



Badger Poll™ #1, Release 1  
University of Wisconsin Survey Center  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
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### Governor McCallum's Performance and the State Budget Situation

According to the inaugural Badger Poll™, conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center, and sponsored by Wisconsin Public Broadcasting and the Capital Times, Wisconsin residents give Governor McCallum mediocre marks on job performance. Overall, when asked to rate the job he is doing on a four point scale, one in four believe he deserves a rating of either excellent (3%) or good (23%). On the other hand, some four in ten (40%) think "fair" is more like it, and one in four (23%) rate him "poor".

When he is compared to his predecessor, the sense that these ratings are not especially strong is emphasized. "Looking back", two thirds of state residents give Tommy Thompson either excellent (15%) or good (51%) ratings. One in three opt for either of the two lower marks: fair (23%) or poor (8%).

There is little systematic difference between men and women in terms of McCallum's job rating, and if there was any for Thompson, it was limited as well. Partisanship, however is another story. Fewer than one in five Democrats gives McCallum either of the top two grades, which proportion is twice as high among Republicans. Correspondingly, three Democrats in four give the incumbent one of the two lower ratings, including one in three who call his performance poor. Half of Republicans choose one of these ratings, but only one in eight call McCallum's handling of his job "poor". Independents are not enthusiastic about the Governor, but not as likely as Democrats to call it poor.

All three partisan groups rate Thompson retrospectively higher than they now do McCallum. Eight in ten Republicans called Thompson at least good, twice as many as reach this level for his successor. Almost six in ten Democrats rated the former Governor this high, about three times as many as accord McCallum the same esteem. There is a similar gap for Independents.

Undoubtedly part of the reason is a perceived worsening in the situation in which the state now finds itself, compared to the Thompson years. Specifically, when asked, "compared to before McCallum became Governor", only 5% think Wisconsin is now in better shape than it was. Some four in ten (40%) say it is worse off, although fully half (50%) of state residents surveyed say it is "about as well off". A plurality of Democrats think things are worse now, while the single most common opinion among Independents and (even more) Republicans is that things are the same. But in all groups, those who perceive a worsening clearly outnumber the relative handful who think things are better.

It should be noted, however, that the political consequences -- especially as we swing into the election campaign -- may well hinge on WHY change (if any) is perceived to have occurred. When respondents were asked "how much of any change is due to Governor McCallum and his policies", only one in ten (11%) said "a lot". A further one in three (32%) said "some", but this group was no bigger than that (also 32%) who felt "only a little" was due to the incumbent. And at least as many (15% compared to 11%) felt that none at all of the change was to his credit or blame as felt that he bore "a lot" of responsibility. The similarity of partisan groups in this perception is quite striking.

What of the budget? One important factor in how residents look at budget choices is whether or not they perceive that the situation could be resolved with little pain simply by cutting back on "waste and fraud". It would appear that there is a good deal of scepticism among state residents concerning the reality of the hard choices which the Governor and Legislature must make. Specifically, when asked "in order to balance the state budget, do you think a choice will have to be made between serious service cuts and big increases in taxes", those choosing either alternative come down about two to one (58%-28%) believing that it "is possible to both maintain essential services and keep taxes down". There are only very modest differences based on residents' self-described partisanship on this issue.

The public claims to have been paying rather limited attention to the Governor's proposal (described as his "tax and spending plan"). One in six (16%) say they have been paying "a lot" of attention, almost half (43%) think "some" is the appropriate categorization. Another one in five (19%) said they were paying "only a little attention", and a similar sized group (20%) reported paying "not much at all". Again, there were only very modest partisan differences.

The plan was described "to make up the deficit, the Governor has proposed holding taxes where they are, but cutting a number of programs, in particular the money the state gives cities and towns for purposes OTHER than education". The balance of reaction is negative, but only modestly so. Specifically, four in ten say the favor the plan (either strongly, 7%, or somewhat, 34%). On the other side, just over half express some degree of opposition (21% strongly, 33% somewhat). Self-described Democrats come down against the plan by about two to one, Republicans are more evenly divided, but tend to favor it. For neither group, however, does the proportion feeling strongly in either direction rival the proportion expressing a sentiment only somewhat on the positive or negative side. Self-described Independents fall between the two, with about the same balance as Republicans, but on the other side. But what is remarkable, perhaps, is the lack of really strong opinion.

Respondents were asked about a series of type of spending, and asked for each whether compared to other areas, it should be "a higher priority than it now is, a lower priority, or have about the same priority". Results overall, especially coupled with the doubts about the need for hard fiscal choices (other than trimming "waste"), suggest that if there are real cuts in service, opinion may crystalize in a more negative way.

The following chart shows the areas, listed in order of the amount by which those who advocate a higher priority outnumber those who feel the area should have a lower priority. (The order of questions on the survey is shown in the detailed tables following this summary.)

Four areas cluster at the top, for each of which the amount by which those who favor an increase of priority outnumber those who favor a decrease comes to one third or more of the sample. They differ in terms of whether the "typical" position is to leave the priority where it is, or whether respondents most commonly look to an increase however.

When it comes to "helping pay for local schools", just under half (47%) opt for an increase of priority, slightly more than would leave it where it is (42%). The pattern is reversed for "fighting crime" (49% and 44% respectively). In each case, however, fewer than one in ten would like to see the area "de-emphasized", relative to others. (Whether in fact an across the board cut would be perceived as holding priority constant would very much remain to be seen).

Three other areas also show a clear predominance of opinion in favor of maintained or increased priority. These are "public higher education", "protecting the environment", and "reducing the use of illegal drugs". For the first and third of these, the single most common opinion is that priority should be increased, for the second, views are evenly split between those who would like to see more emphasis and those who would hold it constant. The proportion wanting to see a relative decrease in priority ranges from one in ten to one in six.

The next three areas show only a relatively small plurality in favor of hiking priority as opposed to lowering it. For all three ("welfare and care for the poor", "roads and highways", "aid to cities and towns"), however, the dominant opinion is clearly that the relative priority should remain unchanged, which position was espoused by an absolute majority of all respondents. Only in one area ("mass transit") was a lowering of priority

more popular than increasing it overall. For this area, roughly twice as many wanted to see a reduced priority than wanted an increase. Still, the four in ten who would keep the priority the same is (barely) the single most common opinion, on a rough par with the group which would see a cut.

Chart I: Summary of Desired Relative Priority

	More	Same	Less
Pay for local schools	47	42	9
Fighting crime	44	49	6
Public Higher Ed	48	36	13
Protect environment	44	45	10
Reduce use of illegal drugs	45	38	16
Welfare and care for poor	30	54	15
Roads and Highways	25	59	15
Aid to cities/towns	24	55	19
Mass transit	19	40	37

What this means is that virtually any perceived cut in priority will leave significant groups upset. This must be understood, however, in the context that many doubt that any real hard choice must be made. For them, the case has not yet been made that belt-tightening will not be sufficient, and until this case is made, it is likely that real cuts will be hard to sell, because their necessity is far from a given.

Within this overall pattern, there are partisan differences. Thus, while the single most common opinion for all three partisan groups is that the priority of welfare should stay the same, Democrats show almost twice as much sentiment that it should be increased as do either Independents or Republicans.

Roads and highways are not the occasion for big splits.

On balance, mass transit is not "popular" for any group, but the degree to which a lowering of priority has support tends to increase as one moves across the partisan spectrum from Democrat to Republican.

All three groups' most common opinion is that (non-education) aid to cities and towns should hold its current priority. Democrats are more likely to want to see it increased than decreased, however, while Republicans and (to a slightly lesser extent) Independents are more willing to see it drop than eager to see it go up in priority.

Support for a greater emphasis on public higher education drops from being favored by two Democrats in three to only about one in four Republicans. On balance, GOP adherents are "neutral" on the priority of this area, with roughly equal sized groups favoring an increase as favor a decrease in priority.

All groups are more likely to want an increase in the priority of paying for local schools than to be willing to see a decrease. But Democrats clearly are most positive -- a majority of this group favors an increase in priority, while among both Independents and Republicans, a plurality would maintain it, which plurality is greater among Republicans than those who favor neither party.

The three groups are quite close when it comes to the priority of "fighting crime". Still, the sentiment for an increase is at least as strong among Democrats as it is among Republican. There is scarcely any more distinction for "reducing the use of illegal

drugs", although this area tends to find fewer opting for maintaining priority, and relatively more willing to see a decrease than was the case for crime in general.

The idea of "protecting the environment", however, seems to tap different partisan nerves. A narrow majority of Democrats opt for an increase, a larger majority of Republicans would keep things the same.

Overall, Republicans are somewhat less likely to voice support for increasing the priority of any area than are Democrats, in keeping with their "smaller government" mindset. But one should not overemphasize these patterns, and the key seems to be that -- absent a conviction that real choices are in the offing -- there is not very much backing for any major reshuffling of priorities.

In summary, these data suggest that the public has not yet really come to grips with hard choices in the budget area. Many hold out hope that tinkering and eliminating waste could avoid any hard choice between revenue enhancement and service cuts. So long as the public does NOT buy the assumption that real choice is necessary, it is hard to mobilize support for any particular solution. If anything, overall sentiment seems to be "try to keep everything as it has been", whether or not that is realistic.

At the same time, the pattern of opinion found here leaves lots of space for opinion to change, especially as (or if) residents become convinced that there really are insufficient resources to keep going as we have been. At that point, when prioritizing areas is seen as more necessary than it is now, the public may be more ready for hard choices than now seems evident.

#### Statewide Marginals and Percentages for Key Groups

What follows is the exact question wording for each of the items referred to in the release. 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 their age group (calculated from year of birth: 18-29; 30-44; 45-59; sixty and older.)

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

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
MALE	49%	100%	--%	43%	52%	53%	51%	51%	50%	43%
FEMALE	51	--	100	57	48	47	49	49	50	58

Q04: How would you rate the job Scott McCallum is doing as Governor of Wisconsin? Excellent, good, fair or poor?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
Excellent	3%	2%	3%	3%	--%	6%	5%	2%	3%	2%
Good	23	24	21	16	17	35	28	24	17	27
Fair	40	41	39	41	52	35	38	39	43	38
Poor	23	23	22	34	20	13	15	22	26	22
TOO SOON TO TEL (vol.)	4	5	4	2	2	3	--	4	6	5
DON'T KNOW	7	4	10	5	8	7	12	6	4	7
REFUSED	2	1	2	*	1	1	2	2	2	--

Q05: And, looking back, how would you rate the job Tommy Thompson did as Governor?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
Excellent	15%	14%	15%	12%	15%	19%	11%	16%	16%	15%
Good	51	54	48	46	47	62	58	53	42	56

Fair	23	22	23	26	29	15	25	18	28	20
Poor	8	7	8	15	8	2	2	8	11	7
DON'T KNOW	3	1	4	2	2	2	3	4	1	3
REFUSED	1	1	2	--	--	1	1	1	2	--

WICMP04: Compared to before McCallum became Governor, do you think Wisconsin is now in better shape than it was, worse shape than it was or about as well off as it was?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
BETTER OFF THAN IT WAS	5%	5%	5%	6%	5%	6%	11%	4%	4%	3%
WORSE OFF THAN IT WAS	40	42	37	51	37	31	29	37	46	40
ABOUT AS WELL OFF	50	50	51	39	55	60	55	53	48	49
DON'T KNOW	4	3	6	3	3	4	5	5	1	7
REFUSED	1	1	1	1	*	1	1	1	2	--

WICMP05: How much of any change is due to Governor McCallum and his policies? A lot, some, only a little, or none at all?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
A LOT	11%	9%	13%	12%	13%	9%	8%	12%	14%	9%
SOME	32	33	32	38	30	33	33	31	32	33
ONLY A LITTLE	32	35	28	29	30	34	38	33	30	28
NONE AT ALL	15	16	14	12	19	18	11	13	20	16
DON'T KNOW	9	6	11	8	6	5	10	10	4	13
REFUSED	1	*	2	1	2	1	--	1	1	*

BUDG02: In order to balance the state budget, do you think a choice will have to be made between serious service cuts and big increases in taxes, or is it possible to both maintain essential services and keep taxes down?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
HAVE TO CHOOSE	28%	29%	27%	32%	30%	31%	18%	27%	33%	33%
DOESN'T HAVE TO CHOOSE	56	54	58	52	58	56	67	57	52	51
SOME OF EACH (VOL.)	6	7	5	5	4	7	6	8	5	5
DON'T KNOW	8	8	9	9	7	5	10	7	7	12
REFUSED	2	2	1	2	1	1	--	2	2	--

BUDG06: How much attention have you been paying to Governor McCallum's tax and spending plan? A lot, some, only a little, or not much at all?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
A LOT	16%	19%	13%	17%	16%	18%	4%	13%	20%	24%
SOME	43	44	42	48	43	47	38	44	50	33
ONLY A LITTLE	19	20	19	19	21	15	27	20	15	21
NOT MUCH AT ALL	20	16	24	16	19	18	32	22	14	19
DON'T KNOW	1	1	1	1	*	1	--	1	*	2
REFUSED	*	--	1	--	*	1	--	1	1	--

BUDG07: To make up the deficit, the Governor has proposed holding taxes where they are, but cutting a number of programs, in particular the money the state gives cities and towns for purposes OTHER than education. In general, do you oppose the plan?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
FAVOR STRONGLY	7%	10%	4%	3%	9%	13%	4%	6%	9%	8%
FAVOR SOMEWHAT	34	34	34	28	35	43	34	37	35	27
OPPOSE SOMEWHAT	33	29	37	39	34	26	37	32	30	36
OPPOSE STRONGLY	21	22	20	27	20	15	23	19	22	21
DON'T KNOW	4	4	5	3	2	2	2	5	3	8
REFUSED	1	1	1	--	--	1	--	1	1	--

BUDG08: The state will have to choose how it spends money on various programs. Please tell me -- compared to other areas -- whether each of the following should be a higher priority than it is now, a lower priority, or have about the same priority? Welfare and care for the poor?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
HIGHER PRIORITY	30%	31%	29%	40%	22%	23%	37%	31%	25%	33%
LOWER PRIORITY	15	16	14	10	16	17	15	16	14	14
SAME PRIORITY	54	53	55	50	61	59	47	50	62	52
DON'T KNOW	1	*	1	*	--	1	1	2	--	1
REFUSED	*	*	1	*	*	1	1	1	*	--

BUDG09: Roads and highways? (Should that be a higher priority for state spending than it is now, a lower priority, or about the same?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
HIGHER PRIORITY	25%	29%	21%	23%	20%	25%	31%	25%	24%	24%
LOWER PRIORITY	15	9	20	17	14	13	12	15	18	11
SAME PRIORITY	59	62	57	60	66	62	56	58	58	64
DON'T KNOW	1	*	1	*	--	--	1	1	--	1
REFUSED	*	--	1	--	*	1	--	1	*	--

BUDG10: Mass transit? (Should that be a higher priority for state spending than it is now, a lower priority, or about the same?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
HIGHER PRIORITY	19%	20%	18%	27%	14%	14%	19%	18%	18%	21%
LOWER PRIORITY	37	43	32	34	35	46	22	41	47	29
SAME PRIORITY	40	36	45	38	48	37	57	39	33	42
DON'T KNOW	3	2	5	2	3	3	2	3	2	7
REFUSED	*	--	1	--	*	1	--	1	*	--

BUDG11: Aid to cities and towns? (Should that be a higher priority for state spending than it is now, a lower priority, or about the same?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
HIGHER PRIORITY	24%	22%	25%	32%	18%	14%	38%	24%	19%	19%
LOWER PRIORITY	19	25	13	13	24	28	6	21	25	18
SAME PRIORITY	55	51	59	54	56	57	54	53	56	59
DON'T KNOW	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	4
REFUSED	*	--	1	--	*	1	--	1	*	--

BUDG12: Public higher education? (Should that be a higher priority for state spending than it is now, a lower priority, or about the same?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
HIGHER PRIORITY	48%	45%	51%	64%	43%	28%	72%	48%	43%	39%
LOWER PRIORITY	13	15	11	6	15	24	7	13	13	17
SAME PRIORITY	36	39	35	29	41	47	20	36	42	42
DON'T KNOW	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	2
REFUSED	1	*	1	1	*	1	--	1	1	--

BUDG14: Helping pay for local schools? (Should that be a higher priority for state spending than it is now, a lower priority, or about the same?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
HIGHER PRIORITY	47%	44%	49%	55%	41%	34%	78%	53%	36%	33%
LOWER PRIORITY	9	12	7	5	13	15	2	6	13	16
SAME PRIORITY	42	43	41	38	46	50	20	41	49	49
DON'T KNOW	1	1	2	2	--	1	1	1	1	3
REFUSED	*	--	1	--	*	1	--	1	*	--

BUDG15: Fighting crime? (Should that be a higher priority for state spending than it is now, a lower priority, or about the same?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
HIGHER PRIORITY	44%	40%	48%	45%	42%	38%	55%	44%	38%	47%
LOWER PRIORITY	6	7	4	8	7	5	2	5	7	6
SAME PRIORITY	49	52	47	47	50	57	42	50	55	47
DON'T KNOW	1	*	1	--	1	--	1	1	--	*
REFUSED	*	--	1	--	*	1	--	1	*	--

BUDG16: Reducing the use of illegal drugs? (Should that be a higher priority for state spending than it is now, a lower priority, or about the same?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
HIGHER PRIORITY	45%	43%	47%	47%	41%	38%	47%	38%	44%	56%
LOWER PRIORITY	16	20	11	15	20	16	18	18	16	10
SAME PRIORITY	38	36	41	36	39	45	33	43	40	32
DON'T KNOW	1	1	1	2	--	--	1	1	*	2
REFUSED	*	--	1	--	*	1	--	1	*	--

BUDG17: Protecting the environment? (Should that be a higher priority for state spending than it is now, a lower priority, or about the same?)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
HIGHER PRIORITY	44%	46%	42%	52%	47%	26%	55%	47%	37%	38%
LOWER PRIORITY	10	11	10	9	13	14	10	8	12	13
SAME PRIORITY	45	43	47	38	40	59	34	45	51	47
DON'T KNOW	1	*	1	1	--	*	1	1	--	2
REFUSED	*	--	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	32%	28%	35%	100%	--%	--%	26%	28%	36%	36%
Republican	28	31	26	--	--	100	32	33	23	31
Independent	22	23	21	--	100	--	22	18	27	20
Other	11	14	8	--	--	--	8	16	10	5
None	4	2	6	--	--	--	10	4	3	3
DON'T KNOW	1	*	2	--	--	--	2	1	1	*
REFUSED	2	1	3	--	--	--	1	2	2	3



QD11: In what year were you born? (ENTER FOUR-DIGIT YEAR)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS			
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+
18-29	15%	16%	15%	12%	15%	17%	100%	--%	--%	--%
30-44	31	32	29	27	25	35	--	100	--	--
45-59	32	33	32	37	39	26	--	--	100	--
60 and over	20	17	22	23	18	22	--	--	--	100
DON'T KNOW	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
REFUSED	2	1	2	2	4	--	--	--	--	--

\* denotes less than .5%

-- denotes 0%

#### HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

This inaugural BADGER POLL™ was conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center as part of its ongoing program of surveys 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 poll was sponsored in part by Wisconsin Public Broadcasting and the Capital Times newspaper of Madison. 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 ideals of rigorous independence.

A total of 597 randomly selected adult residents of Wisconsin were interviewed over the telephone from March 5-17, 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 about +/- 4%. This means that, had we asked every eligible adult 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".