



Asian Barometer 2026



Nicholas Olczak





Executive summary

- Each year, the SOM Institute at University of Gothenburg conducts a Swedish national public opinion survey. Every two years since 2021, we have collaborated with the Institute to ask a representative sample of the Swedish public their views about China, India, and Japan. The latest round of the survey was sent out in late 2025. It found moderate but significant changes in opinions about these three countries. For the first time, the public was also asked their views about a fourth Asian country - South Korea.
- The results of the survey showed a slight increase in enthusiasm for Sweden to cooperate with the three previously surveyed countries. An increased number of respondents agreed Sweden should cooperate with both China and Japan. Increasing proportions of respondents also said they wanted China, India, and Japan to invest more in Sweden.
- Negative views about China and India's politics softened slightly in comparison to the previous survey round. There was a slightly smaller number of people who did not feel that both China and India respected human rights and democratic rights when compared to the previous survey. There was also a decrease in the number of people who disagreed that China acted in a responsible way internationally.
- The new addition to the survey, South Korea, presented some surprising results. Slightly less than half the respondents agreed that South Korea would become an important international actor, while a little less than half also agreed Sweden should cooperate with the country or seek investment from it.
- Overall, many respondents of the survey expressed a lack of knowledge regarding all four Asian countries, although knowledge about China appeared slightly greater. For both India and South Korea, close to a third of respondents chose to answer "don't know" in response to many of the nine questions. A lack of knowledge about South Korea was particularly evident.



Nicholas Olczak

Nicholas Olczak is a postdoctoral researcher at the Stockholm Center on Global Governance (SCGG), and is based at the Department of Economic History and International Relations, both at Stockholm University. He is associated with the Asia Programme and the Swedish National China Centre (NKK) at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI).



Introduction

What does the Swedish public think about China, India, Japan, and South Korea, the four largest economies in Asia? How do they feel that Sweden should engage with these countries? Sweden's political and economic relationships with Asia have long been a vitally important aspect of its international affairs.¹

However, international developments have steadily made the region even more significant. Since 2015, Asia has accounted for over half of the world's manufacturing² and contributes the largest part of its economic growth. Asia has a key role in efforts to tackle global climate change, producing approximately half of global CO2 emissions.³ Security developments in the region, such as North Korea's nuclear weapons programme or tensions in the South China Sea, as well as the positions Asian countries take on issues such as the Ukraine war, are closely linked to the interests of European countries. The region's importance is growing in ways that are forcing Sweden, and other European states, to engage in continuous re-evaluation of their relationships with Asian countries.

The views which the Swedish public holds about Asia can reveal their awareness of these trends and show the domestic pressures which the government confronts

when making policies about the region. Recognizing the need to better understand Swedish public opinion about Asia, four years back we published the first edition of the Asian Barometer that reported on Swedish Public views of China, India, and Japan in late 2021.⁴ Two years later, we followed this with a second report that gave both a snapshot of views in late 2023 and recorded how these had changed since the previous round.⁵ Now, we present a third Asian Barometer which reports on views in late 2025 and updates on how these have been trending over the past six years. For the first time, the report also includes the Swedish public's views about a fourth major Asian country – South Korea. This adds an increasingly important Swedish partner.⁶

The report is based on questions inserted in the *National SOM Survey* which had the same design as in previous rounds. This presents to members of the Swedish public nine statements (eight for the 2021 survey) which target their perceptions of four Asian countries. The survey was fielded in the autumn of 2025, with questionnaires sent out from September and collection stopped in December, and was completed by a statistically representative sample of 1954 people aged between 16 and 85. More details about the SOM survey are provided at the end of this report.

This period saw a number of major political events in both the Asian region and the wider

¹ Government Offices of Sweden. (2021, February 16). *Strategy for Sweden's trade, investment and global competitiveness*. Government.se.

² United Nations Industrial Development Organization. (2025). *Factsheet: Asia and Oceania*. International Yearbook of Industrial Statistics.

³ Raitzer, D. A., Pradhananga, M., & Shu, T. (2019, May 2). *Global Warning: Asia is Critical to Addressing Climate Change*. Asian Development Blog.

⁴ Olczak, N. (2022). *The Asian Barometer 2022: Measuring the Swedish public's views of China, India and Japan*. UI Report No. 2, June 2022.

⁵ Olczak, N. (2024). *Asian Barometer 2024: Trends in Swedish views of China, India, and Japan*. UI Report No. 1, June 2024.

⁶ Government Offices of Sweden. (2025, October 14). *Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Infrastructure and Housing visit South Korea*. Government.se.



world. In Japan, Takaichi Sanae was sworn in as the country's first ever female prime minister in late October, widely reported in the Swedish media.⁷ Following her appointment, Takaichi made a number of changes to Japan's security positioning. In October and early November, the United States (US) President Donald Trump visited South Korea and Japan and held numerous meetings with Asian leaders. These included an APEC summit meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in South Korea, which was followed by a preliminary US-China trade agreement in early November where the two agreed to lower tariffs imposed on some goods.⁸ Also during October and November, several Swedish media outlets reported on the pressure which the US Trump administration was putting on India to reduce purchases of Russian oil.⁹

Formation of Swedish opinions about Asia

How do members of the Swedish public form their views about Asian countries? This involves three mechanisms: 1) Information acquisition; 2) Information organisation; and 3) Perception formation.¹⁰

In forming opinions, members of the public first need to acquire information about the country. They often do this primarily through consumption of media, both newspapers and television and also online media such as social media or video platforms. This gives the media a very prominent role in shaping how people see a particular country. In

Swedish media (Figure 1), all the four surveyed countries get much less attention than the US. China gains the most attention¹¹ although this dropped off after the pandemic, only rising again with coverage of recent US-China trade tensions. Coverage of Japan has also declined since 2021, but peaked in July 2023 possibly because of then Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's attendance of a NATO summit in Lithuania. Indian and South Korean coverage has been at a lower level with occasional small peaks. The tone of the coverage also likely matters. Research has indicated that media is an "agenda setter" which shapes public opinions about issues such as human rights.¹² It is therefore likely that if Swedish newspapers frequently carry stories about human rights issues in an Asian country, this will affect how the country is seen. However, alongside media exposure, there are also other ways in which members of the public can acquire information about a country. They might, for instance, gain this through personal experience either by visiting the country themselves or by meeting people from that country at work or socially (Table 1). In addition, members of the public may also retain views based on things conveyed to them during their education.

China	24,025
India	37,823
Japan	2903
South Korea	1863

Table 1: The number of foreign citizens from the four Asian countries living in Sweden in 2024 (Statistics Sweden).

⁷ Dagens Nyheter. (2025, October 21). *Första kvinnan i Japan som blir premiärminister*. Dagens Nyheter.

⁸ US Embassy and Consulates in China. (2023, November 7). *Fact Sheet: President Trump Strikes Deal on Economic and Trade Relations with China*. U.S. Embassy & Consulates in China.

⁹ Dagens Nyheter. (2025, October 16) *Indien pressas om rysk olja – Trump: Modi har lovat köpstopp*. Dagens Nyheter.

¹⁰ Swedish Institute. (2023, May 12). *Mechanisms underpinning perception*. The Swedish Institute.

¹¹ Söderström, I. (2025, May 20). *China in the Nordic Press: A mixed-method analysis of Helsingin Sanomat and Dagens Nyheter's editorial portrayals between 2012-2024*. University of Turku (MA Thesis).

¹² New Tactics in Human Rights. (2008, February 29). *Engaging the Media in Human Rights*. New Tactics in Human Rights.

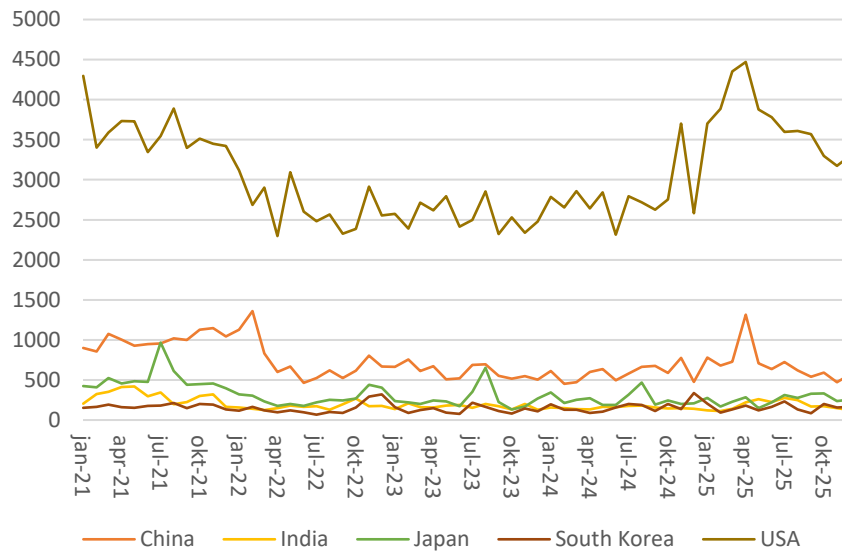


Figure 1: The number of articles featuring the names of the four Asian countries, and the USA for comparison, in five Swedish newspapers between 2021 and 2025.

After they have acquired information about foreign countries, members of the public then filter this information through their established values, morals, and emotions to form specific perceptions about them. This means that the views a particular person holds about each of the Asian countries will likely be shaped by a whole range of demographic characteristics, including their age, political leanings, and profession. Where relevant, the report breaks down the overall results to indicate how respondents with different characteristics answered the questions. Research has indicated that perceptions of countries tend to be relatively stable over time, but that we do see small shifts.¹³

Structure of the report

This report describes how members of the Swedish public responded to nine statements about China, India, Japan, and South Korea that were inserted into the most recent SOM survey. It places these new results alongside those from the previous

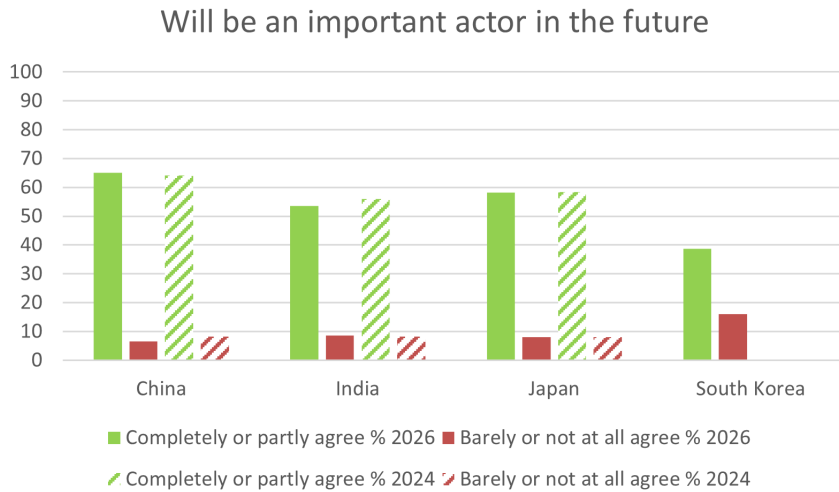
round of the survey. For each statement, the chart displays both how the public responded in the 2025 survey (solid bars) and how they responded in the 2023 survey, excluding South Korea (striped bars). This allows for comparison of the most recent survey results with those from the previous round. For each statement in the survey, the public could answer “completely” or “partly” agree – combined into “agree” (green bars) – or “hardly” or “not at all” agree – combined into “disagree” (red bars). They could also answer “don’t know”.

The report begins by presenting the public’s **general views of the four countries**: how they perceive these countries’ economic status and international role. It then presents the public’s **views about these countries’ societies and politics**: whether they feel the countries respect human and democratic rights, and whether they would like to visit them. Finally, it describes the public’s **views about how Sweden should relate to these countries**: whether Sweden should cooperate with them, accept investment from them, or can learn from them.

¹³ MacDonald, A. (2025). *Global Perceptions: How 18-35 year olds see the UK and the world*. British Council.



General views of the four countries



There was little change in how the Swedish public viewed the future importance of the main Asian countries. **China** saw a slightly smaller proportion doubtful about its growing importance (6.5% compared to 8%), reversing the increased doubts shown in the previous survey.

For **India**, there was a small drop in the number of people that agreed it was becoming an important international actor (54% compared to 56%). However, this remained higher than the survey result from 2021 (49%), four years ago. This suggests that, despite the recent slight dip in those agreeing, overall there may be a slightly increased recognition of the country's global role. The results for **Japan** were virtually unchanged, indicating views about its international role are relatively stable.

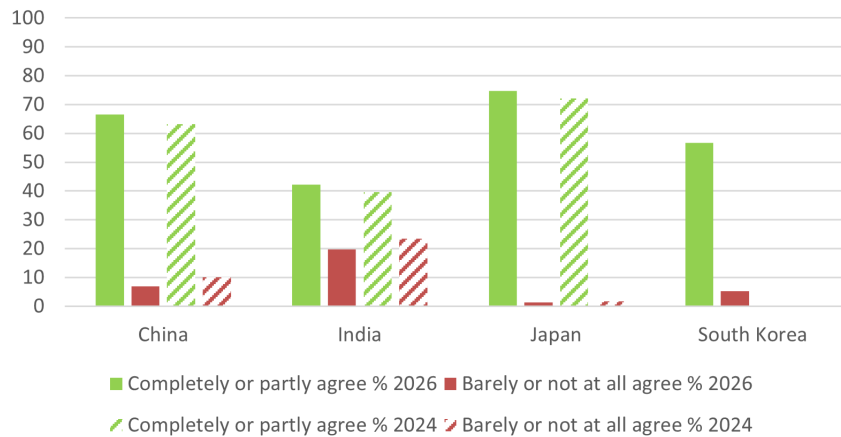
The new results for **South Korea** showed just 39 percent *agreeing* about its future

importance (16% disagreeing). This is surprising given that South Korea is Asia's fourth largest economy, an important node in international trade and supply chains, one of the main US allies in the region, and an important partner to Sweden.¹⁴ Although a middle-power in comparison to China and India, it is particularly striking that far fewer members of the public view South Korea as important than Japan. For this question about Korea, a sizeable 36 percent responded "don't know" which could suggest the result was partly shaped by lack of information.

¹⁴ Yeo, A. (2023, December 19). *South Korea as a global pivotal state*. Brookings.



Has a developed economy



There were only small shifts in the extent to which the public saw the Asian countries as having developed economies, which might also reflect sentiment about their economic strength. China saw an increase in the number of people *agreeing* its economy is developed (66.5% compared to 63%) and a decrease in those *disagreeing* (7% compared to 10%). This is perhaps due to less reporting about its economic downturn and more about its competitiveness in fields such as AI and electric cars.¹⁵

For **India**, about 42 percent of respondents now believe it has a developed economy. This is an increase from the previous survey (40%) and a big jump from the 2022 survey result where 36 percent agreed.¹⁶ This may suggest the Swedish public somewhat recognises the extent of development in the world’s fastest growing economy.¹⁷ However, they still do not overwhelmingly agree that India has a developed economy, which also corresponds with the nation’s self-designation as “developing” at the World Trade Organization (WTO).¹⁸ The survey was

carried out in late 2025, before the India-EU Free Trade Agreement was concluded at the start of 2026.

Japan saw a slight increase in the numbers that agreed its economy is developed (to 75%), but these results have stayed stable across survey rounds. For **South Korea**, the proportion *agreeing* it has a developed economy (57%) is much smaller than for Japan. The two countries, strong in automobile and high-tech manufacturing, could be expected to be seen similarly. It is also notable that fewer people viewed Korea as a developed economy than China, given that Korean high-tech and consumer electronics have been available in the Swedish market for far longer. Around 31 percent answered “don’t know” to this question for Korea (compared to 17% for Japan), suggesting the public lacks information with which to judge the country’s economic standing.

¹⁵ SVT Nyheter. (2025, October 29). *Kinas export växer – trots handelskriget*. SVT Nyheter.

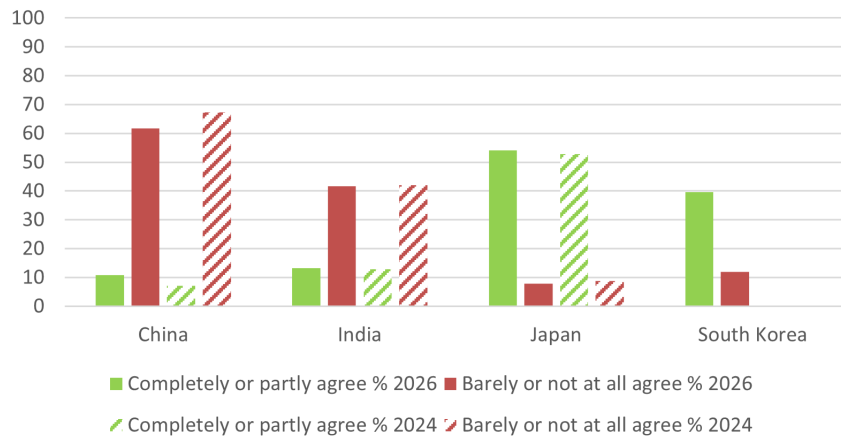
¹⁶ See Appendix Figure 1.

¹⁷ Högman, S. (2025, June 12). *Indien Business Climate Survey 2025*. Business Sweden.

¹⁸ World Trade Organization. (n.d.). *Member Information: India and the WTO*. Retrieved June 4, 2026.



Acts responsibly internationally



China saw a marked decrease in the number of people *disagreeing* it acted responsibly in the world (62% compared to 67%), and a similar increase in the proportion who viewed it as responsible. These shifts were much larger than those between the previous rounds of the survey. This may partly be the long-term effects of the 2021 change in the Chinese ambassador to Sweden and the gradual warming of relations between the two countries over the past few years. It could also be due to the “Trump effect” and changes in US foreign policy that make China appear more favourably (as seen in other European countries).¹⁹

The views of **India’s** international responsibility remained largely unchanged, somewhat negative but much less so than China. Meanwhile, for **Japan** there was a small increase in the proportion viewing it as responsible (54% compared to 52%), continuing the trend of previous survey rounds and echoing positive sentiment across Europe.²⁰

For **South Korea**, surprisingly only 40 percent of the Swedish public surveyed judged it to be a responsible international actor. The Swedish government considers South Korea an important regional partner and works closely with it to advance peace on the Korean Peninsula,²¹ but this is not reflected in public recognition. Notably, though, 40 percent answered “don’t know” when asked about South Korea’s international responsibility. This suggests that the Swedish public feels they lack sufficient knowledge about South Korea’s international political activity to answer this kind of question. It may be that while many Korean brands and cultural exports are popular in Sweden, generating some knowledge about the country, this does not extend to the political domain.

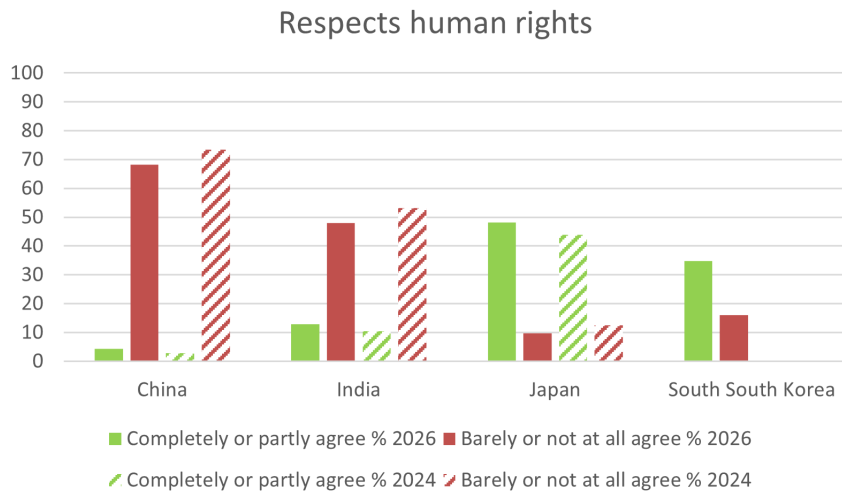
¹⁹ Silver, L., Clancy, L., Schulman, J., Miner, W., & Huang, C. (2025, July 15). *Global Views of China and Xi in 2025*. Pew research Center.

²⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (n.d.). *Opinion Poll: Image of Japan in Five European Countries*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

²¹ Government Offices of Sweden. (2021, August 17). *Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Infrastructure and Housing visit South Korea*. Government.se.



Social and political views



Public views of the human rights records of the three previously surveyed countries showed a common trend. For all three, the proportion *disagreeing* that the country respected human rights declined. This might suggest that the public is adopting a slightly more pragmatic approach to world affairs or comparing these countries more favourably with other parts of the world. The largest shifts were for **China** (68% compared to 73.5%) and **India** (48% compared to 53%), but for both large proportions are still critical of their human rights. It has been suggested that there has been slightly less Swedish discussion of human rights in China in recent years.²² Indian human rights issues have also only received limited media coverage and a large proportion of the public (32%) said they “don’t know” about the country’s rights record.

Views about **Japan’s** human rights record continue to be relatively positive, with 48 percent *agreeing* that it respects human

rights (compared to 43% in the previous survey). That 34 percent answered “don’t know” when asked about Japan’s human rights might explain why views are not more positive.

For **South Korea**, views are similarly relatively positive (35% agree it respects human rights), although opinions are more divided than for Japan. Reporting about adoption from South Korea,²³ or other rights issues,²⁴ may have influenced views. However, here 40 percent of respondents answered “don’t know” when asked about the country’s human rights record.

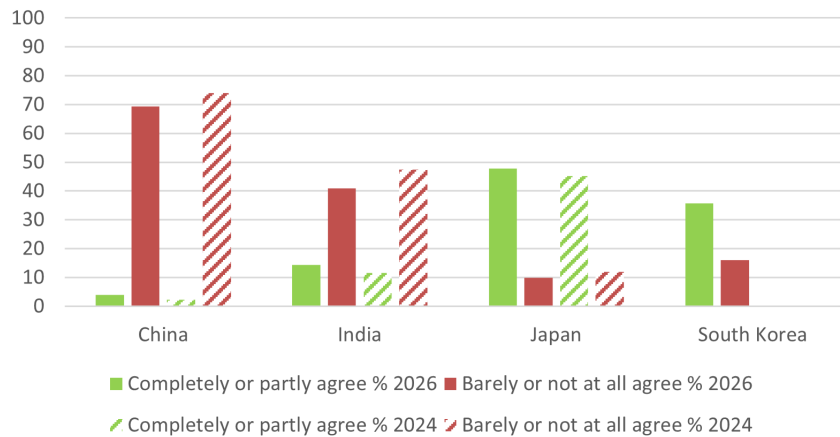
²² Molander, M., & Abdulahad, C. (2025, October 16). *Sweden-China Relations Should Focus on Rights*. Human Rights Watch.

²³ Dagens Nyheter. (2021, October 1). *Sydkoreas president ber om ursäkt för svenska adoptioner*. Dagens Nyheter.

²⁴ Aftonbladet. (2024, July 18). *Sydkorea erkänner samkönade rättigheter*. Aftonbladet.



Respects democratic rights



Views about whether these countries respect democratic rights mirror quite closely views about human rights. They therefore show similar shifts from the results in the previous survey round, with slightly more positive results in all three countries. This may be the result of comparison with declining democracy elsewhere.²⁵

Views about **China's** respect for democratic rights continue to be very negative, which is to be expected given that it is the only autocratic regime amongst the four countries. However, even for China, there was a small decrease in the proportion *disagreeing* it respects democratic rights, possibly the result of comparison with other threats to democracy.²⁶ The proportion that disagreed China respected democratic rights was largest amongst those with a "high" education level (83%) and smallest amongst those with a "low" education level (53%).

For **India**, the public appears slightly less negative about its record on democratic rights than they are about its respect for

human rights (41% disagree it respects these rights compared to 49%). The number of respondents who had a critical view of India's respect for democratic rights decreased a large amount from the previous survey round (41% compared to 47%). Public views about the state of Indian democracy could have been influenced by coverage of the Indian elections in the summer of 2024²⁷ and the media discussions about an India-EU trade deal last year.²⁸

Views about **Japan's** respect for democratic rights changed only slightly, with the number of people agreeing increasing (from 45% to 48%). The Swedish public might have been expected to hold more positive views about democratic rights in **Japan** and **South Korea**, given both countries' records in defending international order. In late 2024, the public outcry over attempts to impose martial law in South Korea was widely reported.²⁹

²⁵ SVT Nyheter. (2026, March 17). *Svenskarnas dom: 7 av 10 anser att USA inte är en demokrati*. SVT Nyheter.

²⁶ Hökmark, G. (2022, December 9). *DEBATT: USA inte längre den fria världens ledare*. Dagens Industri.

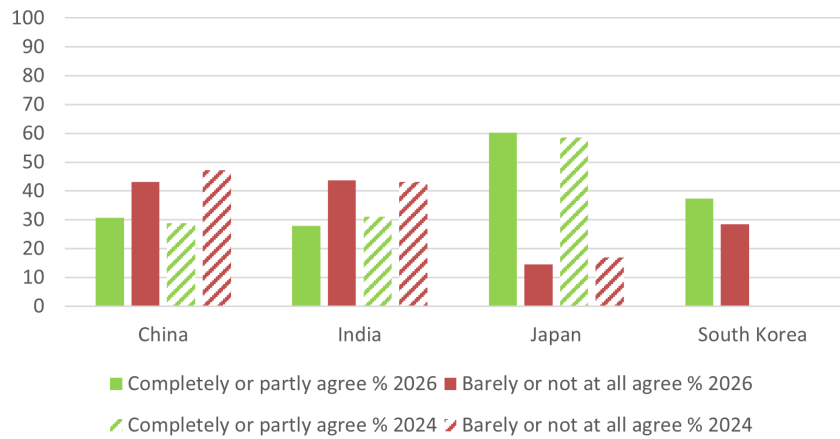
²⁷ SVT Nyheter. (2024, March 1). *Modi vann indiska valet – men tappar egen majoritet*. SVT Nyheter.

²⁸ Sveriges Radio. (2025, June 10). *Indiens handelsminister på besök i Sverige*. Sveriges Radio.

²⁹ SVT Nyheter. (2025, June 4). *60 sekunder: Yoon Suk-Yeol införde krigslagar i Sydkorea*. SVT Nyheter.



I would like to visit



The Swedish public continues to be fairly ambivalent about visiting both China and India, with more people saying they do not want to visit these countries. This is surprising, given both countries' rich cultures, but may be a combination of perceptions about the countries being difficult to visit reinforced by preferences for economical or closer travel.³⁰ The number of respondents saying they would like to visit **China** slightly increased from the previous survey (31% compared to 29%), which could reflect the slightly improved overall relations or the subsiding of impressions left by the pandemic. In contrast, the proportion who would like to visit **India** shrunk slightly (28% compared to 31%), possibly linked to reports during the late spring of 2025 about the security situation in the country.³¹

There was only a small change in results for **Japan** and Swedes appear relatively positive about visiting, with 60 percent of respondents saying they would like to visit the country. While Japan experienced a large increase in tourism during 2025, that the

survey results have not shifted since the previous round suggests that the Swedish public's desire to visit the country remains fairly stable.³²

The results for **South Korea** are quite mixed, with 37 percent agreeing they would like to visit against 28 percent disagreeing. This is again quite surprising. Elements of the country's culture, such as its K-pop scene, are popular in Sweden which could make people want to visit.³³ Notably, the results were different amongst people aged 16–29 (48% wanted to visit and 21% did not) and people aged 65 plus (24% want to visit and 33% did not).³⁴

³⁰ Andersson, P. J. (2025, April 5). *Var fjärde ska resa mindre – men inte på grund av flygskam*. Vagabond.

³¹ Sveriges Radio. (2025, May 7). *UD avråder från resor till delar av Indien och Pakistan*. Sveriges Radio.

³² Starling, M. (2026, January 12). *Japan tourism is booming as travellers look beyond Tokyo and Kyoto*. Euronews.

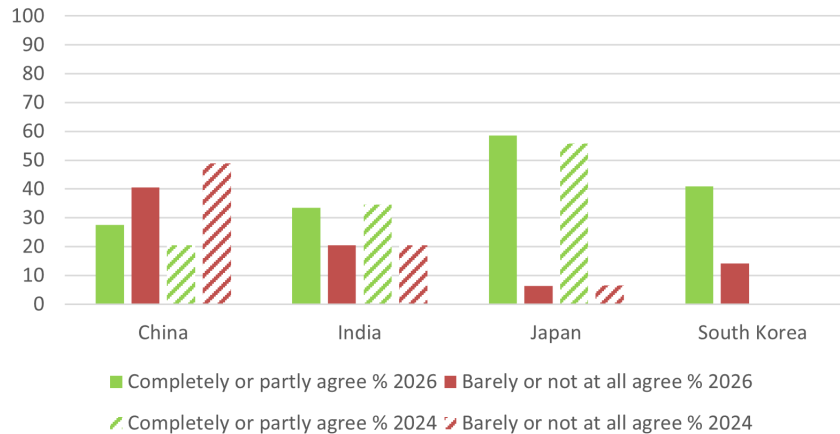
³³ SVT Nyheter. (2025, August 21). *Sydkoreanska hajpen tar över Stockholm: "Helt galet"*. SVT Nyheter.

³⁴ See Appendix Table 1.



Sweden's relations with the four Asian countries

Sweden should cooperate with



There was a small increase in the desire for Sweden to cooperate with China and Japan. This might suggest people take a more pragmatic view of cooperation in the current geopolitical climate. For **China**, the proportion against cooperation shrunk clearly (41% compared to 49%), while the proportion supporting cooperation grew (28% compared to 21%). Views may have been influenced by a general warming of relations,³⁵ or by recent public calls for more cooperation.³⁶ The highest and lowest proportions supporting cooperation were amongst those favouring the *Liberalerna* (30%) and *Kristdemokraterna* (21%).³⁷ A recent EU Chamber of Commerce in China survey found European firms have improving views about doing business with China.³⁸

Support for Sweden-Japan cooperation also increased slightly (59% compared to 56%).³⁹

This corresponds with Swedes' growing desire for Japan to invest in Sweden (see next question). Views about cooperation with **India** hardly changed however (with 33% agreeing to cooperation and 21% disagreeing). Existing cooperation between Indian and Swedish enterprises may have generated more positive views. But reporting on India's approach to Russia and Ukraine may have had the opposite effect.⁴⁰

For **South Korea**, despite Sweden's unique role in security on the Korean Peninsula, support for cooperation was mixed (41% agreeing with cooperation and 14% disagreeing). Cooperation may be seen as risky, given the tense security situation. However, 37 percent answered "don't know" here, perhaps due to the limited existing cooperation between the two countries, in areas such as academia for example.

³⁵Swedish National China Centre. (2026, February 10). *Sverige och Kina i återblick 2025*. Swedish National China Centre, UI.

³⁶ Nilsson Jacobi, M., Anders Söderholm, A., Renström, E., & Hagfeldt, A. (2025, June 24). *Rektorer: Akademien bör samarbeta mer med Kina*. Svenska Dagbladet; SvD Näringsliv. (2025, April 11). *Uppgifter. EU och Kina förhandlar om elbilsavtal*. SvD Näringsliv.

³⁷ See Appendix Table 2.

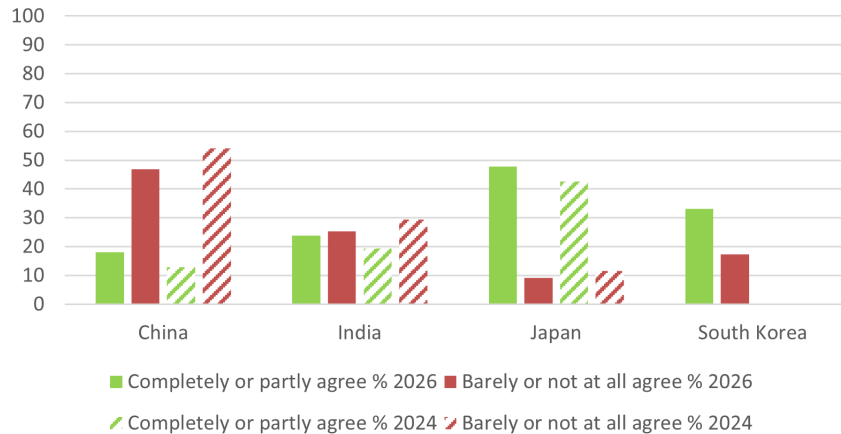
³⁸ European Union Chamber of Commerce in China. (2026, May 25). *China Could Build Momentum for Rebound of Business Confidence by Picking 'Low-Hanging Fruit'*. European Union Chamber of Commerce in China.

³⁹ Regeringskansliet. (2026, February 13). *Samarbetet mellan Japan och Sverige stärks inom försvar och innovation*. Regeringskansliet.

⁴⁰ SVT Nyheter. (2025, December 4). *Indien ska minska importen av rysk olja*. SVT Nyheter.



I want to invest more in Sweden



For all three countries previously surveyed, support for their investment into Sweden increased. For **China**, the portion *agreeing* grew (18% compared to 13%) while that *disagreeing* with investment fell (47% compared to 54%). While there has continued to be some media coverage of Chinese investments,⁴¹ this has appeared to soften slightly from the intense scrutiny and negative coverage these were being given several years ago.⁴² The group with the largest proportion supporting Chinese investment was those naming *Sverigedemokraterna* as their favoured party (22%) and the group with the smallest those who named the *Miljöpartiet* (12%). Respondents with monthly incomes below 14,000 SEK had the largest proportion agreeing with Chinese investment (20%) and lowest proportion *disagreeing* (38%). Those with incomes above 45,000 SEK had the highest proportion who disagreed (63%).

There was similarly a decrease in the number of people who disagreed with **India's**

investment (25% compared to 29%) and an increase in the number who agreed (24% compared to 19%), making the proportions who agree and disagree roughly equal. The Swedish public therefore appears to be growing a little more supportive of Indian investment but is still overall unsure,⁴³ something also reflected by the fact that a large 43 percent answered “don’t know” when asked about investment from the country.

The already sizeable proportion who supported **Japan's** investment into Sweden increased to close to half of respondents. Japan tends to invest in green technology, the power sector, and high-tech products, as well as potential future investment in the defence industry, all sectors which are fast developing in Sweden. Meanwhile, views about **South Korea's** investments into Sweden were more mixed (33% agreeing and 17% disagreeing).

⁴¹ SVT Nyheter. (2025, January 16). *Här är kraven på kinesiska företaget PTL för jättesatsningen i Timrå: "Omöjligt"*. SVT Nyheter.

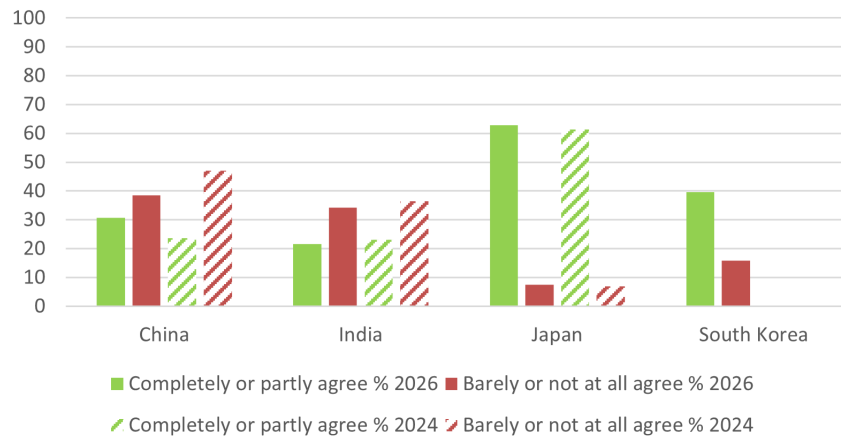
⁴² Mattlin, M., & Rajavuori, M. (2023, March 14). *Changing Causal Narratives and Risk Perceptions on Foreign Investment: the Riskification of Chinese*

Investments in the Nordic Region. East Asia, 40(3), 243–263.

⁴³ Olander, K. (2026, January 27). *Så mycket investerar indiska bolag i Sverige*. Dagens Industri.



Sweden can learn from



There was overall not much change in perceptions about whether Sweden could learn from the three previously surveyed countries. The exception is **China**, which saw a relatively large decrease in the number of people who disagreed (39% compared to 47%) and a large increase in the number that viewed it as somewhere Sweden could learn from. This corresponds to the overall less negative view of China seen in responses to other questions. The group of respondents between ages 30 and 49 had the largest proportion that agreed with this (35%), while those 65 plus had the smallest proportion (27%). It could be that the public is increasingly becoming aware of China’s strengths in areas such as green technology, electric cars, and IT.⁴⁴

There was little change in public views about **India** as a country Sweden might learn from, with perceptions about this relatively negative (22% agree and 34% disagree). This remains slightly surprising given India’s strengths in the information technology sector and the large numbers of Indians who come to work in Sweden.⁴⁵ Once again, a high proportion (36%) answered “don’t know”

when asked their views about whether Sweden could learn from India.

The Indian results look particularly negative when compared to those for **Japan**, where close to two-thirds (63%) agree that Sweden can learn from the country. This is likely to be because of Japan’s reputation for high-tech manufacturing and the appeal of its brands. Although positive, a much smaller proportion agree that Sweden can learn from **South Korea** (40% agreeing and 16% disagreeing), perhaps related to lack of knowledge about the country.

⁴⁴ Dagens PS. (2022, October 29). *Sverige ska lära sig om elbilar av Kina*. Dagens PS.

⁴⁵ Palm, I. & Gahrton, E. (2025, August 13). *Indier största invandrargruppen – därför flyttade familjen Kanaskar*. Svt Nyheter.



Conclusion

The results of the recent survey did not show major changes in the Swedish public's views of Asian countries, when compared to those in the surveys conducted in 2021 and 2023. This is to be expected, as it would take a major event to dramatically shift opinions. Nevertheless, from the results overall and the small changes in responses to some questions, certain common themes emerge.

First, there appears to have been a **slight softening in negative views of China and India**. The proportion of respondents who agreed China acted responsibly on the world stage increased slightly, while the proportion *disagreeing* decreased. This is likely to do with China's international activities looking more favourable in comparison to the recent actions of other states, notably the US. While still very large, the proportions of respondents that disagreed China and India respected human and democratic rights also decreased. This may indicate that some of the public are taking a slightly more pragmatic view of the world in their evaluations of these countries.

Second, this weakening of critical views and more practical approach is also possibly connected to shifts in views about how Sweden should relate to these Asian countries, where these have become **marginally more supportive of cooperation**. The proportions of respondents critical of Chinese and Indian investments into Sweden both declined from the previous round of the survey and the proportion who supported these increased. There has been less media and societal debate about the need to limit foreign investments in recent years, something perhaps reflected in this small shift in public sentiment. For China, the

results also showed an increase in the proportion of the public who felt Sweden should pursue cooperation.

Third, there were **surprisingly negative or mixed Swedish public views about South Korea**, the new addition to the survey in this round. A little less than half of the respondents wanted Sweden to develop more cooperation with this global leader in technology and innovation, while only about a third of respondents wanted Korean enterprises to invest more in Sweden. These results may be due to a lack of knowledge about many aspects of South Korea, despite its significant soft-power impact, which means that people do not recognize the potential cooperation might offer.

Fourth, the results suggested that the Swedish public's **knowledge of major Asian countries remains both limited and fragmented**. For India, there were five out of nine questions where more than a third of respondents chose to answer "don't know" and these proportions showed little change from the previous survey round. For South Korea, the average proportion answering "don't know" to the nine questions was 36 percent. The Swedish public therefore expresses a striking lack of knowledge about two of Asia's largest economies and countries that are pivotal to security and economic developments in the region.



About the National SOM Survey

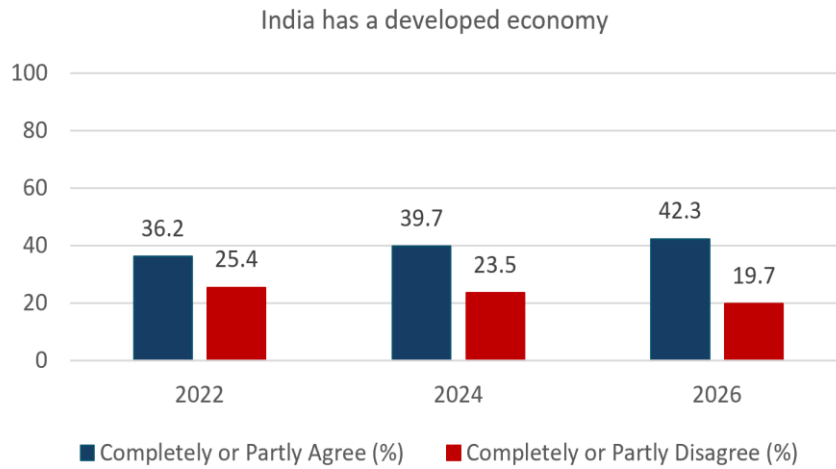
The data for the Asian Barometer was taken from the National SOM Survey (*Den nationella SOM-undersökningen*), which has been fielded each year since 1986. The 2025 survey was conducted in the autumn, with the questionnaires sent out on 18 September and the fieldwork concluded in December. It consists of nine parallel surveys, each sent to a systematic probability sample of 3750 members of the Swedish public aged between 16 and 85 from across the country. These surveys ask members of the public over 100 different questions.

The data used in the Asian Barometer was taken from questions inserted into one of these parallel surveys. The questions presented respondents with nine statements about the four countries. For example, the first statement said: “India is a land that has a developed economy”. The Survey respondents were asked in Swedish to choose whether they “completely agree”, “partly agree”, “hardly agree”, or “do not agree at all” with each statement. There was also an option to choose “don’t know”.

In total, 1954 people completed the survey containing these questions. Not all of these gave responses to all nine statements for each country.



Appendix



Appendix Figure 1: Comparison of responses to the statement "India has a developed economy" in the three survey rounds.

	16–29 years	30–49 years	50–64 years	65+ years
Total	247	550	510	647
Agree %	48.1	47.1	38	24.3
Disagree%	21.5	24.4	28	34.3

Appendix Table 1: Respondents who agreed/disagreed they "Would like to visit South Korea" based on their age group.



	Vänsterpartiet	Sverigedemokraterna	Socialdemokraterna	Moderaterna	Miljöpartiet	Liberalerna	Kristdemokraterna	Inget parti	Ej svar – hela frågan	Ej svar - del av frågan	Dubbelkryss	Centerpartiet	Annat parti
Total	120	222	592	373	103	52	74	37	111	61	58	94	57
Agree %	37.5	28.8	28.5	28.7	27.2	30.8	21.6	18.9	7.2	24.6	41.4	27.7	22.8
Disagree %	40.0	42.3	41.0	48.8	45.6	38.5	52.7	37.8	12.6	31.1	25.9	42.6	31.6

Appendix Table 2: Respondents who agreed/disagreed that "Sweden should cooperate with China" based on respondents' stated preferred political party.

	Som respekterar mänskliga rätti	Kommer vara en viktig global ak	Jag vill ska investera mer i Sv	Jag skulle vilja besöka	Respekterar demokratiska rättig	Sverige bör samarbeta mer med	Sverige kan dra lärdomar av	Agerar ansvarsfullt internation	Har en utvecklad ekonomi
Total	1954	1954	1954	1954	1954	1954	1954	1954	1954
Don't know	40.1	36.3	40.6	25.7	39.6	36.6	36.3	40.2	30.7

Appendix Table 3: Percentage of respondents answering "don't know" for each statement about South Korea.



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