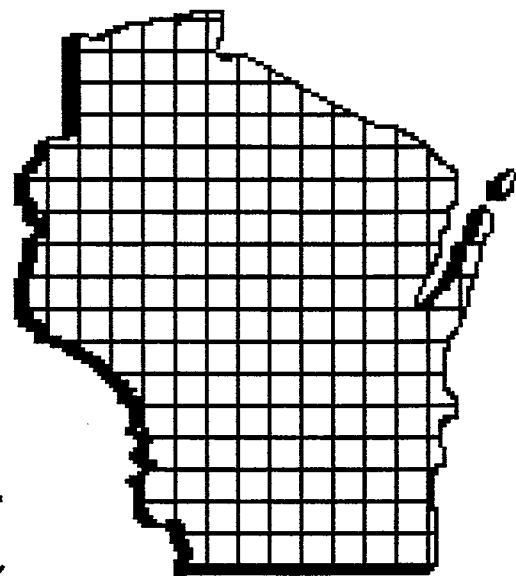


Wisconsin

Policy
Research
Institute
Report



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**THE WISCONSIN
CITIZEN SURVEY**

AUGUST 1997

A Survey of Wisconsin Public Opinion

public's knowledge about and views of public officeholders in Wisconsin and their views about health care and insurance.

The 12th survey was conducted from November 7 through November 14, 1993. The survey included questions on the economy, political institutions, public figures, health-care reform, and crime.

The 13th survey was conducted from July 18 through July 26, 1994. The survey focused on welfare and crime and included questions on state support for education, school choice, and the economy.

The 14th survey was conducted from September 5 through September 12, 1995. The survey included questions on views of public officials, candidate preferences for the 1996 Presidential election, affirmative action, crime, and the economy.

The 15th survey was conducted from September 16 through September 21, 1996. The survey included questions about the 1996 Presidential election, the 1998 races for Governor and U.S. Senator, views of public figures, Indian casino gambling, welfare reform, educational choice, and the economy.

This most-recent survey was conducted from July 7 through July 13, 1997. The survey included questions about key state issues, abortion, the death penalty, Indian casino gambling, the 1998 races for Governor and U.S. Senator, and views of public figures.

The Objectives of the Research

The objectives of this wave of WPRI's ongoing research program continued to be to measure attitudes of residents on emerging and topical issues and to track change in attitudes on selected topics over time.

As was found in earlier surveys, attitudes on some issues have changed very little since the last wave. On other issues, there have been significant changes in attitudes and concerns.

The Methodology for the Study

The data in this report are based on a randomly selected sample of 1,000 Wisconsin residents who are 18 years of age and older. The sample was drawn from a list of telephone numbers generated by a computer. This method includes both unlisted numbers and new listings in proportion to their representation in the population. Nearly every number was called at least three times before the number was discarded. This process, and the sampling itself, is controlled by a Computer Aided Sampling (CAS) System, which monitors the entire process to insure that callbacks are made at appropriate times and that numbers are sampled correctly.

The methodology is the same process the Gordon S. Black Corporation employs in its election surveys. The demographic profile of the sample of residents surveyed was compared against current population estimates for the state. The sample was weighted to compensate for two harder-to-reach populations: younger respondents and black respondents. The number of male and female respondents was also controlled to insure an approximately equal division.

A survey of 1,000 randomly selected residents has a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points for percentages based on the entire sample. For an underlying percentage of 50%, for example, this means that repeated samples would produce results between 47% and 53%, 95 times out of 100. The margin of error for subsamples, such as women, blacks, or young people, will be significantly greater.

The Gordon S. Black Corporation

The Gordon S. Black Corporation is a firm specializing in market research and public opinion polling, located in Rochester, New York. The firm conducts polling for the Cable News Network, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and *The Baltimore Sun*, among others. In the commercial market-research area, the firm's clients include

Xerox, Kodak, Roadway Express, Nationwide Insurance, KPMG Peat Marwick, Bausch and Lomb, and more than 75 other firms. The firm does not work for political candidates of either political party. The firm maintains a non-partisan approach to its work because so much of the opinion polling falls in the public domain.

Dr. Gordon S. Black, the author of the survey, received his doctorate in political science from Stanford University in 1970. He taught public opinion and voting behavior at the University of Rochester between 1968 and 1981, when he resigned as an associate professor of political science. He has published more than a dozen articles on public opinion and voting behavior in professional journals. Dr. Black is a Trustee of the National Council on Public Polls and is a member of the Council of Survey Research Organizations and the American Association for Public Opinion Research.

EDUCATION EMERGING AS KEY STATE ISSUE

Improving public education is emerging as a key issue in Wisconsin. More residents chose it as the issue requiring the most attention from the state government than chose tax or welfare reform, combating crime, or improving the environment.

As the table below shows, the importance of education has steadily increased over the last several surveys, while welfare reform and crime have declined in importance. The declining importance of welfare reform and crime may be due to a recognition on the part of Wisconsin residents that welfare has been reformed by the state and that crime rates are holding steady or declining.

Improving public education is of more importance to some groups in Wisconsin than it is to others:

- It is the most important issue for 32% of Milwaukee city residents.
- Among residents aged 18-54, it is the most important issue for 29%. Among older residents (55 and older), it is the most important issue for only 15%.
- Nearly half (45%) of Blacks surveyed said improving public education was the most important issue, as compared to only 25% of Whites.

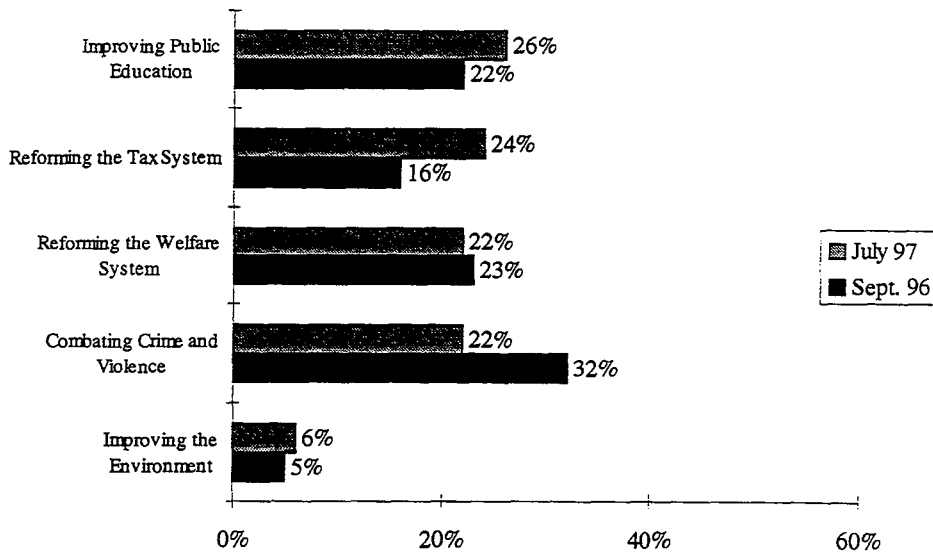
Improving public education is not an issue solely of interest to women. As many men (25%) as women (26%) said it was the most important issue. Nor is a concern with public education concentrated among identifiers with one political party or philosophy. Democrats (23%), Independents (30%), and Republicans (23%) all express an interest in this area, as do liberals (28%), middle-of-the-road residents (26%), and conservatives (24%). These results suggest an opportunity for Wisconsin to engage in a broad-based discussion about improving public education.

Issue Needing Most Attention from Wisconsin State Government

	Nov. 93	July 94	Sept. 95	Sept. 96	July 97
Improving Public Education	16%	12%	18%	22%	26%
Reforming the Tax System	17%	16%	14%	16%	24%
Combating Crime and Violence	30%	29%	24%	32%	22%
Reforming the Welfare System	21%	28%	29%	23%	22%
Improving the Environment	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	5%	6%

Note: Previous surveys asked about Reforming the Health Care System

Improving Public Education Emerging as the Issue Needing the Most Attention from the State Government



VIEWS ON ABORTION DIVIDE RESIDENTS

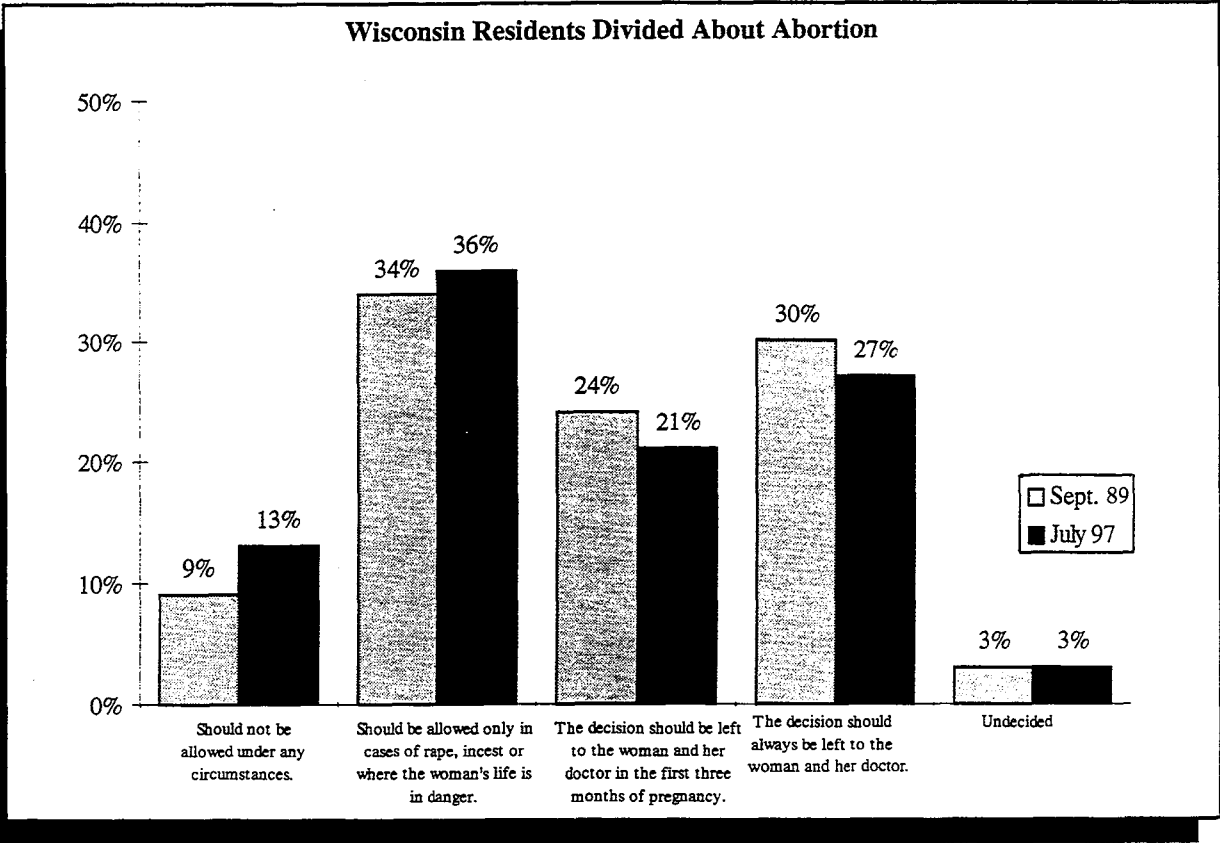
Residents of Wisconsin are sharply divided over the issue of abortion. Overall, about half hold views that are "pro-life" and half hold views that are "pro-choice." Wisconsin residents do, however, favor, by a 63% to 32% majority, a law that would ban "partial-birth abortions," except in cases where it was necessary to save the life of the mother.

As the table on the next page shows, views about abortion are not a function of sex and Catholics are not significantly more likely than Protestants to hold "pro-life" views.

The Madison area is the most "pro-choice" area in the state, with 42% saying the abortion decision should always be left to the woman and her doctor and another 25% saying it should be left to the woman and her doctor in the first three months. Green Bay is the most "pro-life" area, with 16% saying abortion should not be allowed under any circumstances and 43% saying it should be allowed only in cases of rape, incest or where the woman's life is in danger.

Views About Abortion

	Sept. 89	July 97
"Pro-life" responses:		
Abortion should not be allowed under any circumstances	9%	13%
Abortion should be allowed only in cases of rape, incest or where the woman's life is in danger	34%	36%
"Pro-choice" responses:		
The decision should be left to the woman and her doctor in the first 3 months of pregnancy	24%	21%
The decision should always be left to the woman and her doctor	30%	27%
Undecided	3%	3%



	Men	Women	Protestants	Catholics
“Pro-life” responses:				
Abortion should not be allowed under any circumstances	11%	14%	10%	16%
Abortion should be allowed only in cases of rape, incest or where the woman's life is in danger	37%	35%	39%	39%
“Pro-choice” responses:				
The decision should be left to the woman and her doctor in the first first 3 months of pregnancy	20%	22%	23%	23%
The decision should always be left to the woman and her doctor	28%	27%	26%	19%
Undecided	4%	2%	2%	3%

Views about abortion are also associated with broader political views, as shown in the table on the next page. Democrats and liberals are much more likely to hold “pro-choice” views than Republicans or conservatives. Independents and middle-of-the-road residents tend to hold views in between. These results suggest that abortion may not be as divisive an issue within the two political parties as was perhaps the case 20 years ago.

A bill banning “partial-birth abortions” attracts support even from residents who are generally “pro-choice”:

- 50% of residents who think the decision should always be left to the woman and her doctor favor a ban.
- 71% of residents who think the decision in the first three months should be left to the woman and her doctor favor a ban.

