



# Ipsos Reid Public Affairs

POR-446-07  
Date of Contract: February 27, 2008



## The Americas Survey 2008 Executive Summary – March 2008

**Submitted to:** Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada

**Prepared by:** Ipsos Reid Corporation

DSS File # 08170-070660/001/CY

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**Submitted to:**  
Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada  
Lester B. Pearson Building  
125 Sussex Drive  
2nd floor  
Ottawa (Ontario)  
K1A 0G2  
kevin.chappell@international.gc.ca

Ipsos Reid Public Affairs  
One Nicholas Street,  
Suite 1400  
Ottawa ON K1N 7B7  
Tel: 613.241.5802  
Fax: 613.241.5460  
www.ipsos.com

## Executive Summary

When asked to define the term 'The Americas', most respondents say North America or South America with some mentioning Central America, the United States or even Canada. Those with a higher education or higher income are more likely to mention North America, South America or Central America. Those with little education or lower income are more likely not to be able to offer any answer.

Majorities say Canada's interests are either very or somewhat linked to what happens in the United States, Mexico, South America, Central America and the Caribbean. Canadians overwhelmingly believe that Canada's interests are strongly linked to the United States, with four in five (80%) saying so. Mexico comes in a distant second, with one in four (25%) saying Canada's interests are strongly linked with this country. Just one in ten respondents believes Canada's interests are strongly linked to South America (10%), Central America (11%) and the Caribbean (9%). While respondents do not see a strong link between Canada and South America, Central America or the Caribbean, three in ten believe that what happens in these regions is very important to Canada.

Respondents are twice as likely to mention the impact of economic activity as a reason why they feel that what happens in Central America, South America and the Caribbean is important compared to the next highest mention. Interestingly, the lack of economic activity is also the main reason respondents think it is not important to know what happens in these regions.

Nearly four in five Canadians support strengthening ties with South America (79%), Central America (78%) or the Caribbean (78%). Respondents with a higher education or higher income are even more supportive in this regard.

Most Canadians agree that each of several objectives are important to Canada's foreign policy in Central America, South America and the Caribbean. Dealing with drug trafficking, increasing exports and increasing security are seen as most important, followed by promoting Canadian values like democracy, Canada's aid program and political stability. Objectives focusing on promoting investment in the region and attracting skilled immigrants are seen as less important compared to the others.

## Conclusions

A large proportion of Canadians say that what happens in Central America, South America and the Caribbean is important to Canada. However they do not necessarily see as strong a link with these regions as they do with the United States or with Mexico.

Economic activity is volunteered as the top reason for why what happens in Central America, South America and the Caribbean is important to Canada. Concerns with drug trafficking and the security of Canadians do not emerge as reasons to care about Central America, South America and the Caribbean on an unprompted basis, but are among the three most important objectives in the region when prompted with a list of objectives.

The findings suggest that, while the public are not actively engaged or concerned with Central America, South America or the Caribbean, they agree that the objectives of Canada's foreign policy in Central America, South America and the Caribbean are important. That said, while Canadians do recognize the importance of key region-specific issues, such as drug trafficking and security issues, these are not top-of-mind issues when they are asked to consider why Canada's relations with the region are important.