

Polling - Australian and Taiwanese attitudes to China

August 2022

Key results

The Australia Institute surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,003 Australians and 1,002 Taiwanese about their countries and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The results show that

- There are more Australians who think China will invade Australia “soon” than there are Taiwanese who think China will invade Taiwan “soon”.
- Nearly one in 10 Australians think China will attack Australia soon. Less than one in 20 Taiwanese think that China will attack Australia soon.
- Nearly one in four Australians think that China will attack Taiwan soon, while just one in 20 Taiwanese think that China will attack Taiwan soon.
- More Australians than Taiwanese regard China as aggressive (85% vs 80%).
- Australians and Taiwanese are equally likely to say that the United States is aggressive (73% for both).
- Australians are more likely to say the Australian people are prepared to go to war for Taiwanese independence than Taiwanese are to say that Taiwanese people are prepared to go to war for Taiwanese independence (26% vs 17%).
- Twice as many Australian males (28%) think that Australia could successfully defend itself against China as Australian women (14%).
- 60% of Australians and Taiwanese think that self-defence would fail.
 - If the US were to help defend Australia, this figure changes: 43% of males and 26% of females think Australia would win such a conflict.
- Almost twice as many Australian men (49%) as women (26%) think that the Australian people are prepared to go to war if China threatened military action against Australia. Three in five Australians (66% of males and 48% of females) think that the US would commit forces to Australia's defence.
- Australians are more likely to say that the US is afraid of China than vice versa.
- Four in five Australians and one in two Taiwanese say it would be in their country's interests for China and the US to work together towards world peace.

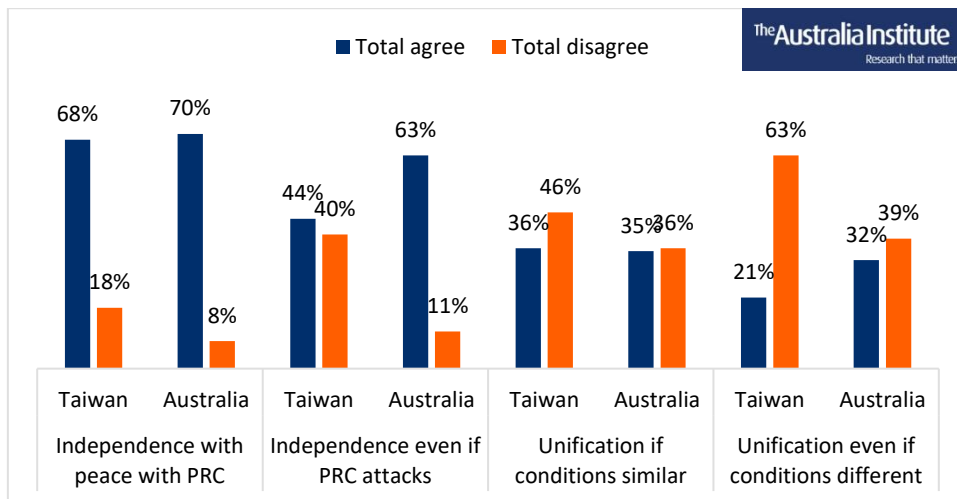
Attitudes to Taiwanese independence

Most Taiwanese and Australian respondents agree that Taiwan should become a new, independent country if it can maintain peaceful relations with the PRC (68% and 70%, respectively).

Taiwanese people are divided about whether Taiwan should declare independence even if the PRC decides to attack Taiwan as a consequence (44% agree, 40% disagree). By contrast, most Australians agree Taiwan should declare independence regardless (63% agree, 11% disagree).

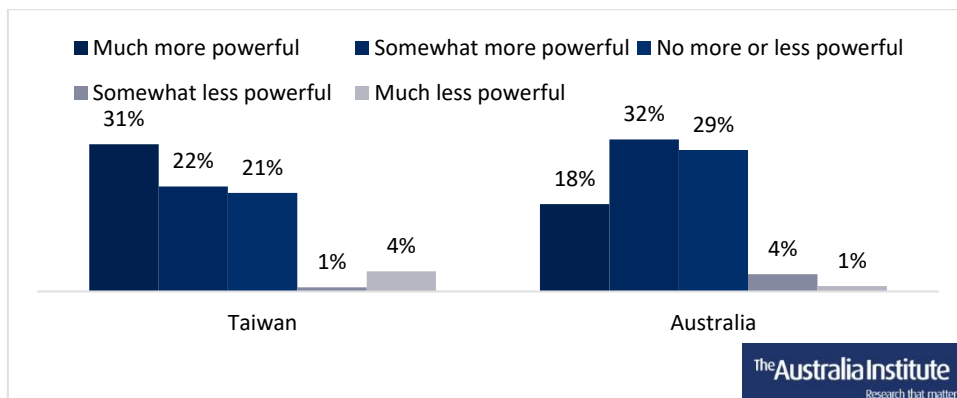
More Taiwanese disagree than agree that Taiwan and the PRC should unify if economic, social and political conditions were about the same (36% agree, 46% disagree). Most Taiwanese disagree that Taiwan and the PRC should unify even if the gap in conditions was quite large (21% agree, 63% disagree).

Figure 1: Attitudes to Taiwanese independence and unification



About half of Australian and Taiwanese people say the incorporation of Taiwan would make China somewhat more powerful or much more powerful (53% vs 50%).

Figure 2: If China fully incorporated Taiwan, would China be more powerful?

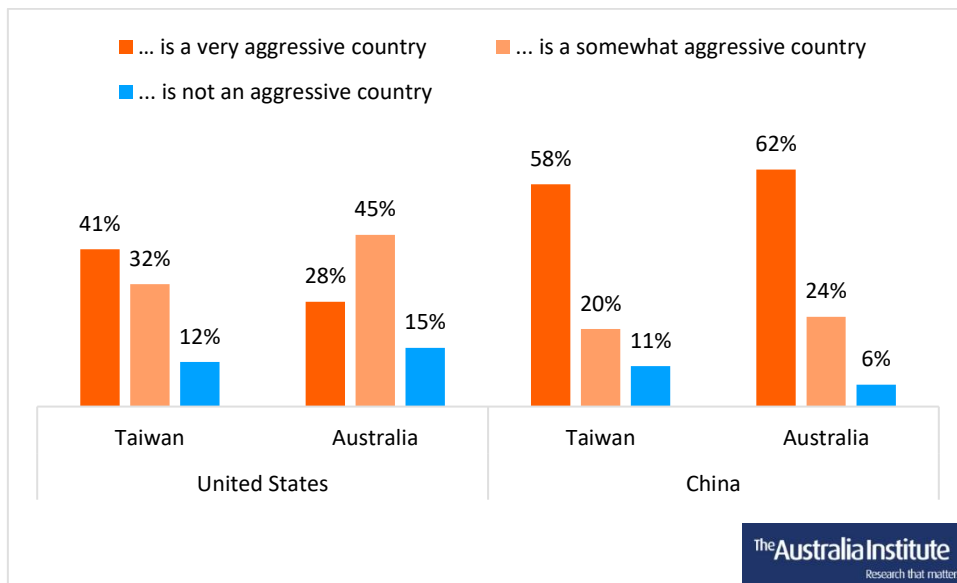


Attitudes to China and the United States

Australians are more likely to say that China is a very aggressive country than Taiwanese people are (62% vs 58%) and are also more likely to say that China is a somewhat aggressive country.

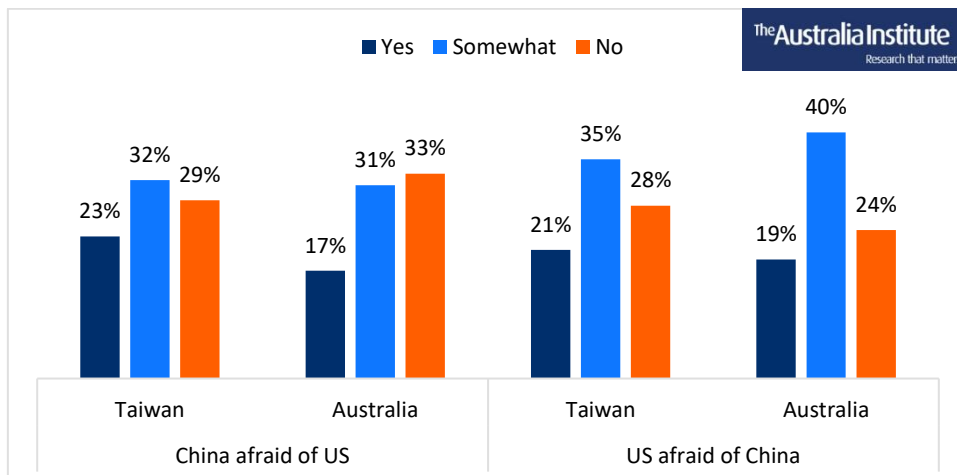
Taiwanese people are more likely to say that the United States is a very aggressive country than Australians are (41% vs 28%). Views are similar on whether the United States is “somewhat” or “very” aggressive (73% for both).

Figure 3: Views on whether China/United States is an aggressive country



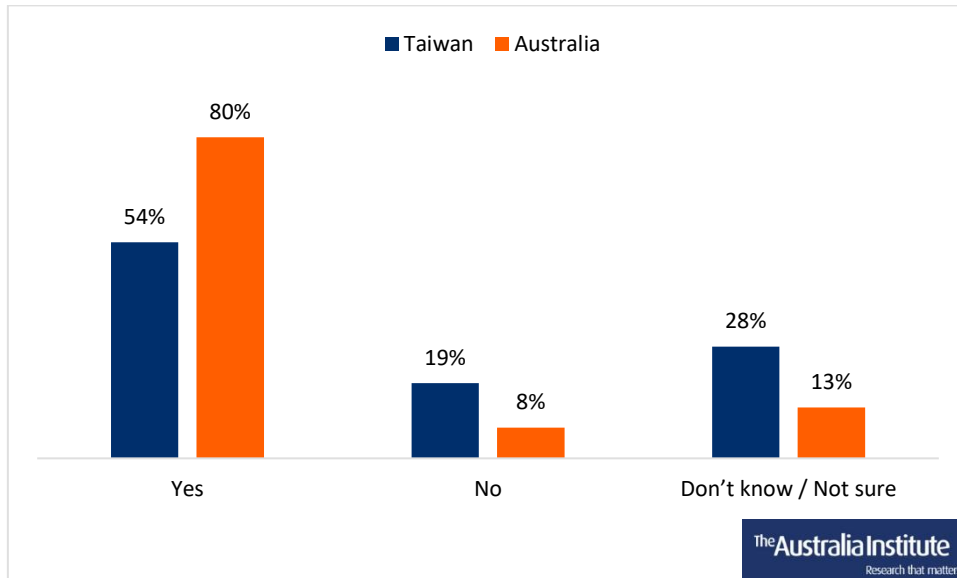
Australians and Taiwanese are divided on whether China is afraid of the United States and whether the United States is afraid of China. About half of Australians and Taiwanese say China is at least somewhat afraid of the United States, and somewhat more say the United States is at least somewhat afraid of China.

Figure 4: Is China afraid of the US and is the US afraid of China?



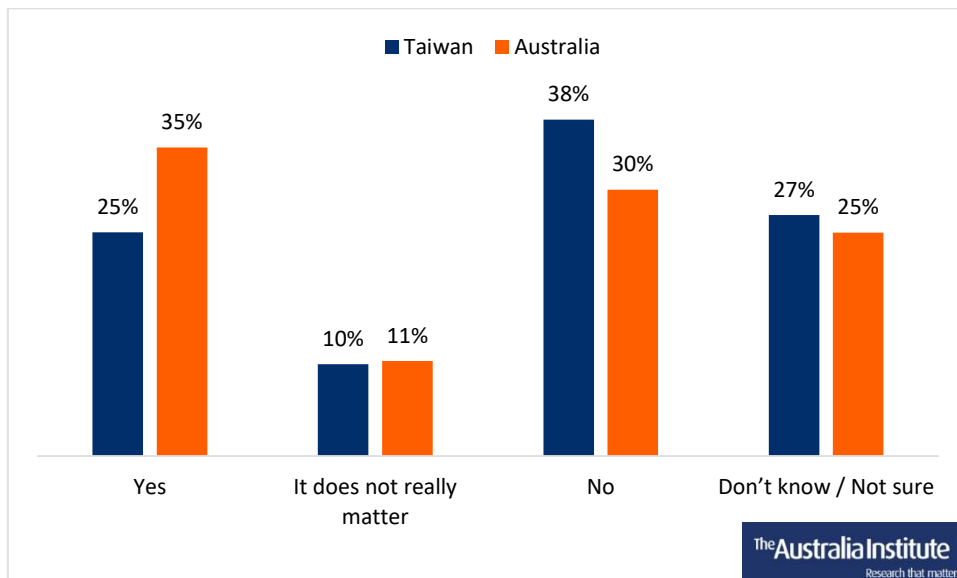
Australians are much more likely than Taiwanese to say that it is in their country's interests that China and the USA work together toward world peace (80% vs 54%).

Figure 5: In your country's interests China and US work together toward world peace



Neither Australians nor Taiwanese are particularly confident that China and the US can work together in the interests of world peace (25% of Taiwanese and 35% of Australians saying "Yes").

Figure 6: Can China and the US work together in the interests of world peace?



War between China and your country

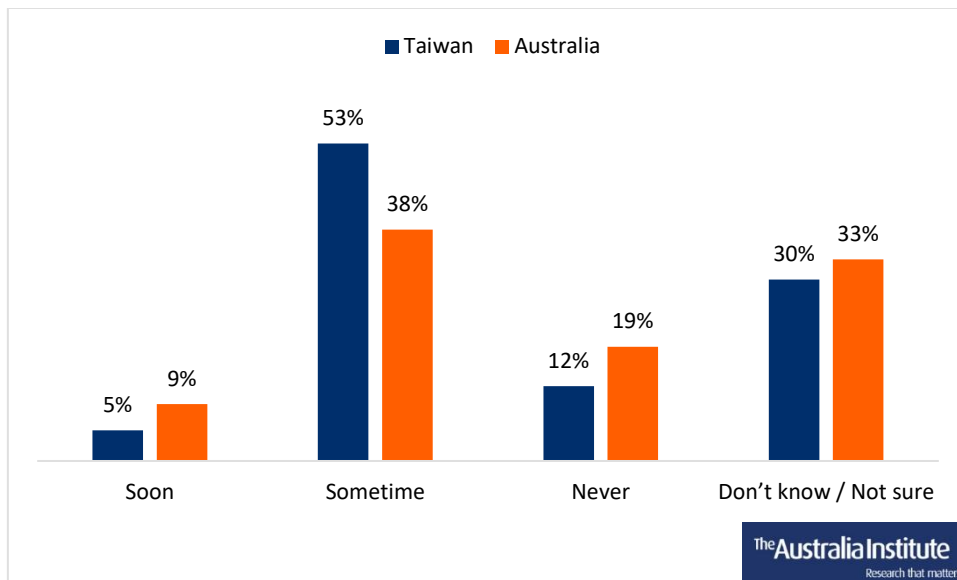
Despite the geographical distances, more Australians think that China will launch an armed attack on Australia “soon” than Taiwanese think China will launch an armed attack on Taiwan soon (9% vs 5%).

However, 58% of Taiwanese think China will attack Taiwan soon or “sometime” compared to 48% of Australians who think China will attack Australia soon or sometime.

One in 10 Taiwanese and one in five Australians say China will “never” launch an armed attack on their country.

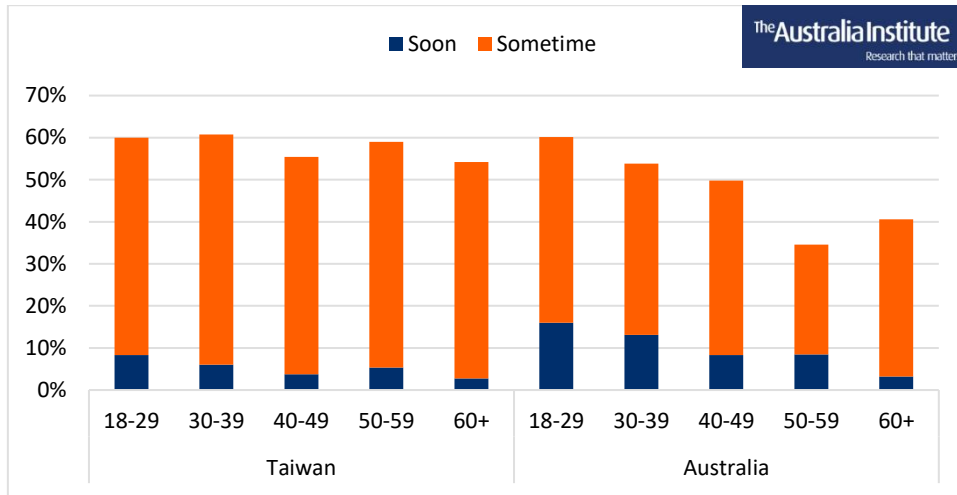
In both cases, around one in three select “Don’t know / Not sure”.

Figure 7: Do you think China will launch an armed attack on your country ...



Younger Australians are more likely to think that China will attack Australia than older Australians, with 60% of Australians aged 18–29 thinking China will attack soon or sometime compared to 41% of those aged 60 or older. The trend is less pronounced for Taiwanese, with 60% of those aged 18–29 thinking China will attack soon or sometime compared to 54% of those aged over 60.

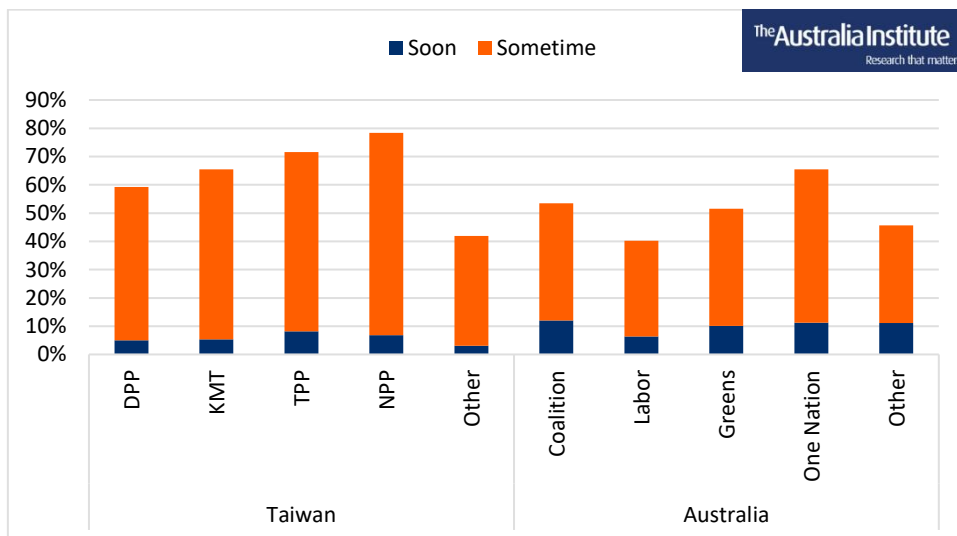
Figure 8: Do you think China will launch an armed attack on your country ...



There is some difference by voting intention. Those planning to vote for the Democratic Progressive Party are least likely to think China will attack Taiwan, although even among DPP voters three in five (59%) think China will attack soon or sometime. This increases to four in five (78%) for New Power Party voters.

In Australia, Labor and Independent/Other voters are least likely to think China will attack Australia (40% and 46% respectively). Most Greens and Coalition voters think China will attack (52% and 53%), as do two in three One Nation voters (65%).

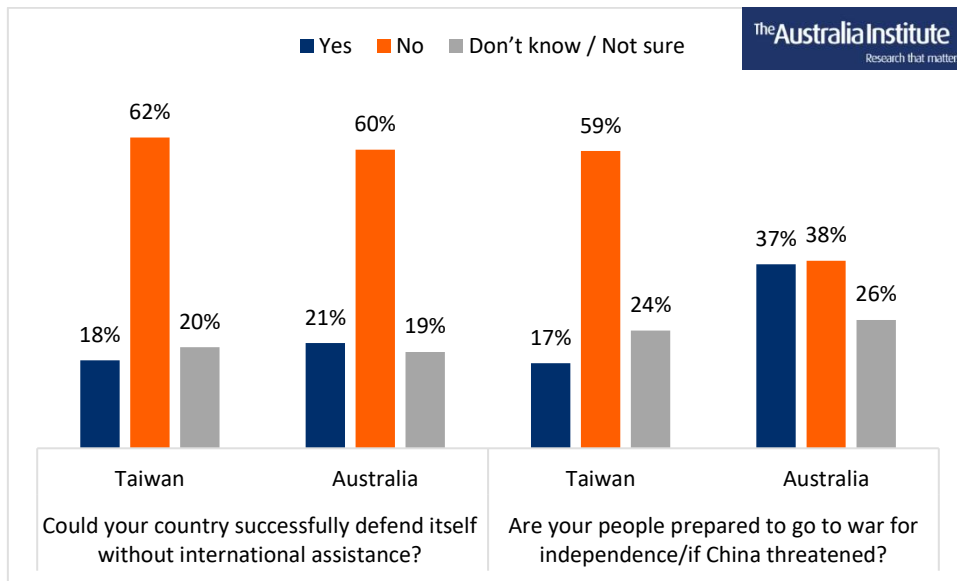
Figure 9: Do you think China will launch an armed attack on your country ...



Most Taiwanese and Australians say their respective countries could not successfully defend themselves against an attack from China (62% Taiwan, 60% Australia), compared to one in five who say they could.

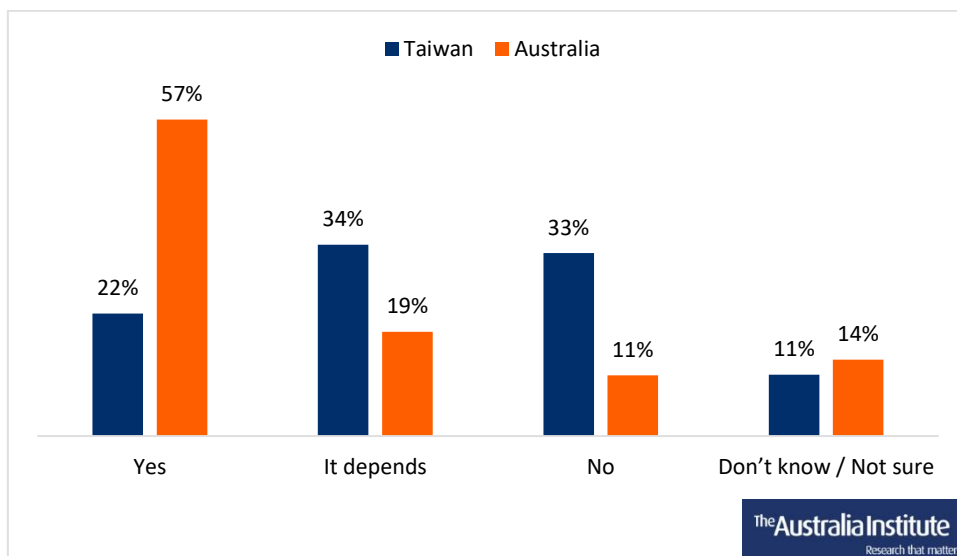
Australians are divided as to whether Australians are prepared to go to war if China threatens (37% yes, 38% no). Conversely, three in five Taiwanese (59%) say the Taiwanese people are not prepared to go to war with China to achieve independence.

Figure 10: Questions on war



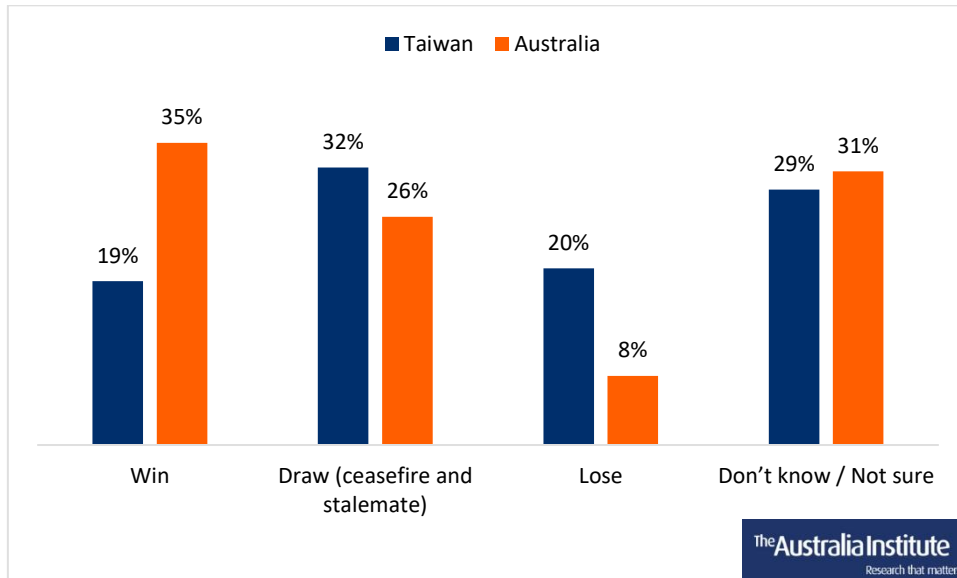
Only one in five Taiwanese (22%) think the US would commit military forces to fight a war if China attacked Taiwan, compared to three in five Australians (57%) who say the US would commit to fight a war if China attacked Australia.

Figure 11: If China attacks your country, will US commit military to fight war?



Australians are more confident that Australia would win a war with China with US help, although it is still only one in three (35%). Only one in five Taiwanese (19%) say their country would win a war with China with US help.

Figure 12: With the help of the US in a war with China, would your country ...



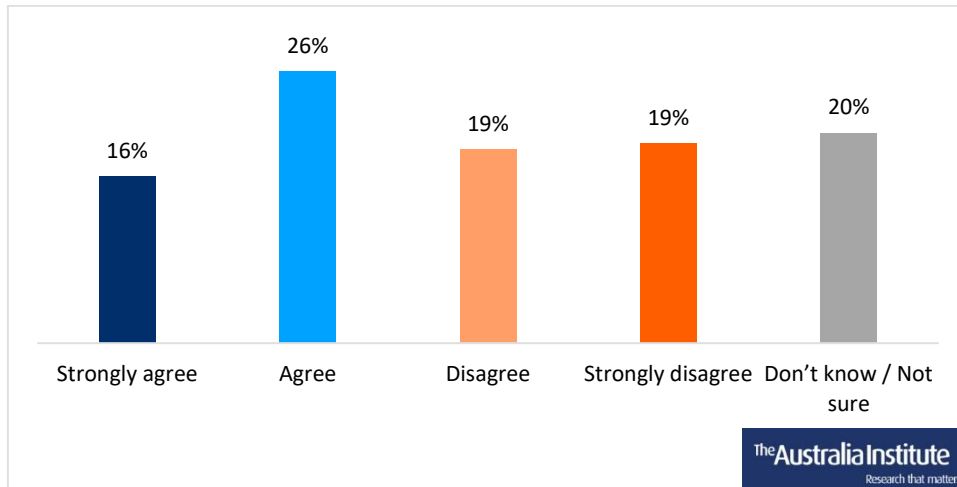
In both countries, men are more likely than women to say their country would win a war.

In Australia, 28% of men and 14% of women say Australia could defend itself without international assistance. In Taiwan, 22% of men and 13% of women say Taiwan could defend itself without international assistance.

In Australia, 43% of men and 26% of women say that Australia would win with US assistance. In Taiwan, 21% of men and 16% of women say that Taiwan would win with US assistance, although men are also more likely to say Taiwan would lose (women are much more likely to say “Don't know / Not sure”).

Taiwanese people are divided on whether Taiwan would be a powerful province were it fully incorporated into China (42% agree, 38% disagree).

Figure 13: If Taiwan were incorporated into China, it would be a powerful province



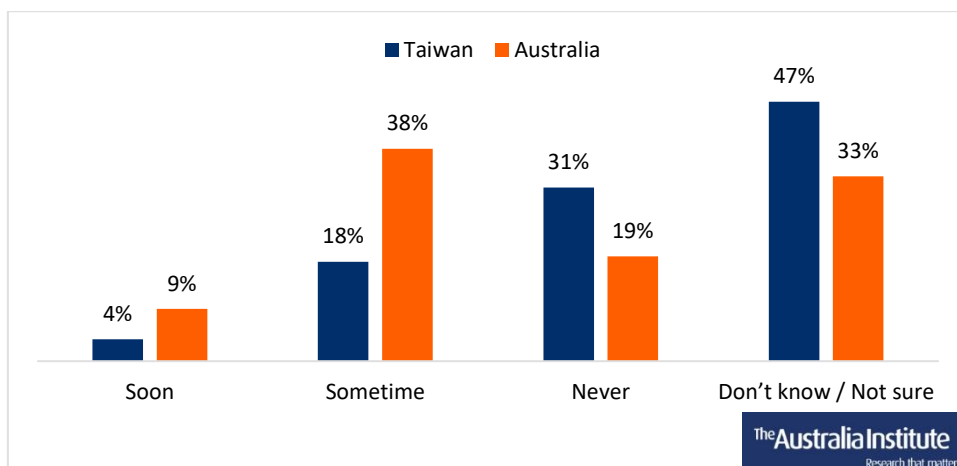
War between China and the other country

The previous section compares Taiwanese attitudes to the invasion of Taiwan with Australian attitudes to the invasion of Australia. What follows is a comparison of Taiwanese and Australian attitudes to the invasion of Australia; and Taiwanese and Australian attitudes to the invasion of Taiwan.

Australia

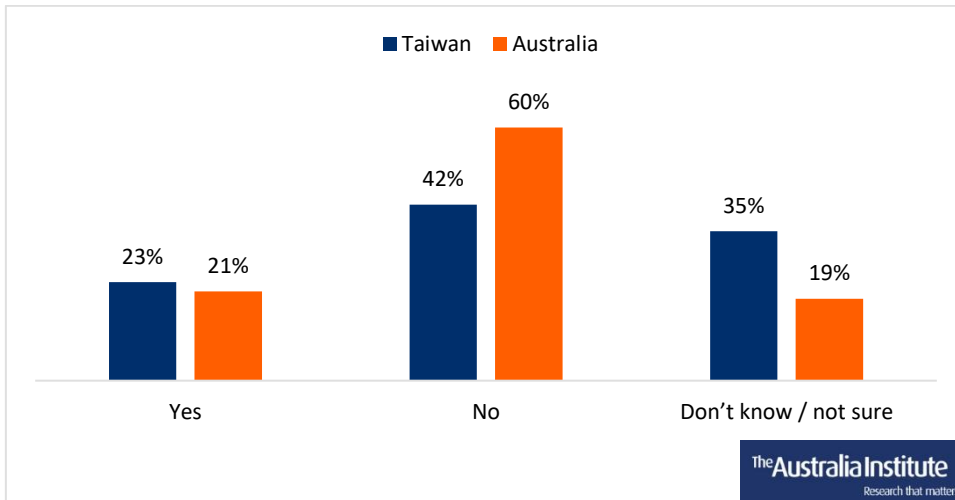
Taiwanese people think an attack on Australia by China is much less likely than Australians do. One in five Taiwanese think China will attack Australia soon or sometime, compared to one in two Australians (22% vs 48%).

Figure 14: Do you think China will launch an armed attack on Australia ...



Taiwanese people are about as likely to say Australia could successfully defend itself without international assistance if attacked by China (23% vs 21%) and much less likely to say that Australia could not defend itself (42% vs 60%).

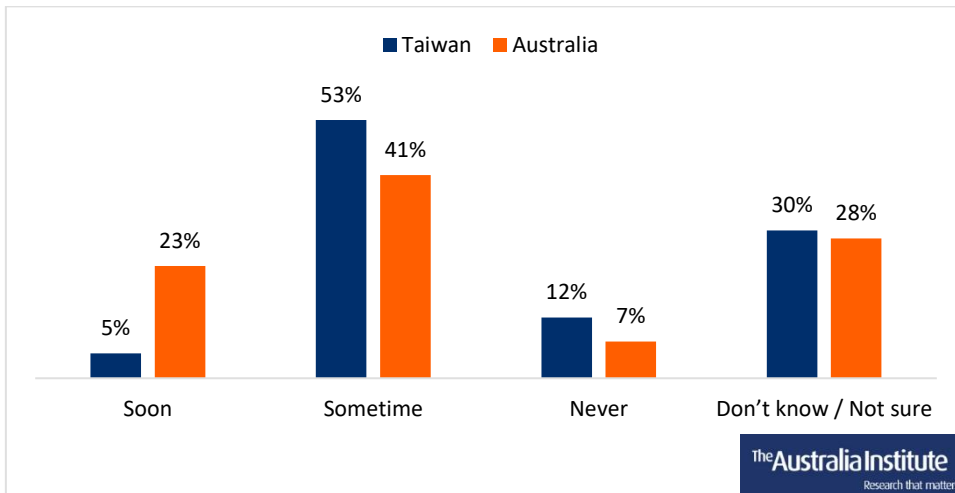
Figure 15: If China attacked, could Australia defend itself without assistance?



Taiwan

Australians are much more likely to think China will attack Taiwan than the Taiwanese are. One in four Australians think China will attack Taiwan soon, compared to one in 20 Taiwanese (23% vs 5%). More Taiwanese than Australians think China will never attack Taiwan (12% vs 7%).

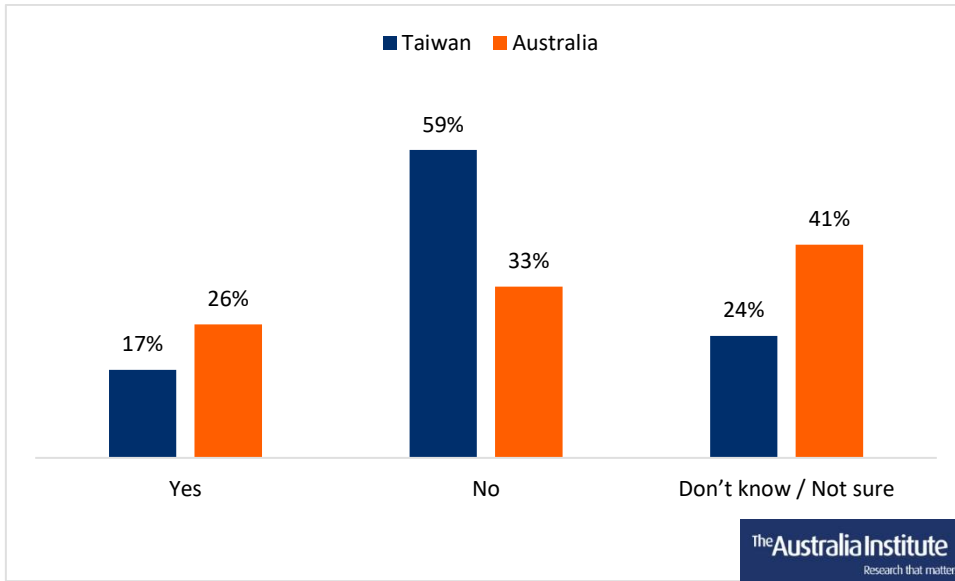
Figure 16: Do you think China will launch an armed attack on Taiwan ...



One in four Australians (26%) say the Australian people are prepared to go to war to help the Taiwanese people gain their independence from China.

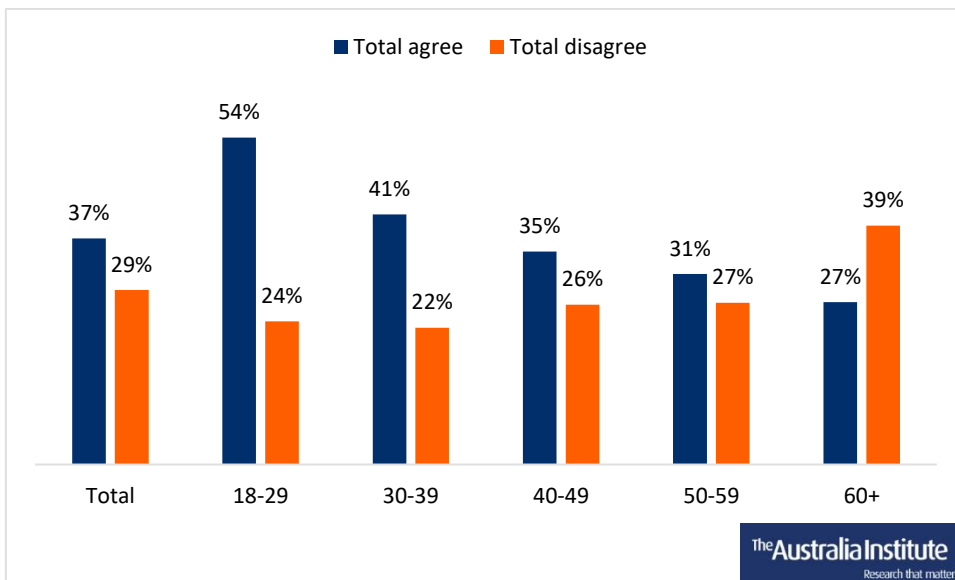
By contrast, only 17% of Taiwanese say the Taiwanese people are prepared to go to war to help the Taiwanese people gain their independence from China.

Figure 17: Are the Australian people/Taiwanese people prepared to go to war to help the Taiwanese people gain their independence from China?



More Australians agree than disagree that Australia should send its defence forces to Taiwan if China incorporates Taiwan (37% agree, 29% disagree). Agreement is highest among those aged 18–29 (54%), the only group where a majority agree. Disagreement is highest among those aged 60 and older (39%).

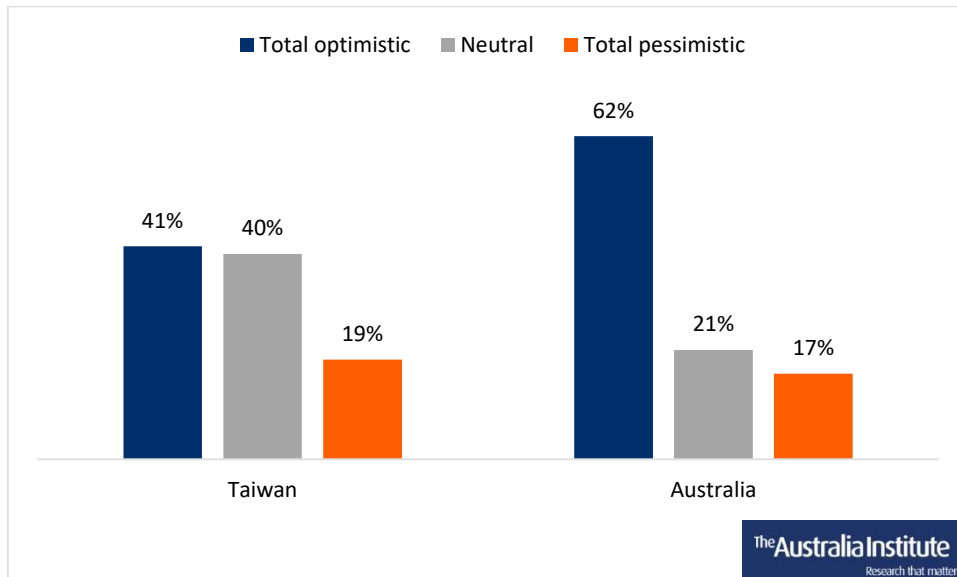
Figure 18: Australia should send its defence forces if China incorporates Taiwan



Optimism

Respondents were first asked whether they are optimistic or pessimistic about the future. Three in five Australians are very or somewhat optimistic, compared to two in five Taiwanese.

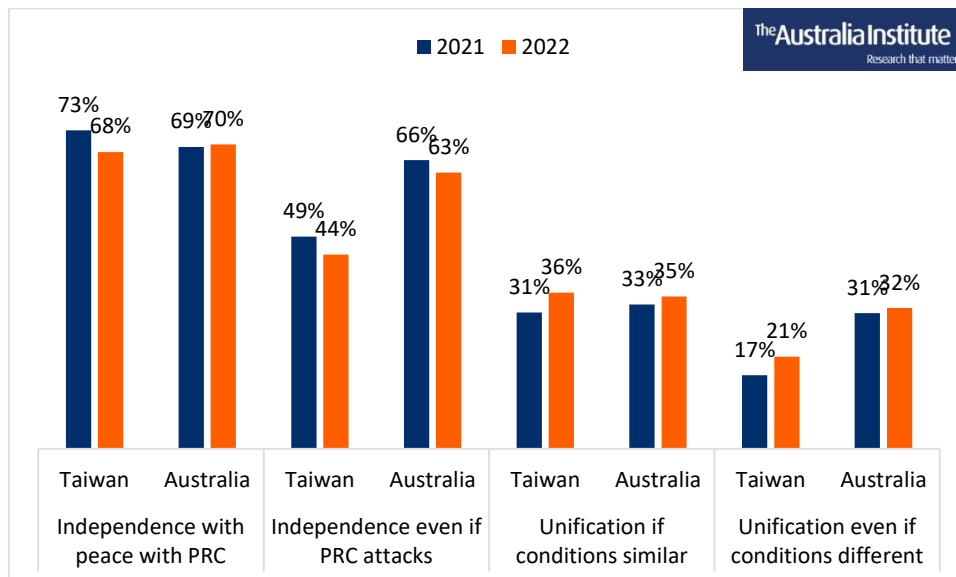
Figure 19: Optimism or pessimism with respect to the future



Comparison with 2021 results

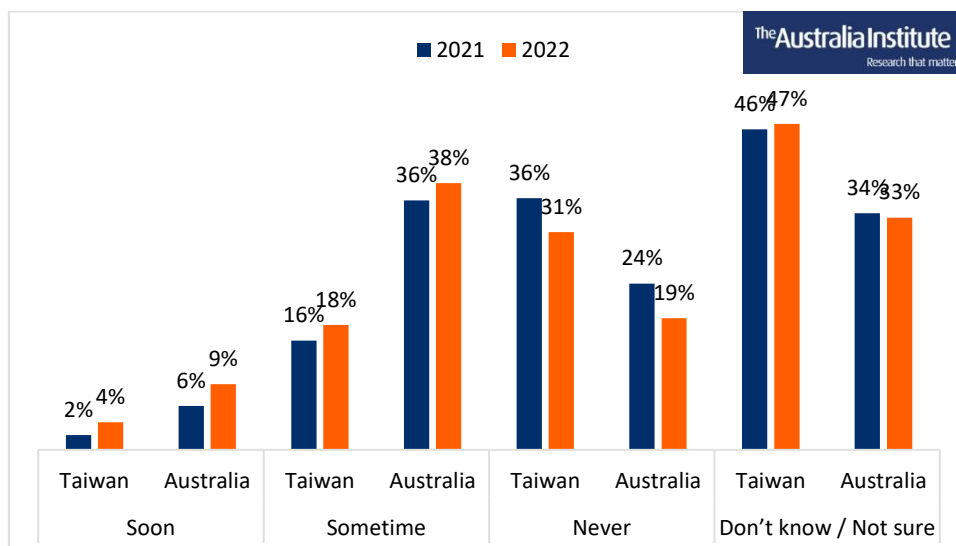
In June 2021 the Australia Institute asked these same questions of Australian and Taiwanese respondents.¹ For the most part, changes in results are small.

Figure 20: Attitudes to Taiwanese independence and unification



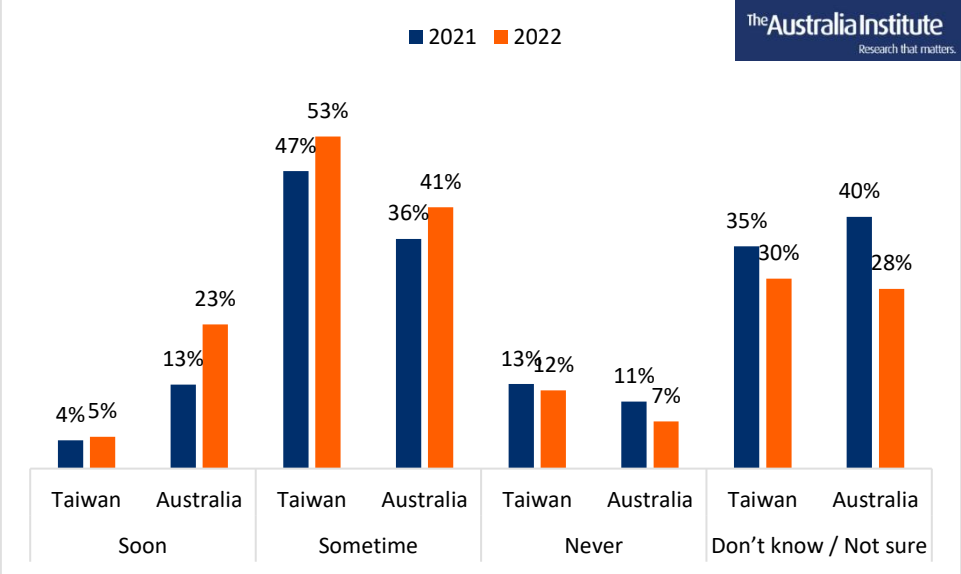
Among both Australians and Taiwanese, more are saying that they think China will attack Australia than did last year. The same is true when asked whether they think China will attack Taiwan.

Figure 21: Do you think China will launch an armed attack on Australia ...



¹ Behm, Conley Tyler, Browne, & Carter (2021) *Should Australia go to war with China in defence of Taiwan?*, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/should-australia-go-to-war-with-china-in-defence-of-taiwan/>

Figure 22: Do you think China will launch an armed attack on Taiwan ...



Method

Between 13 and 16 August 2022, The Australia Institute surveyed 1,003 adults living in Australia and 1,002 adults living in Taiwan, online through Dynata’s panel, with nationally representative samples by gender, age group and region.

Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the House of Representatives (Australia) or Legislative Yuan (Taiwan). Those who were undecided were asked which way they were leaning; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs.

The research is compliant with the [Australian Polling Council Quality Mark standards](#). The long methodology disclosure statement follows.

Long disclosure statement

The results were weighted by three variables (gender, age group and state or territory or region) based on Australian Bureau of Statistics [“National, state and territory population”](#) data, using the raking method. This resulted in an effective sample size of 999 for Australia and 720 for Taiwan.

The margin of error (95% confidence level) for the national results is 3% for Australia and 4% for Taiwan.

Results are shown only for larger states (Australia) or regions (Taiwan).

Voting intention questions appeared just after the initial demographic questions, before policy questions. Respondents who answered “Don’t know / Not sure” for voting intention were then asked a leaning question; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs. “Coalition” includes separate responses for Liberal and National. “Other” refers to Independent/Other, and minor parties in cases where they were included in the voting intention but represent too small a sample to be reported separately in the crosstabs.



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Detailed results

Full results are published in a separate file on the Australia Institute's website.