

Four-in-ten outside Quebec would prohibit women wearing niqabs from receiving government services

Views on substance of Bill 62 vary significantly by region, age, and political leanings

October 27, 2017 – While the [vast majority](#) of Quebecers support their province's new law banning people from providing or receiving government services with their faces covered, new research from the Angus Reid Institute finds that four-in-ten outside of Quebec feel similarly.

Some 40 per cent of residents of Canada's other nine provinces women should be prohibited from visiting government offices while wearing a niqab. A further three-in-ten (31%) say such behaviour should be "discouraged but tolerated," while fewer (28%) say it should be "welcome."

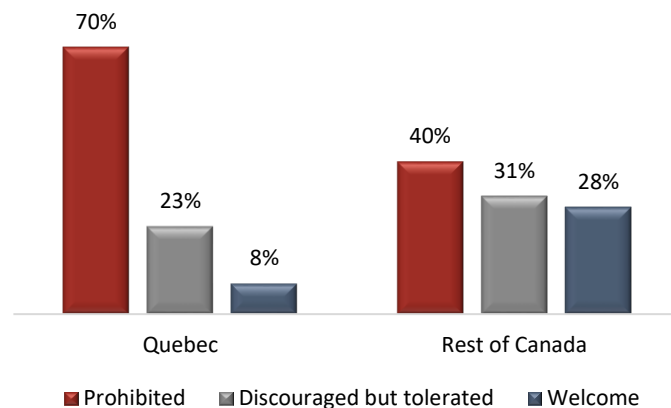
These findings come as reactions to Quebec's Bill 62 pervade Canada's English-language media and Canadians across the country report they are paying close attention to the issue.

Regional and generational differences are key to Canadians views on this topic. Among Quebec residents fully seven-in-ten (70%) say women wearing niqabs should be prohibited from visiting government offices, and only 8 per cent say such people should be welcome. English-speaking regions, meanwhile, are more divided.

More Key Findings:

- More than seven-in-ten Canadians (72%) paying either "some" or "a lot of attention" to this issue
- Outside of Quebec, Alberta and Saskatchewan are the regions most likely to say niqabs should be "prohibited" at government facilities (46% and 52% do, respectively), while Manitoba is the most likely to say they should be "welcome" (41%)

As far as you're concerned, do you personally think the following should be ...
("A woman visiting a government office in a 'niqab' - a veil worn by some Muslim women when they are out in public, covering all of the face except for the eyes")



METHODOLOGY:

The questions discussed in this report come from of online surveys conducted by the Angus Reid Institute, one from October 16 – 23 and one from October 25 – 26, 2017, among representative randomized samples of 1,971 and 1,511 Canadian adults, respectively, who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of the larger size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.2 percentage points, and a probability sample of the smaller size would carry a margin of error of 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The study was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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- There are significant differences on this question by age and past political affiliation as well. A plurality (42%) of those ages 18-34 say niqabs should be “welcome” at government offices, while nearly two-in-three past Conservative voters (62%) favour their prohibition

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Capturing the nation's attention

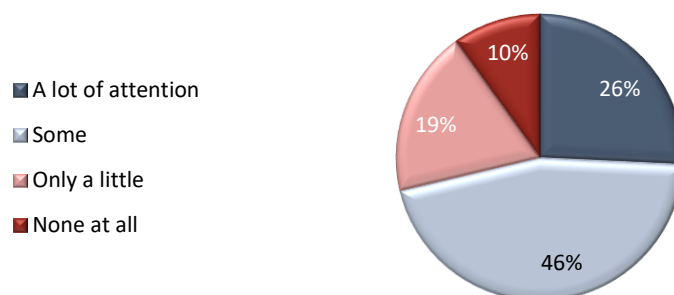
Quebec has been here before. The province's last Parti Québécois government drew [national](#) and [international](#) attention for proposing a “Charter of Values,” that would have prohibited all public employees from wearing “conspicuous” religious symbols while on the job.

Current Liberal Premier Philippe Couillard [campaigning against](#) the PQ's proposed charter during the 2014 provincial election, but his government has since re-ignited the flames of controversy with Bill 62.

In comparison to previous legislation, Bill 62 is more limited in scope, dropping the charter of values' ban on government employees wearing religious symbols, but maintaining its requirement that those providing or receiving government services do so with their faces uncovered.

Like the charter before it, Bill 62 has been widely condemned outside of Quebec. The bill's passage on Oct. 19 prompted a flurry of negative press coverage in English Canada and vaulted the issue into the public consciousness. More than seven-in-ten Canadians (72%) now say they are paying either “some” (46%) or “a lot of attention” (26%) to this issue:

How much attention would you say you have been paying to this issue (Bill 62)?

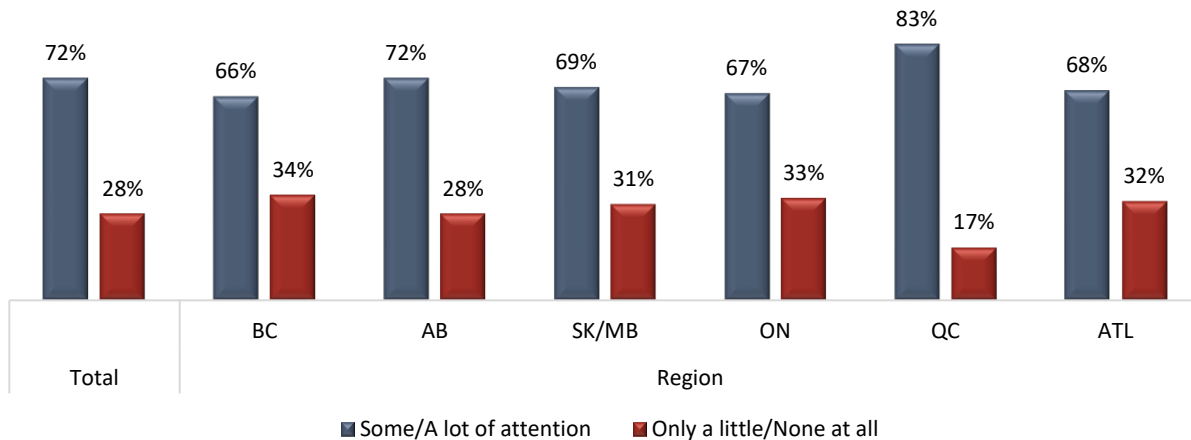


Quebecers are – perhaps unsurprisingly – more likely than residents of other regions to report paying close attention to this debate. That said, at least two-in-three across all other regions are also following the issue closely, as seen in the following graph:

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How much attention would you say you have been paying to this issue (Bill 62)?



This level of engagement with an issue is uncommon in Canada. Past Angus Reid Institute polling has tended to find significantly fewer respondents saying they are following a given topic in the news or paying attention to it. Typically, only major events – such as elections and terrorist attacks – register higher than 70 per cent.

Region, politics inform views

Should a woman wearing a niqab be turned away from a government office unless she uncovers her face and leaves it uncovered?

In many ways, this question is a microcosm of a larger debate about secularism and religious accommodation that has been a part of Quebec politics since the Quiet Revolution. For Quebecers, the answer is, overwhelmingly, “yes.”

Some seven-in-ten in the province (70%) say a woman visiting a government office in a niqab should be “prohibited,” and an even greater number (87%) told the Angus Reid Institute last month that they support Bill 62, the mechanism by which the provincial government would enforce such a prohibition.

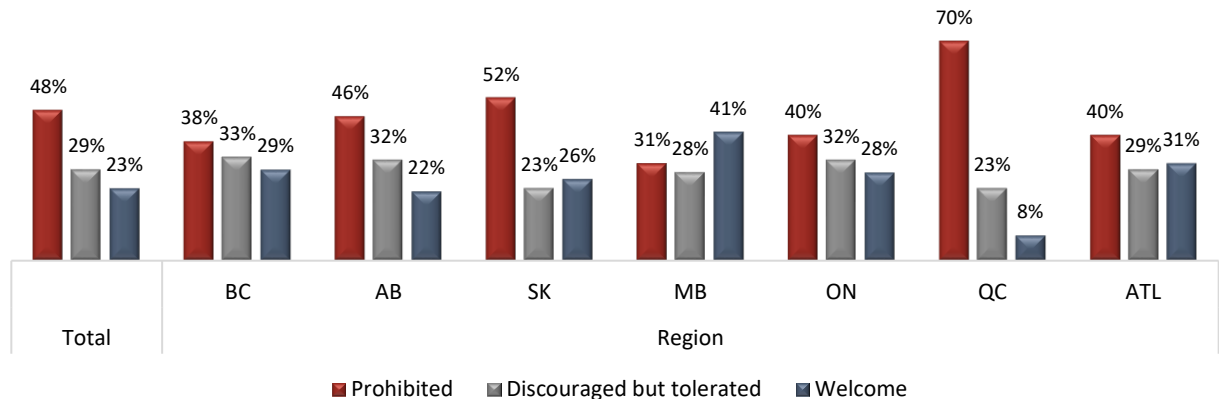
No other region of the country comes close to Quebec's consensus on this issue, but some are more inclined to favour prohibiting women wearing niqabs from receiving government services than others, as seen in the graph that follows. Notably, Manitoba is the only region in which those who say “welcome” outnumber those who say “prohibited.”

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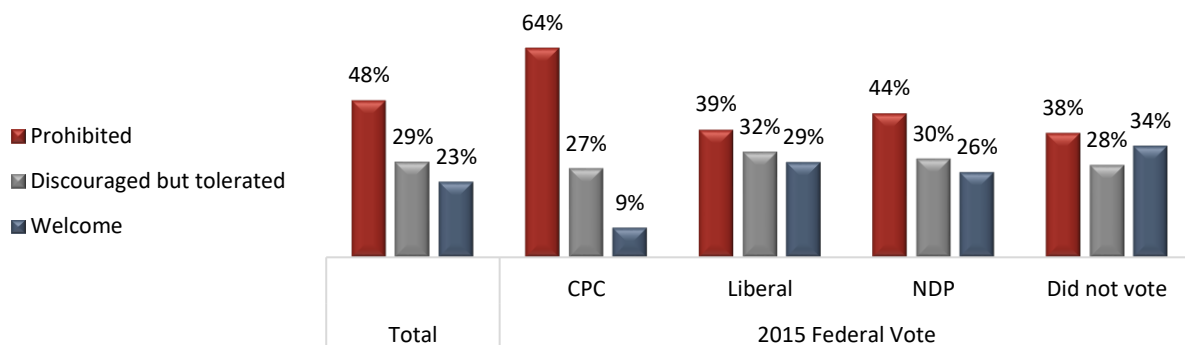


Nearly two-thirds (64%) of those who supported the CPC in 2015 would prohibit women from receiving government services while wearing a niqab, compared to roughly four-in-ten (39%) past Liberals and 44 per cent of past New Democrats who say the same.

The higher number of respondents in Alberta and Saskatchewan who say this behaviour should be prohibited likely reflects the propensity of these provinces to vote for the Conservative Party of Canada in federal elections.

Those who voted for the Liberals or the NDP are three times as likely as those who voted for the CPC to say a woman wearing a niqab should be "welcome." That said, it's notable that most Liberal and NDP voters would either prohibit or "discourage but tolerate" niqabs in government offices.

As far as you're concerned, do you personally think the following should be ... ("A woman visiting a government office in a 'niqab' - a veil worn by some Muslim women when they are out in public, covering all of the face except for the eyes.")



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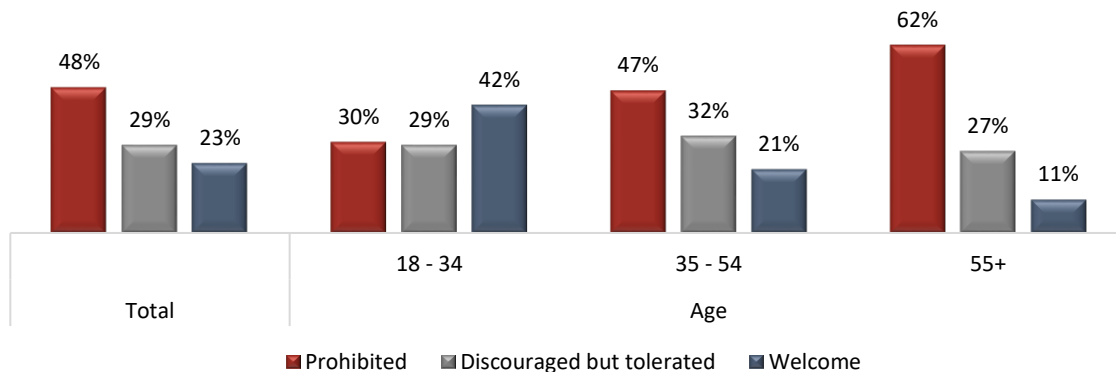
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Generational differences

Another key driver of opinion on this question is age. Younger Canadians (those ages 18-34) are twice as likely as any other age group to say niqab-wearing women should be “welcome” at government offices. Indeed, more young Canadians say this (42%) than say such women should be “prohibited” (30%) or “discouraged but tolerated” (29%).

Other age groups are substantially more inclined to favour prohibition. Nearly half (47%) of the 35-54-year-old group say niqabs should be prohibited at government offices, and more than six-in-ten of those ages 55 and older (62%) say the same:

As far as you're concerned, do you personally think the following should be ... ("A woman visiting a government office in a 'niqab' - a veil worn by some Muslim women when they are out in public, covering all of the face except for the eyes.")



Would Canadians outside Quebec support a similar law?

These findings provide a nuanced look at Canadian opinion on this question of accommodation for Muslim women who cover their faces for religious reasons. In most parts of the country, the majority does not believe such dress should be “welcome” in government buildings.

At the same time, however, most people in most parts of the country stop short of calling for outright prohibition of niqabs and similar face-coverings.

To further illuminate the public opinion landscape on this issue, the Angus Reid Institute also asked respondents outside of Quebec to consider a hypothetical scenario: Suppose their own provincial government was considering legislation similar to Bill 62. If that were the case, would they support or oppose the proposed law?

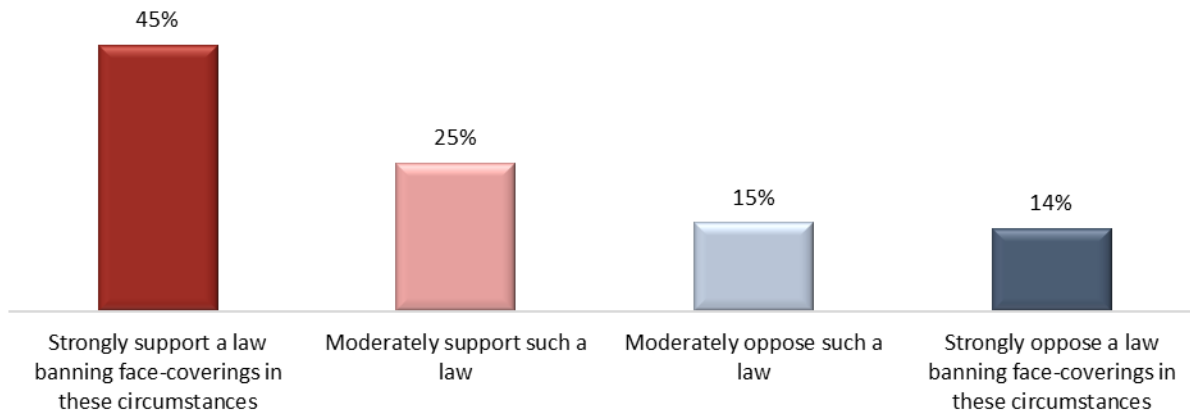
On this question, seven-in-ten (70%) say they would support it, while 30 per cent say they would oppose it.

At first blush, this finding appears to contradict the other findings in this study. Looking at the responses by degree of support, however, a different conclusion emerges:

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And, suppose your own province was considering a similar law requiring people providing or receiving government services to do so with their faces uncovered. Would you support or oppose such a law in your own province?



Some 45 per cent of non-Quebecers say they would “strongly support” a Bill 62-style law in their own province. This roughly correlates to the four-in-ten who would “prohibit” a woman wearing a niqab from receiving government services. Another 25 per cent “moderately support” such a law where they live, a group that roughly correlates to the three-in-ten who say niqabs should be “discouraged but tolerated.”

The three-in-ten respondents who would oppose a law requiring government services to be provided or received with an uncovered face, meanwhile, correspond with the three-in-ten who say niqabs should be “welcome.” See summary tables at the end of this report for responses to this question by region.

It should be noted, of course, that no province other than Quebec has proposed its own version of Bill 62. Indeed, on the day after Quebec adopted its legislation, the Ontario legislature voted unanimously to condemn its neighbour’s bill.

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

Summary tables follow.

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**As far as you're concerned, do you personally think the following should be:
welcome; discouraged but tolerated; or prohibited?**

("A woman visiting a government office in a 'niqab' -- a veil worn by some Muslim women when they are out in public, covering all of the face except for the eyes.")

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1971)	Region	
		Quebec (414)	Rest of Canada (1557)
Prohibited	48%	70%	40%
Discouraged but tolerated	29%	23%	31%
Welcome	23%	8%	28%

**As far as you're concerned, do you personally think the following should be:
welcome; discouraged but tolerated; or prohibited?**

("A woman visiting a government office in a 'niqab' -- a veil worn by some Muslim women when they are out in public, covering all of the face except for the eyes.")

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1971)	Region						
		BC (313)	AB (251)	SK (155)	MB (154)	ON (530)	QC (414)	ATL (154)
Prohibited	48%	38%	46%	52%	31%	40%	70%	40%
Discouraged but tolerated	29%	33%	32%	23%	28%	32%	23%	29%
Welcome	23%	29%	22%	26%	41%	28%	8%	31%

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**As far as you're concerned, do you personally think the following should be:
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(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1971)	Age		
		18 - 34 (571)	35 - 54 (688)	55+ (713)
Prohibited	48%	30%	47%	62%
Discouraged but tolerated	29%	29%	32%	27%
Welcome	23%	42%	21%	11%

**As far as you're concerned, do you personally think the following should be:
welcome; discouraged but tolerated; or prohibited?**

(“A woman visiting a government office in a ‘niqab’ -- a veil worn by some Muslim women when they are out in public, covering all of the face except for the eyes.”)

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1971)	2015 Federal Vote			
		CPC (438)	Liberal (681)	NDP (324)	Did not vote (229)
Prohibited	48%	64%	39%	44%	38%
Discouraged but tolerated	29%	27%	32%	30%	28%
Welcome	23%	9%	29%	26%	34%

As you may be aware, Quebec's National Assembly recently passed a law – called "Bill 62" – that requires all people providing or receiving government services to do so with their faces uncovered. The law effectively prohibits Muslim women from wearing a niqab or burka while working for local or provincial governments in Quebec or interacting with them.

How much attention would you say you have been paying to this issue?

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1511)	Region					
		BC (216)	AB (179)	SK/MB (86*)	ON (537)	QC (350)	ATL (143)
A lot of attention	26%	21%	21%	21%	21%	39%	19%
Some	46%	46%	51%	47%	46%	43%	49%
Only a little	19%	18%	17%	17%	23%	14%	18%
None at all	10%	16%	12%	14%	10%	3%	14%

And, suppose your own province was considering a similar law requiring people providing or receiving government services to do so with their faces uncovered. Would you support or oppose such a law in your own province?

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1511)	Region					
		BC (216)	AB (179)	SK/MB (86*)	ON (537)	QC (350)	ATL (143)
Strongly support a law banning face-coverings in these circumstances	45%	41%	46%	44%	47%	-	44%
Moderately support such a law	25%	20%	25%	25%	28%	-	23%
Moderately oppose such a law	15%	14%	18%	18%	14%	-	18%
Strongly oppose a law banning face-coverings in these circumstances	14%	25%	11%	13%	11%	-	16%

*small sample size

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