



UW Badger Poll™ #31, Release #1  
University of Wisconsin Survey Center  
University of Wisconsin Madison  
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## **POLITICAL SATISFACTION IN THE BADGER STATE**

The latest UW Badger Poll results find that people across the state and across party lines are concerned about the way things are going today in the state and across the nation. The main findings are highlighted below, with additional information on the following pages.

- Satisfaction with the way things are going in the state today reached a new low for the UW Badger Poll with only 38% of Wisconsin residents saying they are generally satisfied. A bare majority (50%) reported that they are dissatisfied. Slightly more than one-in-four Badger State residents said they were either very or extremely dissatisfied.
- After increasing over most of the last two years, from a low of 14% in October 2008, satisfaction with the way things are going in the United States declined by 9 percentage points to only 26%. 66% of Wisconsinites said they were dissatisfied -- slightly more than half of the dissatisfied respondents said they were either very or extremely dissatisfied (just over 34% of all respondents).
- The latest UW Badger Poll ran an experiment on the format of questions used to measure people's political efficacy. Looking strictly at the responses shows additional support to the increased dissatisfaction that most people in Wisconsin expressed above.
  - Most Wisconsinites think the average citizen does not have a considerable amount of influence on what the government does, and a majority think the average citizen has little to no influence on what government does.
  - A large minority of state residents do not think that the people we elect to Congress try to keep the promises they made during the election.
  - A majority feel that they can't trust government administrators to do the best for the country.

## Satisfaction with the Way Things are Going in Wisconsin and the Nation Today

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### Trend of Satisfaction with the Way Things are Going in Wisconsin

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	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Mixed (vol.)</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Refused</b>	<b>(N)</b>
Fall '10	38%	12%	50%	<1%	<1%	(535)
June '10	55%	5%	40%	<1%	0%	(500)
Nov. '09	51%	3%	44%	1%	1%	(507)
Spring '09	42%	2%	56%	<1%	0%	(593)
Oct. '08	45%	5%	49%	1%	<1%	(538)
April '08	54%	4%	41%	1%	<1%	(521)
Dec. '07	48%	6%	45%	<1%	0%	(507)
June '07	60%	2%	37%	1%	0%	(502)
Oct. '06	51%	5%	41%	3%	<1%	(508)

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### Trend of Satisfaction with the Way Things are Going in the U.S. Today

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	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Mixed (vol.)</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Refused</b>	<b>(N)</b>
Fall '10	26%	7%	66%	1%	<1%	(535)
June '10	35%	4%	61%	<1%	<1%	(500)
Nov. '09	33%	4%	62%	<1%	<1%	(507)
Spring '09	24%	3%	73%	<1%	0%	(593)
Oct. '08	14%	5%	81%	<1%	<1%	(538)
April '08	23%	9%	67%	<1%	<1%	(521)
Dec. '07	29%	6%	65%	<1%	<1%	(507)
June '07	33%	4%	63%	<1%	0%	(502)
Oct. '06	32%	5%	61%	2%	0%	(508)

## The Influence of the Average Citizen on Politics

For the following items the latest UW Badger Poll used a randomly selected split ballot, so that approximately half of respondents were asked all the questions with one format type (a statement with an agree/disagree scale) or they were asked all the questions of the alternative format type (a direct question with a scale ranging from “none” to either “a great deal” or “extremely”)

Nearly a majority (49%) of Wisconsinites who were asked disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that “the average citizen has considerable influence on politics” (see the first table below). Among those asked, “How much influence the average citizen has on politics?” 14% said none and 40% said a little.

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### The average citizen has considerable influence on politics

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	Random Sub-Sample
Strongly Agree	6%
Agree	35%
Neither	10%
Disagree	30%
Strongly Disagree	19%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	0%
	(N=253)

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### How much influence does the average citizen have on politics?

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	Random Sub-Sample
None	14%
A Little	40%
Some	36%
Quite a Bit	5%
A Great Deal	5%
Don't Know	<1%
Refused	<1%
	(N=282)

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## The People's Say About what the Government Does

48% of Wisconsin residents who were asked disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that "people like me don't have any say about what the government does". However, among respondents who were asked about "how much say people like you have..." 40% said a little and 22% said none – only 11% said quite a bit or a great deal.

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<b>People like me don't have any say about what the government does</b>	
	Random Sub-Sample
Strongly Agree	16%
Agree	23%
Neither	13%
Disagree	33%
Strongly Disagree	15%
Don't Know	0%
Refused	0%
(N=253)	

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<b>How much say do people like you have about what the government does?</b>	
	Random Sub-Sample
None	22%
A Little	40%
Some	27%
Quite a Bit	8%
A Great Deal	3%
Don't Know	<1%
Refused	0%
(N=282)	

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## Do People Elected to Congress Try to Keep Their Promises?

A majority (54%) of respondents who were asked disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “people we elect to Congress try to keep the promises they made during the election” – only 25% agreed. Among those respondents asked about “how often do the people we elect to Congress try to keep the promises they have made...?” a majority (51%) said sometimes, while 39% said rarely do they try to keep their election promises.

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<b>People we elect to Congress try to keep the promises they made during the election</b>	
	Random Sub-Sample
Strongly Agree	2%
Agree	23%
Neither	21%
Disagree	38%
Strongly Disagree	16%
Don't Know	<1%
Refused	0%
(N=253)	

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<b>How often do the people we elect to Congress try to keep the promises they have made in the election?</b>	
	Random Sub-Sample
Never	5%
Rarely	39%
Sometimes	51%
Very Often	5%
Extremely Often	<1%
Don't Know	<1%
Refused	<1%
(N=282)	

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## Can Government Administrators be Trusted to do What is Best?

A majority (53%) of respondents who were asked disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that “most government administrators can be trusted to do what is best for the country,” while only 24% agreed. Among those respondents asked about “how often can we trust government administrators to do what is best...?” 58% said sometimes, while 26% said rarely and only 9% said never.

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<b>Most government administrators can be trusted to do what is best for the county</b>	
	Random Sub-Sample
Strongly Agree	3%
Agree	21%
Neither	23%
Disagree	37%
Strongly Disagree	16%
Don't Know	<1%
Refused	0%
(N=253)	

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<b>How often can we trust government administrators to do what is best for the country?</b>	
	Random Sub-Sample
Never	9%
Rarely	26%
Sometimes	58%
Very Often	5%
Extremely Often	<1%
Don't Know	2%
Refused	0%
(N=282)	

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**APPENDIX:**

		<b>Satisfaction with the Way Things are Going in Wisconsin Today</b>					
		Dissatisfied	Mixed (Vol.)	Satisfied	Don't Know	Refused	(N)
<b>Overall</b>		<b>50%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>(535)</b>
Likely Voters		53%	11%	36%	<1%	<1%	(427)
Gender	Men	48%	14%	38%	<1%	0%	(229)
	Women	53%	9%	48%	<1%	0%	(306)
Party ID	Democrats	42%	11%	47%	0%	0%	(161)
	Independents & Others	54%	13%	32%	1%	0%	(218)
	Republicans	53%	10%	37%	<1%	0%	(147)
Ages	18 to 29*	34%	10%	56%	0%	0%	(30)
	30 to 44	48%	14%	38%	0%	0%	(90)
	45 to 59	55%	10%	34%	1%	0%	(180)
	60 and over	62%	12%	25%	1%	0%	(235)
Education	Never attended college	49%	7%	44%	<1%	0%	(197)
	Some college	58%	13%	28%	1%	0%	(160)
	College graduate	44%	16%	40%	0%	0%	(177)
Income	Under \$40,000	53%	12%	34%	1%	0%	(194)
	\$40,000 to \$80,000	47%	10%	43%	0%	0%	(178)
	Over \$80,000	53%	9%	38%	0%	0%	(105)
Region	Southern Wisconsin	57%	8%	34%	1%	<1%	(284)
	Northern Wisconsin	42%	15%	43%	<1%	0%	(251)

\* Caution should be taken when interpreting the findings of subgroups with smaller numbers of respondents due to the potential for larger variation. Data are not weighted by region. Geographical regional subgroups presented here are subgroups of the larger statewide representative RDD sample.

**Satisfaction with the Way Things are Going in the United States Today**

		Dissatisfied	Mixed (Vol.)	Satisfied	Don't Know	Refused	(N)
<b>Overall</b>		<b>66%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>(535)</b>
Likely Voters		71%	7%	21%	<1%	<1%	(427)
Gender	Men	67%	8%	24%	1%	0%	(229)
	Women	65%	6%	28%	1%	0%	(306)
Party ID	Democrats	57%	9%	33%	1%	0%	(161)
	Independents & Others	70%	7%	22%	1%	0%	(218)
	Republicans	72%	4%	24%	0%	0%	(147)
Ages	18 to 29*	55%	4%	41%	0%	0%	(30)
	30 to 44	62%	8%	30%	0%	0%	(90)
	45 to 59	73%	7%	20%	0%	0%	(180)
	60 and over	74%	7%	16%	2%	0%	(235)
Education	Never attended college	64%	6%	30%	<1%	0%	(197)
	Some college	76%	6%	17%	1%	0%	(160)
	College graduate	60%	9%	30%	1%	0%	(177)
Income	Under \$40,000	63%	10%	27%	0%	0%	(194)
	\$40,000 to \$80,000	67%	7%	25%	1%	0%	(178)
	Over \$80,000	69%	3%	28%	0%	0%	(105)
Region	Southern Wisconsin	69%	7%	23%	<1%	<1%	(284)
	Northern Wisconsin	63%	7%	29%	1%	0%	(251)

\* Caution should be taken when interpreting the findings of subgroups with smaller numbers of respondents due to the potential for larger variation. Data are not weighted by region. Geographical regional subgroups presented here are subgroups of the larger statewide representative RDD sample.



## SURVEY QUESTION WORDING

- GWS01A In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in **the state of Wisconsin** today?
- GWS01B [#NOTE: only asked if 'GWS01A' is satisfied or dissatisfied]  
Would you say you are extremely, very, somewhat or are you only slightly [satisfied/dissatisfied]?
- GNS01A In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in **the United States** today?
- GNS01B [#NOTE: only asked if 'GNS01A' is satisfied or dissatisfied]  
Would you say you are extremely, very, somewhat or are you only slightly [satisfied/dissatisfied]?
- rand\_ad [#NOTE: Respondents were randomly placed on one of two survey paths. They either received all agree/disagree questions "peXX\_ad" or all construct specific questions "peXX\_cs".]
- EITHER**
- pe03\_ad Next we have a few questions about people's general views on politics and government. Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
- The average citizen has considerable influence on politics. Do you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree?
- pe11\_ad People like me don't have any say about what the government does. Do you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree?
- pe16\_ad People we elect to Congress try to keep the promises they have made during the election. Do you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree?
- pe17\_ad Most government administrators can be trusted to do what is best for the country. Do you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree?
- OR**
- pe03\_cs Next we have a few questions about people's general views on politics and government. How much influence does the average citizen have on politics: None, a little, some, quite a bit, or a great deal?
- pe11\_cs How much say do people like you have about what the government does: None, a little, some, quite a bit, or great deal?
- pe16\_cs How often do the people we elect to Congress try to keep the promises they have made during the election: Never, rarely, sometimes, very often, or extremely often?
- pe17\_cs How often can we trust government administrators to do what is best for the country: Never, rarely, sometimes, very often, or extremely often?

## DEFINITION OF REGIONS

<b>Region</b>	<b>Counties Included in Region</b>
<b>Southern Wisconsin</b>	Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Kenosha, Lafayette, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Rock, Sauk, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha
<b>Northern Wisconsin</b>	Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Outagamie, Sheboygan, Winnebago, Adams, Florence, Forest, Green Lake, Iron, Juneau, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marinette, Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Oneida, Portage, Shawano, Vilas, Waupaca, Waushara, Wood, Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Buffalo, Burnett, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Douglas, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Price, Richland, Rusk, Sawyer, St. Croix, Taylor, Trempealeau, Vernon, Washburn

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Data sources: (1) question asked to respondents "In which county do you live?", (2) question asked to respondents "What is your zip code?", and (3) the county that the telephone number is assigned to by SSI (by plurality of listed telephone numbers known to be in a county).

## HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

This UW BADGER POLL™ was conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center as part of its ongoing program of research designed to benefit the research community and the people of Wisconsin. The Director of the poll operations is Chad J. Kniss, UW Survey Center. The Faculty Director of the Poll content is Associate Professor Katherine Cramer Walsh, Department of Political Science, UW-Madison. The UW BADGER POLL™ is intended to be a "poll of record" for the state, investigating matters of concern to Wisconsinites including politics, culture, and their daily lives, adhering to the highest standards of polling methodology and rigorous independence.

Results shown here are based on 535 persons who were randomly chosen within households with working landline telephone numbers and interviewed between November 17th and December 12th, 2010, inclusive. During this time period, the UWSC made 12,071 phone calls to 2,190 telephone numbers. Additionally, advance letters describing the survey and its procedures were sent to approximately 900 households whose randomly chosen telephone numbers were matched to a known listed address. The response rate for this survey was 36.6%, as defined by the American Association of Public Opinion Research Response Rate 3. Calls were made between 9AM and 9PM Monday through Friday and between 10AM and 5PM on Saturday and from 12 noon to 9PM on Sunday. All telephone numbers were randomly generated by computer. The UWSC made up to 14 attempts on each number in order to confirm if it was a residential number, select an eligible respondent and/or to convert first time refusals. Approximately 55% of the 535 interviews were completed in the first two weeks of calling.

Theoretically, results from this survey have a "margin of error" of a little over +/- 4.2%. This means that, had we asked every resident in Wisconsin exactly these questions at the time the survey was conducted, there is only a one in twenty chance that the answers would differ by more than that in either direction from what we report here. There could be differences because of changes in question wording, events occurring in the meantime, or any of the practical difficulties involved in taking a scientific survey. Results based on subgroups are subject to a larger "margin of error". Results reported here are based on weighted data (weighted to reflect statewide gender and age groups).