

4. Canada and the U.S. -- who got the better deal and how will bilateral relations be affected

Canadians are strongly of the view that the Americans "got a better deal than Canada," with 61% holding this view. A further 28% feel that the deal is fair and balanced for both countries, while 7% say that "Canada got a better deal than the Americans."

Ontarians (68%) and those respondents residing in the balance of Ontario in particular (70%) are more likely to think that the Americans "got a better deal" than Canada. Canadians may not necessarily think, however, that any other outcome would have been achievable in light of the relative strengths of the two countries. This is reflected in findings showing that a significant proportion of those who favour free trade also view the Americans' bargaining ability and performance more favourably. In this context, the more relevant question in terms of public support is whether the agreement is perceived as a good one for Canada in and of itself, quite apart from questions of the relative attractiveness of the deal for Canada and the United States.

Canadians were also asked whether they feel Canada's overall relations with the United States would be better, worse, or about the same because a free trade agreement was reached. Results show that more than eight-in-ten Canadians believe that relations will either improve (41%) or stay the same (43%), while only 15% expect relations to worsen. Once again, Ontario residents (21%) are somewhat more likely to expect that relations will be worse. Not surprisingly, those who support the agreement are more apt to expect a positive effect on bilateral relations with those opposed more likely to expect a negative effect. Overall, however, the predominate view among Canadians is that the agreement will either have a positive or at worst neutral effect on Canada's relations with the U.S.