

SOUTH KOREAN ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

 A BOOK OF CHARTS

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—
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SOUTH KOREAN ATTITUDES ON THE **EUROPEAN** **UNION:**





a book of charts

FOREWORD

Tomasz Kozlowski



Ambassador

Head of the Delegation of
the European Union
to the Republic of Korea

Last year the European Union and the Republic of Korea marked the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. While this was an occasion to celebrate what both parties have achieved over the last half century, above all, it was an occasion to look forward to what the EU and Korea really want to get from their relationship.

We have moved from being distant traders to become strategic partners. Trade and investment remain a core artery of our interaction, bringing jobs and growth to both regions. That being said, EU-Korea relations are now much more than trade. The leaders of both parties recognise that we are natural partners. We hold like-minded values, face common challenges and are determined to contribute to the international community. The strategic partnership is exemplified by growing cooperation in promoting peace

and security around the world, the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement and in the research and innovation work to move us towards the next engines of growth.

In this context, I welcome the project carried out by the Asan Institute to look at the level of awareness amongst the Korean population about the European Union. Whilst policy is set by governments, it is implemented for and by citizens. In determining the next steps for the strategic partnership it is essential that we understand how much citizens are aware of relationship and how they see it affecting their interests.

This publication, "*South Korean attitudes on the European Union: A Book of Charts*" based on the Asan Institute project, provides a valuable instrument for all organisations engaged in EU-Korea relations and public diplomacy.

The relatively low level of knowledge about the European Union and in relations with Korea amongst some age groups and areas demonstrates the need to step up public diplomacy efforts. In some ways, this low level of awareness may reflect the relatively new dimension of many of aspects of our interaction. It may also reflect the lack of "bad news" that tends to take the front pages.

Importantly, the survey shows that in many areas the EU is already regarded as a crucial international partner for Korea alongside the United States and China. This overall positive feeling towards the EU provides an excellent base to move forward with the public diplomacy efforts that will be an essential part of further developing the EU-Korea Strategic Partnership.

FOREWORD

Hahm Chaibong



President

The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

The Republic of Korea and the European Union established diplomatic ties in 1963. At that

time it was known as the European Economic Community, and it consisted of the original seven members that founded it in 1957: Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

A year before the establishment of diplomatic ties, South Korea—while still mired in the destruction of the Korean War—launched its first Five-Year Economic Development Plan. It started the incredible economic growth that would go on uninterrupted for more than thirty years, and propel South Korea into the elite ranks of advanced industrialized nations.

In that time the European Economic Community became the European Union. It quadrupled in size to twenty-eight member states, whose citizens travel unhindered across borders, use a common currency, and most importantly, share the vision of a peaceful and prosperous Europe. Our forbearers half a century ago would hardly recognize what we have become, yet would not have expected any less from their grand designs.

South Korea welcomes a growing partnership with the European Union. Both share the values of education, democracy, human rights, and trade. These values form the foundation for a broad range of cooperation that should be pursued not only for their own benefit, but for the benefit of other countries around the world.

For both South Korea and European Union, understanding their respective publics is vital in creating a closer partnership for the next fifty years. In that regard, this project is an important first step. I look forward to the Asan Institute for Policy Studies playing a central role in bringing South Korea and the European Union ever closer, and discuss how the two partners can move forward together.

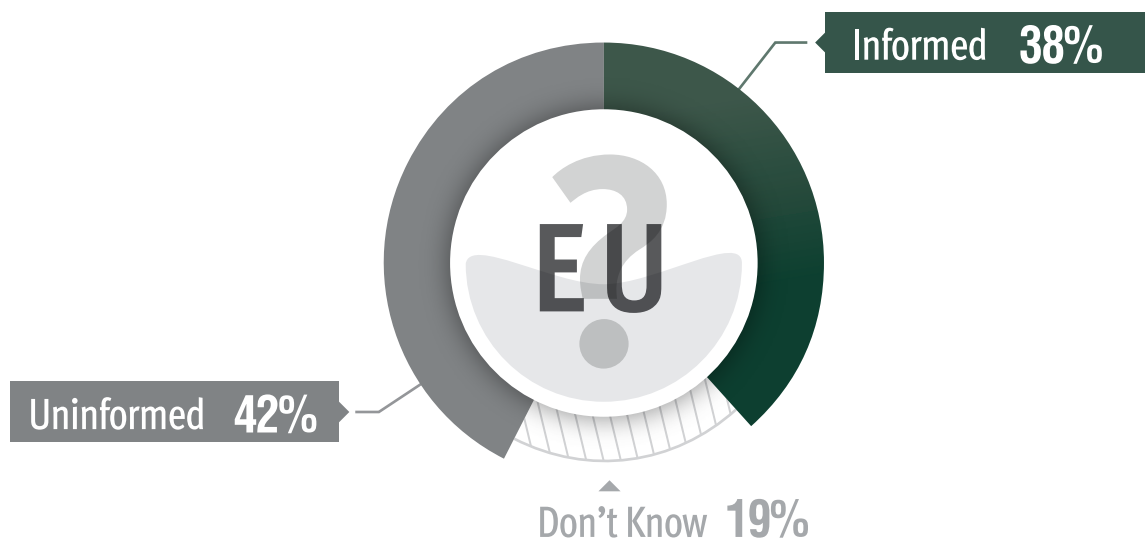
CONTENTS

Basic Knowledge of the EU	10
Basic Knowledge: By Age Group	12
Favorability of the EU	14
Favorability of the EU: By Age Cohort	16
Common Values and Interests (2012)	18
Important Partnerships for South Korea	20
Desire for Strong Leadership in World Affairs (2012)	22
South Korean Relations with the World (2012)	24
Future Importance of Relationships	26
Strength on Global Issues	28
EU Taking a Bigger Role on Human Rights in North Korea	30
Trade	32
Quality of Products	34

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Basic Knowledge of the EU



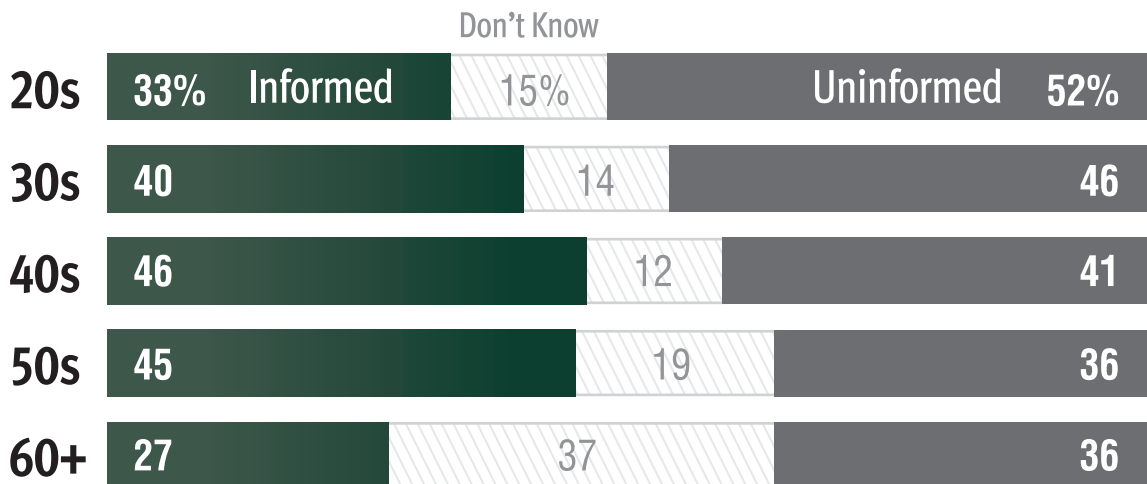


South Korean Attitudes on the European Union:

A Book of Charts

Polling the South Korean public on issues related to the EU is difficult simply because coverage of these issues is rarely a major story in the South Korean media. Due to this, the South Korean public consistently exhibits an overall lack of knowledge about the EU as a whole. When respondents were asked about their knowledge level on the EU, 38% stated they had some level of knowledge. While only 3% stated they were very well-informed, 35% stated they were somewhat informed. However, a plurality (42%) stated that they felt unknowledgeable about the EU. Among this group, nearly one-third stated feeling somewhat uninformed and 10% stated they knew nothing.

Basic Knowledge: By Age Group



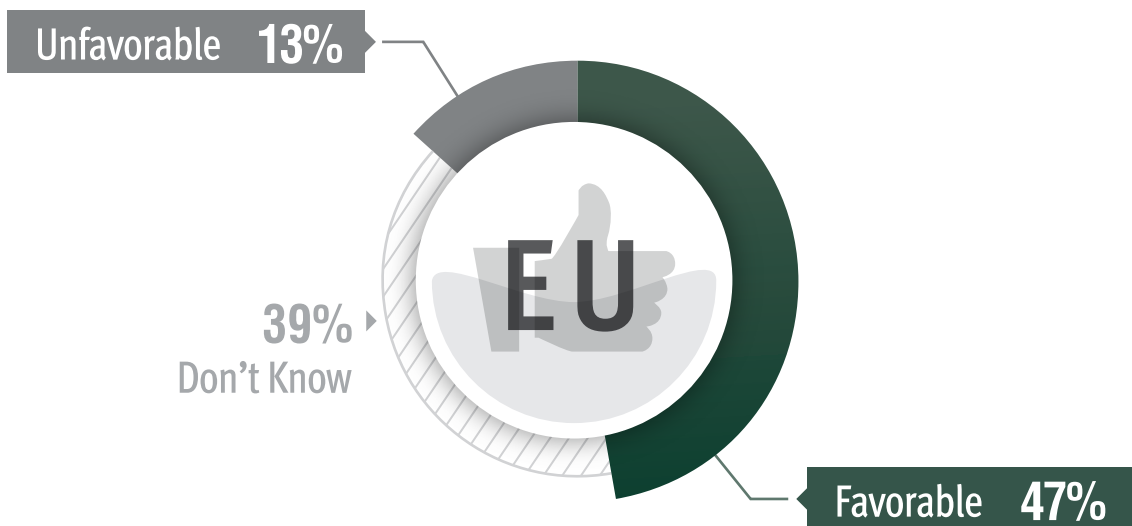


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Of primary concern for the EU is that Korea's youth appear to be more uninformed about the EU than do Korea's older generations—excluding those in their 60s or older. In this case, “Don't Know” responses can also be considered as being uninformed making those in their 60s or older the least knowledgeable about the EU. At the same time, a majority (52%) of those in their 20s reported being uninformed. Of course, this youngest cohort will likely learn more about the EU as it ages, enters the workforce, and has greater opportunities to travel. But this remains cause for concern as Korea's youth is among the most connected in the world and is the first truly affluent age cohort in Korea. They have greater access to the outside world, study languages, and are much greater traveled than previous cohorts were at the same age.

Favorability of the EU



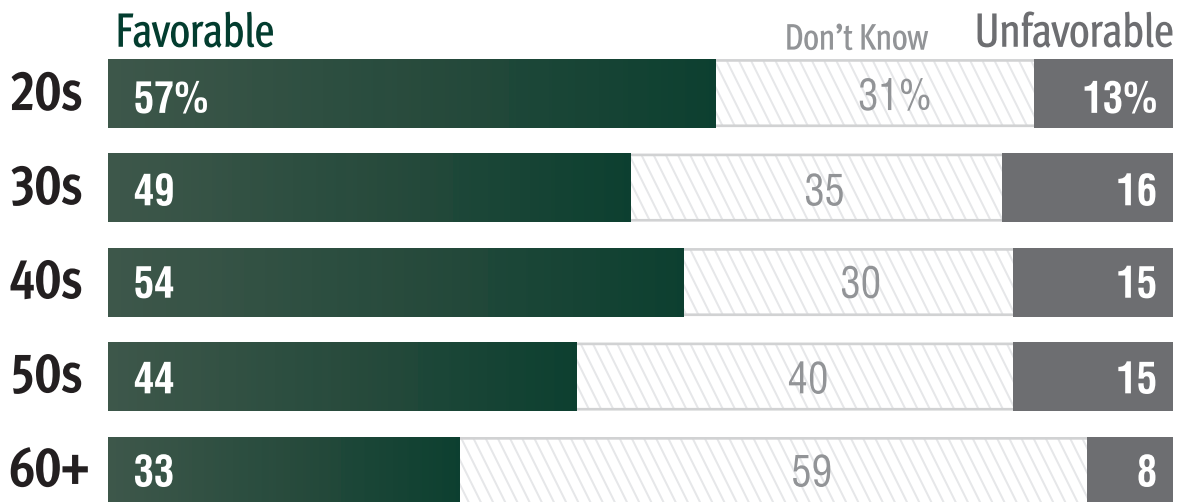


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Despite the overall lack of knowledge about the EU, South Korean hold generally positive views about the European Union. But the lack of knowledge is once again demonstrated with 39% of respondents answering “Don’t Know”. While this is an incredibly high number, it leaves significant room for improvement. With relatively low unfavorability ratings, it is likely that with increased exposure to the EU many would see it favorably, thereby raising the favorability of the EU significantly.

Favorability of the EU: By Age Cohort





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As previously noted, it was Korea's youth who felt least knowledgeable about the EU. Despite this, it is this same cohort that holds the most favorable views of the EU, with 57% stating as such. For Korea's youngest, the EU is unquestionably a destination for culture, travel, art, and fashion. On the other end of the age scale, one-third of those in their sixties or older reported favorable attitudes towards the EU, but a clear majority were Don't Knows. Yet, only 8% stated unfavorable attitudes towards the EU.

Common Values and Interests (2012)



SOURCE

International Trends: Korea (An Asan and GMF Survey)

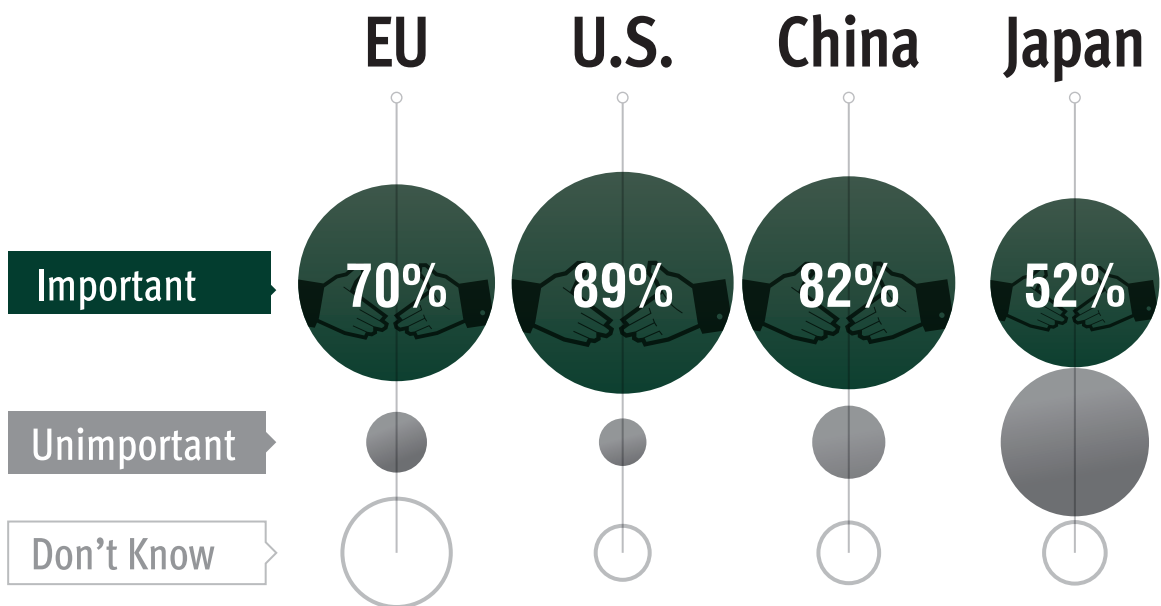


South Korean Attitudes on the European Union:

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In terms of values and interests, South Korea identifies much more closely with the United States and the European Union than it does with China. While these results are drawn from a survey conducted in 2012, it is unlikely that a dramatic shift has taken place despite the much improved relations between South Korea and China. Clearly, the public views its values and interests to be much more in line with Western states. This creates overlap in goals and ambitions, and makes the EU and Korea natural partners across a range of issues. Interestingly, values and interests are seen to overlap with the EU even though the data also presents a high degree of uncertainty about the EU. These perceptions are likely driven by the soft power of the European Union in South Korea.

Important Partnerships for South Korea





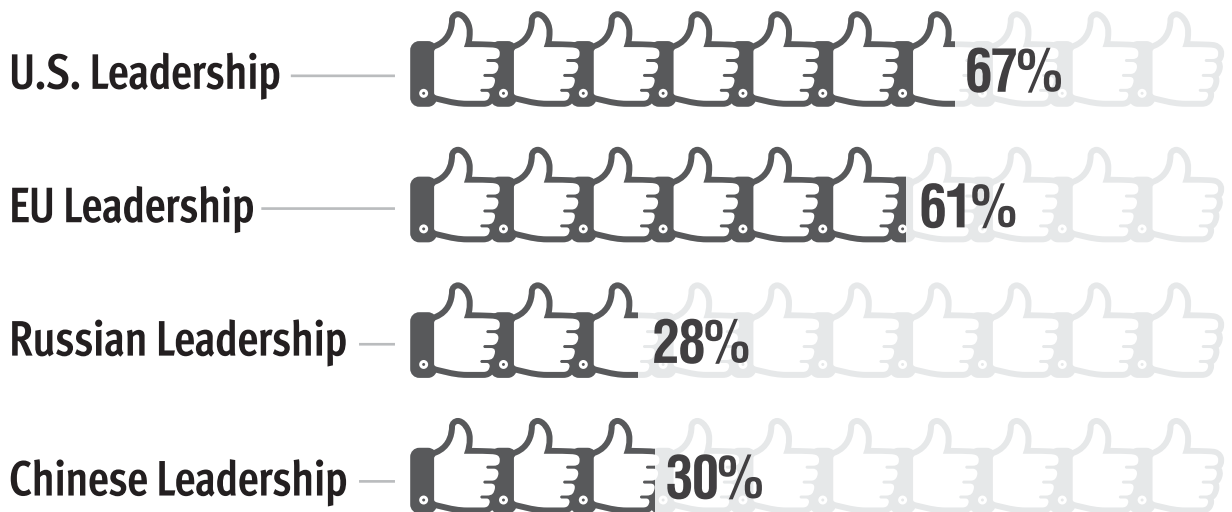
South Korean Attitudes on the European Union:

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One of the major challenges facing the European Union in South Korea is defining its role when so much of Korea's strategic thinking—both economic and security-related—is focused on the United States and China. These relationships largely squeeze out many of the other countries, forcing them to take on much more minor roles. This is reflected in the attitudes on Korea's partnerships for the future. While 70% cited a strategic partnership with the EU as being important, that number pales in comparison to the 89% that cite such a partnership with the United States. With regard to the United States, there was little variation across demographics, indicating that the Korean public has

reached a broad consensus on the importance of the U.S. relationship. Without a significant catalyst, there will likely not be a major reversal in such sentiment. On the other hand, responses were much more varied with regard to the EU. While the 60s and older (60%) were the least likely to cite a strategic partnership with the EU as important, those in their 50s (77%) were the most likely. With regard to China, while there was wide variation among age cohorts—93% of those in their forties and 68% of those in their sixties or older identified this partnership as important—82% overall cited this partnership as important.

Desire for Strong Leadership in World Affairs (2012)



SOURCE

International Trends: Korea (An Asan and GMF Survey)

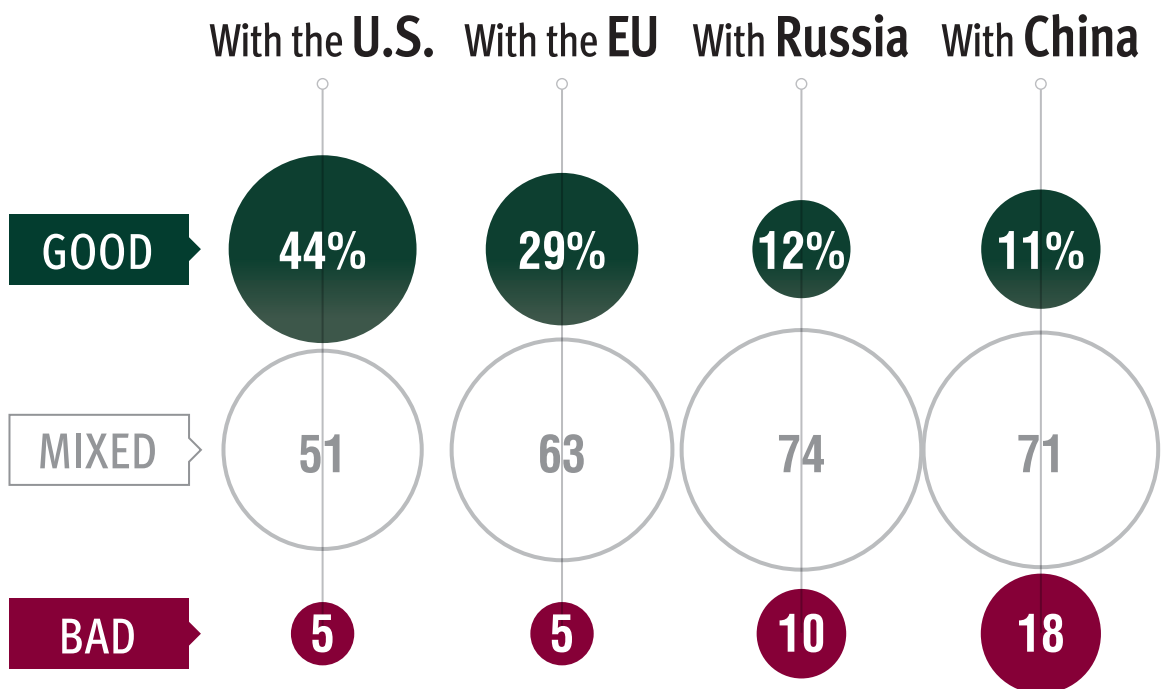


South Korean Attitudes on the European Union:

A Book of Charts

In 2012, when asked about leadership in world affairs, the South Korean public expressed a strong desire for both the United States and the EU to exert strong leadership, with 67% and 61%, respectively. This certainly may be driven by the perception that South Korea, the United States, and the European Union share common values and interests, and therefore strong leadership by these nations also advances Korean interests. But this is a tenuous connection to make. The simpler explanation is that these results closely mirror the results for country favorability, and it is this that is driving the desire for the EU and the United States to show strong leadership.

South Korean Relations with the World (2012)



SOURCE

International Trends: Korea (An Asan and GMF Survey)

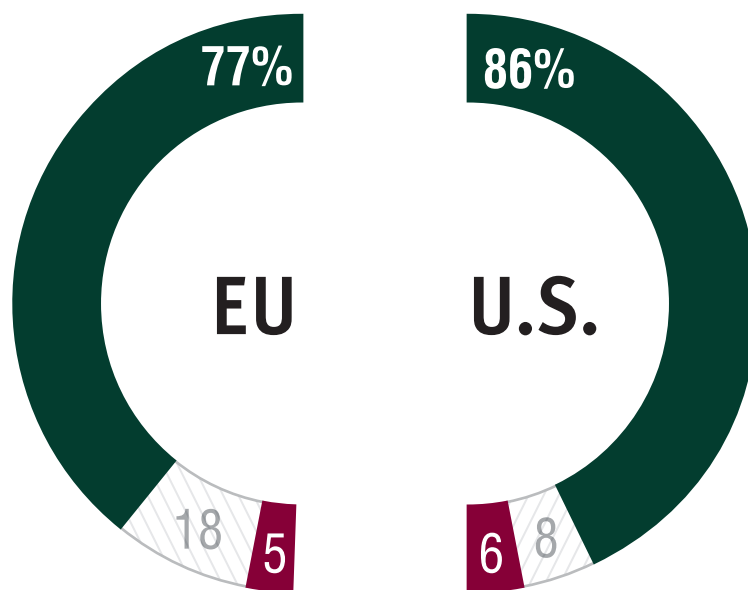


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A Book of Charts

While this question was not asked in 2013, the data from 2012 on South Korean relations with the world provides important context to how South Koreans view the EU in comparison to the rest of the world. While relations with the United States were clearly perceived to be the most positive, relations with the EU were second most positive. It is also worth noting that equal percentages of respondents cited poor relations with the United States and the EU. While relations with China were perceived as the least positive in 2012, that has changed in 2013. President Park's summit with Xi Jinping received overwhelmingly positive reviews, likely pushing positive perceptions of that relationship ahead of Russia, but still well short of positive marks for the EU.

Future Importance of Relationships



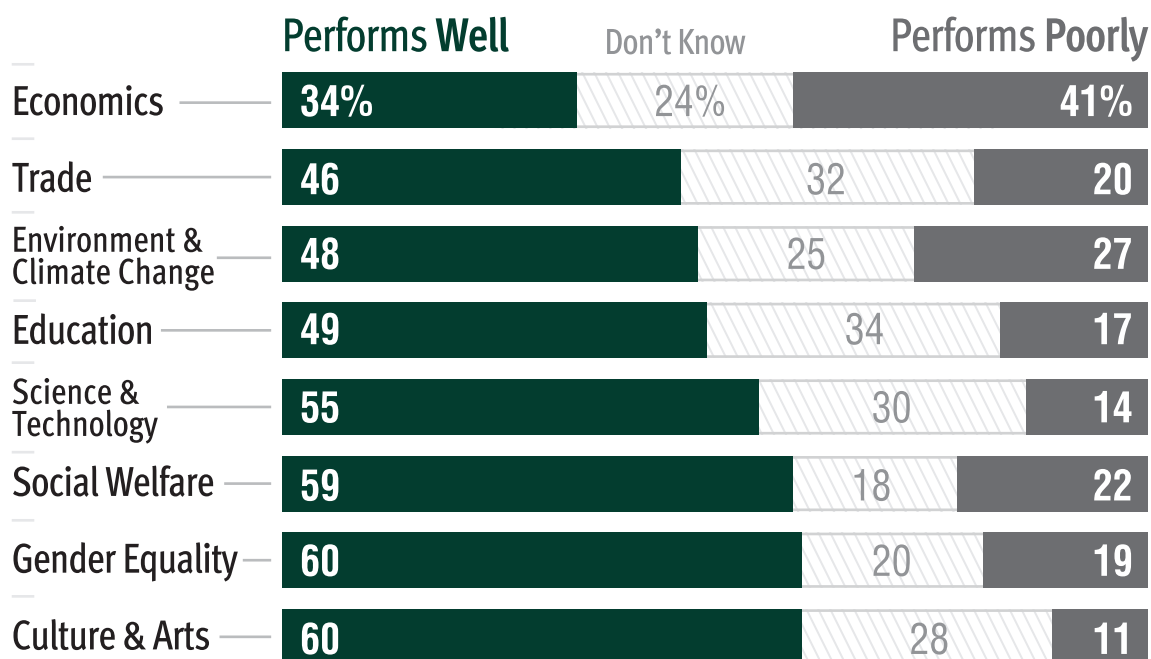


South Korean Attitudes on the European Union:

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Despite the high portion of the South Korean public that lacks information on the European Union, or seems to have no real opinion, the overall picture is optimistic. Even though Korea's relationships with the United States and China will continue to dominate the thinking of many South Koreans, there is certainly room for positive growth in the Korea-EU relationship, with 77% stating as such. But even more important is the spread among age cohorts. While just 63% of those aged sixty or older stated that the EU relationship would be more important moving forward, more than 80% of those in their twenties, thirties, and forties agreed. These are Korea's future policymakers, and such a positive assessment of the EU's role will carry over.

Strength on Global Issues





South Korean Attitudes on the European Union:

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The South Korean public was asked about the strength of the European Union across a range of issues, and this also highlighted the knowledge gap when it comes to the EU. On average, 26% responded as “Don’t Know”.¹

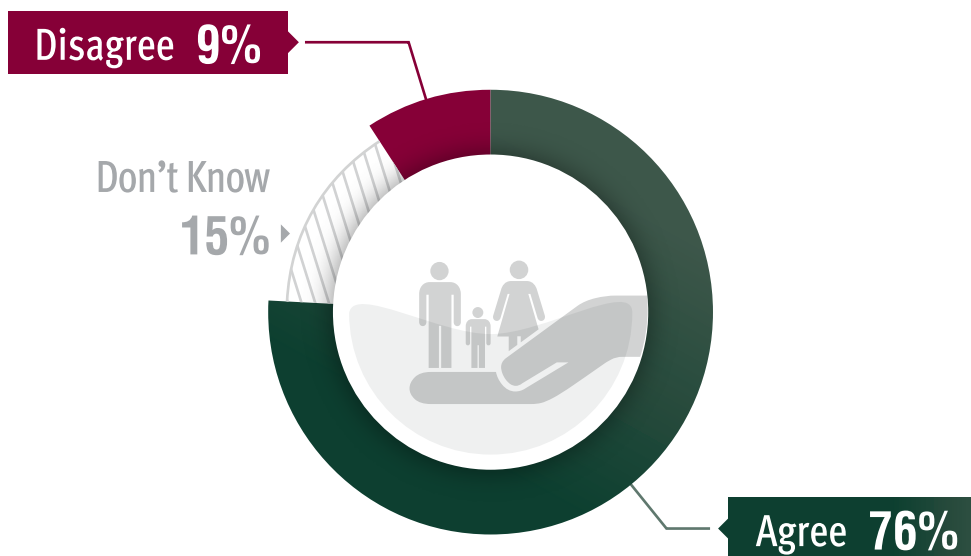
On the issues included, it is unsurprising that the EU was rated weakest on the economy, with only 34% citing the EU as performing well on this issue. The South Korean public is relatively well-informed on economic issues due to its export-oriented economy. When an export market as large as the European Union experiences economic troubles, it attracts significant media attention in Korea. As evidence of this, 41% cited the European Union as performing poorly in economics. This is more than twice the rate for most other issues.

The strengths of the EU as seen by the Korean public were among the culture and the arts, gender equality, and social welfare. The social welfare aspect of this is particularly interesting for South Korea. Over the past five years, South Korea has begun to focus on quality of life measurements, with a significant portion of that focus on how the state should care for the poorest of its citizens. Korea has a relatively weak safety net, and is now undertaking a serious societal debate on what kind of welfare model it should pursue. While the European model is certainly attractive, there are serious questions about whether or not this is appropriate for South Korea given its aging society and budgetary requirements. Regardless, South Koreans seemingly approve of the European social welfare model.

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¹ It should be noted that “Don’t Know” was an explicit response option.

EU Taking a Bigger Role on Human Rights in North Korea



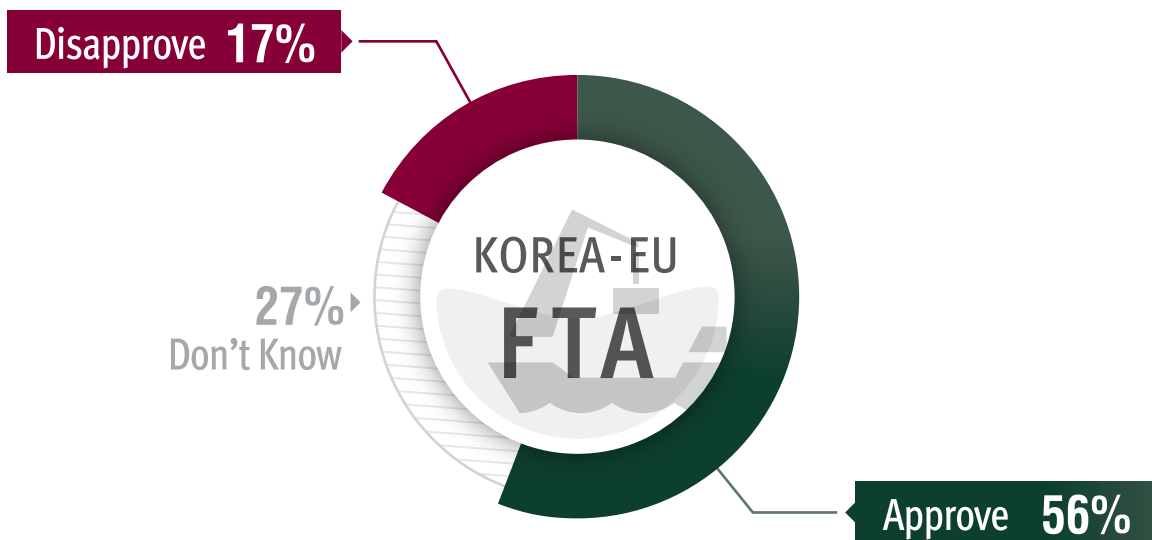


South Korean Attitudes on the European Union:

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Human rights in North Korea have attracted serious attention in 2013, and this is one area in which the South Korean public clearly sees the EU having an important role to play. Yet, this is an issue that generally is not discussed in South Korea. Instead, it is international organizations and non-governmental organizations that raise the issue both in China and on the international scene. Thus far, the EU has also played an important role in raising awareness with its diplomats broaching the topic. The Korean public would like to see the EU continue this role, and even strengthen it—more than three-quarters stated the EU should play a more important role in raising the issue of human rights in North Korea.

Trade





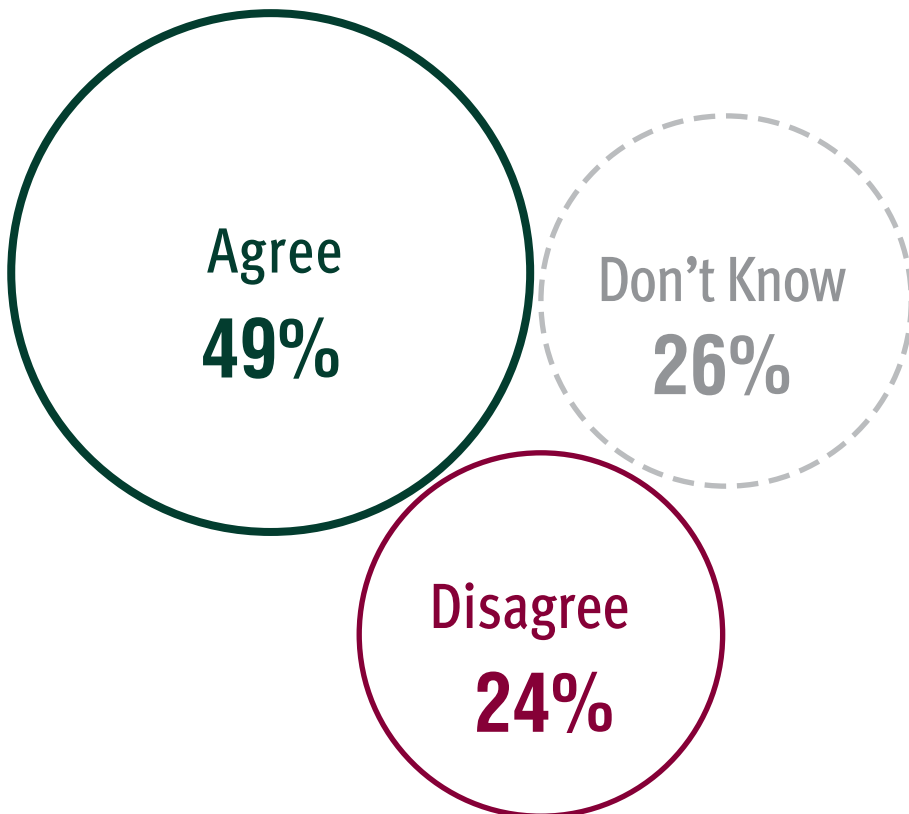
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The Korea-EU FTA enjoys a majority of support from the Korean public and its enactment was nowhere near as controversial as the passage of the Korea-U.S. FTA despite the contents being nearly identical. (In October 2012, only 47% supported the Korea-U.S. FTA.) But once again, Don't Knows represented nearly one-fourth (27%) of all respondents. One point of concern, however, is that the youngest Koreans are the least approving of the agreement. While those in their fifties (66%) are the most approving of the FTA, only 49% of those in their twenties and 53% of those in their thirties agreed. These results are complicated by the fact a strong majority (69%) identify the EU as an important economic partner, and that it is those in their twenties (78%) and thirties (75%) which are most likely to state as such.

Overall support for the Korea-EU FTA is likely derived from the fact that the benefits of the FTA are perceived to go both ways—a plurality of South Koreans (35%) state that both countries benefit equally. However, there is a significant portion (25%) that believes that the EU accrues more benefits from the agreement, while only 8% state that Korea's benefits are greater. Of course, this question reveals why those in their twenties and thirties were least likely to approve of the Korea-EU FTA. It was these two cohorts that were most likely to believe that the EU was benefiting more than Korea from the FTA. While those in their thirties (39%) were most likely to state the EU benefited more, the twenties cohort (35%) followed closely.

Quality of Products





South Korean Attitudes on the European Union:

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Given that many EU-based brands produce highly sought after items in South Korea, it was expected that a strong majority of respondents would see the quality of products emanating from the EU as high. However, that was not the case. While a strong plurality (49%) did agree that the quality of EU products was high, it was short of reaching a full majority. This suggests that there is a disconnect between the products of the EU and the brands which produce those goods. That is, these companies are successful in Korea, but Koreans are not as likely to connect those goods with the European Union as a whole, perhaps opting instead to connect them to the individual countries.

METHODOLOGY OF THE SURVEYS



Unless otherwise noted, all results use the following methodology:

The sample size of each survey was 1,000 respondents over the age of 19. The surveys were conducted by Research & Research, and the margin of error is $\pm 3.1\%$ at the 95% confidence level. All surveys employed the Random Digit Dialing method for mobile and landline telephones.

Results from International Trends: Korea were the product of collaboration between the Asan Institute for Policy Studies and the German Marshall Fund. It combined the results from Transatlantic Trends with International Trends: Korea. Only the results for Korea are presented in this report.

Interviews were conducted using RDD for mobile and landline telephones. The sample size was 1,000 respondents over the age of 19. The survey was conducted from June 15-21, 2012. The margin of error was $\pm 3.0\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

This report is a product of the Public Opinion Studies Center at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

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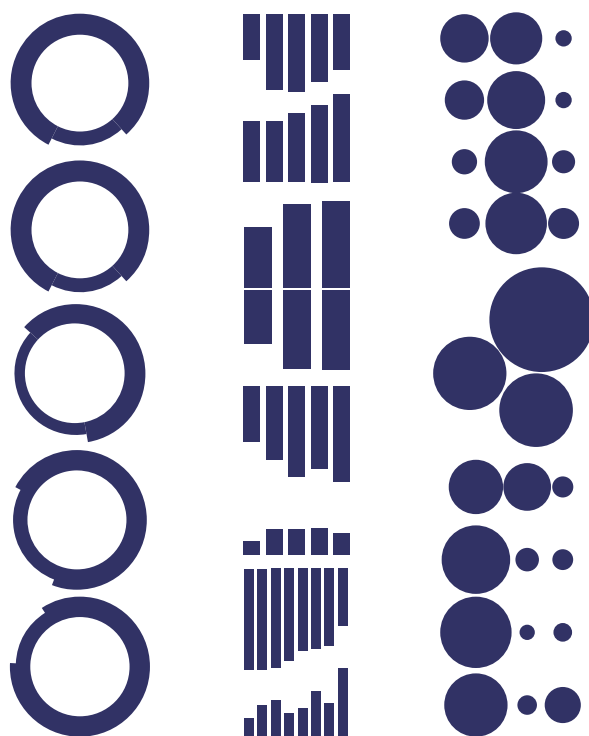
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