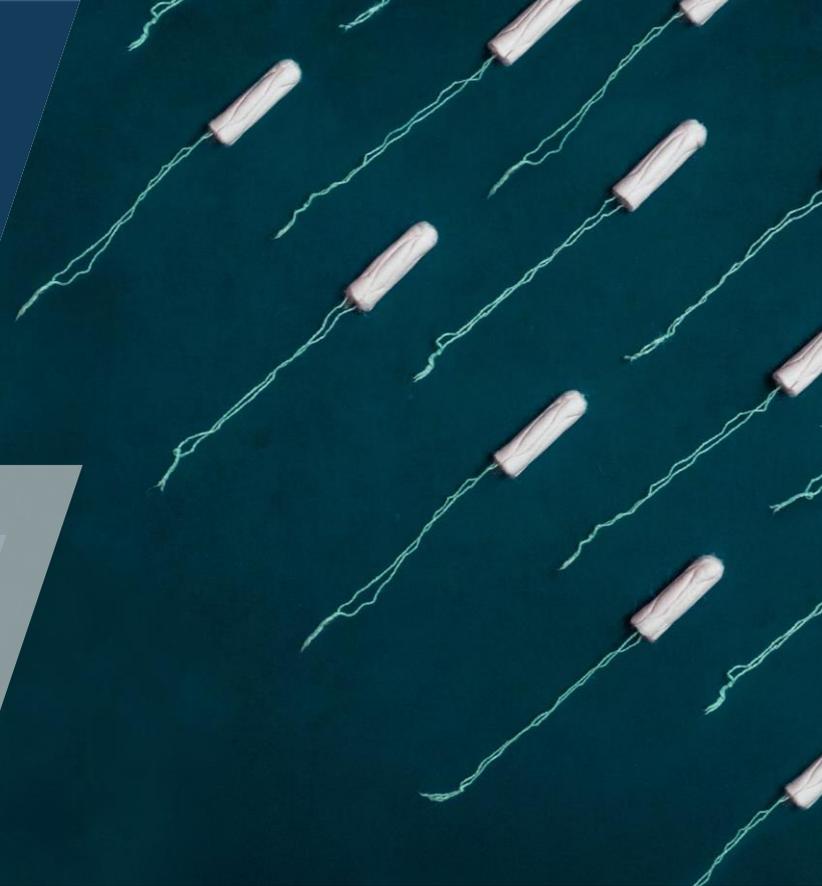


Menstruation in Canada

Views and Realities

May 2022



About the research

Maru Matchbox, in partnership with [Plan International Canada](#), conducted two scientific surveys of 1,074 women, girls, and people who menstruate, and 731 men and boys in Canada in April 2022 (including those who identify as non-binary and gender-fluid), which examined the attitudes and behaviours of youth and adults in Canada towards menstruation.

The research explores access and affordability of menstrual products, as well as public support for free products in a range of settings such as schools, shelters, and the workplace. The survey also found that there is still negative social stigma associated with periods despite growing public conversation on the topic.

Citation

Plan International Canada. *Menstruation in Canada – Views and Realities*, May 2022.



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Cost barriers in affording menstrual products

- It is widely acknowledged that period products are too expensive (83%), with one in five of those who menstruate (21%) acknowledging that they have struggled to afford products for themselves or dependents and have been forced to ration products because they could not afford more (22%).
- Reusable menstrual products could offer a solution, with two-thirds (66%) acknowledging their increased affordability over the long term. In fact, a strong majority (86%) feel that reusable products should be offered at a discounted price for low-income individuals.

The **high cost of a basic needs product** such as pads and tampons can be prohibitively high for some, forcing them to make trade-offs. **Reusable products** could offer a solution for some who have regular access to wash facilities to keep these items clean. With a rise in popularity among younger Canadians, the environmental benefit coupled with diminishing cost over time could prove to be a successful tool in offsetting the monthly expense.

Support for free menstrual products

- There continues to be strong support for free menstrual products in various locations. As might be expected, those who identify as women and girls show the most support in each location.
- Among those who identify as women, shelters (97%) and schools (95%) receive the highest support, followed closely by penitentiaries (93%) and post-secondary schools (93%). Female identifying youth show most support for schools (96%).

Support is strong for providing menstrual products and is strongest for those places where someone may not be able to afford the products such as shelters, schools and penitentiaries. This highlights that those who menstruate acknowledge **the right to access** of these products and perhaps hold off on using free products to allow those with more need to access them.

Impact of menstruation on daily life

- Menstruation has an impact on daily life for many who get their period.
- The wide majority of those who menstruate say they experience painful periods (85%) and premenstrual syndrome (PMS) (78%) at least occasionally but also feel the need to hide being on their period (59%).
- With half (55%) of those who menstruate not feeling like themselves when on their period and just under half (45%) not feeling well supported while on their period (38%) perhaps it is to be expected that most (69%) have chosen to at least occasionally miss out on an activity because of their period.

Despite **positive stated levels of comfort** around menstruation by those who identify as male and female, the impact on activities and daily life can be glossed over.

Those who menstruate deal with **pain and discomfort**, and many do not feel comfortable asking for help and feel the need to hide. **Open discussions and normalization** can help to ease the burden.

Understanding the stigma around menstruation

- A barrier between those who identify as women/girls and men/boys persists. A majority of those who menstruate continue to feel compelled to hide menstrual products as they go the washroom (74%) and not let male colleagues/peers know when they have their period (66%). Perhaps its no wonder when 2 in 5 of those who menstruate have been teased by a male about being on their period.
- Many of those who identify as women/girls (66%) have heard having a period or PMS used as an insult and in fact been on the receiving end (44%). This may be fed in part by the perception that periods are negatively portrayed by the media (57%).

Despite positive stated levels of comfort around menstruation, some habits such as **hiding a menstrual cycle** persist. This underscores the **need for normalizing** natural and necessary behaviours (ie. changing pads, etc.) in order to improve the comfort level of both groups and stem the stigma.

Attitudes of men and boys

- Most of those who identify as men/boys are significantly less comfortable than those who identify as women/girls having discussions with females regardless of relationship (friend/family, 45% vs. 83%, co-worker/peer, 33% vs. 71% or child, 30% vs. 65%).
- When it comes to those identifying as men/boys having discussions with other adult men, comfort is similar with those identifying as women/girls (friend/family, 43% vs. 47%, co-worker/peer, 40% vs. 36%). However, when it comes to having discussions with a male identifying child, women/girls show a higher level of comfort (46%) than men/boys (38%).
- Despite high agreement from men/boys that we should be talking about periods openly with boys and girls (79%), half (42%) of those who identify as male agree that they do not need to know about periods.

There is more work to be done on building a sense of normalcy and true acceptance around menstruation. Even with an understanding that **menstruation is a fact of life** for half of the population and should be taught as part of the school curriculum, those who identify as men still struggle to find a level of comfort in having direct conversations. In fact, those who identify as women/girls are less comfortable having conversations with male-identifying individuals.

Cost barriers

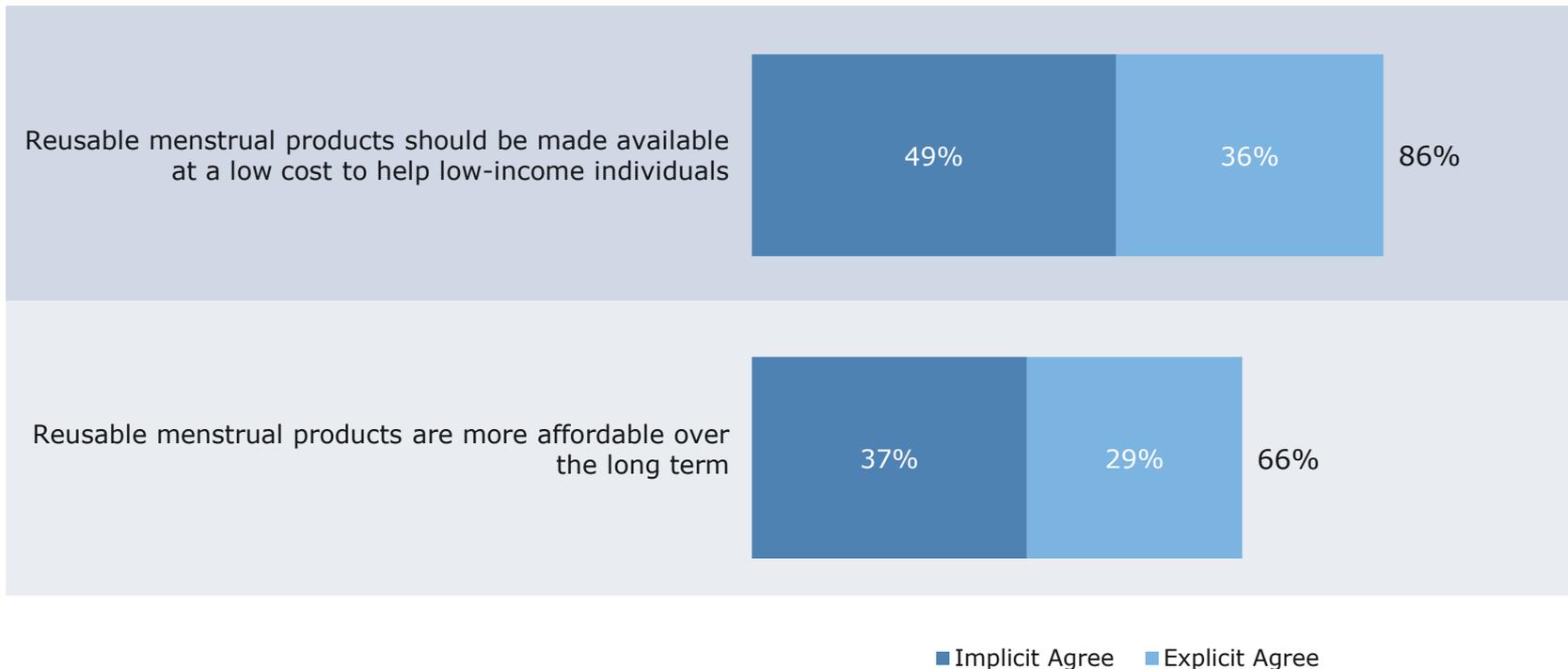


Those who menstruate are keenly aware of the impact of the monthly costs of menstrual products



■ Implicit Agree ■ Explicit Agree

Reusable menstrual products are noted as more affordable over the long-term, and as such, a good option to help low-income individuals

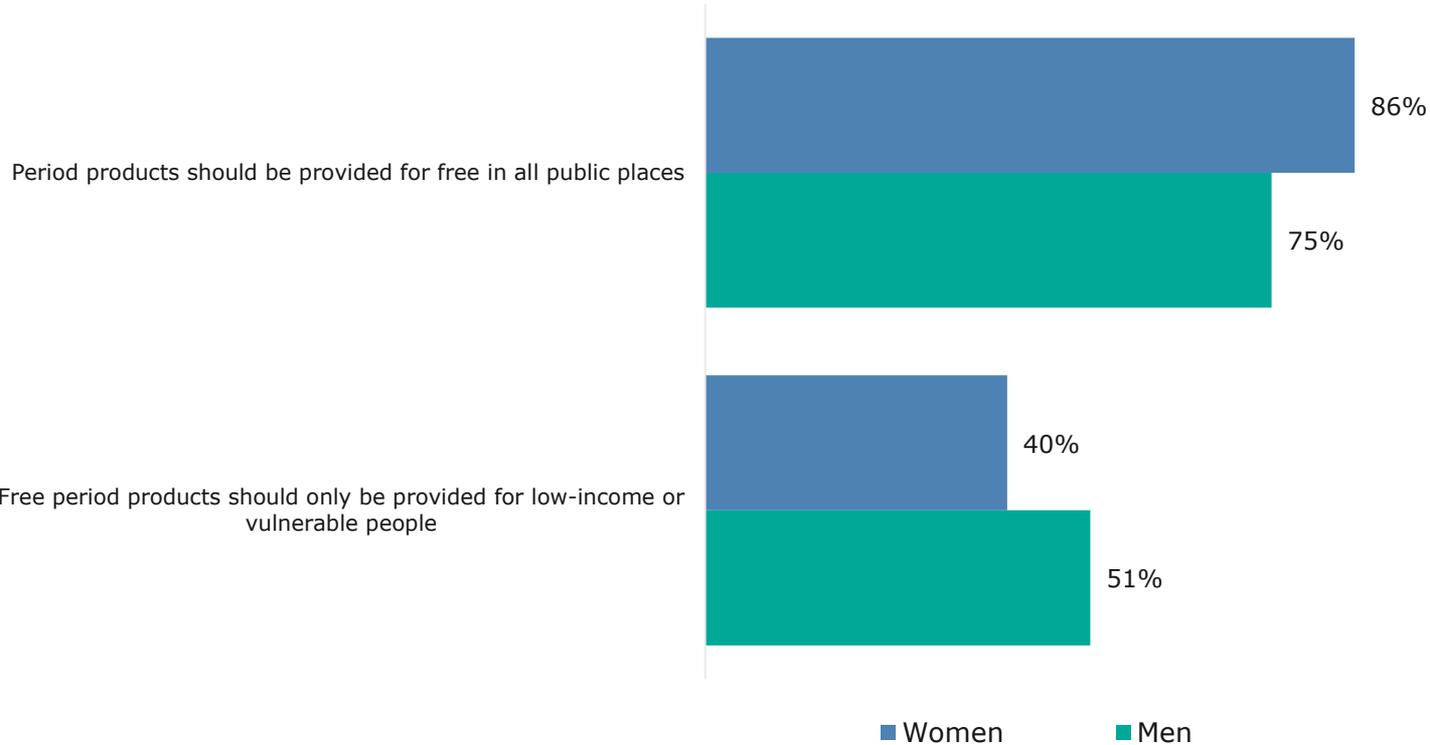


Attitudes toward free menstrual products

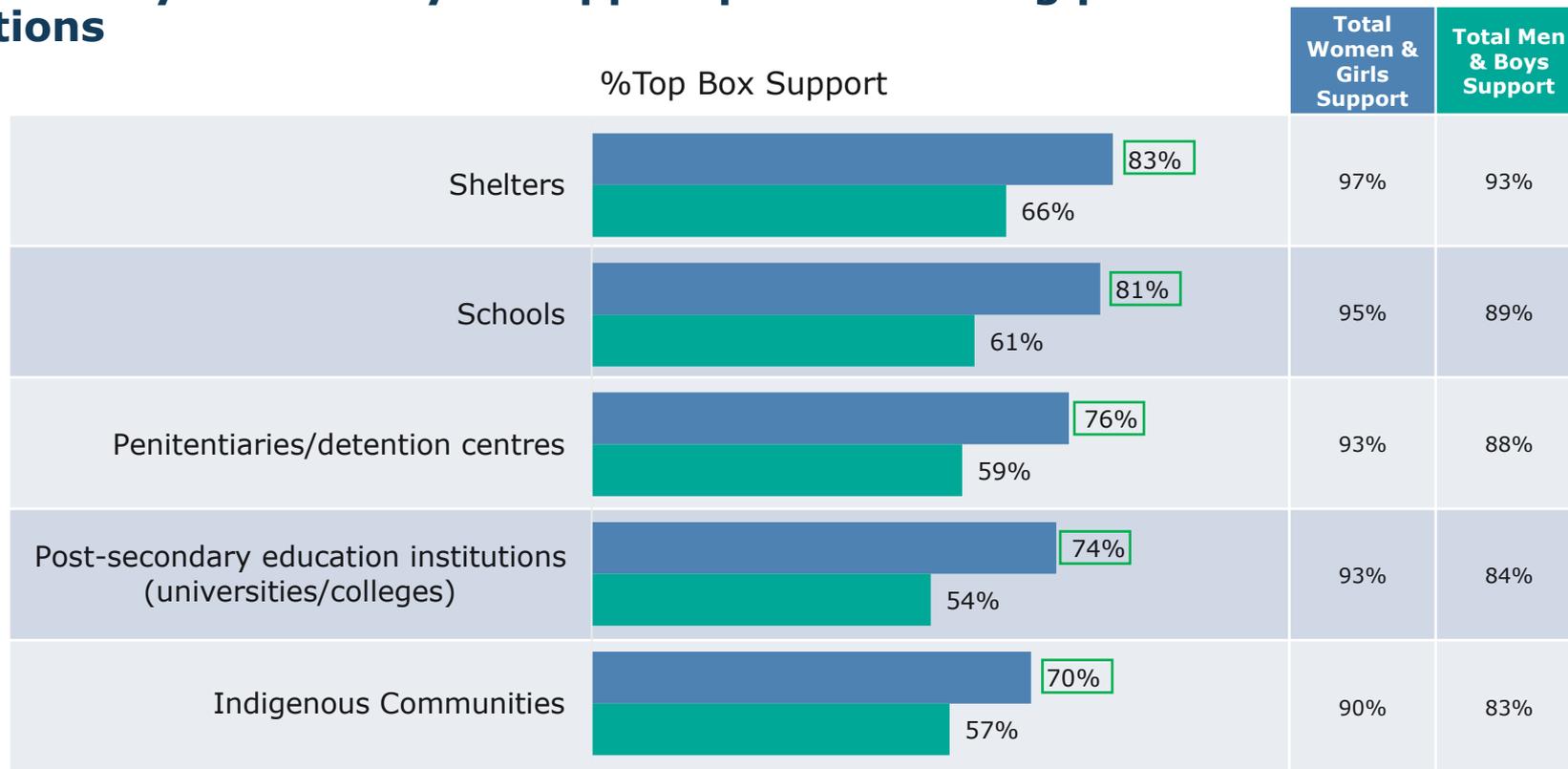


While there is strong support for free period products in all public spaces, those who identify as men regardless of age are more likely to feel that they should only be provided to low-income or vulnerable people

% Agree



Support for having menstrual products available in many locations is supported by a majority. Those who identify as women/girls are significantly more likely to support products being provided in all locations



■ Women & Girls ■ Men & Boys

Those aged 18-34 and 35-54 show higher levels of support as compared to those aged 13-17 and 55+

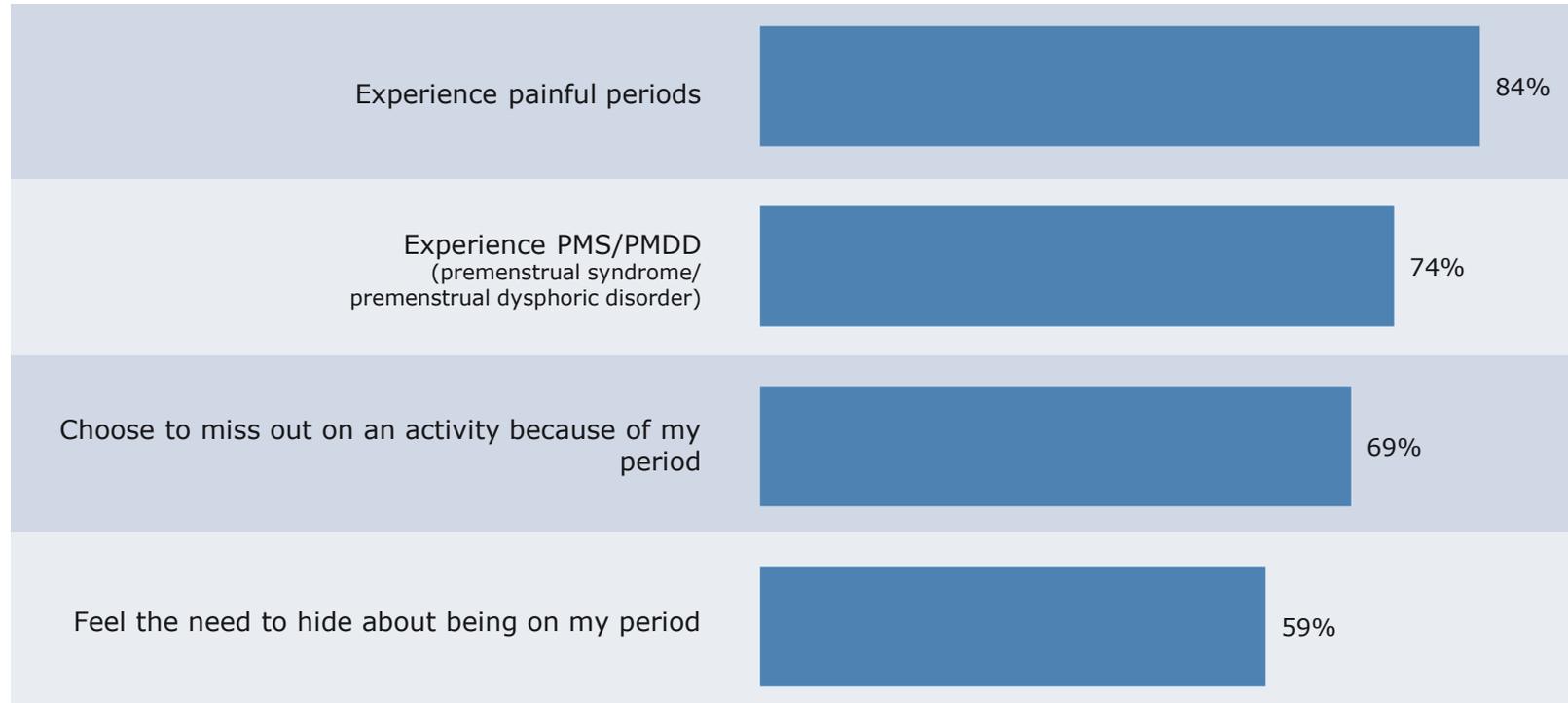
	Total	13-17	18-34	35-54	55+	Urban	Rural	Vis Min	Non-Vis Min	Indigenous
Base: those who identify as women and girls	1074	182	222	428	421	894	175	212	911	45
Shelters	97%	92%	97%	97%	97%	97%	96%	96%	97%	100%
Schools	95%	95%	99%	96%	92%	95%	95%	94%	95%	95%
Penitentiaries/detention centres	93%	94%	95%	94%	91%	93%	93%	91%	94%	97%
Post-secondary education institutions	93%	92%	98%	93%	88%	93%	93%	93%	92%	91%
Indigenous Communities	90%	88%	96%	90%	87%	91%	90%	92%	90%	91%
Workplace	88%	87%	95%	89%	81%	88%	89%	91%	87%	88%
Public spaces	86%	85%	93%	86%	79%	85%	86%	84%	86%	86%
Places of worship	83%	84%	89%	86%	74%	83%	81%	85%	82%	86%

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a red, ribbed hot water bottle against their abdomen. The person is wearing a plaid shirt and grey pants. The background is slightly blurred, showing a patterned surface. A dark blue semi-transparent banner is overlaid on the top right of the image, containing white text.

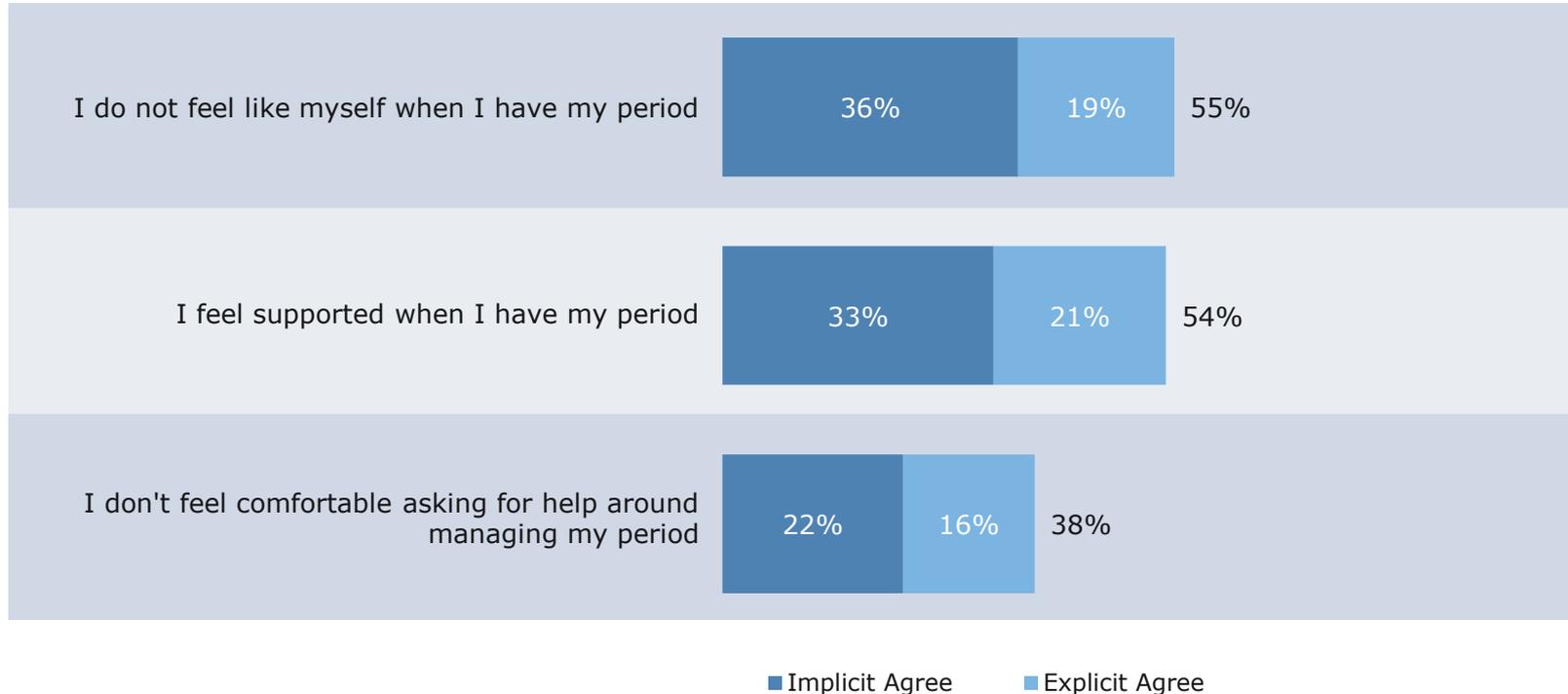
Impact of menstruation on activities and daily life

Painful periods and PMS are experienced by most of those who menstruate, and seven in ten have chosen to miss an activity because of their period

% Regularly & Occasionally



Half (55%) of those who menstruate do not feel like themselves when they have their period but do feel supported when they have their period (54%)



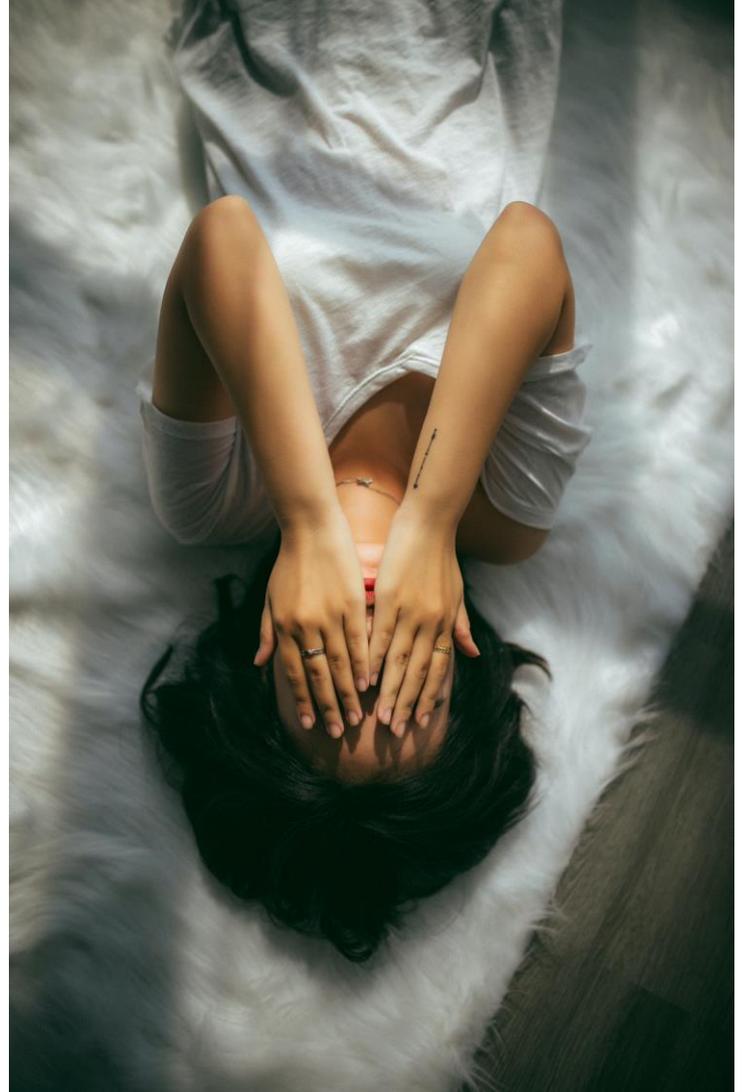
Stigma



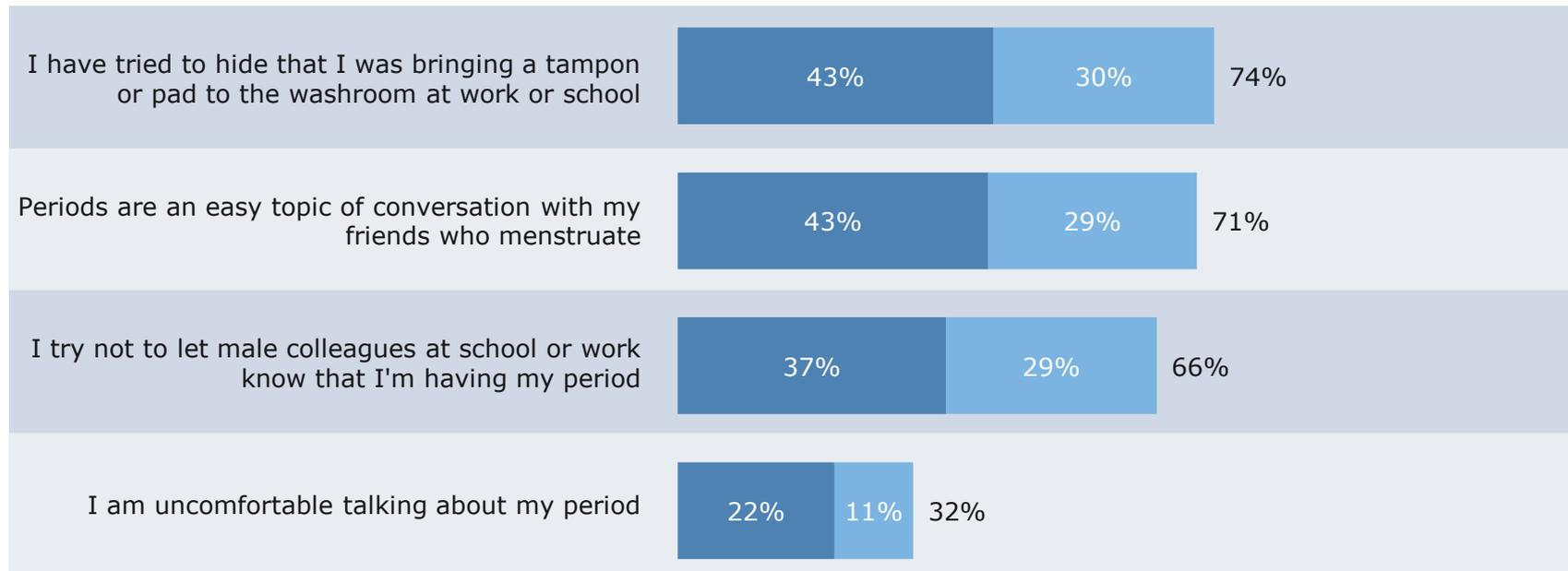
Period shaming

Two-thirds of girls and women (66%) have heard having a period or PMS (premenstrual syndrome) used as an insult.

2 in 5 (38%) have been teased by a male about being on their period.



While periods are acknowledged to be an easy topic of conversation among friends, those who menstruate feel compelled to hide menstrual health products in public

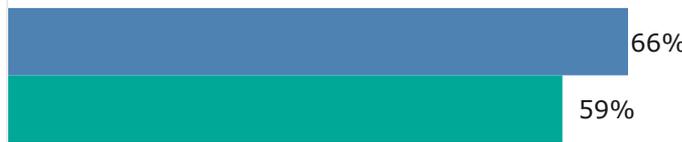


■ Implicit Agree ■ Explicit Agree

Negative portrayals and stereotypes lead to menstruation being used as an insult. These are more keenly felt by those who identify as women

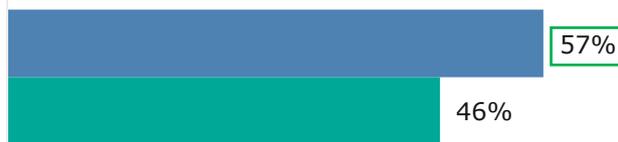
% Agree

I have heard having a period and/or PMS being used as an insult



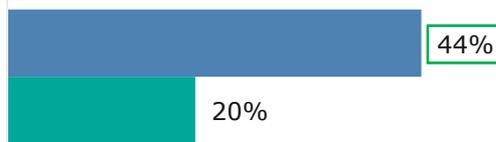
	13-17	18-34	35-54	55+
	182/168	222/128	428/297	421/286
Women	59%	77%	68%	55%
Men	60%	68%	63%	45%

Menstruation and periods are portrayed negatively by the media



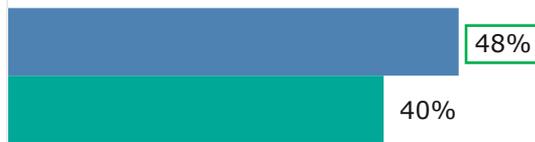
	13-17	18-34	35-54	55+
	182/168	222/128	428/297	421/286
Women	54%	76%	58%	41%
Men	55%	55%	47%	34%

Someone has used having a period and/or PMS as an insult toward me



	13-17	18-34	35-54	55+
	182/168	222/128	428/297	421/286
Women	41%	55%	50%	28%
Men	29%	22%	23%	14%

I have used having a period and/or PMS to explain someones grumpy or irritable behaviour



	13-17	18-34	35-54	55+
	182/168	222/128	428/297	421/286
Women	57%	43%	54%	43%
Men	45%	31%	46%	37%

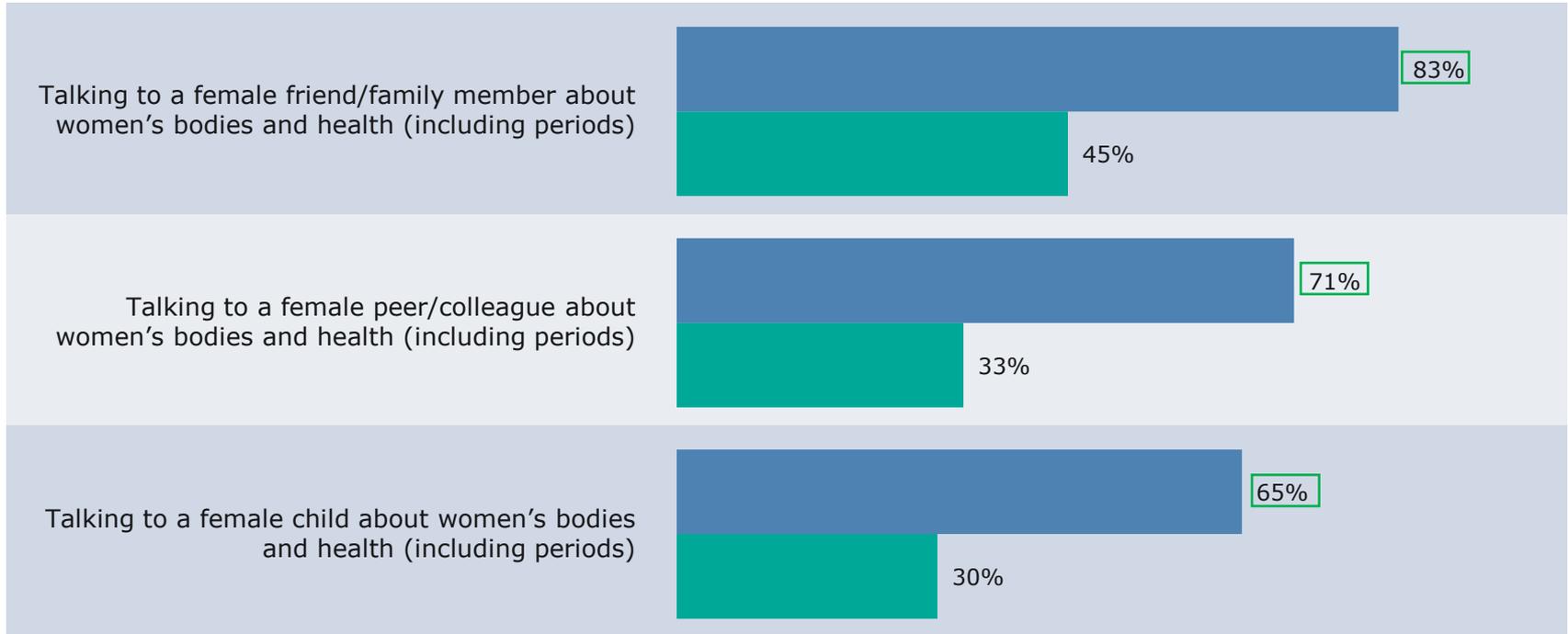
■ Women & girls ■ Men & boys

Attitudes of men and boys

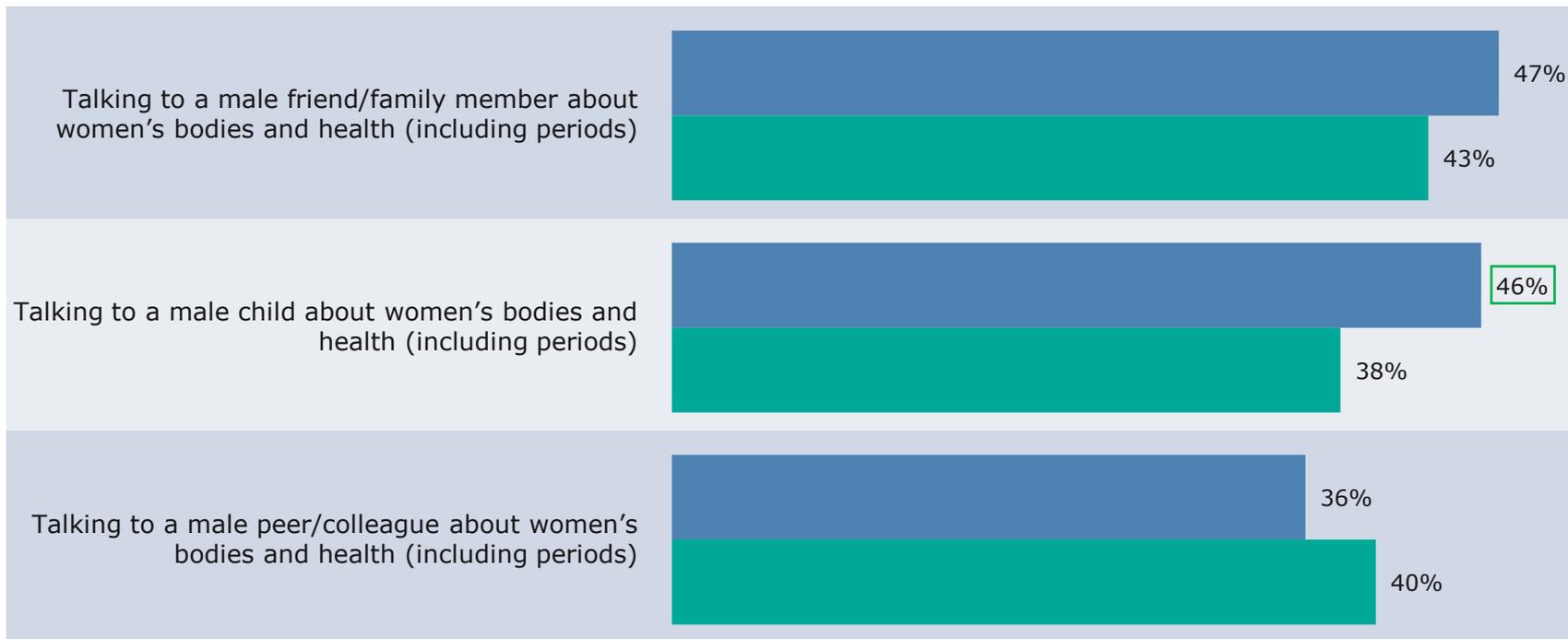


maru/

Those who identify as men and boys are much less comfortable talking to anyone who identifies as a woman about bodies and health

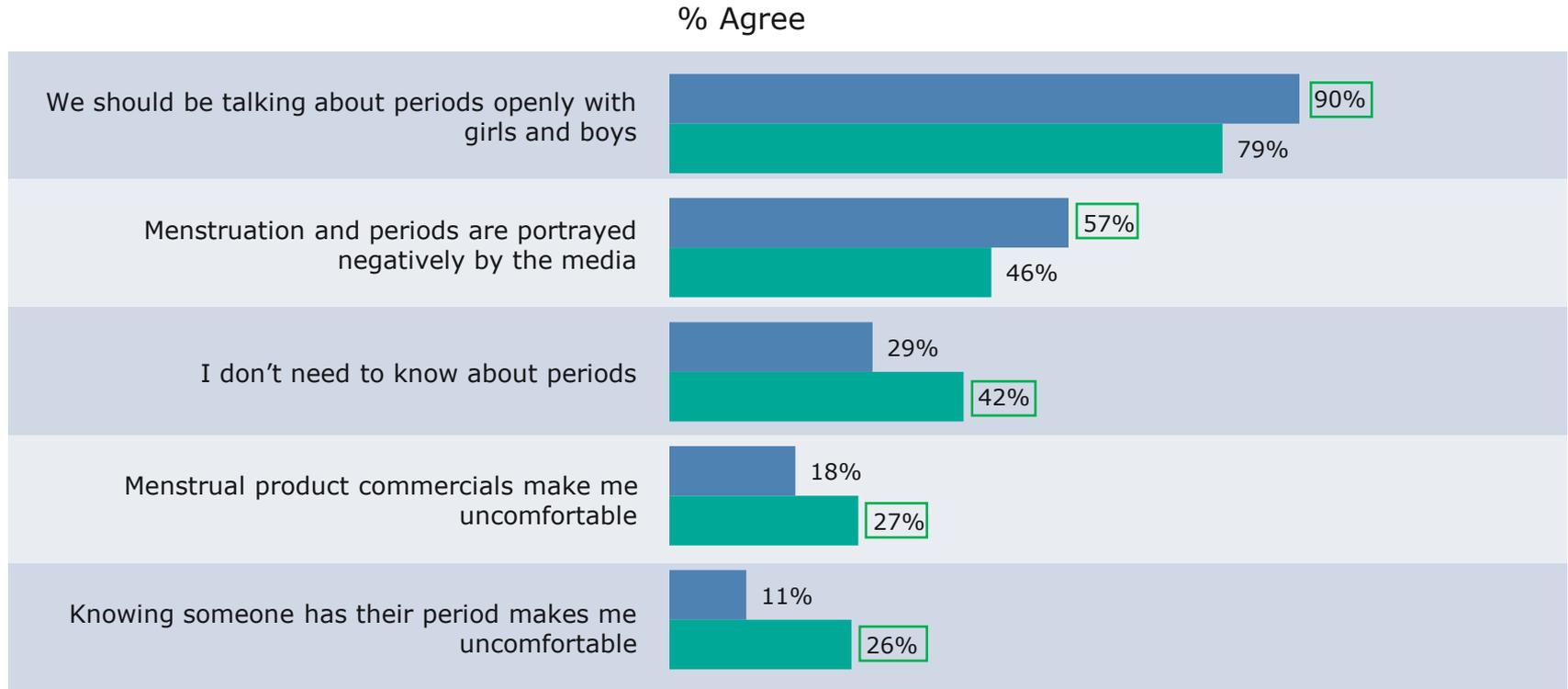


Men and boys are less comfortable talking to a male child about women's bodies than those who identify as women but are just as comfortable speaking to male friends/family and male peer/colleagues



■ Women & girls ■ Men & boys

Despite high agreement (79%) that we should be talking about periods openly with boys and girls, 2 in 5 (42%) of those who identify as male agree that they do not need to know about periods



Methodology

WHO

- An online survey among Canadians aged 18+. This includes:
- n=892 adults who identify as women (MOE +/- 3.6%, 19 times out of 20)
 - n=563 adults who identify as men (MOE +/- 4.4%, 19 times out of 20)
- Canadian youth aged 13-17 were also interviewed. This includes:
- n=168 youth who identify as boys (MOE +/- 8.0%, 19 times out of 20)
 - n=182 youth who identify as girls (MOE +/- 8.0%, 19 times out of 20)

WHAT

An online survey using our Maru Voice Canada panel
All data is weighted to be representative by age, gender, and region census data.

WHEN

The survey was in field from April 17th to April 25th, 2022

Note:

 Indicates significantly higher than another demographic subgroup

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