The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

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Michigan Public Policy Survey December 2020

COVID-19 pandemic sparks Michigan local leaders' concerns for fiscal health

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This report presents Michigan local government leaders' assessments of their jurisdictions' fiscal conditions and the actions they plan to take in the coming year given their financial situations. The findings are based on responses from 12 statewide survey waves of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) conducted annually each spring from 2009 through 2020. The Spring 2020 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) was conducted between March 30 and June 1, 2020.

>> The Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) 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 in partnership with the Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Townships Association, and Michigan Association of Counties. The MPPS investigates local officials' opinions and perspectives on a variety of important public policy issues. Respondents for the Spring 2020 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 1,342 jurisdictions across the state.

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Key Findings

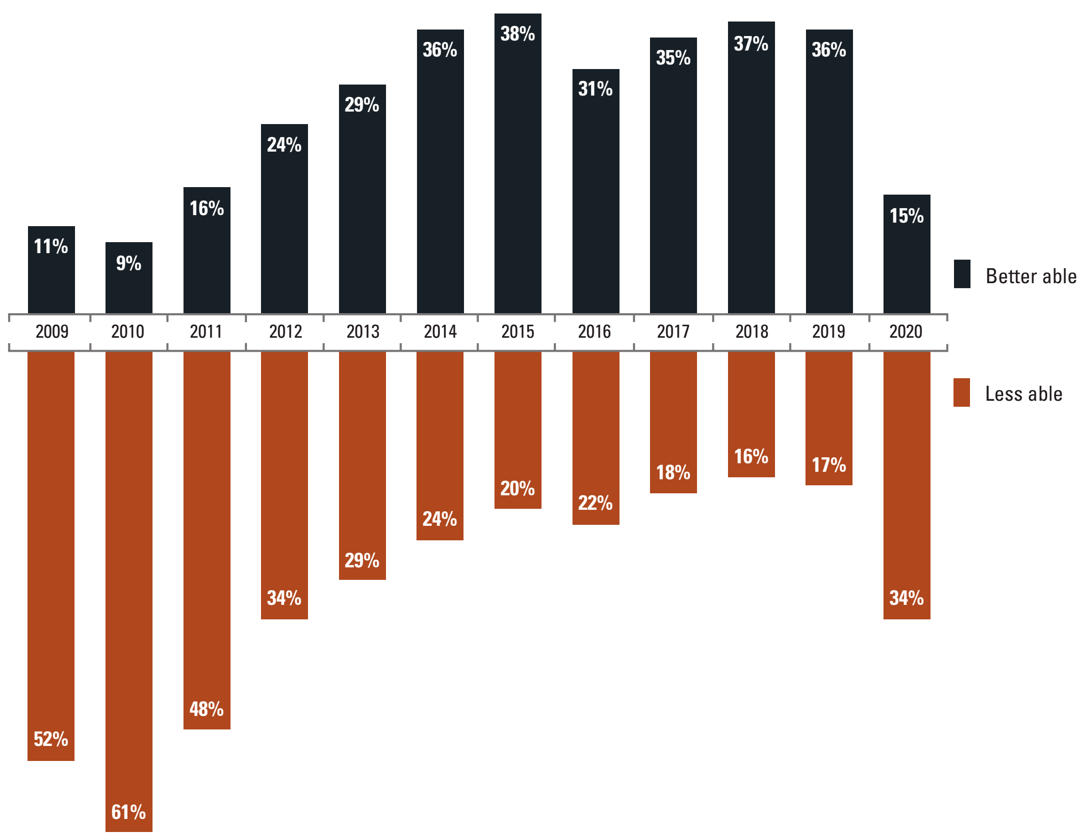
- Amid the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, Michigan local governments reported declining year-over-year fiscal health, with 34% of local governments saying they are less able to meet their fiscal needs today compared with last year, while just 15% say they are better able to do so.
  - Fiscal concerns increased rapidly over the course of the survey field period as the pandemic spread, and by the end of May, 61% said they were less able and only 6% said they were better able to meet fiscal needs this year compared with last.
  - The biggest declines in this measure of fiscal health are among the state's larger jurisdictions. When looking at net fiscal health (the number of jurisdictions with improving health minus those with declining health), places with more than 30,000 residents report sharp drops, from 31% net improvement in 2019 to 38% net decline in 2020.
- However, another summary indicator shows a much smaller immediate decline in fiscal health. As of Spring 2020, 64% of Michigan local leaders rate the current level of their government's fiscal stress as relatively low (4 or lower on a 10-point scale), which is down just slightly from 69% in 2019. Meanwhile, local leaders in 8% of Michigan jurisdictions—essentially unchanged over the last few years, and representing approximately 149 local governments—say they are currently experiencing relatively high levels of fiscal stress.
- Reflecting declining health, this year fewer governments report increasing revenue from property taxes and state aid compared to prior years, and more report decreasing revenue from these sources. In particular, 30% of local governments report declines in revenue from state aid.
- Local officials' assessments of their jurisdiction's general fund balance remain largely positive and unchanged since 2019. On the other hand, cash flow is becoming more of a problem. For instance, 18% of counties say cash flow is somewhat of a problem or a significant problem in 2020, up from 12% in 2019.
- The percentages of jurisdictions reporting increased public safety (25%) and infrastructure (35%) needs are the lowest they have been since the MPPS began in 2009. Meanwhile, just 10% of jurisdictions plan to increase overall service provision in the next year while 12% plan to cut services.
- Looking ahead, local officials express widespread concern about local economic conditions for the upcoming year, with just 13% of jurisdictions anticipating "good times" in their local economy, while 50% expect "bad times." They are also concerned about their ability to meet their jurisdiction's fiscal needs in the next year, with 38% predicting they will be less able to do so, and just 11% saying they will be better able.
- Looking farther ahead to fiscal stress five years down the road, local officials expect higher levels of fiscal stress than they are currently experiencing. However, the percentage predicting particularly high levels of stress five years down the road (12%) is essentially unchanged compared to last year (11%).

A third of Michigan local governments report year-over-year declines in their fiscal health in early 2020

Even with the uncertainty and rapidly changing circumstances of a global pandemic that has persisted through 2020, there is a great deal to learn from local leaders regarding their local governments' fiscal health, planning, and concerns for the future. Since its launch a decade ago, the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) has reported on the trends in fiscal health among Michigan local governments by asking local officials about a variety of measures, from general assessments of overall fiscal improvement or decline to changes in specific types of revenues and expenditures. CLOSUP's recent research by Leiser and Mills suggests that these kinds of opinion data—gathering local leaders' subjective assessments—can be a valuable supplement to other kinds of standard financial audit and economic measures, in part because local officials can contribute "forward-looking, context-specific, and difficult-to-quantify insights about local economic and political conditions" that otherwise might be missed.[1]

One of the key measures the MPPS tracks each year is a summary question regarding changes in fiscal health: whether jurisdictions are *better able* or *less able* to meet their financial needs at that time, compared to the previous year. Since the end of the Great Recession in 2011, the percentage of jurisdictions each year saying they were better able to meet their needs either increased or held steady (with the exception of 2016). However, as of April and May 2020, during the initial arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in the state, this metric shows a sharp decline among Michigan local jurisdictions. Just 15% statewide report improvement as of early 2020, while 34% report decline (see *Figure 1a*). This is the first time since 2012 that more officials report a decline than report an improvement in their ability to meet financial needs. Meanwhile, 47% report no significant change in their fiscal health from 2019 to 2020.

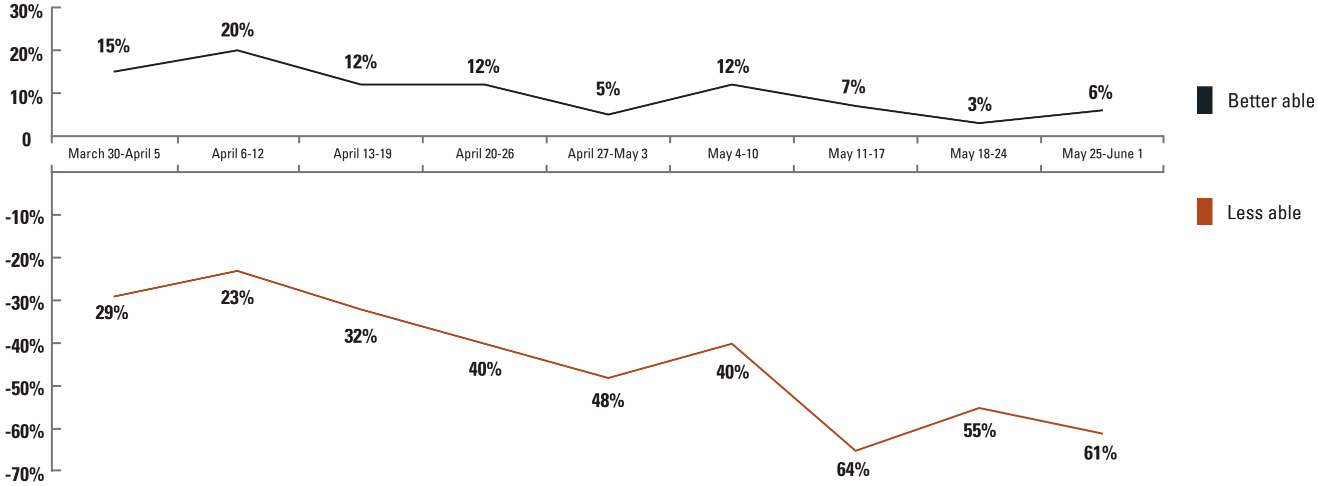
Figure 1a
Percentage of jurisdictions reporting they are better or less able to meet their fiscal needs in current year compared to previous year, 2009-2020



Note: responses for "neither better nor less able" and "don't know" not shown

Assessments of changes in local fiscal health during the COVID-19 crisis evolved week-to-week

Figure 1b
Percentage of jurisdictions reporting they are better or less able to meet their fiscal needs in current year compared to previous year, 2020, by week of survey response



Note: responses for "neither better nor less able" and "don't know" not shown

Changes in the weekly responses over the course of the survey wave may also contain some even bleaker news. The MPPS has a long field period, with the Spring 2020 wave collecting responses from Michigan local officials for nine weeks (opening March 30 and closing June 1). This largely coincided with the initial surge in COVID-19 cases in the state and allows analysis of simultaneous changes in local leaders' assessments of their governments' fiscal health. Looking over that time, local officials' concerns increased throughout this past spring as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic became clearer. It is important, though, to note that nearly 40% of responses came within the first two weeks of the field period, and participation dropped significantly in the final weeks of the survey, as it normally does. This resulted in small number of respondents to the MPPS in the final weeks, which could raise concerns about the representativeness of those responses. However, initial analysis shows this may not be a significant concern.[2]

During the first week of the Spring 2020 MPPS—the end of March and early April—a majority (50%) of local leaders reported that they saw no change in their ability to meet fiscal needs in 2020 compared to the previous year, while 15% said they were better able and 29% reported being less able (see *Figure 1b*). In subsequent weeks, responses to this question grew more pessimistic, and by the end of the field period, nearly two-thirds (61%) of local leaders reported they are less able to meet fiscal needs this year. While it is possible that some of those declines may have reversed over the summer and fall as federal funding from the CARES Act filtered down to the local level,[3] the pessimistic trend line over the course of the spring signals significant concerns among local leaders regarding their jurisdictions' overall fiscal health.

Figure 1c
Net fiscal health yearly change: percentage of jurisdictions reporting improving fiscal health minus percentage reporting declining health, 2009-2020, by population size

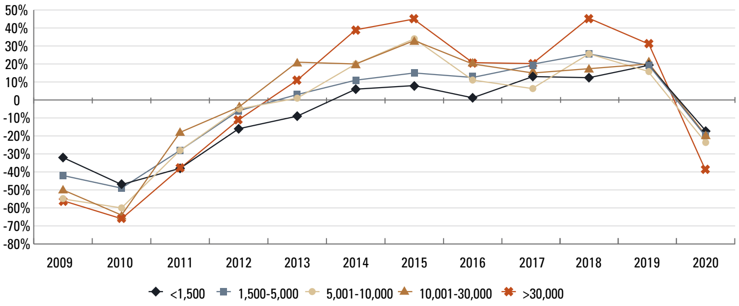


Figure 1d
Net fiscal health yearly change: percentage of jurisdictions reporting improving fiscal health minus percentage reporting declining health, 2009-2020, by jurisdiction type

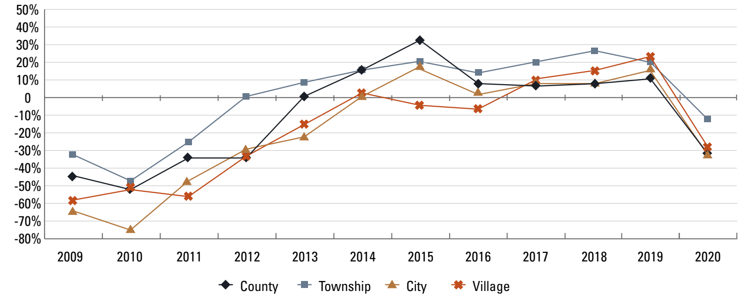


Figure 1c presents the changes in local fiscal health over the last decade broken out by jurisdiction population-size category. It shows "net" fiscal health in each population category: the percentage of jurisdictions that were *better able* to meet their needs minus the percentage that were *less able*. A data point below the zero-axis shows that more jurisdictions in that population category reported declining fiscal health than reported improving health in that year. Conversely, a data point above the zero-axis shows that more jurisdictions in that category reported improving fiscal health than reported declining health.

This year, 15% of local officials report improving fiscal health for their jurisdictions, while 34% say it is declining. Therefore, the statewide "net" calculation is 15%-34%=-19%. Looking at the different jurisdiction-size categories in *Figure 1c*, for the first time since 2012, net fiscal health reports are negative for jurisdictions of all sizes. The decline compared to 2019 is particularly steep among the largest jurisdictions, who reported the highest net fiscal health in 2019 (31%), but the lowest in 2020 (-38%).

Looking by jurisdiction type, Michigan's counties, townships, cities, and villages all show steep declines in net fiscal health compared to 2019. As shown in *Figure 1d*, cities (-33%), counties (-31%), and villages (-28%) have significantly lower net fiscal health in 2020, compared with townships (-13%), although the drop for townships from +20% last year is still quite significant on its own.

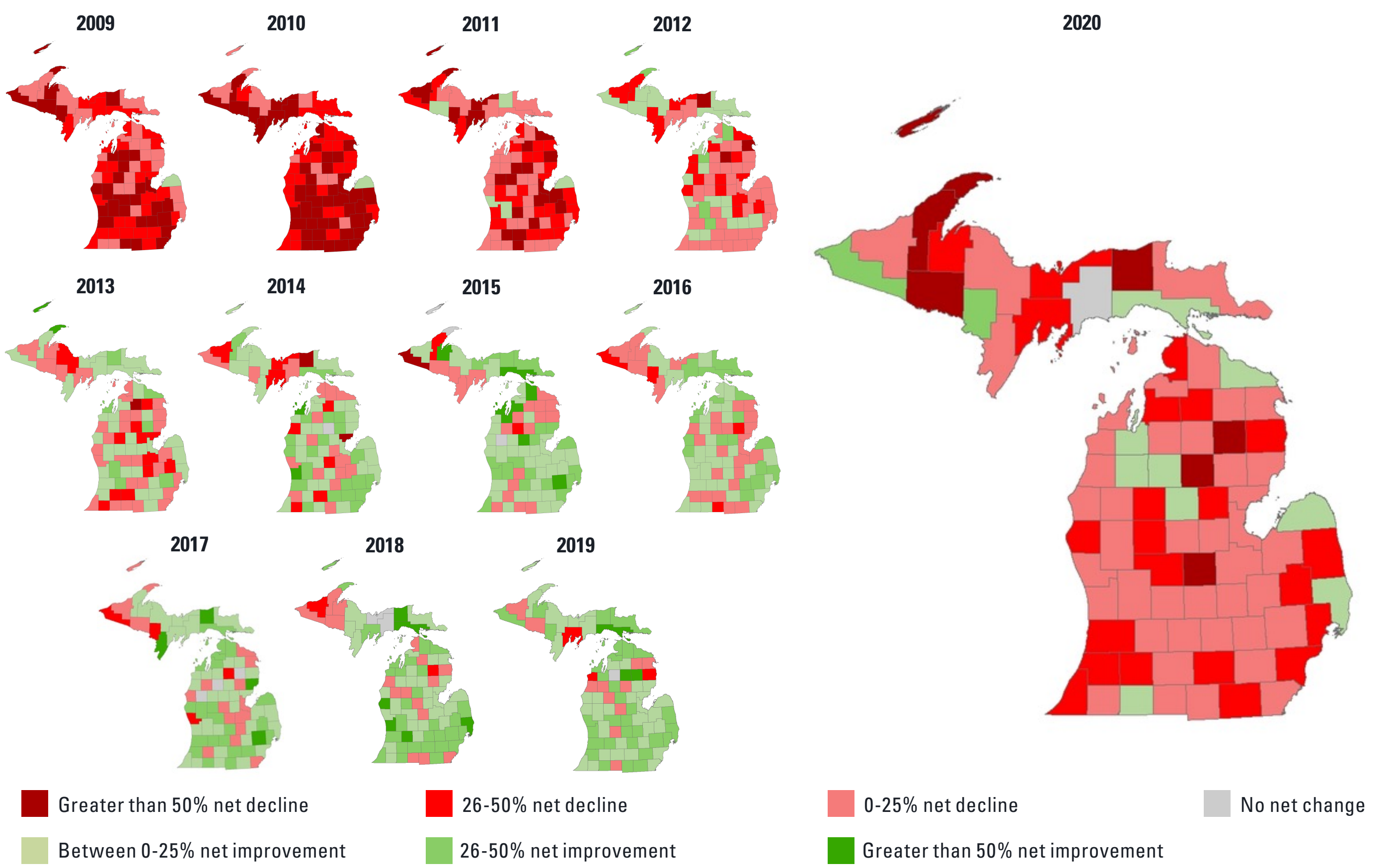
Figure 1e displays the same "net fiscal health" for jurisdictions across Michigan aggregated at the county level. The twelve maps contrast those counties (in shades of red) where more jurisdictions are suffering fiscal decline than are experiencing improved fiscal health (e.g., "below the zero axis"), compared with those counties (in shades of green) where more jurisdictions are experiencing improved fiscal health than decline (e.g., "above the zero axis"). Counties where there are equal numbers of jurisdictions experiencing improvement and decline are shaded grey.

The color shades are scaled by the magnitude of the aggregated fiscal changes, with three categories each for improving (green) and declining (red) conditions. The darkest shades of green and red show where the net calculation of jurisdictions improving minus those declining is greater than 50% (positive if green, negative if red), the middle shades show where the net calculation is between 26% and 50%, and the lightest shades show where the net calculation is between 0 and 25%. For example, if 76% of jurisdictions in a county are improving, while 24% are declining, the net calculation is 76%-24%=52% improving, which results in the darkest shade of green. Or, if 27% of jurisdictions in a county are improving while 33% are declining, the net calculation is 27%-33%=-6%, which results in a light pink-shaded county. It should be noted that for 34 counties, a majority of jurisdictions within them report no change in their fiscal health, so it may be the case that only a small number of jurisdictions in those counties are included in the net calculations.

At the low point during the Great Recession in 2010, the map was almost uniformly red, showing widespread fiscal decline across the state. This gradually improved over time, and by last year most counties showed net improvement, with just 14 counties showing net declines. However, in 2020 this trend is reversed, and just 10 counties show net improvement, while 71 report net decline. Still, it should be noted that, as of April and May 2020, most counties only report a relatively small net decline. This year there are few counties shown in the dark red that was widespread in 2009-2011, and many are the lightest shade of red, indicating a net decline of 25% or less.

Appendix A at the end of this report displays the actual percentage net change for each of Michigan's 83 counties for 2020.

Figure 1e
Net fiscal health yearly change: percentage of jurisdictions reporting improving fiscal health minus percentage reporting declining health, 2009-2020, by county



Current fiscal stress has increased compared to 2019, but most jurisdictions still report low stress levels for 2020

Figure 2a
Officials' assessments of their jurisdiction's current fiscal health, via the MPPS Fiscal Stress Index, 2020

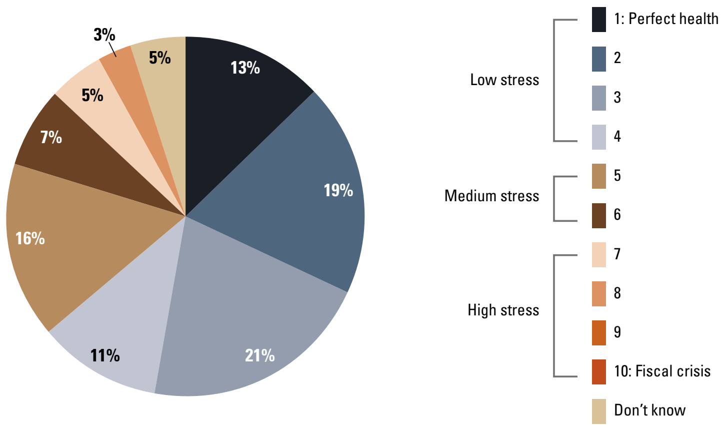
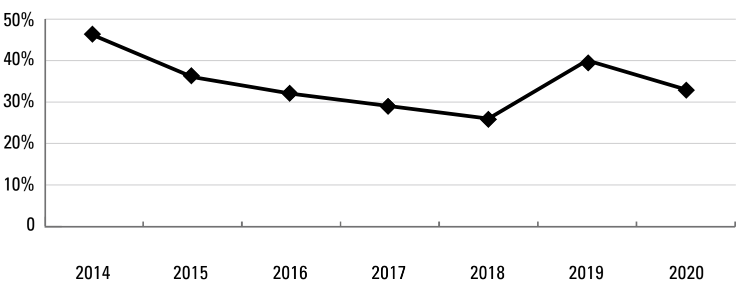


Figure 2b
Net current fiscal health, via the MPPS Fiscal Stress Index: percentage of jurisdictions reporting low fiscal stress minus percentage reporting medium or high stress, 2014-2020



The MPPS looks not only at *changes* in fiscal health year-over-year, but also captures a snapshot of local officials' estimates of fiscal stress in the current year. The results are based on a MPPS Fiscal Stress Index (FSI) question, which since 2014 has asked local officials to rate their jurisdiction's current fiscal stress on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is perfect fiscal health and 10 is fiscal crisis. Current fiscal health may have changed again since the MPPS field period in the spring of 2020, but that FSI measure can still give an overall sense of where jurisdictions stood as the COVID-19 shutdowns first began to impact local governments and their communities.

In 2020, as shown in *Figure 2a*, 64% of Michigan's local leaders rate their jurisdiction's current level of fiscal stress as relatively low (at 4 or less on the 10-point scale). This is down slightly from 2019, when 69% reported relatively low levels of fiscal stress. Meanwhile, this year, 23% report medium levels of fiscal stress (scores of 5 or 6 on the 10-point scale) and 8% report high levels of stress (scores of 7 or higher), essentially unchanged since last year. Another 5% are unsure about their current level of fiscal stress.

To once again examine change over time, *Figure 2b* shows "net" assessments of current fiscal health: the percentage of local officials who say their jurisdiction has low fiscal stress (1-4 on the 10-point scale) minus the percentage that have either *medium* (5-6) or *high* (7-10) stress. Between 2014 (when the MPPS began tracking this indicator) and 2018, this measure showed a clear trend of declining fiscal health for jurisdictions as a whole across the state. Then in 2019, for the first time, that trend was broken, as this indicator showed improving fiscal health. Now, as of spring 2020, with fewer jurisdictions reporting low stress and slightly more reporting medium and high stress, net current fiscal health scores statewide return to the prior trend of decline, sitting at a net score of 33%, down from 40% in 2019.

Figure 2c
Net current fiscal health, via the MPPS Fiscal Stress Index: percentage of jurisdictions reporting low fiscal stress minus percentage reporting medium or high stress, 2014-2020, by population size

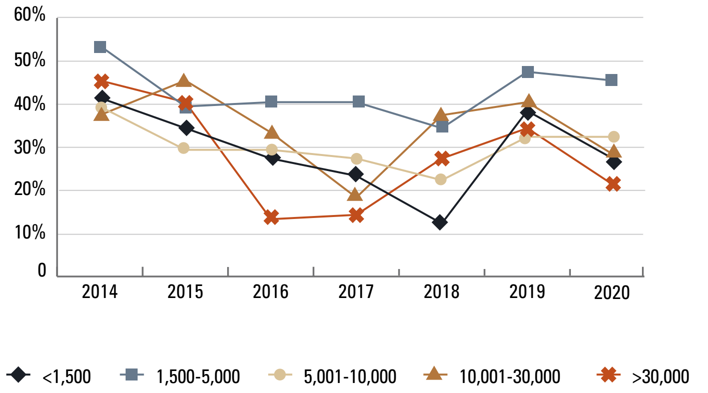


Figure 2d
Net current fiscal health, via the MPPS Fiscal Stress Index: percentage of jurisdictions reporting low fiscal stress minus percentage reporting medium or high stress, 2017-2020, by urban-rural self-identification

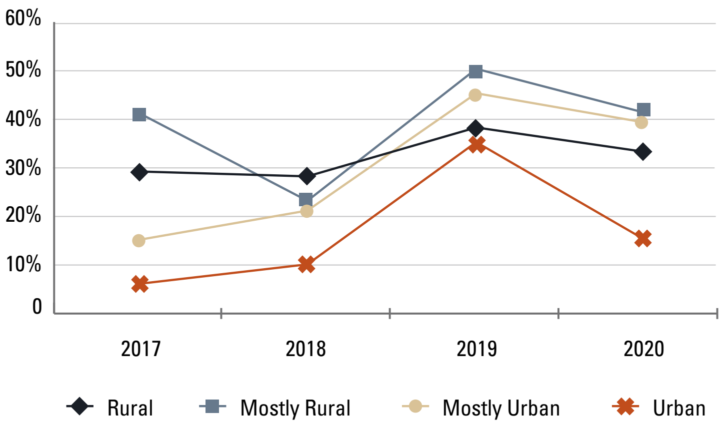
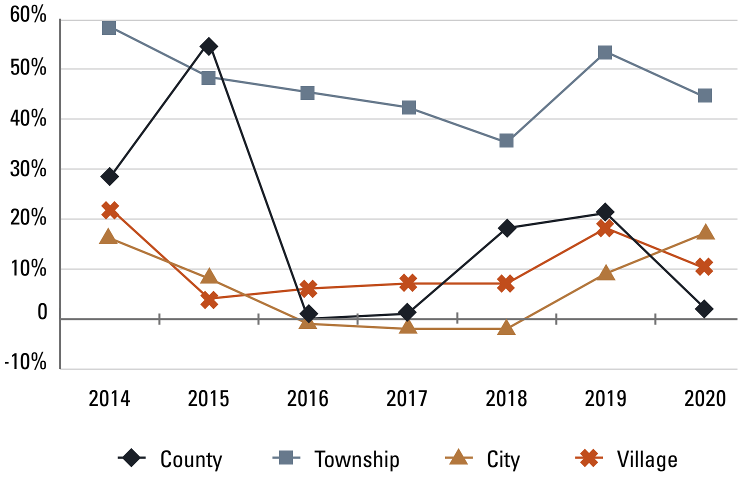


Figure 2c shows the trend in FSI scores broken down by jurisdiction population-size category. Jurisdictions with between 1,500-10,000 residents report relatively little change in net fiscal stress from 2019 to 2020. However, Michigan's smallest jurisdictions (those with fewer than 1,500 residents) as well as jurisdictions with more than 10,000 residents report more substantial declines.

Starting on the Spring 2017 wave, each year the MPPS has also asked local officials to characterize their jurisdictions on an urban-rural spectrum: rural, mostly rural, mostly urban, or urban. As shown in *Figure 2d*, this year each group of jurisdictions along that spectrum reports decreased net fiscal health. However, while jurisdictions identifying as rural, mostly rural, or mostly urban generally report small declines in spring 2020, jurisdictions identifying as fully urban see a steep decline (from 35% to 15%).

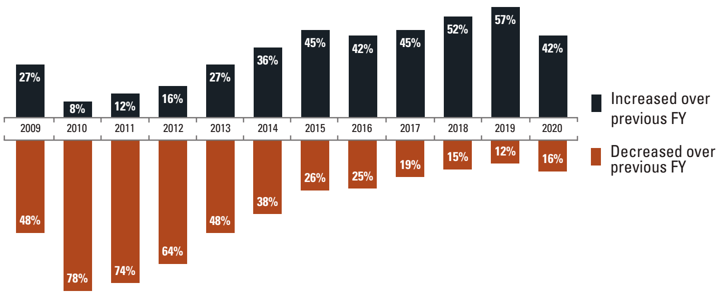
Figure 2e
Net current fiscal health, via the MPPS Fiscal Stress Index: percentage of jurisdictions reporting low fiscal stress minus percentage reporting medium or high stress, 2014-2020, by jurisdiction type



Looking at differences in net fiscal health by jurisdiction type, Michigan counties, villages, and townships report significant declines (see *Figure 2e*). Notably, in spring 2020, among counties there are almost equal numbers reporting medium or high fiscal stress as those reporting low stress (producing a net fiscal health of 2%, taking all counties together). On the other hand, cities actually show significant *improvement* on this measure of "net" fiscal health. This improvement in net assessments is primarily driven by cities that self-identify as rural or suburban locations, rather than by cities that self-identify as fully urban.

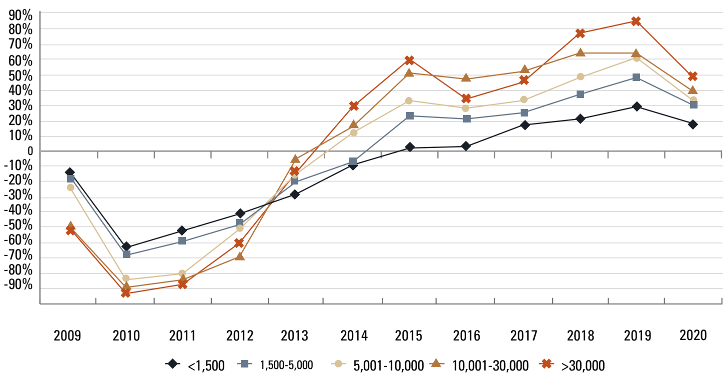
Local governments are more likely to report stagnant revenue from property taxes and state aid this year

Figure 3a
Percentage of jurisdictions overall reporting changes in property tax revenue compared with previous fiscal year, 2009-2020



Note: responses for "no change," "not applicable," and "don't know" not shown

Figure 3b
Net property tax yearly change: percentage of jurisdictions reporting increases in property tax revenue minus percentage reporting decreases in property tax revenue, 2009-2020, by population size

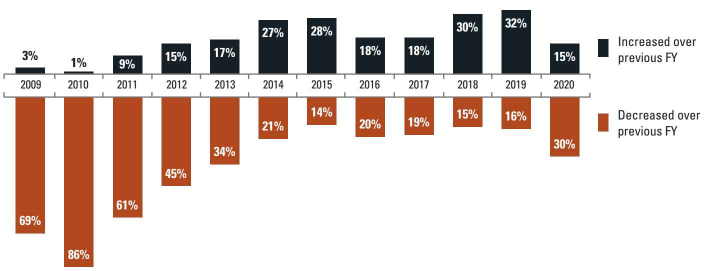


Property taxes are the most important source of revenue for most Michigan local governments, and at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic there was hope across the state that real estate values, and thus property taxes, would not plunge the way they did during the Great Recession.[4] In fact, in prior economic downturns in Michigan, property tax revenues have generally remained stable.[5] In the years following the Great Recession and housing market crisis, three-quarters of Michigan jurisdictions reported declining property tax revenues. As the housing market and the economy gradually recovered, local governments became more likely to report increasing property tax revenues. However, in 2020, as shown in *Figure 3a*, the percent of jurisdictions reporting increases in property tax revenues dropped from 57% in 2019 down to 42%, accompanied by a slight increase in the percent reporting property tax revenue decreases (16%, compared to 12% in 2019).

Jurisdictions of all sizes show a decrease in the net property tax calculation (the percentage of jurisdictions reporting increases in property tax revenue minus the percentage reporting decreases). This decline is particularly acute in the largest jurisdictions, where the net calculation dropped from 85% last year to 48% this year (see *Figure 3b*). Meanwhile, the smallest jurisdictions continue to report the lowest levels of net property tax yearly change.

Figure 4a

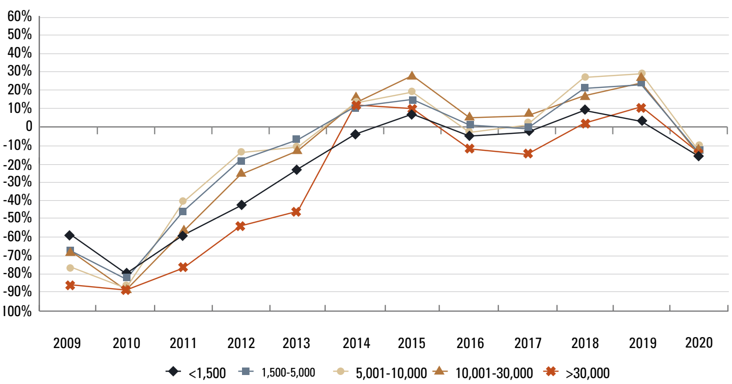
Percentage of jurisdictions overall reporting changes in state aid compared with previous fiscal year, 2009-2020



Note: responses for "no change," "not applicable," and "don't know" not shown

Figure 4b

Net state aid yearly change: percentage of jurisdictions reporting increases in state aid minus percentage reporting decreases in state aid, 2009-2020, by population size



Another important source of funding for local governments is state aid. As shown in *Figure 4a*, just 15% of jurisdictions report an increase in state aid received this year compared to the last fiscal year, while 30% say there has been a decrease. Although there have been fluctuations over time, this is the largest percentage of jurisdictions reporting a decrease since 2013. This coincides with just 22% of local governments saying they had received the financial resources they needed from the State of Michigan to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, as asked on the 2020 MPPS.[6] Assessments of state aid grew more negative over the course of the spring, with the percentage of jurisdictions reporting a decrease in state aid rising from 19% in the first week of the survey to 68% by late May. However, these assessments do not take into account subsequent actions by the State this year, for example, PA144 which created the Coronavirus Relief Local Government Grants (CRLGG) program to distribute funds from the CARES Act to eligible Michigan local governments.[7]

Looking by population category, declines in net state aid calculations are reported among jurisdictions of all sizes as of spring 2020 (see Figure *4b*).

Another important source of revenue for many local governments is fees for services, licenses, transfers, etc. In 2020, 25% of jurisdictions report a decline in revenue from this source compared to the prior year. This is a significantly higher percentage than the last time this question was asked on the MPPS, in 2017, when 10% reported declines (see *Appendix B*). As with other indicators of local government financial health, assessments of revenue from fees for services, licenses, transfers, etc. also worsened over the course of the spring, as the pandemic worsened across Michigan.

Data from 2009-2020 on changes in local government finances and operations this year compared to the last year are available in *Appendix B*.

Spring 2020 assessments of general fund balance and cash flow largely unchanged

Figure 5a
Percentage of officials saying their general fund balance is too high, too low, or about right, 2010-2020

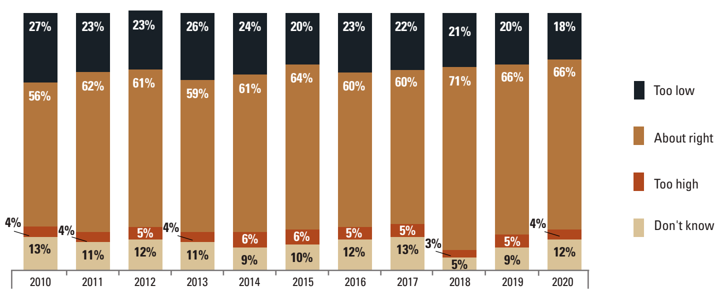
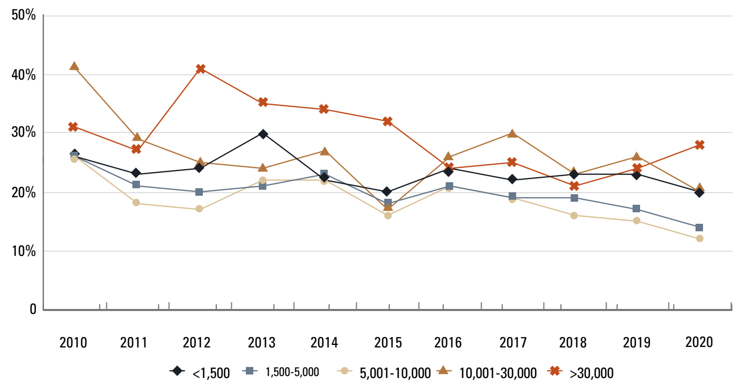


Figure 5b
Percentage of officials saying their general fund balance is too low, 2010-2020, by population size



The MPPS also tracks local governments' general fund balances each year, asking whether the balance is too high, about right, or too low to meet their jurisdiction's fiscal needs. As of spring 2020, 66% of local officials say their general fund balance is about right, unchanged from 2019 (see *Figure 5a*). Meanwhile, about one in five (18%) say their balance is too low, down slightly from 20% in 2019.

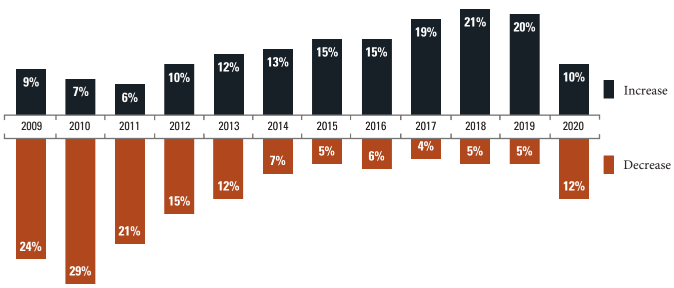
However, as shown in *Figure 5b*, among the state's largest jurisdictions, the percentage that say their general fund balance is too low has increased somewhat, from 24% last year to 28% this year, consistent with other indicators of higher fiscal stress among large jurisdictions.

By jurisdiction type, as of April and May 2020, approximately one-quarter of county (28%), city (27%) and village (26%) officials say their general fund balance is too low this year, compared with only 13% of township officials.

The MPPS also asks about the status of cash flow, a particularly sensitive indicator of fiscal stress. In a worrisome sign, the percentage of jurisdictions saying cash flow is "not a problem at all" dropped from 70% last year to 61% today. On the other hand, only 6% say it is "somewhat of a problem" or "a significant problem." Concerns about cash flow are more commonly reported among county officials, with 18% of counties (up from 12% last year) saying cash flow is a problem (somewhat or significant), compared to 7% for cities, 9% for villages, and 5% for townships.

Local governments more likely to consider service cuts next year compared to recent trends

Figure 6
Percentage of jurisdictions reporting planned changes in overall service provision in the coming year, 2009-2020



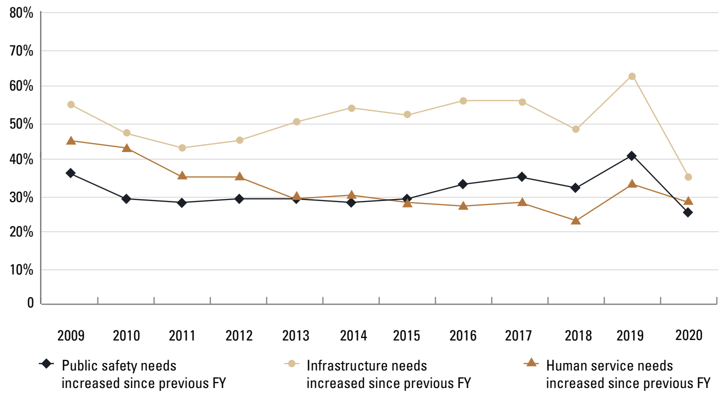
Note: responses for “no change,” “not applicable,” and “don’t know” not shown

Looking ahead to local government service provision in the next fiscal year, there is a large drop in the percentage of jurisdictions that expect to increase service levels, from about 20% each year from 2017 to 2019, down to 10% on the 2020 MPPS (see *Figure 6*). Additionally, statewide 12% of jurisdictions expect cuts to their overall level of services in the next fiscal year, the largest percentage since 2013. And although just 9% of Michigan’s smallest jurisdictions plan to cut services in the coming year, this rises to almost a third (31%) among the state’s largest jurisdictions. It is worth noting, though, that many of the smallest jurisdictions provide a very limited set of services in the first place, and so have fewer places to cut back.

Projections regarding service provision grew less optimistic over the course of the spring, as the pandemic spread and estimates of fiscal health declined. The percentage of local officials predicting a decrease in overall service provision in the coming year went from 9% in the first week of the survey in early April to 31% during the final week in late May.

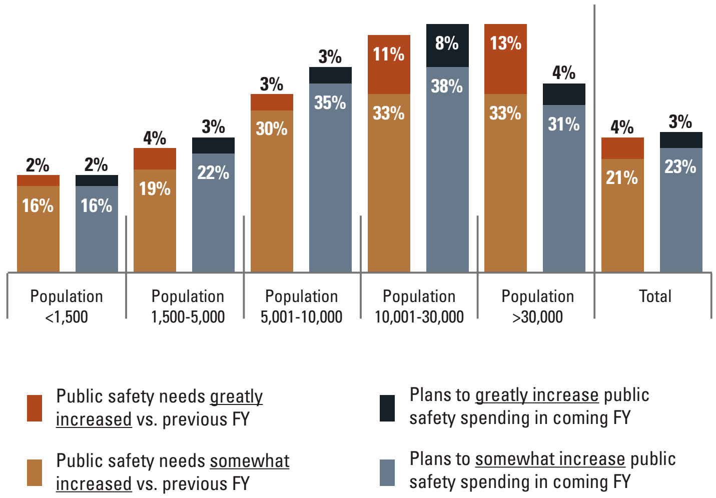
Reports of service needs rising less than in recent years, but human service needs continue to outpace predicted spending

Figure 7
Percentage of jurisdictions reporting increases in infrastructure, public safety, and human service needs compared with previous fiscal year, 2009-2020



A possible positive sign for Michigan local government fiscal health is that the percentages of local governments reporting that infrastructure, public safety, and human service needs have increased in the past year are at record lows since the MPPS started in 2009. For example, 35% of local leaders report increased infrastructure needs this year, down sharply from a spike to 63% in 2019 (see *Figure 7*). Similarly, just one quarter (25%) of Michigan local governments say public safety needs have increased this year, down sharply from 41% in 2019. Finally, and somewhat surprisingly, despite the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, reports of increasing human service needs were down slightly, with 28% of local jurisdictions reporting increases, compared with 33% reporting increases last year, although its unknown if this assessment may have changed through the second half of the year as the pandemic's impacts have persisted. It is also possible that expanded federal and state unemployment benefits early in the pandemic may have helped reduce local demands for human services during the spring.

Figure 8
Percentage of jurisdictions reporting increases in public safety needs and planned increases in actual public safety spending in the coming year, 2020, by population size



Looking ahead to the next fiscal year, with fewer jurisdictions reporting rising needs in these service areas, predictions about future spending generally match the levels of increasing need for most jurisdictions. For example, while 25% of jurisdictions report increased public safety needs in 2020, 26% plan to increase spending on public safety in the next fiscal year (see *Figure 8*).

Looking at infrastructure needs, predicted spending in this area is also largely expected to match increasing needs: 35% of jurisdictions report increased needs while 32% plan to increase spending (see *Figure 9*). However, one notable exception is found among the state's largest jurisdictions (those with more than 30,000 residents). In these largest jurisdictions, 54% report infrastructure needs that are somewhat (39%) or greatly (15%) increased compared to the previous fiscal year, while only 30% plan to increase spending on infrastructure in the next fiscal year.

Figure 9
Percentage of jurisdictions reporting increases in infrastructure needs and planned increases in actual infrastructure spending in the coming year, 2020, by population size

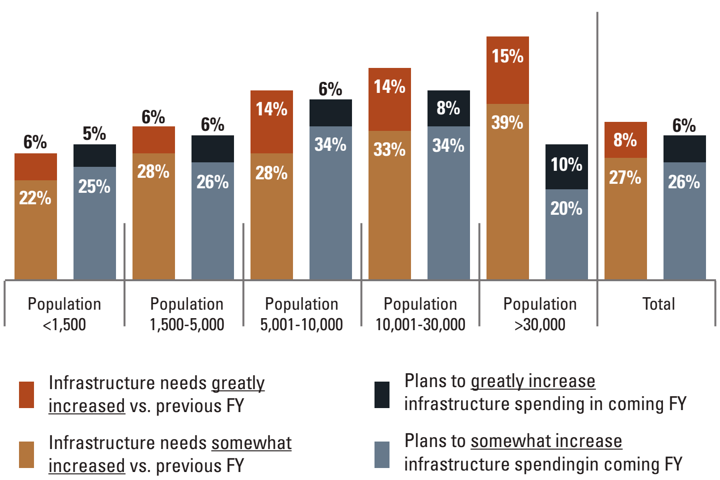
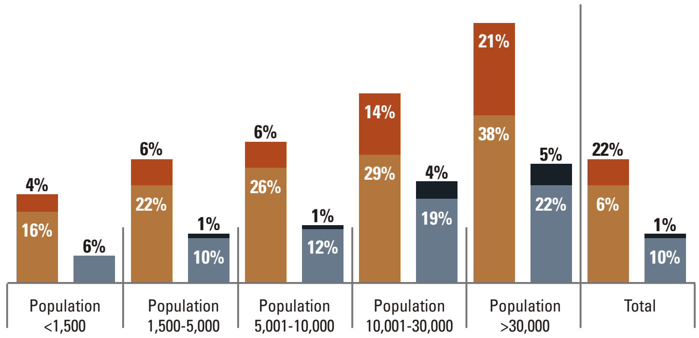


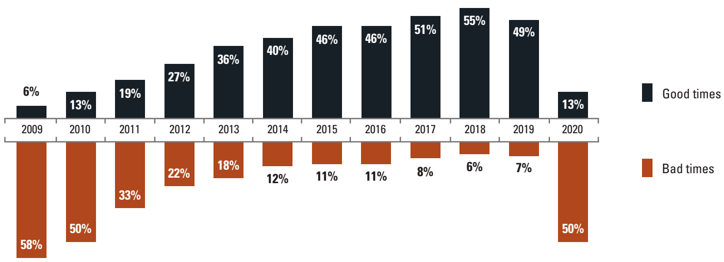
Figure 10
Percentage of jurisdictions reporting increases in human services needs and planned increases in actual human services spending in the coming year, 2020, by population size



Meanwhile, few jurisdictions expect to increase human services spending next year. As shown in *Figure 10*, just 11% of jurisdictions anticipate increasing human services spending, despite 28% reporting increased human service needs compared to the prior year. These shortfalls are reported across all population groups, and reflect a persistent pattern of under-spending reported on prior waves of the MPPS going back to 2010.

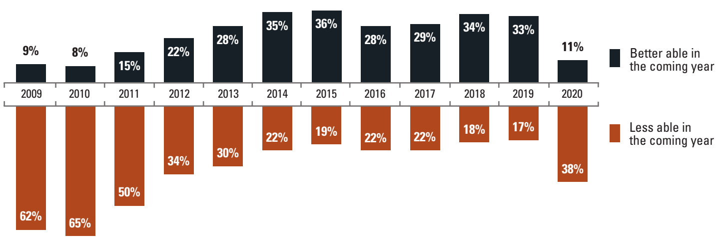
Data from 2009-2020 on local officials' plans for the coming year on a range of topics are available in *Appendix C*.

Figure 11
Percentage of jurisdictions overall predicting their community will have good or bad times financially, 2009-2020



Note: responses for "neither" and "don't know" not shown

Figure 12a
Percentage of jurisdictions predicting they will be better or less able to meet their fiscal needs in next year compared to current year, 2009-2020

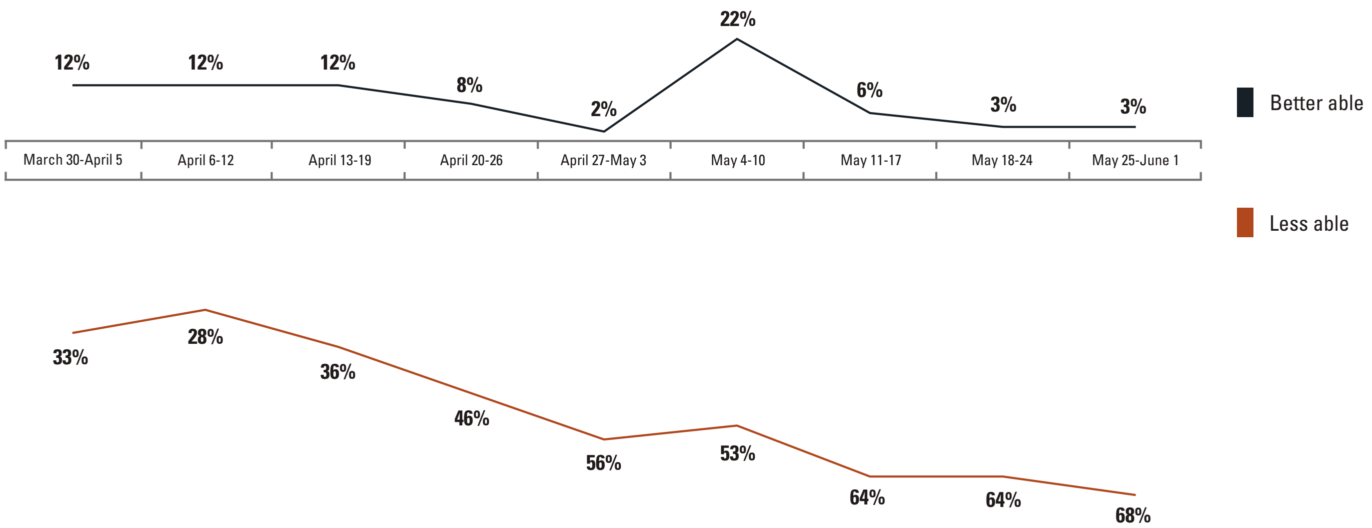


Note: responses for "neither" and "don't know" not shown

Beyond questions about the fiscal health of local governments themselves, the MPPS also asks local leaders to think about general business conditions in their communities, and to predict whether there will be good times or bad times financially in the coming year. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the state has led to a great deal of pessimism about the future economy. The decline, however, is so sharp as to match the pessimism found in the immediate aftermath of the Great Recession, in 2010. Following a slow but steady improvement since the end of the Great Recession, there was a slight decline in the percent of jurisdictions predicting good times in 2019, as talk of "the next recession" became more common among economists and others. This year, in April and May 2020, optimism about local economic conditions fell significantly, to levels not seen since 2010. Statewide, just 13% of local leaders predict good times financially in their local communities in the coming year, while 50% predict bad times (see *Figure 11*).

Thinking specifically about future changes in local governments' fiscal health, Michigan's local officials also predict a sharp decrease in their government's financial fortunes next year. Just 11% predict their jurisdiction will be better able to meet its fiscal needs in the next year compared with this year, while 38% say they will be less able (including 12% who say *significantly* less able). This represents a sharp reversal from 2018 and 2019 when 33-34% expected to be better able to meet needs in the subsequent year and 17-18% expected to be less able (see *Figure 12a*). Meanwhile, in 2020, 40% are expecting no change between this year and next year

Figure 12b
Percentage of jurisdictions predicting they will be better or less able to meet their fiscal needs in next year compared to current year, 2020, by week of survey response



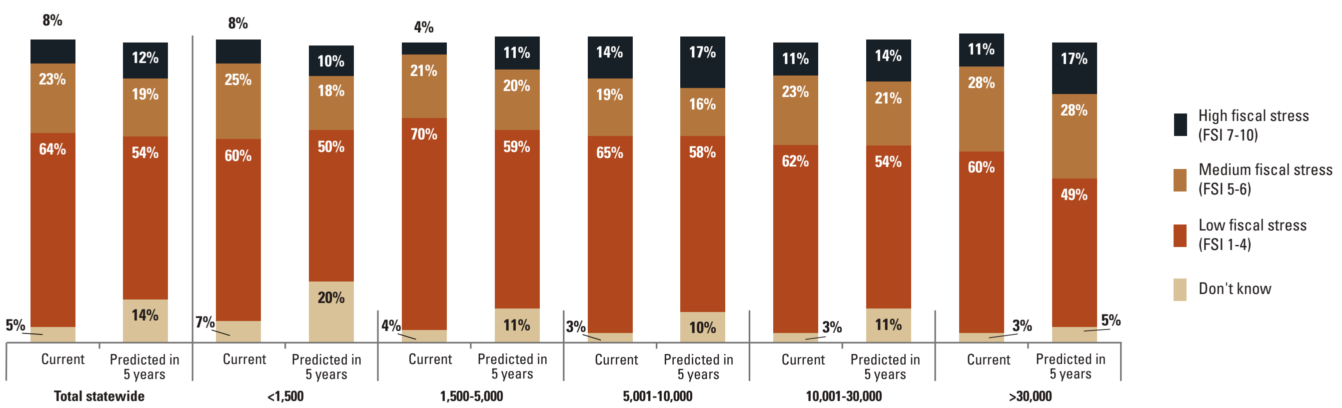
Like local leaders' reports of changes to fiscal health this year, expectations for the next fiscal year grew increasingly pessimistic over the spring and the simultaneous course of the MPPS field period, as the pandemic worsened across the state. At the start of the survey's field period on March 30, only 12% of local leaders predicted their jurisdictions would be better able to meet fiscal needs next year compared with this year, while 33% predicted they would be less able (see *Figure 12b*). By mid-May, in the 7th week of the survey, just 6% expected they would be better able, while a whopping 64% predicted they would be less able.

And in additional forecasting, when local officials are looking ahead to the next fiscal year, the percent predicting increased reliance on their general fund balance rises from 32% in 2019 to 36% in 2020, with reports by the 7th week of the MPPS field period rising to 52% predicting increased reliance on their general fund balance.

Increasing concerns and uncertainty about long-term fiscal concerns

Looking even farther down the road reveals additional concerns about long-term fiscal health. Although many local officials didn't expect significant negative long-term impacts from COVID-19 on their jurisdiction's government operations when surveyed in the spring,[8] 12% predicted they will have high fiscal stress in five years, compared to 8% who say they are experiencing it now (see *Figure 13*). Meanwhile, 54% expect low fiscal stress five years from now, down from 64% who say they have low stress today. These concerns are most prevalent among officials from the state's largest jurisdictions, among whom 17% predict they will have high fiscal stress in five years, and fewer than half (49%) expect to have low stress. However, there is considerable uncertainty, particularly in the smallest jurisdictions, where 20% say they don't know what their local government fiscal stress will be five years down the road.

Figure 13
Officials' predictions of their jurisdiction's fiscal stress in five years, by population size



However, it is worthwhile noting that some of these expectations about future fiscal stress existed even before the COVID-19 pandemic began. While the 54% who expect low fiscal stress five years from now is also down somewhat from 62% who reported expectations of low stress in five years on the pre-pandemic 2019 survey, the 12% of jurisdictions predicting high stress in 5 years on the 2020 survey (is essentially unchanged from expectations in 2019 (when 11% expected high stress five years down the road).

Conclusion

In April and May 2020, amid the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MPPS found increasing concerns among Michigan local government leaders about the state of their jurisdiction's fiscal health. One-third (34%) of local governments this year (up from 17% last year) report that they are less able to meet their fiscal needs today compared with last year, while just 15% say they are better able to do so (compared with 36% last year). Even worse, these assessments were significantly more pessimistic by mid-May, as the first wave of the pandemic crested in Michigan.

As of spring 2020, most local governments still rate their fiscal stress as relatively low, but there are signs of trouble, as more governments report stagnating, or even declining, revenues from property taxes and state aid. Few local governments expect to be able to increase service levels, and 12% plan service cuts, the largest percentage since 2013.

Looking ahead, over the next year, Michigan's local government leaders overwhelmingly predict bad times for their local economies, at a rate that matches the immediate aftermath of the Great Recession in 2010. They are also concerned about their ability to meet their jurisdiction's fiscal needs in the next year, with 38% predicting they will be less able to do so compared to the current year, and just 11% saying they will be better able. Looking five years ahead, 54% of jurisdictions statewide expect to be experiencing low levels of fiscal stress, down from 64% experience low stress today, while 12% expect high fiscal stress at that time, up from 8% today.

Notes

1. Leiser, S. & Mills, S. (2019). Local Government Fiscal Health: Comparing Self-Assessments to Conventional Measures. *Public Budgeting and Finance.* Volume 39:3. pp. 75-96.

2. Horner, D., Ivacko, T., & Fitzpatrick, N. (2020, June). The initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Michigan communities and local governments. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan. Retrieved from http://closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey/80/the-initial-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-michigan-communities-and-local-governments

3. Cavitt, M. (2020, August 30). Michigan's local governments to receive $150 million in federal coronavirus relief. *The Oakland Press*. Retrieved from https://www.theoaklandpress.com/news/michigans-local-governments-to-receive-150-million-in-federal-coronavirus-relief/article_4cb5bcde-e955-11ea-9139-5bab75fb06f7.html

4. Reindl, J. (2020, May 28). As Michigan economy crumbles, home prices jump higher. *Detroit Free Press*. Retrieved from https://www.freep.com/story/money/real-estate/2020/05/28/michigan-economy-crumbles-home-prices-higher-coronavirus-real-estate/5214586002/

5. Roof, J. (2020). Local Government COVID-19 Fiscal Strategy and Resource Guide: Will Property Taxes be Immune to the Effects of COVID-19. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan. Retrieved from: http://closup.umich.edu/COVID-19/memos/property-taxes-and-COVID-19

6. Horner, Ivacko, & Fitzpatrick. (2020, June).

7. https://www.michigan.gov/treasury/0,4679,7-121-1751_2197-537631--,00.html

8. Horner, Ivacko, & Fitzpatrick. (2020, June).

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 2020 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 2020 wave was conducted from March 30 – June 1, 2020. A total of 1,342 jurisdictions in the Spring 2020 wave returned valid surveys (59 counties, 216 cities, 163 villages, and 904 townships), resulting in a 72% response rate by unit. The margin of error for the survey for the survey as a whole is +/- 1.41%. 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/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.

Appendices

Appendix A
Net fiscal health yearly change: percentage of jurisdictions reporting improving fiscal health minus percentage reporting declining health, 2019-2020, by county

County Name	% Less Able to Meet Fiscal Needs	% Neither Better nor Less Able	% Better Able to Meet Fiscal Needs	% Don't Know	Net Yearly Change for 2020
ALCONA	48%	52%	0%	0%	-48%
ALGER	51%	32%	17%	0%	-34%
ALLEGAN	45%	37%	13%	5%	-32%
ALPENA	46%	29%	25%	0%	-21%
ANTRIM	36%	53%	5%	6%	-31%
ARENAC	15%	70%	8%	8%	-7%
BARAGA	37%	45%	0%	18%	-37%
BARRY	48%	26%	26%	0%	-22%
BAY	46%	25%	23%	6%	-23%
BENZIE	22%	57%	14%	6%	-8%
BERRIEN	42%	46%	9%	3%	-33%
BRANCH	39%	22%	20%	19%	-19%
CALHOUN	32%	46%	16%	6%	-16%
CASS	33%	46%	21%	0%	-12%
CHARLEVOIX	22%	71%	8%	0%	-14%
CHEBOYGAN	38%	24%	32%	7%	-6%
CHIPPEWA	24%	58%	10%	9%	-14%
CLARE	24%	50%	26%	0%	2%
CLINTON	25%	52%	23%	0%	-2%
CRAWFORD	46%	28%	26%	0%	-20%
DELTA	48%	32%	20%	0%	-28%
DICKINSON	0%	59%	27%	15%	27%
EATON	34%	44%	13%	9%	-21%
EMMET	37%	63%	0%	0%	-37%
GENESEE	35%	34%	27%	4%	-8%

GLADWIN	35%	65%	0%	0%	-35%
GOGEBIC	11%	52%	37%	0%	26%
GRAND TRAVERSE	18%	49%	22%	11%	4%
GRATIOT	61%	27%	6%	6%	-55%
HILLSDALE	27%	47%	19%	7%	-8%
HOUGHTON	51%	42%	0%	8%	-51%
HURON	10%	71%	20%	0%	10%
INGHAM	33%	47%	20%	0%	-13%
IONIA	30%	58%	6%	6%	-24%
IOSCO	23%	68%	9%	0%	-14%
IRON	65%	35%	0%	0%	-65%
ISABELLA	29%	47%	15%	8%	-14%
JACKSON	38%	62%	0%	0%	-38%
KALAMAZOO	47%	42%	0%	11%	-47%
KALKASKA	35%	48%	18%	0%	-17%
KENT	33%	46%	20%	0%	-13%
KEWEENAW	52%	48%	0%	0%	-52%
LAKE	28%	51%	8%	14%	-20%
LAPEER	42%	58%	0%	0%	-42%
LEELANAU	21%	65%	14%	0%	-7%
LENAWEE	38%	51%	11%	0%	-27%
LIVINGSTON	26%	61%	12%	0%	-14%
LUCE	61%	39%	0%	0%	-61%
MACKINAC	18%	30%	40%	12%	22%
MACOMB	56%	13%	26%	6%	-30%
MANISTEE	22%	58%	7%	12%	-15%
MARQUETTE	37%	38%	20%	6%	-17%
MASON	30%	64%	6%	0%	-24%
MECOSTA	36%	43%	6%	16%	-30%

MENOMINEE	18%	64%	6%	12%	-12%
MIDLAND	22%	63%	7%	7%	-15%
MISSAUKEE	12%	69%	19%	0%	7%
MONROE	39%	44%	17%	0%	-22%
MONTCALM	44%	37%	19%	0%	-25%
MONTMORENCY	23%	53%	0%	24%	-23%
MUSKEGON	34%	37%	24%	5%	-10%
NEWAYGO	40%	44%	16%	0%	-24%
OAKLAND	33%	54%	10%	2%	-23%
OCEANA	41%	46%	6%	7%	-35%
OGEMAW	24%	68%	0%	7%	-24%
ONTONAGON	31%	48%	21%	0%	-10%
OSCEOLA	47%	37%	7%	8%	-40%
OSCODA	53%	47%	0%	0%	-53%
OTSEGO	48%	34%	9%	10%	-39%
OTTAWA	36%	45%	14%	4%	-22%
PRESQUE ISLE	14%	60%	19%	6%	5%
ROSCOMMON	62%	38%	0%	0%	-62%
SAGINAW	33%	27%	26%	14%	-7%
SANILAC	40%	50%	3%	7%	-37%
SCHOOLCRAFT	0%	52%	0%	48%	0%
SHIAWASSEE	30%	62%	8%	0%	-22%
ST CLAIR	20%	45%	23%	12%	3%
ST JOSEPH	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%
TUSCOLA	29%	45%	26%	0%	-3%
VAN BUREN	46%	35%	16%	4%	-30%
WASHTENAW	30%	49%	22%	0%	-8%
WAYNE	44%	38%	13%	3%	-31%
WEXFORD	0%	71%	10%	19%	10%

Appendix B
Conditions in the current fiscal year compared to the previous fiscal year, 2009-2020

		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Revenue from property tax	Increased	27%	8%	12%	16%	27%	36%	45%	42%	45%	52%	57%	42%
	Decreased	48%	78%	74%	64%	48%	38%	26%	25%	19%	15%	12%	16%
Revenue from fees for services, licenses, transfers, etc.	Increased	7%	4%	7%	10%	13%	17%	18%	19%	21%			15%
	Decreased	54%	59%	47%	34%	26%	18%	13%	12%	10%			25%
Amount of debt	Increased			12%	12%	14%	12%	15%	14%	16%		17%	
	Decreased			18%	21%	22%	21%	20%	21%	19%		18%	
Ability of jurisdiction to repay its debt	Increased			7%	12%	14%	15%	18%	13%	14%	14%	18%	8%
	Decreased			7%	7%	6%	4%	4%	6%	3%	2%	3%	8%
Amount of federal aid to jurisdiction	Increased	9%	8%	3%	5%	4%	5%	6%	4%	6%			
	Decreased	38%	39%	29%	22%	21%	14%	11%	13%	14%			
Amount of state aid to jurisdiction	Increased	3%	1%	9%	15%	17%	27%	28%	18%	17%	30%	32%	15%
	Decreased	69%	86%	61%	45%	34%	21%	14%	20%	19%	15%	16%	30%
Number of tax delinquencies	Increased		46%	47%	40%	30%	23%	20%	19%	16%	15%	16%	
	Decreased		20%	12%	12%	13%	15%	16%	17%	15%	15%	14%	
Number of home foreclosures	Increased		60%	56%	41%	29%	18%	15%	13%	10%			
	Decreased		16%	10%	17%	25%	31%	33%	29%	26%			
Public safety needs	Increased	36%	29%	28%	29%	29%	28%	29%	33%	35%	32%	41%	25%
	Decreased	9%	6%	3%	3%	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%	5%	4%	7%
Infrastructure needs	Increased	55%	47%	43%	45%	50%	54%	52%	56%	56%	48%	63%	35%
	Decreased	12%	7%	5%	5%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	7%	4%	10%
Human service needs	Increased	45%	43%	35%	35%	29%	30%	28%	27%	28%	23%	33%	28%
	Decreased	8%	6%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	8%
General government operations needs	Increased						34%	34%	34%	36%	37%	42%	28%
	Decreased						1%	1%	2%	3%	3%	2%	9%
Number of employees	Increased		2%	2%	3%	4%	8%	10%	10%	13%	14%	14%	
	Decreased		27%	23%	19%	16%	9%	7%	6%	5%	5%	5%	
Pay rates for employee wages and salaries	Increased	36%	20%	21%	27%	39%	46%	53%	51%	57%			
	Decreased	15%	13%	10%	7%	5%	3%	1%	1%	2%			
Cost of employee pensions	Increased	40%	30%	22%	21%	24%	25%	26%	28%	30%	25%	26%	25%
	Decreased	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Cost of current employee health benefits	Increased	51%	47%	35%	32%	31%	34%	34%	33%	36%	35%	34%	31%
	Decreased	6%	8%	7%	8%	8%	4%	5%	4%	2%	2%	3%	2%

Cost of retired employee health benefits	Increased	31%	24%	17%	16%	16%	17%	15%	16%	18%	15%	16%	15%
	Decreased	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%

Notes: Responses for "no change," "don't know," and "not applicable" not shown.
Percentages are based on all responding jurisdictions (not just those that selected an option other than "not applicable").
The "not applicable" response option was added in 2011, so direct comparisons with earlier waves may be compromised.
Question text for "pay rates for employee wage & salaries" changed slightly between 2010 and 2011. See web tables for exact question text.

Appendix C
Predicted actions for the coming fiscal year compared to the current fiscal year, 2009-2020

		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Property tax rates	Increase	18%	10%	15%	15%	22%	23%	27%	22%	26%	25%	28%	18%
	Decrease	17%	32%	19%	15%	12%	7%	5%	6%	5%	4%	4%	8%
Charges for fees for services, licenses, etc.	Increase	23%	22%	20%	19%	21%	18%	18%	18%	23%			16%
	Decrease	7%	7%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%			5%
Reliance on general fund balance	Increase		49%	36%	34%	30%	27%	26%	30%	28%	30%	32%	36%
	Decrease		8%	8%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%
Reliance on "rainy day" funds	Increase		38%	25%	21%	19%	17%	17%	17%	17%			
	Decrease		7%	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%			
Amount of services provided	Increase	9%	7%	6%	10%	12%	13%	15%	15%	19%	21%	20%	10%
	Decrease	24%	29%	21%	15%	12%	7%	5%	6%	4%	5%	5%	12%
Actual public safety spending	Increase	26%	22%	20%	22%	27%	33%	34%	34%	33%	35%	39%	26%
	Decrease	18%	22%	16%	9%	7%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%	4%	7%
Actual infrastructure spending	Increase	28%	25%	23%	32%	34%	42%	43%	42%	45%	49%	51%	32%
	Decrease	30%	34%	21%	10%	10%	7%	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%	14%
Actual human services spending	Increase		6%	5%	6%	8%	9%	9%	8%	10%	11%	11%	11%
	Decrease		17%	10%	6%	4%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	5%
Actual general government operations spending	Increase						39%	40%	39%	38%	39%	39%	27%
	Decrease						6%	6%	5%	5%	5%	3%	14%
Funding for economic development programs	Increase	14%	12%	8%	11%	13%	12%	13%	12%	14%			
	Decrease	17%	20%	12%	9%	8%	5%	5%	4%	4%			
Amount of debt	Increase	21%	18%	11%	14%	15%	13%	15%	15%	17%		17%	17%
	Decrease	12%	13%	15%	16%	17%	18%	17%	15%	16%		13%	9%
Sale of public assets (i.e., parks, buildings, etc.)	Increase		5%	5%	6%	6%	7%	7%	7%	9%			
	Decrease		1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%			
Privatizing or contracting out of services	Increase	16%	18%	15%	12%	12%	10%	10%	10%	11%	13%	14%	11%
	Decrease	4%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%
Number and/or scope of interlocal agreements or cost-sharing plans	Increase	32%	38%	40%	40%	34%	30%	22%	18%	18%	17%	21%	13%
	Decrease	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%
Jurisdiction's workforce hiring	Increase	3%	1%	2%	2%	4%	8%	8%					
	Decrease	20%	22%	14%	8%	8%	3%	3%					
Jurisdiction not filling vacant positions	Increase	22%	23%	16%	10%	9%	7%	5%					
	Decrease	3%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%					

Number of employees	Increase								9%	11%	11%	12%	6%
	Decrease								4%	5%	4%	3%	8%
Employee pay rates	Increase			21%	30%	40%	47%	53%	48%	56%	61%	63%	44%
	Decrease			6%	4%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%
Employees' share of premiums, deductibles, and/ or co-pays on health insurance	Increase		33%	30%	30%	27%	26%	22%	17%	17%	17%	15%	
	Decrease		2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Employees' share of contributions to retirement funds	Increase		15%	14%	13%	13%	11%	11%	11%	12%	10%	11%	
	Decrease		1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	
Retirees' share of premiums, deductibles, and/ or co-pays on health insurance	Increase		22%	18%	15%	15%	14%	13%	11%	10%	8%	8%	
	Decrease		1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	

Notes: Responses for “no change,” “don’t know,” and “not applicable” not shown.
Percentages are based on all responding jurisdictions (not just those that selected an option other than “not applicable”).
The “not applicable” response option was added in 2011, so direct comparisons with earlier waves may be compromised.

Previous MPPS reports

Michigan local leaders say local democracy is strong, as their trust in government and citizens rises (October 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)

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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)

The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

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/michigan-public-policy-survey

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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.

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