

## DETROIT AREA STUDY, 2001: Public Services, Local Government, and Taxes

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### Summary

This report reviews issues related to public services and facilities, local government performance, and taxation in southeast Michigan, as examined in the 2001 Detroit Area Study (DAS). Some of the key findings from this survey of over 4,300 adults in the southeast Michigan region are as follows:

- Levels of citizen satisfaction with public services vary significantly by county and the type of community in which respondents live and by certain respondent characteristics such as race and income levels.
- Regarding types of public services and facilities, satisfaction is generally highest for garbage collection services, followed by police protection, the cleanliness of streets and public areas, and local park facilities. Satisfaction is lowest regarding public transportation.
- Residents of the city of Detroit express less satisfaction than other metro area residents on many issues, including the cleanliness of streets and public areas, local park facilities, police protection, and public schools.
- Overall, the region's residents are evenly split in their views on taxation, with 51 percent saying taxes are about right and 49 percent stating taxes are too high or much too high. Again, Detroiters stand out, with 65 percent saying taxes are too high or much too high.
- Views on taxation are associated with views on the quality of public services: of those who give the lowest ratings to public services, two-thirds complain about their taxes; meanwhile, of those who give the highest ratings to public services, only one-third complain about their taxes.
- Although many residents complain about taxes, comparable data from 1975 for the tri-county area of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties show that fewer residents thought taxes were too high in 2001 than thought so in 1975.
- Views on the performance of local government officials are decidedly mixed. While 33 percent of respondents think city and township officials pay attention to what citizens think, 29 percent feel the opposite. And while 28 percent believe these officials are doing a good job managing growth and development, 36 percent disagree with that statement.

These and other findings are discussed in more detail on the following pages.



## Overview

This report is one of a series from the Detroit Area Study (DAS) on the Quality of Community Life conducted by the University of Michigan in 2001. DAS 2001 is a survey of over 4,300 adults in metro Detroit. The study addresses their perceptions, expectations, satisfactions, and behaviors associated with community living. Throughout this report, metro Detroit is defined as the seven counties in the southeast Michigan region: Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne. The city of Detroit is part of Wayne County. The series of reports covers topics including: attitudes about the region and Detroit; characteristics of respondents; public services, taxes, and local government; community and community involvement; neighborhood and neighboring; housing; moving intentions; parks and recreation; regional growth, development, and the environment; and prospects for the future of the region. These and other reports are available online at <http://www.tcaup.umich.edu/workfolio/DAS2001/index.html>. Although the reports are based on data collected several years ago, they identify important differences across the region and provide a valuable basis for tracking changes into the future.

This report discusses people's assessments of local public services and facilities and considers their thoughts about local taxes and government. Public services are important components of community quality and are tied to the taxes citizens pay and the performance of local government officials. Safe communities with clean and well-maintained streets, attractive parks, quality public schools, and good public transit systems retain residents and can attract new ones from other communities. However, these services come at a price and not all citizens are able or willing to pay higher taxes for maintaining or improving them.

## Methodology

Conducted in the spring and summer of 2001, the DAS survey consisted of two parts. Initially, face-to-face interviews were conducted with a probability sample of 315 adult respondents (18 years of age and older) living in the tri-county area of Wayne, Oak-

land, and Macomb Counties. Subsequently, a questionnaire was mailed to a sample of adults throughout the seven counties; 4,077 were returned. Response rates were 59.8 percent for the face-to-face sample and 56.7 percent for the mail sample. A summary of respondent characteristics is available on the study Web site listed above.

As part of the mail survey, respondents had the opportunity to write "additional thoughts" about the quality of life in their community or in the Detroit region, and more information about those responses is also available in the reports on the DAS 2001 Web site.

In addition to survey responses, DAS 2001 compiled contextual information about the minor civil divisions (MCDs) or communities and environments associated with each respondent. Contextual information includes housing and demographic characteristics, land use characteristics, growth rates, employment, school information, and other characteristics of the communities where respondents live.

Findings presented in this and other reports show responses from the entire metro Detroit area and then from each of the seven counties. Because of its importance to the region and the number of respondents from Detroit, findings for the city are presented separately, while findings for other parts of Wayne County are reported as Wayne-Other. In several instances, findings are shown for respondents living in different types of places such as the urban core (Detroit), its older suburbs (e.g., Royal

Oak, Dearborn, Warren), newer suburbs (e.g., Farmington Hills, Livonia, Sterling Heights), large cities that are not contiguous to Detroit (e.g., Ann Arbor, Pontiac), mid-sized cities (e.g., Port Huron, Monroe, Ypsilanti, Mt. Clemens), small cities and villages (e.g., Brighton, Northville, Chelsea), and rural areas of the region. For some questions, findings are also reported for different segments of the population such as young and old, married and single, and individuals whose ethnicity, household income, and educational attainment vary.

## Findings

### RATINGS OF LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Respondents were asked to evaluate public services and facilities in their neighborhoods, including the cleanliness of streets and public areas, street maintenance, garbage collection, local parks, public transportation, police protection, and public schools. Tables 1 and 2 display approval percentages for these public services and facilities by county and by type of place, respectively. Tables 3 and 4 display summary ratings by county and by type of place, respectively. (For complete breakdowns of response distributions as described below, please refer to the report on the DAS 2001 Web site.) The summary ratings in Tables 3 and 4 are

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**Table 1. Approval Percentages for Local Public Services, by County**

Approval Percentages	Metro Detroit	Livingston	Macomb	Monroe	Oakland	St. Clair	Washtenaw	Wayne-Other	Detroit
Cleanliness of streets and public areas	82	83	91	80	91	79	87	90	51
Street maintenance	68	65	73	47	73	66	68	73	53
Garbage collection	86	77	90	82	87	82	87	86	85
Local parks	78	81	85	73	88	79	85	87	35
Public transportation	31	13	31	34	17	25	51	27	49
Police protection	80	84	92	69	87	72	78	87	53
Public schools	75	89	82	85	82	83	81	78	43

Reported statistics are the percentage of respondents who give favorable ratings (very good and fairly good) for the various services and facilities..

“approval ratios,” determined by dividing the percentage of respondents who give favorable ratings (fairly good or very good) by the percentage who give unfavorable ratings (not very good or not good at all). Larger approval ratios indicate relatively larger proportions of residents who approve compared to those who disapprove of the particular service.

### CLEANLINESS OF STREETS AND PUBLIC AREAS

As shown in Table 1, an overwhelming majority (82 percent) of metro Detroit area respondents rate the cleanliness of neighborhood streets and public areas as fairly good or very good. Respondents from the city of Detroit have the lowest approval ratings (51 percent), while Oakland and Macomb County respondents have the highest approval ratings, with 91 percent saying their neighborhoods are clean. By type of community, satisfaction is highest in the large and small cities, followed closely by the newer and older suburbs (Table 2).

As listed in Table 3, the “approval ratios” show that Macomb County and Oakland County respondents are about 30 times more likely to rate the cleanliness of streets and public spaces favorably than unfavorably. In

other words, for each Macomb County and Oakland County resident who disapproves of the street and public area cleanliness, there are about 30 other residents who approve of that cleanliness. Detroiters on the other hand are only 1.4 times more likely to give a favorable rating to this service than an unfavorable rating. When comparing types of places, respondents from small cities and villages and the newer suburbs are the most likely to give positive ratings to the cleanliness of streets and public areas (Table 4).

### STREET MAINTENANCE

Over two-thirds (68 percent) of metro area respondents view their street maintenance as fairly good or very good (Table 1). Respondents in Monroe County and the city of Detroit are least likely to evaluate their street maintenance favorably with about half (47 and 53 percent, respectively) giving it very good or fairly good ratings. By type of place, respondents from urban core, as well as the rural areas and the region’s mid-sized cities are the least likely to give positive ratings to street maintenance in their neighborhoods (Table 4).

### GARBAGE COLLECTION

Metro area residents on the whole are satisfied with their garbage collection services, with 86 percent rating them as fairly good or very good (Table 1). Livingston County respondents are least likely to rate their garbage collection as fairly good or very good (77 percent), with little difference found across the other counties. When isolating types of communities as seen in Table 2, respondents living in rural areas are least likely to give high marks to their garbage collection (76 percent). In other types of communities, between 85 and 91 percent of respondents rate garbage collection favorably. In part, the relatively low marks among residents of rural areas may reflect differences in who collects the garbage. In some communities, public garbage collection is not provided by the governmental unit, thereby requiring residents to hire private waste disposal companies or self-dispose of their own refuse.

### LOCAL PARKS

When asked about local parks, ratings are generally high in all parts of the region except the city of Detroit. Only 35 percent of Detroit

**Table 2. Approval Percentages for Local Public Services, by Type of Place**

Approval Percentages	Metro Detroit	Urban Core	Large Cities	Mid-sized Cities	Older Suburbs	Newer Suburbs	Small Cities	Rural Areas
Cleanliness of streets and public areas	82	51	92	79	90	91	92	83
Street maintenance	68	53	72	64	76	71	78	60
Garbage collection	86	85	90	89	89	86	91	76
Local parks	78	35	91	74	87	85	86	81
Public transportation	31	49	71	47	31	21	15	18
Police protection	80	51	87	81	89	88	92	72
Public schools	75	33	83	61	77	87	85	83

Reported statistics are the percentage of respondents who give favorable ratings (very good and fairly good) for the various services and facilities..



**Table 3. Summary Ratings of Local Public Services, by County**

Approval Ratios	Metro Detroit	Livingston	Macomb	Monroe	Oakland	St. Clair	Washtenaw	Wayne-Other	Detroit
Cleanliness of streets and public areas	8.2	16.6	30.3	10.0	30.7	26.3	17.4	22.5	1.4
Street maintenance	3.6	3.3	5.2	1.2	4.9	3.5	4.0	4.0	1.6
Garbage collection	17.2	12.7	22.5	9.1	14.5	16.4	29.0	17.2	17.0
Local parks	8.7	20.3	17.0	14.6	29.0	13.2	28.3	29.0	0.9
Public transportation	0.8	0.3	1.1	1.1	0.3	0.5	2.3	0.8	1.4
Police protection	10.0	21.0	92.0	6.9	29.0	9.0	11.1	29.3	2.1
Public schools	6.8	17.8	16.4	21.3	11.9	16.6	16.2	9.8	1.2

Reported statistics are approval ratios, which represent summary scores of the percentage of respondents who give favorable ratings (very good and fairly good) divided by the percentage who give unfavorable ratings (not very good and not good at all).

respondents give local parks a favorable rating (Table 1). In contrast, between 73 and 88 percent of residents in the other metro area counties give favorable ratings concerning their local parks. While Detroiters are least likely to approve of their local parks, in terms of community types, residents in the other large cities outside the urban core (Ann Arbor and Pontiac) and from the older suburbs are the most likely to give positive ratings regarding their local parks (Table 2).

#### LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSIT

When asked to rate local public transit serving their neighborhoods, respondents' opinions vary greatly across the region. Overall, ratings are generally low — less than one-third (31 percent) of metro area respondents say local public transit is fairly good or very good (Table 1). In large part, responses reflect the fact that public transportation does not exist in most parts of the metro area. Where public transit is most readily available, in Washtenaw County and in Detroit, just half of respondents say it is fairly good or very good. Respondents in Livingston and Oakland Counties are least likely to give public transit

good marks — less than one in five say local public transportation is good.

While 51 percent of Washtenaw County respondents and 17 percent of those in Oakland County say that local public transit is good, the proportion of favorable ratings from those living in the largest cities in these counties is much higher— nearly three-quarters of respondents in Ann Arbor and Pontiac rate local public transit as fairly good or very good (Table 2). In contrast, the approval ratios of less than 1.0 in Table 4 for respondents in the newer suburbs, small cities, and rural areas show that more of those residents disapprove than approve of public transportation services in their areas.

#### POLICE PROTECTION

Ratings of police protection are generally positive in all parts of the metro area except in Detroit, where just over one-half of the respondents say neighborhood police protection is good, while one-quarter say it is not good (Table 1). Meanwhile, nine in ten respondents from other parts of the metro Detroit area rate police protection favorably, and less than one in ten rate it unfavorably. When looking at types of communities, respondents from rural

areas and from the urban core neighborhoods of Detroit have the lowest satisfaction with police protection (Table 2).

#### LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

With the exception of respondents from the city of Detroit, large majorities rate their local public schools positively. Monroe County and Livingston County respondents give the highest ratings to their local public schools, while Detroit respondents give the lowest ratings (Table 1). The large approval ratios in Table 3 demonstrate the high levels of satisfaction across all of the metro area counties beyond the urban core. In terms of community types, residents from the region's newer suburbs express the greatest satisfaction with their public schools, followed by those from the small cities and villages (Table 2).

#### EVALUATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES OVER TIME IN THE TRI-COUNTY AREA

Opinions about selected local public services were also gauged in surveys conducted in the tri-county area of Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne Counties in 1975 and 1980 (the 1980 study was also part of a University of

**Table 4. Summary Ratings of Local Public Services, by Type of Place**

Approval Ratios	Metro Detroit	Urban Core	Large Cities	Mid-sized Cities	Older Suburbs	Newer Suburbs	Small Cities	Rural Areas
Cleanliness of streets and public areas	8.2	1.4	15.3	26.3	22.5	30.3	30.7	20.8
Street maintenance	3.6	1.6	5.1	2.9	6.3	4.2	5.6	2.5
Garbage collection	17.2	17.0	22.5	17.8	22.3	17.2	22.8	8.4
Local parks	8.7	0.9	30.3	10.6	29.0	21.3	21.5	16.2
Public transportation	0.8	1.5	6.5	2.4	1.0	0.8	0.3	0.4
Police protection	10.0	2.1	21.8	81.0	29.7	44.0	46.0	9.0
Public schools	6.8	1.2	13.8	5.1	9.6	21.3	42.5	11.9

Reported statistics are approval ratios, which represent summary scores of the percentage of respondents who give favorable ratings (very good and fairly good) divided by the percentage who give unfavorable ratings (not very good and not good at all).



**Table 5. Approval Percentages for Local Public Services over Time in the Tri-county Area**

Approval Percentages	Metro Detroit		Macomb		Oakland		Wayne- Other		Detroit	
	1975	2001	1975	2001	1975	2001	1975	2001	1975	2001
Cleanliness of streets and public areas	68	82	76	91	85	91	86	90	36	51
Street maintenance	65	69	70	73	61	73	74	74	55	52
Garbage collection	90	87	89	90	97	86	94	86	84	85
Public transportation	64	30	51	31	42	17	60	27	75	49
Police protection	80	80	91	92	79	87	84	88	71	52

Reported statistics are the percentage of respondents who give favorable ratings (very good and fairly good) for the various services and facilities in 1975 and in 2001. The 1975 survey allowed a “no service” response category for the questions on garbage collection and public transportation, while the 2001 survey did not have such an option. The data reported here for 1975 exclude the “no service” responses, in order to make the 1975 data comparable to 2001 data.

Michigan Detroit Area Study project). These surveys asked respondents to rate the cleanliness of streets and public places, as well as street maintenance, garbage collection, public transportation, and police protection. Table 5 lists the approval percentages from 1975 and 2001 to show changes over the quarter-century time span.

**CLEANLINESS OF STREETS AND PUBLIC AREAS, OVER TIME**

Satisfaction with the cleanliness of local streets and public places was higher in all parts of the tri-county area in 2001 than in 1975. According to respondents, street cleanliness in Detroit showed significant improvement: in 1975, just over one-third rated street and public space cleanliness favorably compared to one-half of Detroiters in 2001.

**STREET MAINTENANCE, OVER TIME**

Views about local street maintenance were remarkably stable over the 26-year period, with the exception of Oakland County, where there was a modest improvement over time. In 1975, 61 percent of the Oakland County

respondents gave street maintenance favorable ratings, compared to 73 percent of the respondents in 2001.

**GARBAGE COLLECTION, OVER TIME**

While there was very little change in ratings of garbage collections services among Macomb County respondents over time, there were declines in favorable ratings among Oakland County and Wayne County residents, as well as a slight increase in favorable ratings among Detroiters. In all cases, large majorities of respondents gave favorable ratings at each time point.

**LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSIT, OVER TIME**

Standing out from the other types of public services, there were significant declines over time in all parts of the tri-county area in ratings of local public transit. The most dramatic drop occurred in Wayne County, where 60 percent of the respondents in 1975 rated public transportation favorably compared to only 27 percent in 2001. For more information regarding public transit, see the companion policy report on travel and transportation

(online at <http://closup.umich.edu/research/publications.html>).

**POLICE PROTECTION, OVER TIME**

Finally, approval ratings for police protection showed slight increases in 2001 compared to 1975 for most parts of the tri-county metro area, except in the city of Detroit. Approval ratings from Detroit respondents for police protection fell from 71 percent in 1975 to 52 percent in 2001.

**OVERALL EVALUATION OF LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

In order to summarize how people feel about public services available to them in their neighborhoods, a composite measure representing the average of each individual’s ratings of the seven specific services was calculated. These measures are grouped into five categories ranging from most favorable (high) to least favorable (low). The distribution of respondents across these categories within each county is shown in Table 6. As the table indicates, local public services are rated relatively high in Wayne, Oakland, and

**Table 6. Overall Evaluation of Local Services, by County**

Local Services Assessment Index	Metro Detroit	Livingston	Macomb	Monroe	Oakland	St. Clair	Washtenaw	Wayne- Other	Detroit
(5) High	20	18	22	5	26	18	19	28	5
(4)	33	32	39	30	39	32	36	36	16
(3)	20	27	23	21	19	20	20	17	20
(2)	16	16	12	32	12	18	18	12	26
(1) Low	11	7	4	12	4	12	7	7	33
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Mean Score	3.3	4.1	4.2	3.8	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.2	3.3

Reported statistics are the percentages of respondents with each average satisfaction rating for the seven types of local services discussed in each county.



**Table 7. Evaluation of Taxes for Public Services, by County**

Evaluation	Metro Detroit	Livingston	Macomb	Monroe	Oakland	St. Clair	Washtenaw	Wayne-Other	Detroit
Too low	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
About right	51	46	61	44	53	47	49	59	33
Too high	37	45	32	47	34	40	39	32	45
Much too high	12	9	7	8	12	13	12	9	20
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Reported statistics are the percentages of respondents rating tax levels for their local services in each county.

Macomb Counties and relatively low in the city of Detroit.

When viewing the data by types of communities (not shown in Table 6), people in mid-sized cities and in rural areas give local services lower ratings on average than those living in other parts of the metro area. By racial breakdowns, African-American respondents (who are most likely to be Detroit residents) give lower marks to local public services than do white respondents. Finally, when viewing the data by household income levels, positive assessment scores tend to increase as household income levels rise.

**ATTITUDES TOWARD TAXES**

DAS respondents were also asked to consider the taxes they pay for their public services. Table 7 shows that 51 percent of metro area respondents say their taxes are “about right,” while 49 percent think taxes are either “too high” or “much too high.” Not surprisingly, few respondents say taxes are too low. Most likely to say that taxes are about right are respondents in Macomb and Wayne Counties (61 percent and 59 percent, respectively), while the residents most concerned about taxes are Detroiters, where just 33 percent feel that taxes are about right for the services received and 65 percent feel that taxes are too high or much too high. When comparing views across types of communities (not shown in Table 7), respondents living in the older suburbs around Detroit are least likely to complain about their taxes.

Although men and women do not differ significantly in their feelings about taxes, other respondent characteristics do show variation in opinions. For instance, respondents who are single, widowed, or divorced, and those with

incomes of less than \$30,000 are most likely to believe that taxes are too high. Fully three-quarters of those respondents who are under age 45, single, widowed or divorced and have at least one child at home say their taxes are too high or much too high.

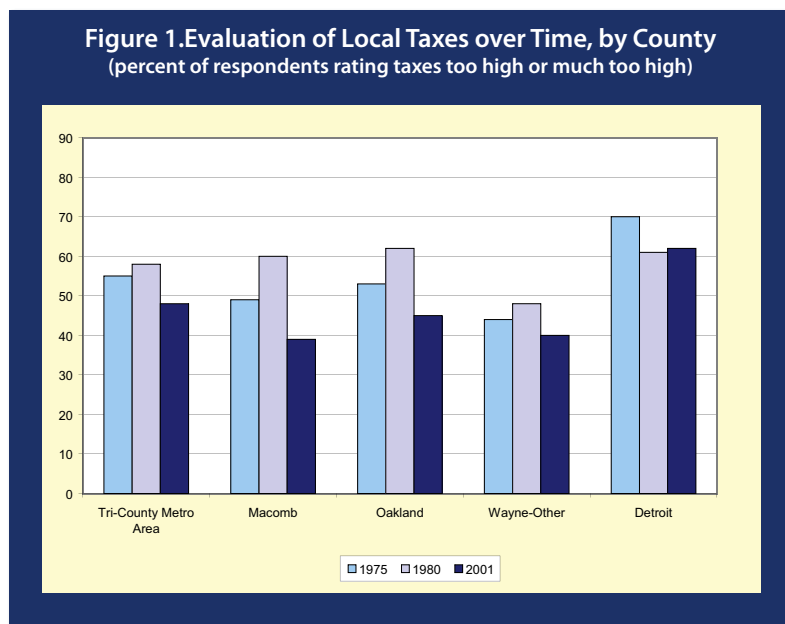
Whereas location, income, and family status are associated with respondents’ feelings about local taxes, perception of the quality of services received remains a strong predictor of views on taxes. Roughly two-thirds of those respondents who give the lowest ratings to local public services also complain about their taxes. On the other hand, just one-third of respondents who view public services favorably complain about their taxes. Specifically, respondents who give the lowest scores to public services are four times as likely as those

giving the highest scores to say that taxes are “much too high” (28 percent versus 7 percent, not shown in Table 7).

For further discussion of the willingness to pay more taxes, see the reports covering Travel and Transportation, Parks and Recreation, and Growth and Development on the DAS 2001 Web site.

**ATTITUDES TOWARD TAXES OVER TIME IN THE TRI-COUNTY AREA**

The question about taxes was also asked as part of the earlier surveys conducted in 1975 and 1980 in the tri-county area. Figure 1 shows that the percent of respondents who feel that taxes are too high or much too high peaked in 1980 and fell by 2001, except in the city of



**Table 8. Approval Percentages for Local Government, by County**

Approval Percentages	Metro Detroit	Livingston	Macomb	Monroe	Oakland	St. Clair	Washtenaw	Wayne-Other	Detroit
Officials pay attention to what people think	33	37	30	30	37	27	38	39	18
Good job managing growth and development	28	27	27	24	35	27	30	33	16
Overall satisfaction with government officials	46	44	48	38	54	41	52	55	24

Reported statistics are the percentage of respondents who give favorable ratings (very good and fairly good) for the various services and facilities..

Detroit. Whereas 58 percent of all tri-county area respondents said their taxes were high in 1980, only 48 percent gave the same response in 2001. The most significant decreases were in Macomb and Oakland Counties, while slightly more residents of Detroit responded that taxes were too high in 2001 compared to 1980.

### ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT

The quantity and quality of local services and the level of taxes paid for those services result in large part from policies established by public officials. One would, therefore, expect that people’s feelings about their local government officials would reflect their views about local services and local taxes. Accordingly, several questions were asked to measure how people feel about the job being done by local government officials. In addition to a question regarding overall satisfaction with local government, questions about the responsiveness of local public officials and their job performance with respect to managing growth and development were also asked.

As shown in Table 8, overall just one-third of area residents think that city and township public officials pay attention to what people think. Most critical are Detroit respondents, where only 18 percent say government officials pay attention to what citizens think.

Respondents also offer mixed views of the job local governments are doing in managing growth and development, with only 28 percent of respondents agreeing that government is doing a good job. Even in Oakland County where residents tend to be fairly satisfied with their local government, just 35 percent feel that growth management and development are being handled adequately.

In terms of overall satisfaction with local government officials, 46 percent of area residents express satisfaction. The least satisfied respondents are in Detroit, where only 24 percent are satisfied. Wayne, Oakland, and Washtenaw County respondents express the highest levels of overall satisfaction with their local government officials.

How citizens feel about their local government is related to their views on taxes. Figure 2 clearly shows the direct relationship between ratings of local government and views on taxes. Those respondents who rate their local government poorly are almost three times as likely to think local taxes are too high or much too high, compared to those who give the most favorable ratings to their local government (72 percent versus 26 percent for all metro Detroit area respondents). And in each category of government satisfaction, residents

of Detroit are more likely than other residents of the metro area to think taxes are too high or much too high.

### SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT OVER TIME IN THE TRI-COUNTY AREA

The question regarding overall satisfaction with local government was also asked as part of the 1975 survey in the tri-county area of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties. Figure 3 shows that for the tri-county area as a whole, levels of satisfaction were nearly comparable in 1975 and 2001. Nonetheless, there were slight decreases in levels of satisfaction in Macomb and Wayne Counties and a substantial decrease in Oakland County, with a drop of about 10 percentage points between the 1975 and 2001 surveys.

**Figure 2. Views on Local Taxes, by Rating of Local Government**

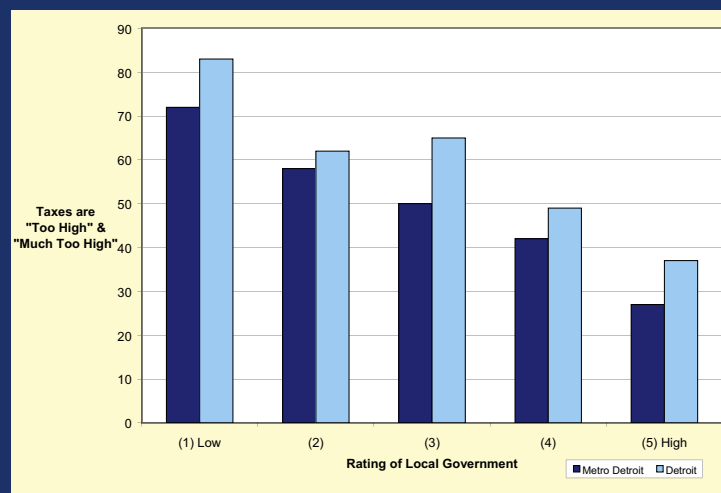
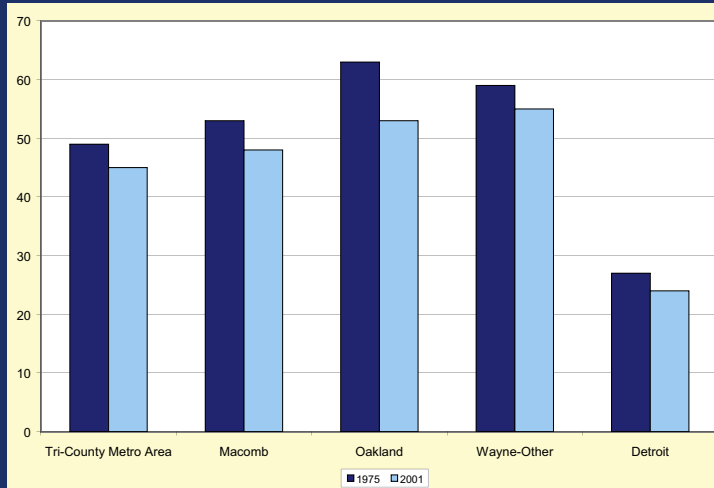


Figure 3. Satisfaction with Local Government over Time, by County  
(percent of respondents who are satisfied)



## Summary

This report has presented findings about citizen views on public services and facilities, the performance of local government officials, and taxation. Some key findings include:

1. Overall, residents of the metro Detroit region express generally high levels of satisfaction with public services and facilities (except for public transportation services), though there is significant variation across counties, the types of communities in which respondents live, and certain respondent characteristics such as race and income levels.

2. Compared to their views of local public services and facilities, residents express less satisfaction regarding taxes and the performance of their local government officials. Overall, 49 percent of metro Detroit residents think taxes are too high. And while 46 percent of area residents are satisfied with local government performance overall, 25 percent are dissatisfied.

3. Residents of the city of Detroit tend to express lower levels of satisfaction on many issues, relative to the other residents of the metro Detroit region.

## Conclusion

State and local policymakers should pay close attention to citizen satisfaction with government in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as electronic communications have shrunk the world and helped empower grass-roots organizations. Citizen-led movements, such as initiatives focused on term limits and tax limits, have increasingly attempted to constrain the powers of state and local government. This report has presented mixed evidence for policymakers who may be concerned about the views of their constituents: even while southeast Michigan residents express general satisfaction with many public services, they simultaneously express significant levels of dissatisfaction with public officials themselves and with the cost of government via taxation. Continued efforts to gauge the views of citizens over time can help policymakers and others improve public policymaking and make government more responsive to the governed.

The research contained in this report was conducted while Dr. Carter was a student at the University of Michigan. The opinions and conclusions expressed here are those of the authors alone and not of the U.S. Census Bureau.

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