

The Impact of Law 21 on Québec Students in Law and Education: Executive Summary of Findings

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1. Introduction

Much of the debate regarding “Bill 21, An Act Respecting the Laicity of the State” (hereafter the “Law” or “Law 21”) in the province of Québec has taken for granted majority support within Québec for the prohibition on the wearing of visible religious symbols by teachers, lawyers fulfilling certain functions, police officers and others.¹ This can flatten the diversity of views. The current research was designed to investigate the impact of the Law on a group among those most directly impacted within Québec, namely students in law and education.

Between October 13, 2020 and November 9, 2021, we carried out an online survey of Québec students in law and education, as well as recent graduates and prospective students in these fields, with the aim of gathering both quantitative and qualitative data about the impact of Law 21 on career plans and decisions about where to live, among students and recent graduates in two professions targeted by the Law.² Questions were multiple choice but respondents could add written comments on several questions as well as at the end of the survey. A core concern was to gather evidence concerning the potential impact of Law 21 on the availability of future professionals, particularly teachers. The survey also asked whether the Law had changed respondents’ perceptions of Québec in one way or another and whether it had had an impact on lived experiences of discrimination.

We contacted major student organizations in Québec to disseminate the survey to their members. The survey was also shared with campus religious groups and individual program student organizations across the province. This survey was also disseminated to teacher’s unions including the Québec Provincial Association of Teachers, the Montreal Teacher’s Association, and the Pearson Teacher’s Union, as well as shared through social media outlets (namely Facebook and Twitter),³ utilizing Facebook’s advertising platform to reach a targeted audience. The survey was distributed in two main pushes, once in Fall 2020 and once again in Fall 2021, partly in response to conditions under the COVID pandemic. Many respondents added detailed written comments. The current report provides an executive summary of key findings in addition to select written comments. It also includes reflections on directions for future research.⁴

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¹Although the legislation is popularly referred to as “Bill 21” we chose to identify it as “Law 21,” to reflect its current legislative status.

²Please note, 15.4% of respondents reported that they were attending or had recently graduated from fields other than law or education.

³Target audience was a population aged 18-40, living in Québec with the following interests: Université de Montréal, Jewish holidays, Muslim world, Activism, Québec, Education, Religion, Policy, Politics, Law or Politics and social issues. We specified education level, as: in high school, in college, college grad, high school grad, some college, associate degree, in grad school, some grad school, Master’s degree, professional degree, Doctorate degree, unspecified or some high school. We specified industry as: Legal Services, Education and Libraries or Community and Social Services

⁴Please note that we have not changed the spelling or grammar of written comments, with the exception of correcting very obvious typographical errors. Comments are given in the original language (French or English) in the main body of the text,

As originally conceived, the questionnaire asked about individual choices, focusing on residence and career choices. We were, nonetheless, struck by the extent to which qualitative written responses also raised issues around the impact of the Law on communities as well as individuals, and on the relationships between groups. In short, we conclude that it is difficult to frame the impact of the Law solely in terms of individual choice.

Limitations

This study has limitations. Since privacy laws precluded asking educational institutions to distribute the survey to all students directly and completing the survey was voluntary, the reach of the survey was limited. As such, the sample size is relatively small and thus not necessarily representative of Québec students in law and education as a whole. Moreover, there is a strong possibility of selection bias in favour of those who feel strongly about the Law one way or the other. This is suggested, for example, by high response rates from Montréal, which has a higher concentration of religious minorities than elsewhere in Québec, and from people reporting wearing religious symbols, notably women who wear hijabs.⁵ At the same time, respondents were relatively diverse and spread out across different Québec schools, and the views presented were often nuanced and complex. The fact that not many people answered in order to express strong support for the Law may be significant in itself. Conversely the high number of respondents who said that they felt adversely affected by the Law is in itself an indicator of the Law's impact on students and their career plans. The high response rate of Muslim women, in particular, may be an indicator of a disproportionate impact of the Law on this community.

The survey thus primarily gives insight into the views of those most directly impacted while also yielding preliminary data on the cohort of Law and Education students as a whole. If the survey needs to be seen as suggestive, it nonetheless raises significant issues for future research. It is hoped that these results underscore the value of consulting those most directly affected.

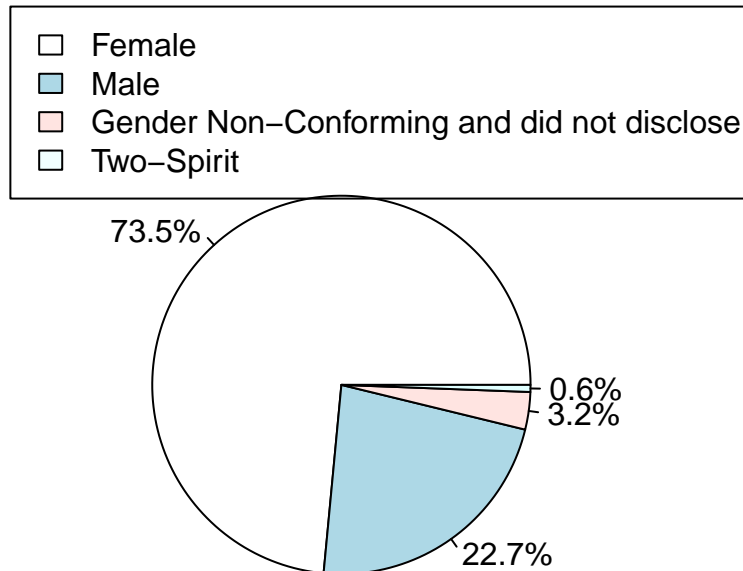
with translations located in Appendix B. In several cases, potential identifying information has been removed.

⁵Given that the relevant legislation and media continue to refer to “religious symbol” we have chosen to use the same term, while simultaneously calling for greater public understanding of the multiplicity of meanings invoked. We recognize that the term “religious symbol” is contested by some, for example on the grounds that wearing religious clothing such as a hijab or a kippah is a religious obligation, not a symbol linked to personal choice. Please see the complex ways respondents to the survey understand this issue, as well as Jennifer Guyver, “Politics or Piety? Debating the Function and Meaning of Religious Symbols in Quebec”, *Arc – The Journal of the School of Religious Studies*, McGill, Volume 45, 2017, pp. 23-4.

2. Findings

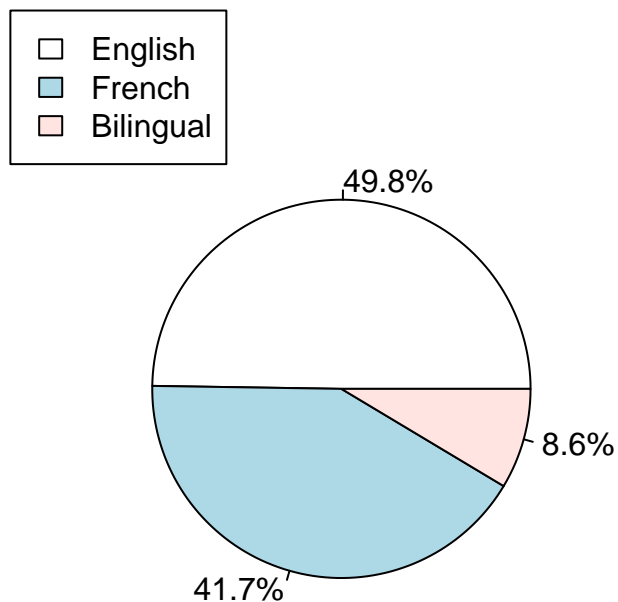
Respondents

Distribution of Respondents by Gender



629 people filled out the survey. 462 respondents (73.5%) identified as female, 143 (22.7%) identified as male, 4 (0.6%) identified as Two-Spirit and 20 (3.2%) identified as gender non-conforming or did not wish to disclose.

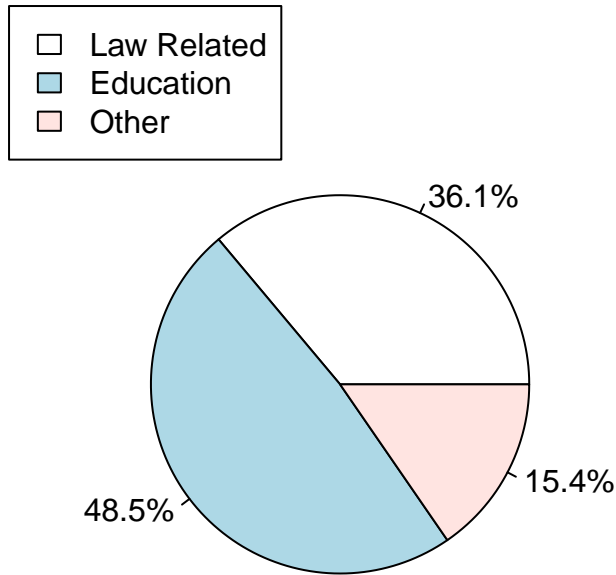
Distribution of Respondents by Language of Educational Institution



313 of respondents (49.8%) are attending or have graduated from English-Language institutions, while 262 (41.7%) are attending or have graduated from French-Language institutions. 54 (8.6%) of respondents are attending or have graduated from bilingual universities or programs.⁶

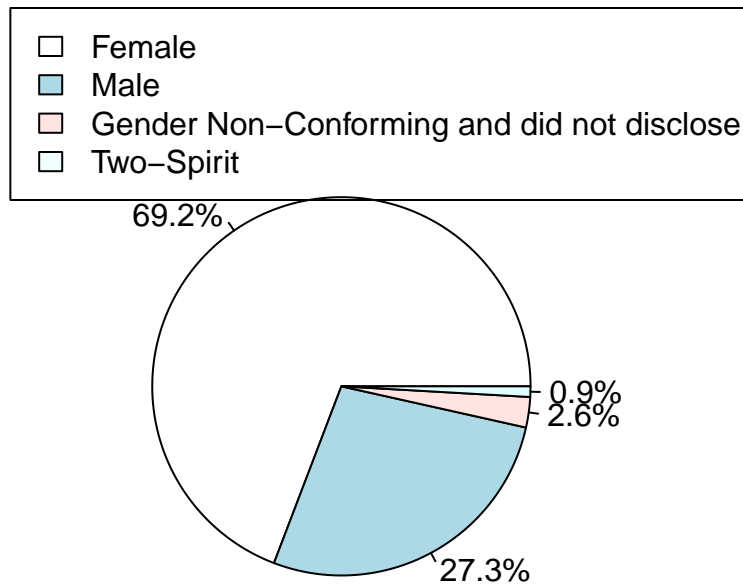
⁶53 respondents were enrolled in the Faculty of Law at McGill, and 1 was enrolled in the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa, both bilingual programs.

Distribution of Respondents by Program



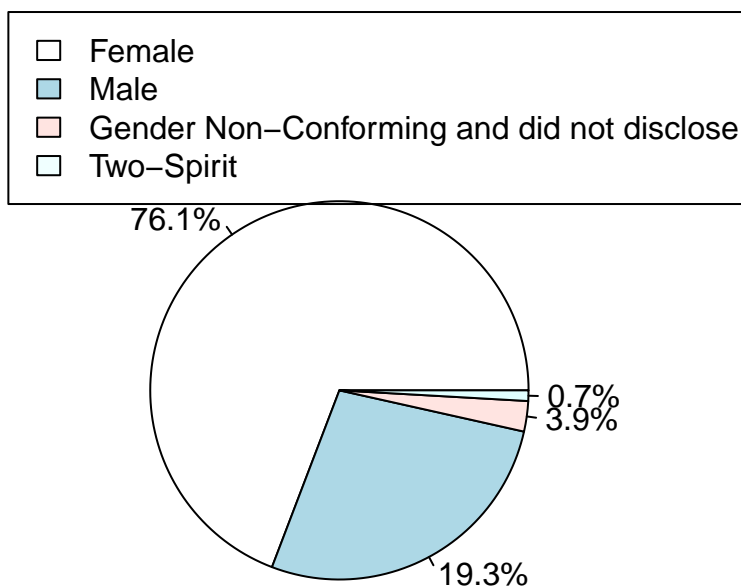
227 respondents (36.1%) are attending or have graduated from a law or pre-law program, while 305 (48.5%) are attending or have graduated from a program in education. 97 respondents (15.4%) are attending or have graduated from a program other than law or education.

Gender Distribution of Respondents In Law-Related Programs



157 of law respondents (69.2%) identified as female, 62 (27.3%) identified as male, 2 (0.9%) identified as Two-Spirit and 6 (2.6%) identified as gender non-conforming or did not wish to disclose.

Gender Distribution of Respondents In Education-Related Programs



232 of education respondents (76.1%) identified as female, 59 (19.3%) identified as male, 2 (0.7%) identified as Two-Spirit, and 12 (3.9%) identified as gender non-conforming or did not wish to disclose.

Finally, 177 respondents (28.1%) reported that they wore some form of religious symbol. Within that group, 142 identified the type of symbol. Broken down by gender, 31.6% of women (146), 14.7% of men (21), 75% of those that identified as Two-Spirit (3), and 35% of those that identified as gender non-conforming or did not wish to disclose (7) reported wearing a religious symbol. 84 respondents (13.4%) were women who wear a head covering and an additional three said they planned to wear a hijab in the future.

38 respondents (6%) reported wearing a cross or other Christian symbol.

Institutional Affiliation

The majority of respondents are attending or have graduated from universities in Montréal, with 190 from McGill University, 100 from the Université de Montréal, 85 from Concordia University and 40 from UQAM. Other respondents are attending or have graduated from the Université de Sherbrooke (26), Bishop's (24), Laval (24), 2 from Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR), 1 from Université du Québec en en Outaouais (UQO), and from unspecified universities in the UQ system (5). The vast majority of the remainder are attending or have graduated from CEGEPS, headed by 42 respondents from Dawson, 20 from Collège Ahuntsic and 13 from Collège Maisonneuve. In total, 503 respondents are attending or have graduated from universities, while the 126 remaining participants are attending or have graduated from CEGEPS and colleges (see Appendix A).⁷

⁷Please note, two respondents are attending or have graduated from schools outside of Québec: the University of Ottawa and Dalhousie University. We chose to include these respondents on the probability that they were Québec residents, and thus potentially impacted by the Law as well.

The Impact of Law 21 on Respondents

Discrimination

34.2% (215) of respondents reported that they had experienced discriminatory treatment since Law 21 was adopted.⁸ Among respondents who stated that they wore a religious symbol, the percentage who claimed to have encountered discrimination was even higher at 56.5% (100). It is worth noting that of the 177 respondents who reported wearing a religious symbol, 21.5% (38) stated their religious symbol was a form of Christian symbol such as a cross necklace, rosary or cross tattoo.

Six of these respondents also reported experiencing discrimination after the passage of Law 21, although none described their experience in specifics in qualitative comments. The 84 respondents who reported wearing hijabs were the most likely to report experiences of discrimination. Indeed, of the 84 women who reported wearing a hijab or head scarf, 76.2% (64) reported experiencing discrimination since the passage of Law 21. Qualitative comments suggest that many individuals experienced discriminatory interactions on a regular basis. Comments also suggest that wearing a hijab was a particular flashpoint for verbal attacks in public and had become more so since the passage of the Law 21. The majority of those who left identifying information and provided commentary on experiences of discrimination were Muslim and/or of Arab background. In addition, Jewish students commented on experiencing increased antisemitism.

“Some look at me as if I am an alien/ some called me terrorist/ some gave themselves the right to yell at me!” Female student, Law and Society, Concordia

“Verbal insults in the metro and in malls.” Female student, Education, McGill, wears a hijab

«Ça m’arrivait occasionnellement avant. Maintenant ça arrive pratiquement à chaque fois que je sors.» Female student, Law, Université de Montréal, hijab-wearing

“Anti-semitism is nothing new but this has legitimized it.” Male student, Education (MA), Concordia, wearing magen David necklace, mezuot pendant, kippot, tzitzit and payos

“I did a teacher practicum and watched students and the teacher ridicule a Muslim girl for wearing a hijab. The teacher said with Bill 21, you can’t dress like that. The girl was mortified and silent and just 11 years old.” Gender non-conforming student, Education, McGill

“People have pointed out to me that wearing the hijab is ‘illegal.’” Female student, Education (MA), McGill

«On me regarde croche dès que je parle en Arabe dans un espace public. On m’a déjà insulté de tous genres de noms et ‘retourne dans ton pays’ pour avoir parlé au téléphone en arabe dans l’autobus. Je ne me sens plus en sécurité au Québec. Et je ne suis pas voilée. J’imagine même pas ce que les femmes voilées subissent..» Female student, Law, Université de Montréal, wears un «croix arménienne»

“Yes . . . some ppl would stop and say”This Quebec, take this towel off your head or go back to where you belong.” Female student, Psychology, Concordia University, wears a hijab

“I am a middle-eastern man. Although I am not Muslim, I feel as though people now feel they have a license to be more openly discriminatory towards people who look like me.” Male student, Law, McGill University.

“Insults because im muslim, dirty looks, feeling unsafe.” Female student, Psychology, CEGEP, wears a hijab

“Because Im a Man, and im Tall and somewhat muscular so direct (like in my face) not really, but I always get that look from secreatary when I first go to a school to do a remplacement like ‘oh he’s arab’” Male student in Education, CEGEP St. Laurent

⁸The specific question asked, was: Have you occasionally, rarely or never encountered negative or discriminatory treatment in public settings since the adoption of Law 21? (Please comment if you wish to provide further specification).

“I have been the subject of anti-semitic attacks telling me to go back to my country. I have also seen instances of vandalism and graffiti.” Male student in Law, Université de Montréal. Wears a kippah

«Travaillant dans le service à la clientèle, j’ai parfois entendu des commentaires dénigrant envers la communauté musulmane suite à l’adoption de ce projet de loi. Je n’ai jamais été touché directement par ces remarques, car je ne ressemble pas à une femme arabe musulmane (si je reprends les termes qu’en employé ces clients). Souvent, des clients m’exprimaient leur ressentie par rapport à l’adoption de ce projet de loi et l’impression qu’ils ont que les musulmans ne veulent pas s’intégrer dans la communauté musulmane, qu’ils sont tous entre eux. Quand je leur apprenais que j’étais moi même musulmane, il y avait juste un moment de malaise, des excuses maladroites pour essayer de se justifier.» Female student in Law, Université de Montréal

Leaving Québec: Departure as Dissent

The most significant impact of the Law reported by respondents was on their choice of residence. 51.8% of respondents (326) said that they were very or somewhat likely to look for work outside Québec as a result of Law 21.⁹ Similarly, 51.4% (323), reported that they were aware of one or more colleagues looking for work outside Québec.¹⁰ 77.9% of the respondents who reported that they were considering employment outside of Québec (254) also noted that they were aware of a colleague looking for work outside of Québec. There was a clear correlation between seeking employment outside Québec and wearing a religious symbol: 69.5% of the 177 respondents who said they wore a religious symbol (123) indicated that they were likely to look for work outside Québec as a result of Law 21. This total includes 81% of the 84 women who wear a head covering as a religious symbol (68).

Current students and recent graduates in education who wear a religious symbol were the most likely to consider leaving Québec, with 73.8% of people in this category (59) responding that they were likely to leave. 56.4% of the 305 education respondents (172) said that they were likely to seek employment outside of Quebec as a result of Law 21. 7.9% of the 305 respondents in education (24) said that they were likely to change careers as a result of Law 21.

For students and recent graduates of law or law-related degrees, 54% of those who wore religious symbols (27) reported that they were likely to leave Quebec as a result of Law 21. 40.5% of the 227 law respondents (92) said that they were likely to seek employment outside of Quebec as a result of Law 21. 9.3% of the 227 total law respondents (21) said that they were likely to change careers as a result of Law 21.

“Je n’ai même pas eu la chance de commencer ma carrière convenablement. Comment voulez-vous que je modifie mon choix de carrière alors que j’ai investi mon argent et 7 années de ma vie dans un domaine. Je n’ai ni l’argent, ni le temps, et ni la force de reprendre quelconques études. La seule solution que je considère fortement est de changer de province pour pouvoir enseigner et éventuellement travailler dans le domaine de l’administration en éducation.” Female graduate student in Education, McGill University; wears a hijab

«Si je ne suis pas acceptée dans le programme que je souhaite prendre, je n’ai pas besoin de sentir que j’impose ma présence en tant que femme musulmane à autrui. Je ne veux pas être perçue comme un fardeau. Nous voulons exercer l’emploi qui nous intéresse et non, convertir nos collègues ou entourage.» Female CEGEP St. Laurent taking law oriented courses; wears a hijab

“I’ve decided to take the Ontario Bar Exam because I will likely go work in Ontario, where I feel more welcomed as a religious minority.” Female student in Law, McGill.

At the same time, it is also notable that Law 21 also seems to be having an impact on the residence choices of people who don’t wear a religious symbol. 208 of the 452 respondents who did not report wearing a religious symbol (46%) also said they were likely or very likely to seek work outside Québec due to the Law. In written

⁹The specific question asked, was: Are you more or less likely to seek employment outside of Québec as a result of Law 21? (Please comment if you wish to provide further specification).

¹⁰The specific question asked, was: Are you aware of colleagues who are seeking or have sought employment outside Quebec as a result of Law 21? (Please comment if you wish to provide further specification).

comments, a number of respondents stated that, while they were not personally affected, they did not want to work in a system that they saw as discriminatory and were therefore planning to move.

“I don’t plan to change my career path, but am looking at working in another province now. I don’t feel that I can be a teacher here in Québec and have a clean conscience while doing so.” Female student in Education, Bishop’s University

«Plusieurs étudiants de mon entourage, qu’ils soient touchés directement ou pas par la loi 21, ne s’identifient pas à ce système et souhaiterait travailler à l’extérieur du Québec.» Female student, Law, Université de Montréal

“I know of several colleagues who are now planning to leave Quebec to teach, though they were not planning to before this bill passed. In some cases it is because they wear a religious symbol and would be unable to teach in Quebec, and in many cases it is students like myself who are not personally impacted but who will refuse to teach in Quebec in solidarity.” Female student in Education, McGill

“I saw this law as part of a larger pattern of discriminatory policies against religious minorities and newcomers in Quebec – it made me very uncomfortable to live in such a province where such forms of discrimination are justified by gov’t officials. In part, this is why I chose to leave Quebec after graduating.” Female graduate student in Law, McGill.

“I do not [wear the hijab] but I was raised in [identifying information removed] which is a religious country surrounded by women who wear the hijab [...] I chose Canada because I believed their laws aligned with my liberal beliefs. Now I am very dissatisfied and rethinking everything.” Female student in Law, Concordia (does not wear hijab)

“The Quebec government is appalling. This law is sickening. I will never ever work in Quebec because of it. I refuse to work in a place where my peers cannot or will be punished for expressing themselves.” Female student in Education, McGill

“I have been feeling less and less welcome in Québec. I have been considering moving out of the province, possibly of the country too.” Female student in Law, Université de Montréal

Conversely, one respondent said that he had come to Québec to escape state instrumentalization of religion in his country of origin and stated that he saw Islam as imperialist:

“In a post-modern country, it is important to ensure a vivid distinction between religious and politics, personal beliefs should not interfere with the administration of the state nor appear to be interfering with those decisions represented by such as professions as Lawyers, police officers, judges etc... even if any individual religious could ensure to practise those professions regarding the strict application of the law and common sense, it is no certitude that those people practising those professions won’t let their [beliefs] interfere.” Male student in Law, Université de Montréal

Fears Regarding Employment Prospects

44.4% of respondents (279) believe that Law 21 is likely to curtail their job prospects.¹¹ 70.6% of respondents wearing a religious symbol (125) believe their job prospects will be curtailed.

«Je poursuis présentement mes études pour une maîtrise en Leadership d’établissement scolaire et je ne pourrai pas devenir directrice d’école à cause de mon voile. De plus, les chargées de cours de l’Université de Montréal nous font savoir à la fin des cours, par des commentaires, que nous ne sommes pas à notre place.» Female student, MA, Université de Montréal, wears a hijab

«Malheureusement, la loi me limite dans le secteur public. Je travaille dans le secteur privé et dans une école musulmans plus précisément.» Recent graduate from Education, Université de Montréal; wears a hijab

¹¹The specific question asked, was: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that Law 21 will curtail your job prospects in Québec? (Please comment if you wish to provide further specification).

“Of course. I’m basically banned from teaching because of something I wear, which I will never compromise for the sake of a job.” Female student in Education, McGill, wears a hijab

One person commented that she might be advantaged through loss of competition:

“Unfortunately as others are marginalized I may fall outside of the group, which would mean that there may actually be more job prospects than there would be. However, that does not mean that I agree with the bill or think the privilege it would give me is fair.” Female student in Education, McGill.

Three people commented that the Law reinforced stereotypes that affected their job prospects although they did not themselves wear religious symbols:

«Ayant un nom de famille à consonance arabe, je pense déjà que certains opportunités de travail pourraient m’être refuser. Je pense que la loi 21 enflamme les stéréotypes associées aux femmes arabes ou musulmanes (bien que les deux ne soient pas toujours reliés, plusieurs personnes ont une forte tendance à les associer). Je ne peux pas être sûre que la loi 21 aura un impact direct sur ma future carrière, mais elle créera un environnement de travail moins propice à la diversité, ce qui pourrait finir par me porter préjudice.» Female student in Law, Université de Montréal

“I’m north african with tanned skin tone, I’m irreligious and I’m afraid that Bill 21 would be amalgamed with ethnicity or”race.” Male student in Law, Université de Montréal

“Although my field is not affected by this bill, I still feel that it affects all religious minorities. As a woman who wears the hijab, I feel like this bill has somehow made many people feel more comfortable to discriminate and harrass people with religious symbols, especially muslim women. For instance, I have had some job interviews where I could immediately tell that the person lost interest in my application as soon as they saw me with my headscarf. In addition, there is no valid explanation to explain the existence of this bill. It is just an excuse to justify discrimination and create more division in the province..” Female student in Engineering, Concordia; wears a hijab.

Others commented that their job prospects would not be curtailed because they were white or could hide their religious symbol.

“I am a privileged white citizen, and my necklace represents the catholic religion, one that is not oppressed.” Female student in Education, Bishops. Wears a “cross necklace”

“My chain is very dainty and can be hidden or removed and its not a problem for me.” Female law student, University of Ottawa. Wears a cross on a chain

«homme blanc athéiste, alors ça me semble que non :(.» Male student in Law, Université de Montréal

Career Paths Disrupted

11.8% of respondents (74) reported that they were likely to change career paths as a result of Law 21.¹² This outcome was stronger among respondents who wear religious symbols: 26% of respondents who reported wearing a religious symbol (46) stated that they were likely to change career paths as a result of the Law; 31 of the 74 respondents who reported that they were likely to change career paths as a result of Law 21 (41.9%) reported wearing a hijab, three reported wanting to wear a hijab or head scarf in the near future, another three reported wearing a cross, and one reported wearing Jewish symbols.

The survey also captured a number of students who said they had been planning to study Education or Law but changed career direction:

¹²The specific question asked, was: Have you changed, or do you plan to change, your career path as a result of Law 21? (Please comment if you wish to provide further specification).

«Au lieu d’aller en droit, je vais essayer de rentrer en psychologie. Je voulais être enseignante de droit au niveau universitaire.» Female student, CEGEP St. Laurent, taking law oriented courses, wears a hijab.

“I was going into teaching, now I’m pursuing a master’s degree in audiology.” Female undergraduate student in Linguistics, Université de Montréal; wears a hijab

“I wanted to go into law school but I also want to eventually wear the hijab and so I chose health science.” Female student, Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, health sciences; wears a “necklace” as religious symbol.

“I chose to stop teaching in Quebec elementary schools for a variety of reasons. A big part of that is the toxic culture that I found to exist in many of these schools. There are lots of factors at play, but Law 21 is just an example of the ways the government contributes to this toxic environment. Even though I do not wear a religious symbol, I did not want to participate in a system that denied that right to others, particularly people who may already be discriminated against for other reason (being a woman, being an immigrant).” Female graduate from Concordia Education

“Though I am not personally impacted by Bill 21, the way that the government is treating my colleagues is appalling and was a big contributing factor to why I reconsidered my career path. If I do ever teach, it will not be in Quebec.” Female student in Education, McGill

“I was planning to complete my education in law school or teaching in the University but I changed my plan b/c [because] I have no future in Quebec in these fields. Also, I cannot be selfish to let my husband quit his job for me to move to other provinces. On the other hand, all of my 3 kids are Quebec born and more comfortable in having education in French language. So, leaving Quebec is not a good option for us. Also, we have a sense of belonging to Quebec I lived most of my life in Montreal and my husband was raised in Montreal so it is hard to leave a city we love and we lived most of our lives in” Female student in Law and Society program, Concordia, wears a hijab.

As this last comment suggests, family and community dynamics were also at play for a number of people.

Just over 39.9% of respondents (251) stated that they were aware of colleagues who had or were about to change their career paths as a result of Law 21. Among respondents who wear a religious symbol, 56.5% (100 out of 177) reported being aware of colleagues who had or were about to change their career paths as a result of Law 21.

«Plusieurs voilées que je connais n’ont pas poursuivi ce qu’elles aiment réellement faire et maintenant elles sont dans des programmes où elles ne sont pas satisfaites à cause de cette loi.» Female student in business, Ahuntsic CEGEP

“A lot of my friends wanted to become teachers but saw that its not realistic.” Female student in Psychology, Université de Montréal. Wears a hijab

“Several of my classmates from law school are being forced to change their career plans - as this law places restrictions on the kind of work they can do, solely because of the religious symbols that they wear as part of their personal expressions of faith.” Female student in Law, McGill

«Quelques amies qui portent le voile, dont certaines iront dans le système privé et d’autres en Ontario.» Male student in Law, UQAM

Worsening Perceptions of Québec

12.4% of respondents (78) reported having a better perception of Québec since the passage of Law 21.¹³ 70.3% (442) said they had a worse perception of Québec since the passage of the Law. 13.5% of respondents (85) affirmed that the Law had not changed their perception of Québec. It is noteworthy that in written

¹³The specific question asked, was: Has your perception of Québec changed as a result of Law 21 or has Law 21 had no effect? (Please comment if you wish to provide further specification).

comments a few of the respondents whose perceptions of Québec remained unchanged stated that they had already had a negative view which had not changed.

The proportion of people wearing a religious symbol whose perception of Québec improved was 14.1%, or 25 of the 177. At the same time, the percentage of respondents wearing religious symbols with a more negative perception of Québec was higher, at about 74.1% (131), when compared to the group average, at 70.3% (442). Although these are small differences, it is possible that people wearing religious symbols were more likely to have strong views one way or the other. Of those who wear religious symbols, more women than men had stronger negative views of Québec.

22.3% of respondents (140) left comments on their changing (or unchanging) perceptions of Québec. The vast majority were negative, although four respondents left comments in support of the Law in this section. All of the thirty comments left by women who also stated that they wear hijabs, have family members who do so, or planned to wear the hijab in the future were negative. Common themes in comments were anger and distress as well as a sense of betrayal.

A number of comments also reflected efforts to understand the origins of the Law, with some respondents commenting, for example, on divides between Montreal and the regions, or on the impact of Québec's own past relationship to religion.

Although this sample size is not large enough to be more than suggestive, and we might assume that students and recent graduates opposed to Law 21 were more likely to complete the survey, the number and nature of negative comments across the board (not only among women who wear a hijab) raises the possibility that the internal self-perceptions that Quebecers hold are challenged for some by the Law.

Some sample comments concerning worsening perceptions of Québec:

"I do not feel very welcome, I am often discriminated against. I thought most people were open, but ever since the decision for the law, I have been feeling less and less at home. Most people hold a strong prejudice against people of my ethnicity and or religion." Female student in Law, Université de Montréal

"It did [change], because when you look at this matter from a hijabi's point of view or even any other religious minority affected by this law, you start to feel like you don't belong and that you're different." Female student in pre-law program, Collège Ahuntsic, wears a hijab

"I despise Quebec now. A province which has absolutely no respect for me or my people to the point that they'd like to take my livelihood away deserves no love. Especially after I was born and raised here and gave all my love to it, it hurts to feel this way." Female student in Education, McGill, 22 years old; wears a hijab

«Moi qui pensait qu'il s'agissait d'une province de paix et de liberté, je viens de voir que ce n'est pas pour tous.» Female student in Law, CEGEP St. Laurent; wears a hijab

"La loi 21 me rend très peu fière d'être Québécoise." Female student in Law, McGill University

"My understanding of Quebec and its laws has been complex over the years, never quite regarding it in a shiny light, but this is certainly a dark, dark spot." Female student in Education (MA), McGill University.

"we're racist af." Female student in Law, Université de Montréal

"Québec is a fundamentally racist, xenophobic, and discriminatory province that has no appreciation for the right to religious freedom. In my eyes, Québec is no better than the USA - and in fact, may be worse." Female student in Law, McGill

It seems fair to assume that the 12.4% of respondents who reported a more positive perception of Québec since the passage of Law 21 support the Law, although this was not directly stated. Of the four comments in support of the Law under this section, the three clearest were as follows:

“Coming from a conservative religious state in the US, Law 21 is a wonderful step towards women’s liberation and freedom. I wish my state would pass a similar bill.” Female student in Education, McGill PhD; 32 years old

“Secularism good. I want as little religion in the state as possible.” Male student in Law, Marianopolis College, 19 years old

“Bill 21 is justified in order to respect the citizens’ right to a neutral service from the State.” Male student in Law, Laval, 20 years old

Comments reflecting on underlying dynamics included the following:

“Since the Quiet Rev., Quebec has shown to be very anti-religion so this is nothing new. As Qc society became more secular, this is a reaction to a perceived or true increase in religiosity from immigrants. So I am not surprised this is happening in Quebec and not elsewhere in Canada. In terms of religion, Quebec is by far the most secular province (eg. rates of unmarried people living together compared to other CAD provinces).” Female student in Education, Concordia, MA program

«Une majorité des Québécois est en faveur de ce projet de loi, en particulier à l’extérieur de Montréal. Je pense que ma vision du Québec qui se limite à mon entourage à Montréal est une version biaisée de ce qu’est le Québec. Je ne peux pas pour autant dire que ma vision a changé négativement, car je suis encore jeune et je n’ai jamais réellement exploré le Québec. Je n’ai pas l’impression de le connaître réellement, j’ai trop l’habitude de vivre dans ma bulle à Montréal. L’adoption de ce projet de loi m’a seulement fait réaliser à quel point Montréal est différent du reste de la province.» Female student in Law, Université de Montréal

«Ma perception du Québec en tant que tel n’a pas vraiment changé; c’est plutôt ma perception des problèmes sociaux au Québec qui a été affectée. Je préfères faire une distinction entre le Québec comme province multiculturelle à laquelle je m’identifie (même si je suis d’une minorité visible) et le Québec de la CAQ qui se base sur les peurs de leur base électorale pour adopter une loi profondément discriminatoire. La loi 21 a un support majoritaire, mais pas du tout unanime. Je dirais que ce qui a changé dans ma perception est le fait qu’il y a une problématique à ce que les gens soient autant à l’aise avec une loi si discriminatoire et qu’avoir un gouvernement qui ne reconnaît même pas cette situation (et le racisme systémique) ne représente pas le Québec comme je le connais.» Female student in Law, Université de Montréal

At least one respondent linked negative views of both Québec and Canada:

“Quebec is part of the country of Canada that so states that we are a multicultural country. However, seeing the treatment of Indigenous peoples, and now the Law 21, I do not believe that the country of Canada nor Quebec are accepting of any culture outside of our colonizers European roots.” Female student in Education, McGill University, wears a “Christian cross.”

Positive Views of the Law

Although the vast majority of people who left written comments on this survey were critical or divided concerning the Law, some left comments in support. Reasons cited included the value of escaping an oppressive regime elsewhere that imposed religious symbols, or the patriarchal nature of religion.

In addition to supportive comments cited above, we note a male undergraduate student in Law at McGill who commented that he could potentially wear a religious symbol but chose not to as he was “secular.” He further wrote:

“My family escaped a toxic restricting country that forced the hijab. We are free here, we should not have any religious symbols in Quebec public service.” Male undergraduate student in Law, McGill University

Another comment:

“I have great hopes that Bill 21 (law 21) will encourage from all faiths to embrace secular civic life here in the province. For women from a conservative religious background, Bill 21 is a great example of the kind of legislation that we should be promoting to liberate women from patriarchal and sexist religious ideologies and banning their representation on our public workers is a great step. Hopefully we will see a new era in which students are able to attend school without being subjected to symbols of patriarchal religious oppression on their teachers.” Female student in Education, McGill University.

Contested Perceptions: the Meaning of a “Religious Symbol” under Law 21

The survey revealed multiple views of what constitutes a “religious symbol”, what it means to wear one and even whether “symbol” is an appropriate word. If the Law assumes a stable meaning attached to particular religious signs, our survey suggests that this may be inaccurate, and that it is therefore difficult to know what it may mean to an individual to remove a sign. For example, is a religious sign an expression of identity?

“my tattoos are representative of my faith.” Female student in Education, Bishop’s University

“I have a rosary tattooed on my wrist.” Female student in Education, Bishop’s University

“I decided to grow and keep a beard because it’s a religious obligation for men, just like the hijab for the women.” Male student in Education, CEGEP St. Laurent

«Je porte la voile, mais je le considère comme un vêtement, pas un symbole.» Female student in Education, UQAM

I wear my Hebrew name and a Hamsa. I consider this to be a representation of my Jewish identity but I don’t think that employers would necessarily know what it is.” Female student, Law, Concordia

“Hijab isn’t a religious symbol.” Female Education graduate, Collège Bois-de-Boulogne.

“I believe in my religion but the visible symbols are only for ardent traditionalists. There is a difference of opinion among minority groups!” Male student in Law, McGill University

“I wear a star of david necklace but I am not a religious person. I consider this law as an attack to my identity.”

“I either wear a cross or a Jewish symbol [...] we should be free to express ourselves through religion, fashion, art, etc.” Female student in Education, Concordia

“I sometimes wear a christian cross for pure esthetism, I like how it looks but have nothing to do with my internal beliefs.” Male student in Law, Université de Montréal.

«D’après-moi la laïcité veut dire la neutralité étatique envers les religions et non pas l’absence des religions. De plus, le droit de porter un signe religieux sur son corps est fondamental dans une société libre et démocratique. Or, les droits et libertés doivent se balancer. Il y a une certaine conséquence à ouvrir la possibilité de porter des signes personnels dans les positions d’autorités. Quelle est la différence intrinsèque entre un signe religieux et un signe politique pour un individu croyant que rien n’est sacré? J’imagine que c’est la croyance sincère que le signe religieux est justement sacré, alors c’est un désaccord fondamental quant à la nature du signe porté. Je trouve ça difficile à reconcilier, mais c’est sûr que les interdictions dans la loi 21 sont contre-productif et porte atteinte au respect des autres. C’est mon take personnel.» Male student in Law, Université de Montréal

“When it comes to the legal system, every religion has its own separate way to judge. However, in a secular state, the irreligiosity of procedure should be reflected as much as possible. For example, a woman Qadi (judge in a sharia court, the legal system of Islam) is required to wear a hijab because that court is explicitly Islamic. In a secular court, having a judge with a hijab, kippah, turban, etc is the equivalent of putting one’s religion above the law of the land. In fact, many religious communities do not even recognize the law of the land because it does not conform with

their religious law (hassidique Jews for example). Finally, you can't have your cake and eat it too: if it's not a big deal that jurists wear religious symbols, then we might as well get rid of all decorum and uniforms (judges and lawyers can now show up to court in tank tops, sweatpants and flip flops). The arguments against Law 21 are gaslighting of the highest order." Male student, Law, Marianopolis

"[Law 21] allows haphazard discrimination:"symbol" can be anything (are black dreadlocks a symbol? is a long beard?)." Male student in Education (MA), McGill

The Hijab in Context

Several people wrote that they did not wear the hijab when answering the survey but hoped to in the future. This was in itself a possible reason to seek a career outside Québec. For some, the Law was thus seen as hindering a previous fluidity of individual choice.

A number of respondents who did not themselves wear hijabs commented that family members or friends did, similarly leading them to have negative views of Québec and to worry about making a home here. Two people who did not wear religious symbols themselves specifically commented on having immigrated from areas of the world where the hijab was worn; one to express relief at escaping the hegemony of religion and the other to express a sense of solidarity with those who wear hijabs. Comments about other people wearing hijabs suggest that a number of respondents who do not themselves wear visible religious symbols still see themselves as embedded in families and communities in which this is a common practice. Law 21 might therefore be seen to affect people beyond the immediate group of individuals who themselves wear visible religious symbols.

This contrasts with the assumption that to remove a hijab is an all-or-nothing individual choice.

At the heart of debates are often contrasting views of what it means to wear a hijab.

"i just find it sad and frustrating that just bcz im a psychoeducator i can work in schools but my sister that also wears the hijab but is a teacher cant work. it makes no sense, sometimes i feel like we are going back in time of WW2 having laws to be against a certain belief, a sign or just the difference." Female graduate from Psycho-education, Université de Montréal; wears a hijab

"Although I study in the field of education, the law does not impact me because I chose not to wear any religious symbols. I know this is anecdotal but I thought I should mention it nonetheless - my friend's sister is in her 3rd year of her BA in education from UdeM. She was planning on starting to work as a teacher in highschool math after graduating but she wears the hijab. Bill21 impacts her career choices a lot!" Female student in Education (MA), Concordia.

"We wanted to go to Halifax because of this law. My mother who wears hijab is a teacher." Female student in health sciences, Collège de Maisonneuve; wears a hijab

«J'ai plusieurs amies qui ont choisi un domaine autre que l'enseignement en raison de la loi 21 et qui sont, jusqu'à présent, en train de changer de domaines chaque an car elles ne savent plus quoi choisir.» Female student in Education, Université de Montréal; wears a hijab

"Mom wears hijab, don't feel comfortable moving family here." Male student in Law, McGill University.

Conclusion

Findings from this survey suggest pronounced and amplified experiences of discrimination among students who wear religious symbols since Law 21 was passed in June 2019. This discrimination includes experiences of diminished job prospects. Respondents also indicate that the Law has given rise to increased incidents of hostility and harassment, on the streets, in classrooms, and in places of employment. Many respondents who do not wear religious symbols voiced concern over the Law's impact on their classmates, friends, and family members.

This survey suggests that a number of people trained in Québec are planning to leave Québec in order to practice education and law elsewhere, including students who do not wear a religious symbol. Furthermore, students who wear religious symbols are choosing not to begin careers in education as a result of the Law. However, a larger number of respondents are considering leaving Québec than are changing career paths. This suggests that mobility should be considered as a factor in debates over the Law. Further research needs to be undertaken to determine the impact on incoming cohorts of potential teachers and lawyers and the loss of new recruits.

If we think of students as largely young people, our findings suggest lack of youth support, particularly in Montreal, and indeed raise the possibility, deserving of further research, of a generation gap concerning attitudes towards Law 21. Our findings of marked generational differences are further confirmed by recent polling suggesting that 73.9% of Quebecers aged 65-to-74 support the ban on religious symbols worn by teachers, as opposed to only 27.8% of Quebecers aged 18-to-24.¹⁴

There is also division among those most affected in law and in education. Student respondents to the survey appear to be largely skeptical of the Law's intent and impact, despite the existence of real debates and struggles to understand the Law which also emerge from survey responses, including some support for the Law. The law does not inspire consensus and, consequently, is divisive and does not put the debate over laïcité to rest. Our data further suggest that the Law has worsened perceptions of Québec among young Québecers themselves, including those who are not from religious or ethnic minorities.

It would be worth pursuing this line of inquiry further. The discomfort of students (including the stated disillusionment of some respondents, both anglophone and francophone, with the climate of education in Québec) is an important issue with implications for professional morale. It is after all students and young people in general who constitute the incoming generation of new teachers and lawyers, charged with beginning their careers under new circumstances and implementing the new rules. What are the implications if they resist Law 21 and have a diminished perception of Québec?

It is also noteworthy that the issue of wearing a religious symbol is seen from the perspective of proponents of the Law as a relatively transparent act. Indeed, it is often argued that to wear a religious symbol is a personal choice and easy to drop on a similarly individualistic basis. Our data hint at a more communal view in which laws against the hijab are seen as an attack on the Muslim community; for example, even by those who do not themselves wear the hijab or are not Muslim. At the same time, support for the Law is also expressed with attention to community impacts. A number of our respondents discuss being part of webs of colleagues, family and community, including classmates, that encompass both people who wear religious symbols and those who do not. Some decisions to leave Québec were made on the basis of the wearing of religious symbols by relatives, classmates, or friends, and not the respondents themselves, or as a more abstract statement of solidarity. In sum, the Law is not just about individual choice but about individuals in relation to community.

We feel that it will be helpful to investigate the impact of the Law on children, particularly children from religious minorities who might themselves wear religious symbols or have family members who do so. How do children see themselves in relation to their communities? What has been their experience, in the classroom and on the street, since the passage of the Law?

The survey also suggests the value of further research on the issue of what a religious symbol is and what it means to different people. What respondents saw as a religious symbol and what they thought it meant to wear one was far more fluid than many discussions of the Law imply. Some saw religious symbols as an

¹⁴Source: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/bill-21-support-poll-1.6316859>

affirmation of identity and therefore saw the Law as an attack on personal identity rather than an affirmation of secularism. It would be a mistake to assume a stable system of meaning around religious symbols.

Finally, the majority of respondents to this survey who self-identified in comments as belonging to a religious minority were opposed to the Law and felt targeted as a community. This was a particularly strong feeling among those who self-identified as Muslim, Arab or North African in comments.¹⁵ This warrants further investigation with attention to debates within as well as between communities.

¹⁵We strongly recommend that future research on the impact of Law 21 includes a specific focus on each of the communities most clearly impacted, including Sikh, Muslim, Jewish, and Indigenous communities, to better understand the diversity of the Law's impact.

APPENDIX A: Distribution of Responses

Table 1: Distribution of Responses by School

School	Respondents
McGill University	190
Université de Montreal	100
Concordia University	85
Dawson College	42
UQAM	40
Université de Sherbrooke	26
Bishop's University	24
Université Laval	24
Collège Ahuntsic	20
Collège de Maisonneuve	13
Marianopolis College	11
John Abbott College	6
CEGEP Marie-Victorin	5
Université du Quebec	5
CEGEP de Saint-Laurent	4
Collège de Bois-de-Boulogne	4
HEC Montreal	4
Vanier College	4
Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf	3
Champlain Regional College	2
Collège Andre Grasset	2
École Polytechnique de Montreal	2
Université du Quebec à Trois-Rivieres	2
CEGEP du Vieux Montreal	1
CEGEP Garneau	1
Champlain College Lennoxville	1
Coaching Québec	1
Collège de Rosemont	1
Collège Édouard-Montpetit	1
Collège Montmorency	1
Dalhousie University	1
ISI Montreal	1
Université du Quebec en Outaouais	1
University of Ottawa	1
Total	629

Table 2: Distribution of Responses from English-Language Schools

School	Respondents
McGill Univeristy (Non-Law)	137
Concordia University	85
Dawson College	42
Bishop's University	24
Marianopolis College	11
John Abbott College	6
Vanier College	4
Champlain Regional College	2
Champlain College Lennoxville	1
Dalhousie University	1
Total	313

Table 3: Distribution of Responses from French-Language Schools

School	Respondents
Université de Montreal	100
UQAM	40
Université de Sherbrooke	26
Université Laval	24
Collège Ahuntsic	20
Collège de Maisonneuve	13
CEGEP Marie-Victorin	5
Université du Quebec	5
CEGEP de Saint-Laurent	4
Collège de Bois-de-Boulogne	4
HEC Montreal	4
Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf	3
Collège Andre Grasset	2
École Polytechnique de Montreal	2
Université du Quebec à Trois-Rivieres	2
CEGEP du Vieux Montreal	1
CEGEP Garneau	1
Coaching Québec	1
Collège de Rosemont	1
Collège Édouard-Montpetit	1
Collège Montmorency	1
ISI Montreal	1
Université du Quebec en Outaouais	1
Total	262

Table 4: Distribution of Responses from Bilingual Schools

School	Respondents
McGill University (Law)	53
University of Ottawa (Law)	1
Total	54

Table 5: Respondents who Reported Attending a Law Program by School

School	Respondents
Université de Montreal	74
McGill University	53
Dawson College	37
UQAM	21
Université de Sherbrooke	10
Université Laval	7
Concordia University	5
Marianopolis College	5
Université du Quebec	4
Collège de Maisonneuve	3
Collège Ahuntsic	2
CEGEP de Saint-Laurent	1
Collège Andre Grasset	1
Collège de Rosemont	1
Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf	1
Dalhousie University	1
University of Ottawa	1
Total	227

Table 6: Respondents who Reported Attending an Education Program by School

School	Respondents
McGill University	126
Concordia University	63
Bishop's University	23
UQAM	16
Université de Sherbrooke	14
Université Laval	13
Université de Montreal	12
Collège Ahuntsic	7
Collège de Maisonneuve	6
John Abbott College	5
Marianopolis College	4
Collège de Bois-de-Boulogne	3
CEGEP de Saint-Laurent	2
Vanier College	2
CEGEP Marie-Victorin	1
Champlain College Lennoxville	1
Champlain Regional College	1
Collège Andre Grasset	1
Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf	1
Dawson College	1
HEC Montreal	1
Université du Quebec	1
Université du Quebec à Trois-Rivieres	1
Total	305

APPENDIX B: Comments (French and English)

Discrimination / La discrimination

“Some look at me as if I am an alien/ some called me terrorist/ some gave themselves the right to yell at me!” Female student, Law and Society, Concordia University.

[Certains me regardent comme si j'étais un extraterrestre / certains me disent que je suis une terroriste / certains se permettent de me crier après!] Étudiante, Droit et société, Université Concordia.

“Verbal insults in the metro and in malls.” Female student, Education, McGill University, wears a hijab”

[On m'adresse des insultes verbales dans le métro et les centres commerciaux.] Étudiante portant le hijab, Éducation, Université McGill.

«Ça m'arrivait occasionnellement avant. Maintenant ça arrive pratiquement à chaque fois que je sors.» Étudiante portant le hijab, Droit, Université de Montréal.

[It used to happen to me occasionally. Now it happens almost every time I go out.] Female student who wears a hijab, Law, Université de Montréal.

“Anti-semitism is nothing new but this has legitimized it.” Male student, Education (MA), Concordia University, wearing magen David necklace, mezuot pendant, kippot, tzitzit and payos.

[L'anti-sémitisme n'est pas nouveau mais cela (Loi 21) l'a légitimisé.] Étudiant portant le collier de David, le pendatif mezuot, kippot, tzitzit et payos, Éducation (Maîtrise) Université Concordia.

“I did a teacher practicum and watched students and the teacher ridicule a Muslim girl for wearing a hijab. The teacher said with Bill 21, you can't dress like that. The girl was mortified and silent and just 11 years old.” Gender non-conforming student, Education, McGill University.

[J'ai fait un stage d'observation en enseignement et j'ai vu l'enseignant ridiculiser une jeune fille musulmane qui portait le hijab. L'enseignant lui a dit qu'avec le Projet de loi 21, elle ne pouvait pas s'habiller ainsi. La jeune fille se sentait humiliée et elle n'avait que 11 ans.] Personne genre non-conforme, Éducation, Université McGill.

“People have pointed out to me that wearing the hijab is ‘illegal.’” Female student, Education (MA), McGill University.

[Des personnes m'ont fait savoir que de porter le hijab est “illégal”] Étudiante, Éducation (Maîtrise), Université McGill.

«On me regarde croche dès que je parle en Arabe dans un espace public. On m'a déjà insulté de tous genres de noms et ‘retourne dans ton pays’ pour avoir parlé au téléphone en arabe dans l'autobus. Je ne me sens plus en sécurité au Québec. Et je ne suis pas voilée. J'imagine même pas ce que les femmes voilées subissent..» Étudiante portant une croix arménienne, Droit, Université de Montréal.

[I am stared at as soon as I speak in Arabic in a public space. I have been insulted and called all kinds of names and told to ‘go back to your country’ for speaking in Arabic on the phone on the bus. I no longer feel safe in Quebec. And I'm not veiled. I can't even imagine what veiled women go through.] Female student wearing an Armenian Cross, Law, Université de Montréal.

«Yes ... some people would stop and say “This Quebec, take this towel off your head

or go back to where you belong.” Female student, Psychology, Concordia University, wears a hijab.

[Oui . . . certaines personnes s’arrêtent pour me dire qu’on est au Québec, de m’enlever la serviette sur la tête ou de repartir d’où je viens.] Étudiante portant le hijab, Psychologie, Université Concordia.

“I am a middle-eastern man. Although I am not Muslim, I feel as though people now feel they have a license to be more openly discriminatory towards people who look like me.” Male student, Law, McGill University.

[Je suis un homme du Moyen-Orient. Même si je ne suis pas musulman, il me semble que les personnes se sentent le droit d’être faire subir de la discrimination aux personnes qui me ressemblent.] Étudiant, Droit, Université McGill.

“Insults because im muslim, dirty looks, feeling unsafe.” Female student, Psychology, CEGEP, wears a hijab.

[Des insultes parce que je suis musulmane, des regards méchants, un sentiment d’insécurité.] Étudiante portant le hijab, Psychologie, CEGEP.

“Because Im a Man, and im Tall and somewhat muscular so direct (like in my face) not really, but I always get that look from secreatary when I first go to a school to do a remplacement like ‘oh he’s arab.” Male student in Education, CEGEP St. Laurent

[Parce que je suis un homme, que je suis de grande taille et assez musclé, je ne reçois pas directement des insultes, mais j’ai toujours un regard méfiant de la secrétaire quand je vais dans une école faire un remplacement, du genre “Ohr, c’est un Arabe!”] Étudiant, Éducation, CEGEP St-Laurent.

“I have been the subject of anti-semitic attacks telling me to go back to my country. I have also seen instances of vandalism and graffiti.” Male student in Law, Université de Montréal. Wears a kippah.

[On m’a adressé des insultes anti-sémitiques, me disant de retourner dans mon pays. Il y a eu aussi des incidents de vandalisme et des graffitis.] Étudiant portant la kippa, Droit, Université de Montréal.

«Travaillant dans le service à la clientèle, j’ai parfois entendu des commentaires dénigrant envers la communauté musulmane suite à l’adoption de ce projet de loi. Je n’ai jamais été touché directement par ces remarques, car je ne ressemble pas à une femme arabe musulmane (si je reprends les termes qu’en employé ces clients). Souvent, des clients m’exprimaient leur ressentie par rapport à l’adoption de ce projet de loi et l’impression qu’ils ont que les musulmans ne veulent pas s’intégrer dans la communauté musulmane, qu’ils sont tous entre eux. Quand je leur apprenais que j’étais moi même musulmane, il y avait juste un moment de malaise, des excuses maladroites pour essayer de se justifier.» Étudiante, Droit, Université de Montréal.

[Working in customer service, I have sometimes heard comments denigrating the Muslim community following the adoption of this Bill. I have never been directly affected by these remarks, as I do not look like an Arab Muslim woman (if I adopt the terms used by these customers). Often, clients would express their feelings regarding the adoption of this Bill and the impressions that they hold that Muslims do not want to integrate into the Muslim community, that they are all among themselves. When I told them that I myself was Muslim, there was just a moment of unease, awkward excuses to try and justify themselves.] Female student, Law, Université de Montréal.

Leaving Québec : / Quitter le Québec : une façon de marquer son désaccord

“Je n’ai même pas eu la chance de commencer ma carrière convenablement. Comment voulez-vous que je modifie mon choix de carrière alors que j’ai investi mon argent et 7 années de ma vie dans un domaine. Je n’ai ni l’argent, ni le temps, et ni la force de reprendre quelconques études. La seule solution que je considère fortement est de changer de province pour pouvoir enseigner et éventuellement travailler dans le domaine de l’administration en éducation.” Étudiante portant le hijab, Éducation (2e cycle), Université McGill.

[I didn’t even get a chance to start my career properly. How do you want me to change my career choice when I have invested my money and seven (7) years of my life in a field. I have neither the money, nor the time, nor the energy to go back to school. The only solution I am strongly considering is to move to another province so I can teach and eventually work in educational administration.] Female student, Graduate degree in Education, McGill University, wears hijab.

«Si je ne suis pas acceptée dans le programme que je souhaite prendre, je n’ai pas besoin de sentier que j’impose ma présence en tant que femme musulmane à autrui. Je ne veux pas être perçue comme un fardeau. Nous voulons exercer l’emploi qui nous intéresse et non, convertir nos collègues ou entourage.» Étudiante portant le hijab, cours associés au Droit, CEGEP St-Laurent.

[If I am not accepted into the programme I want to take, I don’t need to feel that I am imposing my presence as a Muslim woman on others. I don’t want to be seen as a burden. We want to work in the job that interests us, not to convert our colleagues or entourage.] Female student, taking law oriented courses, CEGEP St-Laurent, wears hijab.

“I’ve decided to take the Ontario Bar Exam because I will likely go work in Ontario, where I feel more welcomed as a religious minority.” Female student in Law, McGill.

[J’ai décidé d’aller faire mon barreau en Ontario parce que je vais probablement aller travailler en Ontario où je me sens mieux accueillie comme personne faisant partie d’une minorité religieuse.] Étudiante, Droit, Université McGill.

“I don’t plan to change my career path, but am looking at working in another province now. I don’t feel that I can be a teacher here in Québec and have a clean conscience while doing so.” Female student in Education, Bishop’s University.

[Je n’envisage pas de changer mes projets de carrière, mais je cherche un travail dans une autre province maintenant. Je ne crois pas pouvoir être une enseignante ici au Québec et je ne me sens la conscience en paix de le faire.] Étudiante, Éducation, Université Bishops.

«Plusieurs étudiants de mon entourage, qu’ils soient touchés directement ou pas par la loi 21, ne s’identifient pas à ce système et souhaiterait travailler à l’extérieur du Québec.» Étudiante Droit, Université de Montréal,

[Many students around me, whether or not they are directly affected by Bill 21, do not identify with this system and would like to work outside Quebec.] Female student, Law, Université de Montréal.

“I know of several colleagues who are now planning to leave Quebec to teach, though they were not planning to before this bill passed. In some cases it is because they wear a religious symbol and would be unable to teach in Quebec, and in many cases it is students like myself who are not personally impacted but who will refuse to teach in Quebec in solidarity.” Female student in Education, McGill.

[Je connais plusieurs collègues qui planifient quitter le Québec pour enseigner, bien que cela ne faisait pas partie de leurs plans avant l’adoption de la Loi 21. Dans certains cas, c’est parce qu’ils

portent un signe religieux et ne pourraient donc pas enseigner au Québec, et, dans d'autres cas comme le mien, ce n'est pas qu'ils n'auraient pas le droit d'enseigner au Québec mais qu'ils refuseraient d'enseigner au Québec par solidarité avec eux.] Étudiante, Éducation, Université McGill.

“I saw this law as part of a larger pattern of discriminatory policies against religious minorities and newcomers in Quebec – it made me very uncomfortable to live in such a province where such forms of discrimination are justified by gov’t officials. In part, this is why I chose to leave Quebec after graduating.” Female graduate student in Law, McGill.

[J’ai perçu cette loi comme faisant partie d’un pattern élargi de politiques discriminatoires contre les minorités religieuses et les nouveaux arrivants au Québec - cela m’a rendue très mal à l’aise de vivre dans une telle province où des formes de discrimination sont justifiées par les représentants du gouvernement. En partie, cela explique pourquoi je choisis de quitter le Québec une fois diplômée.] Étudiante, Droit 2e cycle, Université McGill.

“I do not [wear the hijab] but I was raised in [identifying information removed] which is a religious country surrounded by women who wear the hijab [...] I chose Canada because I believed their laws aligned with my liberal beliefs. Now I am very dissatisfied and rethinking everything.” Female student in Law, Concordia (does not wear hijab) *[Je ne porte pas le hijab mais j’ai grandi à ... (l’information supprimée pour cause d’identification) qui est un pays religieux où les femmes portent le hijab [...]. J’ai choisi le Canada parce que je crois que les lois y sont en concordance avec mes croyances libérales. Maintenant, je suis très déçue et j’en suis à me questionner sur tout.] Étudiante ne portant pas le hijab, Droit, Université Concordia.*

“The Quebec government is appalling. This law is sickening. I will never ever work in Quebec because of it. I refuse to work in a place where my peers cannot or will be punished for expressing themselves.” Female student in Education, McGill.

[Le gouvernement du Québec est épouvantable. Cette loi me rend malade. Je ne vais jamais travailler au Québec à cause de cette loi. Je refuse de travailler dans un endroit où mes pairs ne peuvent pas s’exprimer librement ou seront punis de le faire.] Étudiante, Éducation, Université McGill.

“I have been feeling less and less welcome in Québec. I have been considering moving out of the province, possibly of the country too.” Female student in Law, Université de Montréal.

[J’ai l’impression d’être de moins en moins la bienvenue au Québec. Je considère quitter la province et possiblement aussi le pays.] Étudiante, Droit, Université de Montréal.

“In a post-modern country, it is important to ensure a vivid distinction between religion and politics, personal beliefs should not interfere with the administration of the state nor appear to be interfering with those decisions represented by such as professions as Lawyers, police officers, judges etc. . . . even if any individual religious could ensure to practise those professions regarding the strict application of the law and common sense, it is no certitude that those people practising those professions wont let their [beliefs] interfere.” Male student in Law, Université de Montréal.

Dans un pays post-moderne, il est important de séparer nettement la religion et l’État; les croyances religieuses ne devraient pas s’interposer avec l’administration de l’État, ni s’ingérer dans des professions telles que le droit, la police, la justice, etc. . . . même si les convictions religieuses individuelles pourraient permettre la pratique de ces professions tout en respectant une application stricte de la loi et du sens commun; il n’y a pas de certitude absolue que ces gens puissent pratiquer leur profession en toute objectivité.] Étudiant, Droit, Université de Montréal.

Fears / Les craintes en ce qui concerne les perspectives d'emploi

«Je poursuis présentement mes études pour une maîtrise en Leadership d'établissement scolaire et je ne pourrai pas devenir directrice d'école à cause de mon voile. De plus, les chargées de cours de l'Université de Montréal nous font savoir à la fin des cours, par des commentaires, que nous ne sommes pas à notre place.» Étudiante portant le hijab, Maîtrise, Université de Montréal.

*[I am currently studying for a Master's degree in Education Leadership and I will not be able to become a school principal because of my veil. Furthermore, the lecturers at the University of Montreal let us know at the end of the classes, with comments, that we do not belong.] Female student, MA, Université de Montréal, wears a hijab.

“Malheureusement, la loi me limite dans le secteur publique. Je travaille dans le secteur privé et dans une école musulmans plus précisément.” Diplômée récente portant le hijab, Éducation, Université de Montréal,

[Unfortunately, the law limits me in the public sector. I work in the private sector, more precisely in a Muslim school.] Recent graduate from Education, Université de Montréal; wears a hijab

“Of course. I'm basically banned from teaching because of something I wear, which I will never compromise for the sake of a job.” Female student in Education, McGill, wears a hijab.

[Bien sûr. Je suis bannie de l'enseignement parce que je porte quelque chose, que je ne cesserai pas de faire à cause d'un emploi.] Étudiante portant le hijab, Éducation, Université McGill.

“Unfortunately as others are marginalized I may fall outside of the group, which would mean that there may actually be more job prospects than there would be. However, that does not mean that I agree with the bill or think the privilege it would give me is fair.” Female student in Education, McGill.

[Malheureusement, comme d'autres sont marginalisés, et ne faisant pas partie de ce groupe (de marginalisés), cela signifie qu'il y aura plus de possibilités d'emploi pour moi qu'il n'y en aurait eu autrement. Cependant, cela ne veut pas dire que je suis d'accord avec le projet de loi ou que je pense que le fait d'être privilégiée soit juste.] Étudiante, Éducation, Université McGill.

«Ayant un nom de famille à consonance arabe, je pense déjà que certaines opportunités de travail pourraient m'être refusées. Je pense que la loi 21 enflamme les stéréotypes associées aux femmes arabes ou musulmanes (bien que les deux ne soient pas toujours reliés, plusieurs personnes ont une forte tendance à les associer). Je ne peux pas être sûre que la loi 21 aura un impact direct sur ma future carrière, mais elle créera un environnement de travail moins propice à la diversité, ce qui pourrait finir par me porter préjudice.» Étudiante, Droit, Université de Montréal.

[Having an Arabic-sounding last name, I already think that some job opportunities might be denied to me. I think that Law 21 inflames the stereotypes associated with Arab or Muslim women (although the two are not always connected, many people have a strong tendency to conflate them). I cannot be sure that Bill 21 will have a direct impact on my future career, but it will create an environment less susceptible to diversity, which could end up hurting me.] Female student in Law, Université de Montréal

“I'm north african with tanned skin tone, I'm irreligious and I'm afraid that Bill 21 would be amalgamated with ethnicity or"race."” Male student in Law, Université de Montréal.

[Étant d'origine nord-africaine et ayant une peau basanée, même si je ne suis pas pratiquant, je crains que le Projet de loi 21 ne fasse que je sois amalgamé avec une ethnicité ou une "race."] Étudiant, Droit, Université de Montréal.

“Although my field is not affected by this bill, I still feel that it affects all religious mi-

norities. As a woman who wears the hijab, I feel like this bill has somehow made many people feel more comfortable to discriminate and harass people with religious symbols, especially muslim women. For instance, I have had some job interviews where I could immediately tell that the person lost interest in my application as soon as they saw me with my headscarf. In addition, there is no valid explanation to explain the existence of this bill. It is just an excuse to justify discrimination and create more division in the province.” Female student in Engineering, Concordia; wears a hijab.

[[Bien que mon domaine ne soit pas visé par la loi, je pense tout de même qu'elle affecte toutes les minorités religieuses. En tant que femme qui porte le hijab, je pense que ce projet de loi a donné le droit à beaucoup de personnes de faire subir de la discrimination et de harceler des gens qui portent des signes religieux, en particulier les femmes musulmanes. Par exemple, j'ai passé des entrevues pour un emploi où je pouvais tout de suite sentir que la personne avait perdu intérêt dans ma demande dès qu'elle a vu que je portais le voile. De plus, il n'y a pas de bonnes justifications à la loi. C'est simplement un prétexte pour justifier de la discrimination et créer de la division au sein de la population de la province.] "Étudiante portant le hijab, Ingénierie, Université Concordia.

“I am a privileged white citizen, and my necklace represents the catholic religion, one that is not oppressed.” Female student in Education, Bishops. Wears a “cross necklace.”

[[Je suis une citoyenne privilégiée, blanche, portant un collier symbolisant la religion catholique, donc une personne qui n'est pas opprimée.] Étudiante portant un collier avec une croix, Éducation, Université Bishop's.

“My chain is very dainty and can be hidden or removed and its not a problem for me.” Female law student, University of Ottawa. Wears a cross on a chain.

[[La chaîne que je porte est très délicate et peut être cachée ou retirée et cela ne représente pas un problème pour moi.] Étudiante portant une chaîne avec une croix, Droit, Université d'Ottawa.

«homme blanc athéiste, alors ça me semble que non :(» Étudiant, Droit, Université de Montréal.

[White male atheist, although it doesn't seem like it :(]Male student in Law, Université de Montréal.

Career Paths Disrupted / Des projets de carrières perturbés

«Au lieu d'aller en droit, je vais essayer de rentrer en psychologie. Je voulais être enseignante de droit au niveau universitaire.» Étudiante portant le hijab, cours associés au Droit, CEGEP St-Laurent.

[Instead of going to law school, I'm going to try to get into psychology. I wanted to be a law teacher at university level.] Female student, CEGEP St. Laurent, taking law oriented courses, wears a hijab.

“I was going into teaching, now I'm pursuing a master's degree in audiology.” Female undergraduate student in Linguistics, Université de Montréal; wears a hijab.

[J'avais choisi l'enseignement; maintenant, je fais des études de maîtrise en audiologie.] Étudiante portant le hijab, Linguistique, Université de Montréal.

“I wanted to go into law school but I also want to eventually wear the hijab and so I chose health science.” Female student, Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, health sciences; wears a “necklace” as religious symbol. *[Je voulais entrer en droit, mais je voulais aussi porter le hijab à l'avenir alors j'ai choisi des études en sciences de la santé.] Étudiante portant un collier comme symbole religieux, Sciences de la santé, Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf.*

“I chose to stop teaching in Quebec elementary schools for a variety of reasons. A big part of that is the toxic culture that I found to exist in many of these schools. There are lots of factors at play, but Law 21 is just an example of the ways the government contributes to this toxic environment. Even though I do not wear a religious symbol, I did not want to participate in a system that denied that right to others, particularly people who may already be discriminated against for other reason (being a woman, being an immigrant).” Female graduate from Concordia Education.

[J'ai décidé d'arrêter d'enseigner dans les écoles élémentaires du Québec pour diverses raisons. Pour une bonne part, je considère qu'il existe une atmosphère toxique dans plusieurs de ces écoles. De nombreux facteurs expliquent ce fait, mais la Loi 21 est un exemple des façons dont le gouvernement contribue à cet environnement toxique. Bien que je ne porte de signe religieux, je ne veux plus faire partie d'un système qui nie les droits à certains, particulièrement à ceux qui subissent déjà de la discrimination pour d'autres raisons (être une femme, être un immigrant, etc.).] Étudiante diplômée, Université Concordia.

“Though I am not personally impacted by Bill 21, the way that the government is treating my colleagues is appalling and was a big contributing factor to why I reconsidered my career path. If I do ever teach, it will not be in Quebec.” Female student in Education, McGill.

[Bien que le Projet de loi 21 ne m'affecte pas personnellement, la façon dont le gouvernement traite mes collègues est épouvantable; c'est le facteur important qui m'a amenée à revoir mes projets de carrière. Si jamais j'enseigne, cela ne sera pas au Québec.] Étudiante, Éducation, Université McGill.

“I was planning to complete my education in law school or teaching in the University but I changed my plan b/c [because] I have no future in Quebec in these fields. Also, I cannot be selfish to let my husband quit his job for me to move to other provinces. On the other hand, all of my 3 kids are Quebec born and more comfortable in having education in French language. So, leaving Quebec is not a good option for us. Also, we have a sense of belonging to Quebec I lived most of my life in Montreal and my husband was raised in Montreal so it is hard to leave a city we love and we lived most of our lives in” Female student in Law and Society program, Concordia, wears a hijab.

[Je planifiais terminer mes études de droit ou d'enseigner à l'université, mais j'ai changé mes projets de carrière car je n'ai pas d'avenir au Québec dans ces domaines. Par ailleurs, je ne peux être égoïste et demander à mon mari de quitter son emploi pour que nous déménagions dans une autre province. D'un autre côté, mes trois (3) enfants sont nés au Québec et se sentent plus à l'aise de poursuivre leurs études en français. Alors, quitter le Québec n'est pas envisageable pour nous. De plus nous avons développé un sens d'appartenance au Québec où j'ai vécu presque toute ma vie à Montréal et mon mari a grandi à Montréal, alors il serait difficile de quitter une ville que l'on aime et où on a vécu toute notre vie.] Étudiante portant le hijab, Droit et société, Université Concordia.

«Plusieurs voilées que je connais n'ont pas poursuivi ce qu'elles aiment réellement faire et maintenant elles sont dans des programmes où elles ne sont pas satisfaites à cause de cette loi.» Étudiante, Affaires, CEGEP Ahuntsic.

[Many veiled women I know did not pursue what they really like to do and now they are in programs in which they are not satisfied because of this law. Female student in business, Ahuntsic CEGEP]

“A lot of my friends wanted to become teachers but saw that its not realistic.” Female student in Psychology, Université de Montréal. Wears a hijab.

[Beaucoup de mes amies voulaient devenir enseignantes mais ont compris que ce n'est pas réaliste.] Étudiante portant le hijab, Psychologie, Université de Montréal.

“Several of my classmates from law school are being forced to change their career plans - as this law places restrictions on the kind of work they can do, solely because of the religious symbols that they wear as part of their personal expressions of faith.” Female student in Law, McGill.

[Plusieurs de mes camarades de classe en droit sont forcées de changer leurs projets de carrière puisque la loi restreint le genre de travail qu'ils peuvent faire par la suite, seulement à cause du signe religieux qu'ils portent et qui font partie de leurs croyances personnelles.] Étudiante, Droit, Université McGill.

«Quelques amies qui portent le voile, dont certaines iront dans le système privé et d'autres en Ontario.» Étudiant, Droit, UQAM

[Some female friends who wear the veil, of which some will go to the private system and some to Ontario.] Male student in Law, UQAM

Worsening Perceptions of Québec / L'aggravation de perceptions négatives du Québec

“I do not feel very welcome, I am often discriminated against. I thought most people were open, but ever since the decision for the law, I have been feeling less and less at home. Most people hold a strong prejudice against people of my ethnicity and or religion.” Female student in Law, Université de Montréal.

[Je ne me sens pas très bienvenue, je subis souvent de la discrimination. Je pense que la plupart des personnes ont l'esprit ouvert, mais depuis l'adoption de la loi, je me suis sentie de moins en moins chez moi. La plupart des gens ont des préjugés marqués contre mon groupe ethnique et / ou ma religion.] Étudiante, Droit, Université de Montréal.

“It did [change], because when you look at this matter from a hijabi's point of view or even any other religious minority affected by this law, you start to feel like you don't belong and that you're different.” Female student in pre-law program, Collège Ahuntsic, wears a hijab.

[J'ai changé parce, quand on regarde la question du point de vue d'une personne portant le hijab or même d'une personne appartenant à minorité religieuse affectée par cette loi, tu commences à croire que tu n'as plus d'appartenance [ici] et que tu es différente.] Étudiante, cours préparatoire au Droit, Collège Ahuntsic.

“I despise Quebec now. A province which has absolutely no respect for me or my people to the point that they'd like to take my livelihood away deserves no love. Especially after I was born and raised here and gave all my love to it, it hurts to feel this way.” Female student in Education, McGill, 22 years old; wears a hijab.

[Je déteste le Québec maintenant. Une province qui ne me respecte pas ou ne respecte mon peuple au point de me retirer le droit de gagner ma vie ne mérite pas d'être aimé. Surtout que je suis née, que j'ai grandi ici et ai donné [à cette province] tout mon amour, cela fait mal de me sentir ainsi.] Étudiante de 22 ans portant le hijab, Éducation, Université McGill.

«Moi qui pensait qu'il s'agissait d'une province de paix et de liberté, je viens de voir que ce n'est pas pour tous.» Étudiante portant le hijab, Droit, CEGEP St. Laurent.

[Me who thought that this province was one of peace and freedom, I've come to see that those [ideals] are not for everyone.] Female student in Law, CEGEP St. Laurent; wears a hijab.

“La loi 21 me rend très peu fière d'être Québécoise.” Étudiante, Droit, Université McGill.

*[Law 21 leaves me with very little pride in being a Québécoise.] Female student in Law, McGill University.

“My understanding of Quebec and its laws has been complex over the years, never quite regarding it in a shiny light, but this is certainly a dark, dark spot.” Female student in Education (MA), McGill University.

[Ma compréhension du Québec et de ses lois a toujours été complexe, jamais vue sous une lumière brillante, mais ceci [Loi 21] est certainement un moment très noir.] Étudiante, Maîtrise en Éducation, Université McGill.

“we’re racist af.” Female student in Law, Université de Montréal.

[Nous sommes racistes [af].] Étudiante, Droit, Université de Montréal.

“Québec is a fundamentally racist, xenophobic, and discriminatory province that has no appreciation for the right to religious freedom. In my eyes, Québec is no better than the USA - and in fact, may be worse.” Female student in Law, McGill.

[Le Québec est essentiellement une province raciste, xénophobe et discriminante qui ne respecte pas le droit à la liberté de religion. Selon moi, le Québec n’est pas mieux que les États-Unis, et, en fait, il est peut-être pire.] Étudiante, Droit, Université McGill.

“Coming from a conservative religious state in the US, Law 21 is a wonderful step towards women’s liberation and freedom. I wish my state would pass a similar bill.” Female student in Education, McGill PhD; 32 years old.

[Venant d’un état américain conservateur et religieux, la Loi 21 est une étape merveilleuse vers la libération des femmes et la liberté. J’aimerais que mon état passe une loi semblable.] Étudiante de 32 ans au doctorat, Éducation, Université McGill.

“Secularism good. I want as little religion in the state as possible.” Male student in Law, Marianopolis College, 19 years old.

[La laïcité de l’État est une bonne chose. Je veux le moins possible d’ingérence religieuse dans l’État.] Étudiant, Droit, Collège Marianopolis.

“Bill 21 is justified in order to respect the citizens’ right to a neutral service from the State.” Male student in Law, Laval, 20 years old.

[Le Projet de loi 21 se justifie afin d’assurer le droit des citoyens à un service étatique neutre.] Étudiant de 20 ans, Droit, Université Laval.

“Since the Quiet Rev., Quebec has shown to be very anti-religion so this is nothing new. As Qc society became more secular, this is a reaction to a perceived or true increase in religiosity from immigrants. So I am not surprised this is happening in Quebec and not elsewhere in Canada. In terms of religion, Quebec is by far the most secular province (eg. rates of unmarried people living together compared to other CAD provinces).” Female student in Education, Concordia, MA program.

[Depuis la Révolution tranquille, le Québec s’est montré très anticlérical alors cela [Loi 21] n’est rien de nouveau. Parce que la société québécoise est devenue plus laïque, cela est une réaction à la croissance perçue ou réelle de la religiosité des immigrants. Donc, je ne suis pas surprise que cela arrive au Québec et pas ailleurs au Canada. En termes de religion, le Québec est de loin la province la plus laïque (par exemple, le taux d’unions libres est très élevé comparativement aux autres provinces).] Étudiante, Éducation, Université Concordia.

«Une majorité des Québécois est en faveur de ce projet de loi, en particulier à l'extérieur de Montréal. Je pense que ma vision du Québec qui se limite à mon entourage à Montréal est une version biaisée de ce qu'est le Québec. Je ne peux pas pour autant dire que ma vision a changé négativement, car je suis encore jeune et je n'ai jamais réellement exploré le Québec. Je n'ai pas l'impression de le connaître réellement, j'ai trop l'habitude de vivre dans ma bulle à Montréal. L'adoption de ce projet de loi m'a seulement fait réaliser à quel point Montréal est différent du reste de la province.» Étudiante, Droit, Université de Montréal.

[A majority of Quebecers are in favour of this bill, especially outside Montreal. I think that my vision of Quebec, which is limited to my surroundings in Montreal, is a biased version of what Quebec is. I can't say that my vision has changed for the negative, because I am still young and I have never really explored Quebec. I don't feel like I really know it, I'm too used to living in my bubble in Montreal. The adoption of this bill has only made me realize how different Montreal is from the rest of the province.] Female student in Law, Université de Montréal.

«Ma perception du Québec en tant que tel n'a pas vraiment changé; c'est plutôt ma perception des problèmes sociaux au Québec qui a été affectée. Je préfère faire une distinction entre le Québec comme province multiculturelle à laquelle je m'identifie (même si je suis d'une minorité visible) et le Québec de la CAQ qui se base sur les peurs de leur base électorale pour adopter une loi profondément discriminatoire. La loi 21 a un support majoritaire, mais pas du tout unanime. Je dirais que ce qui a changé dans ma perception est le fait qu'il y a une problématique à ce que les gens soient autant à l'aise avec une loi si discriminatoire et qu'avoir un gouvernement qui ne reconnaît même pas cette situation (et le racisme systémique) ne représente pas le Québec comme je le connais.» Étudiante, Droit, Université de Montréal.

[My perception of Quebec itself has not really changed; rather, it is my perception of the social problems in Quebec that has been altered. I prefer to make a distinction between Quebec as a multicultural province with which I identify (even though I am a visible minority) and the Quebec of the CAQ, which relies on the fears of their electoral base to adopt deeply discriminatory legislation. Bill 21 has majority support, but it is by no means unanimous. I would say that what has changed in my perception is the fact that there is a problem with people being so comfortable with such a discriminatory law and that having a government that doesn't even acknowledge this situation (nor systemic racism) does not represent Quebec as I know it.] Female student in Law, Université de Montréal.

“Quebec is part of the country of Canada that so states that we are a multicultural country. However, seeing the treatment of Indigenous peoples, and now the Law 21, I do not believe that the country of Canada nor Quebec are accepting of any culture outside of our colonizers European roots.” Female student in Education, McGill University, wears a “Christian cross.”

[Le Québec fait partie du Canada et de ce fait nous sommes un pays multiculturel. Cependant, avec la façon de traiter les Autochtones, et maintenant avec la Loi 21, je ne crois pas que le Canada ni le Québec acceptent vraiment les cultures autres que les cultures de souches européennes.] Étudiante portant une croix chrétienne, Éducation, Université McGill.

Positive Views of Law 21 / Perceptions positives de la Loi 21

“My family escaped a toxic restricting country that forced the hijab. We are free here, we should not have any religious symbols in Quebec public service.” Male undergraduate student in Law, McGill University.

[Ma famille a quitté un pays où régnait un environnement toxique qui forçait le port du hijab. Ici, nous sommes libres et il ne devrait pas y avoir de symboles religieux dans les services publics au Québec.] Étudiant, Droit, Université McGill.

“I have great hopes that Bill 21 (law 21) will encourage from all faiths to embrace secular civic life here in the province. For women from a conservative religious background, Bill 21 is a great example of the kind of legislation that we should be promoting to liberate women from patriarchal and sexist religious ideologies and banning their representation on our public workers is a great step. Hopefully we will see a new era in which students are able to attend school without being subjected to symbols of patriarchal religious oppression on their teachers.” Female student in Education, McGill University.

[J'ai de grands espoirs que le Projet de loi 21 (Loi 21) encouragera toutes les religions à adopter la laïcité des fonctionnaires dans la province. Pour les femmes d'un milieu conservateur religieux, le Projet de loi 21 est un bon exemple de la sorte de législation qui devrait promouvoir la libération des femmes soumises à des idéologies patriarcales, religieuses et sexistes; bannir leur représentation chez les fonctionnaires de l'État est une bonne étape. J'ai l'espoir de voir arriver une nouvelle ère dans laquelle les étudiants pourront aller à l'école sans être assujettis aux symboles de l'oppression patriarcale religieuse de leurs enseignants.] Étudiante, Éducation, Université McGill.

Contested Perceptions: the Meaning of a “Religious Symbol” under Law 21 / Des perceptions contestées : la signification d'un “signe religieux” sous la Loi 21

“my tattoos are representative of my faith.” Female student in Education, Bishop’s University.

[mon tatouage est représentatif de ma foi]. Étudiante, Éducation, Université Bishops.

“I have a rosary tattooed on my wrist.” Female student in Education, Bishops University.

[J'ai un chapelet tatoué sur mon poignet.] Étudiante, Éducation, Université Bishops.

“I decided to grow and keep a beard because it’s a religious obligation for men, just like the hijab for the women.” Male student in Education, CEGEP St. Laurent. *[J'ai décidé de me laisser pousser la barbe parce que c'est une obligation religieuse, tout comme le hijab pour les femmes.] Étudiant, Éducation, CEGEP St-Laurent.*

«Je porte la voile, mais je le considère comme un vêtement, pas un symbole.» Étudiante, Éducation, UQAM.

[I wear a veil, but I consider it as an article of clothing, not as a symbol. Female student in Education, UQAM.

“I wear my Hebrew name and a Hamsa. I consider this to be a representation of my Jewish identity but I don’t think that employers would necessarily know what it is.” Female student, Law, Concordia.

[Je porte un nom hébreu et un hamsa. Je considère cela être représentatif de mon identité juive, mais je ne pense pas que des employeurs sachent de quoi il s'agit.] Étudiante, Droit, Université Concordia.

“Hijab isn’t a religious symbol.” Female Education graduate, Collège Bois-de-Boulogne.

*[Le hijab n’est pas un signe religieux.] Étudiante, Éducation, Collège Bois-de-Boulogne.

“I believe in my religion but the visible symbols are only for ardent traditionalists. There is a difference of opinion among minority groups!” Male student in Law, McGill University.

[Je crois dans ma religion mais les signes religieux visibles sont seulement pour de fervents traditionalistes. Il existe des différences d'opinions parmi les groupes minoritaires.] Étudiant,

Droit, Université McGill.

“I wear a star of david necklace but I am not a religious person. I consider this law as an attack to my identity.”

[Je porte un collier avec une croix de David, mais je ne suis pas une personne religieuse. Je considère cette loi comme une attaque contre mon identité.]

“I either wear a cross or a Jewish symbol [...] we should be free to express ourselves through religion, fashion, art, etc.” Female student in Education, Concordia.

[Je porte un croix ou un signe religieux juif [...] nous devrions être libres de nous exprimer à travers la religion, la mode, l'art, etc.] Étudiante, Éducation, Université Concordia.

“I sometimes wear a christian cross for pure esthetism, I like how it looks but have nothing to do with my internal beliefs.” Male student in Law, Université de Montréal.

[Je porte parfois une croix chrétienne par pure esthétique, son style me plaît, mais cela n'a rien à voir avec mes croyances personnelles.] Étudiant, Droit, Université de Montréal.

«D'après-moi la laïcité veut dire la neutralité étatique envers les religions et non pas l'absence des religions. De plus, le droit de porter un signe religieux sur son corps est fondamental dans une société libre et démocratique. Or, les droits et libertés doivent se balancer. Il y a une certaine conséquence à ouvrir la possibilité de porter des signes personnels dans les positions d'autorités. Quelle est la différence intrinsèque entre un signe religieux et un signe politique pour un individu croyant que rien n'est sacré? J'imagine que c'est la croyance sincère que le signe religieux est justement sacré, alors c'est un désaccord fondamental quant à la nature du signe porté. Je trouve ça difficile à reconcilier, mais c'est sûr que les interdictions dans la loi 21 sont contre-productif et porte atteinte au respect des autres. C'est mon take personnel.» Étudiant, Droit, Université de Montréal.

[In my opinion, secularism means state neutrality towards religions, not the absence of religions. Moreover, the right to wear a religious sign on one's body is fundamental in a free and democratic society. However, rights and freedoms must be balanced. There is a certain consequence of opening the possibility of wearing personal signs in positions of authority. What is the intrinsic difference between a religious sign and a political sign for an individual who believes that nothing is sacred? I guess it's the sincere belief that the religious sign is just that, sacred, so it's a fundamental disagreement about the nature of the sign worn. I find it difficult to reconcile, but it's certainly true that the prohibitions in Bill 21 are counterproductive and undermine respect for others. That's my personal take.] Male student in Law, Université de Montréal

“When it comes to the legal system, every religion has its own separate way to judge. However, in a secular state, the irreligiosity of procedure should be reflected as much as possible. For example, a woman Qadi (judge in a sharia court, the legal system of Islam) is required to wear a hijab because that court is explicitly Islamic. In a secular court, having a judge with a hijab, kippah, turban, etc is the equivalent of putting one's religion above the law of the land. In fact, many religious communities do not even recognize the law of the land because it does not conform with their religious law (hassidique Jews for example). Finally, you can't have your cake and eat it too: if it's not a big deal that jurists wear religious symbols, then we might as well get rid of all decorum and uniforms (judges and lawyers can now show up to court in tank tops, sweatpants and flip flops). The arguments against Law 21 are gaslighting of the highest order.” Male student, Law, Marianopolis.

[En ce qui concerne le système juridique, chaque religion a sa propre façon de rendre la justice. Cependant, dans un État laïque, la présence de la religion ne devrait pas se faire sentir autant que possible. Par exemple, une femme Cadi (une juge dans une cour de la charia dans la religion

musulmane) doit porter le hijab parce cette cour est explicitement islamique. Dans une cour laïque, le fait d'avoir un juge portant un hijab, la kippa, le turban, etc. équivaut à mettre sa religion au-dessus de la loi du pays. En fait, de nombreuses communautés religieuses ne reconnaissent la loi du pays parce qu'elle ne se conforme pas à leur loi religieuse (par exemple, la loi hassidique pour les Juifs orthodoxes). Finalement, tu ne peux pas avoir le beurre et l'argent du beurre; si ce n'est pas une grosse affaire que les juristes portent un signe religieux, il vaut mieux se débarrasser de tout le décorum et des uniformes (les juges et les avocats peuvent maintenant se présenter en débardeur, survêtement et flip-flops.)] Les arguments contre la Loi 21 sont perturbants au plus haut point.] Étudiant, Droit, Collège Marianopolis.

“[Law 21] allows haphazard discrimination:”symbol” can be anything (are black dreadlocks a symbol? is a long beard?).” Male student in Education (MA), McGill.

[la Loi 21] permet une discrimination hasardeuse : un “symbole” peut être n'importe quoi (des tresses rastas - dreadlocks - sont-elles un symbole ? une longue barbe ?] Étudiant, Éducation (Maîtrise), Université McGill.

The Hijab in Context / Le hijab en contexte

“i just find it sad and frustrating that just bcz im a psychoeducator i can work in schools but my sister that also wears the hijab but is a teacher cant work. it makes no sense, sometimes i feel like we are going back in time of WW2 having laws to be against a certain belief, a sign or just the difference.” Female graduate from Psycho-education, Université de Montréal; wears a hijab.

[je trouve regrettable et frustrant que, simplement parce que je suis une psycho-éducatrice, je peux travailler dans des écoles, mais que ma soeur, qui aussi porte le hijab, ne peut pas travailler en tant qu'enseignante. Cela n'a pas de sens, parfois j'ai l'impression être retournée au temps de la 2e Guerre mondiale avec des lois contre des croyances, un signe religieux ou simplement le fait d'être différent.] Étudiante diplômée portant le hijab, Psycho-éducation, Université de Montréal.

“Although I study in the field of education, the law does not impact me because I chose not to wear any religious symbols. I know this is anecdotal but I thought I should mention it nonetheless - my friend's sister is in her 3rd year of her BA in education from UdeM. She was planning on starting to work as a teacher in highschool math after graduating but she wears the hijab. Bill21 impacts her career choices a lot!” Female student in Education (MA), Concordia.

[Bien que j'étudie dans le domaine de l'éducation, la loi ne m'affecte pas parce que j'ai décidé de ne pas porter de signe religieux. Je sais que c'est anecdotique mais je pense que je devrais mentionner le fait néanmoins - l'amie de ma soeur est dans sa 3e année d'un baccalauréat en éducation à l'Université de Montréal. Elle planifiait commencer à travailler comme enseignante de mathématiques dans une école secondaire après ses études mais elle porte le hijab. Le Projet de loi 21 affecte donc son choix de carrière énormément !] Étudiante, Éducation (Maîtrise), Université Concordia.

“We wanted to go to Halifax because of this law. My mother who wears hijab is a teacher.” Female student in health sciences, Collège de Maisonneuve; wears a hijab.

[Nous voulons aller à Halifax à cause de cette loi. Ma mère, qui porte le hijab, est une enseignante.] Étudiante portant le hijab, Sciences de la santé, Collège Maisonneuve.

«J'ai plusieurs amies qui ont choisi un domaine autre que l'enseignement en raison de la loi 21 et qui sont, jusqu'à présent, en train de changer de domaines chaque an car elles ne savent plus quoi choisir.» Étudiante portant le hijab, Éducation, Université de Montréal.

[I have several friends who chose a field other than teaching because of Law 21 and who are, so far, changing fields every year because they don't know anymore what to choose.] Female student in Education, Université de Montréal; wears a hijab

“Mom wears hijab, don’t feel comfortable moving family here.” Male student in Law, McGill University.

[Ma mère porte le hijab, ne se sent pas à l’aise de faire déménager sa famille ici.] Étudiant, Droit, Université McGill.