

## House in order? Four-in-five Canadians support proposed seat redistribution in House of Commons

*Facing loss of one seat, Quebecers are most opposed & half say Quebec deserves special consideration*

**November 17, 2021** – For the first time since 1966, a province – in this case Quebec – is set to have its number of seats in the House of Commons reduced.

The same proposal [from Elections Canada](#) also sees Alberta gaining three new seats, while B.C. and Ontario would each gain one.

When asked about the reallocation of seats, a new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute found that four-in-five (78%) Canadians, and three-in-five Quebecers (61%), say they support the proposed redistribution.

In response to the proposed reallocation, however, Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet has threatened to unleash the “[fires of hell](#)” if Quebec’s seat count is reduced. As for Bloc voters, they are split down the middle: 51 per cent are against the proposed redistribution while 49 per cent say they are in favour.

Perhaps fueled by grievances with Alberta’s representation in national politics – seven-in-ten (72%) in Wild Rose Country say they are underrepresented in Ottawa – the province has the highest levels of support for the proposed change at 89 per cent.

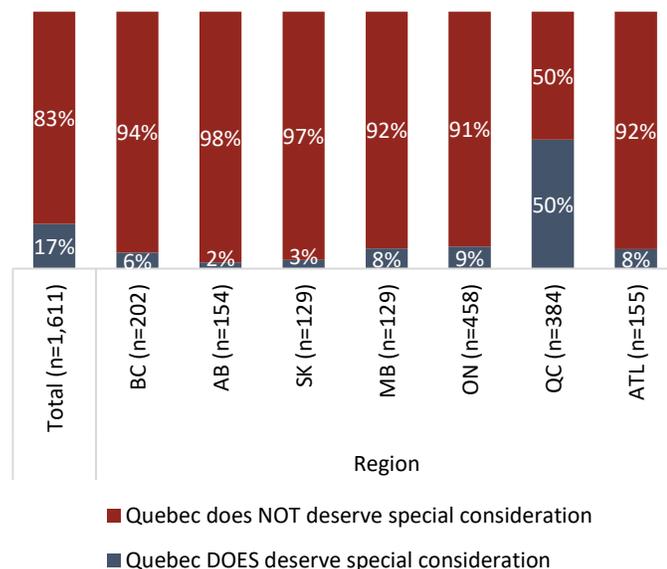
### More Key Findings:

- When asked if Quebec’s status as a nation means that it deserves special consideration in terms of its seat count, Quebecers are split evenly. Four-in-five (79%) of Bloc voters, on the other hand, say that Quebec does deserve special consideration.
- Four-in-five (82%) Canadians believe it’s okay for provinces to lose seats during redistribution if it means the House of Commons is more proportionately distributed based on population. That

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**Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet believes that the province’s status as a nation means it should not lose a seat. Which is closest to your view when it comes to how many seats Quebec has in the House of Commons:**



### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Nov. 3 – 7, 2021, among a representative randomized sample of 1,611 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.4 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.

includes nine-in-ten (87%) of those in Atlantic provinces currently overrepresented in the House given current percentage of population.

- Three-in-five (58%) Bloc voters believe provinces should never lose seats when redistribution happens.

### **About ARI**

*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.*

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### **Introduction: How the seats are distributed in the House of Commons**

To account for differing birth rates, domestic migration, and immigration patterns, the number of seats assigned to each province in the House of Commons is reassessed every 10 years. This process is based on data from the national census and calculated using a formula established by Parliament. New riding boundaries are then decided within each province by an independent boundary commission.

Representation in the House of Commons is guided by the idea that citizens should enjoy roughly the same “weight” in terms of their political representation (although critics have pointed out that this is far more distorted in Canada than in other advanced democracies). This is reflected in the first step of the representation formula where the number of seats assigned to each province is calculated by dividing their population by the “electoral quotient” (currently 121,891). Following this initial division of seats, several special clauses are then applied.

The senatorial clause guarantees that no province has fewer seats in the House than they have in the Senate as the result of the representation formula. To give an example, normally New Brunswick would only be entitled to seven seats through the initial allocation process but, as they have 10 seats in the Senate, the senatorial clause means they are given an additional three in the House.

The grandfather clause guarantees that all provinces will never see their number of seats drop below the number they had when the 1985 Representation Act came into force. The representation rule is meant to ensure that any province that might become underrepresented through the application of the above

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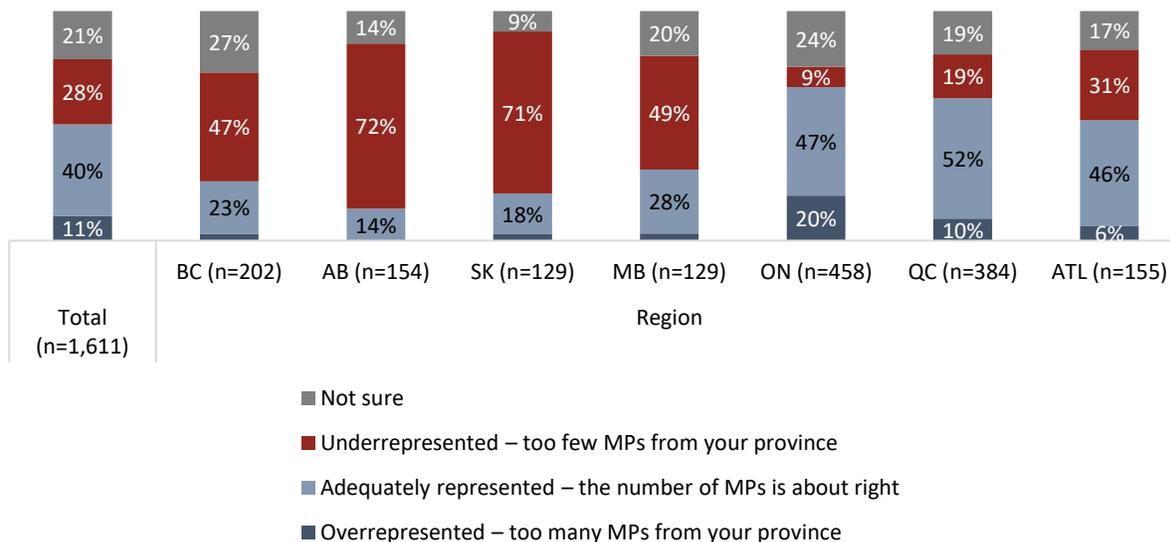
clauses has its representation aligned with its share of the national population. Currently Quebec is the only province that qualifies.

All territories are represented with one seat each, despite their populations being considerably smaller than the national riding average. Likewise, Prince Edward Island receives four seats, overrepresenting its population considerably, comparatively.

### Part One: Half feel well represented in House of Commons

When it comes to the current representation of their province in the House of Commons, a plurality (40%) of Canadians say it is “about right” while three-in-ten (28%) believe they are underrepresented. This hides important regional divides, however. Ontarians are the most likely to believe they are overrepresented in the House of Commons. By contrast, the Prairie provinces are home to the most keenly felt grievance: seven-in-ten in Alberta (72%) and Saskatchewan (71%) believe their province is underrepresented in terms of seat count.

#### Thinking about the Members of Parliament (MPs) from your province who are elected to the House of Commons – would you say your province is:



### Three-quarters support proposed seat redistribution

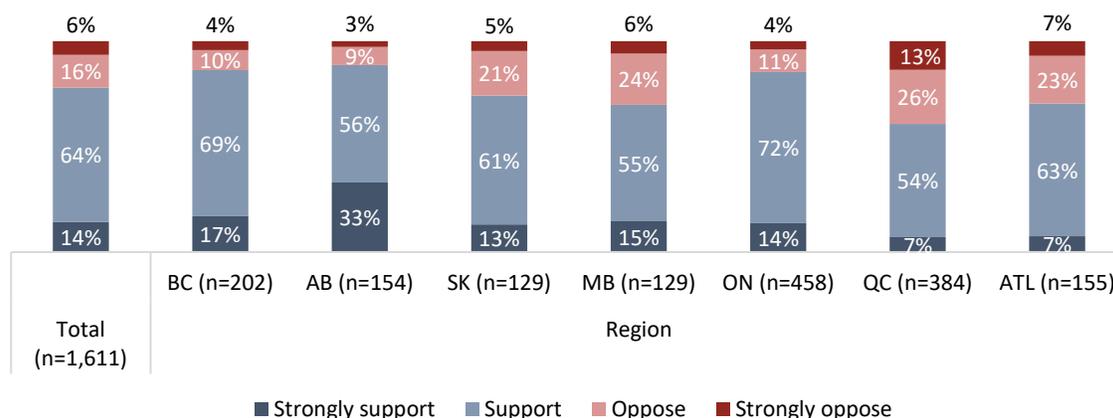
Elections Canada chief electoral officer Stéphane Perrault [launched the process](#) to review and redraw Canada’s electoral map in October after the federal election, a process that happens every 10 years. The initial [2021 reallocation](#) proposed the following redistribution:

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	Current and proposed number of seats in the HoC	Percentage of seats in the HoC under new plan	Percentage of Canada's population
BC	43 (+1)	12.5%	13.6%
AB	37 (+3)	10.8%	11.6%
SK	14	4.1%	3.1%
MN	14	4.1%	3.6%
ON	122 (+1)	35.7%	38.8%
QC	77 (-1)	22.5%	22.5%
NB	10	2.9%	2.1%
NS	11	3.2%	2.6%
PEI	4	1.2%	0.4%
NL	7	2.0%	1.4%
YK	1	0.3%	0.1%
NWT	1	0.3%	0.1%
NU	1	0.3%	0.1%

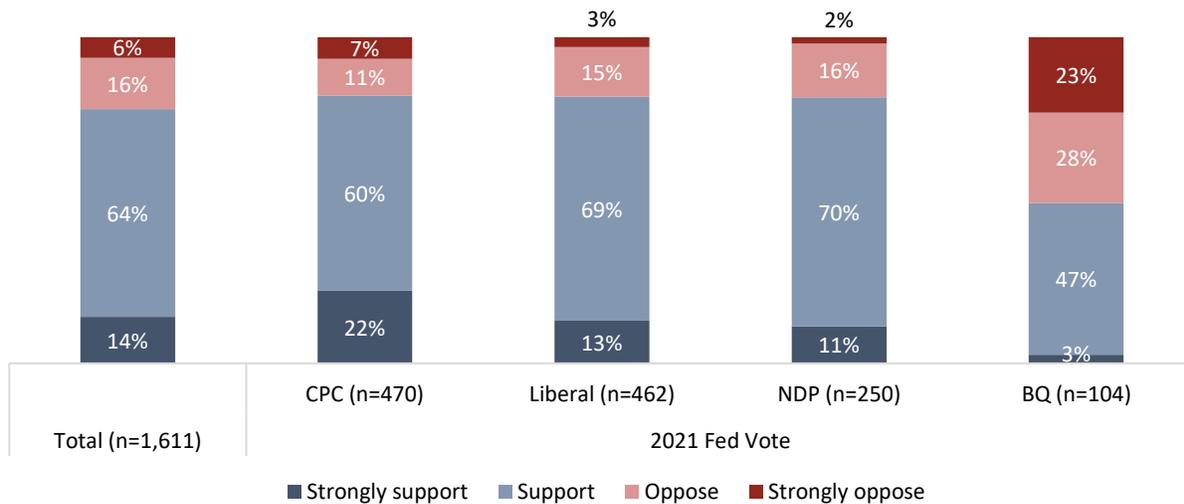
Overall, four-in-five Canadians (78%) support the proposed seat redistribution, albeit with notable regional variation. Two-in-five (39%) respondents from Quebec do not support it, while nine-in-ten (89%) in Alberta favour the proposed changes. Pushing for more representation in the House of Commons was one of the recommendations that came out of Alberta's [Fair Deal Panel report](#).

**Overall, do you support or oppose the proposed change in the distribution of seats in the House of Commons?**



Support for the proposed seat redistribution spans across most party lines before faltering among Bloc Québécois voters who are themselves split evenly on the issue:

**Overall, do you support or oppose the proposed change in the distribution of seats in the House of Commons?**



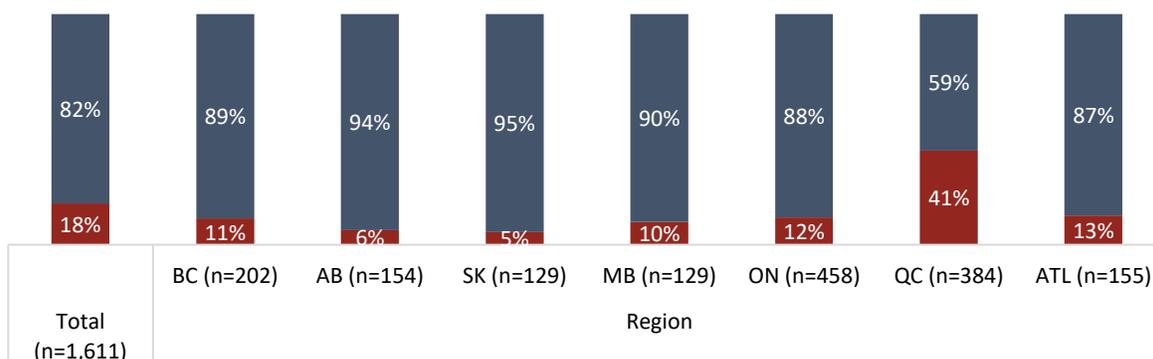
**Part Two: Is it okay for provinces to lose seats during redistribution?**

This is not the first time that a province has faced the prospect of losing a seat in the House of Commons. In the decades following the Second World War, the number of seats was capped. This meant that if one province gained a seat it came at the expense of another. This lasted until Newfoundland and Labrador joined the Confederation in 1949 and the cap was increased.

Following that, the 1966 redistribution resulted in a number of provinces losing seats, including Nova Scotia (-1), Manitoba (-1), Quebec (-1), and Saskatchewan (-4). Since then, no province has seen its number of seats in the House of Commons decline.

Fast-forward to today: four-in-five (82%) Canadians say they are okay with provinces losing a seat if it means that the House of Commons is ultimately more representative of actual population sizes across the country. While respondents in Quebec are the most divided, three-in-five (59%) still say they support the idea of a province losing seats if it results in more proportionate political representation. Notably, nine-in-ten of those in Atlantic provinces – currently overrepresented in the current and proposed seat counts – are on board with provinces losing seats so the House is more proportionately distributed based on population:

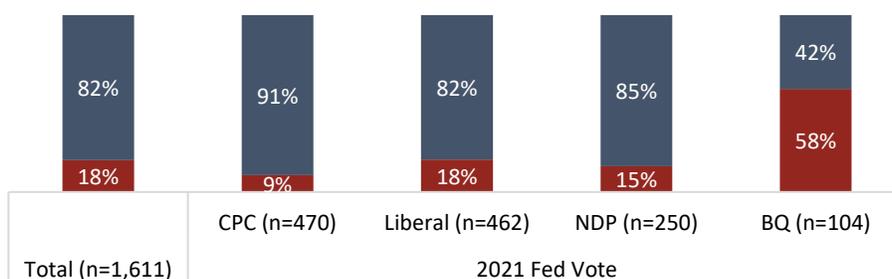
**The current proposal has Quebec losing one seat. Which is closest to your view:**



- It's fine for provinces to lose seats so the House of Commons is more proportionately distributed based on population
- Provinces should never lose seats as a result of seat redistribution

While the principle of proportionate House of Commons representation enjoys strong support across party lines, this again stalls among Bloc Québécois supporters – a majority of whom believe that a province should never lose a seat during redistribution:

**The current proposal has Quebec losing one seat. Which is closest to your view:**



- It's fine for provinces to lose seats so the House of Commons is more proportionately distributed based on population
- Provinces should never lose seats as a result of seat redistribution

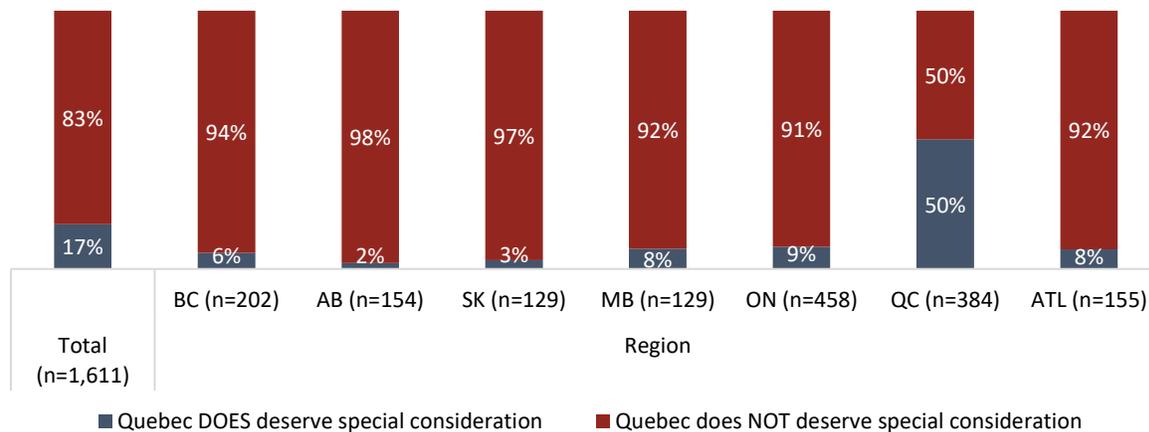
**Canadians don't believe Quebec deserves special consideration; Quebecers split**

Yves-François Blanchet argued that Quebec should not lose a seat due to its special status as a nation. He said if the current proposal went through, dropping the province's seats from 78 to 77, the Bloc would "unleash the fires of hell."

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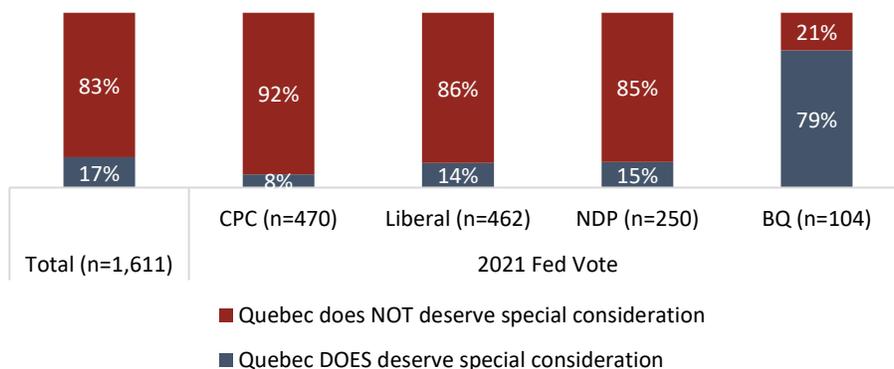
Most Canadians disagree with his premise: four-in-five believe Quebec does not deserve special consideration on this matter. Quebecers themselves are split evenly between believing their province deserves special status when it comes to seat counts and not:

**Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet believes that the province's status as a nation means it should not lose a seat. Which is closest to your view when it comes to how many seats Quebec has in the House of Commons:**



Bloc voters largely fall behind their leader on the issue. Four-in-five (79%) believe Quebec deserves special consideration, running inversely to the rest of the country:

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

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