

## Background

- The female condom is also known as the internal condom
- Only female-initiated method of protection for unintended pregnancy and sexually transmissible infections (STIs)
- 79-95% effective at preventing pregnancy
- Can purchase from family planning clinics, sexual health clinics and online. Women's health clinics and pharmacies may also stock them.
- Use of this method appears low in Australia; little is known regarding its acceptability

## Methods

- **Aim:** interventional post-test study undertaken to explore acceptability of female condom for women
- **Eligibility criteria:** Female, 16+ years, heterosexually active, NSW
- **Recruitment:** Recruited primarily via social media & word of mouth
- **Process:** Eligible women given 3 female condoms (FC2 nitrile), resources & instructional video.

After attempting to use at least one, invited to complete online survey.

Survey explored views, experiences and factors contributing to likelihood of reusing or recommending the female condom to others.

Some women also participated in a short phone interview to share more in-depth feedback about their experience.

- As this was a small exploratory study, we limited the eligibility criteria to 'females who are heterosexually active'. We recognise this is very targeted and may exclude particular people, including men, trans and gender diverse people, and others in the LGBTIQ+ community.

## Participant characteristics

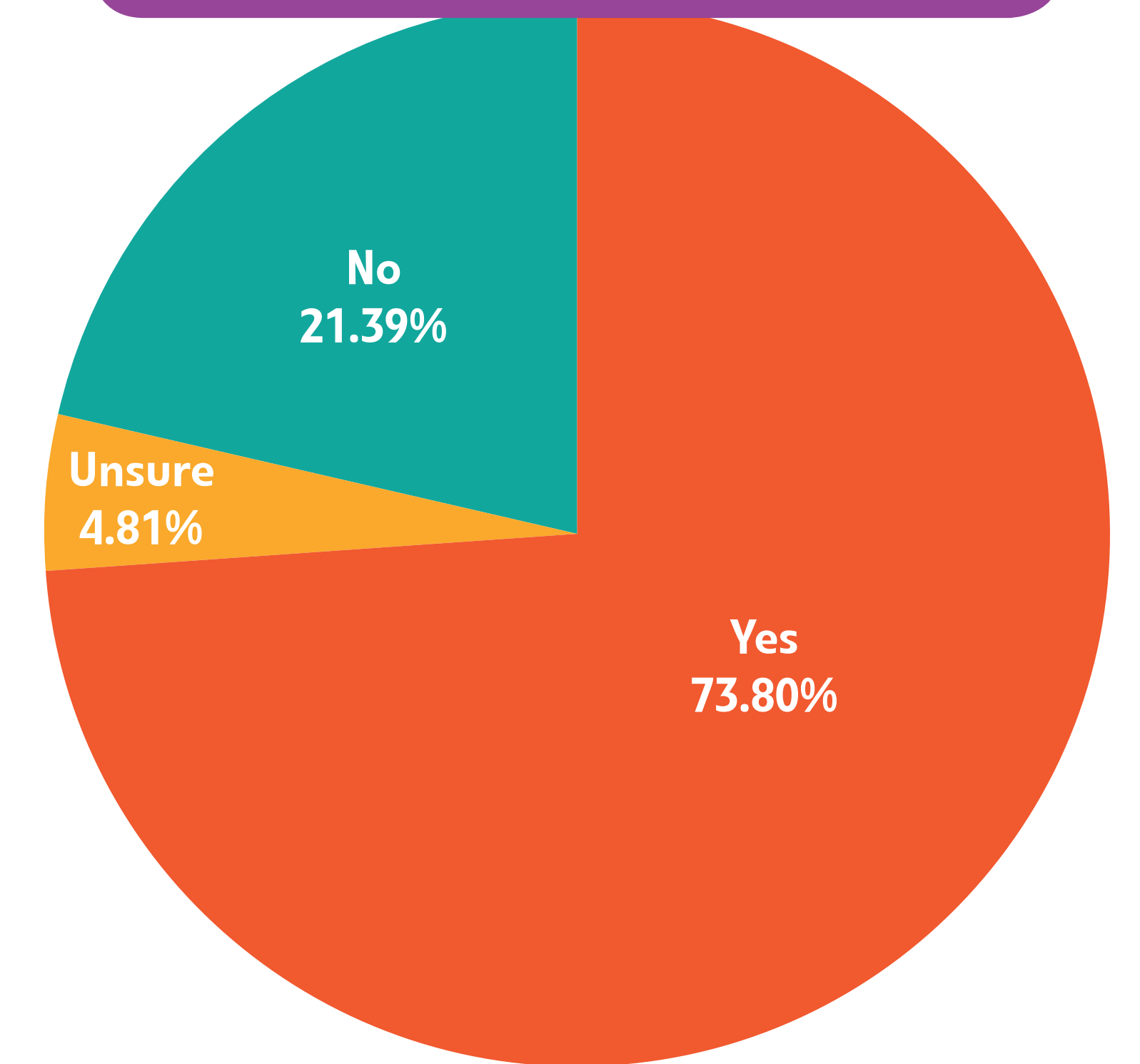
Born in Australia	
Yes	86.17%
No	13.83%
Sexuality	
Heterosexual	65.43%
Bisexual	19.15%
Queer	6.38%
Different Identity	4.26%
Not sure	3.72%
Lesbian, gay or homosexual	1.06%

Relationship status	
In a relationship	57.45%
Married	26.60%
Single	11.17%
Other	4.79%
Duration of current relationship	
< 1 year	21.52%
1-2 years	19.62%
3-5 years	18.99%
6-10 years	18.35%
11-20 years	17.09%
> 20 years	4.43%

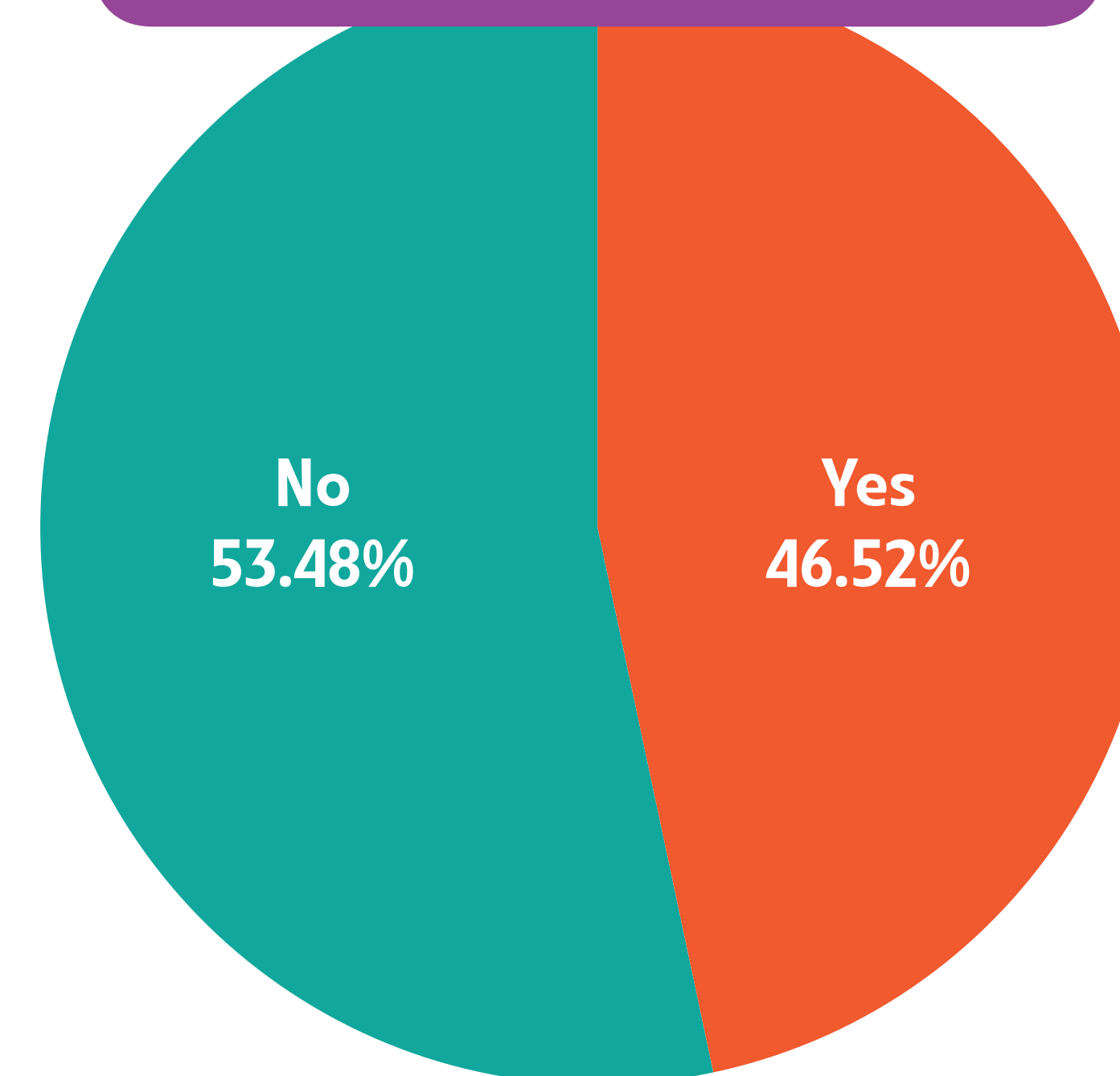
## Results

- To date, 180 women (mean age = 30 years, range = 16-57 years) have completed the survey.
- Most participants were aware of the female condom (73.8%), however the majority had not previously tried it (91.2%).
- Open-ended responses suggested low use was due to limited access to female condoms, lack of education about this method, and the view they are visually displeasing.
- Over half (67%) reported experiencing some difficulty in inserting the female condom.
- Only 46.5% saw a demonstration prior to using it.
- Overall, 61.4% stated they would use the female condom again for STI prevention, and 54% would recommend it to others.

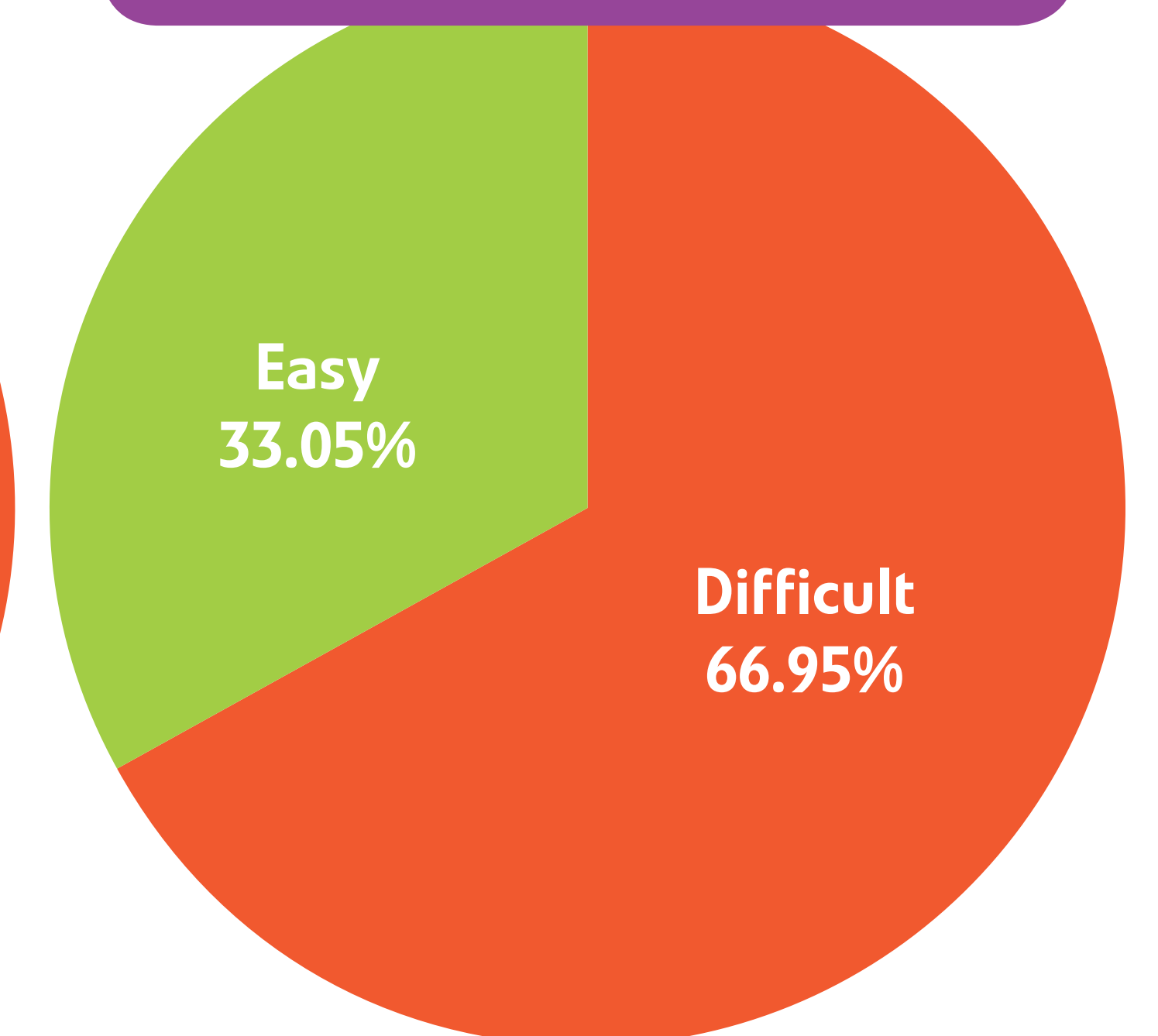
Were you aware of the female condom before participating in this study?



Prior to attempting to use the female condom, did you see a demonstration of how to use it?



How easy was it for you to insert the female condom?



"Unsure of what it was and how it worked. Confused why it had never been advertised or presented in school as a contraceptive method" (17 years)

"My overall impression is that they were good - they're a little tricky/fiddly to put in, but they have benefits of extra STI protection, and I found they were a great option when I was menstruating" (23 years)

"I definitely think it's a good option to have... I'm the kind of person, I don't like to rely on another person either, so it was good to have obviously control of that" (40 years)

## Implications of findings

- Women may value having an option to control risk of STIs with penetrative sex
- Findings may support clinicians when discussing the female condom, particularly for STI prevention
- Contraceptive counselling/STI consultations could include a demonstration of using the female condom
- Useful to inform/educate both partners about female condom (and other methods), as may influence use and acceptability
- Could include option of female condoms in sex education in schools
- Important to increase access to female condoms – availability, cost

## Conclusion

- Preliminary findings suggest education and health promotion efforts are required to raise awareness about the female condom and its potential benefits (including dual contraceptive and STI protection and greater reproductive control).
- Clinicians can contribute to raising awareness among clients about the female condom, particularly for STI prevention.
- Similar studies should be considered to ensure representation from a range of perspectives, including men, trans and gender diverse people, and others in the LGBTIQ+ community.