

Mr. Biden Goes to Ottawa: China tops list of issues Canadians want PM-President summit to address

72% in Canada say the U.S. is this nation's "best friend"; 80% say America takes it for granted

March 21, 2023 – U.S. President Joe Biden arrives in Canada this week with a promise, [per the White House](#), to "reaffirm the United States' commitment to the U.S.-Canada partnership."

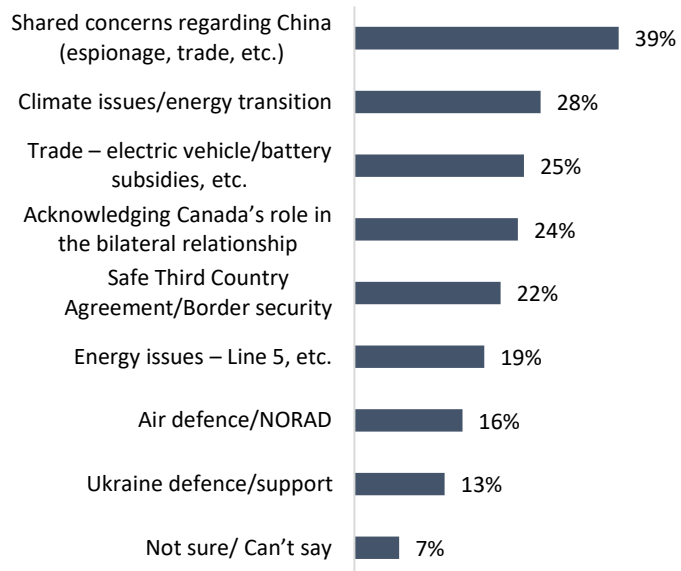
It's a message Canadians will be listening for, given the current state of the bilateral relationship. New data from a cross-border public opinion survey self-commissioned by the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds a majority of Canadians say the U.S. is their country's "best friend" internationally, but fewer Americans (43%) who are inclined to agree. Many in the U.S. (35%) say they don't know if that's the case.

Perhaps that's why an overwhelming 80 per cent of Canadians feel Americans take the relationship for granted, compared to 23 per cent in the United States who say so of Canada. Additionally, about one-in-seven (15%) of Americans say they do not think about the relationship "at all".

The leaders have a substantive to-do list to get through. When asked, Canadians say issues that should be prioritized include discussions over shared economic and security concerns with China (39%), along with climate issues (28%), trade between the two nations (25%), the Safe Third Country Agreement (22%) and – speaking of the aforementioned resentment – acknowledging Canada's role in the bilateral relationship (24%).

During President Biden's visit to Canada, which topics do you feel are MOST important for he and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to address?

(Up to two chosen; Canadian respondents, n=1,649)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 15-17, 2023 among a representative randomized sample of 1,649 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 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

ARI conducted a second online survey from March 15-17, 2023 among a representative randomized sample of 1,025 American adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum USA](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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:

- Seven-in-ten (71%) in Canada and three-in-five (57%) in the U.S. describe the relationship between the two countries as strong or very strong. One-quarter (24%) in Canada and half that in the U.S. (12%) would instead call it weak.
- However, there is also wide belief the two countries could work together more. More than four-in-five in Canada (85%) and three-quarters (77%) in the U.S. say the two countries should build a stronger relationship.
- When asked which regions and countries they would prefer Canada develop closer trade ties with, more than two-in-five (44%) select the U.S. Past CPC voters are more likely to say this (58%) than those who voted Liberal (39%) or NDP (32%) in 2021.

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: The personalities

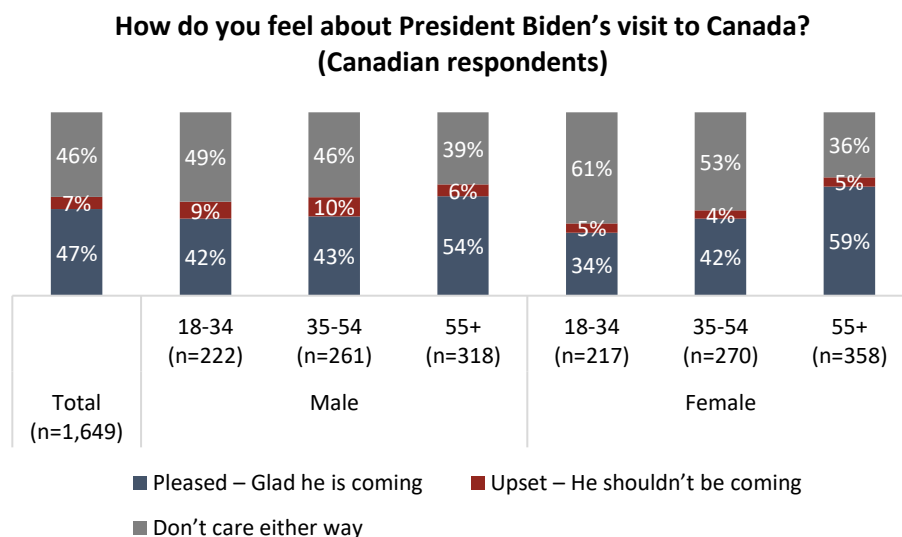
President Joe Biden is making his first official visit to Canada on March 23-24. [There has been some consternation in Canada](#) that it took so long for the trip to come about. While former U.S. President Donald Trump never made an official visit to the country – he only came for the multilateral [2018 G7 meeting](#) in Quebec – other presidents have come to Canada much earlier in their terms.

Still, the importance of the relationship between the two countries is clear. [Both](#) are [each other's](#) most significant trading partner. And as [the balloon issue illustrated](#) earlier this month, both rely on each other for national security concerns. According to [a statement released by the White House](#), during the trip, Biden “will reaffirm the United States’ commitment to the U.S.-Canada partnership and promote our shared security, shared prosperity, and shared values.”

Reactions split between ambivalence and enthusiasm for Biden visit

Canadians are more pleased than not that Biden is coming to visit their country. Half (47%) say they are glad he is coming. One-in-12 (7%) say they are upset at the visit and believe he shouldn't come. However, the group of Canadians who say they don't care about Biden's visit (46%) is nearly as large as those who say they are happy he is coming.

Women, and especially those under the age of 55, are most likely to say they don't care Biden is visiting Canada. Women over the age of 54 (59%) are most pleased:

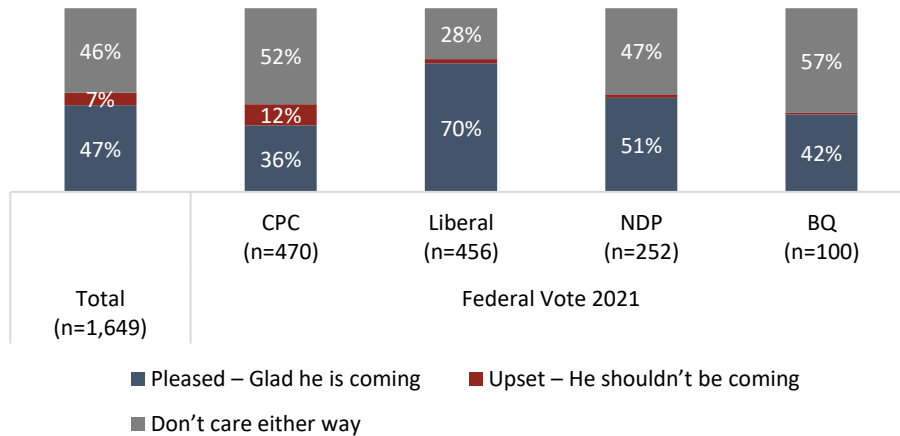


A strong majority of past Liberal voters (70%), and a slim majority of past NDP voters (51%), say they are pleased to see the official visit by the president. Half (52%) of those who voted CPC in 2021 say they don't care. Past CPC voters are the most likely to express negativity towards Biden's visit, with 12 per cent saying they are upset he is coming:

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**How do you feel about President Biden’s visit to Canada?
(Canadian respondents)**



What do Canadians think of Biden’s presidency so far

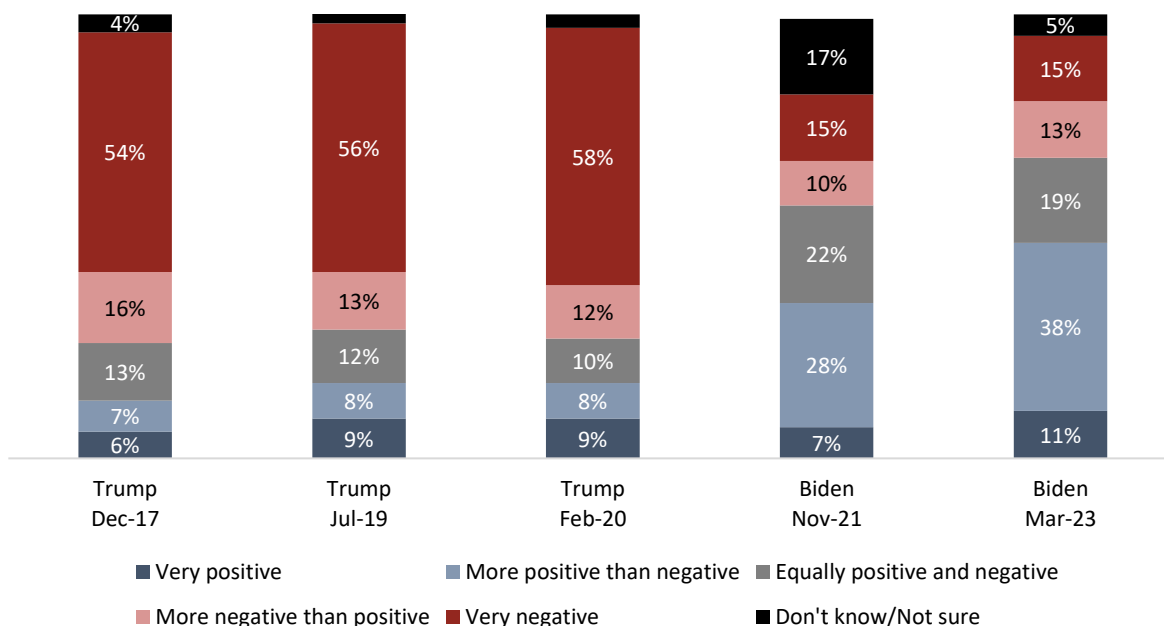
At the halfway mark of Biden’s term as president of the United States, Canadians lean towards the positive in their appraisal of his time in office. Half (49%) have positive impressions of the Biden administration’s performance, while one-quarter (27%) offer more criticism than praise.

Canadians’ evaluation of Biden’s term is much more positive than their evaluation of Trump two years into his term. Consistently so far, Canadians have much more affinity for Biden than Trump:

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Canadian assessments of the administrations of U.S. presidents



More than half (55%) of those who voted CPC in 2021 say they have a negative impression of the Biden administration. Fewer than one-in-ten of those who voted Liberal (6%), NDP (9%) or Bloc Québécois (5%) agree ([see detailed tables](#)).

Most Americans say they recognize Trudeau

Justin Trudeau has been prime minister since 2015, which has given Americans plenty of time to get to know him. He’s been on the [cover of the Rolling Stone](#) and [featured in Vogue](#). The New York Times described him as a [“dreamy boyfriend.”](#) The fawning over Trudeau has faded as his government has persisted through scandals, some – [his repeated wearing of blackface prior to entering politics](#) – have made more waves in the U.S. than others.

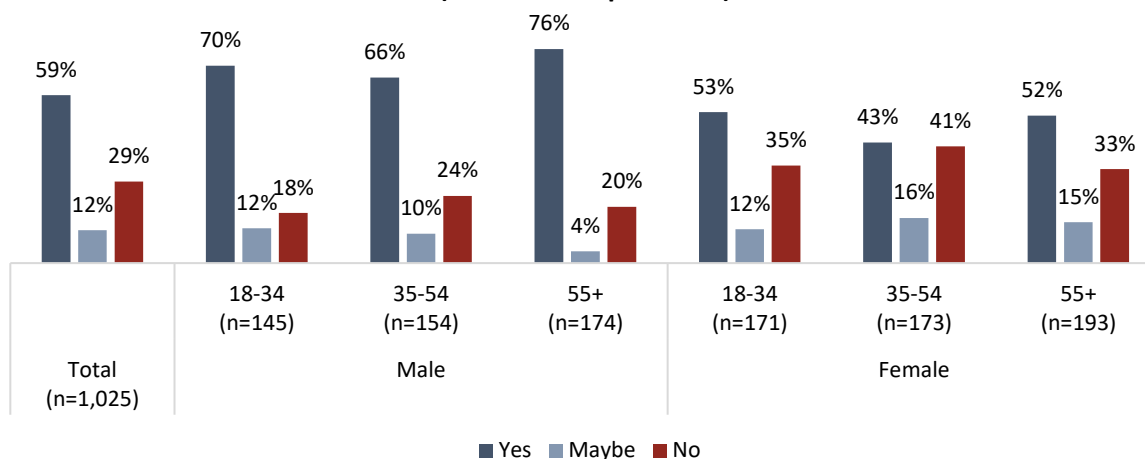
Trudeau also became [a lightning rod](#) for [American criticism](#) of [Canada’s more stringent COVID-19 restrictions](#) during the pandemic.

When presented with [a photo of Trudeau with Biden](#) at the recent “Three Amigos” summit in Mexico City, most Americans (59%) say they recognize Canada’s prime minister. One-in-eight (12%) are less certain while three-in-ten (29%) did not recognize him at all. American men are more likely than women to recognize Trudeau:

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Recognition of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (American respondents)



Americans have more favourable than not view of Canada's PM

Half (53%) of Americans who recognize the prime minister say they view him positively. Three-in-ten (29%) say they view Trudeau unfavourably. Comparatively, in Canada, fewer than two-in-five (37%) approve of Trudeau in ARI's [most recent assessment](#).

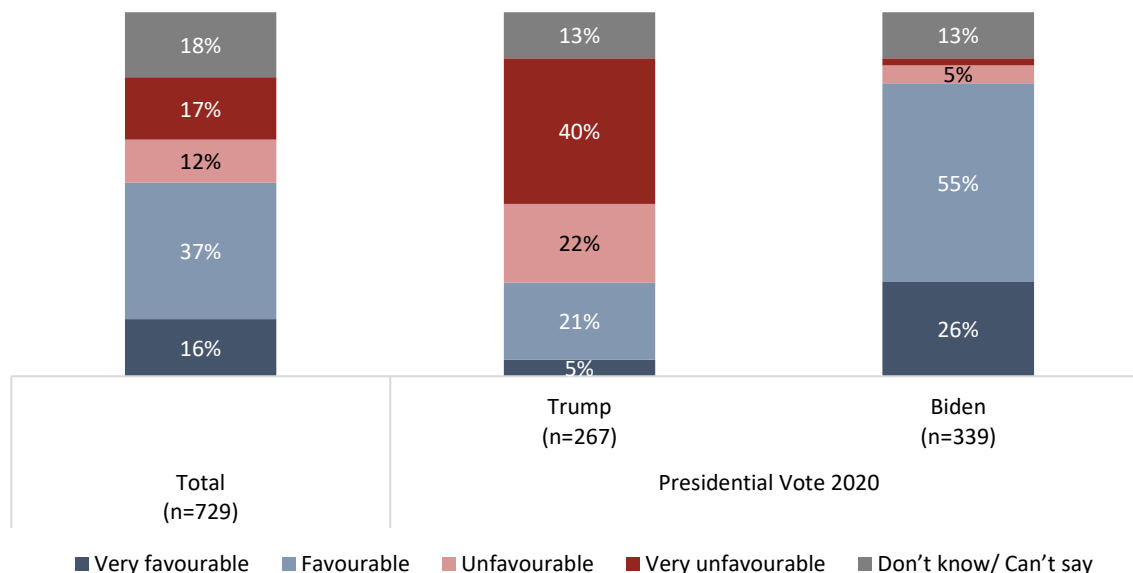
Related: Federal Politics: Liberals trail CPC by six points in vote intention; but Poilievre lags Trudeau in likeability

American men over the age of 54 are the only demographic to be more likely to view Trudeau unfavourably (48%) than favourably (43%). For all other age-gender groups, at least half (51%) say they have a positive impression of the prime minister ([see detailed tables](#)). Perhaps due to the perception that [Trudeau was responsible for Canada's stricter COVID-19 restrictions](#), those who voted for Trump in 2020 are much more likely (62%) than those who voted for Biden (7%) to have an unfavourable view of the Canadian prime minister.

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**Overall, do you have a favourable or unfavourable view of Trudeau?
(American respondents, among those who recognize a photo of Trudeau)**



Part Two: The Canada-U.S. relationship

Due to proximity, the relationship between Canada and the U.S. is always of note. But perhaps recent world events have added import to the partnership. The two countries cooperated successfully in February to down suspicious aerial objects, including at least one alleged spy balloon from China.

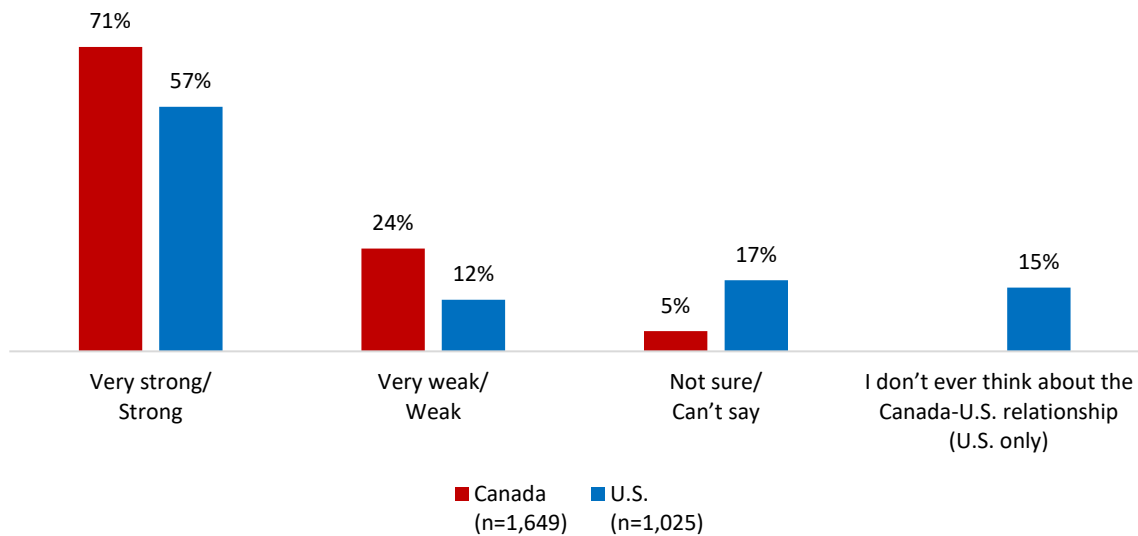
Majorities in Canada, U.S. say relationship is strong

Seven-in-ten (71%) Canadians and approaching three-in-five (57%) Americans describe the current relationship between Canada and the U.S. as “strong” or “very strong”. One-quarter (24%) in Canada and 12 per cent in the U.S. describe it instead as weak or very weak. In the U.S., there are more who offer no opinion (17% vs. 5% in Canada). As well, there are approaching one-in-seven (15%) Americans who profess to giving no thought to the relationship at all:

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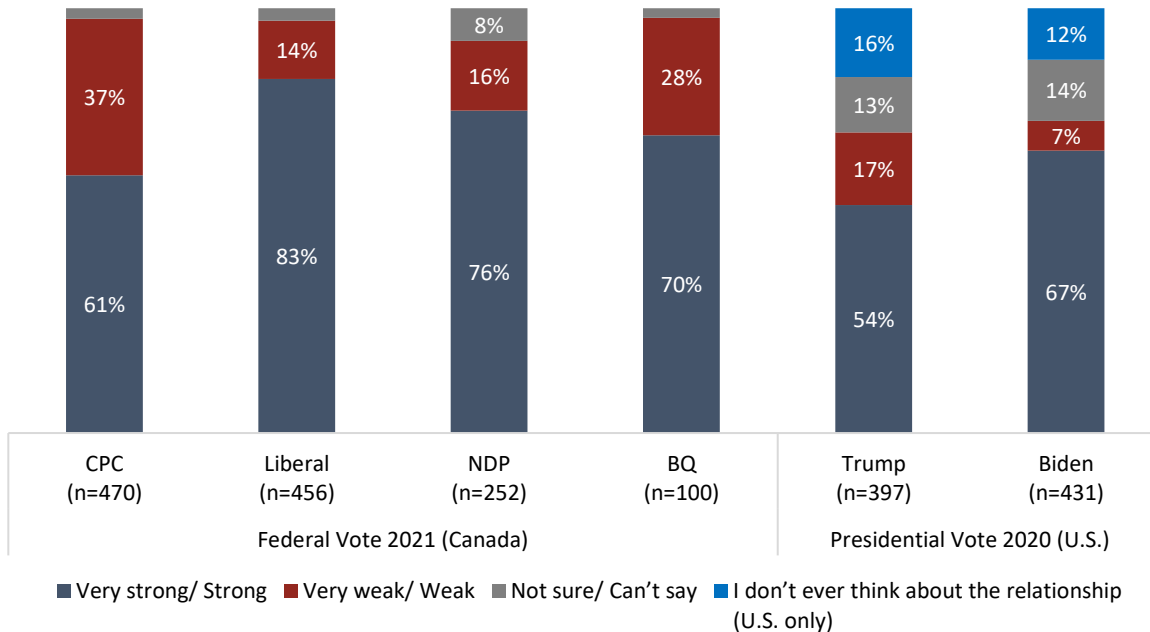
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Thinking about the Canada-U.S. relationship overall, would you say it is currently...



There is some variation to this assessment politically on both sides of the border. Those who voted Trump for president in 2020 are less likely than past Biden voters to describe the relationship as strong, but a majority (54%) still do. In Canada, those who voted CPC (37%) and Bloc (28%) are more likely than other partisans to believe the relationship to be weak, but majorities in both cases (61% CPC, 70% BQ) disagree:

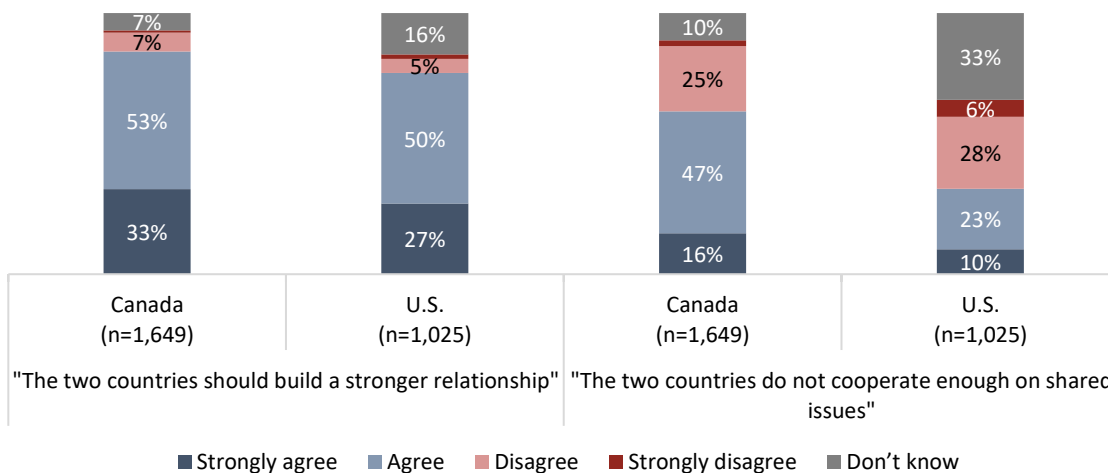
Thinking about the Canada-U.S. relationship overall, would you say it is currently...



Most on both sides of the border want relationship to be stronger

Still, there is a sense that the two countries could be more closely knit. More than four-in-five (85%) in Canada and three-quarters (77%) in the U.S. want the two neighbours to build a stronger relationship. In Canada, there is a larger sense that the two countries do not cooperate enough on shared issues than there is across the border in the United States:

Agree vs. disagree

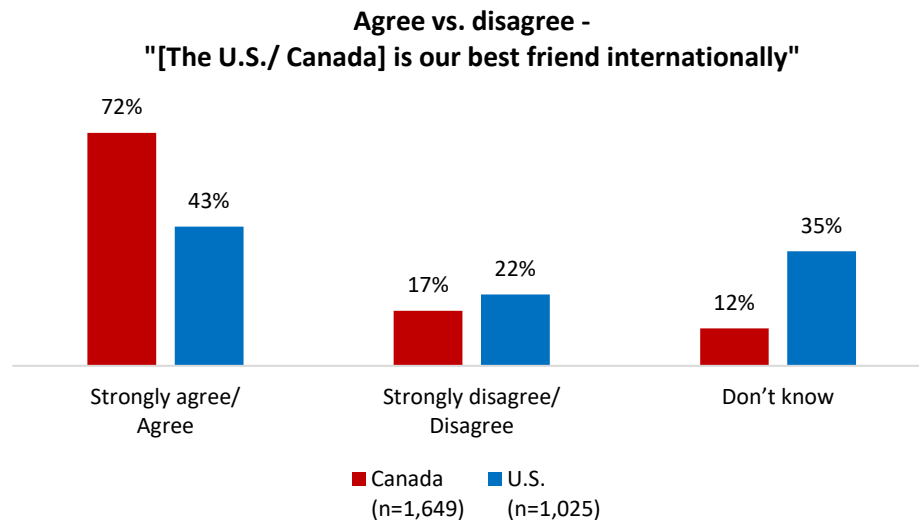


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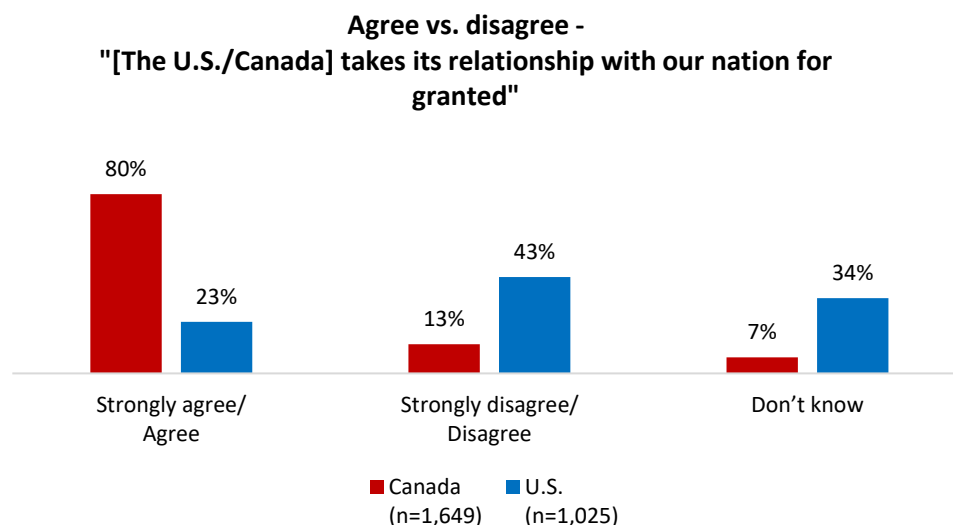
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Canadians believe U.S. to be best friend internationally, fewer Americans agree

Despite Canadians' belief there could be more cooperation, most (72%) in Canada believe the U.S. to be Canada's best friend on the international stage. The feeling, however, is not mutual. Two-in-five (43%) Americans agree, one-in-five (22%) would not describe Canada as America's best friend and a further one-in-three (35%) aren't sure:



The above perhaps explains why there is a majority (80%) belief in Canada that the U.S. takes its relationship with Canada for granted. Americans are much less likely (23%) to believe Canada is taking its friendship with the U.S. as a given:



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U.S., E.U. top list of Canadians' preferred trade partners

There are two regions more Canadians want to see increased trade with above others: the European Union and the United States. Two-in-five (44%) want Canada to continue to focus on trading with its largest partner, the U.S., while as many (45%) want closer economic ties with the European Union, Canada's second largest trading partner. However, fewer Canadians wish for closer trade ties with the E.U. and the U.S. than did so in March 2021.

Fewer than one-in-12 (8%) Canadians want closer trade ties with China, Canada's third largest trading partner.

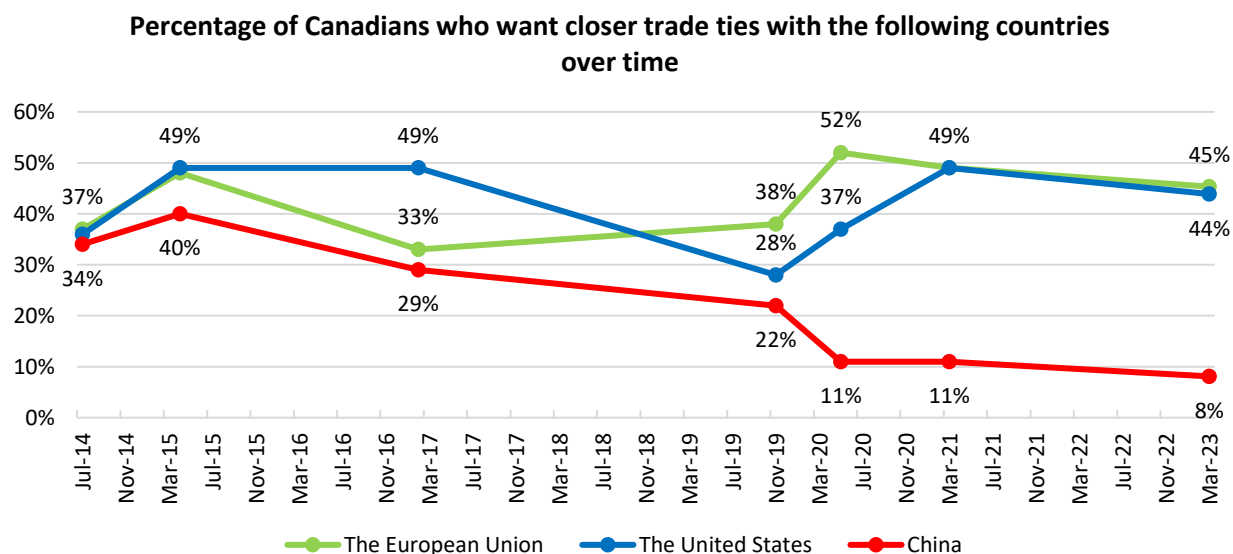
There is a political split on which countries Canadians want closer trade ties with. Past CPC voters are more likely to prefer the U.S. (58%) than other past voters, while those who voted Liberal (52%) and NDP (57%) in 2021 show a higher preference for the E.U.:

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? (Canadian respondents; up to two chosen; change from March 2021 noted)					
	Total (n=1,649)	2021 Federal Vote			
		CPC (n=470)	Liberal (n=456)	NDP (n=252)	BQ (n=100)
The European Union	45% (-5)	39% (-1)	52% (-8)	57% (+3)	53% (0)
Continue to focus on the U.S.	44% (-5)	58% (-4)	39% (-6)	32% (-3)	47% (-9)
The United Kingdom	17% (-9)	18% (-14)	17% (-7)	18% (-8)	9% (-9)
South and Central America	16% (+2)	12% (0)	18% (+6)	21% (+2)	8% (-13)
India	11% (0)	10% (-2)	11% (0)	12% (-2)	11% (+2)
Southeast Asia	8% (-2)	6% (-3)	11% (0)	9% (-5)	7% (+4)
China	8% (-3)	7% (0)	8% (-4)	11% (-2)	4% (-6)
Taiwan	7% (+2)	8% (+3)	8% (+3)	5% (+1)	3% (+1)
Other	5% (+2)	3% (0)	3% (+1)	5% (+1)	4% (+2)

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Canadians wish for closer trade ties with the E.U. and U.S. has varied in the more than eight years of Angus Reid Institute tracking on this question. Meanwhile, desire for increased trade with China has plummeted from a high of two-in-five who said so in April 2015 to fewer than one-in-12 (8%) now:



Part Three: The priorities

What topics do Canadians want the two leaders to discuss?

There are many issues and concerns shared by the two countries at the moment. At the forefront for Canadians, as their country deals with ongoing allegations of election interference by the Chinese government in Beijing, are Canada and America's shared concerns with China, including espionage and trade.

Related:

- [China, Canada and Challenging Diplomacy: Two-in-three Canadians believe Beijing did attempt election interference](#)
- [Friends and foes: Most Canadians say Ottawa should approach China as a 'threat' or 'enemy'](#)

Two-in-five (39%) believe it is most important for Biden and Trudeau to discuss the two countries' shared concerns with China. Approaching three-in-ten (28%) say it is imperative the two leaders discuss climate issues. There are also one-quarter (25%) who believe trade should be a pressing topic and one-quarter (24%) who say they want the U.S. to acknowledge Canada's role in the U.S. and Canada's ongoing partnership.

One-in-five (19%) believe the president and the prime minister should discuss energy concerns such as the ongoing dispute over [Enbridge's Line 5 oil pipeline](#) in Michigan. Albertans (37%) and those in Saskatchewan (36%) are more likely to believe that issue deserves prominence in discussions.

More than one-in-five (22%) want Biden and Trudeau to talk about the Safe Third Country Agreement and border security, in the wake of [record volumes of asylum seekers](#) crossing into Canada at the unofficial crossing at Roxham Road near Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle, Que. Those in Quebec (32%) are more likely to

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feel this should be a key point of discussion. Quebec Premier François Legault has [pressured Trudeau](#) to send asylum seekers to provinces other than his as he says that province's "[capacity to receive refugees has been exceeded](#)."

During President Biden's visit to Canada, which topics do you feel are MOST important for he and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to address? (Canadian respondents; up to two chosen)								
	Total (n=1,649)	Region						
		BC (n=195)	AB (n=159)	SK (n=123)	MB (n=139)	ON (n=455)	QC (n=418)	ATL (n=160)
Shared concerns regarding China	39%	43%	34%	38%	42%	39%	41%	36%
Climate issues/energy transition	28%	28%	21%	22%	22%	27%	33%	27%
Trade – electric vehicle/ battery subsidies, etc.	25%	28%	22%	20%	26%	30%	17%	30%
Acknowledging Canada's role in the bilateral relationship	24%	27%	26%	16%	24%	23%	25%	24%
Safe Third Country Agreement/ Border security	22%	16%	16%	26%	21%	19%	32%	23%
Energy issues – Line 5, etc.	19%	20%	37%	36%	21%	18%	10%	18%
Air defence/NORAD	16%	15%	13%	15%	14%	16%	19%	13%
Ukraine defence/support	13%	13%	15%	16%	14%	13%	13%	16%
Not sure/ Can't say	7%	5%	8%	5%	9%	7%	6%	7%

Canadians more seized by irregular border crossings than Americans

The unofficial border crossing at Roxham Road continues to be a thorny issue for both countries as it falls outside of [the U.S.-Canada Safe Third Country Agreement](#), which dictates that asylum seekers at official land border crossings must apply to the country they first land in. Trudeau has said he wants to renegotiate the deal with the U.S. The agreement has also been challenged as unconstitutional in Canada, as asylum seekers who are returned to the U.S. at official border crossings are often [detained, treated poorly and face deportation](#). The Supreme Court of Canada is expected to rule on the agreement [this summer](#).

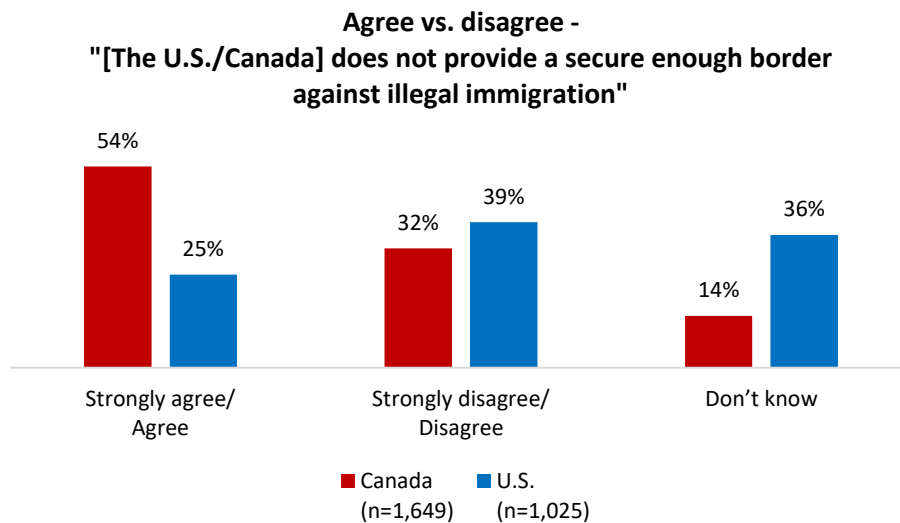
However, Canada might be more prickly on the issue than the United States. Experts [told the New York Times](#) that changing the Safe Third Country Agreement might lead to more asylum claimants in the U.S., which might not be in the Biden administration's interest. The American Ambassador to Canada David L.

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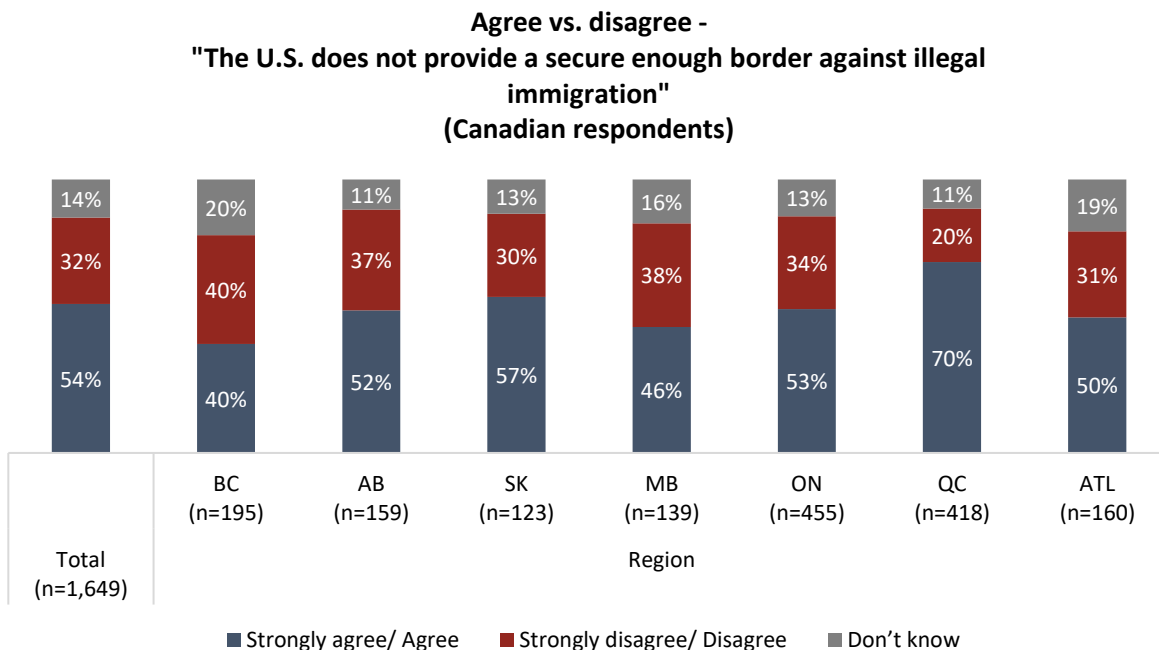
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Cohen said changing the agreement would do “very little” to deal with the issue of illegal crossings at the U.S.-Canada border.

More than half (54%) of Canadians believe the U.S. does not provide a secure enough border against illegal immigration. Respectively, Americans are more likely to believe their northern border is secure against illegal immigration (40%) than not (26%):



Seven-in-ten in Quebec feel the U.S. is not providing a secure enough border against illegal immigration, as that province often ends up being a first point of entry for asylum seekers looking to settle in Canada via the United States. Majorities in Saskatchewan (57%), Ontario (53%) and Alberta (52%) agree:



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Priorities driven by political leaning

Canadians of different political stripes have varied opinions on which topics are important for Trudeau and Biden to discuss. Past CPC (49%) and BQ voters (47%) are more likely to want emphasis on the two countries' shared concerns regarding China than those who voted Liberal (33%) or NDP (27%). As well, those who voted CPC in 2021 are more likely than other past voters to believe energy issues (30%) should be on the agenda. Meanwhile, past NDP voters most want the president and the prime minister to talk about climate issues (49%):

During President Biden's visit to Canada, which topics do you feel are MOST important for he and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to address? (Canadian respondents; up to two chosen)					
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For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics in Canada, [click here](#).

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

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