

Quebec Election Analysis: Popular policies and a faltering opponent propelled CAQ to historic victory

Quebecers were more likely to say the province was on the wrong track than the right one before Oct. 1

October 4, 2018 – As the Quebec Liberals pack up their belongings at 1045 Rue Des Parlementaires following an historic defeat in Monday's provincial election, a new study from the Angus Reid Institute offers some insight into the motivations of voters that drove the Coalition Avenir Quebec and Premier-Designate François Legault to power, as well as some questions for the future.

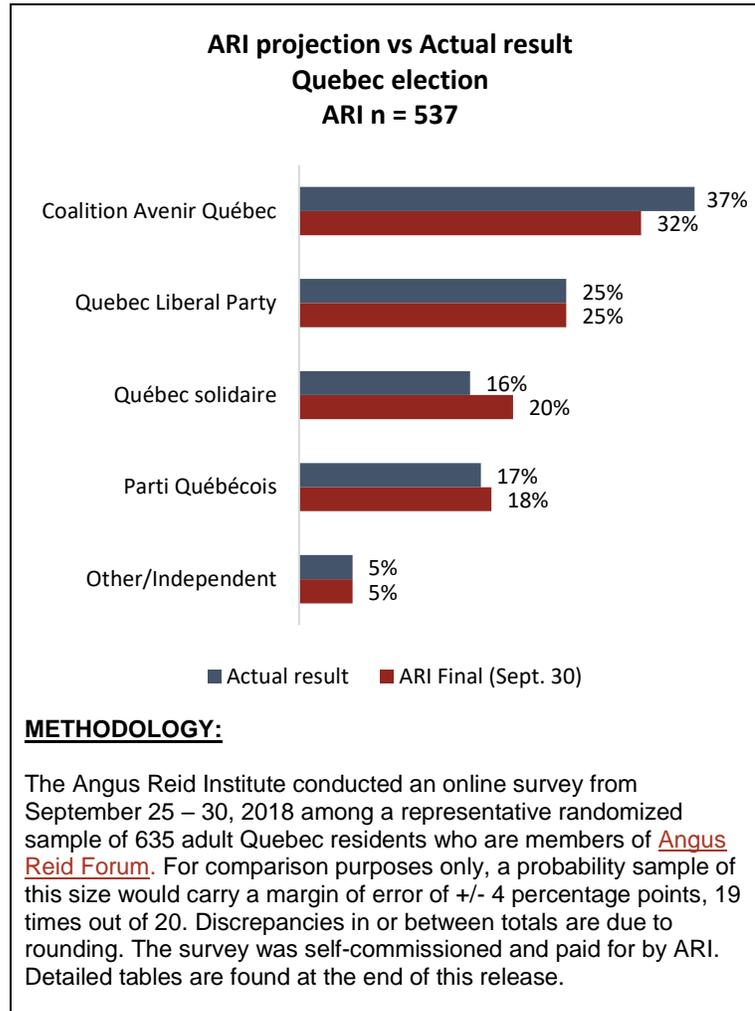
Key proposals on top issues of health care, education and immigration – combined with a diminishing approval rating for the incumbent premier – appear to have played a significant role in the shift of power. Indeed, only three-in-ten residents said that the province was on the right track in the days leading up to October 1.

In claiming its majority, the CAQ became the first party since 1966 other than the Liberals or Parti Quebecois to hold power in Quebec, while the province's traditional duopoly was reduced to a mere echo of its former glory. The Liberals claimed less than 30 per cent of votes cast for the first time since confederation, while the PQ lost official party status, claiming only 9 seats in the National Assembly.

All of this sets up a fascinating next four years of Quebec politics, and even more intrigue to come after that if Legault makes good on his pledge to adopt a proportional voting system ahead of the 2022 election.

Analysis:

- **Which issues mattered?**
 - **Healthcare**
 - **Immigration and values**
 - **Education**
 - **Sovereignty**
 - **Environment**



CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

- The wrong track proves fertile ground for CAQ
- CAQ promised proportional representation, will they deliver?

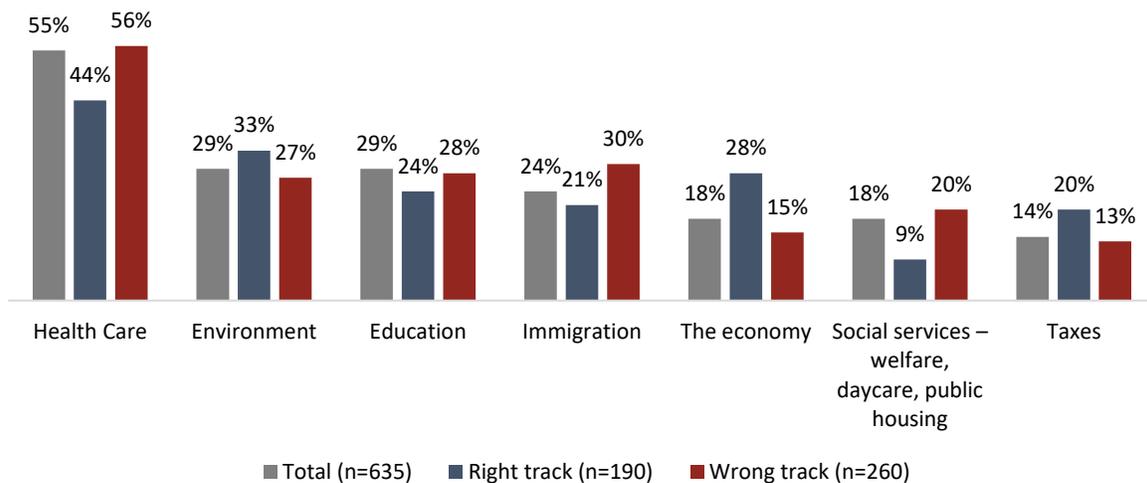
Which issues mattered?

There were a few key issues that the electorate was focused on as it headed to the polls. The CAQ campaigned on opening up health care to more private providers, reducing immigration, and a nationalist position that eschewed the traditional federalist-sovereignist divide. The Angus Reid Institute tested some of these policy options by offering them blindly – without party attribution – to Quebec residents.

Healthcare

The lead issue among potential voters by a wide margin was healthcare, and each party put forth significant promises in that policy area. Notably, both those who thought the province was on the right track and those who thought it was on the wrong track chose healthcare as their top issue. Those who felt the province needed to change direction were more likely to say immigration and social services were high on their list, while those who were satisfied were twice as likely to say the economy is among their top concerns:

As far as you are concerned, what would you say are the most important issues in this election?

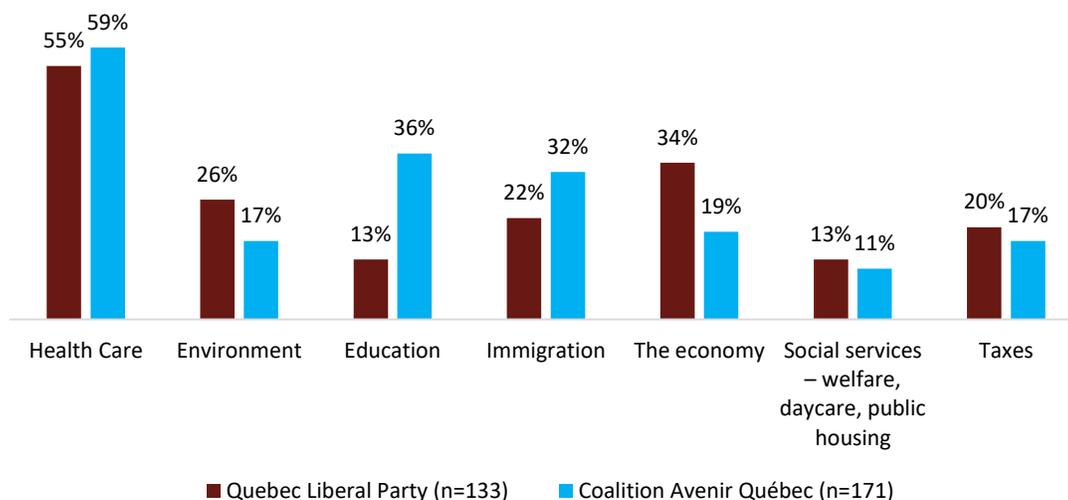


For CAQ supporters, healthcare, education and immigration were top of mind, while Liberal Party supporters were more likely to say that the economy and environment were atop the priority list after healthcare:

CONTACT:

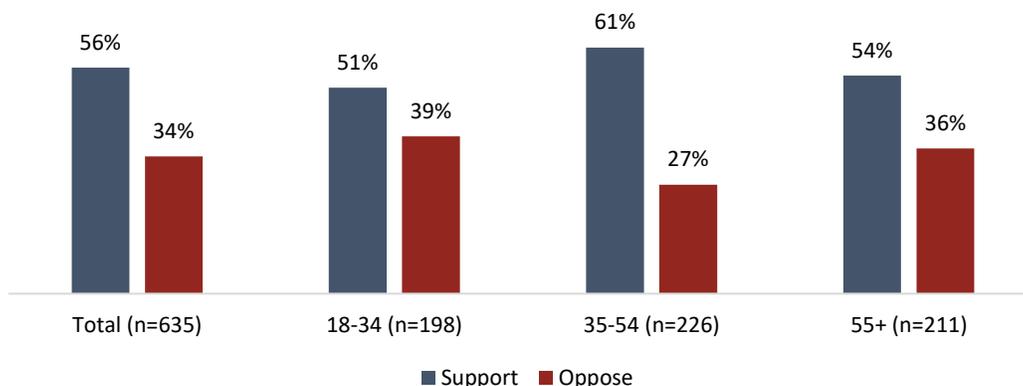
Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

As far as you are concerned, what would you say are the most important issues in this election?



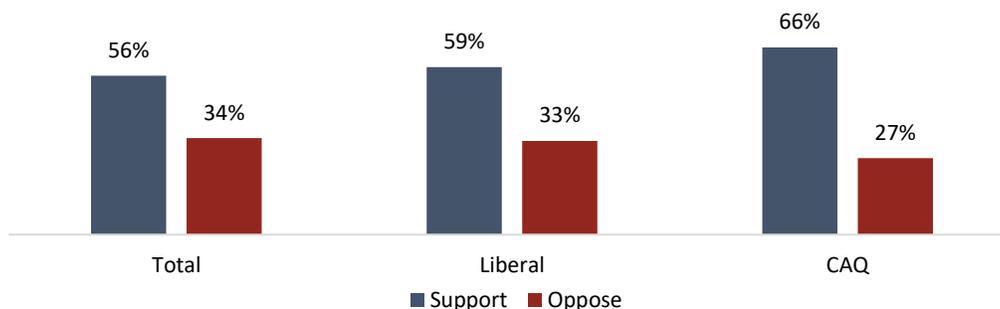
The CAQ promised to increase health care spending by 4.1 per cent annually after the election, while the Liberals said they would increase it by a virtually identical 4.2 per cent. Where the CAQ separated itself was a strong push toward opening up the system to more private-sector providers. This proposal resonated with at least half of all age groups in the province, and 56 per cent overall:

Support vs Oppose "Opening up the health care system to more private-sector providers"



Notably, even six-in-ten projected Liberal voters thought this was a good idea:

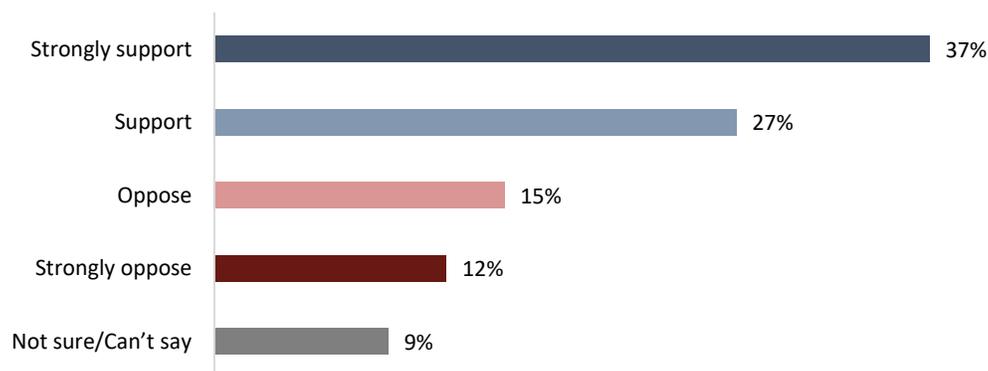
Support vs Oppose "Opening up the health care system to more private-sector providers"



Immigration and values

Immigration is another issue that many Quebecers said they would be considering in their vote. One-quarter (24%) said it was among their top concerns, including 32 per cent of projected CAQ supporters. It is thus notable that the CAQ proposal of a values test for immigrants in order for them to qualify to settle in Quebec had the support of two-thirds of residents, with almost four-in-ten *strongly* supporting the measure:

Support vs Oppose "Have immigrants pass a values and language test in order to qualify to settle in Quebec"



CAQ leader François Legault stated that his government would reduce the number of immigrants and expel those who could not pass a language and values test within three years – though it's unclear whether he has the authority to compel them to leave Quebec.

Education

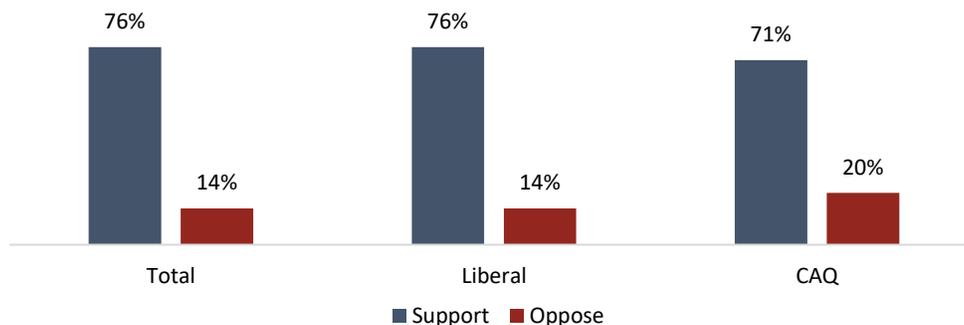
In the important area of education policy, tied for second among the most important issues province-wide, each party put forth plans to increase spending. Couillard's Liberals planned to increase spending by more than \$2.8 billion over 5 years, which included increases of 1.2 per cent and 0.2 per cent over the next two years, respectively.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Ilan Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

This policy was received very positively, as seen in the graph that follows. This is notable insofar as the CAQ may have effectively mitigated gains the Liberal Party could have made on this file by proposing a 3.5 per cent increase annually on education in the coming years, or an increase of \$400 million each year. Those who had education as a top-of-mind issue had two parties both willing to spend to satisfy constituents:

Support vs Oppose "Increase the education budget by \$3 billion"

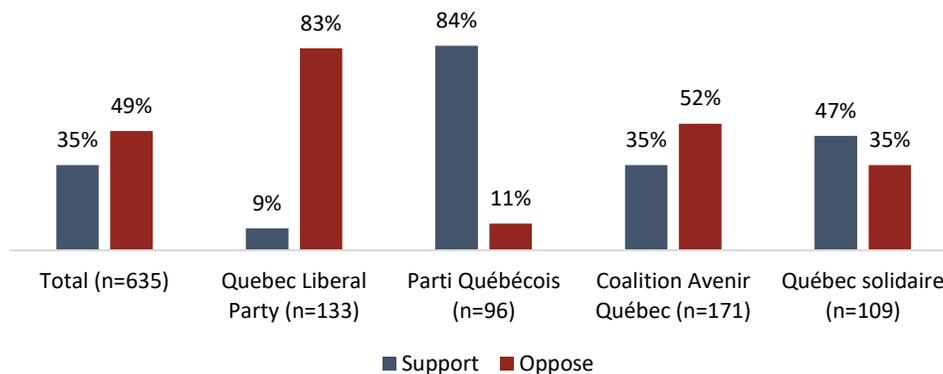


Sovereignty

For the Parti Québécois, sovereignty remains an important issue. More than four-in-five PQ supporters (84%) said they support the pursuit of independence. While that party's leader Jean-François Lisée stated that the PQ would not seek a referendum on independence in its first term in government, Quebec solidaire – which is also a sovereigntist party – made no such promise. That said, only 47 per cent of QS supporters supported the idea.

For the CAQ, the choice to disengage from the federalism-versus-sovereignty debate and run as a third-option, under a nationalist banner, appears to be a savvy one. Half of projected CAQ voters said they opposed pursuing sovereignty, while one-third said they supported it. The election provides some evidence that this third option resonated with voters:

Support vs Oppose "Pursue independence for Quebec"



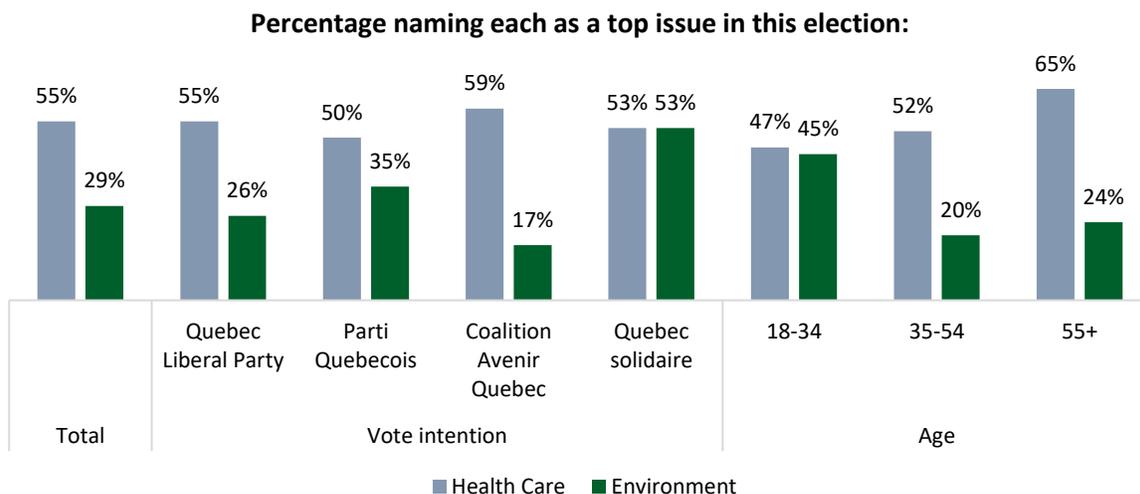
CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

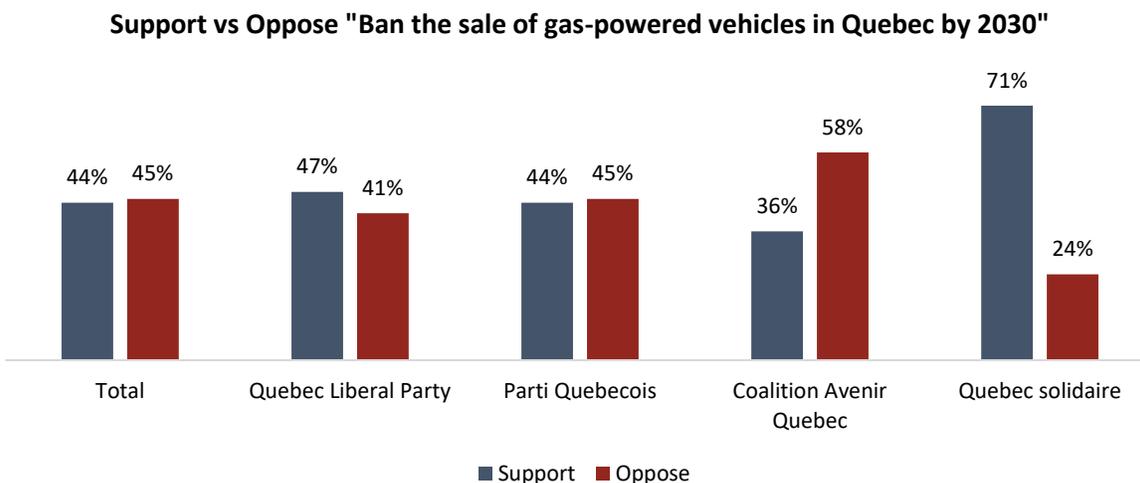
Environment

The environment was a key issue for three-in-ten Quebecers (29%) heading into Monday's election, but it was especially salient for those who supported Quebec solidaire, as well as the younger voters who played a major role in the leftist party's surge to 10 seats and 16 per cent of the popular vote.

While almost twice as many province-wide named health care as the top issue facing Quebec as named the environment, those two priorities were neck-and-neck among QS supporters and Quebecers under age 35:



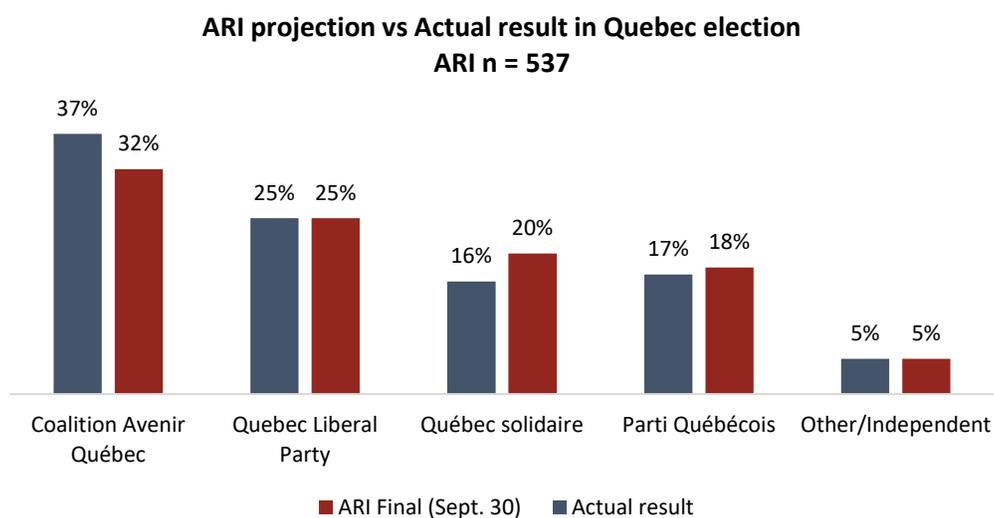
One of the signature promises QS made during the campaign was a ban on the sale of gas-powered vehicles in Quebec by 2030. More than seven-in-ten who intended to vote for the party supported this position, suggesting that environmentalism was a more powerful draw for QS than its support for sovereignty:



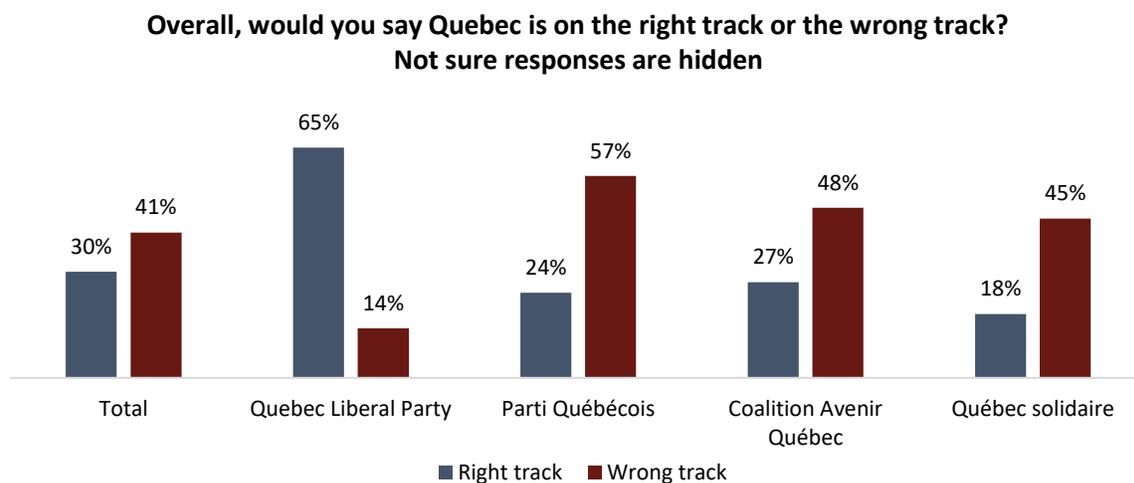
The wrong track proves fertile ground for CAQ

One of the key predictors in any change-of-government election is the dissatisfaction of the population in the leadup to the vote. In the case of Quebec, only three-in-ten residents (30%) said that the province was on the right track leading up to the Oct. 1 vote. Four-in-ten disagreed, suggesting they felt it was time to change leadership.

The Angus Reid Institute election poll, fielded September 25 – 30 suggested this trend would result in a celebratory evening for the CAQ, while also projecting the historically low Liberal turnout, as seen in the graph that follows:



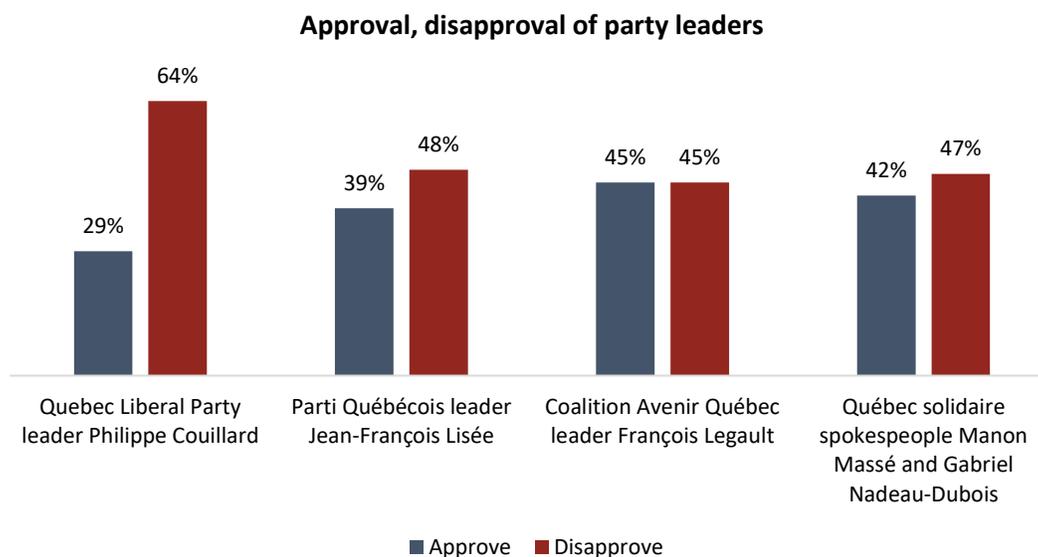
Ultimately, two-thirds of those who said they would support the Liberal Party in its re-election bid said they felt the province was on the right track. Support for the incumbent party's performance was evidently not strong enough to garner Philippe Couillard and company another term:



CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

Couillard himself will likely shoulder some of the blame for his party's poor performance. While each of the party leaders – or in the case of the Québec solidaire, spokespeople – have a relatively divided public perception, Couillard holds the disapproval of more than twice as many Quebec residents as approve of him:



CAQ promised proportional representation, will they deliver?

While many pollsters predicted a minority government in Quebec, the CAQ delivered a firm majority, gathering 74 seats, when 63 were needed to secure that position. Quebec has thus avoided the minority government trend that has emerged in Canada in the last year and a half, with British Columbia and New Brunswick both experiencing hung parliaments in their most recent elections.

What remains to be seen now is what the CAQ will do regarding electoral reform. Before the election, the party [joined other opposition parties](#) in stating that they would pursue proportional representation as a part of their mandate within the first year.

The desire for PR in Quebec appears to be strong. In polling done before the election, two-thirds of respondents in the province said they supported a new system of PR over the current first past the post.

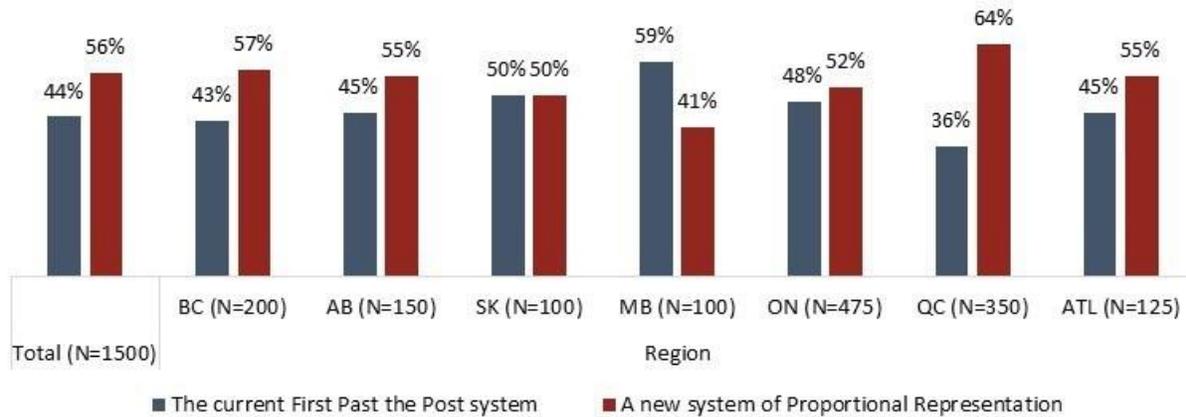
[Related – Proportional Representation: BC residents split three ways over whether to change voting system](#)

This represents the highest number in the country by a strong margin:

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

Based on what you know, please indicate which of these two broad options you would prefer for your province:



*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.*

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

For detailed results by vote intention, [click here](#)

For detailed national results regarding proportional representation, [click here](#).

CONTACT:

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

Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org