

M-103: If Canadians, not MPs, voted in the House, the motion condemning Islamophobia would be defeated

Three-in-ten say the motion is 'a threat to Canadians' freedom of speech' and should not be passed

March 23, 2017 – As Parliament prepares to vote on the anti-Islamophobia motion that has been part of the national discourse for months, a new public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute finds that, if Canadians and not their elected representatives were voting, M-103 would fail.

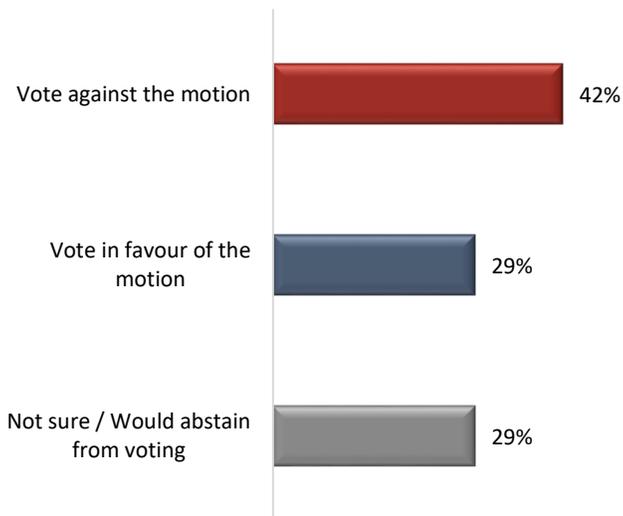
More than four-in-ten Canadians say they would vote against the motion condemning “Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination”, while fewer than three-in-ten would vote for it. A sizeable number – nearly one-third – say they are not sure or would abstain from voting.

This finding comes from a public split on the larger significance of anti-Muslim attitudes and discrimination in society. Half say it's not necessary for government to condemn Islamophobia, and 55 per cent say the problem of anti-Muslim sentiments in this country has been “overblown” by politicians and the media.

Key Findings:

- Canadians are split between believing anti-Muslim attitudes and discrimination are “a serious problem” (45%) and believing that they have been “overblown” by politicians and the media (55%)
- Three-in-ten (31%) say M-103 should not be passed because it is “a threat to Canadians’ freedom of speech”
- Canadians who voted for the governing Liberal Party are divided on how they would vote on this motion, which was put forward by a Liberal MP. Past Conservative voters are more unified in opposing M-103 (68% would vote against it)

If you were a Member of Parliament, how would you vote on this motion (M-103)?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 13 – 17, 2017, among a representative randomized sample of 1,511 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this 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 survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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How would Canadians vote?

M-103 was originally tabled by Liberal MP Iqra Khalid, a Muslim, in the fall of 2016. It was brought forward for debate in February following the mass shooting at a mosque in Quebec City's Sainte Foy neighbourhood. The motion requests that the government:

- “Recognize the need to quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear”
- “Condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination”
- “Request the heritage committee study” the development of “a government-wide approach to reducing or eliminating systemic racism and religious discrimination, including Islamophobia”
- “Collect data to contextualize hate crime reports and to conduct needs assessments for impacted communities and present findings within 240 calendar days”

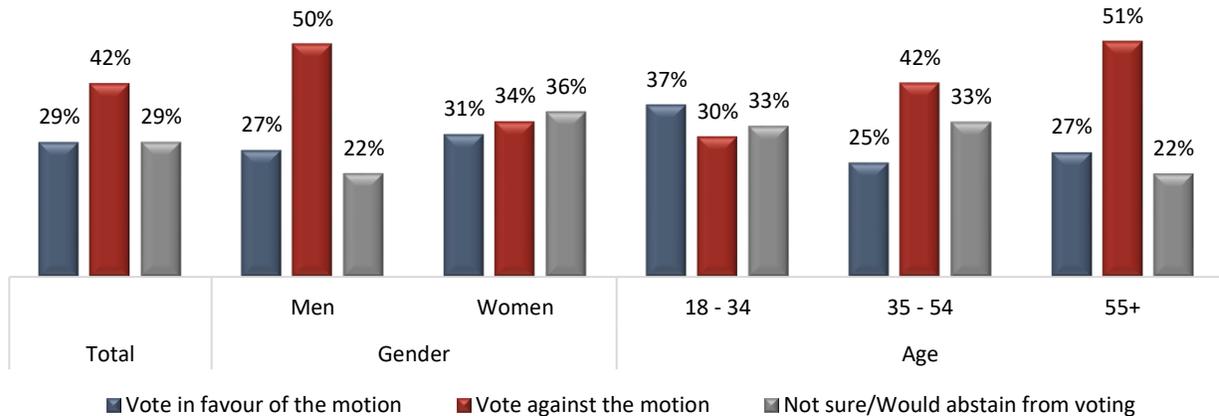
The motion has drawn a [significant backlash](#) from members of the opposition Conservative Party, as well as from the general public. Protests against the motion – and counter-protests in favour of it – have been held across the country, [sometimes turning violent](#).

Some M-103 opponents [argue that it singles out one religion](#) – Islam – for special treatment by using the word Islamophobia in its text. Conservative MPs [offered an amendment](#) that would have removed the reference, but it was defeated.

Others argue that M-103 is more seriously problematic. In the motion's condemnation of Islamophobia, they see [a potential stifling](#) of legitimate critiques of Islam as a religion, and thus an violation of free speech rights.

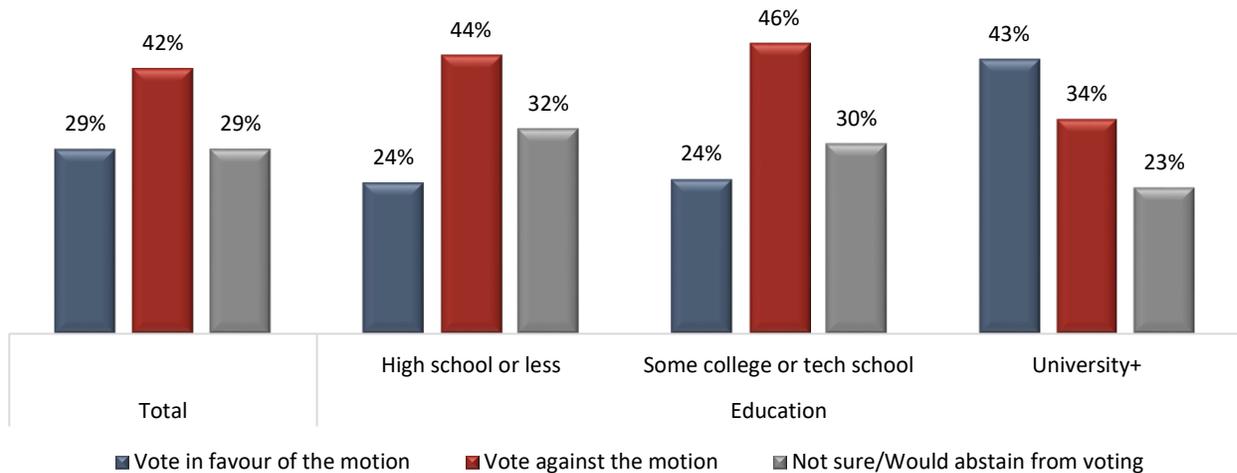
Whether because of these arguments or others, many Canadians appear reluctant to support Khalid's motion. Asked if they would vote for or against M-103 they themselves were members of Parliament, the largest group of respondents (42%) say they would vote against it. However, there are significant age and gender differences in how Canadians would vote:

If you were a member of Parliament, how would you vote on this motion (M-103)?



Education also appears to be a factor in how Canadians would vote on M-103. Those with at least a university degree are more likely to say they would vote for the motion (43%) than to say they would vote against it (34%). Among those with lower levels of formal education, opposition to the motion is the more widely held view:

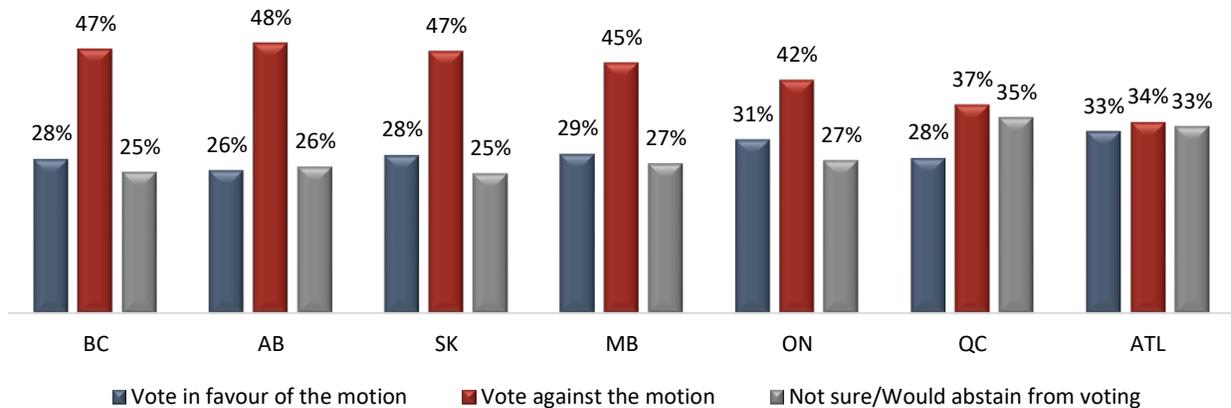
If you were a member of Parliament, how would you vote on this motion (M-103)?



Regionally, opposition to the motion is the most common view across Canada, but Quebecers and Atlantic Canadians are less firm in their opinions, as seen in the graph that follows.

Quebec's softer-than-average stance on M-103 stands in contrast to the province's recent history of expressing [suspicion of minority groups](#), and Muslims in particular.

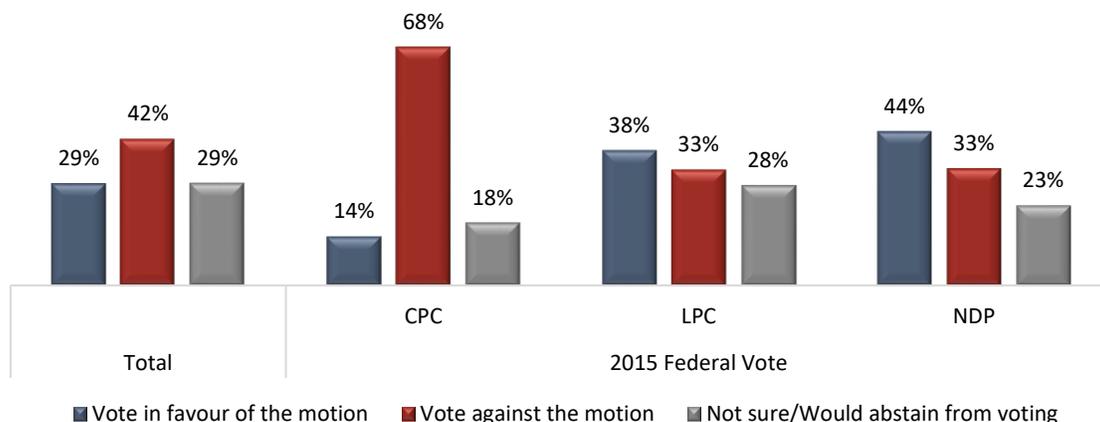
If you were a member of Parliament, how would you vote on this motion (M-103)?



Conservative MPs have led the opposition to M-103 in Parliament, and they do so with the backing of more than two-thirds of the voters who put them in office. Some 68 per cent of those who voted for the CPC in 2015 say they would vote against M-103.

Notably, past Liberal voters are substantially more tepid in supporting the motion that originated on the governing party's backbenches than past Conservative voters are in opposing it. Fewer than two-in-five Liberals (38%) say they would vote in favour of the motion, while fully one-in-three (33%) would vote against. Past New Democratic Party supporters are also less-than-united in their views:

If you were a member of Parliament, how would you vote on this motion (M-103)?



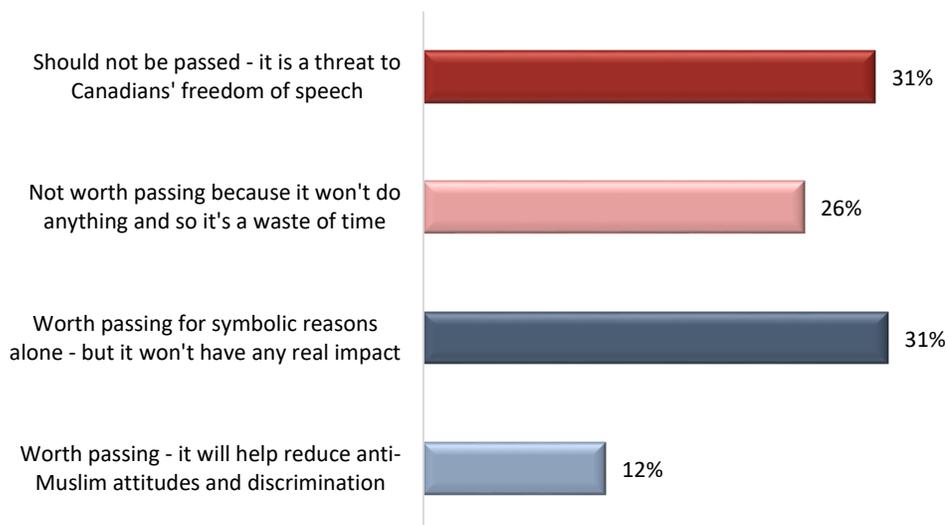
Most say M-103 is not worth passing

Much of the debate over the motion has hinged upon the idea of free speech. Opponents have suggested that this is one step on the path to criminalizing those who speak out against religious practices. Proponents have countered by stating that the hatred and discrimination of Muslims in Canada is a growing problem that needs to be addressed, and have also pointed out that a similar motion denouncing anti-Semitism was passed in 2015 with little controversy.

The largest group of Canadians who oppose the motion fall into the category of those concerned about the alleged precedent it may set for free speech. Three-in-ten (31%) say that this is the reason M-103 should not be passed, while a slightly smaller group who favour rejection say that it simply will have no effect.

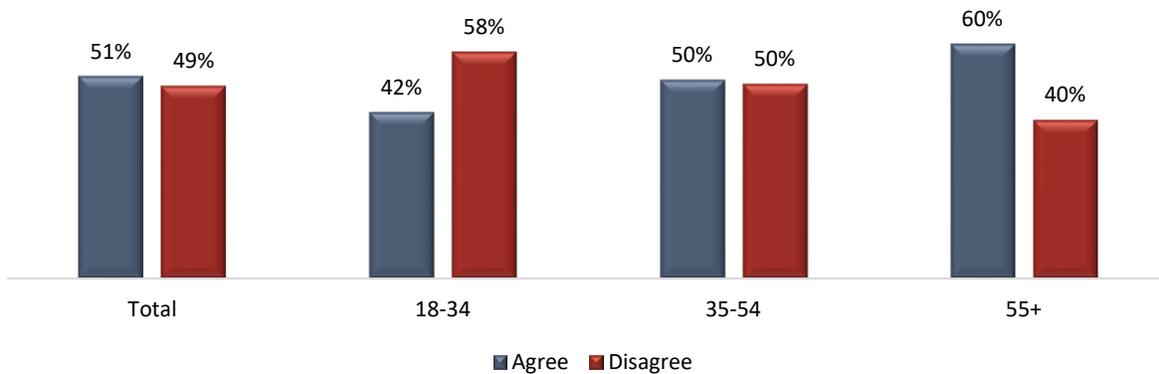
Just one-in-ten (12%) Canadians say that the motion will have a tangible impact on how Canadians view the Muslim community. This group says that this type of action by government can help to reduce anti-Muslim attitudes and discrimination. They are joined on the pro-M-103 side by three-in-ten (31%) Canadians who say that even if the motion will not have any real impact, its symbolic value is worth the effort.

Which of the following statements is closest to your own opinion on this motion, M-103?



In a broader sense, Canadians are split over whether it is the federal government's place to condemn Islamophobia, as Motion 103 does. Asked to agree or disagree with a statement to this effect, 51 per cent agree, and 49 per cent disagree. Younger Canadians – those between the ages 18 and 34 – are more likely to say it is necessary for the government to voice condemnation (58%), while those over 55 are equally as likely to say the opposite (60%):

**Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
"It is not necessary for the Canadian government to condemn Islamophobia"**

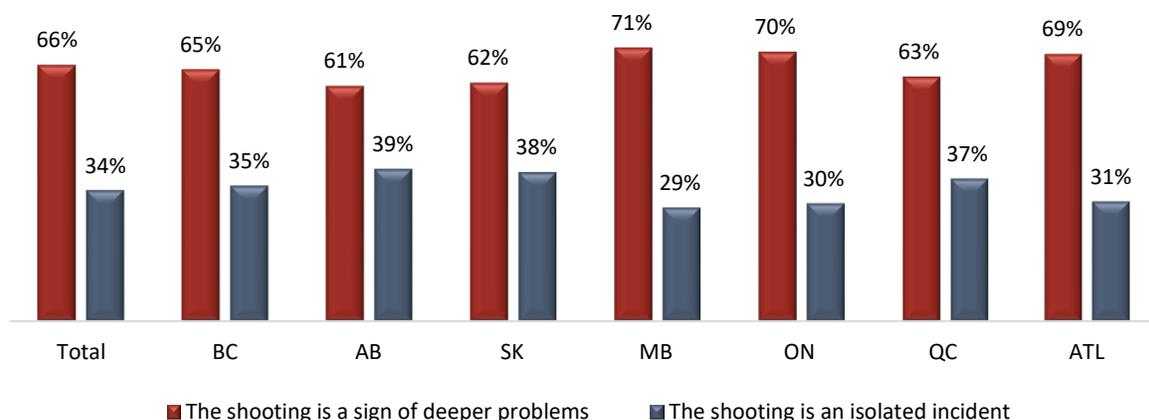


Is anti-Muslim sentiment a deeper issue in Canada?

The event that brought this issue to the minds of many Canadians and their government representatives was the Sainte Foy shooting in January of this year. Six people were killed while worshipping at a Mosque in the Quebec City neighbourhood. The 27-year-old shooter was apparently known for anti-feminist, anti-foreigner positions among his circle of acquaintances.

Considering the shooting, two-thirds of Canadians (66%) say they are inclined to believe that this is a sign of a deeper problem in Canadian society, while the rest say it was an isolated incident. Quebec, Alberta and Saskatchewan are the provinces most likely to voice the minority position, though at least six-in-ten residents in all regions say there are deeper issues involved here.

Which of these two viewpoints is closer to your own?

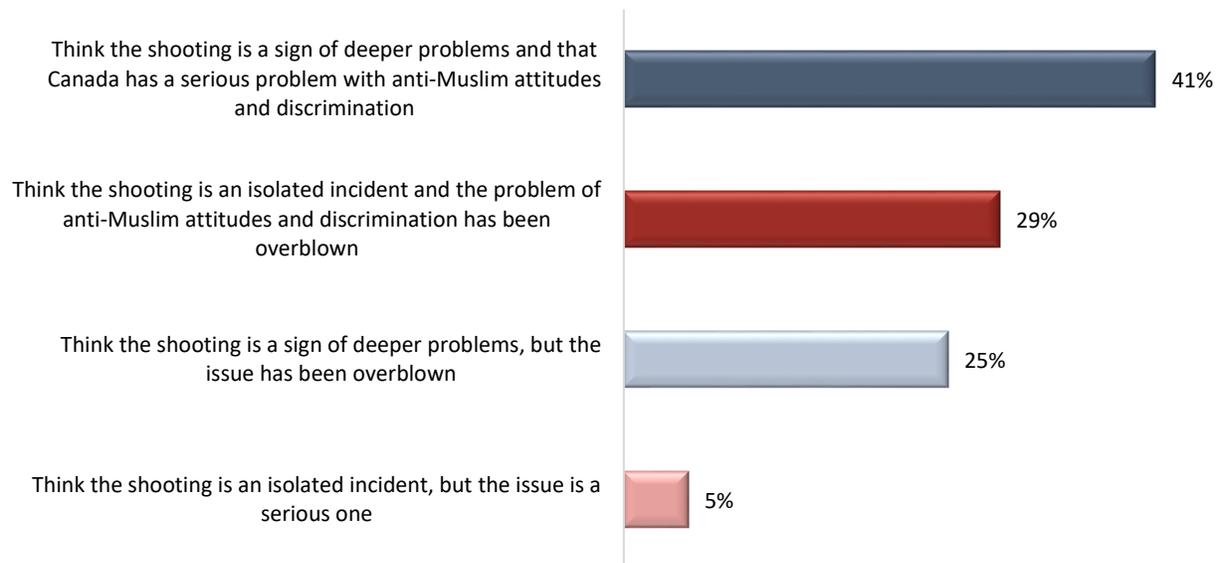


While Canadians are more likely to say that the shooting is a sign of a deeper problem, they don't necessarily agree that it warrants the level of attention it has received in recent months. In fact, asked a broader question about the prevalence of anti-Muslim attitudes and discrimination in Canada, a small majority (55%) say the problem has been overblown by politicians and the media.

These two seemingly contradictory findings – that most Canadians think the Sainte Foy shooting is a sign of deeper problems in society, but most also think that the problem of anti-Muslim sentiments is overblown – become more understandable when the two questions are looked at in tandem.

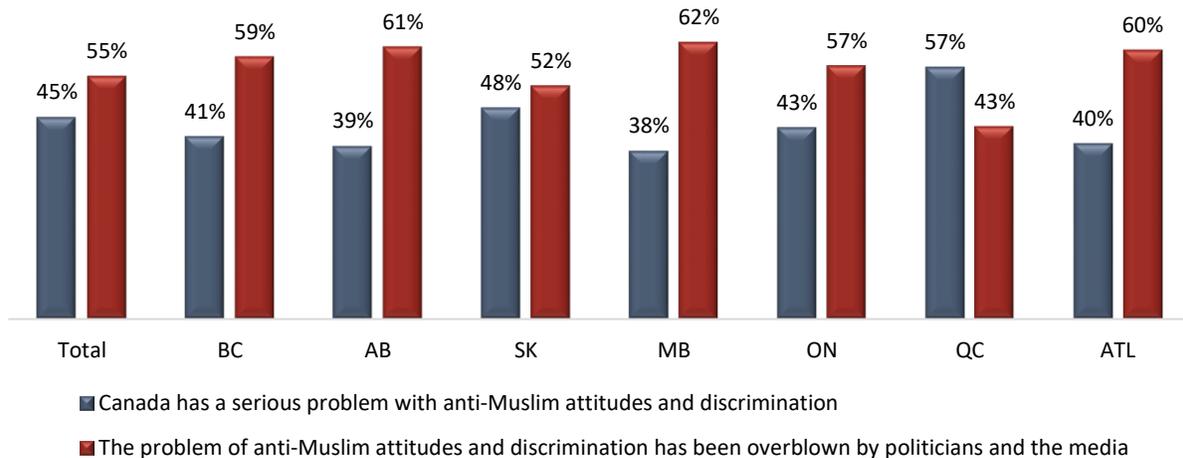
As seen in the graph that follows, Canadians are divided into four groups on this issue, including one-in-four (25%) who believe Sainte Foy is a sign of something deeper, but that the issue has still been overblown:

Four mindsets on the Quebec City shooting and anti-Muslim attitudes in Canada:



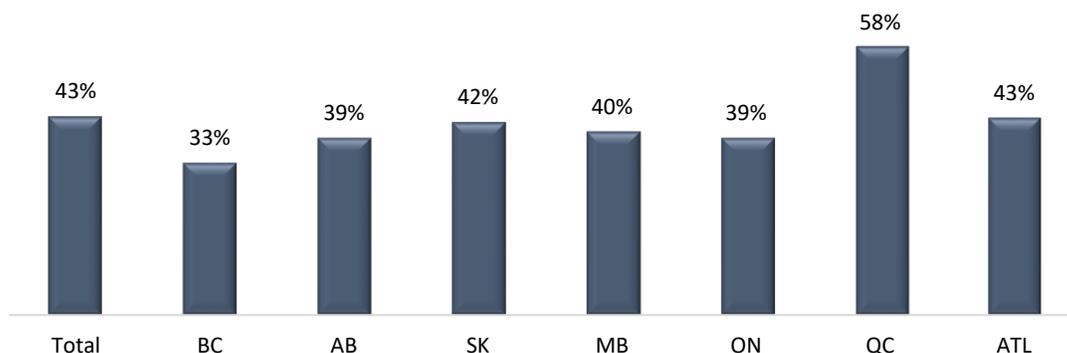
Interestingly, Quebec is the only region where the idea that anti-Muslim sentiments have been overblown is a minority opinion:

Which of these two views is closer to your own?



Quebecers' views on this question may partially be explained by their responses to another question posed in this survey. Almost six-in-ten Quebec residents agree with the statement "lots of people I know are distrustful of Canadian Muslims." No other region expresses majority agreement with this statement, suggesting that Quebec residents' view that the problem is serious may be correlated with higher levels of exposure to anti-Muslim rhetoric:

Percentage who agree with the statement: "Lots of people I know are distrustful of Canadian Muslims"



While relatively few Canadians outside of Quebec say they know a lot of people who are distrustful of Canadian Muslims, most respondents to this survey do agree that "Canadian Muslims face a lot of discrimination in their daily lives." Some six-in-ten (61%) feel this way, including higher numbers of women and younger respondents (68% of each group, [see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

*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 organization 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.*

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).