

CETA: As support softens, Canadians still back trade deal with Europe 5-to-1 over those who oppose it

When it comes to trade focus, Canadians give priority to the U.S., E.U., China and the U.K.

February 15, 2017 – Ahead of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s [visit to Brussels](#) to mark the expected European Parliament vote to ratify the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the latest public opinion survey from the Angus Reid Institute finds slight majority support for the deal among the Canadian public.

Canadians are five times more likely to say they support CETA than to say they oppose it. That said, these numbers represent a notable softening in support in recent years, and a growing level of uncertainty about the trade agreement between Canada and the European Union’s 28 member states, with just over one-in-three people saying they “don’t know” how they feel.

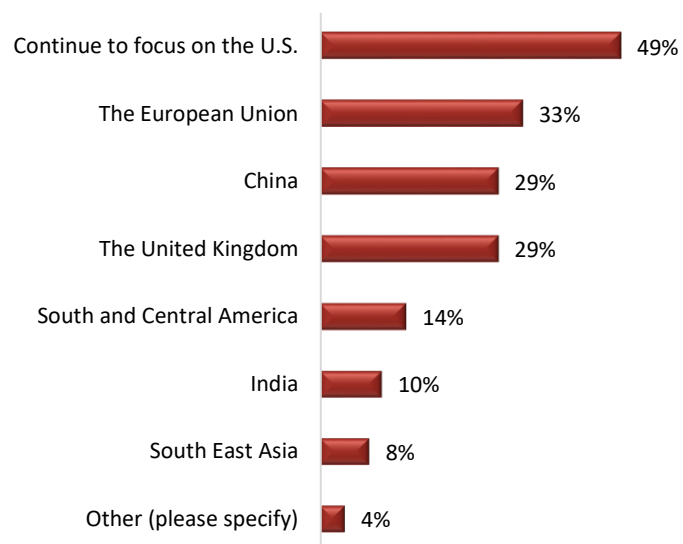
Europe remains a preferred trade target for Canadians, coming second only to Canada’s largest trading partner, the United States.

Significant numbers also want their country to try to develop closer trade ties with China and the United Kingdom, which finds itself in need of economic allies as it prepares for a post-Brexit reality.

Key Findings:

- A small majority of Canadians (55%) say they support CETA, while one-in-ten (10%) oppose the trade deal. The rest (35%) are unsure
- In July 2014, more than two-thirds (68%) supported the deal, and 11 per cent opposed it (22% were unsure)

With which of the following countries or regions should Canada try to develop closer trade ties? (Top two choices shown)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from February 13 – 14, 2017, among a representative randomized sample of 1,509 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl

- Asked which countries they would like to see Canada pursue an expanded trading relationship with, half of Canadians (49%) say the country should “continue to focus on the U.S.” No other country or region garners more the interest of more than one-in-three Canadians

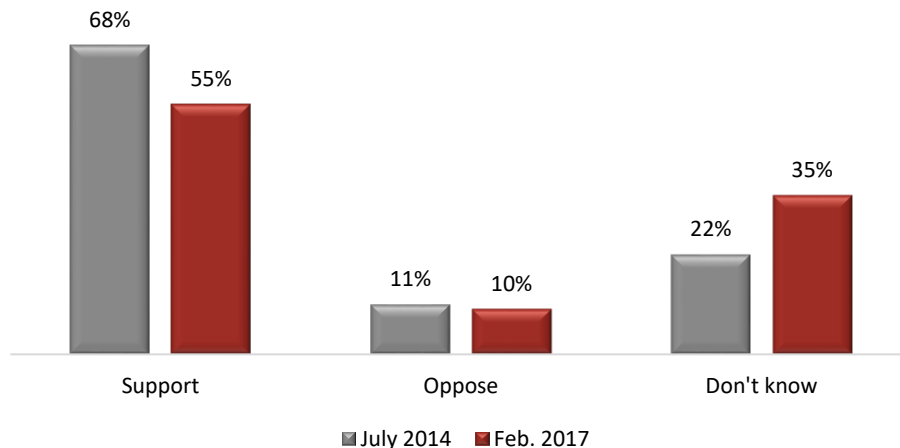
More than half support CETA

Last year, Trudeau flew to Brussels [to sign the agreement](#), signaling the end of negotiations that began seven years earlier under former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper. If the European Parliament votes this week to ratify the agreement – as it is expected to do – votes will still need to be held in member states before the deal takes full effect. That said, the approval of the European Parliament will bring more than 90 per cent of CETA into force [on a provisional basis](#).

Relatively few Canadians would view this as unwelcome news. The vast majority either support the deal (55%) or are unsure of their opinion on it (35%). Only 10 per cent say they oppose CETA.

Support for the Canada-E.U. trade agreement has fallen considerably [since Angus Reid last asked about it](#) in July 2014, but opposition hasn’t grown in that time. Rather, the number expressing uncertainty about the pact has surged (from 22% in 2014 to 35% today):

Support for CETA over time:

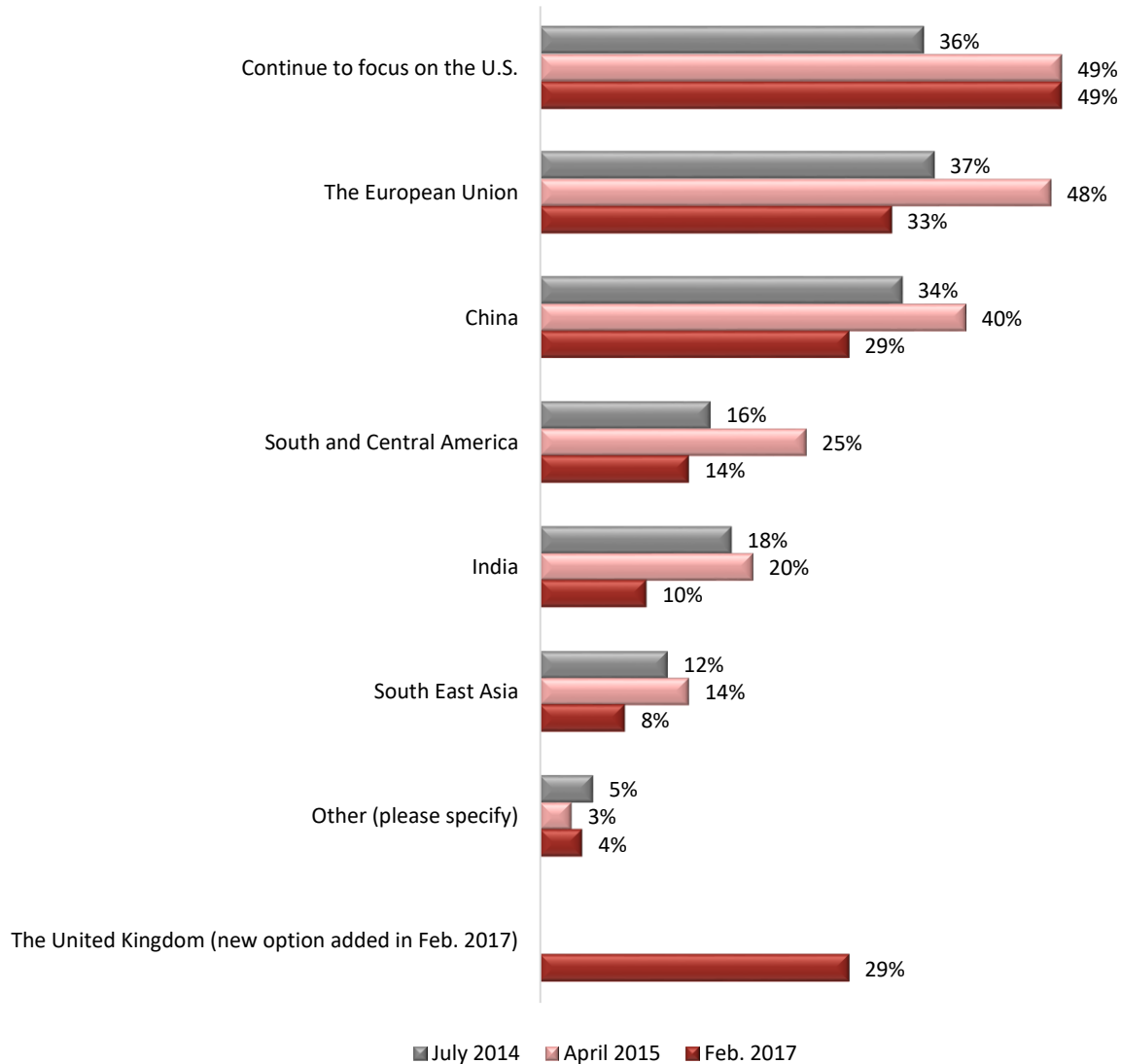


Where should Canada focus its trade efforts?

This week’s expected ratification of CETA is the next step in an anticipated, significant deepening of trade ties between Canada and Europe, presently Canada’s [second-largest trading partner](#) if the countries of the E.U. are considered collectively.

And the pact appears to align with domestic public opinion over where Canada should be developing closer trade ties. On this question, Canadians name the E.U. second, after the United States, with whom Canada already shares its biggest trading relationship. China, which is Canada’s [second-largest](#) single-nation trading partner, takes third place:

As we look to the future, with which of the following countries or regions do you think Canada should develop closer trade ties?

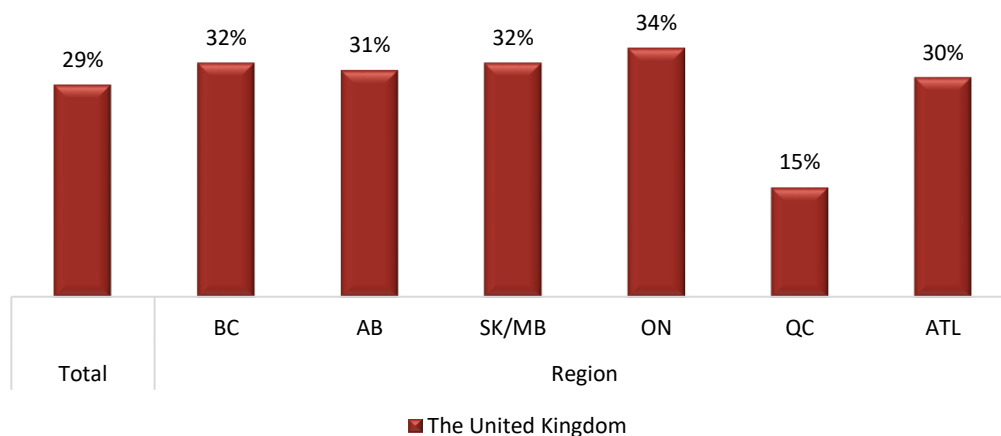


New Look at the U.K.

One possible explanation for the decline in the number of Canadians choosing the E.U. as a preferred trading partner from 2015 may be the addition of the United Kingdom as a stand-alone option in this most recent survey. Three-in-ten Canadians (29%) would like their country to pursue trade ties with a Britain that, post-Brexit, is no longer part of the E.U.

There is significant regional variation regarding views on preferred trading partners. Canadians from predominantly English-speaking regions are more than twice as likely as residents of Quebec to say their country should pursue trade with the U.K.

As we look to the future, with which of the following countries or regions do you think Canada should try to develop closer trade ties?



Notably, it appears that a focus on trade with China has fallen out of favour for many Canadians. Since 2014, the number of respondents opting to focus on China has dropped in every region except Atlantic Canada. Significantly, support for focusing on trade with the Asian superpower dropped 11 points in British Columbia and 16 points in Alberta.

Though public opinion in Alberta has shifted away from favouring trade with China, provincial policy is still Pacific Rim focused. Alberta's trade minister has planned [two trips to China](#) to discuss increasing trade with Canada's energy export capital amid increasing uncertainty around U.S. trade.

It is the United States that picks up the most preference among Canadians when it comes to trade focus. As [recent research](#) from the Angus Reid Institute has noted, Canadians have voiced an increasing affection for NAFTA in the wake of U.S. President Donald Trump's talk regarding the deal. Support for closer trade ties with the U.S. has seen a corresponding increase in each region canvassed. These shifts from 2014 to 2017 are shown in the following table:

As we look to the future, with which of the following countries or regions do you think Canada should try to develop closer trade ties?

	Regions – BC to Manitoba					
	BC 2014 (202)	BC 2017 (196)	AB 2014 (177)	AB 2017 (162)	MB/SK 2014 (90)	MB/SK 2017 (101)
US	29%	39%	29%	47%	34%	45%
EU	32%	34%	35%	28%	26%	33%
China	38%	27%	48%	32%	36%	29%
UK	-	32%	-	31%	-	32%
South Central America	14%	13%	13%	17%	13%	24%
India	25%	13%	23%	12%	24%	11%
Southeast Asia	20%	14%	14%	10%	14%	5%
Other	7%	5%	6%	3%	2%	6%
	Regions – Ontario to Atlantic					
	ON 2014 (538)	ON 2017 (565)	QC 2014 (362)	QC 2017 (371)	ATL 2014 (139)	ATL 2017 (114)
US	39%	52%	36%	53%	43%	43%
EU	44%	30%	35%	38%	35%	31%
China	29%	25%	37%	33%	30%	34%
UK	-	34%	-	15%	-	30%
South Central America	17%	13%	16%	12%	14%	14%
India	18%	10%	11%	6%	16%	10%
Southeast Asia	10%	6%	9%	8%	11%	5%
Other	4%	4%	4%	2%	5%	6%

The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

Summary tables follow. For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

As we look to the future, with which of the following countries or regions do you think Canada should try to develop closer trade ties?

	July 2014 (1508)	April 2015 (1475)	February 2017 (1509)
Continue to focus on the US	36%	49%	49%
The European Union	37%	48%	33%
China	34%	40%	29%
The United Kingdom	N/A	N/A	29%
South and Central America	16%	25%	14%
India	18%	20%	10%
South East Asia	12%	14%	8%
Other (please specify)	5%	3%	4%