DETROIT
DISABILITY
POWER

THE RIGHT TO A PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT BALLOT:

Polling Site Accessibility for Michigan Voters with Disabilities during the 2024 Election

May 2025

Prepared by

Detroit Disability Power

The Right to a Private and Independent Ballot: Polling Site Accessibility for Michigan Voters with Disabilities during the 2024 Elections

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Detroit Disability Power works to build the political power of the disability community and to end disparities disabled people face in regards to housing, employment, education, transportation, healthcare, voting and more. We are a diverse community coming together across visible and hidden disabilities, race, ethnicity, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship and economic status to ensure full inclusion of people with disabilities in Detroit and beyond.

Detroit Disability Power is a project fiscally sponsored by Michigan Disability Rights Coalition.
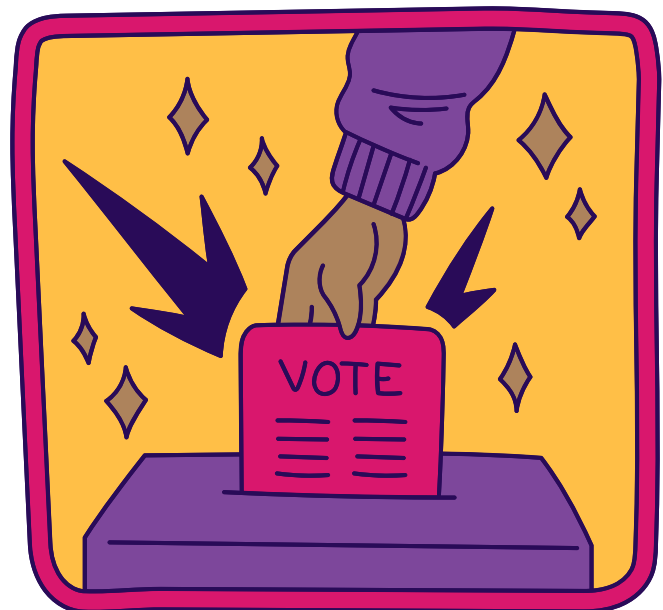
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One in four adults in the United States – nearly 29% of the population – has a disability. There are an estimated 40 million eligible disabled voters. That number increases to over 65 million when you include those who have a household member with a disability.[1] In Michigan, the percentages are a little higher with nearly one in three – 30.4% – voting age people having a disability.[2]

Despite federal and state laws that require equal access to voting, people with disabilities still face significant barriers to full participation in the election process. Detroit Disability Power (DDP) has continued building our polling place accessibility audit program since we conducted our 2022 audit in collaboration with The Carter Center, evaluating the accessibility of 261 polling places in Metro Detroit. In addition to working with clerks to improve election accessibility, we have been working closely with voting rights partners and allies to address the accessibility of the voting process. Furthermore, we facilitated the launch of the National Polling Access Audit Coalition with national and local organizations dedicated to improving accessibility across the country, training voting rights advocates around the country on how to evaluate polling place accessibility and advocate for improvements in their communities.

In 2024, DDP conducted audits during the August 6 Primary and November 5 General Elections. We evaluated whether polling places in Metro Detroit, which serve 1 million Michiganders (about 10% of the state's population), met long-established standards for accessibility required by state and federal law. After assessing 294 polling places in 21 jurisdictions, the observation teams found that ***only 13% of polling places visited were accessible.***

The polling place data generated by the observation teams gives decision makers and advocacy organizations clear evidence of where accessibility was insufficient and where remedial action is needed.

[1] Schur, L., & Kruse, D. (2020). Projecting the Number of Eligible Voters with Disabilities in the November 2020 Elections. https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Centers/Program_Disability_Research/Disability_electorate_projections_2020.pdf

[2] Tian, Y., McKane, P., Lee, C., Frame, A., & Wimberley, R. (2021). Disability and Race/Ethnicity among Michigan Adults. Michigan BRFSS Surveillance Brief. Vol. 12, No. 1. Lansing, MI: Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Lifecourse Epidemiology and Genomics Division, March 2021.

This report highlights several **key recommendations** for how to improve accessibility at the polls so that all Michiganders can exercise their right to vote:

- **INCREASE COORDINATION** between jurisdictions administering elections and the state to ensure they have the resources and support necessary to accommodate people with disabilities throughout the voting period and quickly resolve issues on Election Day.

- **CLEARLY LABEL ALL PATHWAYS** at polling locations and remove any obstructions.

- **ENSURE THAT POLL WORKERS RECEIVE TRAINING** on the voter assist terminals (VATs) and wheelchair-height voting booths.

- **STANDARDIZE TRAINING** to address inconsistencies in Election Day administration that limit access.

- **PROVIDE FUNDING TO LOCAL, COUNTY, AND CITY CLERKS** to ensure accessibility requirements can be met.

- **INCREASE MICHIGAN SECRETARY OF STATE SUPPORT TO MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY CLERKS** to help them increase compliance with federal and state accessibility statutes.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in four U.S. adults has a disability.[3] As defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a person with a disability is someone who "[has] a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activiti[es]."[4] Disabilities may affect a person's vision, movement, thinking, remembering, learning, communicating, hearing, mental health, and social relationships.[5] The disability community is diverse and encompasses many diagnoses and lived experiences. Disabilities can be apparent or non-apparent; remitting and relapsing; progressive or constant; temporary or permanent; something a person is born with or something they acquire during their lifetime. People with the same disabilities can have different experiences and needs.

Voters with disabilities have a right to cast their ballots privately and independently and to receive assistance from a person of their choosing. This right requires accessible polling places with features that allow voters to easily enter and cast a vote: a clear and accessible pathway and entrance, availability of an accessible voting system, and a voting booth set up for private and independent voting. Several federal and state laws guarantee this right and provide for accessibility. However, voters with disabilities continue to face accessibility barriers throughout the voting process, including registering, obtaining voting information, and casting a ballot in person or by mail. Additionally, many voter registration and election office websites are not compliant with web accessibility standards and regulations, making it difficult for some voters with disabilities to register and access reliable information about voting.[6]

To understand the scale of the issue, in October 2016 the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) observed 178 polling places across the country. In all 178 polling places, they observed the exterior of the polling place. In 167 of those polling places, they were permitted to enter the polling place and examine the interior to some degree; however, they were only allowed to approach and observe the voting stations where voters cast their ballots in 137 of the polling places. The GAO found

3 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, July 15). Disability Impacts All of Us Infographic. Retrieved April 21, 2025, from https://www.cdc.gov/disability-and-health/articles-documents/disability-impacts-all-of-us-infographic.html

4 ADA National Network. (2025). What is the definition of disability under the ADA? Retrieved April 21, 2025, from https://adata.org/faq/what-definition-disability-under-ada

5 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025, April 2). Disability and Health Overview. Disability and Health. Retrieved April 21, 2025, from https://www.cdc.gov/disability-and-health/about/

6 Mizner, S. & Smith, E. (2015). Access Denied: Barriers to Online Voter Registration for Citizens with Disabilities. https://www.aclu.org/report/access-denied-barriers-online-voter-registration-citizens-disabilities

that 60% of polling places had one or more potential impediments outside the polling places. Where the GAO team could explore features on the outside and the inside of the voting area, they found that only 17% had no potential impediments to voting. Where they were permitted to approach the voting stations, they found that 65% of the voting stations did not ensure full access.[7]

In 2012, the National Council on Disability (NCD) conducted a voter experience survey among 900 disabled voters nationwide. It found that voters encountered physical and architectural barriers in polling places, technological barriers with accessible voting systems, and attitudinal barriers from poll workers. About 38% of respondents experienced physical barriers outside the polling place, and 54% encountered barriers inside. Poll workers' lack of training and awareness of how to assist voters with disabilities was cited as a significant barrier, with 25% reporting issues with untrained poll workers. Ultimately, only one in five respondents said they could vote privately and independently.[8]

DETROIT DISABILITY POWER:
Assessing Voter Accessibility through Access Audits

Given the persistence of barriers in Michigan and across the U.S., Detroit Disability Power began informally conducting accessibility audits of polling places in 2018. In 2022, DDP partnered with The Carter Center to formally organize observation teams for the November 2022 election in Metro Detroit. The observation teams found that although several of the polling locations had some accessibility features, very few were fully accessible. In fact, only 16% of the 261 polling places audited were fully accessible. **For voters with disabilities to have an equitable voter experience, the voting process must be accessible at every polling place.** Otherwise, voters with disabilities have unequal access to the polls, raising important questions about their constitutional rights to equality under the law. The data we collected in 2022 allowed us to advocate for greater access with county and municipal clerks and our partners, but there is still work to be done. This report builds on that work and documents the 2024 audits conducted by DDP and partners in Michigan which found that only 13% of polling places were accessible.

7 General Accounting Office. (2017). Voters with Disabilities: Observations on Polling Place Accessibility and Related Federal Guidance. https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-18-4.pdf

8 National Council on Disability. (2013). Experience of Voters with Disabilities in the 2012 Election Cycle. https://www.ncd.gov/report/experience-of-voters-with-disabilities-in-the-2012-election-cycle/

Disability rights organizations continue to advocate for improvements, meeting with local election officials as well as supporting state and federal legislation to improve accessibility. It is critical for stakeholders, including disability rights advocates, elections officials, and legislators, to understand the prevalence of accessibility barriers in voting, how they appear in their communities and jurisdictions, and what they must do to remove barriers. This report documents some specific challenges and offers recommendations to improve the voter experience for voters with disabilities.

VOTING ACCESSIBILITY AND THE LAW

Federal Law

In Michigan, the requirements for selecting polling places are defined by state and federal law. Minimum accessibility requirements of sites used to cast ballots during federal elections are defined in the Voting Rights Act (VRA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) – drawing on the 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and the Commerce Clause of the Constitution for their authority.

In addition to federal laws related to accessibility, widely recognized standards and good practices hold that the electoral cycle should promote broad participation and that any barriers to participation by eligible voters should be removed, including special measures to ensure de facto equality for people with disabilities.[9]

The Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965, which prohibits racial discrimination, has several provisions that guarantee voting rights for racially marginalized voters and that impact voters with disabilities. Section 201 prohibits election officials from conditioning the right to vote on the passage of a literacy test or requiring voters to have a particular level of education.[10] This provision is essential for voters with cognitive or learning disabilities that may affect their ability to read, understand, or attain a certain level of education. Section 208 asserts that election officials must allow a voter who is blind or has another disability to receive assistance from a person of the voter's choice, except the voter's employer, its agent, or an officer or agent of the voter's union.[11]

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9 See the U.N. (CCPR), General Comment 25, para. 11; the U.N., CRPD, art. 2, 4, 5(4), 6(1), 24(1)(c) and 29; and the OAS, Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities, art. 2(b)

10 "Section 2 Of The Voting Rights Act," (2023, April 5). https://www.justice.gov/crt/section-2-voting-rights-act

11 Cornell Law School. (2022). "Voting assistance for blind, disabled, or illiterate person," in 52 USC §§ Code § 10508

Passed into law in 1990, the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** – preceded by the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act (VAEHA) – is a federal law that protects and prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities.[12] Title II of the ADA applies to state and local governments of all sizes. It requires government entities to give people with disabilities "an equal opportunity to benefit from all their programs, services, and activities."[13] The ADA applies to all aspects of the voting process, including voter registration, education, and casting ballots. Title II of the ADA is enforced at the local level through filing complaints. Governments with 50 or more employees must have a grievance procedure,[14] and complainants can file administrative complaints with the Department of Justice.[15] **Election officials must consider the ADA compliance of the sites they select for polling places.** The Justice Department has created the ADA Checklist for Polling Places to help election officials understand their obligations under the law, select the most accessible polling locations, evaluate barriers, and make temporary modifications to improve accessibility.

Local governments use both public and private facilities as polling places. Public facilities such as schools or libraries regularly fall under Title II of the ADA. Therefore, public entities are expected to evaluate accessibility and permanently modify these sites when needed. For polling places at churches or other privately owned locations, public entities still must ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to voting. This report will break down the various types of polling places assessed in 2024

Accessibility can be achieved by working with the location's owner to make permanent or temporary modifications. If election officials cannot remove barriers, they must select an alternative polling place. If no accessible option is available, they must supply an alternative voting method at the polling place.[16] In rare cases, if a polling place cannot be made accessible through temporary or permanent modifications, it may be relocated.

Detroit Disability Power does not encourage closing down polling places due to inaccessibility, as some jurisdictions have used the ADA to justify shutting down polling

12 Prior to the ADA, the U.S. government passed the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act (VAEHA) in 1984, which was the first legislation to improve access for disabled voters to the electoral process. VAEHA required polling places used in federal elections to be accessible to elderly voters and voters with disabilities. Today, the VAEHA is rarely used to enforce the rights of people with disabilities, as many of its provisions are now covered by a more expansive set of legal rights defined in 1990 with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

13 U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, State and Local Governments (n.d.), https://www.ada.gov/topics/title-ii/

14 U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. (2006) "ADA Coordinator, Notice & Grievance Procedure" Retrieved April 21, 2025, from https://archive.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap2toolkit.htm.

15 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025, April 2). Disability and Health Overview. Disability and Health. Retrieved April 21, 2025, from https://www.cdc.gov/disability-and-health/about/.

16 U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. (2016). "ADA Checklist for Polling Places. Retrieved April 21, 2025, from https://archive.ada.gov/votingchecklist.htm.

places in ways that suppress voters in that community.[17] Both the disability community and the Justice Department encourage making improvements to existing polling places rather than closing them down.

Although the ADA mandates accessibility in places of public accommodation, it is seen as an unfunded mandate, as state and local governments may not have adequate resources, support, and knowledge to upgrade inaccessible infrastructure and practices.[18] Therefore, it is not uncommon for election offices nationwide to be out of compliance with ADA requirements.

In 2002, more than a decade after the passage of the ADA, the **Help America Vote Act (HAVA)** was signed into law to improve the nation's voting systems and increase voter access. Title III of HAVA requires that each polling place in a federal election has at least one accessible voting system. This system must allow voters with disabilities to cast their ballot privately and independently as well as provide nonvisual access for those who are blind or have low vision. Several states, including Michigan, have laws that mandate HAVA's requirement for accessible voting equipment in non-federal elections. It is considered a best practice to ensure that polling places have accessible voting equipment for elections at all levels of government. The name of the accessible voting system can vary by state. In Michigan, it is referred to as the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT). Therefore, we will refer to the VAT throughout the report.

Michigan Law

States are responsible for enforcing HAVA requirements. In Michigan, a person who believes that an election office or polling place has violated the act may file a complaint with the Michigan Department of State's Bureau of Elections. The complainant must file a signed, notarized statement that includes which Title II section the election authority violated and how. Also, the complainant must have firsthand, eyewitness knowledge of the violation. Once the complaint is received, the election authority has 30 days to respond.[19] While this process is essential for enforcing HAVA requirements in Michigan, many voters with disabilities may not have the time, legal knowledge, or resources to pursue filing such a complaint.

In addition to federal laws, the Michigan Election Law also includes provisions on election accessibility.

17 National Disability Rights Network. (2020, January 30). Election Officials Misusing the ADA to Close Polling Places. https://www.ndrn.org/resource/election-officials-misusing-the-ada-to-close-polling-places/

18 Mills, Kim I (1995, February 27).. "Disabilities Act: An 'Unfunded Mandate' Too Potent To Oppose." AP NEWS.

19 ADA National Network. (2023). What Is the Definition of Disability under the ADA? Accessed January 27 from https://adata.org/faq/what-definition-disability-under-ada.

MCL 168.662 of the Michigan Election Law: This statute requires city and township governments in Michigan to abide by the provisions of VAEHA and HAVA in federal and non-federal elections. This means that election officials in Michigan are required during non-federal elections to provide at least one accessible voting system that allows voters with disabilities to cast their ballots privately and independently.[20]

MCL 168.795 of the Michigan Election Law: This statute says that an electronic voting system must "be compatible with or include at least one voting device that is accessible for an individual with disabilities to vote in a manner that provides the same opportunity for access and participation, including secrecy and independence, as provided for other voters," including nonvisual accessibility. Furthermore, each polling place must have at least one accessible voting device.

While key federal laws (VRA, ADA, HAVA, and VAEHA), as well as Michigan state election laws, create the legal framework governing how elections should be run, the critical tasks needed to ensure that elections are administered according to the law are left to the professional public servants in local governments across Michigan – namely, local election officials and administrators.

POLLING PLACE ACCESS AND ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

In Michigan, local clerks are responsible for ensuring that polling places comply with state and federal laws on accessibility. They must select facilities according to state laws that dictate what types of facilities are acceptable, and make any temporary or permanent changes that are needed. They must notify the Secretary of State and any affected voters of site changes and make all the arrangements for sufficient poll workers and equipment to run the voting activities on Election Day. If facilities do not comply with legal requirements, the clerk must make temporary improvements to ensure accessibility. Although the shortlist of acceptable polling places has recently been expanded, it can still be challenging to find facilities to serve as polling locations.

In Michigan, polling places are primarily located in government buildings, schools, libraries, or churches.[21] Because polling places are typically needed only a few times a year, dedicated spaces are not maintained year-round for that exclusive purpose. Despite this limited use as a polling place, each location is required to meet accessibility requirements.

20 U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. (2019). "Settlement Agreement between the United States and the City of Concord, New Hampshire." Accessed January 27, 2023 from https://archive.ada.gov/concord_nh_sa.html.

21 Mich. Comp. Laws § 168.662 (2022) Michigan Legislature, "Section 168.622" in Michigan Election Law (Excerpt) Act 116 of 1954 (n.d.), http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-168-662

However, local officials often lack the necessary funding to remediate access barriers. Both county clerks and local clerks run departments based on a departmental budget.[22] Because their budgets are typically operational, they generally do not include funds for capital improvement projects such as building improvements or construction to improve accessibility. Such unscheduled funds are generally unavailable unless a specific line item has been included in the fiscal year budget. In addition, clerks may not have a detailed enough understanding of polling place accessibility and how they could make temporary or permanent improvements to know what to budget or even that these line items should be included. As a result, in many jurisdictions no money is available to address accessibility requirements.

With 83 counties, 280 cities and 1,240 townships, Michigan contains over 15% of all election jurisdictions in the United States,[23] making it the most decentralized election system in the country.[24] Each of these jurisdictions is led by a clerk, who has additional responsibilities that require time, attention, expertise, and funds. The clerk also determines whether to provide accessible services beyond what is mandated.[25]

OBSERVING ACCESSIBILITY OF POLLING PLACES

In 2024, DDP recruited, trained, and deployed volunteers to visit 294 total locations in metro Detroit during the August Primary and November General Election. Eleven observers conducted audits during the August Primary and ten observers conducted audits during the November General Election. Observers were trained by DDP's Advocacy Director and Voting Access and Election Protection Fellow on the audit questionnaire and the possible answers to each question, as well as what they should be looking for at each location.

The observation was centered on the city of Detroit, the state's single largest jurisdiction, along with other municipalities in the metro area. This region is home to approximately 4.9 million people, nearly half of Michigan's total population of 10 million.[26] Geographically

22 Mich. Comp. Laws § 168.667 – 168.671 (2022) Michigan Legislature, "Section 168.667-168.671" in Michigan Election Law (Excerpt) Act 116 of 1954 (n.d.), http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-116-1954-XXVIII-POLLING-PLACES-EQUIPMENT-SUPPLIES

23 The Pew Charitable Trusts. (2013, April 4). Most Election Jurisdictions Have Small Populations. https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2013/04/04/most-election-jurisdictions-have-small-populations

24 Michigan Department of State. (2023). Michigan's Elections System Structure Overview. https://www.michigan.gov/sos/-/media/Project/Websites/sos/Elections/Voter-Education/Michigans-Elections-System-Structure-Overview.pdf

25 Michigan Legislature, "Section 168.622" in Michigan Election Law (Excerpt) Act 116 of 1954 (n.d.), http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-168-662

26 U.S. Census Bureau, "2020 Decennial Census" https://data.census.gov/profile/Michigan?g=0400000US26.

contiguous jurisdictions allowed the observation team to assign volunteers to areas that crossed municipal or county borders when practical. The team also selected jurisdictions that include diverse demographic characteristics, including race/ethnicity, income/poverty, language, and culture.[27]

Figure 1: Map of 2024 Audit Locations
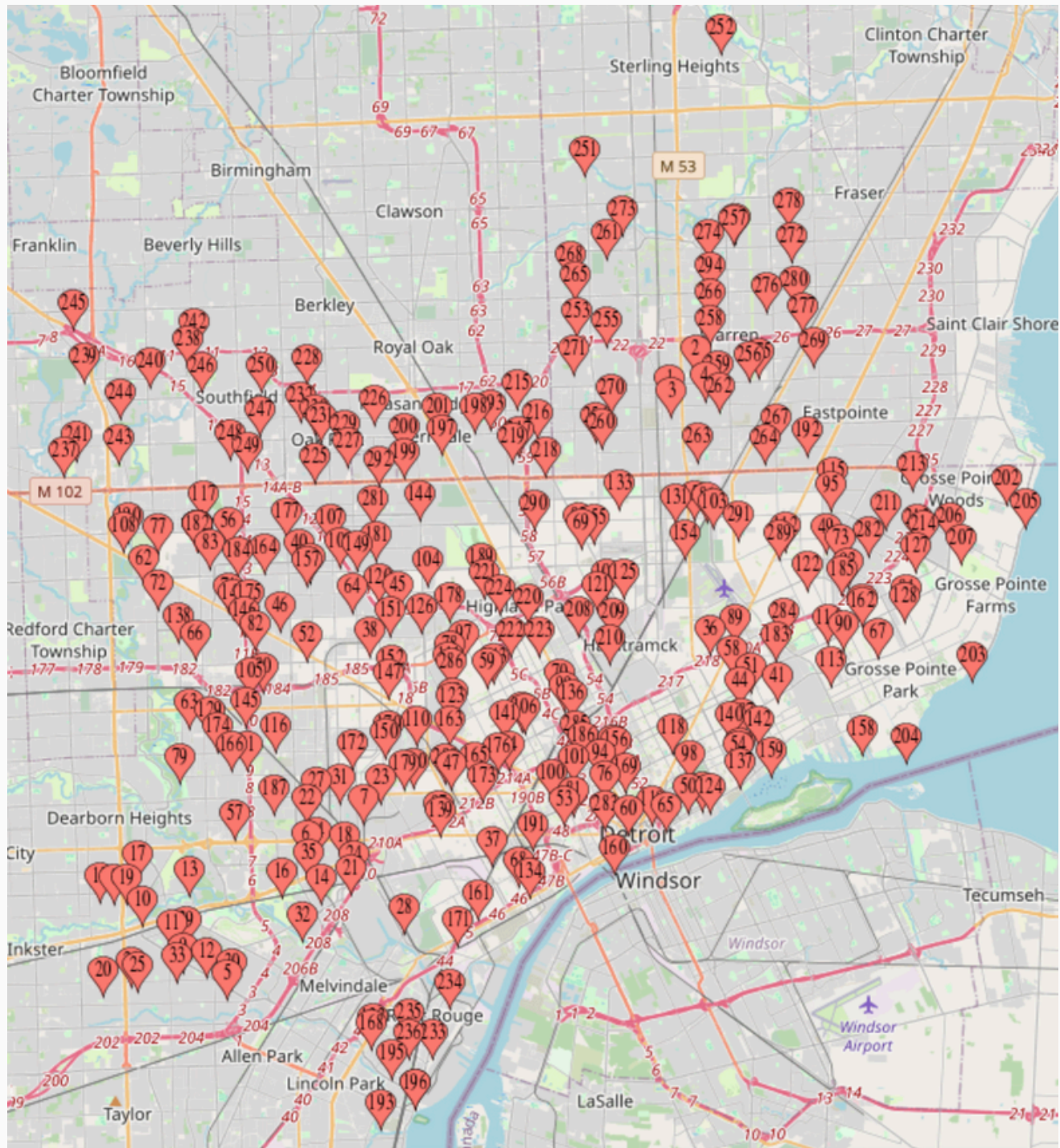
27 U.S. Census Bureau, "2020 Decennial Census"

Overall, the observation teams spanned 21 adjacent cities in the three core counties of Metro Detroit (Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb): Detroit, the enclaves of Hamtramck and Highland Park, Harper Woods, and the five Grosse Pointe communities to the east, Dearborn to the west, and the Downriver communities of River Rouge and Ecorse to the southwest – all in Wayne County; the Oakland County cities of Ferndale, Hazel Park, Oak Park, Royal Oak Township and Southfield; and the Macomb County cities of Center Line, Eastpointe, Sterling Heights, and Warren all on Detroit's northern border.

Volunteer observers visited polling locations during early voting and on Election Day. Observers visited 41 early voting sites separate from Election Day observations. This is particularly important because early voting election administration varies between the city and county clerk based on the jurisdiction. This was Michigan's first year of early voting, allowing voters to have greater flexibility regarding when they could cast their ballot. This is particularly beneficial for disabled voters.

Both the exterior and interior environments of polling locations were observed during the observations. Of the 41 polling locations assessed during early voting for the August 6th election, only 17% of them were fully accessible. 11 polling places only had one access barrier or impediment. If election officials corrected that one issue at each of these polling locations, this would bring the percentage of fully accessible voting locations up to 44%.

Table 1: DDP August Early Voting Data (41 Sites)

Measure	No	Yes	% Yes
Accessible Parking & Pathway	19	22	54%
Accessible Entrances	11	30	73%
Accesible Vat	20	21	51%
Accessible Voting Booth	12	29	71%
Fully accessible polling place?	**34**	**7**	**17%**

Table 2 outlines the number of polling locations assessed in each city in August and November during the August 6 Primary and the November 5 General Election.

Table 2: Number of Polling Locations Observed during August and November by City[26]

City	County	# Polling Locations Observed
Center Line	Macomb	4
Dearborn	Wayne	31
Detroit	Wayne	167
Eastpointe	Macomb	1
Ecorse	Wayne	4
Ferndale	Oakland	5
Grosse Pointe	Wayne	1
Grosse Pointe Farms	Wayne	1
Grosse Pointe Park	Wayne	1
Grosse Pointe Shores	Wayne/Macomb	1
Grosse Pointe Woods	Wayne	2
Hamtramck	Wayne	3
Harper Woods	Wayne	4
Hazel Park	Oakland	6
Highland Park	Wayne	5
Oak Park	Oakland	8
River Rouge	Wayne	4
Royal Oak Township	Oakland	1
Southfield	Oakland	14
Sterling Heights	Macomb	2
Warren	Macomb	29
Total		**294**

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26 These jurisdictions contained 10% of the state's population and presented a demographic spectrum: as large as 640,000 residents and as small as 2,600; majority white, majority Black, and plurality Asian; median incomes of more than double the statewide median, and median incomes of less than half the statewide median; poverty rates as low as 2% and as high as 46%; disability rates as low as 6% and as high as 27% of the local population.

OBSERVATION QUESTIONNAIRE AND MEASURES

The main objective of the election observation teams was to systematically assess the accessibility of polling places, using questionnaires to record information on whether the site had:

- An accessible parking area with a clear pathway into the building
- An accessible entrance
- A fully functional voter assist terminal (VAT)[29] and
- An accessible wheelchair-height booth for casting paper ballots privately.

Each election observer answered several questions in a Google form regarding these key measures. Given that all of the features identified above are necessary to ensure that voters with disabilities have access, a polling place was considered fully accessible only if all of these criteria were fully met.[30] The full questionnaire used by the observer teams can be found in Appendix B.

In addition to questions directly related to the key measures, a limited number of observation questions were included related to other measures that may impact accessibility at a polling location, such as signage related to curbside voting or individuals participating in voter intimidation efforts. While potentially impactful on accessibility for voters, items like these were not considered in assessing the accessibility of a site as they fall outside the accessibility requirements established by current law.

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[29] Voter assist terminals are ballot marking devices designed to assist voters with disabilities. These devices may use audio-only touch screens, pressure-sensitive paddles, or a number of other methods to mark ballots. VATs only mark the ballot; they do not count ballots. Once marked, the ballot is tallied the same as other ballots cast. For more information on Michigan's VATs, visit this website: https://www.michigan.gov/sos/resources/accessibility-and-accommodations

[30] If the answer to one or more questions within a grouping was anything other than "yes," that grouping was deemed not fully accessible. If all four groupings were a "yes" on the aggregate measure, the polling place was deemed fully accessible. For a visual of the grouping of questions please reference Table 2.

Table 3: Voting Access Checklist Questions and Measures

Measures	Coding
MI: Fully accessible parking & pathway?	**Yes, if yes on Q6, Q8, and Q15.**
	Q6. Were there clearly marked accessible parking spots?
	Q8. Was the path from the parking space to the building entrance paved and clear of stairs, narrow doorways, and physical obstacles that would make it hard for a wheelchair user or visually impaired person to enter?
	Q15. Was the path through the building smooth and clear of stairs, narrow doorways, and physical obstacles that would make it hard for a wheelchair user or visually impaired person to enter?
M2: Fully accessible entrance?	**Yes, if yes on Q9, Q10, Q11, and Q12.**
	Q9. Was the wheelchair-accessible entrance to the voting area the main entrance for all voters, or was there a separate wheelchair accessible entrance?
	Q10. If not the main entrance for all voters, was the wheelchair-accessible entrance clearly marked?
	Q11. Was the wheelchair-accessible entrance unlocked?
	Q12. How did the doors to get to the wheelchair-accessible entrance operate?
M3: Fully accessible VAT?	**Yes, if yes on Q16, Q17, Q18, and Q19.**
	Q16. Were there clearly marked accessible parking spots?
	Q17. Did the Accessible Voting System have the accessible controller plugged in and ready for use?
	Q18. Did the Accessible Voting System have the headphones plugged in and ready for use?
	Q19. Was the Accessible Voting System placed to ensure the voter's secrecy?
M4: Fully accessible voting booth?	**Yes, if yes on Q20 and Q21.**
	Q20. Was a wheelchair-height voting booth (for hand-marking paper ballots) set up and ready for use by voters?
	Q21. Was the wheelchair-height voting booth (for hand-marking paper ballots) placed to ensure the voter could mark their paper ballot in secrecy?
M5: Fully accessible polling place?	**Yes, if yes on M1, M2, M3 and M4.**

OBSERVATION FINDINGS: ACCESSIBLE POLLING LOCATIONS

Based on the assessment criteria outlined above, the observation teams found that only **13% of polling places observed were fully accessible**, with 87% of locations inaccessible due to one or more impediments (see table 4). This is unfortunately a decrease of three points from our 2022 observation which found that only 16% of polling places were fully accessible. However, 63 polling places (22% of all locations observed) scored "No" on only one of the four accessibility measures. If remedied, that would raise the number of fully accessible polling places to 34%

Table 4: Summary of Four Accessibility Measures (All DDP Primary/General Election Day Data - 294 Sites)

Measure	NO	YES	% YES
Accessible Parking & Pathway	160	134	46%
Accessible Entrances	116	178	61%
Accessible VAT	123	171	58%
Accessible Voting Booth	124	170	58%
Fully Accessible Polling Place?	**259**	**35**	**13%**

Accessible Parking and Pathway

Most polling places (54%) observed did not have accessible parking and a clear pathway into the voting area. This was the most prevalent impediment observed in 2024. Additionally, many polling locations had only street parking with no accessible spaces, and some had only one parking space designated for disabled voters. An observer noted that one church had a narrow parking stall, inhibiting access, and had faded paint that was no longer visible designating the space as accessible. Common barriers include the following:
- 31 polling places had accessible parking, but the lines were faded and/or the signs were missing.
- 9 polling locations had inadequate ramps present.
- 18 polling places had no curb cuts, broken curb cuts, or curb cuts that were located too far from the voting area.
- 18 polling sites had barriers obstructing passage, including trucks, construction barriers, and various large objects.

- 21 sites had stairs outside of the building without an adequate ramp for access.
- 22 sites had broken pavement and pathways, making it challenging to navigate.

These barriers make it dangerous and difficult for voters with disabilities to access the polling location.

Once inside, there were significant access barriers. 15% of polling locations did not have a smooth and clear path through the building devoid of obstacles. 10 polling sites had stairs with no accessible alternative. One location had a broken chair lift. 18 locations had pathways obstructed with trash cans, voting booths, and various objects. Additionally, narrow spaces made it difficult for voters using mobility aids to get through and navigate. Seven sites required the use of an elevator but required the assistance of an operator or there were no clear instructions regarding the operation of the elevator. One such elevator required the turning of specific keys in order to get it to work. One of our observers witnessed a disabled voter having to track down a staff person to access the elevator to the voting area. This further emphasizes the importance of evaluating both exterior and interior accessibility.

Accessible Entrances

Out of the 294 polling places assessed, 116 (39%) did not have accessible entrances. In many instances, the main entrance to the voting site was not immediately apparent. Of the polling sites that did not have a fully accessible entrance, 58 had an inaccessible main entrance, while 36 did not have a fully accessible separate wheelchair-accessible entrance. In addition, 26 of the 36 (72%) separate accessible entrances were not clearly marked with signage directing voters with disabilities to that entrance. Of the 36 separate entrances, only 10 were unlocked. 10% of polling sites had no wheelchair-accessible entrance. Many observers had to ask poll workers to point them to the accessible entrance due to lack of signage.

An additional access barrier can be heavy doors. 32 polling sites had heavy doors without a button available. Some polling places, such as schools, had buttons present, but they were not functional. The most common issue in regards to the doors were obstructions that prevented voters with mobility aids from entering.

Accessible Voter Assist Terminals

Observers also noted inconsistent availability of the Voter Assist Terminals (VATs). 123 (42%) VATs were not fully accessible. In order for a VAT to be fully accessible, it must be set up, powered on, and ready to be used by voters. At one polling location, there was no VAT set up and available to use. An observer later saw a VAT in a bag next to the wheelchair-height voting booth. The observer inquired why it was not set up, and they were

told the VAT was broken. Additional problems observers encountered included the following: printer errors, a VAT frozen at the PIN entry screen, a VAT with its screen off, and a malfunctioning VAT.

17 (14%) of the 123 polling places that did not have fully accessible VATs did not have the controller plugged in and ready for use. 5 VATs had a controller next to them but not plugged in and in at least 4 instances, the controller was not visible. An observer inquired regarding a missing controller at one polling location, and the poll worker insisted the VAT did not have one because it was touchscreen. This was incorrect, as VATs must have a controller for voters who need non-visual access to the machine.

71 (58%) of the 123 polling places that did not have fully accessible VATs did not have headphones plugged in and ready for use. In at least 25 polling places, observers reported that headphones were near the VAT but were not plugged in. Some observers asked the poll workers to plug them in, and they did, exemplifying how easily accessibility can be improved. 11 polling places had no visible headphones available.

68 (55%) of the 123 polling places that did not have fully accessible VATs did not have the VAT placed to ensure the voters' secrecy. In the majority of cases, the screen was positioned in a way that it was visible to others in the polling place. 13 polling places had no privacy screen available. In 4 polling places, poll workers were using the VAT station as a desk, rest area, or coffee station which should not be the case.

Accessible Voting Booths

124 (42%) sites did not have a fully accessible wheelchair-height voting booth. Observers noted that in 77 polling places, the wheelchair-height voting booth wasn't properly set up (17 polling places) or wasn't available at all (60 instances). However, in 9 polling places, poll workers set up the booths after being asked to do so. In three polling places, poll workers claimed that they did not receive wheelchair-height voting booths, and in one instance, the poll worker did not know that a wheelchair-height voting booth needed to be set up. At another polling location, the chairperson claimed they never set it up because they don't have wheelchair users at their polling location. They further explained that if a wheelchair user needed to vote, they would just have them use the VAT. The largest barrier to access was a lack of privacy, as 122 sites (41% of all polling places) did not have the booths placed in a manner that ensured voters' secrecy.

The significant variance in the setup of accessible voting booths and VATs suggests that the training of poll workers may not adequately emphasize several vital points, such as the

central purpose of the booths, that they must be set up, how to set them up, and that the right to secrecy when casting a ballot is required by both federal and Michigan law.

ACCESSIBILITY BY JURISDICTION

The election observation team aggregated the findings from all polling places observed within individual jurisdictions, as summarized below in Table 5. It is important to note that the number of polling locations observed varies significantly among the jurisdictions, which impacts the percentages as displayed for each measure within each jurisdiction. The number of sites should also be taken into account when considering jurisdictions that received particularly high or low scores based on a limited number of sites.

10 jurisdictions scored 0% on their total accessibility score of polling locations, meaning that no site in that jurisdiction was rated as fully accessible on all four accessibility measures. Those include Eastpointe, Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe Farms, Grosse Pointe Park, Grosse Pointe Shores, Harper Woods, Oak Park, River Rouge, Royal Oak Township and Sterling Heights. Highland Park scored the highest with 60% of their locations being fully accessible. Southfield followed closely behind with 57% of their locations being fully accessible (see table 6). However, it is important to note that the number of polling locations observed varies by jurisdiction.

Table 5: Accessibility Measures by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	M1: Accessible Parking & Pathway	M2: Accessible Entrance	M3: Accessible VAT	M4: Accessible Voting Booth
Center Line	50%	75%	75%	25%
Dearborn	55%	52%	26%	29%
Detroit	32%	50%	70%	55%
Eastpointe	0%	100%	0%	0%
Ecorse	100%	100%	25%	75%
Ferndale	80%	100%	60%	100%
Grosse Pointe	100%	0%	100%	100%
Grosse Pointe Farms	0%	100%	0%	100%
Grosse Point Park	100%	100%	0%	100%
Grosse Point Shores	0%	100%	0%	100%
Grosse Point Woods	100%	50%	100%	100%
Hamtramck	33%	33%	100%	100%
Harper Woods	75%	25%	75%	25%
Hazel Park	50%	83%	100%	50%
Highland Park	60%	100%	100%	100%
Oak Park	37%	50%	25%	87%
River Rouge	25%	75%	0%	0%
Royal Oak Township	100%	100%	0%	100%
Southfield	86%	78%	93%	93%
Sterling Heights	50%	50%	0%	100%
Warren	76%	86%	10%	65%

Table 6: Fully Accessible Polling Places by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Not Fully Accessible	Fully Accessible	% Fully Accessible
Center Line	3	1	25%
Dearborn	29	2	6%
Detroit	152	15	9%
Eastpointe	1	0	0%
Ecorse	3	1	25%
Ferndale	2	3	60%
Grosse Pointe	1	0	0%
Grosse Pointe Farms	1	0	0%
Grosse Point Park	1	0	0%
Grosse Point Shores	1	0	0%
Grosse Point Woods	1	1	50%
Hamtramck	2	1	33%
Harper Woods	4	0	0%
Hazel Park	3	3	50%
Highland Park	2	3	60%
Oak Park	8	0	0%
River Rouge	4	0	0%
Royal Oak Township	1	0	0%
Southfield	6	8	57%
Sterling Heights	2	0	0%
Warren	28	1	3%
Total	**257**	**37**	**13%**

Locations of Polling Places

In Michigan, polling places can be in a wide variety of buildings, from church halls and recreation centers to fire stations. Each of these locations has strengths and weaknesses regarding accessibility for voters with disabilities. Public schools and places of worship made up 76% of polling places in our observation footprint (See Table 7 below).

Table 7: Type of Buildings Used as Polling Locations

Building Type	# of Buildings
Apartment Building	7
Banquet Hall	1
College or University	3
Community or Recreation Center	31
Fire Station	7
Government Building	7
Library	5
Office Building	2
Place of Worship	91
Private School	2
Public School	133
Religious School	1
Retirement Home	4
Total	**294**

Overall, a banquet hall, fire stations, libraries, office buildings, private schools, and a religious school were the least accessible polling places. None of them were comprehensively accessible. The two building types in widest use also had low scores: places of worship (11% fully accessible) and public schools (7% fully accessible). Even the highest-performing building type, colleges and universities, had a low score: Only 67% were fully accessible (See Table 8 below).

Table 8: Accessibility by Type of Buildings Used as Polling Locations

Type of Facility	# Buildings	# Fully Accessible	# With Accessible Parking & Pathway	# With Accessible Entrance	# With Accessible VAT	# With Accessible Voting Booth
Apartment Building	7	1 (14%)	4 (57%)	5 (71%)	3 (43%)	4 (57%)
Banquet Hall	1	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)
College or University	3	2 (67%)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	2 (67%)
Community or Recreation Center	31	9 (29%)	17 (55%)	23 (74%)	20 (64%)	25 (81%)
Fire Station	7	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (86%)	6 (86%)	4 (57%)
Government Building	7	2 (28%)	4 (57%)	5 (71%)	6 (86%)	4 (57%)
Library	5	0 (0%)	2 (40%)	4 (80%)	3 (60%)	3 (60%)
Office Building	2	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Place of Worship	91	11 (12%)	34 (37%)	51 (56%)	62 (68%)	49 (54%)
Private School	2	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)
Public School	133	10 (7%)	65 (49%)	75 (56%)	62 (47%)	74 (56%)
Religious School	1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Retirement Home	4	2 (50%)	4 (100%)	4 (100%)	2 (50%)	3 (75%)
Total	**294**	**37**	**134**	**178**	**171**	**170**

If we examine the type of polling locations based only on their structural features, measures M1 and M2 (accessible parking/pathway and entrance), fire stations, office buildings, private schools, and religious schools were the least accessible, scoring 0% (see table 9). Colleges and universities and retirement homes scored 100% and were fully accessible. **What this tells us is that while a building may be structurally accessible, disabled voters may still have an inaccessible experience voting if it is operationally inaccessible.**

Table 9: Accessibility by Type of Buildings Used as Polling Locations: M1 & M2 ONLY

Type of Facility	# of Buildings	# Fully Accessible M1 & M2	# With Accessible Parking & Pathway	#With Accessible Entrance
Apartment Building	7	3 (43%)	4 (57%)	5 (71%)
Banquet Hall	1	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
College or University	3	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)
Community or Recreation Center	31	15 (48%)	17 (55%)	23 (74%)
Fire Station	7	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (86%)
Government Building	7	3 (43%)	4 (57%)	5 (71%)
Library	5	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	4 (80%)
Office Building	2	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)
Place of Worship	91	27 (29%)	34 (37%)	51 (56%)
Private School	2	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Public School	133	44 (33%)	65 (49%)	75 (56%)
Religious School	1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)
Retirement Home	4	4 (100%)	4 (100%)	4 (100%)
Total	**294**	**100**	**134**	**178**

Many of these sites – such as schools and firehouses –are federally mandated to be accessible outside of their function as a polling site. Their general inaccessibility during the voting season is significant, since many of these impediments are present aside from Election Day. Improving areas where institutions are noncompliant with federal accessibility standards will greatly improve disabled people's ability to interact with their community-at-large throughout the year. We broke down the type of polling locations based on the accessibility policy outside of Election season. 180 sites (61%) fall under ADA Title II. 93 sites are exempt from policies since they are places of worship (see table 10); however, election officials are still required to make temporary modifications to make them accessible on Election Day.

Table 10: Accessibility of Buildings by Accessibility Policy Outside of Election Season

Accessibility Policy	# Buildings	# Fully Accessible	# With Accessible Parking & Pathway	# With Accessible Entrance	# With Accessible VAT	# With Accessible Voting Booth
ADA Title II	180	23 (13%)	90 (50%)	113 (63%)	96 (53%)	107 (59%)
ADA Title III	13	1 (8%)	4 (31%)	6 (46%)	8 (61%)	9 (69%)
Fair Housing Act	8	1 (12%)	5 (62%)	6 (75%)	3 (37%)	4 (50%)
Exempt	93	12 (13%)	35 (38%)	53 (57%)	64 (69%)	50 (54%)
Total	**294**	**37**	**134**	**178**	**171**	**170**

We further broke down the accessibility of polling places based on which policy requires that site to be accessible. Specifically, we were seeking to understand how many of the accessibility barriers are architectural versus operational. Table 11 shows the accessibility of polling places based on M1 and M2 only. Polling places that fall under the Fair Housing Act were the most accessible at 50%.

Table 11: Structural Accessibility by Policy Outside of Election Season

Accessibility Policy	# of Buildings	# Fully Accessible M1 & M2	# With Accessible Parking & Pathway	#With Accessible Entrance
ADA Title II	180	65 (36%)	90 (50%)	113 (57%)
ADA Title III	13	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	6 (46%)
Fair Housing Act	8	4 (50%)	5 (62%)	6 (75%)
Exempt	93	28 (30%)	35 (38%)	49 (53%)
Total	**294**	**100**	**134**	**174**

Lastly, we compared our 2024 data to the data we collected at the same polling locations in 2022. In 2022, the most prevalent impediments were access barriers at the entrance and issues with how the VAT was set up. In 2024, the most prevalent impediments were inaccessible parking and pathways. In 2024, the most accessible features were the accessible entrances and accessible VAT, showing significant improvement from those being the biggest barriers in 2022 (see table 12). Overall, the 242 sites observed in both 2022 and 2024 decreased in accessibility by 6%.

Table 12: Accessibility of Polling Places Visited in Both 2022 and 2024

Measure	% Accessible 2022	% Accessible 2024	% Change
Accessible Parking & Pathway	54%	33%	-21%
Accesible Entrances	45%	59%	+14%
Accessible VAT	45%	62%	+17%
Accessible Voting Booth	60%	54%	-6%
Fully accessible polling place?	**15%**	**9%**	**-6%**

VOTER EXPERIENCES ON ELECTION DAY

DDP is so appreciative of our partners across Michigan who are intentional regarding the tracking and resolution of accessibility barriers. The Election Protection Coalition, made up of over 300 local, state and national organizations, operated the Election Protection Hotline in Michigan which received 37 calls regarding accessibility barriers spanning the 21 jurisdictions we audited. The calls spanned from vehicles blocking entry to the polling place, to malfunctioning VATs, to polling places having no wheelchair-height voting booths. One voter reported observing poll workers carrying an elderly wheelchair user because the entrance was not ADA compliant. While it is important to collect data of these instances, it is just as important to report them in real-time in the event there are resolutions that can be easily implemented.

In addition to data from the Election Protection hotline, our partner Michigan Voices shared data provided by election protection volunteers from their nearly 100 Table Partners. There were 21 reports of accessibility barriers in the jurisdictions we audited. The majority of the reports were regarding lack of accessible entrances, inadequate signage, or malfunctioning VATs.

Third-party Data Collection

It is DDP's goal to collect data beyond the Metro Detroit area. However, we cannot conduct audits alone. We were thrilled when the University of Michigan School of Social Work and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) expressed a desire to conduct accessibility audits during the 2024 General Election for the first time. The observers were trained by DDP's Advocacy Director and DDP's Voting Access and Election Protection Fellow. Of the 73 combined sites, 16% were fully accessible. 31 polling locations only had one access barrier or impediment. If election officials corrected that one issue at each of these polling locations, this would bring the percentage of fully accessible voting locations up to 59% (see table 13).

Table 13: Third-Party November Observations (73 Sites)

Measure	No	Yes	% Yes
Accessible Parking & Pathway	28	45	62%
Accesible Entrances	20	53	73%
Accessible VAT	43	30	41%
Accessible Voting Booth	9	64	88%
Fully accessible polling place?	**61**	**12**	**16%**

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMENDATIONS

Based on the data collected by observers and analyzed by Detroit Disability Power found **persistent challenges in polling place accessibility for voters with disabilities**, which confirms findings from previous studies and affirms the anecdotal experiences of members of the disability community. Beyond this overall finding, Detroit Disability Power has two main conclusions. First, election jurisdictions are not being provided the resources or support necessary to implement and manage these accommodations or effectively remedy challenges promptly. Second, Michigan's high degree of decentralization results in a lack of standardized election administration practices. Variances in the availability of funding by jurisdiction creates inconsistencies in poll worker training. *All of the issues highlighted in this report can be addressed.* With this in mind, we offer the following recommendations to Michigan's election officials.

Coordination, Liaison, and Reporting

Coordinate with the jurisdiction's ADA coordinator to evaluate existing and potential polling place facilities for current accessibility and implementation of any temporary modifications. All public entities with 50 employees or more have an ADA coordinator. Smaller entities without an ADA coordinator should request assistance from the coordinator of another entity, such as the local school district, the county government, or a larger nearby municipality.

Designate a primary contact person for election-related accessibility topics and facilitate easy and accessible ways for staff, poll workers, voters, and advocates to reach them. This point person should be responsible for confirming accessibility in advance and responding to challenges in real time, especially on Election Day and during early and absentee voting. While not all issues can be resolved in real time, the majority can be resolved with the attention of a knowledgeable and committed official.

Training

Standardize poll worker training on voter accessibility issues. Currently, the quality of training depends on the ability of individual clerks who are responsible for understanding the laws and creating their own training materials and curriculum. This results in different training experiences from one jurisdiction to the next, with varying levels of poll worker understanding of accessibility accommodations, the proper placement and operation of accessible voting equipment, and the rights and responsibilities of poll challengers.

Incorporate a "practice election" into poll worker training. In addition to standardized training on voter accessibility issues, a good practice for raising awareness is to have poll workers activate the VAT, use it in a "practice election" to make ballot selections, and submit the ballot using the same process that voters use on Election Day (such as feeding the marked ballot into a tabulator prepared for the practice election). Election Day should not be the first time a poll worker is learning to set up and operate the VAT.

Exterior Accessibility

Clearly mark the accessible path of travel throughout each polling place, even if it appears to be the only path. Use consistent signage for this at each polling place within the jurisdiction. The entrances to Election Day polling places often are not the main entrance. Clear signage will reduce confusion and provide a better voter experience for both disabled and nondisabled voters.

Avoid using large objects to prop open doors. Coordinate with facility owners in advance to ensure the appropriate entries are unlocked, and do not prop open doors unless there is no alternative. When propping open a door is unavoidable, ensure that the object used does not obstruct the doorway. Wheelchair users must be able to get in and out. Incorporate this knowledge into poll worker training. Furthermore, ensure that someone using a mobility aid can easily open the door.

Interior Accessibility

Provide an accessible (seated-height) voting booth for marking a paper ballot and a moveable chair. Not all voters with disabilities choose to use a VAT.

Ensure that VATs and accessible voting booths are placed to protect voters' privacy. Voters using a VAT or an accessible voting booth should have a voting experience equivalent to any other voter at that polling place. Regardless of their distance from other voting stations, both the VAT and the accessible voting booth should have privacy screens around the sides and be angled away from other people's visibility.

Recommendations for Government Officials

As stated earlier, Michigan's decentralized election system poses many challenges. However, all entities can work together to improve voting access. We recommend the following improvements based on the entity:

- We recommend that state entities, whether it be the legislature or the Secretary of State's Office, allocate sufficient funds to support county and city clerks as they seek to make their polling places accessible. Additionally, funding could support audits across the state similar to our audit in Metro Detroit. Expanding the observation territory would paint a more comprehensive picture of accessibility across the state. Furthermore, we recommend state entities provide greater training and guidance to municipalities regarding how they can better comply with Michigan and Federal statutes.

- Municipalities need to focus on structural improvements to polling places. For example, improving sidewalks, eliminating narrow doorways, repairing door push buttons that do not work, etc.

- Local clerks determine how prepared their poll workers are. Consequently, they should focus more heavily on training poll workers on the setup and operation of the VAT, setup of wheelchair-height voting booths, and internal accessibility, such as pathways through the polling place.

ABOUT DETROIT DISABILITY POWER

Detroit Disability Power is a membership organization that works to build the political power of the disability community. We know that in order to end disparities people with disabilities face in regards to housing, employment, education, transportation, healthcare and more, we must organize!

What We Do

- Organize people with disabilities and our allies around local issues that impact our lives
- Collaborate with other organizations engaging in work that affects people with disabilities
- Facilitate Anti-Ableism Workshops for social justice organizations wishing to better understand the systemic oppression of disabled people and that are committed to dismantling able-ism in their work
- Host fun and educational community building events

Our Guiding Principles

Disability is a normal/positive part of human diversity. Our disabilities are essential parts of who we are, places of power and self-love, giving us great assets to share with the world around us.

Nothing About Us, Without Us: We are people with disabilities building power and inclusive social justice movements. We work to dismantle the very real structural and cultural challenges facing us. We organize for the policy and systems change we need and want, therefore making tangible changes in people's lives and shifting power to those most affected by issues.

We organize and serve people with diverse disabilities. We are committed to no hierarchy of disability in our work, engaging with people across disabilities, including chronic illness.

Disabled people have other important identities, which also affect our lived experiences and access to opportunity. Our power-building efforts will always be with an intersectional lens and with attention to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, citizenship status, religion, and other identities that affect our lives.

True Inclusion is Revolutionary. When we evolve our institutions to fully include disabled people, we inevitably build more equitable, accountable, safe, and compassionate communities that are better for everyone.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Disability Demographics by Jurisdiction in Michigan[29]

Jurisdiction	Disability	Hearing Difficulty	Vision Difficulty	Cognitive Difficulty	Ambulatory Difficulty	Self-care Difficulty	Independent Living	No Health Care Coverage
Center Line	13%	3%	3%	3%	7%	3%	6%	2%
Dearborn	20%	5%	6%	14%	9%	4%	7%	7%
Detroit	20%	3%	4%	10%	12%	5%	11%	7%
Eastpointe	17%	3%	3%	7%	10%	5%	9%	6%
Ecorse	25%	6%	7%	14%	11%	5%	12%	7%
Ferndale	10%	3%	2%	5%	4%	1%	4%	5%
Grosse Pointe	7%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Grosse Pointe Farms	11%	3%	1%	3%	7%	2%	4%	1%
Grosse Pointe Park	7%	2%	1%	3%	2%	1%	3%	2%
Grosse Pointe Shores	12%	4%	2%	2%	5%	1%	3%	2%
Grosse Pointe Woods	9%	3%	1%	4%	4%	2%	5%	2%
Hamtramck	11%	2%	3%	5%	5%	3%	6%	10%
Harper Woods	19%	4%	5%	10%	9%	5%	9%	7%
Hazel Park	19%	4%	3%	9%	8%	4%	9%	8%
Highland Park	27%	5%	7%	13%	19%	7%	16%	8%
Oak Park	15%	3%	3%	7%	9%	4%	7%	4%
River Rouge	17%	3%	5%	10%	9%	4%	10%	10%
Royal Oak Township	16%	4%	4%	4%	11%	4%	9%	2%
Southfield	17%	3%	2%	7%	11%	2%	6%	4%
Sterling Heights	13%	3%	2%	5%	7%	3%	7%	5%
Warren	15%	3%	3%	6%	9%	4%	8%	6%

29 U.S. Census Bureau, "2023 American Community Survey" https://data.census.gov/profile/Michigan?g=0400000US26

Appendix B: Observer Checklist Questions

Detroit Disability Power and The Carter Center developed these questions together. The questions were in an online Google Form that observers could access on their smartphones as they went site to site.

Q1. Your Name.

Q2. Your phone number.

Q3. Time of arrival.

Q4. Name of polling place (please use the name on your spreadsheet).

Q5. Was the information listed on the spreadsheet (name, address, and/or precincts) correct?
- Yes – The information on the spreadsheet (name, address, and precincts) is correct.
- No – I discovered a discrepancy. I will describe it below.

Q6. Were there clearly-marked accessible parking spots? (i.e. blue lines, access aisle, and obvious signage in parking lots; or blue lines and obvious signage for on-street parking.)
- Yes – There are easily identifiable parking spots reserved for those with disabilities.
- No – There are no parking spots anywhere marked explicitly for people with disabilities, or the signage is unclear.

Q7. Was there signage visible from the street or parking area with information about curbside voting?
- Yes - there was signage about curbside voting that was visible to voters upon arrival.
- No - there was no signage about curbside voting visible.
- There was signage about curbside voting, but it had fallen over or was blocked.

Q8. Was the path from the parking space to the entrance of the voting area paved and clear of stairs, narrow doorways, and physical obstacles that would make it hard for a wheelchair user or blind/low vision person to enter?
- Yes – the path was paved and clear of any obstacles.
- No – the path was not paved and/or had physical obstacles.

Q9. Was the wheelchair accessible entrance to the voting area the main entrance for all voters, or was there a separate wheelchair-accessible entrance?
- Main entrance for all voters.
- Separate wheelchair-accessible entrance.
- No wheelchair-accessible entrance.

Q10. If not the main entrance for all voters, was the wheelchair-accessible entrance clearly marked?
- The main entrance was accessible and it does not require signage.
- Yes – The accessible entrance was clearly marked.
- No – The accessible entrance was not clearly marked.
- There was no wheelchair-accessible entrance.

Q11. Was the wheelchair-accessible entrance unlocked?
- The main entrance was accessible, so this is not applicable.
- Yes – The accessible entrance was unlocked.
- No – The accessible entrance was locked.
- There was no wheelchair-accessible entrance.

Q12. How did the doors to get to the wheelchair-accessible entrance operate?
- Doors were light enough to open with one hand.
- Doors were obstructed (i.e. propped open by a trash can or another object blocking passage).
- Doors were button-activated.
- Doors were propped open but were not obstructed.
- There was a button, but the button did not work.
- Doors were locked, so I could not determine.
- There was no wheelchair-accessible entrance.

Q13. Was anyone pressuring/intimidating voters in the area around the polling place? (The mere presence of campaign volunteers is not pressure or intimidation.)
- Yes – Someone was pressuring or intimidating voters outside the polling place; I'll explain below.
- No – Nobody was pressuring or intimidating voters outside the polling place.

Q14. Was anyone blocking access to the polling place, or acting violently?
- Yes – Someone was blocking access to the polling place or acting violently; I'll explain below.
- No – Nobody was blocking access to the polling place or acting violently.

Q16. Was the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) available to use? Select all that apply.
- The VAT was set up.
- The VAT was at wheelchair height.
- The VAT was powered on.

Q17. Did the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) have the accessible controller plugged in and ready for use?
- Yes - the VAT had the accessible controller plugged in and ready for use.
- No - the VAT did not have the accessible controller plugged in and ready for use.

Q18. Did the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) have the headphones plugged in and ready for use?
- Yes, the VAT had the headphones plugged in and ready for use.
- No, the VAT did not have the headphones plugged in and ready for use.

Q19. Was the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) placed to ensure the voter's secrecy?
- Yes - the VAT was placed to ensure the voter's secrecy.
- No - the VAT was not placed to ensure the voter's secrecy.

Q20. Was a wheelchair-height voting booth or booths for hand-marking paper ballots available, set up, and ready for use by voters?
- Yes - there was a wheelchair-height voting booth(s) for hand-marking paper ballots set up and ready for use.
- No - the wheelchair-height voting booth(s) were not set up and ready for use.
- There was no wheelchair-height voting booth for hand-marking paper ballots.

Q21. Was the wheelchair-height voting booth(s) (for hand-marking paper ballots) placed to ensure the voter could mark their paper ballot in secrecy?
- Yes – The wheelchair-height voting booth(s) in the building were placed to ensure the voter's secrecy.
- No – The wheelchair-height voting booth(s) in the building were not placed to ensure the voter's secrecy; I'll explain below.
- There was no wheelchair-height voting booth(s) for hand-marking paper ballots.

Q22. Was anyone interfering in the work of the poll workers?
- Yes - Someone was interfering in the work of the poll workers; I will explain below.
- No – Nobody was interfering in the work of the poll workers.

Q23. Are there any photos of access barriers taken outside the polling place you'd like to share? Please upload them here or email them. If emailing, be sure to include the name of the polling site.

Q24. (optional) Is there anything else you want to report?

Q25. Time of departure.