

The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy >> University of Michigan



Michigan Local Energy
Survey September 2020

Intergovernmental collaboration on sustainability and energy issues among Michigan local governments

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This report presents the opinions of Michigan's local government leaders regarding current and potential local government collaboration on a range of sustainability and energy policies. These findings are based on statewide surveys of local government leaders conducted in the Fall 2019 Michigan Local Energy Survey (MiLES), a special wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey.

>> The Michigan Local Energy Survey (MiLES) is a census survey of all 1,856 general purpose local governments in Michigan conducted by the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) at the University of Michigan. The survey was funded by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). More information about the MiLES, including a copy of the questionnaire, is available online at: <http://closup.umich.edu/miles>. Respondents for the Fall 2019 MiLES include county administrators, board chairs, and clerks; city mayors, managers, and clerks; village presidents, managers, and clerks; and township supervisors, managers, and clerks from 1,350 jurisdictions across the state.

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Key Findings

- Over a third (38%) of Michigan local governments report they are currently collaborating with other local governments on recycling issues, while 36% do not collaborate on recycling now, but would be interested in doing so.
 - » Intergovernmental collaboration on recycling is most commonly reported by the state's larger jurisdictions, including almost half (48%) of communities with more than 10,000 residents.
 - » Even among Michigan's smallest jurisdictions, 34% currently collaborate, and only 18% have no interest in doing so.
 - » By region, recycling collaborations are most common in the Northern Lower Peninsula (55%), and least common in the Upper Peninsula (26% of jurisdictions). However, 43% of UP jurisdictions express interest in pursuing collaboration on recycling.
- On other topics, relatively few local governments statewide currently report collaborations on non-motorized or public transportation (17%), green purchasing programs (7%), or shared staffing for energy issues (3%). However, local government officials express considerable interest in pursuing these opportunities, particularly for green purchasing programs (44%).
 - » As with recycling, collaboration on these other issues is more frequently reported by larger local governments, especially jurisdictions with more than 30,000 residents among whom 42% currently collaborate on non-motorized or public transportation, 19% do so on green purchasing programs, and 8% on shared staffing for energy issues (with another 48% interested in doing so).

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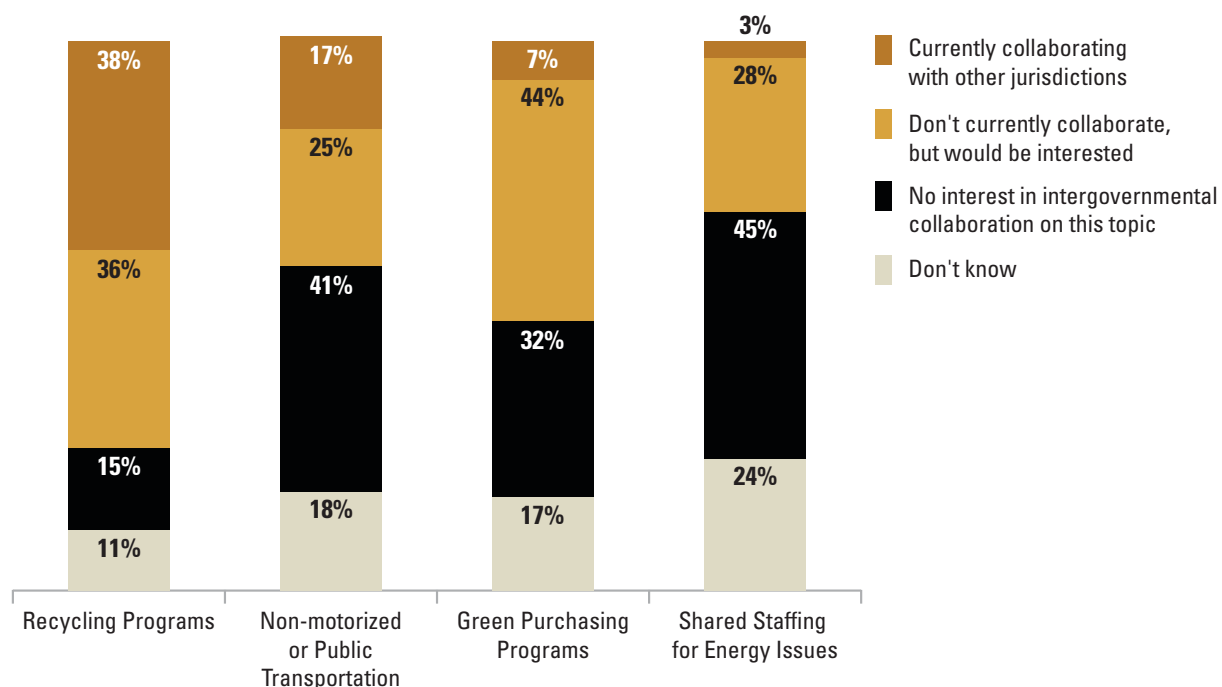
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Interest in increased collaboration varies by program

In Fall 2019, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) sponsored the Michigan Local Energy Survey (MiLES), a special wave of the ongoing Michigan Public Policy Survey, to better understand local officials' perceptions of the costs, benefits, and likelihood of engaging in sustainability activities. As part of the survey, Michigan local government leaders were asked whether their jurisdiction currently collaborates with other local governments on four specific sustainability and energy issues. In addition, those that don't currently collaborate were also asked whether they would be interested in doing so in the future.

According to local leaders, over a third (38%) of Michigan jurisdictions are currently collaborating with other local governments on recycling programs (see *Figure 1*). However, relatively few have programs with other local governments for non-motorized or public transportation (17%), green purchasing programs (7%), or shared staffing for energy issues (3%). Although most jurisdictions are not collaborating on these issues currently, the survey does find interest among many local leaders in developing such programs.

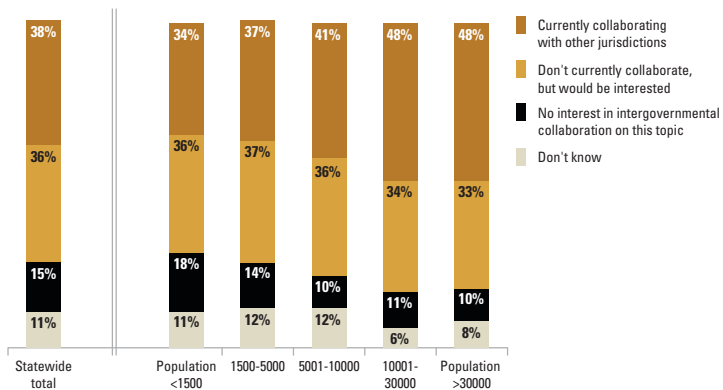
Figure 1
Percent of jurisdictions collaborating or interested in collaborating on various energy and sustainability policies





Three-quarters of Michigan's local governments collaborate or would be interested in collaborating on recycling programs

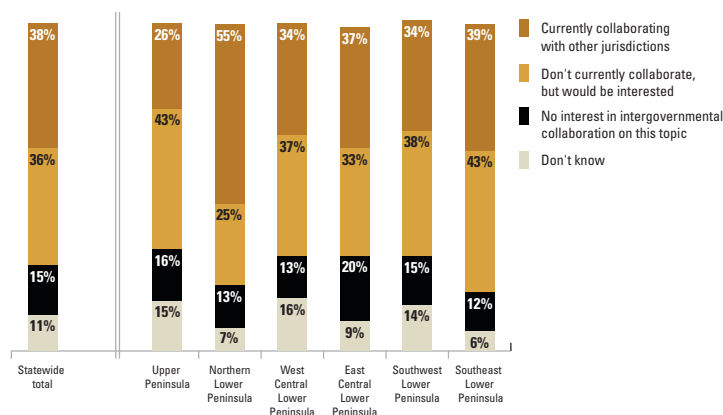
Figure 2a
Percent of jurisdictions collaborating or interested in collaborating on recycling programs, by population size



As shown above, the most common current area of collaboration out of these four issues is in recycling programs, where 38% of jurisdictions statewide say they already collaborate with other local governments (see *Figure 2a*). Another 36% say their jurisdiction doesn't currently collaborate on recycling, but would be interested in doing so. Only 15% of local jurisdictions statewide say they have no interest in intergovernmental collaboration on recycling.

Collaboration on recycling is most common in larger jurisdictions; almost half of jurisdictions with more than 10,000 residents currently collaborate on recycling with other local jurisdictions, while another 33% would be interested in doing so (see *Figure 2a*). However, even among the state's smallest jurisdictions, 34% currently collaborate, and only 18% have no interest in intergovernmental collaboration on recycling.

Figure 2b
Percent of jurisdictions collaborating or interested in collaborating on recycling programs, by region



As shown by region in *Figure 2b*, current recycling collaborations are most common by far in the Northern Lower Peninsula (55% currently collaborate), and least common in the Upper Peninsula (26% of jurisdictions). However, 43% of UP jurisdictions express interest in pursuing collaboration on recycling.

Interest in collaboration on non-motorized or public transportation is high in Michigan's larger jurisdictions

Figure 3a

Percent of jurisdictions collaborating or interested in collaborating on non-motorized or public transportation, by population size

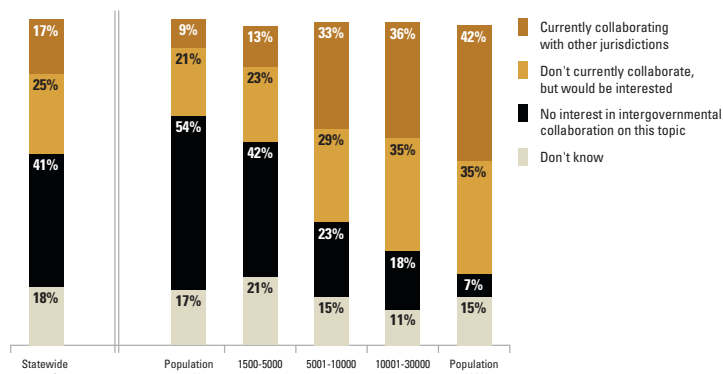
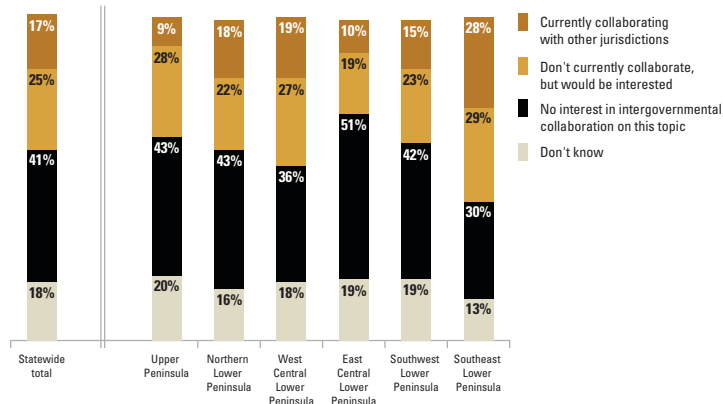


Figure 3b

Percent of jurisdictions collaborating or interested in collaborating on non-motorized or public transportation, by region



Looking at non-motorized or public transportation, 17% of jurisdictions statewide say they currently collaborate with other governments on these services, while another 25% would be interested in doing so (see *Figure 3a*).

Meanwhile, 41% report no interest in intergovernmental collaboration in this area, though another 18% are unsure.

Among larger jurisdictions, this type of collaboration is much more common than in smaller communities. While just 9% of jurisdictions with fewer than 1,500 residents, and 13% of jurisdictions with 1,500-5,000 residents, collaborate on non-motorized or public transportation, this increases to 35% of jurisdictions with 10,001-30,000 residents, and 42% of the state's largest jurisdictions with more than 30,000 residents. Additionally, while over half (54%) of the state's smallest jurisdictions say they have no interest in intergovernmental collaboration in this area, this is true of just 7% of the state's largest jurisdictions.

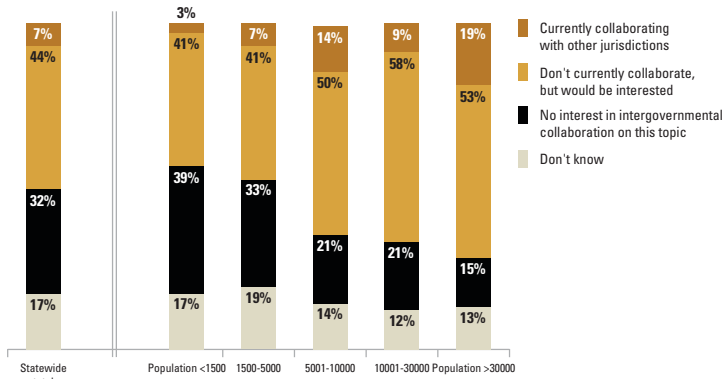
Regional differences among jurisdictions are less stark than differences based on population size. As shown in *Figure 3b*, the region with the most current collaborations on non-motorized or public transportation is Southeast Michigan (28%), while the region with the least collaboration is the Upper Peninsula (9%). Meanwhile, only 10% of jurisdictions in the East Central Lower Peninsula are currently collaborating on these services and 51% of local leaders there have no interest in such intergovernmental collaboration.



Widespread interest in expanding collaboration on green purchasing programs

Figure 4a

Percent of jurisdictions collaborating or interested in collaborating on green purchasing programs, by population size

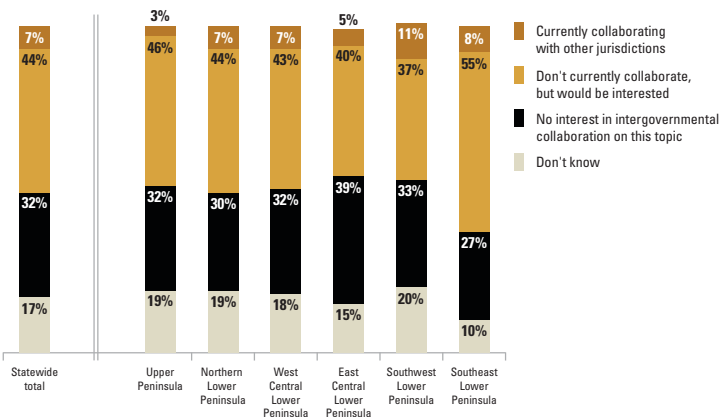


Statewide, just 7% of jurisdictions are currently collaborating on green purchasing programs (e.g., for light bulbs, cleaning supplies, energy efficient vehicles, etc.), as shown in *Figure 4a*. However, there is considerable interest in future collaboration in this area, including among 44% of jurisdictions statewide. Meanwhile, 32% say they have no interest, though another 17% are uncertain.

By population size, current collaboration on green purchasing programs is most commonly reported in the largest jurisdictions (19%), followed by mid-sized jurisdictions with 5,001-10,000 residents (14%). However, jurisdictions with 10,001-30,000 stand out as reporting fewer current collaborations (9%) compared to either the largest jurisdictions or the mid-sized jurisdictions. Only 3% of the smallest jurisdictions currently collaborate on green purchasing programs. Meanwhile, large percentages of jurisdictions of all sizes express interest in pursuing this type of collaboration, including 41% of the smallest jurisdictions.

Figure 4b

Percent of jurisdictions collaborating or interested in collaborating on green purchasing programs, by region



Regionally, there is less variation on green purchasing program collaborations compared with other topics, as seen in *Figure 4b*. While most regions of the state look similar to one another, collaborations on green purchasing programs are currently slightly more common in the Southwest Lower Peninsula (11%) than in other parts of the state. Collaboration is currently least common in the Upper Peninsula (3%), although almost half (46%) of local leaders there are interested in collaborating on green purchasing programs in the future.

Few jurisdictions collaborate on shared staffing for energy issues

Figure 5a

Percent of jurisdictions collaborating or interested in collaborating on shared staffing for energy issues, by population size

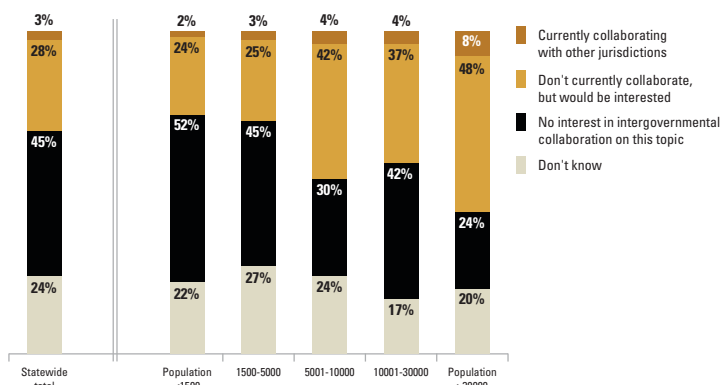
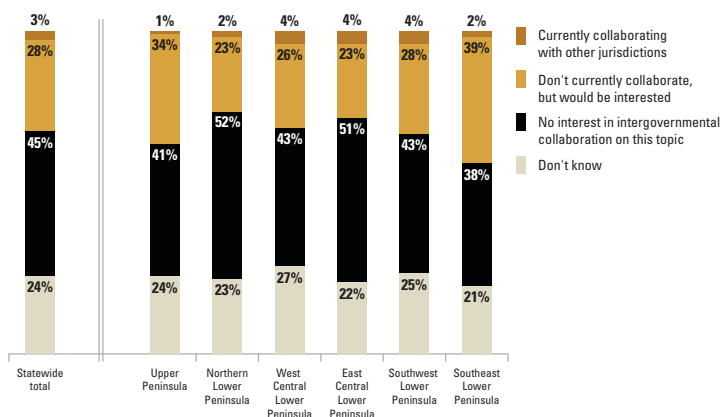


Figure 5b

Percent of jurisdictions collaborating or interested in collaborating on shared staffing for energy issues, by region



Finally, just 3% of Michigan jurisdictions currently collaborate with other local governments on shared staffing for energy issues (e.g., jointly employing a sustainability manager/coordinator), while another 28% would be interested in such collaboration (see *Figure 5a*). Meanwhile, almost half (45%) have no interest in intergovernmental collaboration on shared staffing for energy issues. There is also significant uncertainty (24%) among local officials about collaboration on such shared staffing.

As in the other areas described above, collaboration on shared energy staffing is more common in Michigan's larger jurisdictions. However, even among the state's largest jurisdictions, only 8% currently collaborate, although another 48% are interested in doing so. Meanwhile, among the smallest jurisdictions only 2% currently collaborate, while 52% have no interest in doing so.

While there are few regional differences in current collaboration on shared energy staffing, there are noticeable differences in interest for future collaboration. More than a third of jurisdictions in the Southeast and UP regions express such interest, while about half of jurisdictions in the Northern Lower Peninsula (52%) and East Central Lower Peninsula (51%) have no interest in shared staffing (see *Figure 5b*).

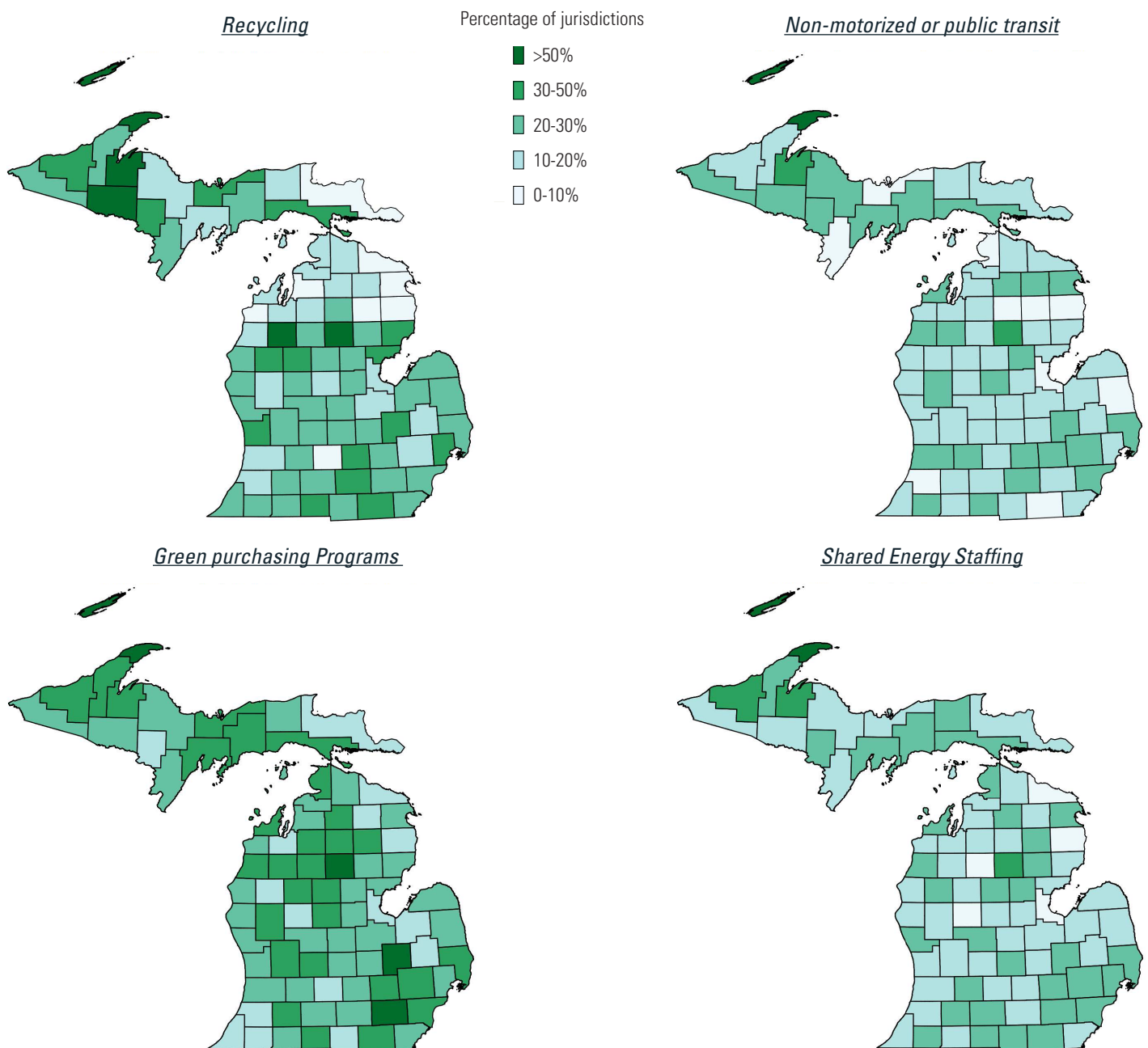


Mapping interest in new sustainability collaboration across the state

The maps in *Figure 6* display local officials' interest in new local government collaboration (among those who are not currently collaborating) on the four sustainability and energy issues, aggregated at the county level. The lighter shades show where interest in new collaboration among jurisdictions within a county is relatively low, while the darker shades indicate greater interest in collaboration. As noted earlier, interest in developing new collaborative efforts on green purchasing programs is widespread in jurisdictions across the state. In addition, local officials in many UP counties express interest in new collaboration on recycling, as do officials in a number of counties across the Lower Peninsula.

Figure 6

Percent of jurisdictions interested in (but not currently) collaborating on various issues, by county



Conclusion

Local governments often collaborate with each other on a range of sustainability and energy policies. In Michigan, collaborations on recycling programs are relatively common (38% statewide currently collaborate in this area). Fewer Michigan jurisdictions currently collaborate on non-motorized or public transportation, green purchasing programs, or shared staffing for energy issues. However, many local leaders express interest in pursuing these types of collaborations. County-level variations in interest may point to opportunities for local jurisdictions to pursue these types of collaborations in the future.

Survey Background and Methodology

The Fall 2019 Michigan Local Energy Survey (MiLES) was a supplementary wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey, conducted from October 7 - December 2, 2019. Surveys were sent via internet and hardcopy to top elected and appointed officials (county administrators, board chairs, and clerks; city mayors, managers, and clerks; village managers, presidents, and clerks; township supervisors, managers, and clerks) from all 83 counties, 280 cities, 253 villages, and 1,240 townships in Michigan. A total of 1,350 jurisdictions returned valid surveys (58 counties, 208 cities, 179 villages, and 905 townships), resulting in a 72.7% response rate. Note that because the unit of analysis in the survey is the jurisdiction, the findings reflect the percentage of local officials that feel a certain way. That is, the response of the County Board Chair in a very populous county is treated on even footing with the response of the Village President of a small village. As a result MiLES has more representation from these small, often rural areas than would a survey that is representative of population of the state overall.

The margin of error for the MiLES as a whole is +/- 1.39%. 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.

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 or the MiLES programs.

Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

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