

Introduction

Objective

The objective of this poll was to query a sample of Saskatchewan residents on issues identified by Saskatchewan Executive Council and Saskatchewan Finance.

Methodology

Interviews were conducted across Saskatchewan with respondents aged 18 or older in households selected at random by computer. All fieldwork was done by telephone from Sigma's call centre.

A total of 1011 interviews were completed. The results from a sample of this size can be expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

All the queries were supplied by Saskatchewan Executive Council and used verbatim. They are repeats from polls that have been conducted regularly over several years, in ongoing monitoring of issues and trends. Queries.

Cautions

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

- Sample surveys provide estimates of the prevalence of the measured factors in the total population from which the sample is drawn. The estimates are statistically reliable within the ranges indicated, at the 95% level of confidence. This means that the actual prevalence of the factor could be greater or lesser than the estimate, by the amount of the margin of error. It also means that 5% of the time, the estimate can be expected to differ from reality by more than the margin of error. Results from sample surveys should therefore be treated as contributing to knowledge, but not as defining it precisely.
- 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 because they are based on smaller numbers. They should be treated with more caution.
- Polls are “snapshot” approximations of reality. Subject to the foregoing considerations, they can be expected to reflect reality validly, within the indicated ranges, at the time they are conducted. Opinions change. It is important to bear in mind that a single poll cannot describe a trend.

- Indicators from the sample can be projected to estimate the prevalence of the measured factor in the total population from which the sample was drawn. They cannot be interpreted as describing any other population.

Highlights

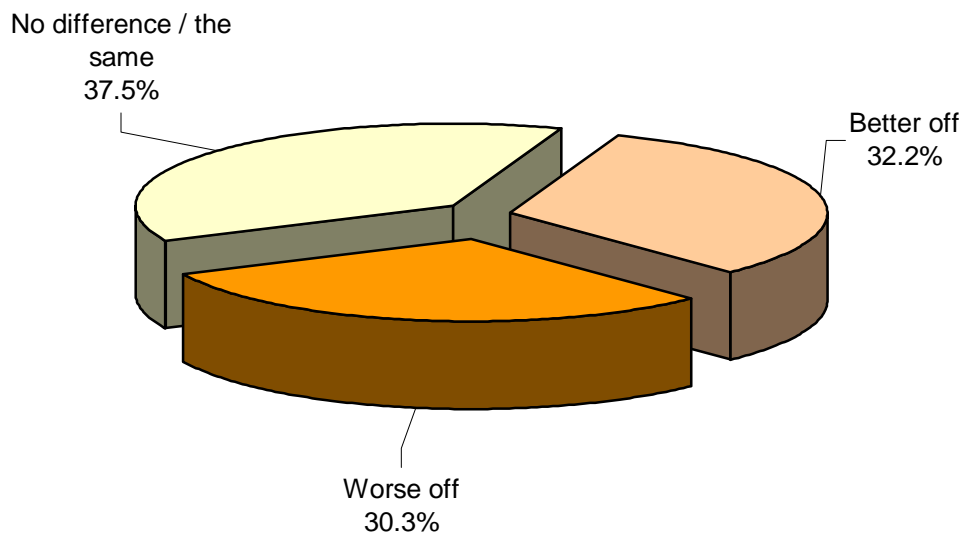
- Respondents appear optimistic regarding their financial future with 45.8% saying they will be better off a year from now.
- More than six out of ten respondents disapprove of the way the Government of Saskatchewan has been handling finances.
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents feel next spring's provincial budget will be in deficit.
- Seven out of ten respondents stated that a deficit budget is acceptable if the money is used to protect public services for Saskatchewan families.
- A large majority of respondents would support the government presenting a deficit budget specifically to pay for emergency drought assistance to farmers.
- Support for the government raising the PST to help pay for the rising cost of the health care system is low, with respondents giving an average score of 3.39 out of 10, and most scoring it at the lowest rating.
- Over one-third of respondents felt that health care should be the top priority for the next provincial budget.

Section A: Financial Perception

A1. Thinking of your own personal financial situation today, would you say that you are better off or worse off financially, than you were a year ago?

The largest group of respondents, 37.5% overall, felt there was “no difference” in their current financial situation from one year ago. An additional 32.2 % felt they were “better off” while a statistically equivalent group of 30.3% said they were “worse off”.

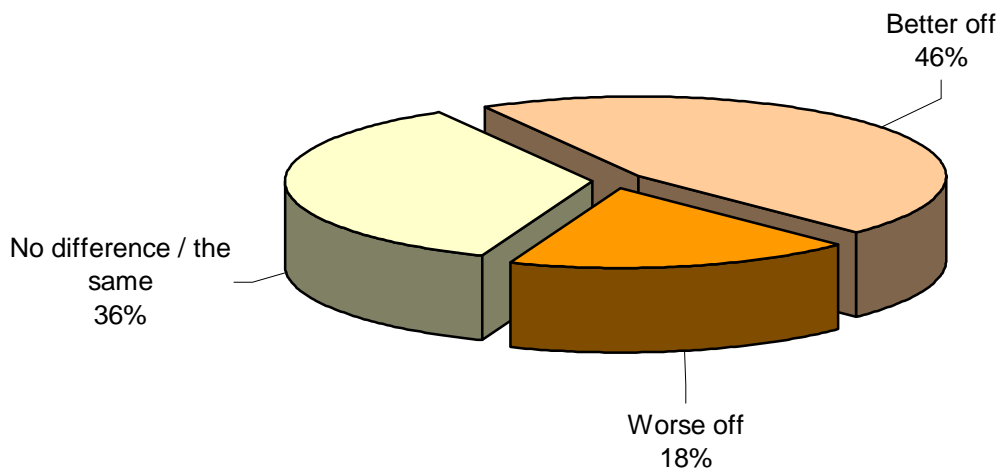
Thinking of your own personal financial situation today, would you say that you are better off or worse off financially, than you were a year ago?



A2. Thinking of your own personal financial situation a year from now, do you expect to be better off or worse off financially than you are today?

Respondents tend to be stable to optimistic, with the largest single group, a plurality of respondents (46.0%), saying they will be “better off” in the following year. Just under one in five (18.0%) felt they will be “worse off”, while 36.0% said they expect “no difference”.

Thinking of your own personal financial situation a year from now, do you expect to be better off or worse off financially, than you are today?

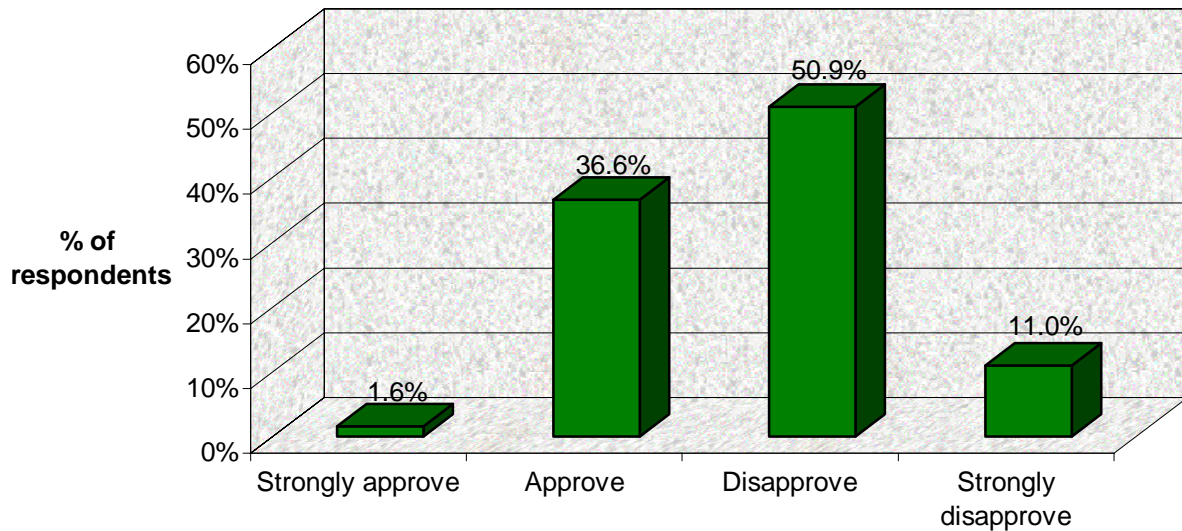


Section B: Provincial Government Financial Performance

B1. On balance, would you say that you approve or disapprove of the way the Government of Saskatchewan has been handling public finances in this Province?

Disapproval of the government's handling of public finances outweighs approval. 61.9% of respondents disapproved (11.0% strongly), while 38.2% expressed approval (1.6% strongly).

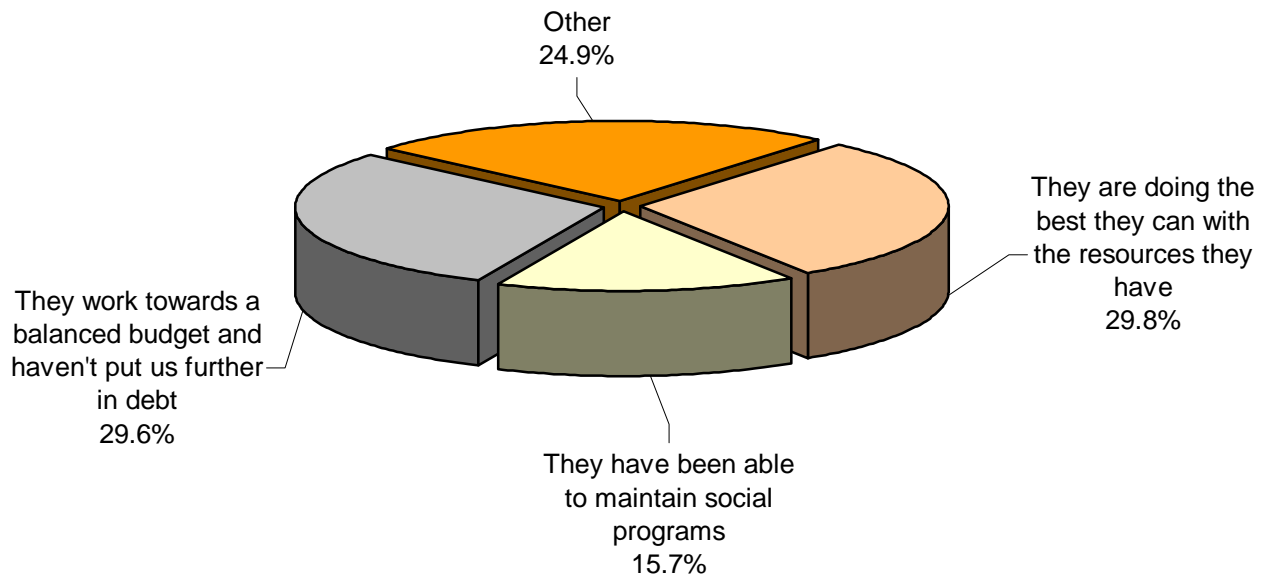
On balance, would you say that you approve or disapprove of the way the Government of Saskatchewan has been handling public finances in this Province?



B1a. What's the main reason you approve of the Government of Saskatchewan's handling of public finances?

Among the 38.2% of respondents expressing approval on the preceding query, roughly equal proportions gave responses that might broadly be grouped into "doing the best they can" and "working towards a balanced budget."

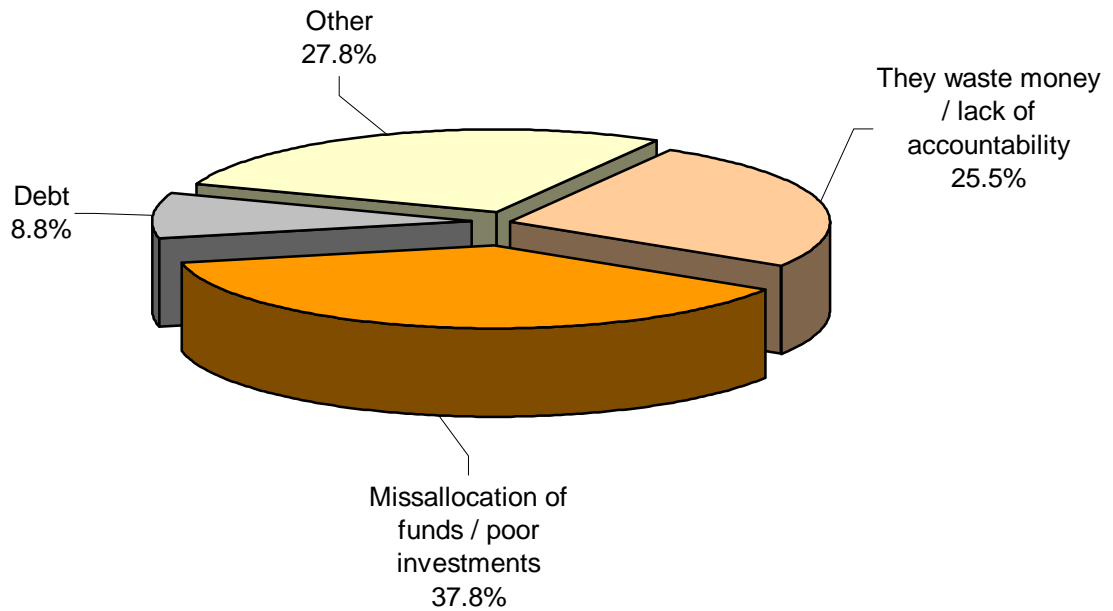
What's the main reason you approve of the the government's handling of public finances?



B1b. What's the main reason you disapprove of the Government of Saskatchewan handling of public finances?

The main driver of the disapproval response given by 61.9% of respondents could broadly be described as is misallocation of funds in poor investments. A related response expressing concern over wasted money and lack of accountability was given by 25.5%.

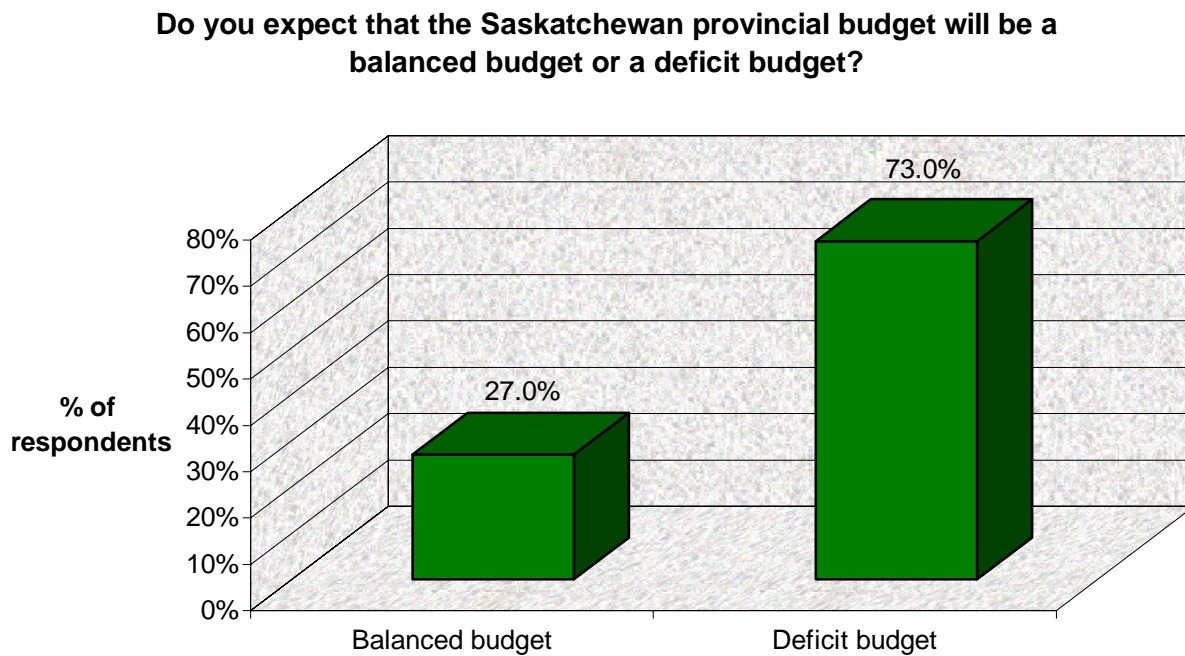
What's the main reason you disapprove of the Government of Saskatchewan handling of public finances?



Section C: Provincial Budget Expectations

C1. Now I'd like to ask you about the Saskatchewan Provincial Budget, which is usually introduced in the spring of each year. Looking ahead to the spring of next year, do you expect that the Saskatchewan provincial budget will be a balanced budget or a deficit budget?

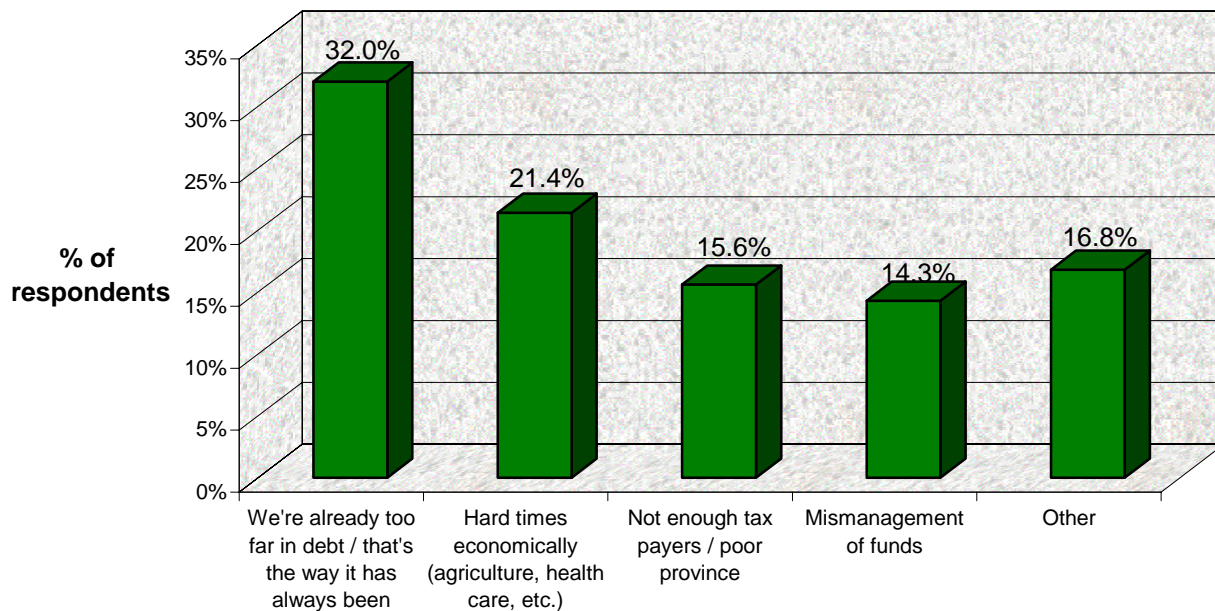
The dominant group of respondents, 73.0% overall, expect the provincial budget to be in deficit.



C1a. What's the main reason you expect there to be a deficit budget in Saskatchewan next year?

This open-ended query attracted a wide range of responses from the 73% who expect a deficit. One grouping, broadly centred around the view that a deficit seems inevitable given existing debt or existing patterns of behavior, attracted a third (32%) of respondents. Those who attribute an anticipated deficit to hard times and related factors constitute just over a fifth (21.4%) of respondents. The perceived poverty of the province and a dearth of taxpaying citizens, and the perception that a deficit could be expected because of mismanagement of funds, drew roughly equal numbers, at 15.6% and 14.3% respectively.

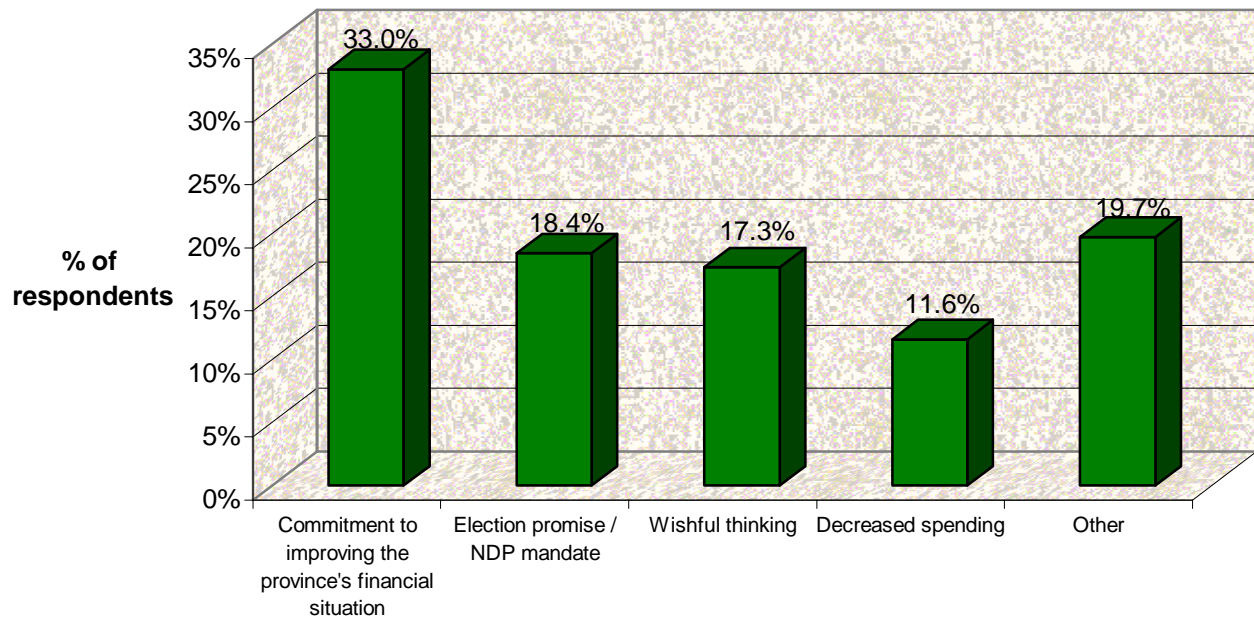
What's the main reason you expect there to be a deficit budget in Saskatchewan next year?



C1b. What's the main reason you expect there to be a balanced budget in Saskatchewan next year?

Among the 27% expecting a balanced budget, the largest group (33%) comprises those who gave as their reason a commitment to improving the province's finances. A closely related response, that a balanced budget is the mandate of the current government, was given by a further 18.4%. Hope that a balance can be achieved, captioned as 'wishful thinking', was given by a proportion (17.3%) roughly equal to the second group. One in ten expects a balance to be reached by reduced spending.

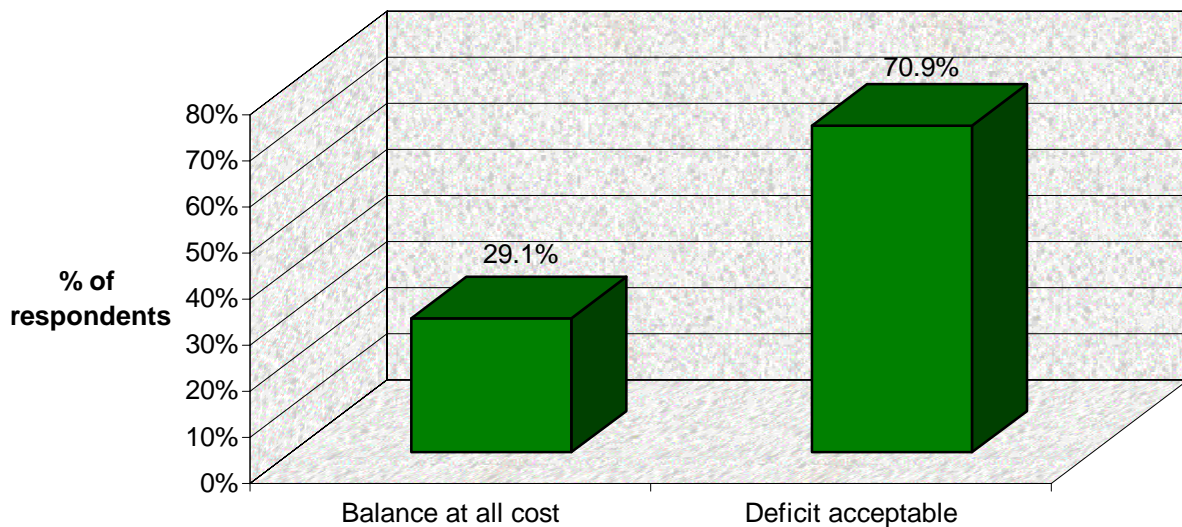
What's the main reason you expect there to be a balanced budget in Saskatchewan next year?



C2. Some people say that the Government of Saskatchewan should balance the Provincial Budget at all costs. Some people say that a deficit budget is acceptable if the money is used to protect public services for Saskatchewan families. Which of these two opposing views is closest to your own way of thinking?

Support for a deficit budget on grounds of protecting needed services is strong, with 70.9% of respondents indicating this view best represents their way of thinking. 29.1% felt that the provincial budget should be balanced no matter the cost.

Which of these two opposing views is closest to your own way of thinking?

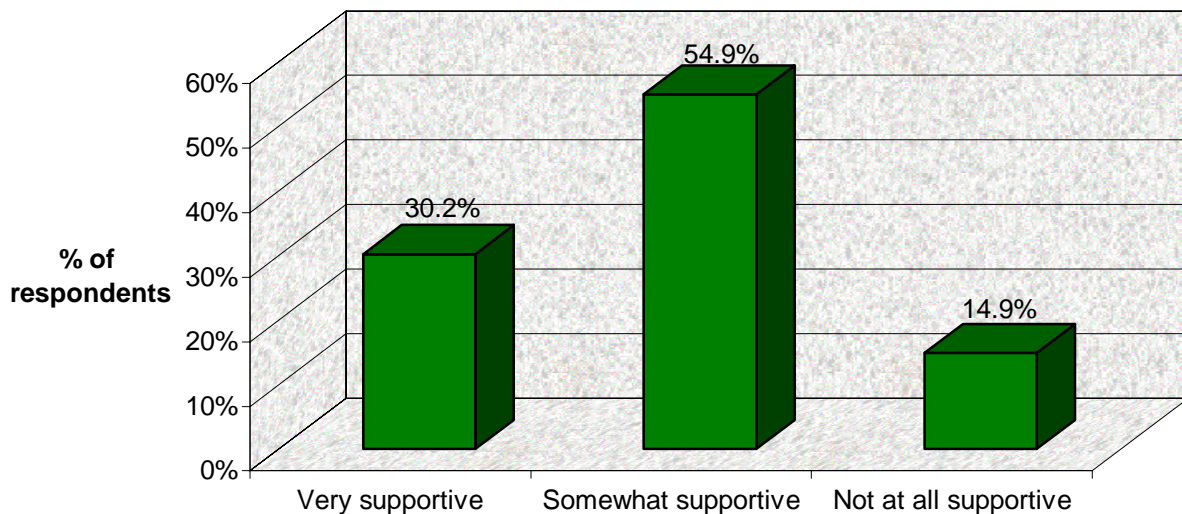


Section D: Targeted Deficits

D1. If the Government of Saskatchewan presented a deficit budget specifically to pay for emergency drought assistance to Saskatchewan farmers, would you describe yourself as being very supportive of that decision, somewhat supportive or not at all supportive?

A large majority of respondents, 85.1% overall, support the idea of a deficit budget to help pay for emergency drought assistance to Saskatchewan farmers (54.9% “somewhat supportive”, 30.2% “very supportive”). Only 14.9% said they would be “not at all supportive”.

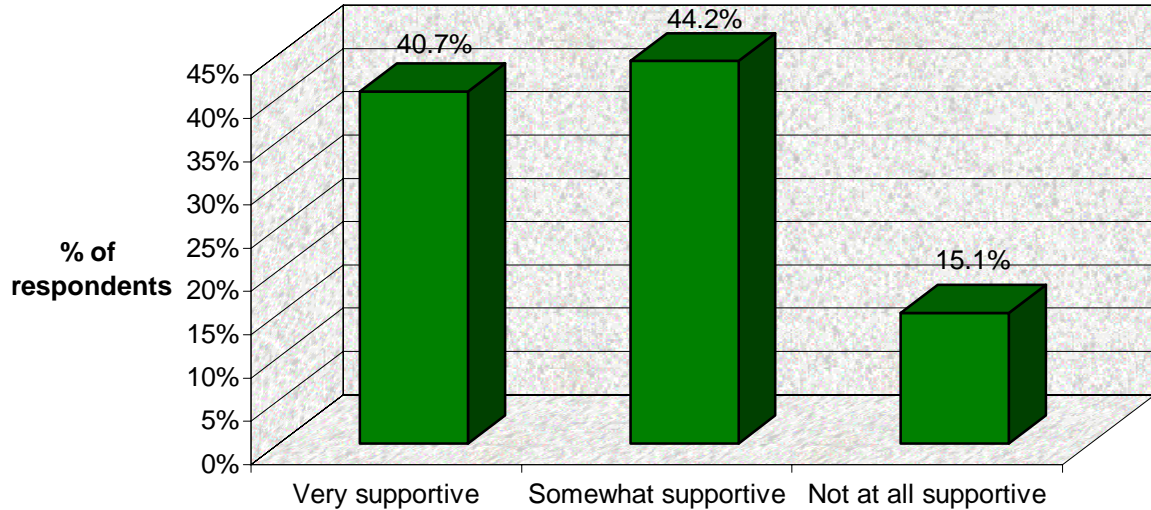
Level of support for the Government presenting a deficit budget to pay for emergency drought assistance:



D2. If the Government of Saskatchewan presented a deficit budget specifically to pay for improved health care services, would you describe yourself as being very supportive of that decision, somewhat supportive or not at all supportive?

Approval of a deficit budget to pay for improved health care services is evident with 84.9% of respondents indicating their support (44.2% “somewhat supportive”, 40.7% “very supportive”). 15.1% were “not at all supportive” of the idea.

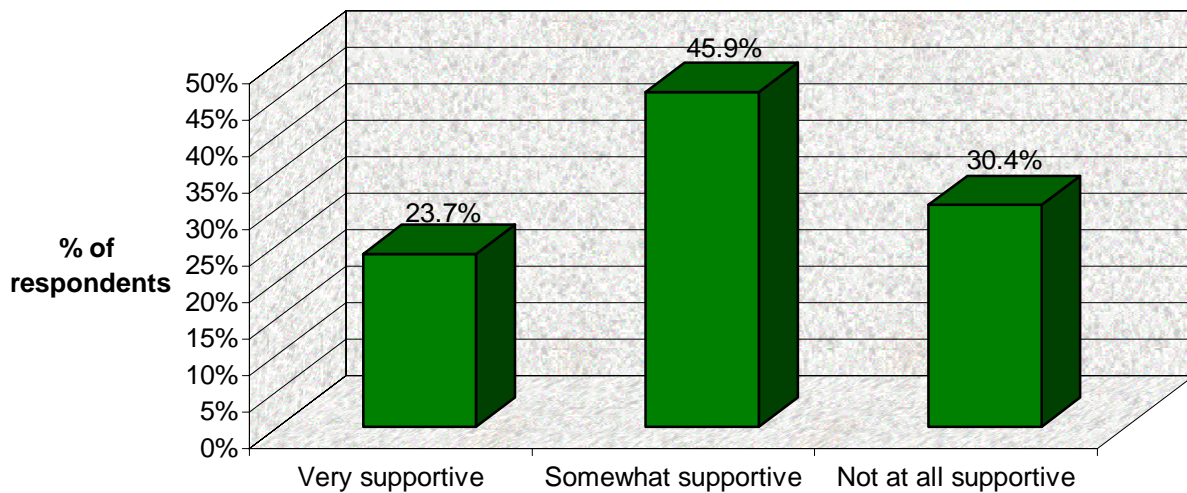
Level of support for the Government presenting a deficit budget to pay for improved health care services:



D3. If the Government of Saskatchewan presented a deficit budget specifically to pay for a plan to speed up the repair and construction of Saskatchewan roads and highways, would you describe yourself as being very supportive of that decision, somewhat supportive or not at all supportive?

Well over two-thirds of respondents (69.6%) indicated support for a deficit budget that would pay for a plan to speed up the repair and construction of roads and highways (45.9% “somewhat supportive”, 23.7% “very supportive”). The remaining 30.4%, said they were “not at all supportive” of the idea.

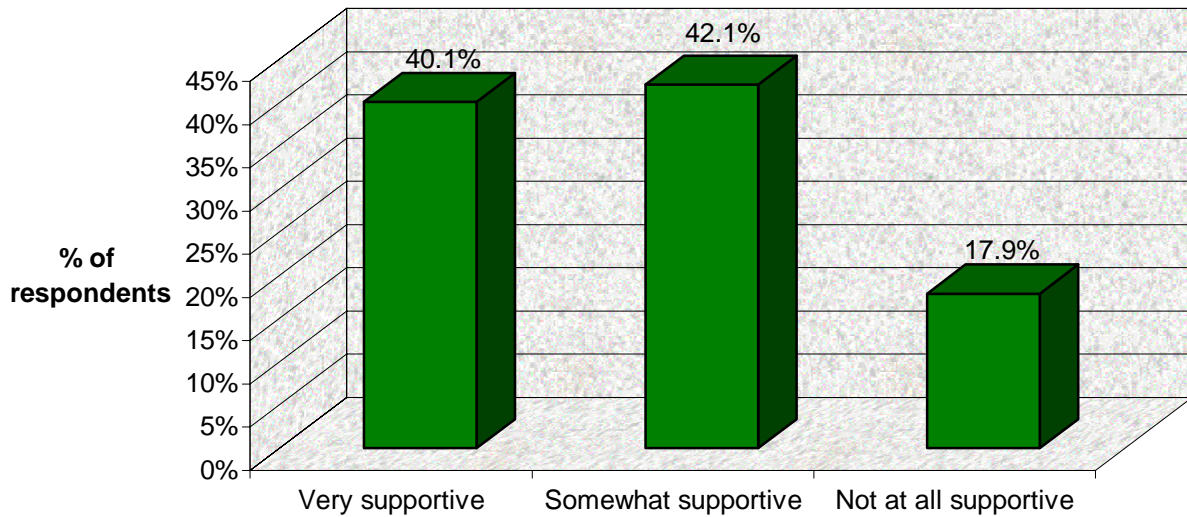
Level of support for the Government presenting a deficit budget to pay for a plan to speed up the repair and construction of Saskatchewan roads and highways:



D4. If the Government of Saskatchewan presented a deficit budget specifically to pay for additional health care staff such as nurses, would you describe yourself as being very supportive of that decision, somewhat supportive or not at all supportive?

Among respondents, support for a deficit budget to pay for additional health care staff is strong. 82.2% of respondents indicated support (42.1% “somewhat supportive”, 40.1% “very supportive”) while 17.9% said they were “not at all supportive”.

Level of support for the Government presenting a deficit budget to pay for additional health care staff such as nurses:

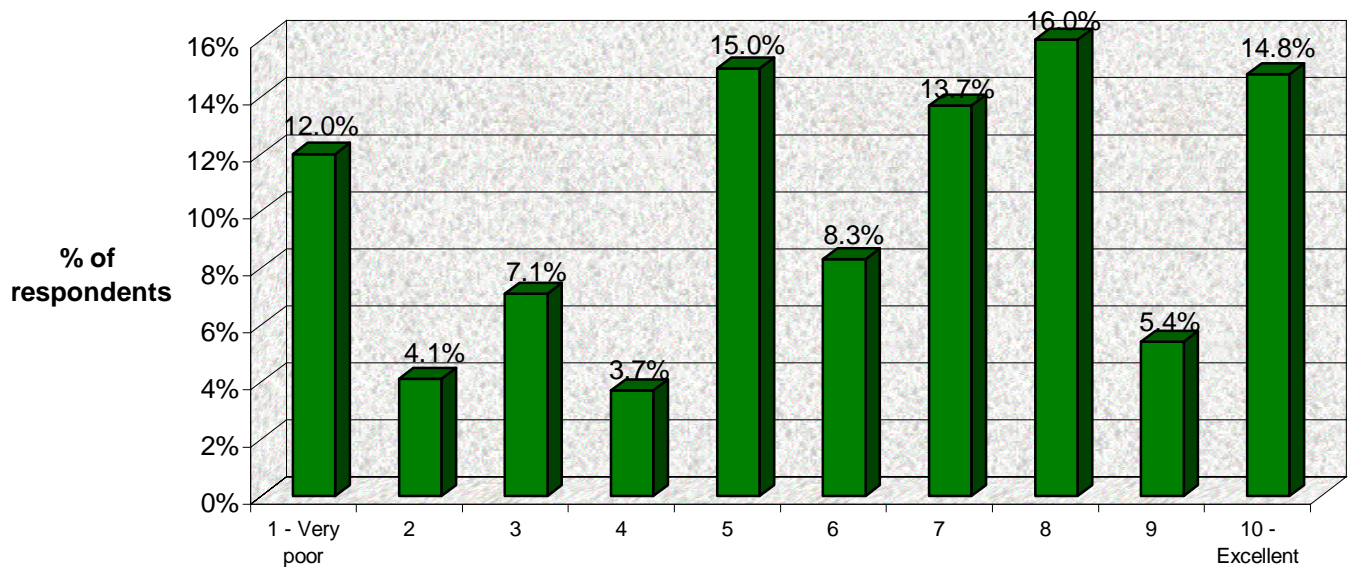


Section E: Health Care Spending

E1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the option of having all health care spending reviewed by outside experts, looking for waste and inefficiencies within the health care system?

Respondents appear open to the option of having health care spending reviewed by outside experts. On the 1 to 10 scale, respondents gave an average rating of 6.01.

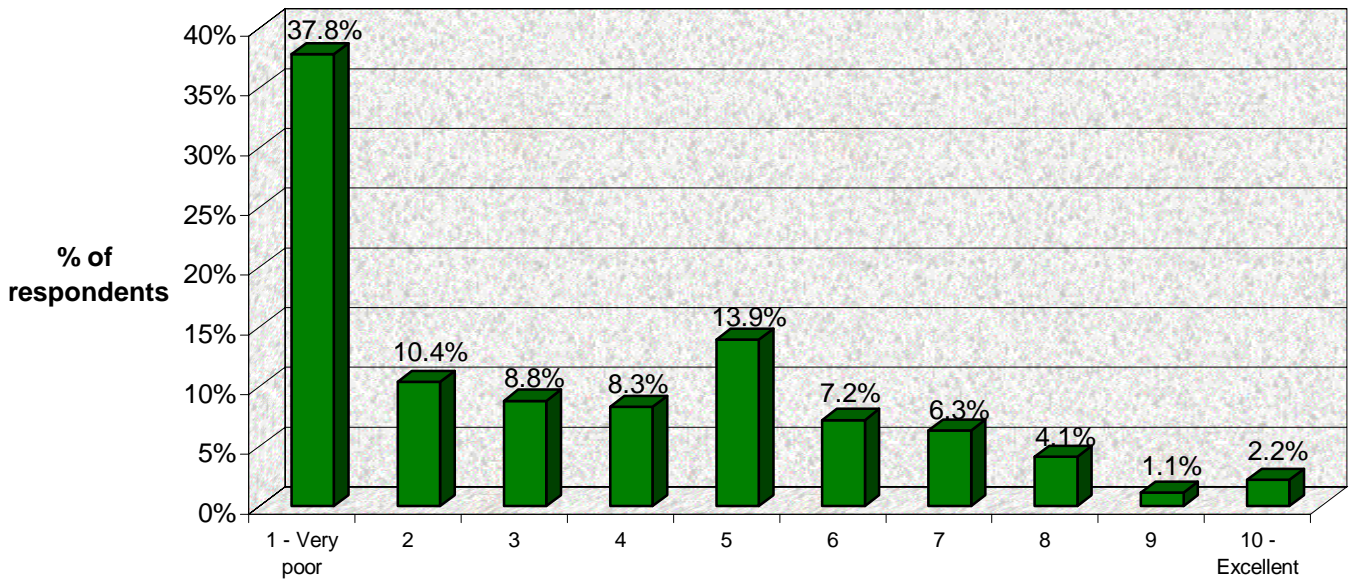
How would you rate the option of having all health care spending reviewed by outside experts, looking for waste and inefficiencies within the health care system?



E2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the option of having the government raise the provincial sales tax to help pay for the rising cost of the health care system?

Respondents showed little support for the idea of raising the PST to assist the cost of the health care system. The average rating out of 10 was 3.39, and by far the largest single bloc (37.8%) gave the lowest possible rating.

How would you rate the option of having the government raise the Provincial Sales Tax to help for the rising cost of the health care system?

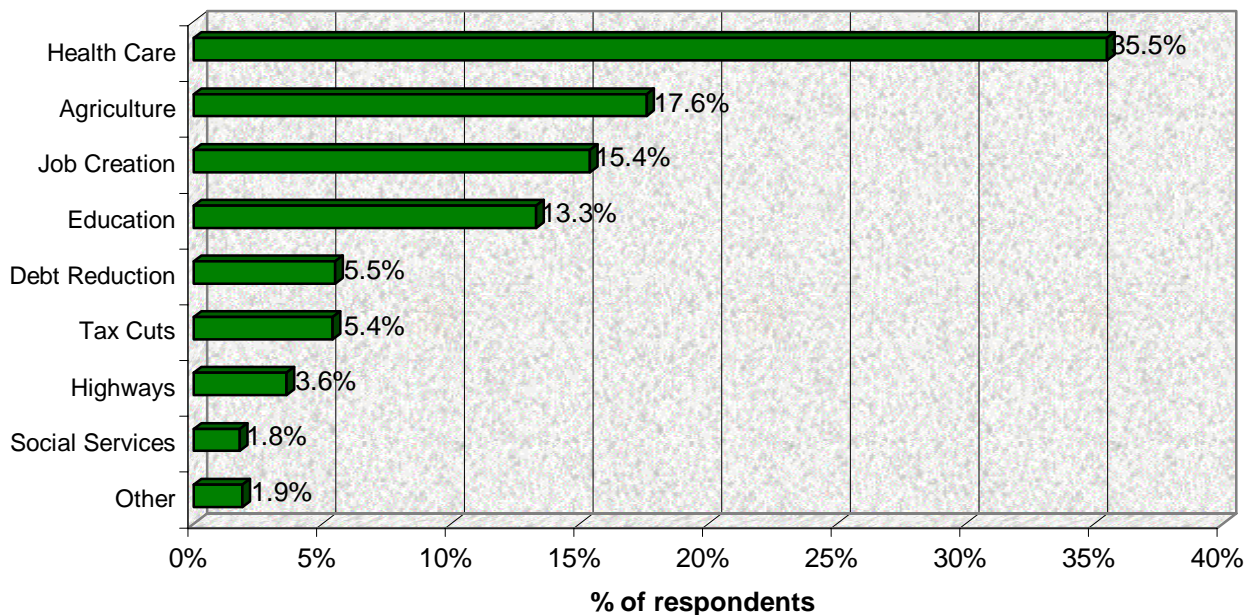


Section F: Provincial Budget Priorities

F1. I am now going to list eight priority areas governments usually talk about when setting budgets. Please listen to the list, and then tell me which one you think should be the top priority for the next Saskatchewan Provincial Budget.

A plurality of respondents (35.5%) chose health care as the top priority for the next provincial budget. Agriculture and job creation followed with 17.6% and 15.4% of respondents respectively.

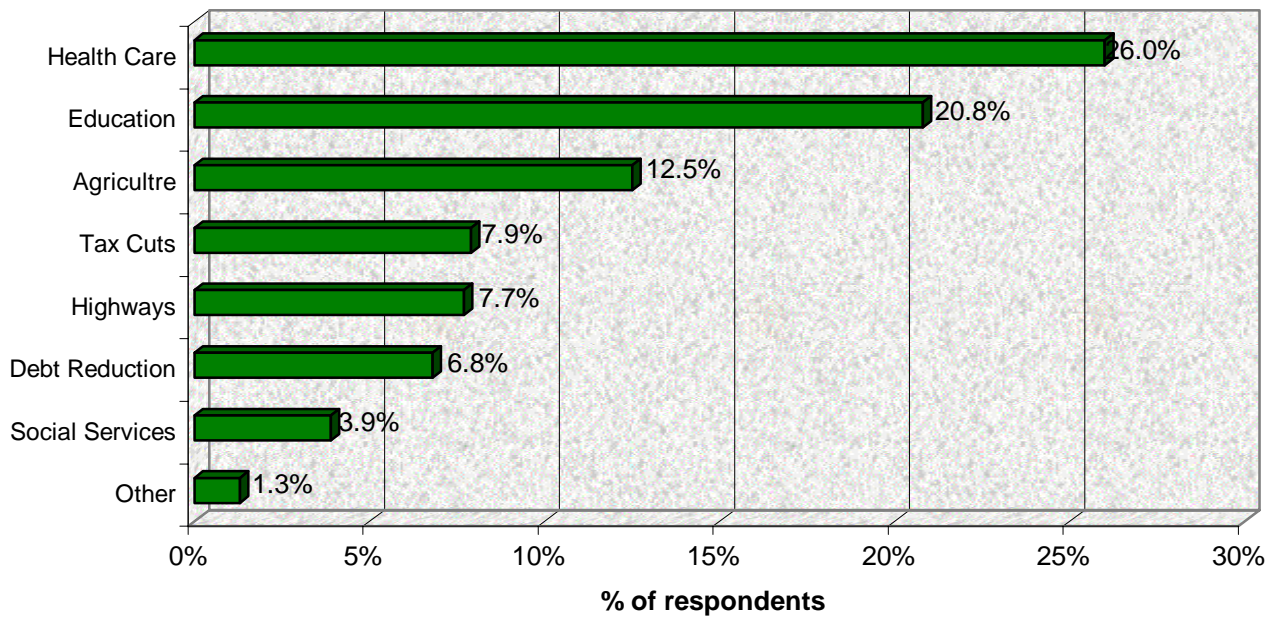
Which one of the following do you think should be the top priority for the next Saskatchewan Provincial Budget



F2. Now, I'm going to read you the remaining priorities. Please listen to the list again, and then tell me which one you think should be the second highest priority in the next provincial budget.

Health care remained at the top of the priority list with 26.0% of respondents choosing it as the second highest priority in the next provincial budget. Education was the second highest priority area among 20.8% of respondents.

Which one of the following do you think should be the second highest priority in the next provincial budget?



Demographics

Gender:

Male	49.9%
Female	50.1%

Age:

18 – 34	25.5%
35 – 54	40.6%
55 and over	33.9%

Location:

City	51.6%
Town/Village/Hamlet	28.4%
Rural Municipality	20.0%

Occupation:

Retired	21.4%
Student	6.0%
Homemaker	5.8%
Not employed	2.5%
Farmer	11.0%
Professional	13.5%
Trades person	9.5%
Business owner/self-employed	4.7%
Employee – private sector	7.7%
Employee – local government	1.1%
Employee – provincial/federal government	5.0%
Manager – private sector	1.5%
Manager – public sector	1.0%
Other	9.3%

Education:

Less than grade 12	16.8%
Grade 12	23.6%
Some technical or university	21.8%
Technical diploma	15.9%
University degree	18.2%
Graduate degree	3.7%

Income:

Less than \$25,000	22.5%
\$25,000 - \$50,000	35.0%
\$50,000 - \$100,000	31.8%
Over \$100,000	10.7%

Region:

Saskatoon	20.2%
Regina	18.1%
Moose Jaw	3.6%
Prince Albert	3.3%
Southeast	9.8%
Southwest	10.3%
East Central	10.4%
Central	9.1%
Northwest	12.0%
North	3.3%