

Michigan Policy Insiders Panel (MPIP) Brief Report – Round 3

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Overview

The Michigan Policy Insiders Panel (MPIP) is a project of Michigan State University's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR), in conjunction with the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) 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.

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.

The Round 3 survey was fielded from March 14, 2017 to March 28, 2017. Email invitations were sent to 610 MPIP panel members on March 14, and reminder emails were sent on March 17, March 21, March 24, and March 28 to those who had not yet completed the questionnaire by the time of the reminder. During this time, 436 respondents accessed the survey (71.5 percent of the panelists) and 415 completed it. Of the 436 who accessed the survey, 95.2 percent completed it. The overall completion rate for the study is 68.0 percent¹.

¹ The formula for calculating the completion rate was Completed Interviews (CI) divided by the sum of Completed Interviews (CI), Respondent Refusals (R), and 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 completion rate for this study is calculated as $415 / 610 = .680$.

Section A. Demographic Summary

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the political insiders who responded to each of the first three rounds of the 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, which is representative of the general adult population of Michigan.

The demographic breakdown of MPIP respondents was very similar across all three rounds of data collection, with only very slight (one to two percentage points) variation across time points. On average, compared to the state's general population, the panel of insiders is *more* balanced in partisan identification, *more* ideologically centrist, *less* diverse in terms of race and gender, and *more* educated.

Table 1. Demographic Breakdown of MPIP Panel, by Round

Demographic Characteristics		MPIP ^a Round 1	MPIP ^a Round 2	MPIP ^a Round 3	SOSS ^a (General MI Population)
Party Identification^d	Republican	33%	34%	34%	29%
	Independent	30%	29%	30%	34%
	Democrat	37%	36%	36%	37%
Ideology	Conservative	16%	16%	18%	40%
	In the Middle	61%	61%	60%	36%
	Liberal	23%	22%	23%	24%
Race/Ethnicity^c	White	90%	92%	92%	78%
	Black	8%	6%	7%	12%
	Hispanic	2%	1%	1%	4%
Gender	Male	62%	64%	65%	49%
	Female	38%	36%	35%	51%
Education	No 4-Year Degree	4%	3%	3%	76%
	4-Year Degree	44%	47%	46%	15%
	Graduate Degree	53%	50%	51%	9%
n		526	402	415	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.

Section B. Issue Attitudes

Insiders were asked about to indicate their opinions toward certain state policy proposals on a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly Oppose” to “Strongly Favor.” Table 2 summarizes the mean level of support for various proposals, ranked in order from highest to lowest support.

Table 2. Reported Support for Various State Policy Proposals

Policy	Mean Support Rating ^a	Net Favorability ^b (% Favor - % Oppose)
Increasing the state’s Earned Income Tax Credit for low and middle-income workers.	3.74	+ 48%
Offering tax credits to college graduates in Michigan to help them make their student loan payments	3.71	+ 47%
Reforming the retirement system for public school teachers by requiring new teachers to go into a 401(k)-type program rather than a pension system.	3.37	+ 20%
Weakening or eliminating the state’s Prevailing Wage construction laws, which currently require that public construction projects pay non-union workers the same wages bargained by union workers in an area.	2.75	- 14%
Making cuts to the Medicaid expansion , known as the Healthy Michigan Plan.	1.79	- 67%

^a Means are calculated on a five-point scale where 1 = “Strongly Oppose” and 5 = “Strongly Favor”

^b Net favorability is calculated as the percentage of respondents who somewhat or strongly favor the policy change, minus the percentage of respondents who somewhat or strongly oppose the change. Positive scores indicate that more people favor the proposal than oppose it, and negative scores indicate that the opposition outnumbers the support.

Table 2 indicates that:

- Among these five hypothetical proposals, increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit was viewed *most favorably*, with a Net Favorability rating (percent favor minus percent oppose) of +48 percent, meaning total approval was 48 percentage points higher than total disapproval.
- Support was *second highest* for offering tax credits to college graduates to help with student loan payments was second highest, with Net Favorability at +47 percent.
- Support was *lowest* for making cuts to the Medicaid expansion, known as the Healthy Michigan Plan. Net Favorability for this proposal was -67 percent.

Next, insiders were asked about what they think government spending priorities should be – in other words, whether too much, too little, or the right amount is being spent in 11 particular areas. Specifically, the question asked:

“We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. For each of the following, please indicate if you think we’re spending too much money, too little money, or the right amount of money on each. Are we spending too much, too little, or the right amount on”

The distributions of responses to these items are shown in Table 3, along with a comparison to the general United States population as estimated using data from the 2016 General Social Survey² (GSS) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. The issue areas appeared in a randomized order on the questionnaire; in the table, they are ranked from lowest to highest Net Spending Score (percent “too little” minus percent “too much”). In other words, the spending areas near the top of the table are the ones on which insiders most commonly believe we are spending *too much*, while those near the bottom are the ones on which insiders collectively believe we are spending *too little*.

Table 3. Spending Priorities, with Comparison to US Mass Public

Spending Area	% “Too Little”	% “Right Amount”	% “Too Much”	Net MPIP ^a (MI Insiders)	Net GSS ^a (US Mass Public)	
					All Respondents	Graduate Degree
Prisons	8%	23%	69%	- 61%	NA	NA
National defense	21%	34%	45%	- 24%	+ 11%	-2%
Social Security	29%	57%	14%	+ 15%	+ 55%	+43%
Assistance to big cities	40%	35%	25%	+ 15%	- 12%	+0%
Law enforcement	32%	56%	12%	+ 20%	+ 43%	+42%
Health	47%	31%	21%	+ 26%	+ 51%	+39%
Assistance for the poor	45%	42%	13%	+ 32%	+ 65%	+53%
The environment	52%	35%	14%	+ 38%	+ 56%	+67%
Education	60%	28%	12%	+ 48%	+ 67%	+72%
Supporting scientific research	58%	34%	8%	+ 50%	+ 29%	+ 39%
Highways and bridges	93%	6%	1%	+ 92%	+ 38%	+48%

^a Net scores are calculated as the percentage of respondents who answered “Spending Too Little,” minus the percentage of respondents who answered “Spending Too Much.” Positive values indicate that support for increasing spending in that area outnumbers support for decreasing it, while negative values indicate the opposite.

Table 3 indicates that:

- In only two of the spending areas (Prisons and National Defense) did more respondents prefer to decrease spending than preferred to increase it. When it comes to prisons, this constituted a substantial majority (69 percent “Too Much” versus 8 percent “Too Little”).
- In two other spending areas (Social Security and Law Enforcement), a majority of respondents (57 and 56 percent, respectively) said we are currently spending the right amount. In each of these cases, support for increasing spending outnumbered support for decreasing spending by about 15 to 20 percentage points.
- In the remaining seven spending areas, at least a plurality (40 to 93 percent) of insiders said we are spending too little. By far the most agreement on this came in the area of funding for highways and bridges, as 93 percent answered “Too Little” versus just 1 percent that answered “Too Much.”
- In seven of the spending areas (National defense, Social Security, Law enforcement, Health, Assistance for the poor, the Environment, and Education), the insiders’ collective attitudes were *less favorable* to increasing spending compared to the US general population.

² For more information, see <http://gss.norc.org/>

- In three other spending areas (Assistance to big cities, Supporting scientific research, and Highways and bridges), insiders were more favorable than the US general population toward increasing spending.
- In most cases, highly educated members of the mass public – those with graduate-level degrees – expressed opinions that were somewhat more similar to those of the insiders panel. The exceptions were that when asked about the environment and education, the mass public expressed more pro-spending attitudes than insiders, and the most highly educated were the most in favor of greater spending.

Next, insiders were asked:

For each group listed [Lower-income people, Middle-income people, Upper-income people, and Corporations], please indicate if you think they are paying their fair share in federal taxes, paying too much in federal taxes, or paying too little in federal taxes.

The distribution of responses to these items are summarized in Table 4, along with a comparison to the general United States population as estimated using data from an April 2017 Gallup Poll³. In the table they are ranked from lowest to highest Net Tax Perception (percent “too little” minus percent “too much”). In other words, the groups near the top of the table are the ones on which insiders most commonly believe are paying *too much* in taxes, while those near the bottom are the ones insiders collectively believe are paying *too little* in taxes.

Table 4. Perceived Tax Burden of Various Groups, with Comparison to US Mass Public

Groups	% “Too Little”	% “Fair Share”	% “Too Much”	Net MPIP ^a (MI Insiders)	Net Gallup ^a (US Mass Public)
Lower-income people	14%	52%	34%	- 20%	- 21%
Middle-income people	2%	54%	44%	- 42%	- 45%
Upper-income people	65%	21%	14%	+ 51%	+ 53%
Corporations	67%	20%	13%	+ 54%	+ 48%

^a Net scores are calculated as the percentage of respondents who answered “Too Little,” minus the percentage of respondents who answered “Too Much.” Negative values indicate that support for cutting the group’s taxes outnumbers support for raising their taxes, while positive values indicate the opposite.

Table 4 indicates that:

- About half of the insiders (52 to 54 percent) indicated lower- and middle-income people are paying about their fair share in taxes, while a sizeable minority (34 and 44 percent, respectively) believe they are paying too much.
- About two-thirds of the insiders (65 to 67 percent) said upper-income people and corporations are paying too little in federal taxes, compared to just 14 and 13 percent (respectively) who said they are paying too much.
- The Net Tax Perception of Michigan policy insiders is nearly identical to that of the US federal population, coming within six percentage points for all four groups.

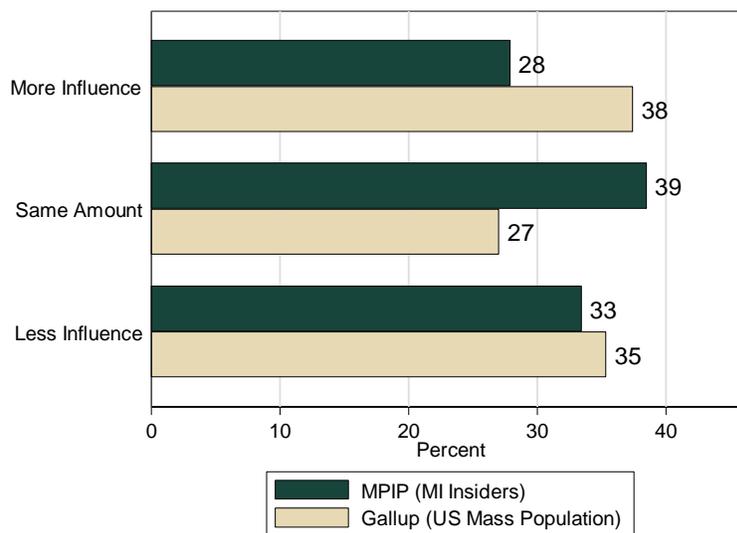
³ For more information, see <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1714/taxes.aspx>

To measure their attitudes toward labor unions, respondents were asked:

“Would you, personally, like to see labor unions in the United States have: more influence than they have today, the same amount of influence as today, or less influence than they have today?”

The distribution of responses to this question is displayed in Figure 1, along with a comparison to the to the general United States population as estimated using data from an August 2016 Gallup Poll⁴. The results indicate that 39 percent of Michigan policy insiders said they want labor unions to keep the same amount of influence, 33 percent want them to have less influence, and 28 percent want them to have more influence. Compared to the US general population, the respondents were *less likely* to answer “More influence” and *more likely* to answer “Same amount.”

Figure 1. Preferences About Labor Union Influence, with Comparison to US Mass Public



To measure their attitudes about gun control, respondents were asked:

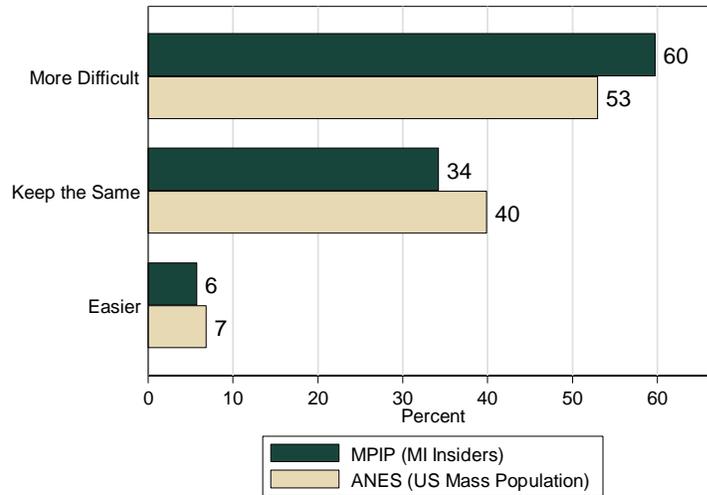
“Do you think the federal government should make it more difficult for people to buy a gun than it is now, make it easier for people to buy a gun, or keep these rules about the same as they are now?”

The distribution of responses to this question is displayed in Figure 2, along with a comparison to the to the general United States population as estimated using data from the 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES)⁵. The results indicate that 60 percent of Michigan policy insiders said it should be more difficult to people to buy a gun, 34 percent want to keep gun laws the same, and just 6 percent want buying a gun to be easier. Compared to the US general population, the respondents were *less likely* to answer “Keep the same” and *more likely* to answer “More difficult.”

⁴ For more information, see <http://www.gallup.com/poll/12751/labor-unions.aspx>

⁵ For more information, see <http://www.electionstudies.org/>

Figure 2. Preferences About Gun Control, with Comparison to US Mass Public

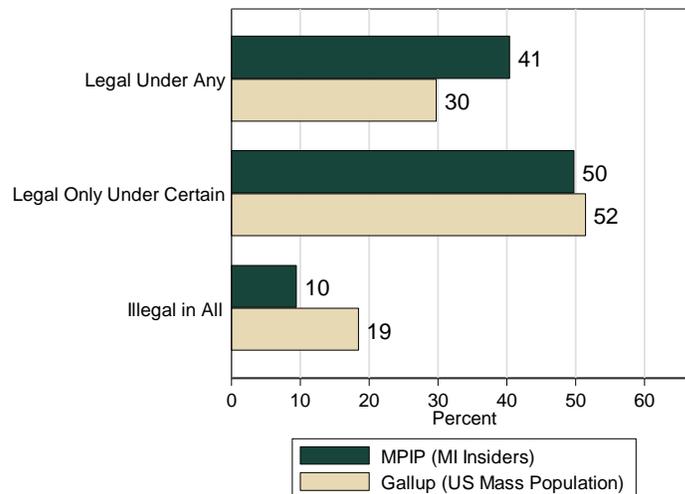


To measure their attitudes about abortion, respondents were asked:

“Do you think abortion should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal under all circumstances?”

The distribution of responses to this question is displayed in Figure 3, along with a comparison to the to the general United States population as estimated using data from a May 2017 Gallup Poll⁶. The results indicate that half (50 percent) of Michigan policy insiders said it should be legal under only certain circumstances, 41 percent want it to be legal under all circumstances, and just 10 percent want it to be illegal in all circumstances. Compared to the US general population, the respondents were far *more likely* to answer “Legal in all circumstances” and *less likely* to answer “Illegal in all circumstances.”

Figure 3. Preferences About Abortion, with Comparison to US Mass Public



⁶ For more information, see <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1576/abortion.aspx>

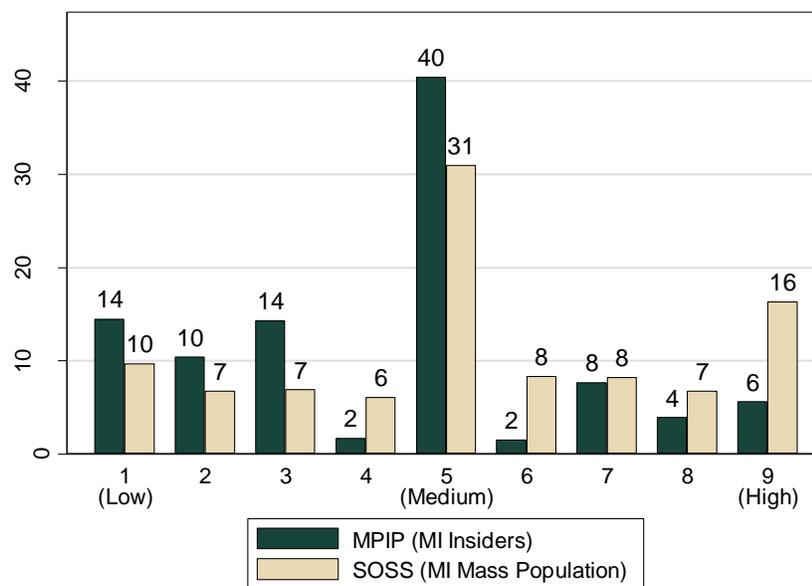
The questionnaire also contained a pair of items to measure what scholars⁷ call “racial resentment” – a set of beliefs “that blacks are demanding and undeserving and do not require any form of special government assistance.”⁸ Respondents were asked to use a five-point scale (ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”) to indicate the extent to which they agreed with two statements:

- 1) *Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. African Americans should do the same without any special favors.*
- 2) *Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for African Americans to work their way up financially.*

Stronger agreement with the first statement, and stronger disagreement with the second, would correspond to higher levels of racial resentment. Combining these two items produces a single nine-point Racial Resentment scale, on which higher values indicate more racial resentment. The distribution of this scale is shown in Figure 4, along with a comparison to the general population of Michigan as measured in the 73rd State of the State Survey conducted by Michigan State University⁹.

Figure 4 indicates that racial resentment is *more prevalent* among the general population of Michigan than it is among the state’s policy insiders. About 20 percent of insiders received a value of six or higher on the racial resentment scale based on their answers, compared to 38 percent of the general population.

Figure 4. Distribution of Racial Resentment, with Comparison to MI Mass Public



⁷ See, e.g., Kinder, Donald and Lynn Sanders. (1996). *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁸ Feldman, Stanley and Leonie Huddy. (2005). “Racial Resentment and White Opposition to Race-Conscious Programs: Principles or Prejudice?” *American Journal of Political Science* 49(1): 169.

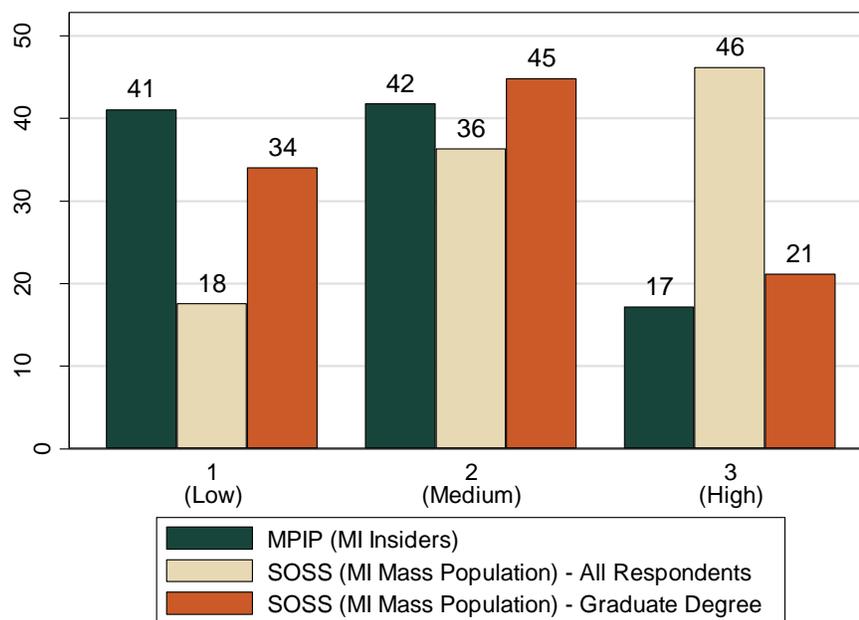
⁹ For more information, see <http://ippsr.msu.edu/survey-research/state-state-survey-soss>

In addition, the questionnaire measured authoritarian attitudes – that is, proclivities for enforcing conformity and uniformity – using two items that asked about child-rearing preferences. These measures have been previously tested and commonly used by scholars of authoritarianism, who have shown them to be strongly related to authoritarian values.^{10,11,12} Respondents were shown two pairs of personal qualities, and asked which quality from each pair is more important for a child to have. The two choices were “Independence” versus “Respect for elders,” and “Obedience” versus “Self-reliance.” Prioritizing respect for elders and obedience were coded as the authoritarian answers, and responses were combined into a single three-point authoritarianism scale (based on whether the respondent chose the authoritarian answer to both items, only one item, or neither).

The distribution of this scale is shown in Figure 5, along with a comparison to the general population of Michigan as measured in the 73rd State of the State Survey.

The results indicate that authoritarian attitudes are *far more prevalent* among Michigan’s mass public than among the state’s policy insiders. About one-sixth (17 percent) of the insiders received a value of three (indicating a high level of authoritarianism) on the scale, compared to 46 percent of the mass population. And, 41 percent of insiders received a value of one (indicating a low level of authoritarianism) on the scale, compared to 22 percent of the mass population. However, members of the mass public who hold graduate degrees gave answers very similar to those of the insiders panel, with just 21 percent scored as “high” authoritarianism and 34 percent scored as “low.”

Figure 5. Distribution of Authoritarianism, with Comparison to MI Mass Public



¹⁰ Feldman, Stanley and Karen Stenner. (1997). “Perceived Threat and Authoritarianism.” *Political Psychology* 18(4): 741-770.

¹¹ Hetherington, Marc and Jonathan Weiler. (2009). *Authoritarianism and Polarization in American Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

¹² Kohn, Melvin. (1977). *Class and Conformity: A Study in Values*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The questionnaire also measured conspiratorial attitudes in politics – a mentality that explains political events as the product of secret plots by a small but powerful group of ill-intending individuals¹³ – using a set of four items. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with different statements on a four-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” which did *not* offer a neutral option (e.g., “Neither Agree nor Disagree”) so that respondents had to pick one side or the other.

The distributions of responses to these items are summarized in Table 5, along with a comparison to the United States mass public as measured in the fall 2014 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES)¹⁴.

Table 5. Prevalence of Conspiratorial Attitudes, with Comparison to US Mass Public

Statement	Mean Rating ^a	% Agree ^b MPIP (MI Insiders)	% Agree ^b CCES (US Mass Public)
Politicians often lie, deflect blame, and find other ways to look innocent	3.09	80%	94%
In national politics, nothing happens by accident	2.75	62%	83%
Government institutions are largely controlled by elite outside interests	2.70	61%	85%
You can see patterns, designs, and secret activities everywhere once you know where to look	2.17	35%	78%

^a Means are calculated on a four-point scale where 1 = “Strongly Disagree” and 4 = “Strongly Agree”

^b Percent agreement combines the percentage of respondents who answered “Strongly Agree” with the percentage who answered “Somewhat Agree”

The table indicates that political insiders generally *agreed* more than they disagreed with the conspiratorial statements (over 60 percent agreement on three out of the four items), but to a *lesser degree* than the mass public (78 to 94 percent agreement on each item). This suggests that the political conspiracy mentality is not uncommon among policy elites, but it is even more common among the general population.

Lastly, the questionnaire included an item to measure respondents’ preferences in regards to immigration policy. The question asked respondents to indicate which of four proposals comes closest to his or her view about what government policy toward unauthorized immigrants in the United States should be. The specific proposals are listed in Table 6 along with the percent of insiders who expressed a preference for each, as well as a comparison to the preferences of the United States general population as measured in the 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES).

¹³ Bruder, Martin, Petter Haffke, Nick Neave, Nina Noripan, and Roland Imhoff. (2013). “Measuring Individual Differences in Generic Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories Across Cultures.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 4: 225.

¹⁴ For more information, see <https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/>

Table 6. Preferred Immigration Policy, with Comparison to US Mass Public

Policy	% Support MPIP (MI Insiders)	% Support ANES (US Mass Public)	% Support ANES (US Mass Public)
		All Respondents	Graduate Degree
Make all unauthorized immigrants felons and send them back to their home country	6%	17%	8%
Have a guest worker program that allows unauthorized immigrants to remain in the United States in order to work, but only for a limited time	13%	15%	14%
Allow unauthorized immigrants to remain in the United States and eventually qualify for U.S. citizenship, but only if they meet certain requirements like paying back taxes and fines, learning English, and passing background checks	56%	58%	63%
Allow unauthorized immigrants to remain in the United States and eventually qualify for US citizenship, without penalties	25%	10%	14%
<i>n</i>	415	4212	676

The results indicate that the vast majority (81 percent) of insiders prefer some form of path to legal citizenship for unauthorized immigrants. Over half (56 percent) would prefer that this path requires meeting certain requirements like penalties and background checks, while one-fourth (25 percent) said unauthorized immigrants should be allowed to stay and qualify for citizenship without penalties.

The attitudes expressed by Michigan’s policy insiders were, on average, *more lenient* toward unauthorized immigrants than the country’s general population. The insiders panel was *less than half as likely* as the US population (6 percent versus 17 percent, respectively) to favor “mak[ing] all unauthorized immigrants felons and send[ing] them back to their home country,” and *over twice as likely* (25 percent versus 10 percent, respectively) to support “allow[ing] unauthorized immigrants to remain in the United States and eventually qualify for US citizenship, without penalties.”

Much of this mass-elite divide could be a product of education – members of the mass public with graduate degrees expressed preferences quite similar to the insiders panel, with just 8 percent favoring deportation and 77 percent favoring some form of path to citizenship. However, only 14 percent said they support such a path without penalties.

Section C. Predictions of Policy Changes by Election Day 2018

Respondents were given a list of policy proposals and asked to indicate (on a five-point scale ranging from “Very Unlikely” to “Very Likely”) how likely it is that important legislation to address each topic will be passed by Election Day 2018. The questionnaire included two sets of policy items – one asking about *state* policy proposals passing the Michigan legislature and being signed by the governor, and another asking about *federal* policy proposals passing the United States Congress and being signed by the President.

The list of state-level policies is shown in Table 7, along with a summary of respondents’ perceptions of how likely each policy change is to be passed and signed into law. In the table, the policies are ranked in order from the most likely to occur to the least likely to occur, according to the collective opinions of the insiders panel.

Table 7. Perceived Likelihood of Particular State Policy Changes Passing by 2018

Policy	Mean Likelihood Rating^a	Net Likelihood^b (% Likely - % Unlikely)
Promotion of skilled trades or technical education	3.95	+ 63%
Regulation of lead and/or copper in drinking water	3.76	+ 54%
Expansion of brownfield tax credits for developers	3.61	+ 47%
Parole, probation, and criminal justice reform	3.51	+ 34%
State employee benefits changes	3.47	+ 37%
Medicaid expansion reform or repeal	3.35	+ 30%
Reform of Emergency Financial Manager Law	3.12	+ 10%
Changes to Prevailing Wage construction laws	3.05	+ 7%
Reductions in income tax rates	2.91	- 4%
Mental health reform	2.85	- 8%
Changes to the Earned Income Tax Credit	2.55	- 32%
Student debt assistance for college graduates	2.18	- 59%

^a Means are calculated on a five-point scale where 1 = “Very Unlikely” and 5 = “Very Likely”

^b Net Likelihood is calculated as the percentage of respondents who said the policy change was somewhat or very likely, minus the percentage of respondents who said it was somewhat or very unlikely. Positive values indicate that respondents who called the change likely outnumber the respondents who called it unlikely, while negative values indicate the opposite.

The results indicate that:

- The policies rated by the insiders panel as most likely to become law were the promotion of skilled trades or technical education, regulation of lead and/or copper in drinking water, and the expansion of brownfield tax credits for developers.
- Respondents also collectively rated five other policies as being more likely than unlikely to pass: parole, probation, and criminal justice reform; state employee benefits changes; Medicaid expansion reform or repeal; reform of the Emergency Financial Manager law; and changes to Prevailing Wage construction laws.
- Respondents collectively rated four policies as unlikely to pass: reductions in income tax rates, mental health reform, changes to the Earned Income Tax Credit, and student debt assistance for college graduates.

The list of federal-level policies is shown in Table 8, along with a summary of respondents’ perceptions of how likely each policy change is to be passed and signed into law. Once again, the policies are ranked in order from the most likely to occur to the least likely to occur, according to the collective opinions of the insiders panel.

Table 8. Perceived Likelihood of Particular Federal Policy Changes Passing by 2018

Policy	Mean Likelihood Rating ^a	Net Likelihood ^b (% Likely - % Unlikely)
Repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act	3.71	+ 50%
Reductions in legal immigration	3.67	+ 51%
Corporate tax overhaul	3.32	+ 25%
Reductions in individual income tax rates	3.12	+ 12%

^a Means are calculated on a five-point scale where 1 = “Very Unlikely” and 5 = “Very Likely”

^b Net Likelihood is calculated as the percentage of respondents who said the policy change was somewhat or very likely, minus the percentage of respondents who said it was somewhat or very unlikely. Positive values indicate that respondents who called the change likely outnumber the respondents who called it unlikely, while negative values indicate the opposite.

On all four items, insiders collectively rated the policy change more likely to occur than unlikely. The two most likely policy changes, according to their responses, are repealing and replacing the Affordable Car Act, and reducing legal immigration.

Section D. Assessment of People, Groups, and Media

Finally, the questionnaire included several items that asked respondents to evaluate particular public officials, groups, and media sources.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of respondents’ subjective assessment of President Donald Trump’s job performance, beside a comparison to the results of the same question asked about then-President Barack Obama on the fall 2016 wave of the MPIP panel survey.

Figure 6. President Trump Approval Rating, with Comparison to Obama 2016

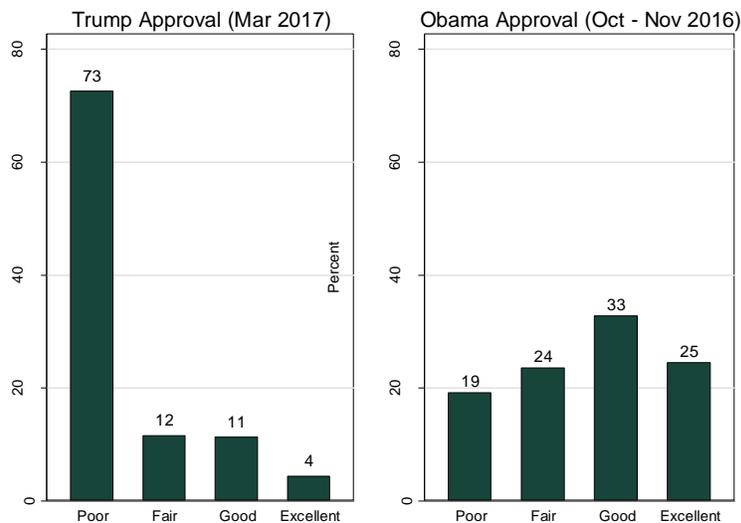


Figure 6 shows that the insiders panel expressed overwhelmingly negative opinions toward Trump’s job performance, with nearly three-fourths (73 percent) rating it “Poor” and just 15 percent rating it either “Good” or “Excellent.” This approval rating compares quite unfavorably to his predecessor, as most insiders (58 percent) had rated Obama either “Good” or “Excellent” last year, and just 19 percent rated his performance “Poor.”

Respondents were also asked about their emotional reactions to Donald Trump – in particular, how often he, because of the kind of person he is or because of something he has done, has made them feel angry, afraid, hopeful, and proud. Responses were indicated using a five-point scale ranging from “Never” to “Always.” The distributions of responses to these items are summarized in Table 9, along with a comparison to the responses of the United States general population, as measured in the 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES). In the table, the four emotions are ranked in order from the one respondents reported feeling toward Trump *most often* to the one they reported feeling *least often*.

Table 9. Emotions toward President Trump, with Comparison to US Mass Public

	Mean Rating ^a	% Always / Most of Time MPIP (MI Insiders)	% Always / Most of Time ANES (US Mass Public)	
			All Respondents	Graduate Degree
Angry	3.28	55%	42%	57%
Afraid	2.86	40%	40%	53%
Hopeful	1.76	11%	22%	13%
Proud	1.48	9%	15%	7%

^a Means are calculated on a five-point scale where 1 = “Never” and 5 = “Always”

Table 9 indicates that:

- Among the four emotions listed, insiders said Trump had made them feel *angry* most frequently, with 55 percent answering either “Always” or “Most of the Time”.
- Two-fifths (40 percent) of the insiders said Trump had made them feel *afraid* either “Always” or “Most of the Time,” making it the second most frequently reported emotion.
- Only about one-tenth (9 to 11 percent) of insiders said Trump had made them feel either *hopeful* or *proud* either “Always” or “Most of the Time,” making them the two least frequently reported emotions.
- The insiders’ rank order of emotions was identical to the rank order produced by the responses of the US general population, but insiders reported feeling angry *more frequently* and feeling hopeful or proud *less frequently* than did the mass public.
- The prevalence of anger, hope, and pride toward Trump among the most highly educated members of the mass public – those with graduate degrees – was very similar to those of the insiders panel (within two percentage points). However, they were even more likely (53 percent) to report feeling afraid either “Always” or “Most of the Time.”

In addition to their feelings about Donald Trump, respondents were also asked to evaluate the job performance of Governor Rick Snyder. Figure 7 shows the distribution of respondents’ subjective assessment of Snyder’s job performance, beside a comparison to the results of the same question asked about him on the fall 2016 wave of the MPIP panel survey.

Figure 7. Governor Snyder Approval Rating, with Comparison to Fall 2016

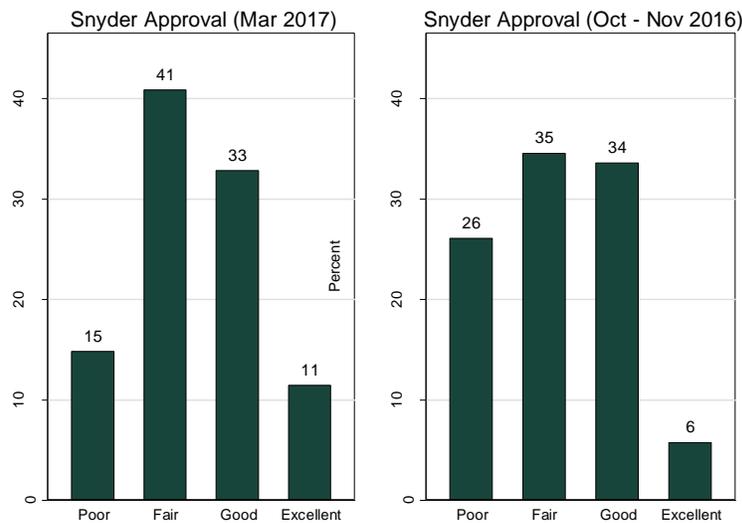


Figure 7 reflects a more favorable assessment of Governor Snyder, on average, than the insiders panel gave him last fall. They were more likely this round than they were last round to rate Snyder’s performance “Excellent” (11 percent, up from 6 percent) and less likely to rate it “Poor” (15 percent, down from 26 percent).

The performance evaluation questions for President Trump and Governor Snyder were also asked to a sample of local government officials in Michigan as part of the Michigan Public Policy Survey¹⁵, and to the general population of Michigan on the 74th State of the State Survey. The opinions expressed about each executive’s performance by all three of these populations are summarized in Table 10. The results indicate that State policy insiders rated Trump far more unfavorably than the other populations, and also made the largest distinction in evaluating Trump versus Snyder (i.e., a Net Approval of -70% for Trump compared to -12% for Snyder, whereas the other populations rated them similarly to one another, on average).

Table 10. Evaluations of Trump and Snyder, with Comparisons to Other Populations

Sample	Net Approval ^a	Mean ^b
Donald Trump		
MI state policy insiders (MPIP)	-70%	1.5
MI local government officials (MPPS)	-6%	2.2
MI mass public (SOSS)	-44%	1.9
Rick Snyder		
MI state policy insiders (MPIP)	-12%	2.4
MI local government officials (MPPS)	-4%	2.3
MI mass public (SOSS)	-41%	2.0

^a Net Approval is calculated as the percentage of respondents who evaluated the executives performance as “Excellent” or “Good,” minus the percentage of respondents who rated it “Fair” or “Poor.” Positive values indicate that respondents who rated the executive’s performance favorably outnumber the respondents who rated it unfavorably, while negative values indicate the opposite.

^b Means are calculated using a five-point scale where 1 = “Poor” and 4 = “Excellent”

¹⁵ For more information, see <http://closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey/>

Next, the questionnaire asked respondents to rate their feelings toward eight particular groups and individuals using a “feeling thermometer” scale commonly used by public opinion scholars.¹⁶ The scale is a measure that ranges from 0 to 100 and indicates how warmly (favorably) or coldly (unfavorably) the respondent feels toward a given person or group. Values above 50 indicate favorable feelings, and values below 50 indicate unfavorable feelings.

The eight people and groups respondents were asked to evaluate are listed in Table 11, along with the mean thermometer rating they assigned to each stimulus and a comparison to the ratings given by the United States general population, as measured in the 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES). In the table, the people and groups are ranked in order from the most positive feelings to the most negative feelings. The results indicate that:

- Insiders expressed *more favorable than unfavorable* attitudes, on average, toward the four demographic groups: Hispanics and Latinos, African Americans, Whites, and Muslims. The mean scores assigned to these groups all ranged between 67 and 75.
- Insiders expressed more unfavorable than favorable attitudes toward the four political figures and institutions: Hillary Clinton, the federal government in Washington, Congress, and Donald Trump. The mean scores assigned to these groups ranged between 26 and 45, with Trump receiving the lowest rating.
- Compared to the US general population, the policy insiders panel rated the three demographic minority groups and Hillary Clinton slightly *more favorably*, and rated whites, the federal government, Congress, and Donald Trump *less favorably*.
- Members of the mass public who have graduate degrees gave ratings that largely mirrored those given by the insiders panel, except the highly educated public rated Muslims *less favorably* and Hillary Clinton and Congress *more favorably*.

Table 11. Feeling Thermometer Ratings of Individuals and Groups

Person / Group	Mean Rating ^a MPIP (MI Insiders)	Mean Rating ^a ANES (US Mass Public)	Mean Rating ^a ANES (US Mass Public)
		All Respondents	Graduate Degree
Hispanics and Latinos	74.7	68.1	72.6
African Americans	74.5	68.5	74.3
Whites	69.8	71.4	71.7
Muslims	67.6	58.2	61.7
Hillary Clinton	44.5	42.2	51.6
Federal government in Washington	34.7	42.1 ^a	34.9 ^a
Congress	28.6	45.2	36.5
Donald Trump	26.4	36.6	24.1

^a Feeling thermometer scores range from 0 to 100 and indicate how favorably or unfavorably a respondent feels toward the person or group. Values above 50 correspond to favorable feelings, while values above 50 correspond to unfavorable feelings.

^b “The federal government in Washington” did not appear as a feeling thermometer item in the 2016 ANES. The scores shown are from 2012.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Wilcox, Clyde, Lee Sigelman, and Elizabeth Cook. (1989). “Some Like it Hot: Individual Differences in Responses to Group Feeling Thermometers.” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 53 (2): 246-257.

Finally, respondents were shown a list of 29 prominent local and national media sources – including print newspapers, television and radio programs, and online news outlets. Each respondent received the same list, but in a unique randomized order. For each source on the list, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they *trust* or *distrust* information coming from the source. A third option, “I am not familiar with this source,” was also provided. This battery of questions was based on a similar set of items from a 2014 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center.¹⁷

The responses to these items given by Michigan’s state policy insiders are summarized in Table 12. In the table, the 29 media sources are ranked in order from the most trusted to the least trusted. Net Trust (the percent who answered “Trust” minus the percent who answered “Distrust”) is shown for the full sample, and also broken down by the partisan affiliation respondents indicated in Round 1 of the MPIP panel survey.

The “Partisan Divide” column (the difference between Democratic Net Trust and Republican Net Trust) shows the extent to which respondents from the two political parties agree or disagree about the source’s trustworthiness. For instance, Net Trust for the Wall Street Journal among Republicans is 81 percent, and among Democrats it is 83 percent. Thus, the Partisan Divide is $D +2$ ($83 - 81 = 2$), indicating very little disagreement.

Table 12 indicates that:

- Overall, insiders reported more trust than distrust in 23 out of the 29 media sources. The sources insiders trust *most* are the Wall Street Journal, PBS, and BBC News. The sources insiders trust *least* are Fox News, the Sean Hannity Show, and the Rush Limbaugh Program.
- Insiders reported a high level of familiarity with the media outlets listed – for 16 out of the 29 outlets, over 90 percent of respondents considered themselves familiar enough to evaluate their trustworthiness. The sources with which insiders were *least* familiar were The Blaze, Info Wars, and The Guardian (between 32 and 48 percent familiar).
- Partisan Divides in trust were reasonably large for most media outlets (an average difference of 32 percentage points between the parties), with Democrats being more likely to trust 22 of the 29 sources.
- The most Democratic-leaning media sources – that is, the ones for which Democratic Net Trust most exceeded Republican Net Trust – with the strongest MSNBC, the New York Times, and the Daily Show. The most Republican-leaning sources were Fox News, the Drudge Report, and National Review.
- However, it is notable that for six of the seven Republican-leaning sources, Net Trust among Republican respondents was *negative* – indicating that even Republicans distrusted the source more than they trusted it. The exception was National Review, which had a Net Trust of +44 percent among Republicans. By comparison, Net Trust among Democrats was above +25 percent for every single Democrat-leaning source on the list.

¹⁷ For more information, see <http://www.journalism.org/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/>

Table 12. Insiders' Familiarity with and Trust in Media Sources, by Party Affiliation

Source	Familiarity ^a	Net Trust ^b				Partisan Divide ^c
		Total	Rep	Ind	Dem	
Wall Street Journal	98%	+ 82%	+ 81%	+ 88%	+ 83%	D +2
PBS	98%	+ 74%	+ 56%	+ 78%	+ 88%	D +32
BBC News	88%	+ 70%	+ 51%	+ 75%	+ 84%	D +33
NPR	98%	+ 69%	+ 49%	+ 76%	+ 84%	D +35
The Economist	74%	+ 59%	+ 53%	+ 67%	+ 60%	D +7
Detroit Free Press	97%	+ 57%	+ 38%	+ 66%	+ 73%	D +35
ABC News	96%	+ 56%	+ 33%	+ 60%	+ 74%	D +41
Time	95%	+ 56%	+ 36%	+ 60%	+ 70%	D +34
CBS News	97%	+ 55%	+ 31%	+ 59%	+ 72%	D +41
NBC News	98%	+ 53%	+ 28%	+ 55%	+ 74%	D +46
Bloomberg	79%	+ 53%	+ 47%	+ 59%	+ 59%	D +12
Washington Post	95%	+ 51%	+ 28%	+ 57%	+ 72%	D +44
New York Times	98%	+ 51%	+ 17%	+ 63%	+ 75%	D +58
Lansing State Journal	95%	+ 50%	+ 33%	+ 55%	+ 64%	D +31
CNN	98%	+ 44%	+ 20%	+ 47%	+ 69%	D +49
USA Today	94%	+ 43%	+ 32%	+ 47%	+ 48%	D +16
Politico	72%	+ 42%	+ 38%	+ 42%	+ 48%	D +10
National Review	62%	+ 25%	+ 44%	+ 24%	+ 16%	R +28
MSNBC	95%	+ 18%	- 14%	+ 18%	+ 47%	D +61
Last Week Tonight	56%	+ 17%	- 2%	+ 11%	+ 44%	D +46
The Guardian	48%	+ 16%	+ 8%	+ 11%	+ 28%	D +20
The Daily Show	75%	+ 10%	- 18%	+ 11%	+ 40%	D +58
Huffington Post	86%	+ 3%	- 21%	- 0%	+ 26%	D +47
The Blaze	32%	- 23%	- 16%	- 26%	- 26%	R +10
Drudge Report	61%	- 25%	- 5%	- 30%	- 37%	R +32
Info Wars	32%	- 29%	- 28%	- 28%	- 30%	R +2
Fox News	98%	- 45%	- 18%	- 55%	- 63%	R +45
Sean Hannity Show	80%	- 56%	- 40%	- 63%	- 66%	R +26
Rush Limbaugh Program	95%	- 69%	- 55%	- 75%	- 82%	R +27

^a "Familiarity" is calculated as 100% minus the percent who answered "I Am Not Familiar With This Source." Sources with over 90% familiarity are listed in **bold text**.

^b "Net Trust" is calculated as the percent who answered "Trust" minus the percent who answered "Distrust."

^c "Partisan Divide" is calculated as the *difference* between Net Trust among Democrats and Net Trust among Republicans. The letters D or R indicate the party with greater Net Trust in each source. Because Net Trust can range from -100% to +100% for each party, the Partisan Divide can theoretically range from R+200 to D+200.

In order to facilitate comparisons in media trust with the general population of the state of Michigan, the same questions appeared on the 74th State of the State Survey (SOSS) with 20 of the 29 media sources. The familiarity, net trust, and partisan divide of insiders and the mass public are compared in Table 13.

The results generally show that Michigan's policy insiders are *more* familiar, *more* trusting, and *less divided* by partisan affiliation when it comes to media sources. In particular:

- State policy insiders reported a *higher* level of familiarity with all 20 outlets that appeared on both surveys.
- The mass-elite differences in familiarity were *largest* with regards to The Economist (34 points higher for insiders), NPR (31 percentage points higher), and Politico (29 points higher). The differences were *smallest* for Info Wars (3 points higher), Fox News (3 points higher), and ABC News (4 points higher),
- Policy insiders reported a *higher* level of net trust in 16 of the 20 outlets that appeared on both surveys, with the exceptions (i.e., those trusted more by the mass public than by insiders) being Drudge Report, Info Wars, Fox News, and the Sean Hannity Show.
- The mass-elite differences in net trust were *largest* for The Economist (41 points higher for insiders), Politico (40 points higher for insiders), and the Wall Street Journal (36 points higher). The differences were *smallest* for MSNBC (2 points higher), the Huffington Post (5 points higher), and USA Today (6 points higher for insiders).
- The general population displayed a *greater* partisan divide with regards to 17 of the 20 outlets, with the exceptions (i.e., those for which the partisan divide was larger among insiders) being National Review, Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, and The Guardian.
- The mass elite-differences in the size of the partisan divide were *largest* with regards to CNN (59 points larger for the mass public), Fox News (46 points larger), and MSNBC (46 points larger). These differences were *smallest* for Drudge Report (1 point larger), The Economist (6 points larger), and the Wall Street Journal (9 points larger).

Table 13. Summary of Trust in Media Sources, with Comparison to MI Mass Public

	Familiarity ^a		Overall Net Trust ^b		Partisan Divide ^c	
	Insiders	MI Mass Public	Insiders	MI Mass Public	Insiders	MI Mass Public
Wall Street Journal	98%	71%	+ 82%	+46%	D +2	D +11
NPR	98%	67%	+ 69%	+36%	D +35	D +47
The Economist	74%	40%	+ 59%	+18%	D +7	D +13
Detroit Free Press	97%	79%	+ 57%	+40%	D +35	D +52
ABC News	96%	92%	+ 56%	+35%	D +41	D +79
Time	95%	88%	+ 56%	+42%	D +34	D +54
CBS News	97%	88%	+ 55%	+40%	D +41	D +80
New York Times	98%	76%	+ 51%	+23%	D +58	D +89
CNN	98%	92%	+ 44%	+12%	D +49	D +108
USA Today	94%	81%	+ 43%	+37%	D +16	D +51
Politico	72%	43%	+ 42%	+2%	D +10	D +41
National Review	62%	35%	+ 25%	+2%	R +28	R +9
MSNBC	95%	89%	+ 18%	+16%	D +61	D +107
Last Week Tonight	56%	36%	+ 17%	+2%	D +46	D +25
The Guardian	48%	38%	+ 16%	+2%	D +20	D +10
Huffington Post	86%	61%	+ 3%	-2%	D +47	D +63
Drudge Report	61%	33%	- 25%	-5%	R +32	R +33
Info Wars	32%	29%	- 29%	-17%	R +2	R +15
Fox News	98%	95%	- 45%	-13%	R +45	R +91
Sean Hannity Show	80%	54%	- 56%	-22%	R +26	R +51

^a "Familiarity" is calculated as 100% minus the percent who answered "I Am Not Familiar With This Source." Sources with over 90% familiarity are listed in **bold text**.

^b "Net Trust" is calculated as the percent who answered "Trust" minus the percent who answered "Distrust."

^c "Partisan Divide" is calculated as the *difference* between Net Trust among Democrats and Net Trust among Republicans. The letters D or R indicate the party with greater Net Trust in each source. Because Net Trust can range from -100% to +100% for each party, the Partisan Divide can theoretically range from R+200 to D+200.