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November 17th, 2021

Presentation to the Executive Policy Committee
With respect to Poverty Reduction in Winnipeg (Report 6)

Good Morning,

Thank you Mayor Bowman, Committee Members and Mr. Jacks for the opportunity to speak with today on what I hope will be an historic day and just the first of many if we can agree to move forward and address the needs of Winnipeg's most vulnerable, the well over 100 000 who live in poverty and the far too many who struggle just above that rather arbitrary line.

I say arbitrary as there is much debate over what is the best poverty measurement. As I have stated here in the past, that argument, while important to understand, is not one that we should be wasting much time on. The difference in income from the preferred provincial and federal Market Basket Measure to our LIM After-tax is just not that much. For a family of four it is the difference of around $6000. That can be comparatively a lot if everything in that family's life remains stable and the other supports they rely on such as school meal programs, food banks, etc… remain stable. As the pandemic has demonstrated, that is an if we cannot count on. Even prior to the pandemic, any adverse life event, extra costs associated with illness, hospitalization or even just missing a construction zone sign and receiving a ticket in the hundreds of dollars meant a struggle to get the family finances back on an even keel.

I am only mentioning the measurement issue because as part of our research for Campaign 2000's 2020 child and family report card, *Manitoba: Poverty Central*, we engaged Probe Research to do some polling. 1000 Manitobans, which puts us at about 95% certainty of being within 3.1 percentage points of what the results would have been if the entire population had been surveyed, were asked a variety of questions on poverty and potential solutions. When asked how difficult they believed it would be for a family of four to live on $30,000 a year, the amount that family gets from all levels of government assistance combined, which is below even the Market Basket Measure for Winnipeg, 89% said it would be difficult. 64% said very difficult. 43% of whom were Progressive Conservative supporters in case you were thinking that it just those who lean more left. A further breakdown of the data showed that 64% of Winnipeggers believed it would be very difficult. A follow up question on how much more

governments should be doing to help people in poverty was asked and 55% of Winnipeggers want much more done. When given choices of what governments could do, jobs and education received highest priority at 60% and affordable housing got 55%. Not surprisingly, these two areas figure prominently in the proposed poverty reduction strategy. With affordable housing being one of the two life poles.

Next week, we will be releasing our next child and family poverty report card *Manitoba: Missed Opportunities*. Here is your partial preview. Winnipeg Centre remains the federal urban riding with the highest rates of child and family poverty at just under 40%. Winnipeg North is not much better at 32%. Given we know that both of these ridings are where the majority of Indigenous Winnipeggers live, these findings should add more weight for the need of the strategy's other life pole Indigenous Children, Youth and Families.

Our report is titled Missed Opportunities because as a province, we missed the opportunity to capitalize on the Canada Child Benefit. Our previous reports demonstrate that there was a significant drop in child poverty in 2016. That was the year that the CCB was fully implemented as was the provincial Rent Assist program. However, with no further investment by the province and perhaps even compounded by changes to Rent Assist thresholds, child poverty rose again in 2017, 2018 and 2019 which is the most recent data available. Now in Manitoba, instead of having the federal ridings with the 1st, 3rd and 5th highest rates of child poverty, we know have the 1st, 3rd and 4th. This is 'on' the province no doubt. They could have and should have done more. However, as our most populace and capital city, this level of government must also do their share. There is a Charter duty to look after the health and well-being of the city's inhabitants.

The only reason I am here today only "with respect to" this matter and not listed as in full support is because I wanted to add the strong caveat that should you, and I hope you will, adopt this strategy, it must be fully resourced. Social Planning Council of Winnipeg was part of the leadership team for *Winnipeg Without Poverty* which led to Council passing the motion to develop this strategy. However, we took note then that there was a stipulation that the strategy be developed with existing resources in mind.

We have to reallocate resources. Our spending priorities, pipes, pavement and police, are not working. And of course we are already spending on not addressing poverty through policing and other emergency services when all evidence demonstrates it is more effective and less costly in the long run to address the root causes of poverty. At different occasions, such as budget consultations, through Alternative Municipal Budgets and other coalition work, we have made various suggestions from where the resources can be reallocated. There is the unsustainable growth of the Winnipeg Police Service budget. There is the decades old approach to cutting business taxes as well as keeping property taxes amongst the lowest of city's our size. As the last Alternative

Municipal Budget demonstrated, an equitable tax system that takes income levels into consideration would benefit both the city's coffers and the taxpayers in most need.

I want to congratulate the strategies authors and our fellow contributors to it. The lenses applied were specific to levers that the city has at its disposal as well as the larger humanitarian and human rights ones. I also want to congratulate you and your fellow council members for embarking on this. I am quite sure none of you really thought that anything could be done without funds. I will close by simply urging you all to adopt and resource this strategy knowing that you have community support to do so.

Thank you.



Executive Director



MANITOBANS' VIEWS ON SOLUTIONS TO POVERTY

DECEMBER 2020

Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL OF WINNIPEG

PROBE RESEARCH INC.

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KEY FINDINGS

- An overwhelming majority of Manitobans – particularly Winnipeggers, women and those in wealthier households – feel it would be hard for a family of four to make ends meet on $30,000 per year. (That's the amount of funding provided by all levels of government to a family on social assistance in Manitoba.) Indeed, six-in-ten Manitobans feel it would be *very difficult* to live on this income, and even 43 per cent of Progressive Conservative supporters feel this way. Not surprisingly, those with high school or less and those in lower-income households are less likely to feel $30,000 per year is insufficient for a family of four.
- A slightly smaller proportion – about one-half – feel the government ought to offer *much more* help to those living in poverty as part of the COVID-19 recovery. Here again, women and Winnipeggers are more likely to feel *much more* help is due to those in poverty following the pandemic, but younger adults and Indigenous people are also more likely to feel this way.
- More job training and more affordable housing are broadly seen as the most effective solutions to poverty. More than one-half of Manitobans rank these solutions in their top three. Interestingly, there is very little support for increasing welfare rates – only nine per cent of Manitobans favour this as an option. However, there is intense support among one-quarter of Manitobans for the creation of a guaranteed annual income.

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 Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

PROBE RESEARCH INC.

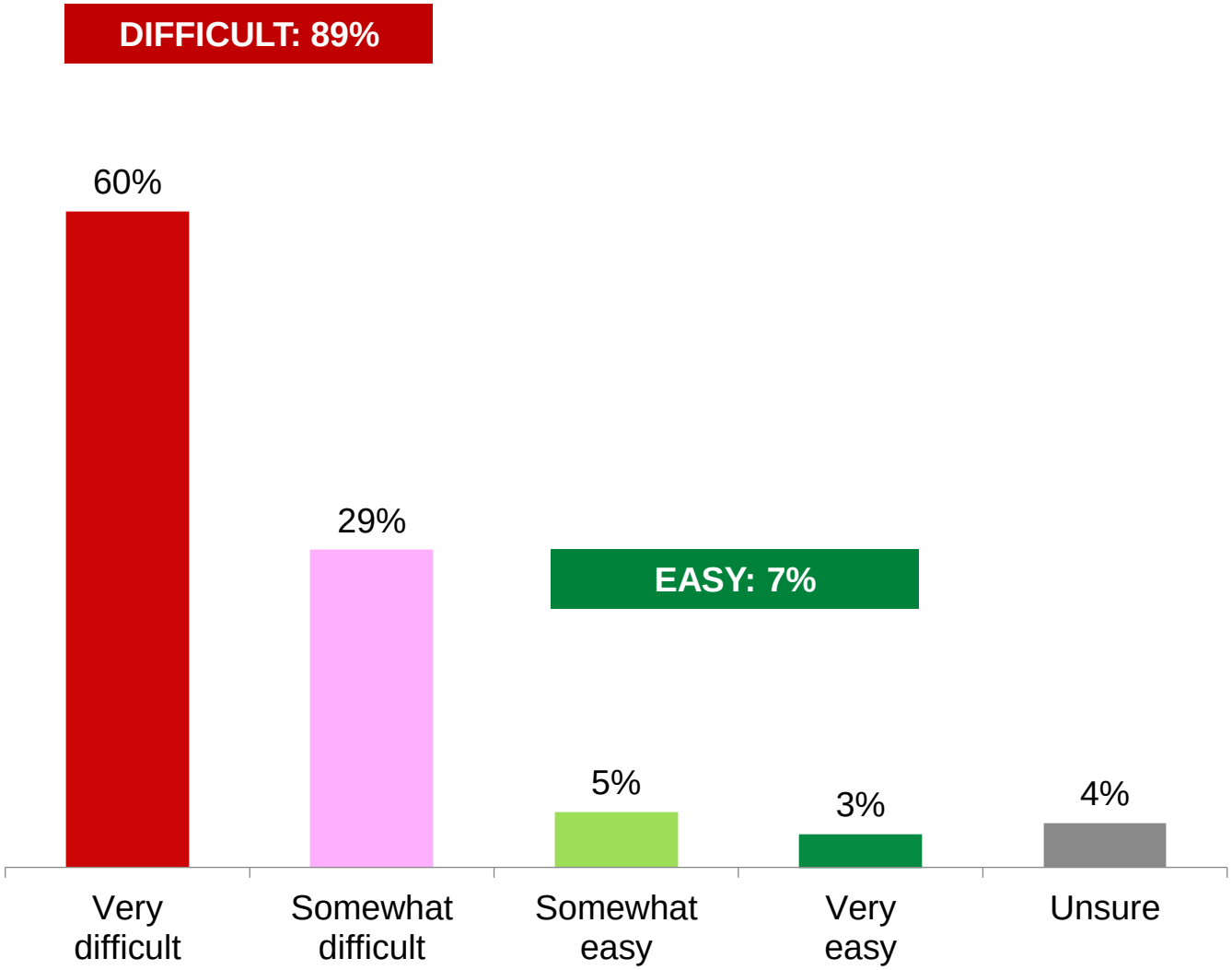
METHODOLOGY

- Between November 24th and December 4th, 2020, Probe Research surveyed a random and representative sampling of 1,000 adults residing in Manitoba.
- With a sample of 1,000, one can say with 95 percent 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.
- 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. A CATI-to-web approach was employed whereby a live-voice operator randomly recruited respondents by telephone, inviting them to complete the survey via a secure online questionnaire. In addition, 277 randomly recruited Probe Research panel members were included in this general population adult sampling.
- Minor statistical weighting has been applied to this sample to ensure that age and gender characteristics properly reflect known attributes of the province's population. All data analysis was performed using SPSS statistical analysis software.

MANITOBANS HAVE NO DOUBT $30K A YEAR IS DIFFICULT FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR TO LIVE ON

SPCW1. *"Prior to the pandemic, a family of four on social assistance or welfare in Manitoba got about $30,000 a year from all levels of government. Based on what you know, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for a family of four to make ends meet on that amount?"*

Base: All respondents (N=1,000)



WOMEN, UNIVERSITY GRADS, NDP VOTERS AMONG THOSE MORE LIKELY TO FEEL LIVING ON $30K/YEAR IS VERY HARD

VIEWS AMONG SUB-GROUPS

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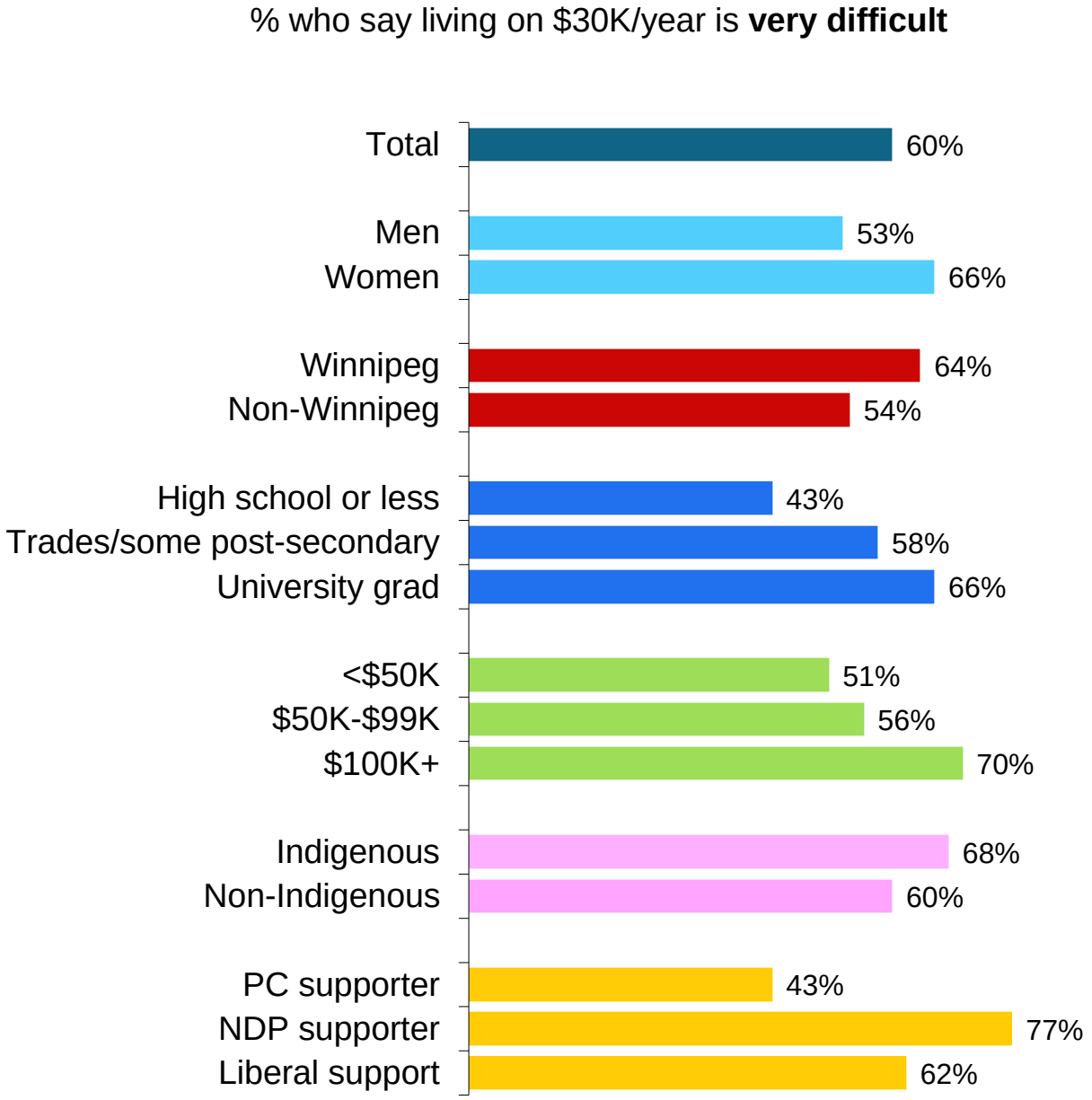
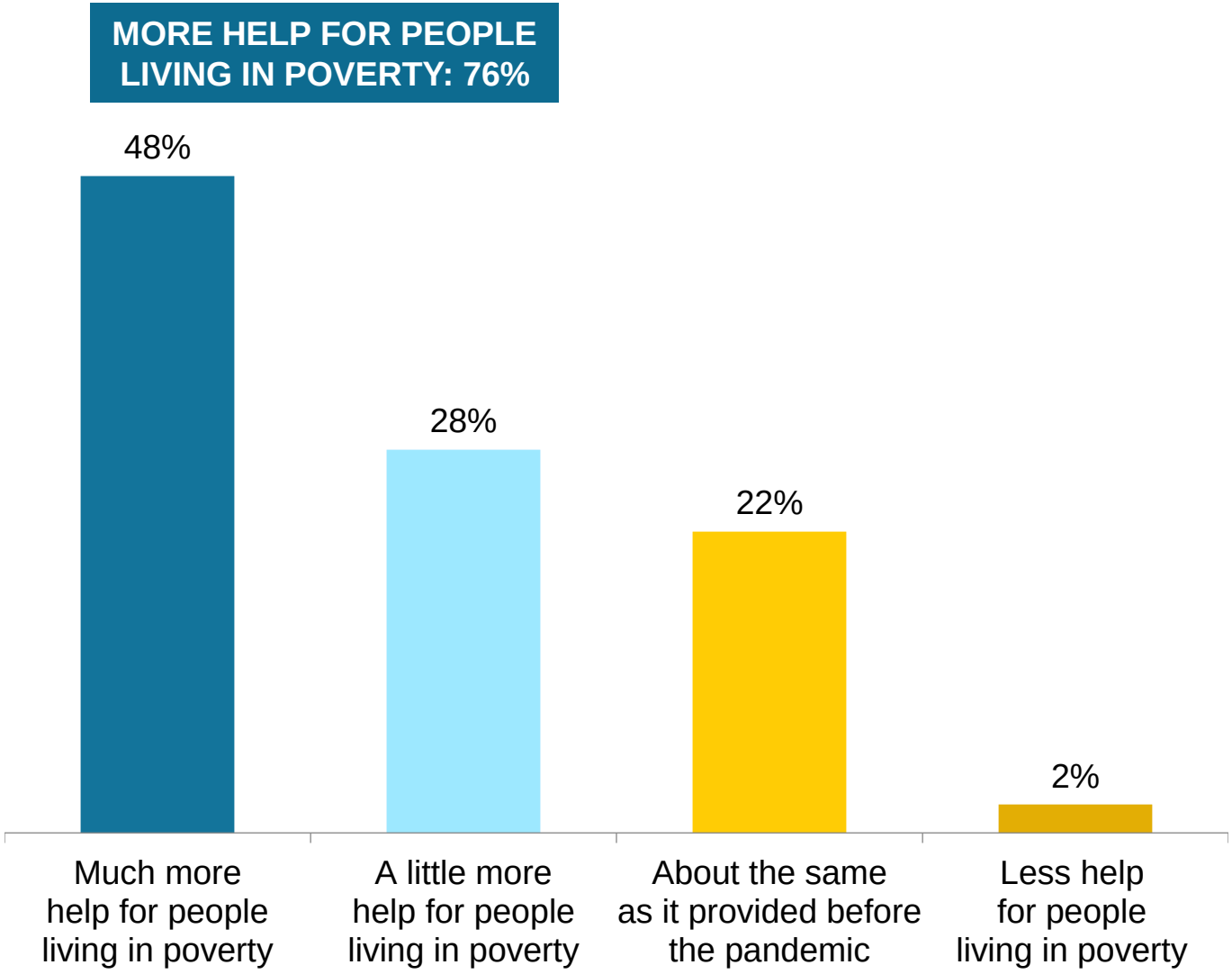


THREE-IN-FOUR MANITOBANS SUPPORT MORE GOVERNMENT AID FOR PEOPLE IN POVERTY POST-PANDEMIC

SPCW2. *"Once the COVID-19 pandemic is over, the provincial government will shift its focus to recovery. When that time comes, would you like to see the government here in Manitoba offer…"*

Base: All respondents (N=1,000)



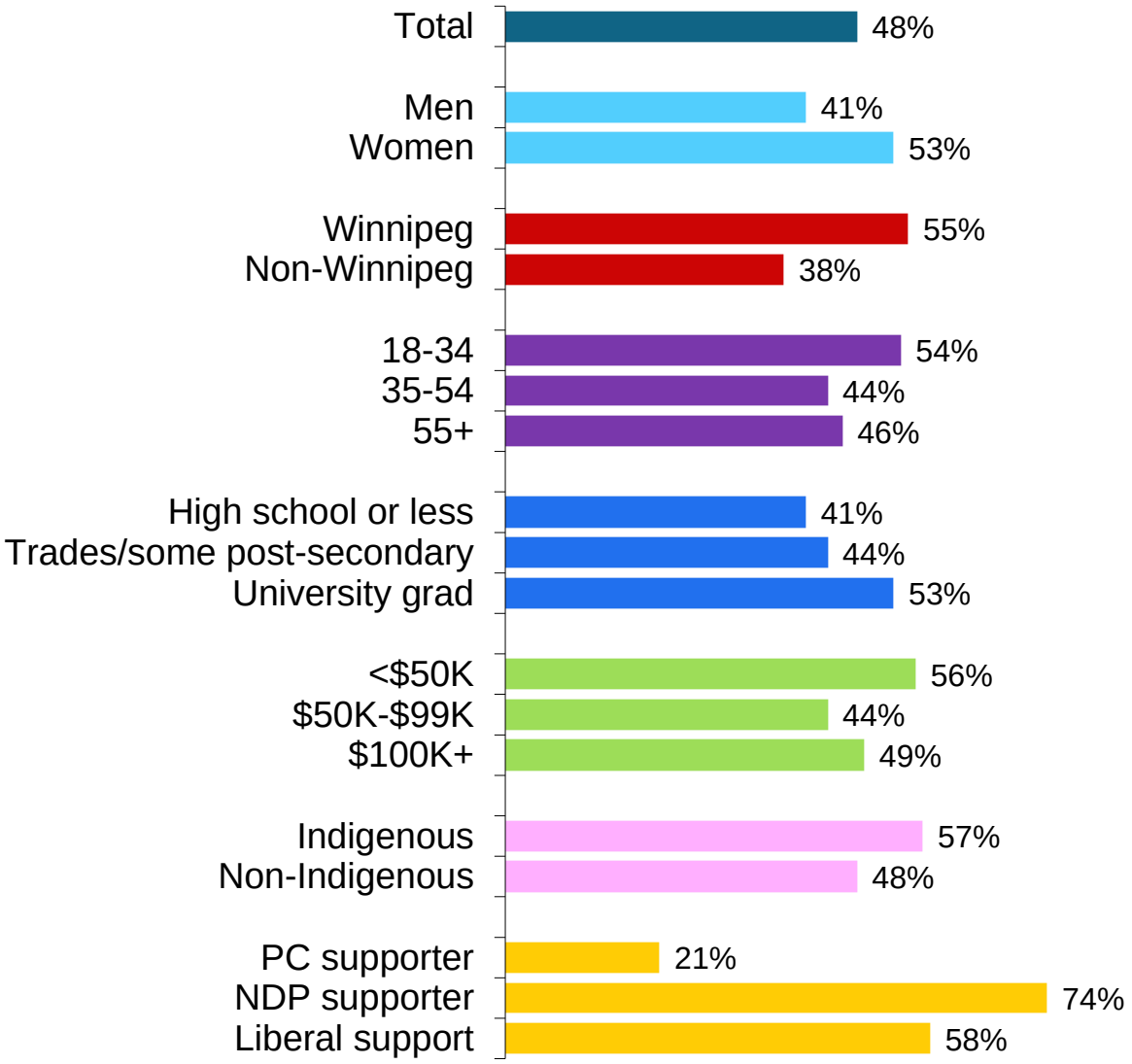
WINNIPEGGERS, YOUNGER ADULTS, NDP VOTERS FAVOUR MUCH MORE AID FOR THE POOR, POST-PANDEMIC

VIEWS AMONG SUB-GROUPS

SPCW2. *"Once the COVID-19 pandemic is over, the provincial government will shift its focus to recovery. When that time comes, would you like to see the government here in Manitoba offer…"*

Base: All respondents (N=1,000)

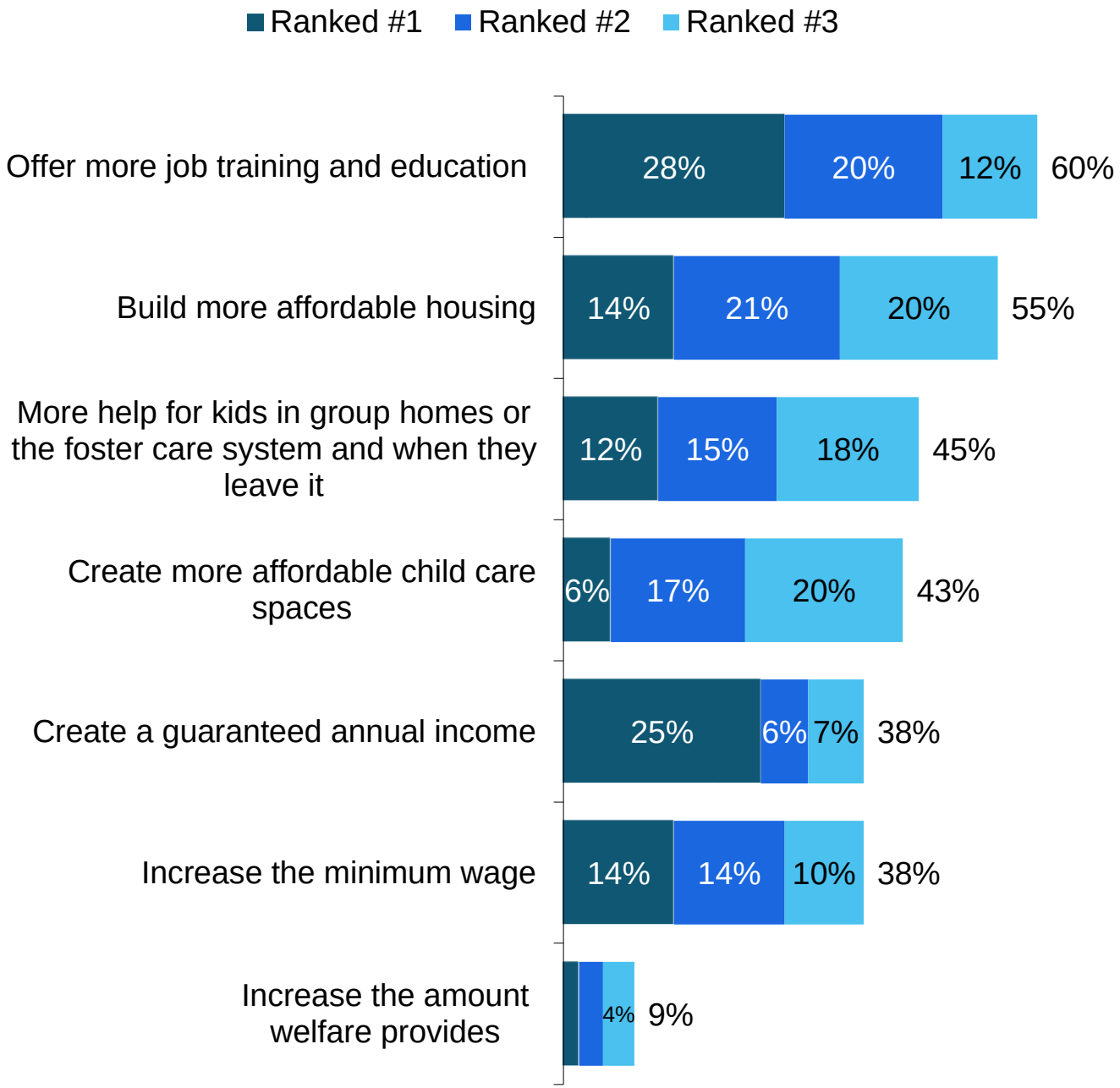
% who favour **much more help** for people living in poverty, post-pandemic



JOB TRAINING, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING VIEWED AS BEST WAY TO FIGHT POVERTY

SPCW3. *"There are many ways governments could help people living in poverty. Please read the list below and indicate which options you feel would be most effective. Please choose up to three and rank them in order."*

Base: All respondents (N=1,000)



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