



Michigan local leaders report little change in the tone of civic discourse in their communities, but are concerned about local impacts of increasingly hostile national partisan politics

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This report presents the opinions of Michigan's local government leaders regarding the state of public discourse in their communities, including how constructive or divisive it is. In addition, it looks at local leaders' assessments of relationships among elected officials and residents, as well as whether they believe national partisan politics helps or hurts those relationships. These findings are based on statewide surveys of local government leaders in the Spring 2021 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS), with comparisons to the Spring 2018 and Fall 2012 MPPS waves.

The Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) is an ongoing census survey of all 1,856 general purpose local governments in Michigan conducted since 2009 by the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP). Respondents for the Spring 2021 wave of the MPPS include county administrators, board chairs, and clerks; city mayors, managers, and clerks; village presidents, managers, and clerks; and township supervisors, managers, and clerks from 1,364 jurisdictions across the state.



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Key Findings

- While national political discourse seems to be increasingly hostile, Michigan local officials in 2021 continued to report generally positive assessments of discourse in their communities around local issues, although leaders in the state's largest communities report higher levels of concern.
- Assessments of discourse *among local elected officials* themselves remain quite optimistic. Only 6% statewide say discourse among their jurisdiction's elected officials on local policy issues is divisive. Meanwhile, 73% say it is generally constructive, including 40% who say it is "very" constructive. These percentages are essentially unchanged since surveys in 2018 and 2012.
- Discourse *between residents and elected officials* is reportedly still quite positive too, and relatively unchanged over time. Just 5% of local leaders describe discourse with residents as divisive, while 70% describe it as constructive (up slightly from 67% who characterized it as constructive in 2018).
- Assessments of the tone of discourse on local policy issues *among residents* themselves are much less optimistic, although they have generally declined only slightly over time. Overall, 35% of local leaders say residents' discussions of local policy are constructive, compared with 38% in 2018. Meanwhile, just 14% say it is divisive (up from 11% in both 2018 and 2012). Statewide, 37% say residents' policy discussions amongst themselves is mixed, sometimes constructive and sometimes divisive.
- In all three cases, local leaders from Michigan's largest jurisdictions (those with more than 30,000 residents), those from urban jurisdictions, and those who report their governments are under high fiscal stress are more likely to describe the discourse as mixed or divisive, compared with those from other Michigan communities. The most severe decline over time is regarding discourse *among residents* in Michigan's largest communities, where just 17% of local leaders say discourse is constructive, down from 28% in both 2018 and 2012.
- Despite few changes in perceptions of the current tone of political *discussions* in Michigan communities, local leaders are sounding the alarm about the impacts of national partisan politics on the more fundamental issue of local *relationships*.
 - » Statewide, 61% believe the current environment of national partisan politics hurts relationships among their residents, including 29% who say it hurts residents' relationships *significantly*.
 - » Almost half (45%) of local officials say that national partisan politics is hurting relationships among members of their board/council, up from only 15% who said the same just three years ago.

Background

Many Americans are feeling pessimistic about the current state of the country, and many believe it may be spiraling into crisis. Concerns about democratic health in the U.S. among both political observers and citizens themselves are widespread and growing. Many organizations that formally track democracy worldwide have highlighted recent democratic declines in the U.S. For example, the Economist's annual "Democracy Index" downgraded the U.S. from a "full democracy" to a "flawed democracy" due to declining ratings over a decade on a number of the 60 different indicators they track.¹ Similarly, in Freedom House's comparative assessment of global political rights and civil liberties, *Freedom in the World*, the score for the U.S. has dropped 11 points in the last decade, among the largest declines globally.² And for the first time, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance added the U.S. to a list of "backsliding democracies" in 2021, noting that many democratically elected governments, including established democracies like the U.S., are increasingly adopting authoritarian tendencies.³ Running parallel to the stream of alarming reports from researchers are the rising concerns of the average American. According to an Ipsos nationwide poll from December 2021, 64% of Americans agreed with the sentiment that the nation's democracy is in crisis and at risk of failing, including broad majorities of Democrats (68%), Republicans (79%), and Independents (67%).⁴ Furthermore, in a survey from the Bright Line Watch last fall, confidence in elections is now more polarized than confidence in the 2020 election was that year, and a clear majority of citizens (62%) currently favor fundamental change to the structure of American government.⁵

Some of the concern around the health of democracy centers on what appears to be increasingly hostile relations between political partisans. According to polls from the Pew Research Center, about nine-in-ten Americans nationwide (91%) say that conflicts between the party coalitions are either strong or very strong, including 71% who say these conflicts are *very strong*, up from less than half (47%) who said the same in 2012.⁶ The state of Michigan is a microcosm of this shift, with the gaps between Michiganders growing across many political and social arenas.⁷

These are all issues that the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) has kept a focus on for more than a decade, through the work of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS). For many years, the MPPS has been tracking a wide range of issues related to the functioning of democracy and political participation in local governance statewide, as reported by local elected and appointed officials across the state.⁸

Up until now, the growth in political tensions and anti-democratic sentiment has appeared relatively muted at the local level in Michigan. Through 2020, reports from Michigan local leaders emphasized robust local democratic health on many metrics, despite perceived declines at the state and national levels. However, as noted above, much has changed in a relatively short period of time in national and state politics across the country, and it is important to keep track of whether those changes are now beginning to trickle down to the local level.

Two of the issues the MPPS research has tracked are changes in the tone of civic discourse in local communities, and the more overarching issue of relationships among local officials, between residents and elected officials, and among the residents themselves. First in 2012 and again in 2018, local leaders in Michigan were asked to assess how constructive or divisive discussions of local policies were in their communities, and they reported back generally positive views of local discourse.⁹ To gauge whether the tone of local political discourse and the health of local relationships have declined over time, the Spring 2021 MPPS once again asked local leaders about these issues.

It is important to note, though, that the survey concluded in early June 2021, and many types of local interaction may have changed further since then. In upcoming waves, the MPPS will continue to ask questions like these regarding democratic institutions and relationships, to track whether local officials remain generally optimistic about the functioning of democracy at the local level, despite any additional turmoil in state and national politics.

Statewide, little change in assessments of constructive discourse among local leaders since 2012

The Spring 2021 MPPS asked local leaders to characterize the general tone of discussion and communication that takes place around local policy issues in their communities, among and between various groups, including among local officials themselves. The survey program asked similar questions back in 2012 and again in 2018, which allows tracking over nearly a decade in which discourse across the country appears to have become more hostile and divisive, at least in terms of national political and policy issues. However, when it comes to locally-focused discourse among local elected officials themselves in Michigan, there is not much change over time.

Despite concerns about increasingly hostile political discourse at the state and national levels, local officials do not report such trends on their own local boards and councils. Overall, in 2021, only 6% of local leaders say discourse among local elected officials is very (2%) or somewhat (4%) divisive, while 73% say it is somewhat (33%) or very (40%) constructive (see *Figure 1*). Meanwhile, 17% say this discourse is mixed, sometimes divisive and sometimes constructive.

These percentages have shifted very little over the past decade. Back in 2012, 74% of local leaders statewide characterized discourse among elected officials on local policy as constructive, while 6% said it was divisive. In 2018, 71% said such discourse was constructive while 8% said it was divisive, meaning 2021 represents a slight rebound to those 2012 levels.

While there does not appear to be much change in assessments of elected officials' discourse statewide between 2012 and 2021, there are some interesting differences among sub-groups.

Figure 1
Officials' assessments of the tone of discussion around local policy issues among elected officials, 2012-2021

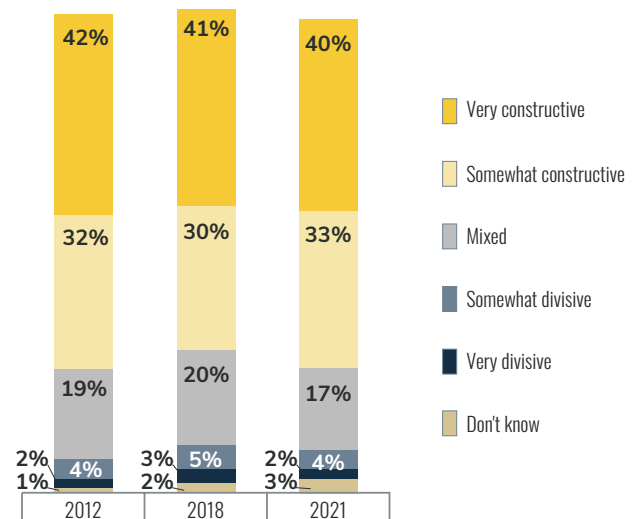


Table 1
Percentage of officials that say discussion around local policy issues is primarily constructive among elected officials, 2012-2021

	Population size		Urban-Rural Jurisdiction				Jurisdiction Fiscal Stress			Official's Partisan Self-identification			Official's Position	
	Fewer than 30,000 residents	More than 30,000 residents	Rural	Mostly Rural	Mostly Urban	Urban	Low Stress	Medium Stress	High Stress	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Elected Officials	Appointed Officials
2012	75%	60%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	77%	72%	71%	74%	69%
2018	72%	60%	71%	73%	66%	66%	75%	67%	64%	74%	64%	65%	73%	61%
2021	74%	67%	76%	74%	74%	62%	79%	67%	62%	77%	67%	79%	73%	74%

For example, there continue to be differences in reports of divisive vs. constructive discourse over local policy issues among elected officials when broken down by the population size of Michigan’s communities, with officials from larger jurisdictions less likely than those from smaller ones to report mostly constructive discourse. As shown in *Table 1*, among Michigan’s largest local jurisdictions (those with more than 30,000 residents), in 2021 67% of local leaders say discourse among elected officials is either somewhat or very constructive, while the same is true among 74% of leaders from smaller jurisdictions (those with fewer than 30,000 residents). Although it persists, this gap has narrowed compared with previous years’ survey responses. In addition, officials from urban jurisdictions (62%) continue to be less likely to report generally constructive discussion compared with officials in mostly urban, mostly rural, and rural communities. And while not shown in this table, the same types of patterns are found in places with high population density compared to place with fewer residents per square mile. In other words, places that are larger, denser, and more heterogeneous reportedly tend to have less civil discussion among their local leaders. This may be driven in part simply because there are likely to be a greater variety of viewpoints, and hence more opportunities to disagree, in places that are larger and more diverse.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, discussion among elected officials in places that report low fiscal stress are seen as the most constructive (79%), though even in jurisdictions with high fiscal stress, nearly two-thirds of local leaders (62%) say discussions on their boards or councils is generally constructive.

When it comes to the partisan identification of the MPPS respondents, 77% of local officials who identify as Republicans say discussion between elected officials is generally constructive, relatively unchanged over time. Democrats are similarly positive (79%), but this represents a significant increase in constructive assessments compared with 2018 and 2012. Finally, self-identified Independents are the least likely to say discussion among local elected officials is constructive (67%), though this is still two-thirds of such respondents.

Additionally, in 2021, local officials who are elected (73%) and those who are appointed (74%) agree in 2021 on their assessments of local policy discussion among boards and councils, representing a significant jump from earlier surveys among appointed leaders.

Discourse between officials and residents also reported as generally constructive, with little change over time

Another place to look for increasing incivility in the current political era is communication between elected officials and their constituents. The ongoing COVID pandemic in Michigan has produced numerous examples of hostile public discourse directed toward local school boards,¹⁰ local public health officials,¹¹ and other local boards¹² over issues of mask mandates, potential vaccine mandates, critical race theory, and more. Nonetheless, it is unclear from anecdotal examples just how common or widespread such problems are, and this is where the MPPS' 70%+ response rate is most valuable. Note that the data in this report were collected in spring 2021, and it is possible that discourse has changed measurably since that time. However, from the perspective of Michigan local leaders, the discourse between elected officials and residents in their communities on local policy issues raises few red flags overall, at least as of spring 2021. Statewide, just 5% of local leaders describe it as divisive, including just 1% that say it is *very* divisive, while 70% report this discourse as constructive, up from 67% in 2018 and equal to 2012 levels (see *Figure 2*).

Figure 2
Officials' assessments of the tone of discussion around local policy issues between elected officials and residents, 2012-2021

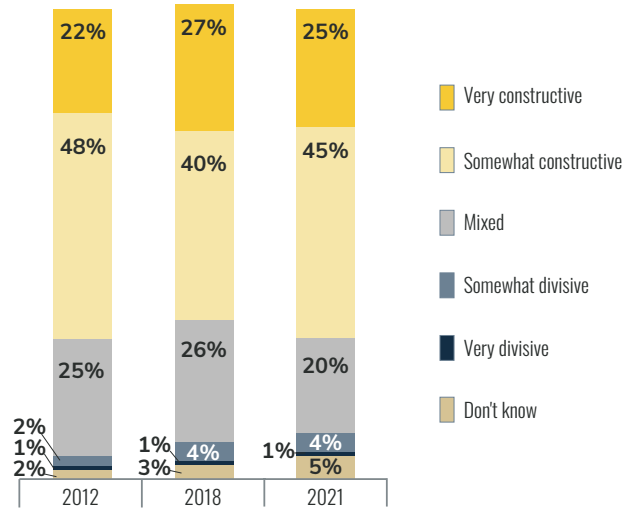


Table 2
Percentage of officials that say discussion around local policy issues is primarily constructive between local officials and residents, 2012-2021

	Population size		Urban-Rural Jurisdiction				Jurisdiction Fiscal Stress			Official's Partisan Self-identification			Official's Position	
	Fewer than 30,000 residents	More than 30,000 residents	Rural	Mostly Rural	Mostly Urban	Urban	Low Stress	Medium Stress	High Stress	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Elected Officials	Appointed Officials
2012	71%	58%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	72%	72%	70%	71%	66%
2018	67%	54%	65%	70%	62%	61%	71%	64%	51%	69%	60%	63%	69%	51%
2021	70%	65%	71%	72%	69%	61%	75%	63%	63%	73%	66%	72%	71%	69%

Once again, there are differences by population size and the urban-rural status of Michigan’s communities. As shown in *Table 2*, compared with officials from all other jurisdiction sizes (70%), those from Michigan’s largest communities (65%) are a bit less likely to say discussions on local policy issues between officials and residents are constructive. Similarly, leaders from fully urban places (61%) are the least likely to describe such communication as constructive.

By levels of community fiscal stress, those with low fiscal stress are the most likely to report constructive discourse, although reports among those communities with high fiscal stress have improved significantly over time (up from 51% in 2018 to 63% in 2021).

Meanwhile, Republican (73%), Independent (66%), and Democratic (72%) local leaders all report improvements over 2018 in the tone of discussion between elected officials and residents.

And again, while in previous years appointed officials had been more pessimistic than elected officials about discussion between elected officials and residents on local policy issues, in 2021 this gap closed substantially.

Discourse among residents themselves remains much less likely to be described as constructive

When asked to characterize discourse among their jurisdictions’ residents themselves, local leaders are much less positive. Only 35% of Michigan’s local officials say residents’ discussions with one another on local policy issues is generally constructive, down slightly from 2018 (38%) but still slightly higher than the 30% who said the same in 2012 (see *Figure 3*). In addition, while just 14% of local leaders describe discourse among residents in their jurisdiction as “somewhat” (10%) or “very” (4%) divisive, this is also up from the 11% who said the same in both 2012 and 2018. Meanwhile, 37% of local leaders say the tone of residents’ discourse with each other in 2021 is mixed, sometimes constructive and sometimes divisive. It is also worth noting that local leaders’ uncertainty about this discourse has risen over time, with the percent of respondents saying they don’t know how to characterize it up from 9% in 2012 to 14% in 2021.

Figure 3
Officials’ assessments of the tone of discussion around local policy issues among residents, 2012-2021

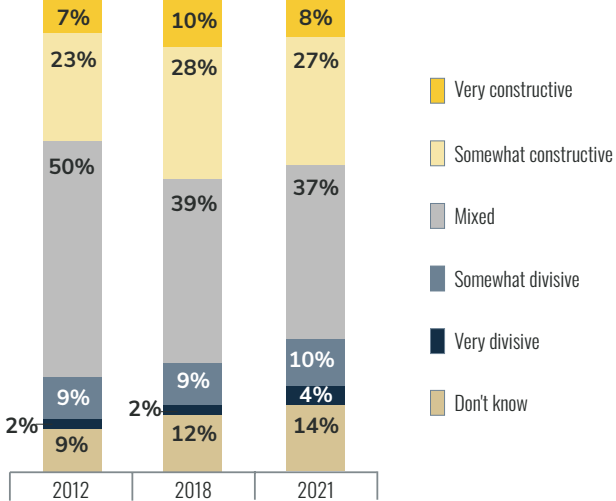


Table 3
Percentage of officials that say discussion around local policy issues is primarily constructive among residents, 2012-2021

	Population size		Urban-Rural Jurisdiction				Jurisdiction Fiscal Stress			Official's Partisan Self-identification			Official's Position	
	Fewer than 30,000 residents	Greater than 30,000 residents	Rural	Mostly Rural	Mostly Urban	Urban	Low Stress	Medium Stress	High Stress	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Elected Officials	Appointed Officials
2012	30%	28%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	30%	31%	30%	31%	29%
2018	39%	28%	39%	41%	34%	33%	39%	40%	30%	44%	30%	35%	41%	27%
2021	36%	17%	36%	35%	29%	29%	38%	28%	31%	38%	29%	29%	36%	28%

Again, there are differences based on the size of the community in local leaders' assessments of residents' political discourse on local issues. Once more, the tone of discourse on local policy issues is reportedly more divisive among residents in large communities than in small ones. Among the state's largest jurisdictions, only 17% of local leaders say residents' discussions on policy among themselves is generally constructive, compared with 36% in other jurisdictions who say the same (see *Table 3*). Positive assessments of residents' discussion have declined substantially in the largest jurisdictions in 2021, down from 28% in 2018 and 2012. Similarly, local leaders from urban (29%) and mostly urban (29%) jurisdictions are somewhat less likely than those from more rural places to say that residents' discussions on local policy are generally constructive.

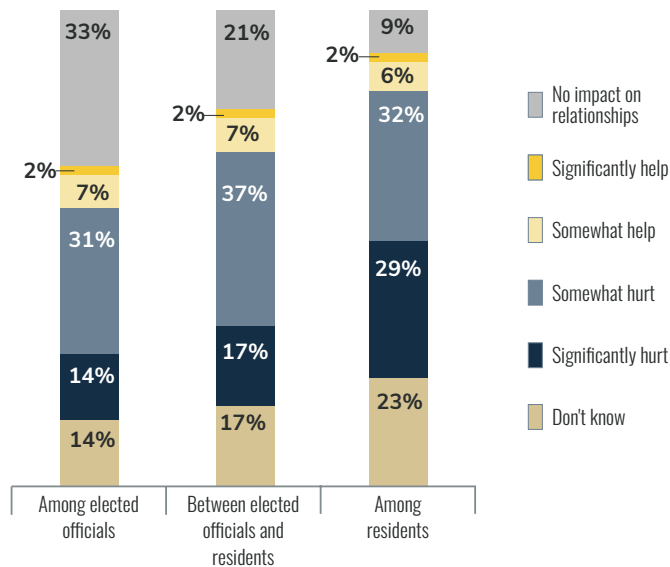
Assessments broken down by the partisanship of Michigan's local leaders show differences too, as Republican leaders' (38%) are more positive than either Independents (29%) or Democrats (29%) about the tone of discourse among residents in their communities.

And, when broken down by the responding officials' type of position, elected officials have more positive assessments (36%) of the constructive tone of citizen discourse compared with appointed officials (28%), reverting to the historical pattern of these differing assessments, unlike the findings presented above for discourse among elected officials, and discourse between elected officials and residents.

Leaders express growing concerns over negative local impacts of national partisan politics

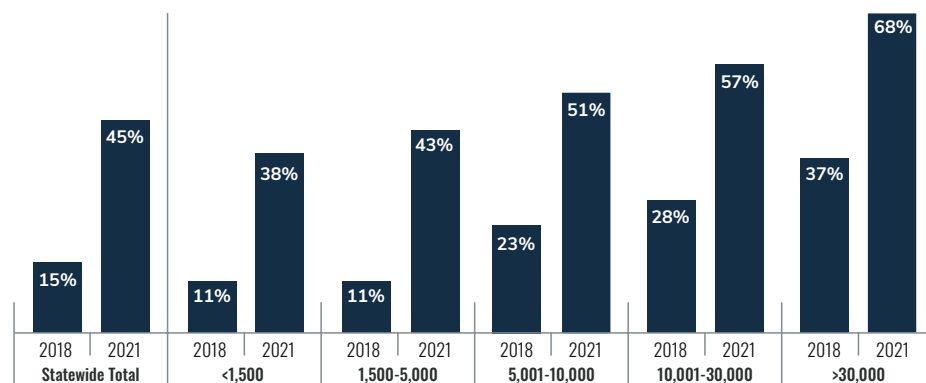
The MPPS also asked Michigan’s local leaders whether they think the current environment of national partisan politics helps or hurts relationships among those same three groups within their jurisdictions. More than just the tone of discourse, this survey question examines a more fundamental issue in terms of overall relationships between local stakeholders. In this case, local leaders express widespread apprehension about the negative effects of national politics in their own communities. First, only a third (33%) of local leaders say current national partisan politics has no impact on the working relationships between members of their local board or council (see *Figure 4*). That drops to 21% when it comes to civic relationships between elected officials and residents, and just 9% for relationships among local residents themselves. Meanwhile, fewer than 10% statewide believe national party politics has a positive impact on any of these various relationships. Nearly half (45%) believe it has a negative impact on the working relationships on their board or council, more than half (54%), say the same regarding relationships between local elected officials and residents, and fully 61% say the same regarding relationships among their communities’ residents.

Figure 4
Officials’ assessments of whether the current environment of national partisan politics helps or hurts civic relationships in the community, 2021



Concerns over these negative impacts have risen significantly over a short period of time. Three years ago, on the Spring 2018 MPPS, local leaders were asked specifically about these impacts on their board’s or council’s relationships. That questionnaire did contain slightly different wording, in that it asked about the impact of “overall state and national partisan politics,” while the 2021 survey asked exclusively about “the current environment

Figure 5
Percentage of officials that say the current environment of national (and state) partisan politics hurts relationships among elected officials, 2018 vs. 2021



of national partisan politics.” Looking specifically at relationships among the jurisdiction’s elected officials—the one local officials say is *least* affected by national partisan politics—in 2018 just 15% said national (and state) partisan politics somewhat or significantly hurt board or council relationships (see *Figure 5*). However, by 2021 that percentage had tripled, to 45%. Substantial increases are found among local leaders from jurisdictions of all sizes, but notably more than two-thirds (68%) of leaders of the state’s largest jurisdictions say current national partisan politics hurts board or council relationships, compared to 37% who said the same three years ago.



As shown in *Table 4*, the pattern of higher concern among local leaders in urban jurisdictions holds in this case as well, with 64% now saying that national partisan politics has a harmful effect on local elected officials’ relationships. And while Republican local leaders are the least likely to say this is a concern, nonetheless nearly half (45%) feel this way in 2021, up from just 13% in 2018. Meanwhile, nearly half of Democrats (49%) and more than half of Independents (56%) also believe national-level partisan politics is now harmful to these local relationships. And, even in places where local leaders report that the current relationships on their board or council are “excellent,” a third (34%) say that national partisan politics is harming those relationships, up from just 7% three years ago.

Table 4
 Percentage of officials that say the current environment of national (and state) partisan politics hurts relationships among elected officials, 2018 vs. 2021

	Urban-Rural Jurisdiction				Jurisdiction Fiscal Stress			Official's Partisan Self-identification			Official's Position		Assessments of current relationships on Board/Council			
	Rural	Mostly Rural	Mostly Urban	Urban	Low Stress	Medium Stress	High Stress	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Elected Officials	Appointed Officials	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
2018	11%	14%	34%	26%	14%	17%	23%	13%	20%	24%	13%	27%	7%	16%	26%	41%
2021	43%	44%	56%	64%	45%	45%	49%	45%	56%	49%	42%	55%	34%	50%	64%	73%

Conclusion

In Spring 2021, after a year of the COVID-19 pandemic and political controversies following the 2020 elections, the MPPS found that local leaders in Michigan remain generally positive about the state of civic discourse on local issues in their communities. Most local leaders continue to report that discourse on local policy issues is generally constructive among elected officials (73%) and between officials and residents (70%). And while local leaders are less positive about the tone of discourse among their jurisdictions' residents themselves—with 35% reporting it as generally constructive in 2021—only 14% believe that it is outright divisive, while 37% say it is mixed. On the other hand, only 17% of local leaders in Michigan's largest jurisdictions currently report that their residents' discourse on local policy is generally constructive, while 28% say it is divisive.

These more positive assessments among local leaders statewide about the tone of local politics have held relatively steady, changing incrementally for the most part since 2012. However, beyond the civility of discourse, the increasingly hostile tone of national policy discourse may increasingly be infecting politics at the local level. Many of Michigan's local leaders believe the current tone of national partisan politics is hurting the more fundamental issue of civic relationships at the local level, with 45% saying it hurts working relationships among members of the local board or council (up from just 15% in 2018), 54% saying it hurts civic relationships between local elected officials and residents of their communities, and 61% saying the same for relationships among those residents themselves.

Notes

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Survey Background and Methodology

The MPPS is an ongoing survey program, interviewing the leaders of Michigan's 1,856 units of general purpose local government, conducted by the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) at the University of Michigan in partnership with the Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Townships Association, and Michigan Association of Counties. Surveys are conducted each spring (and prior to 2018, were also conducted each fall). The program has covered a wide range of policy topics and includes longitudinal tracking data on "core" fiscal, budgetary and operational policy questions and designed to build-up a multi-year time-series.

In the Spring 2021 iteration, surveys were sent by the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) via the internet and hardcopy to top elected and appointed officials (including county administrators and board chairs; city mayors and managers; village presidents, clerks, and managers; and township supervisors, clerks, and managers) from all 83 counties, 280 cities, 253 villages, and 1,240 townships in the state of Michigan.

The Spring 2021 wave was conducted from April 5 – June 7, 2021. A total of 1,364 jurisdictions in the Spring 2021 wave returned valid surveys (67 counties, 208 cities,

173 villages, and 916 townships), resulting in a 73% response rate by unit. The margin of error for the survey for the survey as a whole is +/- 1.37%. The key relationships discussed in the above report are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level or below, unless otherwise specified. Missing responses are not included in the tabulations, unless otherwise specified. Some report figures may not add to 100% due to rounding within response categories. Quantitative data are weighted to account for non-response. "Voices Across Michigan" verbatim responses, when included, may have been edited for clarity and brevity. Contact CLOSUP staff for more information.

Detailed tables of the data analyzed in this report broken down three ways—by jurisdiction type (county, city, township, or village); by population size of the respondent's community, and by the region of the respondent's jurisdiction—are available online at the MPPS homepage: closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey

The survey responses presented here are those of local Michigan officials, while further analysis represents the views of the authors. Neither necessarily reflects the views of the University of Michigan, or of other partners in the MPPS.



Previous MPPS reports

- Michigan local government officials report improved fiscal health after a year of COVID-19, but not yet back to pre-pandemic levels (December 2021)
- Michigan local officials' assessments of American democracy at the state and federal levels decline sharply (November 2021)
- The lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Michigan communities and local governments (October 2021)
- Michigan local governments report fewer economic challenges one year into the COVID-19 pandemic, and describe efforts to support local businesses (September 2021)
- Local leaders' views on Michigan's initial COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Spring 2021 (August 2021)
- Local leaders' concerns about Michigan's direction spike, while evaluations of state leaders sink over the past year (July 2021)
- Michigan local leaders' views on state's new approach to electoral redistricting (February 2021)
- COVID-19 pandemic sparks Michigan local leaders' concerns for fiscal health (December 2020)
- The functioning of democracy at the local level: a compendium of findings from the Michigan Public Policy Survey of local leaders (December 2020)
- Energy Issues and Policies in Michigan Local Governments (October 2020)
- Michigan local leaders expect increased challenges for the 2020 election, but are confident about administering accurate elections (October 2020)
- Michigan Local Energy Survey (MiLES): Intergovernmental collaboration on sustainability and energy issues among Michigan local governments (September 2020)
- Confidence in the accuracy of Michigan's 2020 Census count among local leaders was not very high, slips further (August 2020)
- Michigan local leaders expect mixed impacts from expanded voter registration and absentee voting reforms (July 2020)
- Local leaders' evaluations of Michigan's direction and Governor's performance during the COVID-19 pandemic's arrival (July 2020)
- The initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Michigan communities and local governments (June 2020)
- Energy policies and environmental leadership among Michigan's local governments (January 2020)
- Mixed signals continue for Michigan local governments' fiscal health, while future outlooks worsen (December 2019)
- Michigan local officials' views on the next recession: timing, concerns, and actions taken (October 2019)
- Michigan local government preparations and concerns regarding the 2020 U.S. Census (September 2019)
- New Governor, new evaluations of the direction Michigan is headed among local leaders (August 2019)
- Positive working relationships reported among Michigan's local elected officials (June 2019)
- Community poverty and the struggle to make ends meet in Michigan, according to local government leaders (March 2019)
- The state of community civic discourse, according to Michigan's local government leaders (December 2018)
- Despite sustained economic growth, Michigan local government fiscal health still lags (November 2018)
- Michigan local government leaders' views on medical and recreational marijuana (September 2018)
- Rising confidence in Michigan's direction among local leaders, but partisan differences remain (July 2018)
- Michigan local government officials weigh in on housing shortages and related issues (June 2018)
- Approaches to land use planning and zoning among Michigan's local governments (May 2018)
- Workforce issues and challenges for Michigan's local governments (January 2018)
- Local leaders' views on elections in Michigan: accuracy, problems, and reform options (November 2017)
- Michigan local government officials report complex mix of improvement and decline in fiscal health, but with overall trend moving slowly upward (October 2017)
- Michigan local leaders want their citizens to play a larger role in policymaking, but report declining engagement (August 2017)
- Michigan local leaders' views on state preemption and how to share policy authority (June 2017)
- Improving communication, building trust are seen as keys to fixing relationships between local jurisdictions and the State government (May 2017)

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The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP), housed at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, conducts and supports applied policy research designed to inform state, local, and urban policy issues. Through integrated research, teaching, and outreach involving academic researchers, students, policymakers and practitioners, CLOSUP seeks to foster understanding of today's state and local policy problems, and to find effective solutions to those problems.

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