

Read our research on: [Economic Conditions](#) | [Donald Trump](#) | [Artificial Intelligence](#)

Pew Research Center

Search [pewresearch.org...](#)RESEARCH  
TOPICS ▼

PUBLICATIONS

OUR  
METHODSSHORT  
READSTOOLS &  
DATASETS

EXPERTS

ABOUT  
US[Home](#) > [Research Topics](#) > [Politics & Policy](#) > [Leaders](#) > [Angela Merkel](#)

SHORT READS | SEPTEMBER 23, 2020

SHARE

# How people in 14 countries view the state of the world in 2020

BY [JACOB POUSHTER](#) AND [J.J. MONCUS](#)

2020 has been a year unlike any in recent memory. And a survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 14 countries over the summer – as the [coronavirus outbreak](#) spread around the globe – tells us much about people's thoughts and concerns amid the pandemic. Here are some highlights from the survey, including how people see their own country's response to the virus and how they view the economic and political implications of COVID-19.

**1 The coronavirus has changed everyday life for many around the world.** A median of 58% of adults across the surveyed countries say their life has changed a fair amount or a great deal [due to the outbreak](#).

## RELATED

REPORT | NOV 22, 2021

### U.S.-German Relations on the Mend as New Leadership Takes Hold

REPORT | SEP 22, 2021

### Germany and Merkel Receive High Marks Internationally in Chancellor's Last Year in Office

SHORT READS | SEP 22, 2021

### Merkel will end her tenure in office as a leader who was internationally popular during tumultuous times

SHORT READS | JUL 14, 2021

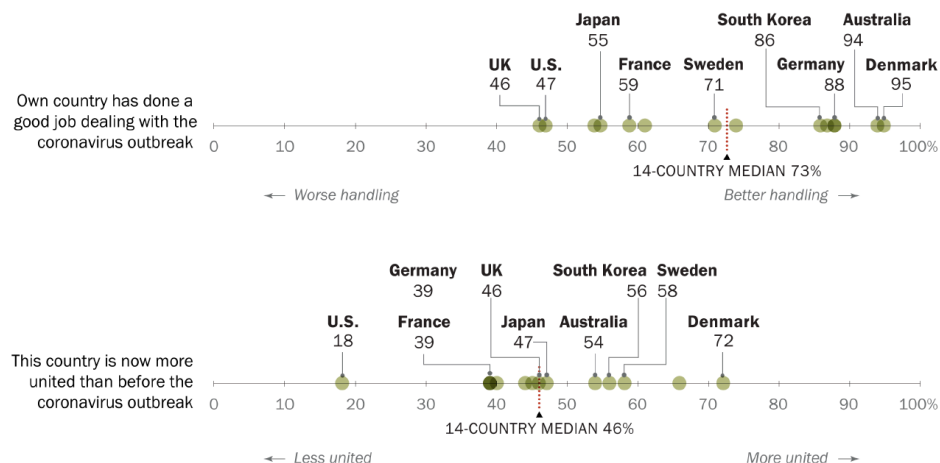
### Fast facts about global views of Merkel and Biden ahead of White House meeting

SHORT READS | JUN 11, 2021

### Americans have less confidence in key world leaders – including Biden – than other global publics do

## While many say their country's coronavirus response has been good, publics are divided over COVID-19's impact on national unity

% who say ...



Note: In Australia and Canada, the question was asked about "COVID-19." In Japan, it was asked about "novel coronavirus," and in South Korea, it was asked about "Corona19."

Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q3 & Q10c.

"Most Approve of National Response to COVID-19 in 14 Advanced Economies"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

In most countries, people give their governments high marks when it comes to responding to the virus. A median of 73% across the surveyed nations say their country has [done a good job](#), with people in Denmark, Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and South Korea especially positive. However, fewer than half of adults in the United States (47%) and United Kingdom (46%) say the same.

There is less consensus on whether the pandemic has [brought people together or created divisions](#). A median of only 46% say their country is now more united than before the outbreak. This includes only 18% of Americans, by far the lowest share in any surveyed country.

## 2 People in other countries see the [U.S. response to the pandemic](#) negatively.

A 13-country median of just 15% say the U.S. has done a good job of dealing with the outbreak. By contrast, half or more of adults in nearly all 13 countries rate the World Health Organization and European Union favorably on their coronavirus response. Relatively few think China has handled the pandemic well, although it still receives considerably better reviews than the U.S. in most countries.

### TOPICS

Angela Merkel

China Global Image

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Environment & Climate

Global Health

International Affairs

National Conditions

Organizations, Alliances & Treaties

U.S. Global Image

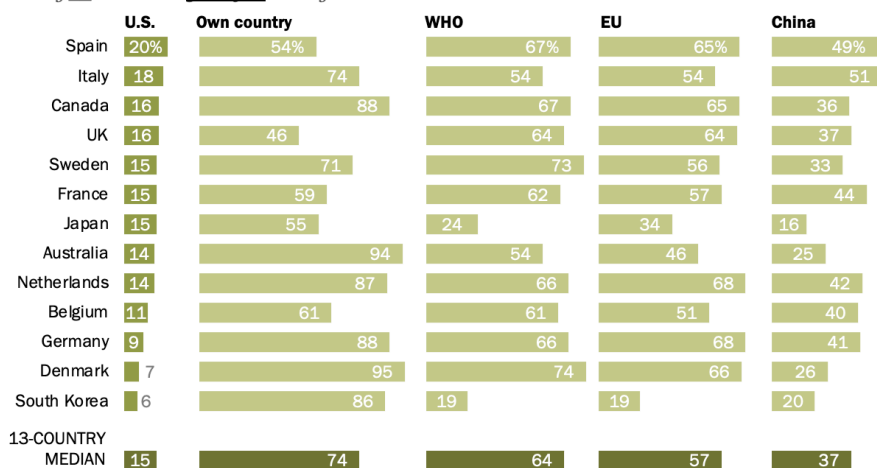
Vladimir Putin

### MOST POPULAR

- 1 How Americans view Israel and the Israel-Hamas war at the start of Trump's second term
- 2 Americans' Views of Deportations
- 3 How the U.S. Public and AI Experts View Artificial Intelligence
- 4 The shares of young adults living with parents vary widely across the U.S.
- 5 Pope Francis and public opinion: Key findings from our surveys

## In all other countries surveyed, people rank the U.S. coronavirus response lowest

% who say \_\_\_ has done a **good job** dealing with the coronavirus outbreak



Note: In Australia and Canada, the question was asked about "COVID-19." In Japan, it was asked about "the novel coronavirus," and in South Korea, it was asked about "Corona19."

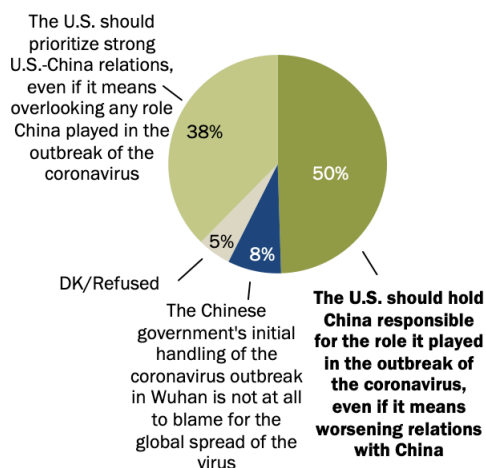
Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q10a-e.

"U.S. Image Plummets Internationally as Most Say Country Has Handled Coronavirus Badly"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## Half of Americans think the U.S. should hold China responsible for its role in the pandemic

% who say ...



Note: Based on total sample. Those who said the Chinese government's initial handling of the virus is not at all to blame for the global spread of the virus were not asked how the U.S. should handle China's perceived role.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 16-July 14, 2020. Q20 & Q20\_tot.

"Americans Fault China for Its Role in the Spread of COVID-19"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

**3** In the U.S., views of China have [continued to sour](#) amid the pandemic. Around eight-in-ten Americans (78%) say the Chinese government's initial handling of the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan is at least a fair amount to blame for the global spread of the virus. Half of Americans say the U.S. should hold China accountable for its role in the outbreak, even if it means worsening bilateral relations.

A clear majority of Americans (73%) also say the U.S. should try to promote human rights in China, at the expense of bilateral economic relations. The same percentage (73%) holds an unfavorable view of China, a 15-year high.

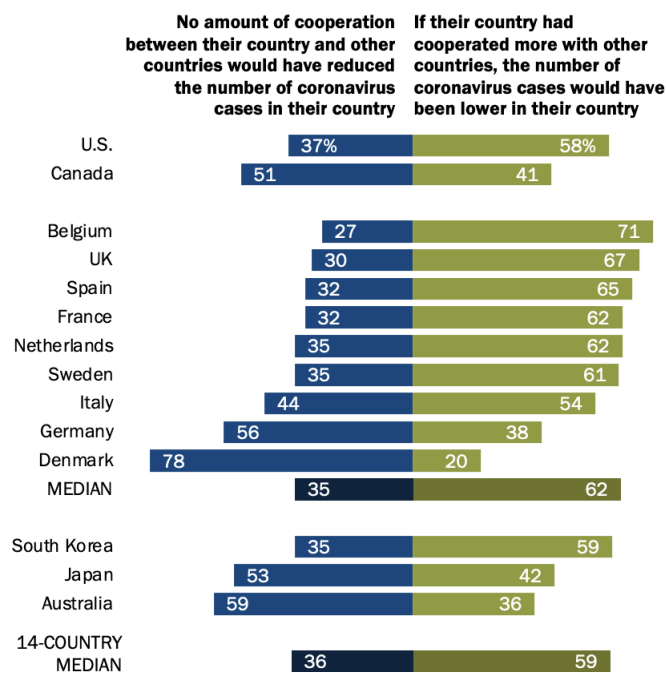
## 4 Many people believe the [impact of the COVID-19 outbreak](#) could have been mitigated in their country with more

**international cooperation.** A median of 59% across the surveyed countries say this, including a 58% majority in the U.S.

However, nearly eight-in-ten in Denmark (78%) express skepticism that more international cooperation would have led to fewer coronavirus cases in their country. Clear majorities in Australia (59%) and Germany (56%) say the same. In these same countries, roughly nine-in-ten or more say their own government handled the coronavirus outbreak well.

### Prevailing view is that greater international cooperation would have reduced COVID-19's impact

% who say ...



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown. In Australia and Canada, question asked about "COVID-19." In Japan, asked about "novel coronavirus." In South Korea, asked about "Corona19."

Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q4.

"International Cooperation Welcomed Across 14 Advanced Economies"

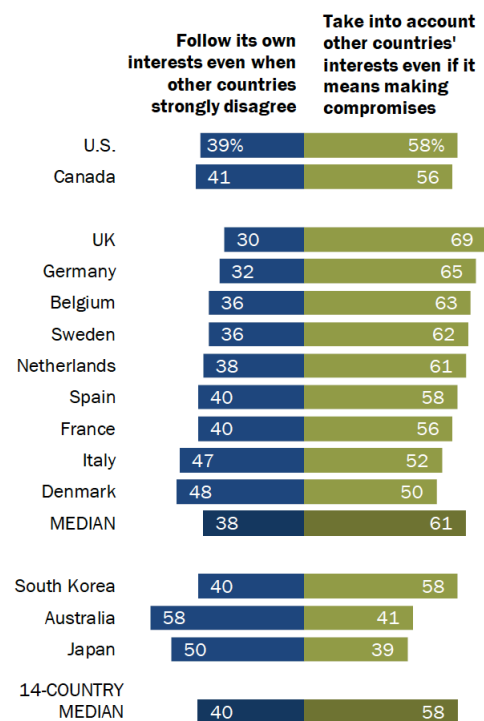
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## 5 People in most surveyed nations [embrace cooperation with other countries](#) when dealing with major international issues. A

median of 58% say their country should take other countries' interests into account when dealing with major international issues, even if it means making compromises. Majorities hold this view in 10 of 14 countries polled.

## There is widespread willingness to cooperate with other countries, even if it means compromising

% who say, when dealing with major international issues, their country should ...



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q11.

"International Cooperation Welcomed Across 14 Advanced Economies"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Views are more divided in Italy and Denmark. And in Australia and Japan, half of adults or more say their nation should follow its own interests, even when other countries strongly disagree.

These findings are in line with a pre-coronavirus Pew Research Center survey conducted in 12 of the same 14 countries in 2019. That survey showed robust public support for the idea of nations cooperating, rather than competing, on the world stage.

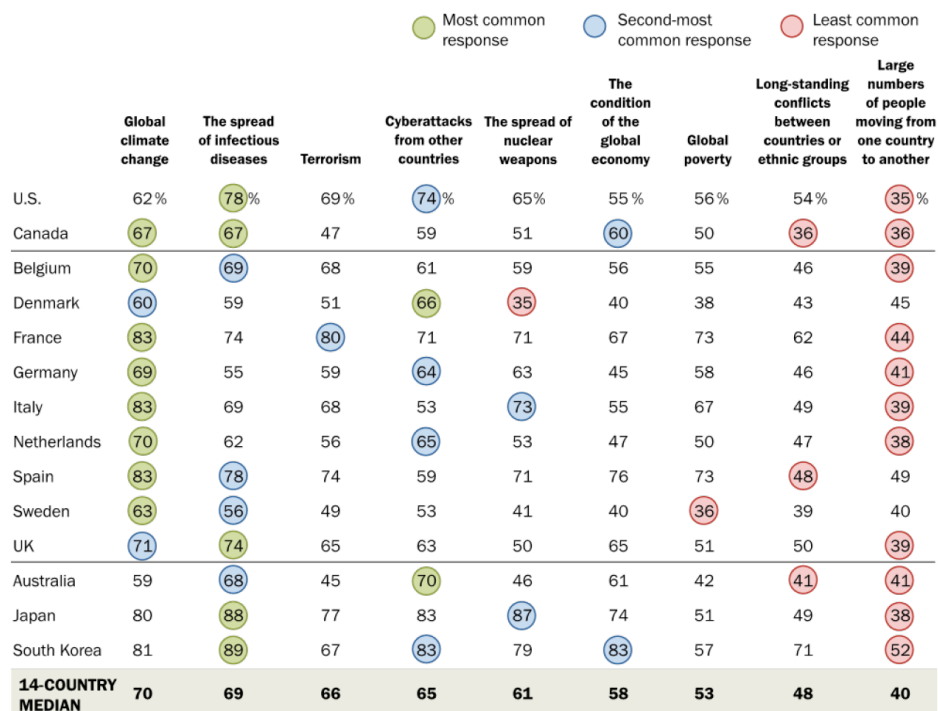
A median of 81% across 12 countries supported nation-states acting as members of a global community that works together to solve problems, while 17% said countries should act as independent nations that compete with others and pursue their own interests, the 2019 survey found.

**6 Despite the pandemic, many Europeans see global climate change as the [greatest threat to their country](#).** This is the case in countries including France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The spread of infectious disease is the top concern in South Korea, Japan, the U.S. and the UK. And in two countries, Australia and Denmark, cyberattacks from abroad are seen as the

greatest threat. People in the surveyed countries are less concerned with the threat of global poverty, conflicts between nations or ethnic groups, or mass migration.

### Majorities most consistently cite climate change, spread of infectious diseases as threats to their country; relatively few mention large-scale migration

% who say \_\_\_ is a major threat to their country



Source: Spring 2020 Global Attitudes Survey, Q13a-i.

"Despite Pandemic, Many Europeans Still See Climate Change as Greatest Threat to Their Countries"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

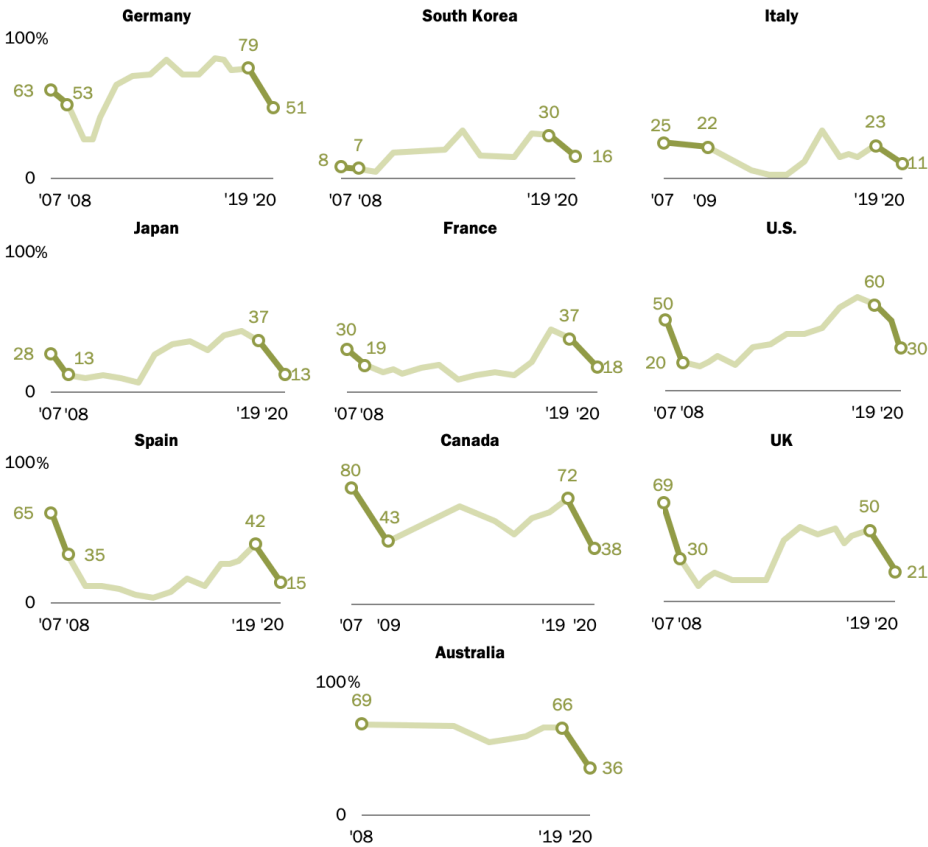
## 7 The share of people with a positive view of the economy has fallen sharply over the past year in all countries surveyed in

**2019 and 2020.** And in most countries surveyed both this year and during the last major economic downturn, views of current economic conditions are at or below where they were [at the start of the Great Recession](#).

Relatively few people in the surveyed countries believe things will get better in the next year. A median of 46% expect economic conditions to worsen in their country over the next 12 months, while 35% think the economic situation in their country will improve and 19% think it will stay the same.

**In many countries, economic attitudes have declined more between 2019 and 2020 than at the start of the global financial crisis**

% who say the current economic situation in their country is *good*

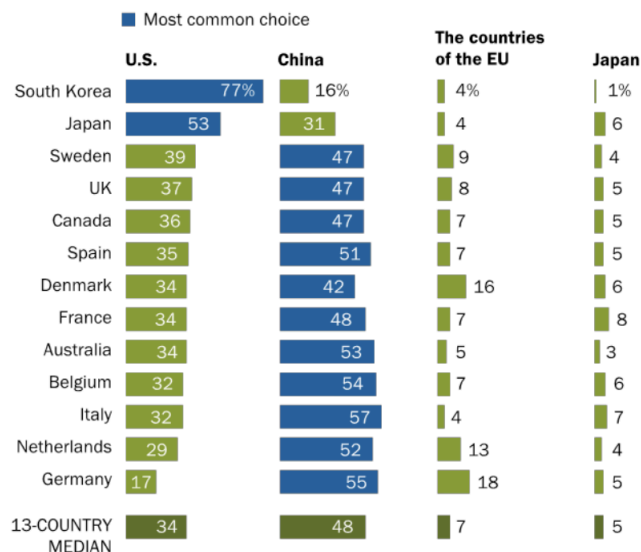


Note: Australia was not surveyed in 2007. Italy and Canada not polled in 2008. In Italy, 2020 survey was conducted by telephone; prior surveys were conducted face-to-face.  
Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey, Q6.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## South Korea, Japan see U.S. as world's leading economic power; Europeans say it's China

% who say \_\_\_ is the world's leading economic power



Note: Volunteered "other," "none/there is no leading power" and those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey, Q14.

"U.S. Image Plummets Internationally as Most Say Country Has Handled Coronavirus Badly"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

**8** People in many nations [name China](#), not the U.S., as the world's leading economic power. A median of 48% across the surveyed countries say this, while 34% say the U.S. is the global economic leader.

South Korea and Japan – the two nations geographically closest to China among those surveyed – are the only countries where the U.S. is the most common choice for the leading economic power.

Overall, ratings have not changed significantly in most countries since 2019, despite drastic economic challenges spurred by the coronavirus pandemic.

**9** Views of the U.S. have declined in many countries over the past year. Positive views of the U.S. are at or near an all-time low in [most countries for which trends are available](#). Three exceptions are South Korea, Italy and Spain, where people viewed the U.S. more negatively in 2003 – before the start of the Iraq War – than they currently do.

Men, those on the ideological right and European supporters of right-wing populist parties tend to have more favorable views of the U.S. than other people surveyed. (Those on the right generally viewed the U.S. more favorably than those on the left even during [President Barack Obama's tenure](#).)



## In many countries, favorable views of U.S. are at 20-year lows

% who have a **favorable** view of the U.S.

■ Highest rating ■ Lowest rating

### Pew Research Center

901 E St. NW, Suite 300

Washington, DC 20004

USA

(+1) 202-419-4300 | [Main](#)

(+1) 202-857-8562 | [Fax](#)

(+1) 202-419-4372 | [Media Inquiries](#)

#### RESEARCH TOPICS

Politics & Policy

International Affairs

Immigration & Migration

Race & Ethnicity

Religion

Age & Generations

Gender & LGBTQ

Family & Relationships

Economy & Work

Science

Internet & Technology

News Habits & Media

Methodological Research

#### FOLLOW US

 Email Newsletters

 Instagram

 Facebook

 X

 Tumblr

 YouTube

 RSS Feed

**ABOUT PEW RESEARCH CENTER** Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan, nonadvocacy fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world. It does not take policy positions. The Center conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, computational social science research and other data-driven research. Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of [The Pew Charitable Trusts](#), its primary funder.

© 2025 Pew Research Center [About](#) [Terms & Conditions](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Cookie Settings](#) [Feedback](#) [Careers](#) [Contact Us](#)

Note: Percentages are medians based on 13 countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and the UK. "Don't know" responses not shown.

Source: Summer 2020 Global Attitudes Survey. Q15a-f.

"U.S. Image Plummets Internationally as Most Say Country Has Handled Coronavirus Badly"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

**10 President Donald Trump is generally seen more negatively than other major world leaders**, with a median of 83% expressing [no confidence](#) in him on world affairs.

Out of the six leaders included in the survey, German Chancellor Angela Merkel receives the highest marks, followed by French President Emmanuel Macron. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson gets mixed reviews, while ratings for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping are overwhelmingly negative.

The leader with the most negative ratings, however, is Trump. Only 16% across the surveyed nations express confidence in him as he seeks reelection.

Topics