



## Michigan local officials' assessments of American democracy at the state and federal levels decline sharply

By Natalie Fitzpatrick, Debra Horner, and Thomas Ivacko

This report presents local government leaders' views regarding the functioning of democracy in their jurisdictions, the State of Michigan, and the United States as a whole, as well as their confidence in elections in their own jurisdiction, across Michigan, and in other states. These findings are based on statewide surveys of local government leaders in the Spring 2021 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS), conducted between April 5 and June 7, 2021, and includes comparisons to Spring 2020 wave responses.

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

## Key Findings

- Michigan local leaders' ratings of the functioning of American democracy at the state and federal levels have dropped significantly since last year.
  - » On a ten-point scale—where one means a total breakdown of democracy and ten means a perfectly functioning democracy— 43% of the state's local leaders rate democracy in the state of Michigan at four or lower today. This is more than double the 18% who felt this way a year ago. It also includes 11% today who see a “total breakdown of democracy” in Michigan, up from 3% last year.
  - » Meanwhile, 66% of Michigan local leaders rate democracy across the U.S. today at four or lower on the ten-point scale, up significantly from the 43% who gave such low ratings last year. And today, nearly a quarter statewide (23%) feel there is a total breakdown of democracy at the federal level, up sharply from 7% last year.
- By contrast, Michigan local leaders continue to give high ratings to the functioning of local democracy in their own jurisdictions, with 84% rating it at seven or higher, unchanged from assessments in 2020.
- Mirroring these assessments of the functioning of democracy overall, local officials express high levels of confidence in their own jurisdictions' elections, but have significantly lower confidence in elections elsewhere in Michigan and in other states.
  - » At the local level, 88% of officials say they have either complete or high confidence in elections in their own jurisdictions. However, this drops to 48% who have complete or high confidence in elections in Michigan, and just 26% for elections in other states across the country.
  - » Confidence in their own local elections is high among leaders from all political parties. However, local officials who self-identify as Republicans are significantly less confident in elections in Michigan statewide as well as in other states, compared to local leaders who identify as Independents or Democrats.



Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

M | Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy

## Background

Concerns about the functioning of American democracy have been growing in recent years.<sup>1</sup> In 2016, the Economist’s annual “Democracy Index” downgraded the U.S. from a “full democracy” to a “flawed democracy” due to declining ratings over a decade on a number of the 60 different indicators they track, and these have declined further from 2016–2020.<sup>2</sup> Over the last 12 months—after controversies including government management of the COVID-19 pandemic, disproven allegations of fraud surrounding the 2020 election, and protests in state capitols nationwide as well as the violent January 6th assault on the Capitol Building in Washington D.C.— these concerns about U.S. democracy have only deepened.

In February, a national public opinion poll found that only 16% of Americans said democracy is working well in the United States.<sup>3</sup> A separate poll this year from the Pew Research Center details larger political divisions in the nation compared with other developed countries, including 59% of Americans who say people can’t even agree on basic facts today.<sup>4</sup>

Michigan, too, has experienced many extraordinary political events over the course of the past year, including a planned kidnapping of the Governor, significant and hostile disputes at local school and government board meetings over COVID-19–related statewide restrictions and mask mandates, an election during the pandemic and subsequent controversies surrounding its certification, and more.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, it is not only national-level events that are placing severe stresses on the health of the American political system, but ones specific to Michigan as well.

Over the past decade, the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) has explored local leaders’ views on many issues related to the functioning of democracy, from civic engagement, to civil civic discourse, trust in government, relationships between jurisdictions and the state, evaluations of policymaker performance, and much more. In addition, the Spring 2020 MPPS introduced a new, overarching question to local leaders about their assessments of the current functioning of democracy that combined many of these issues into one index-style metric.<sup>6</sup> For that question, the functioning of democracy was defined to include basic issues such as “...free and fair elections, rule of law, an unbiased free press, balanced relationships between levels and branches of government, ethical and transparent governance, an informed and engaged electorate, etc.” This question was repeated in spring 2021, to see how local officials’ views on democracy have changed in the past year, and the following report details how their optimism has eroded.

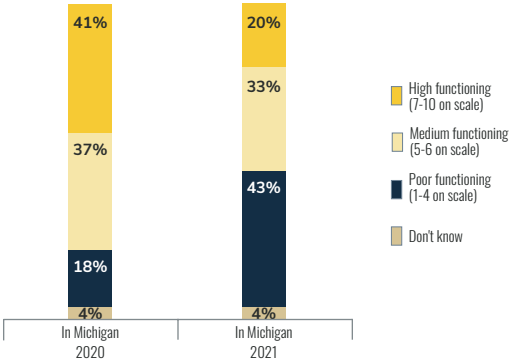
# Local officials' ratings of democracy in Michigan drop sharply from last year

The spring 2021 MPPS survey finds a sharp decline in local leaders' assessments of the functioning of democracy across Michigan overall, compared with findings from spring 2020.

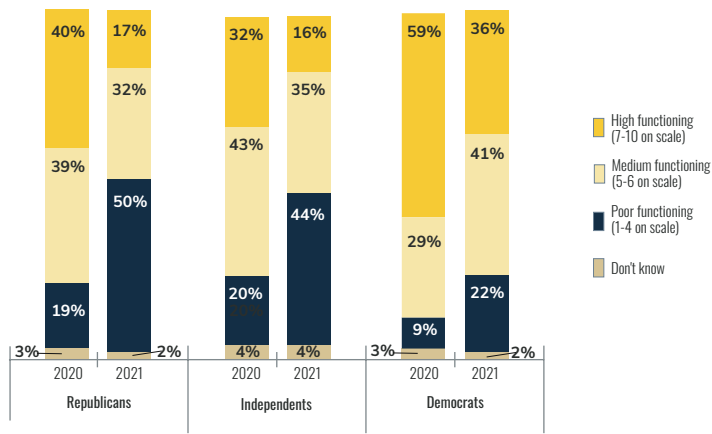
In the spring of 2020, the MPPS introduced a ten point "functioning of democracy" scale, where one equals a total breakdown of democracy and ten means a perfectly functioning democracy. As shown in *Figure 1a*, the percent of local officials rating the functioning of democracy at the state level at a seven or higher (i.e., high functioning) dropped from 41% in 2020 to 20% in 2021, while the percent rating it at a four or lower (i.e., poor functioning) rose from 18% to 43%. Furthermore, the percent of the state's local officials who rate democracy across Michigan as a one—that is, a complete breakdown in democracy—rose from 3% in 2020 to 11% today (see *Appendix A*).

There are significant partisan differences in these assessments. Among local officials who self-identify as Republicans, only 17% give high ratings to the functioning of democracy at the state level in 2021, while 50% give poor ratings, markedly worse from a year ago (see *Figure 1b*). This includes 16% who say there is a total breakdown of democracy in the state, up sharply from 2% in 2020. Independents also give low and sharply worse marks today compared with last year for the functioning of Michigan's democracy, with 16% rating it as high, while 44% rate it at as poor, including 5% who say there is a total breakdown (unchanged from 2020). Ratings among local leaders who identify as Democrats declined as well, with 36% rating democracy across Michigan at seven or higher in 2021, down significantly from 59% in 2020. Meanwhile, 22% of Democrats rate the current functioning of democracy across Michigan as poor, more than double the 9% who said the same last year.

**Figure 1a**  
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy across Michigan, 2020 vs. 2021



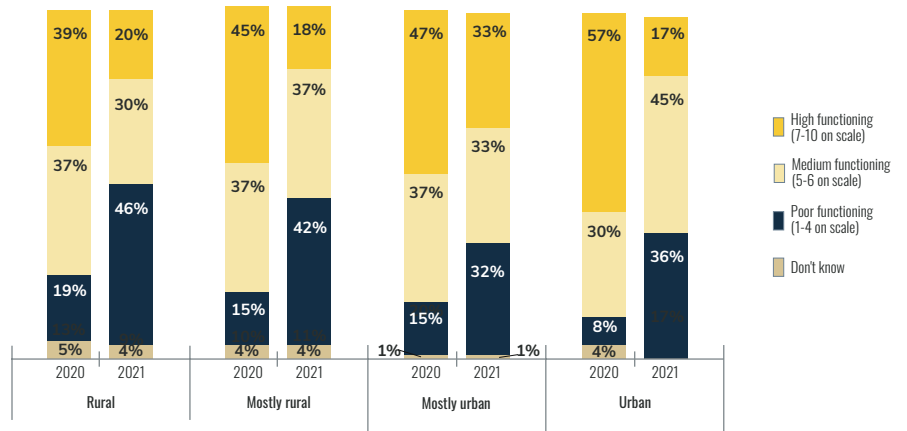
**Figure 1b**  
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy across Michigan, 2020 vs. 2021, by respondents' partisan identification



Note: This figure has been revised and corrected from the original publication version. Please contact CLOSUP for more information.

Assessments of the functioning of Michigan’s democracy declined among local leaders across the urban-rural spectrum, but particularly in urban jurisdictions. As shown in *Figure 1c*, among officials from urban places, high ratings for Michigan’s democracy declined from 57% in 2020 to just 17% in 2021, while poor ratings rose from 8% to 36%. Meanwhile, local officials who describe their jurisdiction as rural or mostly rural are the most likely to currently rate Michigan’s democracy as poor (i.e., at four or lower on the ten-point scale). By comparison, officials who describe their jurisdiction as “mostly urban” give the highest ratings to the functioning of democracy at the state level today. Even so, only a third (33%) of them rate it as high in 2021, and 32% rate it as poor.

**Figure 1c**  
Local officials’ assessments of the functioning of democracy across Michigan, 2020 vs. 2021, by urban-rural self-identification

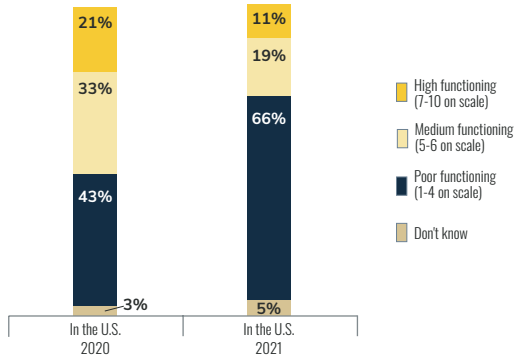


# Concerns over U.S. democracy also climb, with two-thirds rating it poorly

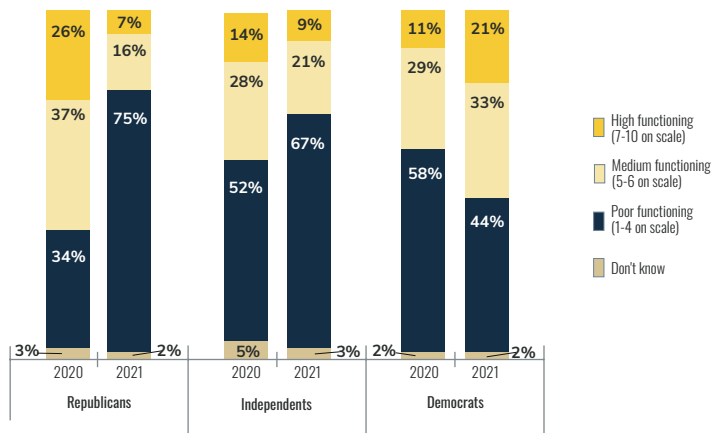
Michigan local officials' ratings of the functioning of democracy across the U.S. overall were already low in 2020, with just 21% rating it at seven or higher, and 43% rating it at four or lower (see *Figure 2a*). In 2021, these ratings sank even further with just 11% rating the functioning of U.S. democracy as high, and two thirds (66%) rating it as poor. Alarming, the percent of local officials who believe there is a complete breakdown of democracy at the federal level (i.e., a "one" on the ten-point scale) rose from 7% in 2020 to 23% in 2021 (see *Appendix B*).

Partisanship again correlates strongly with these evaluations. Between the 2020 and 2021 waves of the MPPS, control of the presidency flipped parties from Republican to Democratic, and Michigan local leaders' evaluations mirrored this change. As shown in *Figure 2b*, Republican local officials' assessments dropped from 26% rating the functioning of the nation's democracy highly in 2020 to just 7% feeling the same way in 2021, while the percentage rating it poorly more than doubled from 34% to 75%. This includes 29% who say there has been a total breakdown of democracy across the U.S., up from 4% in 2020. Democratic local leaders' views flipped in the opposite direction, with higher ratings of the nation's democracy in 2021 than in 2020. Meanwhile, Independent local leaders' views changed less, but followed the same pattern as with Republicans, with lower ratings today than last year.

**Figure 2a**  
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy across the U.S., 2020 vs. 2021

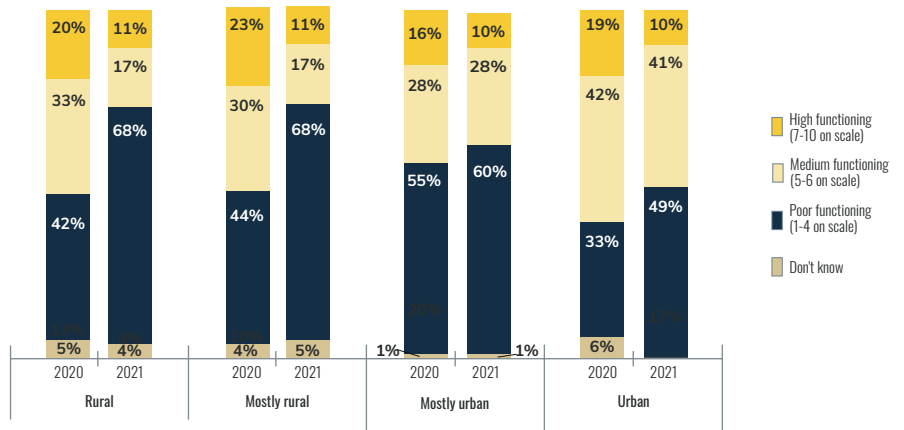


**Figure 2b**  
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy across the U.S., 2020 vs. 2021, by respondents' partisan identification



Whether urban, rural, or anything in between, local leaders' assessments of the functioning of U.S. democracy declined in all types of Michigan communities between 2020 and 2021. Nonetheless, there are still significant differences, with leaders from rural communities more likely to rate U.S. democracy poorly today compared with their urban counterparts, at 68% and 49%, respectively (see *Figure 2c*).

**Figure 2c**  
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy across the U.S., 2020 vs. 2021, by urban-rural self-identification

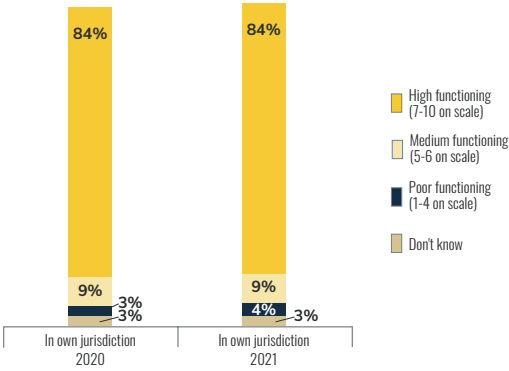


# Broad consensus among Michigan local officials that democracy is functioning well at the local level

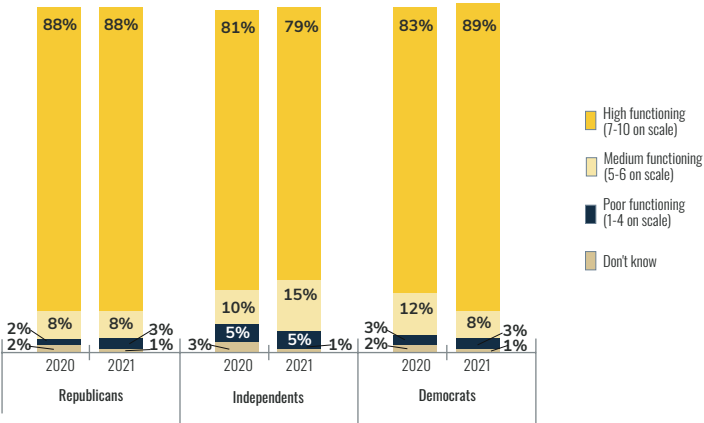
By contrast to the sharply growing concerns about the functioning of democracy in Michigan and the U.S. overall, local officials' assessments of the functioning of local democracy in their own jurisdiction are high and essentially unchanged since 2020. A large majority (84%) rated the functioning of democracy at seven or higher on the ten-point scale in both 2020 and 2021 (see *Figure 3a*). For more detail, see *Appendix C*.

Although partisanship is strongly correlated with assessments of democracy at the state and federal levels, it is not similarly correlated with assessments of local democracy. Michigan's local officials across the partisan spectrum agree that democracy is functioning well in their own jurisdictions. As shown in *Figure 3b*, just 5% of Independents, 3% of Democrats, and 3% of Republicans rate the functioning of democracy in their own jurisdictions as poor (a four or lower on the ten-point scale). Meanwhile, significant majorities from each partisan category consider their jurisdictions to have highly functioning democracy (scores of 7-10 on the scale), although Republicans (88%) and Democrats (89%) are somewhat more likely to give their jurisdictions these high ratings on the state of local democracy compared to independents (79%). Compared to 2020, Republican's assessments were essentially unchanged, while Democrats assessments improved somewhat (up from 83% giving high ratings in 2020) and Independents declined slightly (down from 81%).

**Figure 3a**  
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy in their jurisdictions, 2020 vs. 2021

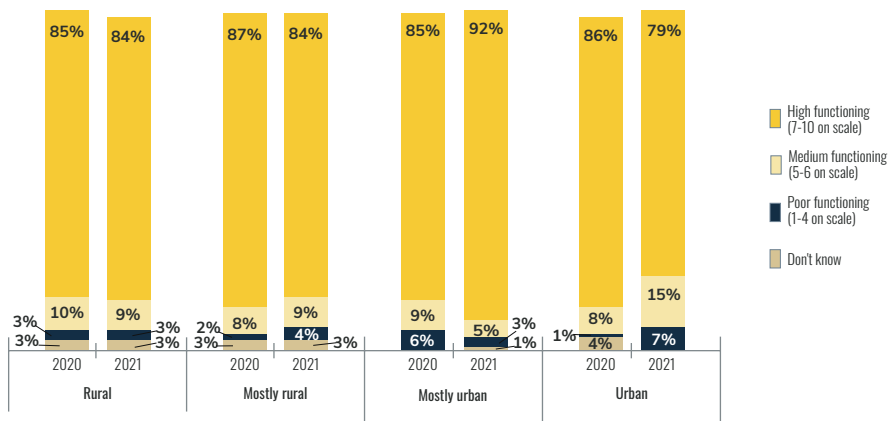


**Figure 3b**  
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy in their jurisdictions, 2020 vs. 2021, by respondents' partisan identification



Across the urban-rural spectrum, only leaders from communities self-identified as “mostly urban” reported increasing confidence in the functioning of local democracy between 2020 and 2021, with high ratings increasing from 85% to 92% (see *Figure 3c*).

**Figure 3c**  
Local officials' assessments of the functioning of democracy in their jurisdictions, 2020 vs. 2021, by urban-rural self-identification





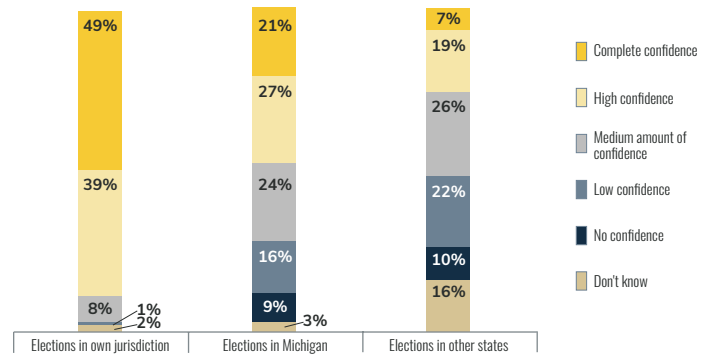
## Same patterns hold for confidence in elections: high for local elections, but doubts about those in other Michigan jurisdictions and in other states

A high-functioning democracy depends on many factors, particularly its elections. Yet the last year has been dominated by arguments about elections across the country. Despite repeated studies demonstrating the reliability of American elections and remarkably low levels of voting fraud,<sup>7</sup> the MPPS finds increasing doubts among local leaders regarding elections in places other than their own jurisdiction. By contrast, their confidence is quite high in their own elections.

This confidence in elections mirrors the findings about the overall functioning of democracy across the local, state, and federal levels. As seen in *Figure 4*, local officials from 88% of Michigan jurisdictions express complete (49%) or high (39%) confidence in their own jurisdiction's elections, and just 1% report low or no confidence. This is consistent with past findings from the MPPS, including surveys of overall jurisdictional leaders such as city mayors and managers, county board chairs and administrators, township supervisors, and village presidents, as well as surveys of the local government clerks who actually run elections.<sup>8</sup>

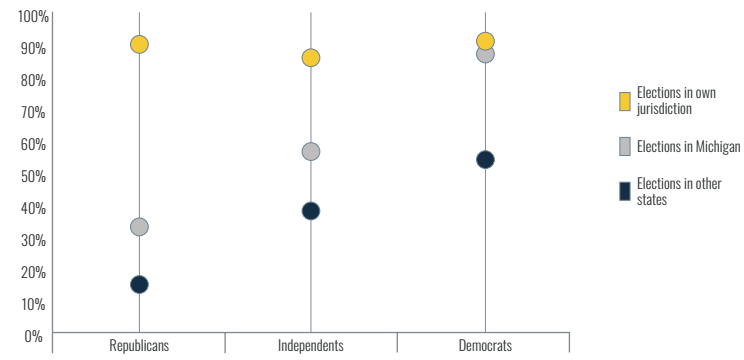
However, many local officials have lower levels of confidence in elections in Michigan overall, or in elections in other states. For elections in other Michigan jurisdictions, fewer than half (48%) of local leaders currently have complete (21%) or high (27%) confidence, while 25% report low (16%) or no (9%) confidence. When considering elections in other states, confidence drops even further, with just over a quarter (26%) reporting complete (7%) or high (19%) confidence, and 32% reporting low (22%) or no (10%) confidence.

**Figure 4**  
Local officials' confidence in elections in their own jurisdictions, in other Michigan jurisdictions, and in other states, 2021



Partisanship plays an important role here once again. While local officials across the partisan spectrum report high or complete confidence in their own jurisdictions' elections—as with the broader assessment of the functioning of democracy overall—there are significant partisan differences when evaluating elections in other jurisdictions in Michigan and in other states. For elections across Michigan overall, just 33% of Republicans have complete or high confidence, compared to 57% of Independents and 87% of Democrats (see *Figure 5*). When considering elections in other states, confidence drops substantially across all partisan groups, but Republican officials remain the most pessimistic, with just 15% reporting complete or high confidence, compared to 38% of Independents and 54% of Democrats.

**Figure 5**  
Percent of officials with high or complete confidence in elections, by partisan identification



## Conclusion

Since spring 2020, Michigan local leaders' assessments of the functioning of democracy across Michigan and the U.S. have worsened significantly. Alarming, 11% of local leaders say there has been a total breakdown of democracy at the state level, and 23% say this about American democracy at the federal level. However, there are large differences in these views correlated with the local officials' partisan identification, with Democrats generally giving higher ratings to the functioning of democracy in Michigan and nationwide, compared to Independents and Republicans. Meanwhile, local officials across the state are generally in agreement that democracy is still functioning very well in their own jurisdictions.

Concerns about the overall state of democracy are mirrored in local officials' confidence in elections in Michigan and in other states, although, again, local officials also have high confidence in elections in their own jurisdiction. But while confidence in local elections is heartening, the rapid deterioration in assessments of both elections and general democratic health at the state and national levels is a concerning sign.

## Notes

1. Horner, D. & Ivacko, T. (2020, October). Michigan local leaders say local democracy is strong, as their trust in government and citizens rises. Ann Arbor: Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy. Retrieved from <https://closup.umich.edu/sites/closup/files/uploads/mpps-democracy-and-trust-2020.pdf>
2. The Economist Intelligence Unit. (2021). Democracy Index 2020: In Sickness and In Health? *The Economist*. Retrieved from <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2020>
3. Sloan, S. & Beaumont, T. (2021, February 8). Few in US say democracy is working very well. *AP-NORC Center*. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/article/ap-norc-poll-us-democracy-403434c2e728e42a955c72a652a59318>
4. Connaughton, A. (2021, October 13). Americans see stronger societal conflicts than people in other advanced economies. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/10/13/americans-see-stronger-societal-conflicts-than-people-in-other-advanced-economies/>
5. Oliver, J. (2020, December 31). MI Year In Review: Coronavirus, Kidnapping Plot, A 500-Year Flood. *Patch*. Retrieved from <https://patch.com/michigan/detroit/mi-year-review-coronavirus-kidnapping-plot-500-year-flood>
6. Horner, D. & Ivacko, T. (2020, October).
7. Panetta, G. (2020, November 11). Americans are more likely to be struck by lightning than commit election fraud. *Business Insider*. Retrieved from <https://www.businessinsider.com/voter-election-fraud-statistics-rare-president-biden-trump-2020-2020-11>
8. Fitzpatrick, N., Horner, D. & Ivacko, T. (2020, October). Michigan local leaders expect increased challenges for the 2020 election, but are confident about administering accurate elections. Ann Arbor: Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy. Retrieved from <https://closup.umich.edu/sites/closup/files/uploads/mpps-election-administration-2020.pdf>



## Survey Background and Methodology

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Appendix A

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

	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	16%	5%	3%	11%
2	12%	9%	4%	10%
3	10%	13%	5%	10%
4	12%	17%	10%	12%
5	19%	24%	23%	20%
6	13%	11%	18%	13%
7	10%	10%	19%	11%
8	4%	3%	10%	5%
9	2%	2%	5%	3%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	1%	1%	2%	1%
Don't know	2%	4%	2%	4%

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

	Rural	Mostly rural	Mostly urban	Urban	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	15%	10%	2%	2%	11%
2	9%	11%	7%	9%	10%
3	9%	9%	16%	9%	10%
4	13%	12%	7%	16%	12%
5	17%	23%	21%	27%	20%
6	13%	14%	12%	18%	13%
7	10%	9%	26%	13%	11%
8	5%	6%	5%	3%	5%
9	4%	2%	1%	1%	3%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Don't know	4%	4%	1%	0%	4%



# Appendix B

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

	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	29%	18%	8%	23%
2	19%	21%	12%	16%
3	16%	18%	15%	16%
4	12%	11%	9%	11%
5	10%	14%	20%	12%
6	6%	7%	13%	7%
7	3%	5%	11%	5%
8	2%	3%	8%	3%
9	2%	0%	1%	2%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	1%	1%	1%	1%
Don't know	2%	3%	2%	5%

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

	Rural	Mostly rural	Mostly urban	Urban	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	24%	25%	16%	9%	23%
2	17%	16%	16%	18%	16%
3	16%	17%	14%	13%	16%
4	11%	10%	14%	9%	11%
5	11%	11%	17%	17%	12%
6	6%	6%	11%	24%	7%
7	4%	6%	6%	9%	5%
8	4%	3%	2%	1%	3%
9	2%	2%	1%	0%	2%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Don't know	4%	5%	1%	0%	5%

## Appendix C

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

	Republicans	Independents	Democrats	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	0%	1%	0%	0%
2	1%	0%	0%	1%
3	1%	2%	0%	1%
4	1%	2%	3%	2%
5	4%	8%	4%	5%
6	4%	7%	4%	4%
7	13%	22%	17%	14%
8	28%	29%	26%	26%
9	30%	16%	26%	28%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	17%	12%	20%	16%
Don't know	1%	1%	1%	3%

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

	Rural	Mostly rural	Mostly urban	Urban	Total Statewide
1: Total breakdown of democracy	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
3	1%	1%	0%	3%	1%
4	1%	2%	3%	4%	2%
5	5%	5%	2%	9%	5%
6	4%	4%	3%	6%	4%
7	13%	14%	23%	18%	14%
8	24%	27%	30%	31%	26%
9	27%	31%	26%	19%	28%
10: Perfectly functioning democracy	20%	12%	13%	11%	16%
Don't know	3%	3%	1%	0%	3%



## Previous MPPS reports

- 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>

University of Michigan

**Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy**

**Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy**

Joan and Sanford Weill Hall

735 S. State Street, Suite 5310

Ann Arbor, MI 48109-3091

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.

web: [www.closup.umich.edu](http://www.closup.umich.edu)

email: [closup@umich.edu](mailto:closup@umich.edu)

twitter: @closup

phone: 734-647-4091



---

**Regents of the University of Michigan**

**Jordan B. Acker**  
Huntington Woods

**Michael J. Behm**  
Grand Blanc

**Mark J. Bernstein**  
Ann Arbor

**Paul W. Brown**  
Ann Arbor

**Sarah Hubbard**  
Okemos

**Denise Ilitch**  
Bingham Farms

**Ron Weiser**  
Ann Arbor

**Katherine E. White**  
Ann Arbor

**Mark S. Schlissel**  
(ex officio)