

State *Of the* State Survey

Foreign Policy: Can America Go it Alone?

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Briefing Paper No. 2002-51

Series Editor: Amy J. Baumer, M.P.A.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE STATE OF THE STATE SURVEY

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following units and organizations, whose financial support has underwritten the quarterly State of the State Surveys.

Organizations

- Area Agencies on Aging Association of Michigan
- Aspen Institute
- Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan
- Nonprofit Michigan Project
- United Way of Michigan

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The results reported in this paper were funded in part by Michigan State University's International Studies and Programs (ISP) and the Center for Advanced Study of International Development (CASID). The authors would like to acknowledge the work of Michigan State University graduate student Vaishali Dnyate for her valuable assistance in helping to prepare this briefing paper.

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State of the State Survey
Briefing Paper 02-51
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August, 2002

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ABSTRACT

Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America, the role and impact of foreign nations and nationals, as well as the United States' role in world affairs, leapt to the forefront of American discourse. This paper examines several questions that are central to the debate including: How important do Michigan residents feel foreign language learning and study abroad participation are for Michigan students? What global issues do Michigan residents believe affect America's well-being? What are their views about involvement of the U.S. in world affairs? Michigan data from the 2002 twenty-fifth State of the State Survey (SOSS-25) as well as baseline data from the 1999 seventeenth State of the State Survey (SOSS-17)¹ were utilized to formulate the discussion.

The field period for SOSS-25 was March 8, 2002 through April 29, 2002. Some 951 residents were selected by random digit dial and interviewed via telephone with a margin of sampling error of ± 3.2 percent. The completion rate for this study was 40.3 percent. The field period for SOSS-17 was April 30, 1999 through July 10, 1999. In this study 974 residents were selected by random digit dial and interviewed via telephone with a margin of sampling error of ± 3.1 percent. The completion rate for SOSS-17 was 45.1 percent. Interviews for each study lasted approximately 20 minutes in length (including approximately 5 minutes of demographic and non-demographic core questions).

INTRODUCTION

Michigan residents are highly supportive of foreign language learning, and study abroad and global involvement regardless of the tensions related to terrorism. In fact, although 84 percent of U.S. citizens are "Very Concerned" or "Somewhat Concerned" about a future terrorist attack on the U.S.,² Michigan residents' perceptions of international issues relating to these issues have not changed fundamentally from 1999 to 2002.

Foreign Language Study

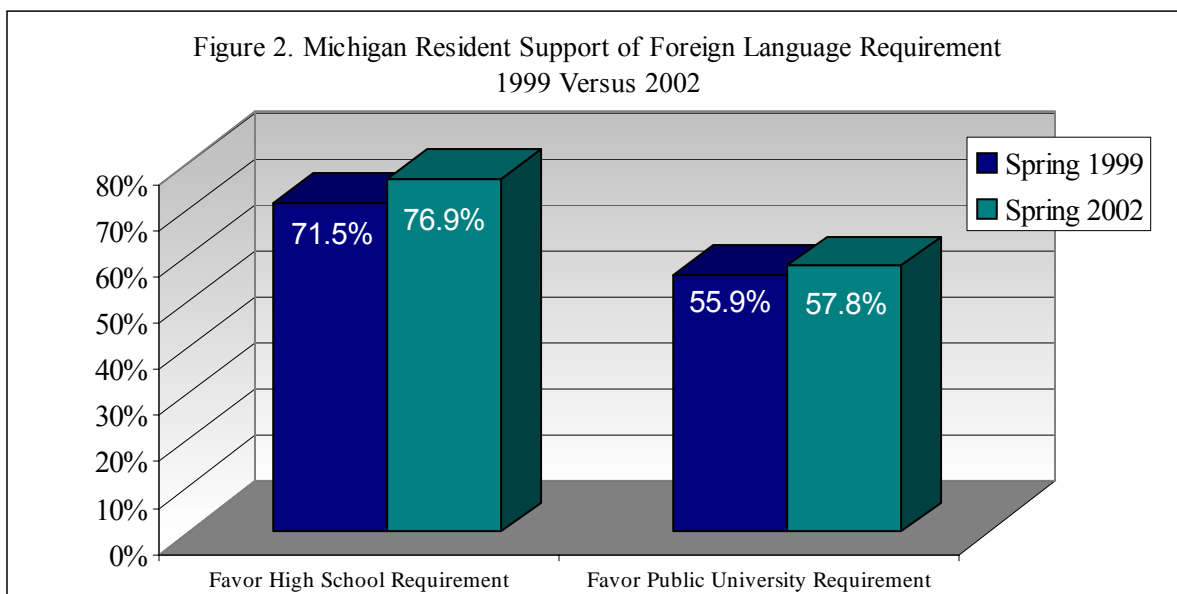
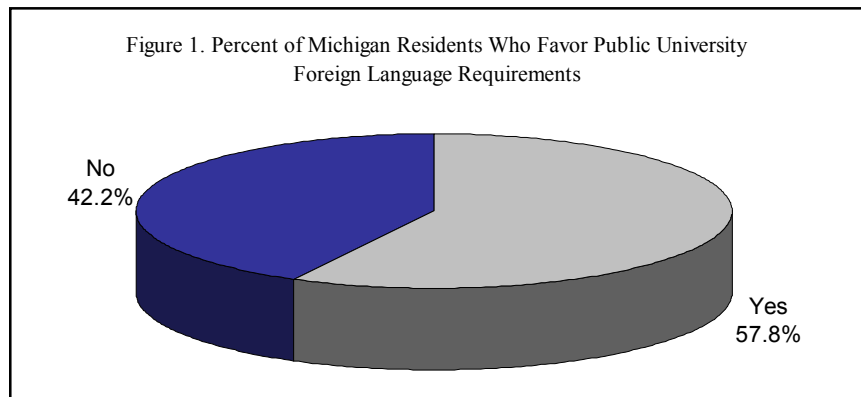
A large majority of Michigan residents (76.9 percent) favor the requirement of foreign language study at the high school level. Support for this increased by 5.4 percent since the 1999 survey. Residents of Detroit are the most supportive with 87.7 percent of the respondents agreeing that foreign language study should be required in high school.

Nearly 58 percent of Michigan residents favor a foreign language requirement at public universities in the state. (Figure 1) This figure is approximately 2 percentage points higher than it was when the 1999 survey was conducted. (Figure 2)

In a later section of this report, we will discuss whether or not Michigan residents think that the U.S. should play an active role in world affairs. Some 60.3 percent of those who do believe that the U.S. should be active also support foreign language requirements at the university level. Among those who think that the U.S. should stay out of world affairs, about six percent less support a foreign language requirement.

A majority of foreign and U.S.-born Michigan residents support high school and college language requirements. Foreign-born Michiganians are more likely to support them. Nearly

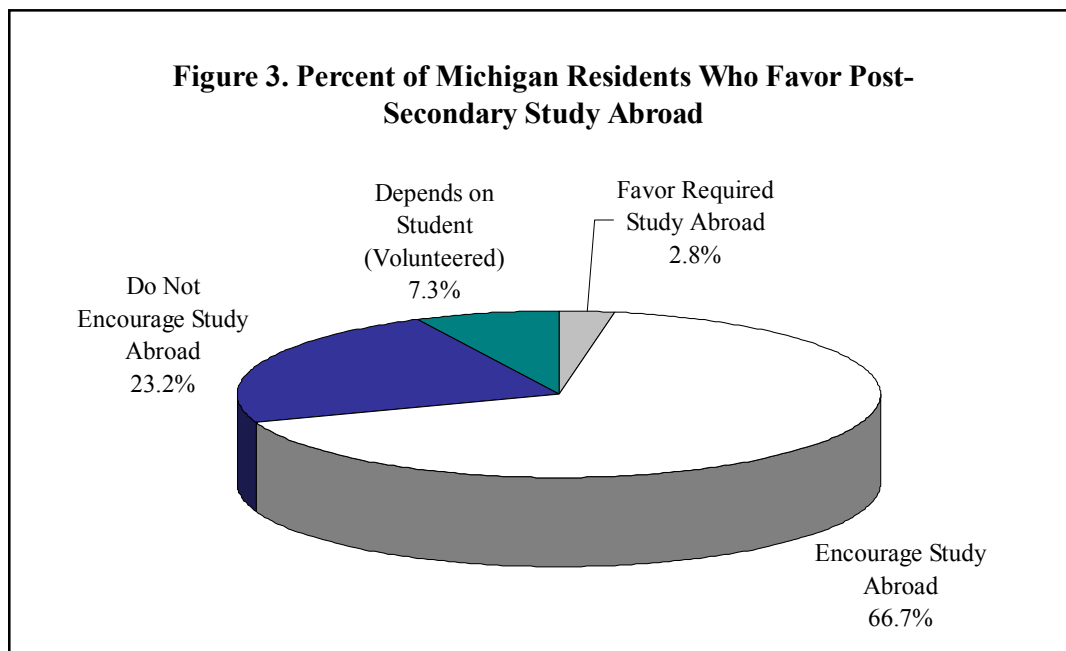
91 percent of foreign-born and 76.3 percent of U.S.-born Michigani-ans support high school foreign language requirements. Nearly 82 percent of foreign-born and 56.6 percent of U.S.-born Michigani-ans support public college and university foreign language requirements.



Study Abroad

Nearly 70 percent of Michigan residents currently favor encouraging or requiring post-secondary study abroad. (Figure 3) This number is slightly less than the one reported in the spring 1999 survey, in which nearly 74 percent supported it. The data also show that Caucasians are less likely to encourage or require study abroad than are other ethnic groups.

Regardless of their own language backgrounds, a majority of both foreign and U.S.-born Michigan residents favor encouraging or requiring study abroad. Approximately 78 percent of foreign-born and 69.2 percent of U.S.-born Michigani-ans support encouraging or requiring it. Foreign-born Michigani-ans and those who can speak or read languages in addition to English are the most supportive. Approximately eighty-two percent of second language speakers favor encouraging or requiring study abroad compared to 62.1 percent of English-only speakers.



Most Michigan residents (96.9 percent) claim English as their native language. Approximately 36.4 percent can read a foreign language. Of those who can speak or read a foreign language, only 15.5 percent can speak it “Fluently” or “Very Well” and 49.5 percent can speak it “Not Well at All.”

Support for study abroad is distributed among respondents in the following ways:

- **Faith:** Residents of Muslim or Jewish faith are the most supportive (100 percent, N=8) followed by 75.7 percent of other non-Christians, 71.9 percent of nonreligious people, 68.7 percent of Roman or Orthodox Catholics, and 69.0 percent of Protestants.
- **Region:** Detroit residents support study abroad by the highest margin at 85.9 percent. Southwest Michigan is next with 62.7 percent, followed by Southeast at 57.3 percent, West Central at 54.5 percent, and East Central at 52.5 percent.
- **Age:** A majority of respondents from all age groups are supportive, but younger residents, in the 18-29 age range, are the most supportive (81.4 percent). Approximately 70 percent of the 30-49 age group and 56.4 percent of the 50 and older age group support it.
- **Expected Future Financial Situation:** Residents with positive economic outlook are the most supportive of study abroad (72.4 percent). There is little difference between those who expect their financial situation to remain about the same (64.3 percent) and those who expect it to worsen (62.1 percent).

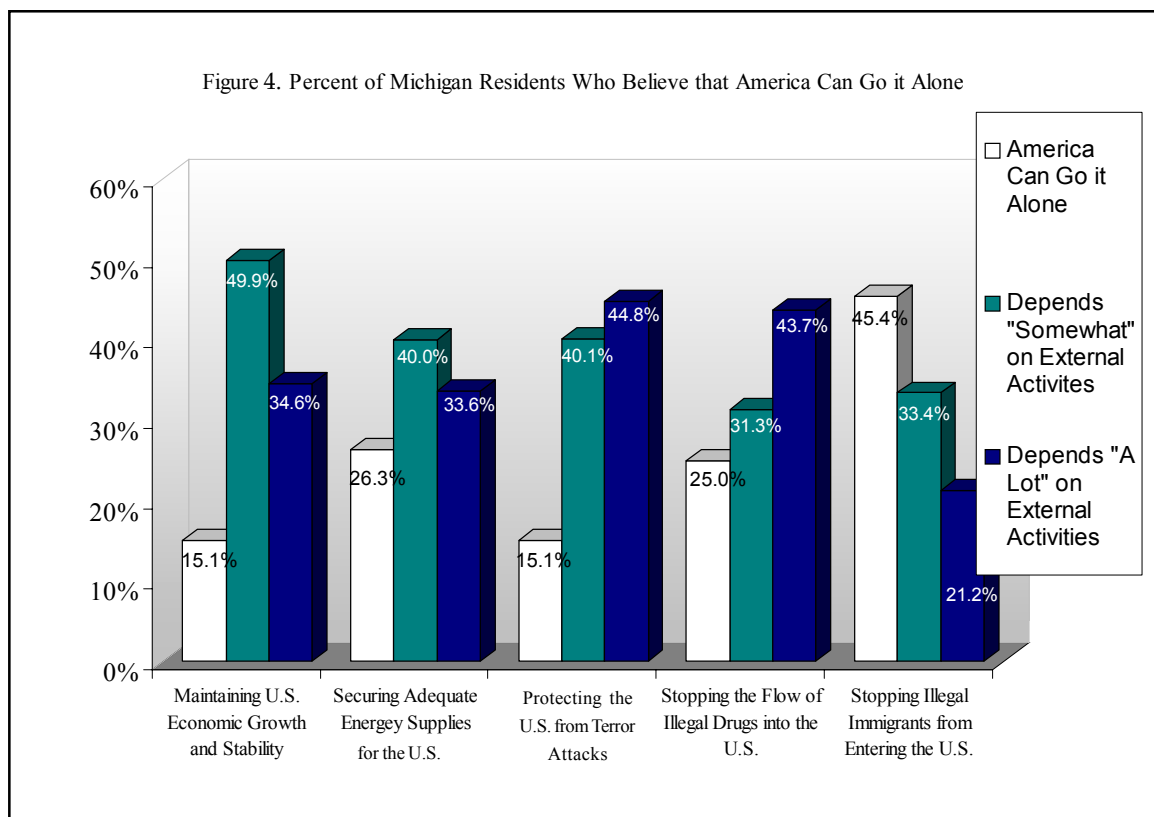
Respondents’ gender and political party identification do not seem to be correlated to opinions about study abroad.

FOREIGN POLICY

A large majority of Michiganians believes that the well being of the U.S. is connected to other countries and that it should be involved in world affairs. In fact when given choices of foreign policies, an overwhelming majority of Michigan residents say that each choice should be of "Some Priority" or "Top Priority" rather than "No Priority at All."

Can America Go it Alone?

A majority of Michigan residents think that the well-being of the U.S. depends on other countries. Specific areas in which residents think outcomes depend "Somewhat" or "A Lot" on external factors are as follows include: maintaining economic growth and stability (84.5 percent), securing adequate energy supplies (73.6 percent), reducing terrorism (84.9 percent),* stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the U.S. (75.0 percent), and stopping illegal immigrants from entering the U.S. (54.6 percent).* (Figure 4) These indicators have not changed dramatically between the 1999 and 2002 surveys. In fact, even before September 11, some 77 percent of residents believed that the U.S. needed assistance in reducing terrorism.



Beliefs about whether the U.S. needs external assistance are distributed in the following ways:

- **Gender:** A greater percentage of women than men think that the U.S. can address issues of economic growth (16.9 percent versus 14.0 percent) and reduce terrorism (15.7 percent versus 14.2 percent) without outside help. A greater percentage of men than women think that the U.S. can address issues of adequate energy supplies (29.2 percent versus

23.6 percent) and stop illegal immigrants from entering the U.S. (49.2 percent versus 41.9 percent) without outside help.

- **Education:** Michigan residents with an education level above high school are more likely than those with an education level at high school or below to think that the U.S. needs assistance in obtaining adequate energy supplies (75.6 percent versus 70.2 percent) and reducing terrorism (87.3 percent versus 81.0 percent).
- **Income:** Income only correlates with Michiganians' beliefs about the U.S.' ability to secure adequate energy supplies. Those in wealthier households are more likely to think that securing energy supplies depends "A Lot" on what happens in other countries. Households with incomes of \$70,000 and greater are most likely to believe this (80.9 percent).
- **Age:** Age does not consistently relate to beliefs about U.S. interdependence. Younger residents are more likely to believe that the U.S. is interdependent in obtaining adequate energy sources. Some 77.1 percent of residents aged 18-29 and 76.1 percent of those aged 30-59 feel this way compared to 64.2 percent of those aged 60 and above. This is also the case when it comes to stopping illegal immigrants from entering the U.S. Some 58.7 percent of residents aged 18-29 and 56.3 percent of those aged 30-59 feel that the U.S. needs help whereas only 45.2 percent of those aged 60 and older feel this way.
- **Political Ideology:** Political ideology and major party identification both correlate with Michiganians' beliefs about U.S. interdependence. Some 64.2 percent of liberals believe that the U.S. needs help in stopping illegal immigrants compared to 58.5 percent of moderates and 48.7 percent of conservatives. In reducing terrorism, 90.1 percent of liberals, 89.4 percent of moderates and 80.2 percent of conservatives think that the U.S. needs help. Attitudes among the moderates shift slightly when it comes to maintaining economic growth and securing adequate energy supplies. With economic growth, some 85.6 percent of liberals, 88.1 percent of moderates, and 81.0 percent of conservatives feel the U.S. needs assistance. With securing adequate energy supplies, some 73.7 percent of liberals, 79.1 percent of moderates and 69.3 percent of conservatives feel that the U.S. requires help from other countries.

INVOLVEMENT IN WORLD AFFAIRS

Some 70.8 percent of Michiganians believe that the U.S. should take an active role in world affairs, while approximately 18 percent say that the U.S. should stay out of them. (Figure 5) This reveals an increase in support for involvement by a measure of 5.8 percent since the 1999 survey.

Many Michiganians believe that the U.S. should utilize the United Nations or other mechanisms to enlist the help of other nations in dangerous situations (84.6 percent). (Figure 6) Many also support the concept that the U.S. should have a shared leadership role in the world (82.8 percent).

Another 2002 poll, entitled the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), found that approximately 81 percent of U.S. residents prefer "a U.S. that takes an 'active part' in world affairs." PIPA found that 14 percent of Americans favored "staying out" of them.³ By contrast, a nationwide poll taken in November 1998 by the Chicago Council on Foreign

Relations (CCFR) found that 61 percent of U.S. citizens said it would be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs rather than to stay out of them.⁴

Figure 5. Percent of Michigan Residents Who Support Active U.S. Involvement in World Affairs

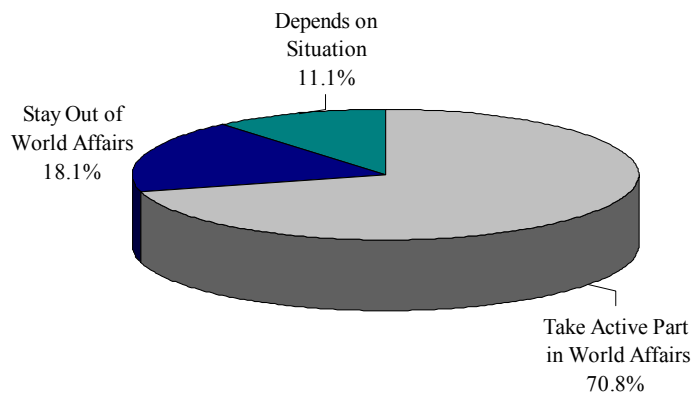
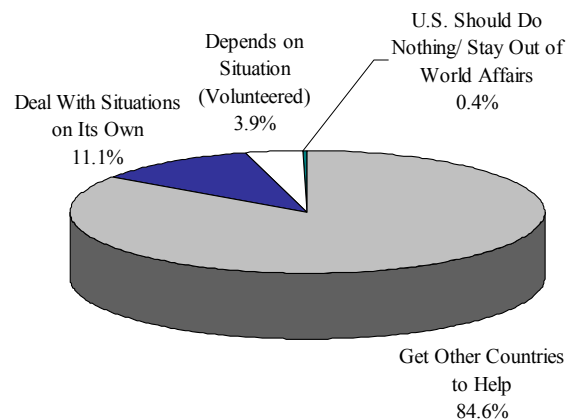


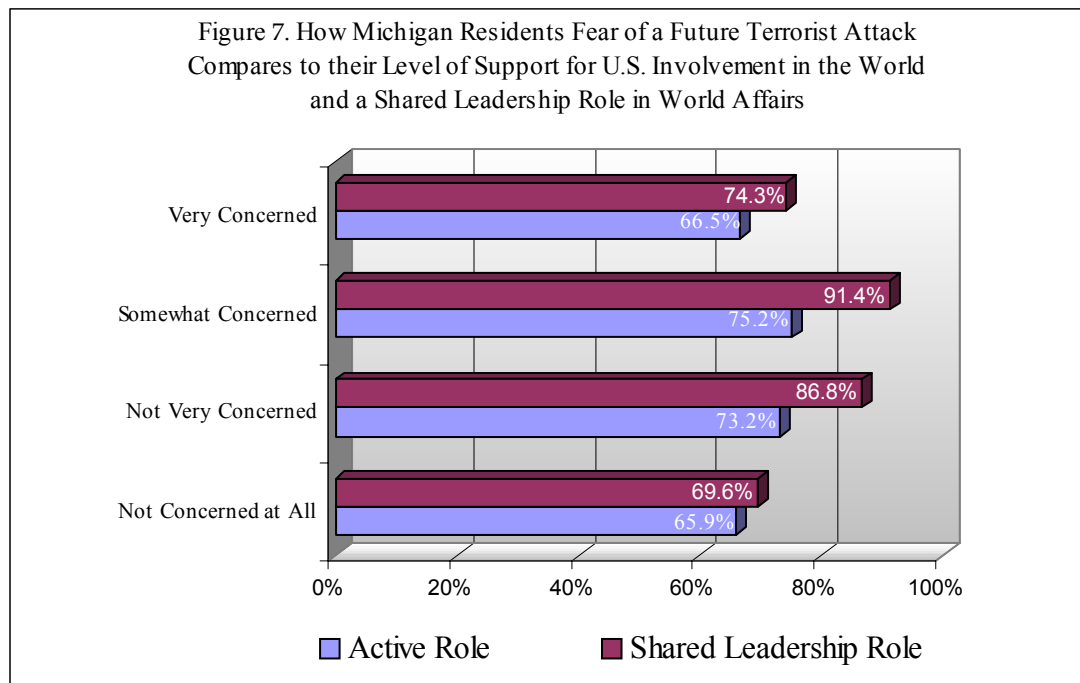
Figure 6. How Michigan Residents Believe the U.S. Should Deal with Dangerous World Situations



Fear of Terrorist Attacks

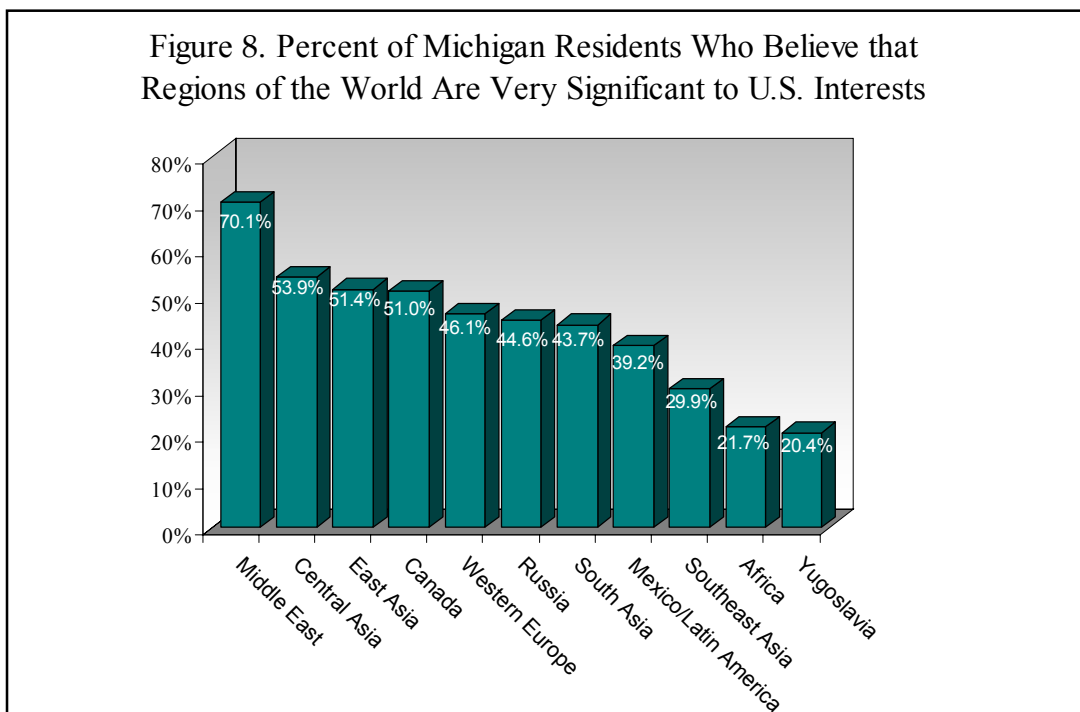
Regardless of their level of fear of future terrorist attacks, Michigan residents are highly supportive of active U.S. involvement in the world and a shared leadership role for the U.S. in world affairs. Figure 7 provides an overview of how Michigan residents support U.S. involvement compared to their level of fear of a future terrorist attack. Those who are

“Somewhat Concerned” are the most supportive of active involvement (74.2 percent) and of the U.S. having a shared leadership role (91.4 percent).



Views of World Regions

Michigan residents perceive world regions as having differing importance for U.S. interests. The largest percentage (70.1 percent)* consider the Middle East to be “Very Significant” to U.S. interests (Figure 8). By contrast, 20.4 percent think that Yugoslavia is “Very Significant” to U.S. interests.



Provided below is a comparison of U.S. and Michigan perceptions, by selected country, utilizing SOSS-25 and other survey results:

- **Canada:** A November 1998 CCFR poll found that approximately 69 percent of the American public believed that the U.S. had a vital interest in Canada.⁴ SOSS-25 indicates that 51.0 percent of Michiganians believe that Canada is “Very Significant” to U.S. interests, 38.1 percent believe the country is “Somewhat Significant,” and 10.9 percent believe it is “Not Very Significant.”
- **Russia:** The November 1998 CCFR poll found that approximately 77 percent of the American public believed that the U.S. had a vital interest in Russia.⁴ SOSS-25 indicates that 44.6 percent of Michiganians believe that Russia is “Very Significant” to U.S. interests, 43.8 percent say it is “Somewhat Significant,” and 11.6 percent believe it is “Not Very Significant.”
- **Mexico:** The November 1998 CCFR poll found that approximately 66 percent of the American public believed that the U.S. had a vital interest in Mexico.⁴ SOSS-25 indicates that only 39.2 percent of Michiganians believe that Mexico and the rest of Latin America are “Very Significant” to U.S. interests, 52.3 percent say these areas are “Somewhat Significant,” and 8.5 percent believe they are “Not Very Significant.”
- **Africa:** The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) Americans and the World website (<http://www.americans-world.org/>) says, “A strong majority of Americans think that Africa is important to the U.S.”⁵ When asked in a May 2000 Gallup survey how important to the U.S. is “what happens in Africa,” some 69 percent said it was either vitally important (approximately 18 percent) or important (approximately 51 percent). Just 23 percent said events there are “Not Too Important,” and a mere 5 percent said they are “Not Important at All.”⁵ SOSS-25 indicates that 21.7 percent of Michiganians believe that America’s interests in Africa are “Very Significant,” 52.2 percent believe that they are “Somewhat Significant,” and 26.1 percent believe that they are “Not Very Significant.”

Protecting the Rights of Residents

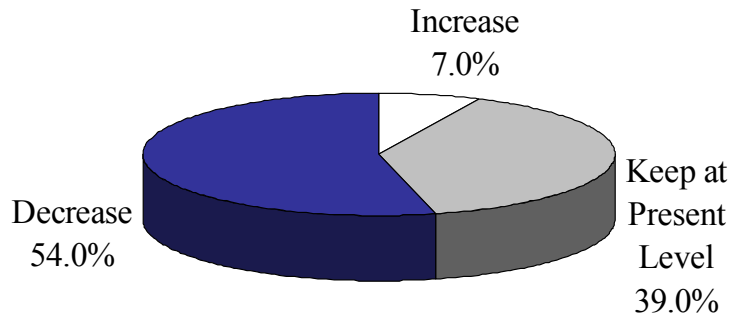
Nearly 83 percent of Michigan Residents feel that the U.S. government is doing enough to protect the rights of racial/ethnic groups inside of the U.S. This is consistent across various racial/ethnic groups. In addition, some 71.1 percent feel that the rights of noncitizen terrorism suspects are being adequately protected.

Immigration

Just over half of Michigan residents believe that the U.S. should decrease legal Immigration. Approximately 7 percent believe there should be an increase. (Figure 9) Some 73.4 percent of Michigan residents—approximately 4.5 percent less than in 1999—say that legal immigration has been “Somewhat” or “Mostly” good for the U.S.

SOSS-25 demonstrates that major political party affiliation correlates with immigration opinions. Republicans are more likely (82.4 percent) than Democrats (69.7 percent) to say that immigration has been “Somewhat” or “Mostly” good for America. In terms of gender, 75.2 percent of men and 71.6 percent of women think it is “Somewhat” or “Mostly” good for the United States.

Figure 9. Percent of Michigan Residents Who Support Increased Legal Immigration into the United States



FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES

As shown in Figure 10, Michigan residents have a high support for each foreign policy priority they were asked to evaluate. Not surprisingly, the top priority for residents is protecting the U.S. from terror attacks (87.9 percent). The other categories that garnered the support of a majority of respondents are as follows: reducing weapons of mass destruction (75.8 percent), insuring adequate energy supplies (66.6 percent), reducing the spread of AIDS and other infectious diseases (60.7 percent), and combating international drug trafficking (56.0 percent). (Figure 11)

Figure 10. Michigan Residents' Prioritization of U.S. Foreign Policy Goals

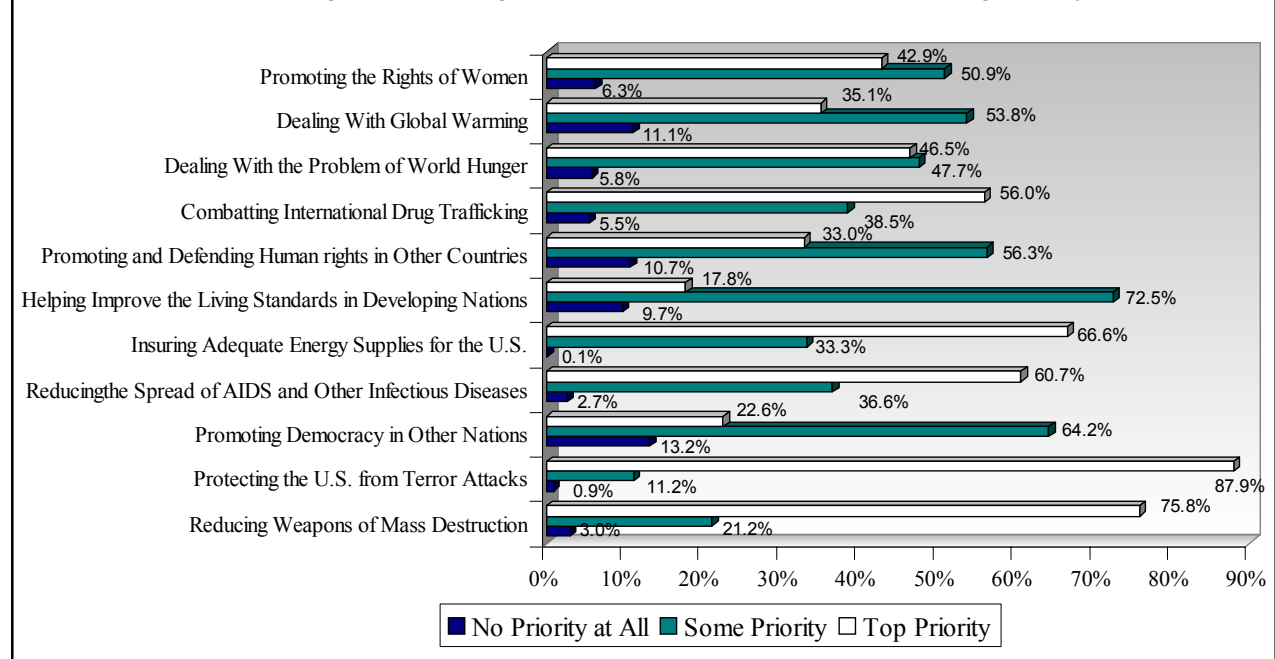
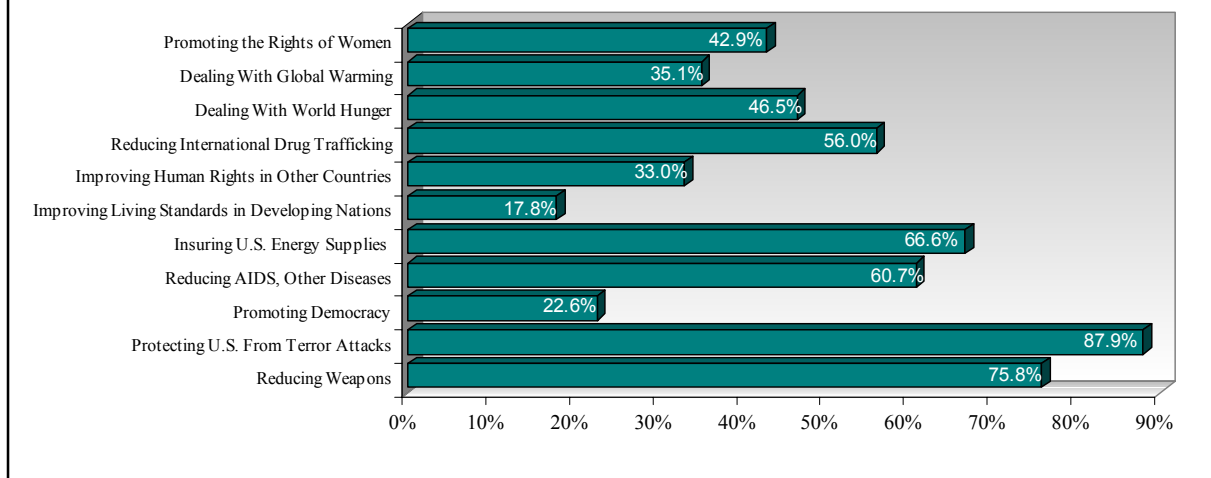


Figure 11. Percent of Michigan Residents Who Think the Following Foreign Policy Goals Should Be Top Priorities



Provided below is an overview of perceptions on various foreign policy priorities. Included for comparison are results from several polls in addition to the SOSS-25 survey. The comparison reveals that Michigan residents in 2002 are more concerned than the general U.S. public with combating international terrorism and promoting the rights of women, but less concerned about reducing weapons of mass destruction, reducing international drug trafficking, dealing with the problem of world hunger, and improving the living standards in developing countries.

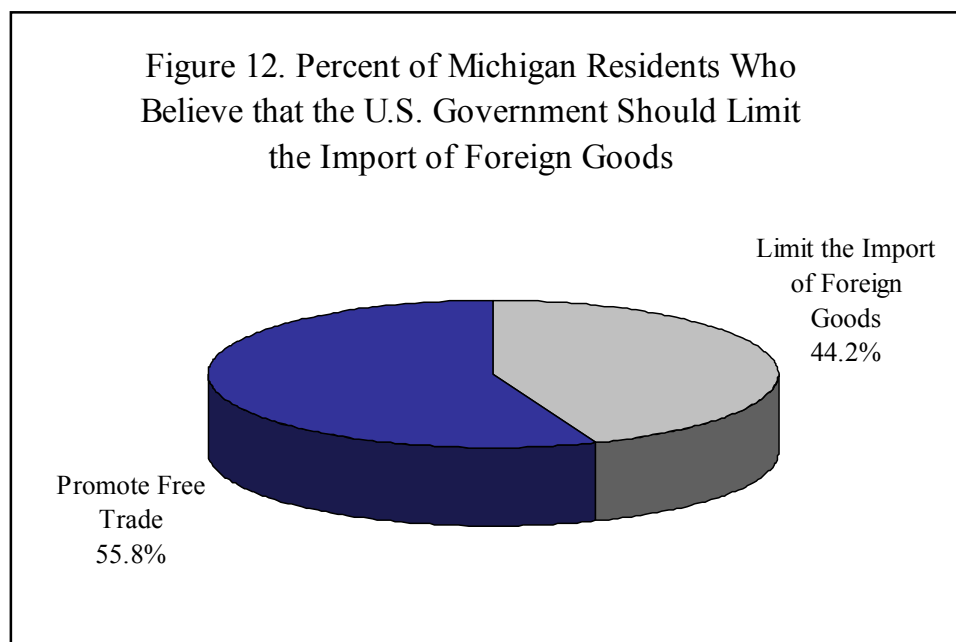
- Combating international terrorism:** The November 1998 CCFR poll shows that approximately 79 percent of Americans believed that combating international terrorism was a “Very Important” goal for the U.S.⁴ Conducted after the events of September 11, 2001, SOSS-25 indicates that a higher percentage of Michiganians think that protecting the U.S. from terror attacks should be a top focus. Some 87.9 percent of Michigan residents think it should be a “Top Priority,” 11.2 percent think it should be given “Some Priority,” and only 3.0 percent believe it should have “No Priority at All.”
- Promoting the Rights of Women:** In reference to promoting the rights of women, the PIPA Americans and the World website (<http://www.americans-world.org/>) says that there is “strong support” for making it a top priority. As indicated on the website, a February 2000 poll by Belden, Russonello and Stewart, asked respondents to rate a number of policy priorities for the next U.S. president on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being the very lowest priority and 10 being an extremely high priority. Asked about the goal of “helping women in other countries obtain basic human rights,” the mean response was 6.47 with approximately 21 percent giving it a priority of 10.”⁵ SOSS-25 indicates that nearly all Michiganians (93.8 percent) believe that promoting the rights of women should be given “Top Priority,” (42.9 percent) or “Some Priority” (50.9 percent).
- Reducing weapons of mass destruction:** The November 1998 CCFR poll shows that some 82 percent of Americans believed that preventing the spread of nuclear weapons was a “Very Important” goal for the U.S.⁴ SOSS-25 indicates that 75.8 percent of Michiganians think that reducing weapons of mass destruction should be a “Top

Priority," 21.2 percent think it should be given "Some Priority," and 3.0 percent believe it should have "No Priority at All."

- **Combating international drug trafficking:** The November 1998 CCFR poll shows that approximately 81 percent of Americans believed that stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the U.S. was a "Very Important" goal for the U.S.⁴ SOSS-25 indicates that only 56.0 percent of Michigianians think that combating international drug trafficking should be a "Top Priority," 38.5 percent think it should be given "Some Priority," and 5.5 percent believe it should have "No Priority at All."
- **Dealing with the problem of world hunger:** The November 1998 CCFR poll says that some 62 percent of Americans believed that combating world hunger was a "Very Important" goal for the U.S.⁴ SOSS-25 shows that only 46.5 percent of Michigan residents think that dealing with the problem of world hunger should be a "Top Priority," 47.7 percent think it should be given "Some Priority," and 5.8 percent believe it should have "No Priority at All."
- **Improving living standards in developing nations:** The November 1998 CCFR poll shows that some 29 percent of Americans believed that helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations was a "Very Important" goal for the U.S.⁴ SOSS-25 indicates that 17.8 percent of Michigianians think that helping to improve living standards in developing nations should be a "Top Priority," 72.5 percent think it should be given "Some Priority," and 9.7 percent believe it should have "No Priority at All."

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The majority of Michigan residents, nearly 56 percent, believe that the U.S. government should promote free trade. (Figure 12)



In terms of buying products made in the U.S., nearly 54 percent of Michigan citizens make an effort to buy them. When it comes to automobiles, however, Michigan residents are very supportive of purchasing American made cars (73.2 percent). Interestingly, this is down by 3.8 percent from the number who reported trying to buy American made cars in the 1999 survey. Only 44.2 percent of Michigan residents believe that U.S. government should limit the import of foreign goods.

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

Although 69.4 percent of Michigan residents believe that NAFTA has been “Mostly Good” or “Good” for the U.S. economy,* only 15.6 percent believe that the U.S. has benefited most and 35.1 percent believe that Mexico, the U.S. and Canada have benefited equally. Nearly 44 percent believe that Mexico has benefited the most—some 3.4 percent higher than in 1999.

Interestingly, a high percentage of respondents said they did not know if NAFTA has been good for either the U.S. economy (12.7 percent) or American workers (11.1 percent). This is consistent with other surveys about NAFTA. For example, as reported on the PIPA website (<http://www.americans-world.org/>), “When an August 1999 poll by the Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University explicitly offered the option [on a NAFTA survey about which country has benefited the most]—‘or haven’t you heard enough to say?’—51 percent chose that option...”⁴

Living in a union household significantly influences perceptions of which country has benefited most from NAFTA. Members of union households (55.1 percent) are more likely than non-union householders (41.1 percent) to believe that Mexico has benefited the most from NAFTA. Members of union households are less likely to believe that Canada or the U.S. benefited the most, or that all three countries have benefited equally.

CONCLUSION

Overall, Michigan residents remain supportive of foreign language learning, study abroad and global involvement in most areas and since 1999 have not changed their basic viewpoints on most international issues. Regardless of the increased tensions related to terrorism and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America, Michigan residents’ perceptions of international issues have not changed fundamentally. Two of the biggest differences between the 2002 survey of Michigan perceptions and the 1999 survey, were 1) a belief that activities and situations in the Middle East do have an impact on the U.S. (70.1 percent versus 58.6 percent); and 2) support for decreasing levels of legal immigration into the U.S. has increased (54.0 percent versus 39.0 percent).

REFERENCES

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² Results from a nationwide study conducted November 14, 2001 to January 15, 2002 by the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research's Office for Survey Research. Principal Investigators Darren Davis and Brian Silver.

³ LaFranchi, H., *Public sees new global role for US*, in *Christian Science Monitor*. January 11, 2002. Available on World Wide Web: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0111/p1s2-ussc.html>.

⁴ Rielly, J.E., (Ed.), *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy*. 1999, The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations: Chicago. p. 40.

⁵ Program on International Policy Attitudes, *Americans and the World*. 2002, Available on World Wide Web: <http://www.americans-world.org/>.

⁶ PollingReport.com, *Foreign Affairs and Defense Issues*. 2002, Available on World Wide Web: <http://pollingreport.com/>.

NOTE

* Indicates that the data reported fall outside of the margin of error.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Michigan State University's State of the State Survey is a quarterly statewide survey of a random sample of the residents of Michigan. Although dozens of surveys are conducted in Michigan every year, no other is designed to provide a regular systematic monitoring of the public mood in major regions of the state. Through SOSS, MSU aims to fill this information gap. SOSS has five main purposes: 1) to provide timely information about citizen opinions on critical issues; 2) to provide data for scientific and policy research by MSU faculty; 3) to provide information for programs and offices at MSU; 4) to develop survey research methodology; and 5) to provide opportunities for student training and research.

Each quarterly round or "wave" of SOSS has a different main theme: a) Winter-quality of life, governmental reform, higher education; b) Spring-family, women, and children; c) Summer-ethnic and racial groups, Michigan communities; d) Fall (even numbered years)-politics, the election, and political issues; (odd-numbered years)-health and the environment. The State of the State Survey is administered by the Office for Survey Research at the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR), using its computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) technology.

The design and overall planning of SOSS is the responsibility of a 17-person Steering Committee chaired by Dr. Brian D. Silver, Director of SOSS for IPPSR. The Steering Committee consists of representatives from sponsoring units, which are primarily colleges and other administrative offices within MSU. Subject to final approval by the Steering Committee, the questionnaire for each wave of SOSS is developed by a Working Group, most of whom also serve as principal investigators or analysts for that wave.

ABOUT SOSS

The State of the State Survey (SOSS) is a statewide survey conducted by the Office for Survey Research at Michigan State University's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR). Administered quarterly, SOSS provides current information about citizen opinions on critical issues such as education, the environment, health care, crime, victimization and family violence, giving and philanthropy, governmental institutions, and specific community concerns.

SOSS surveys are based on stratified random samples of adults age 18 and older living in Michigan. The sample strata are based on the regions, as detailed below, established by Michigan State University Extension, with one exception: Detroit City is treated as a separate region. The data sets include "weights" to adjust the data so that they are representative of the adult population of Michigan. More information about SOSS, including codebooks and methodological reports for each round, are available online at www.ippsr.msu.edu/SOSS.

Regional Categories

Detroit:	City of Detroit
East Central:	Arenac, Bay, Clare, Clinton, Gladwin, Gratiot, Huron, Isabella, Midland, Saginaw, Sanilac, Shiawassee, Tuscola
Northern L.P.:	Alcona, Alpena, Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Iosco, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Missaukee, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Otsego, Oscoda, Presque Isle, Roscommon, Wexford
Southeast:	Genesee, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, Wayne (excluding Detroit)
Southwest:	Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Eaton, Hillsdale, Ingham, Jackson, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, Van Buren
U.P.:	Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Luce, Mackinac, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon, Schoolcraft
West Central:	Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, Ottawa

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