

VIII. International Trade

An overwhelming majority of Canadians (93%) believe that promoting international trade should be a foreign policy priority.¹⁶ Furthermore, a majority (52%) want increased government spending in this area. In fact, promoting international trade is seen by Canadians to be the most deserving of more spending of the seven international spending areas tested in this study. In addition, while trade activities are considered less important by Canadians than the pursuit of international peace and environmental protection (see Figure 2), trade is nonetheless considered to be as important or even more important than promoting human rights, defending Canada, or participating in the UN.

The United States figures highly among the countries which Canadians expect will offer the most competition to Canada in the next decade. As Figure 22 shows, the United States (22%) and Japan (18%) top the list of future competitors, which also includes China (14%) and Asia (14%). Almost one half of all Canadians (48%) mention Asia or an Asian country as Canada's major trade competitor in the future. Despite the advent of NAFTA and the political debate surrounding that trade accord, there is little sense among Canadians that Mexico and Latin America pose a significant trade threat to Canada - only 7% identify that region of the world as our most important future competitor. What is perhaps more surprising is that only 6% of Canadians see Western Europe as a major trade competitor in the future.

Figure 22



¹⁶ Please refer to Figure 2 on page 12 of this report.