



Badger Poll@ #14, Release #2
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DRUNK DRIVING AND THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

When respondents were asked, without reference to the particulars of Attorney General Lautenschlager's situation, how serious a problem drunk driving represents in Wisconsin, the population is disposed to take the problem seriously. Just under half (48%) call it a "very serious" problem, and the vast bulk of the remainder (40%), accounting for almost nine residents in every ten, said it was "somewhat serious".

Women as a group were substantially more likely than men (58% compared to 36%) to label the problem as serious. Over half of those under thirty see drunk driving as very serious, which proportion declines as one moves up the age ladder to the forty-five to fifty-nine year old group, before increasing again among those sixty and older. There is, however, no strong partisan pattern, although as a group Republicans are slightly less likely to call drunk driving very serious than are Democrats, and the proportion is again slightly lower among Independents.

There is general satisfaction on balance with the severity of the laws on the books in this state. Overall, almost half (46%) label them as about right. The group (half of the overall population) which would prefer to see a change broke almost two to one (31%-18%) towards thinking that the laws are now "too lenient" rather than "too strict".

Men and women were similar in the proportion who see the laws as appropriate in their severity, but there are differences when it comes to the direction of desired change. Men are as likely to say the laws are now too strict as to say they are too lenient. Four times as many women think the existing laws are too lenient as believe they are too strict. Democrats and Republicans do not differ much as groups, while Independents are less critical and desirous of tightening. Both youngest and (especially) oldest age groups look more to making the law stricter than do the age groups in the middle. Not surprisingly, those who label drunk driving as a very serious problem are much more critical than those according it a lower level of seriousness. More than half of the former group thinks existing laws are too lenient, the balance of opinion among the latter is that the laws are now either appropriate or too strict.

By a five to three (57%-35%) overall majority, Wisconsin residents would favor a law mandating taking away the driver's license of anyone convicted of drunk driving. With the exception of those who label the problem other than

"very serious" (who are against such a notion by about the same margin as the overall population favors it), all groups examined on balance favor this regimen.

The balance differs somewhat across groups, however. Men come close to being split, while women favor it by five to two. Age differences are muted, though younger residents are at least as supportive as their older counterparts. Eight in ten of those calling drunk driving very serious would favor this measure contrasted with under four in ten of those assessing it as a less serious problem. Partisanship makes scarcely any difference at all.

If driving drunk results in an accident there is even more support for real punishment. Overall, two thirds would favor "a law that required a jail sentence for anyone convicted of drunk driving that caused an accident". One in four (26%) oppose such a mandated punishment.

There is a gender difference, but it is more muted than some so far noted. Support starts out high (seven in eight) among the youngest and drops to somewhat over half among both those forty-five to fifty-nine and sixty and over. Those who view drunk driving as less serious in the abstract nonetheless favor such a measure if there is an accident (by about five to three) while those calling the problem very serious are more onesidedly in favor. Once again, partisanship does NOT display any clear pattern.

A short series of questions dealt specifically with the Attorney General's recent arrest for drunk driving. Reminded both of the specific consequences she incurred, and the fact that this was her first offense, residents tended to feel her punishment was appropriate. Overall, six in ten (60%) said that what happened to her was just about right. Those who would change it tended (27%-10%) to feel the punishment was too low rather than too high.

This was NOT an issue notably separating men as a group from women as a group, nor were there clear age differences. Those who view drunk driving more seriously were somewhat more likely to feel that her punishment was too low rather than too high than those viewing the problem less seriously, but the most common view in both groups was that it was appropriate. Republicans as a group were a bit more critical than Democrats, but it was Independents who raised the most doubts (though again, a majority of all three groups felt what happened to her was appropriate).

The next question reminded respondents that the consequences for Lautenschlager were roughly in line with how other state employees were treated, and asked if this were appropriate. Over three in four (77%) said the Attorney General should be treated about the same as others. The minority (22%) who favored differential treatment was almost unanimous in wanting her to suffer a higher penalty.

This sentiment held across all groups, with most showing no or only very weak group patterns. The youngest group was modestly most likely to call for stiffer penalties (but still seven in ten would not single her out). The clearest differences -- albeit still not great -- were on partisan grounds, with Republicans twice as likely to call for a higher penalty than were Democrats.

When respondents were directly asked, "do you think Lautenschlager should resign", the answer by a 67%-24% majority, was "no". Once again all groups came down on the same side. Neither gender nor age made much of a difference. Those viewing the problem as very serious were about ten points more likely to favor her resignation (but still opposed it by two to one). Twice as many Republicans

as Democrats felt she should leave office, but this meant that a two to one majority among the GOP did not favor her resignation while Democrats opposed it by five to one.

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. The final two columns separately report those who called drunk driving a very serious problem in Wisconsin contrasted with those who chose a less serious description.

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

	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				SERIOUS		
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	YES	NO
MALE	49%	100%	--%	37%	60%	47%	45%	54%	52%	44%	37%	60%
FEMALE	51	--	100	63	40	53	55	46	48	56	63	40

LICEN01. Do you have a valid driver's license?

	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				SERIOUS		
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	YES	NO
YES	97%	98%	96%	97%	95%	99%	98%	96%	99%	95%	97%	97%
NO	3	2	4	3	5	1	2	4	1	5	3	3
DON'T KNOW	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

DRINK01. How serious a problem do you think drunk driving is right now in Wisconsin? Is it a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not a problem at all?

	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				SERIOUS		
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	YES	NO
VERY SERIOUS	48%	36%	58%	55%	42%	46%	56%	45%	38%	57%	100%	--%
SOMEWHAT SERIOUS	40	45	36	35	45	41	42	35	47	34	--	78
NOT VERY SERIOUS	10	17	4	10	12	10	2	16	14	7	--	20
NOT A PROBLEM AT ALL	1	2	--	--	*	2	--	3	1	--	--	2
DON'T KNOW	1	--	1	1	*	1	--	--	*	2	--	--
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

DRINK02. In general, do you think the laws on drunk driving in Wisconsin are too strict, too lenient, or just about right?

	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				SERIOUS		
	TOT	M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	YES	NO
TOO STRICT	18%	27%	10%	12%	22%	18%	18%	26%	21%	8%	6%	30%
TOO LENIENT	31	21	42	36	25	34	32	29	25	39	54	11
JUST ABOUT RIGHT	46	49	44	48	50	44	47	42	50	46	36	56
DON'T KNOW	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	6	4	3
REFUSED	*	--	1	1	--	--	--	--	1	--	1	--

LAUT04. Do you think Lautenschlager should resign?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				SERIOUS	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	YES	NO
YES, SHOULD RESIGN	24%	26%	23%	15%	24%	31%	24%	27%	24%	23%	29%	20%
NO, SHOULD NOT	67	67	66	75	66	62	63	66	68	69	60	73
DON'T KNOW	8	7	10	9	9	6	13	7	7	8	10	7
REFUSED	1	1	1	--	2	1	--	--	2	1	2	--

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

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				SERIOUS	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	YES	NO
DEMOCRAT	27%	21%	34%	100%	--%	--%	20%	27%	27%	32%	31%	24%
REPUBLICAN	30	29	32	--	--	100	32	27	29	33	29	31
INDEPENDENT	27	33	21	--	100	--	29	27	26	27	24	30
OTHER	11	15	7	--	--	--	9	14	14	4	11	11
NONE	3	2	4	--	--	--	4	4	2	2	3	3
DON'T KNOW	1	1	2	--	--	--	5	--	1	*	1	1
REFUSED	1	--	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				SERIOUS	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	YES	NO
18-29	15%	14%	16%	11%	16%	16%	100%	--%	--%	--%	18%	13%
30-44	23	26	21	23	24	21	--	100	--	--	22	25
45-59	34	36	31	34	33	33	--	--	100	--	27	40
60 and over	26	24	29	31	27	29	--	--	--	100	32	21
DK/REFUSED	1	--	3	1	*	2	--	--	--	--	1	1

* 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 March 23 and 31, 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".