

BSC, Political Science team up for New North issues survey

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/15726/bsc-political-science-team-up-for-new-north-issues-survey/>

A new consumer-confidence and political-issue survey of residents of the 18-county New North region of northeastern Wisconsin found more than three-fourths of respondents (77 percent) expect to be either better off or about the same next year while less than one in five (18 percent) anticipate harder times.

The survey also found there is a wide partisan divide in opinion over Governor Scott Walker's performance, with 85 percent of Republicans responding approving or strongly approving of his performance and 82 percent of Democrats either disapproving or strongly disapproving. However, nearly half of all respondents (46 percent) view recall elections negatively as a means of holding elected officials accountable.

Those and other findings are the result of the first-ever University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Business Success Center New North Political and Consumer Confidence Survey. The survey, conducted in collaboration with the UW Oshkosh Department of Political Science, examines New North residents' opinions on economic and political issues leading into what is expected to be a supercharged 2012 election year in the region, state and nation.

- [A summary and full survey results are available at the Business Success Center website.](#)

"Our findings show that New North residents are focused on fundamentals like the economy but are relatively optimistic despite the current political polarization," said UW Oshkosh Political Science Professor James Simmons, who collaborated with Business Success Center on the survey project. "The survey also suggests that Northeast Wisconsin could be very competitive if there is a recall election this Spring. Both the Governor and the Democrats have significant problems and opportunities in this region."

The October and November landline and cell phone survey gauged the opinions of 538 random residents in the 18-county region. It was conducted by trained Business Success Center student interns, with a margin of error of +/- 5 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. More than one-third (36 percent) of respondents indicated no support for either major party, while 34 percent identified as Republicans and 30 percent as Democrats.

On many issues, the survey's findings echo those of other state political surveys: Wisconsin's is a polarized political landscape. However, the Business Success Center's survey specifically examines the 18-county New North, a historically Republican region in state elections with key swing areas developing over the last decade. While 17 of its 18 counties favored the GOP candidate in the 2010 governor's race, and an overwhelming majority of counties endorsed the Republican candidate in the two gubernatorial elections before it, some large, New North cities have elected Democrats to the State Legislature in recent years.

In gauging economic and quality of life issues, the survey found overwhelming confidence in Northeast

Wisconsin as a place to live. More than nine out of ten (92 percent) of residents surveyed said that the quality of life in their New North communities is either good or excellent. Only 5 percent say it is poor, and no one responded that quality of life in his or her community is very poor.

“The New North is the second largest economic region in Wisconsin, where a majority of the companies we work with are located,” said Colleen Merrill, of the Business Success Center. “It is imperative for our center to understand the environment we are servicing. We developed the Political and Consumer Confidence survey to edify our community, to showcase our services and to offer our Political Science department relevant data for classroom discussion. “

The survey further found:

Modest consumer optimism

- More than a third (35 percent) of those surveyed say that they are worse off financially than they were a year ago. However, 62 percent say that they are either better off or no worse off.
- More than half of those surveyed (53 percent) say that it is either a good time to buy major household items or neither a good nor bad time to buy them. There are none of the partisan divisions over issues like financial hardship or consumer confidence found in most of the other questions in the survey.

Economic issues dominant

- The economy dominates both national and statewide issue concerns. The survey shows that four issues – jobs (39 percent), education (22 percent), welfare (15 percent) and taxes (10 percent) dominate the “most important” problems New North residents see facing the state. Issues involving gun control, crime, gay marriage and highways and infrastructure that have received attention in Madison accounted for 6 percent combined.
- Collective bargaining, a key issue in Wisconsin in 2011, is a primary concern with 5 percent of all respondents – specifically, 11 percent of the Democrats and 3 percent of Republicans in the sample.

Low approval ratings, Dems’ lower than Governor’s

- Legislative Democrats’ approval rating (32 percent) is lower than the Governor’s (44 percent).
- A plurality of respondents (43 percent) say they think that the policies enacted by Republicans have moved Wisconsin in the right direction, while 50 percent said it is bad for one political party to control the governorship and both houses of the State Legislature.

About the Business Success Center

The UW Oshkosh Business Success Center (BSC) is an innovative consulting firm uniting local and regional businesses with University resources, such as faculty experts, student interns, research facilities and its survey center. It delivers customized, cost-effective solutions for organizations’ challenges. The BSC’s mission is to further the development of the university and the community by being the gateway for engaging university resources. Its vision is to provide solutions that drive local economic development

and grow our community, providing value to students, faculty, the university and our community. [In February, BSC staff members and student interns helped administer a revealing Manufacturing Vitality survey on behalf of the Northeastern Wisconsin Manufacturing Alliance](#), gauging 179 manufacturing companies' hiring and capitalization plans into 2012.

Learn more:

- [UWO survey collaboration shows manufacturing growth expected in region \(February 2011\)](#)
- [UW Oshkosh Business Success Center](#)
- [UW Oshkosh Department of Political Science](#)