

Erosion of Support for Free Market System: Global Poll

April 15, 2008

Supporters of Free Market Look for Strong Government Regulation

[Full Report \(PDF\)](#)

[Questionnaire/Methodology \(PDF\)](#)



Majorities in most countries continue to support the free market system, but over the last two years support has eroded in 10 of 18 countries regularly polled by GlobeScan. In several countries this drop in support has been quite sharp.

The Chicago Mercantile Exchange in a March 2001 photo (White House photo)

The latest polling was completed before the current stock market volatility that began earlier this year.

Back in 2005 only one country polled--France--had more citizens disagreeing than agreeing with the statement that "the free enterprise system and free market economy is the best system on which to base the future of the world."

Displacing France as the least supportive of the free market system today is Turkey where approval of the free market system has plunged from 47 percent in 2005 to 34 percent now, while opposition has risen from 36 to 41 percent.

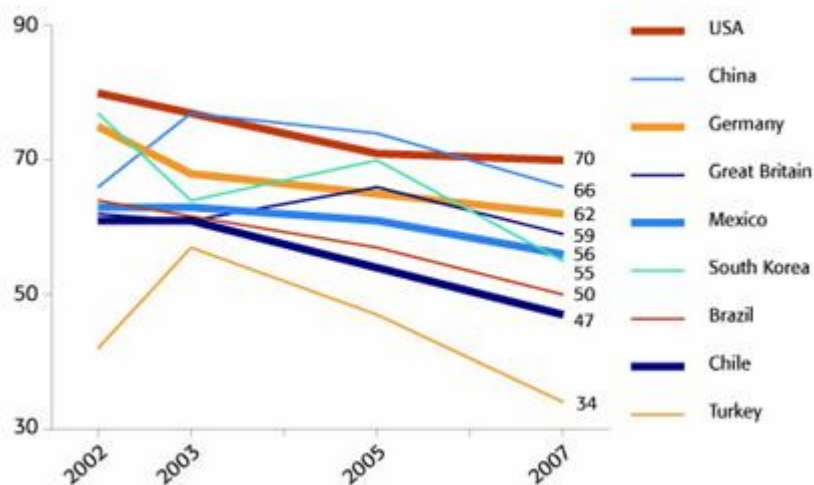
Support for free markets has also dropped 15 points in South Korea since 2005, though a majority (55%) continue to be supportive. Opposition there has jumped 20 points from 19 to 39 percent.

Support among Chileans is also down 14 points since 2003 when Chileans were last polled on this question.

Support in other countries is down by more modest though significant numbers: China (down 9 points), Britain (7 points), Brazil (7 points), Mexico (6 points), and Kenya (6 points).

Free Market Economy Is Best Model for World

"Strongly" and "Somewhat Agree," Decreases: 2002–2007



Asked of half of sample in 2007

The one country to show upward movement in agreement with the free market system is France--up five points. However, more continue to disagree (45%) than agree (41%).

The GlobeScan poll of 9,357 people worldwide also found that large numbers continue to look to their government to take a strong hand in regulating the market. In 17 of the 18 countries a majority (15 countries) or a plurality (two countries) agreed that "the free enterprise system and the free market system work best in society's interest when accompanied by strong government regulation."

Interestingly, supporters of the free market show more enthusiasm for a strongly regulated free market system than critics. Among those who agree that the free market system is the best system, three-quarters also agree that it works best with strong government regulation.

Those who are not enthusiastic about the free market system are divided as to whether it works best with government regulation.

At the same time agreement with this proposition, while still averaging 62 percent across all countries polled, is down in ten countries. This appears to be related to the drop in confidence in the free market system. Among the ten countries for which there was a drop in agreement with the proposition that the free market system works best with strong regulation, six of them also had a significant drop in support for the free market system, and only one had an increase.

Interestingly, three countries that in 2005 were among the four highest in support for the free market system--China, the Philippines, and South Korea--showed substantial increases in agreement with the idea that the market works best with regulation.

The results come from a private multi-client poll conducted by international polling firm GlobeScan between May 29 and August 10, 2007. GlobeScan's paying clients had exclusive use

of the poll's findings until today's first-time public release. The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland assisted GlobeScan with the analysis and interpretation of these findings.

GlobeScan president Doug Miller says, "The results suggest that the free enterprise system was already beginning to lose the unquestioned trust of citizens before the current banking meltdown. It underscores the importance of re-building trust sooner rather than later."

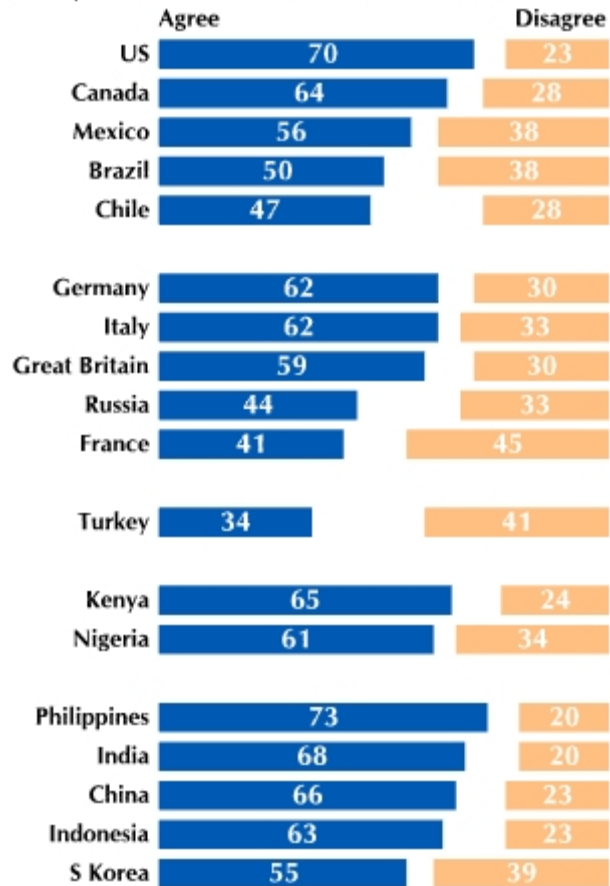
Steven Kull comments, "It appears that as people have doubts about the ability of government to regulate the free market, confidence in the market diminishes."

A total of 9,357 citizens in Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, and the United States were interviewed face-to-face or by telephone. Polling was conducted by GlobeScan and its research partners in each country. In eight of the 18 countries, the sample was limited to major urban areas. As the questions were asked to half samples in each country, the margin of error per country ranges from +/-3.3 to 5.0 percent.

For more details, please see the [full report \(PDF\)](#).

Free Market System

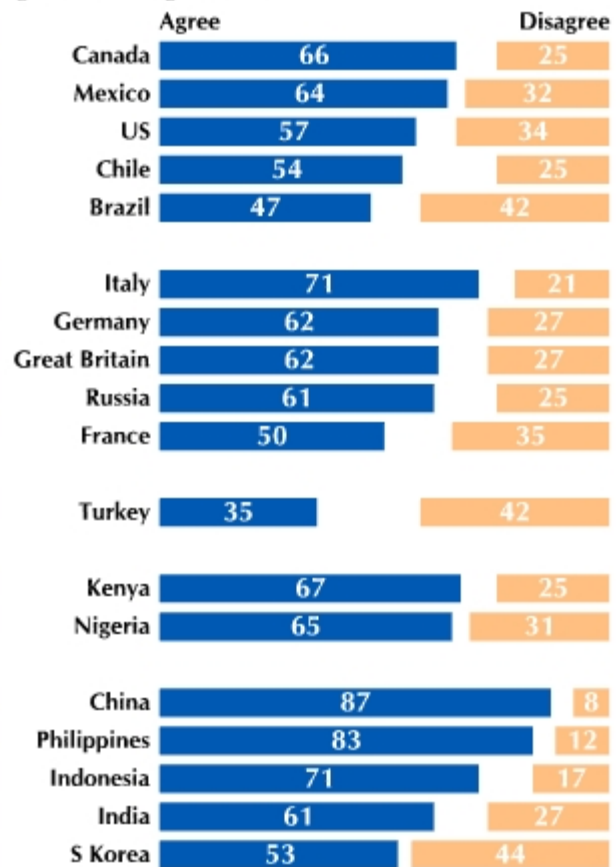
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GlobeScan, 8/07

Strong Government Regulation

The free enterprise system and free market economy work best in society's interest when accompanied by strong government regulations.



GlobeScan, 8/07