

THE LOWY INSTITUTE POLL 2008



Australia and the World PUBLIC OPINION AND FOREIGN POLICY

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LOWY INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

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Executive summary

The Lowy Institute Poll 2008 reports the results of a foreign policy opinion survey conducted in Australia between 12 and 27 July 2008.

The United States

There are signs that attitudes towards the United States are improving. The perceived overall importance of the ANZUS alliance reached its highest level since the Lowy Institute Poll began in 2005. Trust in the United States has also bounced back. In 2006, of four powers, the United States ranked near equal last with China in terms of overall trust to act responsibly in the world. This year it jumped to equal first place with Japan.

However, the United States' influence in the world is perceived negatively by a majority of Australians. Almost two-thirds also continue to say Australia takes too much notice of the views of the United States in our foreign policy.

China

There are signs of growing unease in Australia with China's rise. A majority believe Australia's relations with China are improving and that China's growth has been good for Australia. However, despite this, trust in China has dropped since 2006 and a slim majority of Australians are in favour of joining with other countries to limit China's influence. Only about a third of Australians agreed that Australia's interests would not be harmed if China gained more power and influence and that Australia is doing enough to pressure China on human rights. Around a third viewed the development of China as a world power as a critical threat to Australia's vital interests in the next 10 years, a nine-point rise since 2006.

Afghanistan

Last year Australians were evenly divided over our continued military involvement in Afghanistan. This year a majority emerged opposed to our engagement. Meanwhile, Australians were evenly divided over whether we had clear aims in Afghanistan.

The economy versus the climate

Global financial turmoil has dented the economic optimism of last year, albeit with high levels of overall optimism remaining. Economic objectives such as protecting Australian jobs and strengthening the economy

overtook tackling climate change as the most important foreign policy goals.

However, when it came to possible threats to Australia's vital interests, climate-related issues loomed largest. The increasing scarcity of water was seen as the most critical threat to Australia's interests, with global warming ranking equal second along with international terrorism. There was a decline in the perceived urgency of the need to address global warming and the willingness to pay to tackle the problem, but a solid majority remains in favour of immediate action even if this involves significant costs.

Younger Australians (those under 30 years) were more likely than older Australians (those 60 and older) to be concerned about global warming and were prepared to pay more to address it.

Japanese whaling

Australians are vehement anti-whalers. Of four possible viewpoints, a majority chose the most uncompromising anti-whaling position, saying the government should do more to pressure Japan to stop all whaling even at the risk of losing valuable trade deals. Only a third said the government's response is about right.

Foreign investment in Australia

An overwhelming 90% of Australians said the government has a responsibility to ensure major Australian companies are kept in majority Australian control. An almost equally large majority said investment in Australia by companies controlled by foreign governments should be more strictly regulated than ordinary foreign private investment. A majority of Australians are opposed to major investments in Australia by companies, banks or investment funds controlled by the governments of Great Britain, the United States, Singapore, Japan and the United Arab Emirates. They are most opposed to those controlled by the Chinese government.

Australia and the world

ECONOMIC OPTIMISM AND GLOBALISATION

Global financial turmoil has dented the economic optimism of last year. In 2007, 19% of our respondents were ‘very optimistic’ ‘about Australia’s economic performance in the world over the next five years’. In 2008, only 11% were ‘very optimistic’. Overall though, a very healthy level of optimism remains, with 75% of Australians either ‘very optimistic’ or ‘optimistic’.

There also remains a widespread belief that globalisation has been positive for Australia. A majority of Australians (72%) believe globalisation is ‘mostly good’ for Australia: up from 64% in 2006. Younger Australians are even more positive: 86% of respondents aged 18-29 said globalisation is ‘mostly good’, compared with 64% of those aged 45-59 and 61% of those 60 or older.

FEELINGS TOWARDS OTHER COUNTRIES

Of the 17 countries Australians were asked to rate their feelings towards on a 0-100 scale, Great Britain was the most warmly regarded (77°), with France (69°) in second place. Despite the December 2006 coup, Fiji ranked a warm third place (67°).

The United States saw a slight improvement in its rating from 60° last year to 64° in 2008. Iran witnessed a similar improvement from a much lower base (34° in 2007 to 38° in 2008). Feelings towards China stayed the same at a moderately warm 56°. South Korea, our third largest export destination, ranked a perfect neutral 50°, equal to Indonesia and just above Pakistan on a cooler 46°.

Iraq, with a frosty 37° rating, just squeezed out Iran (38°) as the country Australians felt coolest towards.

Australian Foreign Policy

AUSTRALIA’S REPUTATION AND US INFLUENCE

Following the Federal election in November last year, Australians were asked to compare ‘Australia’s international reputation under the previous Howard government with our reputation under the current Rudd government’. Almost twice as many respondents (33%) said Australia’s international reputation had ‘improved’ than said it had ‘worsened’ (17%) with 40% of those aged 18-29 saying it had improved. Most respondents (46%) said it had ‘stayed the same’.

Looking at perceptions of how much attention Australia pays to US views in our foreign policy, the percentage of respondents saying Australia takes ‘too much’ notice

Fig. 1: Feelings towards other countries

Please rate your feelings towards some countries, with one hundred meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to one hundred: the higher the number the more favourable your feelings are toward that country. If you have no opinion or have never heard of that country, please say so.

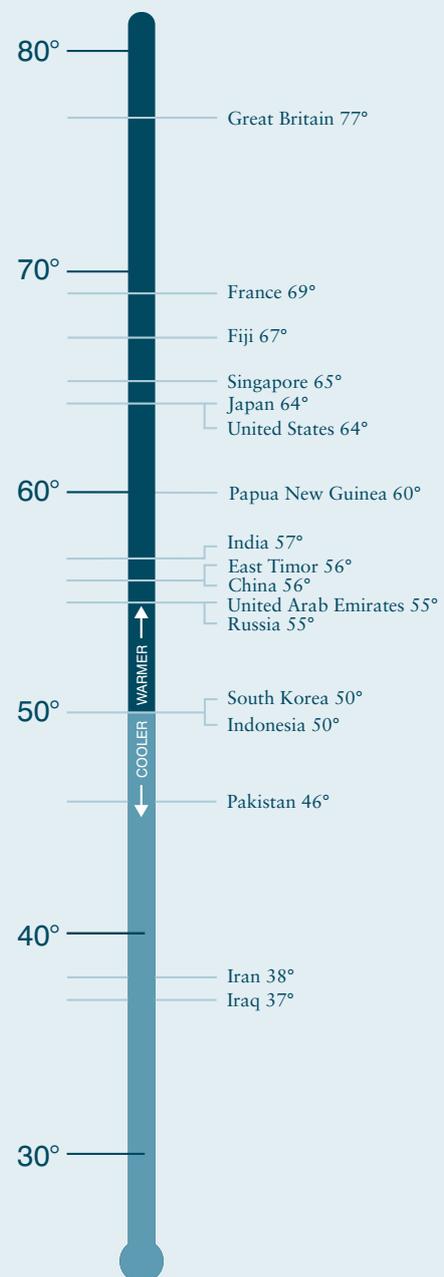


Fig. 2: Influence on Australian foreign policy

Thinking about how much notice Australia takes of the views of the United States in our foreign policy, on the whole do you think we take too much, too little or the right amount of notice?



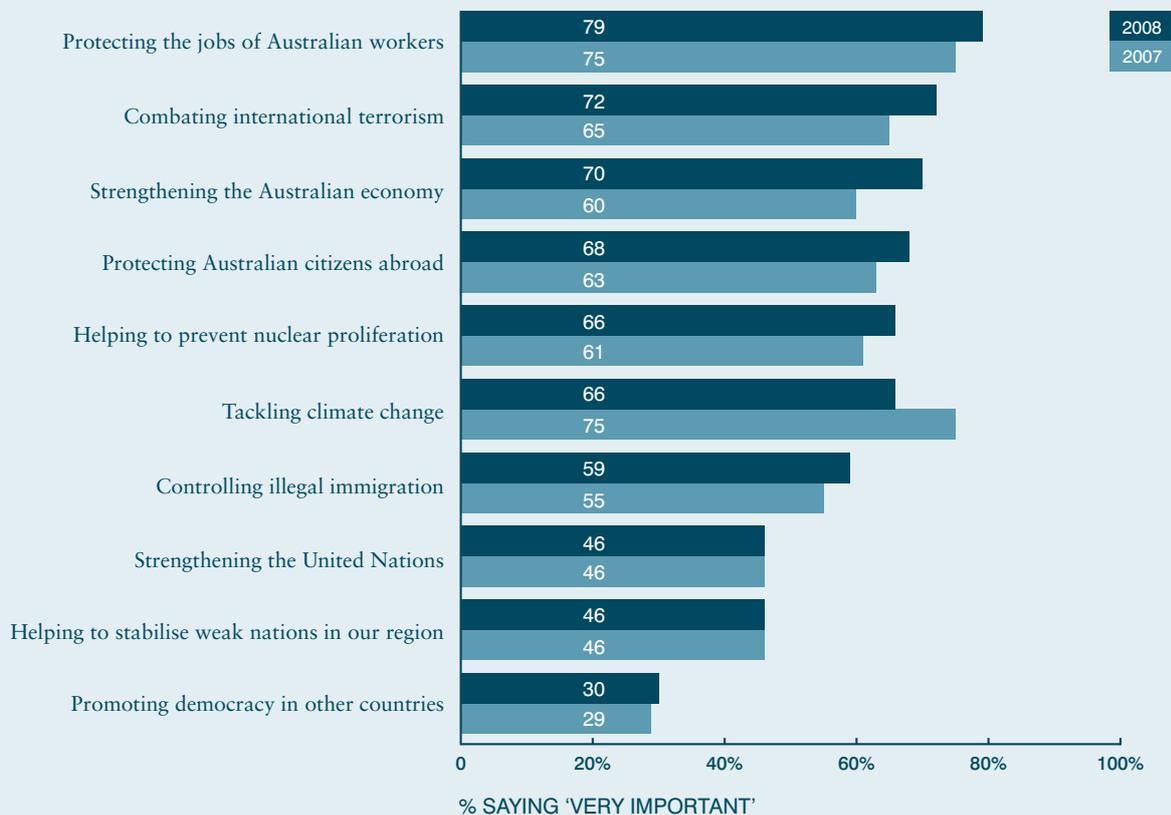
was 65%, while the percentage saying we take ‘the right amount of notice’ was 31%. Respondents in the 18-29 age group were the least likely to say Australia takes ‘too much’ notice (58%).

FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

The domestic and global environment has changed significantly since the last Lowy Institute Poll. There has been a change in government, a global financial crisis and greater focus on climate change. To see what impact these

Fig. 3: Foreign policy goals

Thinking about what Australian foreign policy should be trying to achieve, I am going to read a list of goals, and ask you to tell me how important each one is for Australia. Please say whether you think each issue is very important, fairly important, not very important or not at all important.



changes had on the foreign policy issues that resonate most strongly with Australians we repeated a question from 2007. We asked respondents to rate the importance to Australia of each of ten possible foreign policy goals.

Looking at the percentage of respondents ranking the respective goals as ‘very important’, this year economic issues overtook climate change as the most important foreign policy goal. The goal of ‘strengthening the Australian economy’ underwent the biggest movement, up 10 points from sixth place in 2007 to third in 2008 (60% in 2007 to 70% in 2008). The older Australians get the more likely they are to identify this as a ‘very important’ goal, with 82% of respondents 60 years or older saying this was ‘very important’ compared with 58% of 18-29 year olds.

‘Tackling climate change’ was the next biggest mover, down nine points from equal first place to equal fifth (from 75% in 2007 to 66% in 2008). For this goal, there was a ten-point gap between male and female respondents, with 71% of women viewing tackling climate change as ‘very important’ compared with 61% of men.

The most important goal remained ‘protecting the jobs of Australian workers’ (79%). ‘Combating international terrorism’ jumped a spot to second place (72% up from 65% in 2007), while ‘protecting Australian citizens abroad’ held on to fourth place but was nominated by a greater number of respondents (68% up from 63% in 2007).

‘Helping to prevent nuclear proliferation’ ranked equal fifth (66%) with a clear divide between generations. In the 60 years or older age group, 76% of respondents said this was a ‘very important’ goal, while only 53% of those in the 18-29 age group said the same. Respondents aged 18-29 were also much less likely to identify ‘controlling illegal immigration’ as a ‘very important’ goal (42%) than those 60 years and over (70%).

When those saying that each goal is ‘very important’ are combined with those saying each one is ‘fairly important’ the ranking is much less dispersed. By this measure the most important goals are: ‘Strengthening the Australian economy’ (98%), ‘protecting the jobs of Australian workers’ (96%) and ‘protecting Australian citizens abroad’ (95%). ‘Combating international terrorism’ (93%) and ‘tackling climate change’ (90%) were the next most important. The lowest ranking goal, ‘promoting democracy in other countries’ still scored a high 72%.

JAPANESE WHALING

Whaling – particularly Japanese whaling – is always a contentious issue in Australia. Yet Japan remains, by some margin, Australia’s largest export destination and an important regional security partner, which makes balancing opposition to whaling a complicated foreign policy challenge.

To determine how far Australians wanted to push their opposition to whaling, even at the risk of jeopardising other national interests, we offered respondents four possible viewpoints and asked them to say which one most closely matched their own. A majority (58%) chose the most uncompromising anti-whaling position that ‘the Australian government should do more to pressure Japan to stop all whaling even if we risk losing valuable trade deals’, with female respondents (63%) more likely to hold this view than males (53%).

One third (33%) said ‘the Australian government’s response is about right’. Only 7% said the government should not be involved, with about half of them suggesting it was ‘because we risk jeopardising our commercial relationship with Japan’ and the remainder ‘because Japanese whaling should not be stopped’.

Fig. 4: Attitudes towards Japanese whaling

Thinking about the Australian government’s efforts to stop Japanese whaling, please say which of the following statements comes closest to your own view.

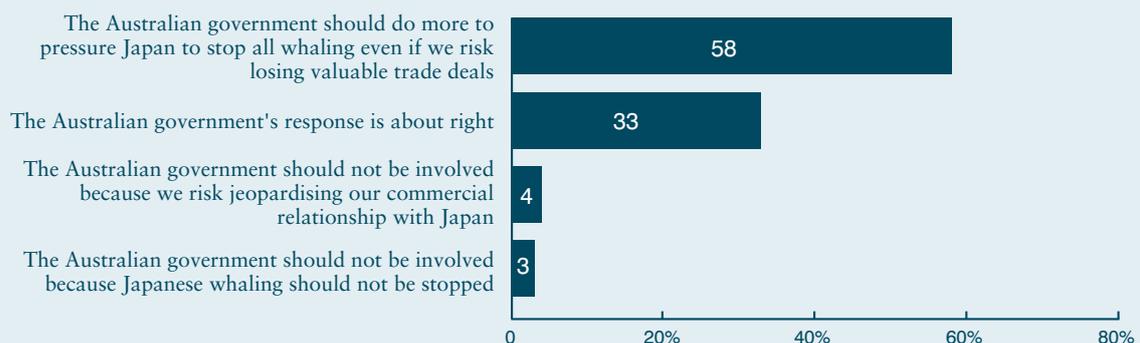


Fig. 5: Foreign investment in Australia

I am going to read you two statements. Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.



FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN AUSTRALIA

When the state-controlled Aluminum Corporation of China (‘Chinalco’) joined Alcoa in buying a 12% stake in the UK common stock of Rio Tinto, it focused attention on the possibility that prominent Australian companies could become part or wholly owned by foreign government-controlled companies and on the associated issue of sovereign wealth funds. To find out what Australians thought about this, we included questions in the 2008 Poll aimed at probing attitudes towards foreign investment in Australia.

An overwhelming majority (90%) said they either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ that ‘the government has a responsibility to ensure major Australian companies are kept in majority Australian control’. Showing the strength of this view, a majority (61%) said they ‘strongly agree’ (with 29% saying they ‘agree’). A 14-point difference emerged between male

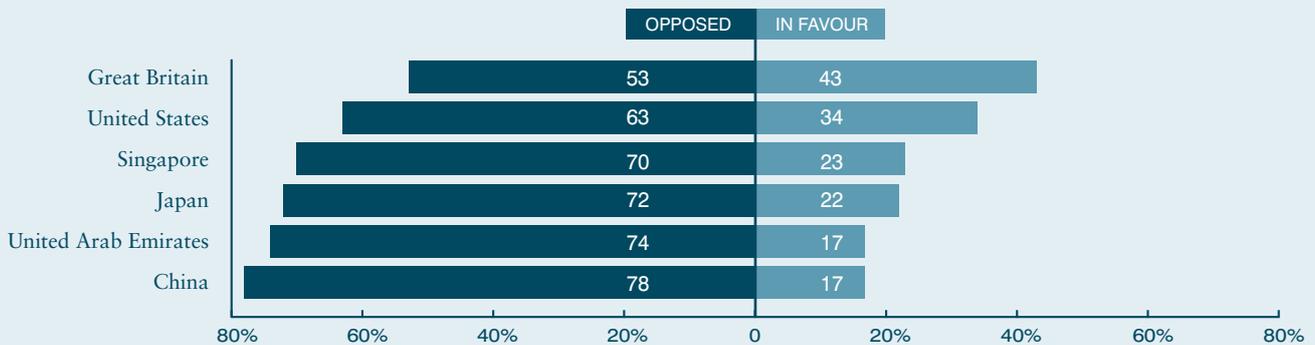
and female respondents: 68% of female respondents said they ‘strongly agree’, while only 54% of male respondents felt the same way.

Australians also distinguished between foreign private investment in Australia and investment by foreign government-controlled companies, widely believing the latter requires stricter regulation. Eighty-five percent of respondents said they either ‘strongly agree’ (49%) or ‘agree’ (36%) that ‘investment in Australia by companies controlled by foreign governments should be more strictly regulated than investment by foreign private investors’.

We asked respondents how they would feel ‘if a company, bank or investment fund controlled by a foreign government was trying to buy a controlling stake in a major Australian company’. A majority were opposed to major investments in Australia by any of the six governments included in our survey.

Fig. 6: Foreign investment in Australia by country

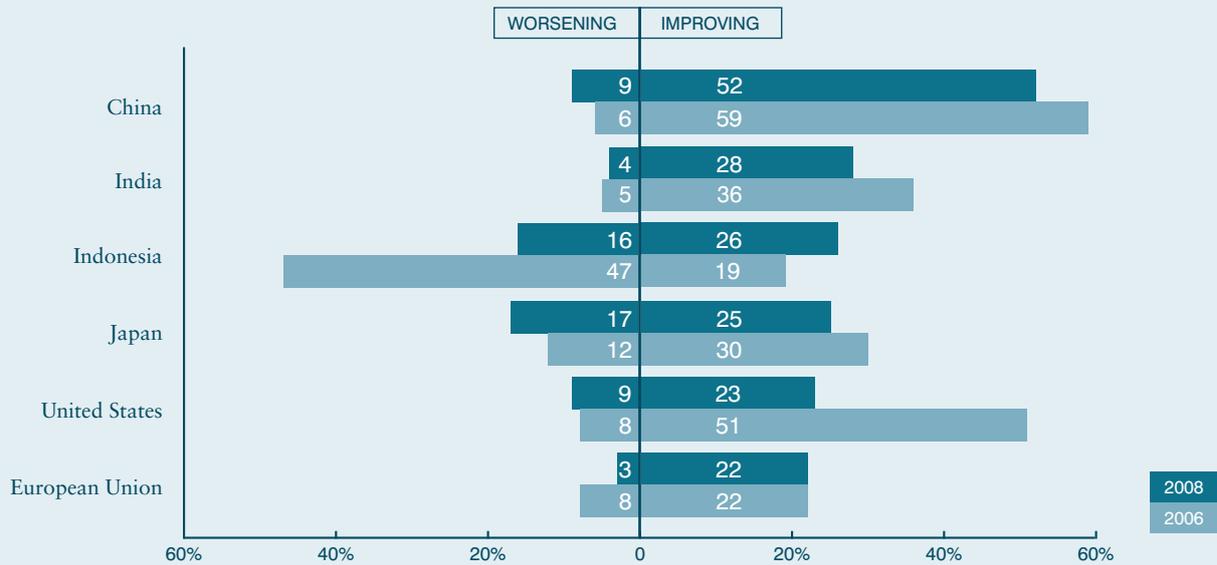
If a company, bank or investment fund controlled by a foreign government was trying to buy a controlling stake in a major Australian company, please say whether you would be strongly in favour, in favour, opposed, strongly opposed or you don’t know, if the foreign government was the government of: *



*This chart combines respondents ‘strongly in favour’ with those ‘in favour’. It also combines respondents ‘strongly opposed’ with those ‘opposed’.

Fig. 7: Changes in Australia’s relationships

In your opinion are relations of Australia with the following countries improving, worsening or staying about the same?



When it comes to potential investment in Australia by companies, banks or investment funds controlled by foreign governments, the least opposition was directed towards those controlled by Great Britain (53% opposed) and the most opposition was directed at those controlled by China (78% opposed). Those controlled by Singapore, Japan and the United Arab Emirates were also opposed, but slightly less so than for China (70%, 72% and 74% respectively). Finally, those controlled by the United States sat somewhere in the middle, with opposition at 63%.

Regional Powers

CHANGES IN AUSTRALIA’S RELATIONS

Looking at the status of Australia’s relations with six powers, most Australians felt they were ‘staying about the same’ rather than ‘improving’ or ‘worsening’. Only in the case of China did a majority (52%) believe relations were ‘improving’ (in 2006, 59% of Australians said relations with China were improving).

The next biggest improvements were seen in relations with India (28% saying they were ‘improving’, down from 36% in 2006) and Indonesia. In Indonesia’s case, 26% said relations were ‘improving’, up from 19% in 2006, while those saying relations were ‘worsening’ dropped from 47% in 2006 to only 16% in 2008. Forty-one percent of respondents aged 18-29 said relations with the

United States were ‘improving’ compared with 23% of respondents overall.

TRUST IN REGIONAL POWERS

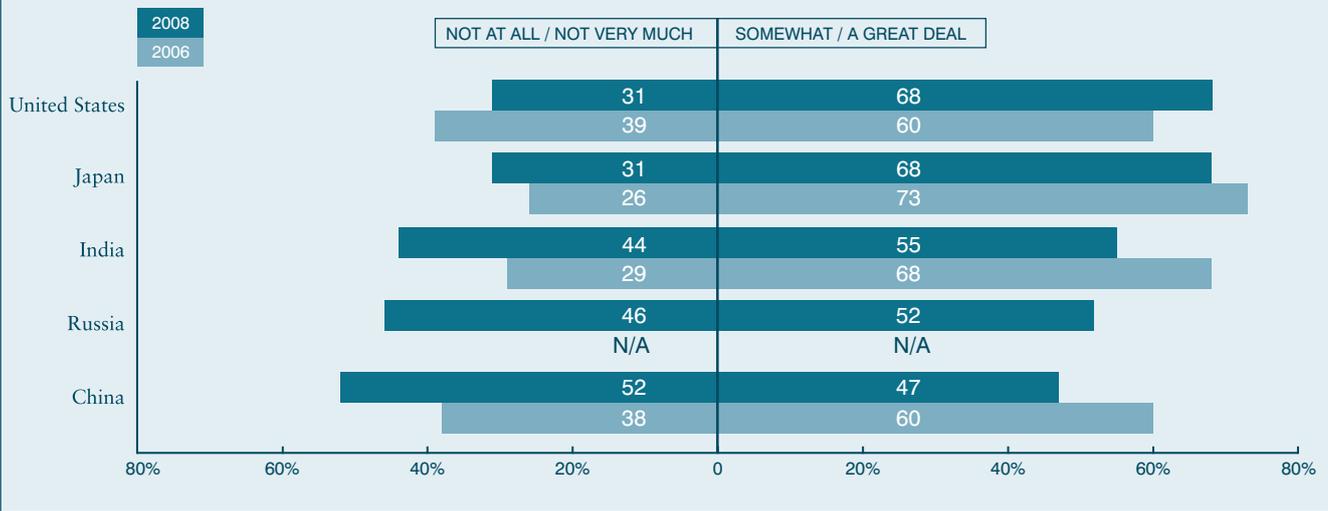
When it comes to how much Australians trust five regional powers to act responsibly in the world, the poll showed the standing of the United States had improved, while that of China and India declined the most since this question was last asked in 2006.

In 2006, in terms of overall trust, the United States ran a near equal last with China (60% trusted both countries ‘a great deal’ or ‘somewhat’, although more trusted the United States ‘a great deal’). In 2008, the United States has jumped to the top ranking (68% trusting it ‘a great deal’ or ‘somewhat’, an eight-point jump since 2006). Japan had an equal rating (68%), but fewer respondents trusted it ‘a great deal’ (15%) compared with the United States (24%). Male respondents were more than twice as likely (21%) to trust Japan ‘a great deal’ than female respondents (9%).

China was trusted the least of the five powers. Only 7% trusted China ‘a great deal’ (the same figure recorded in 2006) and those trusting it ‘somewhat’ fell from 53% to 40% over the period. There was an increase from 11% in 2006 to 21% in 2008 of people saying they did ‘not at all’ trust China to act responsibly in the world. Trust in India

Fig. 8: Trust in other countries to act responsibly

How much do you trust the following countries to act responsibly in the world?



also fell. Those trusting it ‘a great deal’ or ‘somewhat’ fell from 68% in 2006 to 55% in 2008.

CHINA’S RISE

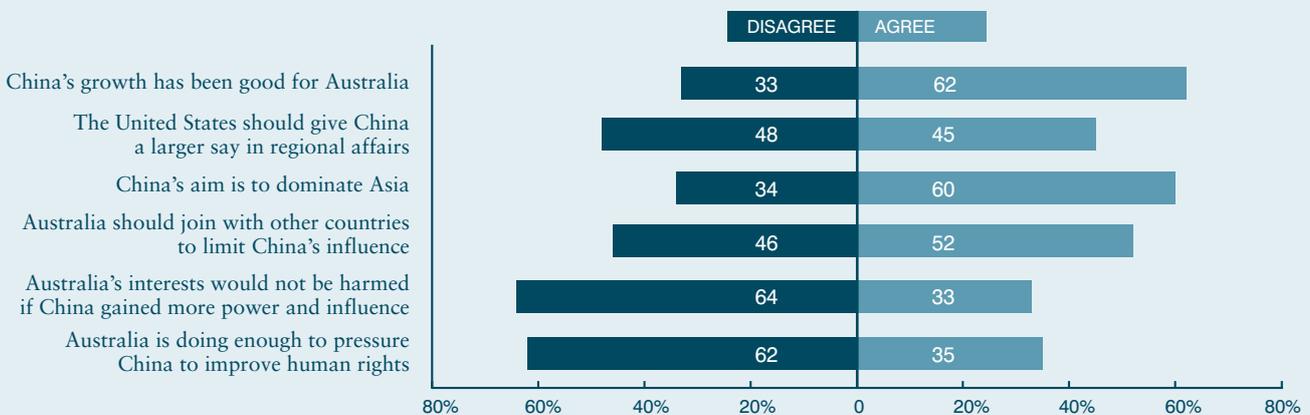
China recently overtook Japan as Australia’s largest trading partner, meaning that for the first time our biggest trading partner is not also a member of the same alliance system. Australia’s relationship with China is a complex one and was further complicated by the controversy over the Chinese Olympic torch relay, the crackdown in Tibet

and the increasing focus on China that came with hosting the Olympic Games. To explore the complexity of this relationship, we asked respondents a series of questions on China.

A majority (62%) of Australians expressed agreement that ‘China’s growth has been good for Australia’, with men more likely to agree with this than women (74% to 51%). Australians appear divided on how to deal with the broader implications of China’s rise. They were divided on

Fig. 9: Attitudes towards China

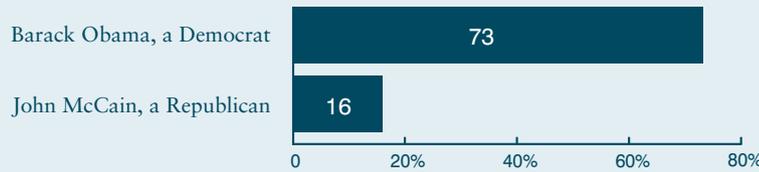
Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements: *



*This chart combines respondents who ‘strongly agree’ with those who ‘agree’. It also combines those who ‘strongly disagree’ with those who ‘disagree’.

Fig. 10: Preferred US presidential candidate

The United States’ presidential election will be held in November this year. Which candidate would you prefer to see become President of the United States?



whether ‘the United States should give China a larger say in regional affairs’ and only a slim majority (52%) agreed that ‘Australia should join with other countries to limit China’s influence’.

Australians were of the clear opinion that ‘China will become the leading power in Asia’, (86% agreeing) and 60% agreed that ‘China’s aim is to dominate Asia’, with women more likely to agree than men (67% to 53%). However, many Australians appear uncomfortable about this. Of those saying China will become the leading power in Asia, 59% said they were ‘somewhat uncomfortable’ (42%) or ‘very uncomfortable’ (17%) about this. Only one third of respondents felt that ‘Australia’s interests would not be harmed if China gained more power and influence’. Women were much more wary than men, with only one fifth agreeing with this proposition.

China’s human rights record also troubled Australians. Sixty-two percent of respondents disagreed that ‘Australia is doing enough to pressure China to improve human rights’.

US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The 2007 Lowy Institute Poll revealed the significance of President George W. Bush and US foreign policies as factors causing Australians to have an unfavourable opinion of the United States. Some of the questions in this year’s poll suggest the image of the United States has improved in Australia, perhaps on the back of the prospect of a new administration and the improving situation in Iraq (and the withdrawal of Australian combat troops).

When it comes to the next administration, Australians are unequivocal about which US presidential candidate they would prefer to see become President of the United States. Barack Obama was favoured by 73% of respondents; John McCain by 16%.

Looking at the impact the election will have, a majority (64%) of Australians were of the view that the outcome of the US presidential election will have either ‘a big

difference’ (19%) or ‘some difference’ (45%) on Australia and our international interests.

However, looking at whether Australians think ‘the US is having a mainly positive or mainly negative influence in the world’, a majority (57%) say its influence is ‘mainly negative’, while only 37% say it is ‘mainly positive’.

International Security

POSSIBLE THREATS

When asked to think about world events, an overwhelming 91% of Australians say they feel ‘safe’ or ‘very safe’. However, Australia is not isolated from global events and to find out which threats worry Australians most we asked respondents to rate a list of 14 ‘possible threats to the vital interest of Australia in the next ten years’. We asked the same question in 2006, allowing us to track some interesting changes.

This year, climate-related threats ousted more traditional threats from the top rankings, despite the fact ‘tackling climate change’ slipped on the list of foreign policy goals (see p. 4). The ‘increasing scarcity of water’ (not asked in 2006) was seen by the largest number of respondents (83%) as a ‘critical threat’. ‘Global warming’ (66%) tied for equal second place with ‘international terrorism’ (which was considered the most critical threat in 2006). Concern over global warming declined with age, with those aged 18-29 more likely than those 60 years or older to say global warming is a ‘critical threat’ (78% to 59%).

Concern over ‘food shortages’ (also not asked in 2006) came in next with 64% of respondents saying this was a ‘critical threat’.

Looking at changes since 2006, the biggest move came from those seeing ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ as a ‘critical threat’ which dropped 12 points from 60% in 2006 to 48% in 2008. Concern over Islamic fundamentalism rose with age, with respondents aged 60 years or over three

times more likely than those aged 18-29 to say 'Islamic fundamentalism' is a 'critical threat' (66% to 22%).

Concern over 'AIDS, avian flu and other potential epidemics' also declined from 58% of respondents ranking it as a 'critical threat' in 2006 to 47% in 2008. The third-biggest change was in the number of Australians identifying 'the development of China as a world power' as a 'critical threat', which jumped from 25% of respondents

in 2006 to 34% in 2008, consistent with concerns over China's rise identified elsewhere in the poll.

Interestingly, female respondents were much more likely than male respondents to identify China's development as a world power as a 'critical threat' (42% to 26%). This difference between the sexes emerged across the poll (albeit not always as pronounced) on questions relating to China, with male respondents more likely to see China

Fig. 11: Threats to Australia's vital interest

I am going to read out a list of possible threats to the vital interest of Australia in the next ten years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all.

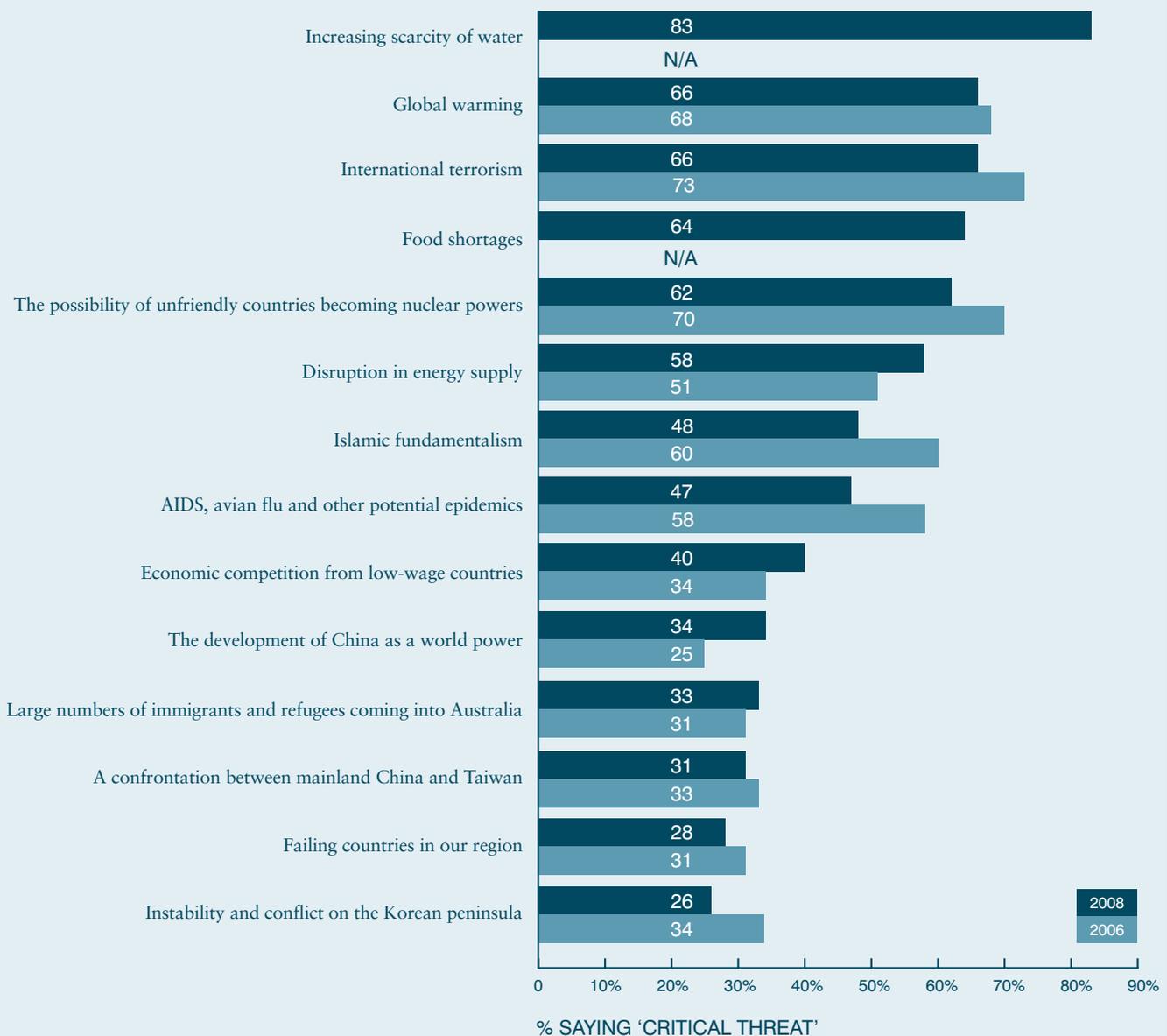
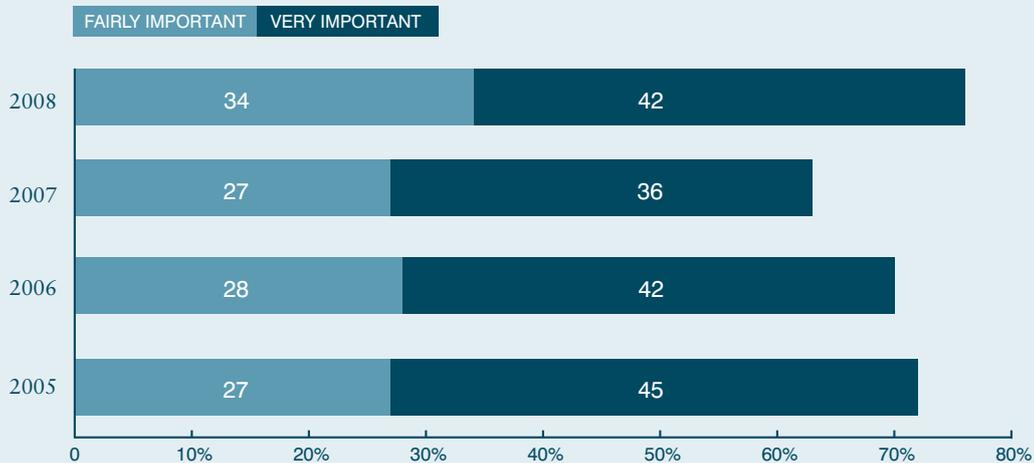


Fig. 12: Importance of the ANZUS alliance

How important is our alliance relationship with the United States for Australia's security?



positively than female respondents. Respondents aged 60 years or over were also more likely than those aged 18-29 to see China's development as a world power as a 'critical threat' (45% to 24%).

Respondents aged 18-29 were less likely than their elders aged 60 years or over to identify a number of other possible threats as critical. When it came to 'the possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers' 54% of 18-29 year olds said it was a 'critical threat' compared with 72% of those 60 years and over. Respondents 60 years or older were twice as likely to identify 'large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into Australia' as a 'critical threat' (46% to 23%). As for 'economic competition from low-wage countries' the gap was more than double with 54% of those 60 years and over saying it was a 'critical threat' compared with 25% of those aged 18-29.

IMPORTANCE OF ANZUS

Since the Lowy Institute Poll began in 2005, we have been measuring Australian attitudes towards the ANZUS alliance. Last year we reported the third consecutive year of gradual decline in the perceived importance of the alliance. This year has witnessed a sharp bounce back with 76% of respondents saying 'our alliance relationship with the United States' is 'very important' or 'fairly important' for Australia's security, compared with only 63% in 2007. By this measure, this is the highest level of support recorded for the alliance since our polling began.

The older respondents were, the more likely they were to identify the alliance as 'very important': 53% of those 60 years or older said this, compared with 29% of respondents 18-29 years old. Men were also more likely than women to believe it was 'very important' (47% to 36%).

MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

Australian combat troops were withdrawn from Iraq in 2008, but a substantial deployment remains in Afghanistan where Australian forces have been involved since 2001.

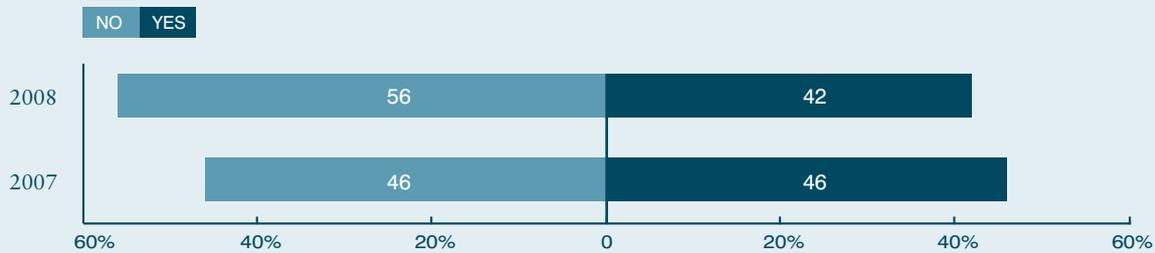
Last year Australians were evenly divided over whether Australia should 'continue to be involved militarily in Afghanistan'. This year a majority (56%) emerged that is opposed to military involvement, with 42% saying we should continue to be involved.

Asked which of four possible reasons for Australian military involvement in Afghanistan most closely reflected their own view, Australians continued to nominate supporting 'the United States under the US alliance' as the most important reason (38%). Next most important was 'to help fight international terrorism' (35%). As in 2007, few believed it was 'to promote Western strategic interests in the region' (10%) or 'to support the democratic government' (17%).

Australians were evenly split over whether we had clear aims in Afghanistan. When it came to rating their confidence in our aims only 50% of respondents said they were 'very confident' or 'confident'; an equal number (49%) said they were 'not confident' or 'not at all confident'.

Fig. 13: Military involvement in Afghanistan

Should Australia continue to be involved militarily in Afghanistan?



There is a correlation between confidence that Australia has clear aims in Afghanistan with support for our military involvement there. Eighty percent of respondents who said they were ‘very confident’ Australia had clear aims in Afghanistan also said Australia should continue to be involved militarily there, while 86% of respondents who said they were ‘not at all confident’ Australia had clear aims also said we should not be involved militarily.

Climate Change

THE IMPORTANCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

In past Lowy Institute polls Australians have identified climate change as one of the most pressing foreign policy challenges. This year climate-related issues topped the list of possible threats to the vital interests of Australia (see p. 10). As well as continuing to track Australian attitudes towards climate change generally, in the 2008 Lowy Institute Poll we also wanted to test the nuances of those attitudes with new questions, including on Australians’ willingness to pay to address the challenge.

Looking at Australian attitudes towards global warming generally, we repeated a question from 2006 that asked respondents to choose one of three options for dealing with the issue.

Once again, easily the most popular option, supported by 60% of respondents, was that ‘global warming is a serious and pressing problem. We should begin taking steps now even if this involves significant costs’. Younger respondents and females were more likely to support this view (71% of 18-29 year olds compared with 48% of those 60 years and older, and 66% of females compared with 53% of males). However, there were signs of some slippage in the urgency with which Australians perceived the problem and their willingness to pay to address it, with support for this position down from 68% in 2006.

The public’s concern over global warming was evident in the finding that just 32% of respondents felt that ‘the problem of global warming should be addressed, but its effects will be gradual, so we can deal with the problem gradually by taking steps that are low in cost’. And

Fig. 14: Options for dealing with global warming

There is a controversy over what the countries of the world, including Australia, should do about the problem of global warming. I’m going to read you three statements. Please tell me which statement comes closest to your own point of view.

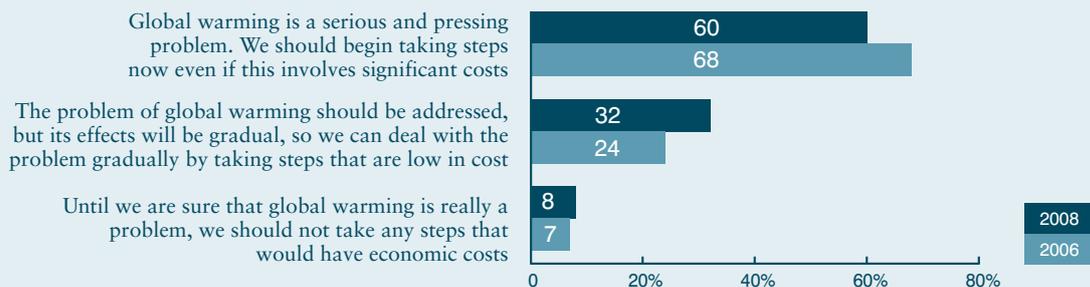
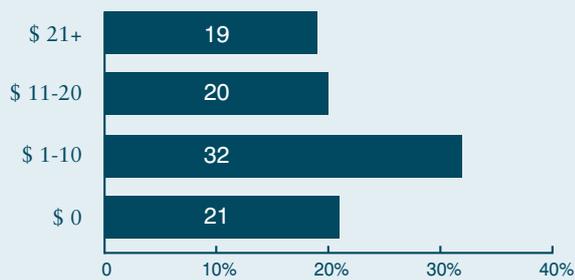


Fig. 15: Willingness to pay to help solve climate change

One suggested way of tackling climate change is to increase the price of electricity. If it helped solve climate change how much extra would you be willing to pay each month on your electricity bill? Please say an amount, rounded off to the nearest ten dollars.



there was almost no support (8%) for the proposition that ‘until we are sure that global warming is really a problem, we should not take any steps that would have economic costs’.

WILLINGNESS TO PAY

Knowing that 60% of Australians agree that to address global warming ‘we should begin taking steps now even if this involves significant costs’ we wanted to test how much Australians were willing to pay.

We asked Australians ‘if it helped solve climate change how much extra would you be willing to pay each month on your electricity bill?’ Overall, 21% of

respondents were not prepared to pay anything extra. Thirty-two percent of respondents were prepared to pay \$10 or less, while 20% were willing to pay \$11 to \$20 and 19% were prepared to pay \$21 or more.

The 60% of people who said ‘we should begin taking steps now even if this involves significant costs’ were on average prepared to pay slightly more, but 13% of these were still not prepared to pay anything extra.

There were notable differences in willingness to pay between older and younger generations. People aged 60 years or older were the least willing to pay to tackle climate change and only 7% were prepared to pay \$21 or more extra per month compared with 31% of respondents aged 18-24.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE KYOTO PROTOCOL

One of the Rudd government’s first acts was to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. To find out how this had influenced Australians’ thinking on climate change we asked respondents to choose which of four statements came closest to their view of what ratification meant.

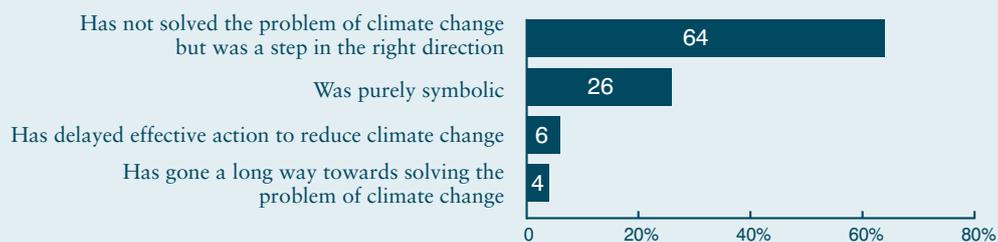
Australians had clear views on the significance of ratifying Kyoto. Nearly two-thirds (64%) said that ratifying Kyoto ‘has not solved the problem of climate change but was a step in the right direction’. A minority (26%) thought it was ‘purely symbolic’ while 6% said it ‘has delayed effective action to reduce climate change’. Only 4% believed ratification ‘has gone a long way towards solving the problem of climate change’.

ABILITY TO DEAL WITH GLOBAL WARMING

We asked respondents how confident they were in the government’s ability to deal with global warming and found Australians were almost equally divided, with a slim majority (51%) saying they were ‘not confident’

Fig. 16: Attitudes towards the Kyoto Protocol

The Australian government recently ratified the Kyoto Protocol. Please say which of the following statements comes closest to your own belief. Australia’s ratification of the Kyoto Protocol:



(35%) or ‘not at all confident’ (16%), but 48% saying they were either ‘very confident’ (6%) or ‘confident’ (42%) in the government’s ability.

URANIUM EXPORTS

Climate change and energy needs have increased interest in nuclear power. As a country with the world’s largest known uranium reserves, Australia is a central player in the global supply of uranium and on the question of whether to sell uranium to countries that have not signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

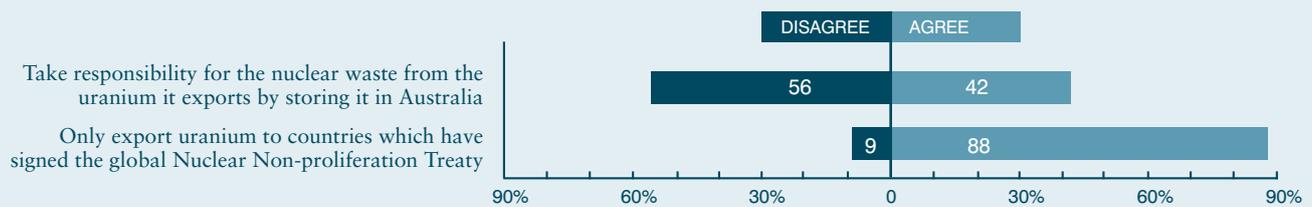
Australians are unequivocal when it comes to exporting uranium. An overwhelming majority (88%) agree we

should ‘only export uranium to countries which have signed the global Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty’. Showing the strength of this feeling, a majority (53%) ‘strongly agree’ with this position.

When it comes to taking responsibility for the waste generated from the uranium we export, Australians were more divided, with a slight majority (56%) disagreeing that Australia should ‘take responsibility for the nuclear waste from the uranium it exports by storing it in Australia’.

Fig. 17: Attitudes towards uranium

Climate change and energy needs have increased international interest in nuclear power and it seems likely that Australia will be exporting more uranium in coming years. Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree that Australia should: *



*This chart combines respondents who ‘strongly agree’ with those who ‘agree’. It also combines those who ‘strongly disagree’ with those who ‘disagree’.

Tables of results

Please note that totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. Slight differences between some of the figures presented here and figures contained in the text that combine responses (e.g. respondents who 'strongly agree' and 'agree') are also the result of rounding.

ECONOMIC OPTIMISM

Overall, how optimistic are you about Australia's economic performance in the world over the next five years?*

	2008	2007	2005
Very optimistic	11%	19%	14%
Optimistic	65%	60.5%	63.5%
Pessimistic	19%	17.5%	18.5%
Very pessimistic	4%	2%	2%
Don't know/unsure	1%	2%	2%

*In 2005 and 2007 a 'neutral' option was included in the response options (in 2005, 21% chose this option and 17% in 2007). For the purpose of backwards comparability respondents choosing the neutral option in previous years have been divided equally and added to the 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' groups.

GLOBALISATION

Do you believe that globalisation, especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world, is mostly good or mostly bad for Australia?

	2008	2006
Mostly good	72%	64%
Mostly bad	23%	28%
Don't know	6%	8%

FEELINGS TOWARDS OTHER COUNTRIES

Please rate your feelings towards some countries, with one hundred meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to one hundred: the higher the number the more favourable your feelings are toward that country. If you have no opinion or have never heard of that country, please say so.*

Country	2008 Mean°	2007 Mean°	2006 Mean°
China	56	56	61
East Timor	56	54	57
Fiji	67	N/A	N/A
France	69	N/A	N/A
Great Britain	77	75	74
India	57	55	62
Indonesia	50	47	50
Iran	38	34	43
Iraq	37	36	44

(Continued over page)

Country	2008 Mean°	2007 Mean°	2006 Mean°
Japan	64	63	64
Pakistan	46	N/A	N/A
Papua New Guinea	60	57	63
Russia	55	N/A	N/A
Singapore	65	64	65
South Korea	50	N/A	56
United Arab Emirates	55	N/A	N/A
United States	64	60	62

*In 2006, this question asked respondents about their feelings towards ‘countries and peoples’.

INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION

As you know, there was a change of government following the Federal election in November last year. Comparing Australia’s international reputation under the previous Howard government with our reputation under the current Rudd government, would you say it has improved, worsened or stayed the same?

Improved	33%
Worsened	17%
Stayed the same	46%
Don’t know	4%

US INFLUENCE ON AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Thinking about how much notice Australia takes of the views of the United States in our foreign policy, on the whole do you think we take too much, too little or the right amount of notice?

	2008	2006	2005
Too much	65%	69%	68%
Too little	3%	3%	2%
The right amount of notice	31%	27%	29%
Don’t know/unsure	1%	2%	1%

FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

Thinking about what Australian foreign policy should be trying to achieve, I am going to read a list of goals, and ask you to tell me how important each one is for Australia. Please say whether you think each issue is very important, fairly important, not very important, not at all important, not very important or not at all important.

Goals	Very important		Fairly important		Not very important		Not at all important		Don't know	
	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007
Protecting the jobs of Australian workers	79%	75%	17%	20%	3%	4%	1%	1%	0%	N/A
Helping to prevent nuclear proliferation	66%	61%	22%	27%	7%	9%	2%	2%	2%	N/A
Combating international terrorism	72%	65%	22%	26%	5%	7%	2%	2%	0%	N/A
Controlling illegal immigration	59%	55%	29%	31%	10%	10%	2%	3%	0%	N/A
Tackling climate change	66%	75%	24%	19%	8%	5%	2%	1%	0%	N/A
Strengthening the Australian economy	70%	60%	27%	35%	2%	4%	0%	1%	0%	N/A
Strengthening the United Nations	46%	46%	40%	38%	11%	13%	3%	3%	1%	N/A
Helping to stabilise weak nations in our region	46%	46%	43%	45%	9%	7%	1%	2%	1%	N/A
Protecting Australian citizens abroad	68%	63%	28%	30%	4%	5%	1%	1%	0%	N/A
Promoting democracy in other countries	30%	29%	43%	41%	21%	24%	6%	6%	1%	N/A

JAPANESE WHALING

Thinking about the Australian government's efforts to stop Japanese whaling, please say which of the following statements comes closest to your own view.

The Australian government should do more to pressure Japan to stop all whaling even if we risk losing valuable trade deals	58%
The Australian government's response is about right	33%
The Australian government should not be involved because we risk jeopardising our commercial relationship with Japan	4%
The Australian government should not be involved because Japanese whaling should not be stopped	3%
Don't know/refused	1%

FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN AUSTRALIA

I am going to read you two statements. Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The government has a responsibility to ensure major Australian companies are kept in majority Australian control	61%	29%	8%	1%	0%
Investment in Australia by companies controlled by foreign governments should be more strictly regulated than investment by foreign private investors	49%	36%	11%	1%	2%

If a company, bank or investment fund controlled by a foreign government was trying to buy a controlling stake in a major Australian company, please say whether you would be strongly in favour, in favour, opposed, strongly opposed or you don't know, if the foreign government was:

	Strongly in favour	In favour	Opposed	Strongly opposed	Don't know
The government of Great Britain	5%	38%	38%	14%	5%
The government of the United States	4%	30%	43%	20%	4%
The government of China	1%	16%	45%	33%	6%
The government of Japan	2%	20%	45%	27%	6%
The government of Singapore	2%	21%	48%	22%	7%
The government of the United Arab Emirates	0%	17%	47%	27%	9%

RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

In your opinion are relations of Australia with the following countries improving, worsening or staying about the same?

	Improving		Worsening		Staying about the same		Don't know	
	2008	2006	2008	2006	2008	2006	2008	2006
United States	23%	51%	9%	8%	67%	40%	1%	1%
China	52%	59%	9%	6%	36%	31%	2%	3%
India	28%	36%	4%	5%	59%	51%	9%	8%
Japan	25%	30%	17%	12%	55%	55%	3%	3%
Indonesia	26%	19%	16%	47%	53%	31%	5%	3%
European Union	22%	22%	3%	8%	63%	61%	12%	8%

TRUST IN OTHER COUNTRIES TO ACT RESPONSIBLY

How much do you trust the following countries to act responsibly in the world?

	Not at all		Not very much		Somewhat		A great deal		Don't know	
	2008	2006	2008	2006	2008	2006	2008	2006	2008	2006
United States	13%	19%	19%	20%	45%	41%	24%	19%	0%	1%
China	21%	11%	30%	27%	40%	53%	7%	7%	1%	2%
India	14%	8%	30%	21%	47%	59%	8%	9%	1%	3%
Japan	10%	7%	21%	19%	53%	54%	15%	19%	1%	1%
Russia	16%	N/A	30%	N/A	46%	N/A	7%	N/A	2%	N/A

ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHINA

Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
China's growth has been good for Australia	13%	50%	27%	6%	4%
The United States should give China a larger say in regional affairs	5%	39%	37%	11%	7%
China's aim is to dominate Asia	20%	40%	28%	6%	6%
Australia should join with other countries to limit China's influence	13%	38%	39%	7%	3%
Australia's interests would not be harmed if China gained more power and influence	4%	29%	46%	18%	3%
Australia is doing enough to pressure China to improve human rights	5%	30%	44%	18%	3%

Please say whether you agree or disagree that China will become the leading power in Asia.

Agree	86%
Disagree	12%
Don't know	3%

[For those agreeing] You think China will become the leading power in Asia. Please say whether you are very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, somewhat uncomfortable or very uncomfortable about this.

Very comfortable	6%
Somewhat comfortable	34%
Somewhat uncomfortable	42%
Very uncomfortable	17%
Don't know	1%

US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The United States' presidential election will be held in November this year. Which candidate would you prefer to see become President of the United States?

John McCain, a Republican	16%
Barack Obama, a Democrat	73%
Refused	11%

What difference do you think the outcome of the US presidential election will have on Australia and our international interests?

A big difference	19%
Some difference	45%
No difference	35%
Don't know	1%

US INFLUENCE IN THE WORLD

Do you think the US is having a mainly positive or mainly negative influence in the world?

Mainly positive	37%
Mainly negative	57%
Depends	1%
Neither positive nor negative/neutral	4%
Don't know/unsure	1%

FEELING OF SAFETY

Thinking about world events, how safe do you feel?

	2008	2007	2006	2005
Very safe	35%	40%	30%	30%
Safe	57%	50%	56%	61%
Unsafe	8%	8%	10%	7%
Very unsafe	1%	1%	3%	1%
Don't know	0%	1%	0%	1%

THREATS TO AUSTRALIA'S VITAL INTEREST

I am going to read out a list of possible threats to the vital interest of Australia in the next ten years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all.

	Critical threat		Important but not critical threat		Not an important threat at all		Don't know	
	2008	2006	2008	2006	2008	2006	2008	2006
The development of China as a world power	34%	25%	46%	52%	19%	22%	1%	1%
Islamic fundamentalism	48%	60%	36%	29%	12%	9%	4%	2%
The possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers	62%	70%	32%	24%	6%	6%	0%	0%
International terrorism	66%	73%	28%	22%	6%	5%	0%	0%
Large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into Australia	33%	31%	46%	44%	21%	24%	0%	1%
Economic competition from low-wage countries	40%	34%	43%	49%	16%	16%	1%	0%
Global warming	66%	68%	26%	26%	8%	5%	0%	1%
AIDS, avian flu and other potential epidemics	47%	58%	43%	36%	9%	6%	0%	0%
Failing countries in our region	28%	31%	54%	52%	14%	14%	3%	3%
Disruption in energy supply	58%	51%	34%	41%	8%	8%	1%	1%
A confrontation between mainland China and Taiwan	31%	33%	45%	44%	20%	18%	4%	5%
Instability and conflict on the Korean peninsula	26%	34%	49%	45%	20%	16%	5%	5%
Food shortages	64%	N/A	25%	N/A	11%	N/A	0%	N/A
Increasing scarcity of water	83%	N/A	16%	N/A	1%	N/A	0%	N/A

IMPORTANCE OF ANZUS

How important is our alliance relationship with the United States for Australia's security?

	2008	2007	2006	2005
Very important	42%	36%	42%	45%
Fairly important	34%	27%	28%	27%
Somewhat important	20%	27%	22%	20%
Not at all important	4%	9%	8%	7%
Don't know/unsure	0%	1%	1%	1%

MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

Should Australia continue to be involved militarily in Afghanistan?

	2008	2007
Yes	42%	46%
No	56%	46%
Don't know	2%	8%
Refused	0%	1%

Thinking about Australia's military involvement in Afghanistan, please say which of the following statements most closely reflects your own view. Australia is involved militarily in Afghanistan...

	2008	2007
To help fight international terrorism	35%	31%
To support the United States under the US alliance	38%	35%
To promote Western strategic interests in the region	10%	9%
To support the democratic government	17%	20%
Don't know	0%	5%

Are you confident that Australia has clear aims in Afghanistan?

Very confident	9%
Confident	41%
Not confident	33%
Not at all confident	16%
Don't know	1%

CROSS-TABULATION OF SUPPORT FOR AUSTRALIA’S CONTINUED MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN BY CONFIDENCE AUSTRALIA HAS CLEAR AIMS IN AFGHANISTAN

Should Australia continue to be involved militarily in Afghanistan?	Are you confident that Australia has clear aims in Afghanistan?				
	Very confident	Confident	Not confident	Not at all confident	Don't know
Yes	80%	58%	28%	14%	18%
No	19%	41%	69%	86%	25%
Don't know	1%	1%	3%	0%	57%

GLOBAL WARMING AND CLIMATE CHANGE

There is a controversy over what the countries of the world, including Australia, should do about the problem of global warming. I'm going to read you three statements. Please tell me which statement comes closest to your own point of view.

	2008	2006
Until we are sure that global warming is really a problem, we should not take any steps that would have economic costs	8%	7%
The problem of global warming should be addressed, but its effects will be gradual, so we can deal with the problem gradually by taking steps that are low in cost	32%	24%
Global warming is a serious and pressing problem. We should begin taking steps now even if this involves significant costs	60%	68%
Don't know	0%	1%

One suggested way of tackling climate change is to increase the price of electricity. If it helped solve climate change how much extra would you be willing to pay each month on your electricity bill? Please say an amount, rounded off to the nearest ten dollars.

Age	Not prepared to pay anything	\$10 or less	\$11 to \$20	\$21 or more	Don't know/refused
18 to 24	12%	23%	18%	31%	15%
25 to 39	23%	26%	26%	22%	4%
40 to 59	21%	32%	17%	22%	8%
60 +	23%	43%	17%	7%	10%
Total	21%	32%	20%	19%	8%

CROSS-TABULATION OF WILLINGNESS TO PAY TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE BY ATTITUDE TOWARDS GLOBAL WARMING

Statement closest to your own point of view on global warming	Willingness to pay to address climate change				
	Not prepared to pay anything	\$10 or less	\$11 to \$20	\$21 or more	Don't know/refused
Until we are sure that global warming is really a problem, we should not take any steps that would have economic costs	62%	16%	8%	11%	4%
The problem of global warming should be addressed, but its effects will be gradual, so we can deal with the problem gradually by taking steps that are low in cost	25%	36%	19%	13%	7%
Global warming is a serious and pressing problem. We should begin taking steps now even if this involves significant costs	13%	33%	22%	24%	9%
Refused	0%	17%	0%	0%	83%

The Australian government recently ratified the Kyoto Protocol. Please say which of the following statements comes closest to your own belief. Australia's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol:

Has gone a long way towards solving the problem of climate change	4%
Has not solved the problem of climate change but was a step in the right direction	64%
Was purely symbolic	26%
Has delayed effective action to reduce climate change	6%

Global warming is seen as an important issue. How confident are you in the government's ability to deal with this issue?

Very confident	6%
Confident	42%
Not confident	35%
Not at all confident	16%
Don't know	1%

ATTITUDES TOWARDS URANIUM

Climate change and energy needs have increased international interest in nuclear power and it seems likely that Australia will be exporting more uranium in coming years. Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree that Australia should:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Take responsibility for the nuclear waste from the uranium it exports by storing it in Australia	12%	30%	24%	32%	2%
Only export uranium to countries which have signed the global Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty	53%	35%	6%	3%	2%

About the Lowy Institute Poll

This Lowy Institute Poll was conducted in Australia in July 2008. A number of the questions in the Poll were first asked in 2005, 2006 or 2007, or have been adapted from questions asked in those years. Repeating questions in successive years allows us to compare public opinion on a single issue through time, building valuable trend data on important international policy issues.

Some of our questions this year are identical to questions asked previously by other survey organisations such as the Chicago Council on Global Affairs which has allowed for the comparison of public opinion internationally. This year we have again participated in WorldPublicOpinion.org's global survey. The complete survey results for all Lowy Institute Polls are deposited with the Australian Social Science Data Archive.

Methodology

For this opinion poll, Field Works Market Research conducted 1001 interviews between 12 and 27 July 2008. Survey interviews were conducted by telephone. The sample was designed to be nationally representative of all Australians 18 years and older. Quotas were set for each state and territory, with broad age-group and gender quotas. Within each geographic area, telephone numbers were selected using random digit dialling.

Interviewers continued making calls until each quota was filled. The results were then weighted to reflect the demographic profile of the Australian population of voting age, using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. These weights were used in the production of all the tables for this report.

All sample surveys have a 'standard error', or margin of error around their estimates. The size of this error depends on a number of factors, one of the most important being the sample size. For the Lowy Institute Poll, with its sample of just over one thousand, the margin of error is about 3% when the full sample is being analysed. The confidence level for this margin of error is 95%, which means that if the Poll were repeated 20 times, then in 19 times out of 20, the true population estimate would lie within plus or minus 3% of the estimate given by this particular sample. It should be kept in mind that for smaller sub-groups, the margin of error can be much higher. In addition, the margin of error also varies for different items in the survey, with those showing greater variability having larger standard errors.

Acknowledgements

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The Poll was funded entirely by the Lowy Institute for International Policy. It is overseen by the Institute's Executive Director, Allan Gyngell, and was managed in 2008 by Fergus Hanson.