

87th State of the State Survey (SOSS)

Brief Report

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OVERVIEW

This report summarizes key findings from the 87th State of the State Survey (SOSS), a Michigan general adult population survey. SOSS has been conducted since 1994 by the Office for Survey Research, and the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR) at Michigan State University. Initially conducted as a Random Digit Dialing (RDD) telephone survey (1994 - 2020), SOSS now utilizes a YouGov web panel survey (2020 - current). Due to the differences in methodology between the previous telephone and current web panel modes, comparisons between the different methods will not be reported.

The current survey was completed as a YouGov panel survey with data collection spanning March 16, 2023 to March 27, 2023. Invitations were sent to 5,303 adult Michigan residents from which 1,323 interviews were completed. The response rate for this round of SOSS was 26.5%¹. After calibrating the data to assign weights, the final dataset consisted of 1,000 cases. Data was weighted for analysis using the "weight" variable unless otherwise stated.

¹ Response rate was calculated using AAPOR RR3.

RESULTS

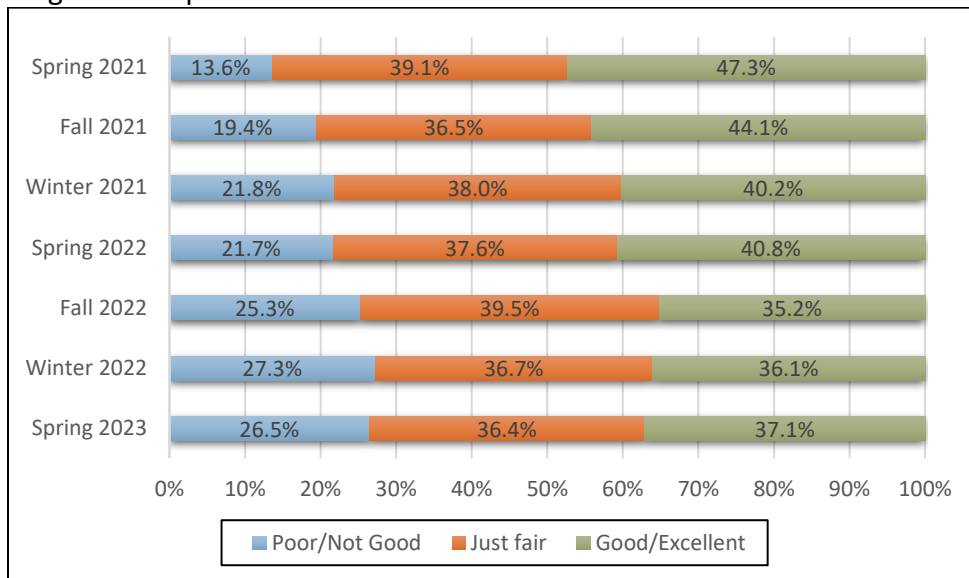
Section A. Economic Optimism

This series of questions is related to multiple areas of economic optimism and has been included in SOSS surveys since the first SOSS in the Fall 1994 (Wave 1). Respondents were asked questions about their financial situation for three time periods:

- "How would you rate your household's **overall financial** situation these days?" (Current)
- "Would you say that you (and your family living with you) are **better off** or **worse off** financially than you were a year ago?" (Current to past)
- "Now looking ahead, do you think that a year from now, you and your family living with you will be better off financially or worse off financially?" (Current to future).

The responses to current household financial situation are reported in Figure 1. This figure also compares the current round (Spring 2023) to rounds over the last three years.

Figure 1. Reported Assessment of Current Household Financial Situation



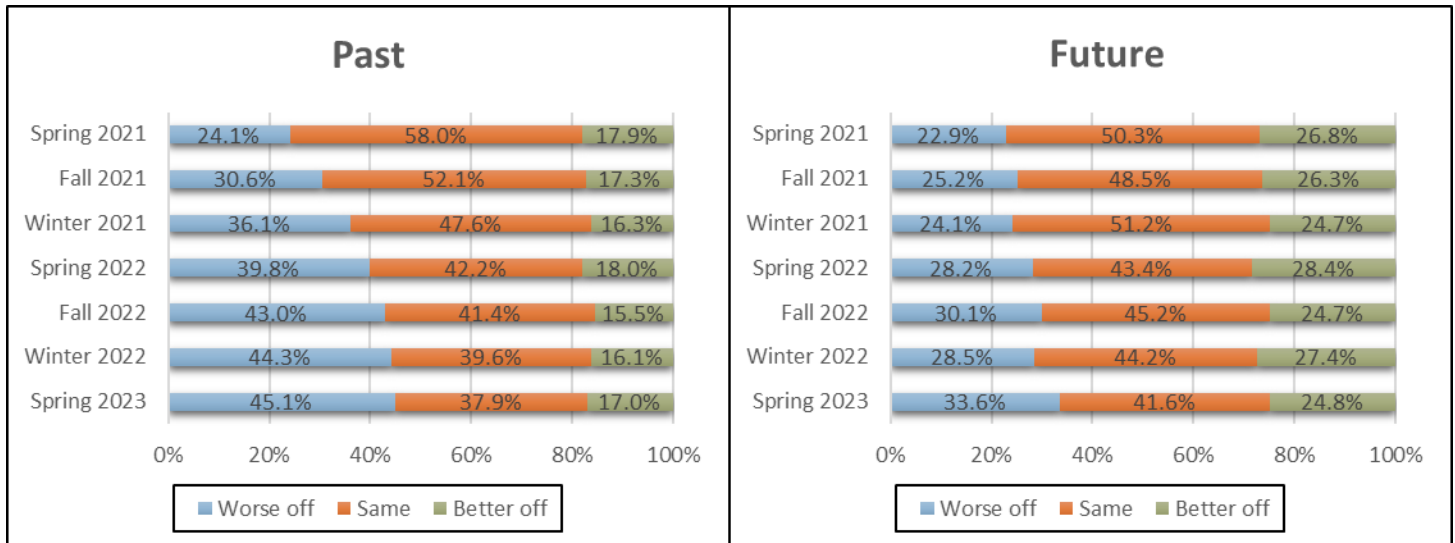
SOSS Sample size = 997-1499

Figure 1 shows a slight general improvement in SOSS respondents' views of their personal household finances.

- There appears to be a slight decrease in the percentage of respondents who stated that their current financial situation was poor/not good.
- The percentage of those who reported that their household financial situation was "Good/Excellent" again increased slightly from the last round with those reporting "Just Fair" staying relatively the same compared to the last period.

Respondents' evaluations of their current situation compared to their past financial situation and anticipated future financial situation are reported in Figure 2 for the same time periods.

Figure 2. Reported Assessment of Current Financial Situation Compared to Past/Future



In terms of present conditions compared to twelve months ago (Figure Labeled "Past"):

- There was a slight increase in the percentage of respondents that stated that they were better off financially now than in the past for Spring 2023 compared to Winter 2022.
- There was also a slight increase in the percentage of respondents that stated they were worse off.

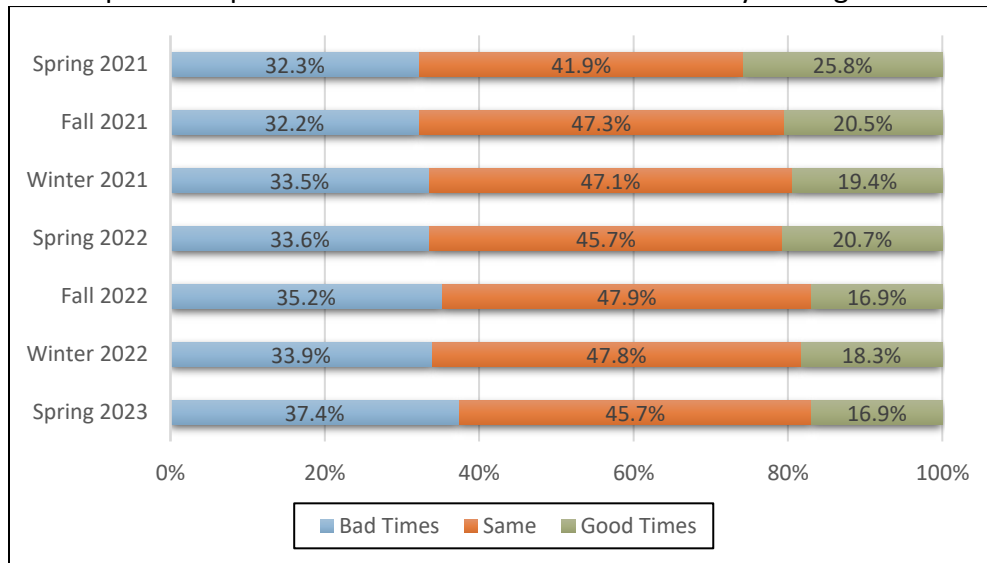
In terms of present conditions compared to those conditions expected 12 months into the future (Table Figure Labeled "Future"):

- There was an increase in the percentage who felt that they would be worse off financially in the future than they currently are (Spring 2023 vs. Winter 2022).
- There was also a decrease in the percentage who felt that they would be better off, as well as those that thought they would be the same financially.

SOSS respondents were also asked, "Now, turning to business conditions in your community, do you think that during the next 12 months, your community will have good times financially or bad times financially?"

The responses to this item for the past seven waves of SOSS are summarized in Figure 3 which shows that respondents are still pessimistic about their expectations about their communities' financial situation, though there was a slight increase in optimism in Spring 2023 compared to Winter 2022.

Figure 3. Reported Expected Financial Situation in Community During Next 12 Months



SOSS Sample sizes: 996-1499

In particular:

- The percentage of respondents expecting the financial situation in their community to be bad in the next twelve months increased to 37 percent from the previous round of SOSS.
- The percentage that expecting good times financially in their community for the next twelve months decreased to 17 percent.

SOSS respondents were then asked about their expectations for specific economic indicators involving the country as a whole during the next 12 months. The questions asked were:

- "Twelve months from now, do you expect the unemployment situation in this country to be better than, worse than, or about the same as it was in the last 12 months?"
- "During the next 12 months, do you think the rate of inflation in this country will go up, will go down, or will stay about the same as it was in the past 12 months?"

Figure 4. Reported Expected Change in Economic Indicators, Over Next 12 Months

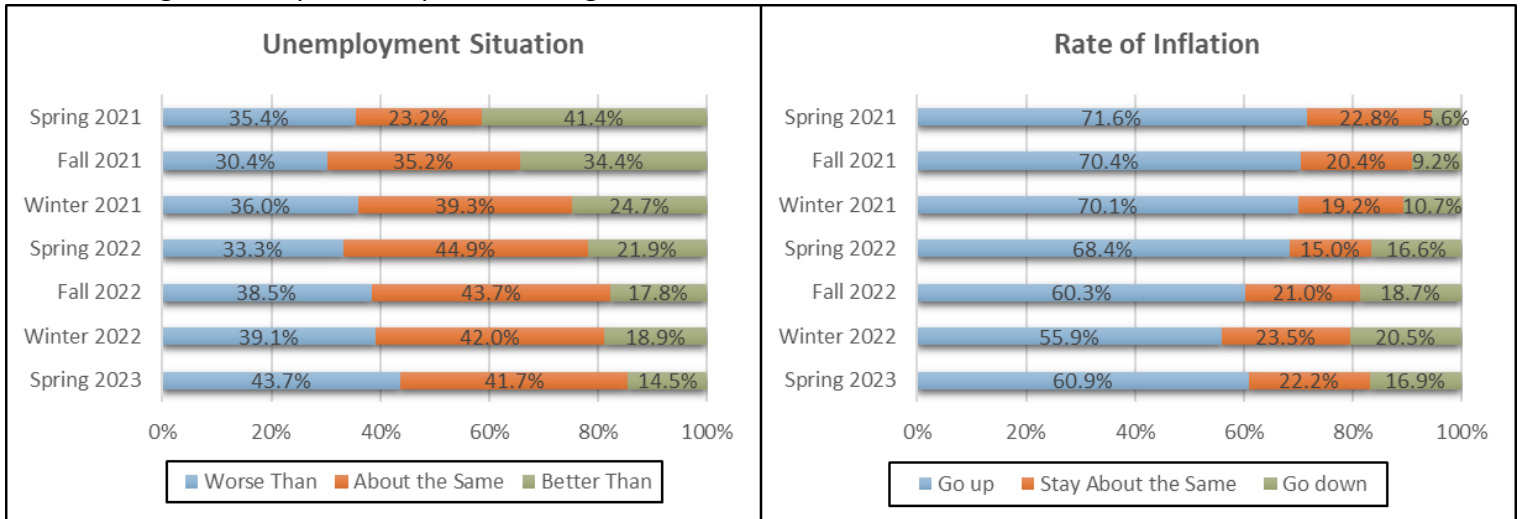


Figure 4 reports the results for these two variables over the past several waves of SOSS.

Specifically, the figure for unemployment shows:

- The percentage of respondents who believe that the unemployment situation will worsen over the next 12 months continues to increase since Spring 2022.
- There is also a decrease in the percentage of respondents that believe that it will be better compared to the last round of SOSS. This has been a general trend since Spring 2021.

Figure 4 also reports respondents' outlook on changes in the rate of inflation during the next 12 months.

In particular,

- There was an increase in the percentage of respondents who felt that inflation would continue to increase within the next 12 months.
- The percentage of respondents who felt that the rate of inflation would go down decreased since the previous round of SOSS.

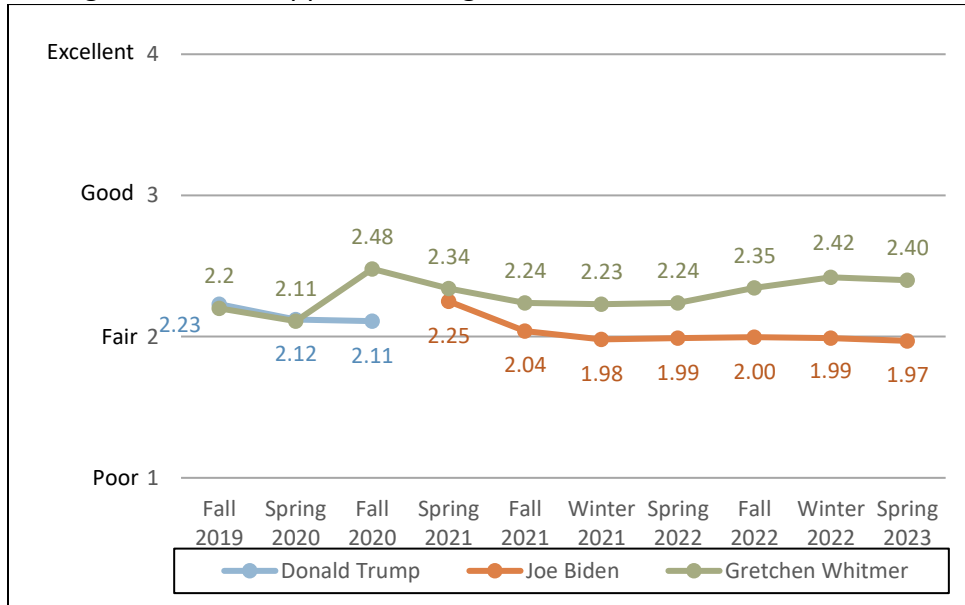
Section B. Assessment of Political Leaders

The questions assessing the current U.S. president and Michigan governor were first asked about President Bill Clinton and Governor John Engler in the Winter 1995 SOSS survey (Wave 2). Since Wave 2, the standing Michigan Governor and the U.S. President have been rated using a four-point performance scale of *poor* (1), *fair* (2), *good* (3), and *excellent* (4).

Figure 5 shows the mean approval rating at the end of President Donald Trump's term and the beginning of President Joe Biden's term, as well as the majority of Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's terms².

² Ratings prior to Fall 2019 were collected as part of telephone interviews and are not included due to methodological differences.

Figure 5. Mean Approval Ratings of Executives, Tracked Over Time



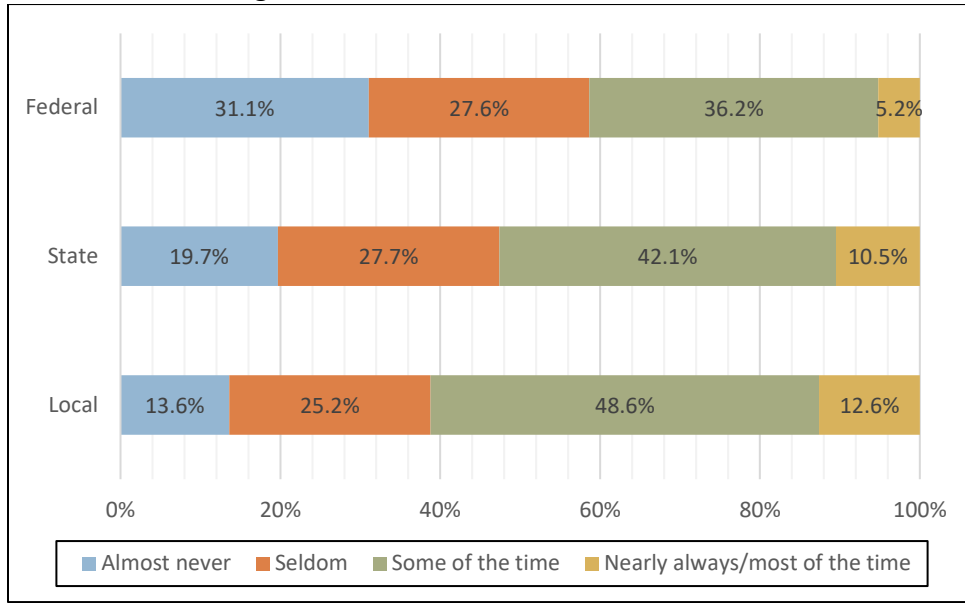
As can be seen in Figure 5:

- President Biden's approval rating decreased during his first year in office and fell from the *Fair* to *Good* range to *Fair*. Since then, his rating has fluctuated between 1.97 and 2.00.
- Governor Whitmer's approval ratings have varied over time, quite possibly due to response to the COVID pandemic during her term, though her ratings have stayed within the *Fair* to *Good* range. There was a slight decrease from the previous round of SOSS, but still the third-highest rating she has received while in office.

Section C. Trust in Government

Respondents were asked how much of the time they trust the federal and state governments, as well as the level of trust they have in their local government. The amount of trust varied by level of government for Spring 2023 (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Level of Trust of Governments



Sample Size = 999/999/997

In particular,

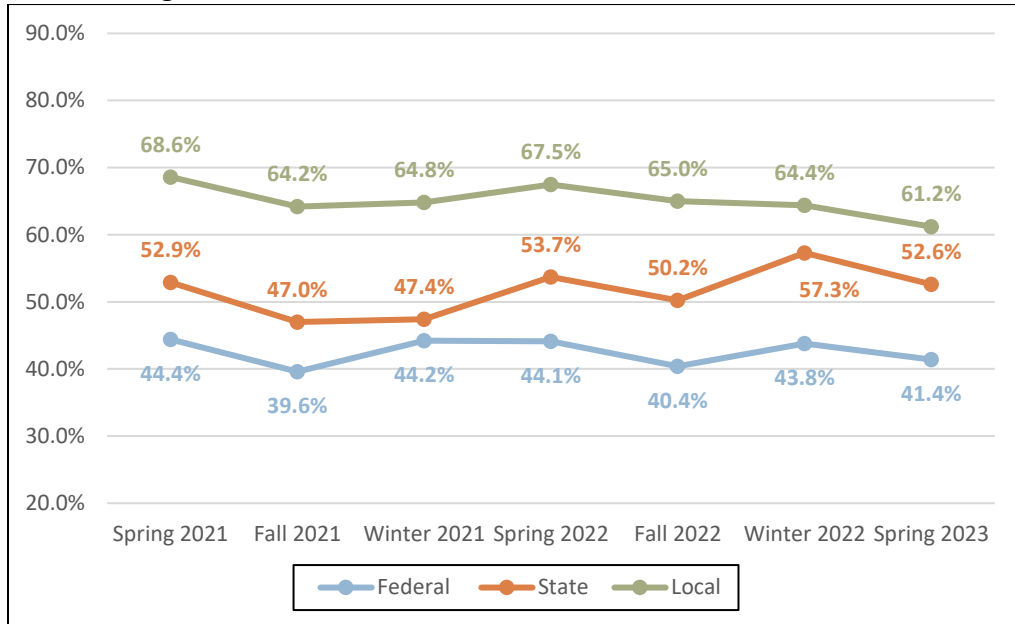
- The Federal government was the least trusted, with only 41 percent stating that they trusted it.
- Fifty-three percent of the respondents reported that they trust the State government some of the time or nearly always.
- Local governments were the most trusted level of government, with 61 percent of the respondents stating that they trusted it some of the time or nearly always.

Historically, the same patterns of Local government being the most trusted and Federal government being the least trusted can be seen in Figure 7.

Figure 7 reports the percentage of respondents who trusted the government entities at least some of the time.

- The same decreases and increases seen at one level are generally mirrored by the other levels of government over time, though this does not always hold true for the Federal government compared to the State and local governments.
- There was a general decline in trust for all three levels of government in Spring 2023 the last compared to the last round of SOSS.

Figure 7: Historical View of Level of Trust of Governments



Section D: Important Issues for Local Communities and State

Respondents were also asked open-ended questions about the issues facing their local communities and the State. The top five categories for each are reported below. All other responses have been collapsed into the “Other” category.

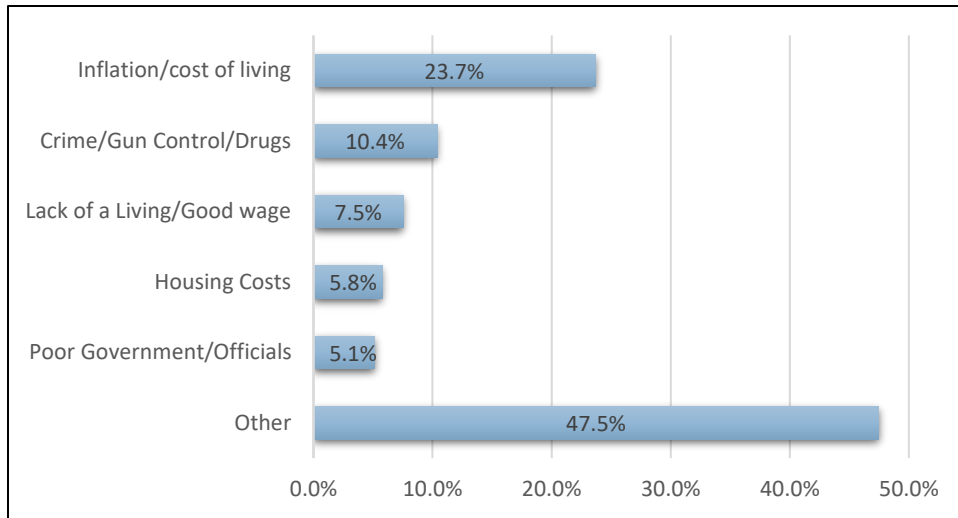
In terms of their community, respondents were asked:

What would you say is the most important problem facing your community today?

Figure 8 shows that:

- Almost a quarter of the respondents stated that inflation/cost of living was the most important. This category included comments related to inflation, cost of living and the rising costs or high costs of consumer goods such as food and gas.
- Other important issues were crime/gun control/drugs, lack of a living or good wage, the cost of housing, and comments about government inadequacies or poor leadership (these included comments about state and federal government/officials).

Figure 8: Most Important Problems Facing Community



Respondents were also asked:

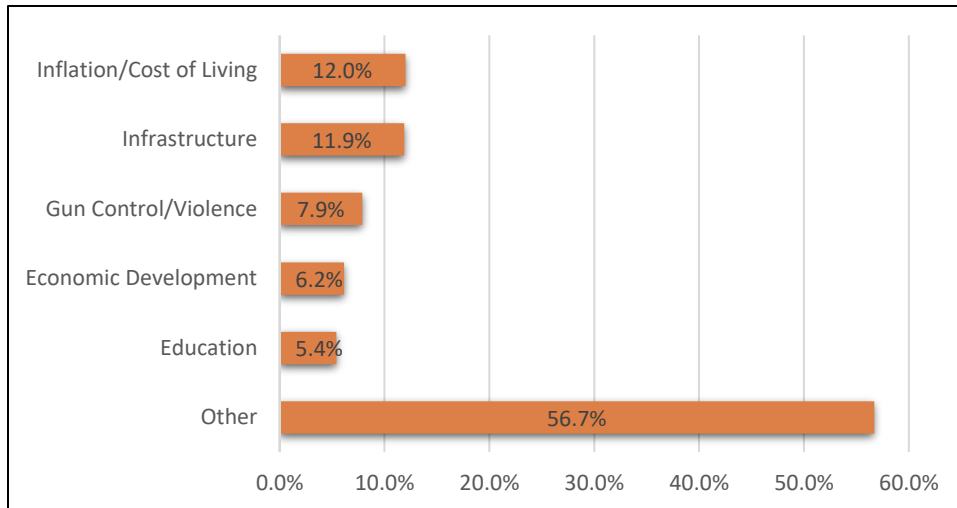
There are many issues that the governor and legislature (in Lansing) could spend time dealing with this session. Of all the issues they could work on, which issue do you think is the most important for them to focus on?

The top five responses are reported in Figure 9.

Of interest,

- As with local community problems, the most important issue identified for the State to work on was inflation/cost of living with infrastructure following close behind.
- The other top issues were gun control/violence in general, economic development including small business, and education including student loans.

Figure 9: Most Important Issues for State Government to Focus on



SUMMARY

Section A: Economic Optimism

Respondents continue to have a relatively pessimistic view of their current and future financial situations. Respondents did report higher percentages of their current situation being good to excellent as well as the current situation being better off compared to the past twelve months. They were more pessimistic about the future with increased percentages reported seeing themselves being worse off in the future, an increase in unemployment and inflation, as well as their community having bad times in the next twelve months.

Section B: Assessment of Political Leaders

Governor Whitmer's approval rating decrease slightly from the last round of SOSS in Winter 2022 but is still within the Fair to Good range. President Biden's rating is nearly the same as the previous survey, with a rating of Fair.

Section C: Trust in Government

The Federal government continues to be the least trusted level of government, and local governments remain the most trusted. The level of trust for all three levels of government decreased between Winter 2022 and Spring 2023.

Section D: Important Issues for Local Communities and State

Inflation/cost of living was the most reported issue at both the local and state level. Crime/gun control/violence was the second most reported at the local level and the third most important issue at the State level with infrastructure being the second most mentioned issue for the State.

APPENDIX

Table A1: Demographic Description of SOSS Respondents

Demographic Characteristics ^a		
Party	Republican	29.4%
	Independent	36.4%
	Democrat	34.2%
Race/Ethnicity^b	White	82.7%
	Black	13.3%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	2.1%
	Native American/Alaska Native	2.3%
	Other Race	3.6%
	Hispanic	4.3%
Gender^c	Male	48.7%
	Female	51.3%
	Intersex	0.0%
Education	Less than 4-year Degree	73.1%
	4-Year Degree	16.6%
	Graduate Degree	10.2%
n		1,000
^a SOSS percentages are weighted using survey weights provided by YouGov. ^b Racial/ethnic categories are not mutually exclusive, and respondents may have selected more than one. ^c Due to the small percentage of Intersex respondents, they were not included in the analysis related to gender.		