

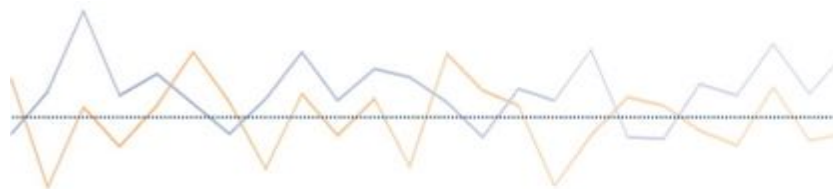
Nova Scotia Teachers Union

Commissioned Results – Autumn (Q4) 2018

THE ATLANTIC QUARTERLY®



November 2018



Method

- Probability telephone survey

Number of Interviews

- 400 in each of two waves

Sampling

- Random samples of adults aged 18+ years from Nova Scotia

Data Collection Dates

- October 3 to October 21, 2018
- November 13 to November 27, 2018

Margin of Error

- Overall results accurate to within ± 4.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20

Reporting

- Current results are compared with tracking data from previous Atlantic Quarterly surveys conducted from 1992 to 2018, and NS Education Issues studies conducted in 2005, 2008 and 2010.
- Results may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Assessment of Performance

- ✓ Negative assessments of **the performance of the provincial government in managing the public education system** remain widespread across the province. **Confidence in the government's ability to act in the best interest of the public school system** and perceptions of the **overall quality of education** are relatively stable but modest, with a minority providing positive assessments.
- ✓ When asked to assess **the actions taken by the government related to public education in recent years**, a majority of Nova Scotians once again perceive an overall negative impact. Among those who believe they had a negative impact, the most commonly cited reason for this opinion is that teachers are not satisfied, followed by teachers being overworked and issues not being resolved. Among those who believe the actions had a positive impact, opinion that there have been improvements, there is dedicated funding to classroom improvement, and the contract dispute affected education are most commonly mentioned.
- ✓ Favourable opinion of **public school teachers in Nova Scotia** remains widespread. Favourable opinion stems from perceptions that teachers do a good job, do what they can with limited resources, perceiving them as hard-working, along with residents having a personal relationship or interactions with teachers, among other reasons.

Public Education Issues

- ✓ Nova Scotians' ratings of the importance of specific issues for the public education school system reveals that a number of issues are widely viewed as critically important. **Lack of support for those with special needs** and **violence in the classrooms** are most often considered critically important, followed closely by **poor student achievement**, **availability of support personnel in the classrooms**, and **teacher morale**. Also considered critically important by a majority are **teacher workloads** and **class sizes**. One-half consider **bussing or transportation issues** as critically important.
- ✓ Violence in the classroom has increased in importance, after declining in second quarter. Also increasing in importance over the past six months are teacher morale, teacher workloads, and class sizes, while availability of support personnel in the classroom has increased relative to the beginning of this year.

Impact of Shift to Single Provincial Advisory Council

- ✓ Compared with results in the spring of this year, there has been a widening of opinions regarding whether the **move from seven school boards to a new single provincial advisory council** will make the public education system in Nova Scotia **better** or **worse**. Residents are more inclined to believe the shift will make it worse than better, although neither viewpoint is a majority one. Top reasons residents believe the new single advisory council will be better include improved efficiency/less waste and improved consistency across the province. Conversely, the most common reasons residents believe the move will make it worse include it being too centralized, regional differences, and reduced input from community/groups.
- ✓ Also widening after shifting to a more equal split in second quarter 2018, residents are more likely to anticipate a negative than a positive impact on **student achievement from the move from seven elected school boards to a single advisory council**. Specifically, one-quarter anticipate a positive impact, while four in ten anticipate a negative impact.
- ✓ In examining more specific potential outcomes from **moving from seven elected school boards to a single advisory council**, a majority of residents continue to believe the move will **make it harder to take into consideration local needs and for parents to have a say in education, it does not address the current problems in the education system, and it will create new problems in the education system**. More residents agree it will be harder for parents to have a say in education, after agreement declined in second quarter. Residents are least inclined to believe it will have positive outcomes including **improving efficiency and consistency, or improving the openness and transparency of decisions** made for the education system.

Administrative Changes

- ✓ Residents' assessment of the anticipated impact on the **quality of public education of various administrative changes** proposed based on the recommendations of an independent consultant are generally similar to results earlier this year. Residents are most inclined to anticipate positive impacts from **enhancing the role and influence of School Advisory Councils**, and **giving teachers and principals the responsibility for the selection of text books and learning materials**, with two-thirds anticipating positive impacts from each action. Approximately one in two residents believe **short-term exchanges of government department and staff** will have a positive impact, while **moving principals and vice-principals out of the NSTU** is the one change from which residents are more likely to anticipate a negative than a positive impact.

Substitute Teachers

- ✓ A large majority of residents remain concerned about the **impact on public education of a shortage of substitute teachers**.

School Bus System

- ✓ Nova Scotians view were **transportation company**, the **regional Centres for Education**, and the **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development** as most responsible for the effective operation of the public education school bus system.

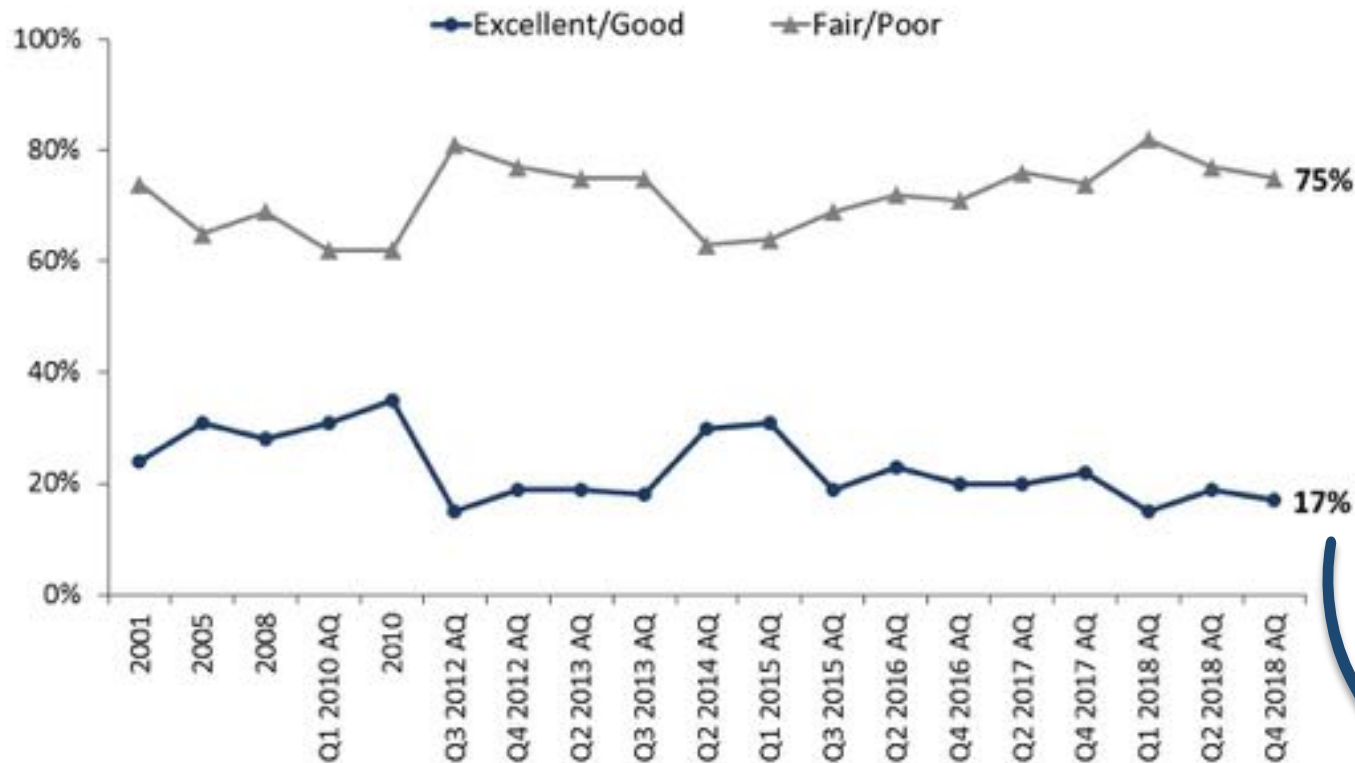
Inclusive Education

- ✓ The vast majority of residents once again indicate it is important that the **public be kept informed of the progress of inclusive education in the province** despite opinion on, the confidence of the public will be kept informed in this regard, remaining split. It is important to note that only a small number of residents are **very confident** the public will be kept informed.

Pre-Primary Program

- ✓ A majority of residents support the **introduction of the pre-primary program** in the province's public schools, with support increasing over the past year.
- ✓ Residents are more likely to view **the job done by the government in introducing the program** negatively than positively, although there has been some narrowing in the discrepancy between positive and negative opinion relative to a year ago.
- ✓ Knowledge regarding whether **educators in the provincial pre-primary program are required to have the same qualifications as other public school teachers** is clearly limited, with a mix of opinions of whether they do or do not have to have the same qualifications.

Performance of Provincial Government in Managing the Public School System



Q.U1: All things considered, do you think the provincial government is doing an excellent, good, fair, or poor job of managing the public school system in Nova Scotia? (n=400)

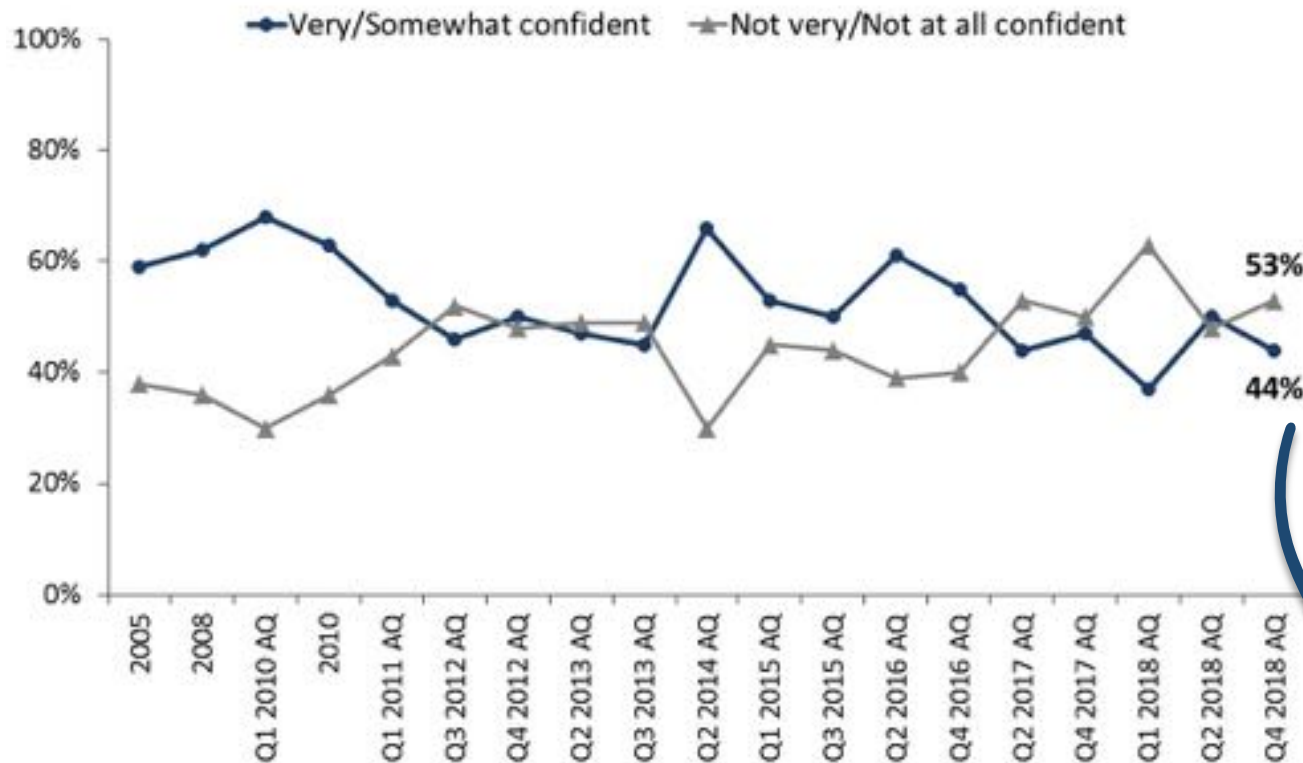
Just fewer than one in five residents believe the provincial government is doing an **excellent** or **good** job at **managing the public school system**, consistent with results in second quarter. By contrast, the vast majority of residents rate the Nova Scotia government's performance in this regard as only **fair** or **poor**, which is also consistent with findings in second quarter.

As would be expected, rating the government's performance on managing the public school system negatively is elevated among residents who express an unfavourable rating on the quality of public education in the province. (Table U2)

Q4 2018 AQ

Excellent = 2%
Good = 15%
Fair = 39%
Poor = 36%

Confidence in Government's Ability to Act in Best Interests of Public School System



Q.U2: How confident are you in the government's ability to act in the best interests of the provincial public school system?
Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident, or not at all confident? (n=400)

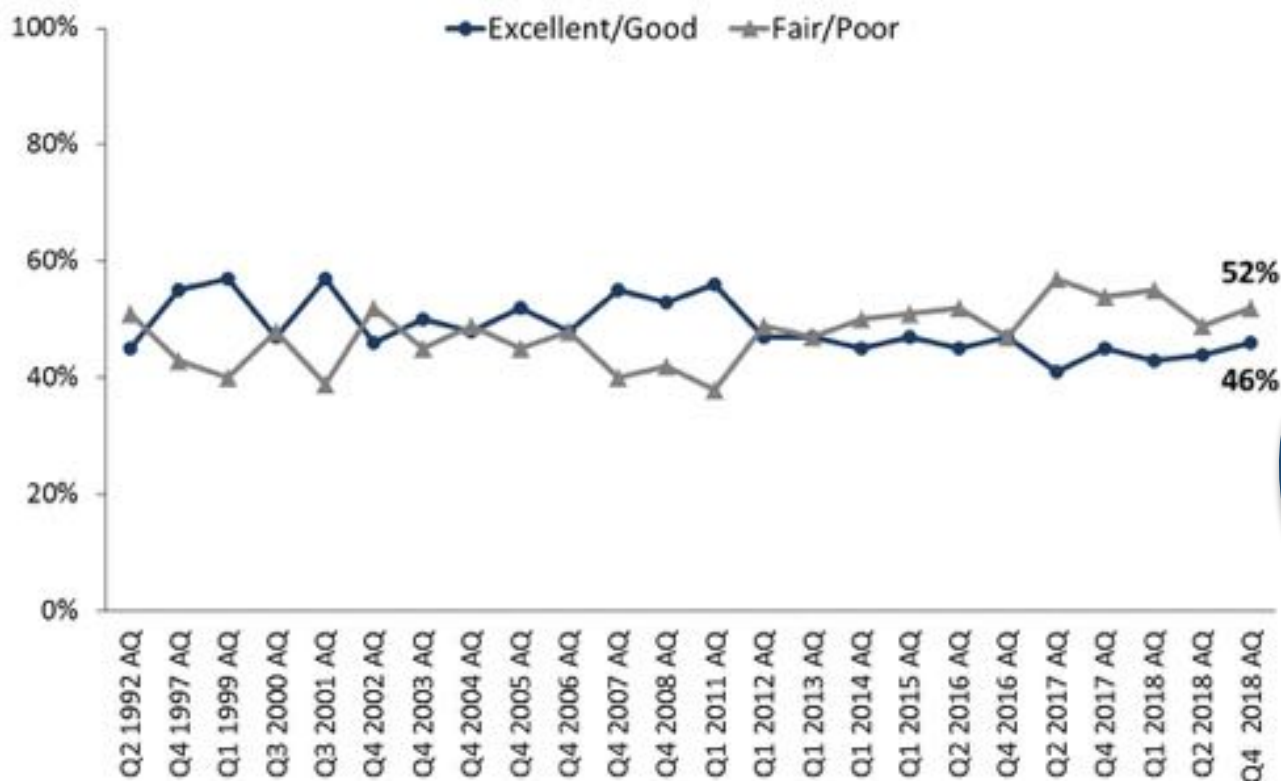
Residents' **confidence in the government's ability to act in the best interests of the provincial public school system** is relatively on par with second quarter results. Currently, opinion on this topic is split, as just under one-half of residents are **very** or **somewhat confident**, while slightly more than one-half of residents are **not very** or **not at all confident**.

Lack of confidence among those who believe the quality of public education in Nova Scotia is only fair or poor is more than double that of those who view the quality of public education as excellent or good. (Table U3)

Q4 2018 AQ

Very confident = 4%
Somewhat confident = 40%
Not very confident = 33%
Not at all confident = 21%

Overall Quality of Public Education in Nova Scotia



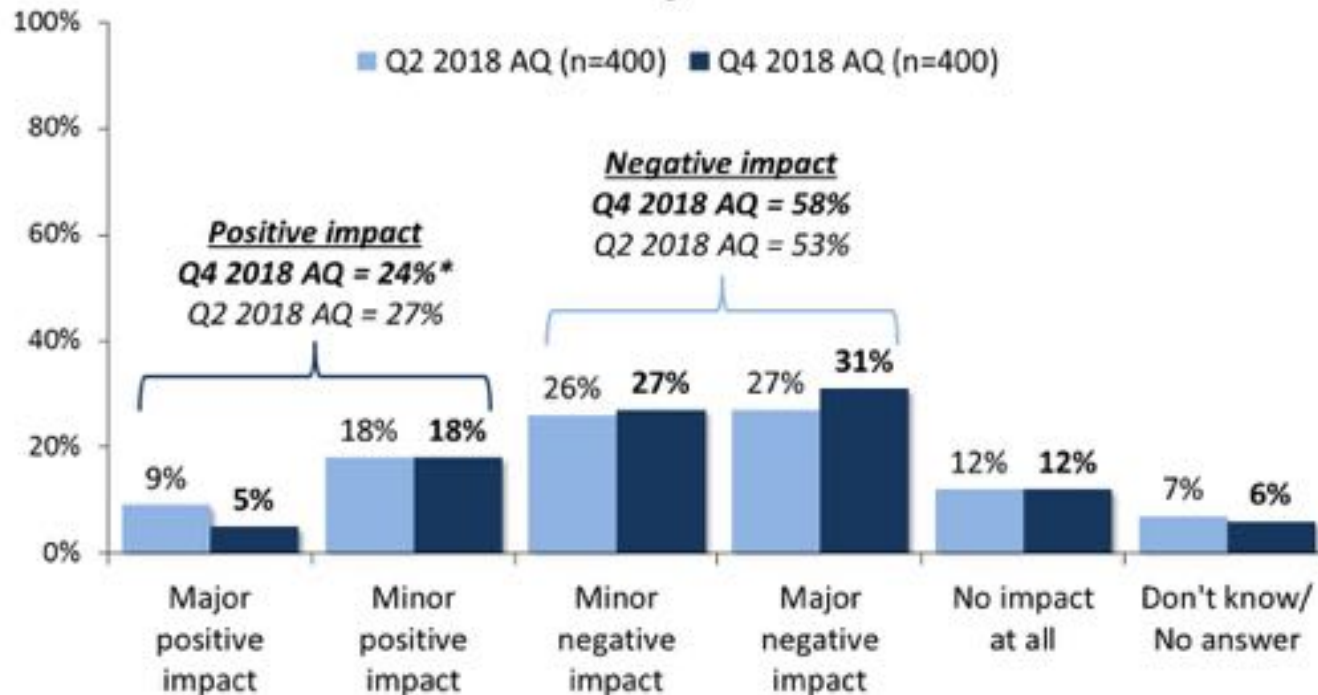
Perceptions regarding the **overall quality of education** in the province remain relatively stable compared with second quarter. Specifically, one-half of residents consider the overall quality of public education to be ***fair*** or ***poor***, while a slightly smaller proportion believe the quality of public education is ***excellent*** or ***good***.

Opinion in this regard is generally consistent across the population. (Table U3)

Q4 2018 AQ
 Excellent = 6%
 Good = 40%
 Fair = 36%
 Poor = 16%

Q.U3: How would you rate the overall quality of public education provided in Nova Scotia? Would you rate the quality of public education as excellent, good, fair, or poor? (n=800)

Impact on the Quality of Public Education by Recent Actions Taken by Provincial Government



Similar to second quarter, residents are roughly twice as likely to believe **the actions taken by the provincial government in recent years** have had a **negative** impact than a **positive** impact on the quality of public education in Nova Scotia.

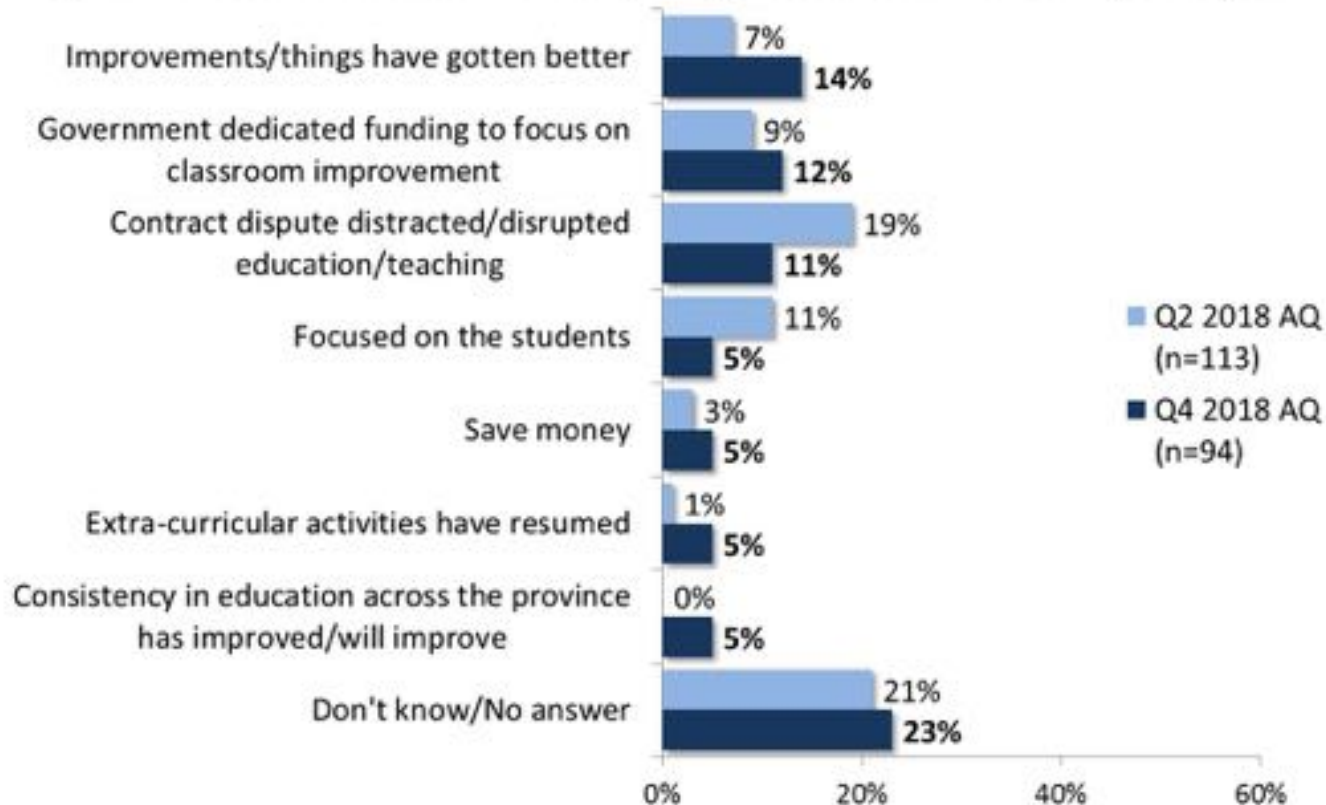
Specifically, close to six in ten residents indicate the actions have had a negative impact, while one-quarter believe they have had a positive impact.

Across the population, residents are more likely to believe there has been a negative than a positive impact. (Table U14)

Q.U14: In recent years, the government has taken certain actions related to public education in the province, including imposing a contract on teachers, after negotiations for a new collective agreement were not successful, and introducing legislation that made a number of changes to public education in the province. All things considered, do you think the actions taken by government in recent years has had a major positive impact, minor positive impact, minor negative impact, major negative impact, or no impact at all on the quality of public education in Nova Scotia? **Due to rounding.*

Most Important Reason for Positive Impact

Key Mentions From Total Unaided Mentions, Among Those Who Said Positive Impact in Q.U14

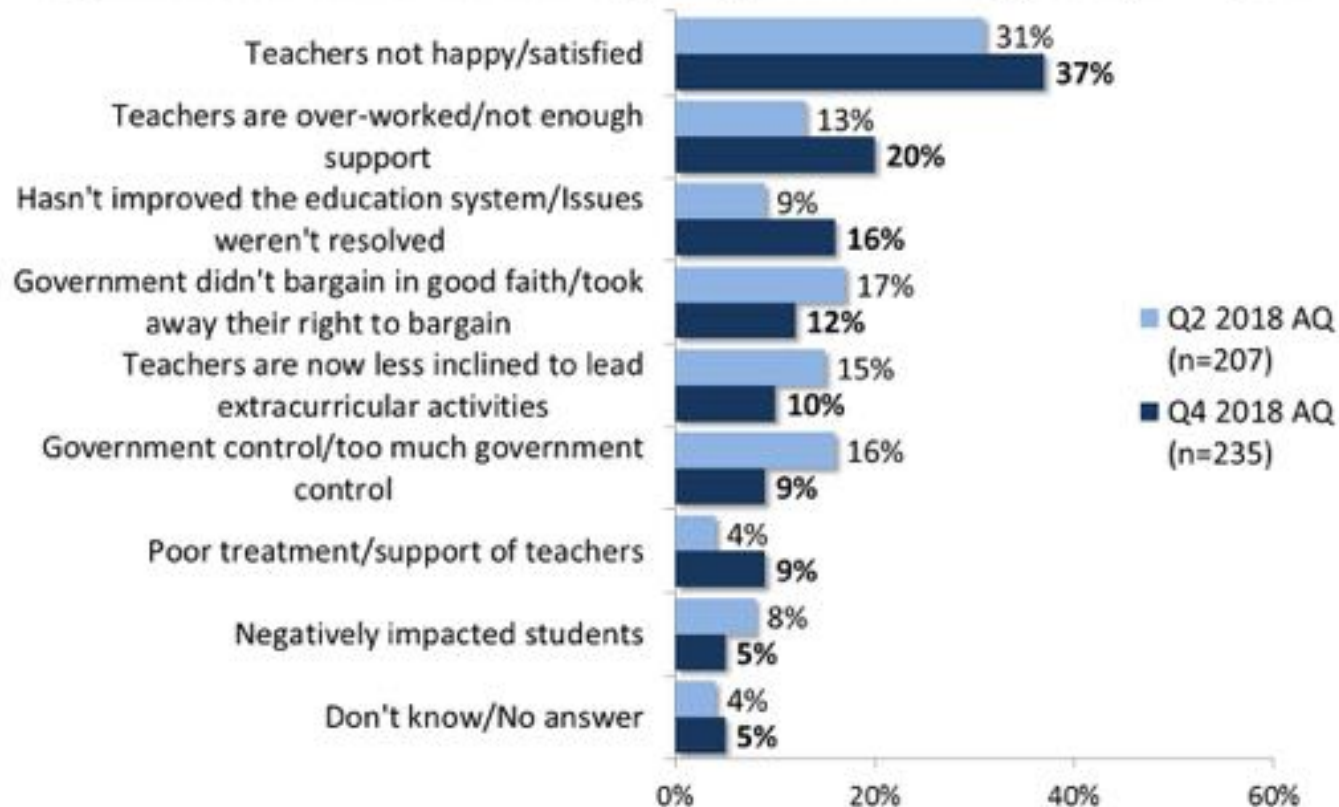


Q.U15a: [IF 'POSITIVE IMPACT' IN Q.U14] What is the single most important reason you say it has had a positive impact?
Probe: Any other reasons?

Among those who believe the recent government actions have made a **positive impact** on the quality of public education in the province, top mentions include *things having improved, dedicated funding to classroom improvement* and the *contract dispute affected education*. (Table U15a)

Most Important Reason for Negative Impact

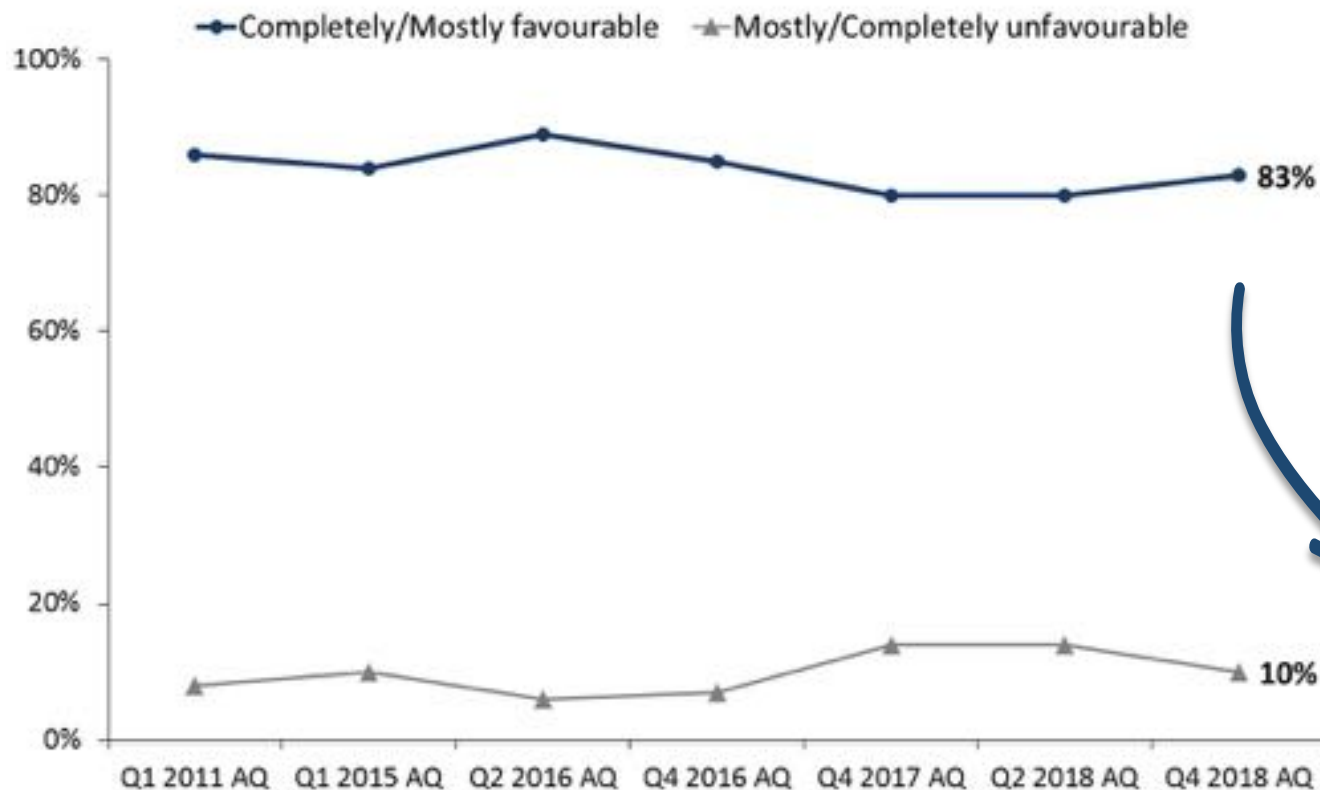
Key Mentions From Total Unaided Mentions, Among Those Who Said Negative Impact in Q.U14



Among those who believe the recent government actions have made a **negative impact** on the quality of public education in the province, opinion that **teachers are not satisfied** is once again mentioned most often. Other commonly cited reasons include opinions that **teachers are over-worked**, the **education system has not improved**, the **government did not bargain in good faith**, **teachers are now less inclined to lead extracurricular activities**, and there is **too much government control**. (Table U15b)

Q.U15b: [IF 'NEGATIVE IMPACT' IN Q.U14] What is the single most important reason you say it has had a negative impact?
Probe: Any other reasons?

Overall Opinion of Public School Teachers in Nova Scotia



Consistent with historical results, public perception of **Nova Scotia's public school teachers** is largely positive, with eight in ten Nova Scotians having a favourable opinion.

Across the population, residents who believe the quality of education in the province is excellent or good are more likely than those who believe it is fair or poor to hold a favourable opinion of public school teachers in Nova Scotia. (Table U8)

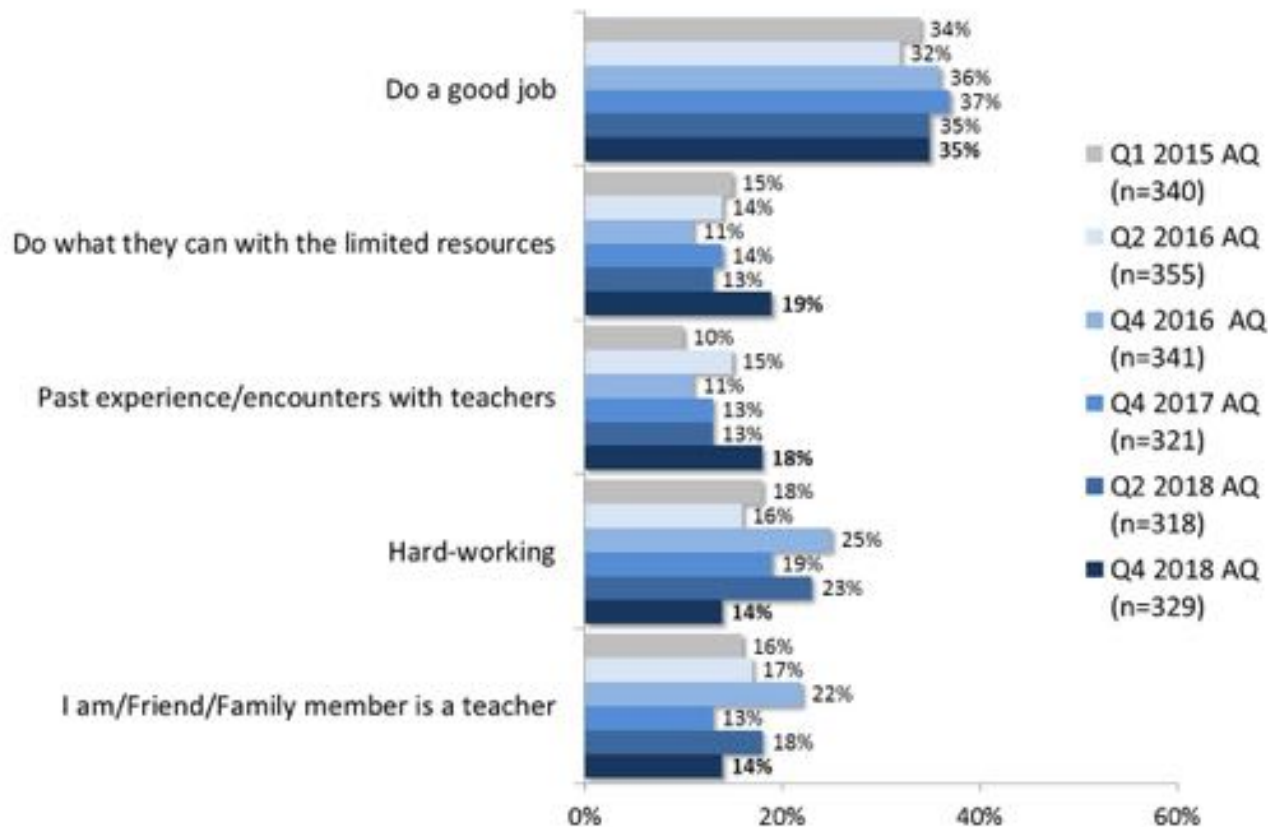
Q4 2018 AQ

Completely favourable = 14%
Mostly favourable = 70%
Mostly unfavourable = 8%
Completely unfavourable = 2%

Q.U4: All things considered, do you have a completely favourable, mostly favourable, mostly unfavourable, or completely unfavourable overall opinion of Public school teachers in the province? (n=400)

Reasons for Favourable Opinion of Public School Teachers

Key Mentions From Total Unaided Mentions, Among Those Who Said Completely Favourable or Mostly Favourable in Q.U4

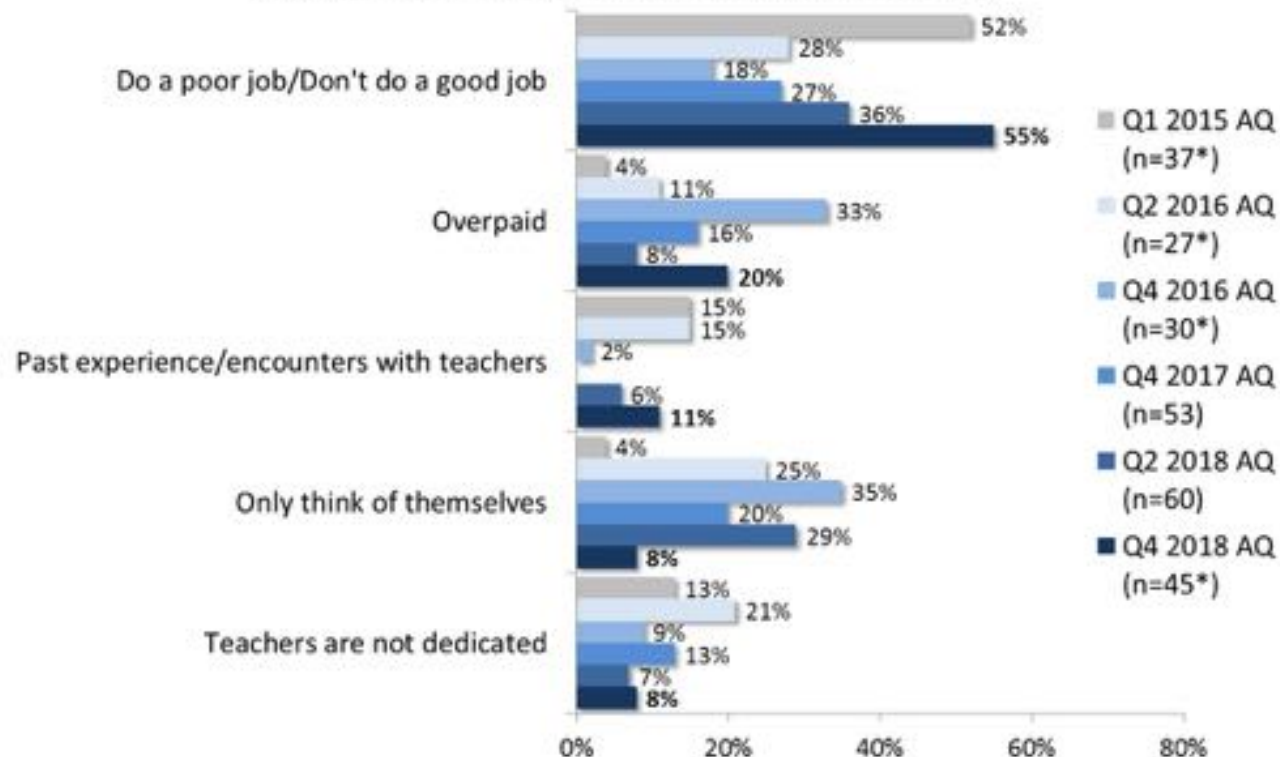


Residents continue to offer a variety of reasons for their favourable opinion of Nova Scotia school teachers, with **teachers doing a good job** remaining the top reason, followed by teachers **doing what they can with limited resources**, believing teachers are **hard-working**, and **having a personal relationship or interactions with teachers**, among others. (Table U9a)

Q.U5a: [IF 'FAVOURABLE' IN Q.U4] Why do you have a completely favourable/mostly favourable overall opinion of Nova Scotia public school teachers? Any other reasons?

Reasons for Unfavourable Opinion of Public School Teachers

Key Mentions From Total Unaided Mentions, Among Those Who Said Mostly Unfavourable or Completely Unfavourable in Q.U4

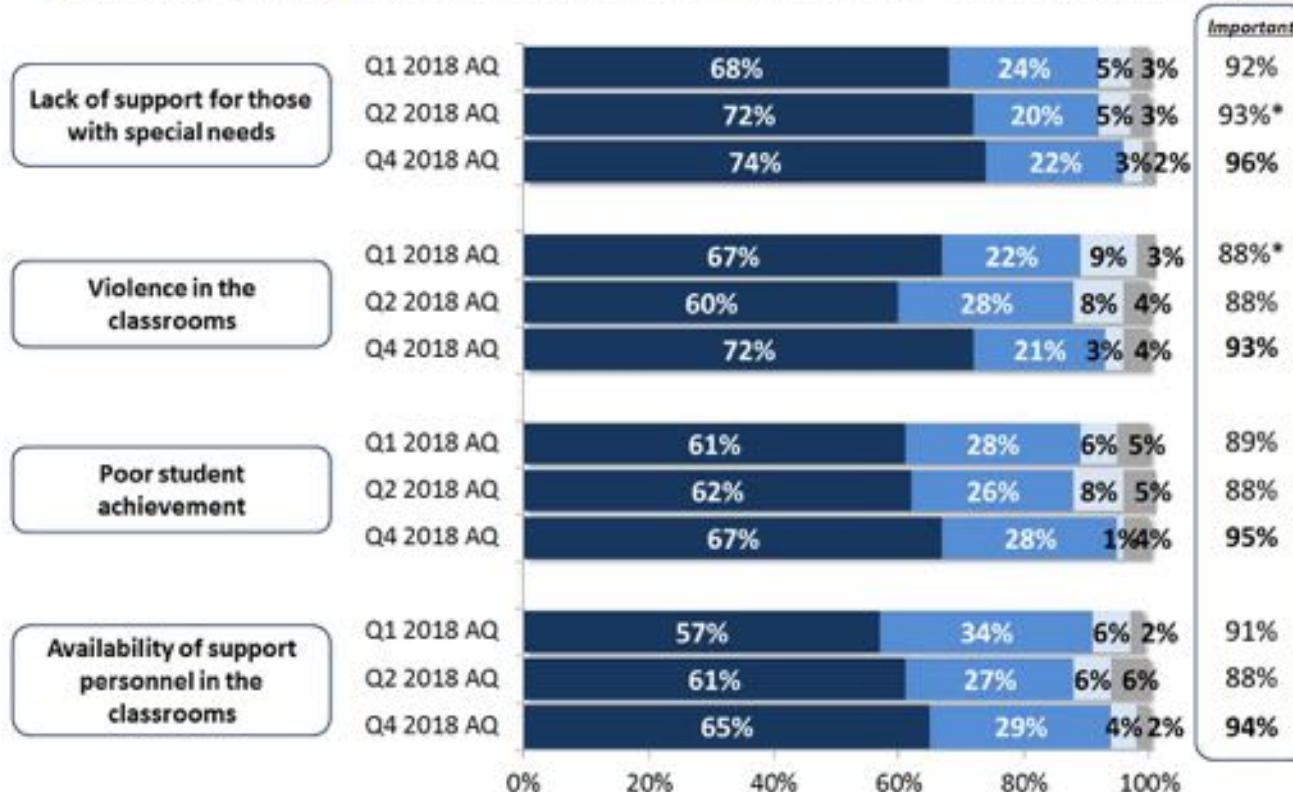


Among the small number of residents (n=45) with a negative perception of public school teachers, **doing a poor job** is the most prevalent mention, and has been steadily increasing since Q4 2016. Other top mentions include perceptions that they are **overpaid**, only **think of themselves**, and are **not dedicated**, along with mentions of **past interactions**. (Table U9b)

Q.U5b: [IF 'UNFAVOURABLE' IN Q.U4] Why do you have a mostly unfavourable/completely unfavourable overall opinion of Nova Scotia public school teachers? Any other reasons? **Caution: Small sample size.*

Importance of Issues for Public Education School System

■ Critically important ■ Important, but not critical ■ Not important ■ Don't know/No answer



Q.U8b-e: I am going to read a list of issues and for each please indicate whether you think it is a critically important, important, but not critical not very important, or not at all important issue for the public education school system in Nova Scotia currently?
(Q1 2018 AQ n=400, Q2 2018 AQ n=400, Q4 2018 AQ n=400). *Due to rounding

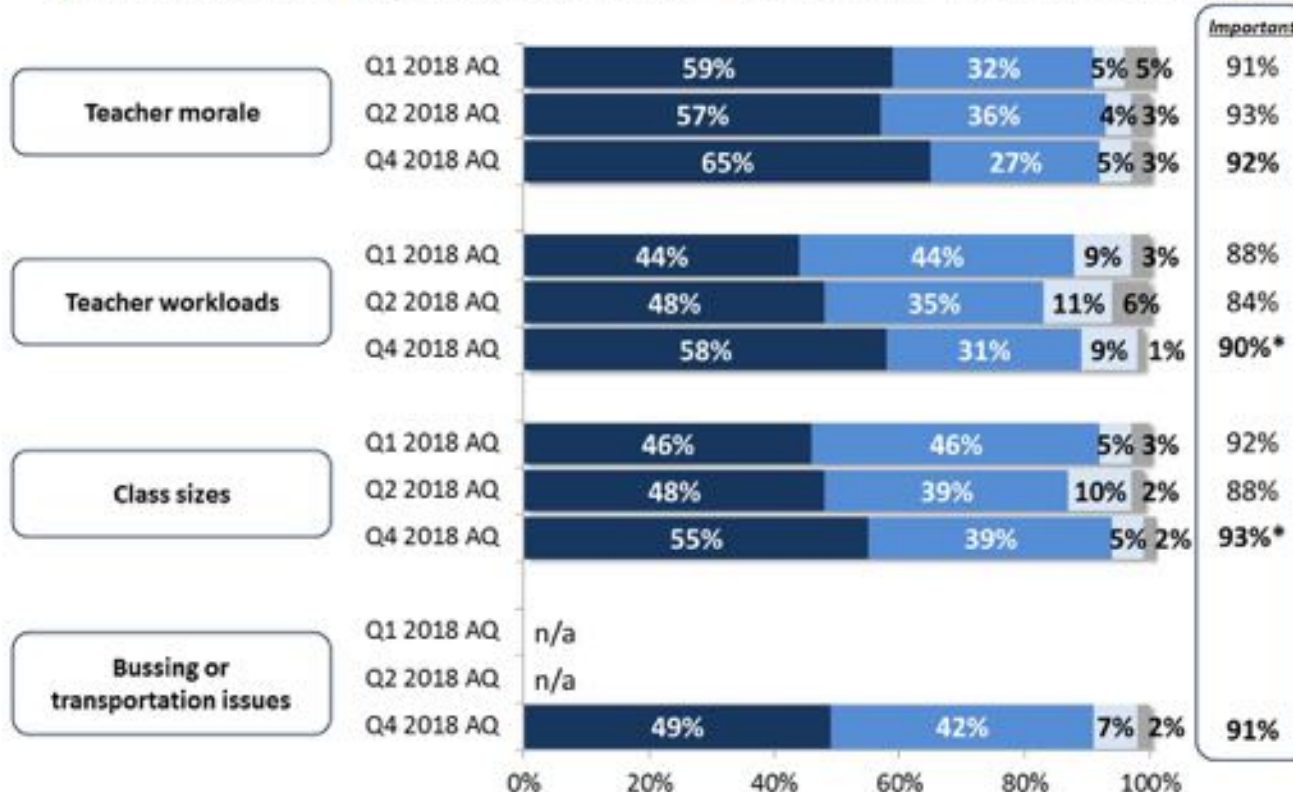
In assessing the importance of specific issues, it is evident that Nova Scotians consider various issues important. Topping the list, three-quarters of residents consider the **lack of support for those with special needs** to be critically important.

There has been a notable rebound in perceived importance of **violence in the classrooms**, which declined in the second quarter. Currently, seven in ten view it as critically important. Meanwhile, two-thirds of residents view **poor student achievement** as critically important, and a similar number of residents perceive the **availability of support personnel in the classrooms** as a critically important issue. The latter aspect has increased in importance compared with February 2018 results.

It merits mention that viewing violence in the classrooms as critically important is elevated in Cape Breton (89%) compared with Halifax (68%) or mainland Nova Scotia (71%). (U8b-e)

Importance of Issues for Public Education School System

■ Critically important ■ Important, but not critical ■ Not important ■ Don't know/No answer



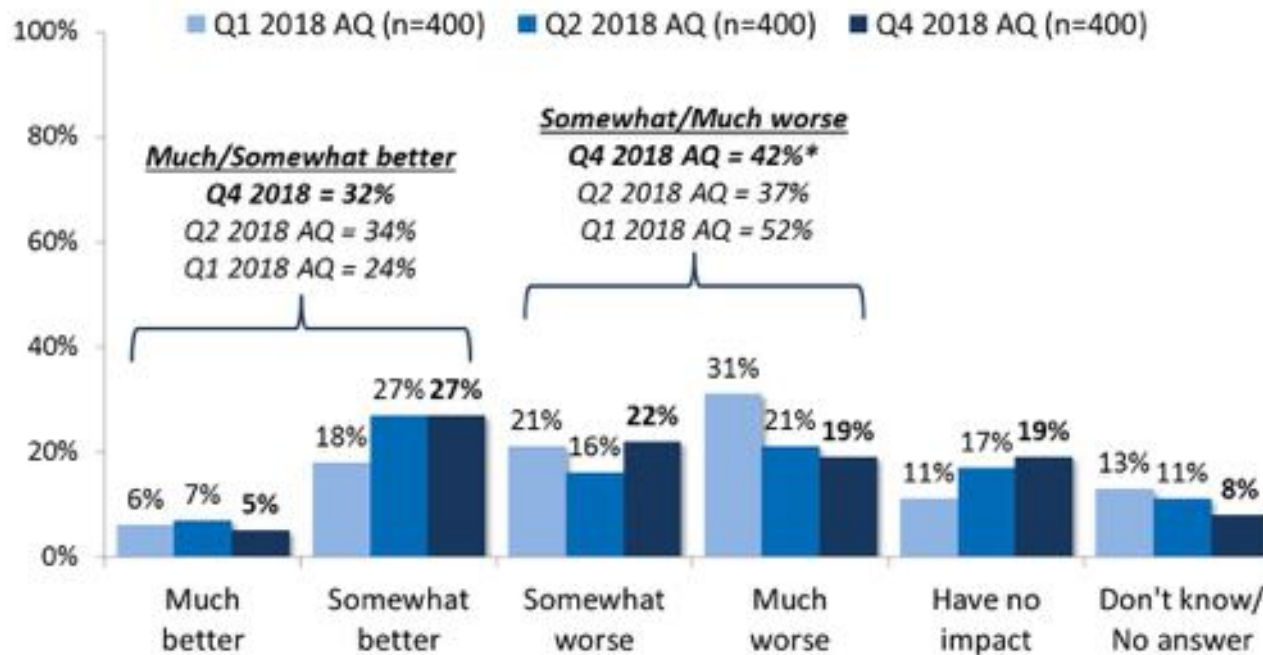
Close to two-thirds of residents consider **teacher morale** to be critically important, which is an increase relative to second quarter.

Just less than six in ten view **teacher workloads** and **class sizes** as critically important, with both experiencing increases in perceived critical importance over the past six months.

Bussing or transportation issues, measured for the first time this quarter, is perceived as least important, with one-half of residents assigning it critical importance. (Table U8a, f-h)

Q.U8a,f-h: I am going to read a list of issues and for each please indicate whether you think it is a critically important, important, but not critical not very important, or not at all important issue for the public education school system in Nova Scotia currently? (Q1 2018 AQ n=400, Q2 2018 AQ n=400, Q4 2018 AQ n=400). *Due to rounding

Impact of Moving From Seven Elected School Boards to Single Advisory Council on Public Education System in NS



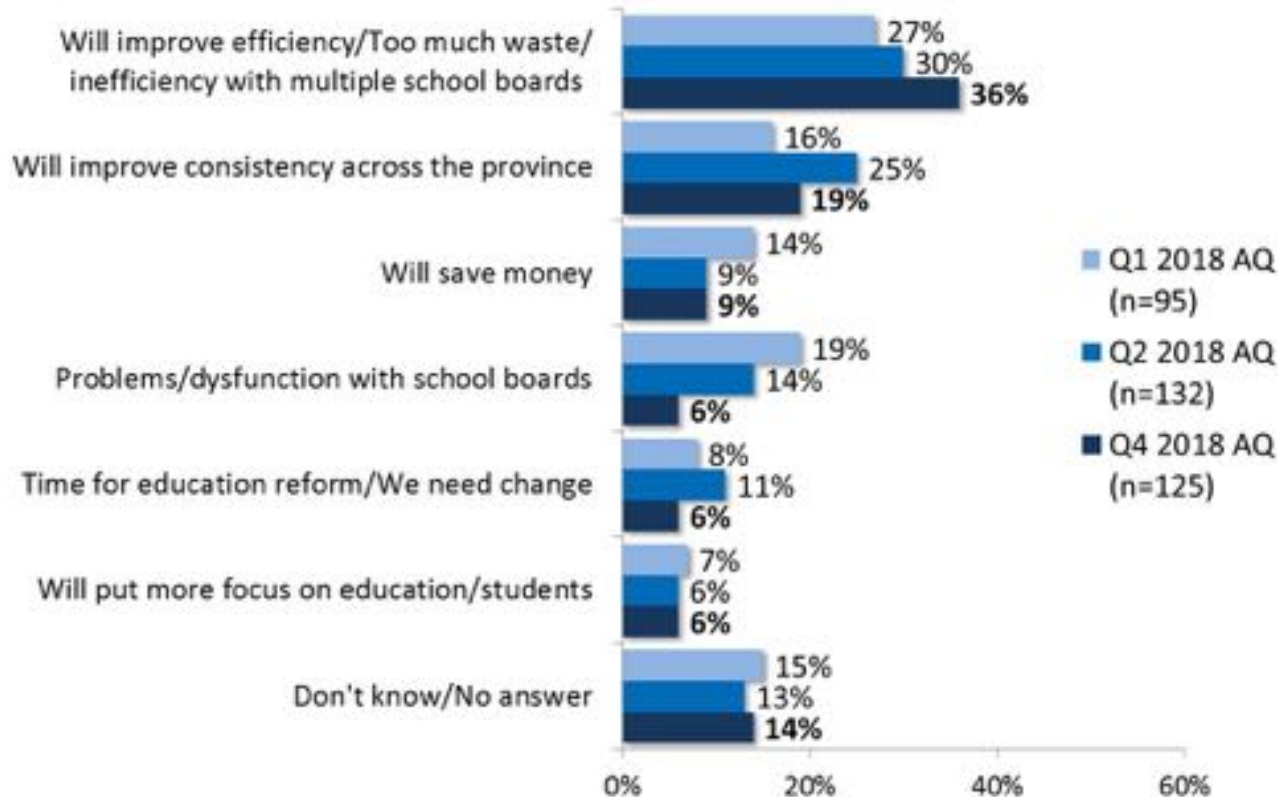
Q.U10: As you may or may not know, the Nova Scotia government recently dissolved the seven elected regional school boards and created a single provincial advisory council made up of people appointed by the minister of education. In your opinion, do you think that this new council will make the public education system in Nova Scotia much better, somewhat better, somewhat worse, much worse, or have no impact? *Note: Slight change of question wording from Q1 & Q2 2018.*

**Due to rounding.*

While shifts are modest, this quarter residents are more likely to view the **move to a single advisory council** as having a **negative** impact than a **positive** impact on Nova Scotia's public education system. Specifically, one-third of residents believe this move will make the public education system **better**, while four in ten believe the decision will make it **worse**. One-quarter believe it will either have no impact or did not have a definite opinion. (Table U10)

Most Important Reason Public Education Will Be Better

Key Mentions From Total Unaided Mentions, Among Those Who Said Better in Q.U10



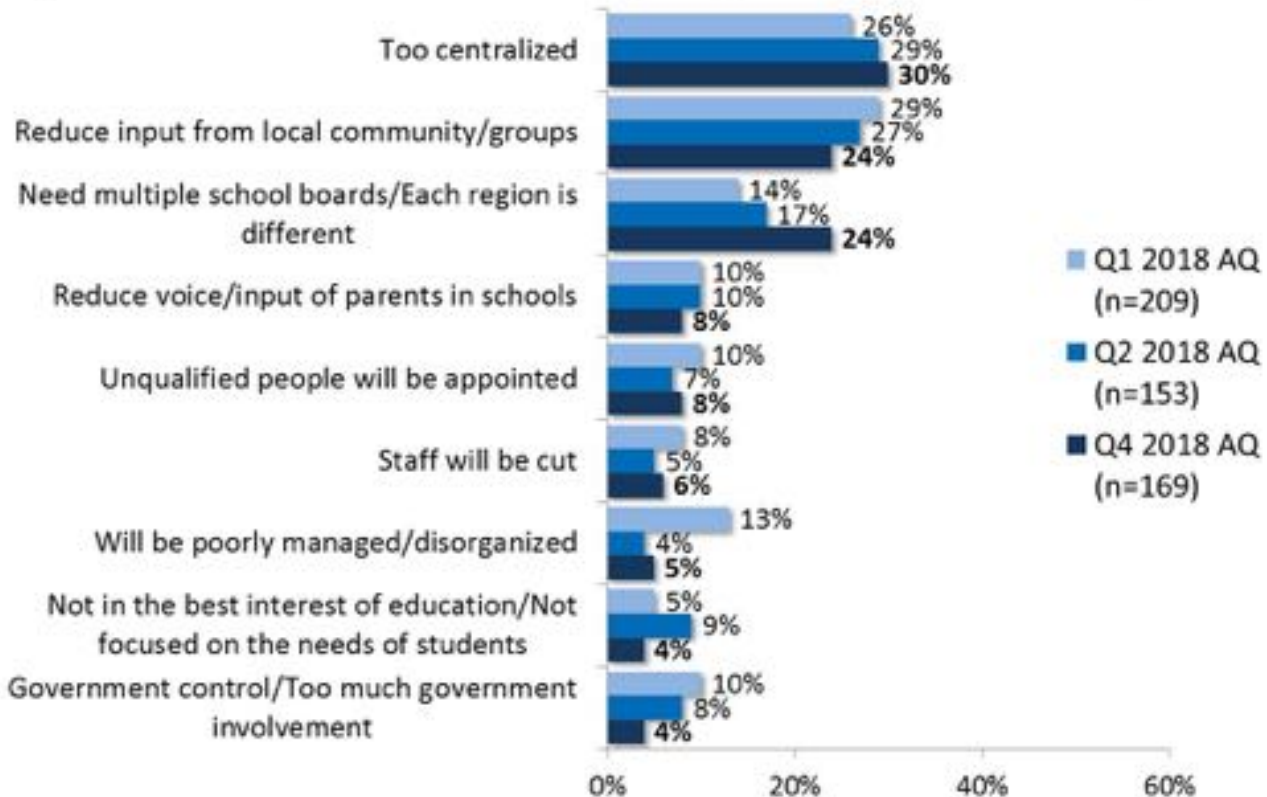
Reasons residents believe public education will be better with the new advisory council include **improved efficiency/less waste**, **improved consistency across the province**, **saving money**, **problems with the school board**, it being **time for a change**, and **more focus on education/students**.

Mentions of improved efficiency have marginally increased since the beginning of the year, while mentions of problems with school boards have declined. (Table U11a)

Q.U11a: [ASK IF 'MUCH/SOMEWHAT BETTER' IN Q.U10] What is the single most important reason you say it will be better?
Probe: Any other reasons?

Most Important Reason Public Education Will Be Worse

Key Mentions From Total Unaided Mentions, Among Those Who Said Worse in Q.U10

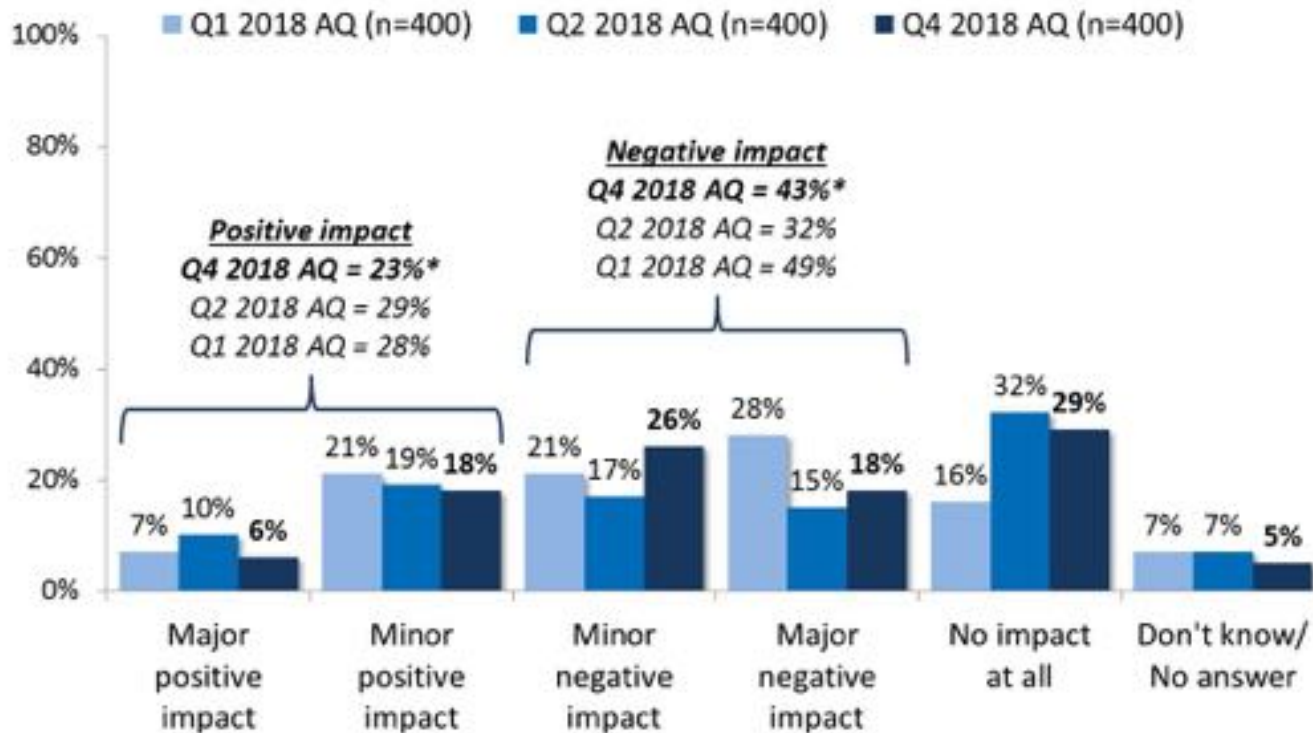


The most common reasons residents believe the move will make public education worse include it being **too centralized**, **reduced input from community or groups**, and **regional differences**.

Mentions of the need for multiple boards to account for regional differences has marginally increased since the beginning of the year. (Table U11b)

Q.U11b: [ASK IF 'SOMEWHAT/MUCH WORSE' IN Q.U10] What is the single most important reason you say it will be worse?
Probe: Any other reasons?

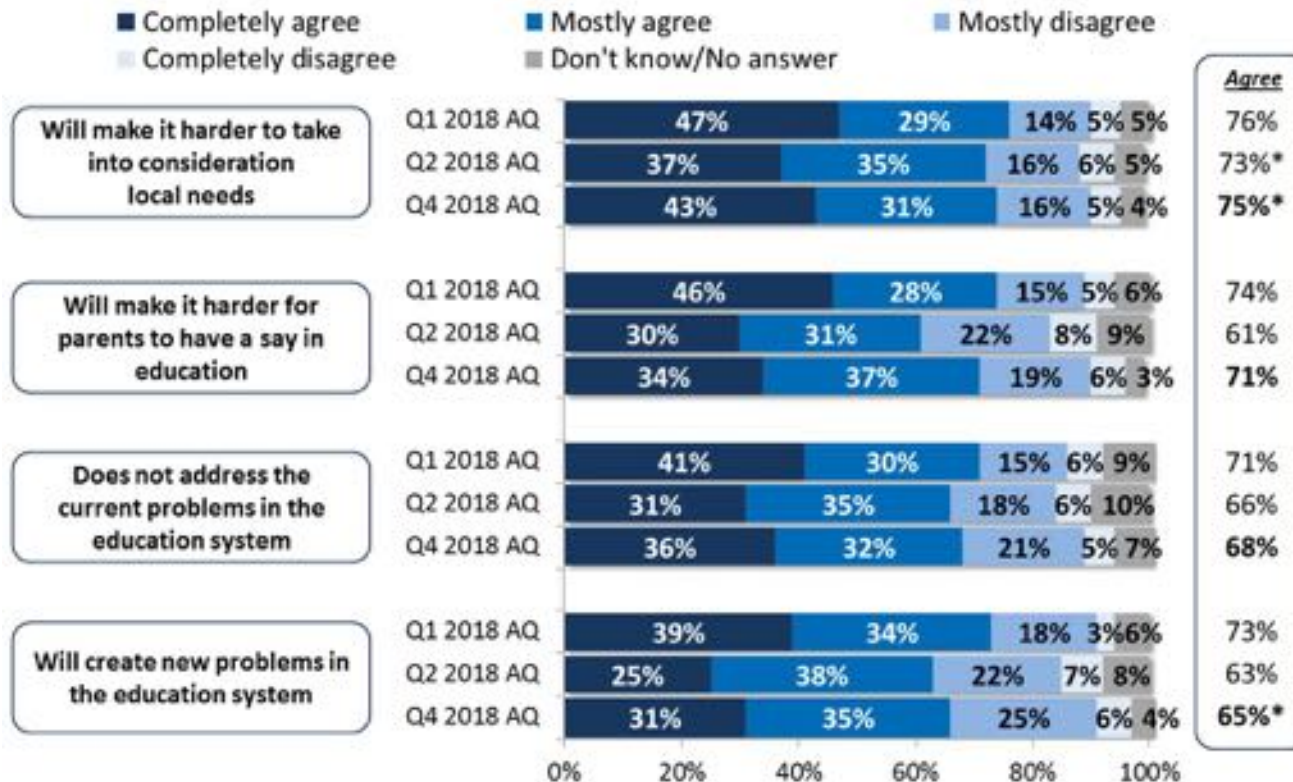
Impact of Moving From Seven Elected School Boards to Single Advisory Council on Student Achievement



After having shifted to a more equal split between positive and negative opinion in second quarter, once again residents are more likely to anticipate a **negative** than a **positive** impact on **student achievement** from the move from seven elected school boards to a single advisory council. Specifically, one-quarter of residents anticipate a positive impact, while four in ten anticipate a negative impact. One-third of residents anticipate no impact or do not provide a definite response. (Table U12)

Q.U12: All things considered, do you believe that the move from seven elected school boards to a single advisory council will have a major positive impact, minor positive impact, minor negative impact, major negative impact, or no impact at all on student achievement?

Opinion of Statements Regarding Moving Seven Elected School Boards to a Single Advisory Council



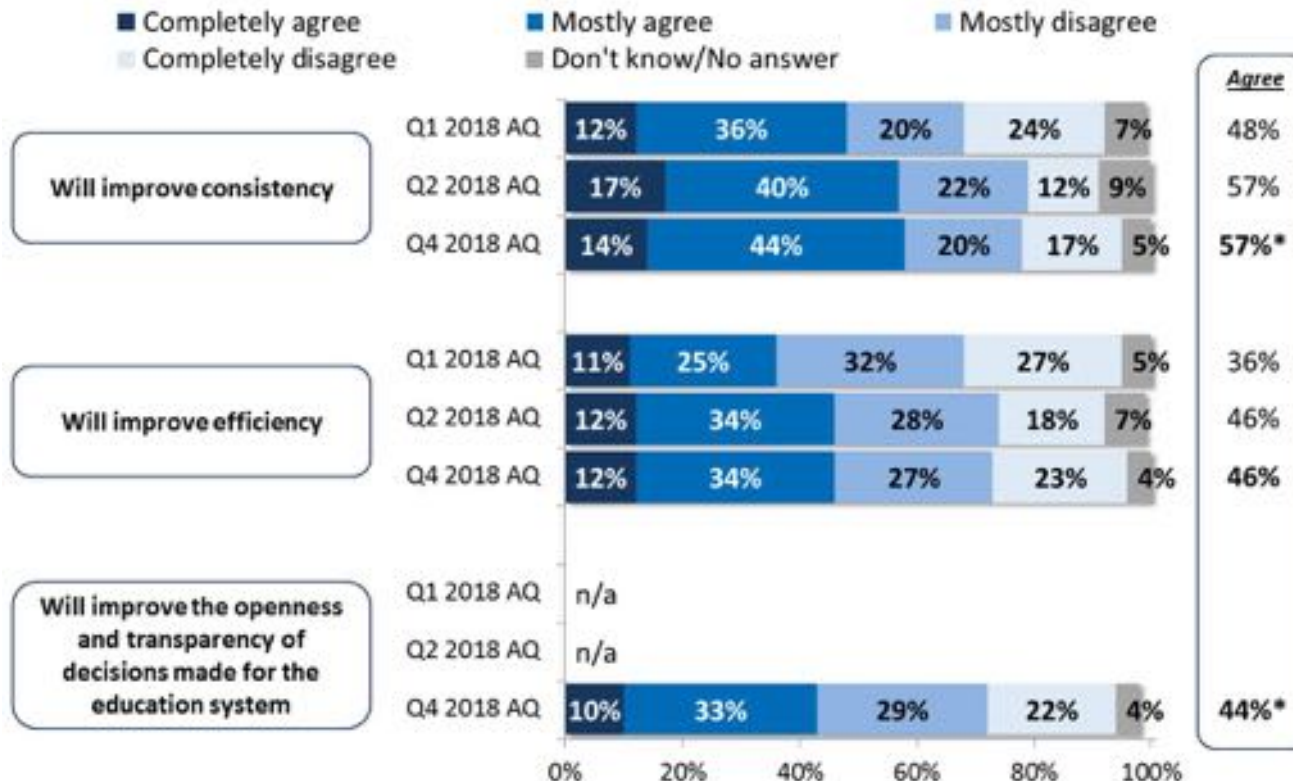
Q.U13c-f: Please indicate whether you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree with the following statements regarding moving from seven elected school boards to a single advisory council. Moving from seven elected school boards to a single advisory council...: (Q1 2018 AQ n=400, Q2 2018 AQ n=400, Q4 2018 AQ n=400). *Due to rounding

Generally speaking, residents continue to be more likely to anticipate negative outcomes than positive outcomes after moving from seven elected school boards to a single advisory council.

Consistent with previous results, three-quarters of residents believe it will **make it harder to take into consideration local needs**, while seven in ten anticipate it **will make it harder for parents to have a say in education**. Of note, agreement on the latter aspect has increased, after experiencing a decrease in the second quarter.

Two-thirds anticipate that it **does not address current problems**, while the same proportion believe the decision **will create new problems**. (Tables U13c-f)

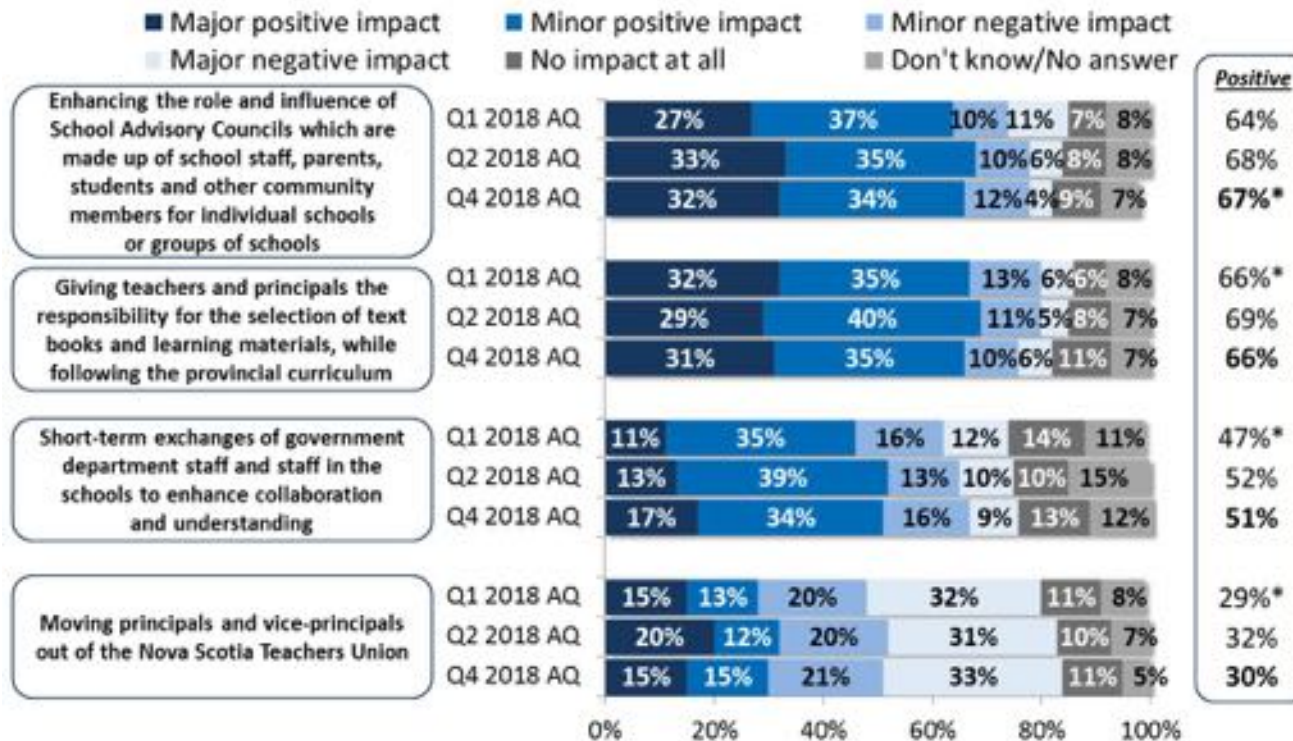
Opinion of Statements Regarding Moving Seven Elected School Boards to a Single Advisory Council



Just under six in ten believe the decision will **improve consistency** and just under one-half anticipate **improved efficiency**, both measures consistent with previous results. Measured for the first time this quarter, only a minority believe the move will **improve the openness and transparency of decisions made for the education system**. (Tables U13a,b,g)

Q.U13a,b,g: Please indicate whether you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree with the following statements regarding moving from seven elected school boards to a single advisory council. Moving from seven elected school boards to a single advisory council...: (Q1 2018 AQ n=400, Q2 2018 AQ n=400, Q4 2018 AQ n=400). *Due to rounding

Impact of Planned Changes to Administration of Public Education System in Nova Scotia



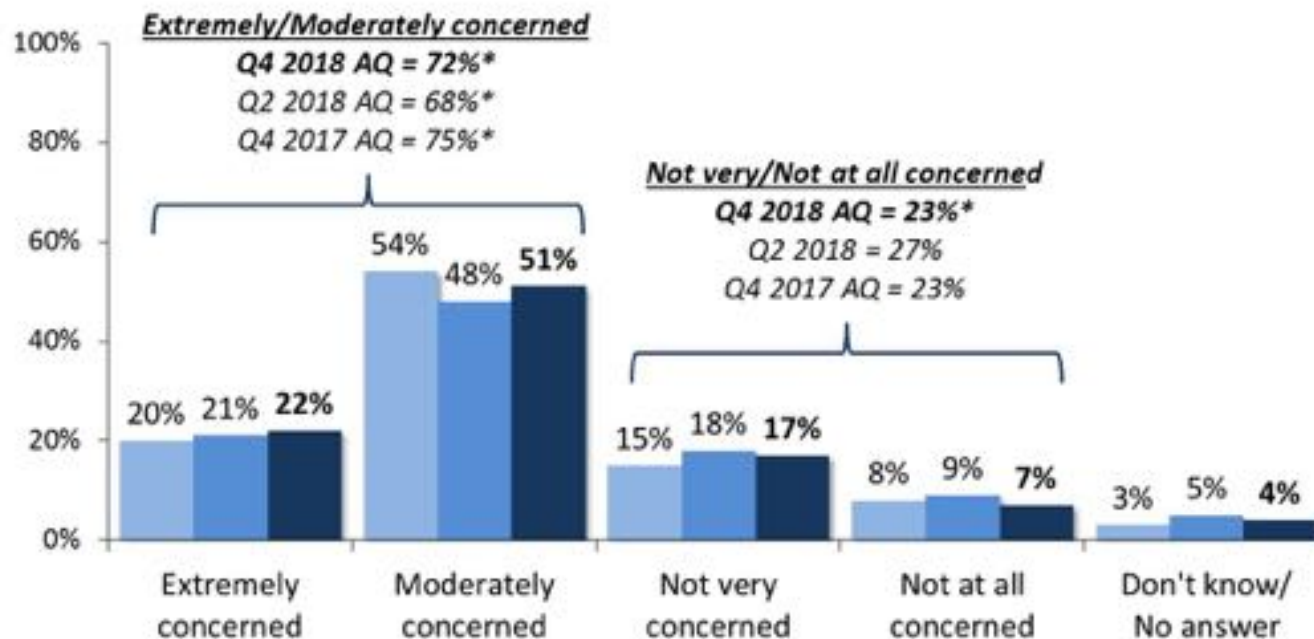
Q.U76a, c-e: The following are changes made in the administration of the public education system based on the recommendations of an independent consultant. Do you think these changes will have a major positive impact, minor positive impact, minor negative impact, major negative impact, or no impact at all on the quality of public education in Nova Scotia? (Q1 2018 AQ n=400, Q2 2018 AQ n=400, Q4 2018 AQ n=400). *Note: Slight change of question wording from Q1 2018. *Due to rounding.*

Residents were asked to assess the anticipated impact on the quality of public education of various administrative changes proposed based on the recommendations of an independent consultant. Anticipated outcomes for each measure are generally consistent with results earlier this year.

Specifically, two-thirds of residents believe that **enhancing the role and influence of School Advisory Councils** and **giving teachers and principals the responsibility for the selection of text books and learning materials** and will have a positive impact. Meanwhile, one-half of residents believe **short-term exchanges of government department staff and school staff** will have a positive impact. The one change for which residents continue to be more likely to anticipate a negative than a positive impact is **moving principals and vice-principals out of the NSTU**. (Table U76a,c-e)

Level of Concern About the Impact on Public Education by Shortage of Substitute Teachers

■ Q4 2017 AQ (n=401) ■ Q2 2018 AQ (n=400) ■ Q4 2018 AQ (n=400)

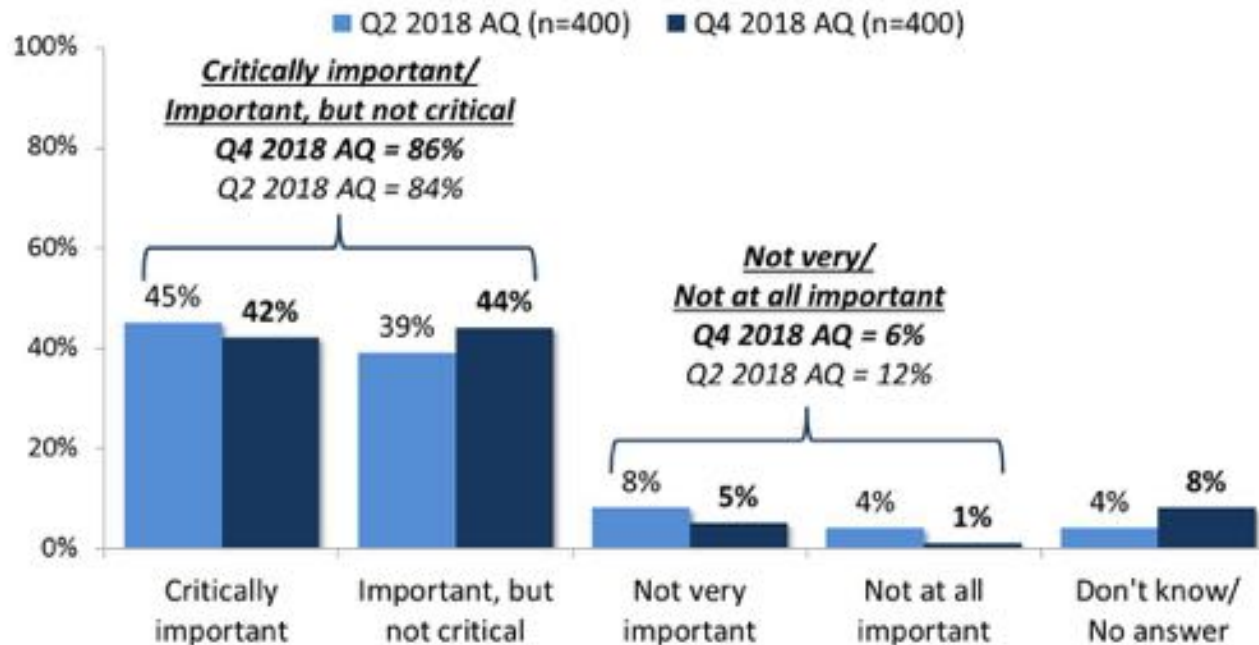


Similar to second quarter, seven in ten Nova Scotians are **extremely** or **moderately** concerned about the impact of a **shortage of substitute teachers** on public education.

Overall concern is elevated among women and those with annual household incomes of less than \$100,000. (Table U76)

Q.U16: Recently there has been some discussion about a shortage of substitute teachers in Nova Scotia. Are you extremely concerned, moderately concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned about the impact on public education of a shortage of substitute teachers in Nova Scotia? **Due to rounding.*

Importance That the Public Be Kept Informed of the Progress of Inclusive Education in the Province



Q.U17: Last spring the Commission on Inclusive Education released a report outlining their recommendations for inclusive education in Nova Scotia's public schools. One of the recommendations is forming an Institute for Inclusive Education which would report to the public on the status of inclusive education in the province through an open and transparent process. In your opinion, how important is it that the public be kept informed of the progress of inclusive education in the province? Is it critically important, important, but not critical, not very important, or not at all important?

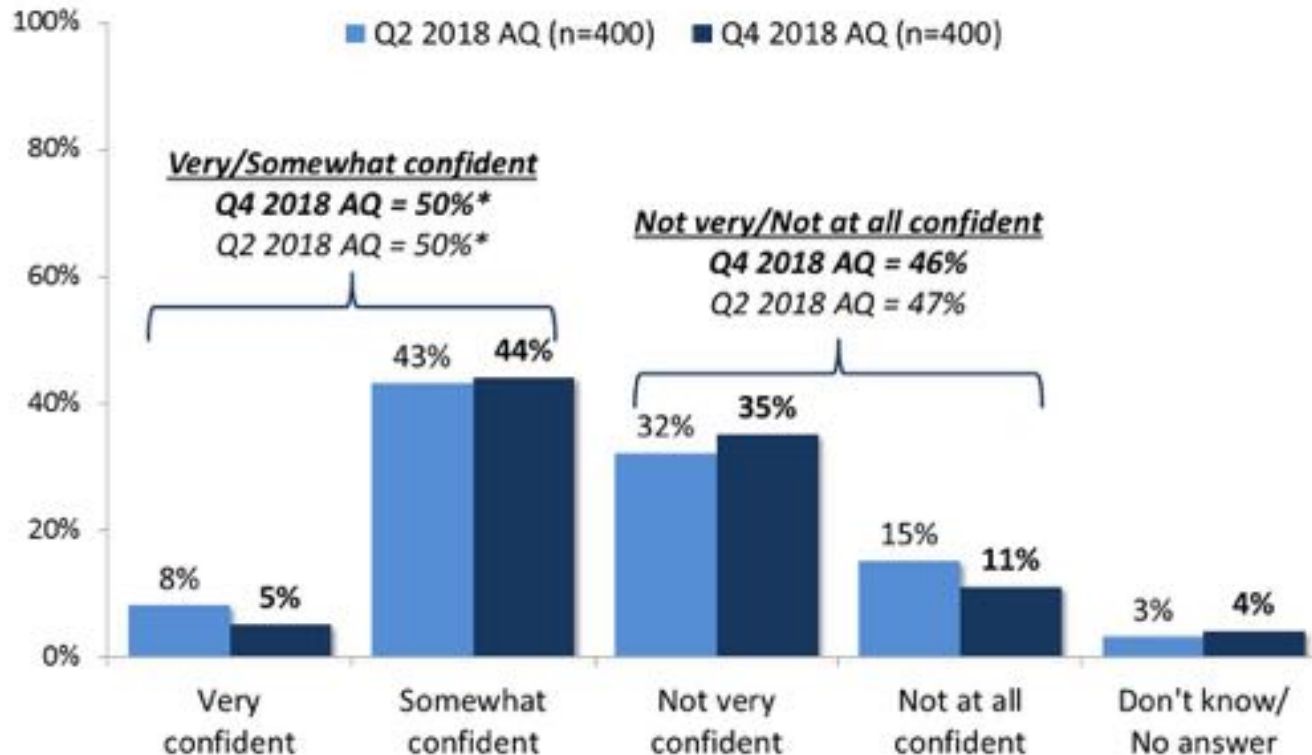
*Note: Slight change of question wording from Q2 2018. *Due to rounding.*

Nova Scotians widely believe it is important for the **public to be kept informed of the progress of inclusive education in the province**, similar to second quarter.

Specifically, close to nine in ten residents indicate that it is **critically important** or **important, but not critical** that the public is kept informed of the progress of inclusive education in the province. Meanwhile, one in ten believe it is **not very** or **not at all important**.

The importance of the public being informed of this topic is generally consistent across all demographic subgroups. (Table U17)

Confidence That the Public Will Be Kept Informed of the Progress of Inclusive Education in the Province



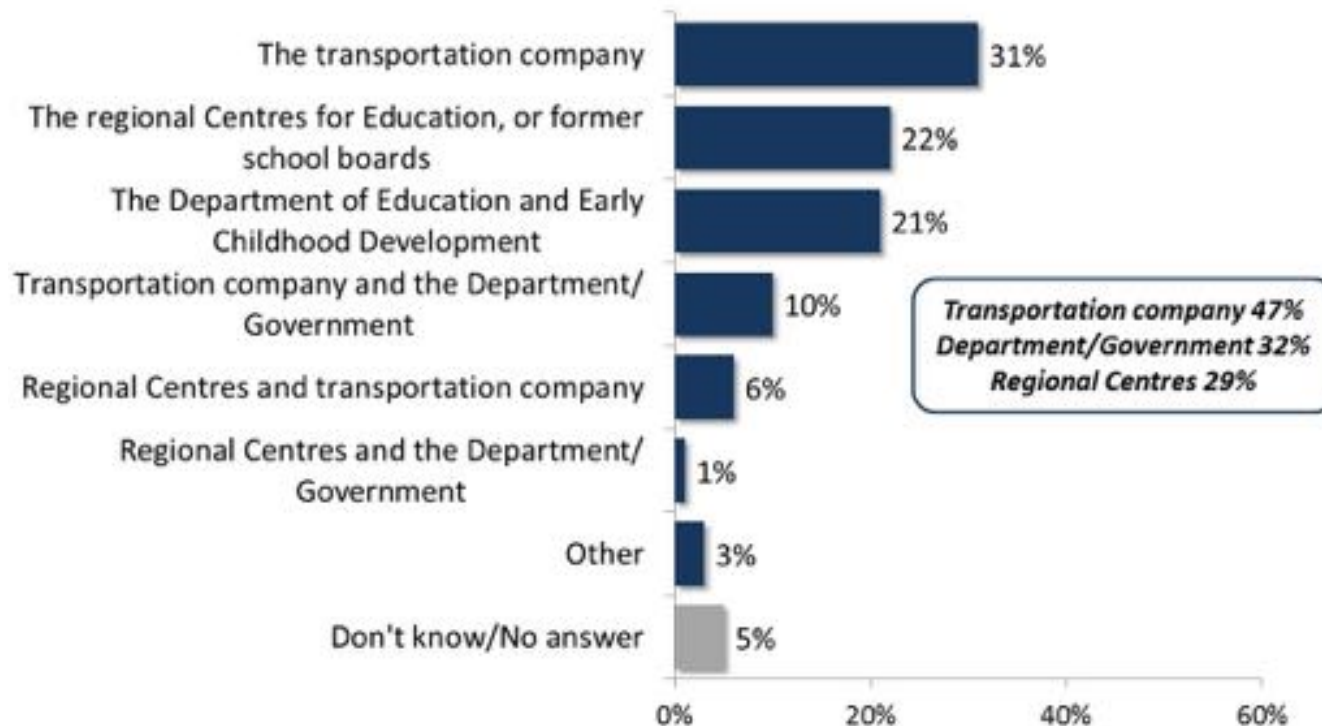
Q.U18: How confident are you that the public will be kept informed of the progress of inclusive education in the province? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident, or not at all confident? (n=400) *Due to rounding.

Confidence that the public will be kept informed of the progress of inclusive education in the province remains split.

Specifically, one-half of residents are **very** or **somewhat confident** that the public will be kept informed of this topic, while just under one-half of residents are **not very** or **not at all confident**. It is important to note that nearly all residents confident in this regard are **somewhat confident**, with only a small number expressing they are **very confident**.

Across the population, confidence is higher among younger residents and those who believe the quality of public education in the province is excellent or good. (Table U80)

Who is Most Responsible for the Effective Operations of Public School Bus System

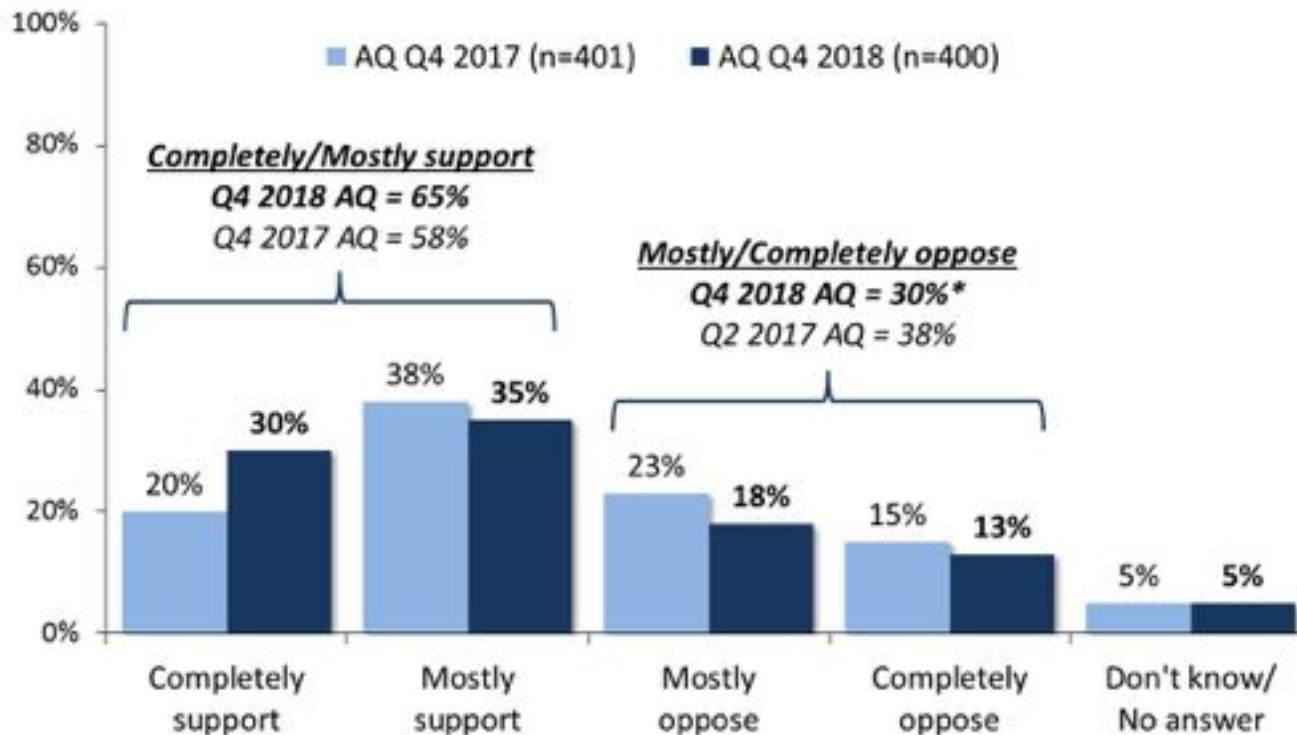


Q.U9: As you may or may not know, at the beginning of this school year, some school buses in Nova Scotia were not arriving on time or not arriving at all. In your opinion, who should be most responsible for the effective operations of the public education school bus system? Should it be...? (n=400)

When asked who is most responsible for the effective operations of the public education school bus system, no single organization was identified by a majority. The top three responses were the **transportation company**, the **regional Centres for Education**, and the **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**. Close to one-half of residents view the transportation company as most responsible, either alone or in combination with another organization. This compares with three in ten who identified the regional centres for Education, or the Department.

There is some regional variation with the transportation company most often identified (alone or in combination with another body) in Halifax and elsewhere in mainland Nova Scotia and the regional Centres most often identified in Cape Breton. (Table U9)

Viewpoint of Introducing Pre-Primary Program in Nova Scotia's Public Schools

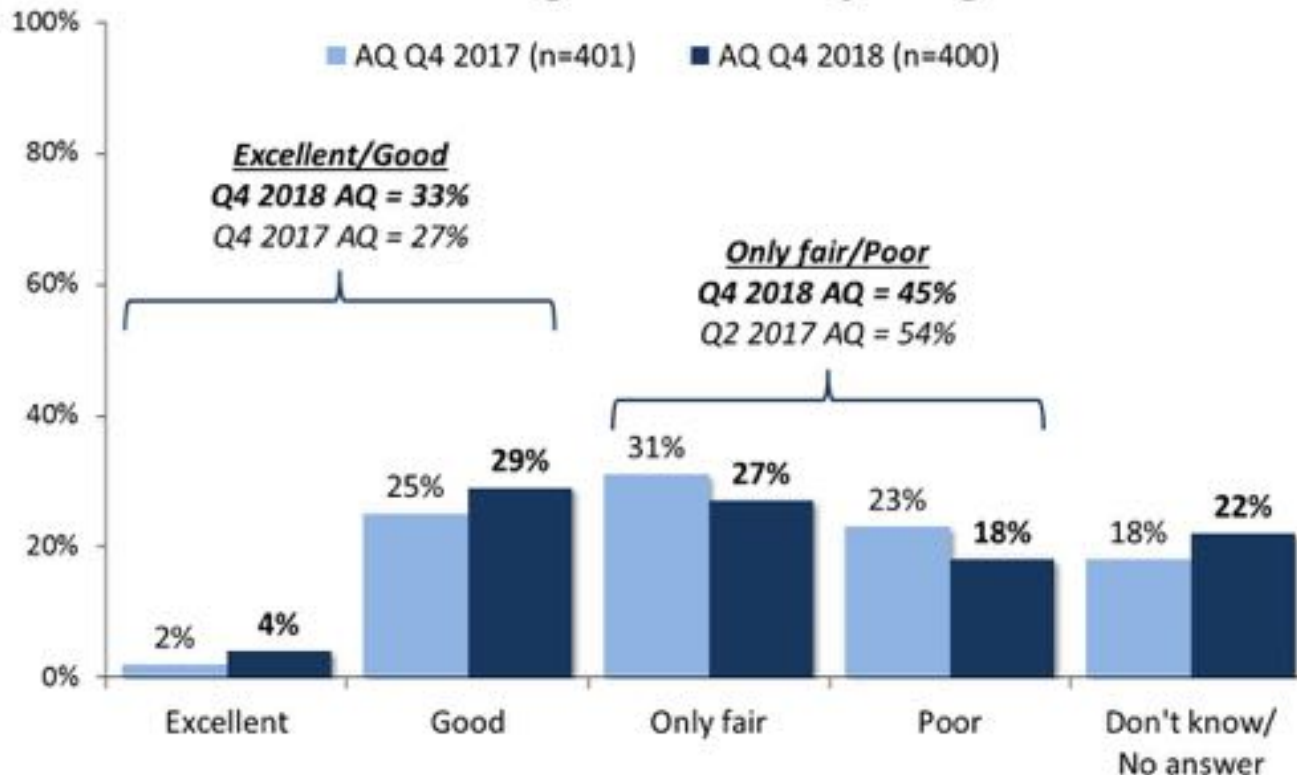


Increased relative to one year ago, two-thirds of Nova Scotia residents **support** the **introduction of the pre-primary program in the province's public schools**. Three in ten **oppose**.

Residents 18 to 34 years of age are more likely to support the introduction than older residents. (Table U6)

Q.U6: As you may know, last September, the Nova Scotia government introduced a pre-primary program for 3 and 4-year olds in public schools with the goal of having it in every public school by 2020. Based on what you know or may have heard, do you completely support, mostly support, mostly oppose, or completely oppose the introduction of a pre-primary program in the province's public schools? *Note: Slight change of question wording from 2017. *Due to rounding.*

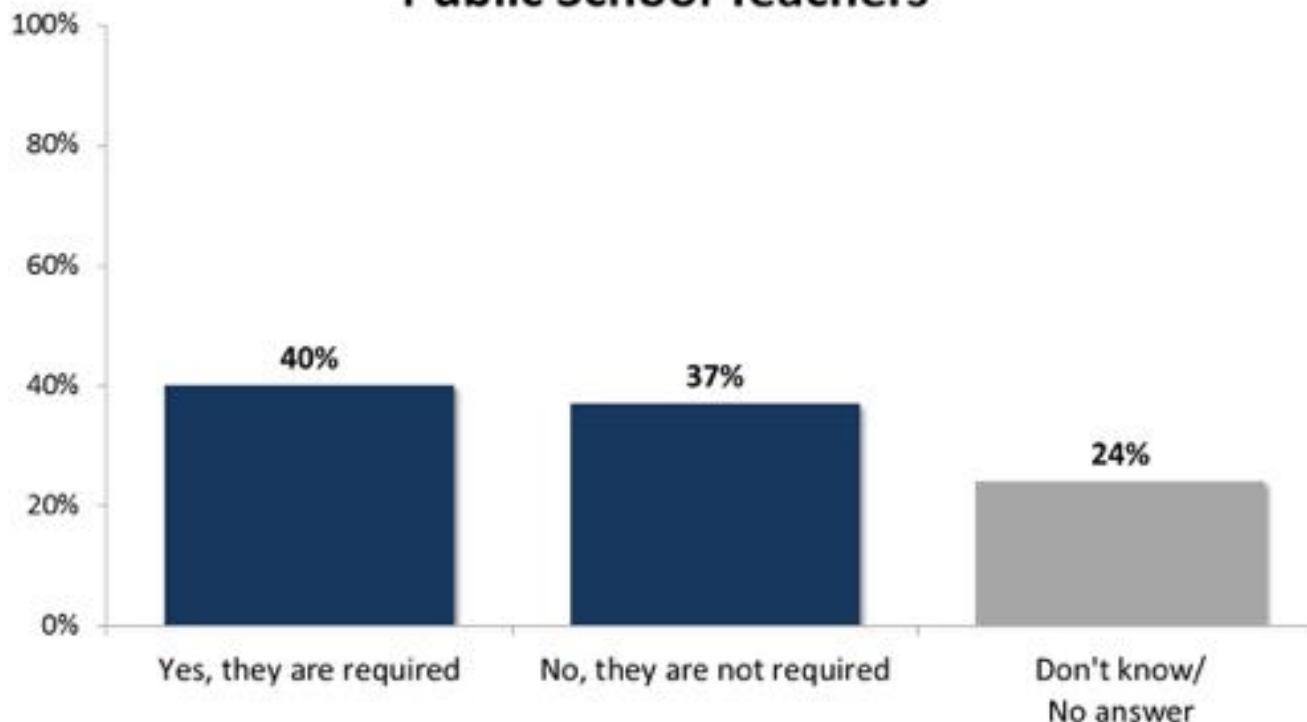
Rating of the Job Done by Nova Scotia Government in Introducing Pre-Primary Program



There has been a slight narrowing of opinion compared with a year ago, although residents remain more likely to hold a negative than a positive opinion of the **job done by the provincial government in introducing the program**. One-third provide a positive assessment, while close to one-half provide a negative assessment, and one-fifth do not provide a definite opinion. (Table U7)

Q.U7: How would you rate the job the Nova Scotia government has done to date in implementing the pre-primary program? Would you say it has been excellent, good, only fair, or poor? *Note: Slight change of question wording from 2017.*

Are Educators in the Provincial Pre-Primary Program Required to Have the Same Qualifications as Public School Teachers



Q.U77: To the best of your knowledge, are the educators in the provincial pre-primary program required to have the same qualifications as other public school teachers? (n=400)

Knowledge regarding whether **educators in the provincial pre-primary program** are required to **have the same qualifications as other public school teachers** is clearly limited. Residents are largely split between believing they do or do not, with one-quarter expressing uncertainty.

There is a notable difference by income, with those with higher household incomes more likely to state they are not required to have the same qualifications. As well, indicating they are not required is elevated among 35 to 54 year olds compared with those younger. (Table U77)