

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 Homeowners throughout Wisconsin have witnessed changes in their communities over the past several years characterized by population growth, business growth and new development. More than four out of five (81%) Wisconsin homeowners think that one of the most important changes in their communities affects the quality of life and three-quarters (74%) say that the condition of housing and neighborhoods constitutes an important change.

In addition, a majority of homeowners like the changes they see. More than half (56%) of homeowners say recent changes in the community have improved their quality of life, while three out of five (59%) say changes in the condition of housing and neighborhoods in their communities are for the better.

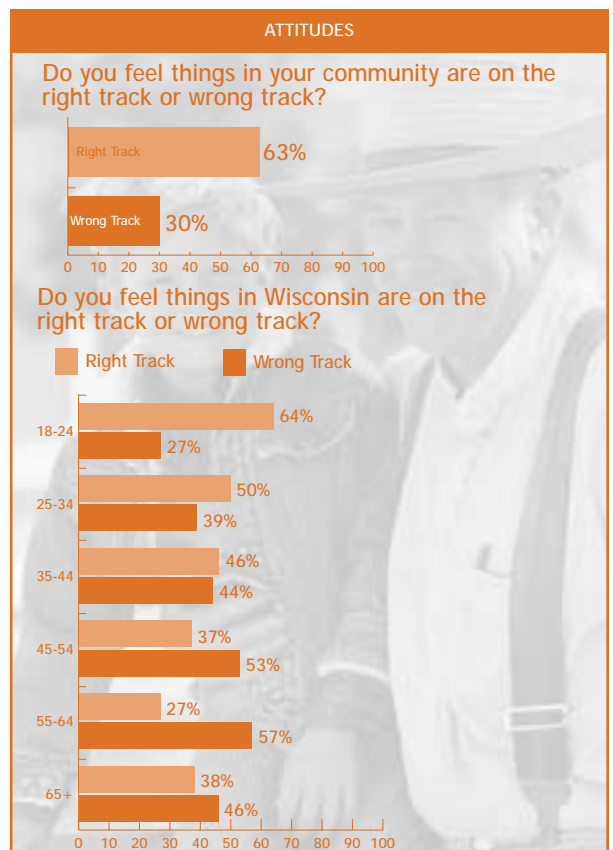
Moreover, half (52%) of respondents approve of the growth that has occurred in their communities and believe some of the changes associated with growth, such as the types of stores and restaurants, have improved their communities.

EDUCATION Wisconsin residents are seeing positive changes in their communities on a variety of fronts, from improvements in the quality of housing to increased recreational opportunities. And, changes in the quality of public schools have not gone unnoticed. Almost three-fourths of respondents (71%) think that changes in the public schools are among the most important alterations that have occurred and more than half of all residents (52%) think those changes have made their communities better places to live.

Despite the strong support for public schools, state residents believe that paying for K–12 education poses a serious policy challenge for elected officials and a financial issue for homeowners. More than four out of five (85%) agree that, “Figuring out how we pay for our public schools is one of the most important issues” facing people like them.

HOMEOWNER SATISFACTION TRENDS

- HOME OWNERSHIP**
Homeowners tend to agree that they are seeing changes in their housing and neighborhoods and a majority say these changes are for the better.
- EDUCATION**
Most residents say changes in their public schools have occurred and made their community a better place to live, but worry about the funding for schools.
- THE ECONOMY**
Wisconsinites' concerns about the economy continue, saying that economic conditions are among the most important changes in their community.
- TAXES**
Overall, the highest majority of Wisconsin residents agree that government spending and the amount we have to pay for taxes is one of the most important issues they face.



THE ECONOMY

As we have noted in past surveys, the state of the economy weighs heavily on the minds of state residents, and this survey is no exception. Almost eight out of 10 respondents think that economic conditions constitute the most important changes in their communities. And, 45 percent of respondents say that changes in the health of the local economy have made their communities better places to live compared with 30 percent of those who say changes have been for the worse.

Although much attention has been paid to changes in manufacturing employment and the economic struggles in some communities, more state residents agree than disagree with the statement that “the types of jobs and employment opportunities” have changed for the better in their communities. Overall, 41 percent of residents say jobs and employment opportunities have changed for the better compared with 32 percent who think that economic opportunities have changed for the worse and 26 percent who think those changes have had no impact in their communities.

Another important but sometimes overlooked aspect of Wisconsin’s economy involves agricultural production. These survey data reveal that many state residents are sensitive to the pressures facing agricultural producers with 61 percent agreeing that changes in the quantity and quality of farmland have significantly affected their communities.

TAXES

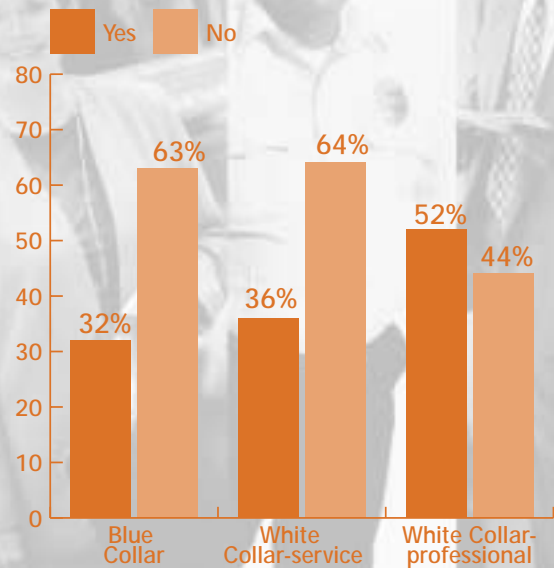
Given a choice of four “hot” policy topics—spiraling health care costs, economic development, public school financing and taxes—state residents rank taxes as the second most important issue, just behind health care. Overall, 87 percent of residents agree strongly (64%) or agree somewhat (23%) with the statement that, “Government spending and the amount we have to pay for taxes is one of the most important issues” facing people in Wisconsin.

There are real differences in the intensity of attitudes on this tax question, however, depending on how people generally perceive that things are going in Wisconsin. For example, among those who believe the state is already on the “wrong track,” nearly three-fourths (74%) agree strongly that the amount we pay for taxes is an important issue. Among those with a more positive outlook about the state’s direction, a slight majority (54%) agree strongly that tax levels are an important issue.

The Summer 2006 Wisconsin Homeowners Alliance Survey interviewed 600 randomly selected Wisconsin residents statewide between May 2 and May 8, 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.

HOME OWNERSHIP

Do you have plans to purchase a home within the next two years?



INSTITUTIONS

As Wisconsin residents look at the changes occurring in their communities, to what extent do they feel that government institutions are playing a positive role? This question is especially relevant as communities struggle to evaluate the services they provide and public perceptions about the efficiency of those services.

When considering the changes they’ve seen in their communities, state residents do express concern about public safety and rank personal security issues among the most important worries they have. Specifically, 64 percent of state residents say an increase in the crime rate is one of the biggest changes they’ve seen in their communities and 54 percent say that increases in crime have adversely affected their communities.

In addition, almost half of these respondents (47%) think that reduced local services are one of the most important changes affecting their communities, but just 36 percent say those reductions have negatively affected those communities and 41 percent say reductions have had no affect.

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