

2008 Annual Ottawa Conference Poll

Canada and the United States: What Does it Mean to be Good Neighbours

Prepared by



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Canada in the World

INNOVATIVE RESEARCH GROUP INC.

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Canadians seek active role in the world

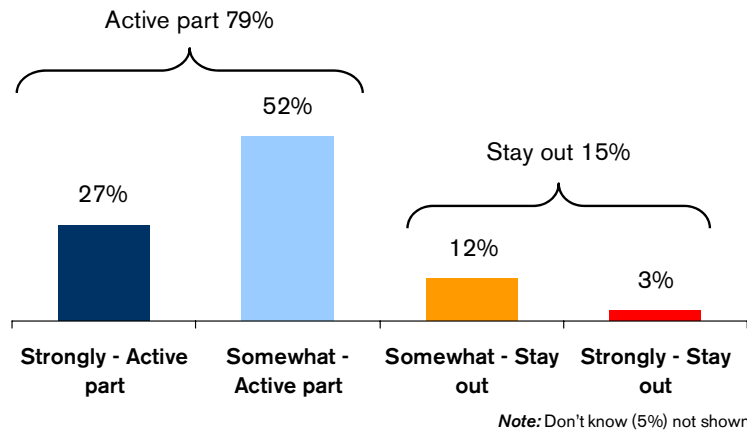
Even with so many international issues such as the world economic crisis and Canada's mission in Afghanistan drawing Canadian's attention out towards the world, during the last election most voters kept their focus on domestic issues. Before pursuing any specific international issues, the survey began by asking Canadians how active this country should be in the world.

A strong majority of Canadians (79%) believe it would be better for the future of the country if we took an active part in world af-

airs. Regionally, Canadians in the West and in Ontario are more likely to agree Canada should take an active part in the world whereas Canadians in Québec and the Atlantic provinces are more likely to say Canada should stay out of world affairs.

Overall, there is a fair amount of intensity in views on Canada's international role with one quarter of Canadians (27%) strongly believing that Canada should be active on the world stage.

Q Do you think it would be better for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs?

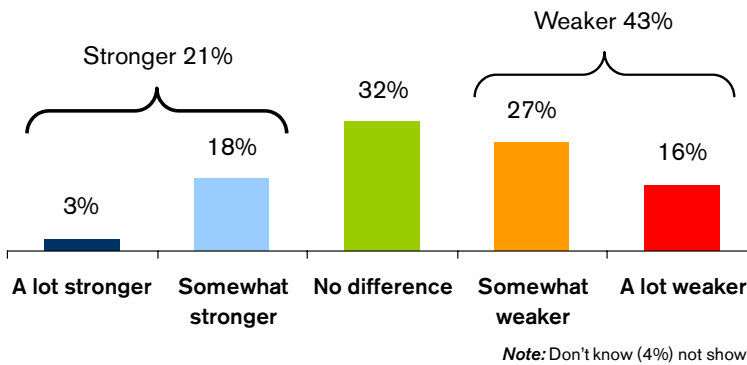


Those that responded 'Stay out'

Region	%
BC	13%
Alberta	19%
Prairies	8%
Ontario	13%
Quebec	20%
Atlantic	20%

Canada losing ground on the world stage

Q Is Canada growing stronger, growing weaker or staying the same in terms of Canada's ability to make a difference in the world?



Those that responded 'Stronger'

Region	%
BC	35%
Alberta	29%
Prairies	28%
Ontario	21%
Quebec	12%
Atlantic	21%
Gender	%
Male	26%
Female	18%

While Canadians want their country to be active on the world stage, they are worried about its ability to actually make a difference in the world. Twice as many Canadians say Canada is growing weaker in its ability to make a difference in the world (43% - 16% a lot weaker) than say Canada is getting stronger (21%). One third (32%) see no difference.

Again there are important regional differences in how Canadians see Canada in the

world. The same regions who say it would be better if Canada was active on the world stage (the West and Ontario) also say Canada is growing stronger in its ability to make a difference in the world. Canadians in Québec and the Atlantic provinces are

both more likely to say it would be better if Canada stayed out of world affairs and that it's growing weaker in its ability to make a difference in the world.

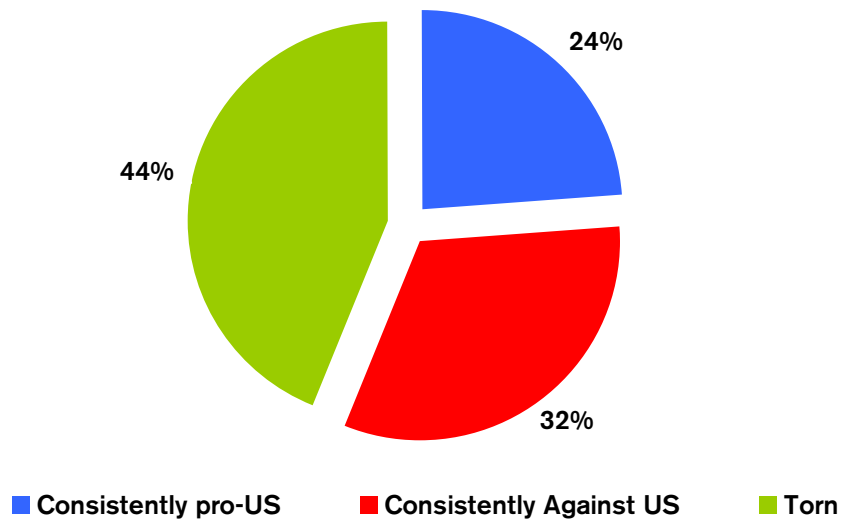
Current Perceptions of the Canada-US Relationship

Canadians not sure whether the US can be trusted

Canadians are unsure whether they can trust the United States or not. While 29% of Canadians agree that 'most of the time the US can be trusted to treat Canadian concerns fairly,' only 38% of Canadians agree with the opposite statement 'It doesn't matter who wins the election, Canada simply can not trust the United States'. When we combine the responses to these two statements, we find that while one-in-four Canadians (24%) have consistent positive attitudes towards the US and one-in-three (32%) have consistently negative views, the largest group of Canadians (44%) are divided or ambivalent in their feelings.

The most positive groups towards the US are seniors (31% consistently positive), men (27%) and residents of the Atlantic (33%).

F Index of attitude towards US



Strong distinction drawn between Bush and America as a whole

After eight years of a controversial president who many Canadians viewed as a threat to Canada and the world, Canadians are still not blaming the American people. When asked if George W. Bush had fairly represented the American people's will and

opinions on most issues or if Americans disagreed with policy choices made by Bush, the large majority felt that Americans did in fact disagree with Bush (77%). Less than one-in-ten (9%) of Canadians believe Bush fairly represented the Ameri-

cans and 14% said they didn't know.

Canadians across the country are united in this view, and older Canadians (84% among 65+) are even more likely than other Canadians to believe Americans and Bush disagree on policy choices.

Conservatives too close to US but not seen as effective

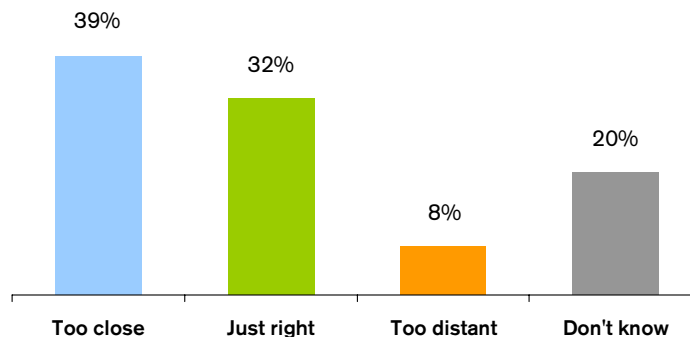
Five times as many Canadians view Stephen Harper and the Conservative government as having too close a relationship with the United States (39%) rather than too distant (8%). As we have seen elsewhere there is a consistent regional divide between central Canada and the Western provinces, with 48% of Quebecers and 41% of Ontarians saying Harper's government is too close to the United States, an uneasiness that is much less evident in British-Columbia, in Alberta or in the Prairies.

Despite this perceived proximity with the American government, the government has not been seen as effective in dealing with Bush and advancing Canada's interest. Three-fifths (58%) of respondents feel that Stephen Harper has not been effective (28% not effective at all) at dealing with the United States. Note that the strongest crit-

ics of Harper's effectiveness in dealing with Bush and advancing the country's interest

are Quebecers (65% not effective) and Ontarians (63% not effective).

Q In your opinion, is the Stephen Harper Conservative government's relationship with the United States...



Those that responded 'Too close'

Region	%
BC	33%
Alberta	25%
Prairies	34%
Ontario	41%
Quebec	48%
Atlantic	39%

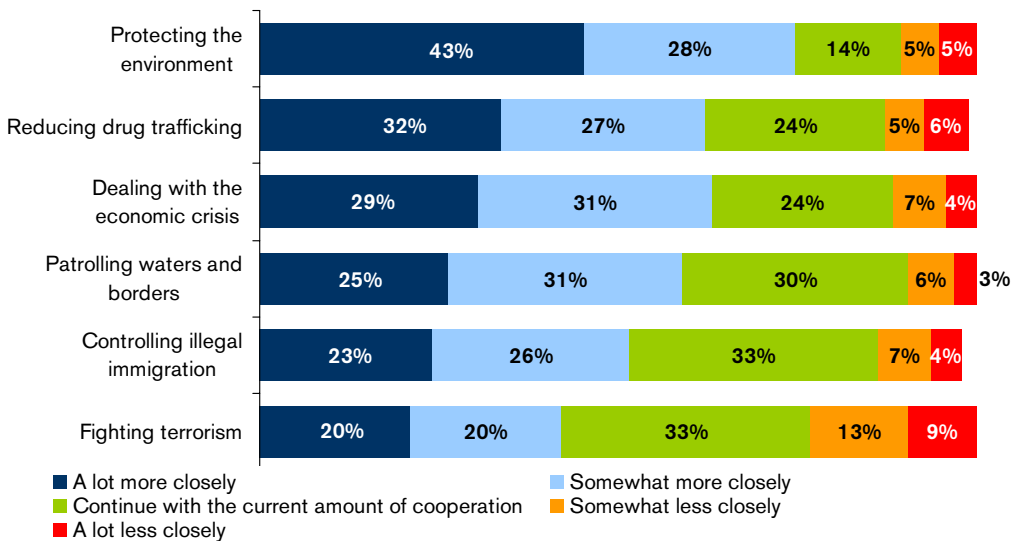
The Future of Canada-US Relations

Despite concerns, Canadians seek closer cooperation

Despite general concerns about the US and Canada's current relationship, when we turn to actual policies, Canadians seek closer cooperation. On central issues like protecting the environment (71%), reducing drug trafficking (59%), dealing with the economic crisis (60%) and patrolling waters and borders (56%), more than half of Canadians feel that Canada should be working more closely with the US.

What is particularly striking about these results is that while Canadians who consistently trust the US are more likely to support a closer relationship on any given measure, even the consistently anti-American respondents are more likely to state Canada should work more closely with the US rather than less closely on every measure.

Q Canada and the United States work together on a number of issues. On each of these issues, do you think Canada should work more closely with the US or less closely with the US or should Canada and the US continue with the current amount of cooperation?



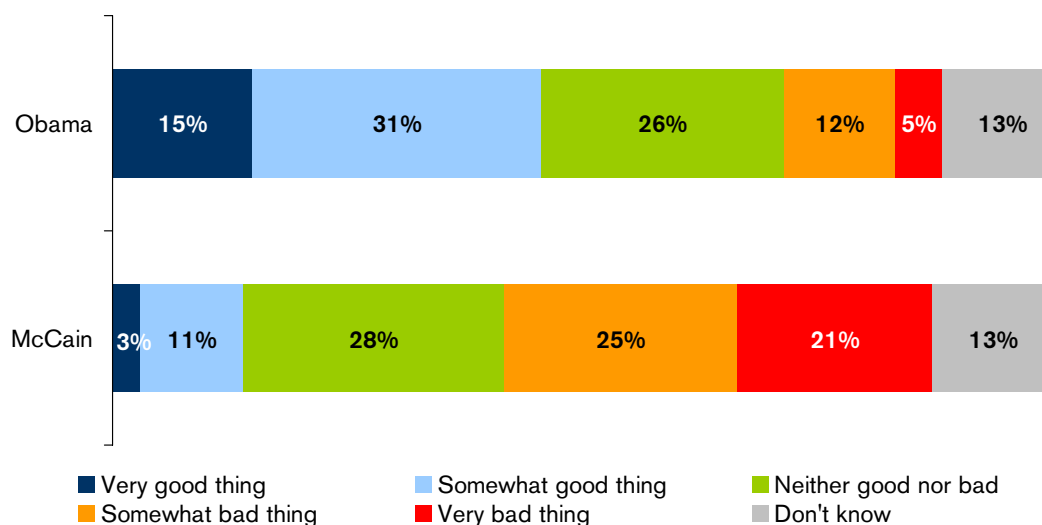
Note: Don't know not shown

Obama seen as change for the better

If Canadians could vote today in the US presidential election, Barack Obama would be able to claim victory with massive support (72%) from Canadians in every province. A small minority would support John McCain's bid (12%), and the remaining 16% would still be up for grabs (they said don't know, would not vote or would vote otherwise). Canadians have clear views of both candidates: Barack Obama is seen as an agent of change for the better, and John McCain as the continuation of the current presidency.

First, almost half of Canadians say an Obama presidency would be a good thing for Canada (46%) but only 17% said it would be bad for our country. On the contrary, a McCain victory is viewed as a good thing for Canada by a small number of Canadians (14%) and more than two-in-five (46%) say it would be a bad thing (with 21% even saying a very bad thing).

Q If Barack Obama / John McCain won the presidential election in the United States, do you think it would be a good thing or a bad thing for Canada?



Hopes and Fears for the New President

Trade top lists of Canadian fears of Obama and hopes for McCain

The hopes and fears of Canadians regarding the two presidential candidates are the mirror image of each other. Among Canadians who view Barack Obama's election as a change for the better, three items

define their hopes: ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (17%), improving the economy (15%) and improving the Canada-US relationship (10%).

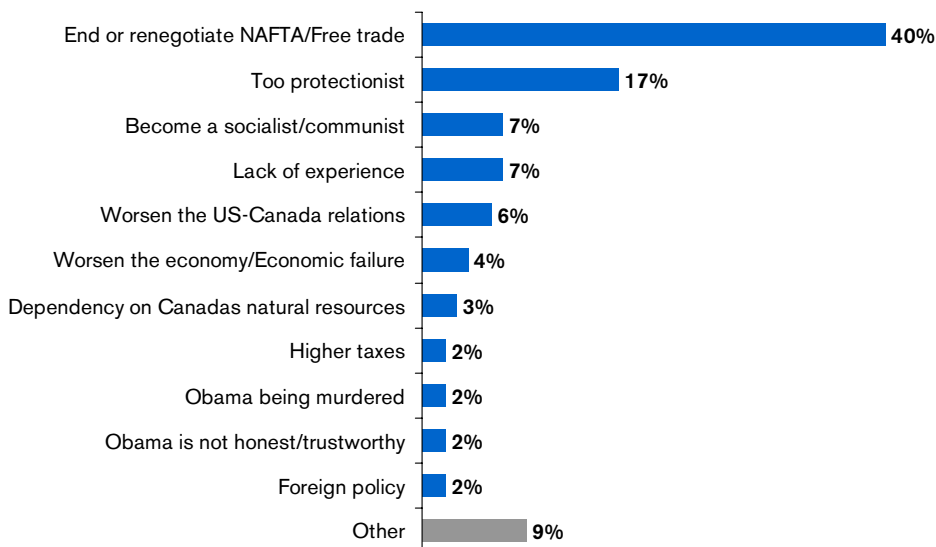
Among those who said an Obama vic-

tory would be bad for the country, the most frequent fear was that Obama would want to renegotiate NAFTA or end free trade (40% of mentions), which is probably the only issue among Canadians that is not in line with his image of change for the better. Note that fears about his lack of experience only accounted for 7% of the mentions.

When it comes to a McCain presidency, among those who said McCain would be a good thing for Canada, 19% said their biggest hope was that he would support NAFTA or free trade, 12% said he would improve the economy, 11% said he would improve the Canada-US relationship and 10% said he would end the war.

Among those who said McCain would be a bad thing for Canada, almost half of the mentions pertained to the continuation of Bush's presidency (26% said fear of a new war / continued war and 22% were explicit mentions of following Bush's steps). Note that a significant 13% of the mentions referred to the fear that he wouldn't outlast his term and be replaced by Sarah Palin.

Q Compared with the current US president George W. Bush would you say Barack Obama is better or worse at... (n=1026)



Note: Don't know (1%) not shown

Obama seen as change for the better across all issues

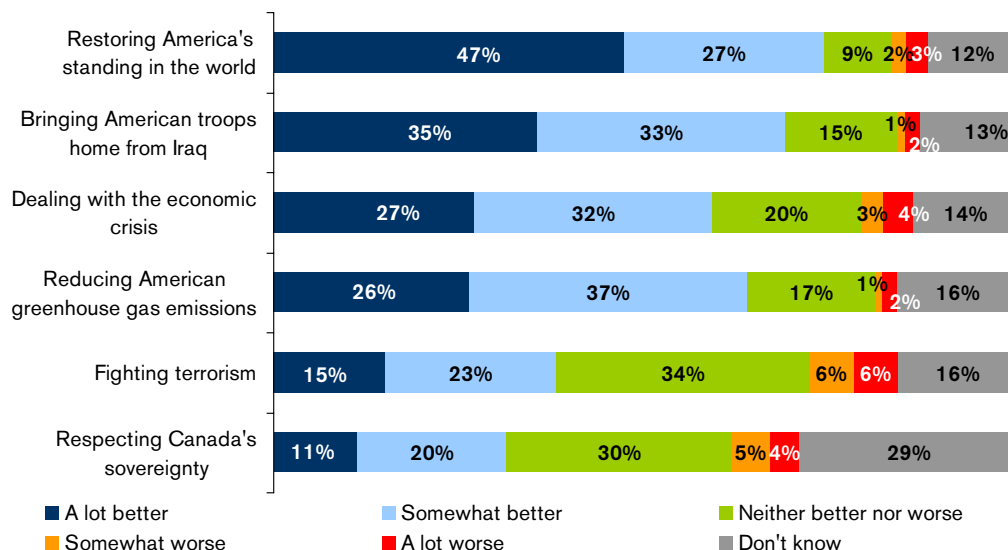
We also asked Canadians whether Barack Obama and John McCain would be better or worse than current president Bush on a number of issues. On most issues, Barack Obama received positive evaluations and Canadians said he would be doing better than George Bush. The most positive issues were restoring America's standing in the world (47% said he would do a lot better than Bush), bringing American troops home from Iraq (35% said a lot better) and dealing with the economic crisis (27% said a lot better).

John McCain's numbers on how he would perform compared to George W. Bush give us a better idea of how Canadians perceive him. On most issues, he is perceived as the 'more of the same' candidate, with half the respondents saying he would do neither better nor worse than Bush. Note two interesting exceptions, restoring America's standing in the world (33% better) and

dealing with the economic crisis (26% better) where he is more often perceived like

someone who would do a better job than Bush.

Q Compared with the current US president George W. Bush would you say Barack Obama is better or worse at... (n=1026)



The Border

Canadians believe the US has gone too far on border restrictions

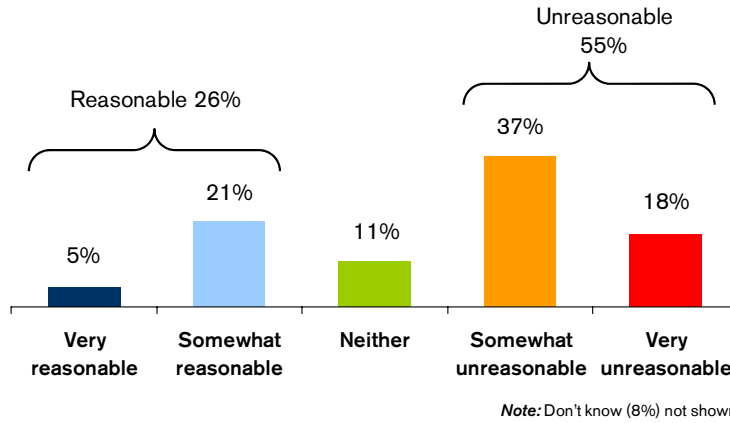
Generally speaking, the majority of Canadians (54%) say that Canada is doing a good job at securing our border. However, most say that our neighbours have gone too far in securing their side. As news stories mount over costly cross-border delays, two-thirds (67%) say that what they have read, seen or heard has told them that tougher restrictions at the US border are making it more difficult for Canadians to export goods to the US. Upon learning that experts agree that US restrictions have made things harder, 55% call tougher restrictions at the border “unreasonable”.

The minority of Canadians who say that Canada is doing a “bad job” at securing our borders are more likely to characterize the US’s tougher restrictions as “reasonable” (35% vs. 24%). Canadians in Alberta and Quebec are the most likely to think that Canada is doing a “bad job” (41%), and Quebecers are less likely

than other Canadians to call the US decision on tougher restrictions at the border

“unreasonable” (46% vs. 58%).

Q In fact, most experts agree that new US restrictions have been making it more difficult for Canadians to export goods to the US. Do you think the US decision to create tougher restrictions at the border is reasonable or unreasonable?



Those that responded 'Unreasonable'

Region	%
BC	61%
Alberta	53%
Prairies	62%
Ontario	59%
Quebec	46%
Atlantic	48%

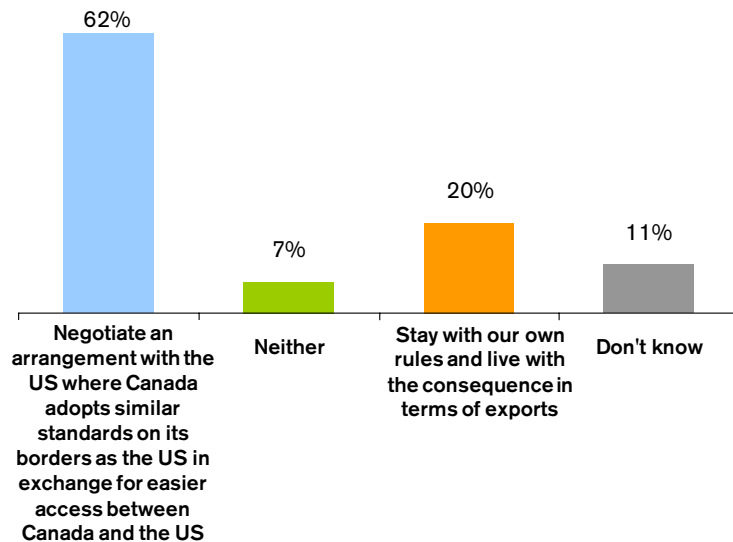
Canadians amenable to strengthening border security in exchange for easier access to US markets

How should Canada respond to the US's “unreasonable” approach? Although most

Canadians are comfortable with our current level of security, three-in-five (62%) would

agree to intensify our own standards in exchange for easier access to US markets. Only one-in-five (20%) would stay with our own rules and live with the consequences in terms of exports.

Q Assuming for a moment that the US is not likely to reduce its current border restrictions, which approach do you think Canada should take in response to the problem of new US restrictions making it more difficult for Canadians to export goods to the US?



Those that responded 'Negotiate...'

Age	%
18-34	57%
35-44	61%
45-64	65%
65+	68%

Stephen Harper has told Canadians that he would like to work with the U.S. administration to find ways to ease the restrictions for Canadians that cause costly cross-border delays. Building support for a negotiated agreement with the US that hinges on our adoption of US-style security standards may require convincing Canadians that our relationship with the US is healthy. The perception of healthy distance between Stephen Harper and the United States may be a factor in deciding support for this trade negotiation. Canadians who believe that Stephen Harper's Conservative government's relationship with the states is “too close” are less likely to want to negotiate with the US (52%) than those who believe the relationship is just right (76%) or too distant (78%).

The Arctic

Canadians have little faith in the US as a partner in Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic

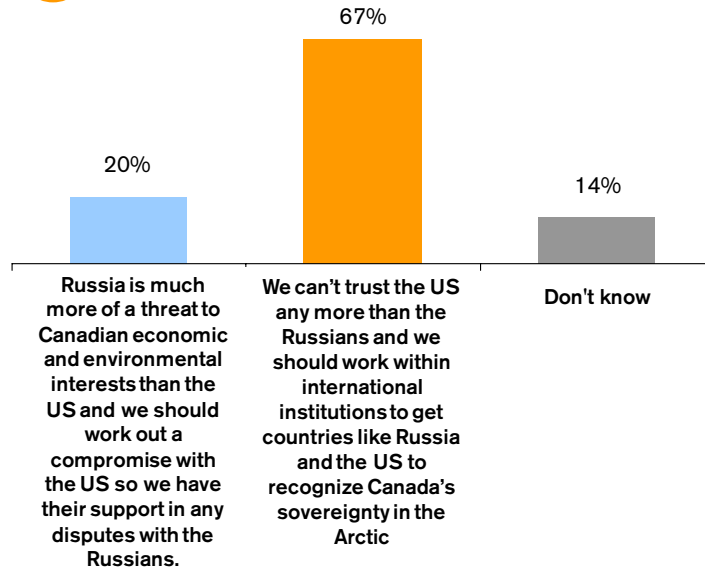
The majority of Canadians think it's unlikely that Canada can reach an agreement with either Russia or the US to recognize Canadian sovereignty in the North. Indeed, two-thirds (67%) of Canadians take the view that we can't trust the US any more than the Russians when it comes to Canadian sovereignty.

Rather than work out a compromise with the US to gain their support in the face of threats to Canadian interests, Canadians favour working within international institutions to get countries like Russia and the US to recognize Canada's sovereignty. Canadians who don't trust Mr. Harper's relationship with the US are much more likely to put their faith in international organizations to safeguard Canada's interests in the Arctic. 80% of those who believe that Mr. Harper has been ineffective in dealing with Bush, and 83% of those who feel the Can-

ada-US relationship is "too close", say they would prefer to work within international

institutions on the question of Arctic sovereignty.

Q When it comes to Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, which of these statements is closest to your view?



Those that responded 'We can't trust the US any more...'

Region	%
BC	69%
Alberta	61%
Prairies	64%
Ontario	71%
Quebec	65%
Atlantic	56%

Canadians prefer to "go-it-alone" to protect Canadian waters

While two-thirds of Canadians say they would prefer to work with international institutions to protect Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic, when it comes to the real question of control of the Northwest Passage, very few are willing to surrender decision-making powers to international bodies. In fact, a plurality of Canadians would rather "go-it-alone" and unilaterally assert sovereignty in the Northwest Passage rather than negotiate with the US or leave the matter to international organizations.

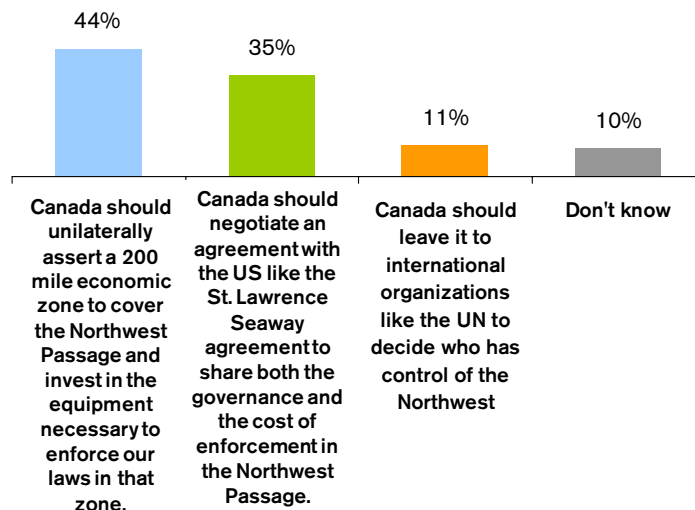
More than two-thirds (68%) of Canadians claim some level of awareness of the Northwest Passage. Following a description of the geography of the Northwest Passage and Canada's position that the waterway is Canadian, 44% endorse the view that Canada should unilaterally assert a 200 mile economic zone to cover the Northwest Passage and invest in the equipment necessary to enforce our laws in that zone. 35% would support the idea that we should enter a deal with the US to share the governance and the cost of enforcement in the Northwest Passage, while only 11% would leave the decision in the hands of international organizations. Relinquishing

decision-making power vis-à-vis the Northwest Passage to international institutions is even the least popular approach among Canadians who support the view that we can't trust the US any more than the Russians when it comes to Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic (13%). 52% of this group support a unilateral assertion of sov-

ereignty, while 3-in-10 would negotiate shared control with the US.

Canadians living in Alberta, Quebec and the Atlantic are more polarized on the question of Northwest Passage control. Similar proportions would work out an agreement with the US as take unilateral action over the seaway.

Q The Northwest Passage is a route through the Canadian Arctic that connects the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. The US has argued it is an international waterway while Canada has argued it is Canadian waters. Which of the following is closest to your view?



Those that responded 'Canada should unilaterally assert...'

Region	%
BC	51%
Alberta	42%
Prairies	54%
Ontario	45%
Quebec	37%
Atlantic	38%
Gender	%
Male	48%
Female	40%

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About this Study

The Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute (CDFAI) commissioned Innovative Research Group Inc. (INNOVATIVE) to conduct a national online poll of Canadians to explore issues surrounding the topic of CDFAI's Annual Conference.

The survey focuses on the following areas:

1. Canada in the World
2. Current Perceptions of the Canada-US Relationship
3. The Future of Canada-US Relations
4. Hopes and Fears for the New President
5. The Border
6. The Arctic

The online survey was conducted among current members of the INNOVATIVE's Canada 20/20 panel from October 16th, 2008 to October 21st, 2008. The Canada 20/20 Panel is recruited from a wide variety of sources to be representative of the known distribution of Canadians by age, gender, region and language. Each survey is administered to a series of randomly selected sub samples of the panel and weighted according to Census data to ensure that the sample is representative of the age, gender, region and language breakdown of the Canadian population to provide results that are intended to approximate a probability sample. Each panelist is provided with a unique URL in their invitation so that only invited panel members are able to complete any specific survey. Each URL can only be used to complete one survey.

The weighted total sample included 1,358 responses eligible for inclusion in our analysis. There were over samples in BC, Alberta and Ontario which bring the total sample to 2,033. An unweighted probability sample of 1,358 would have an estimated margin of error of ± 2.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error will be larger within each sub-grouping of the sample.