

Manitobans' Views on Retail Theft

The
Free Press

June 2024 Probe Research Omnibus Survey

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Key Findings

Manitobans are quite concerned about a wave of retail crime and how it might affect them, a new Probe Research survey for the Free Press finds.

Nearly six in ten Manitobans are concerned about witnessing someone shoplifting or seeing a violent encounter between someone stealing and a retail employee. Nearly one-half, meanwhile, are concerned about being physically attacked by someone shoplifting, with this concern highest among those living in Winnipeg, older Manitobans and those earning lower incomes.

The same proportion (45%) report they avoid shopping at stores that have been hotspots for retail theft, with those living in outer suburban Winnipeg neighbourhoods and Racialized Manitobans most likely to take their businesses to stores they perceive as experiencing thefts less frequently.

When asked to identify what is driving retail theft, a plurality of Manitobans believe it is due to both people not being able to afford increasingly expensive food items, as well as thieves stealing items so they can be re-sold later. One-quarter attribute theft exclusively to resale, with the same proportion believing it stems entirely from the inability to pay for these items.

Strong majorities of Manitobans support measures that may decrease theft in retail stores, with nearly eight in ten agreeing that private security guards should be given more power to stop thieves and nearly three-quarters advocating for retailers being required to ensure all their employees take special training on how to de-escalate situations with shoplifters. Two-thirds also support introducing a form of “danger pay” for retail workers that would require their employers to offer higher wages to reflect the level of risk they face from potential shoplifters.

Methodology

Probe Research surveyed a random and representative sampling of 1,000 adults residing in Manitoba between May 28 and June 9, 2024.

With a sample of 1,000, one can say with 95 per cent certainty that the results are within ± 3.1 percentage points of what they would have been if the entire adult population of Manitoba had been surveyed. The margin of error is higher within each of the survey's population sub-groups.

The sample consists of 488 Manitobans randomly recruited via live-agent operator, 305 randomly recruited via Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and 207 members of Probe Research's online panel. All respondents completed the survey on an online platform.

Modified random digit dialing, including both landline and wireless numbers, ensured all Manitoba adults had an equal opportunity to participate in this Probe Research survey.

Minor statistical weighting has been applied to this sample so that age and gender characteristics properly reflect the province's population. All data analysis was performed using SPSS statistical analysis software.

About the Probe Research Omnibus

For more than two decades, Probe Research Inc. has undertaken quarterly omnibus surveys of random and representative samples of Manitoba adults. These scientific telephone surveys have provided strategic and proprietary insights to hundreds of public, private and not-for-profit clients on a range of social, cultural and public policy topics. The Probe Research Omnibus Survey is the province's largest and most trusted general population survey.

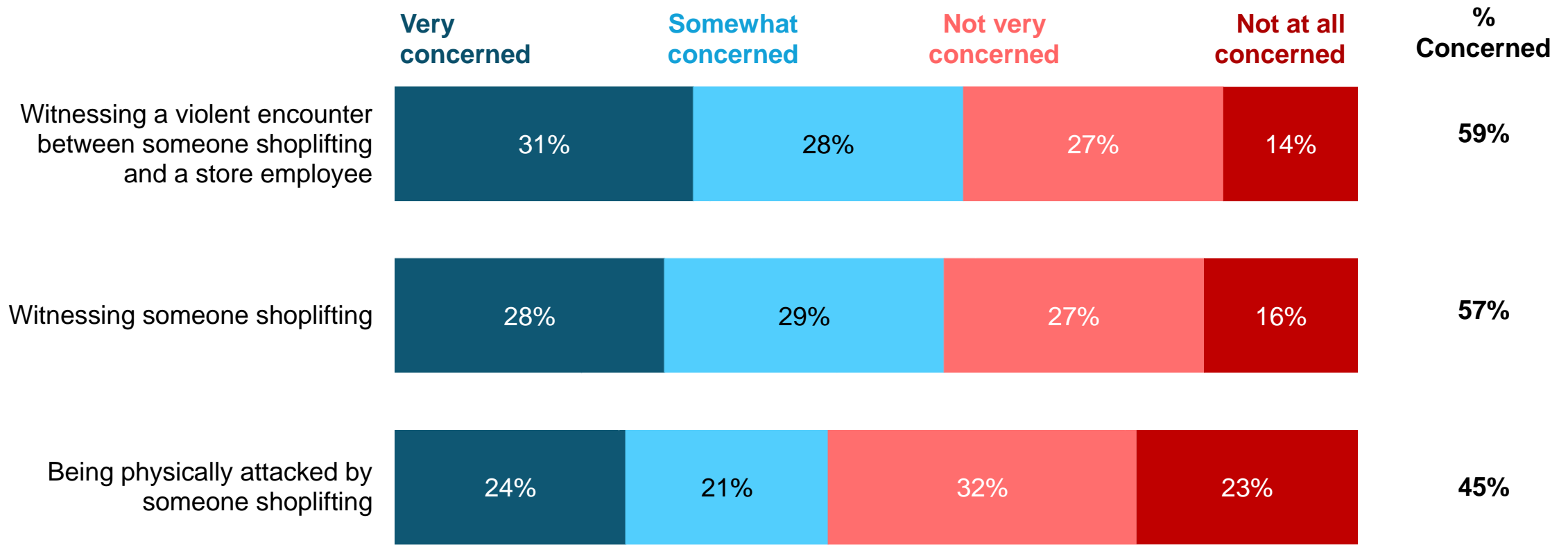
Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was designed by Probe Research in close consultation with the **Free Press**.

Personal Concerns About Shoplifting

Nearly six in ten worry about witnessing shoplifting or seeing a violent encounter at a store

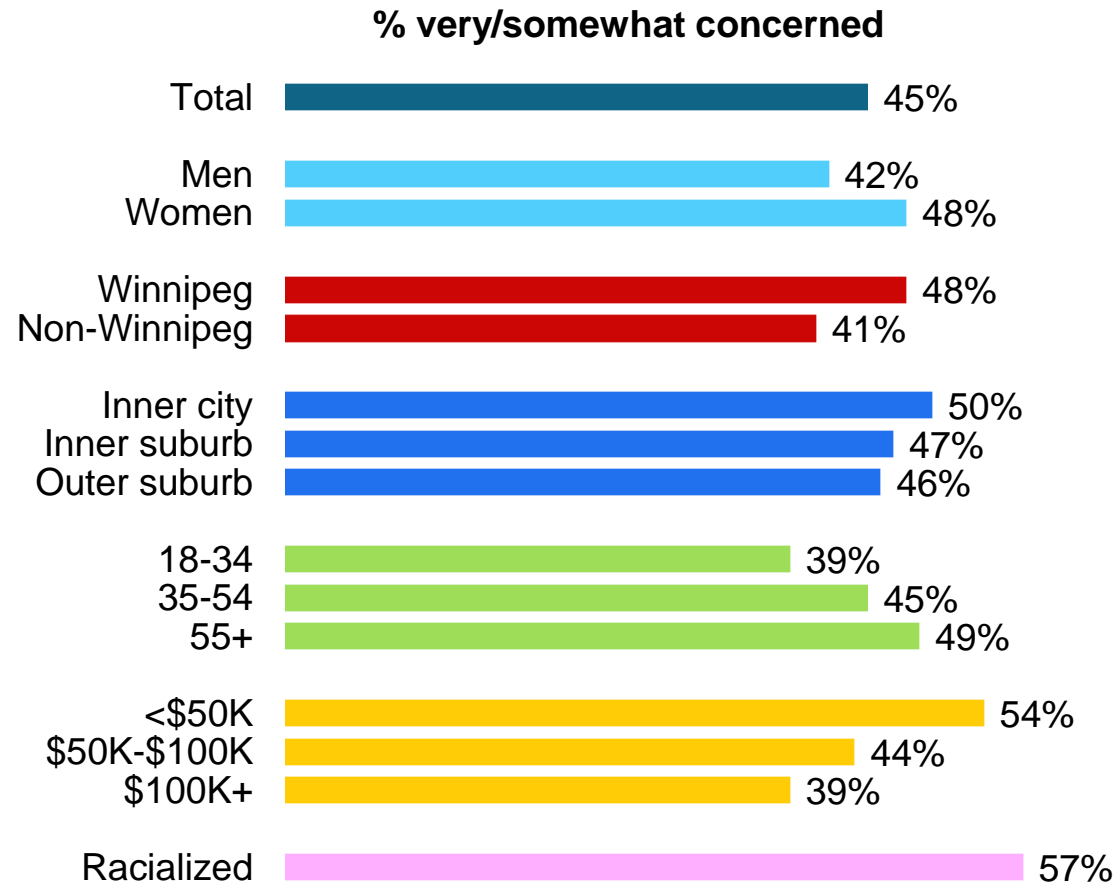
WFP1. How concerned are you about the following when you go to a retail store? (Base: All respondents, N=1,000)



Degree of Concern About Being Attacked by a Shoplifter

Older and racialized Manitobans are more worried about being attacked while shopping

WFP1c. How concerned are you about the following when you go to a retail store: **Being physically attacked by someone shoplifting.**
(Base: All respondents, N=1,000)



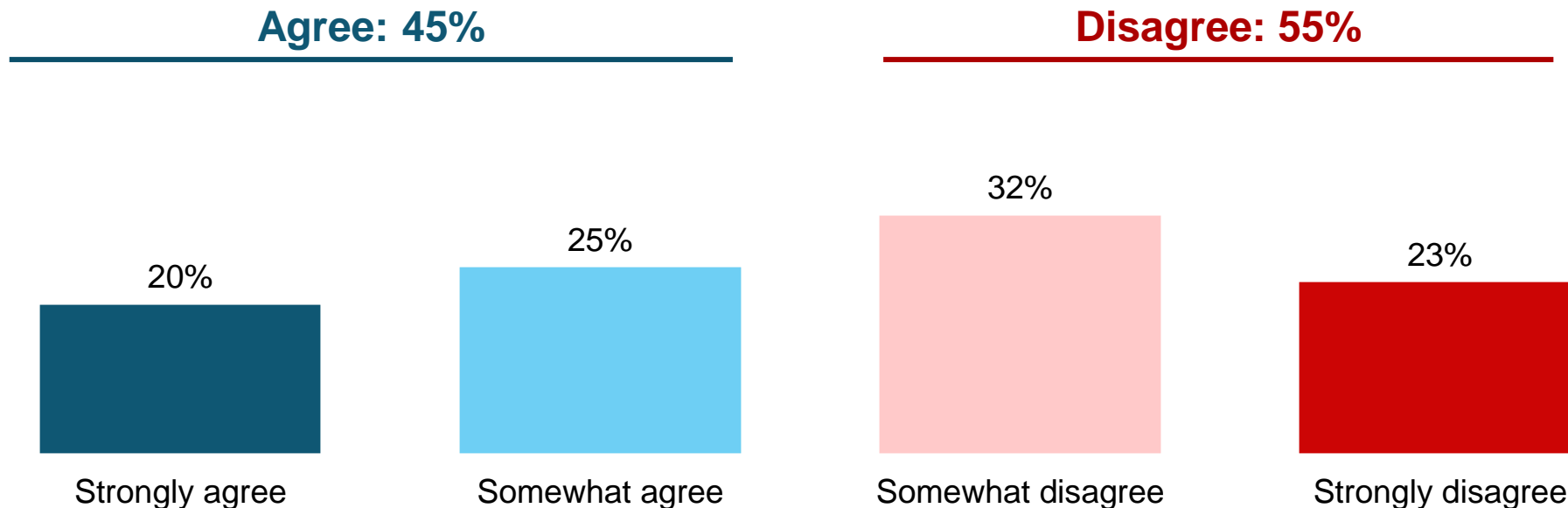
Women, those aged 55+, Racialized Manitobans and Winnipeg residents also tend to be more concerned about **seeing a violent encounter between a shoplifter and a store employee** and **witnessing someone shoplifting.**

Inner-city Winnipeg residents tend to be less concerned about **witnessing someone shoplifting** than their counterparts in suburban areas of the city (53% vs. 63% respectively).

Likelihood of Avoiding Targeted Stores

Nearly one-half avoid shopping at places where there have been many reported thefts

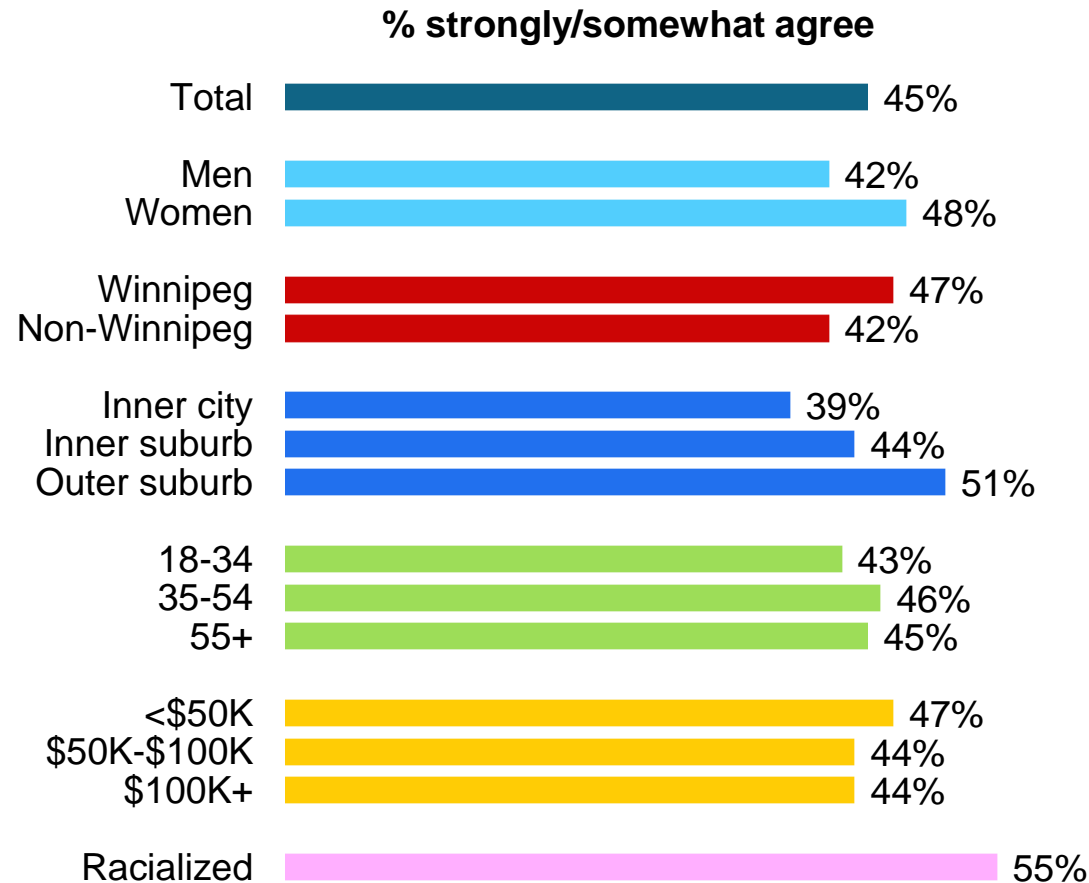
WFP3d. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement: **I avoid shopping at stores where there have been a lot of reported thefts.** (Base: All respondents, N=1,000)



Likelihood of Avoiding Targeted Stores: By Sub-Group

Outer suburban residents, Racialized Manitobans most likely to steer clear of shoplifting hotspots

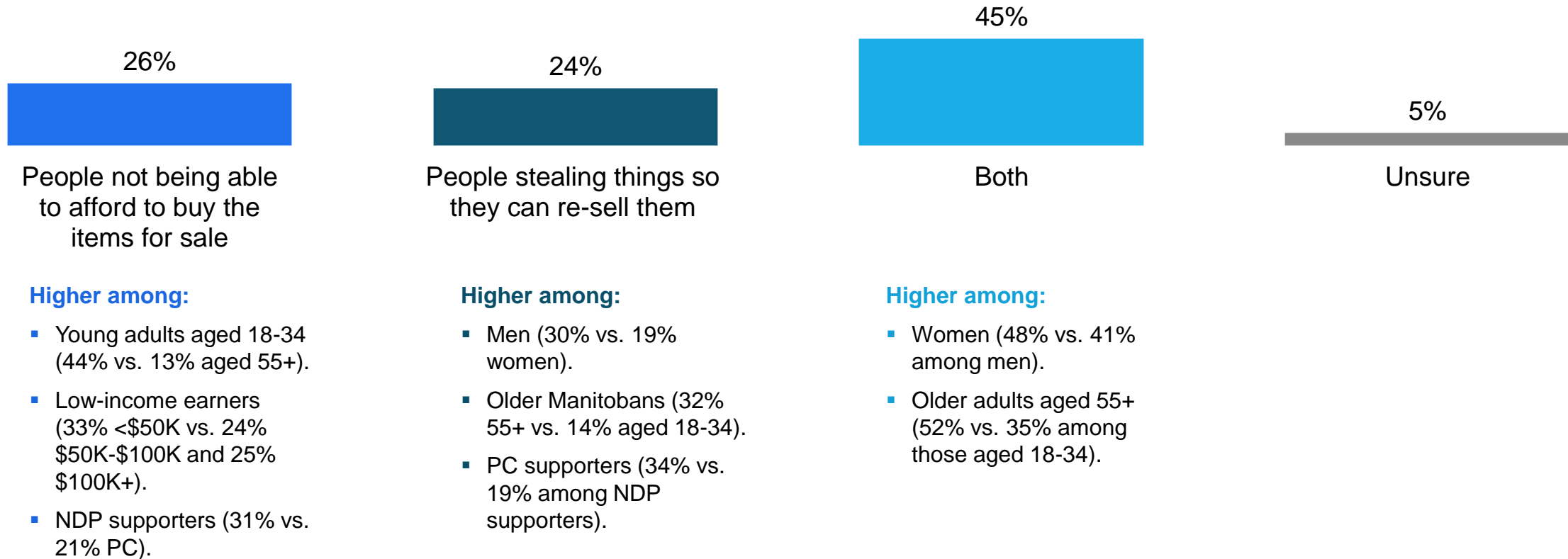
WFP3d. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement: **I avoid shopping at stores where there have been a lot of reported thefts.** (Base: All respondents, N=1,000)



Perceived Causes of Retail Theft

A plurality believe people steal because they can't afford items, as well as to resell them

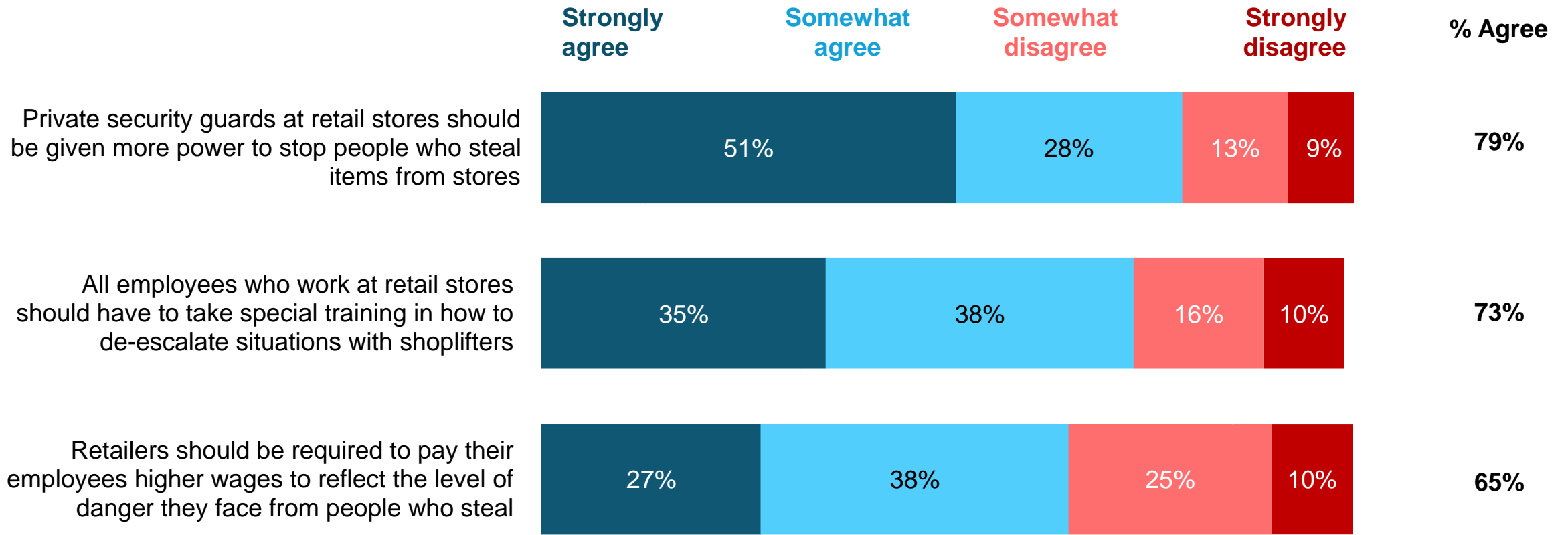
WFP2. Do you think most thefts from grocery stores are due to ... ? (Base: All respondents, N=1,000)



Views on Approaches to Prevent Shoplifting

Nearly eight in ten support giving security guards more power to stop shoplifters

WFP3. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements: (Base: All respondents, N=1,000)



Support for Giving Security Guards More Power to Stop Shoplifting

Large majorities of Manitobans are in favour of empowering guards to prevent theft

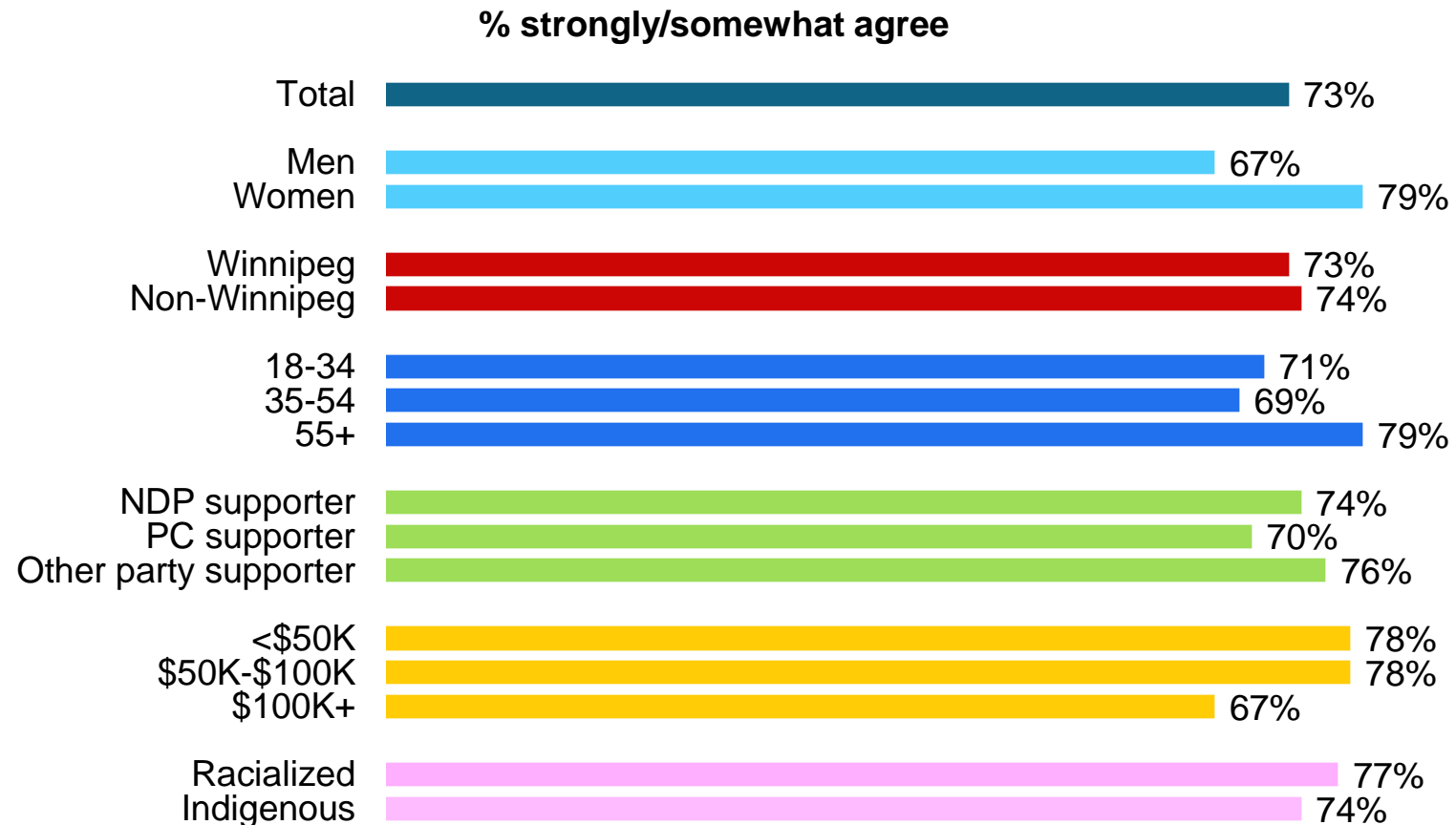
WFP3a. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement: **Private security guards should be given more power to stop people who steal items from stores.** (Base: All respondents, N=1,000)



Support for Requiring Employee De-escalation Training

Women and older adults are most likely to support mandatory training in this area

WFP3b. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement: **All employees who work at retail stores should have to take special training in how to de-escalate situations with shoplifters.** (Base: All respondents, N=1,000)



Support for Paying Retail Employees “Danger Pay”

Lower-income earners, Racialized Manitobans most supportive of higher wages for retail workers

WFP3c. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement: **Retailers should be required to pay employees higher wages to reflect the level of danger they face from people who steal.** (Base: All respondents, N=1,000)

