



American Attitudes Toward China

Views on Issues Concerning Greater China and US-China Relations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Phase Three: Chinese American Attitudes Toward China

Background

The Committee of 100 is a national, nonpartisan organization composed of prominent American citizens of Chinese descent. Members collectively pool their strengths and experiences to address important issues concerning the Chinese American community, promote the advancement of Asian Americans, as well as foster better U.S.-Greater China relations.

This Executive Summary presents the key findings of the third of a three-phase study to assess the attitudes of the general US population (General Public) as well as Chinese Americans towards Greater China and U.S.-China relations. (Opinion Leaders, Congressional Staffers, and Business Leaders, subsets of the General Public, were other segments polled, but not included in comparisons for this Executive Summary.) The objectives of this study are to provide primary quantitative and qualitative research that can be shared, discussed and used to better understand U.S.-China relations and formulate recommendations on how to improve these relationships.

The study is being conducted in collaboration with the world-renown polling firm Zogby International, noted for the excellence of its methodology, experience, database and insights.

Methodology

General Public – Zogby International conducted interviews of 1,202 adults at random nationwide. All calls were made from Zogby International headquarters in Utica, N.Y., from 12/8/04 through 12/11/04. The margin of error is +/- 2.9 percentage points. Slight weights were added to region, party, age, race, religion, and gender to more accurately reflect the population surveyed. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Chinese Americans – Zogby International conducted interviews of 354 Chinese Americans chosen at random nationwide from a surname list. All calls were made from Zogby International headquarters in Utica, N.Y., from 4/22/05 thru 4/28/05. The margin of error is +/- 5.3 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Key Findings by Subject

With notable exceptions, Chinese Americans views of China and US-China relations by and large correspond to those of the General Public. On the other hand, there is a discernible disparity of views between Chinese Americans born in the US and those born in Greater China.

American and Chinese American Attitudes Towards China and US-China Relations

- **Impression of China:** Chinese Americans are substantially more likely to view China favorably (75%) than the general public (59%), which already holds a favorable impression —and, for General Public, significantly more positively than ten years ago (59% in 2004 vs. 46% in 1994).
 - **10 Year Comparison:** A 70% majority of Chinese Americans believe that the relationship between the US and China has improved, when compared with 10 years ago, substantially more than 57% of the General Public who hold this view.
 - **Future Relations:** Chinese Americans closely parallel the overall outlook of the U.S. public regarding the direction of relations with China: While nearly half (52%) perceive Sino-American relations as improving, 10% view them as worsening. Correspondingly, 45% of the General Public expects the US – China relationship to continue to improve, while only 12% foresee a decline in relations.
- **How to improve US-China relations?** General Public calls for increased negotiations, communications, diplomacy, and dialogue between the two countries; Chinese Americans advocate better more communication, increased understanding, more balanced, free trade, and a resolution to the Taiwan issue.
- **Areas of Concern in China:** Human rights issues remain a top concern of Americans, the number one concern for the General Public (46%) while only 20% of Chinese Americans rate human rights as a top concern, along with another 17% listing environmental degradation as a top concern. However, the second and third top areas of concern in China for the General Public, loss of US jobs (21%) and China's military modernization (20%) for Chinese Americans were far less of a concern (9% and 7%, respectively).
- **Human Rights Conditions:** While a bare majority of the general public (52%) holds that the human rights situation in China has improved over the last decade, over two-thirds (68%) of Chinese Americans hold this view.
- **Linking Human Rights to Trade:** Chinese Americans are split evenly (47%) over whether China's access to U.S. markets should be linked to its human rights record compared to 69% of General Public who feel that the two should be linked.
- **Military Threat:** 43% of Chinese Americans describe China's emergence as a military power as constituting either a serious (10%) or potential (33%) threat as compared to 66% of the General Public who described China as either a serious (15%) or potential (51%) threat.
- **War on Terrorism:** China is viewed as a dependable ally in the War on Terrorism by a 56% majority of Chinese Americans as opposed to only 27% of General Public respondents of which a majority (56%) say that China is not a dependable ally.

American Attitudes Toward China in the Global Economy

- **Economic Threat or Partner:** Chinese Americans are split on whether China is an economic partner (41%), and less likely to perceive China as a threat (41%), than are members of the general public (serious or potential threat 60%, partner 25%).
 - Despite this, the majority of both groups consider economic trade with China as beneficial to the US, with Chinese Americans at 83%, and the General Public at 73%.
 - Moreover, 85% of Chinese Americans view products from China as benefiting Americans due to their low cost—more than 20 points higher than the 63% of the general public that shares this viewpoint.
- **Trade Imbalance:** A majority of Chinese Americans (53%) generally parallel the General Public (57%) on the issue of whether the Chinese government helps cause the trade imbalance with the United States, differing by only four points in overall levels of agreement.
- **Job Loss to China:** On the question of U.S. job losses, Chinese Americans do not substantially deviate from the general public in their perception of job loss to job market competitors. In fact, a plurality of Chinese Americans identified China as the top source of job loss, followed by India, then Mexico with combined severe and moderate job loss to China (83%) at a level comparable to the general public (85%).
- **Union Gap:** Surprisingly, as far as the General Public is concerned, there is no union gap, with very minor differences in attitudes regarding severity of job loss among union vs. non-union households.
- **China as a Communist State:** 68% of Chinese Americans believe that China is no longer a communist country, in light of the state's economic reforms. This attitude is particularly strong among Chinese Americans born in China, of whom 86% of respondents hold this opinion (compared to 63% of Business Leaders and 47% Congressional Staff who agree that China is no longer a communist country).
- **Environmental Degradation:** Both samples concur that China's growth has negative consequences for the global environment, 56% of the General Public and 48% of Chinese Americans. However, nearly as many (46%) Chinese Americans disagree with this.
- **Sino-US Business Impact:** Half (47%) of Chinese Americans strongly agree that increased Sino-American business contact improves the image of Chinese Americans. An additional 35% somewhat agree with this viewpoint, while only one-in-seven (14%) disagree.

Hong Kong, Cross Strait Relations, and Other Findings

- **Post Handover Hong Kong:** Chinese Americans are split very evenly on the status of post-handover Hong Kong. Roughly equal percentages view Hong Kong as being better off (26%), worse off (30%) or the same as under British rule (27%). Similarly, 30% of the General Public perceives Hong Kong as worse off since its handover from Britain to China in 1997 with only 22% see Hong Kong as better off.
 - Taiwan-born respondents are more inclined than others to view post-handover Hong Kong as worse off (41%)—roughly the same percentage as among U.S.-born Chinese Americans (40%).
 - Meanwhile, those born in China, have a markedly different outlook, with 40% perceiving Hong Kong as being better off, and just 17% seeing it worse off.
- **US Involvement in Cross Strait Affairs:** A 53% majority of Chinese-Americans oppose greater U.S. involvement in cross-strait relations; 47% of the General Public is against a greater US role.
 - U.S.-born Chinese Americans are slightly more in favor (50%) of increased U.S. involvement than opposed (46%) whereas Taiwan-born Chinese Americans are overwhelmingly in favor (64% while 34% are opposed).
 - However, Chinese Americans born in China, oppose a larger role for the U.S. by a wider 69% to 28% margin.
- **One China Policy:** While the general public indicated overwhelming support for self-determination on Taiwan (77%), a plurality of Chinese Americans (48%) would prefer a continuation of the One China Policy. An additional 11% would actively discourage Taiwan from further moves toward independence.
 - Taiwan-born Chinese Americans are more likely to favor allowing Taiwan to determine its own course, with 46% choosing this option versus 34% who favor continuing the One China policy, in contrast with the General Public which is much more likely (77%) to favor letting Taiwan determine its own fate.
 - Among those Chinese American respondents born in China, more than one-in-five (22%) would favor Taiwan's people deciding their own course.
- **US Military Support of Taiwan:** Of the 77% of General Public and 38% of Chinese Americans who advocate letting Taiwan decide its own fate, a minority of both General Public (32%) and Chinese Americans (45%) support US military involvement if a Taiwanese declaration of independence leads to hostilities between China and Taiwan.
- **Admirable Qualities:** The General Public cites work ethic, family values, history, and commitment to education as the most admirable attributes of Chinese people and their culture similar to the qualities Chinese Americans listed: hard-working, family-oriented, and education-focused.
- **Chinese Immigration to USA:** Chinese Americans have markedly different outlook on Chinese immigration than the General Public: Chinese Americans view Chinese immigration as a more positive (48%) than negative (5%) development in contrast with General Public (29% positive, 17% negative), with 41% and 49% of both groups viewing Chinese immigration in neutral terms, respectively.

- **Visits to China:** While only one-in-ten (10%) members of the General Public have ever visited Greater China, 83% of Chinese Americans have done so, with 70% having done so in the past five years, and another 22% taking 5 or more trips in the past 10 years.

Key Findings of Questions Exclusively Asked of the Chinese American Segment:

- **Negative Portrayal of Chinese Americans in Media:** While a slight majority (51%) of Chinese Americans perceives their portrayal in U.S. media as negative, this is with considerably low intensity. More than twice as many respondents (35%) only somewhat agree with this proposition than strongly agree (16%) with it.
- **Impact of China’s Image on Chinese Americans:** Two-thirds (66%) of respondents say that a negative perception of China held by Americans has an adverse impact on Chinese Americans. 61% of Chinese Americans born in the U.S agree as compared to roughly seven-in-ten among those born outside the U.S.
- **Chinese American Image:** Over two-thirds (70%) of Chinese Americans agree that fashion, movies, and culture from China and Hong Kong improve the image of Chinese Americans while a nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) disagree on this point.
- **Sino-US Business Impact on Chinese Americans:** Just under half (47%) of Chinese Americans strongly agree that increased Sino-American business contact improves the image of Chinese Americans. An additional 35% somewhat agree with this viewpoint, while just one-in-seven (14%) disagree.
- **Chinese American Under-Representation on US Corporate Boards:** While only 44% of Business Leaders (polled in Phase II) feel that Asian Americans are not given adequate access to the corporate boardroom, Chinese Americans overwhelmingly believe (79%) **that Asian Americans are underrepresented in corporate headquarters.**
- **Fields for gains:** 46% of respondents indicate that they would like to see Chinese Americans make greater gains in government and public service, followed by 14% in the field or profession of science and technology and 14% in the corporate sector.
- **Discrimination:** Half (52%) of respondents indicate that they have been subjected to discrimination based on their Chinese ancestry. Nearly as many (45%), however, indicate they have not.
 - Younger respondents are more likely to have perceived discrimination (59%) than are respondents over the age of 30 (~50%).
- **Racial Slurs:** Chinese Americans split evenly on the question of whether they have been subjected to insults based on their ethnic identity—47% say they have been called names or made fun of, while 51% say they have not.
 - Younger respondents more readily recall these insults with 69% indicating they had been made fun of; among seniors, the percentage drops to 47%.
- **Chinese Curriculum:** An overwhelming majority—84%—of Chinese Americans agrees that schools should include teaching materials related to China and the Chinese while only 12% disagree.

- **Chinese American Role Models:** Top Chinese American role models listed by Chinese American respondents are: Yao Ming: 9%; Connie Chung: 8%; Michael Chang: 8%; Elaine Chao: 6%; Bruce Lee: 6%; Jet Li: 5%; Jackie Chan: 4%; Yo Yo Ma: 3%; with I.M. Pei, Gary Locke, Jerry Yang, Lisa Ling, Amy Tan, and Michelle Kwan all at 2%. Other role models included: David Ho; Lucy Liu; Iris Chang; T.Y. Lin; Charles Wang, John Fugh; Henry Lee; Li Zhengdao; Robert Matsui; Katie Tong; Rep. David Wu.

Demographic Questions

- **Birthplace of Respondents:** 26% of Chinese American respondents were born in the USA; 42% were born in China; 20% were born in Taiwan, 6% were born in Hong Kong with the rest coming from other countries.
- **Chinese Language:** 92% of respondents are able to speak at least one Chinese dialect with 51% of these Mandarin speakers, 29% Cantonese speakers, 7% Shanghainese speakers, along with a number of other dialects.
 - Cantonese is more widespread among younger Chinese Americans (46% of those under the age of 30 reported speaking this dialect) while among middle-aged respondents, Mandarin was the overwhelming dialect of choice.
- **Relatives in Greater China:** Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Chinese Americans have relatives in Greater China with whom they have regular contact and only 27% do not. U.S.-born Chinese Americans are the exception, with just one-third (33%) saying they have relatives in Greater China with whom they have contact; for those born in Greater China, the percentage exceeds 85%.

For further information, please refer to www.committee100.org