Detroit Metropolitan Area Communities Study

An innovative survey tool provided by the University of Michigan to support local community development decisions with reliable data on the life outcomes and views of Detroit metro residents

The Need: Data-driven Community Engagement

The unprecedented reinvestment effort occurring in the Detroit metropolitan area has given renewed urgency to familiar questions over how communities should make use of scarce resources to bring about positive change. Now more than ever, there is a need for reliable, inclusive, and up-to-date public opinion data on how Detroiters feel about the breakneck changes happening in their communities and the impact they have on their lives.

To address this challenge, the University of Michigan (U-M) has been working in consultation with more than 80 community stakeholders to implement the Detroit Metropolitan Area Communities Study, (DMACS) an innovative place-based, online survey tool that provides high-quality information on how Detroit residents feel about the most pressing social and economic issues they face.

With DMACS, community stakeholders and government officials will have access to up-to-date and relevant public opinion data on the perceptions and priorities of the people they serve. By monitoring trends in public opinion, community stakeholders can make better informed decisions about where future investments will have the greatest impact.

Central to conversations about the future of Detroit are questions about who benefits from changes to the city. DMACS offers a data-driven approach to answering these questions by providing reliable information on the opinions of the numerous diverse groups that call the Detroit metropolitan area home. With this information in hand, decision-makers can make evidence-based assessments about the equity impacts of local decisions.

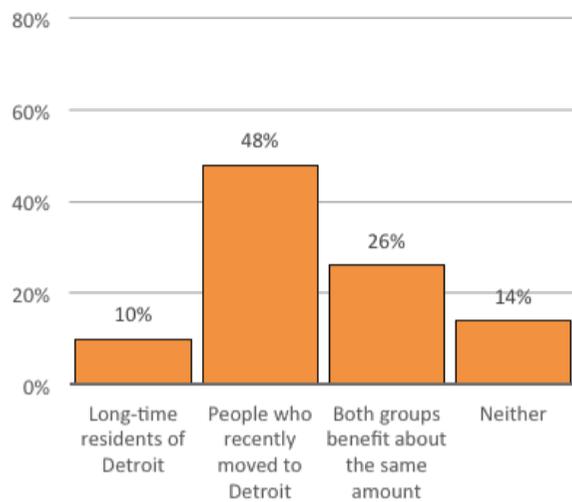### Addressing the Problem: Highlights from Wave 1 of DMACS

Despite the numerous issues facing local decision-makers, no opinion surveys are dedicated to answering questions relevant to the issues facing Detroit metro residents. DMACS fills in these gaps by providing a deep-dive assessment of what priorities metro area residents have for the future, how they are feeling about their quality of life, and whether they believe their communities are benefiting from regional investments.

With the first wave of DMACS completed in 2016, we have initial answers to some of these questions.

Few believe investments in Downtown and Midtown Detroit benefit long-time residents

% who say that ___ benefit from the investments being made in Downtown and Midtown Detroit.

Long-time residents of Detroit: 10%
People who recently moved to Detroit: 48%
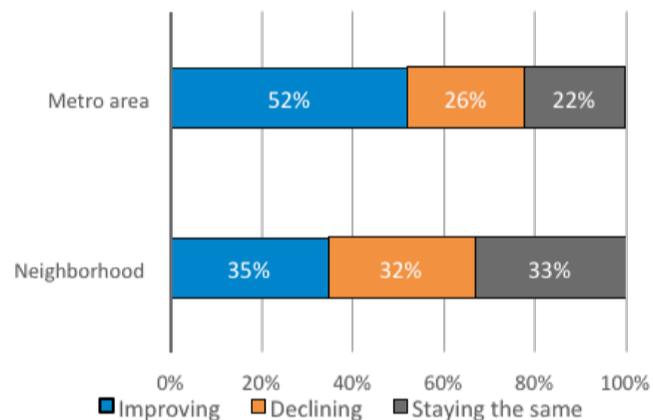Both groups benefit about the same amount: 26%
Neither: 14%

In the past decade, local groups have raised concerns about whether long-time residents are benefiting from the investments made in Detroit after the Great Recession. According to the first wave of DMACS conducted in the Fall 0f 2016, most Detroit area residents believe these investments benefit recent movers to the area (48%) with less than one-tenth indicating that long-time residents are benefiting (10%).

Despite feeling that long-term residents are not benefiting from investments in Downtown and Midtown, a majority of residents believe that the quality of life in the greater metro area is improving (52%). Around a quarter, (26%) however, believe quality of life is on the decline and when asked about the state of their own neighborhood, only a little more than one-third (35%) see improvements.

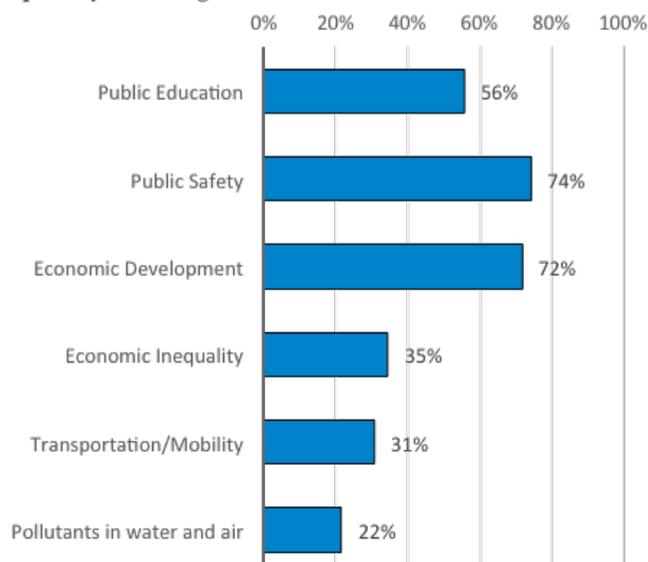**Majority find quality of life improving in the Detroit metro area**

% who say that quality of life in the metro Detroit area/ neighboorhood is ___

Metro area: Improving 52%, Declining 26%, Staying the same 22%
Neighborhood: Improving 35%, Declining 32%, Staying the same 33%

Nearly two-thirds of Detroiters listed public safety and economic development as their top priorities

% of Detroit metro area adults who listed _ as a top 3 priority for change

Public Education: 56%
Public Safety: 74%
Economic Development: 72%
Economic Inequality: 35%
Transportation/Mobility: 31%
Pollutants in water and air: 22%

Moving forward, Detroit residents identified public safety (74%), economic development (72%) and public education (56%) as their top three priorities for change. In contrast, issues that have recently received attention at the national level such as water pollution and economic inequality were listed as one of the top three priorities by fewer than a third of respondents.

As federal attention has been given to reforming childcare and healthcare, it's important for Michigan policymakers to know where Detroit metropolitan areas stand on these issues. When asked whether government investments in childcare and health insurance should change, more than 8 out of 10 metro Detroit residents indicated that government should increase spending on helping people pay for childcare (83%) and health insurance (82%).

Majority favor increases in government spending to help people afford childcare and health insurance

% who say that goverment spending to help pay for health insurance/childcare should ___

Increase	Child Care 83% / Health insurance 82%
No change	Child Care 13% / Health insurance 10%
Decrease	Child Care 4% / Health insurance 8%

Child Care ■ Health insurance ■
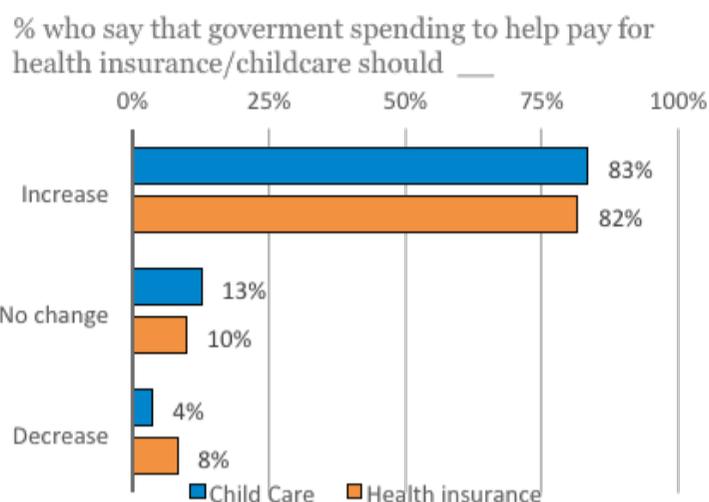
Future Plans

DMACS brings together the world-class survey expertise of U-M experts alongside the rich knowledge of community leaders to produce scientifically valid and publicly relevant opinion data representing the Detroit Metropolitan area. Central to DMACS innovative methodology is the combination of these two sets of knowledge to produce a survey that is inclusive, relevant, and scientifically valid.

Traditional survey methods struggle to reach underrepresented groups. DMACS addresses this problem through the use of multiple methods of contact to meet people where they are and through the use of an online platform that makes it easy to survey and gather responses in real time. In the first two waves collected so far, the DMACS team has already surveyed a representative sample of over 700 City of Detroit residents. In June of 2017, the DMACS team is piloting a community-based survey collection model to increase the diversity of participants while strengthening the sustainability of the project.

Numerous surveys face biases that result from faulty survey design. With DMACS, traditional survey issues such as these are tackled by the group of experts at U-M, who have extensive expertise ensuring that surveys are representative and reliable from year to year. As survey responses come in, the DMACS team constantly analyzes the data and makes adjustments as needed to ensure that the DMACS survey accurately captures the views of residents in the Detroit metro area.

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