

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.

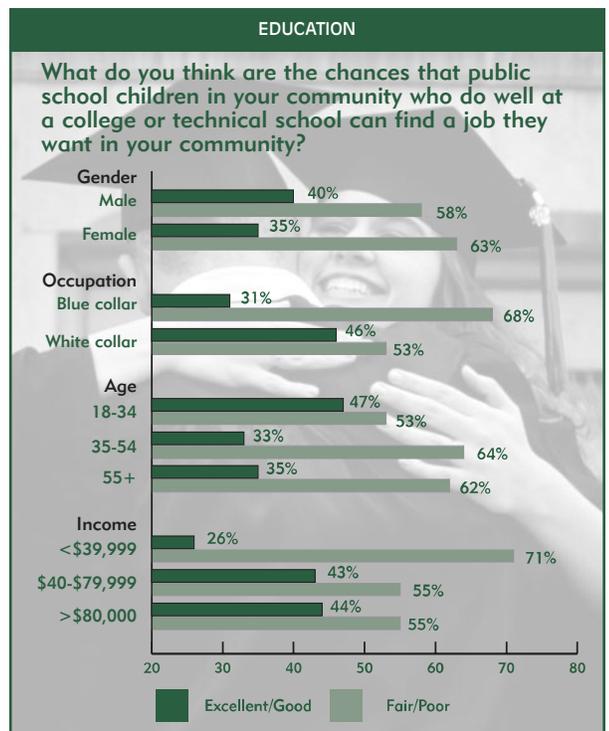
HOME OWNERSHIP In our May issue we pointed out that most Wisconsin residents (55%) agree that there are too many restrictions on what homeowners can and cannot do with their property and that nearly three-fourths of us (71%) believe that “local land-use planning is too often controlled by a handful of people who don’t really reflect what the rest of us think.”

Age affects responses to both of these questions, but so too does gender and respondents’ philosophical inclination. For example, while slightly less than half (46%) of liberals agree that there are too many restrictions on homeowners, nearly two-thirds (61%) of conservatives agree. And, almost half (44%) of people who define themselves as very conservative agree strongly. Similarly, more men than women agree that there are too many restrictions on homeowners (58% to 51% respectively). Moreover, more men than women agree strongly that homeowners should be free to do whatever they want with their home or property as long as they are not creating environmental problems or creating a safety threat (41% to 27% respectively).

EDUCATION The state’s public schools continue to get positive ratings for preparing students to succeed in life. But, while one respondent in four thinks students’ chances for success are excellent, another one-fourth rate their chances as only fair or poor. Interestingly, philosophical inclination is less likely to influence responses to this question. About two-thirds (65% to 61%) of those who describe themselves as very liberal or very conservative believe public school students’ chances for success are either excellent or good. Those who describe themselves as either somewhat liberal or somewhat conservative are even more positive with a little more than three out of four of both groups ranking public K–12 students’ chances as either excellent or good.

That said, when it comes to finding a job in the community after they graduate, few people would give Wisconsin young people an excellent chance (6%). Indeed, 60 percent of all respondents say graduates’ chances of finding a job in their community are fair or poor. The most optimistic respondents are people who identify themselves as very conservative (57% excellent or good) and Milwaukee area respondents (50% excellent or good).

HOMEOWNER SATISFACTION TRENDS	
▲	HOME OWNERSHIP Wisconsin residents are concerned about too many restrictions on what they can and cannot do with their property. More men than women agree that they should be free to do what they want with their property.
▲	EDUCATION The state’s public schools continue to get positive ratings. In fact, no matter where they live, Wisconsinites feel their public schools will prepare them for the future.
▼	THE ECONOMY Residents continue to be pessimistic about their local economies. While conservatives rank their local economies positively, other residents poorly rate their local economy.
▼	TAXES Although a majority of Wisconsin residents trust their local officials to provide services in a cost-effective manner, they are not confident in their local officials holding the line on taxes.



THE ECONOMY

Pessimism about local economies remains persistent across most demographics. More than two-thirds (69%) of those who describe themselves as very conservative rank their local economies positively, but others disagree.

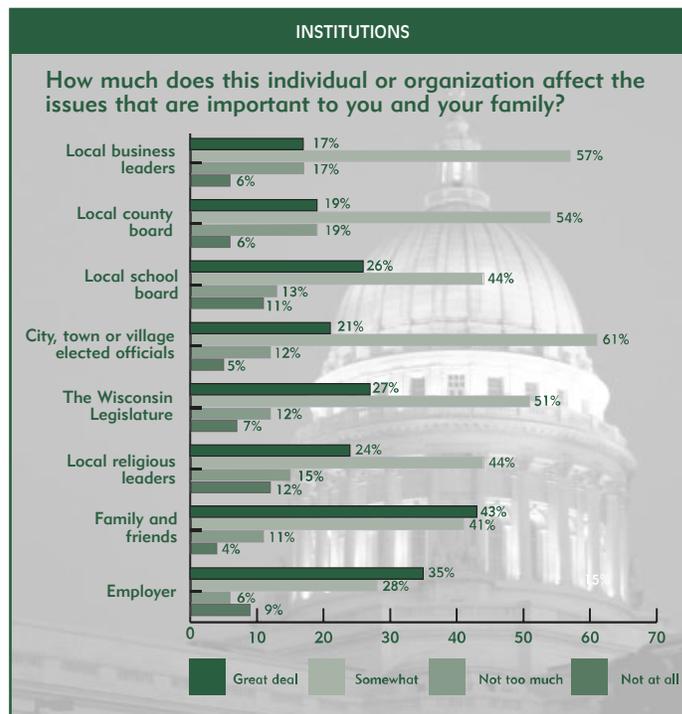
Amongst those making less than \$40,000 annually, 62 percent rate their local economies as only fair or poor, as do almost half (45%) of those making more than \$40,000 a year. Half (52%) of people in the Milwaukee area rate their local economy as fair or poor. Over half of all women (55%) and nearly two-thirds (64%) of women ages 18-24 say that their local economies are fair or poor, compared to 48 percent of all men. And these respondents don't see things getting better in the next 12 months. Over half (53%) of white collar professionals think economic conditions will remain the same, as do half of those with incomes between \$40,000 and \$80,000 and 59 percent of Milwaukee area respondents. Fifty-five percent of women think economic conditions will stay the same.

TAXES

Strong majorities of respondents trust their local officials to provide essential services in a cost-effective manner—34 percent trust them a great deal. More than nine out of 10 of those who describe themselves as either somewhat liberal or somewhat conservative, people with incomes of \$80,000 or more and those in the Fox Valley trust local government. That trust, however does not translate into confidence when it comes to holding the line on taxes—44 percent of respondents think that local officials could hold down costs if they managed better. More than half of people who say they are very conservative (57%) think local governments could manage better, as do half of people with incomes of \$40,000 to \$59,999.

Moreover, majorities of virtually every demographic group support a constitutional amendment limiting increases in tax revenues to the rate of inflation. One person in five (21%) strongly supports this measure and 38 percent support it somewhat. Half of liberals (52%) support it and two-thirds of conservatives (65%) support it. Sixty-three percent of blue collar workers are in support as are 75 percent of people in the Fox Valley. Sixty-one percent of homeowners support the amendment compared to 50 percent of renters.

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



INSTITUTIONS

Although respondents think a number of institutions affect the issues that are important to them, only family and friends affect those issues a great deal (43%). Fewer than one in five (17%) says that local business leaders and county boards affect important issues a great deal.

More troubling, however is the fact that, although an overwhelming majority says they trust their local officials, between one-third and one-half give them a fair or poor rating for managing the issues that are important to respondents. Half of men and people in the Milwaukee area give their county boards fair or poor ratings. Half of blue collar workers (51%) rate their school boards fair or poor. Overall, just one person in 10 rates their school boards excellent in addressing important issues and just 7 percent rate local town, village and city officials as excellent.

Although 78 percent of respondents think the state Legislature affects important issues a great deal or somewhat, a mere 3 percent think the state Legislature is doing an excellent job of managing those issues and 64 percent think they are doing a fair or poor job.

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