

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 Property rights and land use continue to concern our citizens. Slightly more than half of all Wisconsin residents (55%) agree that “there are too many restrictions on what homeowners can and cannot do with their property” and 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.”

Responses related to both issues appear to be affected by age. For example, more than two-thirds (69%) of 18- to 24-year-olds agree that homeowners face too many restrictions. And, while only 31 percent of people between ages 35 and 54 agree strongly with that statement, 54 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds agree strongly.

By way of contrast, half of all respondents over 35 agree strongly that local land-use planning is controlled by people who don’t reflect what they think, while just over a third (37%) of those under 35 agree strongly. This alienation from and cynicism about the land-use planning process is apt to be reflected in older homeowners’ opposition to future land-use proposals.

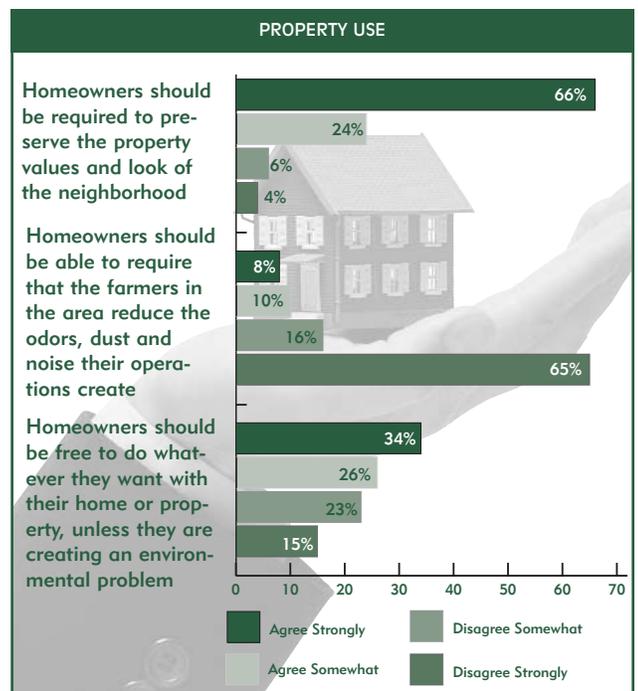
EDUCATION In a recent public agenda survey, parents of America’s high school students expressed satisfaction and confidence in their children’s schools’ performance. Wisconsin residents voiced a similarly high level of confidence in the state’s public schools.

Seven out of 10 people with one or two children under 18 years old say that the chances are excellent (23%) or good (48%) that their children will get the education they need to succeed. Two-thirds of these parents think their children’s chances of being admitted to and doing well at the colleges or technical schools of their choice are excellent or good.

Moreover, respondents without children give their local public schools similarly high votes of confidence. More than three-fourths think that the chances that students will get the education they need are excellent (28%) or good (48%). They are also confident that students will be admitted to and do well at the school of their choice once they graduate from their local public school system—27 percent excellent and 48 percent good.

Majorities of all age groups give their local schools excellent or good ratings for managing important issues, from 68 percent of people 65 and older to 53 percent for people 55 to 64.

HOMEOWNER SATISFACTION TRENDS	
▲	<p>HOME OWNERSHIP</p> <p>Local land-use policies and property rights continue to concern homeowners. Wisconsin residents say that local land-use planning is often controlled by people who do not reflect what they think.</p>
▲	<p>EDUCATION</p> <p>Wisconsin residents are confident in their public schools. Parents believe that their children have an excellent or good chance of getting the education they need to succeed and be admitted to a college or technical school of their choice.</p>
▼	<p>THE ECONOMY</p> <p>The worry about the economy holds steady. While residents think that things are on the right track in their local community, they are pessimistic about the local economy.</p>
▼	<p>TAXES</p> <p>A majority of residents trust local governments to provide services in a cost effective manner, but would support a constitutional amendment limiting taxes that included flexibility to accommodate growth.</p>



THE ECONOMY

Worries about the economy continue to plague state residents. Although two-thirds of respondents think that things are on the right track in their communities, less than half think their local economies are excellent (7%) or good (40%). And, once again, age affects responses. For example, more than half (55%) of those less likely to be in the job market (i.e. 65 and older) give their local economies a positive rating, while nearly two-thirds (63%) of those most likely to be entering the job market (i.e., 18 to 24) say local economies are only fair or poor.

Nevertheless, this younger group is the most optimistic about the chances of students finding jobs in their communities upon graduation. Three out of five say the chances are excellent or good, almost double the percentage of people in all other age groups who were optimistic about job prospects for young people in the local community.

Looking ahead, 18- to 24-year-olds are, once again, the most pessimistic about local economic conditions. Fewer than one in 10 of the youngest respondents (8%) think that the local economy will get better over the next year, while one in four between the ages of 25 and 54 sees improved economic conditions for the near future.

TAXES

Overwhelming majorities of all age groups—in some cases over 90 percent—say they trust local governments to provide services in a cost effective manner. But they differ about some important details. When it comes to local spending, people 18 to 24 and 45 to 54 are most likely to think that local governments are doing a good job of making ends meet in difficult times (62% and 43% respectively). At the same time, people 25 to 34 and 55 to 64 are most likely to think that local governments could hold costs down if they managed better.

And, when it comes to holding the line on taxes, 35- to 44-year-olds are most likely to support a constitutional amendment to limit state and local taxes and spending (70%). Support is weakest among 25- to 34-year-olds (51%) and people 65 and older (53%).

If a constitutional amendment limiting taxes included flexibility to accommodate growth, three out of four 18 to 24 and 35- to 44-year-olds would support it. Support for this modified amendment remains at 53 percent among people 65 and older.

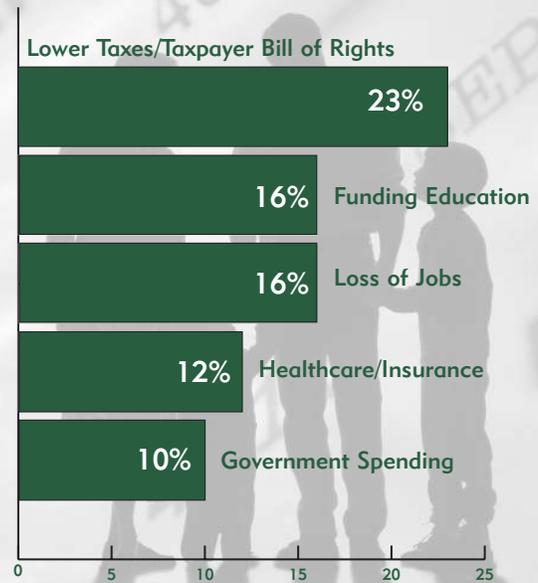
INSTITUTIONS

Although state residents express a high level of trust in their local officials, when it comes to the

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.

FUTURE

When you think about Wisconsin's future, what do you think is the most important issue Wisconsin is facing at the moment?



job they are doing in addressing important issues, some respondent groups are notably critical. Fewer than half of respondents ages 25 to 54 give county boards an excellent or good rating for addressing issues important to respondents. Local city, town and village officials fare somewhat better. Almost two-thirds (62%) of people 65 and older give local officials excellent or good ratings, while just under half of 35- to 44-year-olds (47%) give them positive ratings.

On the other hand, all age groups give the Wisconsin Legislature lower than a 50 percent positive rating, and excellent ratings are all in the single digits. The Wisconsin Legislature earns its highest job rating from respondents 65 and older (42% excellent or good) and its lowest job rating among 55- to 64-year-olds (24% excellent or good), while 75 percent of people between ages 35 and 44 rate the Legislature as fair or poor in dealing with important issues.

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