

Religious Trends: Led by Quebec, number of Canadians holding favourable views of various religions increases

Judeo-Christian symbols viewed as acceptable in public life by most – majority reject Niqab, Burka

April 4, 2017 - Canada is often held up as the paragon of a diverse society. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has proclaimed that “[diversity is Canada’s strength](#)”.

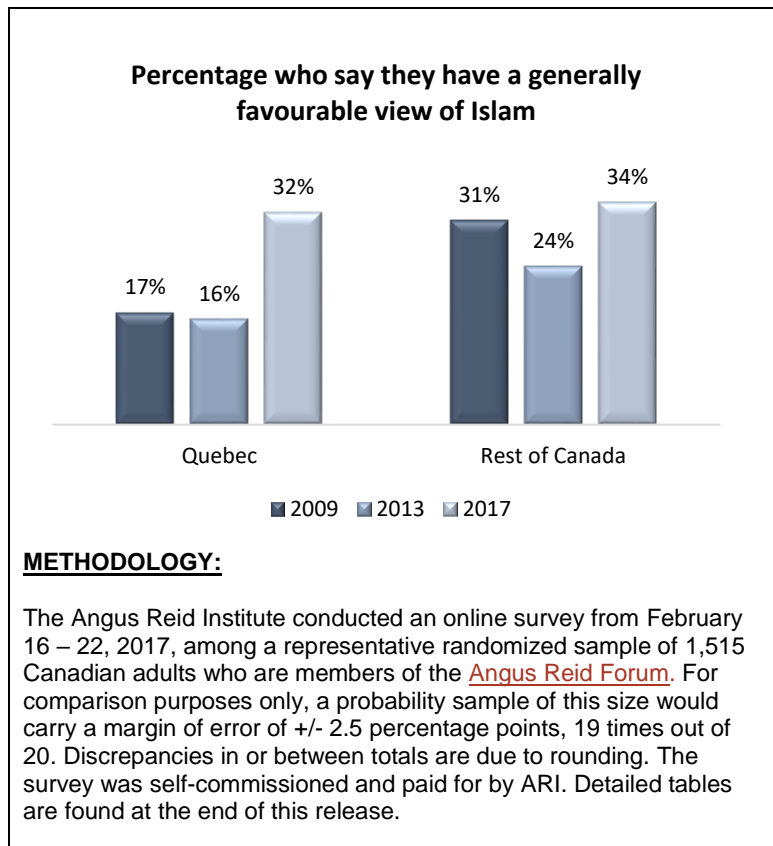
A new study from the Angus Reid Institute finds not only support for, but also limitations to that narrative when it comes to both faith and the visible role of religious symbols in society.

While a strong majority of Canadians are inclined to view the Christian and Buddhist religions favourably, a number of other faiths are viewed with more skepticism. In a climate rife with [conversations about Islamophobia](#), Islam itself is viewed unfavourably by almost half of Canadians (46%). A similarly negative sentiment is found when discussing religious clothing associated with that faith – the Burka and Niqab.

Though Canadians view the Muslim faith with a lower degree of favourability than other religions, this survey reveals an important trend: In both Quebec and the rest of Canada, an increase in favourability from multiple previous waves of reporting has pushed positive opinion to one-third. In Quebec, this represents a doubling of the number of residents who view the religion in a positive light over the past four years.

Key Findings:

- One-in-three Canadians support a person wearing the Niqab (32%) or the Burka (29%), while a strong majority support wearing the Nun’s Habit (88%), Kippah (85%), Turban (77%) or Hijab (75%)



CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

- The percentage of Quebec residents saying they hold a favourable view of Islam has doubled since 2009 from 15 per cent to 32 per cent. Views of four other religions, Sikhism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Hinduism, have all increased in favourability over that time in *la belle province*
- More than eight-in-ten Canadians say it would be acceptable for their child to marry someone who practices Christianity, while this number drops to below two-thirds for the five other major religions canvassed.

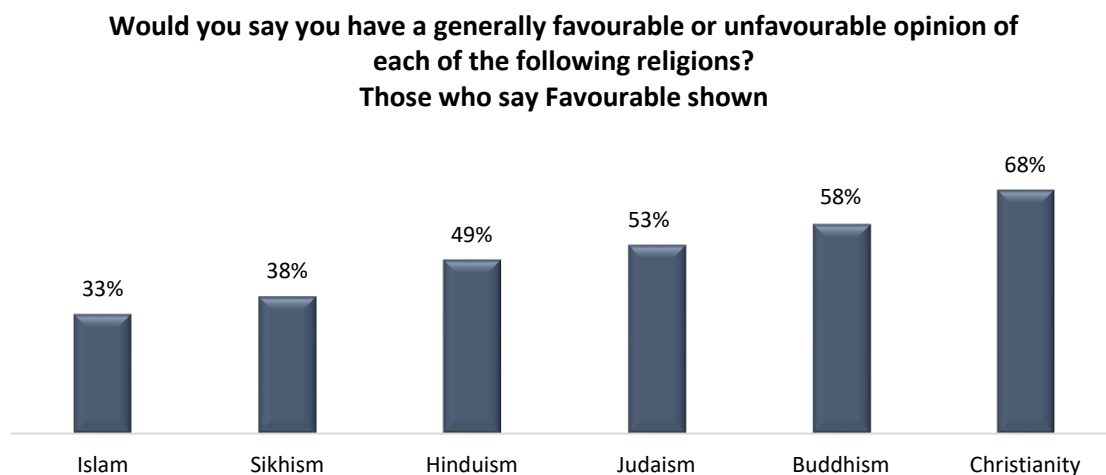
Index:

- Positivity and skepticism toward religion
- Comparing Quebec and the rest of Canada
- Comfort with religious 'inter-marriage' increasing
- Religious clothing and symbols in public life

Positivity and skepticism toward religion

Canada's religious landscape is changing. Before 1971, just 2.9 per cent of those who immigrated to this country said they followed either Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism. Between 2001 and 2011 that number jumped to one-in-three (33%). Thus, Canadians are increasingly encountering different perspectives in their day-to-day lives. While multiculturalism has been Canada's official policy since 1971, recent research indicates recent research indicates that many hope to see new immigrants do more to integrate into what they would consider "mainstream" Canadian society.

Within this shifting environment, two-thirds of Canadians (68%) say they view Christianity favourably, but this number drops by ten points for the next closest faith – Buddhism. Approximately half say the same of Judaism and Hinduism, while far fewer are positive about Islam and Sikhism:

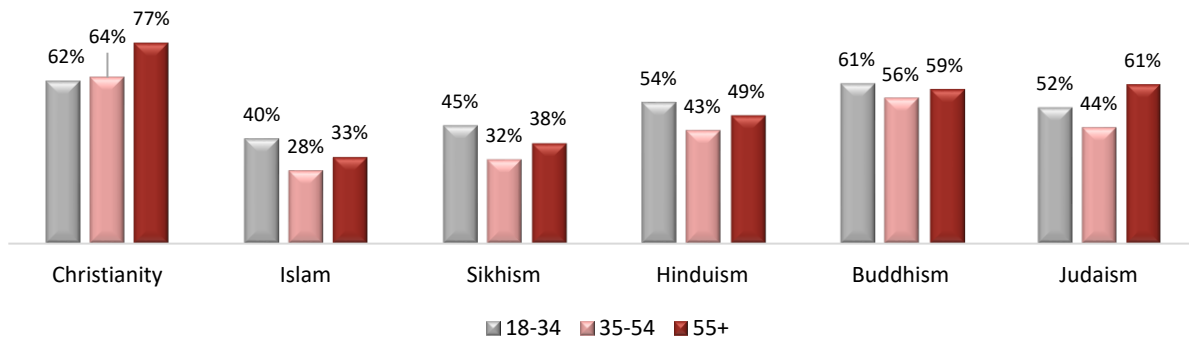


CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

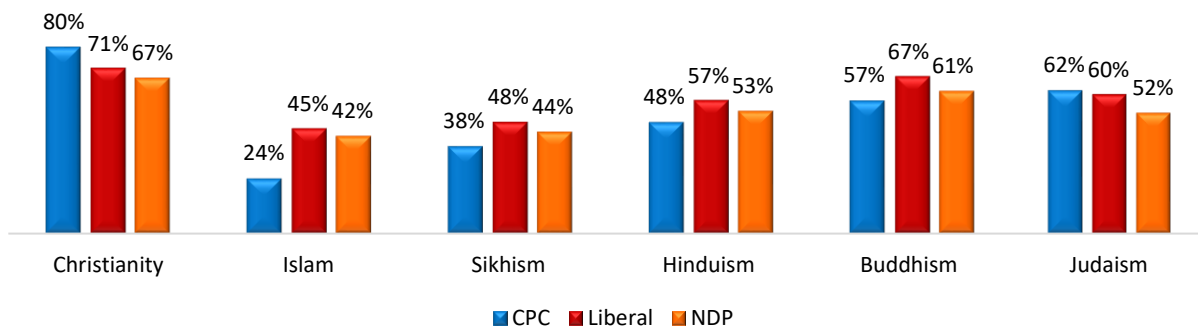
Older Canadians, those over the age of 55, hold a more favourable view of both Christianity and Judaism than their younger compatriots, while Millennials hold are more likely to favour Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism and Hinduism than older cohorts:

**Would you say you have a generally favourable or unfavourable opinion of each of the following religions?
Those who say Favourable shown**



Political ideology is also a significant factor in how Canadians view each of these religions. Past Conservative Party voters are less favourable to faiths other than Christianity and Judaism. Meanwhile, Liberal- and NDP-aligned Canadians are almost twice as likely to hold a favourable view of the Muslim faith:

Would you say you have a generally favourable or unfavourable opinion of each of the following religions?



Comparing Quebec and the rest of Canada

Quebec has been the focus of conversations about religious diversity in Canada in recent years. The [January shootings](#) at a mosque in Quebec City's Sainte Foy neighbourhood brought light to this again,

CONTACT:

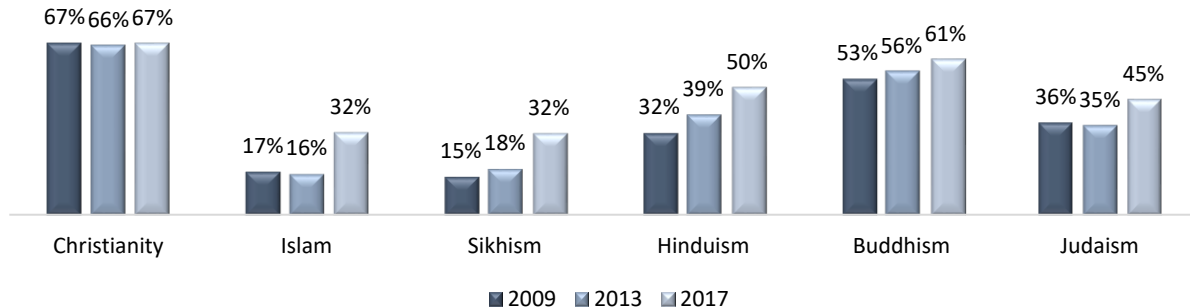
Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

but this is by no means the first anti-Muslim tension the province has dealt with. In the wake of this high-profile act of violence, the Angus Reid Institute finds that favourability towards Islam – and a number of other religions for that matter – has increased in Quebec.

A noticeable trend emerges when comparing tracking data on Quebecers opinions of various religions from 2009, 2013 and 2017. While the number of those who say they view Christianity favourably has held steady at two-thirds in each of the three waves, the percentage who say the same of Islam doubled between 2013 and 2017 from 16 to 32 per cent. This, after holding close to that same one-in-six proportion going back to 2009:

Would you say you have a generally favourable or unfavourable opinion of each of the following religions?

Percentage saying Favourable in Quebec



As seen in the preceding graph, a comparable increase is noted with respect to Sikhism and Hinduism, with smaller increases in favourability for Buddhism and Judaism.

Similar corresponding decreases are found in the number of Quebec residents saying they hold an unfavourable view of each faith other than Christianity (seem summary tables at end of release).

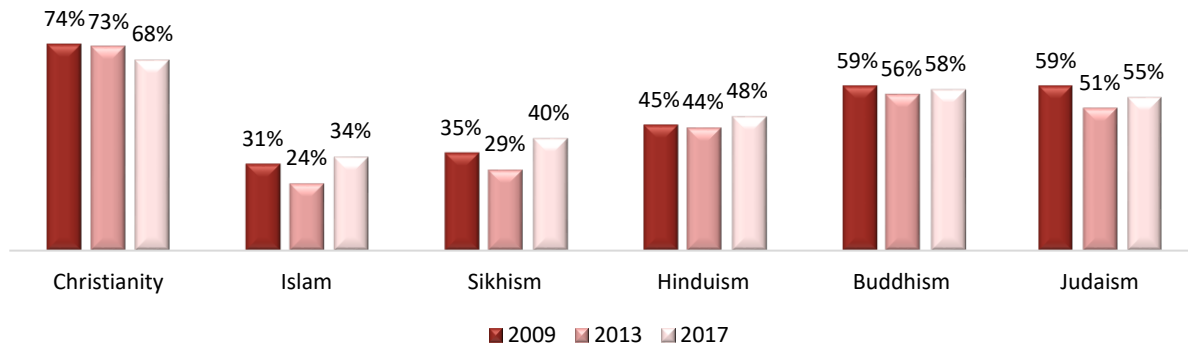
While the rise in favourability of Islam in the rest of Canada is less striking, it is nonetheless noteworthy. In 2013 the Angus Reid Institute found just one-quarter of Canadians viewed the religion favourably, down seven points from 2009. The total number holding that opinion now has risen above 2009 levels to just over one-in-three (34%), and the stark regional disparity between Quebec and the rest of Canada has seemingly disappeared.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Would you say you have a generally favourable or unfavourable opinion of each of the following religions?

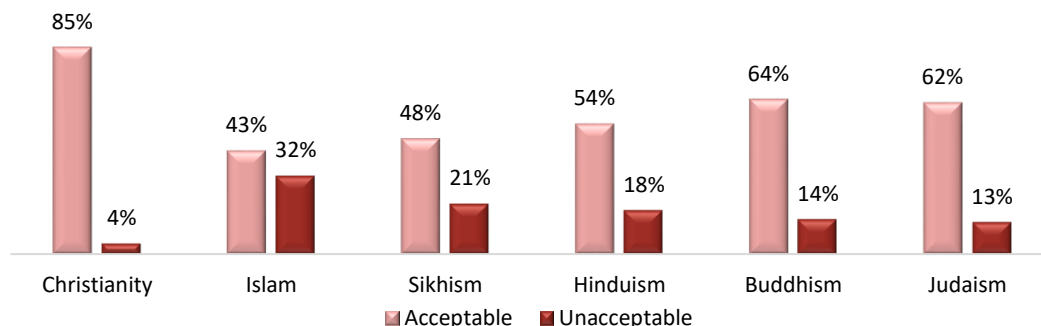
Percentage saying Favourable in Rest of Canada



Comfort with religious 'inter-marriage' increasing

Consider the more intimate prospect of family integration: how would Canadians feel if one of their children were to marry a partner from another faith? As with favourability, there are clear preferences among the Canadian public. Very few say they would not be accepting of their child marrying a Christian, but that number rises to one-in-five for a Sikh (21%) and one-in-three for a Muslim (32%).

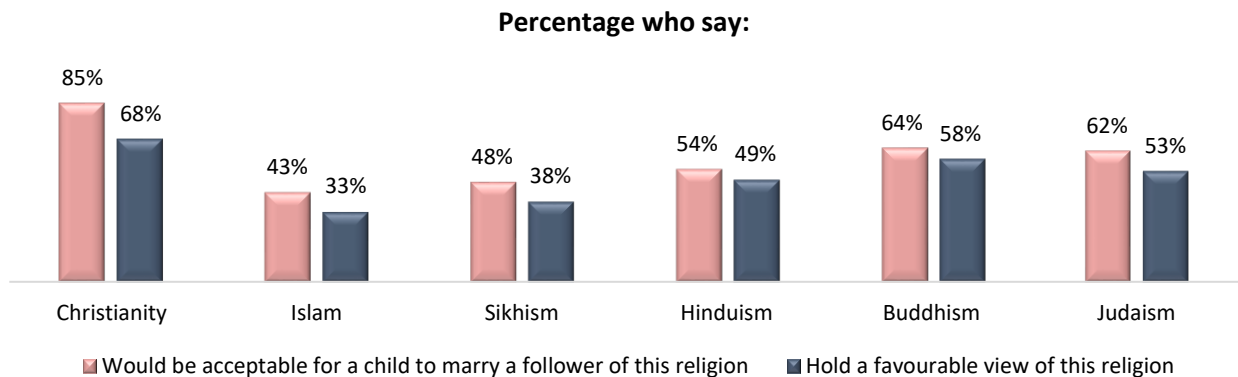
Would it be acceptable or unacceptable to you if one of your children were to marry a person who was a follower of any of these religions?



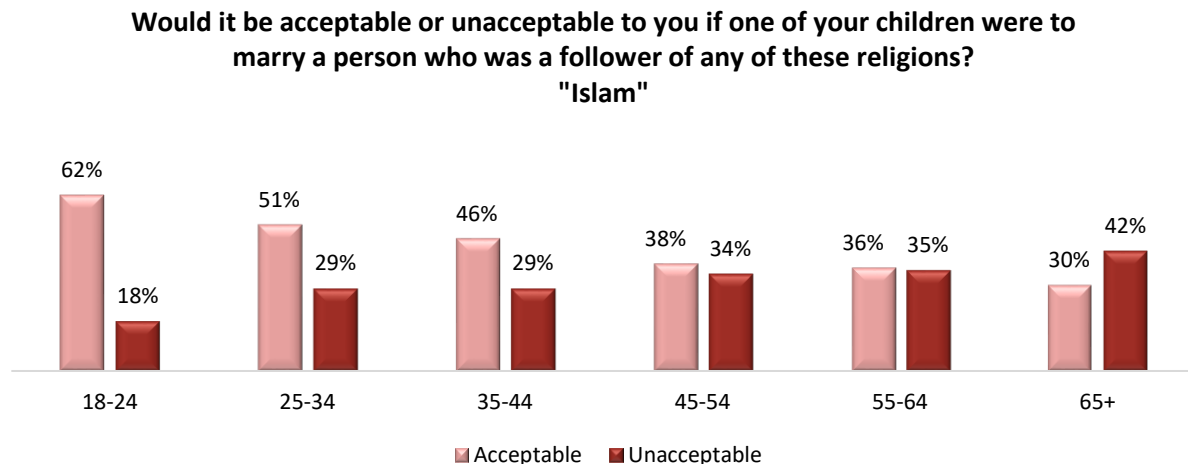
Interestingly, perhaps because this question requires a closer examination of beliefs and personal relationships, respondents are more likely to say they would accept intermarriage from a given faith than they are to say they have a favourable view of that faith. This suggests that, at least among a portion of Canadians, their attitude toward a certain faith would not necessarily colour their view of a person of that faith joining their family. Consider the side by side comparison in the graph that follows:

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org



The generational story here is particularly illuminating. Among Canadians under the age of 44, a much larger proportion say they would view an intermarriage with a person of Islamic faith as acceptable, including a ratio of more than three-to-one (62% acceptable to 18% unacceptable) for those 18 to 24 years of age. Canadians 45 to 64 years of age are divided evenly, while a plurality of those over 65 are opposed to the idea:



Alberta and Quebec residents are most opposed to the idea of their child marrying someone who follows Islam – 41 per cent in each province say that they find the idea unacceptable. At least one-in-five respondents from each region voice this opinion.

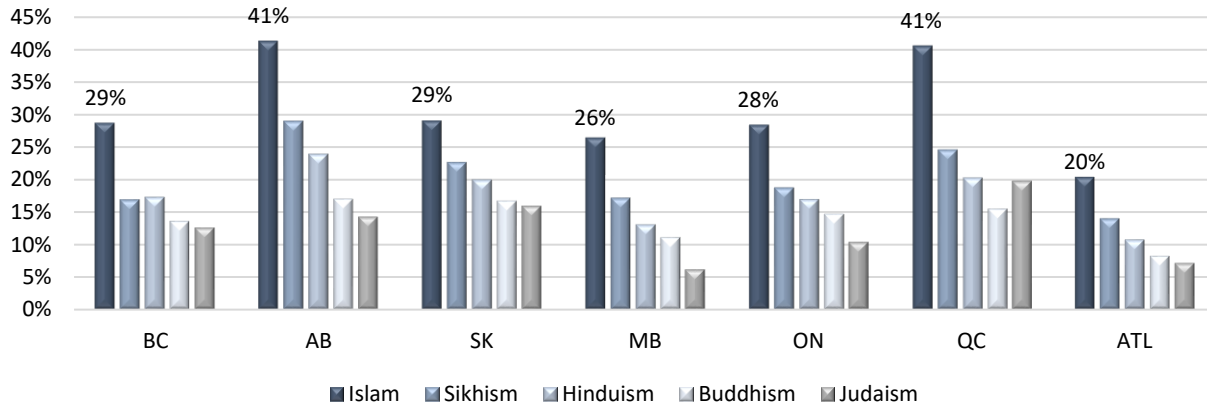
Atlantic Canadians are, on average, the most accepting when considering each of the other religions canvassed. This openness mirrors the enthusiasm [recently noted](#) in Atlantic Canada for increasing refugee targets.

Related: [Open-door policy? Majority support government decision not to increase 2017 refugee targets](#)

CONTACT:

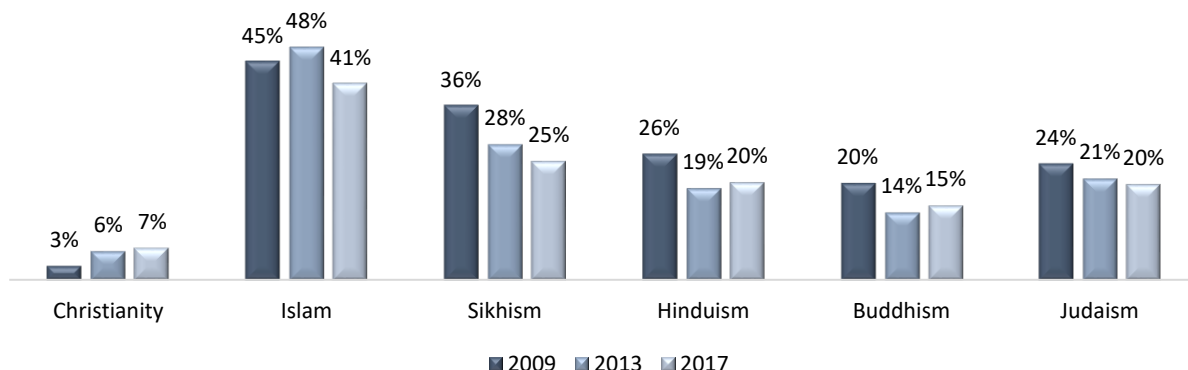
Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Would it be acceptable or unacceptable to you if one of your children were to marry a person who was a follower of any of these religions?
Percentage who say Unacceptable shown



The same warming of opinion toward Islam in Quebec does not appear to hold when responding to this question. While favourability of Islam doubled from previous reporting waves, the number saying it would be unacceptable for their child to marry a follower of the religion is down just four points from 2009. All religions other than Christianity have seen a decrease in opposition in that province:

Would it be acceptable or unacceptable to you if one of your children were to marry a person who was a follower of any of these religions?
Percentage saying Unacceptable in Quebec



Religious clothing and symbols in public life

Canada has seen its share of debate over religious symbolism and clothing in secular society. Indeed, the question of a person's right to wear a niqab during citizenship swearing in ceremonies became a subject

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

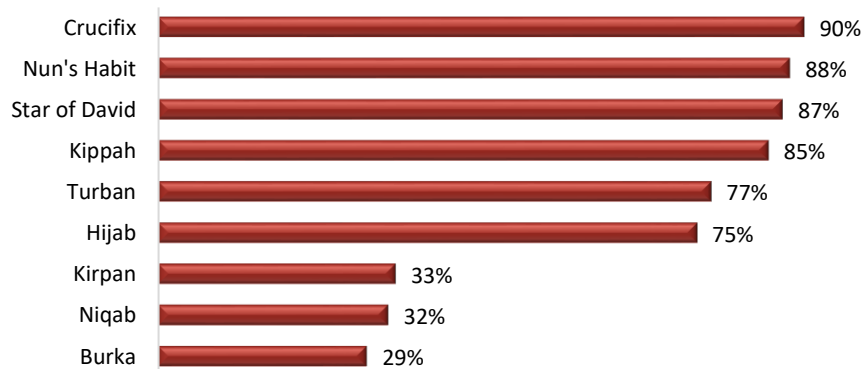
of debate during the 2015 election, when Stephen Harper's government lost an appeal to ban the garment – which covers the face but leaves the eyes exposed – from such ceremonies in September of that year.

The debate is by no means restricted to Canada. More than 30 municipalities in France banned the “burkini” in 2016, before being overturned by a top administrative court. The Court Justice of the European Union recently ruled that employers can lawfully ban religious clothing or symbols in the workplace as long as the rule is applied to “any political, philosophical or religious sign.”

Canadians, for their part, would likely take umbrage with a number of religious items being banned, but not others. The niqab and the burka (a full face and body covering), both of which are worn by some Muslim women, are the two most-opposed forms of religious dress. Roughly three-in-ten Canadians are supportive of each.

Judeo-Christian symbols, the crucifix, nun's habit, kippah and Star of David, are supported by more than eight-in-ten:

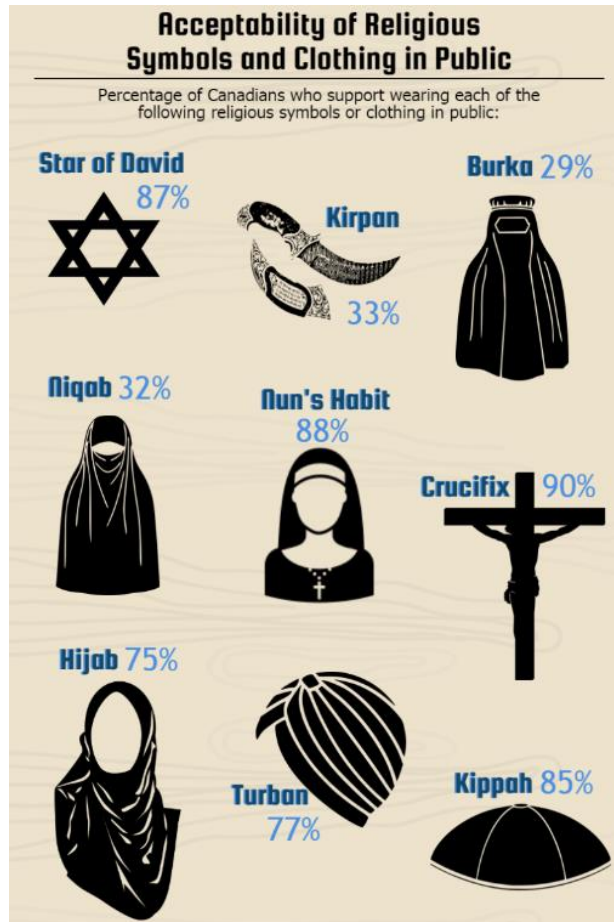
Do you support or oppose people wearing each of the following religious symbols or clothing in public?



For clarification, an infographic is attached that shows a visualization of each symbol or article of clothing:

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

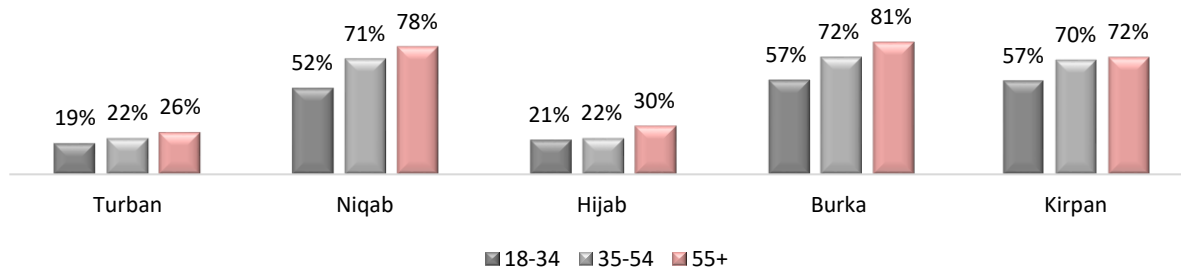


Large portions of each age group voice opposition to each of the non-Judeo-Christian symbols presented. With respect to the most contested pieces of dress – the niqab, the burka, and the kirpan – half of Millennials oppose. This is a much more *laissez-faire* view than that of elder generations:

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

**Do you support or oppose people wearing each of the following religious symbols or clothing in public?
Those who Oppose shown**



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.

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

For detailed results comparing Quebec and the rest of Canada, [click here](#).

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Do you support or oppose people wearing each of the following religious symbols or clothing in public? (Summary of Support)		
(weighted sample sizes)	Nov 2014 (1607)	Feb 2017 (1515)
Turban	N/A	77%
Hijab	73%	75%
Nun's Habit	88%	88%
Burka	N/A	29%
Niqab	27%	32%
Kippa	80%	85%
Kirpan	29%	33%
Star of David	86%	87%
Crucifix	89%	90%

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Would you say you have a generally favourable or unfavourable opinion of each of the following religions/spiritual paths?

(Summary of Favourable)

(weighted sample sizes)	Sept 2013 (1014)	Feb 2017 (1515)
Christianity	71%	68%
Islam	22%	33%
Sikhism	26%	38%
Hinduism	42%	49%
Buddhism	56%	58%
Judaism	47%	53%

Would it be acceptable or unacceptable to you if one of your children were to marry a person who was a follower of any of these religions?

(Summary of Acceptable)

(weighted sample sizes)	Sept 2013* (1014)	Feb 2017 (1515)
Christianity	76%	85%
Islam	27%	43%
Sikhism	30%	48%
Hinduism	37%	54%
Buddhism	48%	64%
Judaism	47%	62%

* These options included a Not Applicable option

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl

Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250-899-0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org