

DATA DIVE WITH NIK NANOS

# THE CURRENT CANADA-U.S. RELATIONSHIP IS BUILT ON CONTRADICTIONS

Canadians can separate long-term national interest from short-term political anger

OPINION

Nik Nanos is the chief data scientist at Nanos Research, a research associate professor at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University and the official pollster for The Globe and Mail and CTV News.

Canadians are ripping mad at the United States. By the standards of modern polling, that anger is unusually deep and widespread. Yet even in this moment, Canadians still see the economic upside of trading with the United States.

The views people have of Americans have had their ups and downs, but the reality is that the long-term public-opinion default is one of positivity, but grounded in an anxiety of living beside an economic superpower whose economy is about 13 times larger than Canada's in nominal terms, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

When America sneezes, Canada catches a cold.

Today it's not a sneeze. It's a U.S. administration playing extreme economic hardball with their northern neighbour — a neighbour who coincidentally fought shoulder to shoulder with America in the Great War, the Second World War, the Korean War, the Gulf War and the war in Afghanistan. Canadians responded to help stranded Americans after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and helped the escape of American hostages in Iran back in 1980. It is a storied past of good neighbours with an open, peaceful border, working together to create jobs and prosperity for both countries.

Today is a different story, at least from the vantage point of average Canadians. Research by Nanos for The Globe and Mail suggests that fully three-quarters of Canadians disagree, to one extent or another, that the U.S. is a trustworthy ally, with a significant 49 per cent "strongly disagreeing." Only one in five Canadians believe (9 per cent agree and another 33 per cent somewhat agree) that the U.S. is a trustworthy ally. Two out of three Canadians (67 per cent) say that they are concerned that the United States and President Donald Trump threaten Canada's security. That level of concern rises to three-quarters of women and 73 per cent of those over 55 years of age.

The previously unthinkable fear that the U.S. will order an invasion of Canada is now being considered by some Canadians. While half dismiss the idea outright, one in five Canadians (21 per cent) believe it is likely

to some extent.

According to the survey, 51 per cent of Canadians report cancelling travel plans to the United States. Seventy-six per cent say they are avoiding purchasing U.S. goods. Forty-five per cent are conveying their displeasure to their American friends and family, and more than one in three Canadians (36 per cent) are showing more patriotism.

Anger at the U.S. is reshaping Canada's traditional global trade instincts. Canadians, once sour on Canada-China trade, are warming up. Back in December, 2020, only 10 per cent of Canadians wanted to increase trade

with China. Fast forward and now that appetite has more than quadrupled; now, 41 per cent want more trade with China.

The conclusion is that when Canadians feel they are being pushed away by America, it opens new opportunities for other big economies like China, India and Europe.

Prime Minister Mark Carney has called this a rupture. Could it be a rupture? Perhaps. Is it a rupture? The research shows not yet.

Canadians still very clearly see benefits of trade with the United States. A survey for the Business Council of Canada shows that

eight in 10 people say trade agreements with the U.S. and Mexico have had a positive impact on the Canadian economy (42 per cent say positive, while another 39 per cent of respondents say somewhat positive). Also of note, about eight in 10 assert that the trade agreements between the U.S., Canada and Mexico have had a positive (37 per cent) or somewhat positive (42 per cent) impact on the overall financial well-being of Canadians.

Almost nine in 10 Canadians say the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) is important (50 per cent) or somewhat important (37 per cent) to the overall financial well-being of Canadians. A similar number say preserving USMCA is important (49 per cent) or somewhat important (37 per cent) to the Canadian economy.

A significant 86 per cent of Canadians support (56 per cent) or somewhat support (30 per cent) Prime Minister Mark Carney negotiating a renewed trade agreement with the United States and Mexico.

At the same time that most Canadians are angry and want to lash out, most still want a renewed trade deal. There are numerous key insights in this seemingly contradictory environment.

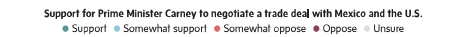
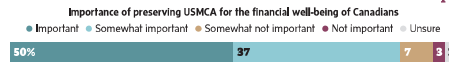
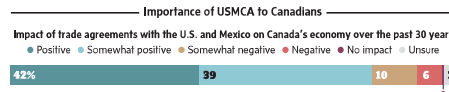
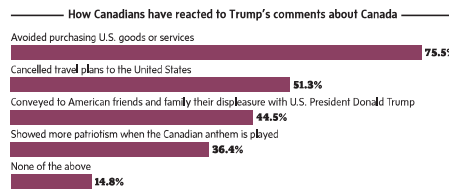
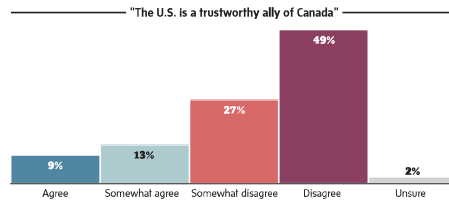
Canadians can separate long-term national interest from short-term political anger. Likewise, having a renewed trade agreement with the U.S. and Mexico is not mutually exclusive to building more trade partnerships outside of North America.

The Canadian mood is not one of retreat, but of advance. Canadians want a trade agreement with the U.S., and, at the same time, they want new and stronger trade relationships outside of the United States.

Even as Canadians sour on America, they are clear-eyed about the prosperity that North American free trade has brought to themselves as individuals and to the country as a whole.

The wild card in landing a trade agreement may very well be domestic politics in Canada and the United States. For a trade deal to move forward, the Canadian and American governments need to feel they have political licence from their citizens. Citizens on both sides of the border need to believe that co-operation benefits both countries.

## Angry with the neighbour



Note: Numbers may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

MURAT YÜKSELIR / THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: WORLD BANK, NANOS RESEARCH

## Emergency departments are the lighthouses of our health care system

BRIAN GOLDMAN

OPINION

Emergency physician in Toronto, and host of *White Coat, Black Art* on CBC Radio One. His latest book is *The Casino Shift: Stories from an ER on the Edge*.

Lighthouses have been around since the reign of Pharaohs in Egypt. The earliest recorded of these, the lighthouse of Alexandria, stood over a hundred metres tall and used a fire at the top to guide ships to safe passage. Today, they've been updated with powerful LED lights and foghorns that switch on automatically based on light sensors.

Emergency departments are like lighthouses. They serve as a safe harbour for critically ill patients. They're a safety net for the close to six million Canadians who lack primary care as well as people who are unhouseed or who have substance use disorders. They are meant to be open every hour of every day, no matter what.

These days, the light in the lighthouse is like a flickering bulb. The signs can be seen at ERs across Canada.

As a 40-year veteran of emergency medicine, I can remember

when closing the ER was never supposed to happen. Last year, a Globe and Mail investigation found that since 2019, at least 24 per cent of Canadian ERs either closed suddenly on a short-term basis or had a planned long-term reduction in hours. Those closings added up to 1.4 million hours in which the light in the lighthouse was off.

In 2026, ER closings are being reported in every province across the country. Emergency departments that manage to remain open despite the challenges have begun to lose their safe harbour status. Increasingly, it feels like I'm reading reports of sick patients suffering cardiac arrest while spending hours in the waiting room.

It's the knock-on effect of a lack of acute care hospital beds. Stretchers in the emergency department are occupied by admitted patients who can't be brought to the wards because their beds are full.

I know many ER colleagues who start the day shift with just one or two open stretchers available to see and treat every critically ill patient who arrives by ambulance, by car or on foot.

The reasons behind these increasingly daily occurrences are well known. There aren't enough hospital beds and long-term care homes for older patients and es-

pecially those with complex needs. There aren't enough primary-care providers, forcing unattached patients to visit the ER instead.

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Canada needs to learn from other countries. Denmark provides primary care to nearly all its population through a mandatory enrolment program. It means everyone eligible for health care in Denmark is assigned to a GP without having to look for one.

There are proven ways to keep the light on in the lighthouse. We need more hospitals, more long-term care homes, and more front-line health care providers. Canada needs to learn from other countries. Denmark provides primary care to nearly all its population through a mandatory enrolment program. It gives family doctors who work in small, rural ERs a precious night-off by replacing them with experienced, albeit remote, ER specialists. It also ensures access for patients. When they register at these small ERs, an independent nurse assesses them, then connects the patient with a virtual ER physician by phone or tablet.

The program is still in its infancy. So far, VERRA has been successful at giving hard-working family doctors a night off while maintaining patient safety.

To help keep the ER lighthouse from flickering out, ERs need innovative thinking like that. They also need the provinces to understand that a health care system cannot function without a lighthouse.