American Public Opinion and Trade

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Americans overwhelmingly see trade as positive

Record High in U.S. See Implications of Trade as Positive for U.S.

What do you think foreign trade means for America? Do you see foreign trade more as -- an opportunity for economic growth through increased U.S. exports or a threat to the economy from foreign imports?

% Opportunity for growth  % Threat to economy

Source: Gallup, March 2019.
Multiple polls show this trend

Do you think international trade is good or bad for the US economy?

And that’s true of Republicans and Democrats
Here’s another poll saying the same thing

And not just “trade” in general: Americans increasingly say free trade agreements are good for the country

More Americans think tariffs hurt the economy

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Helps</th>
<th>Hurts</th>
<th>No Difference</th>
<th>(Don't know)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-13 Aug 19</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-12 Jun 19</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
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For reference: Recently, the United States increased tariffs or fees on imports from China -- in the long run, do you think this strategy will help the U.S. economy, hurt the economy, or not make much of a difference either way?

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For reference: Recently, the United States increased tariffs or fees on imports from other countries. In the long run, do you think these tariffs will help the U.S. economy, hurt the economy, or not make much of a difference either way?

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Fox News: 46% say tariffs hurt the economy vs 29% say they help (17% underwater in 8/19 vs 11% in 5/19 and 6% in 9/18)

BUT ...

trade just isn’t a priority for most Americans

And it’s been that way for a long time

When you dig into the numbers, it appears most Americans “neither favor nor oppose” trade deals.
CONCLUSION
Americans are pretty favorably inclined toward trade, but it’s not a top priority.

Most view trade as \[(ツ)_/\]

This may account for some of the volatility evident in public opinion on trade over the past decade, with many voters adopting the views of their favored political leaders.

And that makes political leadership on trade even more important.