

Penta Policy Insiders

Michigan Insights Review Series

Public Health and Healthcare

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Executive summary

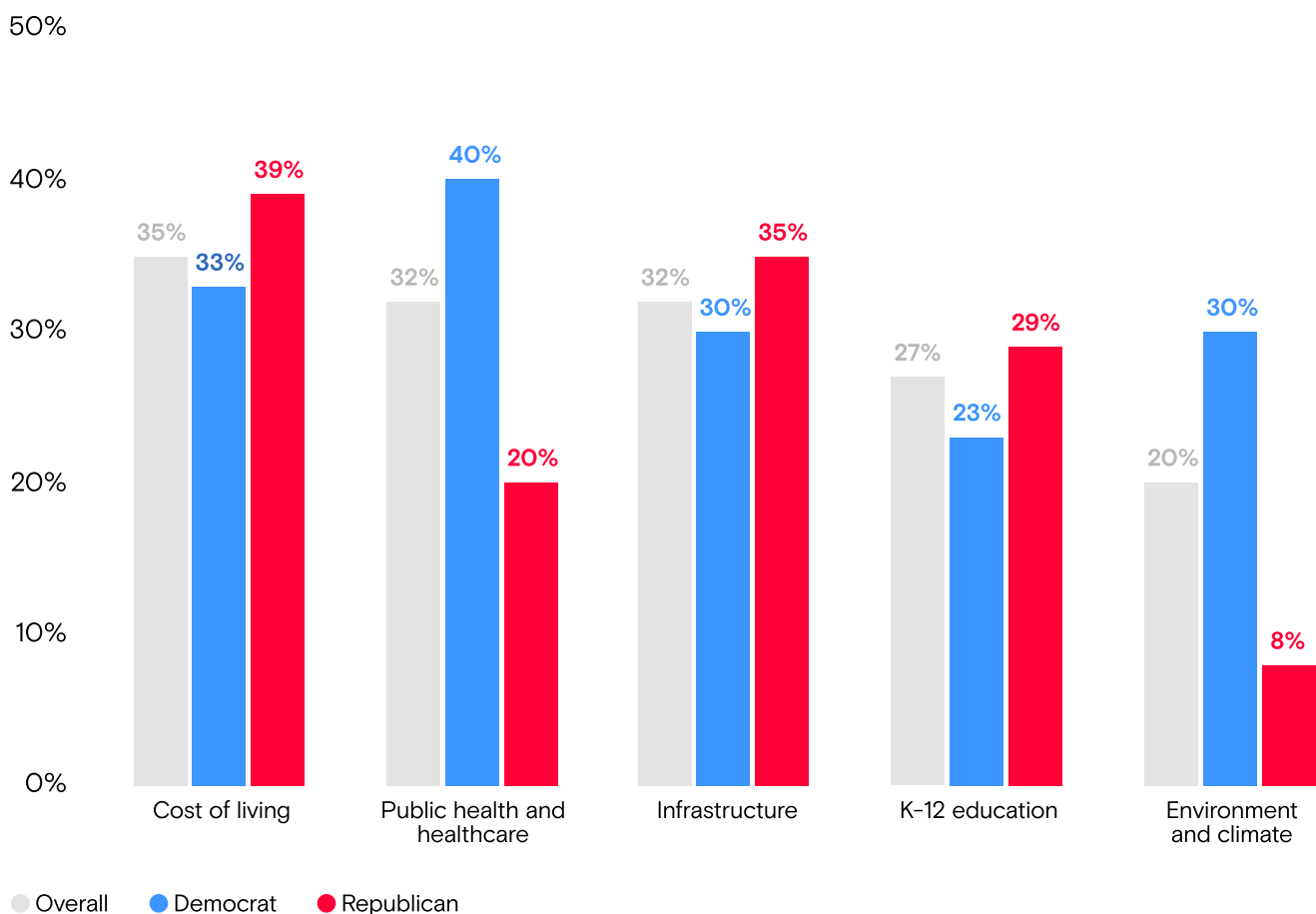
We are pleased to share our findings from this year's Michigan Insights Review. From January to May 2023, we interviewed 237 policymakers in the state to learn about their top policy priorities, as well as the most pressing challenges for policy leaders across the political spectrum.

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 public health and healthcare, with 32 percent of policy leaders saying it's a top-of-mind challenge. In fact, when asked about public health and healthcare objectives, 74 percent of policymakers said the high cost of healthcare is a major challenge.

This report is the third in a series that examines Michigan policymakers' top policy priorities for 2022. This review examines public health and healthcare in the state.

Top policy priorities in Michigan

Multiple selections permitted



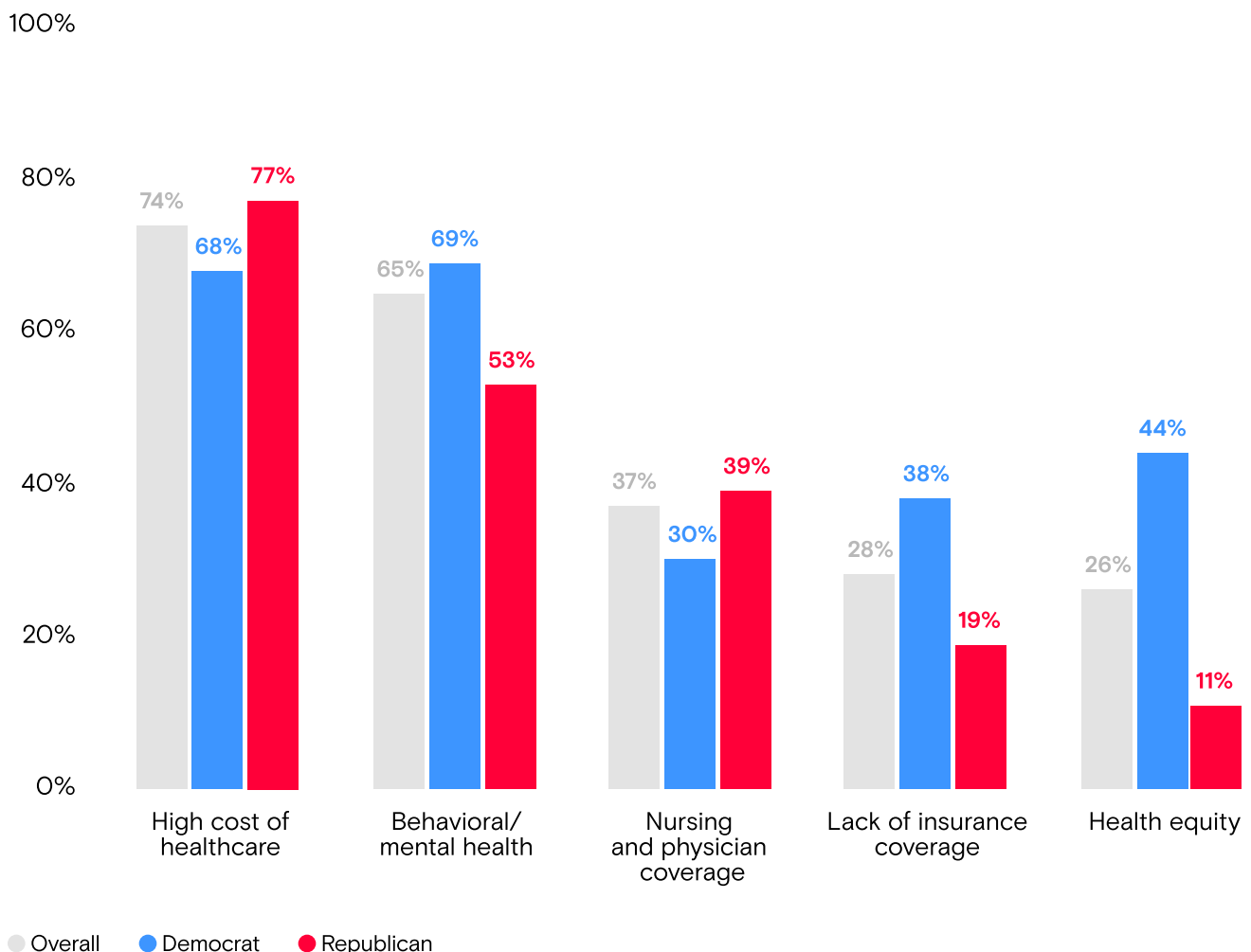
Michigan deep dive

Healthcare priorities in Michigan

Improving healthcare is a top priority for Michigan policymakers, with 17 percent identifying it as a key focus point. When it comes to improving health outcomes, 74 percent of policy staff say that the high cost of healthcare is a challenge and convey that lowering prescription drug costs is critical to ensuring the wellbeing of Michiganders, especially for individuals with chronic illnesses and disabilities.

Policy leaders across the aisle – 65 percent – say addressing mental health in the state is also a principal concern, with 68 percent of Democrats and 53 percent of Republicans saying it is a top priority. Michigan policymakers also highlight the importance of insuring mental health services. This emphasis comes at a time when the state faces a severe shortage of mental health professionals, especially in rural communities.¹ In fact, there are only 11.8 psychiatrists per 100,000 residents in the state. Michigan also ranks third in the shortage of mental healthcare professionals in the country, making this focus on access to mental health services all the more justifiable.²

Top healthcare priorities in Michigan



Lowering prescription drug costs is a priority

Policy leaders say lowering the cost of prescription drugs is paramount.



The more [prescription drug reform] the better. I mean, that's a huge concern for our community. It's the out-of-pocket costs for medications and being able to access them. Just the process of even having to fight with your insurance company. Those processes are not set up for people with disabilities, right? These forms and things that you have to submit, the general bureaucracy and red tape and step after step that you have to go through to try to get things covered. All of that stuff is just like so many extra hoops that our community has to jump through to be able to get our needs met.

Policy Analyst, Private, I



I think [lowering prescription drug costs] is a top priority too... Hearing from people and how outrageous it is to afford life maintaining medication is ridiculous. So that's something that there's a big focus on here.

Committee Clerk, Michigan House of Representatives, Other

Mental health spotlight

Democrats say mental health services should be covered as equally as physical care.



I would also like to see equal benefits for mental and physical health. Oftentimes, mental health is not covered or not covered as well as physical health, so we need to start treating mental health as an equally important part of our healthcare.

Representative, Michigan House of Representatives, D



I think [mental health] is definitely the biggest [priority] because it's kind of a newer facet of health care. That's kind of been a big thing that we've heard in basically every single department. Education obviously [is important], but in every single department people have been touching on mental health and it's important. So that's definitely a big one.

Committee Clerk, Michigan House of Representatives, D

Conclusion

Michigan policy leaders make it clear that healthcare is a top priority and place an emphasis on reducing the prescription drug costs. Policymakers, especially Democrats, agree that addressing the state's shortage of mental health professionals is critical to ensuring the wellbeing of communities in the state.



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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1. <https://www.uwmich.org/alice-report>

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