#### WISCONSIN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, INC.

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### **EMBARGO**

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# WISCONSIN RESIDENTS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE STATE'S ECONOMY

They Are Very Disillusioned With Their State Government and Politicians

Jobs and the economy are the number one concerns in Wisconsin. Residents continue to be disillusioned with the integrity of their state government and political leaders. Wisconsin residents now view the issue of jobs and unemployment as the single biggest problem that state government should be dealing with. In fact their views of the problem of jobs is the highest number we have seen in all the polling we have published going back to January 1988. 31% of Wisconsin residents now believe that unemployment is the single biggest problem in the state. An additional 17% of Wisconsin residents view economic issues as the largest problem facing the state. Combined it means that 48% of Wisconsin residents view jobs, unemployment and the economy as the most critical issues in the state at this time.

These are among the key findings about statewide policy issues from the most recent survey of 600 Wisconsin residents conducted by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, Inc. and Diversified Research between November 9 and 10, 2008.

### Jobs and Unemployment — The State's Biggest Issues

In this survey 31% of respondents identified jobs and unemployment as the number one issue in Wisconsin that government should be doing something about. The compares to last December when only 4% of the people named it as the most important issue. In the current poll it was the number one concern in all areas of the state. In Southeast Wisconsin 43% of the residents named it as the most important issue, followed by 37% of the respondents in Waukesha and 34% in Green Bay. Combining the issues of jobs and economic issues shows that 48% of our residents believe it to be the single biggest problem in the state. That is twice as much of these economic concerns than we have ever seen before. Clearly this is now become the single biggest problem that the state of Wisconsin must deal with.

#### The Direction of the State

Only 37% of the people in this survey thought that the state of Wisconsin was generally going in the right direction, while 54% thought it was off on the wrong track. There were only two areas in the state that thought we were going in the right direction – 50% of the small towns thought we were going in the right direction while 45% of the residents of LaCrosse thought that. That compares to 40% in LaCrosse and the rest of the state that thought we were on the wrong track. It is interesting that there are some political divides over this particular issue. Only 22% of Republicans thought we were going in the right direction, but 52% of Democrats thought we were going in the right direction, while 39% of Independents thought we were going in the right direction. Ideologically, 56% of Liberals thought we were going in the right direction, but only 18% of Conservatives thought so, while 41% of residents who describe themselves as Middle-of-the-Road thought the state was going in the right direction.

These results are slightly better than last December when 56% of our respondents thought the state off on the wrong track and only 34% thought we were on the right track. Over the fifteen years we have been doing this survey these results in this poll are the second lowest we have ever seen.

As negative as residents were about the direction of Wisconsin, they continue to be overwhelmingly negative about the direction of the nation – only 17% thought we were going in the right direction nationally, while 76% continued to believe we were on the wrong track. This is a surprising number considering that this poll was taken almost a week after the election of Barack Obama.

In this survey only 19% of our respondents thought that their family's own economic circumstances would improve over the next year. This was the same percentage as last December and continues to be the most pessimism that we have seen in the twenty years we have asked this question in our polls.

We asked residents how they view Wisconsin's economic conditions over the next year. Only 27% thought the state's economy would improve, while 49% thought it would get worse.

We then asked residents their opinions on how to fix our potential state budget deficit. It was the exact question asked Wisconsin residents in 1992. In this survey 50% thought that the best way to balance the state budget was to cut state spending by 3%, while another 33% thought we should have a pay freeze for state employees. Only 10% of the respondents supported raising state taxes by 3% and just 4% thought we should have a temporary layoff of state workers. These results were different compared to when the question was last asked in 1992. In that survey only 35% supported cutting state spending by 3%, 31% supported a pay freeze, 16% supported raising state taxes by 3% and 17% approved of a temporary lay off of state workers. Clearly Wisconsin residents support the idea of cutting spending and freezing pay for state employees rather than putting a tax increase on the backs of Wisconsin residents.

### **Integrity of Public Officials**

We asked whether people thought how people viewed the spending of tax dollars. 56% thought that we spend too much, 27% thought that spending was about right and only 5% thought that we spend too little. Again, these are results that are almost exactly the same as when this question was asked twenty years ago.

#### **Government Integrity**

We asked our residents how much they thought they could trust state government to do what is right. Only 1% thought just about always, 28% said most of the time and 65% said only some of the time. What was remarkable demographically about this question was that there were four areas of the state where no one said just about always – the City of Milwaukee, Green Bay, Southeastern Wisconsin and Waukesha County. We then asked whose interests do you think elected officials represent the most. 45% said special interests, 38% said their own interests and only 13% thought that elected officials represented the voters interests.

Finally we asked one other tracking question on who has the most power to determine what the state government spends. Only 17% said voters, while 70% said lobbying groups. These results were slightly higher than when we asked this question going back to 1990, but they still represent an extremely negative opinion of the rights of residents compared to lobbying groups in Madison.

#### **Honesty and Ethics of Various Professions**

Finally we asked residents to rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in various fields. The spreads are very interesting. For firefighters, 81% rated their integrity as high while only 2% rated it low, however, for Wisconsin lobbyists only 7% rated their ethics as high while 52% rated it as low.

Residents have a very low opinion of their state's politicians. Only 11% rated them high on their honesty and ethical standards while 37% rated them as low. It is fair to point out that Wisconsin politician's ethical standards and honesty at 11% were rated slightly higher than car salesmen at 9% and Wisconsin lobbyists at 7%.

### **Summary**

There is little doubt that jobs and unemployment has become the most important issue in Wisconsin, closely followed by concern over the state's economy. Residents are clearly pessimistic about the state's economic situation for the upcoming year. They are also very clear that they are not interested in raising taxes to solve the state's economic or budget problems.

What should be of major concern, however, is the continuing disconnect between residents and their elected officials. Only 1% of the people in the state believe that their state government will do the right thing almost all of the time. Only 3% believe that the standards of ethics in our state legislature has gotten better over the last decade. Only 17% believe that Wisconsin voters have the power to decide what state government spends.

This continuing disconnect is enhanced by how Wisconsin residents view the honesty and ethics of various occupations. The public draws a very clear line between individuals who they perceive as serving the common good – such as firefighters and national guardsmen – versus occupations they believe have very little integrity including politicians, car salesmen and lobbyists. It raises a very disturbing question. If Wisconsin is facing serious economic and financial problems, will the public support solutions from government institutions whose values and priorities they have very little respect for.

#### ABOUT THE STUDY

This study of 600 Wisconsin residents was conducted by telephone between November 9 and November 10, 2008. A total of 600 Wisconsin residents were interviewed. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 4% for percentages of the whole sample. For a percentage near 50%, for example, this means that repeated samples would produce results between 47% and 53%, 95 times out of 100.

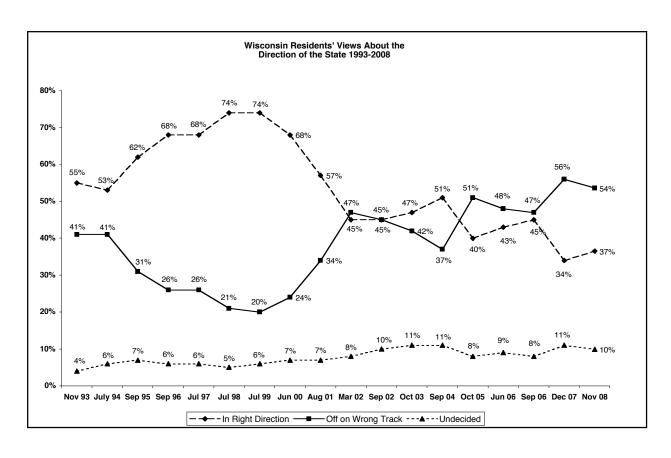
This study was commissioned by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, Inc. The Institute was founded in 1987, and its mandate is to examine issues of public policy facing Wisconsin, using a non-partisan approach.

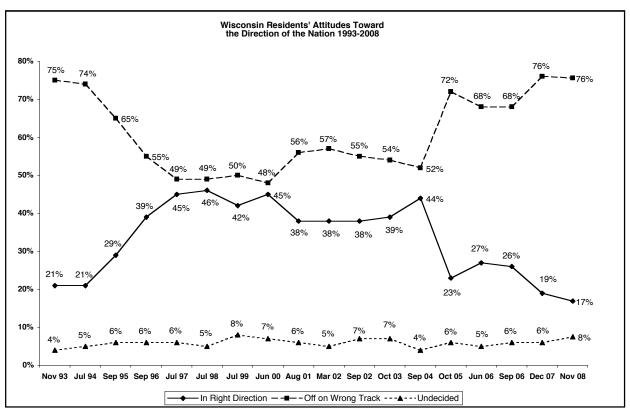
Dr. Michael LaVelle, President of Diversified Research, a nationally known survey research company supervised the project. Dr. LaVelle has a Ph.D. and has taught statistics and social research methods at the university level. He has been President of Diversified Research since 1982 and has over thirty years experience in survey research.

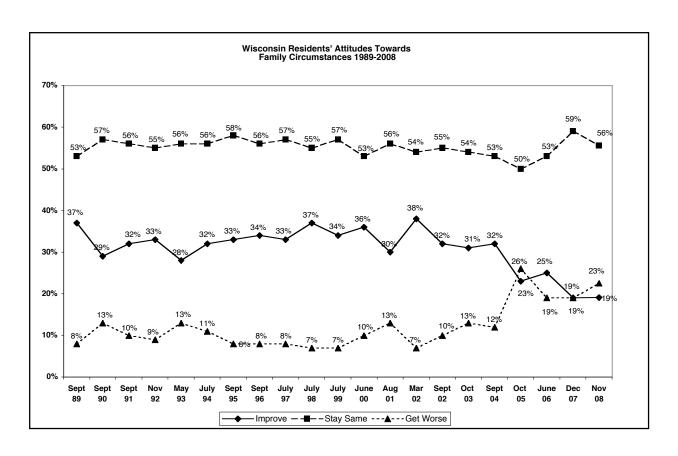
	Jan 1988	Jan Jan Jan Jan 1988 1989 1990 1991	Jan 1990	Jan 1991	Jan 1992	May 1993	July 1994	Sept 1995	Sept 1996	July 1997	July 1998	July 1999	June 2000	Aug. 2001	Sept 2002	Oct 2003	Sept 2004	Oct 2005	June 2006	Sept 2006	Dec 2007	Nov 2008
Unemployment/Jobs	11% 8%		4%	%9	13%	%9	2%	4%	2%	3%	3%	5%	5%	4%	%9	16%	16%	%/	2%	2%	4%	31%
Economic Issues	%6	<b>%</b> 9	3%	2%	%/	4%	5%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	%2	4%	2%	%9	4%	2%	%6	%6	19%
Taxes	33% 28%		28%	33%	26%	30%	19%	20%	16%	21%	18%	24%	17%	24%	25%	25%	17%	19%	25%	26%	28%	13%
Health Care Issues	%0	%2	5%	5%	%8	%8	10%	3%	3%	5%	4%	2%	%9	%6	%8	%6	17%	10%	13%	16%	%22	13%
Education	4%	3%	4%	%/_	%/	11%	%9	10%	10%	10%	10%	11%	%8	12%	10%	%/	%8	13%	%6	14%	%/	%9
Government Issues/ State Budget	A Z	N.A. N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	A N	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	A N	N.A.	15%	13%	2%	10%	2%	%/	%/	2%
Social Issues/Poverty 14% 19% 9%	14%	19%		%8	10%	13%	18%	19%	17%	16%	11%	11%	%9	2%	4%	%9	3%	2%	%9	%/	2%	2%
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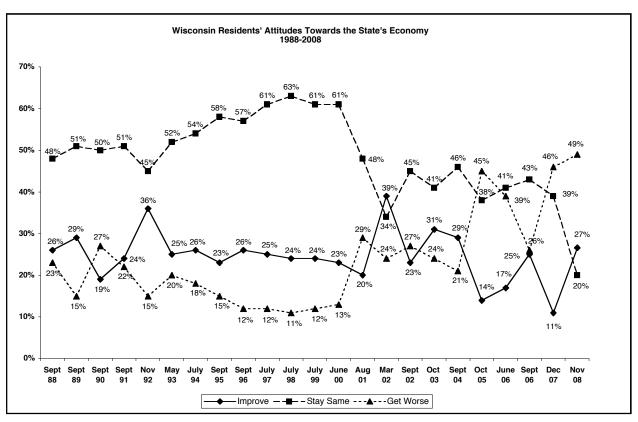
MOST IMPORTANT STATE PROBLEM 1988 - 2008

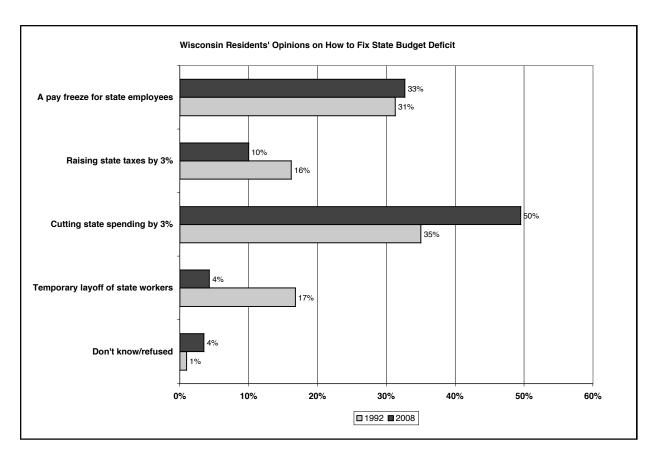
Note: Prior to 2002 the percentage of respondents giving Government Issues or the State Budget as the most important problem was under 5% and not reported by us. Similarly, only in June 2000 and since October 2005 have Gasoline Prices/Gasoline Taxes been a major concern of residents. In 2008 not one respondent indicated concan about gas prices, while another 11% cited concerns that did not fall into any category.











	Jan 1988	Sept 1988	Jan 1989	Sept 1990	Jan 1992	Nov 1992	Aug 2001	March 2002	Sept 2004	Dec 2007	Nov 200
tate Government S <sub>l</sub>	pending of Tax	Dollars									
Too Much	53%	53%	52%	47%	59%	49%	54%	59%	59%	62%	569
About Right	31%	29%	28%	37%	21%	27%	28%	24%	28%	17%	279
Too Little	6%	5%	7%	7%	8%	8%	7%	8%	6%	11%	5%

	Sept 1990	Jan 1991	Nov 1991	Nov 1993	Sept 2002	June 2006	Dec 2007	Nov 2008
Vho Has the Most F	Power to I	Determine W	/hat the Sta	te Governm	ent Spends	?		
Voters	17%	17%	19%	17%	18%	12%	12%	17%
Lobbying Groups	77%	79%	77%	79%	75%	81%	82%	70%
low Much of the Ti	me Can Y	ou Trust Sta	ite Governm	ent to do W	/hat is Right	1?		
Just About Always	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Most of the Time	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	34%	35%	23%	24%	28%
Only Some of the Time	e N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	62%	61%	74%	70%	65%

### Overall, whose interests do you feel elected officials represent the most?

	March 2002	Oct 2005	June 2006	Dec 2007	Nov 2008
Their own interests	40%	47%	40%	42%	38%
Special interests	34%	41%	49%	43%	45%
Voters' interests	21%	6%	6%	10%	13%
No answer	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%

Wisconsin Residents' R	atings of th in Differen	e Honesty t Fields	and Ethics	of People
	High	Average	Low	Not Sure/ No Answer
Firefighters	81%	12%	3%	4%
Wisconsin National Guard	77%	12%	3%	8%
Medical Doctors	61%	30%	7%	2%
Clergy	59%	28%	7%	7%
Teachers	57%	36%	6%	2%
Bankers	27%	49%	20%	5%
Labor Union Leaders	18%	38%	31%	13%
Journalists	17%	42%	36%	5%
Corporate Executives	12%	39%	42%	7%
Wisconsin Politicians	11%	47%	37%	6%
Car Salesmen	9%	50%	34%	7%
Wisconsin Lobbyists	7%	29%	52%	12%

### In your opinion, what is the single most important problem facing Wisconsin that the government should be doing something about?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Unemployment/J obs	31%	27%	26%	37%	34%	17%	27%	43%	32%
Economic	19%	14%	27%	4%	20%	16%	23%	20%	20%
Taxes	13%	23%	22%	17%	10%	22%	9%	8%	8%
Health Care Issues	13%	17%	3%	26%	10%	16%	12%	12%	17%
Education	6%	7%	8%	7%	5%	5%	12%	4%	2%
Government Issues	5%	3%	5%	6%	9%	1%	1%	1%	6%
Don't Know	5%	5%	9%	2%	3%	17%	4%	3%	4%
Other	6%	4%	0%	1%	7%	6%	9%	7%	11%
Social Issues/ Poverty	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%	0%	1%	2%	1%

# Would you say that things in WISCONSIN are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Right Direction	37%	32%	36%	31%	26%	45%	36%	34%	50%
Wrong Track	54%	49%	56%	66%	67%	40%	49%	60%	40%
Don't Know	10%	19%	8%	4%	6%	15%	15%	6%	10%

# Would you say that things in this COUNTRY are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Right Direction	17%	26%	22%	16%	16%	10%	13%	14%	17%
Wrong Track	76%	60%	70%	84%	78%	81%	72%	81%	78%
Don't Know	8%	15%	8%	0%	7%	9%	14%	5%	5%

### What about your own family's economic circumstances? Do you expect them to improve, stay the same, or get worse during the next year?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Improve	19%	19%	23%	10%	22%	26%	17%	14%	17%
Stay Same	56%	47%	41%	76%	56%	50%	63%	59%	57%
Get Worse	23%	25%	34%	14%	21%	23%	19%	18%	23%
Don't Know	3%	9%	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%	9%	2%

### Based on what you know or have heard about the economy of Wisconsin, do you expect state economic conditions to improve, stay the same, or get worse during the next year?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Improve	27%	22%	29%	11%	24%	35%	20%	23%	38%
Stay Same	20%	13%	16%	18%	18%	18%	40%	20%	19%
Get Worse	49%	50%	47%	72%	57%	42%	39%	50%	41%
Don't Know	4%	16%	9%	0%	1%	6%	1%	8%	1%

The State of Wisconsin in required by law to have a balanced budget. While the current budget is in balance, it now looks as though the budget will have a deficit in the future. I'm going to read you four ways the deficit might be reduced. Please tell me which one you would MOST like to see used to reduce a state budget deficit.

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Cutting State Spending by 3%	50%	47%	45%	43%	58%	42%	52%	55%	47%
A Pay Freeze for State Employees	33%	36%	39%	35%	27%	35%	23%	31%	37%
Raising State Taxes by 3%	10%	9%	8%	2%	9%	20%	18%	8%	10%
Temporary Layoffs of State Workers	4%	4%	3%	17%	4%	3%	3%	4%	3%
Don't Know/Refused	4%	5%	5%	3%	3%	0%	5%	2%	4%

### Overall, do you think Wisconsin's state government spends too much, too little, or just about the right amount of tax dollars?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Too Much	56%	52%	58%	63%	63%	55%	45%	52%	53%
Too Little	5%	9%	10%	2%	6%	0%	4%	5%	3%
The Right Amount	27%	17%	21%	34%	20%	33%	35%	32%	31%
Undecided	12%	23%	11%	2%	11%	12%	16%	12%	13%

### Who do you think has the MOST POWER to determine what the state government spends – the voters across the state, or lobbying groups?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Voters	17%	19%	21%	23%	14%	22%	10%	17%	16%
Lobbying Groups	70%	65%	69%	68%	75%	70%	74%	71%	66%
Both	6%	10%	0%	6%	3%	1%	11%	6%	9%
Not Sure	6%	5%	7%	3%	6%	4%	3%	6%	9%
Decline to Answer	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%	3%	3%	1%	1%

### How much of the time do you think you can trust the state government to do what is right – just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Just About Always	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	3%	0%	2%
Most of the Time	28%	24%	33%	31%	27%	21%	27%	22%	32%
Some of the Time	65%	68%	61%	66%	64%	75%	69%	71%	58%
Not Sure	5%	8%	5%	3%	5%	3%	1%	5%	8%
No Answer	1%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	2%	1%

### Overall, whose interest do you feel elected officials represent the most - your interests, special interests or their own interests?

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
Special interests	45%	46%	51%	46%	48%	41%	49%	48%	33%
Elected official's interests	38%	37%	43%	31%	39%	30%	36%	37%	42%
Voter's interests	13%	13%	4%	22%	7%	21%	8%	14%	19%
Refused/No Answer	5%	5%	2%	2%	6%	8%	7%	1%	6%

# Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these fields – high, average, or low?

### **Firefighters**

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	81%	77%	80%	95%	86%	87%	78%	85%	71%
Average	12%	18%	10%	5%	7%	3%	19%	11%	18%
Low	3%	2%	5%	0%	3%	8%	0%	3%	2%
No Answer	4%	3%	5%	0%	4%	2%	2%	1%	9%

# Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these fields – high, average, or low?

#### **Wisconsin National Guard**

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	77%	74%	75%	89%	79%	83%	73%	78%	73%
Average	12%	11%	7%	6%	11%	9%	16%	15%	18%
Low	3%	1%	5%	0%	1%	5%	4%	3%	2%
No Answer	8%	14%	13%	6%	9%	3%	7%	4%	6%

#### **Teachers**

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	57%	44%	51%	66%	55%	68%	73%	53%	53%
Average	36%	51%	40%	26%	36%	21%	26%	35%	41%
Low	6%	3%	7%	9%	6%	8%	1%	10%	3%
No Answer	2%	1%	2%	0%	3%	3%	0%	3%	2%

### Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these fields – high, average, or low?

#### **Medical Doctors**

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	61%	62%	59%	69%	59%	70%	65%	55%	58%
Average	30%	32%	30%	28%	32%	20%	29%	37%	28%
Low	7%	1%	8%	1%	6%	10%	5%	7%	12%
No Answer	2%	5%	3%	2%	3%	0%	1%	1%	2%

# Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these fields – high, average, or low?

### Clergy

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	59%	53%	57%	75%	63%	76%	45%	54%	57%
Average	28%	30%	31%	23%	27%	13%	38%	28%	30%
Low	7%	2%	7%	1%	6%	6%	10%	8%	9%
No Answer	7%	15%	6%	1%	4%	6%	8%	10%	5%

#### **Labor Union Leaders**

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	18%	16%	15%	27%	17%	30%	10%	18%	19%
Average	38%	45%	43%	31%	37%	34%	52%	43%	30%
Low	31%	25%	32%	35%	36%	31%	30%	29%	26%
No Answer	13%	13%	10%	7%	11%	5%	9%	11%	25%

### Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these fields – high, average, or low?

#### **Wisconsin Politicians**

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	11%	9%	8%	4%	12%	23%	3%	8%	15%
Average	47%	51%	50%	62%	47%	37%	57%	47%	37%
Low	37%	27%	34%	34%	36%	34%	36%	41%	43%
No Answer	6%	12%	8%	0%	5%	6%	4%	4%	5%

# Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these fields – high, average, or low?

#### **Journalists**

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	17%	23%	11%	34%	11%	25%	18%	11%	16%
Average	42%	50%	47%	34%	38%	33%	33%	48%	44%
Low	36%	20%	38%	32%	44%	35%	39%	36%	32%
No Answer	5%	7%	4%	0%	7%	7%	10%	5%	8%

### **Corporate Executives**

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	12%	13%	18%	2%	13%	25%	8%	11%	10%
Average	39%	37%	37%	53%	35%	33%	33%	41%	42%
Low	42%	42%	38%	45%	41%	37%	49%	48%	40%
No Answer	7%	8%	7%	0%	11%	5%	10%	0%	8%

# Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these fields – high, average, or low?

#### Car Salesmen

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	9%	2%	12%	1%	12%	16%	4%	11%	10%
Average	50%	47%	53%	65%	45%	59%	58%	52%	41%
Low	34%	42%	30%	30%	35%	22%	32%	29%	43%
No Answer	7%	9%	5%	4%	8%	3%	6%	8%	6%

### Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these fields – high, average, or low?

### **Bankers**

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	27%	21%	31%	23%	28%	31%	18%	27%	28%
Average	49%	52%	48%	55%	51%	38%	53%	47%	48%
Low	20%	20%	15%	21%	15%	28%	22%	22%	21%
No Answer	5%	7%	6%	1%	6%	3%	6%	3%	4%

### **Wisconsin Lobbyists**

	Total	City of Milwaukee	Milwaukee Suburb	Waukesha County	Green Bay Area	La Crosse Eau Claire	Madison	South East	Rest of State
High	7%	6%	3%	13%	10%	15%	0%	3%	8%
Average	29%	37%	35%	22%	23%	31%	16%	35%	35%
Low	52%	37%	48%	63%	55%	47%	77%	56%	40%
No Answer	12%	20%	14%	1%	12%	7%	7%	6%	17%