Trade Issues

Many Americans Hold Conflicting Views on the Economic Nationalism vs. Free Trade Debate. If a Poll Question Invokes “Protect American Jobs,” That Option Wins Hands Down...

**Question:** Do you think it should be the policy of the US to restrict foreign imports into this country in order to protect American industry and American jobs...or do you think there should be no restrictions on the sale of foreign products in the US in order to permit the widest choice and the lowest prices for the American consumer?

![Graph showing percentage of people supporting restrict imports vs. no restrictions from 1985 to 1996.](image)

**Source:** Surveys by the *Los Angeles Times*, latest that of August 3-6, 1996.

**Question:** It has been argued that if all countries would eliminate their tariffs and restrictions on imported goods, the costs of goods would go down for everyone. Others have said that such tariffs and restrictions are necessary to protect certain manufacturing jobs in certain industries from the competition of less expensive imports...Generally, would you say you sympathize more with those who want to eliminate tariffs or those who think such tariffs are necessary?

![Graph showing percentage of people supporting eliminate tariffs vs. tariffs are necessary from 1985 to 1994.](image)

**Source:** Surveys by the Gallup Organization for the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, latest that of October 7-25, 1994.
...But Americans Want To Be Able To Choose the Best Product, Wherever It's Made, and Hold To Many Other Views That Underlie the Free Trade Position

Question: Which of the following statements comes closer to your own view about free trade—free trade would be good for the US because it would help the US economy by expanding exports, or free trade would be bad for the US because it would end up costing the US jobs?

- Good: 52%
- Bad: 38%


Question: Which is the more important goal—restricting imports to save jobs, or expanding exports to create jobs?

- Restricting imports: 19%
- Expanding exports: 72%


Question: ...[D]o you think trade with other countries—both buying and selling products—is good for the US economy, or is it bad for the economy, or does it have no effect?

- Good: 69%
- Bad: 17%


Question: (...)Please tell me if you think each statement is very true, somewhat true, or not true at all)...I try to buy the best product for me whether it is American made or not.


NAFTA: Not Well Understood But Generally Supported

Question: Do you favor or oppose NAFTA...or don't you know enough about NAFTA to say?

- Favor: 48%
- Oppose: 21%
- Don't know enough to say/No answer: 32%


Question: Do you favor or oppose...Withdrawing the US from the North American Free Trade Agreement, which reduces trade barriers between the US, Mexico, and Canada?

- Favor withdrawing: 34%
- Oppose: 51%
- Not sure: 15%

Source: Survey by Yankelovich Partners, Inc. for Time/CNN, March 6-7, 1996.

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