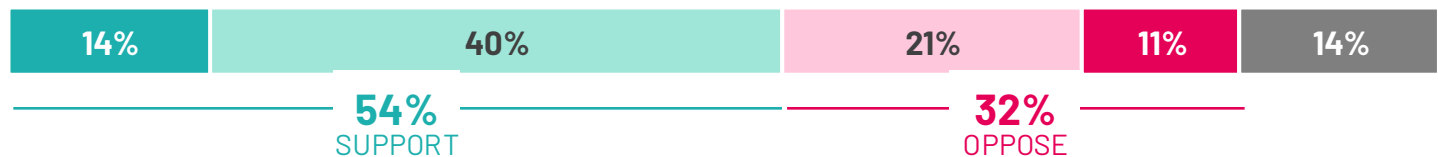


SLIM MAJORITY OF CANADIANS (54%) SUPPORT STRONGER TRADE TIES WITH CHINA

JANUARY 9 | 2026

SLIGHT MAJORITY SUPPORT CLOSER TRADE TIES WITH CHINA

Strongly Support Somewhat Support Somewhat Oppose Strongly Oppose Don't Know



When it comes to where to pursue more international trade deals, support for pursuing trade deals with China is soft, with just over half of Canadians (54%) expressing support for closer trade ties and economic agreements with this country. However, these most recent results are a departure from data collected [in](#)

[2020](#), during the “two Michaels” incident, which showed that eight in 10 wanted to rely less on trade with China. The current numbers reflect a growing recognition that Canada should diversify its trading relationships amid uncertainty in its relationship with the United States.

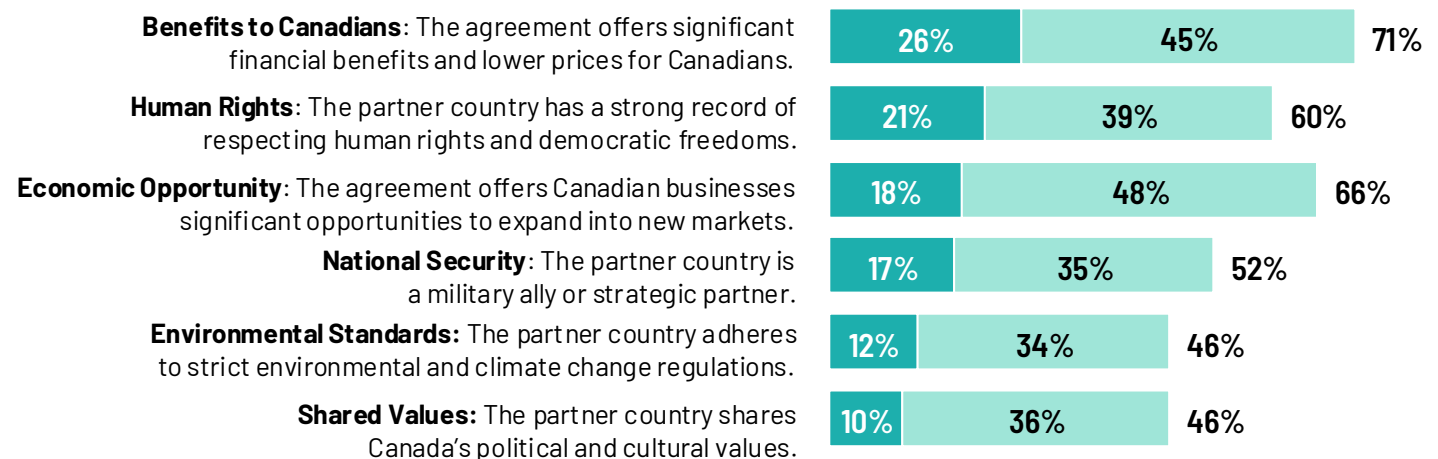
MOST CANADIANS PRIORITIZE DIRECT BENEFITS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN NEW TRADE DEALS

Besides general benefits to Canadians such as lower prices, Canadians prioritize human rights and economic opportunities in new trade deals. Economic opportunity, in fact, ranks above human rights when

critical and very important are considered together. In contrast, environmental standards ranks second last in terms of being critical, tied with shared values when critical and very important are considered together.

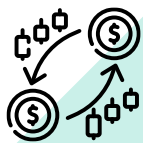
When the Government of Canada is negotiating new trade agreements with other nations, how important should each of the following factors be in the decision-making process?

Critically Important (Deal-breaker) Very Important Total Important



VALUES REMAIN IMPORTANT, WHILE PROTECTIONISM SEES LITTLE SUPPORT

Which of the following statements comes closest to your personal view regarding Canada's international trade strategy?



25%

Values-Based Trade: Canada should only pursue trade agreements with countries that share our values on democracy and human rights, even if it means slower economic growth.



19%

Selective Engagement: Canada should trade with countries with different values, but only if we use that trade leverage to push for human rights improvements.



18%

Pragmatic Trade: Canada should trade with any country that offers mutual economic benefits, regardless of their domestic politics or human rights records.



16%

Protectionism: Canada should not be focused on pursuing new trade partners, but rather should focus on producing goods domestically and focus on reducing reliance on all foreign trade partners.



21%

Don't know enough to say

Despite shared values being among the least critical aspects of any new trade deal, a quarter of Canadians continue to want to see the federal government pursue trade based on the shared values of democracy and human rights.

Nonetheless, around four in 10 (37%) Canadians say that we should pursue either selective engagement – leveraging trade to pursue human rights, or pragmatic trade – putting mutual economic benefits first. Only 16% of Canadians want Canada to follow the path of protectionism, the path being followed by the current U.S. approach.

Finally, one in five Canadians don't know enough to have a point of view.

All told, the data suggests that renewed interest in trade with China does not necessarily mean carte blanche in the way it is approached. What has changed is not Canadians' values, but their tolerance for trade-offs to foster non-U.S. agreements. The challenge for the Prime Minister will be how he navigates the desire Canadians have for greater trade with the degree to which Canadians are prepared to compromise in order to do so.

About This Study

ABOUT THE STUDY

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between December 5 and 11, 2025 as part of our [Trump, Tariffs, and Turmoil](#) syndicated study. For this survey, a sample of n=2,001 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online, via the Ipsos I-Say panel and non-panel sources, and respondents earn a nominal incentive for their participation. Quotas and weighting were employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos polls which include non-probability sampling is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 2.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. Ipsos abides by the disclosure standards established by the CRIC, found here: <https://canadianresearchinsightscouncil.ca/standards/>

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