

Quebecers Sharply Divided Over Hardening of Language Law, Poll Reveals

MONTREAL, May 24, 2021 – Non-Francophones hold widely diverging views from French-speaking Quebecers on Bill 96, which aims to enforce and reinforce the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101). A majority of Anglophones and Allophones also believe the debate over the proposed legislation will strain relations between the majority and minority communities.

That is one of the findings of a new poll conducted by Léger Marketing for the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) and the Association for Canadian Studies (ACS). The poll, conducted via web-survey May 14-19, shows that almost three-quarters of English-speaking Quebecers (73.5 %) and two-thirds of Allophones (63.5%) believe that Bill 96 will worsen relations between English and French-speaking Quebecers. Two-thirds of French-speaking respondents said they believe relations will stay the same.

“There is a real schism in perceptions and attitudes,” says ACS President Jack Jedwab, who oversaw the poll. Most of the Francophones polled believe the threat to the French language remains unchanged at this time. Meanwhile, a majority of other Quebecers consider the French language is more secure than ever.

The vast majority of Quebecers feel attached to Quebec, the poll indicates. That is true among nine out of ten Francophones, seven in ten Anglophones, and eight in ten Allophones.

Quebecers are also deeply divided on the necessity to use the notwithstanding clause in the Canadian Constitution to pre-empt court challenges based on fundamental rights and freedoms. The vast majority of Anglophones (89.3 %) and Allophones (82.3 %) do not believe it is necessary for Quebec to invoke the clause. More than one-third of Francophones (38.9 %) say it isn’t necessary.

“There is a reason for optimism here in that common cause could be built around opposition to the use of the notwithstanding clause,” QCGN President Marlene Jennings says. “Quebecers take enormous pride in the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the inclusive, open, and tolerant society we have built together. When what the Quebec government is proposing becomes more widely understood, my belief is that opposition to the use of the notwithstanding clause will increase.”

More than half of respondents oppose imposition of a quota on the number of Quebecers who could enroll in English-language CEGEPs. Once again, English and French speakers hold divergent views. The vast majority of Anglophones (88.1 %) and more than two-thirds (69.8 %) of Allophones disapprove of this measure. More than half of Francophones (57.0 %) agree with the plan, which is meant to limit the number of French students who can enroll in English junior colleges.

Seven out of ten English-speaking Quebecers believe English-language institutions are more threatened than ever. A majority of Allophones (55.7 %) agree. Very few French speakers, just over 12 per cent, concur.

“In the coming weeks and months, and during public hearings expected in the fall, we will continue to voice our community’s apprehensions as we advocate against the detrimental consequences the measures proposed in this bill would have on our community’s vitality,” Jennings pledged.

The poll sampled 1,501 Quebecers, 18 years of age or older, including 573 Quebecers with languages other than French. For comparison purposes, a probability sample of this number of respondents would have a margin of error of ± 2.95 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. See full results [here](#).

The Quebec Community Groups Network (www.qcgn.ca) is a not-for-profit organization bringing together English-language community organizations across Quebec. As a centre of evidence-based expertise and collective action it identifies, explores, and addresses strategic issues affecting the development and vitality of the English-speaking community of Quebec and encourages dialogue and collaboration among its member organizations, individuals, community groups, institutions, and leaders.

For further information:

Rita Legault, Director of Communications | rita.legault@qcgn.ca

Telephone: 514-912-6555