



Michigan local leaders' concerns about U.S. democracy at state and federal levels ease somewhat, but remain grim

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This report presents local government leaders' views regarding the functioning of democracy in their jurisdictions, the State of Michigan, and the United States as a whole. These findings are based on statewide surveys of local government leaders in the Spring 2022 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS), conducted between April 4 and June 6, 2022, and includes comparisons to Spring 2020 and 2021 wave responses.

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 2022 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 1,327 jurisdictions across the state.



Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

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Key Findings

- When asked to rate the functioning of democracy on a ten-point scale—where one means a “total breakdown of democracy” and ten means “a perfectly functioning democracy”—63% of Michigan local leaders rate democracy *in the U.S. as a whole* poorly, at four or lower on the scale. This is a slight improvement from the 66% who gave such poor ratings in 2021. Only 10% of Michigan local officials currently rate the functioning of democracy at the federal level as relatively strong, at seven or above, essentially unchanged from last year.
 - » Among local leaders who currently give U.S. democracy a poor rating, 18% feel there is a total breakdown of democracy at the federal level (a rating of one), down from 23% who said the same last year.
- Meanwhile, 32% of the state's local leaders rate democracy *in the state of Michigan* poorly, at four or lower today. This is a significant improvement from the 43% who felt this way a year ago, but still represents widespread concern. Just over a quarter (27%) rate Michigan democracy as relatively strong, at seven or above on the scale, up from 20% who said the same in 2021.
 - » Among local leaders who give Michigan democracy a poor rating today, 5% feel there is a total breakdown of democracy at the state level, down from 11% last year.
- By contrast, Michigan local leaders continue to give high ratings to the functioning of local democracy *in their own jurisdictions*, with 84% rating it at seven or higher, unchanged from assessments in 2020 and 2021. Just 3% feel that democracy in their local jurisdiction is functioning poorly.
- Partisan identification plays little role in assessments of the functioning of democracy at the local level, but a significant one for the state and national levels. For local democracy, in 2022, Republicans (86%) are just slightly more likely than Democrats (83%) or Independents (82%) to give high ratings. However, for Michigan's democracy overall, Democrats (45%) are much more likely to give high ratings compared with Independents (27%) and Republicans (23%), although these ratings improved among all partisan groups since 2021. And for democracy across the U.S., one in five (20%) Democratic local officials currently give high ratings, while the same is true of just 10% of Republicans and 8% of Independents.

Background

Concerns about the functioning of American democracy have been increasing in recent years, with particular alarms raised after the 2020 elections. Before then, in 2016, 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, and this trend has continued since then.¹ And more recently, 2021 started with now-disproven allegations of fraud surrounding the 2020 election, protests in state capitols nationwide, and the violent January 6, 2021 assault on the Capitol Building in Washington D.C. which further deepened concerns about U.S. democracy.

At the state level, Michigan has experienced many extraordinary political events recently, including a planned kidnapping of the Governor, significant and hostile disputes at local school and government board meetings over COVID-19-related statewide restrictions and mask mandates, an election during the pandemic in 2020 and subsequent controversies surrounding its certification, and more.² However, despite concerns regarding possible disruptions or problems at polling places during Michigan’s November 2022 general election, administration of the recent election statewide was calm and orderly.³

Since 2009, the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) has tracked 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.⁴ During this time, the surveys have found the growth in political tensions and concerns about democracy has generally appeared relatively muted at the local level in Michigan, at least in terms of local community issues.

Reports from Michigan local leaders have emphasized robust local democratic health on many metrics, despite their perceptions of declines at the state and national levels. Nonetheless, some concerns have appeared in recent years. For example, recent MPPS reports on harassment of local officials⁵ and on their concerns about potential disturbances at polling places⁶ raise serious concerns. And in 2021 local officials expressed concern about the increasingly negative impact of national partisan politics on local relationships among officials and especially among the public, although they still reported that local civic discourse was generally positive, both among local elected officials themselves and between elected officials and their residents.⁷

Beginning in Spring 2020, the MPPS has asked local leaders for their overall assessments of the state of American democracy as a system of government, prompting them to think about such issues as free and fair elections, rule of law, an unbiased free press, balanced relationships between levels and branches of government, ethical and transparent governance, an informed and engaged electorate, and more. Local officials are asked to evaluate the functioning of democracy on a ten-point scale— with 1 as a total breakdown of democracy and 10 as perfectly functioning democracy—for three specific levels of governance: in their own jurisdiction, in the state of Michigan overall, and in the United States overall. The following report details how their optimism about democracy in the U.S. and in Michigan eroded significantly in 2021 but has rebounded at least slightly as of Spring 2022.

Concerns about the health of U.S. democracy remain high, but ease slightly over the past year

Between spring 2020 and spring 2021, as shown in *Figure 1a*, Michigan local officials' ratings of the functioning of democracy in the U.S. overall worsened sharply. The 2020 presidential election, the January 6th assault on the Capitol, and the transition from the Trump to the Biden presidential administrations happened between those two survey waves. By spring 2021 just 11% rated U.S. democracy overall as highly functioning (at seven or higher on the ten-point scale), and 66% rated it as poor (at four or lower).

This year, these ratings have recovered slightly. Although just 10% of local leaders currently rate the functioning of U.S. democracy as high in 2022, 63% rate it as poor, a slight improvement compared to 66% last year. In addition, the percent of local officials who believe there is a complete breakdown of democracy at the federal level (i.e., at "one" on the ten-point scale) fell from 23% in 2021 to 18% in 2022 (see *Appendix A*).

There are significant partisan differences in these assessments, indicating they are likely influenced by which party holds the presidency and/or Congress, at any given time. Between the 2020 and 2021 waves of the MPPS, control of not just the presidency, but also the U.S. Senate shifted to the Democrats, and Republican local leaders' assessments of U.S. democracy declined while Independent and Democratic local leaders' assessments improved (see *Figure 1b*). After those significant partisan reversals in 2020-21, assessments of democracy at the national level have remained more stable over the past year. Republican local officials' assessments of high-functioning democracy actually improved slightly, from 7% in 2021 to 10% in 2022. Similarly, the percentage of Republicans rating U.S. democracy poorly dropped from 75% in 2021 to 69% in 2022. However, 24% of Republican local leaders in Michigan today still believe there has been a total breakdown of democracy across the U.S. Meanwhile, Independent

Figure 1a
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy across the U.S., 2020-2022

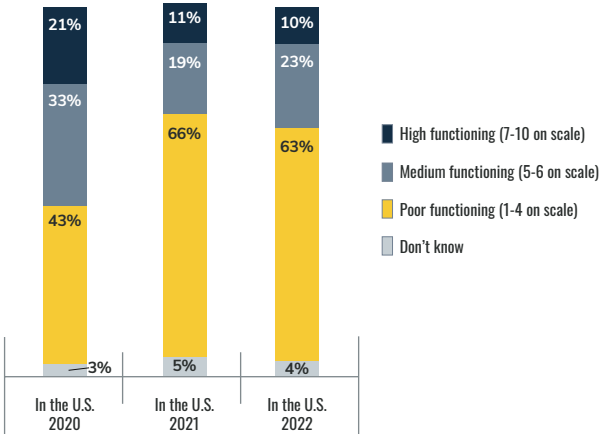
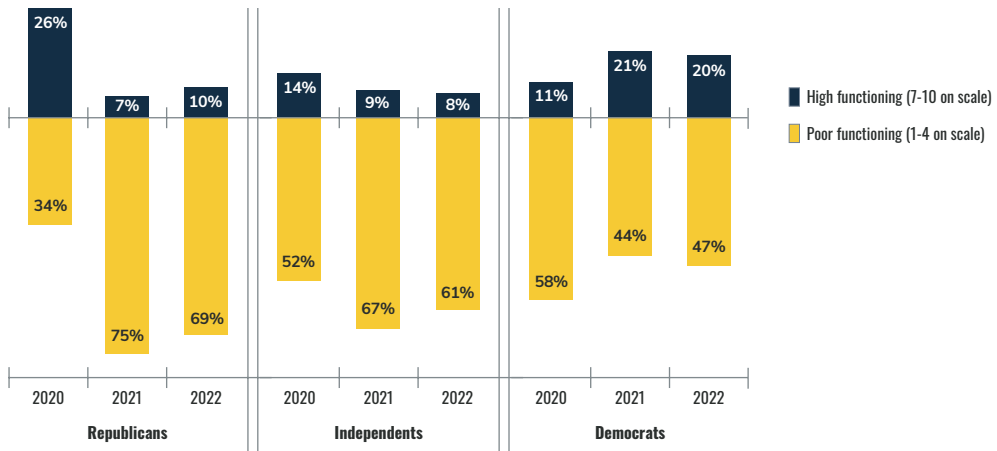


Figure 1b
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy across the U.S., 2020-2022, by respondents' partisan identification



Note: responses for medium functioning (5-6 on scale) and "don't know" not shown

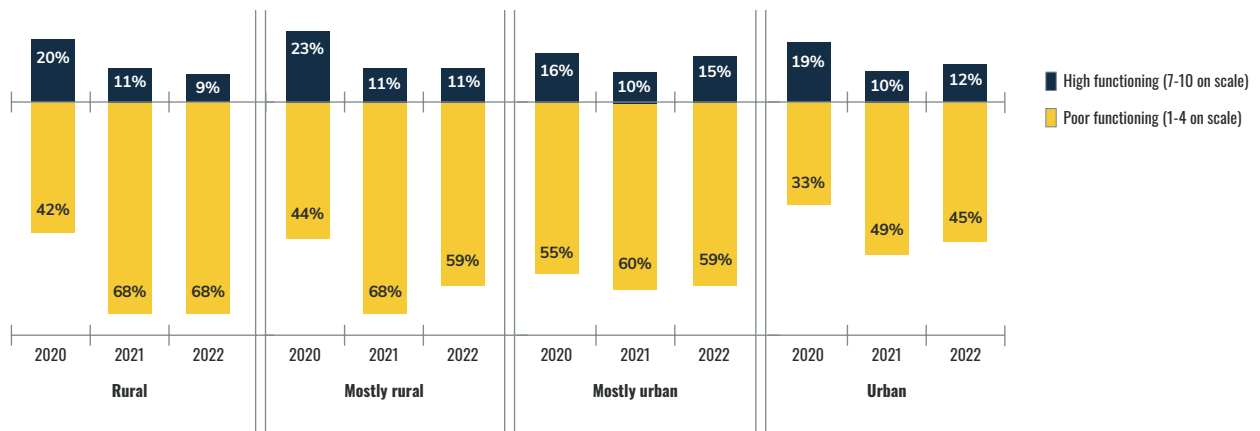
local leaders' views also changed, with fewer giving poor assessments in 2022 compared to 2021. Democratic local leaders' views changed the least among the three groups and got marginally worse compared to 2021 on both ends of the spectrum, with more giving poor assessments and fewer giving strong assessments of U.S. democracy.

Although political partisanship has a particularly strong connection to assessments of the health of democracy at the state and national levels, statistical regression analysis shows that urban-rural differences also have a strong relationship with ratings of the functioning of democracy, unrelated to local leaders' partisanship.

The MPPS asks local officials to characterize their jurisdictions on an urban-rural spectrum: rural, mostly rural, mostly urban, or urban. Between 2020 and 2021, local leaders' assessments of the functioning of U.S. democracy declined in all types of Michigan communities (see Figure 1c). However, in the past year, there have been some differences, with assessments among local officials from fully rural communities showing little change, leaving them as the most likely to rate U.S. democracy poorly (68%). By comparison, assessments by leaders in other types of communities improved, with 59% of officials from mostly rural and mostly urban jurisdictions and 45% from fully urban places rating U.S. democracy as poor, each of which is down slightly from their respective poor ratings in 2021.

Figure 1c

Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy across the U.S., 2020-2022, by urban-rural self-identification



Note: responses for medium functioning (5-6 on scale) and "don't know" not shown

Local officials' ratings of democracy in Michigan also improved over the last year

The spring 2022 MPPS survey finds marked improvement over the past year in local leaders' assessments of the functioning of democracy across Michigan overall. As shown in Figure 2a, the percent of local officials rating democracy at the state level at a seven or higher (i.e., high functioning) increased from 20% in 2021 to 27% in 2022, as the percent rating it at a four or lower (i.e., poor functioning) declined from 43% to 32%. Furthermore, the percent of local officials who believe there has been a complete breakdown in democracy across Michigan fell from 11% in 2021 to 5% today (see *Appendix B*).

In 2022, local officials of all partisan stripes give Michigan democracy better ratings than last year. Among local officials who self-identify as Republicans, 23% give high ratings to the functioning of democracy at the state level in 2022, up from 17% in 2021, though still down significantly from 40% in 2020 (see *Figure 2b*). By contrast, 39% of Republican leaders give Michigan democracy poor ratings today. This includes 7% of Republicans who say there is a total breakdown of democracy in the state, down sharply from 16% in 2021. Independent local leaders also give better marks today compared with last year, with 27% rating it as highly functioning and 25% rating it as poorly functioning. Democrats follow this trend as well, reporting increased confidence in Michigan's democracy since last year. Among Democrats, 45% rate Michigan democracy at seven or higher, up significantly from 36% in 2021. Meanwhile, 18% of Democrats rate the current functioning of democracy across Michigan as poor, a slight improvement compared with the 22% who said the same in 2021.

Figure 2a
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy across Michigan, 2020-2022

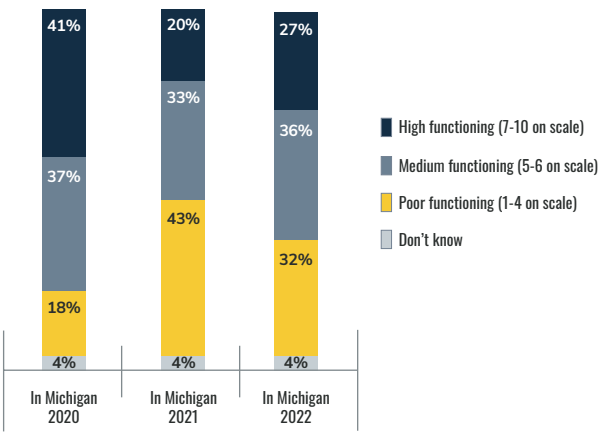
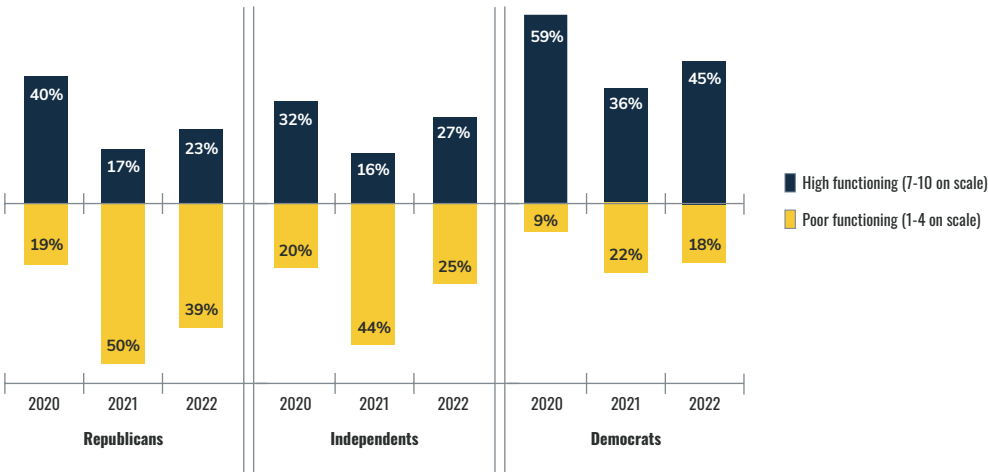


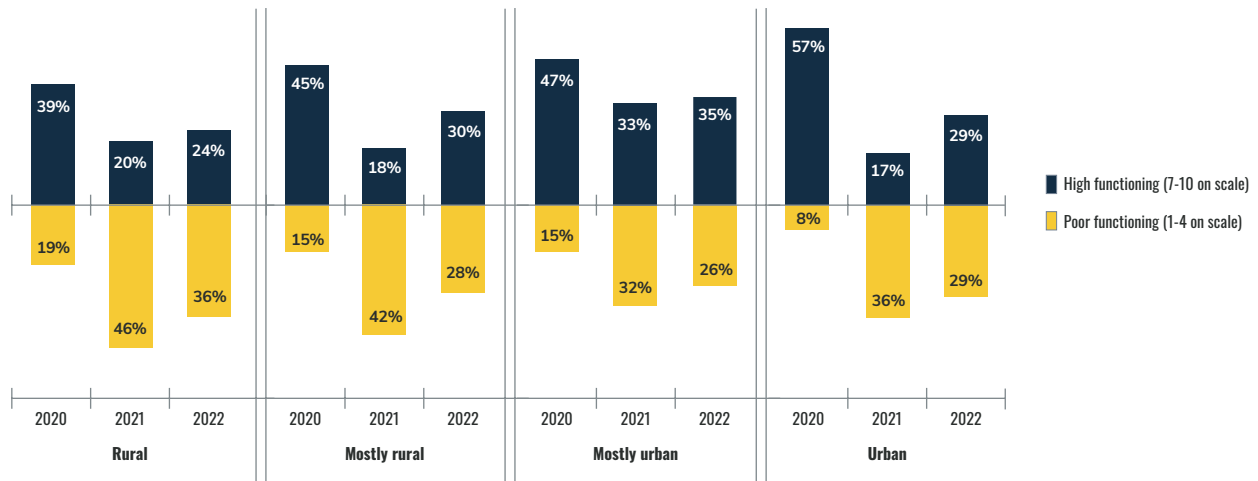
Figure 2b
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy across Michigan, 2020 -2022, by respondents' partisan identification



Note: responses for medium functioning (5-6 on scale) and "don't know" not shown

Assessments of the functioning of Michigan’s democracy also improved among local leaders across the urban-rural spectrum. As shown in *Figure 2c*, high ratings (i.e., at seven or higher on the ten-point scale) among officials from urban places jumped from 17% in 2021 to 29% in 2022, while poor ratings fell from 36% to 29%. Ratings of Michigan democracy also improved significantly among local officials who describe their jurisdiction as mostly rural, up from 18% rating it highly in 2021 to 30% this year. Meanwhile, officials who describe their jurisdiction as “mostly urban” are the most likely to give high ratings to the functioning of democracy at the state level today, but this has changed only slightly from last year.

Figure 2c
Local officials’ assessments of the functioning of democracy across Michigan, 2020-2022, by urban-rural self-identification



Note: responses for medium functioning (5-6 on scale) and “don’t know” not shown

Broad consensus among Michigan local officials that democracy continues to function well at the local level

By contrast to higher levels of concern about the functioning of democracy in Michigan and the U.S. overall, local officials' assessments of the functioning of local democracy in their own jurisdiction are very high and essentially unchanged since 2020. A large majority (84%) have rated the functioning of democracy at seven or higher on the ten-point scale consistently for the past three years (see *Figure 3a*). More details can be found in *Appendix C*.

Although partisanship is strongly correlated with assessments of democracy at the state and federal levels, it is not similarly correlated with assessments of local democracy. Michigan's local officials across the partisan spectrum agree that democracy is functioning well in their own jurisdictions. As shown in *Figure 3b*, just 3% of Independents, 8% of Democrats, and 3% of Republicans rate the functioning of democracy in their own jurisdictions as poor (at four or lower on the ten-point scale). Meanwhile, significant majorities from each partisan category consider their jurisdictions to have high functioning democracy, although Republicans (86%) are slightly more likely to give their jurisdictions these high ratings compared to Democrats (83%) or Independents (82%). Nonetheless, there have been some slight changes over time. Compared to 2021, Republicans' and Democrats' high ratings declined from 88% and 89% respectively, while Independents' assessments improved (up from 79%).

Figure 3a
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy in their jurisdictions, 2020-2022

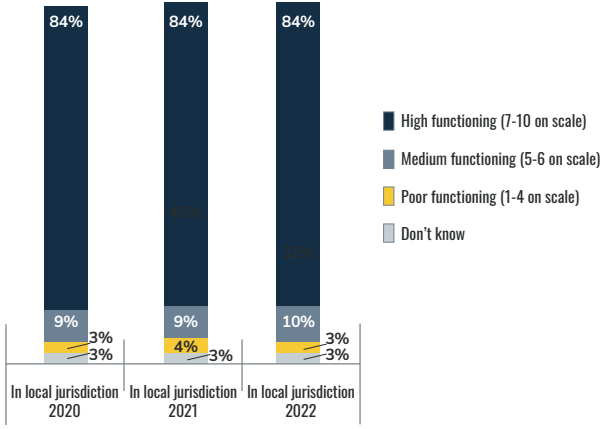
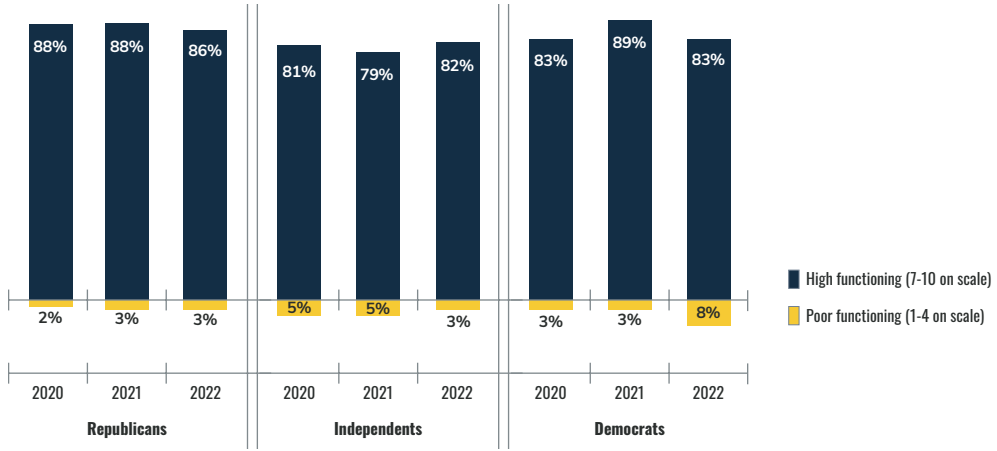


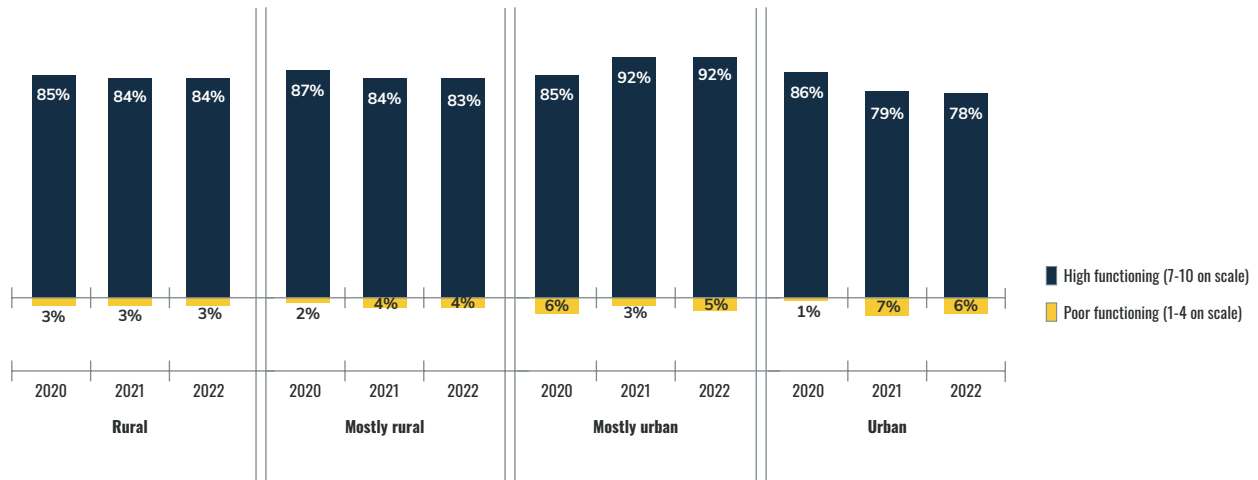
Figure 3b
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy in their jurisdictions, 2020-2022, by respondents' partisan identification



Note: responses for medium functioning (5-6 on scale) and "don't know" not shown

There has also been relative consistency over time in assessments of local democracy across the urban-rural spectrum, compared with greater changes in their assessments for democracy at the state and national levels. In fact, any changes across these groups between 2021 and 2022 fall within the MPPS survey’s very small margin of error, perhaps indicating no real change at all (see *Figure 3c*).

Figure 3c
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy in their jurisdictions, 2020-2022, by urban-rural self-identification



Note: responses for medium functioning (5-6 on scale) and “don’t know” not shown



Voices Across Michigan

Quotes from local leaders regarding issues they were thinking about when rating the overall functioning of democracy in their jurisdiction

Among those who made positive comments about the health of local democracy:

“A good balance of ideas between liberals and conservatives.”

“Total transparency in informing council and the public of any happenings, needs, changes or business of the village. Doing so has created an approachable work environment, open discussion, and helps the decision-making process run smoother.”

“Party politics breaks down at the local level. Doesn’t matter what your party belief is when it comes to roads, 911, garbage collection, quality of life, education and the like.”

“As mayor, I am absolutely committed to transparency, honesty and knowing and following the proper procedures mandated by the state and our charter. I hold a nonpartisan office so I will not be a puppet to any political candidate or party.”

“People seem to be informed, and voting rate is respectable. Also, citizens seek positions of government officials.”

“Elected officials are thinking about residents and seeking input/opinions before making decisions. They value their fiscal responsibility and future of the township.”

“Local government issues tend to be less contentious, or when they are, tend to involve a very small group of residents (i.e., zoning issues). Our rating might be higher, but I believe the political discourse at the national level has a trickle-down effect to state and local government, which has largely been negative for all involved.”

Among those who made negative comments about the health of local democracy:

“Communication between residents and the township board, difficulty in finding election workers, the potential for external malfeasance in election conduct and administration.”

“The misinformation concerning the integrity of our voting process.”

“Residents are pretty unengaged and uninformed about local issues. It’s easy to be misled about issues when they don’t understand how to find factual info. There is very little press coverage that provides in-depth factual information. And what press coverage exists is largely ignored.”

“Council members arguing between themselves and at public meetings. Residents saying their voice isn’t getting heard. And nothing seems to get done for fear of not being re-elected or offending or whatever.”

“There are very vocal residents who may or may not represent a majority opinion, but who tend to drive policy, as they’re the only ones that engage in meetings, with officials, etc.”

“Public input is very low. It’s hard to rate democracy high when we get feedback/comments so infrequently.”

“If you don’t like what the township is doing, show up at a meeting and shout. Then shout some more. Then use social media to shout about your shouting.”

Conclusion

Between 2020 and 2021, Michigan local leaders' assessments of the functioning of democracy across Michigan and the U.S. declined significantly. This year, many concerns about the health of U.S. democracy at the state and federal levels remain, but there has been at least some improvement. For example, 5% of local leaders believe there has been a total breakdown of democracy at the state level in Michigan today, but this is down from 11% in 2021. Meanwhile, 18% say there has been a total breakdown of democracy at the national level, yet that is down from 23% in 2021.

Many of these views are correlated with local officials' partisan identification and with which party is control of the state and federal governments although there have still been changes over time in their views even without change in partisan control of government.

Meanwhile, local officials across the state are generally in agreement that democracy is still functioning very well in their own jurisdictions, and this has not changed since the MPPS began tracking these views in 2020.



Notes

1. The Economist Intelligence Unit. (2022). Democracy Index 2021: A new low for global democracy. The Economist. Retrieved from <https://www-economist-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/graphic-detail/2022/02/09/a-new-low-for-global-democracy>
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3. Cwiek, S. (2022, November 8). Despite Detroit poll book snafu, most voting went smoothly this Election Day, MI Secretary of State says. *Michigan Radio*. Retrieved from <https://www.michiganradio.org/politics-government/2022-11-08/despite-detroit-poll-book-snafu-most-voting-went-smoothly-this-election-day-mi-secretary-of-state-says>
4. Anderson, M., Horner, D., and Ivacko, T. (2020, December). The functioning of democracy at the local level: a compendium of findings from the Michigan Public Policy Survey of local leaders. Retrieved from <https://closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey/88/the-functioning-of-democracy-at-the-local-level-a-compendium-of-findings-from-the-michigan-public-policy-survey-of-local-leaders>
5. Fitzpatrick, N., Horner, D., and Ivacko, T. (2022, October). Michigan local government leaders say civic relationships and civil discourse remain healthy, despite worsening national politics Retrieved from <https://closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey/105/michigan-local-government-leaders-say-civic-relationships-and-civil-discourse-remain-healthy>
6. Horner, D., Ivacko, T., and Peters-Wood, H. (2022, September). Michigan local government leaders remain confident about their election security and administration, though concerns about disinformation increase Retrieved from <https://closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey/104/michigan-local-government-leaders-remain-confident-about-their-election-security>
7. Horner, D., and Ivacko, T. (2022, January). 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 Retrieved from <https://closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey/97/michigan-local-leaders-report-little-change-tone-civic-discourse-their-communities>

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 2022 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 2022 wave was conducted from April 4 – June 6, 2022. A total of 1,327 jurisdictions in the Spring 2022 wave returned valid surveys (62 counties, 202 cities,

167 villages, and 896 townships), resulting in a 71% response rate by unit. The margin of error for the survey as a whole is +/- 1.44%. 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 several ways—by jurisdiction type (county, city, township, or village); by population size of the respondent's community, by the region of the respondent's jurisdiction; and by self-identified rural, mostly rural, mostly urban, or urban categories—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.

Appendix A

Local officials' ratings of the functioning of democracy in the U.S, by partisan identification

	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	24%	15%	5%	18%
2	16%	14%	10%	15%
3	18%	16%	16%	16%
4	11%	15%	16%	14%
5	12%	19%	21%	14%
6	7%	8%	12%	9%
7	6%	3%	12%	6%
8	3%	4%	6%	3%
9	1%	0%	2%	1%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	0%	1%	0%	0%
Don't know	3%	5%	1%	4%

Local officials' ratings of the functioning of democracy in the U.S, by urban-rural self-identification

	Rural	Mostly rural	Mostly urban	Urban	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	22%	16%	11%	7%	18%
2	17%	14%	13%	11%	15%
3	16%	16%	14%	18%	16%
4	13%	13%	21%	9%	14%
5	13%	16%	18%	19%	14%
6	6%	11%	8%	17%	9%
7	6%	6%	7%	12%	6%
8	3%	3%	8%	0%	3%
9	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	4%	3%	0%	7%	4%

Appendix B

Local officials' ratings of the functioning of democracy in Michigan, by partisan identification

	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	7%	3%	1%	5%
2	6%	5%	1%	5%
3	10%	6%	5%	8%
4	16%	11%	11%	14%
5	20%	21%	18%	19%
6	16%	22%	18%	18%
7	12%	15%	21%	14%
8	9%	10%	17%	10%
9	2%	1%	5%	2%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	0%	1%	2%	1%
Don't know	2%	5%	2%	4%

Local officials' ratings of the functioning of democracy in Michigan, by urban-rural self-identification

	Rural	Mostly rural	Mostly urban	Urban	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	7%	4%	2%	0%	5%
2	7%	4%	2%	0%	5%
3	8%	7%	8%	8%	8%
4	14%	13%	14%	21%	14%
5	20%	19%	16%	15%	19%
6	16%	19%	24%	17%	18%
7	13%	15%	14%	21%	14%
8	8%	11%	16%	8%	10%
9	2%	3%	5%	0%	2%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Don't know	4%	3%	0%	9%	4%



Appendix C

Local officials' ratings of the functioning of democracy in their own jurisdictions, by partisan identification

	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	1%	1%	0%	1%
2	0%	1%	1%	0%
3	1%	0%	4%	1%
4	1%	2%	3%	2%
5	3%	4%	4%	4%
6	6%	6%	5%	6%
7	12%	12%	14%	13%
8	29%	30%	32%	29%
9	29%	28%	25%	27%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	16%	12%	12%	15%
Don't know	2%	4%	0%	3%

Local officials' ratings of the functioning of democracy in their own jurisdictions, by urban-rural self-identification

	Rural	Mostly rural	Mostly urban	Urban	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%
2	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
3	1%	1%	2%	4%	1%
4	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%
5	4%	4%	0%	4%	4%
6	6%	6%	3%	7%	6%
7	11%	15%	18%	13%	13%
8	32%	26%	33%	25%	29%
9	25%	28%	33%	26%	27%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	16%	14%	8%	14%	15%
Don't know	3%	2%	0%	3%	3%

Previous MPPS reports

- MPPS Policy Brief: Local government officials give mixed reviews to Michigan's new approach to redistricting (October 2022)
- Michigan local government leaders say civic relationships and civil discourse remain healthy, despite worsening national politics (October 2022)
- Michigan local government leaders remain confident about their election security and administration, though concerns about disinformation increase (September 2022)
- MPPS Policy Brief: Statewide survey finds a majority of Michigan local governments experiencing harassment or other abuse (September 2022)
- MPPS Policy Brief: A survey of Michigan local government leaders on American Rescue Plan Act funding and uses (July 2022)
- Local leaders' pessimism about Michigan's direction continues, but eases slightly from last year (July 2022)
- Internet presence among Michigan local governments: websites, online services, and experience with virtual meetings (May 2022)
- Michigan local leaders' views on recycling: current challenges and opportunities for improvement (April 2022)
- Recycling Issues, Policies, and Practices among Michigan Local Governments (March 2022)
- 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 (January 2022)
- 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)
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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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