important threat for Canadian national interests in the next 10 years, with some provinces finding it to be a significantly more critical threat. Fifty-four per cent of Albertans, for instance, think that a potential epidemic will be a critical threat, compared to 65% of Quebecers.

There is a statistically significant but minimal difference in average opinion across provinces about the threat of Chinese influence on Canadian domestic affairs. Compared to 60% of British Columbians and 60% of Albertans, only 46% of Quebecers consider China's influence a critical threat to Canadian national interests in the coming decade.

The majority of Canadians (87%) indicate that they would like to see Canada increase military and defence collaboration with other like-minded democracies such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, the European Union, and the U.K. (see Figure 35).

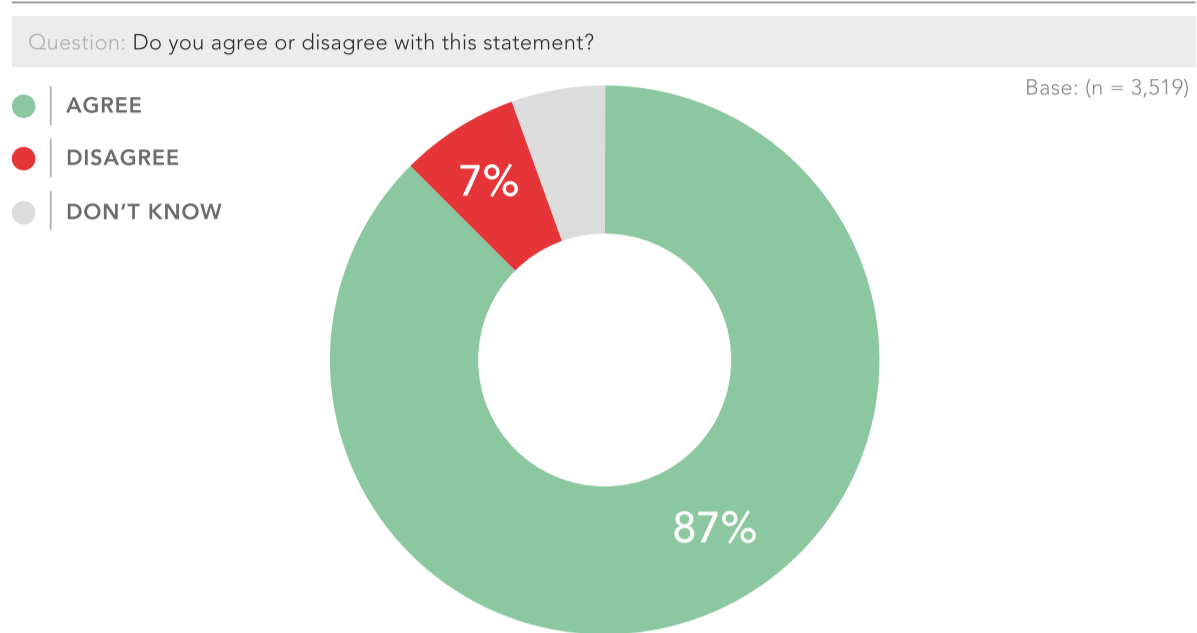


Collaborating on security and defence with like-minded democracies is of significant importance to Canadians

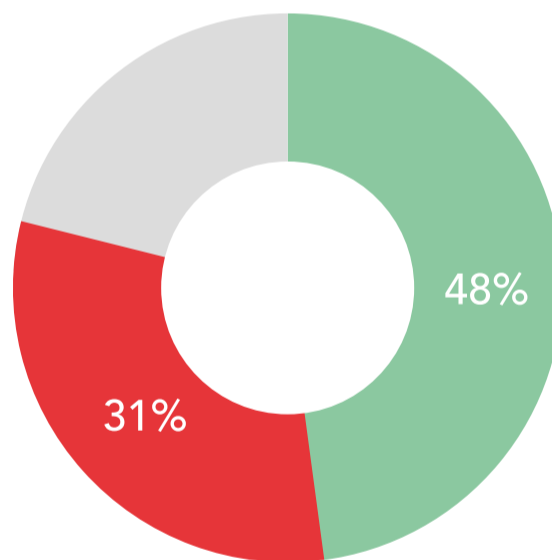
Source: Photo by SARINYAPINNGAM on Getty Images

FIGURE 35

Canada should increase collaboration with other like-minded democracies such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, the European Union, and the United Kingdom for increased military and defence co-operation



Outright military conflict between countries in the Asia Pacific is likely in the next 10 years



Despite security issues and ongoing tensions in the Asia Pacific, we find that only 48% of Canadians think an outright military conflict between countries in the Asia Pacific is likely in the next 10 years. There is a minimal but significant difference in the average opinion expressed by respondents from different provinces. In particular, where 53% of Quebecers believe that a military conflict in the Asia Pacific is likely in the next 10 years, almost all other provinces have less than 50% who hold the same opinion.

CANADIAN VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ASIA

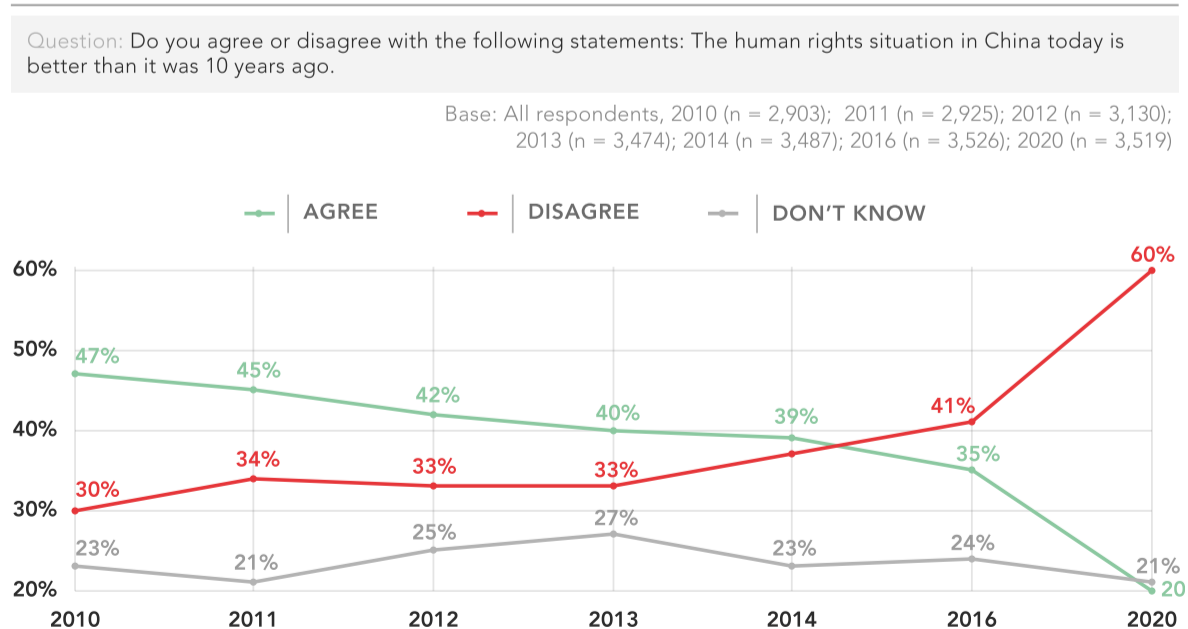
Most Canadians do not think China’s human rights situation is better than it was 10 years ago.

In past National Opinion Polls, we have delved deep into Canadian views of human rights issues in Asia. In 2016, we found that 76% of Canadians felt that “Canada should raise human rights issues in its relations with Asian countries.” In 2018, we took a closer look at Canadian views of human rights issues in China and found that a majority of Canadians would support the Canadian government engaging with China on advancing human rights issues for Chinese citizens. A lot has changed since 2018 in Sino-Canadian relations. And while we re-focus our attention on the economic and political implications, it is pertinent to keep an eye on Canadians’ changing views of China’s human rights situation.

As seen in Figure 36, Canadians’ views of the human rights situation in China have deteriorated over the past decade. In 2010, 47% of Canadians agreed that “the human rights situation in China today is better than it was 10 years ago.” That number has dropped to 20% today. The proportion of Canadians in disagreement with the statement has doubled since 2010, but jumped 1.5 times in just the last four years.

FIGURE 36

Over the past decade, Canadian views of human rights situation in China has deteriorated



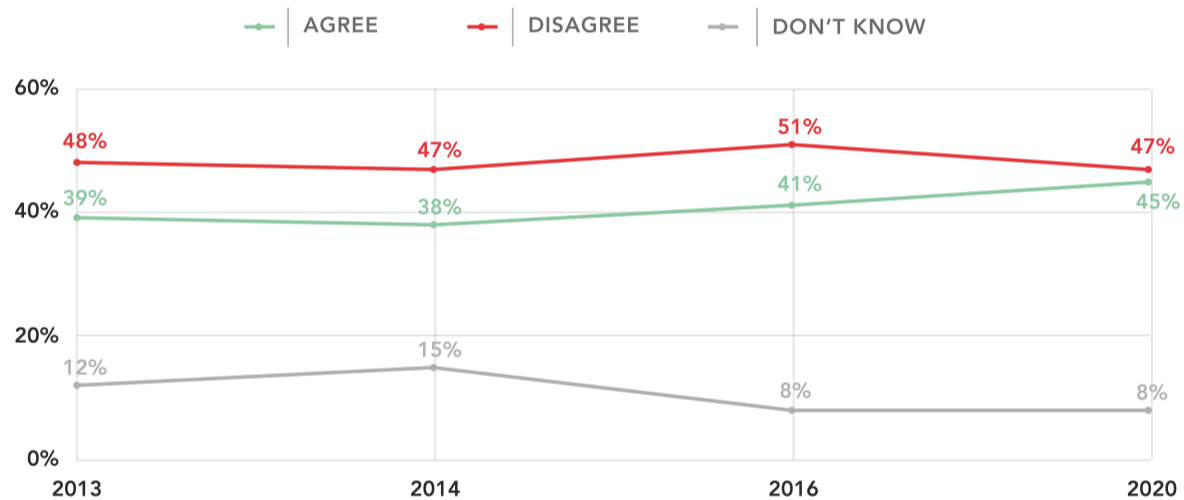
Compared to the 20% who believe that the human rights situation is better in China today than a decade ago, a larger proportion of Canadians (38%) believe that “the human rights situation in **India** today is better than it was 10 years ago” (31% disagree). Compared to 2016, when 41% of the respondents felt that India’s human rights situation was better, the number of Canadians who agree with the statement has declined, but not significantly. Furthermore, in both 2016 and 2020, around 30% of Canadians responded that they “don’t know,” which could indicate a relative lack of awareness about the human rights situation in India compared to in China (23% “don’t know” for China, on average).

FIGURE 37

Most Canadians think human rights concerns in Asian countries should be a factor of consideration in business relations

Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: We can’t afford to stop doing business with or in Asian countries just because of human rights concerns.

Base: All respondents, 2013 (n = 3,474); 2014 (n = 3,487); 2016 (n = 3,526); 2020 (n = 3,519)



Finally, we asked Canadians for their views on conducting business with Asian countries with human rights concerns. Over the years, we have found that many Canadians consistently disagree with the statement that “we can’t afford to stop doing business with or in Asian countries just because of human rights concerns” (see Figure 37). In 2020, however, 45% of Canadians also agree with that statement, indicating a split in opinion. All provinces share a similar opinion to the national average.

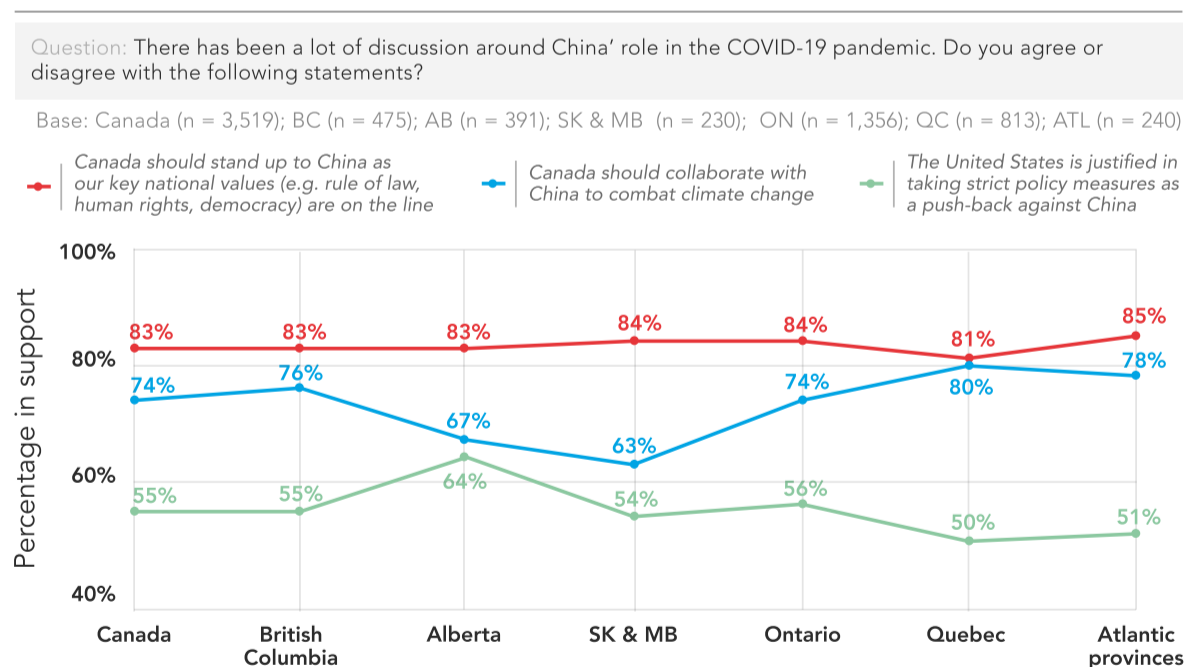
SINO-CANADIAN RELATIONS: A WAY FORWARD

Canadians believe Canada should collaborate with China to combat climate change, and also stand up to China as our key national values are on the line.

The 2020 National Opinion Poll reveals a worsening public opinion toward China. While Canadians have never exhibited warm feelings toward China, as seen in Figure 9, the average feeling has dipped to its lowest in the past decade. Canadians still believe China represents significant economic importance for Canada (5 out of 7), but very few Canadians (35%) consider China’s growing economic power more as an opportunity than a threat.

Exploring Canadian views on Sino-Canadian relations further, we find that 83% believe that Canada should stand up to China as our key national values are on the line, but only 55% of Canadians believe that the U.S. is justified in taking strict policy measures as a push-back against China. Meanwhile, 74% believe that Canada should collaborate with China to combat climate change (see Figure 38).

FIGURE 38
Most Canadians believe Canada should stand up to China as our key national values are on the line



There are small but statistically significant differences in the average opinion held by respondents from different provinces. Whether the United States was justified in taking strict policy measures against China, 64% of Albertans agree with the statement, but among other provinces, 56% or less share similar sentiments. Meanwhile, except for Albertans (67%), and Saskatchewanians and Manitobans

(63%), more than 74% of respondents from other provinces believe Canada should collaborate with China to combat climate change.

CANADIAN VIEWS ON THE TWO MICHAELS

Most Canadians would like to see their government keep engaging China behind closed doors to secure the two Michaels' release.

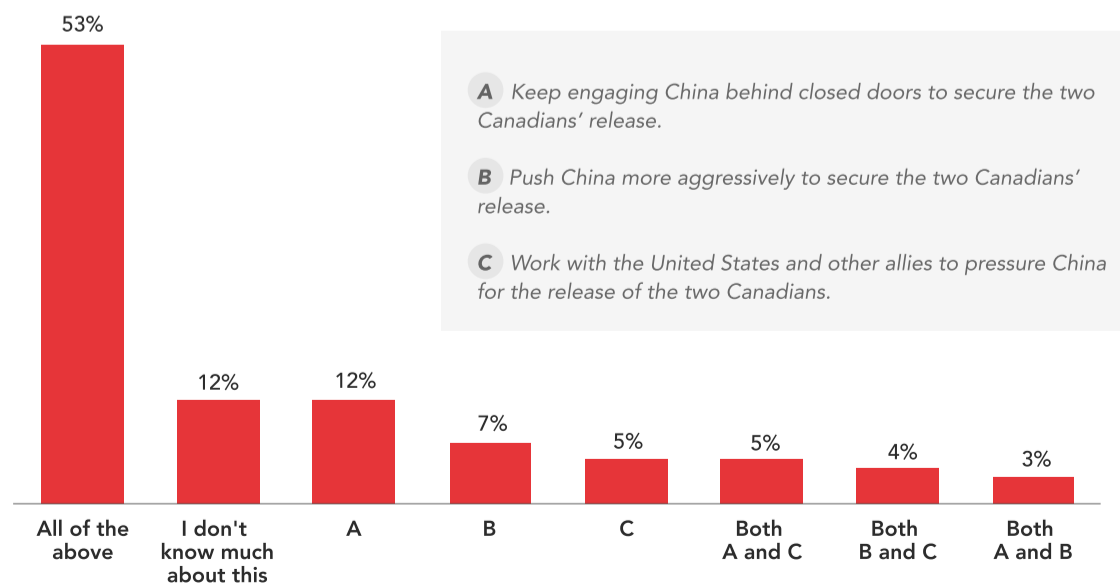
Canada's position regarding the case of the two Michaels – Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig – who have been detained by the Chinese government since December 2018, has ignited a lot of heated debate and discussion. In our 2020 NOP, we investigated public opinion on what the Canadian government should do in this case. Most respondents feel that Canada should keep engaging China behind closed doors to secure the two Canadians' release (73%). The second most popular opinion is for Canada to push China more aggressively to secure the two Canadians' release (67%), and finally, 67% believe that Canada should work with the United States and other allies to pressure China for the release of the two Canadians.

Given the sensitive nature of this topic, this question warranted a closer look at the distribution of responses, and we find that the vast majority of survey respondents (53%) selected all three options (see Figure 39). This may indicate that the respondents are not so much worried about the strategy, but rather about the outcome, i.e. securing the two Michaels' release. We also found that 12% of respondents chose a combination of any two options. Finally, some respondents elected only one option. Among those, 12% believe that Canada should only keep engaging China behind closed doors to secure their release.

FIGURE 39
Exploring Canadian opinions on Canada's approach to the two Michaels' case

Question: Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig have been detained in China since December 2018. What do you think Canada should do in this regard?

Base: All respondents (n = 3519)





Source: Photo by KOBU Agency on Unsplash

COVID-19 AND CHINA

Canadians mainly don't believe the Chinese government acted responsibly at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, and think Canada should actively support an independent inquiry into the virus's origins.

The 2020 NOP indicates a deteriorating view of China in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, as discussed earlier (see Figure 6). Additionally, we find that only 22% of Canadians believe that the Chinese government acted responsibly at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak (67% disagree, per Figure 40).

Interestingly, there is a significant positive correlation between feelings for China and opinions about the Chinese government's responsibility – respondents who have warmer feelings towards China are also likely to agree that the Chinese government acted responsibly during the COVID-19 outbreak. We find that 50% of Canadians who share negative or unfavourable feelings towards China (below 4 on the 10-point scale) also disagree with the statement that “the Chinese government acted responsibly at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak.”

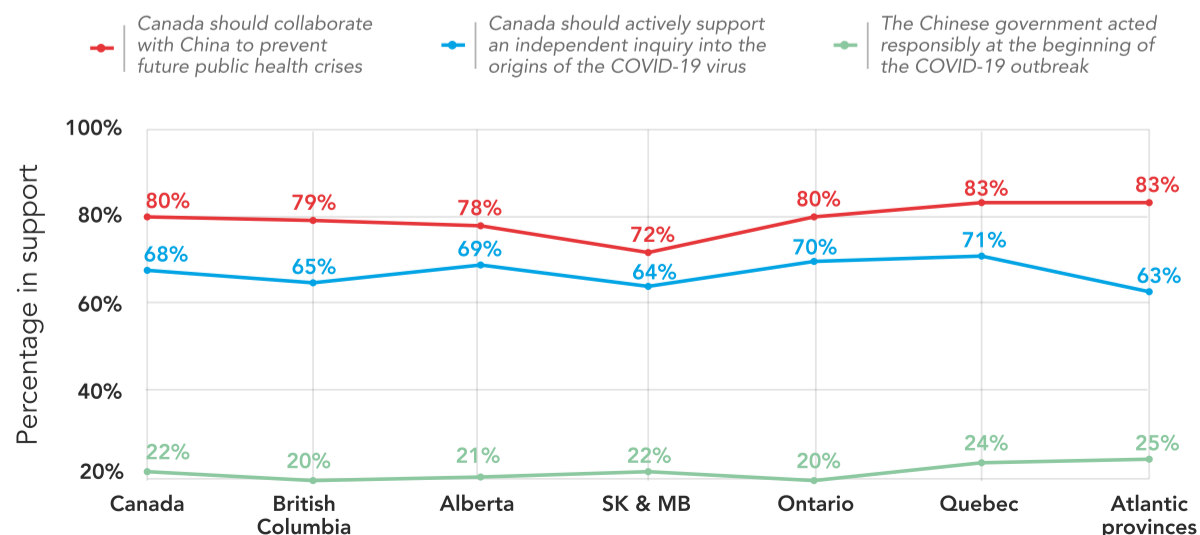
At the provincial level, more than 70% of respondents from British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario disagree that the Chinese government acted responsibly, compared to 60% from Quebec, marking a significant difference in opinion.

FIGURE 40

Canadian views on an independent inquiry into origins of the COVID-19 virus, China's role in the outbreak, and collaborations to prevent future public health crises

Question: There has been a lot of discussion around China's role in the COVID-19 pandemic. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: Canada (n = 3,519); BC (n = 475); AB (n = 391); SK & MB (n = 230); ON (n = 1,356); QC (n = 813); ATL (n = 240)



Following the current pandemic – with concerns around a future pandemic very high (see Figure 34) – Canadians across all provinces express a strong agreement that “Canada should collaborate with China to prevent future public health crises” (see Figure 40).

Most Canadians also agree that “Canada should actively support an independent inquiry into the origins of the COVID-19 virus,” a general level of agreement that is reflected across all provinces. Quebecers show the most agreement of all provinces with this statement.

ON TAIWAN

Most Canadians think Canada should expand relations with Taiwan even if it would lead to problems in Canada’s relations with mainland China.

In our 2020 NOP, we find that Canadians share a favourable and warm view of Taiwan (see Figure 8). However, about 17% of Canadians say that they do not have an opinion on Taiwan (compared to 21% in 2018). Arguably, Canadians view Taiwan in a much more positive light than China. Even in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, perceptions of Taiwan have remained “about the same” for 68% of Canadians, but for 14%, it is “improving” (see Figure 6).

Most Canadians do not consider Taiwan a critical country for Canada’s economic well-being (see Figure 9). Still, given Taiwan’s growing role in the Asia Pacific and the world stage, we asked Canadians further about the tenuous relations between China and Taiwan, and how they expect Canada to act in this regard.

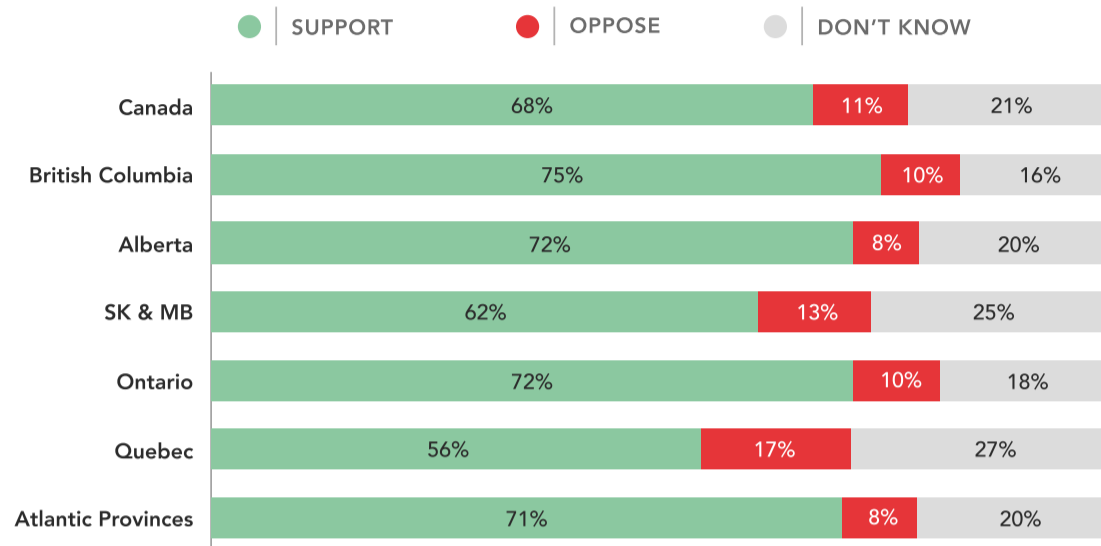
A majority of Canadians (68%) say that they would support Taiwan joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). However, there is a significant difference in the average opinion expressed across different provinces (see Figure 41). We find that only 56% of Quebecers and 62% of Saskatchewanians and Manitobans express support for Taiwan joining the CPTPP, compared to above 71% of respondents from other provinces.

FIGURE 41

Most Canadians support Taiwan joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

Question: Would you support or oppose Taiwan joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)?

Base: Canada (n = 3,519); BC (n = 475); AB (n = 391); SK & MB (n = 230); ON (n = 1,356); QC (n = 813); ATL (n = 240)



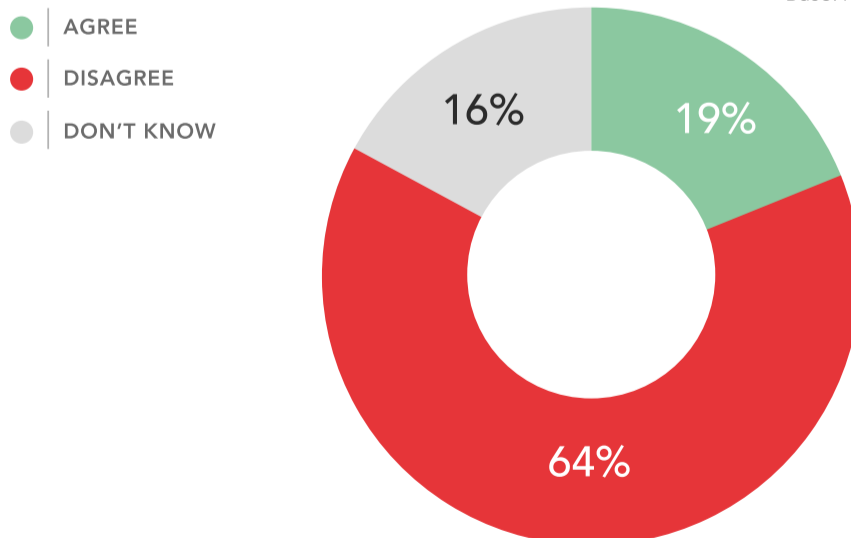
Finally, we asked Canadians if they think “Canada should not expand relations with Taiwan if it would lead to problems in Canada’s relations with mainland China.” Most Canadians (64%) disagreed with the statement, indicating that Canada’s expansion of relations with Taiwan should not be dependent on the issues that may arise in Canada’s relations with mainland China (see Figure 42).

FIGURE 42

Most Canadians are of the opinion that Canada should expand relations with Taiwan, even if it would lead to problems in Canada's relations with mainland China

Question: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: Canada should not expand relations with Taiwan if it would lead to problems in Canada’s relations with mainland China.

Base: All Respondents, 2020 (n = 3,519)



Interestingly, in 2006, Canadians were asked the same question and around 41% (n = 1,014) believed that Canada should not expand relations with Taiwan if it would lead to problems in Canada’s relations with mainland China. The 2006 poll did not

have the “don’t know” option, but the proportion of Canadians in disagreement was considerably higher than it is today (see Figure 42).

CONCLUSION

The year 2020 has been one of flux and change. Not only has our way of life been redefined around a new normal, but there are ongoing socio-economic and political changes afoot globally. The COVID-19 outbreak has impacted every jurisdiction, and in the process, it has brought to our attention the importance of global interconnectedness and helped us recognize that the world needs to come together to keep the wheels turning. As the Canadian economy recovers from the economic and social stress wrought by the pandemic, it is imperative to recognize the opportunities for growth held by the Asia Pacific, a region with which Canadians today identify much more than they did just a decade ago.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the global response has impacted our perception of various foreign economies and relations, but we find that Canadians hold a stable and optimistic attitude towards most Asia Pacific jurisdictions.

Canadians recognize the United States' economic importance, but in the same breath, they also express the need to diversify trade relations and foreign policy alliances away from the U.S. Aligning Canada's trade, economic, security, and foreign policies with like-minded democracies such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, the European Union, and the United Kingdom is now given higher priority than aligning Canada's policies with the United States. Part of this sentiment to de-prioritize the U.S. may stem from witnessing the last four tumultuous years under the Trump Presidency. And indeed, under a Biden administration, we may well see new trends emerge in our 2022 National Opinion Poll.

In this year's NOP, we also observe an all-time low in public opinion toward China across all touchpoints – warmth of feelings, trade, FDI, and human rights. This trend was to be expected given the Huawei debacle and the detention of the two Canadians by the Chinese government since December 2018. The past two years have seen growing animosity in Sino-Canadian relations, which has also filtered out into the attitudes of the Canadian public. This poll shows that while most Canadians disapprove of the strict retaliatory policy tactics adopted by the United States as a push-back against China, Canadians would like their government to stand up to China to protect their key national values. This sentiment is also reflected in Canadian attitudes towards securing the release of the two Michaels.

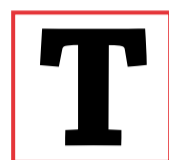
Tapping Canadians' perspectives on both China and the United States, it can be readily surmised that Canadians are not willing to tolerate intimidation and

power plays from these two superpowers. Over the past two years, both the U.S. and China have implemented policies and measures that have impacted Canadian trade, economics, and foreign relations. Despite sharing the most extensive land border and a unique neighbourly relationship with the United States, the Trump administration's decisions, such as blocking personal protection equipment exports in the middle of a pandemic and the imposition of tariffs on aluminum products from Canada, did not go unnoticed by Canadians. Indeed, Canadian attitudes towards these two nations are growing unfavourable, despite their persisting economic importance. However, the recent change of the guard in the U.S. may signal warming relations between the two neighbours. It is expected that Joe Biden's and Kamala Harris' personal connections with Canada, coupled with their diplomacy and closer alignment with Canadian values, will make for a welcome change from the previous administration. Furthermore, according to a recent [Ipsos](#) poll, seven in ten Canadians feel that a Biden administration would be good for Canada.

This poll is also unique in that it takes the pulse of Canadians towards the assimilation and accommodation of immigrants and newcomers to Canada. Immigrants are enriching Canadian culture, and with the Asia Pacific forming the largest source region, it is heartening to note that Canadians do not expect newcomers to let go of their cultural identities but do expect them to adopt core Canadian values such as equality, democracy, and respect for minority rights.

As we approach 2021, it is significant to note that Canadians share an optimistic view of Asia Pacific jurisdictions, and would like to learn more about Asian culture, history, politics, and economics through educational programs. Canadian values are the underlying guiding principle for Canadian foreign relations, and as identified in this poll, there are several areas of potential engagement with Asia, including in cybersecurity, public health, environmental and climate change, and democracy and human rights. All of these areas are in critical stages. In today's connected world, for instance, many governments are at high risk of cyberattack. Case in point is the August 2020 cyberattacks on the Government of Canada that breached the Canadian Revenue Agency's databases detailing personal information of thousands of Canadians. Furthermore, COVID-19 has helped put into perspective the need to focus on public health issues; rising sea levels and warming surface temperatures make climate change a priority area; and, the abuse of human rights observed in places like Myanmar, China, and India raises new questions around democracy and human rights. International collaboration and the exchange of knowledge and expertise is imperative if we are to achieve meaningful and lasting advancements in these areas.

METHODOLOGY



The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada commissioned Ekos Research Associates to survey 3,519 Canadian adults (permanent residents and citizens 18 years and older). The survey was conducted from August 31 to September 21, 2020, using EKOS's research panel, Probit. This panel offers coverage of the Canadian population accessible through internet, phone, or cellphone.

A random stratified sample for this study was drawn from the panel database using random digit dialling. All data was collected online. The margin of error – which measures sampling variability – is +/- 1.65% for the entire sample. The average completion time for the survey was 20 minutes.

The results have been statistically weighted by EKOS according to the current census data on age, gender, and region to ensure the representativeness of the sample. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

As noted under Survey Results, for the purpose of regional analysis and in view of the sample size, some provinces/territories were collapsed into one region, and the provincial grouping of Northern Canada has not been considered in the regional analysis due to the low sample size.

Please note, the margin of error for subsamples varies with sample size. See the table below for an overview of margin of errors to account for in regional subsamples for the 2020 NOP.

Table 1: Sample distribution and Margin of Error for the 2020 National Opinion Poll

Provinces	Unweighted Sample Size	Weighted Sample size	Weighted %	Margin of Error
Canada	3,519	3,519	100	+/- 1.65
British Columbia	465	475	13.5	+/- 4.54
Alberta	407	391	11.1	+/- 4.86
Saskatchewan and Manitoba	247	230	6.5	+/- 6.24
Ontario	1344	1356	38.5	+/- 2.67
Quebec	803	813	23.1	+/- 3.46
Atlantic Provinces (New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador)	239	240	6.8	+/- 6.34
Northern Canada (Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut)	7	7	0.2	+/- 37.04
Prefer not to answer	7	7	0.2	NA

Note: The margins of error are calculated at the 95% level of confidence.

It should also be noted that the margin of error for each year's sample varies. The above table only details the 2020 National Opinion Poll sample distribution.

Statistically significant: Throughout the report, relations between variables are mentioned as statistically significant, or the difference between groups is statistically significant. In simple terms, statistical significance refers to the likelihood that a relationship between two or more variables is caused by something other than chance or sampling.

APPENDIX

Table 2: Canadians' feelings towards each country, region, or territory, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 meaning a "very warm, favourable" feeling – a provincial breakdown

	Canada	BC	AB	SK & MB	ON	QC	ATL
China	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.4	4.0	3.9
European Union	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.3	7.5	7.6	7.5
Hong Kong	6.2	6.3	6.3	5.8	6.2	6.0	6.2
India	5.7	5.9	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.4	6.0
Japan	7.4	7.6	7.4	7.0	7.4	7.4	7.4
South Korea	6.7	6.9	6.8	6.5	6.9	6.5	6.8
Taiwan	6.6	6.8	6.8	6.2	6.7	6.4	6.7
United Kingdom	7.6	7.5	7.8	7.6	7.7	7.4	7.7
United States	4.9	4.7	5.3	5.0	4.8	5.0	4.8
Vietnam	6.3	6.5	6.2	6.0	6.2	6.4	6.4
Sample size	3,519	475	371	230	1,356	813	240

Table 3: Economic importance of each country, region, or territory, on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 meaning "very important" – a provincial breakdown

	Canada	BC	AB	SK & MB	ON	QC	ATL
China	5.0	5.2	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
European Union	5.7	5.6	5.6	5.5	5.7	5.8	5.6
Hong Kong	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.1
India	4.7	5.0	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.3	4.5
Japan	5.1	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.1	5.0	5.0
South Korea	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.4	4.4
Taiwan	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.4	4.2	4.3
United Kingdom	5.2	5.1	5.4	5.2	5.3	5.2	5.3
United States	6.1	6.1	6.2	6.1	6.2	6.0	6.1
Vietnam	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.1	3.9	3.9	3.8
Sample size	3,519	475	371	230	1,356	813	240

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