

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 On most counts, homeownership in Wisconsin is a positive experience. Between 74 percent and 79 percent of Wisconsin adults own their own homes. People feel safe (71% very satisfied with their personal safety, 21% somewhat satisfied). They appreciate their proximity to “good schools” (58% very satisfied, 18% somewhat satisfied), parks and open spaces (62% very satisfied, 30% somewhat satisfied), and to shops and entertainment (57% very satisfied, 34% somewhat satisfied).

There are, however, some indications that housing costs are a concern. A clear majority (74%) indicate they are satisfied with what they pay for maintenance and upkeep, but only 29 percent said they were very satisfied. Similarly, while 76 percent think the cost of ownership is acceptable, only 34 percent said they were very satisfied.

EDUCATION There are clear signs that rising educational costs are affecting state residents. Thirty-one percent of all adults believe that K-12 education is more expensive than it was a year ago (16% thought it was about the same, and 53% weren't sure). Forty-three percent think tuition at the UW is more expensive (2% same, 54% not sure), and 29 percent think the Wisconsin Technical College System is more expensive today than it was a year ago (5% same, 66% not sure).

THE ECONOMY The economy continues to be a significant issue for most people in Wisconsin. Two-thirds say that economic development — i.e., coordinated efforts by government, business and labor to attract new jobs and businesses to Wisconsin — is either absolutely critical (23%) or very important (43%) to their economic and social well-being. Most people think they are either doing about the same as (48%) or better than (29%) they were a year ago, but more than one in five (22%) say they are worse off. And, clear majorities report that they are spending more for groceries, health care, gasoline, utilities and other essentials. Perhaps most telling, 53 percent report that they have less discretionary income at the end of the month now than they did a year ago.

HOMEOWNER SATISFACTION TRENDS	
	HOMEOWNERSHIP Homeowners report high levels of satisfaction.
	COST OF EDUCATION There are early signs that rising educational costs are affecting some state residents.
	STATE OF THE ECONOMY Nearly half of Wisconsin homeowners say they are doing about the same financially as they were a year ago.
	TAXES PAID Homeowners believe they're paying more for taxes and fees.
	COST OF HEALTH CARE Nearly two-thirds of Wisconsin homeowners indicate that they are worried that the cost of health care will become unaffordable for them.

TAXES

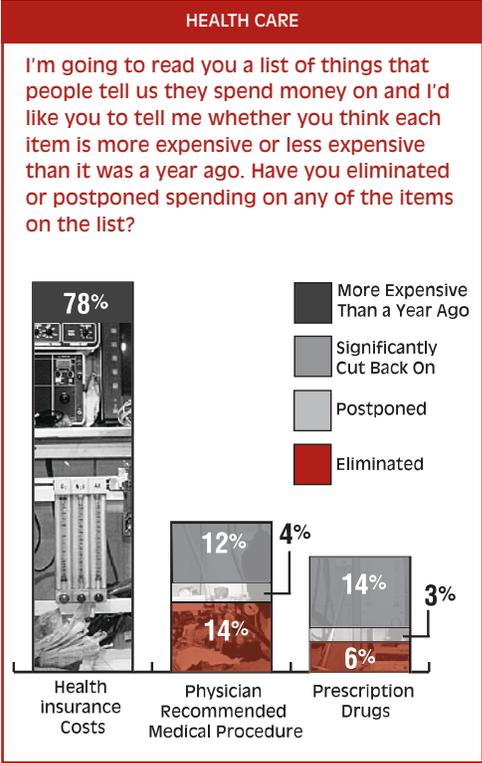
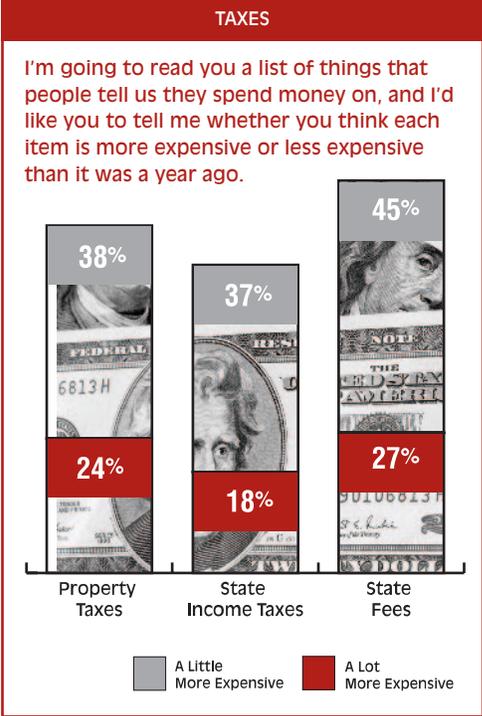
Homeowners believe they're paying more for taxes and fees. Nearly two-thirds believe that their property taxes are either a lot more expensive (24%) or a little more (38%) expensive than they were a year ago. Eighteen percent think their state income taxes are a lot more expensive, while 37 percent say they're a little more expensive. And 70 percent report that state fees like hunting and fishing fees or automobile registration are either a lot more expensive (25%) or a little more expensive (45%). Most troubling? A majority of Wisconsin homeowners report that these taxes and fees either put a great strain (21%) or somewhat of a strain (37%) on their personal finances and nearly half (45%) express concern that these taxes and fees will become unaffordable for their families.

HEALTH CARE

Nearly two-thirds of Wisconsin homeowners (64%) indicate that they are worried that the cost of health care will become unaffordable for them and their families. Seventy-eight percent say that health care related costs are more expensive today than they were a year ago, with nearly half of that group (48%) saying they are a lot more expensive. Is it affecting behavior? You bet. Almost one in three (30%) say they have eliminated, postponed or significantly cut back on physician recommended medical procedures. Another 23 percent indicate they have had to limit their access to prescription drugs and 68 percent report that the increased cost of health care has had a negative effect on their quality of life.

LOCAL ISSUES

Wisconsin's Smart Growth law isn't topping the charts of public awareness. Nearly three out of four (71%) homeowners say they're not familiar with it. But, that doesn't mean they don't care about local planning issues. Not surprisingly, when asked what they thought was most important when it came to land-use planning, environmental concerns topped the list, but people are also concerned about economic development, not causing increased taxes, the impact on traffic and orderly development based on appropriate zoning.



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