

## Islamophobia in Canada: Four mindsets indicate negativity is nationwide, most intense in Quebec

*36% outside of QC have negative view of Islam, compared to 56% within la belle province*

**March 13, 2023** – A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds unfavourable views of Islam prevalent across the country at varying levels and highest in Quebec.

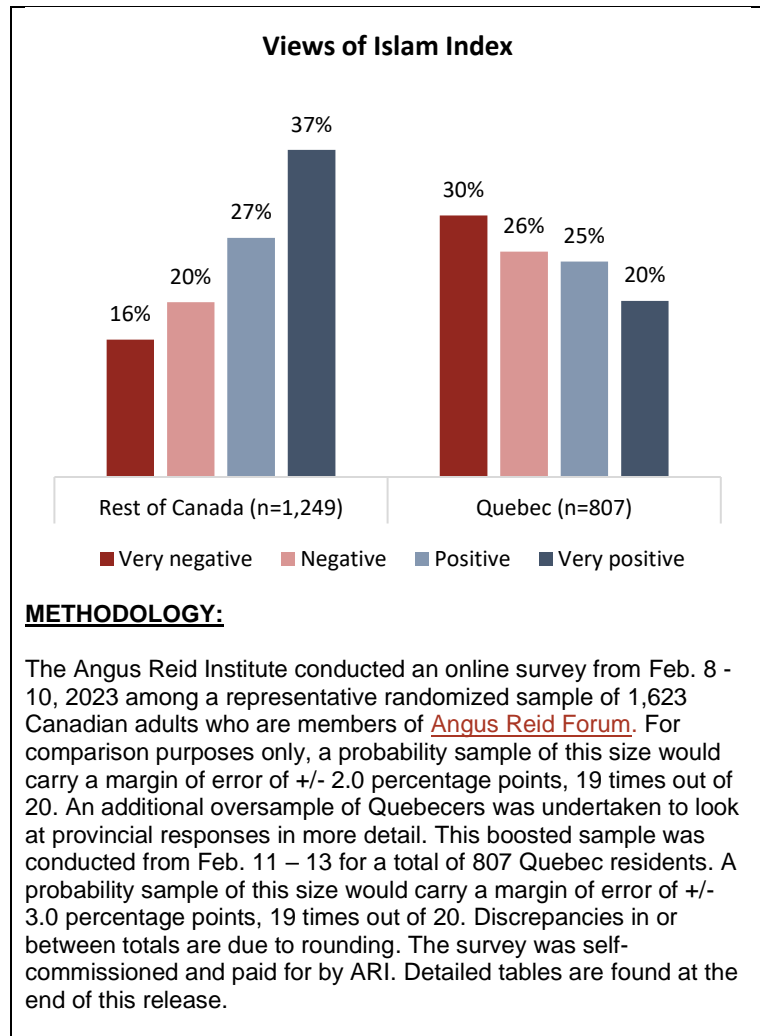
Indeed, two-in-five Canadians outside of Quebec (39%) hold an unfavourable view of Islam. In Quebec that number reaches half (52%). These views take more concrete forms, however, than just the overall sentiment that the religion receives. Its followers face the risk of being unwelcome in a number of areas of Canadian society.

To clarify the picture further, the Angus Reid Institute created the “Views of Islam Index”. Respondents were asked six questions about five religions – Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Hinduism, and Judaism. The dimensions measured included:

- Feeling favourable or unfavourable about the religion
- Support or opposition to people wearing distinctive religious symbols in public
- Levels of comfort with working in the same space where colleagues wore these symbols
- Support or opposition to the establishment of different places of worship in their neighbourhood
- Acceptance of a child marrying a member of one of these religions.

For the purpose of this analysis and given the [ongoing discussion](#) about the level of Islamophobia in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, responses to this national survey were analyzed according to the level of positivity or negativity towards Muslims across all six question areas. Four groups were created, those with Very Positive, Positive, Negative, and Very Negative views of Islam.

A comparison of Quebec with the rest of Canada reveals stark differences. Outside of Quebec, Very Positive and universally accepting views of Muslims and their religious symbols are evident in 37 per cent of the population. A further one-quarter (27%) hold generally positive views but not in all circumstances assessed in the study. On the other end of the spectrum 16 per cent of Canadians outside Quebec hold



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Very Negative views on Islam and religious practices of this faith in nearly every circumstance assessed in the survey.

In Quebec, positive views are more muted but still represent almost half the attitudinal landscape with one-in-five (20%) displaying Very Positive views and a further one-quarter (25%) on the generally positive side of the index.

That said, the largest segment of the population in Quebec (30%) displays Very Negative views toward Islam. The level is about twice that observed in the rest of the country (16%). This “Very Negative” segment in Quebec is similar to the group of the same name in the rest of Canada with one important exception: among this group in Quebec there is a distinct level of negativity towards Judaism and Christianity that is less prevalent elsewhere in the country.

Amid this, Quebec’s Bill 21 continues to be supported by more than half in that province (57%). That law, which prohibits the wearing of religious symbols for individuals in certain public positions of authority while they are on the worksite, is unpopular in the rest of the country with one-in-four (25%) supporting the concept for their own province and two-thirds (65%) opposing it.

### More Key Findings:

- Asked whether Canada has a problem with Islamophobia more broadly, Canadians are evenly divided, with 50 per cent saying it does and 50 per cent saying it does not. Those most likely to view Islam negatively, both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada alike, are also most likely to say there is no problem.
- There is some correlation between age and education when it comes to the Views of Islam Index. Older Canadians are more likely to be in the Very Negative group than younger ones while younger Canadians are more likely to be in the Very Positive group. As well, half of the Very Negative group has a high school diploma or less, while the Very Positive group is much more likely to have graduated from university than other segments.
- More than two-in-five (44%) Canadians believe it is unnecessary to have a special representative on combatting Islamophobia, a position recently appointed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. This view is the overwhelming majority one (82%) of those who have Very Negative views of Islam.
- Seven-in-ten outside of Quebec (72%) support the wearing of the hijab in public spaces, while 28 per cent oppose it. In Quebec, slightly more than half (55%) are supportive, while 45 per cent voice opposition. In Greater Montreal support for the hijab rises to 63 per cent, while it drops to 46 per cent in the rest of Quebec.

### 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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### Part One: Canadians more negative toward Islam than other faiths

In late January, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [announced](#) the appointment of Canada's first special representative on combatting Islamophobia. Journalist and human-rights activist Amira Elghawaby was chosen for the position to "support and enhance the federal government's efforts in the fight against Islamophobia, systemic racism, racial discrimination, and religious intolerance."

Activists and government officials have been concerned in recent years [as attacks against Muslims in Canada](#) have risen, including a 71 per cent increase from 2020 to 2021. This violence was most tragically evident [in 2017](#) when six individuals were killed at a mosque in Quebec City.

While higher profile violent events gather headlines, many Canadians hold a more muted negative perspective towards Islam. Across the country Canadians are least likely to hold favourable views of Islam than five other major religions. In Quebec, one-quarter (25%) view the Muslim faith favourably, however, nowhere in the country does this number exceed 37 per cent:

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Percentage of Canadians who hold a <u>favourable</u> view of each religion:								
Unweighted sample sizes	Rest of Canada (n=1,249)	Region						Quebec (n=807)
		BC (n=200)	AB (n=160)	SK (n=125)	MB (n=121)	ON (n=460)	ATL (n=152)	
Buddhism	64%	75%	63%	55%	58%	64%	52%	61%
Christianity	59%	54%	60%	70%	66%	59%	62%	47%
Judaism	58%	58%	58%	54%	59%	60%	48%	35%
Hinduism	52%	52%	52%	46%	46%	54%	45%	43%
Sikhism	45%	51%	46%	39%	43%	45%	35%	24%
Islam	35%	36%	35%	31%	30%	35%	37%	25%

Unfavourable views are also more common in Quebec for most faiths, but the rest of the country, too, is not immune from these perspectives, particularly when it comes to Islam:

Percentage of Canadians who hold an <u>unfavourable</u> view of each religion								
Unweighted sample sizes	Rest of Canada (n=1,249)	Region						Quebec (n=807)
		BC (n=200)	AB (n=160)	SK (n=125)	MB (n=121)	ON (n=460)	ATL (n=152)	
Buddhism	13%	11%	13%	19%	16%	13%	13%	19%
Judaism	16%	18%	15%	14%	18%	15%	18%	32%
Hinduism	18%	20%	19%	25%	22%	16%	17%	25%
Sikhism	22%	22%	23%	26%	21%	21%	18%	32%
Christianity	31%	35%	29%	22%	26%	31%	30%	37%
Islam	39%	36%	41%	44%	37%	40%	36%	52%

Using a net favourability score, those who view each faith positively versus negatively, Canadians' more unfavourable perspective of Islam than other religions is clearly delineated:

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**Net favourability score: Percentage of Canadians who hold a favourable view of each religion minus those who hold an unfavourable view:**

Unweighted sample sizes	Rest of Canada (n=1,249)	Region						Quebec (n=807)
		BC (n=200)	AB (n=160)	SK (n=125)	MB (n=121)	ON (n=460)	ATL (n=152)	
Buddhism	51%	64%	51%	36%	41%	51%	39%	42%
Judaism	42%	41%	43%	40%	41%	45%	30%	3%
Hinduism	34%	32%	32%	22%	24%	38%	28%	18%
Christianity	29%	19%	32%	48%	41%	28%	32%	10%
Sikhism	24%	29%	23%	13%	22%	24%	17%	-8%
Islam	-4%	0%	-6%	-13%	-7%	-5%	1%	-28%

### Religious symbols in public and at work

When it comes to religious symbols or clothing in public spaces, Canadians are generally permissive. A majority in all regions are supportive of the Star of David, kippa, nun's habit, crucifix, turban, and hijab. That said, Quebec residents are least likely to support each, and slightly more than half (55%) say they support the wearing of the hijab in public. This has significant consequences for the hundreds of thousands of Muslim women living in Quebec and Canada alike:

**Do you support or oppose people wearing each of the following religious symbols or clothing in public?  
Percentage saying "support" shown:**

Unweighted sample sizes	Rest of Canada (n=1,249)	Region						Quebec (n=807)
		BC (n=200)	AB (n=160)	SK (n=125)	MB (n=121)	ON (n=460)	ATL (n=152)	
Star of David	87%	83%	89%	85%	82%	88%	89%	69%
Kippa	86%	83%	86%	79%	82%	87%	88%	65%
Nun's Habit	80%	76%	84%	74%	77%	81%	80%	66%
Crucifix	79%	70%	77%	84%	80%	81%	84%	70%
Turban	79%	76%	79%	73%	77%	80%	80%	60%
Hijab	72%	68%	71%	64%	69%	73%	75%	55%

But what about in the workplace? Canadians were also asked if they would be comfortable with a co-worker wearing these symbols. Quebecers push back on the acceptability of the turban and hijab most, with two-thirds voicing comfort for each, and show a unique aversion to the Jewish kippa not noted elsewhere in the country:

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Suppose a co-worker of yours (if you're retired or not working, that's fine, imagine a time you were working) wore each of the following at work. Percentage saying "comfortable" shown:								
Unweighted sample sizes	Rest of Canada (n=1,249)	Region						Quebec (n=807)
		BC (n=200)	AB (n=160)	SK (n=125)	MB (n=121)	ON (n=460)	ATL (n=152)	
Star of David	93%	92%	94%	92%	90%	92%	97%	81%
Kippa	92%	90%	92%	88%	91%	92%	95%	75%
Crucifix	88%	84%	88%	93%	88%	88%	93%	82%
Turban	87%	86%	88%	83%	88%	87%	92%	68%
Hijab	84%	81%	85%	81%	83%	84%	91%	65%

### Two-thirds would be comfortable with a mosque in their neighbourhood

Canada is home to thousands of places of worship, so it is perhaps unsurprising that the vast majority of Canadians are comfortable with churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques in their own neighbourhood. Quebec residents are least likely to be comfortable with each of the six examples shown, but a majority say they're comfortable with each:

Thinking about where you live, how would you feel if each of the following were built in your neighbourhood. Percentage saying "comfortable" shown:								
Unweighted sample sizes	Rest of Canada (n=1,249)	Region						Quebec (n=807)
		BC (n=200)	AB (n=160)	SK (n=125)	MB (n=121)	ON (n=460)	ATL (n=152)	
A Christian Church	86%	83%	88%	88%	92%	86%	89%	79%
A Jewish Synagogue	86%	84%	85%	87%	91%	86%	86%	62%
A Buddhist Temple	82%	87%	82%	77%	85%	81%	81%	70%
A Hindu Mandir (Temple)	75%	76%	73%	73%	80%	74%	81%	62%
A Sikh Gurudwara	74%	76%	73%	75%	75%	73%	76%	54%
A Muslim Mosque	67%	69%	63%	67%	70%	66%	78%	53%

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**Belief systems and marriage**

One of the more pronounced areas of discomfort for Canadians is evident when considering marriage. Asked if it would be acceptable for their child to marry a follower of each faith, responses vary considerably. Canadians are least likely to say they would accept their child marrying a Muslim:

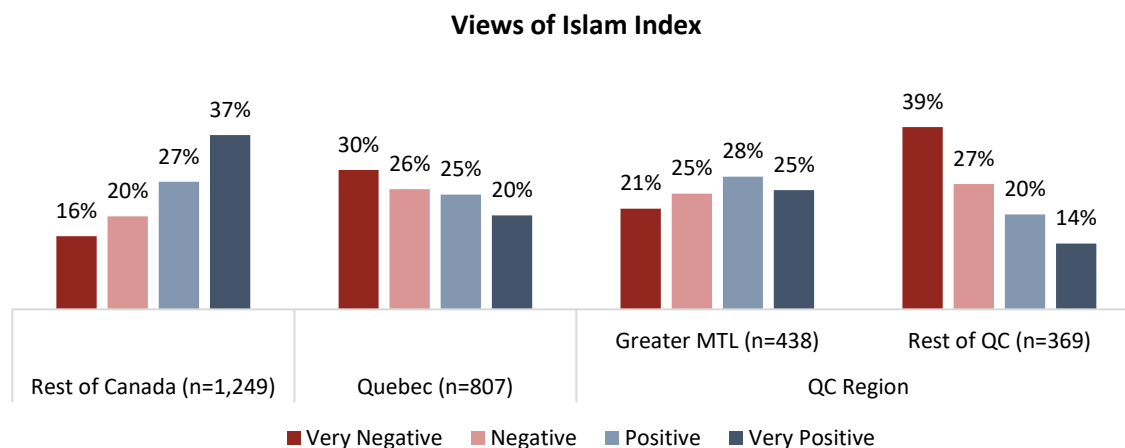
Would it be acceptable or unacceptable to you if one of your children were to marry a person who was a follower of any of these religions? Percentage saying "acceptable" shown:								
Unweighted sample sizes	Rest of Canada (n=1,249)	Region						Quebec (n=807)
		BC (n=200)	AB (n=160)	SK (n=125)	MB (n=121)	ON (n=460)	ATL (n=152)	
Christianity	84%	76%	88%	84%	88%	85%	87%	80%
Judaism	73%	71%	77%	66%	69%	73%	79%	55%
Buddhism	71%	75%	74%	60%	66%	70%	70%	66%
Hinduism	63%	66%	67%	57%	54%	63%	62%	55%
Sikhism	59%	64%	63%	52%	52%	58%	57%	44%
Islam	52%	52%	51%	45%	47%	52%	56%	38%

**Part Two: Views of Islam Index**

To consolidate some of these sentiments, Angus Reid Institute researchers created a Views of Islam Index. This index uses positive and negative scores from six different questions pertaining to Islam to allocate Canadians into groups holding Very Negative, Negative, Positive, and Very Positive views. For more details on the Index [click here](#).

**Regional perspectives**

Outside of Quebec, close to two-in-five Canadians (37%) hold a Very Positive view of Islam. In Quebec this number drops to one-in-five (20%). The number of Quebecers holding a Very Negative view of Islam is twice as high (30%) as it is in the rest of the country (16%). Views are most negative outside of Montreal:

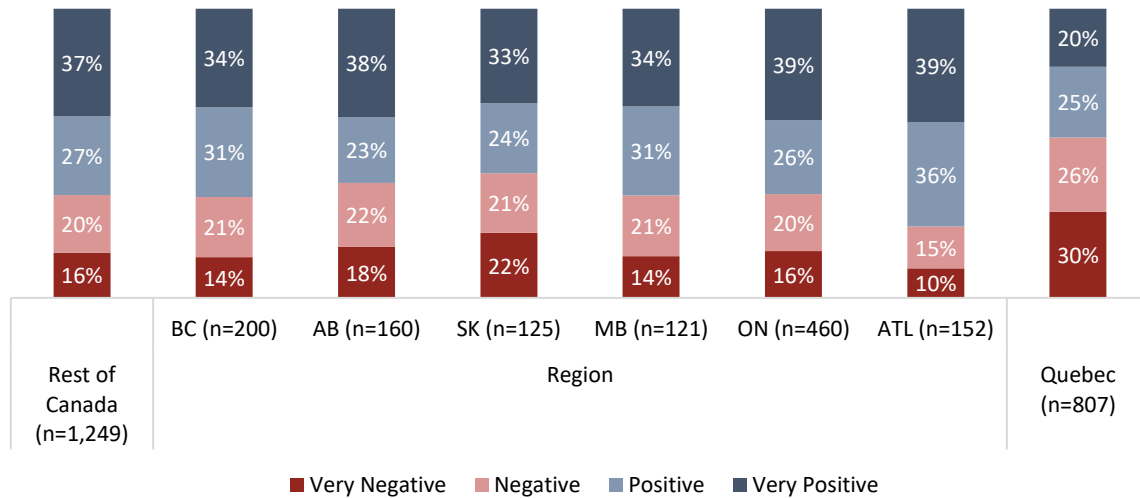


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Albertans, Ontarians, and Atlantic Canadians are most likely to view Islam in a Very Positive light:

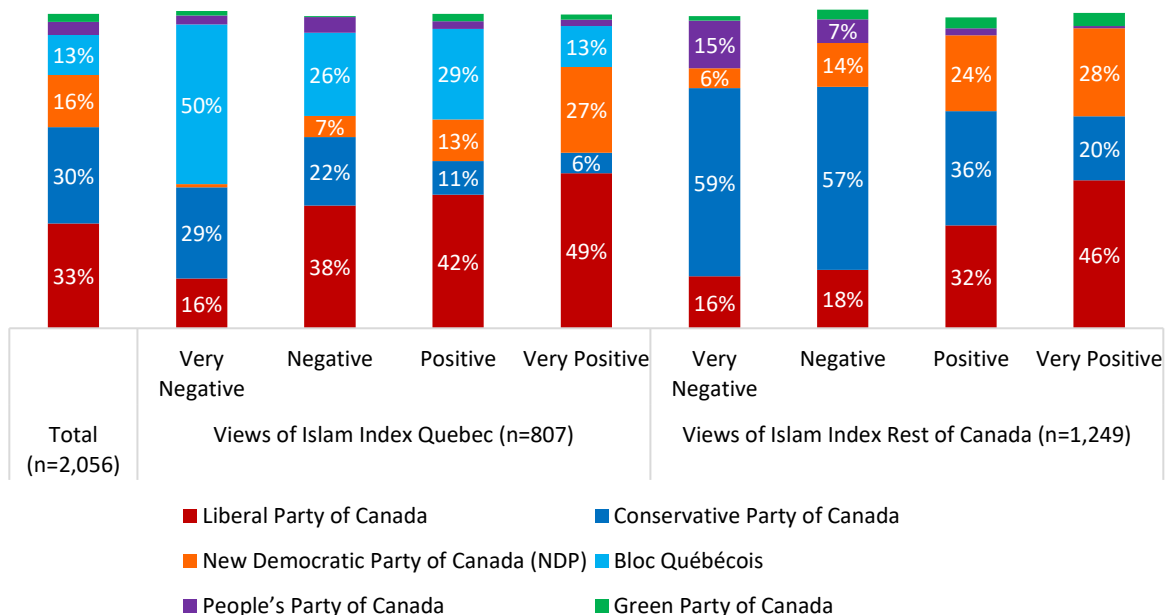
**Regional distribution on Views of Islam Index**



**Bloc Québécois, CPC supporters most negative**

Politically, there are two groups that are vastly more likely to hold negative views of Islam. In Quebec, half of the Very Negative group is comprised of past Bloc Québécois voters. In the rest of Canada, three-in-five of the Negative and Very Negative supported the Conservative Party in 2021:

**Federal vote last on Views of Islam Index**



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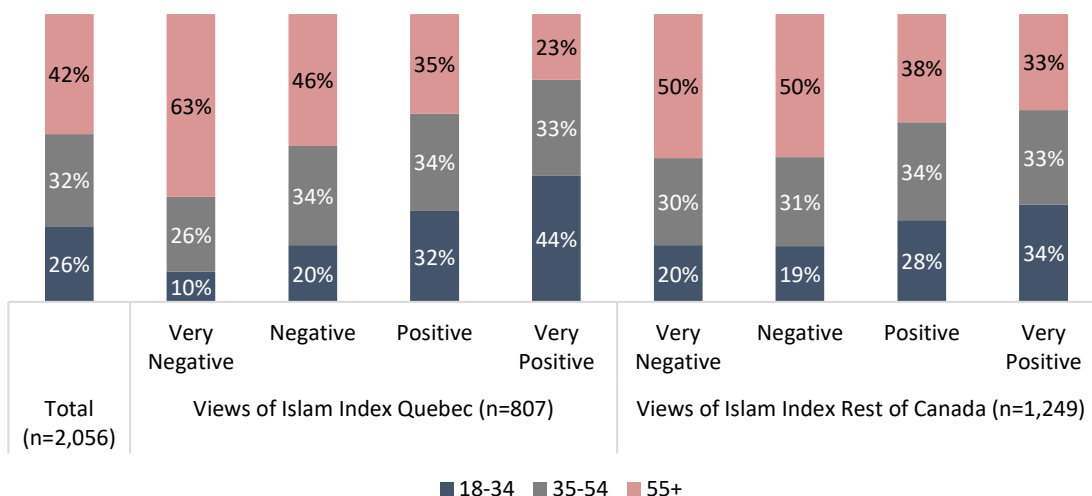
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**Age, gender and education**

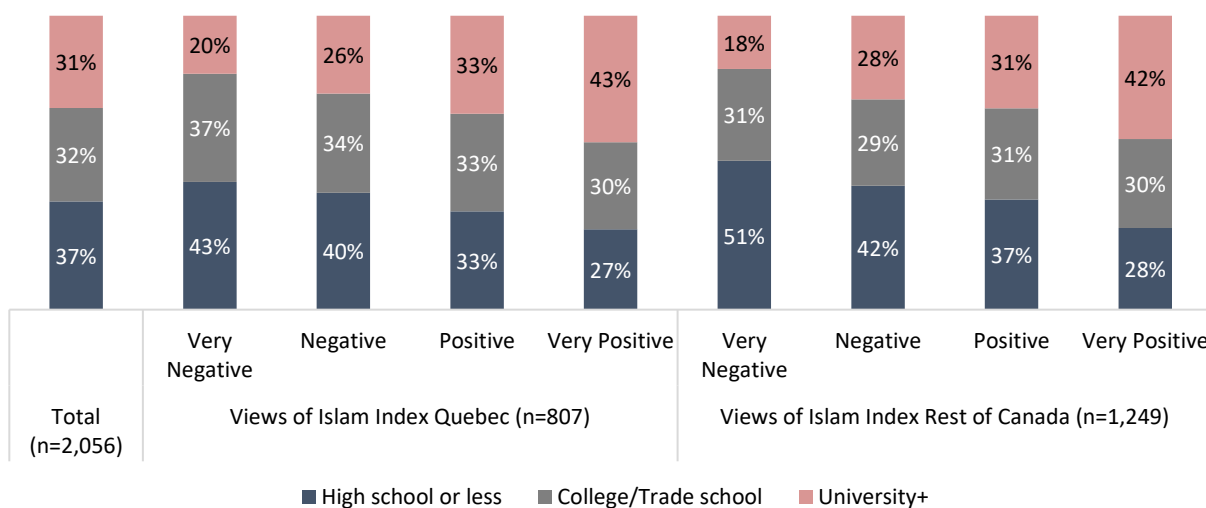
In Quebec, the distribution between all groups is near-even between men and women. In the rest of Canada, those with negative views of Islam are more likely to be male ([see detailed tables](#)). In both portions of the sample – those in Quebec and those outside – age is a considerable factor. Older residents are much more common in the negative groups than the positive ones along the Index:

**Age Distribution on Views of Islam Index**



Those with Very Positive views of Islam in both Quebec and the rest of Canada are twice as likely to have university education than the Very Negative:

**Education distribution on Views of Islam Index**

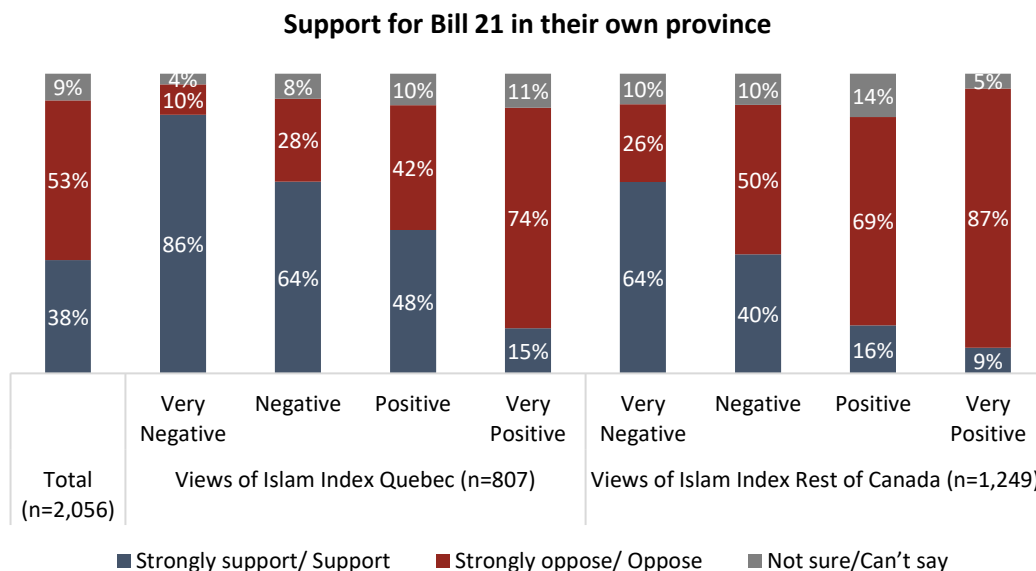


**Part Three: How negative views of Islam correlate with other beliefs**

**Bill 21**

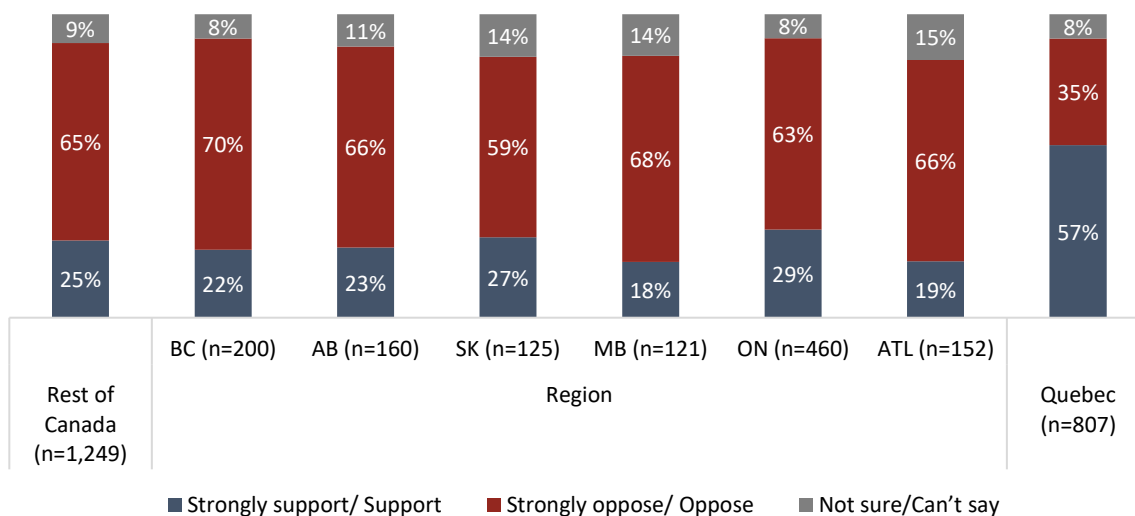
Quebec’s “Act respecting the laicity of the State”, [or Bill 21](#), is a statute that prohibits the wearing of religious symbols for individuals in certain public positions of authority while they are on the worksite. Passed in 2019, [recent research](#) has shown that the law has, in fact, increased feelings of alienation and discomfort among Muslims in the province.

Canadians across the country were asked how they feel about this type of law in their own province (Quebecers were asked if they support or oppose the current law). Those who are most unfavourable to Islam are overwhelmingly in favour of Bill 21, but that enthusiasm drops off significantly among the Negative, Positive, and Very Positive in the rest of Canada.



Overall, outside of Quebec the concept of Bill 21 is unpopular. Two-thirds (65%) oppose it while one-quarter (25%) offer support. In Quebec, nearing three-in-five (57%) support the act, while one-in-three (35%) are opposed:

**Would you support or oppose this type of law in your own province (Bill 21)?  
In Quebec - Do you support or oppose this law?**



**Views of other faith groups, religious symbols**

Islam is evidently the most likely belief system to face criticism in Canada but those who view the faith disapprovingly are also more likely to view other groups with negativity. Consider that in both Quebec and the rest of Canada, three-in-five of those with Very Negative views of Islam also view Sikhism unfavourably. However, those classified as Very Negative on the index in Quebec are also much more critical of Judaism and Christianity than those in the rest of Canada:

Percentage of Canadians who hold an <u>unfavourable</u> view of each religion:									
	Total (n=2,056)	Views of Islam Index Quebec (n=807)				Views of Islam Index Rest of Canada (n=1,249)			
		Very Negative (30%)	Negative (26%)	Positive (25%)	Very Positive (20%)	Very Negative (16%)	Negative (20%)	Positive (27%)	Very Positive (37%)
Islam	44%	90%	61%	35%	8%	91%	64%	37%	5%
Christianity	33%	47%	36%	30%	31%	31%	29%	30%	32%
Sikhism	26%	61%	31%	16%	8%	59%	34%	16%	3%
Judaism	22%	57%	32%	19%	9%	38%	24%	13%	5%
Hinduism	21%	45%	24%	16%	8%	52%	27%	11%	4%
Buddhism	15%	36%	20%	11%	4%	39%	20%	8%	3%

The Very Negative toward Islam are much more resistant of public displays of religious symbols than those in the three other groupings. Notably, the burka and the kirpan are highly opposed among the

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Negative and Positive as well, but other symbols like the hijab and turban cause much less consternation for these latter groups than the Very Negative:

Percentage who <u>oppose</u> allowing these religious symbols to be worn in public:									
	Total (n=2,056)	Views of Islam Index Quebec (n=807)				Views of Islam Index Rest of Canada (n=1,249)			
		Very Negative (30%)	Negative (26%)	Positive (25%)	Very Positive (20%)	Very Negative (16%)	Negative (20%)	Positive (27%)	Very Positive (37%)
Burka	73%	100%	98%	86%	33%	100%	98%	78%	29%
Kirpan	66%	99%	92%	66%	42%	93%	84%	61%	29%
Hijab	35%	98%	49%	14%	-	98%	49%	12%	-
Turban	29%	87%	44%	12%	1%	68%	38%	9%	1%
Nun's Habit	26%	65%	38%	20%	2%	42%	33%	15%	8%
Crucifix	24%	52%	36%	17%	3%	35%	34%	18%	11%
Kippa	22%	73%	38%	13%	1%	42%	25%	7%	1%
Star of David	20%	59%	35%	13%	4%	36%	25%	7%	1%

The Very Negative show much higher levels of aversion to places of worship in their communities than others, both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. Meanwhile, the Very Positive toward Islam have little to no problem with any faith group building and practicing in their neighbourhood:

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Percentage who would be “uncomfortable” having each of the following in their neighbourhood:									
	Total (n=2,056)	Views of Islam Index Quebec (n=807)				Views of Islam Index Rest of Canada (n=1,249)			
		Very Negative (30%)	Negative (26%)	Positive (25%)	Very Positive (20%)	Very Negative (16%)	Negative (20%)	Positive (27%)	Very Positive (37%)
A Muslim Mosque	38%	94%	59%	15%	1%	95%	63%	19%	0%
A Sikh Gurudwara	34%	89%	54%	20%	3%	74%	45%	16%	3%
A Hindu Mandir (Temple)	30%	79%	41%	13%	3%	71%	45%	15%	3%
A Jewish Synagogue	23%	77%	42%	14%	3%	41%	23%	10%	1%
A Buddhist Temple	23%	60%	33%	12%	3%	54%	30%	11%	2%
A Christian Church	17%	39%	21%	11%	5%	28%	20%	12%	6%

### Does Canada have an anti-Muslim issue?

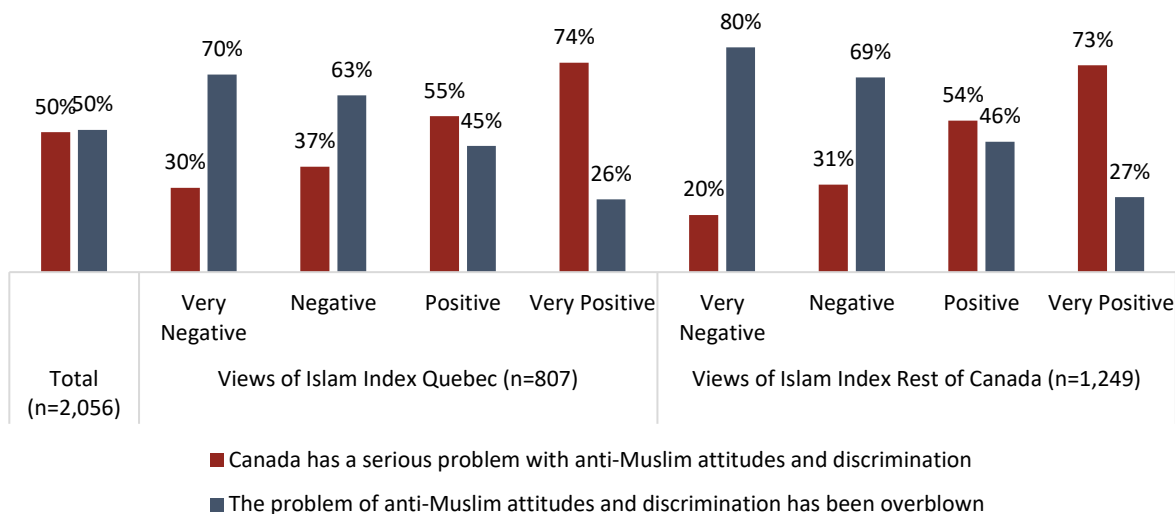
Much of the debate since the appointment of Amira Elghawaby as special representative on combatting Islamophobia has centered on whether this is truly a problem in Canada. In 2017, the House of Commons [passed a non-binding motion](#) to condemn Islamophobia and other religious discrimination. Nearly all NDP and Liberal MPs voted for the motion while most Conservatives – including current leader Pierre Poilievre – voted against it.

Opinions on this issue are divided in near exact proportions. Half of Canadians say that Canada has a serious anti-Muslim problem to reckon with and half say it doesn't. Notably, those with the most negative views towards Muslims in Canada are by far the most likely to say that this is not an issue:

### CONTACT:

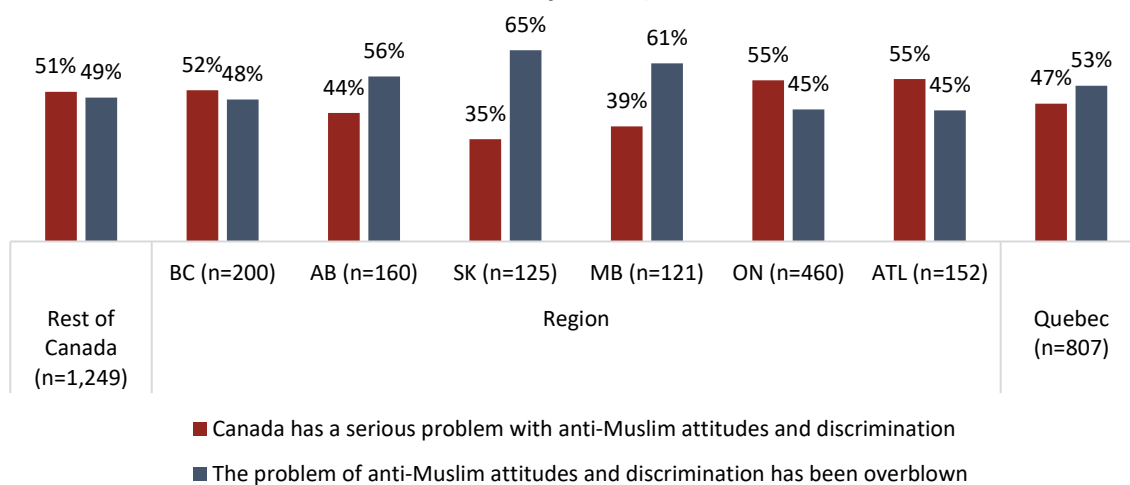
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**Which of these two views is closer to your own (even if neither is exactly how you feel)?**



From a purely regional standpoint, those in Saskatchewan and Manitoba are most likely to say that this issue has been overblown, while residents in Quebec are closely divided:

**Which of these two views is closer to your own (even if neither is exactly how you feel)?**



**Combatting Islamophobia?**

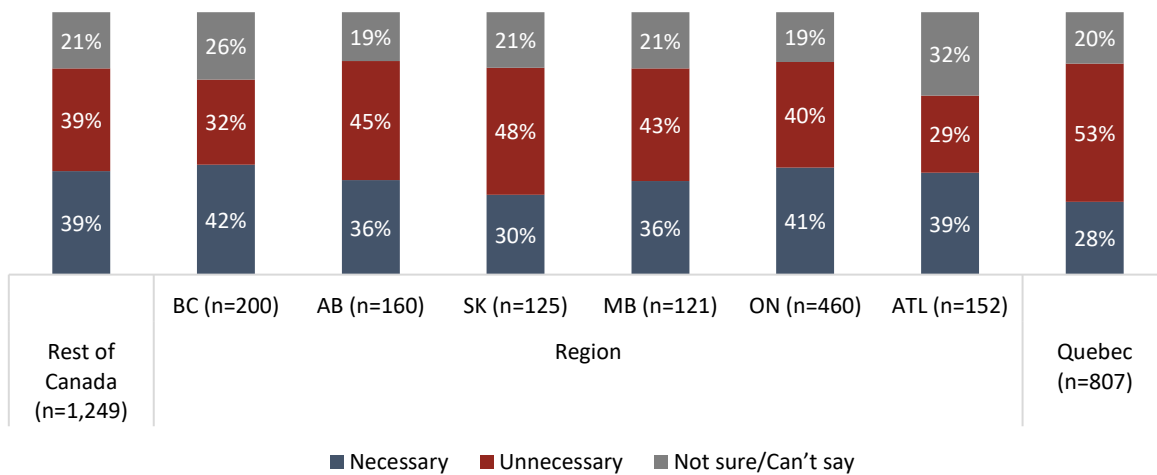
While half of Canadians see a problem with anti-Muslim discrimination in their country, fewer are certain that the position of a special representative to combat Islamophobia is necessary. Even for those with the most positive views of Islam are nowhere near unanimous on this question. Two-in-five (44%) say this is an unnecessary job to create ([see detailed tables](#)).

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Nowhere in the country do a majority of Canadians feel that Canada needs an anti-Islamophobia ambassador. Outside of Quebec opinions are divided evenly, with one-in-five (21%) Canadians saying they're not sure:

**In your view, is a position like this – a representative to work on combatting Islamophobia in Canada – necessary or unnecessary?**



*For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics for the Canada with the exception of Quebec, [click here](#).*

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

*For detailed results based on the Views of Islam Index, [click here](#).*

*For Views of Islam Index scoring, [click here](#).*

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