

Michigan Residents' Opposition to Data Centers

Summer 2026 State of the State Survey

Michigan State University | Energy Values Lab | Institute for Public Policy & Social Research



Introduction

This report contains the key findings from a portion of the Summer 2026 Michigan State of the State Survey (SOSS)ⁱ focusing on residents' perceptions of and support for data center development in Michigan. The SOSS is administered by the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR) of Michigan State University and is a public opinion survey of adult citizens of Michigan.

At the time of writing, Michigan offers state sales and tax exemptions for qualifying enterprise data centersⁱⁱ. Sixteen data centers totaling 2.9 gigawatts (GW) are planned for construction in Michiganⁱⁱⁱ.

Key Findings

4 out of 5 respondents in Michigan have either heard or read about data centers.

Thirty-two percent of Michigan respondents have heard or read “a lot” about data centers (see Fig. 1), while 48% have heard or read “a little.” One in five respondents (20%) haven’t read or heard about data centers in Michigan. This is higher than the U.S. average identified in a recent Pew survey, which found 25% of residents had heard or read “a lot,” 50% had heard or read “a little” and 25% had heard or read “nothing at all.”^{iv}

70% of Michigan respondents oppose the construction of data centers in their community.

Over two-thirds of Michigan respondents are either strongly opposed (52%) or somewhat opposed (18%) to the construction of data centers in their community (see Fig. 2), while only 11% of respondents indicated any form of support. This level of opposition is higher than what a recent UMass Amherst survey reported the US national average to be (65% opposed).^v

Respondents think data centers are bad for Michigan’s environment and economy.

Nearly 3 out of 4 respondents thought data centers were either “mostly bad” (51%) or “somewhat bad” (20%) for the environment (see Fig. 3). Over half of respondents thought data centers were either “mostly bad” (40%) or “somewhat bad” (19%) for the economy. The proportion of respondents perceiving these negative impacts was greater than the US average identified in a recent Pew survey.^{vi}

Fig. 1. How much have you heard or read about data centers in Michigan?

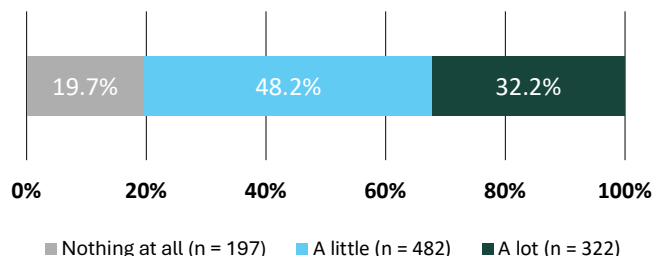


Fig. 2. Would you support or oppose the development of a data center in your community?

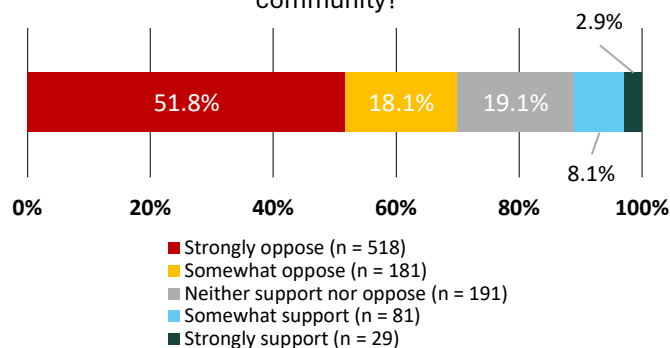
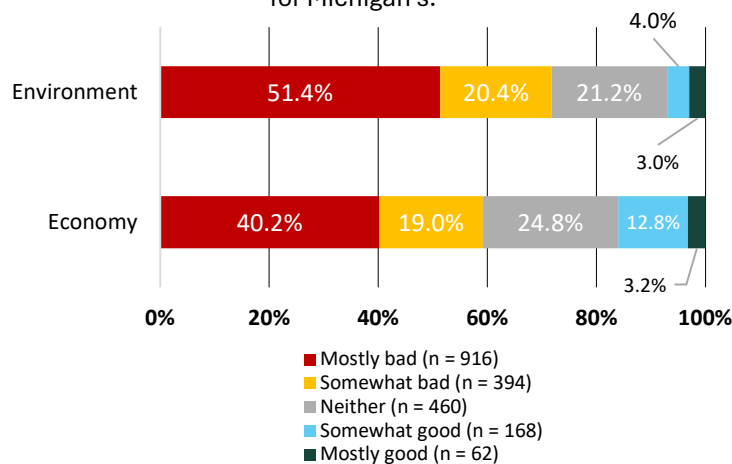


Fig. 3. Do you think data centers are good or bad for Michigan's:





Respondents want local governments to have a say in permitting data centers.

More than 4 out of 5 respondents (83%) believe local governments should have at least some say in the permitting of data centers (see Fig. 4). Just over half (52%) believe local governments should have “a lot” of say in permitting data centers, while an additional 31% feel they should have at least “a little” say.

Municipalities in Michigan can establish zoning ordinances for data centers, but they are prohibited from enacting outright bans on development under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act.^{vii}

Respondents are concerned about additional large-scale development brought about by data centers.

Over two thirds of respondents (71%) were at least “somewhat” or “very” concerned that a data center built in their community would attract additional large-scale development, such as a large-scale solar energy facility, or “solar farm.”

Data centers operating in Michigan can qualify for sales and use tax exemptions if they procure 90% of their energy from clean sources (among other requirements), potentially increasing demand for new solar energy development.^{viii}

Respondents expect data centers to increase their home energy costs.

Over three quarters of respondents (77%) expect data centers to increase home energy costs by either “a little” (23%) or “a lot” (55%). These numbers are greater than the number of US adults more broadly who said data centers are mostly bad for home energy costs (38%) per a recent Pew survey.^{ix}

A recent report from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that data centers operating in communities between 1995-2023 increased electricity prices by 0.5%, providing some validation for residents' concerns.^x

Fig 4. How much say should local governments have in permitting data centers?

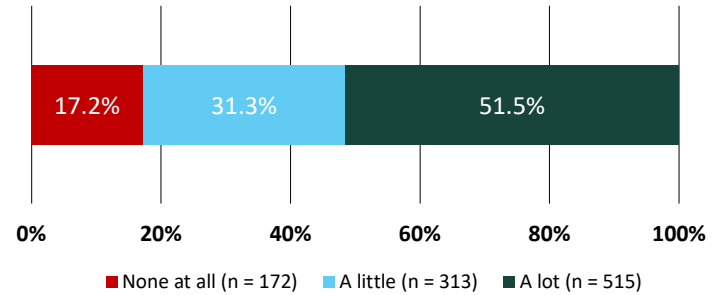


Fig 5. How concerned are you that a data center built in your community would attract additional large-scale development, such as large-scale solar energy facilities?

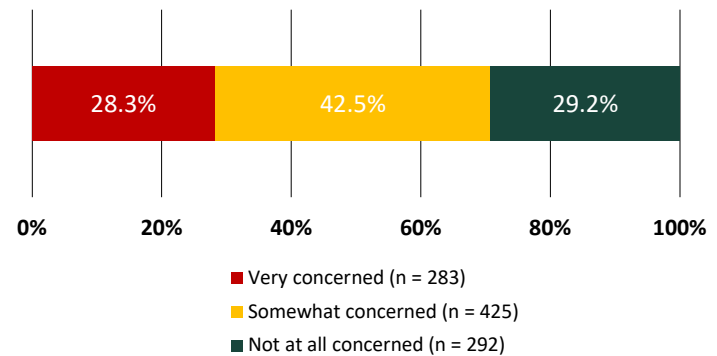
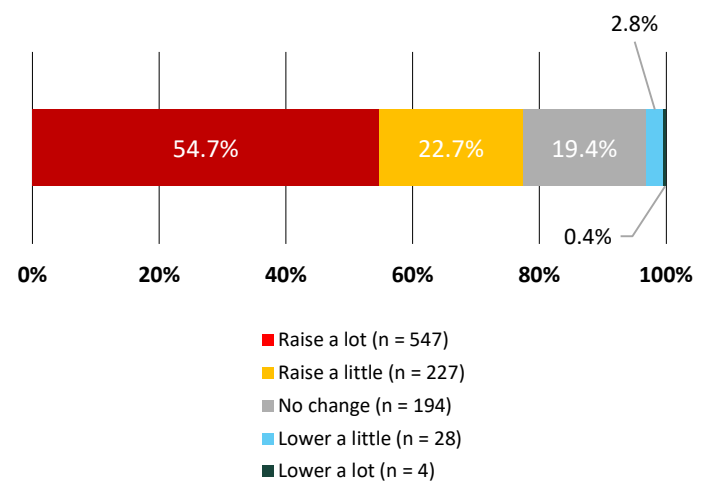


Fig 6. What do you think data centers will do to home energy costs in Michigan?



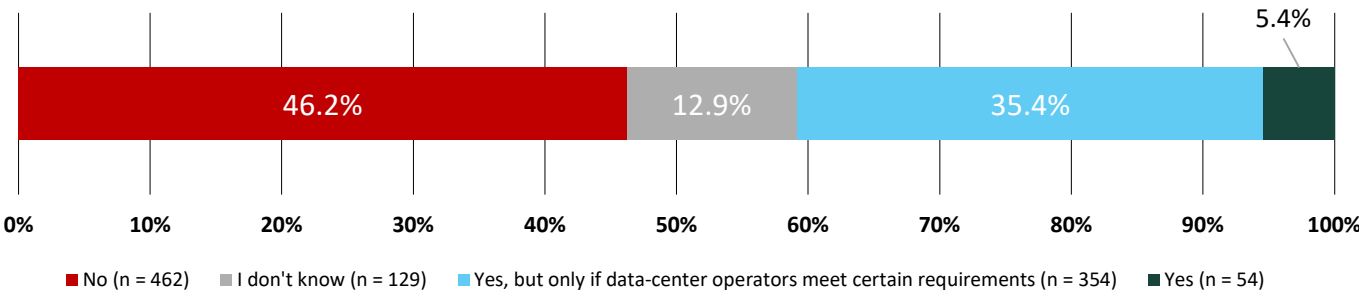


Respondents are split on whether state financial incentives should be provided for data center development.

A plurality of residents (46%) do not think the State of Michigan should provide financial incentives for data center development, while 41% of residents support the idea of financial incentives. Notably, respondents prefer qualified (35%) to unqualified (5%) financial incentives.

Currently, data centers that meet minimum requirements for capital investment, job creation, clean energy procurement, energy efficiency, and water procurement can be exempted from paying state sales and use taxes.^{xi}

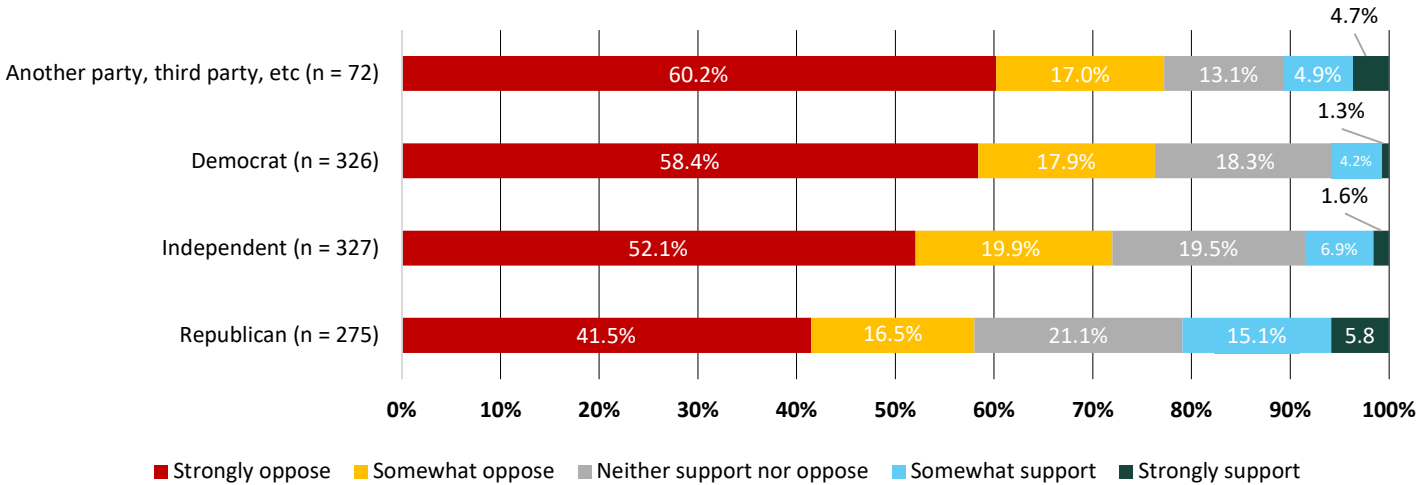
Fig 7. Should the state government provide financial incentives to support development of data centers in Michigan?



Opposition to data centers is bipartisan, though opposition is stronger amongst Democrats and Independents than Republicans.

Over three-quarters (76%) of self-described Democrats at least “somewhat” or “strongly” oppose data center development in their communities. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of self-described independents oppose data center development in their communities. Among self-described Republicans, 58% either “somewhat” or “strongly” oppose data center development in their communities. These results align with previous results from Pew research showing compared to Republicans a greater number of Democrats believe data centers have mostly negative effects.^{xii}

Fig 8. Data Center Support in Communities by Political Party





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ⁱ The SOSS employs Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology to interview a stratified random sample of Michigan adults. SOSS is a product of the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research in collaboration with the Office for Survey Research at Michigan State University.

ⁱⁱ Public Act 207 of 2024 creates the sales tax exemption for qualifying data centers, and Public Act 181 of 2024 creates the use tax exemption. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation provides a helpful summary of the requirements a data center must meet to qualify for exemptions: <https://www.michiganbusiness.org/services/data-center/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ These numbers are gathered from Cleanview, a company tracking energy infrastructure and data center development in the United States: <https://www.cleanview.co/data-centers/michigan>.

^{iv} Gramlich, J., Kennedy, B., McClain, C., & Stocking, G. (2026, March 12). How Americans view data centers' impact in key areas, from the environment to jobs. *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/03/12/how-americans-view-data-centers-impact-in-key-areas-from-the-environment-to-jobs/>

^v Sharpe, J. (2026, September 14). Just 1 in 9 Americans Support AI Data Center Construction in their local Communities, According to New UMass Amherst Poll. *University of Massachusetts Amherst*. <https://www.umass.edu/news/article/just-1-9-americans-support-ai-data-center-construction-their-local-communities>

^{vi} Gramlich, J., Kennedy, B., McClain, C., & Stocking, G. (2026, March 12). How Americans view data centers' impact in key areas, from the environment to jobs. *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/03/12/how-americans-view-data-centers-impact-in-key-areas-from-the-environment-to-jobs/>

^{vii} Mills, S., & Wilkinson, A. (2026, February). *What Michigan Local Governments Should Know About Data Centers*. Center for Empowering Communities. <https://graham.umich.edu/media/files/Data-Center-Guidebook-2026-02-06.pdf>

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^x Alvarez, F., Argente, D., Chow, J., & Van Patten, D. (2026). *Data Centers and Local Economies in the Age of AI: A Shift-Share Approach* (No. W35194; p. w35194). National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w35194>

^{xi} Mills, S., & Wilkinson, A. (2026, February). *What Michigan Local Governments Should Know About Data Centers*. Center for Empowering Communities. <https://graham.umich.edu/media/files/Data-Center-Guidebook-2026-02-06.pdf>

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