



## Citizen Perspectives on Sexual & Gender Based Violence

### Executive Summary

July 2017

# Executive Summary

This research was commissioned to understand public perspectives on sexual and gender based violence. Leger completed a survey of 600 Edmontonians in early 2017 through 15-minute telephone interviews.

The research draws attention to an opportunity to broaden the public's understanding of sexual and gender based violence. There is a specific need to convey that sexual violence and gender based violence are not just physical acts but include a full range of behaviours, including verbal and emotional harm. While acts such as rape, alcohol facilitated rape and other physical behaviours are considered violent and serious by Edmontonians, things like catcalling, sexualizing women, and "outing" people are not taken as seriously.

The study also highlights the willingness of Edmontonians to play a role in preventing sexual and gender based violence and to intervene when it does occur; however, Edmontonians need more information about how to respond when they witness these behaviours, and where they can go for resources and support. Citizens seem to want more information and support and they see the City of Edmonton as an important source of information.

A public education campaign is recommended, to help expand Edmontonians' appreciation and understanding of sexual and gender based violence prevention.

The research findings will be used to support the further development of the City of Edmonton's Gender-based Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Initiative.

*The goal of the research was to understand public perspectives on sexual and gender based violence.*

The City of Edmonton's Gender Based Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Initiative was approved in April 2015. This initiative provides the opportunity to promote preventative activities relating to gender based violence. By raising the level of awareness and highlighting these issues, the City of Edmonton can take action to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault from occurring.

The City of Edmonton contracted Leger to conduct a study with citizens of Edmonton to establish a baseline measure for awareness and understanding of the concepts of gender based violence and sexual violence.

The objectives of the research were to:

- Measure the understanding of gender based violence and sexual violence
- Understand what is and what is not considered an act of gender based violence and sexual violence
- Understand the willingness of citizens to speak up when they witness an act of violence
- Establish a baseline measure for attitudes towards gender based violence and sexual violence
- Measure the awareness of resources for help
- Measure campaign awareness for topics related to gender based violence and sexual violence
- Understand the go-to source of information about preventing gender based violence and sexual violence

## Study Population

Residents of Edmonton, 18 years of age and older.

## Data Collection

600 telephone interviews were completed with Edmontonians.

The survey was pilot-tested on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Interviews were conducted from January 9<sup>th</sup> to March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Edmontonians who self-identified as either Visible Minority (n=103) or Indigenous (n=100) were over-sampled, to allow comparisons across these groups. This was corrected for in the aggregate data using weighting techniques.

Special considerations were made during interviewing due to the sensitive nature of the topic, including but not limited to:

- Using a team of senior, female interviewers was assigned to the project.
- Briefing the interviewers prior to the commencement of the project about the sensitive nature of the survey and preparing a list of frequently asked questions with possible answers appropriate to the situation.
- If respondents found the topic too sensitive or became upset during the interview, they were offered a follow-up call from a City social worker. Two respondents asked to terminate the interview but neither wanted to be contacted by the City.
- Respondents were given an opportunity to decline the survey twice before starting. Four percent (4%) of Edmontonians declined the survey after learning about the topic, including 2% who declined the survey specifically because they were not interested in the topic.

## Statistical Analysis

The margin of error for a sample of 600 Edmontonians is  $\pm 4.0\%$ , 19 times out of 20.

## Analysis & Interpretation of Results

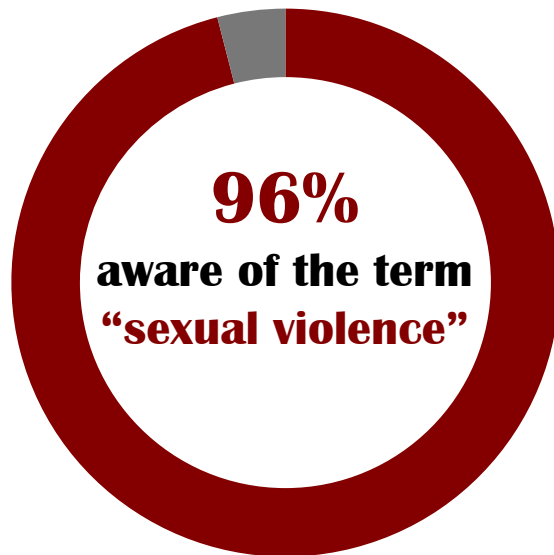
To rectify imbalances and render the sample representative of the entire adult population of Edmonton, raw data were weighted according to the actual distribution of the population based on gender, age, and ethnicity. For the purposes of weighting the data, the gender binary was used; gender identity was also asked, and is shown in the demographics section of this report. Results are weighted using 2011 Census data from Statistic Canada.

# Key Insights

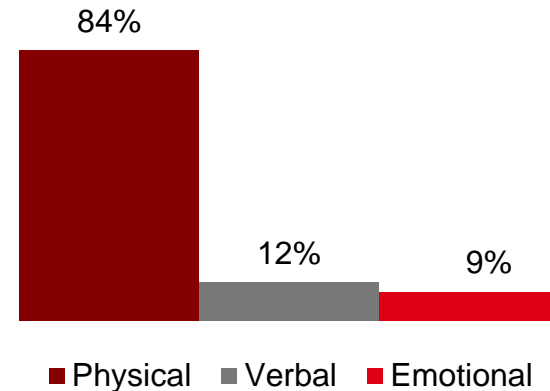
# Awareness and Understanding

**There is opportunity to deepen the public's understanding of sexual and gender based violence, beyond physical actions**

Nearly all Edmontonians have heard of sexual violence, and tend to associate it with physical actions rather than verbal or emotional harm.

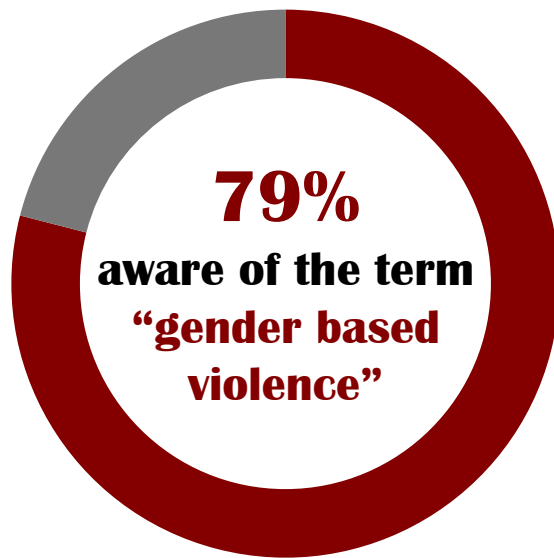


**Most tend to associate sexual violence with physical actions**

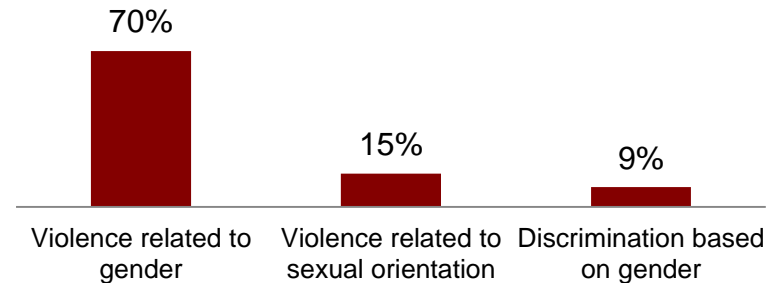


# Awareness and Understanding

Awareness of gender based violence is relatively lower than awareness of sexual violence. Public understanding tends to be literal, and focused on the target rather than the nature of the violence.



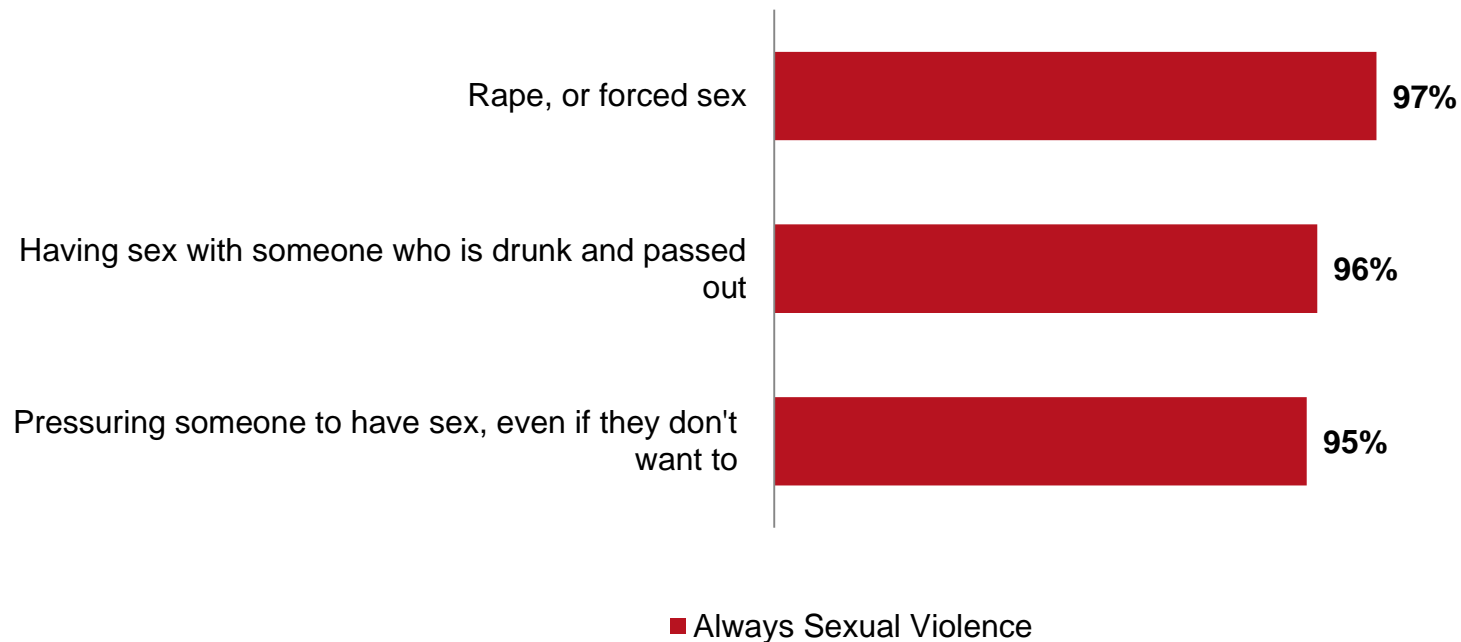
Edmontonians tend to define gender based violence based on the target rather than the nature of the violence



# Is it “violence” or just “serious?”

**While some situations are clearly considered “always violence,” some are only “serious.” It may take convincing for Edmontonians to recognize some behaviours and situations as violence.**

Situations that involve physical harm, such as rape, alcohol facilitated rape, are “always violence,” as is pressuring someone to have sex even when they don’t want to.

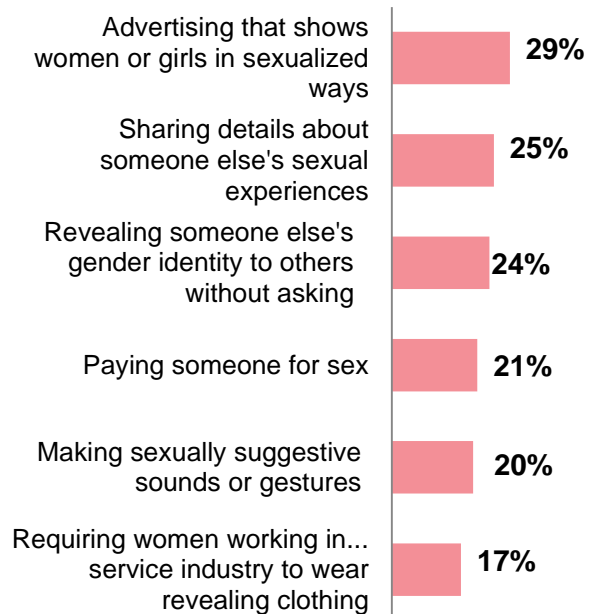




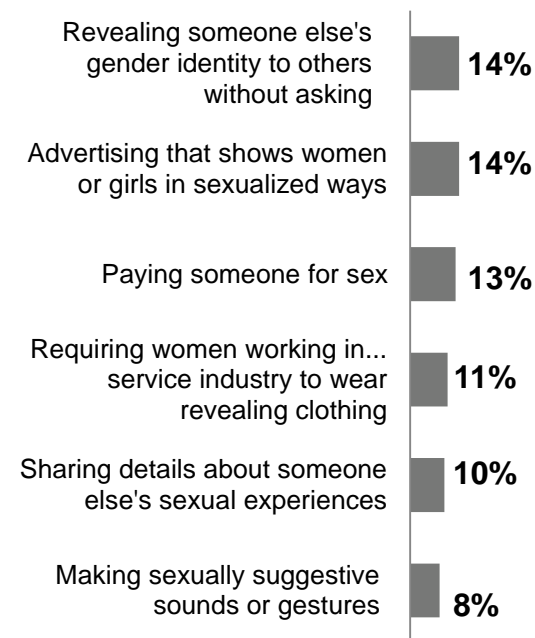
# Is it “violence” or just “serious?”

Most examples of sexual violence presented were considered at least “serious,” although a notable proportion of Edmontonians believe that six of the eleven situations presented are not serious, including catcalling, sexualizing women, and “outing” people.

## Not always violence, but Serious



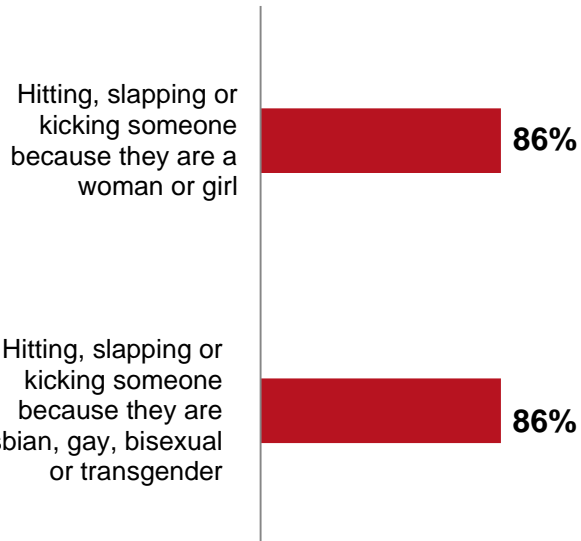
## Not always violence, and Not Serious



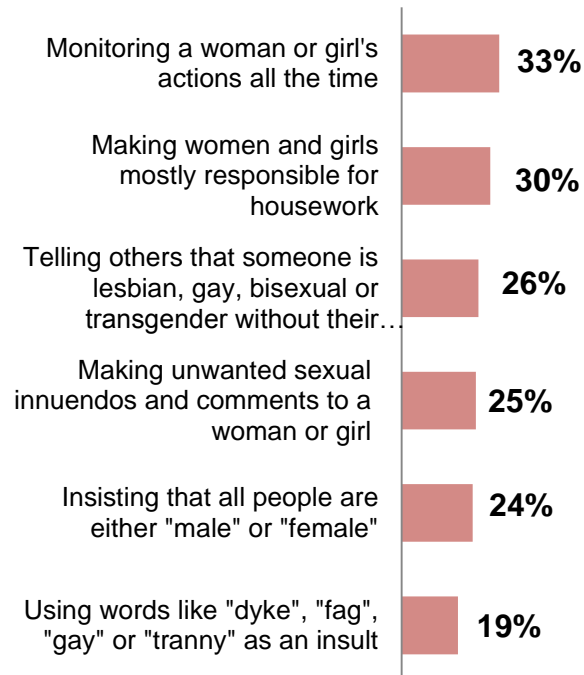
# Is it “violence” or just “serious?”

Similarly, many examples of gender based violence were considered “serious” but some were not, and there is opportunity to educate the public on these topics.

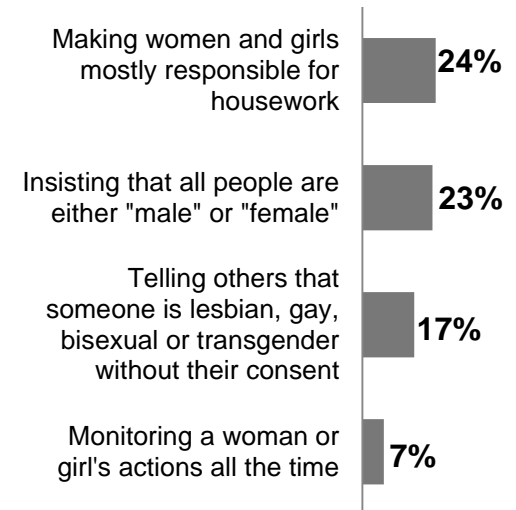
## Always Violence



## Not always violence, but Serious



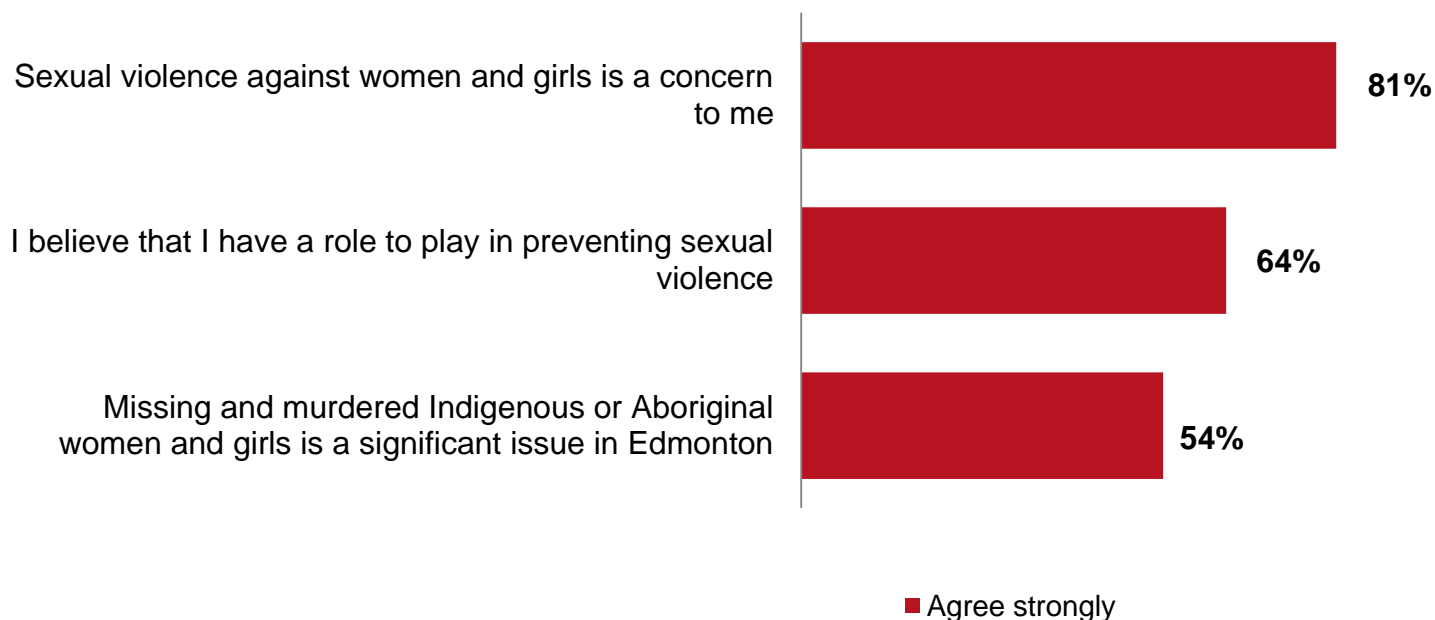
## Not always violence, and Not Serious



## Positive Attitudes

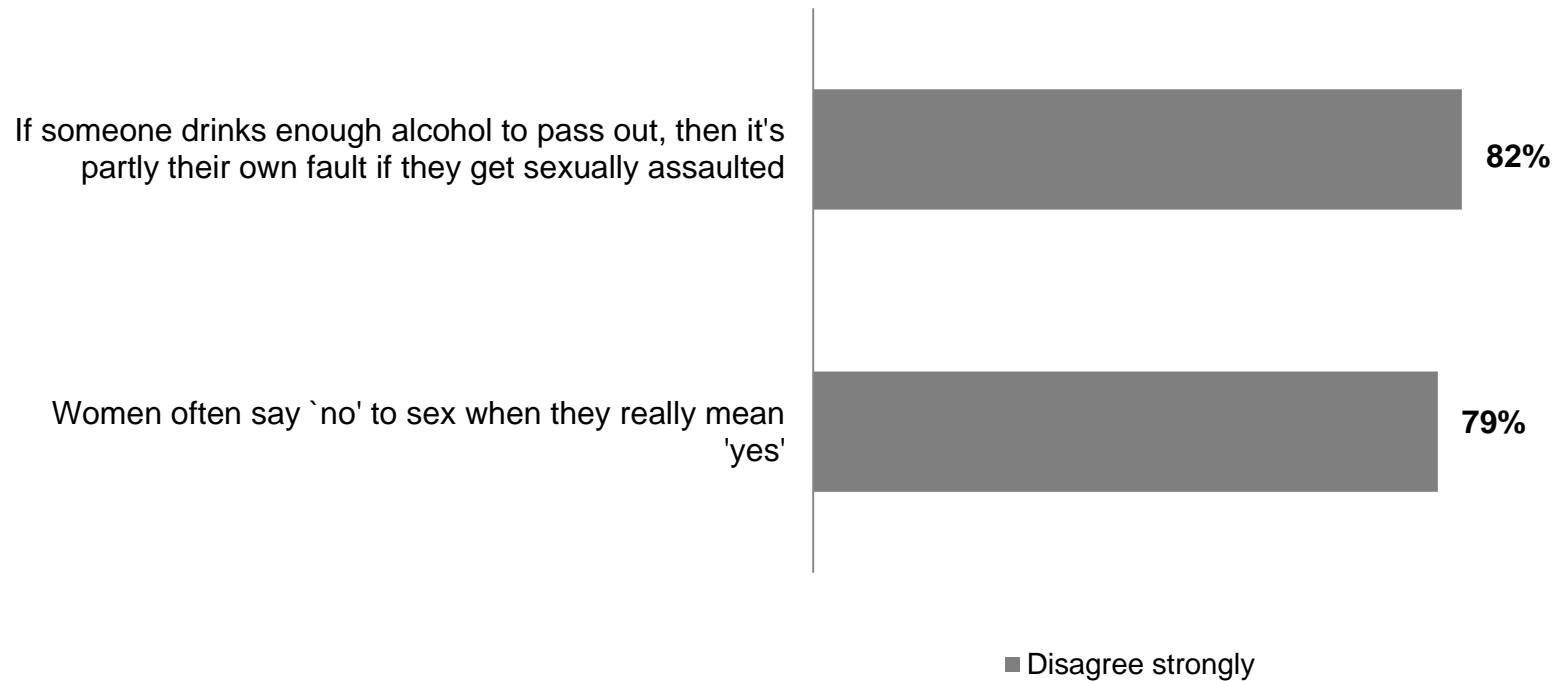
**There is opportunity to position non-violence as the norm and to build on the willingness of Edmontonians to play a role in prevention and intervention.**

Most Edmontonians strongly agree that sexual violence is a concern, that they have a role to play in prevention and that murdered and missing Indigenous women is a significant issue.



## Positive Attitudes

Edmontonians also demonstrate desired attitudes about “no means no” and alcohol-facilitated rape.



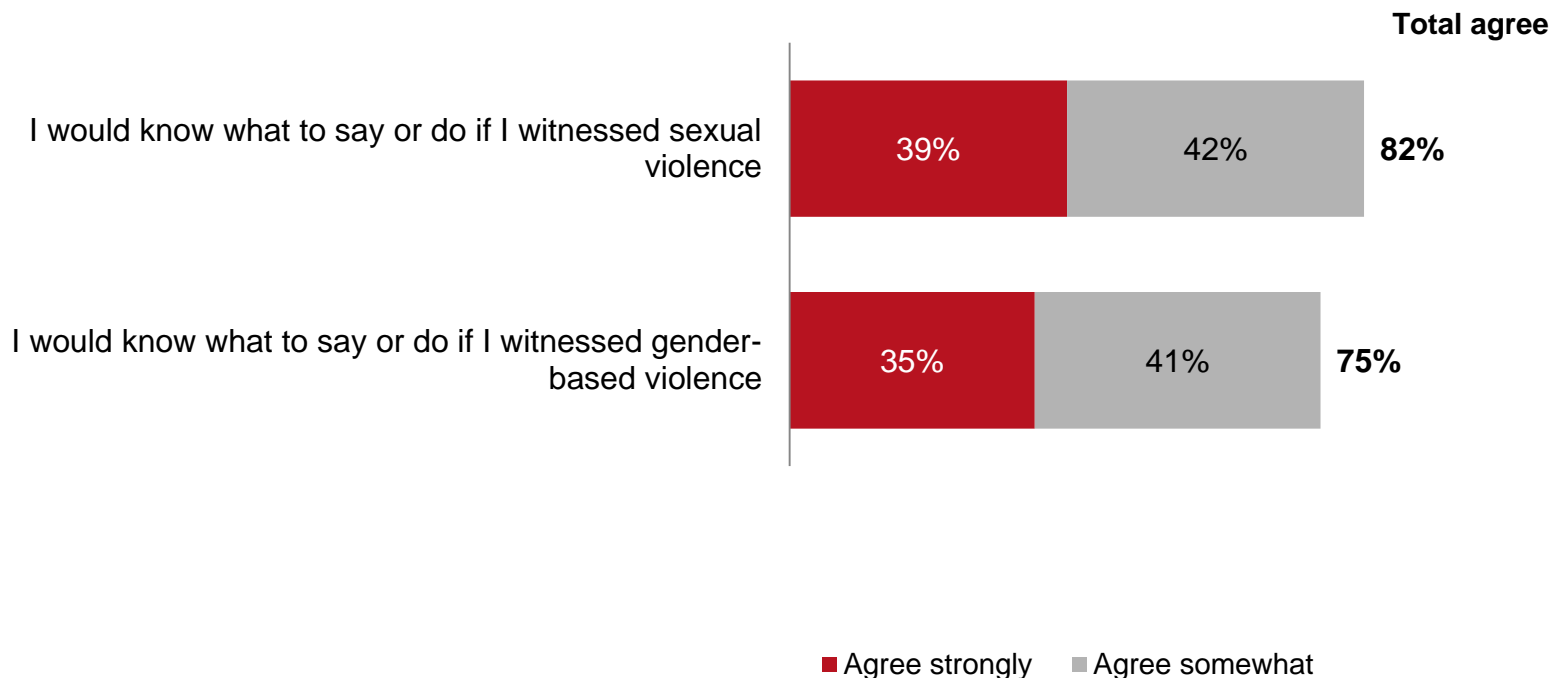
## Positive Attitudes

Edmontonians also strongly believe that everyone should intervene if they witness gender based violence and they are willing to play a role in preventing it.



## Lack of awareness and a few attitudes could be barriers to re-shaping desirable behaviours.

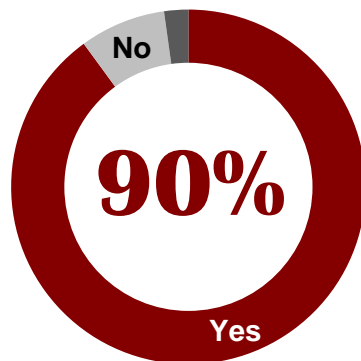
While most Edmontonians claim to know what to say or do if they witnessed sexual violence or gender based violence, these assertions are moderate rather than strong.



## There is opportunity to educate Edmontonians on what to say or do if they witness sexual or gender based violence.

Given the desire and willingness to intervene, there is significant opportunity to educate Edmontonians on how to respond when they witness these behaviours.

Most Edmontonians would want to get involved if someone they knew was experiencing gender based violence



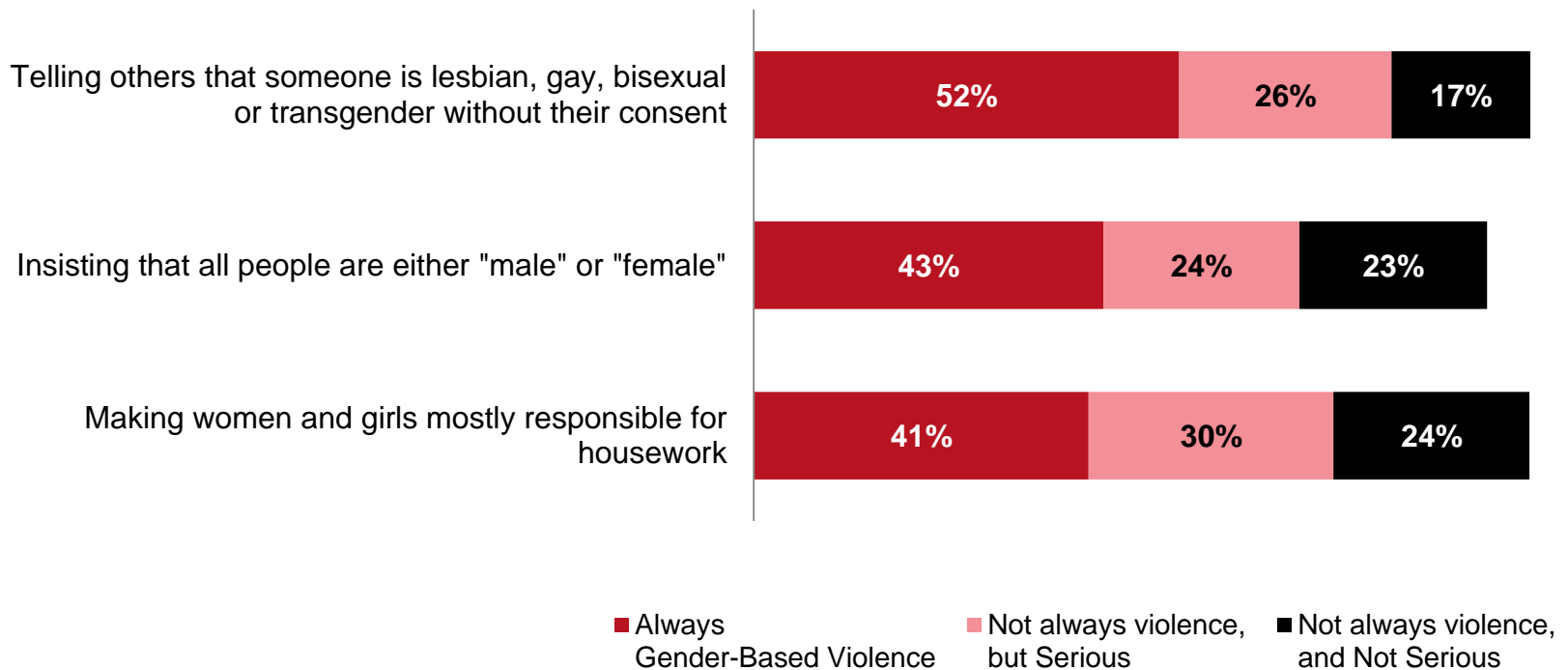
Less than half would know what to say or do



■ Agree strongly

# Barriers

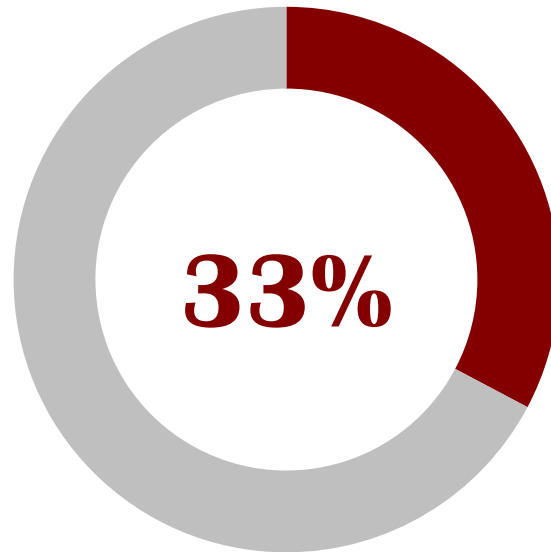
Some attitudes and beliefs may hold Edmontonians back from fully appreciating the issues of sexual and gender based violence, particularly: failing to recognize genders outside the male and female binary; “outing” someone’s gender or sexual attraction; and reinforcing traditional gender roles such as making women responsible for housework.





**Edmontonians seem to want more information and support, and they see the City as an important resource**

**One-third of survey respondents  
accepted the offer for information  
at the conclusion of their interview**



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