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 onesidedness 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 onesided (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 form 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 no 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 videogaming 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).
Statewide Marginals and Percentages for Key Groups

What follows is the exact question wording for each of the items referred to in the release. All results shown are for the basic sample of state residents. The first column is the percentage of the entire sample giving each response. The second and third report 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 age.

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

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>51%</td>
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GAMB01. Which of the following is closest to how you feel about gambling in general...
* It is always morally wrong
* It's irresponsible if you bet money you can't afford to lose, or
* It's just harmless entertainment.

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<th>GENDER</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>MORALLY WRONG</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRRESP. IF OVER HEAD</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARMLESS ENTERTAINMENT</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUSED</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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GAMB02. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the state of Wisconsin raising money through legalized gambling?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROVE</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISAPPROVE</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUSED</td>
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GAMB03. Do you regularly buy state lottery tickets?

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<th>GENDER</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
GAMB05. Do you think the state should advertise legalized gambling like the lottery or daily numbers game?

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<th>GENDER</th>
<th>PARTISANSHIP</th>
<th>AGE IN YEARS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUSED</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>PARTISANSHIP</th>
<th>AGE IN YEARS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORE LIKELY</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LESS LIKELY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO DIFFERENCE</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUSED</td>
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<td>*</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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?

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<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>PARTISANSHIP</th>
<th>AGE IN YEARS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERY SERIOUS</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMewhat SERIOUS</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT VERY SERIOUS</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT SERIOUS AT ALL</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUSED</td>
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</table>

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?

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<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUCH WORSE</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMewhat WORSE</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMewhat BETTER</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUCH BETTER</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO DIFFERENCE (VOL.)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUSED</td>
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</table>
CASINO2. When, if ever, was the most recent time you have been to a casino in Wisconsin?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITHIN PAST MONTH</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITHIN PAST SIX MONTHS</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITHIN PAST YEAR</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LONGER THAN YEAR AGO</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEVER BEEN</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
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CASINO6. Recently Governor Doyle has been making deals with Indian tribes allowing them to expand their gambling and essentially making the arrangements permanent instead of expiring every few years, in exchange for a bigger cut of their gambling money for the state. In general, do you favor or oppose these deals?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAVOR</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPPOSE</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</table>

CASINO7. In the past, the deals were made just between the Governor and the tribes. Regardless of whether you favor or oppose the arrangement, do you think they should require a vote of the Legislature, or is this the sort of thing a Governor should be able to do by himself?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHOULD HAVE BEEN VOTED</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNOR CAN DO ALONE</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUSED</td>
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CASINO9. In general, do you think having the Indian casinos has been good for Wisconsin, bad for Wisconsin, or not really made much difference one way or the other?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOOD</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAD</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO DIFFERENCE</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
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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?

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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELPED A LOT</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELPED SOMEWHAT</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HURT SOMEWHAT</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HURT A LOT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
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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?

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAVOR LIMITATION</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALLOW OTHERS TO OPEN</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUSED</td>
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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?

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<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAVOR ALLOW VIDEOGAMES</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPPOSE ALLOWING</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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QD05. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else?

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<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMOCRAT</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPUBLICAN</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDEPENDENT</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUSED</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
QD11. In what year were you born? (ENTER FOUR-DIGIT YEAR) (Calculated and grouped as below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>PARTISANSHIP</th>
<th>AGE IN YEARS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOT</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/REFUSED</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 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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