



# Broiler Chicken Welfare Survey

## Canadian General Public Survey

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Prepared by:  
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NRG Research Group conducted methodologically sound online surveys in Canada on behalf of Mercy For Animals. The purpose of the research was to examine public attitudes toward new regulatory approaches regarding the treatment of broiler chickens and whether buyers of chicken products (restaurants, grocery stores, etc.) should demand their suppliers have more humane standards in place. A total of 500 surveys were conducted in Canada to assist in answering these objectives.

The surveys found that in Canada there is broad support for the notion that buyers of food chicken products (restaurants, grocery stores, etc.) should require their suppliers to improve the manner in which they raise and process broiler chickens. Strong majorities of respondents agreed with the introduction of various proposed regulatory measures.

In Canada, the strongest agreement with buyers demanding new regulatory approaches of their suppliers were around the *introduction of healthier breeds of broiler chickens* and *ensuring enough clean litter is present for the birds*. All regulatory approaches tested, however, received support (agreement) of over 80% of respondents.

It also should be noted that 86% of respondents agreed that restaurants and grocery stores should still insist that their broiler chicken suppliers introduce new more humane standards even if it meant the cost per pound of chicken may increase slightly.

Mercy For Animals is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to preventing cruelty to farmed animals and promoting compassionate food choices and policies. Currently the organization is focused on working with industry stakeholders regarding regulatory changes to improve the manner in which broiler chickens are raised in Canada.

Mercy For Animals approached NRG Research Group (NRG) to conduct methodologically sound public opinion survey in Canada to assess public views regarding several regulatory changes to how broiler chickens are handled and processed and whether buyers of food chicken products require their suppliers to adhere to these new standards. NRG crafted an initial draft of a survey and worked with Mercy For Animals staff to develop a final survey instrument.

For a variety of reasons (the need for detailed questions and budgetary) it was decided an online survey would be appropriate for this study. Once the survey was finalized, NRG programmed the survey and hosted it on NRG's own secure web-survey platform housed in Canada. NRG purchased online panel sample from Research Now. Research Now is a long established, reputable research panel provider with an extensive panel list numbering over half a million panelists in Canada. A geographically representative sample was drawn from their panel for this study.

The survey was pre-tested June 15 with full fielding continuing immediately after and concluding on June 20, 2017. All respondents were informed of the purpose of the research, the research supplier conducting the research, and that their involvement in the study was voluntary and completely confidential. The survey took approximately 7 minutes on average to complete, which was available in both official languages.

In total, 500 surveys were completed. Since the research is conducted online using panel sample, it is considered to be a non-probability sample and therefore, margins of error are not applicable. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of a survey size of 500 cases with this sample plan would carry a margin of error of approximately +/- 4.4 percent, 19 times out of 20.

The resulting data discussed in this report have been weighted to reflect the actual region, gender and age distribution across Canada based on the most recent available census results.

# Canadian Sample Characteristics (unweighted)



| Variable      | % of N=500 | Variable                | % of N=500 |
|---------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>Gender</b> |            | <b>Canadian Regions</b> |            |
| Male          | 49         | Western Canada          | 31         |
| Female        | 51         | Ontario                 | 38         |
|               |            | Quebec                  | 23         |
| <b>Age</b>    |            | Atlantic Canada         | 7          |
| 18-24         | 7          |                         |            |
| 25-34         | 20         |                         |            |
| 35-44         | 16         |                         |            |
| 45-54         | 18         |                         |            |
| 55-64         | 23         |                         |            |
| 65+           | 16         |                         |            |

## Survey Findings – General Attitudes

In the introduction of the survey all respondents were provided the following information:

*These questions are about broiler chickens. Broiler chickens are the chickens who are raised for meat, including chicken wings, chicken breast, legs and thighs. The topic of the questionnaire relates to how broiler chickens are raised and eventually killed and processed for human consumption.*

*When considering your views on these questions you should be aware that the implementation of the different handling and processing approaches identified in the questions to follow could result in a slight increase to the cost of chicken to consumers.*

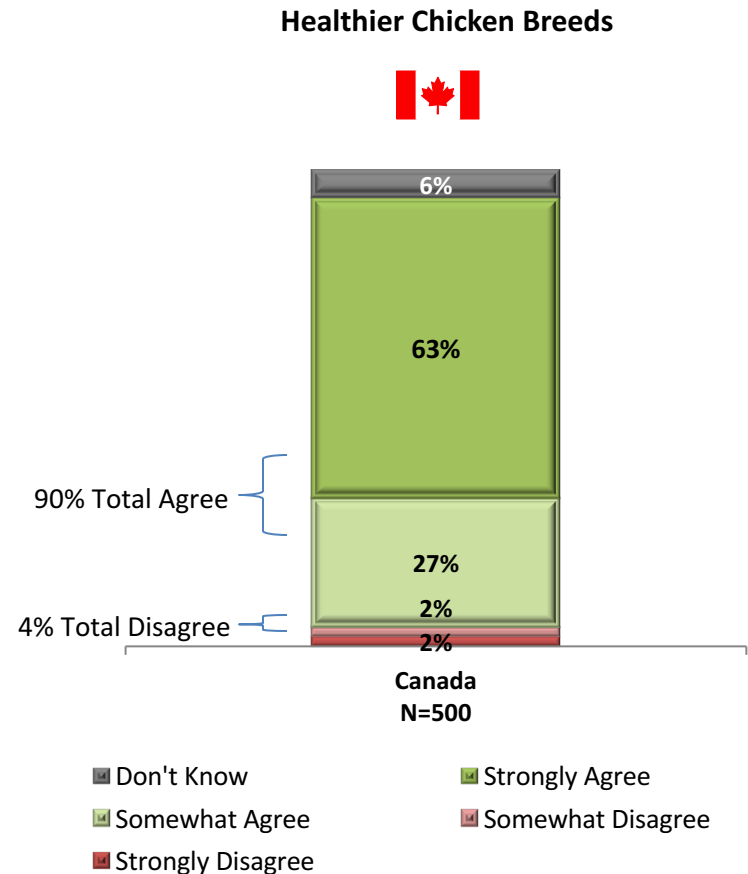
# Healthier Chicken Breeds

Q1. Chickens have been bred to grow larger and more quickly. Studies show sometimes this can lead to organ failure and an inability to stand or walk without pain, especially in the last weeks of their lives. The University of Guelph and animal welfare organizations such as The Humane Society, Mercy For Animals, and Compassion In World Farming are working together to identify breeds of chickens with fewer health problems.

Do you think that restaurants, grocers and other food companies should require their chicken suppliers to use breeds of chickens identified as having fewer health problems?

Subgroups in Canada **significantly more likely** to strongly agree that chicken suppliers should be required to use breeds of chickens identified as having fewer health problems include:

- Women (69% vs. 59% of men); and,
- Age 55+ (71% vs. 59% of respondents age 35-54).

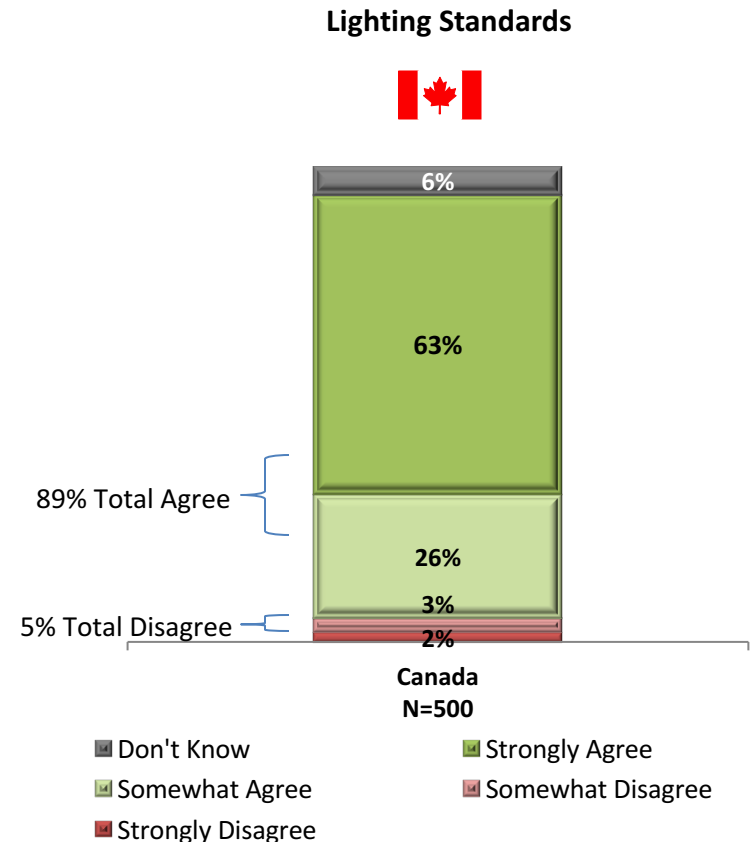


Q2. Currently, many chicken farms keep the lights dim during the day, and with only a short dark period at night, in order to get birds to grow more quickly. However, studies show this causes higher mortality and health problems in birds. Animal welfare non-profit groups such as The Humane Society, Mercy For Animals, and Compassion In World Farming say that it's important for the health of the bird that they get at least six hours of darkness each night, and that barns be better lit during the day to at least 50 lux. (A lux is a unit of measurement for light. For comparison, a dark, overcast day measures about 100 lux.)

Do you think restaurants, grocers and other food companies should require their chicken suppliers to follow the recommended lighting standards of six hours of darkness per night and at least 50 lux during the day?

Subgroups in Canada **significantly more likely** to strongly agree that restaurants, grocers and other food companies should require their chicken suppliers to follow the recommended lighting standards:

- Women (67% vs. 58% of men); and,
- Quebec respondents (70% vs. 57% of Western Canadian respondents).





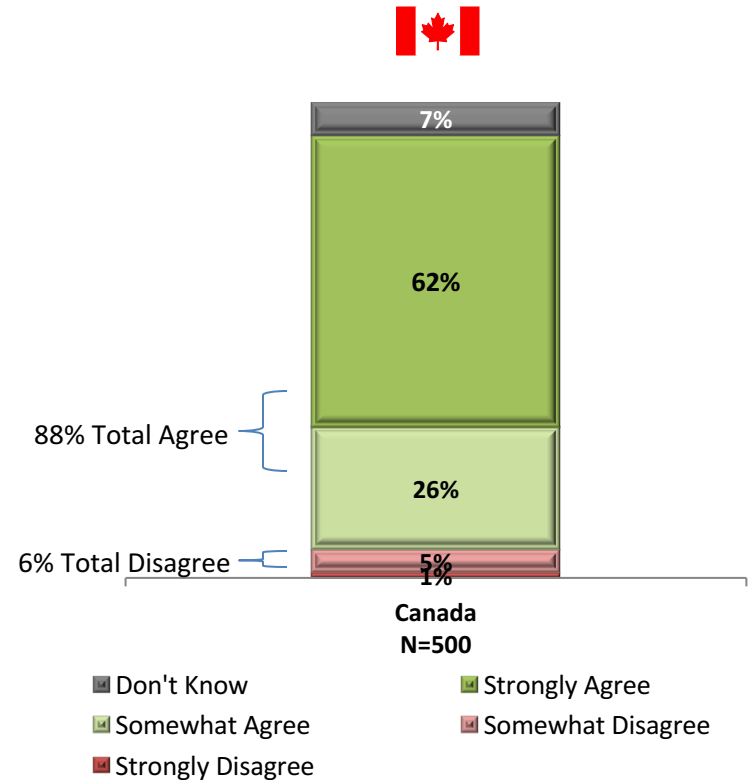
# Limiting Stocking Density to 30kg/m<sup>2</sup>

Q3. The number of chickens in a barn is typically in the tens of thousands, with less than one square foot of space provided for each bird. Studies show that birds who are provided more space are healthier, have better welfare, and are less fearful. Animal-welfare organizations such as The Humane Society, Mercy For Animals, and Compassion In World Farming say that the stocking density for chickens should be no more than 30 kilogram per square meter (Kg/m<sup>2</sup>) to protect the birds' welfare, which would provide more space per bird than what is currently given.

Do you think that restaurants, grocers and other food companies should require their chicken suppliers to limit stocking density to the recommended level of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>?

Among Canadians, female respondents are **significantly more likely** to strongly agree that restaurants, grocers and other food companies should require their chicken suppliers to limit stocking density to the recommended level of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (67% vs. 56% of male respondents).

## Limiting Stocking Density to 30kg/m<sup>2</sup>

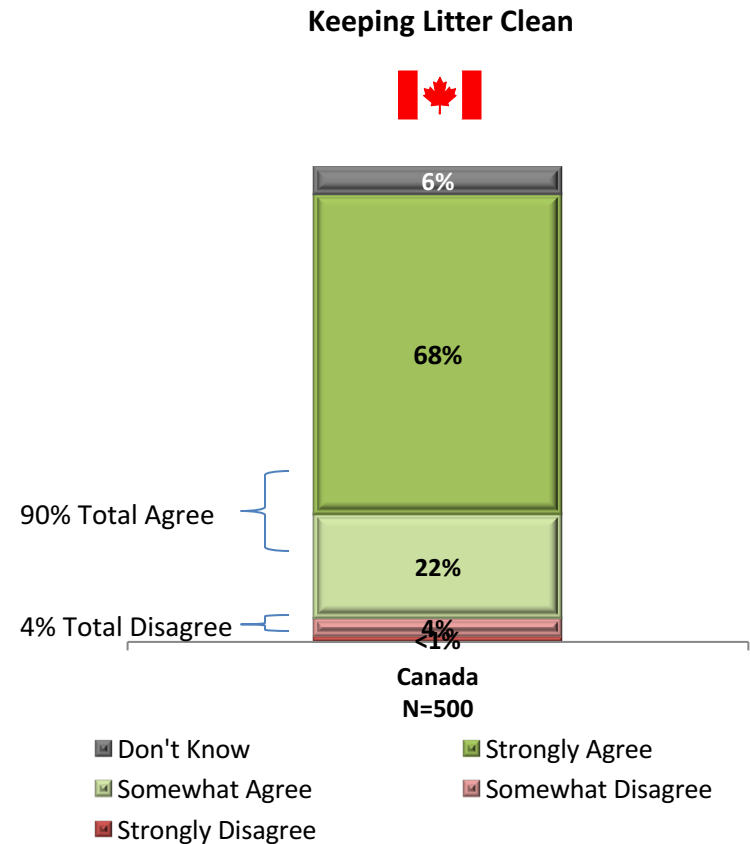


Q4. Having tens of thousands of birds in a barn leads to large quantities of manure/feces, which results in high levels of ammonia and dirty litter. Studies have shown this can cause chickens to develop eye sores and respiratory distress, and can cause burns on their body. To help prevent these problems, animal welfare organizations such as The Humane Society, Mercy For Animals, and Compassion In World Farming say chicken farms should use at least 3 inches of litter, should keep litter clean enough to prevent sores, and should limit ammonia levels to 20 parts per million.

Do you think that restaurants, grocers and other food companies should require their chicken suppliers to follow the recommendation of using 3 inches of litter, keeping litter clean enough to prevent sores, and limiting ammonia levels to 20 parts per million?

Subgroups **significantly more likely** to strongly agree include:

- Women (76% vs. 60% of men); and,
- Age 35+ (72% vs. 57% of respondents age 18-34).

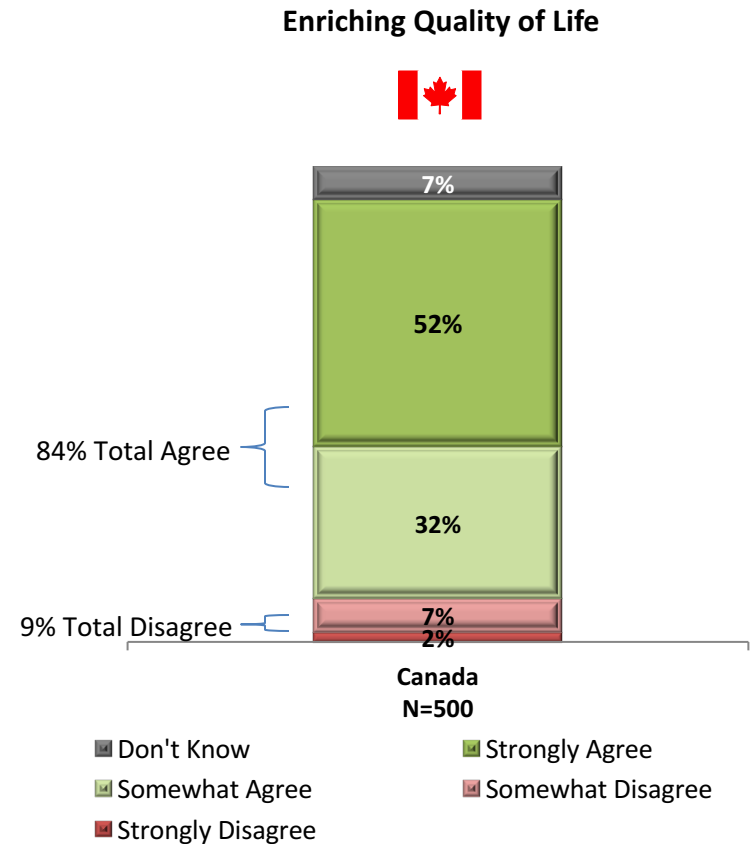


Q5. Chickens are raised in conditions with only litter, food and water. This environment does not provide birds with opportunities to engage in natural behaviors, such as perching, foraging, and pecking. Animal welfare organizations such as The Humane Society, Mercy For Animals, and Compassion In World Farming say that including enrichments, such as straw bales and objects to peck at, increases activity levels of birds and improves their welfare.

Do you think that restaurants, grocers and other food companies should require their chicken suppliers to give enrichments to birds as recommended by animal welfare organizations?

Subgroups **significantly more likely** to strongly agree include:

- Women (61% vs. 43% of men); and,
- Age 35+ (55% vs. 44% of respondents age 18-34).

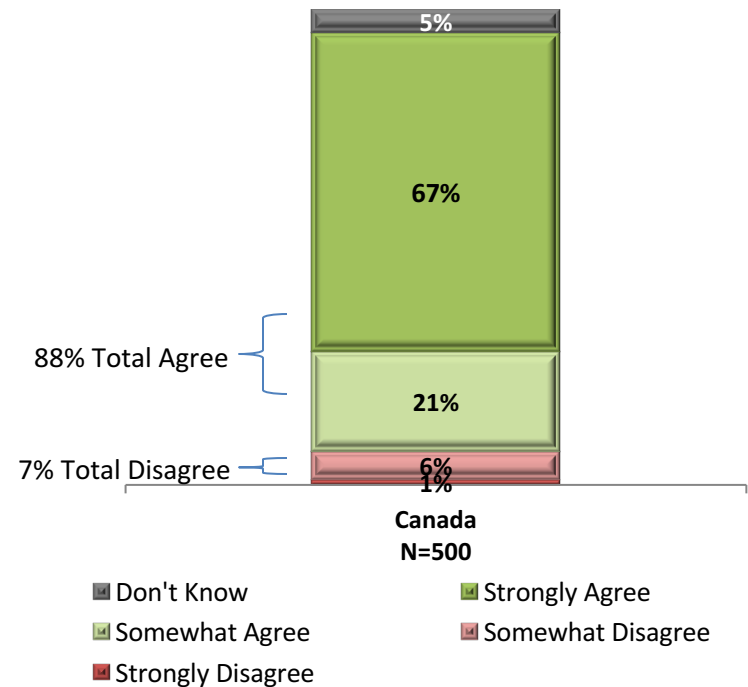


Q6. The slaughter process for chickens begins when birds are removed from a truck and hung upside down by their feet. They are then dragged through an electrified vat of water. The birds are then bled out by having their necks slit, and then dunked into a tank of scalding hot water for feather removal. Often birds reach the scalding tank fully conscious. Animal welfare organizations such as The Humane Society, Mercy For Animals, and Compassion In World Farming say that a controlled atmosphere stunning system reduces needless suffering for animals by consistently rendering birds unconscious before they are killed. Some poultry processing companies, such as Cargill, Olymel and Maple Leaf Foods, have already committed to transition to a controlled atmosphere system by 2020.

Do you think that restaurants, grocers and other food companies should require their chicken suppliers to transition to a controlled atmosphere system where birds are rendered unconscious before being killed?

Canadian female respondents are **significantly more likely** to strongly agree (75% vs. 57% of men).

## Controlled Atmosphere Slaughter

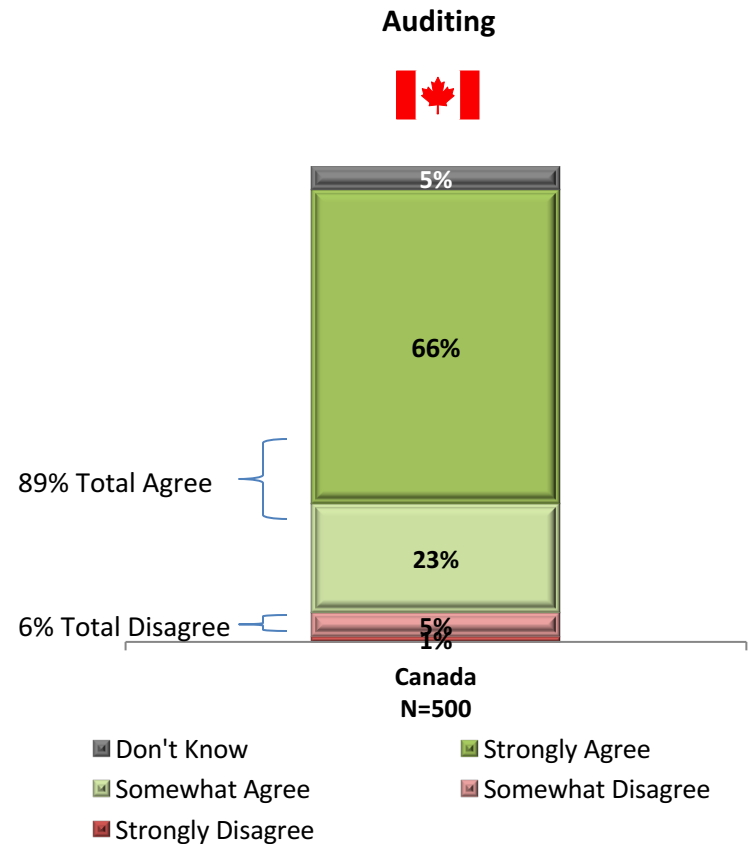


Q7. Auditing is a form of oversight in which an independent company visits farms to ensure that animal welfare standards in place by law are being met. Animal welfare organizations such as The Humane Society, Mercy For Animals, and Compassion In World Farming say independent audits are important for ensuring the rules in place.

Do you think that restaurants, grocers and other food companies should require their chicken suppliers to have third-party audits as a tool to ensure that birds are treated humanely?

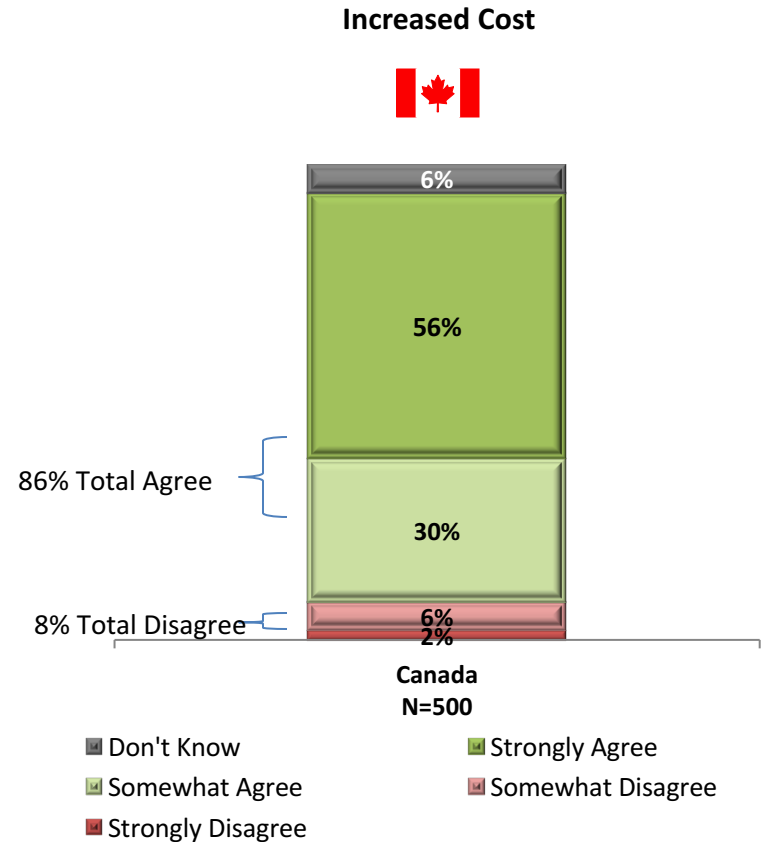
Subgroups **significantly more likely** to strongly agree include:

- Women (76% vs. 56% of men); and,
- Age 35+ (70% vs. 59% of respondents age 18-34).



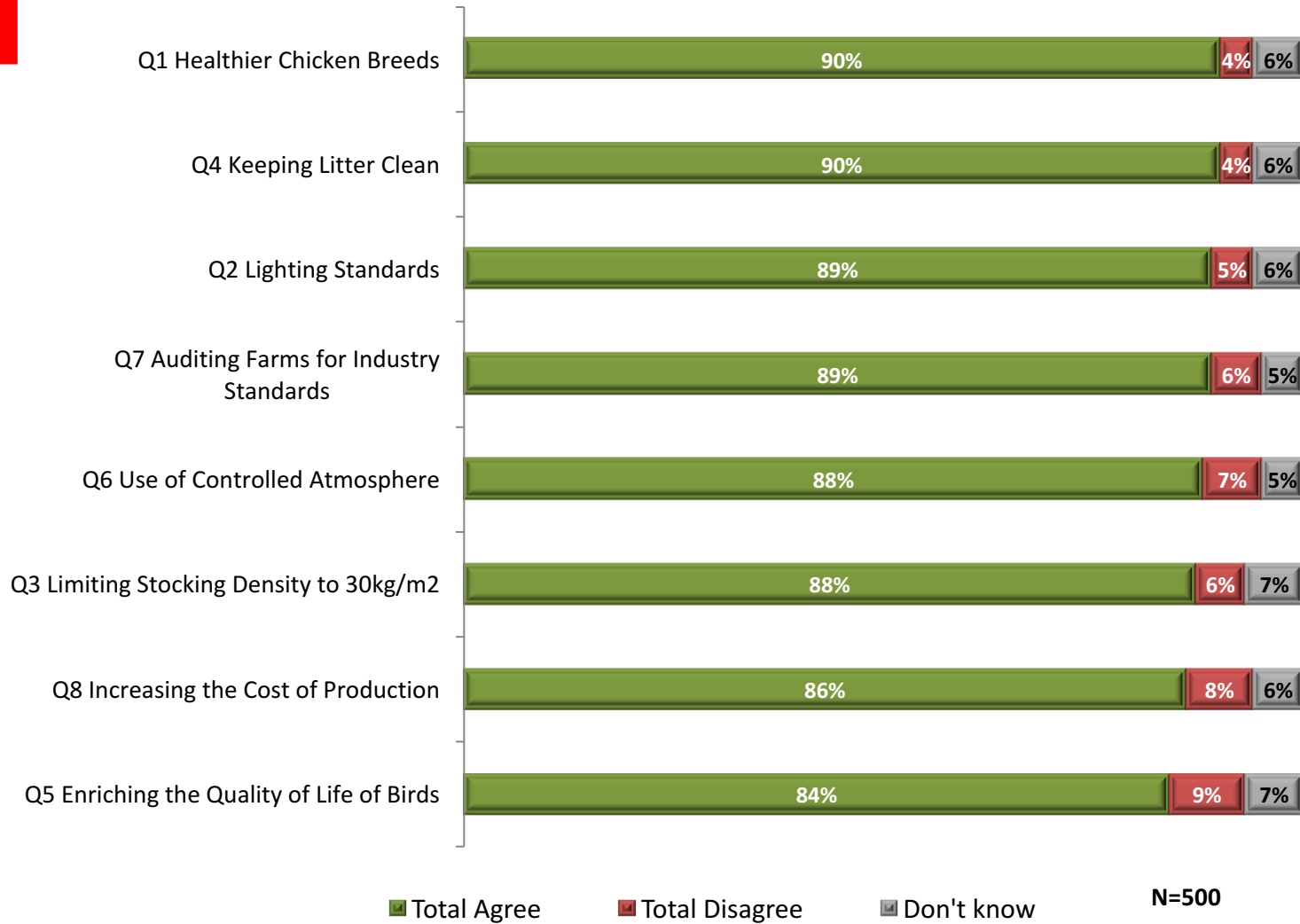
Q8. Many of the animal welfare improvements for chickens that we have discussed could result in an increase in the per-pound cost of chicken. Do you think that restaurants, grocers, and other food companies should insist on these welfare improvements in their supply chains?

Canadian female respondents are **significantly more likely** to strongly agree (65% vs. 47% of men).



## Summary of Questions by Country

# Summary of Agree/Disagree Statements: Canada





End