AustCham China

Doing Business in China Flash Report

November 2025

UTS Australia-China Relations Institute 澳中关系研究院

SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

Australia China Business Council 澳大利亚中国工商业委员会

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Message from the Chair

This Flash Report offers a clear view of how companies are responding to the realities of 2025 — stronger confidence in the Australia–China relationship, set against a more complex global trading environment. The findings show that business sentiment has strengthened markedly since February, but with a pragmatic understanding that progress depends on managing risk, adapting to shocks, and building new capability together.

Renewed Confidence in the Bilateral Relationship

Nearly 80 per cent of respondents report higher confidence in the Australia–China trade and investment relationship since February — a striking result given that confidence was already high earlier this year. The increase is broad-based but strongest among Chinese-controlled firms (93 per cent), reflecting the positive impact of improved diplomatic relations and a sense of renewed stability in the policy environment.

The dominant driver of confidence is the stabilisation of the bilateral relationship itself. The main negative factor remains the US–China tariff environment, underscoring how global frictions continue to shape conditions for bilateral business. Still, firms are not retreating; they are learning how to manage these risks more effectively.

Economic Outlook and Predictability

Confidence in China's economic outlook has softened — none of the foreign respondents describe themselves as "very confident" — but confidence in regulatory predictability has improved modestly. Most firms describe the environment as "somewhat stable," suggesting that predictability, more than speed, is what enables sustained engagement.

Businesses are signalling a shift from cyclical optimism to structural realism: they recognise headwinds in the domestic economy, yet continue to see the underlying bilateral trade and investment framework — including ChAFTA and the resumption of regular ministerial dialogue — as durable and capable of being strengthened and expanded.

Tariffs and Adaptation

The latest round of U.S.–China tariffs is taking a toll, with nearly 70 per cent of firms reporting a negative impact. Yet the survey also shows resilience and adaptability in the way businesses are responding.

- Almost half have adapted operations locally within China;
- About one-third have diversified to other markets;
- Fewer than one in ten have scaled back or exited.

These findings illustrate a business community that is adjusting rather than retreating—pragmatic, flexible, and accustomed to managing risk in a changing global environment.

Recent Developments

A further encouraging sign came with the meeting between Presidents Trump and Xi Jinping in Busan last week, where both sides announced a framework agreement toward a new trade deal. While the details are still emerging, the framework includes commitments to reduce certain tariffs, suspend export-control escalations, and extend the current truce on new trade measures. Early market reaction has been positive, easing pressure on global equities and improving visibility for supply-chain planning.

For Australian companies — many of which operate within Asia-Pacific value-chains or export into China — this pause in escalation provides a more constructive external backdrop for two-way trade and investment. It reinforces the importance of steady engagement by signalling that cooperation, not confrontation, remains possible. At the same time, the framework should be viewed as a step-change, not a full resolution — reminding us that managing risk will continue to define commercial strategy in the years ahead.

In a world where economic and political influence is no longer concentrated in one or two capitals — and is increasingly shared among multiple major powers — it has never been more important to invest time and care in managing key relationships. For Australia and China alike, maintaining strong, predictable, and well-managed ties helps both sides withstand external shocks and keep channels open when global pressures mount — a lesson worth carrying forward.

Investment Outlook: Cautious Short Term, Firm Long Term

Foreign companies' investment intentions are stable overall. Two-thirds report no change in their level of interest since February, while roughly equal shares have either increased or decreased their appetite.

Looking further ahead, sentiment improves sharply. Over the next two to three years, nearly half expect to increase investment in China, while only around 18 per cent foresee a decrease. The data tell a consistent story — short-term caution, long-term commitment. Companies are pacing their expansion but not questioning the fundamentals of engagement.

Sectoral Opportunities – The Next Five Years

When asked where they see the greatest potential for two-way trade and investment over the next five years (not where investment currently sits), respondents identify a clear evolution in opportunity patterns.

- Australian exports to China: Traditional strengths in resources remain the foundation but have lost share. Agribusiness and food, education, and biopharma/med-tech have all risen sharply, reflecting China's long-term policy emphasis on consumption, health, and human capital.
- Australian investment in China: Opportunity perceptions shift decisively toward advanced manufacturing and high-value goods, resource-efficiency technologies, and education and training — areas that rely more on partnership and knowledge transfer than on fixed assets.
- Chinese exports to Australia: Electric vehicles and clean-energy technologies remain dominant, with a significant jump for biopharma and medical devices. Electronics moderate as focus consolidates around EVs and clean-tech supply chains.
- Chinese investment in Australia: The top areas are clean energy and renewables, EV battery manufacturing and infrastructure, and healthcare and life sciences — all aligned with Australia's Future Made in Australia agenda and net-zero objectives.

Across both directions, the pattern is unmistakable: while traditional sectors remain essential, the frontier of growth lies in developing joint capability — clean energy, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, sustainable agrifood systems, and digitally enabled trade.

This reflects the same shift I described at the ChAFTA 10th-Anniversary Forum: moving from complementarity to joint capability — combining technology, talent, and capital to create solutions that neither economy can achieve alone. It is not about moving beyond risk, but about managing risk together through deeper collaboration and more sophisticated partnership models.

Investment Conditions and FIRB Perceptions

Perceptions of Australia's foreign investment review environment have improved modestly across both Chinese and foreign respondents. Combined with China's policy emphasis on high-quality outward investment, this supports the case for measured growth in two-way investment across advanced and sustainable industries.

Confidence Under Pressure

Taken together, the findings tell a story of confidence under pressure. Companies are operating in a more complicated world, but they are adapting, not retreating. Confidence has strengthened because firms see a pathway for engagement that is both commercially realistic and politically sustainable.

Ten years after ChAFTA's entry into force, the foundation remains strong. The challenge and opportunity for the next decade is to deepen cooperation in the industries that will define our shared future — to translate stabilised relations into practical outcomes, from digital trade facilitation to clean-energy collaboration.

The business community is ready for that next phase: informed, experienced, and committed to managing risk while building new capability together.

China's forthcoming Five-Year Plan is also expected to reinforce this emphasis on stability, resilience, and high-quality development — priorities that closely align with the business community's own focus on confidence, capability, and sustainable growth, helping to underpin confidence and momentum in the years ahead.

Vaughn Barber
Chair, AustCham China

Message from the Australia China Business Council

This flash survey provides an important update to the comprehensive Doing Business in China report released by AustCham China in May. Beyond headline figures, it offers early signals of regulatory and operational trends that do not appear immediately in official datasets. It captures sentiment and confidence, highlights areas of friction, and helps companies assess capability, risk, and opportunity in a more informed way.

Since May, tariff escalation by the Trump administration has added a new layer of uncertainty to global markets, while Australia-China relations have continued to stabilise and deliver tangible commercial benefits. Most foreign firms operating in China report profitability in 2024, and many continue to rank China among their top global investment priorities. Companies are not stepping back; they are adapting by diversifying supply chains, strengthening local partnerships, and investing in digital capability as part of a more resilient operating model.

It is also worth noting last week's meeting between Presidents Trump and Xi, and the announcement of a framework toward a new trade deal. While details are still emerging, any reduction in tension between the world's two largest economies is likely to ease pressure on global markets and support a more constructive environment for Australian companies. Surveys grounded in on-the-ground experience provide a counterweight to broader geopolitical commentary and support constructive dialogue with government. My thanks to AustCham China for continuing to provide this visibility.

The message here is measured: opportunity remains significant, the environment continues to evolve, and companies that invest in understanding geopolitical risk alongside traditional commercial considerations will be best placed to capture future growth. This updated survey offers helpful guidance as Australian businesses plan for the year ahead.

David Olsson AM
National President and Chair, Australia China Business Council

Foreword

When AustCham China took the pulse of Australia-China business relations earlier this year, there was a clear optimistic bent. The *Doing Business in China 2025* (DBIC 2025) report, which collected responses between November 2024 and January 2025, showed that while uncertainty around the incoming Trump administration loomed, and there were specific areas of dissatisfaction like Australia's foreign investment approvals process, businesses were enthused by the improvement in ties between Canberra and Beijing, and the China market remained a strategic priority.

However, in April 2025, the Trump administration temporarily hiked tariffs on Chinese goods to an average rate of 135%. Beijing retaliated. Negotiations saw some unwinding, but the US and China still have average tariffs on each other's goods of 58% and 33%, respectively. In addition to tariffs, both sides have unveiled a series of other trade controls, such as a requirement for export licenses affecting firms involved in semiconductors, rare earths, and more.

Yet careful analysis finds that to date around 80% of China's lost sales to the US have found alternative markets, and the latest forecasts for overall Chinese economic growth remain resilient. Following an emphatic federal election win in May this year, and an extended six-day visit to China in July that was squarely focused on trade, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese now also says that bilateral relations are "absolutely" moving beyond "stabilisation". "New layers" are being added and there is a joint commitment to "grow the bilateral relationship". Rather than "stabilisation", the watch word in Canberra these days is "constructive engagement".

This context makes AustCham China's *2025 Doing Business in China Flash Survey* invaluable for getting a read on the present state of the Australia-China business corridor. What stands out most is how modest the impact of US-China trade turbulence in 2025 has been. To be sure, respondents weigh the deterioration in US-China economic relations as an overall negative, albeit with some firms benefiting from their American competitors facing disrupted access to the Chinese market. But as the DBIC 2025 report emphasised, the Australia-China business relationship largely runs on its own track. Bilateral business sentiment continues to be characterised by cautious confidence and with key performance metrics like expected profitability and investment intentions showing no significant deterioration.

With Canberra also making clear it has no intention of following if the US embarks on a broad economic decoupling from China, bilateral economic fundamentals are set to continue to drive the outlook, as well as policy decisions made in Canberra and Beijing, not Washington.

James Laurenceson
Professor of Economics and Director, Australia-China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney (UTS:ACRI)

Key findings

The *2025 Doing Business in China Flash Survey* highlights growing confidence in the Australia-China business corridor, with most respondents noting increased optimism in trade and investment. Improved diplomatic relations, driven by Prime Minister Albanese's July 2025 visit securing trade, green energy, and tourism agreements, fuel this momentum. However, US-China tariffs, intensified in April and September 2025, remain a key concern, though most firms report stable costs and sales, focusing on operational adaptation within China over exiting the market.

Economic concerns, particularly in China's property and financial sectors, temper short-term optimism, with no respondents strongly confident in the near-term outlook. Regulatory predictability has improved slightly, though concerns linger. Profit expectations for 2025 are cautious compared to 2024's positive outcomes, but long-term investment plans are stable, with increases outnumbering reductions.

Foreign investment interest in China shows a slight uptick, while Chinese interest in Australia, especially in electric vehicles (EVs) and renewables, is robust. Australian exports to China focus on agribusiness, non-critical minerals, and education, with investments in advanced manufacturing and resource efficiency technology. Australia's Foreign Investment Review Board reforms, including a new online portal released in late February, alongside less hawkish media reporting, fee refunds for unsuccessful bids, and expedited processing for non-sensitive sectors, have likely driven the improvement in the investment climate since February.

The China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA), nearing its tenth year, is valued by the 10% of respondents addressing it, though its removal is seen as low-impact due to strong economic fundamentals. Firms advocate for digital trade enhancements, like electronic certificates of origin, and show interest in pilot programs. Overall, diplomatic progress and strategic adaptations drive resilience in the Australia-China corridor, with firms leveraging partnerships to navigate economic challenges.

These findings should be viewed in the context of ongoing geopolitical and economic developments that continue to shape business sentiment and operations across the Australia–China corridor. Notably, since the survey period, several major events have taken place — including the Trump–Xi meeting, the Trump–Albanese meeting, and the release of China's new Five-Year Plan — all of which are likely to influence trade dynamics, policy settings, and long-term investment confidence. These developments underscore the rapid pace of change in the global and bilateral environment in which Australian and Chinese businesses operate.

Tariff and market impact

55%

expect no change or increased profitability in China for 2025.

46%

plan to increase investment in China over 2-3 years.

Only **4%**

are significantly more likely to shift production/ sourcing outside China.

28%

report no change or positive impact from US-China tariffs

Confidence and policy environment

80%

report increased confidence in China-Australia trade/ investment vs. early 2025.

65%

cite resilience of Chinese domestic demand as a key driver of optimism.

21%

note improvement in Australia's FIRB process.

Only **28%**

lack confidence in China's regulatory predictability over next 2 years.

Costs, sales, and adaptation

76%

report no change or decreased costs since April tariff spike.

54%

report increased or stable sales despite tariffs.

Only **39%**

focus on diversifying or exiting China, showing strong local commitment.

61%

are leveraging local operations to capitalise on market opportunities in China.

Opportunities and two-way investment

67%

maintain steady investment interest in China despite tariffs.

25%

see US-China tariffs as creating opportunities for their business.

16%

of foreign firms have increased interest in investing in China.

11%

of Chinese firms have increased interest in investing in Australia.

About the 2025 Flash Survey

The *2025 Doing Business in China Flash Survey*, led by AustCham China and conducted from 26 September to 15 October 2025, provides an update on business sentiment since the February 2025 report. Targeting senior executives active in the Australia–China corridor, it examines shifts in perception following the ongoing April US trade measures and the Australian Prime Minister's July visit to China. The survey was distributed in collaboration with AustCham's South and West China chapters, the Australia China Business Council (ACBC), and Dynata, ensuring wide participation across the bilateral business community.

A total of 730 valid responses were collected—366 from Chinese firms (51% or more Chinese-owned) and 364 from foreign firms (less than 51% Chinese ownership, including Australian entities).

This ownership threshold distinguishes perspectives between Chinese and foreign businesses, generating comparative insights into their operations and outlook.

The 36-question survey combined multiple-choice and open-ended items tailored to company type, ownership structure, and footprint in the bilateral market. Most questions were mandatory, except the optional section on the Australia–China Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA). Logic-driven design ensured relevance while reducing respondent burden.

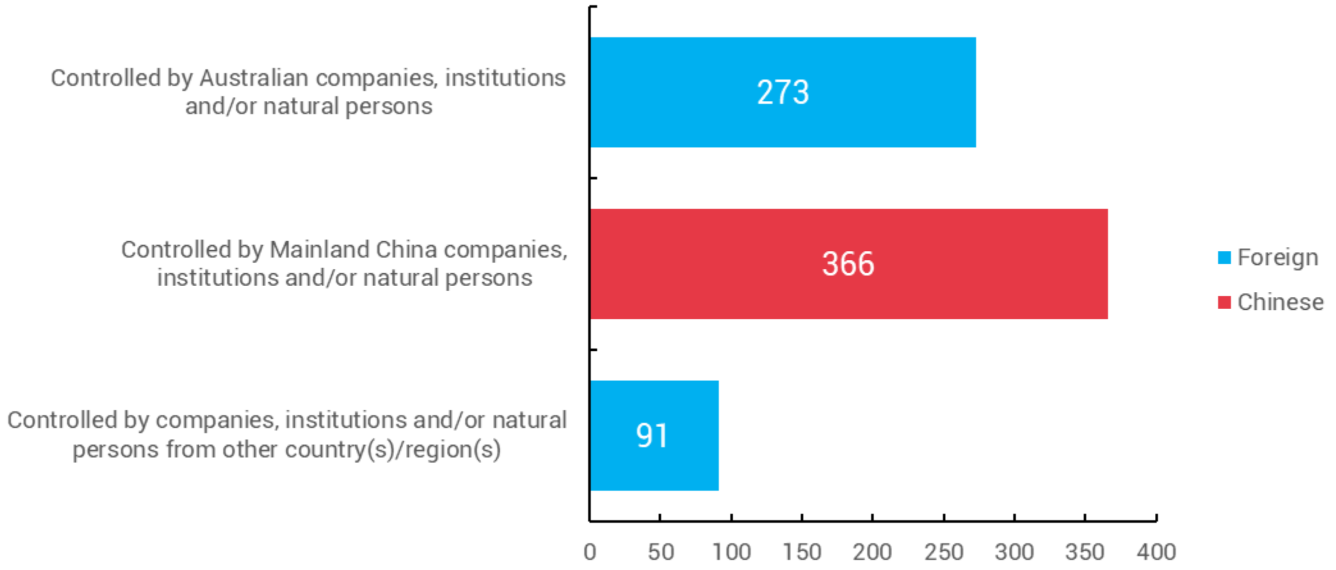
Response counts are specified for each question, and analysis includes only those with strong sample validity. Some questions were limited to foreign respondents to capture distinct challenges and opportunities. This approach balances breadth and depth, yielding reliable, targeted insights.

While all opt-in surveys face potential response bias, broad distribution through member networks and independent panels helps ensure a representative and credible dataset.

Under AustCham China's leadership, the 2025 Doing Business in China Flash Survey reinforces its role as an authoritative gauge of evolving business confidence, challenges, and opportunities in the Australia–China corridor amid shifting geopolitical and economic conditions.

Figure 01

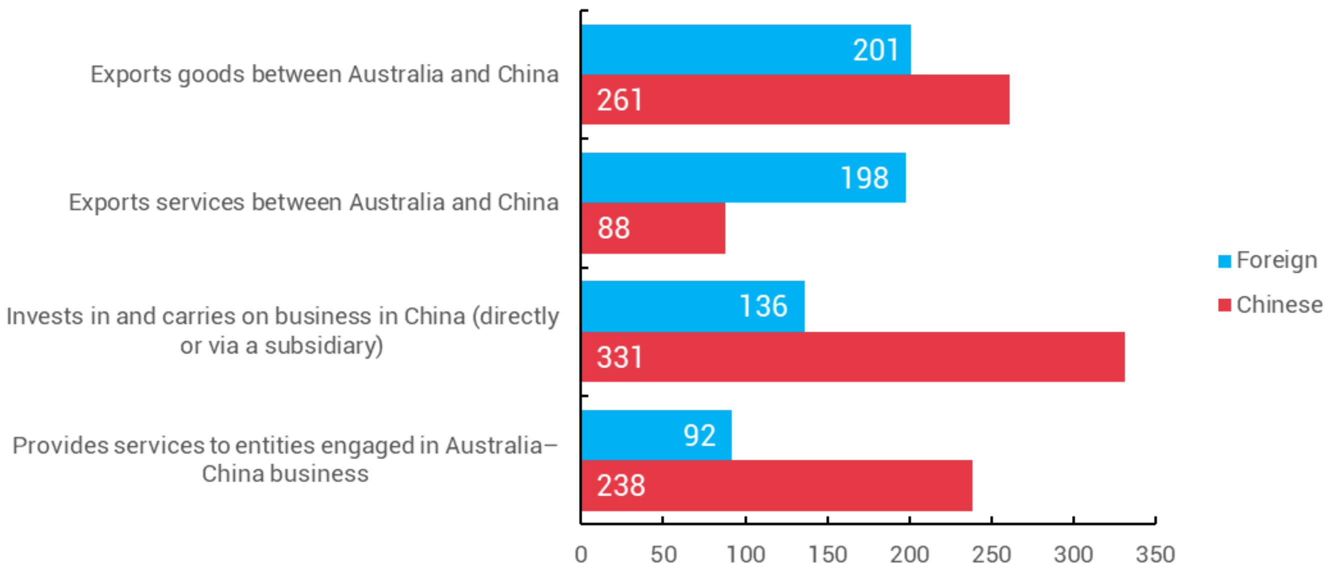
Which of the following statements describes the ownership of your organisation?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents

Figure 02

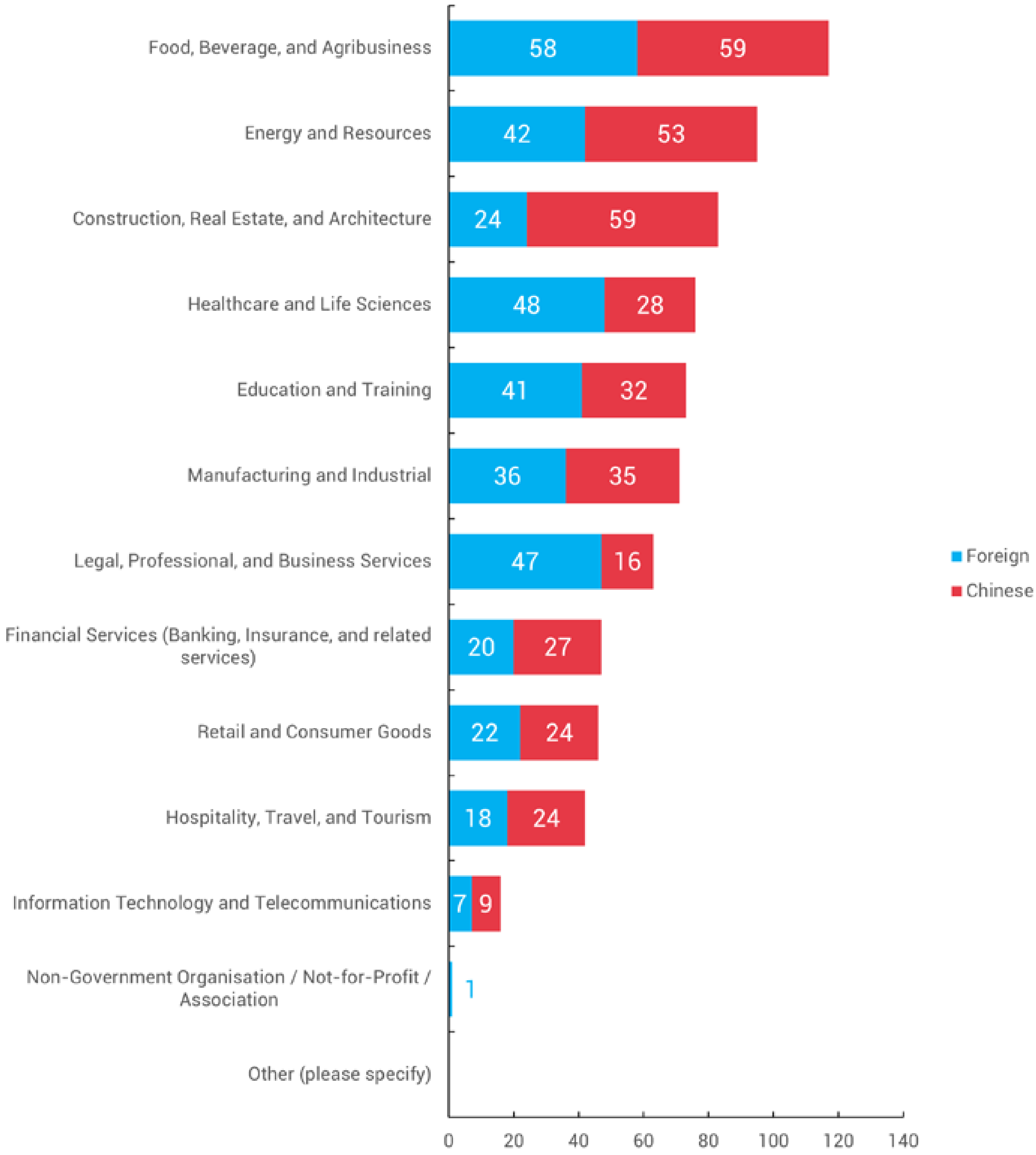
Which of the following activities best describe your organisation's involvement in Australia–China business?



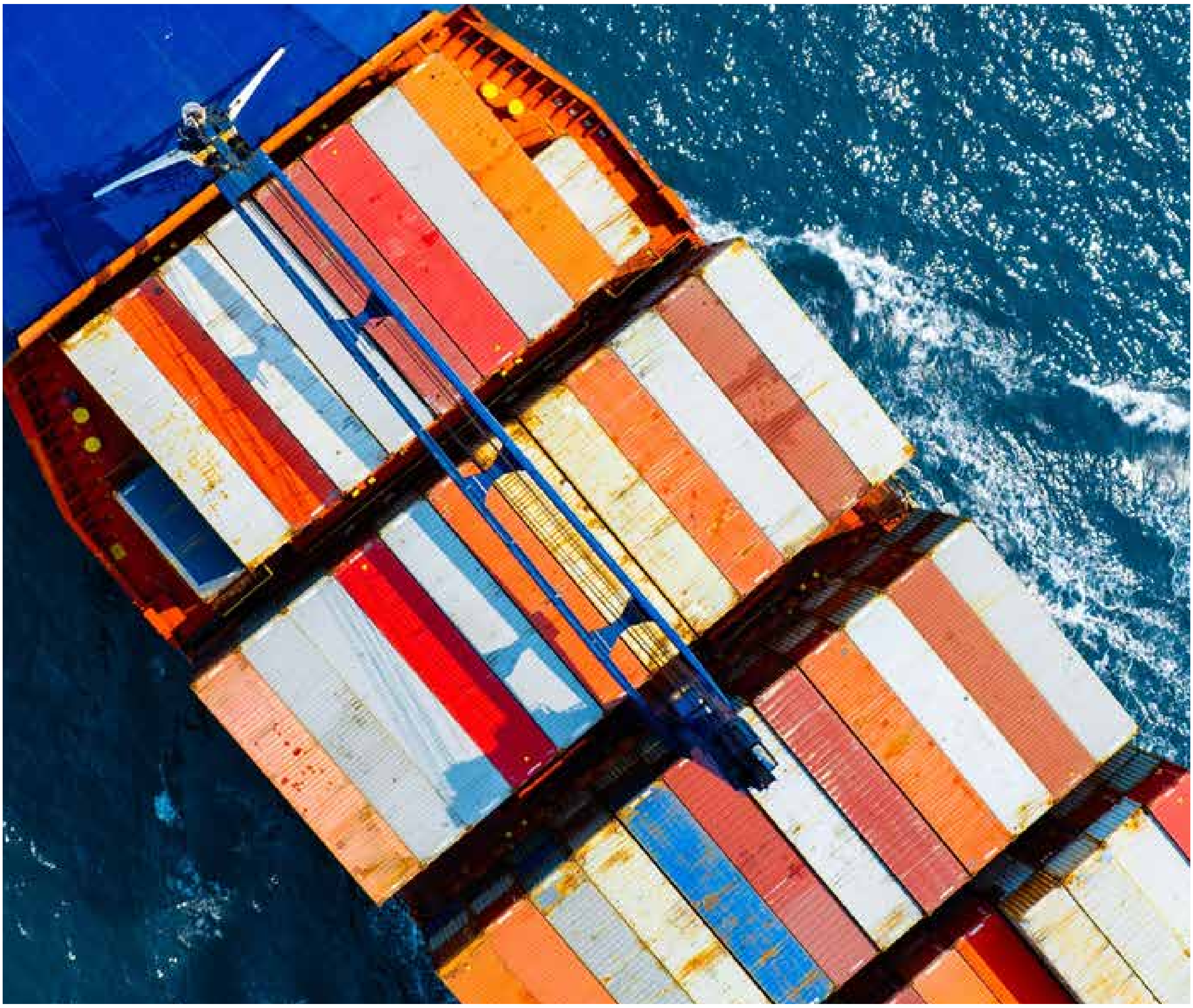
364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents (Multiple responses allowed)

Figure 03

Which best describes your organisation's main industry sector?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents



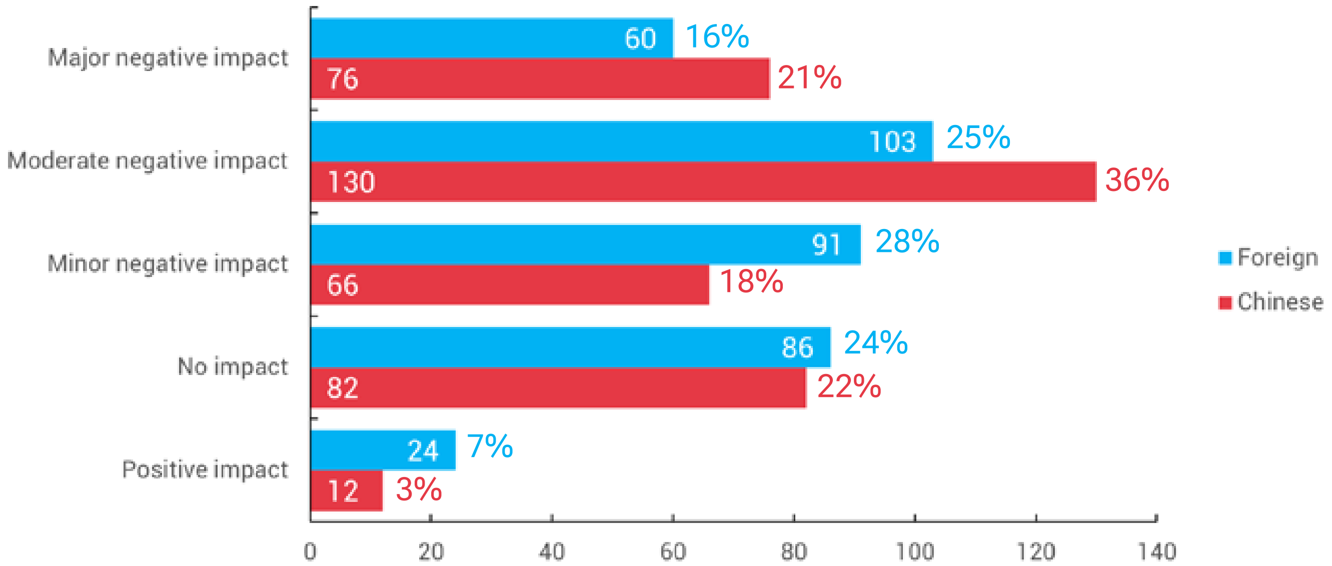
Tariff and market impact

Nearly three in four respondents report ramped up US-China tariffs as having had a negative impact on their business (72%). But those experiencing a “major negative impact” are outnumbered by those assessing “no change” or a “positive impact” (28% versus 19%). In response to the tariffs, just four percent say they are “significantly more likely” to shift production or sourcing outside China.

The DBIC 2025 report found that 26% of respondents expected their China business to decline in profitability in 2024 compared with the previous year. The Flash Survey finds that the proportion expecting a fall in their profits in 2025 relative to 2024 has dropped to 22%. More than half (55%) weighed no change or increased profitability. This helps to explain why over a two-to-three-year time horizon, those planning to increase their investment in China exceeds those intending to decrease, 46% versus 18%.

Figure 04

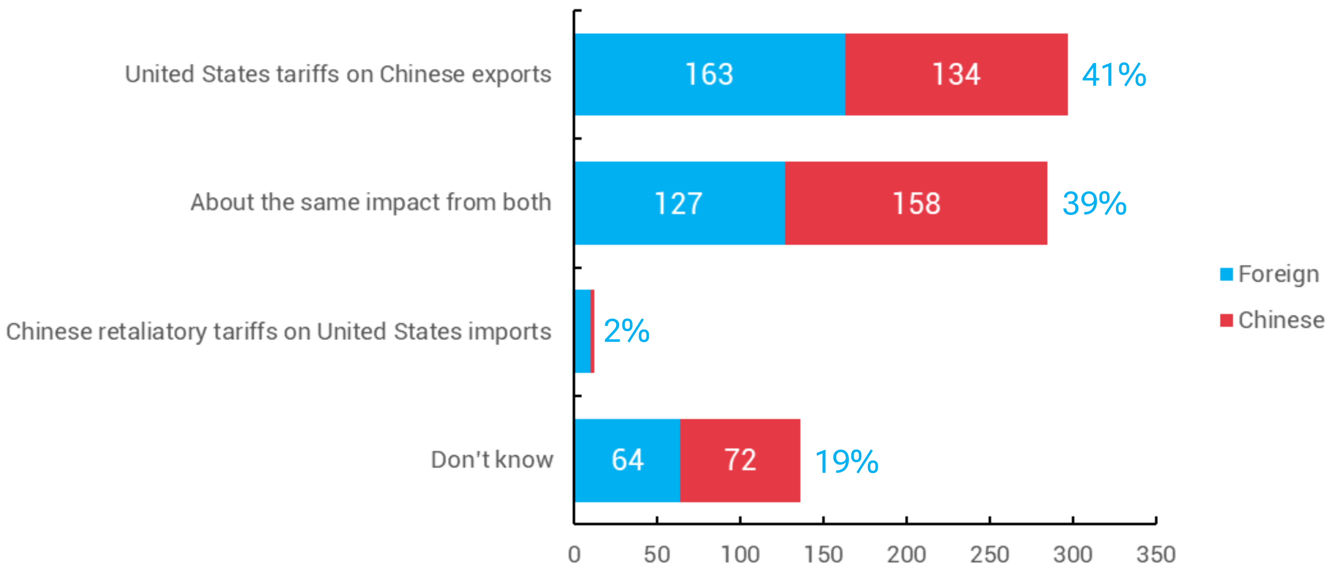
Since April 2025, to what extent have recent US–China tariffs affected your business with China?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents

Figure 05

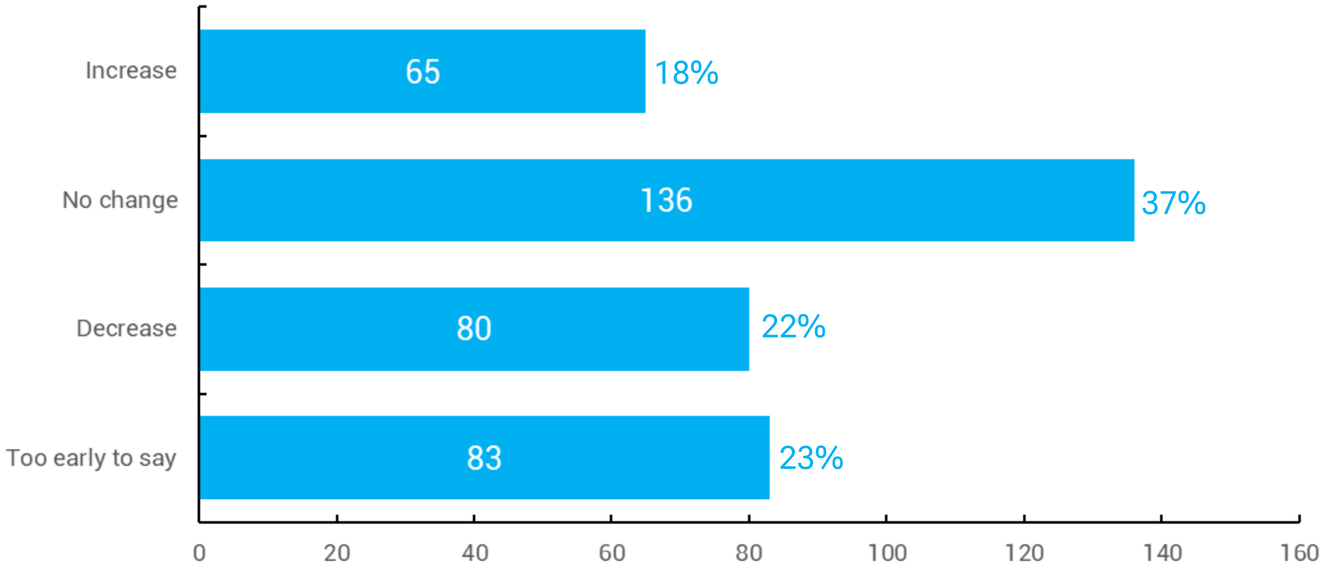
Which has had the greater impact on your business?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents

Figure 06

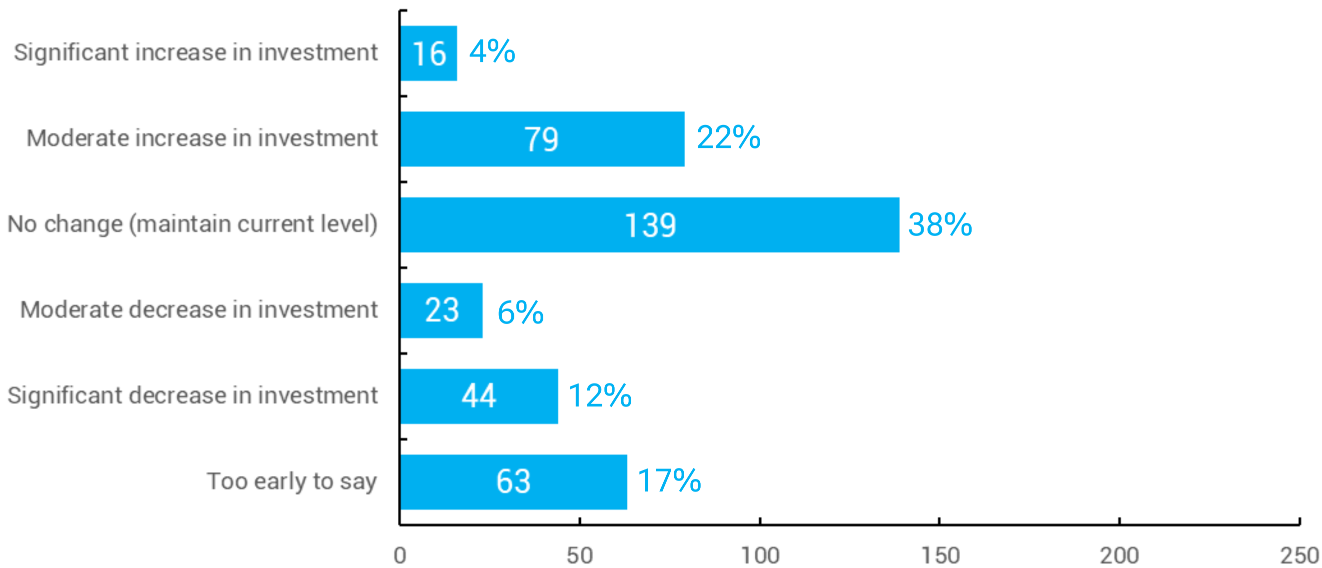
How do you expect your China business profitability in 2025 to compare with 2024?



364 Foreign respondents.

Figure 07

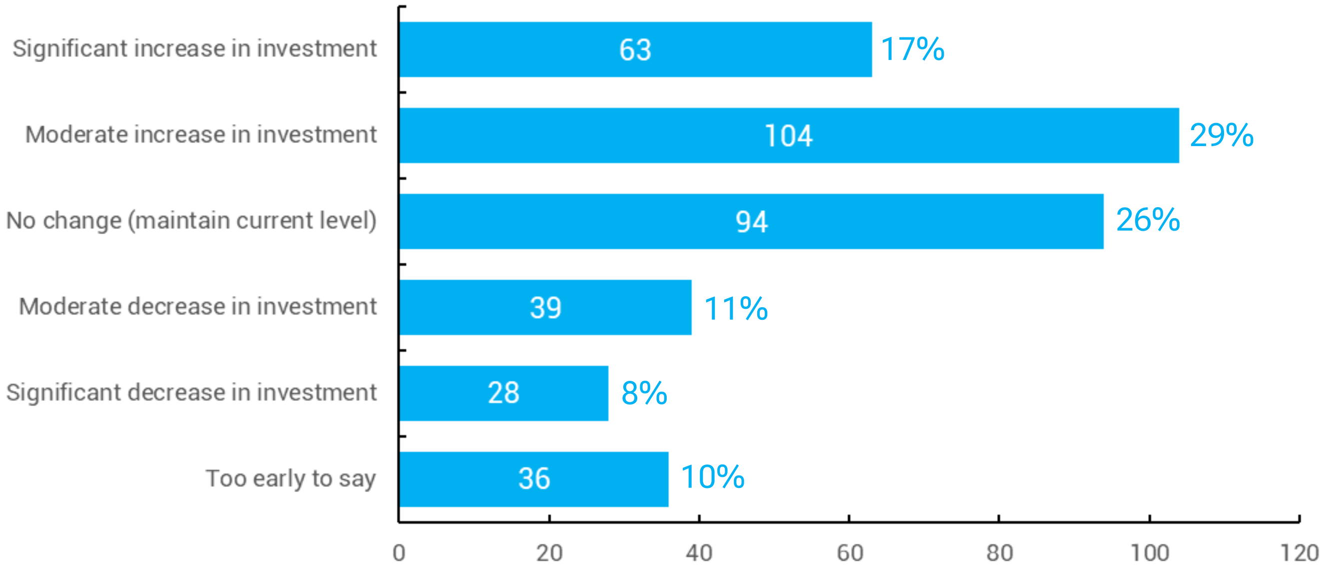
Over the next 12 months, what are your company's plans for investment in your China business?



364 Foreign respondents

Figure 08

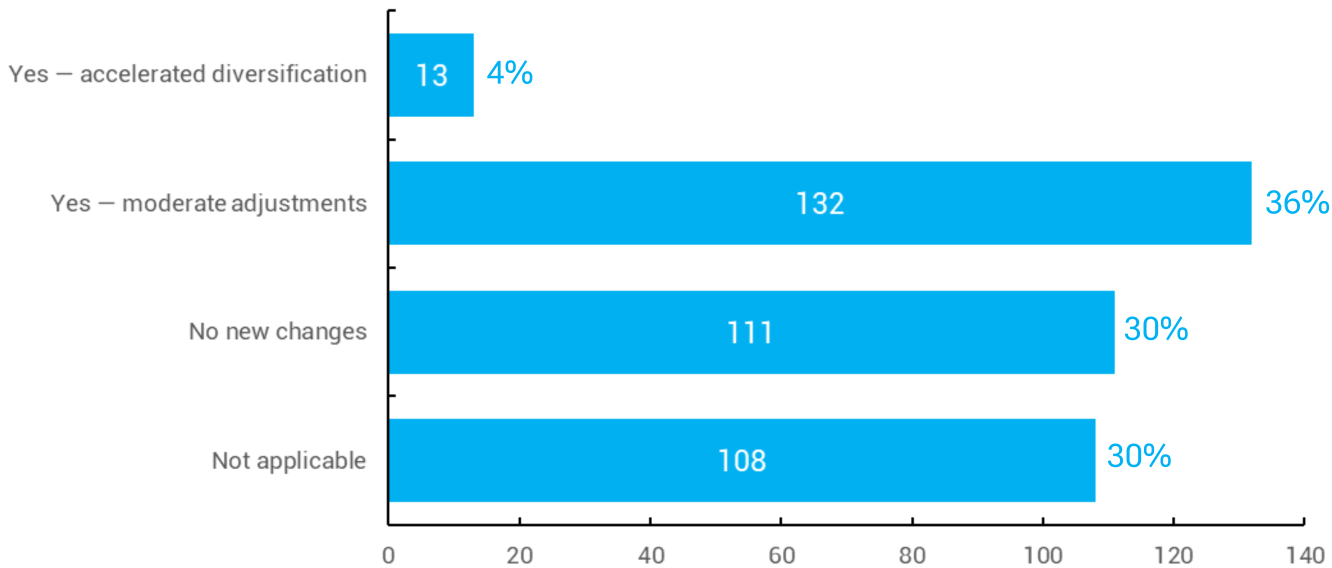
Looking two to three years ahead, how do you expect your company's investment in China to evolve?



364 Foreign respondents.

Figure 09

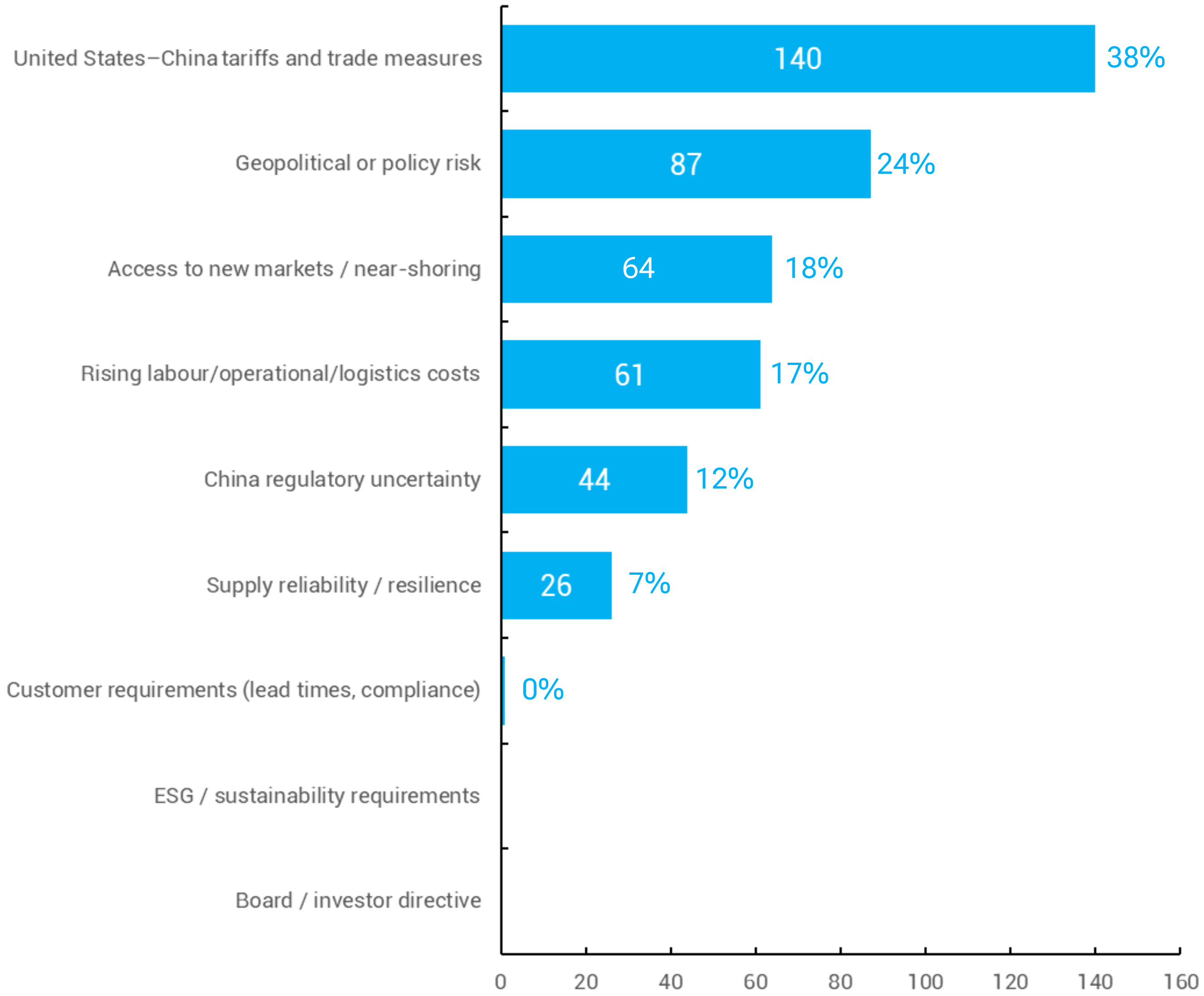
Since April 2025, have you taken additional steps to diversify supply chains outside China?



364 Foreign respondents

Figure 09a

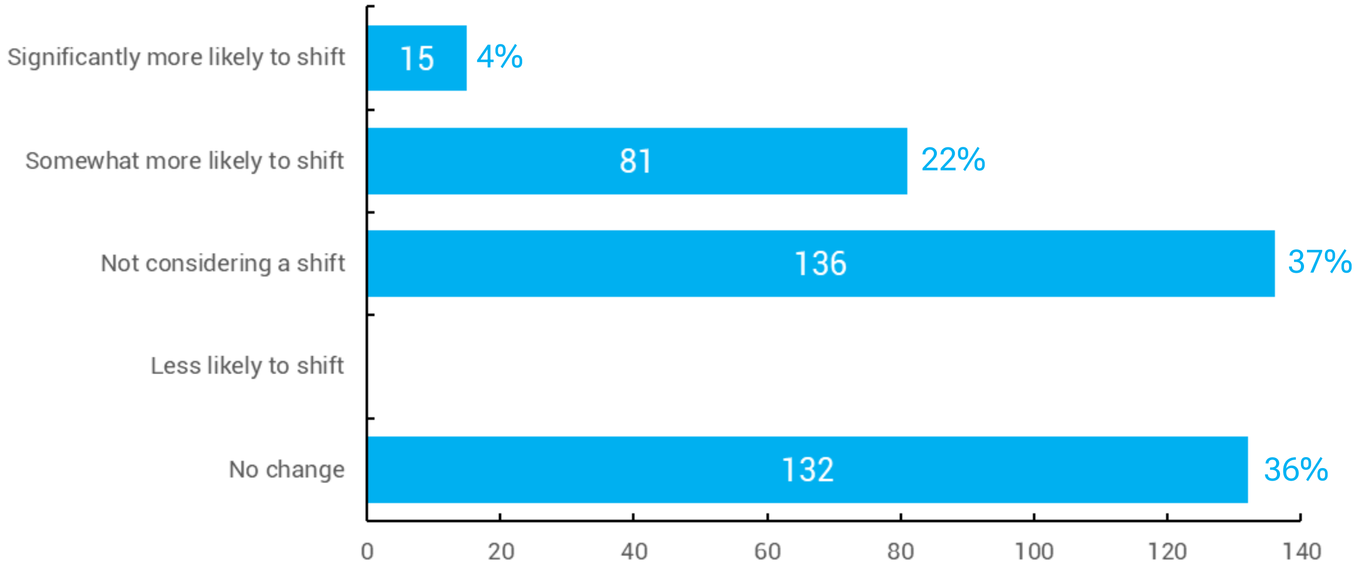
Reasons for diversification:



145 Foreign respondents.(Multiple responses allowed, shown only if Q9 = "Yes")

Figure 10

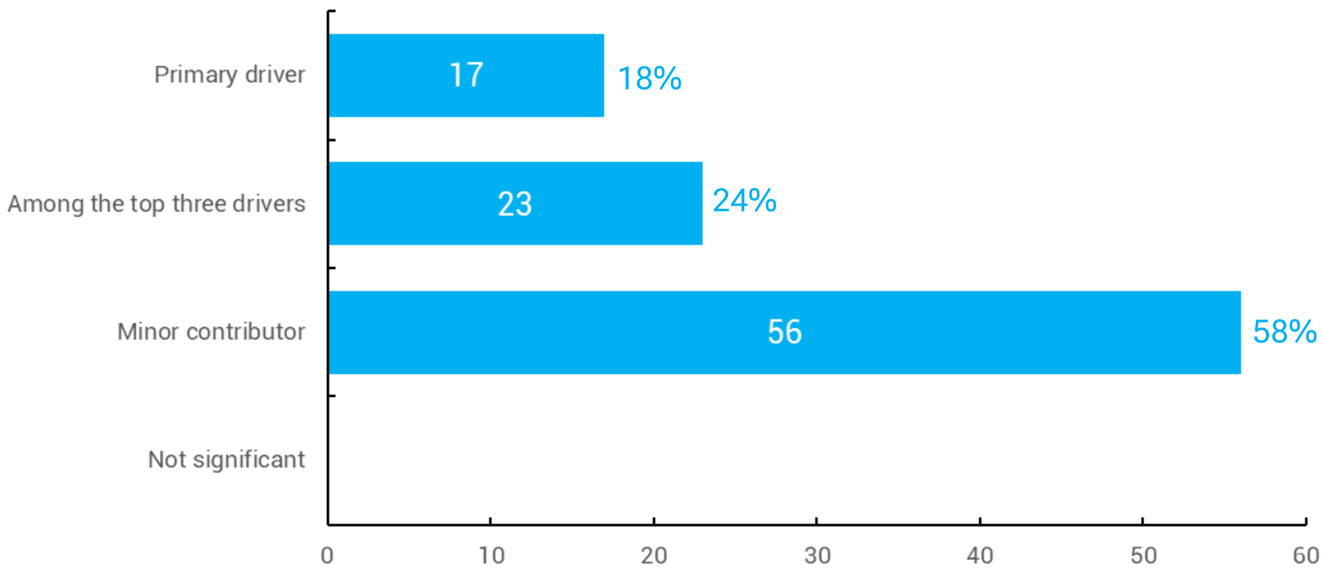
Since the February 2025 survey, how have your plans to shift production or sourcing outside China changed?



364 Foreign respondents.

Figure 10a

Role of US–China tariffs:



96 Foreign respondents. (Shown only if Q10 = "Significantly more likely" or "Somewhat more likely")

Confidence and policy environment

In the DBIC 2025 report, 86% of respondents described their overall sentiment towards the improved bilateral relationship as somewhat or very positive. In the ensuing months, sentiment has shifted further in a positive direction: 80% of respondents report increased confidence in Australia-China trade and investment relative to early 2025.

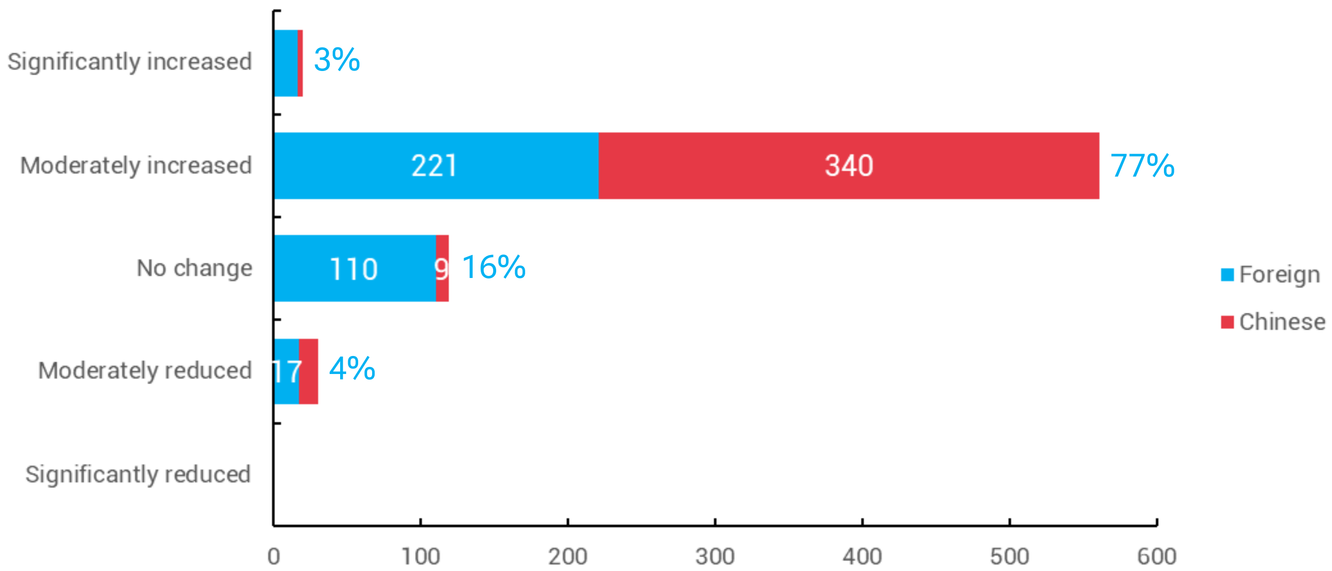
The leading driver of this increase in confidence, cited by both Chinese and foreign firms, was the stabilisation/improvement in the broader bilateral relationship context. Most directly, this represents a big business tick of approval for Prime Minister Albanese's trip to China in July. The resilience of Chinese domestic demand also featured prominently as a cause for optimism amongst both groups.

That said, notes of caution were apparent. More than one in three (35%) lack confidence in China's short-run economic outlook. More than one in four (28%) are not confident in the predictability of the regulatory environment over a two-year time horizon, albeit this is down from 34% expressing pessimism in regulatory predictability in the DBIC 2025 report.

A distinct point of business dissatisfaction in the DBIC 2025 report was Australia's foreign investment approvals process. There is now some evidence, albeit far from overwhelming, that things are headed in a positive direction: 21% say the process has improved, while less than 4% say things have worsened.

Figure 11

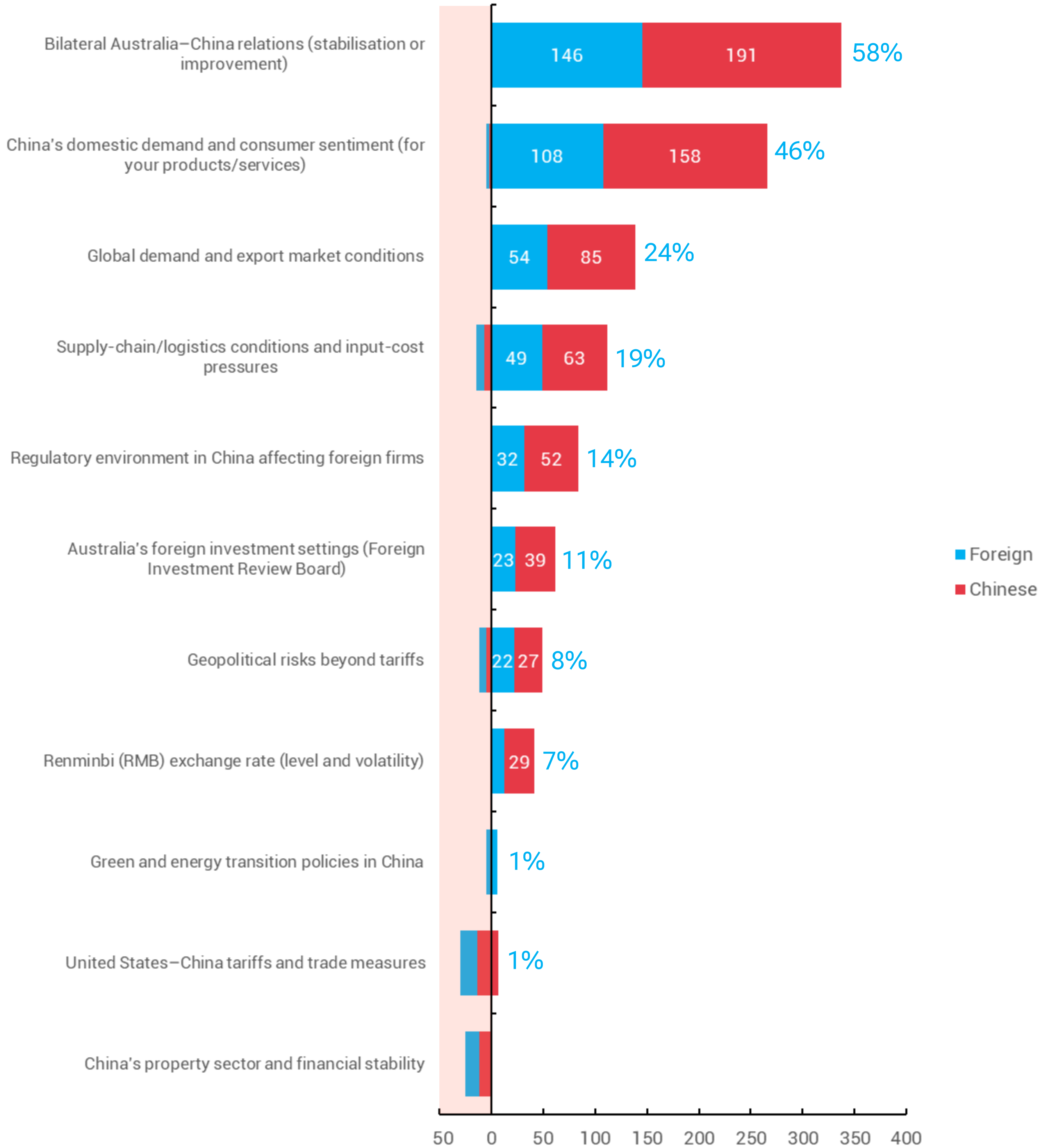
Compared to February 2025, how has your confidence in Australia–China trade and investment changed?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents

Figure 12

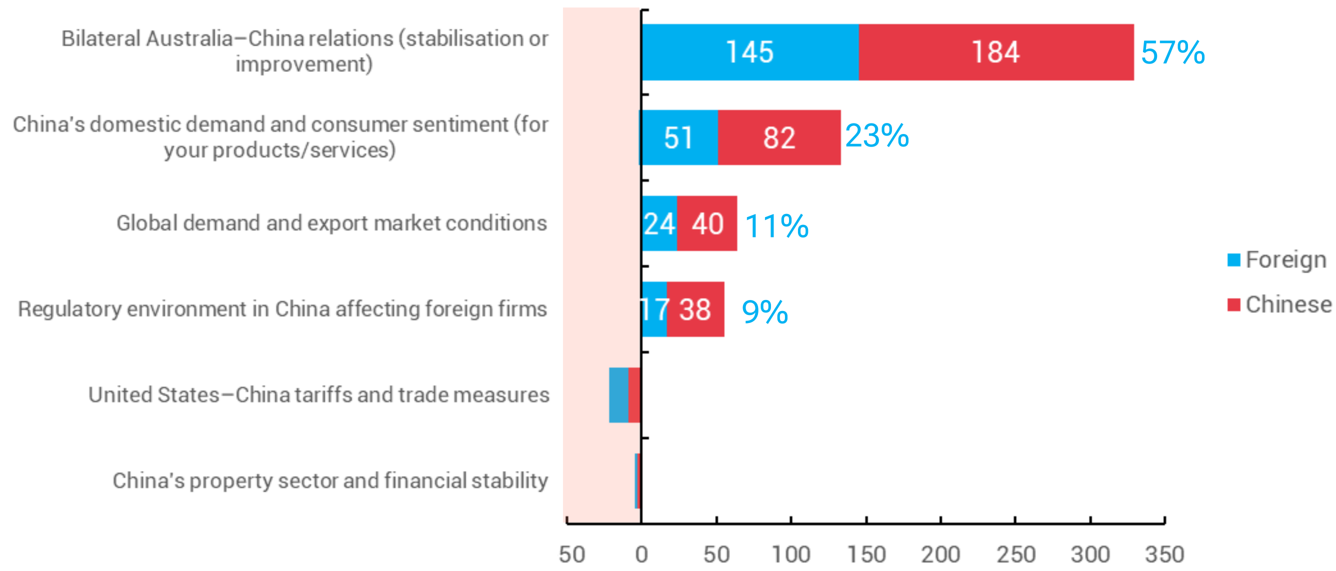
Thinking specifically about your confidence in Australia–China trade and investment, which factors since February 2025 have most influenced your view?



Decrease: 14 Foreign respondents, 13 Chinese respondents.
Increase: 237 Foreign respondents, 344 Chinese respondents.
(Multiple responses allowed, only shown if Q11 ≠ No Change)

Figure 12a

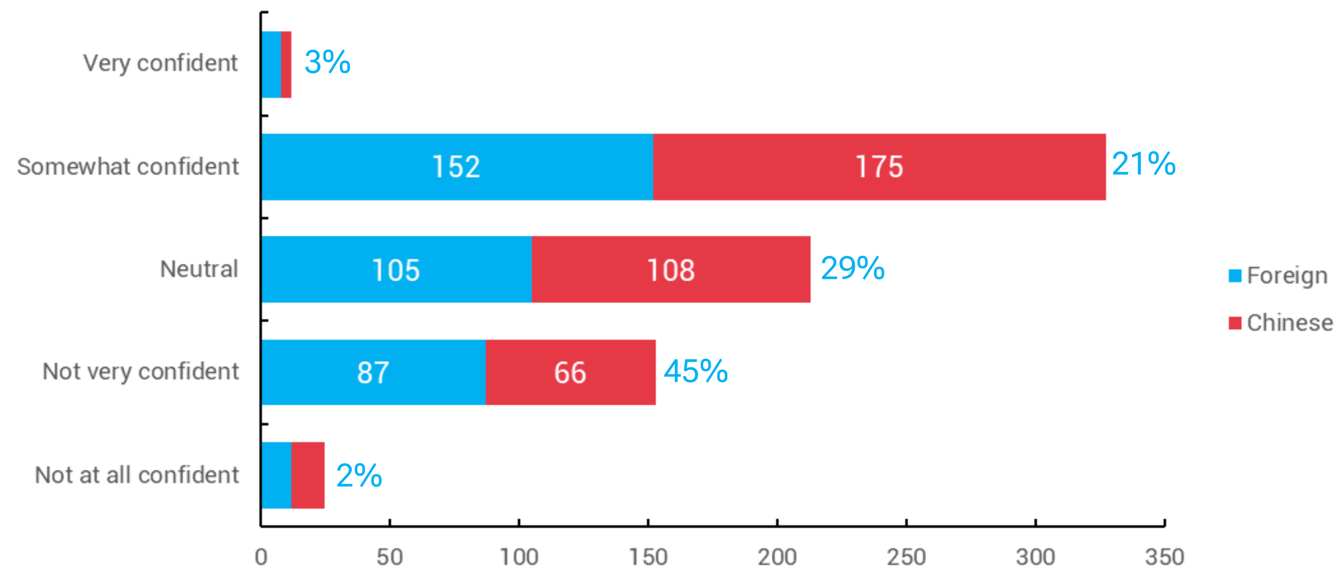
Which one factor most influenced your confidence?



Decrease: 14 Foreign respondents, 13 Chinese respondents.
Increase: 237 Foreign respondents, 344 Chinese respondents.
(Multiple responses allowed, only shown if Q11 ≠ No Change)

Figure 13

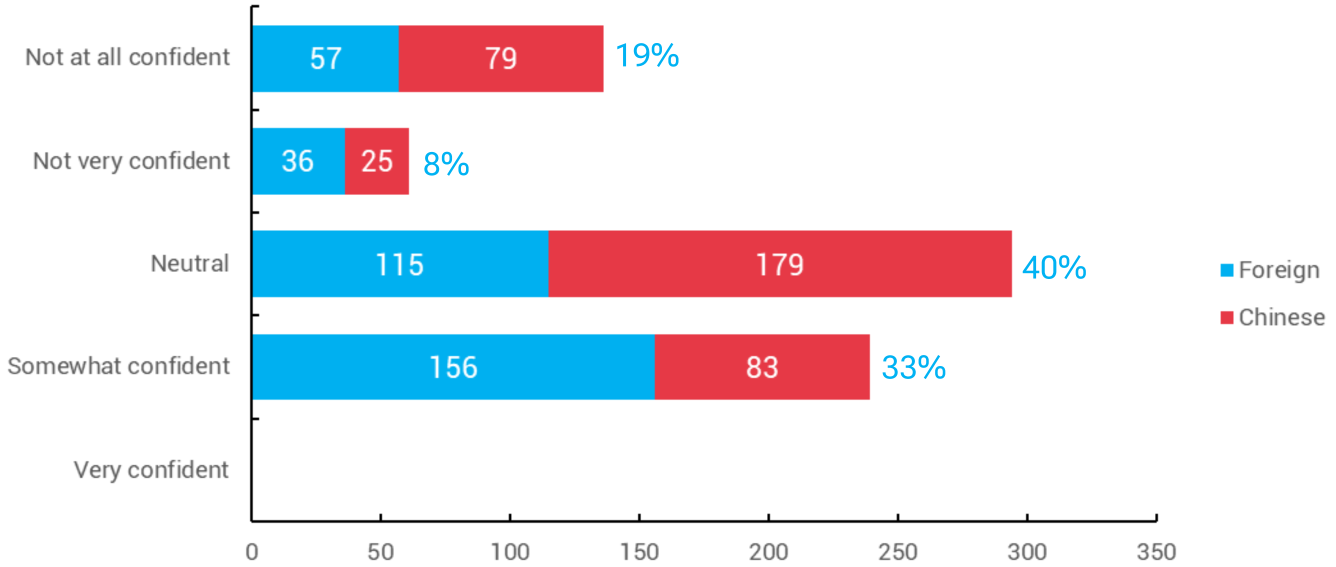
How confident are you that China's regulatory environment will remain predictable over the next two years?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents.

Figure 14

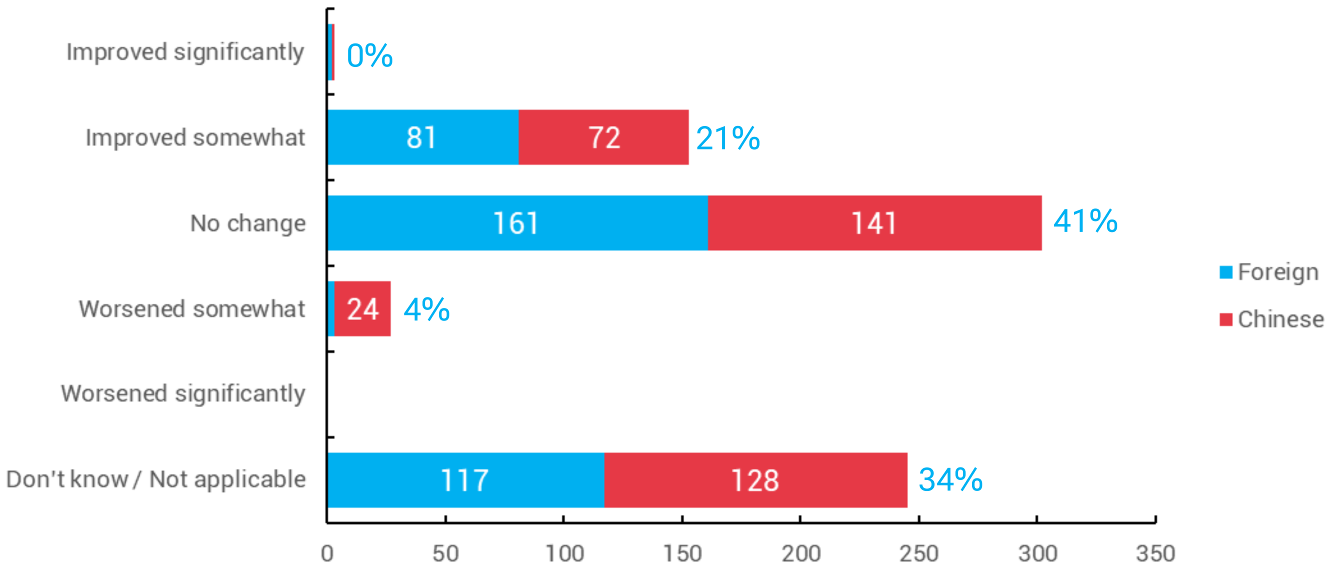
How confident are you in China's economic outlook over the next 12 months?



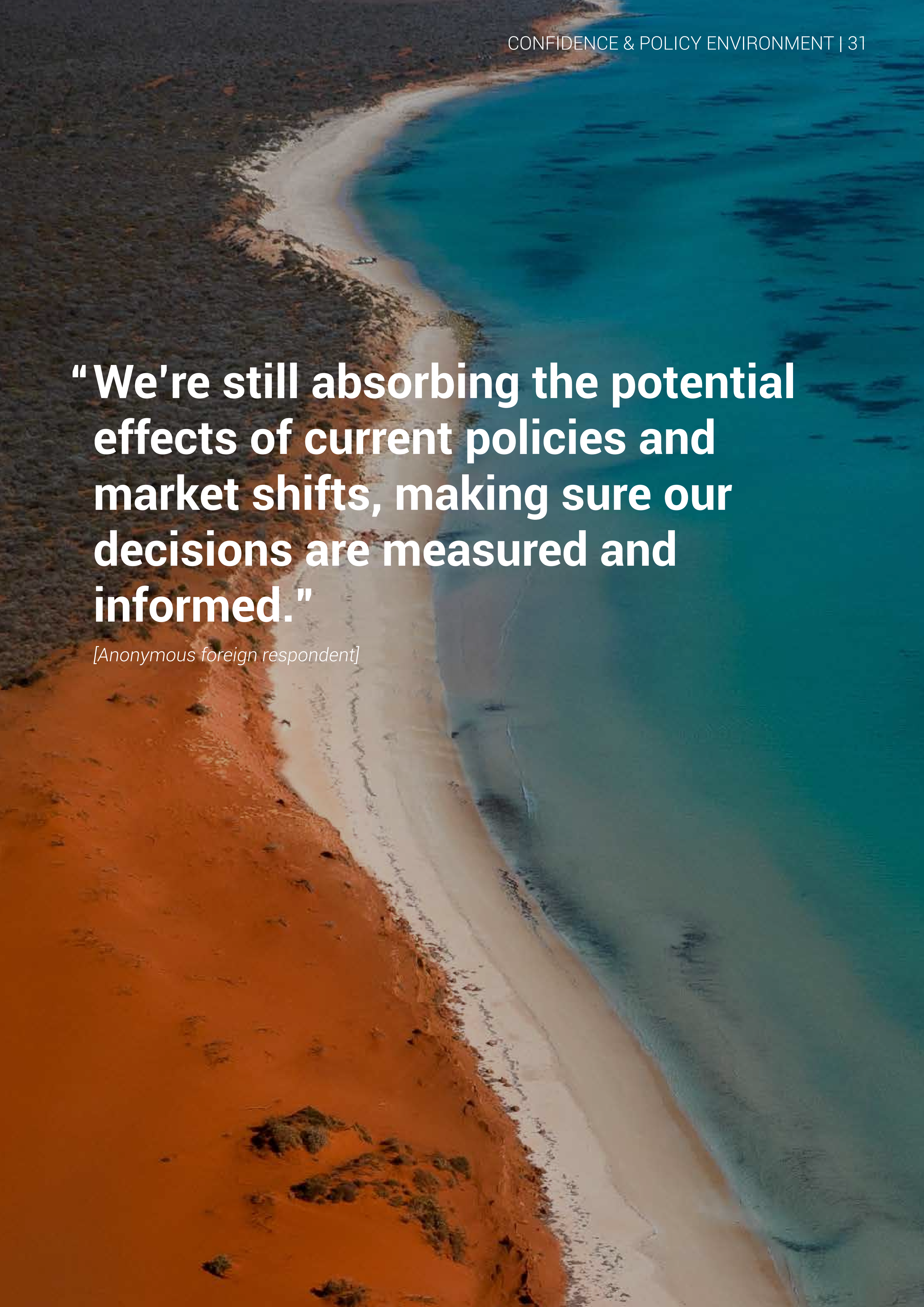
364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents.

Figure 15

Since the February 2025 survey, how has your perception of Australia's foreign investment review regime changed?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents.



"We're still absorbing the potential effects of current policies and market shifts, making sure our decisions are measured and informed."

[Anonymous foreign respondent]

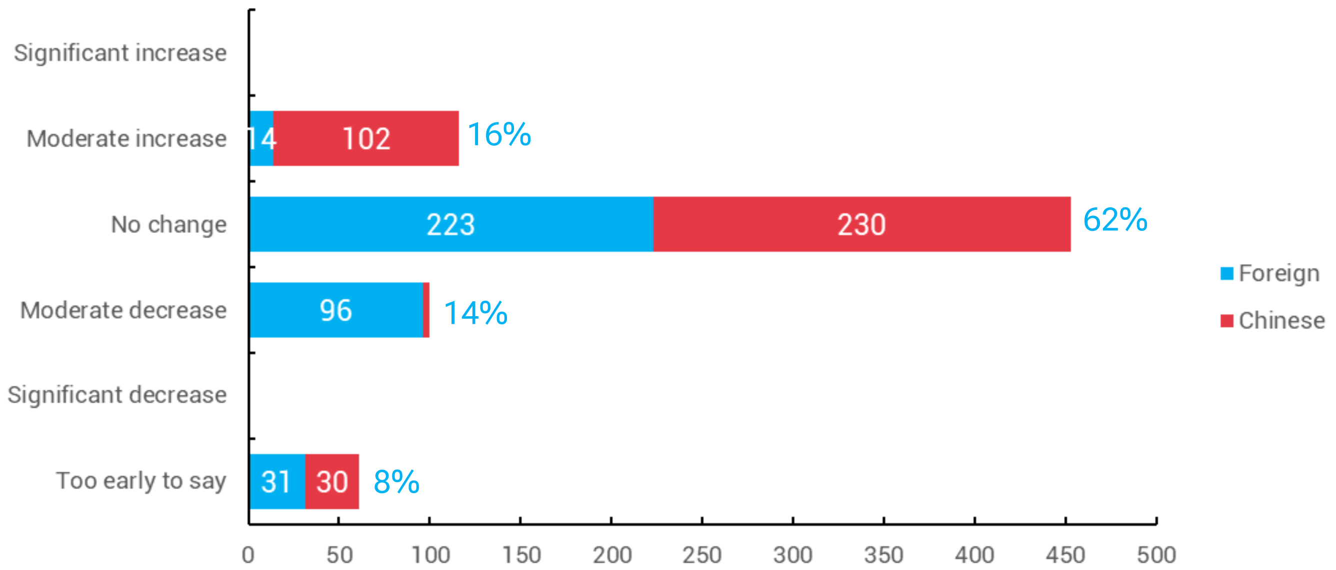
Costs, sales, and adaptation

A clear majority of respondents consider that there has been no change or a decrease in costs since US-China tariffs spiked in April (76%). A slimmer majority judge that sales have increased or experienced no change (61%).

This informs why the primary strategies for dealing with elevated tariffs are adapting operations locally within China or increasing investment in China to capture opportunities created by others exiting (61%). To be sure, this still left a significant minority emphasising diversification to other markets outside China or scaling back/exiting China (39%).

Figure 16

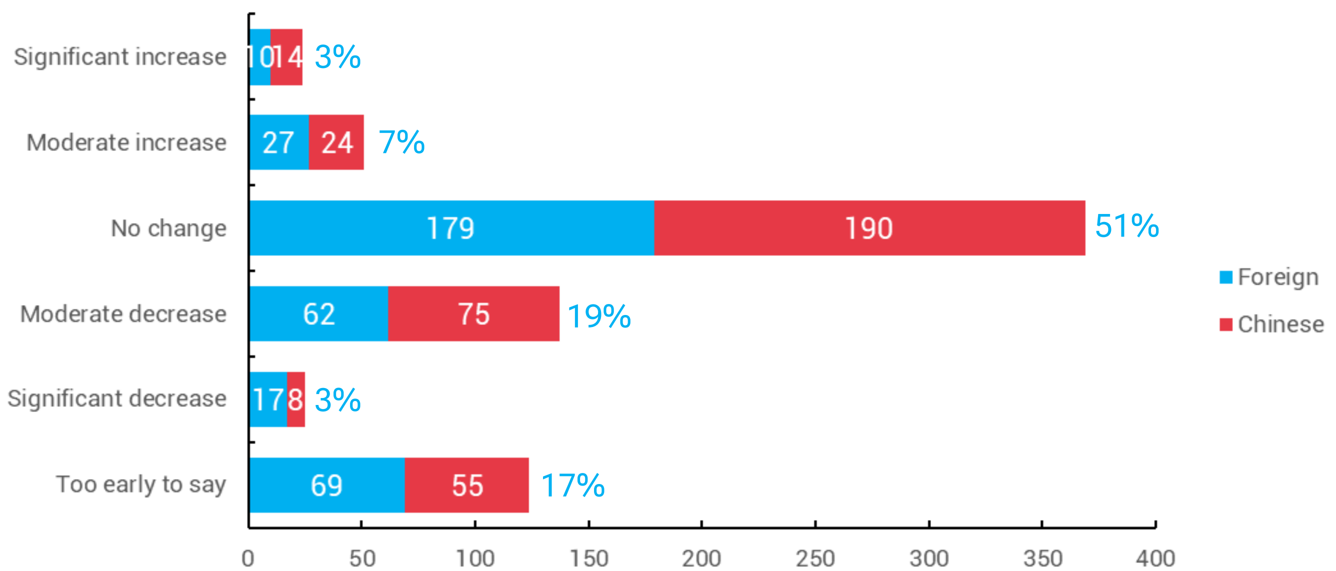
Since the April 2025 US–China tariff changes, how have input costs for your Australia–China business changed?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents.

Figure 17

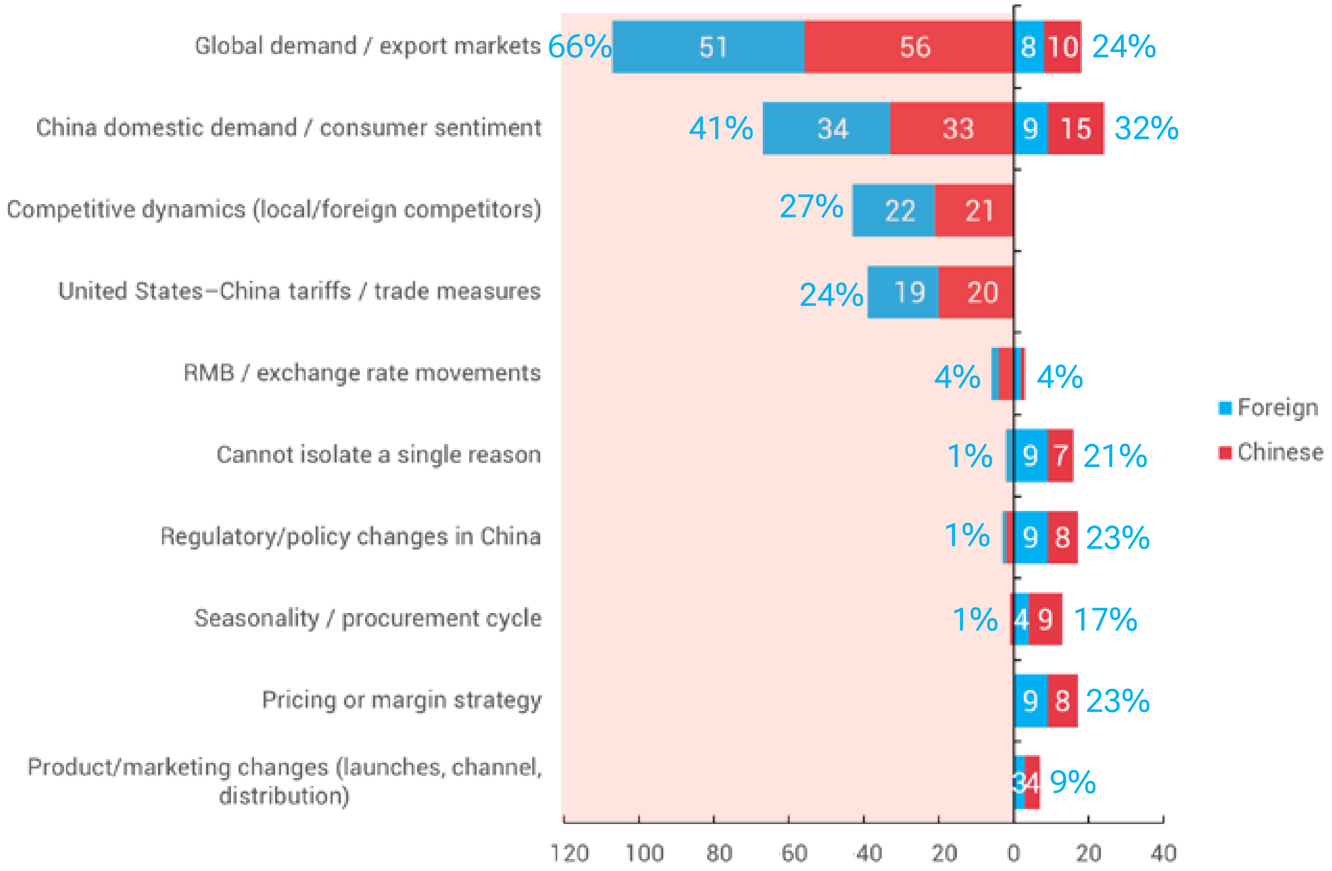
Since April 2025, how have sales or demand for your Australia–China business changed?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents.

Figure 17a

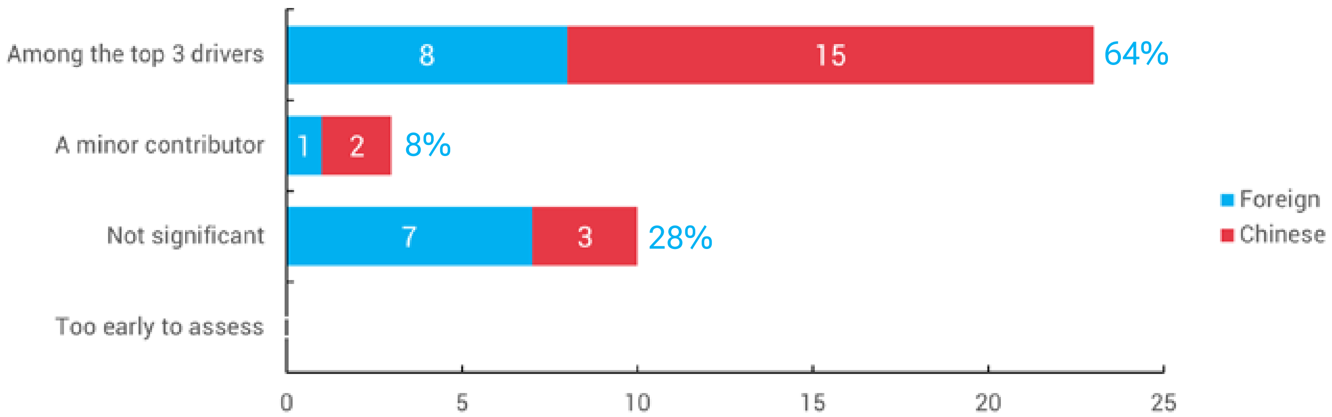
Which factors have contributed to this change?



Decrease: 79 Foreign respondents, 83 Chinese respondents.
Increase: 37 Foreign respondents, 38 Chinese respondents.
(Multiple responses allowed, only shown Q17 ≠ No Change or Too early to say)

Figure 17b

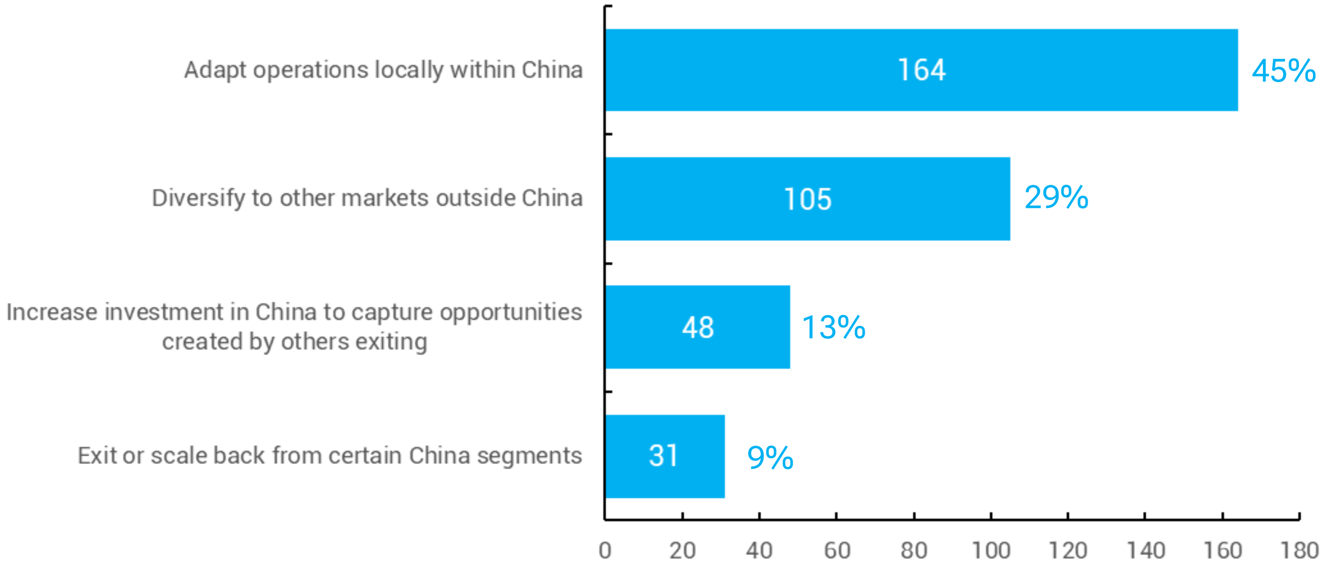
How influential were US–China tariff changes relative to other factors?



16 Foreign respondents, 20 Chinese respondents. (Only shown if US-China Tariffs selected in Q17a)

Figure 18

Which best describes your organisation's primary adaptation strategy in response to tariffs?



364 Foreign respondents.

> **"We are focusing on cost management while remaining ready to expand if demand rebounds."**
>
> *[Anonymous foreign respondent]*

Opportunities and two-way investment

The US-China tariff escalation has had only a minimal negative impact on two-way investment sentiment. A two-thirds majority (67%) say that their organisation's investment interest in China remains unchanged. Of those reporting a change, this is almost as likely to be an increase as a decrease (15% versus 17%). The sectors in China's economy deemed most attractive for investment opportunities were agribusiness, advanced manufacturing, and resource efficiency technologies like those relating to water conservation. These were the sectors also identified as priorities in the DBIC 2025 report.

In the case of investing in Australia, 87% have not changed their plans, while those intending an increase in investment interest outnumbered those reporting a decrease by a ratio of four to one. The leading sectors nominated included clean energy and renewables, EV batteries and infrastructure development and non-critical mineral extraction. This interest maps neatly with signaling by the Albanese government and trends in consumer demand. Earlier this month, Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen participated in the 9th Australia-China Ministerial Dialogue on Climate Change in Beijing. Australian media reported a key objective of the trip, which also included a stop in New Delhi, was to increase Australia's share of global investment in clean energy. Meanwhile, Chinese-made cars now account for four of the top 10 selling models in Australia and all are either EVs or hybrids.

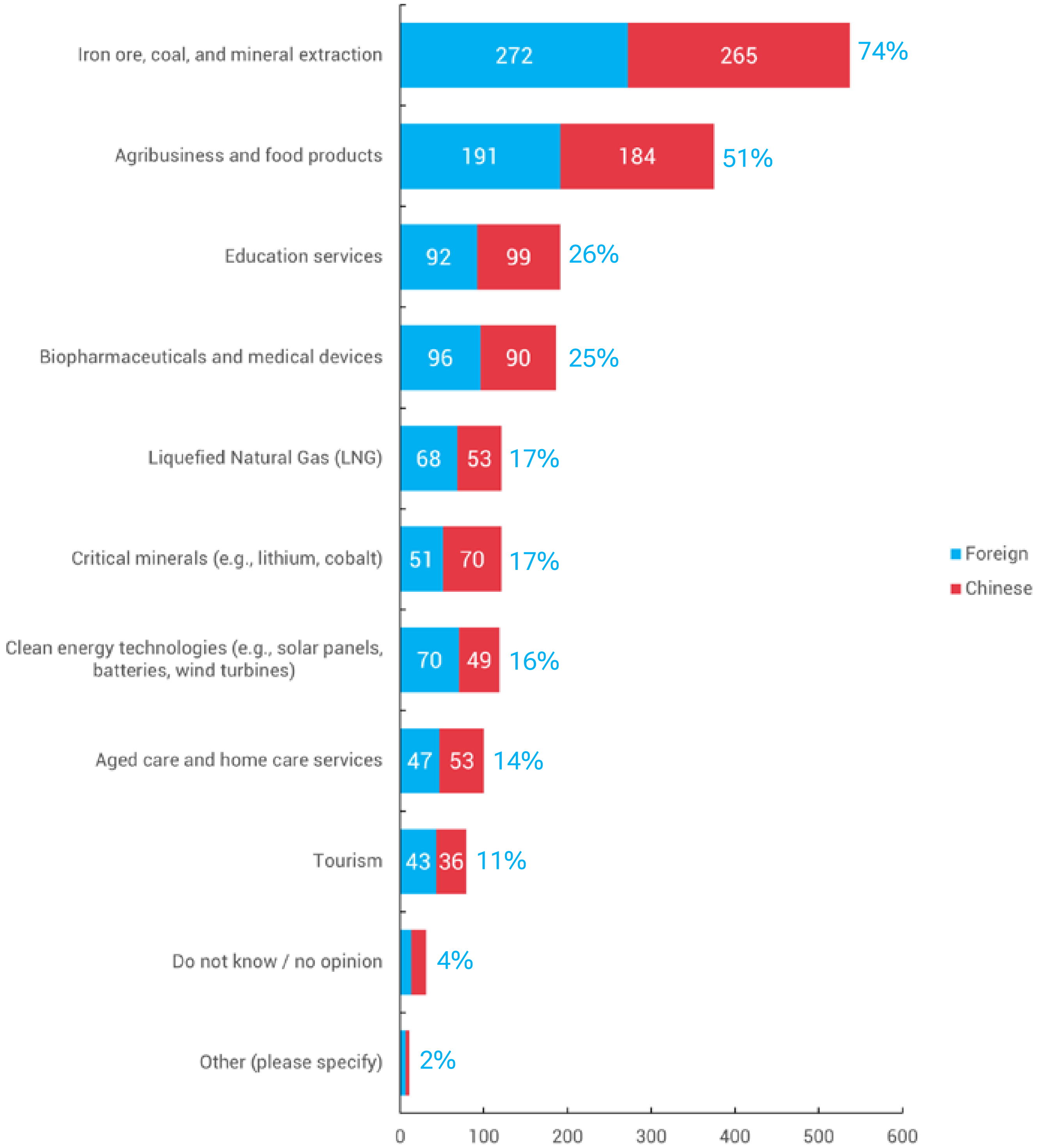
On trade, the Australian sectors identified as having the greatest potential in the China market in the coming five years included non-critical minerals like iron ore, agribusiness and food products, and education services. This represents continuity from the priority sectors identified in the DBIC 2025 report. In terms of Chinese export potential to Australia, this was led by EVs, clean energy technologies and biopharmaceuticals, and medical devices. The latter is a new addition to those identified in the DBIC 2025 report but one that researchers at the Australia-China Relations Institute at the University of Technology Sydney have also recently pegged as demanding of attention.

"The Australian PM's visit sent a strong signal that engagement is back on the agenda."

[Anonymous foreign respondent]

Figure 19

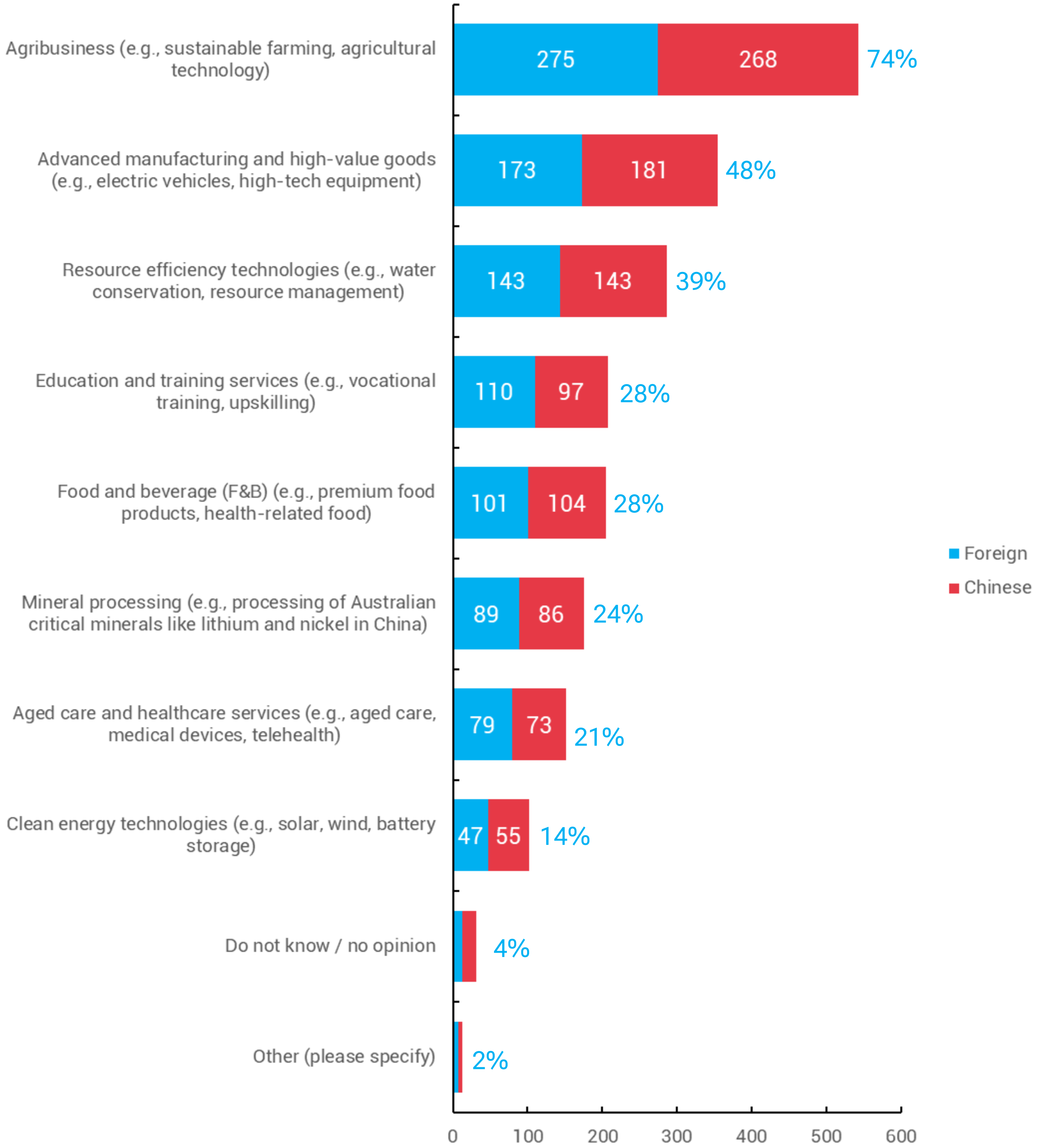
Which Australian export sectors to China do you believe have the greatest potential for growth in the next five years in terms of export revenue?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents. (Multiple responses allowed)

Figure 20

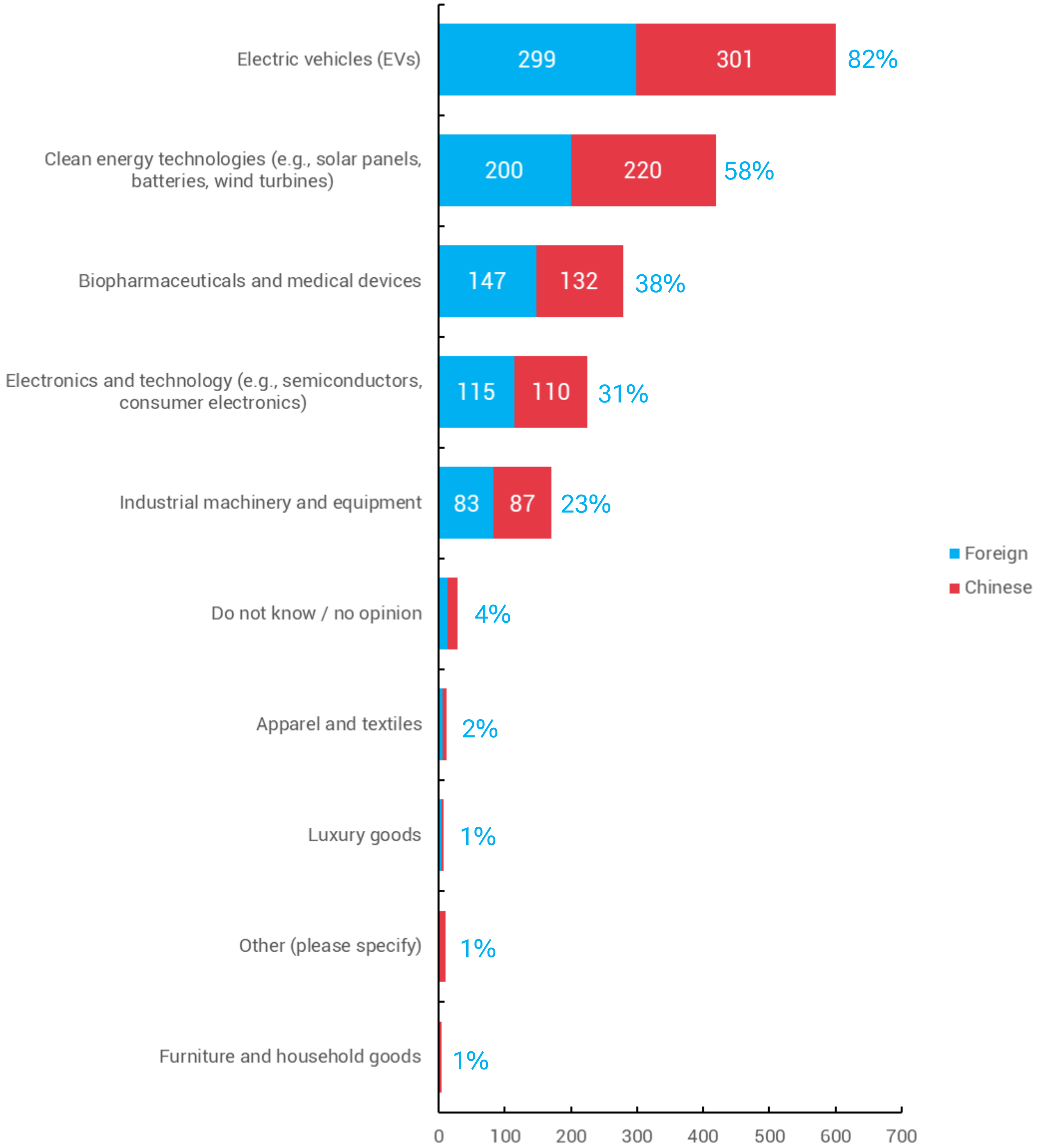
Which sectors do you believe offer the greatest opportunities for Australian investment (including in partnership with Chinese companies) in China over the next five years?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents. (Multiple responses allowed)

Figure 21

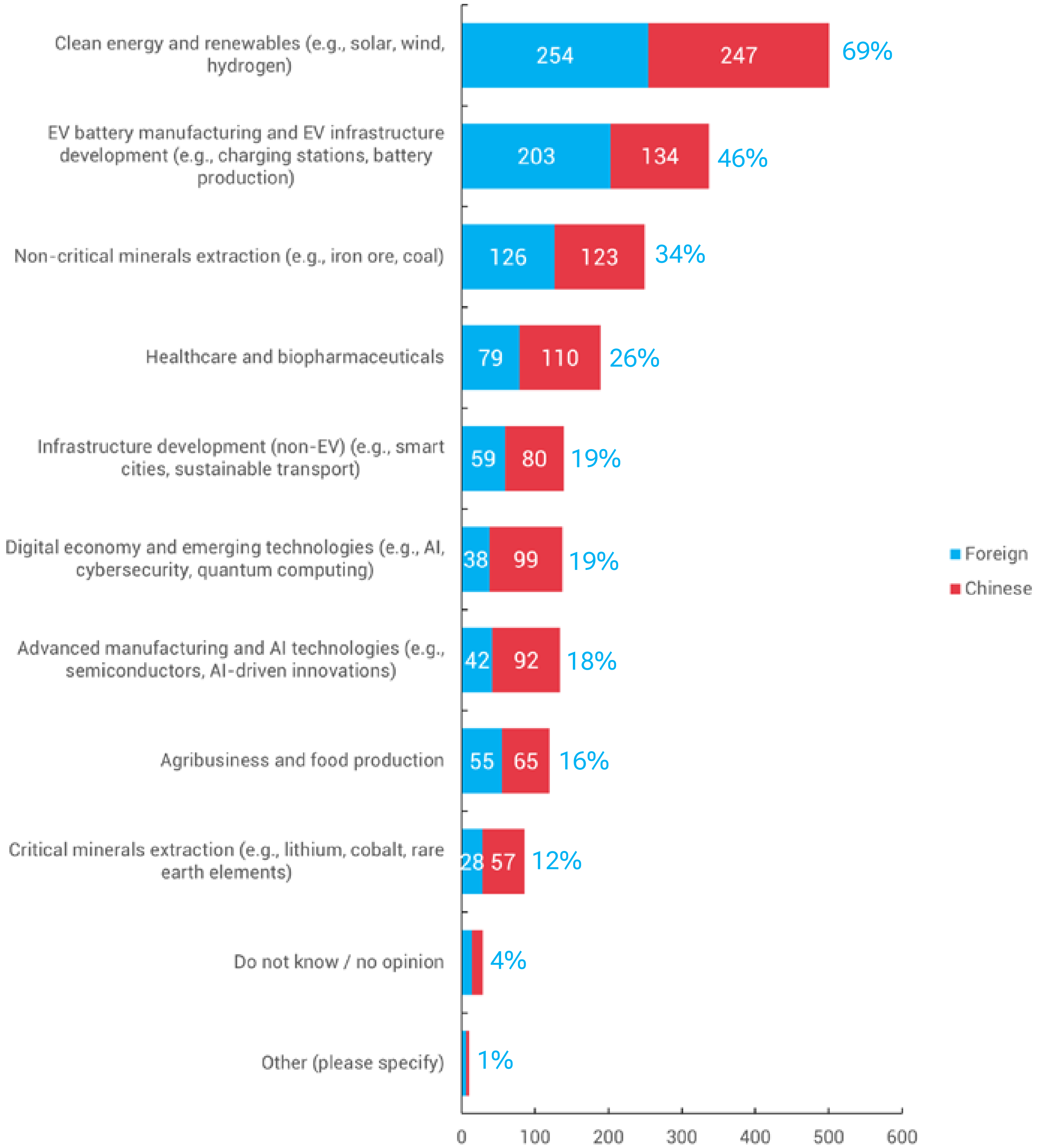
Which Chinese export sectors to Australia do you believe have the greatest potential for growth in the next five years in terms of increased total volume?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents. (Multiple responses allowed)

Figure 22

Which sectors do you believe offer the greatest opportunities for Chinese investment into Australia over the next five (5) years?



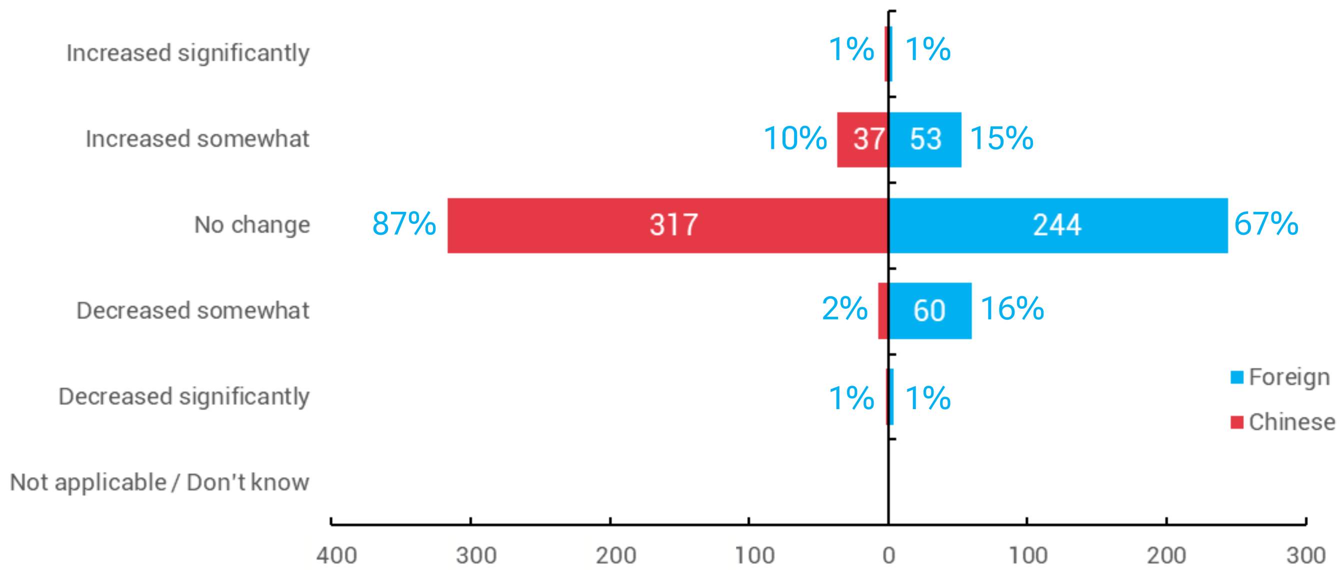
364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents. (Multiple responses allowed)

"There is potential in sectors where both countries have complementary strengths."

[Anonymous foreign respondent]

Figure 23

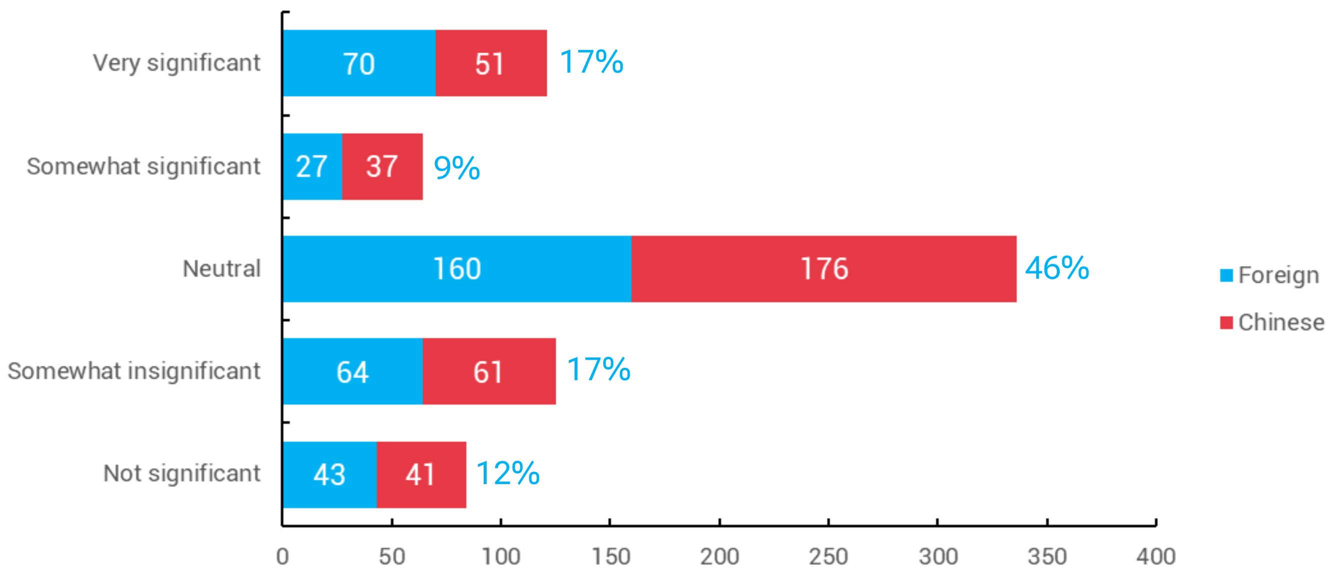
Since February 2025, how has your organisation's interest in investing into Australia or China changed?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents.

Figure 24

How significant are the recent US–China tariffs in creating Australia–China trade or investment opportunities for your organisation?



364 Foreign respondents, 366 Chinese respondents.

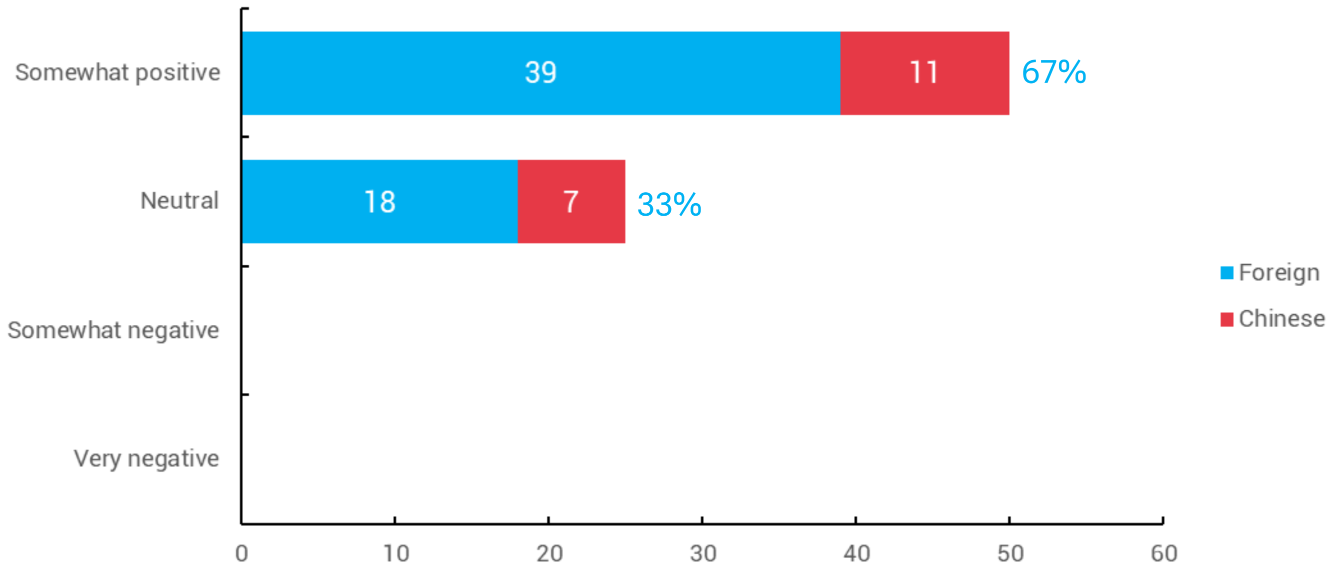
China-Australia Free Trade Agreement pulse

In fresh polling, the Flash Survey investigated sentiment towards the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA), which was enacted nearly a decade ago in December 2015. Compared with other parts of the Flash Survey, relatively few respondents elected to complete the ChAFTA section. Of those providing a response, two-thirds said its impact had been positive, while the remainder said it had been neutral. Yet respondents were equally clear that while ChAFTA supported their business efforts, it was economic fundamentals that made the market. If ChAFTA became unavailable tomorrow, two-thirds assessed that it would have no impact or only a minor one on their business.

With the China-Australia annual leader's meeting in July including a commitment to review ChAFTA, businesses nominate the priorities as being digital trade facilitation tools, such as digital certificates of origin and customs procedures, and mutual recognition of professional qualifications. If these priorities could be delivered upon, the expected impact was typically rated as "moderate". The feasibility of achieving these priorities in the coming 18 months was most commonly assessed as "moderately achievable". Businesses were also keen to support the government translating plans into action with strong expressions of interest to participate in pilot programs, such as digital certificates of origin.

Figure 25

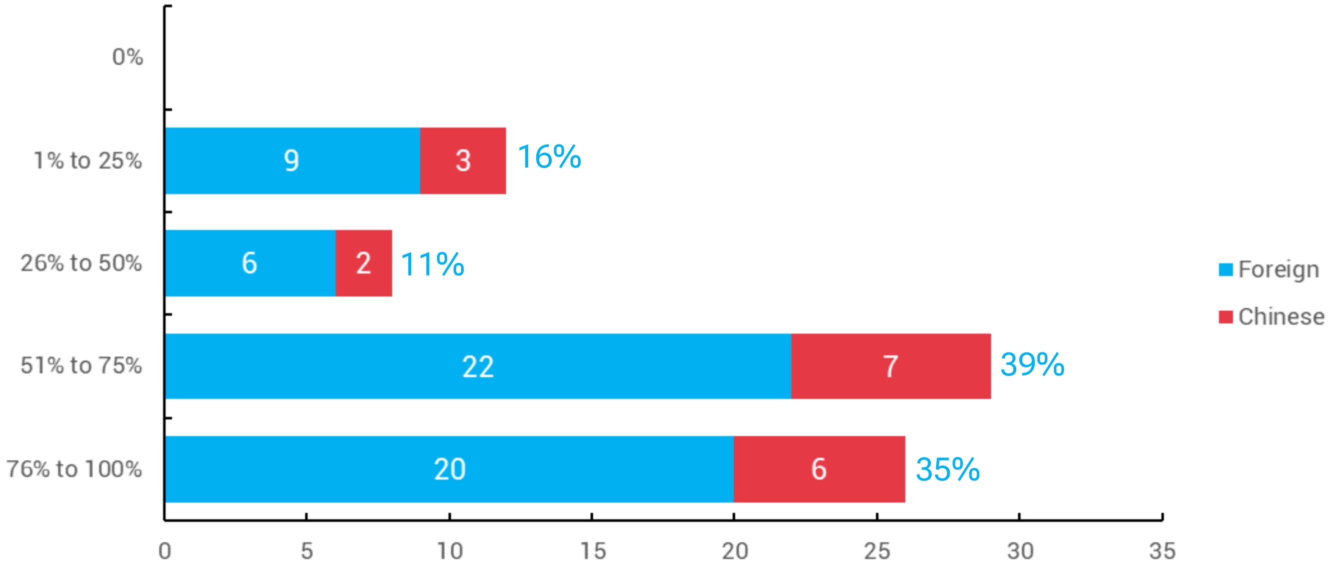
Overall, what has been ChAFTA's net impact on your organisation over the past 12 months?



57 Foreign respondents, 18 Chinese respondents.

Figure 26

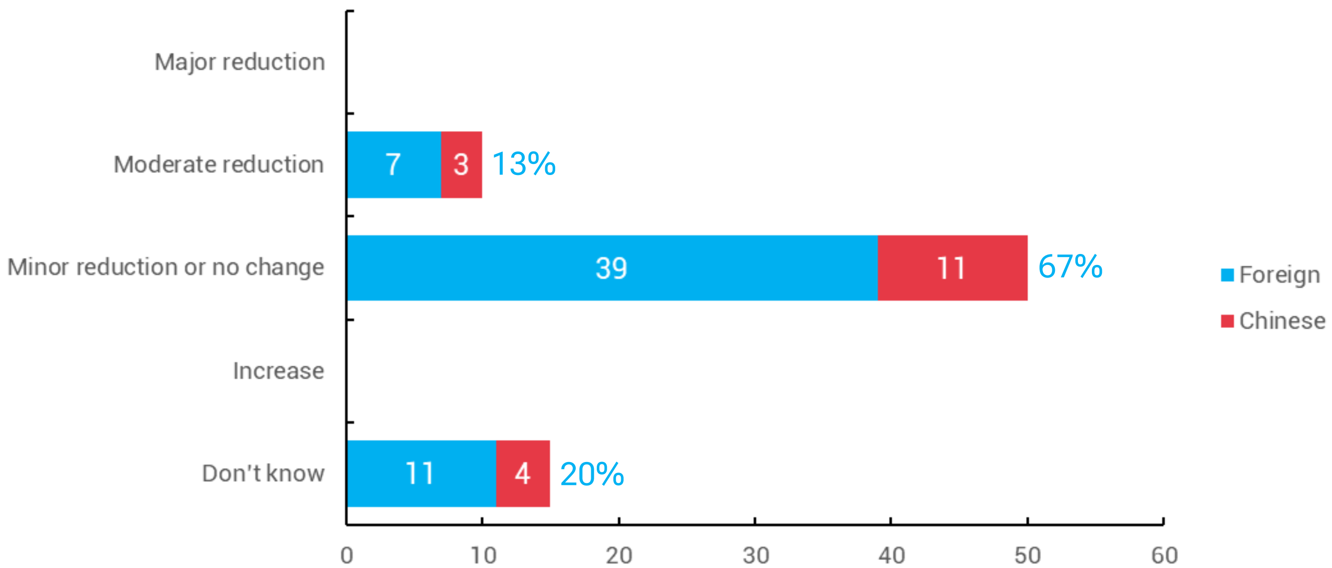
Of your eligible trade in the past 12 months, roughly what share used ChAFTA's preferences?



57 Foreign respondents, 18 Chinese respondents.

Figure 27

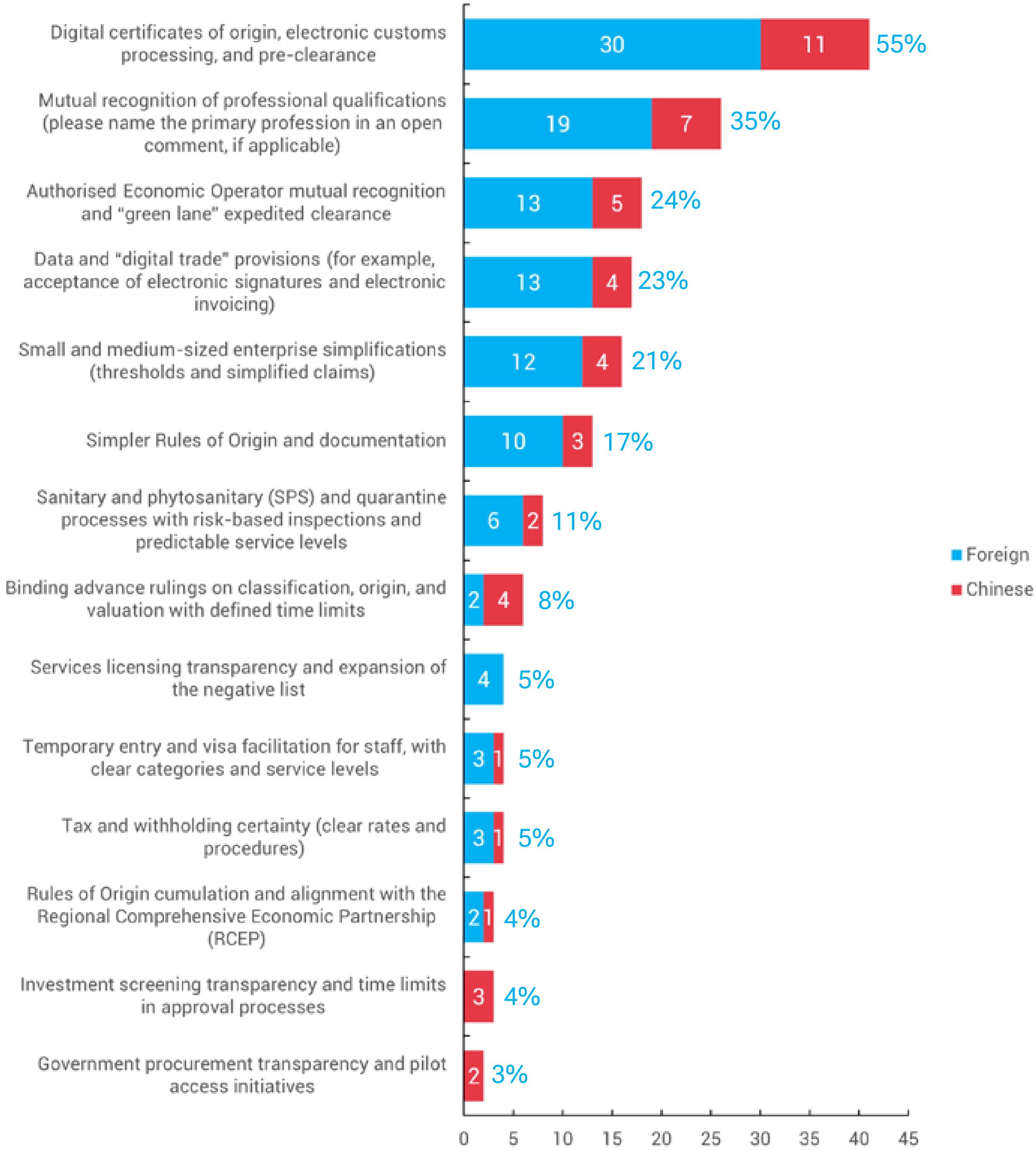
If ChAFTA preferences were unavailable tomorrow, what would be the impact on your Australia–China business?



57 Foreign respondents, 18 Chinese respondents.

Figure 28

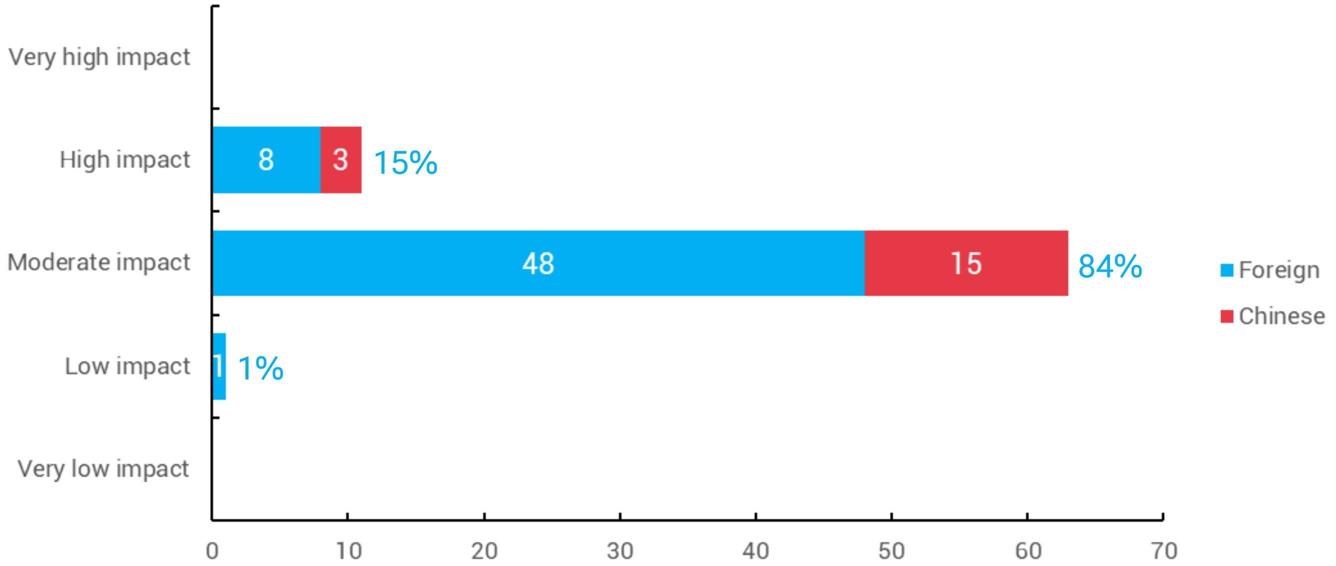
Which upgrades would most improve your ability to trade or invest under ChAFTA?



57 Foreign respondents, 18 Chinese respondents. (Multiple responses allowed)

Figure 29

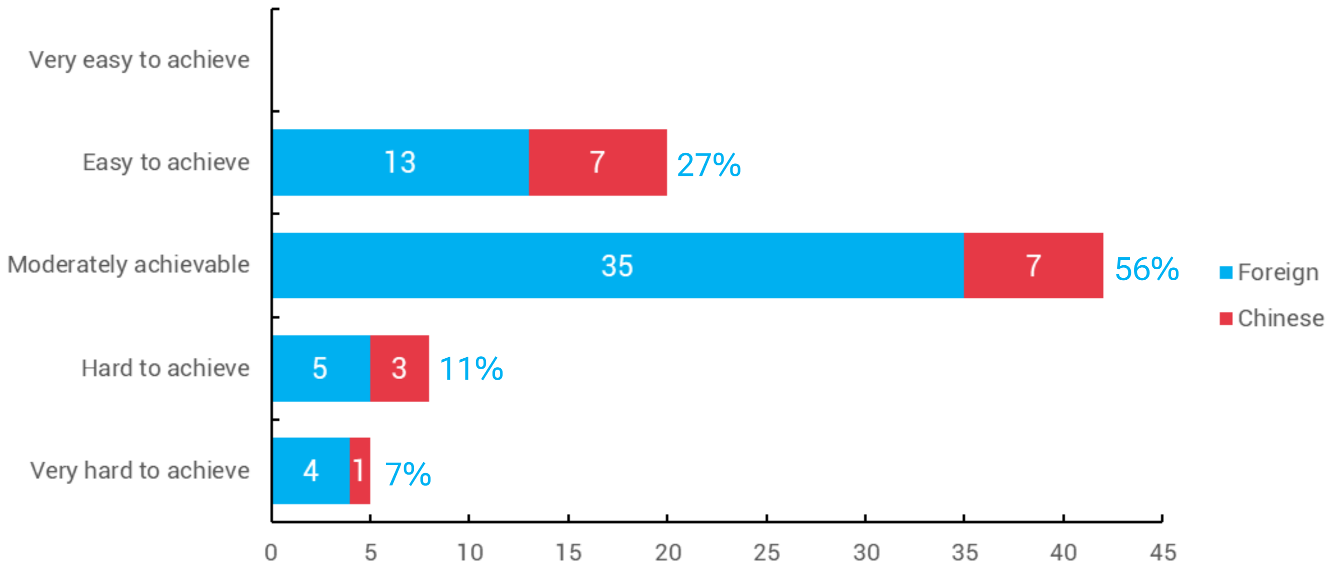
For the one modernisation priority you value most: Expected business impact if achieved.



57 Foreign respondents, 18 Chinese respondents.

Figure 30

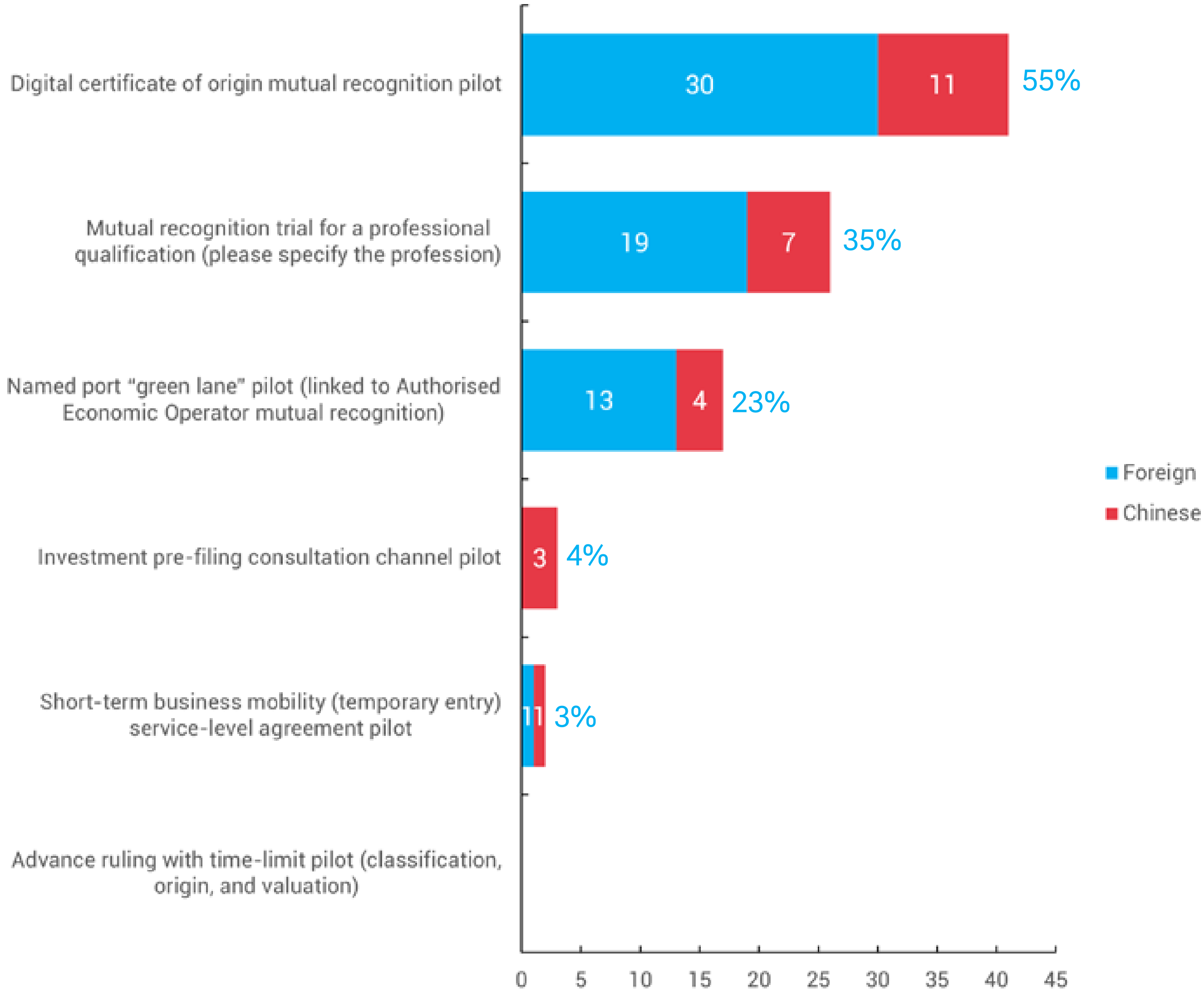
For the one modernisation priority you value most: Achievability within the next 12 to 18 months.



57 Foreign respondents, 18 Chinese respondents.

Figure 31

Which pilot initiatives would your organisation be willing to join?



57 Foreign respondents, 18 Chinese respondents. (Multiple responses allowed)

Survey methodology

This *2025 Doing Business in China Flash Survey* provides an interim update on business sentiment and operational conditions across the Australia–China business corridor, following the release of the May *2025 Doing Business in China* report.

The Flash Survey, conducted by the Australia–China Chamber of Commerce (AustCham China), builds on the established DBIC framework to capture shifts in perception arising from major developments in 2025, including the Australian Prime Minister's visit to China in July and subsequent global trade measures announced by the United States. The survey was conducted online from 26 September to 15 October 2025, targeting senior executives and decision-makers from companies engaged in the Australia–China bilateral corridor across trade, investment, joint ventures, and operational activities.

The findings represent a snapshot of conditions during the survey period and reflect prevailing attitudes prior to several significant developments in late 2025 — including the Trump–Xi and Trump–Albanese meetings, as well as the release of China's new Five-Year Plan — which are expected to further shape the policy and business landscape. These reference points are noted to help future readers contextualise the survey within the evolving economic and diplomatic timeline.

Distribution and Fieldwork used a multi-channel approach to ensure broad representation by industry, geography, and company type. Dissemination partners included AustCham China's South China and West China Chapters, the Australia China Business Council (ACBC), and Dynata, a third-party global panel provider. Targeted outreach extended to industry associations and other chambers of commerce in both China and Australia, ensuring participation from small and medium enterprises alongside multinational firms.

The survey recorded 730 valid responses, with 366 classified as Chinese respondents (companies with ≥51% Chinese ownership) and 364 classified as foreign respondents (companies with <51% Chinese ownership, including those incorporated in Australia or other jurisdictions). This ownership-based classification mirrors previous DBIC methodology, enabling consistent comparison of Chinese and foreign business perspectives. To maintain data focus, responses were limited to activities within the Australia–China corridor. All respondents were required to hold senior roles (e.g. C-suite, director, or equivalent) with direct oversight of their company's bilateral operations.

Survey Design and Logic included 36 questions, combining multiple-choice and open-ended formats. Question logic was applied to tailor the survey based on company type, ownership structure, and sector, ensuring relevance and reducing respondent burden. Questions were mandatory except for the final section concerning the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA), which was optional. For transparency, this report specifies respondent counts for each question and includes only those with statistically meaningful response rates.

For multiple-response questions, percentages were calculated by dividing the number of selections per option by the total number of valid respondents to that question. As respondents could select more than one option, cumulative percentages may exceed 100%.

Data Handling and Analysis involved anonymising all responses to ensure confidentiality and cleaning the dataset to remove incomplete or duplicate entries. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative inputs were thematically coded. Percentages were rounded to whole numbers using the Largest Remainder method, maintaining internal consistency and accuracy across aggregated results. As with all opt-in surveys, the Flash Survey carries a potential for response bias, with sectors or regions possibly overrepresented due to differing engagement levels. However, the use of multiple channels and an independent third-party panel mitigated this risk.

The Australia–China Relations Institute at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS:ACRI) served as an independent analysis partner, contributing to data review and interpretation while remaining external to survey design or collection.

The Doing Business in China 2025 Flash Survey extends AustCham China's commitment to providing a clear, data-driven view of evolving sentiment within the Australia–China business corridor. While smaller in scale than the main DBIC 2025 survey, its targeted methodology and robust respondent base offer timely insights into the shifting dynamics, opportunities, and challenges faced by both Chinese and foreign businesses during a year of renewed engagement and global economic change.

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