

**Michiganders
expect more
investment in
children.**



“What Michiganders Want”

***Public Opinion Poll Results
for Child and Family Advocates
Seeking Change***

November 2021

**Michigan's
Children**

*Public policy
in the best interest
of children*

 **THE
SKILLMAN
FOUNDATION**



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What Michiganders Want: Investments in Children

Frequently Asked Questions

How was the poll conducted? What is significant about its findings?

Michigan's Children, working with The Skillman Foundation, commissioned a telephone poll of 800 likely 2022 General Election voters to gauge public opinion around their concerns and priorities related to Michigan's 2 million children, including the impact of the pandemic. Lake Research Partners conducted the poll from July 27 – August 3, 2021. It has a margin of error rate of +/- (up or down) 3.46 percent.

The poll found a strong majority of Michiganders said they are willing to support greater investments in children and youth and would even raise taxes to get there. **Nearly two-thirds of respondents – or 62 percent – said they would support greater investments in children, and 58 percent said they would support greater investments even if it meant raising taxes.** These findings were supported in every region of the state. They are as popular in outstate Michigan as in urban areas.

What were voters' top concerns around the well-being and prospects of Michigan children?

An overwhelming majority of voters said they were concerned about children **falling behind in school** because of the pandemic (87 percent); children living in households that **struggle to afford basic needs** (82 percent); **exposure to trauma** that children experience in their homes and neighborhoods (81 percent); children struggling with **mental health issues** such as depression, anxiety, ADHD, PTSD (79 percent); children **not getting the learning supports they need to succeed** (78 percent); and children falling behind in school because of **barriers preventing** them from regularly attending school (76 percent).

There was no partisan divide in how voters viewed the pandemic's interruption on children's learning. Democrats and Republicans were equally concerned about learning loss.

Other areas of concern focused on increased **homelessness and foster care** (75 percent); **uninsured children** not receiving health care (70 percent); **the lack of child care** and early childhood education (73 percent); and **the lack of opportunities** for youth to build real-world success skills.

In which areas of need did voters say they favor making greater investments?

Voters said they would support a wide array of specific programs and services in order to help children and youth succeed in school and life. The most popular areas of investment were: **jobs and skills training programs** and community colleges (85 percent); **out-of-school time** (afterschool) programs and experiences for older youth providing **career exposure and skill-building** (86 percent); and programs focused on **improving children's mental health** (83 percent).

How do Michiganders say life could be better for kids with greater investment?

Michiganders raised a number of positive outcomes that could stem from greater investments in children. The top items were: **fewer children will experience abuse or neglect** (92 percent); children will become **better prepared for the workforce** (92 percent); the number of children involved in the **juvenile justice system will decrease** (85 percent); children's **mental health** will improve (87 percent); and **economic and racial inequity** will be reduced.

Why did Michigan's Children and The Skillman Foundation commission the poll?

As advocates focused on children's issues across the state of Michigan, we were eager to learn how Michiganders viewed the **effects of the pandemic on the state's children and families, areas of greatest concern**, and where they **avored making investments** to help overcome challenges. We agreed that advocates, policymakers, and future office-seekers would find this information useful.

How can the poll results instruct advocates for kids and families, and policymakers?

For advocates, the poll results may serve as **encouraging news for the changes they seek** to improve the lives of children and youth in our state. We hope that candidates preparing to run for office in 2022 use this information to inform their own platforms. For Michigan policymakers today, this data can be used to make decisions on the best use of millions in federal COVID-relief dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act and other measures. While the state Legislature and Governor recently approved the FY2022 state spending plan with significant new federal resources from pandemic relief, including \$1.4 billion for child care, there are still millions left on the table that policymakers will take up in supplemental bills this fall. Their decisions can be informed by these poll results.

How can the poll results inform those considering future public investment campaigns?

Public Progress President Todd Patterson, in working with Michigan's Children, The Skillman Foundation, and Lake Research Partners, opined that Michigan's uniquely strong poll results bode well for future public funding "asks" statewide or locally. "The findings in this poll were remarkable, and that's no exaggeration," Patterson said on Michigan's Children's [Speaking for Kids podcast](#) (Sept. 28, 2021). "It's really a great time to take action and pursue that greater investment in children and youth." When stacked up against other similar state polls across the country, he continued, Michigan's poll results line up similarly with national polls with one major difference. That is, Michigan voters feel more strongly about investing in kids as viewed by the "intensity of the results," compared to other parts of the country. Moreover, he said Republican and Democratic Michiganders are more in agreement on greater public investment in kids than their counterparts anywhere else nationally.

Who are the most trusted people for making investments in kids?

The poll asked respondents to identify who they trust the most to make the best decisions for directing resources aimed at kids. Among those who earned the public's trust were (in order) parents, schools, nonprofits, and community-based organizations, such as the YMCA. They were followed by local governments and churches. Patterson told Michigan's Children's President & CEO Matt Gillard on the recent Speaking for Kids podcast that local ballot initiatives and millages should not be overlooked in considering ways to invest public dollars in kids. "Keeping it local could be very successful and should not be discounted," he said.

How can we learn more about the opinions of voters in specific geographic areas?

Contact Michigan's Children to arrange a more detailed discussion about poll reports, to request a guided discussion and presentation, or with other specific questions. Feel free to contact Teri Banas, Director of Communications and Media Outreach, at teri@michiganschildren.org



Key Messages and Talking Points

Introduction: Michigan's Children created the following messages and talking points to help advocates communicate with policymakers and other influencers on the value that Michigan voters place on investing public funds in children and youth, particularly as we work to overcome challenges wrought by the pandemic.

Michigan Voters Demand Investing in Kids be a Priority. New Opinion Poll Finds

Across all geographies and demographics, voters expect their dollars to be put to work to help Michigan children lead healthy, productive lives. **Greater investments** are needed to address inequities, and to help children and families overcome the ill-effects of the continuing COVID pandemic.

- Michiganders spoke loudly **in favor of increased resources for kids** in a statewide public opinion poll of 800 likely 2022 General Elections voters. It was commissioned by Michigan's Children and The Skillman Foundation and conducted in July/August 2021.
- **Nearly two-thirds – or 62 percent** – of voters surveyed said we must invest more in children and young people – and **54 percent said** they would support increased investments **even if it meant raising taxes**.
- The findings were supported in **every region of the state**. They're as popular in outstate Michigan as in urban areas.

Pandemic Raises Voters' Worries over Kids' Challenges and the State's Prosperity

COVID has had a heavy impact on children in Michigan. It has disrupted children's learning, and further exasperating the traditional stress and anxiety of growing up. In the poll results, 87 percent of respondents listed as a top concern students **falling behind in school** because of the pandemic; and 79 percent said inadequate support for **kids' mental health** was also top of mind.

Where Investments Should be Made

Voters see opportunities to address the struggles children and youth face today and improve their future prospects if we invest in the following key areas:

- Out-of-school (afterschool) programs that expose them to career information and skill building;
- Job and skills training programs;
- Programs to improve mental health;
- Programs to reduce the number of youth in the criminal justice system;
- Programs that increase children's safety and security;
- Out-of-school time (afterschool) programs that provide quality child care and enrichment;
- More affordable quality child care for working families.

The Future Improves with More Investments in Michigan's Kids

Voters said they envision several key outcomes improving if greater investments are made in kids. They are:

- Fewer children will experience abuse or neglect;
- Children will be better prepared for the work force and a successful future;
- Michigan's economy will improve;
- The number of youth in the juvenile justice system will decrease;
- Kids' mental health will improve;
- Economic and racial inequity will be reduced.

What Michiganders Want: Investments in Children



Sample Letter to Policymakers

Dear *(Name of Lawmaker, Local Elected)*:

I am *(parent, service provider, civic or community leader)* and very concerned about the effects the pandemic has had on the lives of Michigan children and youth. Unless we take continued action to support their needs and development, I am worried that the challenges they face will deeply impact their future life success and undercut our state's prosperity. Because of this, I strongly support increasing state and federal public resources to begin closing service gaps that help our children thrive, and urge you to do likewise. Their futures – and our collective future as Michiganders – depend on it.

Public support for greater investment in our children's wellbeing is strong. A new report by Michigan's Children and The Skillman Foundation demonstrates that nearly two-thirds of likely general election voters (among over 800 surveyed statewide) said they want to see more public funding invested in overcoming the challenges of the pandemic. Surprisingly, nearly 60 percent even said they would even raise taxes to help our kids and youth. These findings rang true across the state, among rural and urban voters, and across racial, ethnic and economic lines.

We know there's a lot of work that needs to be done to better prepare our young people for the workforce, improve mental health, decrease youths' involvement in the juvenile justice system, support families with high-quality and accessible child cares, and provide more afterschool and out-of-school time experiences to give kids a solid foundation for adulthood. Voters cited all of these issues and more as demanding greater public investment.

Please let public opinion guide you when you consider prioritizing state and federal funds to address solutions. There are still millions of unallocated federal COVID-relief dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act and other measures, and millions more to be acted on in supplemental bills in the state Legislature. With your support, we can make a difference in how our children and youth emerge from this pandemic and move toward a future that's brighter for all of us. We're counting on you.

Sincerely,

Signature line and contact information



Sample Social Media Posts

Voter Support for Investing in Kids

@MichChildren's & @SkillmanFound's poll of voter attitudes discovered 62% of Michiganders say we must invest more in our kids & youth. We agree. Learn more: <https://tinyurl.com/9dy4ft7f>

Michigan residents believe so strongly in the need to invest more in children that 58% support it even if it means raising taxes. Learn more: <https://tinyurl.com/9dy4ft7f>

Pandemic's Impact on Kids

The last 18 months have been hard on our children. A new poll from @MichChildren's identifies voters' "Top Concerns" for our children. Let's invest in our kids & make a brighter future.
<https://www.michiganschildren.org/mikids/>

In addition to disrupted learning, the pandemic has weighed on children's mental health, further exacerbating the traditional stress and anxiety of growing up. Learn more: <https://www.michiganschildren.org/mikids/>

Areas of Investment

An overwhelming number of Michiganders who vote realize children need more support. A new @MichChildren's poll listed areas of preferred investment. Let your policy-makers know you support #InvestingInKids!
<https://www.michiganschildren.org/mikids/>

We need to invest more in MI's kids – #skills training, #mental health, #afterschool, #childcare, & keeping kids out of the criminal justice system – voters say. Let's build support at home & statewide.
<https://www.michiganschildren.org/mikids/>

To improve prospects for MI's youth, voters demand greater investments – even raising taxes – for #skills-training, #afterschool, #mental health, improved safety and security, quality #childcare, & fewer youth involved in the criminal justice system. <https://www.michiganschildren.org/mikids/>



Newsletter Brief

Michigan Voters Want More Investments in Children, Youth – Survey Says

In its recent poll of 800 statewide voters, [Michigan's Children](#) and [The Skillman Foundation](#) found strong support across all geographic and demographics for greater public funding for programs that help children and youth. High on their list of areas for improved funding? **Career exposure (Jobs and skills training), mental health, preventing youth involvement in the criminal justice system, afterschool programs and child care.** Nearly two-thirds (62%) of likely general election voters said they expect their dollars to be put to work to help children and youth lead healthy, productive lives, with 58% saying they would even raise taxes to support increasing investments, according to the poll conducted by Lake Partners Research.

The findings were shared at a session of the Detroit Chamber of Commerce Mackinac Policy Conference, “What Michiganders Want: Investments in Children,” in September. “It’s one thing to say investing in kids is great,” said Angelique Power, President & CEO of The Skillman Foundation. “It’s another when you say, Yes, you can raise my taxes. That was shocking to me.” Said Michigan’s Children’s President & CEO Matt Gillard: “I hope that we can build from this survey and on the work of others to say how we can make these changes happen across Michigan.”

[Watch the replay here.](#) Access other information about the poll through [Michigan’s Children website](#). Read the commentary, “Michigan Supports Funding for our Children’s Future,” written by The Skillman Foundation for The Detroit News [here](#).

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Sample Graphic Elements



Instagram



Main social

Top Concerns

Kids falling behind in school because of the pandemic



Kids living in households that struggle to afford basic needs



Exposure to trauma in homes & communities



Kids' mental health



Not every kid getting the learning supports they need



Percentage that say it is a problem

Where should investments be made?

Career exposure, job training, and skill building



Programs to improve kids' mental health



Programs that reduce the number of youth in the criminal justice system



More affordable childcare



Expanded learning time



Percentage that support increased public investment in proposed area

Michiganders expect more investment in children.

Across every region of our state.



Michiganders expect more investment in children.

62% support



Michiganders expect more investment in children.

Even if it raises their taxes.

58% support



What the future looks like with more investment in children

Outcomes deemed most important by voters:



Fewer children will experience abuse or neglect



The number of youth in the juvenile justice system will decrease



Children will be better prepared for the workforce & a successful future



Kids' mental health will improve



Michigan's economy will improve



Economic & racial inequity will be reduced

What the future looks like with more investment in children



Fewer children will experience abuse or neglect

What the future looks like with more investment in children



Children will be better prepared for the workforce & a successful future

What the future looks like with more investment in children



Michigan's economy will improve

What the future looks like with more investment in children



Kids' mental health will improve

What the future looks like with more investment in children



Economic & racial inequity will be reduced

What the future looks like with more investment in children



The number of youth in the juvenile justice system will decrease

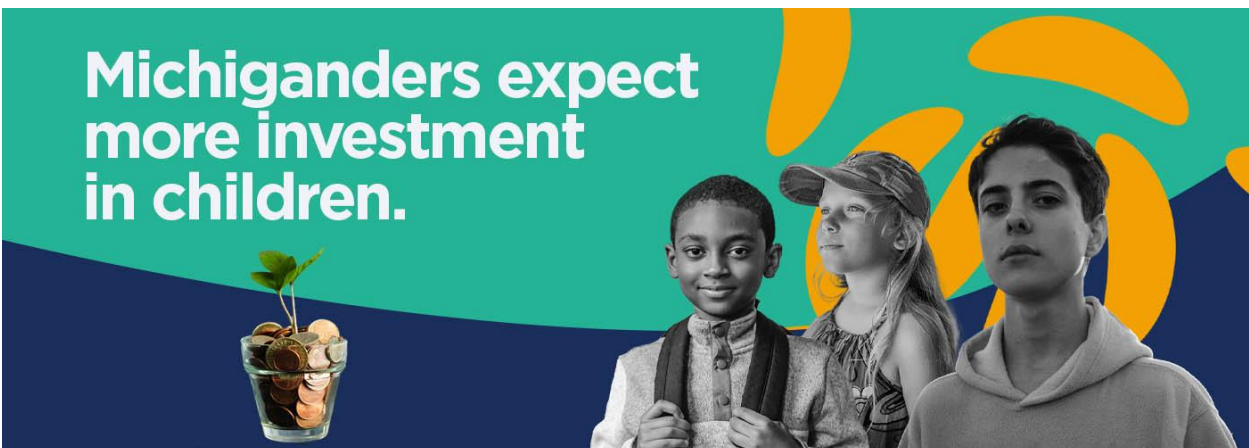
Other Resources

Podcast Guests Discuss Voter Desire to Invest in Michigan Kids

(Sept. 28, 20021) Michigan voters say we must invest in children. In the newest episode of **Michigan's Children Speaking for Kids**, host **Matt Gillard** leads an important conversation on the results of a new statewide public opinion poll that finds Michigan voters strongly support greater investments in the state's 2 million children, even if it means raising taxes. Matt's guests are **Todd Patterson**, president of the Washington, D.C. strategic planning firm, Public Progress, and **Patrick Brown**, Executive Director, Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education. [Listen to an audio version of the podcast here.](#)



[Access 10-slide Graphic Report, "Michiganders expect more investment in children"](#)



[What Michiganders Want: Investments in Children](#)

Watch the video-recorded discussion about the survey results taken at the 2021 Mackinac Policy Conference this fall. [Click here](#) and access the hour-long talk between Michigan's Children's President & CEO Matt Gillard and The Skillman Foundation's President & CEO Angelique Power. It's available on YouTube.



If you would like a presentation tailored to your group's advocacy needs, contact Michigan's Children by calling or emailing Communications Director Teri Banas at (517) 256-0174, or teri@michiganschildren.org.

Michigan Voters Demand Greater Investments in Children and Youth

New Statewide Opinion Poll Issued by The Skillman Foundation and Michigan's Children Finds Strong Public Support to Address Needs

(Sept. 20, 2021) – Nearly two-thirds of Michiganders say they would support increasing public funding for children and youth to counter inequities and the effects of pandemic-related ills, including disrupted learning and impaired mental health (anxiety, depression, ADHD), according to findings of a new poll commissioned by The Skillman Foundation and Michigan's Children.

The survey of 800 likely general election voters across every region in the state revealed deep concerns for children's economic security, health care, mental health, and safety with overwhelming voter support to pay for programs that help youth lead healthy, productive lives. Among those top of mind for voters: preschool and child care, afterschool programs, jobs and skills training, and programs aimed at reducing juvenile justice involvement.

The poll was conducted by Lake Research Partners from July 27 to Aug. 3. It showed that 62 percent of respondents backed increased funding for children. The poll has a margin of error (up or down) of 3.46 percent. Principals discussed its findings and implications for future child advocacy campaigns at the Detroit Regional Chamber's Mackinac Policy Conference on Monday (4 p.m. EST). They included Angelique Power, president & CEO of The Skillman Foundation; Matt Gillard, president & CEO of Michigan's Children; and Celinda Lake, president of Lake Research Partners. (Media interviews are welcomed. The session was streamed online at detroitchamber.com.)

"This is a moment for Michigan," Power said. "Despite polarizing times, Michiganders across race, ethnicity, gender, economics, and geography are loudly saying We Must All Invest in Children. To me, this isn't a request, it's a full-throated mandate."

Voters said they would favor greater state investments to help the state's two million children and youth overcome challenges in educational pursuits, health and well-being, trauma and poverty--even it means raising taxes. Fifty-eight percent of voters from across all regions and demographics said they would vote to raise their taxes in order to help improve the lives and future prospects of Michigan's children.

"The important connection to make is that voters can envision a brighter future for our state and Michigan's economic prosperity if we start making wise investments in the next generation of citizens today," Gillard said. "This is a message ringed with urgency and hope to improve prospects and outcomes for all Michigan's children. That means fewer children experiencing abuse or neglect, children better equipped for the workforce, fewer numbers of youth involved in the juvenile justice system, improved mental health, and greater economic and racial equity."

Those surveyed offered strong clarity in where investments should be made, too. Voters said they would strongly support or somewhat support improved resources in: jobs and skills training programs (85 percent); programs that improve mental health (83 percent); programs that reduce numbers of youth in the criminal justice system (82 percent); afterschool programs that provide quality childcare and enrichment (81 percent); programs that increase children's safety and security (78 percent); and more affordable quality childcare for working families (78 percent).

"Increasing funding for children and young people is the majority position for Michigan voters—across the board. With significant concerns over learning losses, mental health, and falling behind because of barriers that prevent them from regularly attending school, we expect child advocates and legislators will use this valuable information to address the children's issues that have the greatest public will behind them—and which issues must require further and immediate advocacy to build awareness and support," Celinda Lake said.

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[The Skillman Foundation](#) is a private philanthropy that serves as a fierce champion of Detroit children. The Foundation works to ensure Detroit youth achieve their highest aspirations by strengthening K-12 public education, afterschool learning opportunities, and college and career pathways. It's served as a voice for children since 1960.

[Michigan's Children](#) is an independent voice working to reduce disparities in child outcomes from cradle through career through policy change. It has served to improve the odds for all children and families in Michigan for more than 25 years.