

Unity or Separation: Quebec, Alberta & Canada's future: PQ voters drive Quebec separatist push that majority oppose

The second in a three-part series that takes an in-depth look at the motivations of Quebec sovereignty

February 18, 2026 – More than 30 years after the narrowly defeated second Quebec referendum, the separatist movement has been resurrected again on the backs of a resurgent Parti Québécois, who have not governed the province in more than a decade

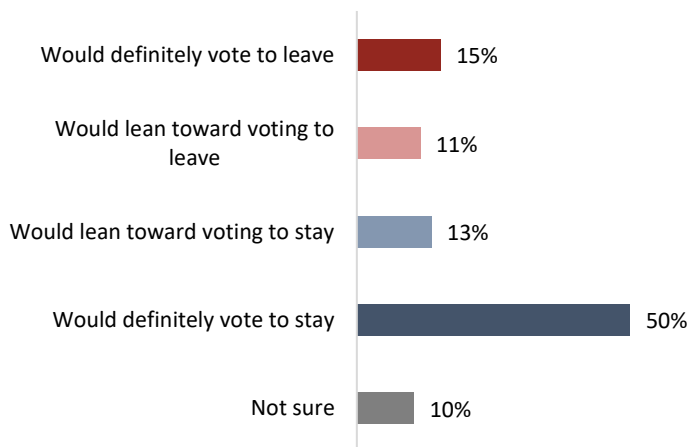
With still much to be decided in the fall provincial race – and when, if ever, the PQ decides “winning conditions” make it the right time to call a referendum – new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds one-quarter (26%) would vote to separate in the event of a referendum held in the present day, split between those who are decided in their vote (15%) and those who are only currently leaning that way (11%).

They are opposed by approaching two-thirds (63%) who would vote for Quebec to stay in such a referendum, including half (50%) in the province who say they are definitely going to vote that way.

The “leave camp” falls mostly – though not entirely – under the banner of those who would also support the Parti Québécois were the provincial election today. Two-thirds (64%) of Parti Québécois voters say they would also vote “leave” in a referendum. But there are also pockets of separatism among supporters of incumbent Coalition Avenir Québec (15% leave), Québec Solidaire (16%) and the Quebec Conservatives (18%). Although clearly the PQ are at the forefront of the push for the next referendum, sovereignty isn't the only deciding factor among Quebec voters when it comes to their next provincial vote.

Identity, language and culture are some of the more compelling arguments for those who would vote for the province to separate from Canada.

If a referendum was held today on Quebec separation, would you vote for Quebec to leave Canada and become its own independent country or stay in Canada? (Quebec, n=939)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Feb. 2-6, 2026, among a randomized sample of 939 Canadian adults who live in Quebec. Respondents are drawn from the [Angus Reid Forum](#), a large-scale online panel developed to include Canadian residents in each of the 343 federal ridings in Canada and representative of the Canadian population by age, gender, family income, ethnic status and education. The sample was weighted to be representative of adults nationwide according to region, gender, age, household income, and education, based on the Canadian census. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3 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.

For more information on our polling methods, [click here](#).

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More Key Findings:

- Three-quarters in the province believe the U.S. would use political means (76%) or economic means (79%) to compel an independent Quebec to join the states. Half (51%) also worry the U.S. could use military means.
- But those who would vote 'leave' if the referendum were today are less convinced the U.S. would compel an independent Quebec to join them than those who would vote 'stay'.
- Nine-in-ten (91%) who say they would "definitely" vote to leave if the referendum were today say that a convincing reason or Quebec to leave Canada is that "Canada's institutions will always favour English Canada over Quebec".
- However, economic concerns appear to be influencing the "lean toward voting leave" group. More than half (54%) among "lean leavers" say the potential of increased economic instability from an independent Quebec is a reason for Quebec to stay in Canada.

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: Lay of the land

Majority following potential of referendum 'closely'

The roots of separatism in Quebec lie much, much deeper than the movement spawning in recent years on the Prairies. But it has perpetually been an issue simmering in the background of Quebec politics. Separatist referendum defeats in 1980 and 1995 have not quelled the desire for the province to forge its own path. In 1980, separatists were defeated soundly by a 60 per cent 'no' vote to a detailed plebiscite which asked residents for the mandate to negotiate a new agreement between Quebec and the rest of Canada. The second referendum in 1995 came much closer to success, with a 49.4 per cent 'yes' vote and 50.6 per cent to 'no', a margin of just 54,288 votes. Since then, the legal framework of potential separation has been more solidly hammered into place by a [1998 Supreme Court Decision](#) and the subsequent [Clarity Act](#) passed by parliament.

An upheaval in provincial politics in Quebec has put the separatist Parti Québécois and its leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon in the pole position with an election approaching in the fall. Plamondon and the PQ have promised to hold a referendum before 2030 if they form government. Former Premier and Bloc Québécois leader Lucien Bouchard has advised against this, worrying that it could [damage the PQ's election chances](#) to centre the provincial election around a referendum. As it stands, the PQ are ahead in vote intention of a field that includes leaderless parties in the Quebec Liberals and the incumbent Coalition Avenir Québec.

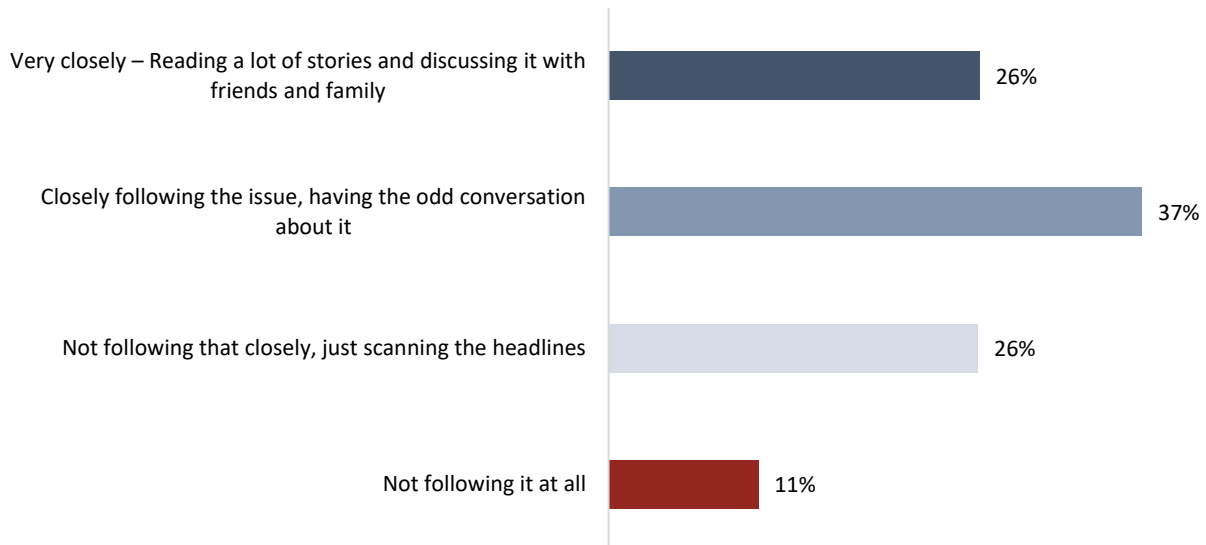
Related: Government satisfaction scores fall like winter snow as Canadians blanketed in cost-of-living challenges

Two-thirds of Quebecers say they are following the potential of a referendum from a PQ government closely or very closely, and another one-quarter are keeping tabs on the headlines. Fewer than one-in-eight (11%) say they are not following it at all:

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How closely have you been following this issue - The Parti Québécois, a separatist provincial political party, has said that if it wins the fall provincial election in Quebec, it will hold a referendum (Quebec, n=939)



Mainstream media the main source of info for both sides

Whether Quebecers place themselves in the “stay” or “leave” camps, the top information source is mainstream media. Social media and informal conversations with friends and family play a lesser role. This varies significantly from the [situation in Alberta](#), where those interested in separation are vastly more likely to draw their information from alternative media and social media.

Notably, [former Parti Québécois leader Pierre Karl Péladeau is the CEO of Quebecor](#), the owner of several mainstream media outlets including Videotron, TVA, Le Journal de Montreal and Le Journal de Quebec.

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When it comes to the issue of a potential referendum and Quebec separating from Canada, where would you say most of the information you learn about this issue comes from? (Up to two chosen)			
	Quebec (n=939)	Referendum vote	
		Leave	Stay
Mainstream media sources	80%	84%	79%
Social media	28%	28%	28%
Conversations with friends and family	25%	29%	23%
Alternative media sources	11%	13%	10%

By two-to-one margin, Quebecers would vote stay in potential referendum

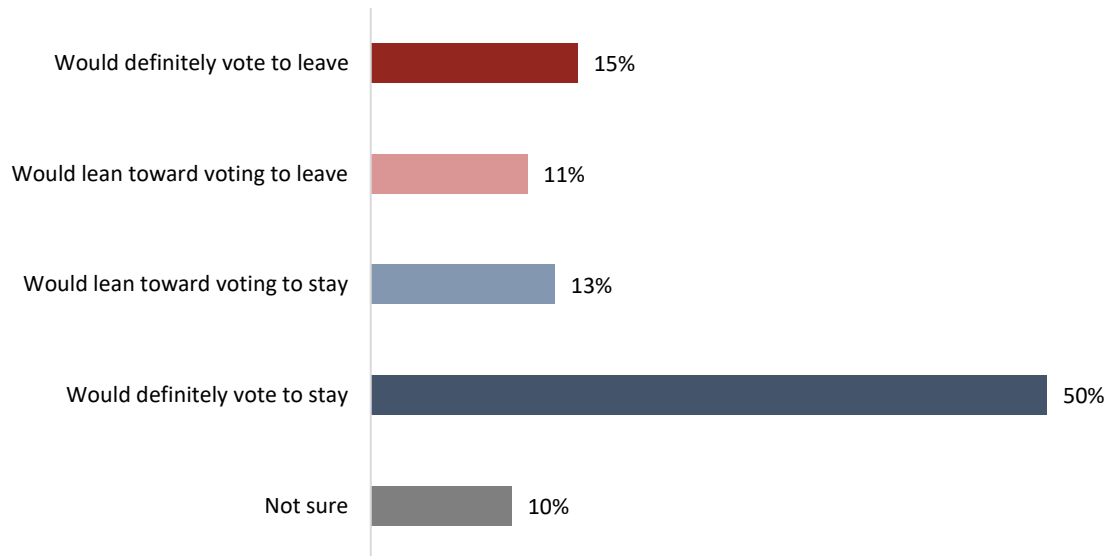
As things stand, the “stay” camp is much larger than the “leave” one. Approaching two-thirds (63%) say they would either lean towards voting stay (13%) or would definitely vote stay (50%) compared to the one-quarter (26%) who lean towards a leave vote (11%) or definitely would vote leave (15%).

The Stay vote is not only larger, but much more hardened. The Leave vote appears to be softer, with a significant minority only leaning that way at the moment:

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**If a referendum was held today on Quebec separation, would you vote for Quebec to leave Canada and become its own independent country or stay in Canada?
(Quebec, n=939)**

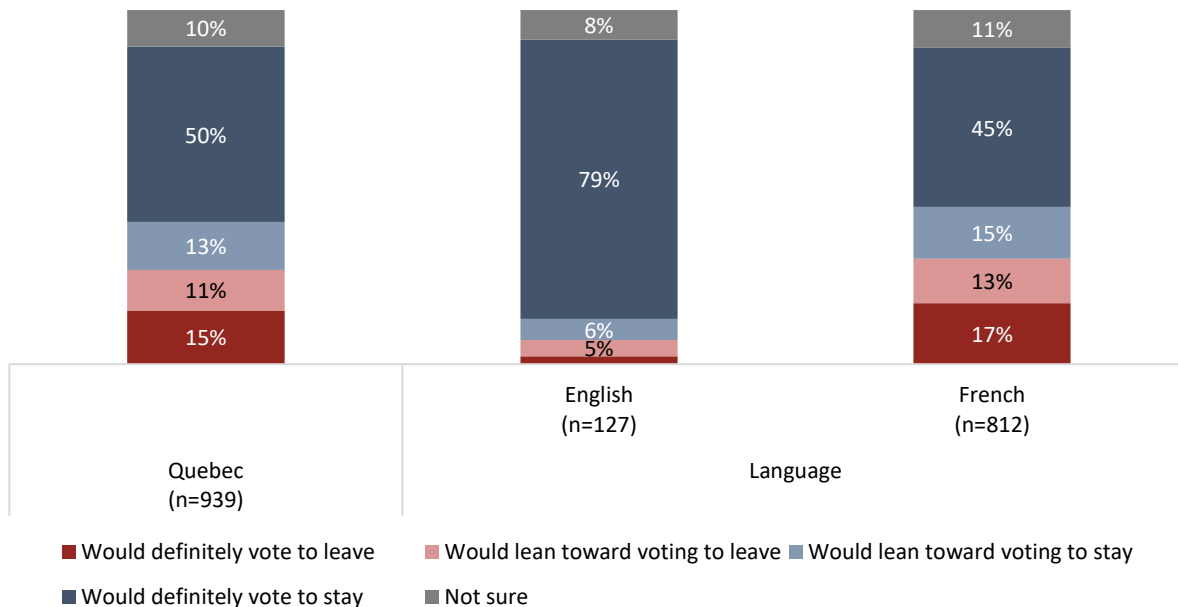


French language and culture is a historic motivator for the separatist movement in Quebec. And those whose primary language is French are much more likely to say they would vote Leave if the referendum was today than those who primarily speak English. But, in both lingual groups, the Leave vote is a minority:

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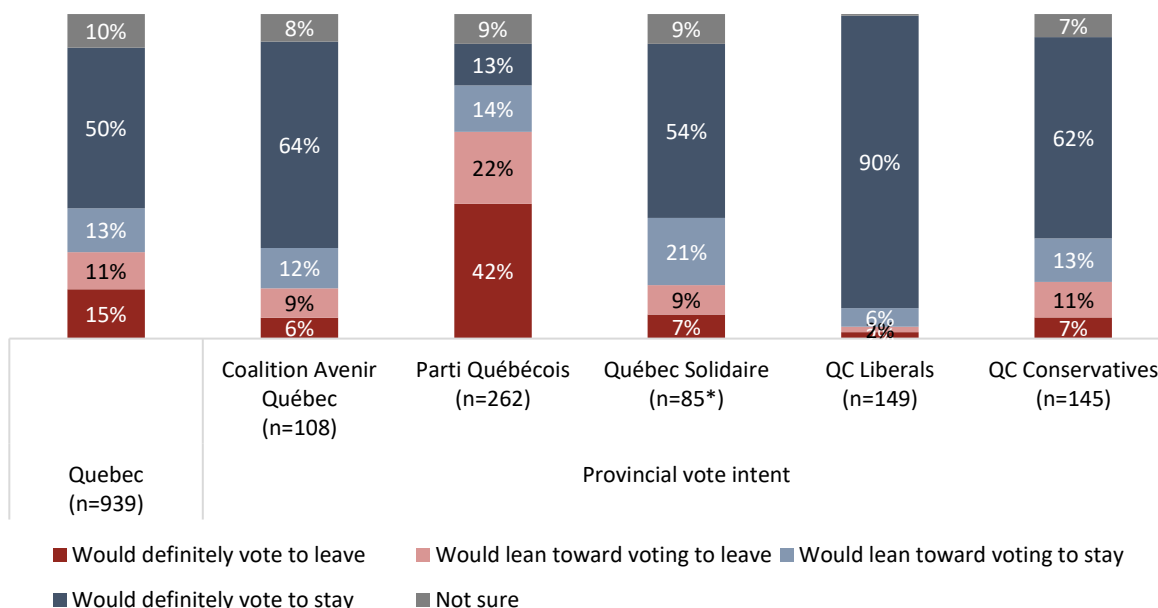
Politics plays a significant role in how Quebecers view this issue. Those who say they would vote for the Parti Québécois if the election were today are the most likely to say they would vote leave. However, even among PQ supporters, the desire to vote Quebec out of Canada is not uniform with one-quarter (27%) saying they would vote PQ and would vote for Quebec to stay in Canada if a referendum were held.

There are also at least one-in-six CAQ (15%), Quebec Solidaire (16%) and Conservative supporters (18%) who are currently on the leave side. This suggests that although the PQ are offering the clearest path to a referendum, it does not mean separatists are unifying behind the party at this point:

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If a referendum was held today on Quebec separation, would you vote for Quebec to leave Canada and become its own independent country or stay in Canada?



**Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

More disapproval than approval for most political leaders on issue

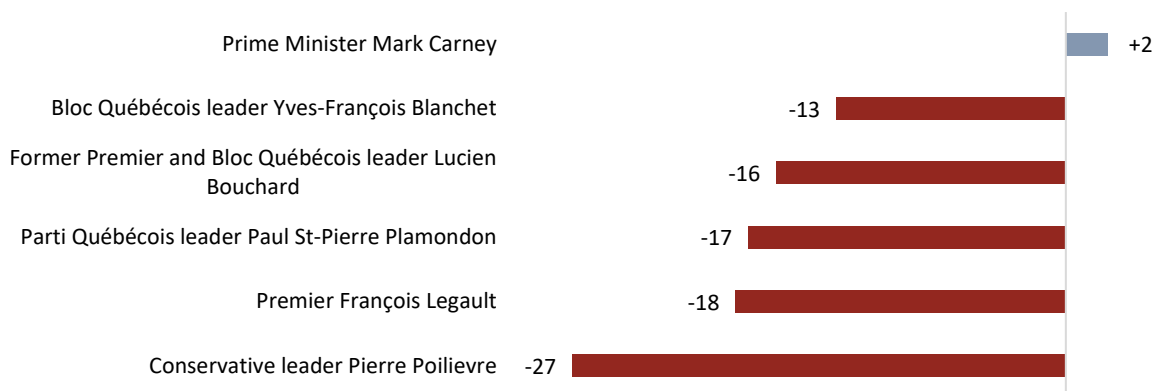
There is fluidity in the Quebec political sphere with an election just months away. Premier François Legault will step down before the election, leaving the incumbent Coalition Avenir Québec without a leader. The opposition Liberal Party is also leaderless after its newly elected leader, former federal minister Pablo Rodriguez, stepped down.

The result is an environment where there is little approval of the discussion on separation being held by top political figures. At best, opinion is split on Prime Minister Mark Carney. Below, more disapprove than approve of how Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet, former Premier and BQ leader Lucien Bouchard, PQ leader Plamondon, Legault and Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre have approached the issue. At the January Conservative convention, Poilievre [blamed the Liberal government for the resurgence of separatism movements in Quebec and Alberta](#), but has not weighed in on separatism in Quebec in recent months otherwise. But he is generally viewed unfavourably in Quebec, including by 62 per cent in the province [in recent ARI data](#).

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**Net approval of how the following have approached the issue of separatism
in Quebec
(Quebec, n=939)**



Assessments vary by how respondents intend to vote in a referendum. Blanchet (+51) and Plamondon (+63) are widely approved of by those who would vote to leave. Meanwhile, of the political leaders included, Carney is the only one who has a positive net approval by those who would vote stay in a referendum:

Net approval of how the following have approached the issue of separatism in Quebec by referendum vote intention		
	Referendum vote	
	Leave (n=250)	Stay (n=592)
Prime Minister Mark Carney	-61	+33
Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet	+51	-44
Former Premier and Bloc Québécois leader Lucien Bouchard	0	-22
Parti Québécois leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon	+63	-54
Premier François Legault	-45	-7
Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre	-50	-19

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Part Two: The case for and against separation

Which arguments are convincing?

For the Stay group...

For those who would vote to stay in a referendum, some of the key motivating factors include the social services lost by leaving confederation, the potential of economic instability, and that Quebec already benefits from significant autonomy within Canada.

Among those leaning towards staying, there are some arguments for Quebec to leave that resonate. The culture arguments – that Quebec has a distinct identity and that an independent Quebec could better maintain its language and culture – are convincing to a majority in the “lean stay” group.

There are also a number of arguments for Quebec to leave that are convincing to approaching two-in-five of the “definite stay” group, including that Canada forces Quebec to take too many immigrants (39%):

Percentage who find the following arguments convincing among those who would lean or definitely vote to stay		
	Lean toward voting to stay (n=127)	Definitely vote to stay (n=465)
Arguments for Quebec to stay in Canada		
Quebec can't afford the social services/infrastructure it would lose by leaving Canada	67%	87%
Quebec has more political influence being a part of Canada than it would outside of it	64%	85%
An independent Quebec would be swallowed up by the U.S.	61%	69%
Quebec opens itself up to more economic instability if it was independent	78%	92%
Quebec is a fundamental part of Canada and should always remain that way	56%	82%
Quebec already benefits from autonomy within Canada and does not need to separate	49%	79%
First Nations territories would be under dispute because of treaties signed with the Crown/Canada	46%	62%
Your own financial prospects would be harmed by Quebec separating	64%	83%
I am Canadian first and foremost	37%	80%
Arguments for Quebec to leave Canada		
An independent Quebec would have a stronger economy	28%	7%
Quebec would completely control its own resources	58%	29%
Quebec and Quebecers have a unique identity distinct from Canada and Canadians	61%	50%
Quebec gives more to Canada than it gets from being a part of it	37%	17%
Quebec deserves the right to forge its own independent path	51%	18%
An independent Quebec would be able to better maintain its language and culture	66%	37%
Canada's institutions will always favour English Canada over Quebec	58%	36%
Canada forces Quebec to take too many immigrants	50%	39%
Your own financial prospects would improve with Quebec's independence	24%	7%

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For the Leave group...

Nearly all among the “definite vote leave” group are convinced that complete control over provincial resources, the unique identity of Quebecers, and the ability of an independent Quebec to preserve its language and culture are good arguments for Quebec to leave.

Among the “lean leave” group, hesitation appears to be caused by economic uncertainty of an independent Quebec, as well as the arguments surrounding federal infrastructure and political influence. Also, notably, one-in-five (22%) “definite leave” voters appear concerned about an independent Quebec’s potential economic instability:

Percentage who find the following arguments convincing among those who would lean or definitely vote to leave		
	Lean toward voting to leave (n=108)	Definitely vote to leave (n=142)
Arguments for Quebec to stay in Canada		
Quebec can’t afford the social services/infrastructure it would lose by leaving Canada	37%	7%
Quebec has more political influence being a part of Canada than it would outside of it	38%	11%
An independent Quebec would be swallowed up by the U.S.	34%	7%
Quebec opens itself up to more economic instability if it was independent	54%	22%
Quebec is a fundamental part of Canada and should always remain that way	26%	7%
Quebec already benefits from autonomy within Canada and does not need to separate	23%	5%
First Nations territories would be under dispute because of treaties signed with the Crown/Canada	31%	8%
Your own financial prospects would be harmed by Quebec separating	37%	13%
I am Canadian first and foremost	15%	6%
Arguments for Quebec to leave Canada		
An independent Quebec would have a stronger economy	57%	80%
Quebec would completely control its own resources	88%	96%
Quebec and Quebecers have a unique identity distinct from Canada and Canadians	85%	94%
Quebec gives more to Canada than it gets from being a part of it	62%	76%
Quebec deserves the right to forge its own independent path	88%	94%
An independent Quebec would be able to better maintain its language and culture	86%	97%
Canada’s institutions will always favour English Canada over Quebec	80%	91%
Canada forces Quebec to take too many immigrants	69%	79%
Your own financial prospects would improve with Quebec’s independence	36%	66%

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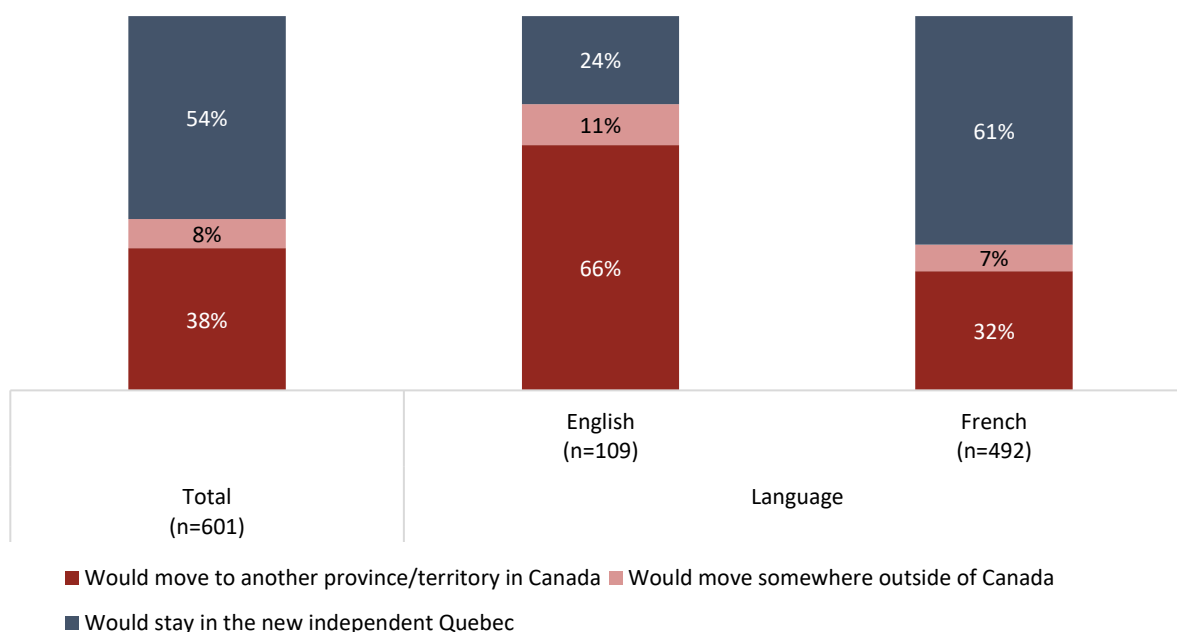
Part Three: What if?

Majority of ‘Stay’ voters would stay in an independent Quebec

More than half (54%) of “stay” voters say if Quebec were to separate, they would stay in the province. Two-in-five (38%) say they would move to another province; one-in-twelve another country.

But in this hypothetical scenario, there is a gap between English and French speaking “stay” voters on whether they would remain in an independent Quebec. Three-quarters (77%) of English speakers say they would leave, whether it would be to elsewhere in Canada (66%) or another country (11%). Three-in-five (61%) French speakers would stay:

**Suppose Quebecers voted to separate from Canada, if that happens, would you stay or move somewhere else?
(Among those who would vote to stay)**



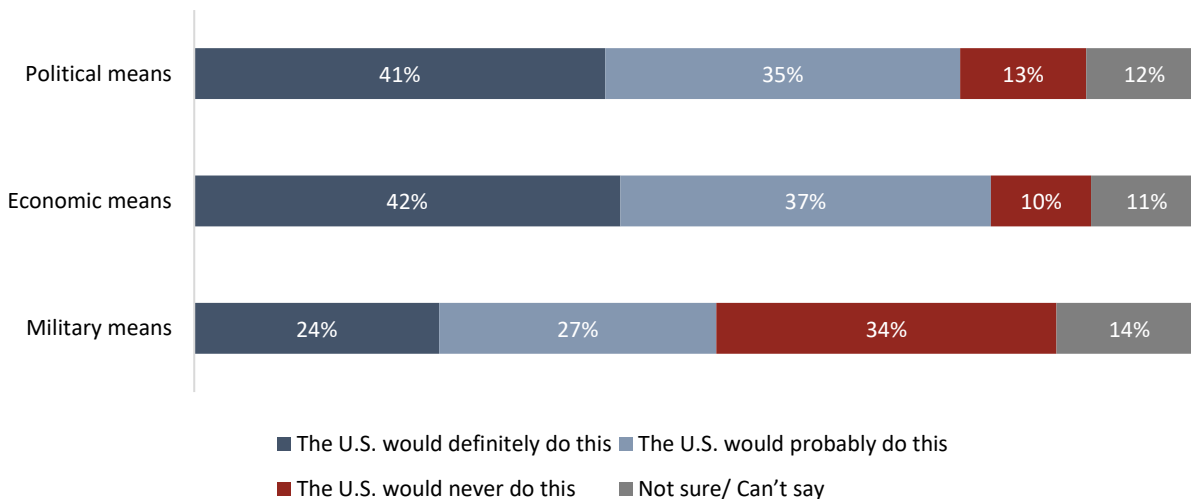
Concerns over U.S. pressure on independent Quebec

In the wake of U.S. President Donald Trump’s regional annexation threats, [there are concerns about how the current U.S.](#) would approach an independent Quebec. Most in the province believe the U.S. would exert economic (79%) or political (76%) influence to coerce Quebec to join the United States. There is more doubt that the U.S. would involve its military, but still half (51%) in Quebec believe the U.S. would definitely (24%) or probably (27%) do that:

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**Do you believe the U.S. would compel Quebec to join using political, economic or military means, or not?
(Quebec, n=939)**



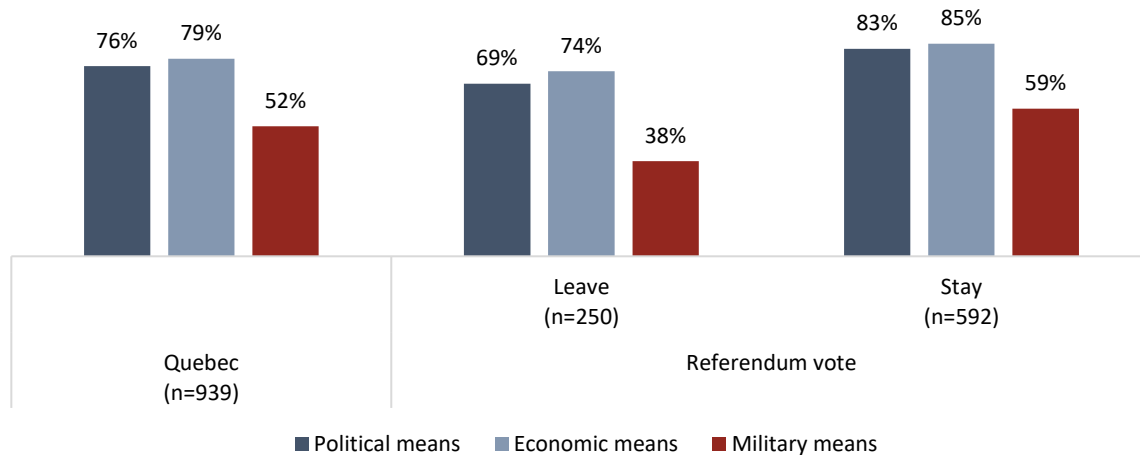
The PQ have promised a referendum in their first mandate by 2030, but there have been concerns about the potential effect of Trump on the timing of any Quebec referendum. In recent months, Blanchet and others have downplayed the threats posed by Trump's 51st state talk, which some view as a way to pre-emptively neutralize separatist opponents' arguments that an independent Quebec would be under threat by Trump's U.S.

Those who are currently in the "leave" camp are less convinced that the U.S. would compel an independent Quebec to join using economic, political or military means than those who would vote "stay" if the referendum were today:

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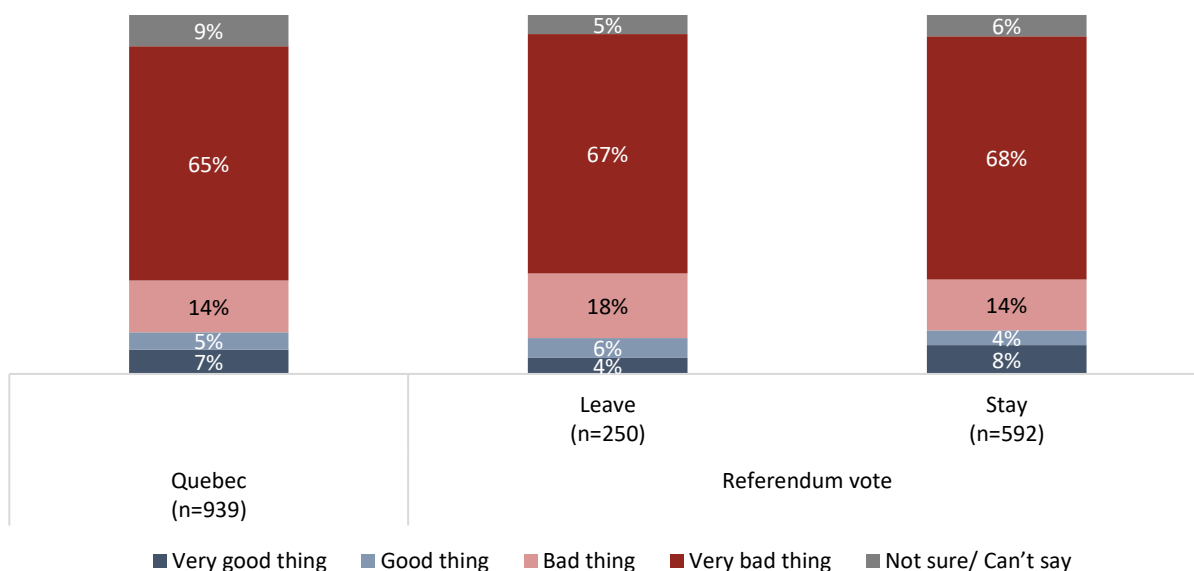
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Percentage who believe the U.S. would 'definitely' or 'probably' compel an independent Quebec to join using...



A post referendum independent Quebec potentially joining the U.S. is overwhelmingly viewed as a bad thing by both those who would vote for the province to leave Canada (85%) and those who would vote for it to stay (82%):

And if an independent Quebec joined the U.S., would that be a good thing or a bad thing?



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