

A Foreign Policy for the Middle Class—What Do Americans Think?

RESULTS OF THE 2021 CHICAGO
COUNCIL SURVEY OF AMERICAN PUBLIC
OPINION AND US FOREIGN POLICY

By Dina Smeltz,
Ivo Daalder,
Karl Friedhoff,
Craig Kafura, and
Emily Sullivan

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2021 Chicago Council Survey Team

Meghan Bradley
Intern, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Karl Friedhoff
Marshall M. Bouton Fellow, Public Opinion and Asia Policy, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Craig Kafura
Assistant Director, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Fosca Majnoni d'Intignano
Intern, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Dina Smeltz
Senior Fellow, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Katherine Stiplosek
Intern, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Emily Sullivan
Research Assistant, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Colin Wolff
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In his inaugural speech, US President Joe Biden ticked off a range of challenges confronting the country. “We face an attack on democracy and on truth. A raging virus. Growing inequity. The sting of systemic racism. A climate in crisis. America’s role in the world. Any one of these would be enough to challenge us in profound ways. But the fact is we face them all at once, presenting this nation with the gravest of responsibilities.”¹

To meet this responsibility, President Biden and his administration propose a “Foreign Policy for the Middle Class,” which aims to simultaneously meet America’s challenges at home and abroad.²

At its core, the Foreign Policy for the Middle Class is about recognizing the linkages between American domestic strength and US ability to maintain international competitiveness. It emphasizes investing at home—in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, infrastructure, green technology, and a range of other social and domestic programs. With these investments, the administration aims to equip American workers, companies, and the government to compete with—and outperform—international competitors. That means investing in American businesses that operate in strategic sectors, research and development, and American jobs and wages rather than focusing on expansive trade deals.

By “building back better” at home, the administration seeks to revitalize the US strength and dynamism needed for the growing political, economic, and security competition with China. To prevail in that competition, the Biden team is intent on restoring US alliances and working with allies to confront adversaries and to address the most pressing global problems. US officials also consider this competition a challenge between democracies and autocracies, and which system can better deliver concrete results for everyday citizens. They call for not only restoring democracy at home but also elevating the centrality of human rights. And most of all, the Biden team argues that American leadership and engagement matter. “We must demonstrate clearly to the American people that leading the world isn’t an investment we make to feel good about ourselves,” Biden has argued.³ “It’s how we ensure the American people are able to live in peace, security, and prosperity. It’s in our undeniable self-interest.”

The idea of a Foreign Policy for the Middle Class has not been without its critics. There is confusion and debate about how this policy would be formulated—with some arguing it is little more than a slogan. Some point to the populist tinge inherent in these ideas,⁴ with similarities to the last administration’s America First policies. Others think of it as “Trumpism with a human face,”⁵ focusing on the well-being of Americans first but without the divisive nationalism that alienated some Americans and denigrated US allies.⁶ Another commentator points out that the economic well-being of the middle class is determined less by foreign policy and more by domestic policy—“where the politics are fiercer, congressional influence is stronger, and presidents enjoy less freedom of action.”⁷ Other skeptics fault the Biden strategy for incorporating “bad economics and class warfare” into US foreign policy.⁸ And even those columnists who acknowledge some of the merits of the policy assert that “proposing a middle class litmus test for every major decision” risks setting impossible standards.⁹

The controversial decision to remove US troops from Afghanistan has been the most high-profile example of the Biden strategy, demonstrating the administration’s commitment to refocusing American efforts and resources on initiatives with more tangible payoffs for the American people. Critics say that the way the withdrawal was executed has hurt US credibility with our allies and has risked deflating confidence in traditional political leadership,¹⁰ perhaps giving energy to authoritarian politicians such as Trump.¹¹ A solid majority of Americans have consistently supported the withdrawal. But beyond Afghanistan, a Foreign Policy for the Middle Class could have potential ramifications across all facets of US foreign policy, including US trade policy, US alliances, US leadership on global issues, and relations with China.

The 2021 Chicago Council Survey finds that Americans welcome several of the major ideas underpinning a Foreign Policy for the Middle Class. The public sees large businesses (59%) and the wealthy (50%) as benefiting a great deal from US foreign policy, rather than the American middle class (11%). Americans see China as a rising economic and military power, one that seeks to replace the United States as the leading power in the world. And Americans think that by making concrete progress at home—by improving education, strengthening democracy, and maintaining US economic power—the United States can enhance its global influence.

While many of the administration’s foreign policy priorities are also priorities for the US public, that is not universally true. The public is less interested in promoting human rights and democracy abroad than the administration proclaims to be. And the data also seem to disprove some of the assumptions undergirding the administration’s approach to foreign policy—namely, that Americans are skeptical about trade and wary of US global engagement and leadership.

Americans Support Focusing on Domestic Improvement

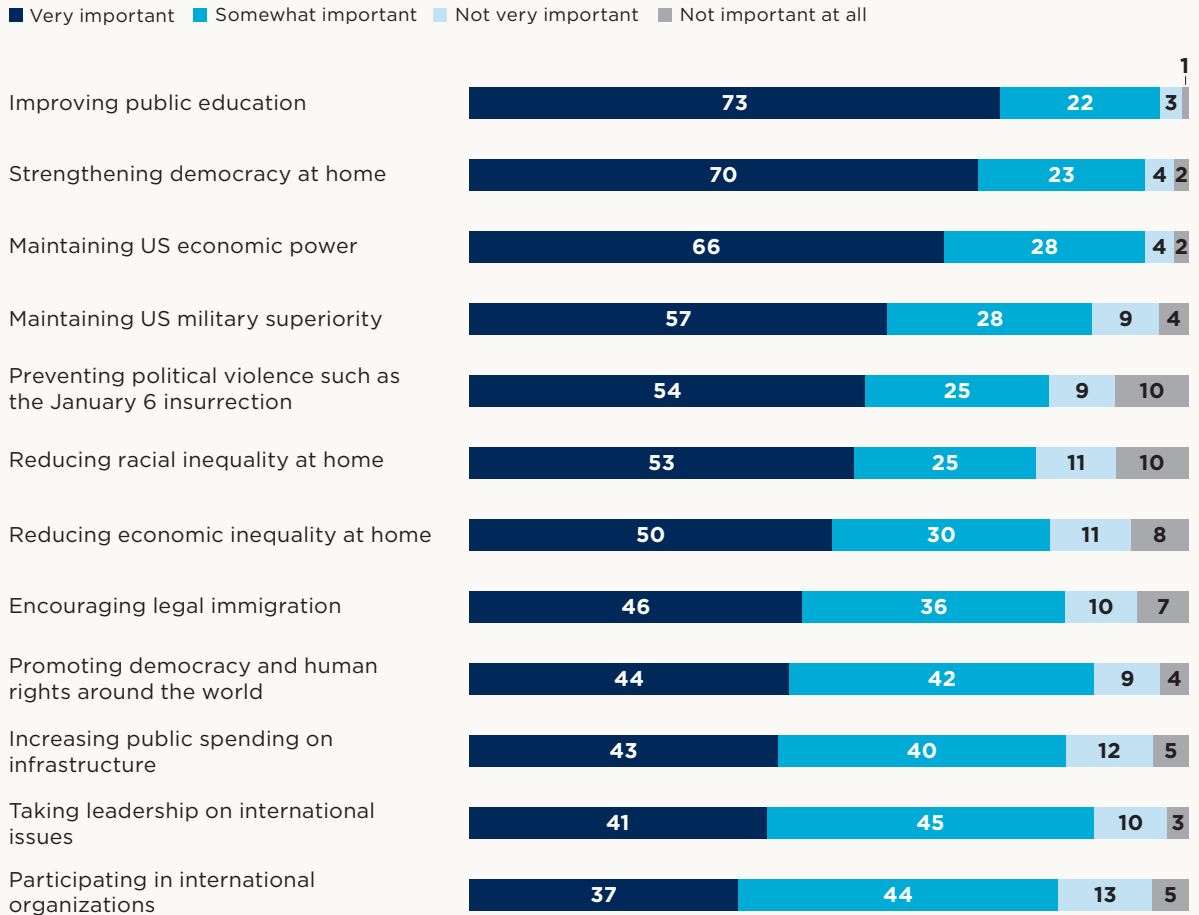
A key feature of the Foreign Policy for the Middle Class is the link between domestic investments and international influence. In fact, the factors seen by most Americans as very important for maintaining US international influence are domestically focused. Majorities of Americans consider improving public education (73%), strengthening democracy at home (70%), and reducing both racial (53%) and economic inequality (50%) as very important to maintaining America’s global influence (Figure A). But those are not the only factors important to the public; Americans also see maintaining US economic power (66%) and American military superiority (57%) as key elements to US global influence. It is these latter elements that Americans also see as being directly challenged by a rising China.

While Americans have been supportive of public spending on infrastructure for decades, according to Chicago Council Surveys, they do not appear to make a connection between infrastructure improvements at home and benefits to US influence overseas. The public rates the importance of improving infrastructure relatively low (10th out of 12 items that are very important to retaining US global influence). Promoting democracy and human rights around the world, taking leadership on international issues, and participating in international organizations are similarly low on this list.

Figure A: Remaining Influential on the Global Stage

Please indicate how important the following factors are to the United States remaining influential on the global stage: (%)

n = 1,045



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

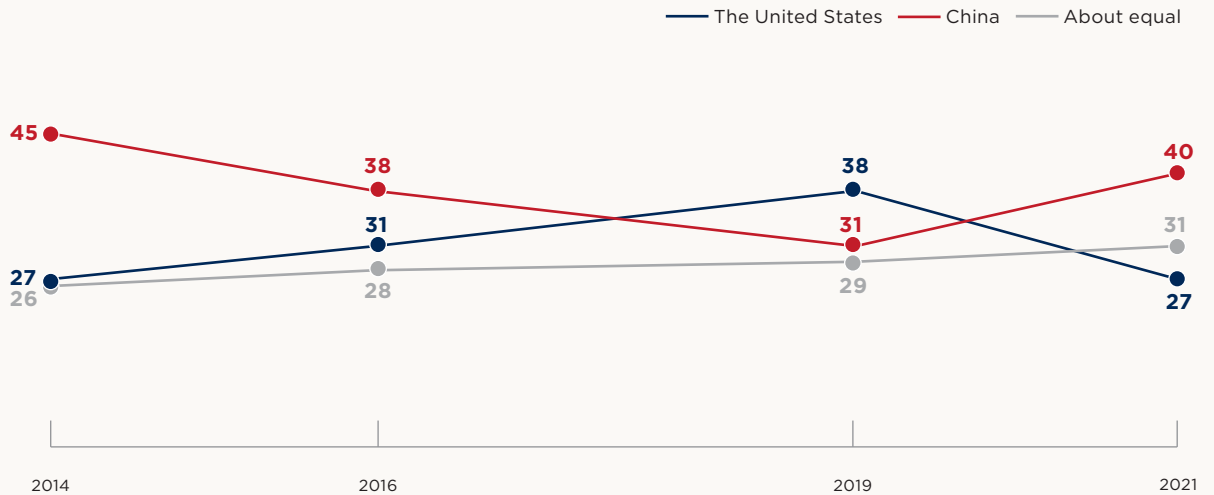
2021 Chicago Council Survey

Americans Sense China Is Catching Up to the United States

A major aim of the administration's policies, Biden has argued, is to prepare the United States to face the challenges to US prosperity, security, and democratic values presented by "our most serious competitor, China."¹² Americans are broadly concerned about competition from China, and they are notably less confident in US economic and military strength compared with China now than they were two years ago. A plurality of Americans (40%) say China is economically stronger than the United States, up from 31 percent who said the same in 2019 (Figure B); only a quarter (27%) see the United States as stronger (down from 38% in 2019). And for the first time in Council polling, fewer than half of Americans (46%) say the United States is stronger than China in terms of military power, down from 58 percent who said the same in 2019 (Figure C).

Figure B: US-China Economic Power Comparison

At the present time, which nation do you feel is stronger in terms of economic power, the United States or China—or do you think they are about equal economically? (%)
n = 2,086

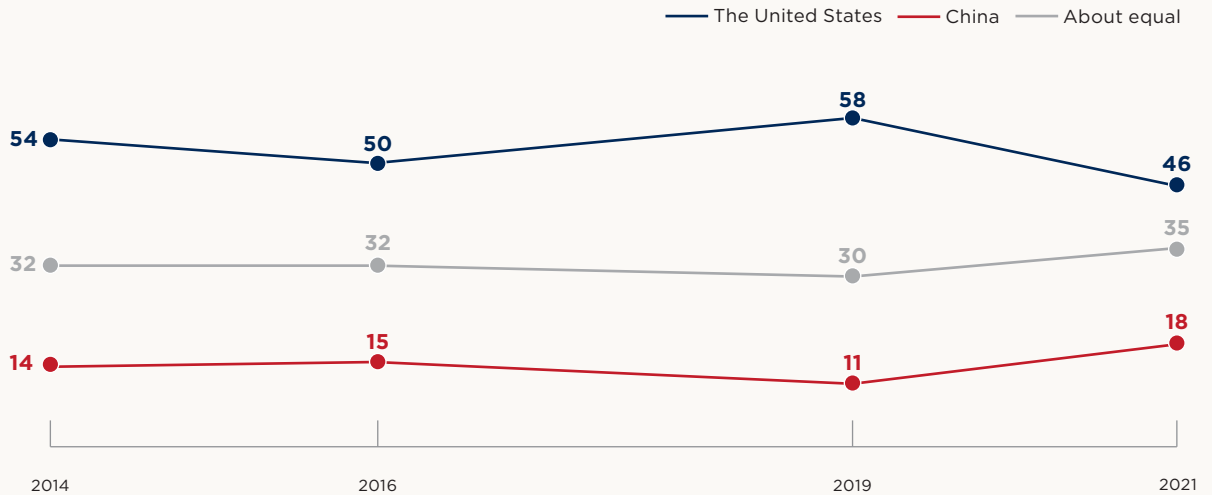


Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

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Figure C: US-China Military Comparison

At the present time, which nation do you feel is stronger in terms of military power, the United States or China—or do you think they are about equal militarily? (%)
n = 2,086



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

Widespread Support for Trade Restrictions against China and Industrial Policies to Bolster US Businesses

There is a strong economic dimension to the administration's foreign policy approach, designed, in part, to increase American competitiveness against China. Many Americans agree, with two-thirds (66%) saying that maintaining US economic power is one of the most important factors in the United States retaining global influence. And Americans see China's rise as a challenge to that economic power.

Americans currently think trade with China has more negatives than positives for the United States. In a dramatic shift from 2019, a majority of Americans now says trade between the two nations does more to weaken US national security (58%, up from 33% in 2019). By contrast, two years ago—amid the US-China trade war—two-thirds of Americans believed that US-China trade strengthened US national security. And in a separate question, majorities favor increasing tariffs on products imported from China (62%) and significantly reducing trade between the two countries, even if this leads to greater costs for American consumers (57%). A Council poll in March 2021 found that majorities of Americans also favored prohibiting US companies from selling sensitive high-tech products to China (71%) and prohibiting Chinese technology companies from building communications networks in the United States (66%).

To compete with China in the development of emerging technologies, US officials propose direct public investment into strategically important industries. Americans are broadly supportive of this approach; eight in 10 say the government should fund research and development of emerging technologies to give US companies an edge over foreign businesses (79%). Seven in 10 favor financial support for US companies that are competing against foreign businesses receiving support from their respective governments (72%).

Slightly fewer Americans—but still majorities—support imposing tariffs on foreign products in industries that compete with US businesses (60%), banning or limiting imports from foreign companies that compete with US businesses (57%), and identifying businesses most likely to succeed and giving them financial support (55%).

Administration Underestimates Public Support for Trade

Some of the administration's assumptions about everyday Americans' inclinations are not borne out by the data. Administration officials concede that Americans have not benefited as much from globalization and US trade policies as much as policymakers had hoped. But the 2021 Chicago Council Survey suggests these officials undervalue US public support for globalization and trade.

MORE AMERICANS NOW SAY TRADE BETWEEN
THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA DOES MORE TO
WEAKEN US NATIONAL SECURITY

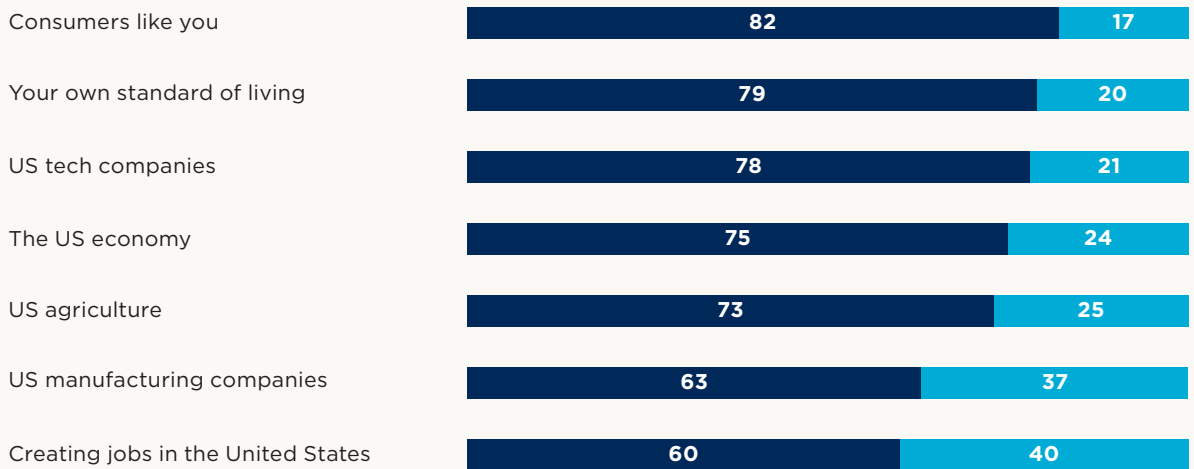
(58%)

A record number of Americans (68%) now say globalization is mostly good for the United States, and nearly three-quarters or more consider international trade to be beneficial to consumers, their own standard of living, US technology companies, the US economy, and US agriculture (Figure D). Smaller majorities say international trade is good for US manufacturing companies and creating jobs in the United States. This support for international trade spans the political spectrum.

Figure D: Beneficiaries of Trade

Overall, do you think international trade is good or bad for: (%)
n = 2,086

■ Good ■ Bad



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

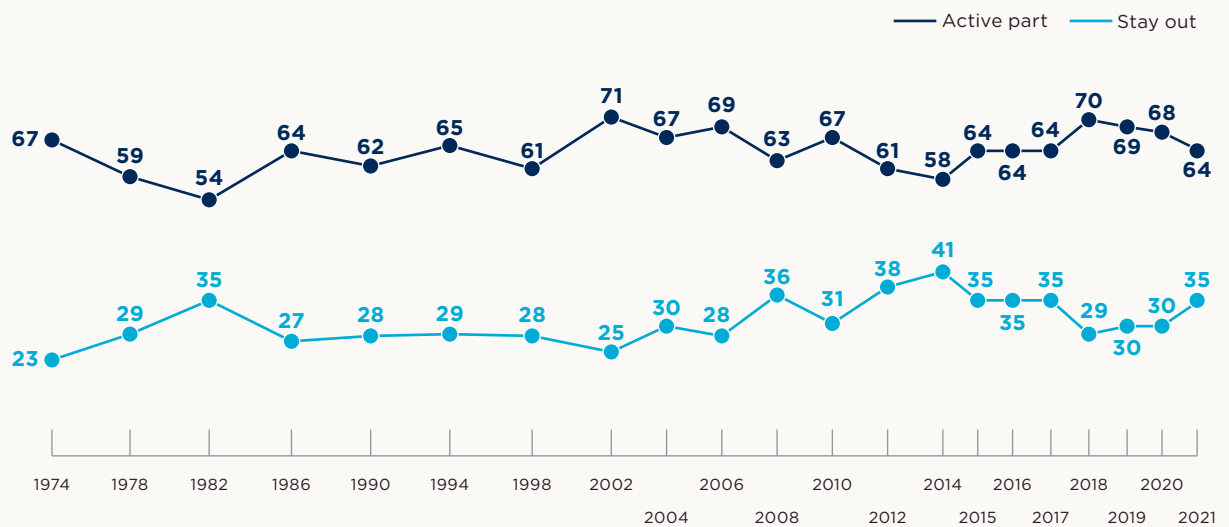
Solid Support for Continued US Global Leadership

With the recent withdrawal from Afghanistan as a backdrop, there is an enduring assumption among senior Biden administration officials that the American public has become disillusioned with the US-led international order and is ready for a more restrained US foreign policy. As Secretary Blinken said in his March 2021 speech, “for some time now Americans have been asking tough but fair questions about what we’re doing, how we’re leading – indeed whether we should be leading at all.”¹³

Some of those concerns may be overstated: nearly two-thirds of Americans (64%) say it is better for the United States to play an active part in world affairs than to stay out of world affairs (35%)—a finding that is consistent with past surveys (Figure E). And a majority of the public believes the benefits of maintaining the US role in the world outweigh the costs (56%).

Figure E: **US Role in World Affairs**

Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs? (%)
n = 2,086



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

The public also wants the United States to play a leading role in preventing nuclear proliferation (76%), combating terrorism (67%), sending COVID-19 vaccines to other countries in need (62%), and limiting climate change (58%). But Americans do not want to manage this responsibility on their own: a large majority supports a policy of shared leadership (69%) rather than seeking a dominant role for the country (23%). The public also supports international cooperation in resolving critical global issues, with majorities of Americans backing US participation in the Paris Agreement on climate change (64%) and the Iran nuclear agreement (59%).

While Supporting Afghanistan Withdrawal, Americans Still Want to Rely on US Military

The withdrawal from Afghanistan has prompted fierce criticism of the Biden administration and its foreign policy approach. But a broad majority of Americans continues to support the decision. Even so, Americans show little interest in pulling the US military back from other commitments around the world. A majority of Americans (57%) says maintaining US military superiority is a very important factor to US global influence, and most think US military bases around the world enhance US military strength. Majorities of Americans want to either maintain or increase the US military presence in Asia-Pacific (78%), Africa (73%), Latin America (73%), Europe (71%), and the Middle East (68%).

In addition, Americans are as willing as ever—or even more willing—to send US troops to defend allies and partners across a range of scenarios. For example, if North Korea invaded South Korea, 63 percent would support using US troops to defend South Korea. A record-high 59 percent of Americans support using US troops if Russia invades a NATO ally such as Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia. Perhaps the most striking shift is that, for the first time, a bare majority of Americans (52%) supports using US troops if China were to invade Taiwan; in 2020, only 41 percent supported US involvement.

Conclusion

In a March 2021 speech, Secretary of State Antony Blinken argued that the administration's priorities would respond to three questions: "What will our foreign policy mean for American workers and their families? What do we need to do around the world to make us stronger here at home? And what do we need to do at home to make us stronger in the world?"¹⁴ As the 2021 Chicago Council Survey shows, this idea of a Foreign Policy for the Middle Class has some resonance with the American public.

The public believes that reforms to education, democracy, and economic competitiveness will bear fruit for America's international role. And, like Biden and many in his administration, Americans are concerned about the rise of China as an economic and military competitor to the United States. However, while Americans back reduced trade with China and providing government support for businesses developing emerging technologies, they are also far more positive about the benefits of trade than the administration assumes.

Internationally, Americans seek to share leadership with other nations and to establish a leading US role in addressing many of the world's most pressing challenges, including climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. They also want the United States to participate in international agreements that address critical threats, such as the Paris Agreement and the Iran nuclear deal. And though the public backs the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, Americans favor maintaining the existing US military presence around the world and are more likely now than in past years to support using force to defend US allies and partners.

The Biden administration's push to restore American leadership abroad while dramatically renewing domestic programs contains an internal tension.¹⁵ That tension arises from two key areas. First, senior administration officials have only so much time and attention. Focusing on one area, such as global leadership, will necessarily detract from others, including domestic renewal. More importantly, every administration has limited fiscal resources and political capital for its initiatives. While the American public supports revitalization on both domestic and international fronts, the Biden team will inevitably face trade-offs. Ultimately, however, the question will be whether the Foreign Policy for the Middle Class is able to deliver on both fronts—domestic and international alike—to realize its promised benefits for the American people.

DEFINING THE MIDDLE CLASS

A “Foreign Policy for the Middle Class” raises a question: which Americans, exactly, consider themselves as belonging to the middle class? As other researchers have shown, there are many ways to define the “middle class.” For this report, we opted to interpret the administration’s use of the term to discuss the views of Americans overall, rather than focus on Americans who specifically describe themselves as members of the middle class. This fits with the general rhetorical approach of political figures who often use “middle class” to mean everyday Americans or the American general public. At any rate, the vast majority of Americans identifies as some variant of the middle class. When asked what socioeconomic class they belong in, half of Americans (48%) self-identify as belonging to the middle class; another quarter (25%) say they are in the lower-middle class, and 18 percent say they are upper-middle class. Relatively few Americans identify outright as a member of the lower class (8%) or upper class (2%).

That said, the views of those who identify themselves as middle-class Americans do differ from those of other Americans in some ways, including from both upper-middle-class and lower-middle-class counterparts.

Some differences are political. The 48 percent who describe themselves as part of the middle class are more likely to identify as Republican than lower-class Americans, and less likely to identify as Democrats compared with upper-class Americans. Middle-class Americans are also more likely than lower-class Americans to say they are ideologically conservative, and less likely than upper-class Americans to identify as ideological liberals.

There are also demographic differences. With an average age of 49, middle-class Americans are older than the average lower-class American (45) but younger than upper-class Americans (51). They are also more likely to identify racially as white, non-Hispanic than lower-class Americans. And there are notable differences in educational attainment. Lower-class Americans are far less likely to have a college education, while upper-class Americans are far more likely to say the same. The middle class sits between these two extremes, with a third holding a college degree, another third with some college education, and another third with a high school diploma or less.

Some of these differences also translate into policy preferences. The middle class is more likely than other Americans to see the United States as the greatest country in the world, and more likely to see US military superiority as very important to maintaining US influence around the world. They are also more likely to see controlling and reducing illegal immigration, and limiting China’s influence around the world, as very important policy goals for the United States. But in many ways, middle-class Americans hold very middle-of-the-road views. Like other Americans, they favor an active role in the world for the United States, shared leadership with other countries, and see trade and globalization as largely positive for the country.

INTRODUCTION

Not long after US President Joe Biden took office, his administration announced its overarching foreign policy strategy—a Foreign Policy for the Middle Class. For President Biden, strengthening the middle class is an important way to win the “fundamental debate” over whether democracies or autocracies are the superior system. “We must demonstrate that democracies can still deliver for our people in this changed world,” he said at the 2021 Virtual Munich Security Conference. “That, in my view, is our galvanizing mission.”¹⁶

The need to increase American competitiveness in the face of a rising China is a motivating force for this foreign policy approach. The idea that domestic renewal can revive international influence rests on the United States simultaneously rebuilding its economy, democracy, and alliances to work “from a position of strength” worldwide.

The results of the 2021 Chicago Council Survey show that most Americans are receptive to these ideas. Americans see a need to prioritize domestic revitalization and US competitiveness. There is broad backing for more restrictive policies toward China, and support for US alliances remains strong. However, the data also show that the Biden administration—like others before it—underestimates support among the American public for international trade, US international involvement, and US global leadership. At the same time, the administration may overestimate the American public’s concern for human rights and democracy abroad. Despite some critics’ views that the Foreign Policy for the Middle Class is too expansive with both domestic and international activism, these results show that Americans do not think US foreign policy should be laid aside while domestic issues are addressed. On the contrary, Americans expect that domestic improvements will benefit US influence and leadership abroad.

LINKAGES BETWEEN US DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES

In his inaugural speech, President Biden ticked off a range of challenges affecting the country. “We face an attack on democracy and on truth. A raging virus. Growing inequity. The sting of systemic racism. A climate in crisis. America’s role in the world. Any one of these would be enough to challenge us in profound ways. But the fact is we face them all at once, presenting this nation with the gravest of responsibilities.”¹⁷

While many of these issues can be viewed from a domestic angle, they also have international consequences. During his first major foreign policy speech, which he notably directed at the American people, Secretary of State Antony Blinken made this connection clear, saying “distinctions between domestic and foreign policy have simply fallen away. Our domestic renewal and our strength in the world are completely entwined. And how we work will reflect that reality.”¹⁸

Domestic Priorities Rate Highly for Maintaining US Influence

The preference for putting one’s own house in order before—or at the same time as—tackling global concerns comes through loud and clear in the 2021 Chicago Council Survey.

The public rates improving public education, strengthening democracy at home, and maintaining US economic power as the top three factors in the United States remaining globally influential (Figure 1). In addition, maintaining US military superiority, preventing violent attacks such as the January 6 insurrection, and reducing racial and economic inequality all rank higher than taking leadership on international issues, promoting democracy and human rights around the world, and participating in international organizations. While some skeptics have criticized the Biden strategy for being too expansive in its attempts to incorporate domestic issues into its foreign policy, the American public seems to agree that these issues that have long been considered domestic do, in fact, have a place in foreign policy conversations.

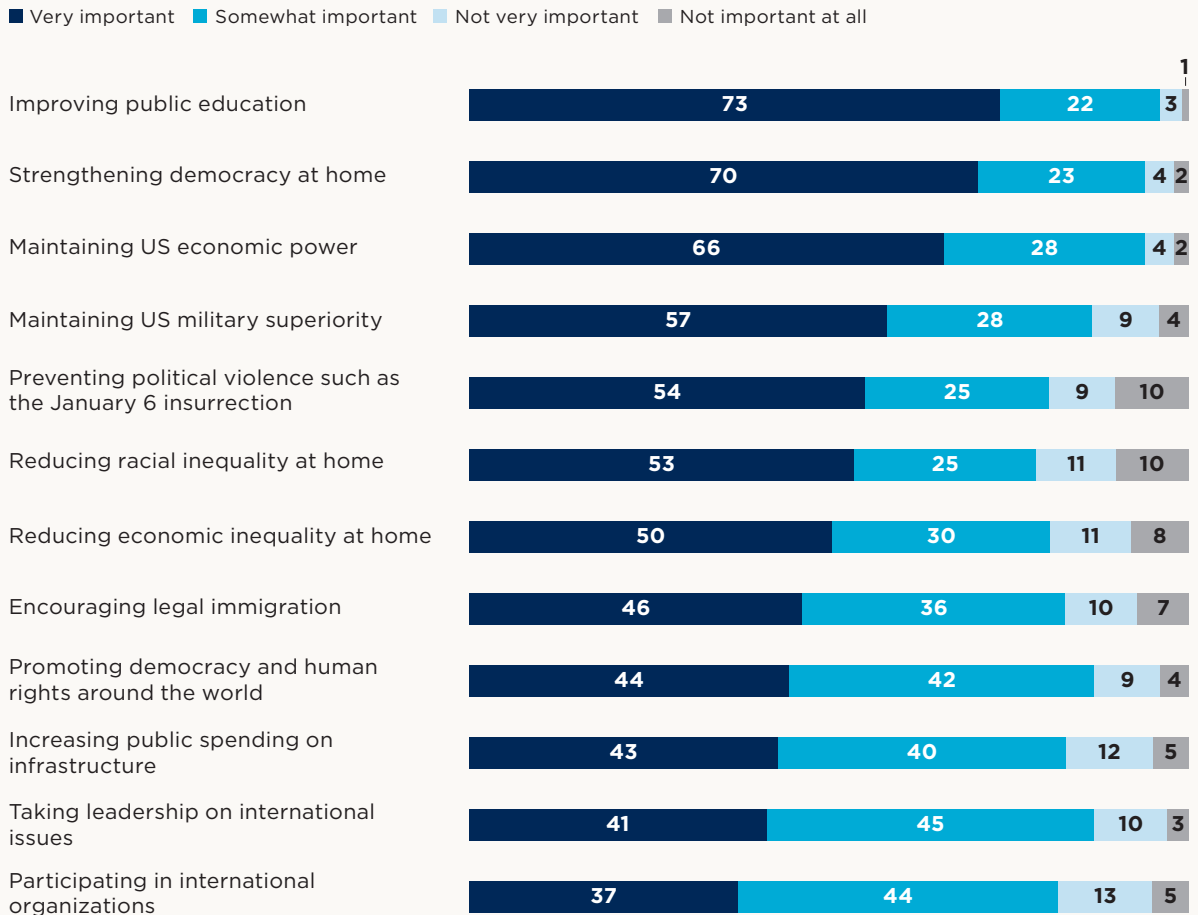
Greater Concern for Internal Than External Threats

Americans say they are personally more concerned about threats within the United States (81%) than threats outside the country (19%). This partially reflects a March 2021 survey finding that many Americans see political polarization (65%), domestic violent extremism (61%), and the COVID-19 pandemic (57%) as critical threats facing the country. And in a January 2021 Chicago Council poll, more Americans named violent white nationalist groups in the United States (29%) and China (26%) as the greatest threats to the country than named terrorist group outside the United States (11%), North Korea (8%), or Iran (2%).¹⁹

Figure 1: Remaining Influential on the Global Stage

Please indicate how important the following factors are to the United States remaining influential on the global stage: (%)

n = 1,045



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

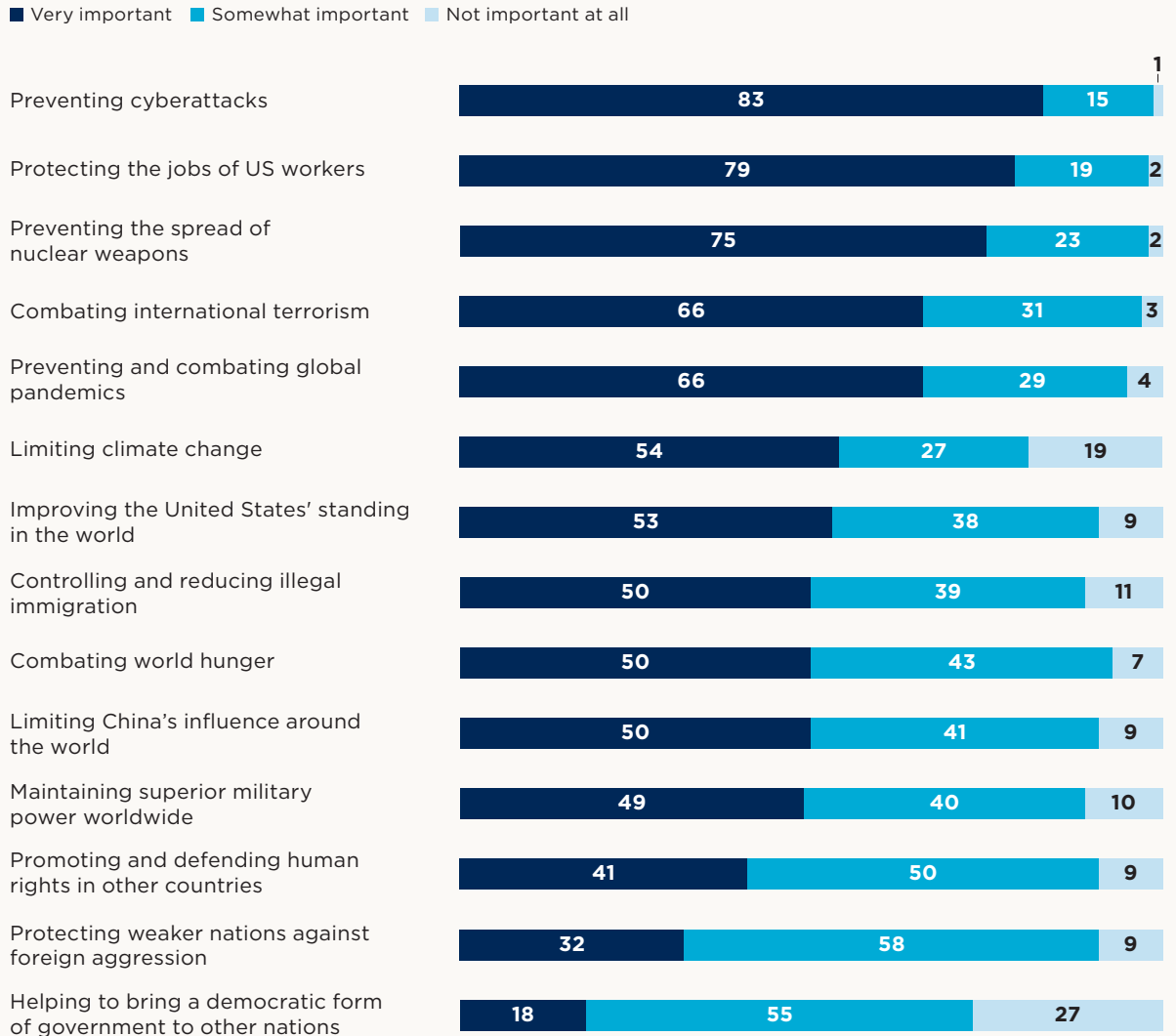
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This domestic focus also extends to Americans' top foreign policy goals, as Figure 2 shows. A large majority of Americans (79%) say that protecting the jobs of American workers is a very important goal, in line with the importance they attach to preventing cyberattacks (83%) and nuclear proliferation (75%). Protecting US jobs, in fact, is seen as more urgent than combating international terrorism (66% very important), preventing and combating global pandemics (66%), and limiting climate change (54%).

Figure 2: Foreign Policy Goals

Below is a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. For each one, please select whether you think that it should be a very important foreign policy goal of the United States, a somewhat important foreign policy goal, or not an important goal at all: (%)

n = bases vary



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

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Democracy and Human Rights: Focus on Home, Not Abroad

Democracy and human rights have been consistent frames for the Biden administration's foreign policy priorities. As Secretary Blinken stated in February 2021, "President Biden is committed to a foreign policy . . . that is centered on the defense of democracy and the protection of human rights."²⁰

Biden himself often frames the challenge of the 21st century as a contest between democracy and authoritarianism.

However, neither human rights nor promoting democracy abroad is a top foreign policy priority for the American public. Only four in 10 Americans (41%) see promoting and defending human rights in other countries as a very important goal for US foreign policy. Even fewer (18%) say that helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations is a very important goal for the United States; in fact, more (27%) say it is not important at all. Furthermore, only a minority of Americans (44%) see promoting democracy and human rights abroad as a very important factor in maintaining US global influence.

Americans are more concerned about democracy at home. Seven in 10 (70%) say strengthening US democracy is a very important factor in maintaining US global influence, and 54 percent say the same about preventing political violence such as the January 6 insurrection. One of the causes of this domestic focus is that half of Americans (52%) believe American democracy has been temporarily weakened but is still functioning, while another quarter (25%) see it as permanently weakened. Americans who see their own democracy as being temporarily or permanently weakened are more likely to focus on strengthening democracy at home, and they are less likely to see promoting democracy and human rights abroad as a very important factor in US global influence.

Domestic Spending Priorities

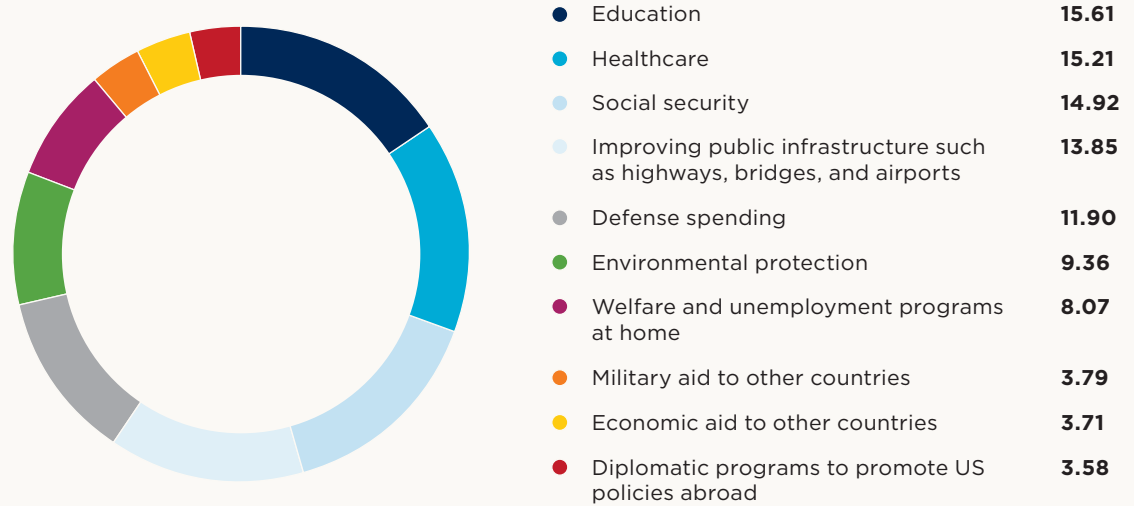
This domestic focus is also amplified in Americans' views on the federal budget. If forced to make trade-offs between domestic and international priorities, Americans would put most of their money into domestic spending (Figure 3). When told they have \$100 to spend on a hypothetical federal budget, survey respondents allocate greater average amounts to education (\$15.61), healthcare (\$15.21), social security (\$14.92), and infrastructure (\$13.85) than they do to defense spending (\$11.90). Average amounts are smaller for environmental protection (\$9.36), welfare and unemployment programs (\$8.07), military aid (\$3.79) and economic assistance (\$3.71) abroad, and diplomatic programs to promote US policies abroad (\$3.58).

70%

OF AMERICANS SAY STRENGTHENING US DEMOCRACY IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR MAINTAINING US INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE.

Figure 3: US Budget Allocation

Next, I'd like you to please imagine that you get to choose how to spend \$100 of your tax money to make up the following areas of the US government budget. For each item, please let us know how many dollars you'd prefer to spend. You must spend all \$100: (\$)
n = 1,030



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But these results do not mean that Americans think US foreign policy should be placed on the back burner while domestic issues are addressed. On the contrary, Americans expect that improvements on the home front will have knock-on benefits for US influence abroad. In addition, the broad majority supports continued US involvement in world affairs, continued membership in international organizations, and continued partnerships with allies and friends—and this is also true for those who prioritize spending on domestic concerns.

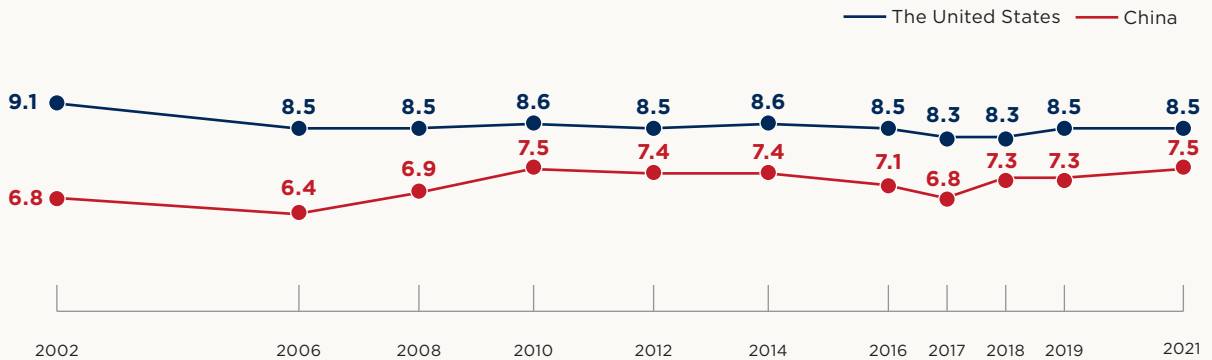
BUILDING AT HOME TO COMPETE WITH CHINA ABROAD

Both on the campaign trail and as president, Biden has been clear that he views China as a competitor to the United States. As he said in March 2021, “they have an overall goal to become the leading country in the world, the wealthiest country in the world, and the most powerful country in the world. That’s not going to happen on my watch.”²¹ The 2021 Chicago Council Survey finds that Americans, too, see Chinese influence growing—and support policies aimed at keeping the United States in the lead.

Americans continue to view the United States as the country with the most influence in the world today, but their views of China’s influence have shifted over the past 15 years, particularly in 2010 following the global financial crisis. Today, the gap has closed to one of its narrowest points, with the United States maintaining a one-point lead in perceived influence over China (Figure 4).

Figure 4: **Influence of the United States and China**

I would like to know how much influence you think each of the following countries has in the world. Please answer on a 0 to 10 scale, with 0 meaning they are not at all influential and 10 meaning they are extremely influential. (mean)
n = 1,015

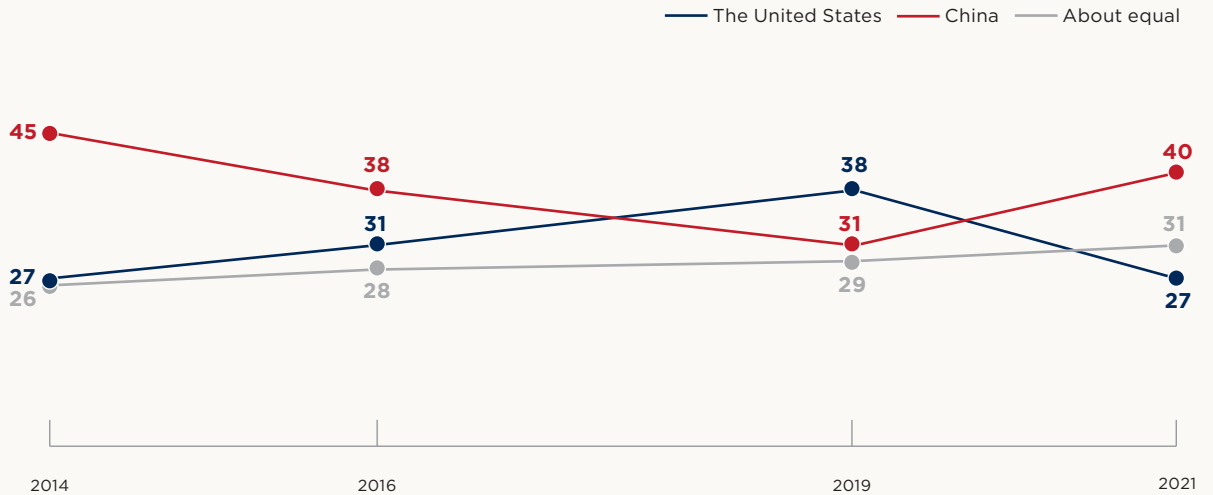


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While Americans’ perceptions of US influence have been broadly stable since 2006, more Americans now (54%) than in 2018 (45%) say the United States is less economically competitive than it was 10 years ago (27% say it is equally competitive; 19% say it is more competitive). Americans are also notably less confident now than they were two years ago in both US economic and military strength compared with China. As Figure 5 shows, a plurality of Americans (40%) say that China is stronger than the United States economically, up from 31 percent who said the same in 2019; only a quarter (27%) now see the United States as stronger. And for the first time in Council polling, fewer than half of Americans (46%) see the United States as stronger than China in terms of military power, down from 58 percent who said the same in 2019 (Figure 6).

Figure 5: US-China Economic Power Comparison

At the present time, which nation do you feel is stronger in terms of economic power, the United States or China—or do you think they are about equal economically? (%)
 n = 2,086

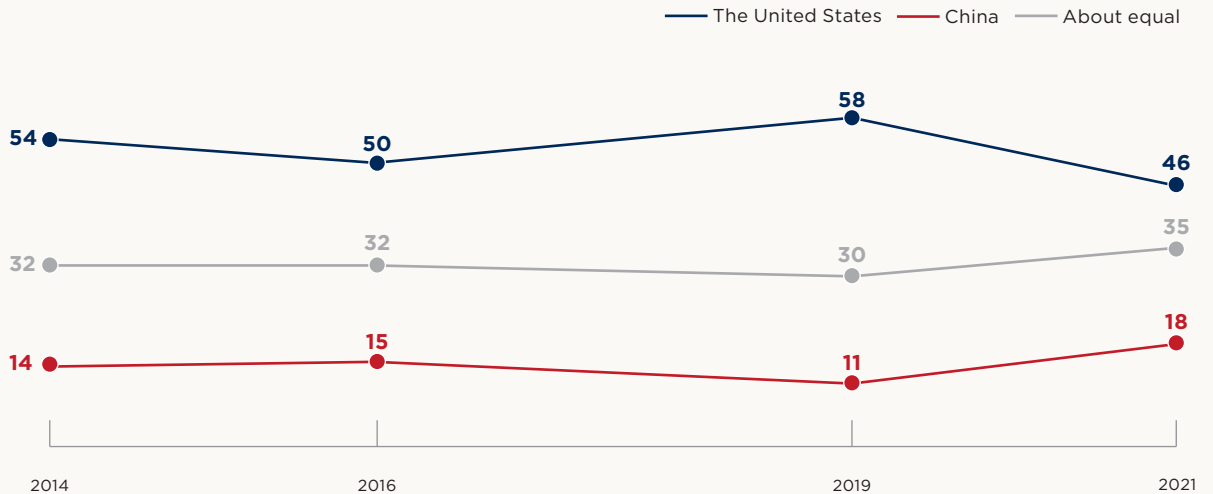


Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

Figure 6: US-China Military Comparison

At the present time, which nation do you feel is stronger in terms of military power, the United States or China—or do you think they are about equal militarily? (%)
 n = 2,086



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

Support Is Growing for US-China Trade Restrictions

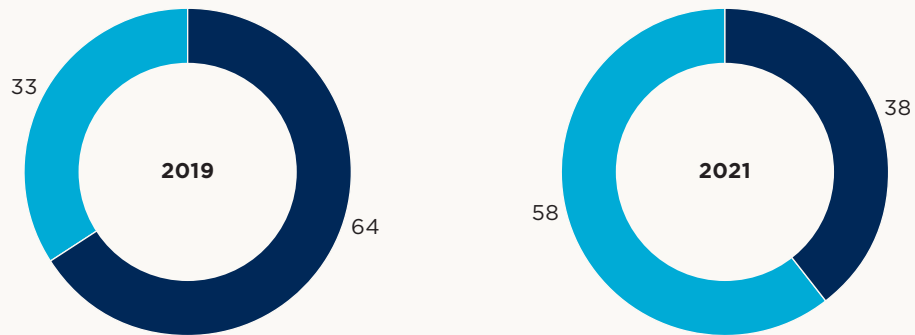
The public's concern about declining US economic power relative to China is helping to drive support for policies aimed at reversing that transition. In a dramatic shift from 2019, a majority of Americans now says trade between the United States and China does more to weaken US national security (58%, up from 33% in 2019), as Figure 7 shows. By contrast, two years ago—amid the US-China trade war—two-thirds of Americans believed that US-China trade strengthened US national security (64%, now down to 38%).

Figure 7: **Trade between the United States and China**

Does trade between the United States and China do more to strengthen US national security or to weaken US national security? (%)

n = 2,086

■ More to strengthen ■ More to weaken



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

There is also growing support for restrictions on trade between the United States and China. A majority of Americans (62%, up from 55% in 2020) favors increasing tariffs on products imported from China. Many (57%, up from 54% in 2020) favor significant reductions in trade between the two countries, even if this leads to greater costs.

Trade is not the only area of concern in relation to China: technology has been a major area of focus for the Biden administration. The 2021 Interim National Security Strategy states that the United States must also “confront unfair and illegal trade practices, cyber theft, and coercive economic practices that hurt American workers, undercut our advanced and emerging technologies, and seek to erode our strategic advantage and national competitiveness.”²²

Many Americans, too, are concerned about the technological angle of US-China competition. Half (52%) favor restricting the exchange of scientific research between the United States and China, and a March 2021 Council poll found that majorities of Americans favored prohibiting US companies from selling sensitive high-tech products to China (71%) and prohibiting Chinese technology companies from building communications networks in the United States (66%).

FEWER THAN HALF OF AMERICANS

(46%)

SEE THE UNITED STATES AS STRONGER THAN CHINA IN TERMS OF MILITARY POWER, DOWN FROM 58 PERCENT WHO SAID THE SAME IN 2019.

Promoting Strategic Industries

To compete with China in the development of emerging technologies, US officials propose direct public investment into strategically important industries. According to a speech delivered on August 9, 2021, by Secretary Blinken, “there are some things that even the most vibrant private sector can’t do on its own. Public investment is still vital. Moreover, America’s entrepreneurs are able to do their pathbreaking work in part because of the foundation provided by public investment.”²³

Majorities of Americans favor the US government investing in strategically important industries. This support covers a variety of ways in which the federal government could act, though it should be noted that the question itself did not mention any budget trade-offs that would have to be considered before implementing these policies.

Figure 8: **Promoting Investment in Industry**

Which of the following actions, if any, do you think the US government should take to promote investment in strategically important industries? (%)

n = 1,071

■ Should take action ■ Should not take action

The US government should fund research and development of emerging technologies to give US companies an edge over foreign businesses in these new industries



The US government should financially support US companies in key industries competing against foreign businesses that receive support from their own governments



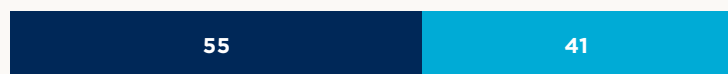
The US government should impose tariffs on foreign products in those industries that compete with US businesses



The US government should ban or limit imports from foreign companies in those industries that compete with key US businesses



The US government should identify businesses most likely to succeed in those industries and offer those companies financial support



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

As Figure 8 shows, eight in 10 Americans say the government should fund research and development of emerging technologies to give US companies an edge over foreign businesses (79%). Seven in 10 favor financial support for US companies that are competing against foreign businesses supported by their respective governments (72%).

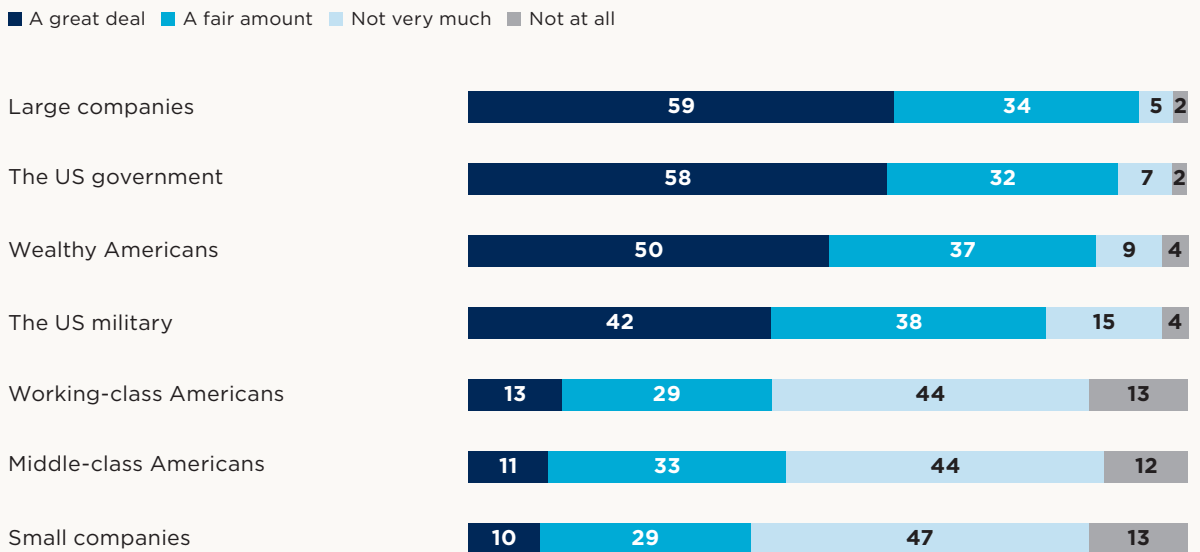
Slightly smaller majorities support imposing tariffs on foreign products in industries that compete with US businesses (60%), banning or limiting imports from foreign companies that compete with US businesses (57%), and identifying businesses most likely to succeed and giving them financial support (55%).

Americans Embrace Globalization but Don't Feel Like Winners

One assumption of the Biden administration that is not borne out by the data is the idea that Americans have become disillusioned with globalization and trade. This assumption is evident in Secretary Blinken's March 3, 2021, speech, "A Foreign Policy for the American People," in which he noted, "Some of us previously argued for free trade agreements because we believed Americans would broadly share in the economic gains that those—and that those deals would shape the global economy in ways that we wanted. . . . But we didn't do enough to understand who would be negatively affected and what would be needed to adequately offset their pain, or to enforce agreements that were already on the books and help more workers and small businesses fully benefit from them."

Figure 9: **Beneficiaries of US Foreign Policy**

To what extent do the following groups benefit from US foreign policy? (%)
n = 1,053



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

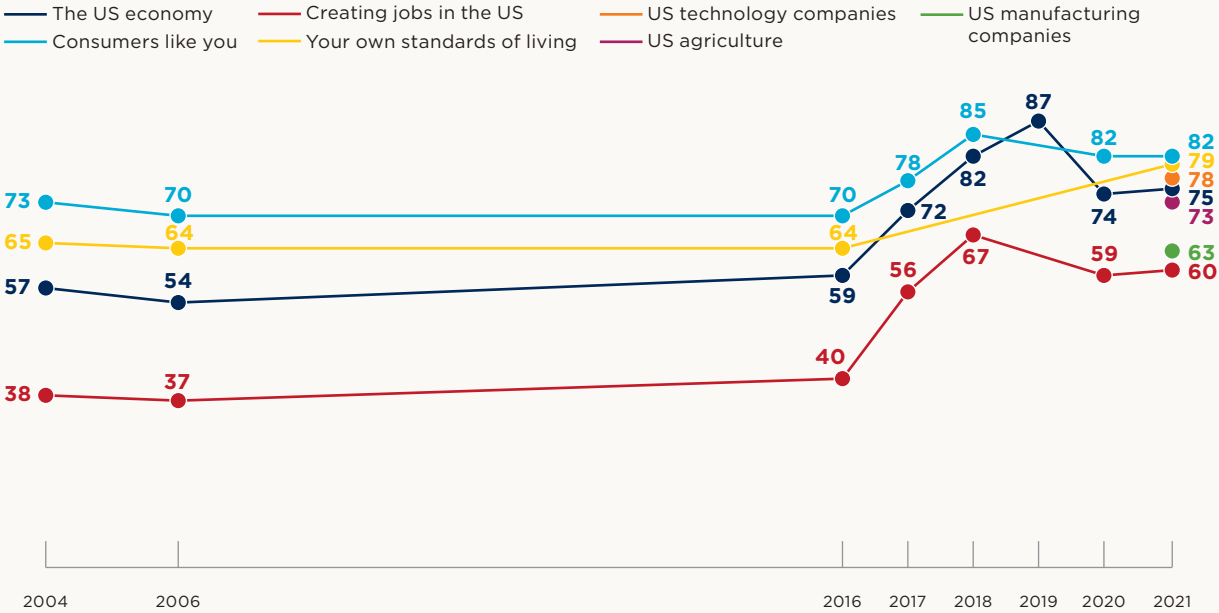
2021 Chicago Council Survey

The data, reflected in Figure 9, show that the administration is correct that everyday Americans feel that large companies (92%), the US government (90%), and the wealthy (87%) benefit disproportionately from US foreign policy decisions. But even those who think the US economic system is unfair to them personally do not necessarily blame trade policy for this inequality. By nearly a six-to-four margin, more Americans say the US economic system is personally fair (56%, with 42% saying it is unfair), similar to 2018 results. When those who think it is unfair are asked which specific factors are to blame, only 27 percent name US trade policy as contributing a great deal. Instead, majorities say that the power of big business (69%) and the influence of special interests (52%) contribute a great deal to this unfairness, followed by institutional inequality (41%).

Rather than seeing trade and globalization as sources of unfairness in American life, a record number of Americans (68%) now say that globalization is mostly good for the United States. As Figure 10 shows, three-quarters or more consider international trade to be beneficial to consumers like them (82%), their own standard of living (79%), US technology companies (78%), the US economy (75%), and US agriculture (73%). Smaller majorities say the international trade has been good for US manufacturing companies (63%) and creating jobs in the United States (60%).

Figure 10: **Beneficiaries of Trade**

Overall, do you think trade is good or bad for: (%)
n = 2,086



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

International trade agreements have not been a priority for the Biden administration so far, with the administration and Congress having allowed Trade Promotion Authority to expire in July 2021. The administration has received ample criticism for refusing to negotiate trade agreements under the rubric of protecting the middle class, particularly from those in Washington who see automation and innovation as greater contributors to middle-class job loss than trade.

But the administration's belief that ordinary Americans oppose trade agreements belies a high level of public support for both specific and hypothetical trade agreements. Support for the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA), the renegotiated and renamed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), is now at an all-time high (80%). Majorities also support joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) (62%) and a free-trade agreement with Taiwan (57%).

Build Back Better? Public Doesn't Equate Infrastructure Rebuild with US Global Influence

The August 2021 passage of the Biden administration's infrastructure bill in the Senate is a key component of the Foreign Policy for the Middle Class agenda. It includes the largest federal investment in infrastructure projects in more than a decade, affecting nearly all aspects of the US economy, including efforts to limit climate change.²⁴

Administration officials have positioned infrastructure investment as a guarantee for future global economic power and influence, emphasizing that building a strong and modern infrastructure at home is essential for the United States to push back on Chinese and Russian claims that their economic and governing systems represent the best path to prosperity.

Americans have been supportive of infrastructure improvement for decades, according to Chicago Council Surveys. As Figure 3 on page 17 shows, infrastructure rates relatively high on the list of Americans' spending priorities. When asked to vote with their hypothetical dollars (given a budget of \$100 total to spend), the public places infrastructure as the fourth most important priority and seems to favor significant investment (\$13.85). This amount is similarly high across all political affiliations.

But the data suggest that Americans do not see a link between infrastructure investments and US foreign policy. As Figure 1 on page 14 demonstrates, the public rates increasing public spending on infrastructure 10th out of 12 factors that would contribute to the US remaining influential on the global stage (ranking by very important). While larger percentages of respondents see other factors as very important, eight in 10 overall say that infrastructure is at least somewhat important to maintaining US influence (83% very or somewhat important).

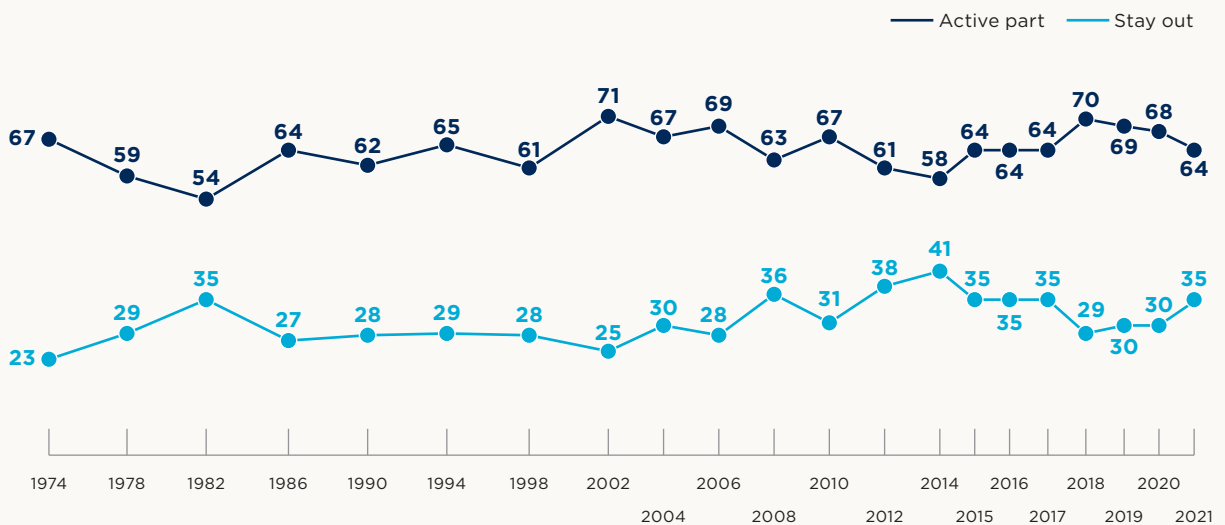
EFFORTS TO RESTORE US LEADERSHIP

While key elements of a Foreign Policy for the Middle Class focus on rebuilding at home to project US influence abroad, returning to the global stage is one of the Biden administration’s top priorities. The current administration has been careful to temper its language when discussing US leadership. Biden’s team has emphasized cooperation over unilateral leadership on the world stage.²⁵ In his September 2021 speech at the UN General Assembly, Biden remarked, "as the United States turns our focus to the priorities and the regions of the world, like the Indo-Pacific, that are most consequential today and tomorrow, we’ll do so with our allies and partners, through cooperation at multilateral institutions like the United Nations, to amplify our collective strength and speed, our progress toward dealing with these global challenges."²⁶ This caution is rooted in the belief held by many administration officials that Americans outside Washington are no longer supportive of US global leadership and the costs associated with it.²⁷ In a 2018 piece for *Foreign Affairs*, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan attributed this supposed preference for a restrained foreign policy to the fact that ordinary Americans have not felt the promised benefit from globalization and the current international order.²⁸

Despite this, a majority of Americans (64%) continues to say that the United States should take an active role in world affairs, as they have every year since the Chicago Council first asked this question in 1974 (Figure 11). This is down slightly from 68 percent in 2020 but is in line with the historical average.

Figure 11: **US Role in World Affairs**

Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs? (%)
n = 2,086



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

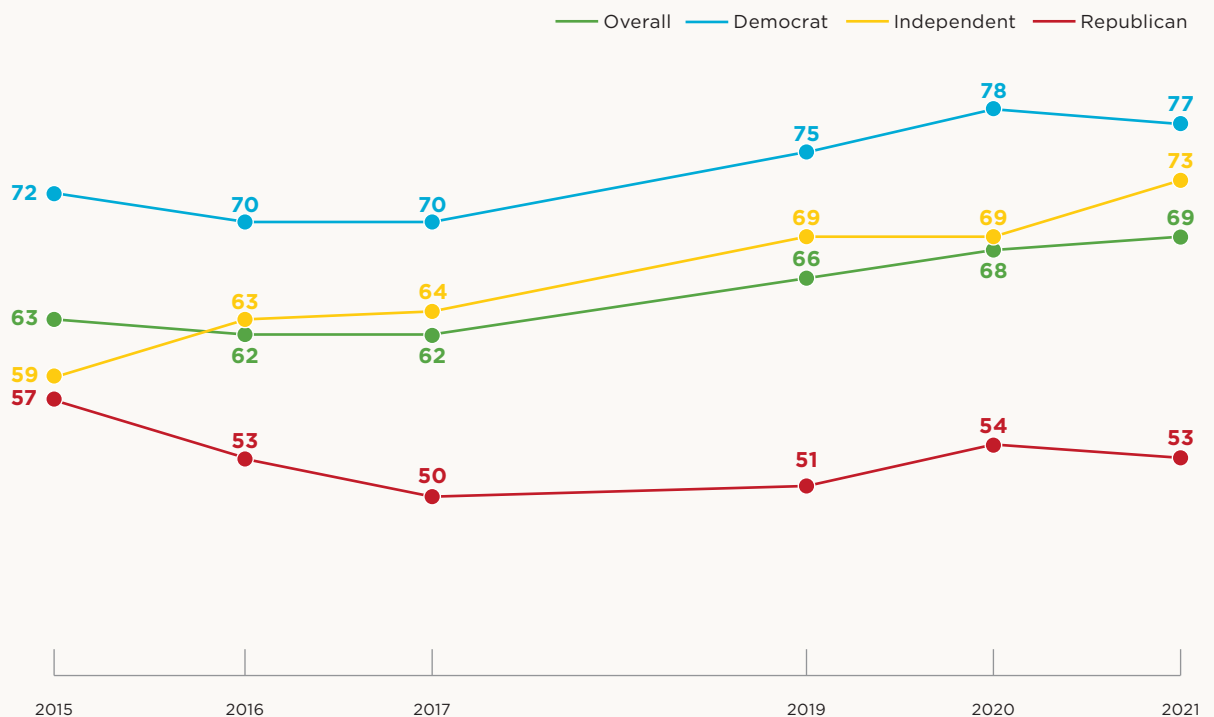
2021 Chicago Council Survey

Moreover, 56 percent say the benefits outweigh the costs of maintaining the US role in the world, down slightly from 61 percent in 2019.

The data, reflected in Figure 12, also show that a majority of Americans (69%) wants the United States to play a shared leadership role in the world, as they have since the question was first asked in 2015 (63%). That support crosses partisan lines, with majorities of Democrats (77%), Independents (73%), and Republicans (53%) all in favor of the United States playing a shared leadership role in the world. Just 23 percent want the United States to be the dominant world leader, and 8 percent want the United States to play no leadership role at all.

Figure 12: **US Leadership Role in the World**

What kind of leadership role should the United States play in the world? Should it be the dominant leader, should it play a shared leadership role, or should it not play any leadership role? (% shared leadership role)
n = 2,086



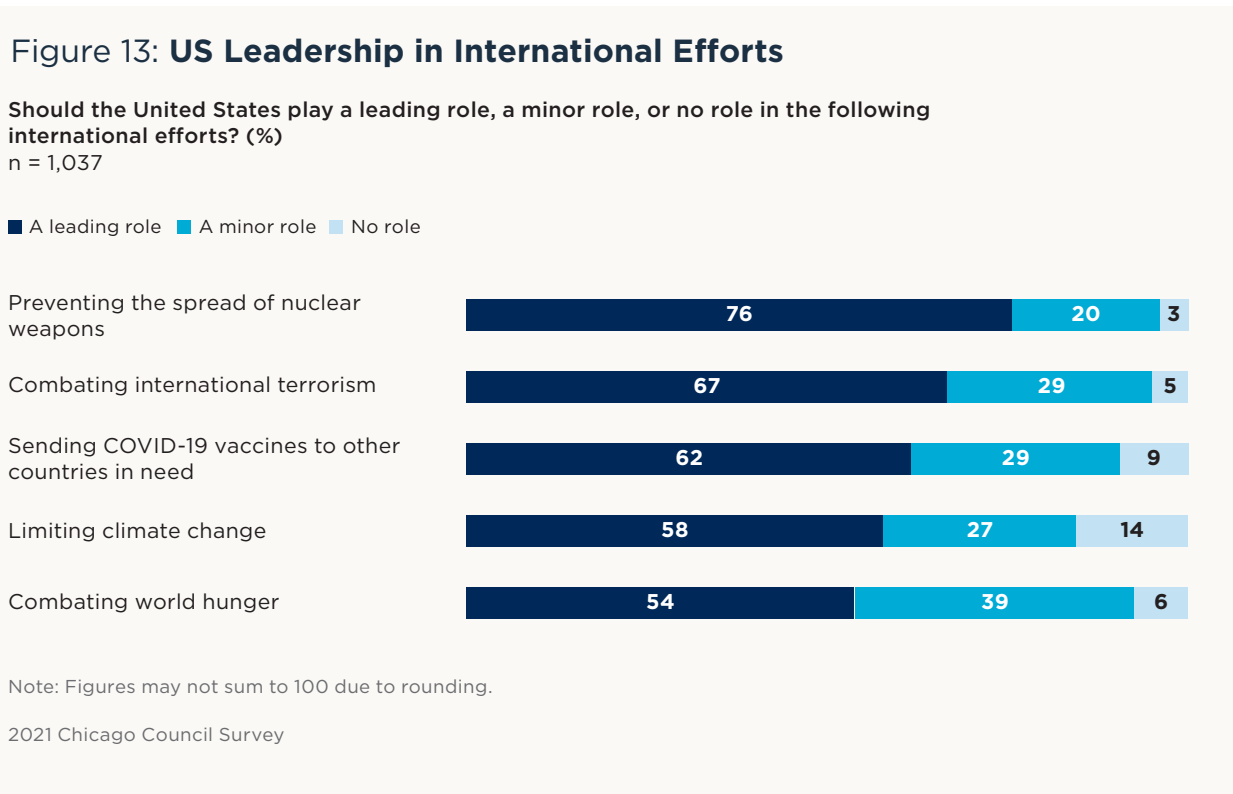
2021 Chicago Council Survey

One aspect of support for this shared leadership role is American participation in international agreements. And the 2021 Chicago Council Survey finds that Americans want the US at the table. Two-thirds (64%) support US participation in the Paris Agreement on climate change, and 71 percent say the United States should participate in the International Criminal Court. Six in 10 (59%) Americans think the United States should participate in the Iran nuclear agreement that lifts some economic sanctions against Iran in exchange for strict limits on its nuclear program. And on trade, 62 percent think the United States should sign on to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The administration has made it clear that it will pursue both American leadership and international cooperation. In a March 2021 speech, Secretary Blinken noted that, “while the times have changed, some principles are enduring. . . . One is that American leadership and engagement matter. . . . Another enduring principle is that we need countries to cooperate, now more than ever.”²⁹

On specific international efforts, there is majority support for the United States playing a leading role on preventing the spread of nuclear weapons (76%), combating international terrorism (67%), sending COVID-19 vaccines to other countries in need (62%), limiting climate change (58%), and combating world hunger (54%), as Figure 13 shows.

If the United States does not take the lead on these pressing challenges, the American public is skeptical that other countries will step up. If the United States does not take a leading role on these issues, few Americans say it is very likely that another country will spearhead efforts on COVID-19 vaccine distribution (15%), combating world hunger (10%), and limiting climate change (19%).



US MILITARY SUPERIORITY AND PRESENCE ABROAD

After two decades at war in Afghanistan and 18 years at war in Iraq, there is an enduring assumption that Americans are weary of “forever wars” and are ready for a more restrained US foreign policy. Secretary Blinken, who has previously come up for criticism for being too supportive of past military interventions,³⁰ claimed in January 2019 that whoever won the presidency in 2020 would have to contend with broad support for retrenchment and an “America First” foreign policy among the American public.³¹

But the public-opinion data do not reflect an American public that is ready to withdraw from the world or that prefers a more restrained foreign policy. A more recent Chicago Council–Ipsos survey conducted August 23–26 found that two-thirds (64%) of Americans continue to support the US withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.

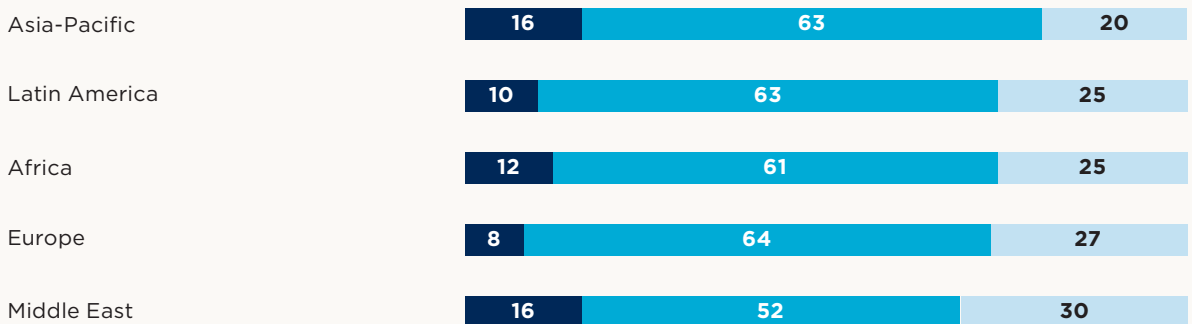
When it comes to the US military, few Americans (15%) want to decrease its size. More than twice as many want to increase the size of the US military, and a bare majority (52%) wants to keep it about the same size. In addition, the American public is broadly supportive of the US military presence around the world. As Figure 14 shows, majorities of Americans want to either maintain or increase the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific (78%), Latin America (73%), Africa (73%), Europe (71%), and the Middle East (68%).

Figure 14: US Global Military Presence

Do you think that the US military presence in the following regions should be increased, maintained at its present level, or decreased? (%)

n = 2,086

■ Increased ■ Maintained ■ Decreased



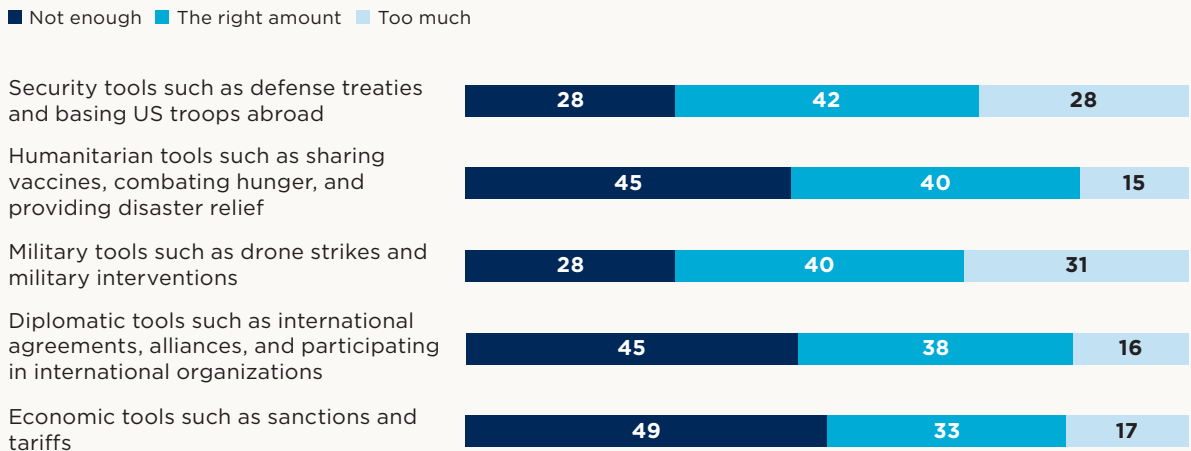
Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

Not only do Americans support the US military presence around the world but a combined majority of the public also thinks that defense treaties and basing US troops abroad are used about the right amount (42%) or not enough (28%), as Figure 15 shows. Just 28 percent say these types of security tools are used too much in the US foreign policy mix. The data also suggest that a combined majority of the American public is fairly comfortable using military force. Forty percent say that military tools such as drone strikes and military interventions are used the right amount, and an additional 28 percent say they are not used enough. That does not mean that Americans want to rely solely on these tools, however. Pluralities also say humanitarian tools (45%) and diplomatic tools (45%) are not used enough, and 49 percent say the same about economic tools such as sanctions and tariffs.

Figure 15: US Foreign Policy Tools

Do you think the United States uses the following sets of foreign policy tools too much, not enough, or the right amount? (%)
 n = 2,086



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

Of course, maintaining the US military size and presence around the world is not cheap, but the American public seems largely ready to fund it. When asked to allocate \$100 of their tax money to specific areas of the US budget, respondents apportioned an overall mean of \$11.90 for defense spending.

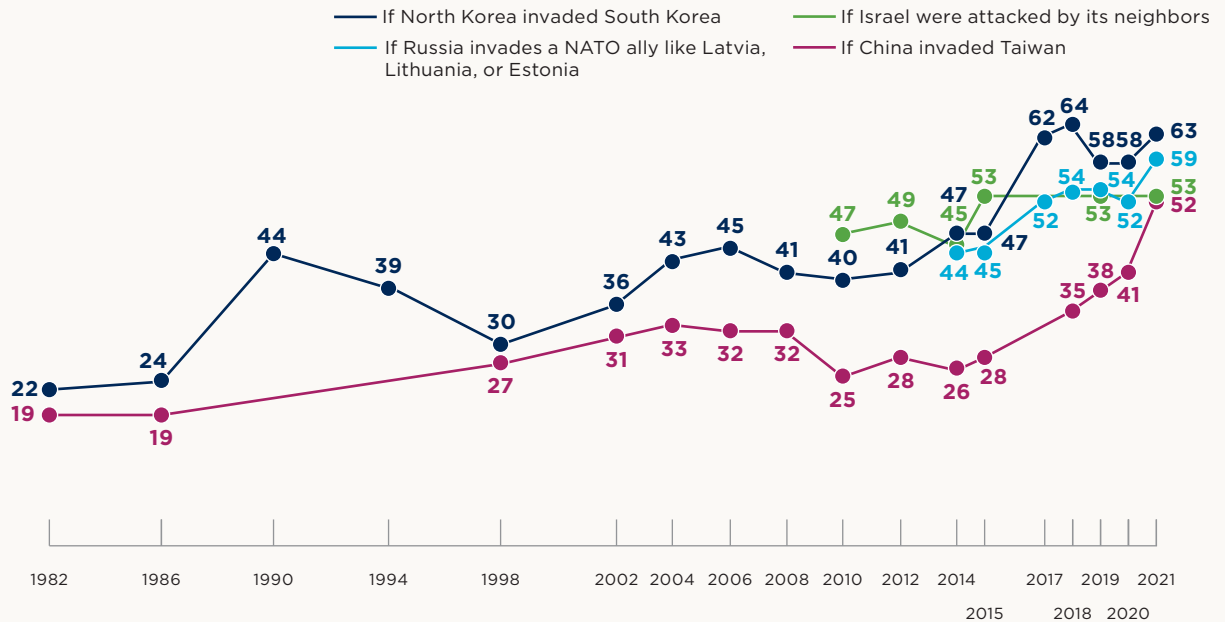
REVITALIZING ALLIES AND PARTNERS

Along with domestic renewal of the United States, revitalizing relationships with US allies and partners has thus far been a core focus of the Biden administration’s foreign policy. “The only way we’re going to meet these global threats,” President Biden remarked after a G7 meeting, “is by working together, and with our partners and our allies.”³² In a March 2021 speech, Secretary Blinken called allies a “unique asset” and said the administration is “making a big push right now to reconnect with our friends and allies, and to reinvent partnerships that were built years ago so they’re suited to today’s and tomorrow’s challenges.”³³

The idea that alliances benefit the United States was called into question under the Trump administration. But the American public did not see US allies as free riders. Instead, the 2020 Chicago Council Survey found that majorities of Americans said alliances benefited both the United States and its allies in East Asia (59%), Europe (67%), and the Middle East (61%). And in 2020, seven in 10 Americans (71%) said the United States should be more willing to make decisions with its allies even if this means the United States may not get its preferred policy choice.

Figure 16: **Use of US Troops Abroad**

There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using US troops in other parts of the world. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would you favor or oppose the use of US troops: (% favor)
n varies



2021 Chicago Council Survey

Of course, a core element of US alliances is the security guarantee to use the US military in the case an ally is attacked by a foreign power. Across a range of scenarios, American public support to use US military force to defend allies or partners either remains stable or has increased (Figure 16). For example, if North Korea invaded South Korea, 63 percent would support using US troops to defend South Korea. That is up from 58 percent in 2020 and only one percentage point lower than the all-time high of 64 percent in 2018. A record-high 59 percent of Americans support using US troops if Russia invades a NATO ally such as Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia. That is up from 52 percent in 2020 and the previous high of 54 percent in 2019. Just over half of Americans (53%) continue to say that they would favor using US troops to defend Israel if it is attacked by its neighbors. Perhaps the most striking shift is that, for the first time, a majority of Americans (52%) supports using US troops if China invaded Taiwan. In 2020, that number was 41 percent.

SIDEBAR **THE MISSING LINK: MANY AMERICANS NOT YET CONVINCED IMMIGRATION ADDS TO US GLOBAL INFLUENCE**

Secretary Blinken frequently emphasizes the edge immigrants provide to the United States in the global economy and the importance of incentivizing the “best and brightest” people to come live, study, and work in the United States when speaking about domestic renewal.

The 2021 Chicago Council Survey data show the anti-immigrant rhetoric amplified by former President Trump, other public figures, and certain media outlets in recent years is not widely shared among the American public. Majorities of Americans express net favorable views of Korean (77%), Chinese (70%), and Mexican immigrants (69%).

Despite these generally favorable views of immigrants, however, Americans overall are less convinced than the current administration that

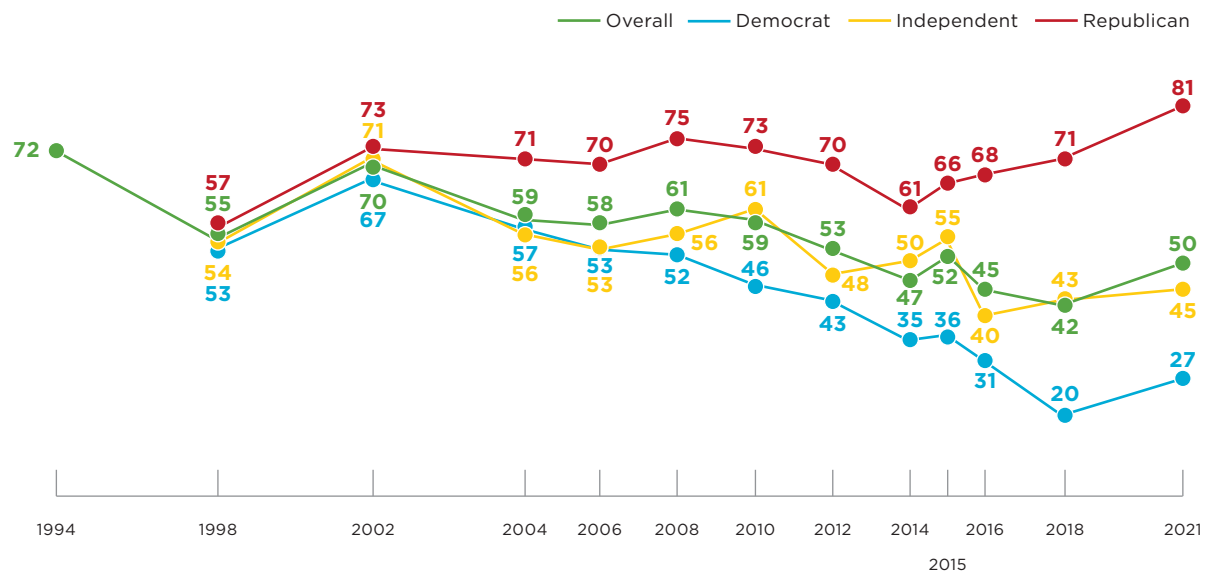
encouraging legal immigration should be a priority when it comes to ensuring our continued global influence. When asked how important several different factors are for the United States to remain influential on the global stage, only 46 percent of Americans classify encouraging legal immigration as a very important factor (see Figure 1 on page 14).

Immigration is one of the issues over which Americans remain most divided in terms of overall results and especially across partisan affiliation. Half of Americans see controlling and reducing illegal immigration as a very important foreign policy goal. The gap between Republicans’ and Democrats’ views on this issue have widened tremendously since 1998, when they were separated by only four percentage points as opposed to the 54 percentage points that separate them today (Figure 17).

THE MISSING LINK: MANY AMERICANS NOT YET CONVINCED IMMIGRATION ADDS TO US GLOBAL INFLUENCE (CONTINUED)

Figure 17: Foreign Policy Goals: Controlling Illegal Immigration

Below is a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. For each one, please select whether you think that it should be a very important foreign policy goal of the United States, a somewhat important foreign policy goal, or not an important goal at all: Controlling and reducing illegal immigration (% very important) n = 1,492



2021 Chicago Council Survey

The Biden administration’s proposed immigration reform legislation, known as the US Citizenship Act, lays out an eight-year path to citizenship for many of the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States today. A majority of Americans thinks illegal immigrants should be allowed to stay

in their jobs and apply for US citizenship either with conditions (24%) or without (41%). But there is a stark partisan divide on this question, likely making major immigration reform a tough sell for the Biden administration at this time.

CONCLUSION

As the president wrote in the 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, “America is back. Diplomacy is back. Alliances are back.” Do the American people believe that America is back? And do they support the policies laid out in the Biden administration’s Foreign Policy for the Middle Class? The results of the 2021 Chicago Council Survey show that the US public still believes the United States is the most influential country in the world but feels China nipping at its heels. Public support has been remarkably stable in supporting many of the traditional foreign policy elements included in the Biden doctrine—international engagement, alliances, and US global leadership.

The American public, like the administration, wants greater investments at home and believes that increased focus on domestic priorities such as improving public education and strengthening American democracy are important for maintaining American influence abroad. And like Biden and many in his administration, Americans are increasingly concerned about China's rising economic and military strength. In response, they favor policies aimed at both restraining Beijing’s rise and bolstering America’s own strength, including tariffs on foreign competitors, greater investments in research and development, and financial support for American firms.

Internationally, Americans back both diplomacy and alliances. The public wants the United States to share leadership with other nations and take a leading role in addressing global challenges such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Americans support US participation in international agreements that address critical threats, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Iran nuclear deal. And though the public supports the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Americans favor maintaining the existing US military presence around the world and are more likely now than in past years to support using force to defend US allies around the world.

Where the public and the administration differ most clearly is on trade. The Biden administration has highlighted that not all Americans benefited from past trade agreements. Yet the 2021 Chicago Council Survey finds that a record number of Americans see globalization as mostly good for the country, and eight in 10 see it as good for US consumers and for their own standard of living. Majorities also support both existing trade agreements, such as the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement, and new agreements for the United States, such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Americans are also less enthusiastic than the administration about promoting a values-based foreign policy. While the administration has endorsed a foreign policy centered on human rights and democracy promotion abroad, the American public does not consider those issues to be top foreign policy priorities. Moreover, the public doesn't make the same links between the health of American democracy and democracy around the world. While everyday Americans believe that bolstering democracy at home is very important for US global influence, they do not feel the same about promoting democracy and human rights overseas.

Some critics argue that the Foreign Policy for the Middle Class is too expansive in its linkage of domestic and international priorities. The results of the 2021 Chicago Council Survey show that Americans disagree. The public does not think US foreign policy should be set aside in favor of addressing domestic issues—but rather that these domestic improvements will benefit US influence and leadership abroad. The challenge for the administration will be to deliver on both the domestic and international dimensions of its policies. After all, if its fundamental diagnosis is correct and the two are inextricably linked, failure on one front will endanger the other.

METHODOLOGY

The 2021 Chicago Council Survey, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy, is the latest effort in a series of wide-ranging surveys on American attitudes toward US foreign policy. The 2021 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the Crown family and the Korea Foundation.

The survey was conducted from July 7 to 26, 2021, among a representative national sample of 2,086 adults. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/- 2.33 percentage points, including a design effect of 1.1817. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items. Partisan identification is based on respondents' answers to a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what?"

The survey was conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs, a polling, social science, and market research firm in Palo Alto, California, using a randomly selected sample of Ipsos's large-scale nationwide research panel, KnowledgePanel® (KP). KP is the first and largest online research panel that is representative of the entire US population. Ipsos recruits panel members using address-based sampling (ABS) methods to ensure full coverage of all households in the nation.

The survey was fielded to a total of 3,899 panel members, yielding a total of 2,200 completed surveys (a completion rate of 56.4%). The median survey length was 25 minutes. Of the 2,200 total completed surveys, 114 cases were excluded for quality-control reasons, leaving a final sample size of 2,086 respondents.

Cases were excluded if they met one of the following three criteria:

1. Speedsters: Respondents who completed the survey in eight minutes or less

- Total cases removed: n = 45

2. Refused 50 percent or more of questions: Respondents who refused to answer 50 percent or more of the eligible survey questions

- Total cases removed: n = 88; n = 67 unique to criteria group

3. Data check score of three out of four: Respondents who failed three or four of the quality checks implemented (see criteria below)

- Total cases removed: n = 29; n = 2 unique to criteria group

1. Completed survey faster than eight minutes

2. Did not accurately input a "4," refused, or skipped Q3_1 in the survey, which was designed to make sure respondents were paying attention ("In order to make sure that your browser is working correctly, please select number 4 from the below list")

3. Refused one or more full survey batteries of five attributes or more (Q7, Q808, Q810, Q811, Q812, Q814, Q26, Q30, Q490, Q44, Q50, Q851, Q190, Q818, QFAIR2, Q240A, Q353, QTW, Q819)

4. Respondents who gave the same exact answer ("straight lined") to a battery of grid questions (Q7, Q811, Q812, Q44)

For more information about the Chicago Council Survey, please contact Dina Smeltz, senior fellow for public opinion and foreign policy (dsmeltz@thechicagocouncil.org), or Craig Kafura, assistant director of public opinion and foreign policy (ckafura@thechicagocouncil.org).

Sampling and Weighting

In general, the specific survey samples represent an equal probability selection method (EPSEM) sample from the panel for general population surveys. The raw distribution of KP mirrors that of US adults fairly closely, barring occasional disparities that may emerge for certain subgroups due to differential attrition. To ensure selection of general population samples from KP behave as EPSEM, additional measures are undertaken, starting by weighting the pool of active members to the geodemographic benchmarks secured from a combination of the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) and the latest March supplement of the US Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) along several dimensions. Using the resulting weights as measure of size, in the next step a PPS (probability proportional to size) procedure is used to select study-specific samples. It is the application of this PPS methodology with the imposed size measures that produces fully self-weighting samples from KP, for which each sample member can carry a design weight of unity. Moreover, in instances for which a study design requires any form of oversampling of certain subgroups, such departures from an EPSEM design are accounted for by adjusting the design weights in reference to the CPS benchmarks for the population of interest.

Typically, the geodemographic dimensions used to weight the entire KnowledgePanel include the following dimensions, with additional nesting of dimensions as well:

- Gender (male, female)
- Age (18–29, 30–44, 45–59, 60+ years)
- Race/Hispanic ethnicity (white, non-Hispanic; Black, non-Hispanic; other, non-Hispanic; two or more races, non-Hispanic; Hispanic)
- Education (less than high school, high school, some college, bachelor's degree or higher)
- Census region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West)
- Household income (less than \$10,000, \$10,000 to <\$25,000, \$25,000 to <\$50,000, \$50,000 to <\$75,000, \$75,000 to <\$100,000, \$100,000 to <\$150,000, \$150,000 or more)
- Homeownership status (own, rent, or other)
- Household size (1, 2, 3, 4+ members)
- Metropolitan area (yes, no)
- Hispanic origin (Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, other, non-Hispanic)
- Language dominance (non-Hispanic and English dominant, bilingual, Hispanic and Spanish dominant) when survey is administered in both English and Spanish

Once the study sample has been selected, the survey administered, and all the survey data are edited and made final, design weights are adjusted to account for any differential nonresponse that may have resulted during the field period. Depending on the specific target population for a given study, geodemographic distributions for the corresponding population are obtained from the CPS, the American Community Survey (ACS), or, in certain instances, the weighted KP profile data. For this purpose, an iterative proportional fitting (raking) procedure is used to produce the final weights. In the final step, calculated weights are examined to identify and, if necessary, trim outliers at the extreme upper and lower tails of the weight distribution. The resulting weights are then scaled to aggregate to the total sample size of all eligible respondents. Detailed information on the demographic distributions of the benchmarks can be found in the appendix.

APPENDIX

Appendix Figure 1: **Defining The Middle Class**

2021 sample size	Overall	Lower class, lower-middle class	Middle class	Upper class, upper-middle class
Weighted	2,086	672	994	396
Unweighted	2,086	577	1,032	456
Partisan Affiliation (%)				
Republican	27	22	30	28
Democrat	32	34	29	38
Independent	39	42	40	33
Presidents (% net favorable)				
Joe Biden	56	57	54	59
Donald Trump	40	41	42	33
Ideology (%)				
Extremely liberal	4	5	4	4
Liberal	14	13	12	20
Slightly liberal	10	11	9	12
Moderate, middle of the road	36	41	36	26
Slightly conservative	12	9	13	13
Conservative	18	13	20	19
Extremely conservative	5	4	5	6
2020 recalled vote (%)				
Joe Biden	45	41	44	55
Donald Trump	34	28	38	32
Another candidate (specify)	3	3	3	2
Didn't vote	14	23	11	6
Don't remember	3	3	3	3
Education (%)				
No high school diploma or GED	11	20	9	3
High school graduate (high school diploma or the equivalent GED)	27	35	28	12
Some college or associate's degree	30	32	31	26
Bachelor's degree	17	9	19	28
Master's degree or higher	14	4	14	31

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

Appendix Figure 1 (continued): **Defining The Middle Class**

	Overall	Lower class, lower-middle class	Middle class	Upper class, upper-middle class
Race/Ethnicity (%)				
White, non-Hispanic	63	56	66	70
Black, non-Hispanic	12	17	10	6
Other, non-Hispanic	7	5	7	10
Hispanic	16	20	15	13
2+ races, non-Hispanic	2	2	2	1
Household Income (%)				
Less than \$10,000	3	8	1	1
\$10,000–\$24,999	9	19	5	1
\$25,000–\$49,999	18	28	14	6
\$50,000–\$74,999	17	21	19	7
\$75,000–\$99,999	14	11	19	7
\$100,000–\$149,999	19	8	24	24
\$150,000 or more	20	4	18	53
Age (%)				
18-29	20	24	19	15
30-44	26	30	23	25
45-59	25	22	26	26
60+	30	23	32	34
How are you paid? (%)				
Paid an hourly rate	48	61	47	28
Paid a salary	39	22	43	59
Paid by the job	9	11	8	11

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

ABOUT THE SURVEY SAMPLE

Weighted	Democrat	Independent	Republican		Democrat	Independent	Republican
% of 2021 sample n = 2,086	32	39	27	Ideology (%)			
Average age	48	47	50	Conservative	7	26	79
Racial composition (%)				Moderate	33	51	18
White, non-Hispanic	47	65	79	Liberal	58	22	3
Black, non-Hispanic	22	10	2	Age (%)			
Hispanic	22	14	14	18-29	21	22	17
Other, non-Hispanic	9	11	5	30-44	27	27	21
Gender (%)				45-59	22	24	29
Female	58	46	53	60+	30	27	32
Male	42	54	47				
Education (%)							
High school or less	37	35	46				
Some college/associate's degree	28	32	30				
College graduates	35	33	25				

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2021 Chicago Council Survey

ABOUT THE CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEY

The Chicago Council Survey, conducted every four years since 1974, biennially since 2002, and now annually, is a trusted and widely cited source of longitudinal data on American public opinion about a broad range of US foreign policy and international issues. With its combination of time series and comprehensive coverage, the Chicago Council Survey is a valuable resource to policymakers, academics, media, and the general public because of its unique ability to capture the sense of particular eras—post-Vietnam War, post-Cold War, post-9/11—and to define critical shifts in American public thinking. The Chicago Council Surveys are highly respected and widely used in policy circles and academic research both in the United States and abroad. Several scholarly works have drawn on Chicago Council Survey data, including *The Foreign Policy Gap* (Page and Bouton), *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Holsti), *Faces of Internationalism* (Wittkopf), and *The Rational Public* (Page and Shapiro). All of the past Chicago Council Survey data sets are available to the public via the Roper Center and ICPSR, and the 2021 data will soon be available at www.thechicagocouncil.org.

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Additional reports based on surveys conducted by the Chicago Council are available at www.thechicagocouncil.org:

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Chicago Council on Global Affairs
Two Prudential Plaza
180 North Stetson Avenue
Suite 1400
Chicago, Illinois 60601



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