

Questions that matter.

Answers you can trust.

Voices for Change:

A Study of Activism Among Young Women in
Canada

angus reid group



Methodology

Field Window

September 15, 2023 –
September 19, 2023



Study

This study was conducted on behalf of Plan International Canada to better understand the challenges faced by young women activists in Canada. This study focuses on women aged 18-24.



Sample

n=350 respondents

- Female
- Aged 18-24
- Reside in Canada



All respondents are members of the Angus Reid Forum. This survey was conducted in English and French.

3 things you should know

01

Young women in Canada are passionate about activism.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) engage in some level of activism, and over half are interested in pursuing or are currently in a career dedicated to social issues. Almost 2 in 5 (39%) feel that their efforts make a difference in their community.

02

Young women face significant barriers to engaging in activism that impact their motivation or ability to engage.

Over half (53%) of young women have feared for their personal safety when engaging in activism, and many (39%) have previously faced harassment. 8 in 10 have witnessed other women face backlash, which for many discourages their motivation (79% out of those who witnessed). One third have decreased their participation due to the rise in cost of living.

03

There is a spectrum of causes that young women care about.

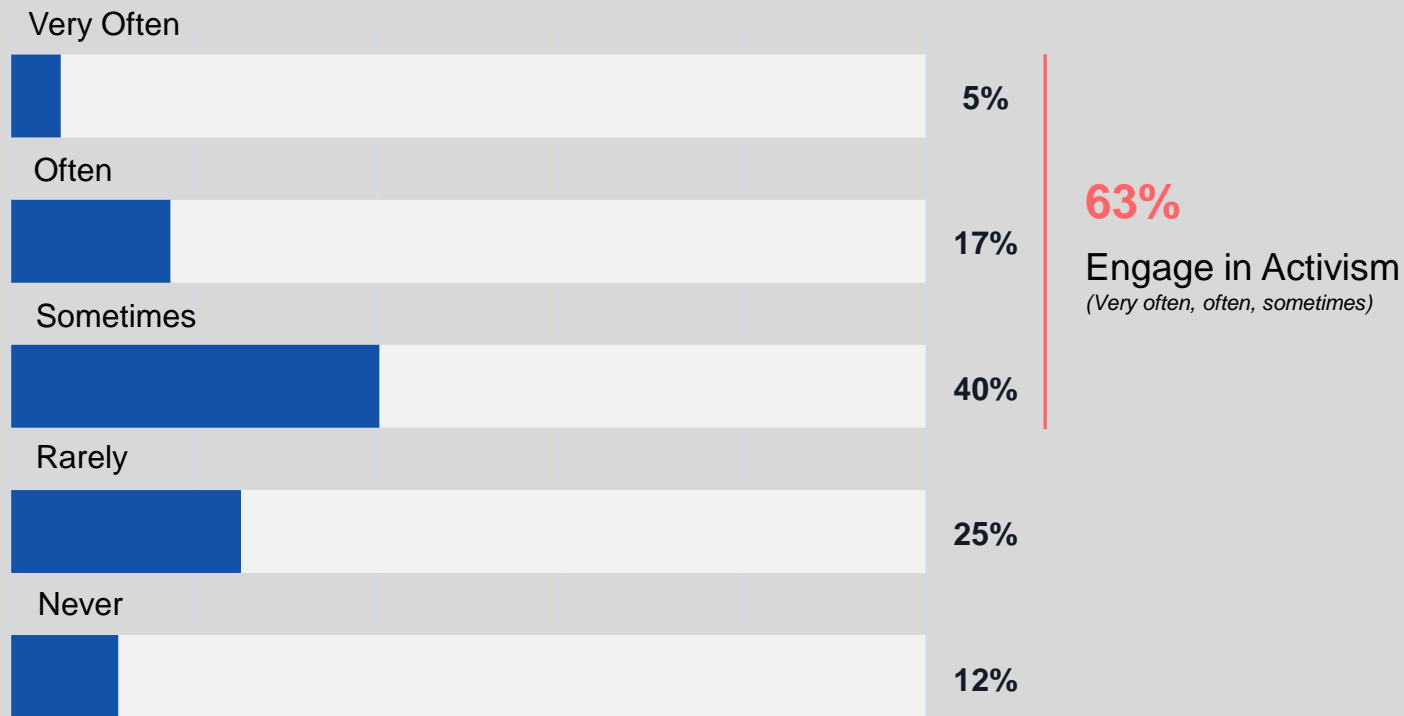
When asked which topic they cared most about when it comes to activism, there was no single issue that dominated. This underscores the diversity of their interests and priorities in the realm of social activism.



Frequency of Activism Engagement

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of young women in Canada engage in some level of activism.

Frequency of Engaging in Activism



Activism is broadly defined in this survey to encompass **any action you take on social issues to bring about social or political change**, such as: speaking out online about issues to drive awareness, starting a campaign, joining grassroots movements, signing a petition, attending a rally or march, writing a letter to a policymaker, donating to a cause, etc.

Personal Safety and Activism

Over half (53%) of these young women have feared for their personal safety when engaging in activism, and almost 2 in 5 (39%) have previously faced harassment.

Personal Safety and Activism
% Strongly/Somewhat Agree with Statement



of respondents have felt ***fear for their personal safety*** when engaging in activism.

(e.g. harassment, online trolling, bullying, physical violence)



of respondents have previously ***faced harassment*** when engaging in activism.

(e.g. online trolling, bullying, physical violence)

Witnessing Backlash

An alarming 8 out of 10 respondents have seen other girls and women face backlash when engaging with activism.



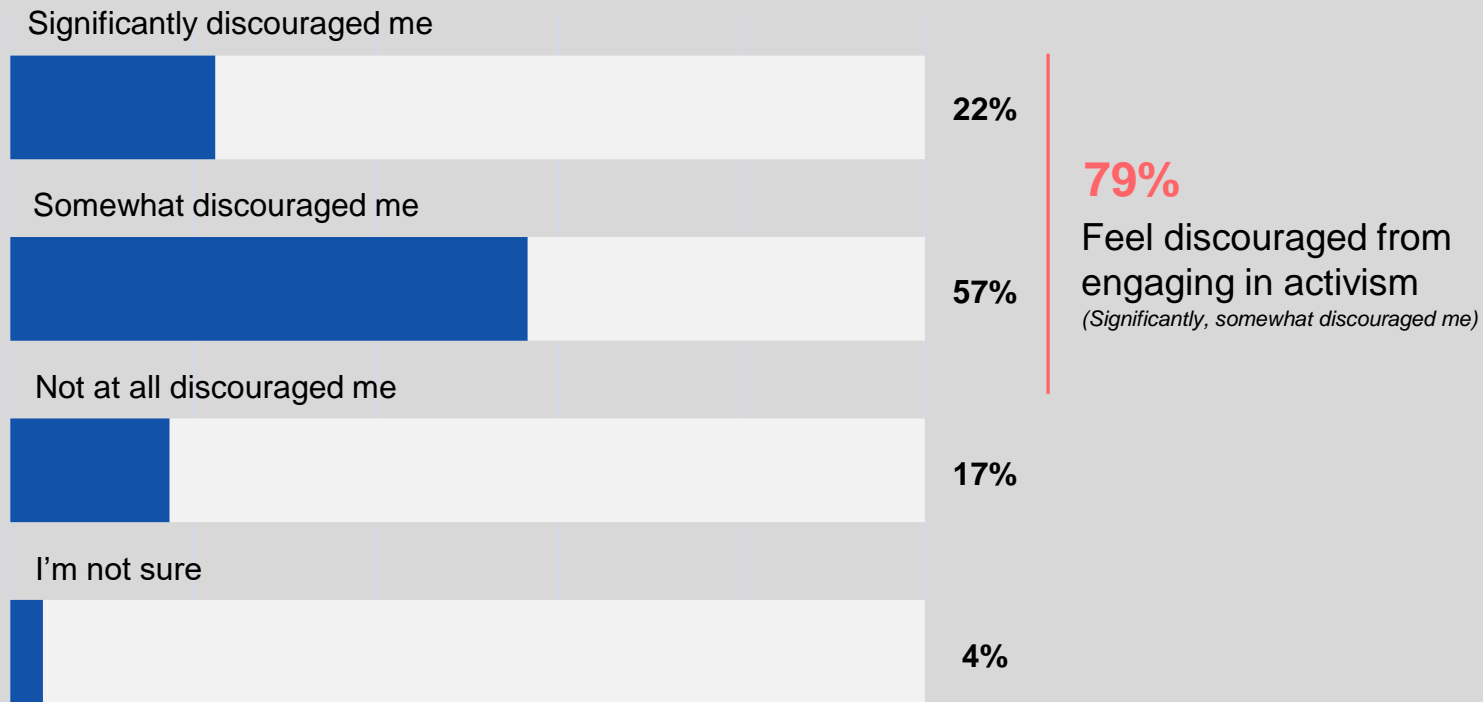
of respondents have **witnessed girls and women facing backlash or challenges** when engaging in activism.

*10% have never witnessed backlash
9% are not sure*

Impact of Witnessing Backlash

Among those who witnessed this backlash, 79% report it has discouraged their motivation to engage in activism to some degree.

Impact of Witnessing Backlash on Personal Motivation to Engage *Among the 80% of Respondents who have Witnessed Backlash*



Cost of Living Impact on Activism

One-third of young women (34%) have decreased their participation in activism due to the rising cost of living.

Cost of Living Impacts on Activism

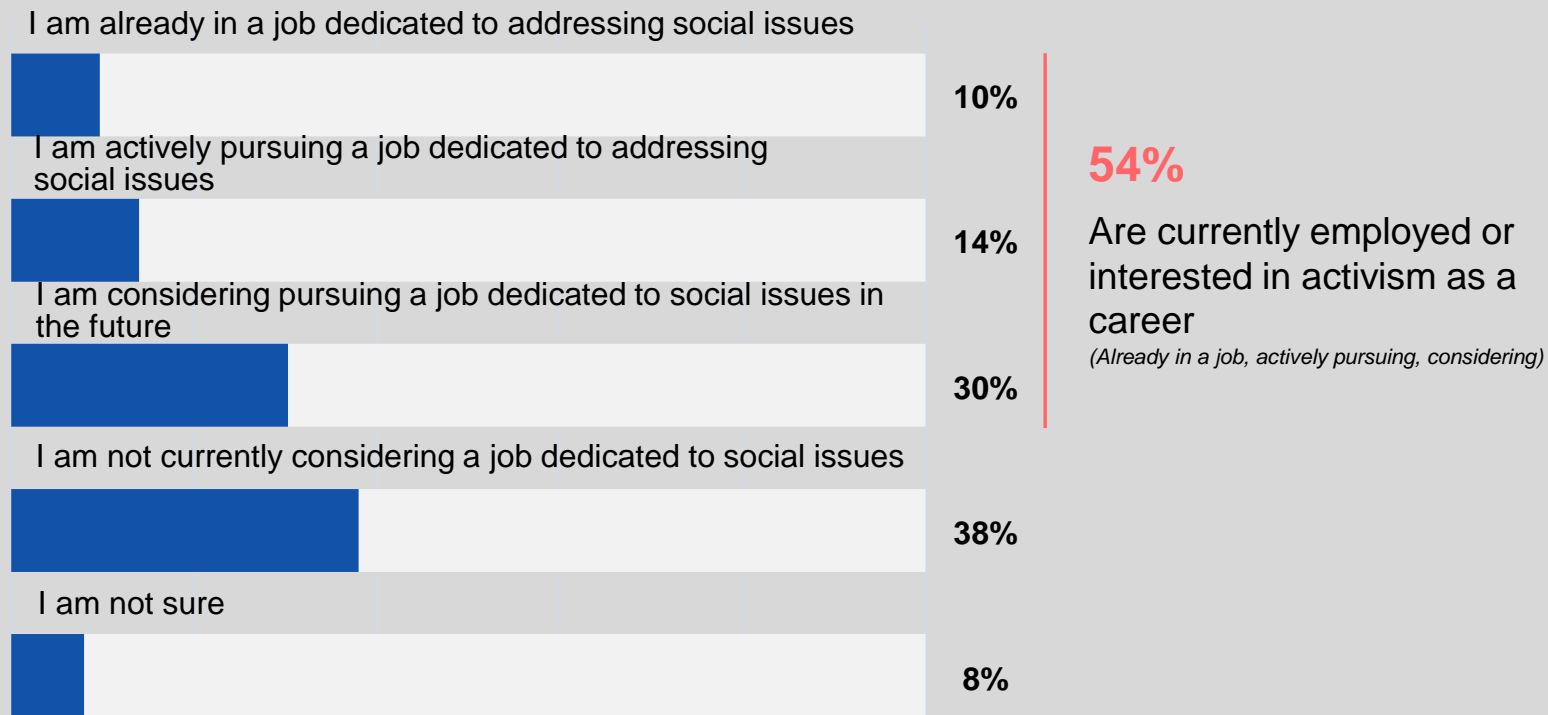


55%
have not changed their participation in activism

Career in Activism

Over half (54%) of young women are interested in pursuing or are currently in a career dedicated to addressing social issues.

Interest in Activism as a Career



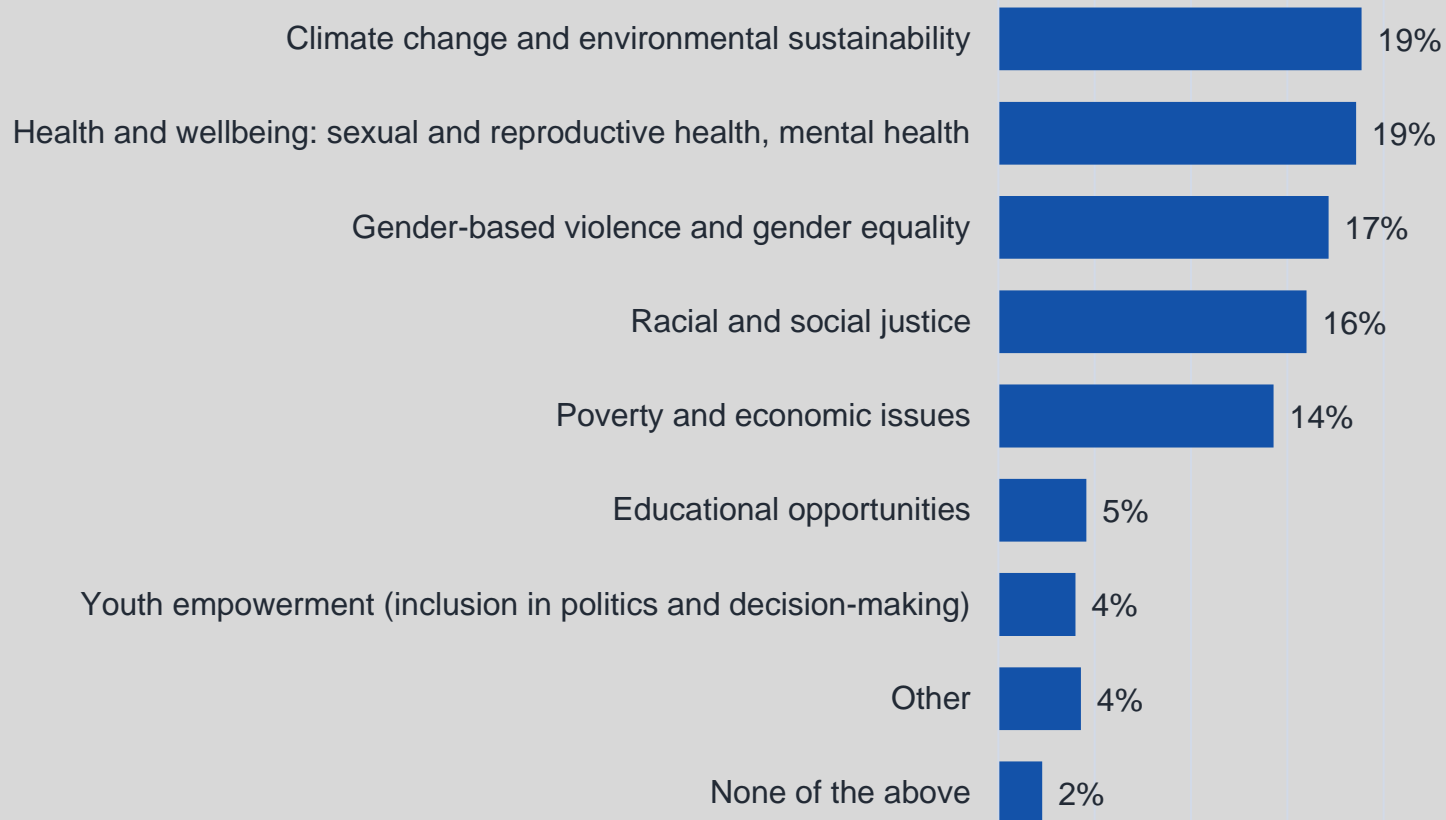
10%
are *already in a job*
addressing social issues

44%
are *considering or actively pursuing a job*
addressing social issues

Most Cared About Causes

Climate change/environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing, and gender-based violence/gender equality are the top 3 causes young women care the most about.

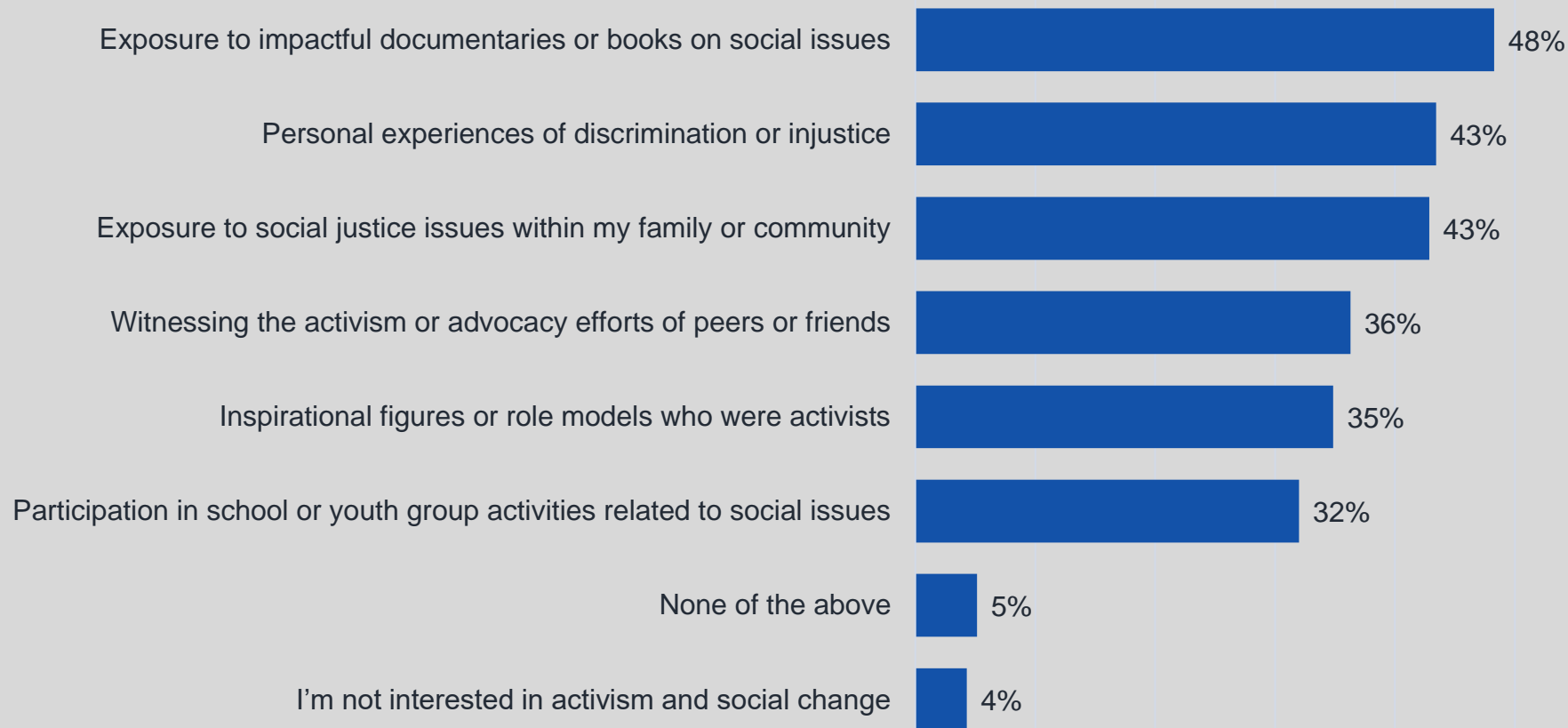
Most Cared About Causes



Experiences Contributing to Interest in Activism

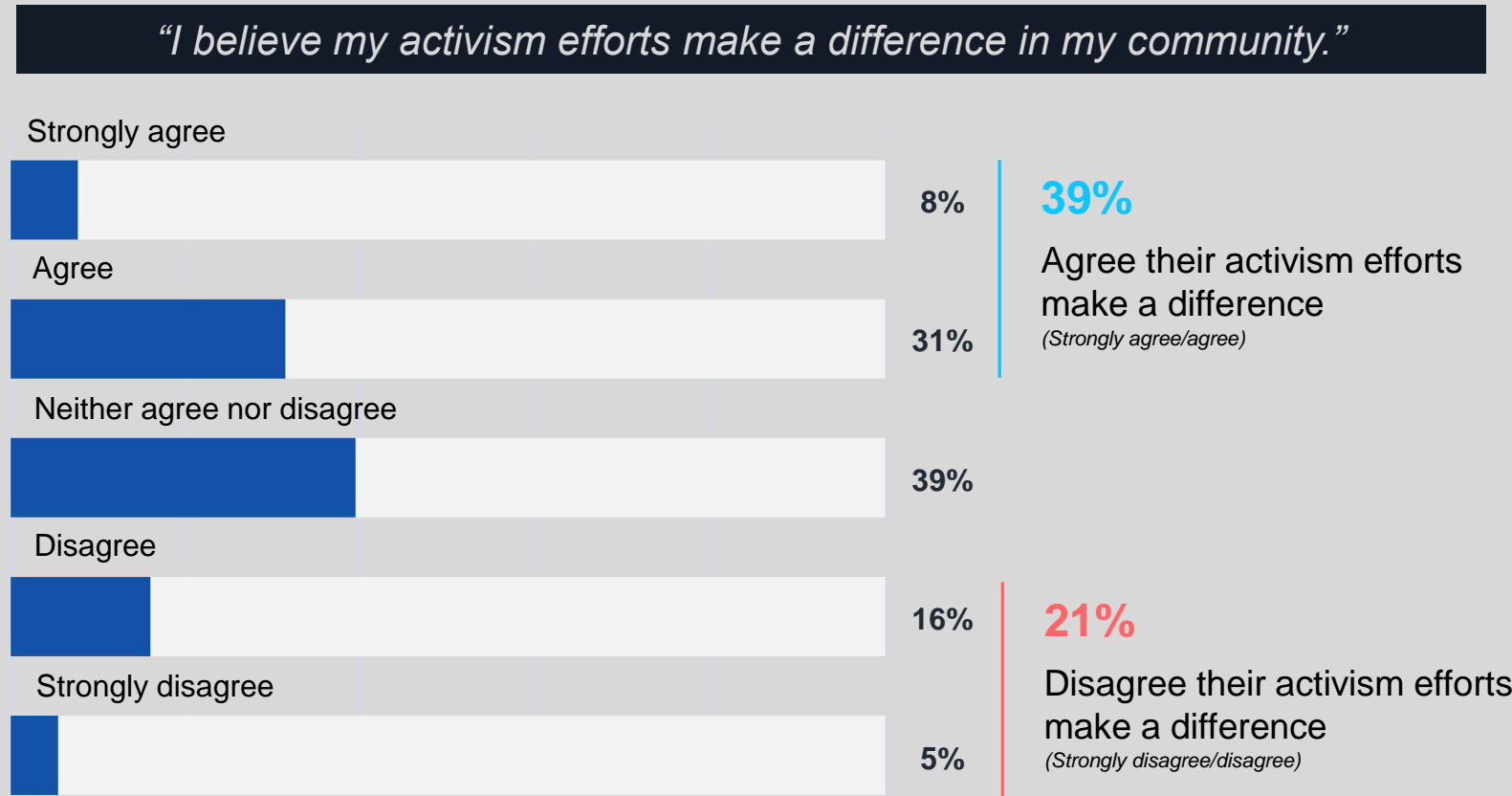
Exposure to documentaries or books, personal experiences of injustice, and witnessing issues within their family/community are the top contributors to interest in activism among young women.

Experiences Contributing to Interest in Activism



Impact of Efforts on Community

Despite the challenges young women face, almost 2 in 5 (39%) agree that their activism efforts make a difference in their community.



39%

agree that their efforts make a difference

39%

aren't sure whether their efforts make a difference