

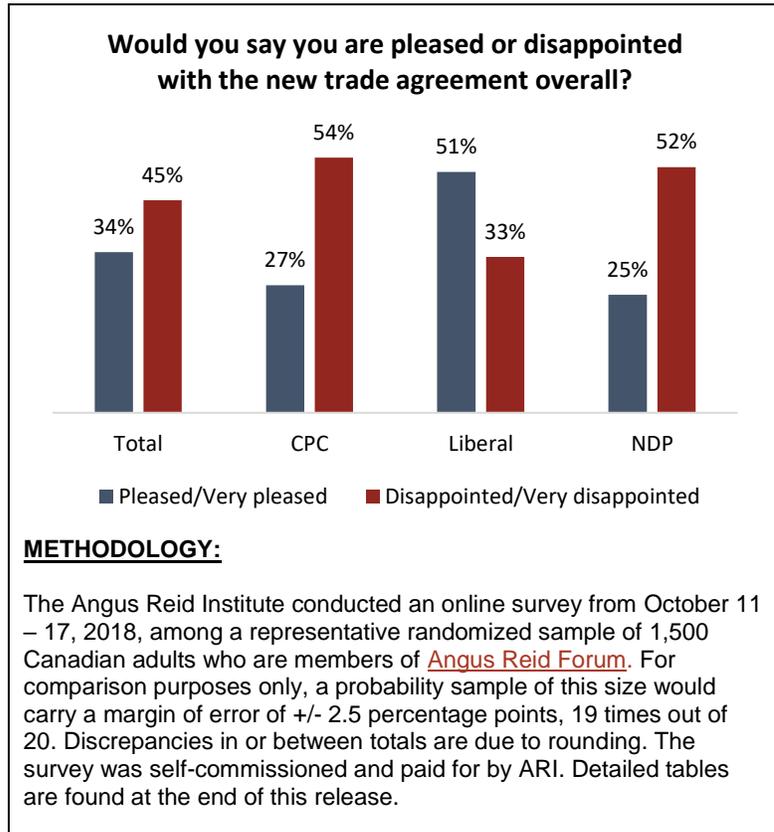
USMCA: Canadians ambivalent about “New NAFTA”, feeling bruised by U.S.

Politics drives sentiment among half that government was “too soft” in negotiations; gave up too much

October 23, 2018 – Three weeks after the announcement that Canada, the United States and Mexico had reached a three-way trade deal to “replace” the North American Free Trade Agreement, Canadians are feeling significantly less euphoric about the pact than the government officials who negotiated it.

Indeed, the latest public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute reveals more say they are “disappointed” than pleased with the new agreement, a sentiment that is driven along political lines – although a significant number of past Liberal Party voters also take a negative view of the deal.

Against this backdrop, fully half are of the view that Canada’s negotiating team dealt with their American counterparts “too softly” and gave up too much to secure the pact, while just one-third feel the agreement reached was “better than nothing”.



But if Canadians are unhappy with their own leaders in these negotiations, they are similarly infuriated with the U.S. This survey finds Canadians feeling more negatively about their ally, neighbour, and largest trading partner than they have been in some 40 years.

More Key Findings:

- Roughly half (49%) of Canadians say they have a “very favourable” or “mostly favourable” view of the United States. That’s a significant drop from the 62 per cent who expressed such a view in June 2016, and the lowest favourability rating the U.S. has received from Canadians since 1980
- One-in-three Canadians (35%) feel the USMCA is better than “no deal at all,” while similar numbers feel the new agreement is worse than (34%) or about the same as (31%) if negotiations had collapsed completely
- Overall, Canadians are about equally likely to be pleased (43%) or disappointed (41%) with the performance of their country’s negotiators. Reviews are more negative for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s performance on the file (37% pleased; 52% disappointed)

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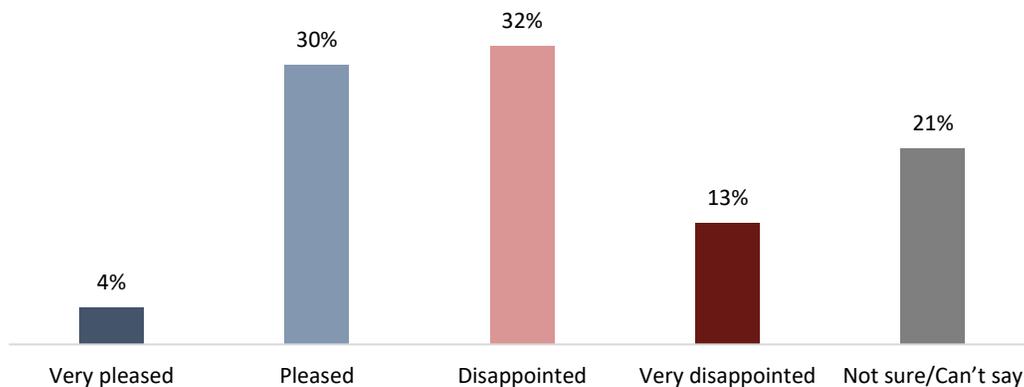
Disappointed in the USMCA

The NAFTA re-negotiation process was contentious, and characterized by [missed deadlines](#) and [threats of withdrawals](#) from U.S. President Donald Trump. Indeed, in January of this year Canadian officials were [reportedly convinced](#) the President would pull the plug on negotiations.

After more than a year of negotiations, tariffs, and tiffs, the three nations finally came together at the end of September to reach an accord, though Trump has [returned to threatening the agreement](#) in recent days.

In the time since negotiations began, Canadians’ affinity for NAFTA [has grown](#). They appear ambivalent about the new USMCA, however. Asked for their opinion of the deal, one-in-five (21%) are unsure, while the bulk of respondents choose a middling “pleased” (30%), or “disappointed” (32%), rather than a more extreme opinion on either side:

Would you say you are pleased or disappointed with the new trade agreement overall?

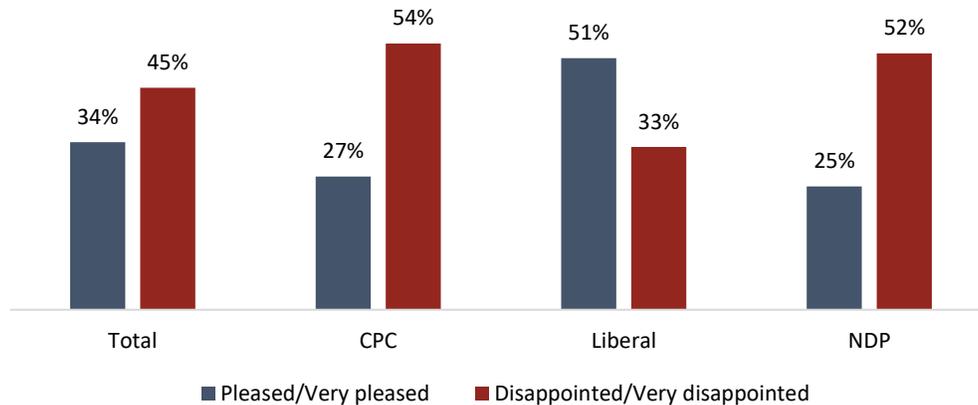


Partisanship plays a significant role in Canadian opinions on this file. The government’s 2015 supporters are roughly twice as likely as those who voted for the Conservative or New Democratic parties to say that they are happy with the outcome:

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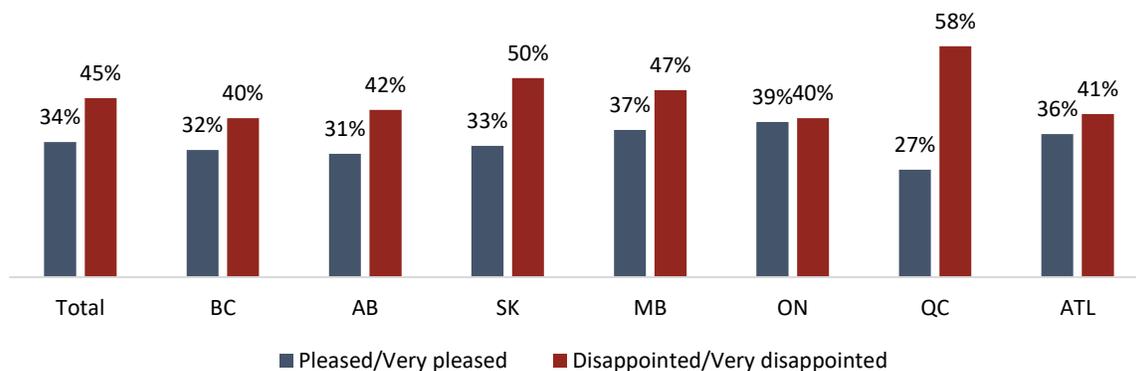
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Would you say you are pleased or disappointed with the new trade agreement overall?



Regionally, Quebec offers the least favourable assessment of the new trade deal, a fact that may reflect Quebecers disappointment in the increased U.S. access to supply managed markets – dairy, poultry, and eggs – negotiated in the pact. Many of Canada’s largest dairy farms are located in Quebec.

Would you say you are pleased or disappointed with the new trade agreement overall?

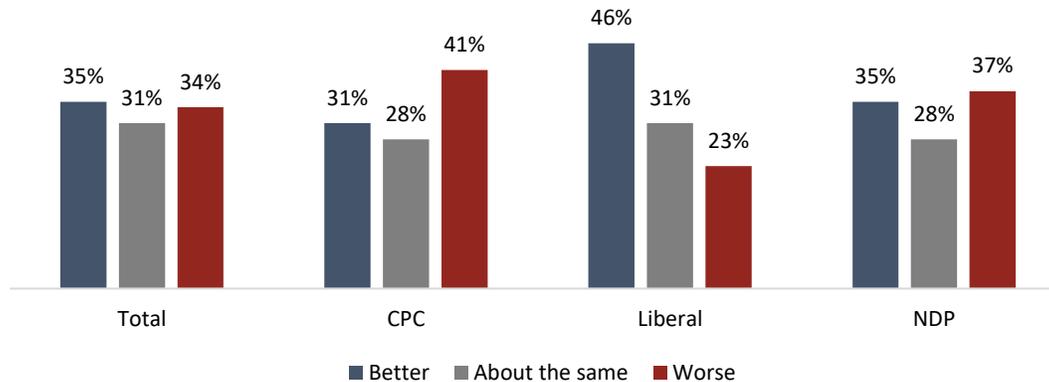


But is it better than no deal?

As the U.S.-imposed deadline for concluding negotiations drew closer, Justin Trudeau [repeatedly told Canadians](#) that “no deal” would still be better for Canada than “a bad deal.”

The government eventually reached an agreement it felt was good, but this survey suggests Canadians are inclined to disagree with that assessment. Asked whether the USMCA would be better or worse for Canada than “no deal at all,” Canadians are split three ways, with only one-in-three (35%) saying the new pact will be better than nothing, while nearly the same number (34%) say it will be worse:

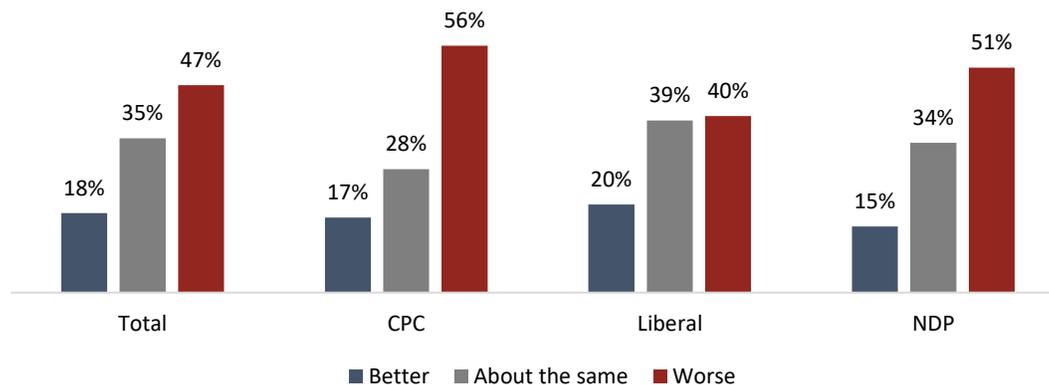
Would you say this new North American trade agreement, the USMCA, is better or worse for Canada than no deal at all?



Less controversial is the notion that the USMCA is a worse deal than the original NAFTA it will soon replace. Nearly half of all Canadians (47%) say the new agreement will be worse for Canada than NAFTA, and fewer than one-in-five (18%) say it will be better.

Even past Liberal voters are two times more likely to say the USMCA will be worse than NAFTA, rather than the reverse:

Would you say this new North American trade agreement, the USMCA, is better or worse for Canada than the original NAFTA it replaces?



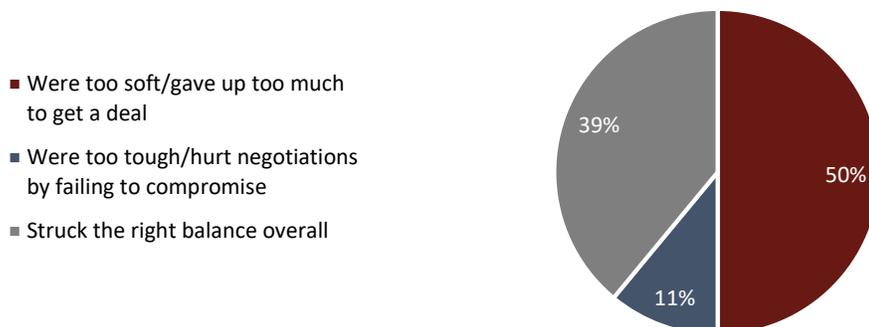
Mixed reviews for Canada’s negotiators

The impact of President Donald Trump on the Canadian public is an interesting one. As the Angus Reid Institute [noted earlier this year](#), the Canadian public’s response to threats from Trump on the trade file was that the government should play hardball, and stand up to the U.S., even if it meant risking adverse consequences.

That same sentiment is evident in Canadian opinion of the USMCA. Assessing the new deal, half of Canadians say that the negotiating team was “too soft” throughout the process and gave up too much to

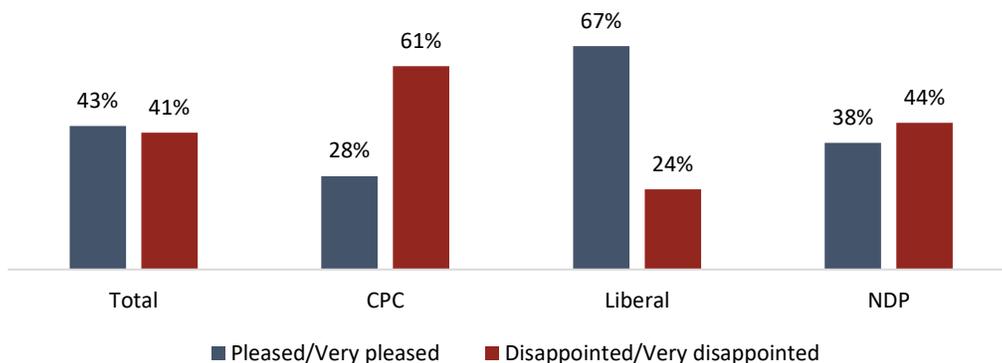
get the deal across the finish line. Four-in-ten say Canada's team did a good job, striking the right balance, but more access to the supply managed dairy market appears to have irked some residents:

Thinking about these trade-offs and Canada's overall approach to the negotiations, would you say Canadian negotiators



Overall, four-in-ten Canadians say they are pleased with the performance of the negotiating team, while the same number say they are disappointed. Notably, the bulk of criticism comes from past Conservative voters:

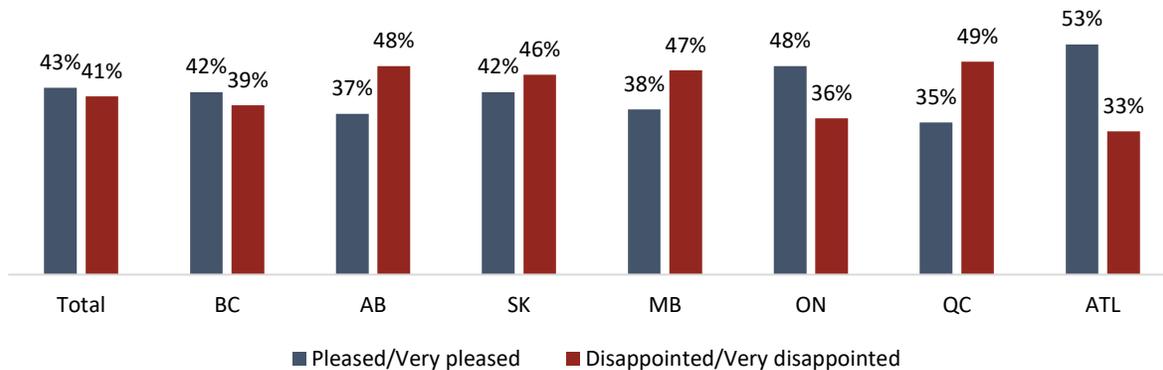
And, overall, would you say you are pleased or disappointed with the performance of Canada's negotiating team?



Again, Quebecers are the most disappointed, though they are joined in their negative assessment of the negotiating team by nearly half of prairie residents.

Ontario and Atlantic Canada, meanwhile, are disproportionately enthusiastic about the performance of Canadian negotiators, findings that could reflect a positive assessment of the deal's potential impact on the auto industry in Ontario and a preponderance of past Liberal voters in the Atlantic provinces.

Overall, would you say you are pleased or disappointed with the performance of Canada's negotiating team?



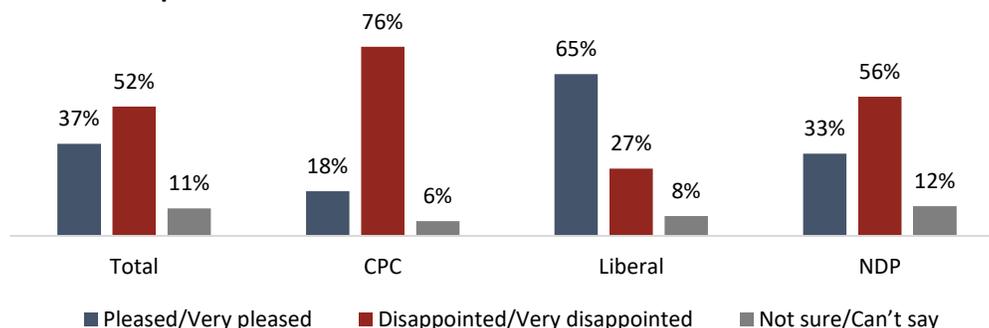
What about the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister was the target of numerous attacks from President Trump and [his team](#) over the course of trade negotiations. Trump went as far as to call Trudeau “[very dishonest and weak](#)” after the G7 Summit.

Trudeau and the Canadian team brushed aside the expected rhetoric, insisting that they were working toward an agreement, and as the [New York Times reported](#) in June 2017, doing so by working around Trump.

While Canadians were [supportive of Trudeau](#) after personal attacks were leveled against him, they’re largely divided on political lines as to his performance during negotiations. This perhaps speaks to a sense that the Canadian team was not strong enough during the process, and that some of that came from the highest level:

Overall, would you say you are pleased or disappointed with the performance of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau?

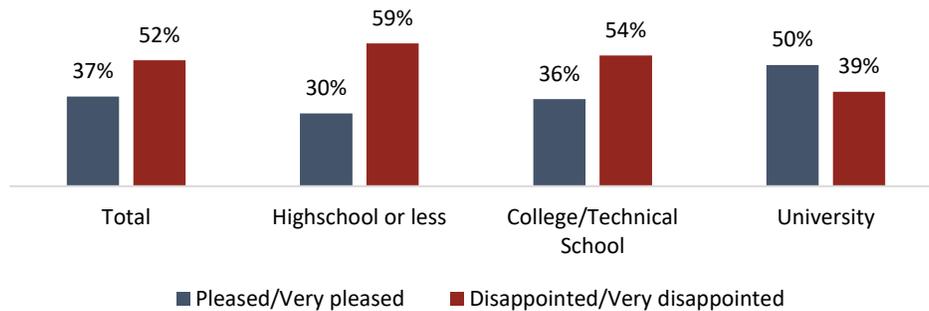


Notably, Trudeau scores the highest marks with university educated Canadians. Half of this group (50%) are pleased with his work over the past year and a half or so, a mark that is not reached within any other demographic – whether age, gender, or otherwise ([see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

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Overall, would you say you are pleased or disappointed with the performance of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau?



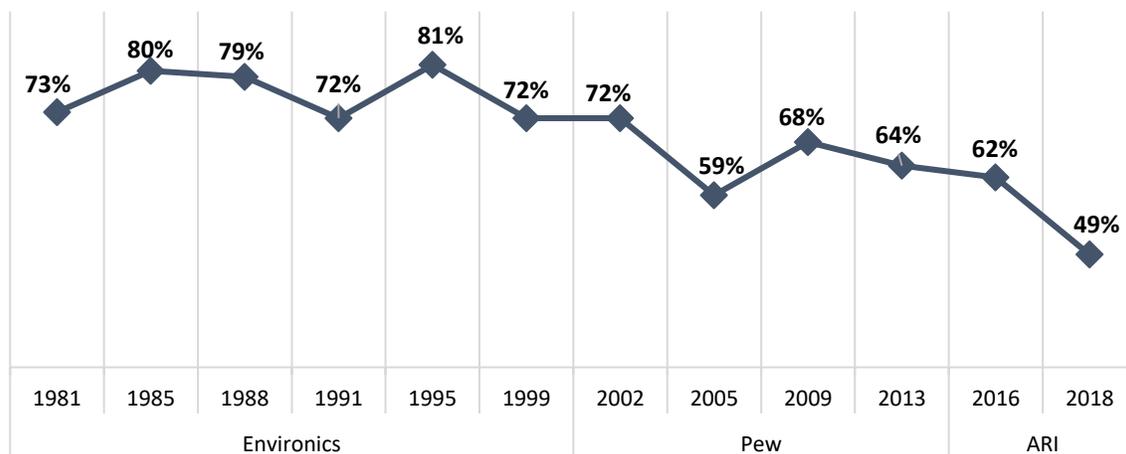
Favourable view of U.S. lowest since 1980

The enduring legacy of the new trade agreement will not be known for years, perhaps decades, but one result is immediately apparent: This period in history has dampened Canadian views of the United States.

The interests of Canada and the United States, while often mutual, have also been at odds at times over the years. Even in times of disagreement, however, the Canadian public has tended to hold the U.S. in high esteem. Today, for the first time in at least 40 years, the number of Canadians saying they have a favourable view of the U.S. has dropped below 50 per cent. This represents a 13-point drop from 2016.

Previously, 59 per cent represented the low-mark, during the turmoil of the Bush administration’s war in Iraq.

Percentage of Canadians holding 'favourable' view of United States



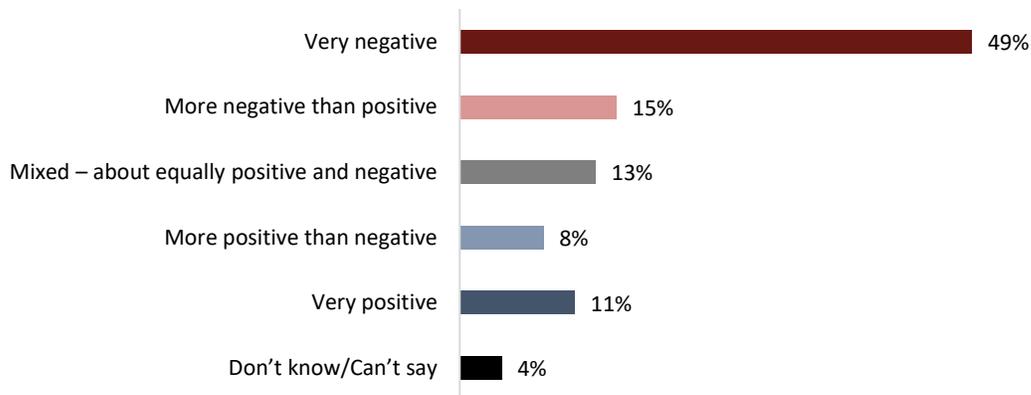
President Trump is undoubtedly a factor in this decline. Continuing an administration-long trend, the President and his team remain deeply unpopular in Canada. Following the signing of the USMCA, half of

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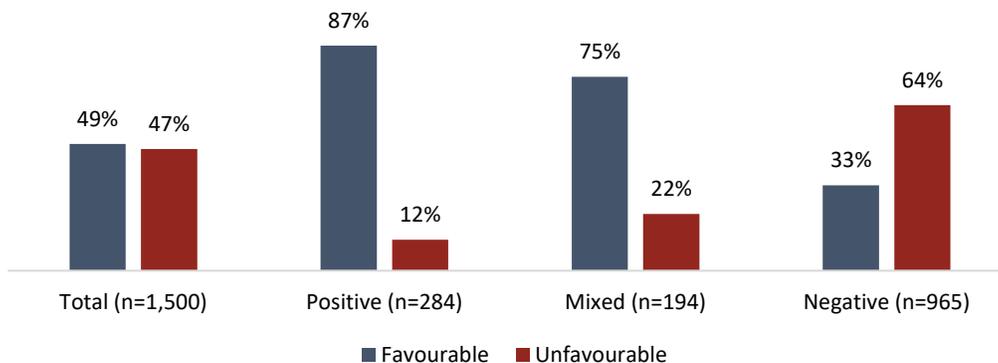
Canadians hold a “very negative” view of Trump and Co., while one-in-ten (11%) take the opposite stance. Overall, two-thirds view the administration negatively (64%):

Based on the Trump administration’s performance since the inauguration on January 20, 2017, is your overall impression positive or negative so far?



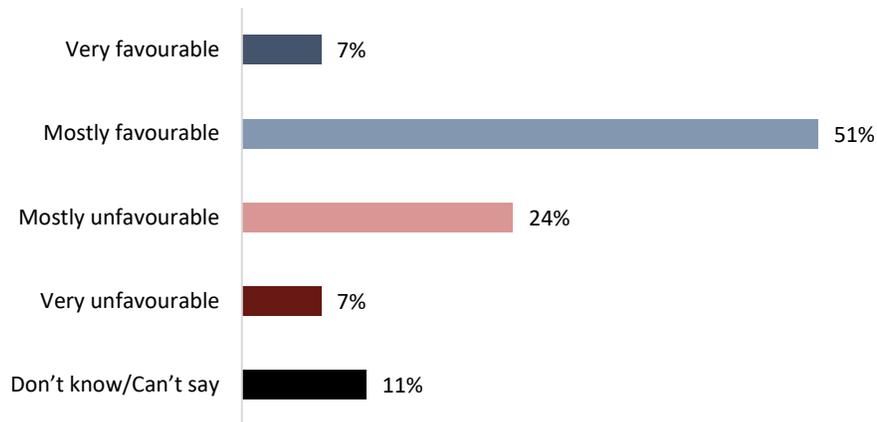
The correlation between a negative view of Trump and a negative view of the U.S. overall is strong. Among those who view the administration positively, 87 per cent also view the country it governs favourably. On the other end of the spectrum, among those who view the administration negatively, 64 per cent view the U.S. in an unfavourable way:

View of United States based on opinion of Trump Administration Performance



Meanwhile, opinions of the other (future) signatory nation in the USMCA, Mexico, do not appear to have suffered the same pummelling in the past two years. In fact, the percentage of Canadians saying they hold a favourable view of Mexico is up 7 percentage points since 2016. Almost six-in-ten Canadians now say they view that country with favour:

Overall, would you say you have a favourable or unfavourable view of Mexico?



*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 foundation 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](#).

Overall, would you say you have a favourable or unfavourable view of the United States?				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1500)	Views of the Trump administration		
		Positive (284)	Mixed (194)	Negative (965)
Very favourable	15%	53%	17%	5%
Mostly favourable	34%	34%	57%	28%
Mostly unfavourable	30%	9%	16%	40%
Very unfavourable	17%	3%	7%	24%
Don't know/Can't say	4%	1%	3%	3%

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