

ASIA PACIFIC

# POINTS OF VIEW

OPINION PANEL

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## Education in Canada-Asia Relations

**December 2012**



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# Background

- ◆ In this Points of View survey, the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada asks Canadians who are engaged in Asia to consider different dimensions of Canada-Asia relations when it comes to education, and the role education might play in helping Canada build closer relations with Asian countries. This includes:
  - Examining the potential impact education could have in helping Canada build closer relations with Asian countries
  - Gauging Canadian “Asia competency,” and identifying the most effective methods to build Asia expertise and knowledge
  - Examining barriers to Canada taking a lead role in international education in Asia
  - Exploring the positioning and initiatives of Canadian post-secondary institutions to establish themselves in the international education market
  
- ◆ Points of View Asia Pacific findings provide private and public sector stakeholders who are engaged in Asia with insights from this unique audience of Asia practitioners whose “close to the ground” perspectives can help inform decision making.

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## Key Findings



# Key Findings

## ◆ Building Asia knowledge and expertise seen as important tool in Canada-Asia relations

- More than 8-in-10 Asia practitioners consider education to be the most critical component of any strategy to build closer relations with Asian countries.
- However, there is no real consensus among Asia practitioners as to whether pursuing opportunities in education will have an immediate (55%) or a longer-term (43%) impact on Canada-Asia relations.
- For Asia practitioners, the most effective actions to take in the education sector are:
  - Creating greater mobility opportunities for higher education students (e.g. study abroad, internships, field schools) (35%)
  - Building a broader and more solid foundation of knowledge of Asian societies and economies (27%)
- The most important barriers keeping Canada from playing a leadership role in international education in Asia include:
  - Immigration rules for foreign students coming to Canada (33%)
  - Tuition fees for foreign students coming to Canada (31%)
  - Academic culture of host Asian countries (28%)



## Key Findings (cont.)

- ◆ **Building Asia knowledge and expertise means investing in education and skills training in areas relevant to Asia, including languages**
  - 40% of Asia practitioners feel that the best way to build Canadians’ “Asia competency” is to invest in training students in skills/knowledge relevant to Asia.
  - For those seeking to hire Canadian residents for Asia-related work, the most important skills for prospective employees to have are:
    - Being comfortable working in a different culture (76%)
    - Having specific knowledge and expertise related to the specifics of the job (69%)
    - Having a broad appreciation for the socio-economic and political context of the Asian country in which they do business (66%)
  
- ◆ **Canadians’ “Asia competency” found lacking; support for language training quite high among Asia practitioners**
  - 60% of Asia practitioners who employ Canadians for Asia-related work say they find it “difficult” to find qualified Canadians with the appropriate level of knowledge and awareness of Asia to help their company/organization succeed in the business they do in Asia.
  - Just 34% of Asia practitioners give positive ratings to Canadian professionals in their industry for their knowledge of Asian societies and economies in which they work or do business.
  - 91% of Asia practitioners support Canada putting a greater priority on the teaching of Asian languages in the country’s elementary and secondary schools. More than half (55%) feel that additional resources should be directed towards including these languages in the curriculum, even if it means taking resources away from the teaching of other foreign or heritage languages.



## Key Findings (cont.)

- ◆ **Canadian education institutions well-positioned to play solid role in building relations with Asia; work to be done in Asia and at home on their campuses with students.**
  - 70% of Asian practitioners say that more is definitely needed to promote Canada as a education “destination.”
  - 83% believe Canadian post-secondary institutions are major players in Asian markets.
    - 60% of Asia practitioners who currently work in Canadian post-secondary institutions say their institutions place Asia well ahead of other regions for pursuing international education opportunities.
  - 27% of Asia practitioners working in Canadian post-secondary institutions feel their institutions should give top priority to working with Asian institutions to develop and improve exchange programs.
  - Those working in post-secondary institutions are also very supportive of specific actions their institutions might take to bolster their Asia-related credentials, including:
    - Tying faculty promotion or tenure to international work or experience (69%)
    - Requiring students to take courses that have a focus on Asian perspectives, issues, and events (64%)
  - However, there is significant opposition to any kind of Asian language requirement for admission (79%), graduation (72%), or general proficiency (67%).



# Key Findings (cont.)

## General Observations

- ◆ From these key findings, we make the following general observations about how Asia practitioners perceive the role of education, and what Canada's position in education means for building closer relations with Asia.
  - First, Asia practitioners' emphasis on education as a tool to enhance Canada's relations with Asian countries is tied to the idea that knowing and understanding other cultures and peoples creates greater opportunities for positive social, economic, and political exchanges.

While they see short-term benefits in this approach, their perspectives are rooted in a longer-term view of relationship-building across the Pacific. The question is whether Canadian governments at all levels can develop the political will and sustain the necessary commitment to pursue a full-on, long-term Asia strategy, something that is implicit in using education as a tool for building closer relations with Asian countries.

- Second, the role Asia practitioners ascribe to education goes beyond recruiting international students or obtaining revenues for Canadian schools. It is also about building Canadians' "Asia competency," currently seen as inadequate for businesses, organizations and governments seeking to expand their activities in Asia.

Indeed, Asia practitioners suggest Canadians need to be gently pushed and prodded to acquire an understanding of Asian societies and their significance in the global order, and to seek out opportunities to gain the relevant Asia knowledge and skills. In one area – language learning - this could mean including more Asian languages in curricula at all levels of our education system.

Yet, in its 2012 National Opinion Poll on Canadians' views of Asia, the Asia Pacific Foundation found that just 25% of Canadians supported placing more emphasis on teaching Asian languages (compared to 91% of Asia practitioners). In this context, any government action to "pivot" to Asia using education as a tool will need a clear strategy, and likely a heavy dose of political will to be effective over the short-to-medium term.





# Key Findings (cont.)

## General Observations (cont.)

- ◆ Third, Asia practitioners' views on the role of education as a means to build closer relations between Canada and Asian countries dovetail with some developments at the government policy level:
  - Asia practitioners' emphasis on the importance of international mobility opportunities for Canadians is consistent with a recent Canadian federal government report which recommended creating an International Mobility Program for Canadian Students. If implemented, this program would facilitate overseas experience for 50,000 Canadian students by 2022. Currently, fewer than 3% of Canadians participate in study abroad programs, and the percentage of those studying in Asia is very low.
  - The same federal government report urges a significant increase in the number of international students, particularly from China and India, studying at Canadian universities. Our panelists suggest that, at present, Canada is not doing enough to promote Canadian higher education to international audiences.
  
- ◆ Lastly, it appears that Canada is not alone in seeking to build closer relations with Asia through education. Canadian Asia practitioners' high level of encouragement for Asian language learning in Canada matches the sentiment of a recently released Australian White Paper, "Australia in the Asian Century," which recommends making Asian language instruction widely available for Australian students.

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## Detailed Findings

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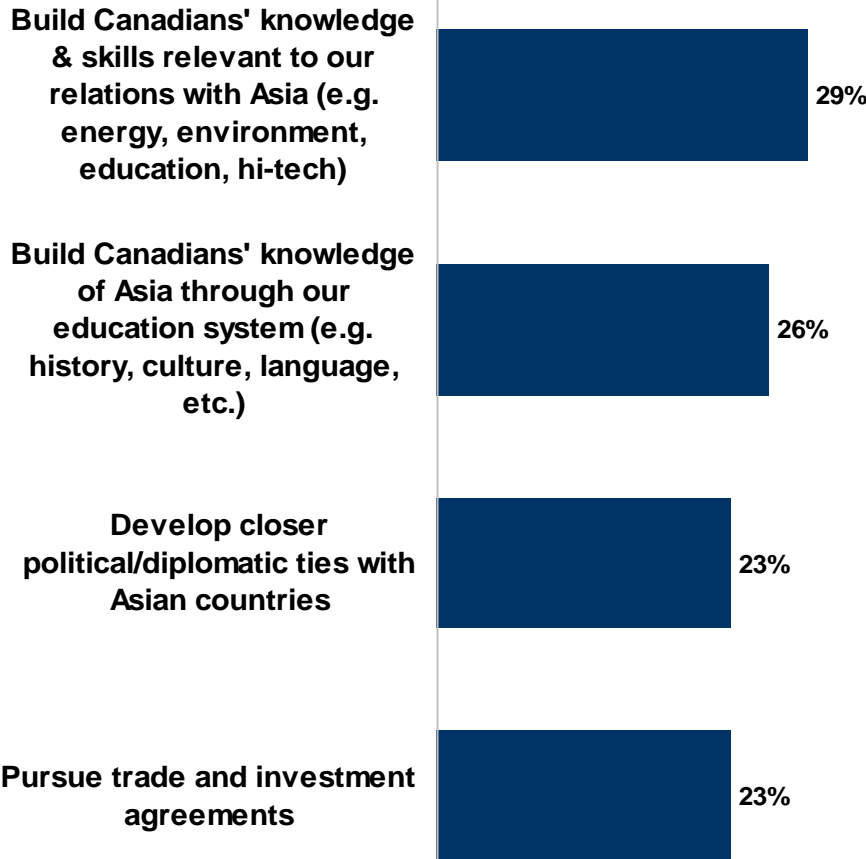
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## Potential Impact of Education on Canada's Position and Influence in Asia



# Top Priorities for Building Closer Relations with Asia

Canadians engaged in Asia prefer a multi-pronged approach to building closer relations with Asian countries. Most would give top priority to building Canadians' knowledge and skills relevant to our relations with Asia. However, similar numbers see a role for increasing knowledge of Asian history and culture through our education system, along with developing closer political and diplomatic relations, and pursuing trade and investment agreements.



% Who selected each approach as top priority to help Canada develop closer relations or increase its influence in Asia. (2 choices possible)

Base: (374)

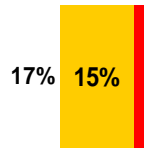
Q.1 : Generally speaking, when you think about Canada developing closer relations with Asian countries, or seeking to increase our influence in the region, which **two** of the following do you think should be the top priority for Canada in the next 3 to 5 years?

# Views of Education as a Potential Catalyst for Building Canada-Asia Relations

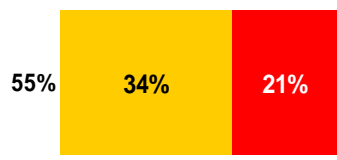
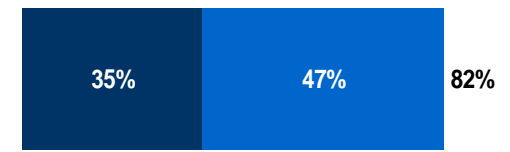
Canada's Asia practitioners view education as a key component of any strategy for building closer relations with Asian countries. They are somewhat divided, however, as to whether the impact education can have will be immediate or more-long term. More particularly, recruiting international students is perceived as more than just a tool to build Canadian universities' and colleges' bottom line; it is also seen as helping to build relations with Asian countries.

**Moderately Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

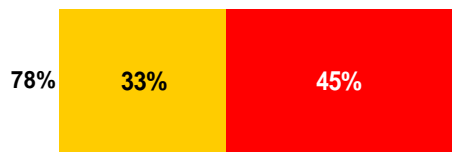
**Strongly Agree** **Moderately Agree**



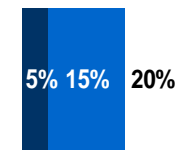
Education is most critical component of any strategy to build closer relations with Asian countries



Pursuing opportunities in education is fine for longer-term impacts on Canada's role/influence in Asia, but will have little immediate impact.



Recruiting international students to study in Canada is great for institutions' bottom line, but has little impact on building relations with Asian countries.



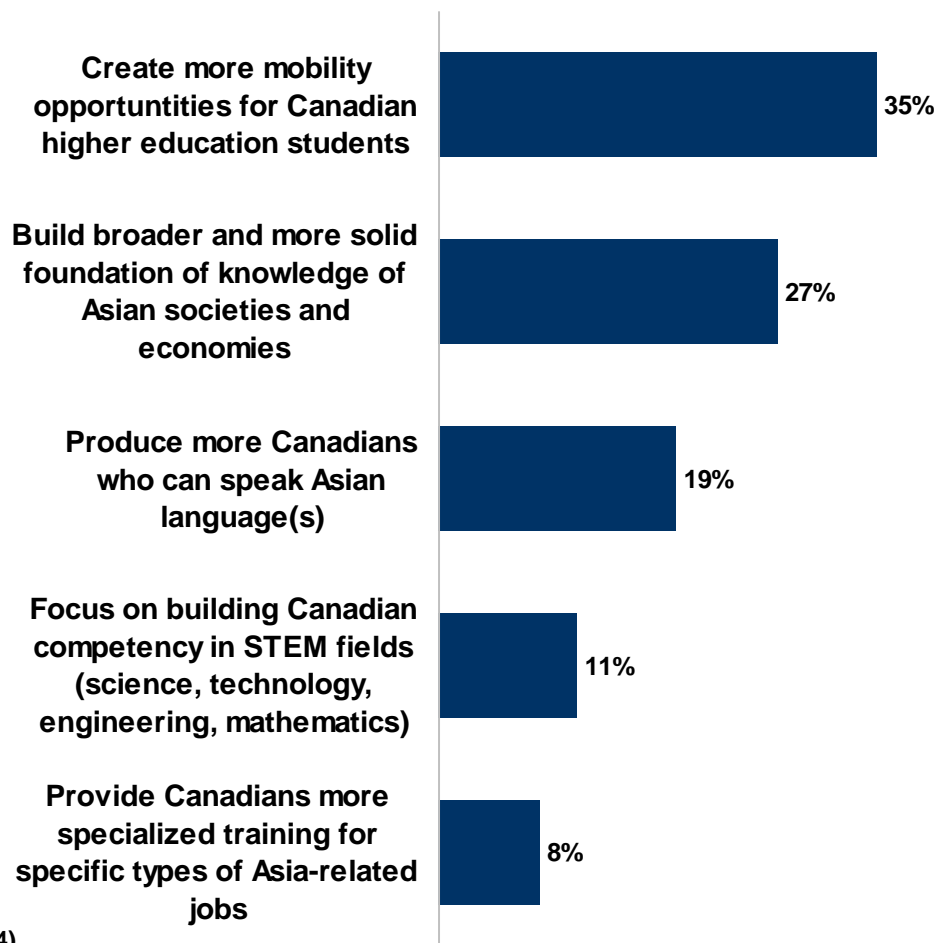
Base: (n varies from 364 to 367)

Q.5 : Would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the role education could play in helping Canada develop closer relations with Asian countries, and help build Canada's influence in the region?

# Most Effective Education Approach to Build Closer Relations with Asia



When it comes to what can be done specifically through education to further Canada's relations with Asian countries, Asia practitioners in Canada single out greater mobility opportunities for Canadian students as the most effective action that could be taken. A good number also feel that it would be a good idea to build a broader and more solid foundation of knowledge of Asian societies and economies.

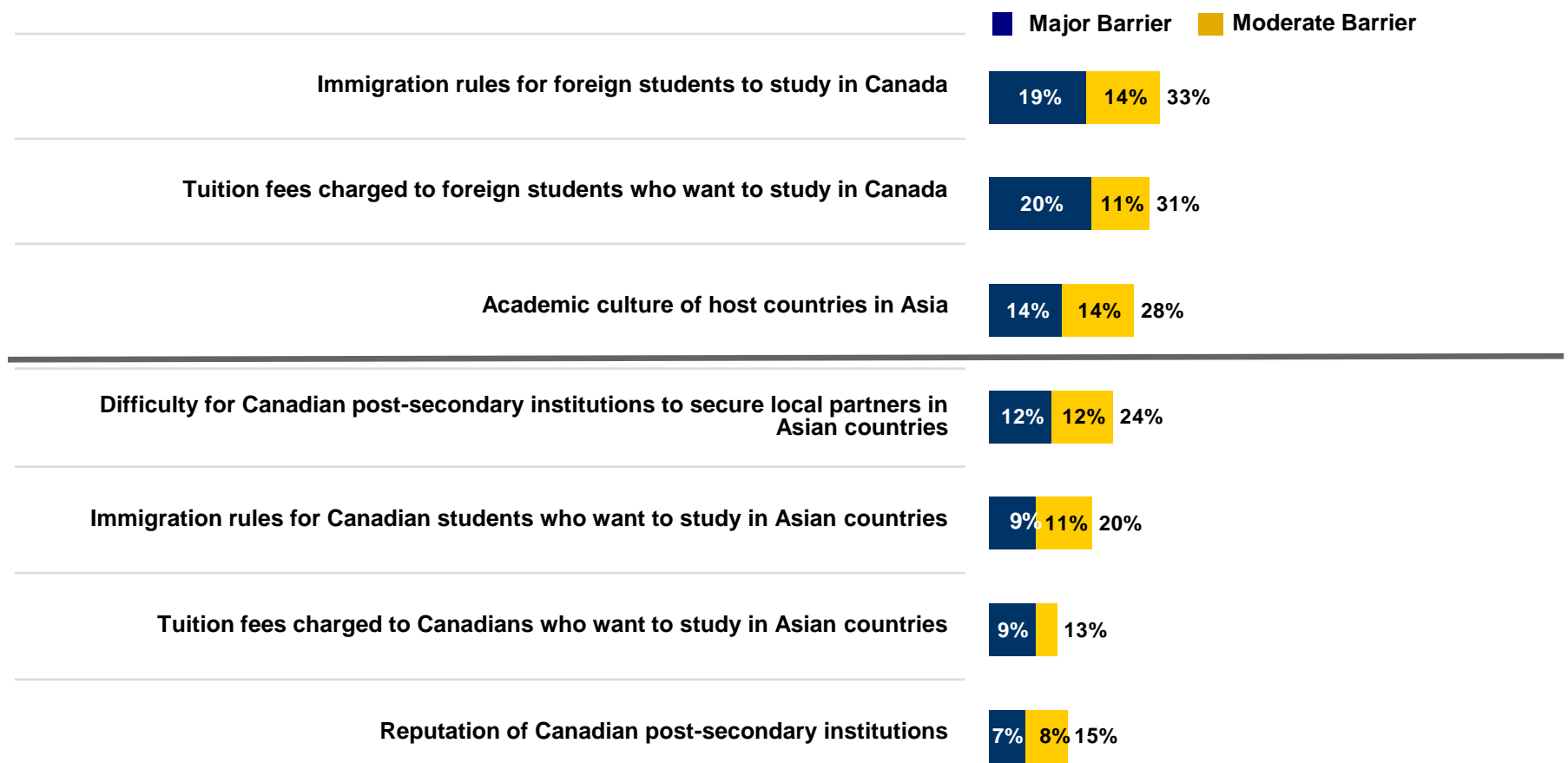


% Who selected each approach as being most effective in helping Canada build closer relations with Asia.  
(2 choices possible)

Base: (374)

Q.2 : Thinking more specifically about what might be done in the area of education, which **two** of the following actions do you think would be most effective in helping Canada and Canadians build closer relations with Asian countries?

Asia practitioners see relatively few major or moderate barriers to Canada taking a leadership role in international education in Asia. Of the more important barriers identified, most emanate from in Canada – immigration rules and tuition fees for foreign students. Few perceive the same problem for Canadians seeking to study abroad in Asia. However, the academic culture of host Asian countries is also seen to pose some difficulties for Canada.



Base: (n varies from 358 to 363)

Q.6 : To what degree do think each of the following is a major or minor barrier to Canada taking a leading role in global or international education in Asian countries? Please rate each one on a 7-point scale where 1 means it is only a minor barrier and 7 means it is a major barrier. (Major barrier=6,7 out of 7; Moderate barrier=5 out of 7)

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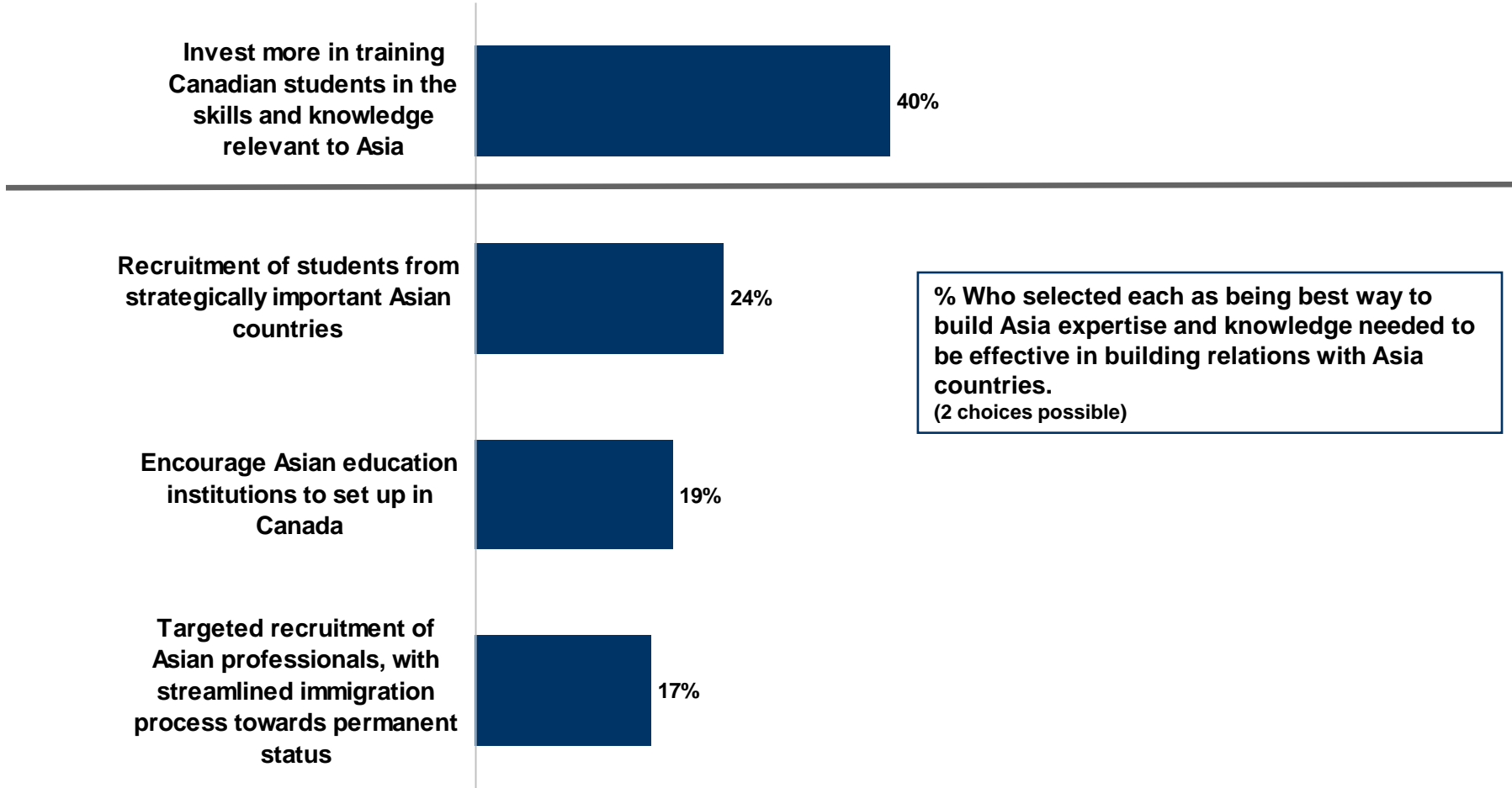
## Building Canada's "Asia Competency"





# Best Way to Build Asia Expertise and Knowledge

Canadians who are engaged in Asia are fairly convinced that the best way to build Canadians' "Asia competency" is to invest in training students in skills/knowledge relevant to Asia. Still, a quarter of Asia practitioners also single out the recruitment of Asian students from strategically important countries as an effective method.



Base: (n=374)

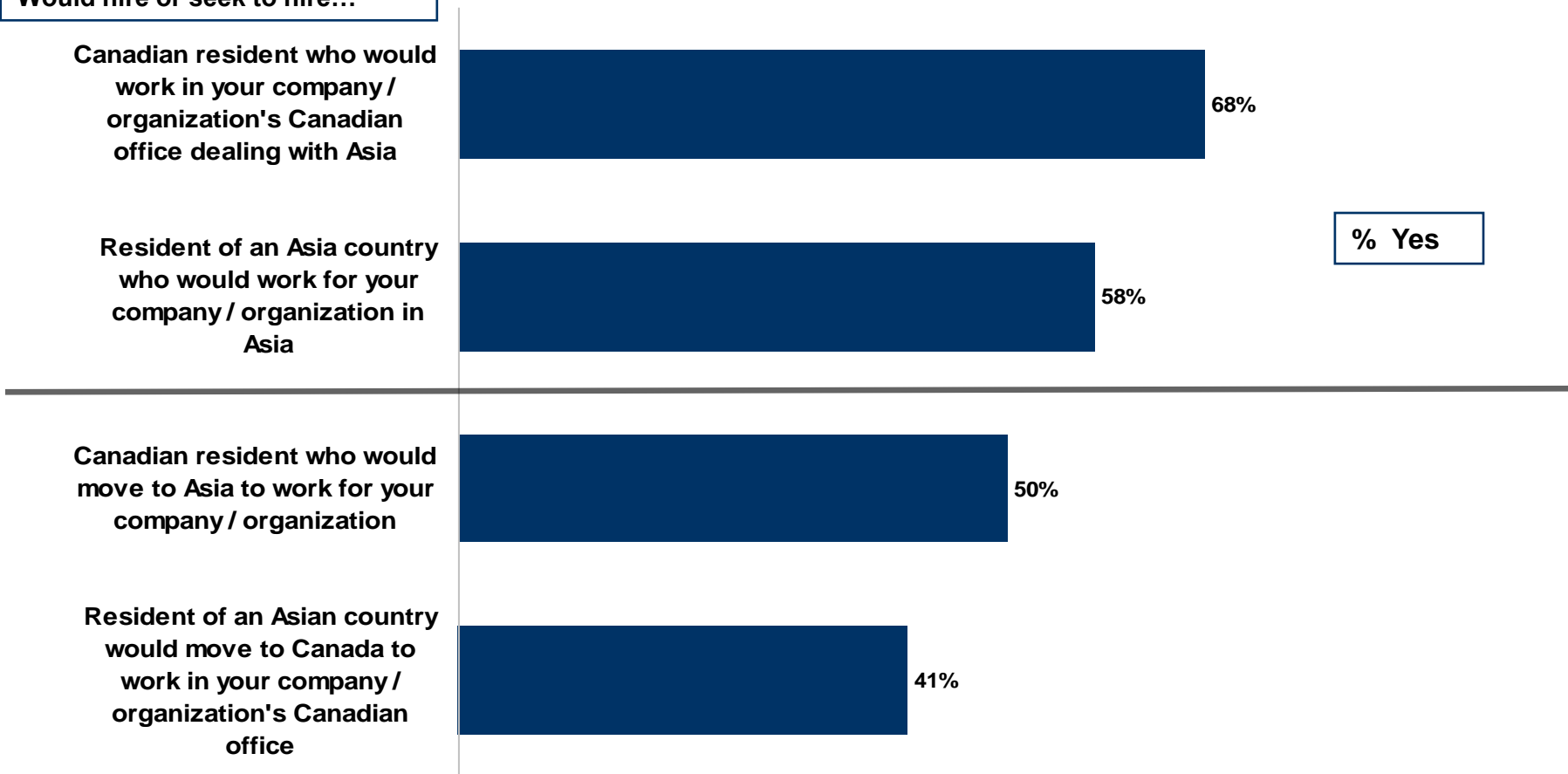
Q.7 : In your view, which of the following is the best way to build the Asia expertise and knowledge that Canada will need to be effective in building relationships with Asian countries in the future? Please select up to **two** responses only.

# Hiring Practices of Canadian Companies/Organizations for Work in/on Asia



Asia practitioners in Canada say their companies/organizations do seek to hire employees with an eye to their Asia practice. Most target local nationals to work in local offices, either in Canada or in Asia. Still, there appear to be some opportunities to hire those willing to move.

Would hire or seek to hire...



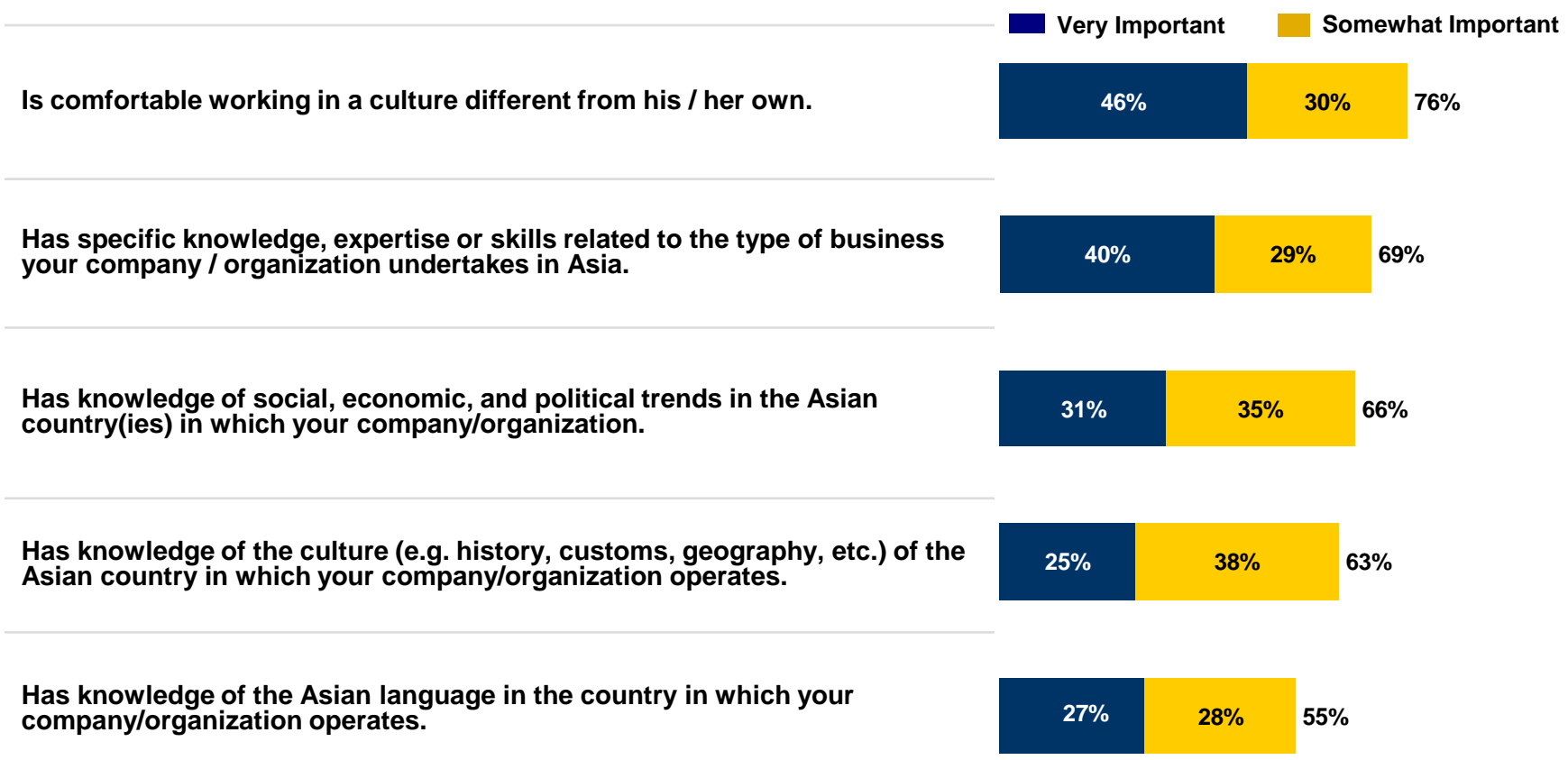
% Yes

Base: (n=varies from 337 to 340)

Q.17: Does your company/organization ever hire or seek to hire each of the following types of employees?

# Importance of Factors in Choosing to Hire Canadian Resident as New Employee

Being comfortable working in a different culture tops the list of important factors Asia practitioners in Canada use when choosing among a number of candidates to hire. However, knowledge and expertise related to the specifics of the job, and a broad appreciation for the socio-economic and political context of the Asian country in which they do business, are also something they consider. Language competency is a less important factor.



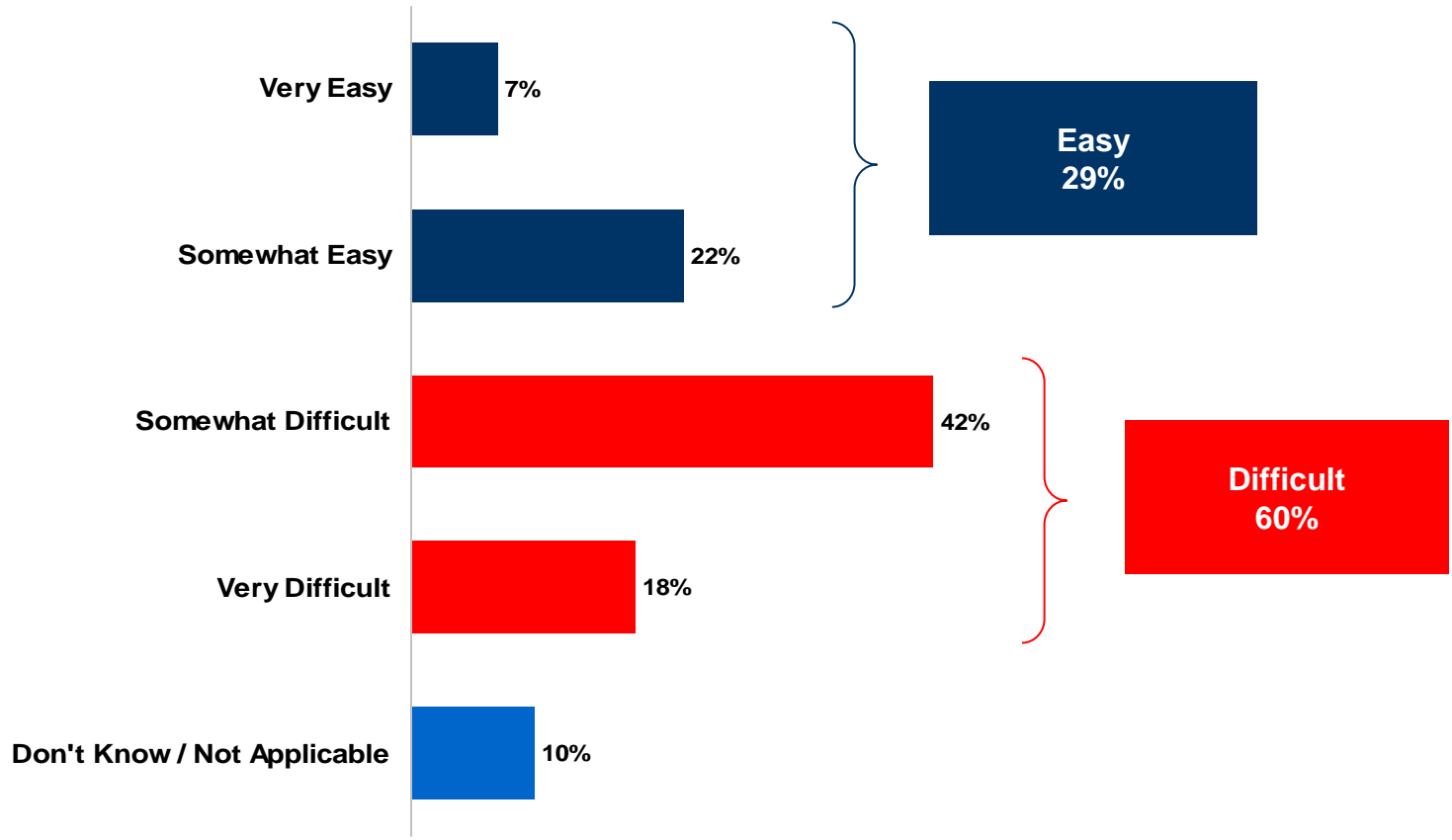
Base: (n varies from 347 to 352)

Q.19 : When your company/organization is looking to hire a new employee who is a Canadian resident, to what extent is each of the following a deciding factor in the candidate you choose to hire?

# Finding Canadians with Asia Awareness/Knowledge to Help Company/Organization



Most Asia practitioners in Canada say they find it difficult to find qualified Canadians with the appropriate level of knowledge and awareness of Asia to help their company/organization succeed in the business they do in Asia.



Base: (n=354)

Q.18: Generally speaking, would you say it's easy or difficult to find Canadian residents with the level of knowledge and awareness of Asia needed to help your company/organization succeed in the business it does or seeks to do in Asia?

# Evaluation of Canadian Professionals' "Asian Competency"



Asia practitioners give more favourable reviews to Canadian professionals for being knowledgeable about Asian societies and economies than for being able to speak an Asian language. Fully one-quarter rate language competency as "very poor." Further, praise for Canadians in both these areas is lukewarm rather than very positive – just 21% (very good/good) for language abilities, 34% for knowledge of Asian societies/economies.

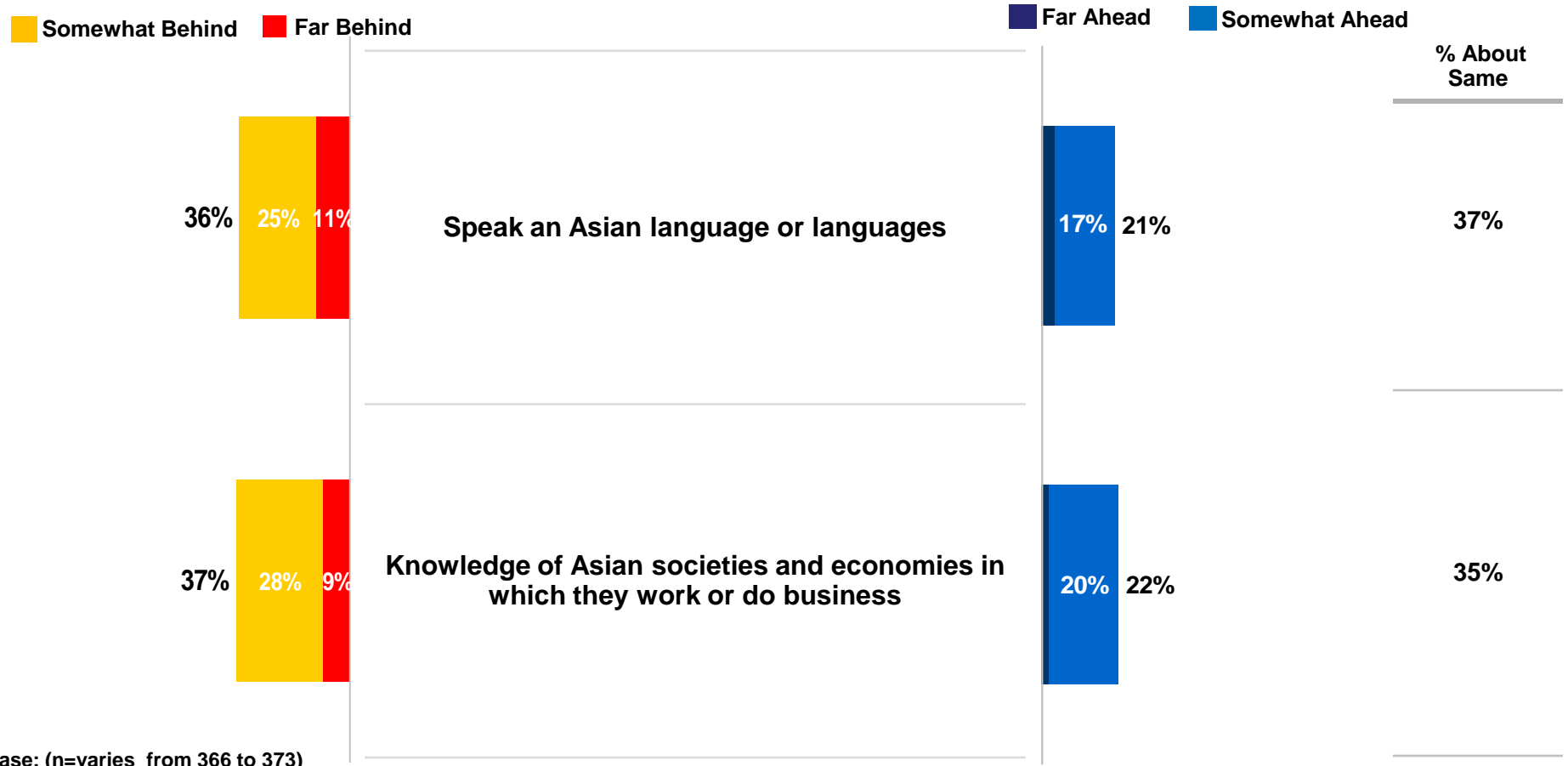


Base: (n=varies from 364 to 372)

Q.3 : Based on your own personal experience and knowledge, how would you rate Canadians who work in your industry or profession when it comes to each of the following?



Canadian Asia practitioners generally perceive other professionals in their industry to be behind or at the same level as those in other Western countries in being able to speak an Asian language or having knowledge of Asian societies/economies. Comparatively fewer position them ahead of others.

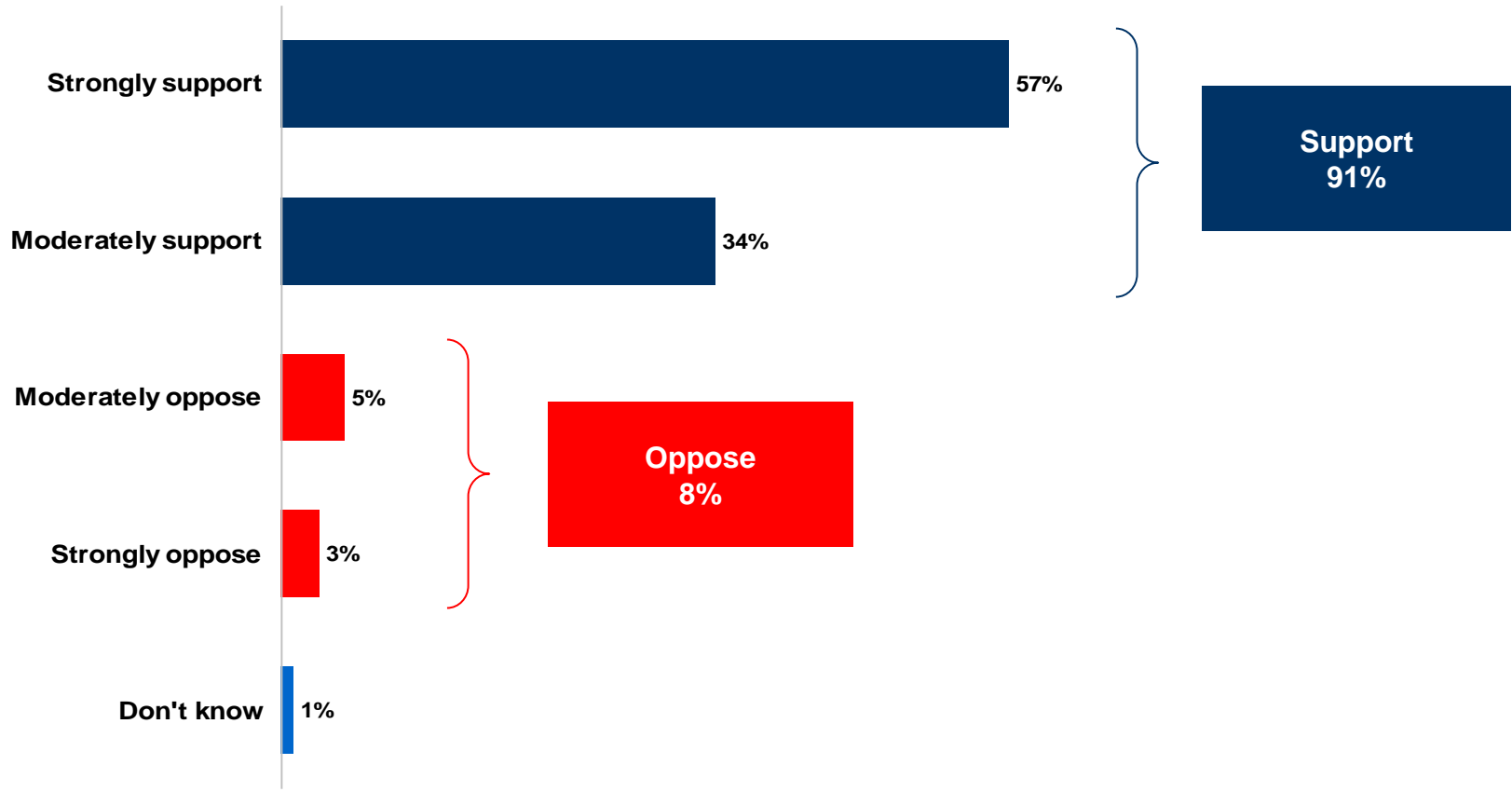


Base: (n=varies from 366 to 373)

Q.4 : And, would you say Canadians in your sector are generally ahead of or behind those from other Western countries, such as the U.S., Great Britain, France, Germany, Australia, when it comes to each of the following, or are they about the same?

# Level of Support for Putting Greater Priority on Teaching Asian Languages

Canadians engaged in Asia give overwhelming support to Canada putting a greater priority on the teaching of Asian languages in the country's elementary and secondary schools; close to 6-in-10 strongly support this action.



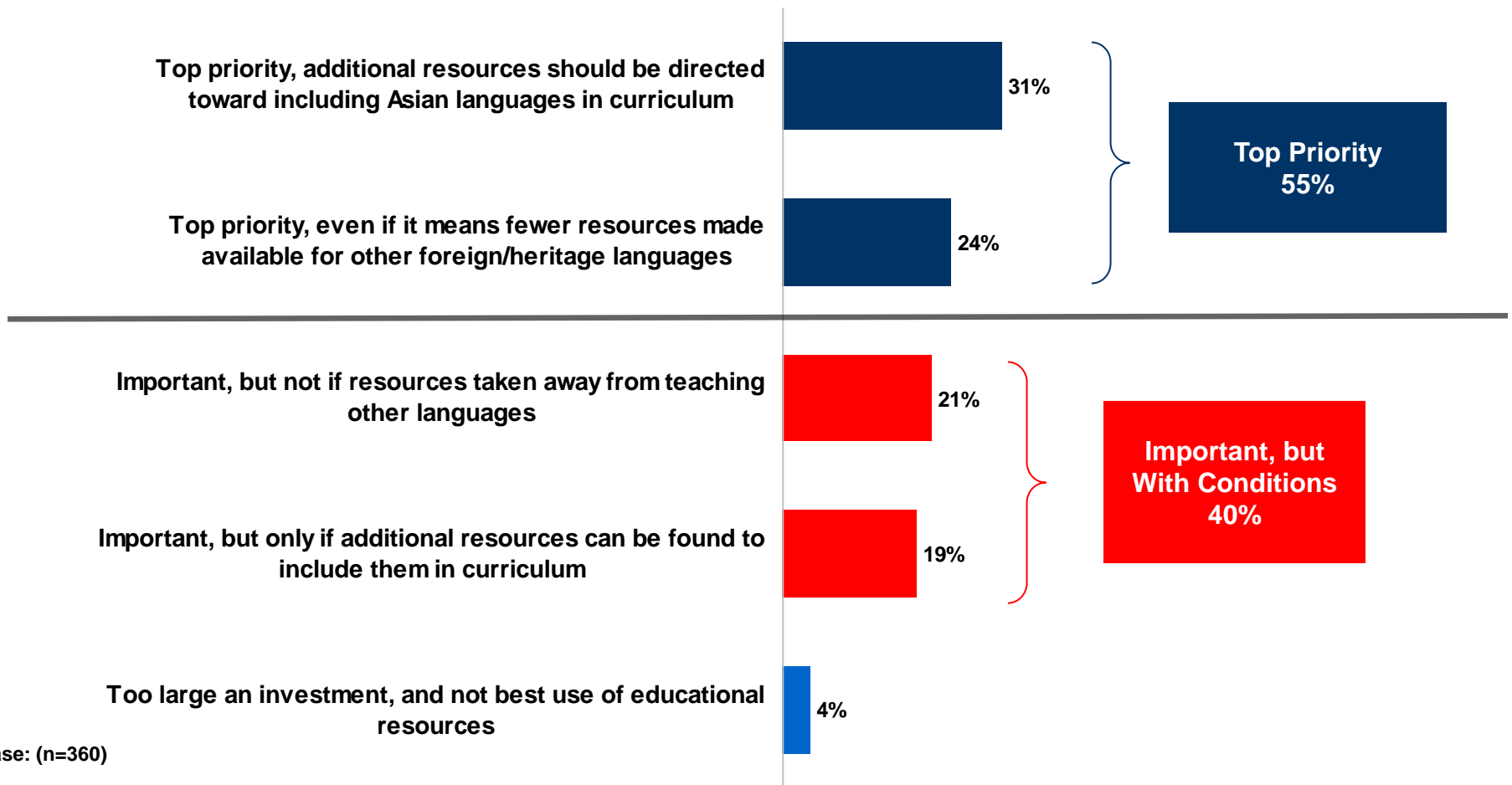
Base: (n=360)

Q.8 : Generally speaking, would you support or oppose putting greater priority on the teaching of Asian languages in Canadian elementary and secondary schools?

# Approach for Teaching Asian Languages in Elementary and Secondary Schools



A majority of Canadians engaged in Asia think that teaching Asian languages should be a top priority, and that additional resources should be directed towards including them in the curriculum, even if it means taking resources away from the teaching of other foreign or heritage languages. A full 4-in-10 acknowledge the importance of teaching Asian languages, but with conditions; they are reluctant to include them if it means negatively impacting the teaching of other languages, or without additional resources. Few reject the teaching of Asian languages as not the best use of educational resources.



Base: (n=360)

Q.9 Which of one of the following statements comes closest to how you feel about the teaching of Asian languages in elementary and secondary schools in Canada?



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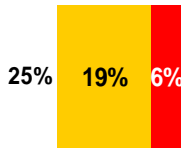
## **Perspectives on the Role of Canadian Higher Education Institutions in Canada-Asia Relations**

# Views on Canadian Post-Sec Institutions Turning to Asia for Global Education Opportunities

Asian practitioners are clearly of the view that Canada can and should pursue education opportunities in Asia. Indeed, they feel more is definitely needed to promote Canada as an education “destination” for foreign students. They also express confidence in Canadian post-secondary institutions’ status and abilities to establish a presence in Asian markets.

Moderately Disagree (Yellow) Strongly Disagree (Red)

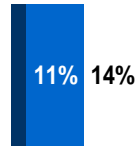
Strongly Agree (Dark Blue) Moderately Agree (Light Blue)



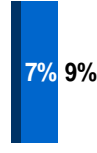
Canada not doing enough to promote itself in Asia as a destination for foreign students to study.



Canadian education institutions not major players in international education; shouldn't be venturing too quickly into Asia.



No real business case for Canadian education institutions to try to establish presence in Asian markets.



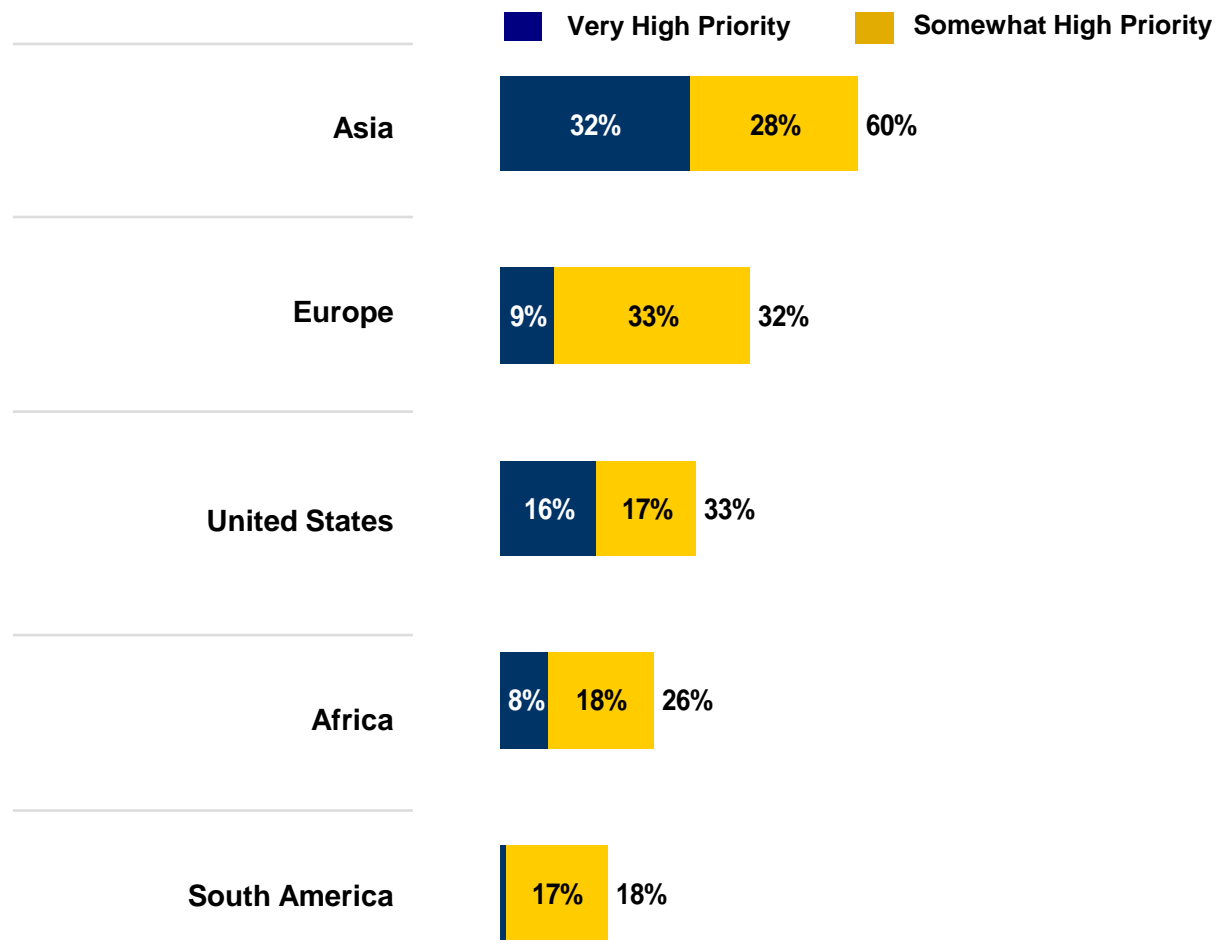
Base: (n varies from 364 to 367)

Q.5 : Would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the role education could play in helping Canada develop closer relations with Asian countries, and help build Canada's influence in the region?

# Level of Priority Post-Sec Institutions Currently Give to Different Regions for Global Education



Asia practitioners working in Canadian post-secondary institutions say their institutions currently place Asia well ahead of other regions for pursuing international education opportunities, by a two-to-one margin.

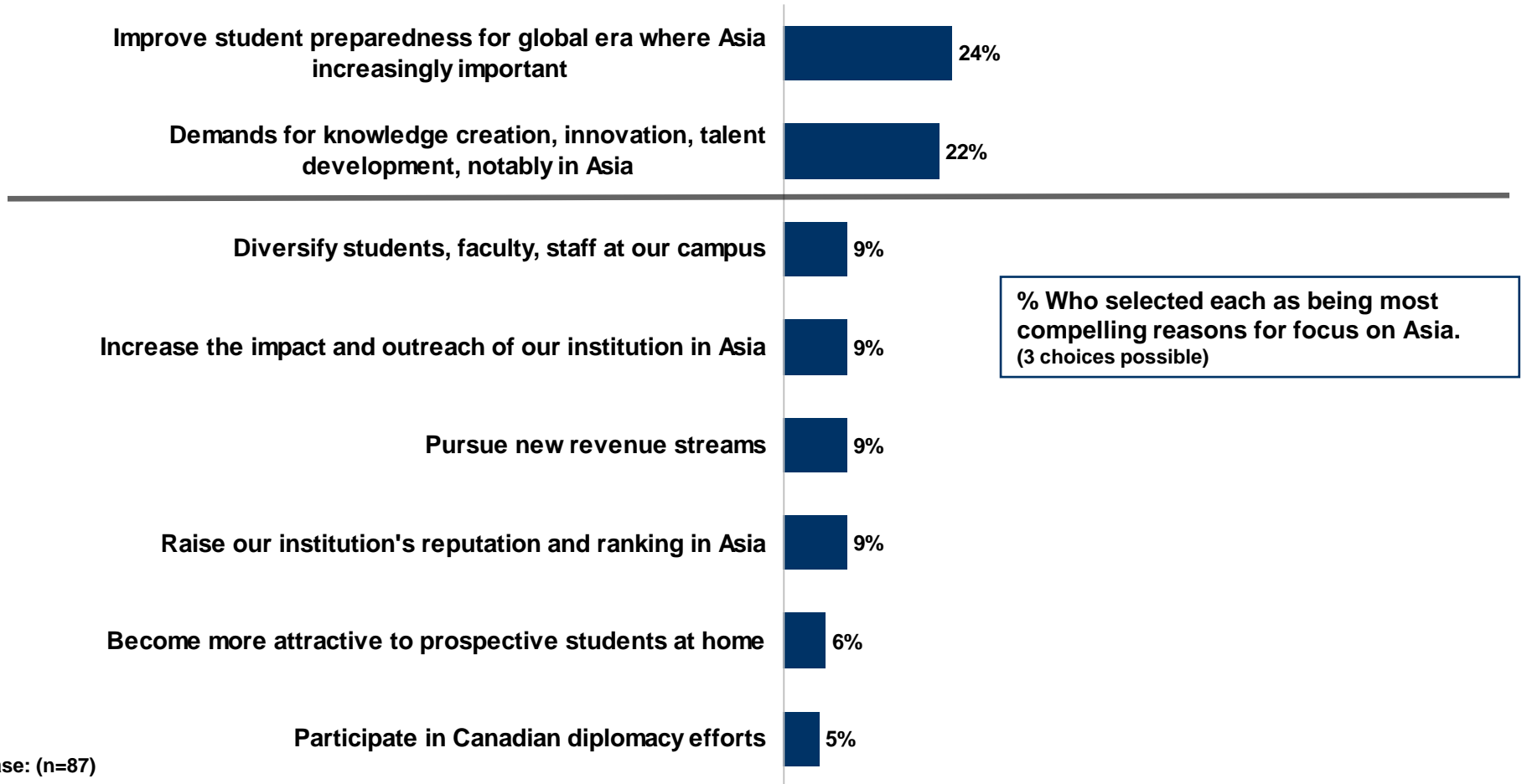


Base: (n varies from 85 to 87)

Q.11 : Generally speaking, what priority do you feel your institution gives to global or international education in each of the following regions of the world?

# Top reasons Post-Sec Institutions Involved in Global Education in Asia

Canadian post-secondary institutions are pursuing global education opportunities in Asia largely to help prepare students for a world where Asia is increasingly dominant, and to respond to market demands for innovation, creativity, and talent, notably in Asia. Comparatively fewer (1-in-10) are turning to Asia to diversify their student/faculty/staff on campuses, to increase their outreach and impact in Asia, to pursue new revenue streams, or to raise their reputation in the region.



% Who selected each as being most compelling reasons for focus on Asia. (3 choices possible)

Base: (n=87)

Q.12 : In your view, what are the **three** most compelling reasons for your institution to be involved in global or international education with a specific focus on Asia? Please select up to **3 responses** only.

# Priority Global Education Initiatives for Post-Sec Institutions to Pursue in Asia



Asia practitioners working in Canadian post-secondary institutions feel their institutions should give top priority to working with Asian institutions to develop and improve exchange programs as well as joint/dual/double programs. Very few single out branch campuses in Asian countries, or the global delivery of online programs for non-Canadian students.

Develop/Improve student/faculty exchange programs with Asian institutions 27%

Develop joint/dual/double degree programs with Asian institutions 20%

Internationalize curriculum at Canadian campuses, with specific attention on Asia 16%

Expand efforts for international student recruitment from Asian countries 13%

Develop workforce training programs for Asian governments/corporations 10%

Undertake/expand global branding and marketing of institution in Asian countries 7%

Global delivery of online programs for non-Canadian students in Asia 5%

Establish branch campus(es) in Asian countries 3%

% Who selected each as priority actions.  
(3 choices possible)

Base: (87)

Q.13: In your view, which **three** of the following actions do you think your institution should give priority to for its international or global education initiatives in Asia? Please select up to **3 responses** only.

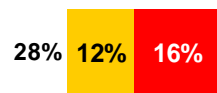


# Level of Support for Asia-Related Requirements at Post-Sec Institutions

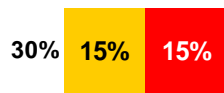
Asia practitioners in Canadian post-secondary institutions are very supportive of requirements for faculty that ties promotion or tenure to international work or experience, and they're also behind requiring students to take course that have a focus on Asian perspectives, issues, and events. However, there is significant opposition to any kind of Asian language requirement for admission, graduation, or general proficiency.

**Moderately Oppose** **Strongly Oppose**

**Strongly Support** **Moderately Support**



Faculty promotion or tenure tied to international work/experience, in targeted faculties.



Require students to take courses that feature perspectives, issues, events in Asia, as part of general education.



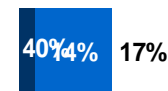
Develop an Asian language proficiency test for all students.



Make knowledge of an Asian language a graduation requirement.



Make knowledge of an Asian language an admission requirement for incoming students.



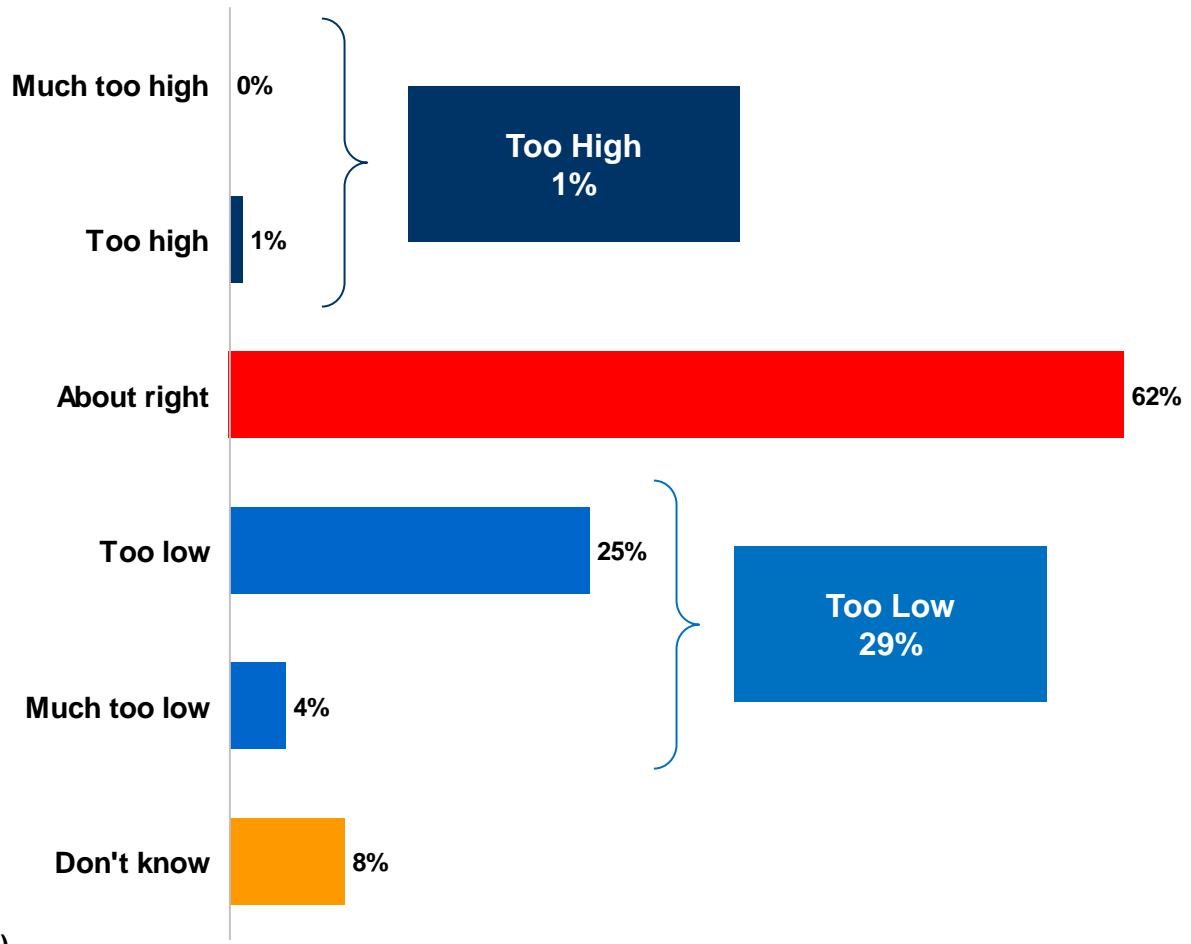
Base: (n=88 for all items)

Q.14 : Would you support or oppose your institution taking action to do each of the following?



# Views of English Language Standards for Foreign Students at Post-Sec Institutions

Most Asia practitioners in Canadian post-secondary institutions feel that English language standards for foreign students are “about right”. However, close to 3-in-10 consider the standards too low. Very few say they’re too high.



Base: (n=89)

Q.18 Based on your own knowledge or experience, do you think English language standards at Canadian post-secondary institutions are too high, too low, or about right when it comes to foreign students?

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## Research Methodology





## Research Methodology

- ◆ Points of View Asia Pacific is an opinion panel of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. It comprises close to 1,188 individuals who are engaged in Asia through their professional, research, or personal interests. 85% of panelists have business or professional interests in Asia, and 67% have worked in Asia. As members, these individuals have consented to receive invitations to participate in ongoing APFC surveys on issues related to Canada-Asia relations.
- ◆ Data collection occurred between October 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012. A total of 374 people completed the survey questionnaire in whole or in part - a 31.5% response rate. Of note, among these 374, 87 worked for or were affiliated with a post-secondary institution (24%), and answered questions of specific relevance to the post-secondary sector. Invitations were sent to opinion panel members through a “closed link” using Insite Systems Inc.
- ◆ The final sample was not weighted in any fashion, given that there are no available aggregate statistics against which to compare our sample parameters.
- ◆ Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online surveys, but this poll of 374 Points of View Asia Pacific opinion panelists has a credibility interval of plus or minus 5.1 percentage points.