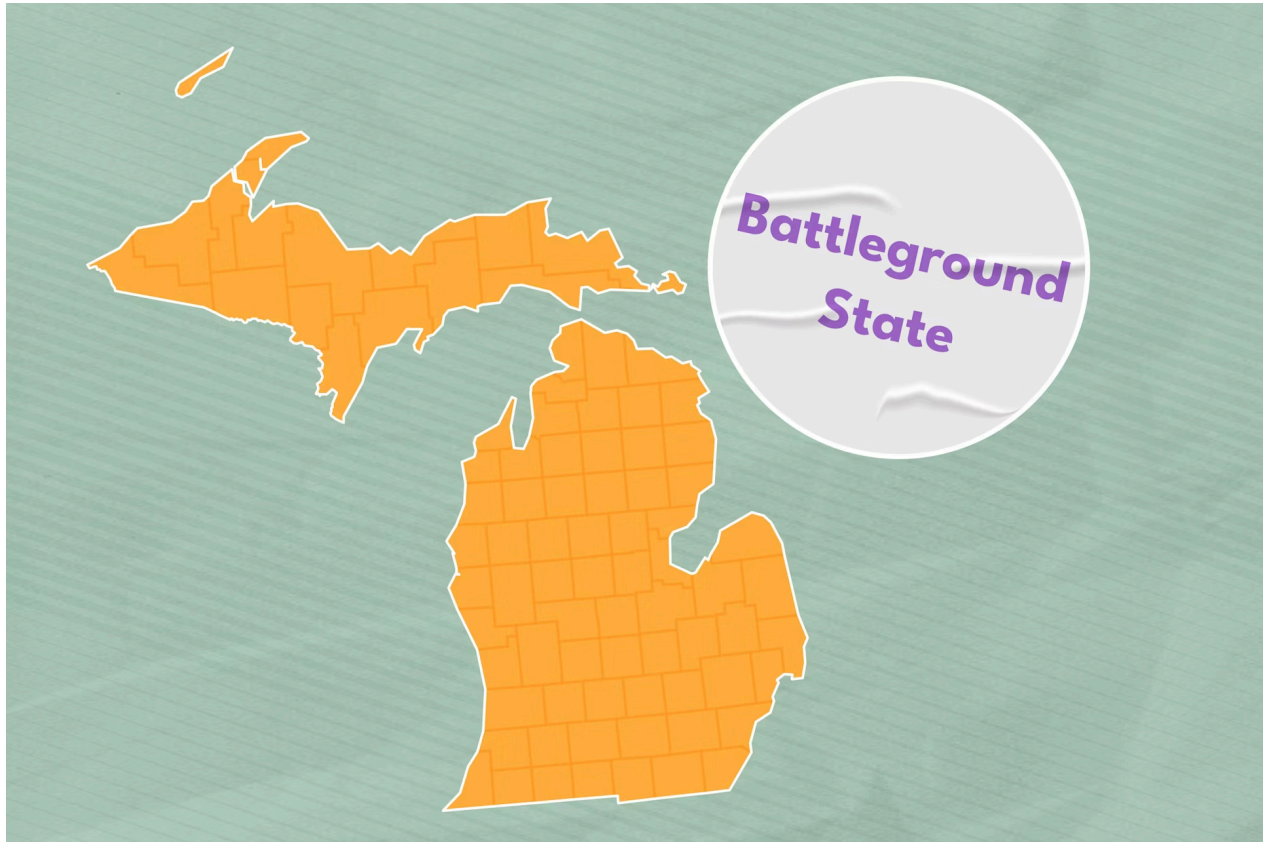


## 2024 Battleground State Preview: Michigan



Michigan is once again a core blue wall battleground state in 2024—with 15 vital Electoral College votes, an open Senate seat, and several close House races. The state has been a critical battleground in five of the last eight presidential elections, and it is tied for having the second highest concentration of non-college voters among all the 2024 battleground states.

Below, we examine the electoral and economic trends that Michigan has seen over the last decade, of which campaigns should be readily aware heading into the 2024 election.

### Michigan: The Tossup State

Michigan has remained one of the most consistent tossups in the country over recent election cycles. Here are three numbers to know:

**10,000:** Democrats have won the state in seven of the last eight presidential races since 1992. But in 2016, when third-party candidates played a significant role in siphoning votes from the main party candidates, Trump won the state by 10,000 votes (0.2%).

**3-to-1:** In 2020, Biden (+ allies) outspent Trump (+ allies) 3-to-1 in ads in Michigan—Democrats' \$114 million to the GOP's \$37 million. <sup>1</sup>

**6.8:** Michigan swung 6.8 percentage points to the right from 2012 to 2020. Biden won by 154,000 votes (2.8%) in 2020.

As Governor Gretchen Whitmer recently affirmed—Michigan is “absolutely” still a purple state, and she emphasized the need for Democrats to “continue to show up and continue to talk about these fundamental issues that Americans and American families need solved.”

### Michigan: The Non-College Economy

Michigan is tied for having the second highest concentration of non-college voters of all the battleground states. Understanding who they are is critical to winning the state.

- **Two-thirds of adults don't have a college degree.** Just 32% of adults over the age of 25 in Michigan have a bachelor's degree, slightly lower than the overall share of adults across the United States. <sup>2</sup>
- **Declining union representation.** Almost 13% of workers in Michigan were members of a union last year, but that number is over three percentage points less than it was 10 years ago. <sup>3</sup> In 2020, Biden carried nearly two out of three union households. <sup>4</sup>
- **Over 4-in-5 Black adults don't have a college degree.** While almost 34% of white adults over the age of 25 have a college degree, only 19% of Black adults of the same age do. And over 27% of Black Michigan residents live below the poverty line—six percentage points higher than Black Americans as a whole. <sup>5</sup> According to the data firm Catalist, Biden won 93% of non-college Black voters—a 6-point decline from 2012. <sup>6</sup>
- **Nearly 1-in-5 workers are employed in the manufacturing industry.** Manufacturing remains a core part of Michigan's economy, and, thanks to a string of negotiating victories, many workers have seen significant pay increases. <sup>7</sup> But with an increasing number of manufacturing jobs in the state requiring a bachelor's degree, the field of opportunity for non-college workers is narrowing. <sup>8</sup>
- **Stagnating incomes.** New data finds that the state ranks 39<sup>th</sup> in per-capita income, with incomes 13% below the national average. <sup>9</sup>
- **The share of “good jobs” available to non-college workers is shrinking.** A recent analysis found that over 9-in-10 Michigan jobs paying more than \$70,000 are held by people with a bachelor's degree. At the same time, just a quarter of Michigan voters said a college degree was worth the money. <sup>10</sup>

In 2024, it is likely we will see an electorate that looks very much like it did in 2020—when non-college voters made up 67% of the Michigan electorate. For Biden to carry the state, he will need to win 46% of non-college voters if his performance among college-educated voters remains steady. <sup>11</sup>

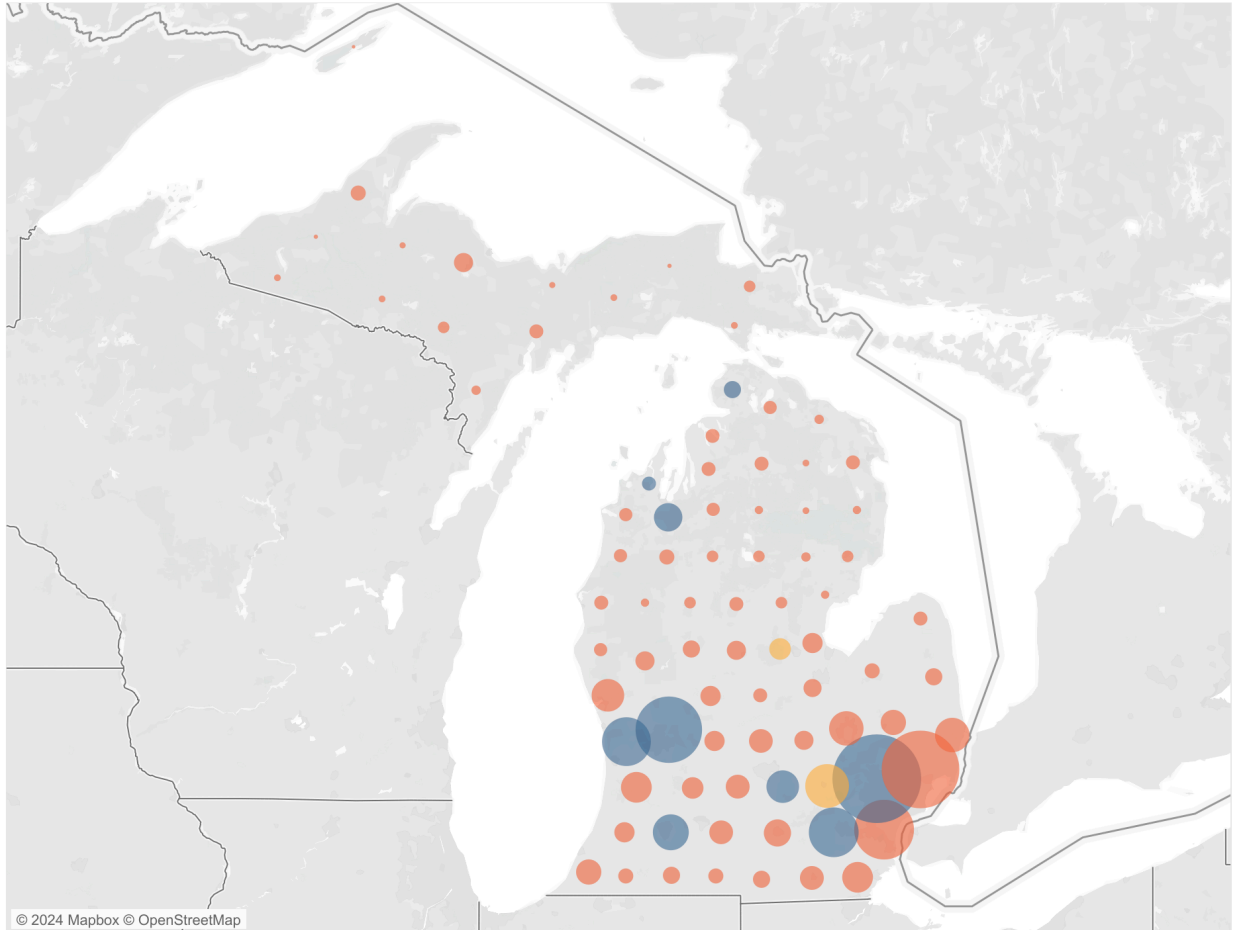
## Michigan: Geographic Challenges

Michigan's economic and demographic trends can, in part, explain the electoral swings that have played out in counties across the state in recent election cycles.

## Michigan Presidential Election Vote Growth & Swings (2012 to 2020)

Swings by county from 2012 to 2020 (head-to-head contest)

■ GOP Vote Growth & Swung Right  
 ■ GOP Vote Growth But Swung Left  
 ■ DEM Vote Growth & Swung Left



Note: Size of bubbles represents the growth in the number of votes (D & R) from 2012 to 2020 in the presidential head-to-head. 2020 presidential margins are the head-to-head results.  
Source: Michigan SOS

**Republicans are seeing their coalition grow in rural, heavily non-college counties.** From 2012 to 2020, there were 774,000 more votes cast statewide. Of those, Republicans netted 295,000 more votes than Democrats. Despite non-metro counties making up only 18% of Michigan's total electorate, the GOP gained 172,000 net votes over Democrats in rural Michigan from 2012 to 2020.

**Republicans are performing better in the Democratic stronghold of Wayne County.** Wayne County, which went for Biden by 39 points in 2020 and comprises a substantial Black, working-class population, saw a significant 9-point swing to the right from 2012 to 2020, with the GOP netting 49,000 more votes than Democrats in this time period.

**Democrats have seen vote growth in Michigan's seven most college-educated counties.** Between 2012 and 2020, Dems netted 167,000 votes over the GOP in these counties, with Oakland, Kent, and Washtenaw counties topping the list.

**White college-educated voters have been the saving grace for Michigan Democrats in the Trump era.** According to Catalist, Democrats saw an 8-point decline in white non-college support in Michigan from 2012 to 2020, but they inversely grew their white college-educated support by eight points, which has helped the party to eke out close victories over the last few cycles.<sup>12</sup>

Like many of the other battleground states, whether Republicans can expand into the non-college vote further and offset Democrats' college-educated gains may well determine if the state flips red this year.

## Conclusion

Michigan is crucial for Democrats to win in 2024. But the shifting coalitions within the state are flashing red warning signs. Without Michigan, Joe Biden's path to victory becomes severely limited. Whether Biden can reconstitute his 2020 coalition is the central question—as well as whether key constituencies like younger Black and Arab-American voters come home to Democrats in the state. Whichever party actively competes for the working-class, non-college vote and disaffected voters of color will likely carry this battleground.

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