



Badger Poll™ #11, Release #6
University of Wisconsin Survey Center
University of Wisconsin Madison
November 26, 2003

NOTE: When using material from this release please cite the Badger Poll™ conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center, paid for by private funds at the University. The Capital Times (Madison) and the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel are the poll's media sponsors.

THANKSGIVING IN THE BADGER STATE
by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

Thanksgiving is traditionally a time, not only for getting together and eating a lot, but for taking stock of ones "blessings". To see how this plays out in the minds of Wisconsin residents, the Badger Poll™ asked a series of questions about Thanksgiving of a random sample of some 511 state residents, interviewed by telephone between October 21 and 27 of this year. Results have a "margin of error" of slightly more than 4% which means that had we asked these questions of the entire eligible population of the state at the same time the survey was conducted, there is only a one in twenty chance that the answers would vary by more than that amount from what we found from the luck of the draw of who happened to be interviewed.

The typical state resident feels that he or she has at least as much to be thankful for this year as was the case "a few years ago". Specifically, when asked several weeks ago whether they would have more, less, or about as much to be thankful for this year as they did "a few years ago", just under half (47%) said they would have more. Almost as many (41%) reported that they had about as much to be thankful for, while one in ten (10%) felt more thankful in the past than they expected to this year.

As a group, men and women differ only slightly, with the the latter more likely to see a change than the former (i.e., both "more" and "less" were slightly higher than among men, but the plurality of positive answers over negative ones was the same). Increased feelings of thankfulness were somewhat more common among self-described Republicans than Democrats. There seems to be something of a fall off as one ascends the age ladder, particularly as one crosses the forty-five divide. Below that point about six in ten say they are more thankful, this slips to under half among those between forty-five and fifty-nine and to one in three among the oldest group. When one groups residents by reported family income (up to \$30,000; between \$30,000 and \$75,000; \$75,000 and above), it appears that the middle group is most likely to say they are more thankful this year, the other two groups are close, but the higher income group is a bit more positive.

Of course, people can differ over what they feel especially thankful for. Respondents were presented with six areas and asked for each whether "it is something you feel especially thankful for this Thanksgiving or not". The first, "because you live in this country", received affirmation from virtually the entire sample (96%), leaving very little room for group differences, and

indeed the proportion saying that living here was something for which they were especially thankful ranged only from a "low" of 94% to a high of 99%.

Also coming in for almost unanimous feelings of gratitude was "because of the health of your family", Overall 96% said they felt especially thankful for that, in this season. No group had less than 93% saying they felt gratitude for this, while the high was 99%.

Two other areas found large majorities feeling thankful, albeit at levels revealing a good deal less unanimity of sentiment. About seven in eight (84%) were thankful "because of the military strength of the United States", while very slightly fewer (80%) said they were thankful "because of our system of government". Both of these areas showed substantial similarity across age, gender, and partisan groups. There was some tendency for those who are materially better off (in terms of income), to be somewhat more grateful for our system of government.

Above, we noted that the health of ones family was an almost universal object of feelings of gratitude. If one looks to the area of more material concerns, levels of appreciation are quite high if somewhat lower than for this question. Some 82% declare themselves especially thankful "because of your own personal economic situation", ranging from just about three in four among self-described Democrats to just under nine in ten among Republicans.

"Because of your work situation" also will commonly be included in the blessings for which state residents feel grateful this year. Overall, about three in four (78%) say they will feel especially thankful for this at Thanksgiving, while fewer than one in twenty (18%) say they will not. The same very modest group-based distinctions are evident. On both of these dimensions, there is some pattern of increased gratitude going along with higher income, but it is perhaps at least as remarkable that levels are as high across the board than that they (relatively modestly) increase from the lowest income group to the highest.

Thanksgiving is traditionally a time for getting together. Eight in ten (79%) will be spending the holiday with family (including their spouses, if any). One in seven will sit down with friends as well. Only a handful reported that they would be alone or working on the holiday or had not yet made plans when the survey was conducted.

About half will have Thanksgiving dinner at home (45%) while the same number will either go somewhere locally (26%) or travel out of town (20%) with the definition of local versus out of town being left to the respondents. The likelihood of hosting the dinner doubled from three in ten to six in ten as one moved from the youngest group (below thirty) to those forty-five to fifty-nine, then trailed off again. It was the youngest group who were most likely to travel out of town.

The typical table may be somewhat crowded. When respondents were asked with how many they would be sharing dinner, the median answer (the point dividing the sample into equal halves above and below it) fell in the eleven to fifteen range. While most people will either be staying at home or "locally" for the holiday, almost four in ten (37%) report that either they or "someone you will be spending Thanksgiving with" will "travel more than 100 miles to arrive at that place", reflecting the fact that Thanksgiving is the heaviest travel period of the entire year. As befits the cross-generational nature of this holiday, none of these characteristics (size of gathering, whether anyone has traveled a substantial amount) varies much across demographic groups.

There will be a certain sameness of menu on what has sometimes been referred to as "Turkey Day". Just under nine in ten (88%) say they will have a turkey dinner for the holiday. There are few demographic differences, but if anything, as income rises, the tendency to have the traditional menu goes up as well.

Further, nearly nine in ten (88%) report that what they will eat this year is "what you usually have on Thanksgiving", only one in eight (12%) say that it changes from year to year. Younger respondents are at least as likely as their older fellow residents to report a stable and traditional menu.

Traditional foods may have an appeal beyond their simple taste. Indeed, the question "when it comes right down to it, how much do you really like turkey", produces two in three (65%) who say a lot, and about one in four (22%) who confess it is only "some". (One in eight take the more negative positions of "only a little" or "not much at all").

Enthusiasm for the big bird is similar among men and women as groups. The middle two age groups are modestly more likely to say they really like turkey a lot. For whatever reasons, Democrats are modestly less likely to profess a fondness for turkey than either Independents or Republicans. But there also seems to be something of an income divide. Just under half of those reporting family income of thirty thousand dollars or less per year say they really like turkey. This figure is almost half again as high for the two higher income groups (just under seven in ten for those up to \$75,000 and just over that for those earning more).

In any event, it would seem that as he or she sits down to the dinner (probably turkey) this coming Thursday, the typical Wisconsite will be with a reasonably large group. Further, this season truly is one of Thanksgiving, not only in name, but for a variety of aspects of the lives of the average Wisconsin resident.

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 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 age. Finally the last three columns show respondents separately based on their reported family income, split at \$30,000 and \$75,000 before tax.

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

	GENDER			PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				INCOME \$K		
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	<30	<75	75+
MALE	49%	100%	--%	43%	48%	58%	53%	54%	46%	43%	33%	54%	65%
FEMALE	51	--	100	57	52	42	47	46	54	57	68	46	35

TURK06. Because of your own personal economic situation?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				INCOME \$K		
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	<30	<75	75+
ESPECIALLY THANKFUL	82%	83%	82%	78%	85%	88%	86%	83%	80%	86%	73%	84%	88%
NOT THANKFUL	17	15	18	20	14	12	14	16	18	12	27	16	7
DON'T KNOW	1	2	*	2	--	*	--	1	2	*	*	--	4
REFUSED	*	1	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	1

TURK07. Because of your work situation?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				INCOME \$K		
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	<30	<75	75+
ESPECIALLY THANKFUL	78%	81%	75%	77%	77%	86%	81%	80%	80%	72%	67%	82%	84%
NOT THANKFUL	18	16	19	19	18	8	19	19	18	10	25	16	12
DON'T KNOW	4	2	5	3	4	5	--	1	2	13	6	2	3
REFUSED	1	1	1	1	2	1	--	--	--	6	2	*	2

TURK08. With whom will you be spending Thanksgiving? Will you be with family, friends, or what?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				INCOME \$K		
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	<30	<75	75+
FAMILY/SPOUSE	79%	78%	79%	82%	80%	78%	82%	78%	78%	81%	77%	80%	79%
FRIENDS	3	5	1	3	3	4	--	5	1	6	5	4	--
FAMILY AND FRIENDS	14	12	15	12	9	16	16	14	15	6	13	12	20
WORKING ON T'GIVING	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	--	3	--	1	2	1
SPENDING DAY ALONE	2	2	2	*	3	--	--	2	2	1	2	2	1
PLANS NOT YET MADE	1	1	1	1	1	--	1	*	--	2	1	1	--
OTHER	1	1	1	--	2	*	--	*	--	2	1	*	--
DON'T KNOW	*	*	1	*	*	*	--	--	--	2	1	*	--
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

TURK09. (IF NOT working or spending Thanksgiving alone) Will you be spending Thanksgiving at your own home, going someplace locally, or travelling out of town?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				INCOME \$K		
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	<30	<75	75+
AT HOME	45%	45%	46%	47%	56%	40%	32%	41%	60%	44%	41%	41%	56%
SOMEPLACE LOCALLY	26	27	26	28	25	27	27	29	22	26	31	29	21
OUT OF TOWN	20	21	20	17	15	26	39	18	13	22	23	21	17
DON'T KNOW	8	8	8	9	4	7	2	12	6	9	5	10	6
REFUSED	*	--	*	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--

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

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				INCOME \$K		
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	<30	<75	75+
DEMOCRAT	30%	27%	33%	100%	--%	--%	28%	28%	32%	33%	33%	34%	23%
REPUBLICAN	30	36	25	--	--	100	41	30	25	28	23	31	35
INDEPENDENT	21	21	21	--	100	--	8	21	25	26	25	19	22
OTHER	11	10	12	--	--	--	13	10	14	6	10	7	17
NONE	6	6	5	--	--	--	6	9	2	4	6	6	3
DON'T KNOW	1	--	1	--	--	--	1	1	1	--	1	1	--
REFUSED	2	1	3	--	--	--	2	1	1	3	3	2	1

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

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				INCOME \$K		
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	<30	<75	75+
18-29	15%	17%	14%	14%	6%	21%	100%	--%	--%	--%	19%	15%	10%
30-44	31	34	28	29	31	31	--	100	--	--	15	36	42
45-59	30	29	32	32	37	25	--	--	100	--	23	31	38
60 and over	21	18	23	23	26	20	--	--	--	100	39	16	9
DK/REFUSED	3	2	3	2	1	3	--	--	--	--	4	2	2

QD13. About how much was your TOTAL FAMILY INCOME last year before taxes, was it... (READ CATEGORIES AS NECESSARY)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				INCOME \$K		
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	<30	<75	75+
LESS THAN \$10,000	4%	3%	4%	4%	5%	1%	6%	3%	2%	4%	15%	--%	--%
\$10,000-\$15,000	3	2	5	4	4	2	7	1	2	6	14	--	--
\$15,000-\$20,000	4	3	4	5	4	2	4	*	2	9	15	--	--
\$20,000-\$30,000	12	8	17	12	14	12	11	7	10	23	55	--	--
\$30,000-\$50,000	23	27	19	27	20	23	25	23	20	26	--	52	--
\$50,000-\$75,000	21	22	20	23	20	22	18	28	25	9	--	48	--
\$75,000-\$100,000	12	15	10	12	11	12	7	17	16	5	--	--	57
OVER \$100,000	9	13	5	4	12	13	8	13	11	3	--	--	43
DON'T KNOW	4	2	6	3	2	4	6	3	2	6	--	--	--
REFUSED	8	6	11	5	8	9	8	6	9	9	--	--	--

* 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 511 randomly chosen state residents were interviewed for this survey by telephone between October 21 and 28, 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".