

THE ORF

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SURVEY 2023

**Young India and the
Multilateral World Order**

THE ORF FOREIGN POLICY SURVEY 2023

Young India and the
Multilateral World Order



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Preface

THE THIRD EDITION of the *ORF Foreign Policy Survey* comes at an important moment in India's political journey, in the 10th year of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. In the last decade, India has managed to situate itself in a multilateral order built around effective and flexible partnerships: from the Quad and I2U2, to an expanded BRICS. The year 2023, in particular, was significant for India as it presided over both the G20 and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. The mood of India's youth is captured by the headline support of 83 percent of the respondents, who expressed approval for the Modi government's foreign policy. This is 6 percentage points higher than last year's result and 11 percentage points more than in 2021.

India's G20 leadership has brought attention to the dynamics of multilateral institutions and the diplomatic effort required to make multilateralism work. At a time when the G20 had become tepid amidst geopolitical contestations, New Delhi has given the grouping a new lease of life—indeed, a new vision. Through its G20 presidency, India moved the needs of the Global South—inclusive development, digital transformations, reform of multilateral institutions, climate finance, women-led development, and the quest for peace—to the mainstream of global governance and to dinner

tables as well. As Prime Minister Modi stated ahead of the G20 Summit in September 2023, “It is well known that we have followed the approach of “*Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas*” (Together, for everyone’s growth with everyone’s trust and with everyone’s efforts) in our country for the last nine years. This is our guiding principle in global relations as well.”

India’s feat of shoring up a consensus on the Delhi Declaration and the inclusion of the African Union in the G20 are testaments to its ability to navigate various political cleavages and lead multilateral institutions in the new world order. But of particular consequence is how India’s presidency of the G20 truly made it a “People’s G20”, with over 200 meetings in 60 cities across the country’s 28 states and eight union territories. Minister of External Affairs Dr S Jaishankar described it succinctly thus: “This G20 made the world ready for India, and India ready for the world.”

This need for multilateral reforms and leadership has become crucial at a time when the world order is experiencing enormous stress. There are enough challenges that warrant reformed and more representative and responsive multilateral institutions, chief among them: the devastating and prolonged impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; the revival of old conflict lines and the emergence of new ones; heightening tensions between the United States (US) and China; the war in Ukraine; and the tensions in the Gulf and Red Sea. India—for its sheer population, its dedication to democracy, its resilient and growing economy, and its geography that is impossible to ignore—is the first among equals to advocate for reforms.

The ORF Foreign Policy Survey 2023: Young India and the Multilateral World Order, conducted in collaboration with Impetus Research, endeavours to understand the views of the country’s urban youth on the most important questions that confront India and the choices that the nation must make in this fast-changing global environment.

The survey found that three years since the COVID-19 outbreak, the youth remain most concerned with global pandemics, terrorism, and economic slowdown. Respondents expressed agreement that multilateral institutions should prioritise healthcare, food security, and economic recovery in this post-pandemic world.

Even as a large majority support India's foreign policy and agree that India effectively used its G20 presidency, scepticism for Pakistan and China looms large among the Indian urban youth. In addition to border confrontations, nearly 80 percent of the respondents stated that the 2020 Galwan clashes had reduced their trust in China. India's urban youth are, however, optimistic about most of India's other neighbours, and expressed support for the country's assistance to Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh. The US, followed by Russia, Australia and Japan, are seen as India's favoured partners in the coming decade. This reflects an understanding of India's historical partnerships (Russia) while simultaneously acknowledging the growth in the country's contemporary relations, with all three Quad partners being included in the list of India's most likely future partners.

India's persistent efforts to protect its citizens overseas in conflict zones and emergencies—with evacuations and rescue operations across the globe, from Ukraine to Sudan—has also led to a greater trust across regions that the Indian state cares for all its citizens, both within the country and abroad.

At a time when multilateralism is under stress and India is emerging as a formidable power, this survey captures a more rounded view of the urban youth's perceptions of the country's foreign policy. ORF has institutionalised this Foreign Policy Survey as an annual endeavour to better track how India's young demographic comprehends the country's foreign policy goals and its growing role in world affairs.

We are confident that *The ORF Foreign Policy Survey 2023* will help bring the voices of young India to the forefront, which will, in turn, aid in more participatory policymaking that reflects the aspirations of the next generation. It is this cohort that has been surveyed, and they will be the ones to fuel India's journey towards 'developed country' status by 2047.

**- Dr Samir Saran
President, ORF**

Key Findings

1 India's urban youth rated the country's overall foreign policy positively: 35 percent graded it *very good* and 48 percent, *good*. The overall support (83 percent) is 6 percentage points more than in last year's survey, and 11 percentage points higher than in 2021.

2 Asked about the current challenges to India's foreign policy, 90 percent of the respondents named *global pandemics* as the most pressing. Other concerns were *terrorism* (88 percent), *post-COVID economic slowdown* (86 percent), *cyber security* (85 percent), and *climate change* (85 percent).

3 Consistent with last year's survey, multilateral platforms were chosen as the most preferred mode of international engagement by the country's urban youth (47 percent).

4 Eighty-eight percent of the respondents considered India's *bid to secure permanent membership to the United Nations Security Council* as an important goal—only 2 percentage points lower than the proportion found in the 2021 and 2022 editions of the survey, showing continued appreciation for the apex multilateral institution of the world.

5 India's G20 presidency was regarded as an overall success, with 83 percent of the surveyed youth deeming it effective in addressing the country's concerns. In contrast, in the 2022 survey, 74 percent of the respondents did not acknowledge the G20's importance in India's foreign policy calculus.

6 All of India's neighbours, except for Pakistan and Afghanistan, received a vote of confidence from a majority of the respondents. With a two-point higher result than in the 2022 survey, Nepal continues to receive the highest vote of trust, this time from 72 percent of the respondents.

7 A majority of the respondents were of the view that India's connectivity with its neighbours has been adequate across all the sectors, particularly in technology, and people-to-people and transport connectivity (86 percent).

8 Respondents were satisfied with India's relations with the global powers, except that with China. The bilateral relationship that garnered the highest positive range (from 81 percent of the respondents) is that with the US.

9 India's urban youth say the US (81 percent), Russia (77 percent), Australia (77 percent), and Japan (76 percent) will likely be the country's leading partners in the coming decade. In 2022 too, the US received the highest vote (85 percent).

10

When asked about India's appropriate position should US-China tensions escalate, 44 percent said it should adopt a neutral stance, and another 44 percent advocated for cooperation with the US. In the 2022 survey, 49 percent believed India should remain neutral, and 41 percent said the country should cooperate with the US—indicating a notable shift this year to partnering with the US.

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A large majority (85 percent) of respondents agreed that the US should support India should tensions between India and China heighten.

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Border conflicts with China are a significant challenge for India, according to 84 percent of the respondents. Eighty percent believed that the 2020 Galwan clashes had severely reduced their trust in China; at the same time, 58 percent advocated for more economic engagements with China. The 2022 edition of the survey recorded the same proportion (84 percent) of respondents expressing concern over border conflicts with China, and 54 percent advocating for better economic ties between India and China.

- Majority of the urban youth (80 percent) agreed that India should remain neutral in the Russia-Ukraine war, and 82 percent said India should look beyond Russia for defence partnerships. In the 2022 survey, 68 percent of respondents expressed concern about closer Russia-China relations; this year, there was an increase in this sentiment by 8 percentage points.
- A good majority (74 percent) agreed that the Quad was an apt means to effectively promote India's interests. Eighty percent of respondents expressed a desire for India and the US to strengthen the Quad against emerging challenges.
- India's urban youth are positive about trade, with 75 percent agreeing that free trade agreements are a means of generating jobs and raising standards of living.

Introduction

THE YEAR 2023 was seminal for India as it sat at the helm of the G20. As soon as the presidency started in late 2022, there was optimism and apprehension alike about whether India would succeed in its agenda of placing the Global South at the centre of international governance. It was hoped that New Delhi's tenure would enable it to fulfil its leadership ambitions as the world struggled to find its feet after the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ In September 2023, India successfully hosted the G20 Leaders' Summit and displayed its ability to navigate the polarisation within the group: The summit passed the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, and announced the inclusion of the African Union (AU) in the grouping, effectively making it G20+1.

Throughout its presidency, India took on a leading role in promoting globalisation and securing the world order via multilateral reforms. It conducted robust engagements with the countries of the Global South, who are both the primary stakeholders and the vanguards, of this global transformation. In the initial months of its G20 presidency, India organised the first

¹ Harsh V Pant, et al., *The ORF Foreign Policy Survey 2022: India @75 and the World*, November 2022, Observer Research Foundation.

edition of Voice of the Global South Summit (VOGSS) to tackle the core issues of developing countries, thereby laying the ground for an inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive G20 leadership. At the end of its presidency, India hosted the second VOGSS that deliberated the ways by which the progress made in the past year can be sustained and channelled towards the reform of the current order.

At the G20 Summit, the leaders resolved to come together amid the unprecedented challenges facing the Global South. In their remarks at the Summit, the leaders underscored the multiple crises faced by the Global South in recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic, worsening climate change, rising inflation, and food and energy insecurities resulting from escalating geopolitical tensions and which have created additional impediments to efforts to eradicate poverty. There were also challenges related to access to concessional financing, and the slowdown in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The leaders, in their interventions, agreed that for countries of the Global South, many of these challenges merely reflect the familiar struggles of the past.

Steering the Leaders' Summit to passing the Declaration that adopted 87 outcome documents and accepted 118 other frameworks, action points, and texts across various issues, New Delhi succeeded in championing the demands of the Global South for sustainable and inclusive development, digital transformation, reforming multilateral institutions, and fostering peace. The Summit's success added to the hope that the global community could be getting closer to the aim of a reformed international order. After all, the G20 presidency was successively going to be held by countries of the Global South, and BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) expanded their respective memberships.

Yet, challenges persist, and the past few years have indeed been tumultuous. The far-reaching, prolonged impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the widening differences between the West and Russia amid the war in Ukraine, and China's attempts to redefine the ethos and structures of global governance and the political map of Asia have all led to the virtual paralysis of the most crucial multilateral platforms. There is an emerging consensus on the need to overhaul the current world order and pave the way for

an alternative that will be more representative and responsive to global challenges, whether legacy or new.

In India's immediate neighbourhood, the ongoing political and economic crises in Pakistan and the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan have raised concerns about the threat of terrorism and affected New Delhi's outreach to the Central Asian Republics. China's forays into Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Nepal have also renewed concerns about its increasing influence in the region. At the global level, New Delhi has had to manage its historical relationship with Russia amid the ongoing rift between Moscow and the West and the growing bonhomie between Russia and China. And as we enter 2024, the lingering shadows of the Russia-Ukraine war and the COVID-19 pandemic are only being compounded by the emergence of new conflicts and the resumption of old ones. The ongoing crisis in West Asia has again raised concerns, with the civilian toll from the conflicts rising every day.

As New Delhi prepares to navigate this rough terrain through multilateral and bilateral mechanisms, it is imperative to understand how its policy responses and diplomatic acumen are being perceived by the country's youth. This edition of the annual ORF Foreign Policy Survey, which focuses on multilateralism, seeks to assist in understanding how the country's urban youth view the government's policy choices and its engagement with the world. It aims to aid in deciphering what India's urban youth regard to be the biggest challenges facing the country and the region, and how they expect the country to respond to those challenges as it emerges as a pivotal power in the new world order.

“

As India navigates the rough geopolitical terrain through multilateral and bilateral mechanisms, we must understand how its policy responses and diplomatic acumen are perceived by the country's youth.

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Context and Rationale

PREVIOUS SURVEYS BY DIFFERENT organisations have contributed to the effort to gauge public opinion on India's foreign policy and its place in world affairs, although they have had their weaknesses. For instance, the Indian Institute of Public Opinion has been conducting annual and bi-annual surveys since 1959 where respondents share their views on India's conduct of its foreign affairs. The coverage of those surveys, however, has been limited: between 1,000 to 1,500 literate respondents from only four Indian cities (Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, and Mumbai). While scholars like Aidan Milliff, Paul Staniland, and Vipin Narang have used these survey results for their analyses, their use of data seems to have largely fallen short of capturing the changing perceptions of the new demography.²

To be sure, other polls have attempted to capture broader demographic samples to assess the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy. Devesh Kapur's research from 2005-2006,

² Aidan Milliff, Paul Staniland, and Vipin Narang, "Uneven Accountability? Public Attitudes on Indian Foreign Policy since the 1960s," MIT Political Science Department Research Paper No. 2019-21, 2019, 1–66.

“Public Opinion and Indian Foreign Policy,” covered 2,12,563 interviewees to gather insights into how Indians belonging to different socioeconomic and regional groups see India’s place in the world and how they perceive other countries.³

News outlets, academics, and think-tanks have also conducted their own surveys. For instance, the Lowy Institute and the Australia India Institute conducted a survey on India’s security threats and relations with other countries.⁴ CNN-IBN-Today conducted a survey in 2014 to discover if the Indian public favoured Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s governance and policies, including those related to the country’s foreign affairs.⁵ Other polls have attempted to capture India’s public opinion on specific issues related to foreign policy and security, such as the Gulf War of 1991, the Pokhran nuclear tests, Kargil War, Iraq War, the civil nuclear deal, and the separatist movement in Sri Lanka.⁶ Some polls have also looked at specific themes, such as the use of nuclear weapons and Indo-US relations.⁷

In recent years, surveys on Indian foreign policy and national security have been conducted on certain subjects. In 2019, a research paper built on the findings of a survey on the implications of counter-insurgency measures on public opinion in Kashmir.⁸ In March 2021, an article collated evidence from

³ Devesh Kapur, “Public Opinion and Indian Foreign Policy,” *India Review* 8, no. 3 (August 13, 2009): 286–305, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480903116818>.

⁴ Rory Medcalf, “India Poll 2013” (Sydney, 2013), <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/india-poll-2013>

⁵ Kumar, “India’s Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: A View from New Delhi”

⁶ Shivaji Kumar, “India’s Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: A View from New Delhi,” *India Review* 17, no. 4 (August 8, 2018): 353–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2018.1510158>.

⁷ See: Benjamin A. Valentino and Scott D. Sagan, “Atomic Attraction,” *The Indian Express*, June 3, 2016, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/barack-obama-hiroshima-speech-india-nuclear-weapon-terrorism-atomic-attraction-2831348/>; Kumar, “India’s Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: A View from New Delhi”

⁸ Gautam Nair and Nicholas Sambanis, “Violence Exposure and Ethnic Identification: Evidence from Kashmir,” *International Organization* 73, no. 2 (2019): 329–63.

various surveys to assess public opinion towards China since the 1960s.⁹ In 2022, Allison Carnegie and Nikhar Gaikwad in their article employed surveys in the US and India to understand how geopolitics impacts people's views on international trade.¹⁰ In August 2022, the Stimson Center released findings of a telephonic survey of 7,000 Indians that assessed public attitudes to India's international conflict scenarios.¹¹ In 2023, Pew Research Center conducted a survey to assess how respondents across the world, including Indians, see Prime Minister Modi and India's influence on and relations with other countries.¹²

While these efforts have been notable, the surveys are often limited to a single event or topic, or use a population sample that is limited to rarefied policymaking circles. Unlike these surveys, ORF's *Foreign Policy Survey* attempts a more sustained and all-encompassing view of India's foreign policy.

This annual survey is the first of its nature. The first edition, released in August 2021, focused on the world order amid the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³ The poll surveyed a subset of urban Indian youth with 2,037 respondents from 14 cities, in the age group of 18-35. This demographic cohort makes up 27 percent of India's urban population, and around 26 percent of the

⁹ Aidan Milliff and Paul Staniland, "Public Opinion Toward Foreign Policy in a Developing World Democracy: Evidence from Indian Views of China," *SocArXiv*, March 2021.

¹⁰ Allison Carnegie and Nikhar Gaikwad, "Public Opinion on Geopolitics and Trade: Theory and Evidence," *World Politics* 74, no. 22, 2022

¹¹ Christopher Clary, Sameer Lalwani, Niloufer Siddiqui, and Neelanjan Sircar, "Confidence and Nationalism in Modi's India," Stimson Center, August 2022.

¹² Pew Research Center, "Views of India Lean Positive Across 23 Countries," Pew Research Center, August 29, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/08/29/views-of-india-lean-positive-across-23-countries/>

¹³ Harsh V Pant, with Prithvi Iyer, Nivedita Kapoor, Aarshi Tirkey, and Kartik Bommakanti, *The ORF Foreign Policy Survey 2021: Young India and the World*, August 2021, Observer Research Foundation, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-orf-foreign-policy-survey-2021-young-india-and-the-world>

country's overall population. The second poll, released in November 2022 around the time of the 75th anniversary of India's independence, covered 5,000 respondents in the age group 18-35, from 19 cities.¹⁴ The present edition, with a focus on issues related to multilateralism, covers a sample of 5,000 respondents between the age group 18-35, from 19 different cities; the questionnaire was administered in 11 different languages.

The observations made in this report should offer crucial insights into public opinion and India's foreign policy, and how policymakers shape that public opinion. In a swiftly evolving multipolar world where India is emerging as a significant power, the findings of this poll indicate how the Indian urban youth view India's overall engagement with the world, its stakes in multilateralism, relations with its neighbours and global powers, its preferred groupings, and international economic relations. The survey also has an eye on the future—it captures the temporal trends, interrogates India's leadership role, its engagement with like-minded countries, and how it leverages its position in an increasingly competitive world. Future surveys would benefit from mapping any identifiable differences in how India's youth interpret the nation's engagement with the world.

The responses were analysed according to various parameters such as age, employment, gender, occupation, geography, and income. The research team conducted a thorough calculation and assessment of the data before attempting to draw patterns and offer insights into the urban youth's current perceptions of India's foreign policy.

¹⁴ Harsh V Pant, et al., *The ORF Foreign Policy Survey 2022: India @75 and the World*, November 2022, Observer Research Foundation, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-orf-foreign-policy-survey-2022>

Methodology and Sample Design

THE 2023 EDITION of the Observer Research Foundation's annual Foreign Policy Survey was conducted in collaboration with Impetus Research. A national survey of India's urban youth, it covers a sample of 5,000 respondents in the 18-35 age group, spread across 19 cities.

The primary fieldwork for the survey was conducted from 7 August 2023 to 15 September 2023. The questionnaire was administered in 11 languages—i.e., Assamese, Bangla, Gujarati, Kannada, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, and English. The sample was drawn using a stratified multi-stage cluster sampling approach. Impetus Research used the 2011 Census figures provided by the office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, as a sampling frame.

The proposed mode of surveying was face-to-face (F2F) using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), with paper and pencil (PAPI) used at some specific locations or in case of technical issues with the tablet PCs. Impetus Research used a CAPI program for data collection.

Of the sample, 60.9 percent (3,047) were males and 39.06 percent (1,953) were females. To ensure heterogeneity in responses, data was collected taking into consideration various socioeconomic characteristics. Proportionate representation from all regions was ensured, as can be seen from Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Composition, by Region

Region	Number of Respondents	Percent
North	1,543	30.86
West	1,090	21.80
East	1,308	26.16
South	1,059	21.18

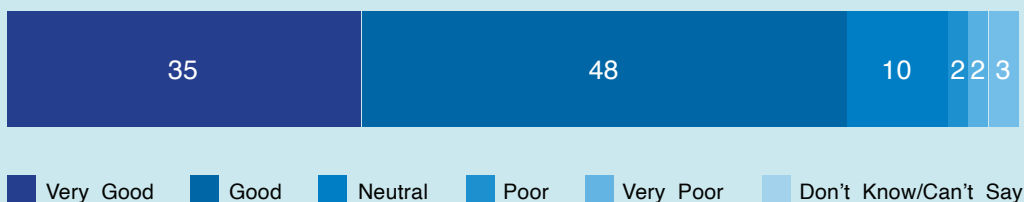
In the sample, 55.98 percent (2,799) of the respondents attended school up to Class 12, while the remaining 44.02 percent (2,201) have obtained education beyond Class 12. Over 70 percent (3,538) of the respondents were employed while 29.24 percent (1,462) were unemployed.

Survey Findings and Analysis

I.

Indian Foreign Policy and Multilateralism

1.1 How would you rate India for its foreign policy on an overall basis? (Single response)



India's urban youth continue to be upbeat about the country's foreign policy.

Support for India's foreign policy has been steadily increasing over the three editions of ORF's Foreign Policy Survey. This year, 35 percent said the country's foreign policy was *very good*—a 3-percentage point increase from 2021, and a 10-percentage point increase from 2022. The combined

83 percent (35 percent, *very good* and 48 percent, *good*) in this year's survey is 6 percentage points higher than last year's result and 11 percentage points more than in 2021.

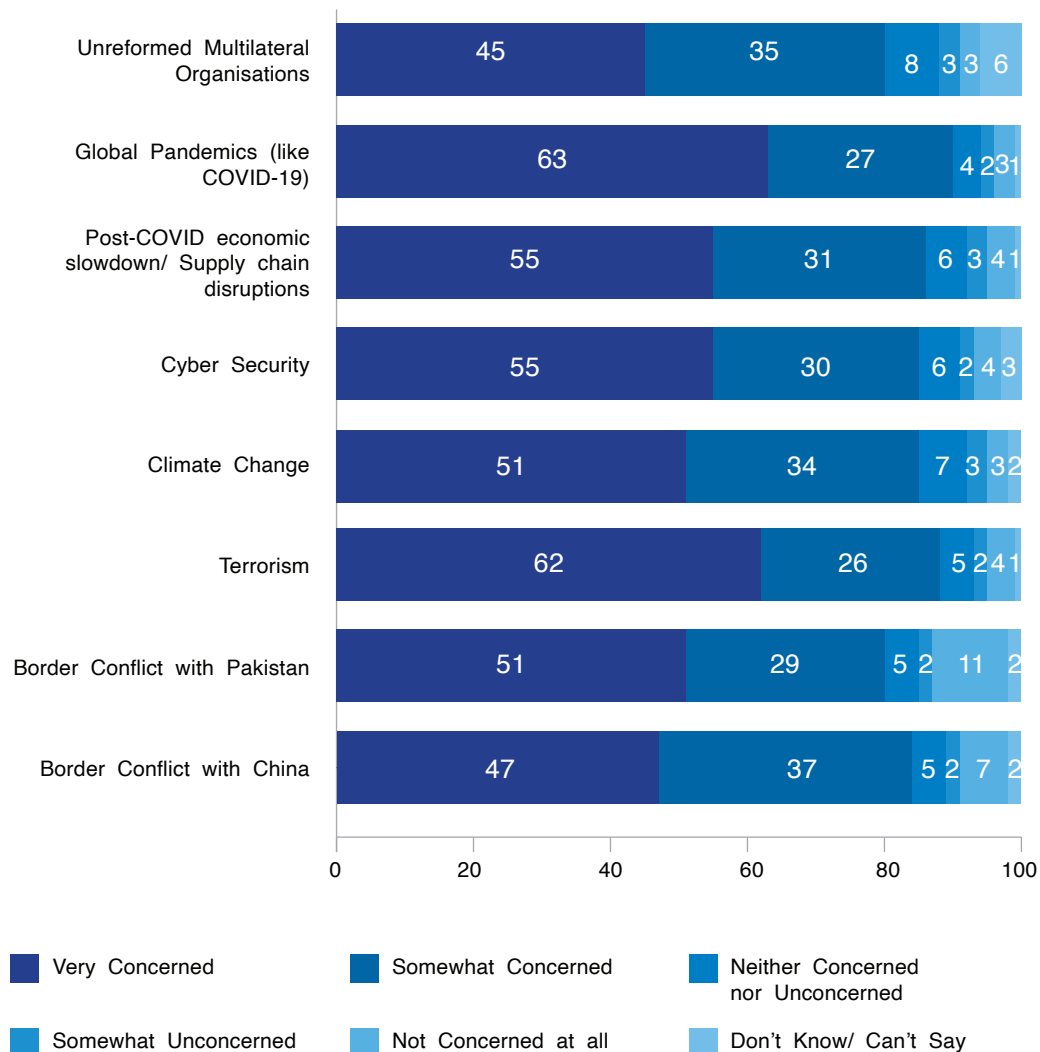
This positive perception may be attributed partly to India's successful G20 presidency in 2023, during a time of intense geopolitical tensions. The country's focus on the neighbourhood, its nuanced response to the crisis in Ukraine, and overall people-centric response and approach during times of conflict, would also have contributed to such an increase in support for the country's foreign policy.

Of all occupational groups, respondents working in government rated it the highest (91 percent). In terms of age, respondents in the 26-35 age group had a more positive outlook (84 percent); and by education, university graduates were the source of the highest frequency of support (85 percent) [See Appendix].

Disaggregated by income, the support increased with a rise along the brackets: from 84 percent support from the below-30,000 income bracket to 89 percent from the 60,001-90,000 group (Incomes are in INR.). 100 percent of respondents falling in the 1,20,001-1,50,000 income bracket rated India's foreign policy as either *very good* or *good*. [See Appendix]

The survey also employed a probit model to understand further the correlation between factors like age, income and education levels and the degree of positive outlook for the country's foreign policy. The probit model analysis indicates that older respondents are more likely to rate India's foreign policy positively. Approval for foreign policy increases with higher income and education, while unemployment is associated with lower frequency of positive ratings. Although females tend to show more positive responses, the gender results are not statistically significant. [See Appendix]

1.2 How concerned are you about the following major foreign policy challenges facing India? (Single response per option)



Three years since the COVID-19 pandemic, India's urban youth consider Global Pandemics, Terrorism, and Economic Slowdown as the biggest challenges to India's foreign policy.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided at the time of writing, its root causes, like the failure of the World Health Organization (WHO) and other multilateral bodies, absence of closure in the previous pandemic, and the ability of powers like China to exploit the multilateral system, remain unaddressed. The survey found 90 percent of the respondents identifying *global pandemics* as India's biggest foreign policy challenge. In the 2022 edition of the survey, *post-COVID economic slowdown* was considered the biggest concern; this year it is listed third (named by 86 percent of respondents), following *terrorism* (88 percent).

Border conflict with China is in a similar range as last year, with 84 percent marking it an important challenge, while the proportion of respondents naming *border conflicts with Pakistan* among the starkest issues fell from 82 percent to 80 percent. These results come amid the continuing India-China stand-off, three years after the Galwan Valley clash (see Question 3.4), as well as the declining importance of Pakistan in India's foreign policy calculus.

The responses indicate the Indian urban youth's increasing wariness towards China and Pakistan, in both traditional and non-traditional realms. Besides border conflicts, the respondents see China and Pakistan challenging India's foreign policy in different ways. They perceive terrorism through the lens of Pakistan, and link China to challenges like cyber security, economic slowdown/supply chain disruptions, and pandemics.

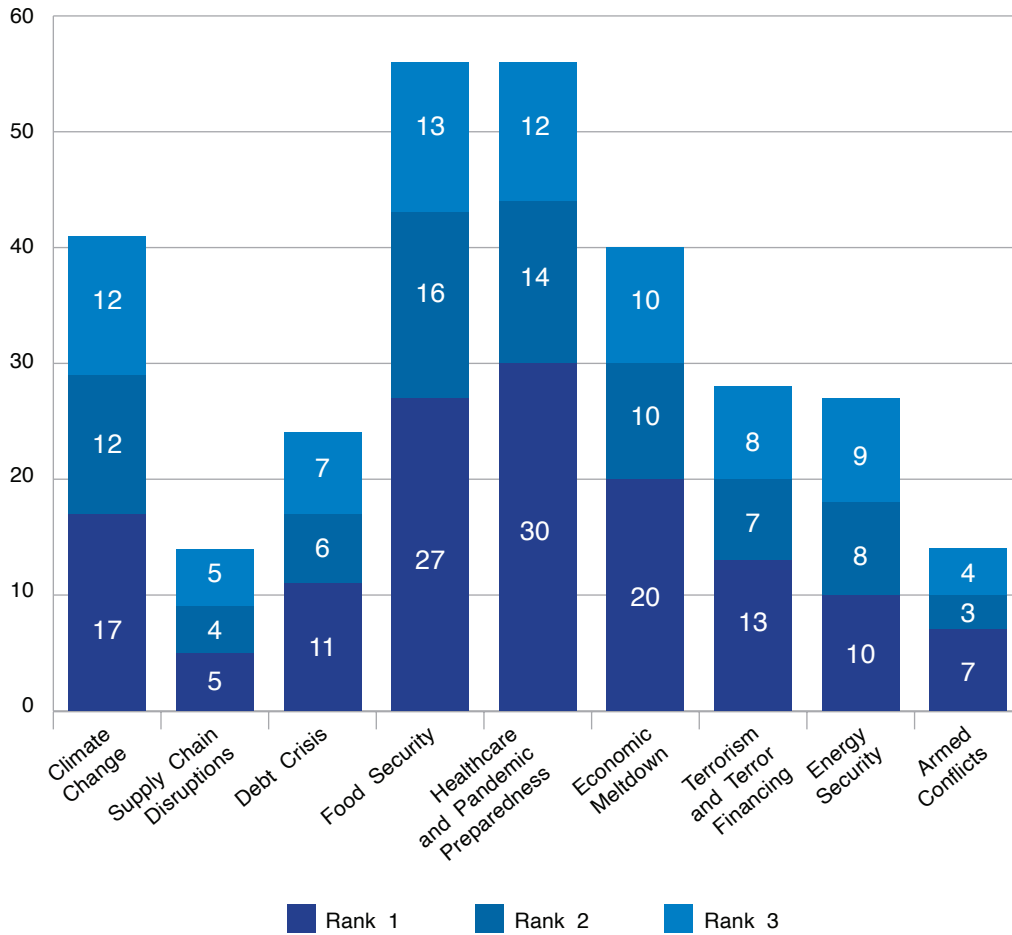
Global pandemics is a cause of concern for both female (92 percent) and male (88 percent) respondents. Globally, there is no dearth of literature proving the disproportionate impacts of this issue on women.¹ Females also listed *terrorism* (91 percent; Males - 85 percent), *climate change*

¹ For gendered impact of pandemics, see: Sangita Dutta Gupta and Susmita Chatterjee, "COVID-19 and its gendered impact," Observer Research Foundation, December 23, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/covid19-gendered-impact>

(90 percent; Males - 82 percent) and *post-COVID economic slowdown* (91 percent; Males - 84 percent) as crucial concerns. More females also considered border conflicts with both China and Pakistan as a cause of concern (87 percent and 85 percent, respectively) [See Appendix]. Eighty percent of the respondents were of the view that the issue of *unreformed multilateral organisations* will be a challenge to India. However, India's attempt in the past year to focus its G20 presidency on creating a discourse around a more reformed multilateral system is likely to give a sense of trust that multilateralism can be saved.

Geographically, those in the eastern (94 percent) and southern regions (93 percent) considered *global pandemics* as the biggest foreign policy challenge, whereas those in the north ranked *climate change* (88 percent) and *terrorism* (87 percent) higher. The border conflicts with China and Pakistan are also considered more of a concern in the South (88 percent and 86 percent, respectively) [See Appendix].

1.3 What issues should multilateral organisations prioritise in the post-pandemic world? Please rank the top 3 in order of importance.



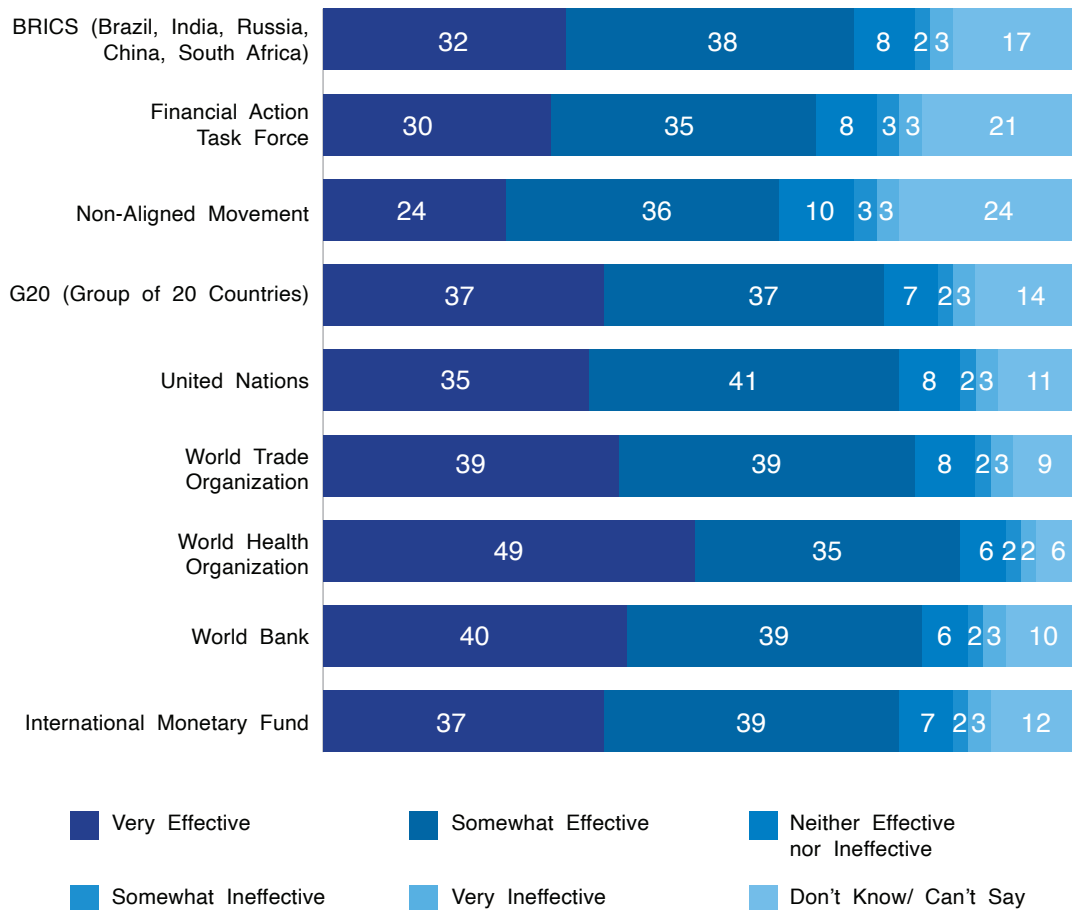
Post-pandemic, multilateral organisations should prioritise healthcare, food security, and economic meltdown.

On being asked the top three issues that multilateral organisations should prioritise in the post-pandemic world, 30 percent of the respondents ranked *healthcare and pandemic preparedness* first, followed by *food security* (27 percent) and *economic meltdown* (20 percent). Issues like *climate change* (17 percent) were also chosen among the most critical. These rankings tend to reflect the concerns highlighted in Question 1.2, and are indicative of the massive lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It appears that concerns surrounding *food security* have also become more grave since the war in Ukraine erupted in February 2022, causing ramifications on supply chains.

More unskilled workers identified *healthcare and pandemic preparedness* as most important (32 percent), and a higher number of respondents from the private sector chose *food security* (35 percent). *Debt crisis* ranked third for businessmen/traders, and *climate change* was named most critical by the skilled workers (20 percent). Broken down by income, respondents in the below-30,000 and 30,001-60,000 brackets said *healthcare and pandemic preparedness* was most important (28 percent); those in the 60,001-90,000, 90,001-1,20,000 and above-1,50,000 brackets chose *food security* (29-41 percent).

Geographically, it was the respondents from the southern regions that had the highest frequency of responses identifying *food security* as most important (62 percent).

1.4 How effective are the following multilateral organisations/ platforms in managing the challenges mentioned in the previous question? (Single response per option)



Despite the crisis in multilateral institutions exacerbated by COVID-19 and the economic slowdown, there is still trust for WHO, World Bank, and WTO.

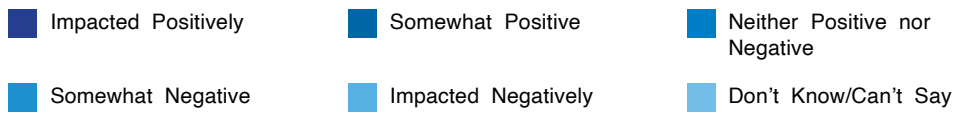
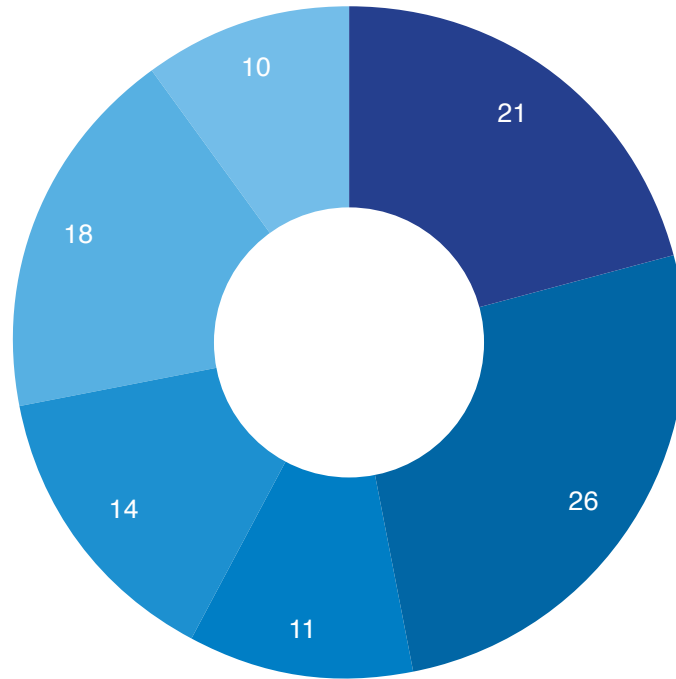
Among a list of different multilateral platforms, the WHO garnered the highest share (84 percent) of *very effective* and *somewhat effective* ratings. This perhaps reflects the results in Question 1.3, where *healthcare and pandemic preparedness* was chosen by the highest proportion of respondents as a priority for these organisations. The World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO) had the second and third highest ratings, respectively,

for effectiveness (79 percent and 78 percent, respectively). Support for the G20 was at 74 percent, more than the combined ratings of *very effective* and *somewhat effective* received by BRICS, Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). In last year's survey, a low 26 percent of respondents reported being aware of the G20. This increased awareness about the ability of the platform to address current challenges is also evident in Question 1.7.

More respondents from the younger age group (18-25) had positive perceptions of the platforms (65-85 percent) except NAM, which received more support from the 26-35 age group (60 percent). This is probably due to the growing debate about NAM's relevance in India's foreign policy, and in parallel, the emergence of other platforms.

Respondents who had a postgraduate degree or a professional course had a more positive attitude towards most of the multilateral platforms (between 70-88 percent). For the WHO and the International Monetary Fund, the level of support increased over higher educational levels (53-88 percent and 39-85 percent, respectively). For the G20, the incidence of *don't know/can't say* responses fell with an increase in educational level (59-7 percent). Respondents working in the government sector had a more optimistic attitude towards these multilateral organisations (60-88 percent). Based on geography, respondents from the southern states preferred the WHO, the World Bank, and BRICS (87 percent, 80 percent and 74 percent, respectively), whereas those in the North had a greater preference for the G20 and FATF (78 percent and 68 percent, respectively).

1.5 How has China's rise affected the workings of important multilateral organisations? (Single response)



Respondents are of the view that China's rise has had a positive impact on multilateral organisations.

Of the respondents, 47 percent considered China's influence on the workings of important multilateral organisations as positive; 32 percent said the impact was negative. This is despite the fact that in Question 3.5, 79 percent agreed that China uses its influence in multilateral institutions to restrict India from promoting its interests.

Respondents in the higher age group of 26-35 had a slightly more positive outlook towards China's role (48 percent). In terms of education, those who finished postgraduate studies had the highest percentage of positive response on China's influence in multilateral organisations (59 percent). Broken down by income, the highest proportion of respondents who had a positive view of China's rise and influence on multilateral organisations were those in the bracket of 9,00,001-12,00,000 (76 percent). Retired respondents and businesspersons/traders had the highest positive perception about China's influence (54 percent and 52 percent, respectively) whereas government-sector employees and students had the most negative outlook (39 percent and 37 percent, respectively).

1.6 India is trying to secure a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. Do you personally feel that this is an important goal for India? (Single response)



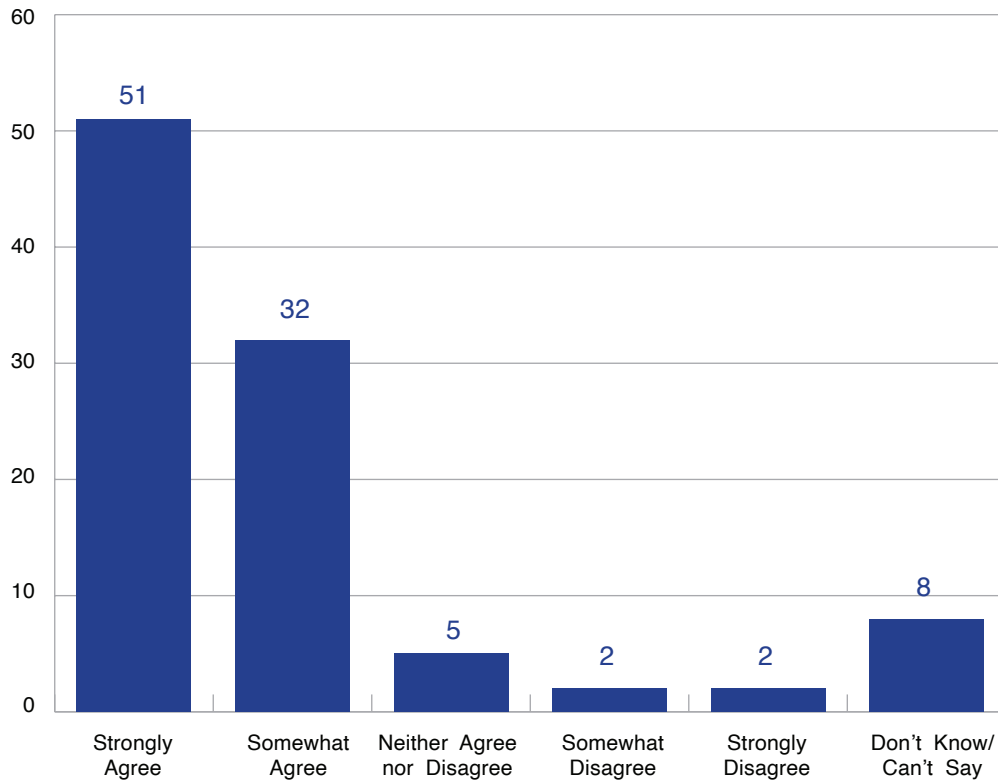
India must pursue its bid for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council.

The issue of India’s permanent membership to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) still resonates with the country’s urban youth. A strong majority of the respondents (88 percent) considered India’s bid to secure a permanent seat at the UNSC as an important goal, only two percentage points lower than the responses in the 2021 and 2022 editions of the survey. This likely shows how the UNSC bid is a ‘prestige project’ and an emotive issue for the respondents.

A higher proportion of respondents in the 18-25 age group expressed support for the country’s UNSC bid (89 percent). Similar to last year’s survey, support for the bid increased with a rise in education level—from 53 percent among illiterate respondents to 96 percent of those who completed their postgraduate degrees or a professional course. Businesspersons/traders and self-employed professionals expressed higher support (93 percent and 92 percent, respectively). Respondents falling in the 1,20,000-1,50,00 income bracket also showed a relatively higher proportion of support for India’s UNSC bid (93 percent).

Geographically, the differences are less stark, indicating a nation-wide support for India’s permanent seat in the UNSC. Ninety percent of the respondents from the northern and eastern regions support the bid, and 86 percent of the respondents from the South expressed the same sentiment [See Appendix].

1.7 To what extent do you agree that India has effectively used its G20 presidency to address its concerns? (Single response)



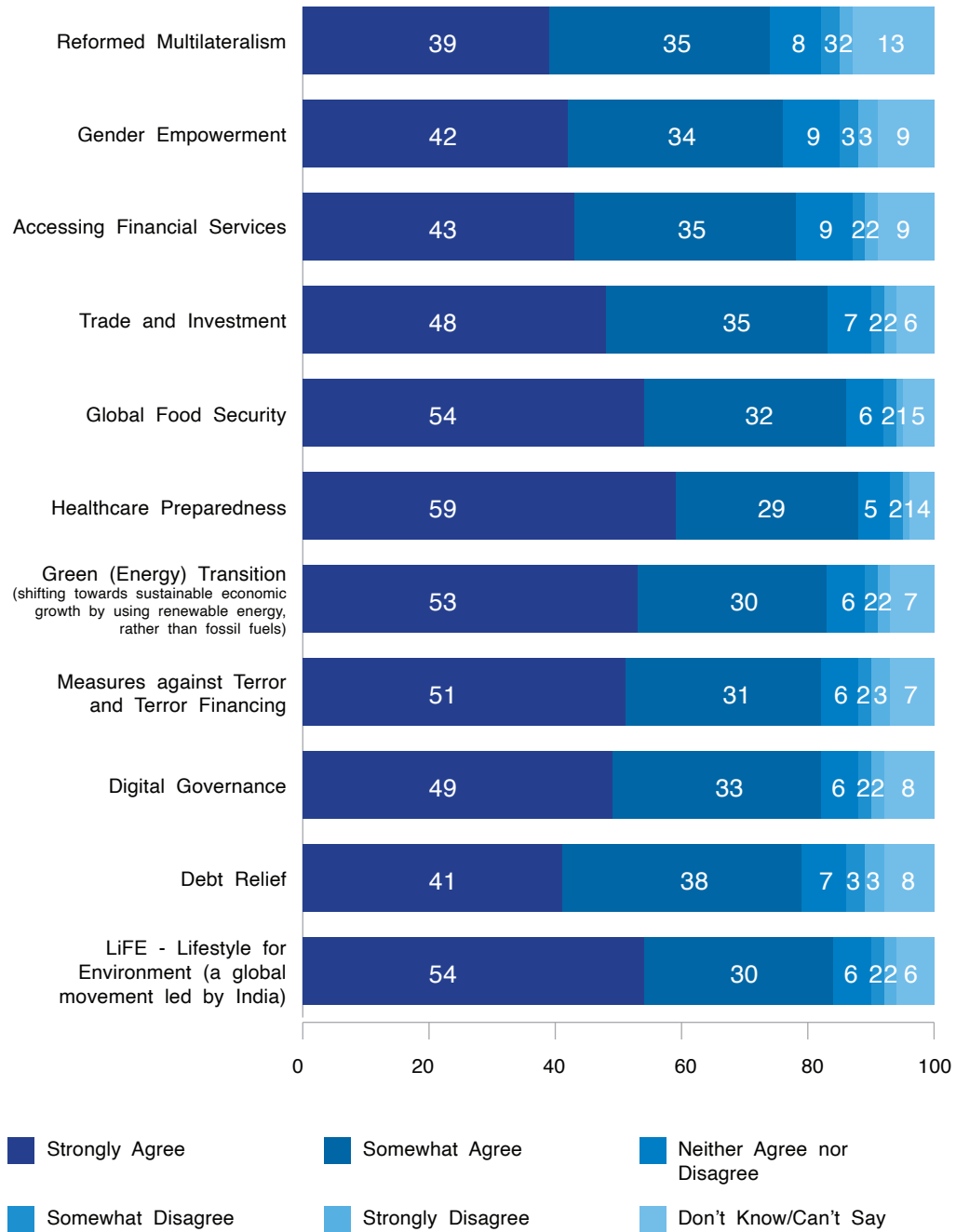
India's urban youth acknowledge the success of the country's G20 presidency.

In September 2023, India presided over the G20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi—a grand event befitting the past one year of India's tenure spearheading the multilateral grouping and placing the concerns of the Global South in the forefront of high-level discussions. A large majority (83 percent) of the respondents agreed that India effectively used its G20 presidency to address its own concerns. It could be said that the adoption of the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration through consensus, and India's deft handling of the differences between the G7 countries and Russia and China, have contributed to this positive outlook about the country's G20 presidency.

Overall, the support for the presidency was unanimous and did not vary much according to age, gender, income, or geography. However, an observable pattern was that in terms of education, respondents with a postgraduate degree had the highest positive outlook (91 percent). Moreover, across the named occupational categories, the highest proportion of responses affirming the presidency's effectiveness was among the government sector employees (89 percent).

In last year's survey, as much as 74 percent of the respondents reported not being aware of the grouping. With the results in this edition, it appears that India has succeeded in effectively leveraging its public diplomacy to spread the message of the G20 far and wide, leading to an increased awareness of the grouping.

1.8 Which issues has India prioritised during its G20 presidency? Please choose an option for each of the statements below. (Single response per option)



Healthcare, food security, and LiFE have been at the forefront of India's G20 presidency.

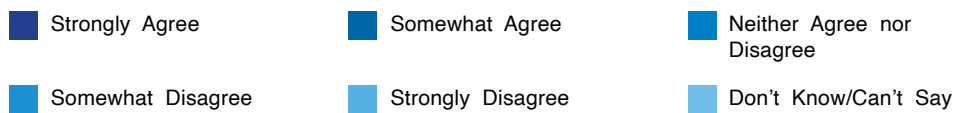
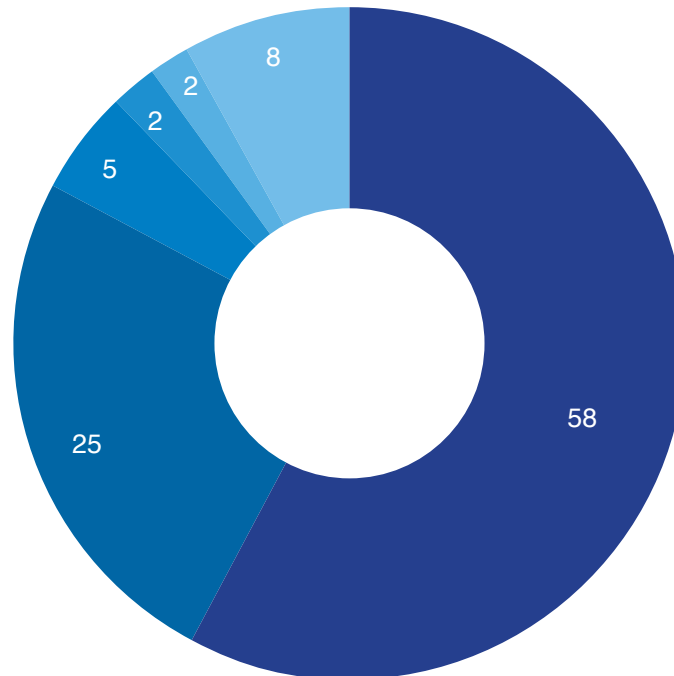
In the 2022 survey that predated India's G20 leadership, the respondents highlighted *healthcare preparedness* and *global food security* as priority areas that India should tackle during its presidency. This year, when asked which issues were prioritised by India during its G20 presidency, the respondents chose *healthcare preparedness* (88 percent), *global food security* (86 percent), and *LiFE* (84 percent) as the top three. These responses reflect the concerns underlined in Question 1.2 about global pandemics, along with the insecurity caused by the post-COVID economic slump. Issues related to *measures against terrorism and terror financing* (82 percent), *digital governance* (82 percent), *trade and investment* (83 percent), and *Green (energy) transition* (83 percent) also received attention.

Reformed multilateralism saw support from 74 percent of the respondents. There was also a notable percentage of *don't know/can't Say* responses (13 percent).

The proportion of respondents who thought India's G20 presidency prioritised *debt relief* and *gender empowerment* increased with educational level (50-85 percent and 50-82 percent, respectively). Across all occupation categories, it was the cohort of government sector employees who most frequently thought that India prioritised *LiFE* (88 percent) and *healthcare preparedness* (88 percent). Disaggregated by income, respondents in the 90,001-1,20,000 group (96 percent) placed *LiFE* on the top of the list.

Geographically, respondents in the east placed *Digital governance* on the third position (85 percent) while *healthcare* and *food security* remained their top two picks. Respondents from the southern states considered *healthcare and pandemic preparedness*, *LiFE*, *global food security* and *Green (Energy) transition* as issues of priority during India's G20 presidency (78 percent).

1.9 India has been visiting G7 summits as a guest country since 2019. Should it be offered a permanent invitee status in G7? (Single response)

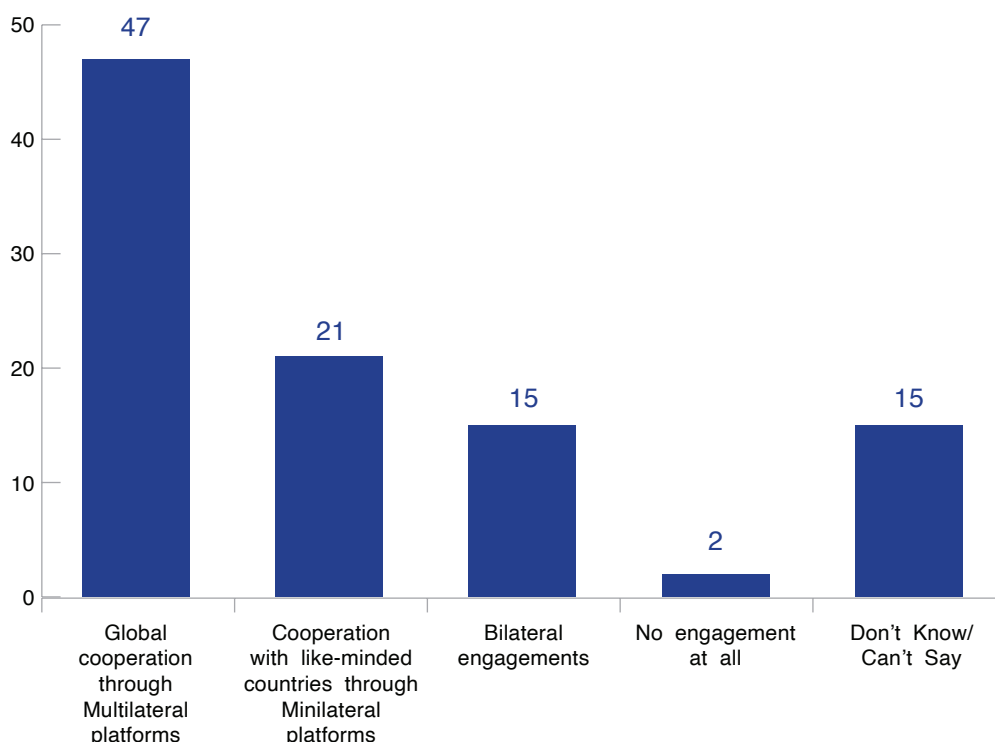


India should be a Permanent Invitee to G7 Summits.

Eighty-three percent of the respondents agreed with the proposition that India should be offered a permanent invitee status to the G7. Indeed, as the focus of the West shifts to the Indo-Pacific and the contestations in the region become more acute, the importance of India in maintaining balance in the region and containing the rise of an aggressive China has only increased. Vis-a-vis these considerations, a 'permanent invitee' status to the grouping of the wealthiest countries is seen favourably by India's urban youth.

Such a view was strongest among the respondents with a postgraduate degree and professional course, 88 percent of whom agreed with the proposition. In terms of occupation, self-employed professionals gave the highest support (89 percent). Geographically, urban youth throughout the country unanimously supported India being a permanent invitee to the G7 (79-85 percent).

1.10 In your opinion, how should India engage with other countries? (Single response)



India's urban youth maintain that the most effective platforms for India to engage with other countries are the multilateral forums.

Forty-seven percent of the respondents chose *multilateral platforms* as their most preferred mode for India's engagements with other countries; 21 percent preferred *minilateral platforms*, and *bilateral engagements* received the least support (15 percent). In last year's survey, more respondents similarly preferred *multilateral* platforms, though that proportion was 13 percentage points lower than this year's result. The perception about multilateralism improved vis-a-vis *bilateral engagements* and *no engagement at all* between the two surveys. This increasing favour for multilateralism is likely an outcome of India's effective use of its G20's presidency and its ability to restore trust in multilateral institutions (see Question 1.7).

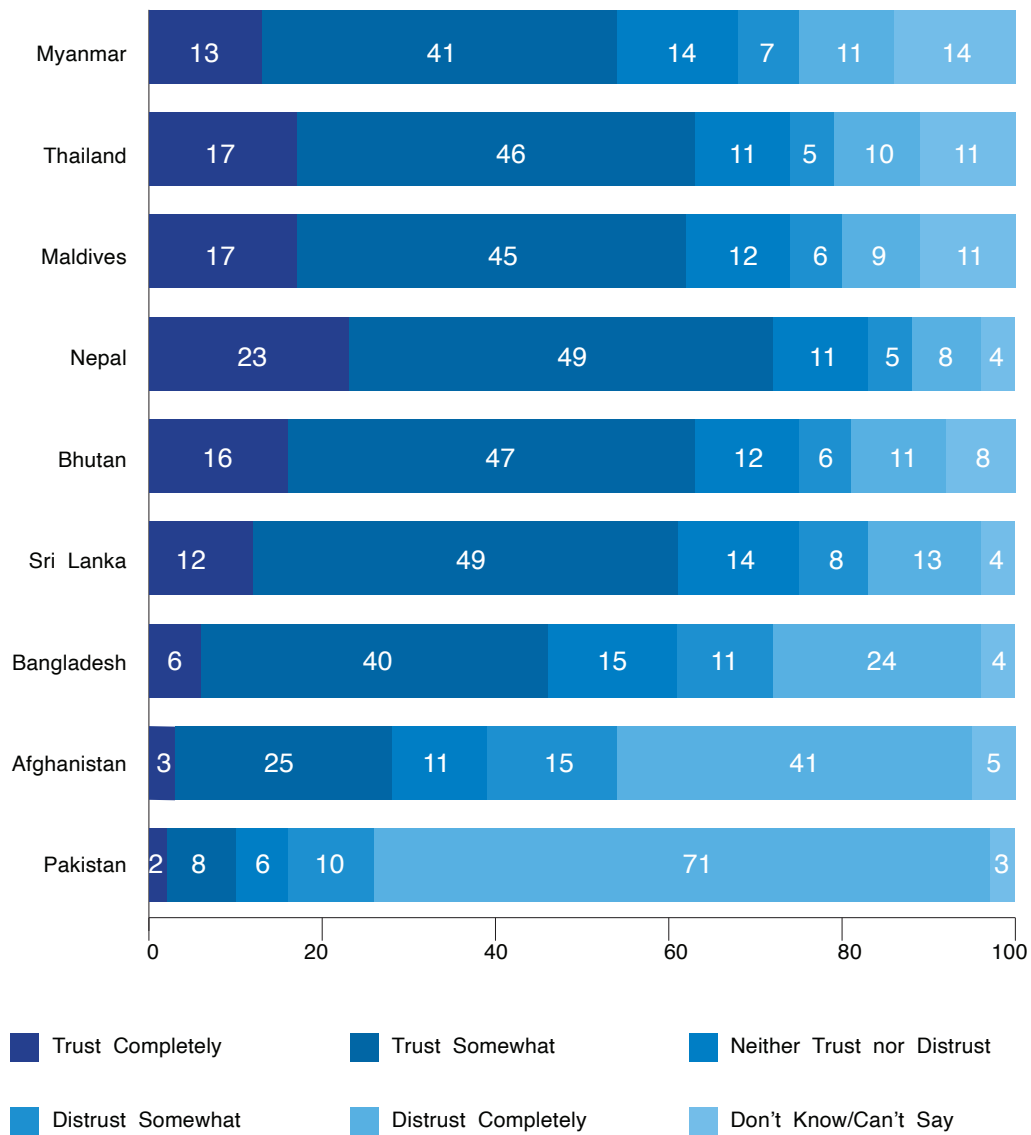
The support for *multilateral platforms* was higher among the 18-25 age group (49 percent) while the 26-35 cohort had more *don't know/can't say* responses (17 percent). Support for *multilateral platforms* also increased consistently from respondents who have studied till Class 5 (23 percent) to postgraduates (61 percent).

Across occupational categories, the highest proportion of those who preferred *multilateral platforms* were government sector employees (63 percent). *Minilateral platforms* received the least support from government sector employees (13 percent). Geographically, more than half of respondents from the western region chose *multilateral platforms* as the preferred mode of engagement (52 percent).

II.

India and the Neighbourhood

2.1 For each of the following neighbouring countries, please indicate how much you trust them. (Single response per option)



India's urban youth identify Nepal and Thailand as the country's most trusted neighbours.

India's urban youth place the highest vote of trust in Nepal, of all the country's immediate neighbours, with 72 percent of the respondents considering the nation to be trustworthy. The other trusted neighbours are Thailand (63 percent), Bhutan (63 percent), the Maldives (62 percent), Sri Lanka (61 percent), and Myanmar (54 percent). Forty-six percent of the respondents considered Bangladesh to be trustworthy. Long-term people-to-people relations and cultural and civilisational links have likely contributed to the urban youth's trust for India's neighbours.

Eighty-one percent of the respondents expressed distrust for Pakistan, with 71 percent stating that they *Distrust completely* and 10 percent saying that they *Distrust somewhat* the country. In the case of Afghanistan, 41 percent of respondents expressed *complete* distrust, and 15 percent reported that they somewhat distrust the country. The lack of trust towards these countries may be attributed to India's border conflicts with Pakistan as well as the respondents' concerns around terrorism (see Question 1.2), augmented by an unstable Pakistan and an Afghanistan governed by an unreformed Taliban. Trust for Afghanistan has decreased from 42 percent in 2021 to 28 percent in 2023, whereas distrust has increased from 31 percent to 56 percent during the same period—when the Taliban came back to power in Afghanistan.

Apart from Bhutan, trust for South Asian countries has shifted compared to 2022. Nepal and the Maldives have seen an increase in trust by 2 percentage points. Nepal's balanced foreign policy and the Maldives' pro-India outreach at the time of the survey have likely contributed to this increase in trust. Trust for Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, however, has reduced by 11 and 4 percentage points, respectively, likely due to political and economic uncertainty. Distrust for both Afghanistan and Bangladesh has increased by 13 percentage points, and distrust for Pakistan has increased by 4 percentage points.

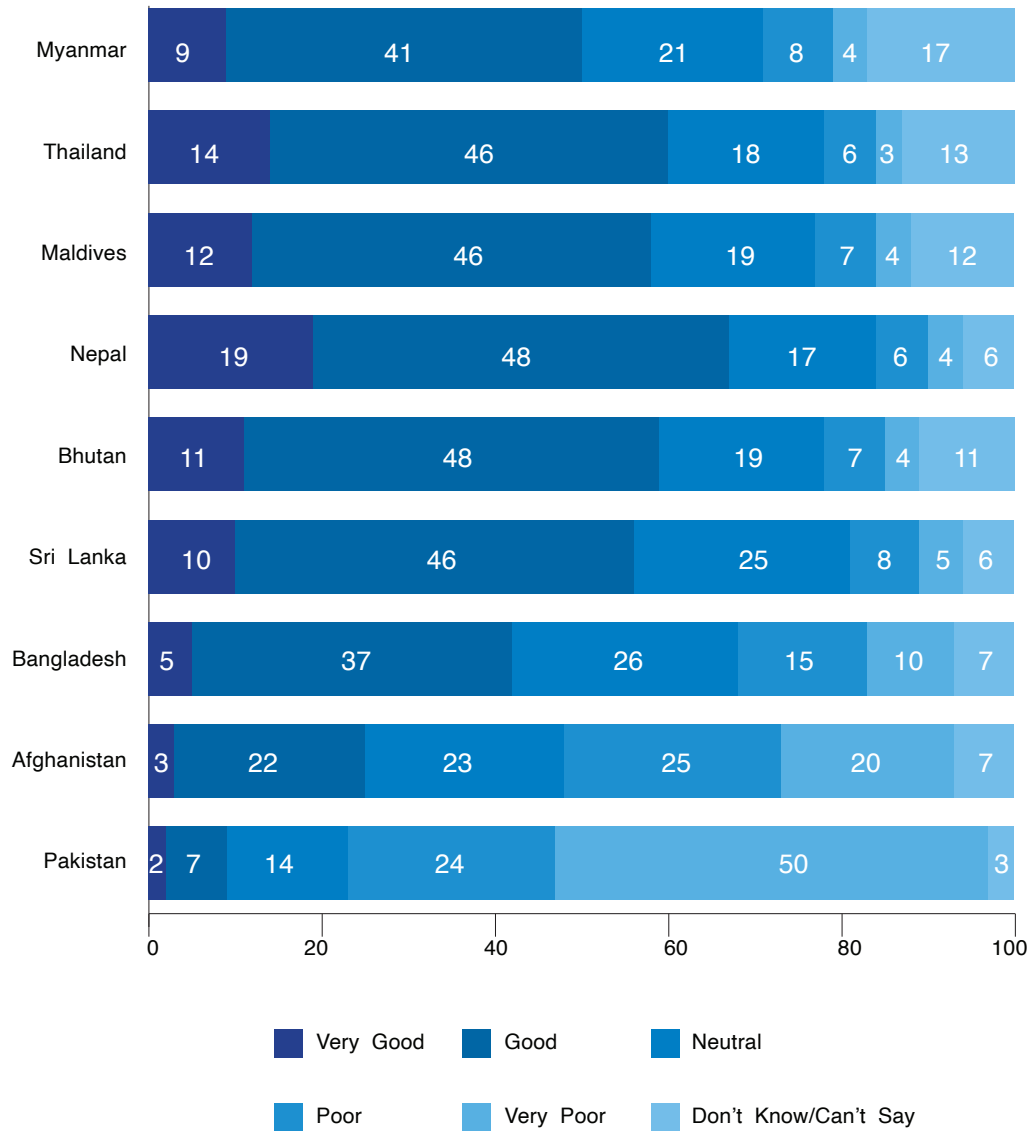
Respondents with postgraduate degrees or a professional course reported higher levels of trust for all countries (between 43 percent and 83 percent) except Pakistan, indicating that education has no impact over how Indian youth look at hostile countries like Pakistan. Trust for Myanmar (40 percent), the Maldives (41 percent), Bhutan (45 percent), and Thailand (47 percent) was the lowest among unskilled workers.

Respondents in the 90,001–1,20,000 income group recorded high levels of trust for Bangladesh (55 percent), Bhutan (74 percent), and Sri Lanka (78 percent) and the least trust for the Maldives (32 percent) and Myanmar (29 percent). This shows that the income group 90,001-1,20,000 have largely polarised views of India's neighbours. None of the respondents in the 1,20,001–1,50,000 income group expressed distrust for Bhutan and Thailand or trust for Pakistan.

Geographically, respondents in northern India recorded higher levels of trust for Nepal (75 percent), the Maldives (67 percent), Thailand (66 percent), Sri Lanka (66 percent), and Myanmar (61 percent). Geographical proximity, historical relations, better transport connectivity, and less historical complexities have likely contributed to this positive perception.

For all countries, respondents in the 18–25 age group had nearly similar optimistic perceptions (11–74 percent) with their counterparts in the 26–35 age group (9–69 percent). Disaggregated by gender, males (28–73 percent) and females (25–68 percent) expressed almost equal degrees of trust in these neighbours.

2.2 How do you assess the status of India’s bilateral relationship with each of the following neighbouring countries? (Single response per option)



India's bilateral relationships with its neighbours, barring Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, have been on the upswing.

Urban youth's trust for India's neighbours has likely shaped their perception of positive bilateral relationships with these countries (see Question 2.1). Sixty-seven percent of the respondents considered India's relationship with Nepal to be *very good* or *good*. Sixty percent of the respondents believed that India has a *very good* or *good* relationship with Thailand. More than half of the respondents also gave a positive response for Bhutan (59 percent), the Maldives (58 percent), and Sri Lanka (56 percent). Forty-two percent of the respondents expressed optimism in the case of Bangladesh, whereas 26 percent considered the relationship to be *neutral*.

With regard to India's bilateral relationship with Afghanistan, only 25 percent of the respondents expressed optimism, whereas 45 percent considered the relationship to be *poor* or *very poor*. On the question of Pakistan, less than 10 percent of the respondents expressed optimism, while 74 percent considered the relationship to be *poor* or *very poor*. These attitudes towards both countries are likely due to the perceived threat of terrorism, India's border conflict with Pakistan (see Question 1.2), and India's limited interactions with Pakistan and the Taliban-governed Afghanistan.

Compared to the 2022 survey, the proportion of respondents that rated India's relationship with Sri Lanka as *very good* or *good* dropped by 5 percentage points. Similarly, positive perceptions of the relationship with Bangladesh reduced by 10 percentage points and negative perceptions increased by 11 points. This decrease in positive perception is likely due to an increase in economic and political uncertainty in these countries. Since 2021, there has been a drop in positive perceptions of the relationship with Afghanistan, from 34 percent in 2021 to 25 percent in 2023, and an increase in negative perceptions, from 23 percent in 2021 to 45 percent in 2023. This could be due to concerns of terrorism in Afghanistan as an unreformed Taliban returned to power in the country. There are no remarkable changes in the responses for other neighbouring countries.

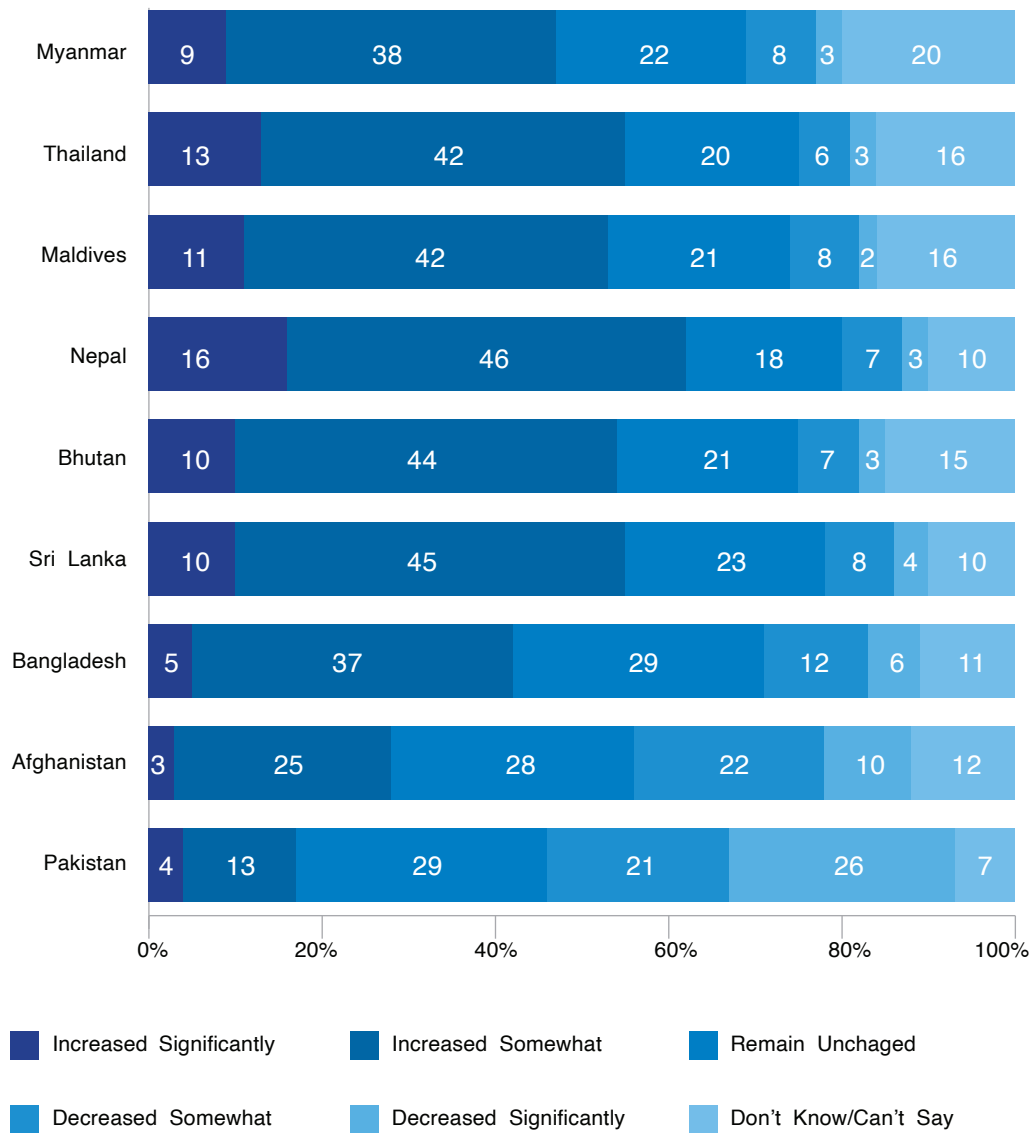
The respondents' positive perceptions of neighbours varied across education level only in the case of Thailand, which saw an overall increase from 37 percent among 'illiterates' to 74 percent in respondents with postgraduate degrees or professional courses. Respondents with a postgraduate degree or a professional course also recorded a higher proportion of *very good* or *good* responses for Bangladesh (54 percent), Myanmar (58 percent), Bhutan (75 percent), and the Maldives (76 percent).

Self-employed respondents reported a higher share of *very good* and *good* responses for India's relations with Sri Lanka (62 percent), Myanmar (64 percent), the Maldives (70 percent), Bhutan (71 percent), Thailand (71 percent), and Nepal (80 percent).

Disaggregating by age, respondents in the 18–25 age group (10–69 percent) are as optimistic as the 26–35 age group (10–64 percent). In terms of gender, besides the case of Pakistan, male respondents expressed more optimism (27–71 percent) compared to their female counterparts (23–61 percent). The frequency of *don't know/can't say* responses was highest among female respondents (5–22 percent) and the 26–35 age group (4–18 percent). This also demonstrates that female respondents appear to be marginally more optimistic about Pakistan than their male counterparts, despite being more concerned of border conflicts with Pakistan (See Question 1.2).

Geographically, respondents from the northern regions were optimistic about Nepal (74 percent), the Maldives (65 percent), Thailand (66 percent), Sri Lanka (62 percent), and Myanmar (59 percent) [See Appendix]. Respondents from the western regions were least optimistic about Afghanistan (21 percent) and Bangladesh (32 percent). It indicates how proximity to a hostile nation (i.e., Pakistan) could negatively impact the responses for those countries that have had close historical or political relations with Pakistan in the past. Income did not have a measurable impact on the responses.

2.3 How do you assess India's interaction with these South Asian countries in the last five years? (Single response per option)



India's engagements with South Asian countries, except for Afghanistan and Pakistan, are regarded as largely positive.

Respondents are of the view that India's interactions with its neighbours, apart from Pakistan and Afghanistan, have increased in the last five years. Sixty-two percent of respondents felt that India's engagements with Nepal have *increased somewhat* or *increased significantly*. Relations are also felt to have increased with Sri Lanka and Thailand (55 percent), Bhutan (54 percent), the Maldives (53 percent), Myanmar (47 percent), and Bangladesh (42 percent). Nearly half (47 percent) of the respondents consider India's relations with Pakistan to have declined, and 32 percent believe that India's relations with Afghanistan have decreased in the last five years. Concerns emanating from Pakistan and Afghanistan, combined with India's robust 'Neighbourhood First' policy, have likely contributed to such mixed response.

There is a 10-percentage point increase from 2022 in the proportion of respondents who believe that the relationship with Pakistan is *unchanged*. This is likely due to the 'passive peace' between India and Pakistan since the Balakot airstrikes. Responses of *decreased somewhat* or *decreased significantly* went up from 18 percent in 2021 to 32 percent in 2023 in relation to Afghanistan. Compared to 2022, there is a 5-percentage point increase in the proportion of respondents who are of the view that relations with Afghanistan *remain unchanged*. This is likely due to reduced diplomatic relations between India and Afghanistan since the Taliban's return to power. Positive responses have increased for Sri Lanka (by 3 percentage points), Nepal (7 percentage points), Bhutan (8 percentage points), and the Maldives (10 percentage points).

In this year's survey, only responses for Afghanistan showed a correlation with education. Positive perceptions towards Afghanistan increased from 13 percent among the illiterate cohort to 45 percent among respondents with postgraduate degrees or professional courses. However, respondents with postgraduate degrees or professional courses were the most optimistic about relationships with Bangladesh (57 percent), Bhutan (71 percent), the Maldives (70 percent), and Thailand (68 percent). Respondents with schooling

up to Class 5 were least optimistic about India's relationship with Bangladesh (25 percent), Sri Lanka (32 percent), Bhutan (26 percent), the Maldives (26 percent), Thailand (29 percent), and Myanmar (26 percent).

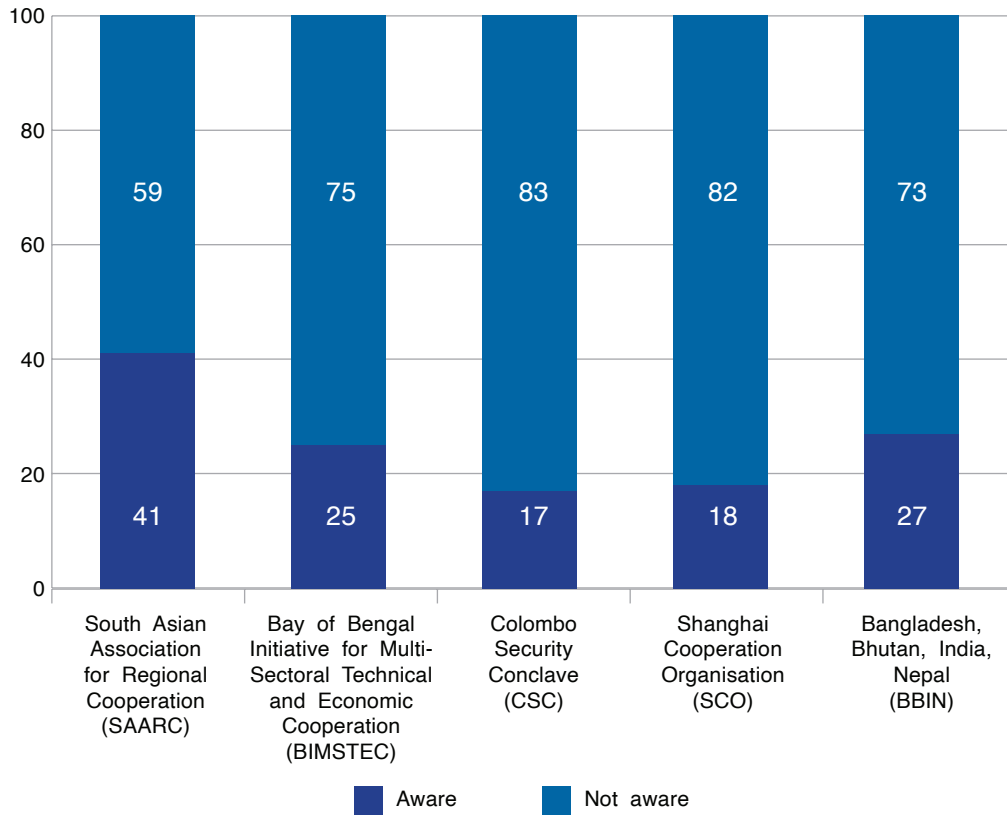
In terms of occupation, on par with their positive perception of India's bilateral relations with its neighbours (see Q 2.2), self-employed respondents were optimistic about India's interactions with Bhutan (64 percent), Nepal (71 percent), the Maldives (64 percent), Thailand (67 percent), and Myanmar (62 percent). Unskilled workers were the least optimistic about relations with Sri Lanka (43 percent), Bhutan (36 percent), the Maldives (32 percent), Thailand (39 percent), and Myanmar (32 percent).

Income-wise, respondents in the 90,001–1,20,000 bracket had positive perceptions of India's relations with Nepal (74 percent), Sri Lanka (72 percent), Thailand (72 percent), and Bhutan (71 percent). This group was least optimistic about relations with Pakistan (7 percent), Myanmar (32 percent), and the Maldives (37 percent).

Broken down by region, respondents from the northern states were most optimistic about India's relations with Sri Lanka (59 percent), Nepal (66 percent), the Maldives (58 percent), Thailand (60 percent), and Myanmar (53 percent). Geographical distance, increasing connectivity, less historical complexities could help explain some of the responses.

Respondents in the 18–25 age group were as optimistic (17–64 percent overall) as the 26–35 age group (16–60 percent overall). Gender-wise, male respondents (30–64 percent) and the females (27–60 percent) were almost equally optimistic, except in the case of Pakistan. *Don't know/can't say* responses were relatively more frequent among female respondents (11–25 percent) and the 26–35 age group (9–21 percent).

2.4.A. Please let me know if you are aware of the following regional platforms/groupings. (Single response per option)



India's urban youth are largely unaware of regional platforms that the country shares with its neighbours.

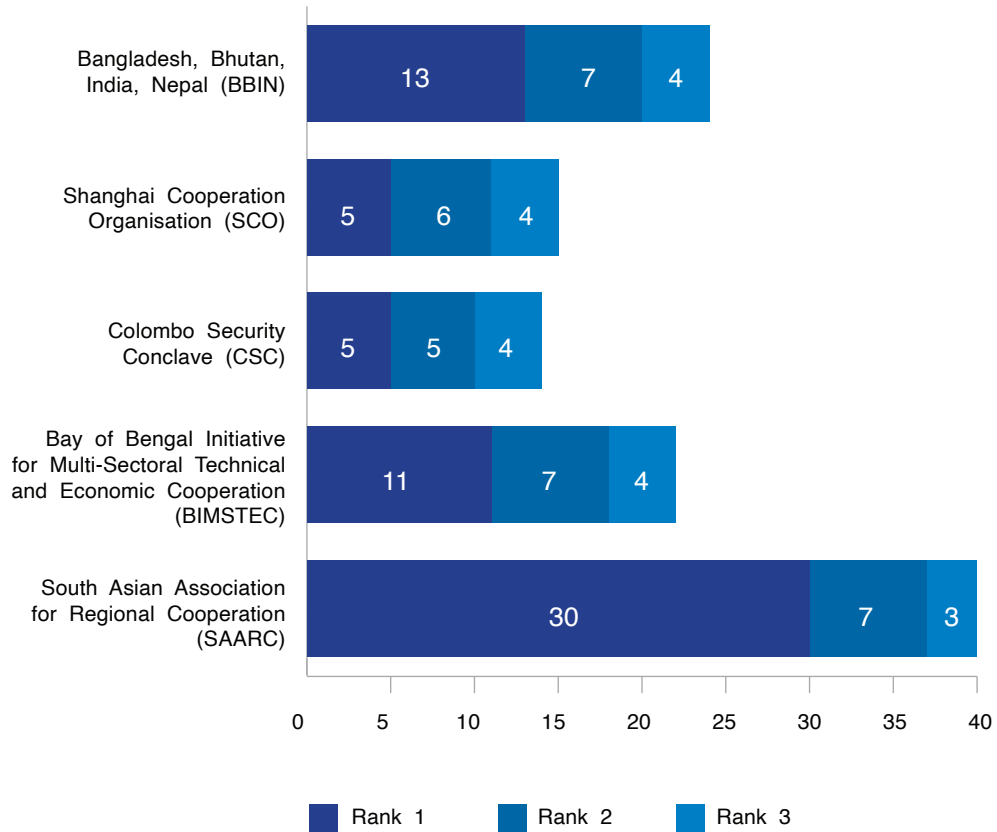
Despite 68 percent of the respondents supporting multilateral engagements (see Question 1.10), India's youth are not highly aware of the regional organisations that the country is part of. Forty-one percent of the respondents were aware of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC); the proportion was 27 percent for the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) grouping, and 25 percent for the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Respondents were least aware of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC; 17 percent) despite its recent revival and expansion.

Awareness of all the groupings was highest among respondents with a postgraduate degree or a professional course (36–69 percent overall). However, only awareness of SAARC showed a correlation with education levels, with the share rising from 8 percent among illiterates to 69 percent among respondents with a postgraduate degree or a professional course. Disaggregated by occupation, respondents within the government sector expressed better awareness of SAARC (58 percent), CSC (23 percent), and SCO (28 percent)—this could indicate that government officials are more aware of regional groupings and organisations, due to the very nature of their job.

In terms of income, respondents earning more than 1,50,000 had relatively better awareness of BBIN (50 percent), SCO (50 percent), and BIMSTEC (60 percent). Respondents earning below 30,000 had the least awareness of the SCO (16 percent), BIMSTEC (21 percent), and SAARC (36 percent). Geographically, respondents in the southern states expressed better awareness of SAARC (50 percent) and BIMSTEC (31 percent).

Respondents in the 18–25 age group had almost similar degrees of awareness (17 percent–29 percent) of regional platforms and groupings as the 26–35 age group (17–25 percent), except in the case of SAARC. Disaggregating by gender, except for BBIN, male respondents had better awareness of regional organisations (19–45 percent) than female respondents (15–35 percent).

2.4.B Which of the following regional platforms/groupings should India prefer to use for engaging with its neighbours? Please rank the top 3 in order of importance.

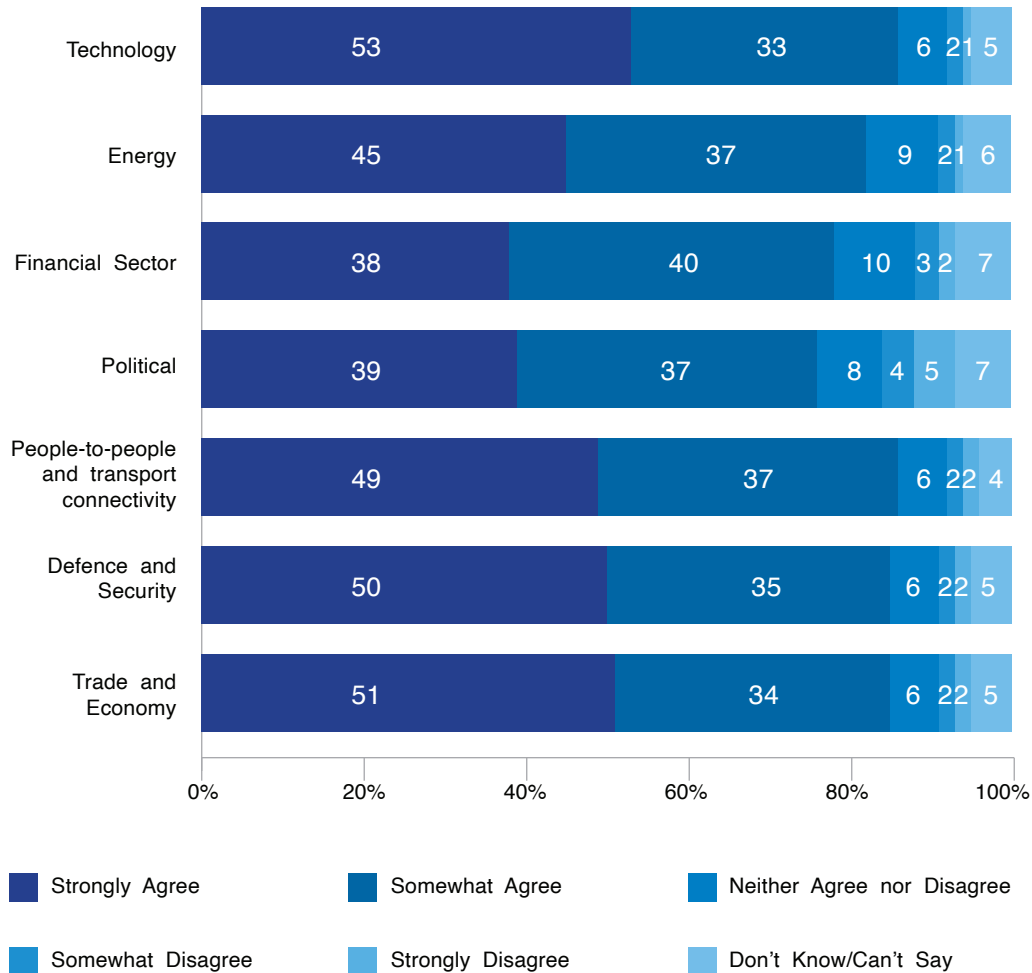


SAARC is the most preferred regional platform for India to engage with its neighbours.

When respondents who were aware of regional platforms (see Question 2.4. A) were asked to rank the organisations in order of importance, SAARC was the first preference for 30 percent of them. Thirteen percent of the respondents chose BBIN as their first preference, and 11 percent, BIMSTEC. In the second preference, SAARC, BIMSTEC, and BBIN were equally preferred (7 percent), and in the third position were BBIN, SCO, CSC, and BIMSTEC (4 percent).

Compared to their younger counterparts, respondents aged 26–35 were more likely to rank SAARC as their first (30 percent), second (8 percent), or third preference (3 percent). This preference among the older cohort of the youth respondents is likely because of SAARC being the oldest regional grouping. Gender-wise, except for BBIN, more female respondents did not rank any of these organisations (66–87 percent). Education, income, occupation, and region had no measurable impact on the rankings.

2.5 To what extent do you agree that India’s connectivity with its neighbours has been adequate in each of the following sectors? (Single response per option)



India’s urban youth aspire for greater political and financial connectivity with the country’s neighbours.

A notable proportion of respondents are of the sentiment that India’s connectivity with its neighbours has been adequate, across all the sectors. This can be attributed to the perceived increase in trust and interactions with neighbours in the past five years (see Questions 2.2 and 2.3), and India’s push for connectivity along its ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy. Eighty-six percent of respondents *somewhat agree* or *strongly agree* that India’s connectivity

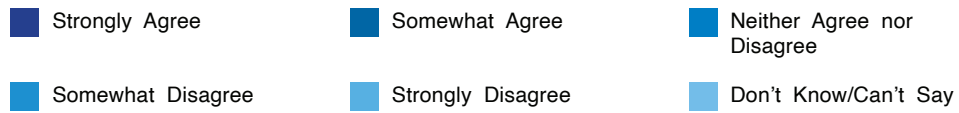
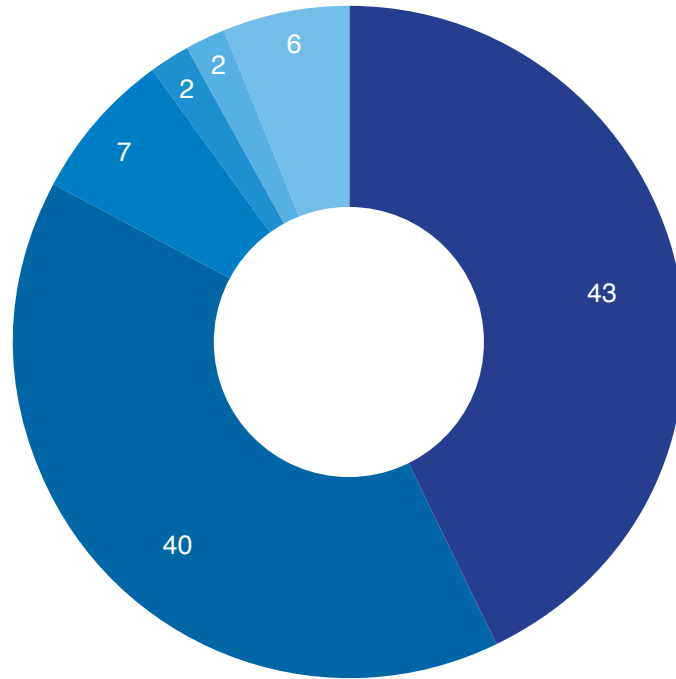
with its neighbours has been adequate in *technology*, and *people-to-people and transport connectivity sectors*. Connectivity was also considered to be adequate in *defence and security* and *trade and economy* (85 percent each). Seventy-six percent of the respondents were optimistic about connectivity in the *political sector*.

Respondents with a postgraduate degree or a professional course were the most optimistic (between 84 to 94 percent) across all sectors. Responses of *somewhat agree* and *strongly agree* increased with education level in *trade and economy* (between 50 to 94 percent), *people-to-people and transport connectivity* (between 58 to 90 percent), and *technology* (between 50 to 93 percent), thus indicating a correlation between education and views on certain sectors of connectivity.

Respondents with higher income tended to be more optimistic. Respondents earning 90,001–1,20,000 were optimistic about India's connectivity in *technology* (97 percent) and *energy* (94 percent). Respondents earning 1,20,001–1,50,000 were optimistic about India's connectivity in the *finance* (93 percent), *people-to-people and transport* (100 percent), and *defence* (100 percent) domains. Respondents earning more than 1,50,000 were optimistic about connectivity in *trade* (100 percent) and *political domain* (90 percent). The ability of higher-income respondents to access and use sectors like technology, finance, trade, people-to-people and transport connectivity, have likely contributed to this correlation.

Survey participants from northern India were most optimistic (81–87 percent) about India's connectivity with neighbours in all sectors except *technology* and *defence*. Geographical proximity to neighbours and India's ability to easily promote infrastructure and connectivity efforts with its territorial neighbours have likely contributed to more support from respondents from the north. Age and gender had no notable impact on the responses.

2.6 To what extent do you agree that India's development-related cooperation with its neighbours is adequate? (Single response)



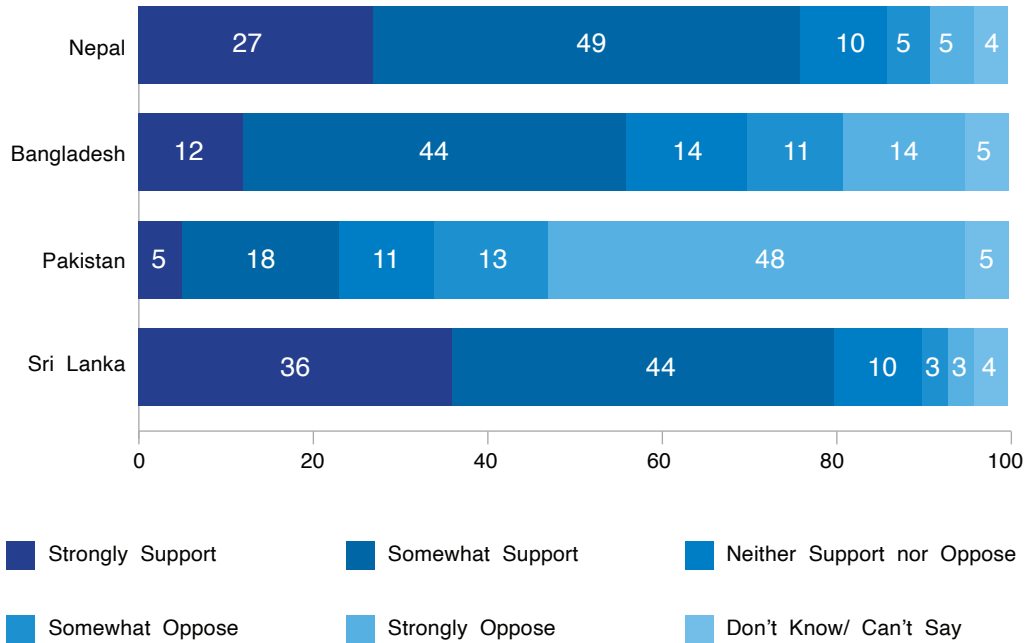
India's development cooperation with its neighbours is adequate.

Eighty-three percent of the respondents agreed that India's development cooperation with its neighbours is adequate. This positive outlook towards development cooperation is likely an outcome of the youth's increasing trust in India's neighbours as well as their perceived increase in bilateral relations with these countries (see Questions 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3), desire for connectivity (see Question 2.5), and scepticism of Chinese 'debt-trapping' in India's neighbourhood (see Question 3.5).

The level of education had a measurable influence on the responses, with the proportion of *strongly agree* or *somewhat agree* responses increasing across education levels. Among illiterate respondents, 55 percent agreed that India's development cooperation is adequate; the proportion increased to 89 percent among respondents with a postgraduate degree or a professional course.

Perceptions of India's development cooperation remained nearly consistent throughout the country, with 81 percent of respondents in the southern regions and 84 percent in the eastern regions agreeing that it has been adequate. Segregated by gender, there is a negligible difference between male (83 percent) and the female respondents (82 percent). The age groups of 18-25 and 26-35 also had a similar degree of support (82 percent) for India's development cooperation. This is an indication of the urban youth's unanimous support of India's development cooperation, regardless of age, gender, education or geography.

2.7 Here is a list of a few South Asian countries that are facing economic difficulties. To what extent would you support India assisting them? (Single response per option)



India’s urban youth largely support India’s assistance to Sri Lanka and oppose assistance to Pakistan.

Respondents expressed support for India’s assistance to Sri Lanka (80 percent), Nepal (76 percent), and Bangladesh (56 percent). Trust and an optimistic perception of India’s relationship with these countries (see Questions 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3) has contributed to this support. Sixty-one percent of the respondents oppose providing assistance to Pakistan. These results indicate support for India’s assistance to Sri Lanka during the latter’s economic crisis, and its passive stance towards Pakistan amid its economic and political crises.

Disaggregating by education, support for Sri Lanka was highest among university graduates (83 percent), whereas support for Bangladesh was highest among respondents with a postgraduate degree or a professional course (68 percent). Support for Nepal was found to be correlated to the level of education (45–83 percent), with the lowest in this range being the proportion for illiterates and the highest among those with postgraduate degrees/professional courses.

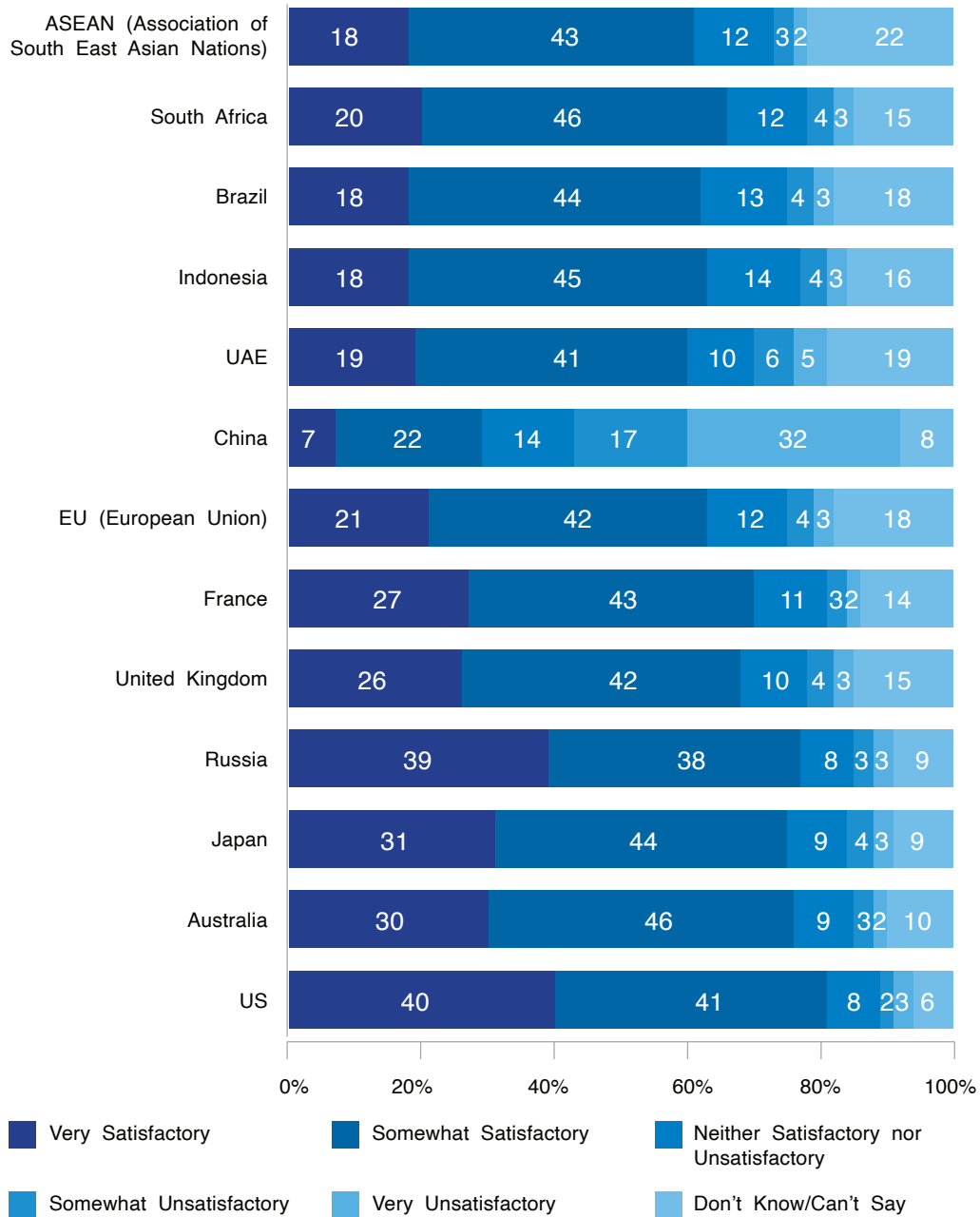
In terms of age, respondents in the 18–25 group were marginally more supportive of providing assistance to Sri Lanka (82 percent), Nepal (79 percent), and Bangladesh (60 percent), when compared to their counterparts in the 26–35 group (77, 74, and 53 percent, respectively). Sixty-five percent of the 26–35 group opposed assisting Pakistan, compared to 58 percent in the 18–25 group.

Employment, geography, income, and gender had no observable impact on the responses.

III.

India and the Global Order

3.1 How satisfied are you with India’s bilateral relationship with the following countries/groupings? (Single response per option)



India’s relationship with leading powers has been satisfactory.

India’s urban youth are satisfied with the country’s bilateral relationships with different leading powers. Respondents expressed satisfaction over India’s relations with the US (81 percent), Australia (76 percent), and Japan (75

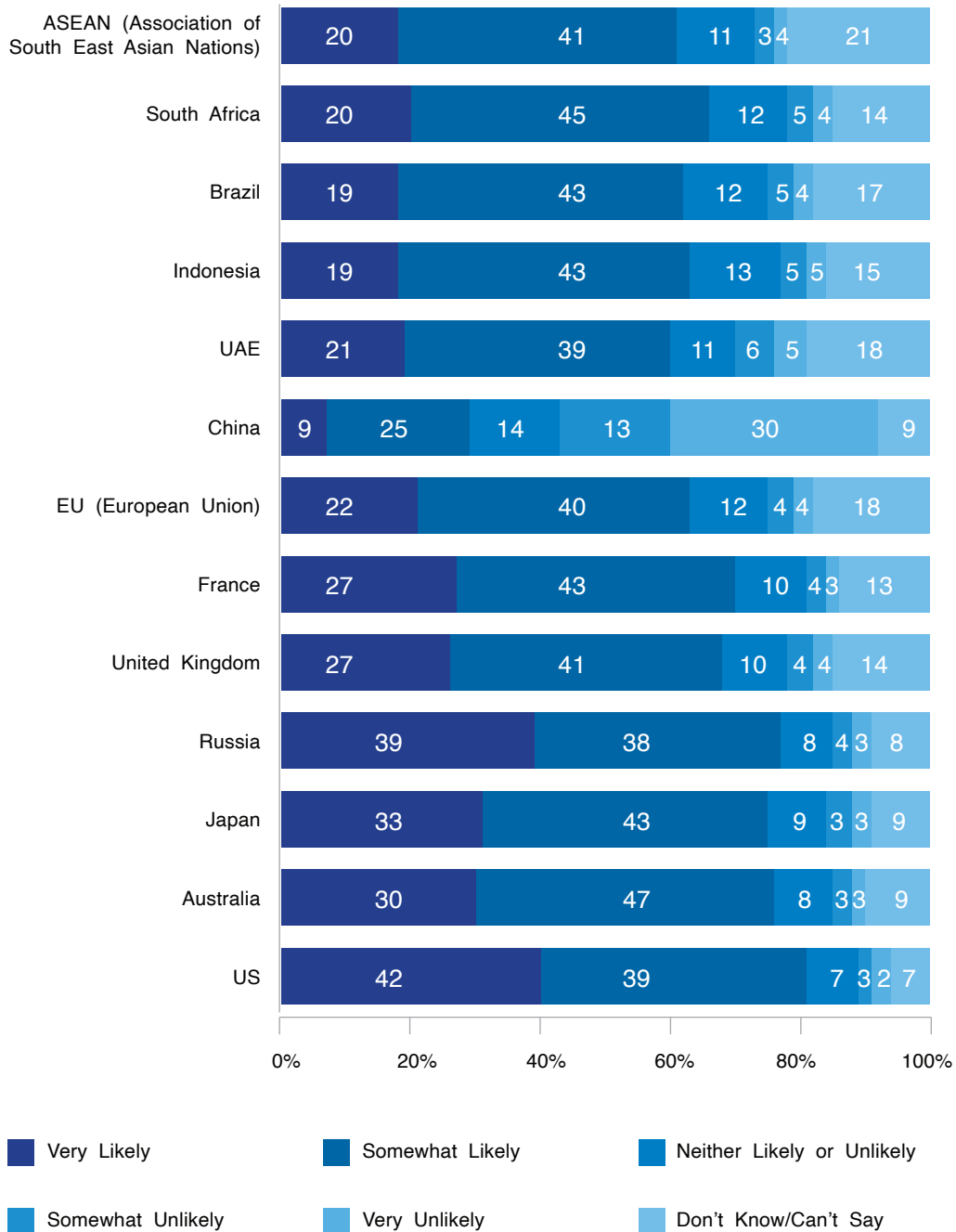
percent)—its Quad partners—as well as Russia (77 percent), a traditional partner. In the case of China, 49 percent of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction, indicating that the youth aspire for better relations and economic engagements with China (see Question 3.5). However, concerns of border conflict with China (see Question 1.2) and a decline in trust (see Question 3.5) following China’s attack on Indian troops in Galwan, continue to persist.

The majority of respondents with postgraduate and professional courses considered India’s bilateral relationships, except with China, to be *very satisfactory* or *somewhat satisfactory*, with the highest proportion noted for the US (90 percent), and the least for Brazil (76 percent). This indicates that education might have no impact on public opinion over hostile countries. Responses of *very satisfactory* and *somewhat satisfactory* increased with respondents’ education level in the case of the US (between 58–90 percent), Russia (between 34–86 percent), Australia (between 42–88 percent), Japan (between 34–87 percent), the European Union (EU) (between 32–77 percent), and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) (between 26–77 percent [See Appendix for correlation between education and satisfaction with the Quad countries]).

Disaggregating by region, there were nearly equal proportions of *very satisfactory* and *somewhat satisfactory* responses for the Quad countries—US (79–83 percent), Australia (73–78 percent), and Japan (73–76 percent)—indicating that unlike other powers, the Quad partners enjoy nearly consistent support throughout the country. This underscores the survey participants’ understanding of the necessity of these bilateral partnerships to counter new and emerging challenges, such as China’s belligerence. Income-wise, respondents earning 90,001–1,20,000 were most optimistic (70–96 percent) of India’s bilateral relations with leading powers, except the EU.

Apart from the matter of China, male respondents were marginally more optimistic of India’s bilateral relationships (63–82 percent) compared to their female counterparts (54–81 percent). The frequency of *don’t know/can’t say* responses was higher among female respondents (8–27 percent) and respondents in the 26–35 group (6–22 percent).

3.2 In the next 10 years, how likely are each of the following countries/groupings to become India's leading partners? (Single response per option)



Quad partners and Russia could emerge as India's leading partners in the next ten years.

Respondents were of the view that the US (81 percent), Russia (77 percent), Australia (77 percent), and Japan (76 percent) are *very likely* or *somewhat likely* to become India's leading partners in the next ten years. This can be attributed to the urban youth's satisfaction over India's bilateral relations with these countries (see Question 3.1). Forty-three percent of respondents consider it *somewhat unlikely* or *very unlikely* for China to be a leading partner of India. This can be attributed to the youth's lack of satisfaction over bilateral relations (see Question 3.1), decline in trust (see Question 3.5), and concerns of border conflicts (see Question 1.2) with China.

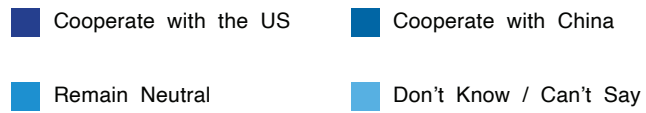
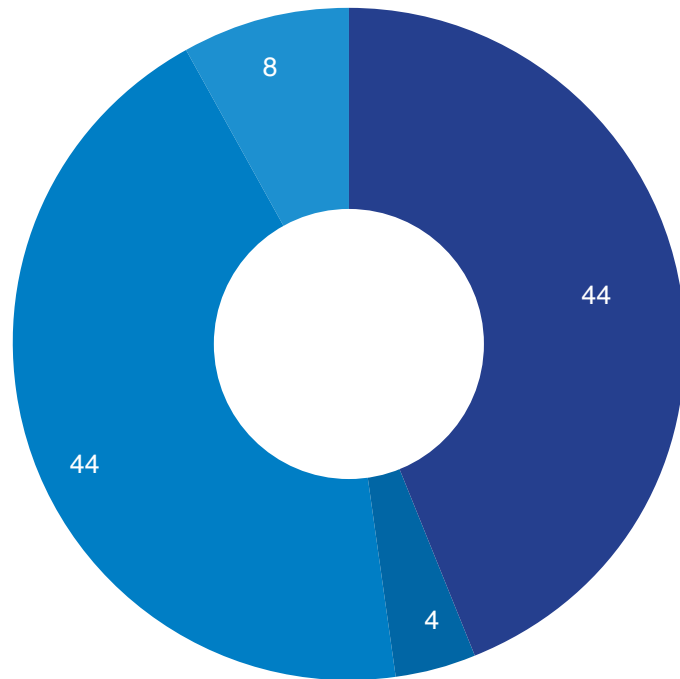
Compared to 2022, the proportion of *very likely* or *somewhat likely* responses has dropped by 4 percentage points for the US. *Very likely* and *somewhat likely* responses for Australia and Japan have increased by 1 and 3 percentage points, respectively, whereas the responses for Russia have remained the same. The decrease in percentage points for the US despite a growing relationship is likely because of minute rifts and divergences between the two countries on issues related to India's neighbourhood. In the case of China, the proportions of *very likely* and *somewhat likely* responses have increased by 10 percentage points; *very unlikely* and *somewhat unlikely* responses have decreased by 11 percentage points. The latter could indicate a lower degree of scepticism towards China, in turn likely due to the lack of any escalation in tensions, such as Galwan in the previous year. At the same time, concerns persist with China on border clashes and its policies with India (see Questions 1. 2 and 3.5).

Except in the case of China, Brazil, South Africa, and ASEAN, the level of education had a positive correlation with the frequency of *very likely* or *somewhat likely* responses for all the countries. Income-wise, the majority of respondents earning 90,001–1,20,000 considered all countries, besides Russia, UK, and Brazil, to be *very likely* or *somewhat likely* to become India's leading partners (between 65-95 percent).

There was little disparity in the *very satisfied* and *somewhat satisfied* responses for the Quad countries across regions: US (77–84 percent), Australia (74–79 percent), and Japan (72–79 percent), indicating that Quad partners enjoy support throughout the country.

Except in the case of China, male respondents had a marginally higher frequency of *very likely* and *somewhat likely* responses (64–83 percent) compared to the females (54–80 percent). In terms of age, respondents in the 18–25 cohort were as optimistic (34–83 percent) as their counterparts in the 26–35 group (33–80 percent). The shares of *don't know/can't say* responses were higher among female respondents (10–27 percent) and the 26–35 age group (8–21 percent).

3.3 What stand should India take if tensions between the US and China increase? (Single response)



India's urban youth are equally divided on what position the country should take amid US-China rivalry.

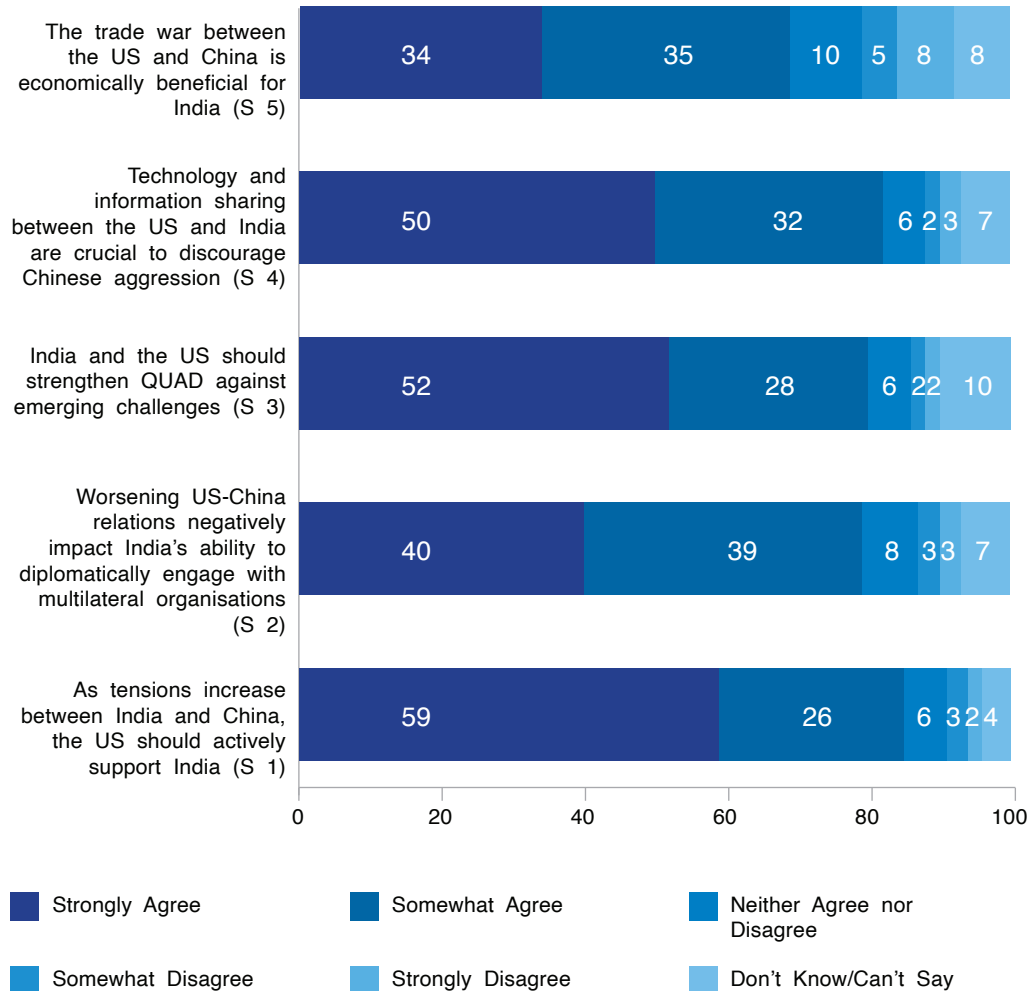
Forty-four percent of the respondents said India should *cooperate with the US* if US-China tensions worsen; and the same proportion would rather that India *remain neutral*. Only 4 percent of respondents thought India should *cooperate with China*. India's increasing relations with the US (see Question 3.1 and Question 3.2), concerns of conflict and declining relations with China (see Question 1.2, Question 3.1, and Question 3.2), and support to boost economic engagement with China (Question 3.5) have likely contributed to this plurality of responses.

Compared to the 2022 survey, the proportion of those preferring that India *remain neutral* dropped by 5 percentage points, while the share of those saying the country should *cooperate with the US* has increased by 3 percentage points. This hints at the possibility of Indian urban youth's increasing trust for the US at the cost of neutrality.

In terms of income, a notable majority (72 percent) in the 90,001-1,20,000 bracket would choose *cooperation with the US*. For those in the above-1,50,000 group, the most preferred option (70 percent) was to *remain neutral*. In terms of employment, respondents who are unemployed were the biggest group to advocate cooperation with the US (56 percent), and self-employed respondents professed neutrality (51 percent).

Geography and education have had no measurable influence on the responses.

3.4 To what extent do you agree with the following statements when you think of US-China relations and the impacts for India? (Single response per option)



The US and India should cooperate more as tensions between China and India heighten.

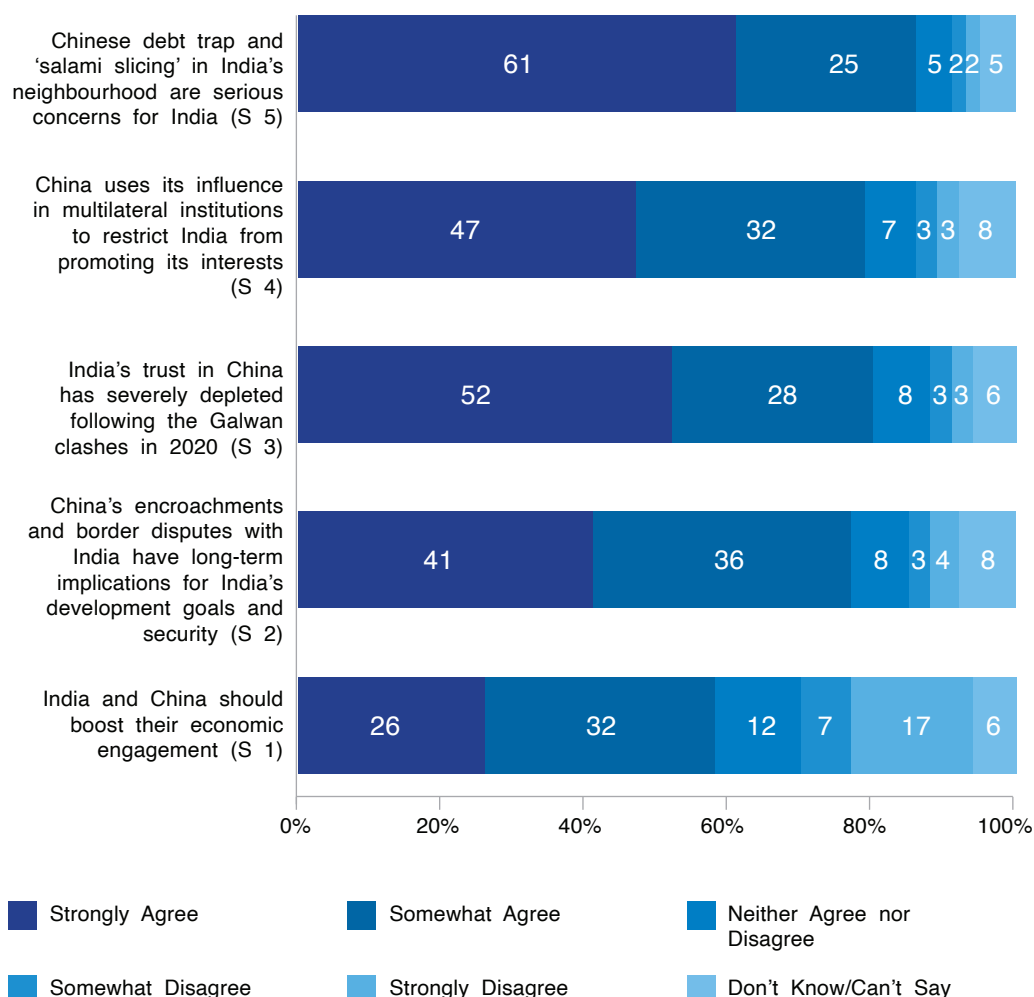
A large majority (85 percent) of respondents *somewhat agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the US should actively support India as tensions with China increase. Seventy-nine percent agreed that worsening US-China relations affect India's diplomatic engagements in multilateral organisations. Eighty-two percent *strongly agreed* or *somewhat agreed* that technology and information sharing between the US and India is crucial to deter further Chinese aggressions.

More than half of the respondents (52 percent) *strongly agreed* and 28 percent *somewhat agreed* that India and the US should strengthen the Quad against emerging challenges. Meanwhile, 69 percent of the respondents agreed that the trade war between the US and China will bring economic benefits to India. Compared to the 2022 survey, the proportion of respondents agreeing to the proposition that India and the US strengthen the Quad (S 3 in the graph) increased by 6 percentage points. This outcome is likely due to India's increasing collaboration with the US, as it confronts an assertive China. The share of respondents agreeing that the trade war between the US and China will benefit India decreased by 1 percentage point (S 5).

Disaggregated by education, support for the first three statements (S 1, 2, and 3) were the highest among respondents with postgraduate degrees (89 percent, 85 percent, and 87 percent, respectively). However, for the statement concerning the Quad (S 3), support had a direct correlation with the level of education (with a range of 53 to 87 percent). Income-wise, respondents earning 1,20,001-1,50,000 were largely supportive of the statements S 1 (100 percent) and S 4 (93 percent). All respondents earning more than 1,50,000 supported S 1 and S 3.

Geographically, the highest proportions of respondents expressing support for most of the statements, except for S 4, were in the north (with a range of 73 to 88 percent), despite being geographically closer to China. Gender-wise, responses for *strongly agree* or *somewhat agree* from the males (71-82 percent) were almost identical to their female counterparts (68-81 percent), except for S 1. In terms of age, respondents in the 18-25 cohort gave a high frequency of *strongly agree* or *somewhat agree* responses (between 71 and 86 percent), and were almost similar to their counterparts in the age group 26-35 (between 69-84 percent).

3.5 To what extent do you agree with these statements on India-China relations? (Single response per option)



Despite increasing tensions, India should conduct more economic engagements with China.

A significant majority (86 percent) of the respondents agreed that Chinese debt trap and 'salami slicing' in India's neighbourhood is a serious concern. More than three-fourths of the respondents (77 percent) agreed that China's encroachments and border disputes with India will have long-term implications for India's development goals and security. Eighty percent of respondents were of the view that India's trust in China has severely depleted following

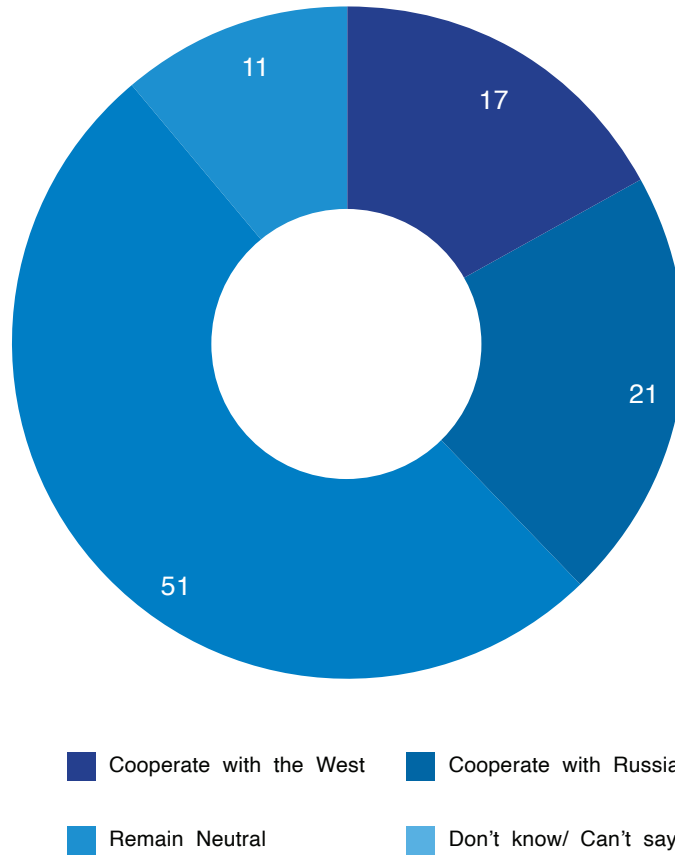
the Galwan clashes. While 47 percent of respondents believe that China's rise has benefitted multilateral institutions (see Question 1.5), 79 percent of respondents agreed that China uses its influence in multilateral institutions to restrict India from promoting its interests.

Despite this increased distrust for China, 58 percent of the urban youth agreed that India should have more economic engagements with China. Compared to the 2022 survey, the proportion of respondents agreeing that India should increase its economic engagement with China has gone up by 4 percentage points, plausibly indicating that, despite being aware of Chinese threats and challenges, respondents are looking for better economic relations between the two sides.

Disaggregating by education level, the majority of respondents with a postgraduate degree or professional course (86–94 percent) *strongly agreed* or *somewhat agreed* with all statements, except for S 1. Occupation-wise, there was a high level of agreement among retired respondents regarding S 1 (85 percent), S 2 (92 percent), and S 4 (92 percent). Agreement with China's debt trap (S 5) and the trust depletion post-Galwan (S 3) was high among self-employed respondents (92 percent and 85 percent, respectively). Income-wise, all respondents earning more than 1,50,000 agreed with the statements on Chinese encroachments (S 2) and the depletion of trust post-Galwan (S 3) [For graphs on income and occupation of respondents and how they responded to S1, refer to the Appendix].

Geographically, there was a high level of agreement among respondents from northern India (between 59–89 percent) for all statements except for the one regarding Chinese encroachments (S 2), despite those states being geographically closer to China. Gender and age have had no measurable influence on the responses.

3.6 What should India's position be as tensions between the West (the US and Europe) and Russia continue to rise? (Single response)

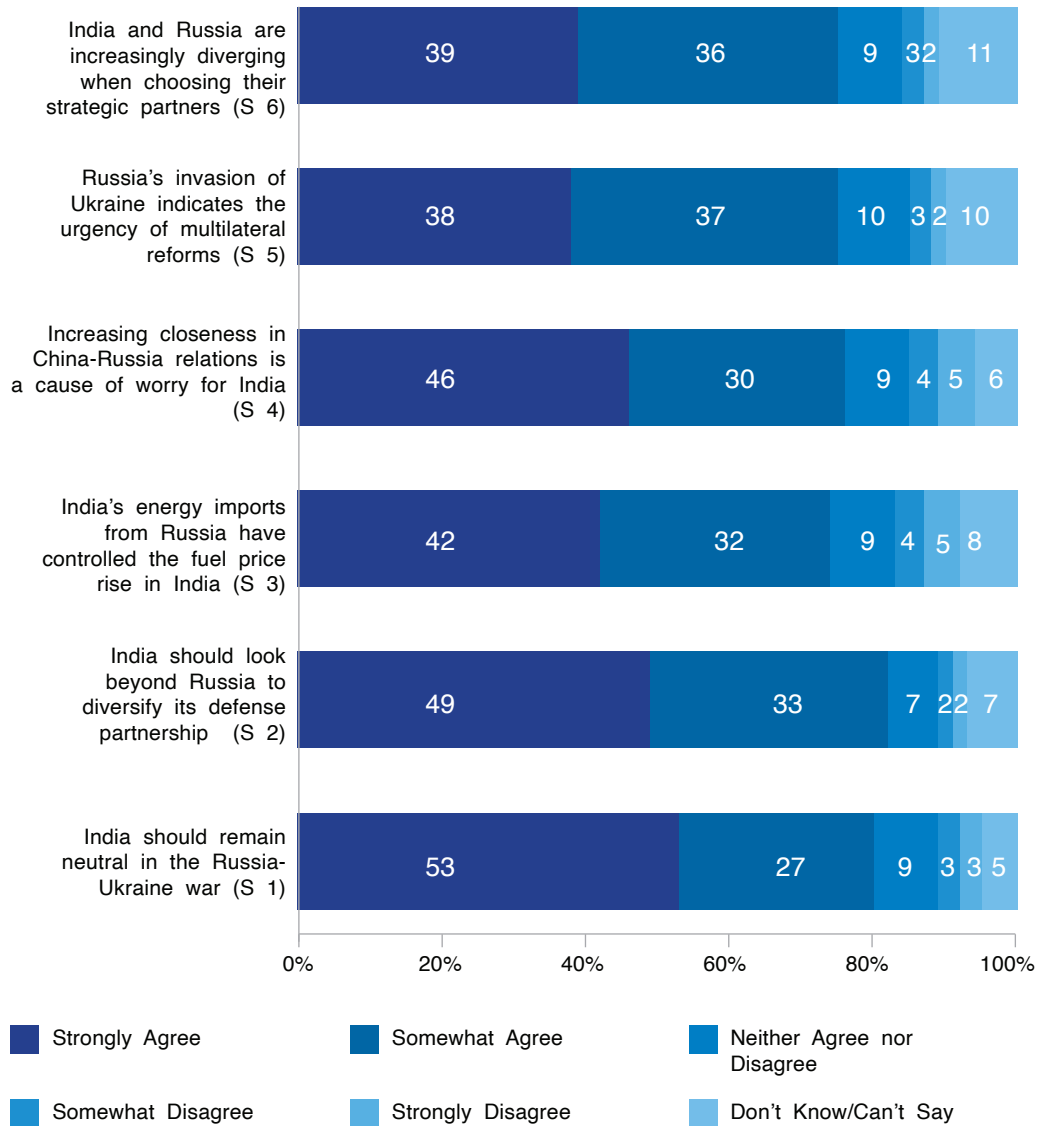


Young India in the urban regions appear to support India's policy of strategic autonomy.

When asked about the best position for India as tensions grow between the West and Russia, a majority of the respondents (51 percent) felt that India should *remain neutral*. Nearly 21 percent of the respondents were of the view that India should *cooperate with Russia*, and 17 percent said it should *cooperate with the West*. Indeed, India's youth are largely supportive of the country's unique relationships with both Russia and the West and advocate for stronger relations with both parties (see Question 3.1 and Question 3.2).

Education, geography, gender, age and occupation have had no measurable impact on the responses [To see how respondents with different education-levels responded to this question, refer to Appendix]. Income-wise, 70 percent of respondents earning more than 1,50,000 and 60 percent of respondents earning 1,20,000–1,50,000 believed that India should remain *neutral*. Fifty-two percent of respondents earning 90,000–1,20,000 felt that India should *cooperate with the West*.

3.7 To what extent do you agree with these statements about India–Russia relations? (Single response per option)



The future of India–Russia relations is an area of concern among India’s urban youth.

Resonating with the view that India should maintain its strategic autonomy (see Question 3.6), nearly 80 percent of the respondents *strongly agreed* or *somewhat agreed* that India should remain neutral in the subject of the Russia–Ukraine war. Seventy-five percent of the respondents agreed that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine indicates the urgency for multilateral reforms—a sentiment perhaps reflected in the question regarding the reform

of multilateral institutions and agendas (see Questions 1.3 and 1.6). Nearly three-fourths of the respondents (74 percent) agreed that India's energy imports from Russia were instrumental in controlling fuel price rise in India.

Nonetheless, the respondents expressed concern over the future of India–Russia relations. Eighty-two percent agreed that India should look beyond Russia to diversify its defence partnerships, and 75 percent said India and Russia are becoming increasingly divergent when choosing their strategic partners. Seventy-six percent agreed that growing closeness between Russia and China is a cause of worry for India. Compared to the 2022 survey, the proportion of respondents who agreed that increasing relations between Russia and China is a concern has increased by 8 percentage points. One explanation could be due to amplifying tensions between India and China, as Russia-China relations deepen.

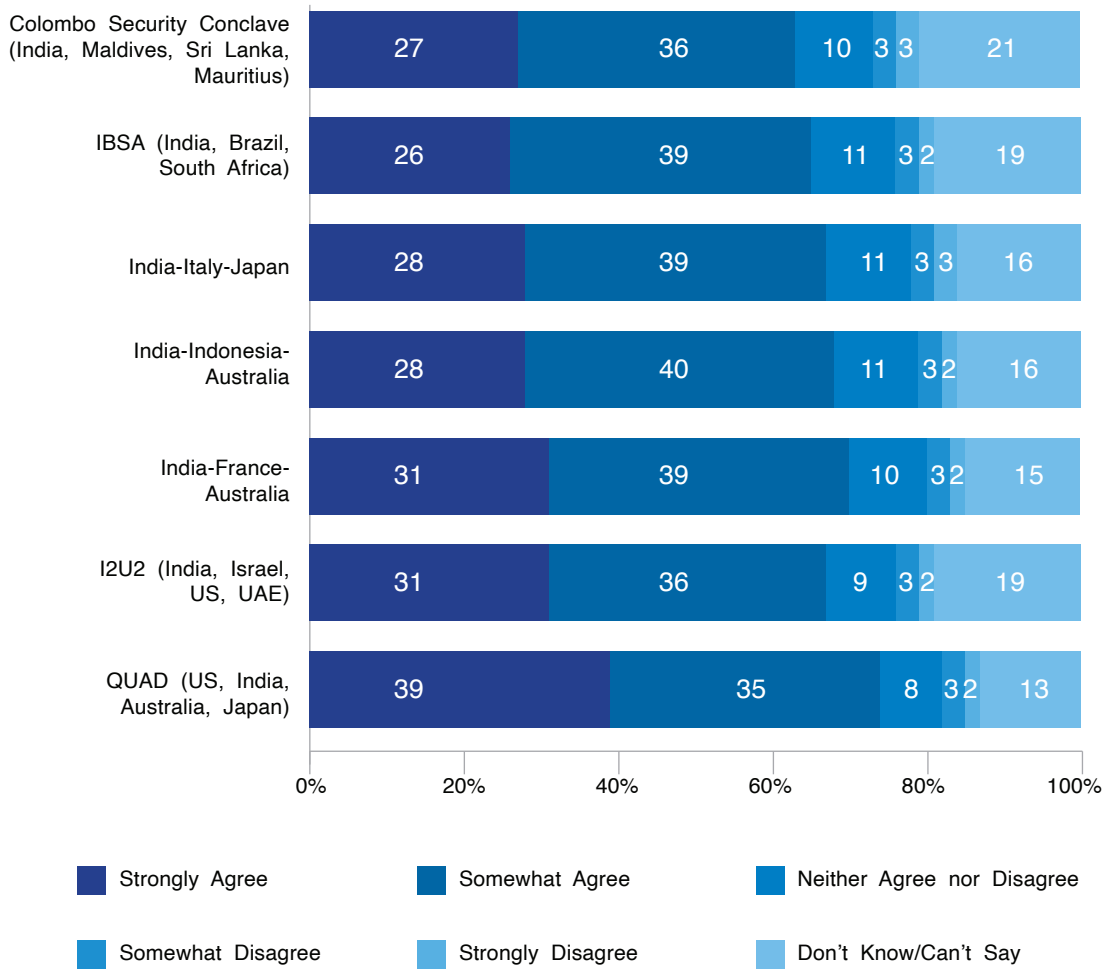
Broken down by education, the majority of the respondents with a postgraduate degree or a professional course agreed with all the statements (between 83-89 percent). The tendency to agree with the statements increased with education levels for S 2 (from 50–89 percent), S 4 (from 63–87 percent), and S 6 (from 50-84 percent). It is plausible that respondents with higher education are able to better observe and understand Russia's relations with the world, and its complexities with India. Occupation had no observable impact on the responses.

Income-wise, the majority of respondents earning 60,000–90,000 agreed with S 3 (77 percent), S 4 (81 percent), and S 6 (79 percent). Most respondents earning above 1,50,000 agreed with S 5 (80 percent) and S 2 (90 percent).

When compared to their counterparts, respondents from northern India agreed with most statements, (ranging from 78-84 percent), except S 1 and S 4. Respondents from the north, despite being geographically closer to China, appear to be less concerned about Russia-China relations and the implications for India.

Gender and age had no notable impact on the responses.

3.8 In view of the increasing tensions across the world, to what extent do you agree that the following organisations/ groupings help promote India’s interests? (Single response per option)



The Quad is regarded as the platform that best helps India in promoting its interests.

A significant majority (74 percent) of India's urban youth are of the view that the Quad helps India promote its interests. This was closely followed by other trilaterals, namely, India-France-Australia (70 percent), India-Indonesia-Australia (68 percent), and India-Italy-Japan (67 percent). The CSC received 63 percent of *strongly agree* and *somewhat agree* responses. Indeed, as seen in Questions 3.1 and 3.2, there is increasing level of trust in the Quad countries; meanwhile, in Question 2.4 A, respondents reported limited awareness of the Conclave.

Respondents' education levels appear to have had an impact on the frequency of *agree* or *strongly agree* responses. The proportion of such responses for the Quad (37–82 percent), India-France-Australia (34–83 percent), India-Indonesia-Australia (34–80 percent), India-Brazil-South Africa (34–77 percent), and CSC (21–76 percent) increased along the education levels. Among respondents earning more than 1,50,000, between 90–100 percent agreed that trilateral groupings (India-France-Australia, India-Indonesia-Australia, India-Italy-Japan, and India-Brazil-South Africa) allowed India to promote its interests.

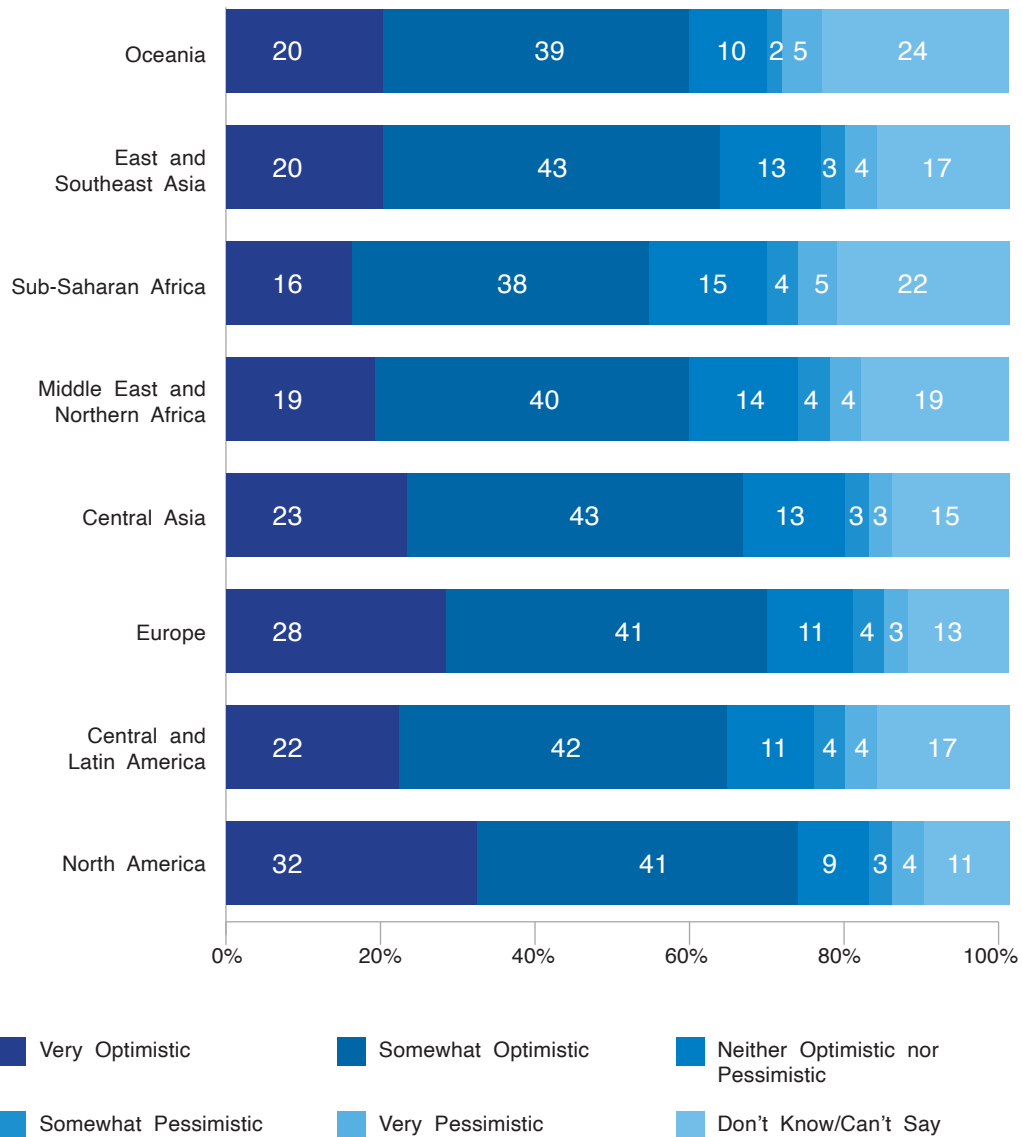
Occupation-wise, students had the greatest percentage of *strongly agree* or *somewhat agree* responses for most groupings and organisations (71–78 percent) except the CSC and the India-Italy-Japan trilateral.

The share of *don't know/can't say* responses was high among respondents in the 26–35 group (15–22 percent). This is likely because minilaterals and groupings of like-minded countries are a relatively new phenomenon. Male respondents had almost similar frequency of *agree* responses (65–75 percent) when compared to their female counterparts (60–71 percent). The share of *don't know/can't say* responses was high among the female respondents (18–26 percent).

IV.

India and the World Economic Order

4.1 How optimistic are you that India benefits from trade agreements with the following regions? (Single response per option.)



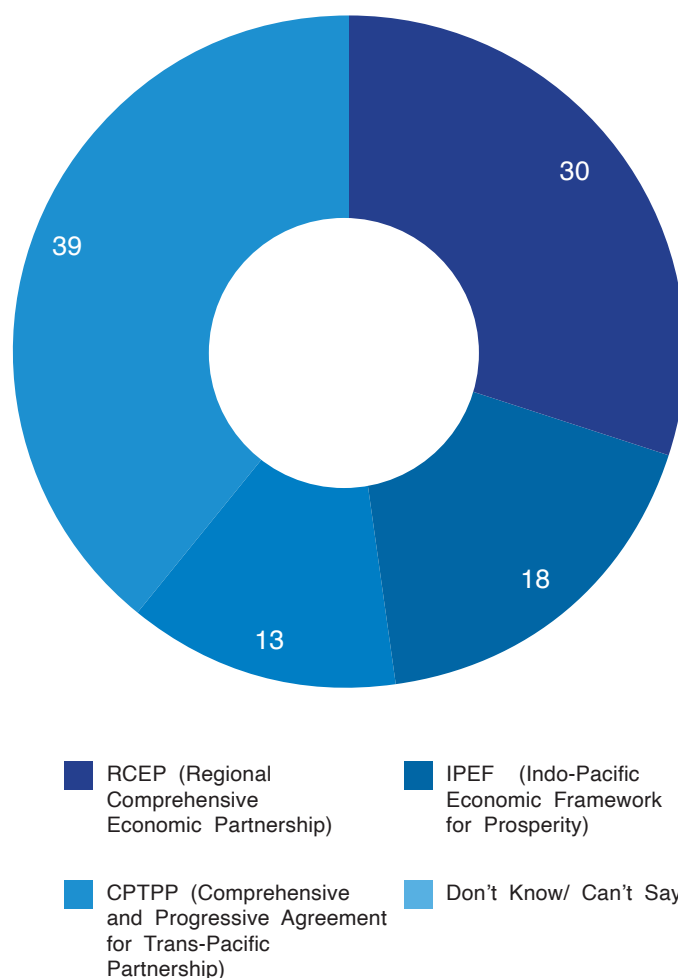
India's urban youth are optimistic about India's trade engagements with North America, Europe, and Central Asia.

India's urban youth are largely optimistic of India's economic engagements with North America (73 percent), Europe (69 percent), and Central Asia (66 percent). India's growing economic ties with the US and ongoing negotiations with the EU towards a free trade agreement (FTA) are testament to these positive perceptions.

Respondents in the 18–25 age group are relatively more optimistic (North America - 76 percent, Europe - 72 percent, and Central Asia - 67 percent) about trade agreements as compared to the 26-35 cohort. In the case of the above mentioned regions, respondents with a postgraduate degree or a professional course were the most optimistic (70-85 percent), with highest optimism for North America. The level of optimism for the Middle East, East and Southeast Asia, and Oceania increased with education levels (21-75 percent, 21-75 percent, and 26-73 percent, respectively).

Broken down by gender, more female respondents were optimistic about trade agreements with North America (74 percent) and Central and Latin America (65 percent).

4.2 Which of the following economic frameworks might benefit India the most? (Single response)



India's urban youth consider the RCEP to be a beneficial economic framework for India.

Thirty percent of respondents consider the *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)* as being beneficial for the country, although India had already opted out of the framework in 2018. Eighteen percent of the respondents consider the *Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)* to be beneficial, whereas the *Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)* received the least support (13 percent). Thirty-

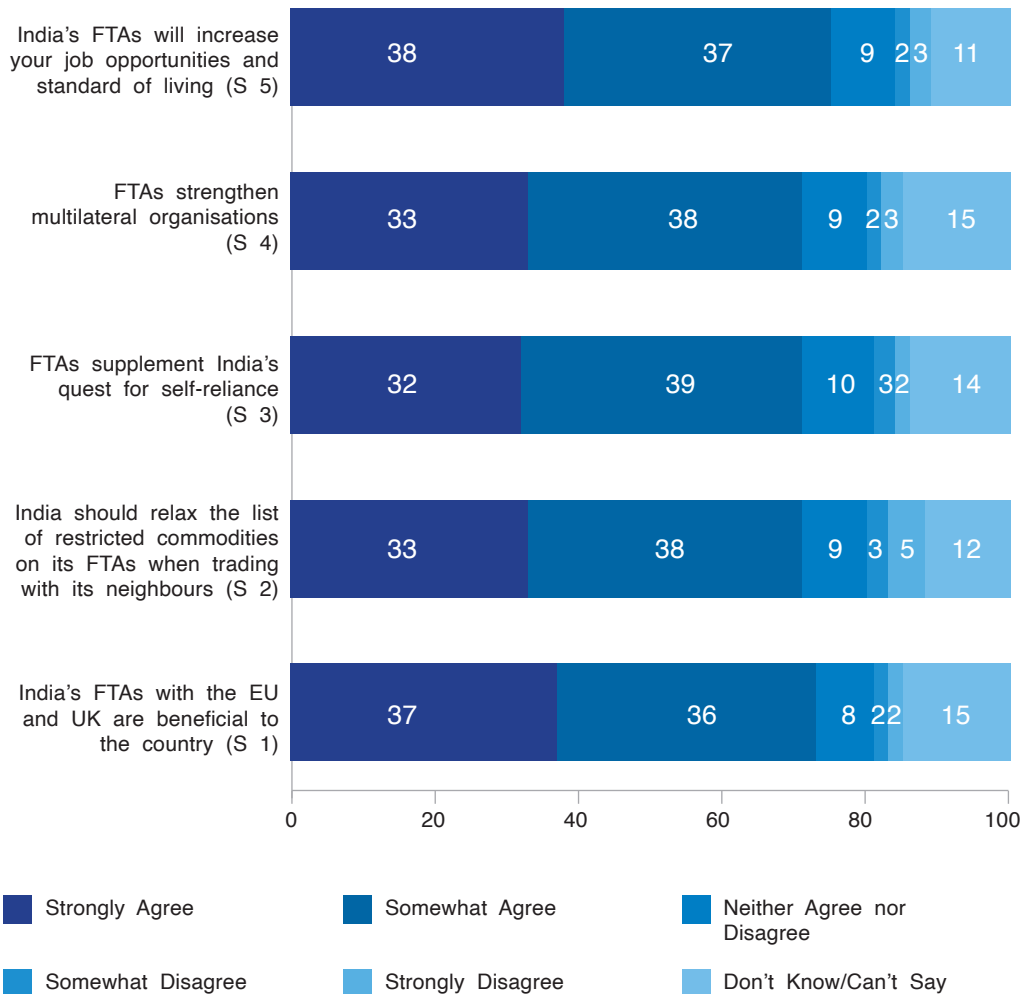
nine percent of the respondents chose the *don't know/can't say* option, reflecting the lack of awareness about these economic frameworks and their potential benefits for India.

Support for RCEP was similar across both age sub-groups (29 and 30 percent, respectively). In terms of education, 42 percent of respondents with postgraduate or professional degrees chose RCEP, whereas 21 percent said IPEF would bring the most benefit. Twenty-nine percent of respondents working in the government sector chose IPEF. The percentage of *don't know/can't say* responses went down with an increase in education level (71-25 percent).

Disaggregated by income, support for the RCEP increased till the 1,20,000-1,50,000 income bracket, with 60 percent of the respondents saying it was beneficial for India.

In the 2021 Foreign Policy Survey, on being asked to assess a list of major foreign policy decisions of the Modi government, respondents gave the country's decision to withdraw from the RCEP the least support. The higher support for the framework this year as opposed to other initiatives reflects the positive perception that the Indian urban youth have about RCEP.

4.3. To what extent do you agree with the following statements on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)? (Single response per option)



India's urban youth have an overall positive perception about free trade agreements (FTAs) and their economic benefits.

Seventy-five percent of the respondents agreed that FTAs would increase their job opportunities and raise their standard of living. Seventy-three percent agreed that India's FTAs with the EU and the UK, negotiations for which are underway at the time of writing, are beneficial for the country.

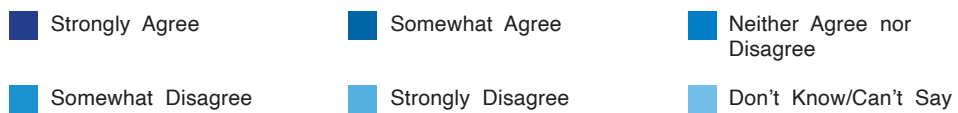
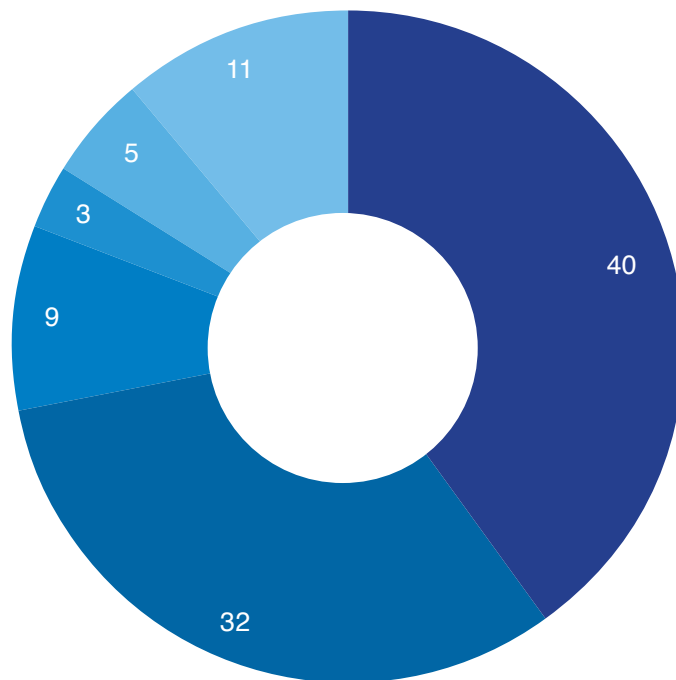
This support for FTAs echoes the youth's positive perception of trade agreements with Europe in general (see Question 4.1). Seventy-one percent of respondents agreed that FTAs strengthen multilateral organisations and supplement India's quest for self-reliance. The same proportion of respondents agreed that India should relax the list of restricted commodities on its FTAs when trading with its neighbours.

Geographically, 77 percent of the respondents in northern India agreed that FTAs with the EU and the UK are beneficial. Seventy-three percent of the respondents in western India agreed that FTAs supplement India's quest for self-reliance. Disaggregated by income, respondents earning between 30,001 and 1,20,000 agreed the most with the statement that FTAs with the EU and UK are beneficial (75-85 percent), whereas those earning below 30,000 agreed the most with the statement that FTAs could increase their job prospects and raise their standard of living (75 percent).

Disaggregated by age, the 18–25 age group had the highest number of agree responses for all statements (72-77 percent).

An increase in education level ran parallel to greater frequency of agreement that FTAs with the EU and the UK are beneficial to India: 39 percent of the illiterate cohort and 82 percent of those with a postgraduate degree or a professional course agreed with the statement. More students (80 percent) and private sector employees (76 percent) agreed that FTAs will increase job opportunities and raise their standard of living [See Appendix]. The higher frequency of positive responses from students also aligns with a more positive outlook expressed by the younger age group, and indicates their confidence towards FTAs.

4.4. Do you think the G7's de-risking strategy against China is more beneficial to India than its decoupling strategy? (Single response)



The G7's de-risking strategy will benefit India more than decoupling.

Seventy-two percent of the respondents agreed (40 percent for *strongly agree* and 32 percent, *somewhat agree*) whereas nearly 8 percent of the respondents disagreed (3 percent for *somewhat disagree*, and 5 percent, *strongly disagree*) that the G7's strategy of de-risking is more beneficial to India than decoupling. Considering that de-risking is a relatively new concept, the proportion of *don't know/can't say* responses was also notable, at 11 percent. The number of *don't know/can't say* responses declined with an increase in education level from the illiterate demographic to those with a diploma degree (53-5 percent).

De-risking has been used to describe the G7 countries' stance towards China on matters of economic interdependence, and the attempt to move away from areas that are deemed risky, such as critical technologies, to build more resilient supply chains. Even as the border conflict between India and China persists and remains an area of concern for India's urban youth (see Question 1.2), bilateral trade between the two countries remains high. Moreover, though there is an increase in distrust for China, a majority of India's urban youth would like the country to increase its economic engagements with China (see Question 3.5). This could explain the increased support for de-risking rather than decoupling.

Respondents in southern India were more inclined to disagree with the statement (68 percent). Disaggregated by income, most respondents in the 1,20,001–1,50,000 bracket (87 percent) agreed with the statement compared to those in lower-income brackets. Most self-employed individuals and those working in the private sector agreed with the statement (78 percent for both). This shows how income and occupation can influence this sentiment. The proportion of *don't know/can't say* responses was higher among retired and unskilled workers (23 percent and 29 percent, respectively).

Scope for Future Research

THE THIRD EDITION of ORF's annual survey has given both predictable and unexpected insights into how India's urban youth view the country's foreign policy. One remarkable observation is that overall support for India's foreign policy has increased across all the three iterations of the survey so far. The respondents largely expressed positive sentiments in several crucial issues, such as support for multilateralism and its reforms, India's G20 presidency, perceptions and relations with most neighbours, the Quad countries and Russia, international economic engagements, and free trade agreements.

India's urban youth also deem non-traditional security threats like pandemics, economic slowdown, and terrorism, as significant challenges. At the same time, there is increasing sense of wariness towards China and Pakistan in both traditional and non-traditional realms. There is also strong support for multilateral organisations like the WHO, World Bank, and the WTO to counter challenges related to healthcare, food security, and economic meltdown.

Certain observations made in this survey warrant further assessments. There is a need to explore how education, gender, occupation, geography and age influence public opinion. In most questions, for instance, men, respondents with postgraduate/professional courses and in the age group 18-25 appear more optimistic in their responses when compared to their counterparts.

It would also be beneficial to understand why India's urban youth trust multilateralism in general, and the WHO in particular, especially as COVID-19 and ongoing conflicts in the world have influenced their sentiments. In terms of gender, there is a need to understand why female respondents are more pessimistic about China and accommodative to Pakistan when compared to their male counterparts. In terms of geography, it would be interesting to understand why respondents in the southern states were more concerned about China and potential border conflicts.

The survey focused on seeking the opinions of India's urban youth, rather than justifying those views. It offers insights at a time when the world order is increasingly coming under stress and India is emerging as a formidable power. This survey can serve as an important reference point for future research on both the theoretical aspects of Indian foreign policy, and its practice.

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Overall support for India's foreign policy has increased across all the three iterations of ORF's survey so far.

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Appendices

A. Sample Design Details

THE FOREIGN POLICY SURVEY of 2023 gathered data from **5,000** respondents across India. The survey targeted responses from young adults (aged 18 - 35). The gender composition of the sample was as follows: **60.9 percent** (3047) males and **39.06 percent** (1953) females. To ensure heterogeneity in responses, data was collected taking into consideration the various socioeconomic characteristics. Proportionate representation from all regions was ensured, as can be seen from Table 1.

Table 1. Region-wise Composition of the Sample

Region	Number of Respondents	Percent
North	1543	30.86
West	1090	21.80
East	1308	26.16
South	1059	21.18

In the sample, **55.98 percent** (2799) of the respondents attended school up to Class 12 while the remaining **44.02 percent** (2201) respondents had education above Class 12. **70.76 percent** (3538) of the respondents were employed and **29.24 percent** (1462) were unemployed.

B. The Probability of Responses that Rate Foreign Policy Positively: A Probit Model

Respondents were asked ‘How would you rate India for its foreign policy on an overall basis?’ Table 2 below shows the frequency of the responses.

Table 2. Distribution of Responses for Rating India’s Foreign Policy

Response	Number of Respondents	Percent
Very Good	1,777	35.54
Good	2,385	47.70
Neutral	248	9.96
Poor	127	2.54
Very Poor	84	1.68
Don’t Know/ Can’t Say	129	2.58

Probit Model – Interpretation

	Dependent Variable: Approval Variable
Gender: Female	0.042 (0.082)
Age	0.010 * (0.006)
region East	-0.149 * (0.087)
region South	-0.350 *** (0.090)
region West	0.301 *** (0.112)
Income Don't Know/Refused/Can't say	-0.150 (0.108)
Income High Income	0.372 (0.248)
Income Middle Income	0.221 *** (0.082)
education level	0.171 ** (0.071)
employment: Unemployed	-0.237 *** (0.089)
Constant	1.478 *** (0.163)
Observations	4,871
Log Likelihood	-829.395
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,680.791

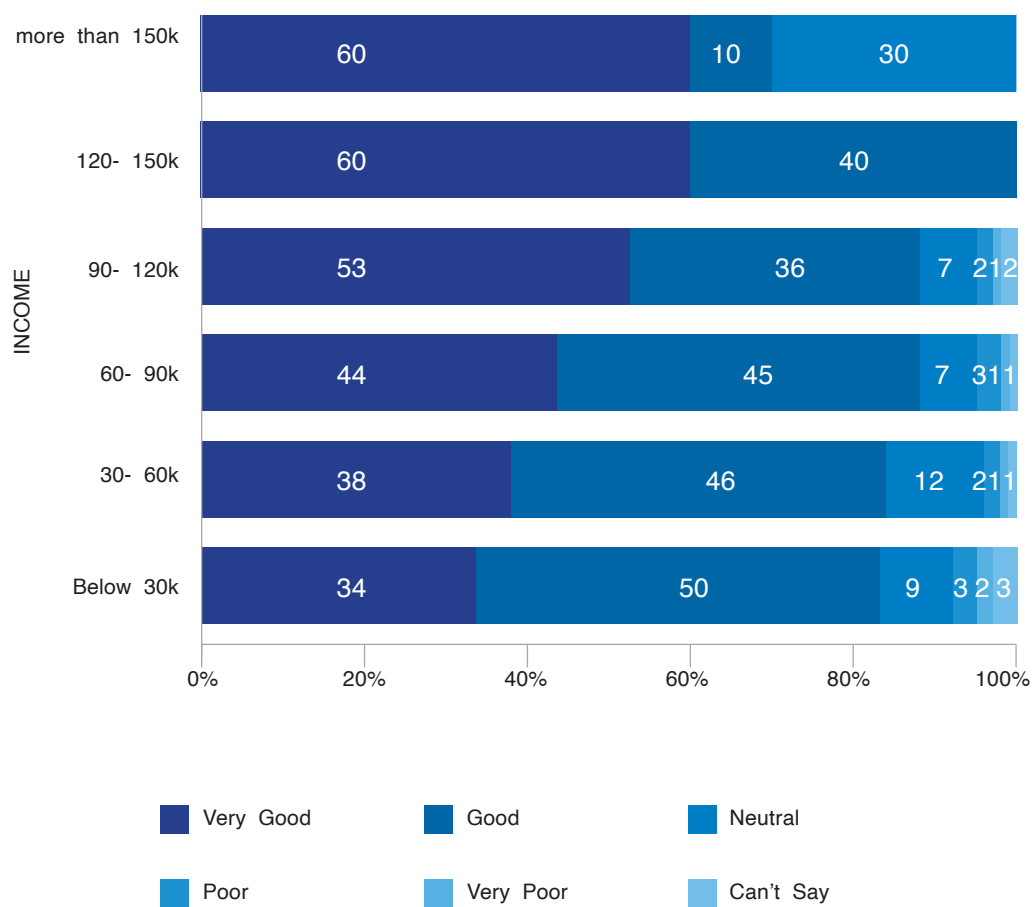
Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The respondents were asked how they would rate the foreign policy of India. The results of the probit model show that as age increases, respondents are more likely to positively rate the foreign policy. Overall, as income level and educational level increases, respondents begin to show higher approval. Alternatively, as compared to those who are employed, unemployed respondents are less likely to express positive approval. Generally, females tend to show more positive responses for their ratings of the foreign policy; however, the results for gender are not statistically significant.

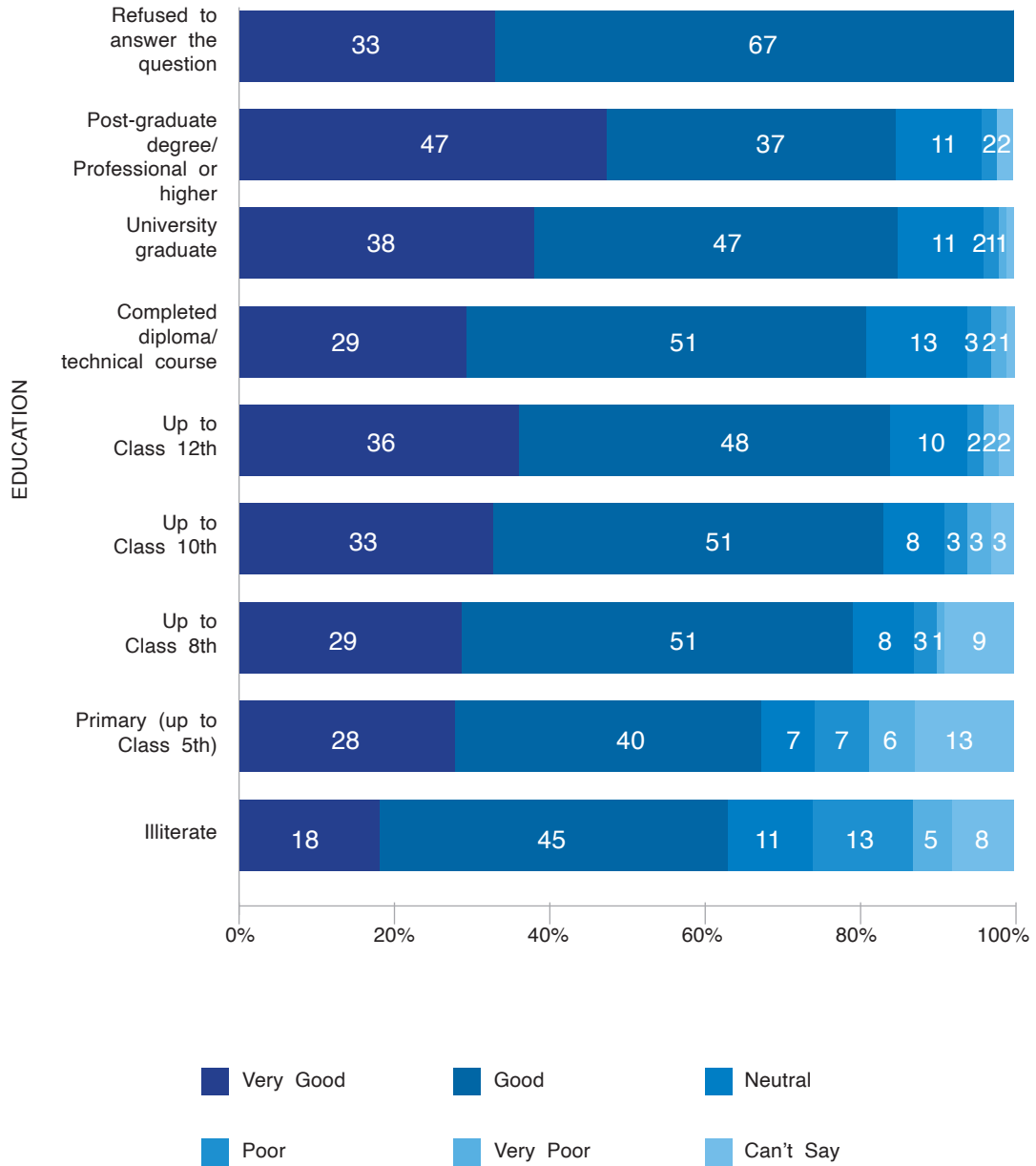
C. Frequency of Responses Based on Socioeconomic Variables

I. Indian Foreign Policy And Multilateralism

1.1. How would you rate India for its foreign policy on an overall basis? (as per Income and Education categories)

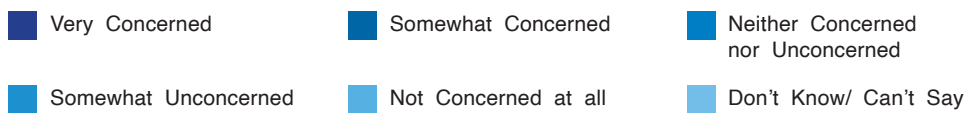
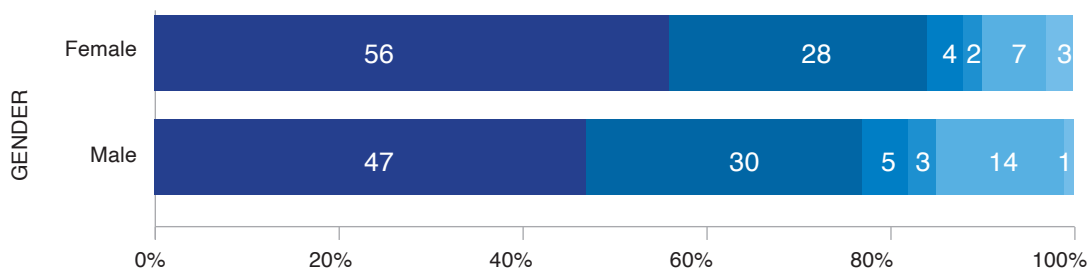
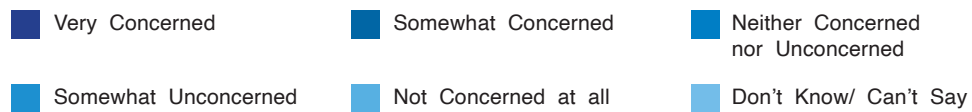
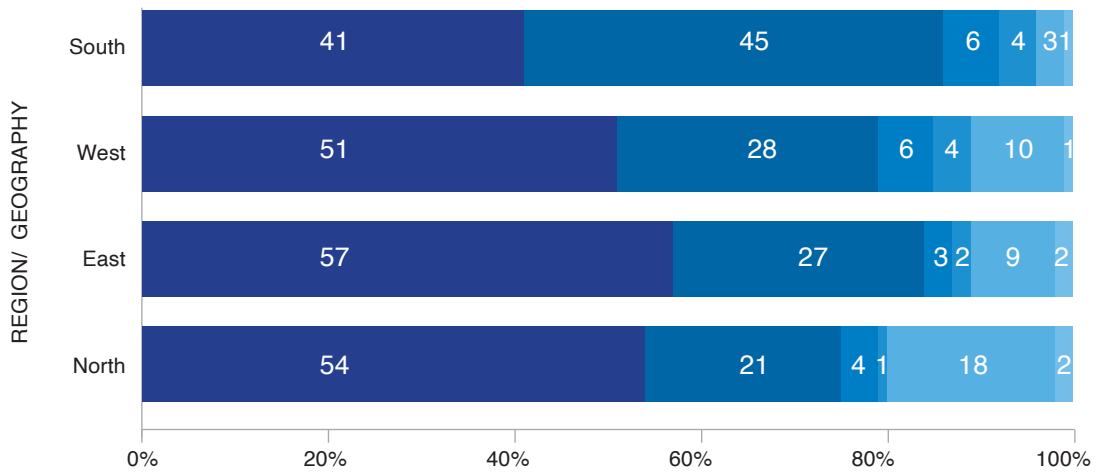


Stance on Foreign Policy, by Education

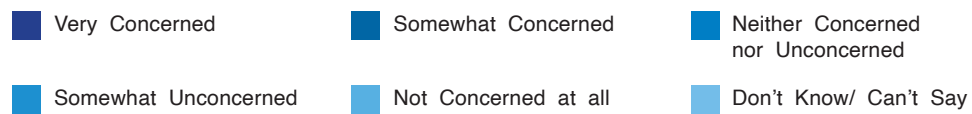
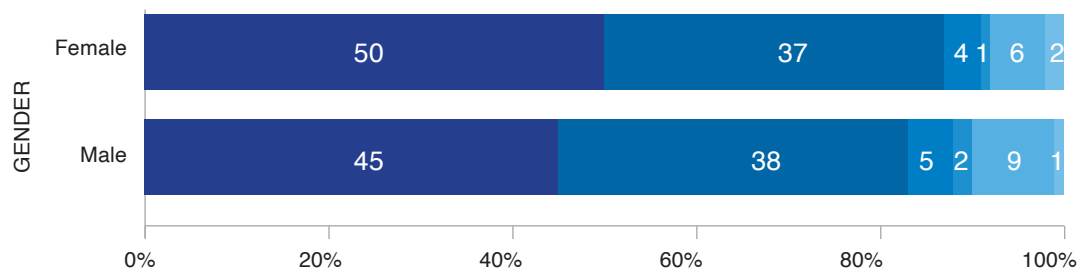
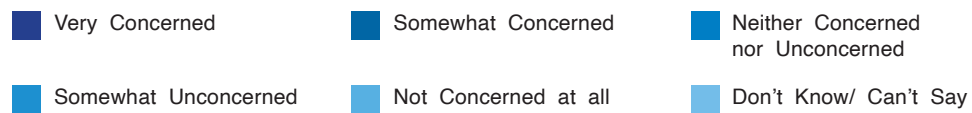
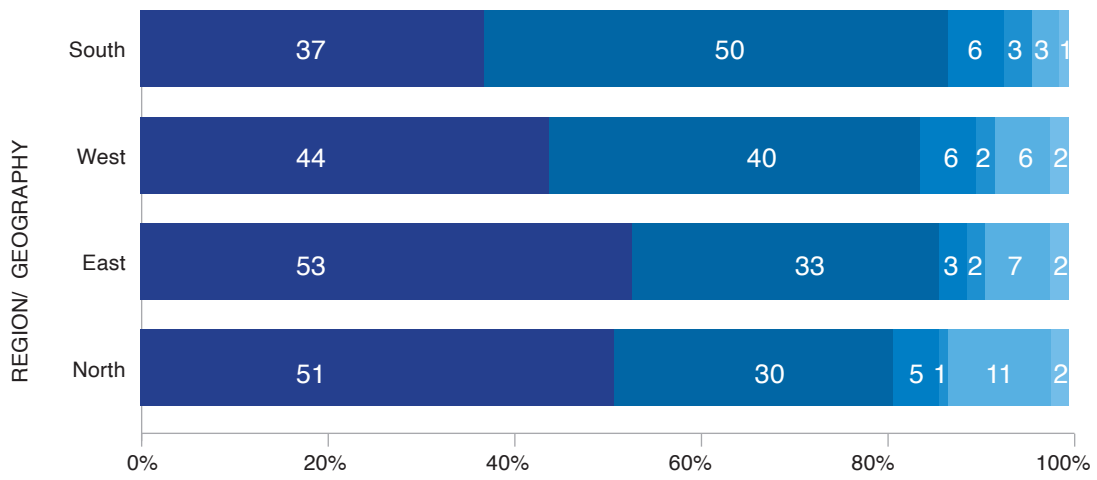


1.2. How concerned are you about this major foreign policy challenge facing India–Border Conflict with China and Pakistan (Region and Gender Categories)

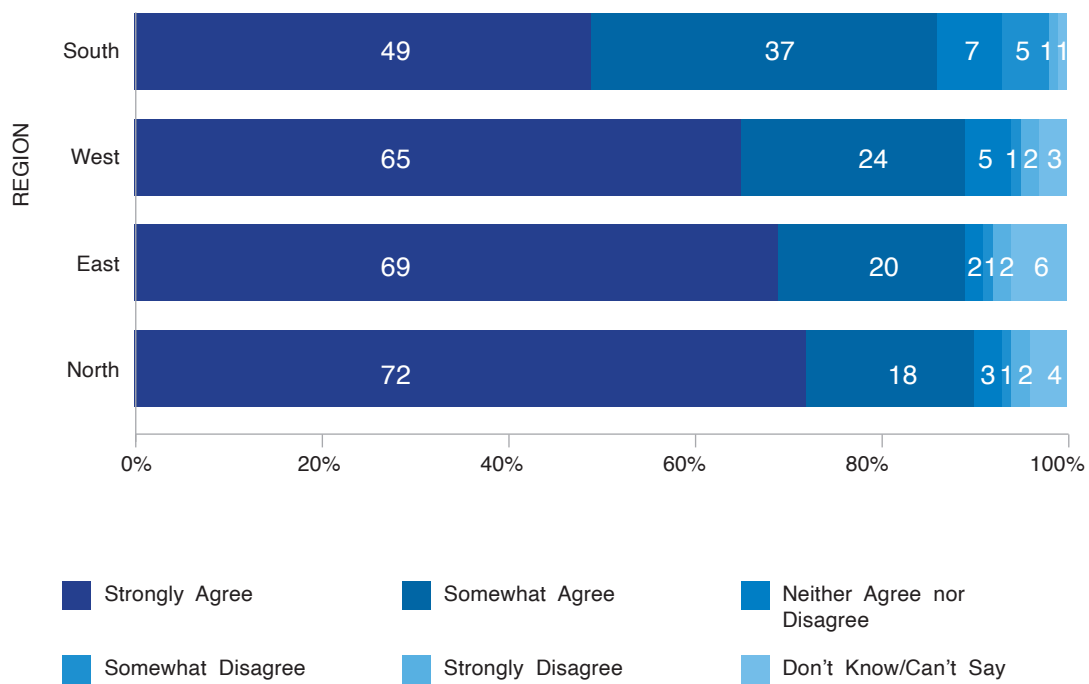
China



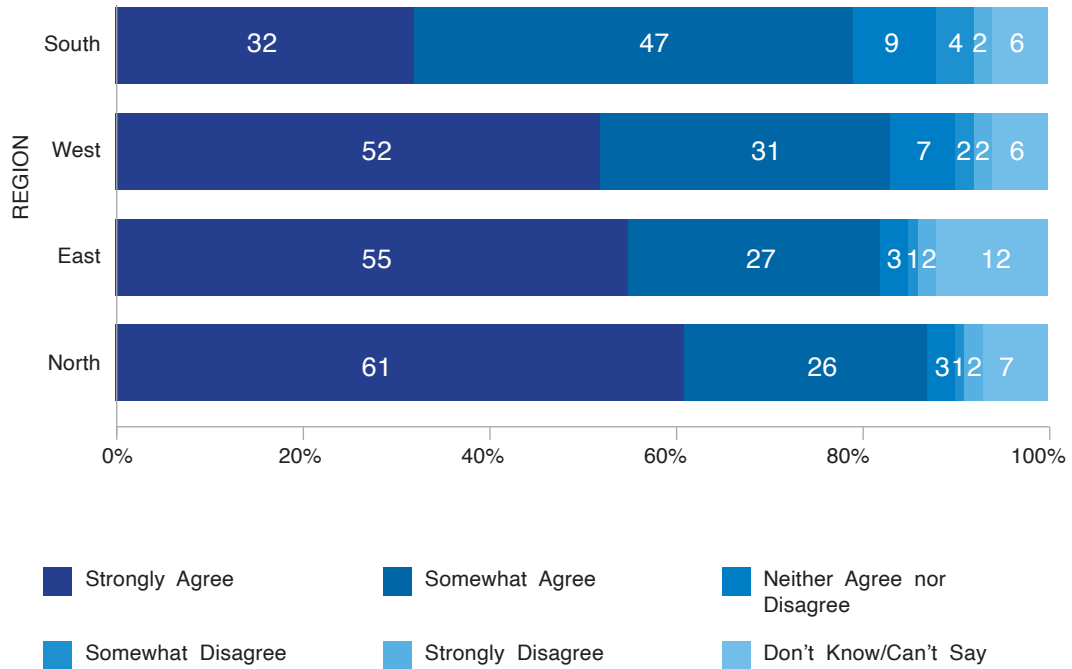
Pakistan



1.6. India is trying to secure a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. Do you personally feel that this is an important goal for India? (Region Categories)

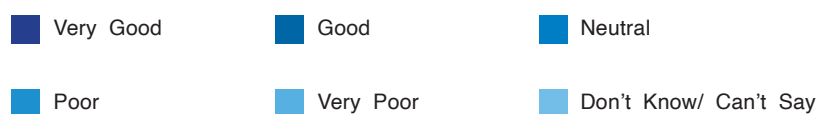
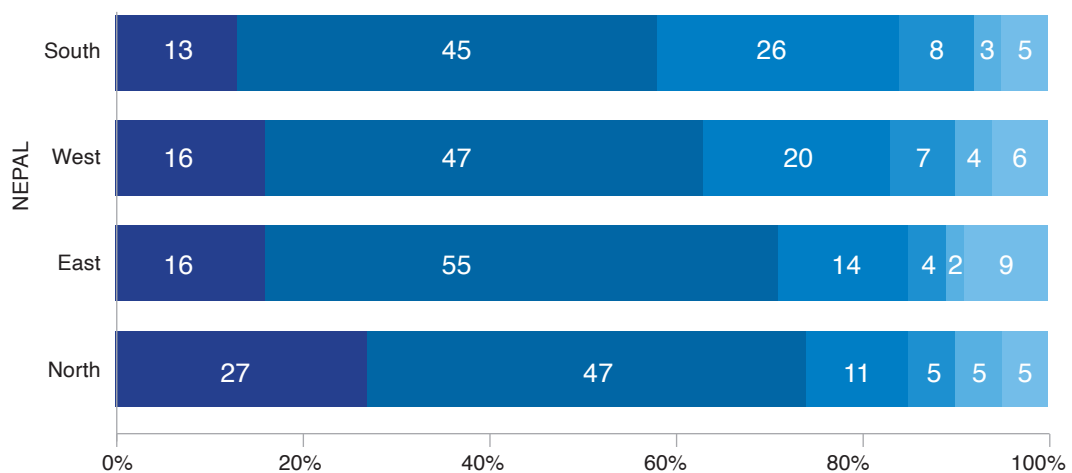
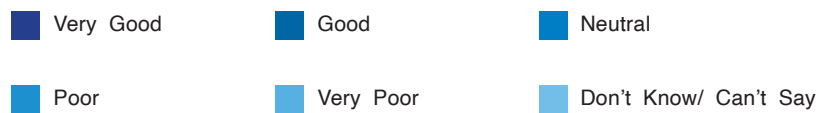
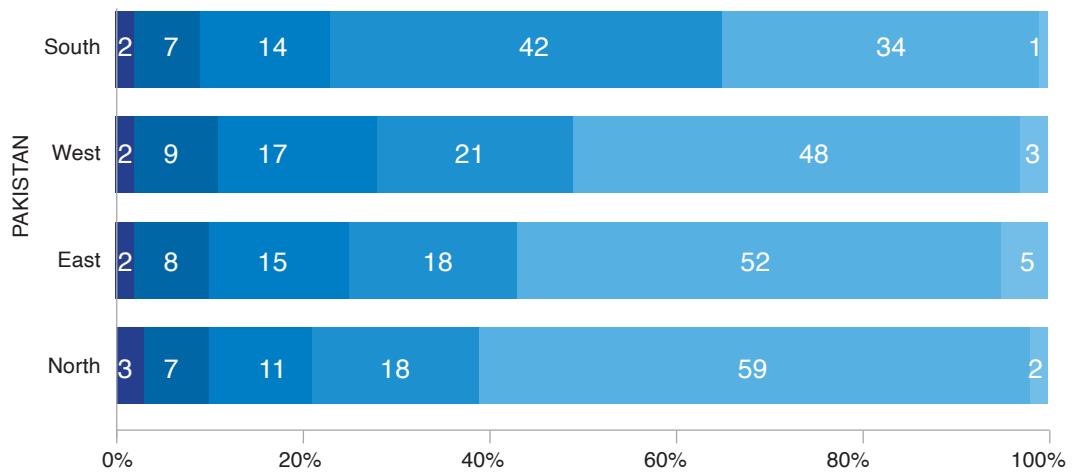


**1.7. To what extent do you agree that India has effectively used its G20 presidency to address its concerns?
(Region Categories)**



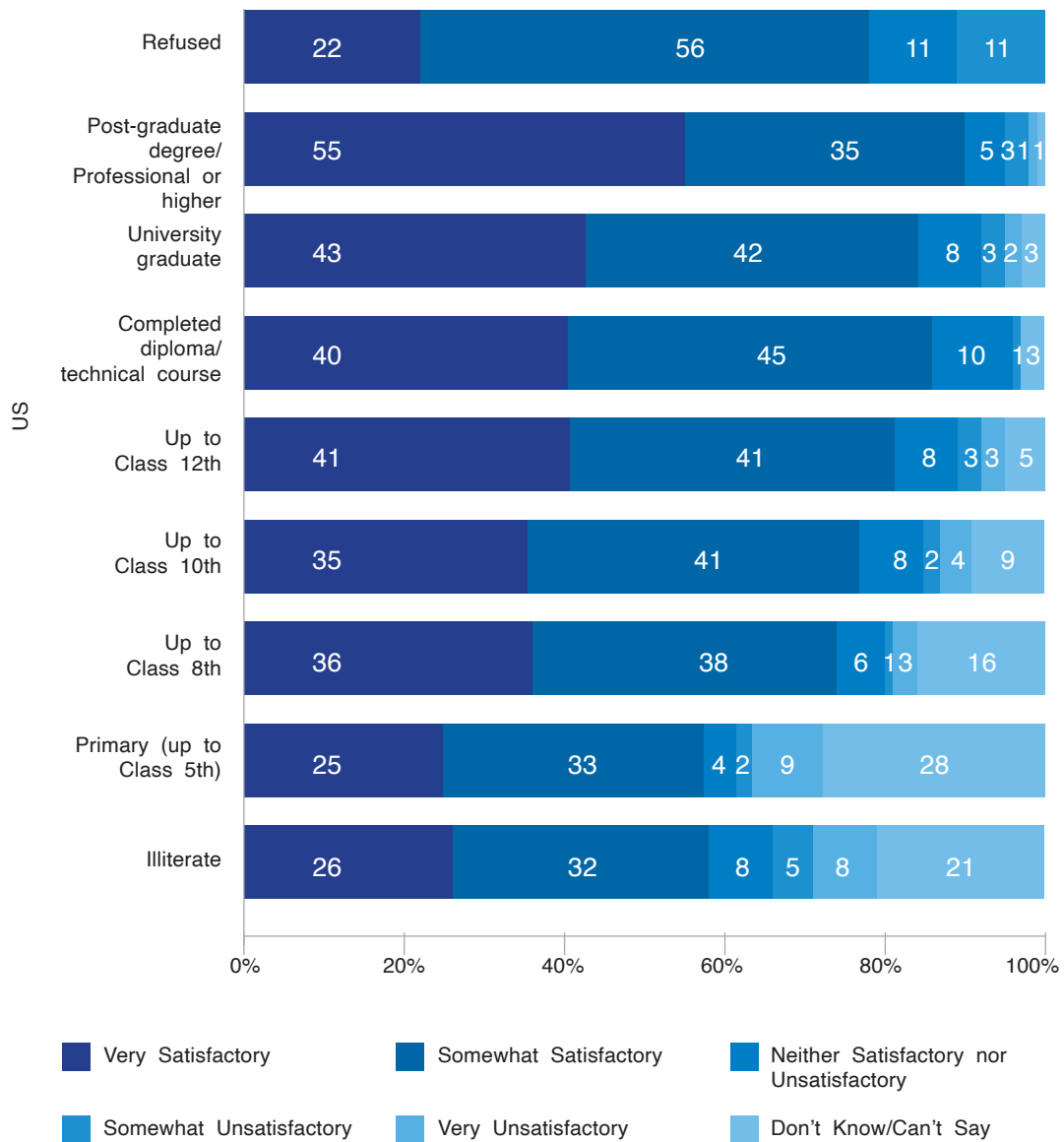
II. India and the Neighbourhood

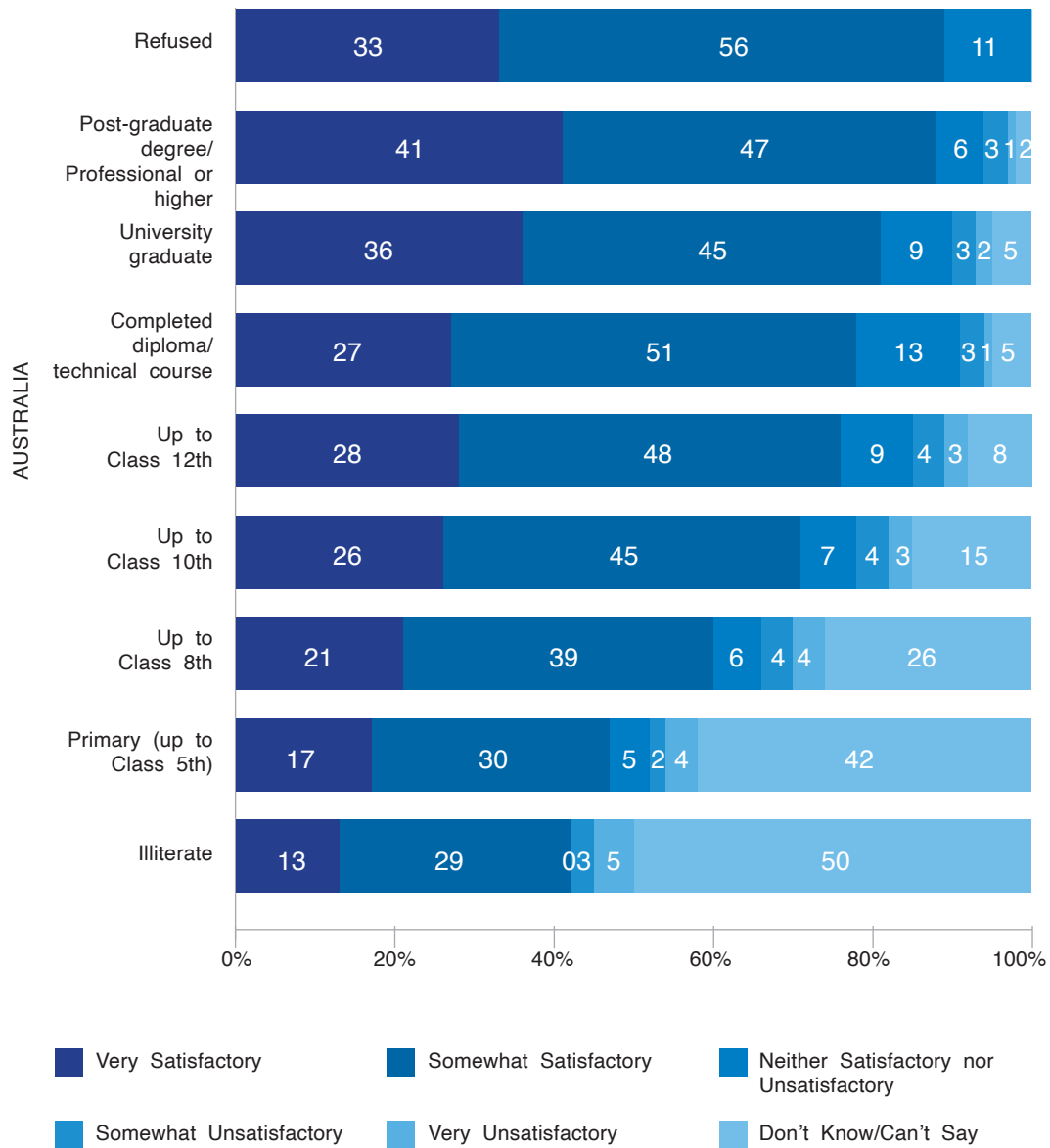
2.2. How do you assess the status of India’s bilateral relationship with each of the following neighbouring countries– PAKISTAN and NEPAL (Region Categories)



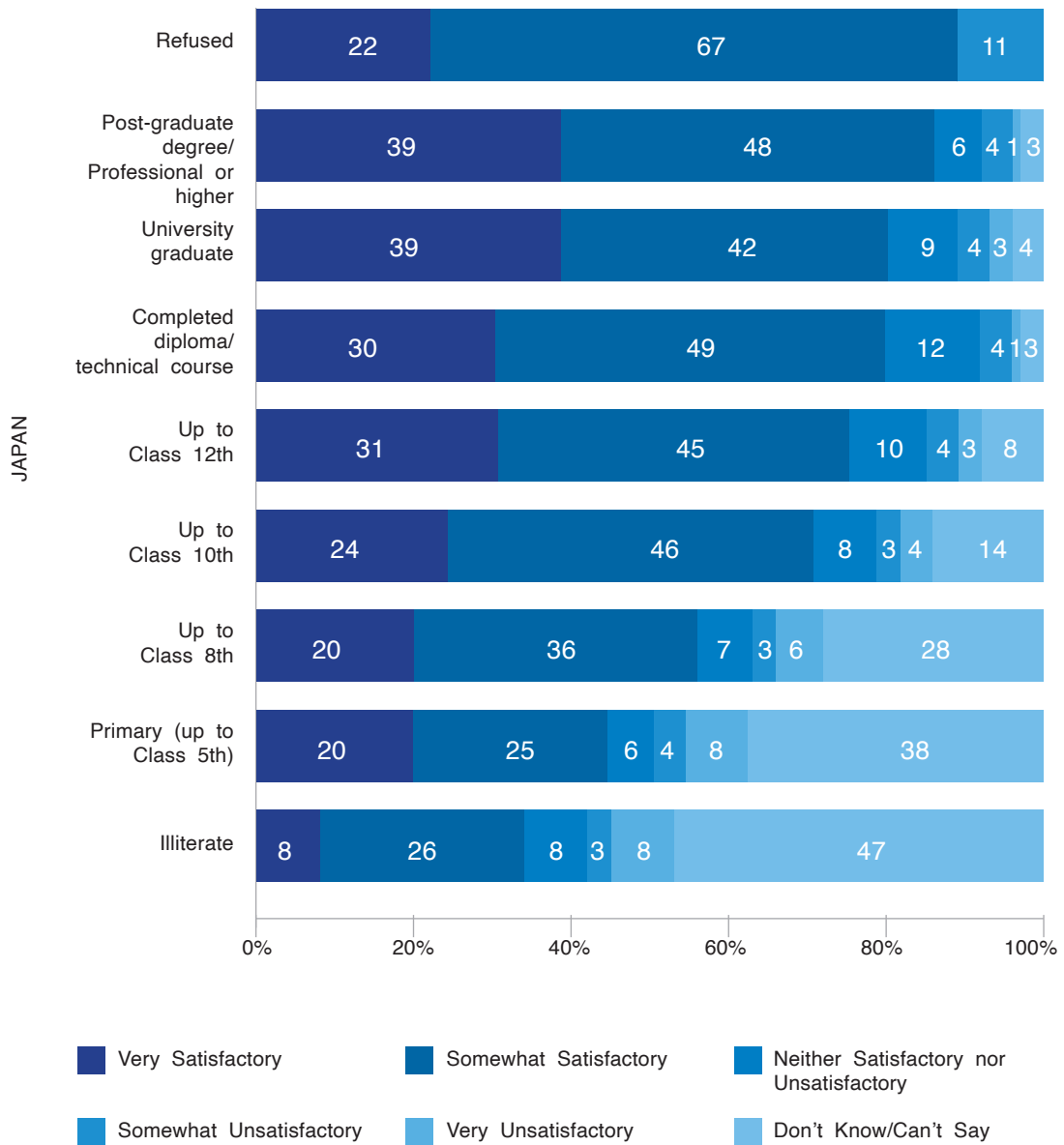
III. India and the Global Order

3.1. How satisfied are you with India's bilateral relationship with the following countries/groupings? (Education categories)

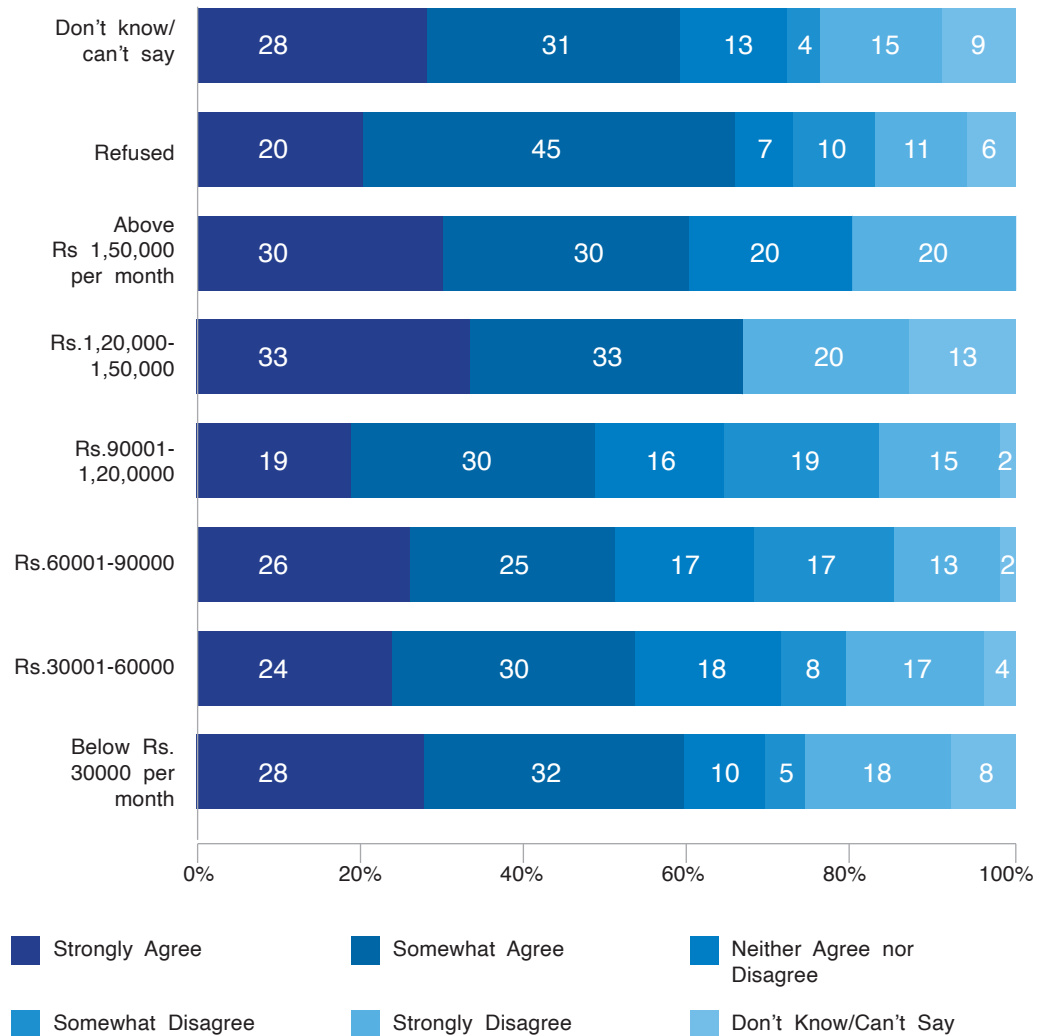




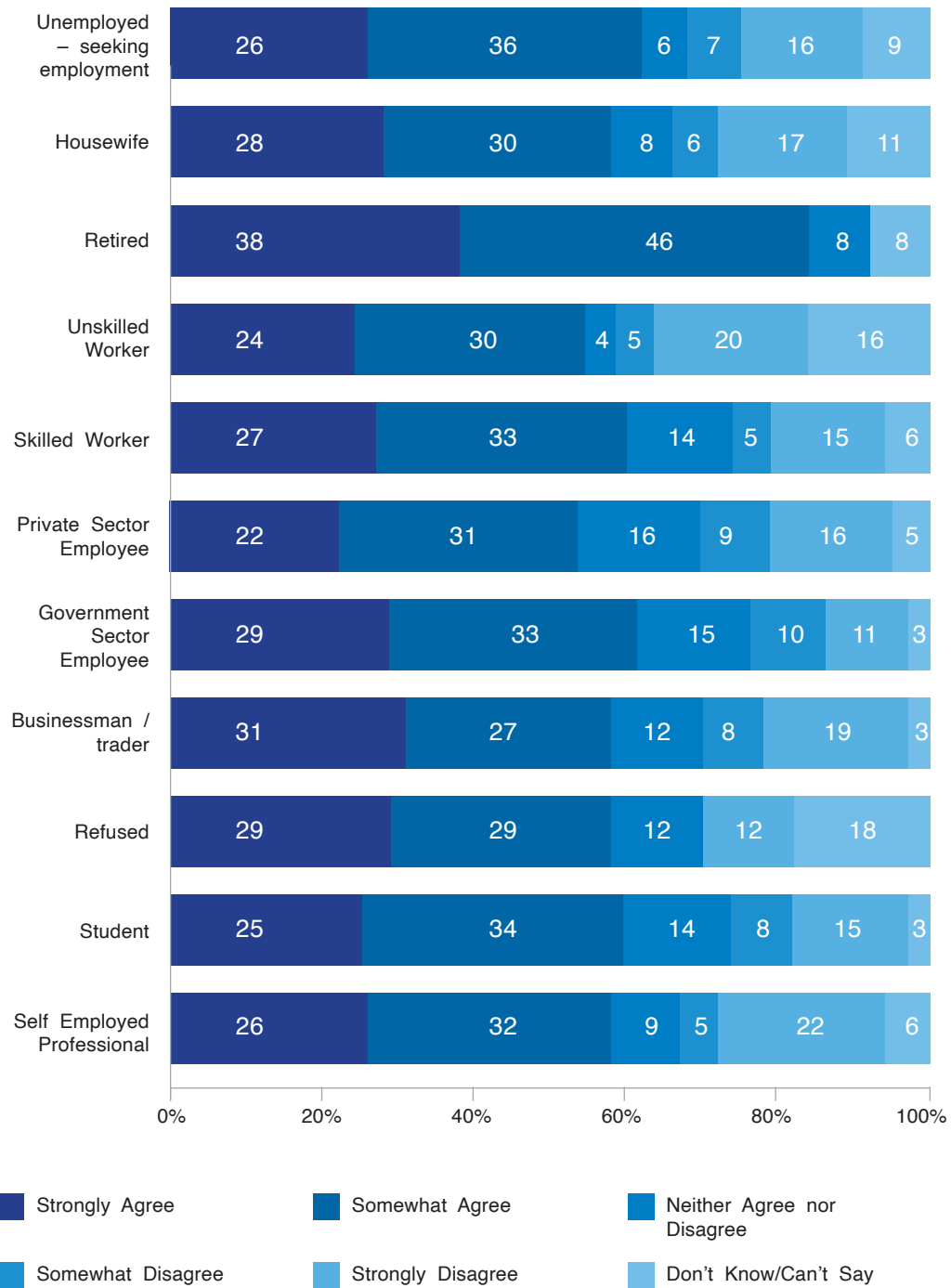
Appendices



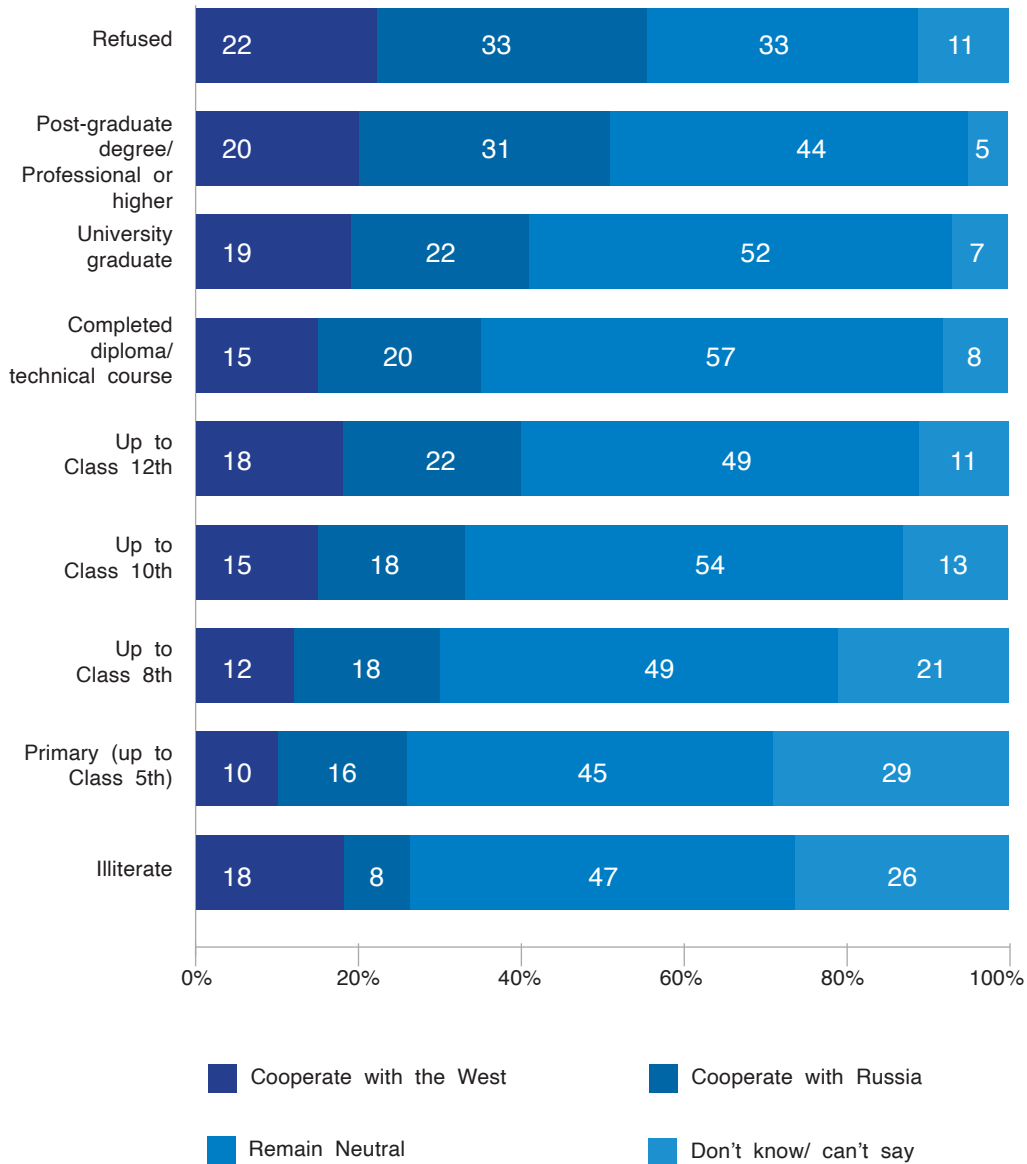
3.5. To what extent do you agree with this statement on India-China relations—India and China should boost economic engagement (Income and Education)



Appendices

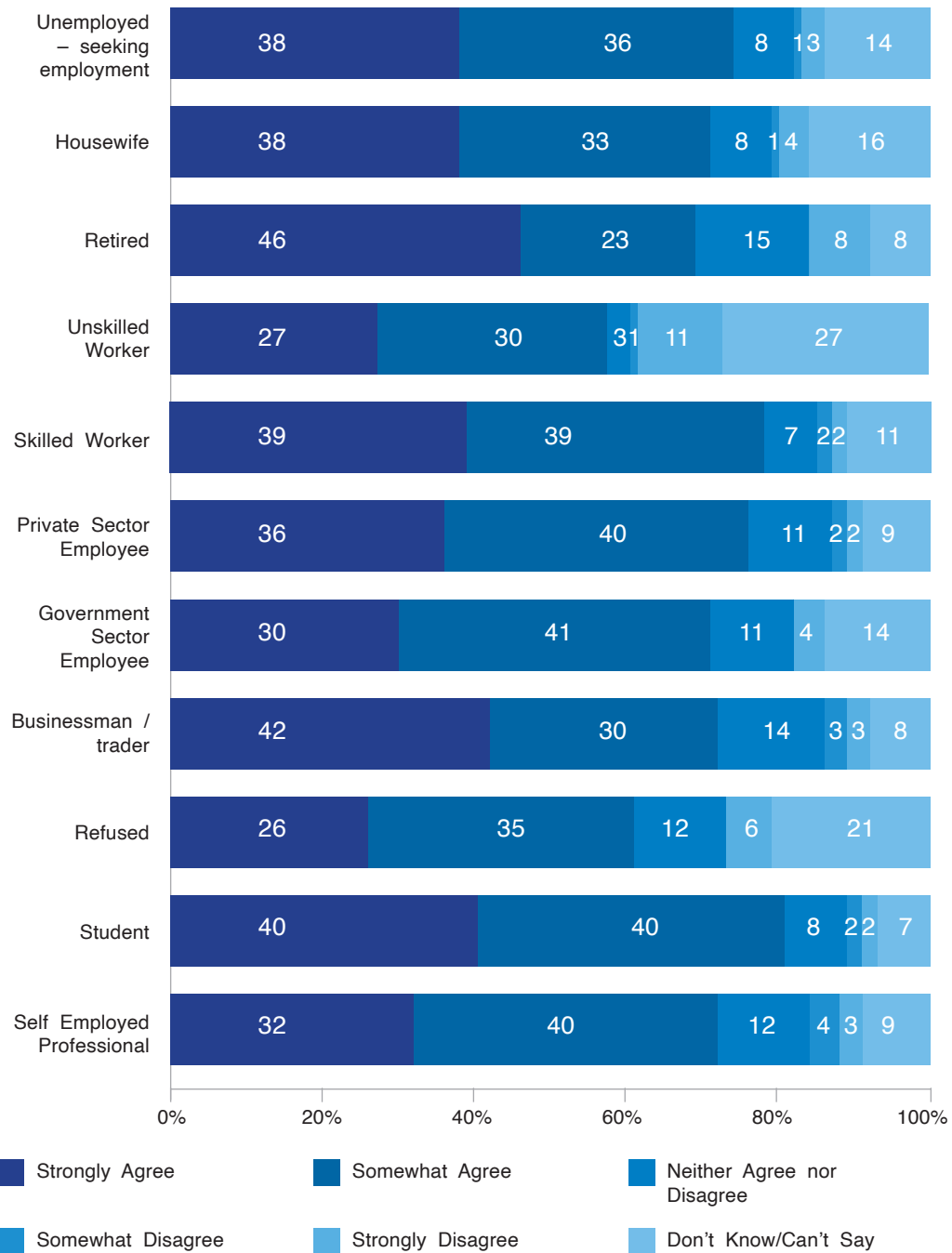


3.6. What should India's position be as tensions between the West (the US and Europe) and Russia continue to rise?



IV. India And The World Economic Order

4.3. To what extent do you agree with the following statements on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)? Statement-India's FTAs will increase your job opportunities and standard of living



D. Tables of Survey Results

1.1 How would you rate India for its foreign policy on an overall basis? (Single response)

Very Good	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very Poor	Don't Know/Can't Say
35	48	10	2	2	3

1.2 How concerned are you about the following major foreign policy challenges facing India? (Single response per option)

	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Neither Concerned nor Unconcerned	Somewhat Unconcerned	Not Concerned at all	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Border Conflict with China	47	37	5	2	7	2
Border Conflict with Pakistan	51	29	5	2	11	2
Terrorism	62	26	5	2	4	1
Climate Change	51	34	7	3	3	2
Cyber Security	55	30	6	2	4	3
Post-COVID economic slowdown/ Supply chain disruptions	55	31	6	3	4	1
Global Pandemics (like COVID-19)	63	27	4	2	3	1
Unreformed Multilateral Organisations	45	35	8	3	3	6

1.3 What issues should multilateral organisations prioritise in the post-pandemic world? Please rank the top 3 in order of importance.

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3
Climate Change	17	12	12
Supply Chain Disruptions	5	4	5
Debt Crisis	11	6	7
Food Security	27	16	13
Healthcare and Pandemic Preparedness	30	14	12
Economic Meltdown	20	10	10
Terrorism and Terror Financing	13	7	8
Energy Security	10	8	9
Armed Conflicts	7	3	4

1.4 How effective are the following multilateral organisations/ platforms in managing the challenges mentioned in the previous question? (Single response per option)

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Somewhat Ineffective	Very Ineffective	Don't Know/ Can't Say
International Monetary Fund	37	39	7	2	3	12
World Bank	40	39	6	2	3	10
World Health Organization	49	35	6	2	2	6
World Trade Organization	39	39	8	2	3	9
United Nations	35	41	8	2	3	11
G20 (Group of 20 Countries)	37	37	7	2	3	14
Non-Aligned Movement	24	36	10	3	3	24
Financial Action Task Force	30	35	8	3	3	21
BRICS (Brazil, India, Russia, China, South Africa)	32	38	8	2	3	17

1.5 How has China's rise affected the workings of important multilateral organisations? (Single response)

Impacted Positively	21
Somewhat Positive	26
Neither Positive nor Negative	11
Somewhat Negative	14
Impacted Negatively	18
Don't Know/Can't Say	10

1.6 India is trying to secure a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. Do you personally feel that this is an important goal for India? (Single response)

Strongly Agree	64
Somewhat Agree	24
Neither Agree nor Disagree	4
Somewhat Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	2
Don't Know/ Can't Say	4

1.7 To what extent do you agree that India has effectively used its G20 presidency to address its concerns? (Single response)

Strongly Agree	51
Somewhat Agree	32
Neither Agree nor Disagree	5
Somewhat Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	2
Don't Know/Can't Say	8

**1.8 Which issues has India prioritised during its G20 presidency?
Please choose an option for each of the statements below.
(Single response per option)**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
LiFE - Lifestyle for Environment (a global movement led by India)	54	30	6	2	2	6
Debt Relief	41	38	7	3	3	8
Digital Governance	49	33	6	2	2	8
Measures against Terror and Terror Financing	51	31	6	2	3	7
Green (Energy) Transition (shifting towards sustainable economic growth by using renewable energy, rather than fossil fuels)	53	30	6	2	2	7
Healthcare Preparedness	59	29	5	2	1	4
Global Food Security	54	32	6	2	1	5
Trade and Investment	48	35	7	2	2	6
Accessing Financial Services	43	35	9	2	2	9
Gender Empowerment	42	34	9	3	3	9
Reformed Multilateralism	39	35	8	3	2	13

1.9 India has been visiting G7 summits as a guest country since 2019. Should it be offered a permanent invitee status in G7? (Single response)

Strongly Agree	58
Somewhat Agree	25
Neither Agree nor Disagree	5
Somewhat Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	2
Don't Know/ Can't Say	8

1.10 In your opinion, how should India engage with other countries? (Single response)

Global cooperation through Multilateral platforms	47
Cooperation with like-minded countries through Minilateral platforms	21
Bilateral engagements	15
No engagement at all	2
Don't Know/Can't Say	15

2.1. For each of the following neighbouring countries, please indicate how much you trust them. (Single response per option)

	Trust Completely	Trust Somewhat	Neither Trust nor Distrust	Distrust Somewhat	Distrust Completely	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Pakistan	2	8	6	10	71	3
Afghanistan	3	25	11	15	41	5
Bangladesh	6	40	15	11	24	4
Sri Lanka	12	49	14	8	13	4
Bhutan	16	47	12	6	11	8
Nepal	23	49	11	5	8	4
Maldives	17	45	12	6	9	11
Thailand	17	46	11	5	10	11
Myanmar	13	41	14	7	11	14

2.2. How do you assess the status of India’s bilateral relationship with each of the following neighbouring countries? (Single response per option)

	Very Good	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very Poor	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Pakistan	2	7	14	24	50	3
Afghanistan	3	22	23	25	20	7
Bangladesh	5	37	26	15	10	7
Sri Lanka	10	46	25	8	5	6
Bhutan	11	48	19	7	4	11
Nepal	19	48	17	6	4	6
Maldives	12	46	19	7	4	12
Thailand	14	46	18	6	3	13
Myanmar	9	41	21	8	4	17

2.3. How do you assess India's interaction with these South Asian countries in the last five years? (Single response per option)

	Increased Significantly	Increased Somewhat	Remain Unchanged	Decreased Somewhat	Decreased Significantly	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Pakistan	4	13	29	21	26	7
Afghanistan	3	25	28	22	10	12
Bangladesh	5	37	29	12	6	11
Sri Lanka	10	45	23	8	4	10
Bhutan	10	44	21	7	3	15
Nepal	16	46	18	7	3	10
Maldives	11	42	21	8	2	16
Thailand	13	42	20	6	3	16
Myanmar	9	38	22	8	3	20

2.4.A Please let me know if you are aware of the following regional platforms/groupings. (Single response per option)

Regional Platforms	Aware	Not aware
South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)	41	59
Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)	25	75
Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)	17	83
Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)	18	82
Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN)	27	73

2.4.B Which of the following regional platforms/groupings should India prefer to use for engaging with its neighbours? Please rank the top 3 in order of importance.

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3
South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)	30	7	3
Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)	11	7	4
Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)	5	5	4
Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)	5	6	4
Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN)	13	7	4

2.5. To what extent do you agree that India’s connectivity with its neighbours has been adequate in each of the following sectors? (Single response per option)

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Trade and Economy	51	34	6	2	2	5
Defence and Security	50	35	6	2	2	5
People-to-people and transport connectivity	49	37	6	2	2	4
Political	39	37	8	4	5	7
Financial Sector	38	40	10	3	2	7
Energy	45	37	9	2	1	6
Technology	53	33	6	2	1	5

2.6. To what extent do you agree that India's development-related cooperation with its neighbours is adequate? (Single response)

Strongly Agree	43
Somewhat Agree	40
Neither Agree nor Disagree	7
Somewhat Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	2
Don't Know/Can't Say	6

2.7. Here is a list of a few South Asian countries that are facing economic difficulties. To what extent would you support India assisting them? (Single response per option)

Country	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Neither Support nor Oppose	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Sri Lanka	36	44	10	3	3	4
Pakistan	5	18	11	13	48	5
Bangladesh	12	44	14	11	14	5
Nepal	27	49	10	5	5	4

3.1. How satisfied are you with India's bilateral relationship with the following countries/groupings? (Single response per option)

Countries	Very Satisfactory	Somewhat Satisfactory	Neither Satisfactory nor Unsatisfactory	Somewhat Unsatisfactory	Very Unsatisfactory	Don't Know/ Can't Say
US	40	41	8	2	3	6
Australia	30	46	9	3	2	10
Japan	31	44	9	4	3	9
Russia	39	38	8	3	3	9
United Kingdom	26	42	10	4	3	15
France	27	43	11	3	2	14
EU (European Union)	21	42	12	4	3	18
China	7	22	14	17	32	8
UAE	19	41	10	6	5	19
Indonesia	18	45	14	4	3	16
Brazil	18	44	13	4	3	18
South Africa	20	46	12	4	3	15
ASEAN (Association of SouthEast Asian Nations)	18	43	12	3	2	22

3.2. In the next ten years, how likely are each of the following countries/groupings to become India's leading partners? (Single response per option)

Countries	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neither Likely or Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Don't Know/ Can't Say
USA	42	39	7	3	2	7
Australia	30	47	8	3	3	9
Japan	33	43	9	3	3	9
Russia	39	38	8	4	3	8
UK	27	41	10	4	4	14
France	27	43	10	4	3	13
EU (European Union)	22	40	12	4	4	18
China	9	25	14	13	30	9
UAE	21	39	11	6	5	18
Indonesia	19	43	13	5	5	15
Brazil	19	43	12	5	4	17
South Africa	20	45	12	5	4	14
ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)	20	41	11	3	4	21

3.3. What stand should India take if tensions between the US & China increase? (Single response)

Cooperate with the US	44
Cooperate with China	4
Remain Neutral	44
Don't Know / Can't Say	8

3.4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements when you think of US-China relations and the impacts for India? (Single response per option)

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
As tensions increase between India and China, the US should actively support India (S 1)	59	26	6	3	2	4
Worsening US-China relations negatively impact India's ability to diplomatically engage with multilateral organisations (S 2)	40	39	8	3	3	7
India and the US should strengthen QUAD against emerging challenges (S 3)	52	28	6	2	2	10
Technology and information sharing between the US and India are crucial to discourage Chinese aggression (S 4)	50	32	6	2	3	7
The trade war between the US and China is economically beneficial for India (S 5)	34	35	10	5	8	8

3.5. To what extent do you agree with these statements on India-China relations? (Single response per option)

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
India and China should boost their economic engagement (S 1)	26	32	12	7	17	6
China's encroachments and border disputes with India have long-term implications for India's development goals and security (S 2)	41	36	8	3	4	8
India's trust in China has severely depleted following the Galwan clashes in 2020 (S 3)	52	28	8	3	3	6
China uses its influence in multilateral institutions to restrict India from promoting its interests (S 4)	47	32	7	3	3	8
Chinese debt trap and 'salami slicing' in India's neighbourhood are serious concerns for India (S 5)	61	25	5	2	2	5

3.6. What should India's position be as tensions between the West (the US and Europe) and Russia continue to rise? (Single response)

Cooperate with the West	17
Cooperate with Russia	21
Remain Neutral	51
Don't know/ Can't say	11
Strongly Disagree	5

3.7. To what extent do you agree with these statements about India–Russia relations? (Single response per option)

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
India should remain neutral in the Russia-Ukraine war (S 1)	53	27	9	3	3	5
India should look beyond Russia to diversify its defence partnership (S 2)	49	33	7	2	2	7
India's energy imports from Russia have controlled the fuel price rise in India (S 3)	42	32	9	4	5	8
Increasing closeness in China-Russia relations is a cause of worry for India (S 4)	46	30	9	4	5	6
Russia's invasion of Ukraine indicates the urgency of multilateral reforms (S 5)	38	37	10	3	2	10
India and Russia are increasingly diverging when choosing their strategic partners (S 6)	39	36	9	3	2	11

3.8. In view of the increasing tensions across the world, to what extent do you agree that the following organisations/groupings help promote India’s interests? (Single response per option)

Organisations	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
QUAD (US, India, Australia, Japan)	39	35	8	3	2	13
I2U2 (India, Israel, US, UAE)	31	36	9	3	2	19
India-France-Australia	31	39	10	3	2	15
India-Indonesia-Australia	28	40	11	3	2	16
India-Italy-Japan	28	39	11	3	3	16
IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa)	26	39	11	3	2	19
Colombo Security Conclave (India, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Mauritius)	27	36	10	3	3	21

4.1. How optimistic are you that India benefits from trade agreements with the following regions?

	Very Optimistic	Somewhat Optimistic	Neither Optimistic or Pessimistic	Somewhat Pessimistic	Very Pessimistic	Don't Know/ Can't Say
North America	32	41	9	3	4	11
Central and Latin America	22	42	11	4	4	17
Europe	28	41	11	4	3	13
Central Asia	23	43	13	3	3	15
Middle East and Northern Africa	19	40	14	4	4	19
Sub-Saharan Africa	16	38	15	4	5	22
East and Southeast Asia	20	43	13	3	4	17
Oceania	20	39	10	2	5	24

4.2. Which of the following economic frameworks might benefit India the most? (Single response)

RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership)	30
IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity)	18
CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership)	13
Don't Know/ Can't Say	39
Strongly Disagree	5
Don't Know/Can't Say	11

4.3. To what extent do you agree with the following statements on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)? Please choose an option for each of the statements below. (Single response per option)

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Can't Say
India's FTAs with the EU and UK are beneficial to the country (S 1)	37	36	8	2	2	15
India should relax the list of restricted commodities on its FTAs when trading with its neighbors (S 2)	33	38	9	3	5	12
FTAs supplement India's quest for self-reliance (S 3)	32	39	10	3	2	14
FTAs strengthen multilateral organisations (S 4)	33	38	9	2	3	15
India's FTAs will increase your job opportunities and standard of living (S 5)	38	37	9	2	3	11

4.4. Do you think the G7’s de-risking strategy against China is more beneficial to India than its decoupling strategy for India? (Single response)

Strongly Agree	40
Somewhat Agree	32
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9
Somewhat Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	5
Don't Know/Can't Say	11

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