



**Government of Saskatchewan**

**Public Opinion Polling  
and Market Research**

from April 1, 2001 to June 30, 2001

Omnibus  
Provincial Public Opinion Survey

Prepared for:

Saskatchewan Executive Council  
113 Legislative Building  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4S 0B3

Submitted by:

Doug Fast & Associates  
280B - 2600 8th Street East  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
S7H 0V7  
Tel: 956-3070  
Fax: 956-3663

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- Federal issues that Saskatchewan residents tend to be most concerned with include health care, the economy, federal taxes and jobs and unemployment.
- Provincial issues that Saskatchewan residents tend to be most concerned with include health care, agriculture, provincial taxes and jobs and unemployment.
- The majority of residents approve of the way the provincial government is handling the environment, the policing of communities, the economy and education.
- The majority of Saskatchewan residents have access to the Internet and almost one half of those have visited a provincial government web site primarily to gather information.
- The majority of residents indicate they would call their local SaskPower office in the event of a power outage.
- More than two thirds of residents think the post-secondary education and training system in Saskatchewan is the same or better than that of the rest of the country.
- The large majority of residents think the quality of Saskatchewan's training programs is good or excellent.
- More than two thirds of Saskatchewan residents are confident that their drinking water is safe, and their community would benefit from co-operating with other communities in providing safe drinking water in the most cost effective manner.
- The majority of Saskatchewan residents agree they would be willing to pay higher rates to make their drinking water safe or to generally improve the drinking water quality.
- The large majority of Saskatchewan residents agree that governments should make and enforce regulations to ensure child care services meet minimum quality standards, that the main goal of child care is to enable parents to work or go to school and that governments should help low-income parents with costs for child care.

# METHODOLOGY

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Doug Fast & Associates was retained by the Government of Saskatchewan to conduct the April 2001 public opinion survey with a representative sample of the Saskatchewan population. The April Omnibus Survey contains questions designed to explore public opinion in the areas of:

- federal issues of importance to Saskatchewan residents;
- provincial issues of importance to Saskatchewan residents;
- SaskPower;
- post-secondary education and skills training;
- SaskWater; and
- social services.

Questions for the survey were provided by Saskatchewan Executive Council and assembled into an interview format by Doug Fast & Associates. The questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure that all of the questions being asked in the interview were understood by the general public and the information being gathered addressed the public opinion research objectives.

The sample frame for this public opinion research survey was constructed to obtain complete interviews from a random sample of 1,000 households throughout Saskatchewan. To ensure proportionate representation from all areas of Saskatchewan, the province was divided into nine geographic sampling districts. Interview respondents were selected randomly from Saskatchewan telephone directories in each region using standard polling practices to ensure random selection of households and respondents. The sampling frame was also constructed to ensure proportionate representation of other important demographic characteristics evident within the provincial population such as gender, age, occupation, level of education and level of household income. This ensures that the opinions of all the various types of people who reside in Saskatchewan are proportionately represented in the statistical measurements documented in this report.

One thousand residents of the province were interviewed between Tuesday, April 17 and Wednesday, April 25, 2001. Interviews were conducted by telephone at times that were appropriate and convenient for respondents - weekdays between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. and weekends between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. All interviews were conducted by Doug Fast & Associates' in-house public opinion interviewers using our *Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing* (CATI) call centre.

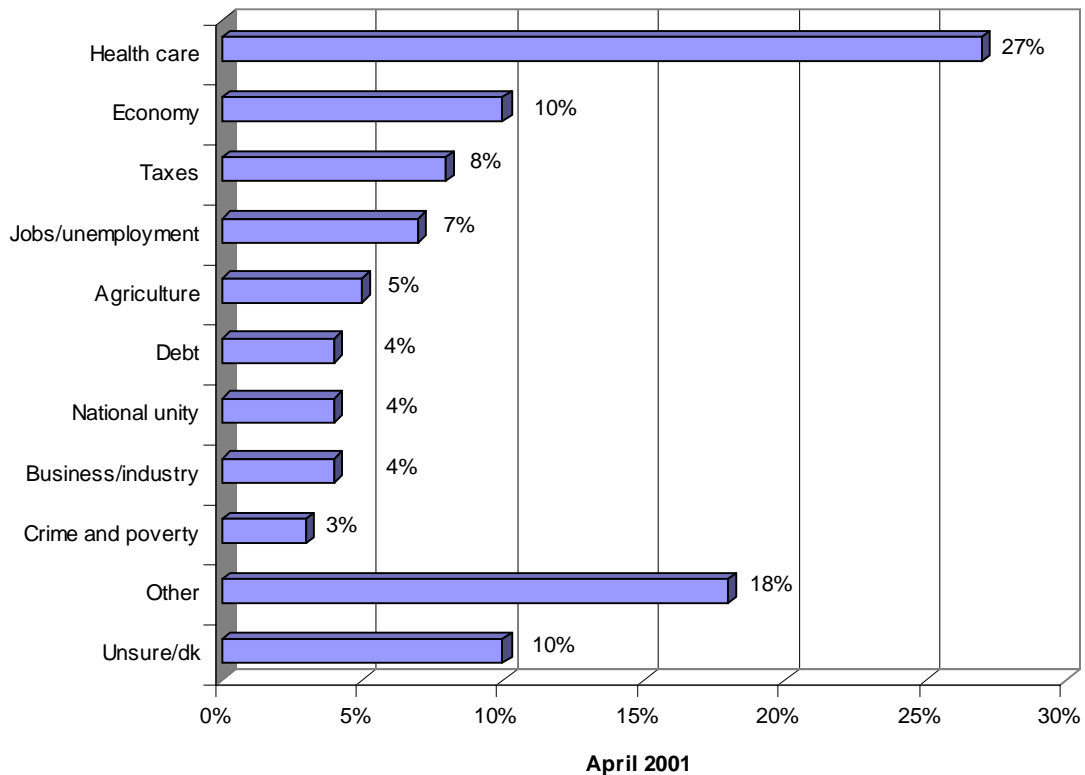
The Omnibus survey sample size of 1,000 people yields public opinion measurements with a statistical level of confidence of 95 percent within an overall margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points: reliable results with low variability. Frequency charts for all public opinion issues are illustrated in this report.

Doug Fast & Associates designed and implemented programs to facilitate the statistical analysis of data using the industry standard SPSS computer program (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Data checking procedures were utilized at all times to ensure accuracy of the data. In addition, statistical tests were conducted on the demographics to check for reliability and validity of the survey data.

# 1.0 GENERAL ISSUES

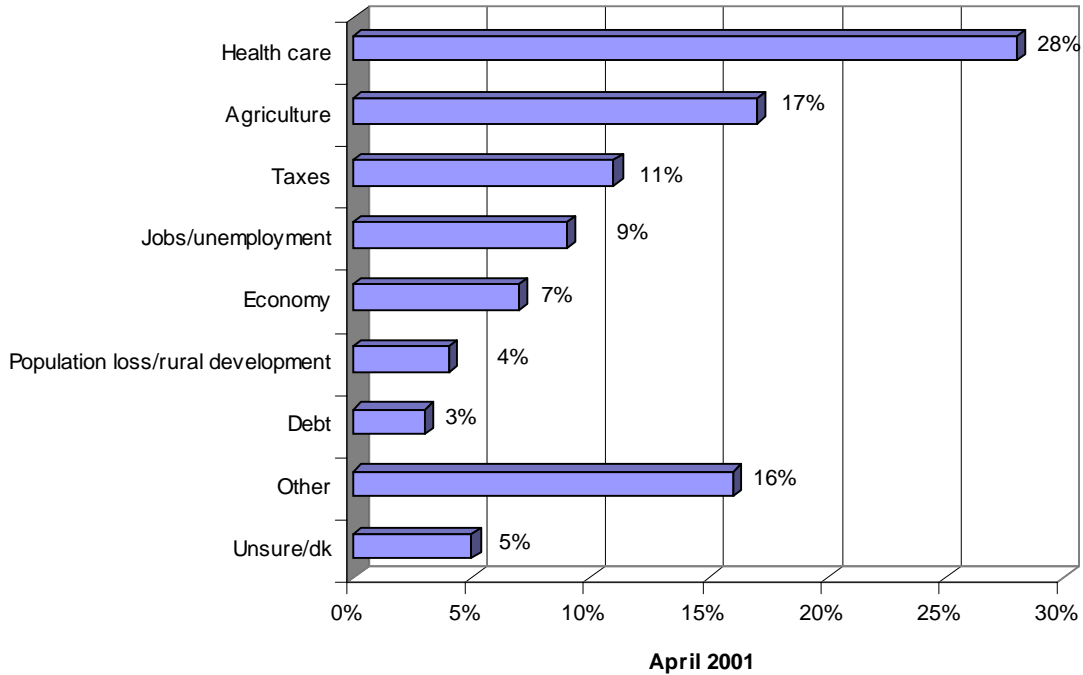
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**Question 1.** In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing Canada today?



- According to 27% of Saskatchewan residents, the most important issue facing Canada today is the health care system. Other important issues include the economy (10%), federal taxes (8%), jobs and unemployment (7%), agriculture (5%), the national deficit and accumulated debt (4%), national unity (4%) and business and industry (4%).
- Approximately 18% of respondents are primarily concerned with 'other' issues such as the federal government in general (4%), the environment (2%), education (2%) and increasing natural gas and utility prices (2%).

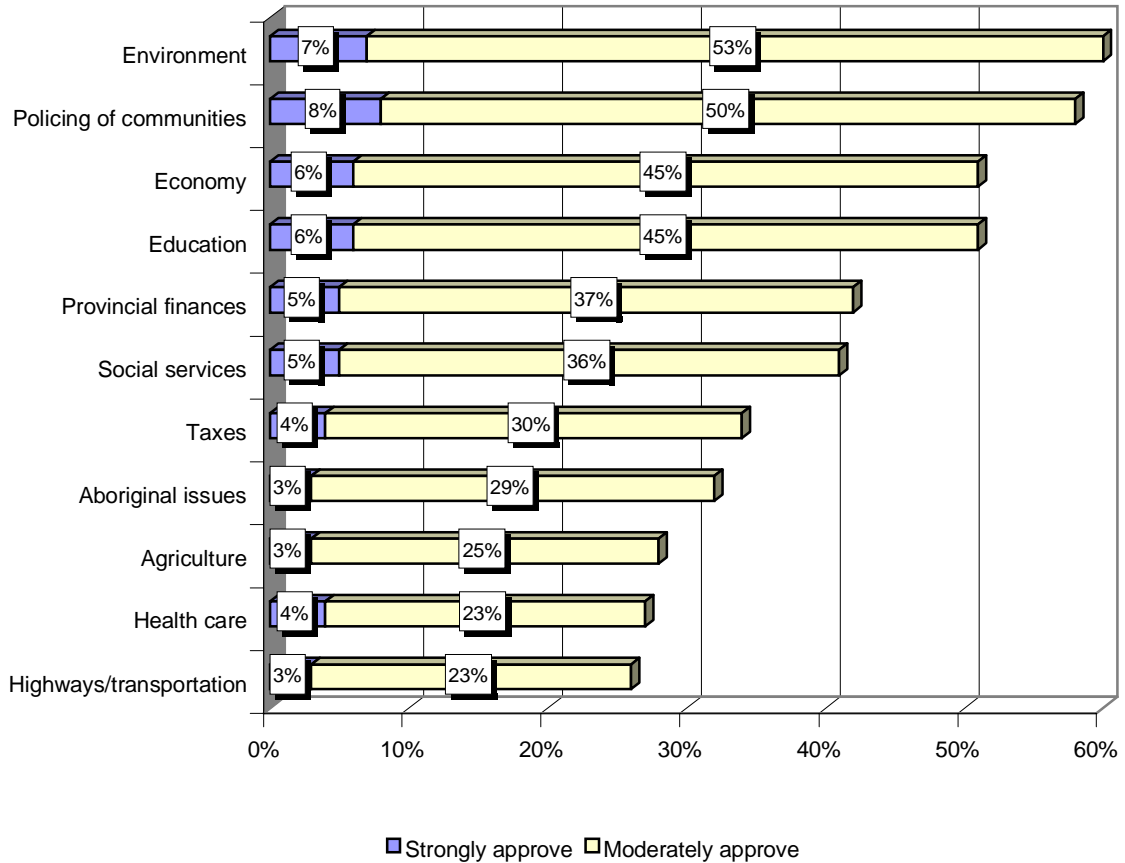
**Question 2.** What do you think is the most important issue facing the province of Saskatchewan today?



- The most important issue facing the province today, according to 28% of Saskatchewan residents, is health care. Approximately 17% of residents are concerned primarily with agriculture, 11% with provincial taxes, 9% with jobs and unemployment and 7% are primarily concerned with the provincial economy.
- Included among 'other' important issues identified by 16% of respondents are the provincial government in general (3%), increasing natural gas and utility prices (2%), highways and transportation (2%), education (2%) and Native issues (2%).

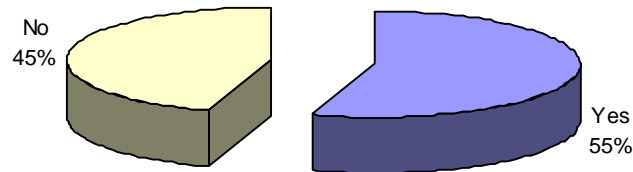


**Question 3.** How much do you approve of the way the provincial government is handling the following...



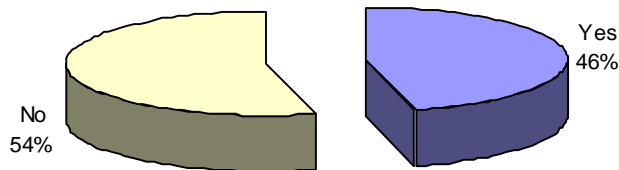
- The majority of Saskatchewan residents approve of the way the provincial government is handling the environment (60%), the policing of communities (58%), the economy (51%) and education (51%).
- More than one third approve of the way the provincial government is handling provincial finances (42%), social services (41%), and taxes (34%).
- More than one quarter of Saskatchewan residents approve of the way the provincial government is handling Aboriginal issues (32%), agriculture (28%), health care (27%) and highways and transportation (26%).

**Question 4.** Do you have access to the Internet?



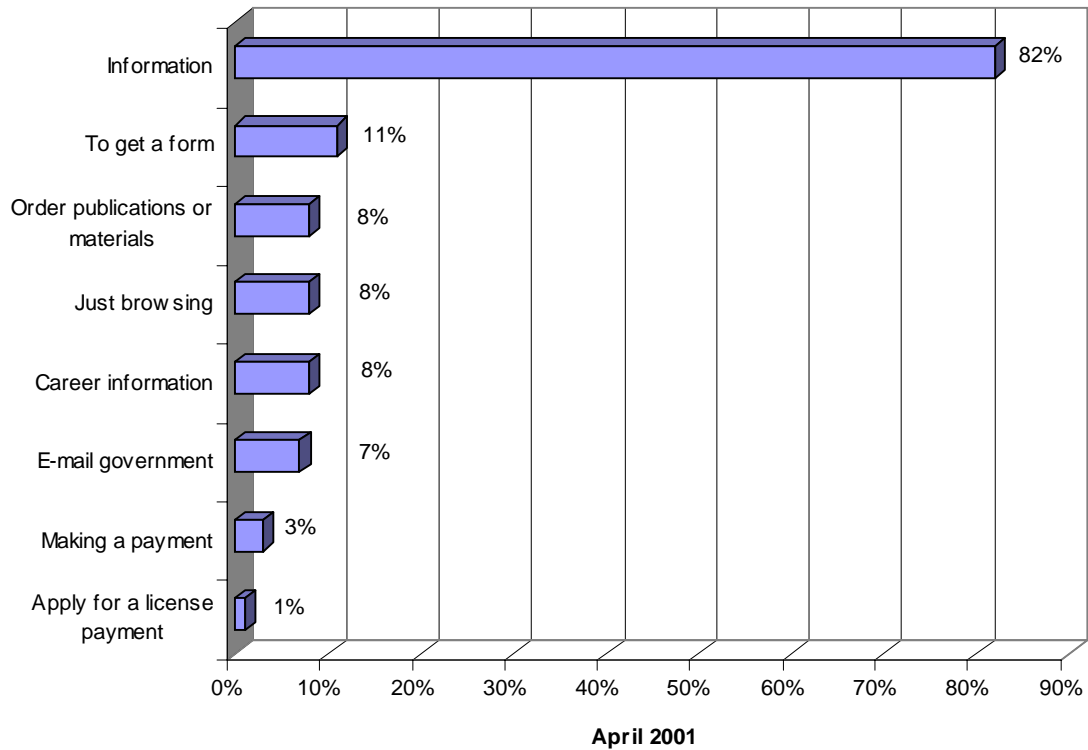
- The majority (55%) of Saskatchewan residents have access to the Internet.

**Question 5.** Have you ever visited a provincial government web site?



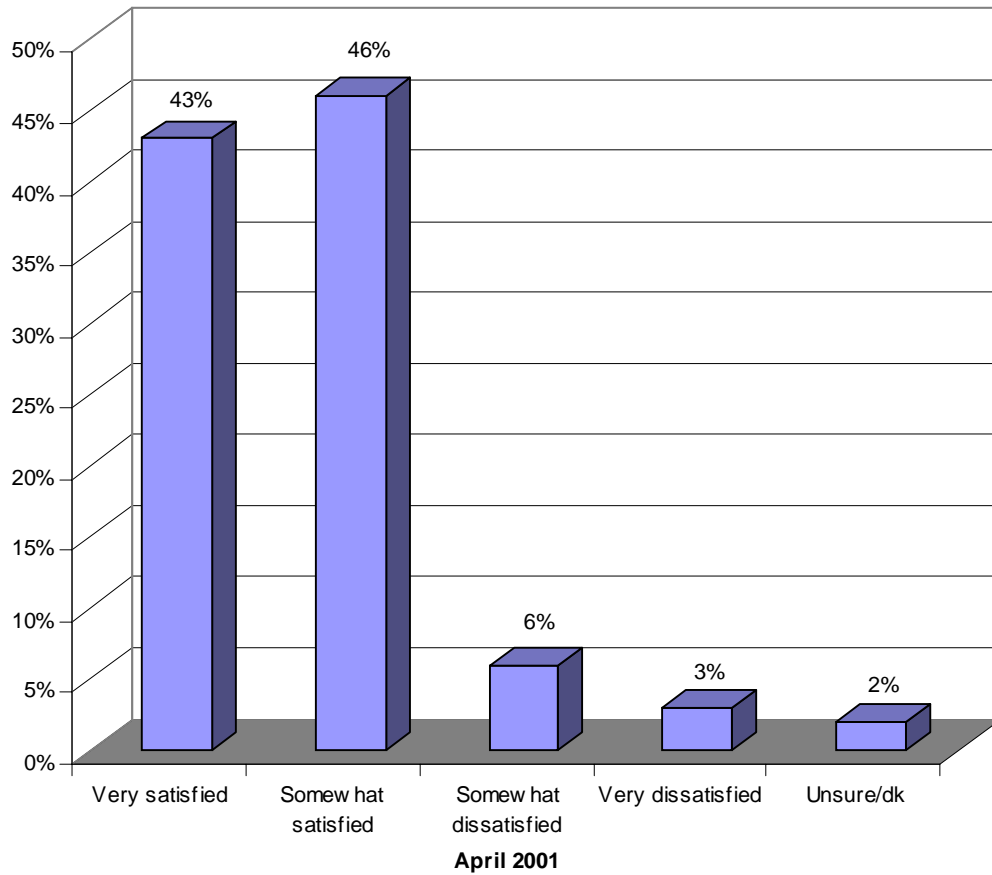
- Approximately 46% of those residents who have access to the Internet have visited a provincial government web site (25% of all residents).

**Question 6.** What was the purpose of the visit?



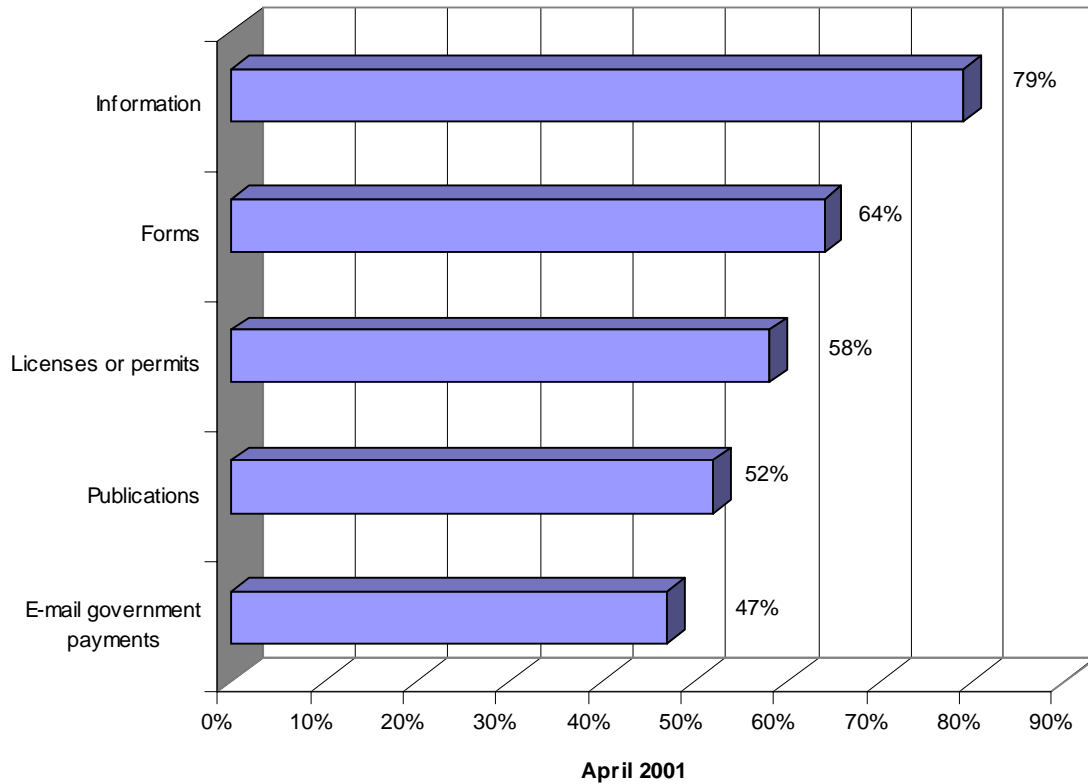
- The large majority (82%) of those residents who have visited a provincial government website indicate they did so to gather information (21% of all residents).

**Question 7.** Were you satisfied with the service you received?



- The large majority (89%) of those residents who have visited a provincial government web site are satisfied with the service they received (23% of all residents).

**Question 8.** Do you think you would access any of the following government services if they were available?

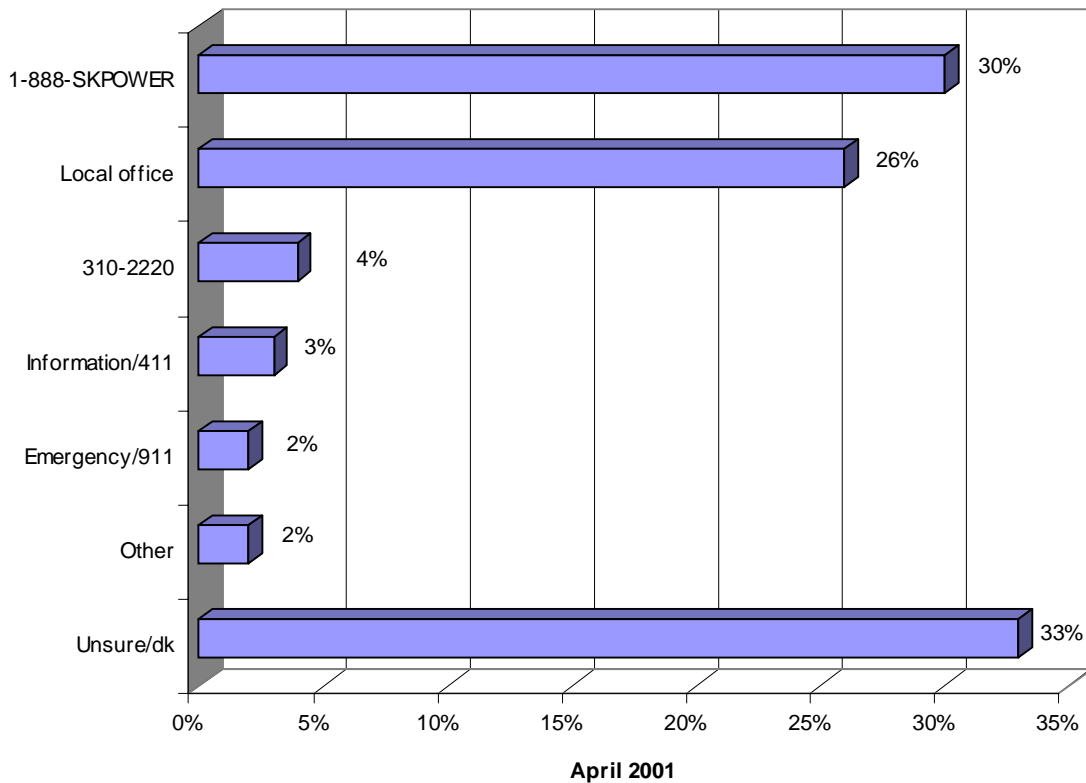


- More than three quarters (79%) of those residents who accessed a provincial government web site accessed information (44% of all residents). Approximately 64% accessed forms (36% of all residents), 58% accessed licenses or permits (32% of all residents), 52% accessed publications (29% of all residents) and 47% e-mailed government payments (26% of all residents).

## 2.0 SASKPOWER

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**Question 9.** What phone number would you call in the event of a power outage?

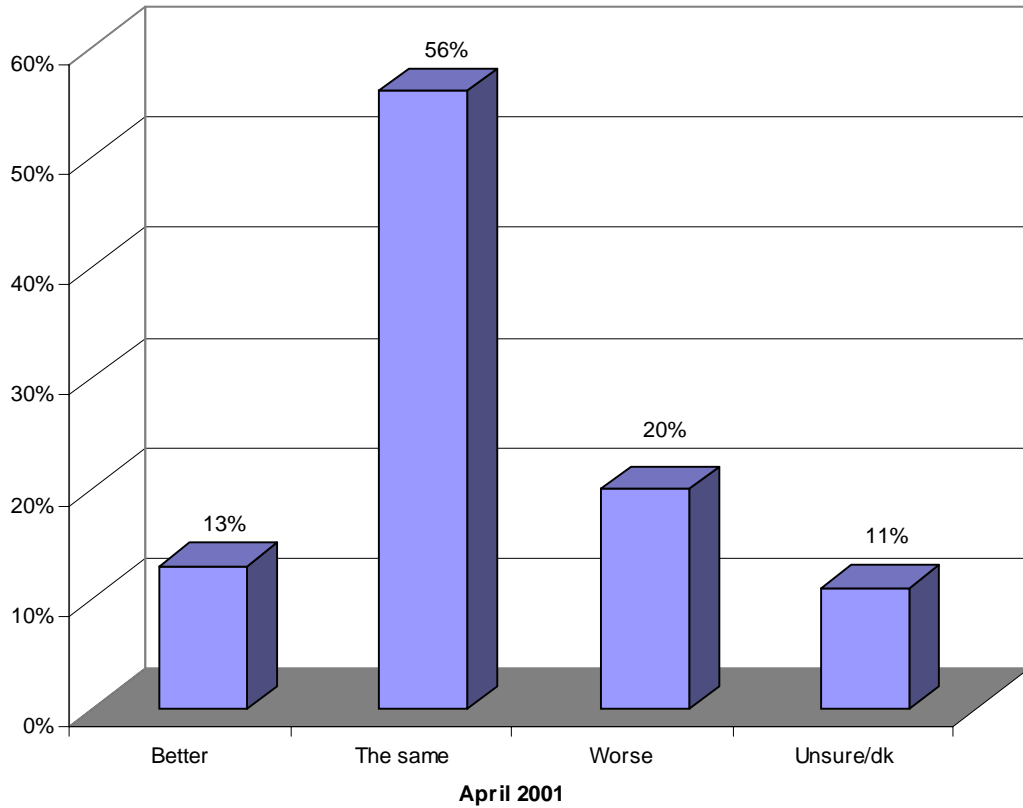


- Approximately 30% of Saskatchewan residents indicate they would call 1-888-SKPOWER in the event of a power outage and 26% would call their local SaskPower office. One third (33%) are unsure what number they would call in event of a power outage.

### 3.0 POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION & SKILLS TRAINING

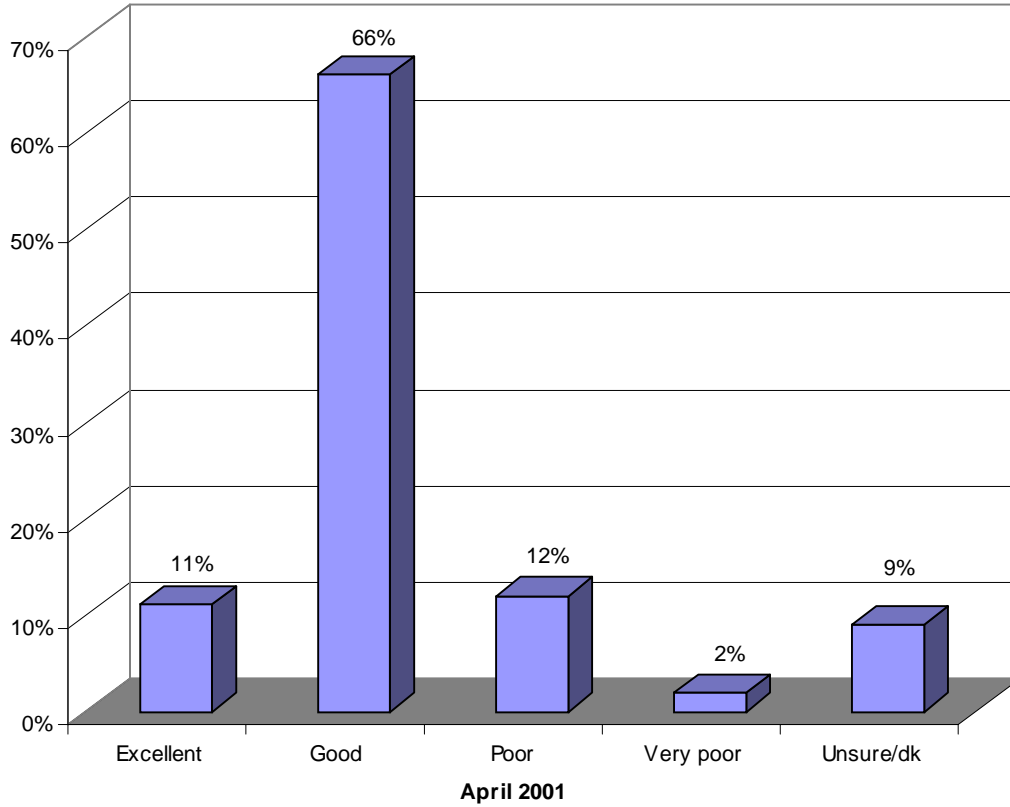
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**Question 10.** Compared to the rest of the country, do you think the post-secondary education and training system in Saskatchewan is better, the same or worse?



- The majority (69%) of residents think the post-secondary education and training system in Saskatchewan is the same or better than that of the rest of the country.

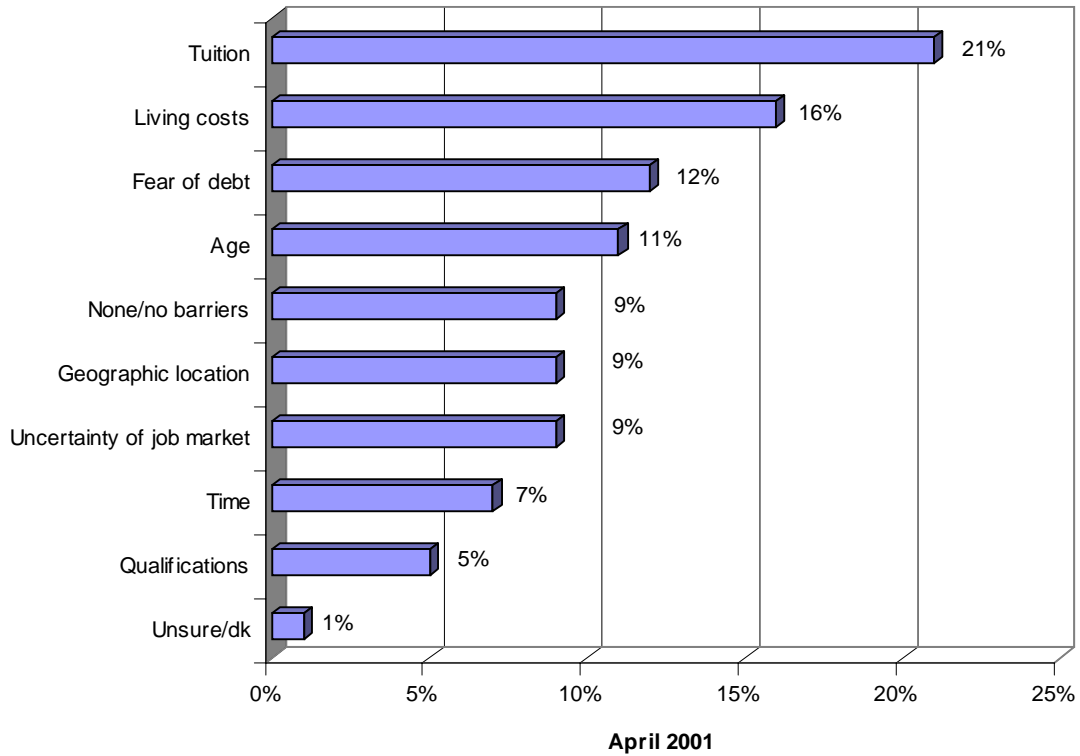
**Question 11.** Do you think the quality of Saskatchewan training programs is generally excellent, good, poor or very poor?



- The large majority of residents (77%) think the quality of Saskatchewan's training programs is good or excellent.

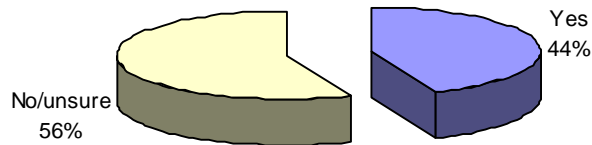


**Question 12.** What barriers do you or your family members experience which prevent you from taking post-secondary education or training?



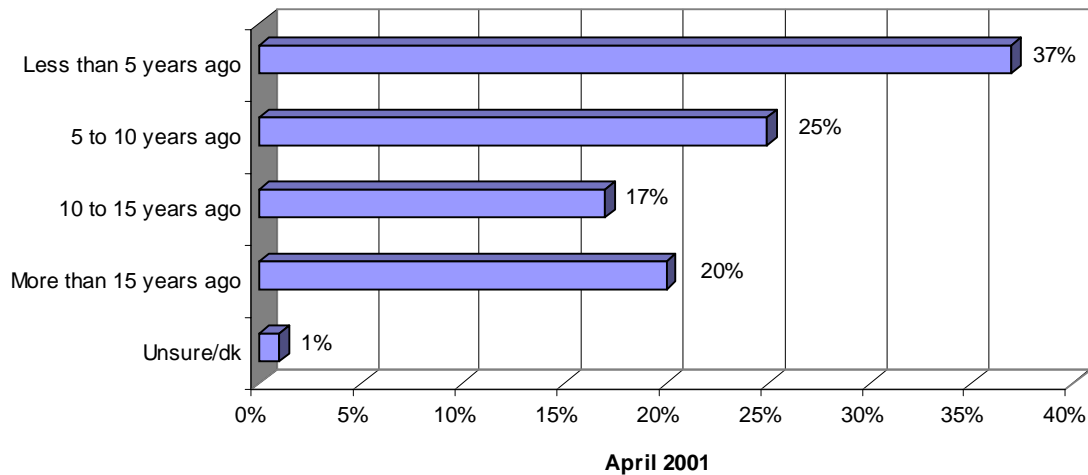
- One in five (21%) Saskatchewan residents identify tuition costs as a barrier for them or their family members from taking post-secondary education or training. Approximately 16% of residents identify living costs as a barrier, 12% indicate apprehension with taking on the debt they associate with post-secondary education or training and 11% suggest that their age is a barrier.

**Question 13.** Have you or anyone in your family ever taken out a student loan in Saskatchewan?



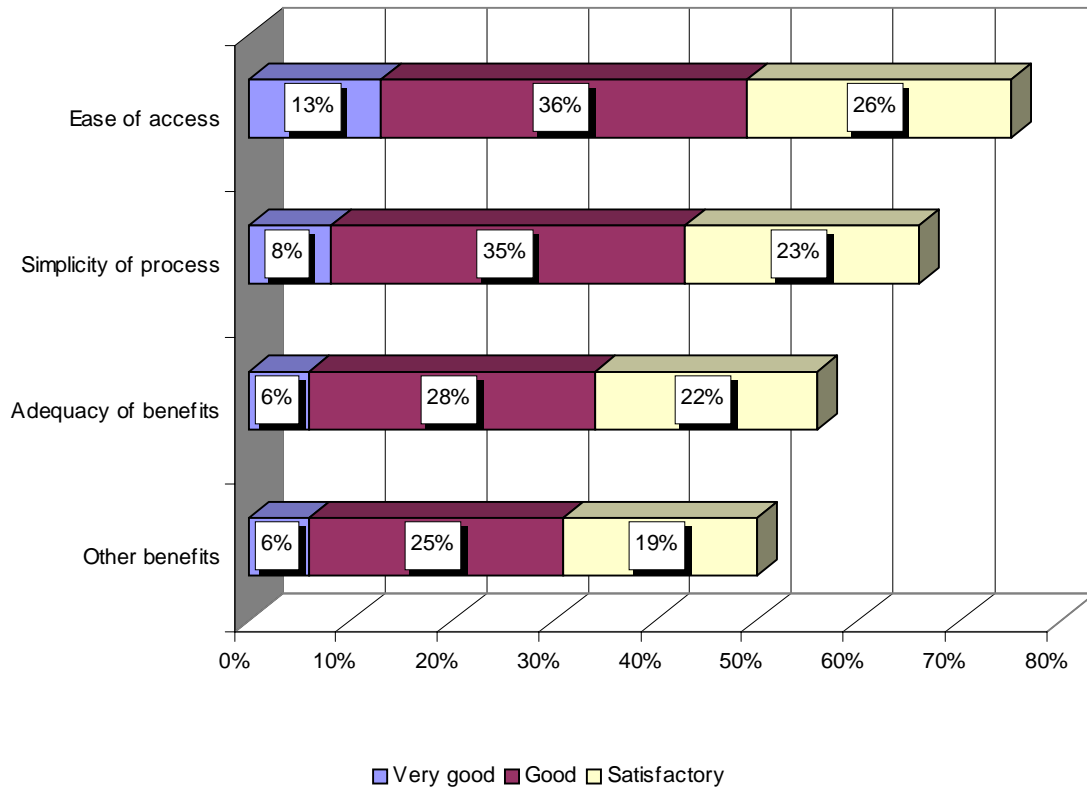
- Approximately 44% of residents indicate they or a family member have taken out a student loan in Saskatchewan at some point.

**Question 14.** How many years ago?



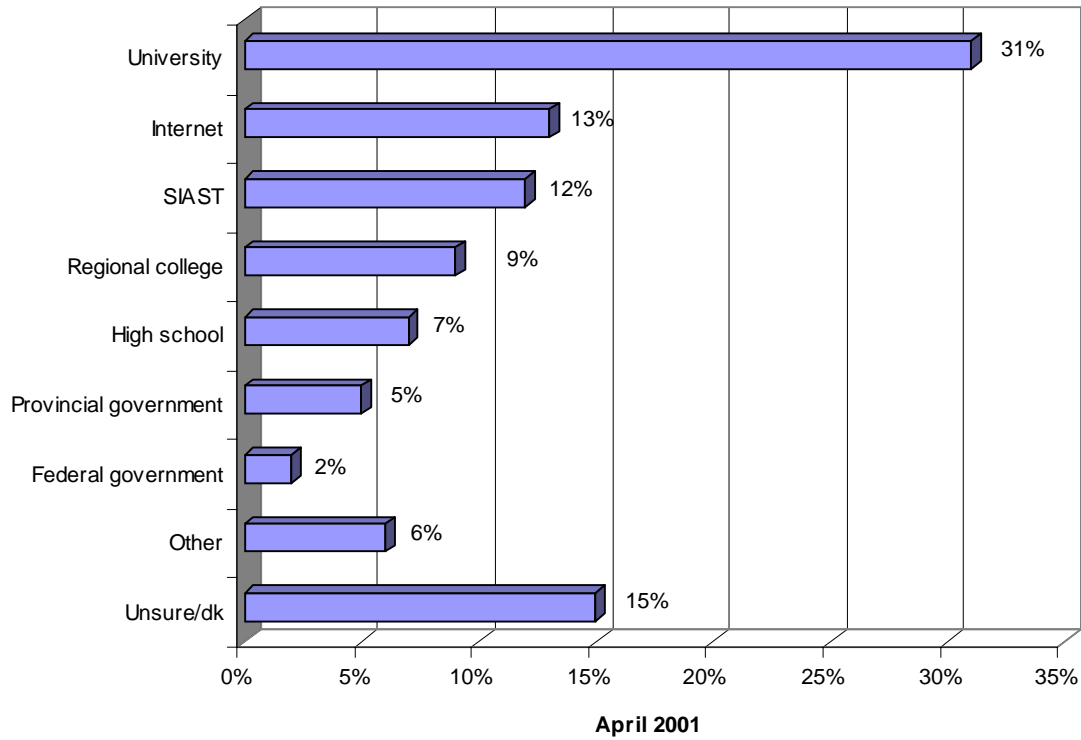
- More than one third (37%) of those residents who have taken a student loan in Saskatchewan indicate they took out the loan less than five years ago (17% of all residents), 25% say it was between five and ten years ago (11% of all residents), 17% say ten to fifteen years ago (8% of all residents) and 20% indicate they took out a student loan in Saskatchewan more than fifteen years ago (9% of all residents).

**Question 15.** Thinking about your experience with students loans, I would like you to rate each of the following areas...



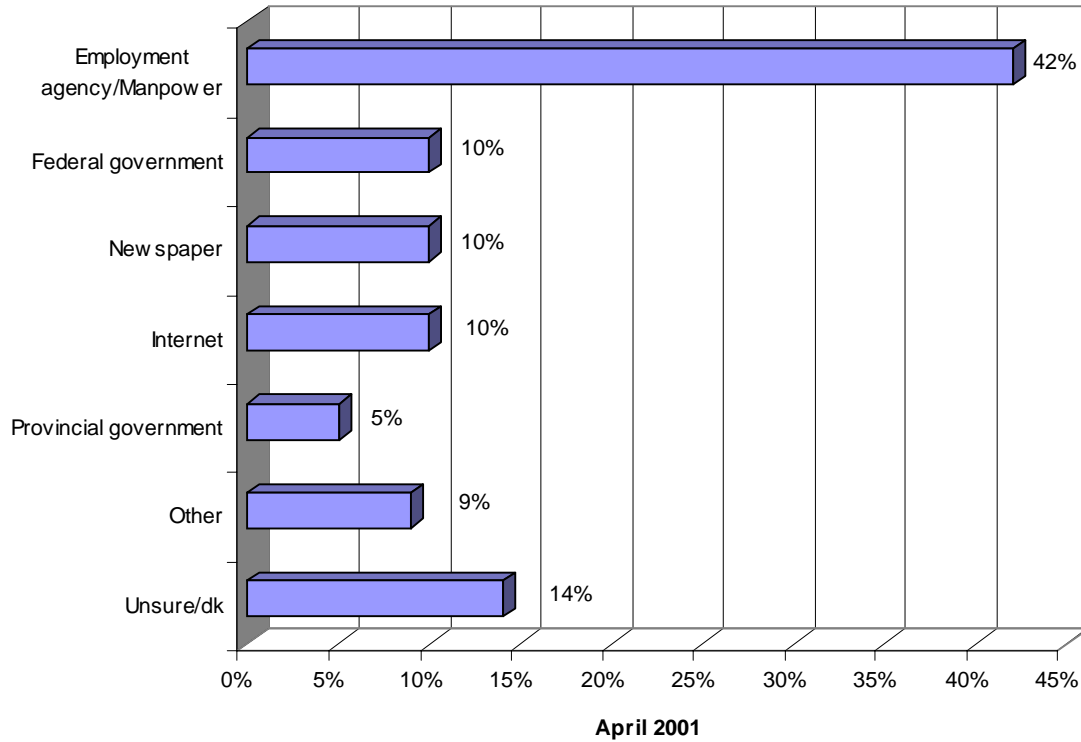
- Three quarters (75%) of Saskatchewan residents who have accessed student loans in Saskatchewan rate the ease of access as satisfactory or better. The majority rate the simplicity of the process (66%) and adequacy of benefits (56%) as satisfactory or better. One half (50%) rate other benefits such as bursaries, debt forgiveness, study grants or interest relief as satisfactory or better.

**Question 16.** Where would you go to get information about post-secondary education and training opportunities in Saskatchewan?



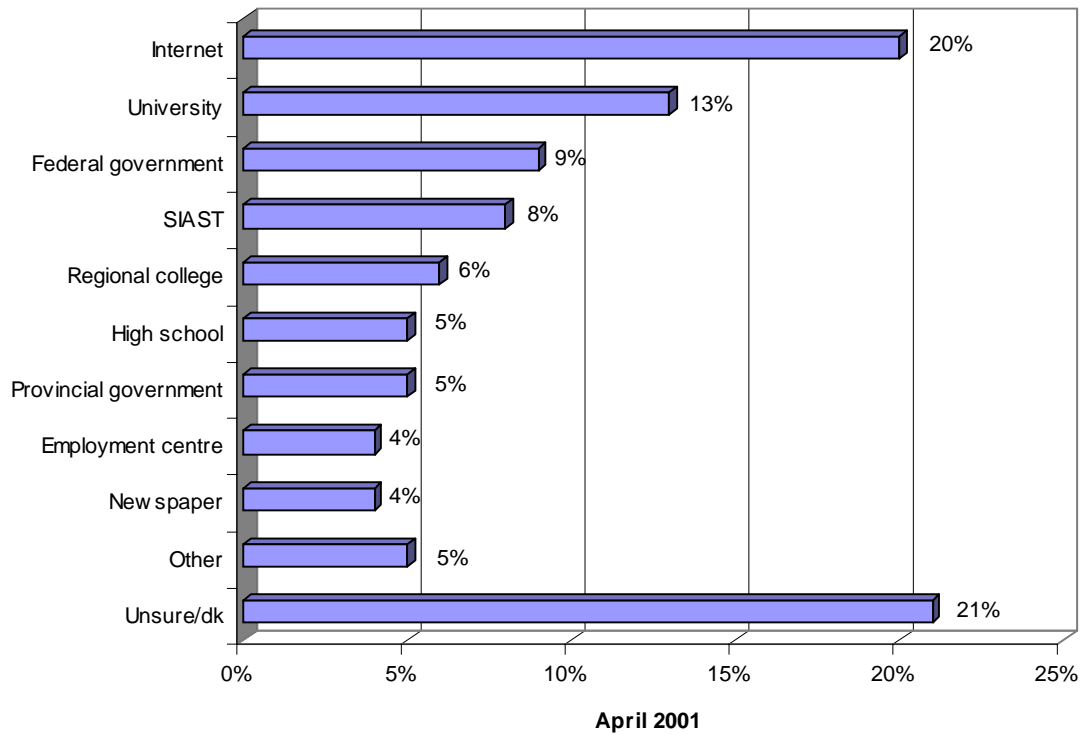
- More than one quarter (31%) of residents would go to a university to get information about post-secondary education and training opportunities in Saskatchewan.

**Question 17.** Where would you go for information about job opportunities or to find workers?



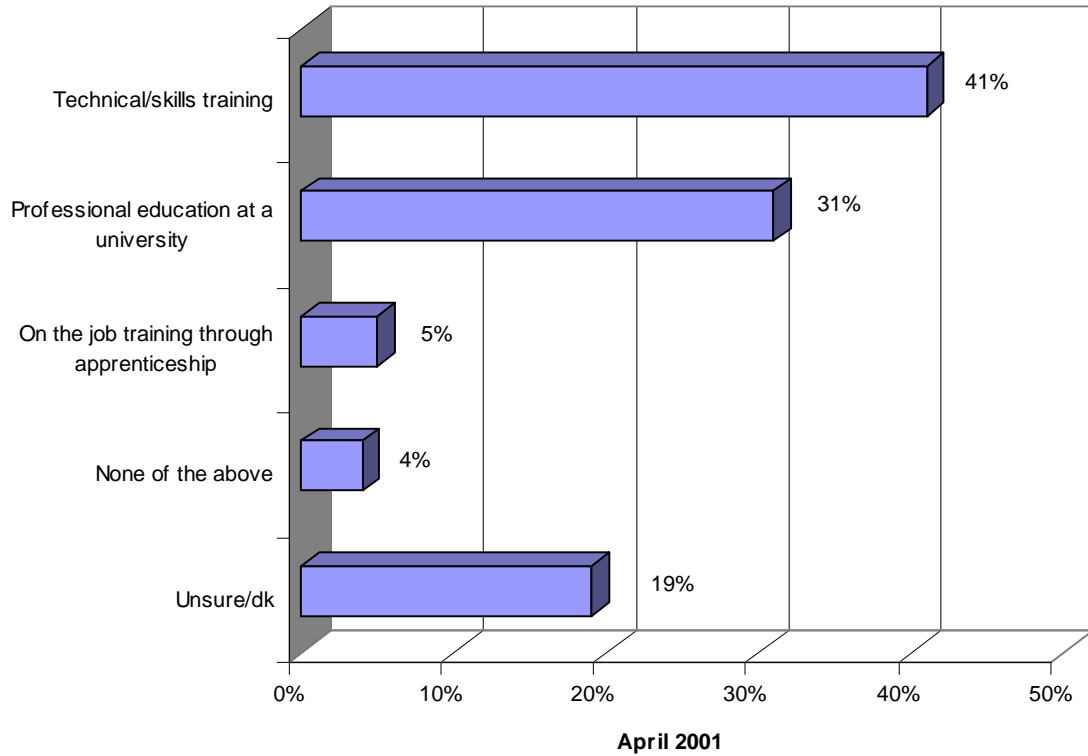
- Approximately 42% of residents would go to an employment agency or 'Manpower' (HRDC) to get information about job opportunities or to find workers.

**Question 18.** Where would you go for career information?



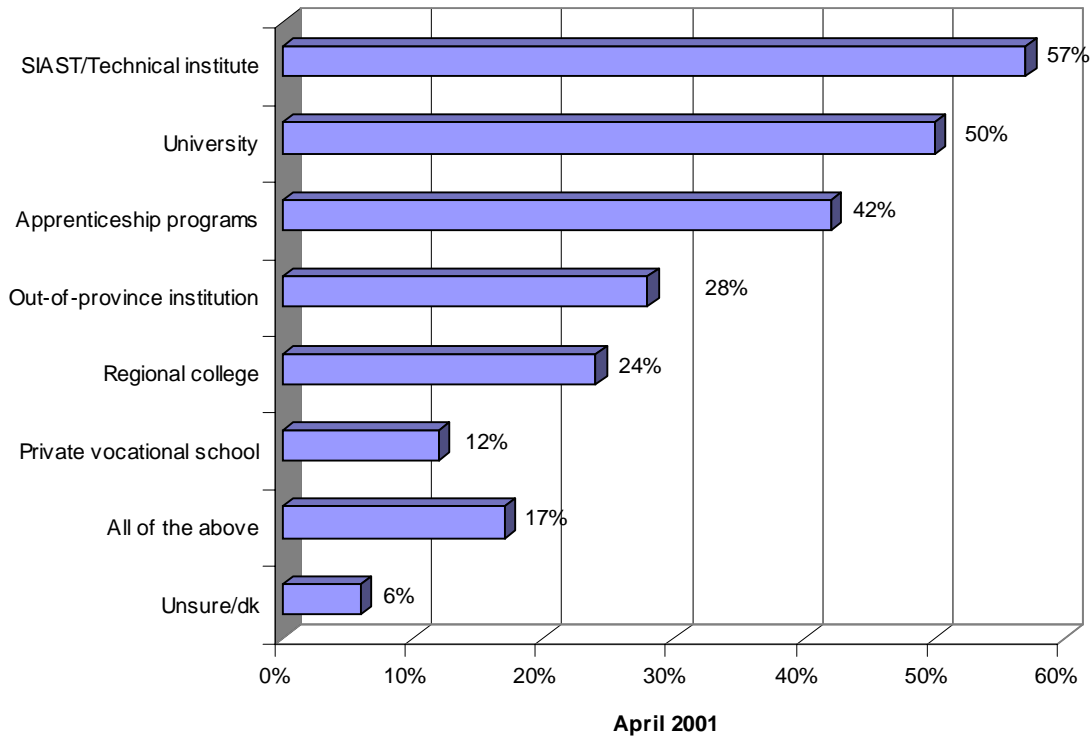
- One in five (20%) Saskatchewan residents would search on the Internet for career information, 13% would go to a university, 9% would obtain information from the federal government and 8% would get information from SIAST.

**Question 19.** Generally speaking, if you were advising a young person today, would you recommend they choose...



- Approximately 41% of Saskatchewan residents would recommend technical education and skills training if they were advising a young person today; 31% would recommend a professional education at a university.

**Question 20.** Which institution would you recommend they attend? Would you recommend...



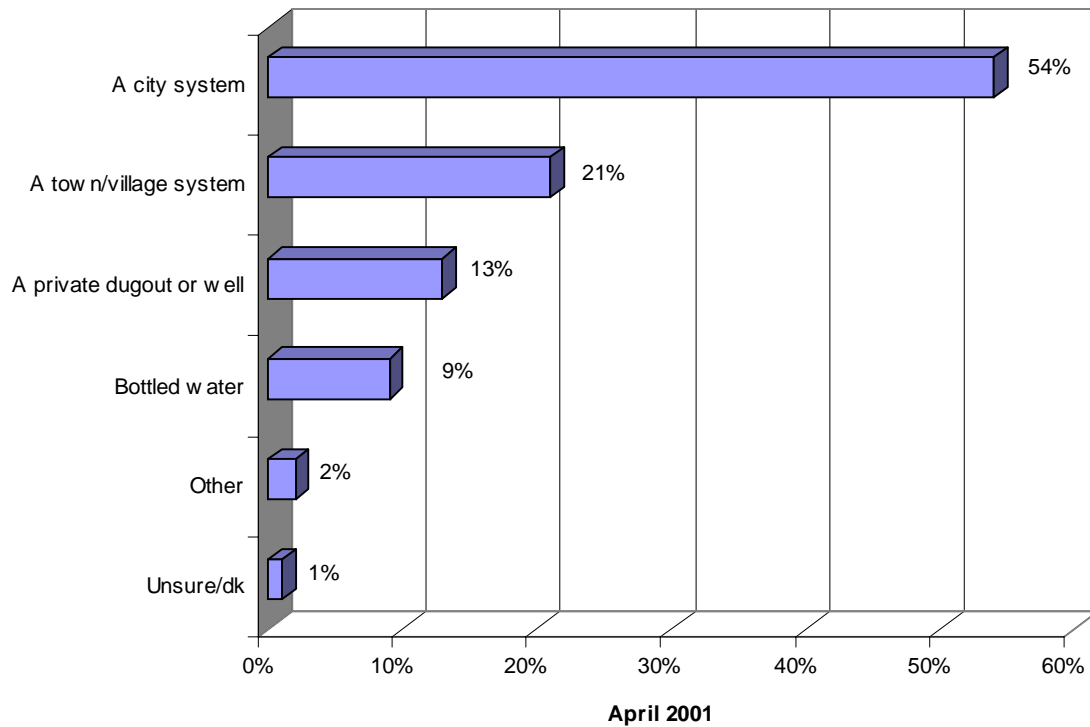
- If they were advising a young person today, Saskatchewan residents would recommend they attend SIAST or a technical training school (57%), university (50%), an apprenticeship program (42%) an out of province institution (28%) or a regional college (24%).



## 4.0 SASKWATER

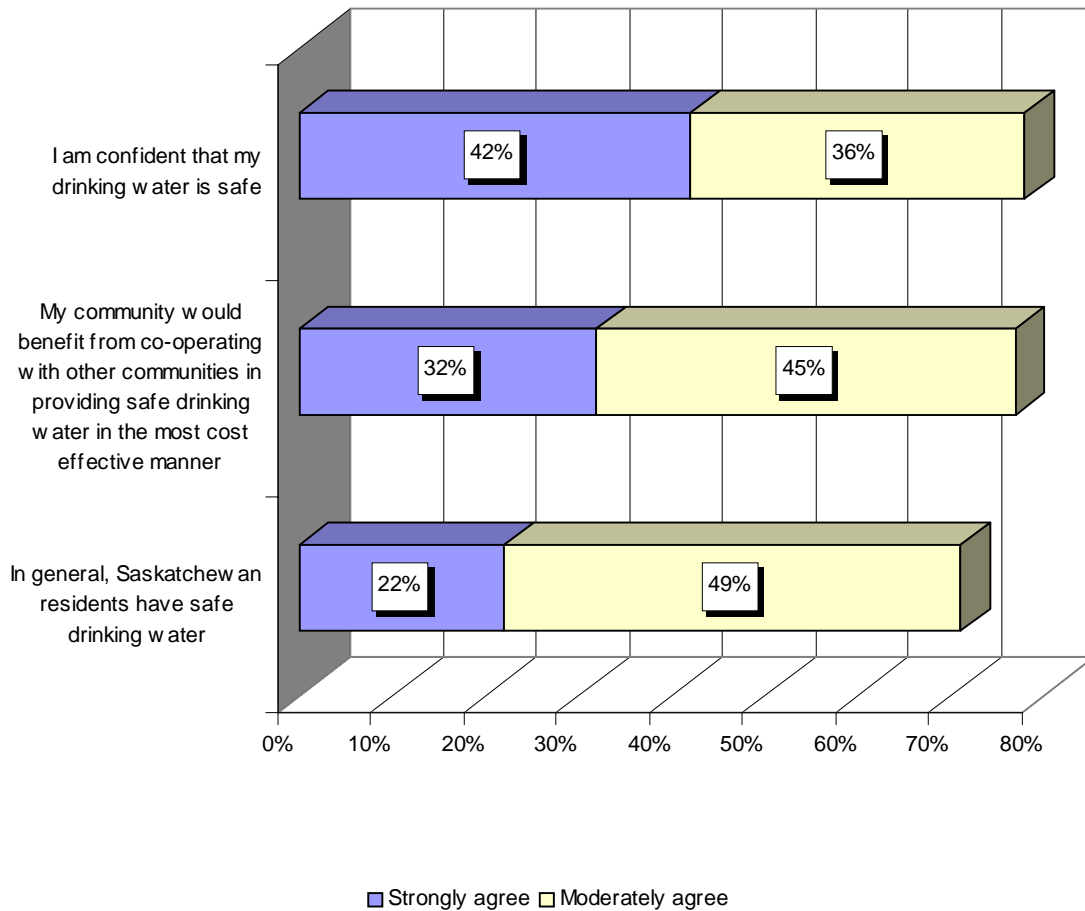
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**Question 21.** Can you please tell me where your drinking water comes from?



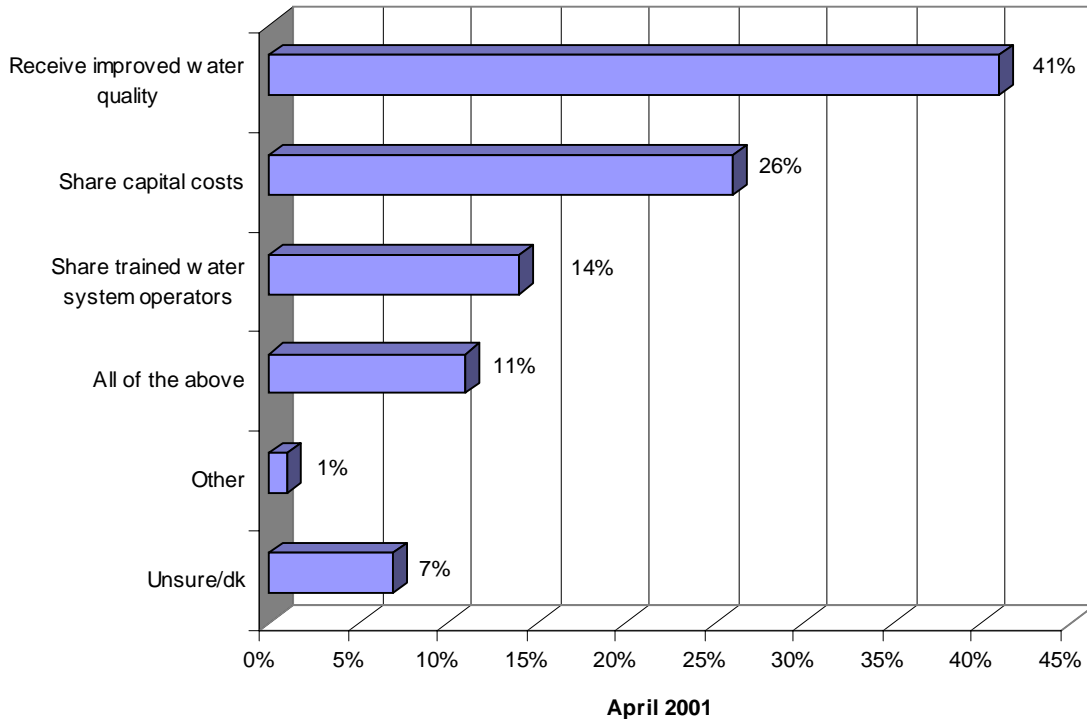
- The majority (54%) of Saskatchewan residents indicate their drinking water comes from a city system, 21% from a town or village system and 13% say their drinking water comes from a private dugout or well.

**Question 22.** How much do you agree with the following statements?



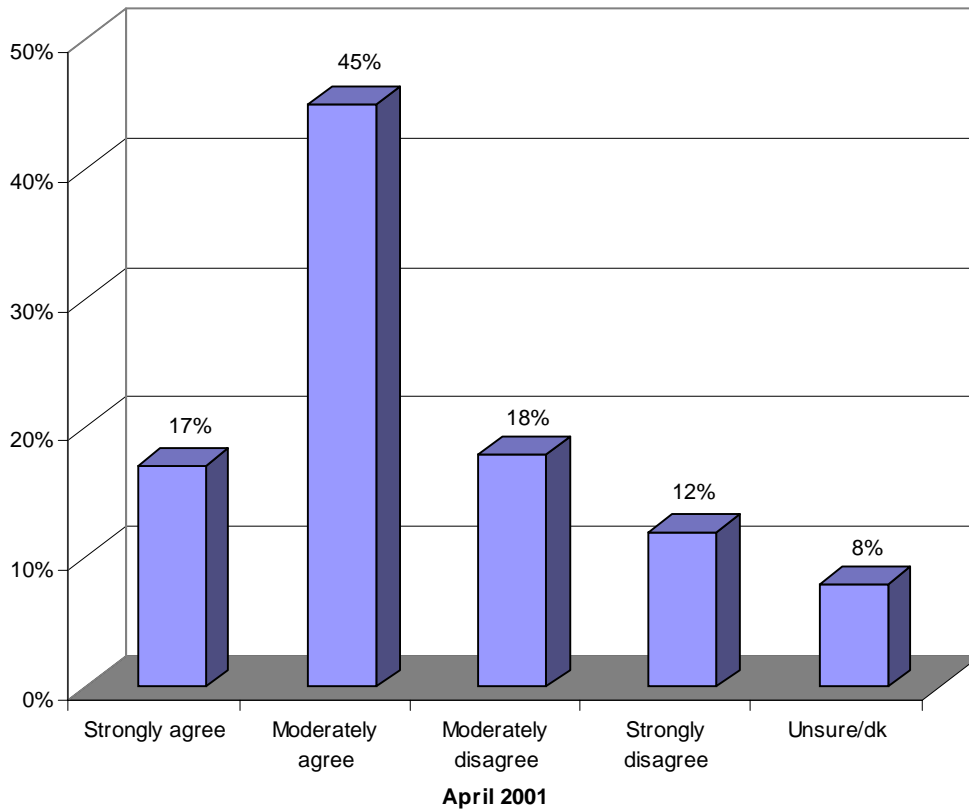
- The majority of residents are confident that their drinking water is safe (78%), their community would benefit from co-operating with other communities in providing safe drinking water in the most cost effective manner (77%) and in general, Saskatchewan residents have safe drinking water (71%).

**Question 22d.** What benefits would your community see by co-operating with other communities in providing safe drinking water?



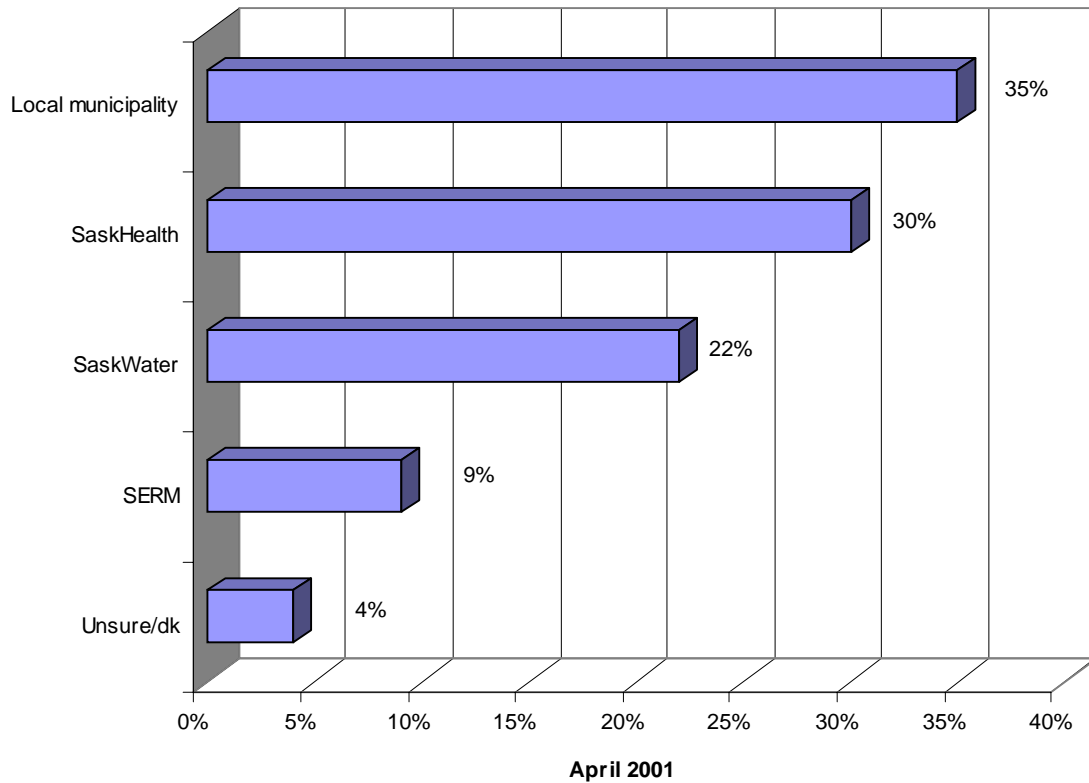
- Approximately 41% of those Saskatchewan residents who think their community would benefit from co-operating with other communities in providing safe drinking water in the most cost effective manner think their community would receive improved water quality, 26% see benefits in sharing capital costs and 14% think sharing trained water systems operators would benefit their community.

**Question 22e.** If improvements are required to make my drinking water safe or to generally improve the drinking water quality, I would be willing to pay higher water rates.



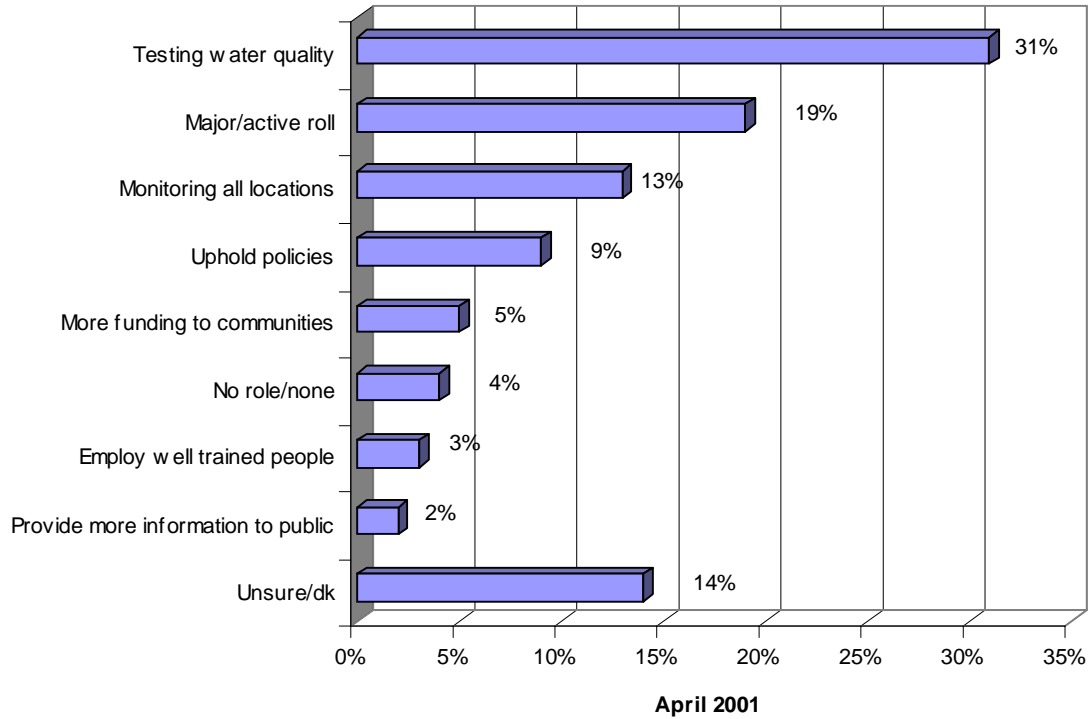
- The majority (62%) of Saskatchewan residents agree they would be willing to pay higher water rates to make their drinking water safe or to generally improve the drinking water quality.

**Question 23.** If you were concerned about the safety of your drinking water, which of the following would you be most likely to contact?



- More than one third (35%) of Saskatchewan residents indicate they would contact their local municipality if they were concerned about the safety of their drinking water, 30% would contact SaskHealth, 22% say they would contact SaskWater and 9% would contact Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM).

**Question 24.** What role should the provincial government play in ensuring the safety of everyone's tap water?



- Approximately 31% of Saskatchewan residents think the provincial government should be testing water quality to ensure the safety of everyone's tap water, 19% say they should be taking a more active role in ensuring the safety of tap water, 13% think the provincial government should be monitoring all locations and 9% think they should be upholding all policies, guidelines and standards.

## 5.0 SOCIAL SERVICES

**Question 25.** The Government and the Department of Social Services provides full and partial coverage for a wide range of programs and services. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements.

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Moderately agree</b>	<b>Combined agree</b>
Governments should make and enforce regulations to ensure child care services meet minimum quality standards.	61%	29%	90%
The main goal of child care is to enable parents to work or go to school.	36%	47%	83%
Governments should help low-income parents with the costs for child care.	37%	44%	81%
Governments should ensure child care is available in all parts of the province.	44%	31%	75%
Assuming that a family qualifies for child care subsidies, the family should be allowed to use that subsidy to pay a relative to fulfill their child care needs.	35%	39%	74%
Children would be better off if one of their parents could stay home to look after them even if it negatively affected the family's financial situation.	45%	28%	73%
The main goal of child care is to help develop social and learning skills.	34%	39%	73%
Governments should help middle-income parents with the costs for child care.	22%	40%	62%
Parents, not governments, should always be responsible for paying for child care.	18%	34%	52%
Extending kindergarten to include four year olds would be a way to help meet child care needs in Saskatchewan.	14%	21%	35%

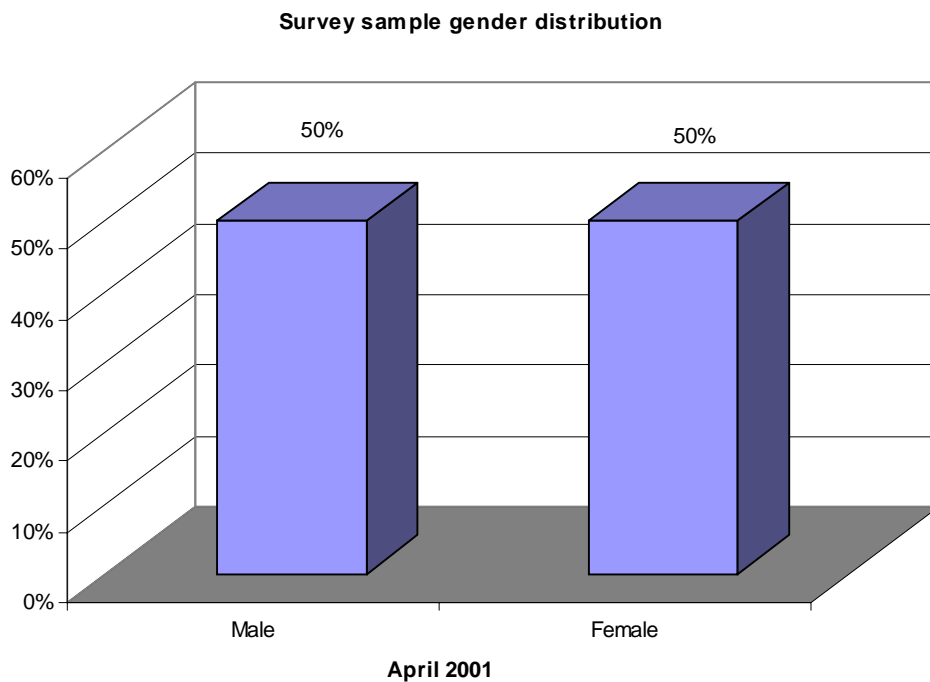
- The large majority of residents agree governments should make and enforce regulations to ensure child care services meet minimum quality standards (90%), the main goal of child care is to enable parents to work or go to school (83%) and governments should help low-income parents with the costs for child care (81%).
- Approximately three quarters of Saskatchewan residents agree governments should ensure child care is available in all parts of the province (75%), families should be allowed to use child care subsidies to pay a relative to fulfill their child care needs (74%), children would be better off if one of their parents could stay home to look after them even if it negatively affected the family's financial situation (73%) and the main goal of child care is to help develop social and learning skills (73%).
- The majority agree governments should help middle-income parents with the costs for child care (62%) and parents, not governments, should always be responsible for paying for child care (52%).

## APPENDIX II SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

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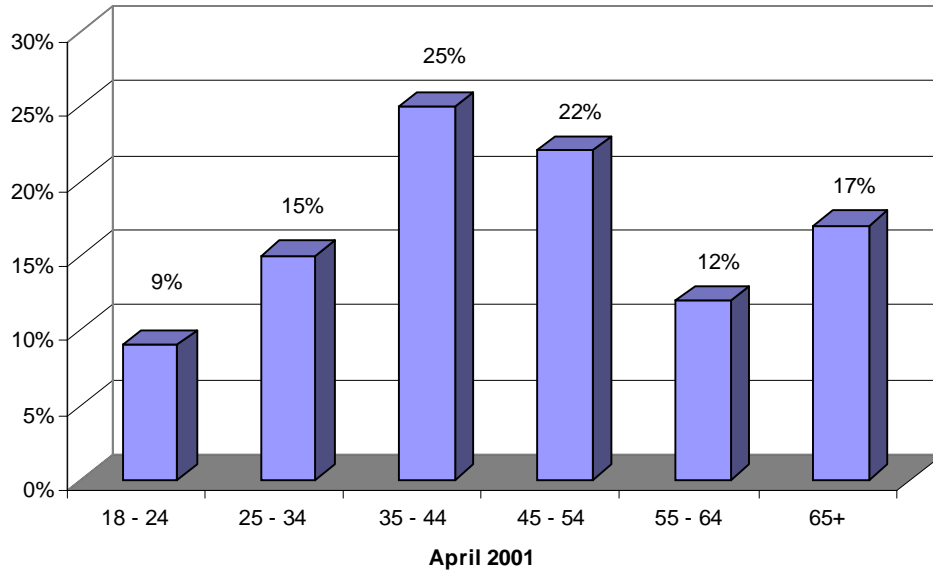
The omnibus public opinion sample frame is constructed to facilitate proportionate representation of various demographic characteristics evident within the province of Saskatchewan. This ensures that opinions of all the various types of residents in Saskatchewan are proportionately represented in the statistical measurements documented in this report. The demographic distributions from the survey sample generally parallel the province's actual population distributions, as measured by Statistics Canada census data.

The omnibus survey sample size of 1,000 people yields public opinion measurements with a statistical level of confidence of 95 percent within an overall margin of error for the point estimates contained in this report of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

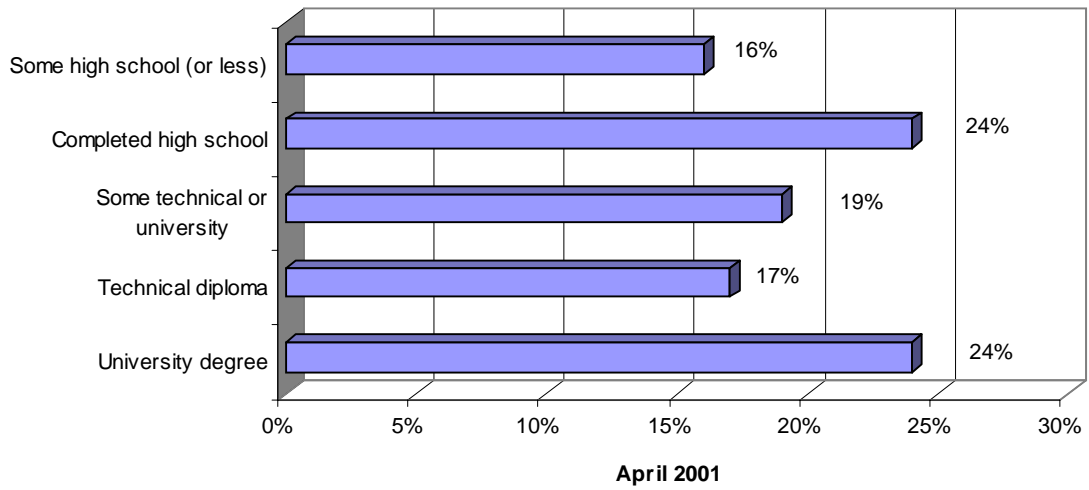




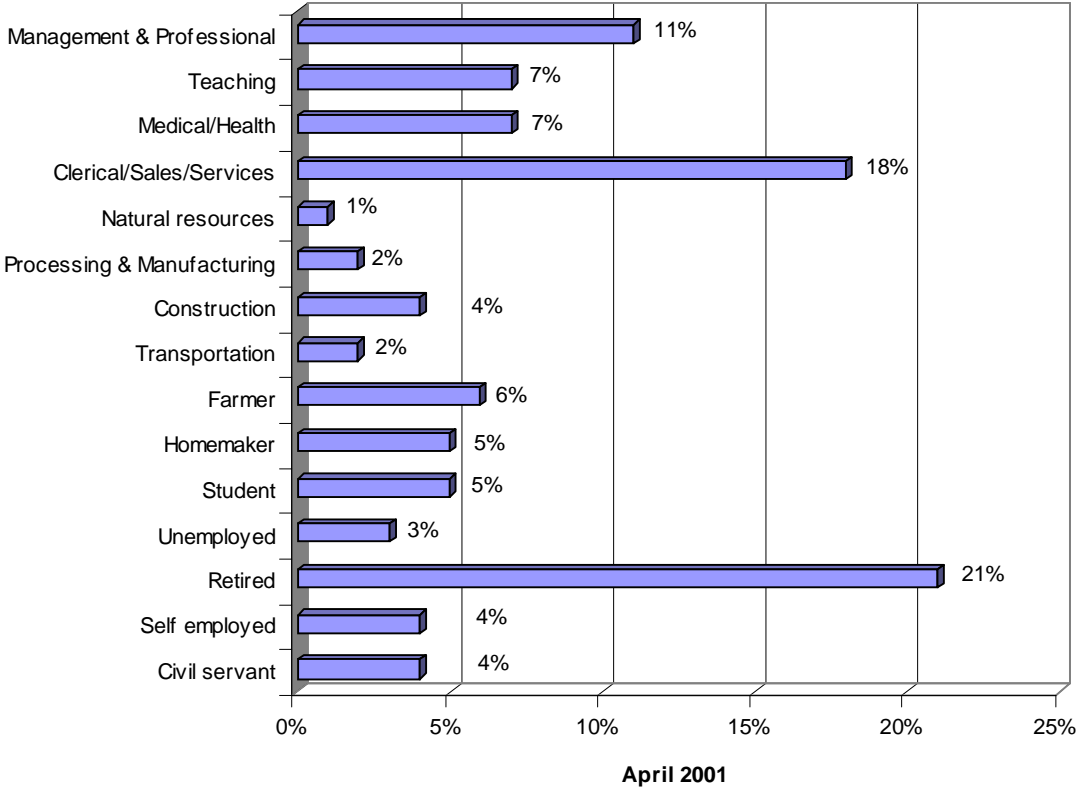
**Survey sample age distribution**



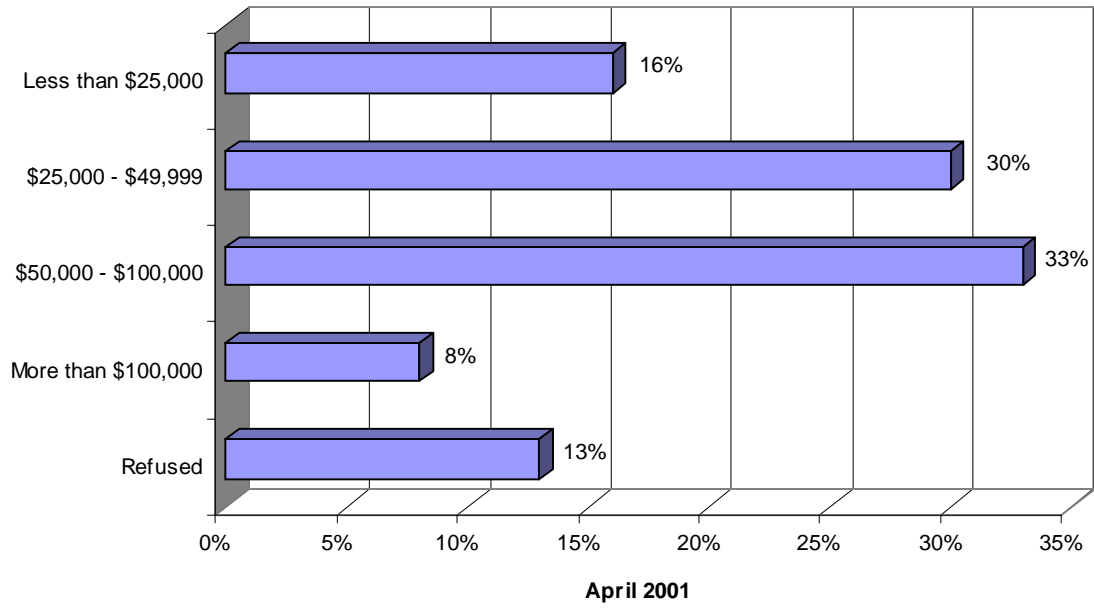
**Survey sample education distribution**



**Survey sample occupation distribution**



**Survey sample income distribution**



**Survey sample regional distribution**

