Michigan Policy Insiders Panel (MPIP)
Brief Report – Round 1

Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, IPPSR
Michigan State University

Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy, CLOSUP
University of Michigan

Conducted by the:

Office for Survey Research
Institute for Public Policy and Social Research

September – October 2016

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Institute for Public Policy and Social Research
Office for Survey Research

CLOSUP
Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy
Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy | University of Michigan

Overview

The Michigan Policy Insiders Panel (MPIP) is a project of Michigan State University's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, conducted in conjunction with the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy at the University of Michigan. The goal is to understand how policymakers learn about state problems, develop political influence, and interact to produce policy solutions.

This confidential online panel will be surveyed monthly or bi-monthly to ascertain their opinions on various public policy issues. MPIP will also serve as a basis of comparison for public views gathered via the State of the State Survey and the Michigan Public Policy Survey, providing data to understand differences in opinions between state and local officials and the public.

The targeted population for the panel included all persons regarded as "political insiders" in the State of Michigan. This included high-ranking members of state government agencies, current members of Michigan's Legislature and their staff assistants, association and corporate lobbyists, state relations officers, think tanks, public relations professionals, and state political media personnel.

A total of 2,970 individuals were invited to join the panel. The recruitment survey was fielded from September 14 to October 2, 2016. During this time, 786 respondents accessed the survey (26.6 percent of the population) and 537[1] completed the recruitment survey and agreed to join the panel. Of the 786 who accessed the survey, 68.3 percent completed the survey and joined the panel. The overall completion rate for the study is 18.1 percent[2].

This report includes highlighted results from our first survey. Additional details are included in the appendix.

---

[1] Respondents were asked to complete the recruitment survey by the end of the day on Sunday, October 2, 2016. An additional 11 respondents completed after the deadline and are included in the panel going forward but were not included in the reporting of the results of the recruitment survey (n=526). Another 10 respondents accessed the survey and declined consent.

[2] The formula for calculating response rates is Completed Interviews (CI) divided by the sum of Completed Interviews (CI) + Respondent Refusals (R) + Non Interviews (NI) minus Ineligible Respondents (IE) (respondents who after selection into the sample are determined not to meet study criteria). No one was eliminated from the denominator due to being ineligible for the study. The response rate for this study is calculated as 537/2970.

Section A. Demographic Summary

Table 1 provides a general breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the 526 political insiders who responded to the initial Michigan Political Insiders Panel survey. In addition, it includes a comparison to results from the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR)'s State of the State Survey[3], which is representative of the general adult population of Michigan.

Table 1. Demographic Breakdown of MPIP Panel, with Comparison to the State of the State Survey Sample

Demographic Characteristics		MPIP[a] (political insiders)	SOSS[a] (general population)
Partisan Identity[b]	% Republican	33.1	29.3
	% Independent	30.1	33.8
	% Democrat	36.8	36.8
Ideology	% Conservative	16.1	39.8
	% In the Middle	60.5	36.2
	% Liberal	23.4	24.0
Race/Ethnicity[c]	% White	90.1	77.8
	% Black	7.8	12.3
	% Hispanic	1.9	3.7
	% Other/Refused	3.2	14.1
Gender	% Male	61.6	49.4
	% Female	38.4	50.6
n		526	995

[a] MPIP percentages are unweighted from a non-probability sample; SOSS percentages use survey weights.
[b] Third party identifiers were excluded from Party ID percentages only.
[c] Racial/ethnic categories were not mutually exclusive; respondents could select as many as applied to them, therefore, percentages may add to more than 100.0%

Compared to the SOSS estimates of the general Michigan population, members of the Michigan Political Insiders Panel were, on average:

---

[3] SOSS is a quarterly statewide telephone survey of a random sample of about 1,000 adult residents of Michigan designed to systematically monitor the public mood on important issues in major regions of the state. SOSS is administered by the Institute for Public Policy & Social Research's Office for Survey Research.

- *More likely* to identify as Republican and *less likely* to identify as Independent,
- *More likely* to identify as "In the Middle" ideologically and *less likely* to identify as Conservative,
- *More likely* to identify themselves as White / Caucasian, and
- *More likely* to identify themselves as Male.

Below, Figure 1 displays the distribution of full seven-point scales for Partisan Identification and Ideology among both the MPIP (political insiders) and SOSS (general population) samples. The images illustrate that compared to SOSS estimates of the general population, respondents to the MPIP survey were *more likely* to identify as strong partisans, yet at the same time *less likely* to side with Liberal or Conservative ideology. Compared to the public, the MPIP sample was *much less likely* to identify as Conservative but only *somewhat less likely* to identify as liberal.

Figure 1. Breakdown of 7-Point Party and Ideology, with Comparison to SOSS
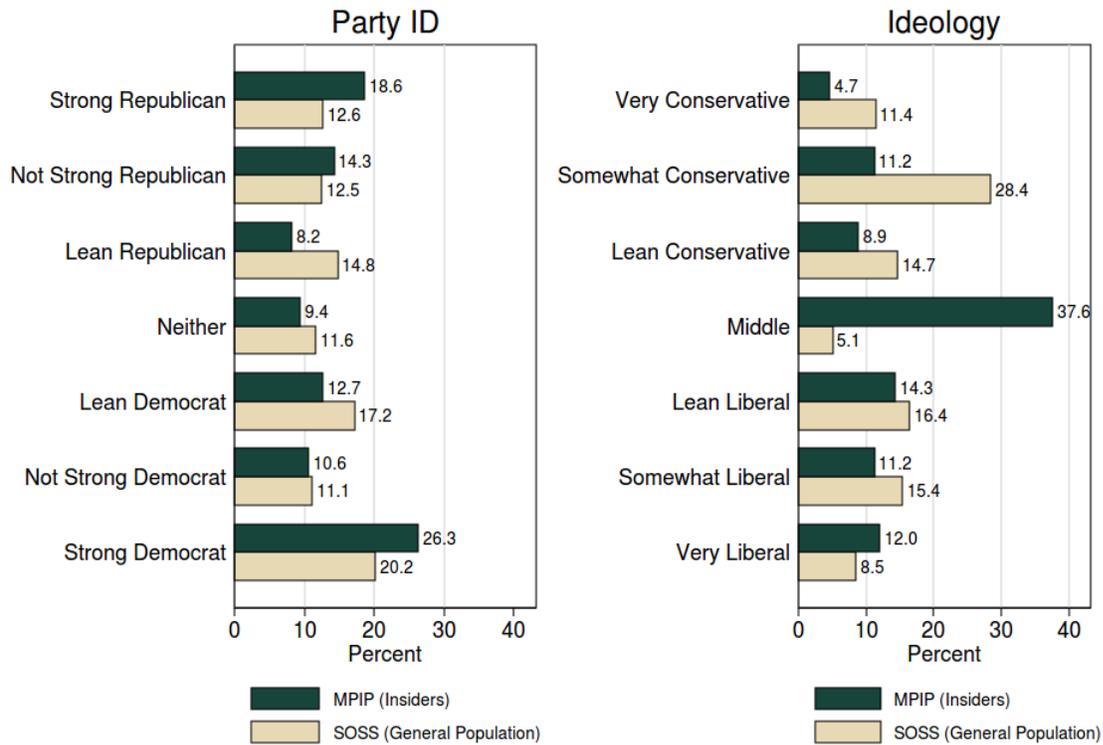
In addition, Table 2 shows the distribution of demographic variables for different categories of political insiders in the MPIP panel – specifically, those primarily working in the Michigan Legislature, in Administrative Agencies, and in Non-Government Organizations. The "Legislature" category includes both staffers and elected officials (though staff make up the vast majority), while the "Non-Government" category includes insiders working in public relations, lobbying, the media, educational institutions, and public policy groups.

Table 2. Demographic Breakdown of MPIP Panel, by Employer Type

Demographic Characteristics		Legislature[a]	Administration[a]	Non-Govt[a]
Party ID[b]	% Republican	44.9	23.3	40.3
	% Independent	8.7	39.5	26.9
	% Democrat	46.4	37.3	32.8
Ideology	% Conservative	22.2	12.2	18.5
	% In the Middle	44.4	64.1	62.0
	% Liberal	33.3	23.7	19.5
Race/Ethnicity	% Non-minority	84.5	83.3	92.7
	% Minority	15.5	16.7	7.3
Gender	% Male	60.0	54.7	70.4
	% Female	40.0	45.3	29.6
Education	% 4-year degree or less	69.4	35.5	53.9
	% Graduate degree	30.6	64.5	46.1
Tenure	% < 5 Years	41.7	19.4	23.7
	% 5 – 9 Years	26.4	14.9	24.6
	% 10 – 20 Years	26.4	21.8	34.0
	% 20+ Years	5.6	44.0	17.8

[a] *All percentages in this table are based on <u>unweighted</u> samples.*
[b] *Third party identifiers were excluded from Party ID percentages only.*

The values in Table 2 indicate that:

- In terms of partisan affiliation, MPIP panelists in the Legislature are far <u>*less likely*</u> to identify as Independent, but are fairly <u>*evenly balanced*</u> between Republicans and Democrats. It should be noted that the actual partisan composition of the Michigan legislature is currently 62 Republicans – 45 Democrats in the House, and 27 Republicans – 10 Democrats in the Senate. Thus, the sample of respondents in the Legislature group (which was made up almost entirely of staff) were more heavily Democratic than the legislature itself, most likely due to differences in response rate by party. Because the MPIP survey was conducted with a non-probability sample and the true partisan distribution of legislative staff is unknown, this cannot be corrected with weighting. We must simply acknowledge the differences in the partisanship of the sample and the partisanship of the legislature.

- Those working for Administrative Agencies are *most likely* to be Independents, and *more likely* to identify as Democrats than Republicans. And those working for Non-Governmental Organizations are *more likely* to identify as Republicans than Democrats.

- Ideologically, panelists within the Legislature reported leaning *more* Liberal than Conservative, and were *less likely* to identify as "In the Middle" than those in Administrative Agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations. As discussed in more detail above, MPIP respondents within the Legislature skewed more Democratic / Liberal than is the case in the legislature itself, most likely due to differential rates of response between Democrats and Republicans.

- Non-Government respondents *were more* likely to identify as White than those in the Legislature and Administrative Agencies.

- Though males constitute a larger proportion of each group than females, non-government respondents were the most likely to be male.

- Panelists within Administrative Agencies were the *most likely* to report holding a graduate degree, followed by those in Non-Government Organizations. Panelists in the Legislature were *most likely* to report having a four-year degree or less.

- Respondents in the Legislature reported having worked in their current position for the *shortest* amount of time, while those in Administrative Agencies reported having the *longest* tenure in their current position. Non-Government panelists were distributed *fairly evenly* over these categories.

Section B. Trust in Government

Figure 2 compares the level of trust respondents to MPIP (political insiders) and SOSS (general population) said they had in each of three different levels of government.

Specifically, the questions asked, "How much of the time do you think you can trust [the federal government in Washington, D.C. / the state government in Lansing / your local government] to do what is right?" The numbers in Figure 2 represent the percent of respondents to each survey who said they could trust each level of government either "Some of the Time" or "Nearly Always or Most of the Time."

**Figure 2. Trust in Three Levels of Government, MPIP versus SOSS Comparison**
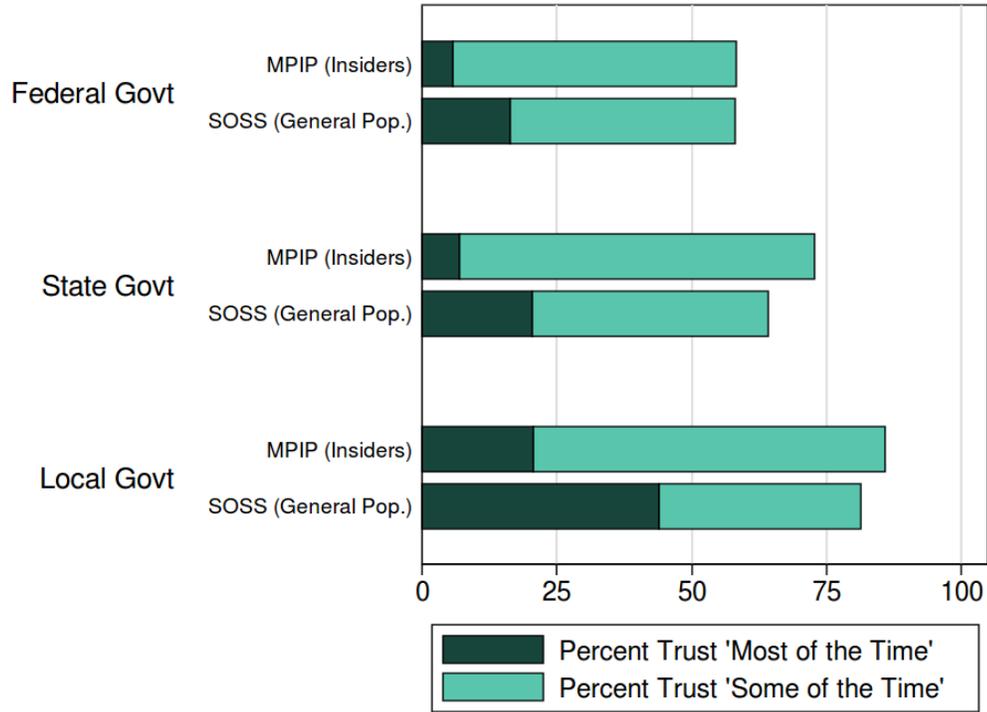
Figure 2 shows that whereas MPIP panelists were _more likely_ than the general population to say they trusted each level of government at least "Some of the Time," they were _less likely_ to say they trust each level "Nearly Always or Most of the Time."

Section C. Presidential and Gubernatorial Approval

Panelists were also asked to rate the performance of United States President Barack Obama and Michigan Governor Rick Snyder as either "Poor," "Fair," "Good," or "Excellent."

Figure 3 compares the distribution of responses to the MPIP survey (political insiders) survey with the distribution of responses to the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy's Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) of local government leaders and IPPSR's State of the State Survey of the general population.

Figure 3. Histograms of Barack Obama and Rick Snyder Approval, with Comparisons to SOSS and MPPS
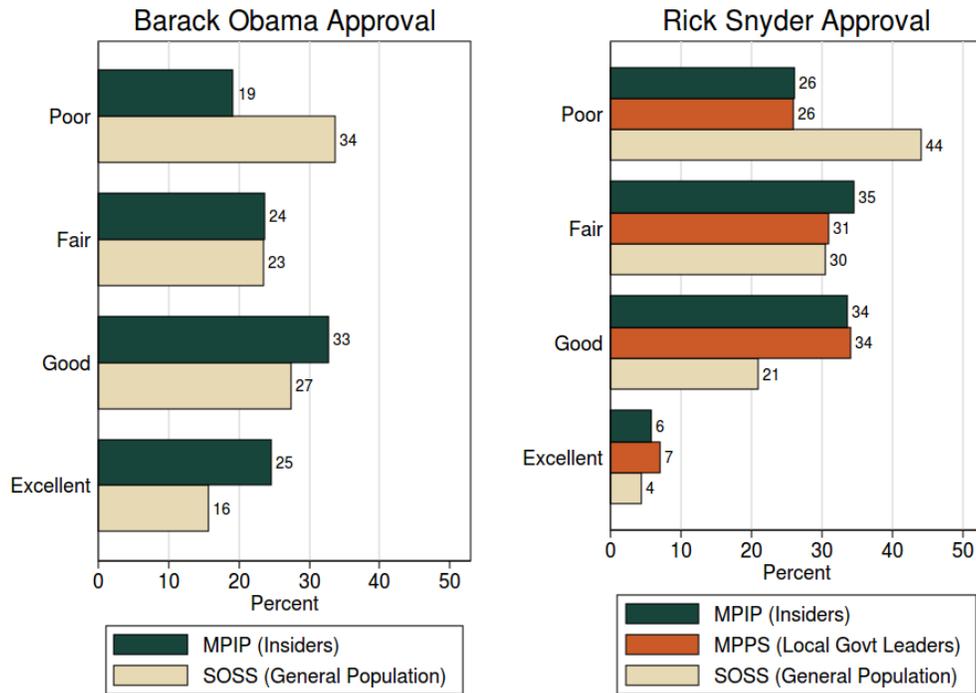
The results in Figure 3 indicate that:

- MPIP panelists rated both President Obama and Governor Snyder more positively than did members of Michigan's general adult population.

- Both MPIP panelists and SOSS respondents rated President Obama more positively than Governor Snyder. About 57 percent of insiders on the panel and an estimated 43 percent of all Michigan adults rated Obama either "Good" or "Excellent," compared to just 39 percent of insider panelists and 25 percent of the general population who rated Snyder this highly.

- MPIP panelists and local government leaders (from CLOSUP's MPPS study) evaluated Governor Snyder similarly. About 40 percent of both groups rated him either "Good" or "Excellent," and the percentage of responses for each answer choice mirror each other quite closely. On average, both groups rated Governor Snyder more positively than did the general population in SOSS.

Section D. Most Important Problem

Panelists were also asked an open-ended question that read, *"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 ONE issue do you think is the most important for them to focus on and why?"*

Figure 4, below, displays a word cloud of the substantive words that appeared most frequently in

panelists' open-ended responses. The size of each word corresponds to the frequency of its use, with the most common words appearing largest and less common words appearing smaller.

Figure 4. Word Cloud of Most Common Words in "Most Important Problem" Open-Ended Responses

As Figure 4 indicates, the most common words used by MPIP panelists in describing the most important issue for the state government to focus on included "Education" (151 mentions), "Infrastructure" (116 mentions), "Funding" (86 mentions, including root words), "Roads" (66 mentions, including root words), "Economy / Economic" (57 mentions), and "Water" (42 mentions).
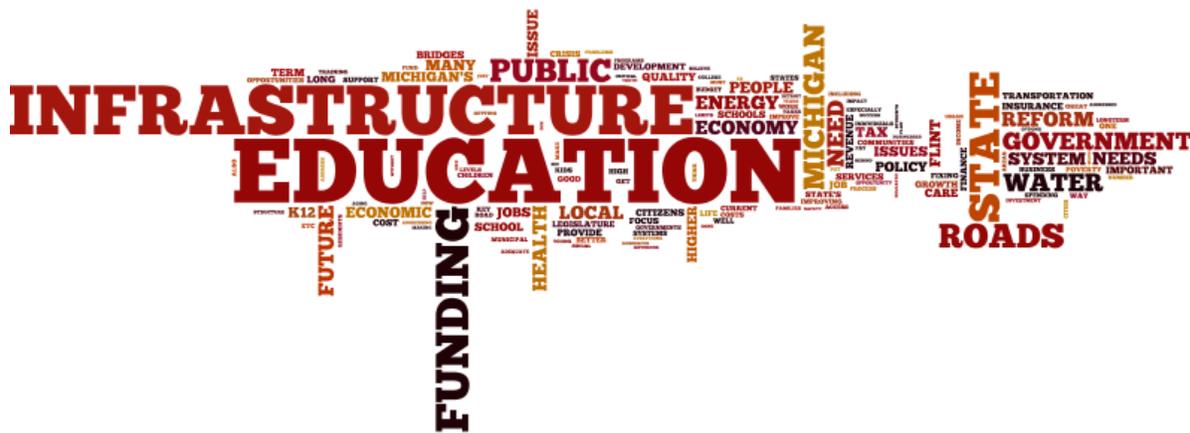
Additional results and methodological details are available in the appendix to this short report. A full report will eventually be publically available at ippsr.msu.edu.