

Attitudes towards the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly in Saskatchewan: A research brief

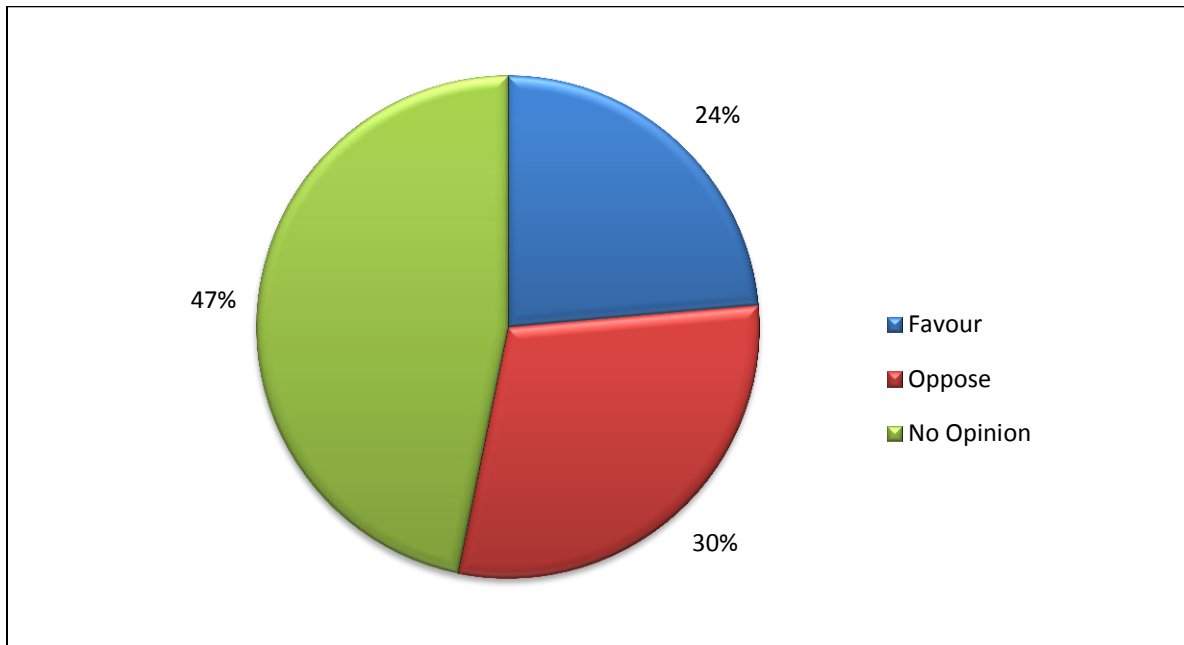
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Saskatchewan Election Study team

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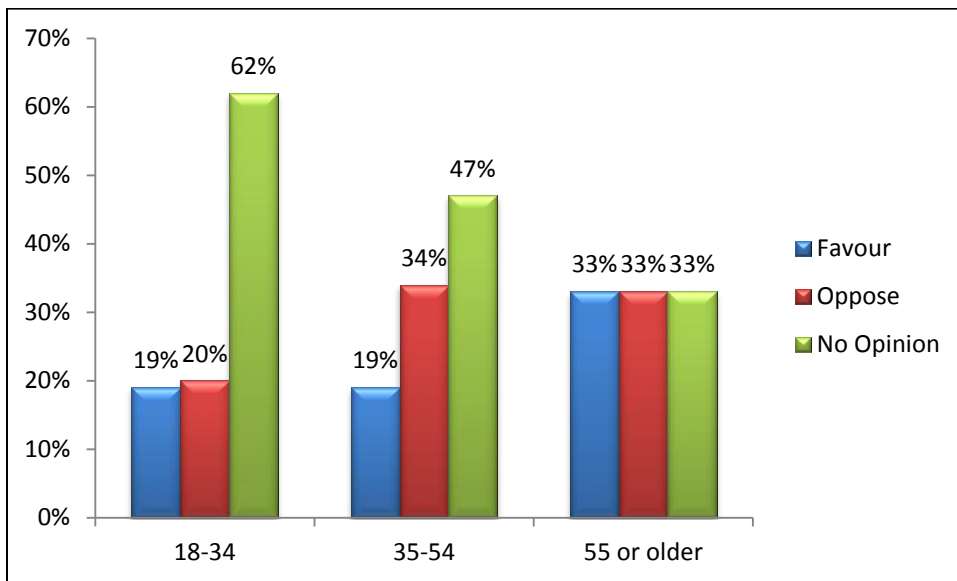
The 2011, Saskatchewan Provincial Election happened to coincide with the introduction of a bill in the House of Commons by the Conservative government to eliminate the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB)'s monopoly on the selling of all wheat, durum and barley produced on the Canadian prairies. The introduction of this bill created considerable controversy in Saskatchewan, with supporters of the Board's monopoly protesting to save it and opponents of the monopoly rallying behind the federal government's stance. As part of the Saskatchewan Election Study survey, Saskatchewan residents were asked their view on the CWB's monopoly. Respondents were asked the question: "Do you 'favour' or 'oppose' the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly on selling prairie wheat, durum and barley, or do you have 'no opinion' on this matter?" This briefing note examines how the responses to this question can be broken down by the age, education, respondent's party allegiance and the area of the province in which they live.

Figure 1: Attitudes towards the CWB's monopoly (all of Saskatchewan)



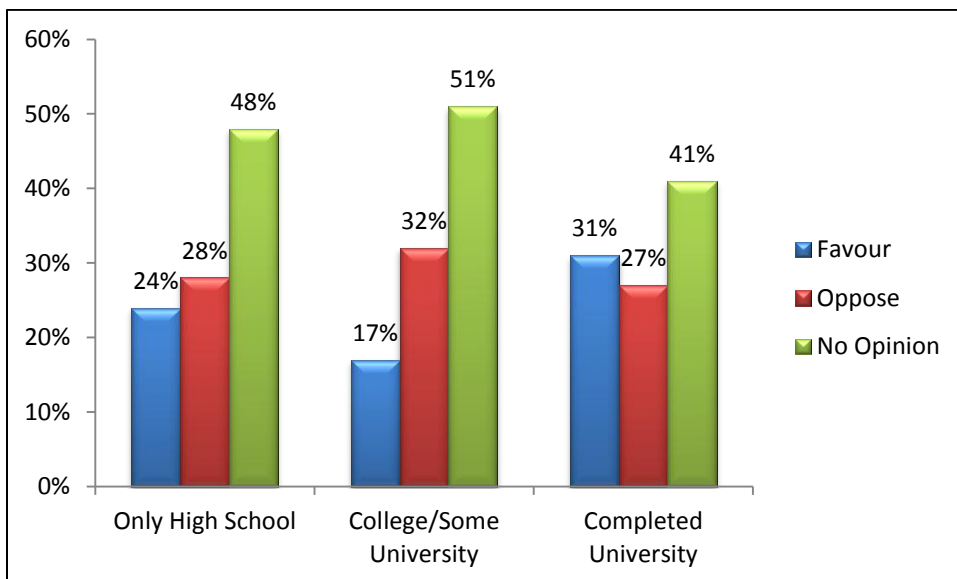
The Saskatchewan Election Study found that the CWB's monopoly is not an important issue for many Saskatchewan residents. Indeed, nearly half of all respondents did not express an opinion about the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly. Among respondents who did express an opinion, opinions were split with slightly more opposing the monopoly than favouring it. No other question asked by the Saskatchewan Election Study team was met with such ambivalence. Saskatchewan residents were much more likely to have opinions on crown corporations, the privatization of hospitals, labour standards, business regulation and Aboriginal issues than the monopoly of the CWB.

Figure 2: Age and attitudes toward the CWB monopoly (all of Saskatchewan)



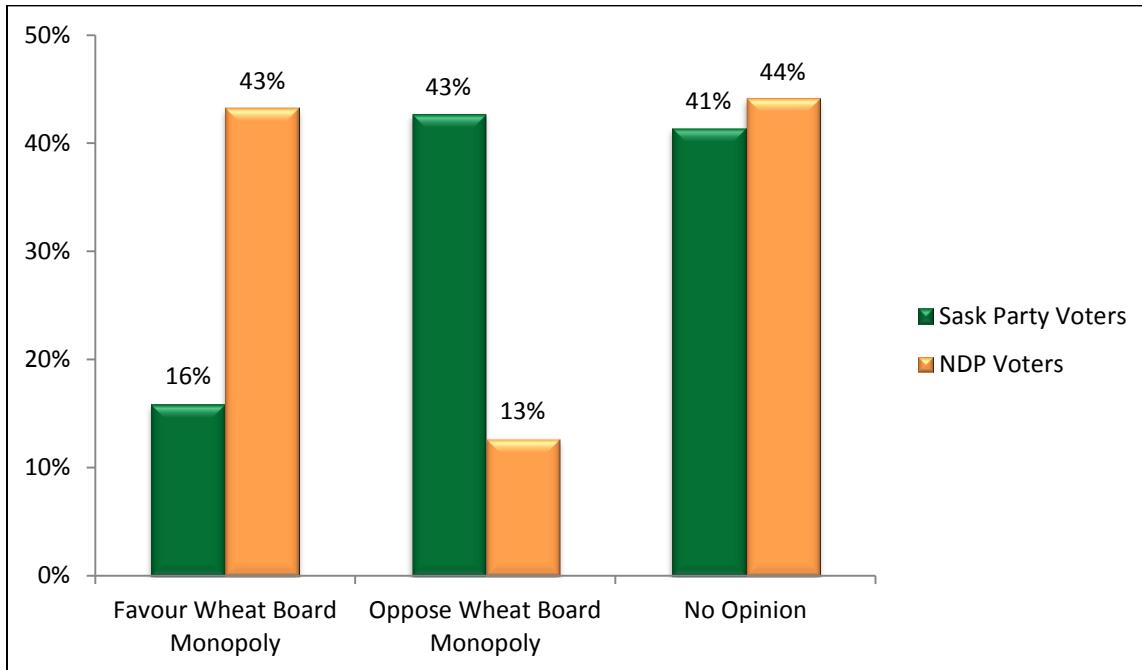
When the responses on the CWB’s monopoly are broken down by age category, a striking pattern emerges. Younger residents of Saskatchewan are very likely (62%) to have no opinion on this issue. On the other hand, the percentage of older residents who have no opinion is much lower than the two other age groups. Though evenly split, older residents are more favourable to the CWB’s monopoly than younger residents. Clearly, the CWB’s monopoly is an issue that resonated more with older residents and support for the CWB monopoly is strongest in that age group.

Figure 3: Level of education and attitudes towards the CWB monopoly (all of Saskatchewan)



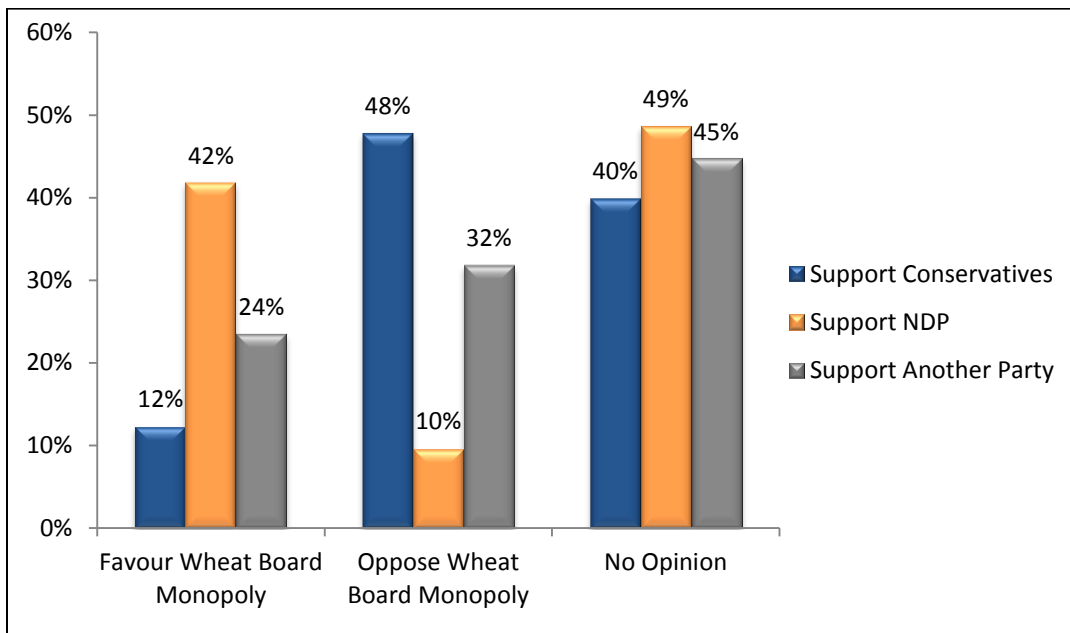
There are also differences in attitudes toward the CWB monopoly based on levels of education. Residents who have completed a university degree are more supportive of the CWB’s monopoly. Residents who completed a university degree are also more likely to have an opinion in this subject than residents with lower levels of education. Similar trends emerged when the team examined the responses of only rural residents of Saskatchewan, with 41% of rural residents who completed a university degree supporting the CWB monopoly while only 24% of these residents did not have an opinion on the subject.

Figure 4: Attitudes on the CWB monopoly by provincial party allegiance (all of Saskatchewan)



During the 2011 provincial election, the Saskatchewan NDP came out strongly in favour of maintaining the CWB's monopoly while the Saskatchewan Party was clear in its support for the federal government's efforts to eliminate it. The survey results indicate attitudes towards the Wheat Board's monopoly are split along partisan lines, with 43% of Saskatchewan Party voters opposing the monopoly and only 16% in favour of it. However, only 13% of provincial NDP voters favoured the CWB's monopoly while 44% of provincial NDP voters opposed it. Overall, it appears the provincial parties' positions on this issue aligned well with the positions of their supporters who expressed an opinion on the Wheat Board's monopoly. As such, there seemed to be little room for one party to 'steal' support from the other party through stressing its position on the CWB monopoly.

Figure 5: Attitudes on the CWB monopoly by federal party allegiance (all of Saskatchewan)



“Other” includes the Liberal Party, Green Party and other parties.

While the federal Conservatives have made the elimination of the CWB’s monopoly one of their first priorities as a majority government, both the federal NDP and the federal Liberals have been very opposed to this move. The Saskatchewan Election Study asked all respondents what party they would vote for if “a federal election was held today.” The results show that the federal parties are well aligned with the positions of their Saskatchewan supporters who expressed an opinion on the Wheat Board’s monopoly. In particular, there is little evidence that the federal Conservative Party has alienated its supporters in Saskatchewan through its push to eliminate the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board. Indeed, only 12% of federal Conservative supporters favour the CWB’s monopoly. Likewise, the NDP appears to have taken a position that would please its supporters as only 10% of its supporters oppose the CWB monopoly.

It is difficult to make concrete conclusions on how the positions of the Liberals or Green Party would affect their support since few survey respondents stated they would support one of these two parties. Given these results, it appears that neither the Conservatives nor the NDP risks losing existing support due to the controversy over ending the CWB’s monopoly. In short, the controversy over eliminating the CWB’s monopoly is in no way expected to alter Saskatchewan’s political dynamics.

Figure 6: Attitudes towards the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly by region

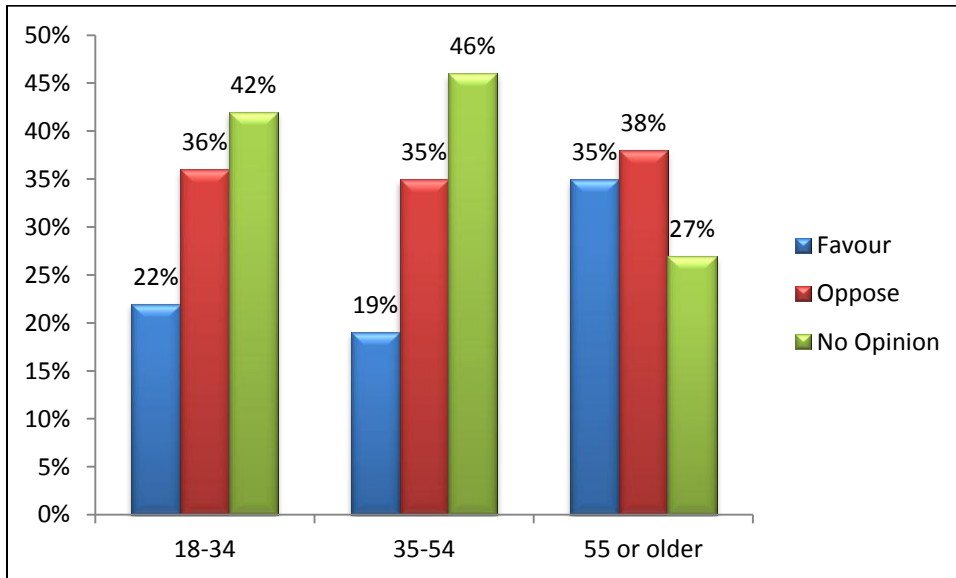
Attitude	Saskatoon	Regina	Smaller cities	Rural
Favour	19%	27%	17%	27%
Oppose	28%	23%	28%	35%
No Opinion	53%	50%	56%	38%

Smaller cities include residents of Estevan, Swift Current, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Prince Albert, North Battleford, and the Saskatchewan portion of Lloydminster.

Unsurprisingly, Saskatchewan rural residents are more likely than non-rural residents to have an opinion on ending the CWB’s monopoly. However, the findings indicating 38% of rural residents have no opinion on the CWB monopoly illustrates that, even in rural areas of the province, this not a ‘burning issue’ on which ‘everyone’ has an opinion.

Nonetheless, according to our data, there are 8% more rural residents that oppose the CWB monopoly than support it. Similar to rural areas, opposition to the CWB monopoly is between 8 and 10 percentage points higher than support in Saskatoon and smaller cities. Regina is only area of the province where more respondents favoured the CWB's monopoly than opposed it.

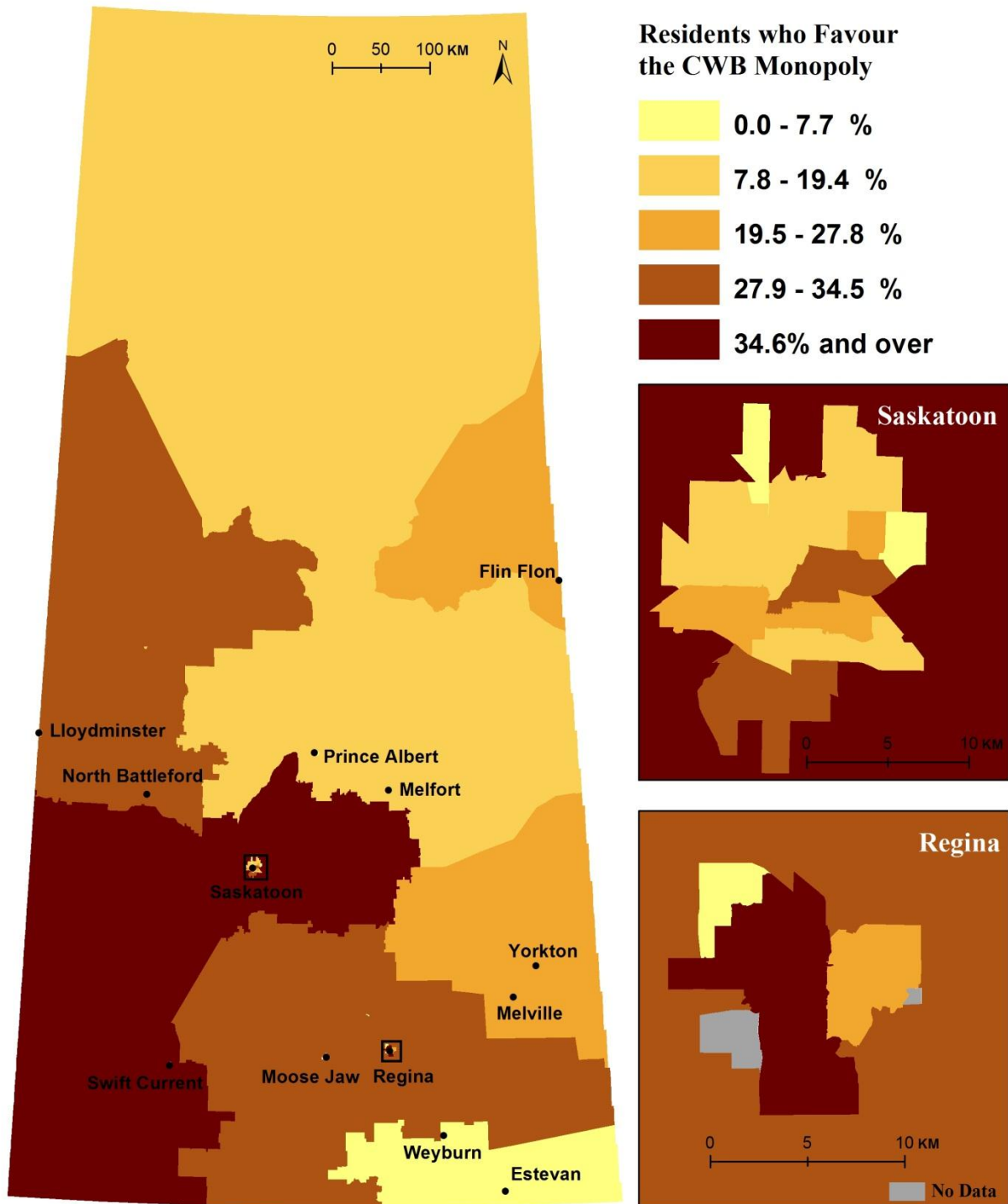
Figure 7: Age and attitudes toward the Wheat Board in rural Saskatchewan



Opinions of rural Saskatchewan residents on the Wheat Board's monopoly vary considerably by age group. Younger rural residents are much less likely to have an opinion on the CWB monopoly and much more likely to oppose the monopoly than older rural residents. At the 35% support for the CWB monopoly, older rural residents are among the groups with the highest levels of support for the monopoly. The difference in attitudes between older and younger rural residents on the subject of the CWB monopoly signals a generational shift in rural Saskatchewan. Younger rural residents no longer seem to strongly identify with the goals and purpose of single-desk marketing and do not particularly see this debate as important in defining the future of rural Saskatchewan.

Figure 8

Percentage of Residents who Favour the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) Monopoly



This map was prepared by Tayyab I. Shah and Weiping Zeng at The Spatial Initiative, University of Saskatchewan.

At the request of the Saskatchewan Election Study team, the Spatial Initiative at the University of Saskatchewan's Social Sciences Research Laboratories produced a map illustrating the support for the CWB monopoly. The support for the CWB monopoly is strongest on the west side of Saskatchewan and particularly in the extreme southwest. This area is one where wheat, durum and barley are relatively more important in farmers' crop mix, where grain elevators and rail lines are more sparsely located and where distances to U.S. markets are much greater. The data suggests that there is more support for the CWB's monopoly in the areas that will be most destabilized by its elimination and less support for it in areas where farmers have more alternatives in the marketing and growing of wheat, durum and barley.

The map also showed there is less support for the CWB monopoly within Saskatoon than in the rural area that surrounds the city. In Regina, the situation is the opposite, with more support for the CWB's monopoly within Regina than in the rural areas that surround it. This finding suggests that Regina could have different political attitudes on state intervention in the economy than Saskatoon.

Methodology of the Saskatchewan Election Study

The 2011 Saskatchewan Election Study was the first study to use the newly-created survey lab in the Social Sciences Research Laboratories (SSRL) complex at the University of Saskatchewan. Deployed as a telephone survey using WinCATI software, 1,099 Saskatchewan residents, 18 years of age and older, were administered a 15-minute survey on political attitudes and behaviours in the province from November 8, 2011 to November 21, 2011. Results of the survey, which generated a response rate of 23.6%, are generalizable to the Saskatchewan population (18 years of age and older) +/- 2.95% at the 95% confidence interval (19 times out of 20). The Saskatchewan Election Study was funded by the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, with additional support from LEAD Saskatoon, St. Thomas More College and the College of Arts and Science at the University of Saskatchewan.