

Cooperative public opinion survey



SURVEY STATS

MARGIN OF ERROR: 3%
CONFIDENCE LEVEL: 95%

SURVEY OVERVIEW

According to the first public opinion survey on cooperatives in more than a decade, a majority of Americans surveyed strongly believe co-ops are beneficial to consumers.

Conducted by ORC International in April, "Consumer Knowledge and Perception of Co-op" reveals that Americans rate member-owned co-ops higher than for-profit businesses in each of the following value indicators—often by margins of 15–20 percentage points—despite slim overall knowledge of the co-op business model:

- Have the best interest of the consumer in mind
- Run business in a trustworthy manner
- Committed to/involved in their communities
- Committed to the highest quality of service
- Offer fair, competitive prices
- Can be counted on to meet customers' needs
- Provide products/services of high value.

KEY FINDINGS

- **AWARENESS GAP** Survey results indicate that even among co-op membership, awareness of the co-op business model is not always apparent. Of those surveyed, only 25 percent identified as co-op members, but when counting respondents who belong to a credit union, utility co-op or mutual insurance company, the number rises to 43 percent. Well over half of those who said they don't belong to a co-op still indicated that they think co-ops are highly valuable in the marketplace, suggesting that while consumer awareness is still very low, consumer confidence is high.
- **POSITIVE VIBES** Despite only a minority (7 percent) indicating that they are "very familiar" with the philosophy of cooperatives, a large majority (70 percent) said co-ops are helpful to consumers.
- **CO-OP DEMOGRAPHICS** Familiarity with the organization and philosophy of cooperatives and co-op membership grew as education, household income and age increased. The survey found that most co-op members are age 65+, college educated and earning more than \$100,000 per year. Survey results suggest that knowledge and understanding of co-ops is narrowest among young adults, low-income households and people of color, now key outreach groups for NCBA CLUSA.

CO-OP STATS

- 1 in 3 Americans is a member of a cooperative
- 75 percent of the U.S. landmass is served by electric co-ops, turning the lights on for 42 million Americans
- More than 100 million Americans are credit union members
- The top 100 co-op businesses generate \$243.2 billion in annual revenue
- NCBA CLUSA member Nationwide is the #1 provider of public-sector retirement plans and the #1 farm insurer in the U.S.

- There are 6,400 housing co-ops with 1.5 million dwellings in the U.S.
- NCBA CLUSA member National Co-op Grocers represents 143 food co-ops with 1.3 million consumer-owners and combined annual sales of more than \$1.7 billion.

CO-OP PRINCIPLES

- Voluntary and open membership
- Democratic member control
- Members' economic participation
- Autonomy and independence
- Education, training and information
- Cooperation among cooperatives
- Concern for community



SURVEY ANALYSIS

“The American public may not have a detailed understanding of cooperatives, but they have a very positive feeling toward co-ops, and I think that positive feeling is what largely motivates consumer decisions.”

—**Stephen Brobeck**, executive director, Consumer Federation of America

Founded in 1916, NCBA CLUSA is the trade association for cooperative businesses in the U.S. and an international development organization active in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America. For 100 years, NCBA CLUSA has advanced, promoted and defended co-op enterprise, highlighting the impact that cooperatives have in bettering the lives of individuals, families and communities.

NCBA CLUSA

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