



Status of Women
Canada

Condition féminine
Canada

ON-LINE CONSULTATION ON GENDER EQUALITY

REPORT ON STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA'S ON-LINE CONSULTATION ON GENDER EQUALITY

FALL 2005

Data analyzed for Status of Women Canada
by Pavla Seleпова under contract with Human Resource Systems Group Ltd. (HRSG)



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SUMMARY

This document reports the responses to the *On-line Consultation on Gender Equality*, which was held from September 9, 2005 to November 10, 2005. This timing maximized the exposure of the issues across Canada by overlapping with the schedule of the face-to-face consultations held in the same period.

In total, 2393 responses were received. These responses provided both tabulated insight into public opinion as well as a large volume of free text input. 91% of the respondents identified themselves as female, 52% were between the ages of 35 and 55, 70% of respondents came from 3 provinces (Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia), and 53% of respondents indicated that they were not involved in gender and women's issues in an organized manner.

The responses to the on-line consultation are consistent across demographic categories and across the gender equality concepts raised by the consultation. Overall, the respondents agree with making gender equality a higher priority in Canada (Question 1) and with increasing funding to women's organizations (Question 4). The respondents also showed their support for government consultations (Question 6). By providing their choices on a number of policy and program priorities, the respondents gave solid input for shaping gender equality work in the future. The results include the approximately 11% of participants who chose to express their disagreement with gender equality.

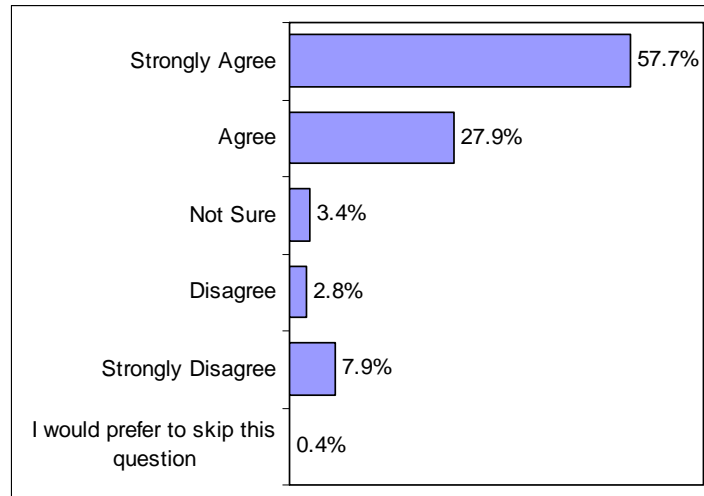
In addition to overall issues concerning equality between women and men, the Questionnaire focused on the situation of Aboriginal women and poverty among women. In the demographic section, 14% of respondents identified themselves as Aboriginal and 31% indicated personal income levels at or below \$30,000. The responses from those who identified as Aboriginal or as belonging to other minority populations as well as respondents in the lowest third of the individual income categories are analyzed in greater detail, for additional insight. However, the differences in their answers from the general population are relatively minor. This illustrates the essence of the conclusions generated by the report; this on-line consultation produced consistent answers across the board and can be viewed as valid and meaningful input into further shaping of public policy on gender equality.



RESPONSES TO ONLINE CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

PART 1 – A NEW GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

Question 1: Do you agree that gender equality should be a higher priority for Canada?



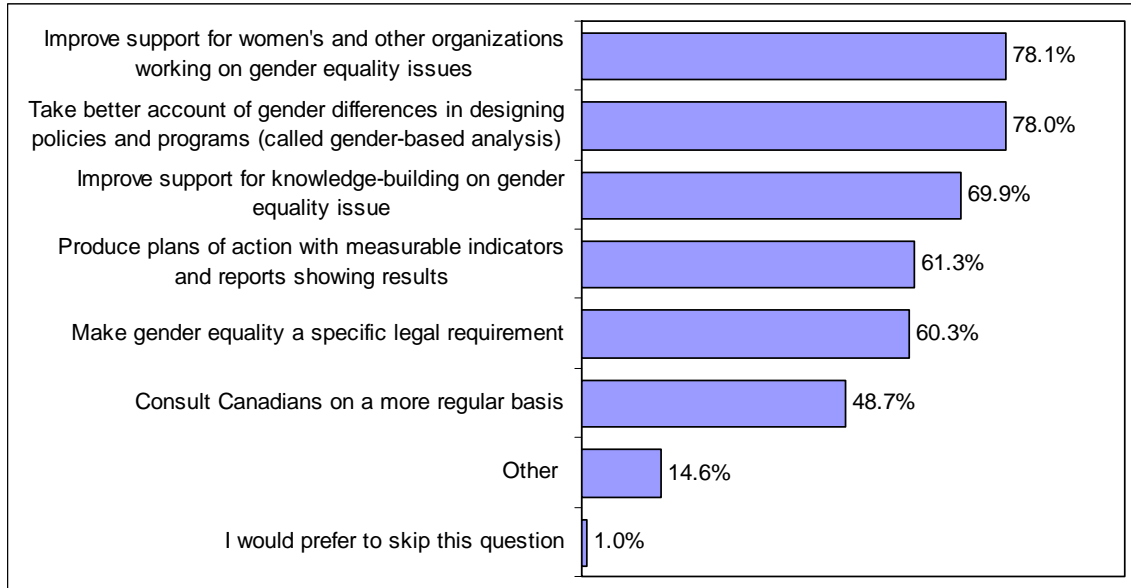
The answers to Question 1 show that 85.6% of respondents Strongly Agreed or Agreed that gender equality should be a higher priority in Canada.

Another way of illustrating the same conclusion is to assign a scale of 1-5 to the level of agreement with this concept (Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4 ... Strongly Disagree = 1). This translates to the average level of 4.24 of agreement with increasing the priority of gender equality in Canada. In other words, the respondents generally “Agreed” with this strategy.

A total of 10.7% of respondents to this question Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. Their free text answers reflect the positions expressed in their responses to this question. There is a good correlation between the answers to this question and the answers in the rest of this section of the questionnaire, both for those who tended to agree and for those who tended to disagree.



Question 2: A number of suggestions made for improving accountability are listed below. Please check as many as you support:

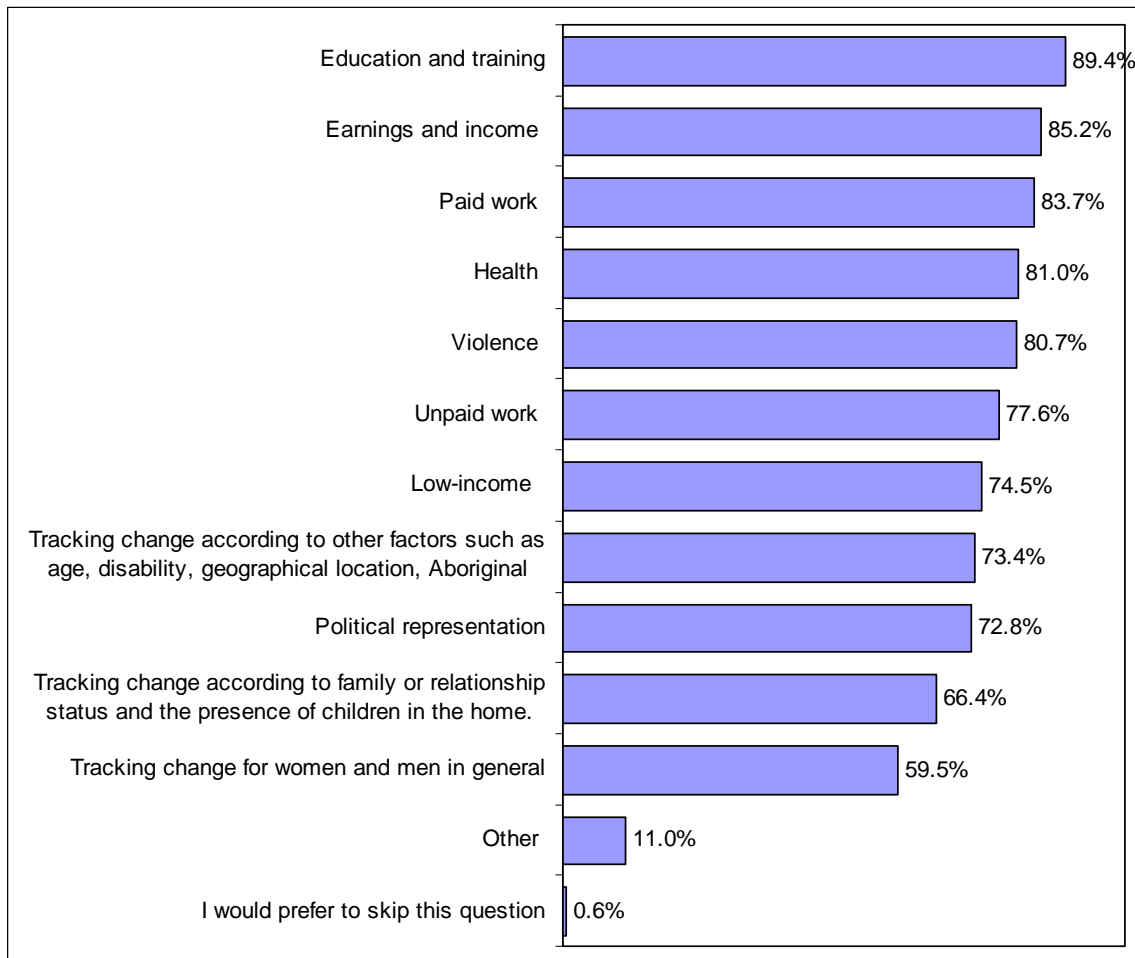


From these responses it is interesting to note that broad support is expressed for all proposed actions. However, the least support was expressed for more consultations.

About 15% of respondents chose "Other." Overall these responses concentrated on a number of specific issues that affect women and on legislative suggestions for cooperation between women's organizations and government.



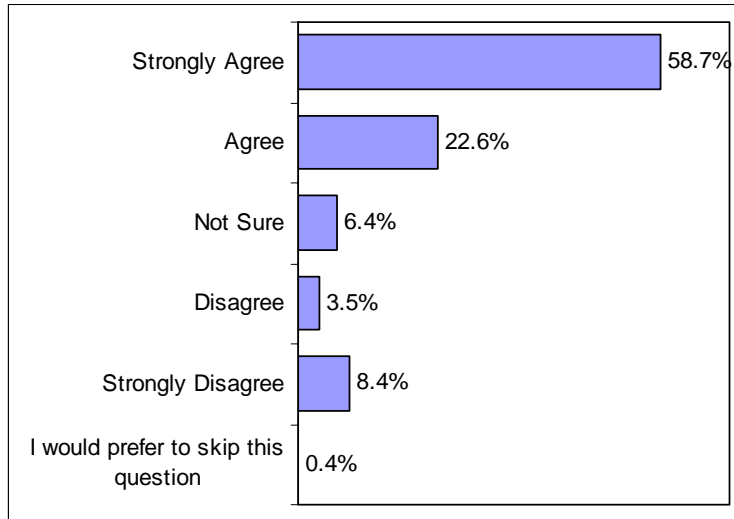
Question 3: In order to help us design a set of gender equality indicators, please indicate as many as you think should be included:



Education, employment and pay lead the chart of chosen indicators and there is solid support for all areas mentioned. The “Other” responses mostly rephrased the concepts already indicated by this chart.

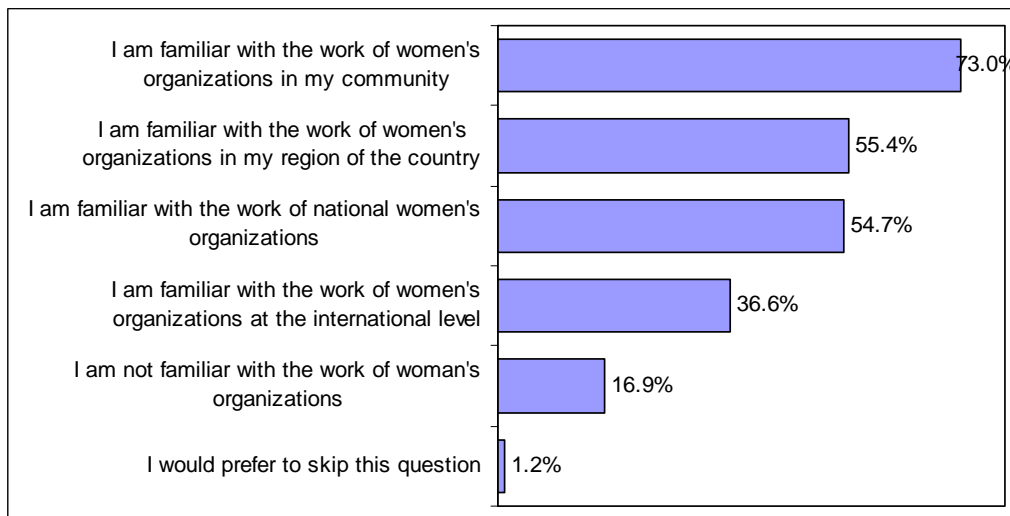


Question 4: Do you think that the government should increase funding support for women's organizations working for equality and bringing women's equality to the attention of policy makers?



Similar to Question 1, these results can be translated to an average of 4.19, which indicates that the respondents generally Agreed. There is also a strong correlation of these responses to the responses in Question 1, indicating that those who disagreed with Question 1 also disagreed with this proposal.

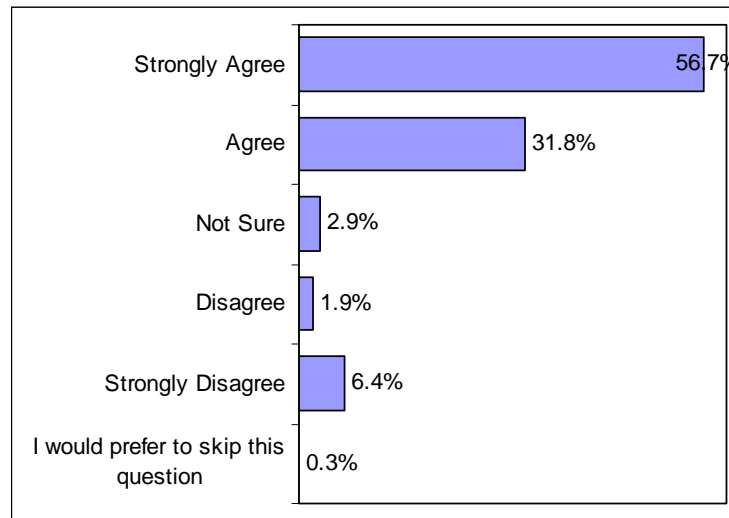
Question 5: Please check as many as apply:



These responses indicate that there was greatest familiarity with women's organizations at the community level.

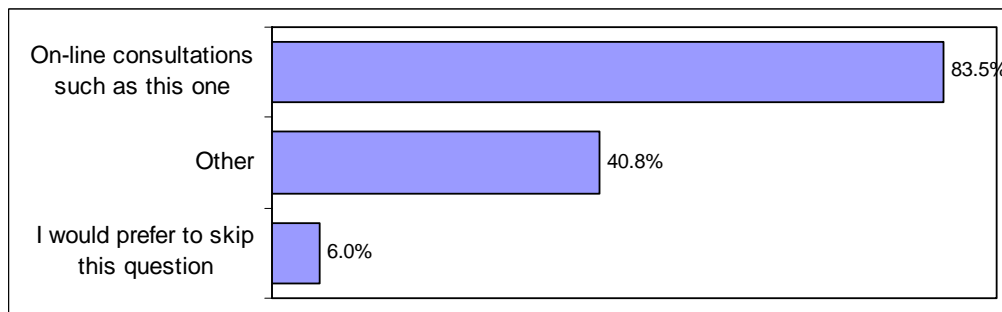


Question 6: Do you believe it is important for the government to consult regularly with organizations across the country that work on gender equality issues?



Similar to Question 1 and Question 4, the average answer is 4.30, which indicates that the average respondent Agreed with holding regular consultations across the country.

Question 7: Do you support other ways to ensure that Canadians, especially women and girls, can have a say on policies that affect them?

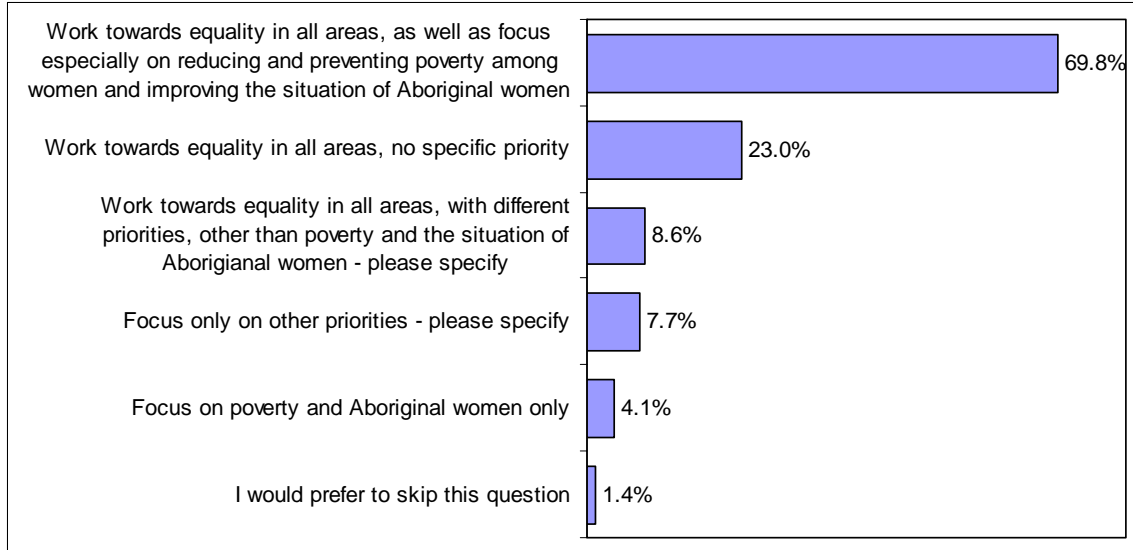


Forty % of the respondents chose “Other” in this question. In general, they chose off-line methods of consultation, such as phone, mail, in person, town halls, education and media.



PART 2 – POLICY AND PROGRAM PRIORITIES

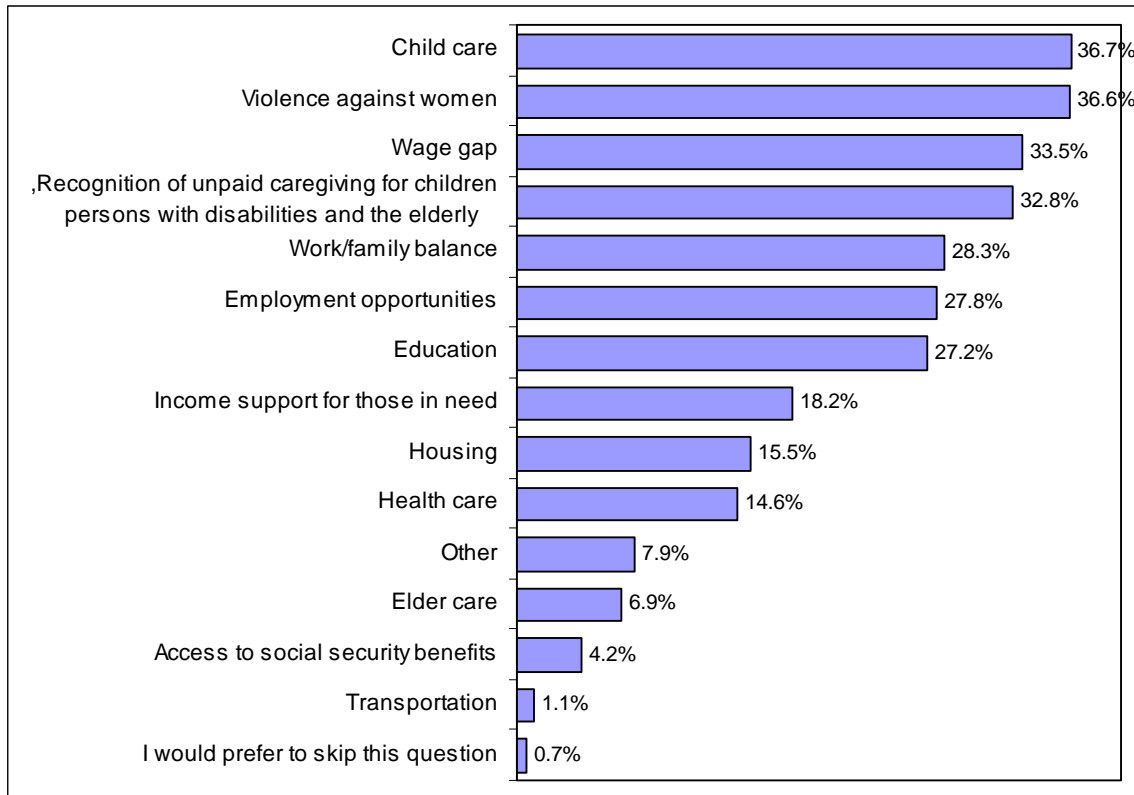
Question 8: What approach to policy and program priorities would you recommend to the Government of Canada for the next few years?



The current partial focus on poverty and Aboriginal issues was preferred by 69.8% percent of respondents. The third and fourth options in this question invited further input. In general, the additional input elaborated on a broad spectrum of issues, such as violence, immigration and race, disability, sexual orientation and age.



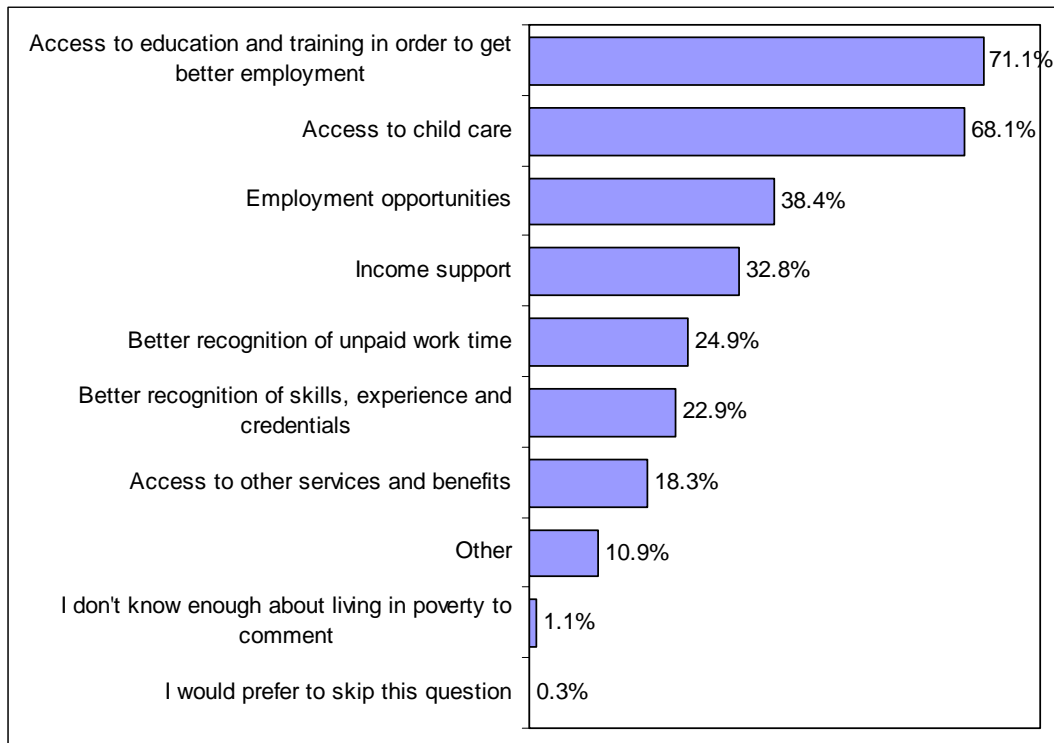
Question 9: Please select the 3 areas where you think action could make the most difference in improving the overall situation of women and girls in Canada:



Childcare and violence against women were chosen most often, by more than 1/3 of the respondents. In addition, 7.9% of respondents contributed other ideas to this question. The responses covered a broad spectrum, with some emphasis on the political/legal sphere and education.



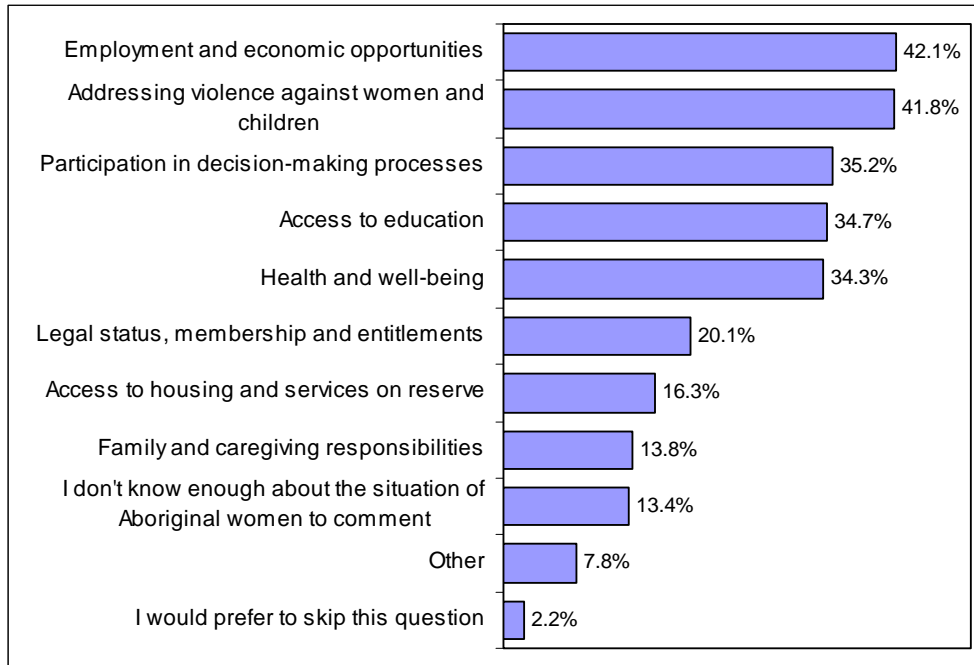
Question 10: In order to improve the situation of women (and their families) living in poverty in Canada, please select the 3 most important areas where you think further action is needed:



Education and childcare are key issues for over 2/3 of respondents. The answers to the category "Other" generally rephrase the categories outlined above.

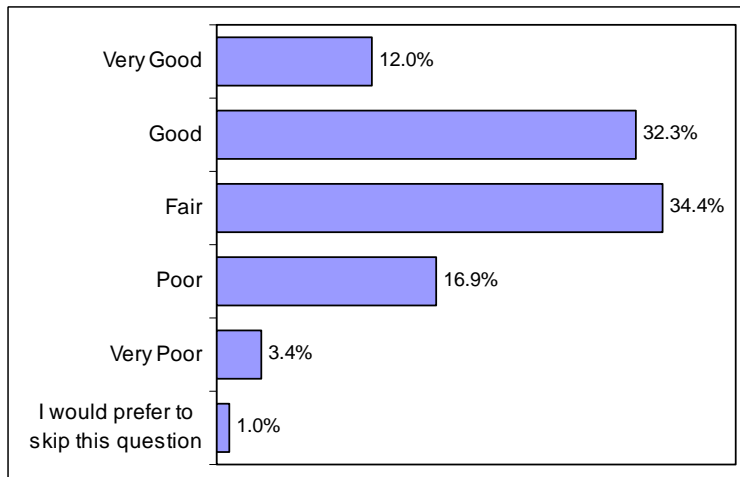


Question 11: In order to improve the situation of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada, please select the 3 areas where you think further action is most needed:



In their free text comments, a number of respondents indicated their limited knowledge of issues affecting Aboriginal women. However, in the end, the overall answers are consistent from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents. For more on this, see the section on “Examples of Insight Gained for Aboriginal, Minority and Lower Income Respondents” later in this report.

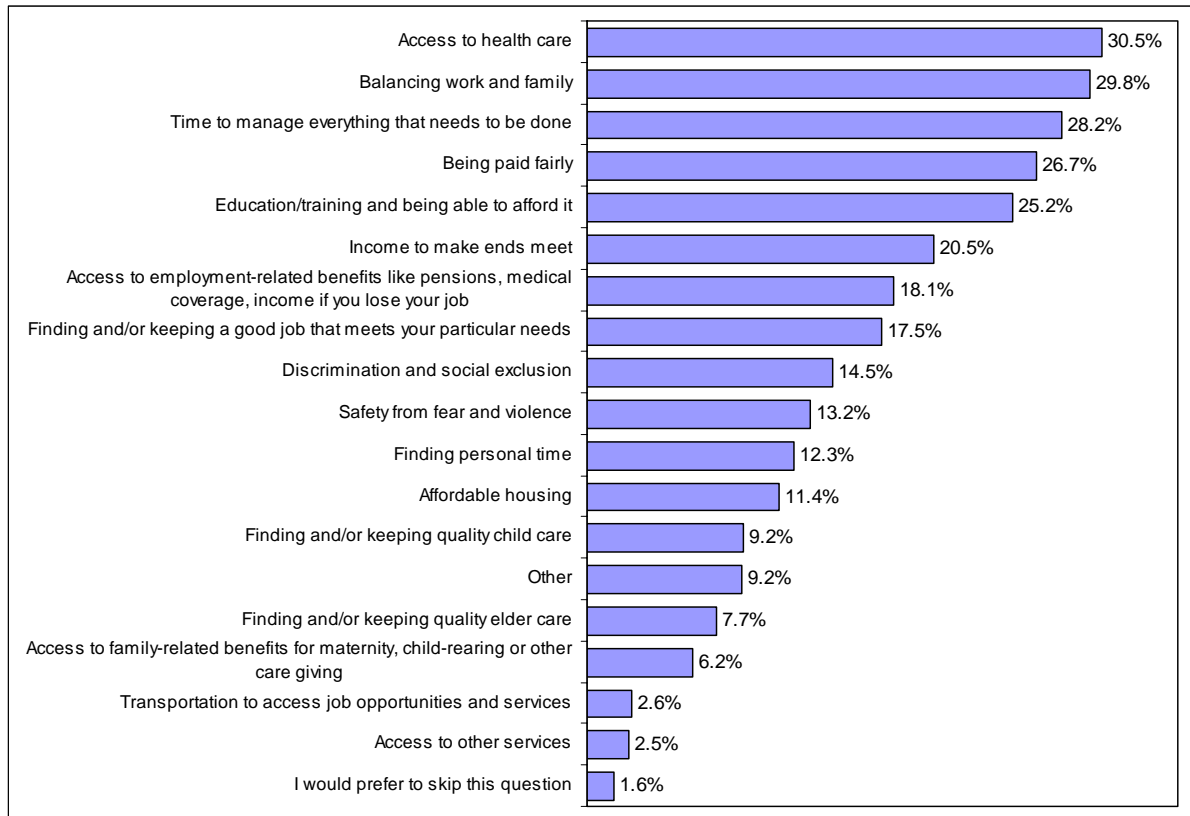
Question 12: How would you rate your knowledge of federal programs, benefits and services (e.g. how they work, how to apply, what are the eligibility criteria)?



On the scale of 1-5, the average response is 3.30. 44.3% of respondents rated their knowledge of federal programs as Good or Very Good. This leaves 55.7% of respondents who considered their knowledge Fair or worse, indicating the potential for difficulties in accessing programs.



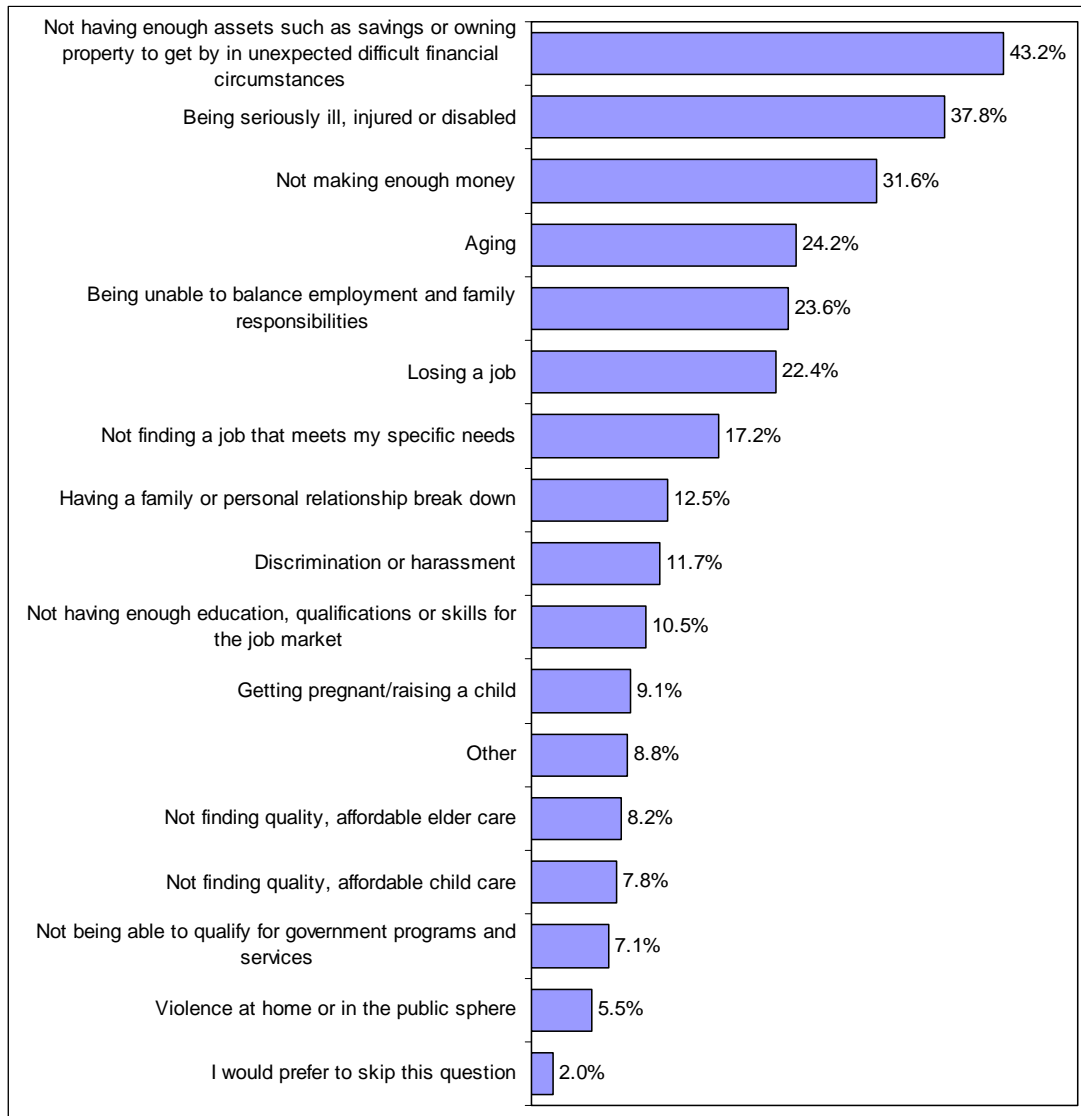
Question 13: Based on your own personal situation, what are the three issues that matter most to you right now?



Health, time and balance, and financial issues led the chart of responses. 9.2% respondents chose “Other,” mostly to rephrase the options provided above in their own way.



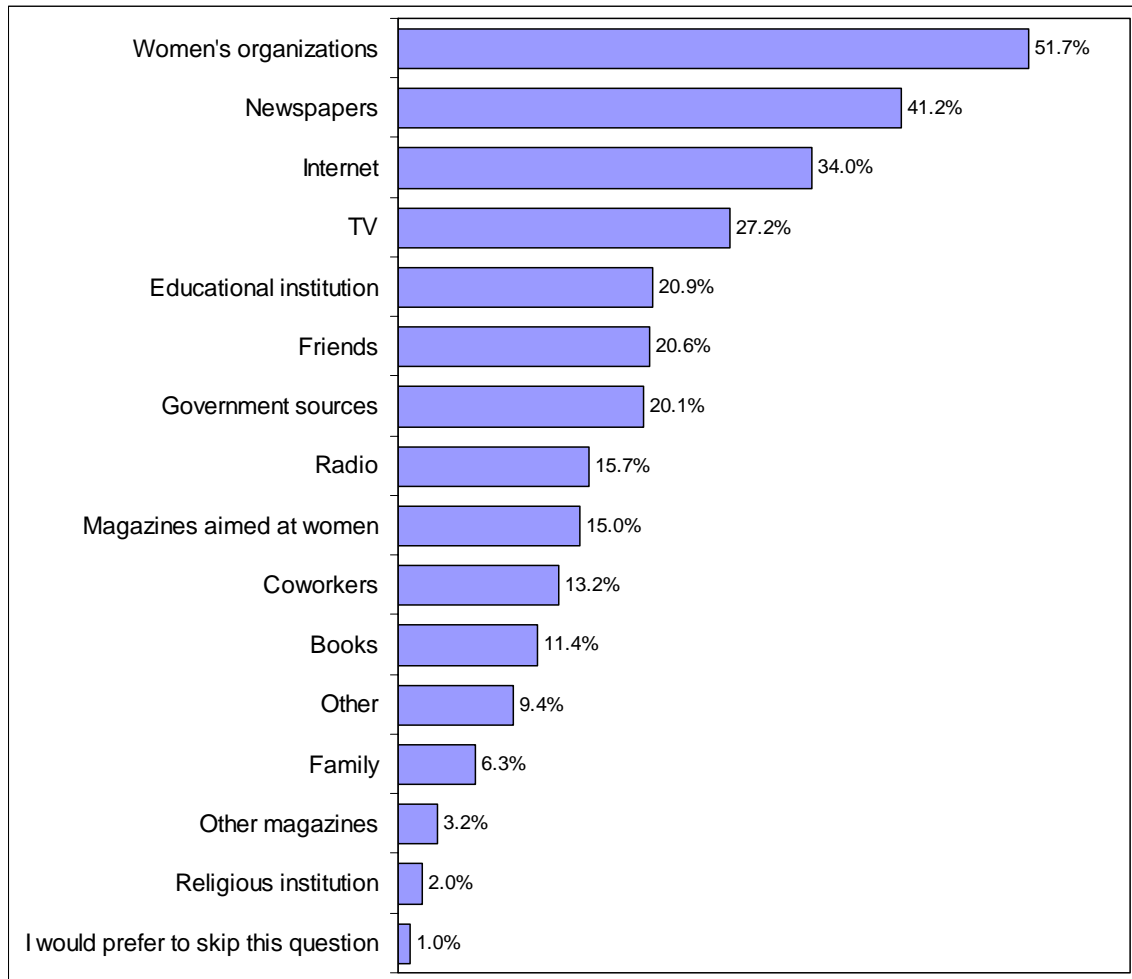
Question 14: What are the three greatest economic risks that you are concerned about personally when thinking about your future?



Financial concerns and illness or disability are listed as the top concerns. 8.8% of respondents chose “Other,” mostly to rephrase the options provided above in their own way.



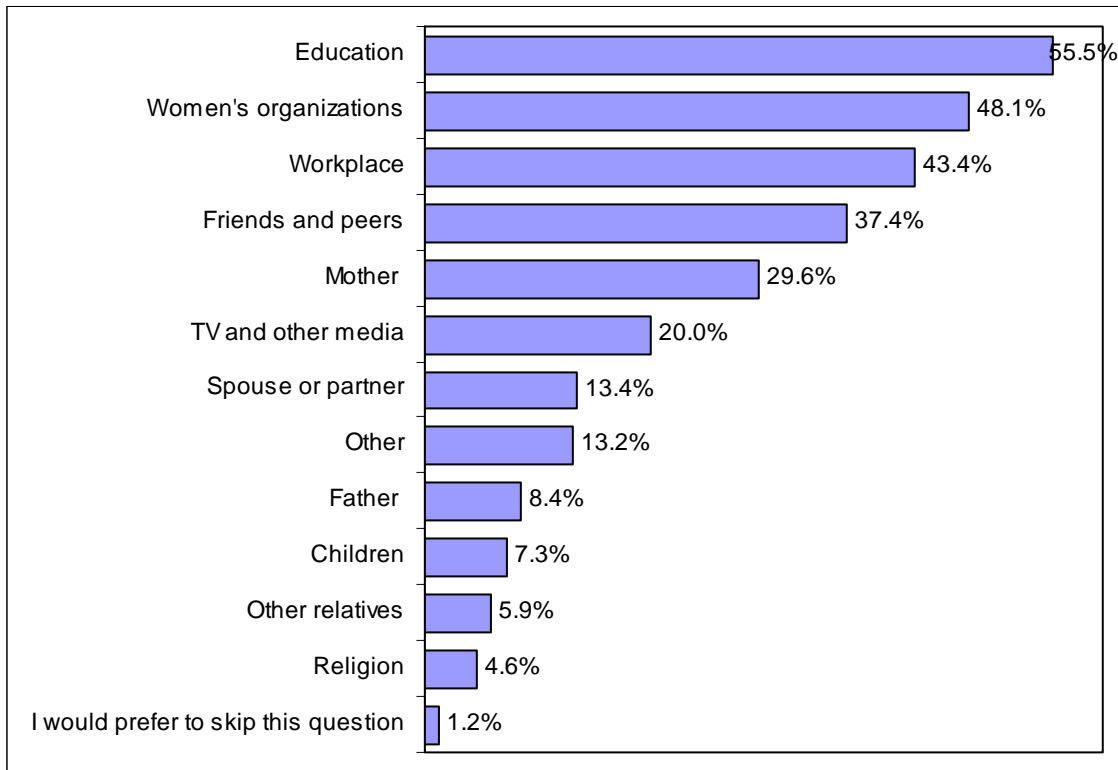
Question 15: What are your three main sources of information on gender equality issues and the situation of women and men in Canada?



Women's organizations and media are identified as the key sources of information. 9.4% of respondents chose "Other." A key trend in their answers referred to Work/Union and Education.



Question 16: What have been the three most important influences on your personal views about gender and women's equality issues?



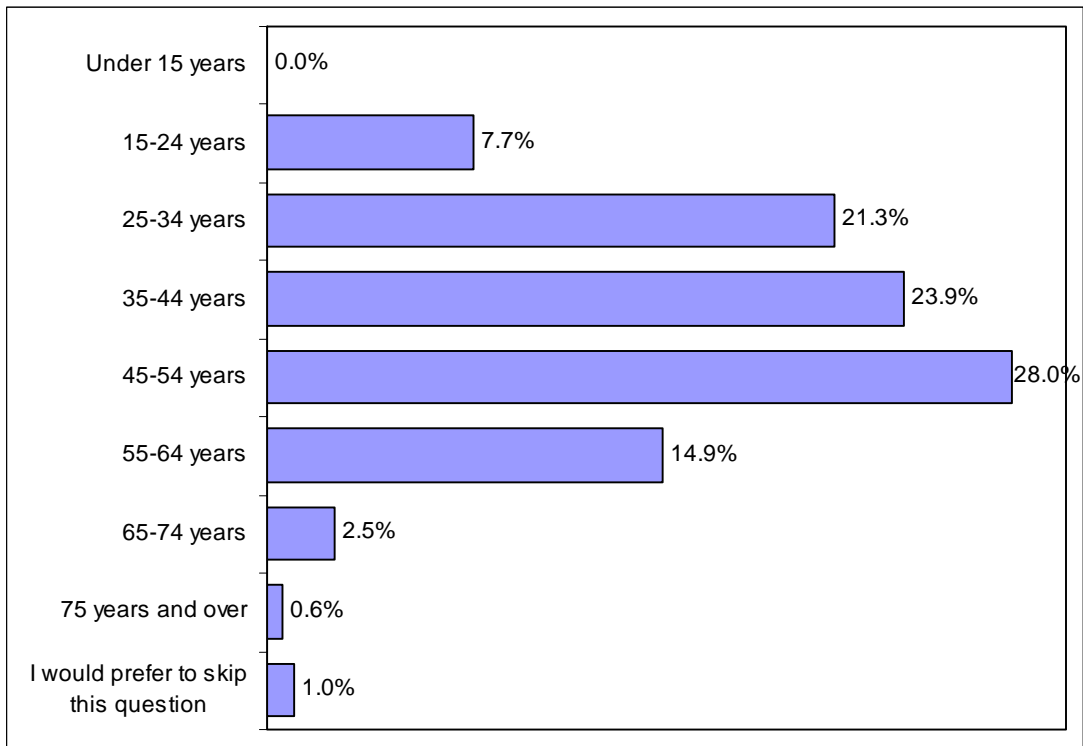
As with Question 15, women's organizations play a key role, as do education and workplace. 13.2% of respondents chose "Other" in this question. Many used this outlet to describe their personal experiences. Another common theme was Workplace/Union.



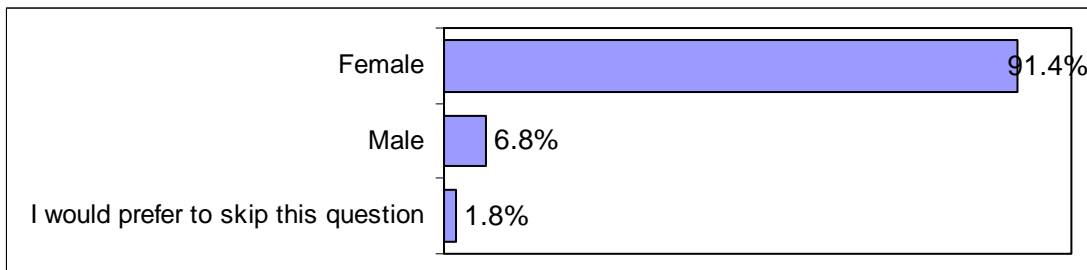
PART 3 – DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic data from this consultation need to be interpreted with caution. A consultation such as this may be susceptible to demographic misinterpretation, since issues related to gender, poverty and minority situations are the topics of most of its questions. The following data, therefore, do not indicate the demographics of the respondents. Instead, the information needs to be viewed as “respondents identifying themselves in the following groups.” In addition, in anonymous surveys such as this one, respondents presenting dissenting opinions typically do not answer demographic questions about themselves as accurately as those who agree would and this needs to be taken into account.

Age



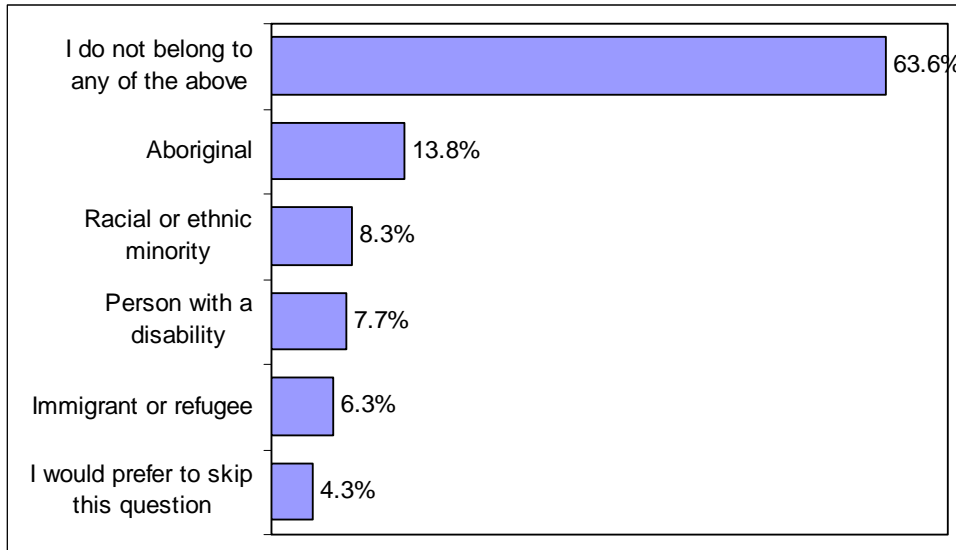
Female / Male



A total of 7% of the respondents identified themselves as Male. Their responses are also significantly different from the rest of the population. For example, Males were more represented among those who disagreed in Question 1. Overall, however, these differences were minor. Both Male and Female respondents agreed with the strategy and policy concepts outlined in the questions. This is further explained in the section “Results by Respondent Subgroups” later in this report.

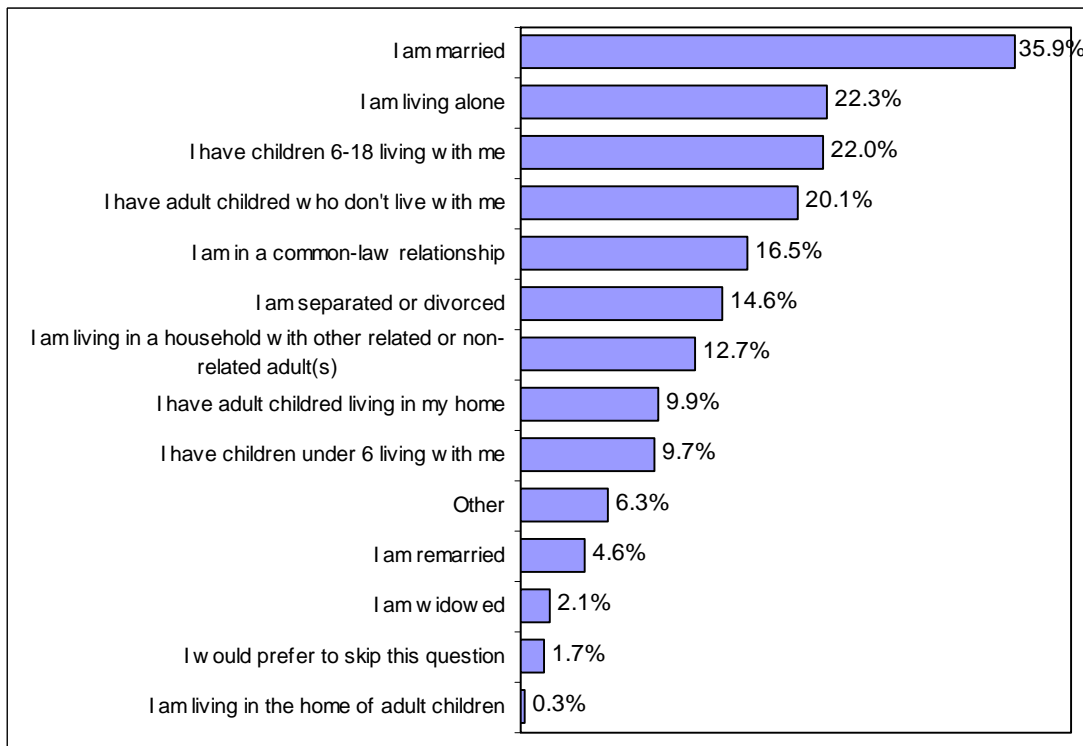


Identify yourself as belonging to any of the following



Although respondents belonging to the population subgroups represented a relatively small portion of the overall population, some conclusions about them were possible. This is discussed further later in this report, in sections “Results by Respondent Subgroups” and “Examples of Insight Gained for Aboriginal, Minority and Lower Income Groups.”. However, for practical purposes, the responses of these subgroups did not differ significantly from the overall population.

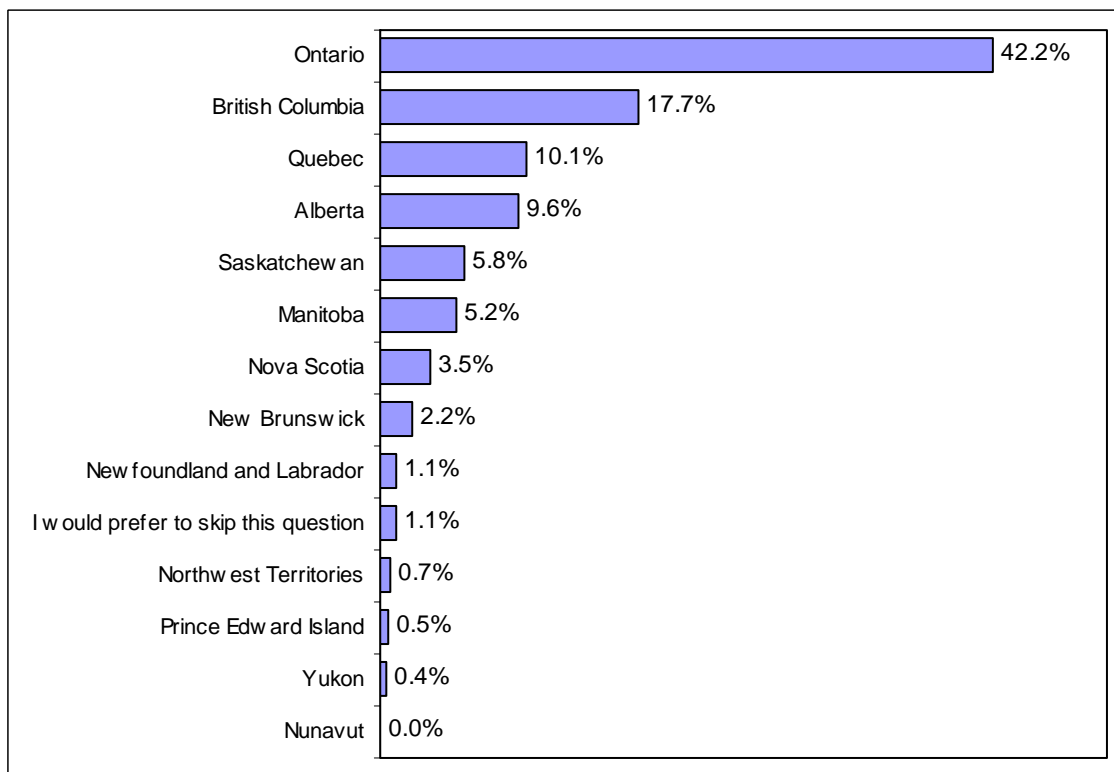
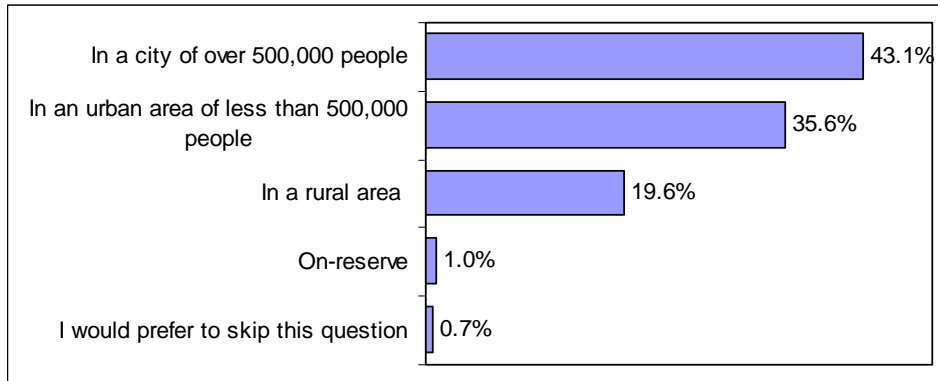
Situation best described as (checks as many as currently apply):



“Other” answers elaborate on the categories above.



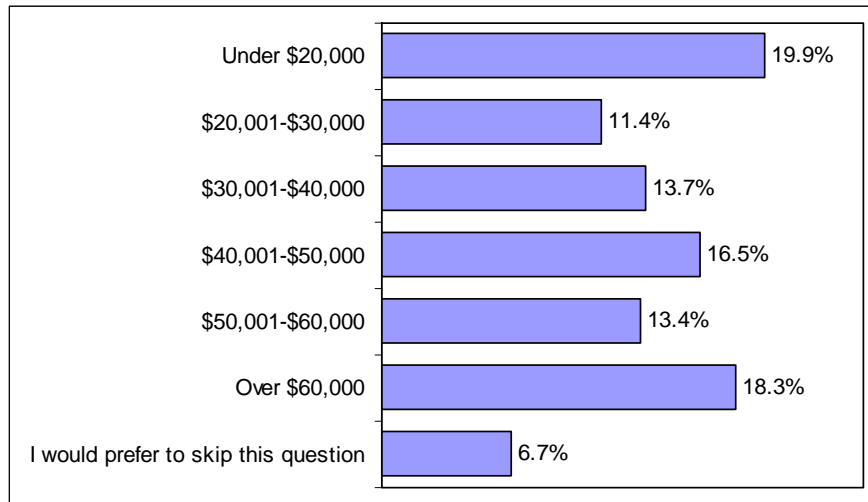
I live in:



The majority of the respondents came from Ontario (42.2%) and from urban areas (78.7%).

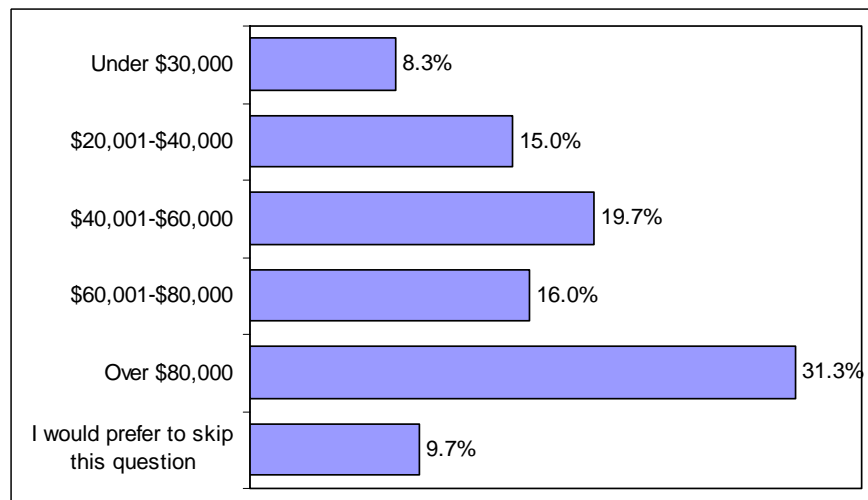


Individual Income



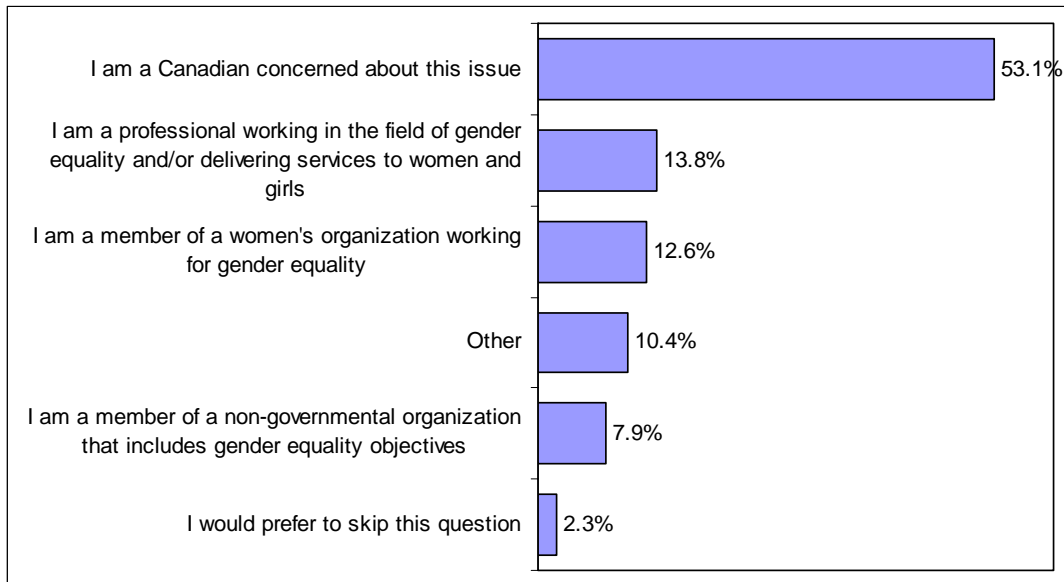
A total of 31.3% of respondents have no more than \$30,000 in individual income. Their responses will be further analyzed later in this report, in sections “Results by Respondent Subgroups” and “Examples of Insight Gained for Aboriginal, Minority and Lower Income Respondents.”

Household Income





Category that best describes my perspective



Just slightly more than one half of respondents (53.1%) identified themselves as concerned Canadians, not associated with a profession or organization involved with gender issues. 10.4% of respondents chose “Other” to express personal experiences that capture gender equality learning on an informal level.

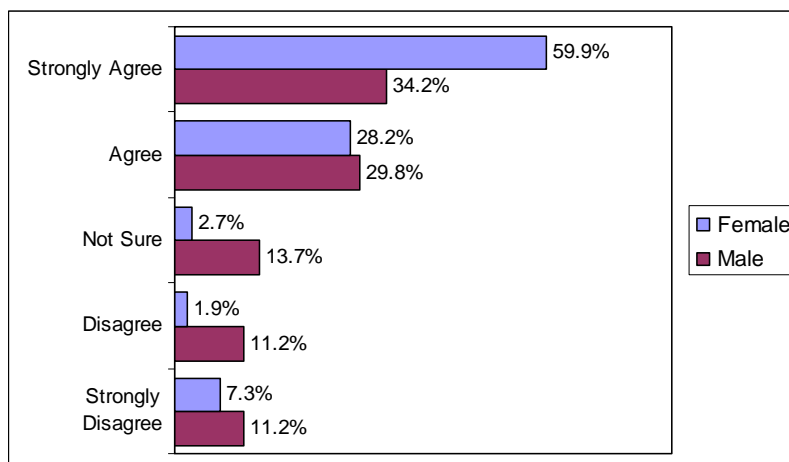


RESULTS BY RESPONDENT SUBGROUP

One of the key conclusions of this consultation is the remarkable consistency across key subgroups of respondents. To illustrate this consistency, the responses to Question 1 were analyzed across distinct segments of the population. The answers vary by segment and it can be shown that these differences are statistically significant. For example, respondents younger than 35 years agree more strongly (score 4.39 on the scale of 1-5) than older respondents (score 4.18) with the concepts outlined in Question 1 (priority of gender equality in Canada).

Category		Average Response to Q1
Overall respondent average		4.24
Age	Less than 35	4.39
	35+	4.18
Female / Male	Female	4.30
	Male	3.55
Groups	Aboriginal	4.32
	Other Minorities (Racial/ethnic, immigrant/refugee, disability)	4.10
	Not belonging to any of these	4.25
Territory	Ontario	4.20
	Quebec	4.43
	West (BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba)	4.24
	East and North (remaining provinces)	4.26
Personal Income	Up to \$30,000	4.26
	\$30,001 - \$50,000	4.36
	\$51,000+	4.17
Member or Professional	Concerned Canadian	4.18
	Member of a women's organization or a professional	4.30

However, these results are entirely academic. For all practical applications, every subgroup rounds to the nearest rank of 4 (Agree) and therefore brings no further applicable insight over and above the general population. In the table above, the largest difference in responses to Question 1 occurred between those respondents who reported themselves as Female or Male. The details below reveal that even in this case, a substantial majority of Males (64%) Strongly Agreed or Agreed with higher priority for gender equality in Canada.





EXAMPLES OF INSIGHT GAINED FOR ABORIGINAL, MINORITY AND LOWER INCOME RESPONDENTS

Due to the importance of recognizing diversity among Canadians, this section further explores the differences in preferences between certain subgroups and the general population. Based on the consistency of the results across the population illustrated in the previous section, the differences are expected to be interesting but relatively minor. This is indeed the conclusion of the following pages.

To best illustrate the insights for the sub-groups, a ranking system is introduced. The rank of preferences for the overall population of respondents is shown in the first column of each table, followed by the ranking for each sub-group.

These results need to be treated as anecdotal only. As explained earlier, the validity of the demographic information is limited. In addition, the sub-group samples are relatively small, which increases the chance of error.

Question 9: Please select the 3 areas where you think action could make the most difference in improving the overall situation of women and girls in Canada:				
	RANK			
	All Respondents	Aboriginal	Other Minorities (racial/ethnic, immigrant/refugee, disability)	Personal Income up to \$30,000
Child care	1	3	3	4
Violence against women	2	1	1	2
Wage gap	3	2	4	3
Recognition of unpaid care giving for children, persons with disabilities and the elderly	4	6	5	1
Work/family balance	5	4	7	6
Employment opportunities	6	5	2	7
Education	7	7	5	5
Income support for those in need	8	9	8	8
Housing	9	8	10	9
Health care	10	10	9	10
Elder care	11	11	12	11
Access to social security benefits	12	12	11	12
Transportation	13	13	13	13



Question 10: In order to improve the situation of women (and their families) living in poverty in Canada, please select the 3 most important areas where you think further action is needed:

	RANK			
	All Respondents	Aboriginal	Other Minorities (racial/ethnic, immigrant/refugee, disability)	Personal Income up to \$30,000
Access to education and training in order to get better employment	1	1	1	1
Access to child care	2	2	2	2
Employment opportunities	3	3	3	5
Income support	4	4	5	3
Better recognition of unpaid work time	5	5	6	4
Better recognition of skills, experience and credentials	6	6	4	6
Access to other services and benefits	7	7	7	7

Question 11: In order to improve the situation of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada, please select the 3 areas where you think further action is most needed:

	RANK			
	All Respondents	Aboriginal	Other Minorities (racial/ethnic, immigrant/refugee, disability)	Personal Income up to \$30,000
Employment and economic opportunities	1	1	1	2
Addressing violence against women and children	2	2	3	1
Participation in decision-making processes	3	4	2	3
Access to education	4	3	5	4
Health and well-being	5	6	3	5
Legal status, membership and entitlements	6	5	7	6
Access to housing and services on reserve	7	8	6	7
Family and care giving responsibilities	8	7	8	8



Question 13: Based on your own personal situation, what are the three issues that matter most to you right now?				
	RANK			
	All Respondents	Aboriginal	Other Minorities (racial/ethnic, immigrant/refugee, disability)	Personal Income up to \$30,000
Access to health care	1	5	6	3
Balancing work and family	2	1	1	8
Time to manage everything that needs to be done	3	7	5	6
Being paid fairly	4	2	3	5
Education/training and being able to afford it	5	3	4	1
Income to make ends meet	6	6	7	2
Access to employment-related benefits like pensions, medical coverage, income if you lose your job	7	8	9	9
Finding and/or keeping a good job that meets your particular needs	8	9	8	4
Discrimination and social exclusion	9	4	2	10
Safety from fear and violence	10	12	9	11
Finding personal time	11	13	11	15
Affordable housing	12	10	15	7
Finding and/or keeping quality child care	13	11	12	13
Finding and/or keeping quality elder care	14	14	13	14
Access to family-related benefits for maternity, child-rearing or other care giving	15	14	14	12
Transportation to access job opportunities and services	16	16	16	16
Access to other services	17	17	17	17



Question 14: What are the three greatest economic risks that you are concerned about personally when thinking about your future?				
	RANK			
	All Respondents	Aboriginal	Other Minorities (racial/ethnic, immigrant/refugee, disability)	Personal Income up to \$30,000
Not having enough assets such as savings or owning property to get by in unexpected difficult financial circumstances	1	1	1	1
Being seriously ill, injured or disabled	2	2	2	4
Not making enough money	3	3	3	2
Aging	4	10	5	6
Being unable to balance employment and family responsibilities	5	5	4	5
Losing a job	6	4	8	10
Not finding a job that meets my specific needs	7	6	6	3
Having a family or personal relationship break down	8	9	9	10
Discrimination or harassment	9	7	6	8
Not having enough education, qualifications or skills for the job market	10	8	10	7
Getting pregnant/raising a child	11	14	12	9
Not finding quality, affordable elder care	12	11	13	14
Not finding quality, affordable child or care	13	12	11	13
Not being able to qualify for government programs and services	14	13	15	12
Violence at home or in the public sphere	15	15	13	15



Question 15: What are your three main sources of information gender equality issues and the situation of women and men in Canada?

	RANK			
	All Respondents	Aboriginal	Other Minorities (racial/ethnic, immigrant/refugee, disability)	Personal Income up to \$30,000
Women's organizations	1	2	1	1
Newspapers	2	1	2	3
Internet	3	4	3	2
TV	4	3	5	6
Educational institution	5	6	7	4
Friends	6	6	4	5
Government sources	7	5	6	8
Radio	8	9	8	10
Magazines aimed at women	9	8	9	7
Coworkers	10	10	11	11
Books	11	11	10	9
Family	12	12	12	12
Other magazines	13	13	14	14
Religious institution	14	14	13	13

Question 16: What have been the three most important influences on your personal views about gender and women's equality issues?

	RANK			
	All Respondents	Aboriginal	Other Minorities (racial/ethnic, immigrant/refugee, disability)	Personal Income up to \$30,000
Education	1	2	1	1
Women's organizations	2	3	2	2
Workplace	3	1	4	5
Friends and peers	4	5	3	3
Mother	5	4	5	4
TV and other media	6	6	6	6
Spouse or partner	7	7	7	7
Father	8	9	8	8
Children	9	10	9	9
Other relatives	10	8	11	10
Religion	11	11	10	11