

## Quebec Politics: Major support for Bill 62, far less approval for government's handling of border issues

*A significant number of Quebecers say each issue will be a key consideration in next year's election*

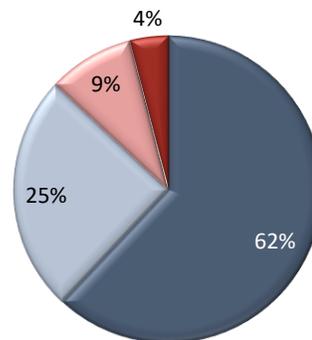
**October 4, 2017** – With roughly a year to go before the next provincial election, Quebec residents are overwhelmingly supportive of their current government's efforts to ban the receiving or administering of public services with a covered face, but most disapprove of its response to this summer's surge in irregular border-crossings.

According to the Angus Reid Institute's latest analysis of quarterly public opinion polling data, some one-in-five Quebecers say each of these issues will be "one of the most important" when making their decision on who to vote for in 2018.

On religious accommodation, fully six-in-ten Quebecers "strongly support" the proposed law that critics – particularly those elsewhere in Canada – say [amounts to discrimination](#) against Muslim women.

There is much less consensus in Quebec society around the provincial government's handling of the border issue. Some 60 per cent disapprove of Premier Philippe Couillard's response to the situation, a total slightly higher than the number who disapprove of the premier's performance overall (54%).

Based on whatever you've seen or heard about Bill 62, would you say you support or oppose it?



■ Strongly support   ■ Moderately support  
■ Moderately oppose   ■ Strongly oppose

### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute analyzed the results of an online survey conducted from September 5 – 19, 2017, among a representative randomized sample of 609 Quebec residents who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). The survey data were donated by MARU/Matchbox. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

**[Related: Premiers' Performance: As Horgan enters office on a high, Wall is set to depart on top](#)**

### More Key Findings:

- Bill 62 enjoys majority support across all demographic groups, but it is less well-liked among respondents under age 35 and the province's anglophone minority

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- Quebecers are more than four times as likely to “strongly disapprove” of their government’s response to the border-crossing issue as they are to “strongly approve” of it (37% versus 8%, respectively)
- Asked to think about how these two issues will influence their voting intentions next year, one-in-five Quebecers say each will be a deciding factor when making their decision next year during the provincial election. Close to four-in-ten say each will be one of a few issues they take into account

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## Bill 62: Overwhelming support for religious neutrality bill

The religious neutrality legislation [currently being debated](#) in the National Assembly is only the latest in a series of efforts to codify the Quebec’s longstanding commitment to the separation of church and state, and to determine what accommodations – if any – should be made to orthodox religious minorities living in the province.

The previous Parti Québécois government’s ill-fated [Charter of Values](#) sought to enshrine the secularism that has pervaded Quebec politics since the Quiet Revolution by prohibiting all public employees in the province from wearing “conspicuous” religious symbols while on the job. Angus Reid polling from 2009 [found significant support](#) for such a requirement, and later polling in 2013 found Quebecers believing their society was “[too accommodating](#)” of religious practices.

Couillard’s Liberal Party won the 2014 election after [campaigning against](#) the proposed charter, and his government’s introduction of Bill 62 – which addresses some of the same issues – has [raised eyebrows](#) outside the province.

In comparison to previous legislation, Bill 62 is more modest in scope, prohibiting only face-coverings such as niqabs and burkas, but extending the prohibition to people receiving public sector services, as well as those public employees administering them. Like previous efforts, Bill 62 has [caused controversy](#), with recent amendments extending the face-covering prohibition to municipal governments and transit authorities prompting [sharp criticism](#) from Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre.

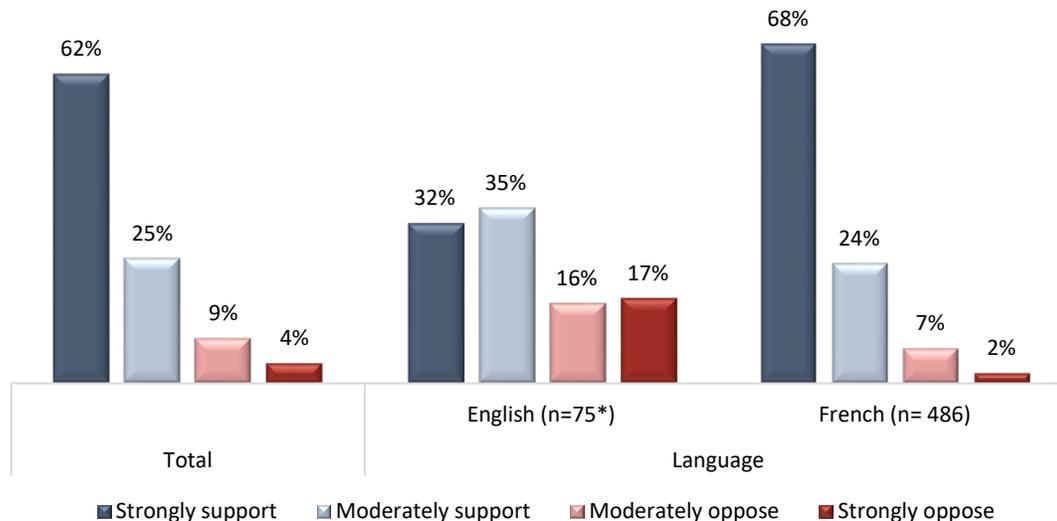
So, where do Quebecers stand? This polling data finds the vast majority of them strongly in favour of the proposed law, with francophone respondents especially supportive:

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**Based on whatever you've seen or heard about Bill 62, would you say you support or oppose it?**



\*small sample size

Overall support among French-speakers tops nine-in-ten (91%), while it reaches two-in-three (67%) among anglophones. Note the relatively small number of mother-tongue-English-speakers in the province. Roughly [10 per cent](#) of Quebecers name English as their primary language.

This greater enthusiasm for the legislation among francophones is likely related to Quebec's historical position as a distinct society within Canada, with its own culture, traditions, and norms. Being majority French-speaking is a key component of this distinct Quebec culture, of course, and so is believing that the state must remain explicitly secular. Insofar as Bill 62 is perceived to maintain or enhance that secularity, it may also be perceived as maintaining or enhancing Quebecois culture.

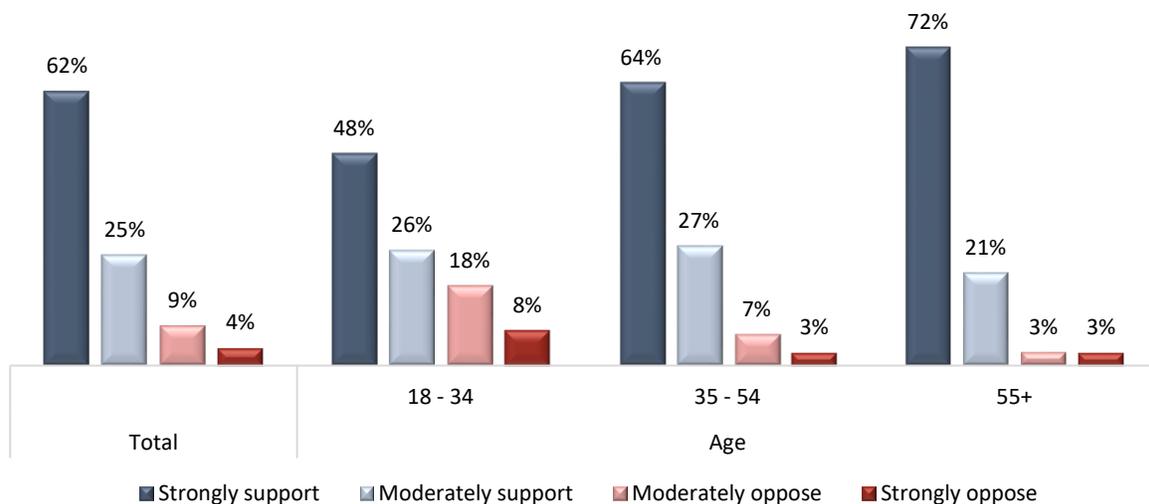
That said, [many critics](#) – especially those [outside the province](#) – have argued support for the bill could also be rooted in racism and xenophobia.

Younger Quebecers (those ages 18 – 34) are more tepid in their support for the legislation, as seen in the graph that follows, though they still support it by a three-to-one margin (74% to 26%) overall.

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**Based on whatever you've seen or heard about Bill 62, would you say you support or oppose it?**



## **Border crossings: Dissatisfaction with Couillard government's response**

While the National Assembly debates religious accommodation in Quebec City, the province's southern border has spent much of 2017 as the epicentre of a debate about a different sort of accommodation.

More than 13,000 people [have crossed the border](#) outside of official border crossings to seek asylum in Canada this year, and the vast majority of those have done so in Lacolle, Que.

Walking across the border outside of an official point of entry allows would-be refugees to circumvent the Safe Third Country Agreement, which prohibits people who are already in the United States from making a refugee claim in Canada – the idea being that the U.S. is a safe country and they should make their claim there instead. Those who try to enter Canada from the U.S. at an official border crossing or airport and claim asylum will be turned away under the agreement, but if they arrive in Canada without going through an official crossing, they are allowed to submit a refugee claim.

The number of irregular border-crossings peaked in August, when hundreds of people crossed daily. The situation led some MPs [to call for the suspension](#) of the Safe Third Country Agreement, while others [called for the designation](#) of the Lacolle crossing as an official point of entry, which would allow Canada to turn away the asylum seekers who arrived there.

The border issue has become a subject of political debate in Quebec as well, with Couillard [appealing to residents'](#) "deep sense of equality and compassion" for the new arrivals, while also discouraging would-be refugees from crossing the border illegally and assuming their applications for status will be approved.

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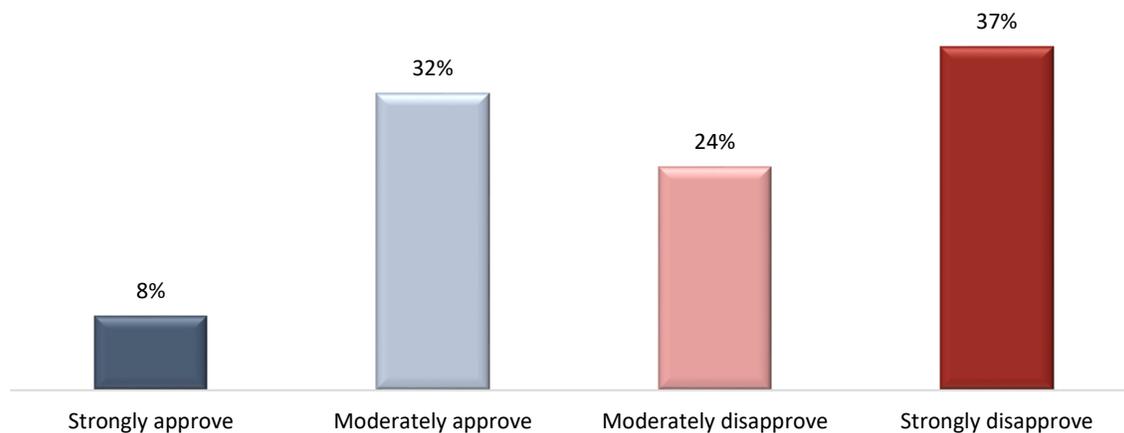
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Opposition parties have criticized the government's handling of the situation, arguing that an independent Quebec would have greater control over its border and could abandon the Safe Third Country Agreement, which would make the process more orderly.

Asked for their opinion, most Quebec residents say they disapprove of the provincial government's handling of the situation, including a plurality who "strongly disapprove," as seen in the following graph:

**Overall, based on whatever you've seen or heard about this issue, would you say you approve or disapprove of the Quebec government's handling of this surge in the number of people crossign the border illegally?**



The 60 per cent who disapprove of the Quebec government's handling of the situation echo the sentiments expressed nationally about the federal government's response. When the Angus Reid Institute asked all Canadians about the issue in August, close to six-in-ten (57%) said they disapproved of the Trudeau government's handling of the situation.

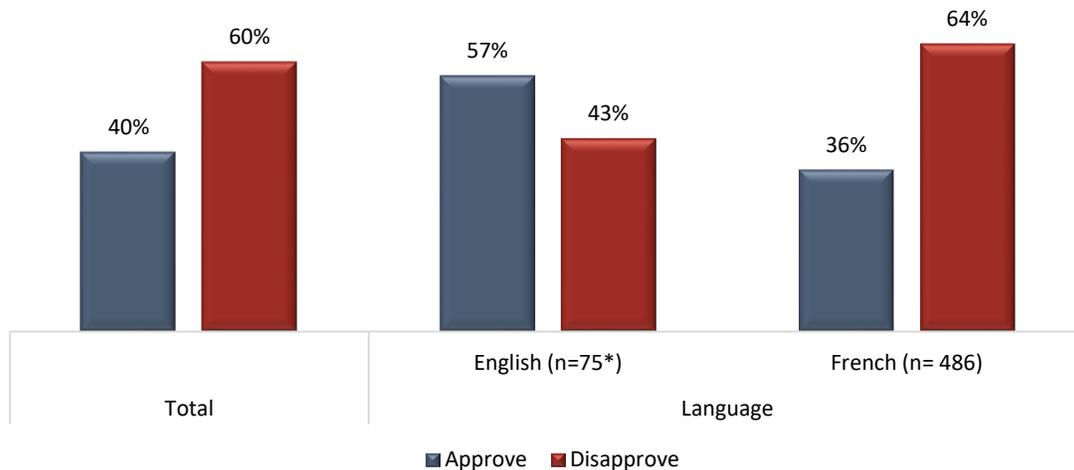
**Related: Half of Canadians say their country is 'too generous' toward illegal border crossers**

Again, language is a significant fault-line on this issue within Quebec. A majority (57%) of English-speaking Quebecers approve of the Couillard government's response to the surge in irregular border-crossings, while nearly two-thirds of francophones (64%) *disapprove*:

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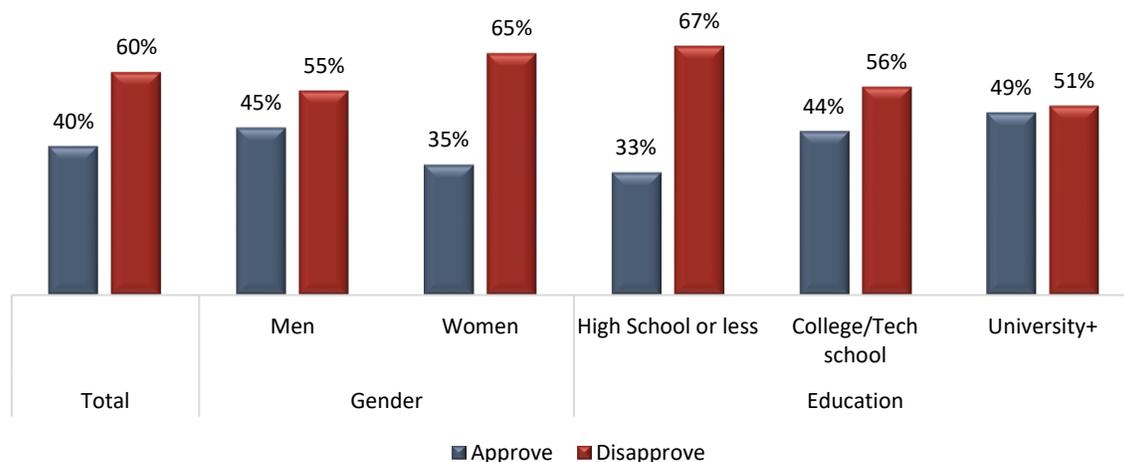
**Would you say you approve or disapprove of the Quebec government's handling of this surge in the number of people crossing the border illegally?**



\*small sample size

There are also notable differences on this question along educational and gender lines, with men and those with university degrees more likely to approve of the government's performance:

**Overall, based on whatever you've seen or heard about this issue, would you say you approve or disapprove of the Quebec government's handling of this surge in the number of people crossing the border illegally?**



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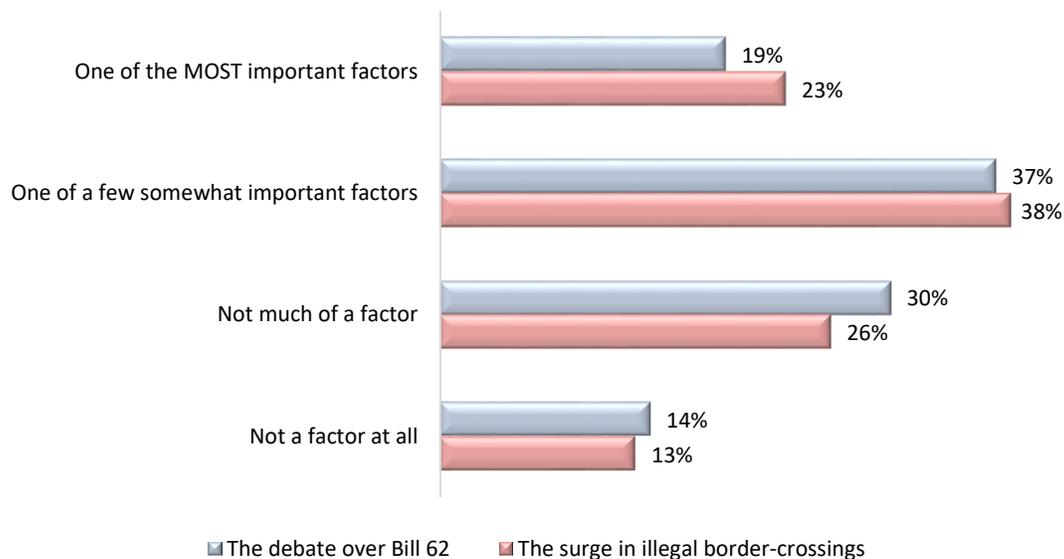
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## Vote Dynamics: Will these issues be a factor in 2018?

Asked what effect each of these issues – Bill 62 and irregular border-crossings – will have on their vote in the 2018 Quebec election, one-in-five (19%), say Bill 62 will be “one of the most important factors” in the decision of which party to support. Nearly one-in-four (23%) say the same of the border issue.

Fewer than one-sixth of respondents say either issue will not be a factor in their vote, and the plurality view in each case is that the topic will be part of a suite of “somewhat important” issues that come to mind when entering the voting booth:

### How much of a factor do you expect each of these issues to be for you, personally, when deciding which party's candidate to vote for in the 2018 Quebec election?

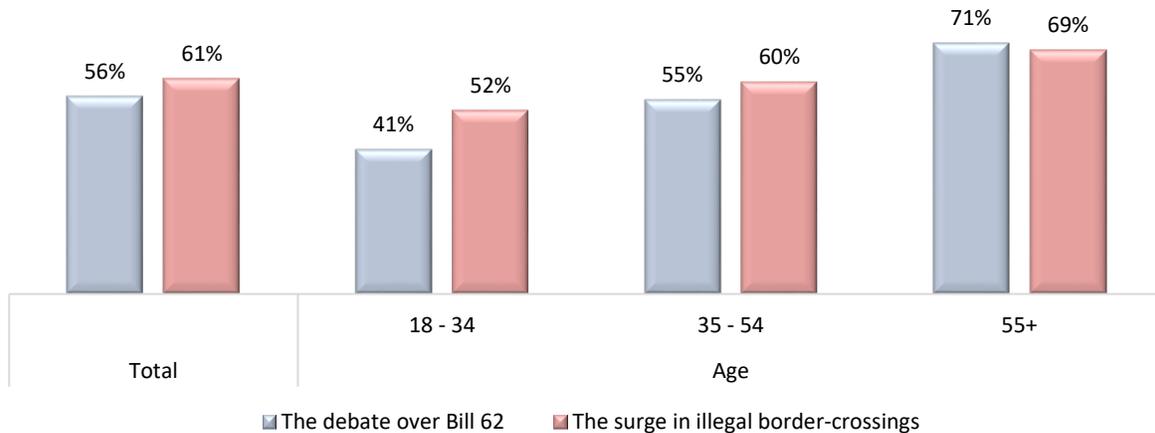


The percentage of respondents saying each of these topics is likely to be an important factor in their choice of party next year is fairly consistent across demographic groups. The most notable differences are between younger and older generations, with the latter placing more weight on each of these issues:

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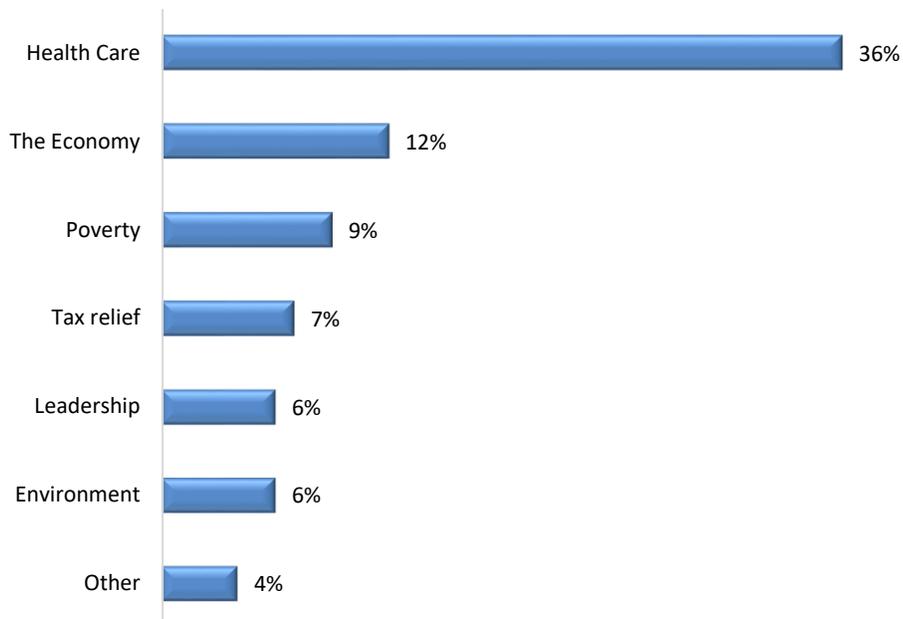
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**Percentage saying each issue will be "one of the most important factors" or "one of a few somewhat important factors" in their 2018 vote:**



Asked to name the top issue facing the province, one-in-three Quebecers choose health care – three times as many as report any other issue rising to the top of their minds:

**What is the top issue facing Quebec today?**



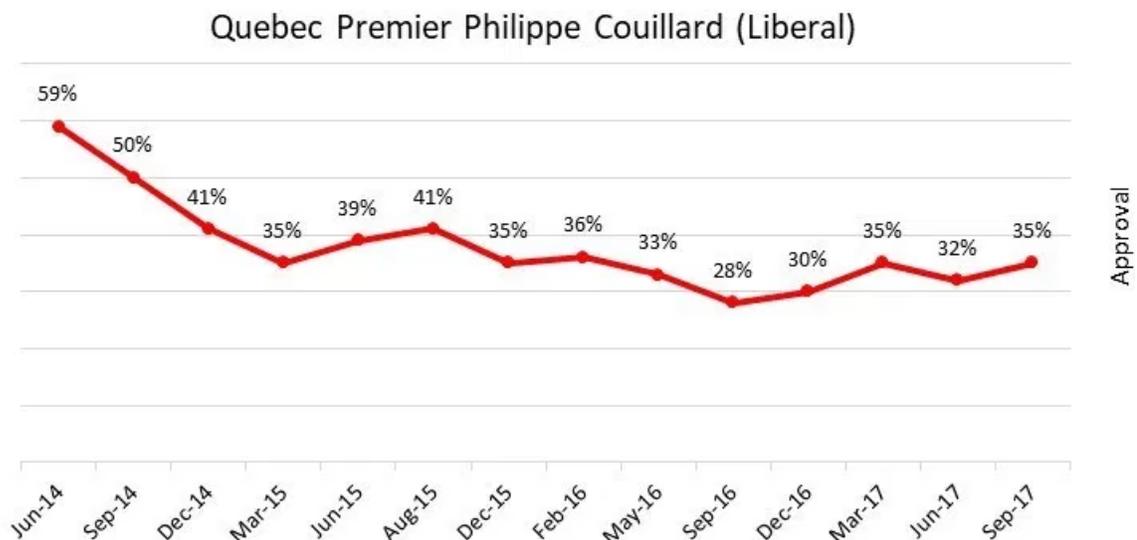
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## Leader approval: Legault viewed most favourably

If the Couillard government is benefitting politically from the strong consensus of support for Bill 62, the benefits are not manifesting themselves in job performance approval for the premier.

Most Quebec residents (54%) disapprove of their province's current leader, while slightly more than one-in-three (35%) approve – a rating that has remained fairly consistent over the last two years:



While the premier's approval might be described as uninspiring, this poll finds little advantage for the leaders and spokespeople of opposition parties in public perception of their job performance.

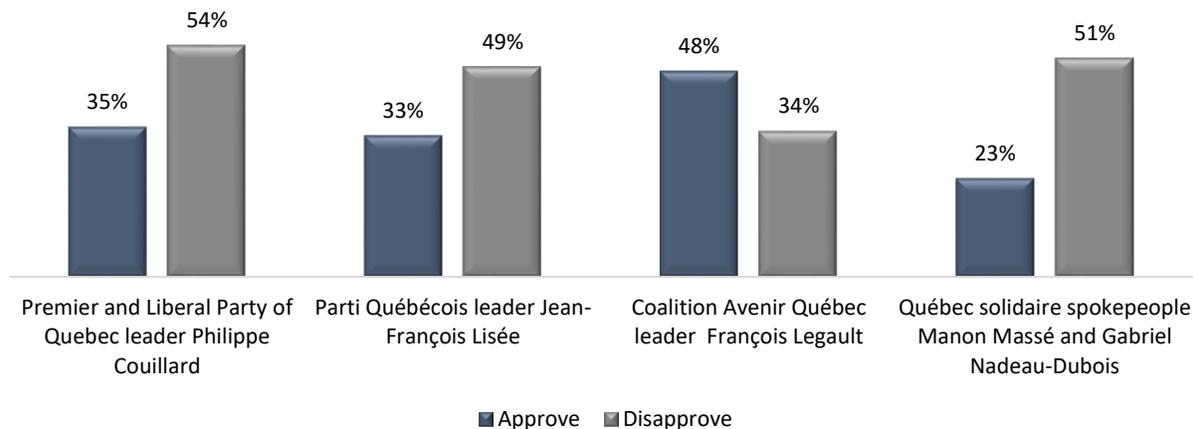
Parti Québécois leader Jean-François Lisée and Coalition Avenir Québec leader François Legault have each criticized Couillard for his handling of the border, but neither leader enjoys the approval of a majority of Quebecers. Indeed, among all party leaders and spokespeople, only Legault has a positive net approval – meaning the percentage of people who approve of him is higher than the percentage who disapprove:

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## Do you approve or disapprove of each of the following people?



Whether Legault can build on this momentum and lead the CAQ to form government for the first time in 2018 remains to be seen.

*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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Based on whatever you've seen or heard about Bill 62, would you say you support or oppose it?			
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (609)	Language	
		English (75*)	French (486)
Strongly support	62%	32%	68%
Moderately support	25%	35%	24%
Moderately oppose	9%	16%	7%
Strongly oppose	4%	17%	2%

Based on whatever you've seen or heard about Bill 62, would you say you support or oppose it?						
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (609)	Gender		Age		
		Men (313)	Women (296)	18 – 34 (145)	35-54 (285)	55+ (179)
Strongly support	62%	63%	62%	48%	64%	72%
Moderately support	25%	24%	26%	26%	27%	21%
Moderately oppose	9%	8%	9%	18%	7%	3%
Strongly oppose	4%	5%	3%	8%	3%	3%

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**Overall, based on whatever you've seen or heard about this issue, would you say you approve or disapprove of the Quebec government's handling of the surge in the number of people crossing the border illegally?**

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (609)	Language	
		English (75*)	French (486)
Strongly approve	8%	16%	6%
Moderately approve	32%	41%	30%
Moderately disapprove	24%	27%	23%
Strongly disapprove	37%	16%	41%

**Overall, based on whatever you've seen or heard about this issue, would you say you approve or disapprove of the Quebec government's handling of the surge in the number of people crossing the border illegally?**

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (609)	Gender		Education		
		Men (313)	Women (296)	High School or less (271)	College / Tech school (219)	University+ (119)
Strongly approve	8%	12%	4%	7%	7%	11%
Moderately approve	32%	33%	31%	26%	37%	37%
Moderately disapprove	24%	20%	27%	22%	26%	23%
Strongly disapprove	37%	34%	39%	45%	31%	29%

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How much of a factor do you expect each of these issues to be for you, personally, when deciding which party's candidate to vote for in the 2018 Quebec election?						
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (609)	Gender		Age		
		Men (313)	Women (296)	18 – 34 (145)	35-54 (285)	55+ (179)
<b>The debate over Bill 62</b>						
One of the MOST important factors	19%	19%	20%	12%	17%	29%
One of a few somewhat important factors	37%	34%	39%	29%	38%	42%
Not much of a factor	30%	30%	30%	43%	28%	21%
Not a factor at all	14%	17%	11%	17%	16%	9%
<b>The surge in illegal border crossings</b>						
One of the MOST important factors	23%	22%	23%	20%	23%	25%
One of a few somewhat important factors	38%	35%	41%	32%	37%	44%
Not much of a factor	26%	26%	26%	35%	26%	19%
Not a factor at all	13%	17%	10%	13%	14%	12%

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## Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of each of the following people?

	Premier and Liberal Party of Quebec leader Philippe Couillard	Parti Québécois leader Jean-François Lisée	Coalition Avenir Québec leader François Legault	Québec solidaire spokepeople Manon Massé and Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois
Approve strongly	9%	8%	11%	4%
Approve somewhat	26%	26%	37%	19%
Disapprove somewhat	19%	21%	20%	22%
Disapprove strongly	35%	28%	14%	29%
Not sure	11%	18%	18%	26%

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