



Analysis:
February 2019 Survey of Canadian Attitudes on China and Canada-China Relations
Revised: 13 March 2019.

The December 2018 arrest of Huawei Technology Co. Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou on Canadian soil, and the subsequent detention of two Canadian citizens in China, have had significant impact on media and expert commentary as well as public opinion on China, its government and Canada-China relations

The February 2019 survey, part of a series of public opinion polls on Canadian attitudes toward China, monitors Canadian reactions to these events by examining subjects including government policy and priorities, economic interactions, and values.

Full results and a line-by-line comparison of the 2017 and 2019 findings are available [here](#).

SUMMARY

- The overall level of negativity surrounding China is significant and growing. Reductions in image favourability and perceived leadership capacity over the next decade relative to the United States have also been accompanied by a decrease in the perceived importance of China to Canada's future. However, all countries—including the US—are viewed less favourably.
- Support for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has remained high at 64%, this despite a degradation of public image and an increase in Canadians' anxiety over a range of issues including housing and Chinese investment in Canada's technology sector.
- Ranking of the Canadian government's top priority in engaging with China has remained largely consistent, with slight increases in the promotion of human rights and protection of Canadian values and institutions and slight decreases in expanding trade and investment and furthering cooperation on global issues. Trade and investment (32%) remain the highest ranked priority by nearly double the assigned importance as promoting human rights in China (17%).

KEY FINDINGS

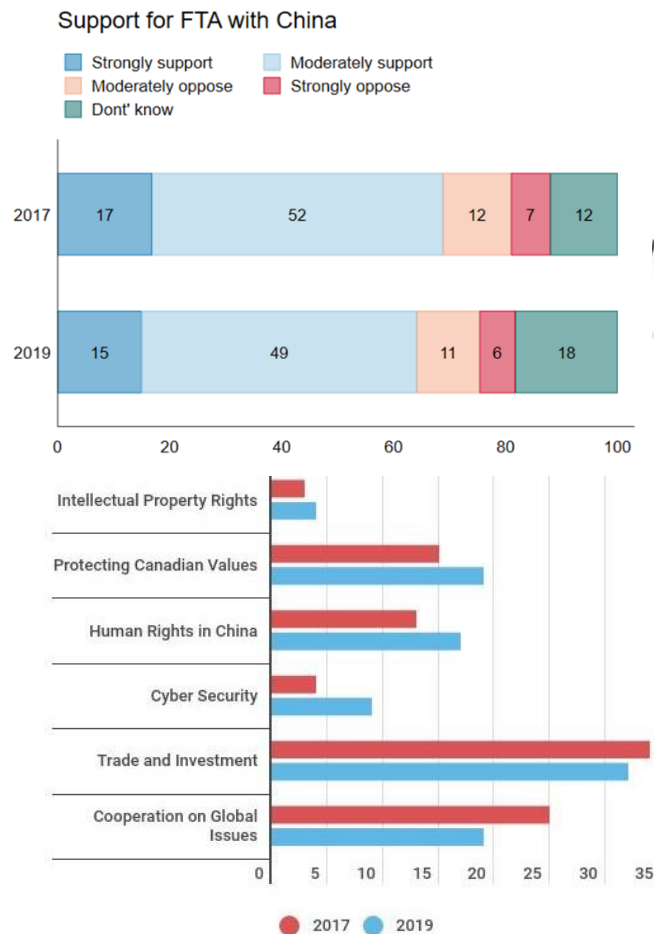
1. Policy Preferences.

- 64% now strongly or moderately support negotiation of an FTA with China; 17% oppose and 18% are undecided.¹ While support has fallen 5 points from the 2017

¹ While these results seem divergent with Angus Reid's polling data indicating that shows 35% of Canadians think trade with China is good for economy, 33% bad, and 22% "equally positive and negative.", the public view of trade broadly is much more tempered compared to negative public views about Chinese investment in Canadian technological sectors. This gap in reactions is consistent with the pattern in the 2017 data, indicating that Canadians can separate economic cooperation from other issues regarding Chinese engagement. Angus Reid, 1 February, 2019, <http://angusreid.org/china-canada-relations-huawei-meng-wanzhou/>

survey result, the most prominent shift in response distribution is toward “don’t know” (+6%) with opposition also experiencing a 2% reduction.

- The support level is highest amongst Liberals (77%), while NDP and Green Party supporters showed an increase in support from 56% each to 62% and 63% respectively. Conservatives had a reduction in level of support to 64%, a fall of 6% from 2017. It is again highest amongst respondents 58 and older (70%), males (69%) and lowest amongst respondents 35-44 years (59%) and females (61%). However, all of the above categories presented a reduction in the approval level of 1-7%. Geographically, support levels have redistributed with the highest support level being found amongst residents of British Columbia (70%) and the lowest in Alberta (59%).



- When asked to choose the federal government’s highest priorities in the relationship with China, 31% believe it should be trade and investment; 19% protection of Canadian values and institutions at home from growing Chinese influence; 17% advancing human rights and democratic reforms in China; 19% cooperation on global issues; 9% on cyber security and 4% intellectual property rights.
- Compared to the same question 18 months earlier, trade and investment and cooperation on global issues fell by 3% and 6% respectively. Significantly, human rights in China (+4%), protecting Canadian values (+4%), and cyber security (+5%) all rose in significance.
- Trade and investment was the highest priority across all age brackets, however support was highest amongst 35-44 years at 39% and lowest amongst 18-24 years (29%). While those 35-44 years are the least supportive for an FTA, this does not seem to reflect a lack of desire to prioritize trade and investment federally. All age

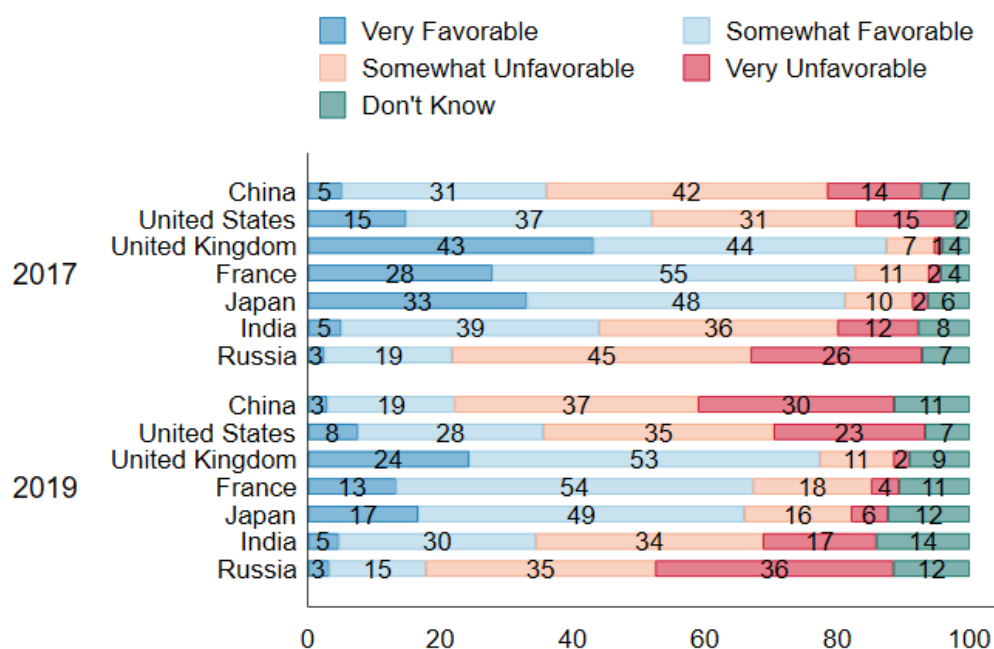
groups similarly prioritize protecting Canadian values and promoting human rights in China except those aged at 58 or older who prioritize protecting Canadian values (23%) significantly over the promotion of human rights (15%).

- Support for prioritizing trade and investment is highest amongst Liberals (37%) and Conservatives (34%)² and lowest amongst NDP (23%) and Green Party (20%). Protecting Canadian values was rated highest by Conservatives (27%) with the NDP giving the highest priority level to human rights promotion (24%). The Green Party was most prominently supportive of cooperation on global issues (49%), which may reflect the respondent's prioritization of issues like global climate change action.

2. Importance, Favourability and Concerns

- When asked to rank countries' importance to Canada's future, China's overall standing fell from second only behind the United States to third overall behind the US and the United Kingdom. However, all surveyed countries did experience a reduction in the absolute value of their importance with China falling 1.2 units and the US falling by 1.5.
- The favourability index for China experienced a noticeable cooling since 2017 with only 21% having a favourable opinion and 67% unfavourable. Again, all measured nations suffered a fall in favourability, with a comparable magnitude of response in the US, France, and Japan to the absolute rating reduction in favourable opinions towards China.

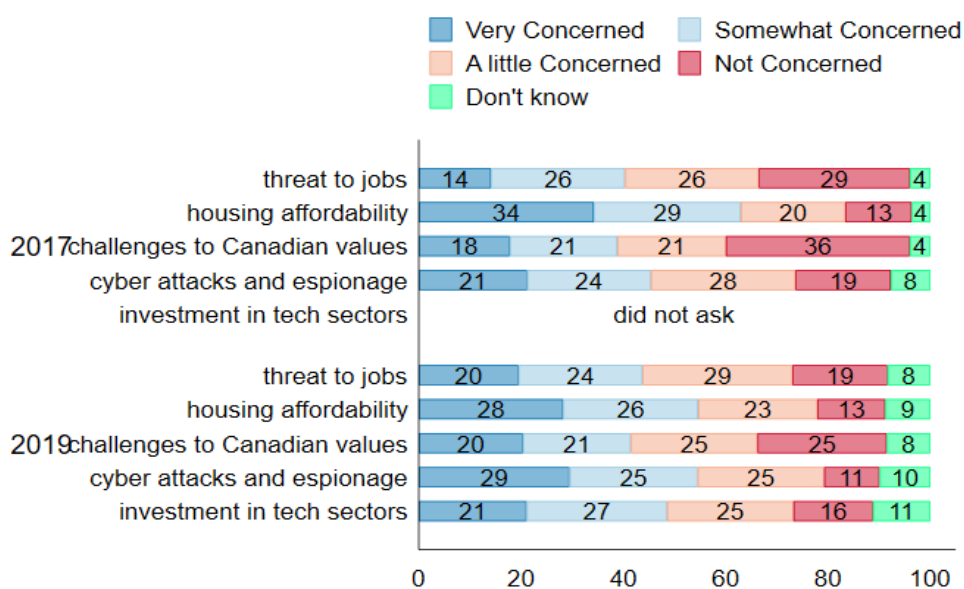
Your opinion about these countries is:



² This partisan division on magnitude of prioritization of differing policy areas is consistent with the results in Angus Reid's survey in which respondents who identify as Conservative were more likely to favour trade (55%) over human rights (45%). Angus Reid, 1 February, 2019, <http://angusreid.org/china-canada-relations-huawei-meng-wanzhou/>

- Looking at global leadership in the next decade comparing China and the United States, estimates of China's potential role fell behind the US in every category except anticipated economic power where the margin is still two-to-one (51% to 26%) in China's favour. Most of China's losses are accounted for under "don't know" rather than through a comparable rise in the faith in US leadership.
- As in 2017 results, there is a high level of anxiety about China's growing presence in Canada, concentrated on housing availability and affordability, cyber attacks and espionage, potential threats to jobs and threats to the Canadian way of life. In 2019, "Chinese investment in Canadian tech sectors" was listed as a potential topic of concern. The level of concern over Chinese investment in Canadian tech sectors (48%) is comparable to the level of concern over cyber attacks and espionage (54%).³⁴

With growing Chinese presence in Canada do you worry about



3. Party Performance

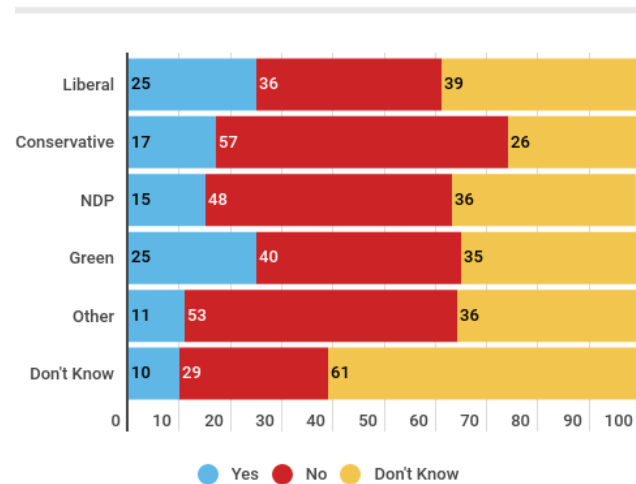
In the 18 months since the previous survey views on the matter of whether the government is doing enough to protect Canadian citizens abroad have become more defined, with a 16% fall in the number of respondents who either did not register an opinion or registered "didn't know". Currently, 42% view the government as not doing enough while 18% felt it was. The

³ These findings are in line with the results from the recent Nanos polling indicating that 53% of Canadians want Huawei banned, with 29% of the remaining respondents indicating they were "unsure". Nanos Survey, January 2019, <http://www.nanos.co/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2018-1356-Globe-December-Populated-Report-with-Tabs.pdf>

⁴ When asked to indicate their agreement with the statement, "Canada should prohibit Chinese investment in sensitive industries such as finance and telecommunications." 70% of respondents agreed. Angus Reid, 1 February, 2019, <http://angusreid.org/china-canada-relations-huawei-meng-wanzhou/>

current government performs even less favourably when the aggregate proportion is separated by party affiliation:

Does the Canadian government do enough to protect Canadians under arrest or imprisoned in China?



- Levels of support are highest among Liberal and Green Party respondents both at 25% respectively; lowest among Conservatives (17%), NDP (15%) and Other (11%), with majorities in both Other and Conservatives responding negatively. Only the unaffiliated respondents maintain the majority non-response/don't know that was recorded in the original 2017 survey.

Prepared by Brady Fox, Chengkun Lu and Alexandra Martin.

For Further Information

Paul Evans - paul.evans@ubc.ca

Xiaojun Li - xiaojun.li@ubc.ca