



Canada-US Relations

The Looking West 2004 policy priorities data demonstrate over four in ten (44.2%) westerners feel that improving Canada-US relations is a high priority for long-term provincial prosperity and quality of life, while one-third (34.8%) feels it is a medium priority. Two in ten feel it is either a low priority (15.9%) or not a priority (4.5%).

To further probe attitudes about the Canada-US relationship, Looking West 2004 survey respondents were asked two questions specific to trade and the economy. First, westerners were asked to rate their agreement with the statement, "Canada should pursue closer economic ties with the United States." Westerners are quite positive in their response to this: seven in ten agree that stronger ties should be pursued, with one-third strongly agreeing. However, there is a notable gap between the three prairie provinces – in which almost three-quarters of respondents agree – and BC, in which less than two-thirds agree.

Figure 1:
Pursue Closer Economic Ties With US –
Western Canadian Respondents, 2004

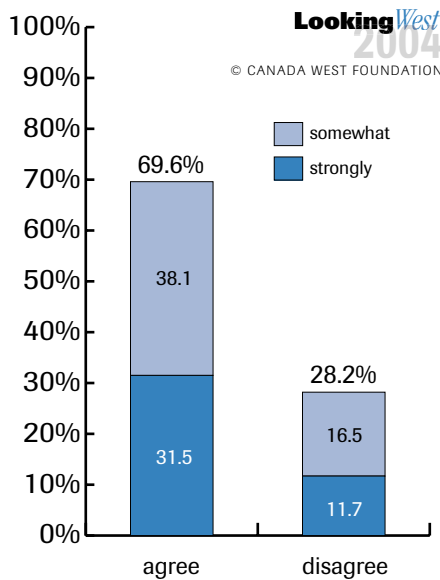
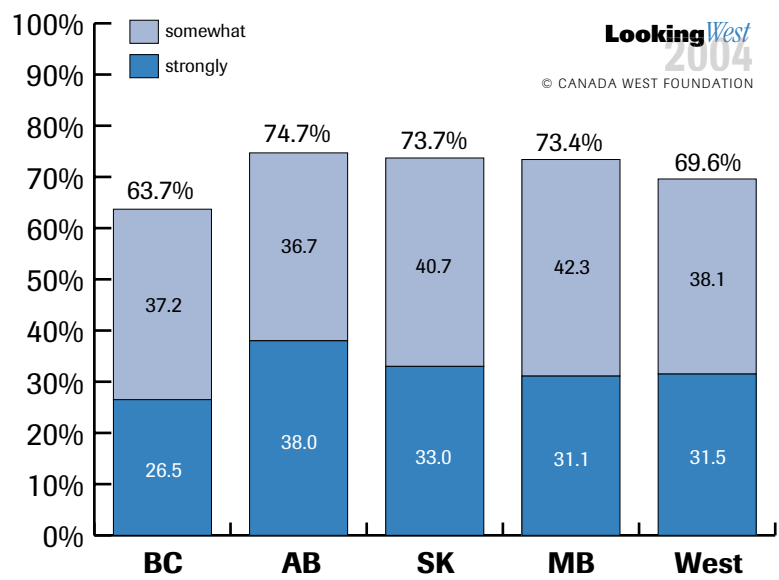


Figure 2:
Pursue Closer Economic Ties With US –
Western Canadian Respondents, 2004

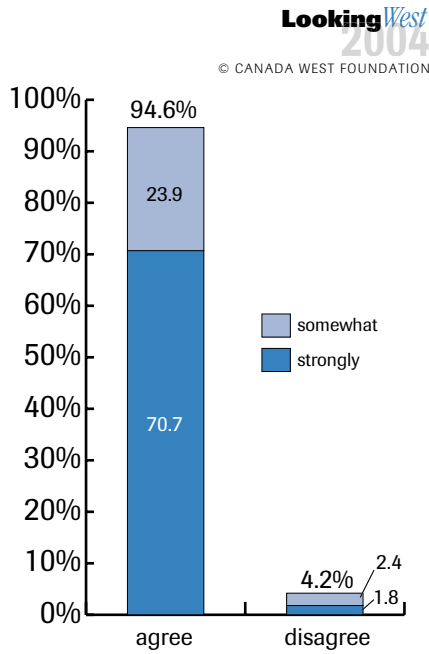


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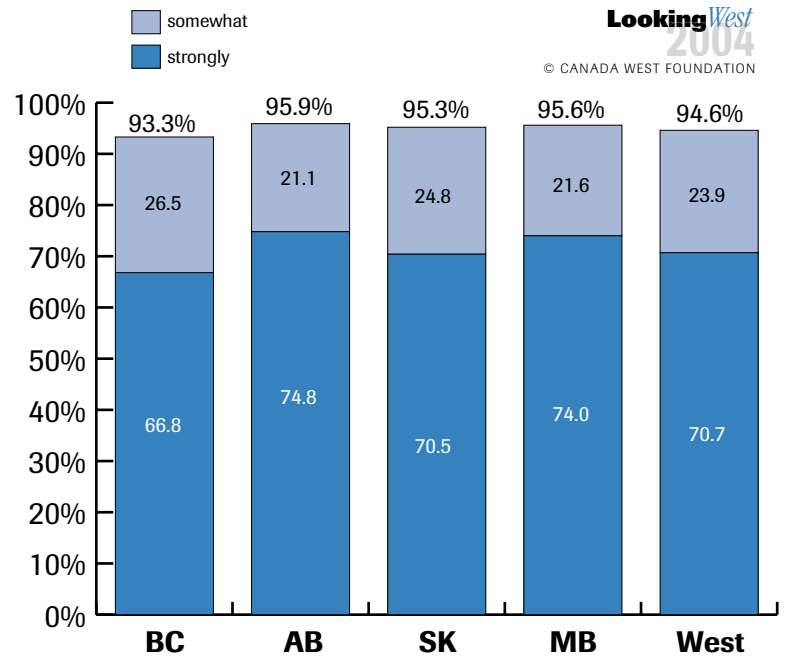
Respondents were also asked to rate their agreement with the statement, "Canada should make every effort to keep the Canada-US border open to Canadian trade." On this point, westerners are emphatic: 94.6% agree, with seven in ten agreeing strongly. Respondents from the prairie provinces are slightly more likely than respondents from BC to strongly agree.

Figure 3:
Make Every Effort to Keep Border Open to Trade –
Western Canadian Respondents, 2004



Canada should make every effort to keep the Canada-US border open to Canadian trade.

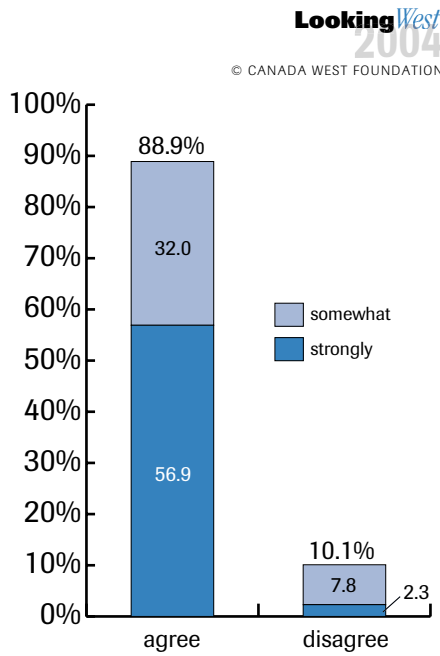
Figure 4:
Make Every Effort to Keep Border Open to Trade –
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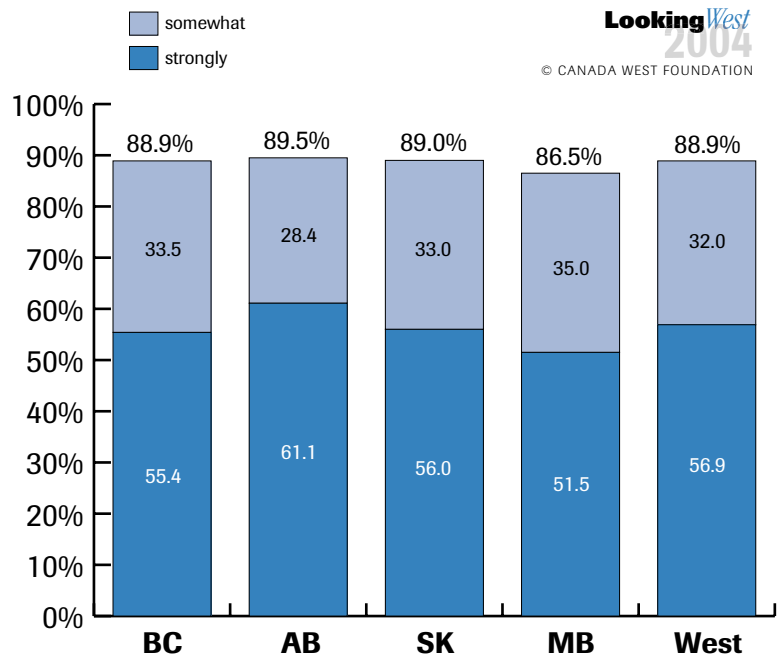
There has been a lot of debate in recent years about the quality of the Canada-US relationship. To assess attitudes about this, Looking West 2004 respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement, “The relationship between Canada and the United States has deteriorated over the past few years.” Westerners clearly think that the relationship has suffered: almost nine in ten (88.9%) agree that it has deteriorated, with the majority (56.9%) agreeing strongly. This opinion is consistent across the four western provinces.

Figure 5:
Canada-US Relationship Has Deteriorated –
Western Canadian Respondents, 2004



The relationship between Canada and the United States has deteriorated over the past few years.

Figure 6:
Canada-US Relationship Has Deteriorated –
Western Canadian Respondents, 2004

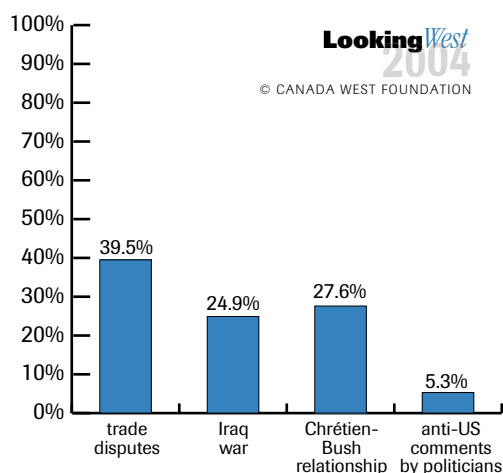


The relationship between Canada and the United States has deteriorated over the past few years.

Respondents who agreed (strongly or somewhat) that the Canada-US relationship has deteriorated were asked a follow-up question: "Of the following reasons, which do you feel has most significantly contributed to a deterioration in Canada-US relations over the past few years? Canada-US trade disputes, such as softwood lumber and beef exports; differing positions on the Iraq war; poor personal relationship between Prime Minister Chretien and President Bush; anti-American comments by Canadian politicians." Westerners are clearly divided on the cause of deterioration; while trade disputes is the cause cited by four in ten, one-quarter blame differing positions on the Iraq war and over one-quarter blame the poor personal relationship between former Prime Minister Chretien and President Bush. Only 5% blame anti-American comments by Canadian politicians.

In BC, a slim majority of respondents (50.1%) put the blame on trade disputes. In the three other western provinces, no response option received majority support. The plurality in Alberta (33.9%) and Manitoba (31.5%) blamed the Chretien-Bush relationship, and the plurality in Saskatchewan (36.1%) blamed trade disputes. But it must be stressed that in all provinces, there is a diversity of opinion about the cause of deterioration.

Figure 7:
Cause of Deterioration –
Western Canadian Respondents, 2004



Asked only of respondents who agreed that the relationship had deteriorated. N = 2,842



This summary was authored by CWF Director of Research Loleen Berdahl, and is part of the Canada West Foundation's Building the New West Project. The Kahanoff Foundation, Western Diversification, the Privy Council Office, the Government of Saskatchewan, and Alberta International and Intergovernmental Relations provided funding support for this research study. The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Canada West Foundation's donors, subscribers or Board.