

For all but one of these concerns, a majority of the public expect that these outcomes are likely under a free trade deal. The exception to this generally positive outlook is that less than half the public (45%) expect that the trade agreement will be fair and equitable for both countries.

- o Two-thirds expect that consumer prices will be lower, but only a third (34%) anticipate higher incomes;
- o Less than half (46%) expect American companies to close their plants, a perception which has not changed significantly since June;
- o Another issue about which the majority appear pessimistic concerns the question of independence. Two-thirds expect that our economy will become so closely tied to the United States that we will lose our ability to make our own decisions, a view which has grown marginally since the June survey. The majority also feel that the Canadian government will be restricted in its ability to provide help to business (70%), and that American companies will buy more control of Canadian companies (77%);
- o Related to the notion of a loss of control, is the perception that American influence over our culture will increase (72%) and Canada and the United States will become more similar (82%);
- o With regard to specific industries, expectations are positive for wood and paper, fish, and oil and gas as roughly two-thirds of the population expect sales to increase in these industries; and
- o The public's outlook on the automobile industry is grim, as fully two-thirds believe that jobs will be lost to the United States. Expectations for banks and insurance companies are also pessimistic as close to two-thirds (63%) think these companies will lose business to American competition.

In order to determine which of these possible outcomes have the most impact on the public's overall assessment of a free trade deal as good or bad, a technique known as multiple regression was employed. The key findings are as follows:

1. The single most important factor affecting people's assessment of free trade is whether the agreement will be fair and equitable for both countries. Those who think this outcome is likely are more inclined to support the idea of free trade. Previous research suggests, however, that Canadians do not necessarily expect that the two countries will benefit equally and, rather, are more concerned about whether or not the deal is a good one for Canada.
2. The second most important factor affecting support for free trade is the question of whether our economy will become so closely tied to the American economy that we lose our ability to make our own decisions.