



Wood Communications Group
Strategic Communications Seminar
Government Services, Spending and Taxes
October 7-11, 2004
N=500 18+ Respondents

1. When you think about how things are going here in Wisconsin, would you say things are on the right track, or do you believe that they have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

Table with 2 columns: Response and Percentage. Rows: Right track (48%), Wrong track (40%), Not sure/don't know (13%)

2. And, how about when you think about how things are going in your county, would you say things are on the right track, or do you believe that they have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

Table with 2 columns: Response and Percentage. Rows: Right track (52%), Wrong track (38%), Not sure/don't know (10%)

3. And, when you think about how things are going in your city/town/village, would you say things are on the right track, or do you believe that they have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

Table with 2 columns: Response and Percentage. Rows: Right track (62%), Wrong track (30%), Not sure/don't know (8%)

4. I'm going to read you a list of local services and I'd like you to tell me how important you think each of these services is to you and your family's personal wellbeing. For example, would you say that having good local police protection is very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all to you and your family's personal wellbeing?

Table with 6 columns: Service, Very important, Somewhat important, Not too important, Not important at all, Not sure. Rows: Police protection, Fire protection, Parks and recreation, Garbage collection



Streets and highway maintenance	58%	35%	5%	1%	0%
Public K-12 education	81%	11%	3%	4%	0%
Planning for growth	51%	37%	7%	3%	2%
Local economic development	54%	37%	6%	3%	1%
Public health	75%	21%	3%	1%	0%
Sewer maintenance	58%	24%	5%	9%	4%
Public transportation	22%	33%	21%	20%	4%

5. I'm going to read you that list again and this time I'd like you to tell me how good a job you think your local government does in delivering that particular service to you and your family. For example, when it comes to making sure you and your family has the police protection you need, would you say your local government does an excellent, good, fair or poor job of delivering that protection?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Sure
Police protection	34%	47%	13%	4%	1%
Fire protection	42%	46%	9%	2%	1%
Parks and recreation	24%	50%	19%	5%	1%
Garbage collection	31%	50%	9%	5%	5%
Streets and highway maintenance	14%	51%	27%	8%	1%
Public K-12 education	25%	45%	20%	7%	4%
Planning for growth	9%	40%	32%	15%	3%
Local economic development	8%	42%	32%	15%	3%
Public health	16%	55%	20%	7%	3%
Sewer maintenance	17%	48%	18%	7%	10%
Public transportation	7%	33%	25%	18%	17%

6. I'm going to read you that list one more time and I'd like you to tell me whether you think your local government is spending about the right amount of money, too much money, or not enough money on that service. For example, would you say the amount your local government pays for police protection is about the right amount, too much, or not enough?

	Right amount	Too much	Not enough	Not sure
Police protection	66%	11%	20%	4%
Fire protection	75%	3%	17%	5%
Parks and recreation	69%	9%	19%	3%
Garbage collection	76%	6%	8%	9%
Street and highway maintenance	60%	9%	28%	3%
Public K–12 education	42%	13%	41%	4%
Planning for growth	49%	12%	32%	7%
Local economic development	55%	10%	30%	6%
Public health	60%	3%	30%	7%
Sewer maintenance	68%	6%	14%	12%
Public transportation	50%	6%	29%	14%

7. Now, I'd like you to tell me which unit of local government has the most responsibility for providing and managing each of these services. For example, when it comes to providing police protection for you and your family would you say that your local city/town/village government has the most responsibility, or do you think that your local county government has the most responsibility, or do you think that they both manage and provide police protection?

	Local city/town/village	County	Both	Not sure
Police protection	47%	17%	34%	1%
Fire protection	66%	9%	23%	2%
Parks and recreation	44%	23%	30%	2%
Garbage collection	71%	10%	13%	7%
Streets and highway maintenance	22%	30%	47%	1%
Public K-12 education	49%	13%	34%	4%
Planning for growth	37%	18%	42%	2%
Local economic development	40%	19%	38%	3%
Public health	17%	42%	37%	4%
Sewer maintenance	63%	13%	17%	7%
Public transportation	36%	30%	21%	13%

8. I'm going to read you a list of taxes and I'd like you to tell me approximately what percentage of that tax is spent on local services, not including public schools in your community? Do you think that [ITEM] pays for more than 90%, 75% to 90%, 50% to 75, 25% to 50%, 10% to 25%, or less than 10% of the cost of local services in your community?

	More than 90%	75-90%	50-75%	25-50%	10-25%	Less than 10%	Not sure Don't know
Property taxes	4%	12%	16%	17%	10%	5%	36%
Local sales tax	4%	5%	10%	11%	11%	22%	36%
State income taxes that are returned to your local government as local aids	2%	6%	12%	19%	16%	10%	35%
Federal income taxes that are returned to your local government for transportation and environmental services	3%	4%	9%	13%	16%	22%	34%

9. And what about the cost of local K-12 public education? Approximately what percentage of the cost of the K-12 public education services do you think is covered by [READ ITEM]. Do you think that [ITEM] pays for more than 90%, 75% to 90%, 50% to 75, 25% to 50%, 10% to 25%, or less than 10% of the cost of K-12 education in your community?

	More than 90%	75-90%	50-75%	25-50%	10-25%	Less than 10%	Not sure Don't know
Property taxes	3%	17%	25%	20%	12%	3%	19%
Admissions and fees	1%	4%	8%	11%	15%	27%	34%
Local sales tax	1%	3%	7%	10%	14%	34%	31%
State income taxes that are returned to your local government as local aids	1%	5%	11%	21%	19%	14%	31%
Federal income taxes that are returned to your local government for transportation and environmental services	2%	5%	12%	17%	19%	16%	30%

10. I'm going to read you that list of taxes one last time and I'd like you to tell me whether you think you are paying too much or too little for that tax in terms of the quality of the local services you are receiving. For example, would you say the property taxes you pay on the home you own are much too high, somewhat too high, about right, somewhat too low, or much too low for the quality of services you receive?

	Much too high	Somewhat too high	About right	Somewhat too low	Much too low	Not Sure
Property taxes	38%	27%	27%	1%	1%	5%
Local sales tax	11%	19%	56%	5%	0%	9%
State income taxes that are returned to your local government as local aids	15%	20%	32%	17%	6%	11%
Federal income taxes that are returned to your local government for transportation and environmental services	12%	14%	26%	24%	13%	11%

11. Do you think the amount you have to pay for property taxes is very fair, somewhat fair, somewhat unfair, or very unfair?

Very fair	10%
Somewhat fair	32%
Somewhat unfair	31%
Very unfair	22%
Not sure/don't know	5%

12. Which of the following amounts comes closest to your annual property tax bill?

Less than \$2000	20%
\$2,001 - \$3,000	29%
\$3,001 - \$4,000	19%
\$4,001 - \$6,000	13%
\$6,001 - \$8,000	3%
\$8,001 - \$10,000	0%
\$10,001 - \$12,000	1%
More than \$12,000	2%
Not sure/Refused to answer	12%



13. Would you say paying your annual property tax bill puts a very great strain, a lot of strain, somewhat of a strain, not too much of a strain, or no strain at all on your family's finances?

Very great	15%
A lot	11%
Somewhat	43%
Not too much	15%
None at all	11%
Not sure/don't know	4%

14. Have you considered moving to another state because of Wisconsin's tax burden?

Yes	29%
No	70%
Not sure/don't know	1%

15. I'd like to talk now about what sort of job you think your local and state elected officials are doing managing your tax dollars and your local services. Let me begin by asking you to think about how you are doing adjusting to changes in the economy. Do you think local government has done a better job, as good a job, not quite as good a job, or not nearly as good a job adjusting to changes in the economy as you have?

Better job	5%
As good a job	34%
Not quite as good a job	34%
Not nearly as good a job	22%
Not sure/don't know	5%

16. And compared to the businesses in your area, would you say local government has done a better job, as good a job, not quite as good a job, or not nearly as good a job adjusting to changes in the economy as businesses in your area have?

Better job	6%
As good a job	33%
Not quite as good a job	34%
Not nearly as good a job	22%
Not sure/don't know	5%

17. And, would you say local government has done an excellent, good, fair, or poor job in using technology to improve its efficiency and reduce costs?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not sure
Using technology to improve productivity and reduce costs	4%	29%	38%	23%	5%
Finding new ways to do more with less	5%	27%	34%	31%	3%
Updating and streamlining the delivery of services	5%	36%	36%	19%	3%
Evaluating the need for services	5%	33%	41%	18%	2%
Providing the services you need	8%	47%	32%	12%	1%
Eliminating services you don't need	4%	26%	35%	28%	7%

18. Some people have suggested that it would be a good idea to consolidate some local governmental units—that is, merge two or more current units of local government into one. Which of the following best describes your thoughts on consolidating local governments in Wisconsin? For example, would you favor state mandated consolidation, state encouraged consolidation, or would you rather maintain our current local units of government as they are?

State mandated Consolidation	8%
State Encouraged Consolidation	27%
Maintain Our Current Local Governmental Entities	59%
Don't know/not sure	6%

19. I'm going to read you a list of local elected officials, and I'd like you to tell me how good a job you think each is doing in providing efficient services for your tax dollars. For example, would you say that your representative on your local city council is doing a very good, good, fair or poor, job of making sure local services are delivered in a cost effective and efficient manner?

	Very good job	Good job	Fair job	Poor job	Not sure
Your city council representative	7%	36%	33%	9%	16%
Your City Council as a whole	6%	37%	37%	11%	9%
Your Mayor/Town/Village Chair	9%	42%	32%	11%	5%
Your County Board Chair	7%	40%	33%	12%	8%
Your County Board member	6%	36%	38%	9%	11%
Your County Board as a whole	5%	37%	41%	11%	6%
Your Town/Village Board member	7%	37%	34%	7%	16%
Your Town/Village board as whole	7%	34%	37%	8%	14%
Your state senator	11%	40%	30%	15%	4%
Your state representative	12%	39%	31%	14%	4%
The Legislature as a whole	5%	32%	43%	16%	4%
The Governor	8%	36%	34%	19%	2%
Your school board member	9%	34%	31%	16%	10%
Your school board as a whole	11%	35%	31%	16%	7%

20. I'm going to read you that list again and I'd like you to tell me how good a job you think each is doing planning a strong economic future for your community. For example, would you say that your representative on your local city council is doing a very good, good, fair, or poor job of planning a strong economic future for your community?

	Very good job	Good job	Fair job	Poor job	Not sure
Your city council representative	6%	36%	36%	12%	11%
Your City Council as a whole	4%	34%	39%	13%	9%
Your Mayor/Town/Village Chair	8%	39%	35%	12%	6%
Your County Board Chair	5%	37%	37%	14%	8%
Your County Board member	4%	38%	38%	10%	9%
Your County Board as a whole	4%	37%	41%	12%	6%
Your Town/Village Board member	5%	38%	33%	9%	15%
Your Town/Village board as whole	6%	36%	35%	10%	13%
Your state senator	8%	40%	33%	16%	3%
Your state representative	8%	38%	36%	14%	4%
The Legislature as a whole	4%	32%	45%	16%	3%
The Governor	7%	37%	33%	21%	2%
Your school board member	7%	37%	33%	14%	8%
Your school board as a whole	8%	37%	33%	15%	6%

21. Do you believe that local governments spend more of your tax dollars on delivering local services to you and the community than they need to?

Yes	33%
No	63%
Not sure/don't know	3%

22. And would you say they spend a great deal more, lot more, or a little more than they need to?

A great deal more	20%
A lot more	31%
A little more	47%
Not sure/don't know	1%

23. I'm going to read you a list of reasons some people have given us for why they think their property taxes are higher than they need to be and I'd like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree that that particular item has made your property taxes unnecessarily high. For example, would you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or disagree strongly that your property taxes are too high because local government spends money on programs we don't need?

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Not sure
Spending money on programs we don't need	35%	32%	18%	11%	4%
Spending money on programs we can't afford	30%	33%	21%	12%	4%
Spending too much money on programs we do need	12%	27%	39%	20%	3%
Spending too much money on public employee wages	22%	28%	28%	19%	3%
Spending too much money on public employee benefits	25%	30%	26%	16%	3%
Spending too much money on a top heavy management system	43%	32%	14%	7%	4%

24. I'm going to read you a series of statements and I'd like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with that particular statement. For example, would you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat or disagree strongly with the statement, "Local government spends money on programs we don't need?"

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Not sure
Spending money on programs we don't need	29%	37%	19%	12%	2%
Spending money on programs we can't afford	28%	34%	25%	10%	3%
Spending too much money on programs we do need	9%	27%	35%	27%	2%
Spending too much money on public employee wages	17%	28%	34%	20%	2%
Spending too much money on public employee benefits	22%	27%	31%	18%	2%
Spending too much money on a top heavy management system	40%	33%	17%	8%	2%

25. I'm going to read you that list of local services again and I'd like you to tell me whether or not you think there is wasteful spending going on in that area in your community. For example, when it comes to the delivery of police protection, would you say that there is a lot, some, a little, not too much, or no wasteful spending going on in your community?

	A lot of wasteful spending	Some wasteful spending	A little wasteful spending	Not too much wasteful spending	No wasteful spending	Not sure
Police protection	9%	15%	11%	17%	45%	3%
Fire protection	5%	11%	13%	18%	49%	3%
Parks and recreation	7%	19%	19%	18%	35%	3%
Garbage collection	5%	13%	14%	15%	44%	9%
Streets and highway maintenance	11%	23%	17%	18%	28%	3%
Public K-12 education	13%	20%	13%	13%	36%	5%
Planning for growth	10%	23%	16%	19%	26%	7%
Local economic development	11%	25%	19%	15%	25%	6%
Public health	4%	15%	16%	18%	40%	7%
Sewer maintenance	8%	15%	13%	18%	36%	10%
Public transportation	8%	13%	16%	15%	35%	15%

26. The Wisconsin Legislature is likely to consider a bill that would freeze property taxes at current levels. Based on what you know at the moment, would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose such a bill?

Strongly support	38%
Somewhat support	29%
Somewhat oppose	15%
Strongly oppose	16%
Not sure/don't know	3%

27. I'm going to read you some statements about the bill that would freeze property taxes and after each I'd like you to tell me whether knowing that piece of information would make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to support the bill. For example, many local elected officials say that a property tax freeze will lead to cuts in critical services, including those affecting public health and safety. Does that statement make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to support the bill?

	Much more likely	Somewhat more likely	Somewhat less likely	Much less likely	Not sure
The bill would result in budget cuts in critical local services, including those affecting public safety	7%	18%	36%	33%	5%
The bill would limit taxes on existing property but local budgets could grow as a result of growth and development	22%	39%	21%	12%	6%
By limiting resources the bill would limit the ability of communities to make adjustments and improvements required to attract new jobs and advance local economic development	12%	29%	34%	20%	6%
By limiting the tax burden the bill would make Wisconsin more attractive to new businesses and their employees	31%	42%	15%	8%	5%

28. Some legislators and local officials agree that we have to do something to hold the line on, or reduce, property taxes, but they do not believe that a freeze is the way to do it. Rather, they suggest that we should find other ways of financing all or part of our local services. Would you say that you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose finding other ways of financing all or part of our local services?

Strongly support	28%
Somewhat support	41%
Somewhat oppose	18%
Strongly oppose	10%
Not sure/don't know	3%

29. Let's take a closer look at this question and focus for a moment on the question of funding K-12 public education. Which of the following taxes would you most prefer to pay to fund K-12 public education in your community?

Using a combination of property taxes and other local taxes	27%
Using sources other than property taxes	18%
Using state income taxes to fund all local education	21%
Continuing to use property taxes as the primary local source of funding	24%
Not Sure/Don't Know	9%



30. Lastly, I'd like to ask you a question about Wisconsin's sales tax. Right now dozens of services, like legal services, accounting services and health clubs, are exempt from the sales tax. Some people think the sales tax should be extended to include these services. Assuming that food, medicine and housing remained exempt, would you favor or oppose extending the sales tax to cover some or all of these services?

Favor	66%
Oppose	31%
Don't know/not sure	3%

31. What is your age?

18-24	5%
25-34	14%
35-44	21%
45-54	21%
55-64	17%
65 or older	21%
Refused	1%

32. Do you own or rent your current residence?

Own	79%
Rent	19%
Refused	2%

33. How many children 18 years or younger reside in this household?

None	62%
1 or 2	29%
Three or more	9%
Refused	0%

34. Which of the following best describes your current job or profession?

Professional	20%
Technical	5%
Managerial	8%
Service	7%
Educator	5%
Farm owner/operator	1%
Skilled labor	13%
Unskilled labor	4%
Homemaker	6%
Retired	24%
Full time student	3%
Unemployed	4%
Other	1%



Refused 0%

35. Which of the following general categories best describes your total annual household income from all sources for 2003?

Less than \$20,000	14%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	25%
\$40,000 to \$59,999	20%
\$60,000 to \$79,999	13%
\$80,000 or more	19%
Refused	9%

36. In what county do you live? _____

[RECORD BY OBSERVATION]

Female 48%
Male 52%