

Three Amigos Summit: More Canadians believe North American trade agreements have hurt than helped

One-in-two CPC voters believe NAFTA/USMCA has hurt Canada's economy

November 19, 2021 – While the leaders of Canada and Mexico talked up the importance of free trade at their summit this week, Canadians themselves are at best more skeptical – and at worst more cynical – than politicians about the benefits of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) to this country's economic fortunes.

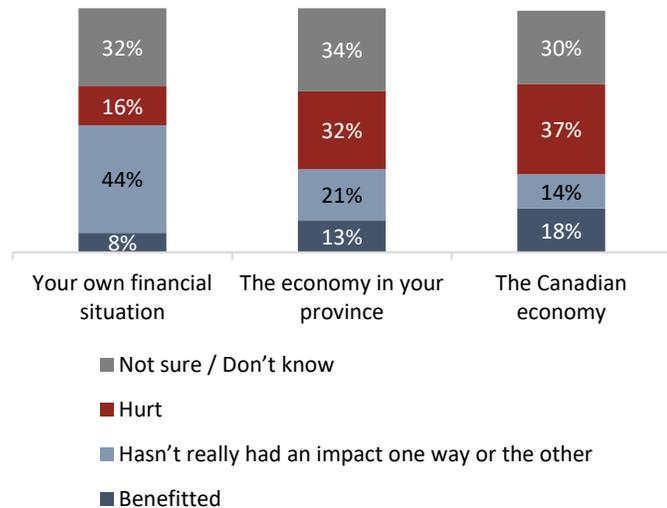
The latest data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds negative feelings towards the three-country free trade agreement continue from when the USMCA was [first signed](#) in 2018.

In the three years since the NAFTA replacement was signed, Canadians have not grown fonder of the USMCA. [At the time](#), Canadians were more disappointed than pleased with the agreement and half said that the new deal was worse than the one it replaced.

Asked how they feel the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) replacement is affecting their country's economy, Canadians are critical by a two-to-one margin (37% to 18%), while many admit they're unsure.

The same story emerges when Canadians are asked to assess the impact of the agreement on their own respective provinces: one-in-three say the deal is hurting their province, while 13 per cent feel it is beneficial. These sentiments are most pronounced in Atlantic Canada and Alberta, where those who believe that USMCA has hurt their provinces' economy outnumber those who believe it has been a benefit by six-to-one and three-to-one, respectively.

Thinking about the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement – formerly known as NAFTA – based on what you have read, seen, heard or experienced, would you say it has benefitted or hurt each of the following?
(All respondents, n=1,514)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Nov. 16-17, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 1,514 Canadian adults who are members of [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.

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More Key Findings:

- Half of Conservative voters believe USMCA and NAFTA have hurt Canada's economy. Among NDP and Liberal voters, those who believe the free trade agreements have had a negative economic impact outnumber those who believe they have been a boon to the country's economy.
- One-in-three Canadians (35%) have a positive impression of the first 11 months of the Biden administration, while 22 per cent say they have a mixed view. One-quarter (26%) are critical.
- Nearly half (46%) of Canadians view the United States in a positive light – up eight points from a historic low in March 2020.

About ARI

*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.*

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Part One: Two-in-five believe USMCA has hurt Canada's economy

The "Three Amigos" – U.S. President Joe Biden, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador – met this week in a trilateral summit for the first time [since 2016](#). Conversations were at times tense – touching on Biden's [protectionist approach](#) to certain industries important to the Canadian economy – and whether policies regarding electric vehicles violate the relatively new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

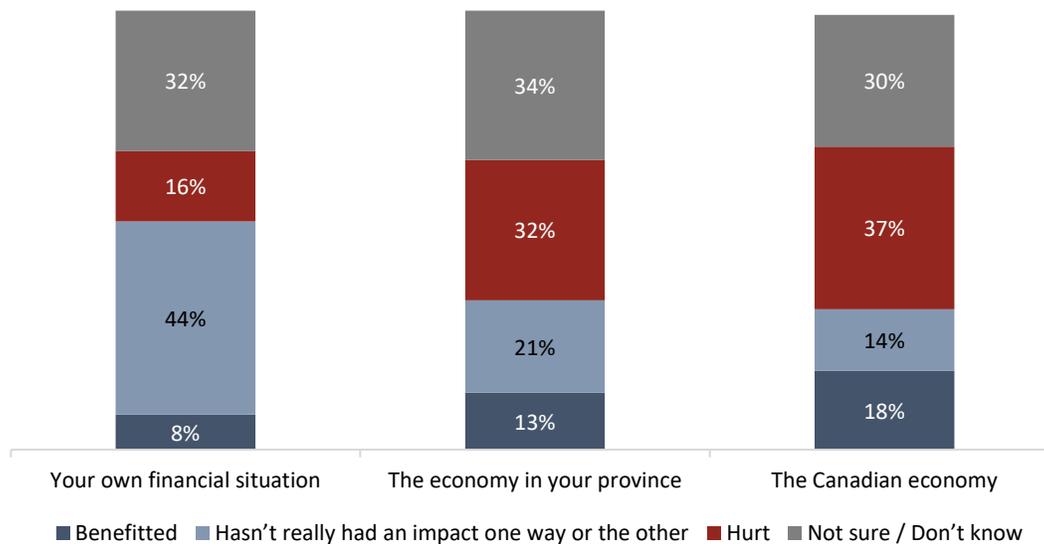
The USMCA replaced the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on July 1 last year. The two agreements are similar, but there were [new rules](#) surrounding auto manufacturing, labour standards, access for agriculture exports and environmental protections.

NAFTA was initially implemented in 1994; the three countries' economies have been linked for nearly three decades now. Canadians believe the free trade agreements have been more bad than good for the country. A plurality believe the agreements have hurt the economy in their province as well as the national economy as a whole, while most (44%) believe there hasn't been much of an impact on themselves personally:

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**Thinking about the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement (USMCA), formerly known as NAFTA – based on what you have read, seen, heard or experienced, would you say it has benefitted or hurt each of the following?
(All respondents, n=1,514)**



Nearly unilaterally, among the supporters of Canada's major political parties, those who believe the USMCA and NAFTA has hurt their financial situation, their province's economy and the national economy outnumber those who believe the free trade agreement has been beneficial to those three areas.

For those who voted Conservative in the recent federal election, half believe USMCA and NAFTA has hurt Canada's economy, three times the number who believe they have been an overall benefit:

Thinking about the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement (USMCA), formerly known as NAFTA – based on what you have read, seen, heard or experienced, would you say it has benefitted or hurt each of the following?				
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,514)	2021 Federal Vote		
		CPC (n=388)	Liberal (n=382)	NDP (n=316)
Percentage who selected 'benefitted'				
Your own financial situation	8%	8%	11%	6%
The economy in your province	13%	12%	15%	10%
The Canadian economy	18%	16%	21%	20%
Percentage who selected 'hurt'				
Your own financial situation	16%	24%	9%	15%
The economy in your province	32%	44%	23%	32%
The Canadian economy	37%	51%	28%	33%

Across the country, there are more who say this free trade deal between the three countries has been negative for their personal financial situation, the economy in their province, and the Canadian economy than positive. Atlantic Canadians are most likely to express that the two agreements have hurt the Canadian economy, half say that, while those who believe NAFTA and USMCA have hurt their province's economy outnumber those who say they have been beneficial by six-to-one.

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Thinking about the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement (USMCA), formerly known as NAFTA – based on what you have read, seen, heard or experienced, would you say it has benefitted or hurt each of the following?							
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,514)	Region					
		BC (n=202)	AB (n=180)	SK/MB (n=103)	ON (n=580)	QC (n=345)	ATL (n=104)
Percentage who selected 'benefitted'							
Your own financial situation	8%	7%	7%	9%	9%	8%	3%
The economy in your province	13%	9%	12%	9%	15%	15%	5%
The Canadian economy	18%	16%	19%	18%	19%	21%	14%
Percentage who selected 'hurt'							
Your own financial situation	16%	13%	18%	14%	19%	13%	10%
The economy in your province	32%	31%	39%	24%	34%	31%	29%
The Canadian economy	37%	38%	41%	32%	37%	34%	47%

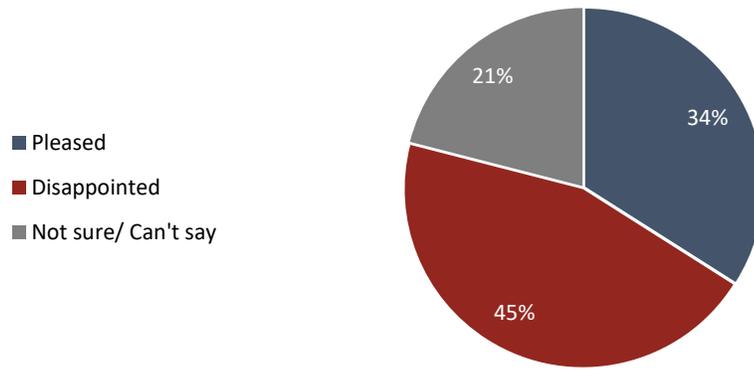
No demographic views the two free trade agreements more positively than negatively, but Canadians aged 18 to 34 are the least negative about the effect on their personal financial situation, their province's economy, and the Canadian economy. For Canadians over the age of 35, the number who say the trade agreements hurt the national economy doubles those who believe it has been an overall benefit ([see detailed tables](#)).

It appears to be a broad continuance of a sentiment first expressed when the USMCA [was signed](#) in 2018. At the time, Canadians were more disappointed than pleased.

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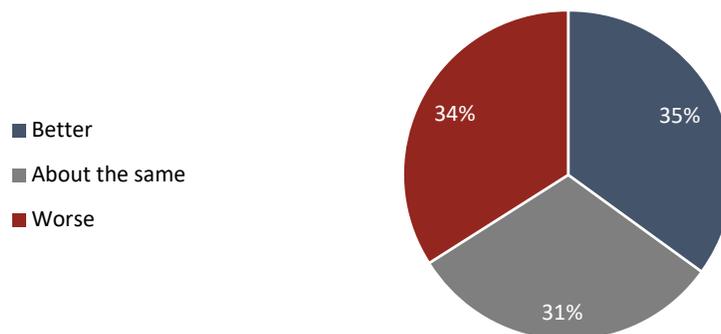
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And overall, would you say you are pleased or disappointed with the new trade agreement overall? (Oct. 2018)



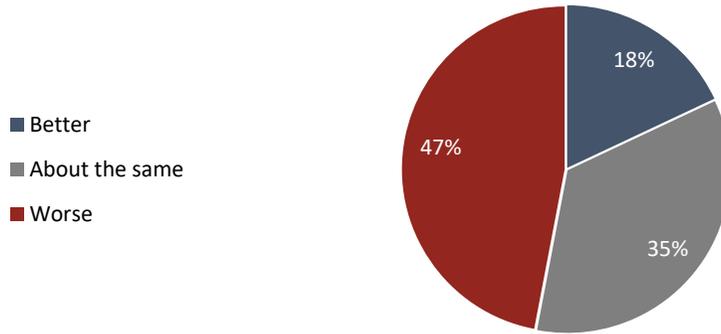
They were also split on whether the deal was better or worse than no deal at all.

Would you say this new North American trade agreement, the USMCA, is better or worse for Canada than no deal at all? (Oct. 2018)



Canadians were much more conclusive on whether or not the USMCA was better than NAFTA, however. Half said the new deal was worse than the deal it replaced.

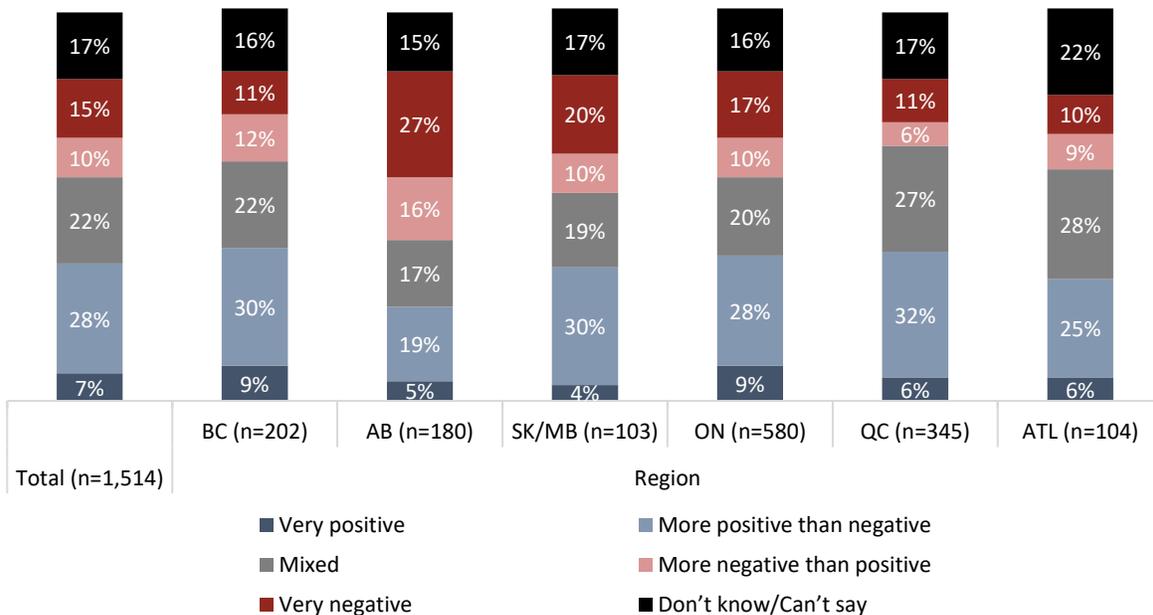
Would you say this new North American trade agreement, the USMCA, is better or worse for Canada than the original NAFTA deal it replaces? (Oct. 2018)



Part Two: Canadians mixed on President Biden

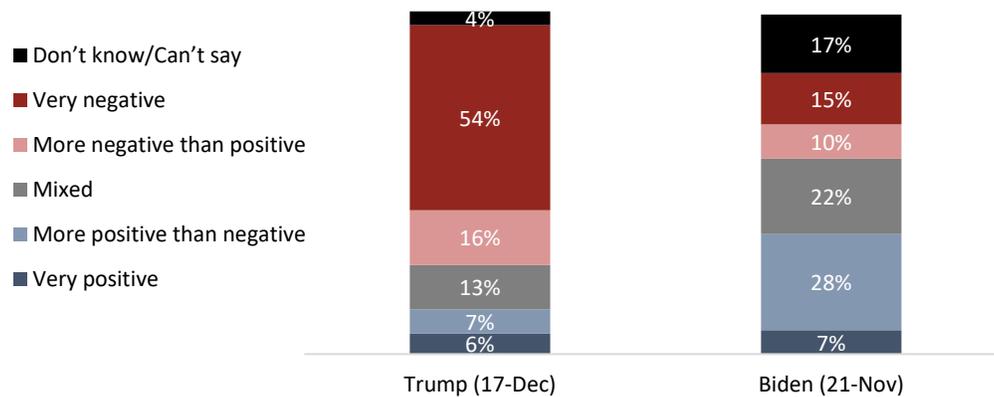
Nearly a year into Biden’s tenure, Canadians are divided on the performance of his administration. One-third (35%) have a positive impression so far, while one-quarter (26%) are more negative. Two-in-five offer either a mixed assessment or no assessment at all:

Based on the Biden administration's performance since January 20, 2021, is your overall impression positive or negative so far?



When compared with Donald Trump at a similar stage of his presidency, the contrast is stark. In December 2017, seven-in-ten Canadians responded that their impression of Trump was negative, including half (54%) who said it was very negative. Only a quarter of Canadians say they have a negative impression of Biden, while only 15 per cent say it's very negative:

Trump vs. Biden initial impressions



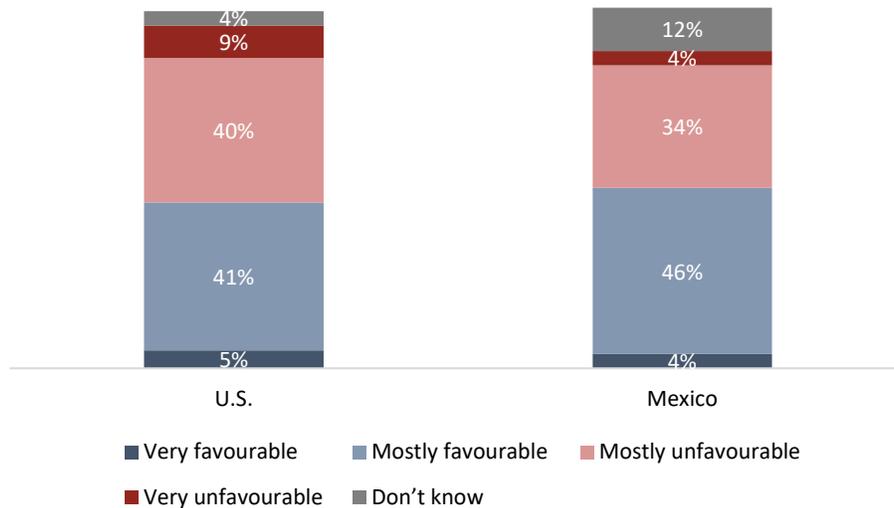
Canadians view Mexico more favourably than unfavourably; split on U.S.

The mixed feelings extend to Canadians' overall impression of the United States. Half (50%) of Canadians have an unfavourable view of our southern neighbour and nearly as many (46%) view the U.S. favourably. When looking further south, half of Canadians have a favourable view of the third partner in the USMCA, while two-in-five (39%) hold unfavourable views:

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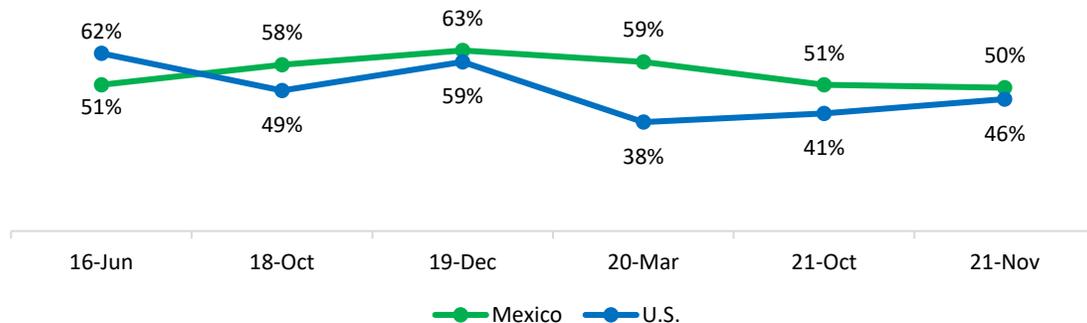
**When you think about each of the following countries, would you say your overall opinion is:
(All respondents, n=1,514)**



Positive views of the United States have climbed from a nadir at the beginning of the pandemic when two-in-five held positive views of the country, but it still has far to recover to the three-in-five (59%) Canadians who felt favourable towards the country as recently as two years ago.

Meanwhile, favourable views towards Mexico have declined since the USMCA was signed three years ago:

**Total favourability of U.S. and Mexico over time
(Percentage who selected 'favourable' shown)**



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

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