



ISSUE BRIEF

THE MENTAL HEALTH OF DETROITERS HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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COMMUNITIES STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 [pandemic had well documented negative effects on the mental well-being of Americans](#) across the country and in Detroit. Less is known about whether those effects have persisted. Did COVID-19 create a “new normal” and baseline for the pervasive experience of poor mental health? Or have residents been able to recover from some of the mental health challenges that peaked during the pandemic? We find evidence of the latter: while substantial percentages of Detroiters report experiencing poor mental health—feeling nervous, anxious or on edge; not being able to control worrying; or feeling depressed one or more days in the past week— the numbers have largely stabilized in the post-pandemic period.

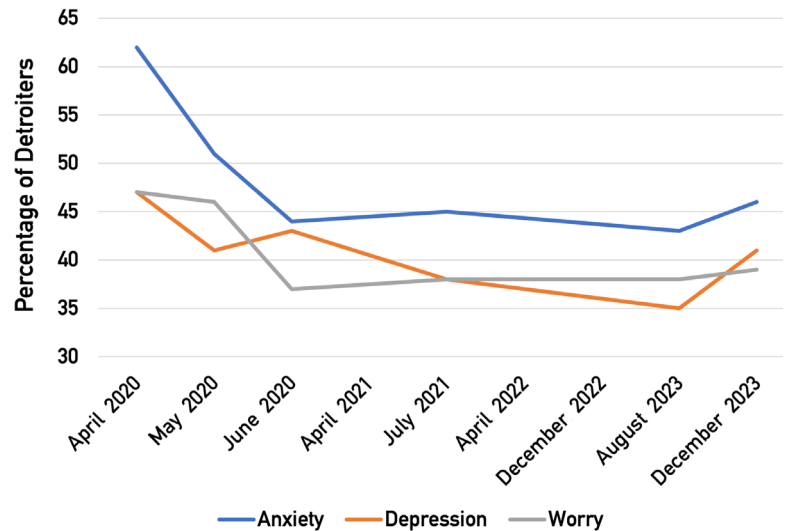
This report shares findings from six Detroit Metro Area Communities Study (DMACS) surveys conducted between April 2020 and December 2023 to examine the self-reported mental health of Detroiters since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Results have been weighted to reflect the population of the City of Detroit. See [full results from DMACS surveys here](#).

SINCE PEAKING IN EARLY 2020, DETROITERS’ EXPERIENCE OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH STABILIZED OVER TIME.

At the start of the pandemic, a majority of Detroiters (62%) reported experiencing anxiety one or more days a week.¹ This number sharply decreased between April 2020 and June 2020, when 44% reported experiencing anxiety. Since then, the percentage of Detroiters reporting anxiety has remained relatively stable.

- At the start of the pandemic, almost one-half (47%) of Detroiters reported feeling depressed one or more days a week. This number also decreased over time, dropping to 35% in August 2023. There was a spike in reports of depression in December 2023, possibly reflecting seasonal fluctuations.
- At the start of the pandemic, almost half (46%) of Detroiters reported feeling “general worry” one or more days a week. Over the ensuing months, this number declined to 37% in June 2020, and since then it has remained relatively stable.

Figure 1: Percent of Detroiters Experiencing Poor Mental Health One or More Days in a Week



DETROITERS OF ALL RACES² WERE LESS LIKELY TO REPORT POOR MENTAL HEALTH OVER TIME.

- White Detroiters consistently reported a greater prevalence of anxiety in comparison to Black Detroiters. In the early months of the pandemic, White residents also reported a greater prevalence of depression and general worry than Black residents. As of August 2023, however, the gap between Black and White Detroiters on all of these indicators had closed substantially, as White residents experienced a drop in their prevalence of anxiety, depression, and generalized worry.
- Latino Detroiters also exhibit improved mental health in 2023 compared to the start of the pandemic. The number of Latino Detroiters who reported experiencing depression or anxiety one or more days a week fell precipitously between April 2020 and July 2021 before stabilizing. Latino residents' sense of general worry peaked in June 2020 before declining. Like White Detroiters, Latino residents reported a greater prevalence of adverse mental health compared to Black residents in April 2020. By December 2023, these gaps between racial groups had closed substantially.

Figure 2: Percentage of Detroiters Who Report Anxiety by Race

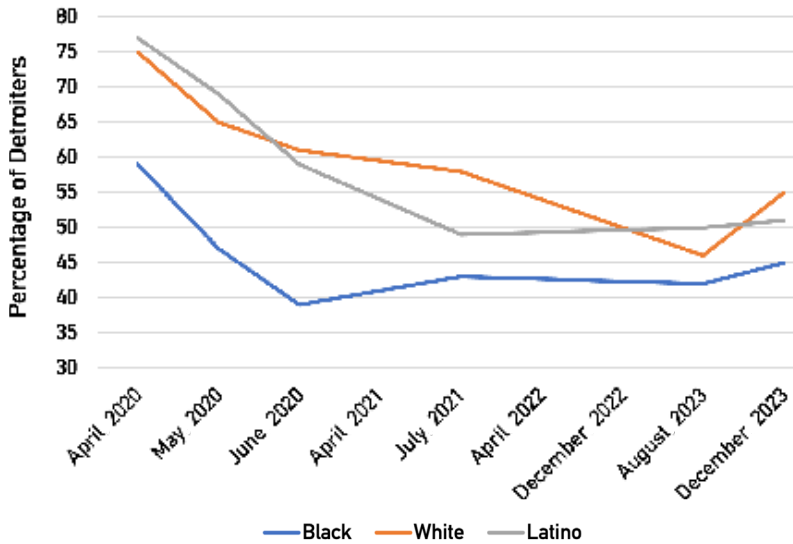


Figure 3: Percentage of Detroiters Who Report Depression by Race

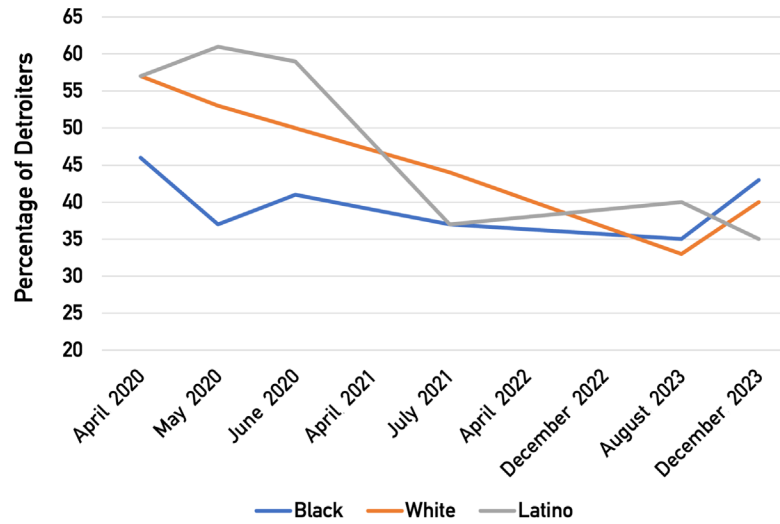
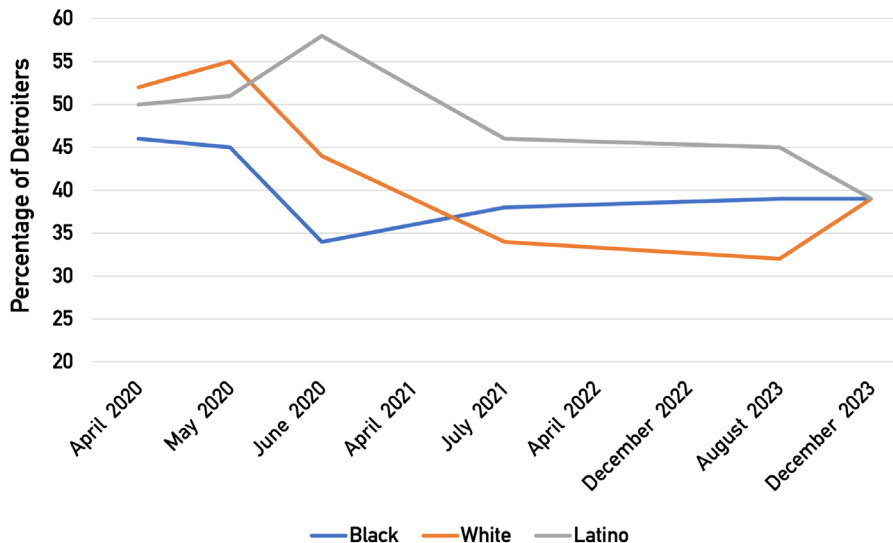


Figure 4: Percentage of Detroiters who Report General Worry by Race



MORE WOMEN EXPERIENCE POOR MENTAL HEALTH THAN MEN.

- In general, more women reported experiencing anxiety, depression, and general worry one or more days a week in

comparison to men. This difference narrowed somewhat over time, especially for depression and general worry.

Figure 5: Percentage of Detroiters Who Report Anxiety by Gender

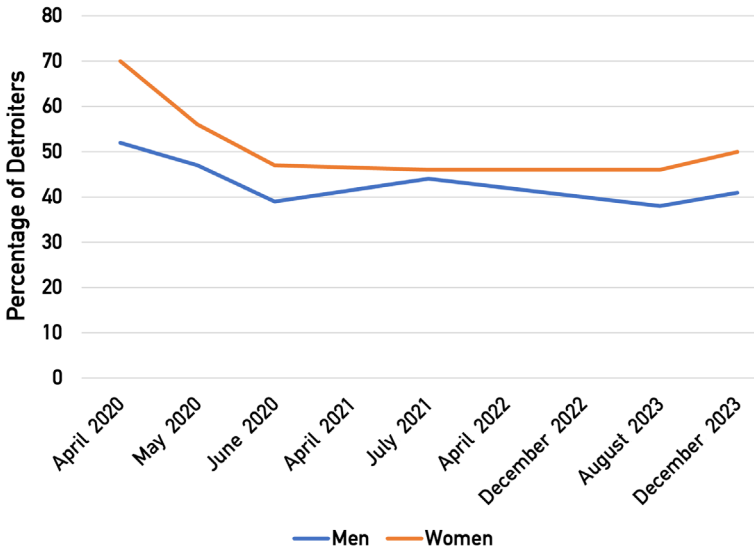


Figure 6: Percentage of Detroiters Who Report Depression by Gender

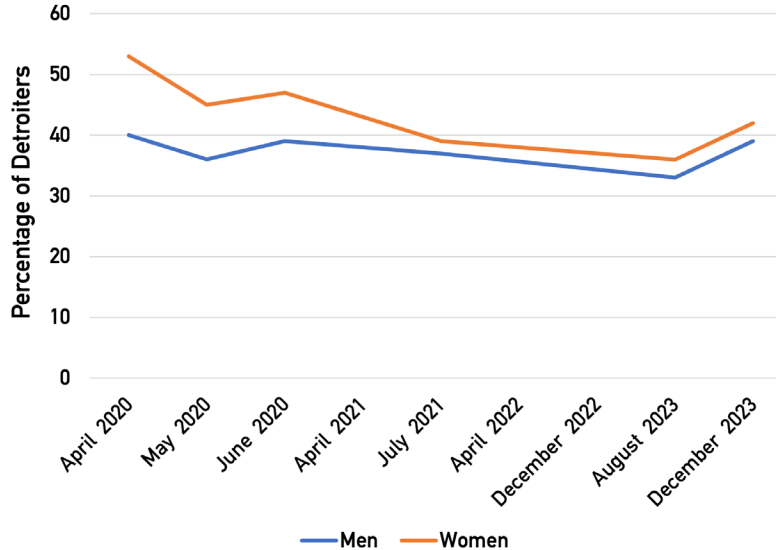
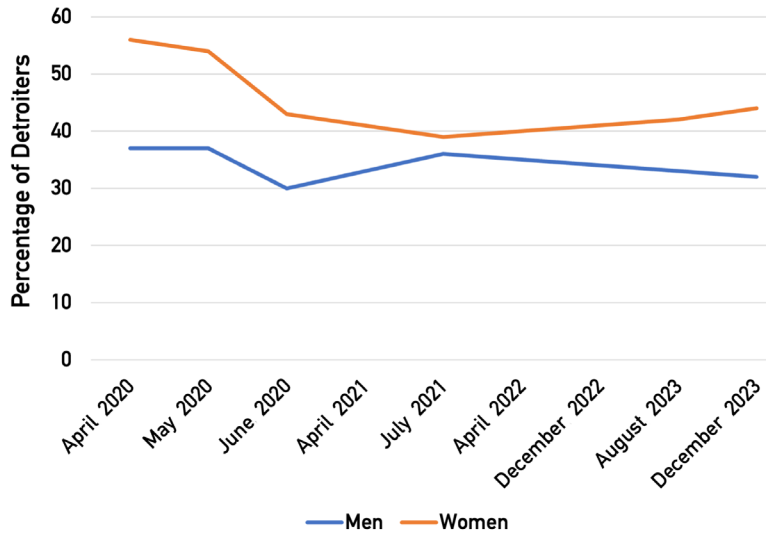


Figure 7: Percentage of Detroiters Who Report General Worry by Gender



MORE LOW-INCOME DETROITERS EXPERIENCE POOR MENTAL HEALTH THAN HIGH-INCOME DETROITERS.³

- Detroiters with low incomes consistently reported a higher prevalence of mental health challenges for all three mental health conditions (at most time periods) in comparison to Detroiters with high incomes.
- Fewer high- and low-income Detroiters reported anxiety, depression, and general worry in December 2023 in comparison to the start of the pandemic in April 2020.

Figure 8: Percentage of Detroiters Who Report Anxiety by Income

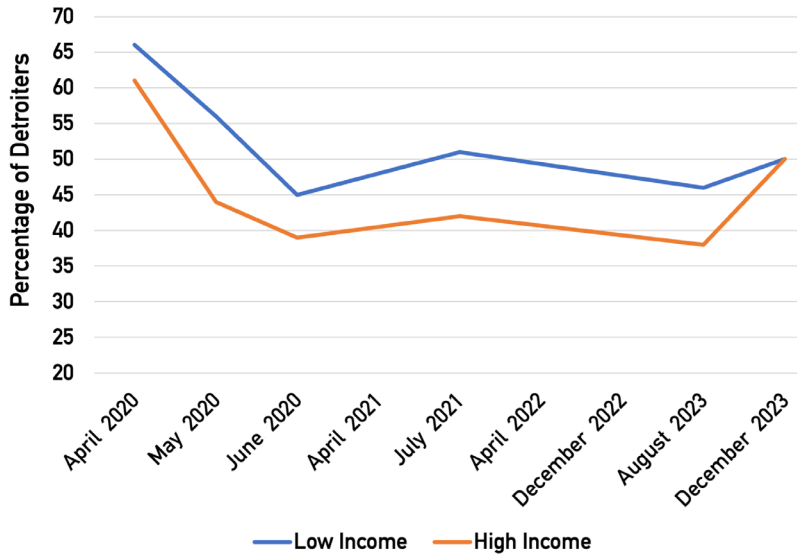


Figure 9: Percentage of Detroiters Who Report Depression by Income

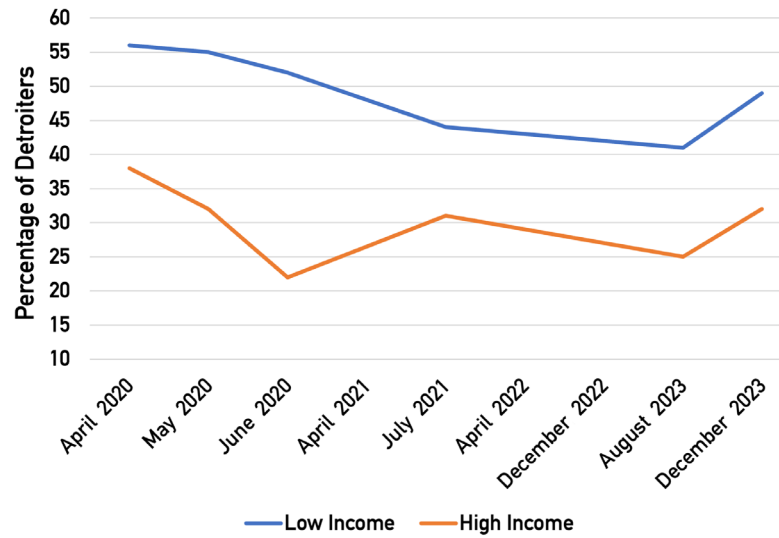
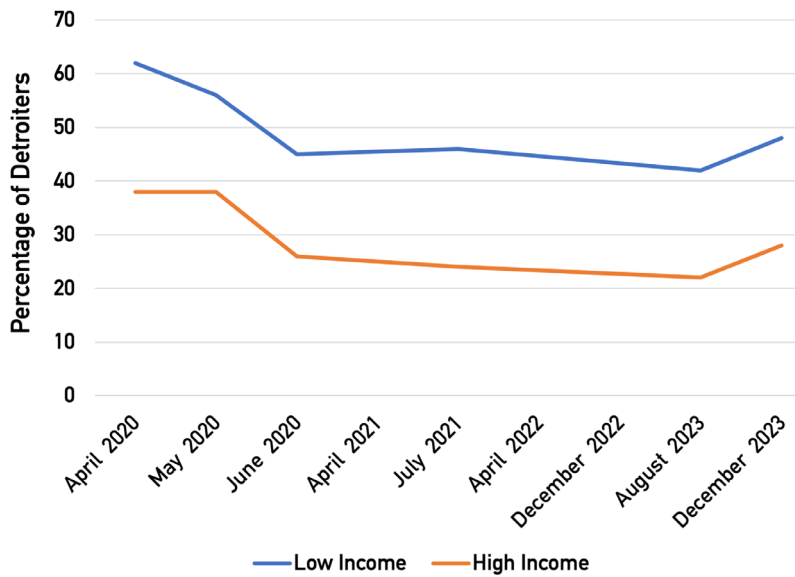


Figure 10: Percentage of Detroiters Who Report General Worry by Income



MORE YOUNGER DETROITERS EXPERIENCE POOR MENTAL HEALTH ONE OR MORE DAYS A WEEK THAN OLDER DETROITERS.

- For all mental health conditions, younger Detroiters (those under 30) consistently reported higher rates of mental health challenges than older Detroiters (those over 65).
- In general, fewer younger Detroiters and older Detroiters reported feeling depressed in August 2023 in comparison to April 2020. However, the prevalence of depression increased among older Detroiters in December 2023.

Figure 11: Percentage of Detroiters Who Report Anxiety by Age

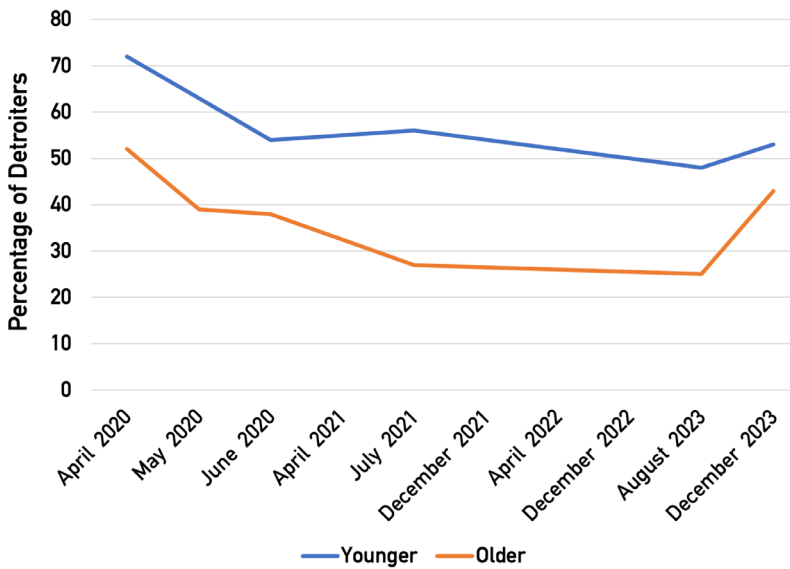


Figure 12: Percentage of Detroiters Who Report Depression by Age

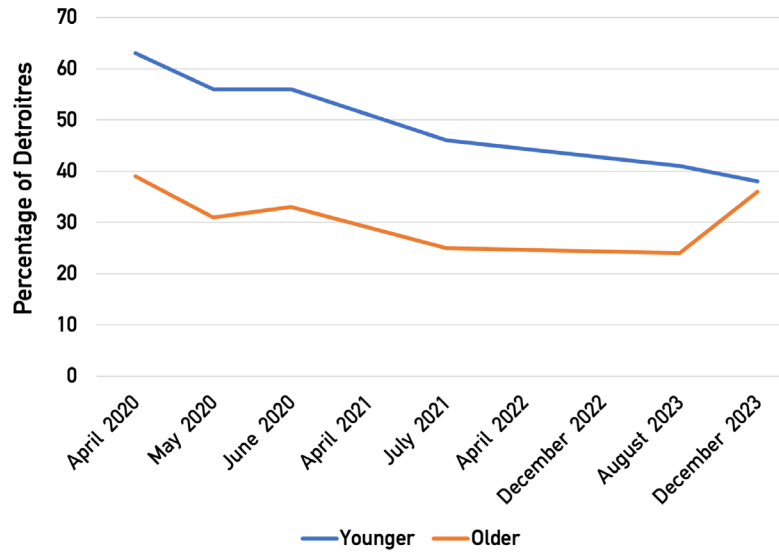
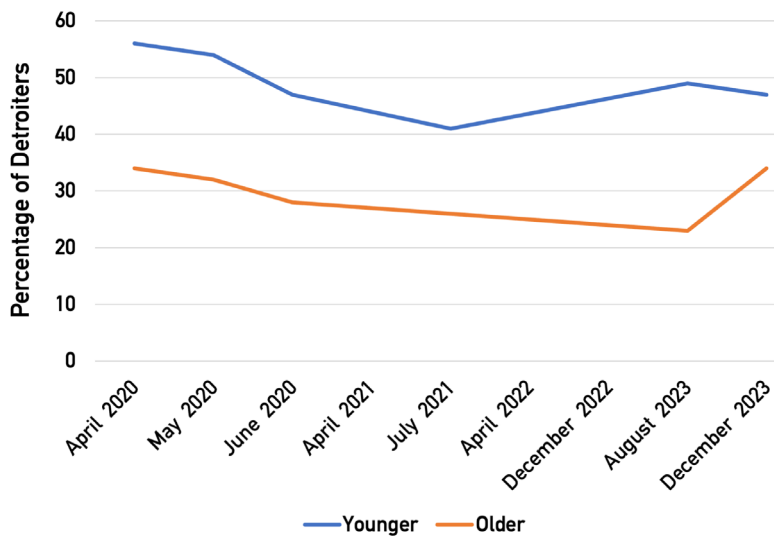


Figure 13: Percentage of Detroiters Reporting General Worry by Age



ENDNOTES

- 1 For all mental health conditions, respondents were asked: In the past 7 days, how often have you felt (1) nervous, anxious, or on edge; (2) not been able to stop or control worrying; (3) felt depressed. For each question, respondents could select: less than 1 day; 1 to 2 days; 3 to 4 days; 5 to 7 days. In this report, respondents are included as reporting poor mental health if they said they experienced one or more days of anxiety, depression, or general worry in the past week.
- 2 This report uses the following ethnoraical categories: "Latino" refers to any respondent who identifies as being of "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin." "White" and "Black" refer to respondents who selected only those respective categories (and no other ethnoraical categories) and who do not identify as Latino. Respondents who identified using other ethnoraical categories, who did not identify with any of the ethnoraical categories, or who identified using multiple ethnoraical categories were coded as "Multi/Other". To avoid drawing conclusions from a small, diverse group of residents, we do not report the results for Multi/Other race Detroiters in this report.
- 3 "Low-income" refers to those who report a household income under \$10,000 and "high-income" refers to those who report a household income of \$100,000 or above. These income groups represent income extremes in Detroit, where the median household income is \$36,000. We focus on these income groups to illustrate the relationship between poverty, affluence, and mental health.

APPENDIX

To view the confidence intervals for the included figures, please visit the [appendix link](#).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful for the generous support of the Knight Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, The Ballmer Group, Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan, and Michigan CEAL: Communities Conquering COVID (MICEAL) (NIH grant 1 OT2 HL 156812). For more on the Detroit Metro Area Communities Study (DMACS), please visit www.detroitssurvey.org. For more on Michigan CEAL, please visit www.michiganceal.org. This report was written by Lauren Chojnacki and is a collaborative effort of numerous colleagues.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on DMACS, please contact
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Learn more at www.detroiturvey.umich.edu

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