



Michigan local leaders report near-term improvements in fiscal health, especially in large jurisdictions, yet long-term concerns increase

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This report presents Michigan local government leaders' assessments of their jurisdictions' current fiscal conditions and predictions regarding their future fiscal health. The findings are based on responses from 14 statewide survey waves of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) conducted annually each spring from 2009 through 2022. The Spring 2022 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) was conducted between April 4 – June 6, 2022.

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.



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Key Findings

- Despite significant infusions of federal and state aid in recent years, Michigan local leaders' assessments of their fiscal stress as of Spring 2022 remain *essentially unchanged* compared to both 2021 and 2020. Statewide, 65% of local leaders rate their governments' fiscal stress as relatively low (a score of 4 or lower on the MPPS 10-point Fiscal Stress Index), while 7% say it is high (at 7 or higher). Those 7% with high fiscal stress represent approximately 130 Michigan local governments.
 - » By population size, the state's largest jurisdictions—those with over 30,000 residents—continue to report the most improvements in this measure of fiscal health. By contrast, there's been some decline among the smallest jurisdictions—those with under 1,500 residents— with 57% reporting low fiscal stress this year, down from 62% in 2021.
- Another measure, one which captures short-term change in fiscal health year-over-year, shows fiscal *improvement* this year. Statewide, 42% report they are better able to meet their fiscal needs in 2022 compared with last year, the highest percentage since the MPPS began tracking in 2009. However, local officials say these are relatively small shifts, not significant changes. Meanwhile, compared with last year, 16% say they are currently less able to meet their needs (a decrease from 21% in 2021), and 39% report no change.
 - » Jurisdictions of all sizes report improvements in this measure of year-over-year fiscal health, with the state's largest jurisdictions reporting the biggest jump (78% better able to meet fiscal needs this year compared to last).
- Positive year-over-year improvements in fiscal health correspond to higher percentages of jurisdictions also reporting increased revenue from property taxes, fees for services, and federal and state aid in 2022 compared to prior years. In another positive sign, an earlier trend of increasing concerns about general fund balances in larger jurisdictions reversed in 2022.
- However, looking ahead to next year, most predict fiscal health will simply remain stable, with 41% statewide predicting no change. Just a third (33%) expect their jurisdictions will be better able to meet their fiscal needs in the coming year, while 17% say they will be less able.
- Looking further down the road, there is *increased long-term pessimism*, up significantly from last year's predictions. These future concerns come despite recent boosts of federal and state funding, such as the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), to many local governments. Statewide, 55% predict they will have low fiscal stress five years from now (a drop from 65% who have low stress today), while 14% predict high levels of stress in five years (double the percentage with high stress today). Among the state's smallest jurisdictions, fewer than half (49%) predict low stress in five years; among jurisdictions with more than 10,000 residents, 19% predict high stress long term.

Most jurisdictions report low stress levels overall for 2022, but small and large jurisdictions have very different experiences over last two years

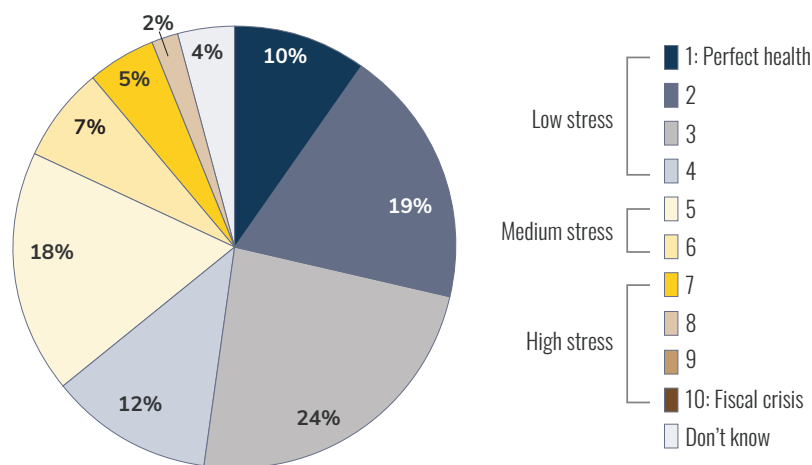
Since its launch in 2009, the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) has reported on the trends in fiscal health among Michigan local governments by asking local officials about a variety of measures, from general assessments of overall fiscal health to changes in specific types of revenues and expenditures. Research suggests that local leaders’ subjective assessments contribute “forward-looking, context-specific, and difficult-to-quantify insights about local economic and political conditions” that otherwise might be missed by standard financial audit and economic measures.¹

One of the key measures the MPPS started tracking in 2014 is the Fiscal Stress Index (FSI). This measure captures a snapshot of local government fiscal health by asking local leaders to rate their jurisdiction’s overall fiscal health on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is perfect fiscal health and 10 is fiscal crisis.

As shown in *Figure 1a*, 65% of Michigan’s local leaders rate their jurisdiction’s current level of fiscal stress on the FSI as relatively low (at 4 or less on the 10-point scale) in 2022. This is essentially unchanged from 2021 (65%) and 2020 (64%), but down slightly from before the pandemic in 2019, when 69% reported relatively low levels of fiscal stress. On the lowest point on the scale, 10% report currently having “perfect fiscal health” (1 on the 10-point scale), essentially unchanged from last year (9%).

Meanwhile, 25% of the state’s local governments currently report medium levels of fiscal stress (scores of 5 or 6 on the 10-point scale) and 7% report high levels of stress (scores of 7 or higher), also unchanged since last year. Another 4% are unsure about their current level of fiscal stress.

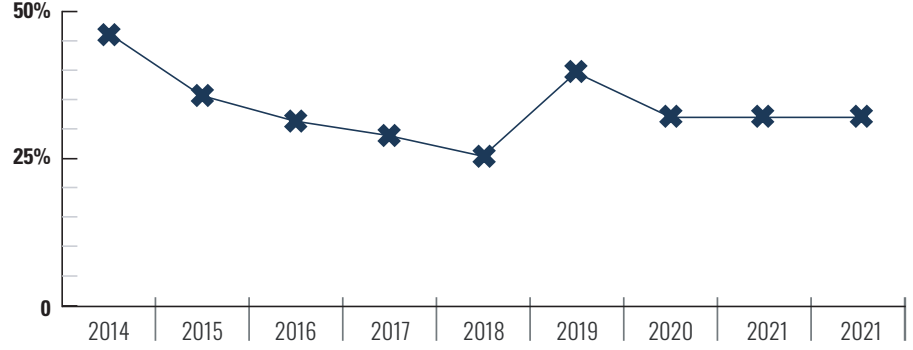
Figure 1a
Officials’ assessments of their jurisdiction’s current fiscal health, via the MPPS Fiscal Stress Index, 2022



To examine change over time in these annual snapshots, *Figure 1b* shows annual “net” assessments of current fiscal health: the percentage of local officials who say their jurisdiction has low fiscal stress minus the percentage that have either medium or high stress. Higher data points indicate better statewide fiscal health (i.e., more jurisdictions low on the stress scale). In 2022, 65% of local officials overall report low stress, while 25% report medium stress and 7% report high stress. Therefore, the statewide “net” calculation is 65% - 25% - 7% = 33%.

Between 2014 (when the MPPS began tracking this indicator) and 2018, this measure showed a clear trend of declining net fiscal health for jurisdictions as a whole across the state. And although the trend of declining health was reversed in 2019, the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 coincided with declining health once more. Since then, net scores have held steady at 33%, unchanged in 2021 and 2022.

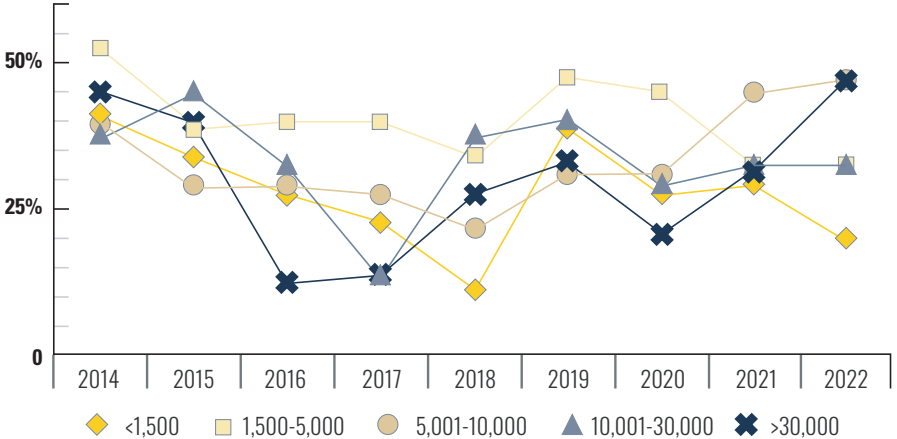
Figure 1b
Net current fiscal health, via the MPPS Fiscal Stress Index: percentage of jurisdictions reporting low fiscal stress minus percentage reporting medium or high stress, 2014-2022



However, the recent trend of stability for all jurisdictions combined across the state masks volatility when broken down by jurisdiction population size. This year, jurisdictions with population ranging from 1,500–30,000 residents showed little change in net FSI compared to 2021 (see *Figure 1c*). However, the state’s largest jurisdictions—those with more than 30,000 residents—report substantial *net improvement* (from 32% in 2021 up to 47% in 2022). Behind this net improvement, the percentage of the state’s largest jurisdictions reporting low fiscal stress increased from 66% in 2021 to 73% in 2022.

By contrast, in a concerning sign, the state’s smallest jurisdictions—those with under 1,500 residents—show a *significant decline* in net fiscal health, from 29% in 2021 down to 20% in 2022. Among these smallest jurisdictions, the percentage reporting low fiscal stress dropped from 62% in 2021 to 57% this year.

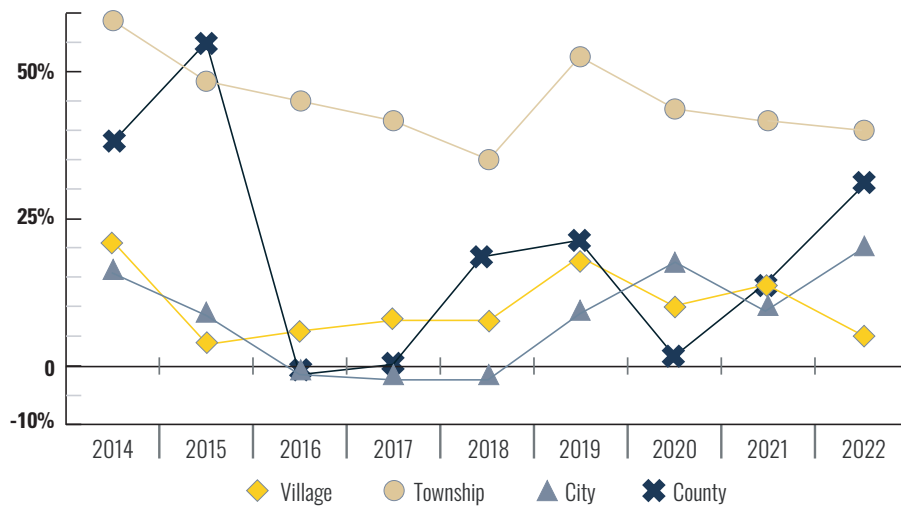
Figure 1c
Net current fiscal health, via the MPPS Fiscal Stress Index: percentage of jurisdictions reporting low fiscal stress minus percentage reporting medium or high stress, 2014-2022, by population size



By jurisdiction type, Michigan counties report significant increases in net health for a second straight year, with a net increase from 15% to 31% (see *Figure 1d*). Cities also report improvement on net FSI scores from 10% to 20%. Meanwhile, townships actually report a small decrease and villages report substantial declines. Behind the net calculations, two thirds of townships (67%) and counties (66%) report low fiscal stress this year, compared with 60% of cities and just 50% of villages.

Figure 1d

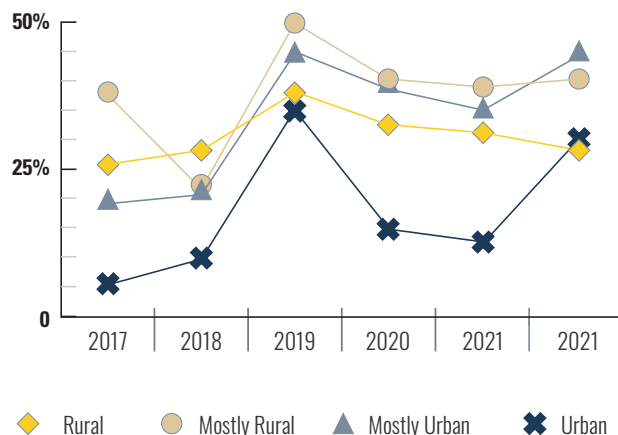
Net current fiscal health, via the MPPS Fiscal Stress Index: percentage of jurisdictions reporting low fiscal stress minus percentage reporting medium or high stress, 2014-2022, by jurisdiction type



The MPPS also asks local officials to characterize their jurisdiction on an urban-rural spectrum: rural, mostly rural, mostly urban, or urban. As shown in *Figure 1e*, this year jurisdictions that identify as mostly urban (45%) and mostly rural (41%) have significantly higher scores than jurisdictions that identify as fully urban (31%) and fully rural (28%). Nonetheless, the net FSI scores for urban jurisdictions increased significantly, from 13% in 2021 to 31% in 2022, while scores also increased for mostly urban jurisdictions (from 35% in 2021 to 45% in 2022). By contrast, rural jurisdictions saw a slight net decrease (from 32% to 28%), while mostly rural jurisdictions improved slightly, from 39% to 41%.

Figure 1e

Net current fiscal health, via the MPPS Fiscal Stress Index: percentage of jurisdictions reporting low fiscal stress minus percentage reporting medium or high stress, 2014-2022, by urban-rural self-identification



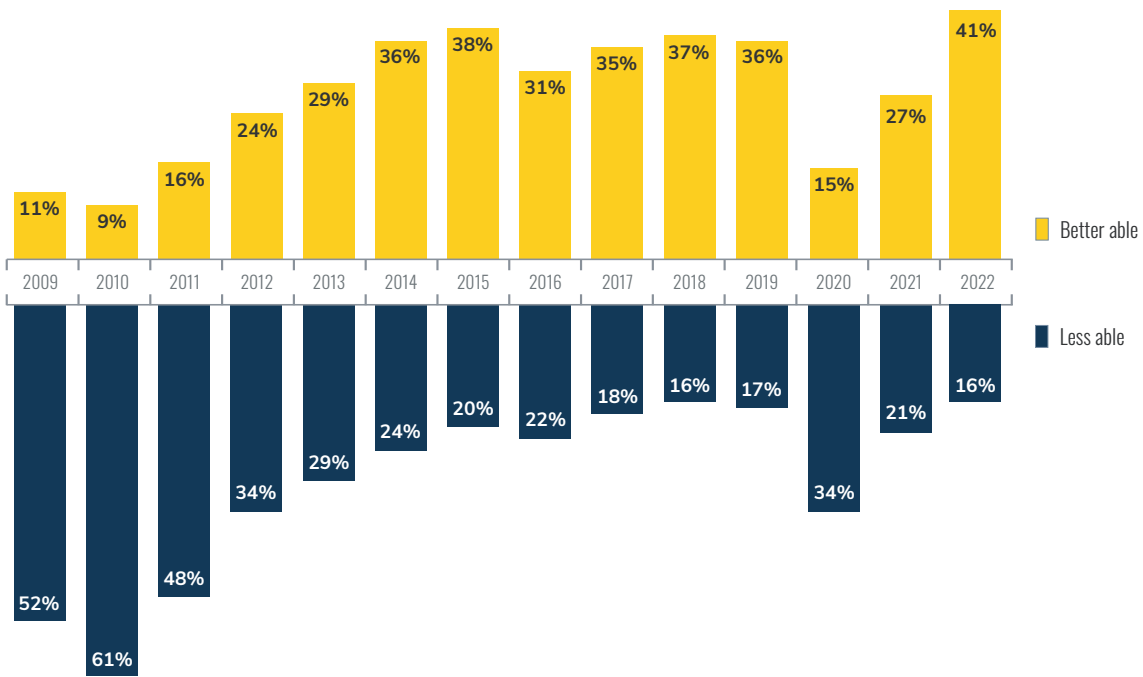
Amid revenue increases, many jurisdictions report short-term improvements in fiscal health

Whereas the FSI takes a snapshot of overall current fiscal health, each year since 2009 the MPPS also asks local leaders a question regarding overall *changes* in fiscal health. In other words, a measure looking at whether jurisdictions are *better able* or *less able* to meet their financial needs now compared to the previous year. Since 2011, after the Great Recession, the percentage of jurisdictions each year saying they were better able to meet their needs either increased or held steady (apart from 2016). In 2020, during the initial arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in the state, this metric declined sharply among Michigan local jurisdictions, but had rebounded by Spring 2021.

In contrast to the overall stability in assessments of fiscal health on the FSI this year, local officials in 2022 report significant improvements in short-term fiscal health. Statewide, 41% of local governments in 2022 report being better able to meet fiscal needs this year compared to last year, which is up from 27% who said the same in 2021 compared to 2020 (see *Figure 2a*). In fact, this year’s 41% represents a record high since the MPPS was launched in 2009. Similarly, only 16% of jurisdictions in 2022 report being less able to meet fiscal needs, which is down from 21% of jurisdictions in 2021. Meanwhile, 39% say they are simply holding steady this year, reporting no significant change in their fiscal health from 2021 to 2022.

However, it is worth noting that most of the reported improvements are relatively small, with 33% reporting that they are “somewhat” better able to meet financial needs, and just 8% saying they are “significantly” better able. This may explain why these improvements are not reflected in the more fundamental Fiscal Stress Index.

Figure 2a
Percentage of jurisdictions reporting they are better or less able to meet their fiscal needs in current year compared to previous year, 2009-2022



Note: responses for “neither better nor less able” and “don’t know” not shown

Figure 2b presents year-over-year change in fiscal health over the last decade broken out by jurisdiction population-size category. It is displayed as “net” change in each population category: the percentage of jurisdictions that were better able to meet their needs minus the percentage that were less able. This year, 41% of local officials overall report improving fiscal health for their jurisdictions, while 16% say it is declining. Therefore, the statewide “net” calculation is 41% - 16% = 25%.

Looking at the different jurisdiction-size categories in Figure 2b, net fiscal health among jurisdictions of all sizes has continued to rebound from the steep declines of 2020. The rebound is particularly large among Michigan’s largest jurisdictions—those with more than 30,000 residents – where 78% report being better able to meet fiscal needs this year (including 15% significantly better able) and only 6% reporting being less able, for a net calculation of 72%. Although the rebound is less extreme in smaller jurisdictions, even among the state’s smallest jurisdictions—those with fewer than 1,500 residents—33% are better able to meet fiscal needs this year (although only 6% significantly), 19% are less able, and 43% report no significant change.

Figure 2b
 Net fiscal health yearly change: percentage of jurisdictions reporting improving fiscal health minus percentage reporting declining health, 2009-2022, by population size



By jurisdiction type, Michigan’s counties report the highest improvements in net year-over-year fiscal health (56%), followed by cities (28%), townships (25%), and villages (11%), all of which represent further improvements compared to 2021 (see *Figure 2c*). Counties are the most likely to report significant year-over-year improvement, with 15% saying they are significantly better able to meet their needs, compared to less than 10% among other jurisdiction types.

Figure 2c
 Net fiscal health yearly change: percentage of jurisdictions reporting improving fiscal health minus percentage reporting declining health, 2009-2022, by jurisdiction type

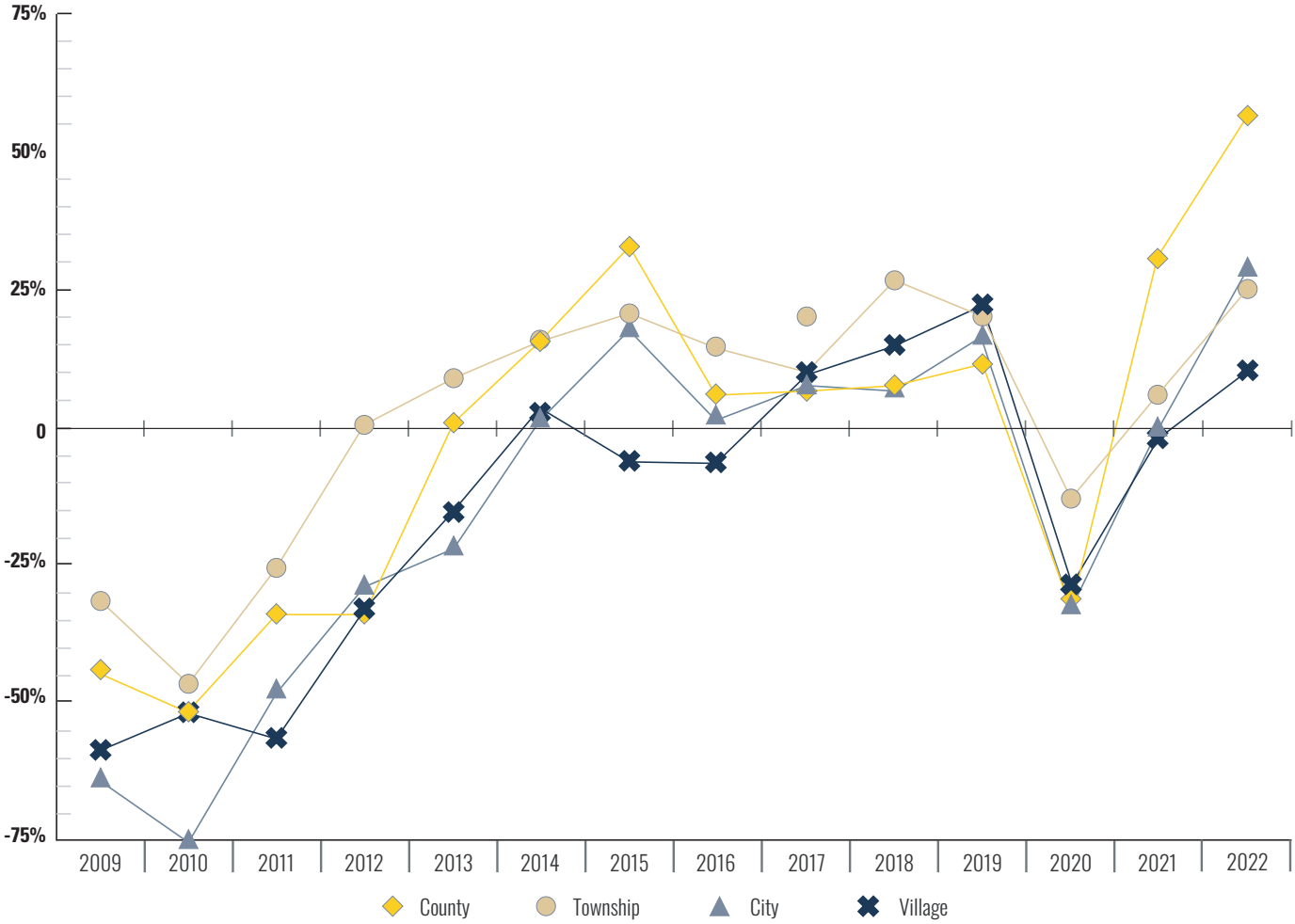


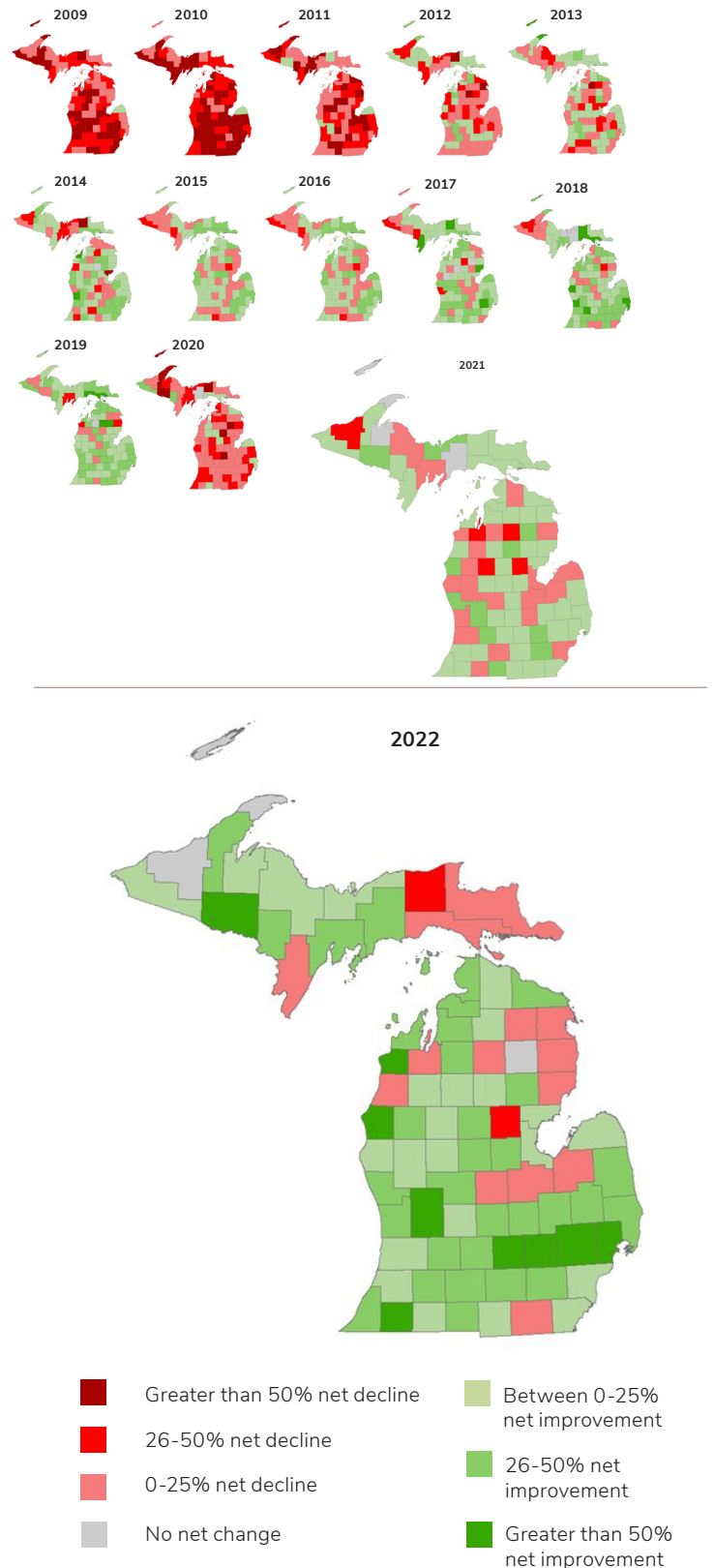
Figure 2d displays the same “net” change for jurisdictions across Michigan aggregated at the county level. The annual maps contrast those counties (in shades of red) where more jurisdictions are suffering year-over-year fiscal decline than are experiencing improved fiscal health, compared with those counties (in shades of green) where more jurisdictions are experiencing improved fiscal health than decline. Counties where there are equal numbers of jurisdictions experiencing improvement and decline are shaded grey.

The color shades are scaled by the magnitude of the county-wide aggregated fiscal changes, with the darkest shades of green and red showing where the net calculation of jurisdictions improving minus those declining is greater than 50% (positive if green, negative if red). The middle shades show where the net calculation is between 26% and 50%, and the lightest shades show where the net calculation is between 0 and 25%. At the low point during the Great Recession in 2010, the map was almost uniformly red, showing widespread fiscal decline across the state. This gradually improved over time, and by 2019 most counties showed net improvement for their local jurisdictions. After a sharp drop in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (with 71 out of 83 counties reporting year-over-year net decline among their local government), fiscal health rebounded in many jurisdictions in 2021.

This rebound continued in 2022, with 62 counties reporting net improvement in fiscal health among their local jurisdictions this year, including nine that saw a net improvement among over 50% of their local governments. Meanwhile, 16 counties report continuing net declines, but only two with a worse than -30% net score (highlighted with the medium red shade), and none over -50%.

Appendix A at the end of this report displays the actual percent net change reported for each of Michigan’s 83 counties for 2022.

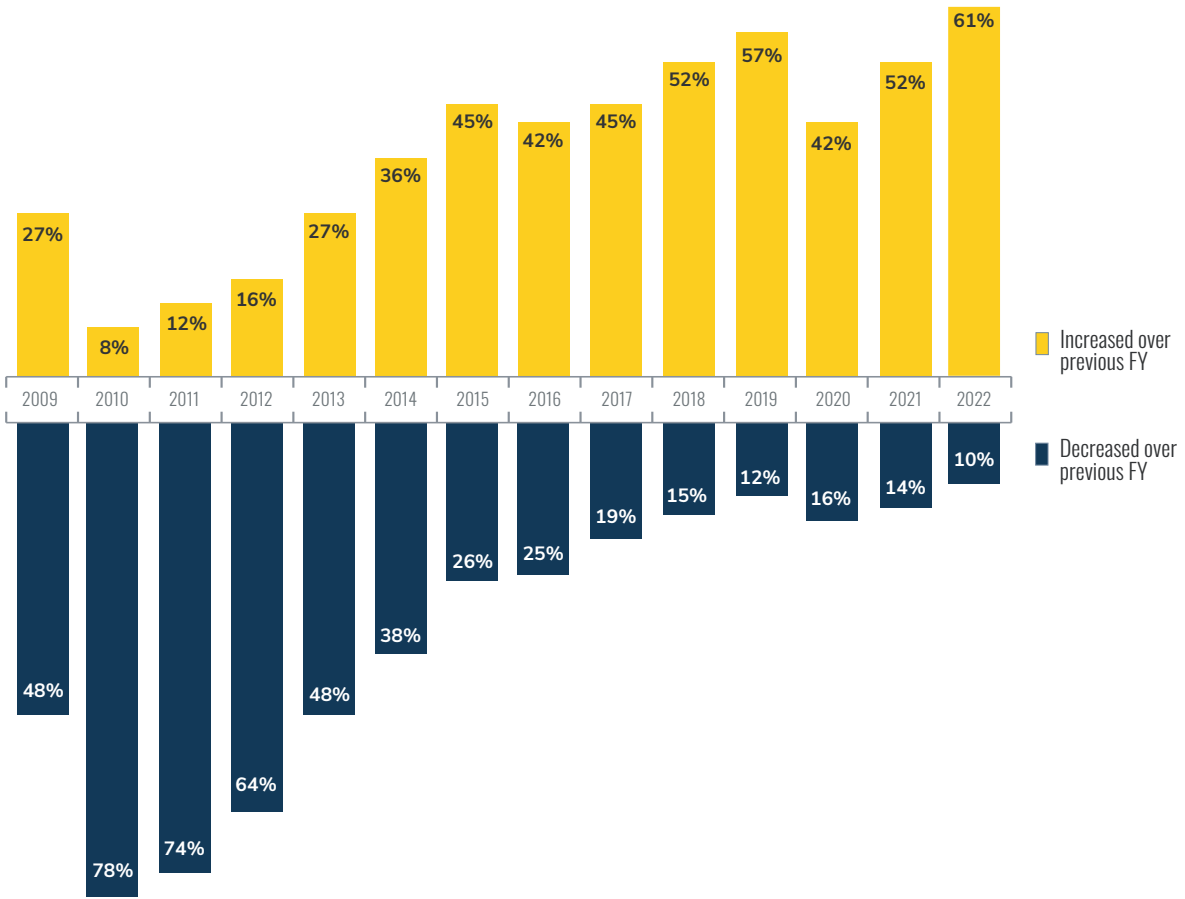
Figure 2d
Net fiscal health yearly change: percentage of jurisdictions reporting improving fiscal health minus percentage reporting declining health, 2009-2022, by county



Increases in property tax revenues across all jurisdiction sizes

The reports of short-term improvements parallel widespread reports of increasing revenues from property taxes, fees for services, state aid, and federal aid. For example, as shown in *Figure 3a*, 61% of Michigan local governments report increased property taxes in 2022, the highest percentage since the MPPS began its tracking. Again, however, most of these reported increases are small, with just 2% statewide reporting that revenues from property taxes increased *significantly* this year.

Figure 3a
Percentage of jurisdictions overall reporting changes in property tax revenue compared with previous fiscal year, 2009-2022



Note: responses for “no change,” “not applicable,” and “don’t know” not shown

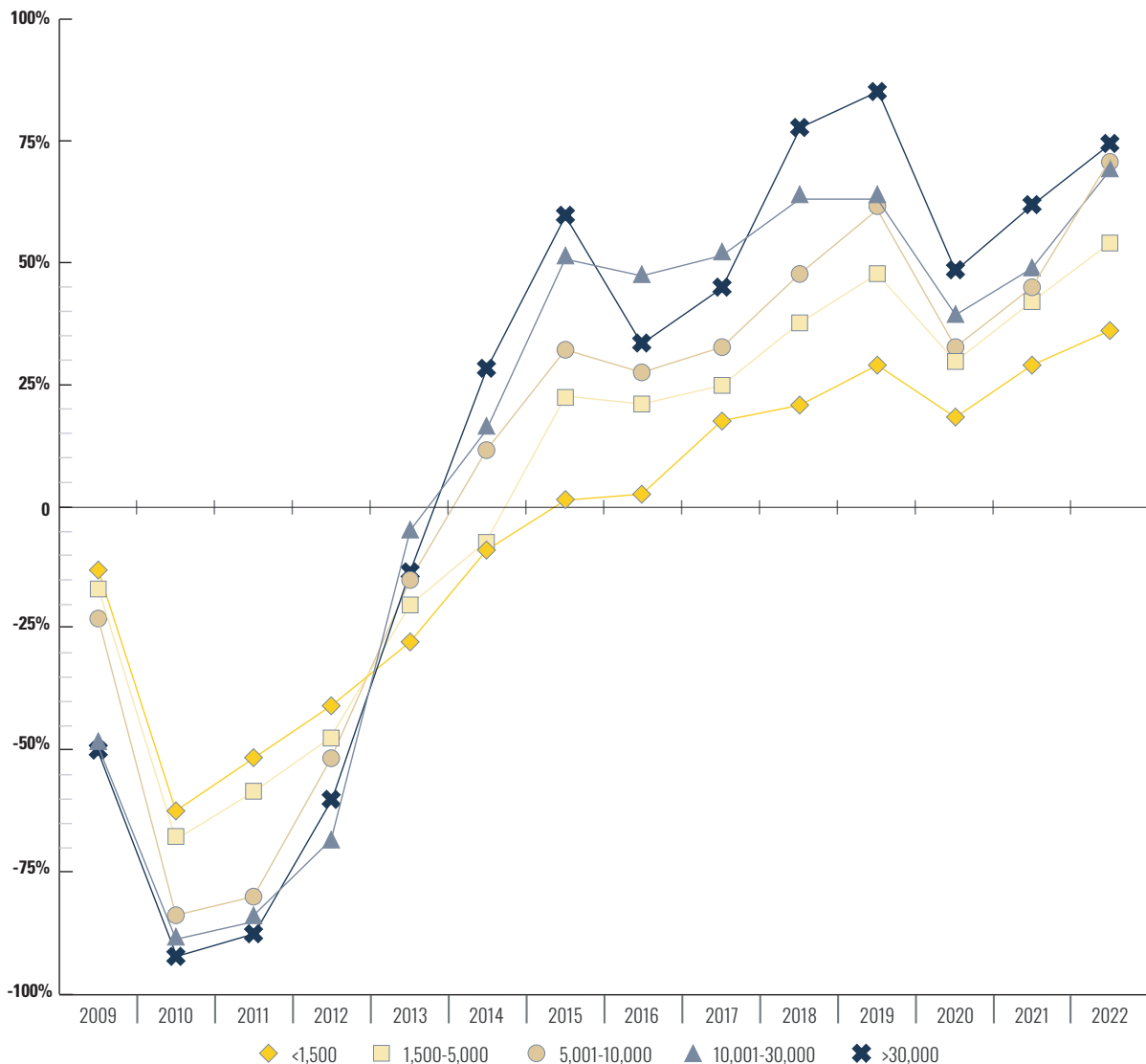
Again, using net calculations for the percentage of jurisdictions with increased revenues minus the percentage with decreased revenues, jurisdictions of all sizes report net increases in property tax revenue, with a full three-quarters (75%) of the state’s largest jurisdictions reporting increases in this measure in 2022 (see *Figure 3b*).

Likely reflecting the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and other COVID-related aid, many governments report more significant increases in federal aid in 2022. More than half (54%) of jurisdictions report increases in federal aid, including 21% who say their federal aid greatly increased. However, these improvements were heavily concentrated among larger jurisdictions. Jurisdictions with under 1,500 residents were much less likely to report large increases (9%) compared to jurisdictions with 1,500-30,000 residents (23-31%), while 60% of jurisdictions with more than 30,000 residents report that federal aid greatly increased.

With this influx of federal aid, overall, 51% of local governments expect ARPA funds to help improve their jurisdiction’s fiscal health, although only 8% think this improvement will be significant.²

Figure 3b

Net property tax yearly change: percentage of jurisdictions reporting increases in property tax revenue minus percentage reporting decreases in property tax revenue, 2009-2022, by population size



Concern about general fund balances eases among larger jurisdictions

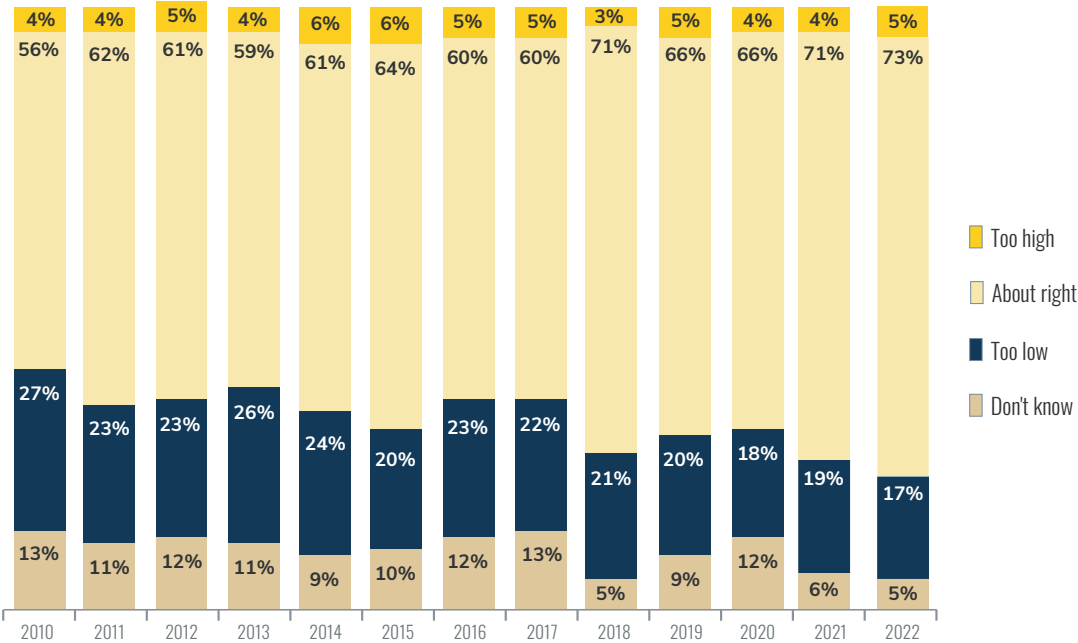
The MPPS also tracks local governments’ general fund balances each year, asking whether the balance is too high, about right, or too low to meet their jurisdiction’s fiscal needs. As of spring 2022, 73% of local officials statewide say their general fund balance is about right, an all-time high in the MPPS series, and up slightly from 71% in 2021 (see *Figure 4*). Meanwhile, this year 17% say their balance is too low, which is the all-time low in the MPPS series.

These improvements are concentrated among jurisdictions with more than 5,000 residents while those with 5,000 or fewer residents mostly held steady.

The MPPS also asks about the status of cash flow, a particularly sensitive indicator of fiscal stress. Despite reports of increased revenues, the percentage of jurisdictions overall saying cash flow is “not a problem at all” surprisingly decreased slightly from 62% last year to 60% this year. Fewer than half of villages (47%) and urban jurisdictions (48%) report that cash flow is “not a problem at all” in 2022. However, very few jurisdictions statewide say cash flow is either somewhat of a problem (5%) or a significant problem (1%).

Data from 2009–2022 on changes in local government finances and operations this year compared to the last year are available in *Appendix B*.

Figure 4
Percentage of officials saying their general fund balance is too high, too low, or about right, 2010–2022

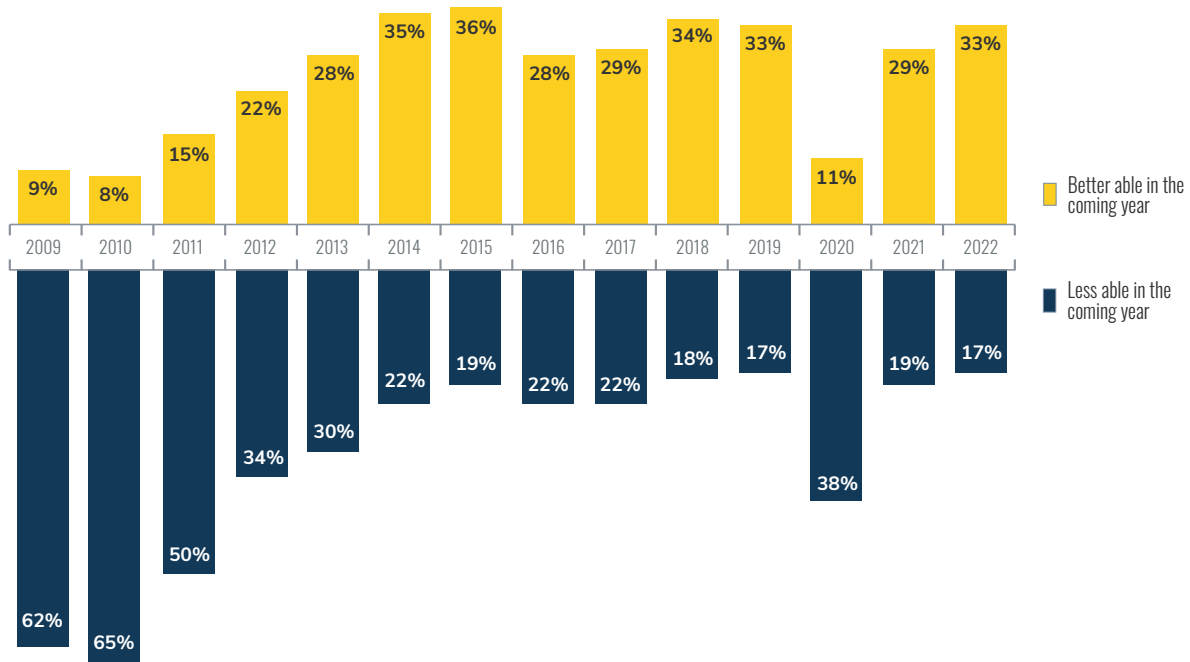


Some optimism for fiscal improvements in the year ahead, but most believe they will simply hold steady

Michigan local officials' optimism is more restrained when looking one year into the future, compared with looking backward, but is still slightly improved compared to their predictions in 2021. Now, in 2022, 33% predict their jurisdiction will be better able to meet its fiscal needs next year compared with this year (see *Figure 5*). By comparison, 29% said the same in 2021 when looking ahead to 2022, and just 11% felt this way in 2020 when looking ahead to 2021. Meanwhile, 17% of local leaders believe their jurisdictions will be less able to meet fiscal needs next year, compared with 19% who felt this way in 2021 and 38% who said so in 2020.

Most predict no change over the coming year, with 41% statewide expecting to be neither better nor less able to meet financial needs next year. Meanwhile, 8% are uncertain what their fiscal status may be next year.

Figure 5
Percentage of jurisdictions predicting they will be better or less able to meet their fiscal needs in next year compared to current year, 2009-2022



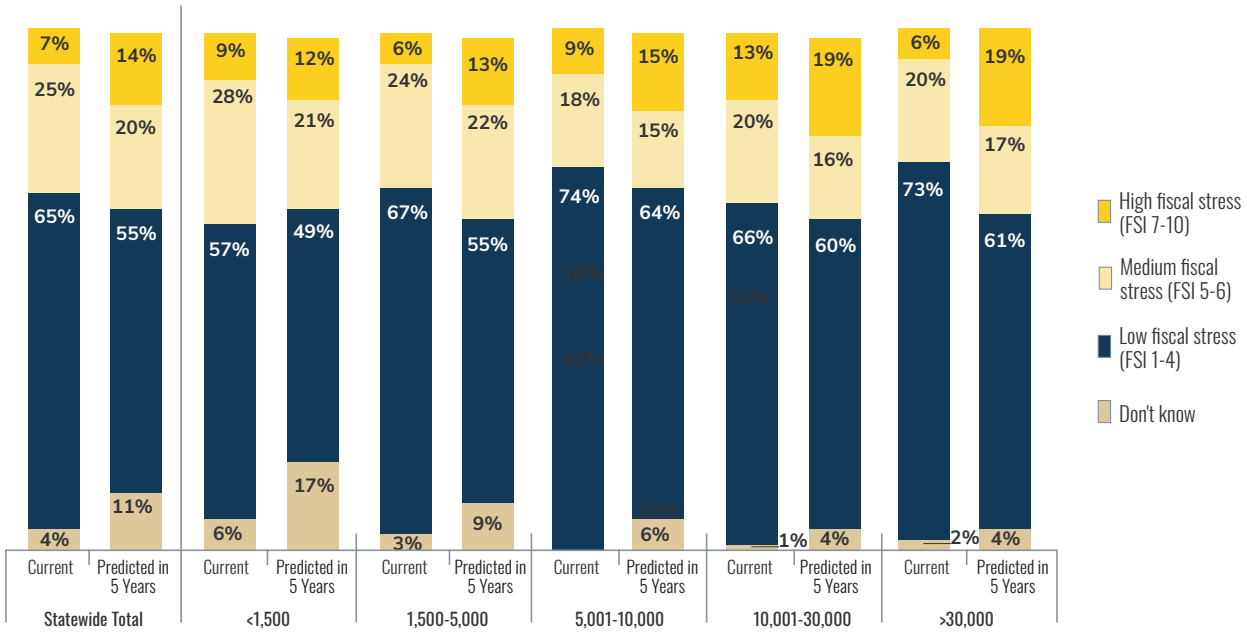
Note: responses for "no change" and "don't know" not shown

Concerns about long-term fiscal stress increase

Despite generally positive reports across all indicators, looking further down the road reveals more concerns among local officials about long-term fiscal health. Even as local officials continue to report improvements in short-term fiscal health, 14% now predict they will have high fiscal stress in five years, compared to 7% who say they are experiencing it now (see *Figure 6*). Meanwhile, 55% expect low fiscal stress five years from now, down from 65% who say they have low stress today.

These long-term concerns are particularly significant in jurisdictions with more than 10,000 residents. Despite noticeable near-term improvements from 2021 to 2022 in the largest jurisdictions, nearly one in five (19%) now predict high fiscal stress in five years (up significantly 6% who report high stress today, and up from 10-11% who predicted long-term stress in 2021). Meanwhile, fewer than half (49%) of the state’s smallest jurisdictions predict they will have low fiscal stress in five years, compared with 57% who report low stress today. However, 17% from these smallest jurisdictions are unsure what they think the next five years will bring.

Figure 6
Officials’ predictions of their jurisdiction’s fiscal stress in five years, 2022, by population size



Local leaders don't appear to see ARPA funding solving long-term fiscal challenges

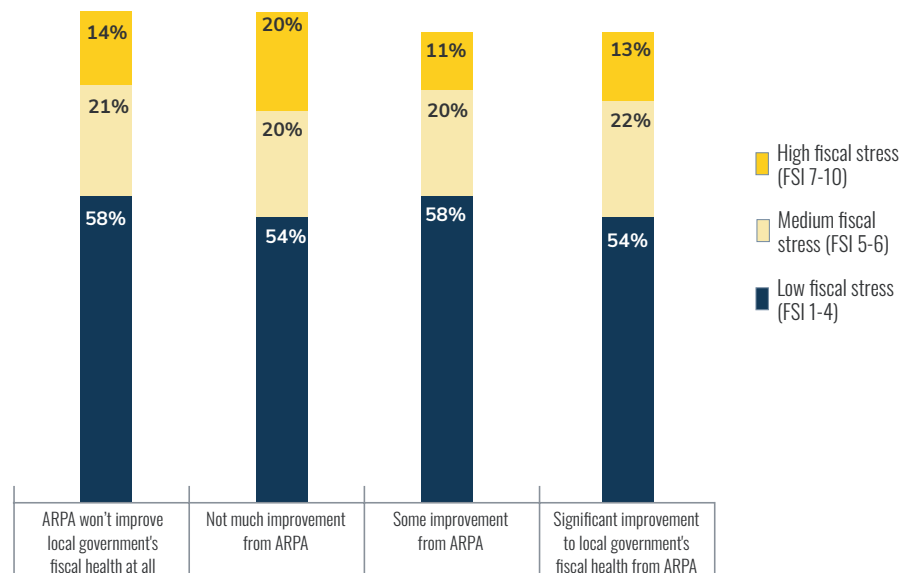
Local leaders' five-year predictions have consistently been more pessimistic than their current fiscal stress assessments ever since these questions were first asked on the MPPS in 2014. However, in 2022, their five-year predictions are abnormally and significantly worse compared with previous years.

One possible explanation for some of the discrepancy in local leaders' relative short-term fiscal optimism vs. more pessimistic long-term outlook could be the temporary nature of the ARPA funds. It appears that local officials overall generally do not feel an infusion of ARPA funds will protect their jurisdictions against long-term fiscal challenges, despite many targeting needed long-term infrastructure investments. Among those that say ARPA funding will significantly improve their jurisdiction's fiscal health, 13% still expect to experience high fiscal stress in 5 years, and another 22% expect medium stress. This is not significantly different from places that say ARPA will not improve their jurisdiction's fiscal health at all, where 14% predict high fiscal stress and 21% predict medium stress (see *Figure 7*). Of course, it is still possible that long-term predictions could have been even worse in the absence of any ARPA funding, among those who feel ARPA will indeed help.

Uncertainty about how large-scale projects or programs using ARPA funding in the near-term may be supported once ARPA funding runs out may also be a significant concern for local officials, and a drag on their predictions of future fiscal health. Statewide, 10% of local leaders say uncertainty about future funding for ARPA-supported projects is a significant problem for their jurisdiction, and among those, over a third (34%) predict high fiscal stress for their jurisdictions in five years. Among the 32% who say uncertainty over future funding post-ARPA is somewhat of a problem, almost one in five (19%) predict high fiscal stress down the road. By comparison, among the 16% of local leaders who say uncertainty over future funding availability after ARPA is not a problem at all, only 7% predict high fiscal stress in the long term.

Figure 7

Officials' predictions of their jurisdiction's fiscal stress in five years, 2022, by assessments of ARPA funding's impact on fiscal health



Note: responses for "don't know" not shown, figure excludes the 2% of jurisdictions that report they did not apply for or accept ARPA funding, or are completely unfamiliar with the program



Conclusion

In 2022 the MPPS again finds mixed evidence for both optimism and concern regarding Michigan local government fiscal health overall, using a variety of fiscal indicators tracked over time. Although local officials in 2022 overall report improvement in their governments' short-term, year-over-year ability to meet fiscal needs, most say these improvements are only marginal. Meanwhile, overall reports of current fiscal stress statewide are unchanged from 2021 and 2020 levels, although predictions for the future indicate deepening concerns regarding long-term fiscal health.

On the optimistic side, 42% of local governments report they are better able to meet their fiscal needs in 2022 compared with last year, the highest percentage since the MPPS began tracking in 2009. These improved assessments of current fiscal health are found among jurisdictions of all population sizes and types.

The news is more complicated when it comes to assessments of current levels of fiscal stress using a more comprehensive measure. The MPPS tracking of the 10-point Fiscal Stress Index shows that, as a whole, reports of fiscal stress are essentially unchanged this year, with 65% of local leaders rating their governments' fiscal stress as relatively low (a score of 4 or lower on the MPPS 10-point Fiscal Stress Index), while 7% saying it is high (at 7 or higher). However, there are significant differences between Michigan's largest and smallest jurisdictions. The state's largest jurisdictions—those with over 30,000 residents—report the largest improvements in current fiscal health, from 66% reporting low stress in 2021 to 73% in 2022. By contrast, assessments have worsened somewhat among the smallest jurisdictions—those with under 1,500 residents—with 57% reporting low fiscal stress this year, down from 62% in 2021.

Looking ahead one year, fewer local officials foresee additional year-over-year improvements in 2023, while 41% predict fiscal health will simply remain stable. And looking farther down the road, officials from jurisdictions of all sizes predict a drop in their fiscal health in the long-term, with just 55% expecting to have low fiscal stress in five years (down from 65% today), and 14% expecting to face high fiscal stress in the same timeframe (up from 7% today).

Notes

1. Leiser, S., & Mills, S. (2019). Local government fiscal health: Comparing self-assessments to conventional measures. *Public Budgeting and Finance*, 39(3), 75–96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pbaf.12226>
2. Fitzpatrick, N., Horner, D., & Ivacko, T. (2022). A survey of Michigan local government leaders on American Rescue Plan Act funding and uses. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan. Retrieved from <https://closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey/102/mpps-policy-brief-survey-michigan-local-government-leaders-american-rescue-plan-act>

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. 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.



Appendices

Appendix A

Net fiscal health yearly change: percentage of jurisdictions reporting improving fiscal health minus percentage reporting declining health, 2021-2022, by county

County Name	% Less Able to Meet Fiscal Needs	% Neither Better nor Less Able	% Better Able to Meet Fiscal Needs	% Don't Know	Net Yearly Change for 2022
ALCONA	31%	54%	15%	0%	-16%
ALGER	16%	49%	35%	0%	20%
ALLEGAN	9%	56%	31%	4%	23%
ALPENA	25%	38%	24%	13%	-2%
ANTRIM	12%	35%	47%	6%	36%
ARENAC	26%	25%	49%	0%	23%
BARAGA	18%	40%	42%	0%	24%
BARRY	13%	34%	53%	0%	40%
BAY	25%	36%	33%	6%	8%
BENZIE	6%	34%	60%	0%	54%
BERRIEN	26%	21%	52%	0%	26%
BRANCH	0%	45%	49%	6%	49%
CALHOUN	0%	51%	49%	0%	49%
CASS	6%	35%	59%	0%	53%
CHARLEVOIX	14%	33%	53%	0%	39%
CHEBOYGAN	15%	58%	21%	5%	6%
CHIPPEWA	23%	49%	9%	19%	-13%
CLARE	7%	49%	44%	0%	37%
CLINTON	13%	39%	48%	0%	35%
CRAWFORD	30%	40%	30%	0%	-0%
DELTA	15%	30%	56%	0%	41%
DICKINSON	11%	49%	40%	0%	29%
EATON	13%	31%	56%	0%	43%
EMMET	8%	58%	34%	0%	25%
GENESEE	10%	38%	53%	0%	43%

GLADWIN	50%	23%	22%	6%	-28%
GOGEBIC	36%	11%	52%	0%	16%
GRAND TRAVERSE	34%	33%	33%	0%	-1%
GRATIOT	33%	46%	22%	0%	-11%
HILLSDALE	15%	55%	30%	0%	15%
HOUGHTON	17%	14%	58%	10%	41%
HURON	4%	84%	12%	0%	7%
INGHAM	0%	41%	59%	0%	59%
IONIA	21%	43%	36%	0%	15%
IOSCO	32%	51%	17%	0%	-15%
IRON	0%	47%	53%	0%	53%
ISABELLA	6%	61%	33%	0%	27%
JACKSON	21%	26%	54%	0%	33%
KALAMAZOO	17%	40%	43%	0%	26%
KALKASKA	0%	51%	49%	0%	49%
KENT	5%	31%	64%	0%	59%
KEWEENAW	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
LAKE	15%	23%	54%	8%	39%
LAPEER	7%	45%	47%	0%	40%
LEELANAU	25%	16%	59%	0%	34%
LENAWEE	34%	38%	28%	0%	-6%
LIVINGSTON	6%	31%	64%	0%	58%
LUCE	45%	55%	0%	0%	-45%
MACKINAC	27%	49%	24%	0%	-2%
MACOMB	10%	9%	71%	10%	61%
MANISTEE	33%	40%	20%	7%	-13%
MARQUETTE	27%	25%	42%	5%	15%
MASON	9%	28%	63%	0%	54%
MECOSTA	19%	54%	26%	0%	7%

MENOMINEE	23%	54%	14%	9%	-9%
MIDLAND	0%	59%	41%	0%	41%
MISSAUKEE	15%	54%	30%	0%	15%
MONROE	27%	21%	52%	0%	25%
MONTCALM	21%	16%	52%	11%	31%
MONTMORENCY	33%	34%	22%	11%	-11%
MUSKEGON	16%	38%	46%	0%	29%
NEWAYGO	17%	38%	41%	4%	24%
OAKLAND	4%	37%	59%	0%	55%
OCEANA	13%	49%	32%	6%	19%
OGEMAW	13%	27%	53%	7%	40%
ONTONAGON	13%	73%	13%	0%	0%
OSCEOLA	6%	69%	25%	0%	19%
OSCODA	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
OTSEGO	24%	38%	38%	0%	14%
OTTAWA	8%	55%	37%	0%	28%
PRESQUE ISLE	12%	31%	51%	6%	39%
ROSCOMMON	17%	43%	41%	0%	24%
SAGINAW	37%	27%	32%	4%	-5%
SANILAC	15%	44%	41%	0%	26%
SCHOOLCRAFT	14%	29%	57%	0%	43%
SHIAWASSEE	5%	49%	35%	11%	30%
ST CLAIR	13%	26%	57%	4%	44%
ST JOSEPH	12%	56%	19%	13%	6%
TUSCOLA	27%	48%	25%	0%	-2%
VAN BUREN	24%	39%	37%	0%	13%
WASHTENAW	12%	30%	58%	0%	46%
WAYNE	26%	26%	41%	7%	15%
WEXFORD	18%	25%	38%	19%	20%

Appendix B

Conditions in the current fiscal year compared to the previous fiscal year, 2009-2022

		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Revenue from property tax	Increased	27%	8%	12%	16%	27%	36%	45%	42%	45%	52%	57%	42%	52%	61%
	Decreased	48%	78%	74%	64%	48%	38%	26%	25%	19%	15%	12%	16%	14%	10%
Revenue from fees for services, licenses, transfers, etc.	Increased	7%	4%	7%	10%	13%	17%	18%	19%	21%			15%	18%	26%
	Decreased	54%	59%	47%	34%	26%	18%	13%	12%	10%			25%	23%	11%
Amount of debt	Increased			12%	12%	14%	12%	15%	14%	16%		17%		13%	15%
	Decreased			18%	21%	22%	21%	20%	21%	19%		18%		16%	17%
Ability of jurisdiction to repay its debt	Increased			7%	12%	14%	15%	18%	13%	14%	14%	18%	8%	11%	17%
	Decreased			7%	7%	6%	4%	4%	6%	3%	2%	3%	8%	3%	2%
Amount of federal aid to jurisdiction	Increased	9%	8%	3%	5%	4%	5%	6%	4%	6%				31%	54%
	Decreased	38%	39%	29%	22%	21%	14%	11%	13%	14%				9%	7%
Amount of state aid to jurisdiction	Increased	3%	1%	9%	15%	17%	27%	28%	18%	17%	30%	32%	15%	23%	37%
	Decreased	69%	86%	61%	45%	34%	21%	14%	20%	19%	15%	16%	30%	19%	13%
Number of tax delinquencies	Increased		46%	47%	40%	30%	23%	20%	19%	16%	15%	16%		25%	18%
	Decreased		20%	12%	12%	13%	15%	16%	17%	15%	15%	14%		6%	7%
Number of home foreclosures	Increased		60%	56%	41%	29%	18%	15%	13%	10%					
	Decreased		16%	10%	17%	25%	31%	33%	29%	26%					
Public safety needs	Increased	36%	29%	28%	29%	29%	28%	29%	33%	35%	32%	41%	25%	36%	41%
	Decreased	9%	6%	3%	3%	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%	5%	4%	7%	2%	2%
Infrastructure needs	Increased	55%	47%	43%	45%	50%	54%	52%	56%	56%	48%	63%	35%	55%	65%
	Decreased	12%	7%	5%	5%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	7%	4%	10%	3%	2%
Human service needs	Increased	45%	43%	35%	35%	29%	30%	28%	27%	28%	23%	33%	28%	37%	38%
	Decreased	8%	6%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	8%	2%	1%
General government operations needs	Increased						34%	34%	34%	36%	37%	42%	28%	42%	49%
	Decreased						1%	1%	2%	3%	3%	2%	9%	2%	1%
Number of employees	Increased		2%	2%	3%	4%	8%	10%	10%	13%	14%	14%		10%	15%
	Decreased		27%	23%	19%	16%	9%	7%	6%	5%	5%	5%		7%	7%
Pay rates for employee wages and salaries	Increased	36%	20%	21%	27%	39%	46%	53%	51%	57%				59%	72%
	Decreased	15%	13%	10%	7%	5%	3%	1%	1%	2%				1%	1%

Cost of employee pensions	Increased	40%	30%	22%	21%	24%	25%	26%	28%	30%	25%	26%	25%	28%	32%
	Decreased	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Cost of current employee health benefits	Increased	51%	47%	35%	32%	31%	34%	34%	33%	36%	35%	34%	31%	32%	36%
	Decreased	6%	8%	7%	8%	8%	4%	5%	4%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Cost of retired employee health benefits	Increased	31%	24%	17%	16%	16%	17%	15%	16%	18%	15%	16%	15%	16%	19%
	Decreased	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%	1%

Notes: Responses for “no change,” “don’t know,” and “not applicable” not shown. Percentages are based on all responding jurisdictions (not just those that selected an option other than “not applicable”). The “not applicable” response option was added in 2011, so direct comparisons with earlier waves may be compromised. Question text for “pay rates for employee wage & salaries” changed slightly between 2010 and 2011. See web tables for exact question text.

Appendix C

Predicted actions for the coming fiscal year compared to the current fiscal year, 2009-2022

		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Property tax rates	Increase	18%	10%	15%	15%	22%	23%	27%	22%	26%	25%	28%	18%	31%	38%
	Decrease	17%	32%	19%	15%	12%	7%	5%	6%	5%	4%	4%	8%	4%	4%
Charges for fees for services, licenses, etc.	Increase	23%	22%	20%	19%	21%	18%	18%	18%	23%			16%	23%	29%
	Decrease	7%	7%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%			5%	2%	1%
Reliance on general fund balance	Increase		49%	36%	34%	30%	27%	26%	30%	28%	30%	32%	36%	32%	32%
	Decrease		8%	8%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%	3%	3%
Reliance on "rainy day" funds	Increase		38%	25%	21%	19%	17%	17%	17%	17%					
	Decrease		7%	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%					
Amount of services provided	Increase	9%	7%	6%	10%	12%	13%	15%	15%	19%	21%	20%	10%	18%	22%
	Decrease	24%	29%	21%	15%	12%	7%	5%	6%	4%	5%	5%	12%	5%	4%
Actual public safety spending	Increase	26%	22%	20%	22%	27%	33%	34%	34%	33%	35%	39%	26%	40%	48%
	Decrease	18%	22%	16%	9%	7%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%	4%	7%	2%	1%
Actual infrastructure spending	Increase	28%	25%	23%	32%	34%	42%	43%	42%	45%	49%	51%	32%	54%	66%
	Decrease	30%	34%	21%	10%	10%	7%	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%	14%	3%	2%
Actual human services spending	Increase		6%	5%	6%	8%	9%	9%	8%	10%	11%	11%	11%	17%	18%
	Decrease		17%	10%	6%	4%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	5%	1%	1%
Actual general government operations spending	Increase						39%	40%	39%	38%	39%	39%	27%	39%	55%
	Decrease						6%	6%	5%	5%	5%	3%	14%	3%	1%
Funding for economic development programs	Increase	14%	12%	8%	11%	13%	12%	13%	12%	14%				17%	22%
	Decrease	17%	20%	12%	9%	8%	5%	5%	4%	4%				3%	1%
Amount of debt	Increase	21%	18%	11%	14%	15%	13%	15%	15%	17%		17%	17%	19%	19%
	Decrease	12%	13%	15%	16%	17%	18%	17%	15%	16%		13%	9%	12%	13%

Sale of public assets (i.e., parks, buildings, etc.)	Increase		5%	5%	6%	6%	7%	7%	7%	9%					
	Decrease		1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%					
Privatizing or contracting out of services	Increase	16%	18%	15%	12%	12%	10%	10%	10%	11%	13%	14%	11%		
	Decrease	4%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%		
Number and/or scope of interlocal agreements or cost-sharing plans	Increase	32%	38%	40%	40%	34%	30%	22%	18%	18%	17%	21%	13%		
	Decrease	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%		
Jurisdiction's workforce hiring	Increase	3%	1%	2%	2%	4%	8%	8%							
	Decrease	20%	22%	14%	8%	8%	3%	3%							
Jurisdiction not filling vacant positions	Increase	22%	23%	16%	10%	9%	7%	5%							
	Decrease	3%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%							
Number of employees	Increase								9%	11%	11%	12%	6%	12%	14%
	Decrease								4%	5%	4%	3%	8%	4%	4%
Employee pay rates	Increase			21%	30%	40%	47%	53%	48%	56%	61%	63%	44%	56%	68%
	Decrease			6%	4%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%
Employees' share of premiums, deductibles, and/or co-pays on health insurance	Increase		33%	30%	30%	27%	26%	22%	17%	17%	17%	15%		12%	14%
	Decrease		2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%		0%	1%
Employees' share of contributions to retirement funds	Increase		15%	14%	13%	13%	11%	11%	11%	12%	10%	11%		9%	11%
	Decrease		1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%		0%	1%
Retirees' share of premiums, deductibles, and/or co-pays on health insurance	Increase		22%	18%	15%	15%	14%	13%	11%	10%	8%	8%			
	Decrease		1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%			

Notes: Responses for “no change,” “don’t know,” and “not applicable” not shown. Percentages are based on all responding jurisdictions (not just those that selected an option other than “not applicable”). The “not applicable” response option was added in 2011, so direct comparisons with earlier waves may be compromised.

Previous MPPS reports

- Michigan local leaders' concerns about U.S. democracy at state and federal levels ease somewhat, but remain grim (November 2022)
- 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)
- 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)

Local leaders more likely to support than oppose Michigan's Emergency Manager law, but strongly favor reforms (February 2017)

Local government leaders' views on drinking water and water supply infrastructure in Michigan communities (November 2016)

Michigan local leaders say property tax appeals are common, disagree with 'dark stores' assessing (October 2016)

Local officials say Michigan's system of funding local government is broken, and seek State action to fix it (September 2016)

Michigan local governments report first declines in fiscal health trend since 2010 (August 2016)

Michigan local leaders' doubts continue regarding the state's direction (July 2016)

Hospital access primary emergency medical concern among many Michigan local officials (July 2016)

Firefighting services in Michigan: challenges and approaches among local governments (June 2016)

Most local officials are satisfied with law enforcement services, but almost half from largest jurisdictions say their funding is insufficient (April 2016)

Local leaders say police-community relations are good throughout Michigan, but those in large cities are concerned about potential civil unrest over police use-of-force (February 2016)

Report: Responding to budget surplus vs. deficit: the preferences of Michigan's local leaders and citizens (December 2015)

Michigan's local leaders concerned about retiree health care costs and their governments' ability to meet future obligations (October 2015)

Fiscal health rated relatively good for most jurisdictions, but improvement slows and decline continues for many (September 2015)

Confidence in Michigan's direction declines among state's local leaders (August 2015)

Michigan local government leaders' views on private roads (July 2015)

Few Michigan jurisdictions have adopted Complete Streets policies, though many see potential benefits (June 2015)

Michigan local leaders have positive views on relationships with county road agencies, despite some concerns (May 2015)

Michigan local government leaders say transit services are important, but lack of funding discourages their development (April 2015)

Michigan local leaders see need for state and local ethics reform (March 2015)

Local leaders say Michigan road funding needs major increase, but lack consensus on options that would raise the most revenue (February 2015)

Michigan local government leaders' views on employee pay and benefits (January 2015)

Despite increasingly formal financial management, relatively few Michigan local governments have adopted recommended policies (December 2014)

Most Michigan local officials are satisfied with their privatized services, but few seek to expand further (November 2014)

Michigan local governments finally pass fiscal health tipping point overall, but one in four still report decline (October 2014)

Beyond the coast, a tenuous relationship between Michigan local governments and the Great Lakes (September 2014)

Confidence in Michigan's direction holds steady among state's local leaders (August 2014)

Wind power as a community issue in Michigan (July 2014)

Fracking as a community issue in Michigan (June 2014)

The impact of tax-exempt properties on Michigan local governments (March 2014)

Michigan's local leaders generally support Detroit bankruptcy filing despite some concerns (February 2014)

Michigan local governments increasingly pursue placemaking for economic development (January 2014)

Views on right-to-work legislation among Michigan's local government leaders (December 2013)

Michigan local governments continue seeking, and receiving, union concessions (October 2013)

Michigan local government fiscal health continues gradual improvement, but smallest jurisdictions lagging (September 2013)

Local leaders evaluate state policymaker performance and whether Michigan is on the right track (August 2013)

Trust in government among Michigan's local leaders and citizens (July 2013)

Citizen engagement in the view of Michigan's local government leaders (May 2013)

Beyond trust in government: government trust in citizens? (March 2013)

Local leaders support reforming Michigan's system of funding local government (January 2013)

Local leaders support eliminating Michigan's Personal Property Tax if funds are replaced, but distrust state follow-through (November 2012)

Michigan's local leaders satisfied with union negotiations (October 2012)

Michigan's local leaders are divided over the state's emergency manager law (September 2012)

Fiscal stress continues for hundreds of Michigan jurisdictions, but conditions trend in positive direction overall (September 2012)

Michigan's local leaders more positive about Governor Snyder's performance, more optimistic about the state's direction (July 2012)

Data-driven decision-making in Michigan local government (June 2012)

State funding incentives increase local collaboration, but also raise concerns (March 2012)

Local officials react to state policy innovation tying revenue sharing to dashboards and incentive funding (January 2012)

MPPS finds fiscal health continues to decline across the state, though some negative trends eased in 2011 (October 2011)

Public sector unions in Michigan: their presence and impact according to local government leaders (August 2011)

Despite increased approval of state government performance, Michigan's local leaders are concerned about the state's direction (August 2011)

Local government and environmental leadership: views of Michigan's local leaders (July 2011)

Local leaders are mostly positive about intergovernmental cooperation and look to expand efforts (March 2011)

Local government leaders say most employees are not overpaid, though some benefits may be too generous (February 2011)

Local government leaders say economic gardening can help grow their economies (November 2010)

Local governments struggle to cope with fiscal, service, and staffing pressures (August 2010)

Michigan local governments actively promote U.S. Census participation (August 2010)

Fiscal stimulus package mostly ineffective for local economies (May 2010)

Fall 2009 key findings report: educational, economic, and workforce development issues at the local level (April 2010)

Local government officials give low marks to the performance of state officials and report low trust in Lansing (March 2010)

Local government fiscal and economic development issues (October 2009)

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