

Voters might like tariffs, but not on Canada and Mexico, new poll finds

Americans aren't so fond of taxing goods from the country's closest allies.

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More Americans oppose President Donald Trump's threatened tariffs against Canada and Mexico than support them, even as the public is split on tariff policy overall, new polling finds.

Tariffs on the United Kingdom would also be deeply unpopular, according to a survey from the British firm Public First shared exclusively with POLITICO.

The poll finds U.S. voters harbor mixed — and at times inconsistent — opinions on the use of tariffs. There are large partisan splits, with Trump supporters more likely to defer to his judgment. But the specifics of the implementation matter with voters across the political spectrum.

“Americans don't really know what to expect from tariffs,” said James Frayne, founding partner of Public First. “They're obviously not an economic tool that's been used terribly widely in recent times, and therefore you get what look like contradictions in public opinion.”

In the abstract, Americans are about evenly split: 35 percent of respondents said they were supportive of using tariffs, 33 percent were opposed and nearly the same amount were neither or unsure. That was despite 41 percent of those surveyed saying they thought tariffs would damage the economy, compared to only 33 percent saying they would improve the economy.

There were also sharp partisan divides; 61 percent of Trump voters support his tariffs plan compared to only 16 percent of Kamala Harris voters.

Those political differences come after Trump made tariffs a central promise in his 2024 campaign. Early in his administration, he has floated levying tariffs on U.S. allies and adversaries alike, including [planned 25 percent tariffs](#) on Canada and Mexico, along with a 10 percent tariff levied on goods coming from China. Trump delayed his plan for Canada and Mexico earlier this month after reaching agreements with their political leaders, but said this week that import fees on goods from both countries [would still go into effect in early March](#).

Those specific tariffs might not be so popular: The Public First polling found that just 28 percent of American adults supported specifically applying tariffs to Canada, while 43 percent were opposed. More than half of those polled said tariffs would damage the U.S.

relationship with Canada. And respondents were even more opposed to using tariffs against Great Britain, another key U.S. ally.

The partisan divides still existed, though: Trump voters still generally supported the tariffs on both Canada and Great Britain. Among respondents supportive of tariffs on both countries, the most commonly cited reason was because they trusted Trump to make the right decisions. They also cited other reasons for supporting tariffs — such as that they would boost American manufacturing — that largely echoed Trump’s own talking points.

Tariffs on Mexico were also slightly unpopular, with 35 percent of adults supportive and 39 percent opposed.

Only tariffs on China were viewed positively overall, with 45 percent of respondents supporting them compared to 30 percent opposed. That was despite those polled saying that the U.S. benefits from trading with China more than any other country.

Taken together, the results suggest that voters’ attitudes toward tariffs are not just determined by economic motivations and whether tariffs would affect their own pocketbooks, but by how they feel about the countries and their status as U.S. allies.

The new polling also found sharp divides on who Americans consider to be the country’s greatest allies, and what the country’s role in the world is. Those divides were along both partisan lines and generational lines.

For instance, just 10 percent of voters agreed with the statement that the U.S. “does not need any allies around the world to help maintain its safety and prosperity.” That figure was 18 percent among survey respondents between the age of 18 and 24 — compared to just 5 percent among voters 65 and older.

Public First surveyed 2,045 U.S. adults from Feb. 7-12. The margin of error was 2 percentage points.