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Goucher Poll Releases Second Round of Inaugural Results

Citizens Share Perceptions of Politicians, National and Statewide Trajectory

Baltimore –The results of the inaugural Goucher Poll are in. The poll, conducted October 21-25, asked Maryland residents for their perspectives regarding the favorability ratings of President Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, and Martin O’Malley; right track/wrong direction of the nation; personal financial situation; and perceptions of state spending and taxation.

The poll surveyed a dual-frame (landlines and cell phones) random sample of 667 Maryland residents and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.79 percentage points. The sample is of all Maryland residents and does not restrict by registered or likely voters.

Highlights of the results are included below. Additional crosstabs of the survey results are available upon request, as are word clouds of one-word descriptions of Obama, Romney, and O’Malley. Mileah Kromer, the director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center, is available for comment regardless of the weather. She can be reached at mileah.kromer@goucher.edu or 724-840-0990.

Favorability Ratings

Sixty percent of Marylanders have a favorable view of President Barack Obama, while 32 percent have an unfavorable view. Former Massachusetts governor and current presidential candidate Mitt Romney was not viewed as favorably, with 64 percent of citizens expressing an unfavorable view and 27 percent expressing a favorable view.

Citizens were slightly more divided on their opinions toward current Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley, with 36 percent of Marylanders having an unfavorable view and 45 percent having a favorable view. Eighteen percent of Marylanders indicated they “don’t know” whether they have a favorable or unfavorable view of the governor.

The Goucher Poll also asked citizens to describe Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, and Martin O’Malley using only one word.

The most common words to describe President Obama are “honest,” “intelligent,” “determined,” “leader,” and “awesome.” The most common words used to describe Mitt Romney are “liar,” “dishonest,” “untrustworthy,” “flip-flopper,” and “businessman.”

“The most common words used to describe Barack Obama and Mitt Romney reflect the partisan climate in the state and the rhetoric from the campaigns,” said Mileah Kromer, director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center. “President Obama has worked during campaign stops, advertisements, and the debates to cast doubts on the truthfulness of Romney’s campaign promises. And it appears that the work is paying off, at least here in Maryland.”

When asked to describe Martin O’Malley, citizens label him as “ambitious,” “liberal,” “dishonest,” “dedicated,” and “politician.”

“It is very telling that ‘ambitious’ was the most frequent word used to describe Martin O’Malley,” said Kromer. “With his now-regular appearances on national political news shows and his primetime speaking spot at the DNC, it is no secret that Governor O’Malley has national political aspirations.”

Direction of Country/Personal Financial Situation

Fifty-six percent of residents think that things in the nation are headed in the right direction, while 40 percent think things have gotten off on the wrong track.

When asked about their current financial situations, 41 percent say they are about the same as they were a year ago; 34 percent say they are better; and 24 percent say they are worse.

Looking ahead a year from now, half of residents expects their financial situations to get better. Eleven percent think their financial situation will get worse, while 31 percent expect things to stay about the same.

State Spending and Taxes

Respondents were asked whether they thought the state spends “too little,” “too much,” or “about the right amount” on certain priorities.

Percent saying state is spending “too little” on:

- Public schools (65)
- Healthcare (44)
- Community colleges (44)
- Environment and natural resources (41)
- Public safety (38)
- Four-year colleges and universities (38)
- Transportation (33)

Marylanders were also asked about how much different groups were paying in state taxes. Only 5 percent of Maryland residents said that middle-income people were paying “too little,” while 60 percent said that higher-income people were paying “too little.”

Percent saying group is paying “too little” in state taxes:

- Large businesses and corporations (65)
- Higher-income people (60)
- Lower-income people (17)
- Small businesses (7)
- Middle-income people (5)



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About the Goucher Poll

The Goucher Poll is conducted under the auspices of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center, which is housed in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Goucher College. Directed by Mileah Kromer, Ph.D., the Goucher Poll conducts surveys on public policy, economic, and social issues in Maryland.

Goucher College supports the Goucher Poll as part of its mission to instill in its students a sense of community where discourse is valued and practiced. The Goucher Poll is fully funded by the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center endowment and does not take additional funding from outside sources.

The Goucher Poll seeks to improve public discourse in the state by providing neutral and nonbiased information on citizen perceptions and opinions. The data collected by the Goucher Poll is used to support faculty and student research.

Survey Methodology

To ensure all Maryland citizens are represented, the Goucher Poll is conducted using random digit dialing (RDD) of a stratified random sample using landline and cellular telephone numbers. The sample of telephone numbers for the survey is obtained from Survey Sampling International, LLC (<http://www.surveysampling.com/>).

The survey was conducted **Sunday, October 21, through Thursday, October 25, 2012**. During this time, interviews were conducted from 1 to 6 p.m. on Sunday and from 5 to 9 p.m. on Monday through Thursday. The Goucher Poll uses Voxco Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software to administer its surveys. Interviews are conducted by a staff of professionally trained, paid student interviewers.

Interviewers attempted to reach respondents with working phone numbers a maximum of five times. Only Maryland adults—residents aged 18 years or older—were eligible to participate.

Interviews were not conducted with adults who were reached at business or work numbers. For each landline number reached, one adult from that household was selected on the basis of being the oldest or youngest adult in that residence. Thirty-five percent of the interviews were conducted on a cell phone, and 65 percent were conducted on a landline.

Interviews for this survey were completed with 667 Maryland citizens. For a sample size of 667 there is a 95 percent probability that the survey results have a plus or minus 3.79 percent margin of error from the actual population distribution for any given survey question. Margin of errors are higher for subsamples.

Survey Question Design

The Goucher Poll provides the questions as worded and the order in which they were administered to respondents.

BRACKED ITEMS []: Items and statements in brackets are rotated to ensure that respondents do not receive a set order of response options presented to them, which maintains question construction integrity by avoiding respondent acquiescence based on question composition.

Example: [agree or disagree] or [disagree or agree]

PROBE (p): Some questions contain a “probe” maneuver to determine a respondent’s intensity of opinion/perspective. Probe techniques used in this questionnaire mainly consist of asking a respondent if his or her response is more intense than initially provided.

Example: Do you have a [favorable or unfavorable] opinion of President Obama?

PROBE: Would you say very favorable/unfavorable?

OPEN ENDED: The open-ended question provides no response options, i.e. it is entirely up to the respondent to provide the response information. Any response options provided to the interviewer are not read to respondents; they are only used to help reduce interviewer error and time in coding the response.

VOLUNTEER (v): Volunteer responses means that the interviewer did not offer that response option in the question as read to the respondent. Interviewers are instructed not to offer “don’t know” or “refused” or “some other opinion” to the respondent, but the respondent is free to volunteer that information for the interviewer to record.

Sample Demographics

	MD population parameter	Weighted sample estimate
Gender		
Male	0.48	0.48
Female	0.52	0.52
Age		
18 to 24 years	0.13	0.13
25 to 34 years	0.18	0.17
35 to 44 years	0.17	0.18
45 to 54 years	0.20	0.20
55 to 64 years	0.16	0.16
65 years and older	0.16	0.16
Race		
White	0.63	0.59
Black	0.29	0.31
Other	0.08	0.10
Region		
Capitol	0.36	0.38
Central	0.46	0.46
Eastern	0.08	0.07
Southern	0.06	0.05
Western	0.04	0.04

Population parameters are based on Census estimates as of July 2011.

Sample is weighted by gender, age, race, and region.

Distribution of regions

Capitol—Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George’s

Central—Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard

Eastern—Kent, Queen Anne’s, Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset, Worcester

Southern—Calvert, Charles, St. Mary’s

Western—Garrett, Allegany, Washington

Survey Results¹

Favorability Ratings and Descriptions

Q: OBAMAFAV

Do you have a [favorable or unfavorable] opinion of President Barack Obama?

PROBE

	Percent
Very unfavorable (p)	21.6
Unfavorable	10.6
Favorable	25.4
Very favorable (p)	34.7
Don't know (v)	6.8
Refused (v)	0.9
Total=667, +/- 3.79	100.0

Q: MITTFAV

Do you have a [favorable or unfavorable] opinion of presidential candidate Mitt Romney?

PROBE

	Percent
Very unfavorable (p)	34.9
Unfavorable	29.1
Favorable	17.0
Very favorable (p)	9.6
Don't know (v)	8.6
Refused (v)	0.7
Total=667, +/- 3.79	100.0

¹ Due to weighting, percent totals may not add up to exactly 100.

Q: OMALLFAV

Do you have a [favorable or unfavorable] opinion of Governor Martin O'Malley?

PROBE

	Percent
Very unfavorable (p)	18.9
Unfavorable	16.9
Favorable	34.3
Very favorable (p)	10.8
Don't know (v)	18.3
Refused (v)	0.8
Total=667, +/- 3.79	100.0

Q: OBAMAONE

What one word best describes President Barack Obama?

[OPEN ENDED]

Top 10 Words*

	Percent
"honest"	3.5
"intelligent"	3.3
"determined"	2.5
"leader"	2.3
"awesome"	1.9
"socialist"	1.5
"confident"	1.5
"smart"	1.3
"trying"	1.2
"integrity"	1.1
"thoughtful"	1.1
"strong"	1.1

Total=667

*Full list of words is available upon request.

Q: MITTONE

What one word best describes presidential candidate Mitt Romney?

[OPEN ENDED]

Top 10 Words*

	Percent
"liar"	5.4
"dishonest"	3.8
"untrustworthy"	3.2
"flip-flopper"	2.5
"businessman"	2
"conservative"	1.7
"sneaky"	1.7
"rich"	1.4
"inconsistent"	1.4
"competent"	1.2

Total=667

*Full list of words is available upon request.

Q: OMALLEYONE

What one word best describes Governor Martin O'Malley?

[OPEN ENDED]

Top 10 Words*

	Percent
"ambitious"	2.3
"liberal"	2.2
"dishonest"	1.5
"dedicated"	1.4
"politician"	1.3
"taxes"	1.2
"fair"	1.1
"liar"	1
"good"	1
"trying"	0.9
"progressive"	0.9
"longevity"	0.9

Total=667

*Full list of words is available upon request.

Right Direction/Wrong Track and Economic Situation

Q: TRACK

In general, do you think things in the nation are [headed in the right direction, or have they gotten off on the wrong track]?

	Percent
Wrong track	40.3
Right direction	55.8
Don't know (v)	4.0
Total=667, +/- 3.79	100.0

Q: ECONPAST

Thinking back, is your current personal financial situation [better, about the same, or worse] than it was a year ago?

	Percent
Worse	23.9
About the same	41.0
Better	34.1
Don't know (v)	0.4
Refused (v)	0.6
Total=667, +/- 3.79	100.0

Q: ECONFUTURE

Now, thinking ahead, do you expect your current financial situation to [get better, stay about the same, or get worse] a year from now?

	Percent
Get worse	10.9
Stay about the same	31.3
Get better	49.6
Don't know (v)	7.8
Refused (v)	0.4
Total=667, +/- 3.79	100.0

State Spending

Q: SPEND

Next, I'm going to ask you some questions about state spending in Maryland.

I'm interested in whether you think government [**spends too little, about right the right amount, or too much**] in some areas.

[ITEMS ROTATED]

	Too little	Right amount	Too much	DK/ refused (v)
Healthcare	43.9	28.4	13.3	14.4
Public schools	65.2	20.9	7.7	6.2
Four-year colleges and universities	37.6	34.2	10.4	17.7
Community colleges	43.8	32.3	4.3	19.6
Transportation	32.9	44.4	11.0	11.8
Public safety	38.0	44.1	9.1	8.8
Environment and natural resources	41.1	31.9	12.9	14.0
Total=667, +/- 3.79				

State Taxes

Q: TAXGRP1

Next, I'm going to ask you about some different groups in Maryland and how much they pay in taxes.

Please tell me whether you think the following group is paying [**too little, their fair share, or too much**] in state taxes. . .

[ITEMS ROTATED]

	Too little	Fair share	Too much	DK/ refused (v)
Higher-income people	60.0	23.2	8.1	8.6
Lower-income people	16.9	38.2	34.5	10.5
Middle-income people	4.8	43.8	46.1	5.2
Small businesses	6.5	40.8	40.8	11.9
Large businesses and corporations	65.4	15.9	8.0	10.7
Total=667, +/- 3.79				