

The Friendly 49th? Four-in-five who crossed the border in 2016 had a ‘good’ experience overall

Those who report bad experiences more likely to be younger or belong to a visible minority

January 30, 2017 – The vast majority of Canadians who traveled to the United States in 2016 had a good border-crossing experience, while the one-in-five who didn’t are disproportionately more likely to be young people and visible minorities.

This is according to a new public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute measuring Canadians experiences with both U.S. and Canadian border agents. It is the first sounding in what is anticipated to be an ongoing study of experienced at the border over the coming year.

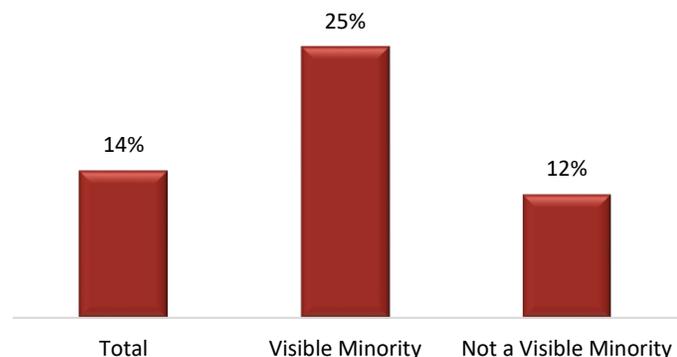
This study also finds about half of all Canadians (51%) expect the Trump presidency to have an impact on cross-border travel – an impact they largely expect to be negative.

Future polling on these topics will provide empirical data against which to assess these concerns.

Key Findings:

- More than eight-in-ten Canadians who traveled to the United States at least once last year say the entry process was good overall (86%), and they give similarly high marks to border wait times (82%) and the courtesy of American border agents (85%)
- Most Canadians say current border-crossing procedures are “about right” (69%) Fewer than one-in-ten (9%) say they’re too lax, while one-in-five believe they’re overly invasive (22%)
- Canadians largely expect crossing the U.S. border to become more difficult under President Trump (48% do so), while one-in-four (27%) expect no impact, and just (3%) expect an improvement

Percentage reporting a ‘poor’ overall experience when entering the U.S. on their most recent trip in 2016:



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from January 9 – 12, 2017, among a representative randomized sample of 1,501 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
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

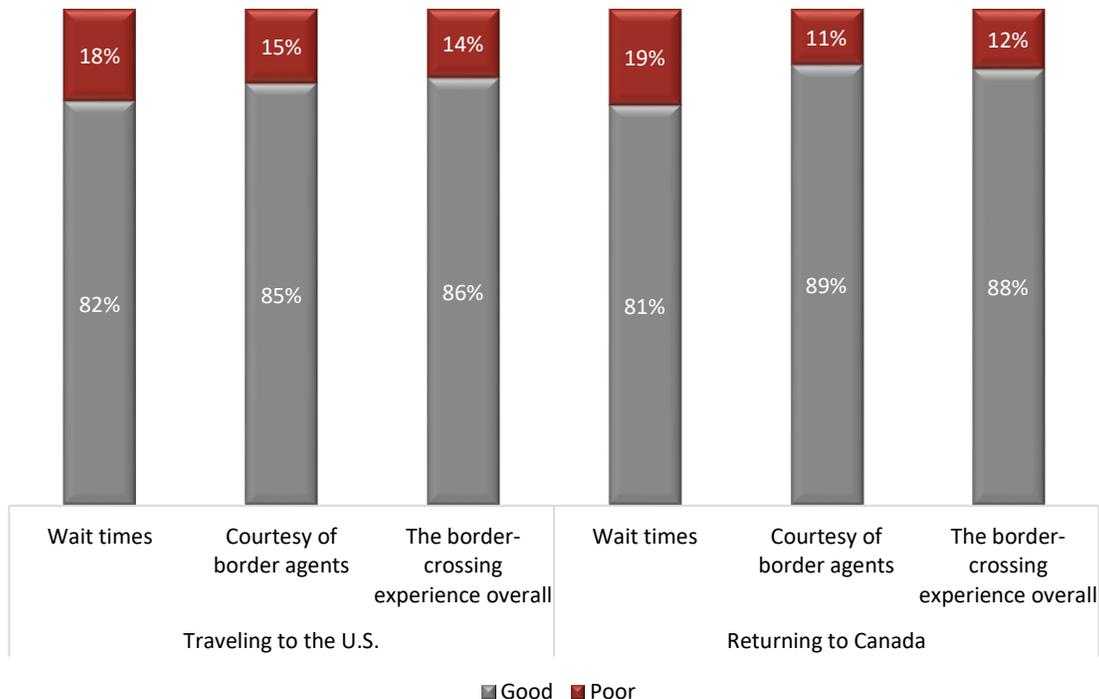
Border-crossing experiences largely positive in 2016

Canadians made more than 20 million trips to the United States in 2015 (the most recent year for which complete data is available), [according to Statistics Canada](#). That's more than 10 times as many visits as they made to Mexico, the next-most-popular international destination for Canadians that year.

Clearly, traveling to the United States is an important activity for many Canadians. Indeed, not quite half of the respondents to this ARI survey (44%) reported visiting the U.S. at least once in 2016, and fully half of those (22% overall) traveled south of the border multiple times.

For most, this familiarity with the border breeds anything but contempt. Asked whether their most recent experience traveling to the United States in 2016 was good or poor in terms of various aspects of the border-crossing, more than four-in-five report a positive experience:

Canadians' border-crossing experiences in 2016:



As seen in the graph, both U.S. and Canadian border authorities get high marks from Canadians on these measures. This is true regardless of the method of travel, with roughly eight-in-ten Canadians who traveled by air saying the experience was good on each measure, in each direction, and the same number who traveled by car saying the same (see summary tables at the end of this report for greater detail).

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

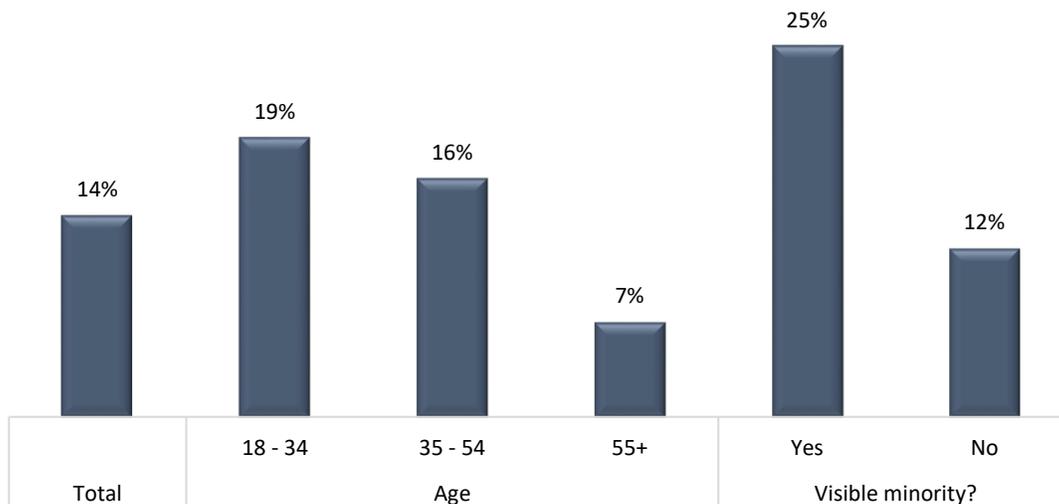
Border experiences vary by age, minority status

While relatively few Canadians had poor cross-border travel experiences in 2016, two demographic groups were more likely than the general population to have had a bad time at the border: young Canadians and visible minorities.

Among those under 35, nearly one-in-five travellers (19%) say they had a poor overall experience entering the United States last year, while fewer than one-in-ten (7%) of those aged 55 and older reported similar problems.

Among self-identifying visible minorities, the percentage reporting a poor experience rises to one-in-four, as seen in the following graph:

Percentage reporting a 'poor' overall experience when entering the U.S. on their most recent trip in 2016:

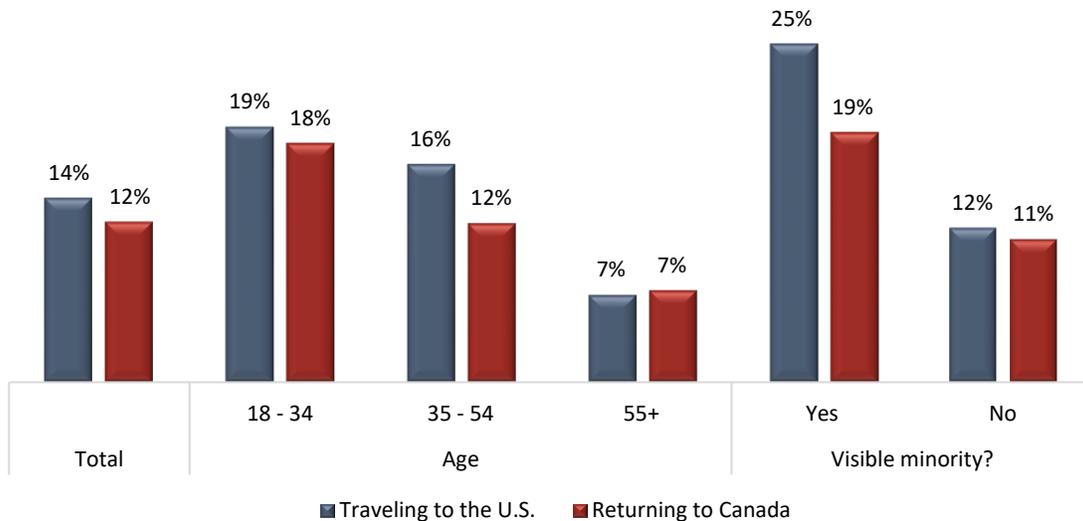


These patterns hold true for interactions with both American and Canadian border services, though the differences between groups are more pronounced in their interactions with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol ([see comprehensive tables](#) and summary tables at the end of this report):

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

Percentage reporting a 'poor' overall experience crossing the border on their most recent trip in 2016:



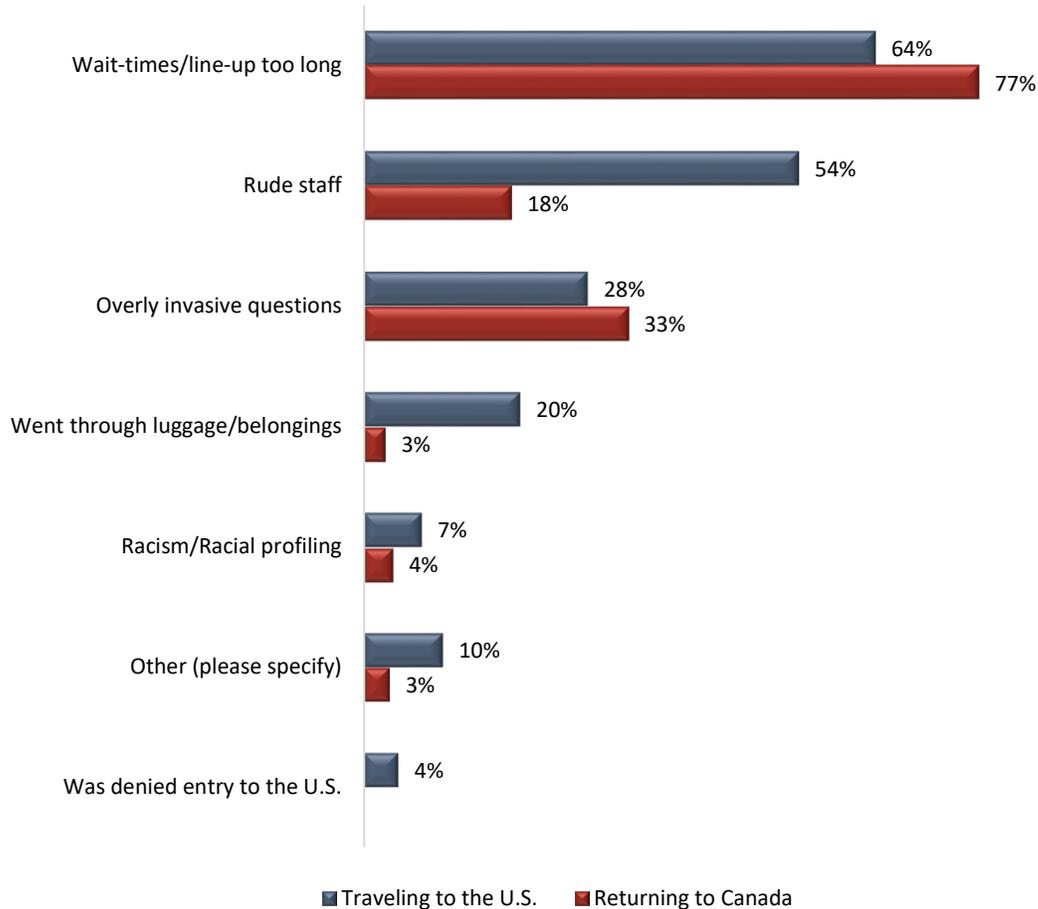
Wait times the main cause of poor experiences

Asked to give the reasons they described themselves as having a poor border-crossing experience overall, Canadians focus on wait-times. Almost two-thirds (64%) describe long line-ups as a factor in their negative experience traveling to the United States, and nearly eight-in-ten (77%) had the same complaint about the return to Canada.

There are wide differences between other reported negative experiences with U.S. and Canadian border agents. For example, Canadians who had a painful experience are fully six times more likely to report having their belongings searched when entering the U.S. than they are to report such a search on the way back home (20% versus 3%, respectively).

Similarly, most Canadians who had a bad experience entering the states say it was at least partly because of what they considered to be rude American border staff (54% say this), while fewer than one-in-five (18%) say perceptions of rudeness factored into their negative experience returning to Canada:

Reasons for a poor border-crossing experience in 2016:



Most say current border policies 'about right'

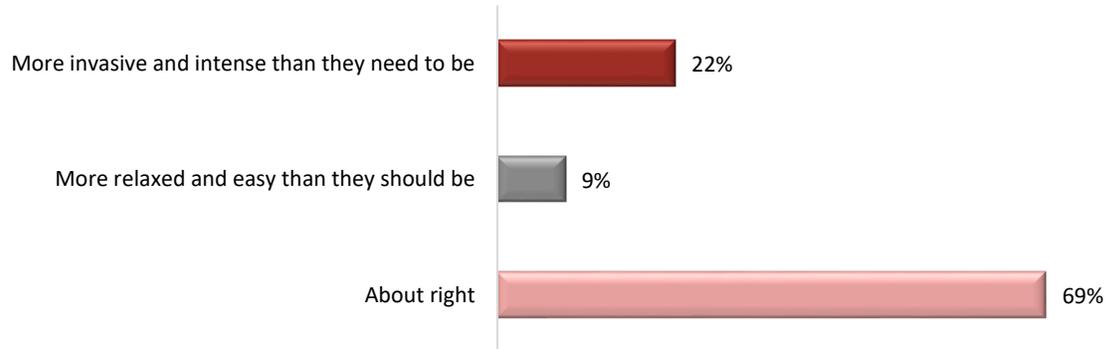
Given that most Canadians who crossed the border in 2016 were satisfied with the experience, it's perhaps not surprising that most Canadians see border security measures as "about right," overall.

If anything, Canadians would prefer a further easing of border regulations to a tightening of them. Twice as many say current policies and procedures are "more invasive and intense than they need to be" as say they are "more relaxed and easy than they should be," as seen in the following graph:

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

**Overall, how would you describe the Canada-U.S. border screening policies and procedures and the experience that means for cross-border travelers?
Would you say they are:**



This finding is notable in light of the Trump administration's apparent intention to begin renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as soon as possible. In addition to governing trade between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, NAFTA contains key provisions related to the ease of movement between the three countries.

As Justin Trudeau and his government [prepare for their first official meetings](#) with the new administration, border policy may be one of the areas where they seek to limit "collateral damage" from NAFTA renegotiation.

Half expect travel to become more difficult under Trump

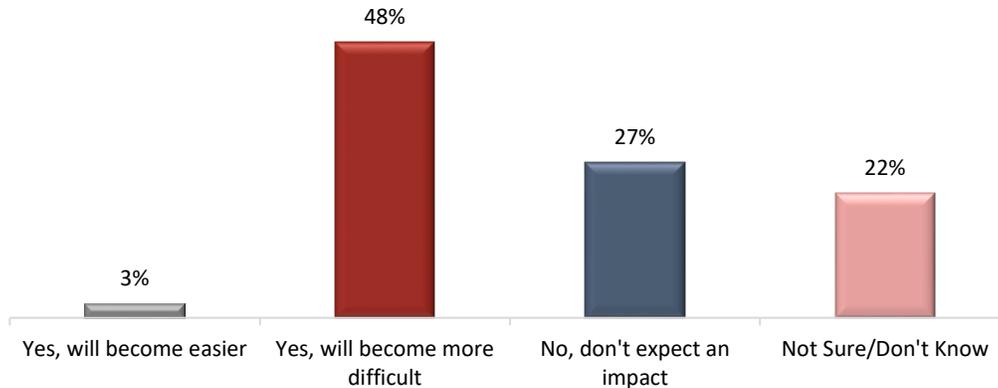
The election of Donald Trump as U.S. President brings with it the promise of increased American isolationism, and a general tone of animosity toward immigration. Trump's signature border-related proposal deals with Mexico, not Canada, but [past ARI polling has shown](#) Canadians to be broadly skeptical of the incoming administration and its impact on U.S.-Canada relations.

Given this context, it's perhaps not surprising that almost half of all Canadians expect crossing the border to become more difficult under President Trump:

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

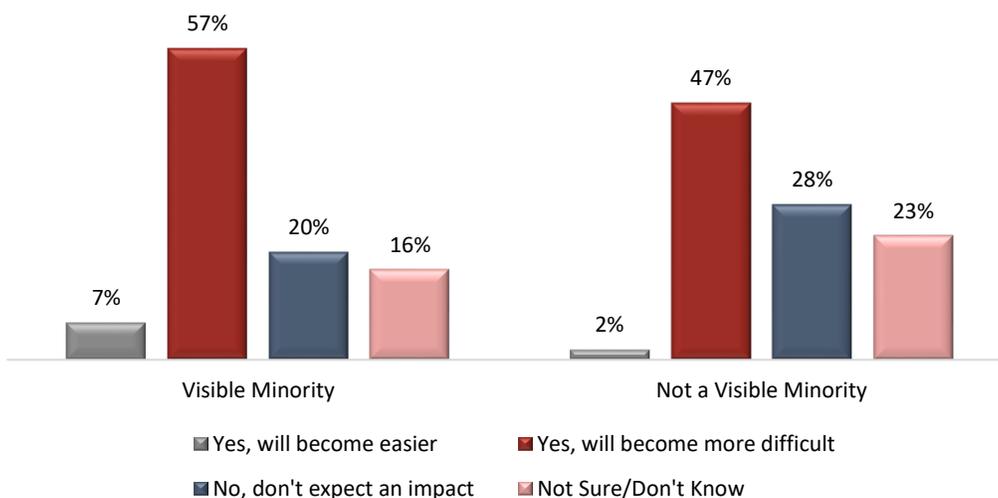
Do you think Donald Trump becoming U.S. President will have an impact on the ease or difficulty of Canada-U.S. cross-border travel?



The same demographic groups that report higher rates of poor border-crossing experiences – younger people and visible minorities – also report greater levels of concern about Trump’s impact on such experiences in the future.

Full majorities of those under age 35 and self-identified visible minorities (57% of each group) expect Trump’s presidency to make traveling to the U.S. more difficult, as seen in the graphs that follow.

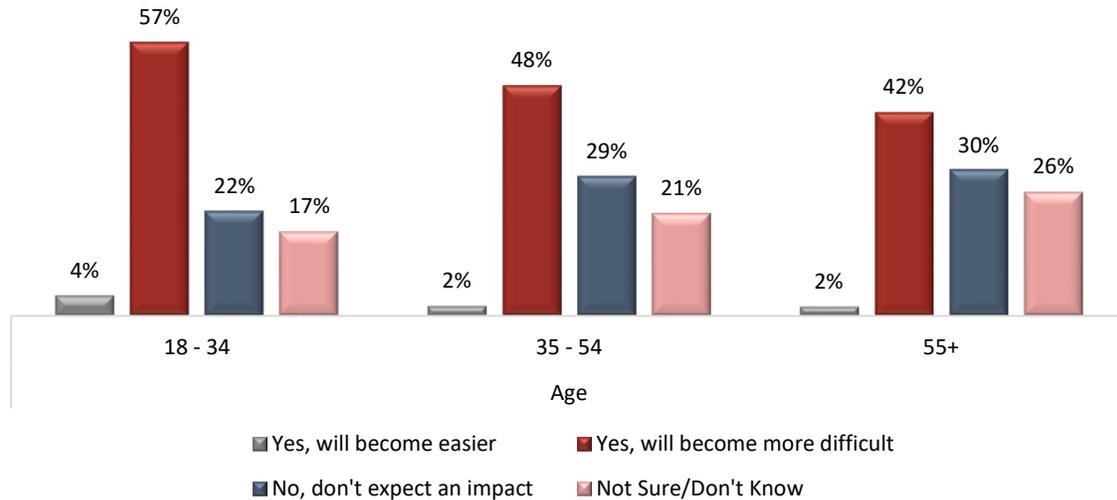
Do you think Donald Trump becoming U.S. president will have an impact on the ease or difficulty of cross-border travel?



CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

Do you think Donald Trump becoming U.S. president will have an impact on the ease or difficulty of Canada-U.S. cross-border travel?



Only time will tell whether these fears come to fruition, but some evidence that they may be justified came on the weekend of Jan. 21, when several Canadians headed for the inauguration and the Women's March on Washington were denied entry into the United States.

*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](#).

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

Thinking about your most recent trip to the United States, how would you rate your experience with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection on each of the following measures?			
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total who traveled to the U.S. in 2016 (660)	Do you consider yourself a “visible minority?”	
		Yes (107)	No (553)
Wait Times			
Very good - it was quite easy	41%	20%	45%
Moderately good	41%	41%	41%
Moderately poor	14%	24%	12%
Very poor - it was painful	5%	16%	3%
Courtesy of border agents			
Very good - it was quite easy	46%	24%	51%
Moderately good	39%	49%	37%
Moderately poor	10%	18%	9%
Very poor - it was painful	5%	9%	4%
The border-crossing experience overall			
Very good - it was quite easy	43%	27%	46%
Moderately good	43%	48%	42%
Moderately poor	10%	16%	9%
Very poor - it was painful	3%	9%	2%

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

Thinking about returning to Canada after your most recent trip to the United States, how would you rate your experience with the Canadian Border Services on each of the following measures?

(Weighted sample sizes)	Total who traveled to the U.S. in 2016 (660)	Do you consider yourself a “visible minority?”	
		Yes (107)	No (553)
Wait Times			
Very good - it was quite easy	35%	21%	38%
Moderately good	46%	52%	45%
Moderately poor	14%	19%	13%
Very poor - it was painful	5%	9%	4%
Courtesy of border agents			
Very good - it was quite easy	49%	32%	52%
Moderately good	40%	52%	37%
Moderately poor	10%	14%	9%
Very poor - it was painful	2%	2%	2%
The border-crossing experience overall			
Very good - it was quite easy	45%	31%	48%
Moderately good	43%	51%	42%
Moderately poor	9%	16%	8%
Very poor - it was painful	3%	2%	3%

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

Thinking about your most recent trip to the United States, how would you rate your experience with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection on each of the following measures?			
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total who traveled to the U.S. in 2016 (660)	Method of travel	
		By air (259)	By car (372)
Wait Times			
Very good - it was quite easy	41%	34%	45%
Moderately good	41%	44%	40%
Moderately poor	14%	13%	13%
Very poor - it was painful	5%	8%	3%
Courtesy of border agents			
Very good - it was quite easy	46%	40%	52%
Moderately good	39%	42%	36%
Moderately poor	10%	12%	9%
Very poor - it was painful	5%	6%	4%
The border-crossing experience overall			
Very good - it was quite easy	43%	39%	46%
Moderately good	43%	43%	43%
Moderately poor	10%	12%	9%
Very poor - it was painful	3%	5%	2%

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

Thinking about returning to Canada after your most recent trip to the United States, how would you rate your experience with the Canadian Border Services on each of the following measures?

(Weighted sample sizes)	Total who traveled to the U.S. in 2016 (660)	Method of travel	
		By air (259)	By air (259)
Wait Times			
Very good - it was quite easy	35%	32%	36%
Moderately good	46%	49%	44%
Moderately poor	14%	12%	15%
Very poor - it was painful	5%	6%	5%
Courtesy of border agents			
Very good - it was quite easy	49%	45%	51%
Moderately good	40%	44%	37%
Moderately poor	10%	9%	11%
Very poor - it was painful	2%	2%	1%
The border-crossing experience overall			
Very good - it was quite easy	45%	39%	48%
Moderately good	43%	48%	40%
Moderately poor	9%	11%	9%
Very poor - it was painful	3%	2%	3%

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

Do you think Donald Trump becoming U.S. President will have an impact on the ease or difficulty of Canada-U.S. cross-border travel?			
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1501)	Do you consider yourself a “visible minority?”	
		Yes (206)	No (1295)
Yes, will become easier	3%	7%	2%
Yes, will become more difficult	48%	57%	47%
No, don't expect an impact	27%	20%	28%
Not Sure/Don't Know	22%	16%	23%

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org