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University of Wisconsin Survey Center  
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FLYING AND SECURITY  
by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

Airline travel is very much a part of life in the United States, and tends to be very much for pleasure rather than business for Wisconsin residents. There is some measured concern about safety of air travel (from multiple causes), and some indication that people are somewhat less confident than they used to be, but no sharp falloff of confidence due to the events of September 11. These are among the findings of the most recent Badger Poll™, which interviewed 500 randomly chosen state residents by telephone between September 17 and 26th, inclusive.

A large majority (86%) of Wisconsin residents have taken a commercial airline flight at some point in their lives. But the typical state resident may not qualify as a "frequent flyer" since half of all residents (51%) have NOT flown within the past year. If they have flown at all, the typical number of times is between two and three over the past year.

Men as a group are somewhat more likely than women to have flown recently and to have flown multiple times in the past year. The likelihood of having flown since 2001 starts out at just under six in ten among those below thirty to one third among those at least sixty years old. And just over four in ten of those who have ever flown reported that they have not taken a commercial flight in the last year.

Flying is obviously one way to get between point A and point B, whether for business or pleasure, but people may well differ in how much (or whether) they enjoy it. Overall, two in three said they like flying either a lot (27%) or somewhat (38%). On the other side, roughly one in three DISlike it, either somewhat (16%) or a lot (15%).

Men are slightly more likely to say they like flying than women, but the distinction is scarcely overwhelming. Roughly two thirds of all four age groups examined claim to like flying as opposed to disliking it. Feelings seem a bit more intense as one looks at the oldest age group. Having flown within the past year is modestly associated with enjoying flying (or vice versa).

When respondents were asked whether they thought commercial flights in the United States were safe, or not, almost seven in eight (84%) said that they were. Only one in seven demurred. Men are about ten points more likely than women to say commercial aviation in this country is safe. The age distribution

is pretty flat. Those who have flown in the past year were almost ten percentage points more confident than the population at large.

The public does think there have been changes since the September 11 attacks. Overall, the largest proportion (48%) thinks commercial flights are now safer. Roughly as many (45%) call it about as safe. Only a handful (5%) believe it is LESS SAFE than it was.

Men are a bit more positive than women as a group. Self-described Democrats are quite a lot like self-described Republicans, Independents are in the middle, onesidedly believing -- if there is a change at all -- that it has left flying more safe than it was. Sentiment, however, that things are safer declines as one moves up the age ladder. Almost two thirds of the youngest group thinks things have improved. The declines to one half in the next group, four in ten to the one older than that, and just under that figure for those sixty or older.

Another dimension of safety relates to air travel compared to other ways of getting to the same destination. Respondents were asked to compare a non-stop commercial flight between California and New York City with the risk of making the same journey by car. Overall, seven in ten felt that the airplane would be either a lot safer (49%) or somewhat so (21%). Almost all the remainder, one in four or 23%, thought the two modes would be equally safe. One in twenty believed flying would be somewhat (2%) or a lot (3%) less safe.

In no group examined did flying fail to "win", but there are group differences. Men were more likely than women to label air travel as safer (and six in ten of the former, but only four in ten of the latter called it a lot safer). Partially related to this gender difference, self-described Republicans were more likely to see a safety difference in favor of flying than were Democrats, while Independents fell between them. All age groups felt flying was safer, but this sentiment was more onesided among the middle groups, followed by the youngest, while those sixty and older were less likely so to feel. Those who have flown within the past year are more confident in the relative safety of air travel than is the general population.

Were they on this hypothetical non-stop cross country flight, respondents profess only a modest level of concern with safety (specifically including mechanical failure, human error or deliberate action). One in eight says they would be "very concerned" for their safety, Adding in the one in four (23%) who admit to being somewhat concerned accounts for a bit more than one in three. Two thirds would be "only a little" (30%) or "not very concerned" (35%).

Again, groups differ. One in four men would be at least somewhat concerned, but that level of worry includes almost one woman in every two. Partisanship is only loosely related. There is also some modest increase in expected anxiety as one moves up the age ladder, although the upward change in anxiety is interrupted some by the forty-five to fifty-nine group, which is not clearly any higher than the next younger. Those who have flown within the last year are as a group somewhat less likely to express concern than the sample as a whole.

Crossing the Atlantic "on a commercial flight from New York to London" would elicit a somewhat greater level of concern. Overall, half of all respondents would be very concerned (19%) or somewhat so (30%). A similar proportion is either "only a little concerned" (21%) or "not very concerned" (29%). This means that overall, switching the destination from California to London is equivalent to moving 15% of the population from below "somewhat" to at or above that level.

Once again, there are relatively modest group-based differences. Women express more concern than men; concern drops slightly as one moves from Democrat to Republican, those who have flown in the past year voice less apprehension than residents in general. Age is a bit different. The youngest group is least concerned, but after rising a bit after one crosses the thirty-year old threshold, concern falls back a bit at forty-five, rising again among sixty and over, but not clearly any higher than for the thirty to forty-four year old group. Indeed, the oldest respondents show an unusually small increase in expressed level of concern on a transoceanic flight compared to a transcontinental one.

For most Wisconsin residents, flying is more often for pleasure than for business. Asked to choose between these two, three in four (76%) said that "when you do fly" it was "most often for pleasure". One in eight (12%) responded "business", while 4% volunteered that it was generally a (roughly equal) mix.

Among no group did pleasure fail to dominate, with majorities ranging from a low of 67% to a high of 85%. But there are differences. Men as a group were more likely to fly primarily on business. Those over sixty differed from other age groups, with the other three quite close together. One in five of those who have traveled by commercial airline in the last year most often fly on business, but this still means three in four primarily fly on pleasure travel.

Consonant with the earlier questions, most residents deny great stress when they actually fly. Only a bit over one in four admitted to being nervous (9% very, 18% somewhat) when they were in the air. Almost six in ten professed to be confident (29% somewhat, 38% very).

Fewer than one in five men, but one in three women admitted to being nervous in the air (conversely two thirds of men, but six in ten women, were confident). Age shows a sawtooth pattern, with the youngest respondents and those between forty-five and fifty-nine more confident (less nervous) than those from thirty to forty-four or sixty and above. Only one in six of those who have flown in the past year said they were nervous in the air, more than eight in ten were confident, including over half of this group who were very confident.

By self report, a fair degree of confidence is nothing new, but may have lessened a bit. When respondents were asked to say how they now feel compared to how they felt a few years ago, six in ten residents (62%) said they felt about the same. The one in three who admitted a difference, however, broke onesidedly in the direction of now being more worried.

Women were about ten points more likely to say they were now more worried than men were. Partisan patterns are flat. All age groups contained more people who admitted to increased worry than those who claimed to be less worried, but the distinction between the group which has moved most (those thirty to forty-four) and that which has moved least on balance (those forty-five to fifty-nine) is small. Those who have flown in the past year were quite modestly less likely to say their worrying had increased.

Overall, half of all residents (50%) say the "possibility of hijacking or terrorism when you're traveling" is something they personally worry about not much at all. Including those who worry "only a little" accounts for three in four. One in four profess to personally worry somewhat (18%) or a lot (8%). Group differences tend to be even more muted when the focus is on deliberate human action and the threat it might cause than was the case when more general sources of concern -- not limited to malevolence -- were in play.





FLY06. Compared to driving to California from New York City, do you think flying on a non-stop commercial flight would be a lot safer, somewhat safer, somewhat less safe, a lot less safe or about as safe as driving?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FLOWN	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	EVR	1YR
A LOT SAFER	49%	59%	39%	42%	48%	62%	48%	52%	53%	41%	53%	61%
SOMEWHAT SAFER	21	22	20	21	23	18	25	22	17	22	21	20
SOMEWHAT LESS SAFE	2	1	3	3	4	1	2	3	2	1	2	1
A LOT LESS SAFE	3	2	4	3	7	1	2	5	3	3	2	1
ABOUT AS SAFE	23	16	30	30	19	16	23	17	23	29	21	17
DON'T KNOW	2	1	3	3	1	1	--	1	2	4	1	1
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

FLY07. How concerned for your safety would you be if you were on a commercial flight from New York to California? Very concerned, somewhat concerned, only a little concerned, or not concerned very much at all? (NOTE: "SAFETY" INCLUDES FEAR OF CRASH, HIJACKING, FAULTY AIR CONTROL AND SO ON).

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FLOWN	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	EVR	1YR
VERY CONCERNED	12%	6%	17%	17%	14%	4%	7%	10%	12%	17%	8%	5%
SOMEWHAT CONCERNED	23	19	27	20	19	26	19	25	21	26	23	19
ONLY A LITTLE	30	32	28	30	29	32	30	34	27	29	32	35
NOT VERY CONCERNED	35	43	27	32	39	38	44	31	39	28	37	42
DON'T KNOW	1	--	2	1	--	1	--	1	1	--	--	--
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

FLY08. How about on a commercial flight from New York to London? How concerned would you be for your safety then?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FLOWN	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	EVR	1YR
VERY CONCERNED	19%	10%	27%	25%	25%	9%	12%	22%	16%	24%	16%	9%
SOMEWHAT CONCERNED	30	32	29	32	21	34	28	31	32	28	30	27
ONLY A LITTLE	21	21	20	20	18	27	19	24	17	25	23	24
NOT VERY CONCERNED	29	37	22	23	35	30	41	24	33	22	31	40
DON'T KNOW	1	--	2	1	1	1	--	*	2	1	*	*
REFUSED	*	*	--	--	1	--	1	--	--	--	*	*

FLY10. When you do fly, is it most often for business or pleasure?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FLOWN	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	EVR	1YR
BUSINESS	12%	19%	6%	6%	14%	19%	14%	16%	12%	6%	14%	20%
PLEASURE	76	70	82	85	77	67	78	73	75	85	81	73
MIXED (VOL.)	4	5	3	1	4	8	4	5	6	--	5	7
DON'T KNOW	7	5	8	6	5	6	3	6	8	5	*	--
REFUSED	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	--	--	3	--	--



FLY15. Do you know anyone personally who has changed any travel plans within the past year because of concern about terrorism or safety?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FLOWN	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	EVR	1YR
CHANGED SELF	8%	9%	7%	9%	6%	8%	9%	9%	9%	4%	8%	7%
YES	34	30	37	31	31	39	33	32	36	28	35	43
NO	58	61	55	61	63	53	58	59	54	68	57	51
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				FLOWN	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	EVR	1YR
Democrat	33%	28%	38%	100%	--%	--%	21%	34%	36%	42%	33%	30%
Republican	29	30	27	--	--	100	23	35	28	25	30	35
Independent	21	24	18	--	100	--	28	15	22	21	20	19
Other	10	12	8	--	--	--	18	8	9	6	11	10
None	4	5	3	--	--	--	7	5	2	3	4	4
DON'T KNOW	2	1	4	--	--	--	3	2	2	2	2	2
REFUSED	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	2	1	1	1	1

QD11. In what year were you born? (ENTER FOUR-DIGIT YEAR) (Calculated and grouped as below)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				FLOWN	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	EVR	1YR
18-29	19%	19%	18%	12%	25%	15%	100%	--%	--%	--%	17%	22%
30-44	27	28	27	28	20	34	--	100	--	--	28	29
45-59	33	34	33	36	34	33	--	--	100	--	34	34
60 and over	19	19	19	24	19	17	--	--	--	100	19	14
DK/REFUSED	2	*	4	1	3	2	--	--	--	--	2	2

\* denotes less than .5%

-- denotes 0%

#### HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

This 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, under the direction of G. Donald Ferree, Jr., Associate Director for Public Opinion Research of the Center. The media sponsors of the survey are the (Madison) Capital Times, and the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel. The 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.

A total of 500 randomly chosen state residents were interviewed for this survey by telephone between September 17 to 26, inclusive. Earlier results on electoral matters reflected a portion of this sample who were registered voters plus a supplementary series of interviews on political matters only, conducted with registered voters. 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 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".