



## No-veil rule has support of Canadians

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Canadians overwhelmingly support having Muslim women remove their veils to take the citizenship oath, a poll shows.

Forum Research released figures Thursday showing a whopping 81% of those polled support having women who wear the niqab, or veil, remove it when they swear allegiance during citizenship ceremonies.

Under sweeping regulations that take effect this week, federal Citizenship Minister Jason Kenney announced Muslim women will have to remove their niqabs or any other face-coverings such as burkas before reciting the oath of citizenship to become Canadian.

Support for the new regulations was strongest in Quebec (89%) and lower in British Columbia (74%), Ontario (77%), and the Prairies (79%).

And older residents were more likely to support Kenney in this.

(68% aged 18 to 34; 84% aged 35 to 44; 88% 45 to 54; 87% 55 to 64; 89% 65+).

When it comes to political party preference, not surprisingly, Tories were most likely to support the measure. All the same, people who said they were likely to vote for the other parties were overwhelmingly in favour of the measure.

People who identified themselves as NDP supporters were 73% in favour. That figure was 75% among those who counted themselves as Liberals.

Still, the high level of Quebec support for removing the veil puts all the Opposition parties in a tight spot if they oppose the government move, said Forum President, Lorne Bozinoff.

"We don't get a lot of numbers in the 80% range in the polling business," Bozinoff said.

"This is very unusual having people fairly unanimous on an issue like this."

It was expected there'd be a stinging backlash to the new regulations. Instead, these figures show the government will shore up support where it needs it most – in Quebec, said Bozinoff.

The high approval rating for the new measure in that province will help the Tories, he said.

“Any of the Opposition parties - the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP - all their supporters are in favour of this idea, so it’s going to put them all in a tight spot and make it hard for them to oppose this idea.”

The provincial NDP leader said she found the new regulation, “disconcerting.”

“I don’t believe that the wearing of a garment for religious or cultural purposes is something that I have the right to tell somebody they can or can’t do,” said Andrea Horwath Tuesday.

And Ontario’s Citizenship and Immigration Minister Charles Sousa said the decision falls under the federal government’s jurisdiction.

“That said, we always want to ensure changes don’t hinder our diversity, which we believe is one of Ontario’s biggest strengths,” Sousa said.

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