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UTS:ACRI/BIDA Poll 2025

The Australia-China relationship: What do Australians think?

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The Australia-China Relations Institute (ACRI) is an independent, non-partisan research institute based at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). UTS:ACRI's mission is to inform Australia's engagement with China through substantive dialogue, and research and analysis grounded in scholarly rigour.

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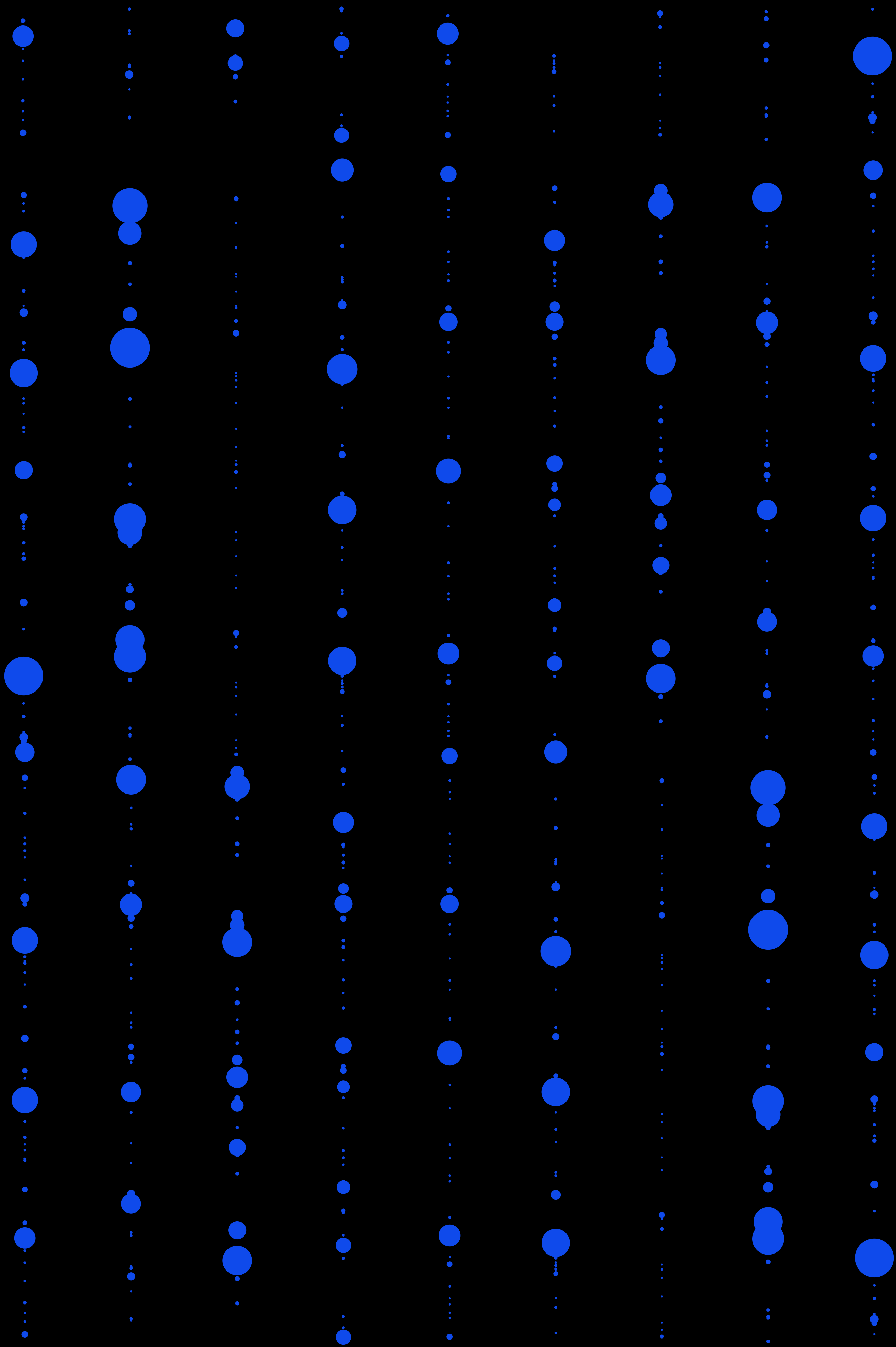

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Executive summary

The *UTS:ACRI/BIDA Poll 2025* offers the latest insights into how Australians understand and evaluate the evolving relationship with China. Entering its fifth year, the survey continues to track shifts in public sentiment across security, economic, political and social dimensions, revealing a more settled but still cautious national outlook.

This year's poll also introduces a new component examining the influences that shape Australians' views of China and of Australia-China relations, broadening the analytical scope beyond attitudes to include the sources and channels through which those attitudes are formed.

Findings are based on an online survey of 2,045 Australian adults conducted nationwide.

Key findings below.

1. Overall views on the Australia-China relationship

- **Building stronger connections and ties, and a strong relationship:** Seven in ten Australians (71 percent) believe that Australia should continue to build stronger connections and ties, and a stronger relationship with China. Support for the sentiment had previously remained virtually unchanged from 2021 to 2024, hovering around 61 percent, before a pronounced rise of 10 points in 2025, the first clear upward break in the five-year trend.
- **Concerns:** Concern about Australia's relationship with China has fallen to its lowest point in five years, though the sentiment continues to be held by a slim majority of Australians. In 2025, just over half (54 percent) expressed concern, a decline of 10 points from 2024 (64 percent) and 20 points since 2021 (74 percent).
- **Benefits:** Nearly three-quarters of Australians (72 percent) recognise the benefits of the relationship with China, a marked 10-point increase from 2024 (62 percent). Agreement had remained relatively stable between 2021 and 2024, fluctuating between 58 and 63 percent, before this clear upward shift in 2025.
- **Mistrust of the Chinese government:** The proportion of Australians expressing mistrust of the Chinese government has eased, falling from 76 percent in 2021 to 64 percent in 2025, a 12-point decline. While mistrust is still widespread, this marks a softening in sentiment. The decrease was gradual between 2021 and 2024 (71 percent), before a seven-point fall in 2025.
- **The Australian government's management of China relations:** Satisfaction with the Australian government's management of the China relationship has risen steadily, climbing from 32 percent in 2021 to 41 percent in 2025, a nine-point gain. The most significant improvement occurred between 2022 and 2023, with a five-point rise (34 to 39 percent), followed by smaller increases in subsequent years.
- **A harder Australian government line on China:** Support for a harder government line on China has softened over time, falling from 63 percent in 2021 to 51 percent in 2025 – its lowest level in five years. While views remained fairly steady until 2024, an eight-point drop in 2025 marks a clear easing in sentiment. Fewer Australians now favour a tougher stance, with more adopting neutral or undecided positions.
- **Responsibility for improving the Australia-China relationship:** Views on responsibility for improving the Australia-China relationship were stable from 2021 to 2024 before shifting modestly in 2025. This year, agreement that both countries share responsibility rose from 79 percent in 2024 to 84 percent, a five-year high, while the view that China alone is responsible fell 11 points, from 48 percent in 2024 to 37 percent in 2025. Belief that Australia alone bears responsibility remained steady at around 31 percent.
- **Future outlook:** Expectations for short- to medium-term improvement in relations between Australia and China have become slightly more positive, though most Australians remain cautious. Agreement that the relationship will improve over the next three years slowly rose from 27 percent in 2021 to 34 percent in 2025, while disagreement fell from 30 to 21 percent. Neutral views continued to dominate, hovering in the mid-40 percent range. Overall, optimism has edged upward, but the public remains largely in a wait-and-see stance.

2. Politics and political communication

- **Political party best placed to handle Australia's China policy:** Since 2022, trust in the Australian Labor Party to manage Australia's China policy has strengthened, rising from parity with the Liberal/National Coalition (35 percent versus 36 percent) to a consistent lead (49 percent versus 29 percent in 2023; 40 percent versus 34 percent in 2024; 48 percent versus 29 percent in 2025), signalling sustained, if qualified, approval of Labor's approach.
- **China policy and electoral impact:** When asked after each federal election, an increasingly larger share of Australians said the government's management of China policy influenced their vote, rising from 27 percent (2022 election) to 37 percent (2025 election), while those saying it had no impact fell from 56 percent to 24 percent.

  Although based on only two survey points, this shift suggests that foreign policy may be gaining modest importance in voting decisions.
- **Communication over areas of disagreement:** Two-thirds (66 percent) continue to prefer that the government communicate disputes with China privately through diplomatic channels rather than publicly, indicating broad support for a restrained approach.

3. Military and security

- **China as a security threat:** Agreement that China poses a security threat to Australia decreased by five points from 71 percent in 2024 to 66 percent in 2025, the lowest recorded in the five-year series, after three years of stability in the low 70s. The shift points to a mild easing in perceptions of threat, though about two-thirds of Australians continue to see China as a security concern.
- **The possibility of military conflict with China within three years:** Views on the likelihood of military conflict with China remained steady, with about half of Australians seeing it as a serious possibility from 2023 (51 percent), when the question was first asked, to 2025 (50 percent). Views on the prospect of conflict seem to have consolidated, suggesting a durable sense of strategic risk within the public mindset.
- **Support for an increase in Australia's defence spending:** Agreement that Australia is right to increase defence spending rose to a series high of 72 percent in 2025, an eight-point increase on the previous year after several years of decline. A related question introducing explicit trade-offs, such as cuts to health or education spending, showed lower but steadily increasing support over time (50 percent in 2023; 53 percent in 2024; 55 percent in 2025).

  Although the gap between the two measures has varied between 11 and 17 points, both indicate a gradual strengthening of public acceptance for higher defence spending as a sustained national priority, even when balanced against competing budget pressures.
- **AUKUS:** Agreement that acquiring nuclear-powered submarines under AUKUS will help keep Australia secure from a military threat from China rose from 48 percent in 2024 to 50 percent in 2025, continuing an upward trend since 2023 (44 percent). Neutrality eased to 26 percent after peaking in 2024 (31 percent), while disagreement declined from 33 percent in 2023 to 24 percent in 2025.

  A new 2025 question found limited support for reducing AUKUS involvement to ease tensions with China (25 percent agree, 46 percent disagree). At the same time, 68 percent supported using AUKUS to deepen cooperation with the US and the UK on advanced technologies such as cyber, AI and quantum computing under Pillar II.

  Together, the data point to a gradual but still qualified strengthening of support for AUKUS.
- **Forming trade and security blocs that exclude China:** Agreement that Australia should form blocs deliberately excluding China fell from 43 percent in 2024 to 31 percent in 2025, the lowest level in five years, while disagreement rose to 32 percent and neutrality to 37 percent. The results suggest a softening in support for exclusionary groupings, though around one-third of Australians still back the idea.
- **South China Sea:** In 2025, about three-quarters of Australians (72 percent) viewed China's actions in the South China Sea as a threat to Australia's interests, while 68 percent agreed Australia should support backing Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines against China's maritime activities and 65 percent backed joint patrols with partners including the US, Japan and the Philippines. The results show strong public backing for regional cooperation and a high baseline of concern over China's maritime behaviour.

- **Conflict over Taiwan:** In 2025, 37 percent of Australians supported sending troops to defend Taiwan if attacked by China, a level that has remained stable within a narrow 35 to 39 percent range since 2022. Neutral and opposing views divided the remainder of respondents in roughly equal measure, suggesting a settled but cautious public stance on direct military involvement.

  In a hypothetical US-China conflict over Taiwan, 50 percent favoured neutrality and 47 percent supported military assistance to the US, a near-even balance that reflects a return to the more cautious pattern of 2021 after several years of fluctuation.

  Overall, the data indicate enduring ambivalence rather than polarisation, with Australians more inclined toward neutrality or indirect support than to endorsing combat operations.
- **Espionage:** Concern that Chinese espionage is more troubling than that of other countries fell from 59 percent in 2024 to 53 percent in 2025, reflecting a moderate shift toward more neutral or less alarmed views. Broader comparisons show concern about espionage by China (66 percent) remains high and close to that for Russia (69 percent), both well above concern about the US (41 percent).
- **Foreign interference:** Agreement that foreign interference from China is more concerning than interference from other countries declined from 58 percent in 2024 to 54 percent in 2025, continuing a gradual easing trend from 67 percent in 2022. A separate set of comparative items shows that concern about interference from China and Russia has levelled around 64 percent, while concern about the US has risen steadily by 17 points – from 37 percent in 2021 to 54 percent in 2025 – narrowing perceived differences among the three.

4. The United States

- **Balancing relations with the US and China:** In 2025, 65 percent of Australians agreed that the country can maintain good relations with both Washington and Beijing, the highest level recorded, while neutrality fell from 27 percent in 2024 to 19 percent and disagreement rose slightly to 15 percent.

  A majority (51 percent) continued to believe China will eventually force Australia to choose between the two powers, while the proportion expecting similar pressure from the US increased steadily from 39 percent in 2021 to 57 percent in 2025 – an 18-point rise and the first instance in which perceived pressure from Washington exceeded that from Beijing.
- **Risk of conflict under the second Trump presidency:** Nearly two-thirds of Australians (64 percent) agreed that the country is more likely to be drawn into a conflict with China under President Donald Trump, with 22 percent neutral and 14 percent disagreeing. The result indicates a broad perception that US leadership under Trump increases regional tension.
- **Independent policymaking:** A new 2025 question found clear agreement (77 percent) that Australia should make its China policy decisions independently, even when they differ from US preferences. Seventeen percent were neutral and six percent disagreed, showing strong support for maintaining autonomy in foreign policy.
- **Regional influence:** Agreement that the US has more influence than China in Australia's regional neighbourhood declined from 65 percent in 2021 to 38 percent in 2025, a 27-point drop overall, including a 17-point fall between 2024 and 2025. Over the same period, disagreement rose from nine to 29 percent and neutrality from 26 to 33 percent, suggesting a significant reassessment of relative regional influence rather than a simple reversal of perceived dominance.
- **Economic coercion:** Between 2021 and 2025, agreement that China is willing to use trade and investment ties to punish Australia over political disagreements declined gradually from 77 to 70 percent.

  Over the same period, views of the US shifted significantly, with agreement rising from 36 percent in 2024 to 72 percent in 2025 – a 36-point increase and the largest year-on-year change in the dataset, overtaking China for the first time on this metric.

  The reversal suggests a rapid reassessment of public perceptions of economic leverage and coercive capacity, likely reflecting heightened sensitivity to US actions in the global trade and security environment.

5. Trade and investment

- **Economic overreliance:** Agreement that Australia is too economically reliant on China declined steadily across the series – from 80 percent in 2021 to 66 percent in 2025 – the lowest level recorded. Disagreement rose gradually from three to 10 percent and neutrality from 16 to 24 percent. The five-year pattern shows a clear, consistent easing in concern, even as two-thirds of Australians still view reliance as excessive.

- **Economic risk and opportunity:** Agreement that Australia's economic relationship with China is more of a risk than an opportunity fell consistently from 53 percent in 2021 to 39 percent in 2025 – a 14-point decrease and a five-year low. Disagreement increased from 20 to 26 percent and neutrality from 27 to 35 percent, indicating a sustained reduction in perceptions of economic risk.
- **Economic contribution:** Views of engagement with China remained broadly positive but showed moderate fluctuation. Agreement that close engagement supports prosperity decreased from 63 percent in 2021 to 54 percent in 2024, before rising slightly to 59 percent in 2025.

  Agreement that trade with China creates jobs stayed stable within a narrow 61 to 65 percent range.

  Support for Australian companies pursuing business opportunities with China rose steadily from 61 percent in 2021 to 70 percent in 2025, reflecting growing endorsement of commercial ties.
- **Trade agreements (ChAFTA and the CPTPP):** Agreement that the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA) has been beneficial increased from 53 percent in 2024 to 60 percent in 2025 – a five-year high, up from 52 percent in 2021.

  Support for China's bid to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) rose gradually from 31 percent in 2022 to 38 percent in 2025, while support for Taiwan's bid remained consistently higher, albeit declining slightly from 66 to 61 percent. The roughly 20-point gap between support for China's accession and Taiwan's accession indicates continued caution toward China's participation despite generally favourable views of expanded trade frameworks.
- **Tourism:** Perceptions of Chinese tourism fluctuated modestly but remained positive. Agreement that Chinese tourists provide a major economic benefit ranged between 67 and 74 percent, returning to the five-year high of 74 percent in 2025.

  Support for maintaining Australia's attractiveness to Chinese tourists rose from 58 to 69 percent between 2024 and 2025, an 11-point single-year increase and the highest result in the five-year series.
- **Education:** Attitudes toward Chinese international students' economic contribution have been stable, with agreement remaining between 67 and 76 percent since 2021 and standing at 69 percent in 2025.

  Concern that universities are too financially reliant on Chinese students stayed consistently high, ranging from 73 to 81 percent and reaching 75 percent in 2025.

  The overall trend shows steady dual recognition of economic benefit and dependency, with little variation over five years.
- **Foreign investment:** Sentiment toward Chinese investment remained stable but slightly less negative over time. Agreement that such investment is more detrimental than beneficial hovered between 48 and 51 percent from 2021 to 2024 before easing to 47 percent in 2025. Disagreement rose to 19 percent and neutrality to 35 percent.

  Agreement that Chinese investment has created jobs remained steady within 49 to 53 percent, ending at 50 percent in 2025.

  The data reflect long-term ambivalence rather than marked change.
- **Port of Darwin:** Support for government action on the Port of Darwin increased modestly before rising markedly after the Albanese government announced it intended to terminate the lease. Agreement that the government should force Landbridge to sell the port rose from 60 percent in 2022 to 64 percent in 2023 and 62 percent in 2024, before climbing to 75 percent in 2025. The data show sustained majority support for restoring national control over strategic infrastructure, consolidating after government intervention.
- **Critical minerals:** Support for limiting foreign investment in Australia's critical minerals sector rose steadily from 58 percent in 2023 to 66 percent in 2025. Agreement to specifically restrict Chinese investment remained higher but stable, moving slightly from 73 to 74 percent. The parallel trends since 2023 indicate growing support for tighter oversight across all investors, with heightened caution toward China's involvement.

- **Residential real estate:** Concern about Chinese influence in the housing market remained high but fluctuated within a moderate range. Agreement that Chinese buyers drive up housing prices fell from 82 percent in 2021 to 73 percent in 2023, rose to 80 percent in 2024, and eased to 76 percent in 2025. Agreement that Chinese investors have negatively affected the rental market stayed within 68 to 74 percent, ending at 69 percent in 2025. The five-year trend points to persistent but gradually softening concern, likely shaped more by wider affordability pressures and domestic market dynamics than by changes in the bilateral relationship.

6. Society

- **Political discourse and social cohesion:** In 2025, 54 percent of Australians agreed that political debates about China are increasing divisions within society, with 32 percent neutral and 13 percent disagreeing. Although new in 2025, the result indicates moderate concern about domestic polarisation on China issues.

  Agreement that Chinese government influence undermines Australian values stood at 44 percent in 2025, down slightly from 46 percent in 2024 and 48 percent in 2022-23, indicating little substantive change over time and a broadly steady level of concern.

- **Democratic values and the economic relationship:** In 2025, 43 percent agreed that being a close economic partner with China is compatible with Australia's democratic values, while 24 percent disagreed and 33 percent were neutral. With no prior trend data, the 2025 findings point to a cautiously mixed view – more Australians see compatibility than not, but a substantial share remain uncertain.

- **Australian-Chinese communities:** Between 2021 and 2024, agreement that political tensions with China negatively affect Australians of Chinese origin declined from 63 to 49 percent, while neutrality rose from 27 to 37 percent and disagreement from 10 to 14 percent, indicating a gradual easing of concern. In 2025, a reframed question on discrimination risk found 58 percent concerned, 26 percent neutral, and 16 percent disagreeing, broadly consistent with earlier awareness of social pressures.

  In 2025, six in 10 Australians (60 percent) agreed that Australians of Chinese origin play an important role in fostering bilateral understanding (30 percent neutral, 10 percent disagree).

  Eighty-two percent said their views of the Chinese government are separate from their views of people of Chinese origin, with four percent disagreeing, the strongest consensus finding in the 2025 survey.

  Agreement that Australians of Chinese origin could be influenced by Beijing to undermine Australia's interests remained relatively stable across the five years, rising from 39 percent in 2021 to around 43 percent in 2023 and 24 before easing to 38 percent in 2025. Disagreement increased to 28 percent in 2025, but these shifts are modest and within normal sampling variation. Overall, concern persists: around four in ten Australians continue to view some degree of Chinese government influence on Chinese-Australian communities as possible.

- **Human rights policy:** Support for imposing sanctions on Chinese officials or entities involved in human rights violations remained consistently high and stable across the series – 65 percent in 2022, 68 percent in 2023 to 2024 and 66 percent in 2025.

  A new 2025 question found a large majority (77 percent) supported Australia working with other democracies to hold China accountable for abuses in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong (17 percent neutral, six percent disagree), showing strong alignment with cooperative approaches to human rights enforcement.

- **Personal safety and travel perceptions:** Concern about arbitrary detention when travelling to China eased from 73 percent in 2024 to 65 percent in 2025, the lowest level recorded. Earlier readings ranged between 66 and 72 percent from 2021 to 23, indicating fluctuations within a high band rather than a continuous decline. Despite the moderation, roughly two-thirds of Australians still view arbitrary detention as a credible risk when considering travel to China.

7. University and research

- **Academic freedom concerns:** Agreement that Australian university ties with China compromise freedom of speech declined from a high of 50 percent in 2022 to 44 percent, reflecting a five-year low.

  In a new 2025 question, 58 percent agreed that Australian universities can collaborate with Chinese institutions while protecting academic freedom if proper safeguards are in place, with 28 percent neutral and 14 percent disagreeing. The result indicates broad but conditional support for structured engagement.

- **Research collaboration – General:** Agreement that academic partnerships with China make Australia more competitive internationally increased from 48 percent in 2021 to 58 percent in 2025, a five-year high.

  Support for continuing joint research projects rose slightly from 61 percent in 2022 to 63 percent in 2025, following a temporary dip in 2024 (54 percent).

- **Research collaboration – Science:** Agreement that collaboration between Australian and Chinese scientists benefits Australia rose from 64 percent in 2021 to 72 percent in 2025, with similar support (73 percent) for maintaining individual research connections. Over the five-year period, views of Australia-China scientific cooperation have remained generally positive, with minor year-to-year variation but an overall upward trajectory.

8. Competition and cooperation

- **Regional partnerships to counter China's influence:** Agreement that building closer relationships with Southeast Asian nations is beneficial for countering China's influence was 68 percent in 2023 and 71 percent in both 2024 and 2025.

  Support for engagement with Pacific Island nations rose from 74 percent in 2023 to 77 percent in 2025, the highest level recorded in the three-year series.

  These results show consistently strong endorsement of regional cooperation, with only minor year-to-year variation.

- **Cooperation on global and regional issues:** Agreement that working with China on global issues such as climate change and global health is beneficial increased from 69 percent in 2022 to 78 percent in 2025 – a nine-point rise and the highest level since data collection began.

  Support for regional cooperation on issues such as ending malaria in the Pacific followed a similar path, rising from 69 percent in 2024 to 78 percent in 2025.

  The data indicates broadening confidence that collaboration with China on transnational challenges can complement, rather than contradict, strategic competition.

- **Cooperation on technology and governance:** In 2025, 70 percent agreed that Australia should work with China on developing low-emissions technologies such as green hydrogen and green steel even when political tensions exist.

  Sixty percent supported cooperation on international artificial intelligence safety rules and digital governance.

  These single-year findings show substantial openness to technical collaboration, accompanied by more caution where governance or security implications are greater.

9. Influences shaping views on China and Australia-China relations

- **Most influential group shaping views on China:** In 2025, most Australians (55 percent) said their views of China are shaped mainly by the Chinese government, including its leadership and political system.

  Smaller shares nominated Australians of Chinese heritage (12 percent), Chinese citizens (nine percent), Chinese companies such as Huawei, TikTok, or Alibaba (five percent), and Chinese state media (two percent). Seventeen percent selected 'other'.

  The findings indicate that perceptions are anchored primarily to views of the Chinese government, with other influences playing a secondary and more complementary role.

- **Broader sources influencing overall views of China:** Traditional media, including newspapers, television and radio, were the most frequently cited influences on Australians' overall views of China (29 percent).

  Personal interactions with people of Chinese heritage (18 percent) followed, then social media (14 percent) and information from friends or family and academic or professional experience (both 13 percent). Travel in China was cited by 11 percent, and two percent selected 'other'.

  Traditional media therefore play a leading role in shaping attitudes, with other informational and interpersonal sources contributing to a more diffuse pattern of influence.

- **Information sources on Australia-China relations:** When asked which sources they rely on most for news about Australia-China relations, 31 percent of respondents cited public broadcasters such as ABC and SBS.

Nine Entertainment media were selected by 14 percent, international outlets other than Chinese state media by 13 percent, and other Australian commercial outlets such as Seven Network, Network Ten or commercial radio by 13 percent.

News Corp Australia outlets were mentioned by 12 percent, social media by 11 percent, Chinese state media by two percent and Chinese-language media in Australia by one percent. Three percent nominated other outlets.

Public broadcasters were the most commonly relied-on source overall, ahead of commercial and international media, indicating their relatively prominent position in how Australians access information on the bilateral relationship.

- **Social media platforms used for information on Australia-China relations:** Among respondents who used social media for news on Australia-China relations, Facebook was the most cited platform (49 percent), followed by TikTok (19 percent) and X (formerly Twitter) (16 percent). Smaller shares used Instagram (seven percent), YouTube (three percent), WeChat (three percent) or Reddit (two percent). Three percent named other platforms such as Spotify, Substack, Bluesky, Xiaohongshu (RedNote) and LinkedIn.

Introduction

The *UTS:ACRI/BIDA Poll 2025* provides the fifth consecutive annual snapshot of Australian public opinion on the Australia-China relationship. This year's findings show a pattern of gradual moderation in attitudes: concern and mistrust toward China have eased from earlier peaks but remain substantial, while support for engagement and recognition of mutual benefit have strengthened modestly. Australians appear to be adjusting to a more stable, less volatile phase in bilateral relations, though underlying caution remains evident.

The findings are based on an online survey of 2,045 Australian adults, designed to be nationally representative with sample sizes across states and territories proportionate to population (see Methodology for further information).

A majority of Australians remain concerned about the relationship with China, but the intensity of that concern has declined to its lowest level in five years. At the same time, agreement that Australia should continue to build stronger connections with China has reached its highest level in the series and recognition of the relationship's benefits has also increased. Satisfaction with the government's management of China policy has risen slightly, with small year-to-year changes indicating steady rather than substantial improvement. Support for a harder line on China has continued to fall, suggesting cautious public endorsement of the Albanese government's stabilisation approach.

Trust in the Australian Labor Party's management of China policy remains higher than for the Liberal/National Coalition, consolidating since 2022. The share of Australians saying China policy influenced their vote rose at the 2025 election, indicating a slight increase in the political salience of foreign policy. Most continue to prefer that disputes with Beijing be managed privately through diplomatic channels rather than publicly.

Perceptions of China as a security threat have softened slightly, even as around two-thirds of Australians continue to see it as a concern. Roughly half view military conflict with China within three years as a serious possibility, a figure largely unchanged since 2023. Support for higher defence spending reached its highest level in five years in 2025, following earlier fluctuation. Although headline support has strengthened, caution persists when fiscal trade-offs are made explicit, with backing for both measures trending gradually upward.

Taken together, these results point to a more stable but still qualified consensus in favour of increased defence investment.

Majorities support regional defence cooperation, including joint patrols in the South China Sea and assistance to Southeast Asian partners, reflecting strong public backing for coordinated regional responses to China's maritime activities. Support for AUKUS has risen modestly to around half the public, though views remain divided and overall sentiment qualified rather than strongly positive.

Concern about Chinese espionage has eased moderately over the past year but remains high overall and comparable to concern about Russia. Views on foreign interference show a similar pattern, with apprehension about China continuing to decline gradually while concern about the US has increased, narrowing the perceived gap among the major powers.

Views on Taiwan remain steady and cautious. Around one-third of Australians (37 percent) support sending troops if China attacked Taiwan, a proportion that has remained stable between 35 and 39 percent since 2022. In a hypothetical US-China conflict over Taiwan, 50 percent favoured neutrality and 47 percent supported military assistance to the US, marking a return to the more cautious balance of 2021 after several years of fluctuation. A majority, however, supported strengthening political and economic engagement with Taiwan even at the risk of increased tension with Beijing, suggesting Australians are more comfortable with diplomatic and economic support than direct military involvement.

Views of the US remain broadly favourable but increasingly qualified. Australians continue to express support for alliance-aligned initiatives such as AUKUS and regional defence cooperation, even as perceptions of US behaviour have become more critical. For the first time, more Australians said Washington (57 percent) than Beijing (51 percent) would ultimately force Australia to choose between them. Agreement that the US has more influence than China in Australia's regional neighbourhood has fallen sharply to 38 percent and perceptions of US economic coercion have risen markedly. Together, these results suggest growing scrutiny of US power and influence alongside continuing support for cooperative defence frameworks.

Confidence in maintaining good relations with both the US and China remains high and strong majorities support Australia making its own policy decisions even when these diverge from US preferences, indicating clear public backing for policy independence within the alliance framework. Views of the second Trump presidency are marked by concern, with concern about Australia's economic overreliance on China has declined steadily from 80 percent in 2021 to 66 percent in 2025, the lowest level in the series. Agreement that the economic relationship poses more of a risk than an opportunity has also fallen to a five-year low, while support for trade and business engagement has increased. Views of Chinese tourism and education remain broadly positive, tempered by continuing caution about dependence on these sectors.

Support for government control over strategic infrastructure such as the Port of Darwin remains consistently high and backing for limits on foreign investment in critical minerals has increased modestly. Concern about Chinese property investment remains widespread but has eased over time, shaped more by domestic housing affordability pressures than by developments in the bilateral relationship.

Within Australia, attitudes toward Chinese influence and social cohesion remain broadly stable. Concern that political debates about China increase divisions within society is moderate and most Australians clearly distinguish between views of the Chinese government and people of Chinese heritage. Large majorities recognise the positive role of Australians of Chinese origin in building understanding between the two countries, while concern that they could be mobilised by Beijing shows little change, with a sizeable minority continuing to hold this view, highlighting an ongoing attitudinal divide relevant to social cohesion.

Support for human rights measures remains consistently strong. Around two-thirds of Australians favour targeted sanctions on Chinese officials and entities implicated in abuses in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, while more than three-quarters support cooperation with other democracies to promote accountability. Concern about personal safety when travelling to China has moderated slightly but remains elevated, with about two-thirds still viewing arbitrary detention as a credible risk.

Public attitudes toward universities and research collaboration with China have stabilised further. Concern that such ties compromise academic freedom has declined to its lowest point in five years, while majorities support collaboration under appropriate safeguards. Australians also support a balanced approach combining competition and cooperation with China at regional and global levels. Majorities back closer ties with Southeast Asian and Pacific Island nations to balance China's influence, while also endorsing cooperation with China on climate change, public health and low-emissions technologies. A smaller but clear majority supports joint work on international rules for artificial intelligence safety and digital governance. Together, these results indicate steady public backing for pragmatic engagement, pursuing cooperation where interests align while maintaining vigilance in areas of strategic sensitivity.

Finally, the 2025 poll introduces new questions on how Australians form their views of China and the bilateral relationship. Most respondents said their opinions are shaped primarily by perceptions of the Chinese government and political system, with traditional media the most commonly cited source of information on Australia-China relations.

Overall, the 2025 findings depict a public that remains cautious but increasingly measured. Australians continue to view China as both a partner and a challenge, recognise the complexity of balancing relations with the US and express growing confidence in Australia's capacity to manage its interests within a dynamic regional environment.

1. Overall views on the Australia-China relationship

1.1 Overview

The five years between 2021 and 2025 traced a full arc in Australia–China relations: from economic coercion and a diplomatic deep freeze to the cautious reopening of dialogue and trade. As relations thawed, the Albanese government pursued an approach of 'risk-informed engagement'.[1] Against this backdrop, Australian public opinion on the Australia-China relationship shows gradual adjustment over 2021 to 2024, punctuated by sharper movement in 2025. Across the first four years, most indicators shifted only modestly; the latest wave records the clearest single-year changes in the series.

Support for building stronger connections and ties reached 71 percent in 2025, up 10 points from 2024 and the highest level recorded. Concern about the relationship fell 20 points since 2021 to 54 percent, while agreement that the relationship is beneficial rose 10 points to 72 percent. Mistrust of the Chinese government declined 12 points to 64 percent, its lowest level in five years. Taken together, these movements suggest a tempering of negative sentiment, coinciding with the easing of trade measures and a more regular rhythm of political engagement.

Caution nevertheless remains prominent. Just over half of respondents continue to favour a harder Australian government line on China policy, and mistrust of the Chinese government remains the majority view. Confidence in the Australian government's management of China relations has increased modestly (to 41 percent), and optimism about improvement over the next three years has edged up (to 34 percent), though neutral responses remain substantial. The overall perspective is pragmatic, with engagement accepted but approached with restraint.

Differences by political alignment, age, education and income persist, though some narrowed in 2025. Labor-aligned and left-identifying respondents are generally more supportive of engagement, while Liberal/National Coalition-aligned respondents remain more sceptical. Younger Australians generally express lower concern and mistrust but are less attached to formal institutional ties than older cohorts. The pattern suggests adjustment to a more stable diplomatic environment, with reduced apprehension, but continued reserve.

Broader developments during this period help contextualise these attitudes. By December 2024, Beijing's coercive trade measures, implemented between 2021 and 2022, had been largely rolled back. This was followed in July 2025 by a trip to China by Prime Minister Albanese which focused predominantly on strengthening trade ties.

At the same time, Australia's policy debate remained dominated by issues such as foreign interference and espionage, regional security tensions and supply chain resilience, with a particular focus on Chinese investment in critical minerals. Episodes of unsafe interactions between Chinese and Australian vessels and aircraft and live-fire drills by Chinese warships in the Tasman Sea, served as reminders of the persistent strategic risks that accompany renewed engagement. Into this mix entered a new variable in the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency in January 2025. His administration's early signals introduced fresh uncertainty into Australia's strategic calculus.

The 2025 results suggest that public sentiment has moved beyond the crisis-driven anxiety of the early 2020s toward a steadier, though still alert, phase in the Australia-China relationship, even as uncertainty persists within a volatile great power environment.

1.2 Support for building stronger connections and ties, and a strong relationship

Agreement that Australia should build stronger connections and ties, and a stronger relationship with China rose from 61 percent in 2021 to 71 percent in 2025. Support remained virtually unchanged from 2021 to 2024, hovering around 61 percent, before a pronounced rise of 10 points in 2025, the first clear upward break in the trend. Disagreement with the sentiment nearly halved over the same period, falling from 17 percent to nine percent, while neutral responses edged down slightly from 22 to 19 percent (Figure 1). This stability over four years followed by acceleration indicates a period of cautious acceptance that crystallised into more confident support in 2025 as trade and political dialogue stabilised.

Figure 1. **Support for Australia building stronger connections and ties, and having a strong relationship with China**

Australia should try to build stronger connections with China
Australia should build strong ties with China
Australia should have a strong relationship with China
Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025

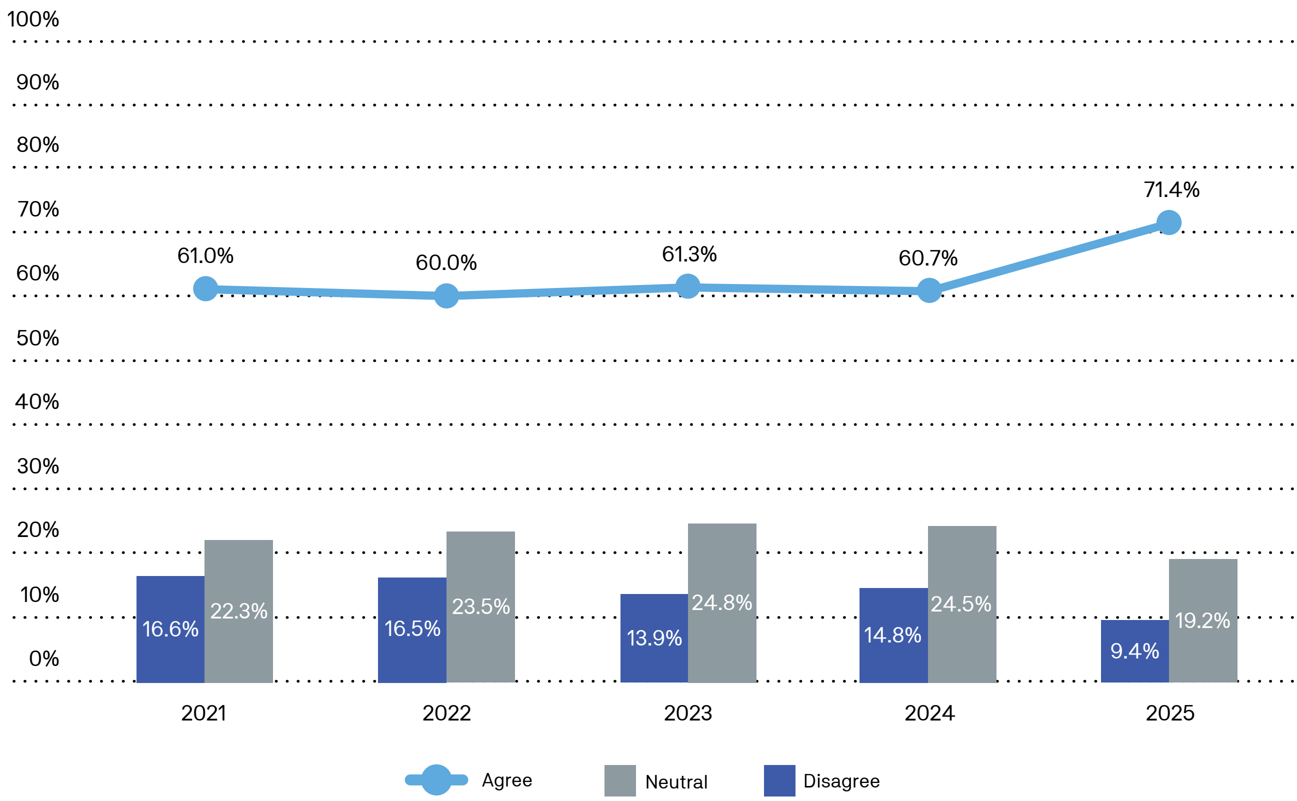
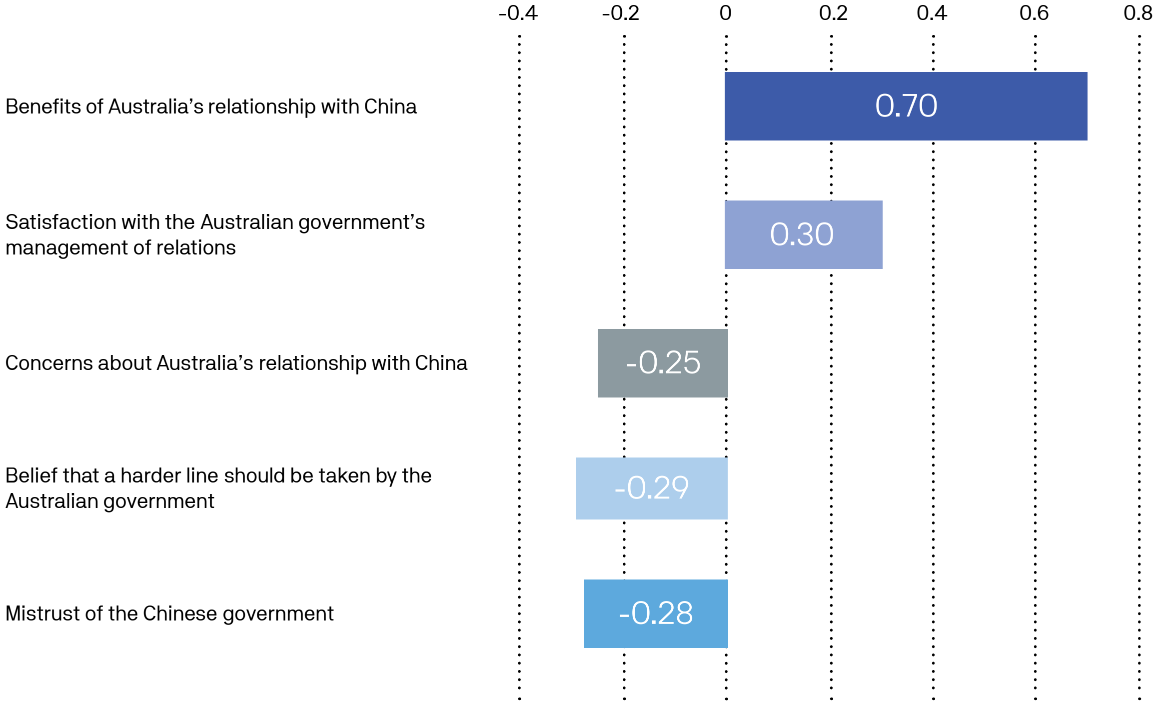


Figure 2. **Predictors of support for Australia building stronger connections and ties, and having a strong relationship with China**



The biggest factor driving support for agreement with the sentiment that Australia should continue to try to build strong connections and ties, and have a strong relationship with China was perceived benefits of the Australia-China relationship.

To a lesser extent, the level of satisfaction with the Australian government's management of bilateral relations also had some bearing on support for this sentiment. Respondents who concurrently expressed concerns about the bilateral relationship were not precluded from also expressing support for Australia building stronger connections and ties, and having a strong relationship with China.

Respondents who expressed mistrust of the Chinese government and who tended towards agreeing that a harder stance on China ought to be adopted by the Australian government were less likely to support the view that Australia should build stronger connections and ties, and have a strong relationship with China (Figure 2).

Across the series the composition of support was broadly stable. Male respondents, university degree-holders, retirees and higher-income earners were generally the most supportive. Female respondents, those with vocational or secondary qualifications, unemployed respondents and lower-income respondents were less supportive. Politically, respondents who identified with the left or supported the Australian Labor Party or were more likely to favour closer ties, while those identifying with the right or supporting minority parties excluding the Greens were less so.

At the state level there was some variation but, broadly speaking, residents of the Australian Capital Territory tended to be more supportive, while residents of New South Wales tended to be less supportive (Table 1).

Table 1. **Latent factors impacting support for building stronger connections and ties, and having a strong relationship with China**

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
State (more supportive)	Northern Territory	Australian Capital Territory	-	Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory; Tasmania
State (less supportive)	New South Wales	-	New South Wales; Queensland	Tasmania; New South Wales	New South Wales
Age* (more supportive)	-	-	-	Older (aged 55+)	Older (aged 55+)
Age* (less supportive)	-	-	-	-	Younger (aged 18-34); Middle-aged (aged 35-55)
Gender (more supportive)	-	Male	Male	Male	Male
Gender (less supportive)	-	Female	Female	Female	Female
Location (urban / rural) (more supportive)	-	-	-	-	Large metropolitan area
Location (urban / rural) (less supportive)	-	Small rural area	-	-	-
Household type (more supportive)	-	-	-	-	Couple family with no dependent children
Household type (less supportive)	-	-	-	-	Other (e.g., other one family household; multiple family household; single person; group household)
Education (highest level) (more supportive)	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Postgraduate degree	-
Education (highest level) (less supportive)	Certificate / Trade / Diploma	High school	-	High school	High school
Employment (more supportive)	Retired	Retired	Retired	Retired	Retired
Employment (less supportive)	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Income (more supportive)	Higher income	Higher income	-	Higher income	Higher income
Income (less supportive)	Lower income	Lower income	Median income	Lower income	Lower income
Political view (more supportive)			Left-wing	Left-wing	Left-wing
Political view (less supportive)			Right-wing	Neutral; Right-wing	Right-wing
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (more supportive)	Greens (2019)	Australian Labor Party; Liberal / National (2019)		Australian Labor Party (2022)	Australian Labor Party; Minority party (excl. Greens) (2025)
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (less supportive)	Minority party (excl. Greens) (2019)	Minority party (excl. Greens) (2019)		Minority party (excl. Greens) (2022)	Liberal / National (2025)
Political party best placed to manage China relations (more supportive)			Australian Labor Party		
Political party best placed to manage China relations (less supportive)			Liberal / National; Minority party (excl. Greens)		

*Age bracket groupings were changed in 2023

Note:

indicates a broad demographic trend over three or more years

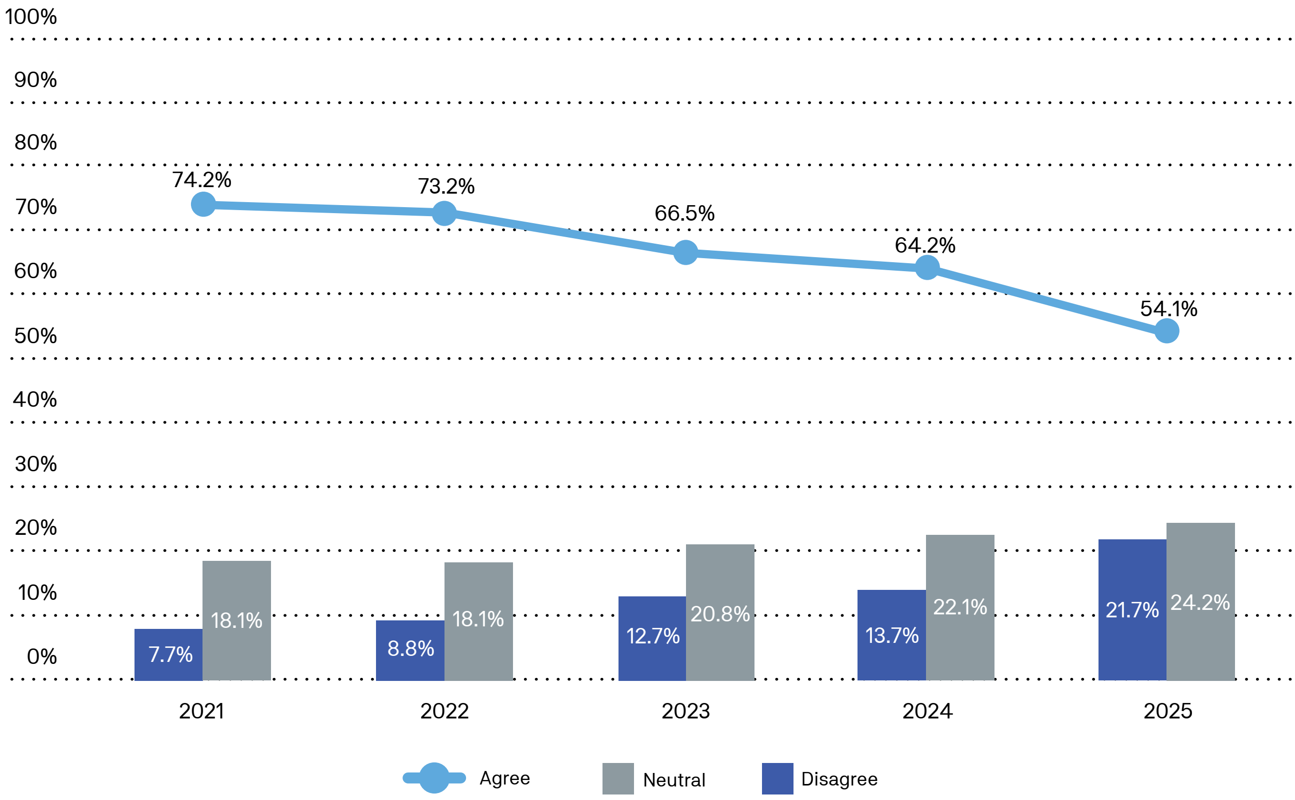
indicates the demographic question was not posed that year

1.3 Concern about the Australia-China relationship

Agreement that Australians were concerned about the Australia-China relationship fell from 74 percent in 2021 to 54 percent in 2025, a decline of 20 points across the five-year series. The fall was gradual from 2021 to 2024 (74 percent in 2021; 73 percent in 2022; 67 percent in 2023; 64 percent in 2024) before a 10-point drop in 2025, the largest single-year decrease in the dataset. Despite this decline, concern about the relationship remains the view of a slim majority of Australians. Disagreement rose from eight to 22 percent and neutral responses increased from 18 to 24 percent (Figure 3).

Figure 3. **Concerns about Australia's relationship with China**

I am concerned about Australia's relationship with China
I am very apprehensive about the nature of Australia's relationship with China
I am worried about how Australia and China interact with each other in a number of areas
I hold a lot of concerns about the Australia-China bilateral relationship
Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025



The profile of concern shifted modestly over time. Older Australians (aged 47 and over; aged 55 and over) expressed the highest concern from 2021 to 2024, but by 2025 the pattern had moved toward the middle-aged group (aged 35-55). Younger Australians (aged 18-34) remained less concerned throughout. Concern was consistently greater among respondents identifying with the political right or supporting the Liberal/National Coalition, and lower among those identifying with the left or supporting the Australian Labor Party. Educational differences were stable, with university degree-holders less concerned than those with high-school or vocational qualifications. Income associations shifted: higher-income Australians were slightly more concerned in 2022 to 2023, but by 2025 lower-income respondents were the most concerned.

Geographic variation was evident across years. South Australia and Tasmania showed higher concern in 2022, New South Wales in 2023 and the Northern Territory in 2025. Lower concern appeared in the Northern Territory (2022), South Australia (2023) and, by 2025, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria (Table 2).

Table 2. **Latent factors impacting concerns about Australia's relationship with China**

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
State (more concerned)	-	South Australia; Tasmania	New South Wales	-	Northern Territory
State (less concerned)	-	Northern Territory	South Australia	-	Australian Capital Territory; Victoria
Age* (more concerned)	Older (aged 47+)	Older (aged 47+)	Older (aged 55+)	Older (aged 55+)	Middle-aged (aged 35-55)
Age* (less concerned)	Younger (aged 18-46)	Younger (aged 18-46)	Younger (aged 18-34)	Younger (aged 18-34)	Younger (aged 18-34)
Gender (more concerned)	-	-	Female	-	-
Gender (less concerned)	-	-	Male	-	-
Location (urban / rural) (more concerned)	-	Large rural area	-	Rural area	-
Location (urban / rural) (less concerned)	-	Small rural area	-	-	-
Household type (more concerned)	-	-	-	-	-
Household type (less concerned)	-	-	-	-	-

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Education (highest level) (more concerned)	–	–	High school	–	High school
Education (highest level) (less concerned)	–	–	Bachelor's degree	–	Bachelor's degree
Employment (more concerned)	–	–	–	Retired	–
Employment (less concerned)	–	–	–	–	Unemployed
Income (more concerned)	–	Higher income	Median to higher income	–	Lower income
Income (less concerned)	–	–	Lower income	–	Higher income
Political view (more concerned)			Right-wing	Right-wing	Right-wing
Political view (less concerned)			Left-wing; Neutral	Left-wing	Left-wing
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (more concerned)	–	Australian Labor Party (2019)		Liberal / National (2022)	Liberal / National; Minority party (excl. Greens) (2025)
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (less concerned)	Did not vote (2019)	Did not vote (2019)		Australian Labor Party; Rather not say / Did not vote (2022)	Australian Labor Party (2025)
Political party best placed to manage China relations (more concerned)			Liberal / National		
Political party best placed to manage China relations (less concerned)			Australian Labor Party; Other minority party		

*Age bracket groupings were changed in 2023

Note:

indicates a broad demographic trend over three or more years

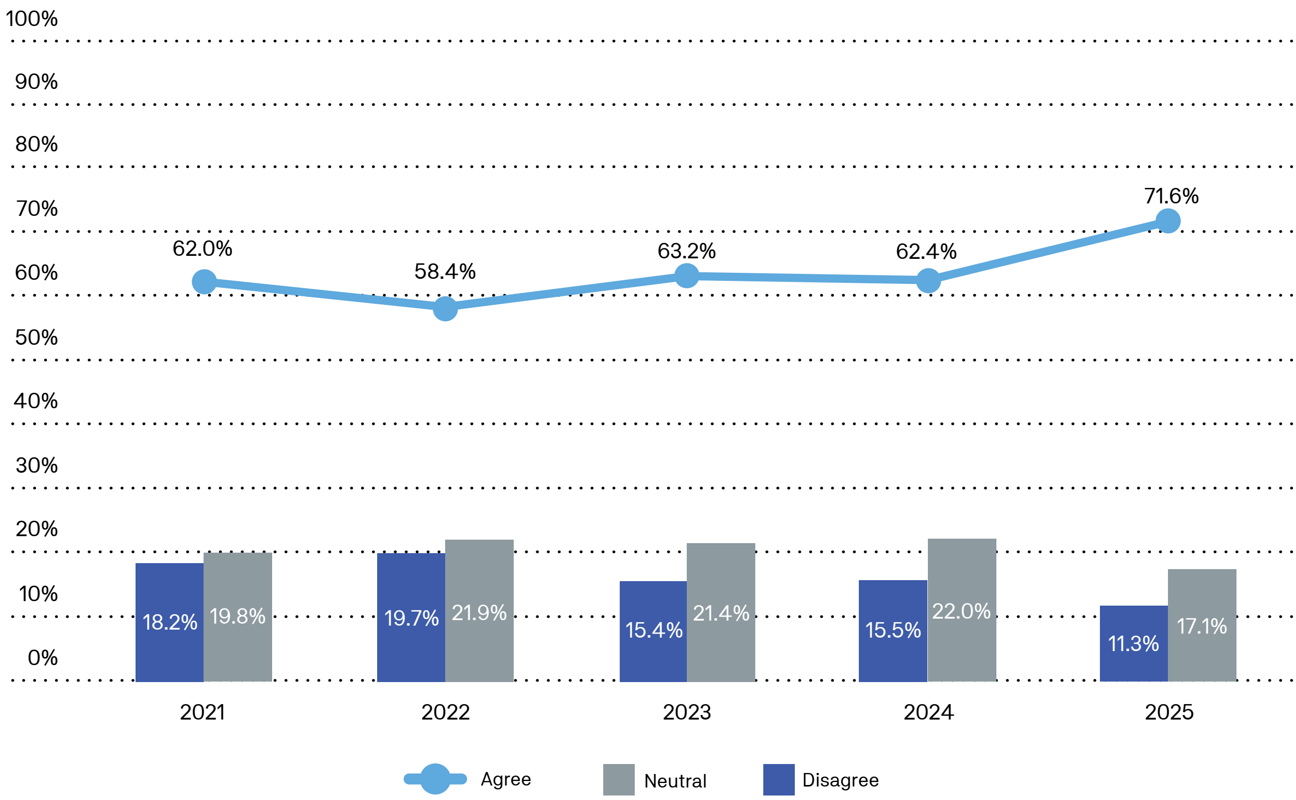
indicates the demographic question was not posed that year

1.4 Perceived benefits of the relationship

Agreement that Australia's relationship with China is beneficial rose from 62 percent in 2021 to 72 percent in 2025, a 10-point increase. Between 2021 and 2024, agreement fluctuated within a narrow band (62 percent in 2021; 58 percent in 2022; 63 percent in 2023; 62 percent in 2024) indicating a period of relative stability before the distinct rise in 2025. Disagreement declined from 18 to 11 percent, while neutral responses eased slightly from 20 to 17 percent (Figure 4).

Figure 4. **Benefits of Australia's relationship with China**

It is very beneficial for Australia to have a working relationship with China
I believe the nature of Australia's relationship with China is of great value for Australia
Australia's relationship with China is positive for Australia
Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025



The demographic pattern of benefit perception changed little over time. Men, urban residents, retirees, university degree-holding Australians and higher-income earners were consistently more positive. Rural residents, those with vocational or secondary qualifications and lower-income respondents were less positive.

Political orientation remained stable: left-identifying and Labor-supporting respondents perceived greater benefit, while right-identifying and Liberal/National Coalition supporters remained more sceptical.

State-level results varied: the Australian Capital Territory recorded higher perceived benefit in 2021, 2024 and 2025, while Tasmania was more positive in 2021 but less positive in 2024. New South Wales and Victoria were less positive in 2021 and again in 2025, with Victoria also low in 2022 and the Northern Territory low in 2025 (Table 3).

Table 3. **Latent factors impacting perceived benefits of Australia's relationship with China**

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
State (more beneficial)	Australian Capital Territory; Tasmania	-	-	Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory
State (less beneficial)	New South Wales; Victoria	Victoria	-	Tasmania	New South Wales; Northern Territory
Age* (more beneficial)	-	-	Younger (aged 18-34)	Younger (aged 18-34)	Older (aged 55+)
Age* (less beneficial)	-	-	Middle aged (aged 35-55)	Older (aged 55+)	Middle-aged (aged 35-55)
Gender (more beneficial)	-	Male	Male	Male	Male
Gender (less beneficial)	-	Female	Female	Female	Female
Location (urban / rural) (more beneficial)	-	Small metropolitan area	-	-	Large metropolitan area
Location (urban / rural) (less beneficial)	-	-	-	Rural area	Rural area
Household type (more beneficial)	-	-	Couple family with dependent children	Couple family with no dependent children	-
Household type (less beneficial)	-	-	Other (e.g., other one family household; multiple family household; single person; group household)	Couple family with dependent children	-

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Education (highest level) (more beneficial)	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree; Postgraduate degree	Bachelor's degree; Postgraduate degree
Education (highest level) (less beneficial)	Certificate / Trade / Diploma	Certificate / Trade / Diploma	High school	High school	High school; Certificate / Trade / Diploma
Employment (more beneficial)	Retired	Retired	Retired	Full-time employed	Retired
Employment (less beneficial)	Unemployed	Unemployed	-	Unemployed	Unemployed
Income (more beneficial)	Higher income	Higher income	Higher income	Higher income	Median income; Higher income
Income (less beneficial)	Lower income	Lower income	Median income	Lower income	Lower income
Political view (more beneficial)			Left-wing	Left-wing	Left-wing
Political view (less beneficial)			Right-wing; Neutral	Neutral; Right-wing	Right-wing
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (more beneficial)	Liberal / National (2019)	Australian Labor Party / Liberal National (2019)		Australian Labor Party (2022)	Australian Labor Party; Minority party (excl. Greens) (2025)
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (less beneficial)	Other minority party (excl. Greens); Did not vote (2019)	Minority party (excl. Greens) (2019)		Rather not say / Did not vote (2022)	Liberal / National (2025)
Political party best placed to manage China relations (more beneficial)			Australian Labor Party		
Political party best placed to manage China relations (less beneficial)			Liberal / National; Other minority party		

*Age bracket groupings were changed in 2023

Note:

indicates a broad demographic trend over three or more years

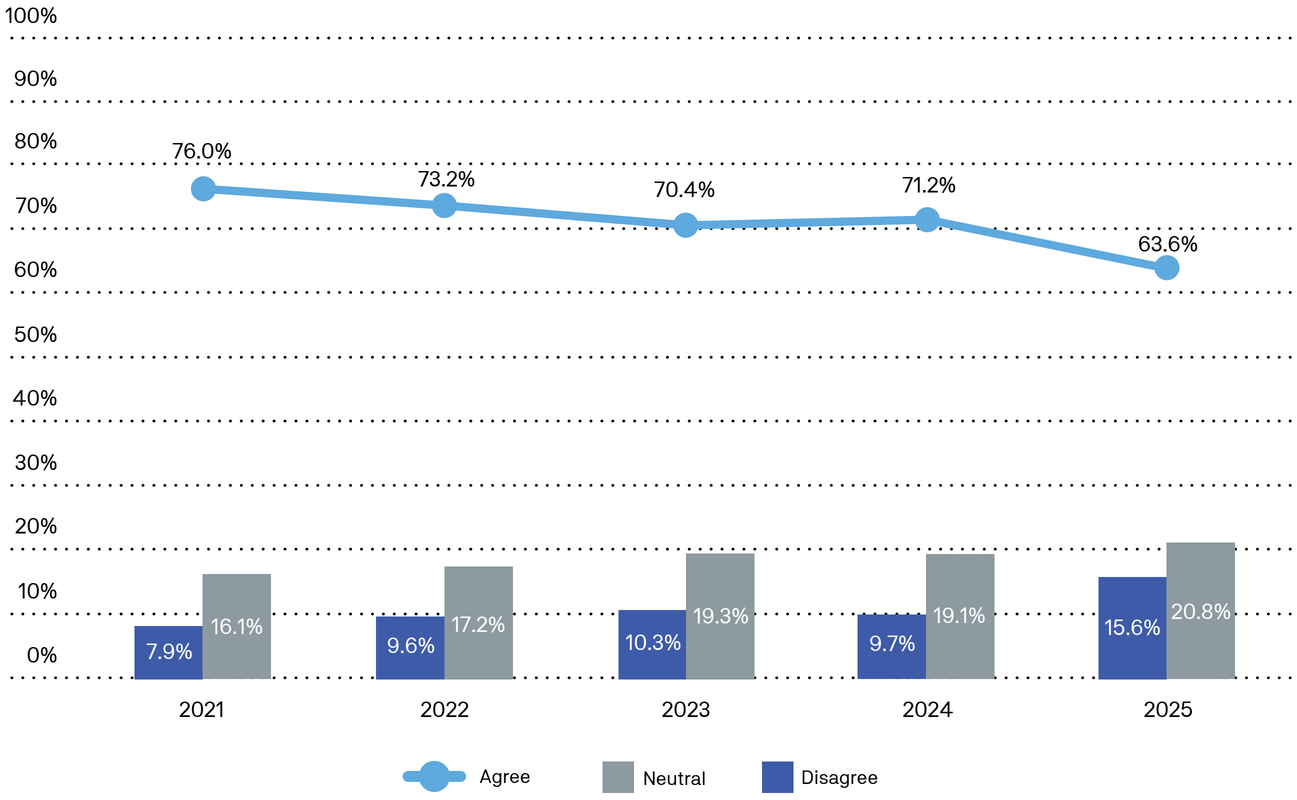
indicates the demographic question was not posed that year

1.5 Mistrust of the Chinese government

The proportion of Australians expressing mistrust of the Chinese government declined from 76 percent in 2021 to 64 percent in 2025, a 12-point fall. While levels of mistrust remain elevated, the decline indicates a measurable softening over time. The decline was gradual from 2021 to 2024 (76 percent in 2021; 73 percent in 2022; 70 percent in 2023; 71 percent in 2024) before a seven-point drop in 2025, marking the largest single-year decrease in mistrust across the series. Disagreement with the sentiment rose from eight to 16 percent, while neutral responses increased modestly from 16 to 21 percent (Figure 5).

Figure 5. **Mistrust of the Chinese government**

I have a lot of mistrust towards the Chinese government in its dealings with Australia
The Chinese government cannot be trusted in its dealings with Australia
It is difficult to believe the Chinese government when it comes to its dealings with Australia
I am sceptical of the Chinese government when it comes to its dealings with Australia
The Australian government should be suspicious of the Chinese government when it comes to having dealings with them
Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025



The demographic structure of mistrust remained stable. Older Australians (aged 55 and over), those with vocational or secondary qualifications, and lower-income respondents continued to be the most mistrustful.

Younger Australians (aged 18-34), university degree-holders and higher-income earners were less so.

Right-identifying and Liberal/National Coalition-supporting respondents expressed greater mistrust than their left-identifying and Labor-supporting counterparts.

Mistrust was higher in New South Wales (2022) and Tasmania (2025), and lower in the Northern Territory (2021), Victoria (2023 and 2025) and Western Australia (2024) (Table 4).

Although mistrust has moderated, it remains the majority position, suggesting that the decline in negative sentiment has not necessarily translated into significantly increased trust.

Table 4. **Latent factors impacting level of mistrust of the Chinese government**

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
State (more mistrusting)	-	New South Wales	-	-	Tasmania
State (less mistrusting)	Northern Territory	-	Victoria	Western Australia	New South Wales; Victoria
Age* (more mistrusting)	Older (aged 47+)	Older (aged 47+)	Older (aged 55+)	Older (aged 55+)	Middle aged (aged 35-55); Older (aged 55+)
Age* (less mistrusting)	Younger (aged 18-46)	Younger (aged 18-46)	Younger (aged 18-34)	Younger (aged 18-34)	Younger (aged 18-34)
Gender (more mistrusting)	Male	-	-	-	-
Gender (less mistrusting)	Female	-	-	-	-
Location (urban / rural) (more mistrusting)	-	-	-	-	-
Location (urban / rural) (less mistrusting)	-	-	-	-	-
Household type (more mistrusting)	-	Couple family with no dependent children	-	-	-
Household type (less mistrusting)	-	Couple family with dependent children	-	-	-

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Education (highest level) (more mistrusting)	-	-	-	-	Certificate / Trade / Diploma; High school
Education (highest level) (less mistrusting)	-	-	Bachelor's degree	-	Bachelor's degree
Employment (more mistrusting)	Employed full-time	Unemployed	-	Retired	Retired
Employment (less mistrusting)	-	Retired	-	Employed full-time	-
Income (more mistrusting)	-	-	-	-	Lower income
Income (less mistrusting)	-	-	-	-	Higher income
Political view (more mistrusting)			Right-wing	Right-wing	Right-wing
Political view (less mistrusting)			Left-wing	Left-wing	Left-wing
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (more mistrusting)	Liberal / National (2019)	Liberal / National (2019)		Liberal / National (2022)	Liberal / National; Minority party (excl. Greens) (2025)
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (less mistrusting)	Did not vote (2019)	Australian Labor Party (2019)		Rather not say / Did not vote (2022)	Australian Labor Party (2025)
Political party best placed to manage China relations (more mistrusting)			Liberal / National		
Political party best placed to manage China relations (less mistrusting)			Australian Labor Party; Other minority party		

*Age bracket groupings were changed in 2023

Note:

indicates a broad demographic trend over three or more years

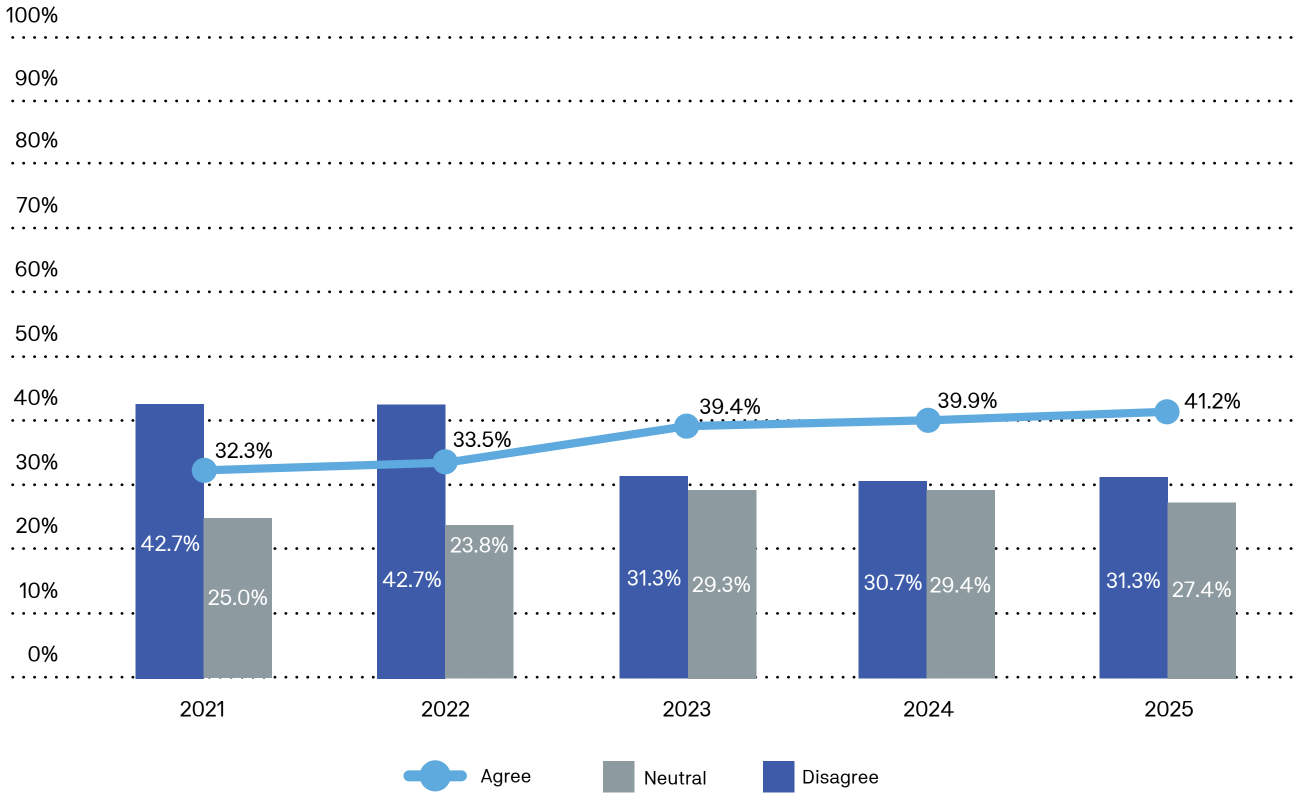
indicates the demographic question was not posed that year

1.6 The Australian government's management of China relations

Agreement that the government is managing the relationship well rose from 32 percent in 2021 to 41 percent in 2025, a nine-point gain. The largest improvement occurred with a five-point increase between 2022 (34 percent) and 2023 (39 percent), with smaller increases thereafter.

Figure 6. **Satisfaction with the Australian government's management of China relations**

The Australian government is managing Australia's relationship with China well
The Australian government is doing a good job in managing Australia's relationship with China
I am satisfied with the Australian government's management of Australia's relationship with China
Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025



Satisfaction increased across most demographics but the underlying distribution remained fairly stable. Younger Australians (aged 18-46; aged 18-34) and couples with dependent children were generally more satisfied, while older Australians (aged 47 and over; aged 55 and over) were less satisfied.

Those who resided in a metropolitan area and university degree-holders showed higher satisfaction than rural residents and respondents with vocational or secondary qualifications in more recent years.

Politically, a gradual realignment occurred: respondents aligned with the Liberal/National Coalition were somewhat more satisfied in the early years, but by 2024-25 satisfaction was higher among Labor-aligned respondents. A shift was also discernible in income bracket. Those who earned a lower income were more likely to express satisfaction in earlier years, while those who earned a higher income were less satisfied, with this tendency appearing to reverse in later years.

Satisfaction was higher in New South Wales (2024) and in the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania (2025), while lower in Western Australia (2021), Tasmania (2022), South Australia (2023), Victoria (2024) and Queensland and the Northern Territory (2025) (Table 5).

Overall, satisfaction rose steadily after 2022 but remained divided along educational, income and political lines.

Table 5. **Latent factors impacting level of satisfaction with the Australian government's management of China relations**

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
State (more satisfied)	-	-	-	New South Wales	Australian Capital Territory; Tasmania
State (less satisfied)	Western Australia	Tasmania	South Australia	Victoria	Queensland, Northern Territory
Age* (more satisfied)	Younger (aged 18-46)	Younger (aged 18-46)	Younger (aged 18-34)	Younger (aged 18-34)	-
Age* (less satisfied)	Older (aged 47+)	Older (aged 47+)	-	Older (aged 55+)	Middle aged (aged 35-55)
Gender (more satisfied)	Female	-	-	-	-
Gender (less satisfied)	Male	-	-	-	-
Location (urban / rural) (more satisfied)	-	-	Large metropolitan area	Large metropolitan area	Small metropolitan area
Location (urban / rural) (less satisfied)	-	-	Rural area	Rural area	Rural area

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Household type (more satisfied)	Couple family with dependent children	Couple family with dependent children	Couple family with dependent children	Couple family with dependent children	-
Household type (less satisfied)	Couple family with no dependent children	-	Other (e.g., other one family household; multiple family household; single person; group household)	Couple family with no dependent children	-
Education (highest level) (more satisfied)	-	-	-	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor's degree; Postgraduate degree
Education (highest level) (less satisfied)	-	Certificate / Trade / Diploma	-	Certificate / Trade / Diploma	High school; Certificate / Trade / Diploma
Employment (more satisfied)	-	-	-	-	-
Employment (less satisfied)	-	Unemployed	-	Unemployed	-
Income (more satisfied)	-	Lower income	-	Higher income	-
Income (less satisfied)	-	Higher income	Median income	-	Lower income
Political view (more satisfied)			-	Left-wing	Left-wing
Political view (less satisfied)			-	Right-wing	Right-wing
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (more satisfied)	Liberal / National (2019)	Liberal / National (2019)		Australian Labor Party (2022)	Australian Labor Party; Minority party (excl. Greens) (2025)
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (less satisfied)	Australian Labor Party; Minority party (2019)	Australian Labor Party; Minority party (2019)		Liberal / National; Rather not say / Did not vote (2022)	Liberal / National (2025)
Political party best placed to manage China relations (more satisfied)			Australian Labor Party		
Political party best placed to manage China relations (less satisfied)			Liberal / National; Other minority party		

*Age bracket groupings were changed in 2023

Note:

indicates a broad demographic trend over three or more years

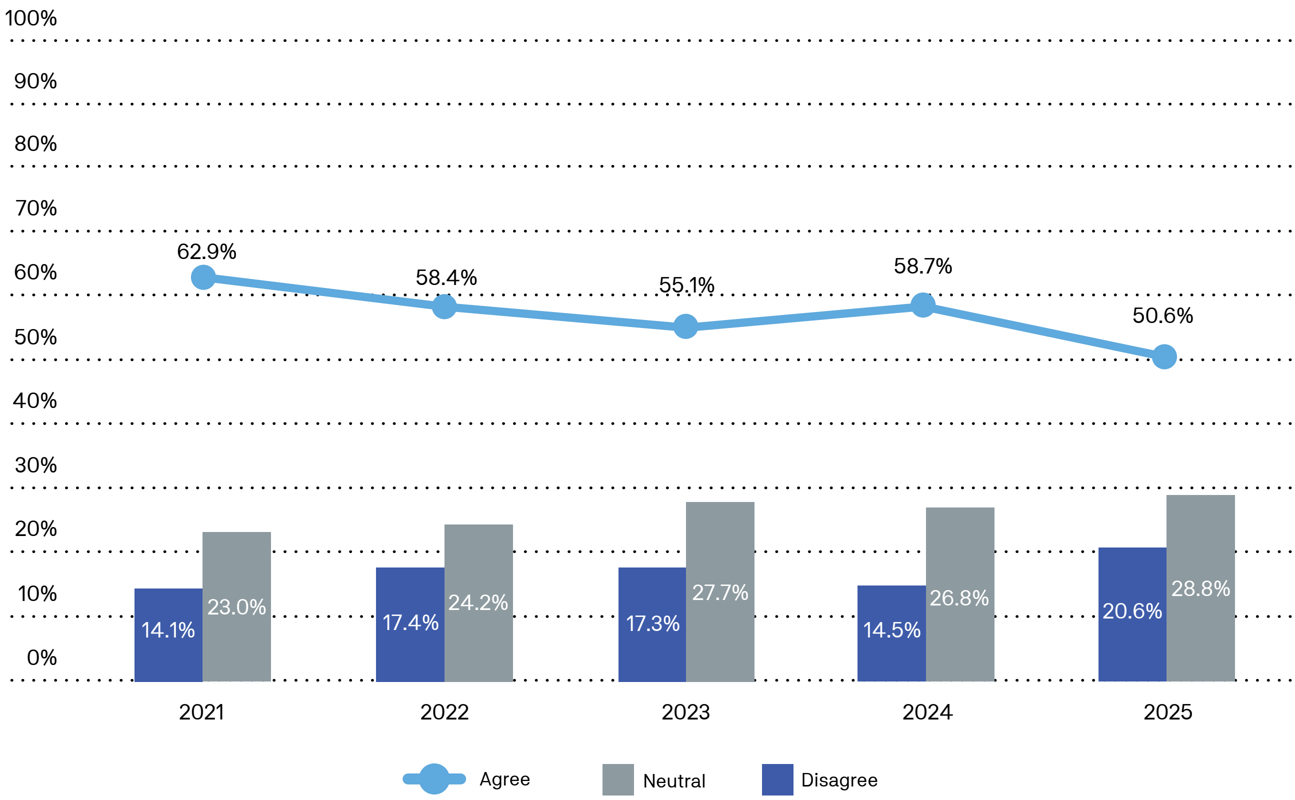
indicates the demographic question was not posed that year

1.7 A harder Australian government line on China

Agreement that the Australian government should take a harder line fell from 63 percent in 2021 to 51 percent in 2025, a 12-point decline over five years. Support for a harder government line on China remained relatively stable between 2021 and 2024 (63 percent in 2021; 58 percent in 2022; 55 percent in 2023; 59 percent in 2024) before a more pronounced eight-point drop in 2025. Over the same period, disagreement rose from 14 to 21 percent, and neutral views increased from 23 to 29 percent, suggesting that firm backing for a tougher approach has given way to greater ambivalence rather than reversal (Figure 7).

Figure 7. **Support for a harder government line on China**

I believe the Australian government should take a harder line with respect to its relationship with China
I believe the Australian government should take a harder line with respect to its policies dealing with China
Australia should be harder when it comes to dealing with China
Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025



There was limited state variation: the Northern Territory recorded higher support in 2025, while the Australian Capital Territory showed lower support in 2023 and 2025.

The age pattern shifted across the series: in 2022 younger Australians (aged 18-46) were more likely to favour a harder line, whereas by 2024 older Australians (aged 55 and over) became more supportive, and by 2025 support was strongest among middle-aged Australians (aged 35-55) and lowest among younger Australians (aged 18-34).

Those holding high-school or vocational qualifications remained more supportive than university graduates, while the income relationship inverted across the period, from stronger support among lower-income respondents in 2021 to 2022 to stronger support among higher-income respondents in 2025.

Throughout the series, respondents identifying with the political right or supporting the Liberal/National Coalition were consistently more likely to agree that the government should take a harder line, while those identifying with the political left or supporting Labor were less likely to do so.

Table 6. **Latent factors impacting support for a harder government line on China**

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
State (more supportive)	–	–	–	–	Northern Territory
State (less supportive)	–	–	Australian Capital Territory	–	Australian Capital Territory
Age* (more supportive)	–	Younger (aged 18-46)	–	Older (aged 55+)	Middle-aged (aged 35-55)
Age* (less supportive)	–	Older (aged 47+)	–	Younger (aged 18-34)	Younger (aged 18-34)
Gender (more supportive)	–	–	Female	–	Female
Gender (less supportive)	–	–	Male	–	Male
Location (urban / rural) (more supportive)	–	–	–	–	–
Location (urban / rural) (less supportive)	–	–	–	–	–
Household type (more supportive)	–	–	–	–	–
Household type (less supportive)	–	–	–	–	–

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Education (highest level) (more supportive)	Certificate / Trade / Diploma	High school; Certificate / Trade / Diploma	High school; Certificate / Trade / Diploma	High school	High school
Education (highest level) (less supportive)	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree; Postgraduate degree	Bachelor's degree; Postgraduate degree	Postgraduate degree	Bachelor's degree; Postgraduate degree
Employment (more supportive)	-	Full-time employed	-	-	
Employment (less supportive)	-	Retired	-	-	
Income (more supportive)	Lower income	Lower income	-	-	Higher income
Income (less supportive)	Higher income	-	-	-	Lower income
Political view (more supportive)			Right-wing	Right-wing	Right-wing
Political view (less supportive)			Left-wing	Left-wing	Left-wing
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (more supportive)	Minority party (excl. Greens) (2019)	- (2019)		Liberal / National (2022)	Liberal / National (2025)
Voting behaviour in the Australian federal election (less supportive)	Did not vote (2019)	- (2019)		Australian Labor Party (2022)	Australian Labor Party (2025)
Political party best placed to manage China relations (more supportive)			Liberal / National		
Political party best placed to manage China relations (less supportive)			Australian Labor Party; Other minority party		

*Age bracket groupings were changed in 2023

Note:

indicates a broad demographic trend over three or more years

indicates the demographic question was not posed that year

1.8 Responsibility for improving the Australia-China relationship

'The responsibility for improving the relationship between Australia and China lies with China'

'The responsibility for improving the relationship between Australia and China lies with Australia'

'The responsibility for improving the relationship between Australia and China lies with both countries'

Public views on which side bears responsibility for improving the Australia-China relationship remained broadly steady from 2021 to 2024 before a modest but clear adjustment in 2025. Agreement that both countries share responsibility held between 78 and 80 percent over the first four years (80 percent in 2021; 78 to 79 percent in 2022 to 2024) before rising by about five points to 84 percent in 2025, the highest level recorded in the series (Figures 8A-B).

Agreement that China alone is responsible was largely stable between 2021 and 2024 (45 to 48 percent) and then declined by 11 points to 37 percent in 2025. Agreement that Australia alone is responsible stayed broadly stable, remaining close to 31 percent each year, (Figures 8A-B).

These movements indicate that the main change occurred in 2025: a moderate rise in support for shared responsibility and a corresponding reduction in the view that China alone bears it.

Figure 8A. **Responsibility for improving the Australia-China relationship**

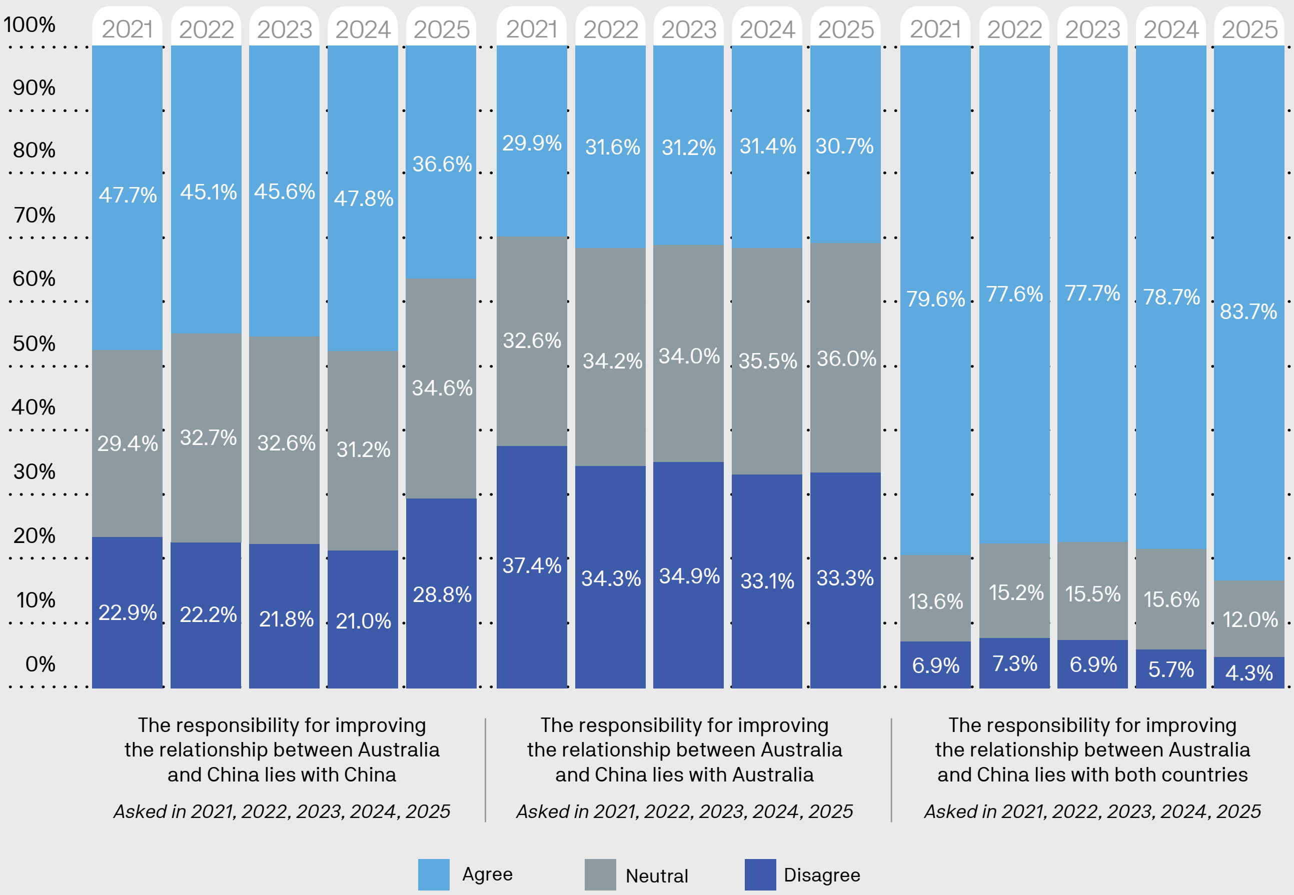
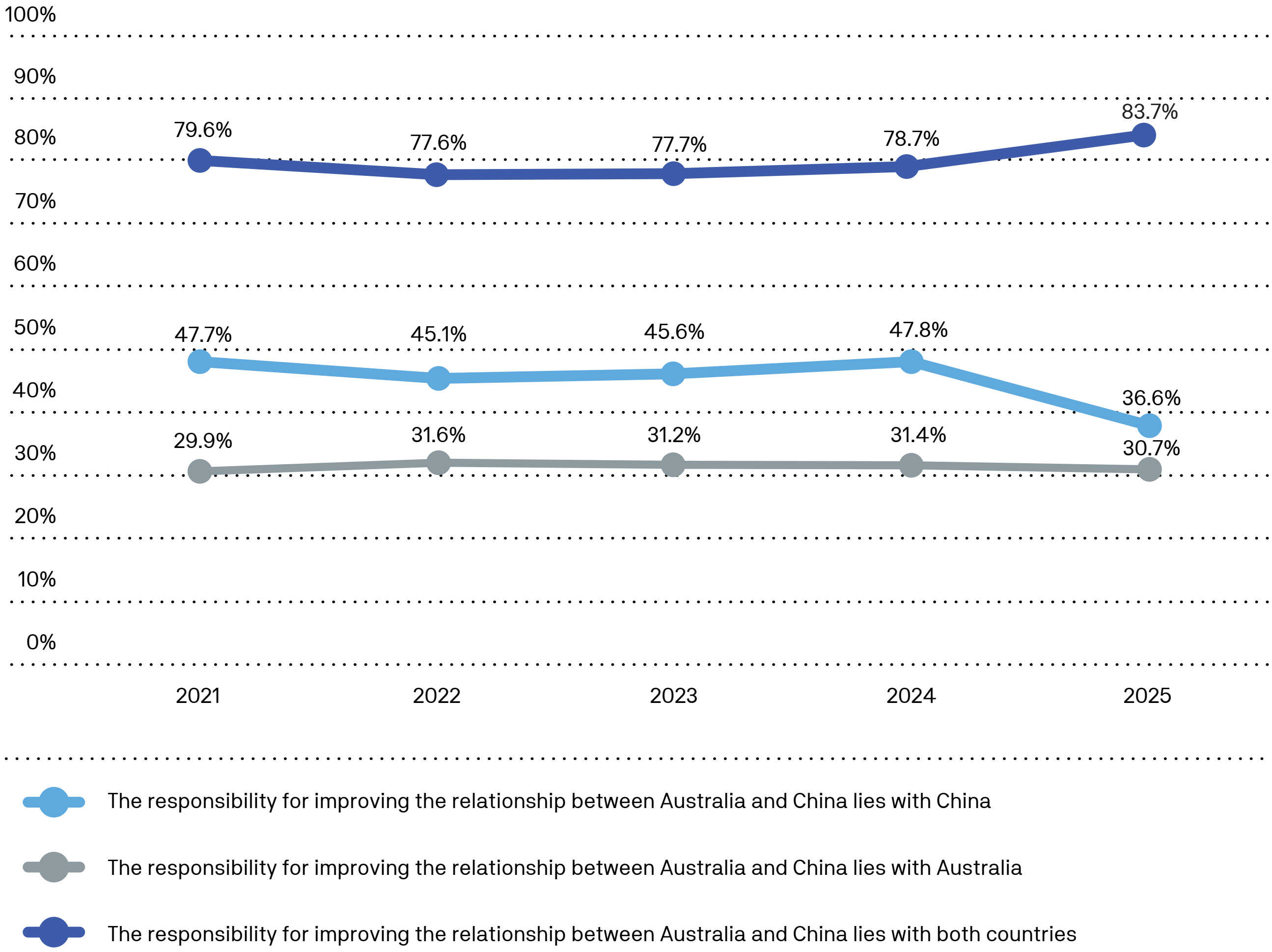


Figure 8B. **Responsibility for improving the Australia-China relationship (trends in agreement)**



1.9 Future outlook

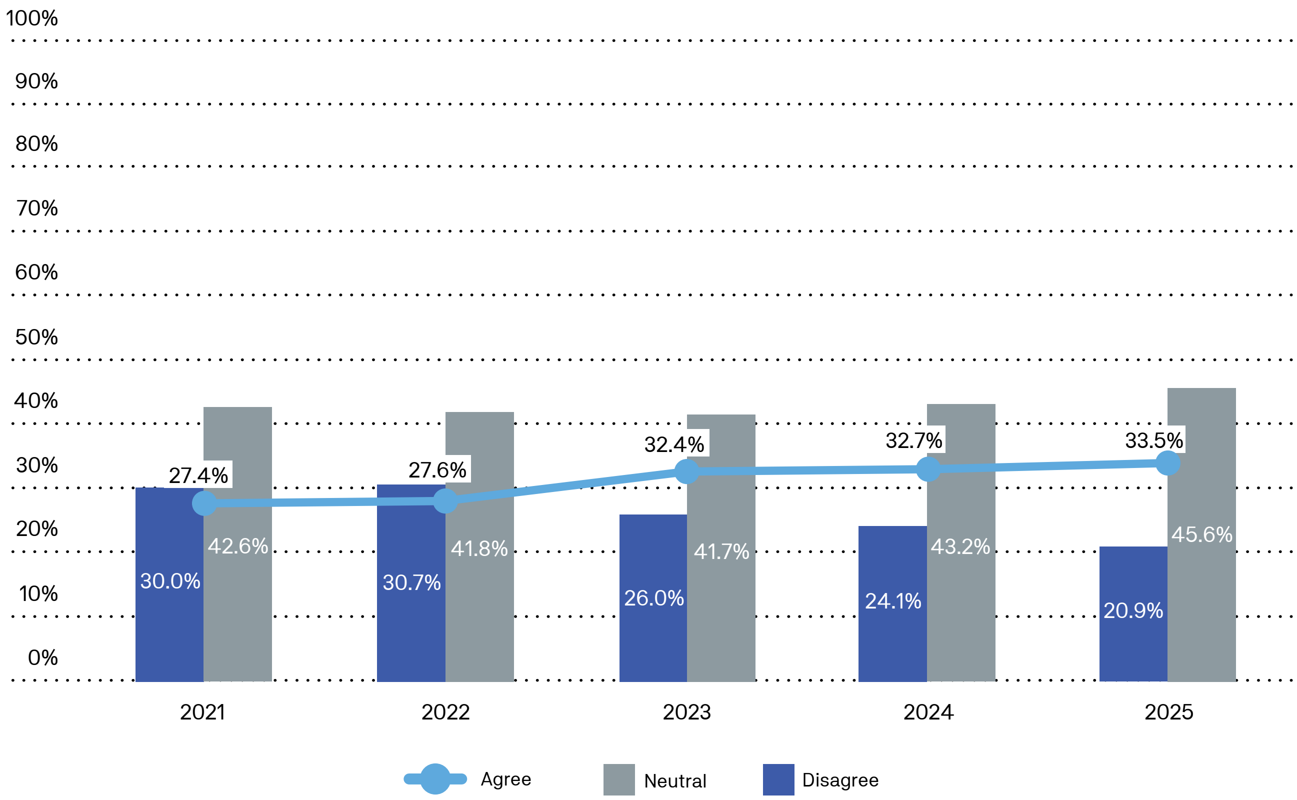
'The Australia-China relationship will improve in the next three years'

Expectations for improvement in the Australia-China relationship have become gradually more positive over the five years to 2025, though most Australians remain neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Agreement that the relationship will improve in the next three years rose from 27 percent in 2021 to 34 percent in 2025, a modest seven-point increase. Over the same period, disagreement fell from 30 percent to 21 percent, while neutral views remained dominant, varying only slightly between 42 and 46 percent (Figure 9).

The year-to-year pattern shows a slow and steady shift rather than a sudden change: optimism grew marginally after 2022, stabilising at roughly one-third of the public by 2025. This suggests that while confidence in the bilateral trajectory has improved, most Australians continue to adopt a wait-and-see stance.

Figure 9. **Improvement of the Australia-China relationship in the next three years**

The Australia-China relationship will improve in the next three years | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



2. Politics and political communication

2.1 Overview

The five years between 2021 and 2025 saw the politics of Australia-China relations move from sharp partisan contestation to a steadier, more managerial mode of communication. After several years in which China policy was framed largely through national security rhetoric, the Albanese government's approach of stabilisation was underpinned by an emphasis on measured language. Debate between the major parties narrowed around competence and tone rather than ideology. This adjustment coincided with broader international developments, including the return of Trump to the US presidency, which contributed to a heightened focus in Australian politics on predictability in foreign policy communication.

Political identity has consistently structured Australians' views of China policy. Following the 2022 change of government, confidence in Labor's management of China relations rose from 35 percent in 2022 to 49 percent in 2023 and remained ahead of the Coalition through 2025 (48 percent compared with 29 percent). The Liberal/National Coalition's relative support remained fairly stable over the period, consistent with its position as the main alternative for respondents favouring a more assertive approach to China policy (see Section 1).

Between the 2022 and 2025 federal elections, China policy became a more visible consideration in political evaluation. The share of respondents reporting that it influenced their vote increased by 10 points from 27 percent in 2022 to 37 percent in 2025, while those saying it had no impact declined from 56 percent to 24 percent, offset by a rise in respondents uncertain about its relevance.

Throughout this five-year survey period, Australians maintained strong support for resolving disagreements with Beijing through diplomatic rather than public channels. Political communication generally reflected this preference, with both major parties using, for the most part, restrained, procedural language to frame engagement with China.

2.2 Perceptions of party competence on China policy

Australians' views on China policy over the five-year series remained strongly shaped by political alignment. As shown across the attitudinal measures in Section 1, political identity was one of the most consistent predictors of opinion, linking perceptions of benefit, concern, mistrust and preferred government stance.

In 2022, opinion on which party was best placed to handle Australia's China policy was evenly divided between the Australian Labor Party (35 percent) and the Liberal/National Coalition (36 percent), with nearly 30 percent nominating another party. By 2023, this pattern shifted sharply: Labor's share rose to 49 percent while confidence in the Coalition fell to 29 percent. Support dipped in 2024 (40 percent versus 34 percent) before rebounding in 2025, when 48 percent nominated Labor and 29 percent the Coalition (Figure 10).

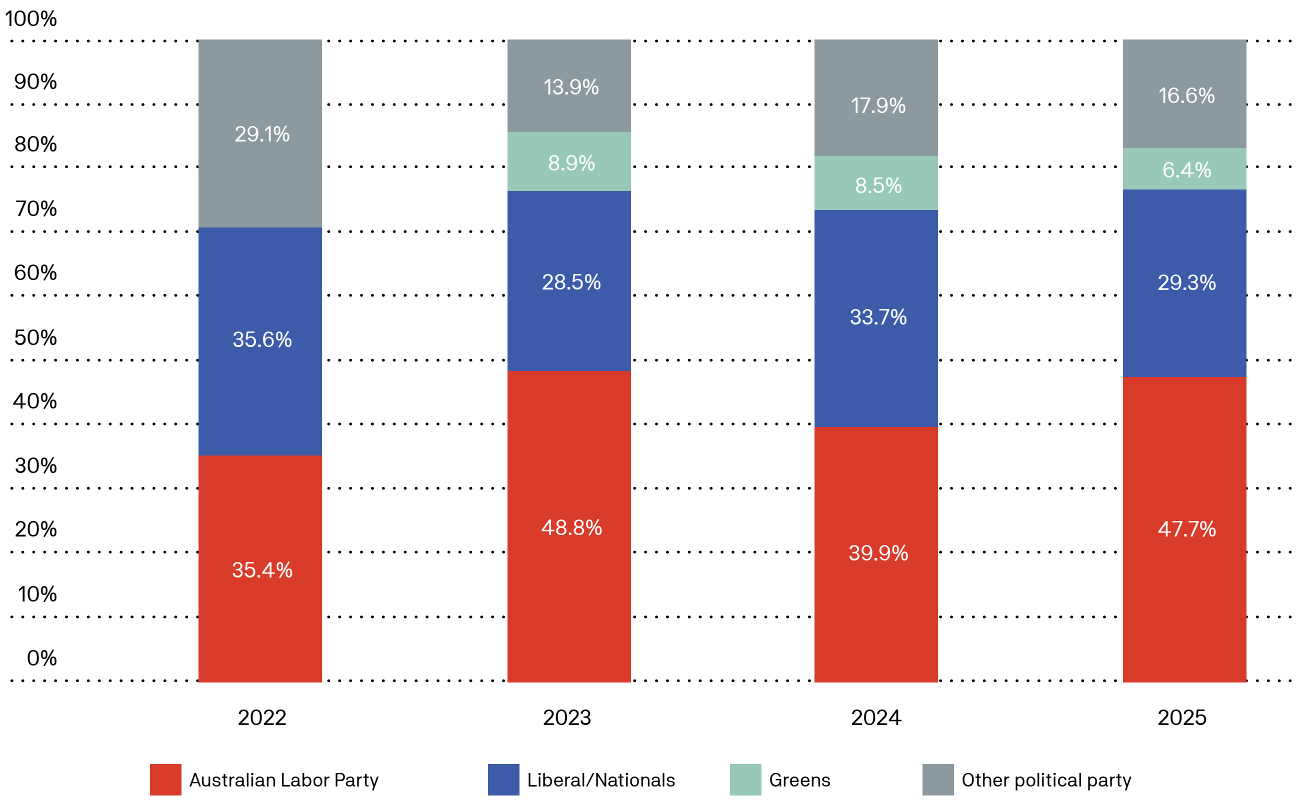
Data for the Greens were not collected in 2022, but in subsequent years, around nine percent of respondents nominated the Greens (2023 to 2024) easing to six percent in 2025 (Figure 10). This modest decline may reflect both reduced salience of China policy within the Greens' broader issue agenda and a consolidation of confidence around Labor's management as relations stabilised. It also corresponds with a general softening in national support for the Greens in the 2025 federal election, suggesting the shift may reflect wider electoral sentiment rather than attitudes to China specifically.[2]

While Figure 10 measures perceptions of which party is best placed to manage China policy rather than respondents' underlying attitudes toward China, other findings in this report show that Coalition-aligned and right-leaning respondents were consistently more likely to favour a harder or more sceptical stance toward China (see Section 1). The Coalition therefore retained a core base among these voters even as its overall share of confidence in managing the relationship declined from parity with Labor in 2022 to 29 percent in 2025.

Overall, the data show a durable but not uncritical endorsement of Labor's handling of China relations. After assuming office in 2022, Labor established and largely maintained an advantage on this issue, suggesting that steadier management and reduced public friction with Beijing were broadly rewarded across the electorate.

Figure 10. **Political party best placed to handle Australia's China policy**

Which political party is best placed to handle Australia's China policy?
(Note: No data is available for the Greens in 2022. Respondents in that year selected from the choices of the Australian Labor Party, Liberal/Nationals and Other political party)
Asked in 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025



2.3 China policy and electoral impact

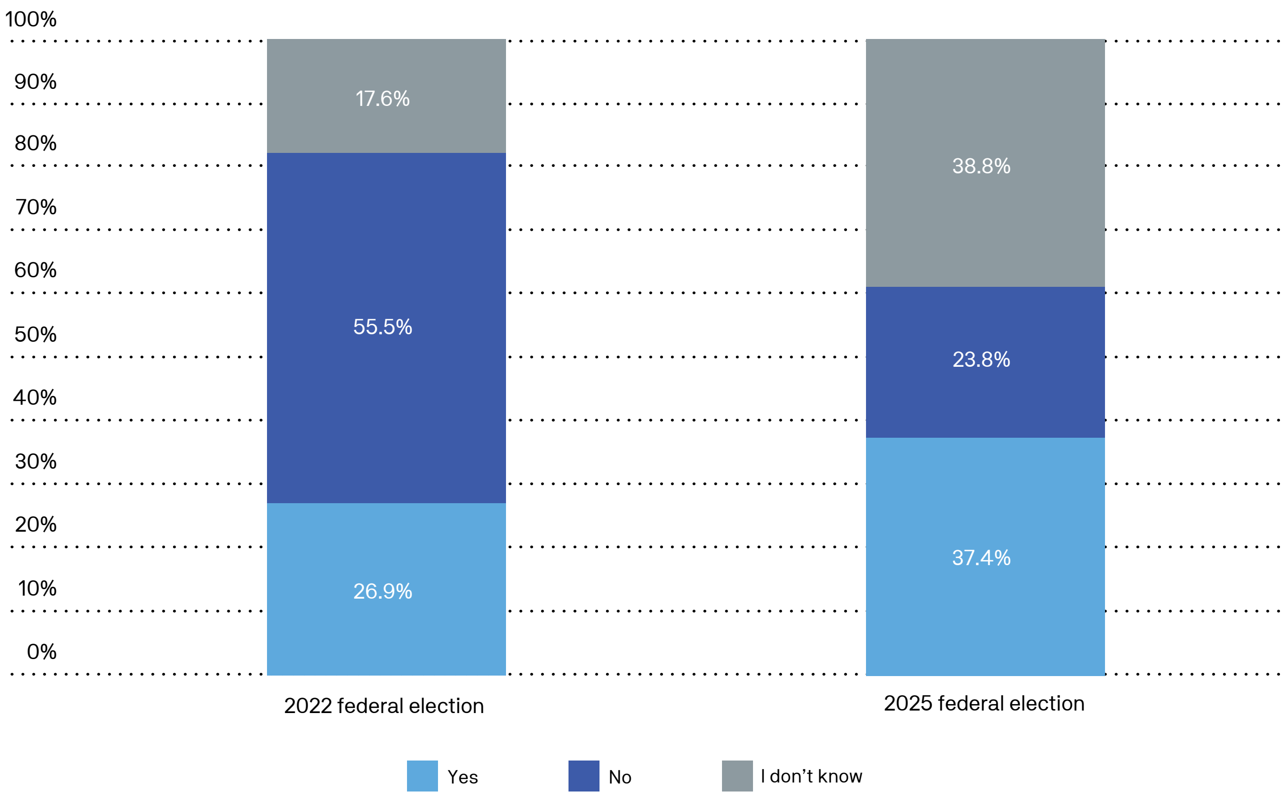
The Australian government's handling of China policy has become a more visible consideration in how voters assess national leadership between the 2022 and 2025 elections, even if engagement with the issue remains uneven. In 2022, just over a quarter of respondents (27 percent) said China policy influenced their vote, while more than half (56 percent) said it did not. By 2025, the share identifying it as an influence had risen to 37 percent, and those saying it was not a factor had fallen to 24 percent.

Another notable shift was the rise in uncertainty: the proportion of voters selecting 'I don't know' more than doubled, from 18 percent in 2022 to 39 percent in 2025 (Figure 11). Though based on only two election cycles, these results suggest that foreign policy, generally peripheral in Australian voting behaviour, is attracting broader public attention.

Taken together, the findings indicate heightened awareness rather than decisive electoral weight. China policy appears to have moved from a niche foreign affairs issue to a wider test of government competence, shaping perceptions of leadership and stability even if it rarely determines votes outright.

Figure 11. **Management of China policy: An issue that impacted federal election vote?**

Is the Australian government's management of China policy an issue that had an impact on your vote in the federal election that took place in 2022? | *Asked in 2023*
Is the Australian government's management of China policy an issue that had an impact on your vote in the federal election that took place in 2025? | *Asked in 2025*



2.4 Communication over areas of disagreement

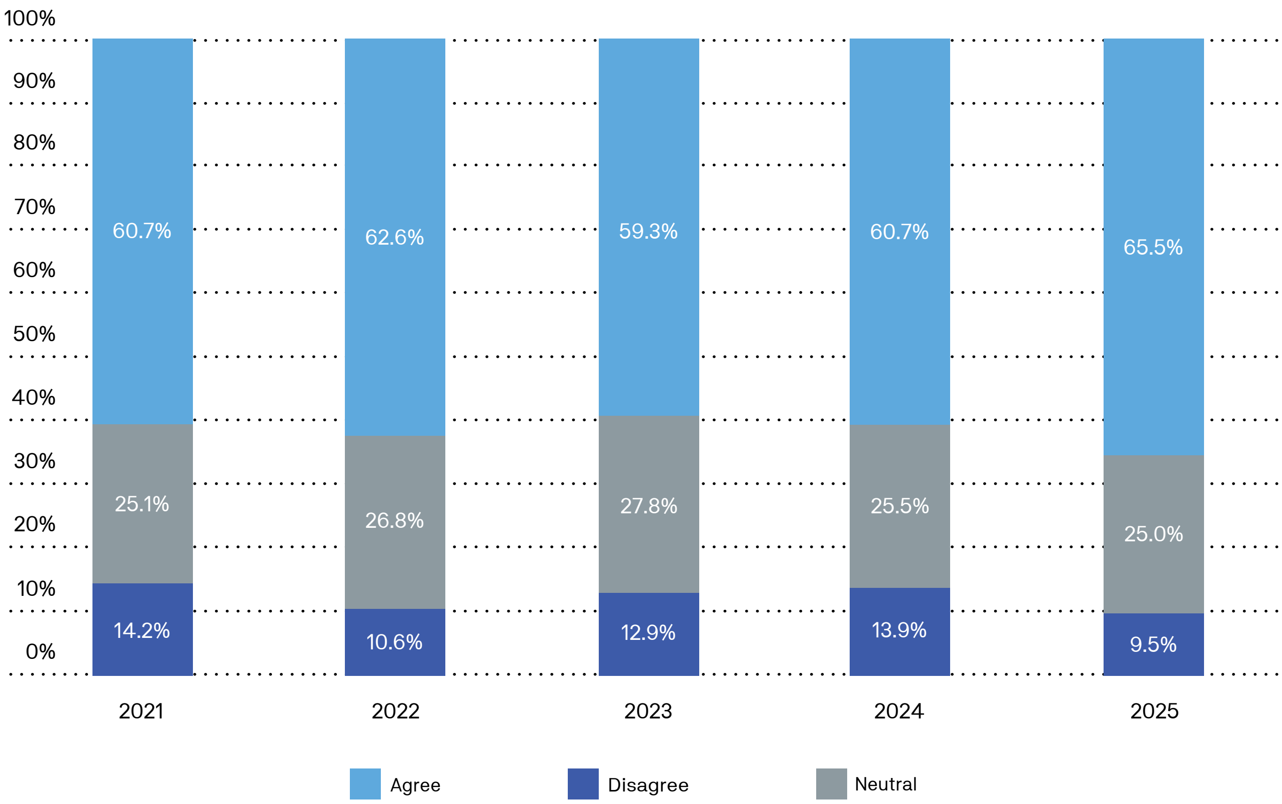
'The Australian government's disputes with the Chinese government are better communicated through diplomatic channels rather than public statements'

Across the five-year series, Australians expressed consistent support for managing disputes with China through diplomatic rather than public channels. Agreement with this view increased from 61 percent in 2021 to 66 percent in 2025, after fluctuating slightly between 59 and 63 percent in the intervening years. Disagreement declined from 14 percent to 10 percent, while neutral responses remained stable at around one-quarter of respondents (Figure 12).

The modest upward trend aligns with broader moderation in public attitudes toward the bilateral relationship. As concern and mistrust eased, a growing share of Australians favoured a calm, measured approach to communication. This outlook is consistent with the government's emphasis on maintaining stability and tone in its diplomatic engagement with Beijing.

Figure 12. **Support for the Australian government's communication of disputes through diplomatic channels**

The Australian government's disputes with the Chinese government are better communicated through diplomatic channels rather than public statements
Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025



3.
Military and security

3.1 Overview

From 2024 into 2025, Australians' views on security and defence in relation to China showed gradual adjustment within an environment of renewed contact but continuing strategic tension. The period featured the 23rd Australia-China Defence Strategic Dialogue in February 2025, the first since 2019 following a four-year hiatus,[3] and ongoing uncertainty surrounding allied defence initiatives. Progress on AUKUS advanced unevenly, with the Pentagon's mid-2025 review raising more questions about timelines and implementation.

Subsequent events occurring shortly after the survey period, including President Trump's reaffirmation of US commitment to AUKUS during Prime Minister Albanese's Washington visit[4] and a People's Liberation Army jet releasing flares dangerously close to an Australian patrol aircraft over the South China Sea in late October 2025,[5] further illustrated the volatility of the regional environment but did not shape the survey results.

Defence Minister Richard Marles reiterated Australia's established concern about the scale and opacity of China's military modernisation at a security dialogue in Singapore, calling on Beijing to explain 'why it needs to have such an extraordinary military build-up.' He stated that the absence of reassurance and transparency constituted the 'fundamental issue' for the region.[6] Around the same time, US officials and Australian commentators called for increased defence spending by Canberra, reflecting a broader preoccupation with deterrence and preparedness in an increasingly contested Indo-Pacific environment.[7]

Survey data for 2025 indicate that Australians remain alert but less anxious. Perceptions of China as a security threat stayed high but moderated slightly from their 2022 to 2024 plateau. Expectations of military conflict were broadly unchanged, while neutral responses rose modestly, reflecting a mood of measured vigilance rather than acute alarm. Support for higher defence spending strengthened, including when potential domestic trade-offs were mentioned, suggesting that investment in defence is now viewed as a continuing national priority rather than a short-term reaction to external pressure.

Views of Australia's strategic partnerships displayed a similar calibration. Public backing for the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines under AUKUS rose modestly but remained below support for cooperation on advanced technologies more broadly.

Attitudes toward the regional environment reflected pragmatic restraint. Support for forming trade or security blocs that deliberately exclude China fell to its lowest level in the series, while assessments of the bilateral relationship's contribution to regional stability remained largely unchanged. New 2025 data revealed strong concern about China's maritime behaviour and broad endorsement of cooperation with regional partners, including joint patrols and assistance to Southeast Asian states such as the Philippines.

On Taiwan, a clear majority supported strengthening political and economic engagement with Taipei, even if this risked tension with Beijing, while only a minority backed direct military involvement. When asked about a potential US-China conflict over Taiwan, respondents were almost evenly divided between lending military support to the US and remaining neutral, with neutrality edging higher than in 2024. Together these results suggest that Australians favour solidarity through diplomacy and economic engagement while remaining cautious about entanglement in any prospective military conflict.

In the domestic security sphere, concern about foreign interference remained significant but showed signs of moderation. The charging of a Chinese national by the Australian Federal Police under foreign interference legislation in August 2025 kept espionage and influence operations in public view,[8] even as perceptions of Chinese interference eased slightly in the data. Meanwhile, concern about interference from Russia and the US rose, narrowing the perceived gap among major powers.

Taken together, the 2025 results depict an electorate alert to China's expanding capabilities yet increasingly accustomed to managing strategic competition as a persistent feature of the regional order. Public sentiment has consolidated into a form of pragmatic vigilance, supporting sustained defence preparedness, alliance coordination and technological resilience while continuing to prioritise diplomacy and regional stability over confrontation.

3.2 Security and stability

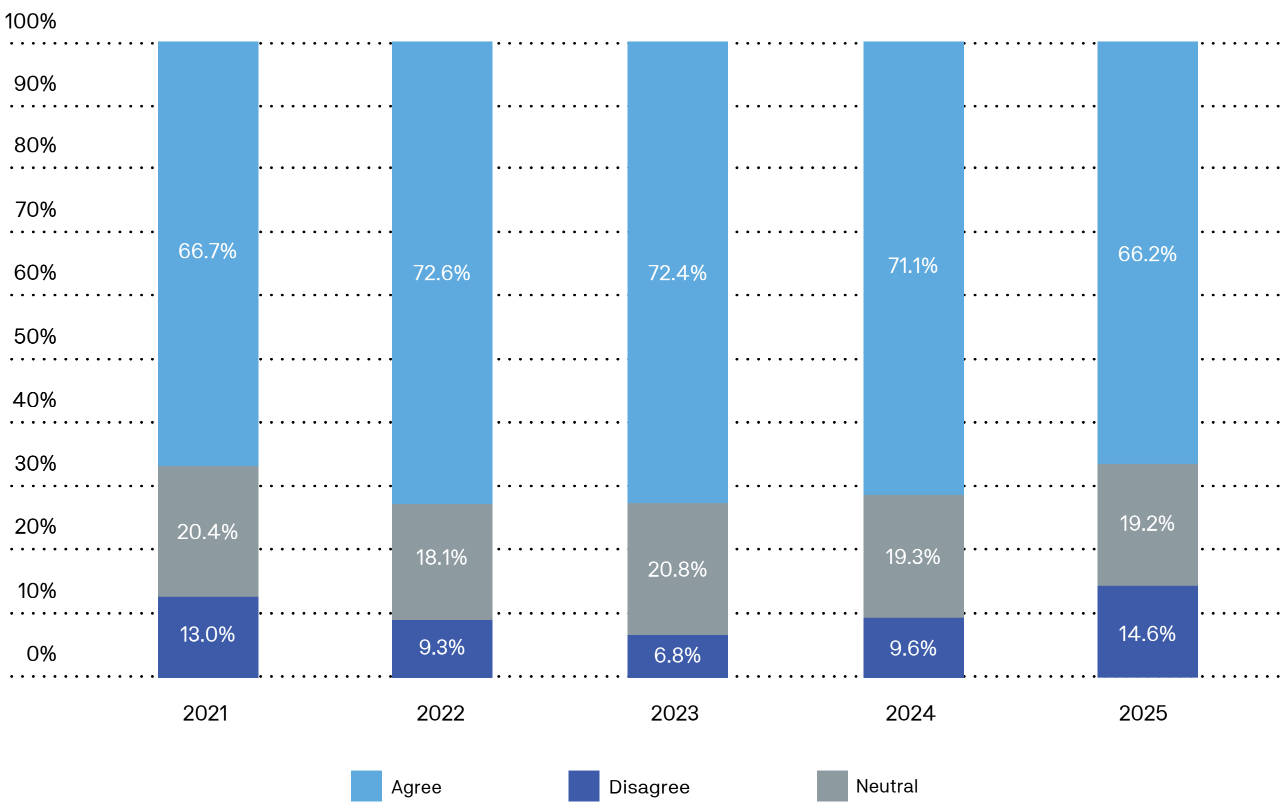
'China is a security threat to Australia'

Agreement that China represents a security threat to Australia fell from 71 percent in 2024 to 66 percent in 2025, a five-point decrease and the lowest level recorded since 2021 (67 percent). After a modest rise into the low 70s in 2022 (73 percent) and 2023 (72 percent), perceptions held steady through 2024 before easing this year.

Over the five-year period, disagreement shifted from 13 percent in 2021 to 15 percent in 2025, with fluctuations in between, while neutral responses remained fairly stable at 18 to 21 percent. Despite this year's decline, two-thirds of Australians continue to view China as a security threat (Figure 13).

Figure 13. **China as a security threat**

China is a security threat to Australia | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*

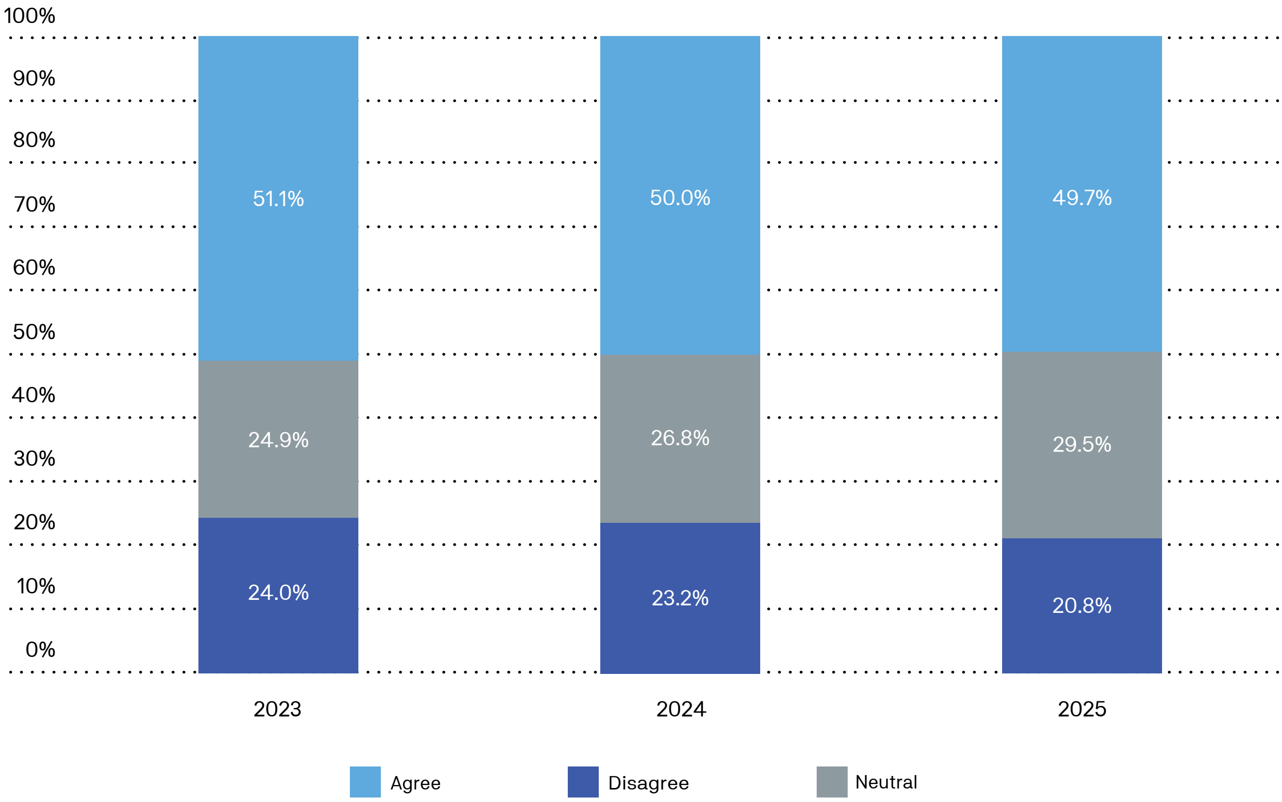


'Military conflict with China within three years is a serious possibility'

Agreement that military conflict with China within three years is a serious possibility remained essentially unchanged, at 51 percent in 2023 and 50 percent in both 2024 and 2025. Between 2023 and 2025, neutral responses rose five points from 25 percent to 30 percent and disagreement fell three points from 24 percent to 21 percent. These small shifts indicate a broadening of neutral sentiment rather than a directional change in perceived risk (Figure 14). Views on the prospect of conflict appear to have stabilised, suggesting a durable sense of strategic risk within the public mindset.

Figure 14. **Possibility of military conflict with China within three years**

Military conflict with China within three years is a serious possibility | *Asked in 2023, 2024, 2025*



'The Australian government is right to increase defence spending, to balance, among other considerations, China's growing military might'

'The Australian government is right to increase defence spending, even if it means budget cuts in other areas, for example health and education, to deter a military threat from China'

Agreement that Australia is right to increase defence spending reached 72 percent in 2025, a series high and an eight-point rise on the previous year. This follows several years of decline, with support easing from 70 percent in 2022 to 67 percent in 2023 and 64 percent in 2024 before rebounding.

A separate question that introduced explicit trade-offs, such as cuts to health or education spending, showed lower but gradually increasing support: 50 percent in 2023, 53 percent in 2024 and 55 percent in 2025.

The gap between the two questions has varied between 11 and 17 points over the period, indicating continued caution about fiscal trade-offs. Taken together, the results suggest a more stable and gradually strengthening consensus in favour of higher defence spending, even as headline support has moved with changing circumstances (Figures 15A-B).

Figure 15A. **Support for an increase in Australia's defence spending (headline versus trade-off)**

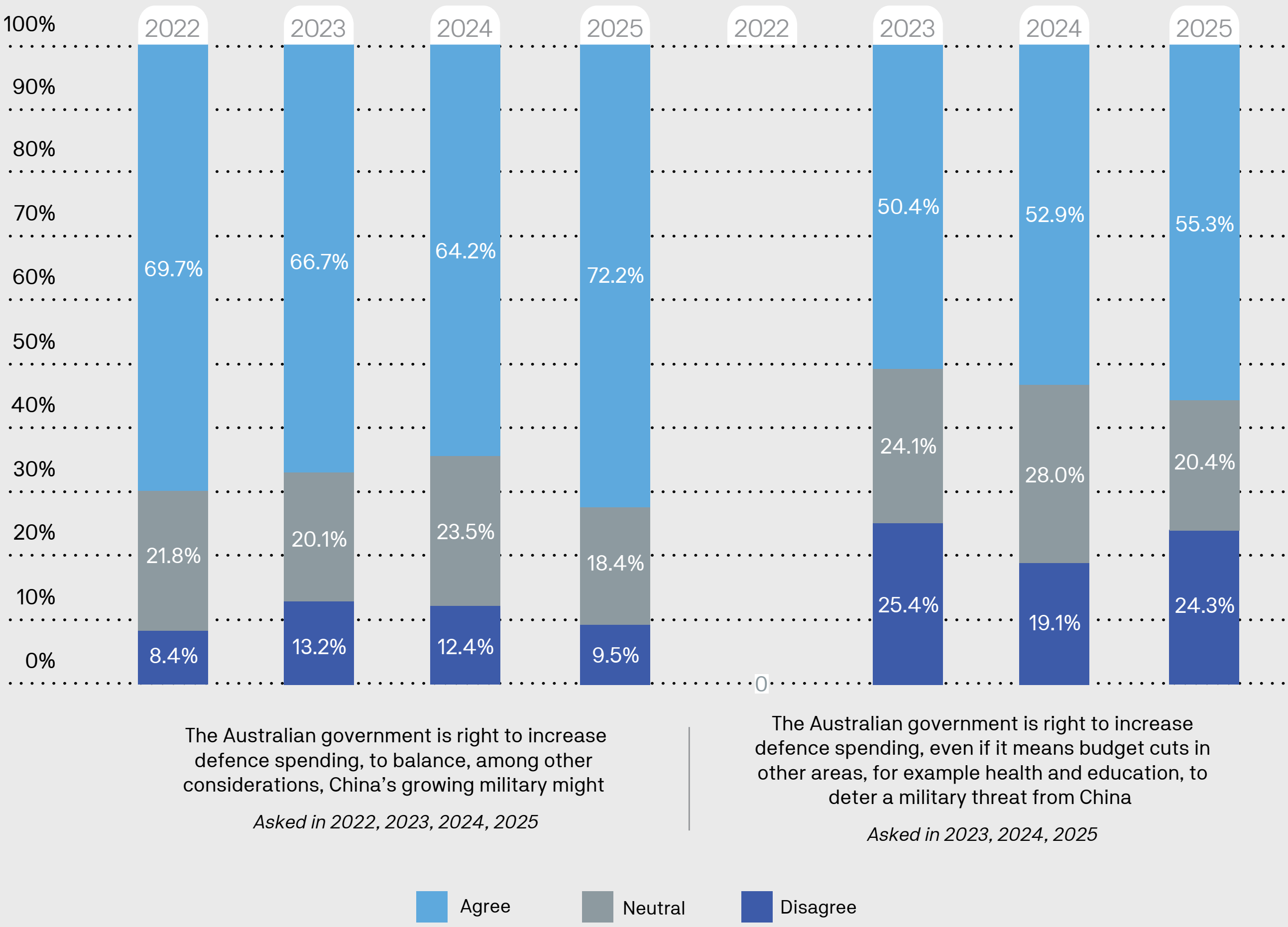
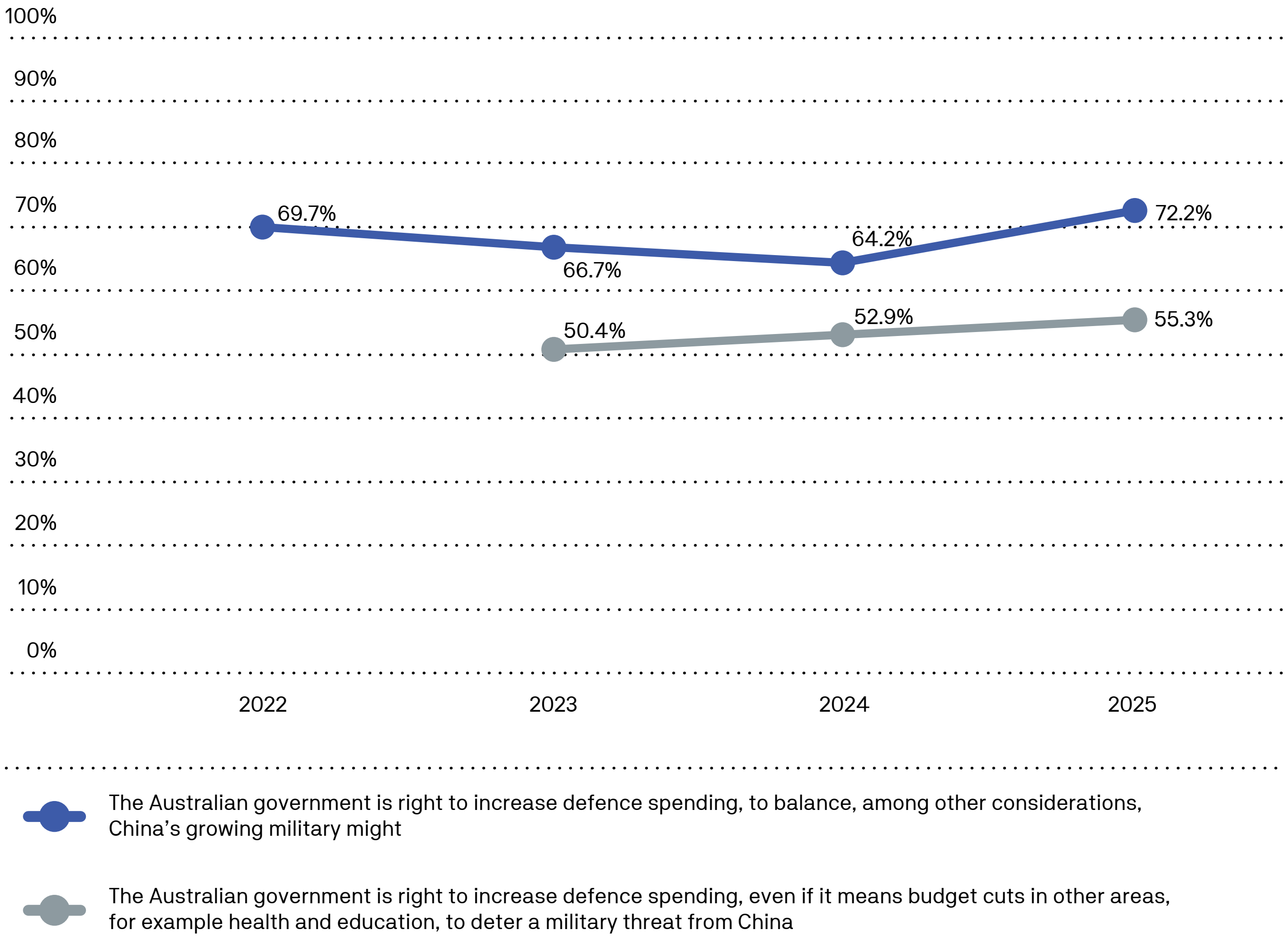


Figure 15B. **Support for an increase in Australia's defence spending (headline versus trade-off) (trends in agreement)**



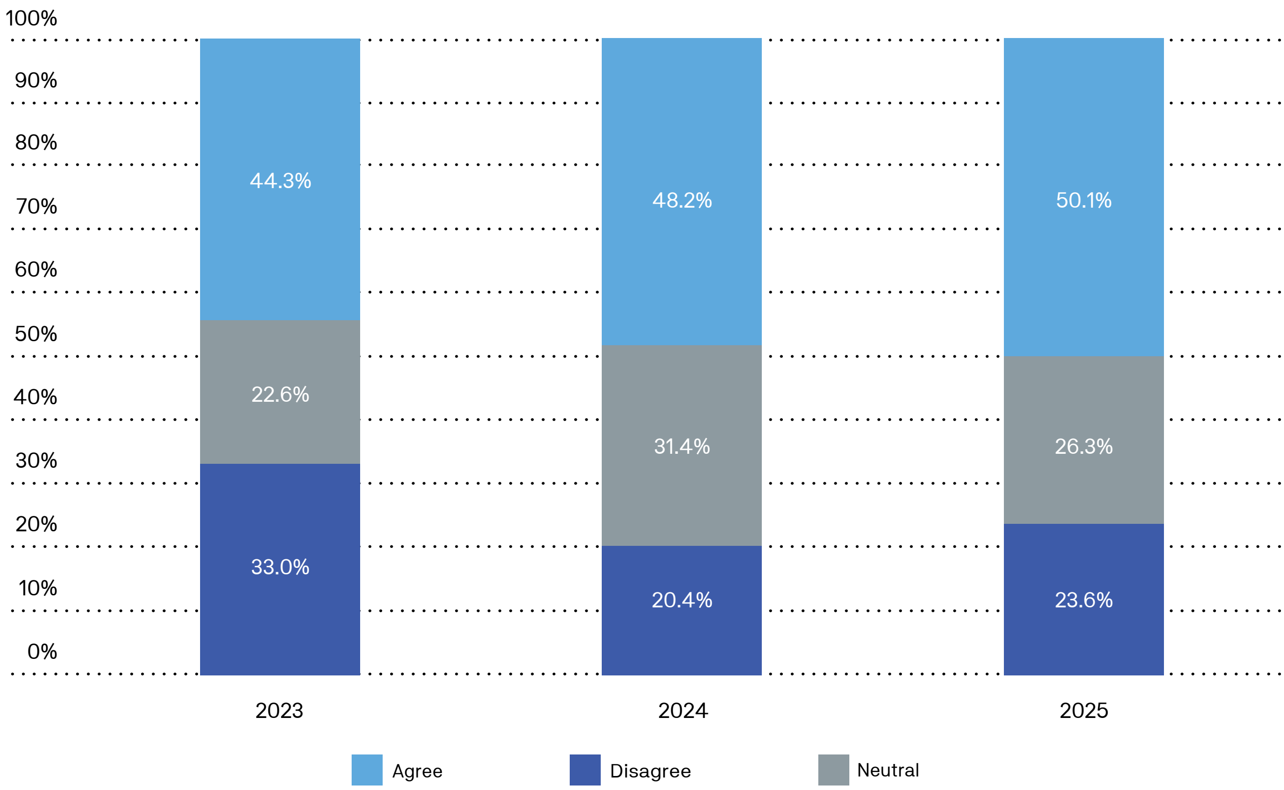
‘The Australian government’s plan to acquire nuclear submarines under the Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) trilateral security partnership will help keep Australia secure from a military threat from China’

Agreement that the Australian government’s plan to acquire nuclear submarines AUKUS will help keep Australia secure from a military threat from China increased from 48 percent in 2024 to 50 percent in 2025, continuing an upward trend since the question was first introduced in 2023 (44 percent). Over the same period, neutrality fluctuated, from 23 percent in 2023 to 31 percent in 2024 before easing to 26 percent in 2025, while disagreement fell overall, from 33 percent in 2023 to 24 percent in 2025 (Figure 16).

These patterns suggest a gradual strengthening of confidence in AUKUS as a contributor to national security, though views remain mixed, with around half supportive and the remainder divided between neutrality and opposition.

Figure 16. **Acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines under AUKUS**

The Australian government’s plan to acquire nuclear submarines under the Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) trilateral security partnership will help keep Australia secure from a military threat from China | *Asked in 2023, 2024, 2025*

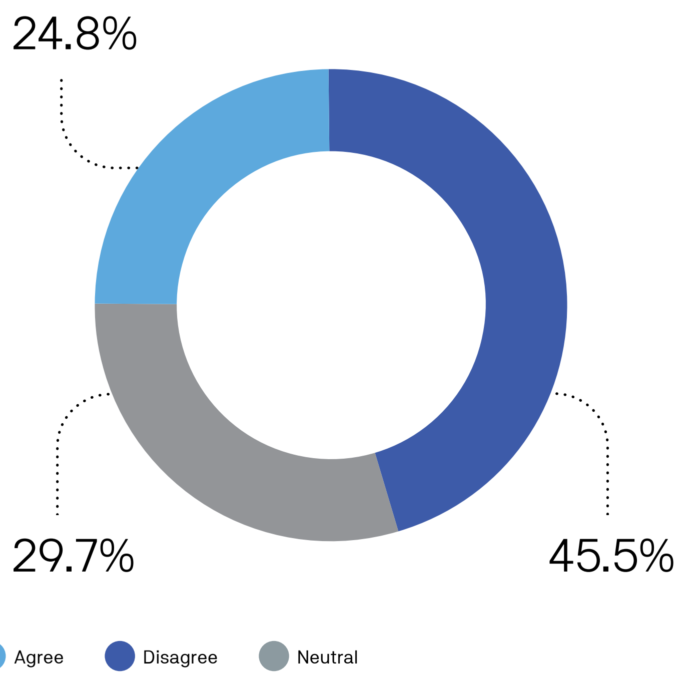


'Australia should reduce its involvement in AUKUS to avoid worsening relations with China'

When asked whether Australia should reduce its involvement in AUKUS to avoid worsening relations with China (a new 2025 item), 46 percent disagreed, 30 percent were neutral and 25 percent agreed (Figure 17). These figures indicate limited support for reducing participation in the trilateral partnership when the rationale of managing diplomatic friction with China is explicitly presented in the question framing.

Figure 17. **Reduction of involvement in AUKUS**

Australia should reduce its involvement in AUKUS to avoid worsening relations with China | *Asked in 2025*



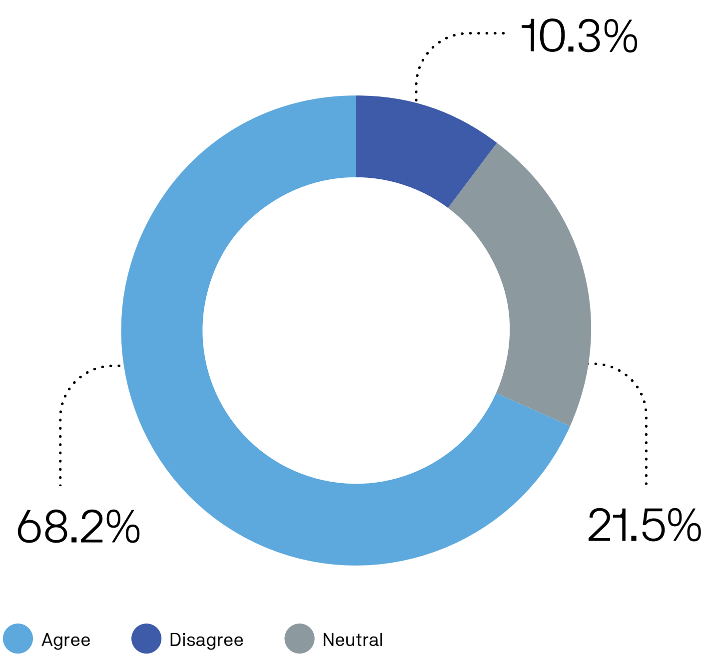
'Australia should use AUKUS to build cooperation with the United States and United Kingdom in advanced technologies (e.g., cyber, AI, quantum computing) that will help it manage relations with China'

At the same time, 68 percent agreed that Australia should use AUKUS to deepen advanced-technology cooperation with the US and UK (with 21 percent neutral and 10 percent disagreeing) (Figure 18).

The 18-point difference between support for technology cooperation 68 percent) and for nuclear-submarine acquisition (50 percent) seems to show greater public ease with collaborative capability development than with large-scale military procurement. However, as the items differ in scope and framing, this pattern should be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive evidence of a preference for technology partnerships over force-structure expansion.

Figure 18. **Cooperation on advanced technologies under AUKUS**

Australia should use AUKUS to build cooperation with the United States and United Kingdom in advanced technologies (e.g., cyber, AI, quantum computing) that will help it manage relations with China | *Asked in 2025*

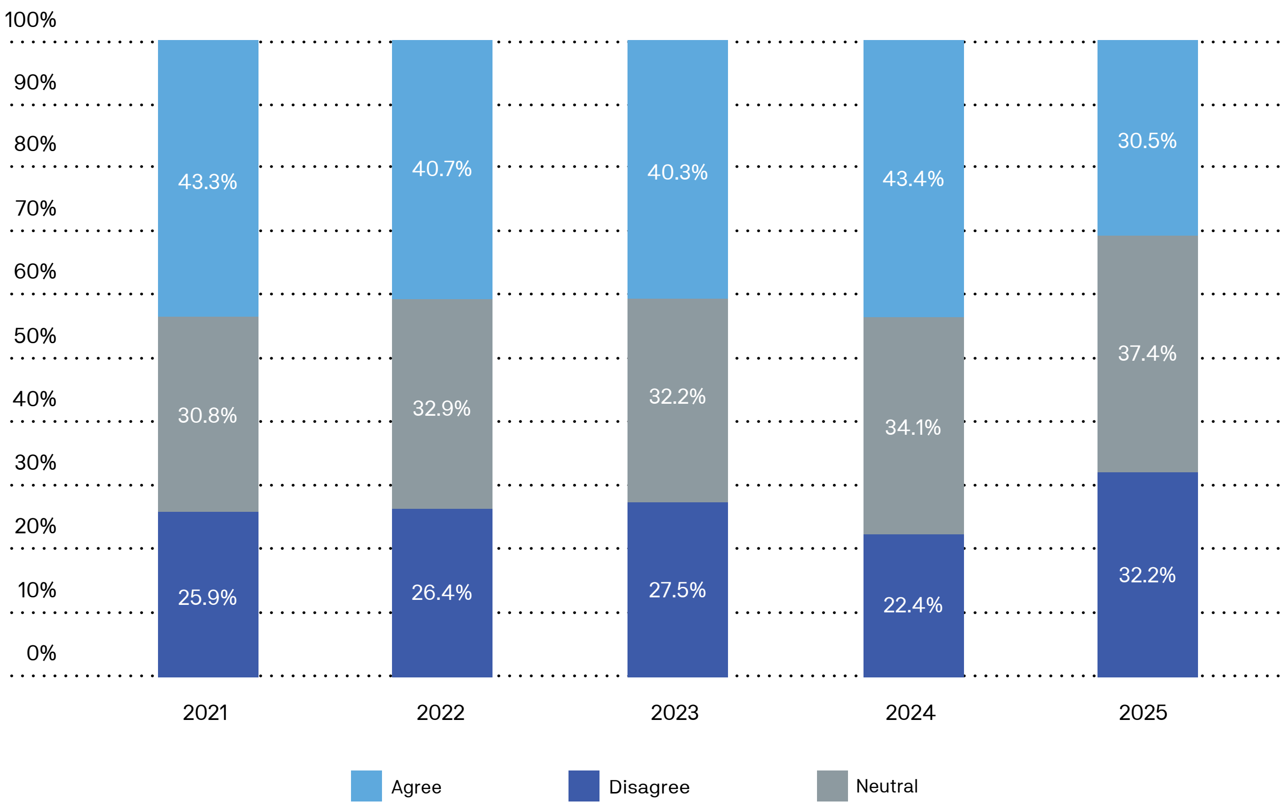


'Australia should form trade and security blocs with other countries that deliberately exclude China'

Support for forming trade and security blocs that exclude China fell from 43 percent in 2024) to 31 percent in 2025, a 12-point decline and the lowest level in the five-year series. During 2021 to 2024, agreement had been steady around 40 to 43 percent. Disagreement also rose from 22 percent in 2024 to 32 percent in 2025, the highest recorded, while neutrality increased to 37 percent (Figure 19). This change appears to mark a softening of support for exclusionary groupings following several years of stability.

Figure 19. **Trade and security blocs**

Australia should form trade and security blocs with other countries that deliberately exclude China | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*

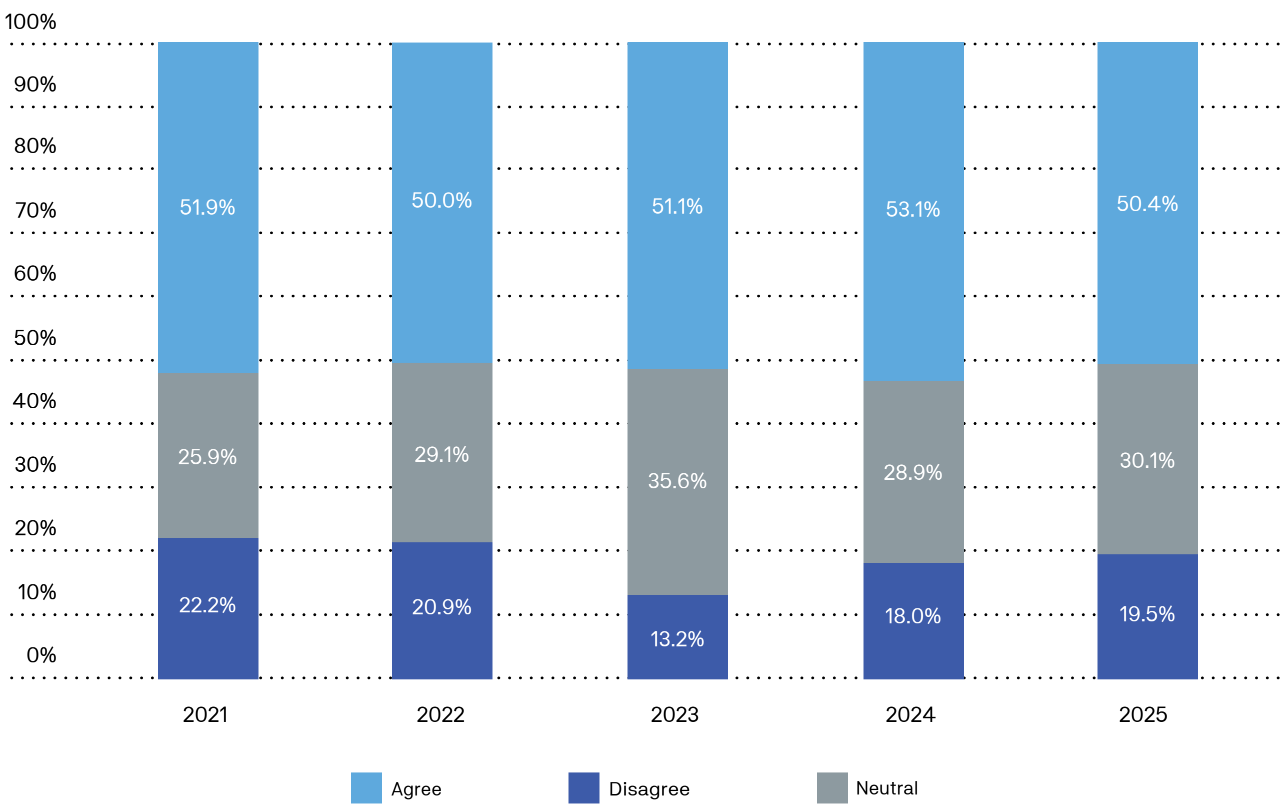


'Australia's relationship with China contributes to regional stability and security'

Agreement that Australia's relationship with China contributes to regional stability decreased slightly from 53 percent in 2024 to 50 percent in 2025, returning to levels broadly consistent with those recorded between 2021 and 2023 (around 50 to 52 percent). Disagreement rose marginally from 18 percent to 20 percent, broadly remaining within the range observed across the series (Figure 20). Overall variation has been limited, indicating that views on the impact of Australia's relationship with China on regional stability have changed little over time.

Figure 20. **Regional stability and security**

Australia's relationship with China contributes to regional stability and security | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



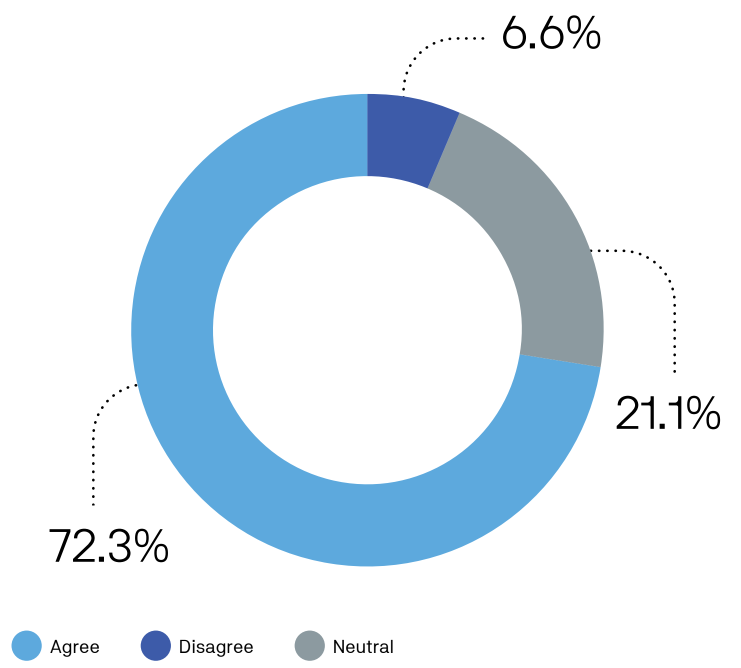
3.3 South China Sea

'China's actions in the South China Sea, including confrontations with countries such as the Philippines, are a threat to Australia's interests'

A clear majority (72 percent) agreed that China's actions in the South China Sea pose a threat to Australia's interests, with 21 percent neutral and seven percent disagreeing (Figure 21). As this question was introduced in 2025, no trend data are available, but the distribution points to a high baseline of perceived threat, roughly comparable to the levels of strategic concern captured in earlier security-related items.

Figure 21. **China's actions in the South China Sea a threat to Australia's interests**

China's actions in the South China Sea, including confrontations with countries such as the Philippines, are a threat to Australia's interests | *Asked in 2025*

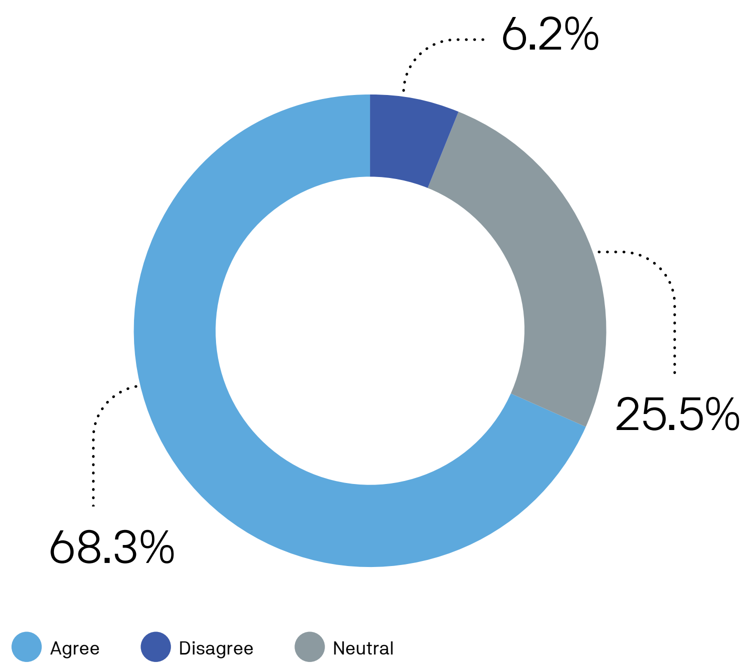


'Australia should support Southeast Asian countries, such as the Philippines, in resisting Chinese actions in the South China Sea'

Agreement that Australia should support Southeast Asian countries, such as the Philippines, in responding to Chinese actions in the South China Sea stood at 68 percent, with 26 percent neutral and six percent disagreeing (Figure 22). This pattern indicates widespread backing for diplomatic and practical cooperation with regional states, though a modest share of neutral responses suggests some uncertainty about the form or extent of such involvement.

Figure 22. **Support for Southeast Asian nations in the South China Sea**

Australia should support Southeast Asian countries, such as the Philippines, in resisting Chinese actions in the South China Sea | *Asked in 2025*



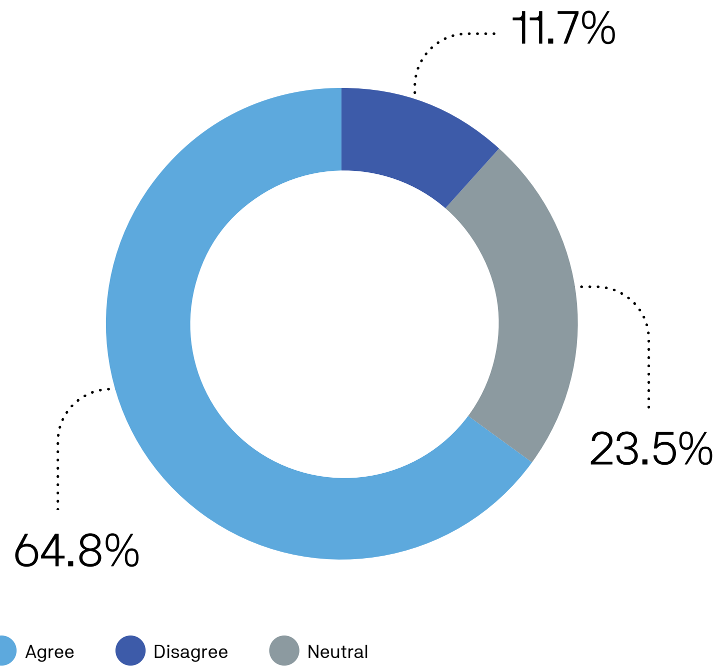
‘Australia should carry out joint patrols in the South China Sea with countries like the US, Japan and the Philippines, even if this creates tensions with China’

A similar proportion (65 percent) agreed that Australia should conduct joint patrols in the South China Sea with partners such as the US, Japan and the Philippines, even if this could create tensions with China. Twenty-four percent were neutral and 12 percent disagreed (Figure 23). These results indicate broad support for visible cooperation with defence partners.

Taken together, the 2025 findings seem to indicate a strong public appetite for regional defence cooperation and sustained vigilance toward China’s maritime behaviour. Because these items were fielded for the first time, it is not yet possible to assess trend direction, but the results establish a high initial benchmark for perceived threat and endorsement of collective action.

Figure 23. **Support for joint patrols in the South China Sea**

Australia should carry out joint patrols in the South China Sea with countries like the US, Japan and the Philippines, even if this creates tensions with China | *Asked in 2025*



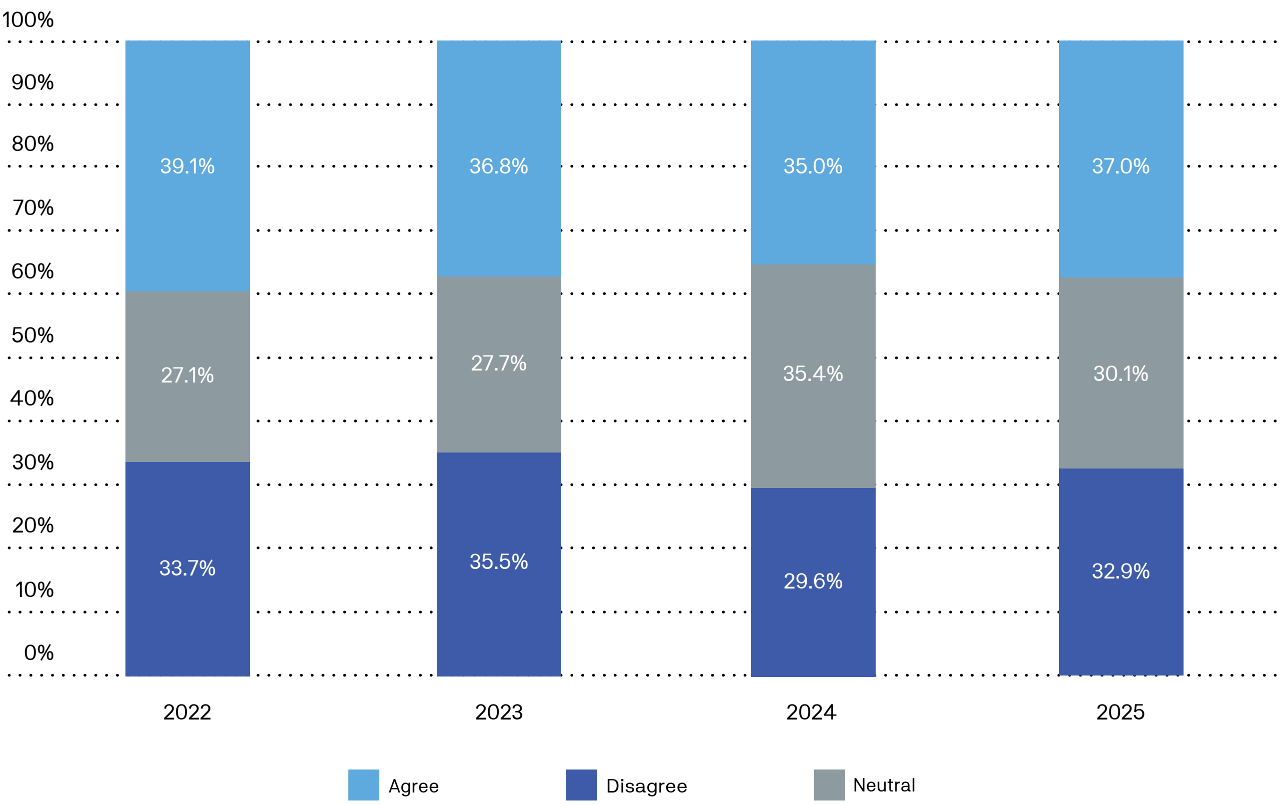
3.4 Taiwan

'If China launches a military attack on Taiwan, Australia should send troops to go to Taiwan's defence'

When asked whether Australia should send troops if China launched a military attack on Taiwan, just over one-third of Australians (37 percent) agreed in 2025 (Figure 24). Support for military intervention has remained within a narrow range of 35 to 39 percent since 2022, with neutral and opposing views dividing the remainder of the electorate in roughly equal measure. The absence of a clear upward or downward trend suggests that Australians have reached a stable equilibrium on the question of direct involvement: a consistent minority back the use of force, but most remain cautious or undecided. This steadiness appears to point to a general reluctance to endorse combat operations, even amid continued concern about China's regional assertiveness.

Figure 24. **Defence of Taiwan**

If China launches a military attack on Taiwan, Australia should send troops to go to Taiwan's defence | *Asked in 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



'In the event of a military conflict between the United States and China over Taiwan, Australia should remain neutral'

'In the event of a military conflict between the United States and China over Taiwan, Australia should lend military support to the United States'

In 2025, 50 percent agreed that Australia should remain neutral in the event of a military conflict between the US and China over Taiwan, while 47 percent agreed that Australia should lend military support to the US in the same scenario, a near-even split that resembles the pattern in 2021 (53 percent and 45 percent, respectively) (Figure 25B).

Between 2022 and 2024, agreement that Australia should remain neutral was generally lower than in 2021 and 2025, ranging from around 42 to 49 percent (42 percent in 2022; 49 percent in 2023; 43 percent in 2024). Over the same period, agreement that Australia should lend military support reached majority levels in 2022 and 2023 (56 percent and 52 percent) before falling back below 50 percent in 2024 and 2025. The 2025 results therefore bring the balance of opinion back closer to the 2021 pattern, with a slight lead for remaining neutral and no clear majority for military involvement (Figures 25A-B).

Across the series, the data highlight a persistent tension: attitudes shift from year to year, with neither position enjoying sustained dominance. Although each option reaches majority support in some years, neither maintains majority backing consistently across the series, meaning no stable consensus emerges. This pattern points to an underlying cautiousness rather than entrenched polarisation.

Figure 25A. **Conflict over Taiwan between the United States and China**

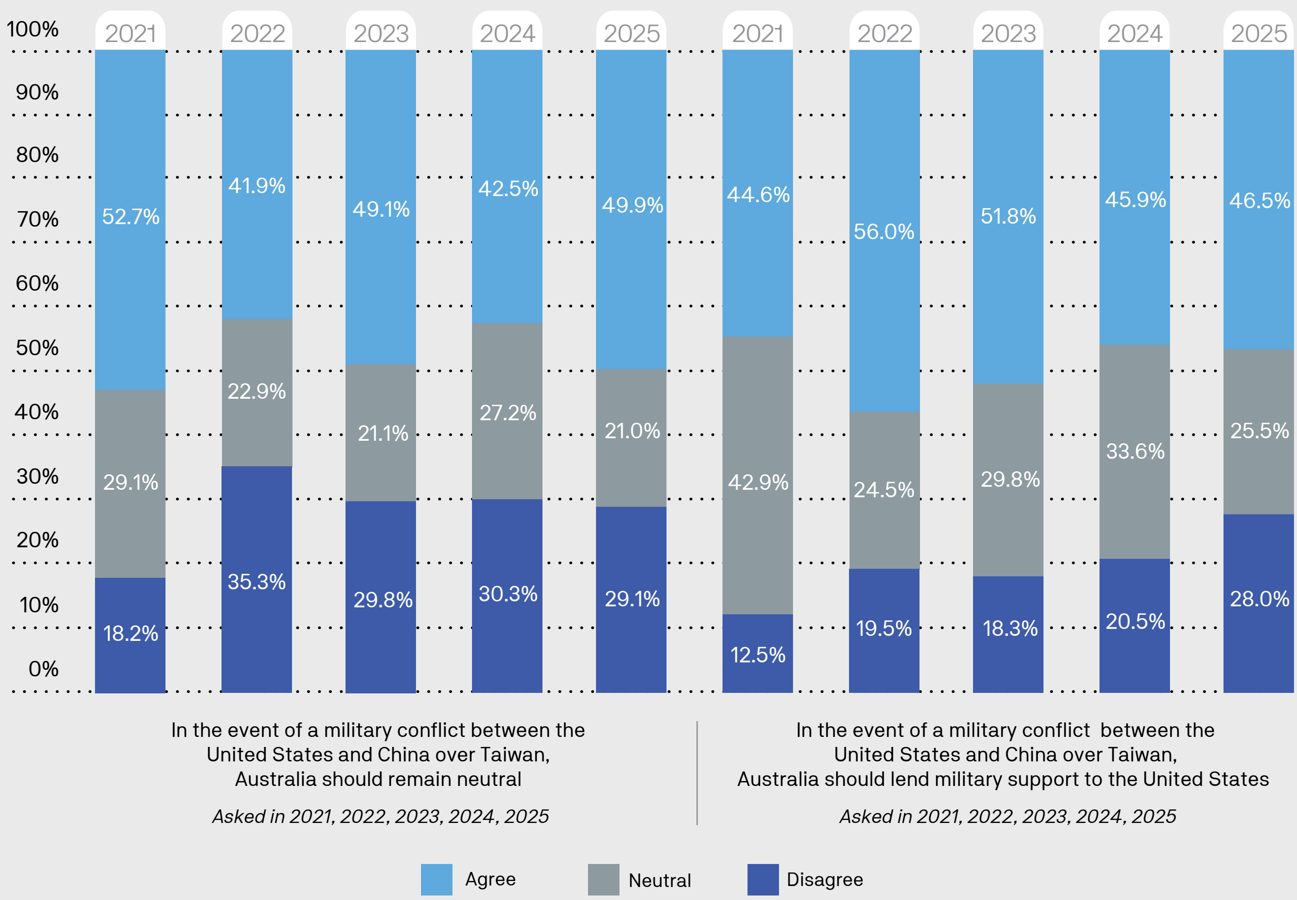
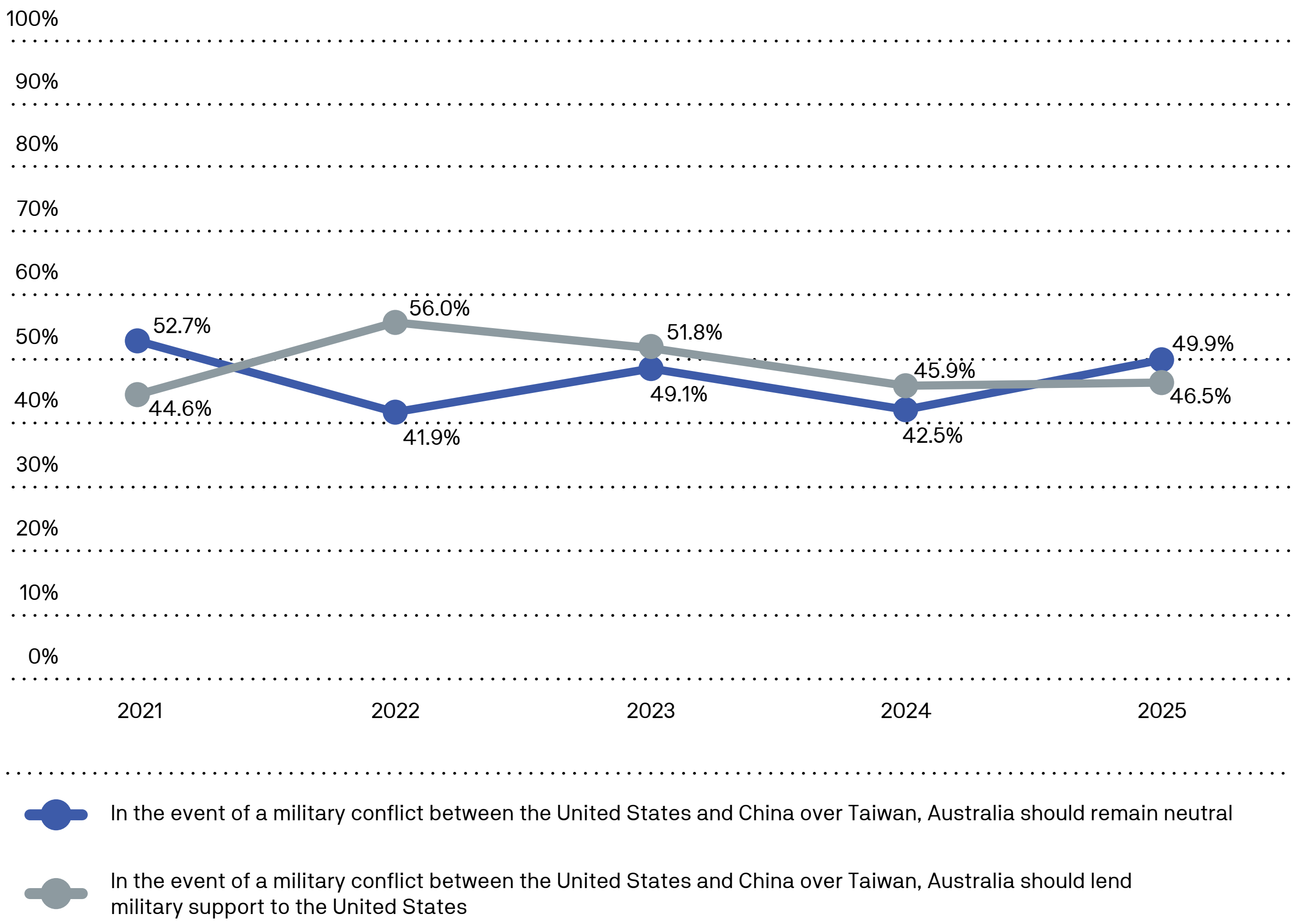


Figure 25B. **Conflict over Taiwan between the United States and China**

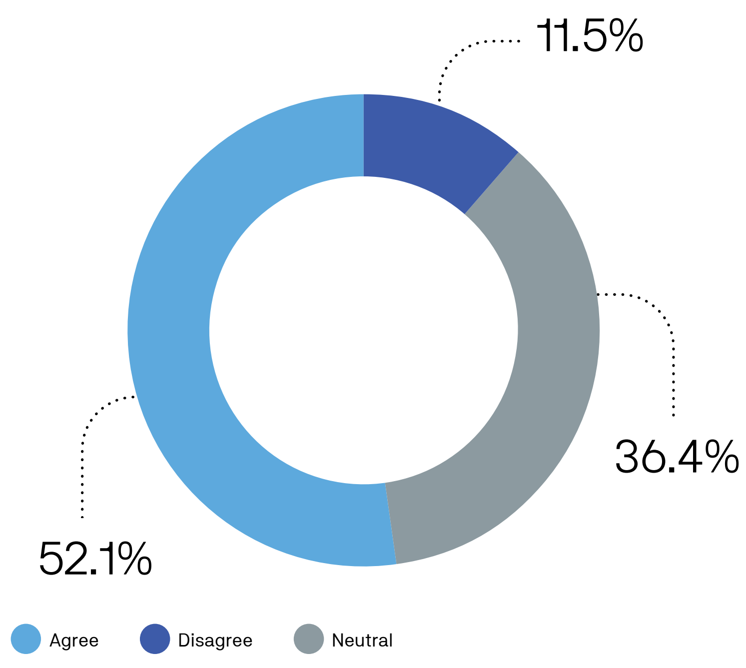


'Australia should strengthen economic and political engagement with Taiwan, even if this contributes to tensions with China'

A separate question on strengthening ties with Taiwan shows similar nuance. In 2025, 52 percent agreed that Australia should deepen economic and political engagement with Taiwan even if this contributed to tensions with Beijing, while 36 percent were neutral and 12 percent disagreed (Figure 26). Although asked for the first time in 2025, the result indicates broader comfort with non-military forms of support than with participation in an armed conflict. Australians appear willing to expand political and economic engagement with Taipei while remaining hesitant to endorse direct military involvement should hostilities occur.

Figure 26. **Support for engagement with Taiwan**

Australia should strengthen economic and political engagement with Taiwan, even if this contributes to tensions with China | *Asked in 2025*



3.5 Cybersecurity

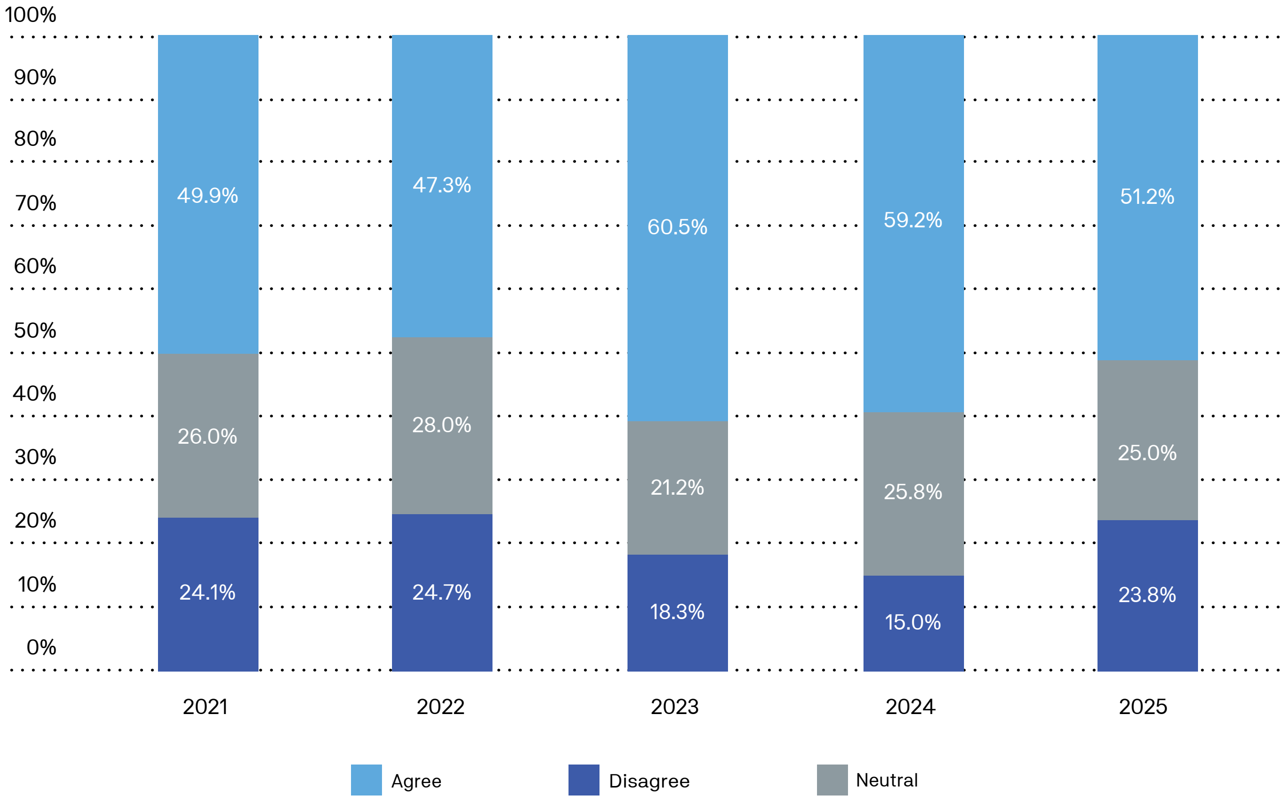
'Australia should ban Chinese-owned apps such as TikTok and WeChat'

Support for banning Chinese-owned apps such as TikTok and WeChat declined from 59 percent in 2024 to 51 percent in 2025, an eight-point fall, returning close to the 2021 baseline of 50 percent after peaking at 61 percent in 2023. Over the same period, disagreement rose to 24 percent in 2025, matching the upper levels recorded earlier in the series, while neutrality remained steady near 25 percent (Figure 27).

These movements appear to show a gradual softening in support for restrictive digital measures after a period of elevated concern, though a narrow majority continue to favour bans overall. The levelling-off of support likely reflects a broader moderation in threat perceptions observed elsewhere in the survey rather than a decisive reversal of sentiment.

Figure 27. **Support for banning apps such as TikTok and WeChat**

Australia should ban Chinese-owned apps such as TikTok and WeChat | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



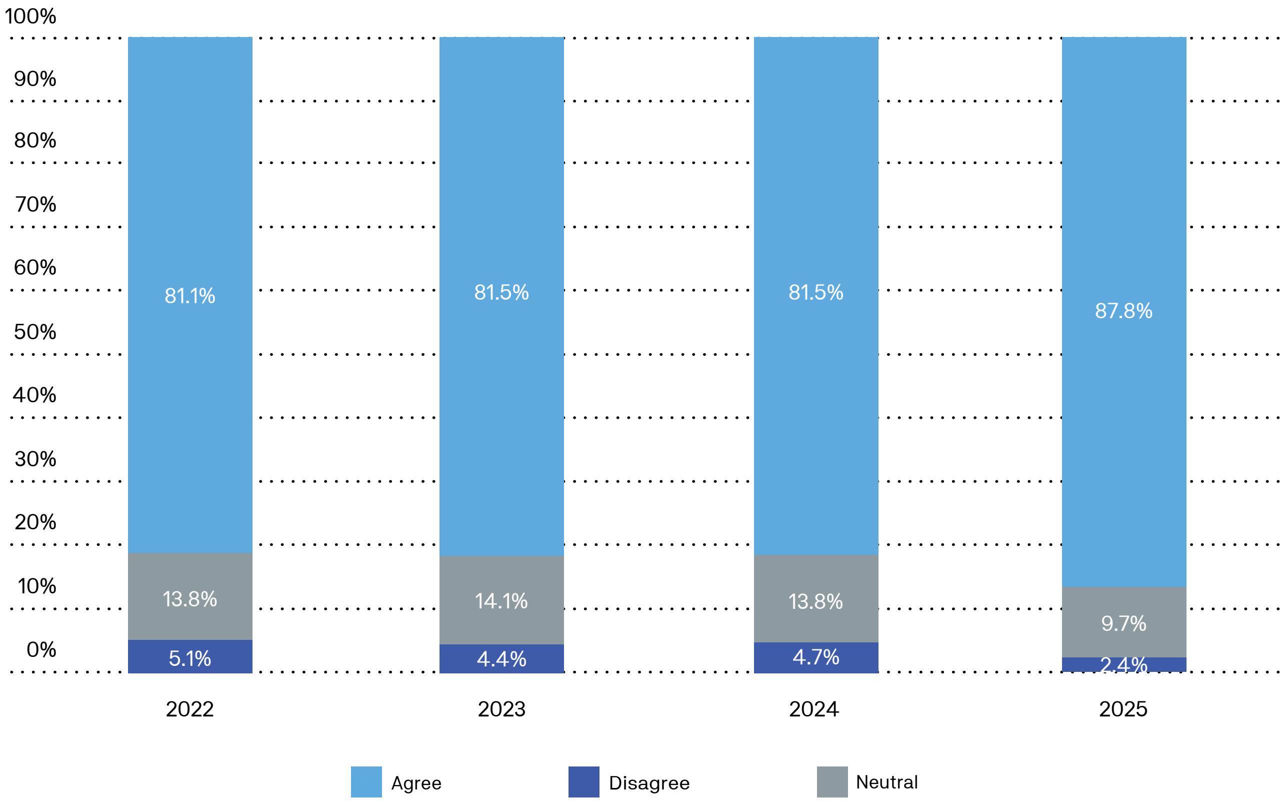
'The Australian government is right to publicly call out any Chinese state-sponsored cybersecurity attacks on Australia's digital systems'

Agreement that the Australian government is right to publicly attribute Chinese state-sponsored cyberattacks reached 88 percent in 2025, the highest level in the four-year series. Support had remained largely stable between 81 and 82 percent from 2022 to 2024 before rising by six points this year. Disagreement fell to two percent, down from around five percent in 2022, while neutrality declined to 10 percent (Figure 28).

This incremental strengthening of support indicates a near-unanimous consensus that public attribution is appropriate, even as enthusiasm for more punitive or restrictive measures such as app bans has eased.

Figure 28. **Public attribution of Chinese state-sponsored cybersecurity attacks**

The Australian government is right to publicly call out any Chinese state-sponsored cybersecurity attacks on Australia's digital systems | *Asked in 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



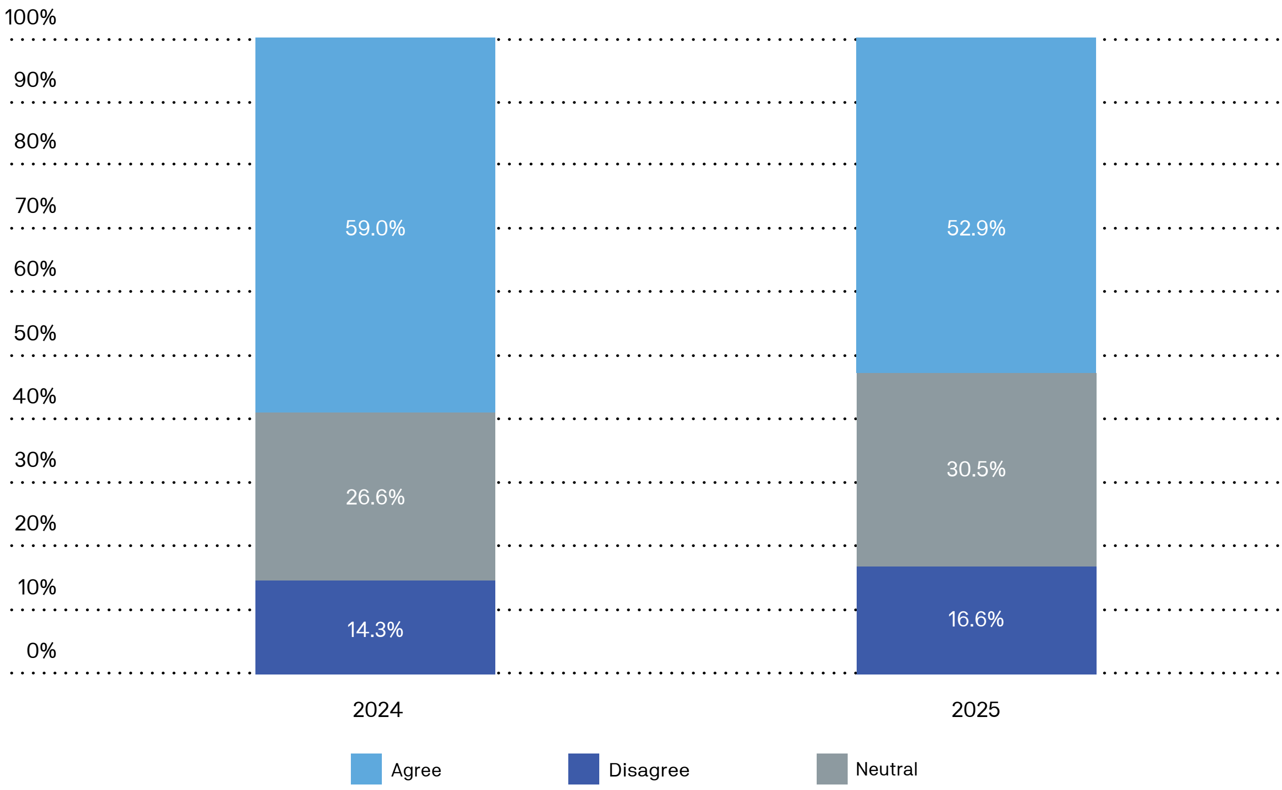
3.6 Espionage and foreign interference

'Espionage conducted by China against Australia is more concerning than espionage against Australia conducted by other countries'

Agreement that espionage conducted by China is a major concern decreased six points from 59 percent in 2024, when the question was first introduced, to 53 percent in 2025. Over the same period, neutrality rose from 27 percent to 31 percent and disagreement increased from 14 percent to 17 percent, indicating a moderate shift away from strong concern toward more uncertain or dismissive positions (Figure 29).

Figure 29. **Espionage conducted by China**

Espionage conducted by China against Australia is more concerning than espionage against Australia conducted by other countries | *Asked in 2024, 2025*



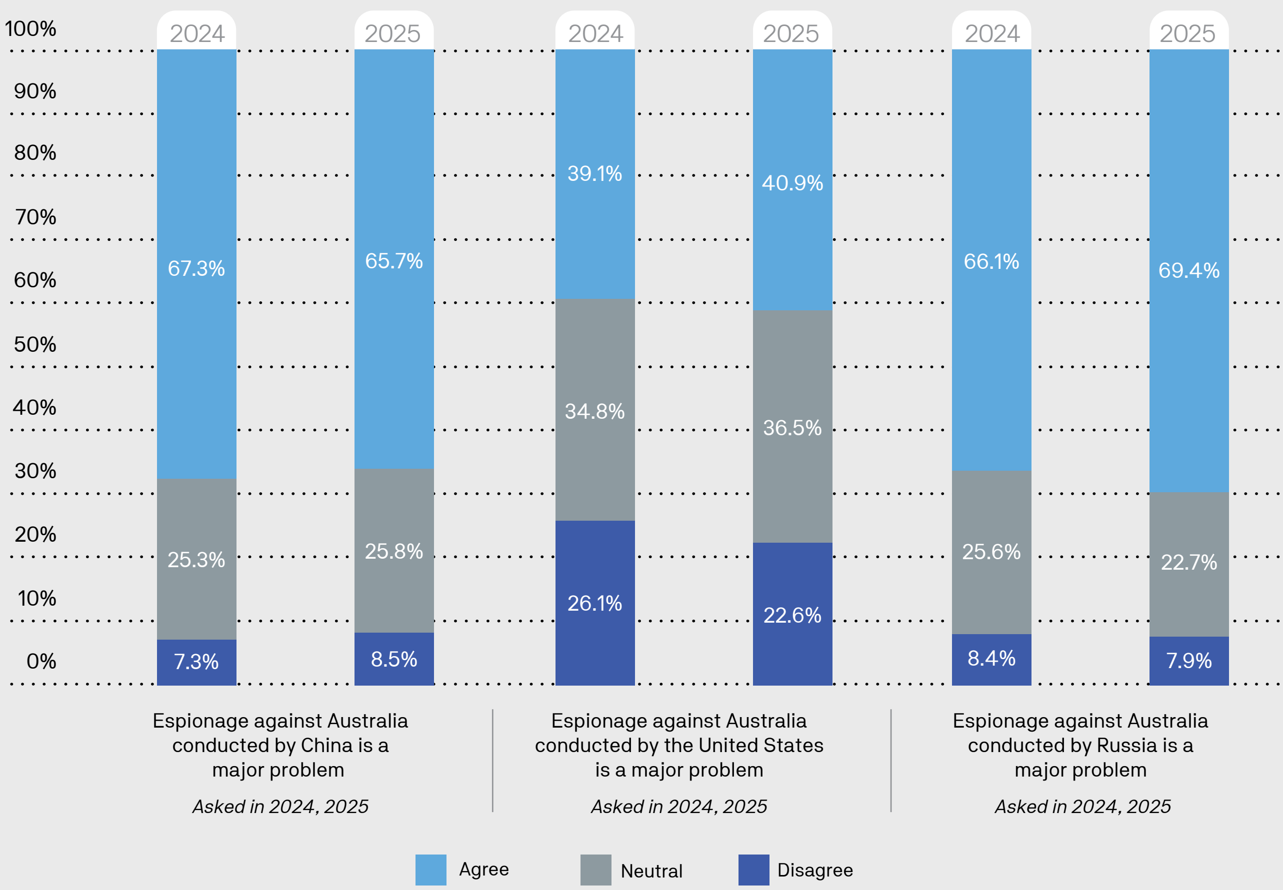
'Espionage against Australia conducted by China is a major problem'

'Espionage against Australia conducted by the United States is a major problem'

'Espionage against Australia conducted by Russia is a major problem'

In comparative perspective, concern about espionage by China remained essentially unchanged between 2024 (67 percent) and 2025 (66 percent), while concern about Russian espionage rose modestly from 66 to 69 percent and concern about US espionage from 39 to 41 percent (Figure 30). These results indicate that public attention to espionage risks has broadened slightly beyond China, even as it continues to be viewed as the most prominent source of threat.

Figure 30. **Espionage – Country comparisons**

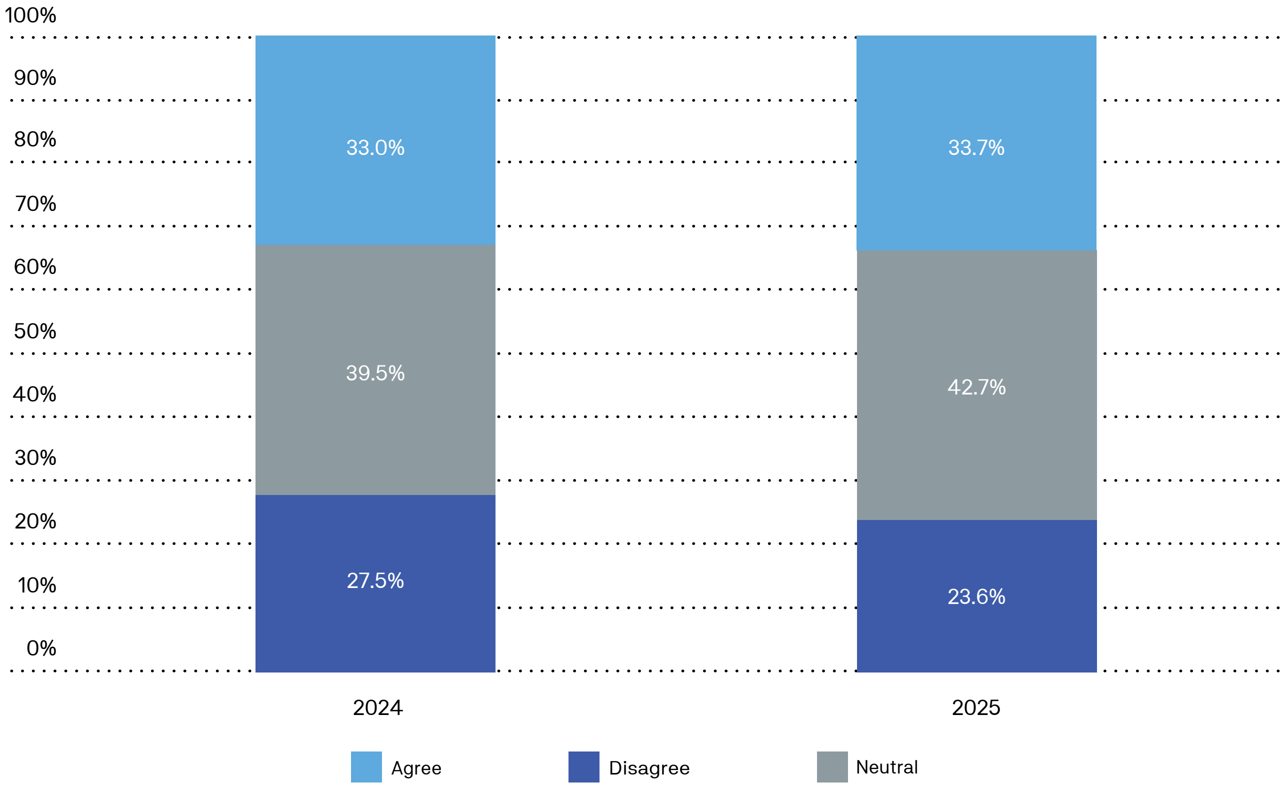


'The Australian government is successfully responding to espionage conducted by China against Australia'

Confidence in the government's handling of Chinese interference remained broadly stable between 2024 (33 percent) and 2025 (34 percent), with a small uptick in neutrality (from 40 to 43 percent) and a slight reduction in disagreement (from 28 to 24 percent) (Figure 31).

Figure 31. **The Australian government's response to espionage conducted by China against Australia**

The Australian government is successfully responding to espionage conducted by China against Australia | *Asked in 2024, 2025*

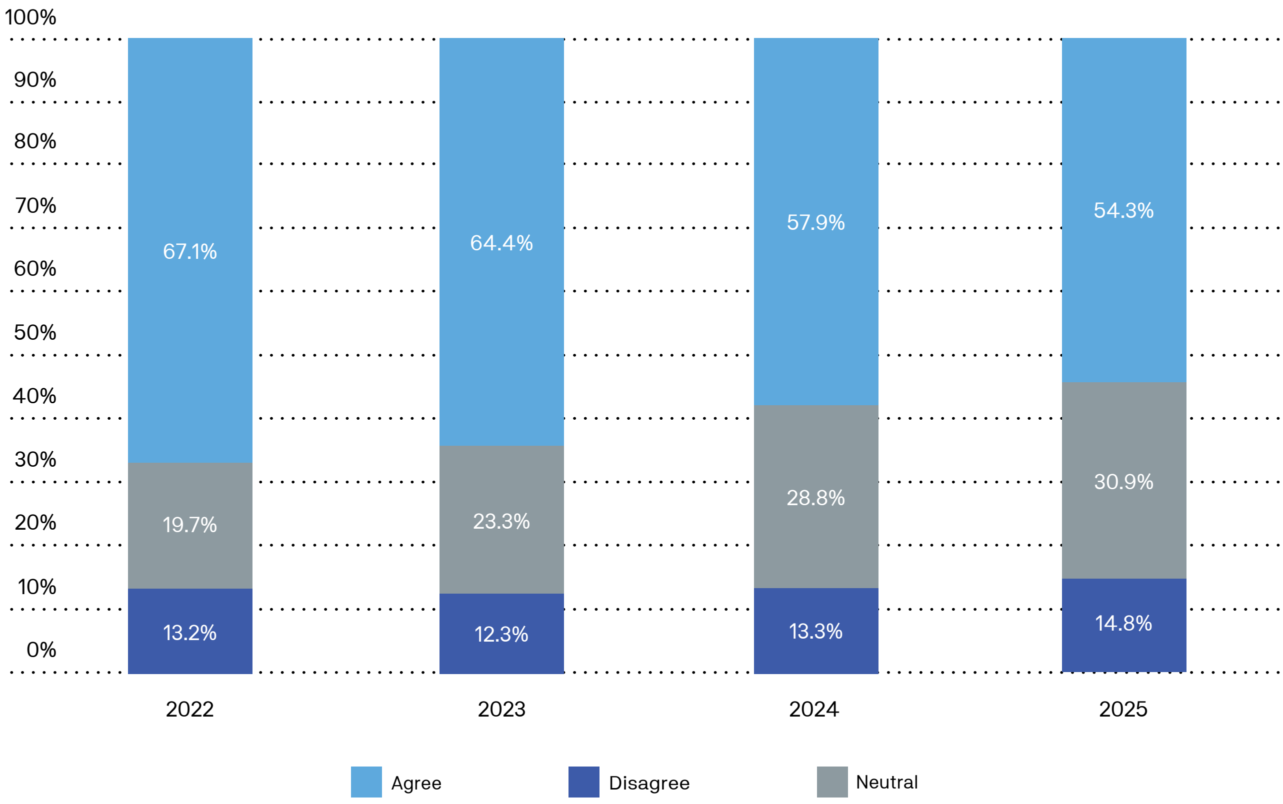


'Foreign interference stemming from China is more concerning than foreign interference from other countries'

Agreement that foreign interference from China is a serious problem was 54 percent in 2025, compared with 58 percent in 2024, 64 percent in 2023, and 67 percent in 2022. The four-point movement between 2024 and 2025 is modest, best understood as part of a longer-term easing trend rather than a significant annual decline. Over the same period, neutrality rose from 20 to 31 percent and disagreement from 13 to 15 percent. Overall, although a clear majority of respondents still regard interference from China as a serious concern, the rise in neutrality and slight increase in disagreement point to a gradual widening of less alarmed views rather than a sharp shift in outlook (Figure 32).

Figure 32. **Foreign interference stemming from China**

Foreign interference stemming from China is more concerning than foreign interference from other countries | *Asked in 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



'Foreign interference stemming from China is a major problem'

'Foreign interference stemming from the United States is a major problem'

'Foreign interference stemming from Russia is a major problem'

In comparative perspective, concern about interference from China and Russia appears to have plateaued following several years of gradual decline or stabilisation, while concern about interference from the US has continued to rise more steadily. Since 2021, concern about China has eased from 72 to 64 percent, Russia has fluctuated before levelling around 64 percent, and the US has risen from 37 to 54 percent. These patterns suggest a narrowing of perceived differences among major powers, driven largely by a progressive normalisation of US-related concerns rather than an intensification of alarm over China or Russia (Figures 33A-B).

The result is a more level comparative landscape, even as China remains the most consistently and widely recognised source of interference in the Australian context.

Figure 33A. **Foreign interference – Country comparisons**

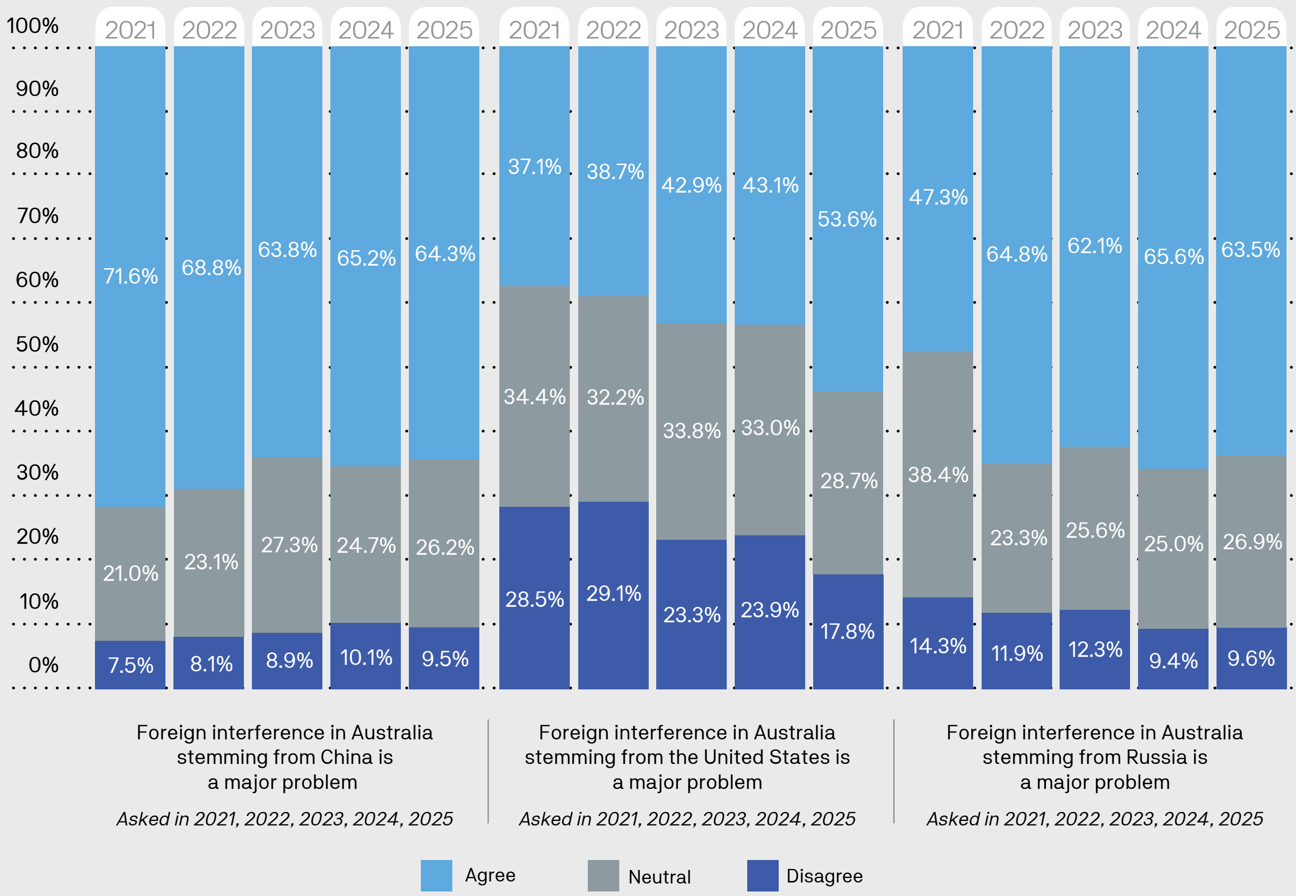
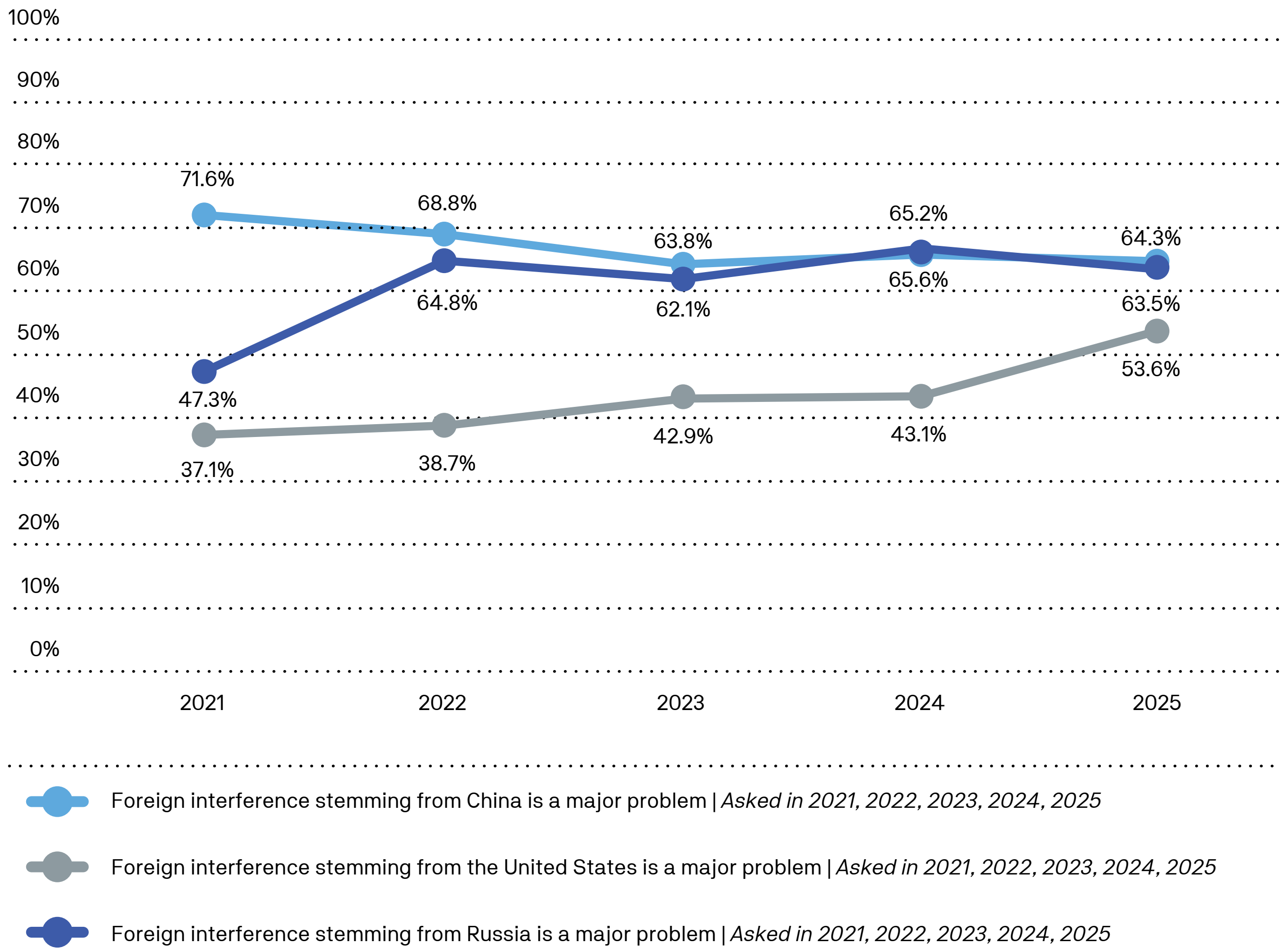


Figure 33B. **Foreign interference – Country comparisons (trends in agreement)**

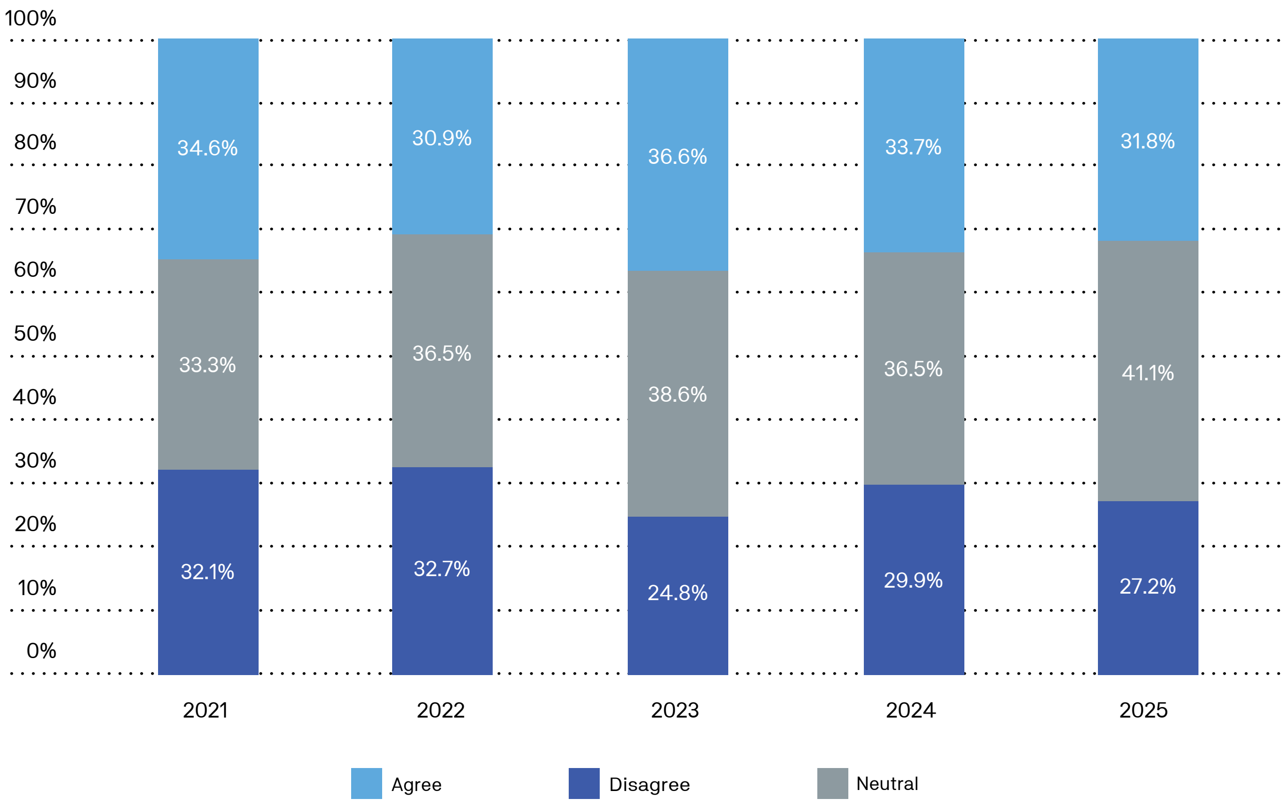


'The Australian government is successfully responding to Chinese government interference in Australia'

Confidence in the government's handling of Chinese interference remained broadly stable, at 32 percent in 2025 compared with 34 percent in 2024. Neutrality rose slightly to 41 percent, the highest in the five-year series, and disagreement fell from 30 to 27 percent (Figure 34). These small shifts point to a continuation of limited but steady confidence, alongside a mild reduction in overt criticism as a growing share of respondents adopt a neutral or cautious stance toward the government's performance.

Figure 34. **Efficacy of the Australian government's response to Chinese government interference in Australia**

The Australian government is successfully responding to Chinese government interference in Australia | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



4.
The United States

4.1 Overview

The 2025 survey was conducted amid significant developments in the Australia-US relationship. In March 2025, Prime Minister Albanese publicly warned that the US decision to impose global tariffs on steel and aluminium was 'entirely unjustified' and 'against the spirit of our two nations' enduring friendship.'[9] The following month, the US introduced a 10 percent baseline tariff on most imported goods from Australia, alongside higher duties on steel and aluminium (50 percent), copper products (50 percent) and vehicles and parts (25 percent) as part of a broader global tariff package.[10] Albanese later described the measures as 'economic self-harm', warning they would raise costs and slow growth.[11]

At the time survey responses were collected, the Australian Prime Minister and the US President had not yet met. Shortly after fieldwork concluded, Albanese and Trump met in Washington, announcing an $8.5 billion critical minerals deal intended to reduce dependence on China.[12] While this occurred after the survey period, it completed a sequence of developments that defined the broader context in which Australian views of the US were formed in 2025.

Across the 2021 to 2025 series, Australian opinions of the US evolved amid intensifying US-China rivalry and questions about alliance reliability. The public remained broadly supportive of the alliance but increasingly aware of its limits and trade-offs.

Confidence in Australia's ability to maintain good relations with both Washington and Beijing reached its highest level in 2025, suggesting that most Australians still see balanced diplomacy as achievable despite strategic competition.

Expectations that the US might eventually compel Australia to choose between itself and China rose substantially, surpassing expectations of Chinese pressure for the first time. This signals a reassessment of where Australians perceive strategic constraints to lie, though it does not necessarily indicate weakening support for the alliance.

A majority also viewed the return of President Trump as heightening the risk of regional conflict, while three-quarters supported Australia making its China-policy decisions independently of US preferences.

Perceptions of US regional influence declined markedly over the five-year period, reaching their lowest level in 2025. Increased Chinese engagement in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, combined with debate over the reliability of US policy under the new administration, likely informed this reassessment of regional power dynamics.

Views on economic coercion showed the most pronounced movement. Concern about Chinese trade punishment eased slightly, whereas perceptions of US willingness to apply trade or investment pressure rose sharply.

Overall, the 2021 to 2025 findings portray an electorate that values the US partnership yet seeks clearer boundaries on its influence.

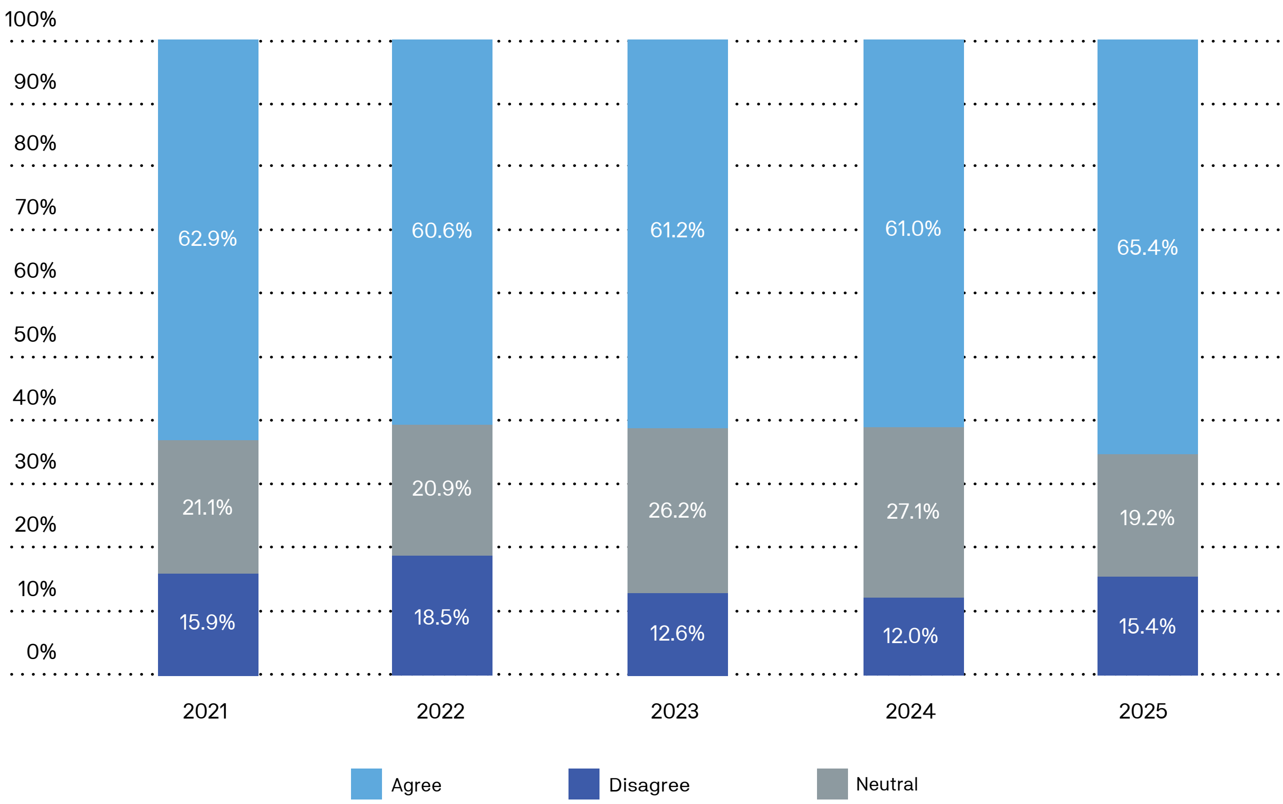
4.2 Balancing Australia's relationships with the United States and China

'Australia can enjoy a good relationship with both China and the United States at the same time'

Across the five-year series, most Australians continued to believe that the country can maintain good relations with both Washington and Beijing. Agreement with this view rose from 63 percent in 2021 and around 61 percent between 2022 and 2024 to 65 percent in 2025, the highest level in the series. Neutral responses declined from 27 percent in 2024 to 19 percent in 2025, while disagreement increased slightly from 12 percent to 15 percent (Figure 35). These results indicate a modest but clear strengthening in public confidence that balanced relations with both powers are achievable.

Figure 35. **Australia's relationships with the United States and China**

Australia can enjoy a good relationship with both China and the United States at the same time | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



'China will eventually force Australia to choose between a close relationship with Beijing or a close relationship with Washington'

'The United States will eventually force Australia to choose between a close relationship with Washington or a close relationship with Beijing'

When asked whether either China or the US would eventually force Australia to choose between them, perceptions diverged. Agreement that China would compel such a choice remained broadly stable across the five-year period – 51 percent in 2021, dipping to 46 percent in 2022, before returning to the low 50s from 2023 to 2025 (50 percent in 2023; 52 percent in 2024; 51 percent in 2025)..

By contrast, agreement that the US would do so rose steadily from 39 percent in 2021 to 42 percent in 2022, 47 percent in 2023 and 2024, and 57 percent in 2025. The overall 18-point increase marks the first time expectations of pressure from Washington (57 percent) have exceeded those from Beijing (51 percent).

Over the same period, disagreement that the US would apply such pressure fell from 27 percent to 14 percent, underscoring the gradual rise in this perception (Figures 36A-B).

Figure 36A. **Forced to choose?**

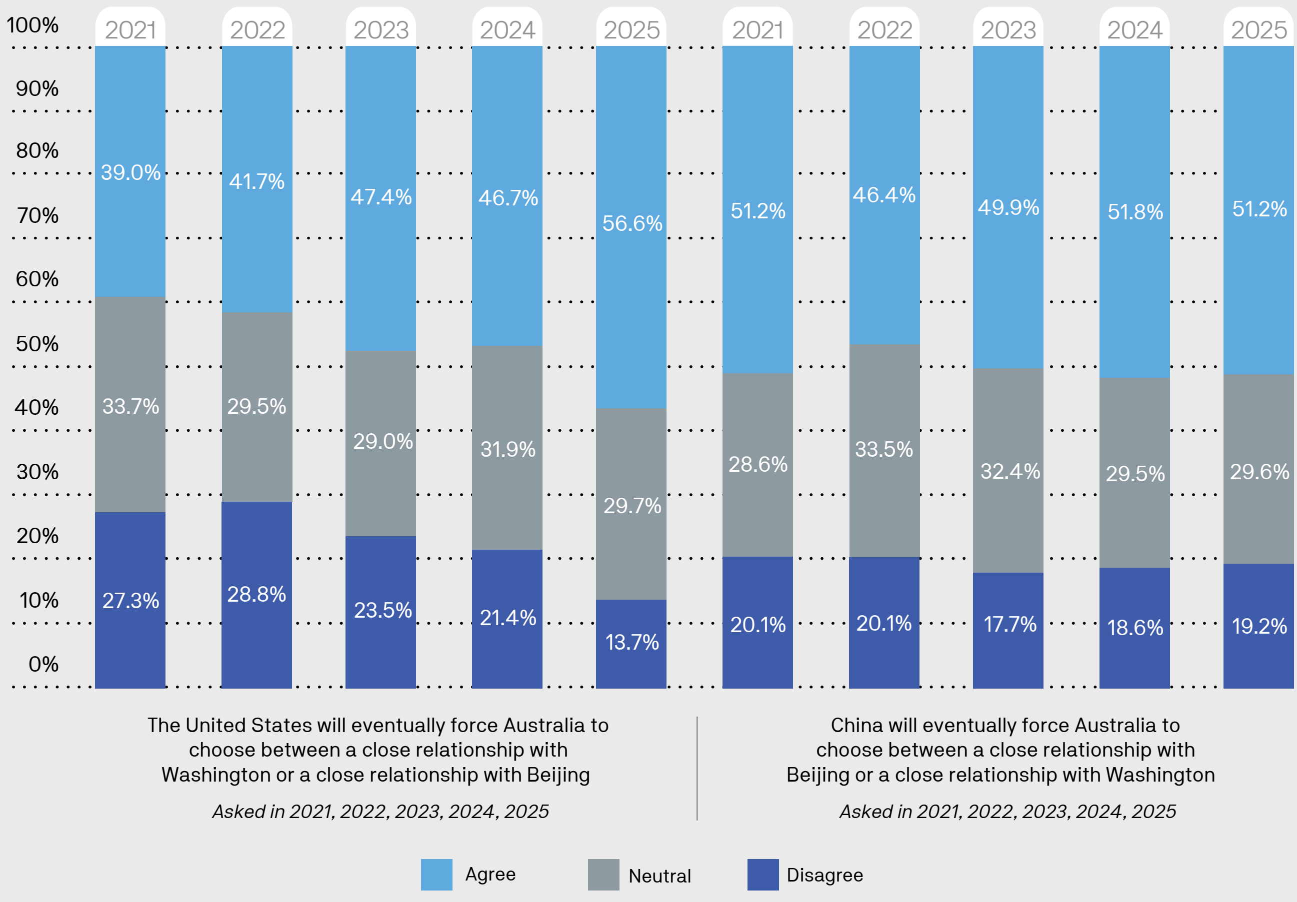
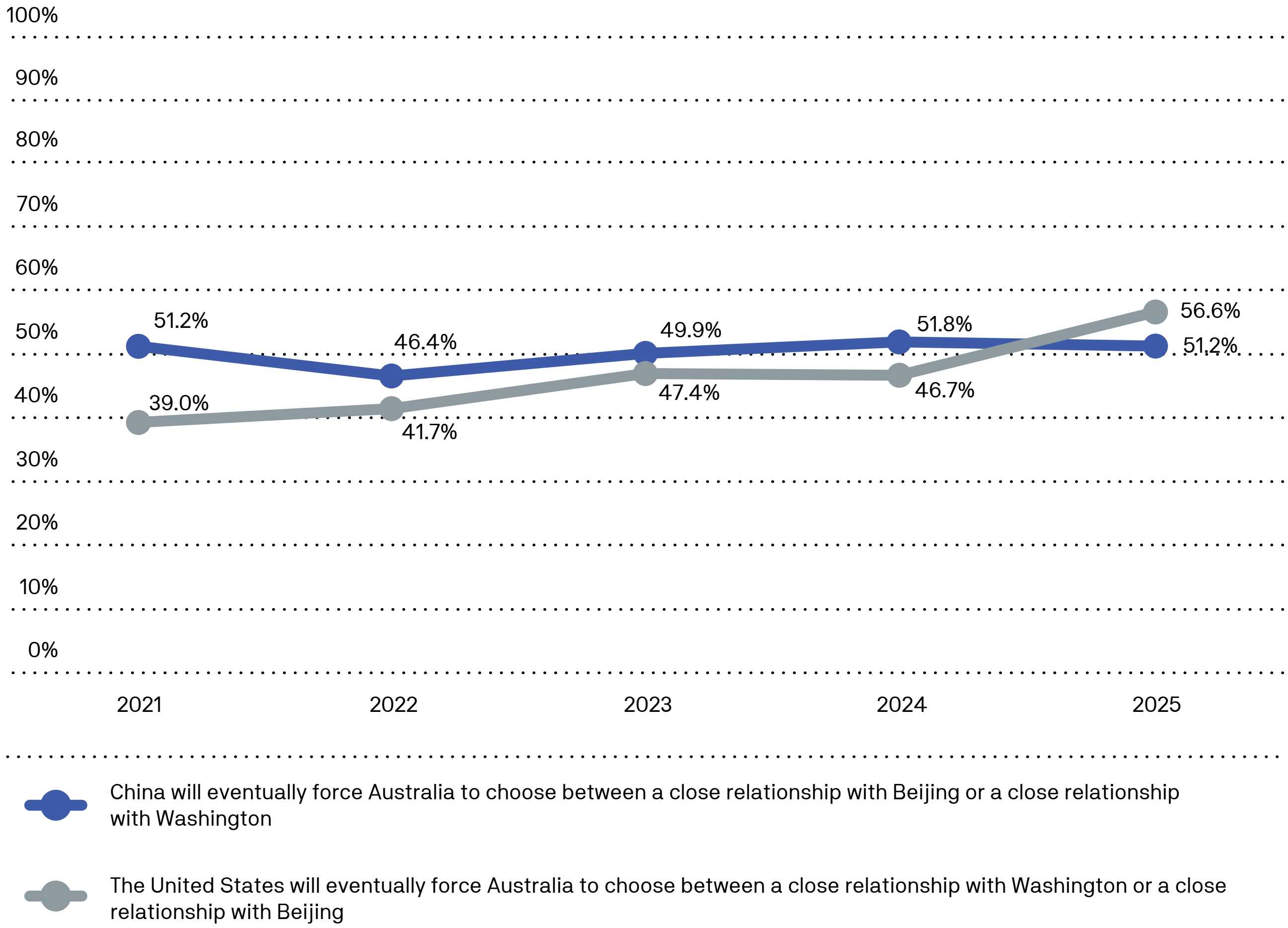


Figure 36B. **Forced to choose? (trends in agreement)**



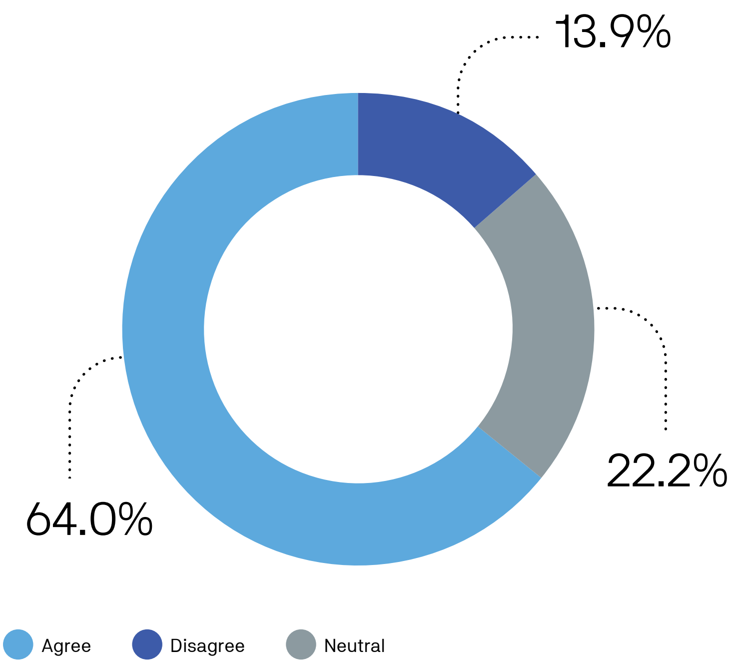
4.3 The second Trump presidency and China

'Under President Donald Trump, Australia is more likely to be drawn into a conflict with China'

A new 2025 question asked whether Australia is more likely to be drawn into a conflict with China under President Trump. Sixty-four percent agreed, 22 percent were neutral, and 14 percent disagreed (Figure 36). The results suggest that a substantial majority associate the current US administration with increased regional tension.

Figure 37. **Likelihood of conflict with China under Trump's presidency**

Under President Donald Trump, Australia is more likely to be drawn into a conflict with China | *Asked in 2025*



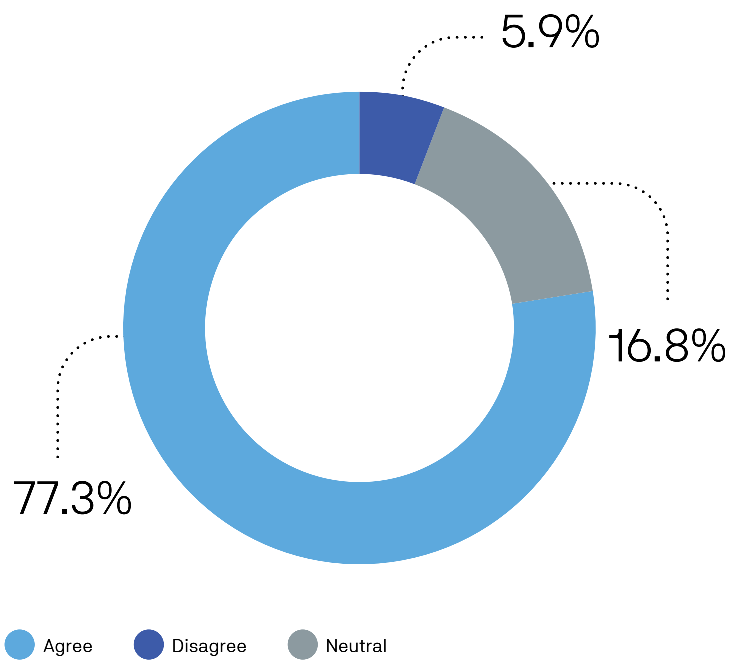
4.4 An independent foreign policy

'Australia should make China policy decisions independently, even when they differ from the United States' preferences'

Another new 2025 item found 77 percent agreement that Australia should make its China policy decisions independently, even when they differ from US preferences. Only six percent disagreed and 17 percent were neutral (Figure 38).

Figure 38. **Making independent foreign policy**

Australia should make China policy decisions independently, even when they differ from the United States' preferences | *Asked in 2025*



4.5 Regional influence

'The United States has more influence than China in Australia's regional neighbourhood'

Perceptions of relative influence in Australia's regional neighbourhood shifted markedly over the five-year period, with the sharpest movement occurring between 2024 and 2025. Agreement that the US has more influence than China steadily declined from 65 percent in 2021 to 61 percent (2022), 56 percent (2023), 55 percent (2024) and 38 percent (2025), a total fall of 27 points, and a 17-point drop in the past year alone. Over the same period, disagreement rose from nine to 29 percent, and neutral responses from 26 to 33 percent, reflecting a pronounced weakening in perceptions of clear US dominance (Figures 39A-B).

Figure 39A. **The United States and China's regional influence**

The United States has more influence than China in Australia's regional neighbourhood | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*

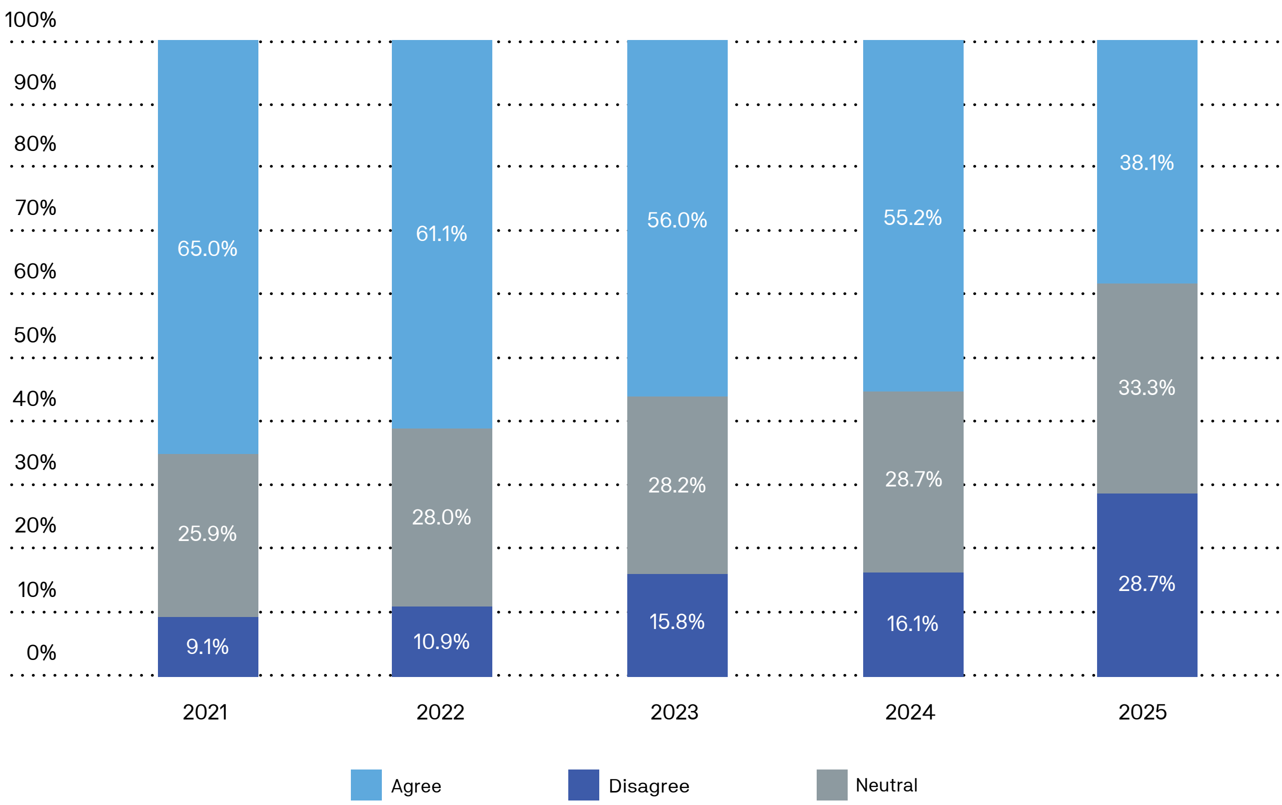
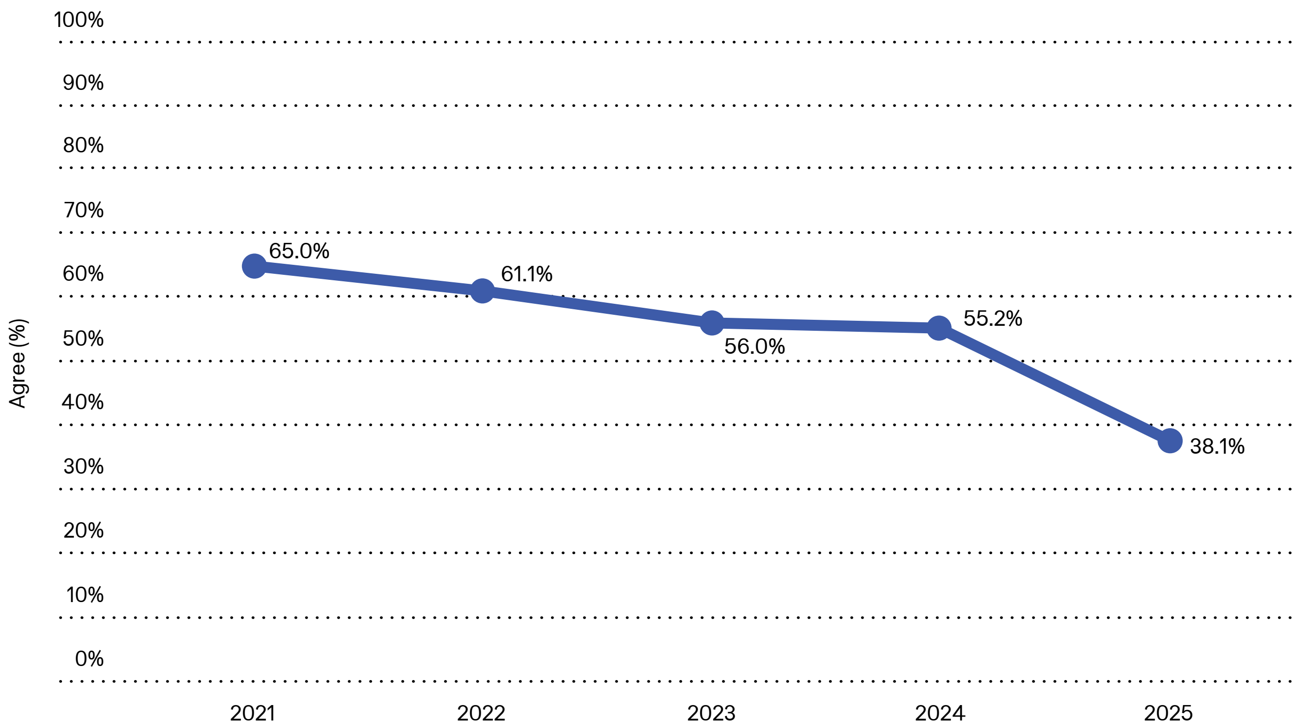


Figure 39B. **The United States and China's regional influence (trend in agreement)**



4.6 Trade and coercion dynamics

'The United States government is willing to use its trade and investment ties with Australia to punish Australia over political disagreements'

'The Chinese government is willing to use its trade and investment ties with Australia to punish Australia over political disagreements'

Attitudes toward the potential use of economic leverage by China and the US moved in opposite directions over the five-year series.

Agreement that China is willing to use trade and investment ties to punish Australia over political disagreements declined gradually, from 77 percent (2021) to 74 percent (2022), 73 percent (2023), 76 percent (2024) and 70 percent (2025), a net fall of seven points.

By contrast, agreement that the US is willing to use trade and investment ties to punish Australia rose sharply, from 33 percent (2021 to 2022), 34 percent (2023) and 36 percent (2024) to 72 percent (2025), a 36-point increase in one year. From 2024 to 2025, disagreement fell from 27 to eight percent and neutrality from 37 to 20 percent (Figures 40A-B). This represents the steepest single-year movement in the dataset.

Taken together, these results indicate that Australians continue to view China as the more consistent source of economic coercion, but perceptions of US willingness to employ similar measures have expanded markedly. The data suggest an emerging symmetry in how both powers are judged, reflecting a more transactional reading of international behaviour rather than a realignment of allegiance.

Figure 40A. **The United States and China's willingness to mete out economic punishment over political disagreements**

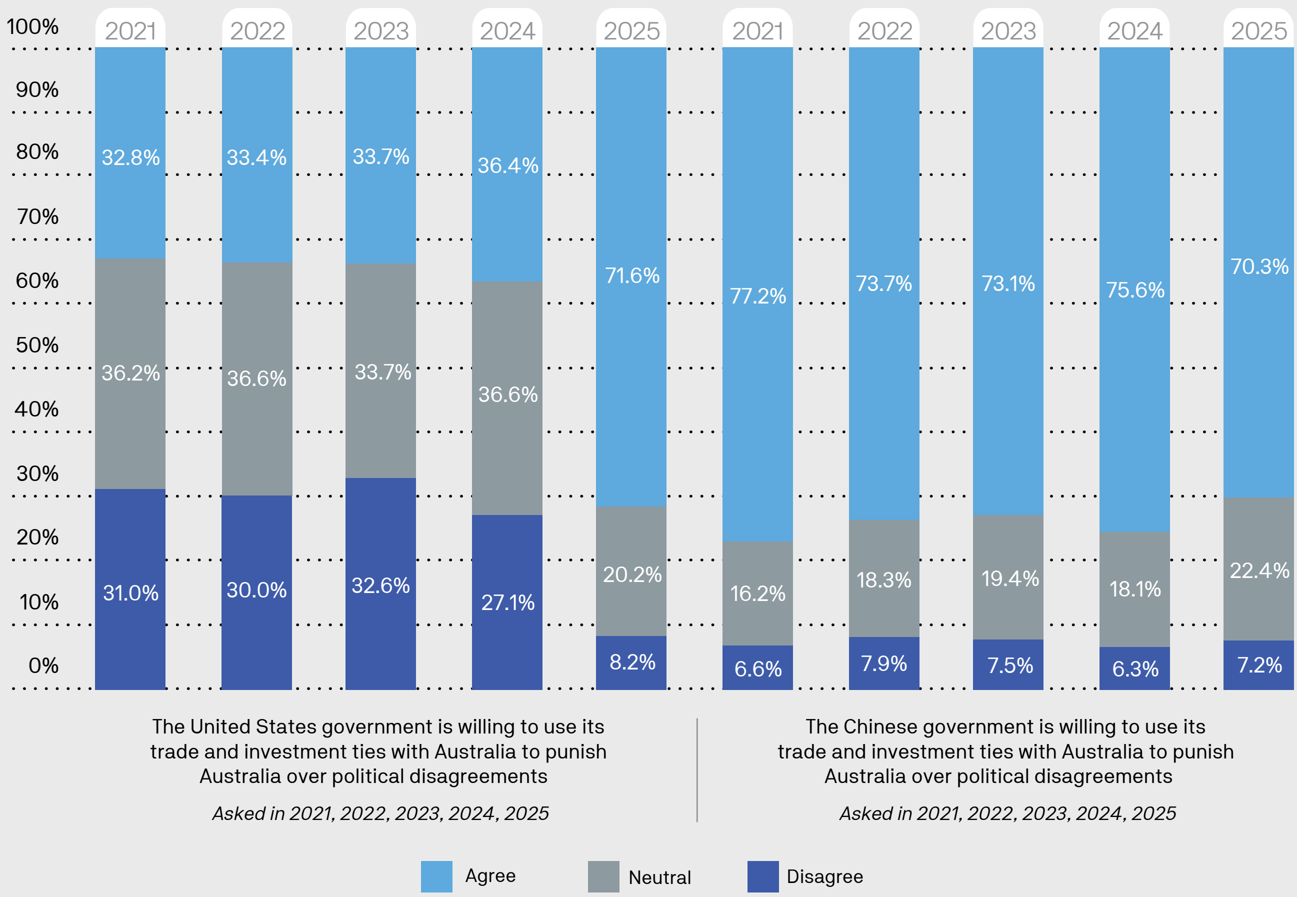
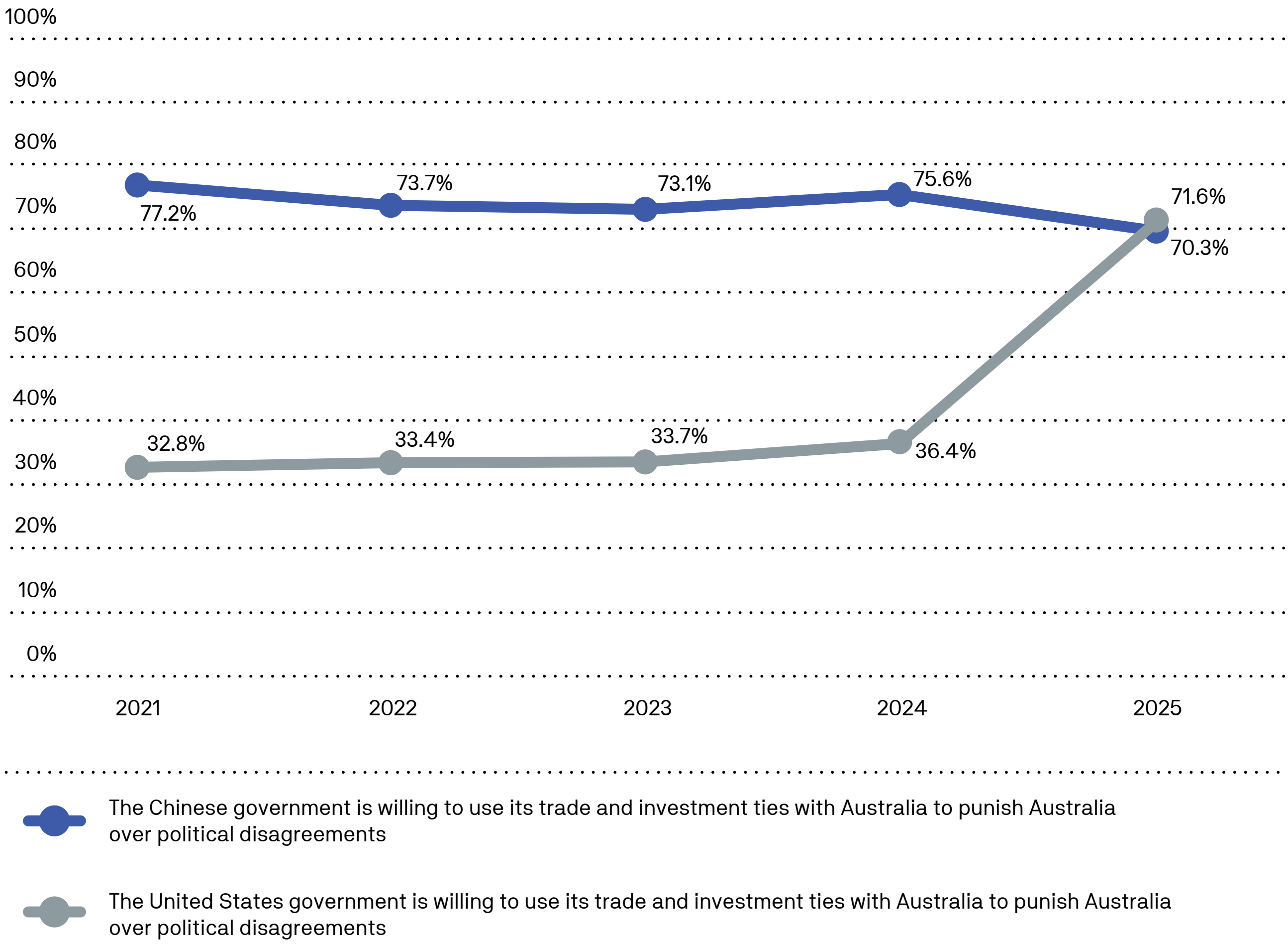


Figure 40B. **The United States and China's willingness to mete out economic punishment over political disagreements (trends in agreement)**



5.
Trade and investment

5.1 Overview

By late 2024, China had lifted the last of the 2021 to 2022 trade restrictions it had placed on Australian exports as part of its campaign of economic coercion. Remaining suspensions on red meat establishments and an informal ban on live rock lobster exports were lifted in December 2024. Previously, Australian exporters faced formal and informal trade sanctions on wine, barley, coal, cotton, timber, oaten hay, copper ores and concentrates and red meat into China, around $20 billion worth of Australian products.[13]

In 2025, both governments agreed to review the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA) ahead of its 10th anniversary, signalling renewed institutional engagement. These developments formed the backdrop to a measurable easing in public anxiety about economic dependence and a more settled view of bilateral trade.

The data show that perceptions of risk have eased across most measures. Fewer Australians now regard the economic relationship as a liability and more see it as a manageable feature of national prosperity. This change does not indicate unqualified confidence so much as a recalibration of expectations: engagement with China is accepted as necessary, but conditional on safeguards that protect national interests. The pattern suggests that the sharp anxieties of the early 2020s have given way to a more settled, if still guarded, outlook.

Public support for business links and trade has remained resilient, though attitudes toward investment continue to diverge. Australians distinguish clearly between the benefits of open commerce and the risks associated with foreign ownership in strategic sectors. Critical minerals, critical infrastructure such as the Port of Darwin and residential real estate remain focal points of unease, underscoring that stabilisation has not erased sensitivity about economic sovereignty.

By contrast, industries such as education and tourism are perceived primarily through an economic rather than political lens. As student flows and visitor numbers recovered after the pandemic, perceptions of their contribution remained positive and largely insulated from broader political shifts. This resilience points to an enduring recognition of the economic value of people-to-people exchange even amid wider caution about strategic exposure.

Overall, the 2025 results appear to mark a period of consolidation. Engagement is accepted as an enduring reality, but with clear public expectations of transparency, reciprocity, and control over sensitive assets. The tone of opinion reflects a public that sees economic cooperation with China as both vital and bounded by the need for continued vigilance.

5.2 Economic overreliance

'Australia is too economically reliant on China'

Public concern about Australia's economic dependence on China remains widespread but has eased noticeably over the past five years. In 2021, 80 percent of respondents agreed that Australia is too economically reliant on China. Agreement then declined to 74 percent in 2022, remained close to that level through 2023 (72 percent) and 2024 (74 percent), then fell eight points to 66 percent in 2025, the lowest reading in the series (Figures 41A-B).

At the same time, the proportion who disagreed rose from three percent in 2021 to 10 percent in 2025, and those who expressed neutrality increased from 16 to 24 percent (Figure 41A).

This pattern indicates a gradual diffusion of concern, culminating in a more pronounced easing in 2025. Although two-thirds of Australians still see the economy as overly dependent on China, the acute sense of vulnerability that characterised earlier years has clearly receded.

Figure 41A. **Economic overreliance on China**

Australia is too economically reliant on China | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*

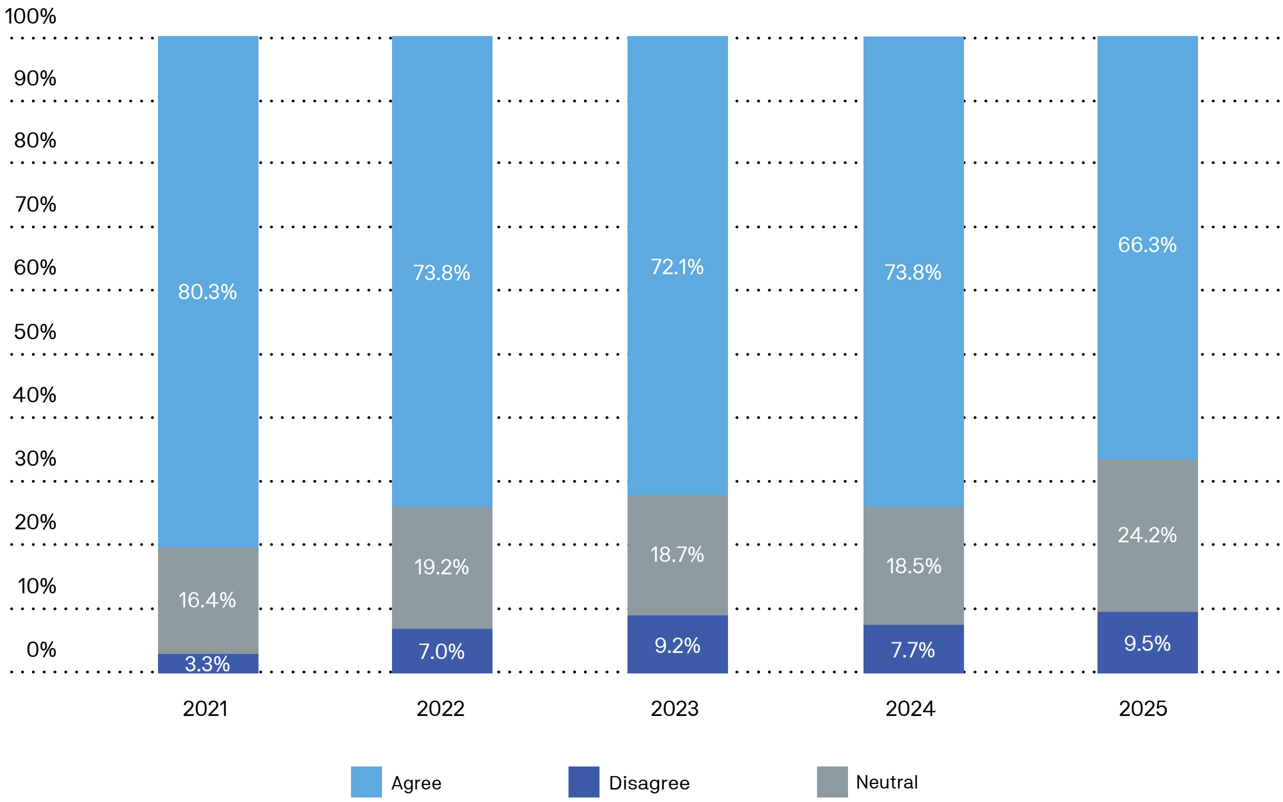
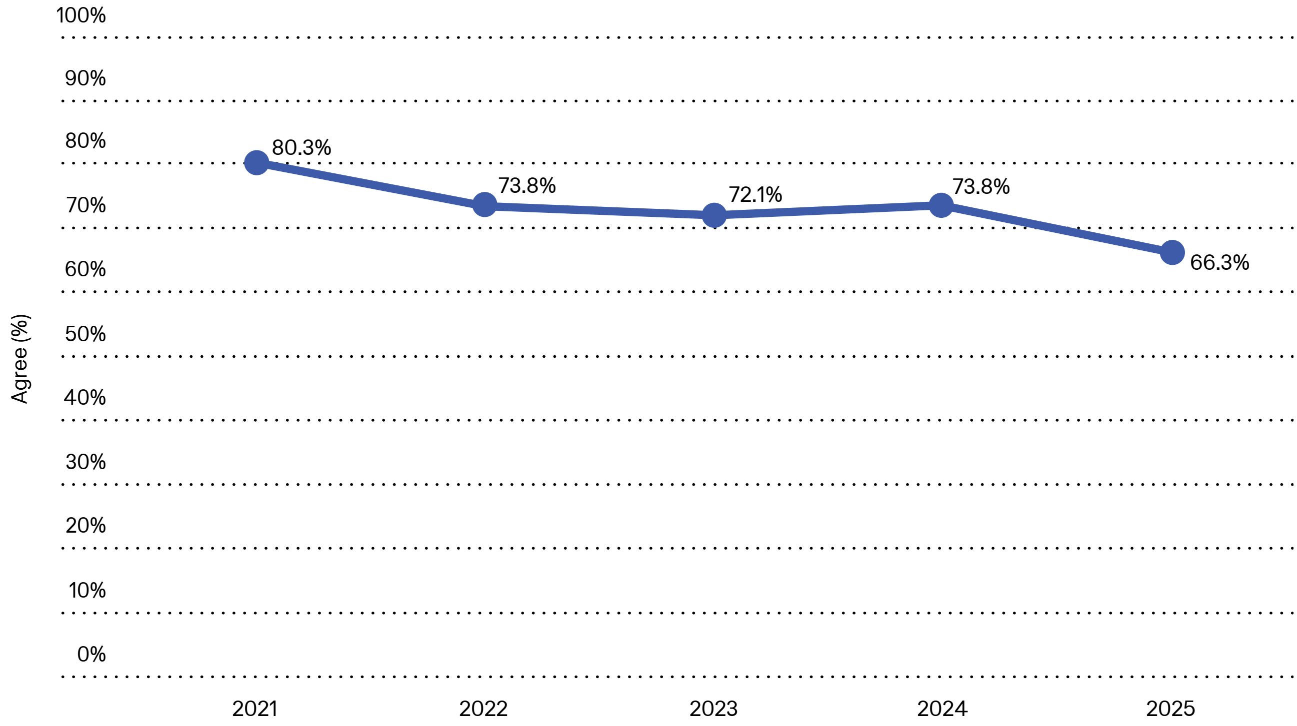


Figure 41B. **Economic overreliance on China (trend in agreement)**



5.3 Economic risk and opportunity

'Australia's economic relationship with China is more of an economic risk than an economic opportunity'

Australians have become less likely to describe the economic relationship with China as a risk. Agreement that it is 'more of a risk than an opportunity' declined from 53 percent in 2021 to 50 percent in 2022 and 47 percent in both 2023 and 2024, before falling further to 39 percent in 2025, a five-year low and a total decrease of 14 points.

Over the five-year series, disagreement rose from 20 to 26 percent and neutrality from 27 to 35 percent. The data indicate a consistent easing of risk perception over the period, with the clearest shift occurring in 2025 (Figures 42A-B).

Australians remain cautious about exposure to China, but fewer now regard that exposure as inherently negative, suggesting a gradual moderation in how economic risk is perceived.

Figure 42A. **The Australia-China economic relationship: More of an economic risk than opportunity?**

Australia's economic relationship with China is more of an economic risk than an economic opportunity | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*

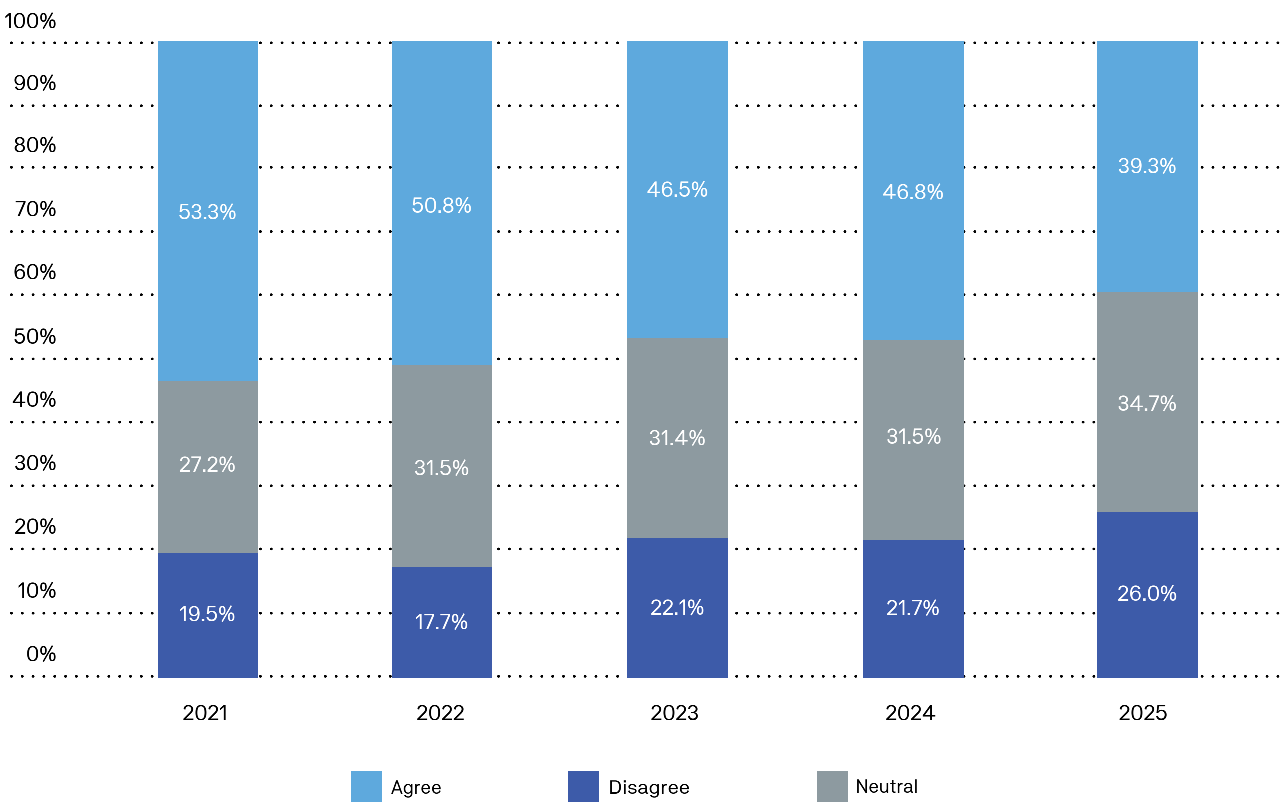
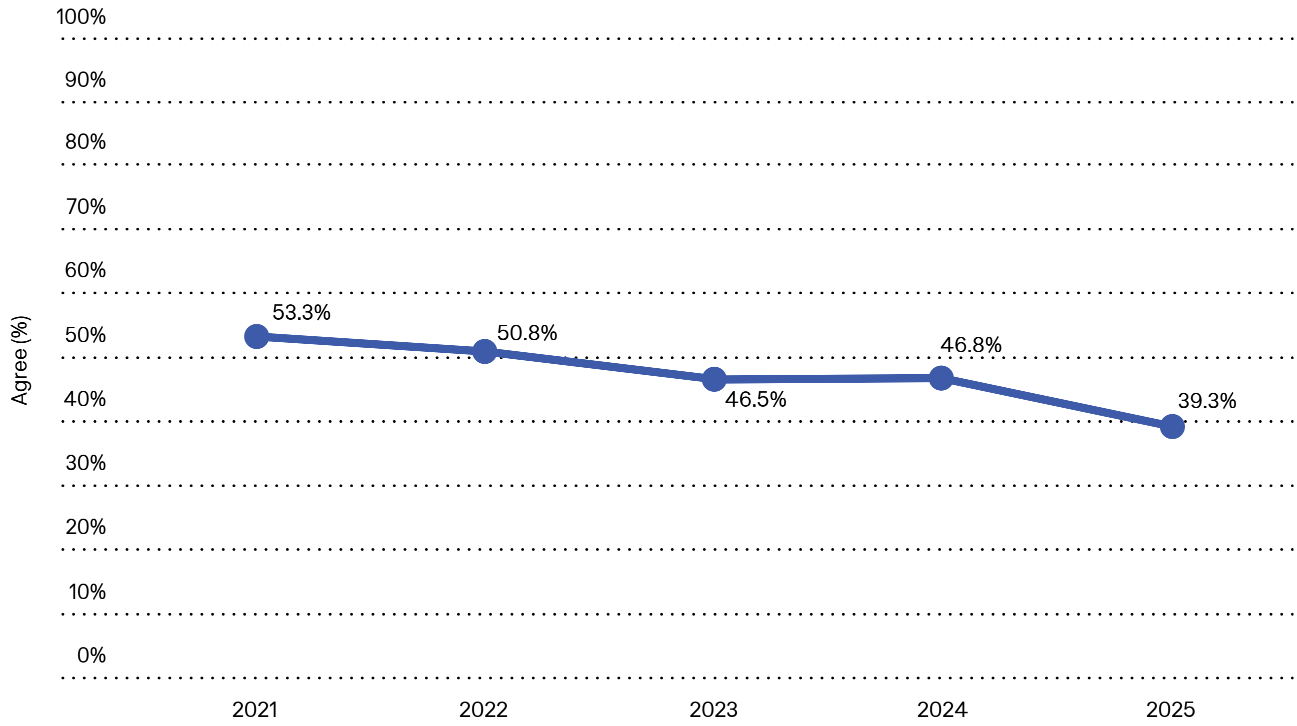


Figure 42B. **The Australia-China economic relationship: More of an economic risk than opportunity? (trend in agreement)**



5.4 Economic contribution: Prosperity, employment, business engagement

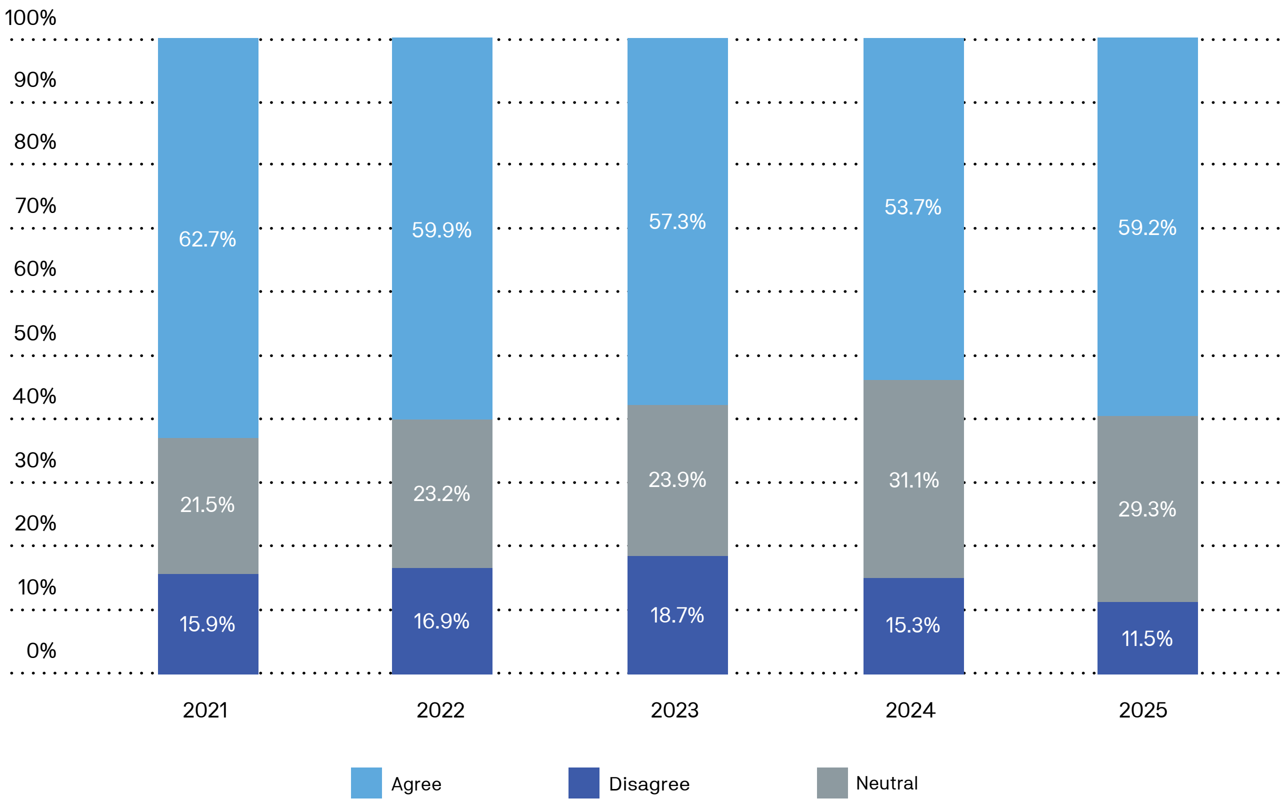
'Without close economic engagement with China, Australia would not be as prosperous as it currently is'

Australians continue to view engagement with China as economically beneficial, though support is moderate rather than overwhelming. Agreement that 'without close economic engagement with China, Australia would not be as prosperous as it currently is' steadily declined from 63 percent in 2021 to 54 percent in 2024 and then rose slightly to 59 percent in 2025. Disagreement remained low, ranging between 12 and 19 percent (Figure 43).

The five-year trend suggests a stable but qualified recognition of prosperity benefits, pointing to a steady acceptance of the economic value of engagement, even as enthusiasm has cooled slightly compared with earlier years.

Figure 43. **Economic engagement with China and prosperity**

Without close economic engagement with China, Australia would not be as prosperous as it currently is | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*

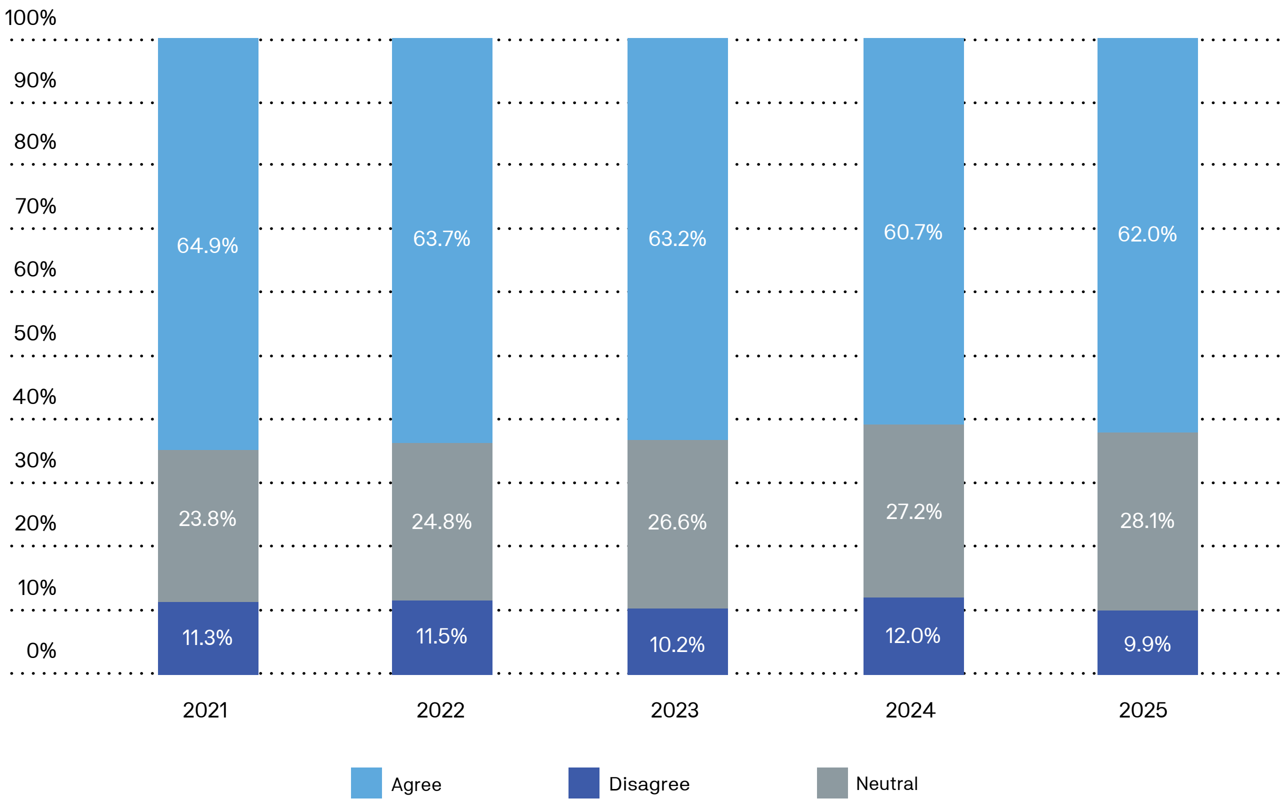


'Trade with China has created job opportunities in Australia'

Perceptions of employment benefits were also stable and measured. Agreement that trade with China has created job opportunities steadily fell from 65 percent in 2021 to 61 percent in 2024 before edging up to 62 percent in 2025. Neutral and disagreement responses varied little, suggesting that views of employment effects have been largely insulated from broader political shifts (Figure 44).

Figure 44. **Trade with China and employment**

Trade with China has created job opportunities in Australia | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



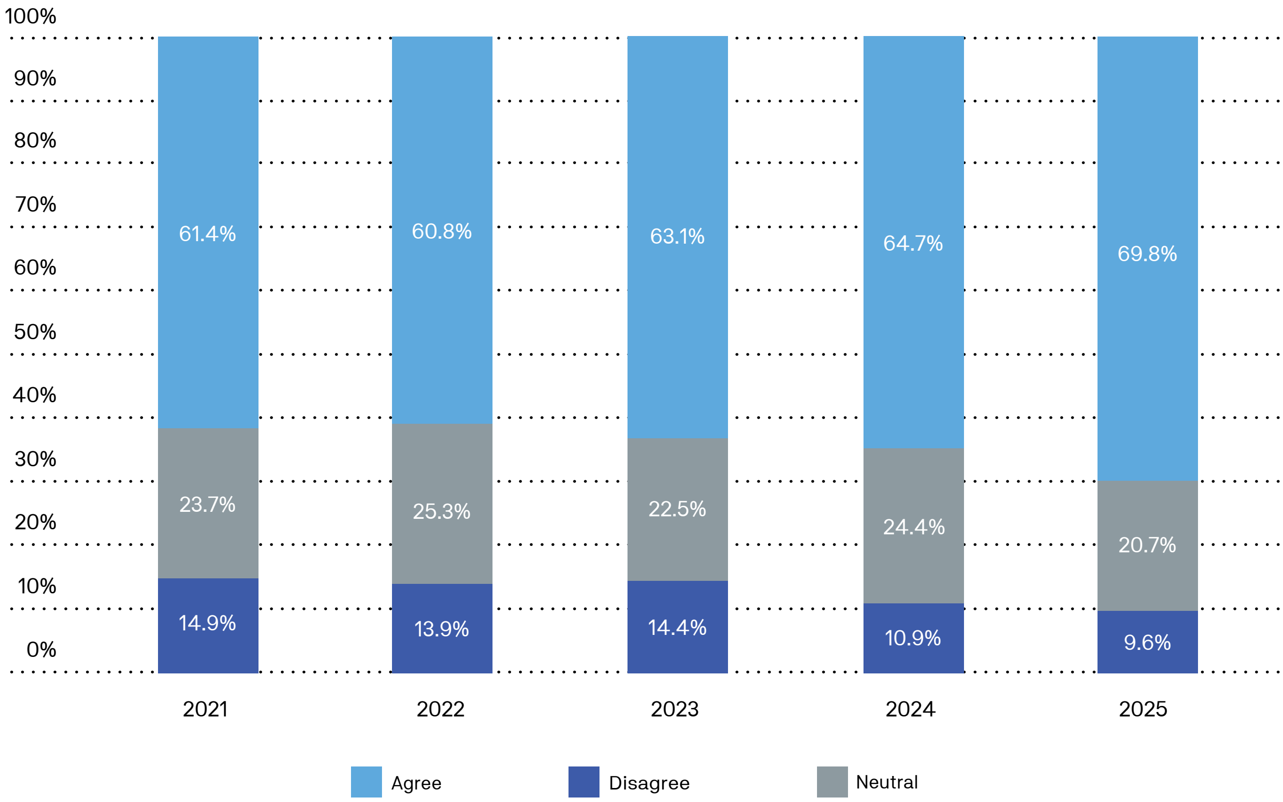
'Australian companies should continue to pursue business opportunities with China'

Support for continued commercial engagement with China has remained a defining feature of public opinion and reached a five-year high in 2025. Agreement that Australian companies should continue to pursue business opportunities with China increased from 61 percent in 2021 to 70 percent in 2025, while neutrality declined from 24 to 21 percent and disagreement fell below 10 percent (Figure 45).

While still short of overwhelming consensus, the steady upward movement over the period indicates a durable, pragmatic outlook. Australians consistently support business engagement as part of national economic management, even amid broader geopolitical uncertainty.

Figure 45. **Support for business ties**

Australian companies should continue to pursue business opportunities with China | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



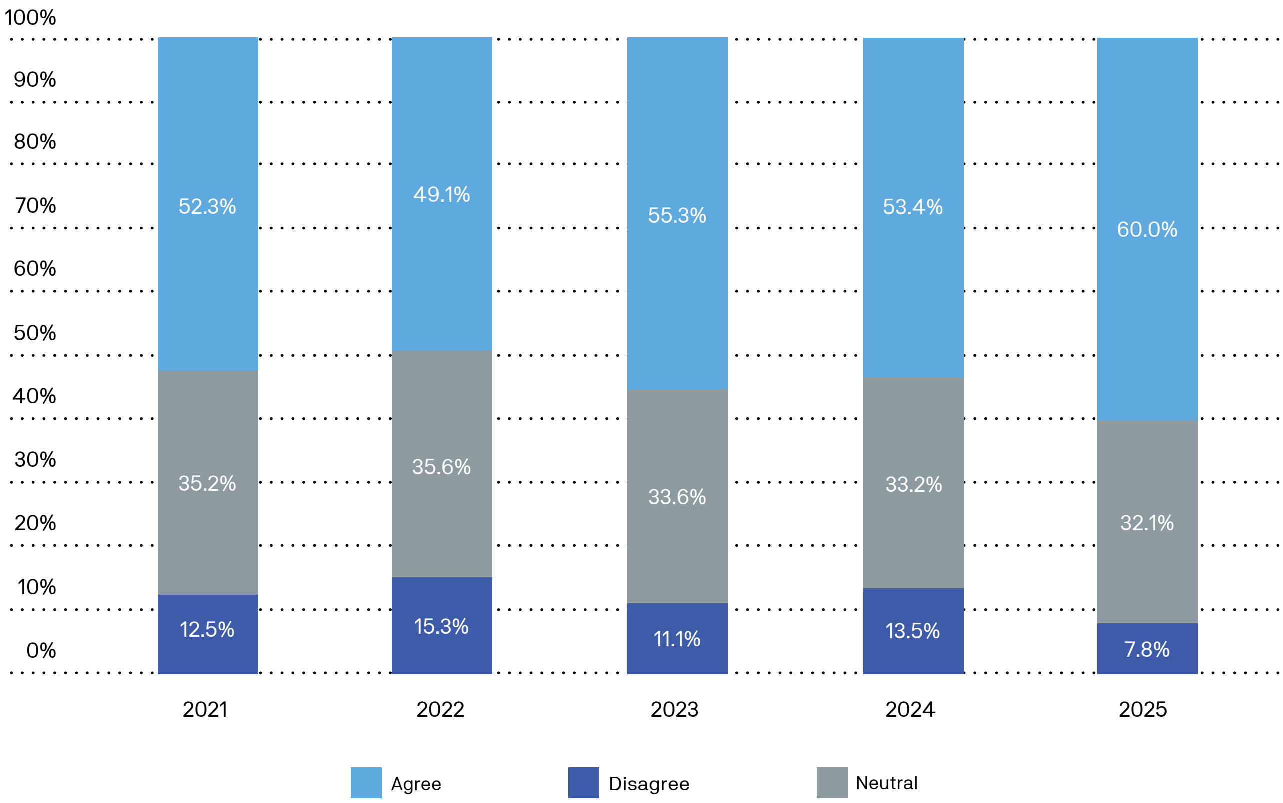
5.5 Trade agreements

'The China-Australia Free Trade Agreement has been beneficial for Australia'

Perceptions of trade frameworks were more favourable in 2025. Agreement that the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA) has been beneficial for Australia rose by seven points from 53 percent in 2024 to 60 percent in 2025, the highest level since 2021 (52 percent), while declined from 14 percent in 2024 to eight percent in 2025. Neutrality remained steady across the five-year series at around one-third of respondents, suggesting clear but not overwhelming support (Figure 46).

Figure 46. **The China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA)**

The China-Australia Free Trade Agreement has been beneficial for Australia | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



‘The Australian government should support China’s bid to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade agreement which 11 countries, including Australia, signed in 2018’

‘The Australian government should support Taiwan’s bid to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade agreement which 11 countries, including Australia, signed in 2018’

Support for China’s bid to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) increased by seven points from 31 percent in 2022 to 38 percent in 2025, while opposition fell from 24 to 17 percent. Support for Taiwan’s bid remained notably higher, decreasing slightly by five points from 66 to 61 percent across the same period.

Across the series, support for Taiwan exceeded China’s by roughly 20 points, indicating ongoing caution about Beijing’s participation even as overall views of trade cooperation became somewhat more open (Figures 47A-B).

These results suggest Australians differentiate between trade integration and strategic trust, supporting expanded frameworks in principle but with persistent reservations about China’s role within them.

Figure 47A. **Expansion of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)**

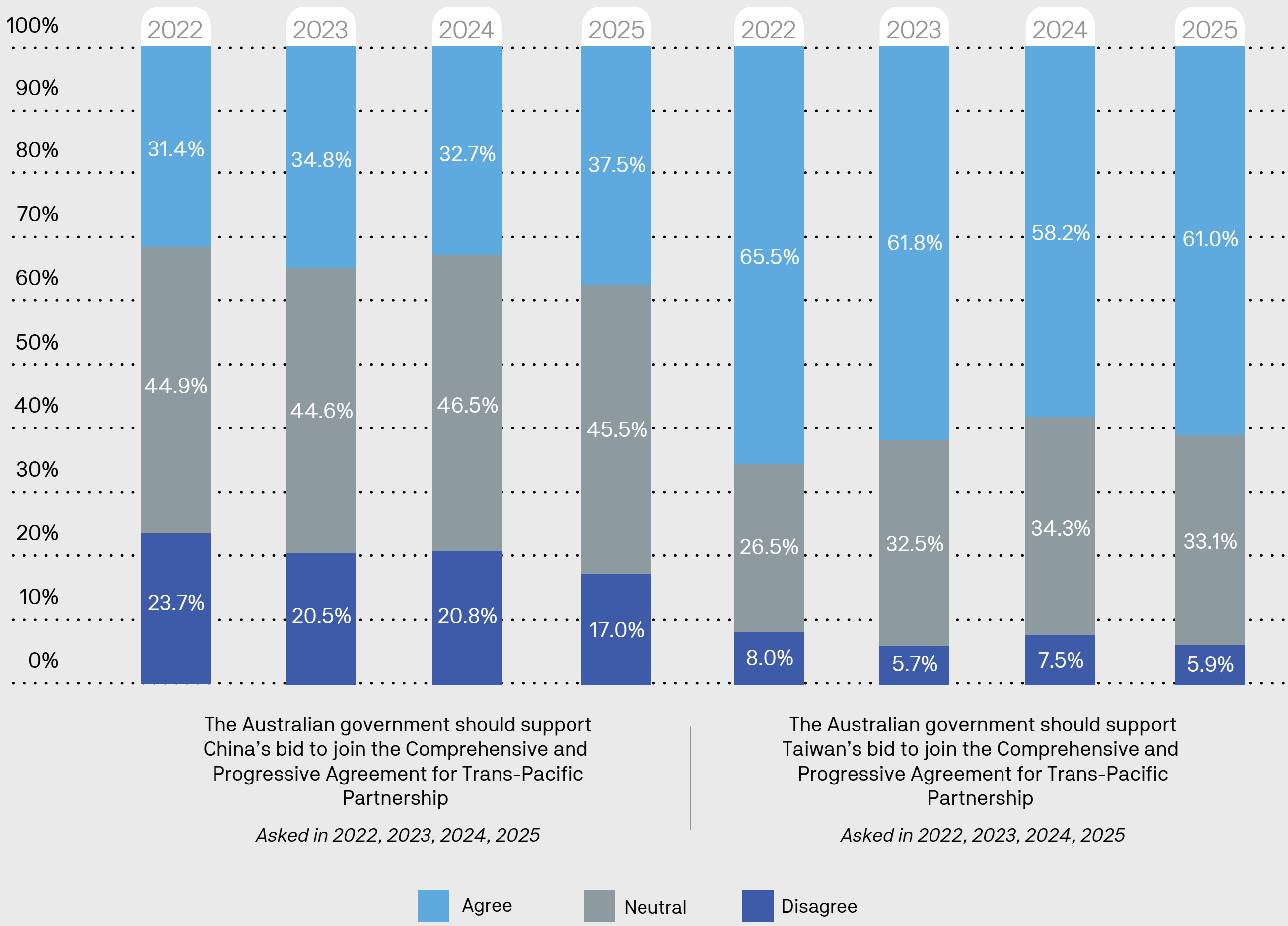
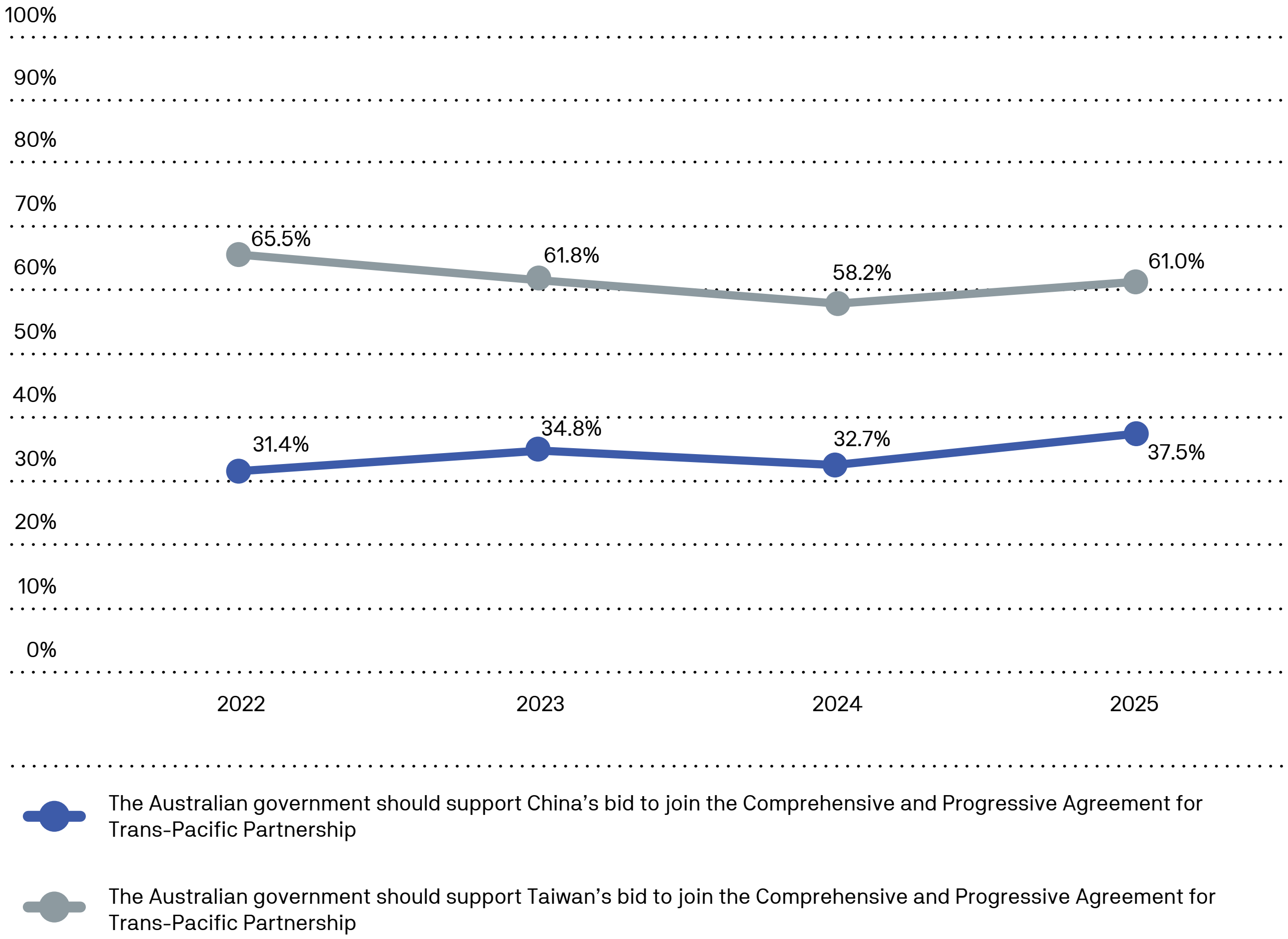


Figure 47B. **Expansion of the CPTPP (trends in agreement)**



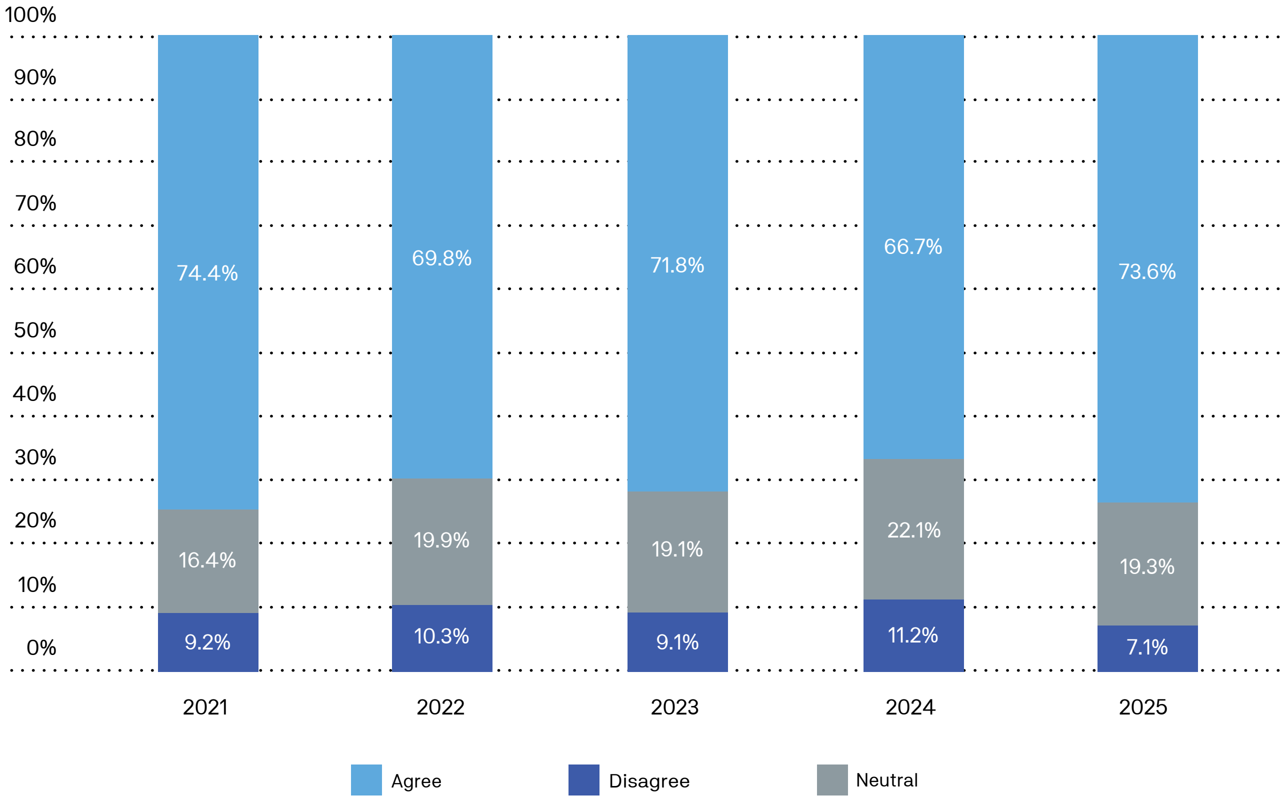
5.6 Trade case study: Tourism

'Tourists from China provide a major economic benefit to Australia'

Public perceptions of Chinese tourism have remained positive overall, with some variation that may have reflected changes in travel conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic and broader political context. Agreement that tourists from China provide a major economic benefit to Australia increased from 67 percent in 2024 to 74 percent in 2025, returning to the five-year high first recorded in 2021. The 2025 result followed several years of more mixed sentiment, during which agreement fluctuated between 67 and 72 percent (Figure 48).

Figure 48. **Trade case study: Tourism – Economic benefit**

Tourists from China provide a major economic benefit to Australia | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



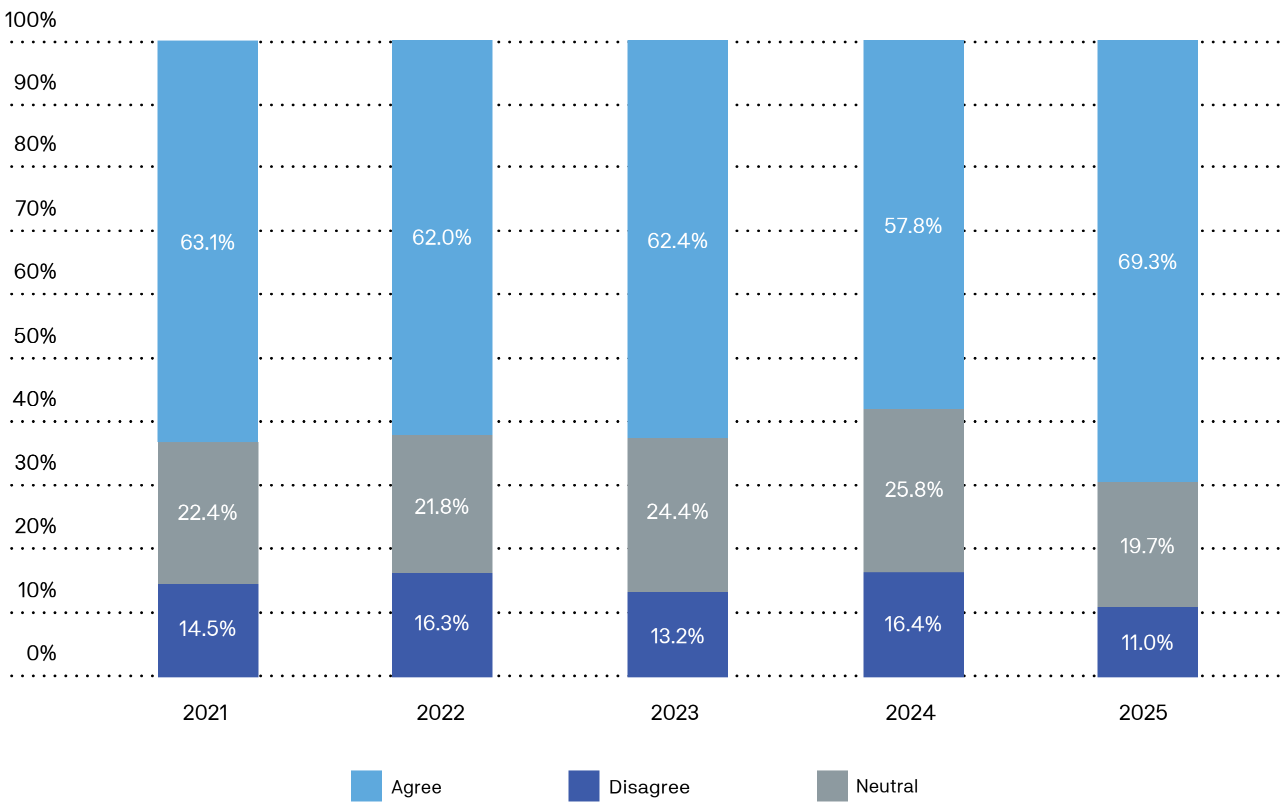
'Australia should continue to work towards making Australia an attractive destination for Chinese tourists'

Similarly, agreement that Australia should continue to make itself an attractive destination for Chinese tourists rose from 58 to 69 percent between 2024 and 2025, an 11-point increase and the highest level in the five-year series (Figure 49). Although clear majorities have supported this position in every year of measurement (63 percent in 2021; 62 percent in 2022; 62 percent in 2023), the 2025 data indicate renewed emphasis on tourism as an important economic link within the bilateral relationship.

Taken together, the results suggest that attitudes toward Chinese tourism are responsive to practical conditions, such as border policy and travel regulations, as well as the broader political environment. The consistent presence of majority support across all years indicates that the sector continues to be viewed primarily through an economic rather than a political lens, even as overall sentiment varies with external developments.

Figure 49. **Trade case study: Tourism – Attracting tourists from China**

Australia should continue to work towards making Australia an attractive destination for Chinese tourists | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



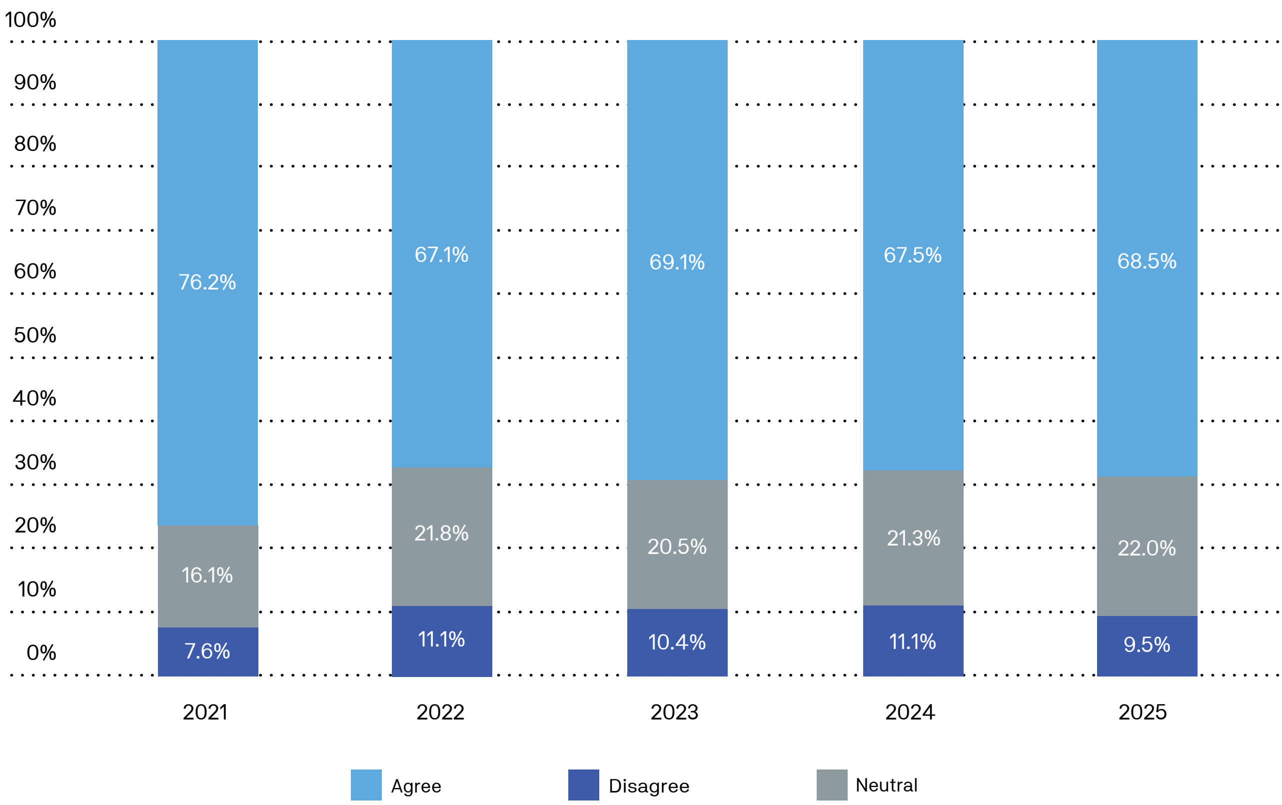
5.7 Trade case study: Education

'International students from China provide a major economic benefit to Australia'

Perceptions of the economic contribution made by Chinese international students have remained consistently positive across the five-year series. In 2025, 69 percent agreed that students from China provide a major economic benefit to Australia, a level broadly in line with views in 2023 (69 percent) and only slightly above 2024 (68 percent). While agreement has edged down from its peak of 76 percent in 2021, it has remained relatively stable since 2022, when it reached its lowest point (67 percent). Throughout the period, agreement has consistently held above two-thirds of the public, indicating enduring recognition of the sector's economic value (Figure 50).

Figure 50. **Trade case study: Education – Economic benefit**

International students from China provide a major economic benefit to Australia | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



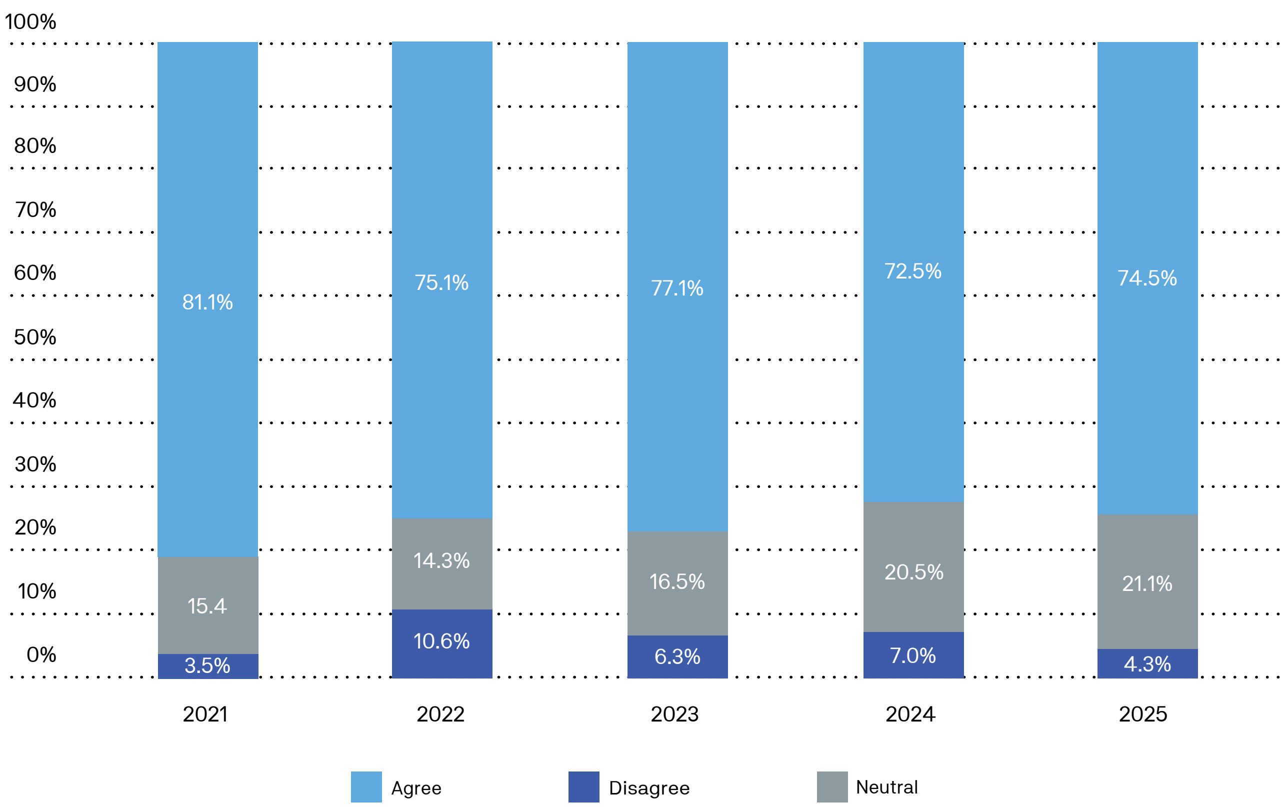
‘Australian universities are too financially reliant on international students from China’

At the same time, concern about Australian universities’ financial dependence on Chinese students has remained persistently high. Agreement that universities are too reliant on students from China reached 75 percent in 2025, up slightly from 73 percent in 2024, and remained only a few points below the 2021 high of 81 percent (Figure 51). The narrow range of movement across the series indicates a stable dual perception: broad recognition of the economic benefits of Chinese enrolments alongside continuing unease about overreliance on a single source country.

Overall, these results suggest that while attitudes toward the education relationship have been steady, they remain characterised by structural caution. Respondents appear to accept the economic importance of Chinese students but view this reliance as a long-term feature that requires careful management rather than a short-term imbalance to be resolved.

Figure 51. **Trade case study: Education – Financial overreliance by Australian universities**

Australian universities are too financially reliant on international students from China | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



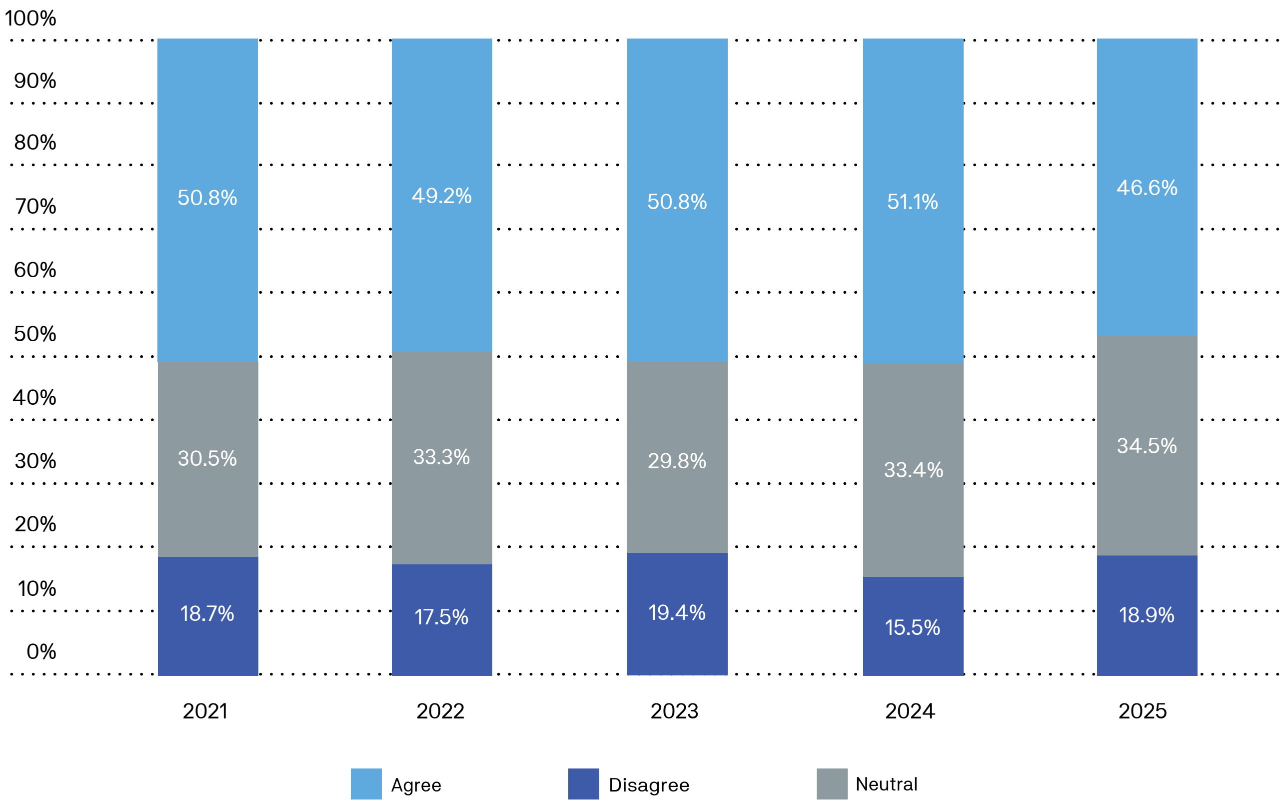
5.8 Foreign investment

'Foreign investment from China is more detrimental than beneficial to Australia'

Public sentiment toward Chinese investment in Australia has remained broadly steady over the five-year period, with views clustered around a near-even split. Agreement that Chinese investment is more detrimental than beneficial hovered between 49 and 51 percent from 2021 to 2024 before easing to 47 percent in 2025, the lowest level in the series. Levels of disagreement have shown only minimal movement, fluctuating between 16 and 19 percent, while neutral responses have remained in the low- to mid-30 percent range, reaching 35 percent in 2025. Taken together, the pattern suggests a modest softening at the margin rather than a substantive shift in underlying attitudes (Figure 52).

Figure 52. **Foreign investment from China: Detrimental or beneficial?**

Foreign investment from China is more detrimental than beneficial to Australia | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



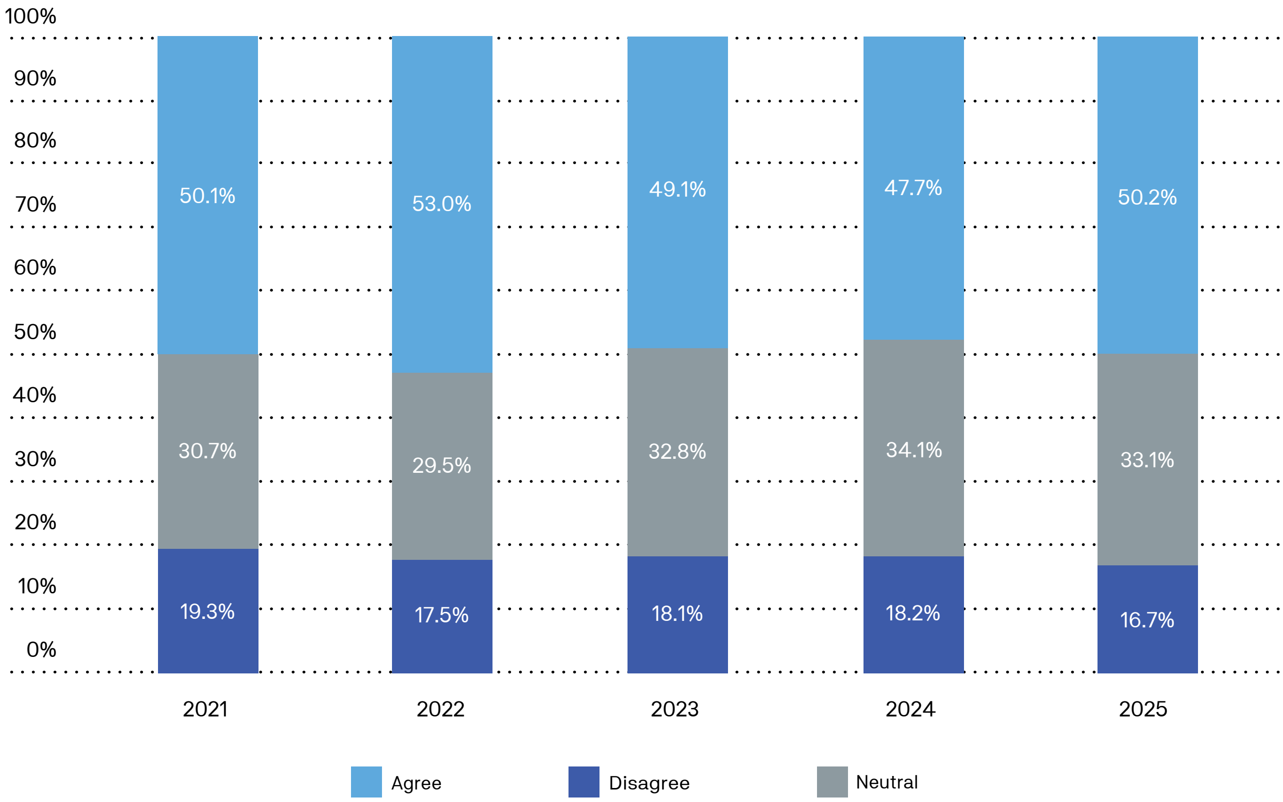
'Foreign investment from China has created job opportunities in Australia'

Agreement that Chinese investment has created job opportunities in Australia has remained relatively steady over the five-year period, shifting within a narrow band between 48 and 53 percent. In 2025, agreement stood at 50 percent, close to the levels recorded in 2021 and 2023. Neutral responses have consistently hovered around one-third of the public, while disagreement has remained in the high-teens (Figure 53).

The overall pattern points to a modest and qualified level of support rather than strong endorsement. Many Australians acknowledge employment benefits from Chinese investment, but a sizeable share remains non-committal and a persistent minority is unconvinced.

Figure 53. **Foreign investment from China and employment**

Foreign investment from China has created job opportunities in Australia | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



5.9 Investment case study: Port of Darwin

'The Australian government should force Landbridge, the Chinese company that bought the 99-year lease to the Port of Darwin in 2015, to sell the port back to the government'

'The Australian government is right to end Chinese-owned company Landbridge's 99-year lease of the Port of Darwin'

In 2025, the survey found strong support for the Australian government's decision to end Chinese-owned company Landbridge's 99-year lease of the Port of Darwin, a 2025 federal election campaign promise by both major parties. The 2025 question was framed accordingly: 'The Australian government is right to end Chinese-owned company Landbridge's 99-year lease of the Port of Darwin.'

Three-quarters of Australians (75 percent) agreed with the decision, while 18 percent were neutral and seven percent disagreed. Although the 2025 item differed in wording from previous surveys, earlier results show consistent majority support for government intervention (Figures 54A-B).

Between 2022 and 2024, respondents were asked whether 'The Australian government should force Landbridge, the Chinese company that bought the 99-year lease to the Port of Darwin in 2015, to sell the port back to the government.' Agreement with that statement stood at 60 percent in 2022, 64 percent in 2023 and 62 percent in 2024 (Figure 54B).

Viewed together, it is clear that public sentiment favouring stronger government control over the Port of Darwin has been stable for several years and became more firmly expressed once there was clear government intention to bring the port back under Australian control. The data suggest sustained caution toward foreign ownership of strategic infrastructure, particularly where national control and security considerations intersect.

Figure 54A. **Investment case study: Port of Darwin – Support for the Australian government's decision to end the Landbridge lease**

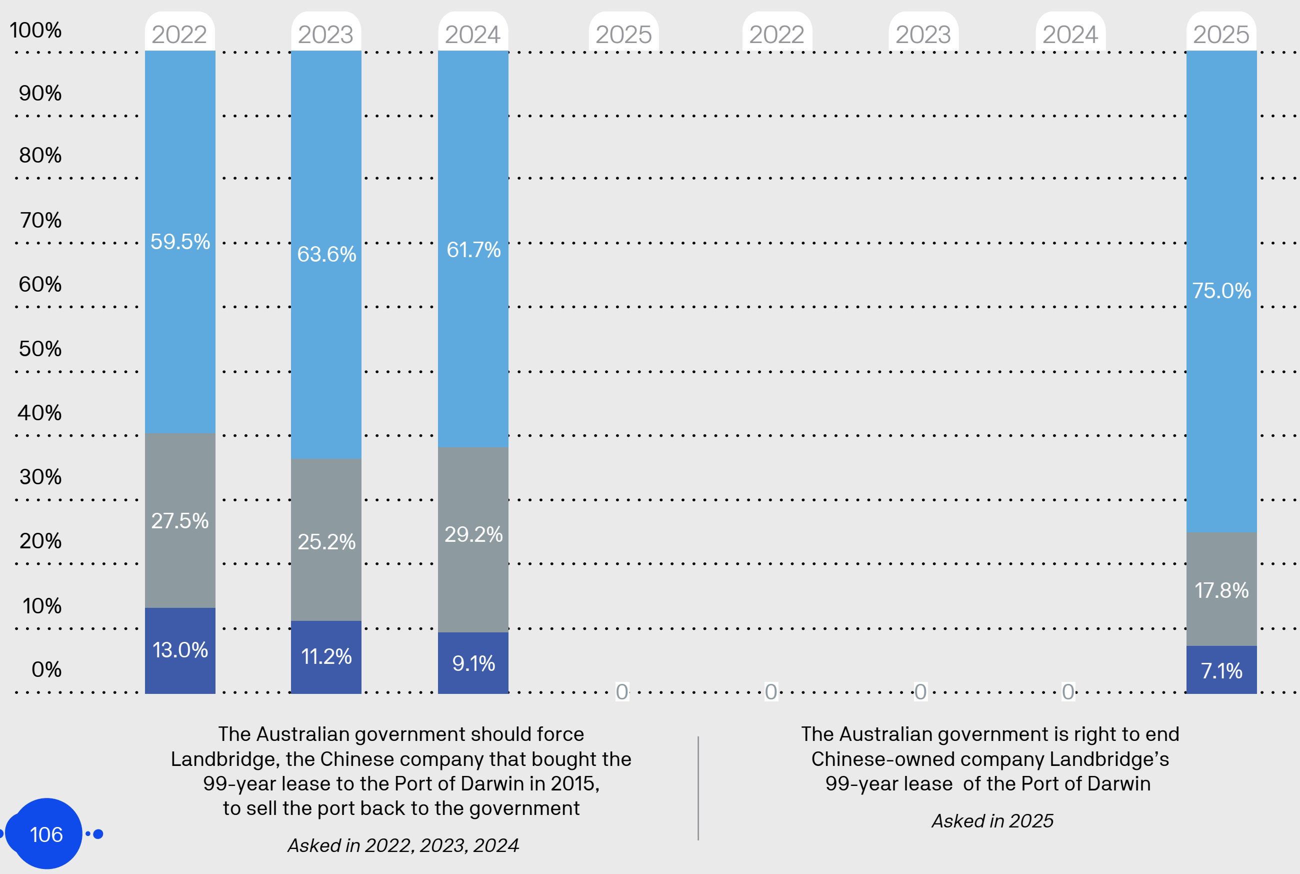
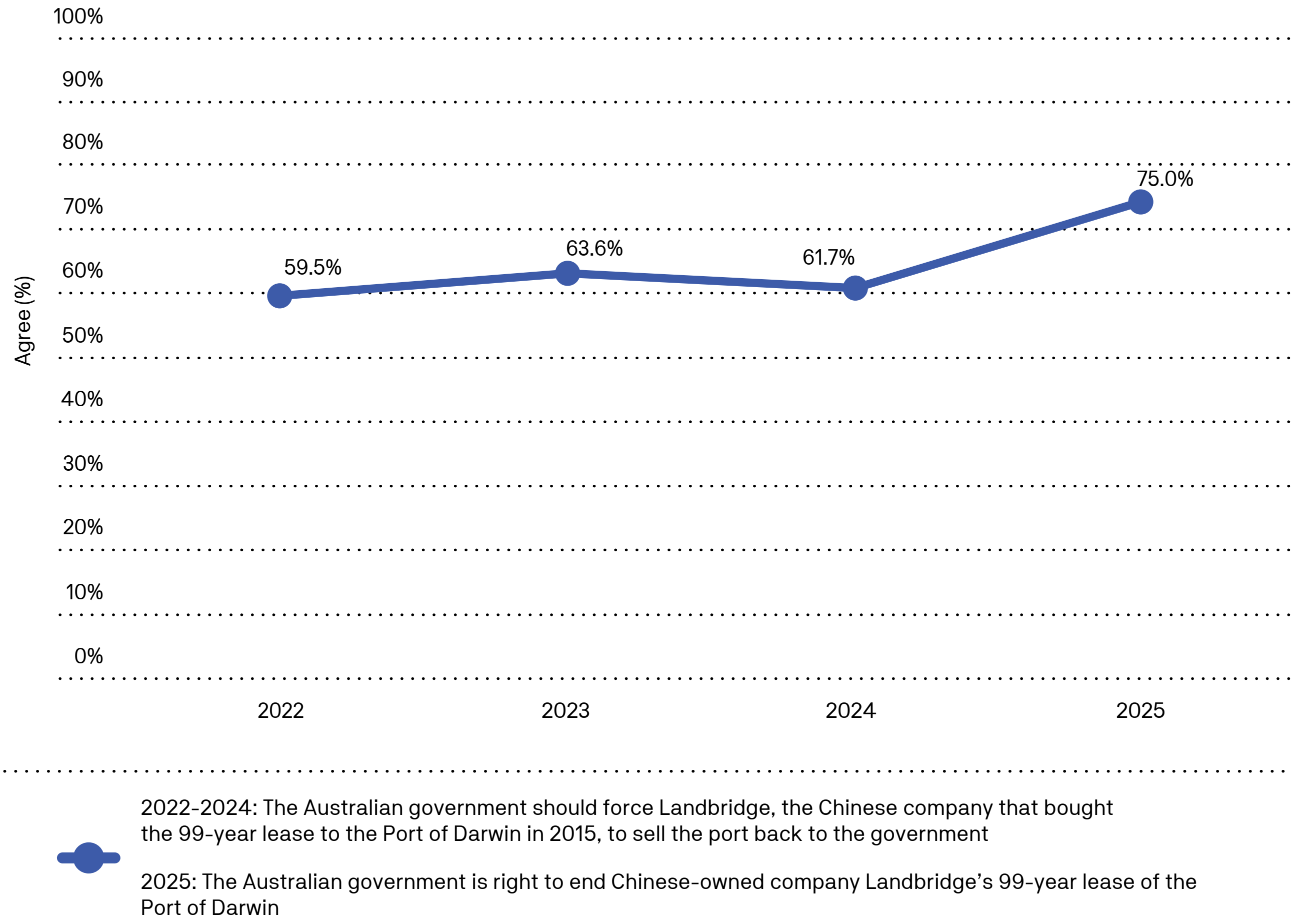


Figure 54B. **Investment case study: Port of Darwin - Support for the Australian government's decision to end the Landbridge lease (trend in agreement)**



5.10 Investment case study: Critical minerals

'The Australian government should limit foreign investment from other countries (e.g., US, UK, Canada, Japan, South Korea, India, China) in Australia's critical minerals industry'

'The Australian government should limit foreign investment from China in Australia's critical minerals industry'

Support for limiting foreign investment in Australia's critical minerals sector has grown steadily since data were first collected in 2023. Agreement that investment from *all* foreign countries should be restricted rose from 58 percent in 2023 to 66 percent in 2025, an eight-point increase. Agreement to specifically limit Chinese investment consistently remained higher, increasing slightly from 73 percent to 74 percent from 2023 to 2025. Neutrality remained near 20 percent and disagreement declined modestly over the same period (Figures 55A–B).

The parallel trends suggest Australians favour close oversight of foreign participation in the sector but continue to view Chinese investment with particular caution. The consistency of these responses since 2023 indicates a broadly established view that critical minerals require strategic management across all foreign partners, with China singled out as a higher-sensitivity case.

Figure 55A. **Investment case study: Critical minerals – Limitation on foreign investment**

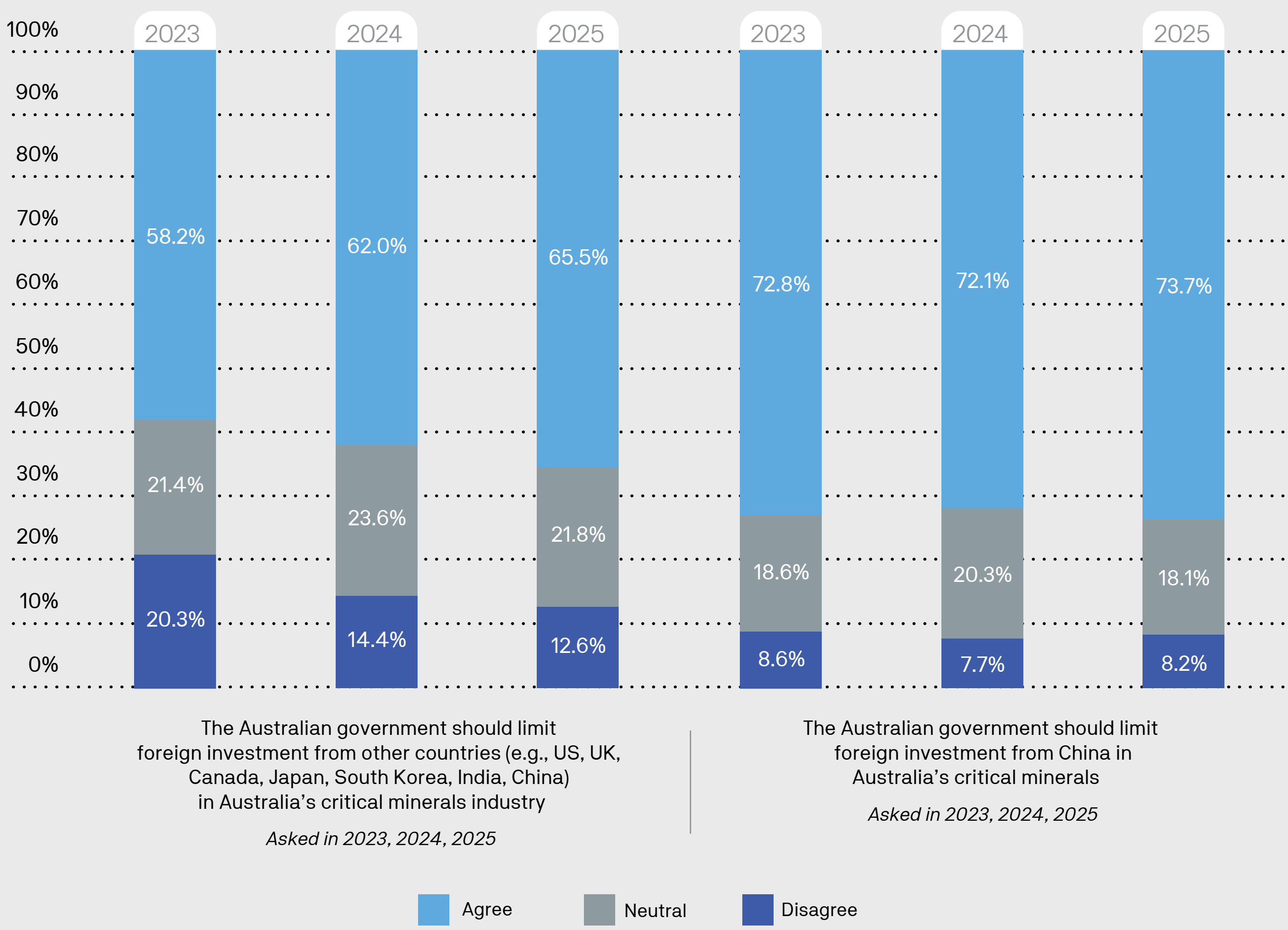
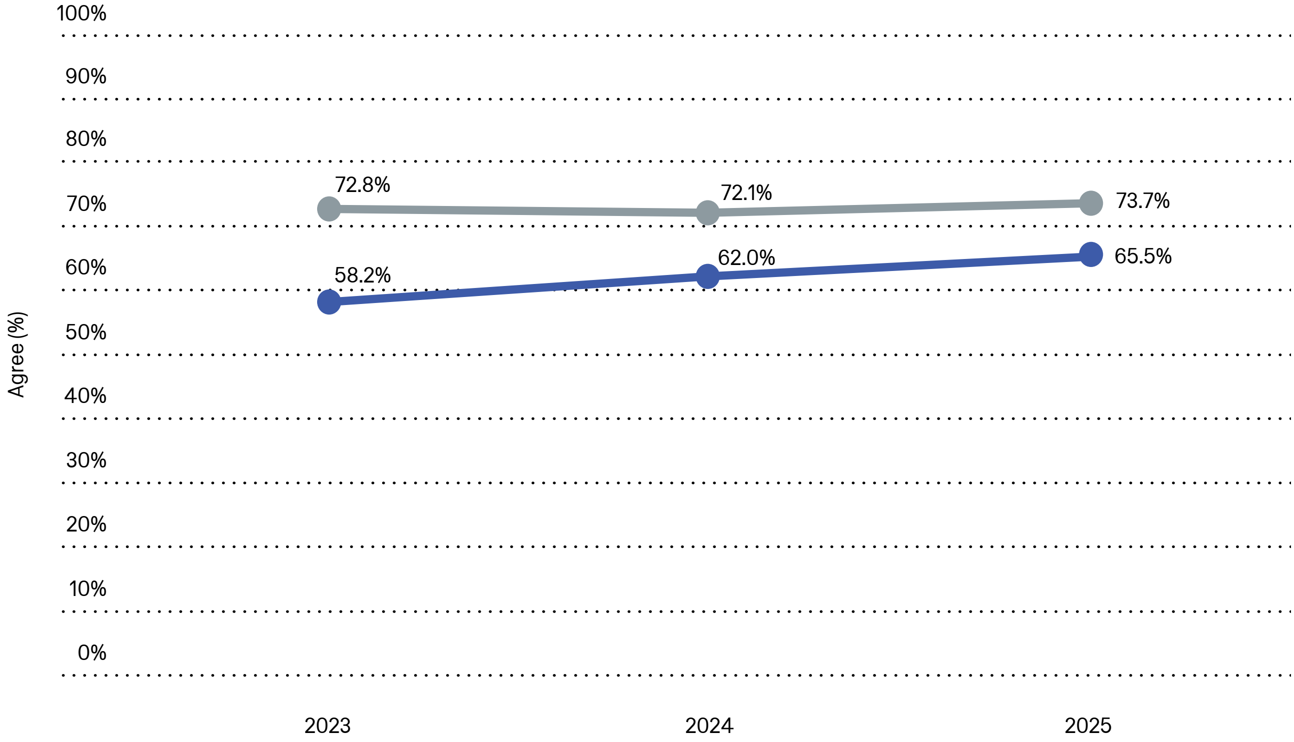


Figure 55B. **Investment case study:**
Critical minerals – Limitation on foreign investment (trends in agreement)



The Australian government should limit foreign investment from other countries (e.g., US, UK, Canada, Japan, South Korea, India, China) in Australia's critical minerals industry

The Australian government should limit foreign investment from China in Australia's critical minerals industry

5.11 Investment case study: Residential real estate

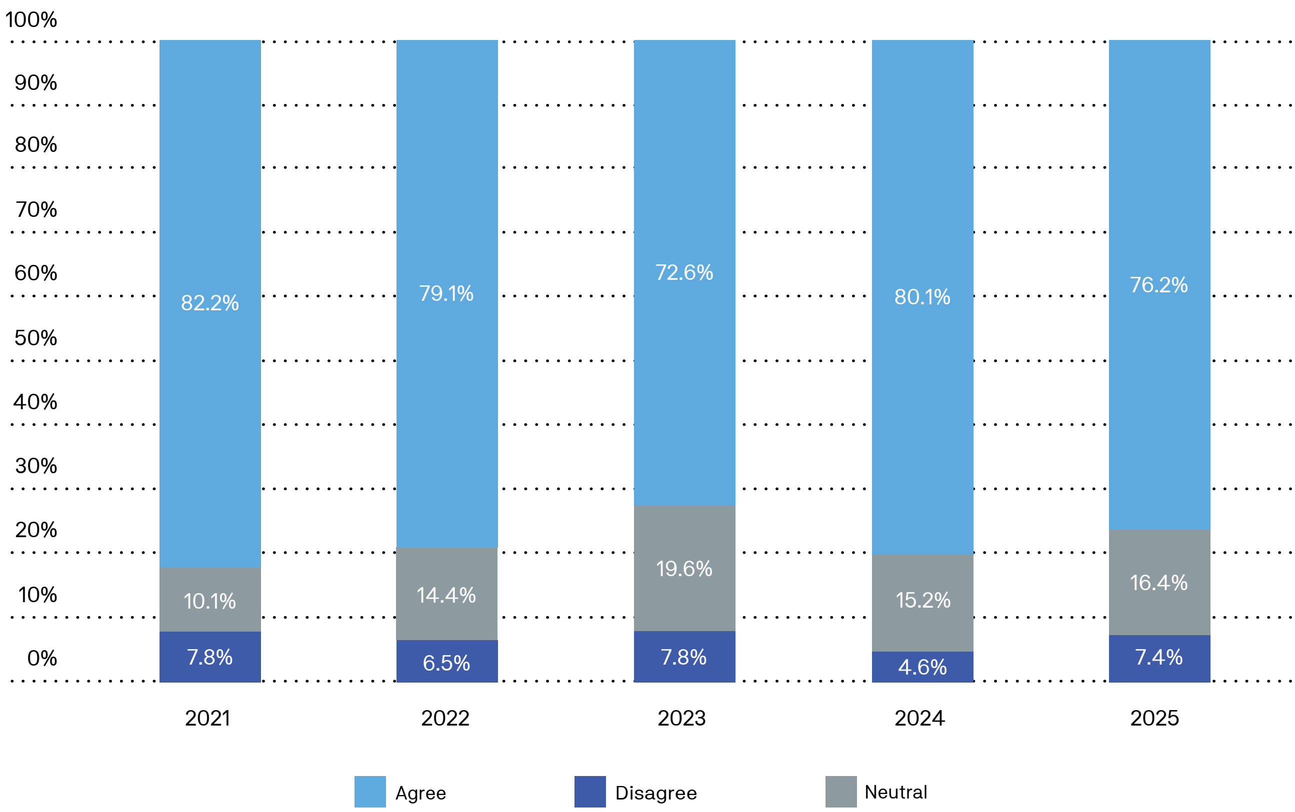
'Foreign buyers from China drive up Australian housing prices'

Concern about the effects of Chinese investment in Australia's housing market has remained high and broadly stable over the past five years. Agreement that foreign buyers from China drive up Australian housing prices ranged from 73 to 82 percent, standing at 76 percent in 2025. Disagreement has remained consistently low at five to eight percent, while neutral responses have fluctuated within the 10 to 20 percent range without a clear trend (Figure 56).

These patterns indicate that although levels of concern vary modestly from year to year, a strong majority continues to view Chinese buyers as contributing to housing price pressures.

Figure 56. **Investment case study: Residential real estate – Housing price pressure**

Foreign buyers from China drive up Australian housing prices | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



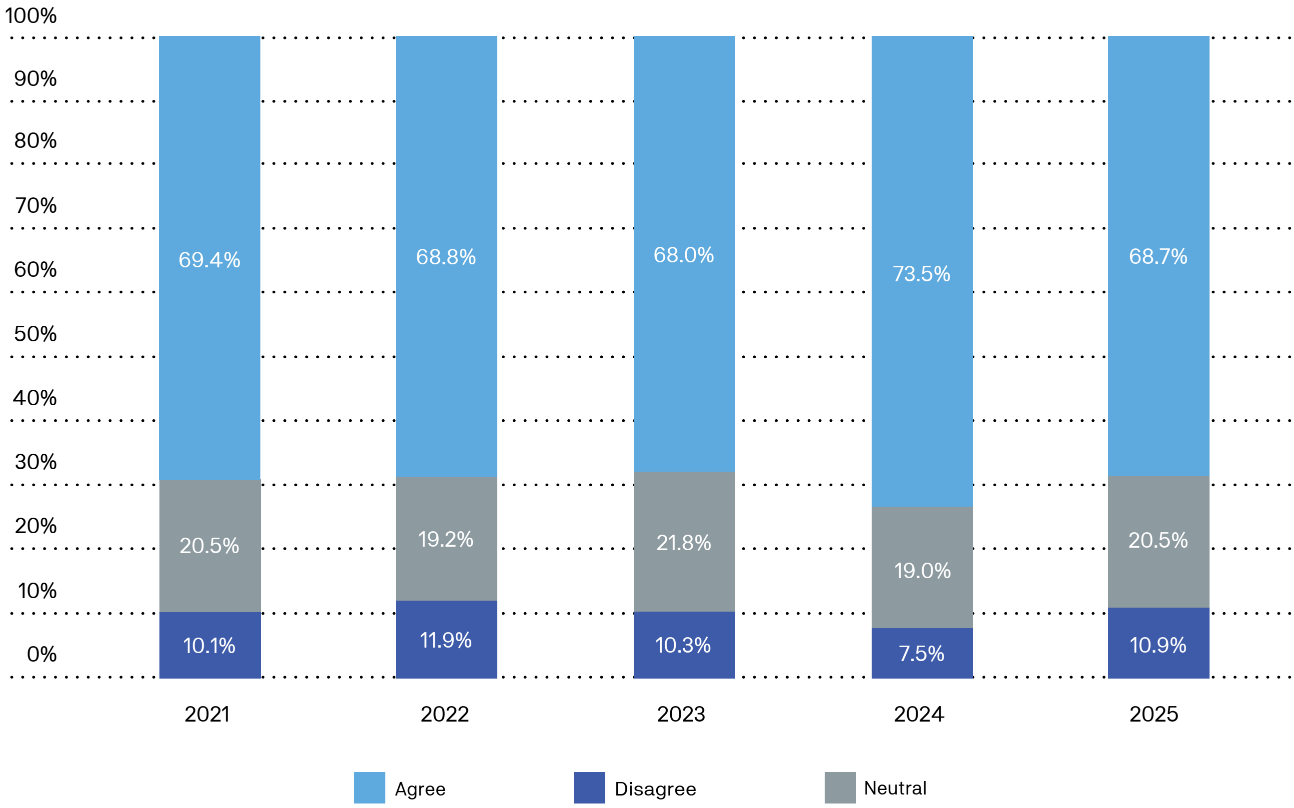
'Chinese investors have negatively affected the rental market for residential real estate in Australia'

Similarly, agreement that Chinese investors have negatively affected the rental market ranged between 68 and 74 percent across the five-year period, ending at 69 percent in 2025. Neutrality hovered around 19 to 22 percent, and disagreement stayed consistently low, below 12 percent (Figure 57).

The five-year pattern indicates persistent concern rather than substantial change, with year-to-year fluctuations confined to a narrow range. These results suggest that public perceptions of foreign property investment continue to be driven more by broader anxiety about housing affordability than by short-term shifts in the bilateral relationship. The modest easing in 2025 coincided with the Albanese government's decision to adjust migration settings and expand housing supply to address affordability pressures, which may have contributed to a slight softening in sentiment. Overall, Australians continue to associate Chinese property investment with upward pressure on housing and rental markets.

Figure 57. **Investment case study: Residential real estate – Rental market pressure**

Chinese investors have negatively affected the rental market for residential real estate in Australia | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



6. Society

6.1 Overview

In 2024 and 2025, both Australian and Chinese leaders publicly emphasised the importance of rebuilding direct ties between their societies as a foundation for stability.[14]

At the same time, the continued detention of Australian writer Yang Hengjun, sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve in early 2024,[15] served as a reminder of the limits of rapprochement and the persistence of human rights concerns.

In 2025, just over half of Australians judged that political debates about China were contributing to divisions within society, indicating an undercurrent of concern about domestic polarisation. At the same time, perceptions that Chinese government influence is undermining Australian values eased slightly in 2025, remaining just below a majority and broadly steady across a five-year period. Views of value compatibility reflected a similar ambivalence. Many Australians saw close economic partnership with China as broadly compatible with Australia's democratic system, but uncertainty about how far shared economic interests align with national values remained evident.

Views toward Australians of Chinese origin showed a mix of continued concern and broad recognition. Awareness of discrimination and harassment within the community remained significant but has softened since 2021, while a clear majority recognise the community's constructive role in building understanding between the two countries. Most Australians distinguish clearly between the Chinese government and people of Chinese heritage, though a substantial minority still express concern about potential foreign influence. Agreement with the view that Australians of Chinese origin could be mobilised to undermine national interests has eased to its lowest level in the five-year series but remains relatively high, indicating that underlying reservations persist.

Support for human rights-related measures remained firm and consistent. Around two-thirds favoured targeted sanctions on officials implicated in abuses, and more than three-quarters endorsed working with other democracies to uphold accountability, underscoring the durability of principled positions even as broader tensions stabilise.

Perceptions of personal safety when travelling to China have also eased. Concern about arbitrary detention fell to its lowest level since 2021, though it continues to command majority agreement, reflecting ongoing attentiveness amid renewed travel links.

Taken together, the findings indicate that public sentiment has levelled out rather than shifted dramatically. Attitudes toward China's societal influence remain broadly consistent but still include elements of unease, particularly on questions of foreign influence. Overall, the results point to continuity, with enduring concerns sitting alongside recognition of the contributions made by Australians of Chinese heritage.

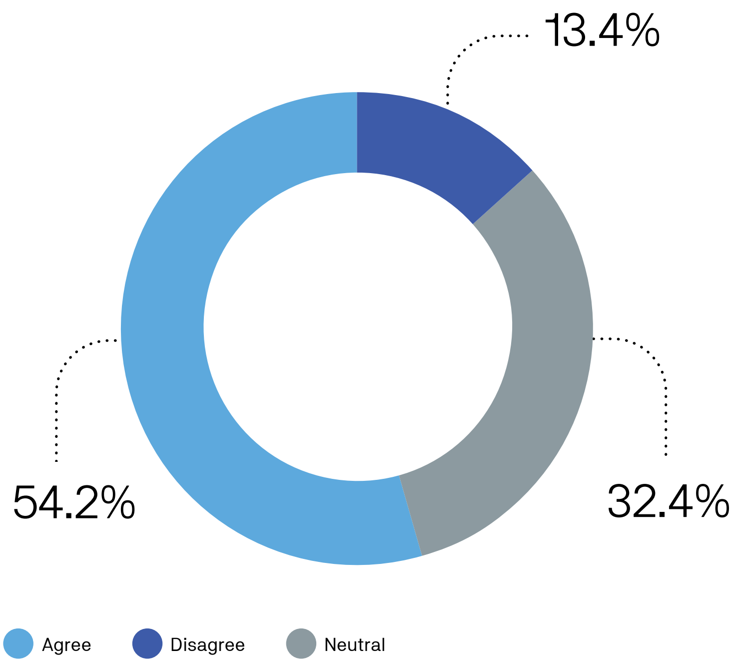
6.2 Political discourse and social cohesion

'The current nature of political debates about China are increasing divisions within Australian society'

In 2025, just over half of Australians (54 percent) agreed that political debates about China are increasing divisions within Australian society, while 32 percent were neutral and 13 percent disagreed (Figure 58). Although this question was introduced for the first time in 2025, the result suggests moderate concern about the domestic effects of political polarisation over China, with roughly one in three respondents undecided.

Figure 58. **Impact of the current nature of political debates on China on Australian society**

The current nature of political debates about China are increasing divisions within Australian society | *Asked in 2025*



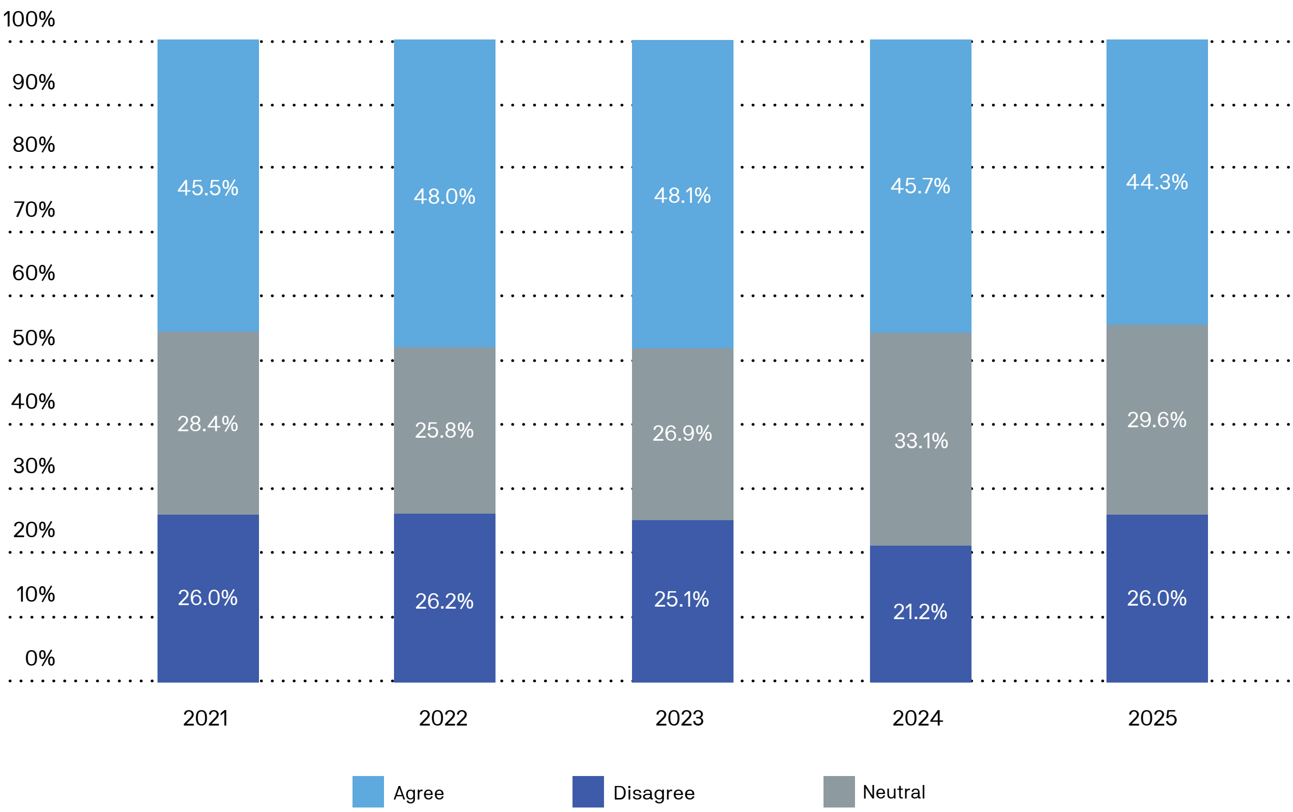
'Australian values and traditions are being undermined by Chinese government influence in Australia'

Perceptions of whether Chinese government influence is undermining Australian values and traditions have remained broadly stable over the past five years. Agreement has shifted only within a narrow band, from 44 to 48 percent across the series: 46 percent in 2021, rising to 48 percent in 2022 and 2023, before easing to 46 percent in 2024 and 44 percent in 2025. Disagreement has ranged between 21 and 26 percent, returning to 26 percent in 2025, while neutral responses have moved between 26 and 33 percent with no sustained trend (Figure 59).

Overall, the data show persistent, moderate concern but no marked escalation or decline, with views remaining relatively evenly distributed over time.

Figure 59. **Perceptions of the impact of Chinese government influence on Australian values and traditions**

Australian values and traditions are being undermined by Chinese government influence in Australia | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



6.3 Democratic values and the economic relationship

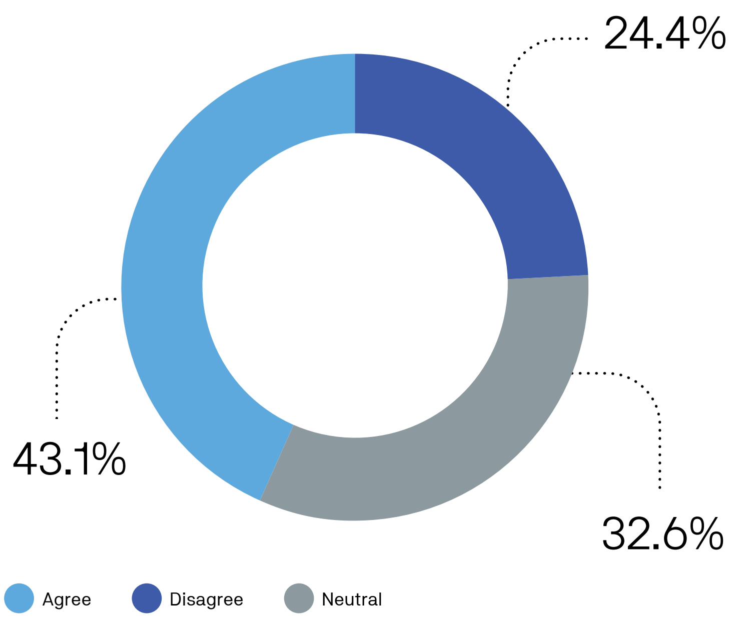
'Being a close economic partner with China is compatible with Australia's democratic values'

In 2025, 43 percent of Australians agreed that being a close economic partner with China is compatible with Australia's democratic values, while 24 percent disagreed and 33 percent were neutral (Figure 60).

Although more Australians agreed than disagreed, a substantial share expressed uncertainty. The results suggest a cautiously mixed view of whether economic engagement with China can coexist comfortably with Australia's democratic principles. Public opinion on this issue appears shaped less by ideology than by pragmatism, reflecting a willingness to accept economic cooperation alongside unease about value differences and political influence.

Figure 60. **Compatibility of economic partnership with democratic values**

Being a close economic partner with China is compatible with Australia's democratic values | *Asked in 2025*



6.4 Australian-Chinese communities

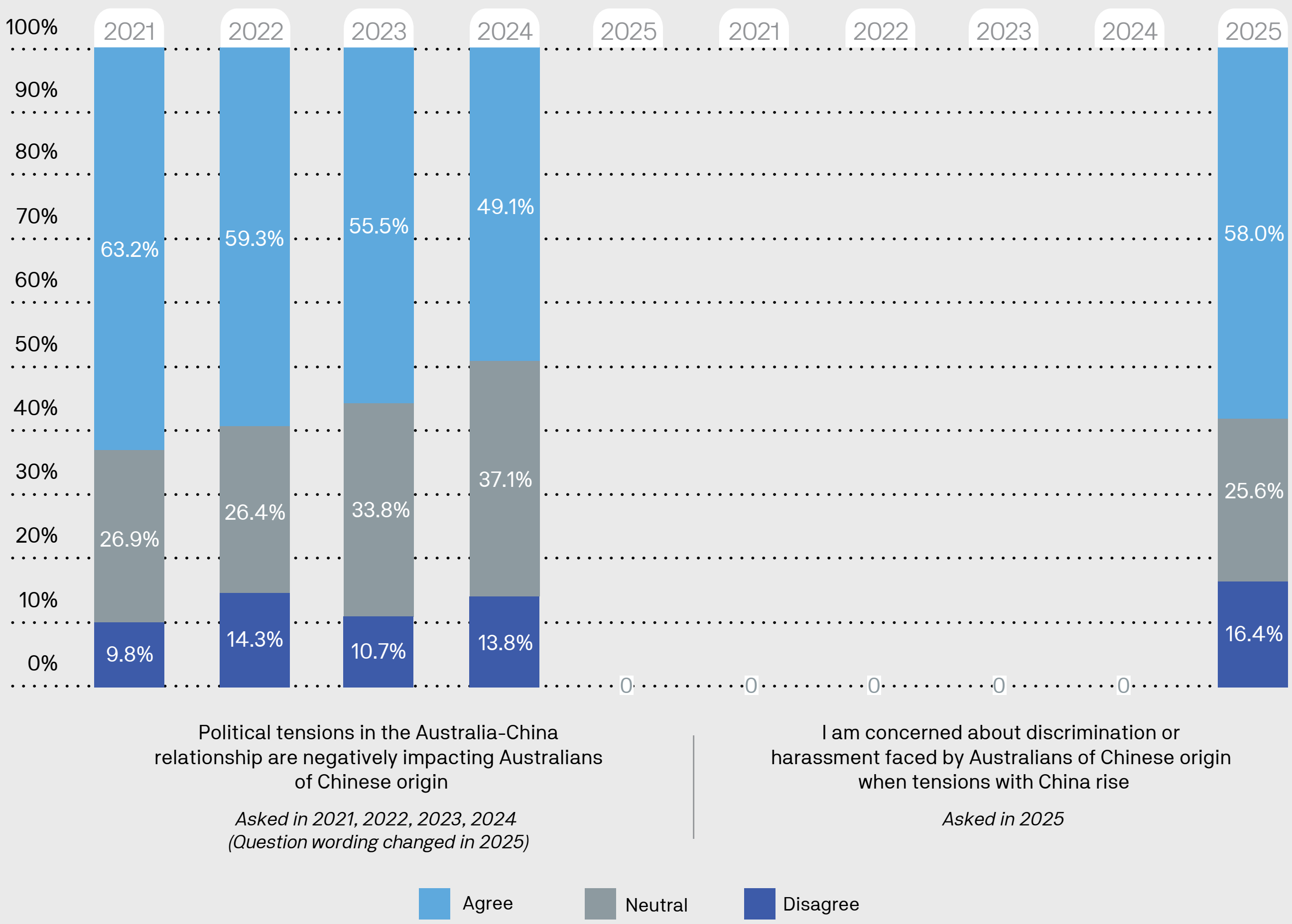
'Political tensions in the Australia-China relationship are negatively impacting Australians of Chinese origin'

'I am concerned about discrimination or harassment faced by Australians of Chinese origin when tensions with China rise'

Between 2021 and 2024, agreement that political tensions between Australia and China negatively affect Australians of Chinese origin declined steadily from 63 percent to 49 percent, while neutrality increased from 27 percent to 37 percent and disagreement rose slightly from 10 percent to 14 percent (Figure 60). This trend suggests a gradual easing of concern about the domestic consequences of diplomatic friction.

In 2025, the question was reframed to gauge concern about discrimination or harassment faced by Australians of Chinese origin when bilateral tensions rise. Under this new wording, 58 percent expressed concern, 26 percent were neutral and 16 percent disagreed (Figure 61). Although not directly comparable, the results point to continuing awareness of the social pressures associated with political tension, broadly consistent with earlier patterns.

Figure 61. **Impact of political tensions on Australian-Chinese communities**

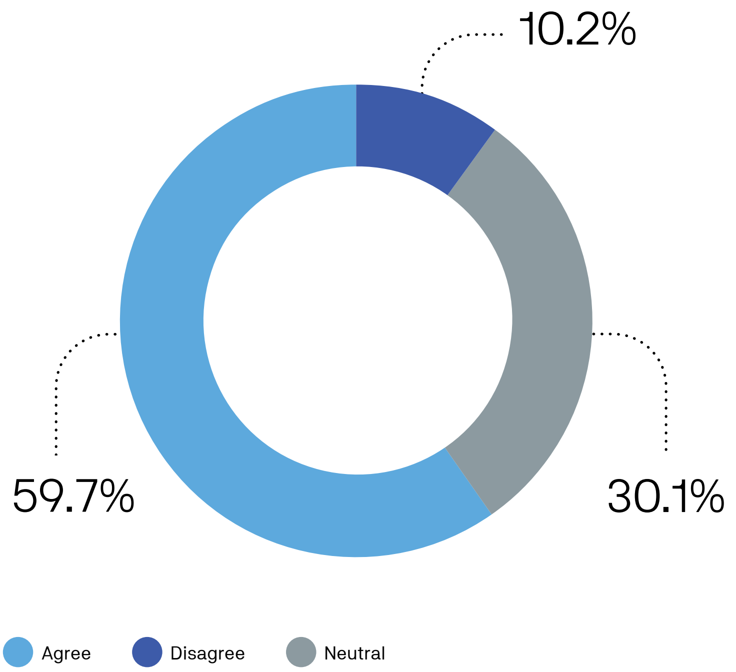


'My views about the Chinese government are separate from my views about people of Chinese origin'

In a new item in 2025, six in ten respondents (60 percent) agreed that Australians of Chinese origin play an important role in building understanding and cooperation between Australia and China, with 30 percent neutral and 10 percent disagreeing (Figure 62). This finding reflects broad recognition of positive community contributions to bilateral understanding.

Figure 62. **The role of Australian-Chinese communities in building bilateral understanding and cooperation**

Australians of Chinese origin play an important role in building understanding and cooperation between Australia and China | *Asked in 2025*

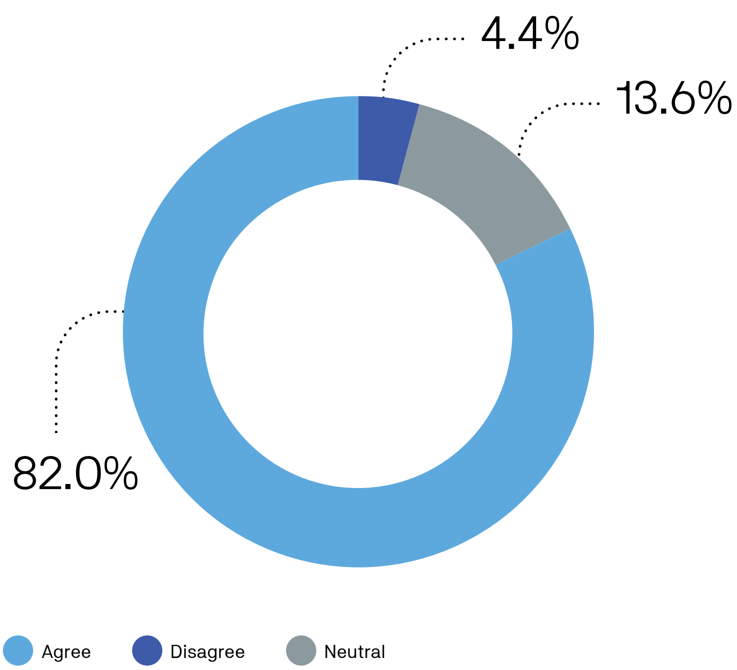


'My views about the Chinese government are separate from my views about people of Chinese origin'

Public attitudes also draw a clear distinction between the Chinese government and people of Chinese heritage. Eighty-two percent reported that their views about the Chinese government are separate from their views about people of Chinese origin, with only four percent disagreeing and 14 percent neutral (Figure 63). This represents one of the clearest points of consensus across the 2025 survey.

Figure 63. **Separation of views about the Chinese government and people of Chinese origin**

My views about the Chinese government are separate from my views about people of Chinese origin | *Asked in 2025*



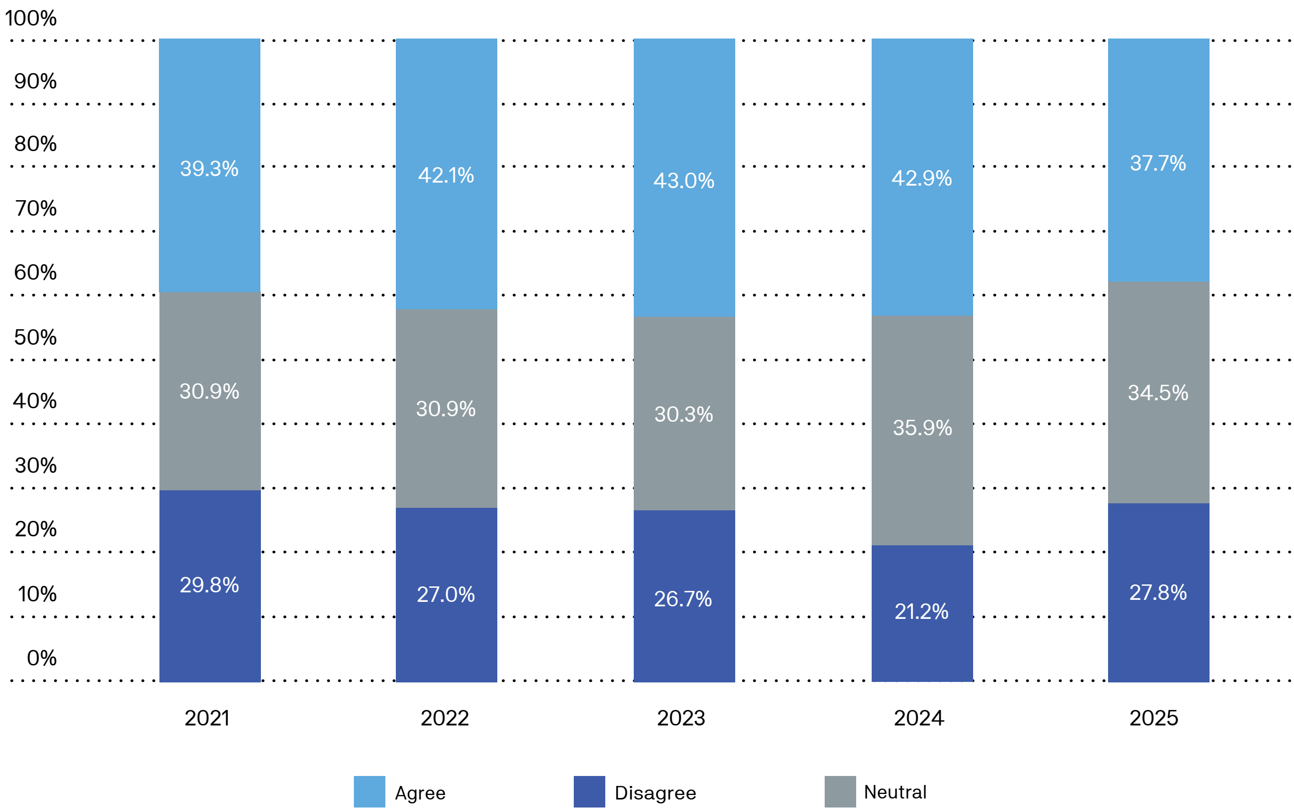
'Australians of Chinese origin can be mobilised by the Chinese government to undermine Australia's interests and social cohesion'

Perceptions that Australians of Chinese origin could be mobilised by the Chinese government to undermine Australia's interests showed only a small easing in 2025. Agreement fell to 38 percent, down from around 43 percent in 2023 and 2024, and below the levels recorded in 2022 (42 percent) and 2021 (39 percent). Disagreement rose from 21 percent in 2024 to 28 percent in 2025, close to the series high of 30 percent in 2021, while neutral responses remained comparatively stable across the five years (Figure 64).

These shifts are modest and may fall within normal sampling variation, but the overall level of concern remains notable: around four in ten Australians still regard some degree of Chinese government influence on Chinese-Australian communities as possible, indicating that the issue continues to carry weight in public opinion.

Figure 64. **Perceptions of Chinese government influence on Australian-Chinese communities**

Australians of Chinese origin can be mobilised by the Chinese government to undermine Australia's interests and social cohesion
Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025



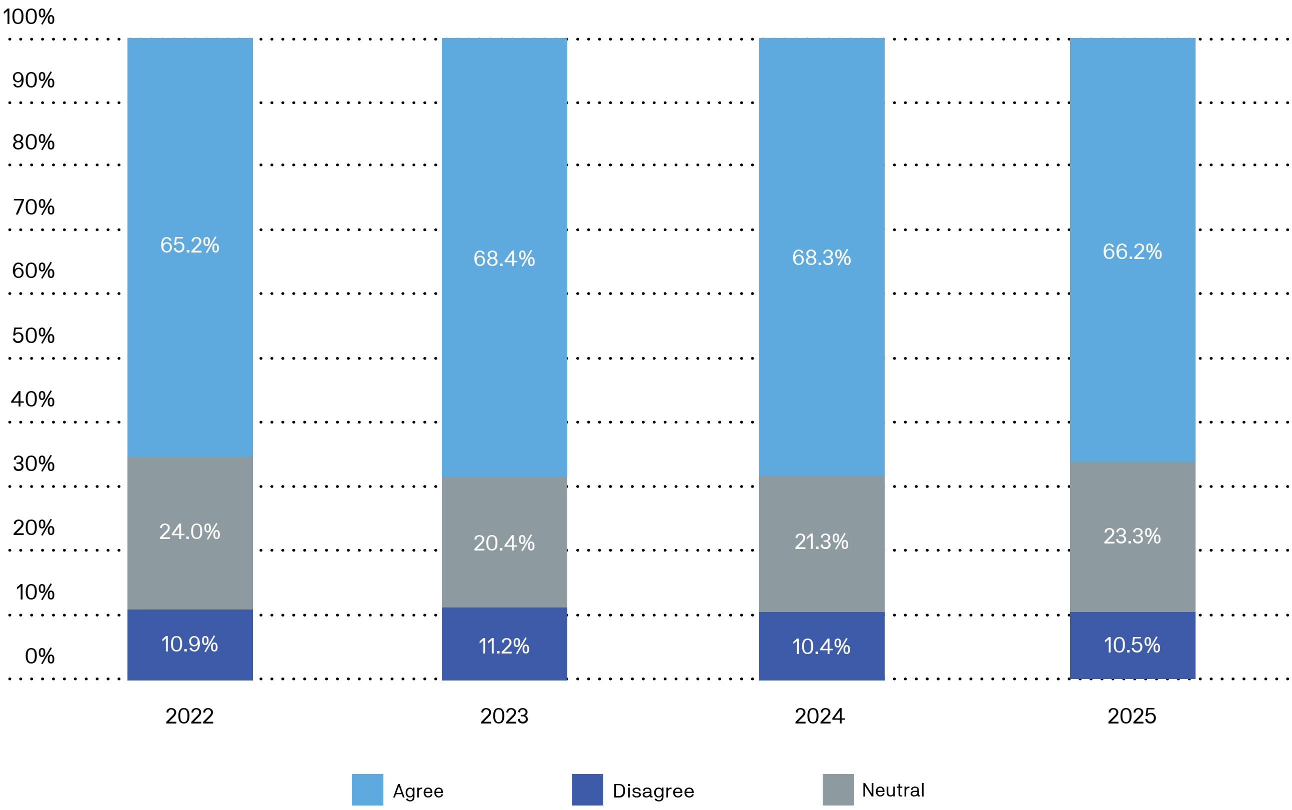
6.5 Human rights policy

'Australia should place sanctions, such as travel and financial bans, on Chinese officials and entities involved in human rights violations, such as those committed in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong'

Support for using sanctions in response to human rights violations in China has remained consistently high since the question was first asked in 2022. In 2025, two-thirds of Australians (66 percent) supported sanctions such as travel or financial bans on Chinese officials and entities involved in violations in Xinjiang, Tibet, or Hong Kong, similar to 68 percent in 2024 and 2023, and 65 percent in 2022. Disagreement and neutral responses remained similarly stable (Figure 65).

Figure 65. **Support for the use of sanctions legislation**

Australia should place sanctions, such as travel and financial bans, on Chinese officials and entities involved in human rights violations, such as those committed in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong | *Asked in 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*

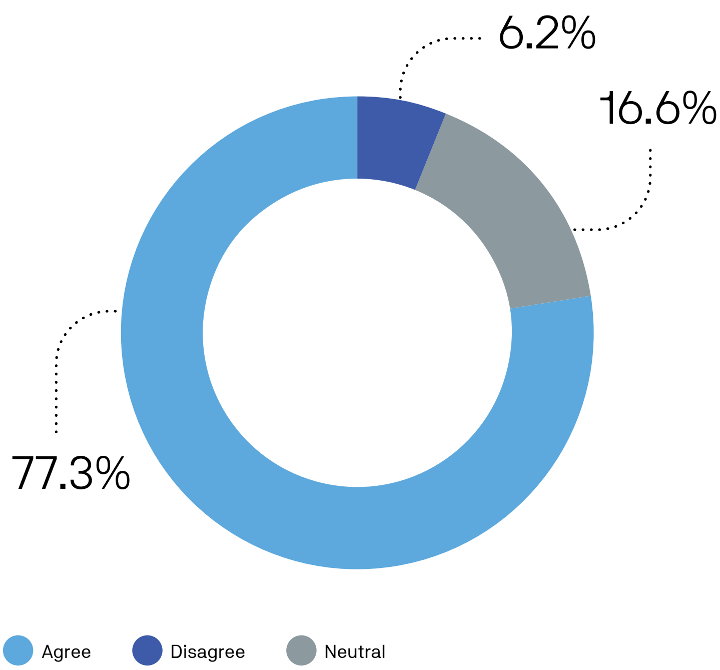


'Australia should work with other democracies to hold China accountable for human rights violations, such as those committed in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong'

A related question introduced in 2025 found more than three-quarters of respondents (77 percent) supported Australia working with other democracies to hold China accountable for human rights abuses, with 17 percent neutral and only six percent disagreeing (Figure 66).

Figure 66. **Support for cooperation with other democracies to hold China accountable for human rights violations**

Australia should work with other democracies to hold China accountable for human rights violations, such as those committed in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong | *Asked in 2025*



6.6 Personal safety and travel perceptions

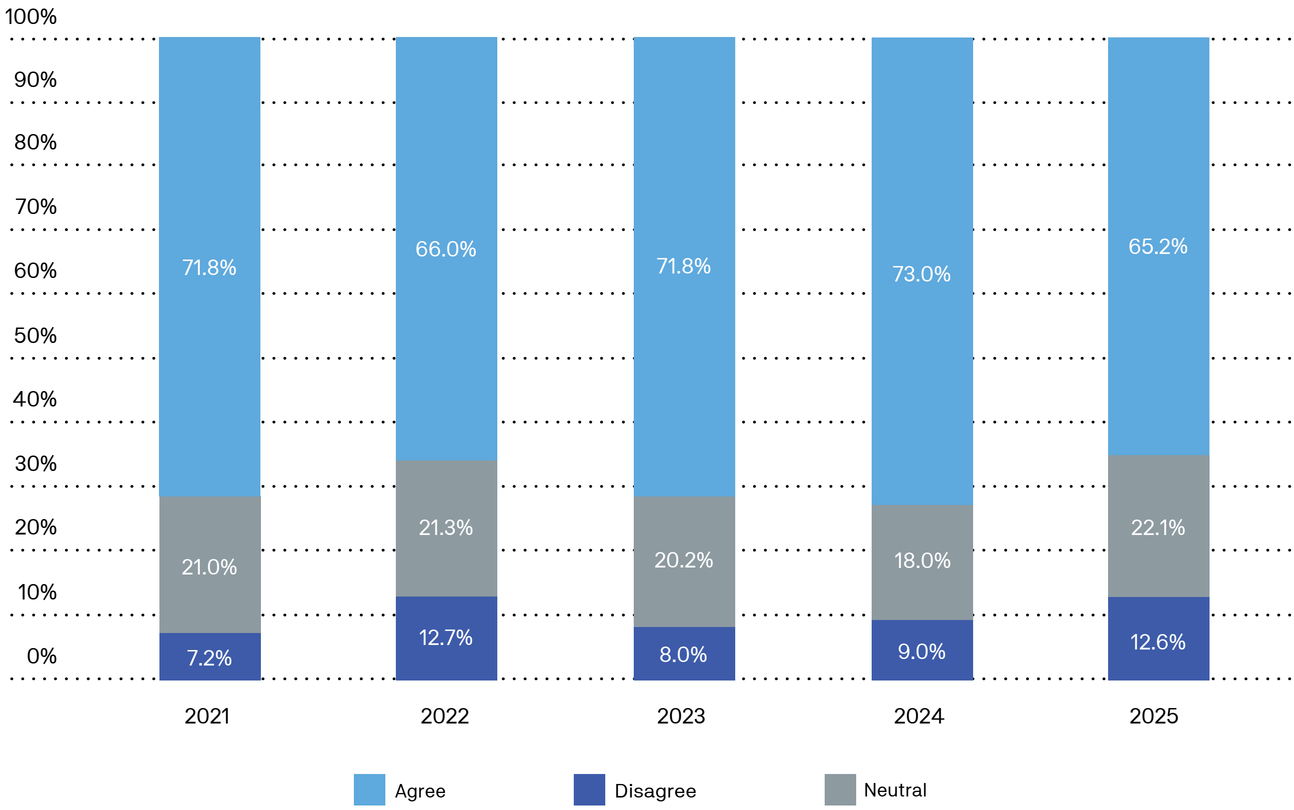
'The risk of arbitrary detention is a concern when considering travel to China'

Concern about personal safety when travelling to China remains widespread but has eased in 2025. Agreement that the risk of arbitrary detention is a concern when considering travel fell from 73 percent in 2024 to 65 percent in 2025, the lowest level in the five-year series. Previous readings ranged between 66 percent and 72 percent from 2021 to 2023 (Figure 67).

Although concern has moderated, nearly two-thirds of Australians continue to see arbitrary detention as a credible risk when considering travel to China, indicating sustained awareness of personal security risks even as perceptions of immediacy have diminished somewhat.

Figure 67. **Arbitrary detention – A concern when considering travel to China?**

The risk of arbitrary detention is a concern when considering travel to China | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



7. University and research

7.1 Overview

Between 2021 and 2025, Australian attitudes toward university and research engagement with China showed gradual stabilisation after a period of scrutiny over foreign interference and research security. Policy measures introduced during this period, such as enhanced transparency requirements and coordination between universities and government, formed the backdrop for these perceptions but cannot be directly linked to observed changes in sentiment.

Concern that partnerships with Chinese institutions compromise academic freedom declined modestly over the five-year series, while support for continued collaboration, particularly in scientific research, rose slightly. These results point to incremental adjustment rather than major realignment.

Overall, public opinion in 2025 reflects cautious acceptance of engagement under defined safeguards. A clear majority regard collaboration as manageable with appropriate oversight, while a smaller but persistent minority remain concerned about autonomy and integrity risks. The data therefore suggest a measured settling of views, with support for research ties sustained but qualified by expectations of transparency and institutional control.

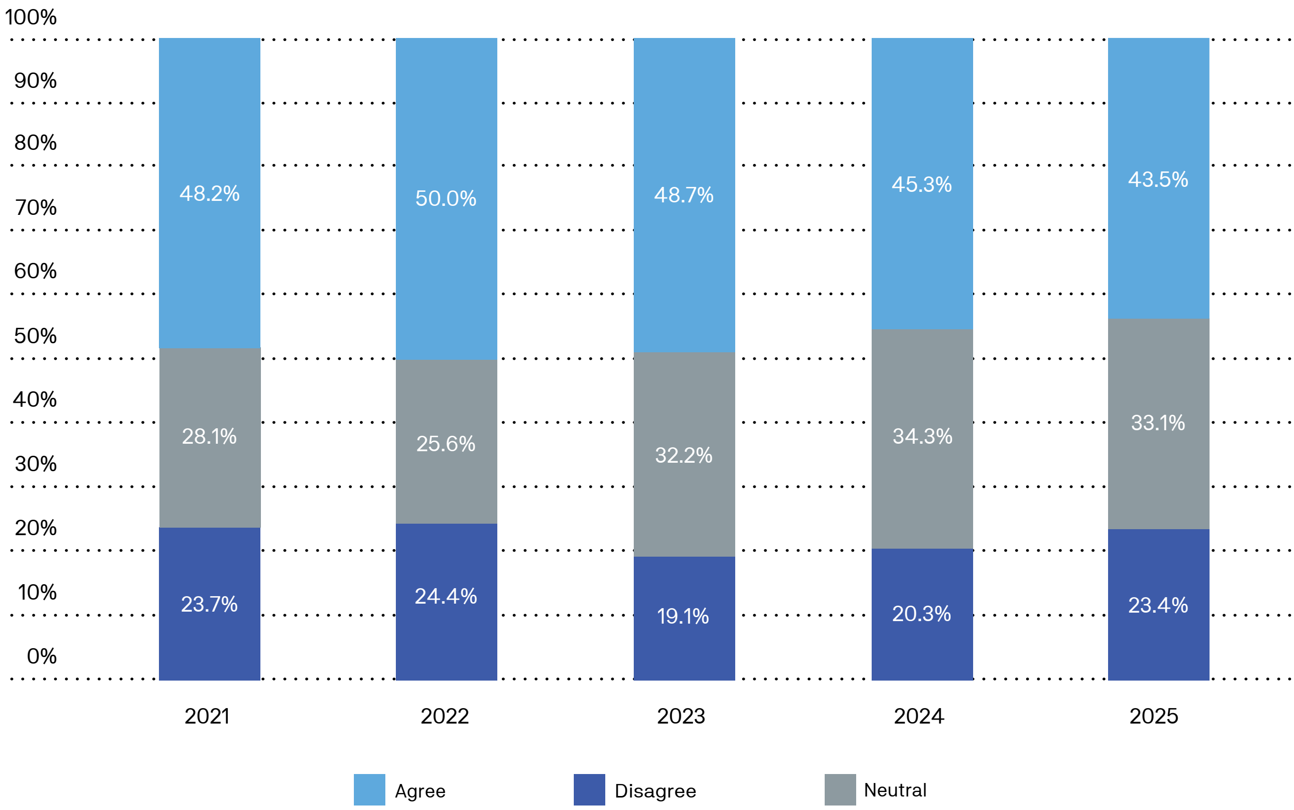
7.2 Academic collaboration and safeguards

'Australian university ties with China compromise Australian freedom of speech'

Public concern that university ties with China compromise academic freedom has eased modestly over the past five years. Agreement with that view fell from a five-year high of 50 percent in 2022 to 43 percent in 2025, the lowest point in the series, while neutrality increased from 28 to 33 percent and disagreement remained near 23 percent (Figure 68).

Figure 68. **Freedom of academic speech**

Australian university ties with China compromise Australian freedom of speech | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*

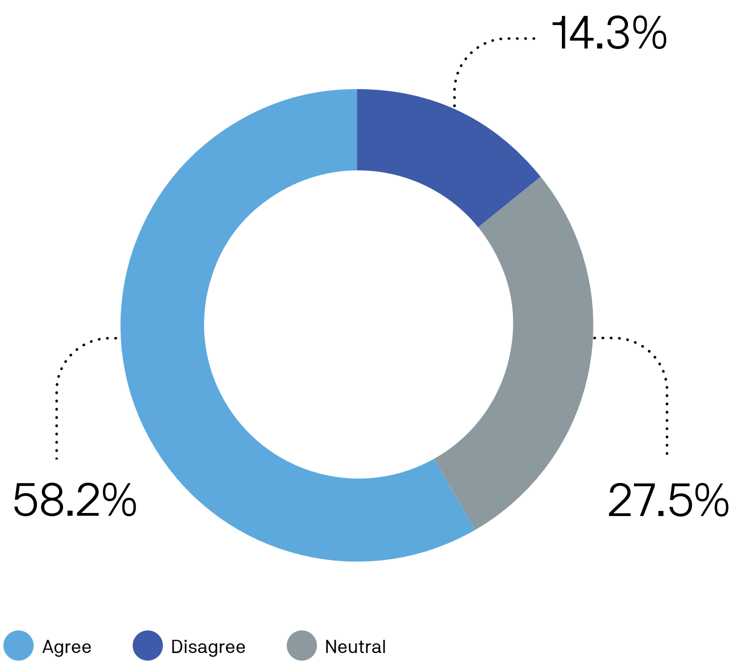


'Australian universities can both collaborate with Chinese institutions and protect academic freedom with the right safeguards'

In 2025, about six in 10 Australians (58 percent) agreed that Australian universities can collaborate with Chinese institutions while safeguarding academic freedom, provided the right protections are in place, while 28 percent were neutral and 14 percent disagreed (Figure 69).

Figure 69. **Academic collaboration and safeguards**

Australian universities can both collaborate with Chinese institutions and protect academic freedom with the right safeguards | *Asked in 2025*



'Research collaborations between academics from Australia and China makes Australia more competitive internationally'

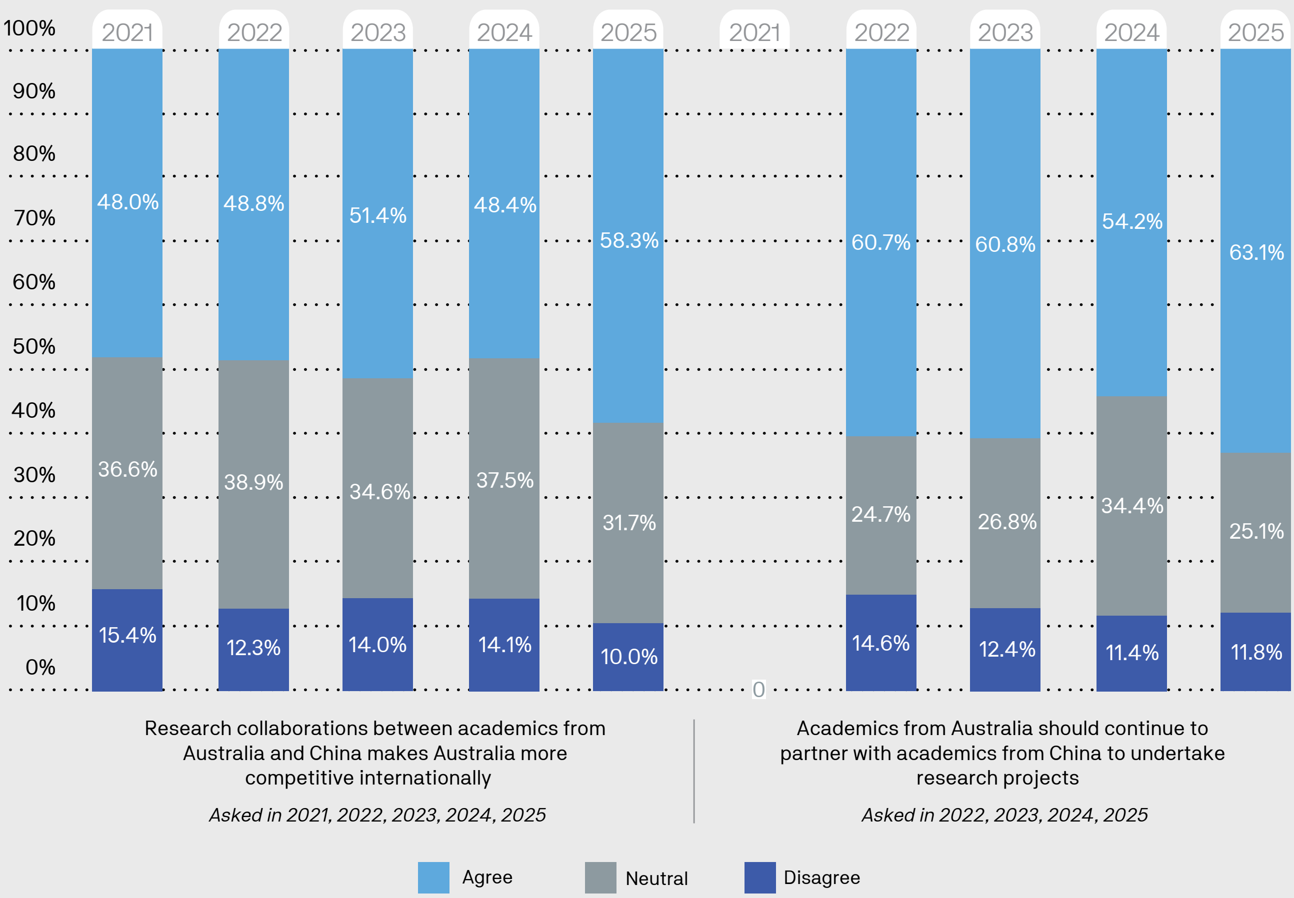
'Academics from Australia should continue to partner with academics from China to undertake research projects'

Support for research collaboration strengthened overall across the five-year period, particularly in 2025, although year-to-year fluctuations indicate the trend has not been uniformly upward. Agreement that partnerships between Australian and Chinese academics make Australia more internationally competitive rose from 48 percent in 2021 to 49 percent in 2022, 51 percent in 2023, dipped to 48 percent in 2024 and increased to a series high of 58 percent in 2025. Over the same period, neutral responses ranged from 32 to 39 percent, while disagreement remained low, between 10 and 15 percent.

Support for continuing joint research projects followed a similar pattern. Agreement was 61 percent in both 2022 and 2023, dipped to 54 percent in 2024, and rose to 63 percent in 2025. Neutral responses varied between 25 and 34 percent, and disagreement stayed low at 11 to 15 percent across the series (Figure 70).

Taken together, these results point to a general improvement in attitudes toward academic collaboration, with consistently low levels of disagreement and a sizeable but stable neutral middle. However, they sit within a broader survey landscape in which security-related concerns remain visible in other domains.

Figure 70. **Research collaboration – General**



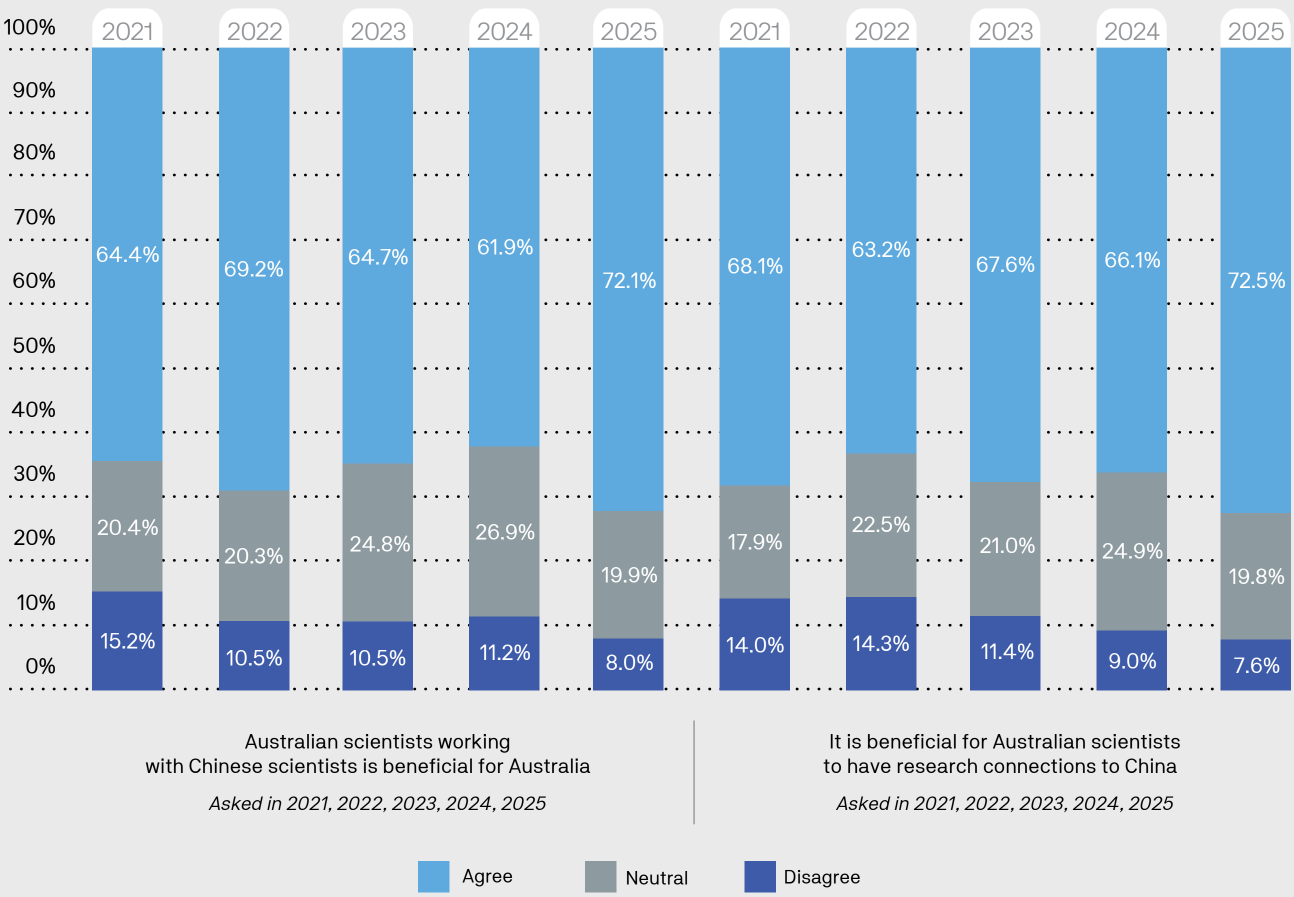
'Australian scientists working with Chinese scientists is beneficial for Australia'

'It is beneficial for Australian scientists to have research connections to China'

Views of scientific cooperation have been consistently positive across the series, though with some year-to-year variation. Agreement that partnerships between Australian and Chinese scientists benefit Australia rose from 64 percent in 2021 to a series high of 72 percent in 2025, after fluctuating between 62 and 69 percent in the intervening years. Perceptions of individual research connections followed a similar pattern: agreement stood at 68 percent in 2021, dipped into the mid-60s from 2022 to 2024, and then increased to 73 percent in 2025. Neutral responses for both measures generally ranged from 18 to 27 percent, while disagreement remained low, at eight to 15 percent across the period (Figure 71).

Taken together, these findings point to a stable pattern of cautious positivity toward scientific collaboration, with support strengthening in 2025 but earlier fluctuations indicating that views have been steady rather than consistently rising. Again, while these attitudes sit alongside security-related concerns captured elsewhere in the survey, sentiment toward scientific engagement itself remains generally favourable.

Figure 71. **Research collaboration – Science**



8.
Competition and cooperation

8.1 Overview

Across the polling series, Australian attitudes toward competition and cooperation with China have reflected a stable dual approach: strong support for reinforcing regional partnerships to balance Chinese influence, alongside broad endorsement of working with China on global issues where cooperation serves mutual interests. These results suggest that Australians generally see competition and collaboration as parallel, rather than conflicting, elements of Australia's international engagement.

The 2025 results reinforce this equilibrium. Support for closer relationships with Southeast Asian and Pacific Island nations stayed high, while agreement that Australia should cooperate with China on global and regional challenges reached its highest levels in the series. New items introduced in 2025 extended this cooperative framing to emerging technologies, showing strong support for joint work on low-emissions industries and more qualified backing for engagement on international digital and AI governance.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Australians favour a balanced external strategy: strengthening regional influence and resilience while maintaining room for targeted collaboration with China in areas of shared responsibility. Public sentiment appears measured and pragmatic, recognising that managing relations with China requires both competition and cooperation across different policy domains.

8.2 Regional and global competition and cooperation

'It is beneficial for Australia to build closer relationships with Southeast Asian nations, including through increased aid assistance, to counter China's influence in the region'

'It is beneficial for Australia to build closer relationships with Pacific Island nations, including through increased aid assistance, in order to counter China's influence in the region'

Support for deepening regional partnerships to manage China's influence has remained consistently strong since data collection began in 2023. In 2025, 71 percent of Australians agreed that it is beneficial for Australia to build closer relationships with Southeast Asian nations, the same level as in 2024 (71 percent) and slightly higher than in 2023 (68 percent). Disagreement has remained low throughout the three-year period, while neutral responses have fluctuated between 20 and 25 percent (Figure 72).

Support for closer engagement with Pacific Island nations is even higher. Agreement rose from 74 percent in 2023 and 2024 to 77 percent in 2025, with disagreement remaining below seven percent and neutral responses around 19 to 20 percent (Figure 73).

These stable, high majorities indicate durable public backing for an active regional policy focused on strengthening relationships in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific as part of a broader approach to balancing China's influence.

Figure 72. **Building closer relationships with Southeast Asian nations to counter China's influence**

It is beneficial for Australia to build closer relationships with Southeast Asian nations, including through increased aid assistance, to counter China's influence in the region | *Asked in 2023, 2024, 2025*

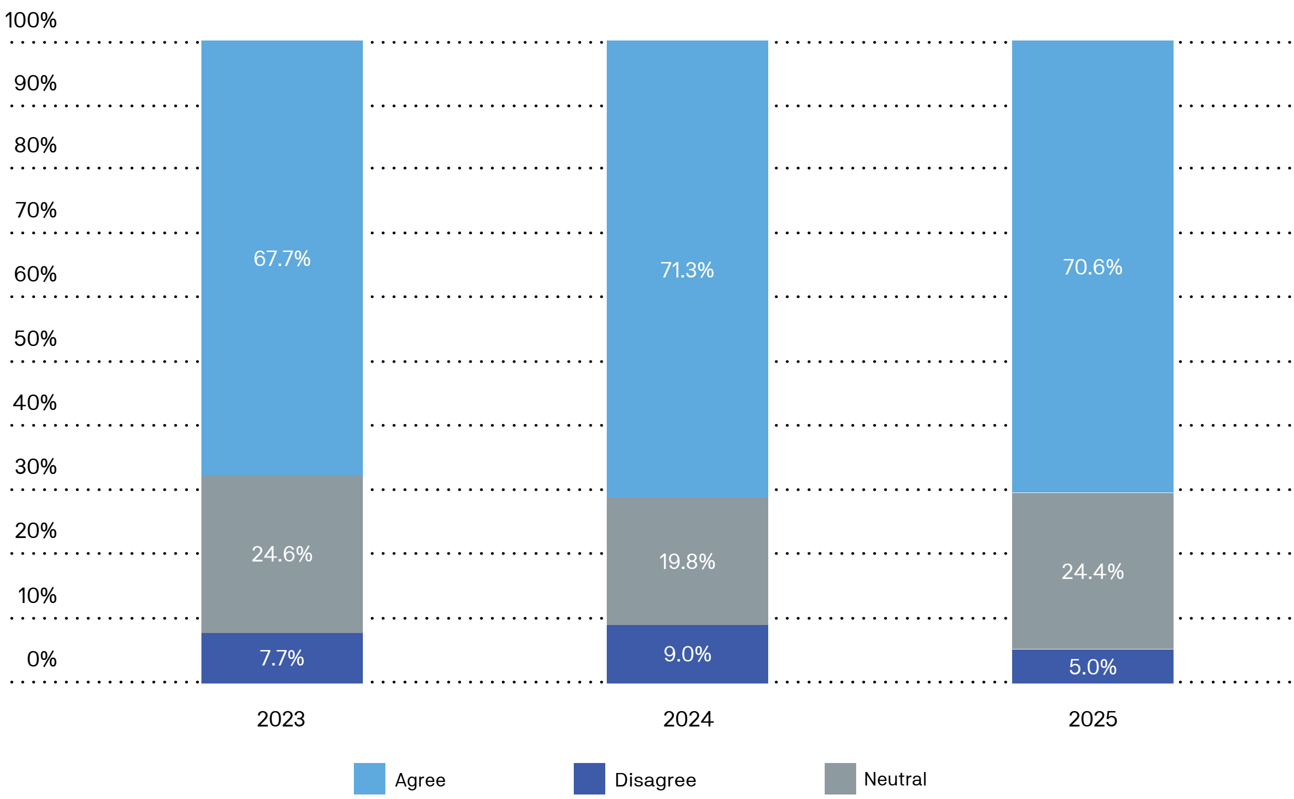
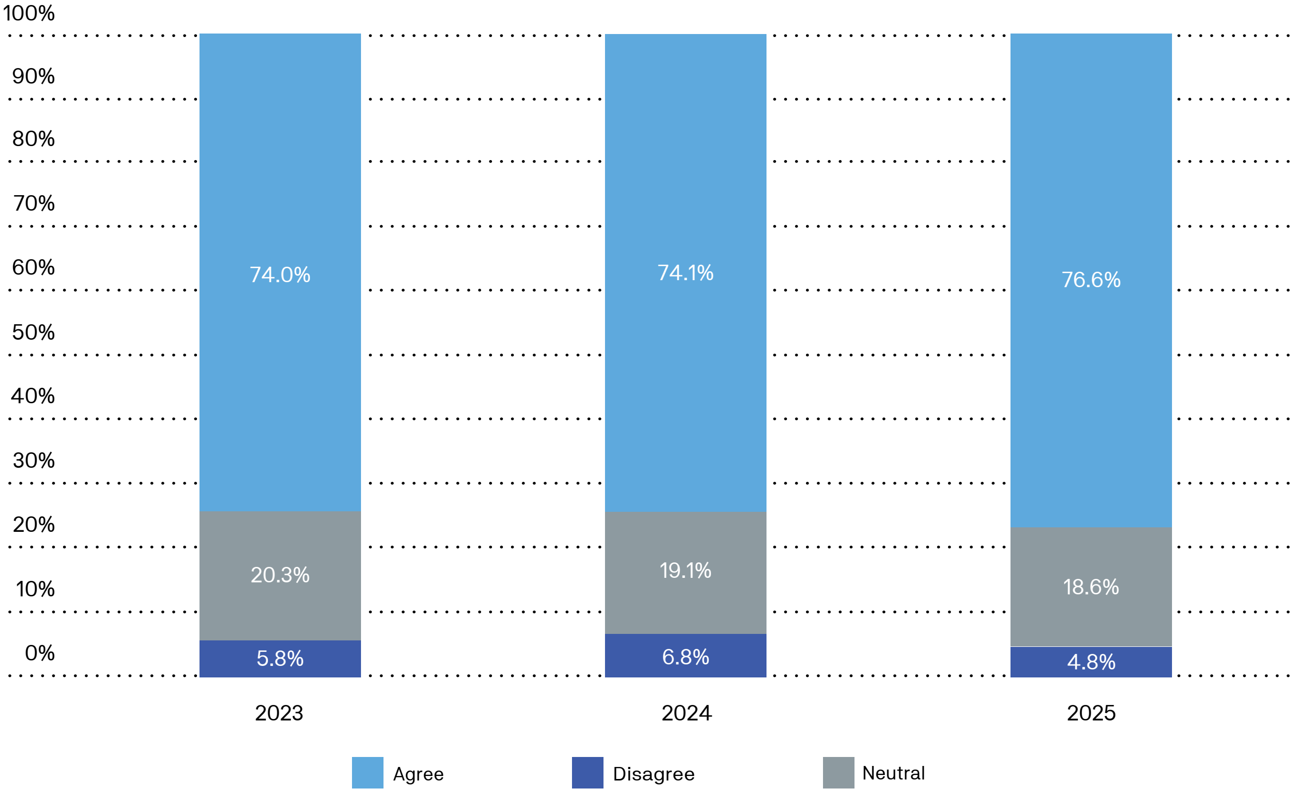


Figure 73. **Building closer relationships with Pacific Island nations to counter China's influence**

It is beneficial for Australia to build closer relationships with Pacific Island nations, including through increased aid assistance, in order to counter China's influence in the region | *Asked in 2023, 2024, 2025*



'It is beneficial for Australia to work with China on global issues, such as climate change and global health'

'It is beneficial for Australia to work with China on regional issues, such as ending malaria in the Pacific'

Australians have also remained strongly supportive of cooperation with China on shared global and regional challenges. Agreement that working with China on global issues such as climate change and global health is beneficial rose from a five-year series low of 69 percent in 2022 to a high of 78 percent in 2025, after fluctuating within the 70 to 74 percent range in 2021 (74 percent), 2023 (72 percent) and 2024 (70 percent). Over the same period, disagreement remained low at around 10 to 11 percent, while neutral responses varied between 12 and 20 percent, dipping to their lowest level in 2025 (12 percent) (Figure 74).

Support for cooperation on regional initiatives followed a similar pattern. Agreement stood at 69 percent in 2024 before increasing by nine points to 78 percent in 2025, having remained between 71 and 72 percent from 2021 to 2023. Disagreement here also remained low across the five-year series, moving between eight and 12 percent, while neutral responses ranged from 14 to 22 percent (Figure 75).

These consistently high levels of agreement, combined with low disagreement and a substantial but stable neutral middle, suggest that most Australians view constructive engagement with China on transnational issues as compatible with national interests, even amid broader strategic tensions.

Figure 74. **Benefits of global cooperation**

It is beneficial for Australia to work with China on global issues, such as climate change and global health | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*

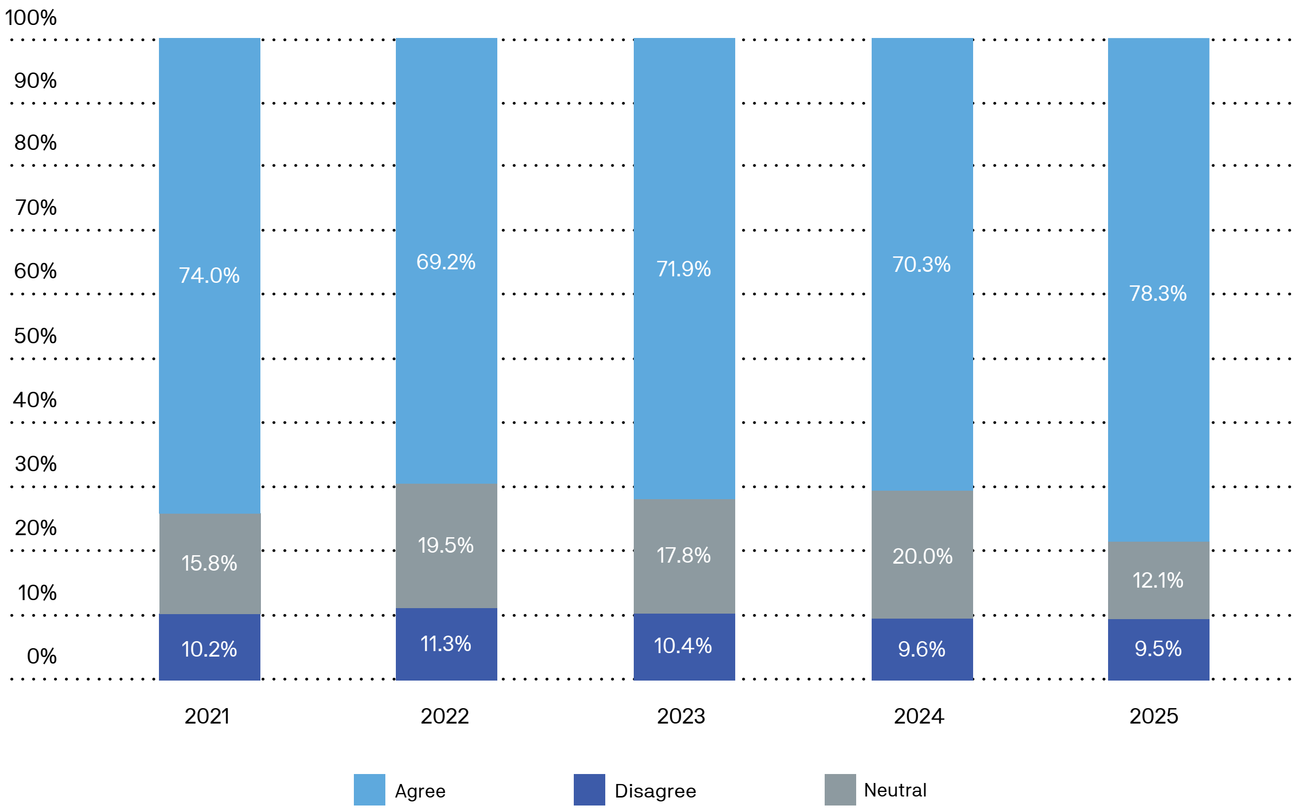
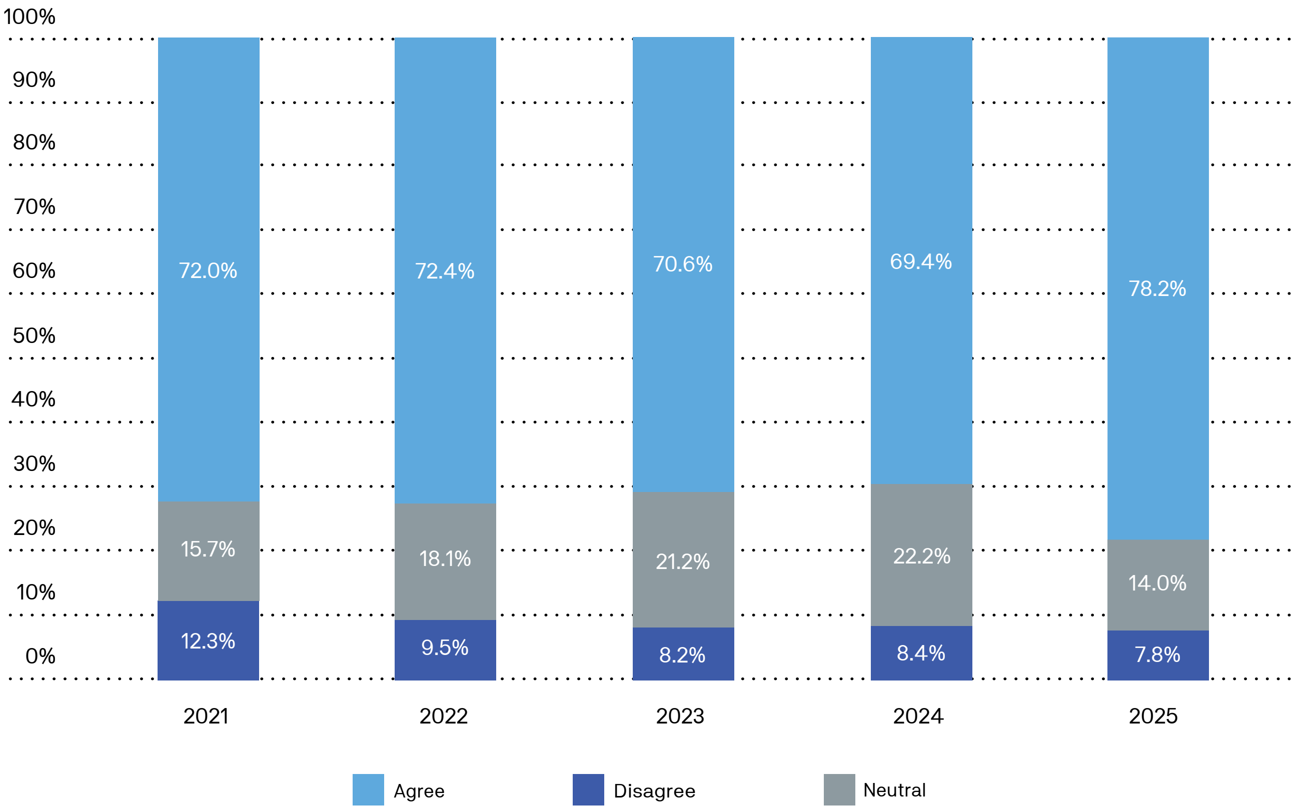


Figure 75. **Benefits of regional cooperation**

It is beneficial for Australia to work with China on regional issues, such as ending malaria in the Pacific | *Asked in 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025*



'Australia should work with China on developing low-emissions technologies such as green hydrogen and green steel, even when political tensions exist'

'Australia should work together with China to shape international artificial intelligence safety rules and digital governance'

Survey items introduced in 2025 extended this perspective into the technological domain. Seven in 10 Australians (70 percent) agreed that Australia should work with China on developing low-emissions technologies such as green hydrogen and green steel, even when political tensions exist. A smaller majority, 60 percent, supported collaboration on establishing international rules for artificial intelligence safety and digital governance (Figures 76-77). These single-year results highlight public openness to cooperation in technologically significant fields, while also reflecting greater caution where governance and security implications are perceived to be higher.

Viewed together, the findings show a coherent pattern of dualism. Australians support strengthening regional partnerships to enhance influence and stability while endorsing selective cooperation with China where interests align.

Figure 76. **Cooperation on low-emissions technologies**

Australia should work with China on developing low-emissions technologies such as green hydrogen and green steel, even when political tensions exist | *Asked in 2025*

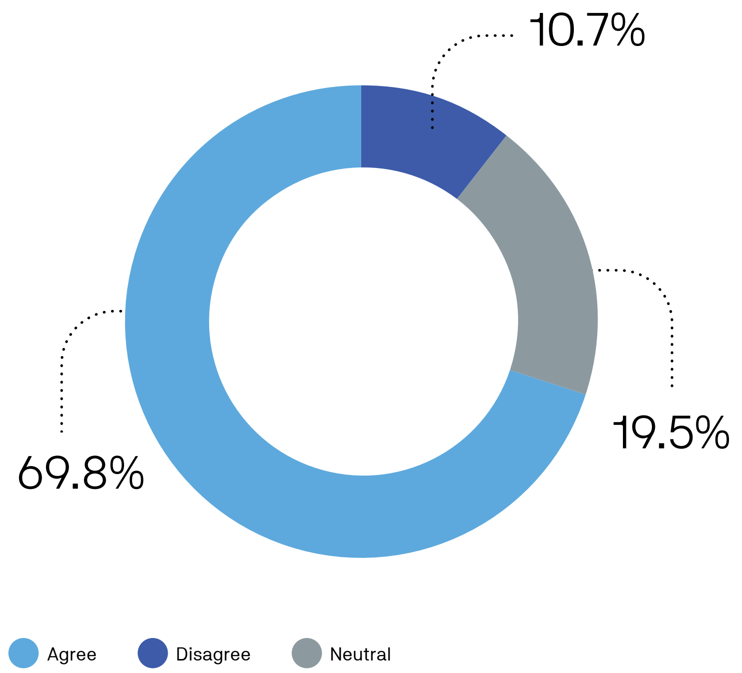
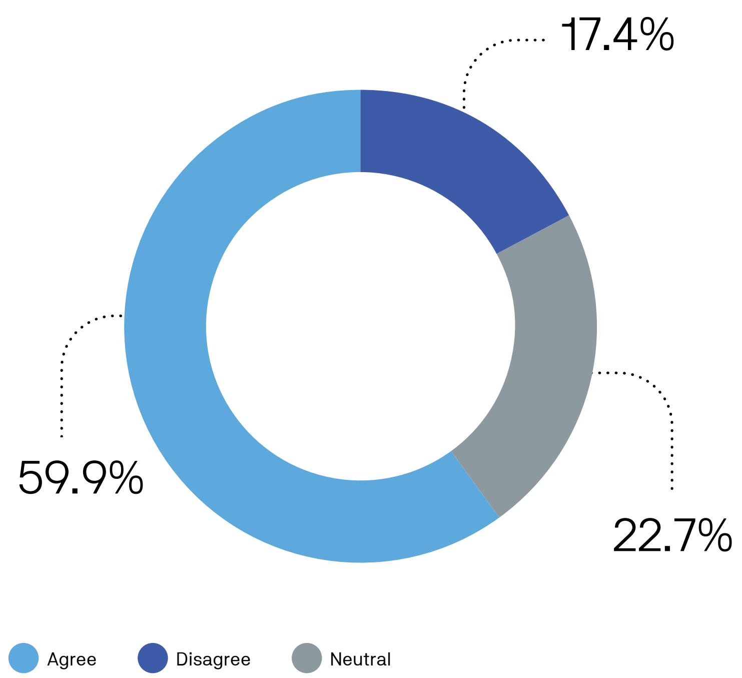


Figure 77. **Cooperation on international AI safety rules and digital governance**

Australia should work together with China to shape international artificial intelligence safety rules and digital governance | *Asked in 2025*



9.
Influences shaping views on China and Australia-China relations

9.1 Overview

This section examines the factors that shape how Australians form their views of China. It explores both the groups and institutions considered most influential and the sources of information and experience that contribute to those views. The findings provide insight into the main channels through which public perceptions of China are formed.

The 2025 results provide a detailed picture of the informational and perceptual channels through which Australians form their views of China. Across the survey, perceptions of China remain shaped mainly through political and institutional lenses rather than through direct personal experience. This aligns with broader findings in the report, where more pragmatic economic attitudes coexist with perceptions that continue to be influenced by political developments and media narratives.

A clear majority of respondents identified the Chinese government and its political system as the most influential factor shaping their overall perceptions, far outweighing references to Chinese citizens, companies, or Australians of Chinese heritage. This suggests that for most Australians, China's leadership remains the central reference point for understanding the country's global role.

Media exposure continues to dominate as the main channel shaping opinion. Public broadcasters such as the ABC and SBS were nominated by about one-third of respondents as their primary source of information on Australia–China relations, ahead of commercial, international and social media outlets. Digital platforms occupy a secondary space in information consumption, with Facebook by far the most frequently used for news about China, followed by TikTok and X (formerly Twitter).

Personal and professional experiences contribute meaningfully but less decisively. Contact with people of Chinese heritage in Australia, academic or work-related exposure, and travel to China were among the most commonly cited non-media influences. These patterns suggest that Australians' views of China are formed primarily through mediated and institutional channels rather than sustained interpersonal contact. The prominence of the Chinese government as a reference point, combined with reliance on established media institutions, underscores that while economic and social attitudes toward China have become more moderate, perceptions of China as a political actor remain central to how Australians interpret the relationship overall.

9.2 Most influential group shaping views on China

'When you form your views about China, which group is the most influential in shaping your views?'

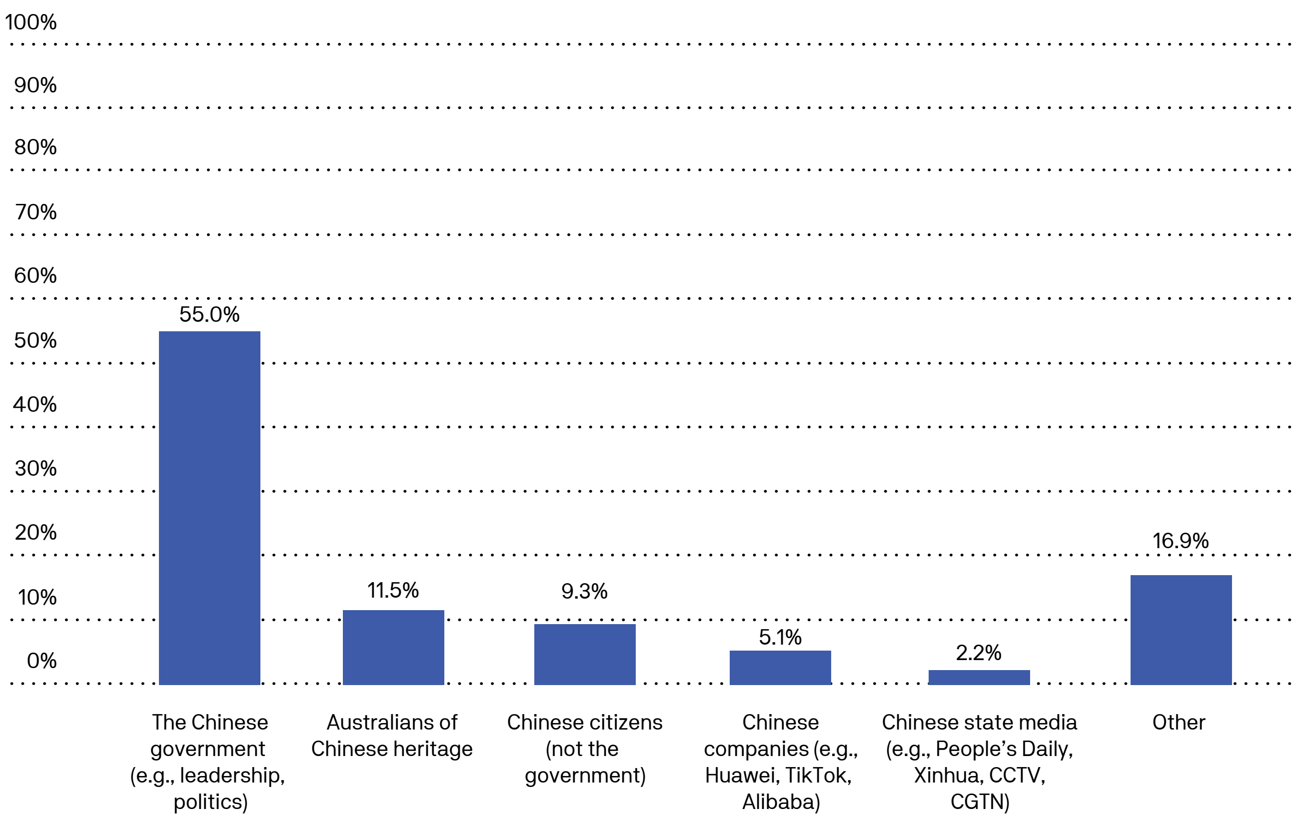
When asked which group is most influential in shaping their overall views of China, a majority of respondents (55 percent) nominated the Chinese government, including its leadership and political system. The next most frequently cited group was Australians of Chinese heritage (12 percent), followed by Chinese citizens (nine percent), Chinese companies such as Huawei, TikTok or Alibaba (five percent) and Chinese state media, (for example, *People's Daily, Xinhua, CCTV, CGTN*) (two percent). A further 17 percent said that other factors shaped their views (Figure 78).

Among those who elaborated on 'other', most responses referred to broader influences or issues rather than identifying new groups. Some mentioned media coverage, government policy or international developments, suggesting that respondents interpreted the question more broadly as relating to sources of influence rather than specific actors. Others cited personal or professional experience, such as working with Chinese businesses, teaching or research, or travel. A smaller number referred to strategic or political issues, independent journalism or think tanks, while a few mentioned personal networks or general observation as shaping their perspectives.

These findings indicate that respondents' perceptions of China are primarily shaped by views of the Chinese government and its political system, which serve as the main reference point for understanding China's role in the world. Other influences also contribute but appear to play a more complementary role relative to the prominence of the Chinese government in shaping overall perceptions.

Figure 78. **Most influential group shaping views of China**

When you form your views about China, which group is the most influential in shaping your views? | *Asked in 2025*



9.3 Broader sources influencing views on China

'What shapes your overall views of China as a country? Which of the following have influenced your overall views of China as a country?'

Traditional media, including newspapers, television and radio, were the most commonly cited influence (29 percent). Personal interactions with people of Chinese heritage in Australia followed (18 percent), ahead of social media platforms (14 percent).

Information from friends, family or acquaintances (13 percent) and academic or professional experience, such as study, work or research (13 percent), were also frequently mentioned. Travel experiences in China were nominated by 11 percent. A small proportion (two percent) selected 'other' (Figure 79).

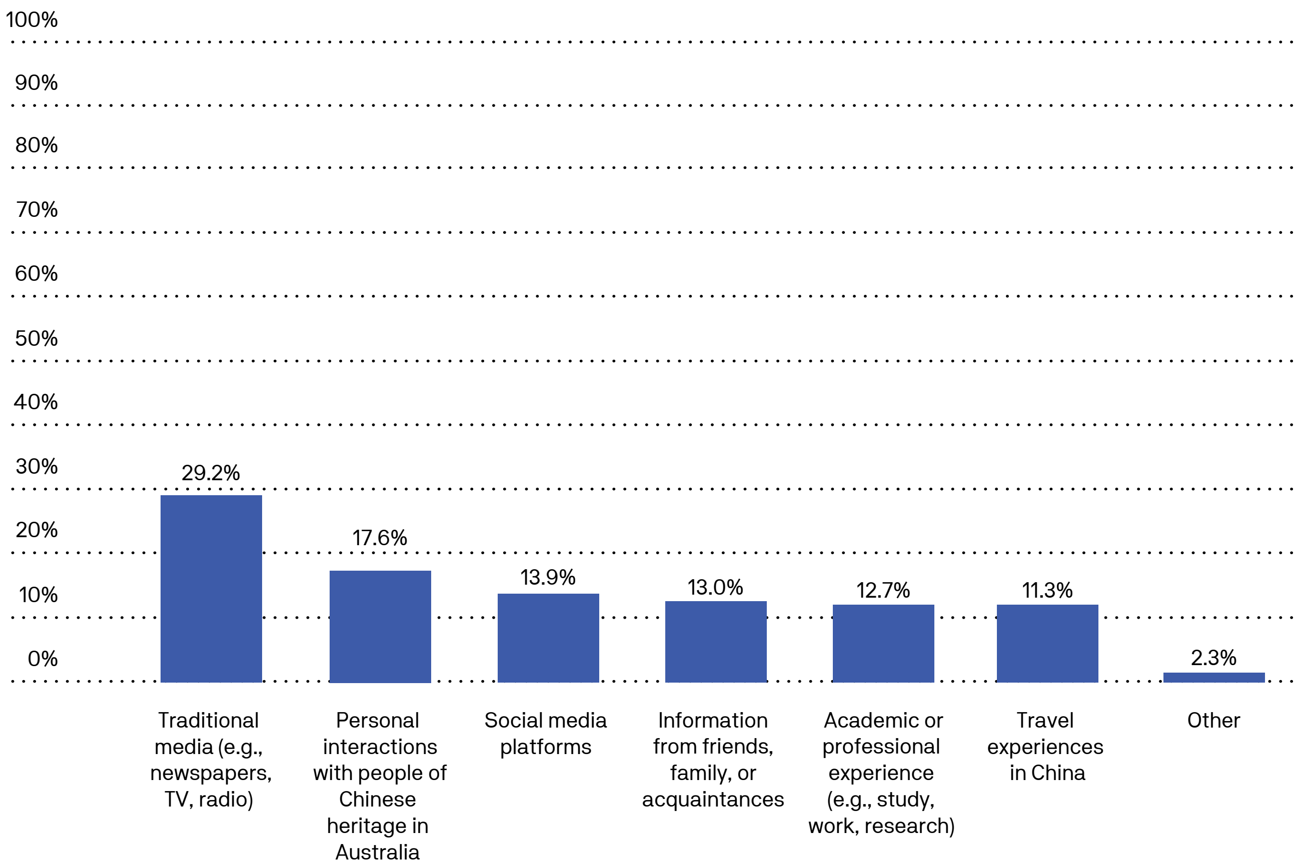
Among those who elaborated on 'other', most responses extended existing categories rather than introducing new sources.

Some respondents interpreted the question more broadly, referring to general influences such as media exposure, personal or professional experience, or independent research. Others mentioned interactions with Chinese individuals or institutions, consistent with predefined categories, while a smaller number cited broader political, historical or ethical considerations, including human rights issues, governance and China's global role.

These findings indicate that Australians' views of China are influenced by a range of informational and experiential factors, with traditional media remaining the most frequently cited source, followed by personal contact and digital platforms.

Figure 79. **Broader sources influencing views of China**

What shapes your overall views of China as a country? Which of the following have influenced your overall views of China as a country? | *Asked in 2025*



Note: Respondents could select more than one option.

9.4 Information sources on Australia-China relations

'Which sources of information do you rely on most for news about Australia-China relations?'

To understand how respondents access information specifically about Australia–China relations, a follow-up question asked which sources they rely on most for news on this topic.

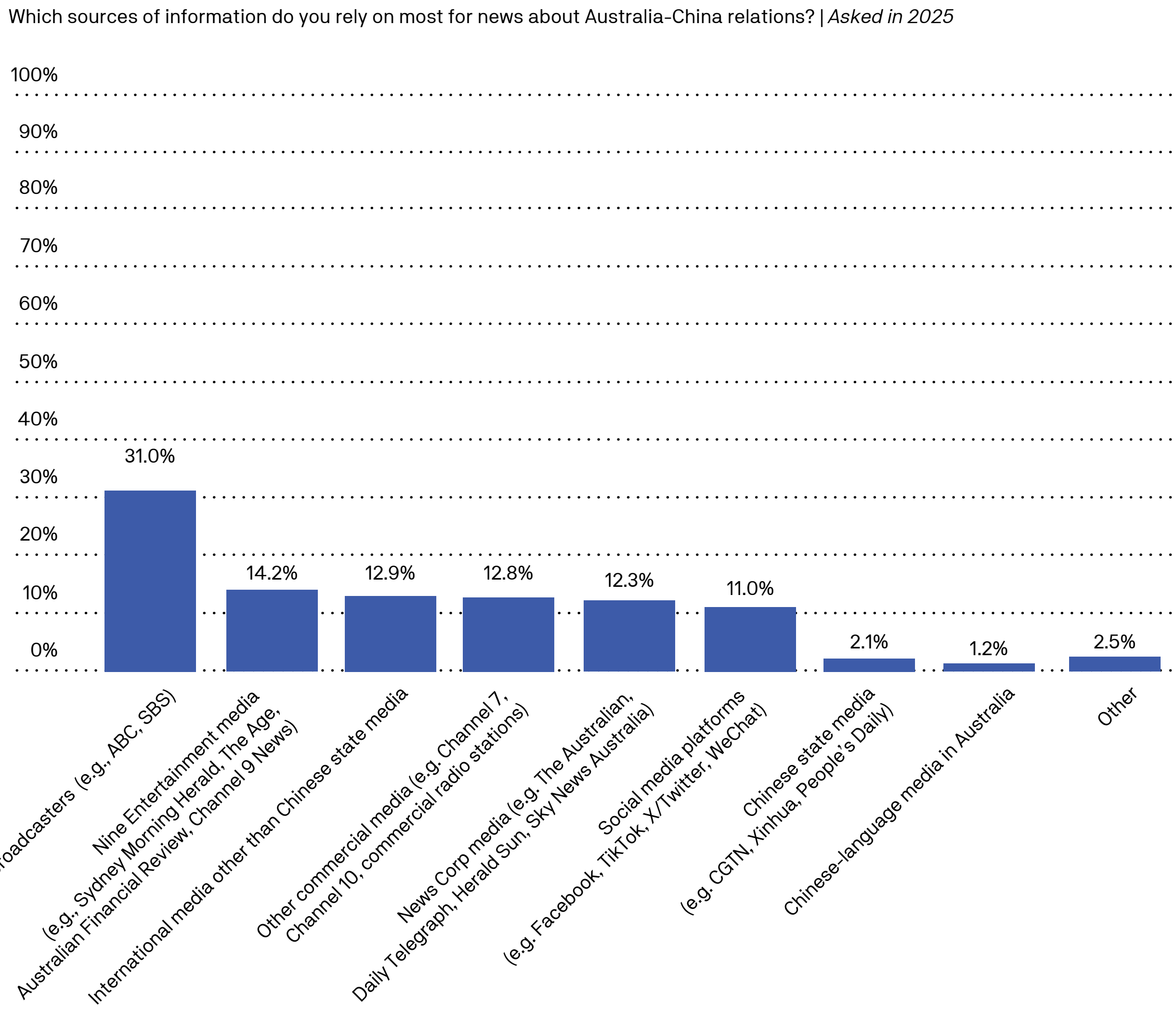
Public broadcasters such as the ABC and SBS were cited most frequently (31 percent). Nine Entertainment media, including the *Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, The Australian Financial Review,* and *Channel 9 News,* were selected by 14 percent, followed by international media other than Chinese state media (13 percent) and other Australian commercial media such as Seven Network, Network Ten and commercial radio stations (13 percent).

News Corp Australia outlets, including *The Australian, Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun* and *Sky News Australia*, were chosen by 12 percent, while social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter) and WeChat were nominated by 11 percent. A small minority relied primarily on Chinese state media (two percent) or Chinese-language media in Australia (one percent) (Figure 80).

A further three percent of respondents selected 'other'. Of those who specified alternative sources, most referred to outlets that overlapped with existing categories, while others mentioned *Guardian Australia*, Schwartz Media publications, *The Conversation*, industry publications and podcasts.

These results indicate that Australia's public broadcasters remain the primary source of information about Australia-China relations, followed by a mix of mainstream commercial and international outlets.

Figure 80. **Sources of information most relied on for information about Australia-China relations**



Note: Respondents could select more than one option.

9.5 Social media platforms

'Which social media platform do you use most often for information about Australia-China relations?'

Respondents who identified social media platforms as a key source of information were asked which specific platforms they used most often for news about Australia-China relations.

Facebook was the most frequently selected platform (49 percent), followed by TikTok (19 percent) and X (formerly Twitter) (16 percent). Smaller numbers cited Instagram (seven percent), YouTube (three percent), WeChat (three percent) and Reddit (two percent), while three percent nominated other platforms (Figure 81). Among those who specified other platforms, examples included Spotify, Substack, Bluesky, Xiaohongshu (RedNote) and LinkedIn.

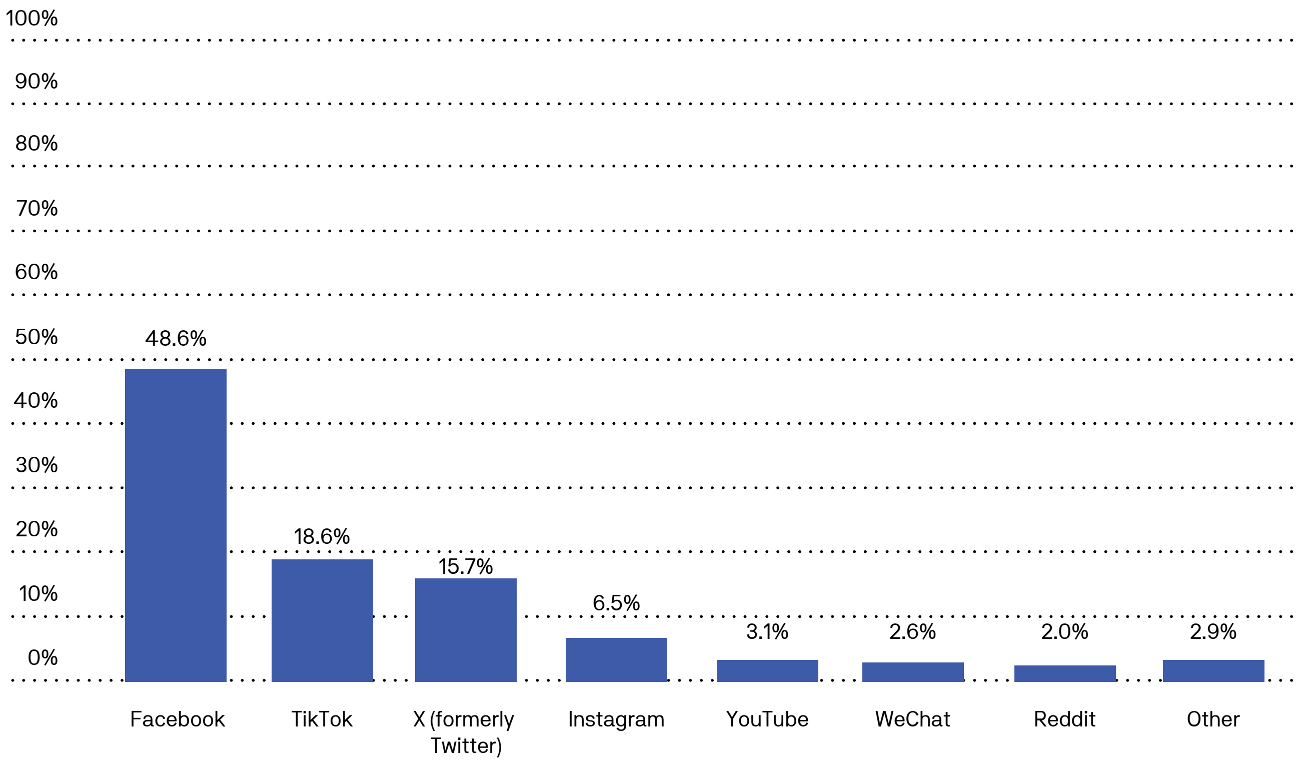
These findings highlight the central role of Facebook in shaping how respondents encounter information about Australia-China relations, suggesting that discussion and engagement with the topic occur primarily through a platform with a more established and possibly older user base.

At the same time, the presence of TikTok and X/Twitter and, to a lesser extent, Instagram, YouTube and Reddit, indicates that information about Australia-China relations circulates across a variety of platforms serving different media habits and generational cohorts.

These results indicate that Facebook is the dominant platform for accessing information about Australia-China relations among respondents who rely on social media. TikTok and X (formerly Twitter) account for smaller but notable shares, while other platforms are used less frequently.

Figure 81. **Social media platforms most often used for information about Australia-China relations**

If respondents selected 'Social media platforms' in the previous question, the following question was presented:
Which social media platform do you use most often for information about Australia-China relations? | *Asked in 2025*



Methodology

Sample

Responses were collected via an online survey with participants recruited via a commercial panel, the Online Research Unit (ORU). Responses were collected from Australian adults across all Australian states and territories with Australian Census-based quotas applied to age and gender. State quotas were set at obtaining a minimum of 200 responses from Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia and South Australia, a minimum of 150 from Northern Territory, a minimum of 300 from Victoria and Queensland and 400 from New South Wales. The total sample size consisted of 2,045 complete responses. Responses were collected between September 23 and October 14 2025. The median response time was 21.1 minutes.

Instrument

The survey consisted of several parts:

1. Respondents were first provided background information and an invitation to participate.
2. Screening questions were performed on age, gender, location and citizenship/permanent residency status.
3. Respondents then provided their level of agreement in relation to their concerns and benefits of the Australia–China relationship and support overall. Responses were gathered using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'.
4. An introductory task on ice-cream flavours was undertaken to familiarise respondents with the best–worst scaling task.
5. A best–worst scaling task was undertaken where respondents indicated the area of most concern in relation to the Australia–China relationship spanning 35 different areas.
6. Respondents were then asked to indicate their perceived level of agreement (on a seven-point Likert scale) about their concerns, benefits, or perceptions on specific dimensions of the Australia–China relationship. Respondents were randomly allocated to complete three to six questions relating to six out of 18 areas surveyed.
7. Respondents then completed sociodemographic questions relating to their household type, education, employment status, income, voting behaviour, political orientation, and ethnicity.
8. Respondents were then given the opportunity to provide open-ended feedback on any dimension of the Australia–China relationship.
9. Respondents then provided feedback about the survey on various dimensions such as difficulty and enjoyment.
10. Respondents were then returned to the survey panel company's website to received credit for their completion.

Note: The poll instrument advised respondents that 'China' used throughout the poll referred to the People's Republic of China.

Analysis

Questions relating to the concerns, benefits and overall views were analysed using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis followed by structural equation modelling. Reflective scales relating to latent dimension were evaluated in terms of reliability and discriminant validity with all factor scores being above a benchmark of .707. The resulting Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceed 0.5 in all cases to establish convergent validity, whilst the resulting Cronbach Alpha's exceed 0.75 and Composite Reliabilities all exceeded .78 to establish reliability. Discriminant validity was established by confirming the AVE exceeded the corresponding squared correlation between latent scores. The structural model relating concerns and benefits to overall support had a norm fit index of .961 above the acceptable benchmark of .9 to indicate incremental fit, with a standardised root mean square residual of 0.026, significantly below the suggested benchmark of .08.

About

About the authors

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Elena Collinson is head of analysis at the Australia-China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney (UTS:ACRI).

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Professor Burke designs primary research projects using experimental design techniques and innovative survey approaches, such as best–worst scaling, as well as standard methods integrating hybrid choice, structural equation modelling (for attitudinal models), cluster and discriminant analysis (for segmentation), and regression analysis (e.g. probit). His work models consumer and human behaviour, including applications to product and service evaluation, social well-being and forecasting, with numerous projects involving mix-methods including those in health and well-being, education, employee, stakeholder and community preferences, and issues around rural and remote workforce participation.

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About the Australia-China Relations Institute

The Australia-China Relations Institute (UTS:ACRI) is an independent, non-partisan research institute established in 2014 by the University of Technology Sydney. Chinese studies centres exist in other Australian universities. UTS:ACRI, however, is Australia's first and only research institute devoted to studying the relationship of these countries.

UTS:ACRI seeks to inform Australia's engagement with China through research, analysis and dialogue grounded in scholarly rigour.

uts.edu.au/acri

About the Centre for Business Intelligence & Data Analytics

The speed and scale at which data is collected has changed significantly from quarterly sales reports to second-by-second data on inventory held in warehouses across the globe.

But whether it's government, industry or community organisations, just having access to data doesn't often lead to improved performance or optimisation.

Evidence-based business intelligence and analytics is critical for strategic and tactical decision making. It enables organisations to effectively and efficiently capture and apply data insights from market trends, consumer needs, behaviours and opinions to make evidence-based, strategic, decisions and boost productivity.

At the Centre for Business Intelligence & Data Analytics (BIDA), we specialise in finding new ways to build business intelligence through the capture, analysis and applications of data insights.

For businesses, our approach enables an in depth understanding of an organisation and provides actionable insights such as anticipating consumer behaviour, formulating optimal pricing models and strategies and boosting overall productivity of an organisation through better use of data.

For government and community organisations we are using data to grow business intelligence, creating evidence-based approaches to inform and engage with citizens, while also helping guide own internal operations. Our research builds capacity to provide better services spanning public transport, education, health, environment and public safety.

Through our research and collaborations, we are developing theoretical and applied models, enabling organisations to be well informed, responsive and agile.

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All interpretations, and any remaining errors or omissions, are solely the responsibility of the authors.

Endnotes

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