

**Survey reveals positive attitudes toward cooperatives, marketing advantages**



**Bill Oemichen, president and CEO of WFC/MAC, discusses the results of the cooperative survey at the joint annual meeting of WFC and MAC. The telephone survey polled 400 Wisconsin and Minnesota residents.**

**St. Norbert College hired by WFC/MAC to gauge consumers' knowledge of co-ops**

This fall WFC/MAC hired St. Norbert College's Survey Center in DePere, Wis. to poll a random selection of Minnesotans and Wisconsinites to determine their knowledge and perception of cooperative businesses.

A total of 400 telephone interviews were completed between September 26, 2007 and October 12, 2007. Respondents were selected so that the survey would be representative of all Wisconsin and Minnesota adults 18-years-old and older.

The surveyors asked a total of 13 questions, of which seven were direct-

ed towards determining the consumer's attitude toward cooperatives and the types of products and services they offer.

The survey results demonstrate a high level of awareness of cooperatives among the population of both states. The survey also demonstrates the high level of support for the very positive role cooperatives play in state and local economies. At the same time, however, the poll also points out some challenges cooperatives have in bringing the cooperative message to younger consumers.

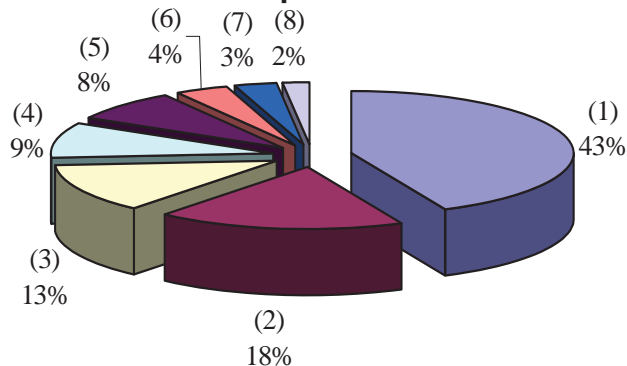
**Complete survey results available to members**

As a service to WFC/MAC membership, the complete survey results are being made available to members. To receive a CD of the results, please contact Dana Pronschinske, [dana.pronschinske@wfcmac.coop](mailto:dana.pronschinske@wfcmac.coop) or 608-258-4391.

**Key survey finding #1: Demographics**

The survey population of Wisconsin and Minnesota consisted of more females than males (60% to 40%), with the majority being age 45 or older. When comparing demographics, Wisconsin and Minnesota were equally comparable across most categories.

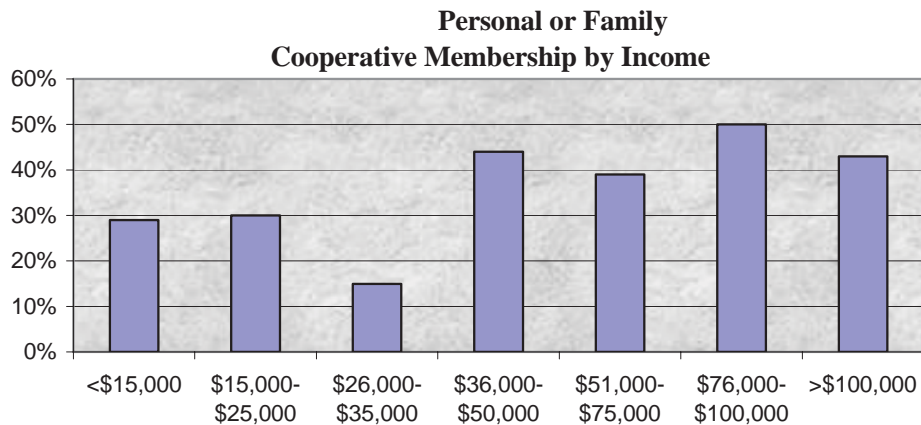
**First words people think of when hearing the term "cooperative" or "co-op"**



(1) Owned by people for the common good / shareholders.....	43%
(2) Farming / foods .....	18
(3) Lower prices / competitive / quality .....	13
(4) Local / community based and owned.....	9
(5) Business / dividends / profit sharing.....	8
(6) Gas / electric / phone.....	4
(7) Other .....	3
(8) Credit unions / banks.....	2

## Key survey finding #2: Business cooperative use

Overall, the majority of survey respondents (63%) are members of families that do not actively participate in consumer-owned cooperative businesses. Although Minnesota residents are slightly more likely to be members of a cooperative business (42%) than Wisconsin residents (31%), the Wisconsin residents who do use co-ops are more likely to choose a co-op over other businesses offering the same product.



## Key survey finding #3: Defining cooperatives

Overall, when respondents were asked what they first thought of when hearing the term cooperative or co-ops, the plurality (43%) said they think of businesses owned by the people for the common good.

## Key survey finding #4: Health insurance

When obtaining health insurance, most respondents (43%) express support for cooperatives when it comes to serving their needs for health care coverage. Only 19% of participants indicate support for investor-owned companies and 21% favor government-sponsored health care. A fairly large percentage (17%) is not sure who would provide the best coverage.

Type of Health Insurance by Employment

Type	Employed outside the home	Run a business with the home	Stay at home parent/homemaker	Student	Unemployed/Looking	Retired	Out of the workforce
Cooperative	48%	33%	50%	67%	71%	35%	20%
Investor-owned company	18	13	32	0	0	21	20
Government	19	21	7	17	29	25	20
Not sure	15	33	11	17	0	19	40
Refused	1	0	0	0	0	1	0

## Key survey finding #5: Home electrical or telecommunication needs

The majority of respondents (66%) express support for cooperatives when it comes to serving their home electrical or telecommunication needs. Twenty-three percent (23%) of participants indicate support for investor-owned companies and 5% indicate they have no preference. Seven percent (7%) are not sure who would provide the best rates and most reliable service.

## Key survey finding #6: Consumer products

When shopping for consumer products, most respondents (69%) express support for cooperatives when it comes to serving their need for high-quality goods. Only 11% of participants indicate support for non-co-op products, 13% indicate there is no difference and 7% are not sure.

## Key survey finding #7: Financial services

When seeking out financial services, most respondents (59%) expressed support for credit unions when it comes to serving their banking needs. A surprising 8% of participants indicate support for farm credit cooperatives and 20% favor commercial banks. Seven percent (7%) indicate no difference and 6% are not sure who would best meet their needs.

The survey sample is highly representative of the two states surveyed, being that it is weighted towards urban dwellers. It is reasonable to conclude that the survey population, especially in Minnesota, would have significantly less exposure to farm credit co-ops than to co-op business in general.



**Special thanks to AgStar Financial Services for their partial sponsorship of this survey.**



Prepared and distributed to provide issue-specific information on matters pertaining to Wisconsin's and Minnesota's cooperative businesses.

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