

Penta Policy Insiders

Michigan Insights Review Series

Infrastructure

August 2023
policyinsiders.pentagroup.co

Executive summary

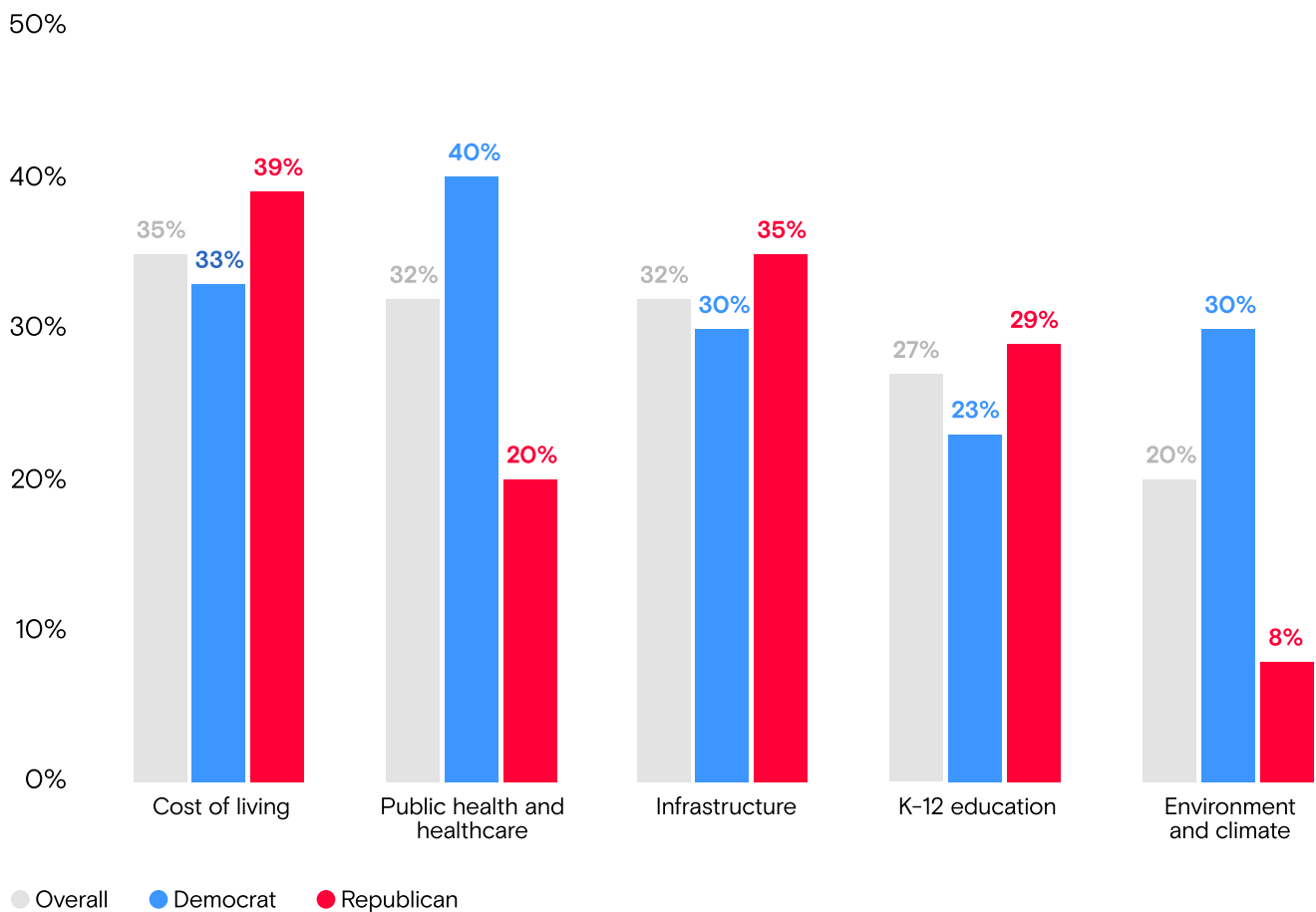
We are pleased to share our findings from this year's Michigan Insights Review. From January to May 2023, we interviewed 237 policymakers in the state to learn about their top policy priorities, as well as the most pressing challenges for policy leaders across the political spectrum.

Michigan policymakers we spoke to detail a variety of priorities for their communities, including improving K-12 education, healthcare, infrastructure, and more. At the top of policymakers' minds is the rising cost of living, with 35 percent of leaders citing it as a top issue. This focus on cost of living comes at a time when nearly 40 percent of Michiganders say they struggle to afford basic needs.¹ When it comes to rising living expenses, policy leaders also convey concerns about housing prices and rising income inequality. The second highest-ranked priority for policy staff is infrastructure, with 32 percent of policy leaders saying it's a top-of-mind challenge. In fact, when asked about infrastructure objectives, a notable 89 percent of policymakers say improving the state's roads and bridges is vital.

This report is the fourth in a series that examines Michigan policymakers' top policy priorities for 2022. This review examines infrastructure in the state.

Top policy priorities in Michigan

Multiple selections permitted



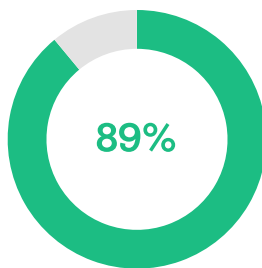
Michigan deep dive

Infrastructure

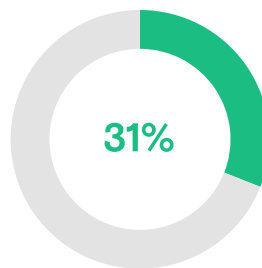
Policymakers are focused on a variety of infrastructure issues in Michigan, with a specific emphasis on roads and bridges. Policy leaders also detail several other priorities, such as increasing broadband access, improving water treatment, strengthening the electric grid, and boosting the public transit system.

Top infrastructure priorities in Michigan

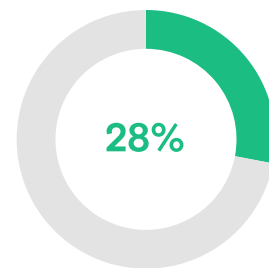
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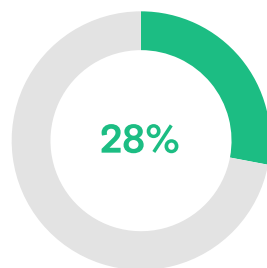
Roads and bridges



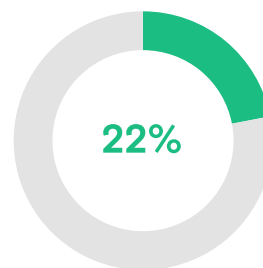
Electric grid health



Water treatment



Broadband access



Public transportation

Roads and bridges

One of the leading priorities in Michigan is improving the quality of roads and bridges, with 89 percent of the policymakers we surveyed identifying roads and bridges as the top infrastructure issue. In the past year, the Transportation Asset Management Council published a review of the roads in the state in which only 25 percent received a rating of 'good,' while 33 percent were rated as 'poor.'² This was a slight improvement since 2021, but based on plans for future investment, experts project that the state of roads will start to decline again by 2026.³



The exit to get off the expressway to the main road was so bad, I feel like if you didn't have an SUV, you would have blown out a tire. I mean, it was hole, hole, hole. I mean, bad... So I think it might be waiting for some kind of tech that fixes asphalt so it doesn't break. I don't know. It's bad.

Education Specialist, Michigan Executive Branch, I



Michigan is definitely having an infrastructure problem right now. We have a lot of bridges and disrepair. Our roads are horrible compared to many other states. The governor keeps saying that she's working on this. I don't necessarily think we're seeing much improvement. That's probably going to be a thing that is going to have a lot of focus, infrastructure with roads and tunnels and bridges probably in the near future.

District Director, Michigan State Senate, R

Investing in infrastructure

Policy leaders believe that key infrastructure updates will improve safety and accessibility across the state. Policymakers are also supportive of investments that will increase access to clean water and promote public transit.



I think we need to be looking at our transportation policies in Michigan with moving to more of a public transit system and investing in rail and looking at bus and looking at EVs kind of looking at a robust—a diverse transportation policy instead of reliance on gas-powered cars. And I think the legislature and the governor can really drive those conversations.

District Director, Michigan State Senate, R



[It is just] really, really important for everybody to make sure that whatever traffic, whatever type of vehicles exist, we're providing the opportunity for everybody to travel safely, whether they're doing it on foot or bike or scooter or a traditionally driven vehicle or an autonomous vehicle, that these are all there and accessible to everybody and don't create undue harm to the people around that.

Advocacy Director, Private, Unknown



[The community has] suffered disinvestment for probably 50 to 80 years... So the state has mandated that lead service lines be removed... but it costs \$75 million or more to finish replacing all the lead lines... the money's just not here in the community because the revenue stopped being generated in order to do that.

Councilman, Michigan State Municipality, D



One [priority] is dumping infrastructure. We don't need to keep it just because we've had it forever. If it doesn't work, let's do some research, find out if people are using it, want to use it. If not, get rid of it.

Education Specialist, Michigan Executive Branch, I

Going electric

Strengthening the electric grid is a top infrastructure priority. Policymakers want to see improvements in both the health and capacity of the network, especially given the increase in electric vehicles across the state.

Electric grid health



You also need to talk about how are we powering our electric grid. The car doesn't help the environment at all. If we're powering it with a coal-powered power plant, so you need to greenify your grid at the same time that you're making these electric vehicles, otherwise, you're not doing yourself any good.

Councilman, Michigan State Municipality, D



We have to make sure we have the volume of electricity... we also have to make sure that we can transfer that electricity. So our grid needs reliability. Some of the poles and wires were installed in the 1950s and can not carry the burden that is needed now.

State Representative, Michigan House of Representatives, R

Electric vehicle transition



I think they're a cool concept. I just don't think that the infrastructure is really there to support it. I would buy an EV as a second car. That's kind of always my thing. I would always rather have a gas car. But there's people that really like the idea. So I'm not for it or against it. I'm just going to let the market dictate that one.

Committee Clerk, Michigan House of Representatives, R

Conclusion

Policymakers are in agreement that improving roads and bridges in Michigan is the most significant priority, but also want to see progress in other key areas such as public transit and electric grid health. Policy leaders feel that updating infrastructure is necessary, but that it will also require additional revenue and initiatives in order to support such projects.

About Penta Policy Insiders

Penta Policy Insiders provides direct feedback from policymakers to government relations professionals, improving advocates' ability to understand, validate, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their engagement.

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Citations

1. <https://www.michigan.gov/mic/-/media/Project/Websites/mic/TAMC/Annual-Reports/2022-TAMC-Roads--Bridges-Annual-Report-WEB.pdf?rev=7c4debb793c94d9d82606e7cb09Od5f8&hash=D2276A89CE637F7D629107B06E640675>
2. Ibid

Qualitative n: 32 | Quantitative n: 205

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