

South Koreans and Their Neighbors

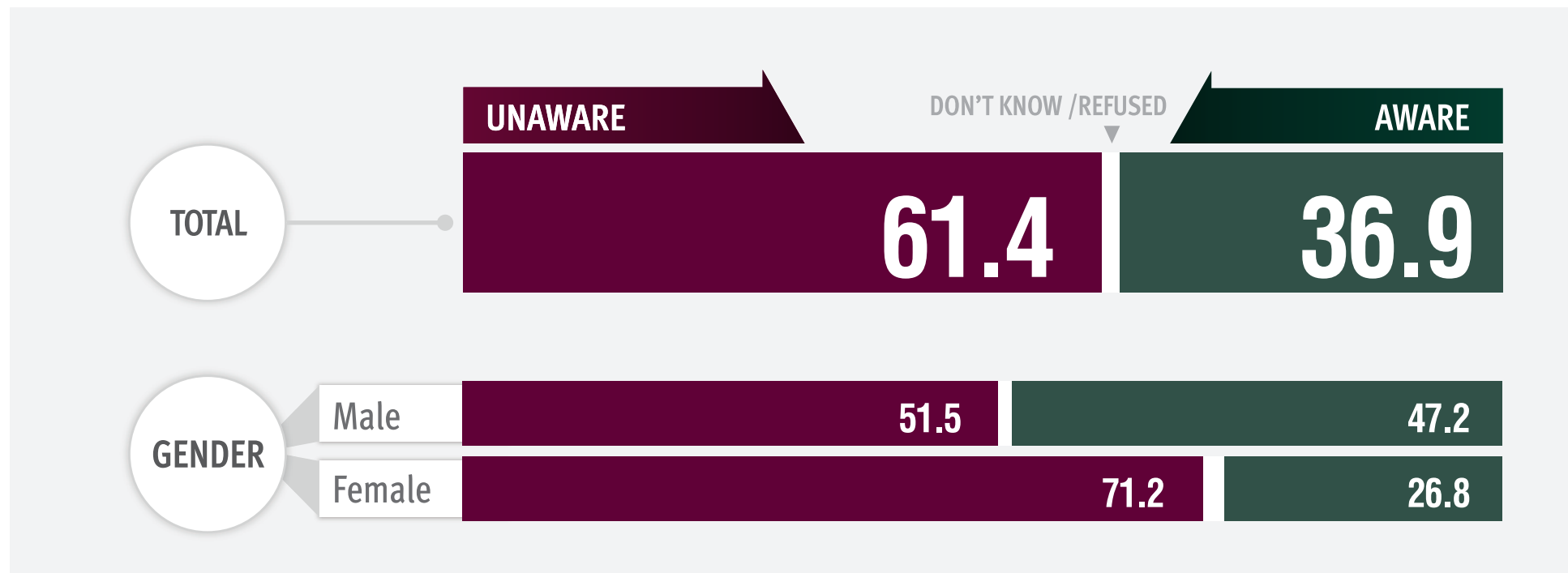
ASAN POLL

THE ASAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES



April 29 – May 1, 2013, %

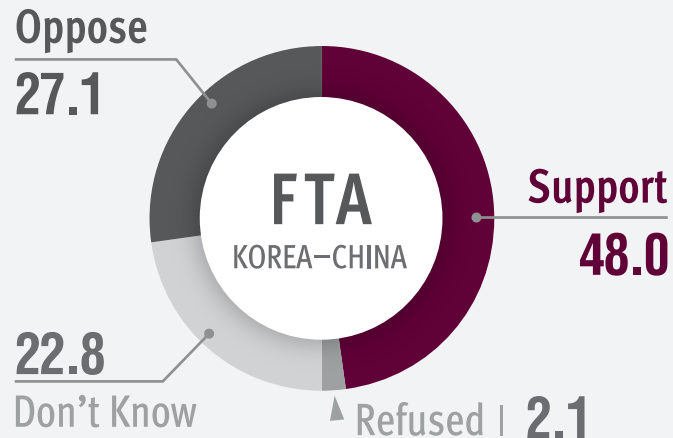
How aware are you of the Korea–China FTA?



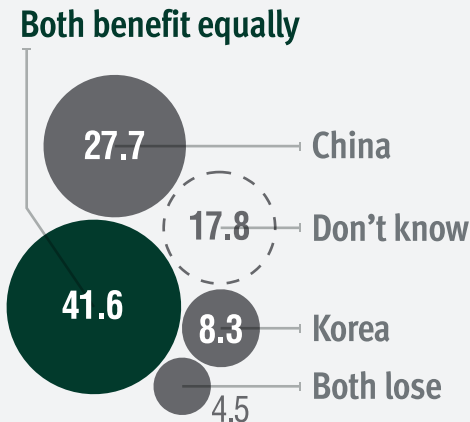
Despite the fact that negotiations for the Korea–China FTA began in May 2012, less than 40% of the public reported awareness of the FTA. In a poll conducted in October 2012, 56.8% reported being aware of the Korea-U.S. FTA. Simply, the Korea-China FTA has not received nearly as much media attention as the Korea-U.S. FTA.

Q April 29 – May 1, 2013, %

1) Do you support or oppose the Korea-China FTA?



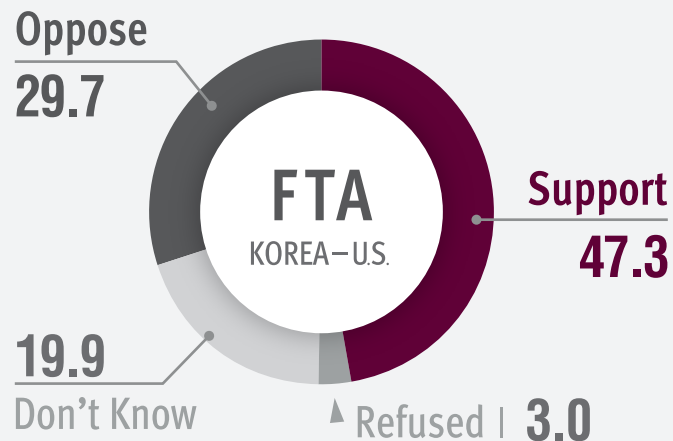
2) Who benefits more from the Korea-China FTA?



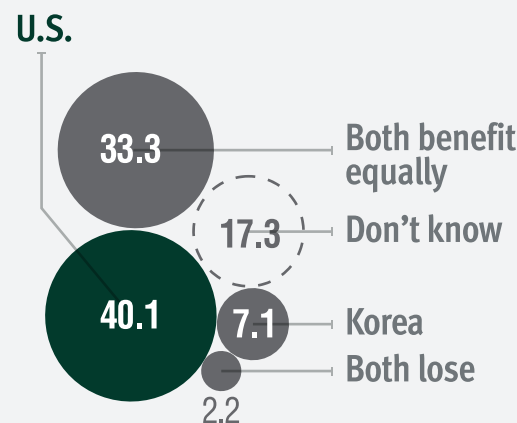
While 48% of respondents stated support for the Korea-China FTA, 27.1% opposed. This result is similar to the poll conducted in October 2012, just after the Korea-U.S. FTA came into effect. However, respondents' assessments on which country would benefit from the FTA were significantly different. In terms of the Korea-China FTA, 41.6% stated that both countries would benefit, with 27.7% stating that China would benefit more. However, in the case of the Korea-U.S. FTA, 40.1% believed that the U.S. would benefit more while 33.3% stated that both the U.S. and Korea would benefit equally. Due to China's large market and the potential for economic gain, Koreans expect to accrue more benefits from the FTA with China.

Q October 25-27, 2012, %

1) Do you support or oppose the Korea-U.S. FTA?



2) Who benefits more from the Korea-U.S. FTA?

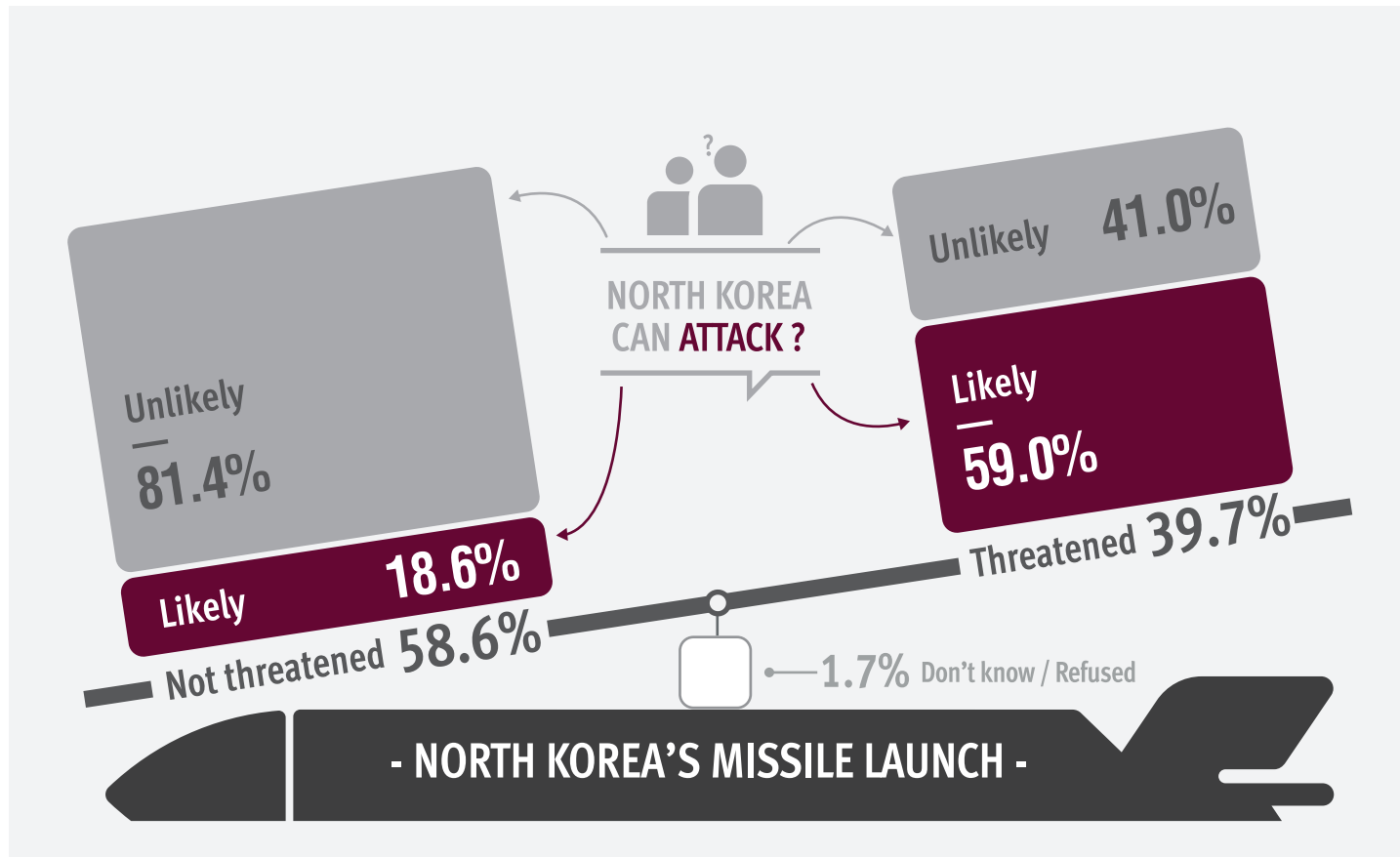


PUBLIC REACTION TO NORTH KOREA'S MISSILE LAUNCH



May 23-25, 2013

How threatened do you feel by North Korea's missile launch?



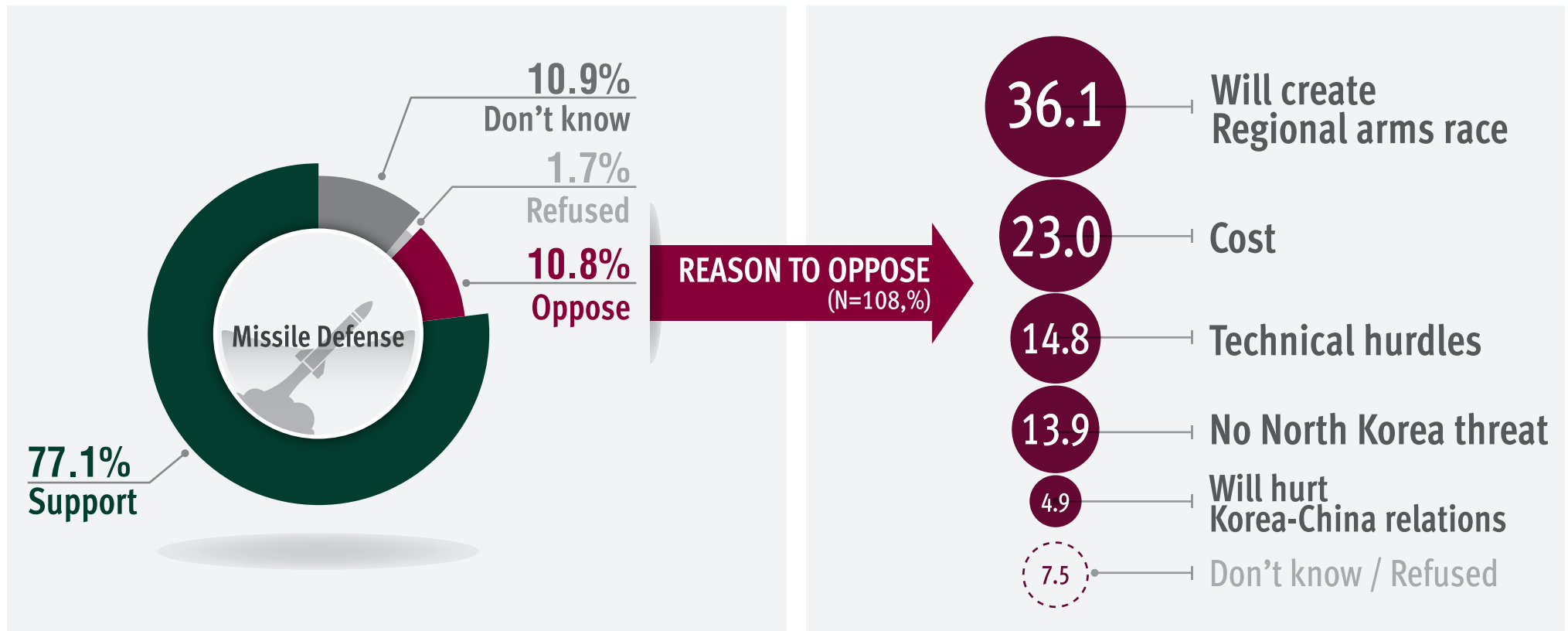
Between May 18th and 20th, North Korea launched a series of short-range missiles into the East Sea. However, only 39.7% of respondents reported feeling threatened by these launches. Among this group, 59.0% stated that it was likely that North Korea would attack the South with a medium- or long-range ballistic missile or nuclear-tipped missile. This represents 23.4% of the entire sample.

PUBLIC OPINION ON MISSILE DEFENSE (MD)



May 23-25, 2013

What do you think about Missile Defense (MD)?



🔄 When asked, 77.1% of the respondents thought MD was necessary. The most often cited reason for supporting MD was to prevent a first-strike by North Korea (30.8%). Only 10.8% stated that they opposed. A strong majority of the South Korean public (83.1%) supported pursuing a domestically developed MD, and 75.4% supported joining the U.S.-led MD system. There was little change from when these questions were asked immediately following North Korea's third nuclear test in February 2013.

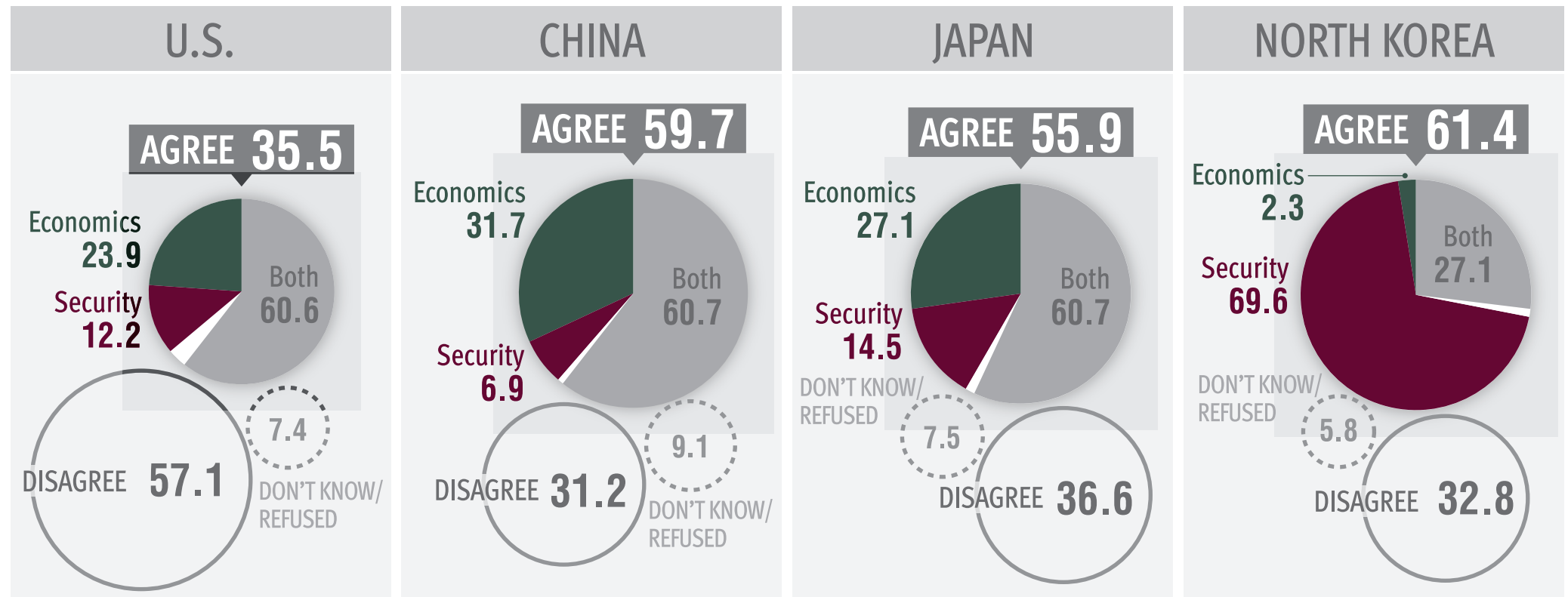
ASSESSMENT ON THREATS FROM SURROUNDING COUNTRIES AND CATEGORIES OF THOSE THREATS

ASAN POLL



June 7-9, 2013, %

- 1) Do you believe that [the U.S. / China / Japan / North Korea] will pose a threat to South Korea?
- 2) If you **AGREE** with the above, in which category would these countries pose the greatest threat?



🕒 The South Korean public feels more threatened by the countries in East Asia than it does by the United States. A majority of Koreans agree with the idea that China, Japan, and North Korea will pose a threat to South Korea. Respondents who perceive potential threats from China and Japan think that both will pose a threat in terms of military and the economy, but North Korea was seen as the biggest military threat. Despite the ROK-U.S. alliance, 35.5% of respondents perceive the United States to be a potential threat. In a recent poll, however, 92.0% of the respondents expressed their support for the ROK-U.S. alliance and recognized its strategic necessity.

ASSESSMENT AND PROSPECT OF SOUTH KOREA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH SURROUNDING COUNTRIES

ASAN POLL



June 7–9, 2013, %

1) Do you think the relations between South Korea and the surrounding countries [the U.S./China/Japan/North Korea] have improved or worsened?

IMPROVED

WORSENER

DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED

2) In the future, do you think that South Korea will have improved relations with the surrounding countries?

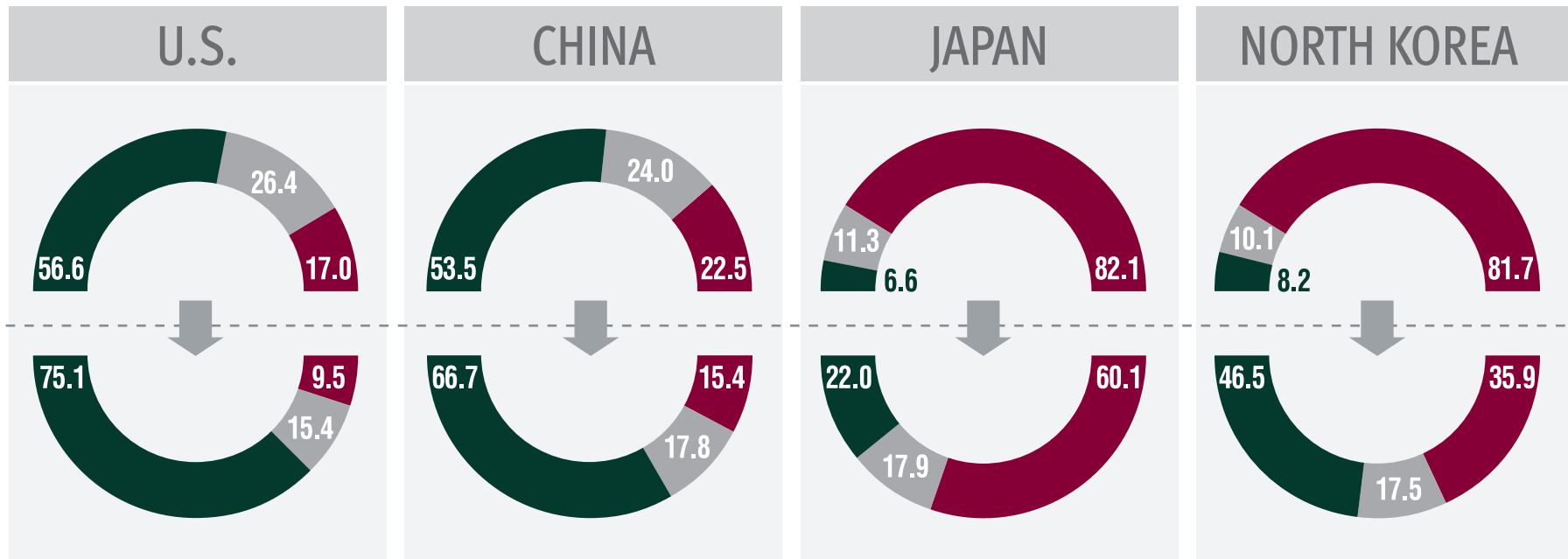
WILL IMPROVE

WILL WORSENER

DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED

1) RECENT

2) OUTLOOK



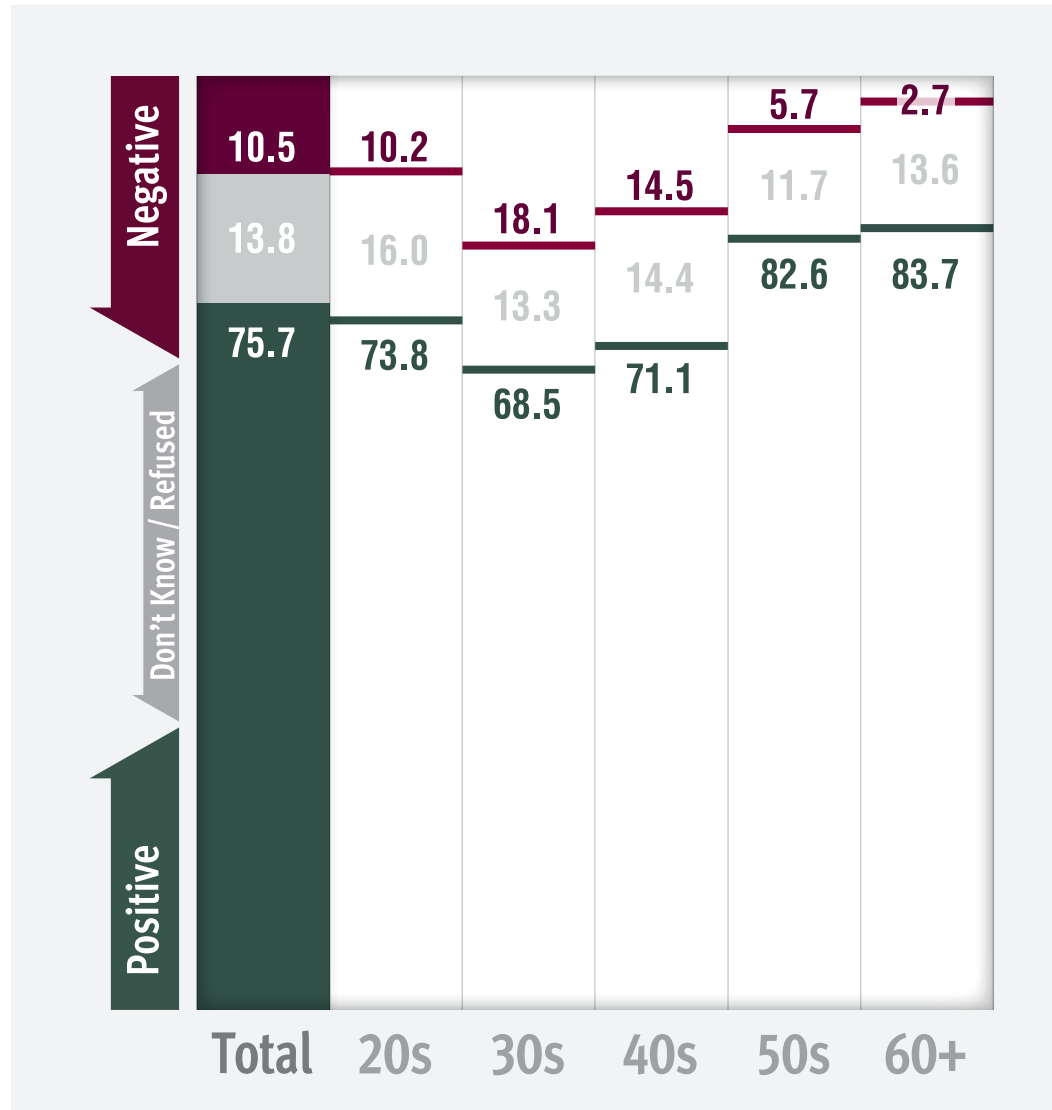
A majority of respondents stated that South Korea's relations with the United States (56.6%) and China (53.5%) have recently improved, and those relationships were expected to improve in the future. While 75.1% thought relations would get better with the United States in the future, 66.7% expected an improvement with China.

But for Japan and North Korea, nearly 80% stated that those relationships had worsened. Moreover, only 46.5% expected South-North relations to improve in the future, and even fewer thought relations with Japan would improve (22.0%).



July 1-3, 2013, %

How do you assess President Park's Korea-China summit?



While a majority (75.7%) positively assessed the Korea-China summit, held on June 27, 2013, 10.5% of respondents assessed it negatively. The so-called “5060 generation”—referring to those in their 50s and 60s or older who are strong supporters of President Park—were the most positive. 82.6% of those in their 50s and 83.7% of those 60+ positively assessed the summit. The 20s cohort, one that leans conservative on national security issues, was third most likely to assess the summit positively (73.8%). The Park administration believes the state visit to China and the signing of bilateral memoranda outlining a Korea-China common vision reinforced the strategic cooperative relationship between the two countries. Many media outlets assessed the outcome of the summit positively for increasing Chinese support for the inter-Korean peace process and furthering cooperation in Northeast Asia, but also pointed out that China did not go far enough in condemning North Korea’s nuclear program.

FAVORABILITY OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES



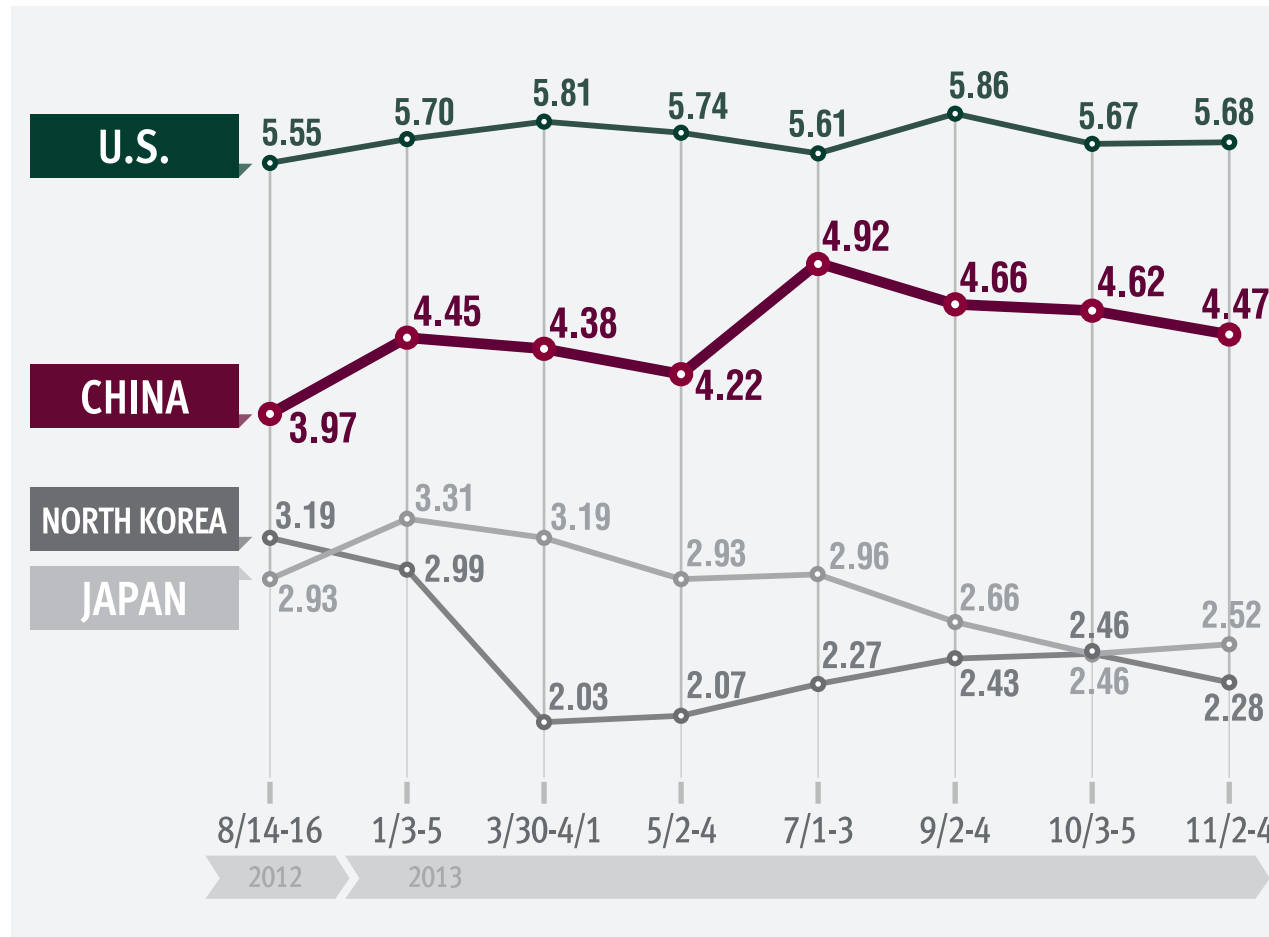
How would you rate the favorability of each of the following countries?

(Scale 0-10, Completely unfavorable = 0; Completely favorable = 10)



Favorability levels of the United States have remained largely unchanged over the past year. It remains the most favorable nation by a considerable margin. The rating of China, on the other hand, has improved in that same time, with a particularly large increase from May to July. This one-time jump was precipitated by the Park-Xi summit which was covered very favorably by South Korean media.

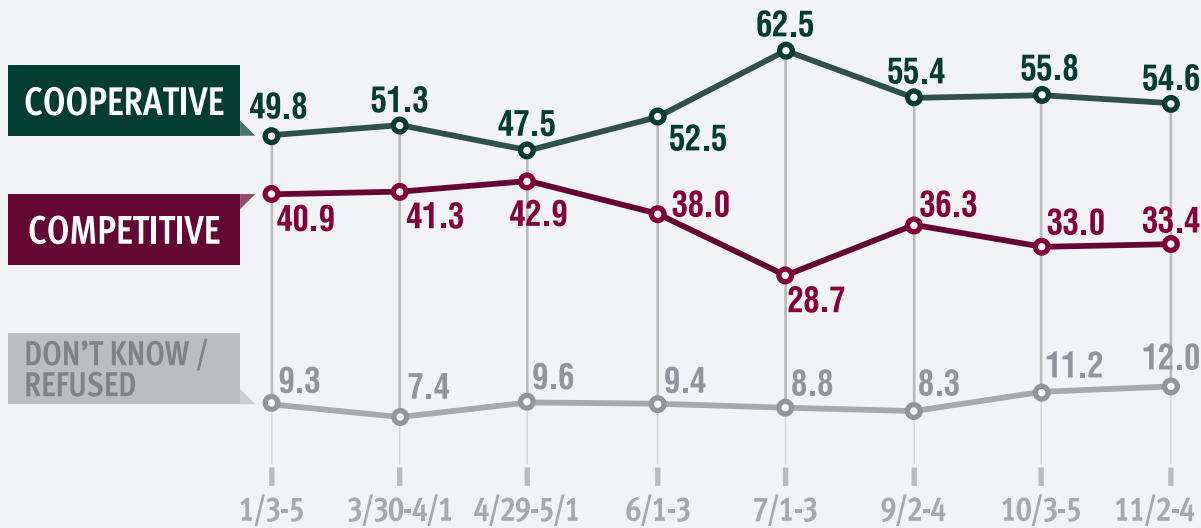
The ratings for both North Korea and Japan have declined significantly since August 2012. In the case of North Korea, this reflects the considerable tensions on the Korean Peninsula through the first half of 2013. There was a particularly sharp drop from January 2013 to March following the North's third nuclear test in February. Japan is seen almost as unfavorably as North Korea, a view driven by the ongoing dispute over the Dokdo islands as well as a range of historical grievances.





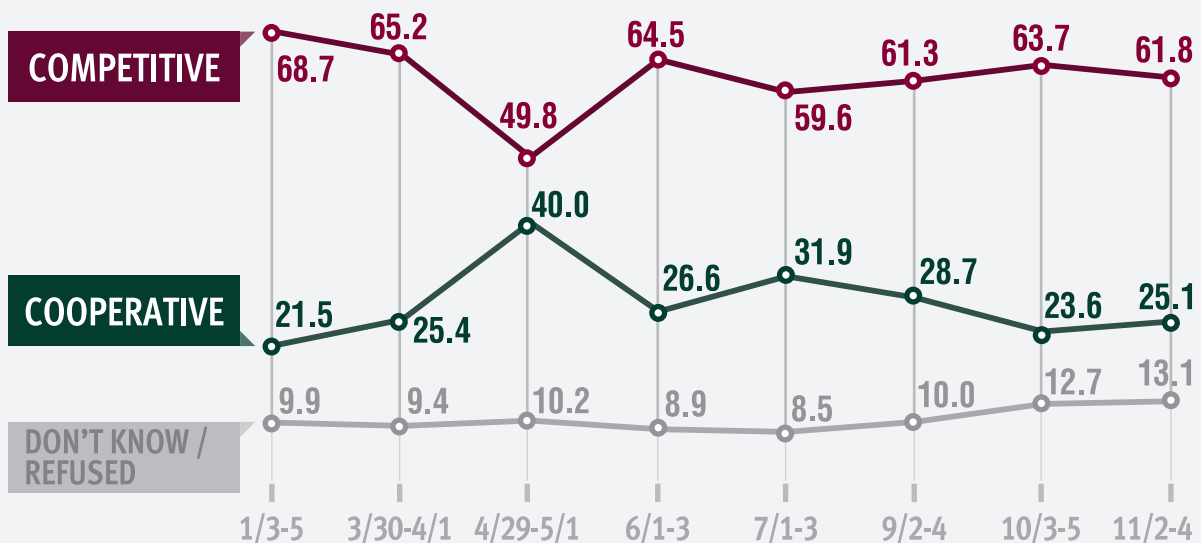
How would you assess the relationship between Korea and China and the relationship between the U.S. and China?

KOREA-CHINA RELATIONS (%)



The Korean public has generally viewed Korea-China relations as cooperative, but that view received a significant boost following the Korea-China summit. While 52.5% viewed the relationship as cooperative before the summit, 62.5% viewed it as cooperative after the summit. However, that view has since returned to pre-summit levels.

U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS (%)



U.S.-China relations are largely perceived as competitive, but high profile meetings between key officials seems to effect South Korean perceptions. In the time since, however, perceptions of that relationship have returned to their normal range.

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN KOREA-CHINA RELATIONS



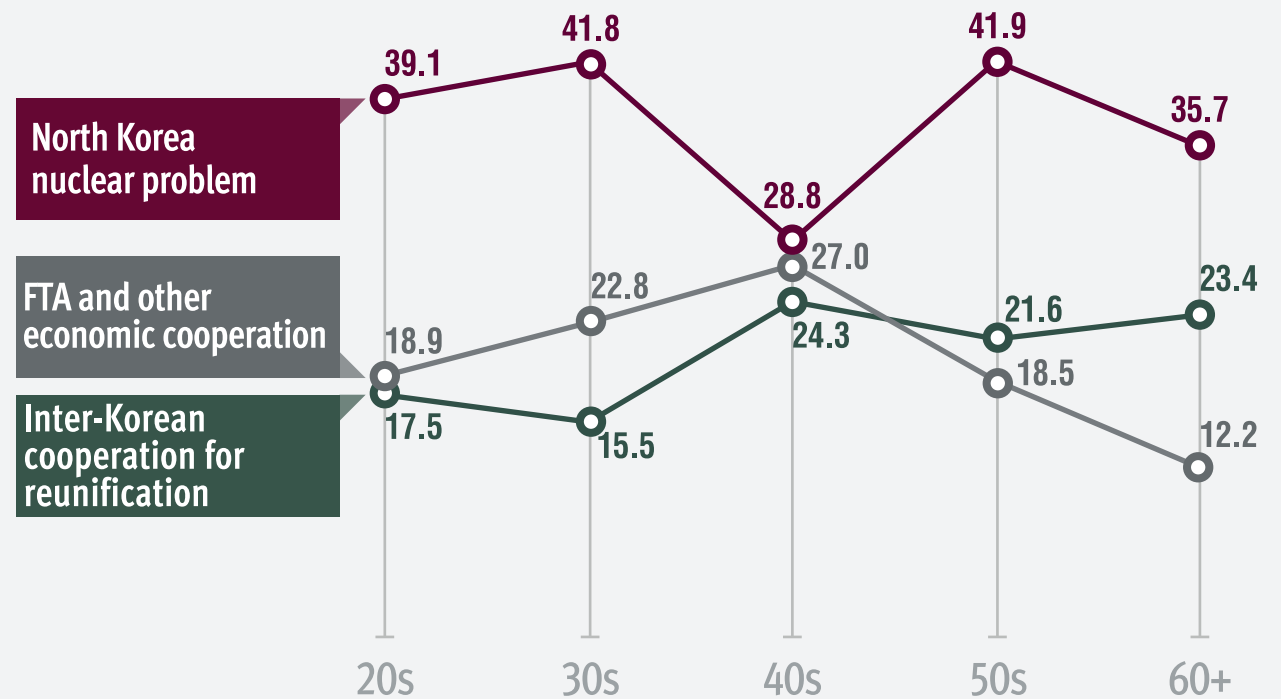
July 1-3, 2013, %

What is the most important issue for Korea-China relations?

| TOTAL



| BY AGE



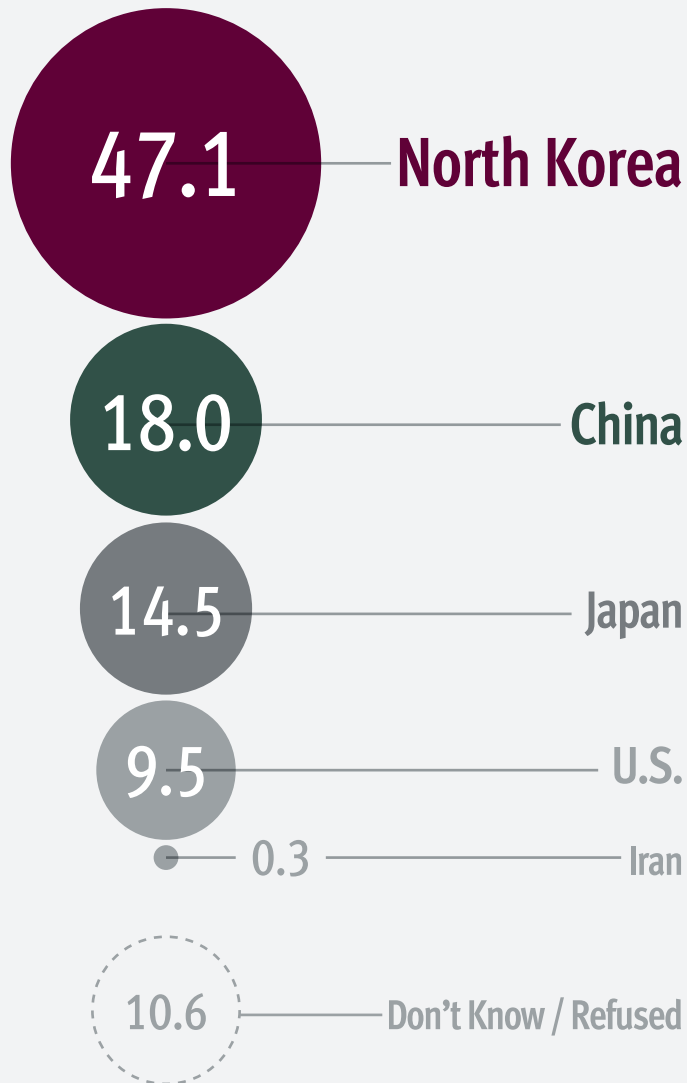
After the Korea-China summit, the public focus has been on the direction of Korea's foreign policy on China. Koreans cite Korea-China cooperation on resolving the North Korean nuclear program (37.2%), inter-Korean cooperation for reunification (20.6%), and economic cooperation (20.1%) as the most important issues. That Korea-China cooperation on the North Korea nuclear program is necessary was the most cited by all age

groups. The second most important issue, however, received varying levels of importance among age cohorts. Among Koreans in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, the second most important issue was the FTA and economic cooperation, while for Koreans 50 and over the second highest response was inter-Korean cooperation for reunification.



July 4-6, 2013, %

Which country is the greatest threat to South Korea?



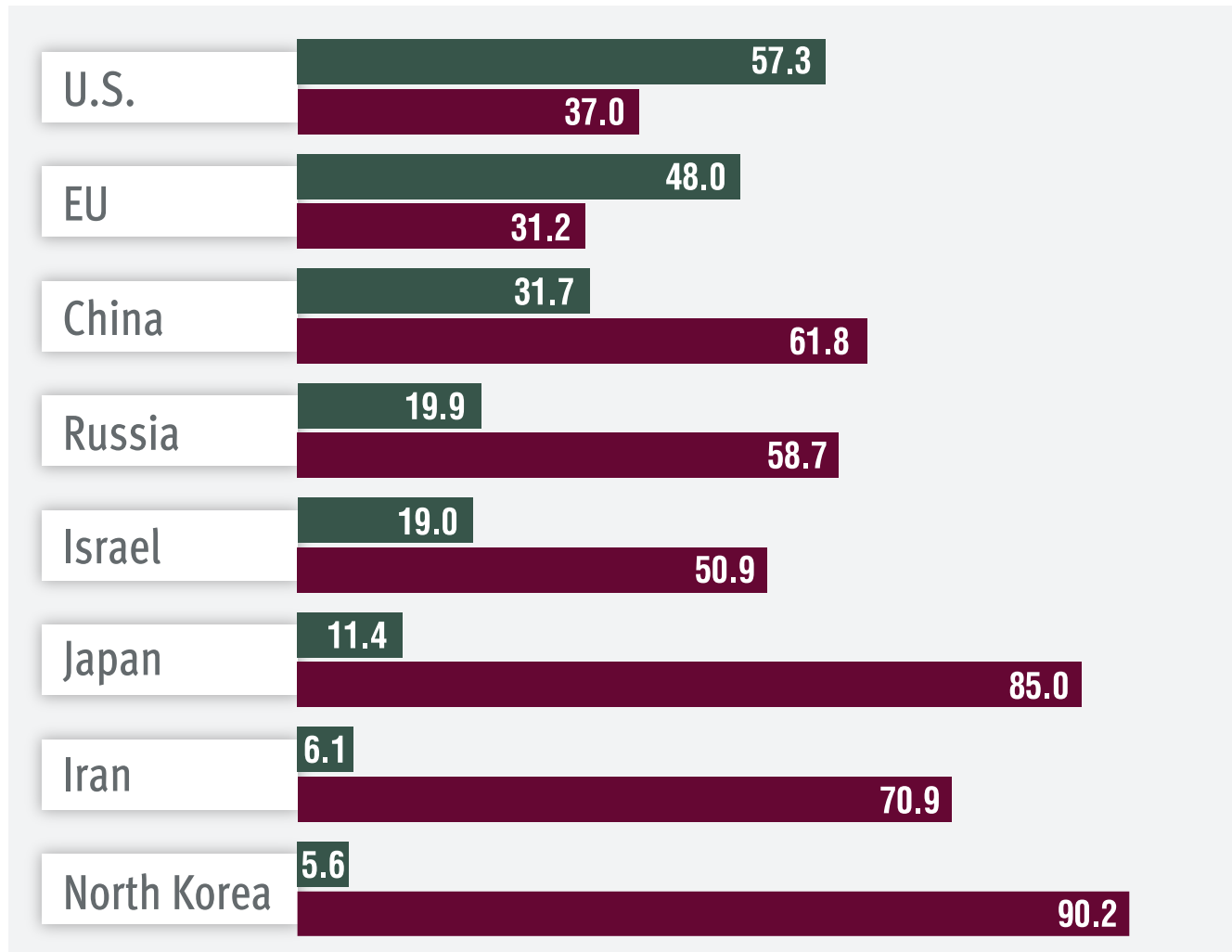
Because of Korea's geopolitically strategic location, it must constantly assess international politics, particularly with regard to potential threats. When asked, "Which country is the greatest threat to South Korea?" with no response options presented—that is, responses were freely offered by the respondent—Koreans cited North Korea (47.1%), China (18.0%), Japan (14.5%), and the United States (9.5%).

Unsurprisingly, nearly half of respondents cited North Korea as posing the greatest threat. Continued North Korean provocations, beginning with North Korea's rocket launch in December 2012, continuing with its third nuclear test in February, and current deadlock over the fate of Kaesong have heightened South Korean perceptions of North Korea as a major threat.



July 7-9, 2013, %

Do you trust the following countries?



Trustworthy

Untrustworthy



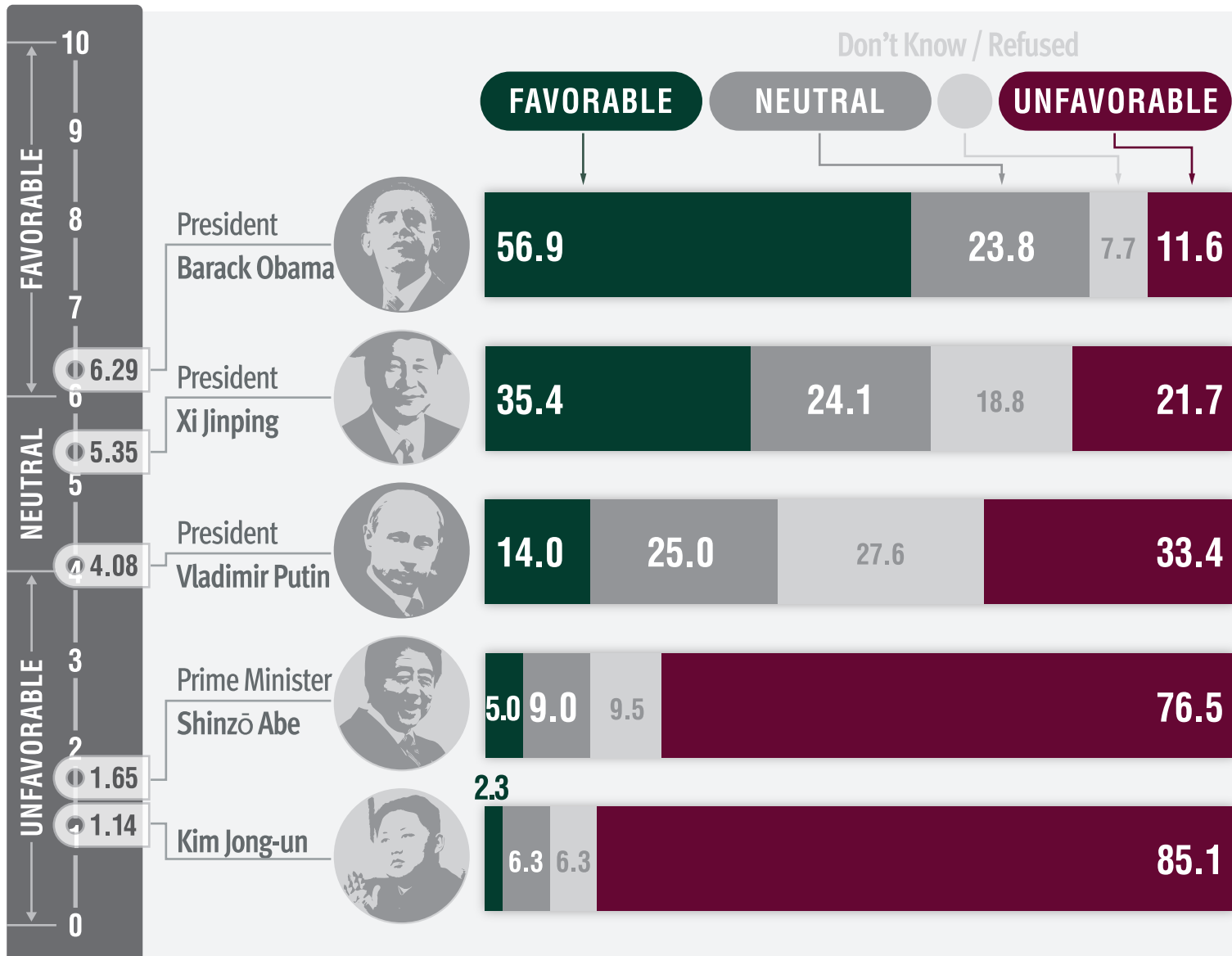
The Korean public trusts the United States and the EU, but distrusts Japan, Iran, and North Korea. When asked, 57.3% replied positively for the United States and 48.0% for the EU. China had the third highest affirmative responses (31.7%), followed by Russia (19.9%), and Israel (19%). Trust in Japan (11.4%), Iran (6.1%), and North Korea (5.6%) was weak. The order of the level of trust in the United States, China, Japan, and North Korea was identical to the order of the favorability of those countries. Interestingly, even though the favorability of China was high when this survey was conducted, trust in China remained relatively low.

FAVORABILITY OF FOREIGN LEADERS



July 10-12, 2013, %

How favorable are the following leaders?

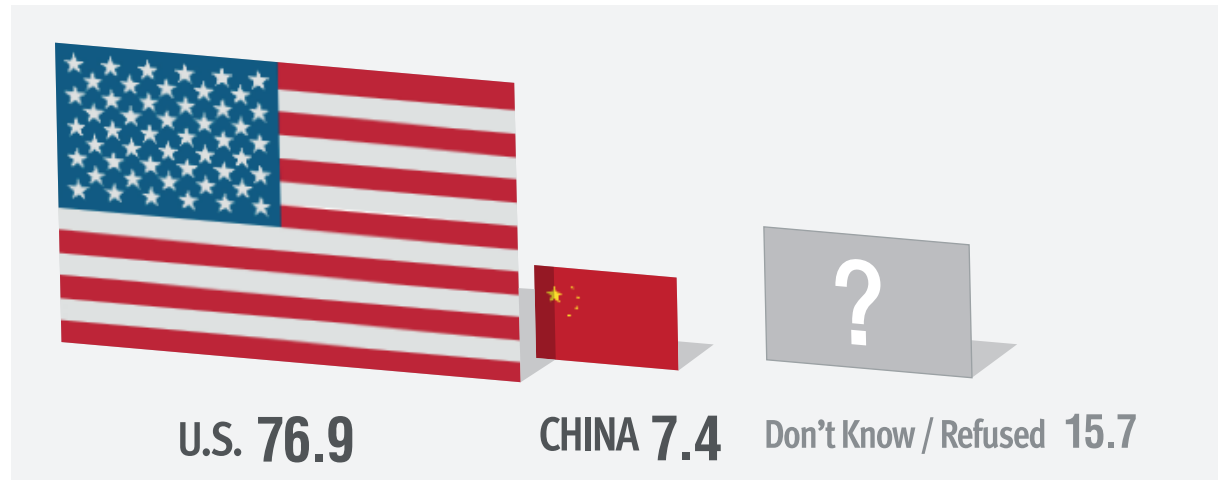


Koreans show strong favorability for President Obama, and generally show favorability for President Xi. Unfavorability was particularly strong for Prime Minister Abe and Kim Jong-un. President Obama had the highest score with 6.29, followed by President Xi at 5.35. Approval scores of Prime Minister Abe and Kim Jong-un were, respectively, 1.65 and 1.14. Polls conducted from July 1-3 show approval of Japan and North Korea to be 2.96 and 2.27, respectively. Although it is difficult to compare results from two different polls, favorability for the two leaders is more than one point lower than approval for the countries. That is, Koreans showed more disapproval towards the leaders than the countries' society and culture.

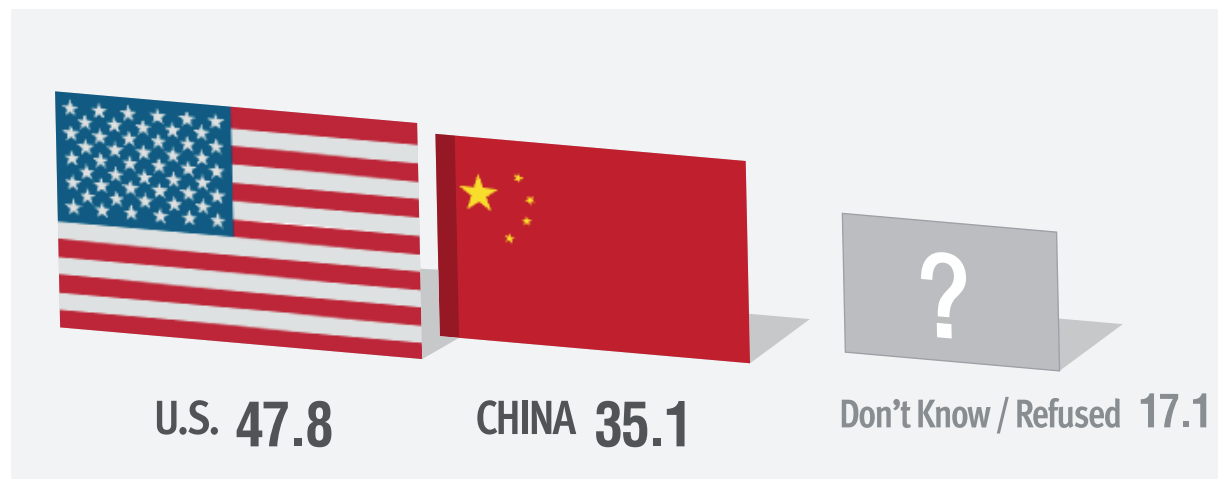


July 22-24, 2013, %

Which country *currently* exerts the most global political influence?



Which country will exert the most global political influence *in the future*?



To examine Koreans' perception of international politics, we asked respondents to name the country that exerts the most global political influence (open-response).

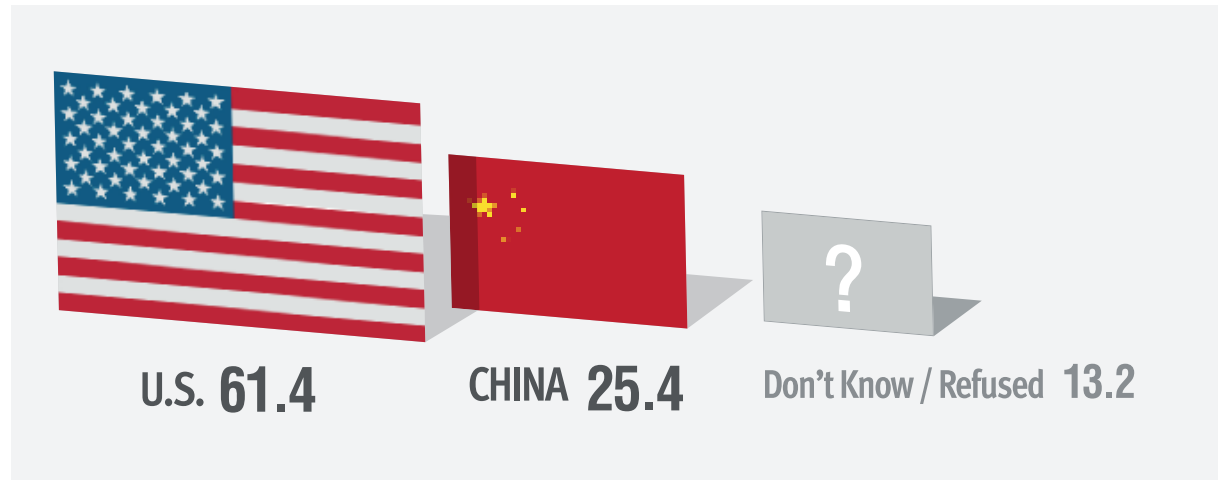
76.9% of Koreans cited the U.S. as the greatest global political influence, while only 7.4% named China. Other responses included South Korea (0.8%), the EU (0.7%), Japan (0.6%), and North Korea (0.4%).

However, responding to the second question about future influence, Koreans predicted China's influence will grow. The U.S. still had the greatest share of responses (47.8%), but China saw a notable increase (35.1%). This increase came because 35.4% of those who had named the U.S. as the greatest current political influence named China as the greatest future political influence.



July 22-24, 2013, %

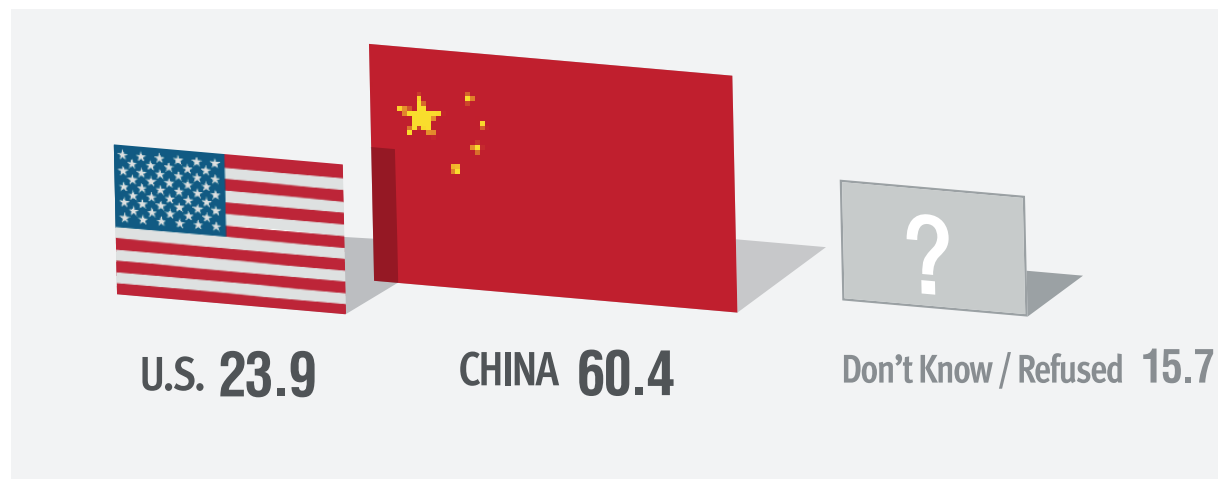
Which country *currently* exerts the most global economic influence?



Respondents believed the U.S currently wielded the most economic influence, but saw China replacing the U.S. as the greatest global economic power in the future.



Which country will exert the most global economic influence in the future?



61.4% of Koreans cited the U.S. as the greatest global economic influence currently, while only 25.4% named China. However, when asked which nation would hold the most economic influence in the future, a striking number of people switched their response from the U.S. to China. 60.4% of Koreans believed that in the future China will exert the most global economic influence, while 23.9% named the U.S. This change was visible regardless of generation. The reason for the difference in perceived current and future influence is that over half (56.2%) of those who cited the U.S. in the first question switched to China for the second question. In contrast, 90.9% of those who cited China in the first question also cited China in the second question.

Public Opinion Studies Center

The Public Opinion Studies Center at the Asan Institute conducts some of the most widely cited public opinion surveys in international relations and political science. Its regular polls produce reliable data for political leaders and the general public, creating more informed policy debates and decisions. The Center also publishes a monthly survey report dealing with both international and domestic issues in Korea. Major publications include *The Vote Choice of Korean Electorates (in Korean)* and, *Electoral Reform in Korea: Reapportionment and Redistricting (in Korean)* which respectively cover Korean voting behavior and the election system.

Other Survey Reports, such as “South Korea in a Changing World: Foreign Affairs,” “The Asan Post-election Report,” “Asan Breaking Poll: The Death of Kim Jong-Il and Its Effects on South Korean Public Opinion,” and “The Asan Institute Opinion Poll in the Wake of the Attack on Yeonpyeong Island,” gauge public sentiment on salient issues in Korean society.

The full text of each survey reports is available on the Asan Institute website (www.asaninst.org) under the Publication-Public Opinion Survey section.

For more details on polling methodology, please visit www.asaninst.org/eng

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