

DATA DIVE WITH NIK NANOS

THE TIES THAT GRIND

On both sides of the border, anxieties about the world beyond North America run deep – but on issues of human rights and business, Canadians and Americans have drifted apart, a long-term study suggests

OPINION

Nik Nanos is the chief data scientist at Nanos Research, a global fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, a research professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo and the official pollster for The Globe and Mail.

Words such as “trusted allies,” “economic partners” and “friends” have historically come to mind when thinking of the relationship between Canada and the United States.

As former president John F. Kennedy memorably put it when addressing Parliament in 1961: “Geography has made us neighbours. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners. And necessity has made us allies. Those whom nature hath so joined, let no man put asunder. What unites us is far greater than what divides us.”

Those words still intuitively ring true for many. Some may point to the Trump administration as a watershed in the relationship, but opinion tracking over time in both Canada and the U.S. suggests the drift between the two countries on many issues occurred before Donald Trump assumed the presidency.

The latest results in a 16-year tracking study by Nanos with the State University of New York at Buffalo of 1,039 Canadians and 1,023 Americans put a new spotlight on the binational relationship. Looking at the long-term

trend line, it appears we are more bound by a common set of fears than a common sense of purpose.

As in all relationships, there are common interests, which land on the positive side of the political ledger, and divergent views on the negative side.

Common views between Americans and Canadians are more likely to exist when it comes to responding to forces from outside North America, whether driven by the goal of minimizing energy dependence on the Middle East or concerns about visitors showing up at our borders.

Among the most consistent views in both countries is the belief that Canada and the U.S. should work together to develop an integrated energy policy to reduce or eliminate our dependence on oil from the Middle East.

More than three out of four Canadians and Americans believe this is very or somewhat important. This view has been consistent over the past 16 years and has weathered storms such as the controversial Keystone XL pipeline. Likewise, the appetite in the United States for co-operation with Canada on energy policy continues even though the U.S. has become the top producer of oil in the world.

When it comes to co-operation on anti-terrorism measures, the views on both sides of the border have remained relatively consistent, with more than seven out of 10 Americans and about six in 10 Canadians assert-

ing there should be much/somewhat closer co-operation.

On the border front, the Nanos-UB tracking study asks both Canadians and Americans about the inspection of goods and the questioning of visitors at the border. Although Americans were most likely to consistently cite Mexico and Mexicans as targets for border inspections, the focus is clearly shifting to China.

This year marks the first time that Americans felt Chinese visitors were more of a priority for questioning than Mexicans. Over the past decade, the appetite to question Mexican visitors at the U.S. border has dropped almost by half – from a high of more than six in 10 to a little more than three in 10. The appetite in the U.S. to question visitors from China over the same period has doubled.

Similar trends have occurred among Canadians with the view that Chinese visitors should be a priority for questioning at the border. Fifty-five per cent cite the Chinese as a priority – up 30 percentage points in the past decade – while 25 per cent believe Americans should be questioned by Canadian authorities.

On the values front, there has not only been disagreement but a significant disconnect between Americans and Canadians.

Among the most dramatic divides are human rights. Back in 2010, under the Obama administration, Canadians were much more likely to say the U.S. was the country closest to Canada on human rights. Over the course of

the past decade that has dropped 35 points, with the U.S. now trailing Britain, Germany and France. In stark contrast, Americans believe Canada is the country closest to the U.S. on human rights and has scored Canada at the top in 15 of 16 years of tracking.

Views on business values also show a clear disconnect.

Back in 2005, when Canadians were asked which country was the closest to Canada on business values, the U.S. was cited by more than 60 per cent of Canadians, with Britain trailing far behind at 17 per cent. Fast forward to 2020, and the U.S. has dropped a significant 30 points and is numerically second for the first time in the public opinion tracking, marginally behind Britain.

The top three countries Americans believe have similar business values to their own are Canada (25 per cent), Britain (22 per cent) and Japan (16 per cent).

With the COVID-19 pandemic gripping the world, a new question was asked about health threats. Both Canadians and Americans were asked which countries represented the greatest health threats when it comes to things such as a pandemic.

About six in 10 Americans cite China as their greatest health threat, while only 6 per cent believe it is Canada. In contrast, 50 per cent of Canadians believe the U.S. is the greatest health threat to Canada, followed by China (40 per cent). This reinforces the view that Canadians are quite concerned about a full reopening of the border before the pandem-

ic is better under control in the U.S., whereas the same appetite to keep the border closed does not likely exist among Americans.

A majority of Americans and Canadians still want much closer or somewhat closer co-operation on border security, but the appetite among Canadians for co-operation is not as strong as it was in 2005, which is the benchmark year for the tracking study.

Where do things stand?

The long-term tracking suggests it may be unfair to lay all the tension in the Canada-U.S. relationship at the door of the Trump administration. The drift between the two countries on many fronts has been occurring incrementally. But Canada and the U.S. remain allies, economic partners and friends. The challenge today is ensuring the friendship continues to thrive in the future.

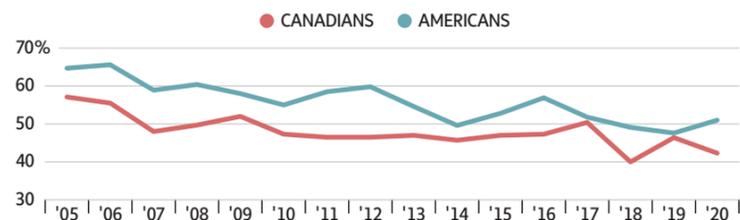
This column is based on an independent 16-year tracking study conducted by Nanos in conjunction with the State University of New York at Buffalo.

It is based on parallel national samples of at least 1,000 Americans and 1,000 Canadians each year. Both samples of opinion are national online surveys representative of the adult populations in both countries. The most recent research was completed in September, 2020, and the full reports with detailed technical notes on the methodologies are posted at nanos.co.

Canadians and Americans

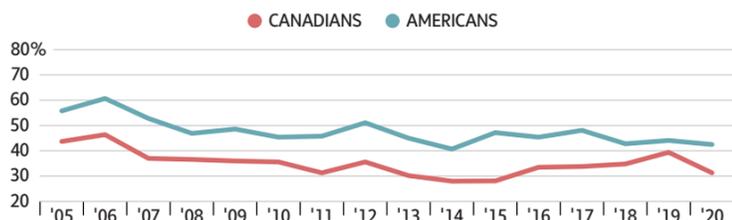
ENERGY DEPENDENCE

Percentage who say it is very important for the U.S. and Canada to work together to develop an integrated energy policy to remove any dependence on Middle East oil



ANTI-TERRORISM

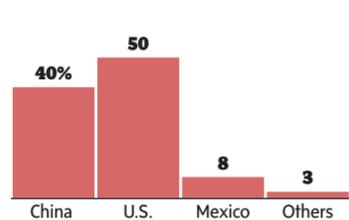
Percentage who say the U.S. and Canada should be moving towards greater and closer co-operation in terms of anti-terrorism measures



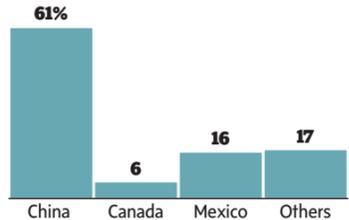
HEALTH RISK

Which of the following countries is the greatest health threat to Canadians/Americans when it comes to things like a pandemic?

CANADIANS SAY:



AMERICANS SAY:

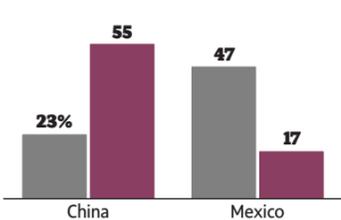


QUESTIONING VISITORS

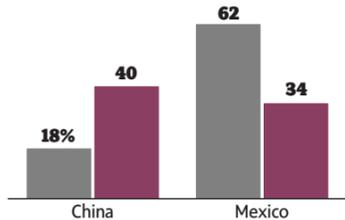
Which country's visitors should Canadian/American customs officials question most thoroughly?

● 2010 ● 2020

CANADIANS SAY:



AMERICANS SAY:



MURAT YÜKSELİR / THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: NANOS RESEARCH

Note: numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

American expats: Can the U.S. count on your vote?

BRUCE HEYMAN
GORDON GIFFIN
VICKI HEYMAN
PATTI GIFFIN

OPINION

Bruce Heyman was the U.S. ambassador to Canada from 2014 to 2017. Gordon Giffin was the U.S. ambassador to Canada from 1997 to 2001. Vicki Heyman and Patti Giffin served alongside Bruce and Gordon in their roles in Ottawa. They are champions of the American Voter Abroad effort (VoteFromAbroad.org).

This has been a year of staggering loss in the United States. Almost 200,000 Americans have died from COVID-19, and in recent days, we've learned that U.S. President Donald Trump understood the virus's risks to American lives but purposely played them down. We have witnessed Mr. Trump trample on our democratic values and norms in service of his ego and personal gain. In the past four years, his leadership has made our country more fractured, less safe and less equitable. We can't afford another four years of this and neither can our democracy. And in this instance, “we” refers

to the global community – the entire world.

As if that weren't enough, the U.S. also lost a civil-rights lion in Representative John Lewis, who passed away in July. Mr. Lewis spent decades advocating for voting rights because he understood that suffrage was the key in the fight for civil rights and equality for all Americans. He held that conviction even on his dying day, calling for Americans to be vigilant in his final letter: “Ordinary people with extraordinary vision can redeem the soul of America by getting in what I call good trouble, necessary trouble. Voting and participating in the democratic process are key. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.”

And indeed, in November, Americans will have to work harder than ever to pursue their right to vote. Communities have seen polling stations shuttered or consolidated, which means lines on voting day will be long and stations will be chaotic. The new Postmaster-General – a Trump appointee – has enacted new policies that critics fear could disrupt the postal system such that mail-

If you're an American living in Canada, your vote could be a crucial agent of change.

in ballots will not be returned on time. Those who persevere despite these obstacles will do so because they understand what is at stake; they will do so because the right to vote is sacred.

If you are an American living in Canada, you belong to a voter demographic that is roughly 650,000 strong. Globally, there are approximately 6.5 million eligible U.S. voters living outside the country.

That being said, in 2016, slightly more than 7 per cent of those Americans voted. Only 5 per cent of Americans living in Canada voted in that election, in which the margin of victory was just 107,000 votes spread across three battleground states: Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. The margin of victory in Michigan was less than 11,000 votes.

An increase in votes from Americans living in Canada could

have had a far-reaching effect on our most recent presidential election – and that will be true in 2020, too.

Even though Americans living abroad have historically voted in low numbers, their votes have been a deciding factor in several elections. In 2016, American voters from abroad represented the margin of victory in Governor Roy Cooper's race in North Carolina; in the same year, they helped Senator Maggie Hassan win her race in New Hampshire. In 2018, votes from expats covered the razor-thin margin of victory for Florida Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried; indeed, more American voters abroad sent their ballots back to battleground Florida than any other state. An estimated 50 per cent of U.S. voters living abroad will cast their votes in 2020, so if you think your vote doesn't count because you're an American living in Canada, please know that it does.

If you no longer have a residence in the U.S., you can still vote. If you haven't lived in the U.S. for decades, your vote counts. If you've never lived in the U.S., but were born to American parents, there are 37 states where you can still vote. And the time to act

is now: The deadline for voting by Americans living abroad is much shorter than those stateside, so register and request your ballot early at VoteFromAbroad.org (volunteers will walk you through specific guidelines and offer 24/7 support). If the state you register in allows voting by e-mail, do so. If the state you register in only allows vote by mail, fill out your ballot and send it back immediately.

If you're an American living in Canada, your vote could be a crucial agent of change. Given another four years, Mr. Trump would pursue an unprecedented path toward authoritarianism, which is why anyone with the franchise must use it. And Canadians can help by making it known to their American friends and loved ones living abroad that they can have a great impact on the course of history simply by voting in November.

The U.S. and Canada are more than neighbours. We are family. As family members, we have shared outcomes in what the future holds. Americans are American wherever we live, including in Canada, and what would happen in the U.S. under another four years of Mr. Trump's leadership will affect us all.