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For First Time, Majority of Mexicans Hold Unfavorable View of United States

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US-Mexico relations have hit a rough patch since the election of Donald Trump in the United States, and not just at the diplomatic level. Today, Mexican public opinion of the United States is at a record low according to Buendía & Laredo polling, and Mexicans say the United States and Mexico are working at odds on a variety of key issues.

At the same time, a December 2017 Chicago Council Survey shows that American views of Mexico remain positive since the election of Donald Trump, and are up sharply from all-time lows in 2013. With NAFTA negotiations soon to enter their sixth round, majorities among both Mexican and US publics believe that NAFTA has been good for their respective economies.

Two in Three Mexicans Have Unfavorable View of United States

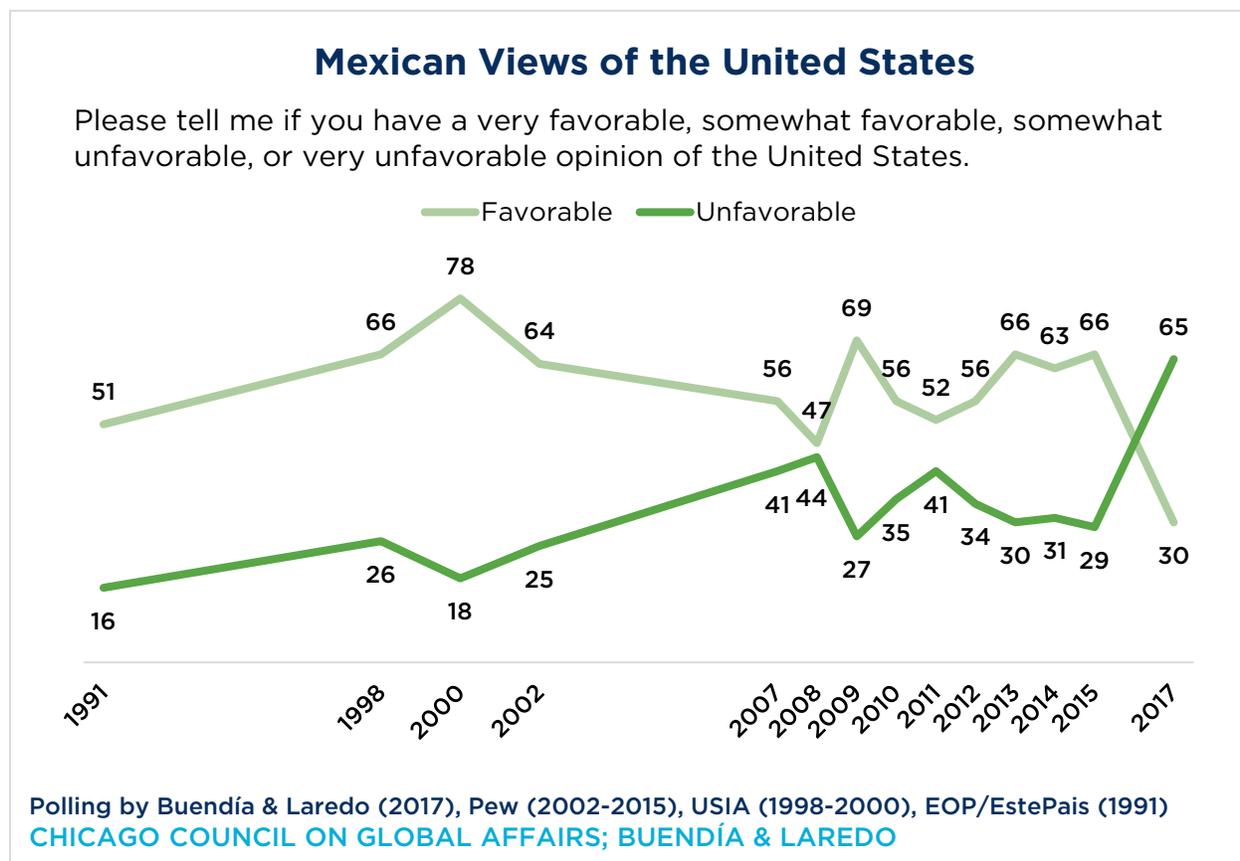
Donald Trump began his presidential campaign with insults against Mexico and Mexicans alike. He complained that Mexico is "killing us at the border and killing us on jobs and trade"¹ and said that "when Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. ...They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists."² As president, things have not improved much; in a call with Mexican president Enrique

¹ ["Here Are All the Times Donald Trump Insulted Mexico."](#) Katie Reilly, TIME. August 31, 2016.

² ["Donald Trump's Presidential Announcement Speech."](#) June 16, 2015.

Peña Nieto, Trump focused on ‘tough hombres’ and threatened tariffs against Mexican imports.³

Such statements have had a sharp impact on Mexican public opinion, with Mexican views of the United States plunging since 2015. Today, two in three Mexicans (65%) express an unfavorable view of the United States, while just three in ten (30%) have a favorable view. This represents a stunning reversal of opinion from 2015, when the two in three (66%) had a favorable view of the United States and three in ten (29%) had unfavorable views.



In addition, 61 percent in Mexico say that bilateral relations are worsening, and majorities of Mexicans now say that the United States and Mexico are working in different directions on securing the US-Mexico border (76%), trade and economic development (74%), combating organized crime in Mexico (58%), and combating the trafficking of illegal drugs (51%). In fact, according to a January 2017 Parametria survey,⁴ a majority in Mexico favor closer ties with countries in Latin America (55%) rather than maintaining closer ties with the United States (32%). This marks a change from 2014, when slightly more Mexicans preferred a closer relationship with the United States (47%) than Latin America (41%). GlobeScan/PPC data also finds six in ten Mexicans say that the United States has a negative influence in the world (59%),

³ [Transcript: Conversation with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto](#). August 3, 2017.

⁴ [“Nacionalismo como un acto de defensa.”](#) February 3, 2017.

five percentage points more than say the same for North Korea (54%).⁵ Only Pakistan (65% negative), Iran (64%), and Israel (63%) were perceived to be more negative in international influence.



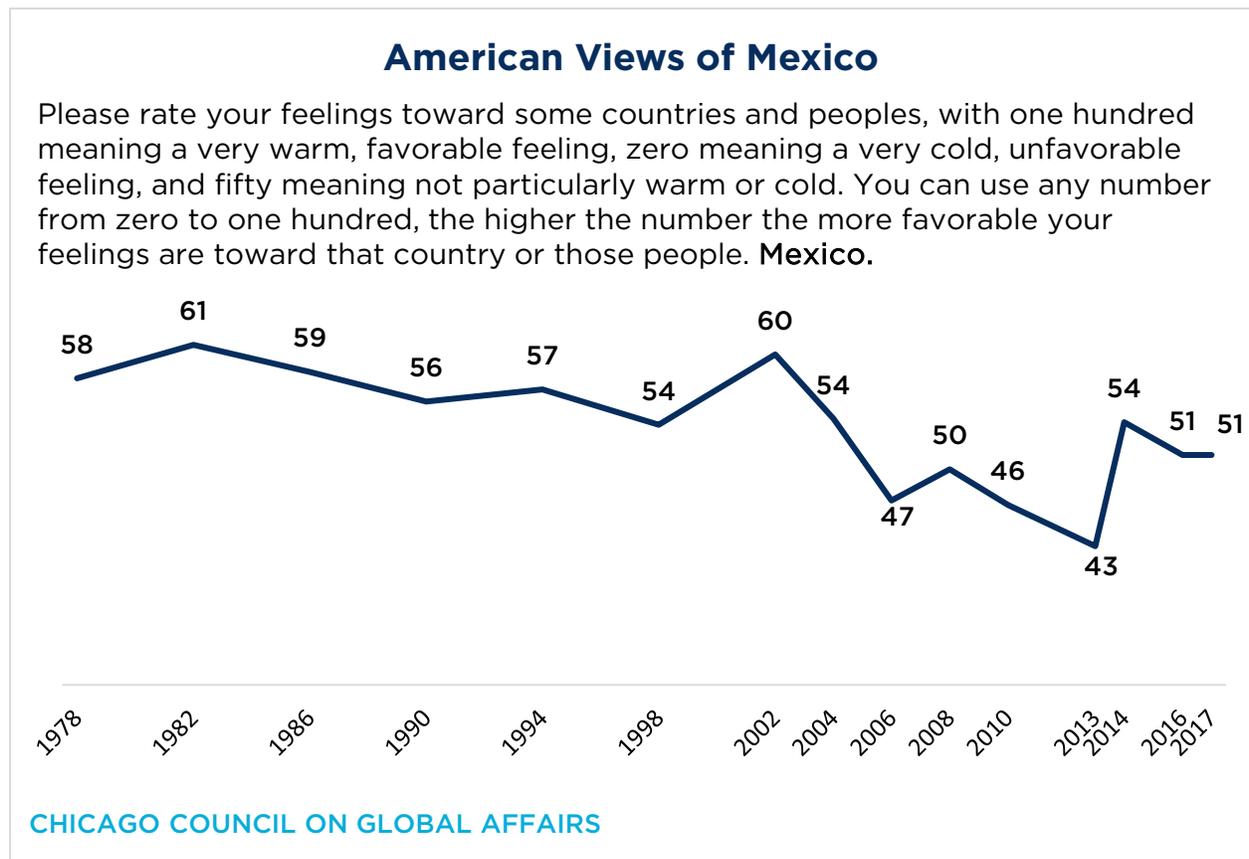
US survey conducted June 10-27, 2016. Mexico survey conducted September 30 to October 7, 2017.

No doubt much of this pessimism is related to Mexican impressions of President Trump and his policies. Buendía & Laredo results find that among the Mexicans that know or have heard of President Trump (85%), the vast majority (89%) have a negative opinion of him. At the same time, a December 2017 Parametria survey found that Mexicans make a distinction between President Trump and the American people, with 46 percent holding favorable views of Americans and 45 percent holding unfavorable views. The overall figure is more positive than November 2004, when a plurality of Mexicans held negative views of Americans (43% unfavorable, 33% favorable).

⁵ [“Sharp Drop in World Views of US, UK: Global Poll.”](#) July 4, 2017.

American Views of Mexico Remain Slightly Warm

In contrast to Mexican views of their northern neighbor, American views of Mexico are more positive now than they were several years ago. The most recent Chicago Council data finds Americans giving Mexico an average rating of 51 degrees on a scale of 0 to 100, with 0 being a very unfavorable view and 100 being a very favorable feeling. This is unchanged from 2016 and up sharply from an all-time low of 43 degrees in 2013, when news reports were dominated by images of the violence of the ongoing drug war in Mexico. Surveys from Pew⁶ and Gallup⁷ show a similar shift in American views over the past several years, with American attitudes towards Mexico rebounding from low points.



US survey conducted December 1-3, 2017.

Americans' relatively positive views of Mexico could be seen as a rejection of the president's harsh statements about immigrants from Mexico and his desire to build a wall between the United States and Mexico. This is suggested by surveys that have consistently found a majority of Americans opposed to the idea of expanding the fencing at the border, especially among self-described Democrats (who also express

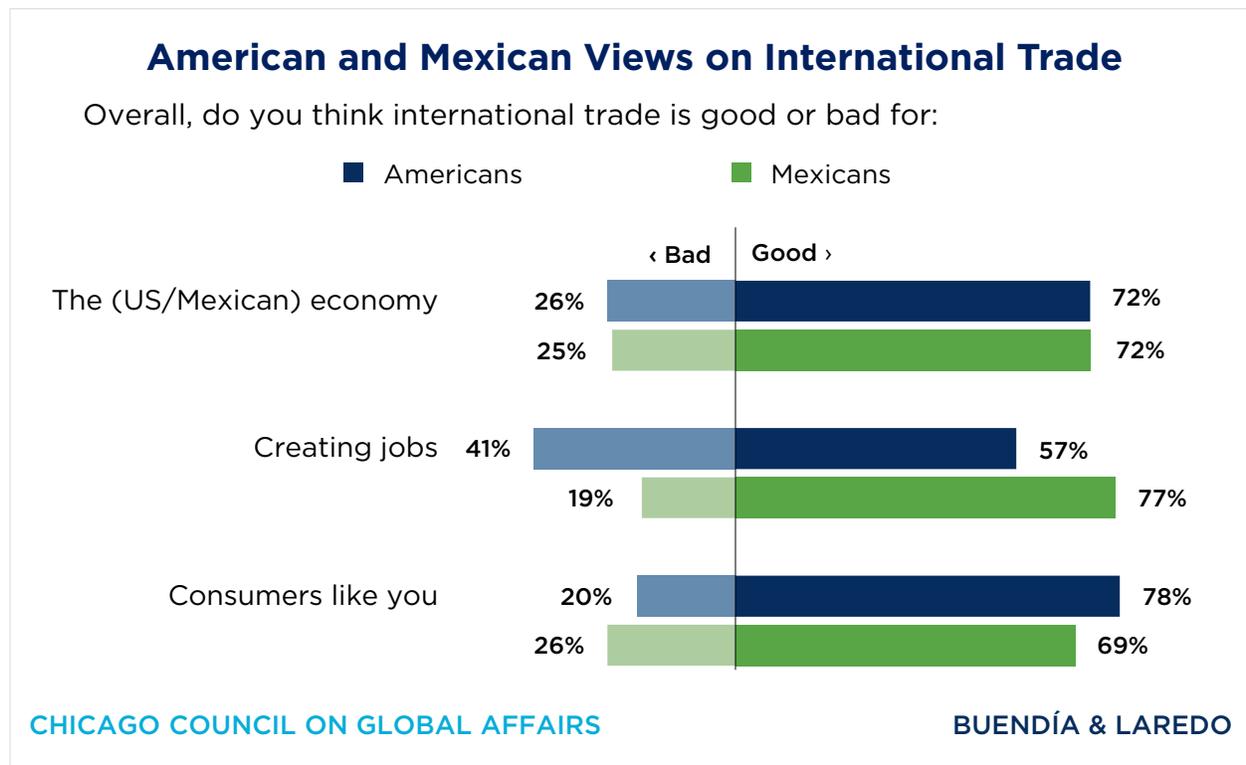
⁶ "[How Americans, Mexicans see each other differs for those closer to border.](#)" Hanyu Chwe. October 25, 2017.

⁷ "[Americans' Favorable Views of Mexico Highest Since 2006.](#)" Justin McCarthy. February 22, 2017.

more favorable views of Mexico than Republicans).⁸ The 2016 Chicago Council Survey also found that Americans had grown more positive toward Mexican immigrants (59% favorable, up from 55% in 2013).⁹ On a related issue, the 2017 survey also found a record high 65 percent of Americans favoring a path to citizenship for undocumented workers in the United States, many of whom are of Mexican descent.

Shared Positive Views of International Trade

While the bilateral relationship has clearly been tested since the election of Donald Trump, one issue that majorities on both sides of the border seem to agree is on the benefits of international trade. Majorities of Americans and Mexicans say that international trade is good for their nations' economies (72% each). Both Americans (78%) and Mexicans (69%) say international trade is good for consumers like them. And three in four Mexicans (77%) say that international trade is good for creating jobs in Mexico, while a smaller majority of Americans (57%) say the same about job creation in the United States.

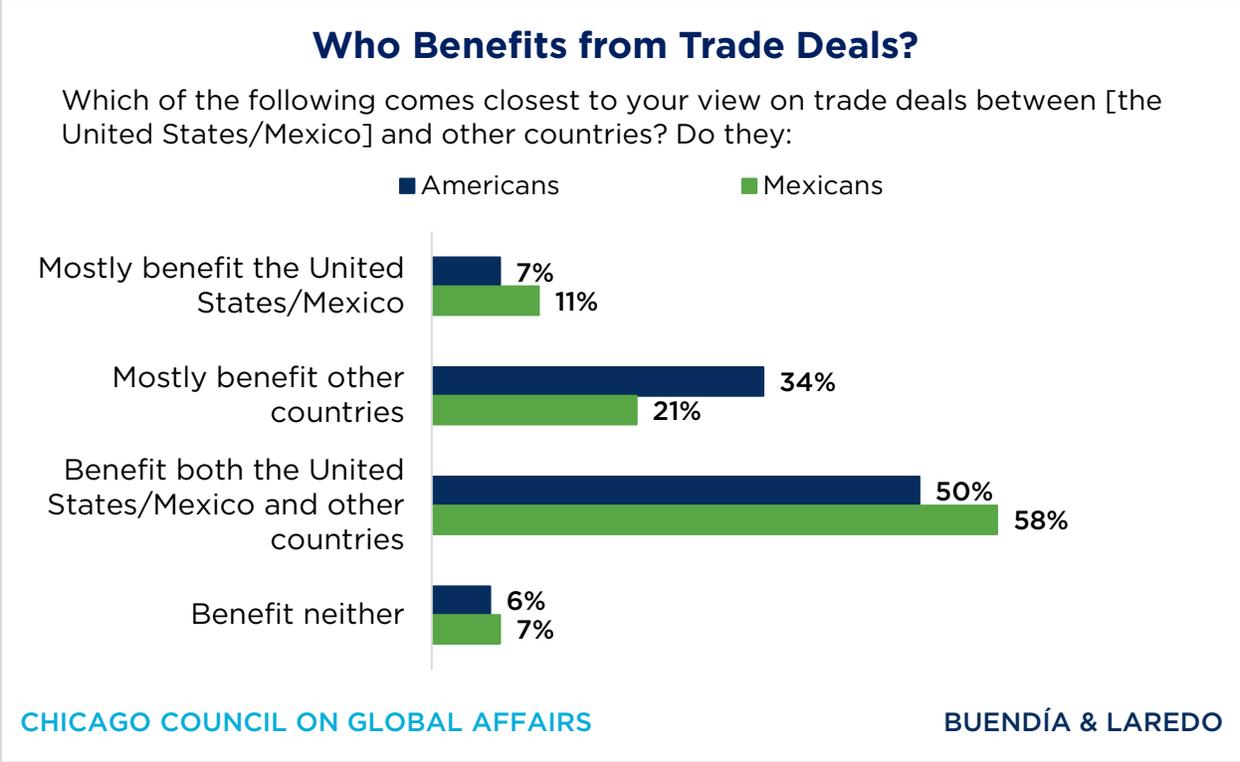


US survey conducted June 27 to July 19, 2017. Mexico survey conducted September 30 to October 7, 2017.

⁸ Democrats rate Mexico an average of 57 degrees, compared to 45 among Republicans and 50 among Independents.

⁹[America in the Age of Uncertainty](#). Dina Smeltz, Ivo Daalder, Karl Friedhoff, Craig Kafura. October 6, 2016.

Both publics also tend to view international trade as mutually beneficial to all countries involved in trade agreements. Half of Americans say that international trade benefits all countries (50%) with seven percent saying it mostly benefits the United States. A substantial minority (34%) of Americans, however, say trade mostly benefits other countries. Mexicans are more likely than Americans to see international trade as a benefit to all sides (58%) or to Mexico’s advantage (11%), and are less likely than Americans to think international trade mostly benefits other countries (21%).

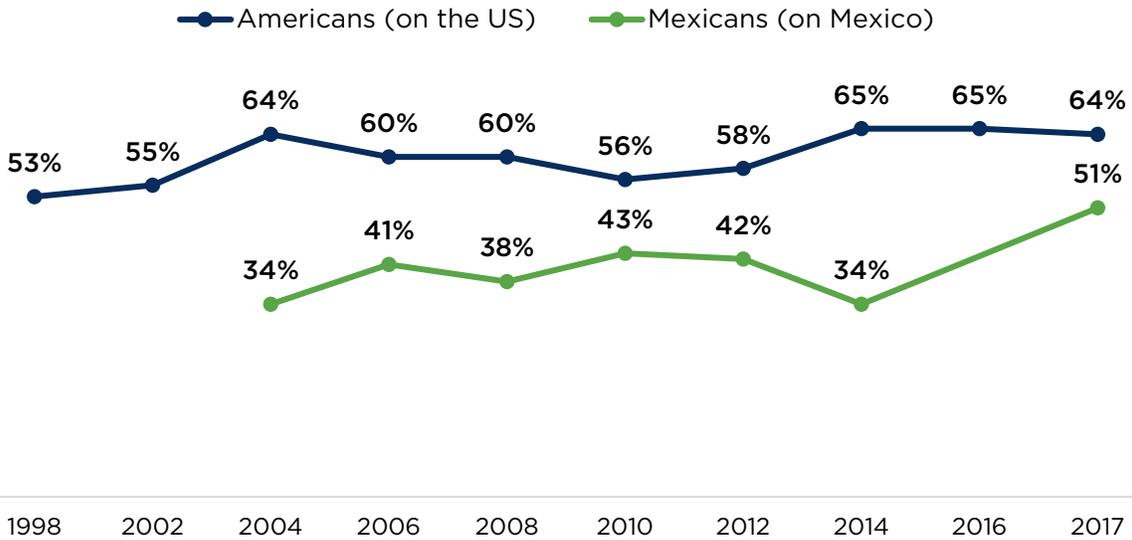


US survey conducted June 27 to July 19, 2017. Mexico survey conducted September 30 to October 7, 2017.

Two in three Americans (64%) and a bare majority of Mexicans (51%) say that globalization is mostly good for their countries. While a majority of Americans have been positive about globalization for the past two decades, Mexican support for globalization is more recent: in 2014, only one in three (34%) saw globalization as mostly good for Mexico.

Globalization and the Economy

Do you believe that globalization, especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world, is good or bad for [the United States/Mexico]? (% mostly good)



US: CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS 1998-2017
MEXICO: CIDE 2004-2014; BUENDÍA & LAREDO 2017

US survey conducted June 27 to July 19, 2017. Mexico survey conducted September 30 to October 7, 2017.

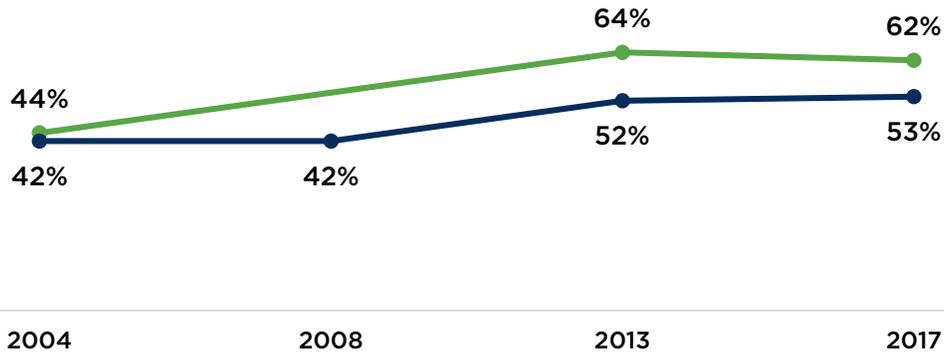
Majorities Positive Toward NAFTA Though Suspicious of Trade Tactics

While NAFTA negotiations are still ongoing, majorities of both Mexicans (62%) and Americans (53%) continue to see NAFTA as good for their nations' economies. Support for the trade agreement is fairly stable since polls conducted in 2013, but has increased in both countries since 2004 and 2008.

NAFTA & the Economy

Overall, do you think the North American Free Trade Agreement, also known as NAFTA, is a good or bad thing for the economy? (% good)

—●— Mexicans (on the Mexican economy) —●— Americans (on the US economy)



US: CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS 2004-2017

MEXICO: CIDE 2004, 2008; CIDE & ITAM 2013; BUENDÍA & LAREDO 2017

US survey conducted June 27 to July 19, 2017. Mexico survey conducted September 30 to October 7, 2017.

Though Mexicans see NAFTA as good for the Mexican economy, they do not believe the United States practices fair trade with Mexico: three in four (75%) say the United States is an unfair trader, while two in ten (20%) think US trade is fair. Only half say that Canada is a fair trader (50%), with 31 percent saying Canada is unfair in trade. Americans, for their part, are divided on whether Mexico practices fair trade (47% fair and 46% unfair). This is relatively unchanged from 2012 when 48 percent of the US public perceived Mexico as a fair trade partner. Nonetheless, Americans generally see Canada as having more fair trading practices (79% fair).

Fair Traders

Overall, do you think the following countries practice fair or unfair trade with the United States/Mexico?



US survey conducted June 27 to July 19, 2017. Mexico survey conducted September 30 to October 7, 2017.

Conclusion

As the data from both countries shows, US-Mexico relations have hit striking turbulence with Mexican opinion of the United States turning sharply negative. But this is not the first time public opinion has registered problems with the relationship. The Mexican peso crisis in late 1994 and the rise of cartel-related violence in mid-2000s also affected public perceptions of the relationship. It is also clear that the Trump administration's negative rhetoric on Mexico is not resonating with most Americans: Americans remain slightly warm towards Mexico, a rebound from much more negative views just several years ago. And while US and Mexican publics say the two nations are working in different directions, they remain united in their support for international trade, globalization, and NAFTA, issues of critical importance to the US-Mexico relationship. With NAFTA renegotiations ongoing and continuing shared security challenges, the stakes are high for the business communities and security cooperation on both sides of the border.

US Methodology

Most results reported from the United States are based on data from the 2017 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy. The 2017 Chicago Council Survey was conducted by GfK Custom Research using their large-scale,

nationwide online research panel between June 27 and July 19, 2017 among a weighted national sample of 2,020 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The survey was fielded to a total of 3,618 panel members yielding a total of 2,181 completed surveys (a completion rate of 60.3%). The median survey length was 22 minutes. Of the 2,181 total completed surveys, 161 cases were excluded for quality control reasons, leaving a final sample size of 2,020 respondents. The margin of error for this survey is ± 2.4 percentage points including a design effect of 1.1758.

One survey item (on-US-Mexico cooperation on specific issues) is reported from the 2016 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, conducted June 10-27, 2016 by GfK Custom Research using their large-scale, nationwide online research panel among a weighted national sample of 2,061 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The survey was fielded to a total of 3,580 panel members yielding a total of 2,244 completed surveys (a completion rate of 63%). The median survey length was 20 minutes. Of the 2,244 total completed surveys, 183 cases were excluded for quality control reasons, leaving a final sample size of 2,061 respondents. The item reported from the 2016 Survey has a margin of error of ± 3.4 percentage points including a design effect of 1.2149.

One additional item (the thermometer of American feeling towards Mexico) is from a December 1-3, 2017 survey conducted for the Council on Global Affairs by GfK OmniWeb using the KnowledgePanel. The survey was conducted among a weighted national sample of 1,000 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of error for this survey is ± 3.0 percentage points.

Partisan identification is based on respondents' answer to a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?"

The 2017 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Charles Koch Institute, the Korea Foundation, and the personal support of Lester Crown and the Crown family.

Mexico Methodology

Results reported from Mexico are based on data collected by Buendía & Laredo. The nationwide, in-person survey was conducted from September 30 to October 7, 2017, among a weighted national sample of Mexican adults enrolled as voters, 18 years of age or older, who reside in housing units within the national territory. The survey had a response rate of 45.4%. Assuming a design effect (deff) of 1.3, the margin of error is ± 3.5 percentage points. For more details, please contact us at contacto@buendíaylaredo.com or at +52 (55) 52 50 59 08.

About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization that provides insight—and influences the public discourse—on critical global issues. We convene leading global voices, conduct independent research, and engage the public to explore ideas that will shape our global future. The Council is committed to bringing clarity and offering solutions to issues that transcend borders and transform how people, business, and governments engage the world. Learn more at thechicagocouncil.org and follow [@ChicagoCouncil](https://twitter.com/ChicagoCouncil).

About Buendía & Laredo

Buendía & Laredo is a specialized firm on public opinion and market research studies. Its priority is to generate information with the highest methodological standards. Buendía & Laredo is formed by a multidisciplinary group of social science researchers: political scientists, economists, survey methodologists, and statisticians. Learn more about Buendía & Laredo surveys at www.buendiaylaredo.com and follow [@buendiaylaredo](https://twitter.com/buendiaylaredo).

About the Wilson Center Mexico Institute

The Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars seeks to improve understanding, communication, and cooperation between Mexico and the United States by promoting original research, encouraging public discussion, and proposing policy options for enhancing the bilateral relationship. The Institute maintains an ongoing focus on five key issues in US-Mexico relations: security and the rule of law; economics and competitiveness; migration and migrants; border issues; and energy. Learn more at www.wilsoncenter.org and follow [@MexicoInstitute](https://twitter.com/MexicoInstitute).