

# The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

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

Michigan Public  
Policy Survey August 2015

## Confidence in Michigan's direction declines among state's local leaders

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 Rick Snyder and the Michigan Legislature. These findings are based on statewide surveys of local government leaders in the Spring 2015 wave and comparisons to previous Spring waves of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS).

>> 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 takes place twice each year and investigates local officials' opinions and perspectives on a variety of important public policy issues. Respondents for the Spring 2015 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 1,328 jurisdictions across the state.

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

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## Key Findings

- Fewer than half (46%) of Michigan's local officials believe the state is currently headed in the right direction, down sharply from the 55% who felt this way in 2014. Meanwhile, 38% believe the state is off on the wrong track, up from 32% one year ago.
  - » The drop in optimism about the state's direction is found among officials across all political parties. Among self-identified Republican officials, 59% say the state is headed in the right direction, down from 72% who said the same last year. A large decline is also found among Independent officials (37% in 2015 vs. 45% in 2014), while Democratic officials' optimism has declined to 28% in 2015 from 30% a year ago.
  - » A bare majority (52%) of officials from the largest jurisdictions—those with more than 30,000 residents—say the state is headed in the right direction, down from 65% in 2014. Meanwhile, only 41% of officials from the smallest jurisdictions—those with fewer than 1,500 residents—also say Michigan is headed in the right direction, which is down from 48% a year ago.
- Local leaders who believe Michigan is off on the wrong track focus most commonly on what they see as problems with the state's tax policies, dysfunction in Lansing, and Lansing's broken relationship with local governments. They use Proposal 1—the failed ballot initiative from May 2015 that addressed road funding—as an example of the problems in each of these areas.
- Meanwhile, local leaders who say Michigan is headed in the right direction most commonly cite their optimism about the state economy, including support for specific state-level policies that they believe are contributing to economic gains. These include the passage of right-to-work legislation, assistance in helping Detroit through bankruptcy, the "Pure Michigan" tourism campaign, and careful management of the state budget led by Governor Rick Snyder.
- Unlike their opinions on the direction of the state, local leaders' positive job approval ratings for Governor Snyder have remained steady over the past year. Statewide, over half (54%) rate his performance as either good or excellent, while 14% rate it as poor, essentially unchanged from last year's ratings.
- By contrast with the stable job evaluations for the Governor, local officials' overall opinions on the Michigan Legislature's performance have declined slightly compared with last year. Ratings of the Legislature's performance as excellent or good (23%) are down from 28% in 2014. Meanwhile, 38% of local officials rate the Legislature as "poor," more than the 32% who said the same in 2014. This is the first time since 2011 that "poor" ratings have been the most common response among local leaders.

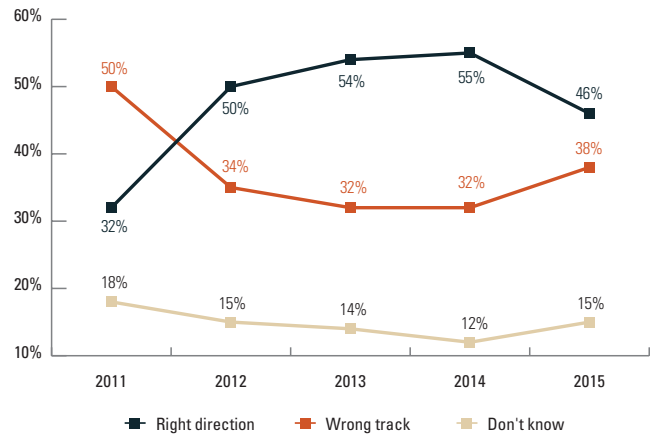
## Confidence in the state’s direction declines; fewer than half say Michigan is headed in the right direction

As part of its ongoing tracking of local leaders’ views on a variety of governance issues, the Spring 2015 Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) asked Michigan’s local government leaders for their opinions on the direction in which the state is headed, as well as their assessments of the job performance of Governor Rick Snyder and the Michigan Legislature.

The MPPS began tracking local leaders’ views on the state’s direction in the spring of 2011, a few months after Governor Snyder took office. At that time, a majority (50%) of local leaders felt the state was off on the wrong track, while just 32% felt it was headed in the right direction. By 2012 these percentages essentially flipped, with 50% then feeling the state was headed in the right direction and just 34% feeling it was off on the wrong track. These changes appeared to be closely tied to local leaders’ assessments of Governor Snyder’s job performance, after they had experienced a year’s worth of his governorship to evaluate.<sup>1</sup>

The two subsequent annual MPPS surveys in 2013 and 2014 tracked a slow and steady increase in the percentage saying the state was headed in the right direction. However, as of 2015 there has been another sharp change in these views. Overall, after three years of increase, optimism about the state’s direction has suddenly declined. Government leaders from fewer than half (46%) of Michigan’s local jurisdictions say the state is now headed in the right direction, while 38% believe the state is on the wrong track (see *Figure 1a*).

**Figure 1a**  
Percentage of local officials who say Michigan is headed in the ‘right direction’ or is off on the ‘wrong track,’ 2011-2015





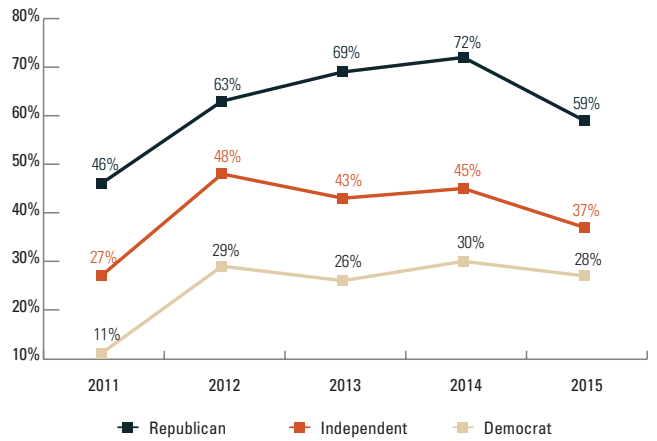
To understand these overall percentages it is important to note that MPPS survey respondents are much more likely to be Republicans than is the case with citizen respondents to typical public opinion polls in the state. This is because the MPPS survey targets the 1,856 local jurisdictions in Michigan, which are comprised of 1,240 townships, 279 cities, 254 villages, and 83 counties. In turn, the townships that dominate the MPPS sample are most often represented by Republican local leaders. Overall, in the 2015 MPPS, approximately 59% of respondents are self-reported Republican local officials compared to 25% Democratic local officials and 17% Independent local officials. By comparison, citizens in the Fall 2014 State of the State public opinion survey conducted by Michigan State University identified themselves as follows: 39% Republicans, 48% Democrats, and 13% Independents.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, Michigan’s executive and legislative branches of state government are both currently controlled by Republican officials. So it is not surprising that officials’ opinions on the state’s direction continue to be closely linked to partisan identification. As seen in *Figure 1b*, over a quarter (28%) of local officials who self-identify as Democrats believe the state is currently headed in the right direction, compared with 37% of Independent officials and 59% of Republican officials.

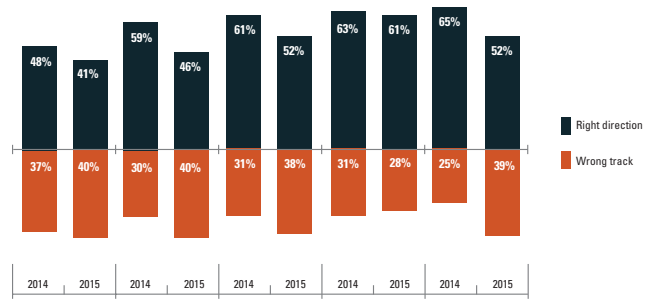
But what may be surprising is that Michigan’s Republican local leaders are now significantly less supportive of the direction in which the state is headed than they were a year ago. In fact, their support is at its lowest point since 2012. At its peak in 2014, 72% of Republican local leaders thought the state was headed in the right direction, but that has fallen to 59% today. Support for the state’s direction has also fallen among Independent (from 45% to 37%) and Democratic (from 30% to 28%) local leaders in the last year.

Regardless of community size, the percentage of local leaders who believe the state is headed in the right direction has also fallen in the last year, in all types of jurisdictions, large and small (see *Figure 1c*). The largest change is found in the state’s largest jurisdictions (those with more than 30,000 residents), where the percentage of local leaders who express optimism about the state’s direction fell by 13 percentage points and the percentage who say the state is on the wrong track increased by 14 points. On the other hand, there was relatively little change in these views among leaders from jurisdictions with 10,001 to 30,000 residents.

**Figure 1b**  
Percentage of local officials who say Michigan is headed in the ‘right direction’ in 2011-2015, by partisan identification



**Figure 1c**  
Percentage of local officials who say Michigan is headed in the ‘right direction’ or is off on the ‘wrong track’ in 2014-2015, by jurisdiction size



Note: responses for “don’t know” not shown

## Those pessimistic about Michigan's direction often cite tax policy and dysfunction in Lansing; optimists point to improving state economy

For the first time, the Spring 2015 MPPS asked local leaders why they believe the state is either on the wrong track or headed in the right direction, eliciting over 1,600 descriptive comments from 696 local leaders, referencing a wide range of topics. This kind of open-end question allows local officials to provide more detailed information compared to a standard check-box question, and elaborates on precisely what officials are thinking of when they evaluate the state's direction. Although these open-end responses do not necessarily speak for the entire MPPS sample, they do represent an extensive cross-section of opinions regarding what makes local officials more or less optimistic about Michigan's future.

Among those local leaders who believe the state is on the wrong track, the most common set of remarks focuses on taxation and tax policy. They comment particularly on two specific tax issues: the taxing of pensions and also on Proposal 1, the failed May 2015 statewide ballot proposal related to new taxes for road funding and other issues.<sup>3</sup>

The pension income tax change referred to by many local officials in their comments was signed into law by Governor Snyder in 2011.<sup>4</sup> It revised the exemptions to private pension income to require individual taxpayers reaching the age of 67 in 2020 to start paying additional taxes on their pensions. This new individual tax was instituted at roughly the same time as a significant cut in the state's business tax. These changes to the state's tax code received a significant amount of media coverage during the Governor's reelection campaign in 2014,<sup>5</sup> and clearly still linger in the mind of many local officials when thinking about the current direction of the state.

It is not surprising the second tax topic—the complex May 5 ballot proposal to boost road funding as well as funding for schools, local governments, and mass transit—would be at the top of mind for many local officials, as 35% say that road maintenance is the top public service priority among their citizens.<sup>6</sup> However, Proposal 1 was debated and voted down in the middle of the MPPS field period, making it a timely example to use in illustrating Michigan's tax problems. But, more generally, many local officials insist that the entire tax system in Michigan would need reform before the state can get back on the right track.

The issue of Proposal 1 also carries over into the other two most frequent sets of “wrong track” comments: dysfunction in Lansing itself and the perceived poor relationship between the state government and local governments across Michigan. Pointing to the choice to put road funding to a public vote rather than resolving it through legislation, many who think the state is on the wrong track express concerns that the state government—both legislature and executive—cannot govern effectively. Local officials see a lack of leadership and an over-emphasis on partisan politics at the state level as hindering Michigan's prosperity. Furthermore, they list a variety of state policies that directly affect local governments—including unfunded mandates, cuts in revenue sharing and school funding, and a lack of attention to the fiscal stresses on smaller communities—that make them pessimistic about Michigan's direction.

Among local leaders who say the state is on the right track, they overwhelmingly focus on the state of Michigan's economy. Economic indicators such as lower unemployment and higher property values are making many local officials optimistic about the state's direction. Local officials frequently link their positive assessments about economic gains to state policies such as the passage of right-to-work legislation, assistance in helping Detroit through bankruptcy, the “Pure Michigan” tourism advertising campaign, and careful management of the state budget. It should also be noted that many local officials who believe the state is on the right track specifically credit the leadership of Governor Snyder with many of the successes they see.



## Voices Across Michigan

### Quotes from local leaders regarding their evaluations of the state's direction

#### *Among officials who say the state is on the wrong track:*

“Looking at just the May Sales Tax proposed constitutional increase as a symptomatic example: The goal from the State’s point-of-view is to increase sales tax, and really has nothing to do with the repair and maintenance of roads, as advertised. Rather, monies currently going to roads will be ‘back-doored’ into other areas that are less worthy and the situation will not show much improvement...Again, this situation is symptomatic of nearly all the activities of the State, and with regard to taxation.”

“Legislators are not governing. They are beholden to special interests and short-term issues. There isn’t any political will to address the structural issues facing the state. The State cannot cut its way out of the situation.”

“Priorities of the current legislature are too focused on an extreme partisan agenda rather than what’s best for the State.”

“The State of Michigan has taken money away from local governments through reductions in revenue sharing and personal property tax revenue. They then said it is the local governments’ fault for having financial woes. They are trying to lead from a top down approach to restrict local government autonomy to make decisions. They need to focus on reducing laws and regulations that restrict growth and waste business and people’s time.”

“While we are led to believe things in urban areas of Michigan and Michigan in general are improving, there is no indication of this at all in my area. High unemployment, no job opportunities, very low wages, nothing has changed. If anything gotten worse due to suspension of unemployment benefits and still no jobs, no sign of changes are seen. As most who live in this area have said, we are always in a recession so we never know any different, we live the same all the time. I think the things that have been changed to allow politicians to profess the false claims of improvement are things that affect normal everyday people trying to make a living.”

#### *Among officials who say the state is on the right track:*

“Unemployment is down, businesses are investing again, new houses are being built. We are at least talking about roads, though the current solution (Proposal 1) isn’t the best.”

“The industrial sector has stabilized—the automobile plants are working again. The housing market is on the rise. The pure Michigan campaign is drawing tourists. Unemployment is declining. Education is finally realizing that not every student is going to college and adjustments are being made to train those individuals in good paying jobs without the students incurring thousands of dollars in student loans.”

“The main reasons for things that are going right in Michigan are a balanced State budget and the improvements made to make Michigan more ‘business friendly.’”

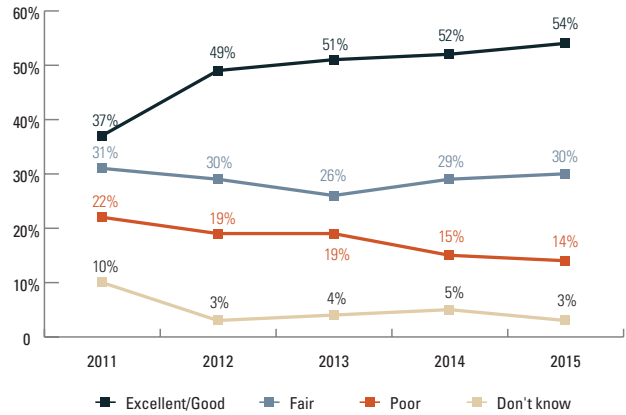
“I support the Governor’s plans for economic development and his focus for quite some time now about finding a funding source to repair our state’s roads. Though nothing has yet been approved regarding our roads, it hasn’t been due to the Governor not leading. Rather, it’s been the legislature and interest groups not being able to get their act together. Finally, the Pure Michigan initiative has been a hands-down success, and has quite frankly made me proud of what our beautiful state has to offer.”

## Ratings of Governor Snyder's performance are mostly unchanged

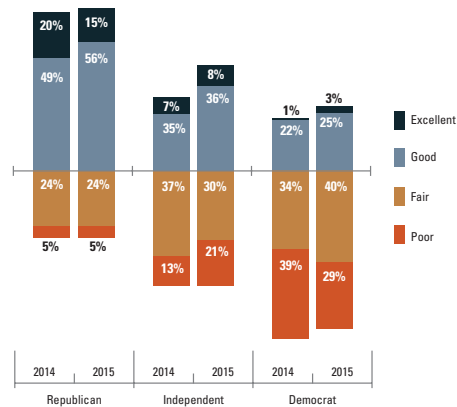
While confidence in the state's direction has declined over the past year, local leaders' assessments of Governor Snyder's performance, overall, have remained mostly stable. In 2015, over half (54%) of local officials statewide rate his performance as either good or excellent, while 14% rate it as poor, essentially unchanged from last year's ratings and consistent with ratings for him over the previous several years (see *Figure 2a*).

Party identification is again one of the most significant predictors of local leaders' views on Governor Snyder's performance. Within each partisan group there have only been slight upticks in the assessments over the Governor's performance over last year. Currently 71% of officials who identify themselves as Republicans think the Governor is doing a good or excellent job compared to 69% in 2014 (see *Figure 2b*). By comparison, fewer than half (45%) of Independent officials rate the Governor's performance this way, while in 2014, 42% of Independents gave the Governor positive ratings. Meanwhile, just over a quarter (28%) of Democratic officials in 2015 say the Governor is doing a good or excellent job, up slightly from the 23% who said the same in 2014.

**Figure 2a**  
Local officials' evaluations of Governor Snyder's performance, 2011-2015



**Figure 2b**  
Local officials' evaluations of Governor Snyder's performance in 2014-2015, by partisan identification



Note: responses for "don't know" not shown

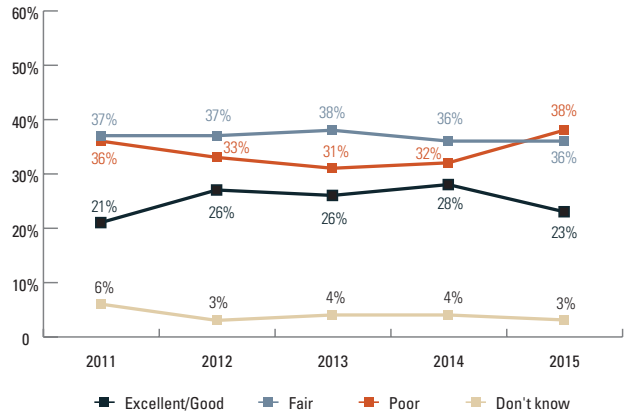


Fewer than a quarter of local officials say Legislature’s performance is excellent or good

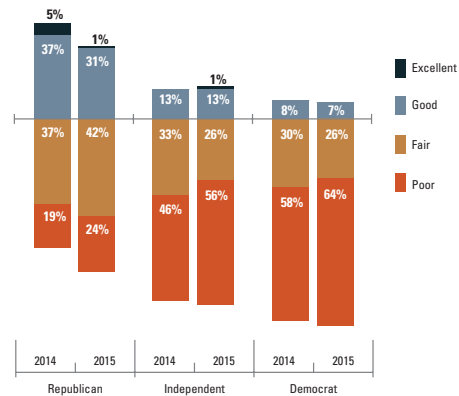
Local leaders continue to be significantly more critical of the Michigan Legislature than of the Governor in 2015, with fewer than a quarter (23%) of local officials statewide saying the State Legislature’s performance is either good or excellent (see *Figure 3a*). And unlike their views on Governor Snyder’s performance in 2015, local officials’ overall opinions on the Michigan Legislature’s performance have declined slightly compared with last year’s survey responses. In fact, for the first time since the MPPS began tracking these views in 2011, ratings of poor are the most common response local leaders give for the Legislature’s performance. Ratings of excellent or good (23%) are down from 28% in 2014. Meanwhile, 38% of local officials rate the Legislature as poor, up from the 32% who said the same in 2014.

Again, partisan identification is a key factor corresponding to respondents’ opinions about the Legislature’s performance, and change in opinions can be found among all partisan groups. Positive ratings of good or excellent have declined the most among Republican local leaders, from 42% last year to 32% in 2015 (see *Figure 3b*). At the same time, poor Legislative ratings among Independent officials have risen from 46% in 2014 to 56% today. Similarly, poor ratings for the Legislature among Democratic officials increased from 58% in 2014 to 64% in 2015.

**Figure 3a**  
Local officials’ evaluations of the Michigan Legislature’s performance, 2011-2015



**Figure 3b**  
Local officials’ evaluations of the Michigan Legislature’s performance in 2014-2015, by partisan identification



Note: responses for “don’t know” not shown

## Conclusion

After three straight years of increasing optimism among local leaders regarding the direction in which Michigan is headed, the 2015 MPPS finds a sharp decline in these views. Whereas 55% of local leaders felt the state was headed in the right direction in 2014, this has declined to just 46% today. This decline in support is found among local leaders of all partisan groups. Most surprisingly, given the Republican Party's monopoly on Michigan's state government, the largest drop in local leaders' support for the state's current direction is found among Republican local leaders (from 72% in 2014 to 59% in 2015).

Among those who think the state is off on the wrong track, the most common reasons given for their views relate to concerns about the state's tax policies—especially with regard to the recently enacted pension tax on individuals, and the failed May 2015 ballot proposal to raise funding for Michigan's roads and other priorities—as well as concerns about dysfunction in Lansing, and the broken relationship between the state government and local governments.

Meanwhile, among those who think Michigan is headed in the right direction, overwhelmingly the most common reasons provided are beliefs that the state economy is headed in the right direction. Many local leaders cite specific state policies for the economic success they see, including passage of right-to-work legislation, state support for Detroit's emergence from bankruptcy, the "Pure Michigan" tourism campaign, and careful management of the state budget led by Governor Rick Snyder.

Compared to the overall drop in support for the state's current direction, local leaders' support for Governor Snyder are holding steady in 2015, with 54% rating his performance as either good or excellent. By comparison, local leaders' opinions of the State Legislature's job performance have ticked down in 2015, with just 23% rating it as good or excellent, and a plurality of 38% rating it as poor. This is the first time since tracking began in 2011 that ratings of "poor" are the most common outcome for the Legislature's evaluations.

## Notes

1. Ivacko, T, & Horner, D. (2012). *Michigan's local leaders more positive about Governor Snyder's performance, more optimistic about the state's direction*. 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-2012-Right-Track.pdf>
2. Institute for Public Policy and Social Research. (2014). *State of the State Survey-69 (fall)*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University. Retrieved from: <http://www.ippsr.msu.edu/SOSS>
3. Michigan Ballot Proposal 15-1, The Michigan Sales Tax Increase for Transportation Amendment. (2015). Lansing, MI: Michigan Secretary of State. Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/sos/Official15\\_1\\_482602\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/sos/Official15_1_482602_7.pdf)
4. Ross, R.A. (2011). *Description of recently enacted personal income tax changes with taxpayer examples*. Lansing: MI: House Fiscal Agency. Retrieved from <http://www.house.michigan.gov/hfa/PDF/Alpha/TaxpayerExampleMemo.pdf>
5. Christoff, C. (2014, September 3). *Pension tax bites Michigan's Snyder in re-election bid*. Bloomberg Business. Retrieved from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-09-03/pension-tax-bites-michigan-s-snyder-in-re-election-bid>
6. Ivacko, T., & Mills, S. (2015). *Local leaders say Michigan road funding needs major increase, but lack consensus on options that would raise the most revenue*. 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-fall-2014-michigan-roads.pdf>





## Survey Background and Methodology

The MPPS is a biannual survey of each of Michigan's 1,856 units of general purpose local government, conducted once each spring and fall. While the spring surveys consist of multiple batteries of the same "core" fiscal, budgetary and operational policy questions and are designed to build-up a multi-year time-series of data, the fall surveys focus on various other topics.

In the Spring 2015 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, managers and clerks; village presidents, clerks, and managers; and township supervisors, clerks, and managers) from all 83 counties, 278 cities, 255 villages, and 1,240 townships in the state of Michigan.

The Spring 2015 wave was conducted from April 6 - June 8, 2015. A total of 1,328 jurisdictions in the Spring 2015 wave returned valid surveys (68 counties, 211 cities, 166 villages, and 883 townships), resulting in a 72% response rate by unit. The margin of error for the survey for the survey as a whole is +/- 1.44%. 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

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)

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>

# The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

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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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