

Friends and Foes in Trump's America: Canada tops Americans' list of allies

Canada fares much better than fellow NAFTA country Mexico in American minds.

January 19, 2017 – In the Donald Trump era, which countries should the United States consider friends, and which should it regard with caution?

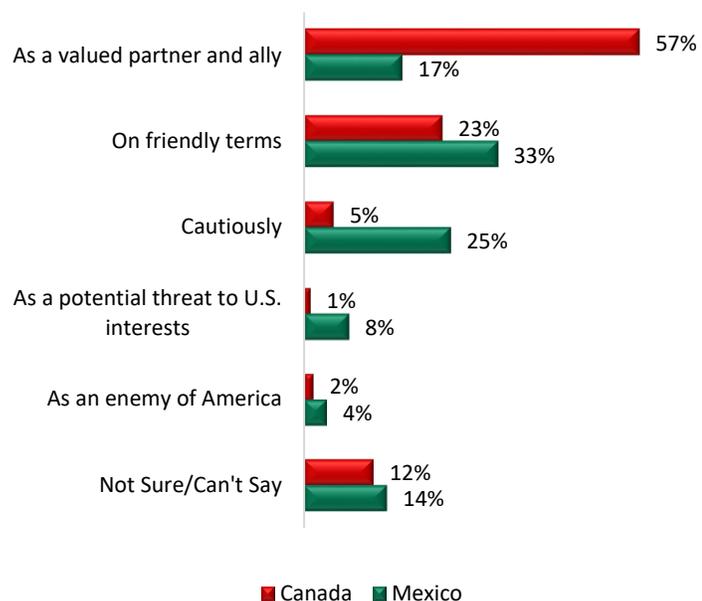
A new public opinion poll of more than 1,500 Americans conducted by the Angus Reid Institute finds Canada atop the list of countries Americans want their new government to approach in a friendly way, followed by traditional U.S. allies in Europe and the English-speaking world.

Canada is viewed much more positively than America's other partner in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexico. While most Americans see trade with Canada as mutually beneficial, they're more inclined to see trade with Mexico as disproportionately benefitting their southern neighbour.

Key Findings:

- Eight-in-ten Americans (80%) say the Trump administration should approach Canada "as a valued partner and ally" (57%) or "on friendly terms" (23%), and they give similar – though not as high – marks to other traditional allies
- Americans are considerably more skeptical about their southern neighbour, however. Fewer than one-in-five (17%) say the new U.S. government should view Mexico as a valued partner, though only one-in-ten (12%) say Mexico should be considered either an enemy or a potential threat

How do you think the incoming Trump administration should approach each of the following countries?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from January 13 – 17, 2017, among a representative randomized sample of 1,503 American adults who are members of the [Springboard America](#) panel. 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.

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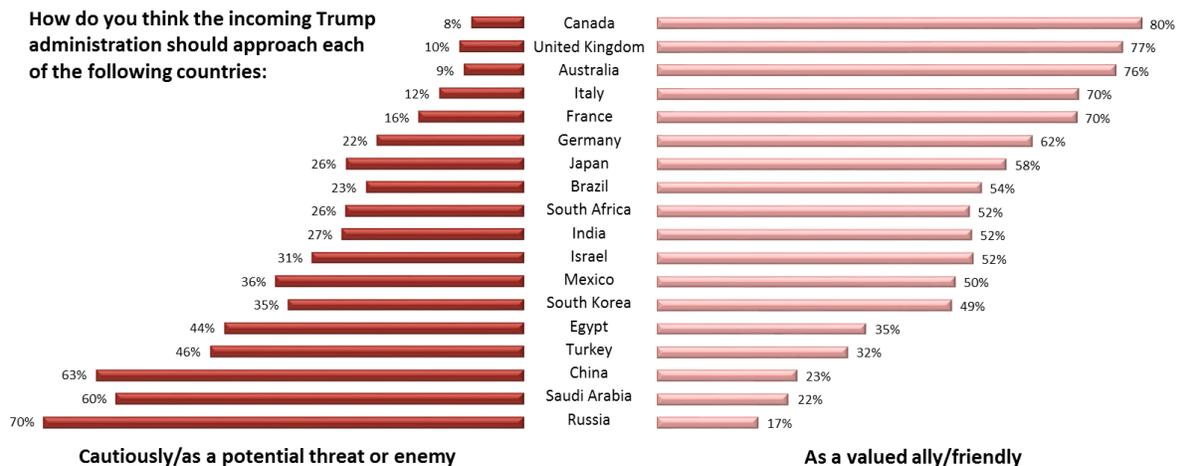
- Partisan divides drive perceptions of NAFTA, with more than six-in-ten of those who supported Trump in the recent U.S. election saying America should reduce its commitment to NAFTA, or get out of the deal entirely

Canada and the Anglosphere top the list

Traditionally – at least since World War II – new American presidents have made Canada their first international destination after taking office. Some reports have suggested that Trump will break with this tradition, holding his first international meeting instead with Russian leader Vladimir Putin, whose government has been accused of seeking to influence the U.S. election in Trump’s favour.

Leaving aside, for a moment, the controversy such a meeting would potentially cause, one of the reasons Canada has long been regarded as a good first destination for a new president is that Canada is one of the United States’ oldest and most steadfast allies.

This poll finds the American public still feeling positively about their country’s relationship with its northern neighbour. A full majority (57%) say the Trump administration should treat Canada as “a valued partner and ally,” and more than eight times as many favour a friendly approach to Canada as a cautious one:

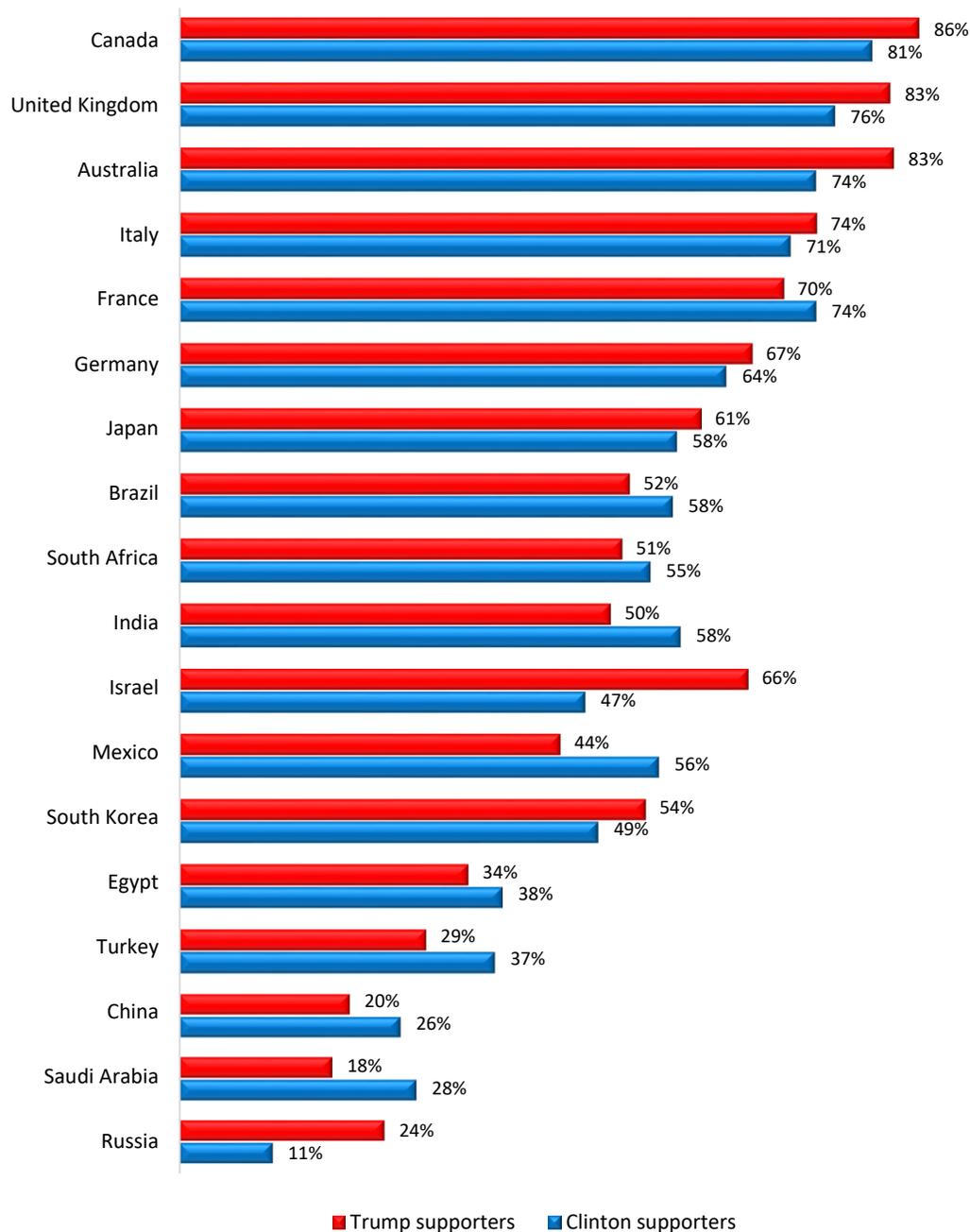


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By this measure, Canada is America’s most highly regarded ally, a finding that holds across the political spectrum in the states. Indeed, though Canada has a reputation for being more left-leaning, politically, than the United States, those who supported Trump in the 2016 presidential election are slightly *more* favourable in their views of Canada than those who supported Democrat Hillary Clinton.

As the following graph indicates, supporters of both candidates are much more in agreement on how the Trump administration should approach Canada than they are on some other countries:

**How do you think the incoming Trump administration should approach each of the following countries:
(Percentage saying 'friendly')**

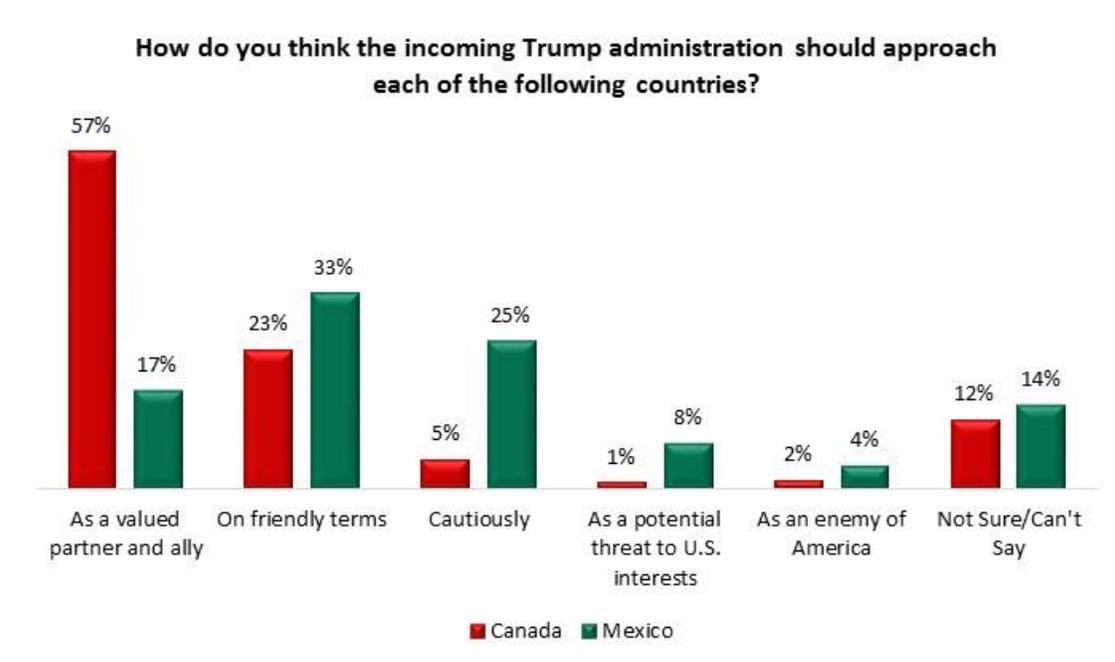


Ambivalence toward Mexico

One country that has long borne the brunt of Trump's ire is Mexico. The new president has repeatedly called for the construction of a wall along his country's southern border, and routinely threatens private companies with high taxes on imports from Mexico.

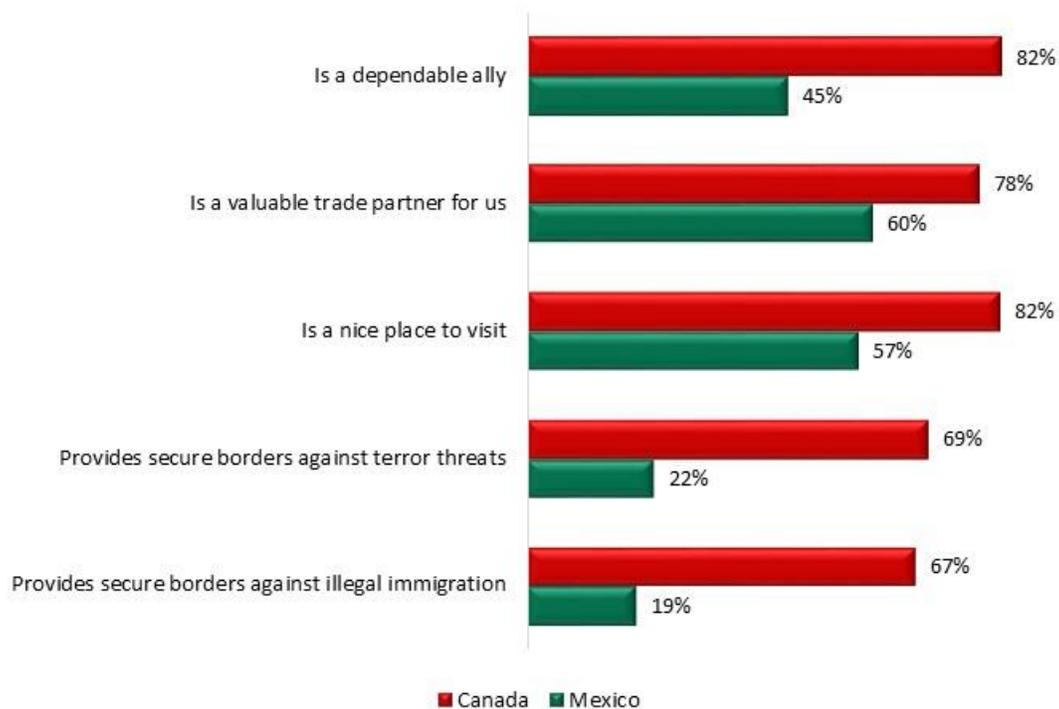
The American public is not anti-Mexico, but it is more lukewarm on that country than it is on other historical allies – notably fellow NAFTA member Canada.

Fewer than one-in-five Americans (17%) think the Trump administration should view Mexico as a valued partner and ally. They're more likely to say Mexico should be viewed "on friendly terms" (33%) or "cautiously" (25%). In comparison to Canada, especially, Mexico appears to be a subject of ambivalence for most Americans:



Likewise, Americans tend to have a higher opinion of Canada than Mexico on five different dimensions canvassed in this survey, with especially large gaps on questions of border security:

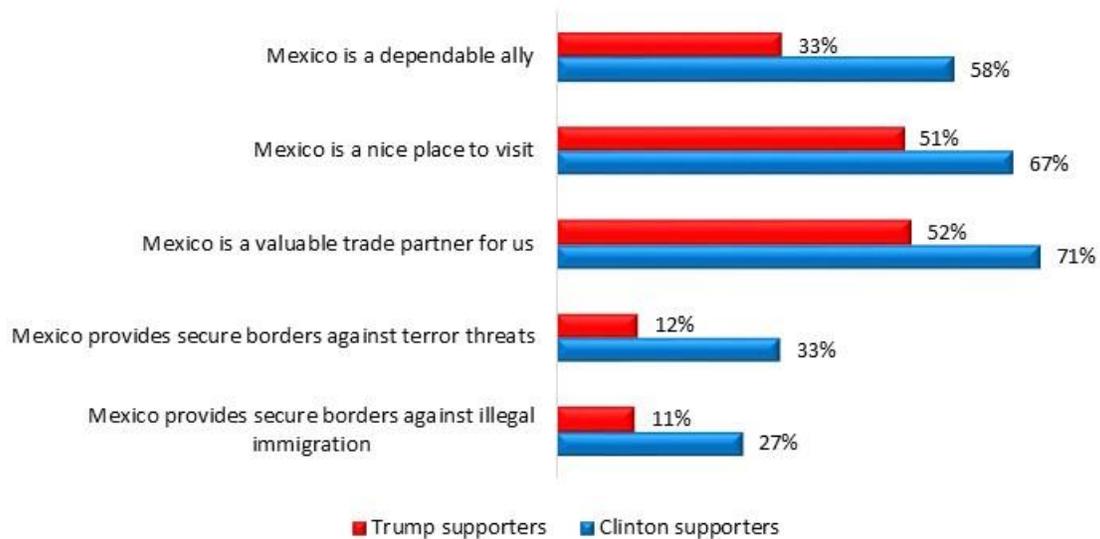
**Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about
(Canada/Mexico)? (Percentage who agree shown)**



As might be expected, given Trump’s hostility toward Mexico on the trade and immigration files, Trump supporters take a much dimmer view of the country than those who preferred Clinton. Indeed, Trumpists are three times as likely as Clintonites to see Mexico as “a potential threat to American interests,” though it should be noted that relatively few Trump supporters feel this way, overall (13% do, see summary tables at the end of this release).

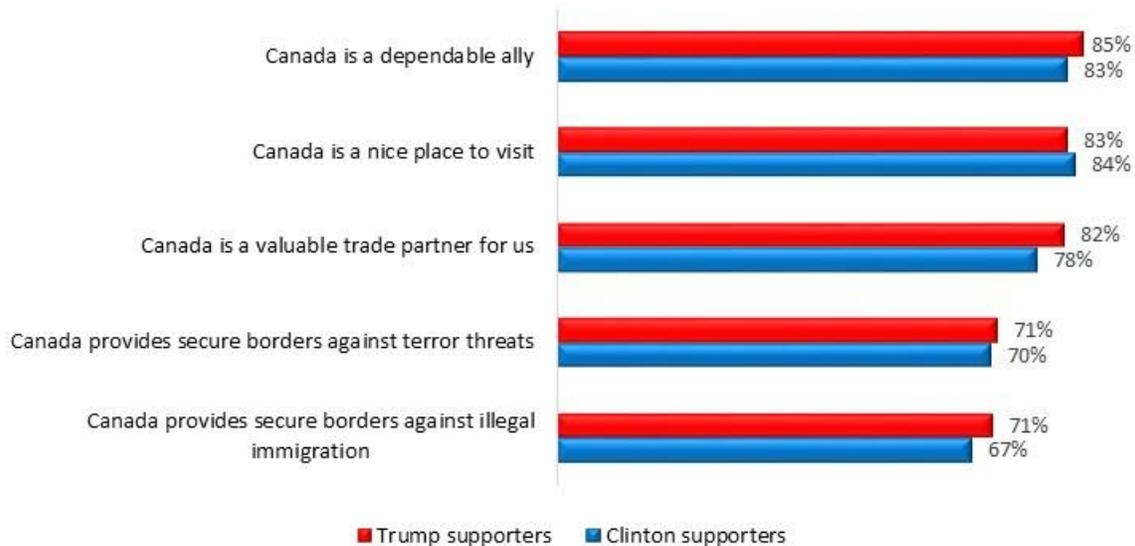
Similarly, when considering the various statements about the two countries, Trump supporters take a harsher view of Mexico than Clinton supporters:

**Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
(Percentage who agree shown)**



On Canada, meanwhile, the two camps appear to be more or less in agreement:

**Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
(Percentage who agree shown)**

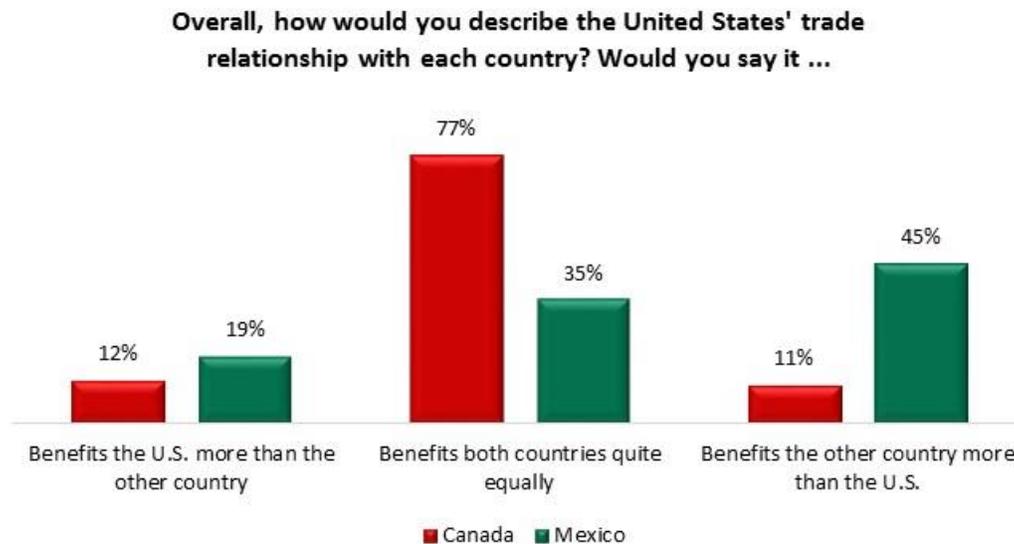


What should be done with NAFTA?

Arguably no one – friend or foe – is watching the trade file as closely as Canada and Mexico, both of whom count the United States as their single largest trading partner by a massive margin.

Less well-known is the fact that Canada ranks second (very close behind China) and Mexico third on the list of America's largest trading partners. This trilateral trade activity – governed by NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement – is a high-stakes proposition for all three partners as Trump makes his historic arrival at the White House.

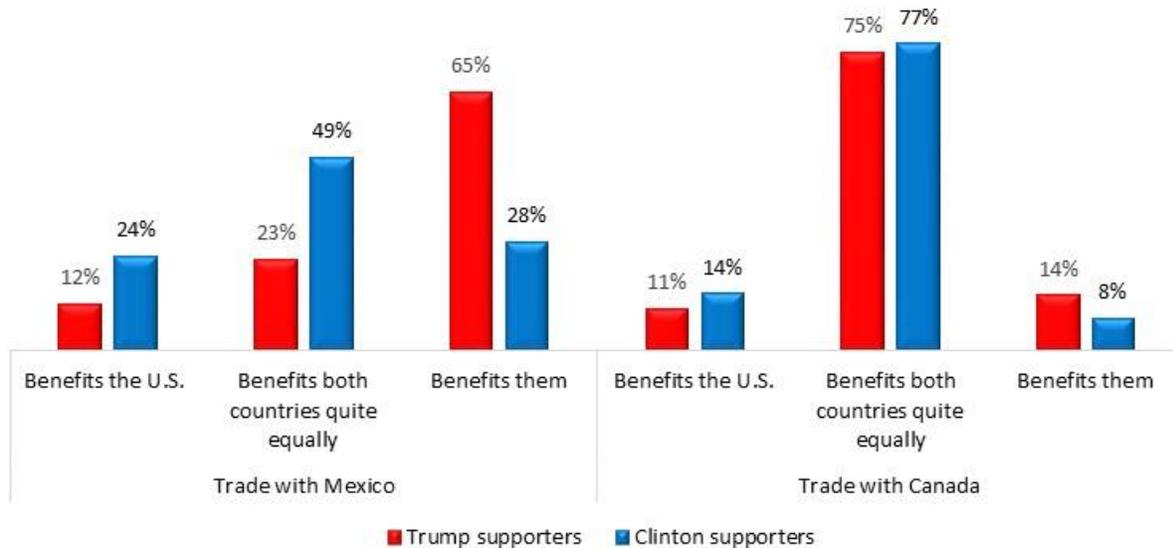
The disparity in Americans' views of their NAFTA partners may reflect their opinions on North American trade itself, and on who benefits from it. Americans largely see their trade relationship with Canada as benefitting both countries roughly equally (77% say this), while many see trade with Mexico as benefitting that country disproportionately in comparison to their own country:



The belief that Mexico benefits more from trade with the U.S. than the U.S. does is driven in large part by those who supported Trump last November. Almost two-thirds of this group (65%) says trade with Mexico “benefits them” – more than twice the number of Clinton supporters who say the same.

As seen in the following graph, there is no such partisan divide on the U.S. trade relationship with Canada:

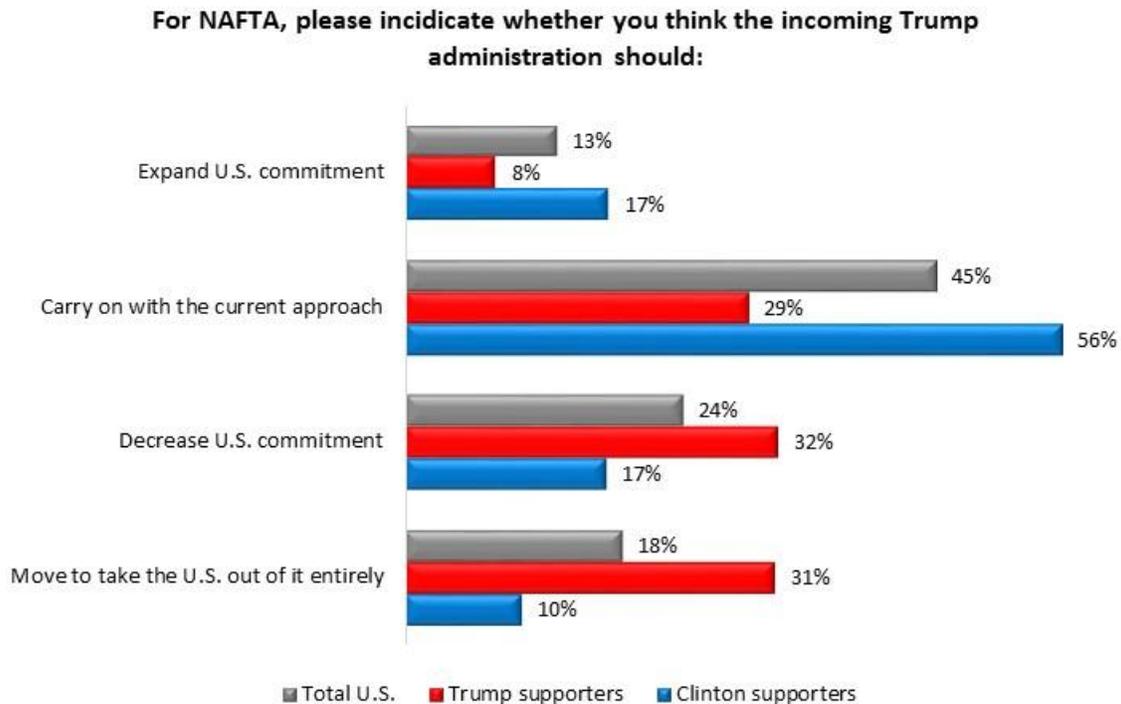
Overall, how would you describe the United States' trade relationship with each country? Would you say it ...



Partisan divides are also seen in public opinion on NAFTA itself.

American public opinion is generally “lukewarm” when it comes to NAFTA and how the incoming Trump administration should approach this trade agreement. Overall, almost half (45%) of Americans say the US should “carry on with the current approach”, but large numbers opt for “decreasing the US commitment” (24%) or moving “to take the US out of it entirely” (18%).

Among those who helped deliver Trump to the presidency, a full majority (63%) would like to see the new government either reduce the American commitment to NAFTA or abandon the agreement altogether (32% and 31% respectively). Most of those who supported Clinton, meanwhile, would prefer to see the U.S. carry on with the current approach to the trade agreement:



This political divide on views of NAFTA was in ample evidence last fall when the [Angus Reid Institute's American Voter Survey](#) showed polar-opposite perspectives: Trump supporters saw NAFTA as hurting rather than helping the US by a two-to-one margin while Clinton supporters were equally convinced the opposite was true.

And what about NATO?

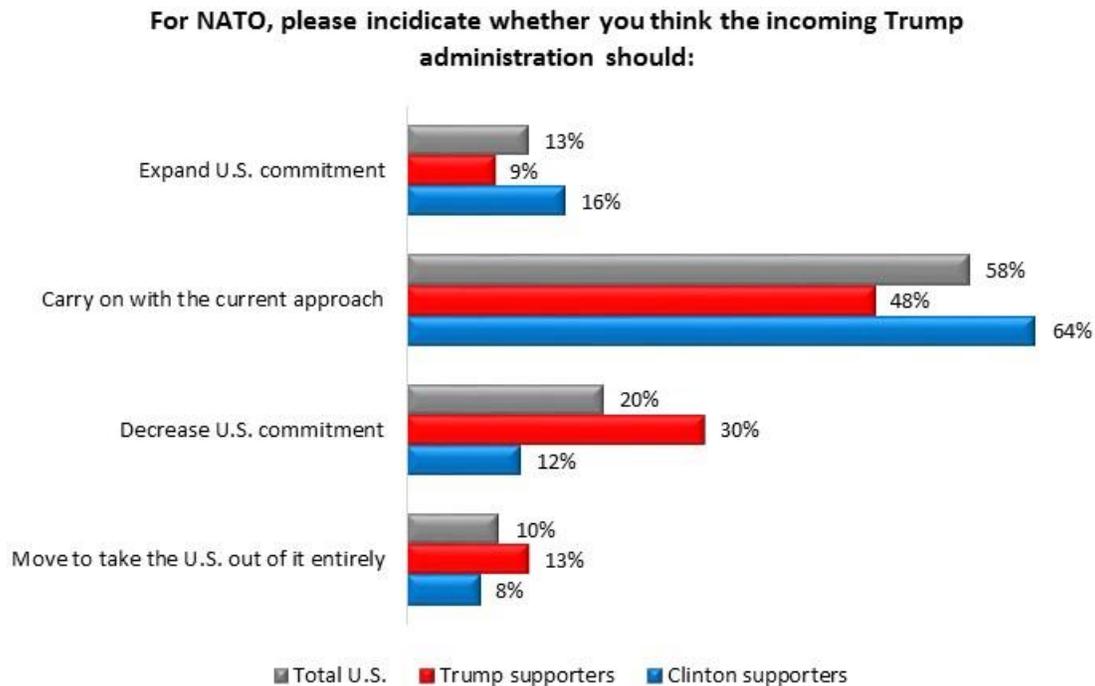
During the election campaign, Donald Trump offered some commentary on NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), the postwar western alliance now numbering 28 members. Specifically, the then-candidate mused about withdrawing the U.S. from the alliance if other member-nations did not pay their full contribution to the organisation, and more famously referred to the alliance as "obsolete."

This has given some serious cause for pause on both sides of the Atlantic – from European leaders, especially those in newer NATO member/former east bloc states, to historians to millions of citizens of member nations who view the alliance favorably and as a critical ingredient in the past seven decades of "world peace".

Obviously, any significant change to NATO – and particularly America's commitment to it -- would have massive implications for Canada, the only other NATO member on this side of the Atlantic, and one that has historically relied heavily on the alliance for its overall postwar military and defense regime

Asked how they think the Trump administration should approach NATO, almost six-in-ten Americans (58%) opt for the US to "carry on with the current approach" towards the alliance. That said, views on this

question vary substantially across the American political divide, with Trump supporters more tepid on the alliance, and Clinton supporters more supportive of it:



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](#).

How do you think the incoming Trump administration should approach each of the following countries? (Summary of “As a dependable ally” plus “On friendly terms”)

(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Australia	76%	83%	74%	76%	59%
Brazil	54%	52%	58%	57%	43%
Canada	80%	86%	81%	78%	63%
China	23%	20%	26%	24%	25%
France	70%	70%	74%	68%	55%
Germany	62%	67%	64%	62%	43%
India	52%	50%	58%	52%	39%
Italy	70%	74%	71%	68%	54%
Japan	58%	61%	58%	62%	44%
Mexico	50%	44%	56%	53%	42%
Russia	17%	24%	11%	19%	11%
Saudi Arabia	22%	18%	28%	20%	19%
South Africa	52%	51%	55%	56%	38%
South Korea	49%	54%	49%	48%	33%
Turkey	32%	29%	37%	31%	26%
United Kingdom	77%	83%	76%	78%	60%
Israel	52%	66%	47%	45%	34%
Egypt	35%	34%	38%	35%	28%

How do you think the incoming Trump administration should approach each of the following countries? (Mexico)					
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
As a valued partner and ally	17%	11%	24%	16%	10%
On friendly terms	33%	33%	31%	37%	32%
Cautiously	25%	28%	22%	24%	23%
As a potential threat to US interests	8%	13%	3%	5%	7%
As an enemy of America	4%	5%	4%	2%	3%
Not Sure/Can't Say	14%	9%	14%	16%	26%

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about Canada. (Summary of "Agree")					
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Canada is a dependable ally	82%	85%	83%	78%	76%
Canada is a valuable trade partner for us	78%	82%	78%	72%	73%
Canada is a nice place to visit	82%	83%	84%	78%	75%
Canada provides secure borders against terror threats	69%	71%	70%	66%	64%
Canada provides secure borders against illegal immigration	67%	71%	67%	64%	59%

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about Mexico. (Summary of "Agree")

(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Mexico is a dependable ally	45%	33%	58%	46%	41%
Mexico is a valuable trade partner for us	60%	52%	71%	60%	48%
Mexico is a nice place to visit	57%	51%	67%	55%	51%
Mexico provides secure borders against terror threats	22%	12%	33%	23%	16%
Mexico provides secure borders against illegal immigration	19%	11%	27%	22%	12%

**Overall, how would you describe the United States' trade relationship with Canada?
Would you say our trade relationship with Canada:**

(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Benefits mostly the U.S.	6%	6%	6%	4%	4%
Benefits the U.S. more than them	7%	5%	8%	10%	4%
Benefits both countries quite equally	77%	75%	77%	74%	83%
Benefits them more than the U.S.	9%	12%	7%	9%	7%
Benefits mostly them	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%

Overall, how would you describe the United States' trade relationship with Mexico? Would you say our trade relationship with Mexico:					
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Benefits mostly the U.S.	6%	6%	7%	7%	7%
Benefits the U.S. more than them	13%	6%	17%	19%	14%
Benefits both countries quite equally	35%	23%	49%	30%	39%
Benefits them more than the U.S.	33%	42%	23%	32%	33%
Benefits mostly them	13%	23%	4%	13%	7%

For each of the following organizations, please indicate whether you think the incoming Trump administration should: (NATO – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization)					
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Move to take the U.S. out of it entirely	10%	13%	8%	7%	8%
Decrease U.S. commitment	20%	30%	12%	18%	16%
Carry on with the current approach	58%	48%	64%	60%	66%
Expand U.S. commitment	13%	9%	16%	15%	9%

For each of the following organizations, please indicate whether you think the incoming Trump administration should:					
(NAFTA – the North American Free Trade Agreement)					
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Move to take the U.S. out of it entirely	18%	31%	10%	13%	10%
Decrease U.S. commitment	24%	32%	17%	22%	20%
Carry on with the current approach	45%	29%	56%	49%	58%
Expand U.S. commitment	13%	8%	17%	16%	12%