

SIECCAN ISSUE BRIEF

SURVEY INDICATES STRONG SUPPORT FOR PUBLICLY FUNDED SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES AND SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

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SUMMARY

The Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN) surveyed 4,410 adults aged 25-44 across Canada on a range of sexuality and sexual health issues.

A clear majority support publicly funded access to contraception (81%) and abortion services (74%).

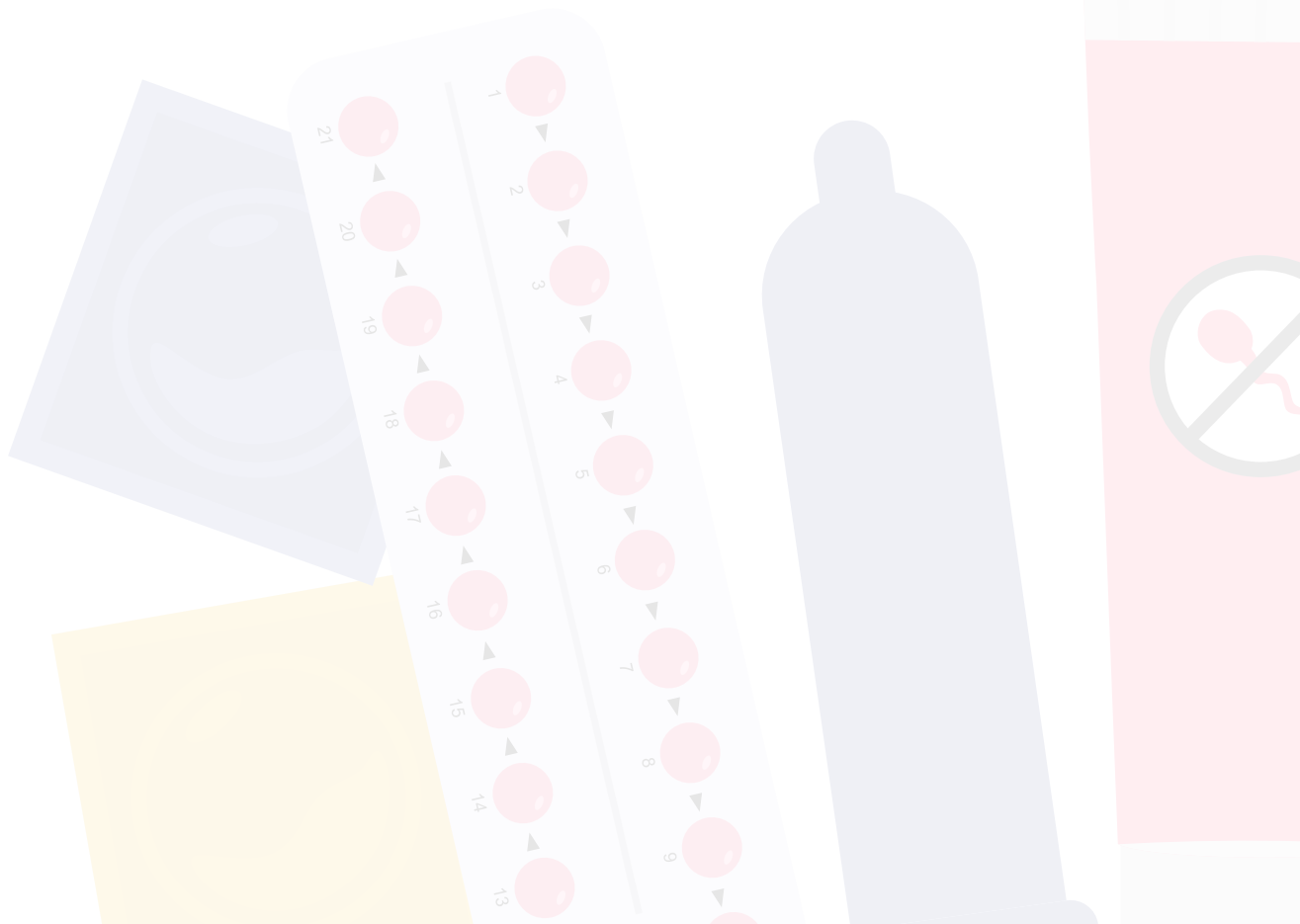
A majority of people also support publicly funded access to HPV vaccination programs for children/youth (74%) and adults (79%).

Over three-quarters of parents (76%) and non-parents (82%) agree that sexual health education should be provided in schools. For detailed findings from the survey, see below.

SEX INFORMATION AND EDUCATION COUNCIL OF CANADA (SIECCAN)

The Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN) is a registered not-for-profit charitable organization that works with educators, health professionals, community organizations, governments, and other partners to promote the sexual and reproductive health of Canadians.

SIECCAN is focused on sexual health education/promotion research, content, and resource development for professional and public audiences. As part of these objectives, SIECCAN regularly conducts survey research of people in Canada, including youth, university students, and adults.



THE CURRENT RESEARCH

Surveying attitudes related to sexual health can provide important input for educators and policy makers regarding the provision of sexual health education and services in Canada.

In September 2023, SIECCAN conducted a national survey of 4,410 adults aged 25-44 across Canada. Participants were recruited by Leger, a professional polling company, to complete an online questionnaire about sexual health and sexual health attitudes.

Questions addressing attitudes towards sexual health education and sexual and reproductive health services were adapted from previous studies (e.g., Loveless et al., 2023; Wood et al., 2021) or created for the purpose of the current research.

SUPPORT FOR PUBLICLY FUNDED SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES

The results indicate strong support for publicly funded sexual and reproductive health services in Canada (see Table 1).

ABORTION SERVICES. Most participants (74%) agree that access to publicly funded abortion services should be available across Canada. Support was strong across all regions, ranging from 67% in the Prairie Provinces to 80% in Quebec.

CONTRACEPTION. A strong majority (80%) agree that access to publicly funded contraception should be available across Canada. Support ranged from 79% in the Prairie Provinces and Ontario to 89% in the Atlantic region.

HPV VACCINE PROGRAMS. The majority of participants support publicly funded HPV vaccination programs for youth and adults. Approximately three quarters (74%) think that publicly funded school-based HPV vaccination programs should be available to all children and youth, with support ranging from 69% in the Prairie Provinces to 81% in Quebec. Most (79%) agree that publicly funded HPV vaccination programs should be available to all adults in Canada. Support ranged from 76% in the Prairies to 85% in the Atlantic region.

Table 1. Strong Support for Publicly Funded Sexual and Reproductive Health Services Among People in Canada aged 25-44

| Full Sample N = 4410 | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|------------------|---------|------------------------------|------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Individual Statements | % Agree or Strongly Agree* | Strongly Agree % | Agree % | Neither Disagree nor Agree % | Disagree % | Strongly Disagree % | I don't know % |
| Access to publicly funded abortion services should be available across Canada. | 74% | 49.4% | 24.8% | 11.6% | 3.3% | 6.9% | 3.9% |
| Access to publicly funded contraception (i.e., birth control) should be available across Canada. | 81% | 54.2% | 26.3% | 9.4% | 3.4% | 3.8% | 3.0% |
| Publicly funded school-based HPV vaccination programs should be available to all children and youth. | 74% | 46.3% | 27.5% | 11.3% | 3.5% | 4.6% | 6.8% |
| Publicly funded HPV vaccination programs should be available to all adults in Canada. | 79% | 48.9% | 30.0% | 9.9% | 2.3% | 3.3% | 5.5% |

*Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number; All analyses exclude those who chose "I prefer not to answer"

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL-BASED SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

A large majority of participants (79%) agree that sexual health education should be provided in the schools and less than 10% disagree with this statement (Figure 1). Most participants want schools that are inclusive (i.e., aim to reduce transphobia and homophobia) and provide access to sexual health information in libraries (see Table 2).

Support for school-based sexual health education was reported across all regions and among parents/guardians.

Figure 1. "Sexual Health Education Should be Provided in the Schools".
Full Sample N = 4410

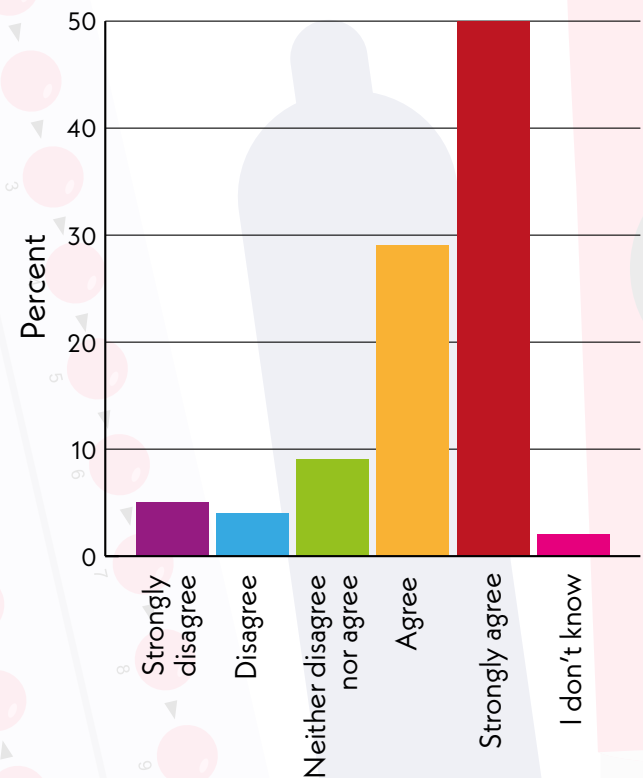


Table 2. Strong Support School-Based Sexual Health Education Among People in Canada aged 25-44

| Individual Statements | Full Sample | Region | | | | | Parent/Guardian Status | |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | N = 4410 | British Columbia n = 537 | Prairie Provinces n = 756 | Ontario n = 1583 | Quebec n = 1257 | Atlantic Provinces n = 277 | Yes n = 2063 | No n = 2297 |
| | % agree/ strongly agree | % agree/ strongly agree | % agree/ strongly agree | % agree/ strongly agree | % agree/ strongly agree | % agree/ strongly agree | % agree/ strongly agree | % agree/ strongly agree |
| Sexual health education should be provided in the schools. | 79% | 82% | 81% | 80% | 72% | 87% | 76% | 82% |
| Access to age-appropriate sexual health education in schools is a basic right for all children and youth. | 80% | 79% | 78% | 77% | 84% | 84% | 79% | 81% |
| School libraries should provide youth with access to books with age-appropriate sexual health information. | 77% | 77% | 73% | 73% | 83% | 82% | 74% | 80% |
| Schools should seek to reduce transphobia (i.e., prejudice and discrimination against transgender people). | 70% | 69% | 67% | 69% | 74% | 72% | 68% | 72% |
| Schools should seek to reduce homophobia (i.e., prejudice and discrimination against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people). | 75% | 74% | 70% | 71% | 81% | 77% | 72% | 78% |
| Providing access to comprehensive sexual health education for all people in Canada is a shared responsibility that requires the participation of families, communities, schools, and all levels of government. | 80% | 77% | 79% | 76% | 85% | 86% | 80% | 80% |

Responses included 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree and "I don't know"
 All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number; analyses exclude those who chose "I prefer not to answer".

KEY POINTS

The results of this survey can inform policy and program decision making focused on the provision of sexual and reproductive health services across Canada.

There is strong support among adults in Canada aged 25-44 for access to publicly funded sexual and reproductive health services, including:

- **abortion services**
- **contraception**
- **HPV vaccine programs for youth and adults.**

The findings can reassure educators that a strong majority of adults in this age group, including parents/guardians, are supportive of school-based sexual health education, want schools to provide equitable access to sexual health information (e.g., in libraries), and want schools to address transphobia and homophobia.

The current results are consistent with previous research indicating strong support for school-based sexual health education among parents (Loveless et al., 2023; McKay et al., 2014; Weaver et al., 2002; Wood et al., 2021) **and youth in Canada** (SIECCAN, 2023).

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