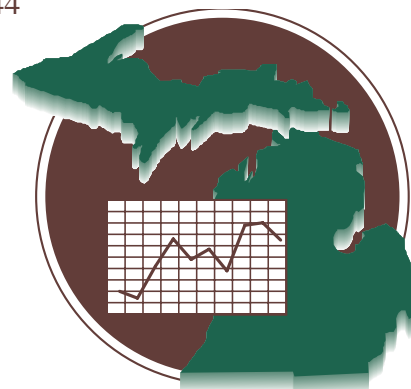


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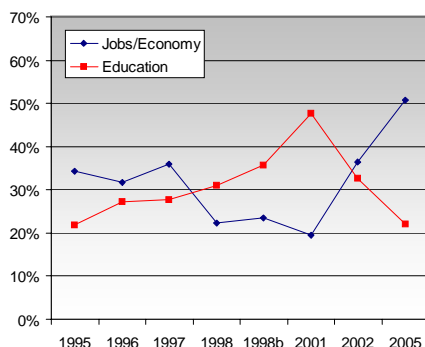
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## STATE of the STATE Survey

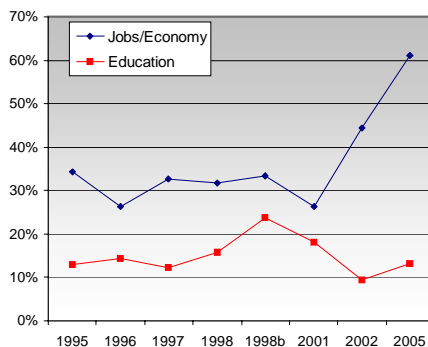
# Economy, Jobs Top Issues for Michigan Residents

Priorities for the Michigan Legislature, Governor



MSU-IPPSR, State of the State Survey, 1995-2005

Most Important Community Issues



MSU-IPPSR, State of the State Survey, 1995-2005

## Overview

Since 1994, Michigan State University (MSU) has been asking Michigan citizens to rank their state government priorities and reflect on their most pressing community issues.

The 37th round of MSU's State of the State Survey (SOSS-37) of 965 Michigan adults concluded in April 2005. The results of the survey showed that the economy was the top category of priority at both the community and state levels and in some cases to the exclusion of all else.

While the economy has been one of the top state issues among Michigan residents off and on since 1994, it is currently rated higher than ever before. Education was at the top from 1998 to 2001. In 2002, the tide changed once again and to date, the economy has again been the most important issue.

At the community level, Michigianians have historically focused on local issues like public services and have given some attention to the economy. Today, the economy dominates all other issues. It has been rising exponentially since the winter 2001 survey.

## State Priorities

When asked to reflect on their top priorities for the governor and legislature, over half (51%) of the survey participants identified the economy as the most important problem. Education was second with 22% rating it as the top issue. The third-highest rated issue was government performance and taxes (13%), followed by health care (12%), crime (1.3%), and transportation/roads (<1%). Further analysis of the results shows that while there were some differences by subgroup on second- and third-highest rated issues, the rating of economy as a top priority was consistent across all groups.

While individuals from all parties rated the economy at the top, Republicans were less likely to identify the economy as the top issue (43%) compared to democrats (54%). Independents were even less likely to rate it at the top (39%). Political ideology (i.e., conservative or liberal) did not influence the designation of the economy as a top issue.

Men and women agreed that the economy was the top issue. Although, men rated government performance

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## About SOSS

The Institute for Public Policy and Social Research conducted the 37<sup>th</sup> round of the State of the State Survey (SOSS-37) by phone with 965 Michigan adult residents during February 15 through April 4, 2005. The margin of sampling error was + 3.2%.

IPPSR's State of the State Survey is the only survey conducted in Michigan that provides a regular systematic monitoring of the public mood on important issues in major regions of the state. More information on SOSS is online at: [www.ippsr.msu.edu/SOSS](http://www.ippsr.msu.edu/SOSS).

This edition of SOSS focused on measuring what was the most important problem for state government to address, the performance of and trust in government, the economic outlook of Michigan residents, and current healthcare issues.

Support for this round of SOSS was provided by MSU Extension and Institute for Children Youth and Families. Overall support is provided by the Dean of the College of Social Science and the MSU Office of the Provost.

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(Continued on Page 2)

## Michigan Governor and Legislature (cont.)

higher than women did. While men rated it third (19%) women rated it fourth (8%) behind healthcare.

Both men and women identified education as the second most important issue (20% and 24% respectively).

While both African Americans and Whites considered the economy as the top priority, African Americans were much more likely to do so (66%) than Whites (47%). Both rated education as the second most important issue (19% and 24%, respectively). The most significant difference here was that Whites were more concerned about government performance and taxes (15%) than African Americans (3%).

Individuals in all age groups considered the economy as the most important issue for the government to address. Those in the 25-29 age range were most likely to give this category a top rating (77%), excluding nearly all other categories from their rating.

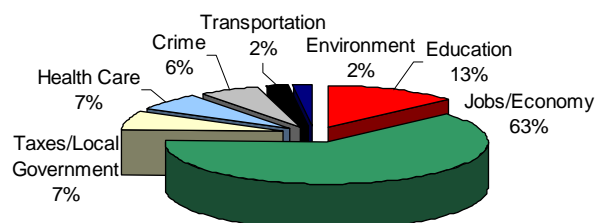
## Community Problem

At the community level, Michigianians also think that the economy is a critical issue deserving attention.

According to SOSS-37, 61% rated the economy as the most important community problem. Education came in second at 13% with taxes and local government in third (7%). Following close behind are health care (7%) and crime/gangs/drugs (6%). Transportation and roads (2%) and the environment and land use (2%) capture little attention.

In this survey, more people rated the economy as the top priority than at any

**Top Community Issues**



MSU-IPPSR, State of the State Survey-37, Winter, 2005.

point in the survey's history (61%). This is the eighth survey of its type since 1994. The next highest priority rating occurred in 2002 when 44% of the citizens rated it at the top.

This is a dramatic shift from 2001 when 18% thought that education was the most important community issue and 26% thought that the economy was the most important.

By subgroups, the picture was mostly the same. While all age groups saw the economy as the top issue, they varied on their rating of second place issues.

Perceptions of community problems were not partisan. Similarly, political ideology did not influence the designation of the economy as a top issue.

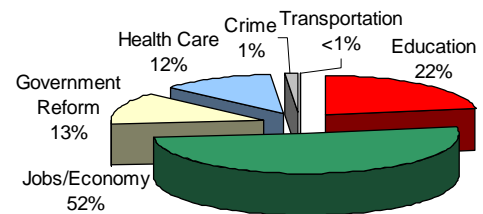
Men and women perceived community issues in very similar ways. They both rated the economy first, followed by education. One minor difference was that taxes came in third for men, while for women crime was the third place issue.

Perception of the most important community problem did not vary by race. Both African Americans and Whites rated the economy at the top (59% and 62% respectively).

Some differences existed among second place issues. While Whites rated education second (14%), African Americans placed crime/gangs/drugs in second (21%). White residents saw crime as one of their lower priorities (3%) following taxes and health care. African Americans rated education third (9%).

People in the 18-24 age range were most likely to rate crime in second place (19%), while others mostly rated education second. The exceptions were those in the 60 and over category. Those in the 60-64 age group gave virtually equal priority to education/taxes/crime (12%). Those over 65 rated taxes as second (11%), followed by health care (9%), and transportation (7%).

## Priorities for Michigan Governor and Legislature



MSU-IPPSR, State of the State Survey-37, Winter, 2005.

While crime was an important issue for 18-24 year-olds, it was much less important than it has been. In 2001, for example, 45% rated crime at the top, while only 18% said the economy was most important. Their third place issue at that time was transportation (12%).

While all regions of the state rated the economy as the top issue for communities, they differed regarding second place. The second place issue in Detroit, for example, was crime. Detroiters gave crime a higher rating as a local issue than any other region (18%). Education was rated third (11%).

## Priority Shifts

In conclusion, it is apparent that Michigan residents rate the economy as the top issue at both the community and state levels. Of course, as one issue rises in importance, other issues shift to lower levels of priority.

Looking at the winter SOSS results from 1997 to 2005, it appears that crime and transportation were the most negatively impacted in terms of priority.

Education has also been an important issue over time with some peaks and valleys in its priority rating. Health care has actually increased in priority over time, taxes and government have been stable, and environment/land use has gone down slightly in priority.

Across all groups of people there is wide agreement that the top priority for Michigan communities and for the state as a whole is the economy. There are a wide range of issues that are listed as priorities by Michigianians, but at this time it appears that none come close to matching the importance of the economy.