

**WISCONSIN PUBLIC RADIO/ST. NORBERT COLLEGE
THE WISCONSIN SURVEY
FALL 1999**

TOPIC: Y2K Computer Problem

RELEASE DATE: November 2, 1999

SAMPLE SIZE: 403 Wisconsin Residents over the age of 18

MARGIN OF ERROR: +/-4.8

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND CONCERN WITH THE ISSUE

"Lately there has been growing discussion of the Y2K computer problem or Millennium bug. Have you heard about this problem?"

<u>RESPONSE</u>	<u>SPRING</u>	<u>FALL</u>
Yes	97%	95%
No	3	5

"How concerned are you about the effects of the Y2K Problem. Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too unconcerned, or not at all concerned with the Y2K problem."

<u>RESPONSE</u>	<u>SPRING</u>	<u>FALL</u>
Very concerned	11%	5%
Somewhat concerned	41	22
Not too unconcerned	33	47
Not at all concerned	16	27

"Now I would like to ask you about your level of concern for specific aspects of the Y2K problem. For each of the issues I mention, please tell me if you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned with the problem."

	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not Too Concerned	Not at All Concerned	Unsure
Power Failures	Spring 38%	Spring 45%	Spring 14%	Spring 1%	Spring 0%
	Fall 29	Fall 46	Fall 22	Fall 3	Fall 0
Banking Problems	Spring 37%	Spring 39%	Spring 16%	Spring 8%	Spring 0%
	Fall 23	Fall 47	Fall 23	Fall 7	Fall 0
Food Shortages	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring	Spring

	22%	31%	31%	15%	0%
	Fall 20	Fall 30	Fall 34	Fall 16	Fall 0
Air Traffic Control Problems	Spring 35%	Spring 32%	Spring 18%	Spring 13%	Spring 1%
	Fall 31	Fall 30	Fall 22	Fall 17	Fall 0
Mail Delivery Problems	Spring 19%	Spring 37%	Spring 26%	Spring 17%	Spring 1%
	Fall 15	Fall 33	Fall 37	Fall 16	Fall 0
Problems with Government Services	Spring 26%	Spring 40%	Spring 18%	Spring 16%	Spring 0%
	Fall 25	Fall 42	Fall 19	Fall 12	Fall 2

SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA Y2K EFFORTS

"Which of the following best describes your views about government's handling of the Y2K problem. Would you say that government should increase its efforts to deal with the problem, decrease its efforts to deal with the problem, or not change its efforts in dealing with the problem."

<u>RESPONSE</u>	<u>SPRING</u>	<u>FALL</u>
Increase its efforts	47%	28%
Decrease its efforts	4	6
Not change its efforts	42	62
Unsure	8	4

"Which of the following best describes your views about media coverage of the Y2K problem. Would you say that the media has spent too much coverage on this issue, not enough coverage on this issue, or the right amount of coverage of the issue."

<u>RESPONSE</u>	<u>SPRING</u>	<u>FALL</u>
Too much coverage	35%	51%
Not enough coverage	16	7
The right amount of coverage	49	41
Unsure	1	2

ACTIVITIES IN RESPONSE TO Y2K

"In response to the Y2K problem please tell me how likely you will be to take the following actions?"

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Unsure
Take money out of the bank	Spring 11% Fall 11	Spring 19% Fall 18	Spring 23% Fall 18	Spring 47% Fall 51	Spring 1% Fall 1
Change travel plans	Spring 11% Fall 14	Spring 11% Fall 9	Spring 17% Fall 13	Spring 59% Fall 63	Spring 2% Fall 2
Purchase a gas powered generator	Spring 5% Fall 8	Spring 10% Fall 6	Spring 12% Fall 7	Spring 73% Fall 79	Spring 1% Fall 1
Store more food and water in your house	Spring 16% Fall 18	Spring 24% Fall 26	Spring 12% Fall 9	Spring 48% Fall 46	Spring 0% Fall <1

SUMMARY

With New Year's Day 2000 only two months away the Y2K computer problem continues to receive considerable attention throughout the nation. The most recent Wisconsin Public Radio/St. Norbert College Survey Center "Wisconsin Survey" released today indicates broad awareness of the issue, but decreased concern among the state's residents regarding the potential problem. The survey also provides evidence that most Wisconsinites are not planning to take actions in response to Y2K related problems, but a substantial portion of state residents are likely to engage in moderate protective measures as the new year approaches.

CONCERN OVER Y2K

While there is extremely widespread awareness (95%) about the potential Y2K problem among state residents, concern about the issue appears to be waning in Wisconsin. In a spring survey of state residents, 52% of respondents indicated either high or moderate levels of concern about the Y2K issue, with 49% indicating little or no concern about the problems associated with the computer bug. The most recent Wisconsin Survey finds that concern levels have dropped significantly with 27% of Wisconsinites indicating that they are very or somewhat concerned about the Y2K problem, and 74% either not too concerned or not at all concerned with the issue. These findings indicate that there has been a major decrease in the intensity of concern among State residents about the potential problem.

In terms of specific problems associated with the Y2K issue there has been varied degrees of change in public opinion since the spring. The survey results indicate that there have been significant decreases in

the number of individuals who are very concerned about Y2K related banking problems and power failures. Between April and October the percentage of residents who were very concerned with power failure dropped from 38% to 29%, and the number of individuals indicating a high degree of concern with banking failures decreased from 37% to 23%. In other areas of potential Y2K problems public concerns remained constant from the spring, with food shortages, air traffic control problems, mail delivery problems, and problems with government services demonstrating no statistically significant changes in the past six months.

SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AND MEDIA COVERAGE

The latest Wisconsin Survey results show diverging public opinion regarding government handling of the Y2K problem and media coverage of the issue. When asked about government efforts to deal with the problem, nearly 2 out of 3 Wisconsinites indicated that government should not change its efforts in dealing with the problem, marking a 20% increase in satisfaction from the spring of 1999. Similarly, while 47% of individuals in last spring's survey thought government should increase its efforts to deal with Y2K, only 28% had the same opinion in the most recent survey. While government efforts to deal with the issue appear generally satisfactory with state residents, there is growing dissatisfaction with media coverage of the issue. In the most recent survey over 1 in 2 Wisconsin citizens thought that there was too much coverage of the Y2K problem, marking a 16% increase from the spring survey.

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION FOR Y2K PROBLEMS

Most Wisconsinites indicate a low likelihood of engaging in activities to protect themselves from Y2K related problems. The highest probability of individuals taking action in response to Y2K appears to be moderate precautionary actions such as taking money out of the bank (29% likely) and storing more food and water at home (44% likely). More substantial activities such as purchasing gas powered generators is not in the plans of most residents of the state, with only 8% indicating that they are very likely to make that purchase and 6% somewhat likely to take that protective measure. These results are almost identical to the findings of the spring survey, providing evidence that state residents remain cautious in their response to potential Y2K problems

*Christopher P. Borick, Director
St. Norbert College Survey Center*