



Michigan local government leaders say civic relationships and civil discourse remain healthy, despite worsening national politics

By Natalie Fitzpatrick, Debra Horner, and Thomas Ivacko

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, as well as their assessments of civic relationships among elected officials, between elected officials and residents, and among residents themselves. These findings are based on statewide surveys of local government leaders in the Spring 2022 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS), with comparisons from 2021, 2018, and 2012 MPPS waves, as well as MSU's State of the State Survey (SOSS) of Michigan residents.

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.



Key Findings

- Although the tone of political discourse across the state and nation seems increasingly antagonistic, at the community level in Michigan local leaders report that civic relationships and discussions of local policy issues continue to be positive, some even reporting slight improvements.
- Assessments of relations *among local elected officials* themselves remain stable and generally strong. Statewide, 70% say discourse among their own jurisdiction's elected officials on local policy issues is constructive, and a large majority (84%) rate the relationships among their elected officials as good or excellent. Meanwhile, 15% say relationships among elected officials in their jurisdiction are only fair (11%) or outright poor (4%).
 - » These assessments of discourse and relationships are significantly less positive among jurisdictions that identify as urban compared to more rural communities. However, assessments of elected officials' discourse have improved among urban jurisdictions since 2021.
- Although assessments of discourse *between local elected officials and residents* have worsened slightly in the last year, two-thirds of local officials still say this discourse is primarily constructive, while 82% rate relationships between officials and residents as good or excellent.
 - » In a reversal from patterns seen in 2018 and 2021, officials from mostly urban and fully urban communities are now more likely to report this discourse as primarily constructive compared to officials in mostly rural and rural communities.
 - » A recent MPPS report on public harassment of jurisdiction personnel raised significant concerns about the relationships between elected officials and residents. Looking at communities where such abuse has been reported, relationships have indeed been negatively impacted, with almost a quarter (24%) saying they are currently just fair or poor. Nonetheless, even in those jurisdictions where abuse has occurred, most local officials say both discourse and civic relationships are generally positive.
- Assessments of discourse *among residents* themselves have improved compared to previous years. Statewide, 42% say discourse among their community's residents on local policy issues is constructive, up from 35% in 2021, and also higher than in 2018 (38%) and 2012 (30%). Meanwhile, 65% rate relationships among residents as good or excellent, up from 60% in 2021.
 - » Urban jurisdictions in particular have seen large improvements in assessments of residents' discourse and relationships in the last year.
- Comparing the MPPS to statewide public opinion data collected around the same time, Michigan local officials are much more likely than Michigan residents to rate each type of discourse as constructive.

Background

Concerns about the health of democracy in the U.S. among both political observers and the public are widespread and growing. Many organizations that formally track democracy worldwide have highlighted recent democratic declines in the U.S. For example, in Freedom House's comparative assessment of global political rights and civil liberties released in 2022, *Freedom in the World*, the score for the U.S. has dropped 10 points in the last decade.¹

One particular area of concern is increasing political divisions and partisan hostility. A January 2022 Quinnipiac poll found that 53% of Americans expect political divisions in the country to worsen in their lifetime, while just 15% expected them to ease.² The same poll found that 76% of Americans say that political instability in the U.S. is a bigger danger to the nation than that presented by other countries that are adversaries of the U.S.

At the local level, a significant concern about the health of democracy centers on what appears to be increasingly hostile relations between government officials and the public, with government officials too often facing verbal and even physical abuse.³ During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, such incidents of hostility involving public health officials received particular attention.⁴ And in the wake of false accusations of voter fraud in the 2020 election, local election officials have been another target of abuse.⁵

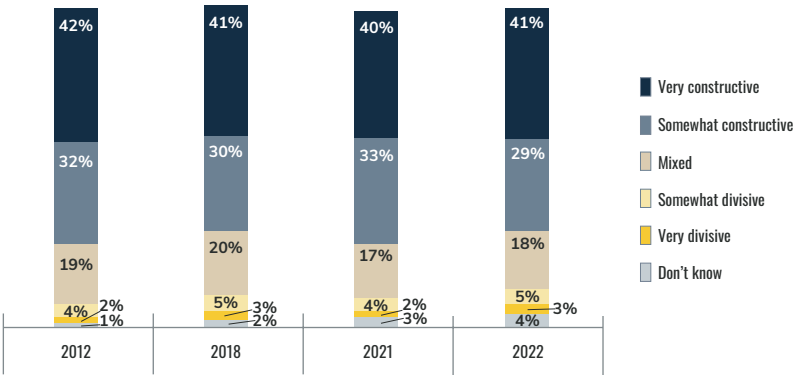
These are all issues that the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) has kept a focus on through the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS). Since 2009, the MPPS has tracked a wide range of issues related to the functioning of democracy and political participation in local governance statewide, as reported by local elected and appointed officials.⁶ During this time, the surveys have found the growth in political tensions and anti-democratic sentiment 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, the recent MPPS reports on harassment of local officials⁷ and on their concerns about potential disturbances at polling places⁸ raise serious concerns. And in 2021 local officials expressed concern about the impact of national partisan politics on local relationships, although they still reported that local civic discourse was generally positive among local elected officials and between elected officials and their residents.⁹

In order to learn more about the progress of these issues in local communities around the state, the Spring 2022 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. Local leaders also rated overall working and civic relationships among and between these groups. The survey program asked similar questions in 2012, 2018,¹⁰ and 2021,¹¹ which allows tracking over the last decade.

Discourse on Boards and Councils continues to be primarily constructive

Statewide, a large majority (70%) of local leaders describe discourse on local policy issues among their jurisdiction’s elected officials as mostly constructive in 2022 (see *Figure 1a*). Although this represents a slight decline since 2021 (73%), these assessments have generally been stable over the last decade, ranging from 70%-74% since 2012. Meanwhile, the percentage who say discussion among elected officials in their local government has been primarily divisive has ranged between 6-8% since 2012, including 5% of local leaders this year who say elected leaders’ discussions are somewhat divisive, while just 3% say they are very divisive.

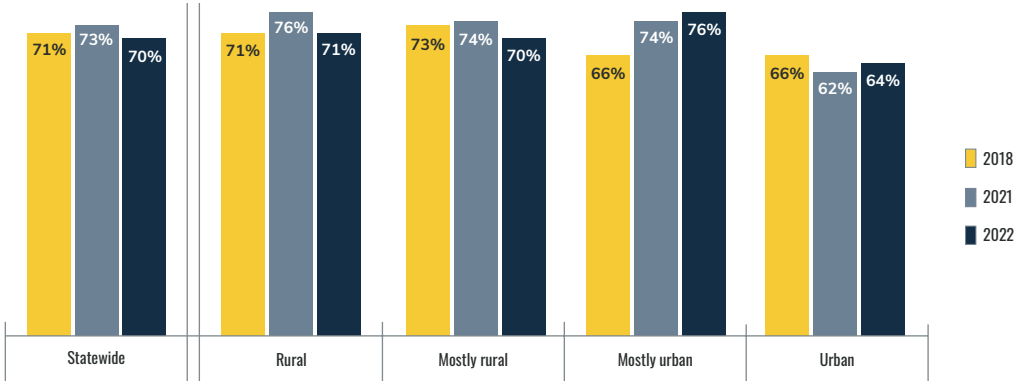
Figure 1a
Officials’ assessments of the tone of discussion around local policy issues among elected officials, 2012-2022



Beginning in 2017, the MPPS started asking respondents to describe whether their jurisdiction is rural, mostly rural, mostly urban, or urban, allowing analysis of MPPS data along this continuum. And although there have been relatively few changes in assessments of elected officials’ discourse statewide between 2012 and 2022, there are some interesting differences along the urban-rural scale. For example, compared to 2021, there have been small declines in civility of discourse among local elected officials in self-described rural and mostly rural jurisdictions (see *Figure 1b*). At the same time, there have been slight improvements among urban and mostly urban jurisdictions. However, jurisdictions identifying as urban continue to be significantly less likely to rate discourse among their elected officials as constructive (64%) compared to those from rural (71%), mostly rural (70%), and mostly urban (76%) jurisdictions.

For additional differences broken down by various factors, such as the jurisdiction’s size, whether the jurisdiction reports public abuse of its personnel, the respondent’s partisan identification, and status as an elected or appointed official, see *Appendix A*.

Figure 1b
Percent who rate tone of discussion among elected officials as “constructive,” 2018-2022, by urban-rural self-identification



Note: the 2012 MPPS did not ask whether respondents consider their jurisdiction urban or rural or in between. Responses for “mixed,” “somewhat divisive,” “very divisive,” and “don’t know” not shown.

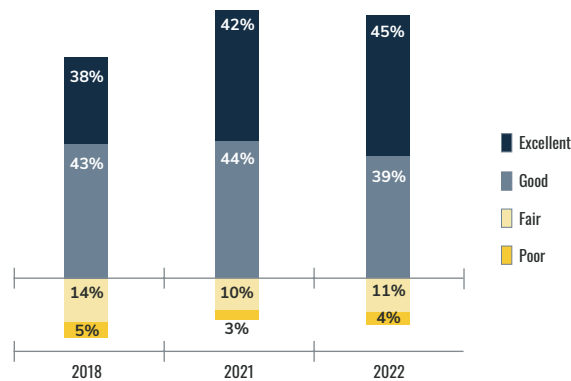
Relationships on Boards and Councils also very positive and largely stable

Looking beyond just the tone of discourse at the more fundamental issue of working relationships among elected officials, a large majority (84%) of local leaders rate the relationships among their local elected officials as good or excellent, down slightly from the 86% who said the same in 2021 (see *Figure 2a*). However, the percent who rate working relationships as “excellent” has increased somewhat over time, to 45% in 2022 from 42% in 2021 and 38% in 2018. Meanwhile, in 2022, 15% say relationships among elected officials in their jurisdiction are only fair (11%) or outright poor (4%).

Although, as noted earlier, assessments of elected officials’ discourse in urban jurisdictions improved slightly this year, positive assessments of relationships among these officials dropped to 68% in 2022 from 76% last year (see *Figure 2b*). In contrast, mostly urban jurisdictions report a higher percentage of excellent and good ratings for officials’ relationships this year (87%) compared to 2021 (85%) or 2018 (73%), while assessments have stayed relatively steady in rural and mostly rural jurisdictions.

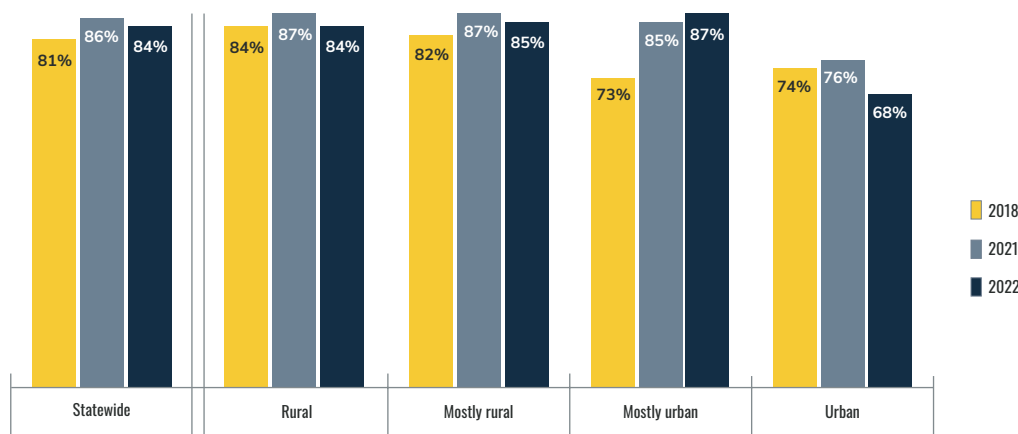
For additional differences broken down by various factors, such as the jurisdiction’s size, whether the jurisdiction reports public abuse of its personnel, the respondent’s partisan identification, and status as an elected or appointed official, see *Appendix B*.

Figure 2a
Officials’ assessments of working relationships among elected officials, 2018-2022



Note: responses for “don’t know” not shown.

Figure 2b
Percent who rate working relationships among elected officials as “excellent” or “good,” 2018-2022, by urban-rural self-identification



Note: responses for “fair,” “poor,” and “don’t know” not shown.

Ratings of dialogue between elected officials and residents remain generally constructive, despite reports of harassment

Assessments of the tone of discussion on local policy issues between elected officials and residents have also been relatively stable over the past few years. As shown in *Figure 3a*, currently two-thirds (66%) of local officials report primarily constructive discourse between elected officials and their residents, down slightly from the 70% who said the same last year, and as far back as 2012. However, the percent who specifically say this discourse is very constructive (28%) was up slightly this year. Meanwhile, just under a quarter (24%) say this discourse is “mixed” in 2022, and just 6% say it is generally divisive.

Declines in the last year are found in mostly rural and rural communities, down eight percentage points and four percentage points respectively (see *Figure 3b*). By contrast, there have been improvements in mostly urban and especially in urban communities. In fact, officials from mostly urban and urban communities are now more likely to report discourse as primarily constructive compared to officials in mostly rural and rural communities, a reversal compared to 2018 and 2021.

Figure 3a
Officials’ assessments of the tone of discussion around local policy issues between elected officials and residents, 2012-2022

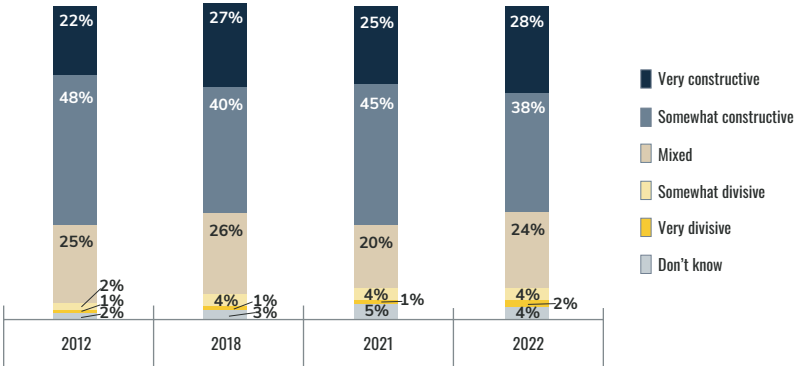
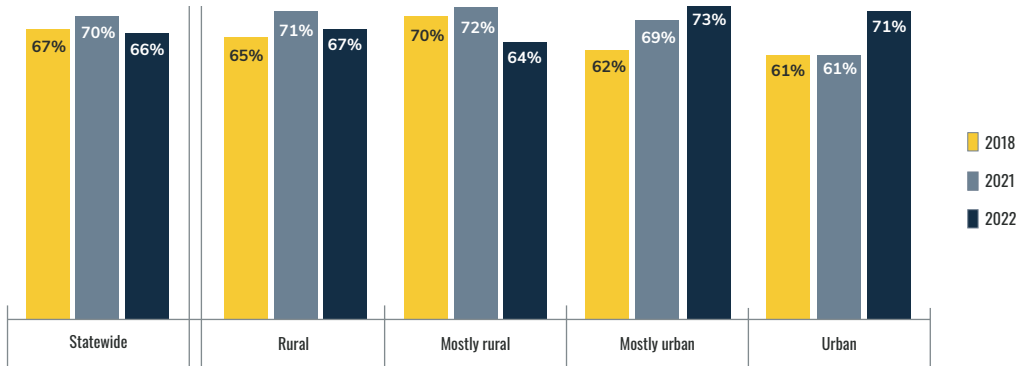


Figure 3b
Percent who rate tone of discussion between elected officials and residents as “constructive,” 2018-2022, by urban-rural self-identification

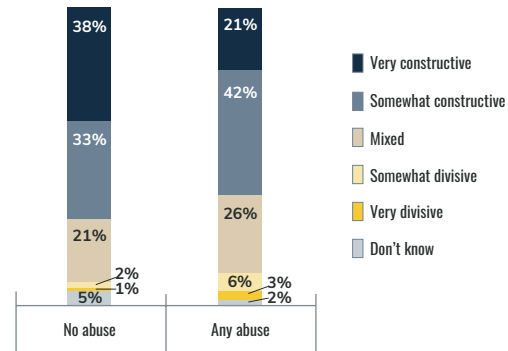


Note: the 2012 MPPS did not ask whether respondents consider their jurisdiction urban or rural or in between. Responses for “mixed,” “somewhat divisive,” “very divisive,” and “don’t know” not shown.

The 2022 MPPS also asked local officials about experiences with harassment, threats, and violence from the public, targeted at local government personnel. As summarized in a CLOSUP brief published in September 2022, officials from 53% of jurisdictions statewide report recent experiences with harassment, threats, or even violence against members of their local government, including 47% who experienced harassment themselves.¹² Unsurprisingly, local officials who report harassment, threats, and violence against local government personnel are less likely to describe discourse between the public and local officials as somewhat or very constructive compared to those who report no such abuse. However, even in those jurisdictions where local leaders report abuse against jurisdiction personnel, 63% say discourse between elected officials and residents is generally positive (see *Figure 3c*). In addition, in jurisdictions where abuse is reported, only 9% say discourse between elected officials and residents is primarily divisive. It appears that local leaders mostly differentiate the quality of general discussion with their residents as separate from any abuse received from specific noxious individuals or groups, who appear to be in the minority in most such communities.

For additional differences broken down by various factors, such as the jurisdiction’s size, whether the jurisdiction reports public abuse of its personnel, the respondent’s partisan identification, and status as an elected or appointed official, see *Appendix C*.

Figure 3c
 Officials’ assessments of the tone of discussion around local policy issues between elected officials and residents, by whether abuse against local government personnel was reported, 2022

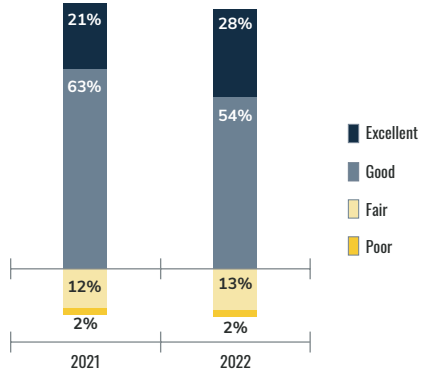


Reports of relationships between elected officials and residents also relatively unchanged

Similarly, even though a majority of local leaders statewide report problems with harassment and threats in their jurisdictions, 82% percent rate their overall relationships with residents as excellent or good, just below the 84% who said the same last year. And perhaps surprisingly, the percent rating those relationships as “excellent” has increased from 21% to 28% in the past year (see *Figure 4a*).

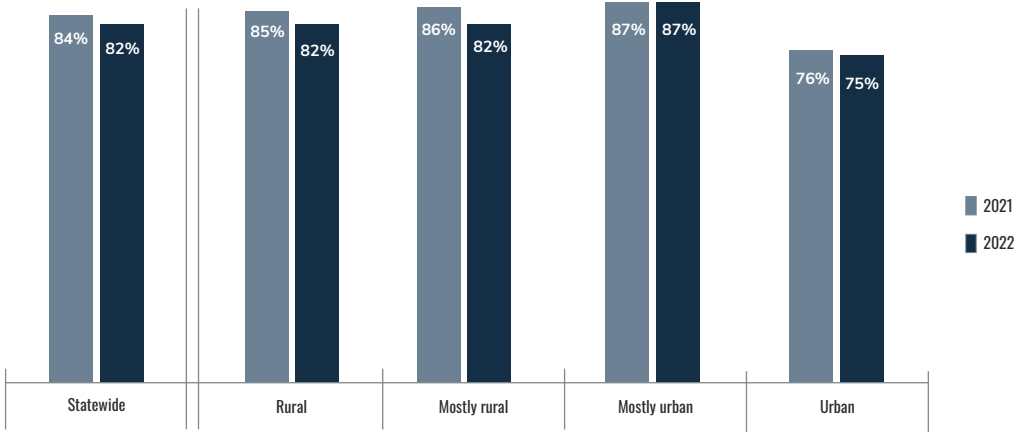
As shown in *Figure 4b*, the largest declines (four percentage points) in overall positive relationship ratings since last year are found among officials from mostly rural communities.

Figure 4a
Officials’ assessments of civic relationships between elected officials and residents, 2021-2022



Note: responses for “don’t know” not shown.

Figure 4b
Percent who rate civic relationships between elected officials and residents as “excellent” or “good,” 2021-2022, by urban-rural self-identification

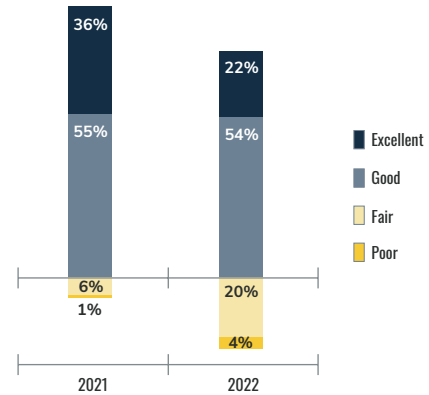


Note: responses for “fair,” “poor,” and “don’t know” not shown.

As with assessments of discourse, ratings of relationships remain largely positive even in jurisdictions where local government personnel have experienced harassment or abuse, with 76% reporting excellent or good relationships between elected officials and residents overall (see *Figure 4c*). However, while just 7% of local leaders in jurisdictions not subject to recent harassment or threats say their relationships with residents are fair or poor, this more than triples to 24% in places where personnel have suffered abuse.

For additional differences broken down by various factors, such as the jurisdiction’s size, whether the jurisdiction reports public abuse of its personnel, the respondent’s partisan identification, and status as an elected or appointed official, see *Appendix D*.

Figure 4c
 Officials’ assessments of civic relationships between elected officials and residents, by whether abuse against local government personnel was reported, 2022

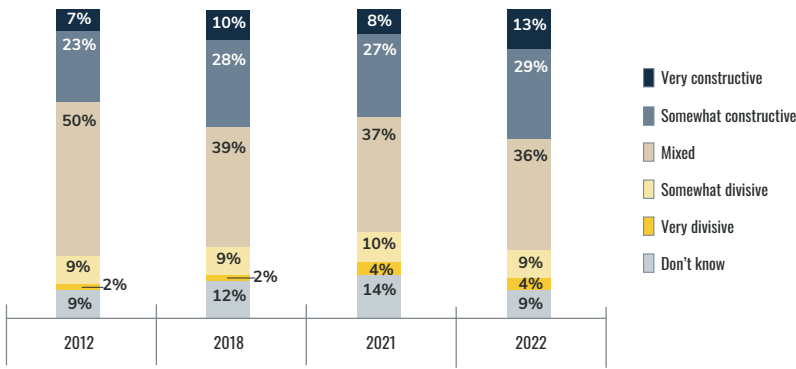


Note: responses for “don’t know” not shown.

Largest improvement found in ratings of discourse among residents themselves

Perhaps surprisingly, given growing incivility in the national political environment, this year Michigan local leaders are more likely to say discourse about local policy issues among their residents themselves is primarily constructive (42%) compared with last year (35%) or even with assessments stretching back to 2012 (30%), as shown in *Figure 5a*. However, the percent who believe discussions among residents is mostly divisive (13% in 2022) has remained relatively unchanged over time.

Figure 5a
Officials' assessments of the tone of discussion around local policy issues among residents, 2012-2022

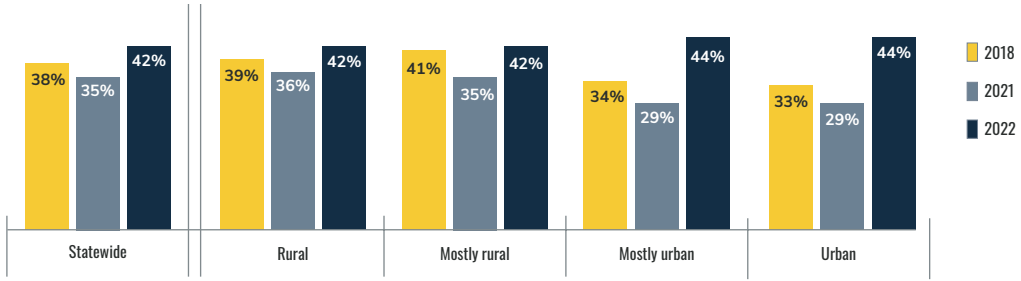


Note: responses for "don't know" not shown

Improvements in assessments of resident discourse are found in jurisdictions across the rural-urban spectrum but are most common in jurisdictions that are mostly or completely urban. In 2022, 44% of local leaders from mostly and fully urban communities say the tone of their residents' discussions on local policy issues is constructive, up from 29% in 2021 (see *Figure 5b*). And while officials from mostly and fully urban jurisdictions were less likely to describe discourse as constructive compared to those from mostly and fully rural jurisdictions in prior years, in 2022 there is no statistically significant difference across these groups.

For additional differences broken down by various factors, such as the jurisdiction's size, whether the jurisdiction reports public abuse of its personnel, the respondent's partisan identification, and status as an elected or appointed official, see *Appendix E*.

Figure 5b
Percent who rate tone of discussion among residents as "constructive," 2018-2022, by urban-rural self-identification



Note: the 2012 MPPS did not ask whether respondents consider their jurisdiction urban or rural or in between. Responses for "mixed," "somewhat divisive," "very divisive," and "don't know" not shown.

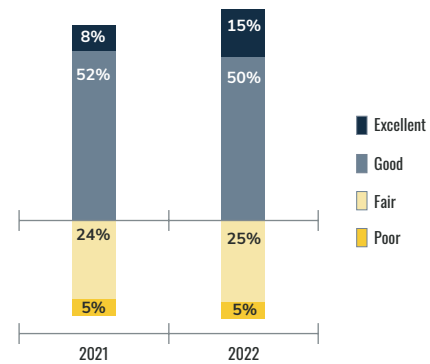
Improvements in residents’ civic relationships in the past year reported across the board, particularly in urban jurisdictions

Similarly, local officials’ ratings of overall civic relationships among residents themselves have also improved over the last year, with two-thirds (65%) rating them as excellent (15%) or good (50%), up from 60% in 2021 (see *Figure 6a*). By comparison, 30% of local leaders in 2022 say their residents’ relationships are only fair or outright poor, essentially unchanged from last year.

Again, officials from jurisdictions of all kinds on the urban-rural scale report improvements in their residents’ relationships, although urban jurisdictions report the biggest jump, with 68% saying their residents’ have positive civic relationships in 2022, compared with 57% last year (see *Figure 6b*).

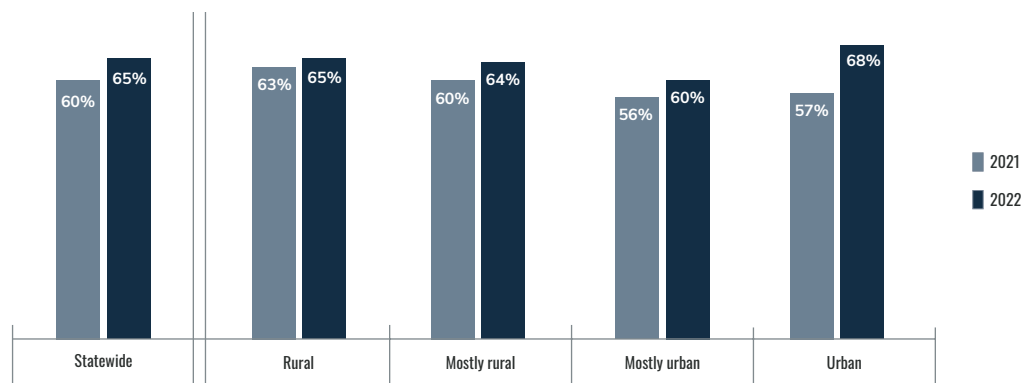
For additional differences broken down by various factors, such as the jurisdiction’s size, whether the jurisdiction reports public abuse of its personnel, the respondent’s partisan identification, and status as an elected or appointed official, see *Appendix F*.

Figure 6a
Officials’ assessments of civic relationships among residents, 2021-2022



Note: responses for “don’t know” not shown

Figure 6b
Percent who rate civic relationships among residents as “excellent” or “good,” 2021-2022, by urban-rural self-identification



Note: responses for “fair,” “poor,” and “don’t know” not shown.



The Spring 2022 MPPS also asked local officials to rate the overall functioning of democracy in their jurisdiction and included a follow-up question about factors that influenced their rating. Many responses focused on the state of discourse and relationships among local officials, and between officials & their residents. In line with their assessments of civic discourse and relationships reported above, these assessments were largely positive, with discussions of how board/council members are able to work well together, their ability to keep partisan politics out of decision-making on local issues, and the ability to form strong relationships in small communities. However, some responses discussed occasional challenges on contentious issues, as well as some negative interactions with residents.

Voices Across Michigan

Quotes from local leaders about the effect of discourse and relationships on the functioning of local democracy (taken from survey question on the functioning of local democracy):

“The elected officials I work with care about the local issues and keep state and national politics out of their decisions. It hasn’t always been this way, but it has been for quite some time. They have respectful debate on topics and honest sharing of information. No one voice holds more weight on the board. Administration and elected officials work well together with an honest sharing of information and ideas. They set the standard really high.”

“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.”

“Although there is some contention between commissioners, they are still able to address and move through the everyday and other infrequent issues (i.e.-make decisions) that come before them.”

“Everyone on our Board of Trustees contributes their time, whether they are paid or not, to all of the activities involved in running a local government. Cemetery cleanup, general cleaning and maintenance of the township office and property and anything else they are asked to do. They are wonderful!”

“We seek consensus among council members through discussions including the audience members as well as free and open, nonjudgmental opinions. Everyone is treated with respect and their opinions are listened to. Most of the time the council votes unanimously because they have listened to all sides of an argument. In other words, my Council are all adults and know how to act like it.”

“We have very few partisan issues here. We are a small township, and our board gets along quite well in regards to the things we do. We strive to listen to our citizens and to make our township a place that is a good place to live. Most of our work consists or doing road projects as we don’t have any big recreation areas or parks of any kind. There is not a lot to disagree about on road projects.”

“We are such a small unit of government, that communication and expression of thoughts and ideas are commonly expressed with little to no negative feedback.”

“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.”

“Though we have a mix of Democrats and Republicans on our board and committees and commissions, most of them are engaged in respectful communication. We have had a couple of folks come to meetings and be verbally harassing of others that don’t share their political views. Some in the board didn’t have the experience with managing these issues and putting the proper limits in place on these persons. We have sought advice from our legal counsel on handling these concerns.”

“Residents are hostile to township officials and don’t ask for facts before assuming we are for or against a topic.”

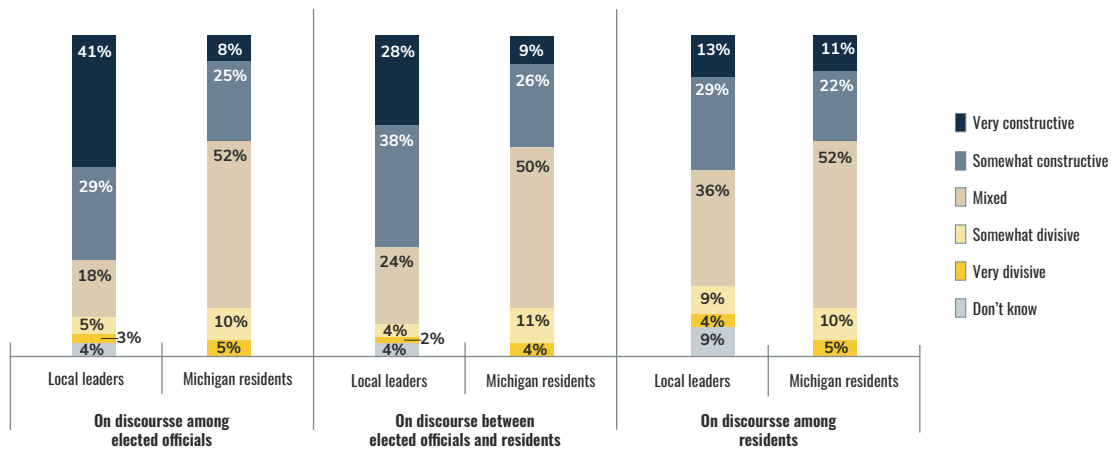
Local officials have a more positive view than Michigan residents have of civic discourse

Local leaders’ assessments of civic discourse among various groups are significantly more positive than those of the public at large. In April 2022—at approximately the same time the Spring 2022 MPPS was in the field—Michigan State University’s Institute for Public Policy and Social Research conducted a wave of its State of the State Survey (SOSS) among Michigan residents. That survey asked Michiganders similar questions regarding their ratings of discussions in their communities among elected officials, between officials and residents, and among residents themselves.¹³ As shown in *Figure 7*, compared to the general public, Michigan local officials are more than twice as likely to report constructive discourse among elected officials in their community (70% vs. 33%).

Some of these differences could result from the differing methodologies across the two surveys, as the MPPS is a jurisdiction-based census survey, while the SOSS is a population-based, random-sample survey. One effect of these differences is that MPPS respondents are more likely to come from smaller and more rural communities compared with respondents on the SOSS. Nonetheless, while 66% of local leaders statewide say discourse between elected officials and residents is primarily constructive, only 35% of Michigan residents said the same. Local officials are also somewhat more likely to report constructive discourse among their community’s residents than the general public does, but the difference is smaller (42% vs. 33%). While relatively few residents report outright divisive discourse overall in their communities, a majority of Michigan residents say that tone of discussion among all these groups is “mixed.”

While differences between responses on the MPPS and the SOSS could result from study design differences, local officials from even the largest jurisdictions are more likely to portray local civic discourse as constructive compared to Michigan residents. Likewise, although a greater proportion of local government leaders identify as Republican compared with the Michigan population as a whole, this does not explain the large discrepancy between responses of local leaders compared to residents.

Figure 7
Local officials’ vs. Michigan residents’ assessments of the tone of discussion around local policy issues, 2022



Note: The State of the State Survey (SOSS) did not include a “don't know” response option.



Conclusion

In Spring 2022, the MPPS found that local leaders in Michigan continue to be generally positive about the state of civic discourse on local issues in their communities and are also generally positive about civic and working relationships more generally. Most local leaders continue to report that discourse on local policy issues is generally constructive among elected officials (70%) and that working relationships on their board or council are good or excellent (84%). Despite concerns about harassment, threats, and even rare violence against local officials, two-thirds of officials report primarily constructive discourse between elected officials and residents, and 82% rate civic relationships between these groups as good or excellent. And while local leaders are less positive about the tone of discourse among their jurisdictions' residents themselves—with 42% reporting it as generally constructive in 2022— assessments of both civic discourse among residents and civic relationships among residents have improved since 2021, particularly in urban jurisdictions.

Notes

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11. Horner, D. & Ivacko, T. (2022, January).
12. Fitzpatrick, N., Horner, D. & Ivacko, T. (2022, September).
13. Note: findings from the Spring 2022 State of the State Survey (SOSS) are not yet publicly available. Data presented here were provided directly to CLOSUP via email by the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research at Michigan State University. The analyses, interpretations, and conclusions in this report are solely those of the authors of this report. They do not necessarily represent the views of IPPSR or of Michigan State University.



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—will be 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

Percent who rate tone of discussion among elected officials as constructive, 2012-2022

	Population size		Abuse of local officials reported		Official's Partisan Self-identification			Official's Position	
	Fewer than 30,000 residents	Greater than 30,000 residents	No abuse reported	Any abuse reported	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Elected Officials	Appointed Officials
2012	75%	60%	*	*	77%	72%	71%	74%	69%
2018	72%	60%	*	*	74%	64%	65%	73%	61%
2021	74%	67%	*	*	77%	67%	79%	73%	74%
2022	70%	68%	74%	68%	75%	63%	69%	71%	68%

Appendix B

Percent who rate working relationships among elected officials as excellent or good, 2018-2022

	Population size		Abuse of local officials reported		Official's Partisan Self-identification			Official's Position	
	Fewer than 30,000 residents	Greater than 30,000 residents	No abuse reported	Any abuse reported	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Elected Officials	Appointed Officials
2018	82%	71%	*	*	83%	76%	76%	83%	71%
2021	87%	76%	*	*	88%	77%	89%	88%	82%
2022	84%	75%	90%	78%	87%	78%	81%	85%	78%

Appendix C

Percent who rate tone of discussion between elected officials and residents as constructive, 2012-2022

	Population size		Abuse of local officials reported		Official's Partisan Self-identification			Official's Position	
	Fewer than 30,000 residents	Greater than 30,000 residents	No abuse reported	Any abuse reported	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Elected Officials	Appointed Officials
2012	71%	58%	*	*	72%	72%	70%	71%	66%
2018	67%	54%	*	*	69%	60%	63%	69%	51%
2021	70%	65%	*	*	73%	66%	72%	71%	69%
2022	66%	65%	71%	68%	72%	55%	66%	68%	61%

Appendix D

Percent who rate civic relationships between elected officials and residents as excellent or good, 2021-2022

	Population size		Abuse of local officials reported		Official's Partisan Self-identification			Official's Position	
	Fewer than 30,000 residents	Greater than 30,000 residents	No abuse reported	Any abuse reported	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Elected Officials	Appointed Officials
2021	86%	73%	*	*	88%	75%	85%	86%	77%
2022	83%	76%	91%	76%	86%	77%	80%	84%	76%

Appendix E

Percent who rate tone of discussion among residents as constructive, 2012-2022

	Population size		Abuse of local officials reported		Official's Partisan Self-identification			Official's Position	
	Fewer than 30,000 residents	Greater than 30,000 residents	No abuse reported	Any abuse reported	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Elected Officials	Appointed Officials
2012	30%	28%	*	*	30%	31%	30%	31%	29%
2018	39%	28%	*	*	44%	30%	35%	41%	27%
2021	36%	17%	*	*	38%	29%	29%	36%	28%
2022	42%	35%	54%	33%	49%	34%	32%	45%	33%

Appendix F

Percent who rate civic relationships among residents as excellent or good, 2021-2022

	Population size		Abuse of local officials reported		Official's Partisan Self-identification			Official's Position	
	Fewer than 30,000 residents	Greater than 30,000 residents	No abuse reported	Any abuse reported	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Elected Officials	Appointed Officials
2021	62%	46%	*	*	65%	53%	52%	64%	46%
2022	65%	56%	76%	55%	70%	54%	56%	68%	53%



Previous MPPS reports

- 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)

All MPPS reports are available online at: <http://closup.umich.edu/mpps-publications>

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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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