

Health & Risk Communication Center

College of Communication Arts & Sciences

<http://hrcc.cas.msu.edu/>

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Healthy People-Healthy Planet Poll Detailed Announcement

Healthy People-Healthy Planet Poll: Michigan Residents' Concern about Climate Change Increases

For a second straight year, a majority of Michigan residents surveyed are more concerned about the risks of climate change than the risks associated with policies to address climate change. In addition, almost half of respondents think that Line 5 should be removed, and the vast majority thinks that the state should take action about algae blooms. Results are from a recent Healthy People-Healthy Planet (or HPSquare) Poll; a representative online poll of 1,000 Michigan residents led by Michigan State University's Health & Risk Communication Center (HRCC).

"These new results reinforce and deepen our understanding of how Michigan residents feel about the environment," said study lead Daniel Bergan, associate professor in MSU's Department of Communication. "People care about economic development, but not at the expense of environmental quality."

When asked, "Which of these statements comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right: Protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth to some extent OR Economic growth should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent;" 67 percent said that the environment should be given priority. This is an increase from 59 percent when a similar question was asked in the spring of 2017, also from the HRCC. Responses to this question differ starkly by vote choice: 90 percent of people who reported voting for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election said that the environment should be given priority, versus only 41 percent among those who reported voting for Donald Trump.

The survey also asked about issues particular to the Great Lakes and Michigan. The survey explained that "Line 5 is an oil pipeline that runs under the Straits of Mackinaw near the Mackinac Bridge, between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. A recent study calculates that an oil spill resulting from damage to Line 5 could cost more than 6 billion dollars. A state-contracted study finds that removing Line 5 would cost about \$200 million and the cost of gasoline at the pump in Michigan could rise by about 2 cents per gallon. Alternatively, the Canadian company Enbridge that pumps oil through Line 5 has raised the possibility of encasing the pipeline in a tunnel that Enbridge estimates could cost \$500 million and take years to complete. Based on what you know about this issue, do you think Line 5 should be removed from the Great Lakes, should it continue to operate as is, or should it continue to operate while a tunnel is constructed?" A plurality (46 percent) responded that Line 5 should be removed. Another question concerned policies to deal with algae blooms. A brief introductory paragraph explained that a rise in algae blooms in lakes kill aquatic life, harm fisheries, and contaminate safe drinking water supplies, and that algae blooms are caused by phosphorus from agricultural fertilizer that washes into

rivers and lakes. Respondents were then asked “Do you think that the state of Michigan should require that farmers adopt practices-such as planting ‘cover crops’ to reduce erosion, installing more efficient irrigation systems, or using low-phosphorus fertilizer- that result in less fertilizer run-off into the Great Lakes, or do you think that farmers should be allowed to decide for themselves how to deal with fertilizer run-off.” A large majority (79%) favored having the state of Michigan do something about algae blooms.

Similar to the question about climate change, responses to the questions more specific to Michigan and the Great Lakes were related to vote choice. Almost all Clinton voters (89%) supported Michigan doing something to deal with algae blooms, versus 71% of Trump voters. Almost two thirds (63%) of Clinton voters favor shutting down Line 5, versus only about one quarter (26%) of Trump supporters.

Professor Maria Lapinski is director of the HRCC. “Even with the big difference by how people voted, we’re seeing a consistent attitude about the importance of the Great Lakes to people who live here,” she said. “And similar public opinion results have been reported from Illinois residents.”

Carefully designed and weighted opt-in internet panels can provide results that accurately reflect characteristics of the population. Recent studies comparing results from a YouGov online survey and a traditional phone survey with a random-digit dialing sample have found that the two methods produce similar estimates (Ansolabehere & Schaffner, 2014). YouGov weighted individuals by age, gender, race and ethnicity, years of education, voter registration status, and vote choice in the 2016 presidential election to reflect the population of Michigan adults. The survey was in the field from August 3-21, 2018.

References

Ansolabehere, S., & Schaffner, B. F. (2014). Does Survey Mode Still Matter? Findings from a 2010 Multi-Mode Comparison. *Political Analysis*, 22(3), 285-303.

Table 1: Michigan State University Health & Risk Communication Center Survey Results, Summer 2018	
<i>Survey Question</i>	<i>Reponses (%)</i>
Protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth to some extent	67
Economic growth should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent	33
Line 5 should be removed from the Great Lakes	46
Line 5 should continue to operate as is	19
Line 5 should be encased in a Tunnel	35
Michigan should require that farmers adopt practices that result in less fertilizer run-off	79
Farmers should be allowed to decide for themselves how to deal with fertilizer run-off.	21
<i>Results from an online panel survey of 1,000 Michigan adults fielded by YouGov. Survey in the field from August 3-August 21, 2018. Margin of error approximately +/-4%.</i>	

Table 2: Support for Policies by 2016 Presidential Election Vote Choice		
<i>Survey Question</i>	<i>Clinton Voters (%)</i>	<i>Trump Voters (%)</i>
Protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth to some extent	90	41
Economic growth should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent	10	59
Line 5 should be removed from the Great Lakes	63	26
Line 5 should continue to operate as is	10	29
Line 5 should be encased in a Tunnel	27	45
Michigan should require that farmers adopt practices that result in less fertilizer run-off	89	71
Farmers should be allowed to decide for themselves how to deal with fertilizer run-off.	11	29
<i>Results from an online panel survey of 1,000 Michigan adults fielded by YouGov. Survey in the field from August 3-August 21, 2018. Margin of error approximately +/-4%.</i>		



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