



Badger PollSM #2, Release 6
University of Wisconsin Survey Center
University of Wisconsin Madison
July 3, 2002

NOTE: When using material from this release please cite the Badger PollSM conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center, paid for by private funds made available through the UW-Madison Chancellor's Office and University Communications. The Capital Times served as the poll's media sponsor.

WISCONSIN RESIDENTS CONSIDER THE CLIMATE
by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

Do Wisconsin residents think the climate is changing? What if anything does the "greenhouse effect" have to do with it. And however, much we might talk about the weather, how much do we really mind winter's cold and summer's heat. These questions were addressed on the most recent Badger PollSM, which interviewed 524 randomly chosen state residents by telephone between June 8 and 17, inclusive. The poll was conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center and was underwritten financial by private funds made available by the UW-Madison Chancellor's Office and University Communications, with the media sponsorship of the Capital Times.

Half the Wisconsin population (48%) say that the climate in Wisconsin is getting warmer. This contrasts with just under four in ten (38%) who believe it is staying about the same, and 10% who think the climate is getting colder.

This question, identical in format was included in a series of national interviews UWSC conducted from mid-July to the end of October last year, at which point the national was modestly less convinced of warming. Overall, some 44% said the climate (in their region of the country) was getting warmer, about as many (45%) said it was staying the same, but only 7% said it was getting colder.

In Wisconsin, men and women are generally similar in that the largest proportion feels the climate is warming, but women are a bit more likely to perceive a change in either direction and the balance between warming and cooling is a bit higher for women. Self-described Republicans are less likely to see warming, while Independents are most so. The perception that the climate is warming up increases as one moves up the age ladder, before falling off some among those over sixty, and the youngest group is the only one for which a majority denies change.

Opinion is less clear when it comes to whether the climate is getting wetter or drier. Almost six in ten (59%) say it is staying about the same, and the balance between wetter and drier among those who DO see a difference is about even (17%-21%). As before, men and women are generally similar, but women are a bit more likely to see change (and to think things are getting wetter) than are men. Republicans are least likely to see change, Independents most. Both the youngest and oldest groups are less likely to see change than are those in the middle, with those forty-five to fifty-nine the only one among whom there is a

tilt towards thinking the climate is now wetter if it has changed appreciably at all.

Last year's national results were different. In the summer and fall of 2001, four in ten national respondents reported their climate getting drier, more than twice as many as now take this position in Wisconsin, About half (49%) said it was staying the same, and only 8% felt it was getting wetter where they lived.

After respondents were asked what they thought was happening to the climate, they were reminded of "talk about the so-called 'greenhouse effect', the idea that chemicals in the atmosphere are changing the climate of the world overall". Half (50%) then answered "yes" when asked if "there have been big changes in world climate because of the greenhouse effect, or not". One in three (35%) denied big changes, but 10% volunteered that there had been changes, but they were small.

Women are almost half again as likely as men (roughly six in ten compared to four in ten) to see changes. Age shows only a weak effect, with the oldest group splitting pretty evenly and others (the youngest less clearly) saying there had been big changes. Partisanship, however, shows the clearest pattern, with two thirds of Democrats, half of Independents, but only one third of Republicans saying there had been big changes from the greenhouse effect.

On the 2001 national survey, the overall results were quite close to what we found in Wisconsin, despite the fact that perceptions of the climate were somewhat different. With 49% of the national sample believing there have been big changes due to the greenhouse effect, 34% saying there had not, and 9% volunteering that only small changes had occurred, the national results for within a point or so of the Wisconsin ones for each category.

There is moderate concern for the future. Overall, more than six in ten thought the greenhouse effect, whatever it now was, would be either a lot worse (15%) or somewhat worse (47%), over the next twenty years or so. Contrariwise, one in five felt it would be a lot (3%) or somewhat (18%) better. About one in ten (9%) volunteered that they felt it would be about the same.

National results from 2001 are generally similar. National respondents were a bit more likely to think things would get a lot worse, and corresponding less likely to think they would get somewhat worse, but differences are quite small.

Among all Wisconsin groups examined, more felt the problem would worsen than said it would improve, but the balance does differ some. Women are more pessimistic than men. Among Democrats the tendency to expect it to get worse is stronger than it is among Independents, while Republicans come closest to being divided. Still roughly half of GOP adherents think it will worse, compared with one in three who expect improvement and one in seven who see little or no change. There is a slight tendency for pessimism to drop modestly with age.

The weather is a common topic of conversation, and the image of Wisconsin for many includes a sense of almost stoic pride in winter cold and summer extremes. Reminded that "people complain a lot about the climate, but when it comes right down to it, how much do you mind the winter weather here in Wisconsin, the largest group (41%) says "not much at all". One in six (17%) say only a little, one in five (21%) reported minding it "some", and only one in seven (15%) said they minded it "a lot". A handful (7%) volunteered that they actually liked it. Women were more likely to complain than men (more than four in ten minded it "some" or more, compared to one in four among men. Partisan differences pale compared to the earlier questions on warming. Age fails to show a strong

pattern.

National results about winter weather in 2001 were roughly congruent with our Wisconsin profile. Somewhat over four in ten said the winter did not bother them much at all, with five percent volunteering they liked it. One in three minded either a lot (14%) or some (19%), with one in six caring only a little.

Of course, there may be a human tendency to complain about whatever the weather happens to be. A parallel question asked respondents to use the same categories to describe how much they minded SUMMER weather. Just under half (49%) said not at all, one in eight (12%) said only a little, one in seven said some (15%) and just under one in ten (9%) said a lot. Another one in seven (15%) volunteered they liked it.

Women complain a bit more than men. There are only small differences based on age. Oddly, one of the biggest is for partisanship, where Democrats are about ten points more likely than Republicans or Independents to voice discontent, and the proportion expressing not much at all, or actually liking summer weather is lowest among Democrats, and highest among Independents.

If national figures on winter weather were generally consistent with views in Wisconsin, this was not quite the case when it comes to summer weather. Specifically, just under four in ten nationally mind the summer weather either a lot (19%) or some (20%), half again as many as took one of these positions in the Badger State. Consistently, national respondents were less likely to say they were not bothered at all, and fewer volunteered that they liked the summer weather.

On the one hand, this means that (at least from the perspective of June), winter comes in for some more complaint. But the small size of the difference may be a surprise. For instance, while one in four mind the hot weather at least some, the comparable figure for winter cold is (only) a bit over one in three. And, from the other side, just under two thirds either don't mind summer weather at all or actually like it, the comparable figure for winter weather is just under half. Across groups, a similar pattern obtains. For each one examined, there is a greater tendency not to mind summer weather at all or actually to like it than to feel the same for winter weather. The difference ranges from a low of about twelve points to a high of some twenty-five points. Each group also shows more minding the winter weather at least some than mind summer weather this much, with the overall differences a bit smaller.

Statewide Marginals and Percentages for Key Groups

What follows is the exact question wording for each of the items referred to in the release. The first column is the percentage of the entire sample giving each response. The second and third reports the percentages for men and women separately. The fourth, fifth, and sixth columns show self-described Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. Columns seven through ten group respondents by their age group (calculated from year of birth: 18-29; 30-44; 45-59; sixty and older.) For the six substantive questions, results are shown from national interviews conducted by UWSC from mid-July to October of 2001, as part of its continuous national survey. These numbers reflect some 514 persons and have a "margin of error" of slightly more than 4% as well.

Q01: INTERVIEWER: (DO NOT ASK) Enter respondent's gender

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
MALE	49%	100%	--%	40%	60%	54%	45%	55%	43%	52%
FEMALE	51	--	100	60	40	46	55	45	57	48

CLI01: The weather changes from day to day and from season to season, of course, but overall, do you think the climate in Wisconsin is getting warmer, getting colder, or staying about the same?

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				NAT
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	
GETTING WARMER	48%	46%	50%	52%	54%	42%	35%	49%	55%	44%	44%
GETTING COLDER	10	6	14	15	6	8	10	10	10	12	7
STAYING ABOUT SAME	38	46	30	31	35	46	52	37	31	40	45
SEASONS MODERATING (V)	2	1	2	1	3	1	--	1	3	2	*
SEAS. MORE EXTREME (V)	*	*	1	--	1	--	2	--	*	--	2
DON'T KNOW	2	2	2	1	3	2	1	2	1	3	3
REFUSED	*	--	1	1	--	--	--	1	--	--	*

CLI02: And do you think the climate is getting drier, wetter, or staying about the same?

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				NAT
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	
GETTING DRIER	17%	18%	16%	20%	17%	14%	18%	24%	15%	13%	40%
GETTING WETTER	21	18	25	22	22	18	17	20	28	17	8
STAYING ABOUT SAME	59	61	56	54	59	66	64	52	54	68	49
DON'T KNOW	3	2	4	4	3	2	1	4	3	3	3
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

CLI03: There has been talk about the so-called "greenhouse effect", the idea that chemicals in the atmosphere are changing the climate of the world overall. Do you think there have been big changes in world climate because of the greenhouse effect, or not?

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				NAT
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	
HAVE BEEN BIG CHANGES	50%	41%	58%	66%	51%	32%	51%	55%	52%	42%	49
HAVEN'T BEEN	35	45	26	21	32	55	37	32	33	39	34
ONLY SMALL CHANGE (VOL)	10	10	9	8	11	8	12	5	12	9	9
DON'T KNOW	5	4	7	5	6	5	--	8	3	10	8
REFUSED	*	*	--	--	--	--	--	--	*	--	1

CLI04: Over the next twenty years or so, do you think the greenhouse effect will be a lot worse than it is now, somewhat worse, somewhat better, or a lot better?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				NAT
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	
LOT WORSE	15%	14%	17%	22%	16%	5%	18%	13%	19%	11%	19%
SOMEWHAT WORSE	47	42	52	51	50	43	53	51	46	41	43
SOMEWHAT BETTER	18	22	15	15	16	26	15	17	19	23	19
LOT BETTER	3	2	3	--	3	6	1	2	3	3	2
ABOUT THE SAME (VOL.)	9	15	5	3	8	15	7	10	8	12	6
DON'T KNOW	7	5	8	8	7	5	6	7	5	10	10
REFUSED	*	1	*	1	--	--	--	--	1	*	1

CLI05: People complain a lot about the climate, but when it comes right down to it, how much do you mind the winter weather here in Wisconsin? A lot, some, only a little, or not much at all?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				NAT
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	
A LOT	15%	14%	16%	19%	10%	14%	12%	15%	16%	15%	14%
SOME	21	13	27	23	21	19	25	21	17	23	19
ONLY A LITTLE	17	16	18	18	13	22	16	16	18	16	16
NOT MUCH AT ALL	41	47	34	36	48	39	43	43	40	37	45
ACTUALLY LIKE IT (VOL)	7	9	5	6	9	6	4	4	9	9	5
DON'T KNOW	*	--	*	--	--	1	--	1	--	--	*
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	*

CLI06: And when it comes right down to it, how much do you mind the summer weather? A lot, some, only a little, or not much at all?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				NAT
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	
A LOT	9%	11%	8%	10%	7%	8%	12%	12%	5%	9%	19%
SOME	15	11	18	18	8	11	10	17	16	13	20
ONLY A LITTLE	12	8	15	16	9	11	12	11	13	11	16
NOT MUCH AT ALL	49	51	48	43	60	52	57	52	49	42	39
ACTUALLY LIKE IT (VOL)	15	19	11	13	16	18	9	8	18	23	6
DON'T KNOW	*	--	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	1	--
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	*

QD05: Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
DEMOCRAT	31%	26%	37%	100%	--%	--%	39%	29%	30%	32%
REPUBLICAN	31	34	28	--	--	100	22	36	29	35
INDEPENDENT	20	24	15	--	100	--	16	16	24	20
OTHER	10	8	11	--	--	--	12	13	9	5
NONE	6	5	6	--	--	--	10	4	5	6
DON'T KNOW	1	1	2	--	--	--	1	2	1	1
REFUSED	2	2	2	--	--	--	--	*	3	2

QD11: In what year were you born? (ENTER FOUR-DIGIT YEAR)

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
18-29	14%	13%	15%	18%	12%	10%	100%	--%	--%	--%
30-44	26	29	22	24	21	30	--	100	--	--
45-59	35	31	39	33	43	32	--	--	100	--
60 and over	24	26	23	24	24	27	--	--	--	100
DK/REFUSED	1	1	1	1	--	1	--	--	--	--

* denotes less than .5%

-- denotes 0%

HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

This BADGER POLLSM 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, under the direction of G. Donald Ferree, Jr., Associate Director for Public Opinion Research of the Center. This Badger PollSM was funded with private funds made available through the UW-Madison Chancellor's Office and University Communications. The media sponsor of the survey was the Capital Times newspaper of Madison. The BADGER POLLSM 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.

A total of 524 randomly selected adult residents of Wisconsin were interviewed over the telephone from June 8-17, inclusive. Telephone numbers were generated by computer in proportion to the number of adults living in each area of the state. Theoretically, results from this survey have a "margin of error" of a little over +/- 4%. This means that, had we asked every eligible adult 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".