

When it comes to jobs, pay and prices, most North Americans question NAFTA's payoffs

By Michael Babad

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The Canadian, American and Mexican governments may be tying themselves in knots trying to remake NAFTA, but only minorities of their citizens believe trade drives three key benefits.

That's not to suggest most don't think trade is good for their country – indeed, just the opposite – but fewer than 50 per cent of those surveyed by the Pew Research Center believe it creates jobs, boosts wages and lowers prices.

This comes as Canadian and American negotiators are deadlocked in talks to remake the North American free-trade agreement, with the latter pushing Ottawa to join Mexico in what is now a bilateral deal.

Negotiations are stalled against what the U.S. says is a Sept. 30 deadline, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau reiterating Wednesday that he won't be pushed.

“We will keep working as long as it takes to get the right deal for Canada,” Mr. Trudeau told reporters in New York.

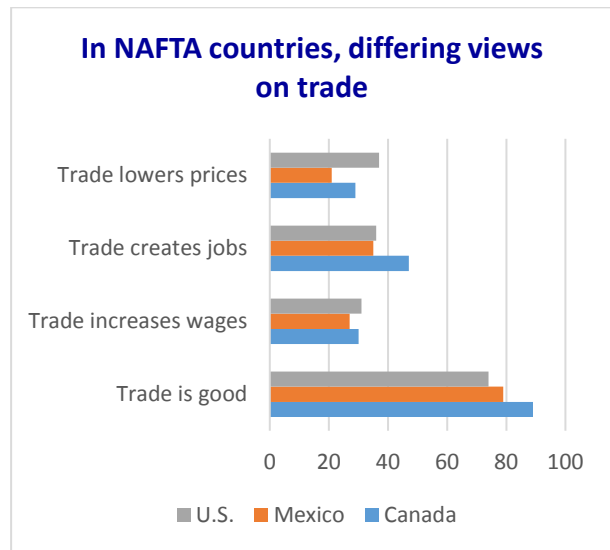
Amid the dread over the impact of a NAFTA collapse, though, is Pew's survey of global trade showing a weak attitude in the three countries when it comes to those three big things.

“Their publics overwhelmingly think trade is good for their countries, in principle,” said

Bruce Stokes, Pew's director of global economic attitudes.

“But, in practice, in no NAFTA nation does a majority of adults believe that trade creates jobs, raises wages or lowers prices,” he added, outlining the survey of more than 30,000 people in 27 countries.

“Canadians are more likely than Americans and Mexicans to say that trade generates jobs. And Canadians and Mexicans are less likely than Americans to hold the view that trade lowers prices.”



Other parts of the Pew survey showed that in 20 of the countries surveyed, those with higher income levels were more likely to think trade fuels job creation.