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GAMBLING AND THE STATE
by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

Most people in Wisconsin view gambling as something which in itself is unobjectionable but which has the potential of harm in irresponsibly engaged in. Specifically, when offered three general descriptions of gambling and asked which came close to their own views, two thirds (63%) said "it's irresponsible if you bet money you can't afford to lose". Fewer than one in ten (7%) took an absolutist "it's morally wrong" stance, while one in four (27%) said "it's just harmless entertainment".

Men were roughly ten points more likely than women to label gambling just entertainment, with essentially the entire difference coming down to a correspondingly higher proportion of women voicing concern over its irresponsibility for some. Partisan differences were muted, and there was only a modest tendency for the minority calling gambling just harmless entertainment to fall off some for the first three age groups.

Gambling in the abstract is one thing, gambling with state involvement could be quite another. On balance, though sentiment is by no means unanimous, the Wisconsin public approves (by 65%-31%) "of the state of Wisconsin raising money through legalized gambling. Sentiment is similar among men and women as groups, with the former a bit more positive. Approval tends to be higher among those less than forty-five than among older respondents. As on the more general question, there is not a strong partisan divide, although self-described Democrats "edge out" Republicans in approving of the general notion, and sentiment is rather more evenly divided (about five to four pro) among self described Independents.

One's views of gambling in the abstract do not determine, but do seem to spillover into one's reaction to the state's involvement. Virtually all those who found gambling morally wrong disapproved of the state's ties. (Actual figures were 91%-9% but beyond noting the oneness of it, this number should not be taken too literally since, based on fewer than one respondent in ten, it has a large potential imprecision due to the luck of who happened to be interviewed. Among those who felt gambling COULD be irresponsible, backing for state involvement was about two thirds (63%-34%). Among those viewing it as "harmless entertainment", backing for state involvement was very one-sided (87%-9%).

Only a minority of about one in six (17%) claim to "regularly buy lottery tickets", where the definition of "regularly" was left to the individual respondent. In no group examined does the proportion placing themselves in this

category much exceed one in five, but there are some patterns. Men as a group are more likely than women (21%-13%) to be regular purchasers. The proportion is steady across partisan lines. Age shows no strong, consistent pattern.

State involvement then raises some concerns. State encouragement, through advertising appears to raise more. When respondents were asked, "do you think the state should advertise legalized gambling like the lottery or daily numbers game", the public comes close to being split: 54% say it should; 42% say it should not.

While group-based differences are scarcely overwhelming, they are clearer for this question than for anything so far discussed. Thus men back state advertising by a three to two (60%-38%) margin, while women are evenly split (48% pro, 46% con). In contrast to the overall gender pattern, support falls off five to three among Democrats (more likely as a group to be women) to an even split among Republicans, with Independents in between the two. The proportion favoring advertising for the state-sponsored games is twice as high among the youngest age group as it is among the oldest (those sixty and older). The other two groups are quite similar to one another and fall between them.

Once again, general perceptions of gambling related to opinion on state involvement. The proportion backing advertising of state-sponsored games rose from one in four (22%-75%) among those thinking gambling immoral, to half (49%-47%) among those who felt it could be irresponsible if people get in over their heads. Those who just saw gambling as harmless entertainment back advertising most strongly (73%-22%).

Of course, beyond affirmative advertising intended to encourage participation in state sponsored games, the simple fact that the state IS involved, might -- for some at least -- convey an imprimatur. Respondents were asked directly about this: "Do you think the fact the state sponsors the lottery makes people more likely to take part than they would if the same game were legally run privately, less likely.. or... doesn't the fact that the state sponsors it make a difference. Two thirds (65%) of all residents believe it makes little or no difference in people's willingness to gamble. But almost three in ten (28%) do think state sponsorship implies endorsement and encourages participation. One in twenty, thinks the fact the state is involved acts to discourage potential gamblers. Group differences on gender, partisan, and age lines are essentially non-existent or quite small.

This question also fails clearly to relate to general perceptions of advertising. Those who favor the state advertising legal games have 28% thinking state endorsement encourages participation, 2% say it makes it less likely, 67% fail to perceive an impact. The contrasting 5e group which opposes advertising is virtually indistinguishable: 29% say state backing makes people more likely to take part, 7% less likely, and 61% see no difference.

There is a sense that compulsive gambling ("I mean where people can't control the amount of money they bet") poses something of a challenge for our state. Overall, while only one in six (16%) call it a "very serious" problem at present, half (50%) call it "somewhat serious" and combining these two groups accounts for two respondents in three. About three in ten assigning compulsive gambling a lower importance, either not very serious (24%) or not serious at all (5%).

Women take compulsive gambling modestly more seriously than men as a group do. Partisanship makes for rather murky distinctions, if any. But age does relate to this perception. Only about half of the youngest group see compulsive

gambling as at least somewhat serious. This figure rises across age groups until it reaches over eight in ten among those sixty and older.

One component of the opinion climate about casinos here may well be what impact it would have on this problem. Seven in ten say that if there were more casino gambling in Wisconsin this would make the problem of compulsive gambling worse (19% much, 52% somewhat). One in ten think it would make it better (7% somewhat, 2% much). One in five either volunteered that it would make not difference or otherwise did not answer the question as put. All groups are more likely to think increased casino gambling would worsen the problem than to think it would help it, but by far the most common answer across the board is that this would be "somewhat" rather than "much" worse.

About a third of residents have been to one "a casino in Wisconsin" in the last year (8% within the past month, 16% in the past six months, 9% within the last year). Another third (36%) have been, but longer ago than one year. A final rough one third (31%) has never been to an in-state casino. Group differences are modest, but men are slightly more likely to have been recently than women. The proportion who has never been drops as one leaves the youngest group, and the likelihood of have been relatively recently modestly increases as one moves up the age ladder.

We earlier reported on several questions related to the gambling compacts and the budget, which are also included here for completeness' sake. Overall, the public split (52%-44%) on basic support for the compacts, which was higher among Democrats than Republicans and fell with age. There was sympathy for the idea of the legislature being involved in approving them (68%-29%). This sentiment increased (quite modestly) as one moved toward a GOP adherence, but age showed no clear pattern. The public split on whether casinos should be limited to Indian tribes (50%-46%), on which only the eldest group (which favored it) stood out. At the same time they favored permitting videogames in taverns. Indeed, even among those who favored keeping casinos an Indian monopoly, opinion on the videowagering split (44% in favor, 52%), while among those opposing it, sentiment was more, but not universally, positive (77% in favor, 20% opposed).

Two questions not dealing with the compacts, and so discussed here for the first time dealt with the impact of Indian casinos. On balance, Wisconsin residents think having Indian casinos has been a good thing (52%). Only one in eight label them "bad" for Wisconsin. Three in ten think there is little or no impact (31%).

Men are more positive than women (by about ten points), but there is little partisan cast to these views. Overall perceptions "bounce" a bit by age, with the proportion saying they are good for the state starting out just under six in ten, falling to half, going up again to almost six in ten and then falling off again. In any event, these differences are small in any absolute sense.

There is a definite sense that they have benefited the economy if not necessarily by a large amount. Two thirds feel they have helped the economy either a lot (10%) or somewhat (55%). By contrast, one in five (21%) do not think they have made much difference, and fewer than one in ten thinks they have HURT the economy (6% somewhat, 1% a lot). Men and women do not sharply differ. There is a somewhat greater likelihood among Democrats to think the economy has been helped (if not a lot). Scepticism is highest among those thirty to forty-four and lowest among the next older group (forty-five to fifty-nine).

GAMB05. Do you think the state should advertise legalized gambling like the lottery or daily numbers game?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
YES	54%	60%	48%	61%	51%	48%	77%	55%	52%	39%
NO	42	38	46	36	43	48	23	40	44	54
DON'T KNOW	4	3	6	3	7	4	--	5	4	7
REFUSED	*	*	*	1	--	--	--	--	*	1

GAMB07. Do you think the fact the state sponsors the lottery makes people more likely to take part than they would if the same game were legally run privately, less likely to take part, or doesn't the fact that the state sponsors it make a difference?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
MORE LIKELY	28%	32%	24%	29%	27%	23%	26%	29%	28%	29%
LESS LIKELY	5	3	6	4	3	8	7	2	4	7
NO DIFFERENCE	65	61	68	65	66	67	65	67	66	59
DON'T KNOW	3	4	2	2	4	3	2	2	2	6
REFUSED	*	*	--	*	--	--	--	--	*	--

GAMB08. How serious a problem do you think compulsive gambling is in Wisconsin. I mean where people can't control the amount of money they bet. Very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not serious at all?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
VERY SERIOUS	16%	14%	17%	13%	18%	12%	12%	16%	14%	19%
SOMEWHAT SERIOUS	50	46	53	56	45	47	40	40	54	63
NOT VERY SERIOUS	24	29	20	21	28	31	34	30	23	14
NOT SERIOUS AT ALL	5	6	3	5	5	4	10	5	4	1
DON'T KNOW	5	4	7	6	3	6	4	9	4	4
REFUSED	*	*	*	--	1	1	--	--	1	--

CASIN01. If there were more casino gambling in Wisconsin, would that make the problem of compulsive gambling a lot worse, somewhat worse, somewhat better, or much better than it would be without casinos here?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
MUCH WORSE	19%	16%	23%	16%	23%	20%	14%	24%	10%	27%
SOMEWHAT WORSE	52	56	47	58	46	52	49	52	57	45
SOMEWHAT BETTER	7	5	8	6	6	6	10	5	5	8
MUCH BETTER	2	2	1	3	2	--	6	--	1	2
NO DIFFERENCE (VOL.)	18	18	18	16	21	18	18	16	24	15
DON'T KNOW	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	4
REFUSED	*	*	*	*	*	1	--	*	1	--

CASIN10. And, have they helped the economy of Wisconsin a lot, helped it somewhat, hurt it somewhat, hurt it a lot, or not really made much difference to the state's economy?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
HELPED A LOT	10%	11%	9%	13%	9%	8%	11%	10%	10%	9%
HELPED SOMEWHAT	55	55	55	62	53	51	53	45	65	54
HURT SOMEWHAT	6	5	6	4	6	7	11	6	4	4
HURT A LOT	1	2	1	*	1	3	--	1	1	2
NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE	21	23	19	12	26	24	18	28	15	23
DON'T KNOW	8	5	11	9	5	7	8	11	5	7
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

CASIN11. Right now in Wisconsin and several other states, only Indian tribes are allowed to open casinos. Do you favor keeping this limitation or should other people also be able to open casinos here?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
FAVOR LIMITATION	50%	50%	49%	54%	51%	48%	43%	42%	50%	63%
ALLOW OTHERS TO OPEN	46	48	44	44	42	46	53	54	45	33
DON'T KNOW	3	2	5	2	6	3	3	3	4	3
REFUSED	1	*	2	--	2	2	--	2	1	1

CASIN12. Would you favor or oppose allowing things like video poker or slots in taverns or restaurants in Wisconsin if the people operating them paid a special fee to the state?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
FAVOR ALLOW VIDEOGAMES	58%	64%	53%	60%	51%	59%	70%	65%	63%	40%
OPPOSE ALLOWING	37	32	42	36	45	36	27	33	34	52
DON'T KNOW	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	2	8
REFUSED	1	*	1	1	*	*	--	--	1	1

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	34%	26%	41%	100%	--%	--%	39%	31%	32%	34%
REPUBLICAN	26	29	23	--	--	100	29	28	24	25
INDEPENDENT	26	33	20	--	100	--	16	23	29	33
OTHER	8	8	9	--	--	--	7	13	8	4
NONE	4	4	5	--	--	--	4	5	3	4
DON'T KNOW	1	*	1	--	--	--	3	--	1	--
REFUSED	1	1	1	--	--	--	2	*	1	1

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

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
18-29	13%	15%	12%	16%	8%	15%	100%	--%	--%	--%
30-44	30	29	31	28	26	33	--	100	--	--
45-59	31	30	31	30	34	28	--	--	100	--
60 and over	24	26	21	24	29	23	--	--	--	100
DK/REFUSED	3	1	5	3	3	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 507 randomly chosen state residents were interviewed for this survey by telephone between March 4 and 12, 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 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".

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