



# KEI: 2020 Report on American Attitudes Toward the Korean Peninsula

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This study on American Attitudes Toward the Korean Peninsula surveyed 1,248 Americans in August of 2020. The survey was commissioned by the Korean Economic Institute of America and conducted by YouGov.

The goal of the report is to explore perceptions of Americans on the relationship with South Korea, the challenges presented by North Korea, and how the U.S. should manage its relationship with the peninsula. This has been explored through direct questions concerning specific trade and military alliances in the region as well as how South and North Korea more generally fit into global international relations.

YouGov surveyed 1,064 respondents that were weighted to reflect a nationally representative sample of adults (18+) in the U.S. Of that sample, 389 Americans indicated following international news. An additional 184 Americans who specifically follow international news were surveyed to ensure a sample size of over 500 respondents that follow international news. Among this group, 291 respondents also indicate specifically following Asia-Pacific (APAC) news.

Results in this report are presented among the nationally representative sample of 1,064 respondents unless otherwise noted on the slide. For any questions presented in this report measuring multiple countries or regions, respondents were given a predetermined list of country/regions to react to.



**Survey conducted from August 26<sup>th</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020**



**Average Survey Length: 15 minutes**

# Demographics: By Sample Type



## Education

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
High school or less	43%	29%
Some college, 2 year	31%	34%
4-year	17%	24%
Post-grad	9%	12%

## Income



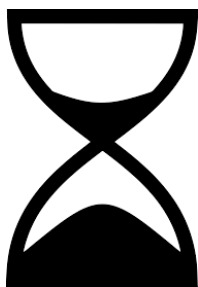
	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
Less than 10,000	10%	7%
\$10,000 - \$24,999	14%	13%
\$25,000 - \$49,999	20%	22%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	27%	29%
\$100,000 or More	15%	18%
Prefer not say	14%	12%

## Region

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
Northeast	20%	21%
Midwest	22%	24%
South	36%	33%
West	22%	22%

## Age

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
18-29	22%	18%
30-49	31%	26%
50-64	30%	33%
65 or older	17%	22%



## Ethnicity

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
White	68%	70%
Black	12%	9%
Hispanic	13%	13%
Other	7%	8%

## Political Party:



	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
Democrat	36%	38%
Republican	25%	22%
Independent	27%	32%
Other/Not Sure	12%	10%

## Gender

	Nat. Rep	Int'l News Followers
Male	49%	58%
Female	51%	42%



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# KEY INSIGHTS: Americans' General Views on South and North Korea

Two-thirds of Americans (66%) have a “very favorable” or “favorable” view of South Korea.

- 42% of Americans see South Korea as a “very” or “fairly influential” nation in the world compared to 29% who view North Korea as an influential nation.
- 49% of Americans view South Korea as a friend to the U.S.
  - Viewing South Korea as a friend, at least half of Americans would like to see the U.S. and South Korea cooperate on several issues such as international peacekeeping, global health, trade rules, and technology infrastructure.
  - Democrats are generally more likely to desire this cooperation between the U.S. and South Korea.
- 37% of Americans approve of U.S. administration’s handling of relations with South Korea. However, four-in-ten Americans are “unsure” suggesting a lack of information on the current U.S. policy towards South Korea.

Seven-in-ten Americans (71%) have a “very unfavorable” or “unfavorable” view of North Korea.

- 68% of Americans see North Korea as an adversary of the U.S. – one of the highest of all nations or regions included.
  - Further, 38% of Americans consider North Korea among the top 3 critical foreign policy challenges facing the U.S. – trailing only the challenges presented by China and Russia.
- Fewer than one-in-three Americans (31%) approve of the current U.S. administration’s handling of North Korea.



# KEY INSIGHTS: Americans' Views on Trade & Military Alliance with South Korea

Fewer than one-in-three Americans are aware of the free trade agreement with South Korea (27%).

- Regardless of awareness, 65% of Americans believe engaging in trade with South Korea is beneficial to the U.S.
  - More Americans following international news (35%) and APAC news (40%) are aware of the U.S. & South Korea free trade agreement.
- 26% of Americans watched, listened to or followed South Korean musical artists, movies, or TV shows in the past 12 months. 71% are aware that at least some of these entertainment products originate in Korea.
  - Further, at least eight-in-ten Americans have heard of the South Korean brands of Samsung (89%), LG (86%), Kia (81%), and Hyundai (80%). However, fewer than half of Americans are aware these brands originated in South Korea. Few have heard of South Korean social media/messaging and IT brands.

Six-in-ten Americans (62%) see the military alliance with South Korea as beneficial to the U.S.

- 49% of Americans would like to see the U.S. maintain the current troop presence in South Korea and 7% would like to see an increase in troops. Comparatively, only 19% of Americans would like to see the U.S. reduce or withdraw troops from the peninsula.
- 61% believe the U.S. should assist South Korea in the aftermath of a cyber-attack and 36% believe the U.S. should coordinate with South Korea on cyber issues in general.



# KEY INSIGHTS: Americans' Views on the North Korea Challenge

North Korea is ranked with China and Russia as a major adversary of the U.S.

- 84% of Americans believe it is “very important” or “important” for North Korea to give up its military nuclear capabilities.
  - Political parties are generally aligned on North Korea giving up its nuclear weapons – the vast majority of Republicans (88%) and Democrats (86%) think it’s important.
  - In general, 47% of all Americans think no countries, including the U.S., should maintain military nuclear capabilities.
- 83% of Americans believe it is “very important” or “important” for the U.S. to push for human rights improvements in North Korea.
  - This is also consistent across both Republicans (85%) and Democrats (88%).
- 53% of Americans approve of the U.S. sending humanitarian assistance to North Korean citizens and 47% approve of the U.S. providing Covid-19 assistance to North Korean citizens.
  - More Democrats approve of sending humanitarian assistance to North Korea compared to Republicans (60% vs 50%).

# AMERICANS' GENERAL VIEWS ON SOUTH & NORTH KOREA

Approximately half of all Americans view South Korea as a “friend” of the U.S. and would like to see the two countries coordinate more on issues such as international peacekeeping, global health, trade rules, and technology infrastructure. North Korea, conversely, is considered the 3<sup>rd</sup> most critical foreign policy challenge to the U.S., with only one-in-ten Americans having a favorable opinion of the nation.



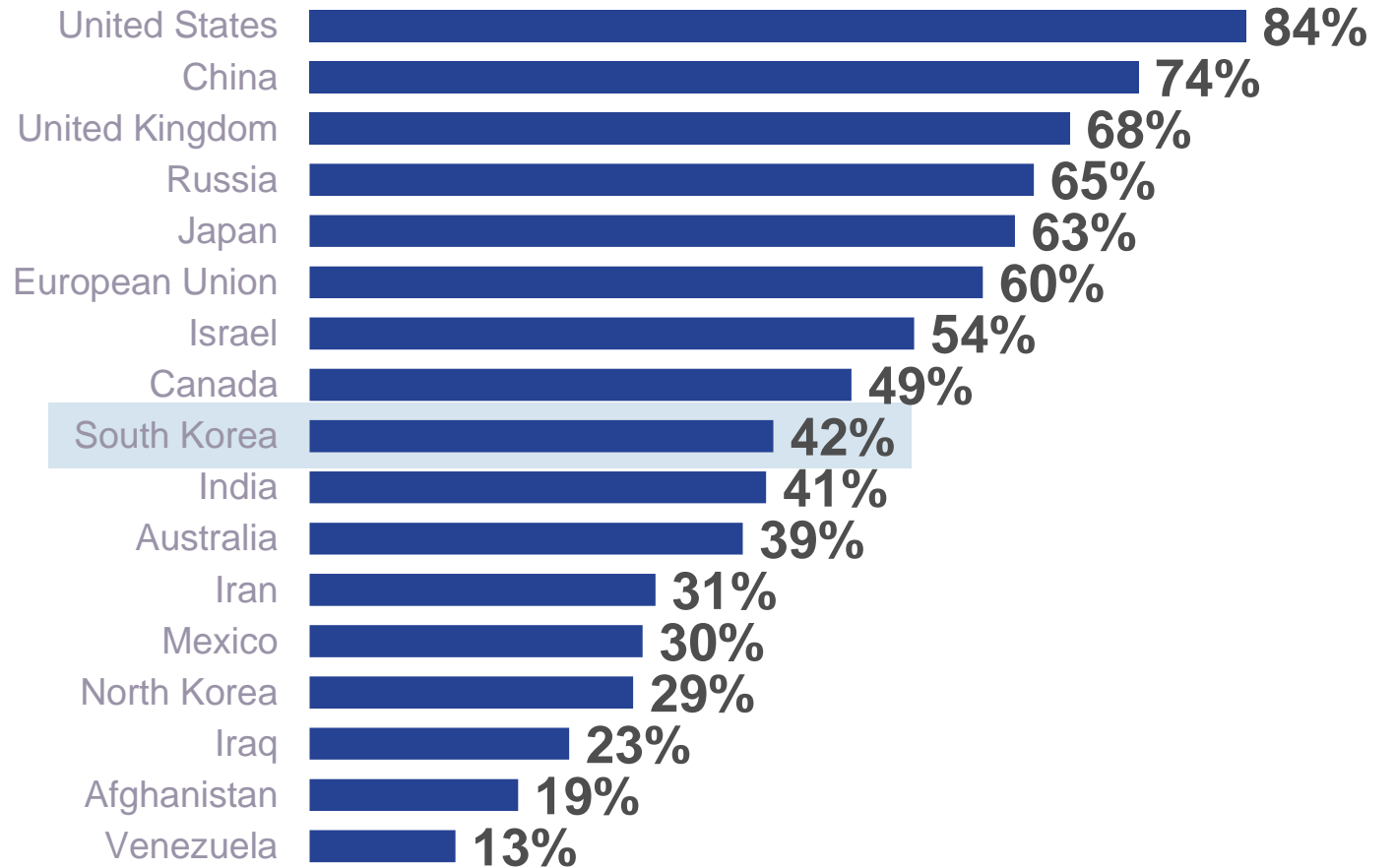
4-in-10 see South Korea as a very/fairly influential nation in the world; the U.S. is viewed as the most influential nation in the world.



Fewer see North Korea as very/fairly influential (29%).

International News Followers are more likely to see South Korea as very/fairly influential (50%, vs. 36% among those who do not follow National news).

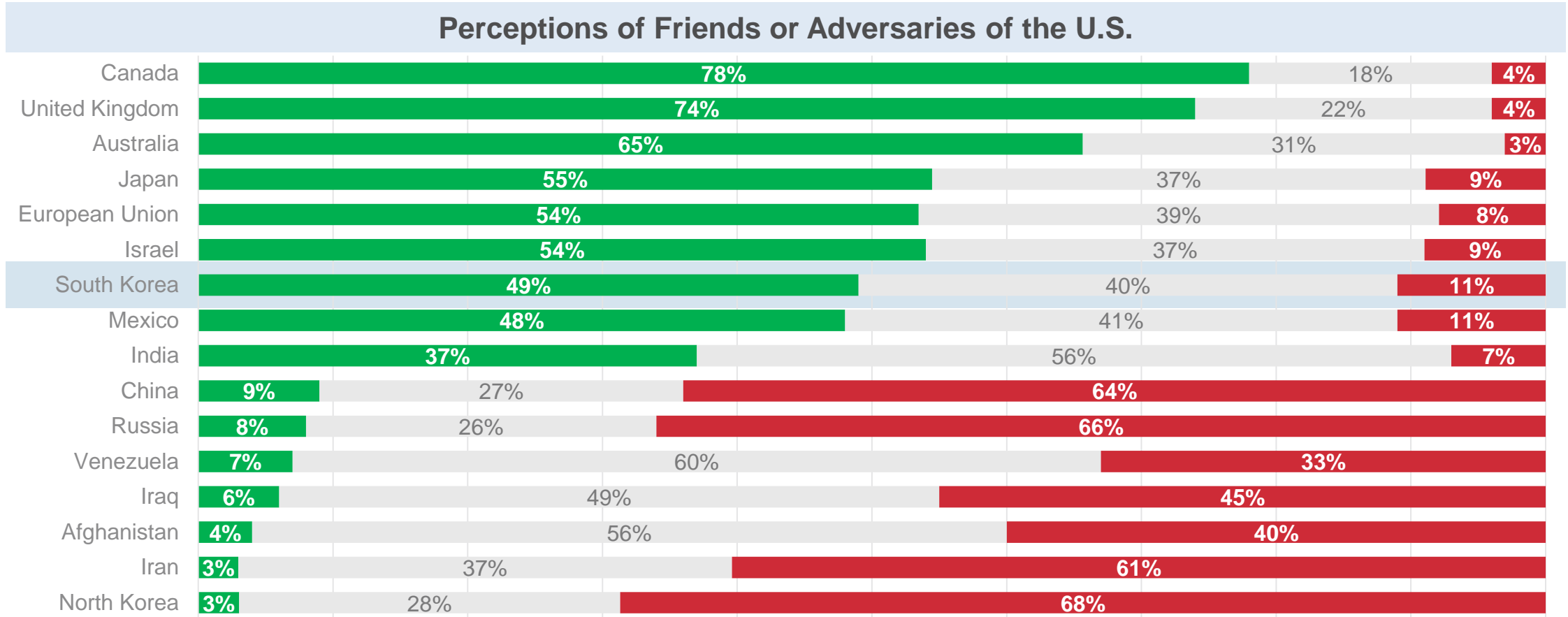
**Nation's or Region's\* Influence in the World  
(very/fairly influential)**



Q1: How influential do you think the following country or region is in the world? (n=1064)  
\*Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question

# Half of Americans view South Korea as a “friend” to the U.S.

The most commonly viewed “friends” of the U.S. are the three predominately English-speaking nations (Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia).



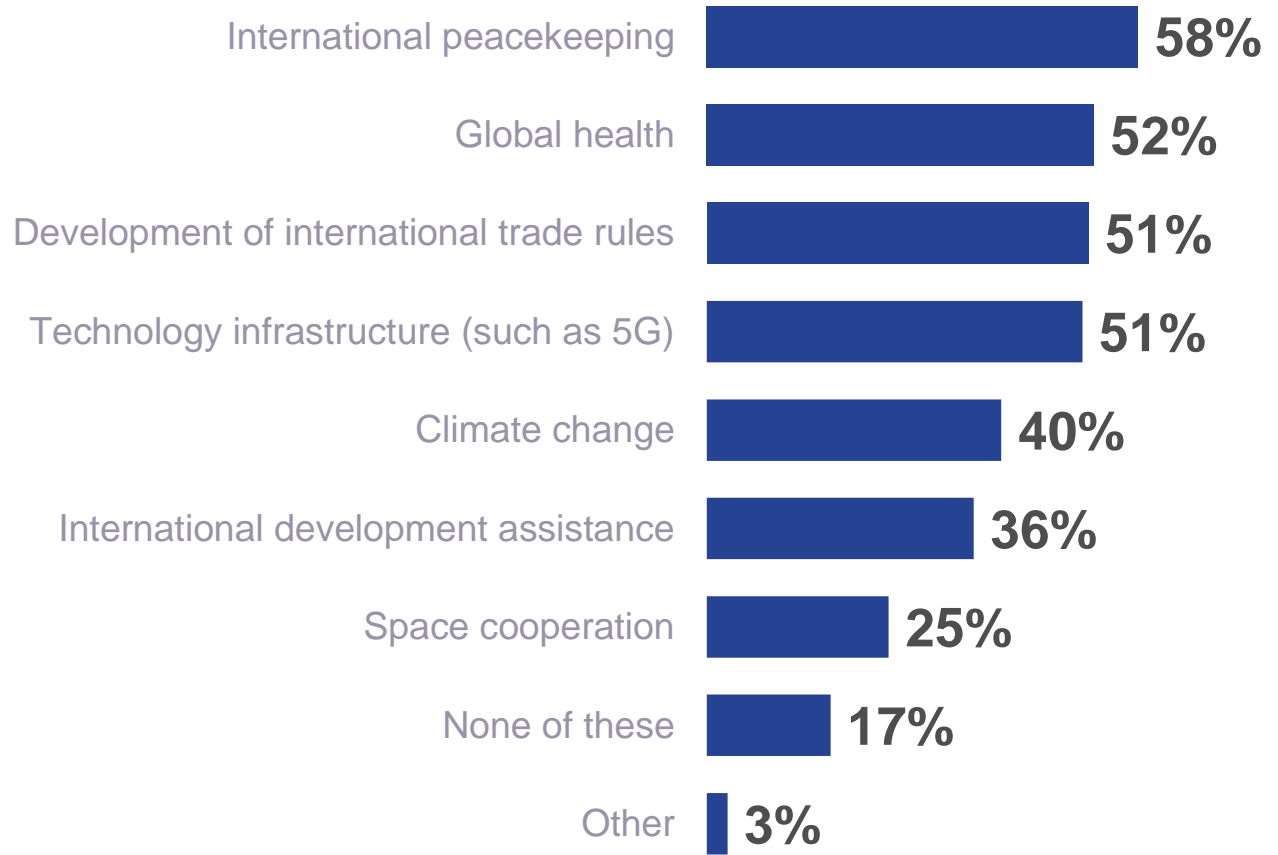
At least half of Americans would like to see the U.S. and South Korea cooperate on several issues such as international peacekeeping, global health, trade rules, and technology infrastructure.



Compared to Republicans, Democrats are significantly more likely to want to see cooperation on:

- Global health (65% vs. 42%)
- Climate change (59% vs 16%)
- Technology infrastructure (59% vs. 44%)

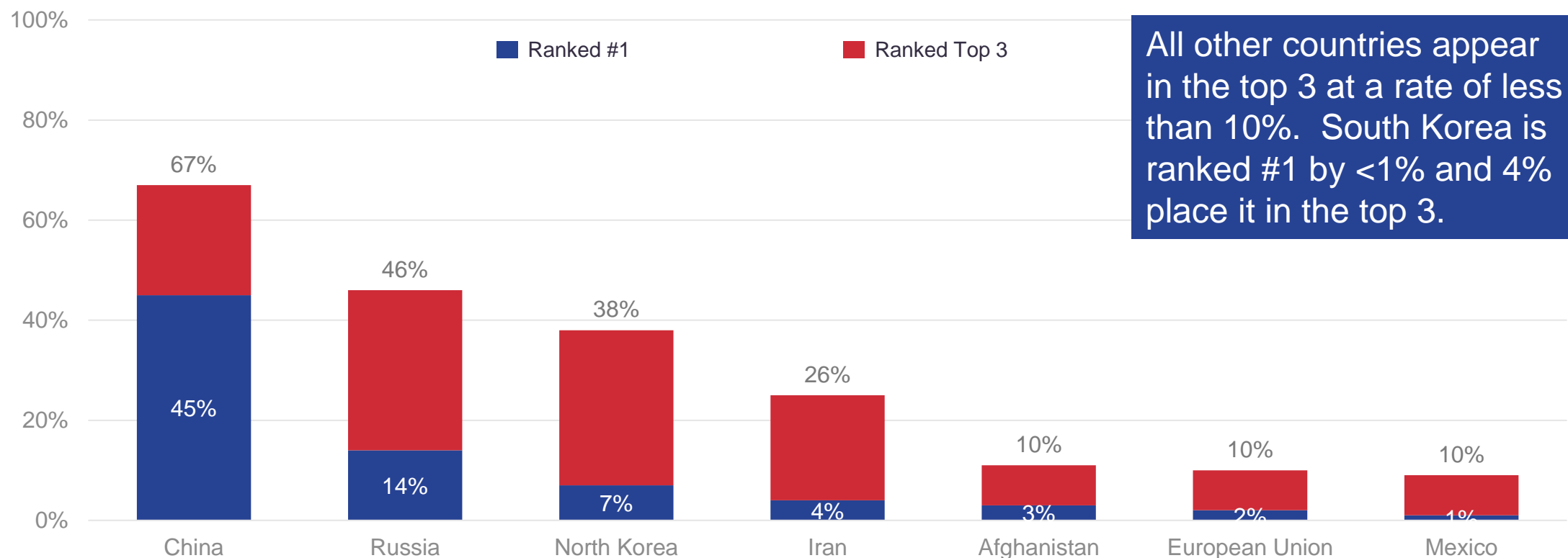
### Issues that U.S. and South Korea Should Cooperate On



# North Korea seen as 3<sup>rd</sup> most critical foreign policy challenge to the U.S., following only China and Russia.

Iran rounds out the top 4 critical foreign policy challenges to the U.S.

## Countries/Regions\* Representing the Most Critical Foreign Policy Challenges to the U.S.



All other countries appear in the top 3 at a rate of less than 10%. South Korea is ranked #1 by <1% and 4% place it in the top 3.

Americans following international news and APAC news see a greater challenge from China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran.

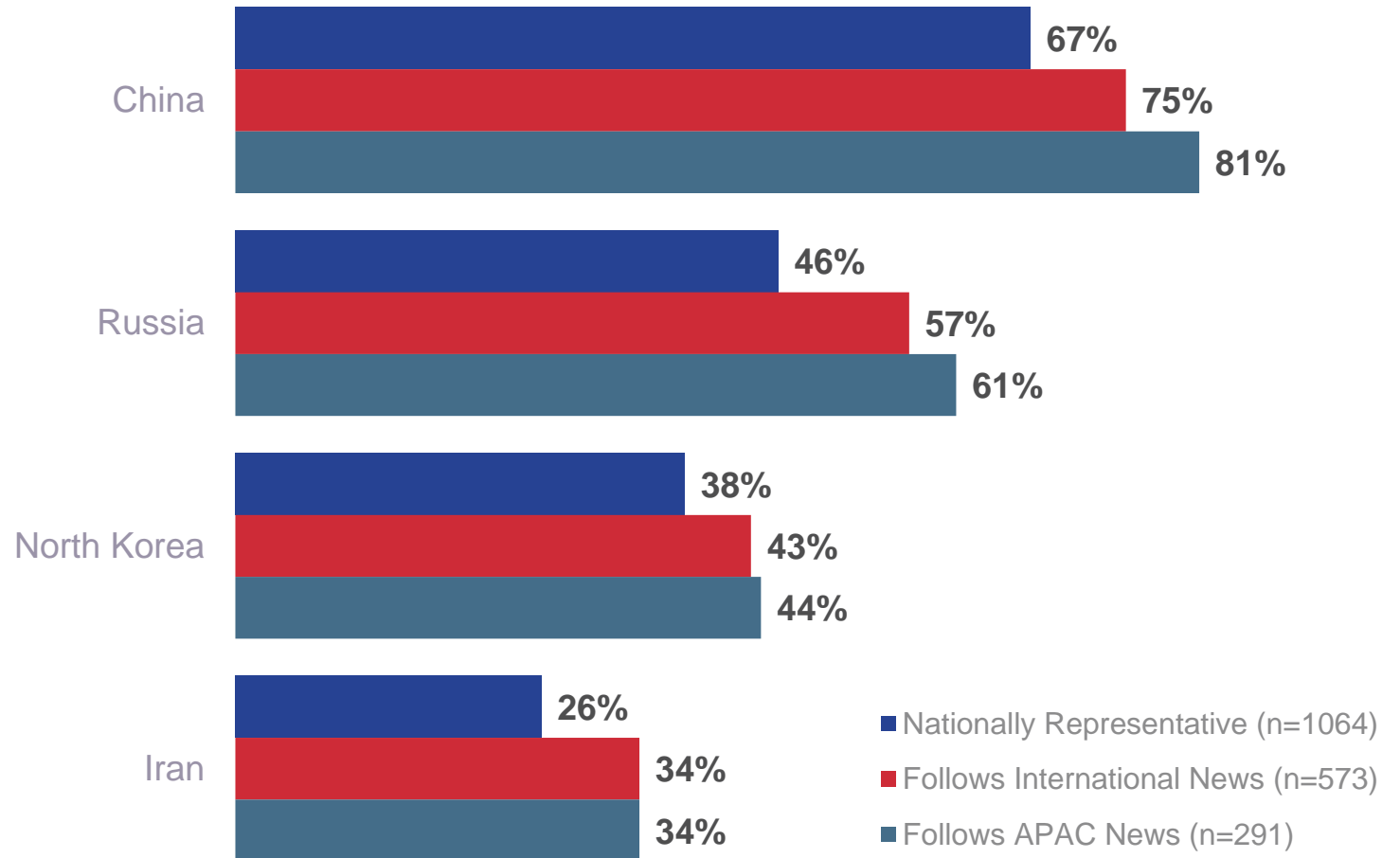


Democrats in America see Russia (57% vs. 40%) as a greater challenge compared to Republicans.



Republicans, however, view China as a greater challenge (78% vs. 65%).

**Countries/Regions\* Representing the Most Critical Foreign Policy Challenges to the U.S.**  
*(ranked in the top 3)*



Q8: In your view, which of the following countries and/or geographic regions, if any, represent the most critical foreign policy challenges for the U.S.? Please select up to three responses. (n=1064)

\*Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question

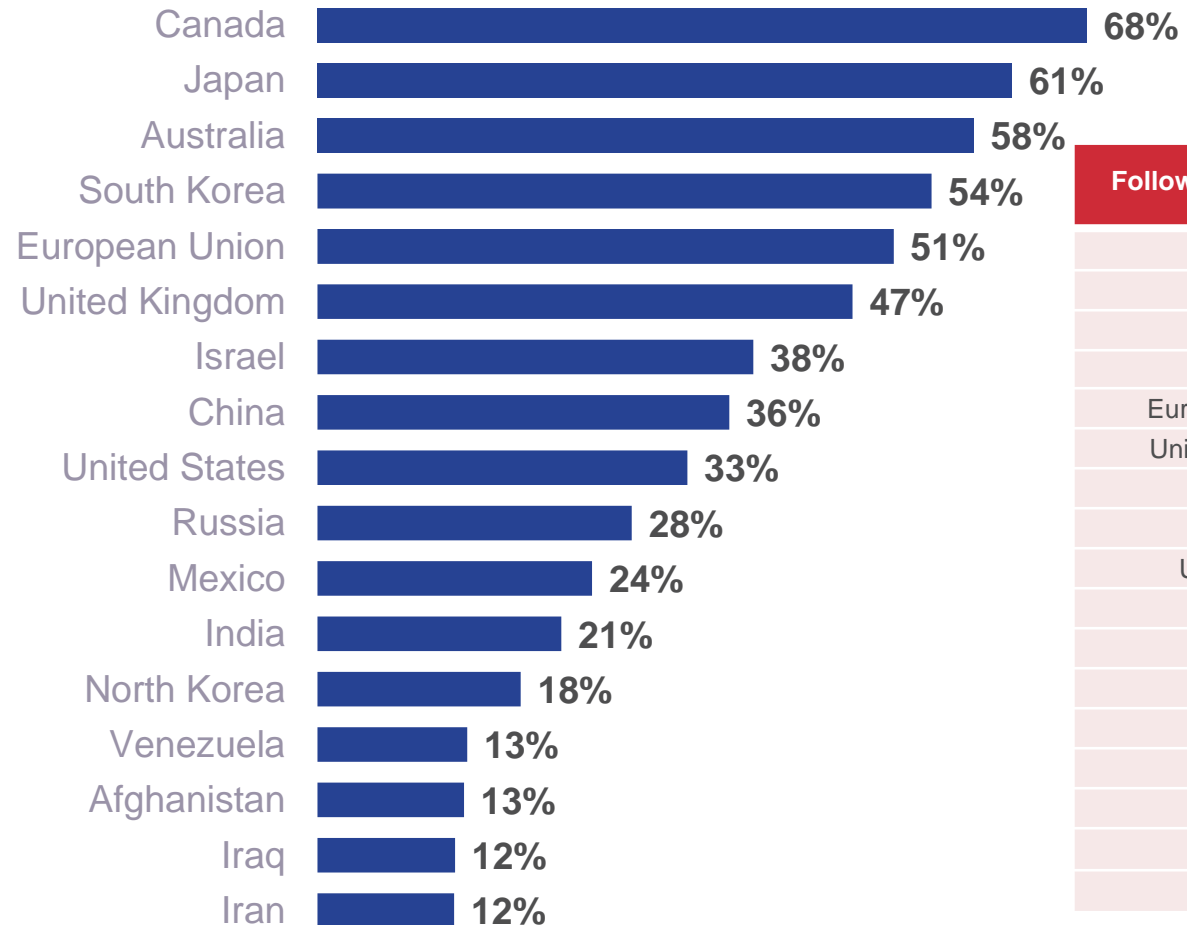
**54% of Americans say South Korea handled Covid-19 very well/well. This trails only Canada, Japan, and Australia in their perceived handling of the virus.**



This rises to 70% among international news followers who believe South Korea handled Covid-19 well.

Less than one-fifth of Americans believe North Korea handled Covid-19 well.

### Perception of Countries'/Regions'\* Handling of Covid-19 (very well/well)



#### Follows International News (n=573)

Canada	77%
Japan	76%
South Korea	70%
Australia	69%
European Union	59%
United Kingdom	51%
Israel	44%
China	42%
United States	32%
Russia	25%
Mexico	24%
India	21%
North Korea	17%
Iran	11%
Iraq	10%
Venezuela	10%
Afghanistan	9%

Q7: How well do you think the following country or region has handled the outbreak of COVID-19? (n=1064)  
\*Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question

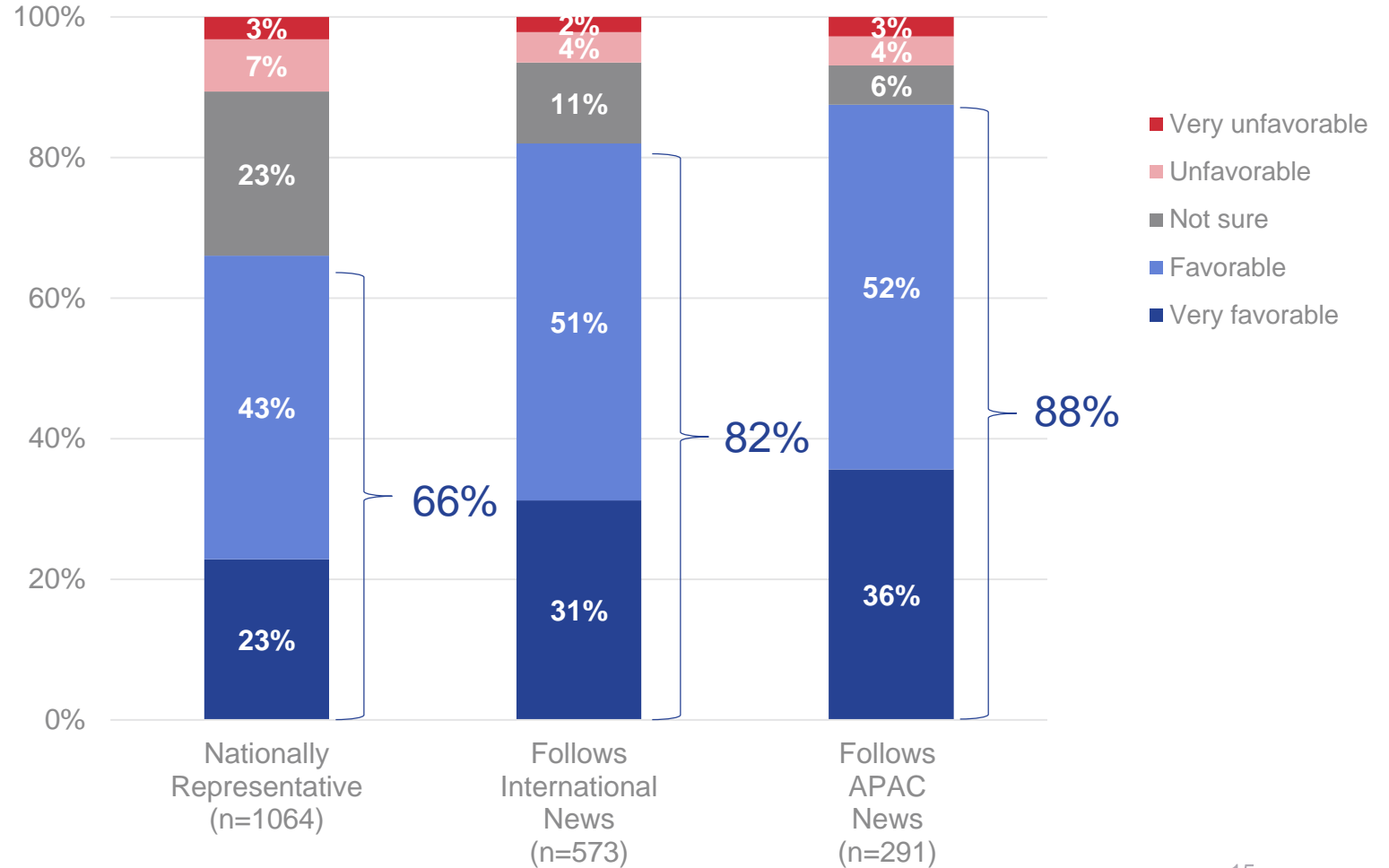


# Two-in-three Americans have a favorable view of South Korea.



Among those that follow international news, this rises to 82% and, among those that follow APAC news, this rises to 88%.

## Overall Opinion of South Korea



**37% of Americans approve of the U.S. administration's handling of relations with South Korea, with four-in-ten being "unsure."**

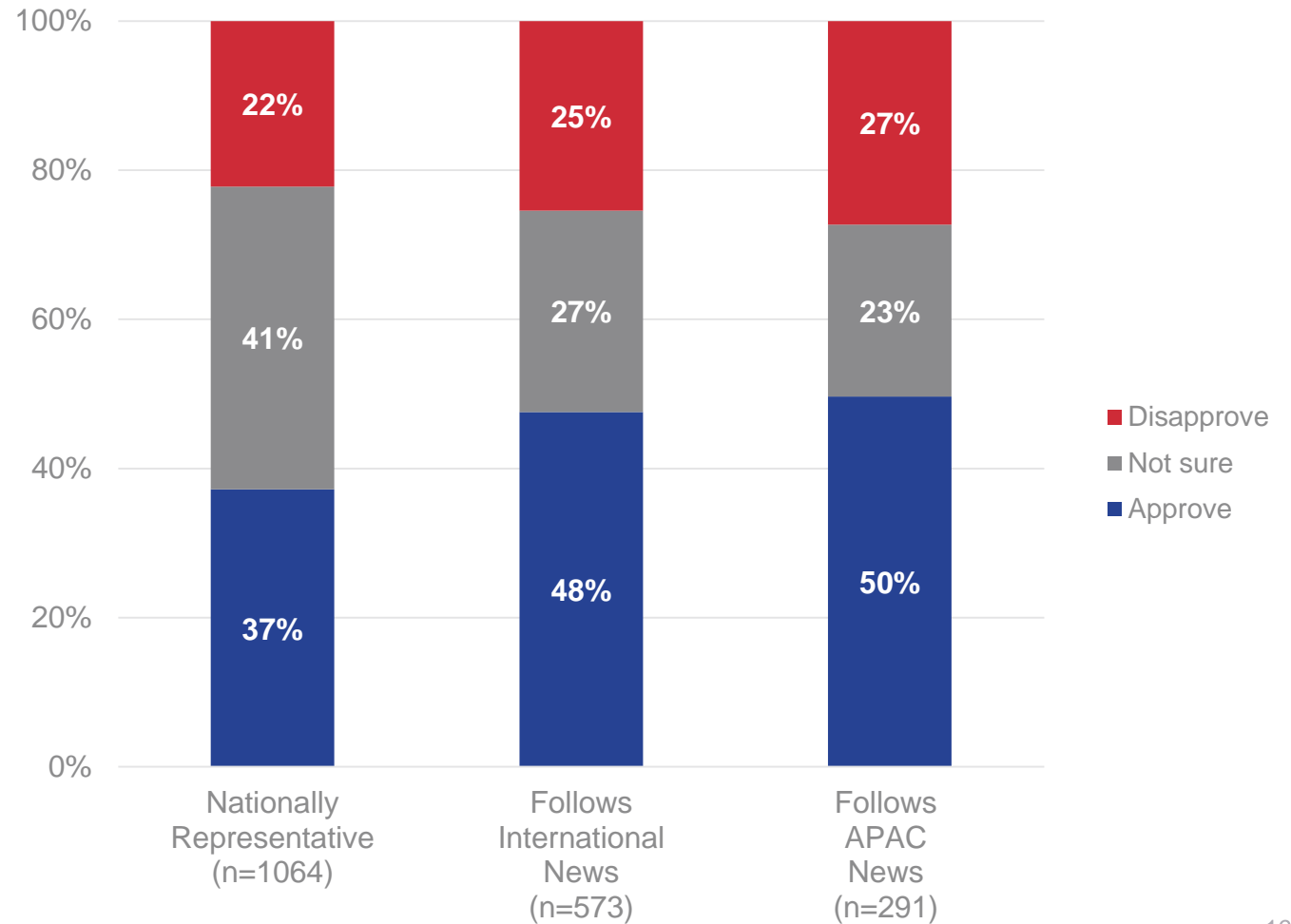


50% of those that follow APAC news approve of the administration's handling of South Korea.



Republicans are significantly more likely to approve of the administration's handling of South Korea compared to Democrats (63% vs. 24%).

### Approval of the Current U.S. Administration's Handling of Relations with South Korea

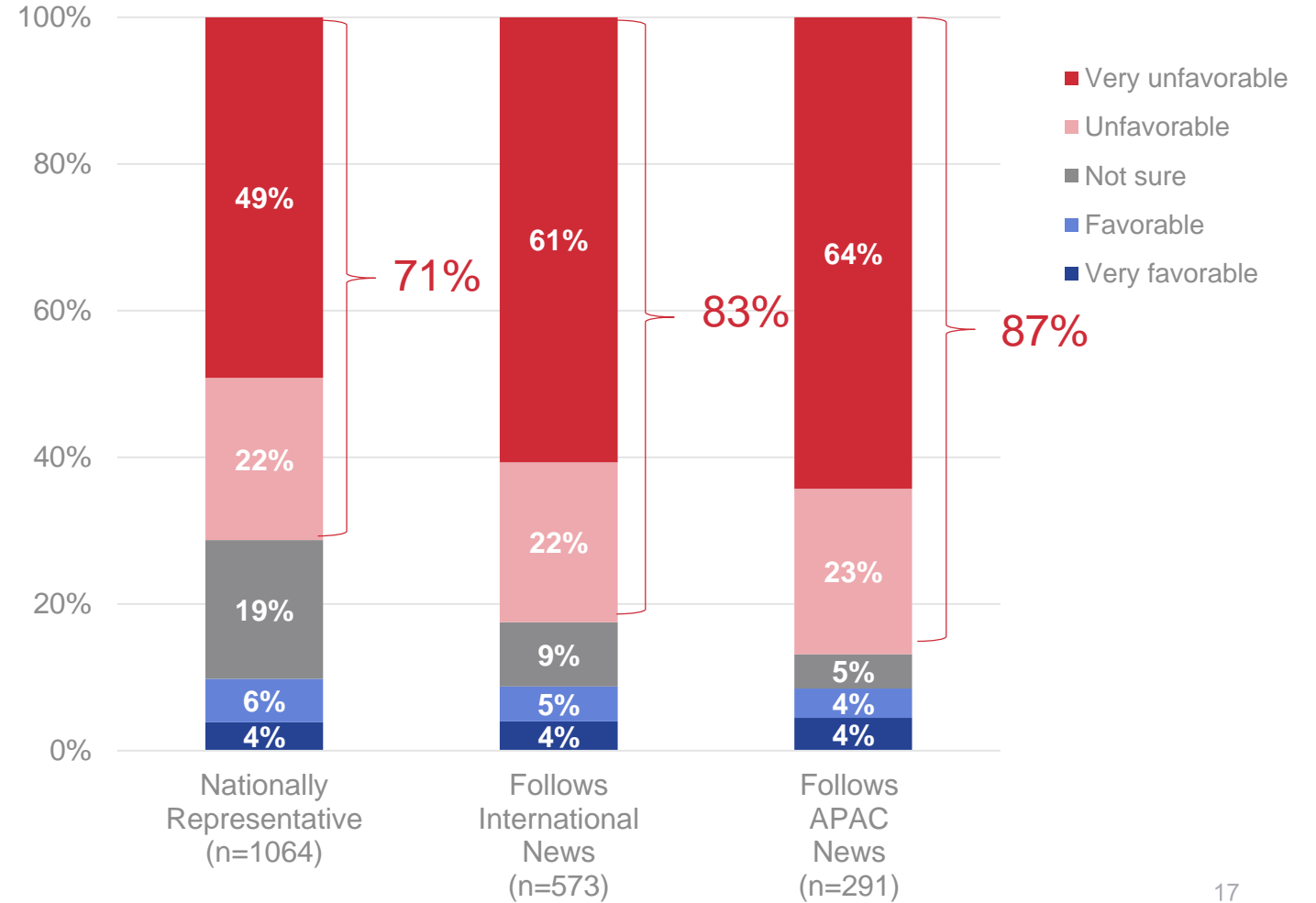


# Most Americans have unfavorable view of North Korea.



More international news and APAC news followers have an unfavorable view of North Korea.

## Overall Opinion of North Korea



Q20. Now thinking about North Korea, overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable opinion of North Korea? (n=1064)

**Fewer than one-in-three Americans approve of the current U.S. administration's handling of North Korea.**

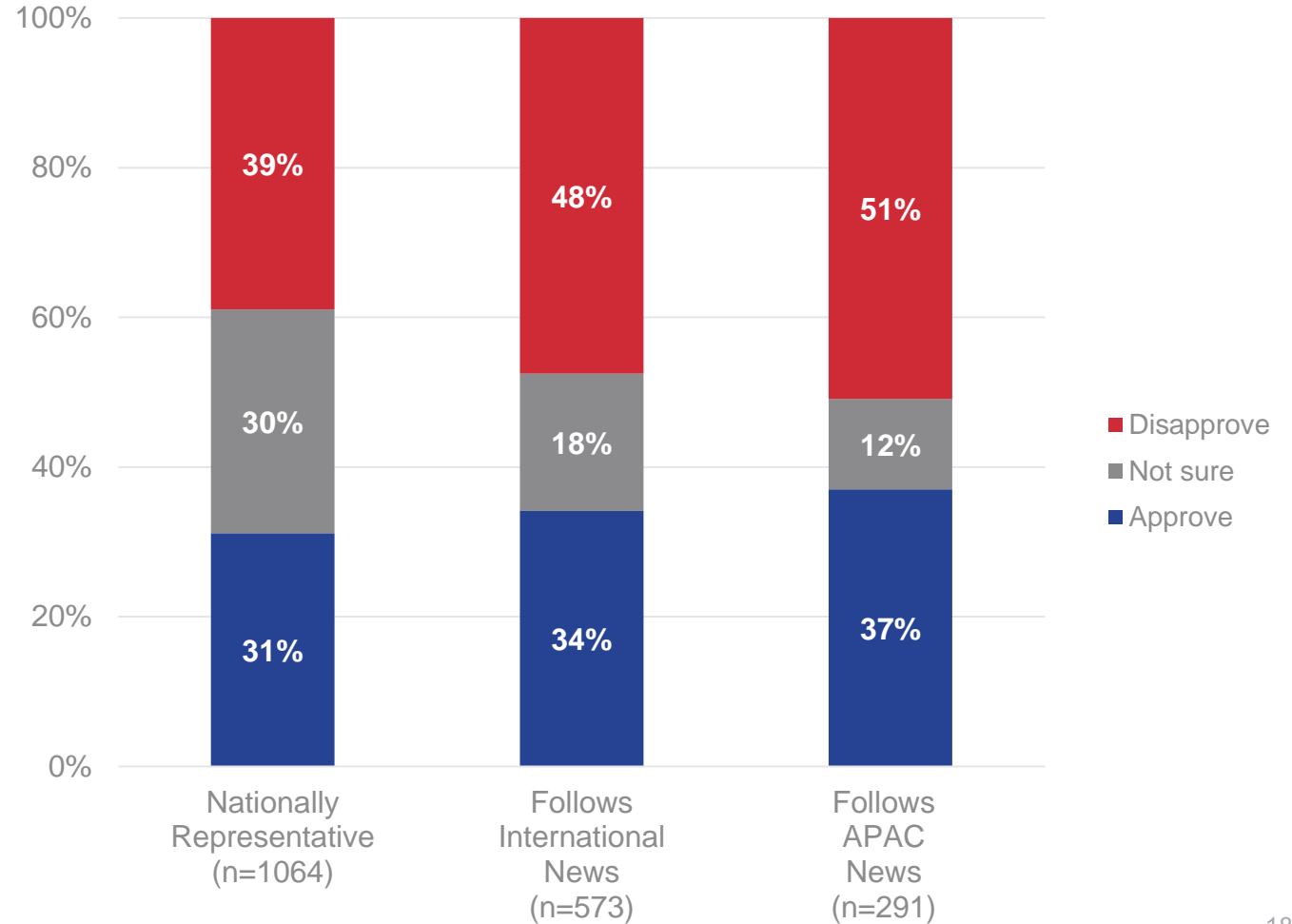


Only 9% of Democrats approve of the current administration's handling of relations with North Korea.



However, 66% of Republicans approve.

### Approval of the Current U.S. Administration's Handling of Relations with North Korea



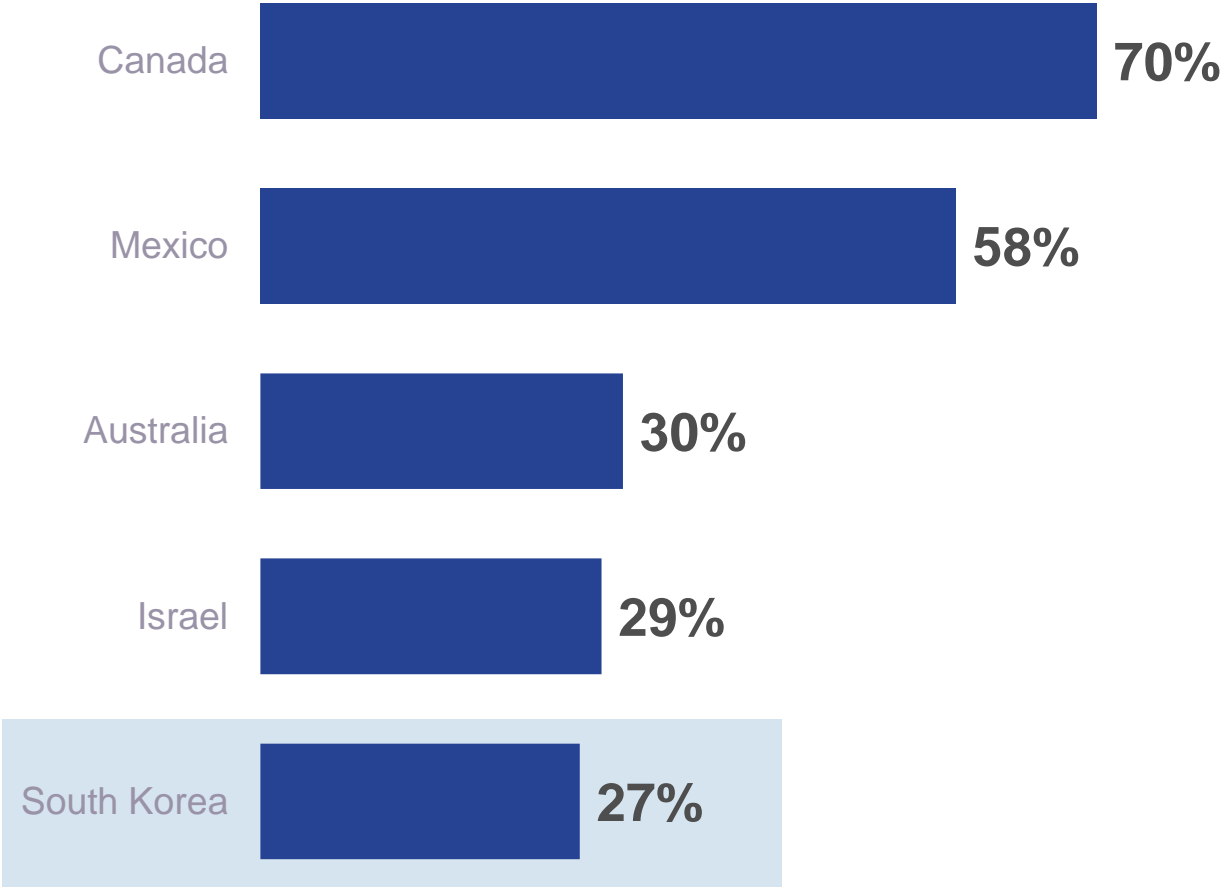
# AMERICANS' VIEWS ON TRADE WITH SOUTH KOREA

Two-in-three Americans see trade with South Korea as beneficial to the U.S., however, less than one-in-three are aware of the U.S.'s free trade agreement with South Korea.

**Fewer than one-in-three Americans are aware of the free trade agreement with South Korea (27%).**

Most Americans are aware of U.S. free trade agreements with fellow North American neighbors – Mexico and Canada.

**Awareness of Countries\* that have a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.**



Q2. To the best of your knowledge, with which of the following countries/regions do you believe the U.S. has a standing free trade agreement? (n=1064)  
\*Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question

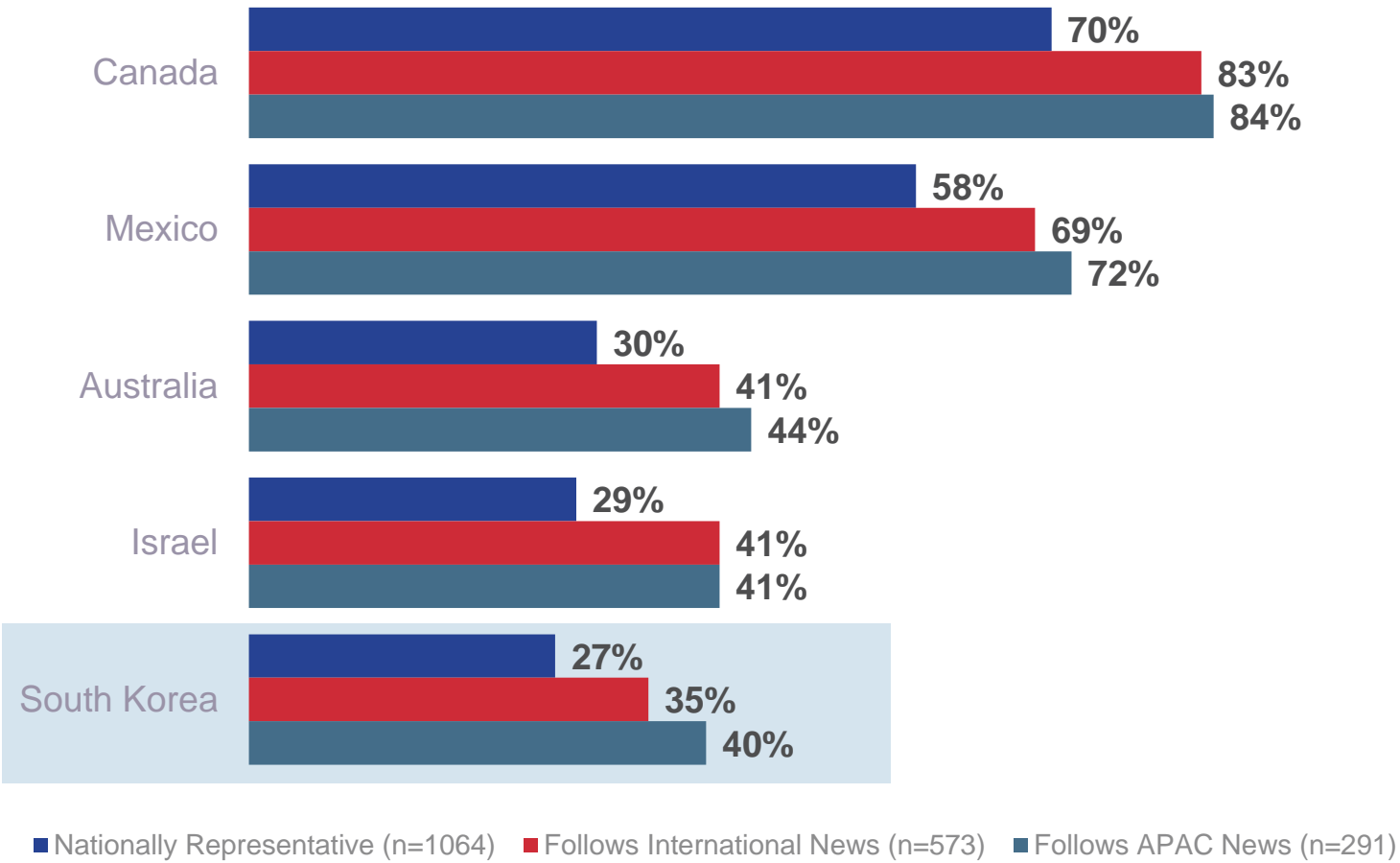


More Americans following international news and APAC news are aware of the U.S. & South Korea free trade agreement.



A similar trend is seen for awareness of the other U.S. free trade agreements.

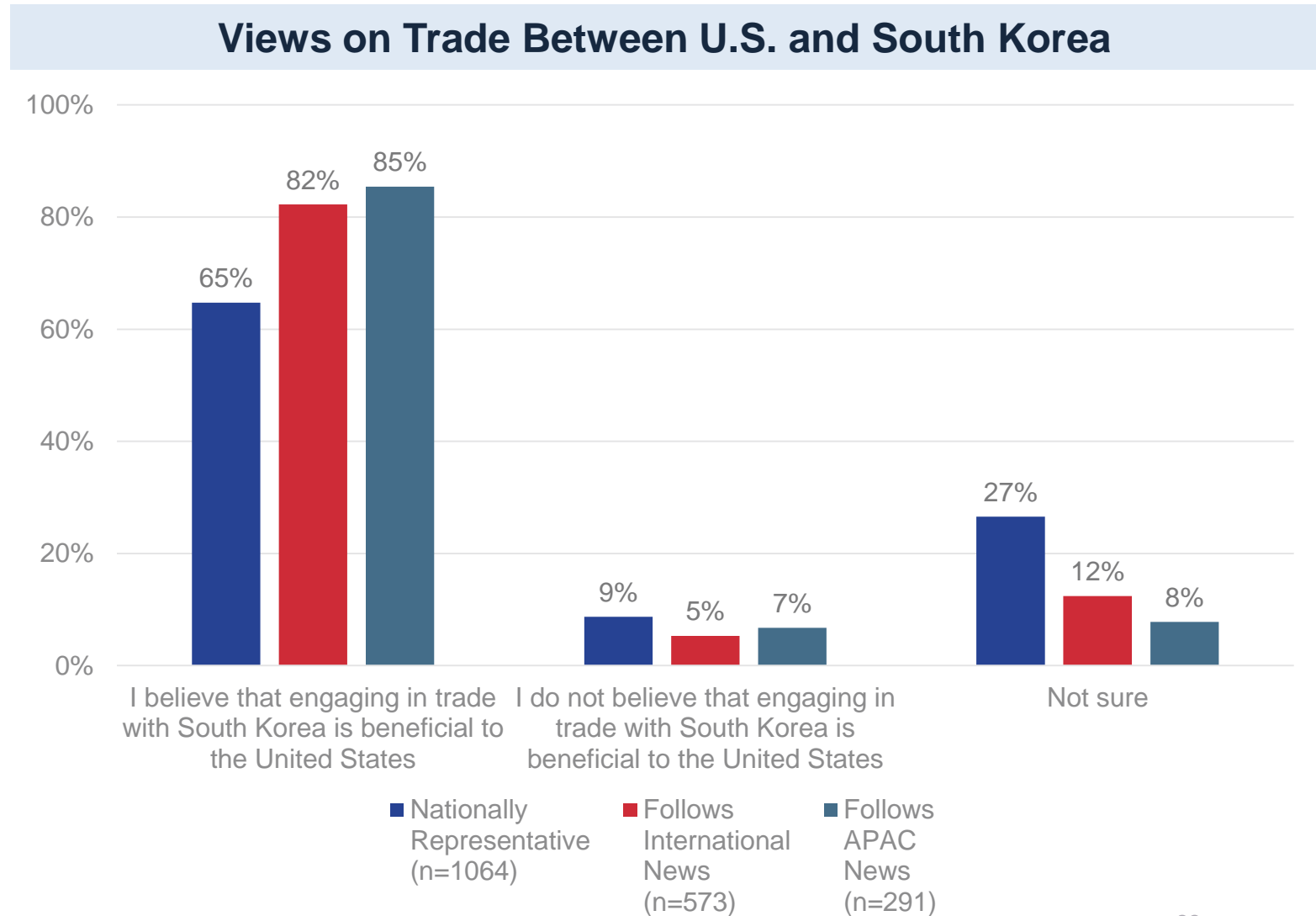
**Awareness of Countries\* that have a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.**



Regardless of awareness, two-in-three Americans see trade with South Korea as beneficial to the U.S.



Over eight-in-ten Americans that follow international news or APAC news see trade with South Korea as beneficial to the U.S.

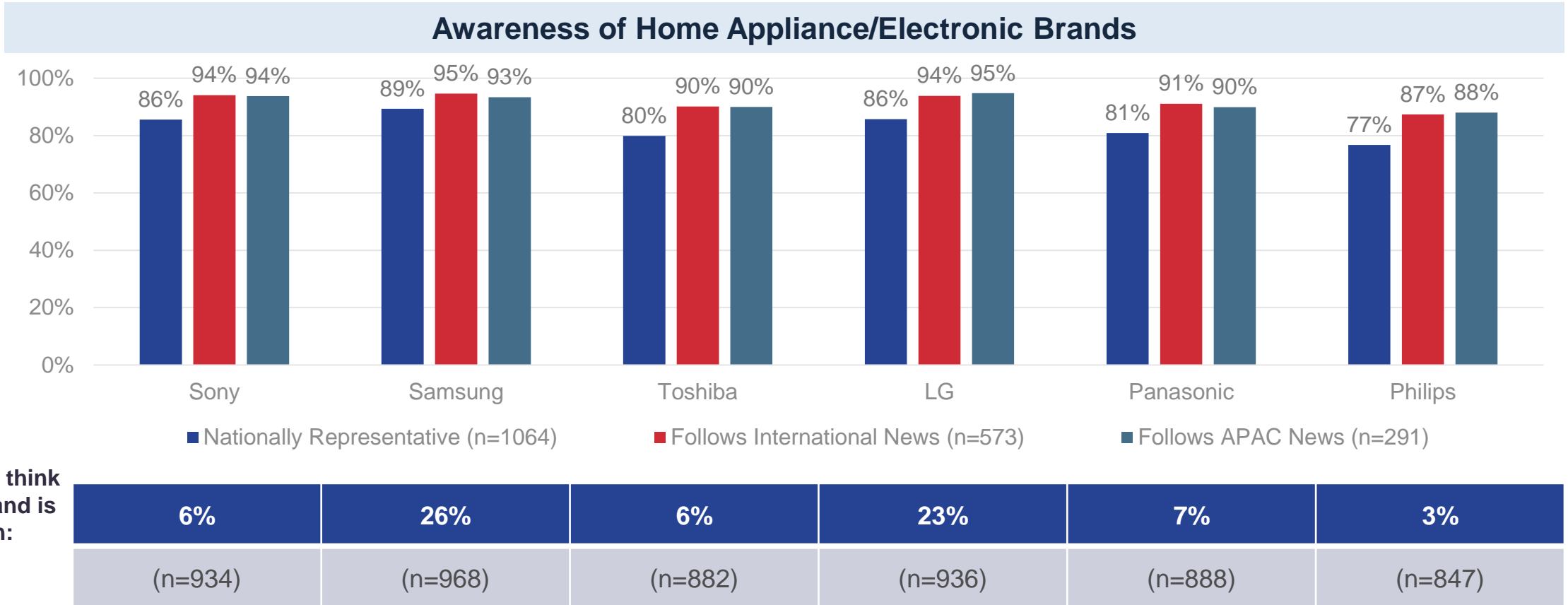


Q15. Do you believe trade with South Korea is beneficial to the United States, or do you not feel this way? (n=1064)

# Almost 9-in-10 Americans are aware of South Korean Brands

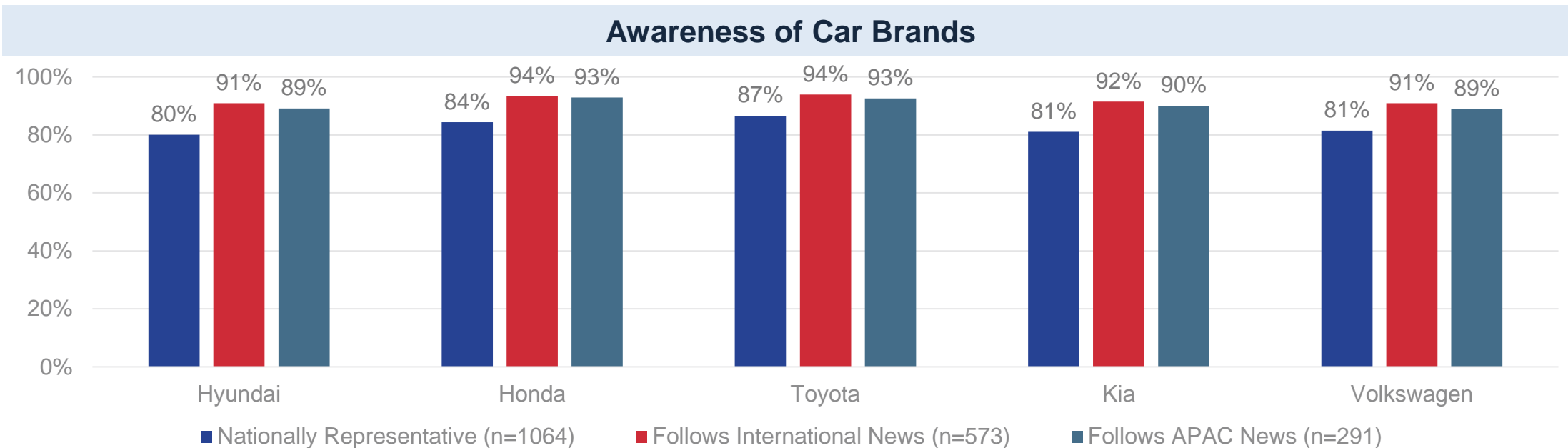
## Samsung & LG.

However, only 26% of Americans are aware Samsung originated in South Korea and 23% of Americans are aware that LG is a South Korean brand.



# 8-in-10 Americans are aware of South Korean Car Brands – Hyundai & Kia.

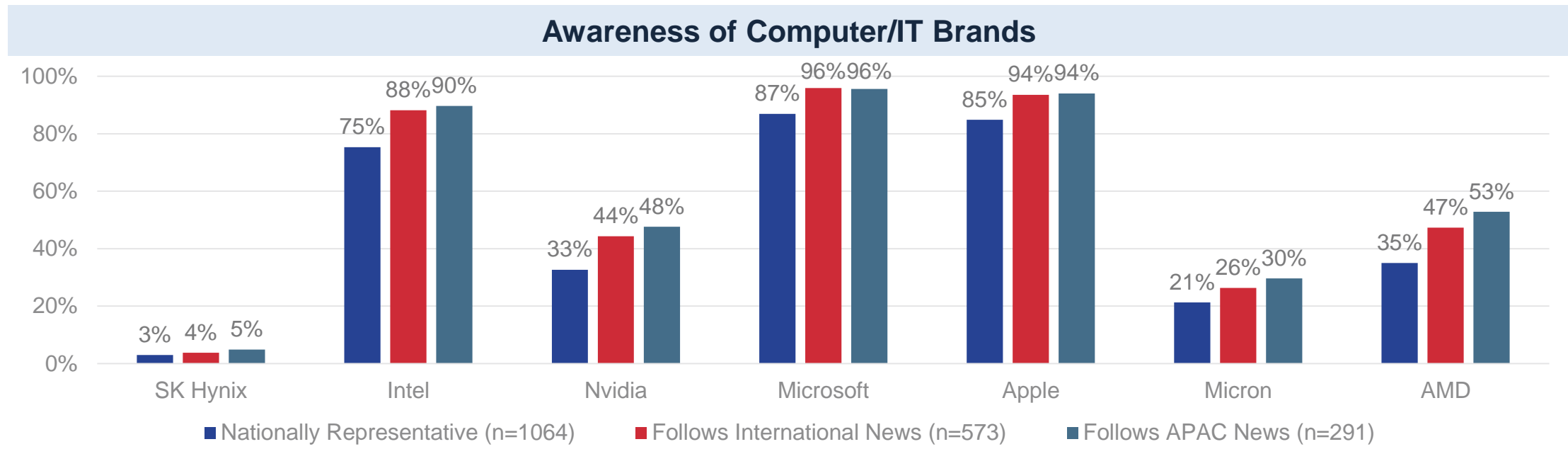
Fewer than half of these Americans are aware that Hyundai (44%) originated in South Korea or that Kia is a South Korean car brand (47%).



% who think the brand is Korean

Hyundai	44%	Honda	4%	Toyota	3%	Kia	47%	Volkswagen	1%
	(n=890)		(n=926)		(n=945)		(n=895)		(n=898)

# Few Americans are aware of South Korea's computer/information technology brand SK Hynix.

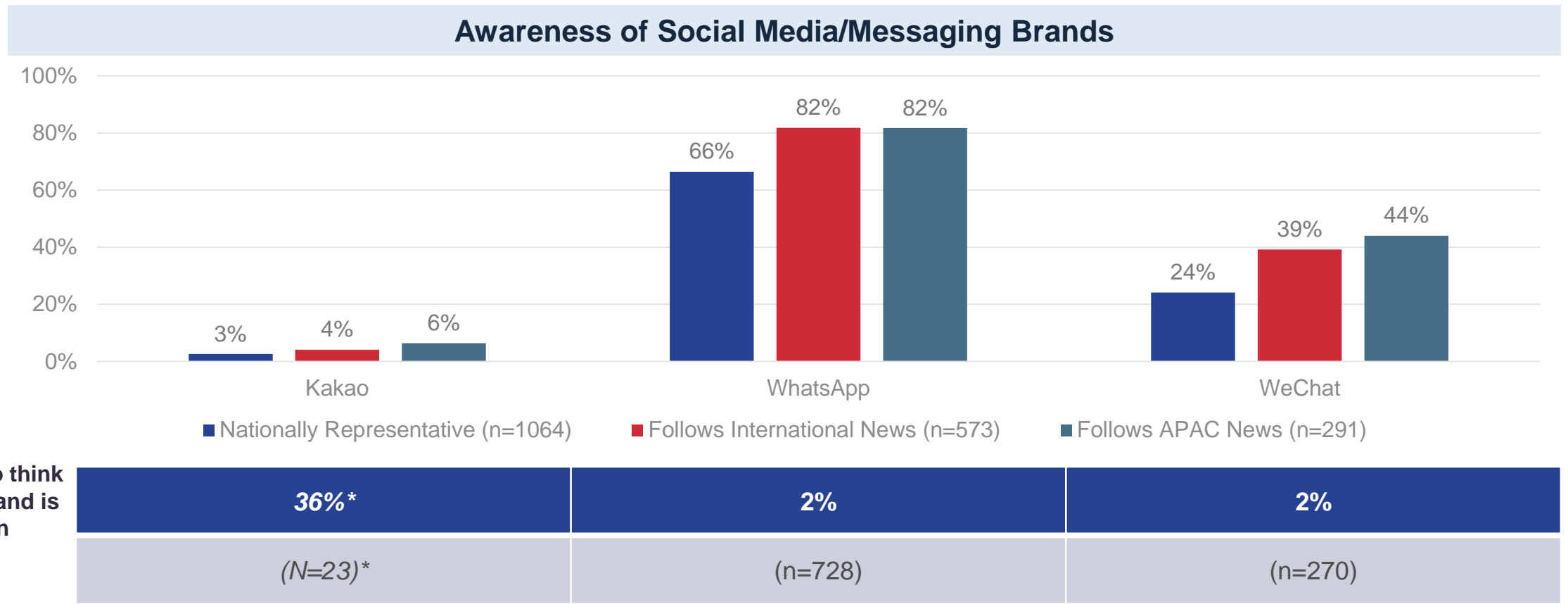


% who think the brand is Korean

28%*	1%	4%	1%	0%	2%	2%
(n=32)*	(n=843)	(n=360)	(n=951)	(n=930)	(n=238)	(n=389)

**YouGov**® Q4. Changing topics, which, if any, of the following brands or items have you heard of? (n=1064)  
 Q5c. From which country do you think the computer/information technology brand originates or comes from? Bases Vary  
 \*Caution: Small Base Size.

# Few Americans also are aware of South Korea's Kakao social media brand.

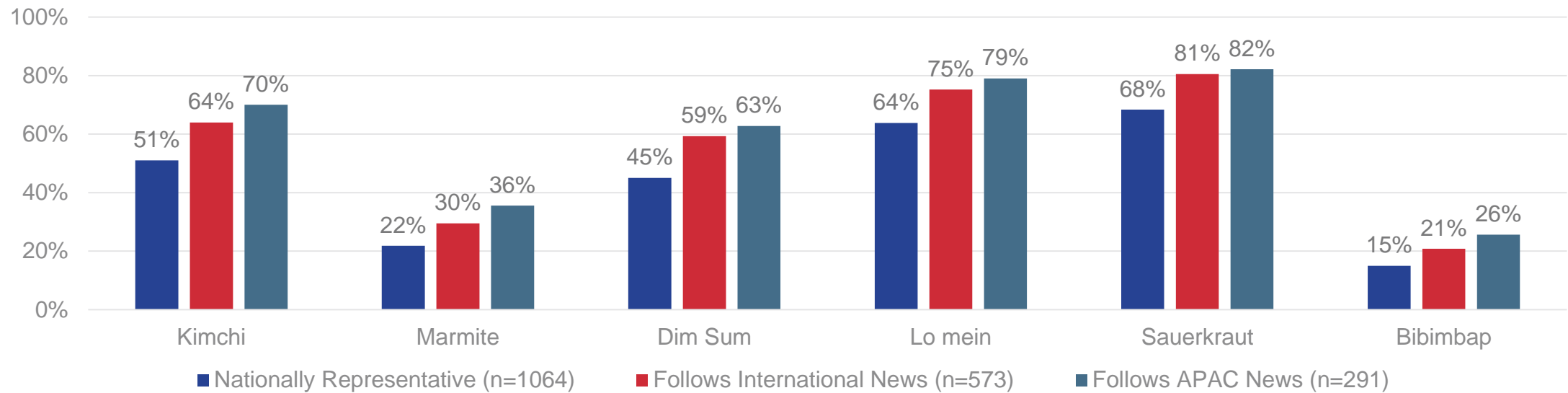




# Half of Americans are aware of Kimchi, with 15% being aware of Bibimbap.

Among those aware of these food items, over half correctly identified that they originated in South Korea.

**Awareness of Food/Cultural Items**



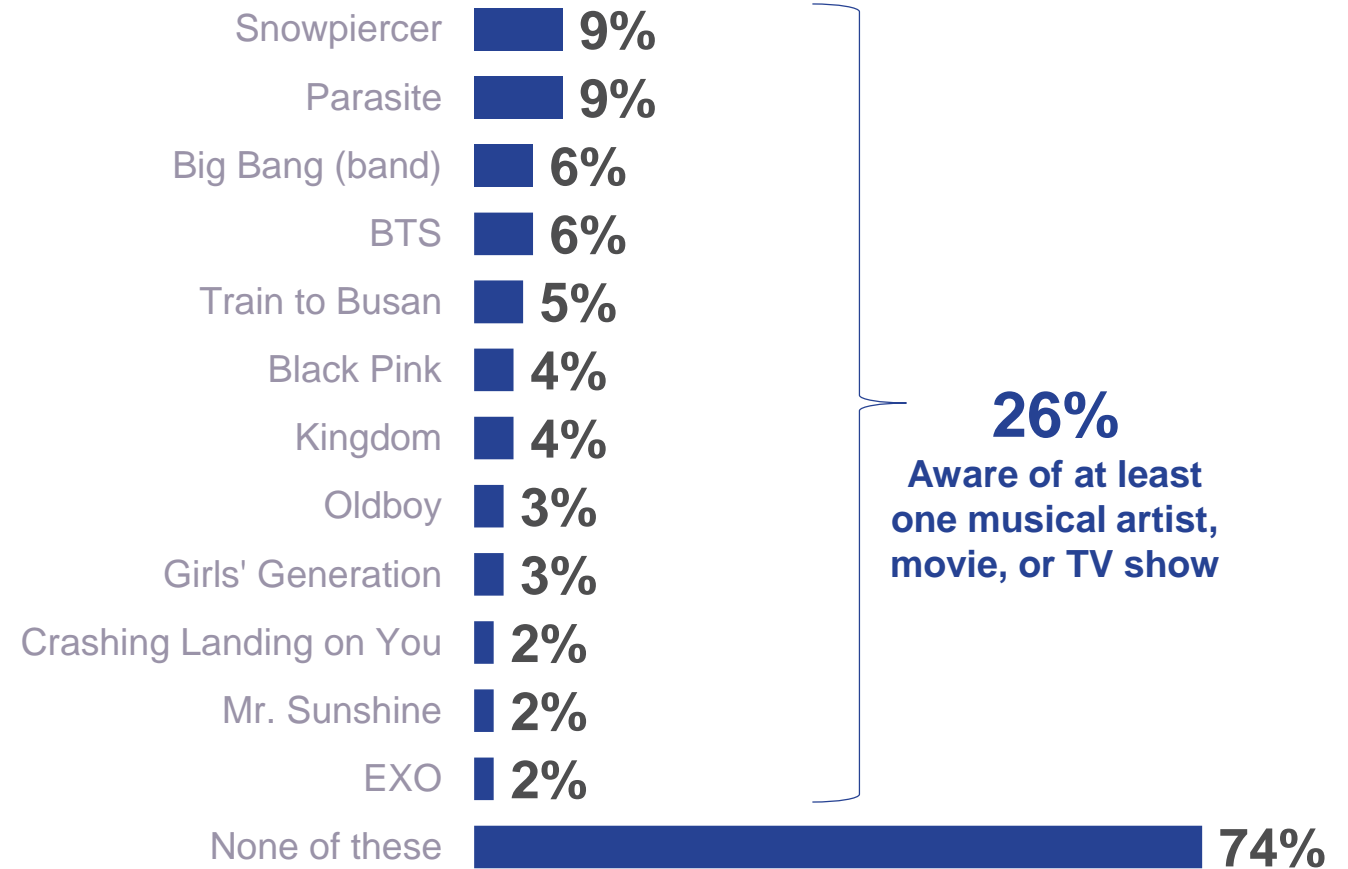
% who think the food/item is Korean

<b>58%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>69%</b>
(n=591)	(n=270)	(n=530)	(n=725)	(n=774)	(n=189)

One-in-four Americans recall at least one South Korean musical artist, movie, or TV show from the past 12 months.

About one-in-ten are aware of the film Snowpiercer or Parasite.

### Viewing of South Korean Musical Artists, Movies, or TV Shows

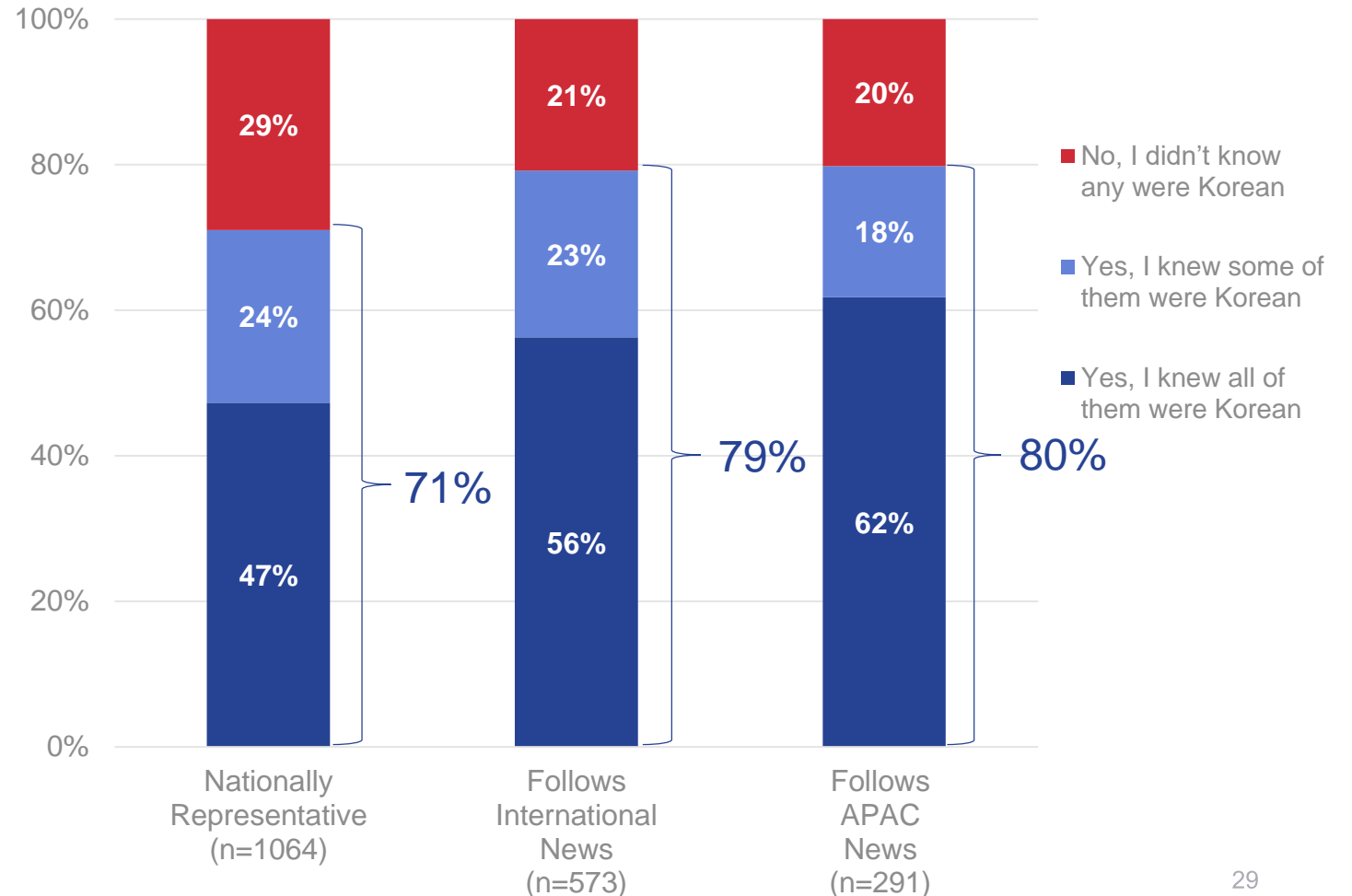


Of those that recalled a South Korean musical artist, movie, or TV show, 7-in-10 were aware that all or at least some were Korean.



This awareness rises to 79% among international news followers and 80% among APAC news followers.

### Awareness that these Musical Artists, Movies, or TV shows are Korean



Q13. Earlier you mentioned that in the past 12 months, you have watched, listened to or followed several musical artists, movies, or TV shows. Did you know that these are all Korean artists/productions? (n=270)

# AMERICANS' VIEWS ON MILITARY ALLIANCE WITH SOUTH KOREA

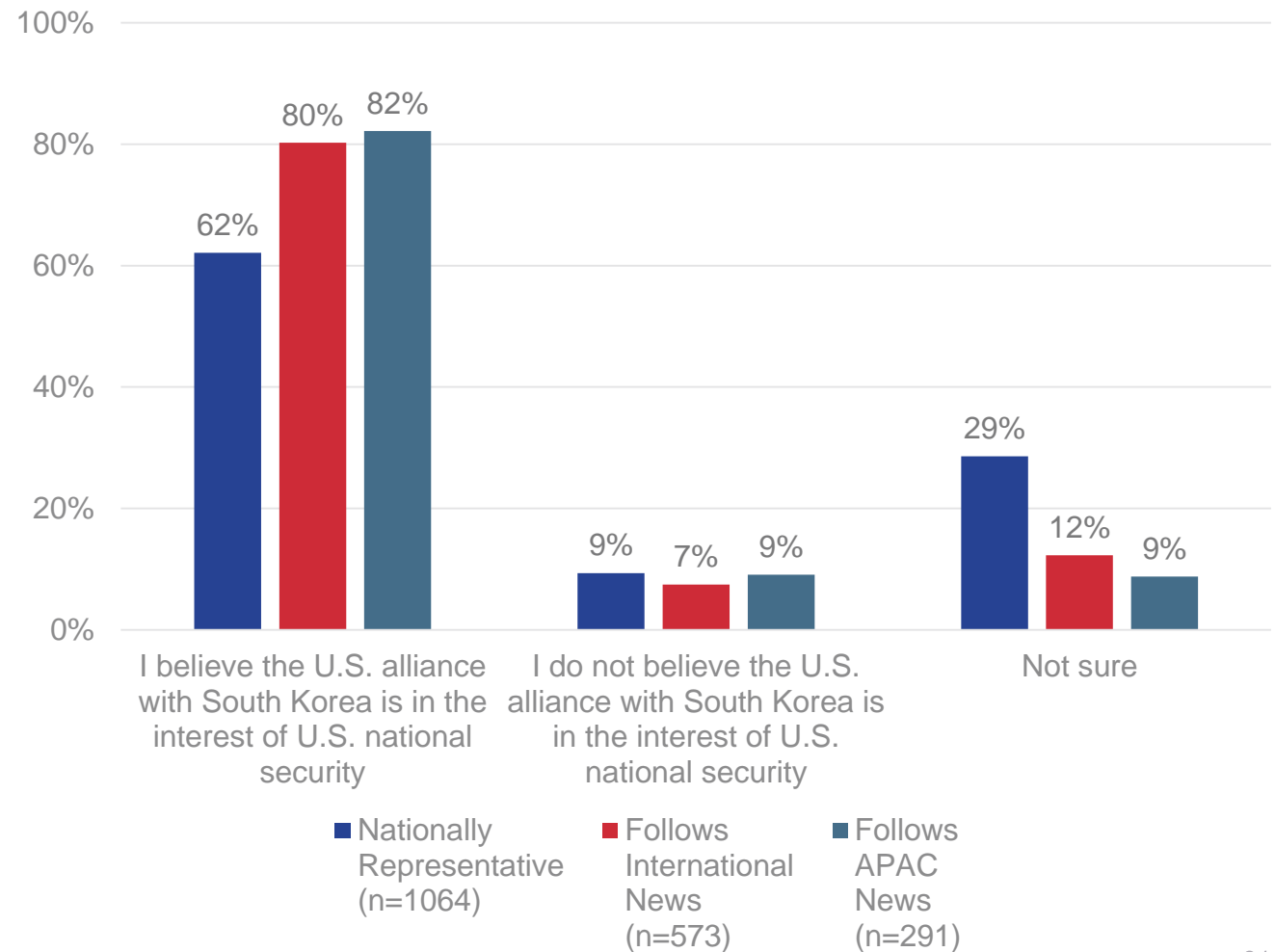
More than six-in-ten Americans see the military alliance with South Korea as beneficial to the U.S., while 56% of Americans would like to see the U.S. “maintain” (49%) or “increase” (7%) the troop presence on the peninsula.

Over six-in-ten Americans see the military alliance with South Korea as beneficial to the U.S.



This rises to over eight-in-ten Americans that follow international news or APAC news who see the South Korean military alliance as beneficial to the U.S.

### Views on Military Alliance Between U.S. and South Korea



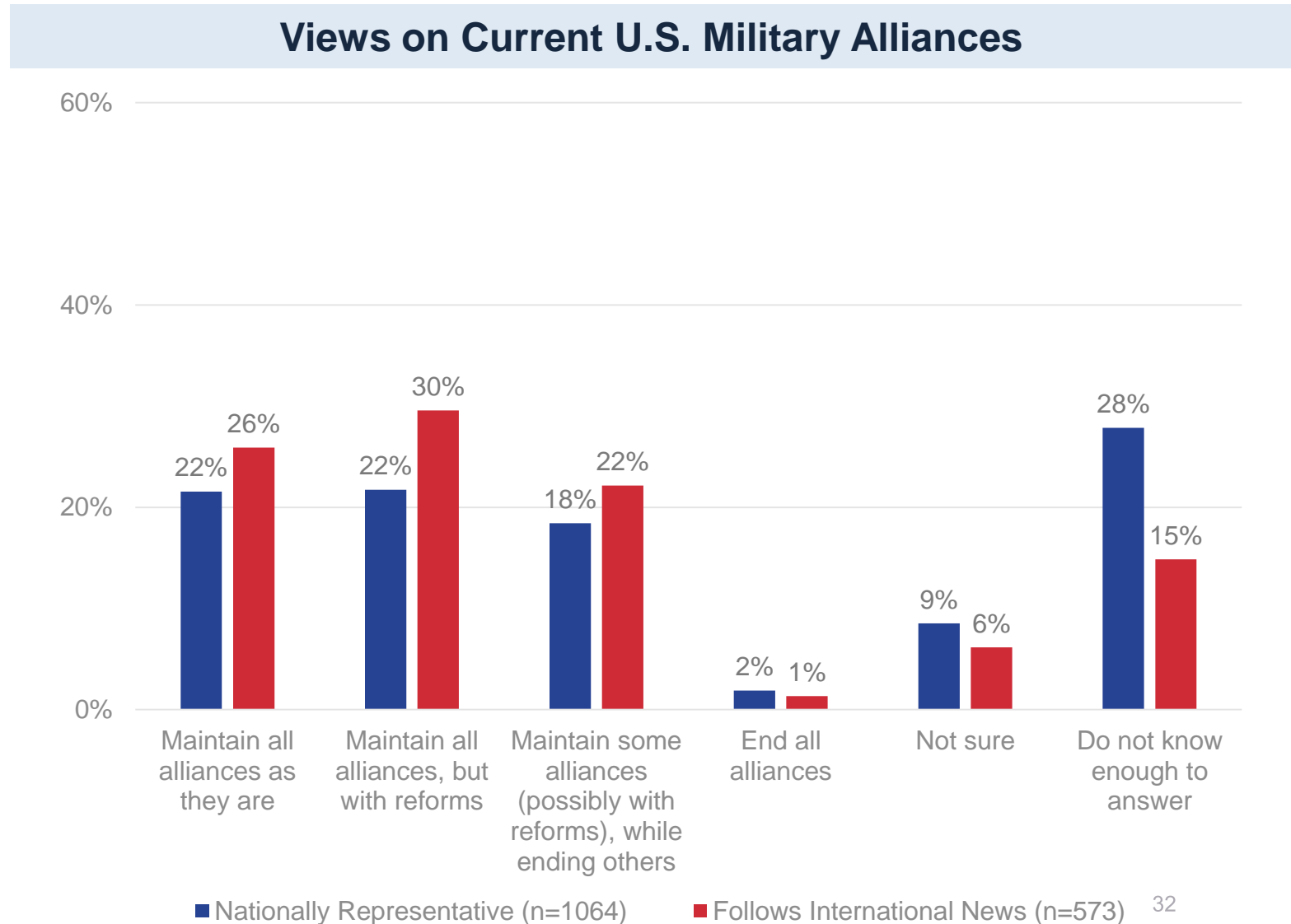
**44% of Americans want to maintain all U.S. alliances – 22% want to keep them as they are and 22% want reforms.**



Democrats in America generally want to keep alliances as they are (29% vs. 21%).



Republicans, however, are more in favor of maintaining all alliances but with reforms (26% vs. 19%).



Q4. Which comes closest to how you feel about current U.S. military alliances? (n=1064)

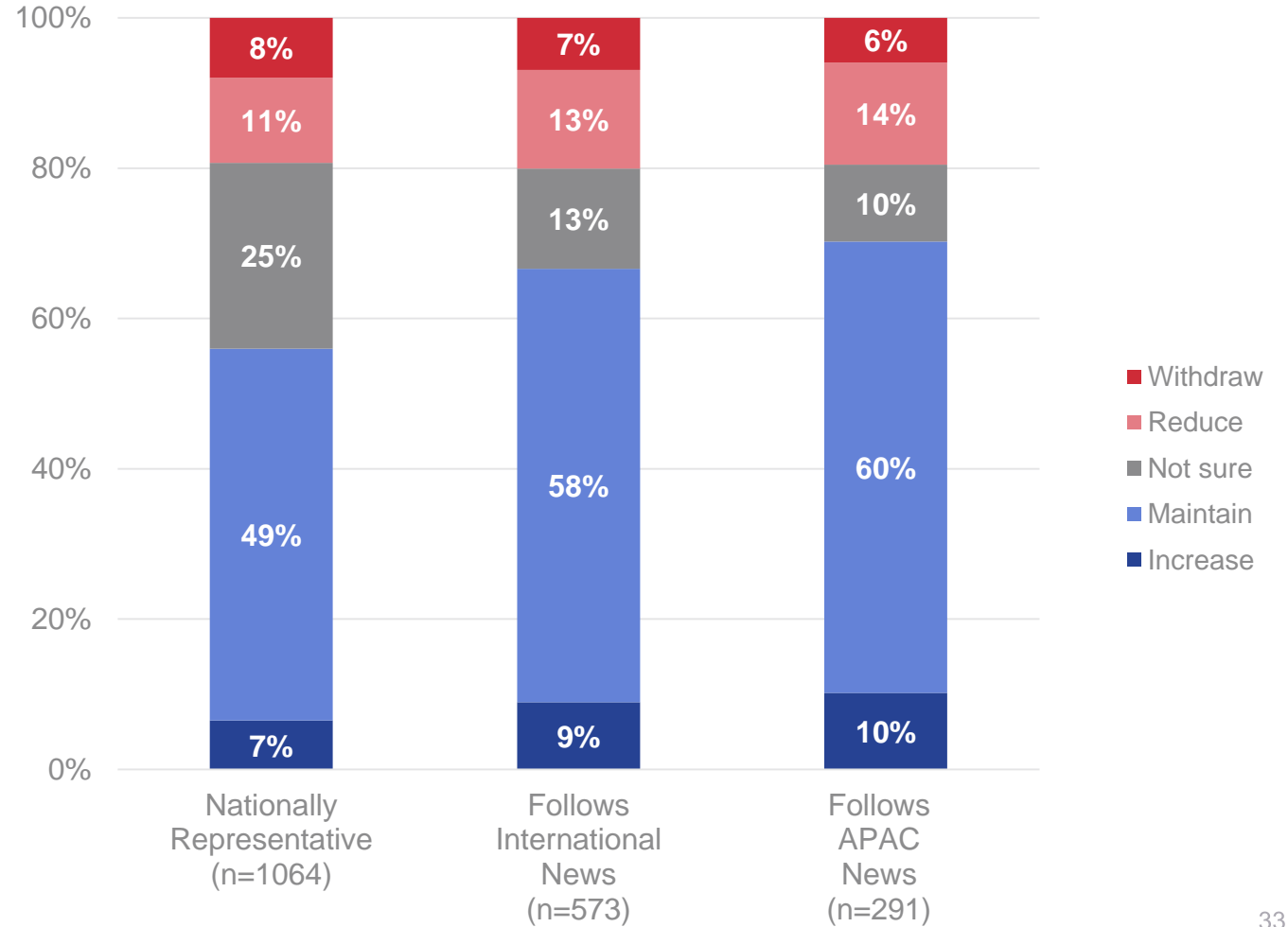


Half of Americans would like to see the U.S. maintain current troop presence in South Korea.



6-in-10 Americans that follow APAC news believe we should maintain our troop presence in South Korea.

### Views on U.S. Troops in South Korea



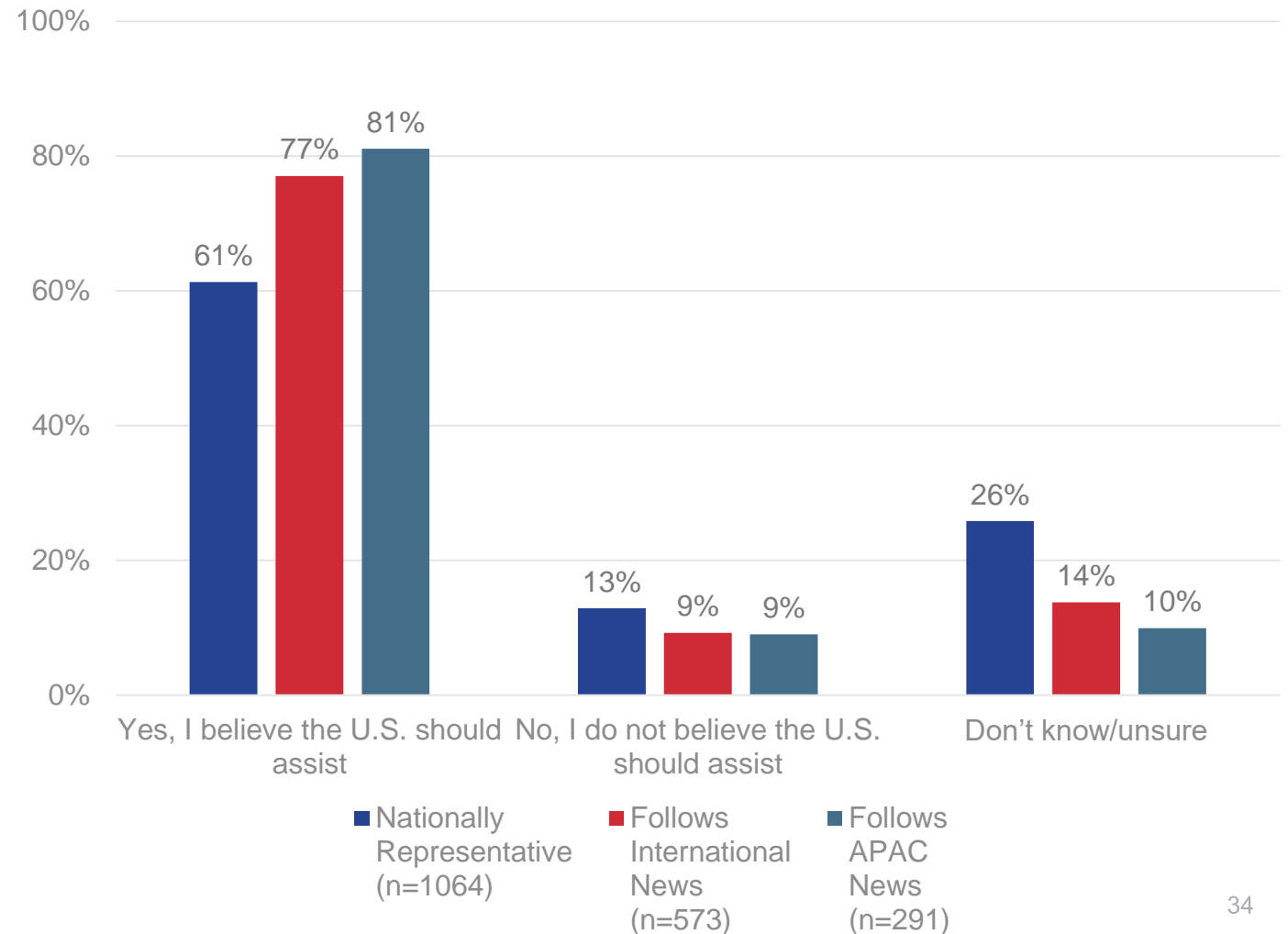
Q18. The U.S. currently maintains 28,500 troops in South Korea. For context/comparison, the U.S. also currently has 54,000 troops in Japan and 34,000 troops in Germany. In your opinion, should the United States increase, maintain, reduce, or withdraw its military forces from South Korea? (n=1064)

# Six-in-ten believe U.S. should assist South Korea in the aftermath of a cyber-attack.



Similar to the general views on the U.S./South Korea military alliance, over eight-in-ten Americans that follow APAC news believe the U.S. should assist in the event of a cyber-attack on South Korea.

## Views on Whether the U.S. Should Assist South Korea in Event of a Cyber-Attack

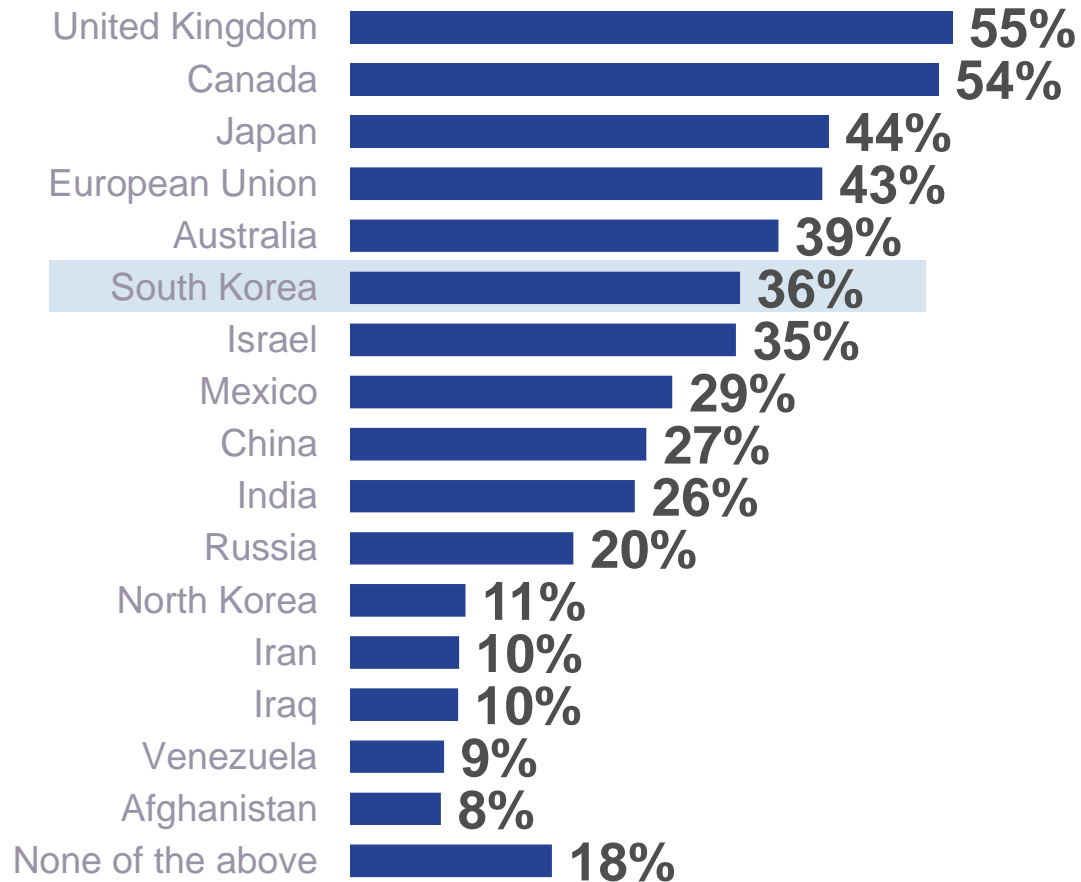


Q19. Do you believe that the U.S. should assist South Korea in the event of a cyber-attack from North Korea or China, or do you not feel this way? (n=1064)

In general, more than one-in-three Americans think the U.S. should coordinate with South Korea on cyber issues.

This follows behind the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, and the European Union as the countries/regions Americans would most like to see the U.S. coordinate with on cyber issues.

### Countries/Regions\* the U.S. Should Cooperate with on Cyber Issues



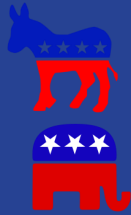
Q3. As cyber-security becomes more of a focus for the international community in the years to come, which countries (if any) would you like to see the U.S. cooperate with on cyber issues? (n=1064)

\*Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question

# AMERICANS' VIEWS ON THE NORTH KOREA CHALLENGE

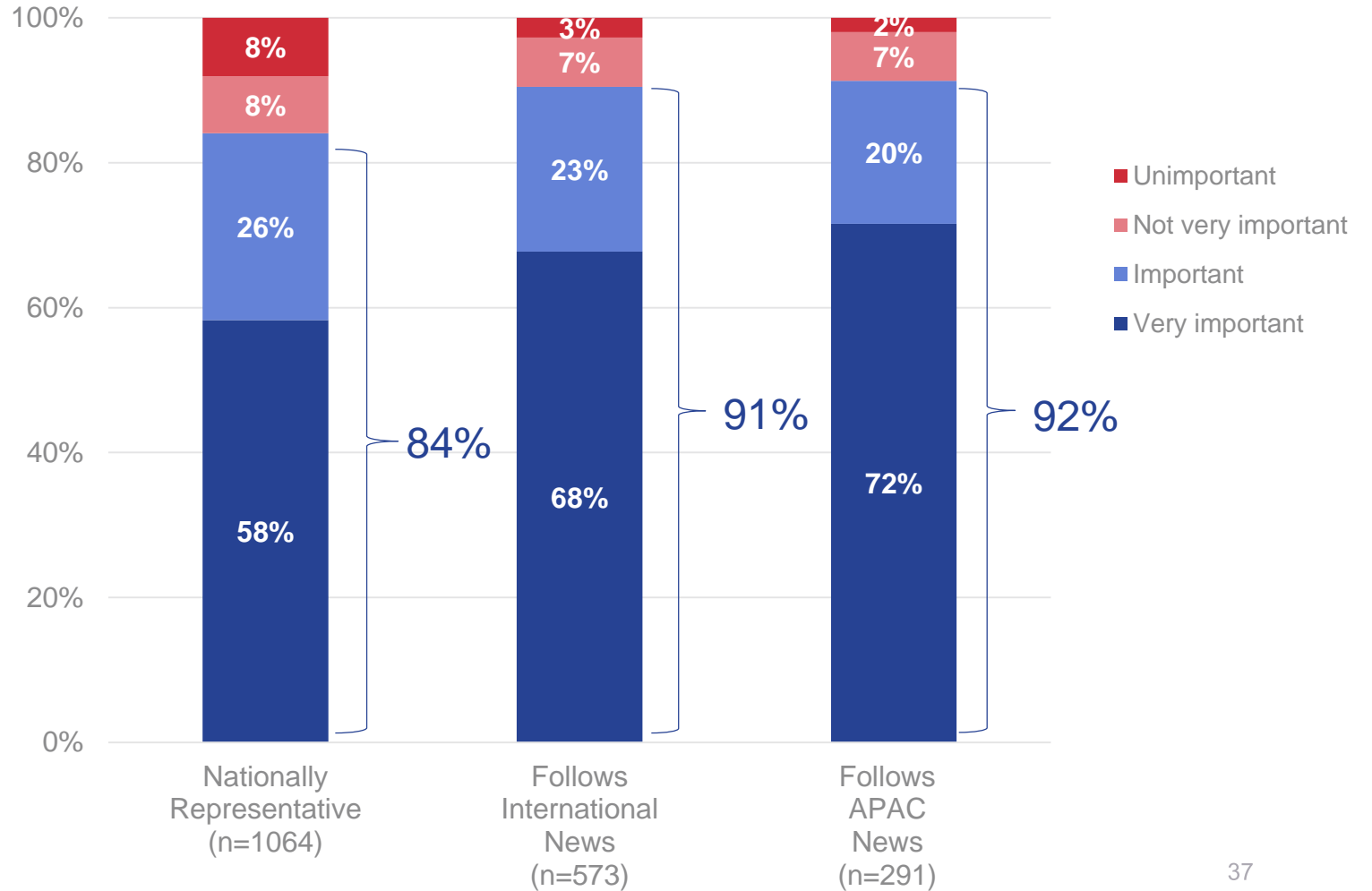
While 84% of all Americans think it is important for North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons, about half of Americans still support sending humanitarian assistance and Covid-19 assistance to the citizens of North Korea.

Vast majority of all Americans believe it is important for North Korea to give up its military nuclear capabilities.



This is consistent across both Republicans (88%) and Democrats (86%).

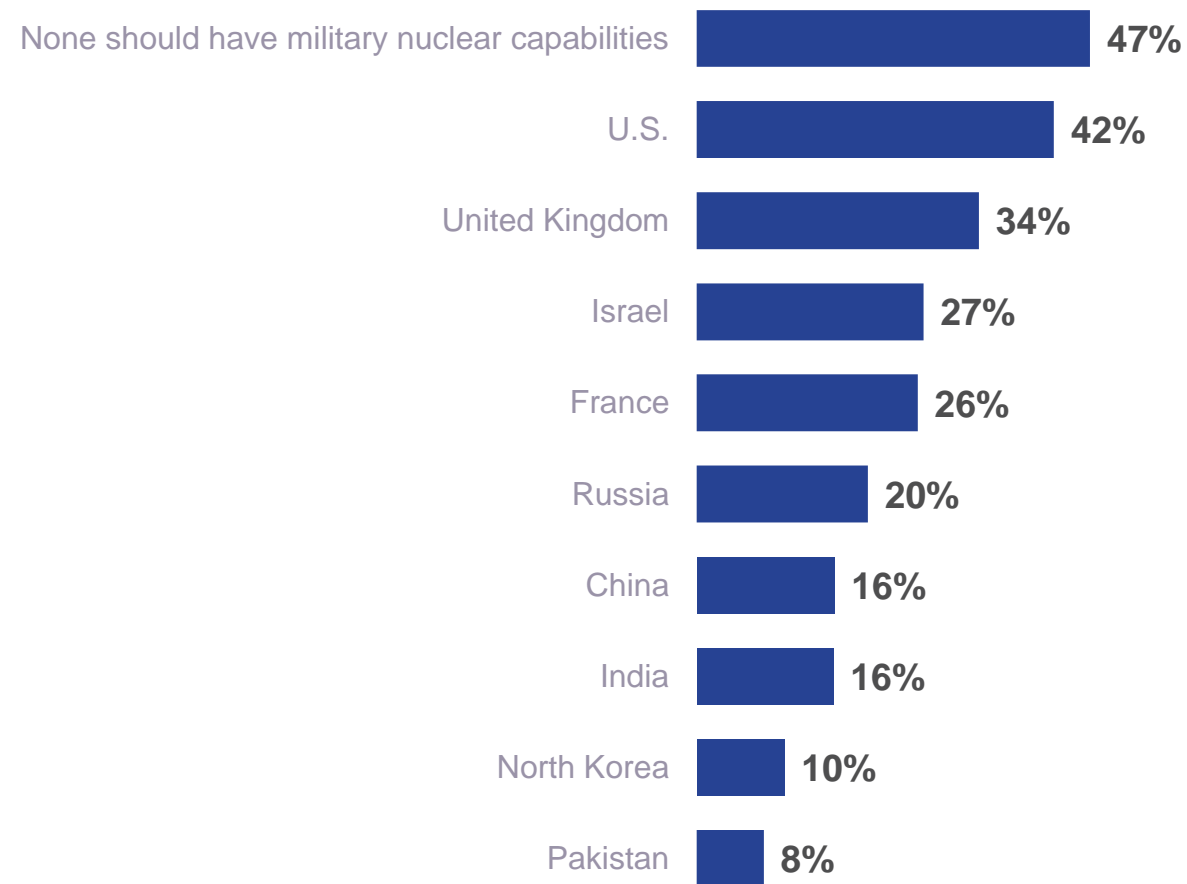
### Importance of North Korea Giving Up its Military Nuclear Capabilities



Q22. In your opinion, how important is it that North Korea give up its military nuclear capabilities? (n=1064)

**Only one-in-ten Americans believe North Korea should maintain its military nuclear capabilities; almost half think no countries should have military nuclear capabilities – including the U.S.**

### Countries\* that Should Maintain Military Nuclear Capabilities



Q9. The following countries all have military nuclear capabilities. In your opinion, which of the following do you feel should be able to maintain its military nuclear capabilities? Please select all that apply. (n=1064)

\*Respondents were provided a predetermined list of countries and regions to choose from for this question

Over eight-in-ten Americans believe the U.S. should push for human rights improvements in North Korea.

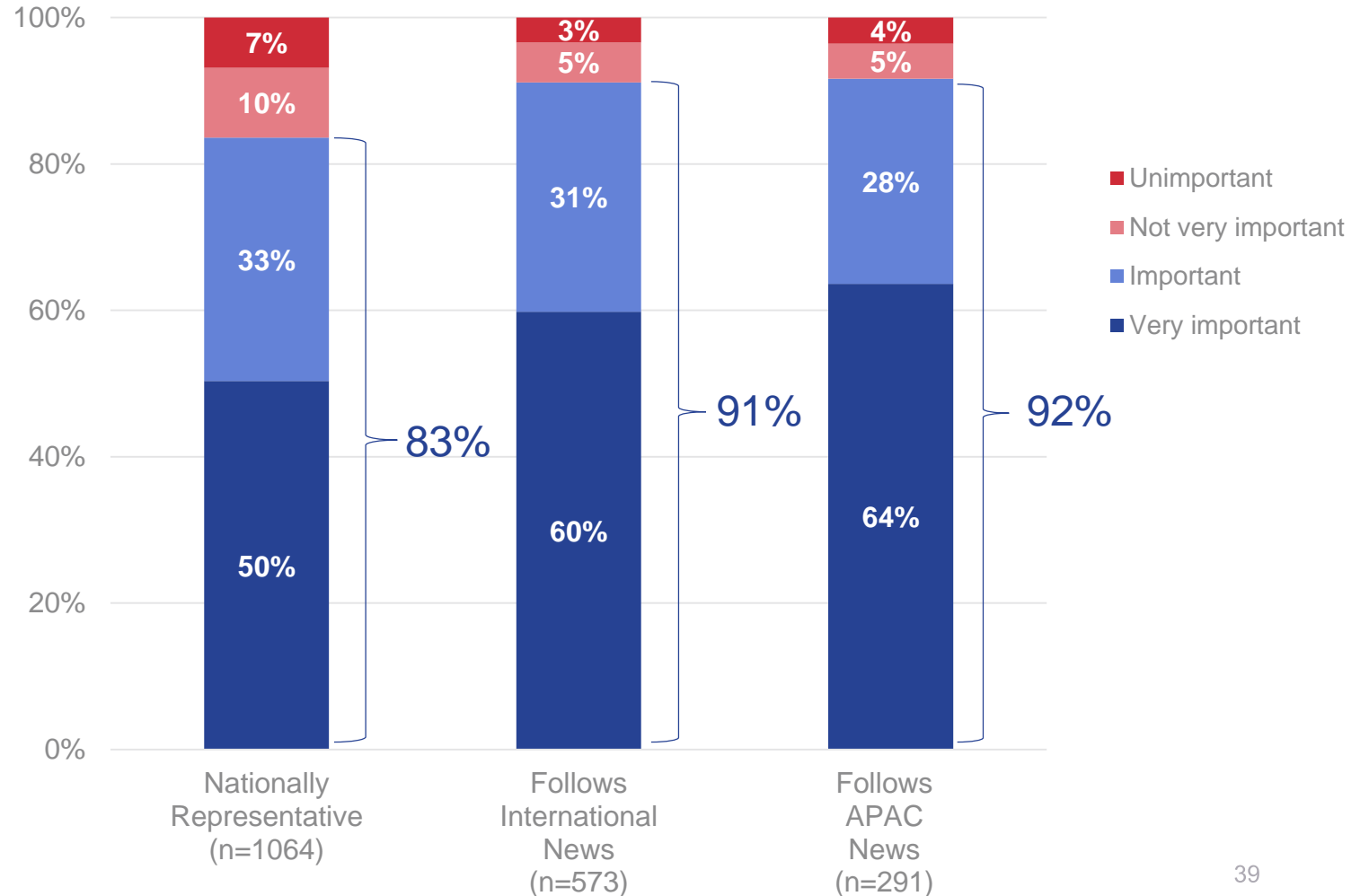


This rises to over nine-in-ten Americans who follow international news or APAC news.



This is consistent across both Republicans (85%) and Democrats (88%).

### Importance of U.S. Pushing for Human Rights Improvements in North Korea



Q23. And how important is it that the U.S. pushes for human rights improvements in North Korea? (n=1064)

Over half of Americans approve of the U.S. sending humanitarian assistance to North Korean citizens.

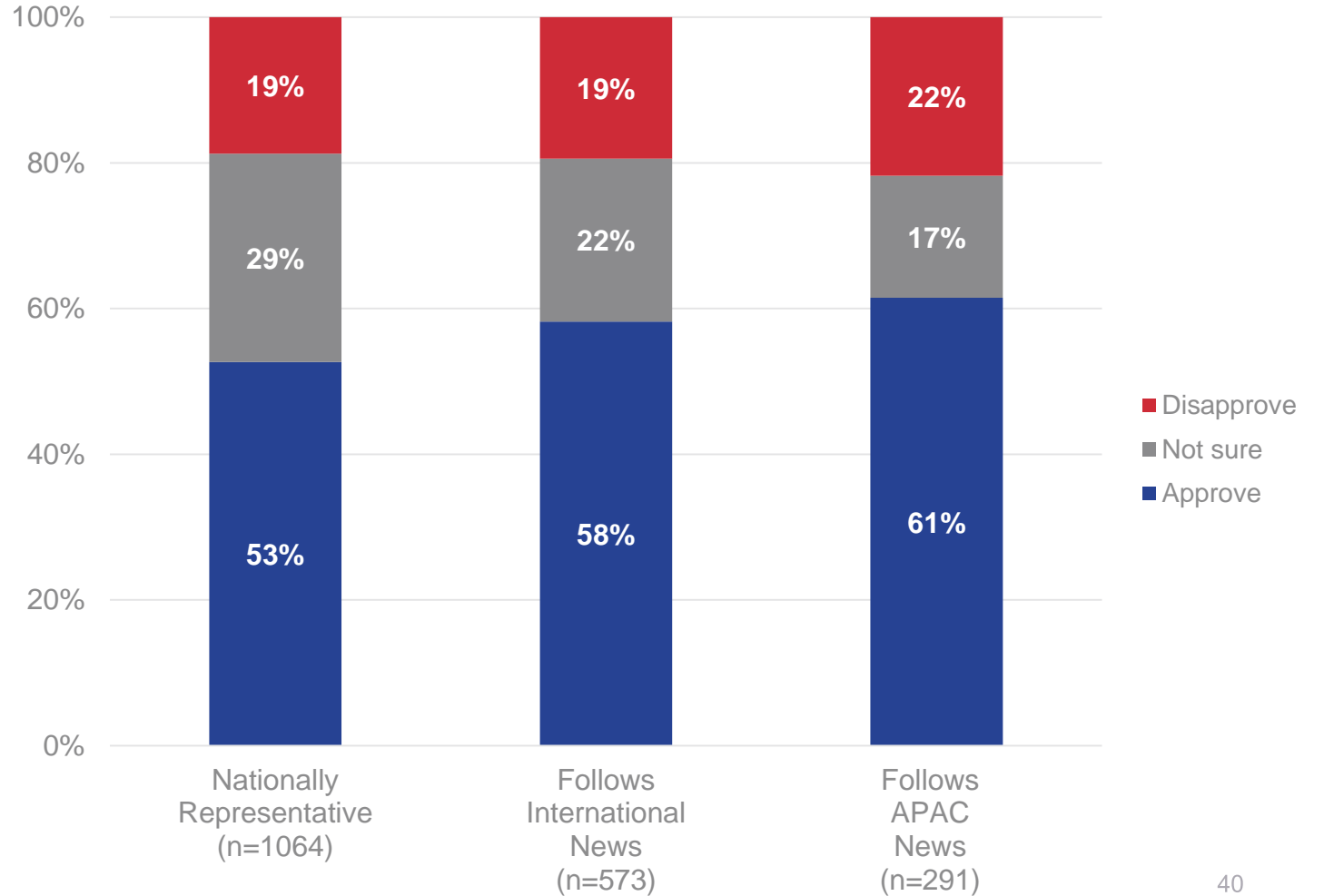


6-in-10 Americans that follow APAC news believe we should provide humanitarian assistance to North Korean citizens.



More Democrats approve of sending humanitarian assistance to North Korea compared to Republicans (60% vs 50%).

### Approval of U.S. Providing Humanitarian Assistance to North Korean Citizens

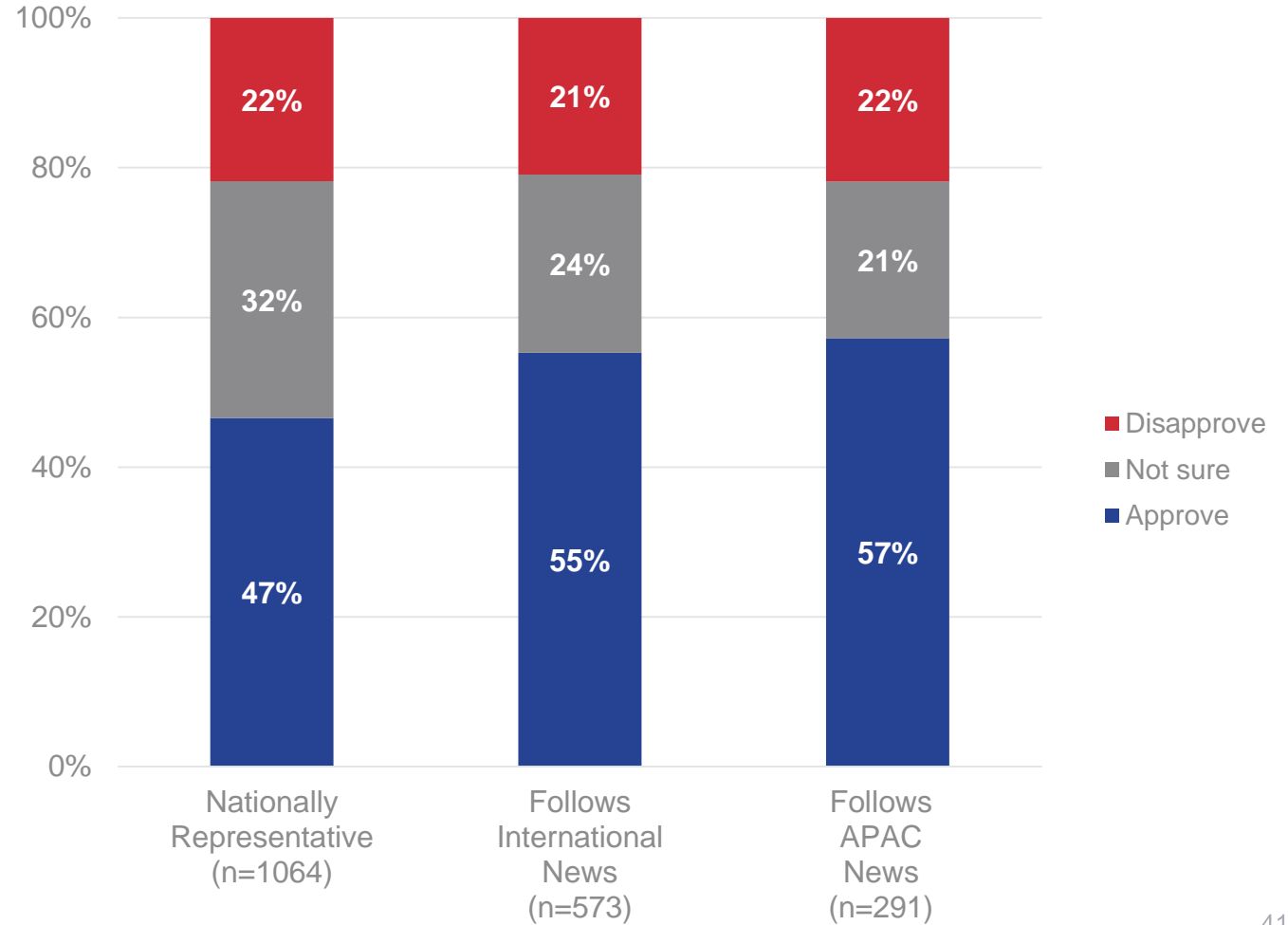


Q24. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the U.S. providing humanitarian assistance such as food, medical supplies, or other civilian assistance to North Korean citizens? (n=1064)



However, less than half of Americans approve of the U.S. sending Covid-19 assistance to North Korean citizens.

### Approval of U.S. Providing Covid-19 Assistance to North Korean Citizens



Q25. In your view, would you approve or disapprove of the U.S. providing Covid-19 assistance to North Korea? (n=1064)

# Thank You