

*The Wisconsin Homeowners Alliance (WHA) is a 501(c)(4) organization dedicated to representing the interests of Wisconsin homeowners and protecting Wisconsin's quality of life one home at a time. As part of this effort, the WHA conducts a series of statewide public opinion surveys designed to help us understand what homeowners are thinking and talking about. This monthly publication is intended to share issues of importance and concern to homeowners with decision makers around the state.*

**HOME OWNERSHIP** Historically, Wisconsin residents have been solidly behind the right of property owners to make their own decisions about that property. In this Wisconsin Homeowners Alliance survey, we revisited several property rights issues and asked our respondents to weigh-in. And, while solid majorities continue to support property-owners' rights, they also think those owners should be held accountable to maintaining the value of their property and surrounding properties. In support of property-owners' rights, respondents agree that homeowners should be free to do whatever they want with their property as long as they are not creating environmental problems or health risks (60%).

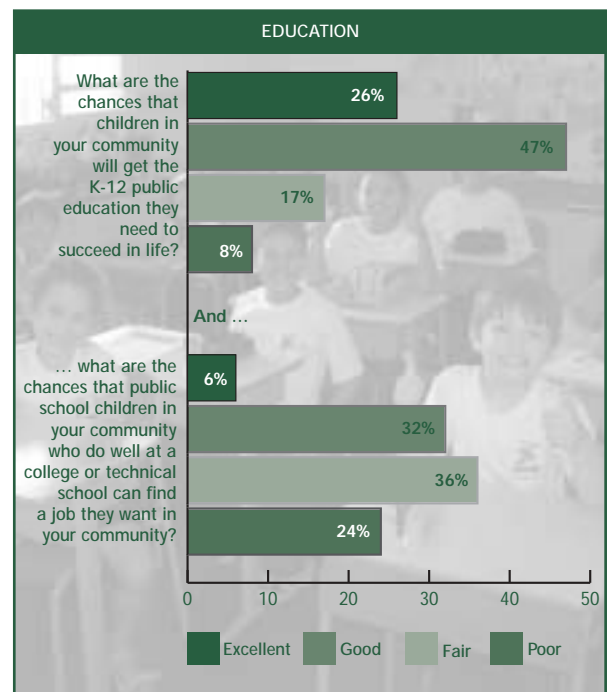
Similarly, eight out of 10 people in Wisconsin disagree that farmers should be required to reduce odors, dust and noise in their operations for the benefit of homeowners in new subdivisions (65% disagree strongly and 16% disagree somewhat.)

On the other hand, while a modest majority (55%) says that there are too many restrictions on what homeowners can and cannot do, an overwhelming 90 percent of state residents think that people should be required to preserve the property values and the look of the neighborhood (66% agree strongly and 24% agree somewhat.) In Wisconsin, with property rights comes property responsibilities.

**EDUCATION** Almost three-fourths of respondents in this survey think that the public schools in their area are effective in two ways. Three-fourths (73%) say that the chances that students in public schools will get the education they need to succeed in life are excellent (26%) or good (47%). Two-thirds say that the chances for students being admitted to and do well in the college or technical school of their choice is excellent (24%) or good (45%).

But once school is completed, we have serious economic concerns about our students' future. Sixty percent of respondents think public school students' chances of finding a job they want in their communities are fair or poor. In South Central Wisconsin, 71 percent of respondents say successful students' chances of finding a job in the area are fair or poor, and one in three say the chances are poor.

HOMEOWNER SATISFACTION TRENDS	
▲	<p><b>HOME OWNERSHIP</b> Property rights are an important aspect to home ownership. Wisconsin residents say they should be able to do what they want with their own property as long as it doesn't devalue the property or surrounding properties.</p>
▲	<p><b>EDUCATION</b> While residents say that children in their community receive an excellent education to prepare them to succeed in life, they also say they won't be able to take that education and apply it back to their community.</p>
▼	<p><b>THE ECONOMY</b> Pessimism about local economy continues to grow, and Wisconsin residents do not feel their economy is going to get better any time soon.</p>
▼	<p><b>TAXES</b> Residents worry about ever-increasing taxes and would support a constitutional amendment to limit local government taxing and spending.</p>

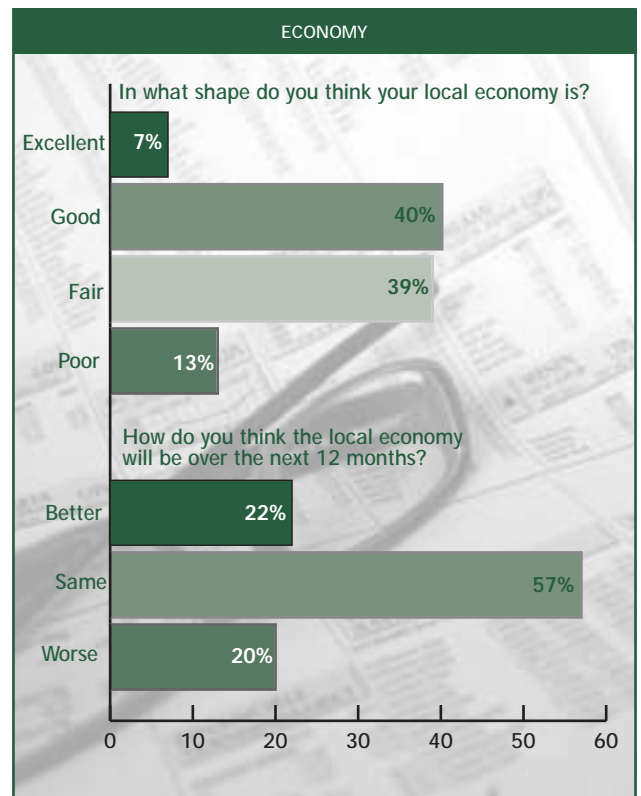


**THE ECONOMY**

While many economic indicators suggest that the economy is getting stronger, the people of Wisconsin don't appear to be recognizing improvements in their own communities. The four most important issues that people say affect Wisconsin right now are economic ones—jobs, taxes, funding education and the overall economy. Half of survey respondents say their local economies are fair (39%) or poor (13%). More than half (57%) don't think the local economy will change in the next year, and one in five thinks it will worsen. White collar, professional people are more likely to think their local economy is excellent or good (53%), as are people who consider themselves very conservative (69%).

In spite of the overall pessimism about local economies, two-thirds of respondents think that things in their communities are on the right track, while less than half (48%) think things in Wisconsin are on the right track.

Those who say things are going to remain the same or get worse emphasize the lack of jobs and business growth. Interestingly, those who think things will get better are also inclined to think that business growth, development and employment will be responsible. Are we seeing one more example of the difference between people who see the glass as half empty or half full?



**TAXES**

Along with the state of the economy and a dearth of job opportunities, state residents say taxes top their list of concerns. And, in spite of the fact that nine in 10 respondents (89%) report that they trust their local officials to deliver services efficiently, almost half (44%) think that while local services are important, "property taxes are much too high and local government could hold down costs if they managed better." Two respondents in five say that "local government is doing a good job of making ends meet in difficult times."

A solid majority of state residents (59%) would support a legislative vote for a constitutional amendment limiting the spending and taxing ability of state and local government. Just under half of respondents (48%) would support language that would allow growth in taxes if local tax bases grow. And, 64 percent of respondents express support for an amendment that would limit taxing and spending increases to the rate of inflation with a provision for voter approved spending increases. The Legislature is expected to vote on this legislation in the spring.

**INSTITUTIONS**

When it comes to affecting issues they care about, respondents say that Wisconsin's governmental institutions have an important impact, but their job ratings don't reflect the significance of their roles in managing issues. Wisconsinites say that friends and family (84%), local town, village and city officials (82%), and the Wisconsin Legislature (78%) have the greatest affect on issues important to them. And, while family and friends receive a similarly high rating for the job they do in managing important issues (76%), local government receives a positive rating from slightly more than half of respondents (55%) and the state Legislature earns an excellent or good rating from barely one respondent in three. Employers (69%) and local religious leaders (63%) round out the top three rated groups for the quality of the job they are doing on important issues.

The Spring 2006 Wisconsin Homeowners Alliance Survey interviewed 600 randomly selected Wisconsin residents statewide between February 12 and February 16, 2006. The numbers represent weighted results and these results are an accurate reflection of the opinions of Wisconsin residents within a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

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