



Michigan local governments highly confident in election integrity, wary of disinformation

By Debra Horner and Stephanie Leiser

This report presents the opinions of Michigan's township and city leaders on issues related to election administration in their jurisdictions, including confidence in overall accurate election administration and expected problems their jurisdictions might encounter. These findings are based on statewide surveys of local government leaders in the spring 2026 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS), conducted between March 30 and June 9, 2026—prior to the August 2026 primary. It also contains comparisons to opinions expressed in the 2020 and 2022 MPPS waves.

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 2026 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 1,328 jurisdictions across the state.



Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

 Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy

Key Findings

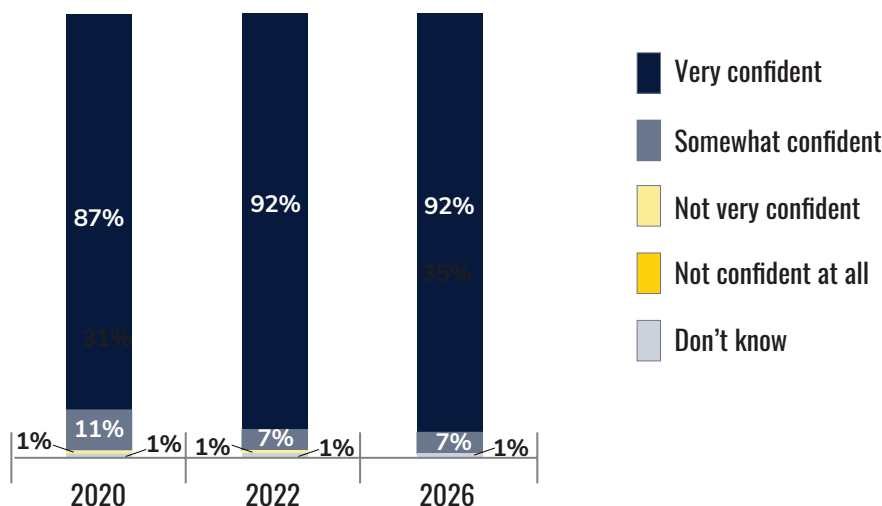
- When asked in spring 2026 about the upcoming November election, Michigan township and city officials remain very confident in local election administration. Overall, 92% are very confident in their jurisdiction's ability to administer an accurate election in November 2026, unchanged from 2022 and up from 87% in 2020.
 - » Among township and city clerks, who are most directly responsible for election administration, 95% are "very confident" in their jurisdiction's ability to conduct elections accurately, compared with 91% of township supervisors, city mayors, and managers.
 - » Confidence in local election administration is consistently high across jurisdiction sizes and similar among Republican, Democratic, and Independent local officials. Across every partisan group, just 1% or fewer say that they are "not very" or "not at all" confident in their jurisdiction's ability to administer an accurate election this fall.
 - » Despite overwhelming confidence in local governments' ability to conduct elections, only two-thirds (65%) of local officials believe their *residents* are "very confident" in the accuracy of elections in their community. However, this is a substantial increase from the 52% who said the same about their residents in 2022.
- Nearly half of townships and cities statewide (49%) report that election costs are a problem for their jurisdiction's budget, up from 41% who said the same in 2020. Costs are a problem for jurisdictions of all sizes, from the smallest townships to the largest cities.
 - » Concerns regarding other potential problems with election administration, such as recruiting poll workers or technical issues like equipment malfunctions or inaccurate voter registration lists, have generally decreased or stayed the same since 2022.
 - » However, a growing share of officials from the state's larger jurisdictions (43%) predict problems with intentional disinformation targeted at local voters about voting procedures or other election issues.
 - » When it comes to election security, three-quarters say that the security of their jurisdiction's voting equipment (75%) and voting data and records such as absentee ballots and voter information (76%) is "not a problem at all," while only 1% predict security will be a significant problem for their jurisdiction.

Michigan township and city officials have consistently high confidence in their ability to conduct accurate elections

Nearly all township and city officials statewide (99%) are confident in their jurisdiction's ability to administer an accurate election, including 92% who are "very confident" (see *Figure 1a*). This is consistent with 2022 and up from the 2020 election conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when 87% were still "very confident."

Figure 1a

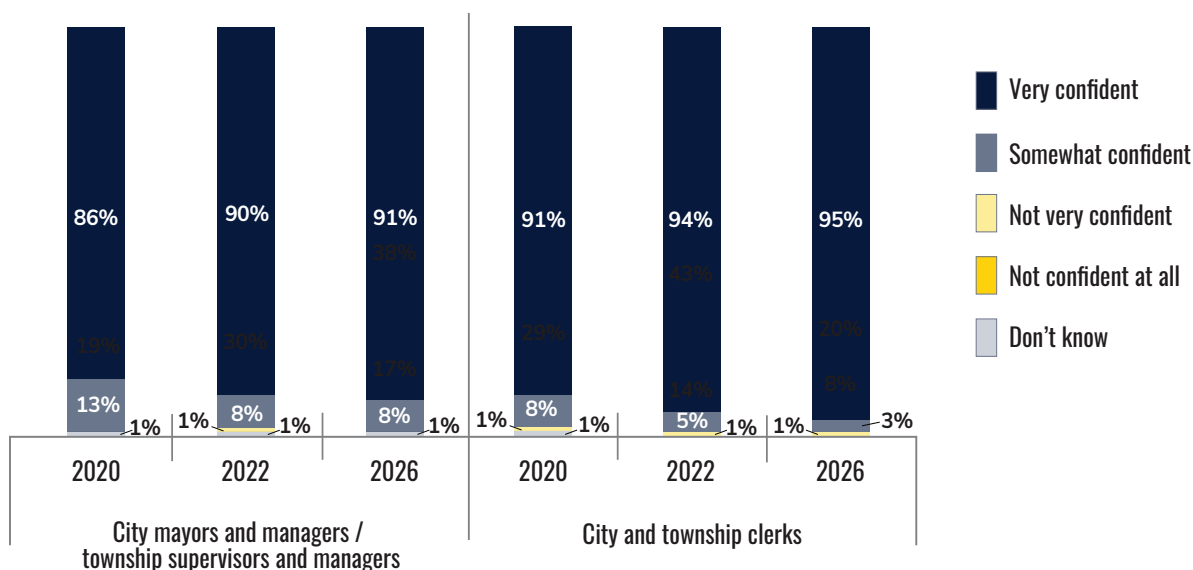
Local officials' confidence in their township's or city's ability to administer an accurate election, 2020-2026



City and township clerks—the local officials most directly responsible for election preparations in their jurisdictions—have even higher confidence in the accuracy of local elections than other city and township officials. Among clerks in 2026, 95% are "very confident" in their jurisdiction's ability to conduct elections accurately, compared with 91% of city mayors, township supervisors, and managers (see *Figure 1b*).

Figure 1b

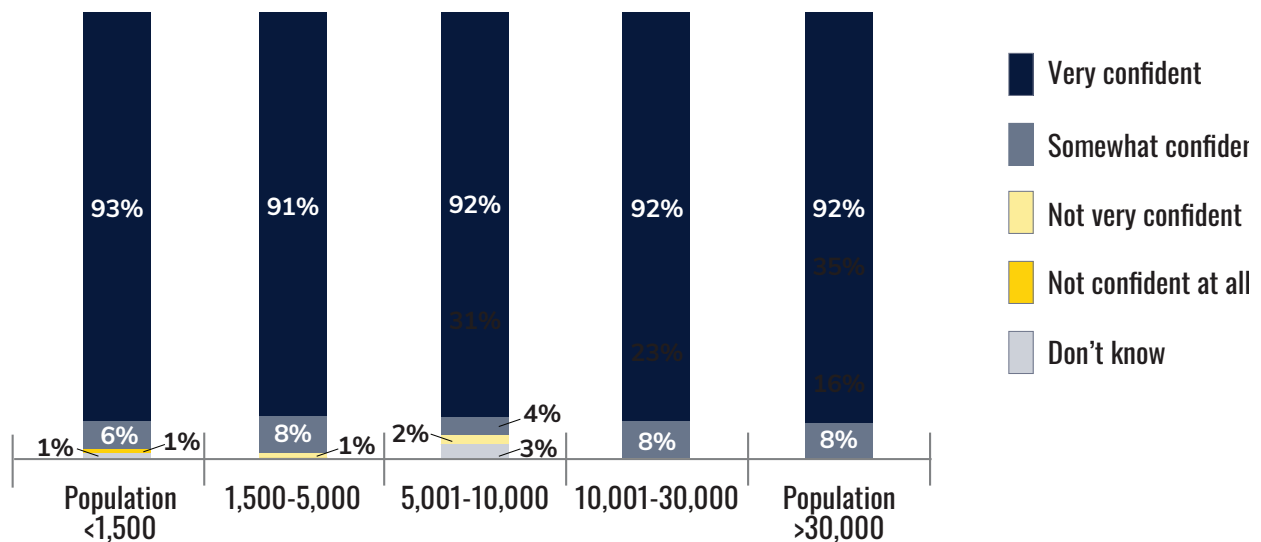
Local officials' confidence in their township's or city's ability to administer an accurate election, 2020-2026, by respondent position



Confidence in local election administration is widespread across all jurisdiction sizes. More than 90% of leaders in cities and townships from the smallest to the largest are very confident in their jurisdiction's ability to conduct an accurate election this fall (see *Figure 1c*).

Figure 1c

Local officials' confidence in their township's or city's ability to administer an accurate election, 2026, by population size

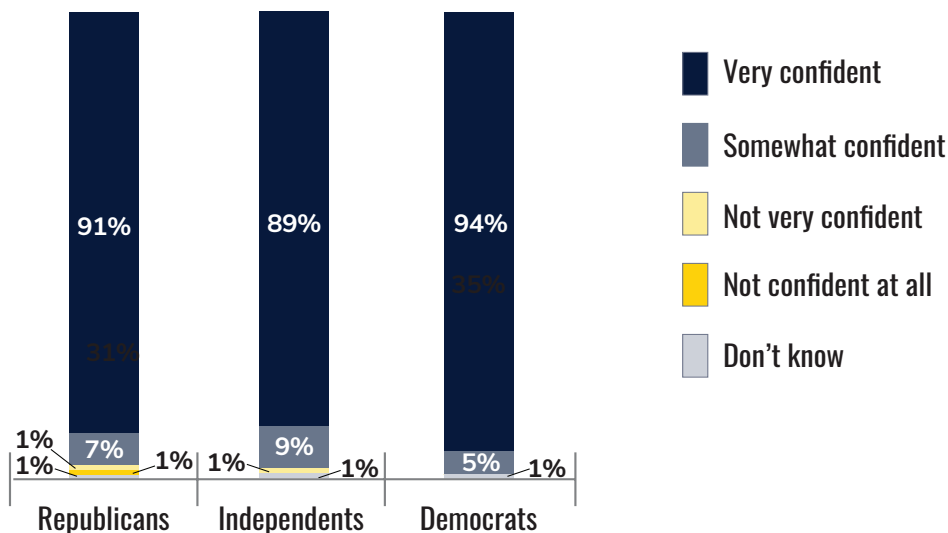


That confidence also extends across partisan lines. As shown in *Figure 1d*, township and city officials who identify themselves as Democrats on the MPPS are most likely to say they are “very” confident in their local elections (94%), but so are Republicans (91%) and Independents (89%).

Across every partisan group, no more than 1% of local officials claim that they are “not very” or “not at all” confident.

Figure 1d

Local officials' confidence in their township's or city's ability to administer an accurate election, 2026, by partisan identification

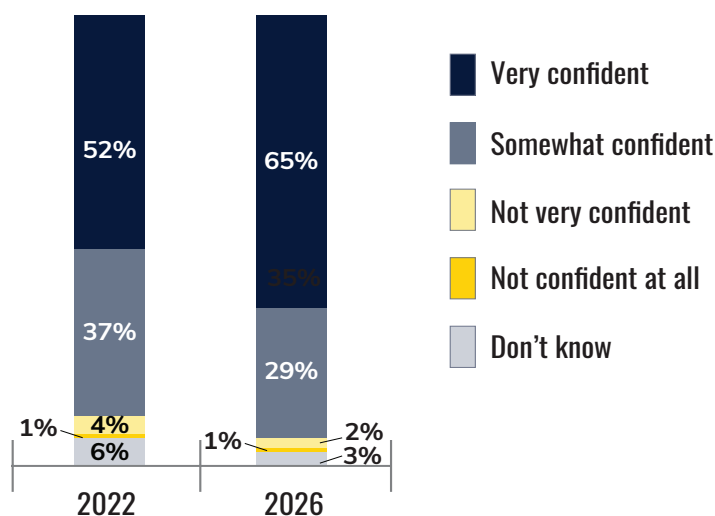


Local leaders are less certain about their residents' confidence in local elections, but optimism is higher this year

When asked about residents' confidence in local elections, around two-thirds (65%) of township and city officials statewide believe their residents are very confident in the accuracy of their jurisdiction's elections, up significantly from 52% in 2022 (see *Figure 2a*). Meanwhile, 29% believe their residents are somewhat confident, and just 3% believe they are not very confident or not at all confident.

Figure 2a

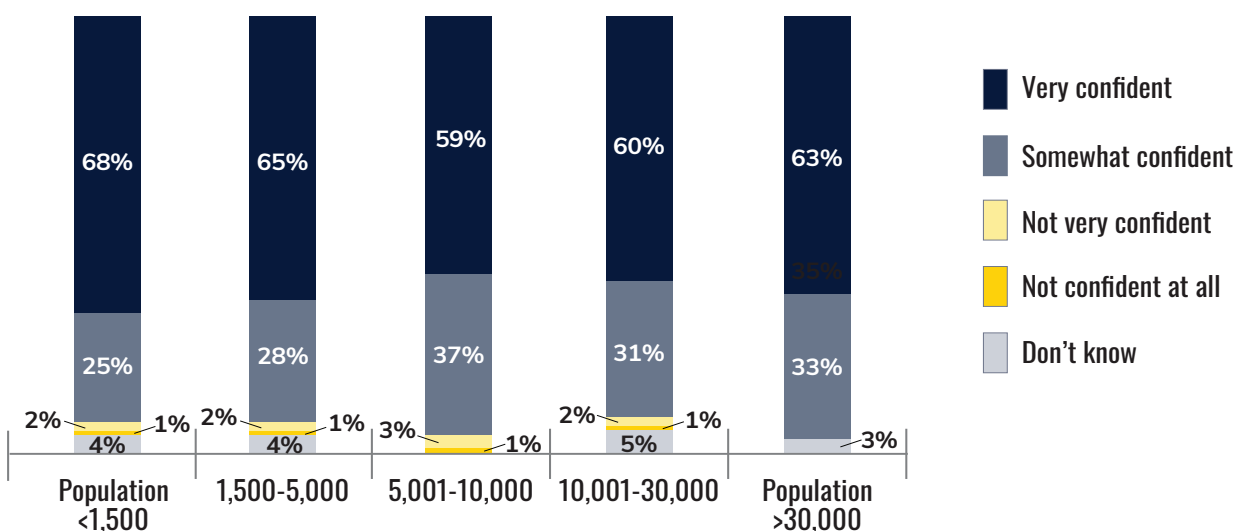
Local officials' assessments of residents' confidence in the accuracy of their township's or city's elections, 2022 vs. 2026



As shown in *Figure 2b*, officials from the state's smallest jurisdictions are the most likely to say their residents are very confident in local election accuracy (68%, up from 61% in 2022). By contrast, 59% of those from mid-sized communities with between 10,001-30,000 residents say their voters are very confident in their elections. Even so, perceptions of resident confidence have increased across communities of all sizes since 2022.

Figure 2b

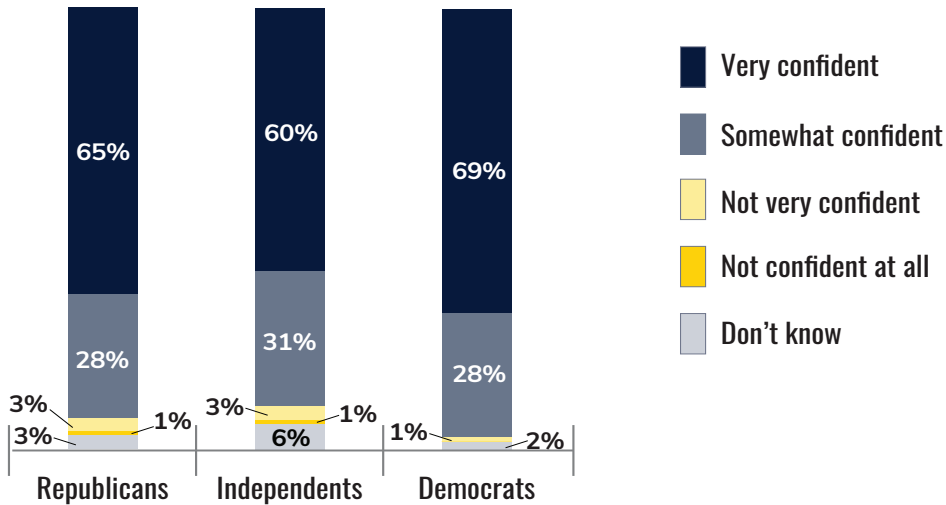
Local officials' assessments of residents' confidence in the accuracy of their township's or city's elections, 2026, by jurisdiction size





There are again relatively few differences in the perceptions of resident election confidence among local leaders of different political parties. Among Democrats, 69% believe their residents are very confident in local election accuracy, while 65% of Republicans and 60% of Independents say the same (see *Figure 2c*).

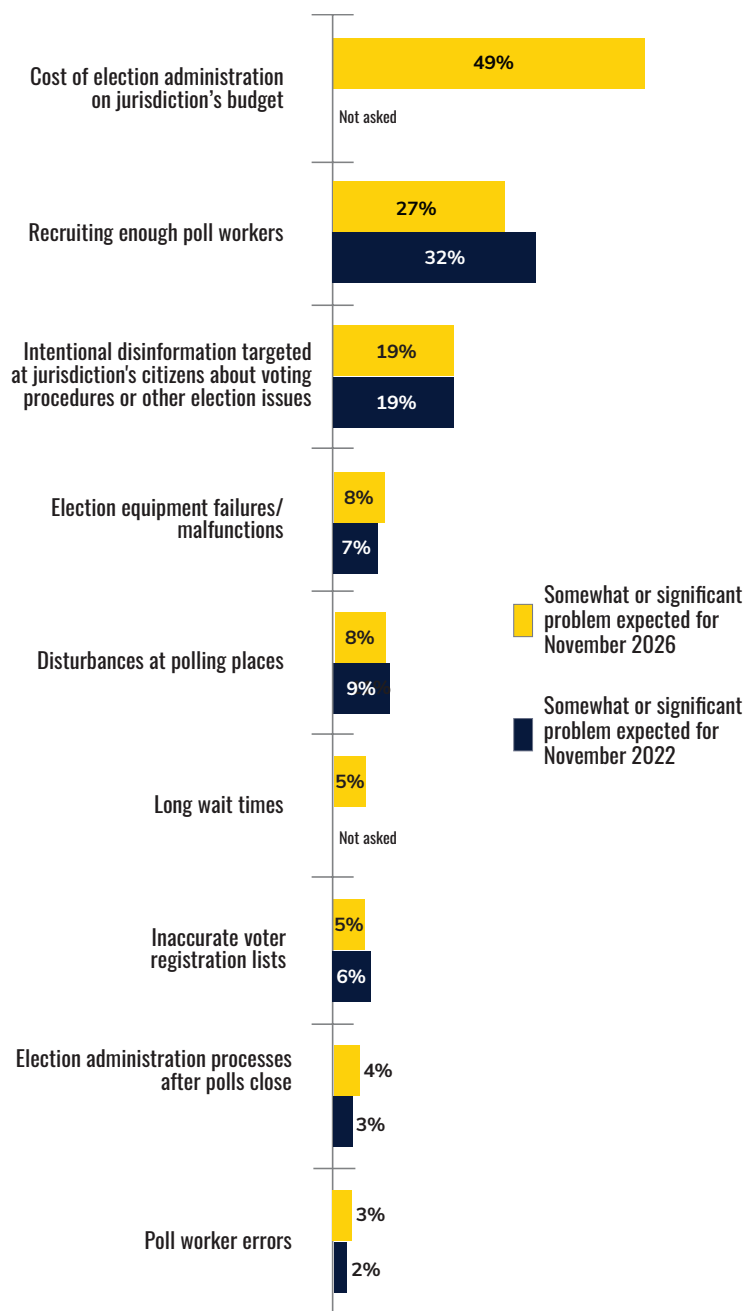
Figure 2c
Local officials' assessments of residents' confidence in the accuracy of their township's or city's elections, 2026, by partisan identification



Half of townships and cities statewide say costs are a problem; recruiting poll workers remains a challenge, but less so than in 2022

Figure 3

Local officials' assessments of expected problems with election administration in their township or city, 2022 vs. 2026



Although confidence is high about election integrity, some local leaders still expect to face problems with various aspects of administration for the upcoming November 2026 election.

In particular, as shown in *Figure 3*, around half of all townships and cities statewide (49%) say the effect of election administration costs on their budget is a somewhat (34%) or significant (15%) problem for the jurisdiction's budget. The survey did not ask about costs in 2022, but concerns about them are up from 2020, when 41% said election costs were a problem.

Concerns regarding other potential problems with election administration have generally decreased or stayed the same since 2022. For example, this year 27% of township and city officials say recruiting enough poll workers will be a somewhat or significant problem, down from 32% in 2022.

Approximately one in five jurisdictions (19%) remains concerned about intentional disinformation targeted at citizens about voting procedures or other election issues, similar to the 19% who said the same in 2022.

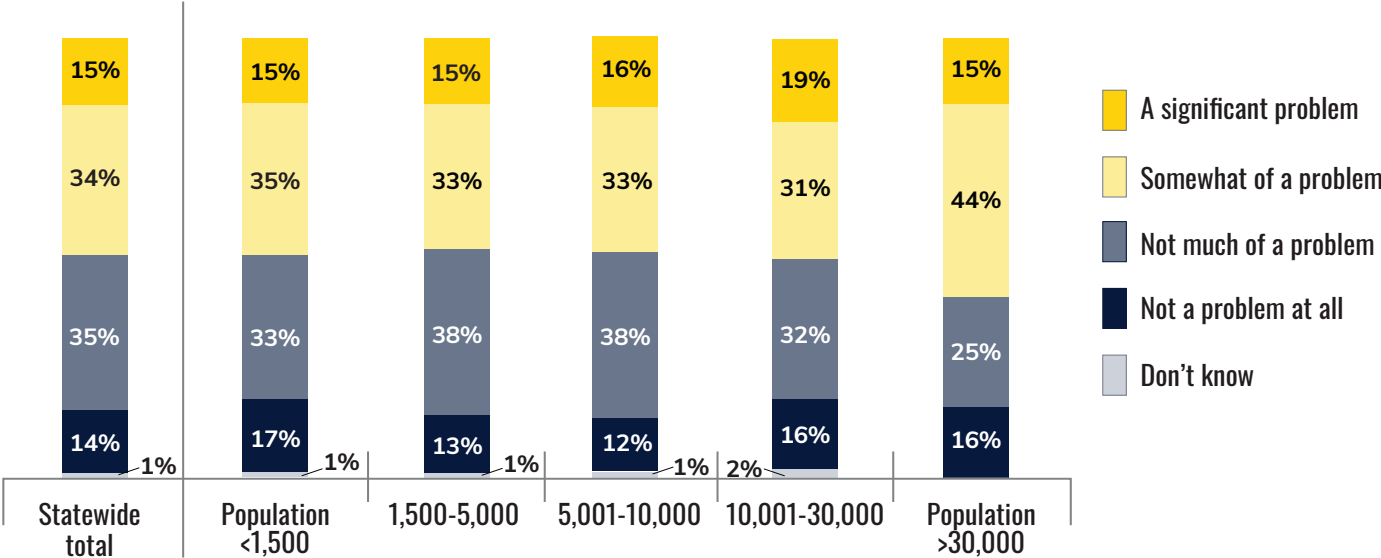
Meanwhile, fewer than 10% statewide report concerns with technical issues, such as equipment malfunctions or failures, inaccurate voter registration lists, and poll worker errors. This is relatively unchanged from 2022.



Election administration costs are a problem for townships and cities across the board

Concerns about the impact of election costs on local government budgets extend comparably from the largest to the smallest Michigan local governments. In townships and cities with more than 30,000 residents, 59% of local officials say costs will be a somewhat or significant problem for their budgets, and only 16% say costs won't be a problem at all (see Figure 4). Similarly, among communities with fewer than 1,500 residents, 50% of leaders predict costs will be a problem for their jurisdiction and, again, only 17% say they won't.

Figure 4
Local officials' expected problems with election costs in November 2026, by jurisdiction size



Larger jurisdictions are the most likely to express concerns about disinformation and disturbances at polls

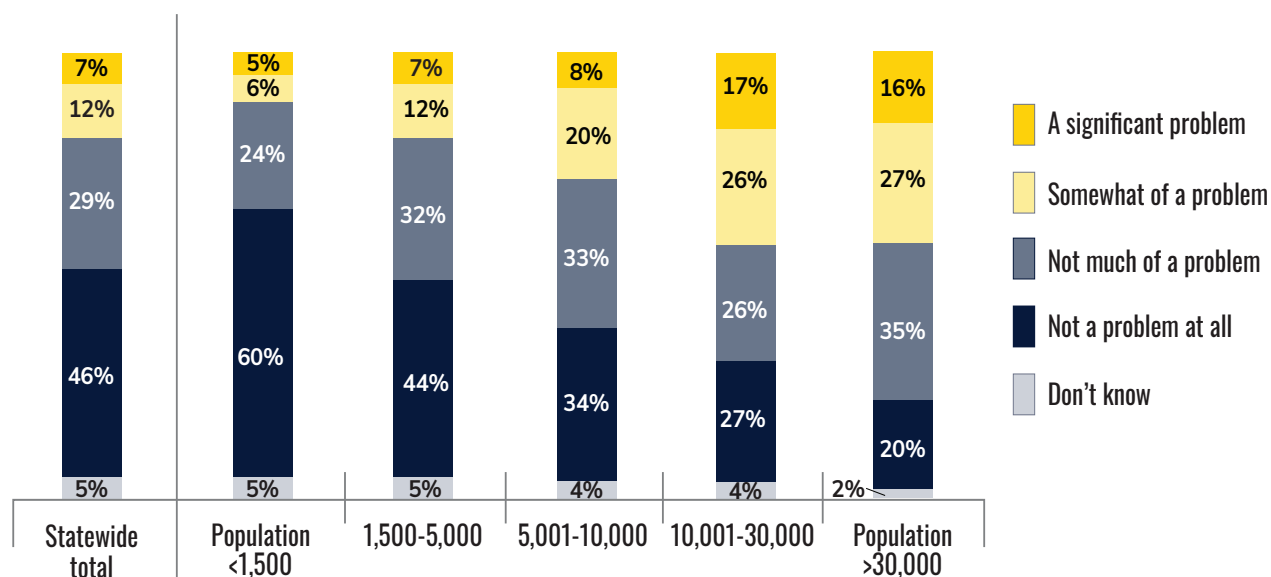
By contrast, leaders from larger jurisdictions are significantly more likely to identify intentional disinformation targeted at their jurisdiction's citizens about voting procedures or other election issues as a problem for the November general election. As shown in *Figure 5*, 43% of local officials from jurisdictions with more than 10,000 residents believe election disinformation in November 2026 will be a somewhat or significant problem. Only about a quarter of larger jurisdictions predict that election disinformation will not be a problem at all. By contrast, among the smallest jurisdictions, only 11% anticipate it will be a problem, and 60% say it won't be a problem at all.

Concerns regarding disinformation have increased among local leaders in the largest communities (43% in 2026 vs. 29% in 2022) and mid-sized communities of 10,001-30,000 (43% vs. 35%) but remained relatively stable in smaller communities.

There are also partisan differences in concerns over disinformation that persist even after accounting for jurisdiction size and other factors. Using statistical regression analysis to control for other factors, data from the MPPS show that—regardless of whether they are from a small or large jurisdiction—local leaders who identify themselves as Democrats (38%) or Independents (31%) are more likely to say disinformation will be a problem in November than Republicans are (15%).

Figure 5

Local officials' expected problems with intentional disinformation targeted at jurisdiction's citizens in November 2026, by jurisdiction size

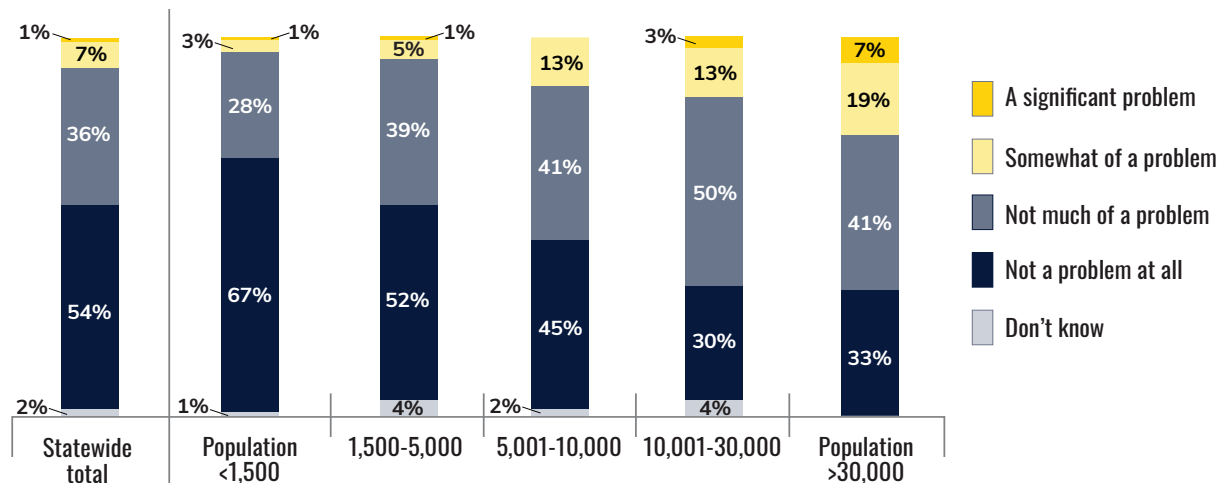


A similar, though less widespread, pattern appears for concerns about disturbances at polling places (e.g., inappropriate campaigning, voter intimidation, etc.). Over a quarter (26%) of officials from the state's largest townships and cities anticipate problems with disturbances at the polls compared with a much smaller share of officials from the smallest jurisdictions (see *Figure 6*). Meanwhile, among officials in the state's largest jurisdictions, only 33% believe disturbances will not be a problem at all in their community's elections in November. Levels of concern about disturbances at polling places in 2026 mirror those from 2022.

Similarly, regardless of jurisdiction size, Democrats (16%) and Independents (14%) are much more likely to predict disturbances will be a problem in their jurisdiction than are Republicans (5%).

Figure 6

Local officials' expected problems with disturbances at polling places in November 2026, by jurisdiction size



Local officials statewide anticipate minimal election security problems

The MPPS asked specifically about election security issues in 2020, 2022, and again in 2026.

This year, three-quarters (75%) of township and city officials say that the security of their jurisdiction's voting equipment (i.e., whether it could be tampered with or hacked) will not be a problem at all (see *Figure 7*). Only 3% statewide say it will be a somewhat (2%) or significant (1%) problem. The state's smallest jurisdictions report the highest confidence this year, with 80% saying this will not be a problem at all; 78% of officials in the largest jurisdictions say the same.

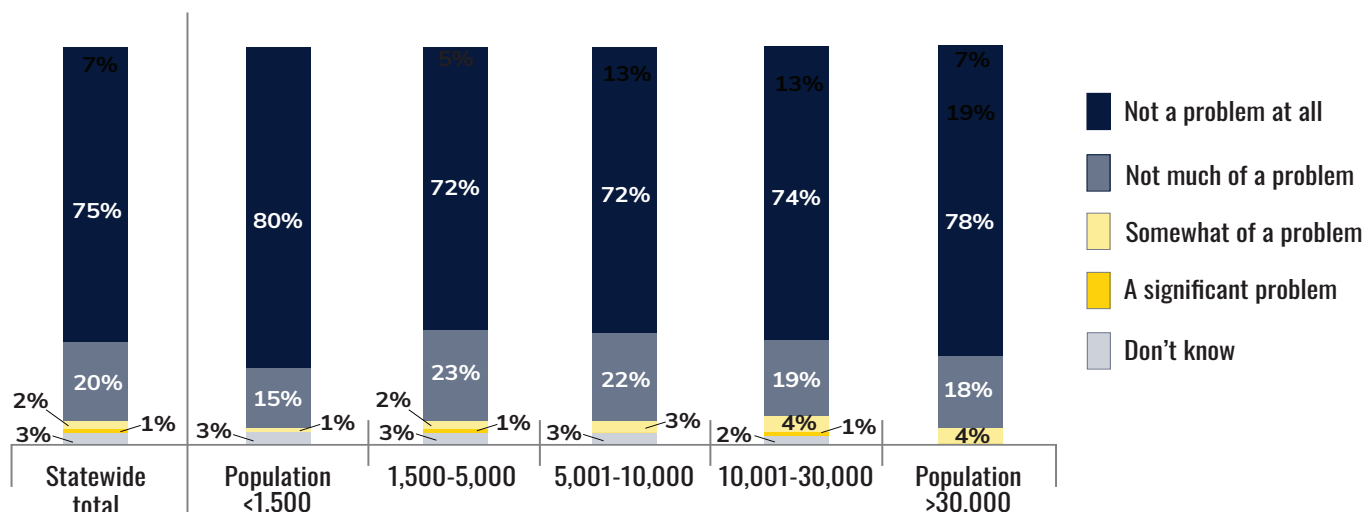
Similarly, 76% statewide report that the security of their voting data and records (e.g., absentee ballots, voter information, etc.) will not be a problem at all in November, with similarly high confidence among jurisdictions of all sizes.

There are some differences among partisans, with Democrats (83%) more likely to say that the security of both local voting equipment and records will not be a problem at all, compared with Independents (74%-76%) or Republicans (72%-74%).

These results are not substantially different from similar questions asked in 2020 and 2022.

Figure 7

Local officials' expected problems with security of jurisdiction's voting equipment in November 2026, by jurisdiction size





The MPPS asked city and township leaders to share additional feedback, experiences, and concerns regarding local election administration through an open-ended survey question. In the Spring 2026 wave, local leaders provided over 200 comments regarding their expectations for the November 2026 election in their jurisdiction. Approximately a third of these were positive comments, expressing praise for their staff and confidence in their election processes. The majority of comments are more negative, with many concerned with high costs and the lack of federal and state financial support for election administration, staffing challenges for the nine-day early voting period, and staff and volunteer turnover, as well as misinformation and low turnout among their voters. Some examples of the comments include the following:

Voices Across Michigan

Quotes from local leaders about their jurisdiction's election administration

"We work very hard at our elections and resent all the negative comments about insecure or fraudulent elections."

"The residents' lack of confidence does not necessarily stem from how the township manages and conducts elections. It is from the media coverage and negativity from other forms of government."

"I have only had a handful of residents come to question the election procedures. I invite them to come sit down with me to review the strict process we must follow. I always invite them to become one of our Inspectors. The doubt is very minimal currently. I work hard to make sure our residents feel confident in the process."

"We as a township board are very protective of our election process. Our clerk is constantly updated on elections and changes that occur. We have a secure room for our election equipment and are very proud of how our elections are handled."

"The cost to run an election is staggering. Our Clerk and his staff do a phenomenal job with all aspects of voting. I do see where a less-experienced staff could have issues."

"Finding polling places is extremely difficult with Public Schools wanting voting out of their facilities for safety reasons. Churches and other similar places that would traditionally host polls are not willing to do so for political reasons/safety. With early voting and absentee voting, the number of needed physical polling locations should be significantly reduced... even more than has recently occurred."

"Nine days of in-person voting plus mail in ballots are putting undue burdens on the townships, we have small budgets and spending so much money on elections are taking away from other programs and causes that the money had went to before."

"The nine days of early voting is an unfunded state/voter mandate. While there are some benefits to the community, the staffing costs are a burden locally. We have had to consolidate precincts in order to redirect funds to cover these costs. We worry about the shortage of clerks, retiring clerks, and attracting more people. The increasing stresses of the job are driving people away from the industry. Even finding poll workers has become more challenging."

"The rise of election misinformation and the resulting distrust in democratic systems have fundamentally shifted the landscape for municipal clerks and election officials. What was once a largely administrative, behind-the-scenes role has become a high-stakes, public-facing position that requires navigating a "hyper-partisan" environment. The combination of low pay, high workload, and constant scrutiny is leading to a crisis in retention."

Confidence in other Michigan jurisdictions' ability to conduct accurate elections varies widely by partisanship

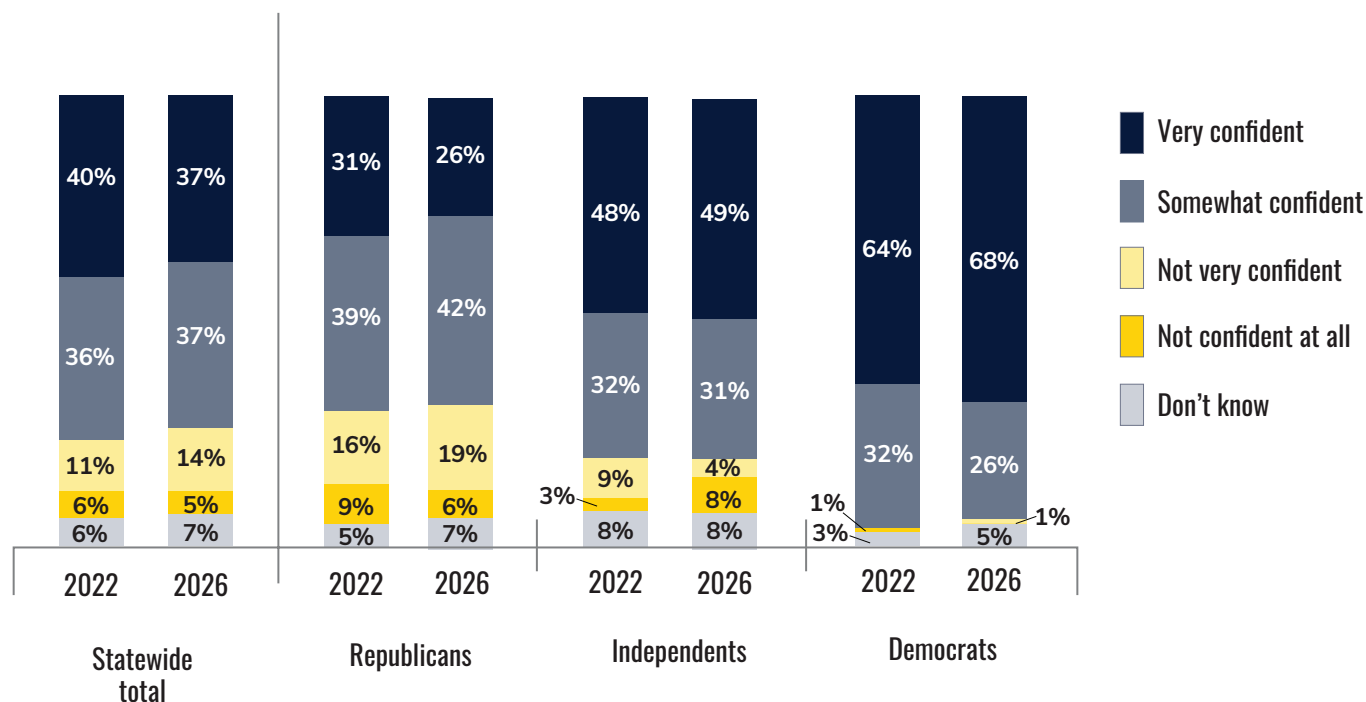
Although Michigan township and city leaders have high confidence in elections in their own jurisdictions, they are less confident in other Michigan jurisdictions' ability to administer accurate elections. This year, 74% express at least some confidence in other Michigan jurisdictions' elections, but only 37% say they are very confident, while another 37% are somewhat confident and 19% are either not very or not at all confident (see Figure 8).

Partisanship clearly plays a role in local leaders' concerns about other Michigan communities' elections. Only a quarter (26%) of local officials who self-identify as Republicans are very confident in other jurisdictions' elections, down from 31% in 2022. By comparison, around half (49%) of Independents are very confident, as are more than two-thirds (68%) of Democrats, up from 64% who said the same in 2022.

At the other end of the scale, nearly a quarter (25%) of Republican local leaders are not very confident or not confident at all in other jurisdictions' election accuracy, compared with 12% of Independents and just 1% of Democrats, essentially unchanged since 2022.

Figure 8

Local officials' confidence in other Michigan jurisdictions' ability to administer accurate elections, 2022 vs. 2026, by partisan identification





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 2026 iteration, surveys were sent by the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) online and by hard copy 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 2026 wave was conducted from March 30 – June 9, 2026. A total of 1,328 jurisdictions in the Spring 2026 wave returned valid surveys (66 counties, 225 cities, 170 villages, and 867 townships), resulting in a 72% response rate by unit. The margin of error for the

survey as a whole is +/- 1.28%. Subgroup margins of error may be larger. 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 in several ways—by jurisdiction type (county, city, township, or village); population size of the respondent's community, the region of the respondent's jurisdiction; and self-identified rural, mostly rural, mostly urban, or urban categories—will soon be available online at the MPPS homepage: <https://closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey>

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