

# The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

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

Michigan Public  
Policy Survey July 2020

## Local leaders' evaluations of Michigan's direction and Governor's performance during the COVID-19 pandemic's arrival

By Debra Horner and Thomas Ivacko

This report presents the opinions of Michigan's local government leaders regarding the direction in which the state is headed, as well as their evaluations of the job performance of Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Legislature. These findings are based on statewide surveys of local government leaders in the Spring 2020 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS)—conducted between March 30 and June 1, 2020, the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic in Michigan—and tracking comparisons to previous spring waves.

>> 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.

For more information, please contact: [closup-mpps@umich.edu](mailto:closup-mpps@umich.edu) / (734) 647-4091. You can also follow us on Twitter @closup

**CLOSUP**

Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

 Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy



**GERALD R. FORD SCHOOL  
OF PUBLIC POLICY**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

## Key Findings

- Statewide, nearly half (46%) of Michigan's local officials said in April and May 2020 that the state has gotten off on the wrong track, while 39% said the state is generally going in the right direction, an improvement over assessments in 2019. However, the percentage saying "right direction" declined over the course of the survey field period, in conjunction with the spreading COVID-19 pandemic.
  - » As in previous MPPS tracking, local leaders' views on the state's direction are strongly associated with partisan identification. In Spring 2020, among local officials who self-identify as Republican, just a quarter (26%) said the state is headed in the right direction, down from 31% who said the same last year. Meanwhile, among Independents, 39% said the state is headed in the right direction, up from 24% last year. And among Democratic local officials, 72% said the state is headed in the right direction, up sharply from 51% who said so in 2019.
  - » However, views shifted over the survey's two-month field period, as impacts of COVID-19 spread across the state. Although 40% of officials overall believed Michigan was headed in the right direction during the week of March 30-April 6, only 24% said so during the final week ending June 1. Local concerns over not getting the financial and public health resources their governments need to respond to the pandemic are associated with beliefs that the state is on the wrong track.
- Although only 39% of local officials statewide rated Governor Gretchen Whitmer's job performance as "good" or "excellent," this was significantly higher than her 2019 ratings (23%), with most change coming from those who said "don't know" last year, when she had been in office for just a few months. By contrast, 27% rated the Governor's performance in 2020 as only fair and 31% rated her performance as poor.
  - » Evaluations of Governor Whitmer improved across all partisan groups in 2020. Positive ratings for the Governor were found among 82% of Democratic local leaders (up from 63% last year), 45% of Independents (up from 23%), and 18% of Republicans (up from 12%).
  - » However, the Governor's positive ratings also declined over the course of the survey period, from 41% during the first week of April to 27% by June 1, driven primarily by declines among Republican officials.
- Although just 31% of local officials statewide said the Michigan Legislature's performance is either excellent or good in 2020, this is up from 21% last year and represents the highest ratings for the Legislature since the MPPS began tracking them in 2011.

### **Background**

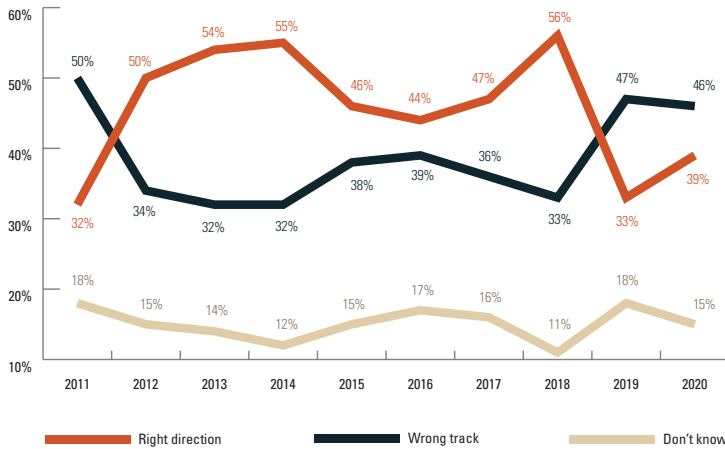
As in each of the past nine years, the 2020 MPPS survey asked Michigan's local leaders whether they feel the state is generally going in the right direction, or if things have gotten off on the wrong track. The survey also gathered their opinions on the job performance of Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Legislature, as it has done each year since 2011. The following report presents these views among the chief elected and appointed officials who run local governments in all kinds of communities across Michigan—from the largest and most densely populated urban areas in the southeast, to the smallest, most rural and sparsely-populated areas of the Upper Peninsula—and places these views in context of tracking done over almost a decade going back to 2011 when communities were just beginning to recover from the Great Recession.

Of course, during the first half of this year, Michigan has faced a series of unprecedented challenges related to the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent statewide state of emergency and stay-at-home orders that had huge impacts on the state's economy. In fact, the spring 2020 MPPS was in the field gathering local leaders' opinions throughout April and May, as the pandemic arrived and spread unevenly across the state.

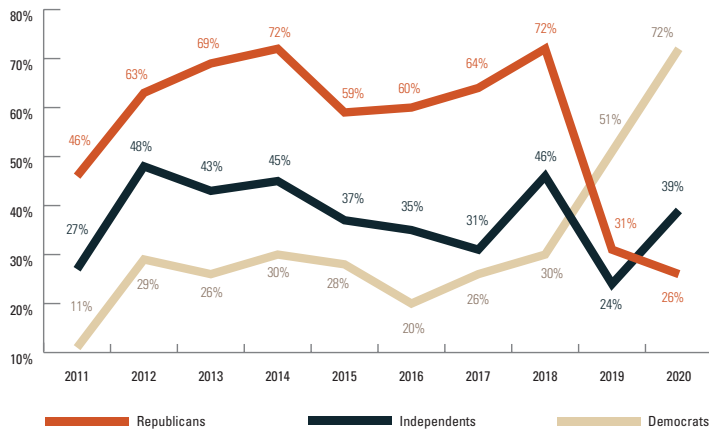
Other major developments this spring—the widespread protests and marches stemming from the May 25th death of George Floyd in Minneapolis at the hands of a local police officer—took place largely after the MPPS already finished gathering data, and therefore are not reflected in the views reported below.



**Figure 1a**  
Percentage of local officials who say Michigan is headed in the 'right direction' or is off on the 'wrong track,' 2011-2020



**Figure 1b**  
Percentage of local officials who say Michigan is headed in the 'right direction' in 2011-2020, by partisan identification



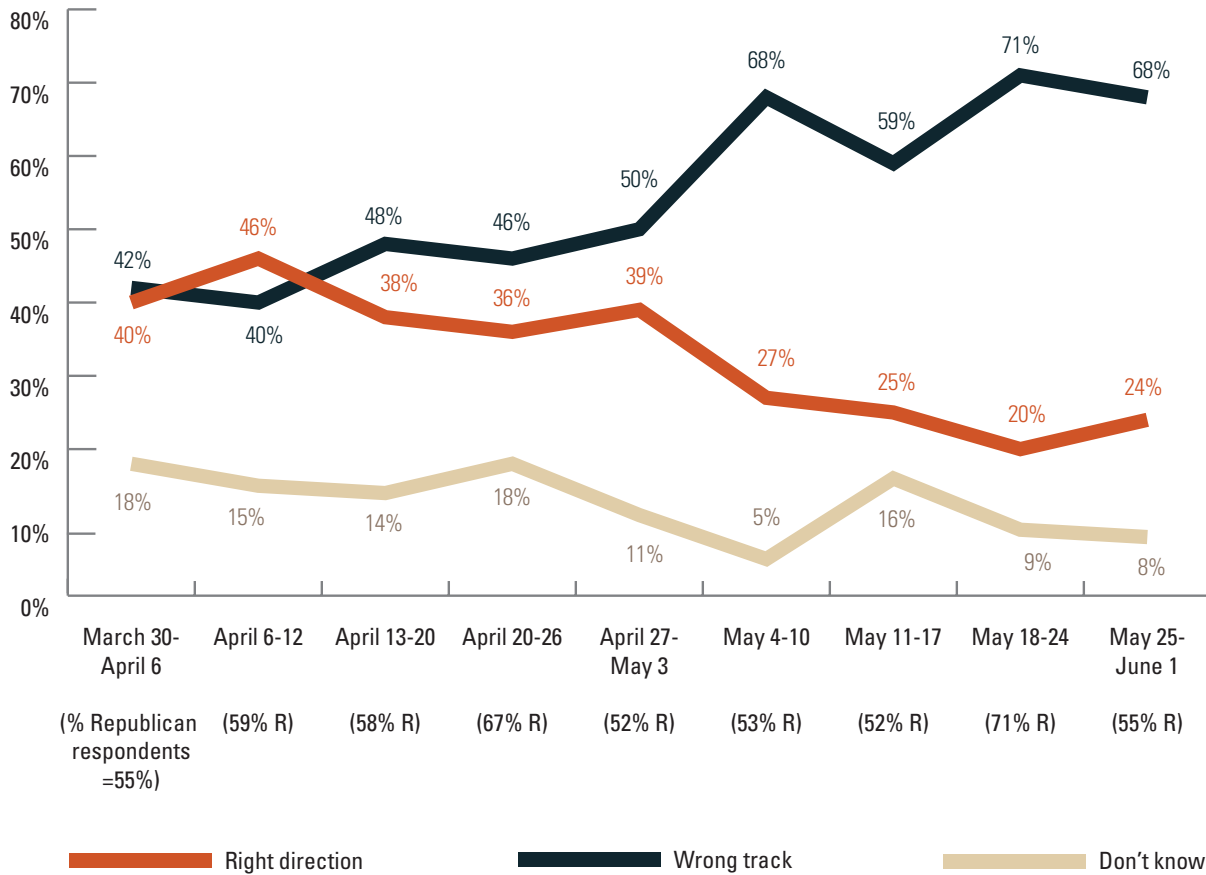
## Local officials' confidence in Michigan's direction up slightly in 2020, but has declined throughout the spring

As shown in *Figure 1a*, concerns continue from last year among local leaders about the direction the state is headed, with more saying in April and May 2020 that the state is off on the wrong track (46%) than saying it is heading in the right direction (39%). However, while the overall percentage saying the state is on the wrong track remains relatively unchanged compared to 2019, more local leaders say Michigan is headed in the right direction this year, compared with 2019 (39% vs. 33%).

As it has since MPPS tracking began, partisan identification continues to play a crucial role in these assessments, and breaking down the overall percentages by partisanship illustrates the significantly different opinions among Michigan's local officials. Michigan has 1,240 townships—most of which are small and rural—compared with 533 cities and villages and 83 counties, and so the bulk of local governments in the MPPS survey are most often represented by Republican local leaders. For example, according to responses on the 2020 MPPS, 57% of Michigan local government leaders identify themselves as Republicans, while 27% say they are Democrats, and 15% identify as Independents. (By comparison, according to Gallup polling in 2018, 39% of Michigan citizens identify themselves as Republicans, while 45% self-identify as Democrats, and 16% as Independents.<sup>1</sup>)

Looking over time, while Republican Governor Rick Snyder was in office from 2011-2018, Republican local officials consistently expressed more optimism about the state's direction, compared with Democrats and Independents. However, since the beginning of Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer's administration in 2019, the views of Republicans and Democrats have flipped. As shown in *Figure 1b*, only around a quarter (26%) of local officials who identify themselves as Republican say the state is going in the right direction, down from 31% in 2019. However, among officials who identify as Democrats, 72% now say that Michigan is going in the right direction, up from 51% who said so in 2019. Meanwhile, local officials who identify themselves as Independents also express increased optimism compared with last year, with 39% saying Michigan is going in the right direction, up from 24% in 2019.

**Figure 2**  
Percentage of local officials who say Michigan is headed in the ‘right direction’ or is off on the ‘wrong track’ in 2020, by week of survey response



While local officials’ assessments of the state heading in the “right direction” increased overall in 2020 compared to 2019, the rapidly changing events associated with the COVID-19 pandemic this spring appear to have negatively impacted those evaluations over the course of the survey field period. The MPPS typically has a long field period, with the Spring 2020 wave collecting responses from Michigan local officials for nine weeks (launching on March 30 and closing on June 1). This period largely coincided with the initial progression of COVID-19 cases in the state and the concurrent economic shutdown.<sup>2</sup> *Figure 2* displays the responses statewide during each week of the MPPS field period, with the percentage of Republican local leaders among respondents by week indicated in the x-axis. (Please see the endnotes for a brief description of statistical analysis of the MPPS responses week-over-week.<sup>3</sup>)

As shown in *Figure 2*, in the first week of the survey (March 30-April 6), similar percentages of local leaders said Michigan was either headed in the right direction (40%) or off on the wrong track (42%). And in the second week of April, “right direction” responses (46%) briefly overtook those for “wrong track” (40%). However, over the subsequent six weeks as the pandemic spread and the state’s economy suffered, the percentages saying “right direction” and “wrong track” flipped again, and grew further apart by the end of the survey on June 1.

A sharp increase in “wrong track” evaluations came during the first week of May, when President Donald Trump had pushed for economies to re-open and protests over Governor Whitmer’s stay-at-home order first descended on Lansing.<sup>4</sup> By the end of May, negative evaluations had risen further, though primarily so among Republican local leaders. By the final week of the survey, 68% of responding local leaders overall said Michigan was on the wrong track compared to just a quarter (24%) who



answered “right direction.” This decline mirrored similar changes found in national public opinion polling, as fewer and fewer Americans said the nation was headed in the right direction throughout the spring, as the pandemic spread across the nation.<sup>5</sup>

Although party ID has, by far, the strongest correlation with local leaders’ attitudes about the direction of the state, analysis using statistical regression reveals additional factors correlated with these evaluations. In particular, local leaders’ views on whether their local governments were getting the public health and financial resources they needed to address the COVID-19 crisis are associated with evaluations of the direction of the state. In April and May, only 35% of local leaders statewide reported that they had received the public health resources needed from the state government and only 22% said they were getting sufficient financial support.<sup>6</sup> These views on lack of state government support are an important factor in local leaders’ assessments of the state being on the wrong track, even when taking into account—or “holding constant”—their partisan affiliations. By comparison, and somewhat surprisingly, local leaders’ reports on the actual current impacts of COVID-19 on their local economies and on their governments had little independent statistical relationship. In other words, it does not appear to be the impacts of the pandemic itself, but instead the state and federal governments’ policy responses to support local jurisdictions that play a particularly important role in local leaders’ evaluations this year, regardless of partisanship. As will be seen later in this report, this is even more strongly the case for their views on the job performance of the Governor and Michigan Legislature.

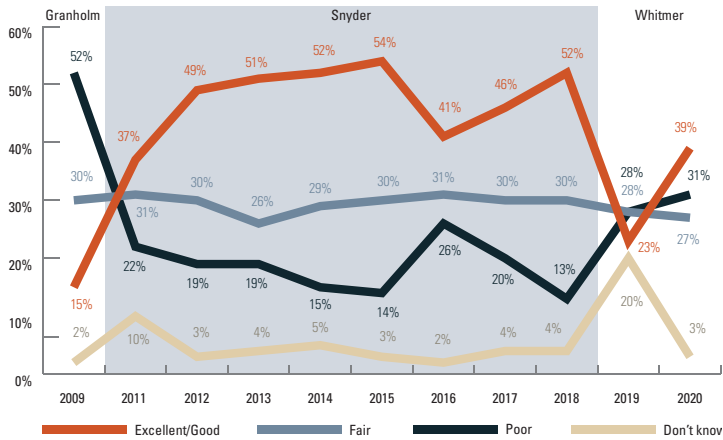
As shown in *Table 1*, local leaders who strongly or somewhat agreed that they *were* getting the public health and financial resources they needed were significantly more likely to believe Michigan is heading in the right direction, while those who disagreed were more likely to say the state is off on the wrong track.

**Table 1**  
Percentage of local officials who say Michigan is headed in the ‘right direction’ or is off on the ‘wrong track’ in 2020, by assessments of whether getting necessary resources to address COVID-19 in community

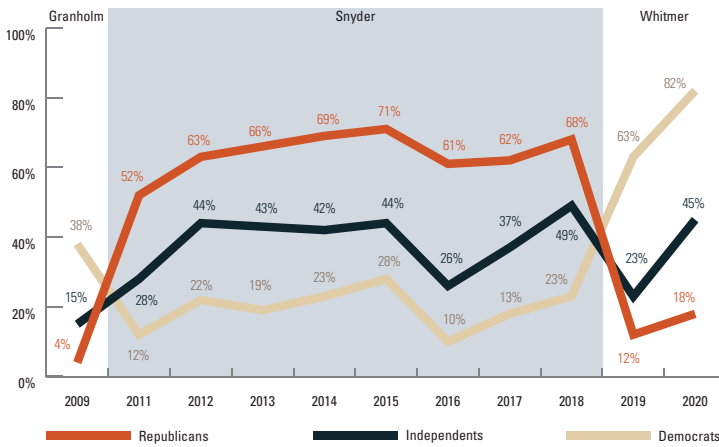
Is jurisdiction getting the public health resources it needs from the State government?				
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Michigan going in right direction	55%	46%	34%	20%
Michigan off on wrong track	28%	42%	55%	70%
Is jurisdiction getting the financial resources it needs from the State government?				
Michigan going in right direction	57%	49%	27%	24%
Michigan off on wrong track	28%	41%	65%	66%

Note: responses for “neither agree nor disagree” and “don’t know” not shown

**Figure 3a**  
Local officials' evaluations of Governor Whitmer's performance compared with previous Governors' performances, 2009-2020



**Figure 3b**  
Percentage of local officials who rate the Governor's performance as 'excellent' or 'good' in 2009-2020, by partisan identification



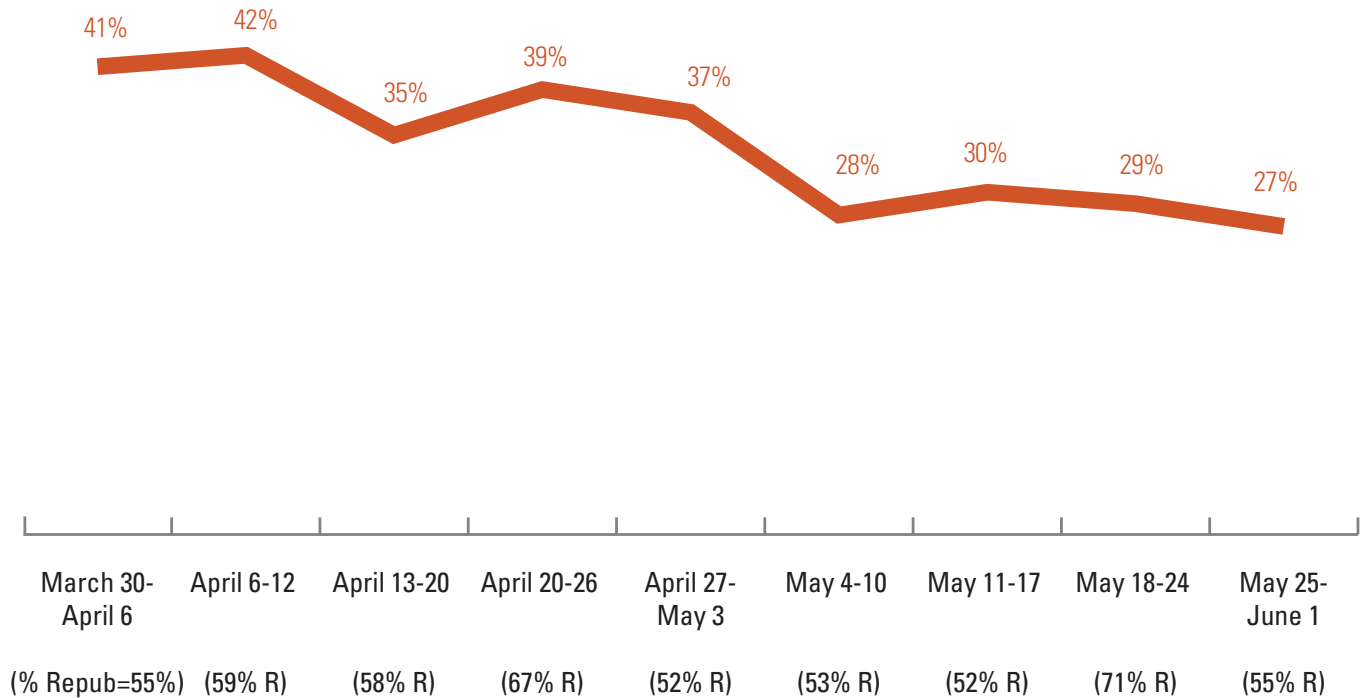
## Ratings of Governor Whitmer's performance also up early in the survey wave, but decline over the course of COVID-19 pandemic response

Statewide over the full MPPS survey period, local leaders' positive assessments of Governor Whitmer's job performance are up substantially from last year, when she first took office. On the 2020 MPPS, 39% of local officials rated Governor Whitmer's performance as either excellent or good, up from just 23% in 2019 (see *Figure 3a*). Most of this increase came from officials who said "don't know" in last year's survey, when she had only been in office for a few months. Meanwhile, another 27% said she's doing a fair job, while 31% rated her performance so far as poor.

Like assessments of the state's direction, these ratings on job performance are also strongly correlated with partisanship. Still, evaluations of Governor Whitmer's performance improved across all partisan groups in 2020. As shown in *Figure 3b*, over the entire course of the MPPS survey period, 82% of Democratic local leaders gave Governor Whitmer positive ratings, up from 63% in 2019. Among Independents, 45% gave her positive ratings in 2020, compared with 23% in 2019. Meanwhile, 18% of Republicans rated Governor Whitmer's performance as good or excellent in 2020, up from 12% last year.



**Figure 4**  
Percentage of local officials who rate the Governor Whitmer’s performance as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ in 2020, by week of survey response



Once again, though, these assessments by local leaders declined over the course of the two months the MPPS was in the field. During the first week of April, 41% of local leaders gave Governor Whitmer either excellent or good ratings for her job performance, but this declined to just 27% by the end of the survey period on June 1 (see *Figure 4*). The change was driven primarily by Republican local leaders: while 37% gave Governor Whitmer’s job performance “poor” ratings in the first week of the MPPS, that rose to 74% by the final week of the survey.

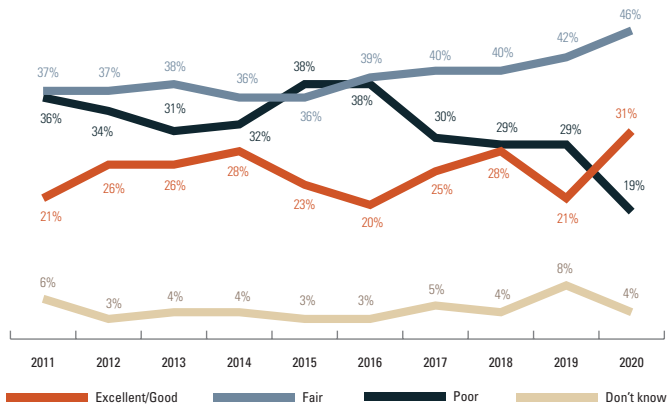
As noted earlier, beyond partisanship—the strongest predictor of attitudes regarding the Governor’s performance—another important factor is local officials’ assessments of whether the state was providing sufficient resources to help their communities deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Officials were most likely to rate the Governor’s performance as excellent or good if they strongly agreed that they were getting the public health (60%) or financial (53%) resources they needed (see *Table 2*), and were least likely to do so if they strongly disagreed.

**Table 2**  
Percentage of local officials who rate the Governor Whitmer’s performance as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ in 2020, by assessments of whether their jurisdiction was getting necessary resources to address COVID-19 in community

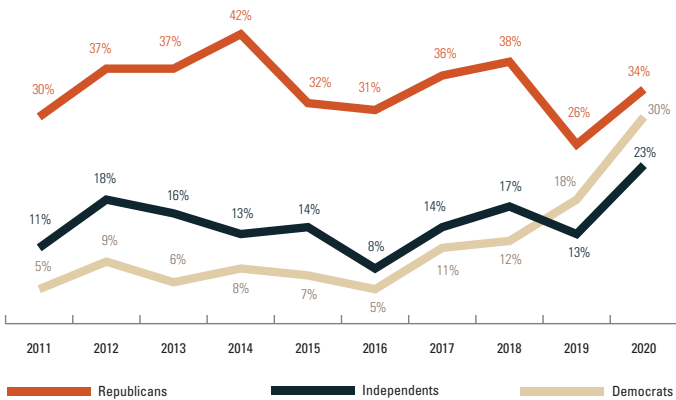
Is jurisdiction getting the public health resources it needs from the State government?				
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Whitmer excellent or good	60%	42%	35%	26%
Is jurisdiction getting the financial resources it needs from the State government?				
Whitmer excellent or good	53%	43%	29%	30%

Note: responses for “neither agree nor disagree” and “don’t know” not shown

**Figure 5a**  
Local officials' evaluations of the Michigan Legislature's performance, 2011-2020



**Figure 5b**  
Percentage of local officials who rate the Legislature's performance as 'excellent' or 'good' in 2011-2020, by partisan identification



## Michigan Legislature's performance ratings improve across party lines

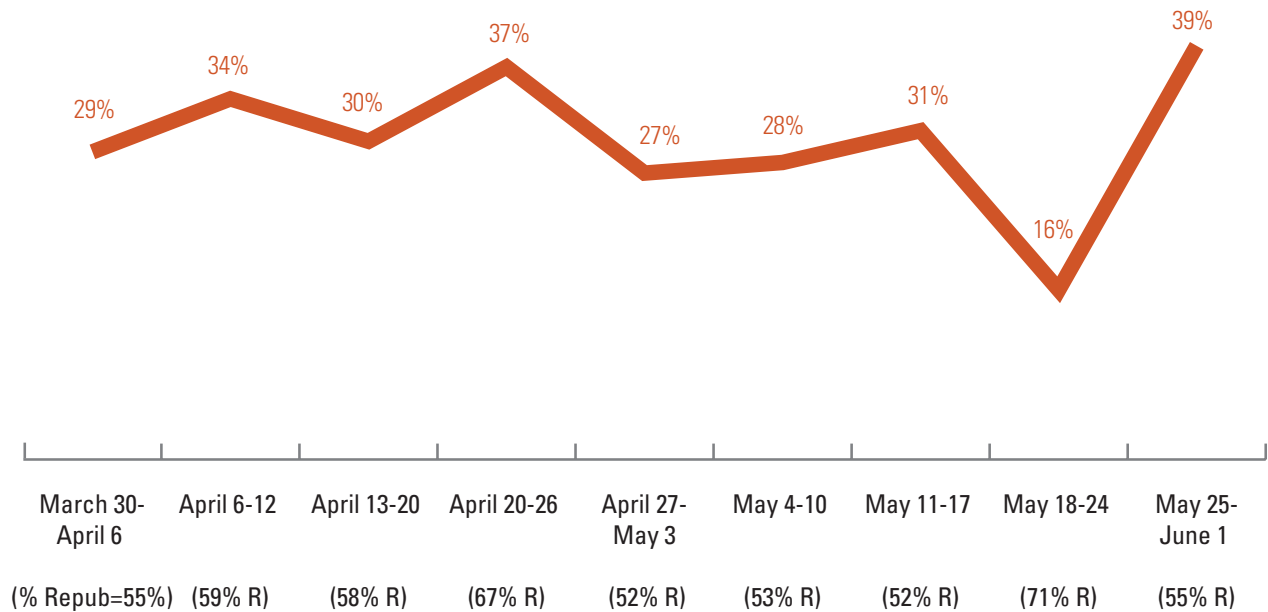
Typically on the MPPS, changes in evaluations of the Michigan Legislature's performance have been much less dramatic than those for the Governor, but this year local leaders' views on the Legislature's performance have seen a relatively large shift in the positive direction. Although fewer than a third (31%) of local officials statewide said the Michigan Legislature's performance is either excellent or good in 2020, this is up from 21% last year and represents the highest ratings for the Legislature since the MPPS began tracking the measure in 2011. As seen in *Figure 5a*, local officials overall were most likely to say the Legislature's performance has been just fair (46%), also up from last year (42%). Meanwhile, 19% of local leaders rated the Legislature as "poor," down significantly from 29% last year.

When looking at these evaluations by partisan identification, increased positive assessments of the Legislature's performance are found among Republicans, Independents, and Democrats alike (see *Figure 5b*). Particularly notable is the *rebound* in Republicans' evaluations, which saw a 12 percentage point evaluation drop between 2018 and 2019, followed now by an 8 percentage point increase in 2020. Still, the ratings in 2020 among Democrats and Independents are also improved sharply since last year.





**Figure 6**  
Percentage of local officials who say the Legislature’s performance is ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ in 2020, by week of survey response



Ratings for the Michigan Legislature didn’t show the same dramatic over-time declines through the spring, as seen earlier in assessments about the direction of the state and the Governor’s performance ratings. During the first week of the MPPS survey, 29% of Michigan’s local leaders gave the Legislature either excellent or good ratings for its job performance, and that level remained relatively steady throughout April and mid-May, until the last two weeks of May, when the Legislature’s ratings saw a great deal of volatility (see *Figure 6*).

Similarly, while there is still a strong correlation between assessments of performance and whether local leaders felt the state was providing sufficient resources to help their communities deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, the variability is slightly smaller when it comes to assessments of the Legislature than for the Governor. As shown in *Table 3*, 45% of those who strongly agreed that they were getting the public health and financial resources they needed also believed the Legislature was doing a good or excellent job, compared with just 33% among those who disagreed they were getting the help they needed from the state.

**Table 3**  
Percentage of local officials who rate the Legislature’s performance as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ in 2020, by assessments of whether their jurisdiction was getting necessary resources to address COVID-19 in community

Is jurisdiction getting the public health resources it needs from the State government?				
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Legislature excellent or good	45%	35%	18%	33%
Is jurisdiction getting the financial resources it needs from the State government?				
Legislature excellent or good	45%	39%	22%	25%

Note: responses for “neither agree nor disagree” and “don’t know” not shown

## Conclusion

Local government leaders' assessments of Michigan's direction as a state in 2020 have improved from last year, but remain under water, with more saying the state is off on the wrong track (46%) than that it is heading in the right direction (39%). And these views became more pessimistic as the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout spread across the state during the two-month period that the MPPS survey was in the field, in April and May.

Similarly, local leaders' ratings of Governor Whitmer's performance started out higher in 2020 than in the previous year, but declined in the face of the pandemic. Meanwhile, evaluations of the Legislature's performance were also up this year, and were somewhat more erratic over the spring.

Partisanship continues to be strongly correlated with all of these assessments, with Republicans being both more likely to say the state is on the wrong track and more critical of the Democratic governor than either Independents or Democrats, while Democrats are more likely to be critical of the Republican-controlled legislature. Nonetheless, in this year's MPPS survey, another key factor in these assessments appears to be local leaders' views about whether their jurisdictions were getting the public health and financial resources they needed from the state in order to respond to the pandemic. As time went on and they increasingly felt they were not getting the necessary resources, their views of the state's direction and in particular the Governor's job performance declined significantly.

## Notes

1. Gallup Organization. (2018). 2017 Democratic States Exceed Republican States by Four in 2018. Washington, D.C.: Gallup Organization. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/247025/democratic-states-exceed-republican-states-four-2018.aspx>
2. Beggin, R. & Wilkinson, M. (2020, May 17). When will Gov. Whitmer reopen Michigan? It's complicated. And a bit vague. *Bridge Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-government/when-will-gov-whitmer-reopen-michigan-its-complicated-and-bit-vague>
3. Methodological note: It is important to point out that nearly 40% of responses on the Spring 2020 MPPS came within the first two weeks of the field period, while the number of new responses dropped significantly in the final weeks of the survey, as they typically does. Despite the relatively smaller number of respondents to the MPPS in the final weeks, it is still possible to look at statistically significant differences in answers over time. Analyzing small numbers of survey responses typically decreases statistical confidence in the reliability of findings (i.e., small differences in answers can yield large swings in percentages when sample is small). However, preliminary analysis of this wave's data shows there are relatively consistent levels of weekly response rate among 1) jurisdictions of different sizes, 2) regions, and 3) proportion of partisans over the course of field period. This can increase confidence in the over-time analyses. Nonetheless, there may be other factors that encouraged local officials to respond earlier or later, such as whether jurisdictions were simply too busy dealing with the pandemic early in the field period to participate in the survey at that time.
4. Mauger, C. (2020, April 30). Protesters, some armed, enter Michigan Capitol in rally against COVID-19 limits. *Detroit News*. Retrieved from <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/04/30/protesters-gathering-outside-capitol-amid-covid-19-restrictions/3054911001/>
5. Monmouth University Polling Institute. (2020, June 2). Protestors' Anger Justified Even If Actions May Not Be. West Long Branch, NJ: Monmouth University. Retrieved from [https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/documents/monmouthpoll\\_us\\_060220.pdf](https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/documents/monmouthpoll_us_060220.pdf)
6. Horner, D., Ivacko, T., & Fitzpatrick, N. (2020). 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/files/mpps-spring-2020-covid.pdf>



## Survey Background and Methodology

The MPPS is an ongoing survey program, interviewing the leaders of Michigan's 1,856 units of general purpose local government. 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/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.*

-

## Previous MPPS reports

- The initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Michigan communities and local governments (June 2020)
- Energy policies and environmental leadership among Michigan's local governments (January 2020)
- Mixed signals continue for Michigan local governments' fiscal health, while future outlooks worsen (December 2019)
- Michigan local officials' views on the next recession: timing, concerns, and actions taken (October 2019)
- Michigan local government preparations and concerns regarding the 2020 U.S. Census (September 2019)
- New Governor, new evaluations of the direction Michigan is headed among local leaders (August 2019)
- Positive working relationships reported among Michigan's local elected officials (June 2019)
- Community poverty and the struggle to make ends meet in Michigan, according to local government leaders (March 2019)
- The state of community civic discourse, according to Michigan's local government leaders (December 2018)
- Despite sustained economic growth, Michigan local government fiscal health still lags (November 2018)
- Michigan local government leaders' views on medical and recreational marijuana (September 2018)
- Rising confidence in Michigan's direction among local leaders, but partisan differences remain (July 2018)
- Michigan local government officials weigh in on housing shortages and related issues (June 2018)
- Approaches to land use planning and zoning among Michigan's local governments (May 2018)
- Workforce issues and challenges for Michigan's local governments (January 2018)
- Local leaders' views on elections in Michigan: accuracy, problems, and reform options (November 2017)
- Michigan local government officials report complex mix of improvement and decline in fiscal health, but with overall trend moving slowly upward (October 2017)
- Michigan local leaders want their citizens to play a larger role in policymaking, but report declining engagement (August 2017)
- Michigan local leaders' views on state preemption and how to share policy authority (June 2017)
- Improving communication, building trust are seen as keys to fixing relationships between local jurisdictions and the State government (May 2017)
- Local leaders more likely to support than oppose Michigan's Emergency Manager law, but strongly favor reforms (February 2017)
- Local government leaders' views on drinking water and water supply infrastructure in Michigan communities (November 2016)
- Michigan local leaders say property tax appeals are common, disagree with 'dark stores' assessing (October 2016)
- Local officials say Michigan's system of funding local government is broken, and seek State action to fix it (September 2016)
- Michigan local governments report first declines in fiscal health trend since 2010 (August 2016)
- Michigan local leaders' doubts continue regarding the state's direction (July 2016)
- Hospital access primary emergency medical concern among many Michigan local officials (July 2016)
- Firefighting services in Michigan: challenges and approaches among local governments (June 2016)
- Most local officials are satisfied with law enforcement services, but almost half from largest jurisdictions say their funding is insufficient (April 2016)
- Local leaders say police-community relations are good throughout Michigan, but those in large cities are concerned about potential civil unrest over police use-of-force (February 2016)
- Report: Responding to budget surplus vs. deficit: the preferences of Michigan's local leaders and citizens (December 2015)
- Michigan's local leaders concerned about retiree health care costs and their governments' ability to meet future obligations (October 2015)
- Fiscal health rated relatively good for most jurisdictions, but improvement slows and decline continues for many (September 2015)
- Confidence in Michigan's direction declines among state's local leaders (August 2015)
- Michigan local government leaders' views on private roads (July 2015)
- Few Michigan jurisdictions have adopted Complete Streets policies, though many see potential benefits (June 2015)
- Michigan local leaders have positive views on relationships with county road agencies, despite some concerns (May 2015)



Michigan local government leaders say transit services are important, but lack of funding discourages their development (April 2015)

Michigan local leaders see need for state and local ethics reform (March 2015)

Local leaders say Michigan road funding needs major increase, but lack consensus on options that would raise the most revenue (February 2015)

Michigan local government leaders' views on employee pay and benefits (January 2015)

Despite increasingly formal financial management, relatively few Michigan local governments have adopted recommended policies (December 2014)

Most Michigan local officials are satisfied with their privatized services, but few seek to expand further (November 2014)

Michigan local governments finally pass fiscal health tipping point overall, but one in four still report decline (October 2014)

Beyond the coast, a tenuous relationship between Michigan local governments and the Great Lakes (September 2014)

Confidence in Michigan's direction holds steady among state's local leaders (August 2014)

Wind power as a community issue in Michigan (July 2014)

Fracking as a community issue in Michigan (June 2014)

The impact of tax-exempt properties on Michigan local governments (March 2014)

Michigan's local leaders generally support Detroit bankruptcy filing despite some concerns (February 2014)

Michigan local governments increasingly pursue placemaking for economic development (January 2014)

Views on right-to-work legislation among Michigan's local government leaders (December 2013)

Michigan local governments continue seeking, and receiving, union concessions (October 2013)

Michigan local government fiscal health continues gradual improvement, but smallest jurisdictions lagging (September 2013)

Local leaders evaluate state policymaker performance and whether Michigan is on the right track (August 2013)

Trust in government among Michigan's local leaders and citizens (July 2013)

Citizen engagement in the view of Michigan's local government leaders (May 2013)

Beyond trust in government: government trust in citizens? (March 2013)

Local leaders support reforming Michigan's system of funding local government (January 2013)

Local leaders support eliminating Michigan's Personal Property Tax if funds are replaced, but distrust state follow-through (November 2012)

Michigan's local leaders satisfied with union negotiations (October 2012)

Michigan's local leaders are divided over the state's emergency manager law (September 2012)

Fiscal stress continues for hundreds of Michigan jurisdictions, but conditions trend in positive direction overall (September 2012)

Michigan's local leaders more positive about Governor Snyder's performance, more optimistic about the state's direction (July 2012)

Data-driven decision-making in Michigan local government (June 2012)

State funding incentives increase local collaboration, but also raise concerns (March 2012)

Local officials react to state policy innovation tying revenue sharing to dashboards and incentive funding (January 2012)

MPPS finds fiscal health continues to decline across the state, though some negative trends eased in 2011 (October 2011)

Public sector unions in Michigan: their presence and impact according to local government leaders (August 2011)

Despite increased approval of state government performance, Michigan's local leaders are concerned about the state's direction (August 2011)

Local government and environmental leadership: views of Michigan's local leaders (July 2011)

Local leaders are mostly positive about intergovernmental cooperation and look to expand efforts (March 2011)

Local government leaders say most employees are not overpaid, though some benefits may be too generous (February 2011)

Local government leaders say economic gardening can help grow their economies (November 2010)

Local governments struggle to cope with fiscal, service, and staffing pressures (August 2010)

Michigan local governments actively promote U.S. Census participation (August 2010)

## The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

Fiscal stimulus package mostly ineffective for local economies (May 2010)

Fall 2009 key findings report: educational, economic, and workforce development issues at the local level (April 2010)

Local government officials give low marks to the performance of state officials and report low trust in Lansing (March 2010)

Local government fiscal and economic development issues (October 2009)

All MPPS reports are available online at: <http://closup.umich.edu/mpps.php>

University of Michigan

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

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

Joan and Sanford Weill Hall

735 S. State Street, Suite 5310

Ann Arbor, MI 48109-3091

---

The **Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP)**, housed at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, conducts and supports applied policy research designed to inform state, local, and urban policy issues. Through integrated research, teaching, and outreach involving academic researchers, students, policymakers and practitioners, CLOSUP seeks to foster understanding of today's state and local policy problems, and to find effective solutions to those problems.

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

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

**twitter:** @closup

**phone:** 734-647-4091



**Regents of the University of Michigan**

**Jordan B. Acker**  
Huntington Woods

**Michael J. Behm**  
Grand Blanc

**Mark J. Bernstein**  
Ann Arbor

**Paul W. Brown**  
Ann Arbor

**Shauna Ryder Diggs**  
Grosse Pointe

**Denise Ilitch**  
Bingham Farms

**Ron Weiser**  
Ann Arbor

**Katherine E. White**  
Ann Arbor

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