

Saskatchewan Finance

Post Budget Survey

Prepared for Saskatchewan Finance

by

Sigma Analytics

April 18, 2001

Highlights

The Budget

- 54.2% of decided adults in Saskatchewan who responded indicated they were aware that the Government of Saskatchewan has tabled its budget for 2001-2002. Awareness was highest among men above the age of 35, where at least 71% were aware the budget had been tabled.
- Among those that were aware that the budget was tabled, 42.8% said television news was their primary source of information concerning the budget.
- Among those that were aware that the budget was tabled, 66.6% approved of the direction taken in the 2001-2002 budget. With regards to most gender and age demographics there was slightly less approval among rural respondents as compared to urban respondents. Even if the budget approval rating is corrected by re-weighting the results to account for the fact that those who approve the provincial government's actions indicated more likelihood of being aware of the budget being tabled, the approval level remains a strong 61.3% of the overall population.
- 81.9% believe that it was an appropriate step for the provincial government to budget 1.1 billion dollars for education at this time.
- 81.3% believe that it was an appropriate step for the provincial government to budget 312 million dollars for highways at this time.

- 75.6% believe that it was an appropriate step for the provincial government to budget an extra 229 million dollars for healthcare at this time.
- 72.6% believe that it was an appropriate step for the provincial government to budget 10 million dollars to provide for programs to protect and nurture children at this time.
- 75.4% believe that it was an appropriate step for the provincial government to lower small business tax from 8% to 6% at this time.
- Among those who are aware of the budget and do not approve of the way the provincial government is handling its job, 35.6% approve of the direction of the budget. This group has a significantly lower income than those who do not approve of the government's performance and do not approve of the budget, and is much more favorable to the government with regards to their handling of healthcare, both in the budget and as a whole. Further, this segment gives the government a significantly higher approval rating with regards to the economy.

Provincial Government Approval Ratings

- 48.9% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is performing its job. This support is highest among males above the age of 55 (over 60% in favor) in which there has been an increase in excess of 20% since January 2001. This support is lowest among rural women in which no age demographic shows higher than 43% approving.

- 55.0% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling education. This marks a statistically significant increase of nearly 10 percentage points from the January 2001 percentage of 46.9%. Large increases occurred with regards to every male demographic with the largest being a 30% increase among urban males, 55 years and older.

- 27.5% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling agriculture. As expected, there is a statistically significant difference among rural and urban respondents with regards to this query. However, in no demographic does the government exceed a 50% approval rating.

- 35.5% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling healthcare. This marks a statistically significant increase from the 23.8% obtained in January 2001. The largest gains were made with respect to rural males in which for every age demographic there was an increase of at least 16%.

- 31.9% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling highways/transportation. This is a statistically significant increase of 13% from January 2001 (18.9%).

Background & Methodology

This poll was commissioned by Saskatchewan Finance in a tender call on which Sigma Analytics submitted the winning bid.

The primary objectives of this poll are three-fold:

- To provide data that quantifies current levels of awareness of the 2001 Saskatchewan Provincial Budget, and
- To evaluate directly the current levels of approval among the people of Saskatchewan with regard to both the budget as a whole, and particular aspects of the budget, and
- To quantify the impact of the 2001 Saskatchewan Provincial Budget on both the overall provincial government approval rating as well as on approval ratings for particular sectors of activity.

The poll was conducted by telephone. A sample of Saskatchewan households was drawn by simple random sampling and canvassed over a four-day period from Monday April 9th to Thursday April 12th. Calls were made between 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. on each of these days.

A total of 418 interviews were completed. Taken as a whole, the results from a sample of this size are considered to be accurate to within plus or minus 4.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The survey instrument was developed by Saskatchewan Finance in consultation with Sigma Analytics. The instrument was refined through a pre-test of 20 respondents gathered on Monday April 9th. It contained twenty-two substantive queries plus five demographic queries.

Call lists were generated using a random number generator. Each telephone number was geo-coded by both postal code and community name. All related geographic post-stratification is based on this methodology.

Interpreting the results in this report should be done with the following considerations in mind:

- While polling results for the entire sample are statistically reliable within the range indicated, results for sub-sets of the sample will have a larger margin of error. When sub-sets are used and statistically significant relationships exist, this fact is stated in the report.
- Polls are “snapshot” approximations of reality, valid within the indicated ranges at the time the poll is conducted. Trends in opinion may be under way at the time the “snapshot” of the poll is taken, or they may begin subsequent to the poll. These trends are not captured by the poll.
- Responses to all questions are provided in the form of valid percent. “Valid percent” means the percentage response among those who answered the question as opposed to the percentage response among those who were asked the question. The difference between the two is that only valid percent represents an unbiased estimator of the true population parameter of interest. As such, valid percent enables comparison of results of previous studies. In this report, for each query, the percent who “Didn’t know” or “Refused to answer” is provided separately.

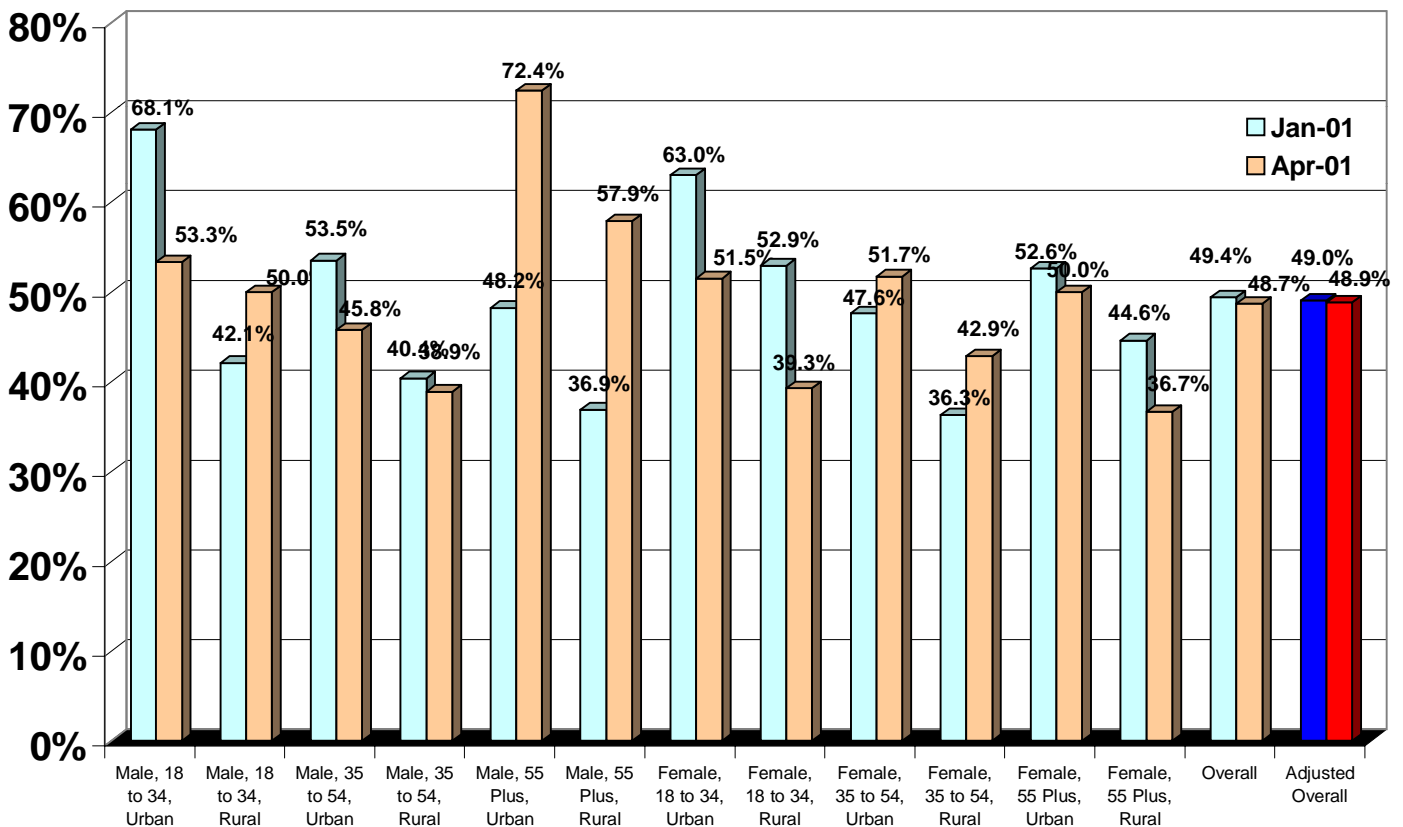
- For each major query, results are broken out by demographic strata. Overall results are provided as well as an adjusted overall score. The adjusted overall score is a re-weighted score, based on demographic variables, which insures that the sample is representative of the population. Due to the small sample size of this survey, only three variables could be accurately incorporated in a re-weighting. They are: age, gender, urban/rural.
- Results are compared throughout to provincial government approval ratings obtained through an independent poll conducted by Sigma Analytics, and published in both the Regina LeaderPost and the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix in January 2001. The results of this poll are based on 1208 completions, with a margin of error of 2.7 percentage points 19 out of 20 times.

Primary Results – Approval Ratings

“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is performing its job?”

48.9% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is performing its job. With regard to specific demographic groups, the highest approval rating for the provincial government is currently among males over 55 (72.4% and 57.9% among urban and rural respectively.) This segment has seen a major increase in approval levels since January 2001 (40.2% and 36.9% respectively). Approximately 4.5% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.7% refused to respond.

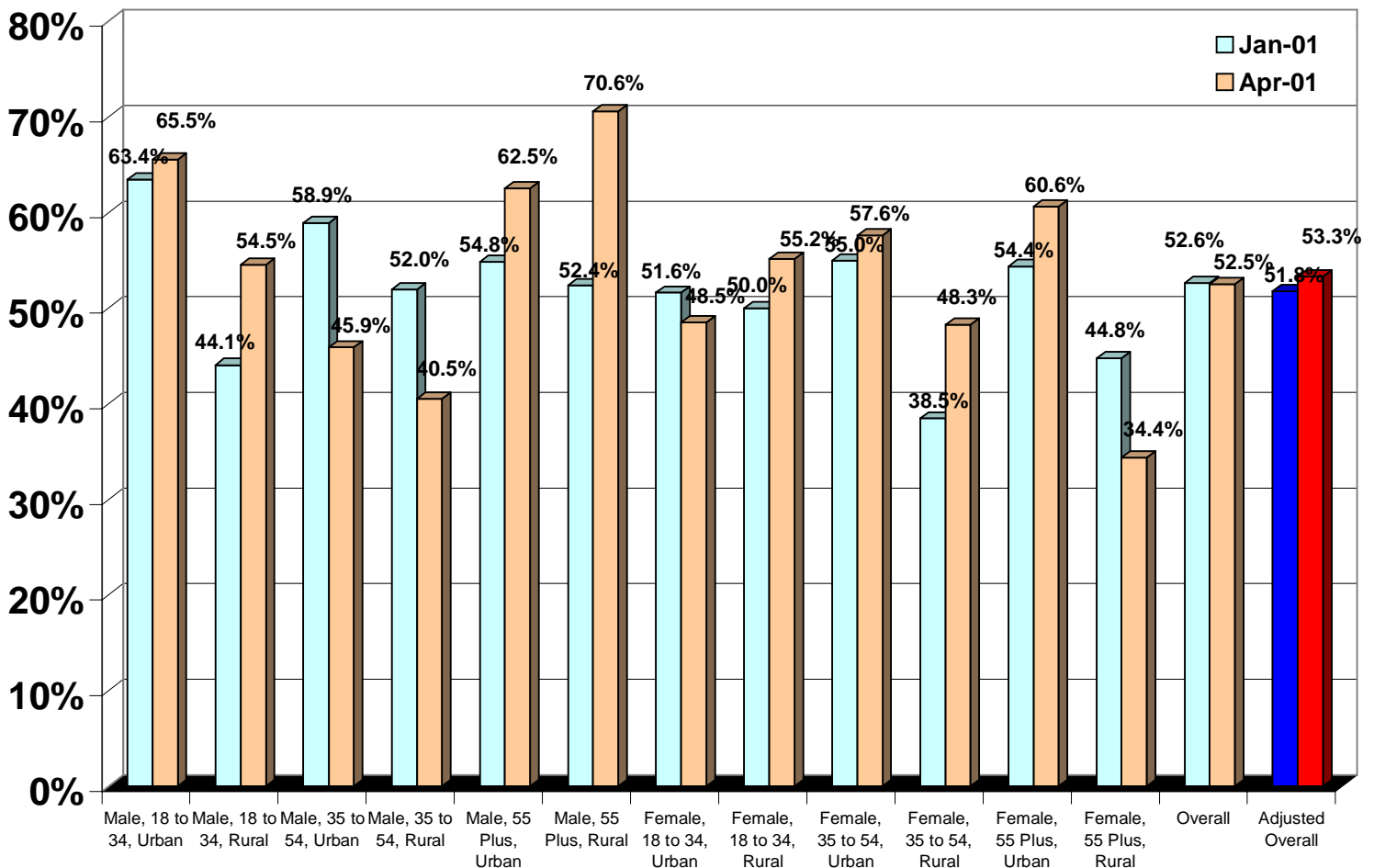
Figure 1. Overall Provincial Government Approval Rating - Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is performing its job?



“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling the economy?”

Adjusted to reflect actual demographics, 53.3% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling the economy. The government’s approval rating has risen in many demographic segments since January. It has declined significantly among men 35 to 54, both urban and rural, where the approval is not higher than 46% in either demographic. Approximately 2.6% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.2% refused to respond.

Figure 2. Provincial Government Approval Rating - The Economy

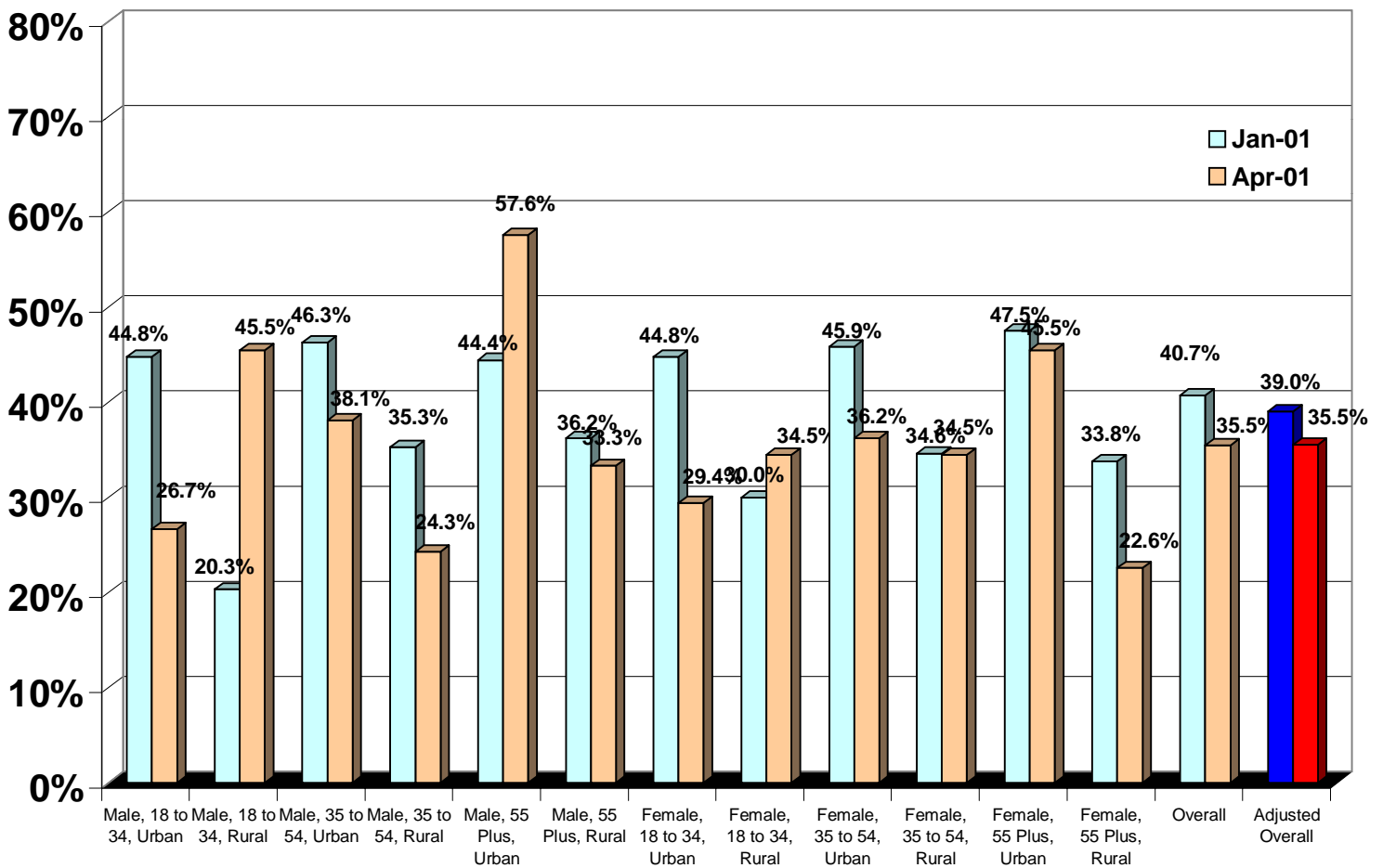


“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling Taxes?”

35.5% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling taxes. This rating is down slightly from the January 2001 level of 39.0%. The largest decrease shows among urban males and females aged 18 to 34, where the scores dropped significantly from January 2001 (44.8% for both) to April 2001 (26.7%, 29.4%).

Approximately 1.9% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved.

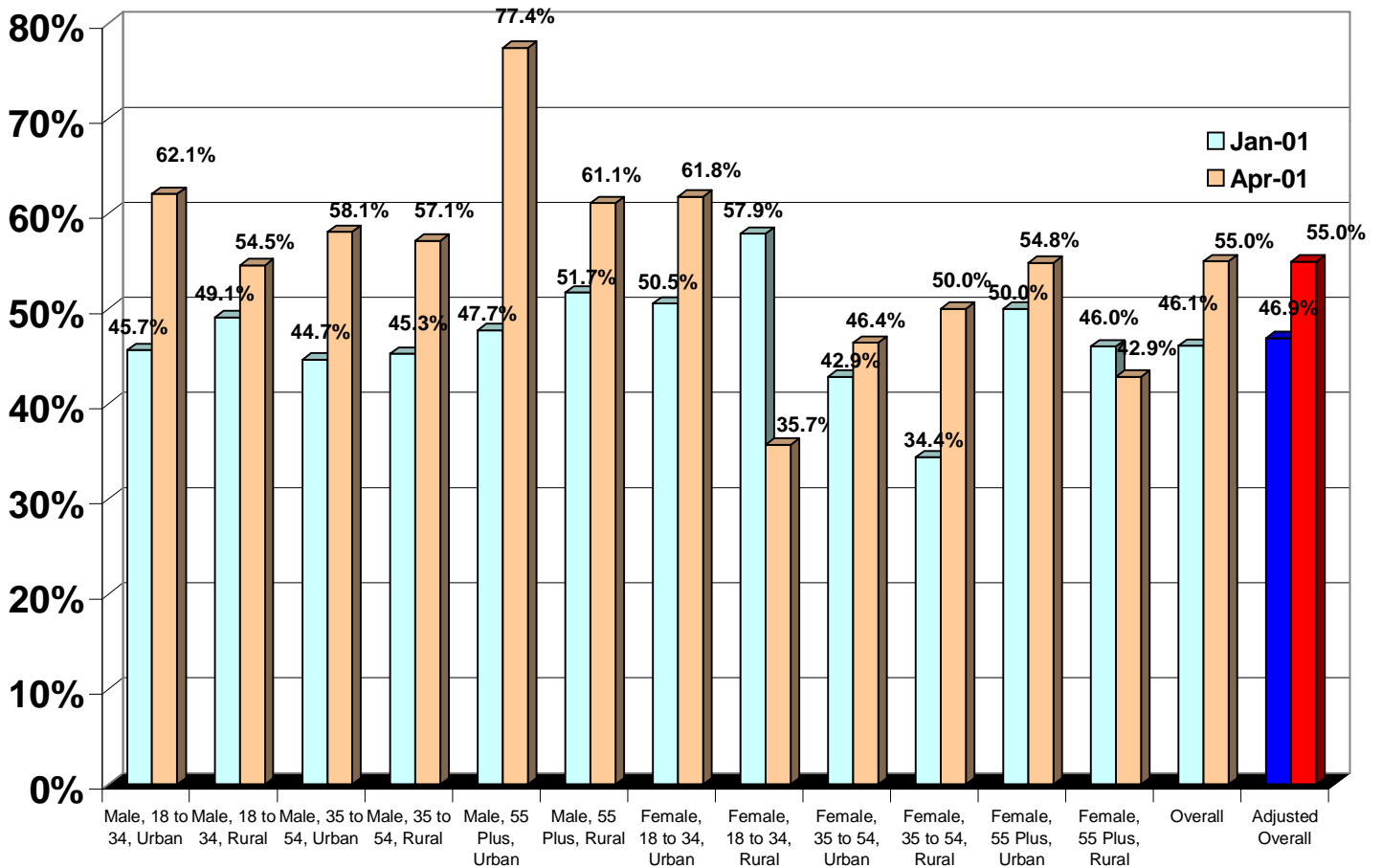
Figure 3. Provincial Government Approval Rating - Taxes



“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling Education?”

55.0% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling education. This marks a statistically significant increase of nearly 10 percentage points from the January 2001 percentage of 46.9%. Large increases occurred in every male demographic with the largest being a 30% increase among urban males, 55 years and older. The only significant drop-off occurred among rural women between 18 and 34, in which the percentage dropped from 57.9% in January 2001 to 35.7% in April 2001. Approximately 4.5% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.2% refused to respond.

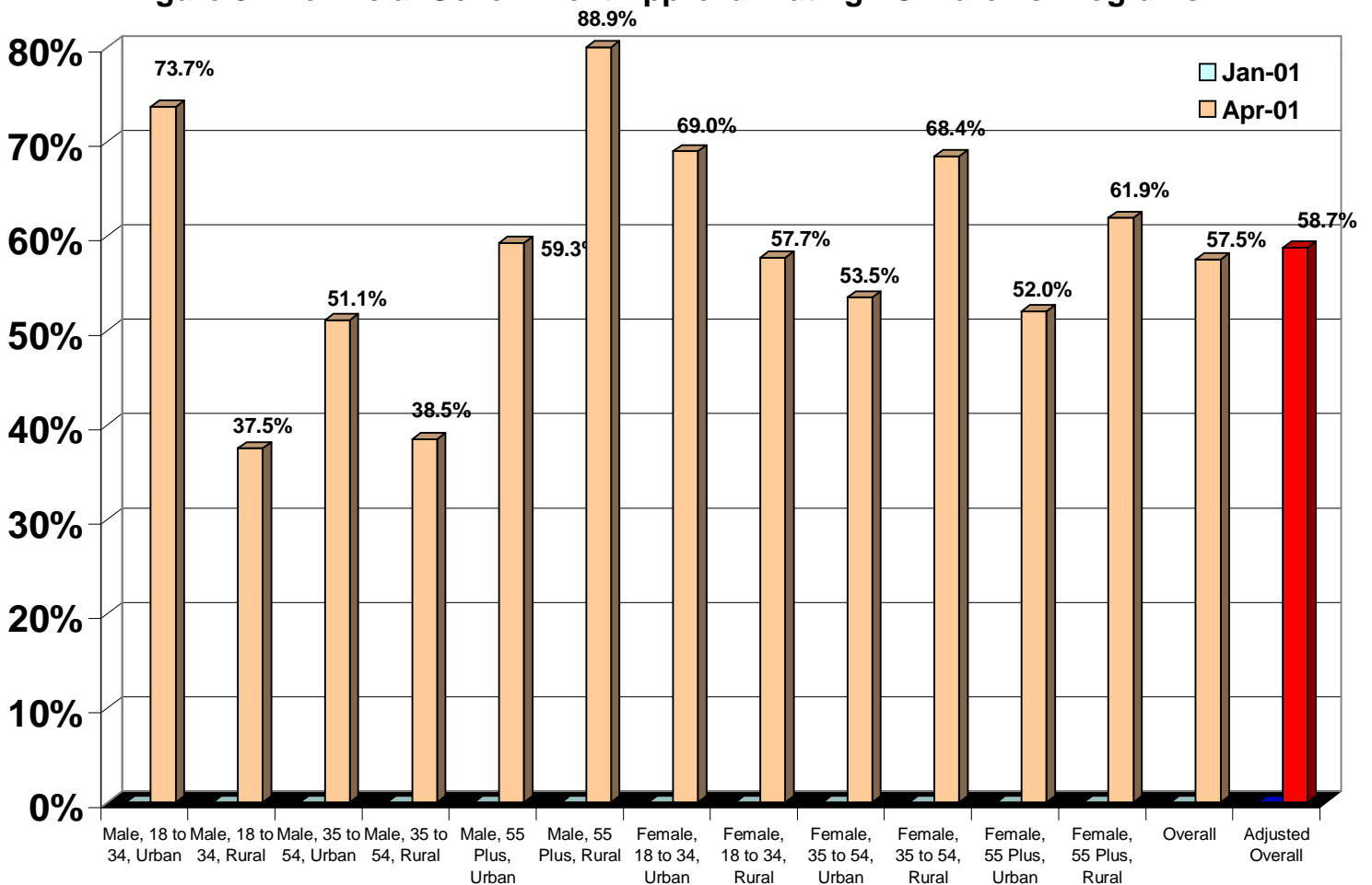
Figure 4. Provincial Government Approval Rating - Education



“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling Children’s Programs?”

58.7% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling children’s programs. As no measure was taken in January 2001, there is no comparison provided for this query. Approximately 26.6% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 1.0% refused to respond.

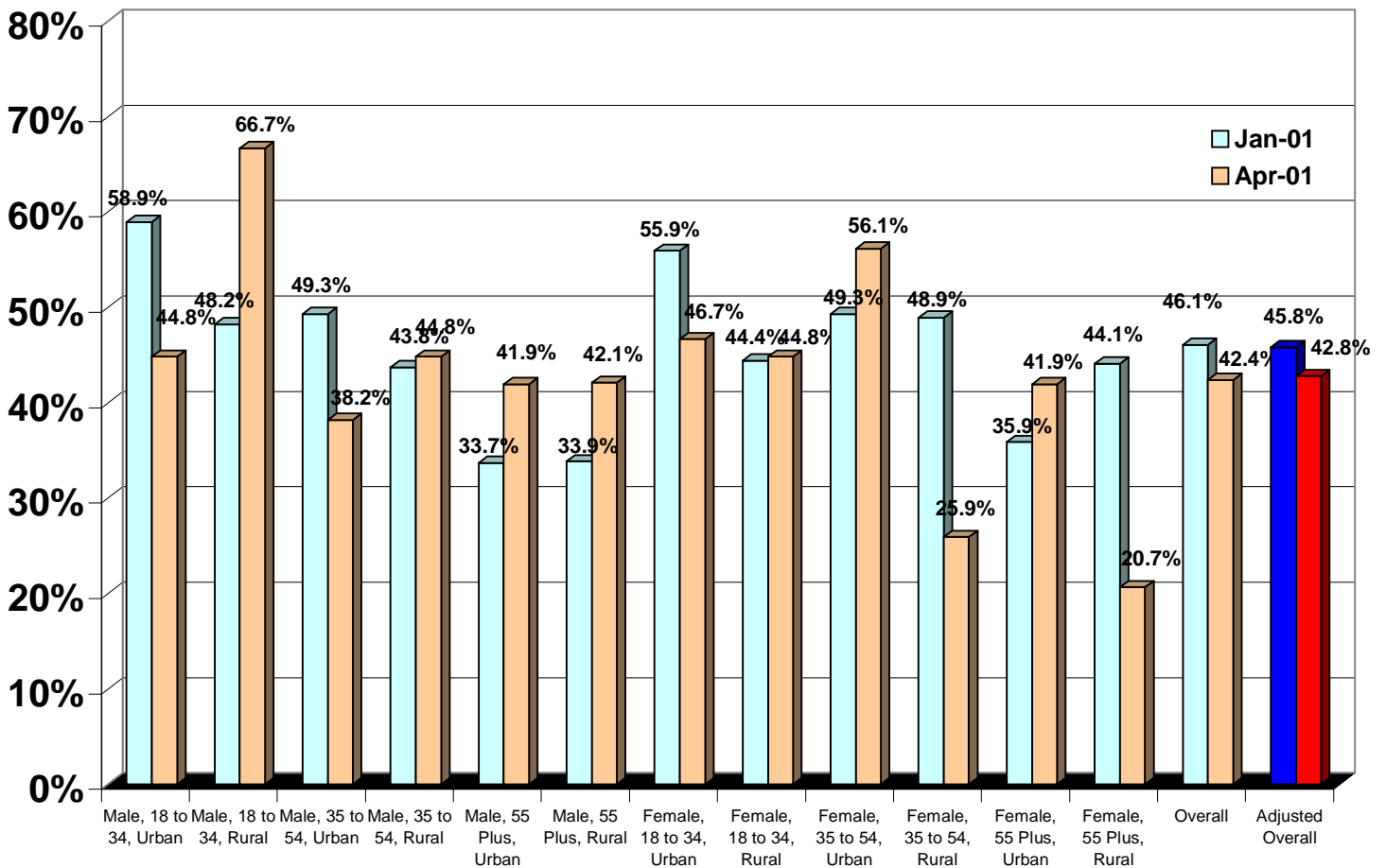
Figure 5. Provincial Government Approval Rating - Children's Programs



“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling Crime?”

42.8% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling crime. This represents a slight, though not statistically significant decrease from January 2001. The greatest drop-off is among rural women over 35 where there has been a decrease of at least 23% in each demographic. Approximately 9.1% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.5% refused to respond.

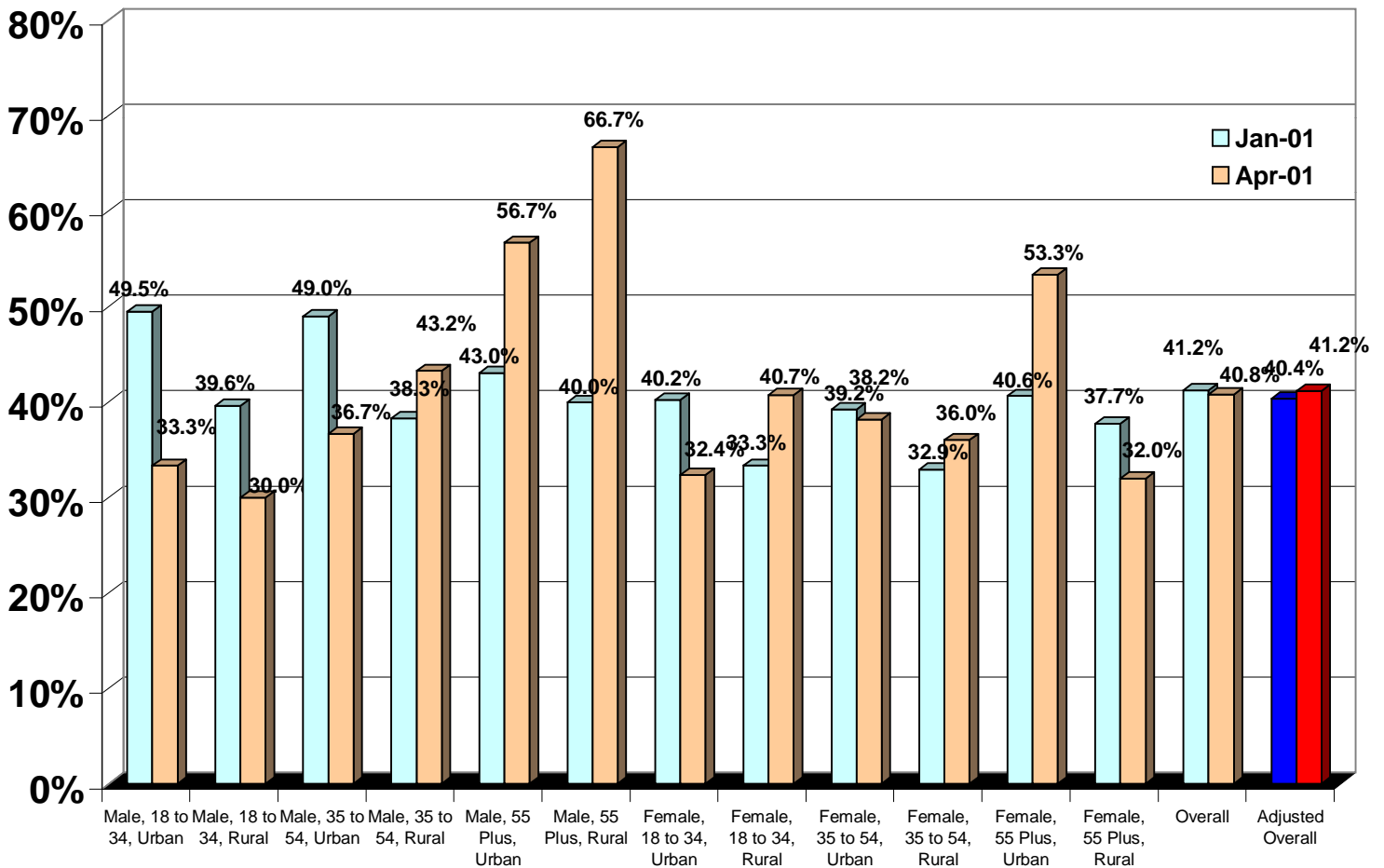
Figure 6. Provincial Government Approval Rating - Crime



“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling Welfare?”

41.2% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling welfare. Large increases occurred among both urban and rural males, 55 plus, where approval ratings increased approximately 20 percentage points. Approximately 9.1% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.2% refused to respond.

Figure 7. Provincial Government Approval Rating - Welfare

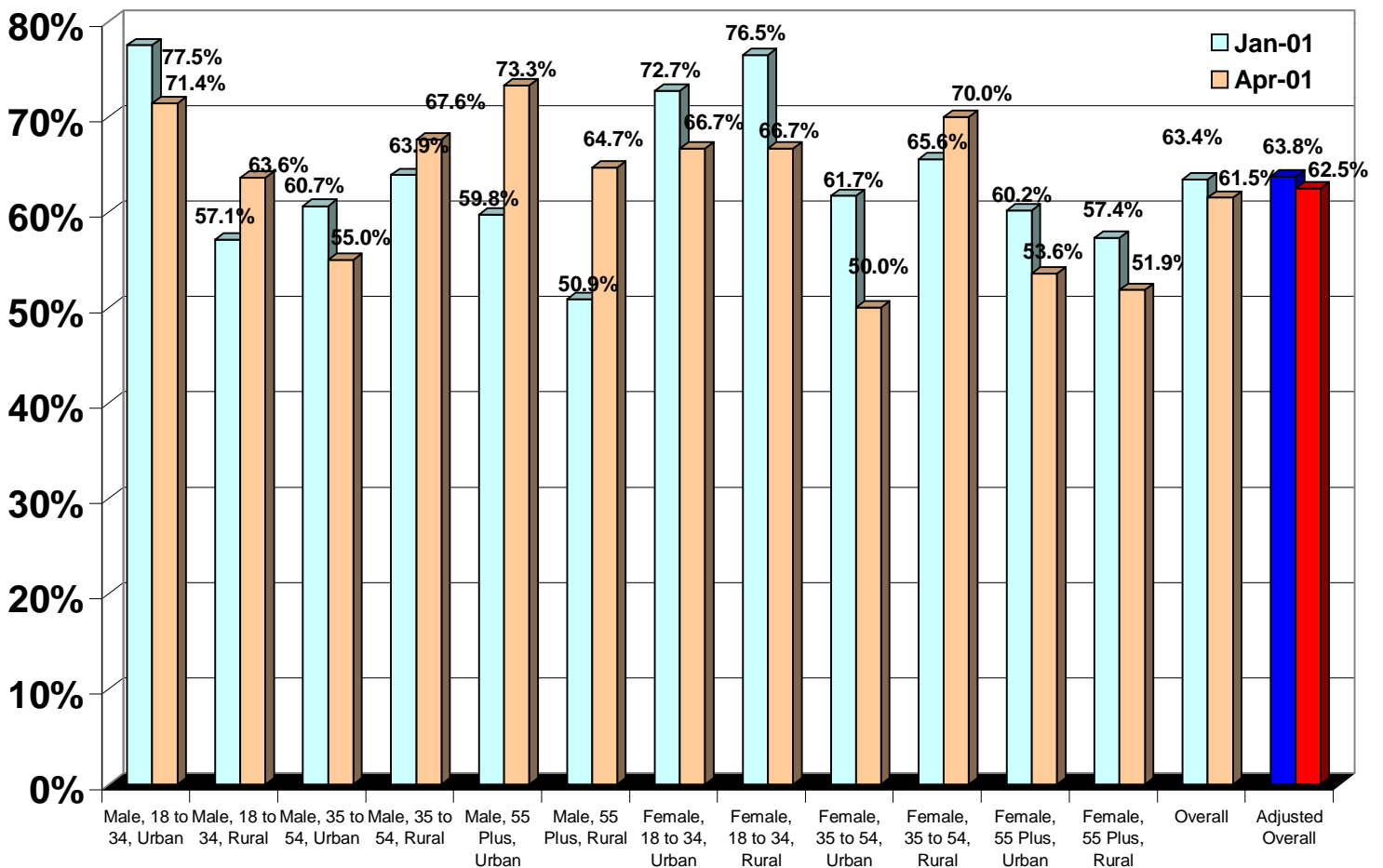


“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling the Environment?”

62.5% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling the environment. This does not represent a statistically significant change from January 2001.

Approximately 8.9% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved.

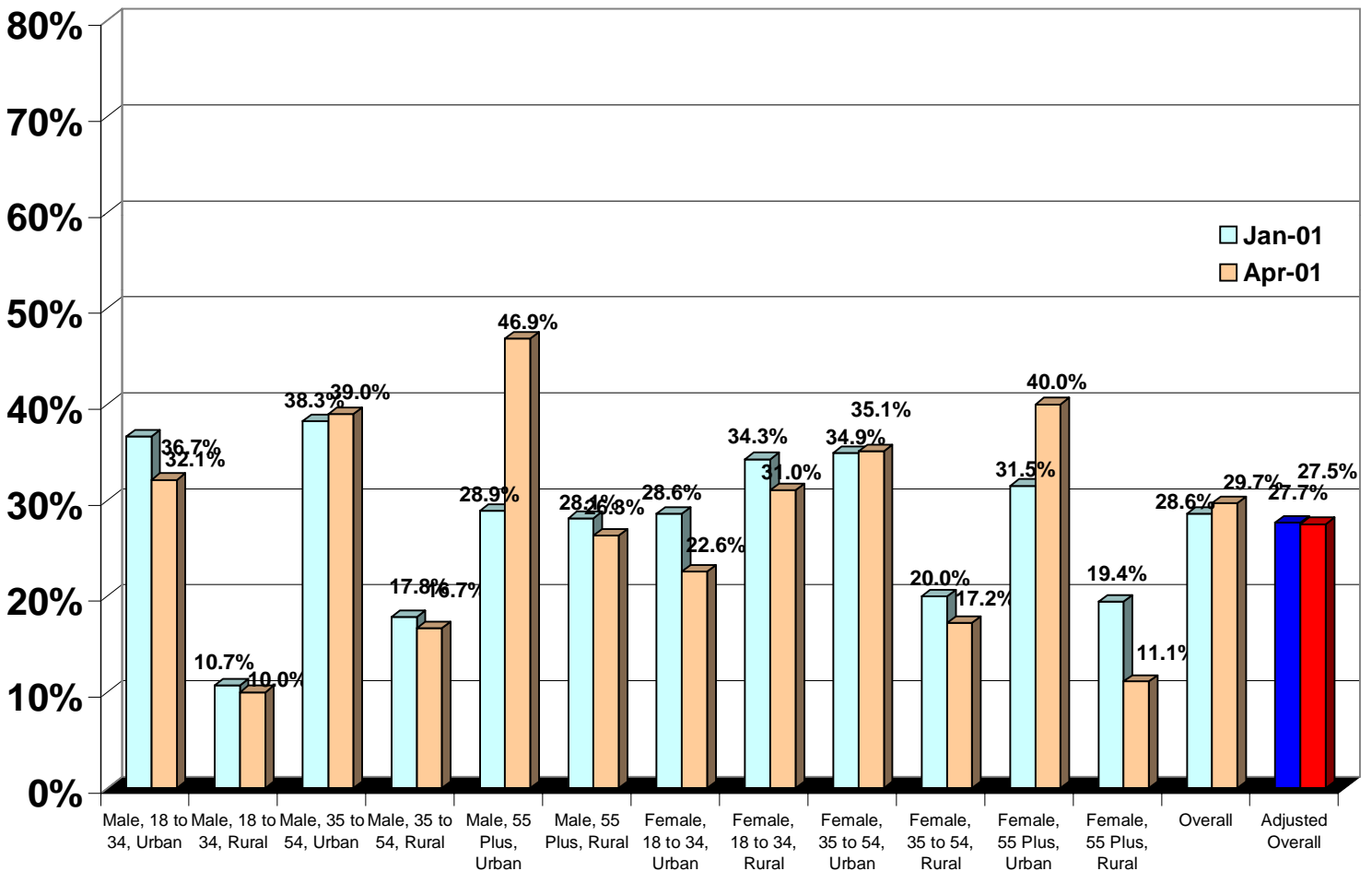
Figure 8. Provincial Government Approval Rating - The Environment



“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling Agriculture?”

27.5% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling agriculture. There is a statistically significant difference between rural and urban respondents on this query. However, in no demographic does the government exceed a 50% approval rating. Approximately 6.0% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.5% refused to respond.

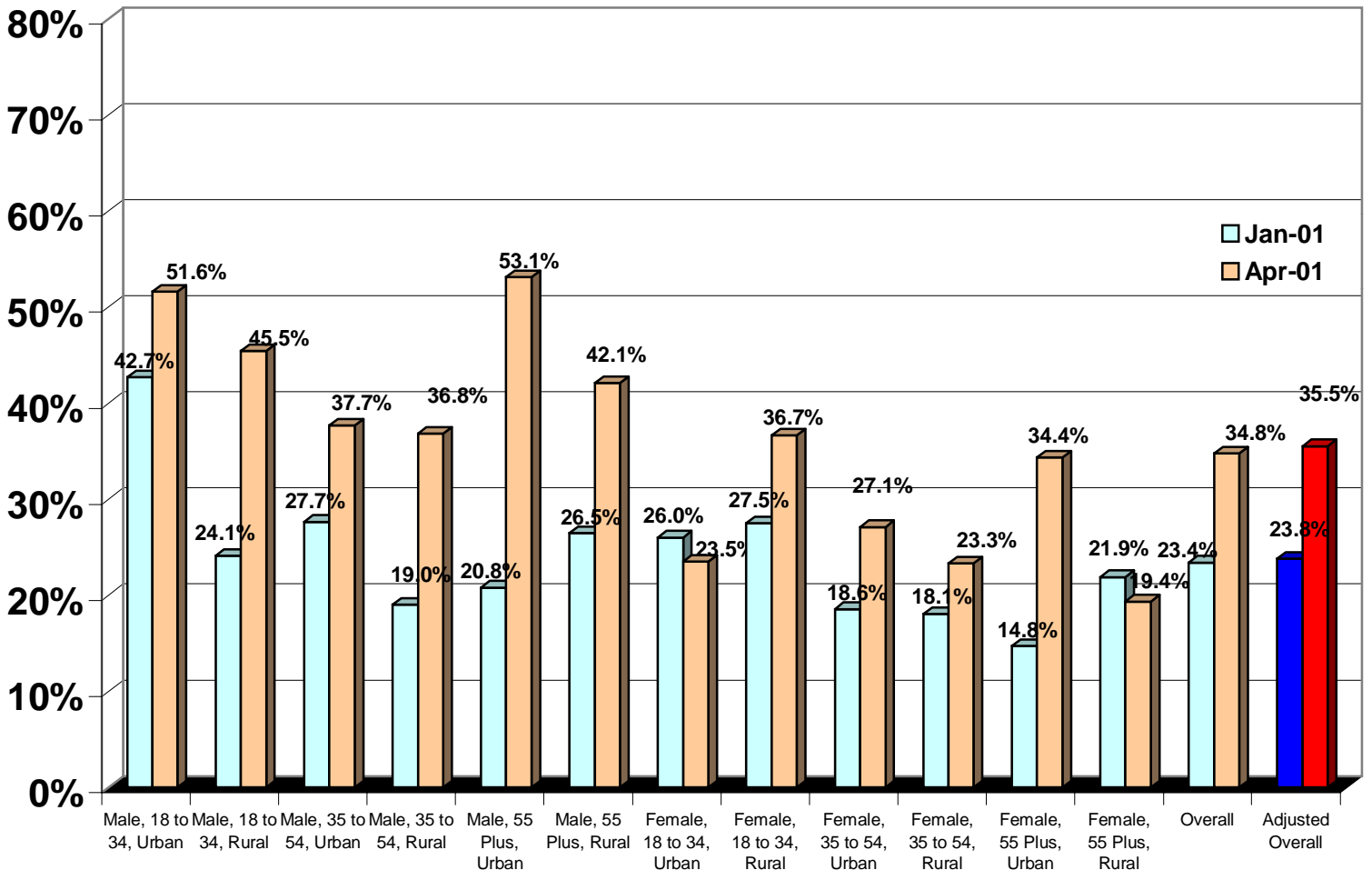
Figure 9. Provincial Government Approval Rating - Agriculture



“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling Healthcare?”

35.5% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling healthcare. This marks a statistically significant increase from 23.8% in January 2001. The largest gains were made with respect to rural males in which for every age demographic there was an increase of at least 16%. Approximately 1.4% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.2% refused to respond.

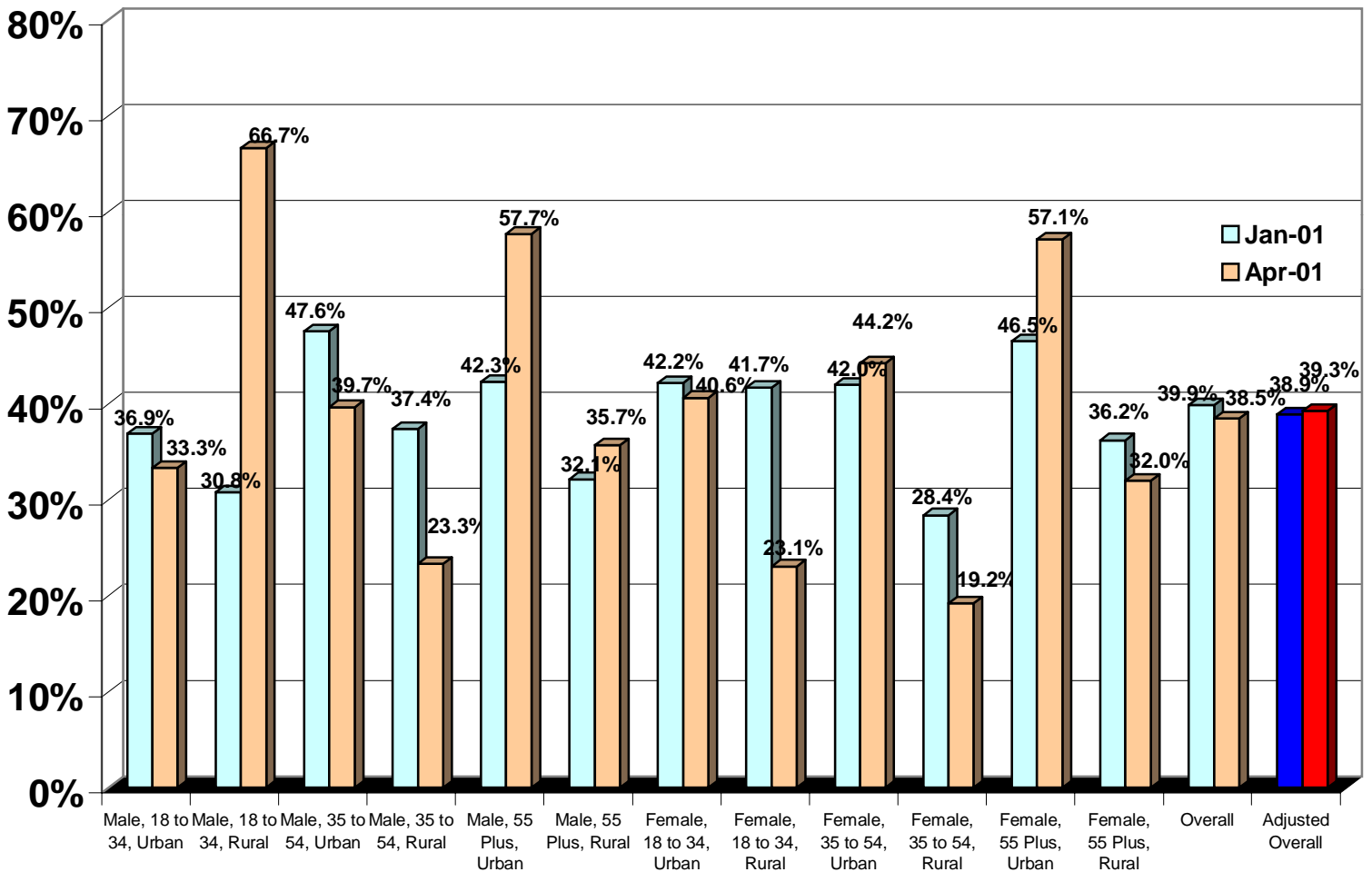
Figure 10. Provincial Government Approval Rating - Healthcare



“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling Aboriginal Issues?”

39.3% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling aboriginal issues. Approval increased the most dramatically among rural males 18 to 34, where it rose nearly 36%. Approval decreased substantially among rural women, 18 to 34, which dropped 18.5%. Approximately 13.6% those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.5% refused to respond.

Figure 11. Provincial Government Approval Rating - Aboriginal Issues

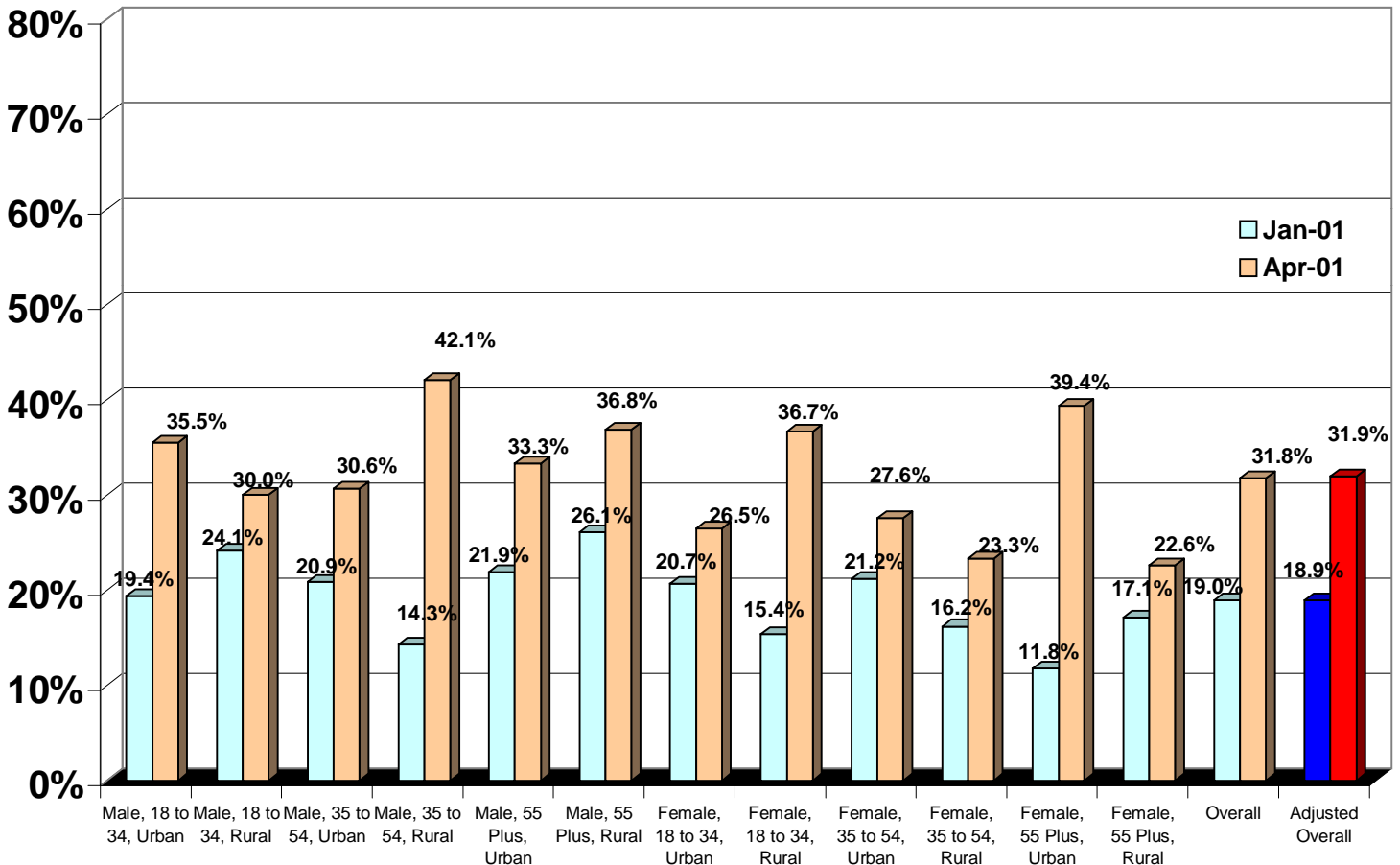


“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling Highways/Transportation?”

31.9% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling highways/transportation. This is a statistically significant increase of 13% from January 2001 (18.9%).

Approximately 0.5% those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.7% refused to respond.

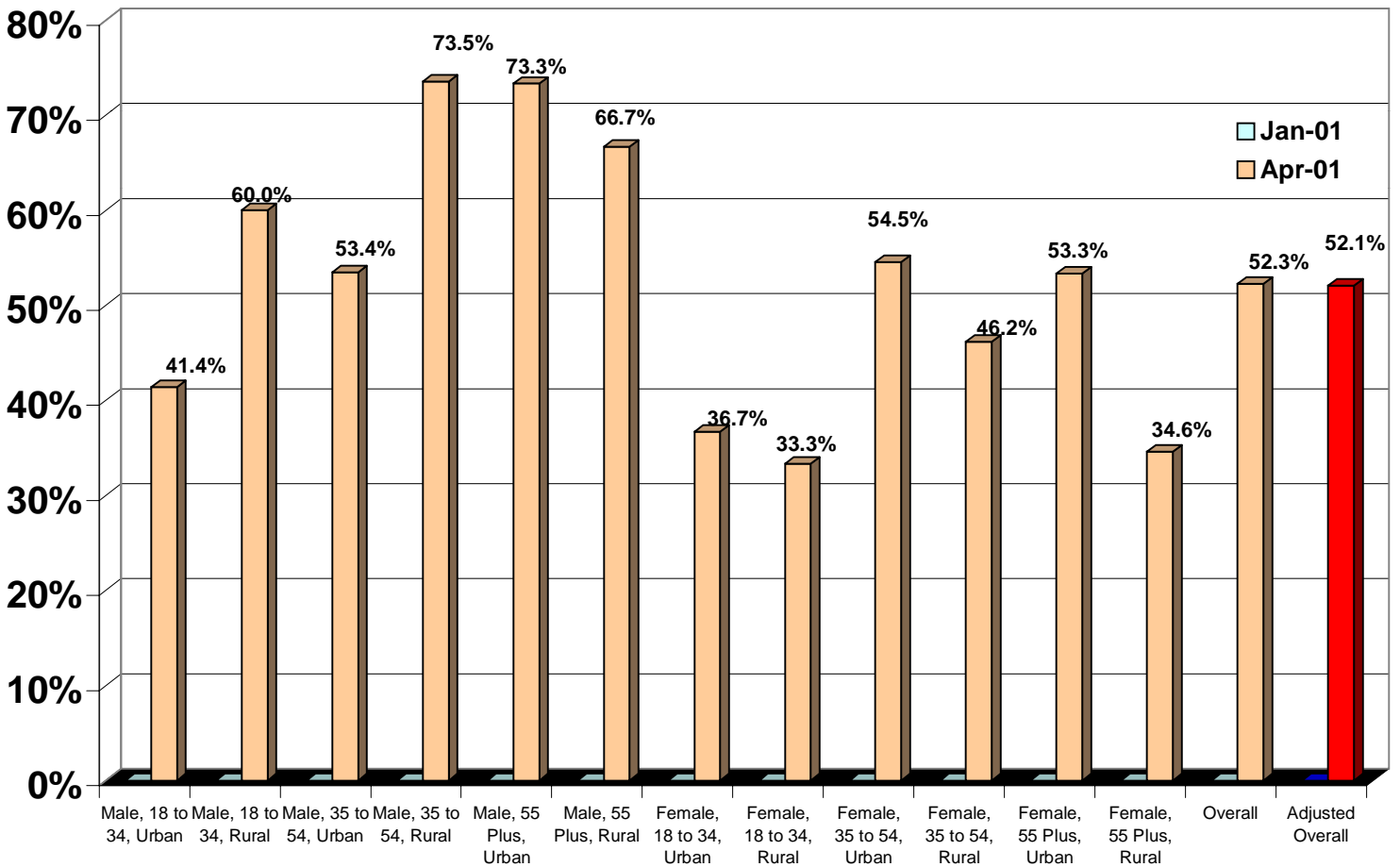
Figure 12. Provincial Government Approval Rating - Highways/Transportation



“Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is handling the provinces Finances?”

52.1% of decided adults in Saskatchewan currently approve of the way the provincial government is handling the province’s finances. The strongest level of approval is among rural males above the age of 35, and all men above 55, with at least 66% approval showing in each demographic. Approximately 9.3% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.7% refused to respond.

Figure 13. Provincial Government Approval Rating - Province's Finances

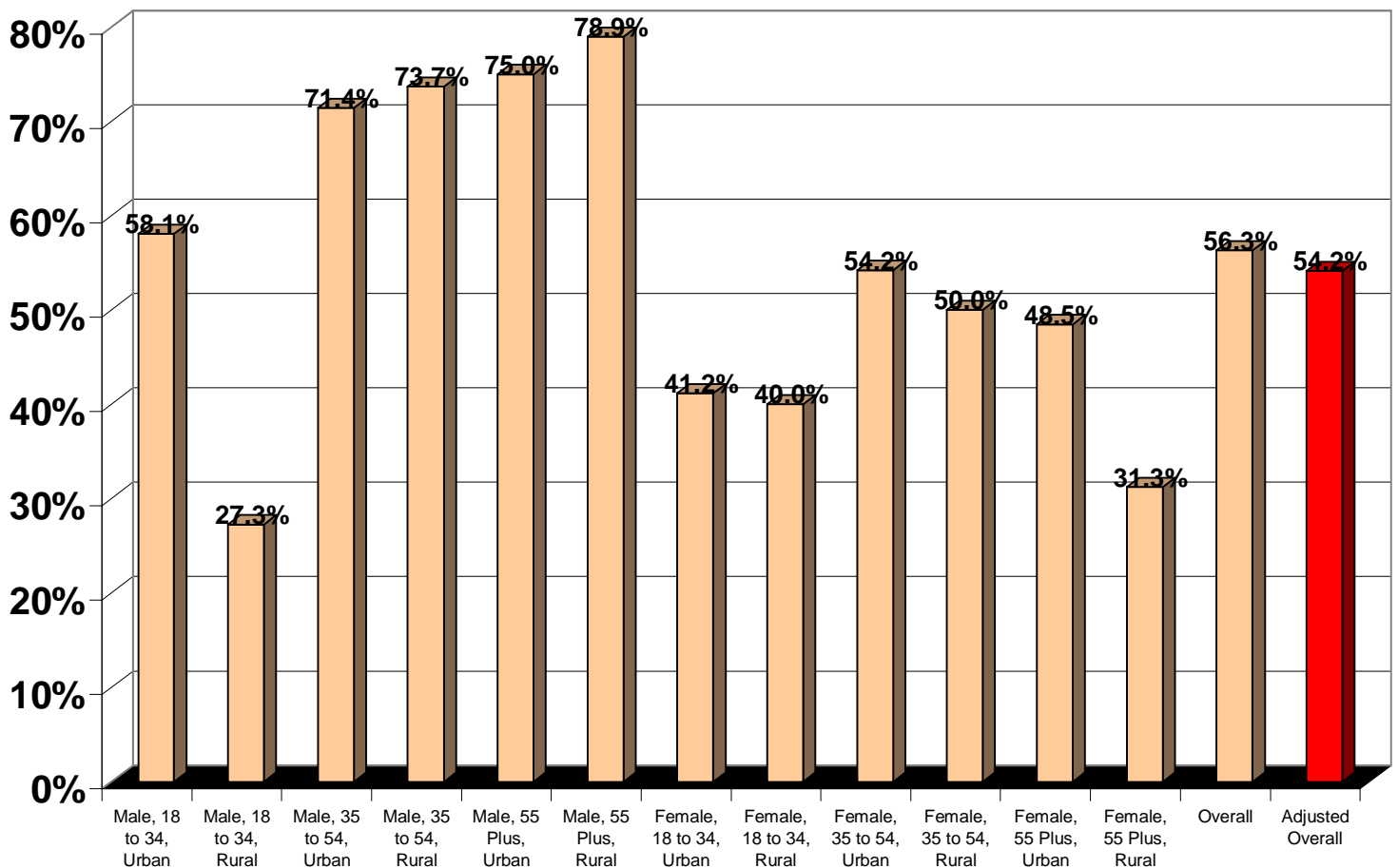


Primary Results – Budget Awareness

“Were you aware that the Government of Saskatchewan has tabled its budget for 2001-2002?”

54.2% of decided adults in Saskatchewan were aware that the Government of Saskatchewan has tabled its budget for 2001-2002. Awareness was highest among men above the age of 35, where at least 71% were aware the budget had been tabled. Strikingly, one of the lowest awareness levels was registered by rural females over 55, at 3.13% less than half the level of men of the same demographic. Approximately 0.5% those asked did not

Figure 14. Were you aware that the Government of Saskatchewan has tabled its budget for 2001-2002?

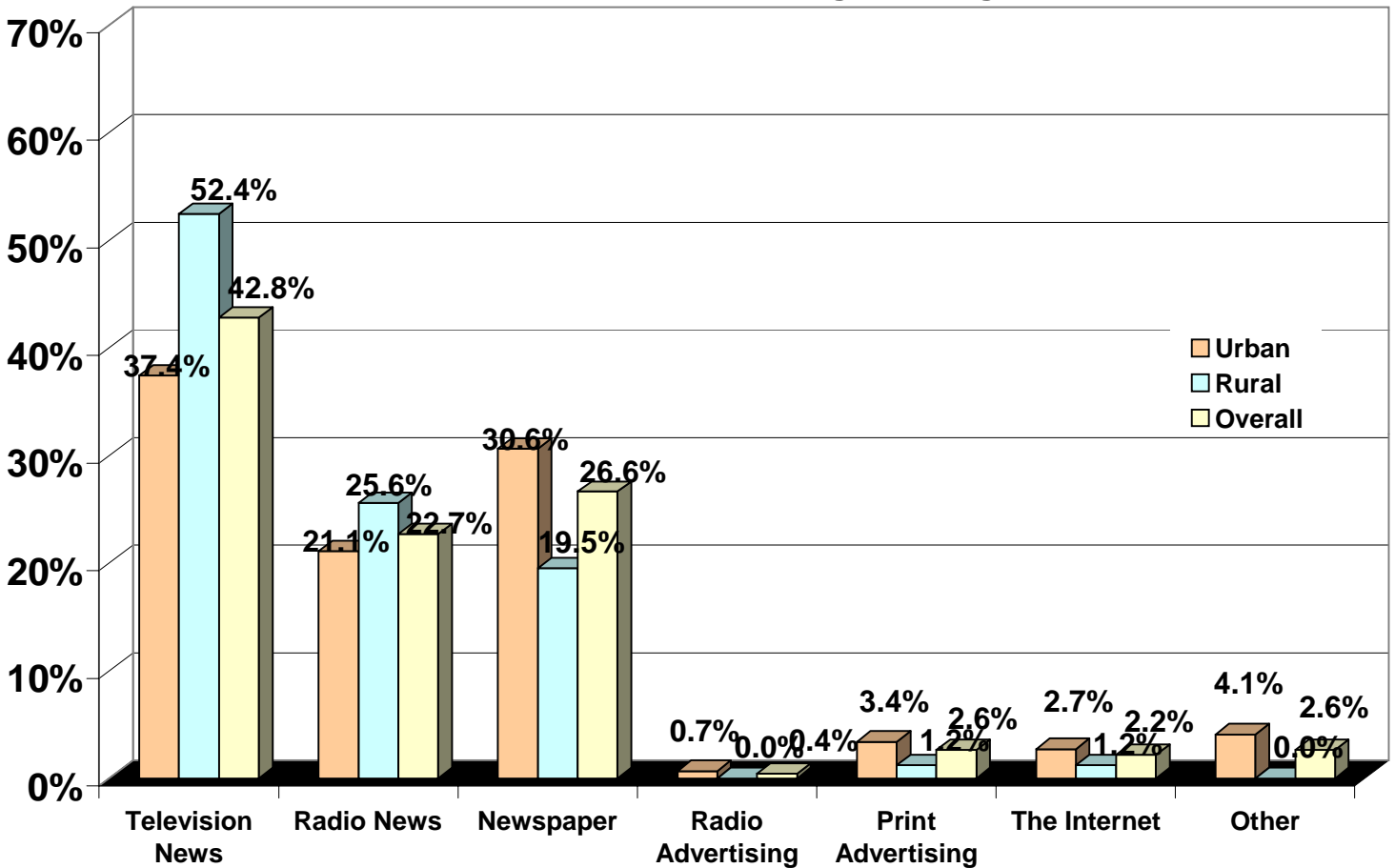


know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.5% refused to respond.

Among those that were aware, “Which one of the following sources represented your primary source of information concerning the budget?”

Among those that were aware that the budget was tabled, 42.8% indicated television news as their primary source of information concerning the budget. The level was highest among those from rural Saskatchewan in which over 52% reported television news as their primary source of information. Approximately 0.9% of those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 0.9% refused to respond.

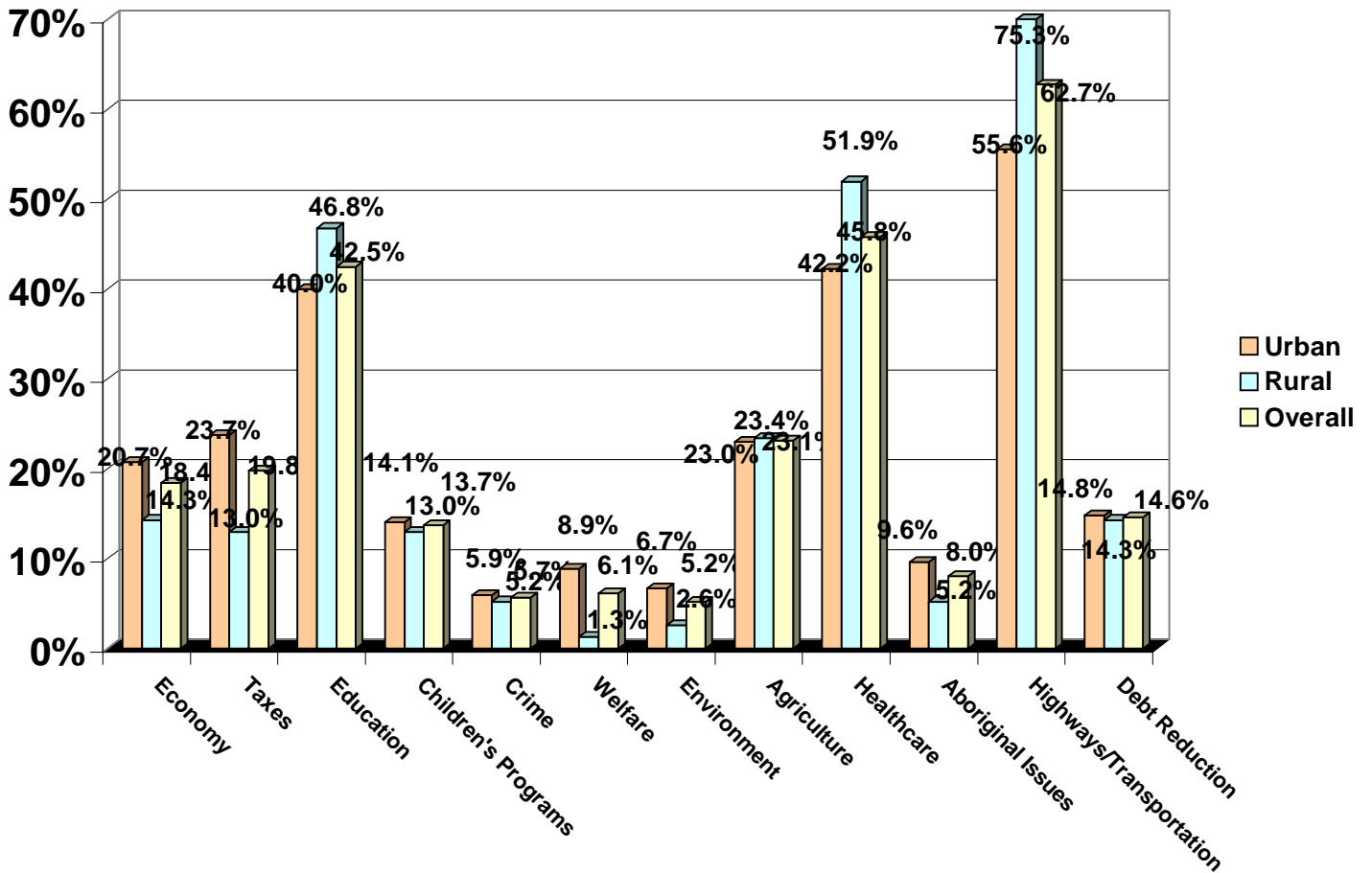
Figure 15. Which one of the following sources represented your primary source of information concerning the budget?



Among those that were aware, “Which of the following items do you feel were the major initiatives in the budget?”

Among those that were aware that the budget was tabled, 62.7% felt that Highways/Transportation was a major initiative of the budget. 45.8% identified Healthcare and 42.5% identified Education as also being major initiatives. Approximately 9.0% either did not know or refused to respond.

Figure 16. Which of the following items do you feel were the major initiatives in the budget?

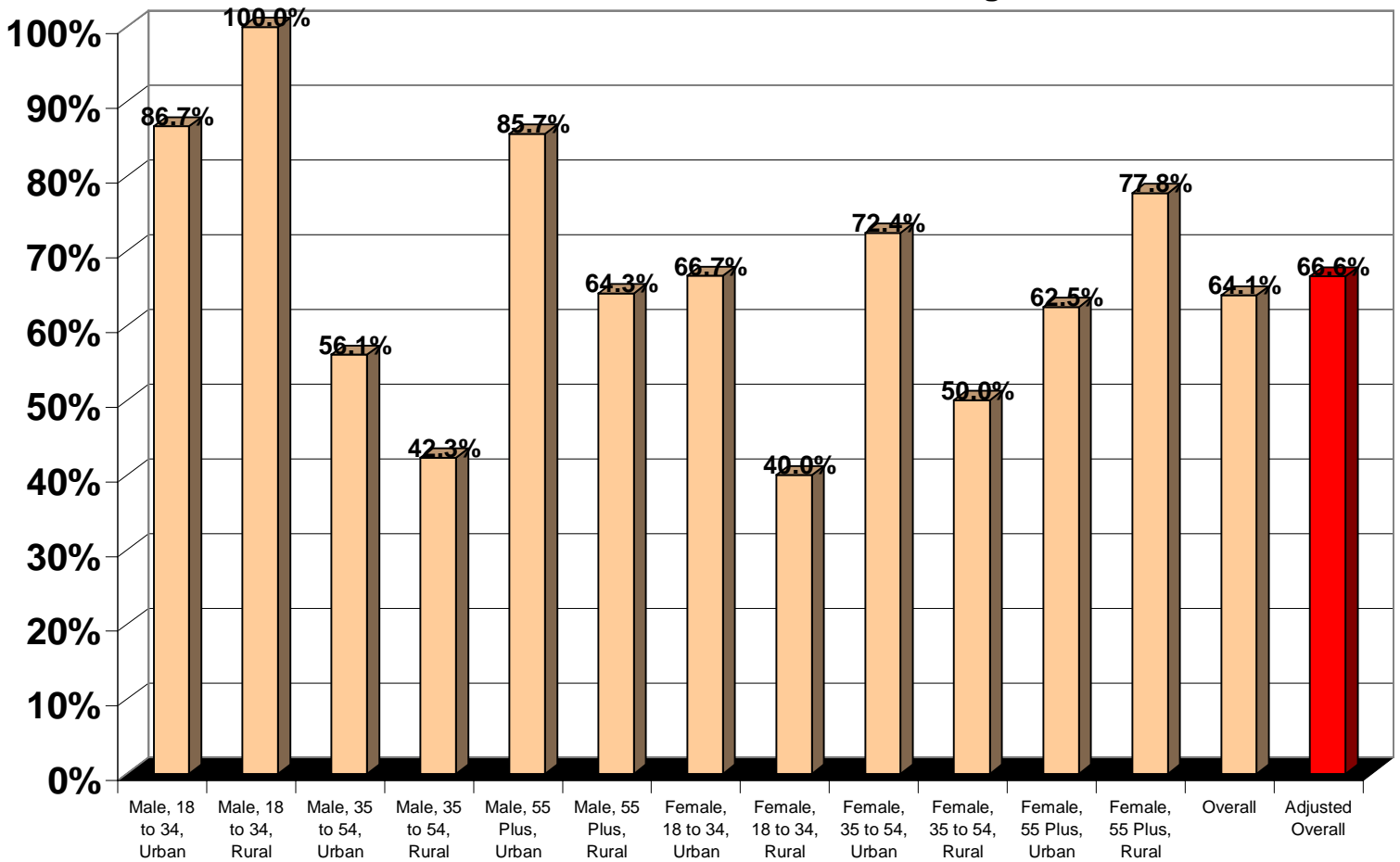


Among those that were aware, “In general, do you approve or disapprove of the direction taken in the 2001-2002 budget?”

Among those that were aware that the budget was tabled, 66.6% approved of the direction taken in the 2001-2002 budget. Most gender and age segments showed slightly less approval among rural respondents than among urban respondents. In general, tests to determine whether the relationship was significant were inconclusive due to sample size.

Approximately 9.4% those asked did not know whether they approved or disapproved, while 1.3% refused to respond.

Figure 17. Provincial Budget Approval Rating - In general, do you approve of the direction taken in the 2001-2002 budget?



“The provincial budget provides 1.1 billion dollars for education, an increase of 4.1%. This is an appropriate step at this time.”

81.9% believe that it was an appropriate step for the provincial government to budget 1.1 billion dollars for education at this time.

Approximately 2.4% of those asked did not know whether they agreed or disagreed, while 0.7% refused to respond.

Figure 18. The provincial budget provides 1.1 billion dollars for education, an increase of 4.1%. This is an appropriate step at this time.

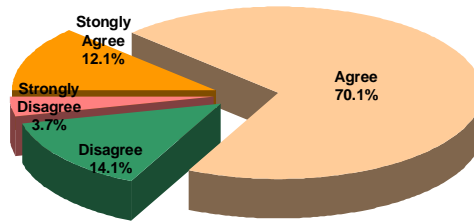
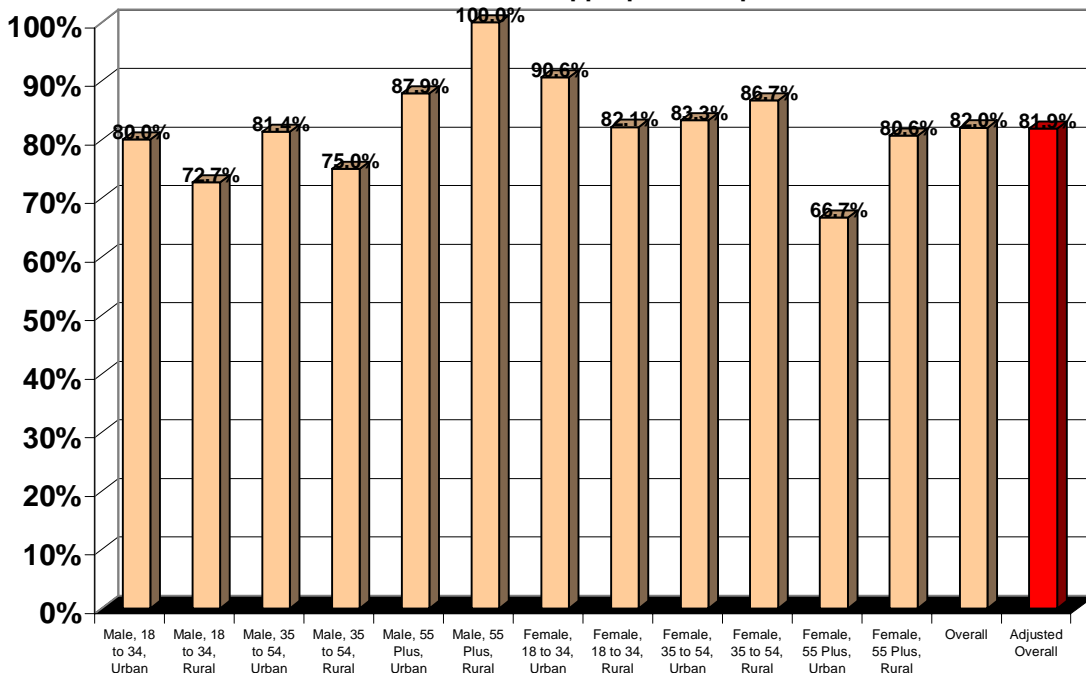


Figure 19. The provincial budget provides 1.1 billion dollars for education, an increase of 4.1%. This is an appropriate step at this time.



“The provincial budget provides 312 million dollars for highways, a 25% increase compared to the last budget. This is an appropriate step to take at this time.”

81.3% believe that it was an appropriate step for the provincial government to budget 312 million dollars for highways at this time.

Approximately 1.0% of those asked did not know whether they agreed or disagreed while 0.2% refused to respond.

Figure 20. The provincial budget provides 312 million dollars for highways, a 25% increase compared to the last budget. This is an appropriate step to take at this time.

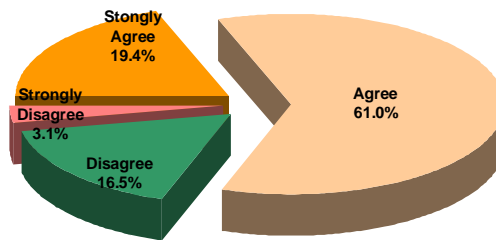
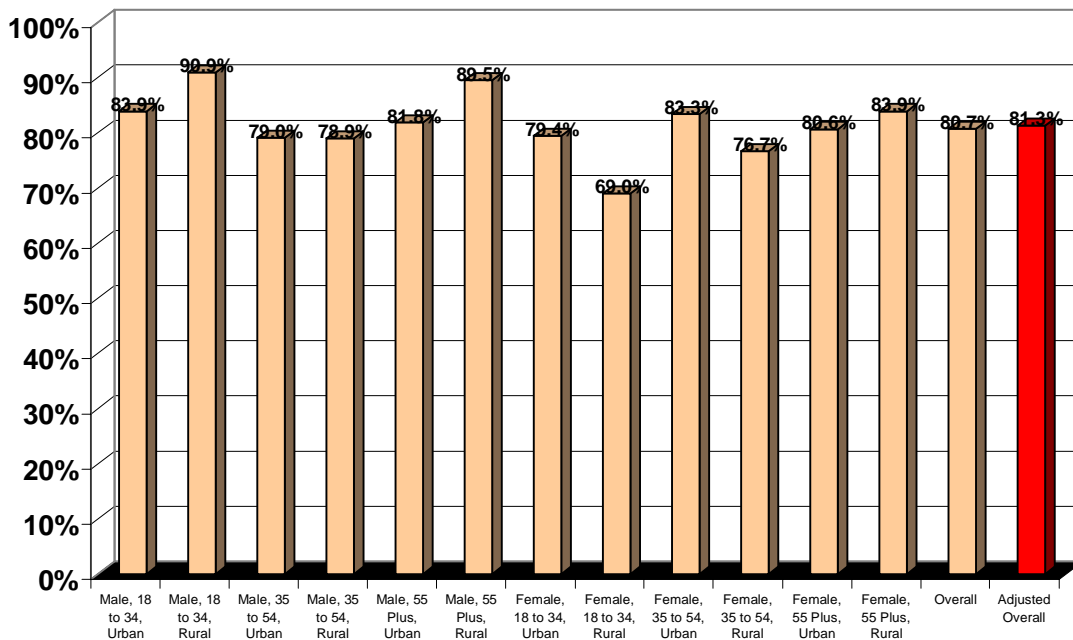


Figure 21. The provincial budget provides 312 million dollars for highways, a 25% increase compared to the last budget. This is an appropriate step to take at this time.



“An extra 229 million dollars is provided for healthcare, an 11.6% increase compared to the last budget. This is an appropriate increase for the government to make at this time.”

75.6% believe that it was an appropriate step for the provincial government to budget an extra 229 million dollars for healthcare at this time. Approximately 1.9% of those asked did not know whether they agreed or disagreed while 1.0% refused to respond.

Figure 22. An extra 229 million dollars is provided for healthcare, an 11.6% increase compared to the last budget. This is an appropriate step to take at this time.

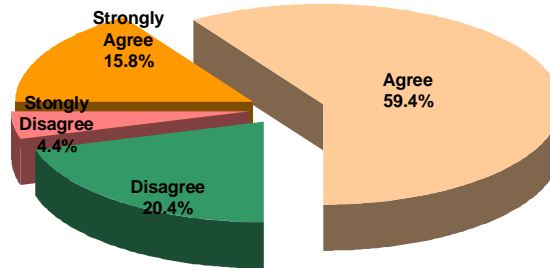
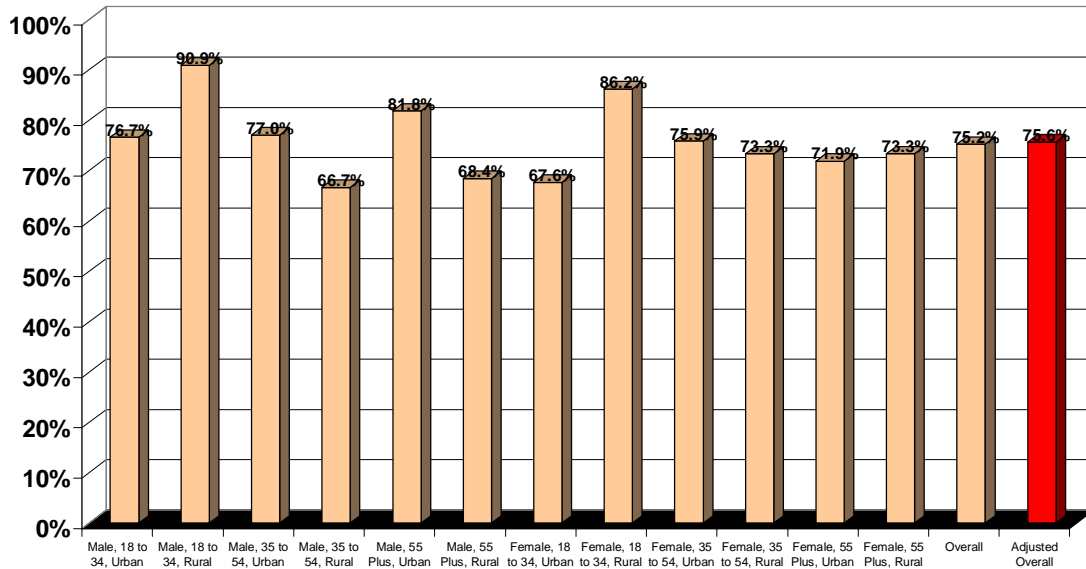


Figure 23. An extra 229 million dollars is provided for healthcare, an 11.6% increase compared to the last budget. This is an appropriate step to take at this time.



“Ten million dollars is provided for programs to protect and nurture children up to five years of age. This is an appropriate increase for the government to make at this time.”

72.6% believe that it was an appropriate step for the provincial government to budget 10 million dollars to provide for programs to protect and nurture children at this time. Approximately 6.0% of those asked did not know whether they agreed or disagreed while 0.5% refused to respond.

Figure 24. Ten million dollars is provided for programs to protect and nurture children up to five years of age. This is an appropriate step to take at this time.

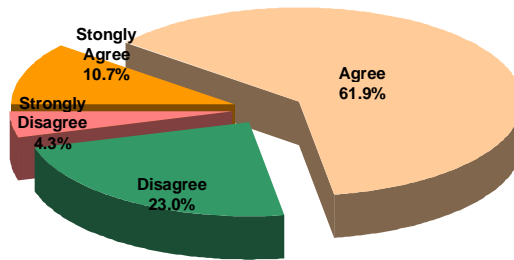
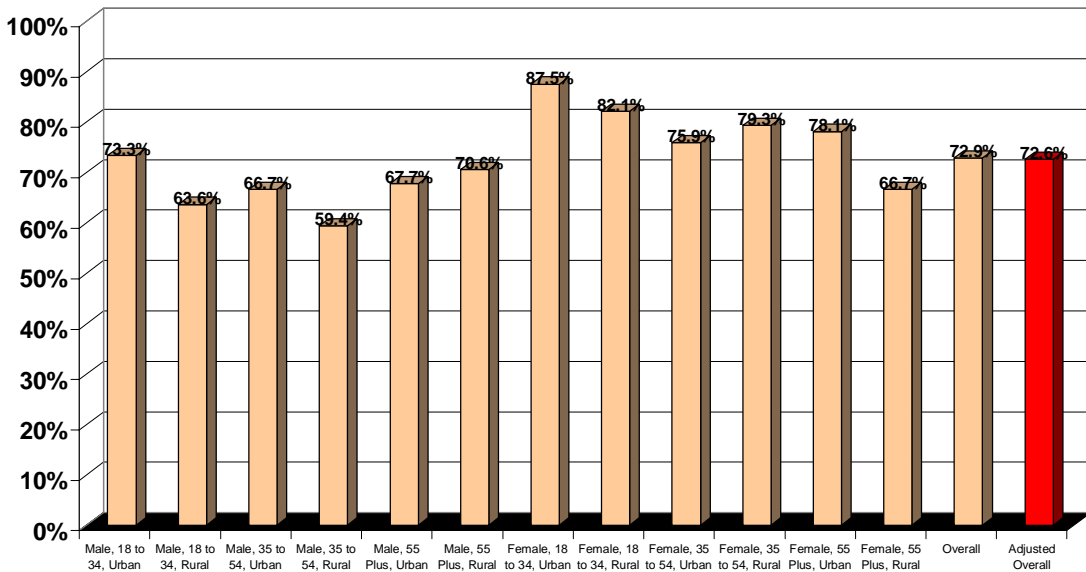


Figure 25. Ten million dollars is provided for programs to protect and nurture children up to five years of age. This is an appropriate step to take at this time.



“The small business tax was lowered by two points, from 8% to 6%. This is an appropriate increase for the government to make at this time.”

75.4% believe that it was an appropriate step for the provincial government to lower small business tax from 8% to 6% at this time. Approximately 2.6% of those asked did not know whether they agreed or disagreed.

Figure 26. The small business tax was lowered by two points. This is an appropriate step to take at this time.

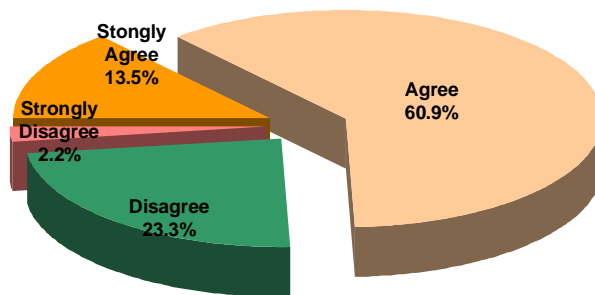
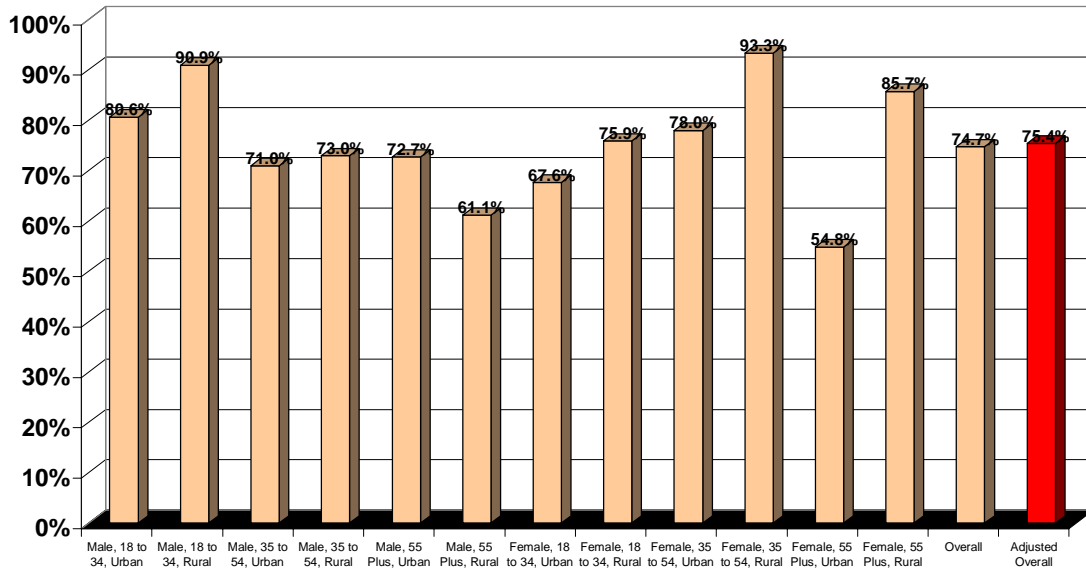


Figure 27. The small business tax was lowered by two points. This is an appropriate step to take at this time.



Primary Results – Sample Demographics

Comparison of Demographics of Survey Respondents Versus Demographics of Population of Interest

In interpreting the results of any survey it is important to understand the relationship of the sample to the population of interest, and in the case where there are mild fluctuations, to correct for them. Using a Chi-squared Goodness-of-Fit test, we detected a variation sufficient enough from the demographic make-up of the sample and the population of interest to merit some form of correction. In all the primary analysis, this report provides an adjusted score which incorporates a demographic re-weighting based on post-stratification techniques that correct for any bias which may be introduced due to misrepresentation of the population based on demographics.

Secondary Results

Budget Approval – Detailed Analysis

It has been previously stated that 66.6% of those who were aware that the budget had been tabled, approved of the direction of the budget. This percentage is a re-weighted number that takes into account the demographic make-up of the respondents as well as the demographic make-up of the target population. It does not, however, take into account the fact that those who were aware of the budget being tabled had a greater propensity to approve of the provincial government than those who were not aware (52.7% versus 42.5%). This is particularly significant when one considers that among those that approve of the way the provincial government is handling its job and who are aware of that the budget was tabled, 88.2% approve of the direction of the budget, while among those who do not approve of the way the provincial government is handling its job only 35.6% similarly approve of the budget.

In order to understand the underlying factors which caused individuals to approve of the budget, the population of respondents was segmented into the following groups:

Segmentation of Respondents

	Segments			
	1	2	3	4
Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the way the provincial government is performing its job?	<i>Disapprove</i>	<i>Approve</i>	<i>Disapprove</i>	<i>Approve</i>
In general do you approve or disapprove of the direction taken in the 2001-2002 budget?	<i>Disapprove</i>	<i>Approve</i>	<i>Approve</i>	<i>Disapprove</i>

Among these segments the most interesting group in terms of providing useful information is segment 3, which represents individuals who do not support the provincial government, but do believe the budget is going in the right direction. While the sample size for this survey, and as a result for this segment, was not sufficiently large to permit a detailed analysis of this group, some useful information can be obtained.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
The provincial budget provides 1.1 billion dollars for education, an increase of 4.1%. This is an appropriate step at this time.	Var(X)=Var(Y)	.932	.337	.368	85	.713	5.99E-02	.16	-.26	.38
	Var(X)<>Var(Y)			.371	63.108	.712	5.99E-02	.16	-.26	.38
The provincial budget provides 312 million dollars for highways, a 25% increase compared to the last buget. This is an appropriate step to take at this time.	Var(X)=Var(Y)	.020	.887	.279	87	.781	4.66E-02	.17	-.28	.38
	Var(X)<>Var(Y)			.283	66.682	.778	4.66E-02	.16	-.28	.38
An extra 229 million dollars is provided for healthcare, an 11.6% increase.	Var(X)=Var(Y)	6.149	.015	2.056	84	.043	.38	.19	.01	.75
	Var(X)<>Var(Y)			2.187	70.478	.032	.38	.17	.03	.73
Ten million dollars is provided for programs to protect and nurture the environment.	Var(X)=Var(Y)	6.850	.011	1.881	84	.063	.32	.17	-.02	.66
	Var(X)<>Var(Y)			2.065	72.222	.043	.32	.15	.01	.63
The small business tax is lowered by two points, from 8% to 6%. This is an appropriate step at this time.	Var(X)=Var(Y)	5.112	.026	1.122	85	.265	.19	.17	-.15	.52
	Var(X)<>Var(Y)			1.191	73.394	.238	.19	.16	-.13	.51

As stated previously, just over one third (35.6%) of those who do not approve of the provincial government’s performance, but who are aware of the budget being tabled, approve of the direction of the budget. When compared with segment 1, responses are not significantly different for any approval rating except for the rating of the economy in which 50% of segment 3 approves of the way the provincial government is handling the economy, while only 16.4% of segment 1 feel the same.

Independent Samples t-Tests were conducted for each of the ordinal statements with regard to segments 1 and 3. Only the statements relating to the increase in healthcare and children’s programs showed statistically significant differences in response.

Finally, when each of the demographics is tested for differences between segments 1 and 3, only income shows a significant difference. For income, segment 1 is a statistically significantly higher income group than segment 3.

Number of Cases in each Segment

Cluster	1	58.000
	2	97.000
	3	32.000
	4	13.000
Valid		200.000
Missing		218.000

Conclusions

Indirect evidence that suggests that the message the provincial government intended the budget to project has in fact been received, and favourably, is seen in the increase in three key provincial government approval ratings since January 2001:

- The education approval rating rose nearly 10 percentage points to 55.0%.
- The healthcare approval rating rose nearly 12 percentage points to 35.5%
- The highways approval rating rose exactly 13 percentage points to 31.9%

None of the other approval ratings increased significantly.

The healthcare and highways ratings indicate continuing disapproval of government performance. Based on results from the current poll alone, the relatively low approval numbers might be interpreted simply as negatives. By comparing the levels in this poll with levels obtained in January 2001 through an independent study by Sigma Analytics, it is clear that there has been an improvement in perceptions, some of which might be attributed to the budget.

One facet of the results that might be probed further is the disparity between males and females on awareness of the budget. Males generally show substantially higher awareness levels.

The results also point to marked segmentation of the population by gender and geography, as well as age, around approval ratings on various aspects of government activity.