

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York (FES) commissioned YouGov to field a survey of twelve countries, including approximately 1,000 respondents apiece from Brazil, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, Turkey, and The United States. The survey included several items measuring public opinion toward global organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations (UN), and several others. This memo briefly summarizes the results.

### Executive summary

- In most countries, the World Health Organization (WHO), an agency within the United Nations, had the strongest reputation out of the major global organizations, with 62 percent of respondents around the world reporting a favorable view of the WHO and 19 percent reporting an unfavorable view
  - Respondents typically report trusting the United Nations the most on international affairs compared to organizations like the European Union and countries like the US, Russia, or China
    - The United Nations is most trusted compared to other countries or global organizations by a 7-point margin in the US, a 2-point margin in Japan, a 13-point margin in Mexico, a 16-point margin in South Africa (relative to the next most trusted), a 39-point margin in Kenya, a 42-point margin in Indonesia
  - Organizations associated with the global financial system like the World Trade Organization (47 percent favorable to 17 percent unfavorable) and International Monetary Fund (40 percent favorable to 22 percent unfavorable) have systematically lower favorable ratings than other kinds of organizations
- Large shares of respondents are unsure how they feel about major global organizations their country is involved in
  - Respondents in Brazil and Russia felt positively about the Group of Twenty (G20), but “Not sure” was the most common opinion in other member states in the sample
- The United Nations has a stronger reputation than most other global organizations
  - The UN has positive net favorability in every country in the sample, including 50-32 net favorability in the US, 50-16 in France, 47-13 in Germany, 65-14 in Mexico, 66-13 in Brazil, 70-12 in India, and 48-22 in Russia
- The world tends to agree the United Nations serves purposes like advancing global peace and prosperity
  - Around the world, respondents agree the UN advances global peace by a 65-17 margin, improves economic prosperity by a 54-21 margin, and promotes democracy by a 55-20 margin
- The world is more skeptical that the United Nations effectively deals with problems, and have concerns about the cost to national sovereignty of United Nations membership

- Only 46 percent of respondents around the world agree the UN effectively deals with the world's problems, compared to 29 percent who disagree, and agree by a 32-30 margin that the UN costs countries some of their sovereignty
- Only about 29 percent of respondents felt that new alternative institutions to the UN were a good idea, compared to 52 percent who preferred working within existing institutions
- Respondents are concerned that better relations among countries are needed to ensure the world grows back stronger after the pandemic
  - In every country in our sample, a higher share of respondents said better relations with other countries and more involvement with global organizations were important than said additional military spending by their country was important
  - About 74 percent of respondents said their country should prioritize better relations with its neighbors and 73 percent said they should prioritize better relations with the global community, compared to 52 percent who prioritized a stronger military

## Global attitudes toward the United Nations and World Health Organization

*The United Nations and World Health Organization have stronger reputations than other global organizations*

Our survey included several items measuring global public opinion about major global organizations. We included organizations of which every country in the sample was a member, as well as some regional organizations of which only a few countries in the sample were members. The following chart breaks out a sample of the organizations we included, by member country.

Our results suggest that the World Health Organization currently has the strongest reputation of the major global organizations. Across the full sample, fully 62 percent of respondents approve of this organization, compared to just 19 percent who have an unfavorable view. It has net positive favorable ratings in almost every country in the sample -- +43 net favorability in Turkey, +54 net in South Africa, +28 net in Russia, +89 in Kenya, +59 in Indonesia, +55 in India, +42 in Germany, +38 in France, +48 in Mexico, +53 in Brazil, and +16 in the United States, down to a statistically split -1 net in Japan. Generally, respondents from Japan reported lower favorability toward global organizations across the board, likely driven by a sample that identified as further to the political right than others in the sample.

The United Nations, the World Health Organization's parent organization, also has a strong reputation. Compared to other organizations like the Group of Twenty (G20), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other similar organizations, more respondents reported having a "very favorable" or "somewhat favorable" view of the UN than those other organizations. The United Nations was the most popular global organization in the United States and Japan;

statistically tied with the World Health Organization as the most popular global organization in Brazil, Germany, Kenya, Indonesia, India, Mexico; and second most popular to the World Health Organization in France, Russia, and Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

Even accounting for name recognition and other factors, organizations whose names relate them to the global financial sector were less popular than one would expect, controlling for other factors. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank consistently polled 5-7 points lower than other global organizations by virtue of having lower outright favorability, *not* by having lower name recognition. This type of result is not surprising in a period when the global economy is struggling.

That said, even accounting for the higher share of “don’t know” responses among less well-known organizations, the United Nations’s net favorability is among the highest in the sample. When compared to other global organizations, people across the world clearly look to the United Nations when it comes to the subject of global leadership.

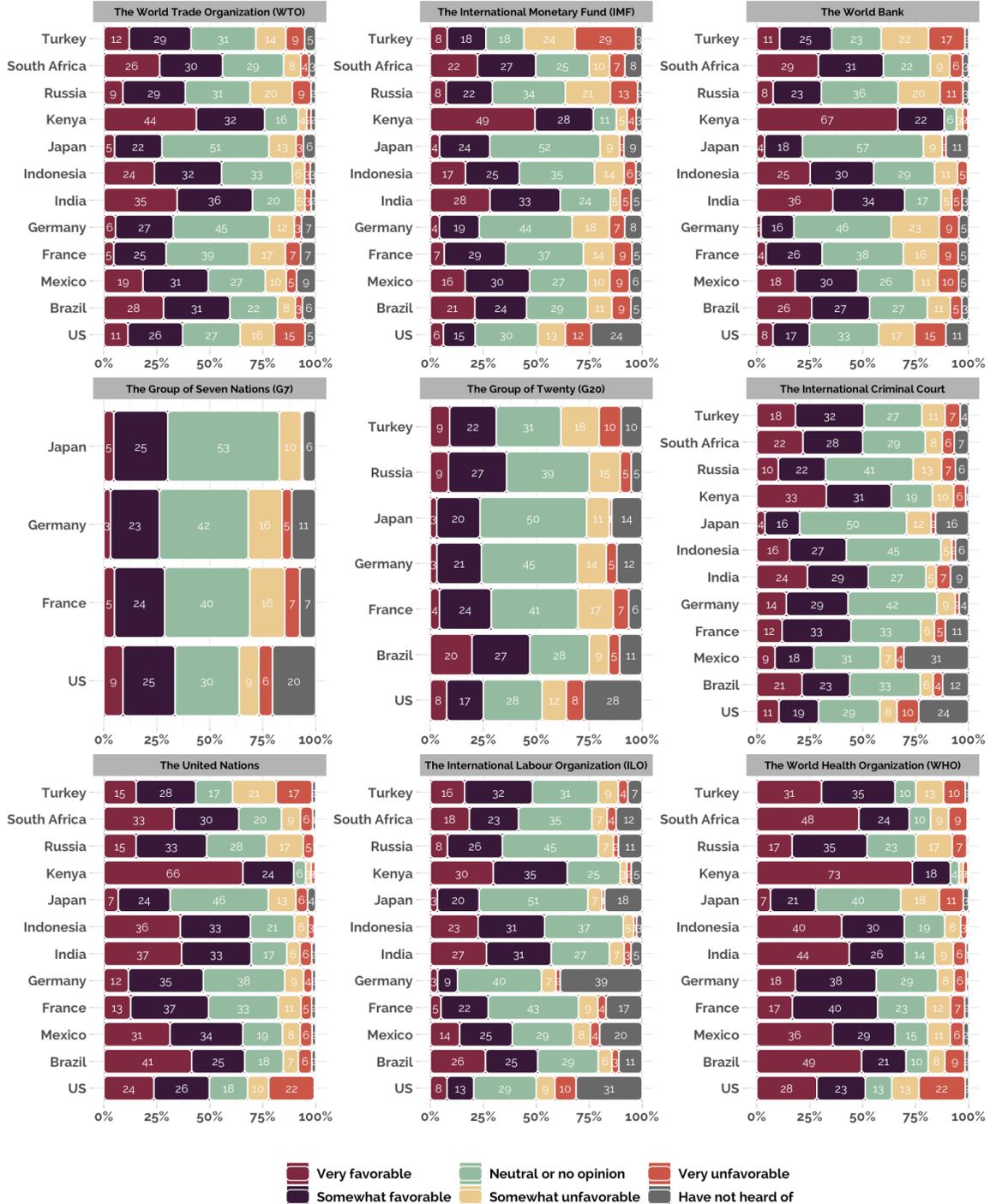
Notably, there is plenty of room for movement in favor of, or against, many of the global organizations we included in our sample. For example, when it comes to organizations like the Group of Seven and the Group of Twenty, more respondents from their member states were unsure how they felt than felt positively or negatively toward either. Across the full sample, fully 52 percent of respondents from a Group of Seven member state (the US, France, Germany, Japan) either had no opinion or were unsure how they felt about that organization. About 50 percent of respondents from a Group of Twenty member state (the US, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, and Turkey) were unsure how they felt about that organization.

We find a similar trend for the International Labor Organization (ILO), with 50 percent of respondents living in member states being unsure of or having no opinion toward that organization. This suggests there is significant room for movement in favor of or against these organizations as the world looks to the global community to rebuild in the wake of COVID-19 and the subsequent economic impact of the pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> Additionally, we note that the result for UN favorability among US voters has been fairly stable across the Trump era. For example, in an October, 2018 survey, YouGov found that US voters on net held a favorable view of the United Nations by a 46-31 margin. <https://today.yougov.com/topics/politics/articles-reports/2018/10/04/americans-dont-see-world-they-think-president-does>

**Views on different IOs (global)**

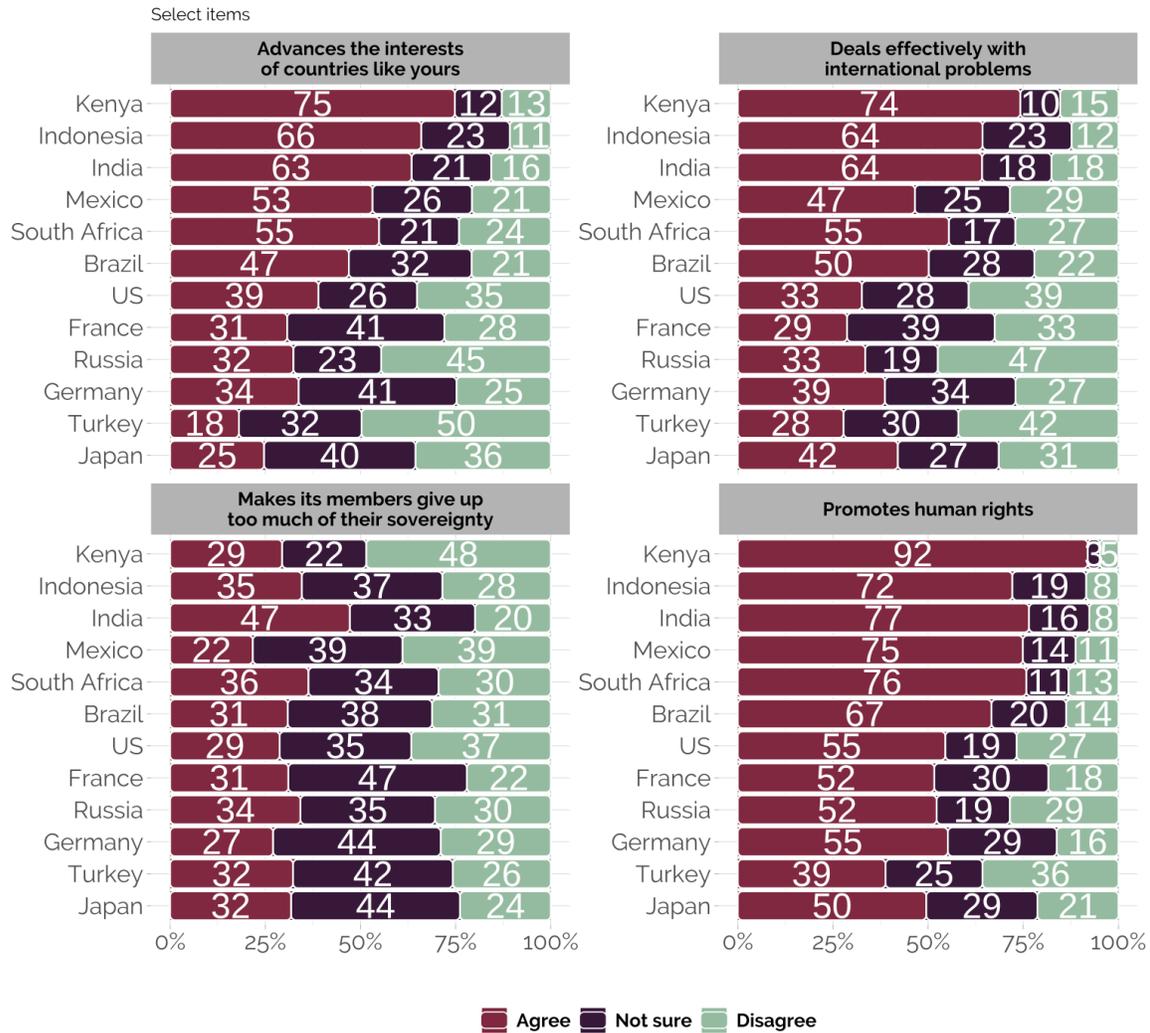


We pressed respondents on the question of the United Nations’s reputation and found that, by and large, the UN has a good reputation with respect to the missions it advances. For example, with the exception of Japan, Russia, and Turkey, respondents on net agreed that the United Nations “advances the interests of countries like [theirs].” Outright majorities from every country except for Turkey agreed that the United Nations “promotes human rights.”

At the same time, respondents across the world expressed concern about the efficacy of the United Nations when it came to solving problems. On net, more respondents from the United States, France, Russia, and Turkey *disagreed* that the UN “deals effectively with international problems.” The United Nations’s rating on this issue was lower in most countries than on other elements of UN favorability such as whether it promotes human rights or advances the interests of member countries.

Additionally, about half of the countries in the sample on net agreed that the United Nations’ “makes its members give up too much of their sovereignty.” This includes net agreement among respondents from Indonesia, India, South Africa, France, Russia, Turkey, and Japan, as well as a statistically split population between net agreement and disagreement among respondents from Brazil and Germany. While favorability and name recognition of the UN are both quite high, there is clear skepticism about the value of membership to its member states.

**United Nations reputation**



And when it comes to the United Nations, would you say you agree or disagree with each of the following, or are you unsure? The United Nations...

This is of particular importance because countries overwhelmingly agree that having stronger global organizations and better relations between countries of the world are vital elements of recovery from the pandemic. We asked respondents from each country what changes they felt their country needed to make to grow back stronger in the wake of COVID-19, including “Ensuring we are closer with the global organizations that help deal with pandemics” and “Ensuring our country has good relations with the global community” along with other domestic policy issues like “Providing our citizens access to healthcare” and “Building a strong military.”

When we pressed respondents on what sorts of countries or organizations they trusted to do the right thing when it came to international affairs, respondents in many countries were split between preferring the United Nations and another organization - the European Union in the case of the two EU member states (France and Germany) and the United States in some cases (with respondents from India and Brazil trusting the US the most). The United Nations was the most trusted organization or country in Mexico (24 percent), Indonesia (47 percent), Japan (21 percent), Kenya (59 percent), and South Africa (16 percent). The United Nations was statistically tied or narrowly in second for the most trusted organization or country alongside one other in Turkey (16 percent, tied with “another country” at 20 percent, the modal response there being Turkey itself), India (26 percent, with the United States at 30 percent), and Brazil (25 percent, with the United States at 27 percent).<sup>2</sup>

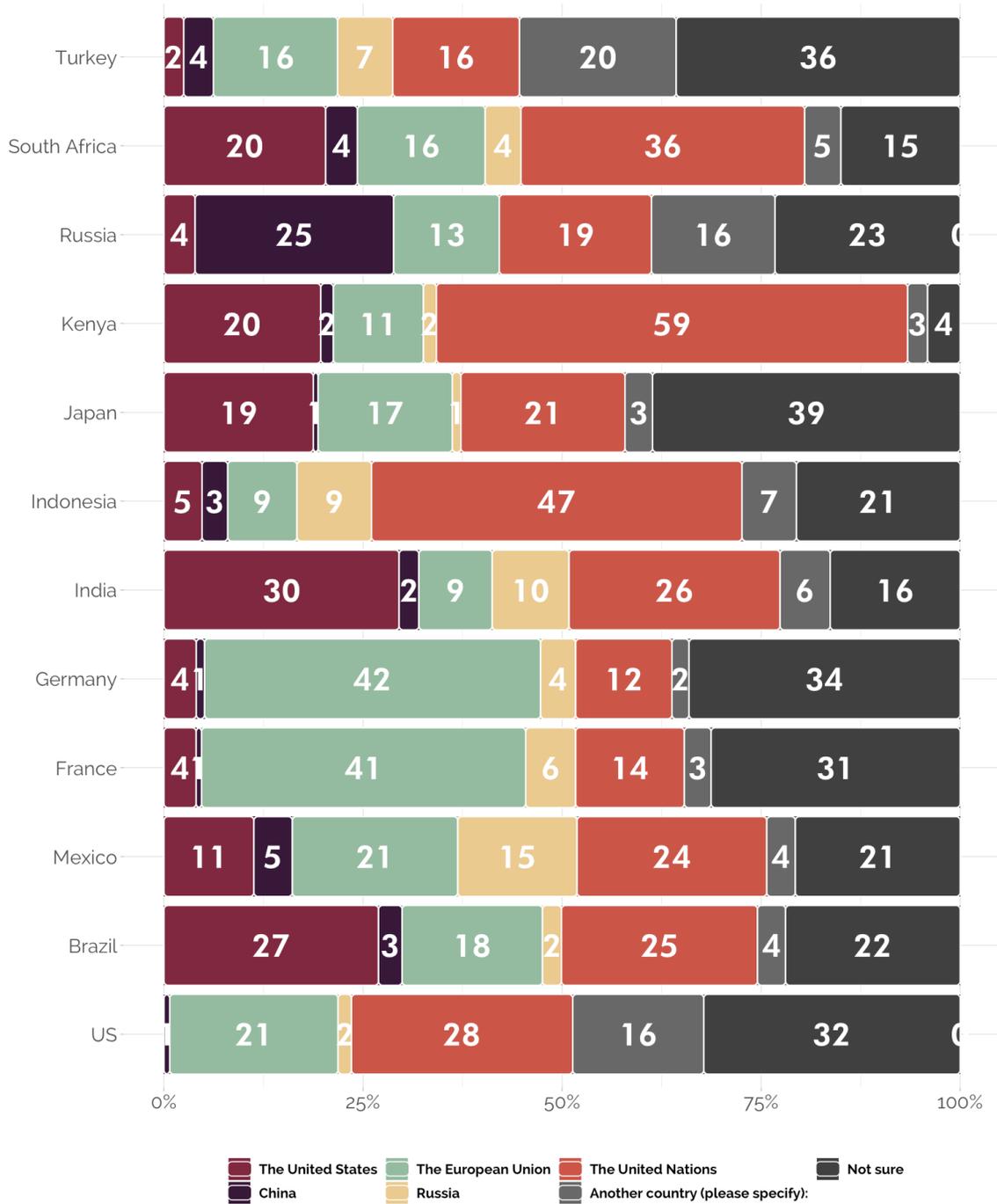
European Union member countries France and Germany were significantly more likely to select the EU as their most trusted international organization, which is perhaps not surprising. Russian respondents were narrowly more likely to report trusting China (25 percent) over the United Nations (19 percent) the most when it came to international affairs. This is the only case in the data of an individual country being the most trusted when it came to international affairs, compared to an organization like the EU or UN.

We also found that in many countries, large pluralities of respondents did not have an opinion. Typically, we found that respondents who reported paying more attention to political news in general, and to news specifically about international affairs, were more likely to have an opinion at all. Additionally, respondents in France who reported they voted for Macron were more likely to select the UN (18 percent) than those who supported other candidates (for example, 16 percent of Mélenchon supporters selected the UN, 10 percent of Fillon supporters, and 9 percent of Le Pen supporters selected the UN). In Germany, respondents who said they supported the SPD were more likely to select the UN (18 percent, versus a survey-wide average of about 13 percent).

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<sup>2</sup> Here, we note that respondents were not asked about their own country. Respondents in the United States were not given the “United States” option and respondents in Russia were not given the “Russia” option.

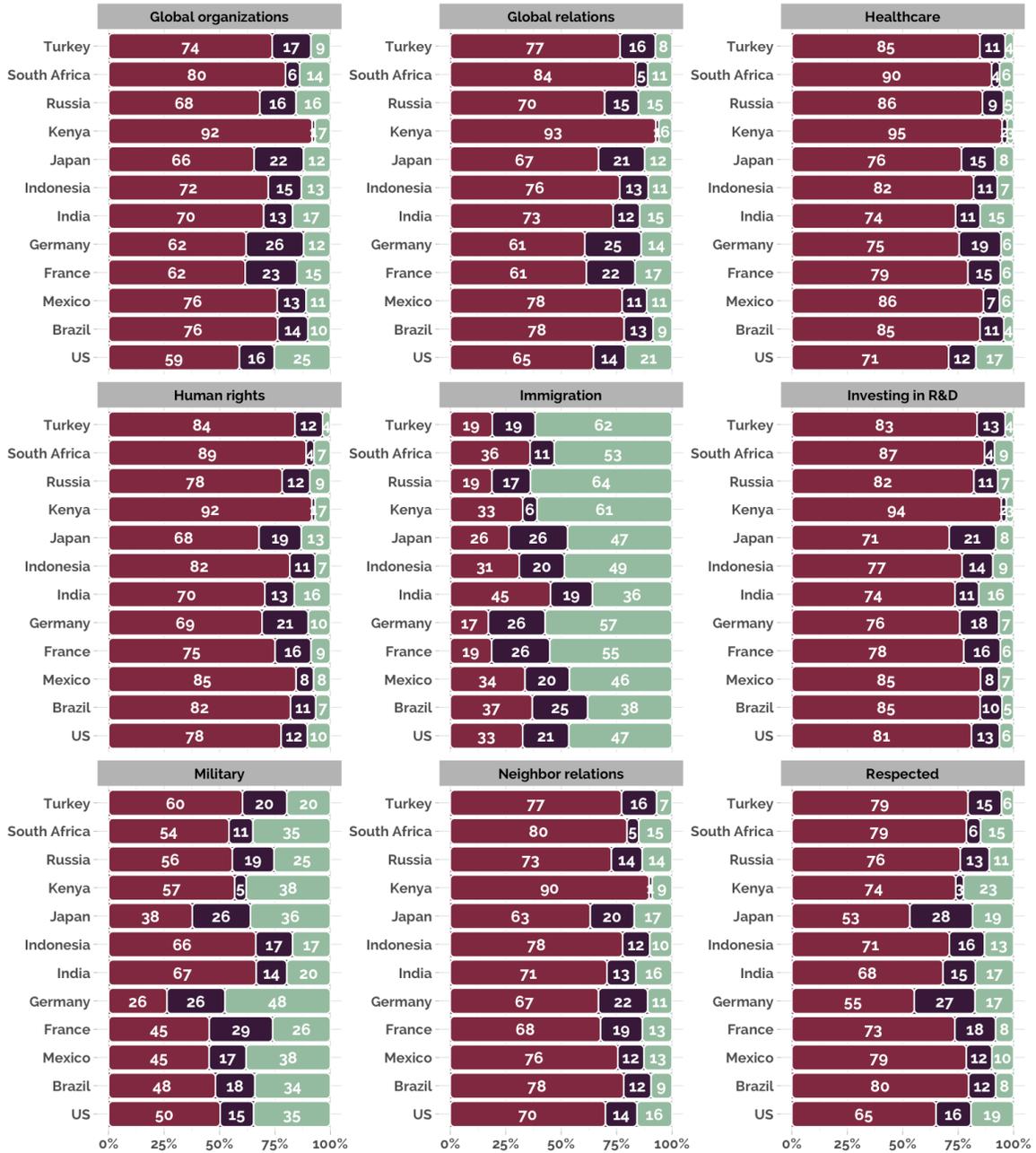
**Who do respondents trust**



Generally speaking, when it comes to international affairs, who do you trust most to do the right thing?

In most countries, respondents viewed having strong relations both with the global community and global organizations as nearly as important as having a strong healthcare system - a remarkable finding for the pandemic era. Even as countries express some skepticism about the present value of the United Nations, they also acknowledge that such organizations will be crucial components of a global recovery from the pandemic. While most other organizations do not have the reputation of the UN, this suggests there is pressure on the UN to meet these expectations and prove its relevance to the world when it comes to building back from the relatively tumultuous past few years.

**Grow back stronger grid**



■ Our country should focus on this more
 ■ Not sure
 ■ Our country should focus on this less

In order for your country to become stronger after COVID-19, when it comes to changes it might make, should it focus (more or less) on doing each of the following?

Notably, in each country in the sample, more respondents prioritized better relations with other countries<sup>3</sup> and with global organizations<sup>4</sup> than prioritized military spending.<sup>5</sup> For example, in the United States, while about 50 percent of respondents prioritized having a stronger military, about 65 percent of American respondents prioritized having better global relations -- including 44 percent of Republicans and 55 percent of Independents. Even in the country where the most respondents prioritized having a stronger military, India, more respondents prioritized better involvement with global organization (73 percent) than the military (67 percent).

At the same time, there is *not* presently a global appetite for a set of new global organizations. We asked respondents if they felt that the United Nations had grown out of date, requiring new institutions to take its place, or if the current set of global institutions was best suited to deal with our problems. With the exception of Turkey and Russia, whose respondents were statistically split on this question, respondents felt that current institutions were best suited to deal with our current problems, even if they were imperfect. Even in countries that express persistent skepticism of global organizations, like France and the United States, respondents there on net clearly supported working within existing institutions rather than creating new ones.

The relatively high levels of uncertainty in France and Germany suggest that the past several years, where each country's role in its various member organizations has been at the center of political debate, have introduced uncertainty about each country's role in the world. Perhaps not surprisingly, we find that in each of these countries (as well as in others, like India and the United States) that those who identify as more politically to the right on the ideological spectrum drove up the share of respondents who felt it was time for a new set of global institutions. To the degree that this remains a part of the political debate, it will be incumbent on these global organizations to prove their value to their member states.

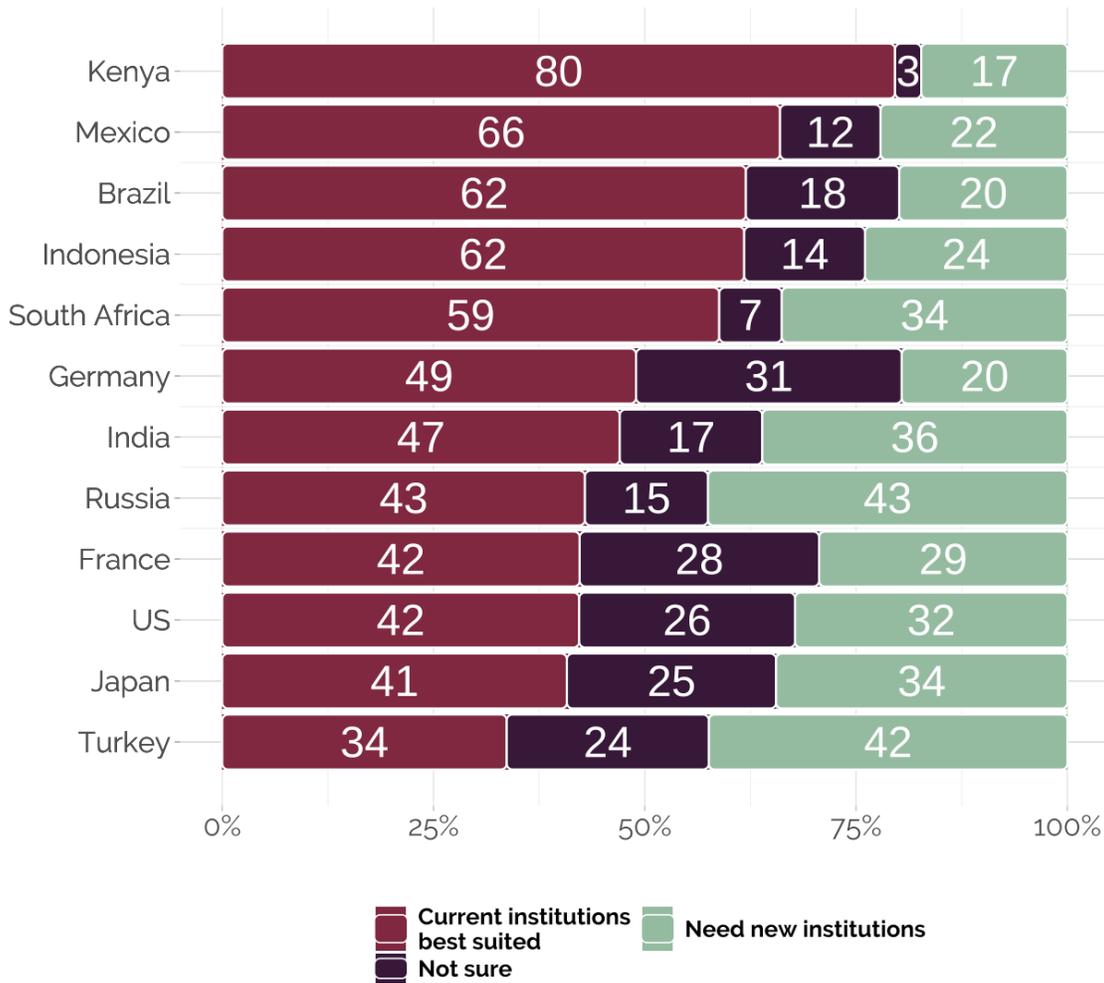
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<sup>3</sup> The wording we used here was, "Ensuring our country has good relations with its neighbors."

<sup>4</sup> The wording we used here was, "Ensuring we are closer with the global organizations that help deal with pandemics."

<sup>5</sup> The wording we used here was, "Building a strong military."

**Is United Nations Out of Date**



*And even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?*

It is perhaps notable that countries from the “global south,” such as Kenya, Mexico, Brazil, Indonesia, and South Africa hold particularly high views of the United Nations. Large majorities in each country agree that current global institutions like the UN are best suited to handle the problems the world faces today. Respondents in these countries each trusted the UN the most (or tied for most, as in the case of Brazil) when it came to international affairs.

The world has spent the past few years in an unprecedented crisis not just of global health, but of political forces that openly assailed global institutions and their value to the countries that join them. Here, we show that the United Nations's reputation has by and large survived the past few years, but that there is persistent skepticism about the value it provides in terms of offering concrete solutions to these problems.

This presents something of a paradox for the UN. Its role as a global leader is not currently questioned by the possibility of alternative institutions, but is called into question by what role it chooses to play in the global recovery. The pandemic recovery presents a clear opportunity for the UN to provide leadership on the very issues where the world expects it to do so.