

Survey finds most local leaders want residents engaged, but see limits

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(Phys.org) —Most local government leaders in Michigan believe residents should provide input into policymaking, but relatively few think they should be deeply involved, according to a University of Michigan survey.

Nearly two thirds (64 percent) of Michigan's local leaders said residents should provide some input, while 17 percent say residents should simply stay informed about policy issues, according to the poll by U-M's Ford School of Public Policy.

Relatively few local leaders believe residents should get deeply involved, such as by recommending specific [policy choices](#) (9 percent), identifying [policy options](#) from which officials would choose (7 percent) or by making decisions on behalf of the local government (1 percent).

The poll, part of the Michigan Public [Policy Survey](#) series at the Ford School's Center for Local, State, and [Urban Policy](#), reports:

- A majority of local leaders (53 percent) believe their jurisdictions offer "a great deal of opportunities for their citizens to engage in local governance activities."
- Just 10 percent of local officials say their citizens are very engaged, 55 percent say they are somewhat engaged and 34 percent say residents are not very or at all engaged.
- About two thirds (64 percent) say their understanding of residents' views has increased and 62 percent believe the quality

of their decisions has increased as a result of fostering engagement.

"While we found that many local government leaders don't think residents should make decisions for the government in normal circumstances, that changes when it comes to controversial issues," said Thomas Ivacko, CLOSUP administrator and program manager. "When it comes to hot-button issues, the percentage of local leaders who believe [residents](#) should make the final decision for the government increases markedly to 24 percent."

The study, conducted October-December 2012, involved surveys sent via hardcopy and the Internet to top elected and appointed officials in all counties, cities, villages and townships in Michigan. A total of 1,328 jurisdictions returned valid surveys, resulting in a 72-percent response rate. The survey had a margin of error of 1.43 percentage points either way.

More information: closup.umich.edu/michigan-publ...l-government-leaders

Provided by University of Michigan

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