

A microscopic view of several COVID-19 virus particles, which are spherical and covered in numerous spike-like protrusions. The background is a soft, out-of-focus teal color with some light bokeh effects.

# Views on COVID-19: Policies and Provincial Performance

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# Key Findings

## Views on an “Unvaxxed Tax” in Manitoba

Manitobans are evenly split on whether to levy additional taxes on those who choose not to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Slightly more than one-half are in favour of this idea (which was recently floated by the Quebec government and has been introduced in some European countries), including three in ten who strongly support introducing this levy. Conversely, three in ten strongly oppose this idea, with slightly more than one in ten expressing moderate opposition to this notion of taxing adults who choose not to get vaccinated.

When asked to express their preference for how this “unvaxxed tax” might work, Manitobans are slightly more likely to be in favour of increasing taxes to pay for health care and providing those who get vaccinated with a tax credit. However, about three in ten favour a direct surcharge on those who refuse to be vaccinated and do not have a medical exemption (which is the approach taken in Austria and Greece). One-third, meanwhile, are unsure or express no preference.

## Provincial Government Performance

Currently, only three in ten Manitobans approve of newly-minted Premier Heather Stefanson’s performance managing the pandemic – a level comparable to that of former premier Brian Pallister shortly before he resigned in the summer of 2021. Four in ten praise the performance of Health Minister Audrey Gordon (-12% vs. October 2021), while more than seven in ten continue to approve of the work of Dr. Joss Reimer (the province’s medical lead for vaccine implementation) and Dr. Brent Roussin (the chief provincial public health officer).

Views on the provincial government’s performance have reached their lowest point since the beginning of the pandemic. Currently, only two in five approve of the work the Manitoba government has done to protect Manitobans’ health (40%, -10% vs. October 2021) and deal with the economic impact of COVID-19 (40%, -9% vs. October 2021).

# Key Findings (cont'd)

## Provincial Government Performance (cont'd)

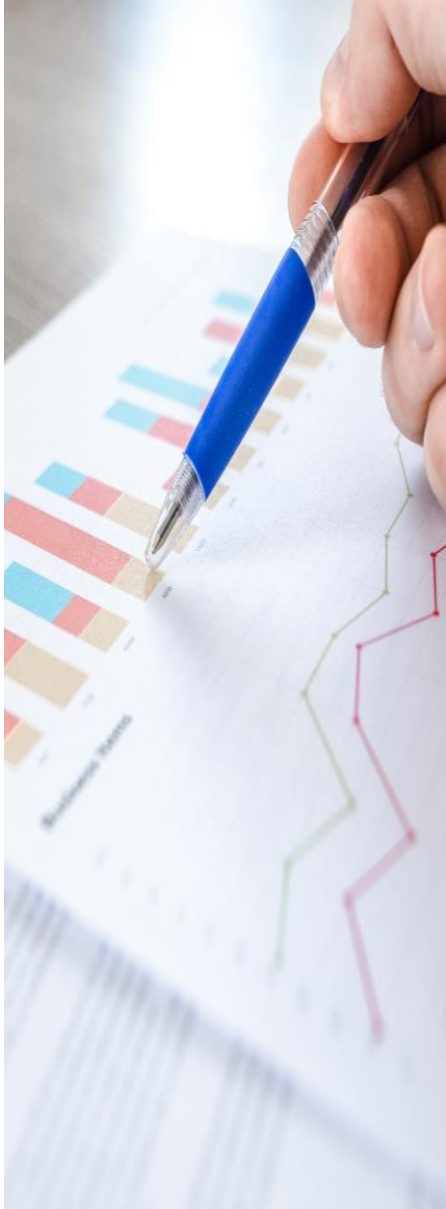
While the Delta variant was ravaging Alberta and Saskatchewan in the fall of 2020, Manitobans were fairly confident their government was performing better than their Prairie neighbours. Now, however, Manitobans are much less bullish on their provincial government's approach. Today, fewer than one-half agree Manitoba is handling the pandemic better than Alberta and Saskatchewan (46%, down from 77% in October).

With the Omicron variant spreading through Manitoba during the past month, a growing proportion of citizens believe the current public health restrictions are not strict enough (surging to 40% from 13% in October). One-third believe the current restrictions are about right, while one-quarter feel they are excessive.

## Experience With COVID-19 and Confidence in Vaccines

Nearly two years into the pandemic, nearly all Manitobans know someone who has been infected with COVID-19. Indeed, this includes nearly three in ten who have been diagnosed or believe they have had COVID-19 but haven't confirmed the diagnosis with a test. Certain groups of Manitobans are more likely to have directly experienced COVID-19, particularly younger adults, those living in southern Manitoba and those with very young children. Racialized Manitobans (including Indigenous peoples and those who identify as a person of colour) are nearly twice as likely to say they have had COVID-19, while those who are not vaccinated are nearly three times as likely to have had this virus than those who are fully vaccinated.

Given how widespread COVID-19 has been – especially during the past two months – it is perhaps no surprise that two in five Manitobans agree they are losing confidence in the vaccine's ability to prevent people from getting sick. Confidence in the COVID-19 vaccine is waning in many of the same groups that are more likely to have had the virus themselves – as well as among those with lower levels of educational attainment.



# Methodology

## Research Objectives

Probe Research conducted a survey among Manitoba adults regarding a variety of issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. The questionnaire was designed by Probe Research and contained new areas of inquiry as well as questions from previous surveys conducted in July 2020, October 2020 and October 2021.

## Methodology

A 13-minute (average) online survey was conducted Jan. 19-26, 2022, with a representative sample of N=800 Manitoba adults.

## Sample

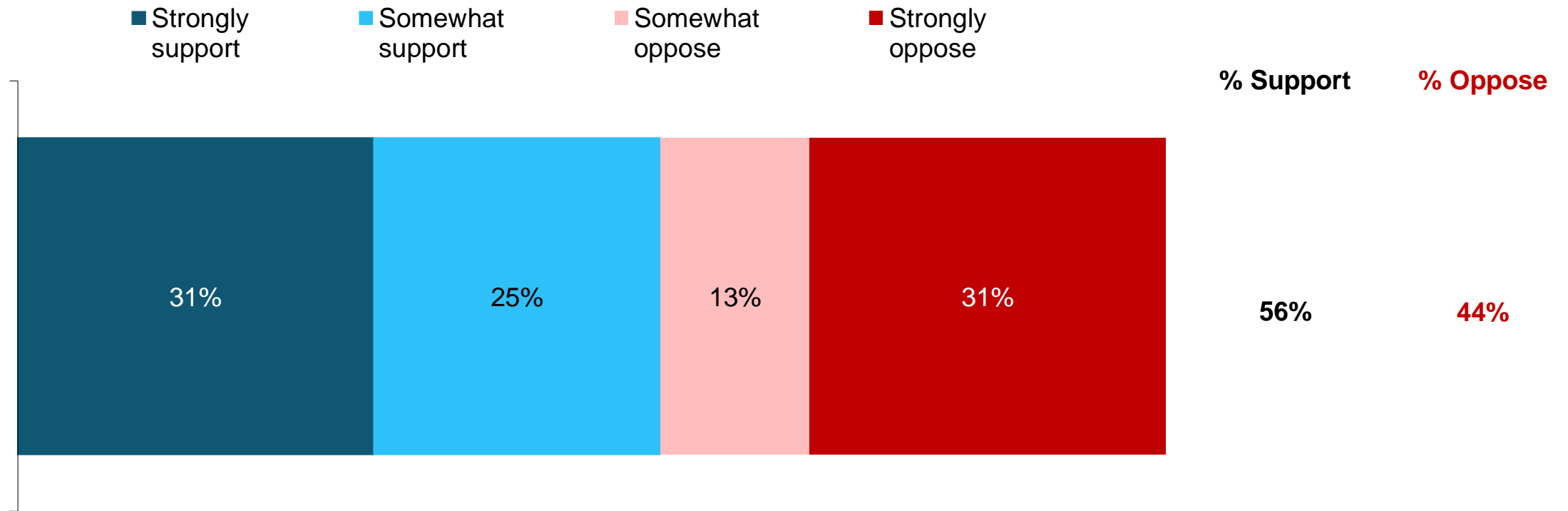
The sample was provided by Probe Research's proprietary panel and supplemented with respondents from a large national panel provider.

As an online panel survey is a sample of convenience, no margin-of-error can be ascribed. However, a random and representative non-convenience sample of 800 adults would have a margin of error of  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Minor statistical weighting by age, gender and region has been applied to this sample to ensure that it corresponds with the province as a whole.

# Support for an “Unvaxxed Tax” in Manitoba

Narrow majority of Manitobans support taxing those who choose not to get the COVID vaccine



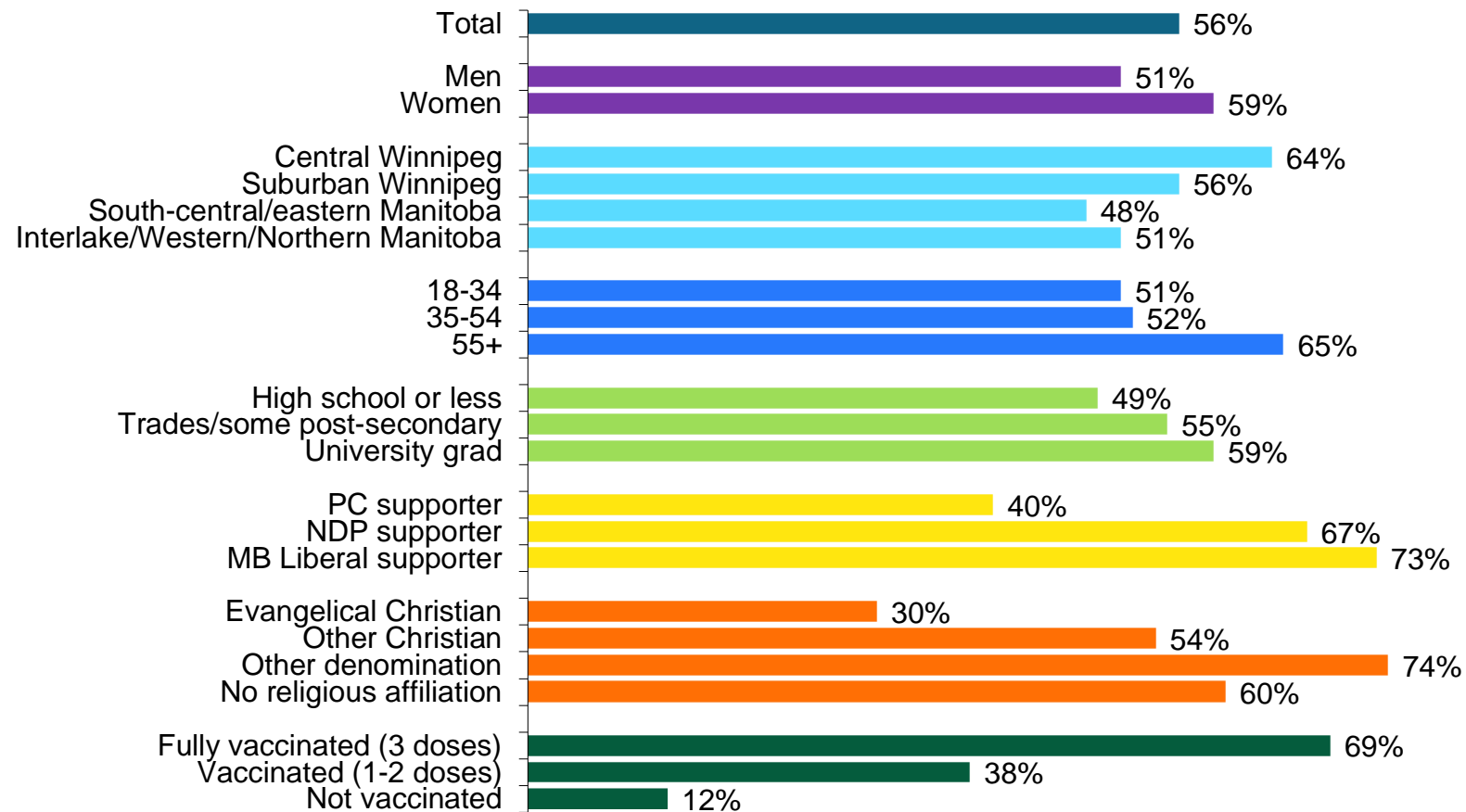
Q8. Quebec’s provincial government recently announced that adult residents who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 and do not have a medical exemption will be required to pay an additional tax. Do you support or oppose the Manitoba government charging a similar tax to adults who choose not to be vaccinated against COVID-19?

Base: All respondents (N=800)

# Support for Unvaxxed Tax: By Subgroup

Women, Winnipeggers, older adults more likely to favour taxing the unvaccinated

% who strongly/somewhat support tax on unvaccinated adults

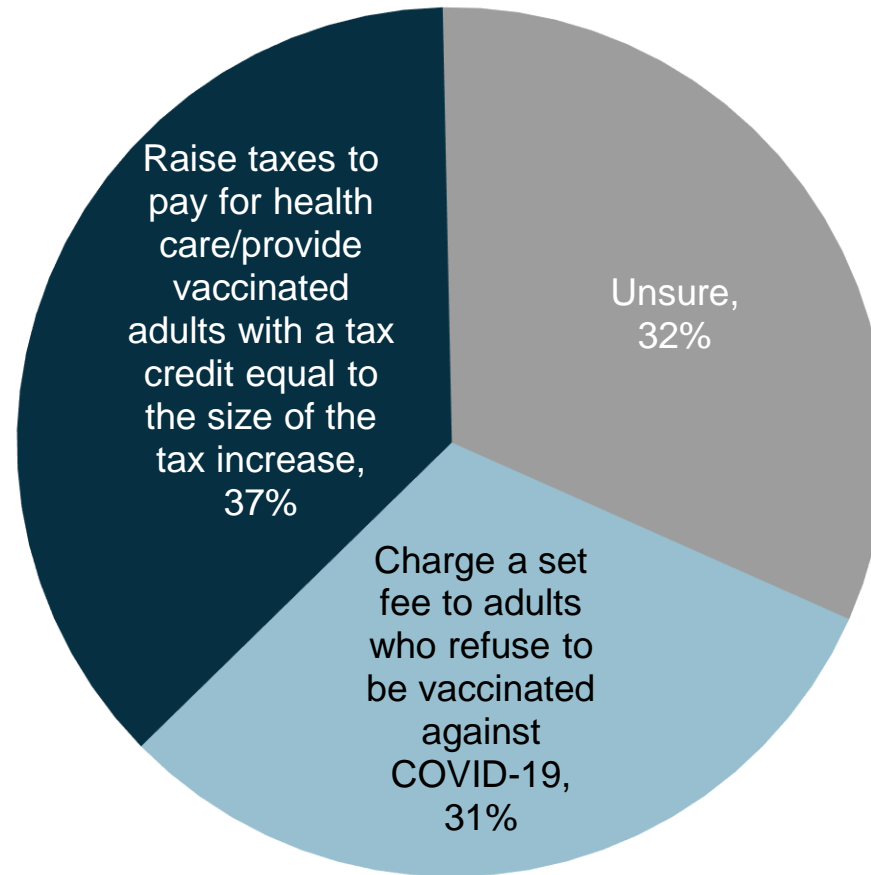


Q8. Quebec's provincial government recently announced that adult residents who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 and do not have a medical exemption will be required to pay an additional tax. Do you support or oppose the Manitoba government charging a similar tax to adults who choose not to be vaccinated against COVID-19?

Base: All respondents (N=800)

# Views on Ways to Levy an Unvaxxed Tax

Manitobans slightly more likely to favour providing tax credits to those who get vaccinated



Those most likely to **support raising taxes and providing a corresponding tax credit to those who get vaccinated** include:

- University graduates (46% vs. 24% among those with high school or less)
- Provincial NDP supporters (48% vs. 28% among PC supporters)
- Those who have received three doses of the vaccine (43% vs. 21% among those who are not vaccinated)

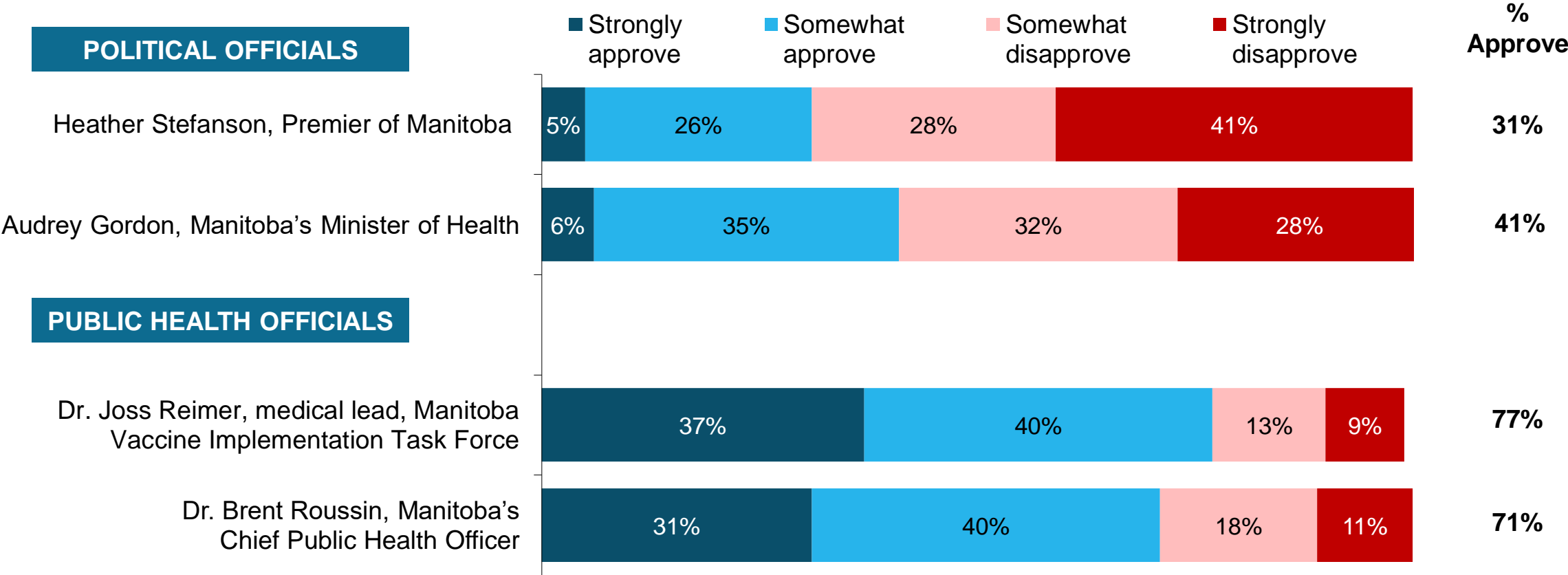
Q9. Regardless of whether you support this idea...which of the following two approaches do you think would be better for the Manitoba government to take when it comes to this issue?

Base: All respondents (N=800)



# Approval Ratings of Provincial Government Officials

Manitobans remain more likely to praise public health officials versus elected representatives



Q5. How would you rate the performance of each of the following public officials during the pandemic? For each, please indicate if you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove of their performance. (ROTATE NAMES)

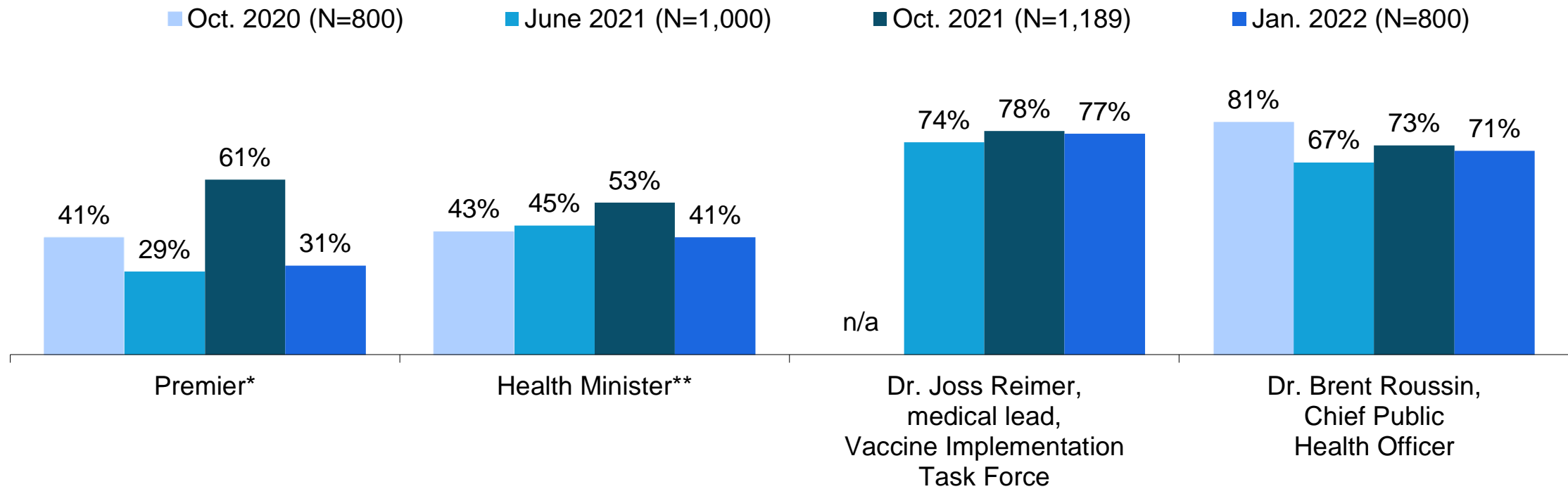
Base: All respondents (N=800)



# Approval of Political and Public Health Officials: Tracking

Approval of Premier Stefanson’s performance comparable to that of Brian Pallister in June 2021

**% approve (strongly and somewhat)**



Q3. How would you rate the performance of each of the following public officials during the pandemic? For each, please indicate if you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove of their performance. (ROTATE NAMES)

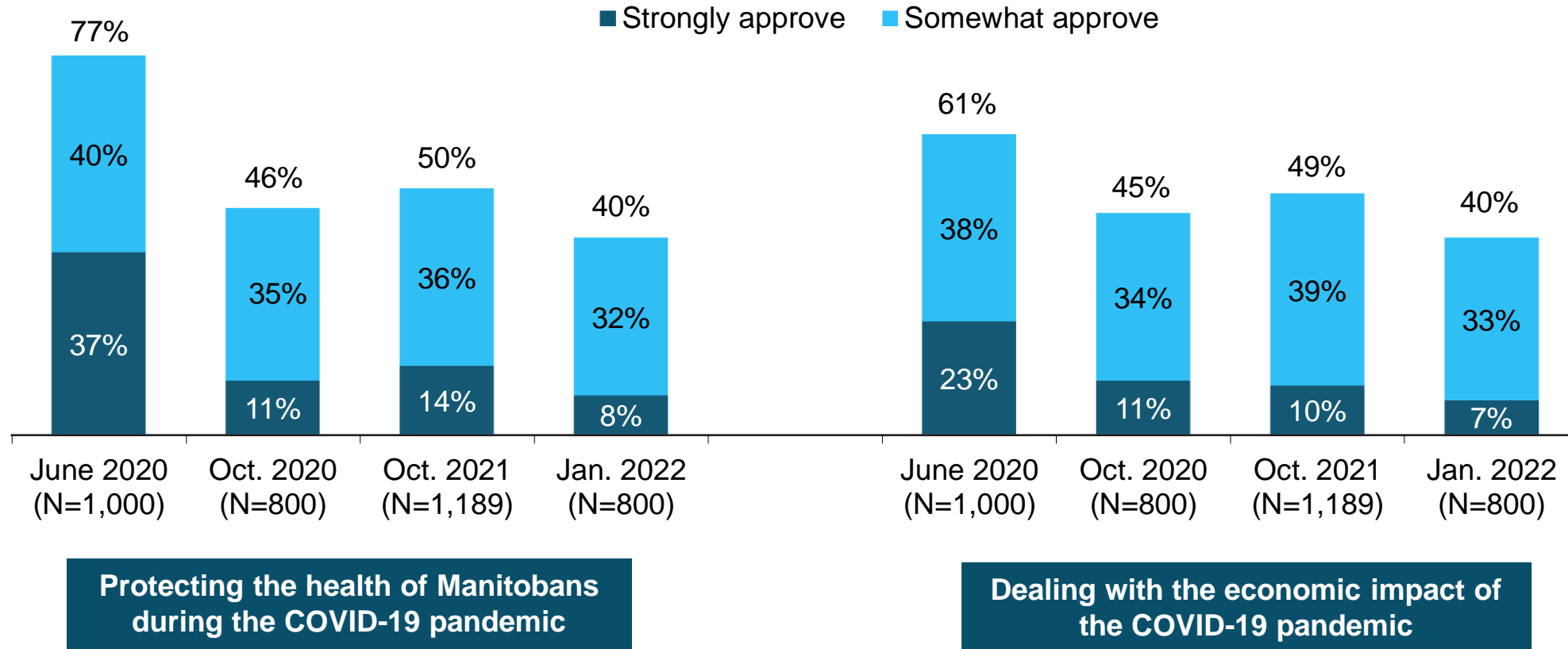
\*Premier Brian Pallister in Oct. 2020 and June 2021; Kelvin Goertzen in Oct. 2021 and Heather Stefanson in Jan. 2022.

\*\*Health Minister Cameron Friesen in Oct. 2020, Heather Stefanson in June 2021 and Audrey Gordon in Oct. 2021 and Jan. 2022.

Base: All respondents (N=800)

# Performance of the PC Government: Tracking

Views on the government's health, economic performance reach lowest point during the pandemic

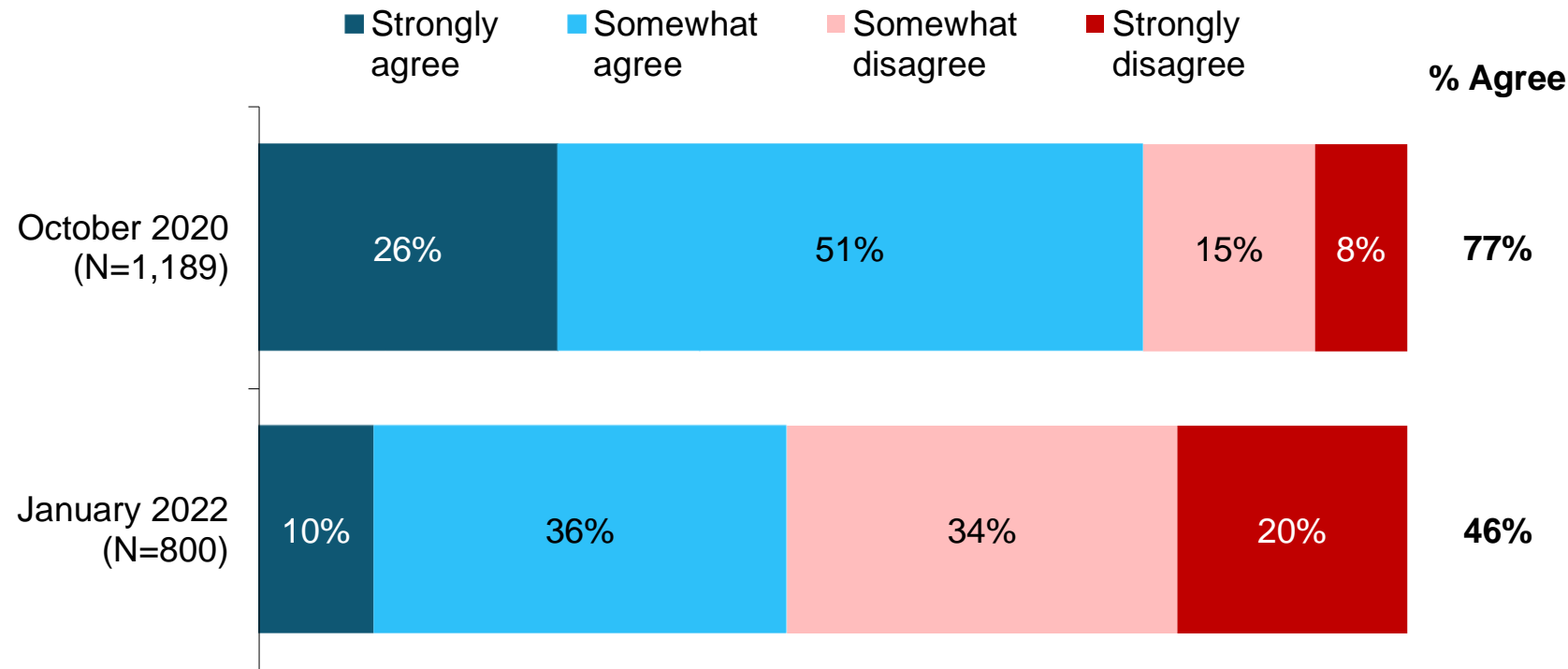


Q2. Overall, how would you rate the performance of Manitoba's Progressive Conservative government when it comes to...? (ROTATE A & B)

Base: All respondents (N=800)

# Comparisons With Alberta and Saskatchewan's Approach

Fewer than one-half now agree Manitoba has done a better job compared to its Prairie neighbours



Those **more likely to agree** Manitoba has done a better job than its Prairie neighbours include:

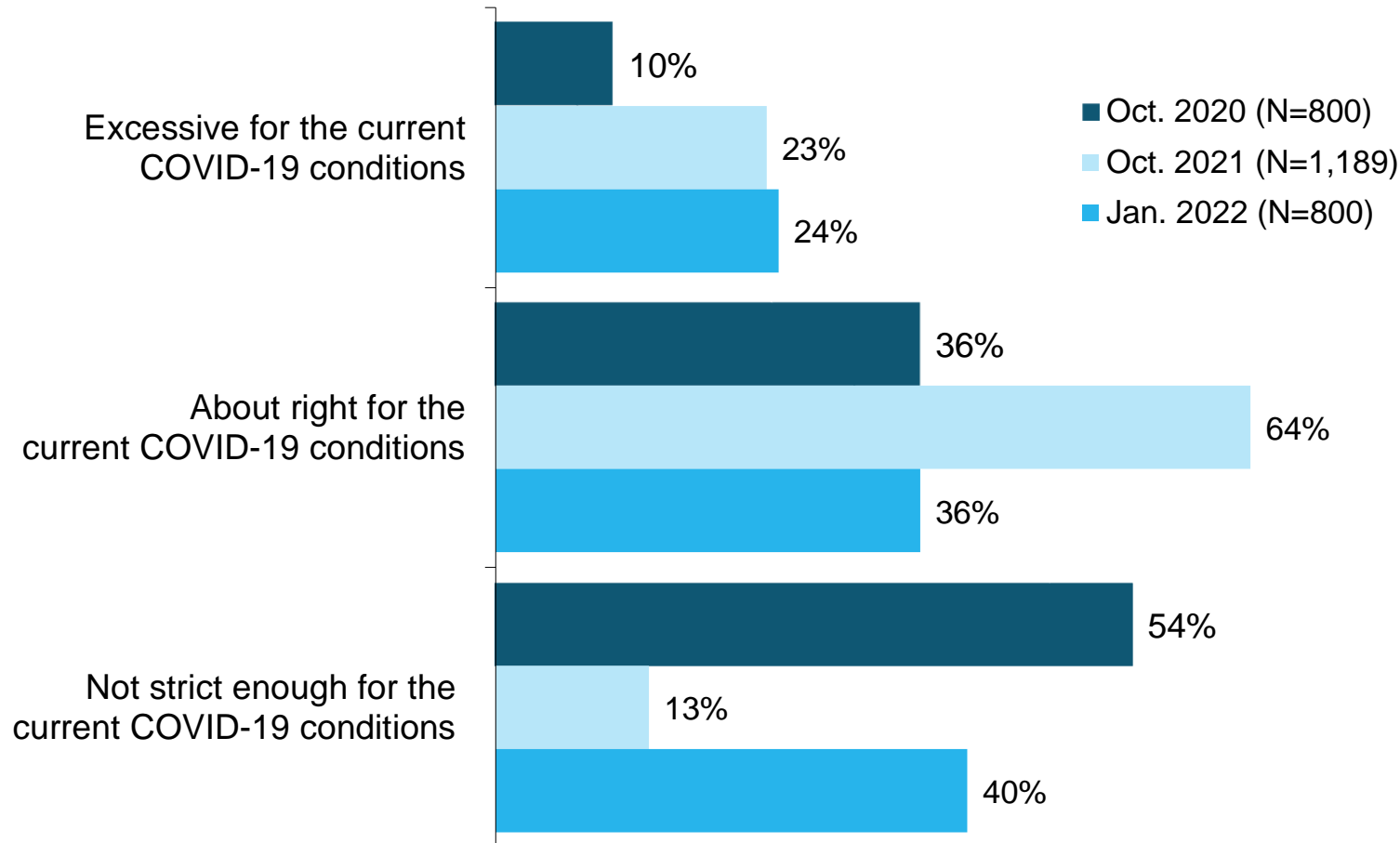
- Older Manitobans (52% aged 55+ vs. 41% among those 18-34)
- BIPOC Manitobans (56% vs. 45% among those who do not identify as Black, Indigenous or a Person of Colour)
- Progressive Conservative and provincial Liberal supporters (56% and 55%, respectively, vs. 39% among NDP supporters)
- Those who have been completely or partially vaccinated (50% and 47% vs. 26% among those who are unvaccinated).

Q1e. On another topic... please read the following statements about the COVID-19 virus and indicate if you agree or disagree with each one: Manitoba has done a far better job dealing with the pandemic than Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Base: All respondents (N=1,189)

# Views on Current Public Health Orders and Restrictions: Tracking

Four in ten believe current restrictions are not strict enough



Those most likely to say the current restrictions are **not strict enough** include:

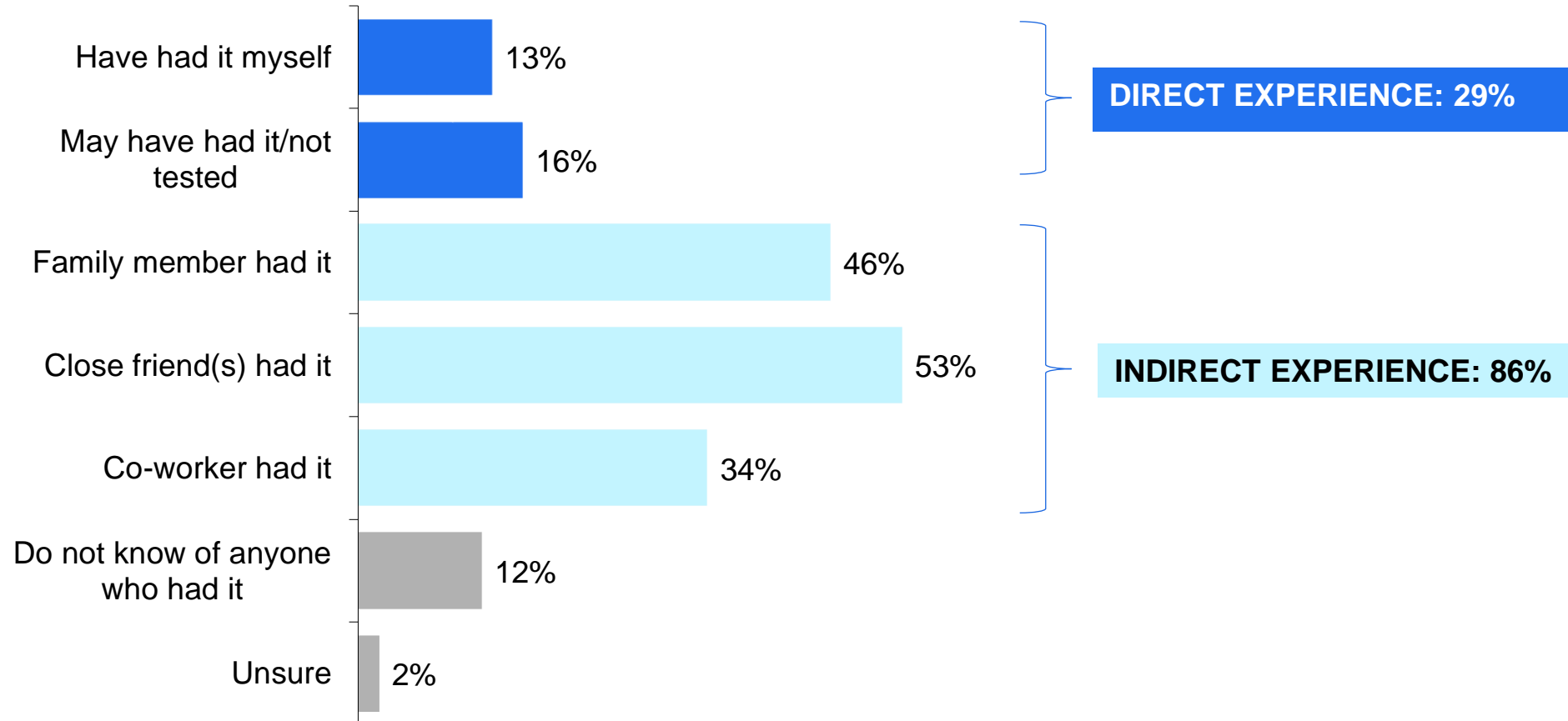
- Winnipeg residents (47% vs. 29% among those in rural/northern Manitoba)
- Women (46% vs. 32% among men)
- Older adults aged 55+ (49% vs. 35% among those 18-34)
- Provincial NDP and Liberal supporters (57% and 46% vs. 19% among PC supporters)
- Those who are fully vaccinated (49% vs. 10% among those who are not vaccinated)
- Those with no religious affiliation (45% vs. 17% among evangelical Christians)

Q6. Of the following, which best describes your thoughts on the current public health orders and restrictions, given current COVID-19 conditions? I think the current restrictions are...

Base: All respondents (N=800)

# Personal Experience with COVID-19

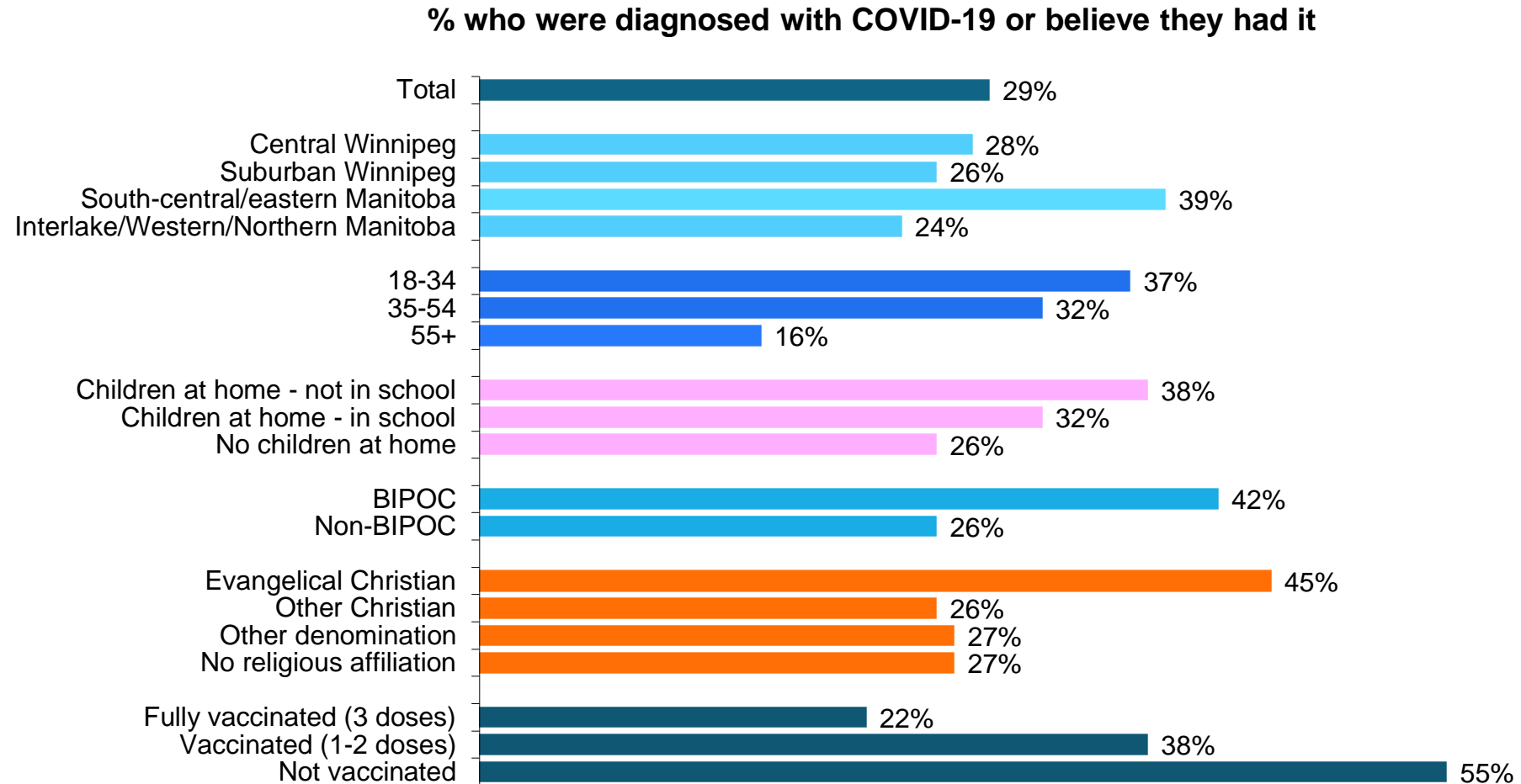
Three in ten believe they have had COVID-19; more than eight in ten have been touched by it



Q5. Which of the following best describes your own personal experience with COVID-19?

# Experience With COVID-19: By Subgroup

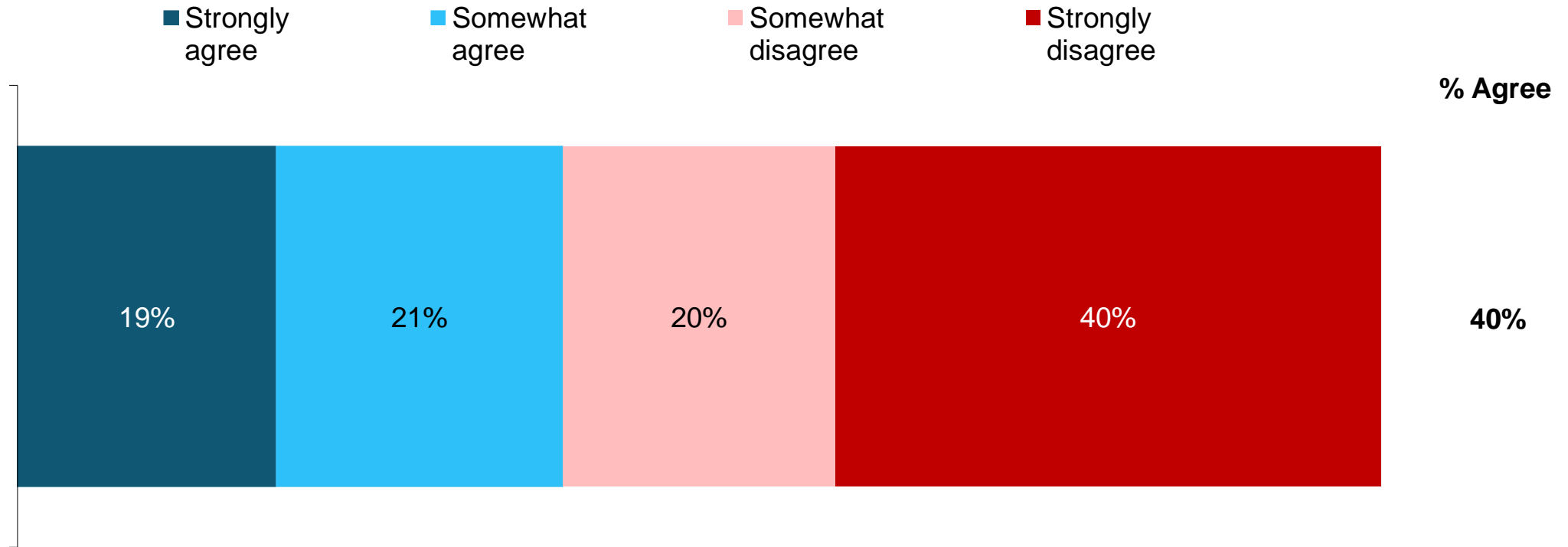
Younger adults, BIPOC citizens, those with young children more likely to have contracted COVID



Q5. Which of the following best describes your own personal experience with COVID-19?

# Confidence in Vaccines

Four in ten beginning to lack confidence that COVID-19 vaccines prevent illness



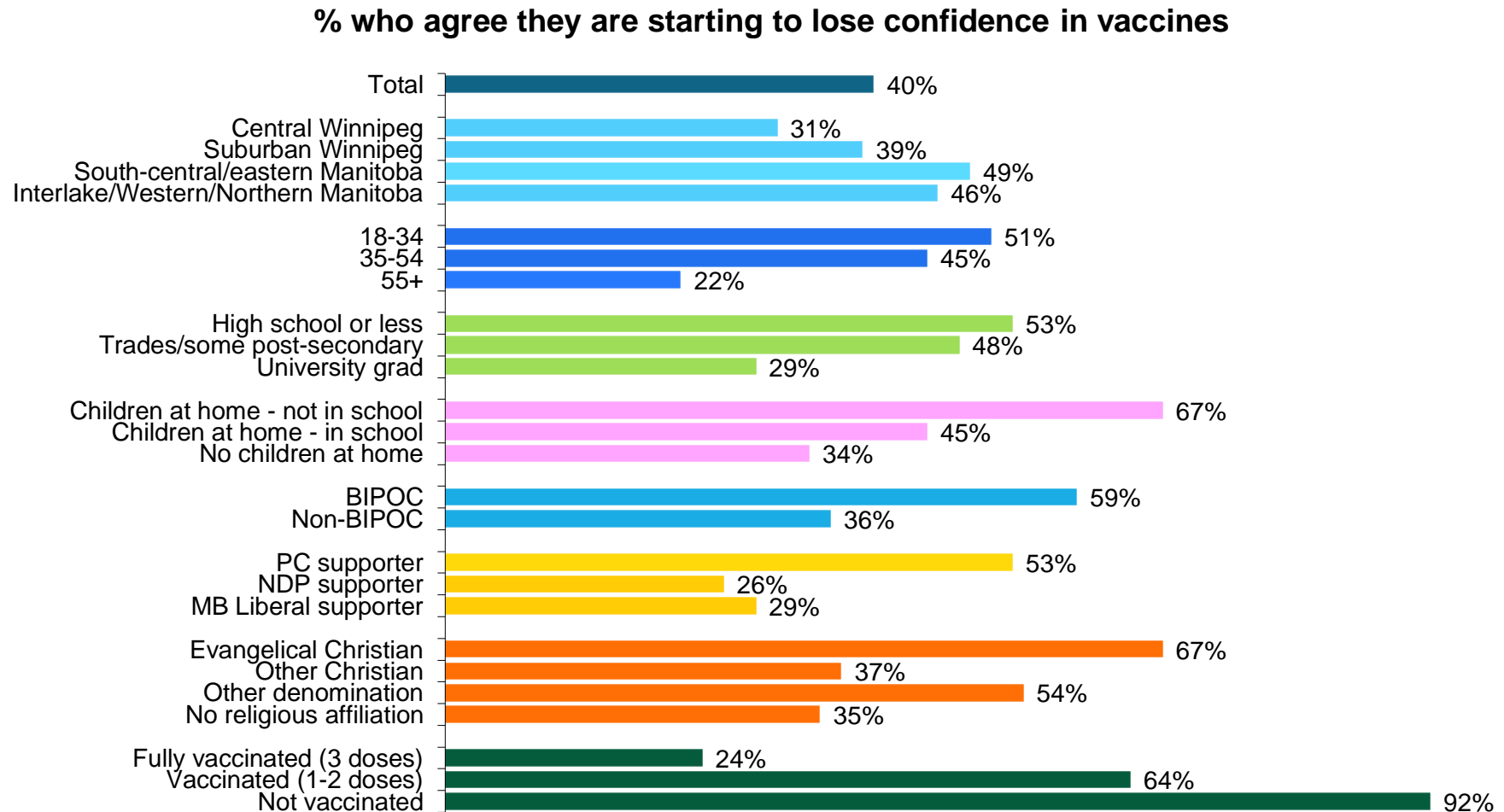
Q1f. On another topic...please read the following statements about the COVID-19 virus and indicate if you agree or disagree with each one: I'm starting to lose confidence vaccines prevent people from getting sick.

Base: All respondents (N=800)



# Confidence in Vaccines: By Subgroup

Younger Manitobans, those with children most likely to lose confidence in vaccines to prevent illness



Q1f. On another topic...please read the following statements about the COVID-19 virus and indicate if you agree or disagree with each one: I'm starting to lose confidence vaccines prevent people from getting sick

Base: All respondents (N=800)