

	SPRING 2003	FALL 2003	SPRING 2004	WINTER 2005	
OVERVIEW	↔	↓	↔	↑	Against the backdrop of longstanding concerns about the economy, the people of Wisconsin tell us that property taxes are placing a serious strain on family budgets and they want more efficient, cost-effective delivery of local services.
THE MOOD	↑	↓	?	↑	The overall mood in Wisconsin has improved slightly since 2002, and more than half of respondents say that things are on the right track in their local communities.
HOME-OWNERSHIP	↔	↔	↔	↔	The property tax burden continues to affect the affordability of homeownership and people tell us that taxes are producing a serious burden that threatens their economic wellbeing.
EDUCATION	↔	↑	↔	↑	People recognize public K-12 education as an important component to the quality of life in their communities and in their homes, and their satisfaction with the quality of that education is continuing a gradual rise since 2002.
THE ECONOMY	↓	↓	↔	↔	State residents understand the importance of economic development to the quality of life in their communities, but they say that local government has room for improvement in promoting economic growth.
TAXES	↑	↑	?	↓	Although respondents value the services they receive locally, they are feeling the pinch of property taxes and think they are unfair. Moreover, people think that government has not done as good a job of belt-tightening as they or local businesses have done.
PUBLIC SERVICES	↔	↔	↔	↓	State residents continue to give high ratings to local governments for delivery of essential services such as police and fire protection, but a majority agrees that there is waste in government spending.
HEALTH CARE	?	↓	↔	↑	Rising health care costs have become a key issue for government leaders as well as private sector employers. Overall, state residents say providing public health services is an important function of government. In addition, they overwhelmingly believe their local communities are doing a good job of delivering public health services.
THE FUTURE	↔	↓	↔	?	Local services are very important to the wellbeing of Wisconsin families and respondents say their communities are doing a good job of providing those services. Furthermore, basic services are likely to remain a top priority. At the same time, state residents believe that local governments can find efficiencies that will allow them to continue to provide high-quality services without imposing higher taxes.

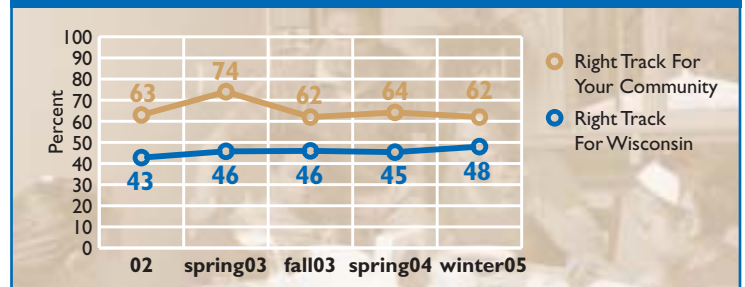
Summary

People in Wisconsin have consistently given their local communities high quality-of-life ratings and continue to do so. In an apparent ironic twist, people are most optimistic about things in their communities, even though significant economic concerns center on local property taxes and the delivery of local services. Almost two thirds of state residents say things in their cities and towns are on the right track, and half think things in their counties are on the right track. Statewide, just under half of respondents think things are on the right track, up slightly from previous surveys.

Survey Highlights

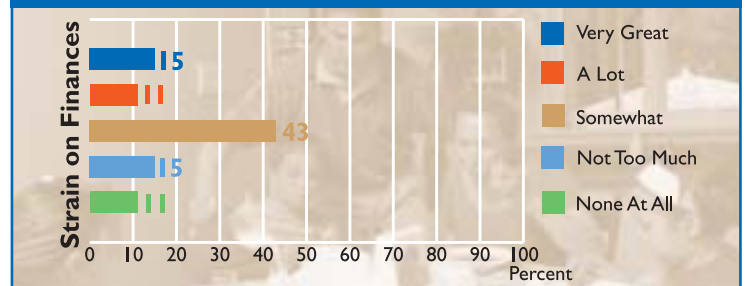
The mood in Wisconsin communities continues to be positive and respondents' assessment of the statewide picture seems to be inching upward. Two out of three people say things in their cities and towns are on the right track and 48 percent say things statewide are on the right track, up 5 percentage points since 2002.

Are things in your community on the right track or off on the wrong track?



As in the past, financial concerns are affecting the perceived quality of life our communities offer. In this instance, the focal point is property taxes. One person in four reports that their property tax bills place a significant strain on their family's finances and two out of five say property taxes place a moderate strain on their budget.

How much strain does your property tax bill put on your family's finances?



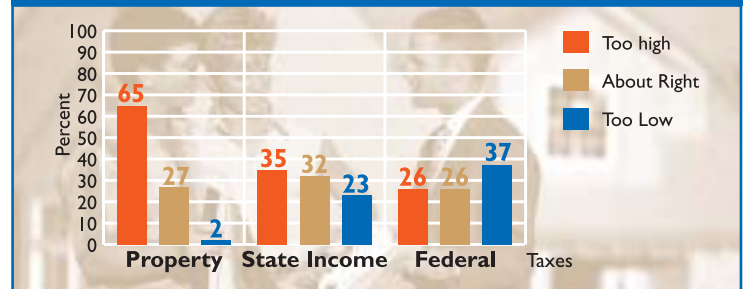
Summary

Historically, Quality of Life survey respondents have expressed satisfaction with the affordability of housing in their communities, but property taxes are taking a toll on the housing affordability equation. In this survey, state residents take another look at the affordability issue and two out of three say their property taxes are much too high or somewhat too high, while 53 percent think that the amount they pay in property taxes is somewhat or very unfair.

Survey Highlights

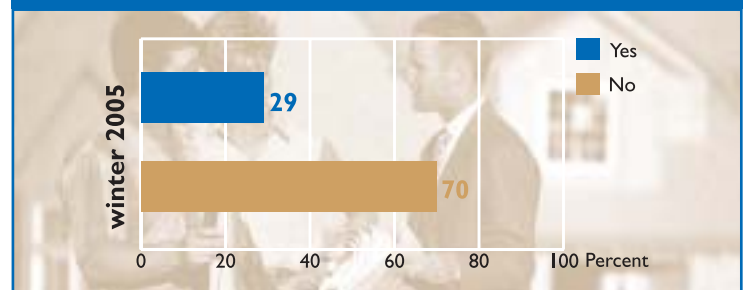
Two-thirds of state residents say the property taxes they pay are too high, while 35 percent say the state income taxes they pay for local aids are too high and 26 percent say federal taxes they pay for education are too high.

Are you paying too much in taxes or too little in terms of the quality of local services you are receiving?



Almost one person in three reports that they have considered moving to another state because of Wisconsin's tax burden.

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

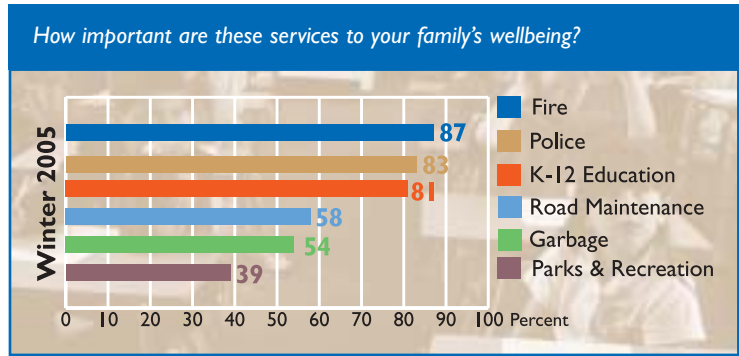


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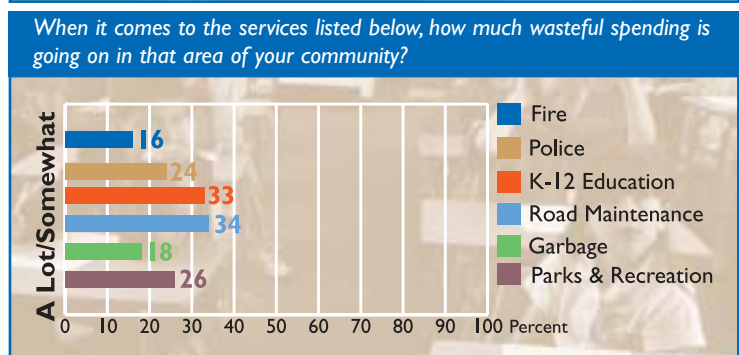
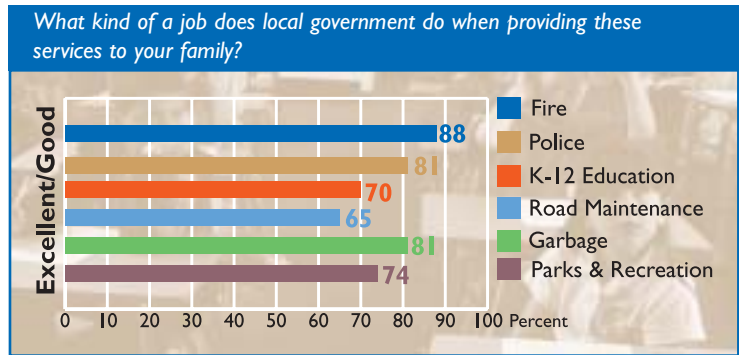
K-12 public education ranks among the most important local services affecting the quality of life for people in Wisconsin and 70 percent of state residents give their local schools an excellent or good rating for the job they are doing. Nevertheless, fewer than half of survey respondents say that their school boards and their own school board representatives do a very good or good job of providing services in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Survey Highlights

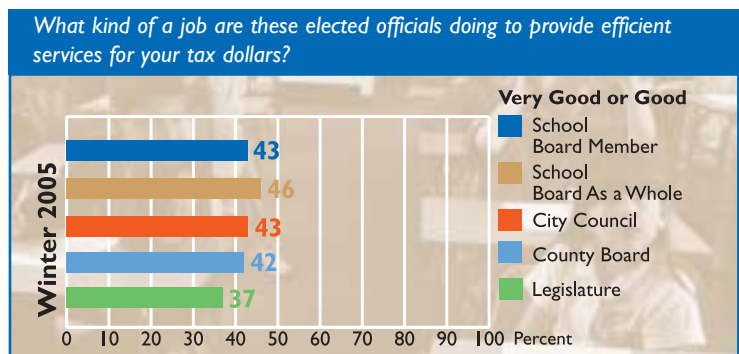
Eight out of 10 state residents say that public K-12 education is very important to their family's well-being. Indeed, public schools are the third-highest ranked service behind fire and police protection.



Educators get high marks for the services they provide. More than two out of three respondents say the quality of education is either excellent or good. Even so, one person in three thinks that there is a lot or some wasteful spending in the public schools in their area.



On the other hand, people think that both school boards as a whole and individual school board members could do a better job of providing cost-effective and efficient services. Just 43 percent of state residents say their school board member does a very good or good job of providing cost-effective services and 46 percent give their school boards positive ratings.

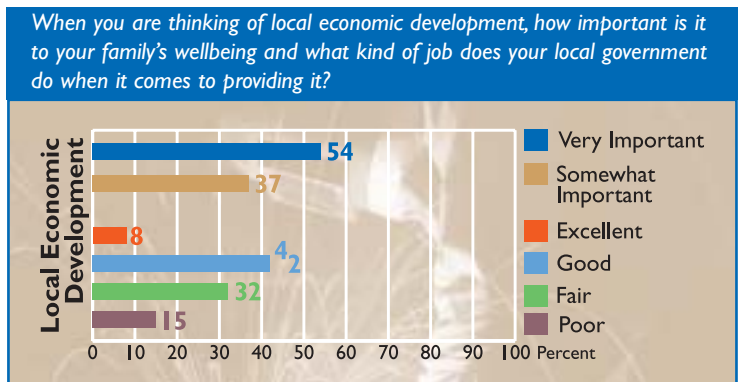


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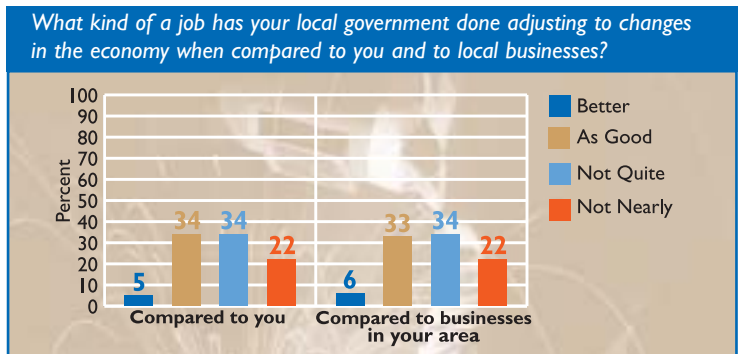
More than half of respondents in this survey report that local economic development initiatives are very important to their wellbeing. But local governments earn some of their lowest ratings for their economic development efforts. On top of this, state residents don't think their local governments have done as good a job as they and local businesses have done in making adjustments in response to economic conditions. A majority of respondents say their local governments have done a fair or poor job of finding ways to do more with less, using technology to improve efficiency and reduce costs and eliminating unnecessary services.

Survey Highlights

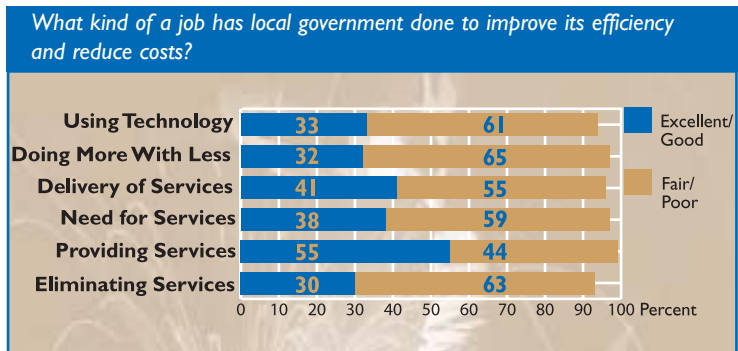
More than nine out of 10 state residents say that local economic development efforts are very important or somewhat important to their wellbeing and that of their families, but 47 percent give local governments a fair or poor rating for local initiatives.



In response to the recent economic downturn, 56 percent of respondents say that their local governments have not done as good a job adjusting to changes in the economy as they and local businesses have done.



More than half of state residents give their local governments grades of fair or poor for implementing measures to cut costs and improve efficiency.



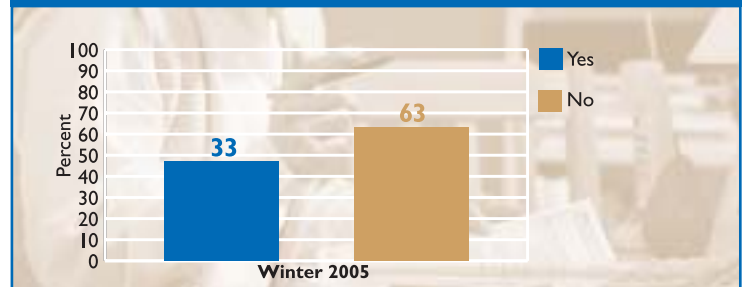
Summary

State residents place a high value on the services they receive locally, but one-third of them question whether those services are being delivered as efficiently as possible. In addition, while people generally don't believe too much money is being spent on critical programs, substantial numbers believe that unnecessary programs are driving property taxes higher. Residents also say some wasteful spending is occurring. Overall, 65 percent of residents say property taxes are too high, while 54 percent of residents believe the amount they pay for property taxes is unfair.

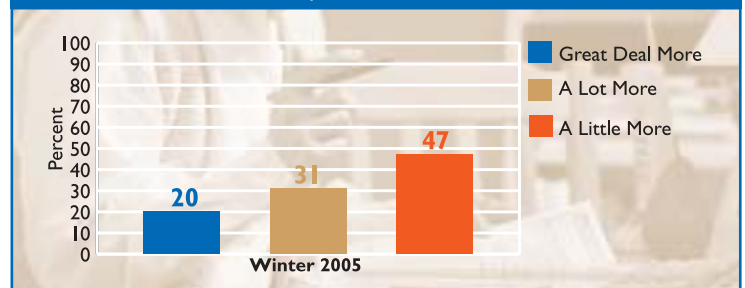
Survey Highlights

A majority of residents believe that overall, local governments are not spending more tax dollars delivering local services to the community than they need to. But, of the 33 percent who believe too much is being spent, more than half say there is "a lot" or "a great deal" of overspending.

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?

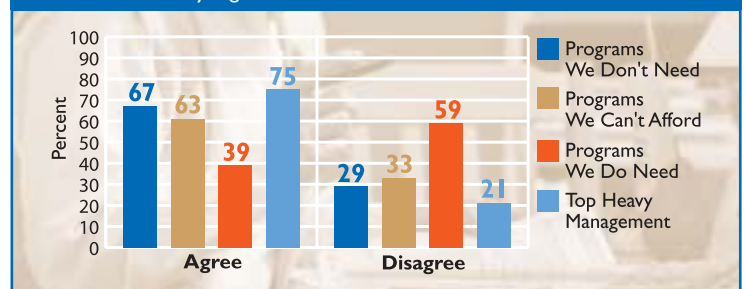


Do you believe that local governments spend a great deal more, a lot more, or a little more than they need to?



State taxpayers recognize the importance of services such as police and fire protection, schools, public health efforts and streets and highway maintenance. At the same time, however, they perceive their property taxes are unnecessarily high because of programs that aren't needed or cost too much.

Do you agree or disagree that the following have made your property taxes unnecessarily high.

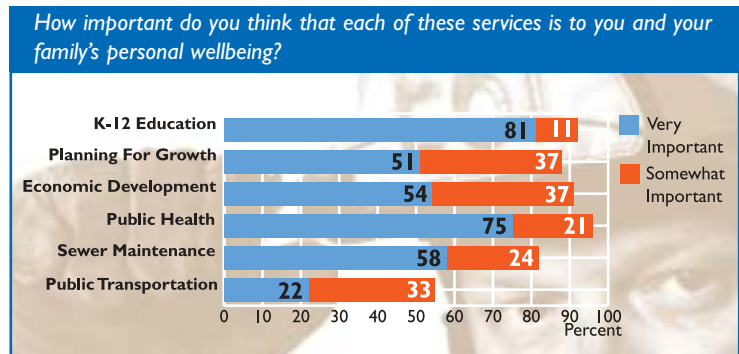
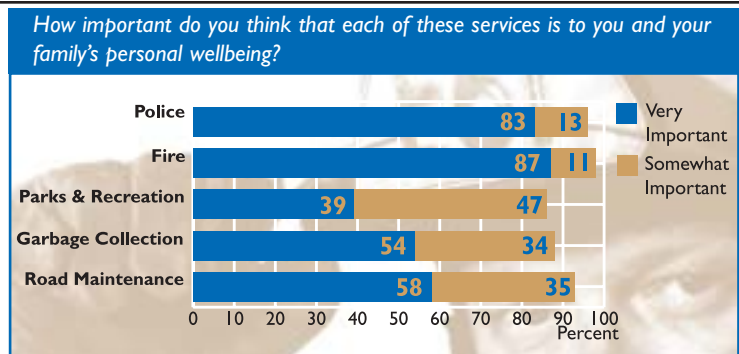


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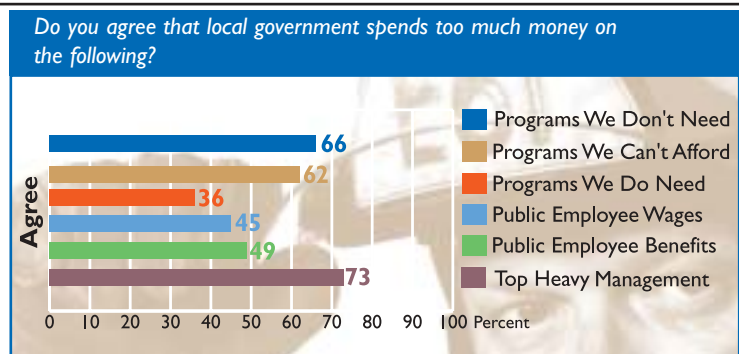
The people of Wisconsin rely on a variety of critical community services to secure a high quality of life for themselves and their families. Among the most important of these services are police (83%) and fire protection (87%), K-12 public education (81%), public health services (75%), garbage collection (54%) and street and sewer maintenance (58%). At the same time, majorities of respondents agree that their communities are spending money on programs they don't need, on programs they can't afford and that there is waste in most government spending. In spite of these concerns, 59 percent of Wisconsin residents reject consolidation of local government units in favor of maintaining current governmental entities.

Survey Highlights

State residents view most local services as important to their family's wellbeing and basic public safety services top the list. Universally, respondents say that police and fire protection as well as K-12 public education are important local services.

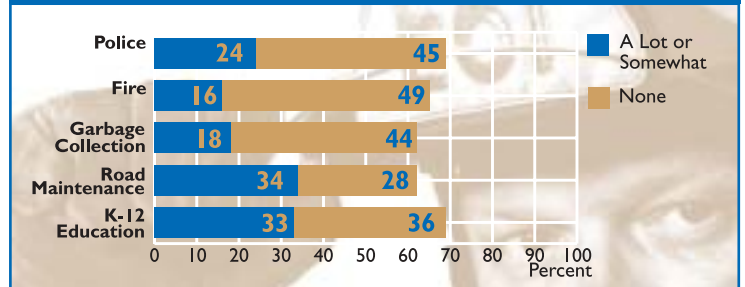


Although local services are important, a majority of state residents agree that governments are spending more than necessary. Sixty-six percent say their governments spend money on programs they don't need and 63 percent say governments are spending for programs they can't afford. Likewise, 75 percent agree that there is too much spent on top-heavy management and 55 percent think government is spending too much money on employee benefits.

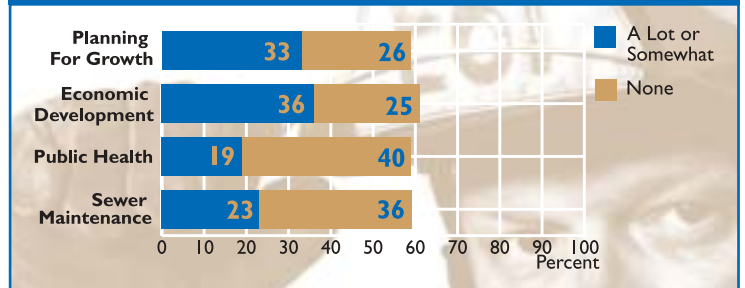


While strong pluralities say that there is no waste in some services such as police and fire protection, garbage collection, public health services and sewer maintenance, one person in three believes that there is a lot or some waste in services like street and highway maintenance, K-12 education, planning for growth and local economic development.

Do you think that there is wasteful spending going on in the following areas in your community?

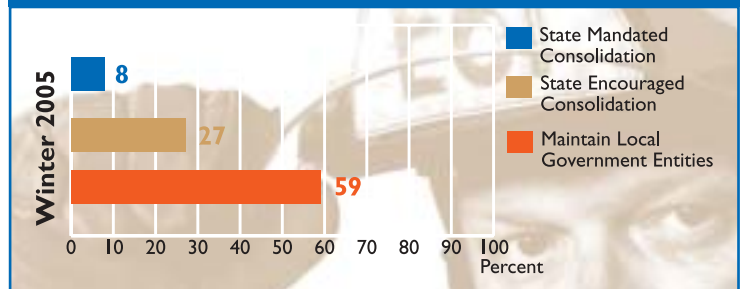


Do you think that there is wasteful spending going on in the following areas in your community?



Although state residents express serious concerns about government spending and the cost effectiveness of government services, just one in three would support either state-mandated or state-encouraged consolidation.

Which of the following best describes your thoughts on consolidating local governments in Wisconsin?

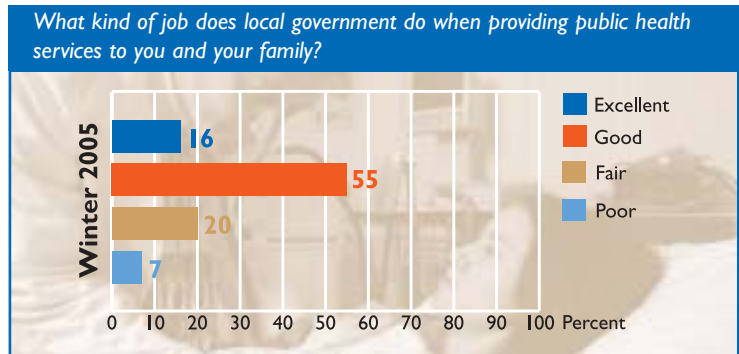


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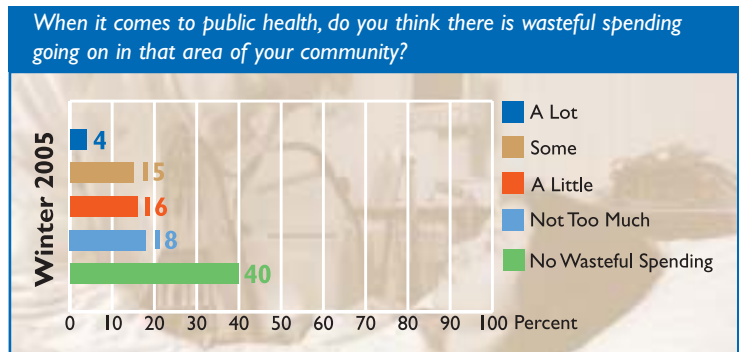
Public health services are the fourth-highest priority for state residents, after fire protection, police protection and public K–12 education. Seventy-five percent of respondents believe public health services are very important for their family’s wellbeing, with just 1 percent saying these services are not important at all.

Survey Highlights

In addition to their view that local governments should be responsible for public health programs, state residents believe their communities are doing a good job providing the services.



Relatively few people believe public health programs are guilty of wasteful spending.



Summary

Overall, state residents believe things are on the right track in their communities, but they would like local government leaders to do a better job responding to economic changes, updating services and evaluating local needs. They believe city and county officials bear responsibility for helping local communities achieve a more prosperous future, with 88 percent agreeing that it's important to plan for growth and 91 percent agreeing that it's important to spend on economic development efforts.

Survey Highlights

Nearly one-half of respondents give their local elected officials fair or poor grades for planning a strong economic future in their communities. Fifty-two percent say their city councils have done a fair or poor job, 53 percent say their county boards have done a fair or poor job, and 45 percent say their town or village boards have done a fair or poor job.

