

City Omnibus Survey - Saskatoon February 2007

Norsask Consumer
Interviewing Services
Ltd./innovationLOGIK

READ Saskatoon 
It's more than words.

Executive Summary

In February 2007, Norsask Consumer Interviewing Services and innovationLOGIK conducted a public opinion survey of Saskatoon residents to gauge people's perceptions regarding a variety of current events and topics within the City of Saskatoon. A total of 402 surveys were completed. The completed surveys provide a margin of error of $\pm 4.7\%$ at 95% confidence interval. There were 6 questions probing opinions concerning literacy in Canada. Key findings of this research are summarized as follows:

What percentage of adults in Canada do you feel struggle with literacy?

Respondents were first asked about their perception of literacy rates in Canada, and it is evident from the responses that there is a perception that Canadians generally struggle with literacy. Forty-seven percent felt that up to one quarter of adult Canadians struggle with literacy, and a further 29% indicated that this number could be as high as 49%. A small percentage of respondents (8%) felt that these rates could be higher, between 50% and 100%. As well, nearly 16% did not know how many adults struggled with literacy. Females on average felt that more adults in Canada struggle with literacy than do males. Age of respondents factored in on perception of literacy rates in Canada. Those in the older age segments, 55 to 64 and 65 plus, felt that more Canadians struggle with literacy. There are minimal variances amongst the other age categories – which when compared to older adults – perceive that fewer Canadians struggle with literacy overall. When considering education levels of respondents, there is minimal variance between the segments considered. The exception to this was the cohort with less than a high school education who perceived that fewer Canadians overall struggled with literacy. Those who were fully employed felt that more Canadians struggled with literacy. Retirees perceived that literacy was higher, but 58% still indicated that potentially up to half of Canadians struggle with literacy. There is also a correlation between income levels and perceptions of literacy. Respondents in higher income groups feel that more Canadians struggle with literacy overall. Even those in lower income groups (less than \$40,000) suggest that literacy is an issue; however on average these groups report a 10% to 15% gap in perceptions.

The Federal Government recently cut \$18 million funding to literacy organizations. Were you aware of this?

The awareness of funding cuts to literacy organizations is generally low as 72% indicated that they were not aware of any cuts. This lack of awareness is higher amongst males; however the variance between the genders is minimal. The lack of awareness is highest amongst the age groups of 18 to 24, 25 to 29, and 30 to 44, where 82% on average are unaware of the cuts. Awareness levels do increase amongst the older age categories, particularly the 55 to 64 age category, and the 65 plus group who indicate awareness levels averaging 43%. Levels of awareness varied slightly when considering education levels of respondents. Three out of 4 respondents who had less than high school, or attended or graduated College or Technical school were unaware of cuts made to organizations. Awareness levels increased slightly amongst the University educated and Trades Certificates and Diploma holders. In these groups, 1 in 3 was aware of the cuts. Students, homemakers, the unemployed, and those employed full time are generally less aware of federal cuts to literacy programs. Eighty percent of respondents from these groups are generally unaware of any cuts. Awareness increases amongst retirees and the self employed who indicate a 43% and 38% level of awareness respectively. There is very little variance between awareness levels and income levels of respondents. With the exception of the cohort earning between \$80,000 and \$100,000 annually who reported lower levels of awareness at 13%, the average level of awareness across the other groups approximated 27%.

Do you agree with this \$18 million Federal Government cut?

The vast majority of respondents were not in favor of this cut. Fully 87% did not agree with this cut, and this was consistent amongst the genders, that is, there were no gender differences. These feelings were also consistent across all age groups, education levels, occupation, and incomes of the respondents, where on average 88% or more did not agree with the cuts. The exception to this was the age group of 65 plus who reported a slightly lower level of agreement – at 83%, those with less than a high school education, at 78%, and those making less than \$40,000 per year, at 85%.

To what extent do you agree that a higher literacy level gets people a higher paying job which improves their quality of life?

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on a 5 point scale (where 1 was equal to “completely disagree” and 5 was = to “completely agree”). Overall, respondents strongly agreed that a higher literacy level does improve job quality and quality of life, providing an average score of 4.2 out of 5. Again, there were no real gender differences in terms of their feeling about this. When considering age and their agreement levels with this statement, all of the groups provided scores that were close to the average score of 4.2. The agreement with this statement was high across the board, ranging from 3.9 out of 5 amongst the 18 to 24 year old group to 4.4 out of 5 in the 45 to 54 age group. Respondents with less than a high school education, and students had the lowest level of agreement with this statement averaging 3.8 out of 5. Beyond this, when considering education and employment status, agreement levels are 4 out of 5 or higher. Not surprisingly, there is a positive correlation between income levels and agreement with this statement. The highest levels of agreement came from those in the highest income group - \$100,000 or more per annum – where the average score was 4.5 out of 5. Even those making less than \$20,000 per year agreed that literacy and job and life quality are related. The score from this income level was 3.8 out of 5.

Would you personally like to improve your literacy level?

Thirty-five percent of respondents agreed that they would like to improve their literacy levels; 36% of females felt this compared to 34% of males. The desire to improve literacy levels varied somewhat with age. Nearly half of those between the ages of 18 to 24 indicated that they would like to improve their literacy. This drops off as the population ages, ranging from a low of 25% amongst those 65 and older to a high of 43% amongst those between the ages of 30 to 44. When considering desire to improve literacy levels in relation to the education of respondents, similar trends that were associated with age were noted, that is, the greater the level of education attained, the less likely respondents had a desire to increase their literacy level. The lowest desire was noted amongst those with Trade Certificates and Diplomas, where 22% indicated a desire to improve. The highest desire for improvement came from high school graduates (42% indicating yes) and those

with less than high school at 40%. The desire to improve literacy levels was also high amongst students, and the unemployed (both at or near 50% indicating yes). Those who are retired and the self employed expressed the least desire to improve their literacy levels, at 27% and 24% respectively. When considering income levels, those with lower incomes had a greater desire to improve their literacy levels. Forty percent of those making under \$40,000 annually expressed a desire to improve their literacy. This desire decreased somewhat as annual income increased.

Have you ever heard of Read Saskatoon?

Fifty-eight percent of respondents have heard of Read Saskatoon. This awareness is higher amongst females, at 66% when compared to males at 49%. Awareness of Read Saskatoon increases with age. Awareness was highest amongst 45 to 54 year olds at 73%, followed by 55 to 64 year olds at 68%. Awareness was lowest amongst 18 to 24 year olds at 22%. When considering awareness of Read Saskatoon and education levels of respondents, the highest level of awareness was reported for those who have attended or graduated University (71% awareness level). The lowest levels of awareness were reported from the high school and less than high school segments, at 45% and 47% respectively. Homemakers, and those employed part time recorded the highest level of awareness at 83% and 74% respectively. It is evident that students are the least aware of read Saskatoon (34% awareness overall). This is followed by the other group that fell under 50%, that being the self employed, at 48%. In consideration of household income, the highest levels of awareness were reported for the higher income brackets. The awareness amongst groups making more than \$40,000 per year ranged from a low of 56% (\$80,000 to \$100,000 and \$100,000 or more annually) to a high of 67% (\$60,000 to \$80,000 annually). The lowest level of awareness was reported from the lowest income group surveyed. Those making less than \$20,000 annually reported the lowest level of awareness at 40%.