

2024 EAI Public Opinion Poll on East Asia: Overall Perception, United States, China, North Korea



East Asia Institute

Survey Overview

	2023 Korean Survey	2024 Korean Survey
Population	Adults aged 18 and older	Adults aged 18 and older
Sampling frame	-	Hankook Research Politics and Society Panel (49,889 people)
Sampling method	Proportional selection by region, gender, and age (as of July 2023)	Proportional selection by region, gender, and age (as of July 2024)
Sample size	1,008	1,006
Survey method	Face-to-face Interviews (Personal Interview: PI)	Web survey
Response rate	-	31.2% (among 3,220 people who requested, 1,006 people completed the survey)
Survey date	2023. 8. 25. ~ 2023. 9. 13.	2024. 8. 26. ~ 2024. 8. 28.
Survey Agency	Hankook Research Co. Ltd.	Hankook Research Co. Ltd.
Composition of Respondents	[Gender] Male 49.8%; Female 50.2% [Age] Under 20: 1.4% 20 to 29: 14.9% 30 to 39: 14.7% 40 to 49: 18.0% 50 to 59: 19.9% Over 60: 31.2%	[Gender] Male 49.5%; Female 50.5% [Age] Under 20: 1.4% 20 to 29: 12.5% 30 to 39: 14.8% 40 to 49: 18.8% 50 to 59: 20.3% Over 60: 32.2%

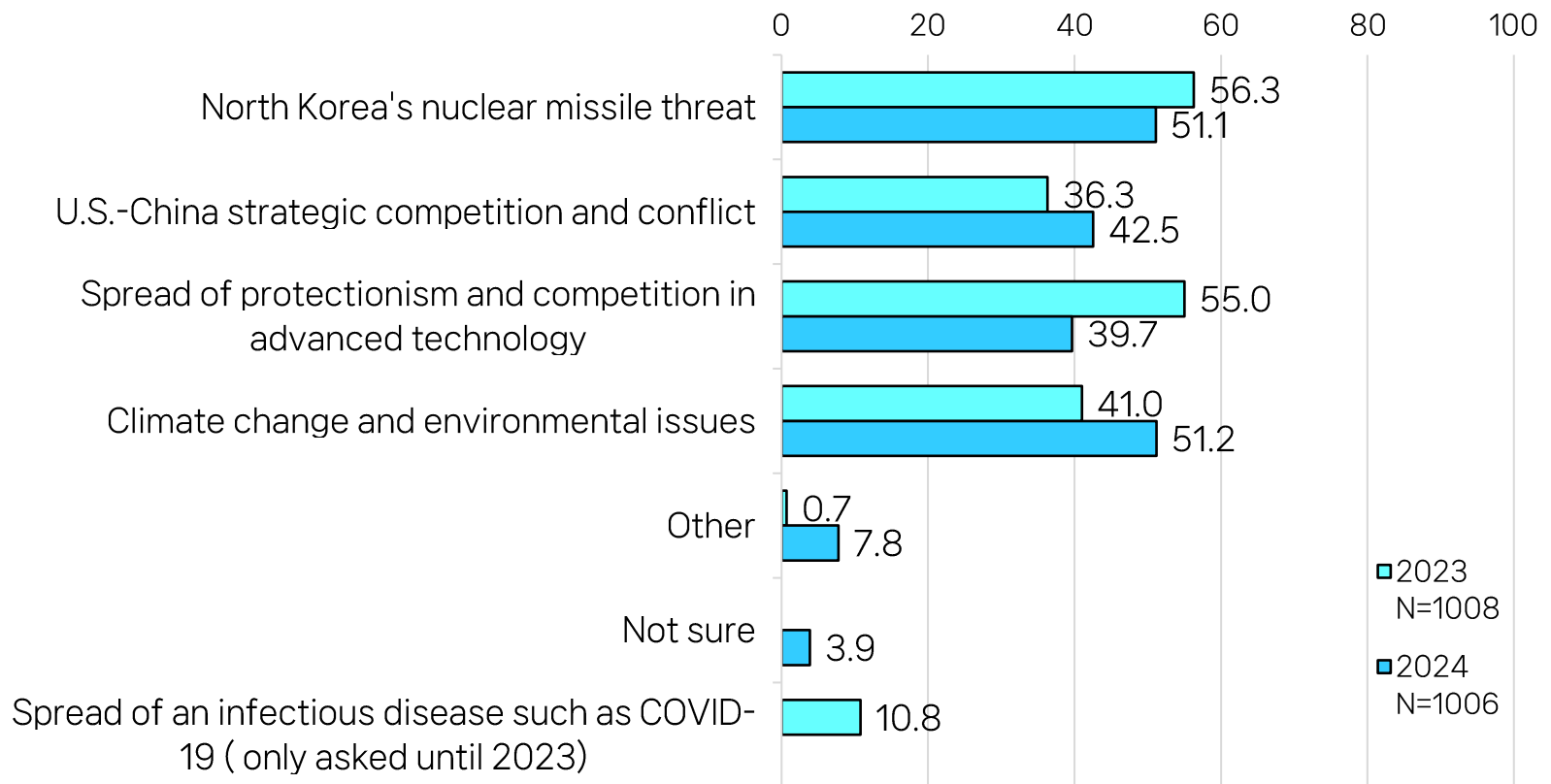
General Perception of External Affairs

South Korea's Greatest Threats, 'Climate Change' and 'North Korean Threat' Tied

- When asked about the greatest threat facing South Korea (up to two choices), "Climate change and environmental issues" ranked first at 51.2%, followed closely by "North Korea's nuclear and missile threat" at 51.1%. The percentage of respondents who selected climate change as one of their top two choices increased by 10.2 percentage points from 41.0% in 2023 to 51.2% in 2024. This increase can be interpreted as a result of more people perceiving real, tangible changes such as abnormal weather and heatwaves as threats.
- When asked about the most important diplomatic relations for South Korea (up to two choices allowed, the ROK-U.S. relationship overwhelmingly ranked at first at 75.1%, while inter-Korean relations ranked second at 52.6%, marking an 11.8 percentage point increase from 40.8% in the previous year. Meanwhile, ROK-China relationship was selected by 32.8%, showing a reverse trend with a 15.3 percentage point decrease from 48.1% in the previous year.
- Regarding which countries pose a military threat to South Korea (multiple answers allowed), North Korea ranked highest at 87.4%, followed by China at 63.7%, Russia at 44.8%, and Japan at 37.7%. The number of respondents identifying Russia as a military threat significantly increased from the previous year (19.9% → 44.8%).
- As for the future of South Korea, 54.0% of respondents expressed a pessimistic outlook, while only 32.1% held an optimistic view. The pessimistic outlook increased by 15.7 percentage points from 2023 (38.3%), while the optimistic outlook decreased by 19.8 percentage points from 2023 (51.9%).

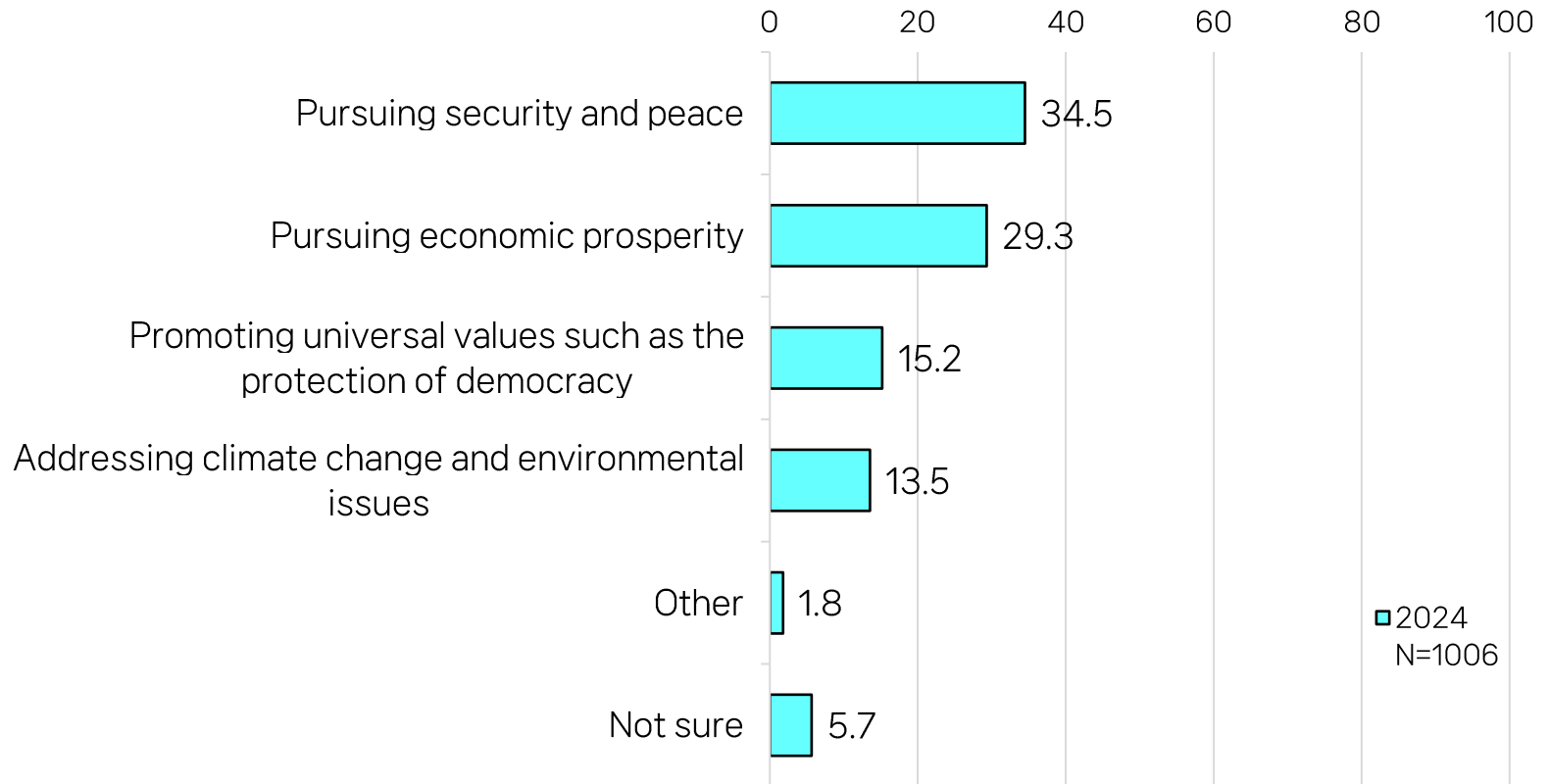
Threat to South Korea

Q1. What do you think are the biggest threats facing South Korea? [Up to 2 responses] (%)



Foreign Policy Priority

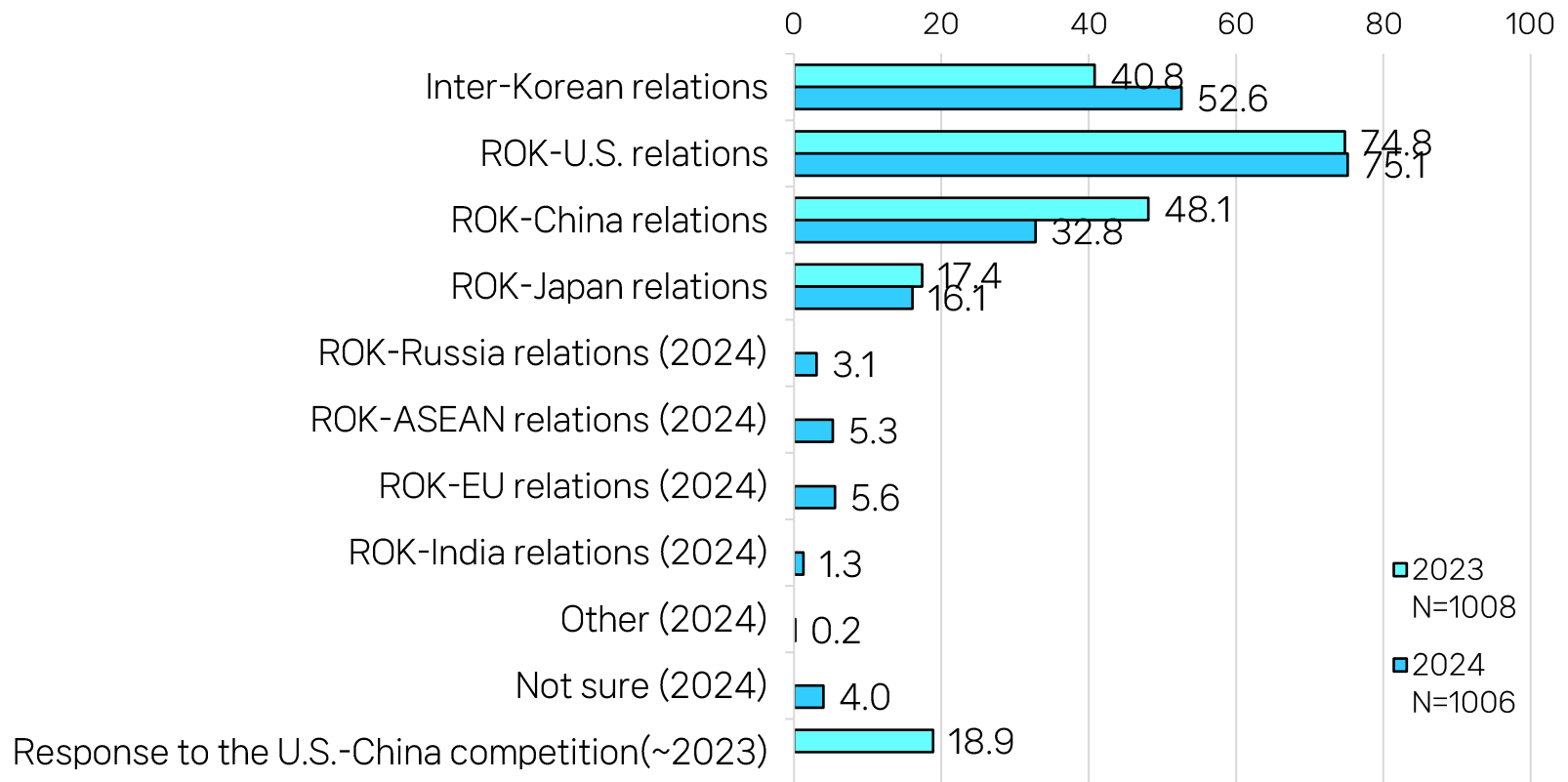
Q2. What should be the government's highest priority in its foreign policy efforts? (%)



Key Diplomatic Relations

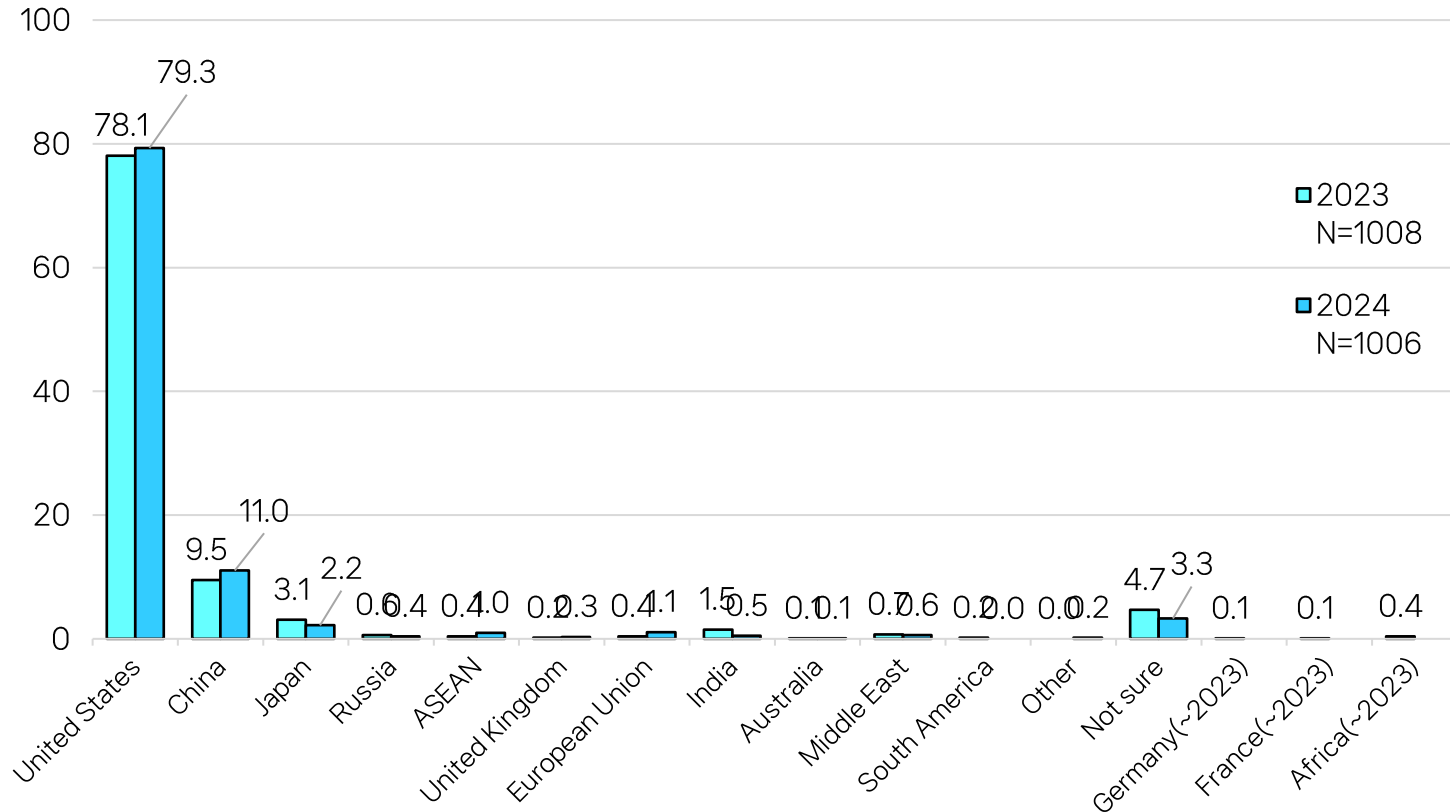
Q3. What do you think are the most important diplomatic relations for South Korea?
[Up to 2 responses]

(%)



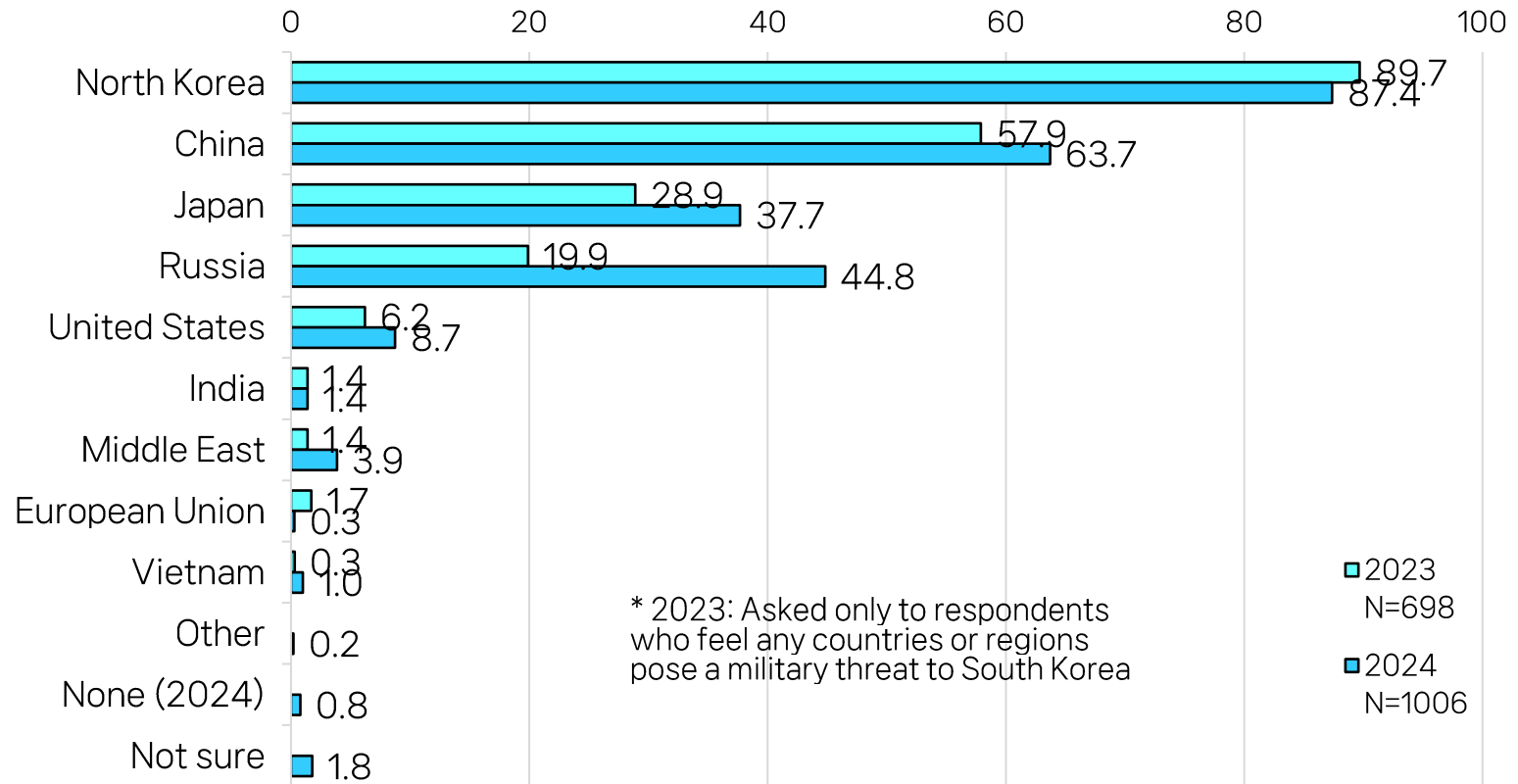
Future Key Relationships

Q4. Looking ahead, which country or region do you believe will hold the most significant relationship with South Korea? (%)



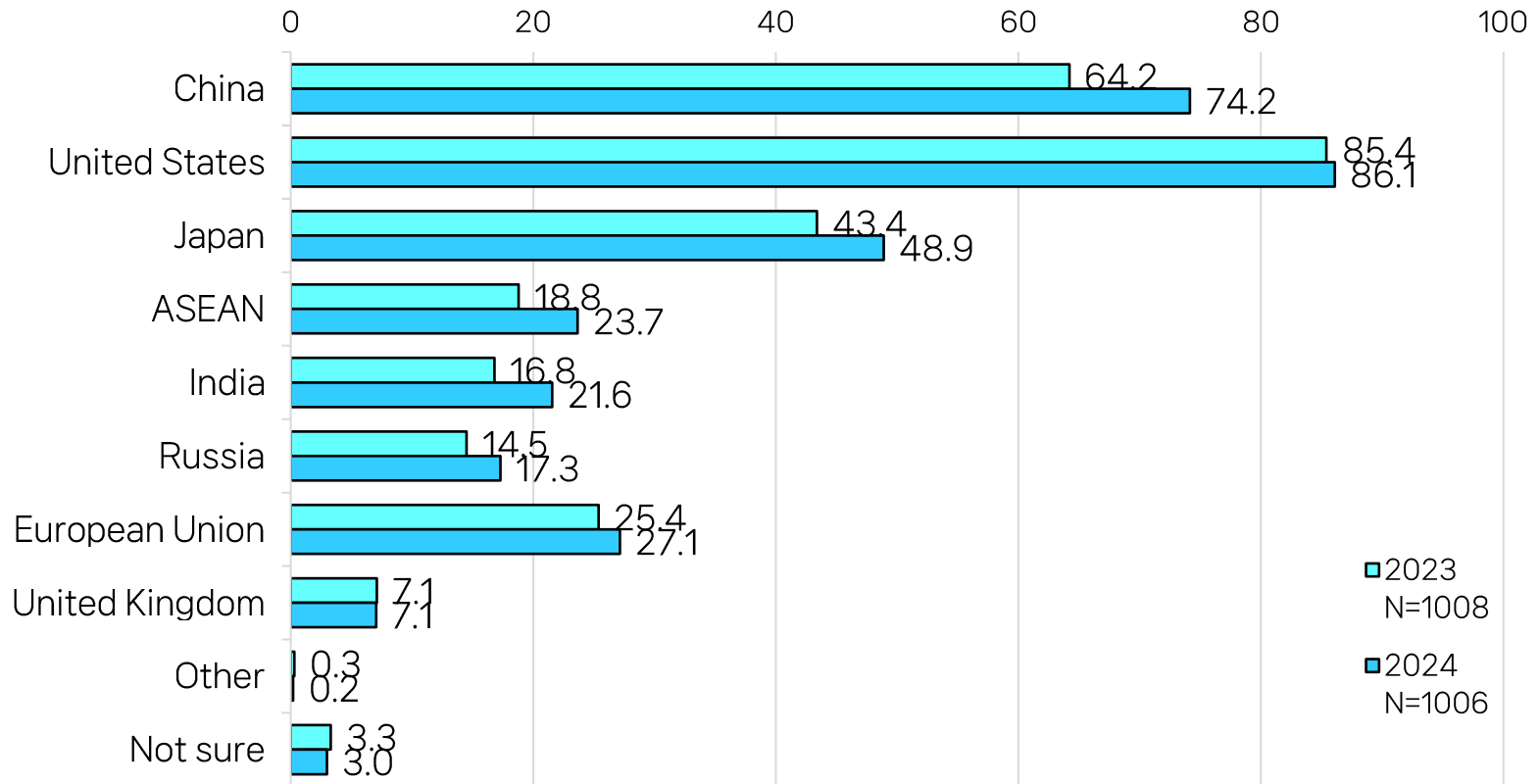
Perceived Military Threat by Country or Region

Q5. Which countries or regions do you perceive as potential military threat to South Korea?
[Select all that apply] (%)



Economically Important Country or Region

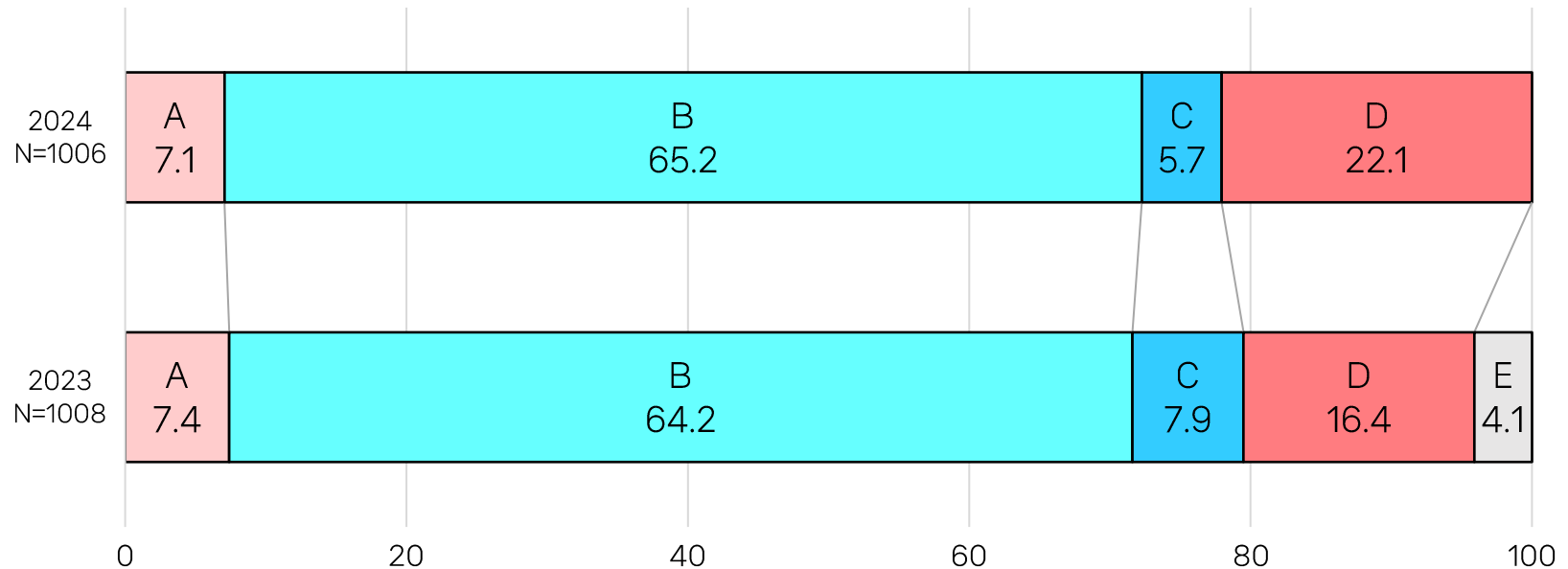
Q6. Which countries or regions do you consider particularly important for South Korea in terms of economic relations? [Select all that apply] (%)



Relative Feeling of Affinity: China vs. U.S.

Q7. Which country do you feel more affinity: China or the United States?

(%)

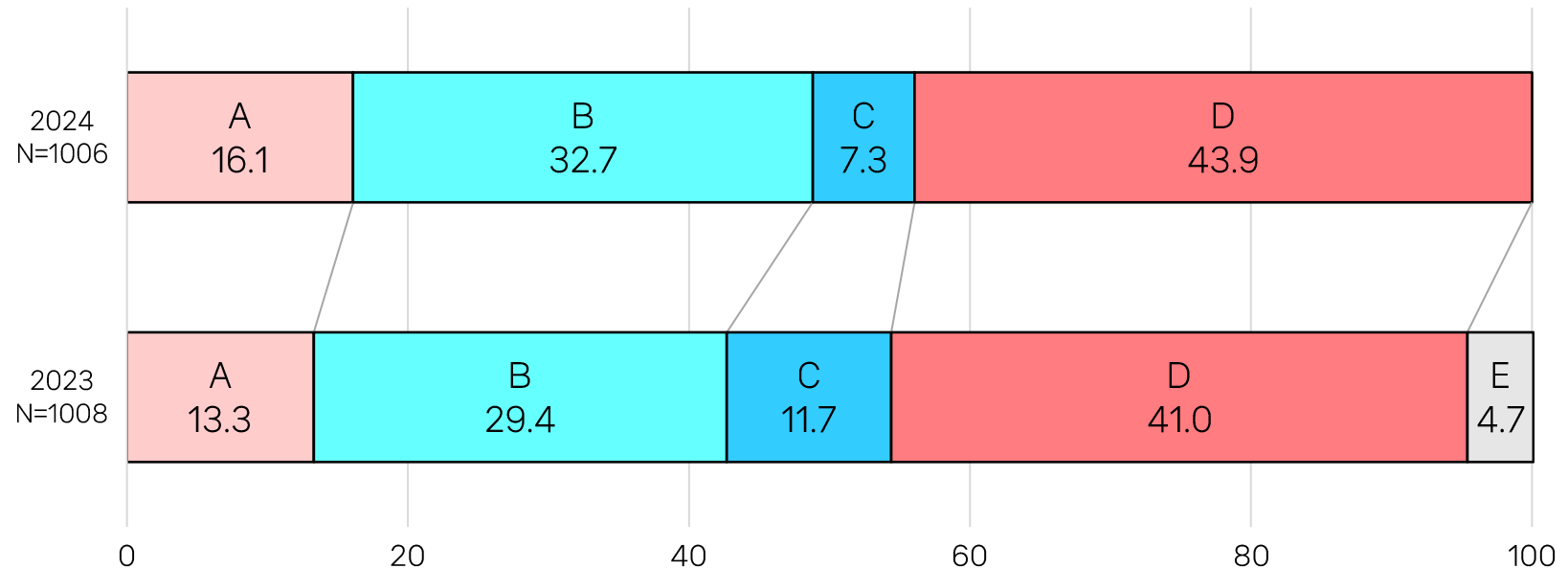


A	B	C	D	E
More affinity towards China	More affinity towards the United States	Equal affinity to both	Affinity for neither	Not sure (2023 only)

Relative Feeling of Affinity: China vs. Japan

Q7. Which country do you feel more affinity: China or Japan?

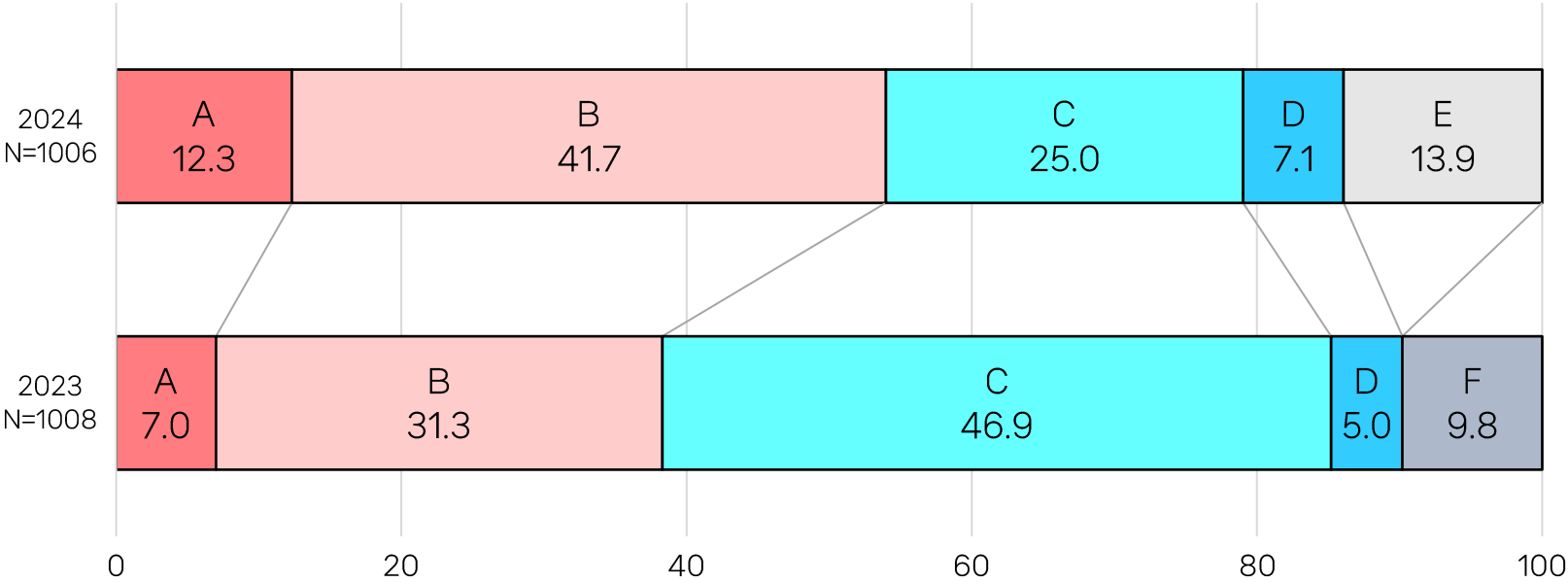
(%)



A	B	C	D	E
More affinity towards China	More affinity towards Japan	Equal affinity to both	Affinity for neither	Not sure (2023 only)

Prediction of the Future of South Korea

Q8. What do you think about the future of South Korea? (%)



A	B	C	D	E	F
Pessimistic	Somewhat pessimistic	Somewhat optimistic	Optimistic	Neither (2024 only)	Not sure (2023 only)

Perception of the U.S. and ROK-U.S. Relations

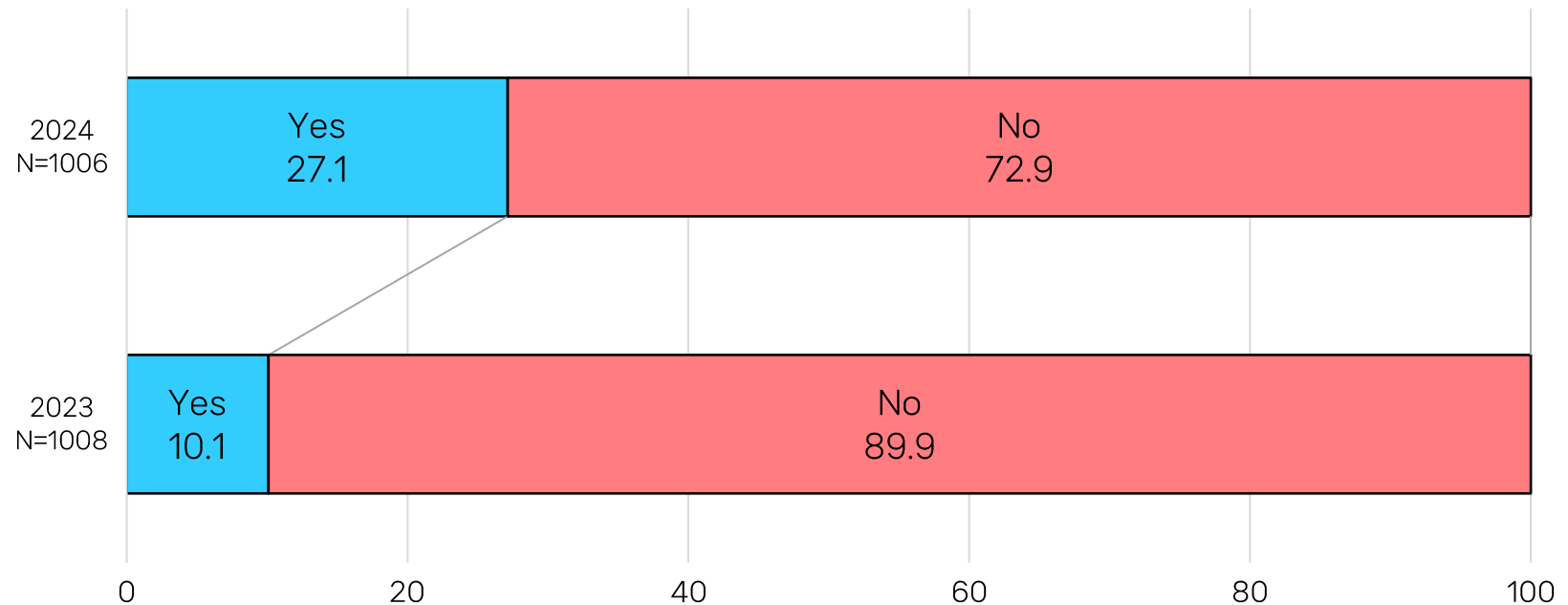
Positive Impressions Driven by “Economic Opportunities” and “Shared Values”

- 71.7% of respondents had a "good impression" or "mostly good impression" of the United States. The reasons for the positive impression included "economic opportunities in the U.S. market" (47.6%) and "because the U.S. is a liberal democracy" (44.0%) (up to two responses allowed).
- On the other hand, respondents with a negative impression cited reasons such as "America-first policies and unilateral attitude" (59.4%) and "issues within U.S. society, such as racism, gun violence, and drug problems" (50.0%) (up to two responses allowed).
- Regarding President Biden, 50.9% of respondents had a positive impression of him, whereas 71.3% had a negative impression of former President Trump.
- When asked to assess the current U.S.-South Korea relations and their outlook for the future, the majority provided moderate responses: "average" (56.9%) for the current state and "it will stay the same" (63.3%) for future prospects. Optimistic views on both the current relationship and its future improvement dropped by more than 20 percentage points compared to 2023.
- Although trust in the U.S. as a reliable country fell by 12 percentage points from 2022 (85.1% → 73.1%), it remained high. The perception of the U.S.-South Korea economic relationship as complementary increased by 12.9 percentage points from 2023 (50.8% → 63.7%).

Experience of Visiting the United States

Q9. Have you ever visited the United States?

(%)

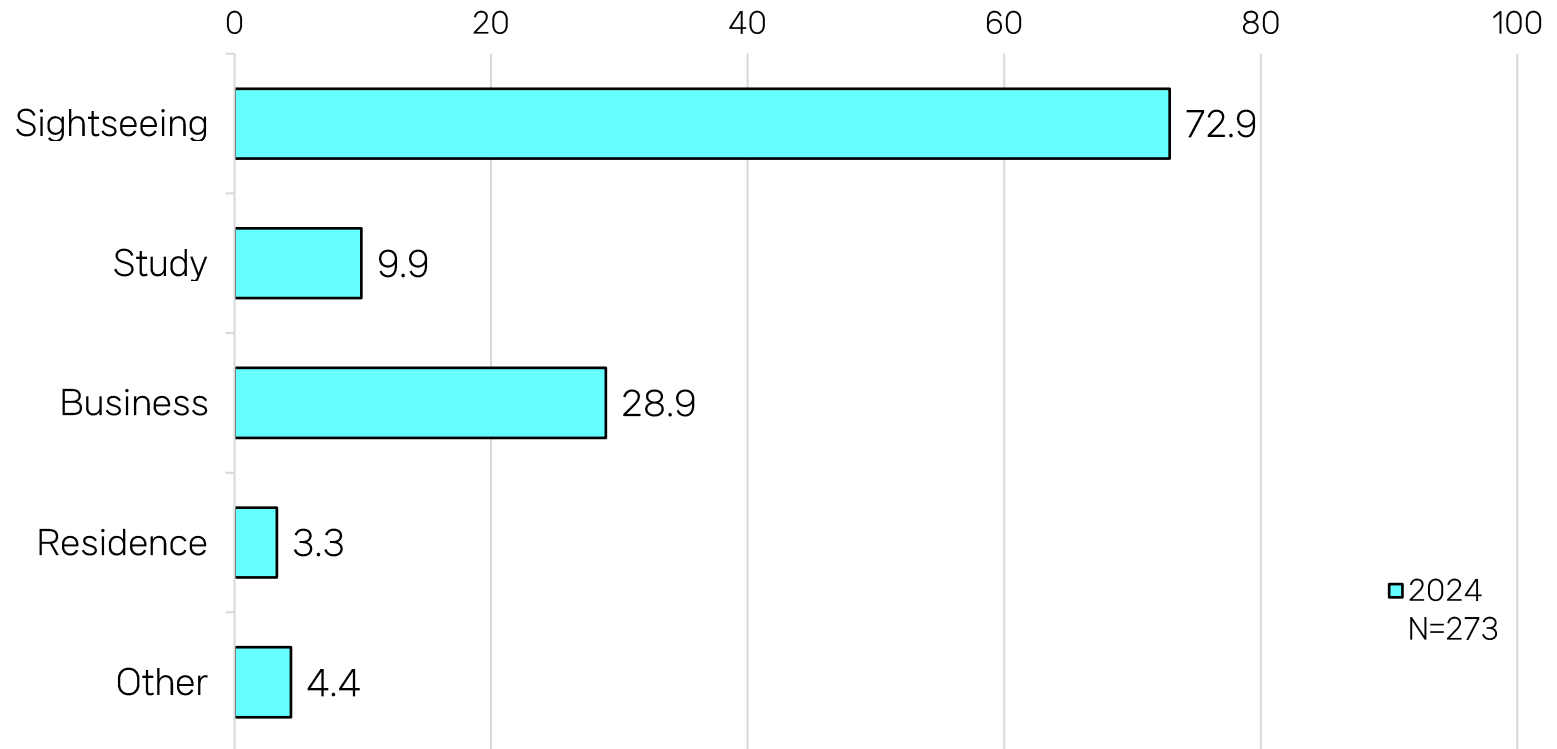


Purpose of Visiting the United States

Q9-a. (Only those who answered "yes" in Q9)

What was the purpose of visiting the United States? [Multiple responses]

(%)

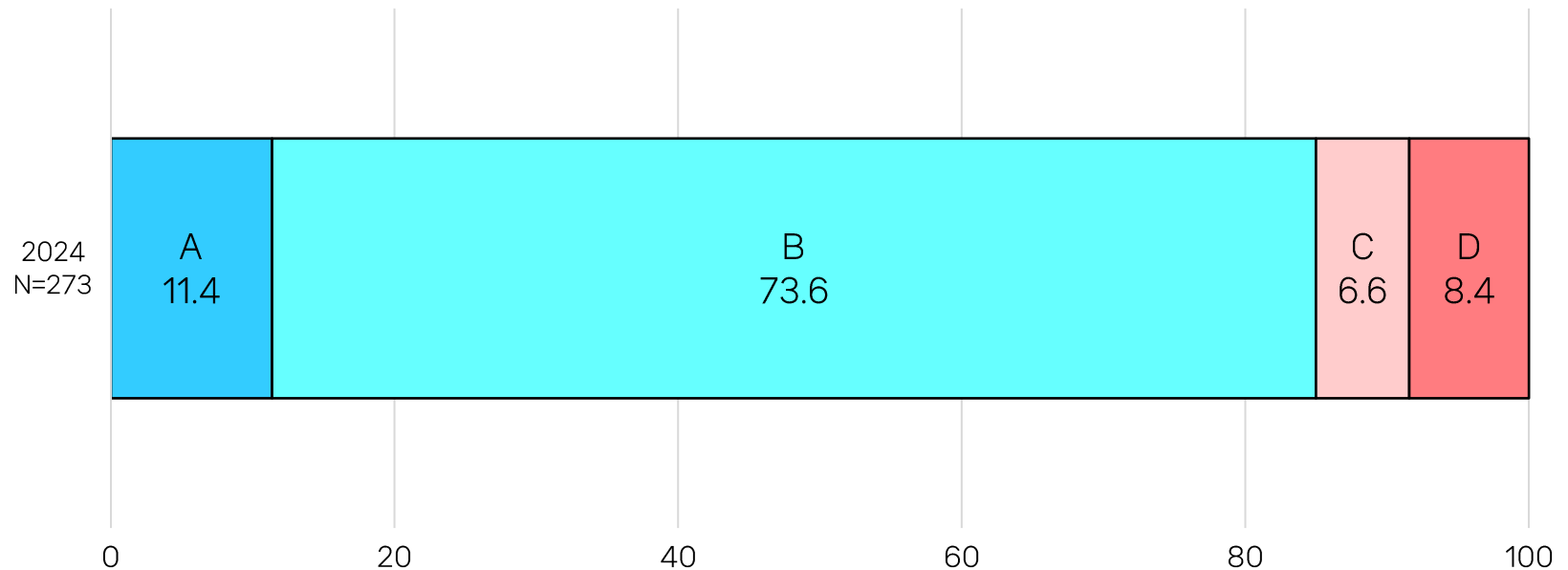


Perception Change after Visiting the U.S.

Q9-b. (Only those who answered "yes" in Q9)

Has your perception of the United States changed following your visit?

(%)

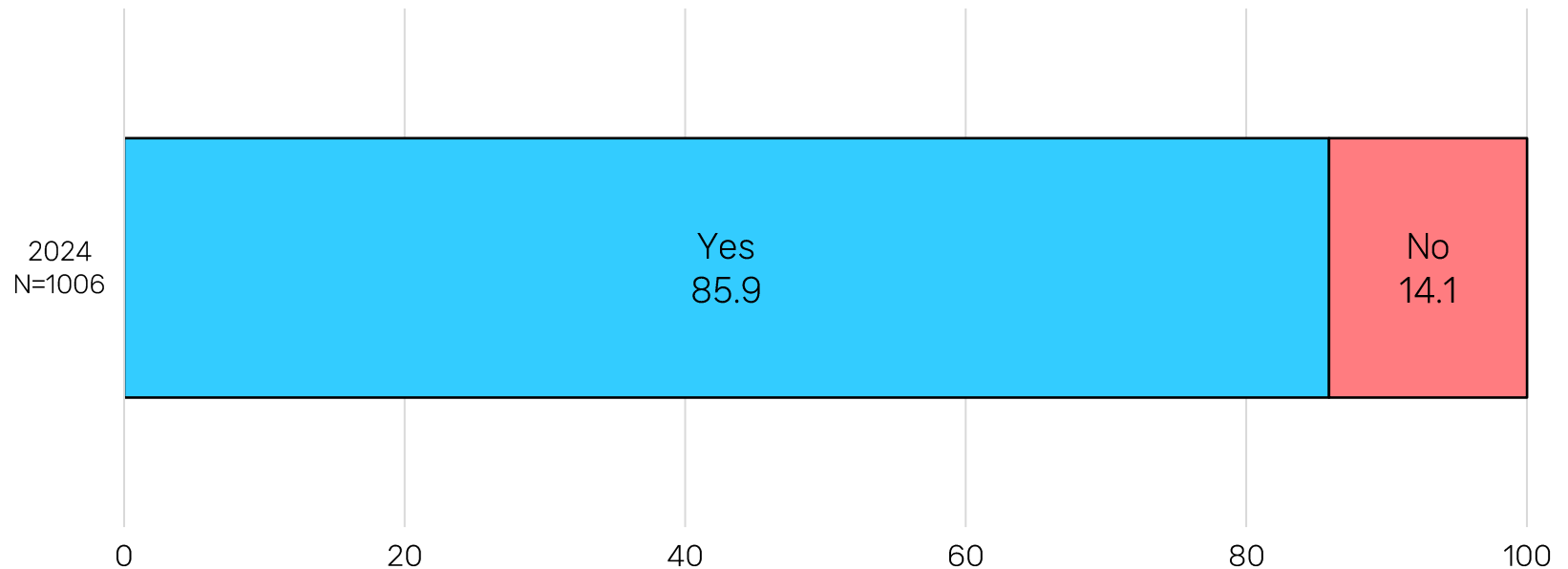


A	B	C	D
Became more favorable	Remained favorable	Remained unfavorable	Became more unfavorable

Expectations to Visit the United States

Q10. Would you like to visit the United States if you had the chance?

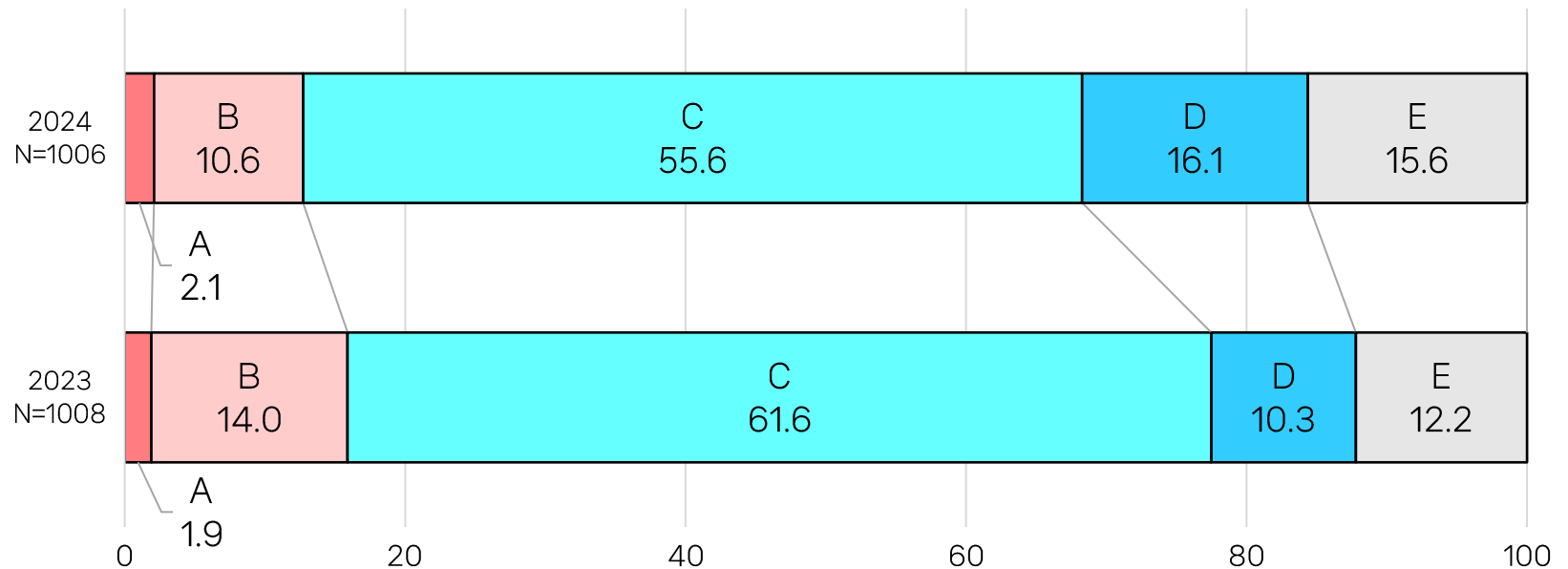
(%)



Impression of the United States

Q11. What is your impression of the United States?

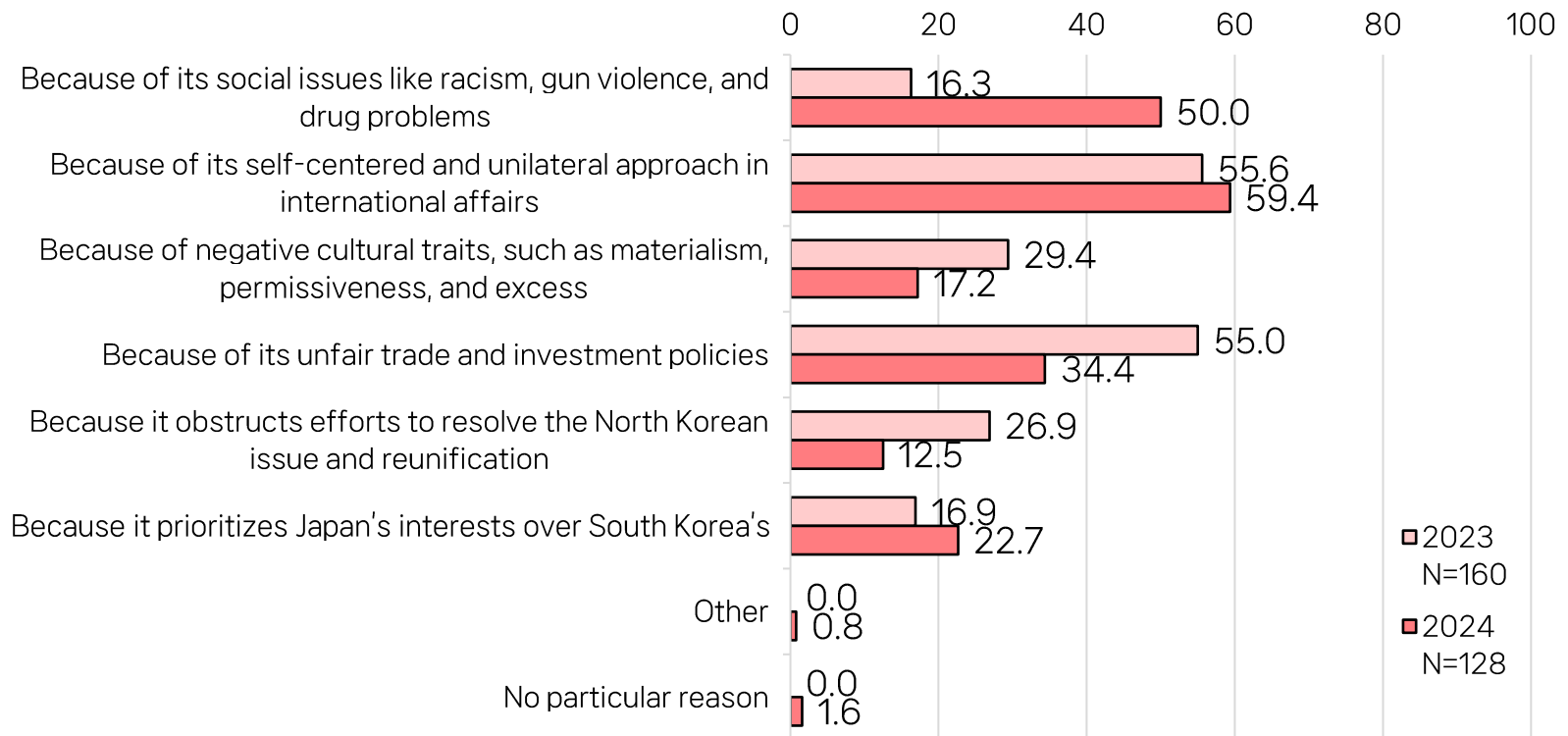
(%)



A	B	C	D	E
Unfavorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Somewhat favorable	Favorable	Neither

Reasons for Unfavorable Impressions

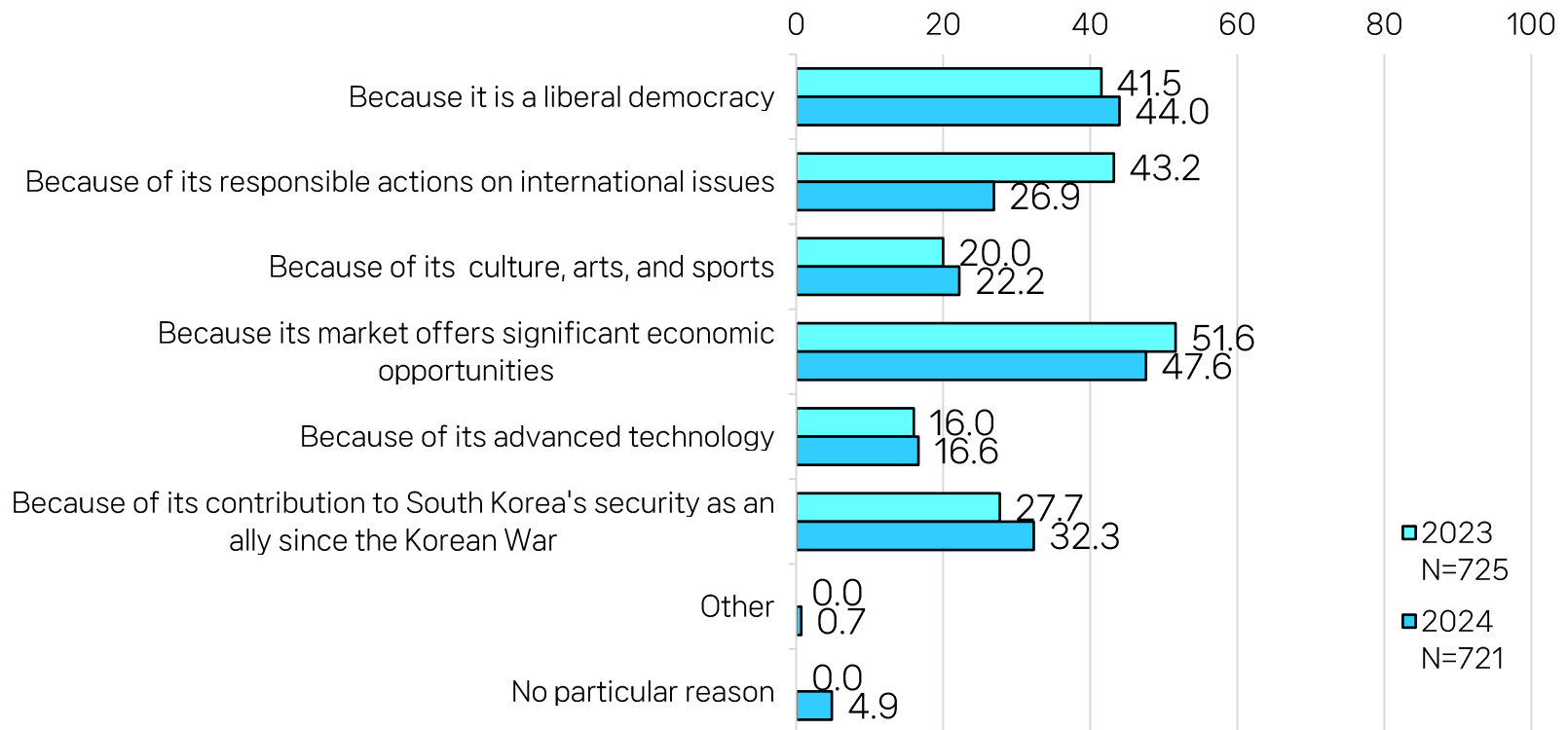
Q11-a. (Only those who answered “unfavorable” or “somewhat unfavorable” in Q11)
Why do you have an unfavorable impression of the United States? [Up to 2 responses] (%)



Reasons for Favorable Impressions

Q11-b. (Only those who answered "favorable" or "somewhat favorable" in Q11)
Why do you have a favorable impression of the United States? [Up to 2 responses]

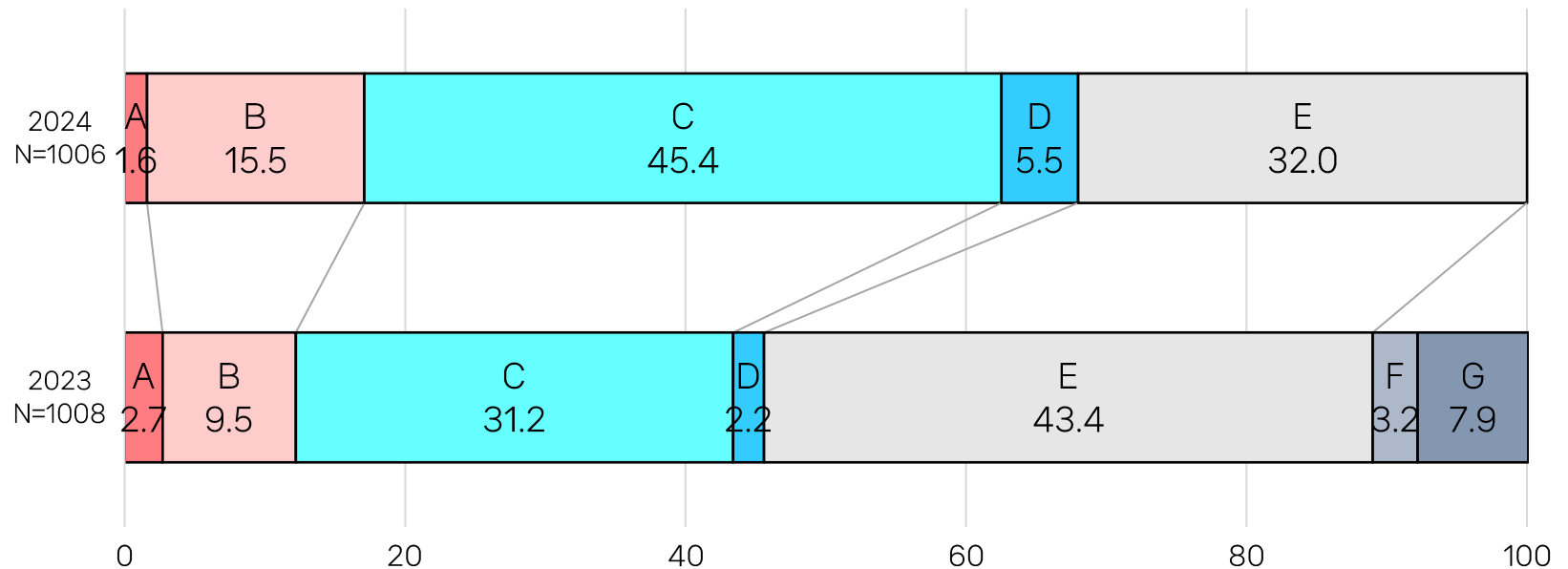
(%)



Impression of President Biden

Q12. What is your impression of Joe Biden, President of the United States?

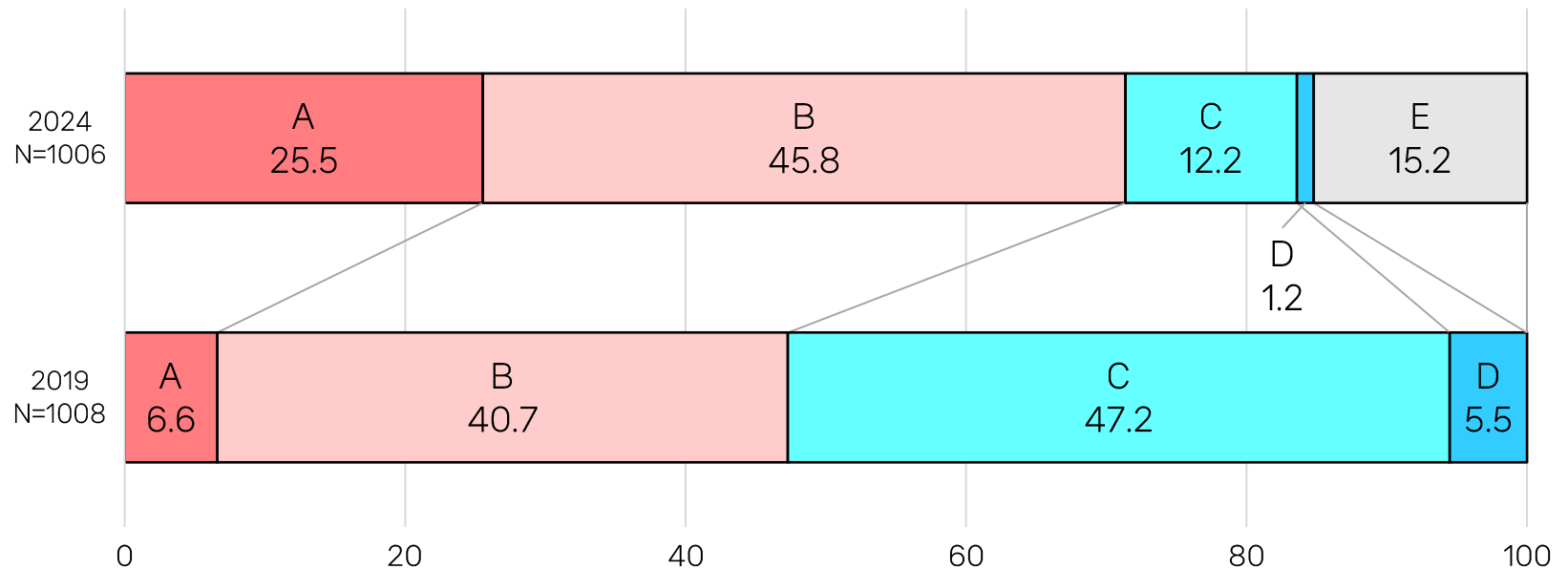
(%)



A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Very bad	Somewhat bad	Somewhat good	Very good	Neither	Not sure (2023 only)	Indifferent (2023 only)

Impression of Former President Trump

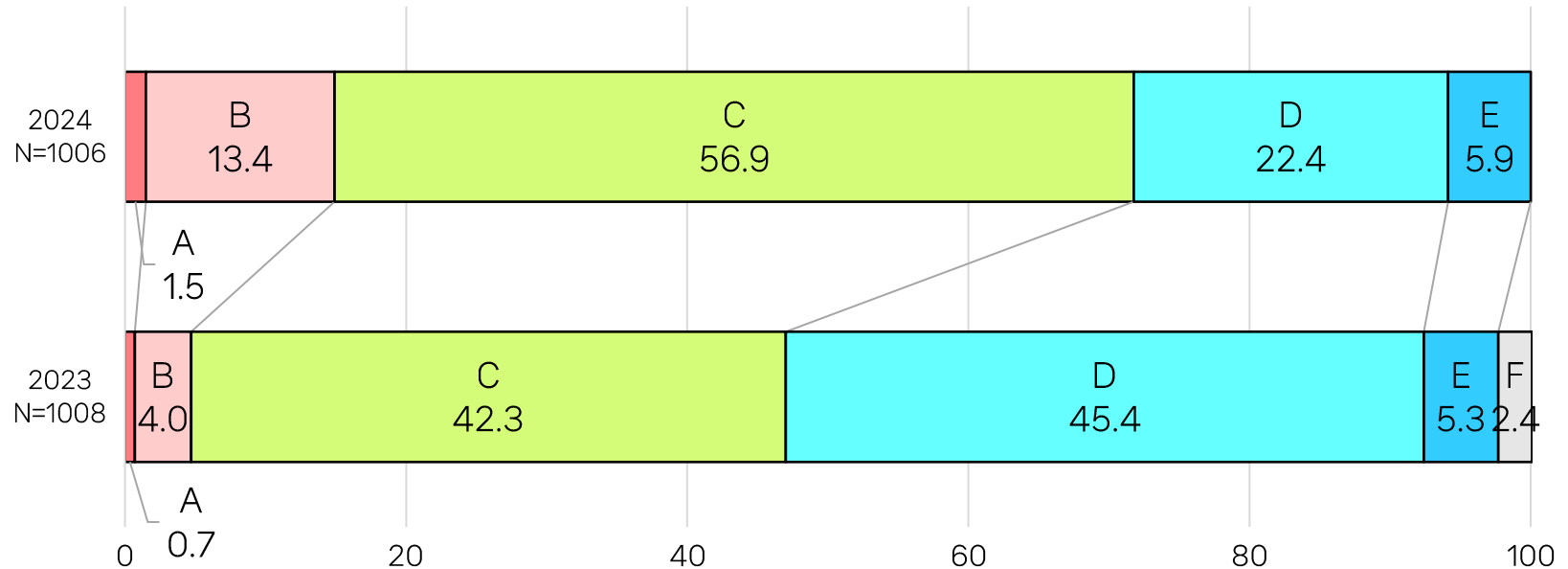
Q13. What is your impression of Donald Trump, former President of the United States? (%)



A	B	C	D	E
Very bad	Somewhat bad	Somewhat good	Very good	Neither

Current ROK-U.S. Relations

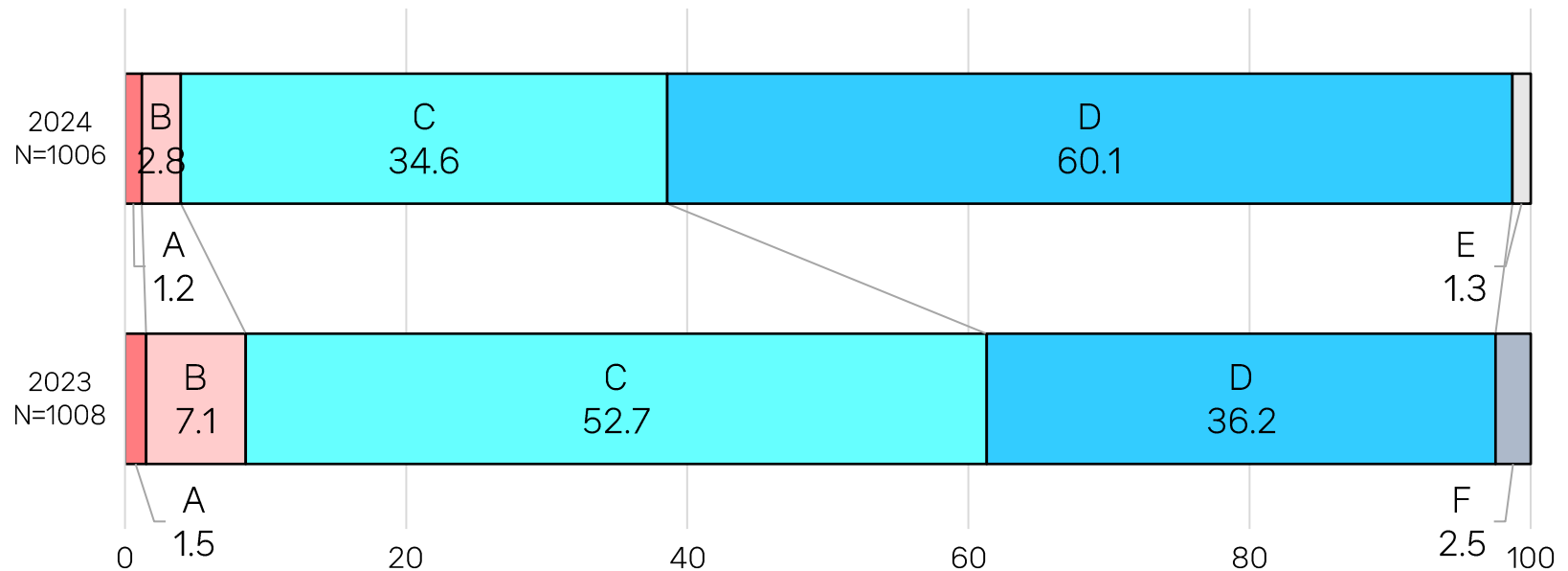
Q14. What do you think current relations between South Korea and the U.S. are like? (%)



A	B	C	D	E	F
Very bad	Somewhat bad	Fair	Somewhat good	Very good	Not sure (2023 only)

Importance of the ROK-U.S. Relations

Q15. Do you think the ROK-U.S. relations are currently important to South Korea? (%)

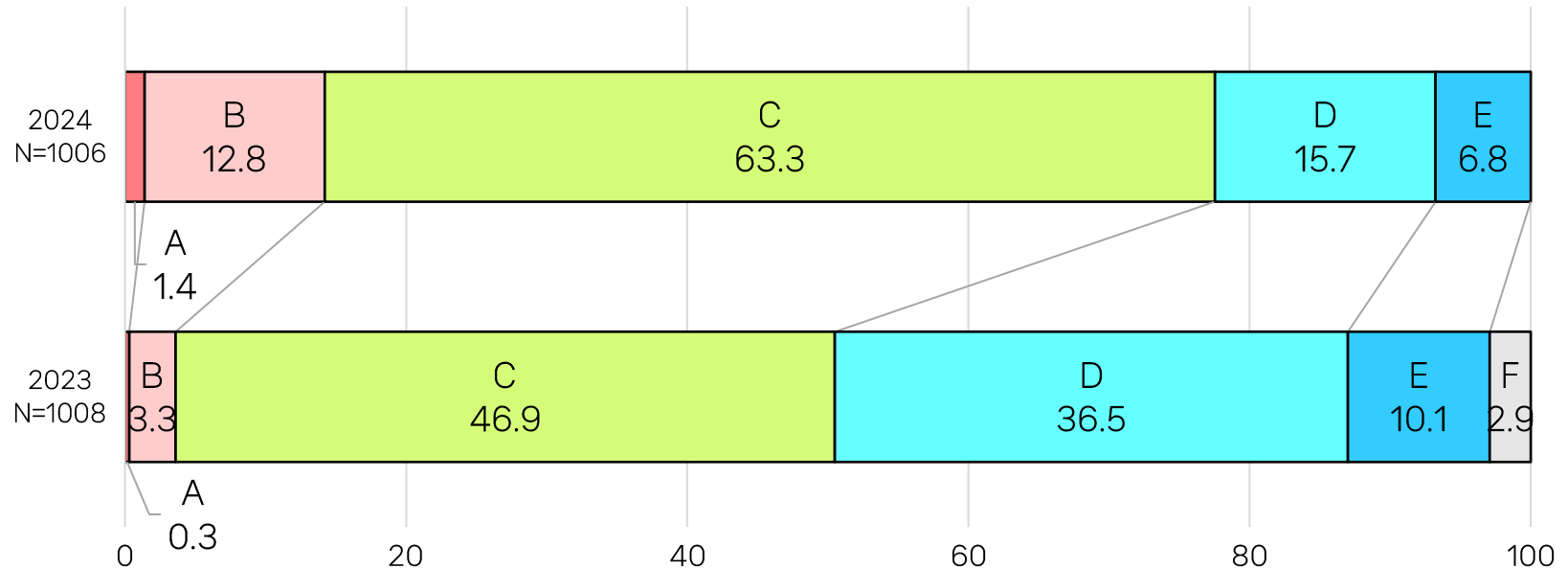


A	B	C	D	E	F
Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Important	Neither (2024 only)	Not sure (2023 only)

Future of the ROK-U.S. Relations

Q16. How do you envision the future ROK-U.S. relations?

(%)

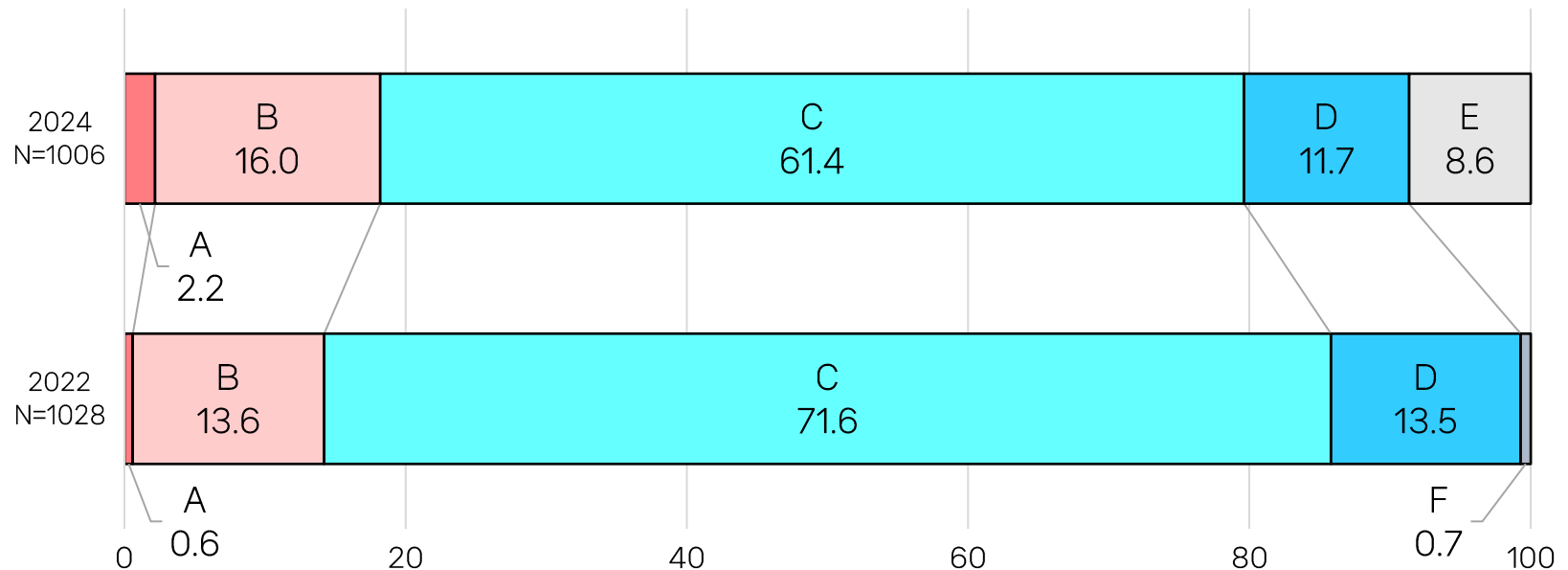


A	B	C	D	E	F
Will worsen significantly	Will worsen slightly	Will remain the same	Will improve slightly	Will improve significantly	Not sure (2023 only)

Reliability of the United States

Q17. Do you think the United States is a trustworthy partner of South Korea?
(not asked in 2023)

(%)

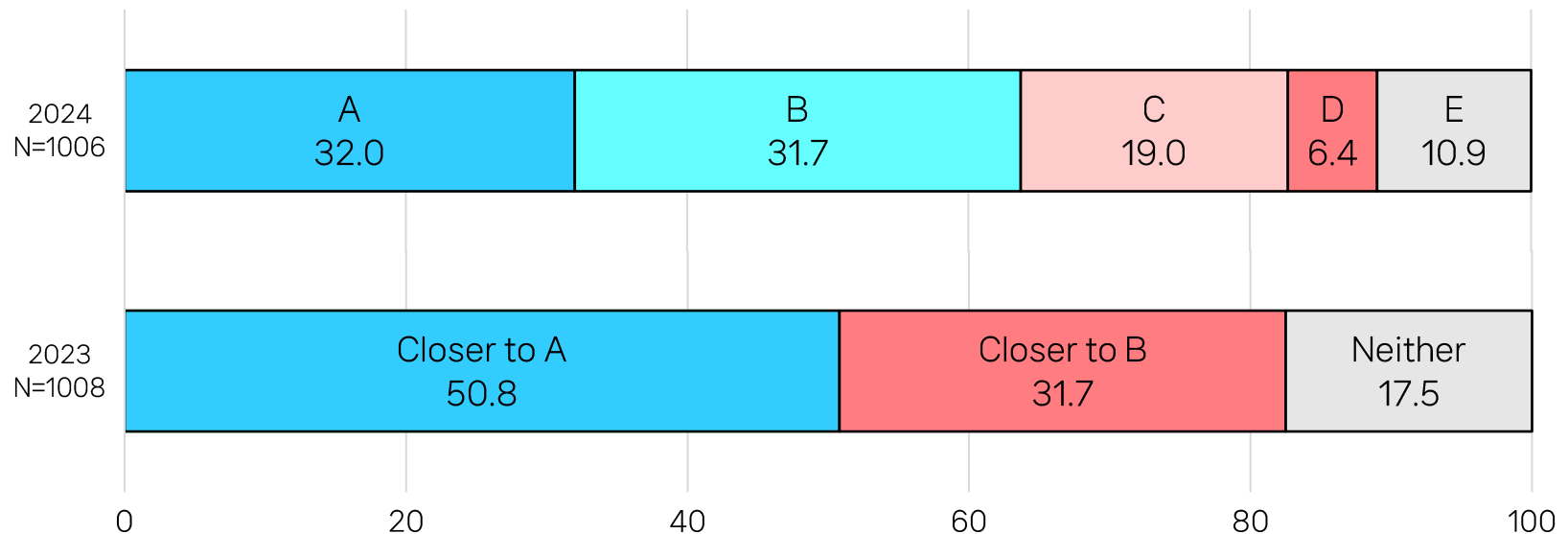


A	B	C	D	E	F
Definitely not	Not really	Somewhat	Definitely yes	Neither (2024 only)	Not sure (2022 only)

Economic Relations Between South Korea and the U.S.

Q18. Regarding the economic relations between South Korea and the United States, which of the following statements do you agree with more: A or B? (%)

A: The two economies are mutually complementary. / B: The two economies are mutually competitive.



A	B	C	D	E
Closer to A	Somewhat closer to A	Somewhat closer to B	Closer to B	Neither

The Role of ROK-U.S. Alliance

A Call to Address Global Issues ...

Cautious Public Opinion on Keeping China in Check

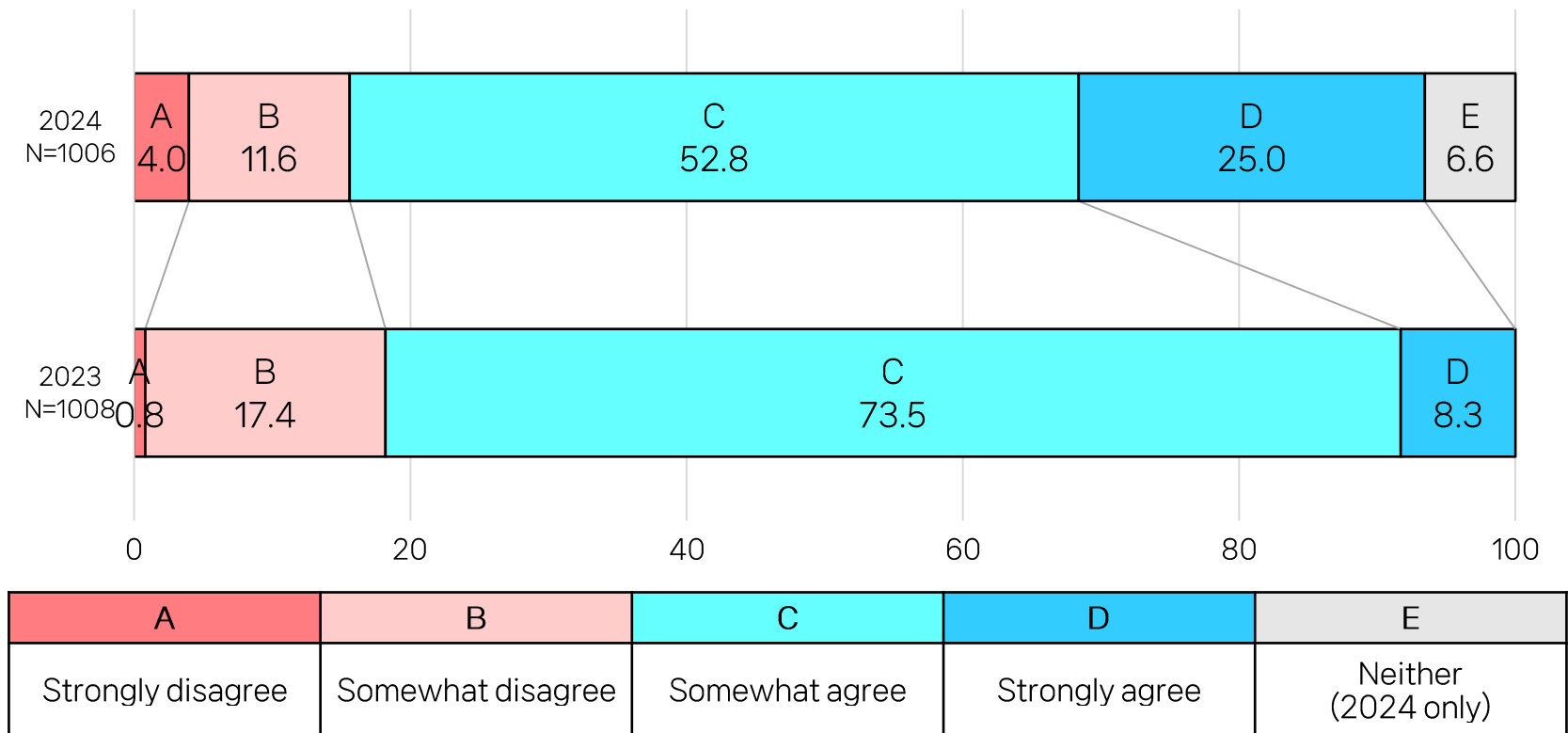
- 77.8% agreed that the U.S.-South Korea alliance should develop beyond responding to North Korea and evolve into an alliance that addresses regional and global issues. This positive public opinion on expanding the scope of the alliance has been consistent, following 81.8% in 2023.
- When asked about specific roles within the U.S.-South Korea alliance, 74.3% supported South Korea's participation in U.S. efforts to protect maritime trade routes in the Indo-Pacific region. However, only 54.1% supported joint action with the U.S. if tensions escalate in the Taiwan Strait, showing differing opinions depending on the issue.
- When asked about South Korea's maximum level of involvement if military conflict arises in the Taiwan Strait with U.S. intervention, the largest share (44.2%) supported "humanitarian aid", while only 18.1% favored sending troops (whether non-combat or combat), and 9.1% felt South Korea should refrain from any involvement.
- Regarding the primary role U.S. troops in South Korea should play, "defending South Korea from North Korea" was the most cited (35.4%), followed by "maintaining peace in the East Asia region" (27.2%) and "responding to China's military expansion" (14.2%). This indicates that while public opinion still prioritizes countering the North Korean military threat, there is also considerable openness to a peacekeeping role for U.S. forces in the broader East Asian region.

Role of the ROK-U.S. Alliance

Q19. Do you agree with the following statement, or not?

(%)

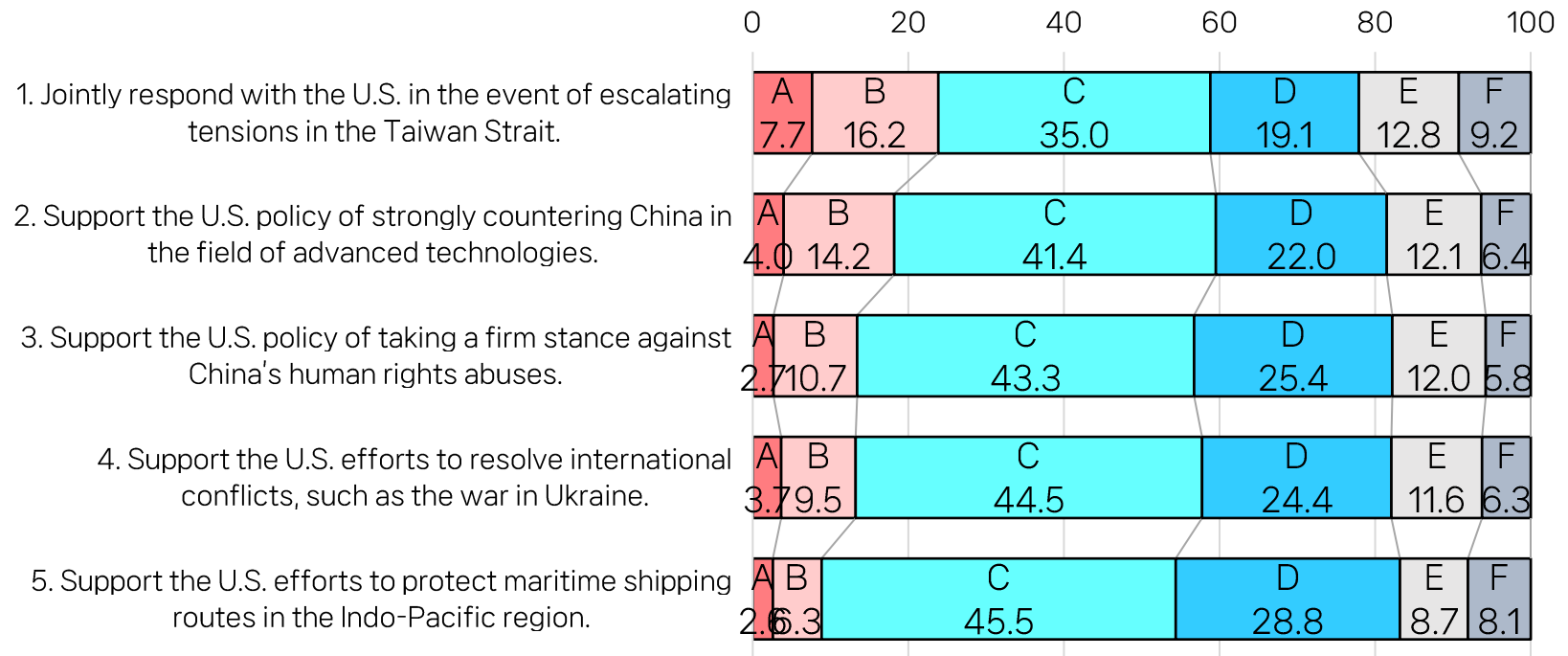
"The ROK-U.S. alliance should work to address regional and global issues, extending its scope beyond merely responding to the North Korean military threat."



South Korea's Role in the ROK-U.S. Alliance

Q20. Within the framework of the ROK-U.S. alliance, do you support the following roles for South Korea?

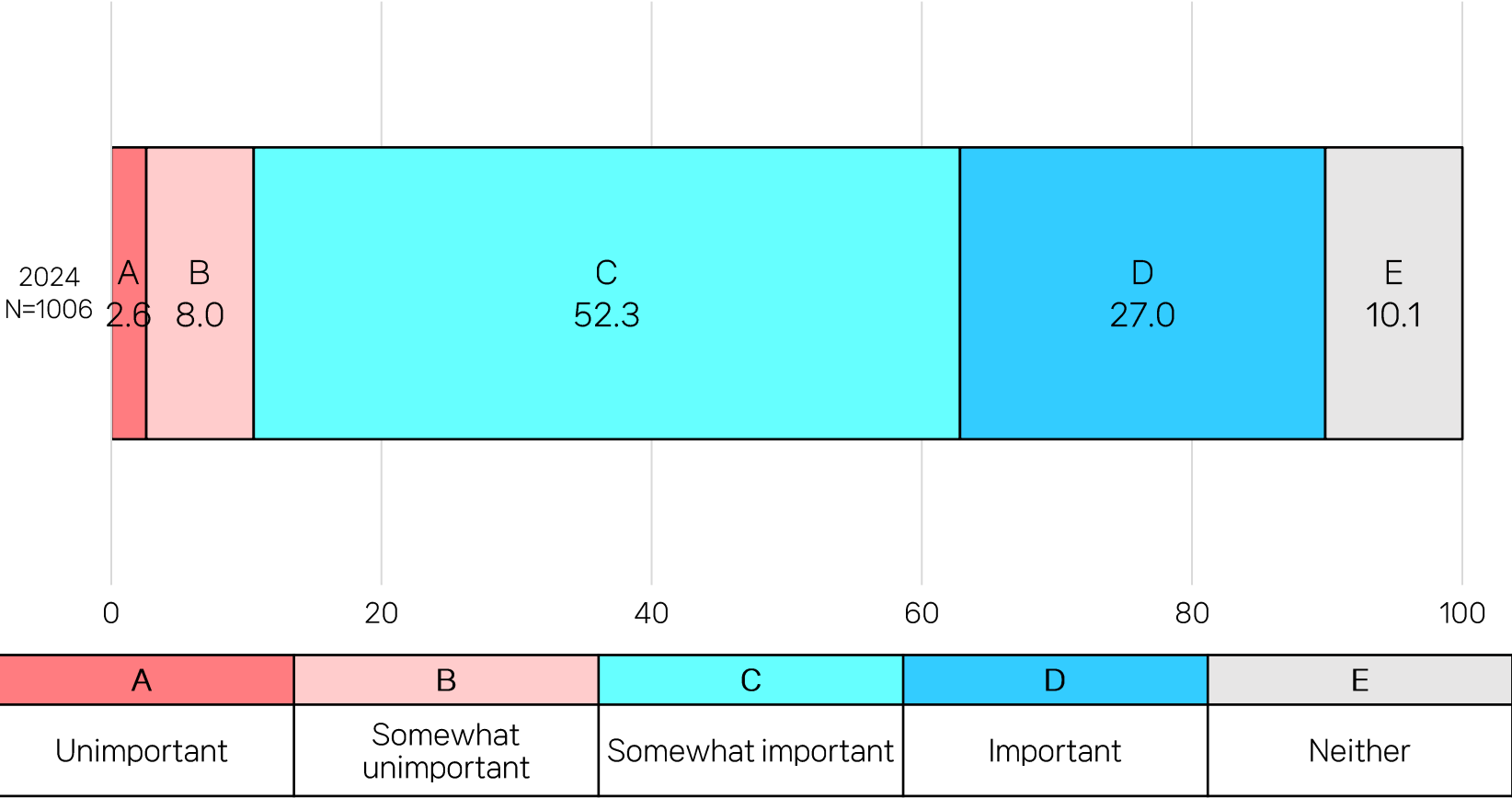
(%)



A	B	C	D	E	F
Strongly oppose	Somewhat oppose	Somewhat support	Strongly support	Neither	Not sure

Importance of Taiwan Strait Conflict on South Korea

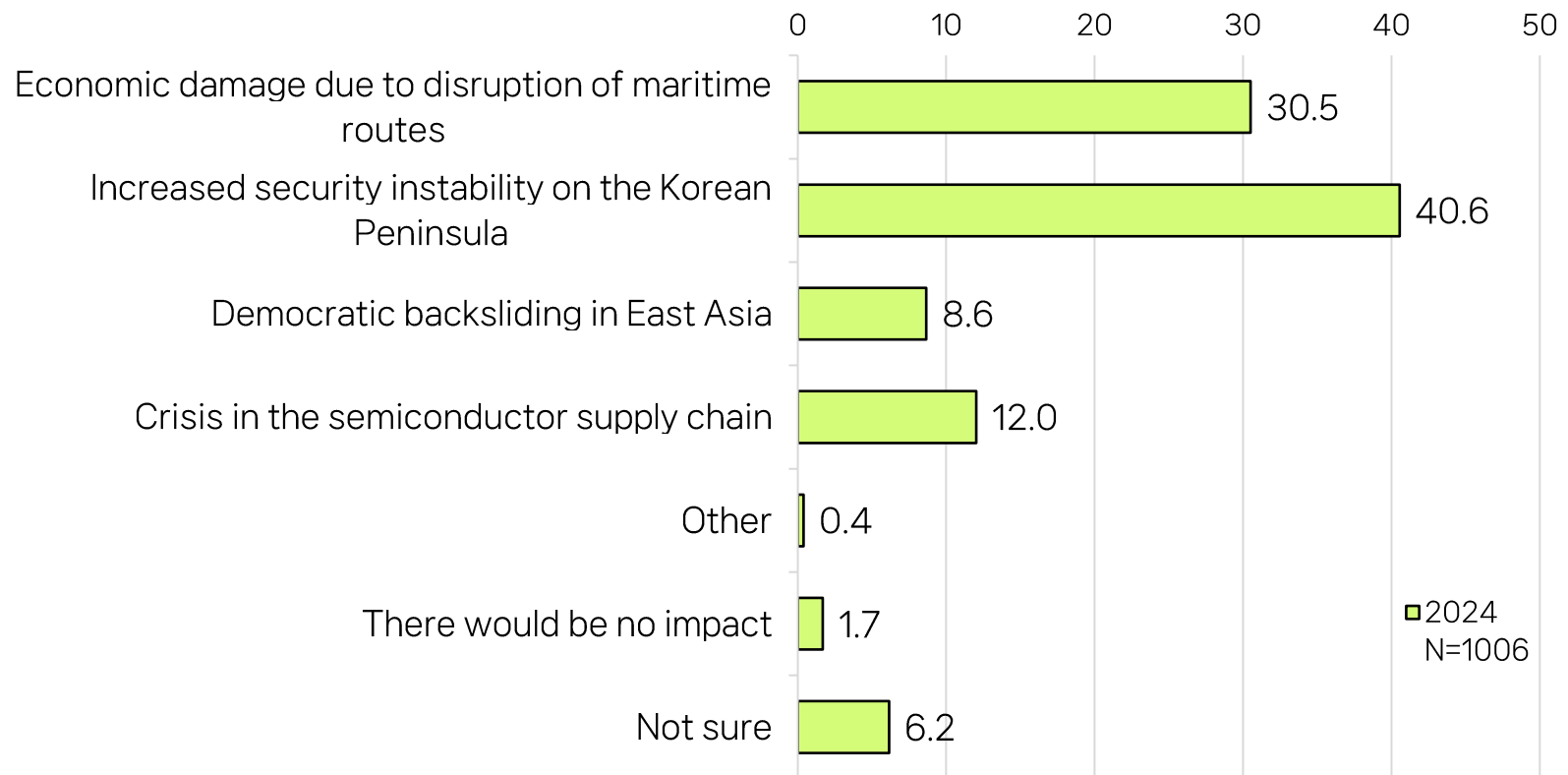
Q21. How important do you think tensions and conflicts in the Taiwan Strait are to South Korea's national interests? (%)



Impact of Taiwan Strait Conflict on South Korea

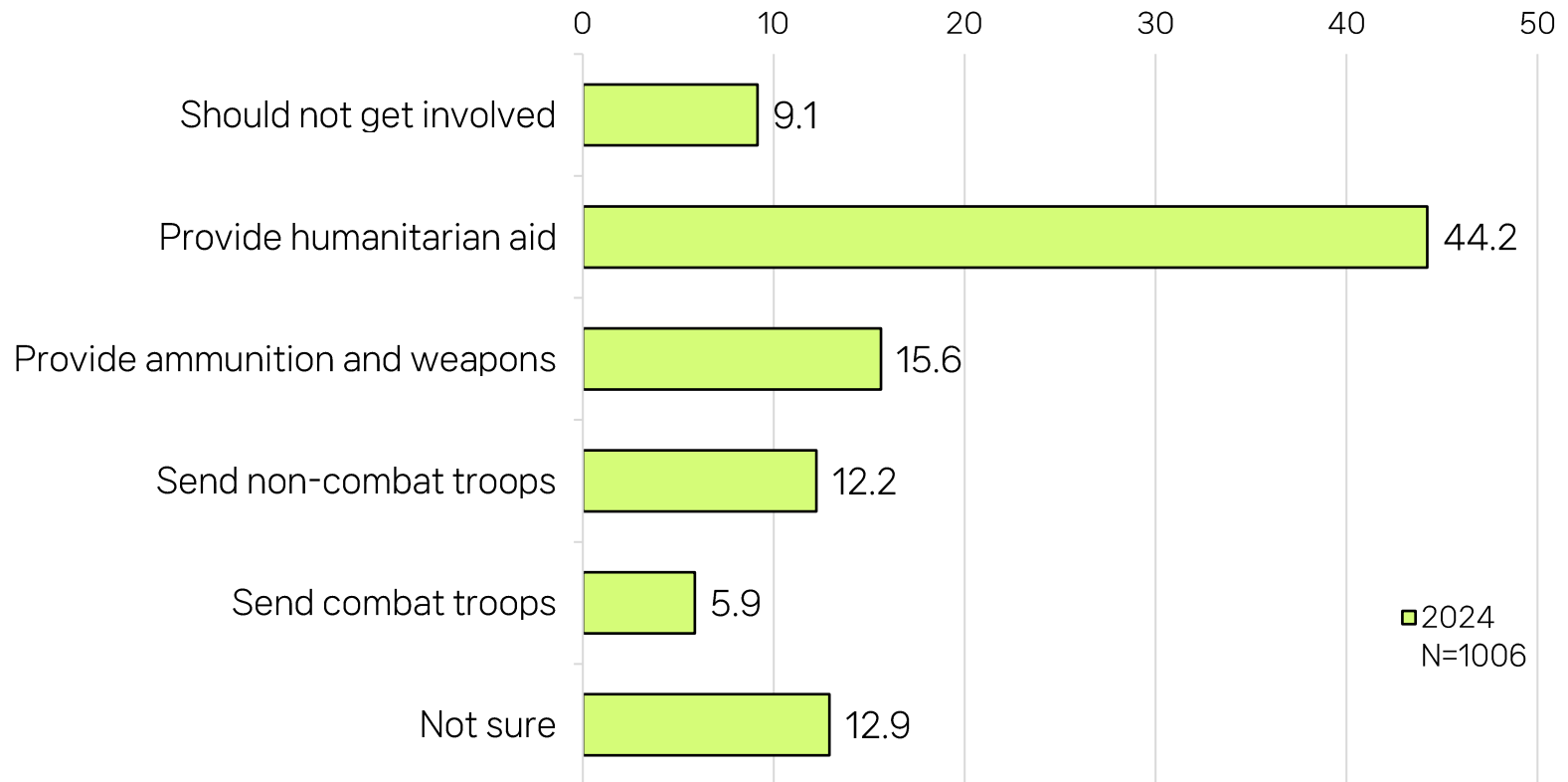
Q22. In the event of a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait, what do you think would be the most serious impact on South Korea?

(%)



Response of South Korea on Taiwan Strait Conflict

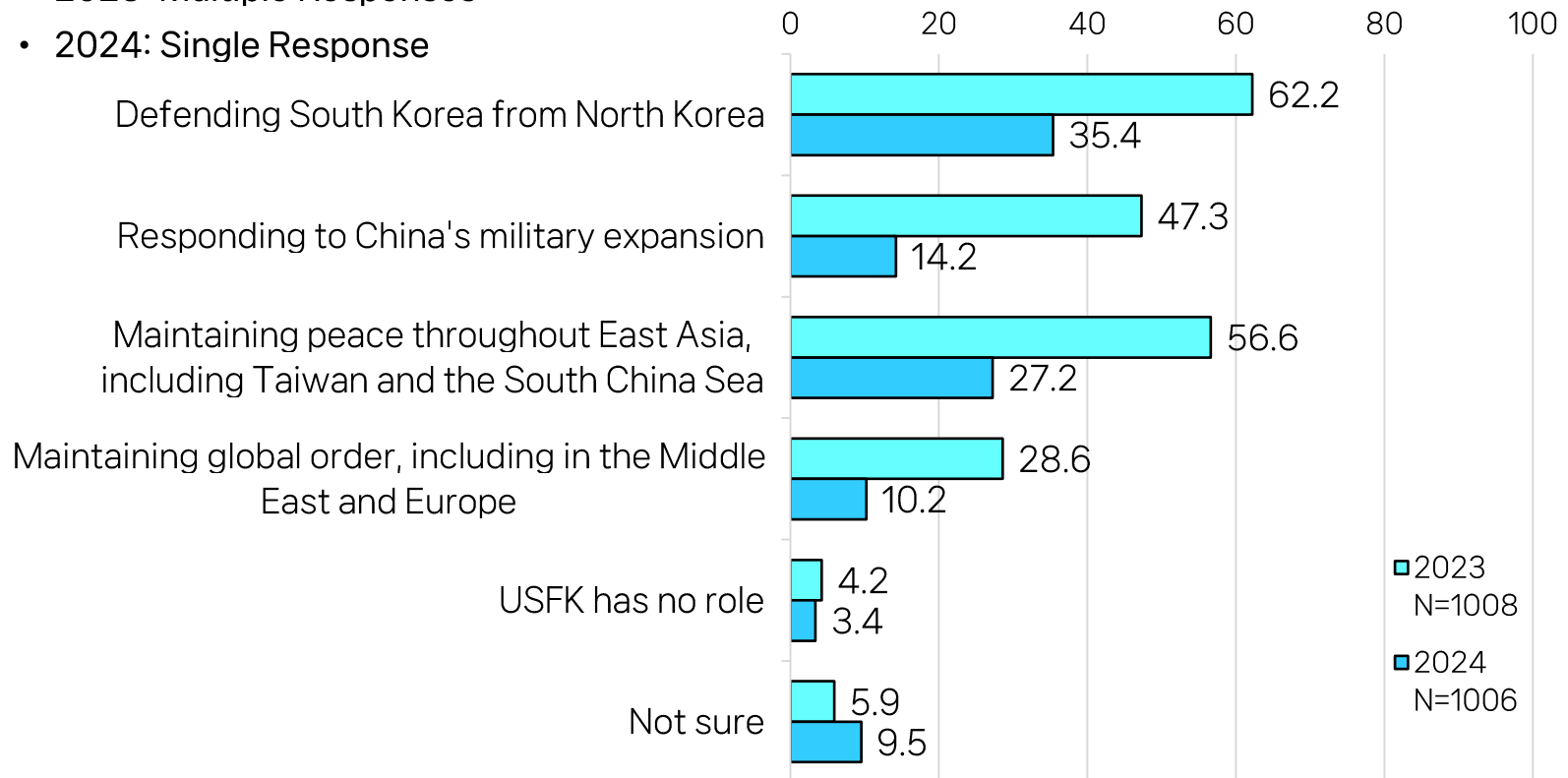
Q23. If a military conflict occurs in the Taiwan Strait and the U.S. intervenes militarily, to what extent do you think South Korea should respond? (%)



Role of U.S. Force Korea

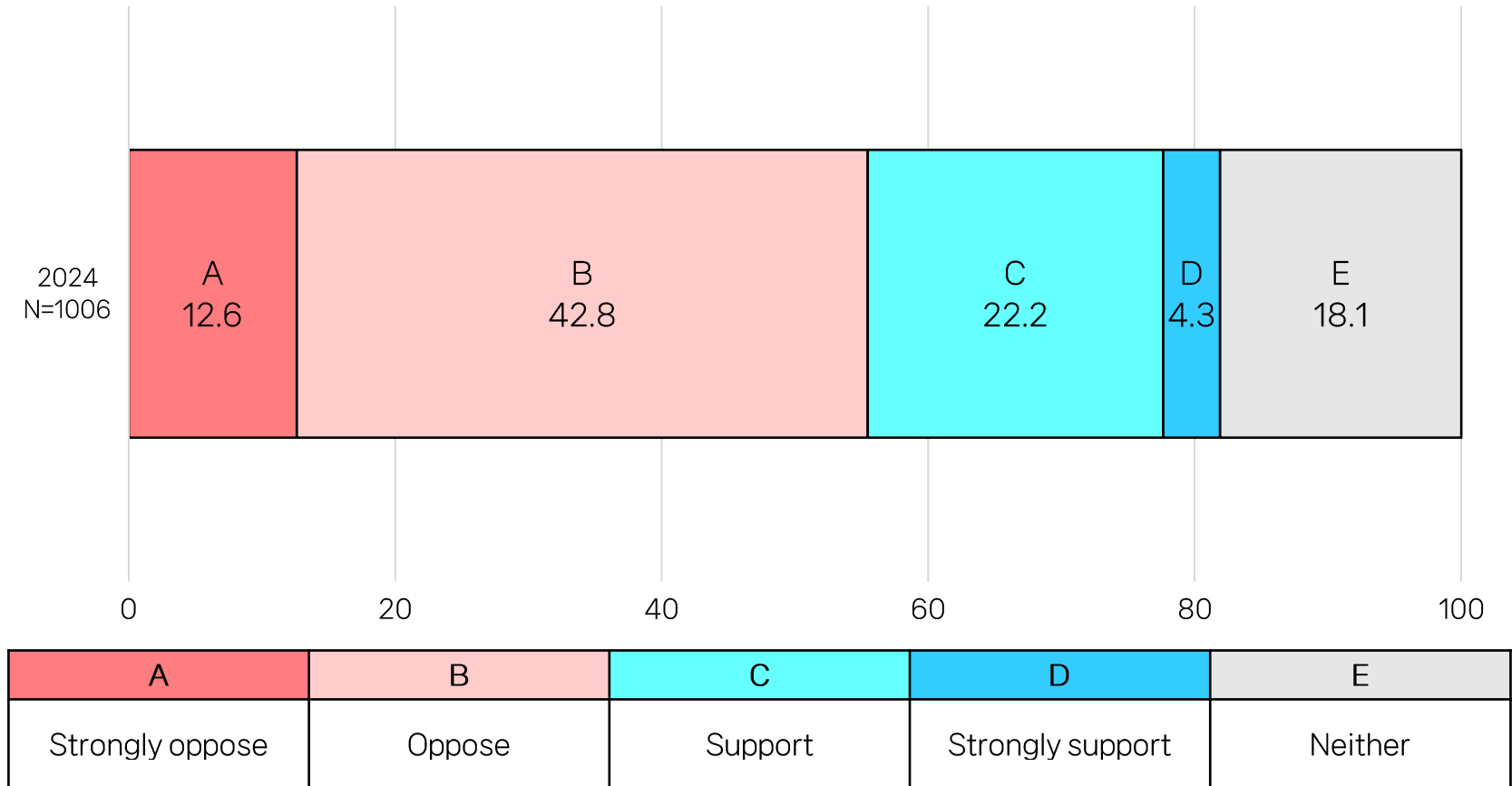
Q24. The United States plans to flexibly manage its military assets in the Indo-Pacific region. What do you think should be the maximum role of U.S. Force Korea (USFK)? (%)

- 2023: Multiple Responses
- 2024: Single Response



Opinion on the U.S. Limiting Economic Relations with China

Q25. What is your opinion on the United States imposing restrictions on South Korea's and Japan's trade and investment relations with China through measures like the CHIPS Act? (%)



Perception of China and ROK-China Relations

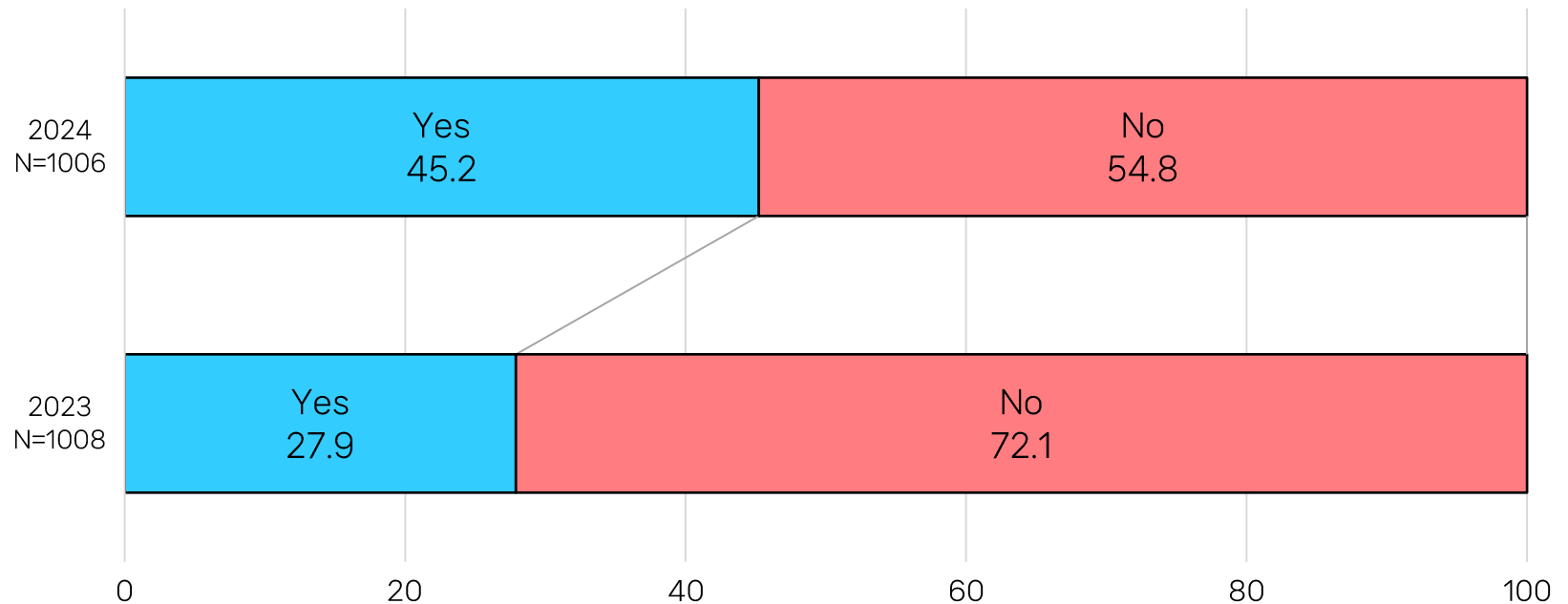
"Not Good, but Important"

- 63.9% of respondents had a negative impression of China, significantly outnumbering those with a positive impression (19.6%). The top reasons for negative impressions were "the impact of China's environmental issues" (44.2%), "China's disrespectful attitude toward South Korea" (39.4%), and "coercive actions like THAAD retaliation" (38.3%) (respondents could select up to two reasons).
- A majority of respondents (67.5%) also expressed a negative view of President Xi Jinping.
- In the case of the U.S. and Japan, over 70% of respondents said that visiting these countries either maintained or improved their positive impressions of them. However, visits to China had little impact on improving impressions, with only 51.8% saying their positive impression was maintained or improved after visiting.
- Regarding the current state of South Korea-China relations, 60.1% of respondents rated them as "bad," and the majority (60.4%) predicted that future relations would "remain the same."
- Nevertheless, when asked whether South Korea-China relations are important, 85.9% responded that they are "important," indicating a continuation of last year's public sentiment of separating perceptions of China from the importance of bilateral relations.

Experience of Visiting China

Q50. Have you ever visited China?

(%)

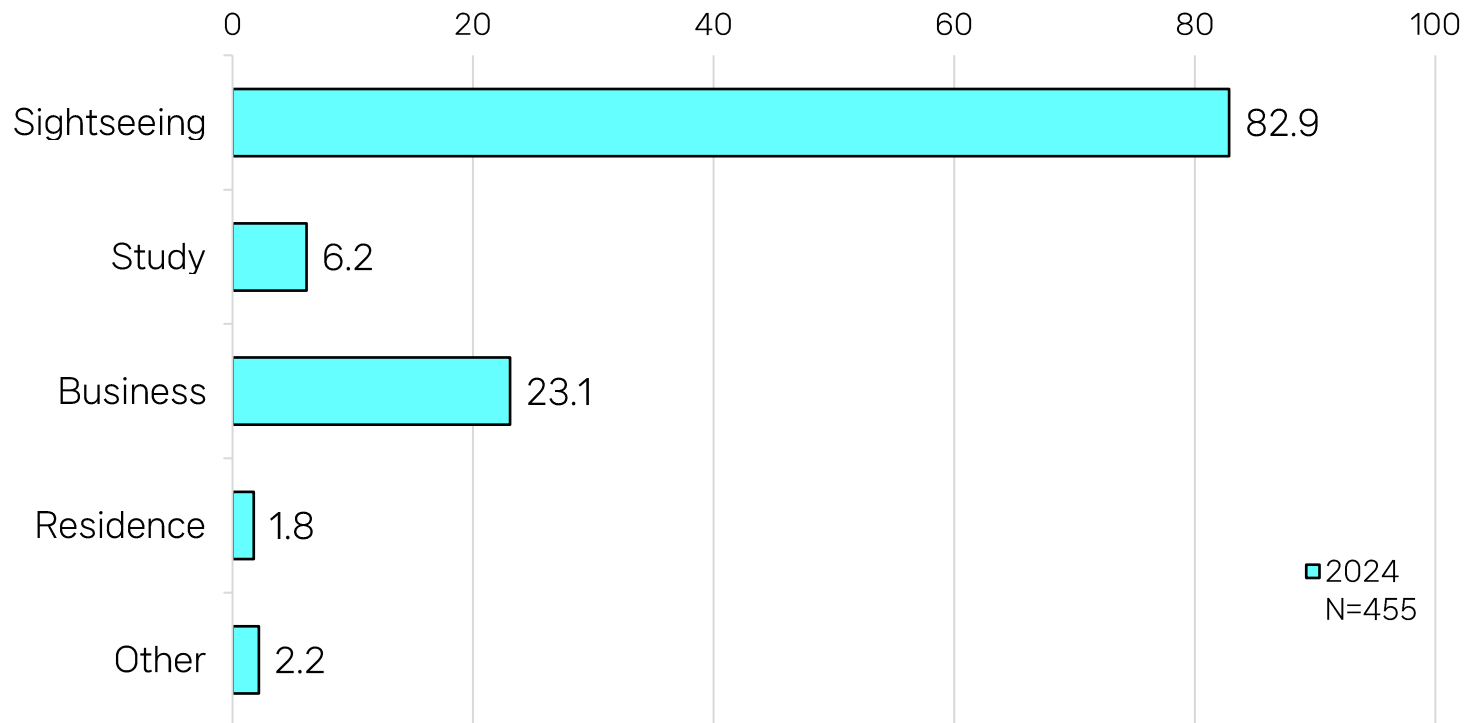


Purpose of Visiting China

Q50-a. (Only those who answered "yes" in Q50)

What was the purpose of visiting China? [Multiple responses]

(%)

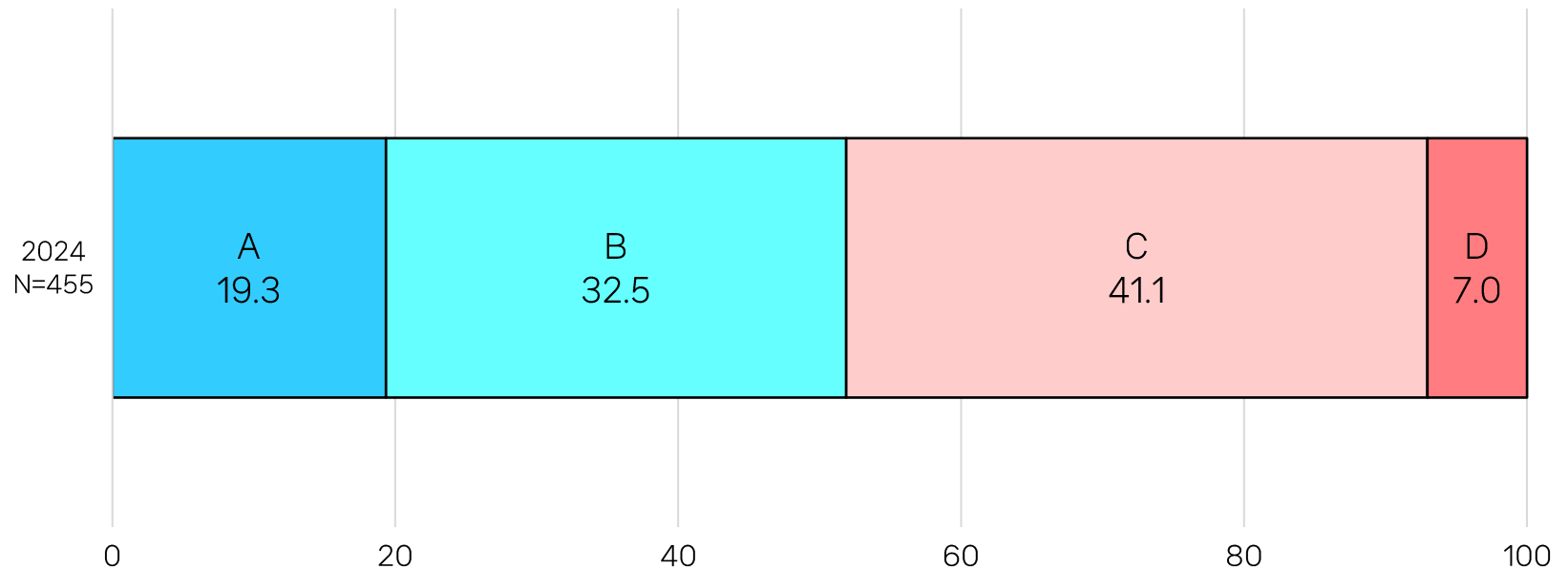


Perception Change after Visiting China

Q50-b. (Only those who answered "yes" in Q50)

Has your perception of China changed following your visit?

(%)

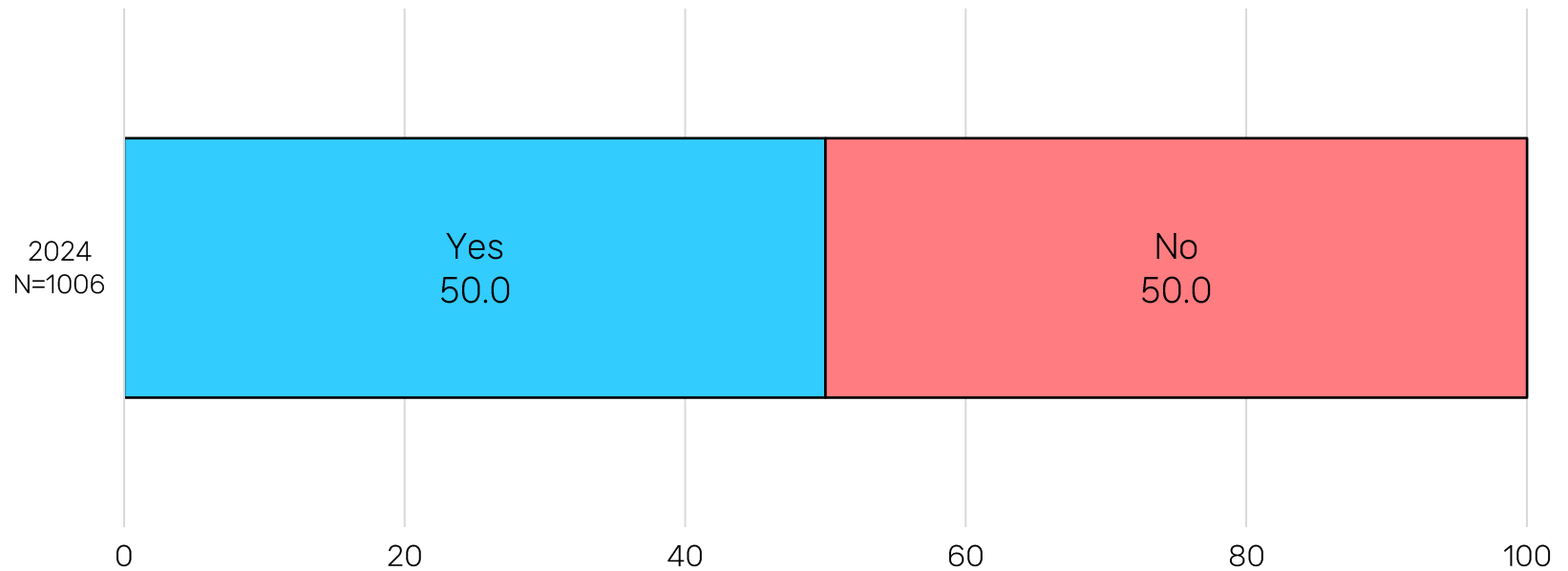


A	B	C	D
Became more favorable	Remained favorable	Remained unfavorable	Became more unfavorable

Expectations to Visit China

Q51. Would you like to visit China if you had the chance?

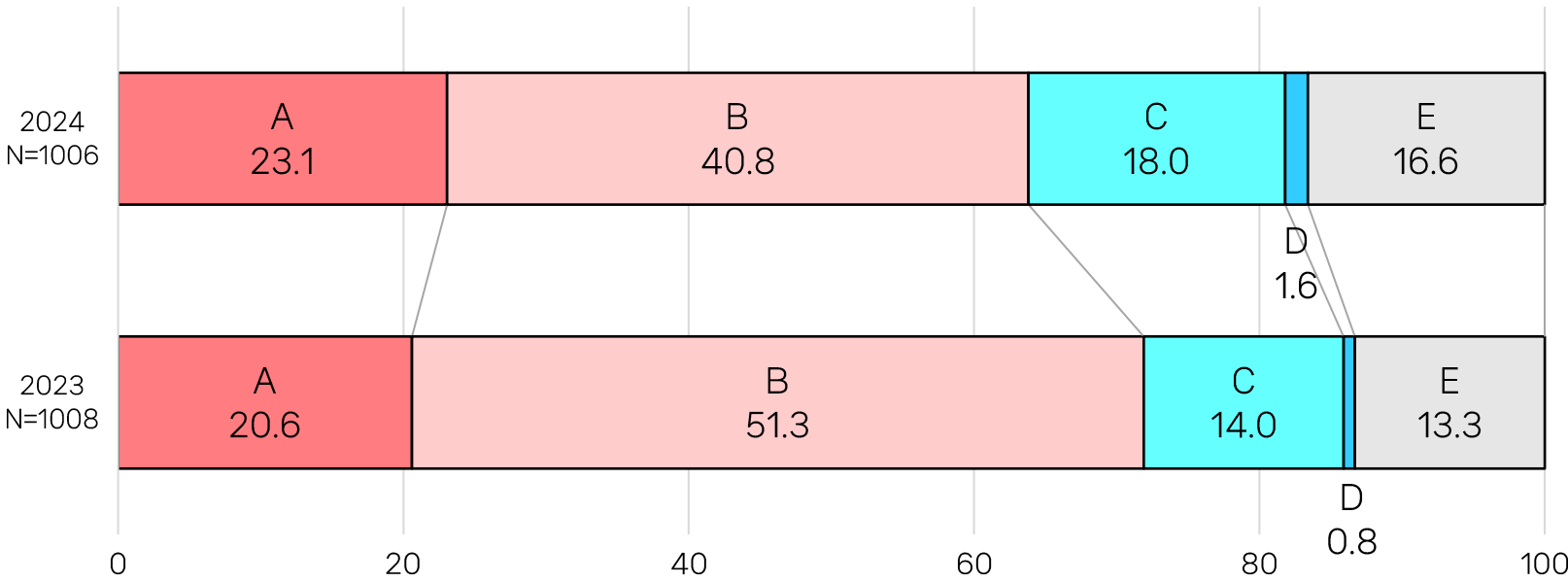
(%)



Impression of China

Q52. What is your impression of China?

(%)



A	B	C	D	E
Unfavorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Somewhat favorable	Favorable	Neither

Reasons for Unfavorable Impressions

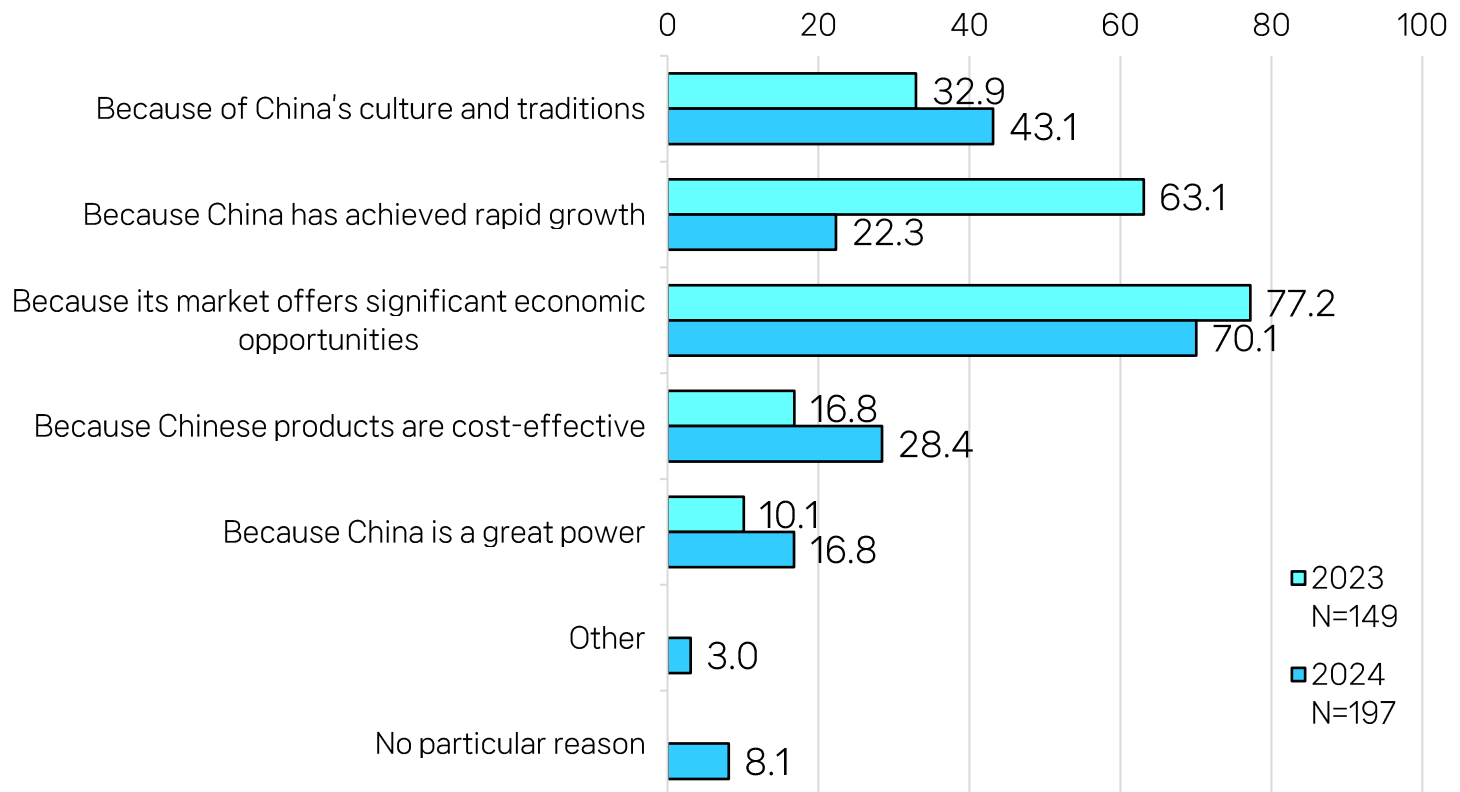
Q52-a. (Only those who answered “unfavorable” or “somewhat unfavorable” in Q52) (%)
Why do you have an unfavorable impression of China? [Up to 2 responses]



Reasons for Favorable Impressions

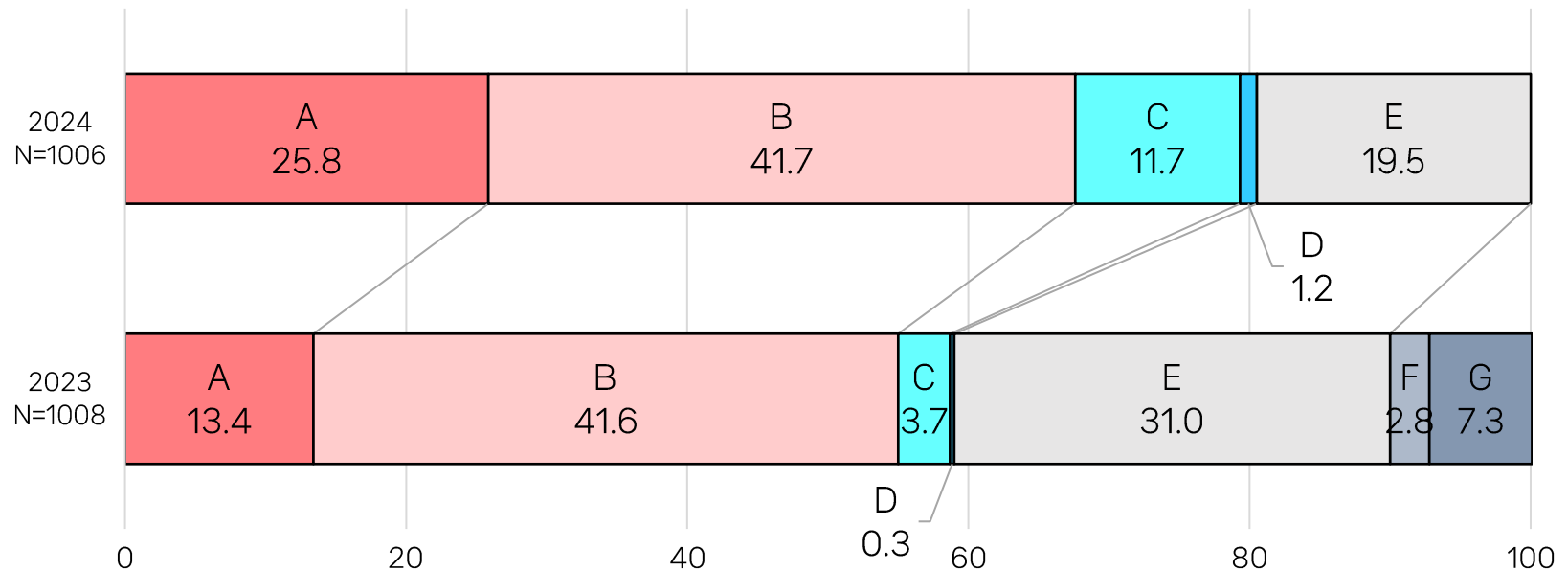
Q52-b. (Only those who answered "favorable" or "somewhat favorable" in Q52)
Why do you have a favorable impression of China? [Up to 2 responses]

(%)



Impression of President Xi Jinping

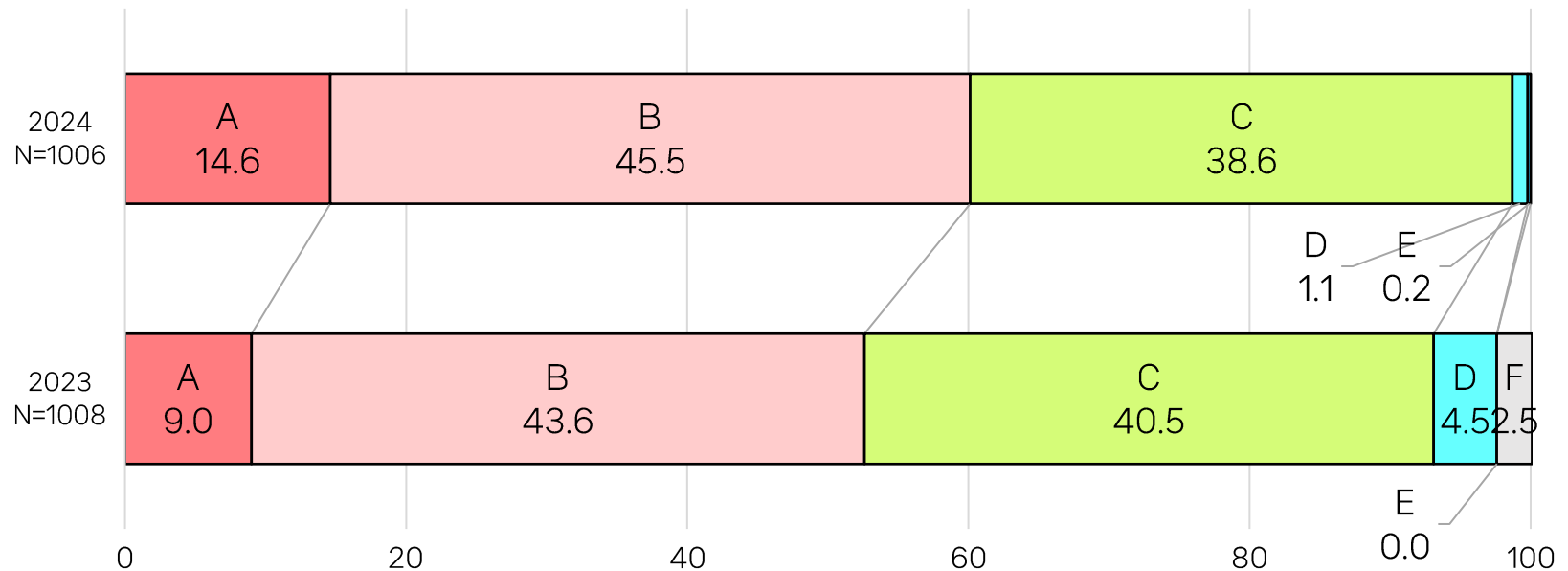
Q53. What is your impression of Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China? (%)



A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Very bad	Bad	Good	Very good	Neither	Not sure (2023 only)	Indifferent (2023 only)

Current ROK-China Relations

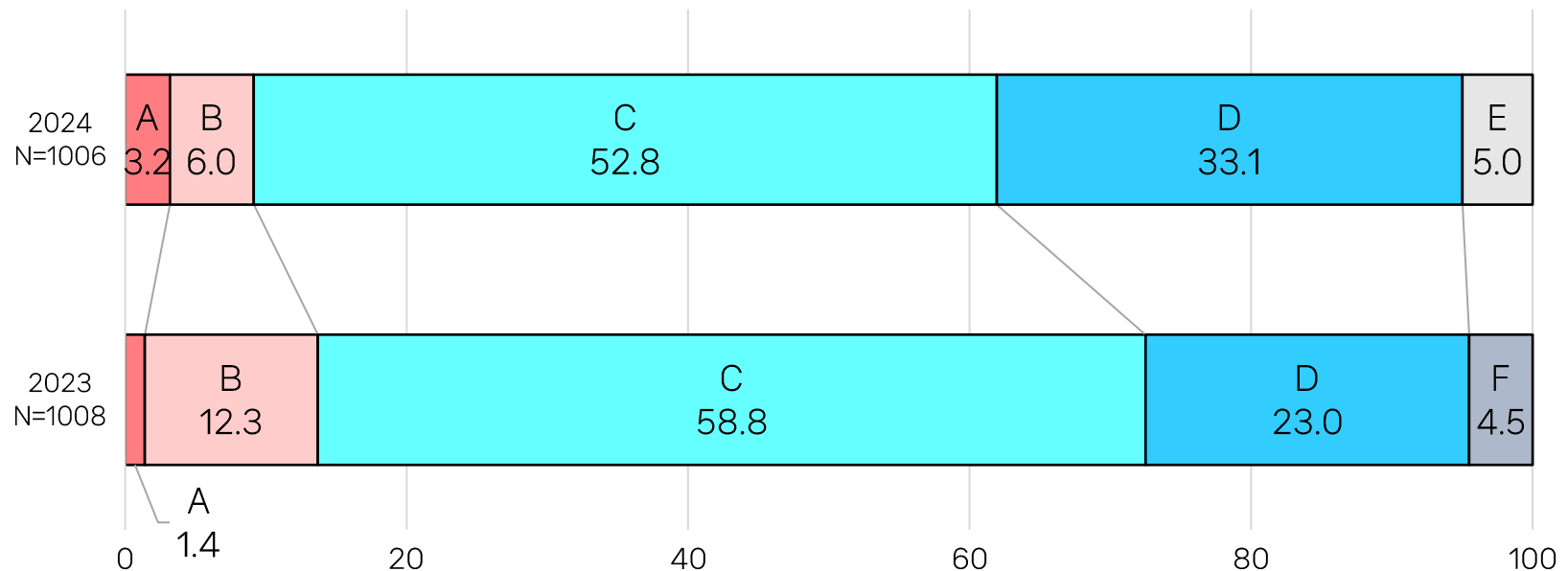
Q54. What do you think current relations between South Korea and China are like? (%)



A	B	C	D	E	F
Very bad	Somewhat bad	Fair	Somewhat good	Very good	Not sure (2023 only)

Importance of the ROK-China Relations

Q55. Do you think the ROK-China relations are currently important to South Korea? (%)

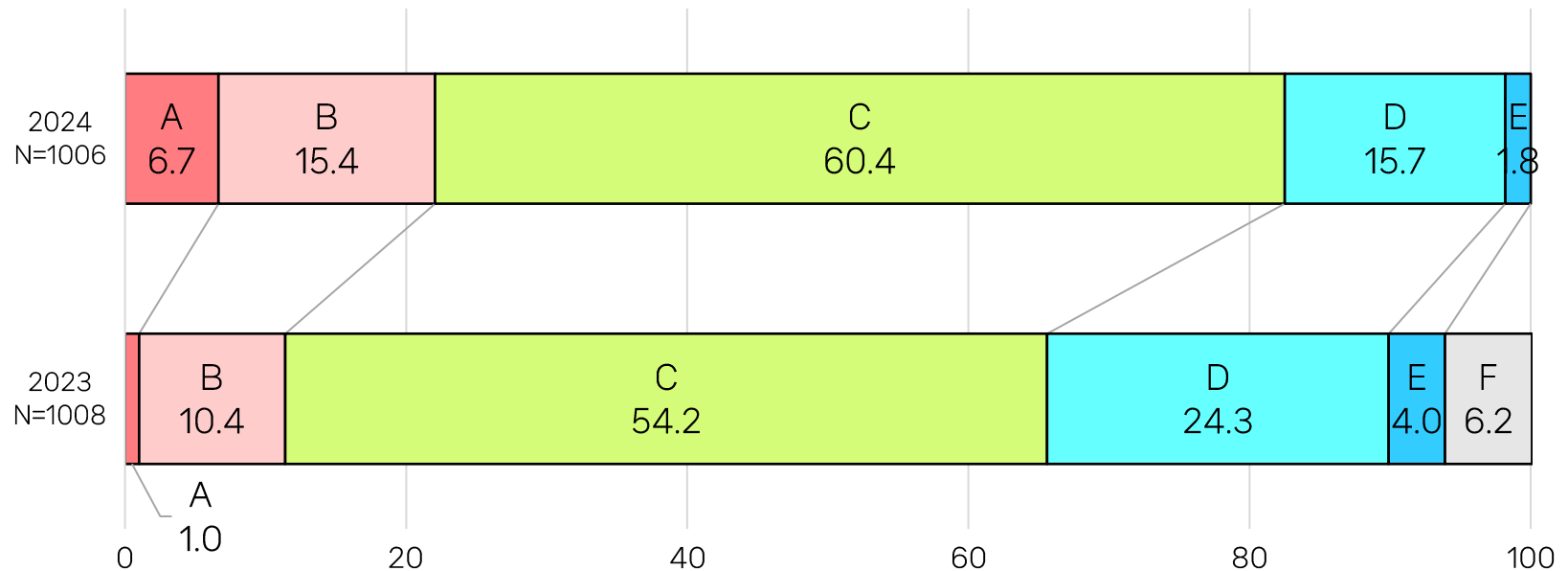


A	B	C	D	E	F
Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	To a great extent	Neither (2024 only)	Not sure (2023 only)

Future of the ROK-China Relations

Q56. How do you envision the future ROK-China relations?

(%)

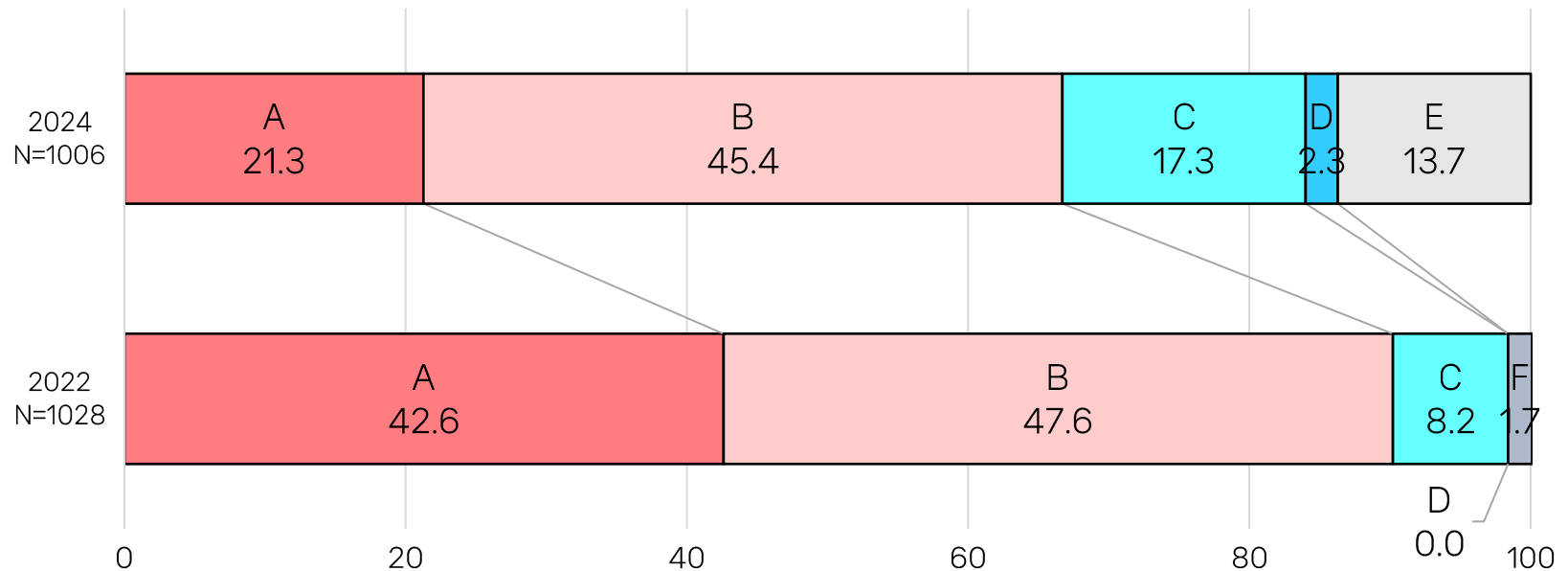


A	B	C	D	E	F
Will worsen significantly	Will worsen slightly	Will remain the same	Will improve slightly	Will improve significantly	Not sure (2023 only)

Reliability of China

Q57. Do you think China is a trustworthy partner of South Korea?
(not asked in 2023)

(%)

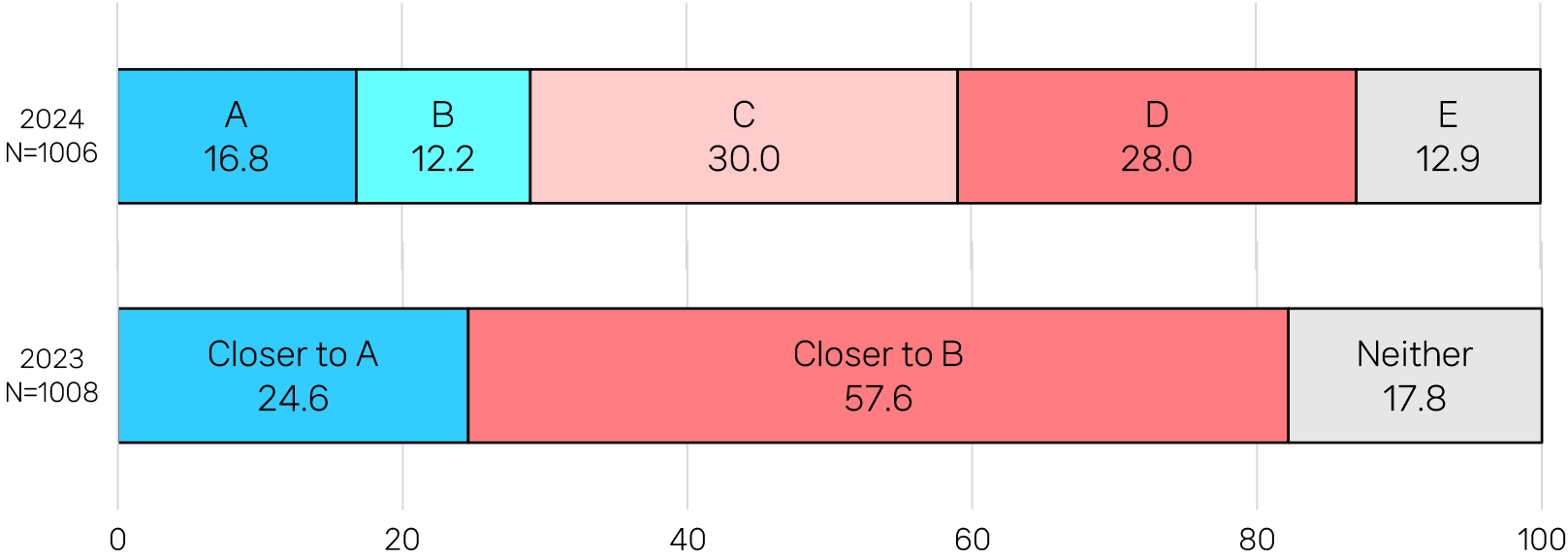


A	B	C	D	E	F
Definitely not	Not really	Somewhat	Definitely yes	Neither (2024 only)	Not sure (2022 only)

Economic Relations Between South Korea and China

Q58. Regarding the economic relations between South Korea and China, which of the following statements do you agree with more: A or B? (%)

A: The two economies are mutually complementary. / B: The two economies are mutually competitive.



A	B	C	D	E
Closer to A	Somewhat closer to A	Somewhat closer to B	Closer to B	Neither

U.S.-China Competition and ROK's Response

Public Opinion Split over Potential U.S.-China Conflict:

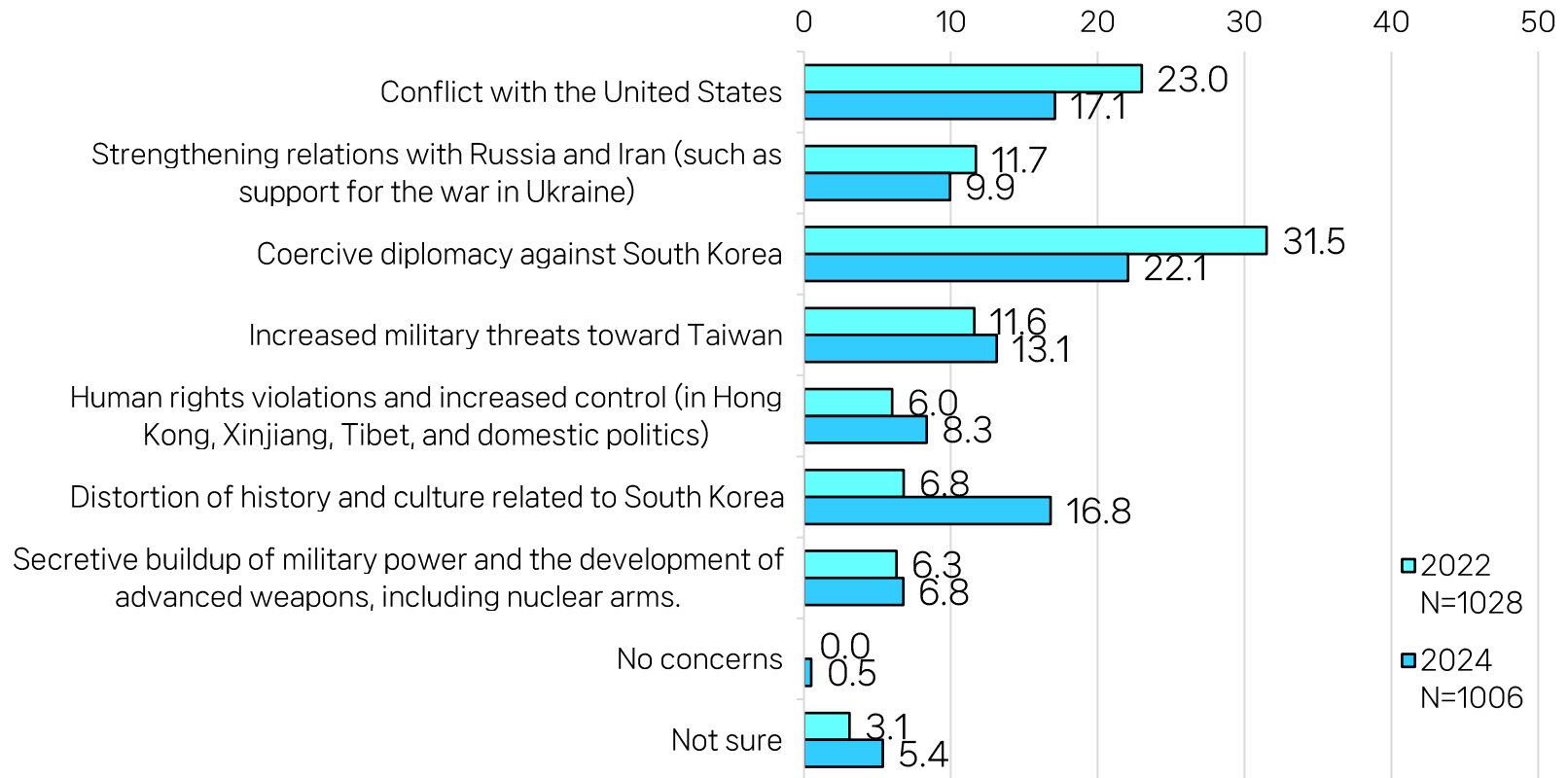
"Support U.S." vs. "Neutral"

- When asked about concerns regarding recent developments in China, the most common response was "China's coercive diplomatic behavior toward South Korea" (22.1%), followed by "conflicts with the U.S." (17.1%) and "distortion of Korean history and culture" (16.8%). While the percentages of the first two responses decreased compared to 2022, concerns over distortions of Korean history and culture, which ranked third, more than doubled from 6.8% in 2022, indicating a growing sense of unease among South Koreans regarding this issue.
- In the event of serious conflict between the U.S. and China, 46.8% of respondents favored South Korea taking a "neutral" stance, while 41.6% supported "backing the U.S." Only 2.9% believed that South Korea should support China.
- When asked about priority issues in South Korea's diplomacy toward China, the top response was "expanding economic exchanges and high-tech cooperation" (30.0%). This marks a shift from 2023, when "responding to China's economic sanctions" was the main concern, indicating a slightly more positive outlook on bilateral cooperation.

Concerns about the Recent Developments in China

Q59. What concerns you the most about the recent developments in China?
(not asked in 2023)

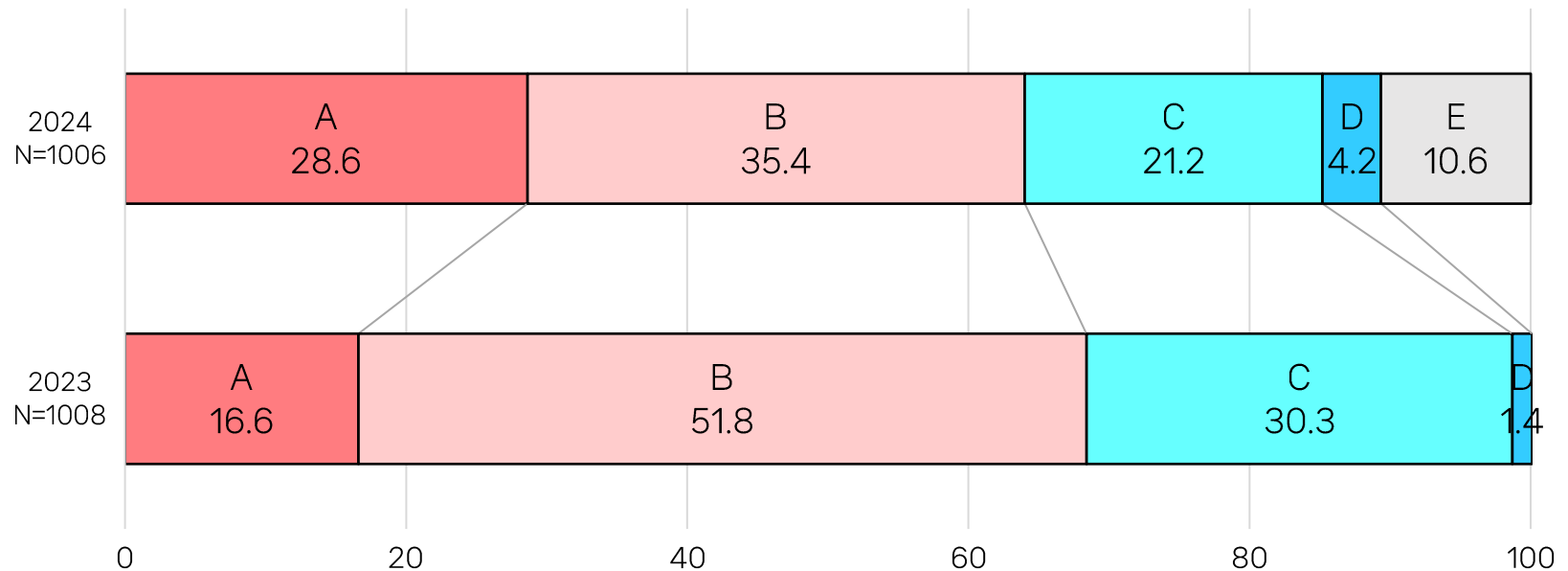
(%)



Whether China Will Surpass the United States

Q60. Do you believe China will surpass the United States and become a global leader in the near future?

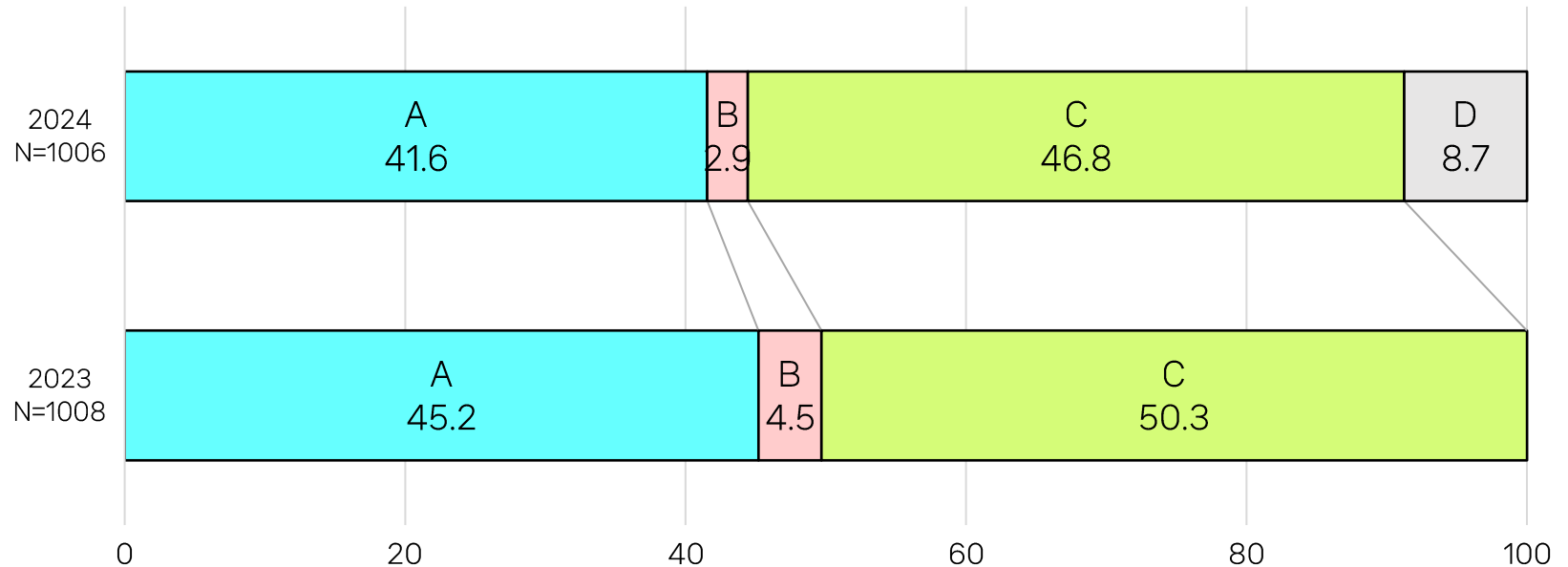
(%)



A	B	C	D	E
Definitely not	Unlikely	Likely	Definitely yes	Neither (2024 only)

South Korea's Position in U.S.-China Conflict

Q61. In the event of a serious U.S.-China conflict, what position should ROK adopt? (%)

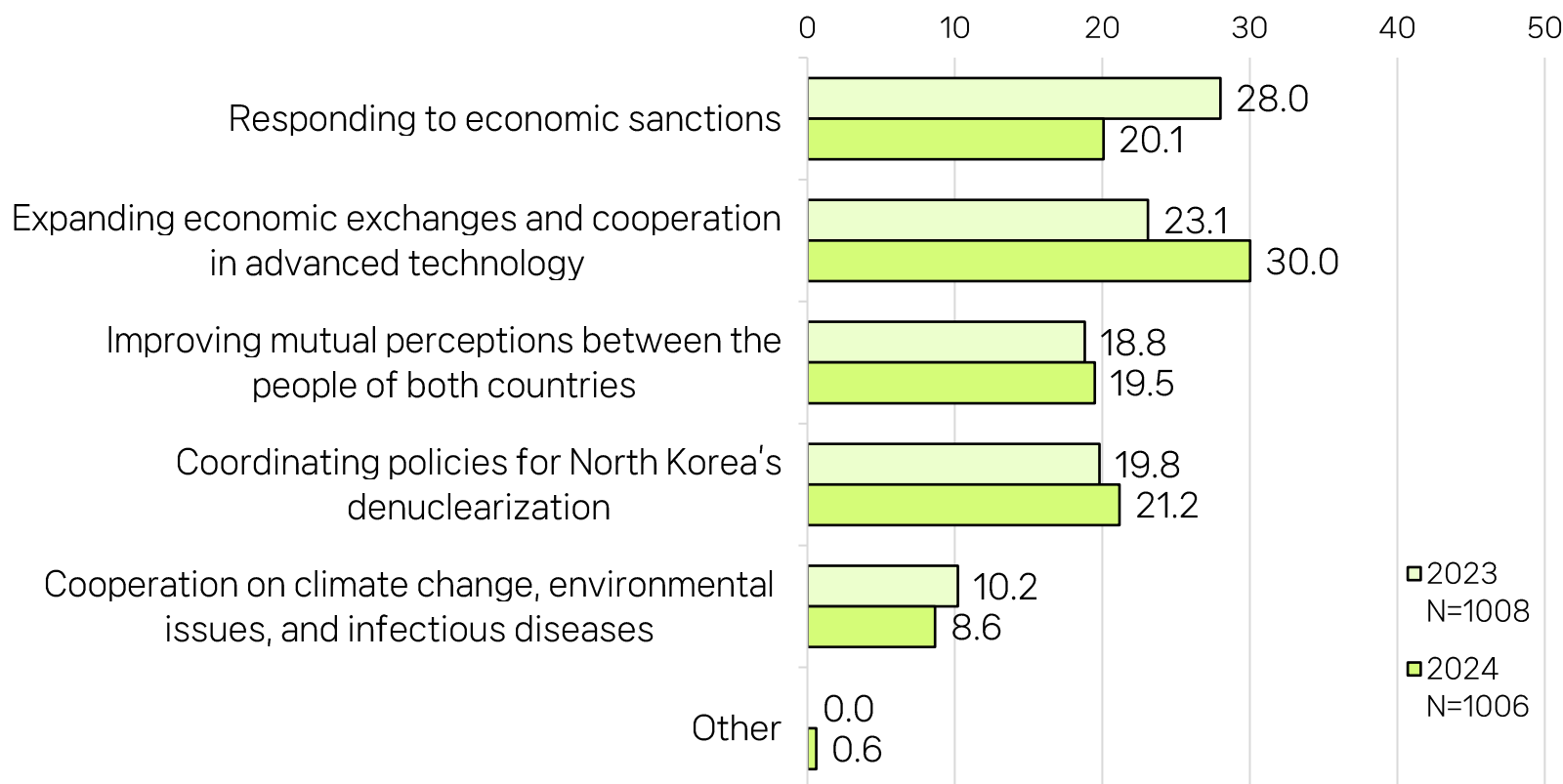


A	B	C	D
Support the United States	Support China	Remain Neutral	Not sure (2024 only)

Top Policy Priority toward China

Q62. What is South Korea's top policy priority toward China?

(%)



Perception of North Korea and Inter-Korean Relations

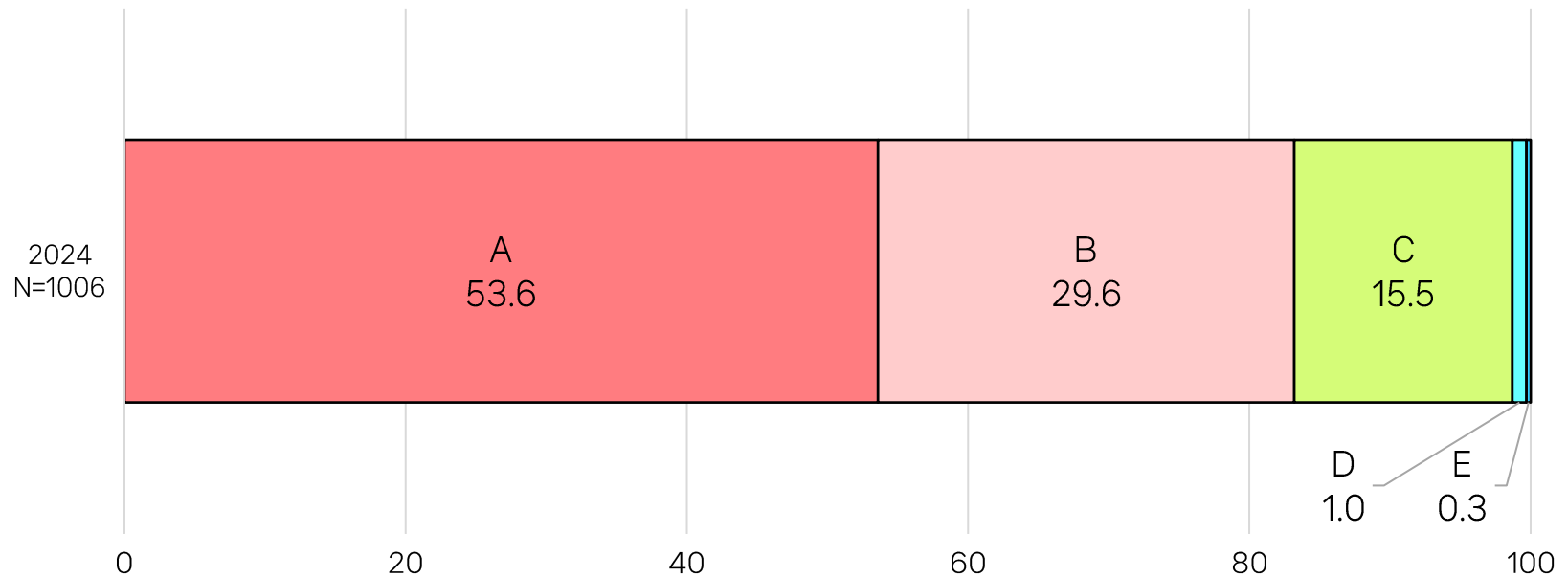
Split Public Opinion on Credibility of U.S. Extended Deterrence ... 71.4% Support "Nuclear Armament if DPRK Retains Nukes"

- An overwhelming 83.2% of respondents rated current inter-Korean relations as "bad," while only 1.3% said relations are "good." This reflects public perception of the strained relations caused by the introduction of DPRK's "Two Hostile States rhetoric" and its actions, such as sending trash balloons.
- While 82.9% agreed that South Korea should maintain its goal of North Korean denuclearization, 72.0% expressed skepticism that North Korea would actually give up its nuclear weapons, indicating a predominantly negative outlook on the issue.
- When asked if the U.S. extended deterrence was sufficient in responding to North Korea's nuclear threat, opinions were split, with 41.2% agreeing and 47.4% disagreeing.
- If North Korea does not abandon its nuclear weapons, 71.4% of respondents believed that South Korea should pursue independent nuclear armament. Additionally, 34.8% supported the idea that Japan should also arm itself with nuclear weapons under such circumstances.

Current inter-Korean Relations

Q46. What do you think current inter-Korean relations are like?

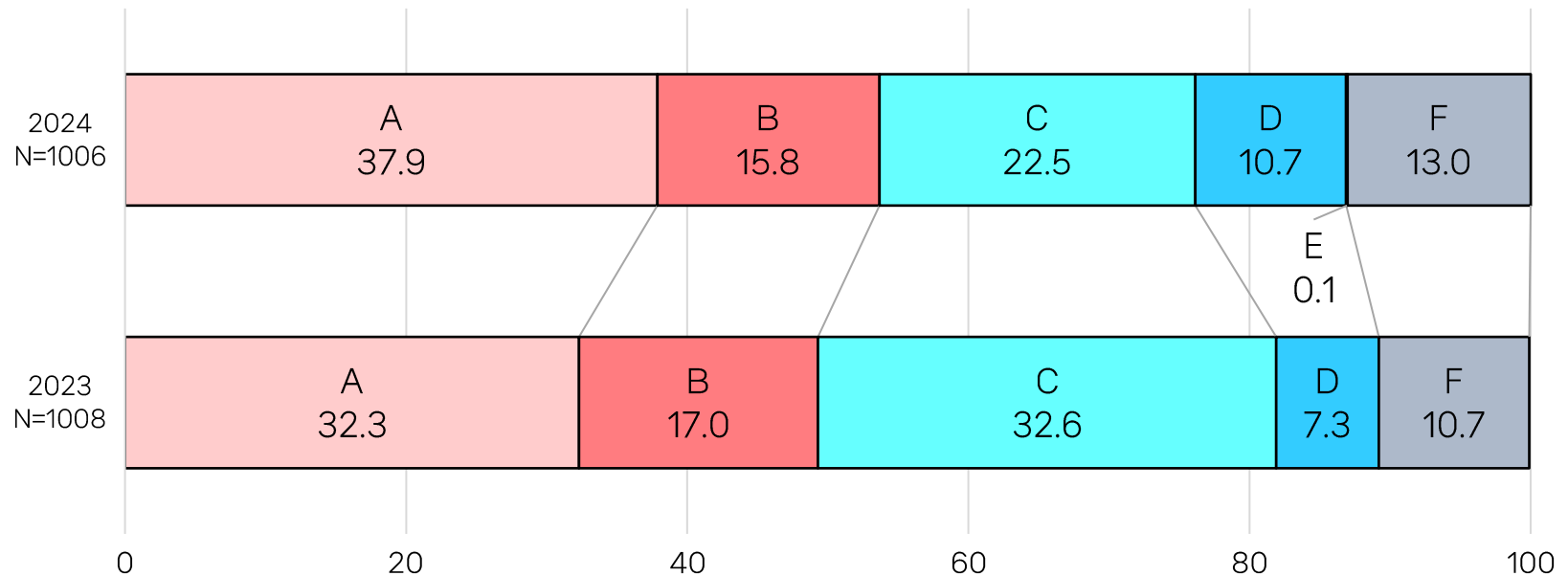
(%)



A	B	C	D	E
Very bad	Somewhat bad	Fair	Somewhat good	Very good

Future Situation on the Korean Peninsula

Q47. How do you envision the situation on the Korean Peninsula ten years from now? (%)

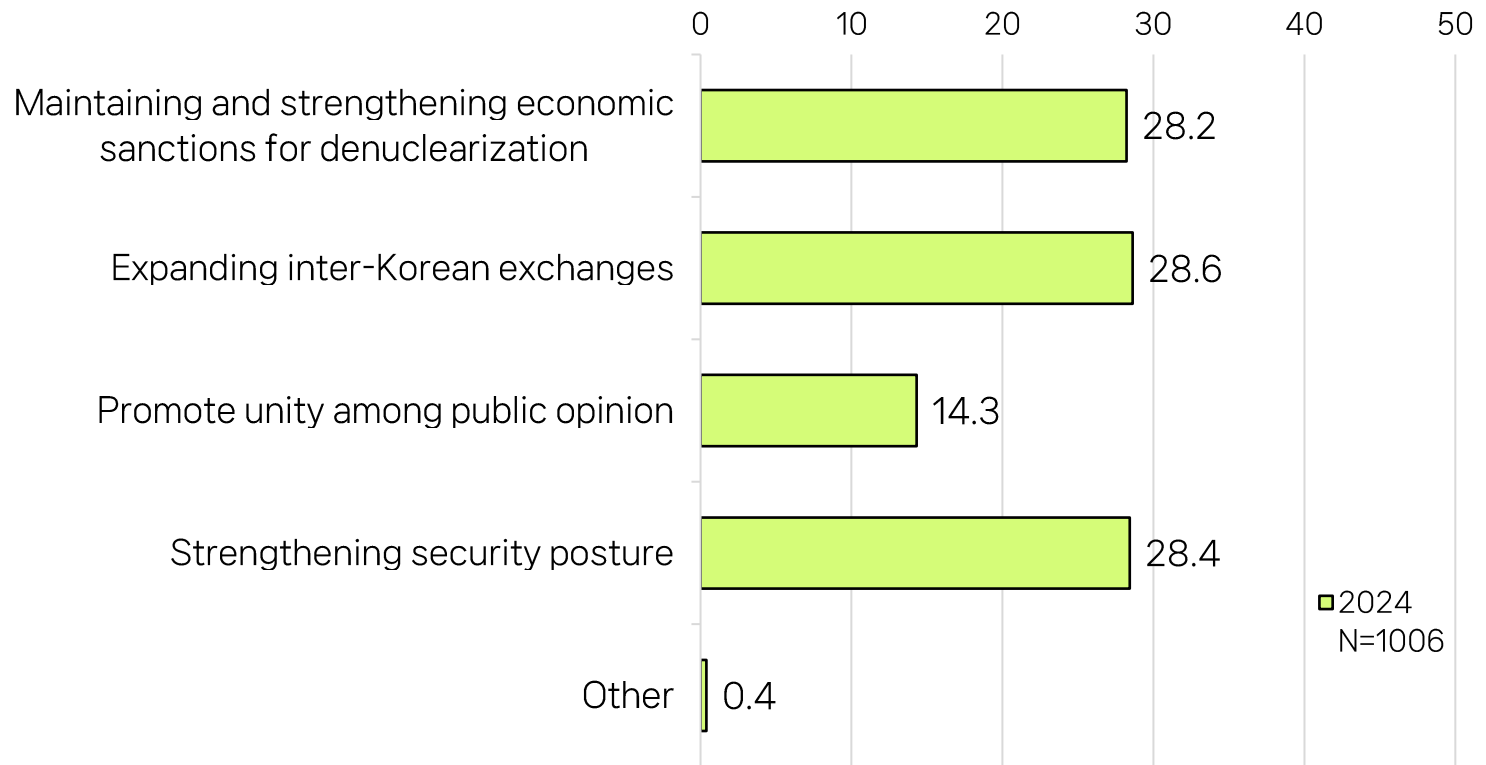


A	B	C	D	E	F
The current instability will be maintained	ROK-DPRK tensions between will deepen	Inter-Korean relations will improve	Signs of inter-Korean reunification will arise	Other	Not sure

Top Policy Priority toward North Korea

Q48. What is South Korea's top policy priority toward North Korea?

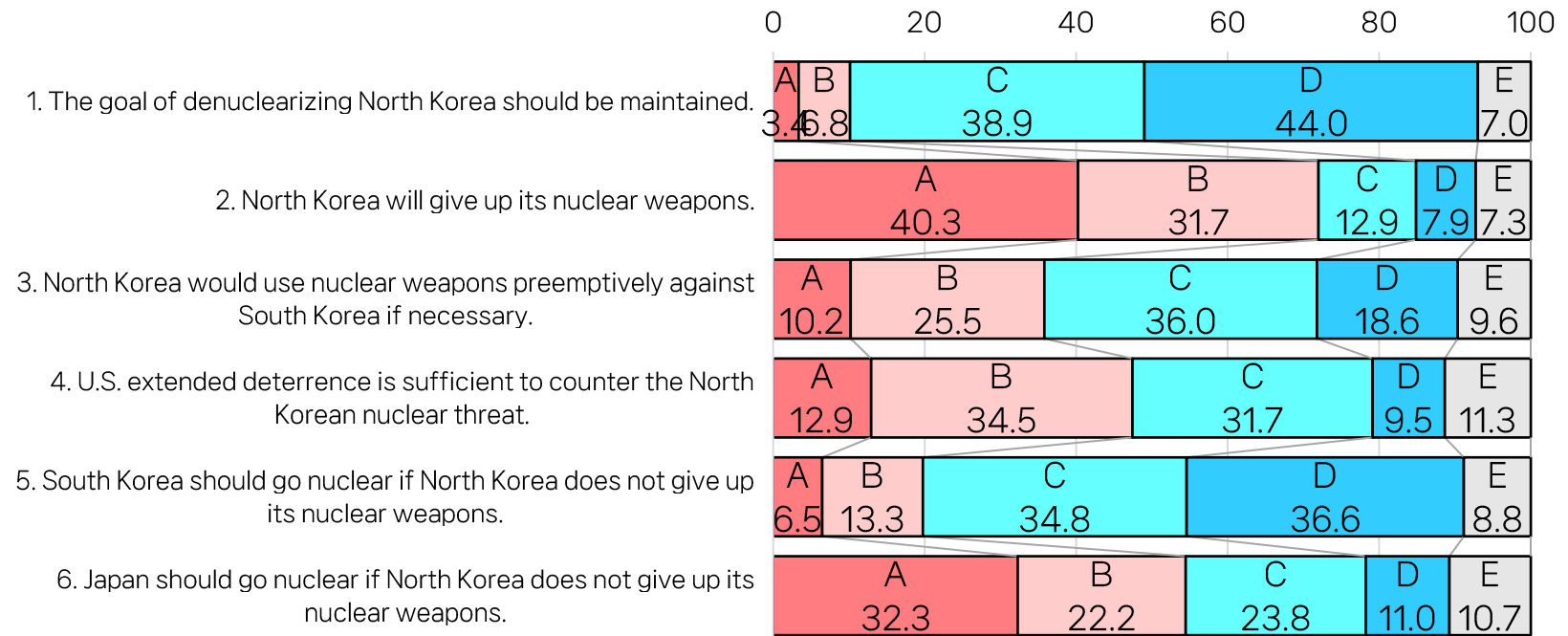
(%)



North Korean Nuclear Weapons and Responses

Q49. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

(%)



A	B	C	D	E
Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Neither