

Water Affordability in Michigan



PUBLIC SECTOR
CONSULTANTS

History of Water Assistance in Michigan

- There is no permanent program at the federal level to support water assistance (unlike all other utilities)
- Michigan Legislature has provided:
 - 2020- \$25 million (317,000 households benefited)
 - 2024- \$60 million
 - 2025- \$10 million
- Legislation has been introduced to create the first statewide water assistance program in the nation
- Some local programs (notably in WRAP in Southeast Michigan) but challenges exist with implementing at a local level (Bolt decision)



Background

In 2023 Public Sector Consultants started a project to understand:

- Municipal water rates
- Household income and affordability measures at community level
- The intersection of household income and water utility rates in establishing a statewide assistance program



Methodology

- Program needs and costs for the state and certain regions were calculated using datasets from the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Program estimates are based on geographic areas defined by the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau Public Use Microdata Areas.
- Water and sewer rate data were merged with U.S. Census household data to estimate the number of households qualified for the program and the amount of gap payment necessary.

Baseline Numbers Statewide

4.1 million

Total households in Michigan

1.2 million

Under 200% of FPL (~\$47,800)

\$71,149

Median household income

\$84

Average monthly
total water bill



Statewide Program Estimates

371,522

Total households with unaffordable water (pay for water+ water bill is more than 2-3% of their household income)

\$435

Average annual gap between their water bill and affordable water

\$36

Average monthly need



Regions with the Highest Annual Gap

Region	Total Qualified Households	Average Annual Gap per Household
Northeast Wayne County (I-94 corridor)	7,917	\$685
Southeast Macomb County (Mount Clemens and Fraser)	5,347	\$617
Northwest Ingham County	6,719	\$595
Central Wayne County (Dearborn and Dearborn Heights)	14,938	\$555
Central Genesee County (Flint and Mount Morris)	11,927	\$546
Central Oakland County (Birmingham and Bloomfield)	4,324	\$538
Southeast Wayne County (north Downriver area)	6,740	\$532
Western Upper Peninsula	15,292	\$529
North Macomb County	3,428	\$525
South and east Ingham County	6,957	\$517
East-central Washtenaw County (outside Ann Arbor)	5,564	\$511
St. Clair County	9,013	\$509
St. Joseph and Branch Counties	2,900	\$495
Northeast Detroit	11,086	\$495
Central Oakland County	7,309	\$494
Eastern Upper Peninsula	7,234	\$493
North-central Detroit	13,416	\$486
Jackson County	4,633	\$485
Northeast Oakland County	3,286	\$478
Eaton and Clinton Counties	4,620	\$477

Regions with the Largest Number of Qualified Households

Region	Total Qualified Households	Average Annual Gap per Household
Western Upper Peninsula	15,292	\$461
Central Wayne County (Dearborn and Dearborn Heights)	14,938	\$297
Northwest Detroit	14,859	\$446
North-central Detroit	13,416	\$486
Central Genesee County (Flint and Mount Morris)	11,927	\$335
Saginaw County	11,632	\$319
Northeast Detroit	11,086	\$495
Southwest Detroit	11,031	\$374
St. Clair County	9,013	\$315
Southwest Macomb County (Warren and Center Line)	8,005	\$301
Northeast Wayne County (I-94 corridor)	7,917	\$449
Bay and Midland Counties	7,407	\$237
Central Oakland County	7,309	\$273
Eastern Upper Peninsula	7,234	\$455
Berrien County	7,218	\$224
Central Wayne County (Westland, Garden City, Inkster, and Wayne)	7,134	\$262
Southeast Oakland County	7,079	\$331
South and east Ingham County	6,957	\$325
Southeast Wayne County (north Downriver area)	6,740	\$346
Northwest Ingham County	6,719	\$398



**Learn more at:
publicsectorconsultants.com/understanding-water-affordability-in-michigan**