Positive working relationships reported among Michigan's local elected officials

By Debra Horner and Thomas Ivacko

This report presents the opinions of Michigan's local government leaders regarding relationships among members of their board or council as well as between the board/council and local government employees. Assessments include a look at various factors that help or hurt board/council relationships, as well as ratings of the tone of discussion among local elected officials and how often they reach consensus on issues. These findings are based on statewide surveys of local government leaders in the Spring 2018 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS).

Key Findings

- Michigan's local leaders report that relationships among members of their local governing boards or councils are quite positive, overall. Statewide, over a third (38%) say relationships among elected officials are excellent while another 43% say they are good. Nonetheless, around one in five (19%) report that relationships between members on their board or council are just fair (14%) or outright poor (5%).

  » Local leaders from larger, more urban jurisdictions, as well as appointed officials (compared with elected officials themselves), are somewhat less likely to say board/council relationships in their government are excellent or good.

  » And among local jurisdictions that have employees, local leaders also give generally positive assessments to relations between elected officials on the board/council and members of the staff.

- In places where elected officials report positive relationships, they say factors that <u>help</u> those relationships include:
  - elected officials' willingness to support decisions of the board/council (61%);
  - clarity of roles for the elected officials (51%);
  - behavior of individual elected officials, including a positive tone of communication, professionalism, and ethics (45%)

- In places where elected officials report only fair or poor relationships, they say factors that <u>hurt</u> those relationships include:
  - poor behavior by individual elected officials, including a negative tone of communication and lack of professionalism and/or ethics (84%);
  - the presence of blocs or factions on the board/council (64%);
  - a lack of clarity regarding the roles of elected officials (57%)

- By overwhelming percentages, local leaders say their boards/councils are able to come to consensus on a wide range of issues facing their jurisdiction, including routine decisions, budgetary issues, and even development issues, which can often divide communities.

  » Even in places with only fair or poor relationships on the board or council, local leaders are much more likely to report common as opposed to rare consensus on budget and routine issues, and are just as likely to report regular as opposed to rare consensus on development issues.

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Background

Hyper-partisan politics in Washington, D.C. and numerous state capitals have reached alarming levels and have fed dysfunction in national and state governance. While this is not an entirely new phenomenon,[1] it raises significant concerns about political leaders' willingness to cooperate and make progress on important policy issues both in Washington DC[2] and across the country.[3]

In Michigan, Governor Gretchen Whitmer entered office in 2019 with a goal to improve interpersonal relationships with members of the opposing party in the legislature. Whitmer told *The Detroit News* that relationship-building was the point of reintroducing the old tradition of "quadrant" meetings with legislative leaders of both parties in the Michigan House and Senate: "Whether I can find common ground on issues with Republican leaders or not, we are going to sit and start to build relationships. I think when you talk, you can find common ground."[4] Republican leaders in the Michigan Legislature also described their goals of finding areas of agreement and compromise with the Democratic administration, beginning Michigan's newest era of divided state government on a hopeful note.[5]

It remains to be seen whether these efforts will be successful or not in helping build bipartisan cooperation and more effective policymaking in state government.[6] However, other Michigan elected officials have also called for a focus on trying to repair and reinforce positive relationships in government in order to make their governing boards more effective.[7]

Given the growing concerns about hyper-partisanship and hostility at higher levels of government, one important question is whether these issues are now infecting local governance. One thing that may help foster positive relationships in local politics is the smaller size of governing boards. In Michigan local governments, County Commissions, City and Village Councils and Commissions, or Township Boards have relatively few members. Thus, as a study from State and Local Government Review puts it, "small size is important because council members cannot easily hide or camouflage their personal policy differences and must work closely together to achieve effective policy outcomes."[8] On the other hand, local governments deal with policy issues that can be quite controversial and divide communities, such as new developments that might run into NIMBY resistance.

The status of local government relationships is an open question with little recent research to highlight whether the breakdowns found in Washington, D.C. and numerous state capitols are spreading to local communities too. In order to look at the health of relationships among members of local government here in Michigan, the Spring 2018 MPPS asked local government leaders to evaluate the current status of relationships among members of their Board or Council, and inquired about factors that help or hurt those relations, as well as a number of other related issues.

Positive relationships among local elected officials reported across Michigan

When asked to assess the overall state of relationships among elected officials on their local government's board or council, an overwhelming percentage of Michigan's local leaders (81%) say those relationships are positive. Statewide, over a third (38%) say the relationships are excellent while another 43% say they are good (see *Figure 1a*). On the other hand, around one in five local leaders statewide (19%) say relationships between members on their board or council are only fair (14%) or outright poor (5%).

There are some differences in these ratings based on the jurisdiction's population size. The state's smaller jurisdictions (those with fewer than 5,000 residents) are more likely than larger ones (those with more than 10,000 residents) to say relationships among local elected officials are excellent or good. In fact, in communities with more than 30,000 residents, 29% of local leaders say that relationships among elected officials are only fair (18%) or poor (11%). Nonetheless, the same percentage of these largest jurisdictions (29%) also say their elected officials' relationships are excellent, while another 42% say they are good.

When comparing relationship assessments among the various regions of the state, as shown in *Figure 1b*, local leaders from the West Central region are the most likely to rate their board's or council's relationships as excellent or good (86%). And although officials from the Northern Lower Peninsula and Southeast Michigan are the most likely to report only fair or poor relationships on their boards or councils—24% and 22%, respectively—still more than three-quarters in those regions say their elected officials' relationships are generally positive.

Figure 1a
Officials' assessments of the overall relationships among elected officials in the jurisdiction, by population size
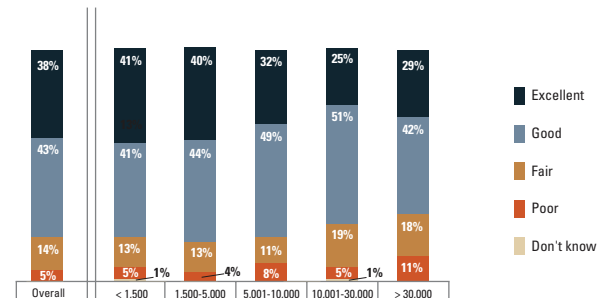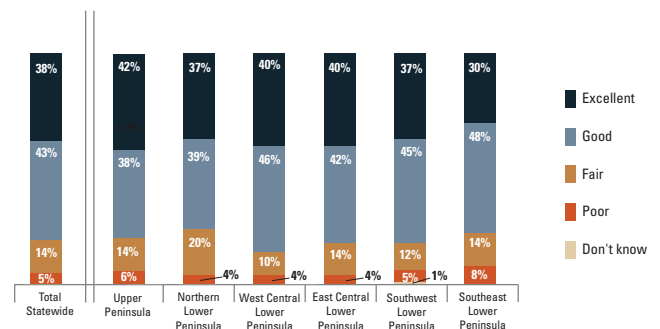

Figure 1b
Officials' assessments of the overall relationships among elected officials in the jurisdiction, by region

Beginning with the Spring 2017 wave, the MPPS started asking local officials to characterize their jurisdictions on an urban-rural spectrum of rural, mostly rural, mostly urban, or urban. As shown in *Figure 1c*, local leaders from jurisdictions that identify as rural are the most likely to say that overall relationships among elected officials in the jurisdiction are excellent (43%). Meanwhile, leaders from jurisdictions identified as mostly-urban are the most likely to say these relations are poor (9%).

Respondents to the MPPS each wave include elected officials (such as county board chairs, city mayors, townships supervisors and clerks, and village presidents), as well as appointed officials (such as county administrators, city and township managers, and city and village clerks). This allows for rare analyses comparing what elected officials themselves say in contrast to what an appointed official might see as an "outside observer." It is important to note that, when looking at overall responses on the MPPS, the vast majority of surveys are submitted by elected officials—for example, in the Spring 2018 wave, 79% were from elected officials. This is because few Michigan townships have appointed managers or administrators, and because townships also make up the majority of Michigan's local governments and therefore also the MPPS's survey respondents.

However, with over 200 appointed officials included in the MPPS, this comparative analysis is possible, and when it comes to ratings of board/council relations there are some differences. Appointed officials tend to give somewhat less positive evaluations to the relationships between their jurisdiction's elected officials, compared with those elected officials' own views. For example, compared to the 26% of local appointed officials who rate the relationships among their elected board or council members as excellent, significantly more elected officials (40%) say the same about themselves (see *Figure 1d*). And while just 4% of elected officials say their relationships are poor, this increases to 9% in the view of appointed officials. (Note: these differences in evaluations between elected and appointed officials are statistically significant even when taking into account—or "holding constant"—other characteristics such as jurisdiction size or type.)

Looking at other individual-level factors that could influence how respondents evaluate these board/council relationships, there are only slight differences in characteristics such as the local leaders' gender, the length of their tenure in office, etc. Of particular interest are similarities among Republicans, Independents, and Democrats on these relationship assessments. When breaking down responses by local leaders' self-identified partisanship, 40% of Republicans say relations among their board or council members are excellent, as do 35% of Independents and 33% of Democrats. And while 5% of Republicans and Independents say their board/council's relations are poor, similarly so do 7% of Democrats.

Figure 1c
Officials' assessments of the overall relationships among elected officials in the jurisdiction, by urban-rural self-assessment
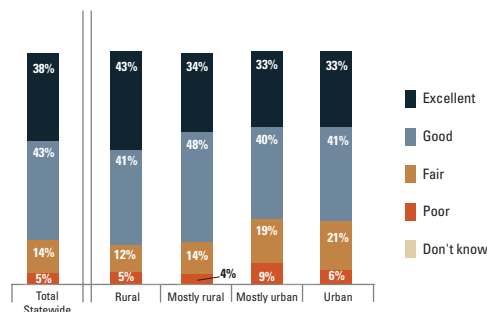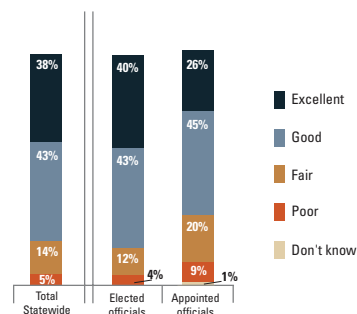

Figure 1d
Officials' assessments of the overall relationships among elected officials in the jurisdiction, by respondents' status as elected or appointed official

Reports of relations between elected officials and employees also very positive

The MPPS also asked local leaders about relationships between elected officials and employees in the jurisdiction (looking only among jurisdictions that have employees), and finds similar patterns to those reported above. Overwhelmingly, local leaders believe relationships between their board/council and their local government employees are positive. Nearly a third (31%) statewide say these relationships are excellent, and over half (51%) say they are good (see *Figure 2a*). By comparison, only 17% say relationships between their elected officials and employees are only fair or poor. Again, Michigan's larger jurisdictions are the most likely to say these relationships are only fair or poor, though still over three-quarters of these larger jurisdictions (with over 10,000 residents) say those relationships are excellent or good.

When looking regionally, there are few differences. Local leaders in Southeast Michigan are slightly more likely to say that relationships between elected officials and employees of the jurisdiction are poor (6%), and somewhat less likely to say they are excellent (27%) compared with leaders from other areas, but these are only small variations from the general patterns reporting positive relationships (see *Figure 2b*).

Figure 2a
Officials' assessments of the overall relationships between elected officials and employees in the jurisdiction (among those jurisdictions with employees), by population size
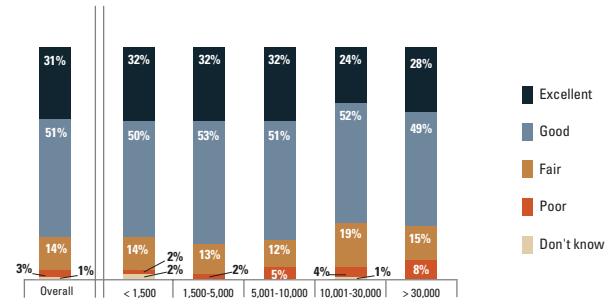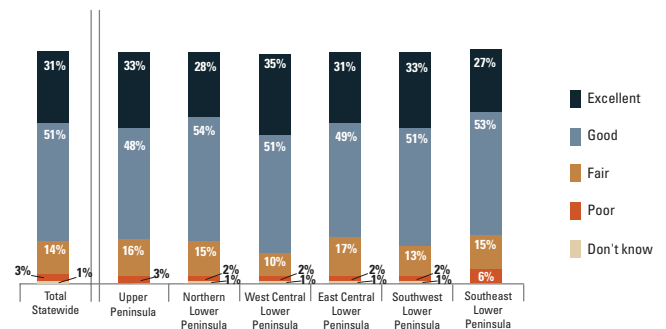

Figure 2b
Officials' assessments of the overall relationships between elected officials and employees in the jurisdiction (among those jurisdictions with employees), by region

Again, the patterns for relationships between elected officials and employees look similar to the patterns among elected officials themselves, when broken down by urban-rural status. As shown in *Figure 2c*, local leaders in fully-rural jurisdictions are the most likely to say these relationships are positive (85%). Meanwhile, local leaders from mostly urban and fully-urban jurisdictions are the most likely to say relationships between the board/council and employees are only fair or poor (though overwhelming percentages still say they are positive).

And, as with assessments of relationships on the board or council itself, elected officials have a somewhat rosier view of their relationships with employees compared with the views of appointed officials (who happen to be staff employees, themselves). While 33% of elected officials statewide report that board/council relationships with employees are excellent, only 23% of appointed officials say the same (see *Figure 2d*). And while just 14% of elected officials say relationships are fair or poor between the board/council and employees, this almost doubles to 27% among appointed officials. But once again, this still means the overwhelming percentage of Michigan's chief local appointed officials (73%) view the relationship between their board/council and the jurisdiction's employees as good or excellent.

Figure 2c
Officials' assessments of the overall relationships between elected officials and employees in the jurisdiction (among those jurisdictions with employees), by urban-rural self-assessment
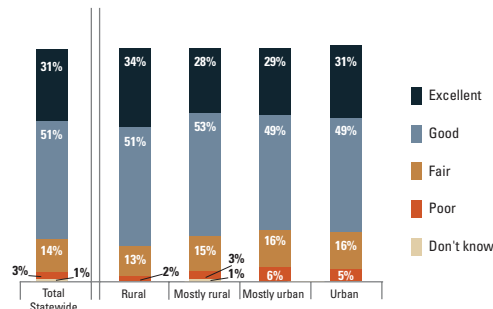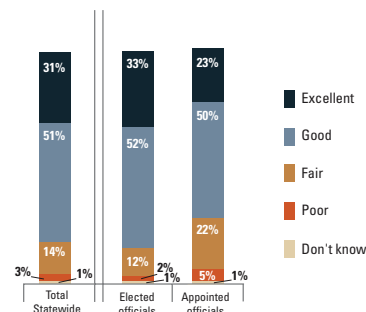

Figure 2d
Officials' assessments of the overall relationships between elected officials and employees in the jurisdiction (among those jurisdictions with employees), by respondents' status as elected or appointed official

Factors associated with positive board/council relationships

To follow up on assessments of the overall board/council relationships, the MPPS asked local leaders how they think a variety of factors influence those relationships. The survey looked at six different issues that could affect board/council relations, and asked whether they help or hurt relationships, or whether they had no impact at all.

First, looking at jurisdictions with reportedly positive relationships among board/council members, the most common feature that local leaders identify as helping those relationships is the willingness of individual elected officials to support final decisions of the board/council. Statewide, 61% of local leaders in jurisdictions with positive board/council relationships say that this willingness significantly (48%) or somewhat (13%) helps their elected officials' relationships, while just 7% say that lack of this "buy-in" is a factor that hurts their relationships (see *Figure 3*). A majority (51%) of local leaders from places with positive relationships also say that clarity of roles and responsibilities helps their board/council relationships.
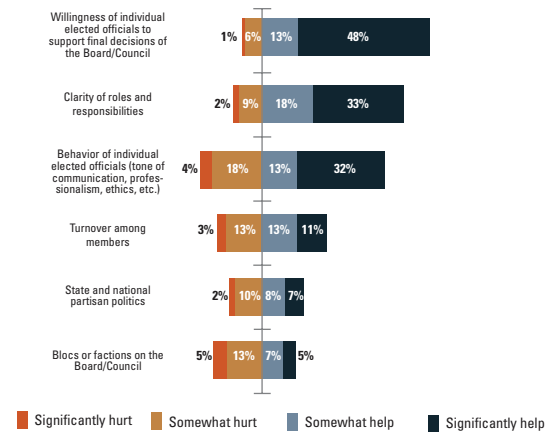
Nearly half (45%) of local leaders with positive relationships on their board/council report that the behavior of individual elected officials—such as their tone of communication, professionalism, ethics, etc.—is a helpful factor for their jurisdiction's governing body. Conversely, 22% of officials in places with positive board/council relationships say that the behavior of individual elected officials is a negative factor that hurts relationships. Thus, even on generally well-functioning boards and councils, there are factors that can harm working relationships.

And when it comes to three other issues that could affect board/council relationships, local leaders from places with positive relationships are more likely than not to report they simply have no impact at all. Over half of leaders from jurisdictions that report positive relationships say that turnover among board/council members (50%), the presence of blocs or factions on the board/council (51%), and state or national partisan politics (61%) have no impact on their elected officials' relationships. Furthermore, for well-functioning boards and councils that do say those factors have an impact, they are almost equally likely to say they are helpful versus hurtful.

For breakdowns of the data by jurisdiction type, region, and by urban-rural self-assessment, see *Appendix A*.

Figure 3
Officials' assessments of various factors that help or hurt relationships among elected officials, among jurisdictions with overall "excellent" or "good" relationship ratings

Note: responses for "No impact on relationships" and "Don't know" not shown

Factors associated with negative board/council relationships

Looking next at jurisdictions where officials say they have only fair or poor relationships among board/council members, the issue most commonly cited as hurting relationships is the behavior of individual elected officials. Overall, 84% say that individual members' behavior—such as their tone of communication, professionalism, ethics, etc.— hurts board/council relations, including 45% who say it hurts significantly. On the other hand, even in these places where relationships are not good to start with, 11% say the behavior of individual board members can still help improve relationships (see *Figure 4*).

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of local leaders in jurisdictions with less-than-good board/council relationships say having blocs or factions among members hurts their relationships. Meanwhile, over half (57%) from these jurisdictions say that the lack of clarity for roles and responsibilities of board/council members hurts the relationships among elected officials, while 34% say having such clarity actually helps improve relationships in their jurisdictions.

For the other three factors examined in the survey, less than a majority of respondents say they either hurt or help relationships. Overall, 46% say the unwillingness of individual elected officials to support the board/council's final decisions is a factor that hurts relationships, while 43% say willingness to be a team player helps improve relationships in these places where those relationships are generally considered just fair or poor.

In these places with less-than-positive board/council relationships, turnover appears to weigh more heavily on the negative end, with 42% saying board turnover harms relationships. Yet, 24% say it actually helps.

Finally, in places with just fair or poor relationships, the impact of state and national partisan politics also appears to weigh somewhat more heavily on the negative side of local relations, more likely to be reported as hurtful (30%) than helpful (14%).

For breakdowns of the data by jurisdiction type, region, and urban-rural self-assessment, see *Appendix B*.

Figure 4
Officials' assessments of various factors that help or hurt relationships among elected officials, among jurisdictions with overall "fair" or "poor" relationship ratings
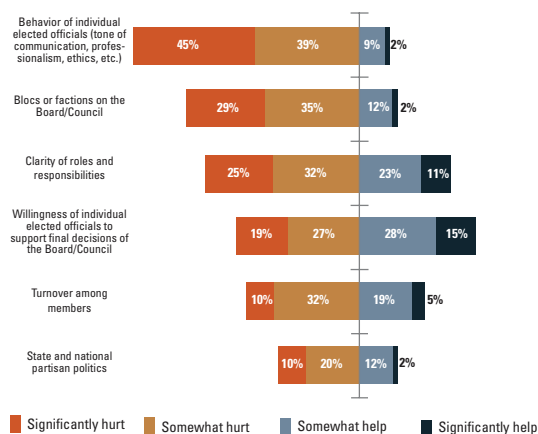
Note: responses for "No impact on relationships" and "Don't know" not shown

The tone of elected officials' communication is strongly associated with the positivity of overall relationships

As shown in the figures above, the behavior of officials on local government boards and councils is rated as a particularly helpful factor in jurisdictions with excellent or good relationships, while it is rated as particularly hurtful in places with only fair or poor relationships. On the MPPS, local leaders were subsequently asked about a particular element of behavior, namely, the general state of public discourse and the tone of discussion and communication that takes place around policy issues among elected officials.

As shown in *Figure 5*, most local leaders statewide (71%) say that the tone of discussion among elected officials in their jurisdictions is typically very constructive (41%) or somewhat constructive (30%). But significant differences emerge when broken down by whether board/council relationships are positive or negative. Among local leaders who say their board/council relationships are excellent, almost three-quarters (74%) also say that communication is very constructive. That percentage drops to just over a quarter (28%) among those who rate overall board/council relationships as simply good, and down to 5% among those who say overall relationships are only fair. And when looking at jurisdictions where local leaders rate board/council relationships as outright poor, none say that discussion tends to be constructive, and only 19% say it is even mixed. In these jurisdictions, 79% say the tone of discussion and communication is either somewhat (39%) or very divisive (40%).

It is not possible to say if the tone of discussion is a driving factor that creates poor relationships, or whether poor relationships lead to negative tone in discussion. However, it is clear that the two situations go hand-in-hand, and it is reasonable to assume that negative tone in discussions certainly cannot help improve already poor relations.

When asked about change in their board/council's tone of discussion over the last five years—whether it has become more or less civil—almost half of (46%) of local leaders statewide say the tone of discussion has not really changed (see *Figure 6*). However, when broken down by the status of board/council relations, places with positive relationships are overwhelmingly likely to say the tone of discussion has either not changed or has become more civil. By comparison, in jurisdictions where leaders say relationships are just fair, 20% say there has been some increase in civility while 43% say civility has declined in the past five years. And among jurisdictions where leaders say relationships are poor, 77% say the tone of discussion has become somewhat (29%) or significantly (48%) less civil.

Figure 5
Officials' assessments of the current tone of discussion around local policy issues among elected officials, by board/council relationship
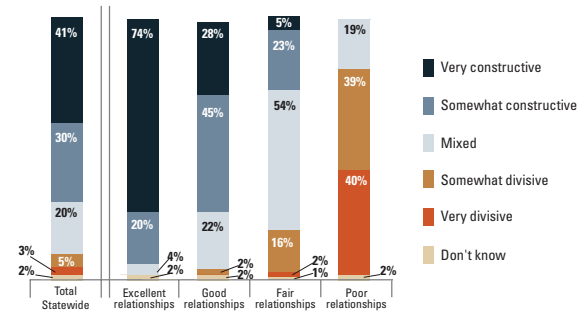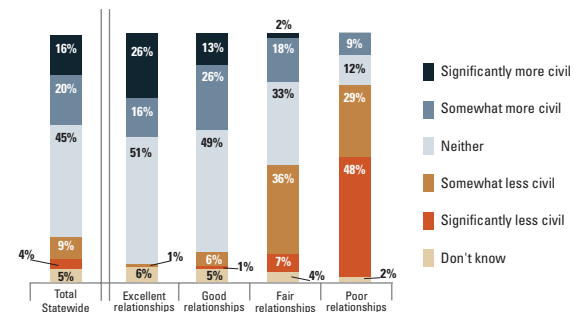

Figure 6
Officials' assessments of any change in tone of discussion around local policy issues among elected officials, by board/council relationship

Regardless of the nature of their relationships, local boards and councils come to consensus more often than not

As shown earlier, another factor that Michigan local leaders say impacts relationships among their elected officials is the willingness of individual members to support final decisions of the full board or council (see *Figures 3* and *4*). This is made easier when the board or council can actually come to a consensus on the issues before them, particularly controversial ones. Interestingly, most local leaders say they often find they have consensus on a wide range of issues. For example, as shown in *Figure 7*, when it comes to routine decisions facing the jurisdiction, local leaders overall are overwhelmingly likely to say there is board/council consensus nearly always (43%) or most of the time (42%). In places with excellent relationships on the board or council, 64% of local leaders report they have consensus nearly always. However, even in places with poor relationships, 43% say they come to consensus on routine issues facing the jurisdiction nearly always or most of the time, while another 33% say this happens at least some of the time and only about a quarter say it happens seldom (15%) or almost never (9%).

Boards or councils might be expected to have a harder time finding consensus on issues of budgeting and fiscal policy than on routine matters, but the reported patterns remain similar. Among jurisdictions with excellent relationships on the board/council, 67% find consensus on fiscal issues nearly always (see *Figure 8*). Meanwhile, among jurisdictions with poor relationships, 42% can get there nearly always or most of the time, and fewer than one in five get to consensus seldom (10%) or almost never (8%).

Finally, when faced with decisions on development issues—which can be contentious and divide communities—once again while there are differences between jurisdictions depending on the tenor of board/council relations, they are not as stark as in other places in this report. Jurisdictions with excellent or good relationships among elected officials are overwhelmingly likely (92%) to find they have consensus on development issues almost always or most of the time (see *Figure 9)*. By comparison, the same is true among 61% of jurisdictions with only fair relationships. And last, places with poor board/council relationships are just as likely to find they have consensus on development issues almost always or most of the time (27%) as to find they have it seldom or almost never (26%).

Figure 7
Officials' estimates of board/council member consensus on routine decisions facing the jurisdiction, by board/council relationship
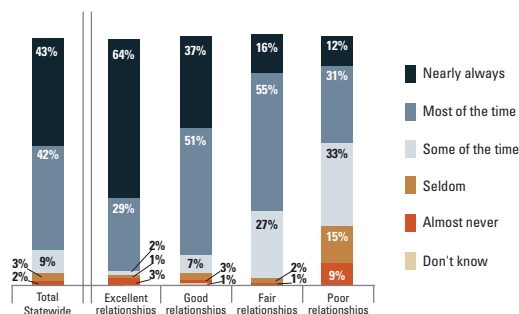

Figure 8
Officials' estimates of board/council member consensus on budgeting and fiscal policy, by board/council relationship
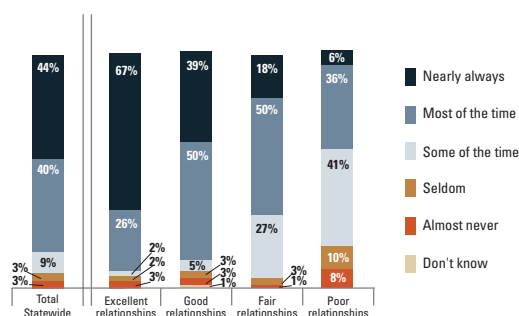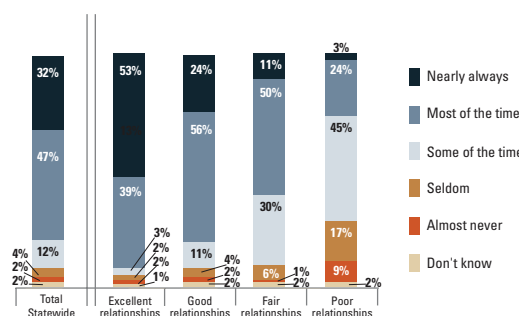

Figure 9
Officials' estimates of board/council member consensus on development issues, by board/council relationship

In an open-ended survey question, the MPPS asked local leaders to identify what they think could be done, if anything, to improve the relationships among their jurisdiction's board or council members, or between the board/council and staff. More than 600 local leaders provided comments, including particular focus on issues of formal communication, training on roles and responsibilities, and respectful attitudes. Below are some examples in their own words:

Voices Across Michigan

Quotes from local leaders about ways to improve the relationships among the jurisdiction's board or council members

"I think it would help if we had formal policies in place."

"All board members need to make sure to keep the lines of communication open at all times and provide agenda items to the supervisor prior to meetings so other board members are not surprised by any topic of discussion."

"More time in social settings to allow relationship building."

"As a [leader] my greatest communication tool is the 'forward' button for emails I receive to keep my Board in the loop."

"We hosted several trainings about council's roles which helped a little bit. We have also had several brainstorming sessions which helped show that the commissioners all want similar things and we can focus on common ground issues."

"Better communication face to face instead of comments from other sources."

"The Board members have to read their packets and be prepared."

"Adherence to a code of conduct within the meetings as well as while serving as a council member would be very helpful. Same with decorum in the meetings, more mutual respect. Our primary difficulty is with the [redacted] member, who has a strong voice and never seeks to compromise. Also, two of the [redacted] members are not at all politically correct when it comes to statements made to citizens, we have had citizens feel offended by sometimes off-color remarks."

Quotes from local leaders about ways to improve the relationships between the jurisdiction's board/council and staff

"Attend employee's union meetings. Spend some time with them."

"We have recently created an Employee Relations Committee in the hope to better the relationship between the jurisdiction Board and its staff."

"I think the relationship between our board members and staff is excellent. We work at this with a monthly meeting with the jurisdiction's office staff to review the prior monthly board meeting and pertinent comments regarding the agenda items. Then we ask each staff member if they have anything to mention. I value this meeting and I know the staff appreciates it. We have this an hour before we open and the employees are paid for the extra hour each month."

"Board members are limited in their ability to interact with jurisdiction employees because most have day jobs. However, greater visibility of elected officials would help the Board seem more relevant to our staff."

"I believe the elected officials could improve morale by not communicating directly with staff (prohibited by Charter). It puts staff in a very awkward position."

Conclusion

While there is concern across the country about the state of American politics and a perception that politicians in Washington, D.C. are becoming ever more antagonistic, in Michigan local leaders' assessments of relationships among elected officials on their local board or council are quite optimistic. Statewide, more than a third of local leaders (38%) say the relationships on their board or council are excellent, while another 43% say they are good. Despite these positive reports, there remains a subset of local leaders who express concern, with 19% statewide saying relationships between members on their board or council are only fair (14%) or outright poor (5%).

When asked about various factors that could help or hurt relations among board/council members, local leaders in those places that report excellent or good relationships point to members' willingness to support decisions of the board or council, clarity of roles, and positive behavior of elected officials (such as their tone of communication, professionalism, and ethics). On the other hand, in those places with only fair or poor relationships, local leaders say that negative behavior, the presence of factions on the board, and lack of clarity of roles can be most harmful to working relationships.

And while local leaders in places with just fair or poor board/council relationships say the tone of discussion among members is predominantly divisive and has become less civil in the past five years, the news is not all downbeat. Even in these places, 43% say they reach consensus on routine issues nearly always or most of the time, while another 33% say this happens at least some of the time and only a quarter say it happens seldom (15%) or almost never (9%).

Finally, there is no lack of ideas on how to improve relationships further. Hundreds of Michigan's local leaders provided suggestions on the MPPS, such as more formal training and opportunities for informal interaction, making the time for outreach to staff, and codifying roles and appropriate behavior for Michigan's local elected officials.

Notes

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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. 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 2018 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 2018 wave was conducted from April 9 – June 8, 2018. A total of 1,372 jurisdictions in the Spring 2018 wave returned valid surveys (65 counties, 237 cities, 177 villages, and 893 townships), resulting in a 74% response rate by unit. The margin of error for the survey for the survey as a whole is +/- 1.35%. 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: http://closup.umich.edu/mpps.php.

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

Michigan local officials' assessments of various factors that help or hurt relationships among elected officials, among jurisdictions with overall "excellent" or "good" relationship ratings

	Counties			Townships			Cities			Villages		
	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact
Behavior of individual elected officials (tone of communication, professionalism, ethics, etc.)	46%	37%	18%	43%	18%	36%	44%	34%	17%	51%	22%	25%
Willingness of individual elected officials to support final decisions of the Board/Council	76%	16%	6%	58%	5%	34%	68%	12%	16%	63%	9%	26%
Turnover among members	27%	31%	30%	22%	12%	56%	29%	23%	40%	28%	23%	41%
Blocs or factions on the Board/Council	12%	29%	41%	11%	15%	55%	16%	31%	42%	15%	19%	45%
Clarity of roles and responsibilities	61%	20%	13%	47%	9%	40%	58%	17%	21%	53%	11%	31%
State and national partisan politics	4%	31%	53%	16%	8%	65%	12%	24%	52%	12%	12%	53%

	Upper Peninsula			Northern Lower Peninsula			West Central Lower Peninsula			East Central Lower Peninsula			Southwest Lower Peninsula			Southeast Lower Peninsula		
	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact
Behavior of individual elected officials (tone of communication, professionalism, ethics, etc.)	47%	16%	35%	46%	19%	35%	45%	20%	31%	40%	20%	37%	49%	22%	27%	42%	32%	23%
Willingness of individual elected officials to support final decisions of the Board/Council	65%	3%	28%	61%	7%	32%	58%	10%	30%	55%	9%	35%	66%	6%	28%	68%	8%	21%
Turnover among members	17%	18%	57%	24%	14%	54%	26%	15%	46%	22%	13%	58%	27%	16%	47%	26%	21%	41%
Blocs or factions on the Board/Council	6%	17%	60%	13%	14%	56%	9%	19%	46%	12%	13%	60%	15%	16%	53%	17%	29%	37%
Clarity of roles and responsibilities	44%	11%	40%	47%	9%	39%	53%	10%	35%	46%	10%	39%	54%	11%	34%	55%	17%	24%
State and national partisan politics	8%	9%	70%	12%	13%	60%	14%	13%	55%	15%	10%	64%	17%	10%	61%	17%	14%	58%

	Rural			Mostly Rural			Mostly Urban			Urban		
	Help	**Hurt**	**No Impact**	**Help**	**Hurt**	**No Impact**	**Help**	**Hurt**	**No Impact**	**Help**	**Hurt**	**No Impact**
Behavior of individual elected officials (tone of communication, professionalism, ethics, etc.)	41%	17%	39%	51%	23%	25%	50%	33%	15%	38%	42%	20%
Willingness of individual elected officials to support final decisions of the Board/Council	54%	6%	37%	69%	7%	23%	71%	13%	16%	74%	10%	13%
Turnover among members	21%	13%	55%	27%	15%	50%	27%	35%	34%	25%	20%	40%
Blocs or factions on the Board/Council	10%	14%	56%	15%	19%	49%	20%	30%	38%	11%	37%	43%
Clarity of roles and responsibilities	44%	7%	43%	54%	13%	29%	66%	18%	16%	61%	21%	18%
State and national partisan politics	12%	8%	65%	18%	13%	58%	12%	26%	54%	23%	21%	42%

Appendix B

Michigan local officials' assessments of various factors that help or hurt relationships among elected officials, among jurisdictions with overall "fair" or "poor" relationship ratings

	Counties			Townships			Cities			Villages		
	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact
Behavior of individual elected officials (tone of communication, professionalism, ethics, etc.)	23%	78%	0%	12%	84%	3%	11%	86%	3%	8%	85%	4%
Willingness of individual elected officials to support final decisions of the Board/Council	61%	38%	0%	45%	44%	7%	39%	51%	7%	34%	49%	17%
Turnover among members	35%	43%	14%	24%	37%	29%	20%	60%	15%	28%	40%	22%
Blocs or factions on the Board/Council	29%	71%	0%	15%	59%	10%	7%	85%	4%	18%	43%	25%
Clarity of roles and responsibilities	43%	43%	14%	38%	52%	5%	24%	69%	4%	29%	64%	7%
State and national partisan politics	29%	36%	27%	15%	25%	38%	9%	48%	33%	18%	21%	41%

	Upper Peninsula			Northern Lower Peninsula			West Central Lower Peninsula			East Central Lower Peninsula			Southwest Lower Peninsula			Southeast Lower Peninsula		
	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact	Help	Hurt	No Impact
Behavior of individual elected officials (tone of communication, professionalism, ethics, etc.)	14%	82%	4%	15%	81%	4%	12%	85%	0%	16%	78%	5%	7%	93%	0%	5%	89%	5%
Willingness of individual elected officials to support final decisions of the Board/Council	44%	51%	6%	54%	30%	13%	40%	48%	9%	51%	39%	8%	47%	48%	2%	23%	62%	6%
Turnover among members	26%	46%	12%	24%	26%	40%	29%	56%	12%	25%	39%	27%	23%	49%	23%	18%	47%	21%
Blocs or factions on the Board/Council	12%	69%	10%	14%	59%	14%	18%	46%	9%	19%	60%	16%	11%	69%	3%	9%	78%	4%
Clarity of roles and responsibilities	47%	53%	0%	30%	60%	8%	33%	61%	6%	40%	45%	5%	39%	51%	8%	26%	66%	4%
State and national partisan politics	8%	27%	41%	19%	21%	42%	18%	25%	29%	12%	26%	48%	11%	39%	39%	16%	42%	23%

	Rural			Mostly Rural			Mostly Urban			Urban		
	Help	**Hurt**	**No Impact**	**Help**	**Hurt**	**No Impact**	**Help**	**Hurt**	**No Impact**	**Help**	**Hurt**	**No Impact**
Behavior of individual elected officials (tone of communication, professionalism, ethics, etc.)	12%	85%	3%	9%	85%	3%	8%	89%	3%	5%	90%	5%
Willingness of individual elected officials to support final decisions of the Board/Council	43%	45%	7%	44%	46%	7%	32%	58%	7%	48%	42%	9%
Turnover among members	28%	45%	22%	21%	38%	28%	17%	53%	25%	24%	49%	16%
Blocs or factions on the Board/Council	17%	58%	9%	11%	67%	11%	11%	77%	9%	0%	89%	0%
Clarity of roles and responsibilities	34%	56%	7%	37%	54%	4%	38%	59%	3%	10%	84%	0%
State and national partisan politics	14%	25%	39%	16%	24%	34%	9%	56%	35%	12%	40%	42%

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