



# Ohio Insights Review

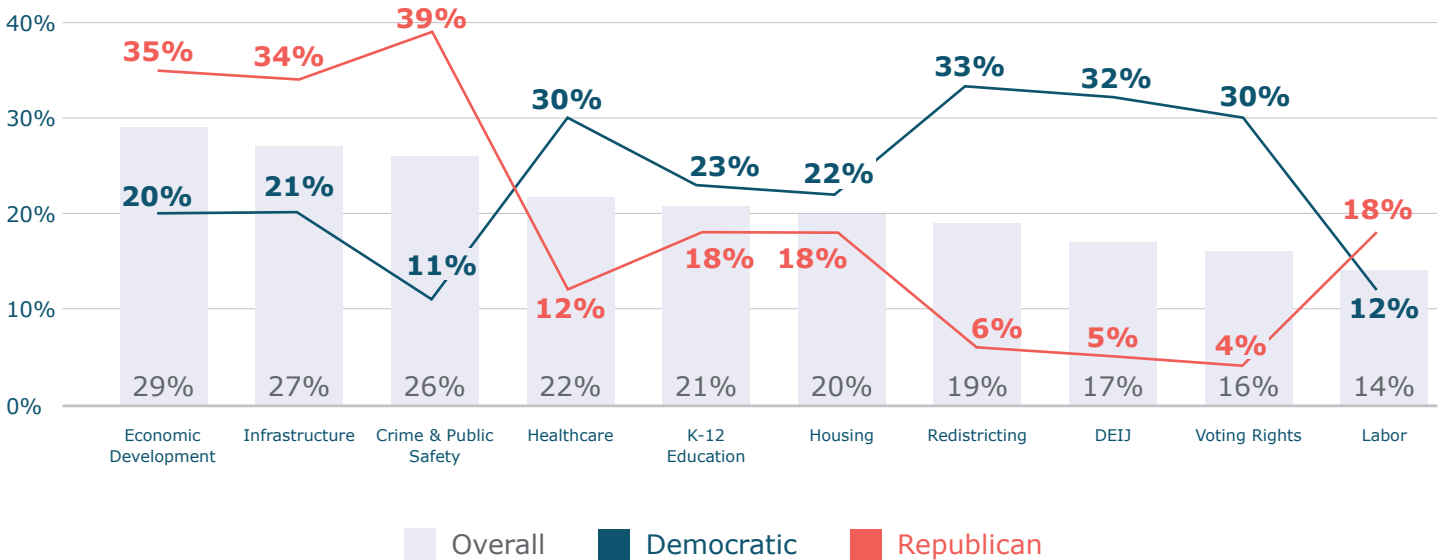
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# Introduction

## Top 10 Issues in Ohio: Party Split

Which of the following do you view as the most pressing issues facing the state? (percentage of respondents who placed the issue in their top three)



From April to June 2022, we surveyed and spoke with over 200 state and local policymakers in Ohio to understand policy priorities throughout the state and how the private and public sectors are working on those issues.

Policymakers highlight economic development, infrastructure, and crime and public safety as key issue areas for Ohio. Policymakers also discuss how they would like to see the private sector engaging on these issues, in order to benefit both local communities and the state as a whole.

Although these three issues ranked highest among policymakers overall, there was a clear disparity between Democrat and Republican priorities. Democrats raise Diversity, Equality, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) as the biggest issue for the state, while Republicans prioritize crime and public safety above other policy areas.

*This review examines three of Ohio policymakers’ top policy priorities: (i) Economic Development (ii) Transportation Infrastructure and (iii) Crime & Public Safety.*

# Section One: Economic Development



Ohio has great potential for economic growth, as demonstrated by the influx of large corporate projects into the state. Policymakers emphasize the importance of workforce development in order to support such projects and potential.

## Corporate & Economic Growth

Policymakers highlight a variety of features that make Ohio an attractive business environment, including geographic location, industrial reputation, and strong colleges and higher education. Tapping into these benefits to draw new businesses into the state is a key aspect of Ohio's economic development.

*“Overall, I think the Ohio economy is strong. Ohio specifically is a state in a region with **significant natural resources, with a great manufacturing workforce base, with strong educational community college and higher educational programs..the heartland region generally has opportunities for growth.**”*


Executive Department Director, R

*“**[Economic development] is about strategic marketing, growing our various clusters that are here, including aerospace, food production, parts manufacturing... and also just by virtue of where we are geographically in the country; it's an optimal location. So we're always looking at, “How do we grow those clusters?”**”*

Municipal Director of Economic Development, I

*“One of the issues is attracting and retaining employees. And then the other thing I would say is **they're looking at incentives for manufacturers to come to the state. So we're incentivizing manufacturers. So you have the employer side of trying to bring people to the state but then also looking to obtain and retain talent.**”*

Legislative Policy Advisor, D



One of the most high-profile developments for the state has been Intel's announcement that they will be building two chip manufacturing plants in central Ohio. The new factories are expected to bring new jobs, people, and economic growth to the region.

*"We have economic development, that's a key factor in Ohio. We have the announcement of **the largest economic development project with Intel coming to central Ohio.** So economic development is going to be huge for us."*

State Representative, R

*"Columbus is growing. We have the new Intel facility that's coming in. **There are going to be more jobs and people coming into there area because of the microchip plant.**"*

State Representative, D

*"With the Intel project going around the Columbus area, New Albany, that's a huge project. **It's literally the biggest project the county's ever seen, from a standpoint of development and the amount of money being committed and things that are going to be done.**"*

County Commissioner, R

## Workforce Development

As Ohio's economy grows, it's important that its workforce is able to keep up, both in numbers and skill set. However, workforce development is hampered by issues of an aging population and an outflux of young Ohioans leaving the state.

*"We're hearing a lot from different businesses about workforce. Workforce development is very big, and continuing to have a good business environment. **We just landed Intel... but for them to expand, they certainly need the workforce there too.**"*

State Senator, R

*"Today, we have 500 skilled labor jobs that we don't have people for...**So we're well behind the curve when it comes to developing skilled trade laborers.**"*

City Commissioner, R



*“Ohio has an aging population, so we have a lot more people leaving the workforce than entering... We need to acknowledge that we are losing a lot of our institutional knowledge because people are aging out.”*

Legislative Policy Advisor, D

*“We have a ton of colleges and universities in Ohio. So we have a good talent pipeline. **Our challenge is keeping our talent here.** I think that when tech companies like Intel move in here, they’ll certainly want to stay here.”*

Legislative Office Director, R

In response to the skills gap and labor force needs brought on by economic development, public-private partnerships have formed across the state to create a pipeline from colleges and universities to businesses within the state. Ohio has seen particular success with the TechCred program, which helps to improve vocational skills in schools and workplaces.

*“We just passed a law recently that **helps or incentivizes businesses to partner with universities to create pipelines and streamlines** into certain areas. So businesses are investing in fellowships or internship programs.”*

Legislative Policy Advisor, D

*“We formed a **public-private partnership with a number of small manufacturers around our county and two of our colleges to create a workforce development center.** So we now have a building where we have young people coming in and people who’ve been displaced or are underemployed to learn skilled trades with the support of local industry and local colleges.”*

City Commissioner, R

*“Now technology has become more competitive, which is one of the reasons here in Ohio, our governor and lieutenant governor have championed something that we call **TechCred, which is basically opportunities for employers to assist their incumbent workforce with getting technology credentials at their place of employment.**”*

Executive Department Director, R

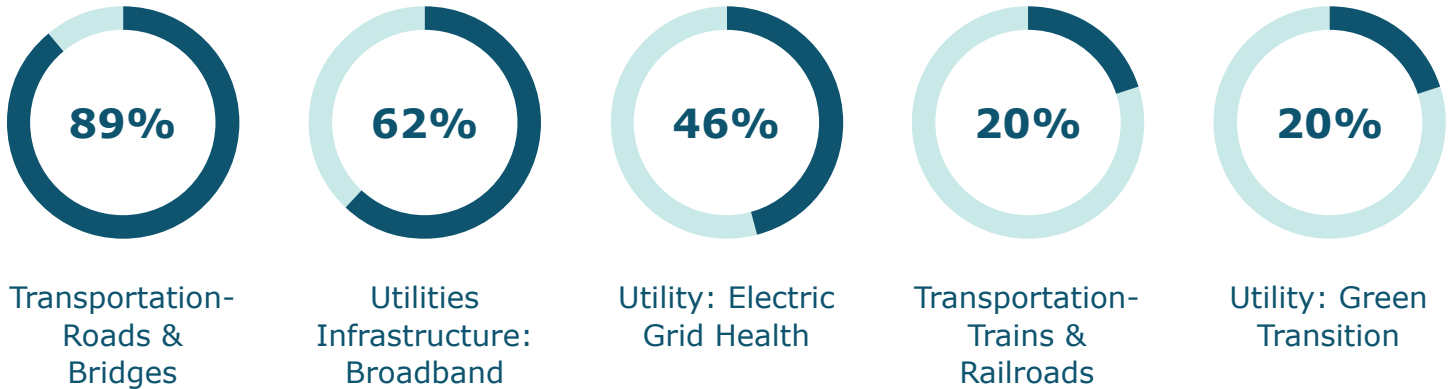
*“We have a **Tech Credential program** where we’re encouraging vocational education and things like that, where kids can get certified in different sectors, in different jobs, and use those skills... **And I think that meshes really well with the private sector’s needs.**”*

Legislative Office Director, R

# Section Two: Transportation Infrastructure

## Top Infrastructure Priorities in Ohio

Which of the following do you view as the most pressing issues in regards to infrastructure in your state? (percentage of respondents who placed the issue in their top three)



n=61

Infrastructure is another important element of Ohio’s economic development. Policymakers place particular emphasis on the state’s lacking transportation infrastructure, for both roads and bridges and public transportation. They also brought up the uncertain role of electric vehicles (EVs) within the larger issues of transportation and electrical infrastructure.

## Aging Infrastructure & Keeping Up With Economic Growth

As Ohio grows and develops, the workforce isn’t the only aspect that will have to keep up; physical infrastructure will also need to keep pace in order to support the state’s economic expansion. Policymakers have brought up concerns that, in its current state, Ohio’s infrastructure won’t be able to fulfill this need.

*“[A main issue is] infrastructure development with water, wastewater, roads, and using those funds from the infrastructure bill as well as putting them into the right buckets, improving those processes.”*

State Representative, R

*“Infrastructure is important wherever you are in the country. You know, you can’t have businesses unless you have the right sewer, water, electric, transportation.”*

Municipal Director of Economic Development, I

*“Suddenly we have several thousand more people driving up and down the streets. It’s going to be crowded...We’re in a world where all these are people going to come that are going to work here, and it’s going to change our way of life.”*

Municipal Council Member, R

*“I also believe that we have some infrastructure issues...I can drive to the capital of Michigan and Indiana quicker than I can drive to the capital of the state of Ohio.”*

Mayor, R

## Lack Of Public Transportation

Ohio’s transportation infrastructure is particularly weakened by its lack of public transit. This is an issue that affects both urban and rural areas, and policymakers are frustrated by the lack of progress on the issue.

*“The number one [priority] is transportation. There is a very small public transit system. It doesn’t run on a fixed route system that you’d see in a more urban area, but it’s more of a demand response system...The system is very expensive.”*

City Council President, I

*“The only light rail that you’ll see in this state is up in the Cleveland area, and it’s really an old light rail system. There’s just a lot of resistance to it...There’s no money, no push, no political willpower to make those connections. Nobody wants to ride the bus.”*

Executive Department Chief, R

*“A subway system would take so, so long to set up in Columbus. I think that just every day that isn’t done, it becomes less likely that actually happens. I don’t think there’s a subway system in Cleveland or in Cincinnati or in Dayton. So I just think that it’s not likely that occurs.”*

Legislative Policy Advisor, D





## EV As The Future Of Transportation?

With the rising prevalence of EVs, policymakers acknowledge the potential environmental benefits of an EV transition. However, they also note that this wouldn't solve all the issues with Ohio's infrastructure, especially as the state's electrical grid is not currently ready for a full EV transition.

*"I think we're a long way, quite frankly, from being able to sustain an entirely electric fleet in Ohio, and I think that's true around the country. **I think we have a long way to go in terms of building resiliency on the grid and having enough energy supply to meet that demand.**"*

Legislative Office Director, R

*"I think some of the concerns that I have is that I wonder if the electric infrastructure is there. A big grocery store in town called Kroger, they have one recharging station at their place. I'm not aware of any other publicly available recharging stations. **So I am wondering if there's enough capacity to help people charge their vehicles.**"*

City Council President, I

*"**I think electric cars are inevitable.** They make good sense on one hand, for the environment. On the other side of the coin, **we're going to need a larger electric grid.** So that's going to create more problems but it's inevitable."*

Municipal Council Member, D

Additionally, there is the question of **the gas tax**, which provides a considerable portion of the state's funds for road maintenance and repair. Policymakers raise questions of how these funds would be procured in the face of an EV transition.

*"**A lot of our infrastructure is derived from the gas tax. So electric vehicles will diminish the returns that our local and state government gets from the gas tax.** So that's a very real concern of mine...But ultimately, we want to be receptive to economic development and expansion and innovation in Ohio. So we're cautiously optimistic about the sector."*

State Representative, R

*"At some point, everyone has to realize that just because the internal combustion engine may be going away and we may not be buying as much gasoline and diesel fuel as we have in the past, roads are still going to continue to deteriorate. **And so how are we going to offset that lost revenue from gasoline and diesel fuel taxes so that we can continue to take care of our roads?"***

Mayor, R

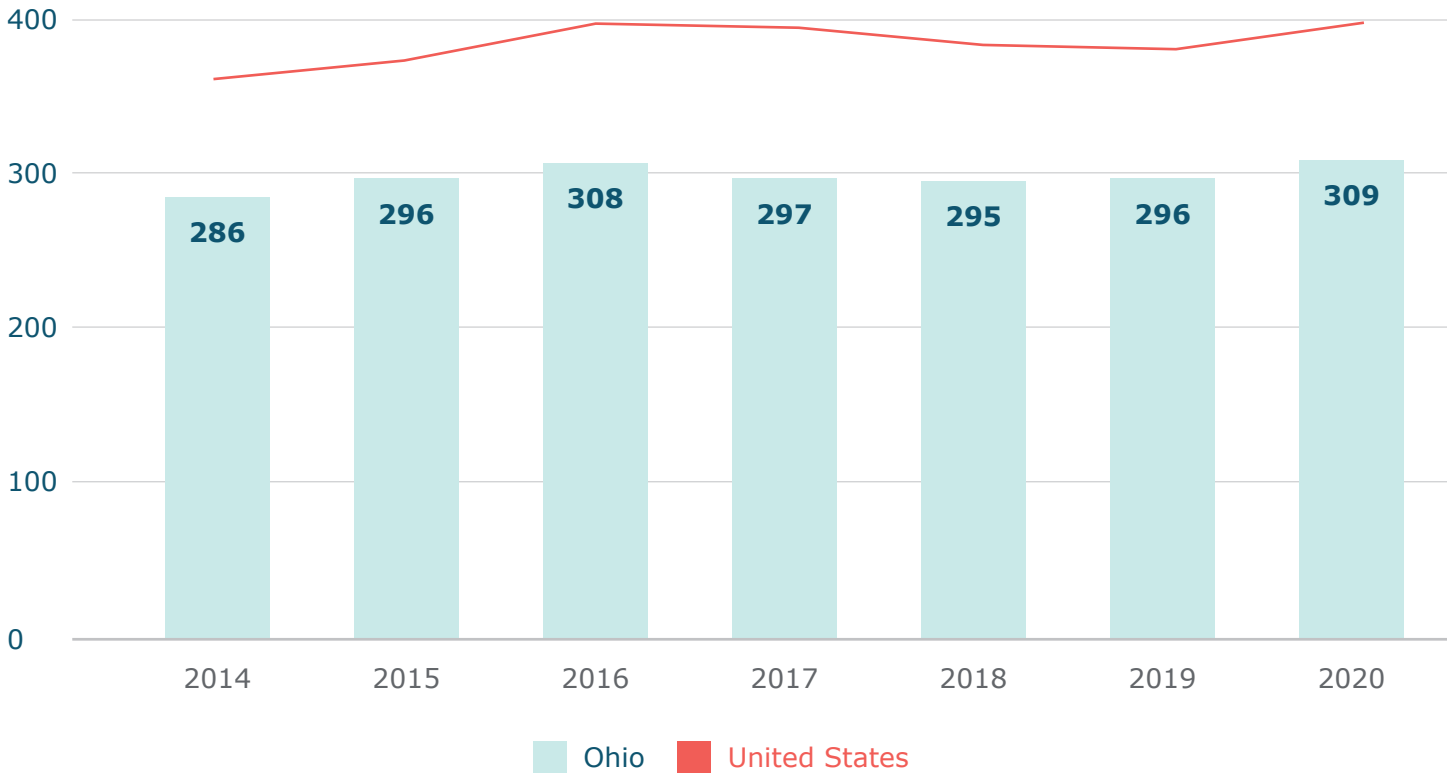
# Section Three: Crime & Public Safety



## Violent Crime in Ohio vs. the U.S. As A Whole

Violent Crimes Committed per 1000,000 people

Ohio has experienced an uptick in violent crime in recent years, with a 5.3% increase between 2019 and 2020.<sup>1</sup>



Source: FBI National Incident-Based Reporting System

Policymakers put forth several possible strategies to respond to the state's increasing crime rates. In particular, the connection between mental health and crime was highlighted, along with the need to train law enforcement accordingly in issues of mental health. The school-work pipeline also has great potential in this area, as policymakers seek to fulfill demand for law enforcement while providing new recruits with the proper training and preparation.

*“The Governor is committed to supporting law enforcement, reducing violent crime, and has spent an unprecedented amount of funds to improve access to mental health services and combat addiction. **But it will take more than money or programming.** Everyone from local sheriffs, to city councils to the state legislature is talking about law enforcement reforms, school safety, traffic/road safety, and recidivism.”*

Executive Policy Director, R

*“[A policy priority is] **getting all of our enforcement, our police, and helping them more with understanding health issues that people have mental health** and maybe even adding some people to work with, not just as a police officer, but as a mental health person.”*

Executive Financial Analyst, D

*“We have what we’re calling a **Safety Academy, where the city of Cincinnati for the police and the fire department works with Cincinnati public schools** to form an academy for folks that are interested in public service...They go through it and they get ready to test for these jobs.”*

Municipal Council Member, D





## Conclusion

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Policymakers believe that private sector engagement is an important aspect of Ohio’s continued growth. There is ample opportunity for the private sector to collaborate with the public sector and local communities. Policymakers emphasize the importance of **open communication**.

*“I mean, ultimately **advocating well means taking additional viewpoints and trying to develop the best policy**. So it’s hard for us to make policy on issues that we’re not aware of. To advocate means it’s important for us to be aware of other issues or policy impacts that we otherwise want to be aware of.”*

State Representative, R

*“As we work through issues, we have an **open line of communication** with [that company]. And that’s important. Because **we and the legislature don’t want to be making decisions in a vacuum**— we want to understand how the decisions that we make are going to affect employers and their potential investments here.”*

Legislative Office Director, R

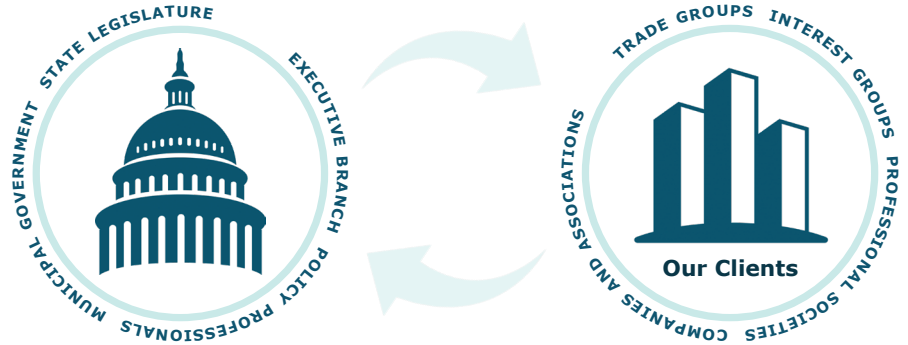
As Ohio expands and develops, policymakers are focused on ensuring that the state can keep up with its own growth. This includes producing a capable workforce, improving the physical interconnectivity of the state and its residents, and ensuring a safe environment as well as a productive one.



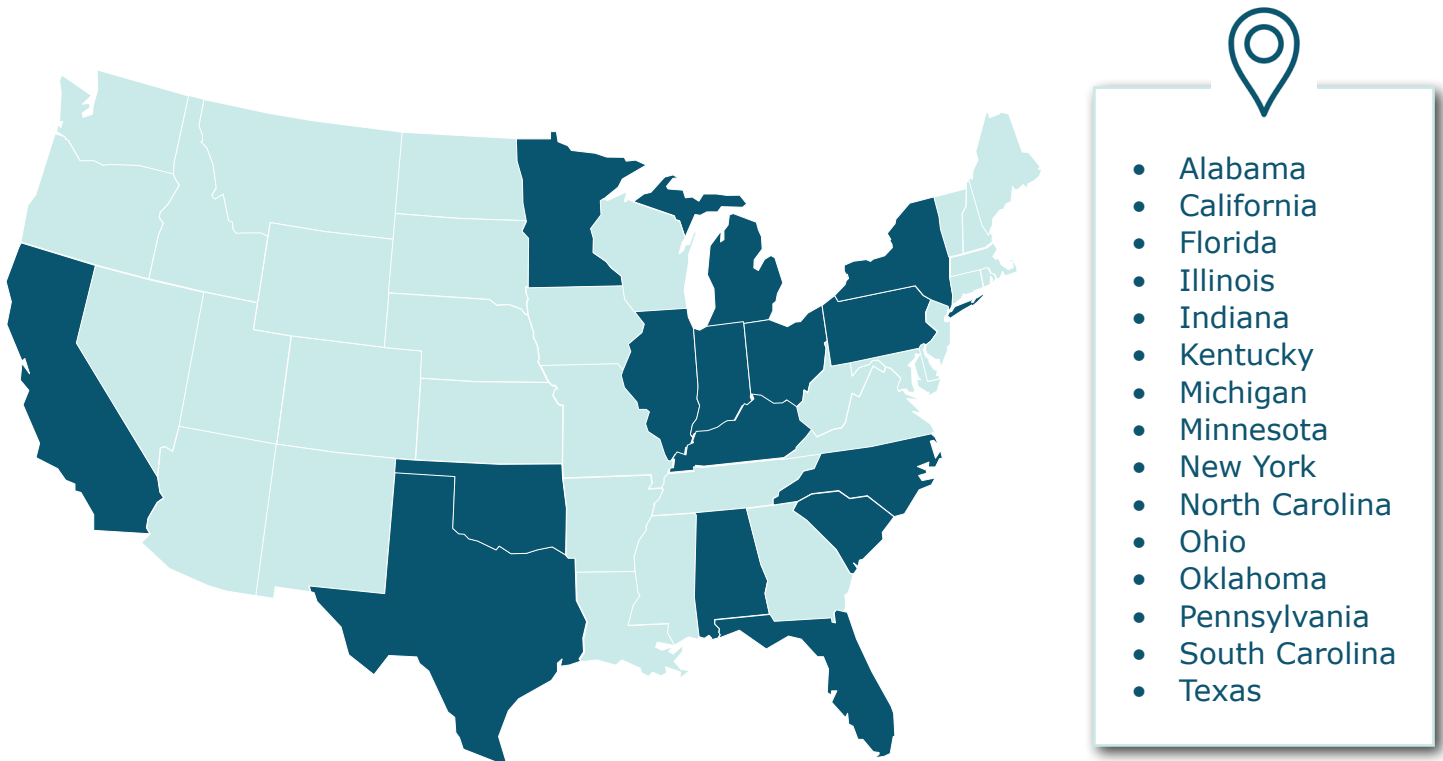
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# States Insights Review

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# Citations

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