Civic Discourse in Michigan: Insights from Local Leaders

Preliminary Findings from the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS)

September 21, 2018
Michigan Municipal League 2018 Annual Conference
Background: The Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS)

- **A census survey** – all 1,856 Michigan counties, cities, villages, and townships
- **Respondents** – chief elected and appointed officials
- **Administered** – since 2009, online and via hardcopy
- **70+% regular response rates** (Spring 2018 = 74%)
- **Transparency**
  -- Questionnaires online
  -- Pre-run data tables online
  -- Sharing of (anonymized) datasets with other researchers
- **Expert advisors on questionnaire content**
- **Research partnership with Michigan local government associations**
  -- MAC, MML, & MTA
The tone of discourse in Michigan communities

Thinking more generally about the tone of discussion and communication that takes place around local policy issues, how would you describe the general state of public discourse between the following groups within your jurisdiction?
Thinking more generally about the tone of discussion and communication that takes place around local policy issues, how would you describe the state of public discourse among elected officials themselves within your jurisdiction?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Very Constructive: 36%, 33%
- Somewhat Constructive: 30%, 36%
- Mixed: 17%, 18%
- Somewhat Divisive: 9%, 4%
- Very Divisive: 2%, 4%
- Don't Know: 8%, 4%

**How divisive is discourse among city/village officials?**
Thinking more generally about the tone of discussion and communication that takes place around local policy issues, how would you describe the state of public discourse between elected officials and residents within your jurisdiction?
Thinking more generally about the tone of discussion and communication that takes place around local policy issues, how would you describe the state of public discourse among residents themselves within your jurisdiction?
How divisive is discourse among city/village officials?

...how would you describe the state of public discourse among elected officials themselves within your jurisdiction? (2018)

![Bar chart showing the state of public discourse among elected officials in different population categories.](chart.png)
How divisive between city/village officials and residents?

..., how would you describe the state of public discourse between elected officials and residents within your jurisdiction? (2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Very Constructive</th>
<th>Somewhat Constructive</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Somewhat Divisive</th>
<th>Very Divisive</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1,500</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,501-5,000</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,001-10,000</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001-30,000</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;30,000</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
..., how would you describe the state of public discourse between and residents themselves within your jurisdiction? (2018)
Would you say the tone of discussion and communication among these groups is more or less civil than it was five years ago? (2018 responses statewide)

- Among elected officials:
  - Significantly More Civil: 16%
  - Somewhat More Civil: 20%
  - Neither More nor Less Civil: 45%
  - Somewhat Less Civil: 9%
  - Significantly Less Civil: 4%
  - Don't Know: 5%

- Between officials and residents:
  - Significantly More Civil: 13%
  - Somewhat More Civil: 21%
  - Neither More nor Less Civil: 50%
  - Somewhat Less Civil: 8%
  - Significantly Less Civil: 2%
  - Don't Know: 6%

- Among residents:
  - Significantly More Civil: 7%
  - Somewhat More Civil: 17%
  - Neither More nor Less Civil: 46%
  - Somewhat Less Civil: 14%
  - Significantly Less Civil: 4%
  - Don't Know: 13%
Would you say the tone of discussion and communication among elected officials is more or less civil than it was five years ago?

(only cities and villages in 2018)
Would you say the tone of discussion and communication among between elected officials and residents is more or less civil than it was five years ago? (only cities and villages in 2018)
Would you say the tone of discussion and communication among residents is more or less civil than it was five years ago?

(only cities and villages in 2018)
The Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS)

Web: www.closup.umich.edu
Email: closup-mpps@umich.edu
Twitter: @closup