

# Winnipeggers' Views on Homelessness

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**PROBE** RESEARCH

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# The Story

Like most Canadian cities, Winnipeg is grappling with the issue of homeless encampments. Winnipeggers feel a mixture of sadness, sympathy, frustration and even anger about how to resolve the issue of unhoused people setting up shelters in parks and along riverbanks.

On Sept. 25, Winnipeg's city council unanimously passed new rules that would limit where encampments can go – barring them from playgrounds, near bridges, rail lines or transit shelters, among other locations. Winnipeggers who live near established encampments have expressed a great deal of frustration about the perceived effects of these encampments on their neighbourhoods. But, some organizations who work with people experiencing homelessness question the effectiveness of these proposed rules and suggest they may not stand up to a court challenge.

**Most Winnipeggers want firmer rules when it comes to encampments.** The largest segment of the population – more than six in 10 Winnipeggers – think encampments should only be allowed in specific places, and only for a limited time but with supports in place to help those who have nowhere else to go. A large segment of the population would prefer to have encampments banned everywhere. These results suggest many Winnipeggers are in favour of council setting limitations on encampments.

**At the same time, Winnipeggers have little faith in government's ability to deal with homelessness.** For example, compared to a year ago, more Winnipeggers now think the City is doing a poor job of addressing homelessness. Marks for the provincial government, police and social service agencies are not much better. This negative view could change if new rules lead to fewer encampments and more people being housed, but the City and others involved in addressing homelessness have a lot of work to do to assure Winnipeggers that things are getting better.

# Key Findings

**A majority of Winnipeggers want some restrictions on where encampments can be located and how long they can stay in place.** More than six in 10 indicate encampments should only be allowed in specific areas in the short term, with maintenance and support services available. More than one-quarter, on the other hand, think encampments should not be allowed anywhere in Winnipeg. The proportion of people who believe encampments should not be restricted in any way is very small (4%), with the same share of Winnipeggers expressing no opinion.

**There are stark differences in terms of how diverse groups of people feel about homeless encampments.** Women, younger adults and lower-income Manitobans are more likely to feel sympathy and sadness when they see encampments and are also most on board with the idea of placing some restrictions on encampments along with proper supports. Older, more suburban residents are more likely to feel uncomfortable, frustrated or even angry – and are also more likely to think encampments should not be allowed. Those who voted for the Progressive Conservatives (PCs) in the last provincial election are more likely to express anger and frustration, while NDP voters are more likely to be sympathetic.

**Winnipeggers continue to give governments and frontline agencies poor marks for how they are addressing homelessness.** Only one-third continue to praise social service and outreach agencies for the job they are doing with encampments, with one in five crediting police for their approach. Only about one in 10 each praise the work of the provincial government and the City of Winnipeg. The proportion who think the City is doing a poor job has jumped noticeably in the past year.



# Methodology

Probe Research surveyed a random and representative sample of 600 Winnipeg adults between September 4 and 14, 2025.

Respondents were contacted using four different methods. The sample includes 319 Winnipeg residents randomly recruited via live-agent operator, 154 randomly recruited via text message/SMS, 7 randomly recruited via Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and 120 members of Probe Research's online panel. All respondents completed the survey using an online platform.

With a sample of 600, one can say with 95 per cent certainty that the results are within  $\pm 4.0$  percentage points of what they would have been if the entire adult population of Winnipeg had been surveyed. The margin of error is higher within each of the survey's population sub-groups.

Probe reached out to Winnipeggers through modified random digit dialing, including both landline and wireless numbers. This ensured all Manitoba adults had an equal opportunity to participate in this survey.

The sample has been weighted slightly by age, gender, region and educational attainment so it properly reflects the city's population, based on Census data. Probe used SPSS software to conduct all statistical analysis.

## About the Probe Research Omnibus

For nearly 30 years, Probe Research has conducted quarterly omnibus surveys of random and representative samples of Manitoba adults. These surveys have provided strategic and proprietary insights to hundreds of public, private and not-for-profit clients on many different social, cultural and public policy topics. The Probe Research Omnibus Survey is the province's largest and most trusted general population survey.

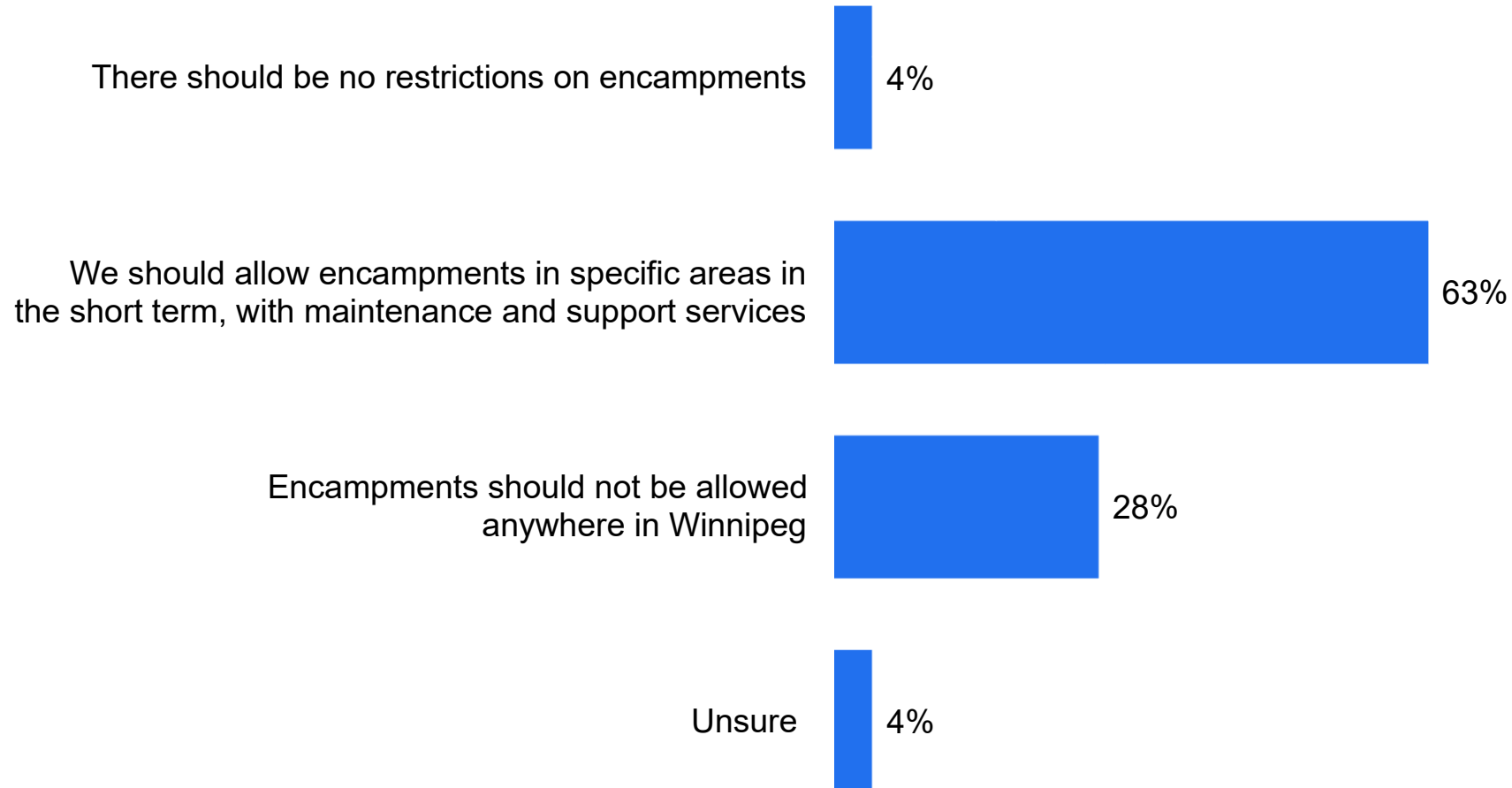
## Survey Instrument

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

# Views On Where Encampments Should Be Allowed

More than six in 10 support only allowing encampments in designated areas for a limited time

WFP3. When it comes to homeless encampments, which one comes closest to your view (even if neither are exactly right)? (Base: Winnipeg residents, N=600)

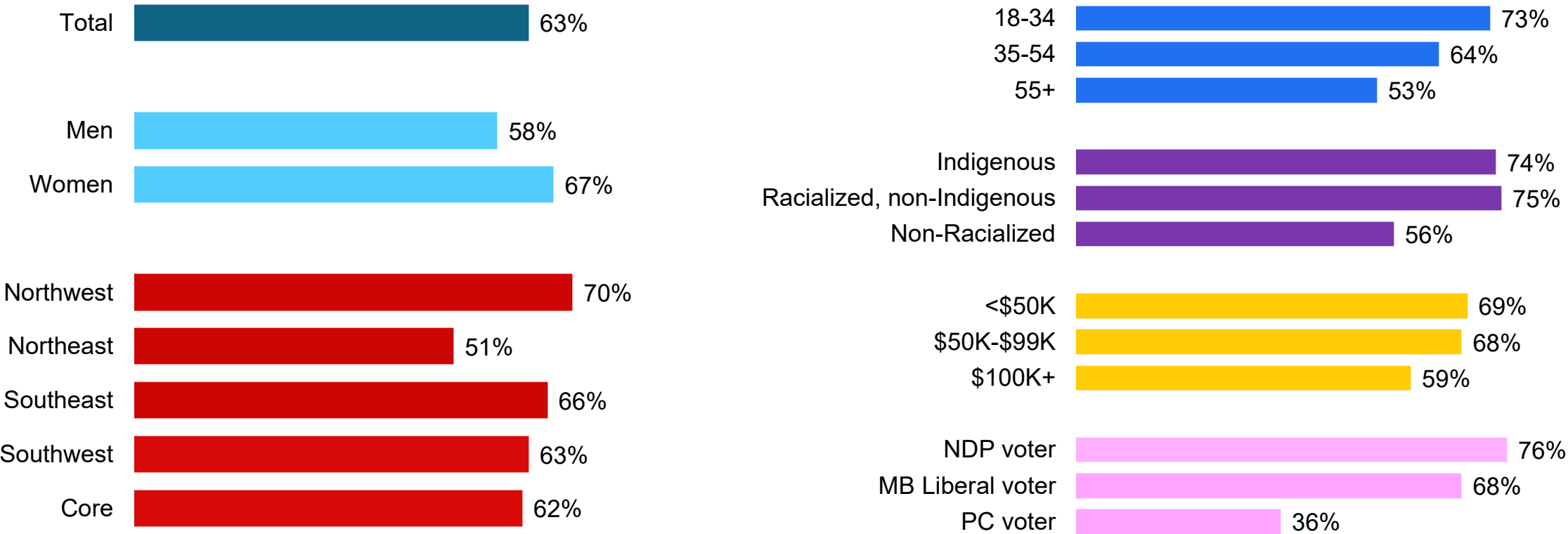


# Support for Restricting Encampments to Designated Areas: By Subgroup

Women, younger adults and Racialized Winnipeggers are more supportive of this idea

WFP3. When it comes to homeless encampments, which one comes closest to your view (even if neither are exactly right)? (Base: Winnipeg residents, N=600)

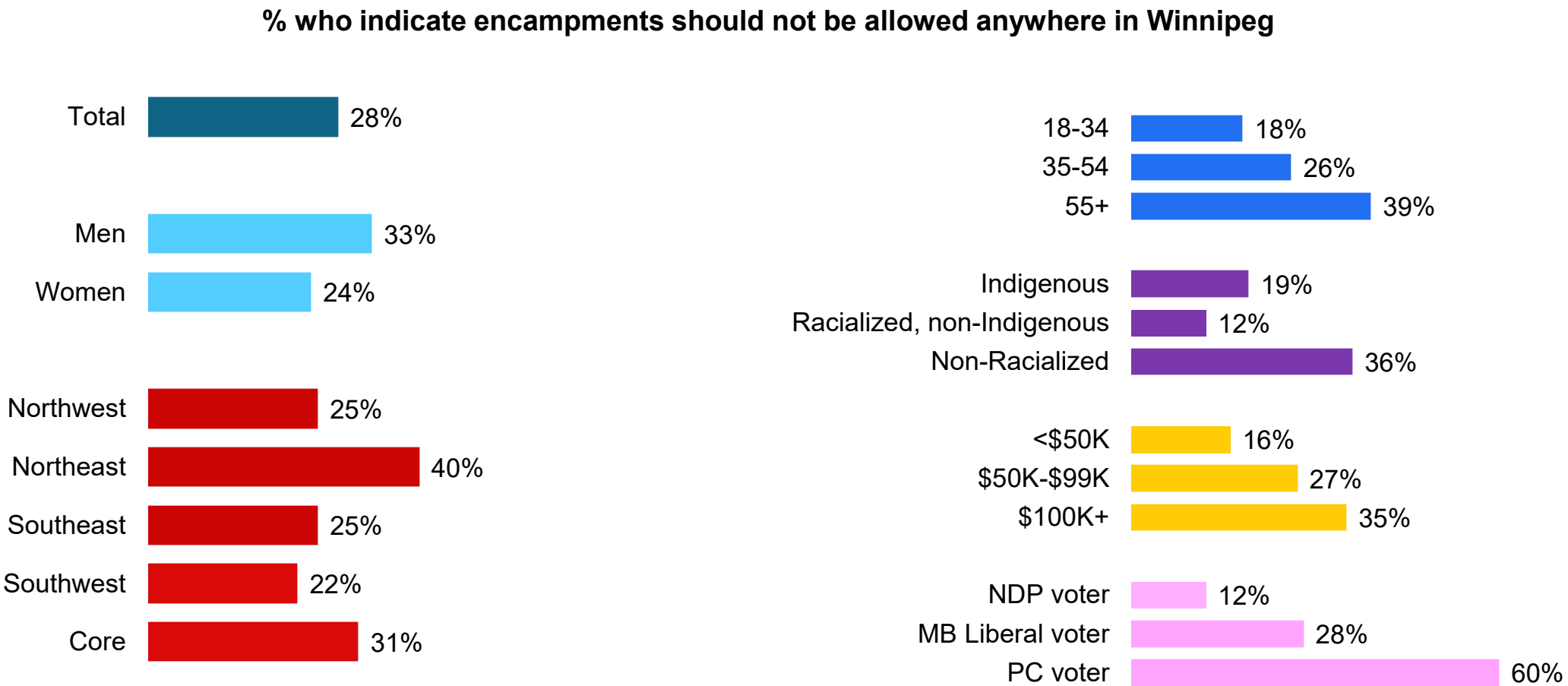
**% who favour only allowing encampments in specific areas in the short term, with maintenance and support services**



# Support for Banning Encampments: By Subgroup

Older, wealthier Winnipeggers are most likely to believe encampments should not be allowed

WFP3. When it comes to homeless encampments, which one comes closest to your view (even if neither are exactly right)? (Base: Winnipeg residents, N=600)

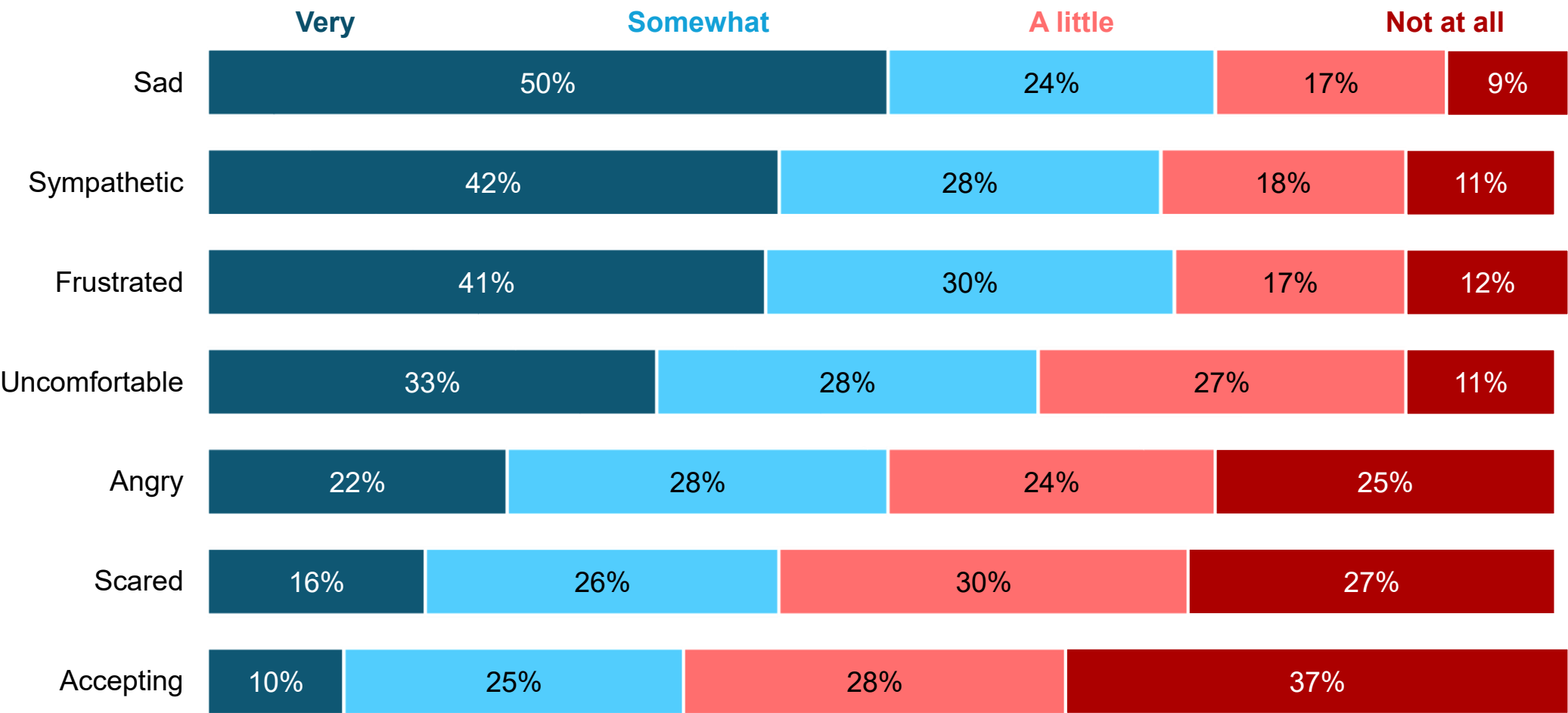




# Reactions to Homeless Encampments

Winnipeggers are most likely to feel sad, sympathetic and frustrated with encampments

WFP2. When you encounter or see a homeless encampment in Winnipeg, how do you typically feel? (Base: Winnipeg residents, N=600)



# Reactions to Homeless Encampments: By Subgroup

Women are more likely to express both sympathy and discomfort with encampments

**% who very much feel this way**

## Sad

- Women (59% vs. 40% among men).
- Lower-income earners (71% <\$50K).
- NDP voters (55% vs. 31% of Progressive Conservative voters).

## Uncomfortable

- Those in the inner city and outer suburbs (40% and 37% vs. 23% among inner suburban).
- Women (37% vs. 29% among men).
- Those born outside Canada (35%).
- PC voters (46% vs. 18% NDP).

## Scared

- Outer suburban residents (21% vs. 11% inner suburb and 14% inner city).
- Women (21% vs. 11% among men).
- Younger adults (21% aged 18-34 vs. 9% aged 55+).
- Those born outside Canada (21%).
- Those with children at home (31%).

## Sympathetic

- Women (45% vs. 38% among men).
- Younger adults (54% aged 18-34 vs. 27% aged 55+).
- Lower-income earners (56% <\$50K).
- NDP voters (53% vs. 18% PC).
- Racialized, non-Indigenous residents (61%).

## Frustrated

- Those in suburban areas (47% outer suburbs and 43% inner suburbs vs. 25% inner city).
- Older Winnipeggers 55+ (49% vs. 33% among aged 18-34).
- PC voters (57% vs. 32% NDP).

## Angry

- Suburban residents (27% inner suburb and 23% outer suburb vs. 16% inner city).
- PC voters (33% vs. 12% NDP).

# Assessing the Response to Homelessness

## Fewer now think frontline organizations are doing a good job of addressing homelessness

WFP1. When it comes to dealing with homelessness, are the following doing an excellent job or a poor job, based on what you know? (Base: Winnipeg residents, N=600)

