



# Actually, Americans Like Free Trade

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Both presidential candidates have strongly criticized recent international trade agreements, presumably assuming that the public shares this hostility. However, the 2016 Chicago Council Survey, conducted June 10-27, finds that a majority of the American public believes free trade is beneficial to the US economy and consumers. The main concern for many Americans—as it has been in the past—is concentrated on the threat trade poses to job security.

## Bipartisan Public Support for Globalization

Globalization and free trade have proven to be defining issues for both parties in the 2016 election. Donald Trump has blamed economic difficulties on increased globalization, pledging to impose tariffs on Chinese and Mexican imports and to cancel trade agreements. And recently [Hillary Clinton stated](#), “Too many companies lobbied for trade deals so they could sell products abroad but then they instead moved abroad and sold back into the United States.” Despite the candidates’ knocks against globalization, the 2016 Chicago Council Survey shows that American public support for globalization is at one of the highest levels ever registered.

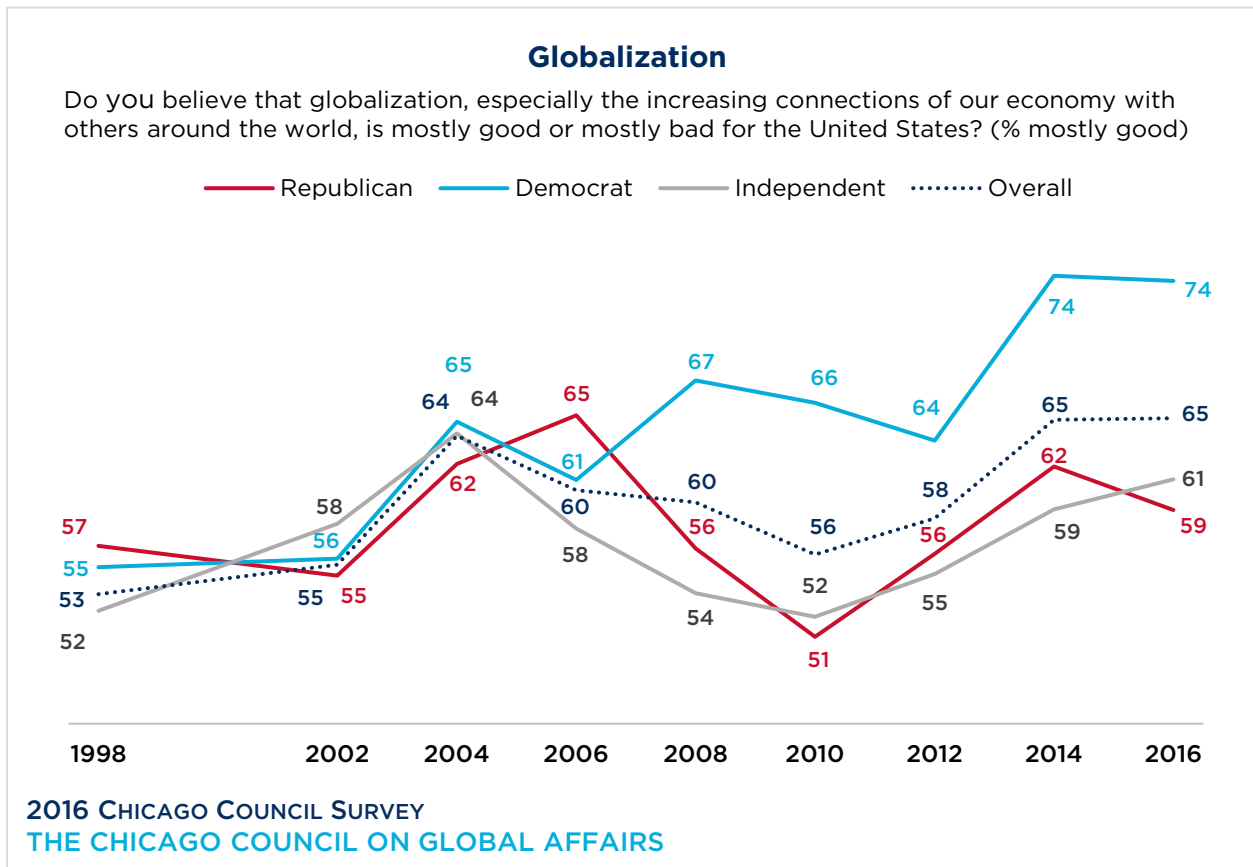
Two out of three (65%) Americans say that globalization, especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world, is mostly good for the United States (compared to 34% who say that it is mostly bad), with majorities across the political spectrum expressing a positive view (see figure, next page).

Three in four (74%) self-described Democrats say that globalization is mostly good—a high water mark and similar to 2014. Despite globalization being a flash point in the primaries between Secretary Clinton and Senator Bernie Sanders, positive views of globalization are no different among their core supporters (76% among core Clinton supporters; 75% among core Sanders supporters)<sup>1</sup>. Compared to Democrats, a smaller overall majority of self-described Republicans (59%) say globalization is mostly good, though only one-half (50%) of core Trump supporters are

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<sup>1</sup> Core Sanders supporters refers to those self-described Democrats and Democratic-leaning Independents who said that Bernie Sanders was their top choice for president (36% of Democrats), and core Clinton supporters refers to those who named Hillary Clinton as their top choice (47% of Democrats). Similarly, 31 percent of self-described Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents said that Donald Trump was their top choice for president, while two in three (65%) named a different candidate.

positive versus nearly two-thirds (62%) of Republicans who preferred other candidates. Independents' views are similar to Republicans, with six in ten (61%) saying globalization is mostly good, continuing an upward trend dating back to 2010.



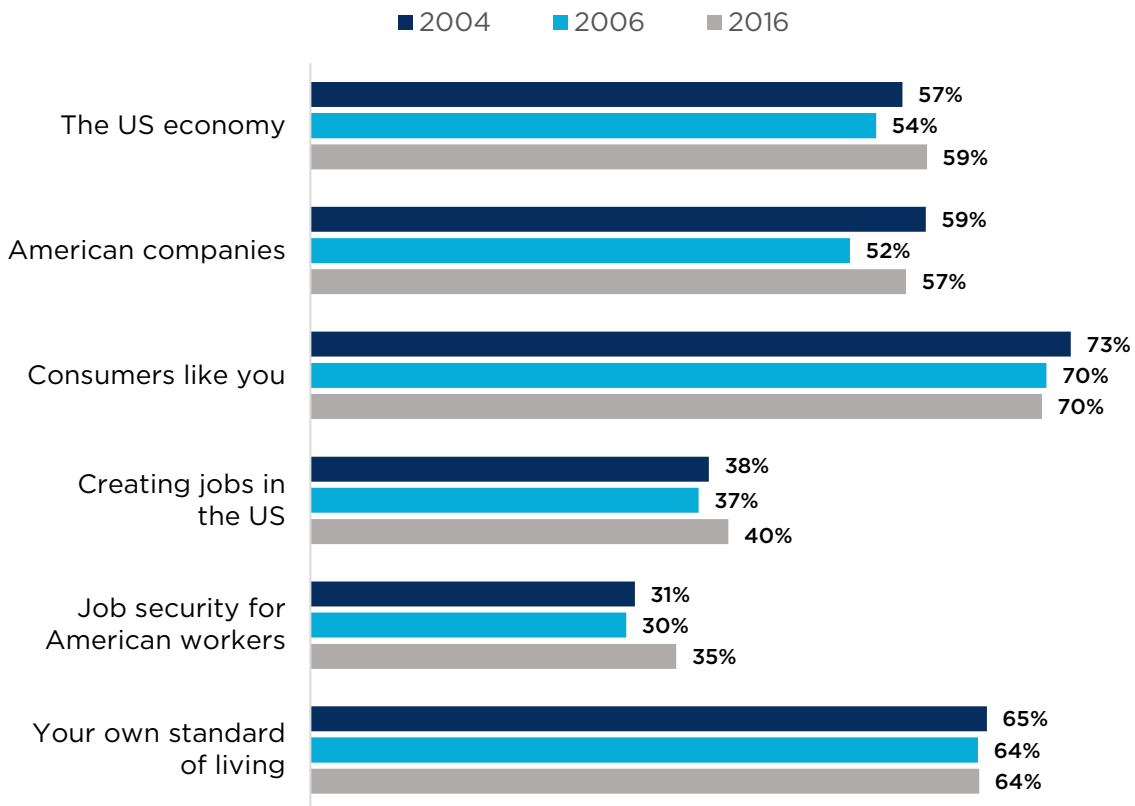
### Americans Say Trade Good for US Economy, Bad for Job Security

Americans seem to recognize that international trade brings both advantages and disadvantages. About six in ten Americans say that international trade is good for the US economy (59%), American companies (57%), and their own standard of living (64%). An even larger majority say that international trade is good for American consumers (70%). However, as in past surveys, Americans are less positive when it comes to the impact of international trade on job security for American workers (35% good) and creating jobs in the United States (40% good). These overall percentages are broadly in line with previous readings from the last several times the Survey asked these questions, in 2004 and 2006 (see figure, next page).

[Hillary Clinton stated](#) in an August 11 speech that she would “stop any trade deal that kills jobs or holds down wages,” which could reflect concern revealed in public opinion polling on trade and jobs. For example, a [July 2016 CBS News/NYT poll](#) found that Americans are far more likely to say that international trade loses more jobs (60%) than it creates in the United States (19%). In another example, a March [Bloomberg Politics Poll](#) found that two in three (65%) Americans preferred increased restrictions on foreign goods to protect American jobs while just 22 percent favor fewer restrictions “to enable American consumers to have the most choices and the lowest prices.” And a May 2015 [Pew survey](#) found a plurality saying that free trade agreements (FTAs) make wages lower (46% vs. 33% saying FTAs make no difference and 11% saying FTAs makes wages higher).

## International Trade

Overall, do you think international trade is good or bad for (% good):



2016 CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEY  
THE CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

### Republicans Less Supportive of Trade Than Democrats

Traditionally, the Republican party's longstanding position has been one that promotes trade as an engine of growth. Yet recent public opinion survey results show that among the public, self-described Democrats are now most positive toward international trade. The 2016 Council Survey shows that roughly two in three Democrats and half of Republicans say that trade benefits the US economy and American companies. Larger majorities of Democrats than Republicans also say that trade has been good for US consumers as well as their own standard of living. Moreover, larger minorities of Democrats than Republicans say that trade is good for creating jobs and job security for American workers (see table, next page).

But this partisan pattern has not always been the case and could vary according to which party is in office. In 2004 and 2006 Republicans were more likely than Democrats to say that trade was beneficial to the American economy, American consumers, and US standards of living. And Republicans, Democrats, and Independents were all equally likely to express skepticism that trade was good for creating jobs and job security in 2004 and 2006.

**Overall, do you think international trade is good or bad for (% good):**

The US economy				
	REP	DEM	IND	Total
2004	59%	55%	57%	57%
2006	60%	52%	53%	54%
2016	51%	68%	56%	59%

American companies				
	REP	DEM	IND	Total
2004	58%	59%	59%	59%
2006	55%	50%	52%	52%
2016	50%	65%	57%	57%

Consumers like you				
	REP	DEM	IND	Total
2004	74%	73%	72%	73%
2006	78%	68%	69%	70%
2016	66%	75%	69%	70%

Creating jobs in the US				
	REP	DEM	IND	Total
2004	37%	38%	39%	38%
2006	38%	38%	36%	37%
2016	34%	47%	37%	40%

Job security for American workers				
	REP	DEM	IND	Total
2004	30%	29%	33%	31%
2006	30%	30%	31%	30%
2016	30%	41%	33%	35%

Your own standard of living				
	REP	DEM	IND	Total
2004	66%	63%	65%	65%
2006	70%	64%	62%	64%
2016	60%	72%	60%	64%

But since 2006, Democrats have become more optimistic, and Republicans less optimistic, about the impact of trade. In fact, the gap between Democrats' and Republicans' positive assessment on trade's impact on these various dimensions has widened from at most 5 percent in 2004 to double digits in 2016 (the largest gap in the 2016 survey is 17% regarding the US economy). Independents, meanwhile, continue to be more skeptical of the benefits of trade, regardless of which party is in the White House.

Among Republicans, core Trump supporters are considerably less likely than Republicans who supported a non-Trump candidate to say that international trade is good for the US economy (40% core Trump vs. 57% other candidate), consumers like them (54% vs. 73%), and their own standard of living (49% vs. 65%). Among Democrats, those whose top choice for president was Sanders are less likely than Clinton supporters to credit international trade with creating US jobs (51% vs. 41%). But otherwise core Sanders and Clinton supporters agree that international trade is good for the US economy (71% Clinton, 67% Sanders) and their own standard of living (75% Clinton, 70% Sanders).

## Not All Boats Feel Lifted by Trade's Tides

Partisanship is not the only factor influencing the level of support for free trade. Demographic factors such as age, education, race, income and gender also play a role. Younger Americans, the college-educated, those with higher income, and non-whites are generally more likely than other groups to say that free trade is good for the US economy, US companies, consumers and standard of living. But interestingly there are little to no demographic differences on evaluations of free trade's impact on jobs and job security.

Overall, do you think international trade is good or bad for (% good):							
	The US economy	American companies	Consumers like you	Creating jobs in the US	Job security for American workers	Your own standard of living	
18-29	65%	62%	75%	45%	37%	71%	
30-44	61%	56%	74%	41%	34%	66%	
45-59	53%	56%	67%	36%	35%	59%	
60+	56%	57%	66%	38%	33%	63%	
High school grad or less	55%	54%	64%	43%	37%	60%	
Some college/Associates	55%	56%	68%	35%	32%	61%	
College grads	67%	65%	82%	39%	34%	73%	
White, non-Hispanic	54%	55%	68%	33%	30%	61%	
Black, Non-Hispanic	66%	67%	64%	55%	44%	63%	
Other, non-Hispanic	68%	61%	79%	45%	40%	78%	
Hispanic	66%	60%	79%	54%	47%	72%	
\$0-\$20k	53%	52%	63%	46%	43%	56%	
\$20k-\$40k	52%	58%	60%	39%	33%	58%	
\$40-\$75k	58%	58%	67%	38%	34%	61%	
\$75-\$125k	61%	56%	76%	36%	33%	68%	
\$125k+	69%	64%	82%	43%	34%	75%	
Male	61%	62%	73%	41%	35%	66%	
Female	56%	53%	68%	38%	35%	63%	

## Six in Ten Overall Support the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement

Perhaps no other trade agreement has been held up to signify the negative aspects of trade more than the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the trade pact including the United States and twelve Asia-Pacific and Western Hemispheric nations. On August 11 [Hillary Clinton](#) reiterated her opposition to TPP stating, "I oppose it now, I'll oppose it after the election, and I'll oppose it as president." [Donald Trump](#) also has emphatically opposed to the deal declaring, "Not only will the TPP undermine our economy, but it will undermine our independence."

Despite criticism from political figures on both sides of the aisle, six in ten (60%) Americans support the TPP, down slightly from support in 2015 (64%) and 2014 (63%). Specifically, seven in ten Democrats (71%), six in ten Republicans (58%), and a bare majority of Independents (52%) support the trade deal. Among Democrats fewer core Sanders supporters, but still a majority, favor the TPP (56%, vs. 74% of core Clinton supporters). Among Republicans, only half of core Trump supporters (47%) support the TPP, while a majority of those who supported another candidate for president favor signing the deal (58%).

## Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on data from the 2016 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy. The 2016 Chicago Council Survey was conducted by GfK Custom Research using their large-scale, nationwide online research panel between June 10-27, 2016 among a national sample of 2,061 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia.

The margin of error ranges  $\pm 2.2$  to  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points, depending on the specific question. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups (Republicans  $\pm 5.8$ , Democrats  $\pm 5.1$ , Independents  $\pm 5.3$ ) and for analysis of core candidate supporters ( $\pm 7.2$  to 10.3 points among Democrats;  $\pm 7.9$  to 11.2 points among Republicans).

Partisan identification is based on respondents' answer to a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what?"

Respondents were asked two separate questions about voting preferences. The first asked "*If the presidential election were being held today and the candidates were Hillary Clinton, the Democrat or Donald Trump, the Republican, for whom would you vote?*" The response categories were randomized. The second question, which we used to determine core Clinton, Sanders, and Trump supporters asked "*Regardless of your voting preference in the previous question, who was your top choice for president among the following candidates – Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders, Ted Cruz, John Kasich, Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush, or other (specify)?*" These response options were also randomized.

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## About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

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