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# The mixed blessing of NAFTA

**Arizonans and Sonorans lukewarm regarding its impact a decade after its implementation**

**By Tim Steller**

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Ten years after the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect, it provokes more ambivalence among residents of Arizona and Sonora than personal enthusiasm.

Majorities on both sides of the border say NAFTA benefited their home states. But even larger majorities of Arizonans and Sonorans say the accord has not helped them personally.

Those are among the results of a poll on the free trade agreement commissioned by the Arizona Daily Star and El Imparcial, Sonora's largest newspaper. The poll was carried out by El Imparcial's polling unit in March and April.

The poll was part of a larger, six-month collaboration between the two newspapers, examining NAFTA's impact on Arizona and Sonora. Reporters and photographers fanned out across the two states to measure the results of NAFTA, a trade-liberalization pact so hotly contested in the early 1990s that it helped provoke an armed rebellion in southern Mexico.

At that time, NAFTA's detractors argued it would cause massive job losses in American industry and in Mexican agriculture. The accord's supporters said the benefits would blossom especially in the U.S.-Mexican border region, where jobs in international trade would flourish.

The test of those arguments began on Jan. 1, 1994, when the three countries of North America began reducing the tariffs they charge those who ship products across their borders, and started removing other barriers to international commerce.

Some of the reductions took effect immediately. At the outset, for example, the United States eliminated tariffs on Mexican-grown cantaloupes that are imported between Jan. 1 and May 15 each year.

Other barriers are only falling over the long term. Mexican cantaloupes that are imported between May 16 and July 31 each year will be charged a 35 percent tariff until 2009.

Sonorans say the tariff reductions have benefited the United States more than Mexico or Canada. And yet Sonorans are more spirited free-traders than Arizonans. About 76 percent of Sonorans said NAFTA should continue and 73 percent said it should be extended to include the rest of Latin America.

## Arizona and Mexico's major players

Arizona's main cities

PHOENIX

Population: 1,321,045

Average Age: 31

Main economic activity:  
Government, manufacturing

Tucson

Population: 486,699

Average Age: 32

Main economic activity:  
Government, tourism

Nogales

Population: 20,878

Average Age: 30

Main economic activity: Commerce

Douglas

Population: 14,312

Average Age: 31

Main economic activity: Retail

Yuma

Population: 77,515

Average Age: 31

Main economic activity:  
Agriculture, military

Sierra Vista

Population: 37,775

Average Age: 32

About 41 percent of Arizonans polled said the United States benefited most from NAFTA, more than those who picked Mexico (25 percent) or Canada (2 percent). Yet Arizonans are less enthusiastic than Sonorans about extending free trade: 59 percent said NAFTA should continue, and 56 percent said it should be extended to the rest of Latin America.

Main economic activity: Military  
Flagstaff

Population: 52,894  
Average Age: 27

Main economic activity: Education,  
tourism  
San Luis

Population: 15,322  
Average age: 26

Main economic activity: Commerce  
Sonora's main cities

Agua Prieta  
Population: 71,149  
Average Age: 31 years

Main economic activity:  
Manufacturing  
Caborca

Population: 54,038  
Average Age: 29 years

Main economic activity: Agriculture  
and cattle industry  
Ciudad Obregón

Population: 266,087  
Average Age: 30 years

Main economic activity: Business  
and services  
Cananea

Population: 33,528  
Average Age: 31 years

Main economic activity:  
Manufacturing  
Empalme

Population: 41,719  
Average Age: 31 years

Main economic activity:  
Manufacturing  
Guavmas

Population: 103,553

Average Age: 31 years

Main economic activity:  
Manufacturing

Hermosillo

Population: 604,125

Average Age: 31 years

Main economic activity: Business  
and services

Huatabampo

Population: 32,228

Average Age: 30 years

Main economic activity: Agriculture  
and cattle industry

Magdalena

Population: 24,210

Average Age: 31 years

Main economic activity:  
Manufacturing

Nacozari

Population: 12,186

Average Age: 31 years

Main economic activity: Mining

Navojoa

Population: 106,139

Average Age: 29 years

Main economic activity: Business  
and services

Nogales

Population: 184,755

Average Age: 31 years

Main economic activity:  
Manufacturing

Puerto Peñasco

Population: 35,617

Average Age: 30 years

Main economic activity: Business  
and services

San Luis Río Colorado

Population: 148,880

Average Age: 30 years

Main economic activity:  
Manufacturing

Sonoita

Population: 10, 578

Average Age: 29 years

Main economic activity: Business  
and services

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