

FOR RELEASE SEPTEMBER 9, 2015

Americans' Concerns about China: Economics, Cyberattacks, Human Rights Top the List

*Republicans Especially Likely to See
Threats from China*

BY *Richard Wike*

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
ON THIS REPORT:**

Richard Wike, Director, Global Attitudes Research
Stefan Cornibert, Communications Associate

202.419.4372

www.pewresearch.org

About This Report

This report examines American perceptions of issues in the U.S.-China relationship. It is based on 1,003 telephone interviews in the U.S. with adults 18 and older conducted from April 13 to May 3, 2015. For more details, see survey methodology and topline results.

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

Richard Wike, *Director, Global Attitudes Research*

James Bell, *Vice President, Global Strategy*

Danielle Cuddington, *Research Assistant*

Michael Keegan, *Information Graphics Designer*

Dorothy Manevich, *Research Assistant*

Jacob Poushter, *Senior Researcher*

Steve Schwarzer, *Research Methodologist*

Bruce Stokes, *Director, Global Economic Attitudes*

Hani Zainulbhai, *Research Analyst*

Jill Carle, *Research Associate*

Claudia Deane, *Vice President, Research*

David Kent, *Copy Editor*

Bridget Parker, *Research Assistant*

Audrey Powers, *Administrative Coordinator*

Katie Simmons, *Associate Director, Research*

Ben Wormald, *Associate Digital Producer*

Find related reports online at pewresearch.org/global.

About Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It does not take policy positions. It conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, media content analysis and other empirical social science research. The center studies U.S. politics and policy views; media and journalism; internet and technology; religion and public life; Hispanic trends; global attitudes and U.S. social and demographic trends. Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder. All of the center's reports are available at www.pewresearch.org.

© Pew Research Center 2015

Americans' Concerns about China: Economics, Cyberattacks, Human Rights Top the List

Republicans Especially Likely to See Threats from China

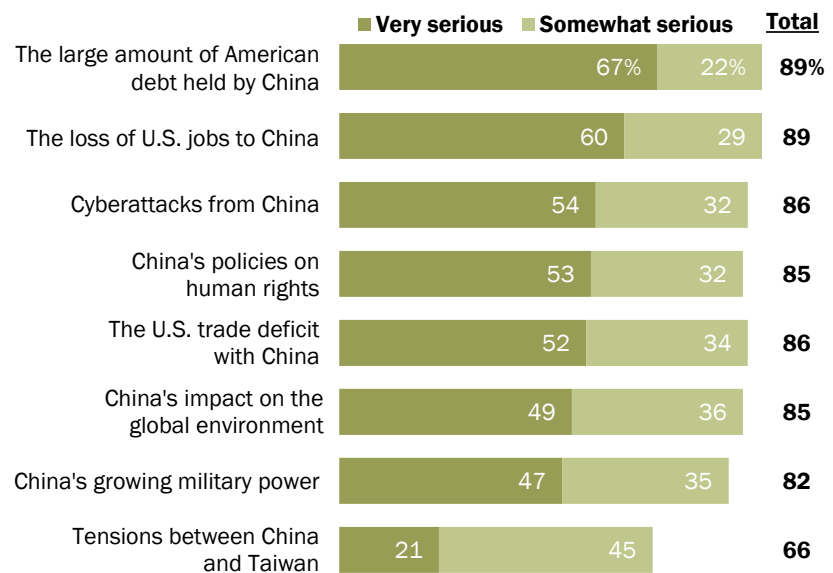
As the White House prepares to host Chinese President Xi Jinping for his first state visit to the United States later this month, the American public continues to see a number of issues related to China and its rising power as major concerns. In particular, economic issues loom large. China's growth rate has slowed, its stock markets have recently plummeted and it is facing a variety of economic challenges, but Americans are still concerned about economic threats posed by China – especially the amount of U.S. debt held by Beijing, the U.S.-China trade deficit and the loss of American jobs to China.

But it's not just economic issues that trouble Americans. They are also worried about cyberattacks, Beijing's human rights record, China's impact on the environment and its growing military strength. On many of these issues, there is a sharp partisan divide, with Republicans expressing stronger concerns than either Democrats or independents.

These are among the key findings of a new Pew Research Center survey, conducted among 1,003 respondents in the U.S. from April 13 to May 3, 2015. (For more on U.S. and global views of China, see "[Global Publics Back U.S. on Fighting ISIS, but Are Critical of Post-9/11 Torture](#)," released June 23, 2015).

Americans See a Variety of Problems in Relationship with China

How serious of a problem is ...



Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q26xa-h.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Large majorities of Americans say all eight of the issues included on the survey are at least a somewhat serious problem for the U.S. And seven of these issues are considered a serious problem by roughly eight-in-ten or more of those polled.

All three economic issues are rated as *very* serious problems by roughly half or more of the American public. Two-in-three say the large amount of U.S. debt held by China ([\\$1.27 trillion](#)) is a very serious problem, and six-in-ten hold this view about the loss of jobs to China. Concerns about job losses are especially common among older Americans, women, people with less education, those with lower incomes and Republicans. About half (52%) consider the trade deficit ([which totaled \\$31.6 billion in July](#)) a very serious problem.

Even though economic issues continue to shape how Americans see China, there is slightly less concern about these perceived threats than there was three years ago, when Pew Research Center last asked these questions. Since 2012, the share of the public describing the debt issue (-11 percentage points), job losses (-11) and the trade deficit (-9) as very serious concerns has declined significantly.

The current survey was conducted before [revelations](#) in June that U.S. federal workers had been targeted by cyberattacks that many experts believe originated in China. Even so, 54% considered cyberattacks from China a very serious problem.

And roughly half say the same about Beijing's human rights policies, the country's environmental impact and its increasing military power, which was showcased last week in Beijing with a major military parade commemorating the end of World War II.

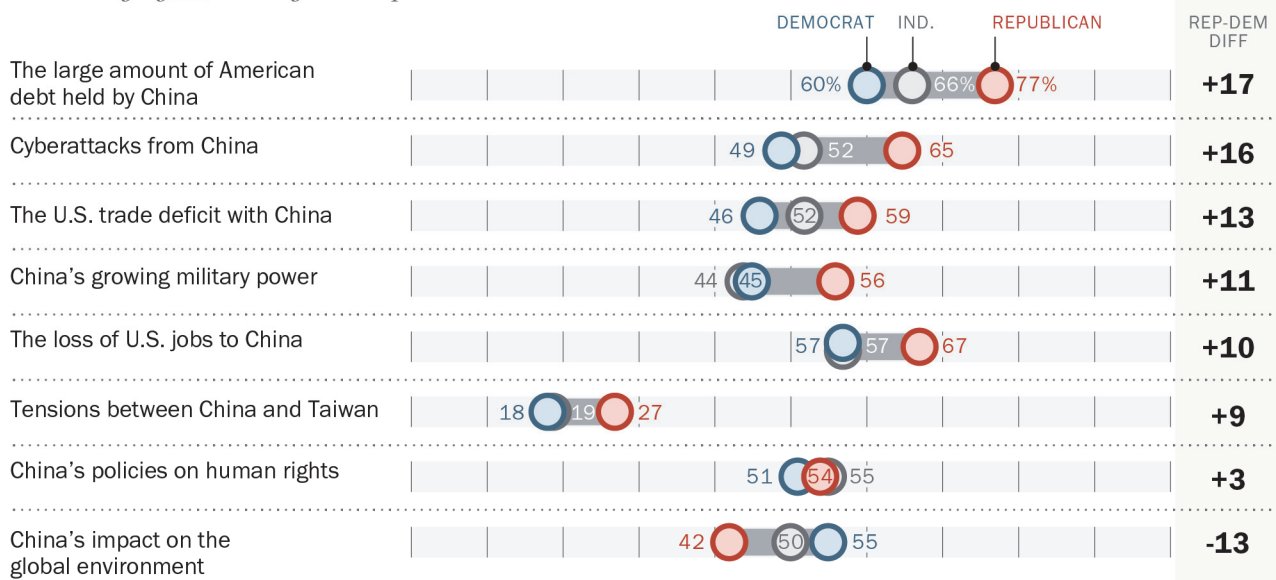
Among the issues tested, tensions between Taiwan and China generate the least concern. Just 21% think this is a very serious problem.

Republicans More Likely to See Threats from China

China has already become an issue in the 2016 Republican presidential contest, and as the new survey reveals, worries about China are especially prevalent among GOP supporters. For instance, 77% of Republicans say the large amount of U.S. debt held by China is a very serious problem, compared with 60% of Democrats. Republicans are significantly more concerned than Democrats about six of the eight issues on the survey. The exceptions are human rights, where there is no significant partisan difference, and China's impact on the environment, which generates more worries among Democrats.

Republicans More Concerned than Democrats about China on Most Issues

Percent saying ___ is a very serious problem



Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q26xa-h.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Ratings for China Are Steady – and Negative

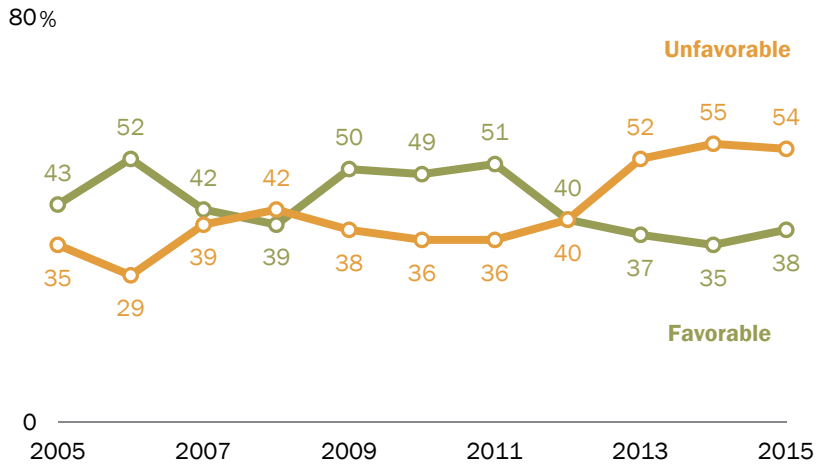
Overall ratings for China are relatively unchanged since last year. Fifty-four percent of Americans have an unfavorable view of China, while just 38% hold a favorable opinion. In each Pew Research Center survey since 2013, roughly half or more of those surveyed have expressed a negative view of China. Prior to 2013, the most negative rating for China was 42% in 2008.

As is generally the case for views about China on specific issues, there is a notable partisan gap on the overall favorability measure. More than six-in-ten Republicans (63%) give China an unfavorable rating, compared with 51% of independents and 50% of Democrats.

Negative assessments of China are also more common among older Americans. Fully 64% of those ages 50 and older have a negative opinion, while just 39% hold this view among people under age 30.

Americans Give China Mostly Negative Ratings

U.S. views of China

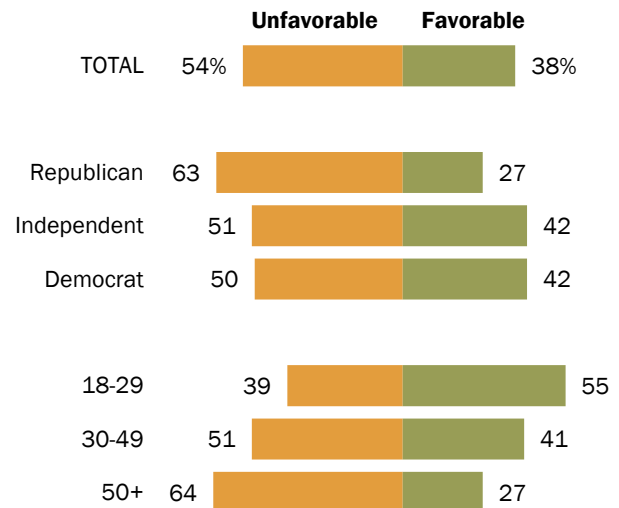


Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q12b.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Republicans and Older Americans More Negative toward China

U.S. views of China



Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q12b.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Methodology

About the Pew Research Center's Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey

Results for the survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. The results are based on national samples, unless otherwise noted. More details about our international survey methodology and country-specific sample designs are available on our [website](#).

For more detailed information on survey methods for this report, see here:

http://www.pewglobal.org/international-survey-methodology/?country_select=United+States&year_select=2015

For more general information on international survey research, see here:

<http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/international-survey-research/>

Topline Results

**Pew Research Center
Spring 2015 survey
September 9, 2015 Release**

Methodological notes:

- Survey results are based on national samples. For further details on sample designs, see Methodology section and our [international survey methods database](#).
- Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. The topline “total” columns show 100%, because they are based on unrounded numbers.
- Not all questions included in the Spring 2015 survey are presented in this topline. Omitted questions have either been previously released or will be released in future reports.

		Q12b. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of ____? b. China					
		Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2015	4	34	33	21	8	100
	Spring, 2014	7	28	34	21	10	100
	Spring, 2013	7	30	32	20	12	100
	Spring, 2012	6	34	25	15	19	100
	Spring, 2011	12	39	22	14	12	100
	Spring, 2010	10	39	24	12	14	100
	Spring, 2009	9	41	25	13	13	100
	Spring, 2008	9	30	26	16	19	100
	Spring, 2007	8	34	25	14	18	100
	Spring, 2006	12	40	19	10	19	100
Spring, 2005	9	34	22	13	22	100	

		Q26xa. I am going to read you a list of things that may be problems for the U.S. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious or not a problem at all. a. the loss of U.S. jobs to China					
		Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not a problem at all	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2015	60	29	8	2	1	100
	May, 2012	71	19	6	2	2	100

		Q26xb. I am going to read you a list of things that may be problems for the U.S. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious or not a problem at all. b. the U.S. trade deficit with China					
		Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not a problem at all	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2015	52	34	7	4	3	100
	May, 2012	61	28	4	3	4	100

		Q26xc. I am going to read you a list of things that may be problems for the U.S. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious or not a problem at all. c. China's policies on human rights					
		Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not a problem at all	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2015	53	32	6	4	5	100
	May, 2012	48	33	10	4	6	100

		Q26xd. I am going to read you a list of things that may be problems for the U.S. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious or not a problem at all. d. tensions between China and Taiwan					
		Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not a problem at all	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2015	21	45	17	7	10	100
	May, 2012	27	39	15	6	13	100

		Q26xe. I am going to read you a list of things that may be problems for the U.S. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious or not a problem at all. e. China's impact on the global environment					
		Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not a problem at all	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2015	49	36	7	3	4	100
	May, 2012	50	31	10	4	6	100

		Q26xf. I am going to read you a list of things that may be problems for the U.S. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious or not a problem at all. f. the large amount of American debt that is held by China					
		Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not a problem at all	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2015	67	22	5	3	2	100
	May, 2012	78	14	3	2	3	100

		Q26xg. I am going to read you a list of things that may be problems for the U.S. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious or not a problem at all. g. China's growing military power					
		Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not a problem at all	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2015	47	35	12	4	2	100
	May, 2012	49	33	11	4	4	100

		Q26xh. I am going to read you a list of things that may be problems for the U.S. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious or not a problem at all. h. cyberattacks from China					
		Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not a problem at all	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2015	54	32	7	4	3	100
	May, 2012	50	29	10	2	8	100