



RESULTS EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, AT NOON EST

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Baltimore – Twenty-eight percent of Maryland residents indicate the economy is the most important issue facing the state today. Another 13 percent say the most important issue is taxes, followed by 10 percent saying it is education and gun control, respectively.

Perceptions of State Government and Officials

Citizens were divided on their opinions toward Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley and the Maryland General Assembly. Forty-six percent of Marylanders have a favorable view of Governor O’Malley, while 45 percent have an unfavorable view. When asked about the job O’Malley was doing as governor of Maryland, 47 percent approved, and 43 percent disapproved.

Thirty-eight percent of Marylanders disapprove, and 38 percent of Marylanders approve of the way the Maryland General Assembly is handling its job, while a quarter of citizens indicated they “don’t know.”

Forty-seven percent believe the state has gotten off on the wrong track, while 44 percent think it is going in the right direction. Sixty-four percent of residents believe they can trust the state government to do what is in the public’s interest “some” or “all” of the time.

Death Penalty

Fifty-one percent of Maryland citizens are opposed to ending the use of the death penalty in the state; 43 percent support ending it. Fifty-five percent disagree that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to murder, while 37 percent think it does.

Forty-eight percent of Marylanders favor life in prison as a punishment for murder, while 40 percent favor the death penalty.

When asked to estimate how many people have been executed in Maryland over the past 10 years, nearly half overestimated the amount, and 18 percent indicated they “don’t know.” Thirty-three percent estimated that the state executed anywhere from zero to three individuals in the past 10 years. Two individuals have been executed in the state in past 10 years: Steven Howard Oken (2004) and Wesley Eugene Baker (2005).

“During this past week, the Maryland General Assembly has taken the first steps to add Maryland to the list of 17 other states that have abolished the use of the death penalty,” said Mileah Kromer, director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center. “While citizens appear to overestimate its use, prefer life imprisonment without parole, and express doubts over whether the death penalty deters murder, half of Maryland residents do not want the death penalty taken completely off the table.”

Transportation

Maryland citizens were asked to offer their opinions on the biggest transportation issues in the state. More than a quarter mentioned an issue dealing with public transportation; 19 percent cited an issue with infrastructure; 18 percent mentioned an issue with congestion and traffic; and 17 percent expressed concern about the costs associated with transportation in the state.

Respondents then were asked to rate the roads and highways and public transportation in the state on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “very bad,” and 5 means “excellent.” Positive perceptions of Maryland’s roads and highways were higher than for its public transportation: 33 percent rated Maryland’s highways and roads a 4 or 5, while only 23 percent gave public transportation in the state a 4 or 5.

Marylanders were divided on their opinions toward the speed cameras in use throughout the state. Forty-nine percent of residents indicate they are an “ineffective” tool for reducing speeding, while 48 percent view them as being “effective.”

Guns

Maryland residents were asked their opinions on several of the gun laws and regulations being discussed in Annapolis.

83 percent support requiring a license for handgun buyers.

82 percent support fingerprinting as a requirement for purchasing a handgun.

77 percent support prohibiting anyone who was involuntarily committed—for any length of time—to a mental health facility from purchasing a gun.

61 percent support a statewide ban on the sale of assault weapons.

59 percent support a statewide ban on the sale of high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 bullets.

The poll, conducted March 3-7, surveyed a dual-frame (landlines and cell phones) random sample of 791 Maryland residents and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.48 percentage points. The sample is of all Maryland residents and does not restrict by registered or likely voters.

Additional crosstabs of the survey results are available upon request, and Mileah Kromer, the director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center, is available for comment. She can be reached at mileah.kromer@goucher.edu or 724-840-0990.

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 are 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, March 3, to Thursday, March 7. 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 791 Maryland citizens. For a sample size of 791 there is a 95 percent probability that the survey results have a plus or minus 3.48 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	.48	.50
Female	.52	.50
Age		
18 to 24 years	.13	.13
25 to 34 years	.18	.18
35 to 44 years	.17	.17
45 to 54 years	.20	.20
55 to 64 years	.16	.16
65 years and older	.16	.16
Race		
White	.63	.63
Black	.29	.23
Other	.08	.14
Region		
Capitol	.36	.36
Central	.46	.46
Eastern	.08	.08
Southern	.06	.06
Western	.04	.04

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

Sample is weighted by age, gender, and region.

Distribution of Regions

Capitol—Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George’s

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

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

Southern—Calvert, Charles, St. Mary’s

Western—Allegany, Garrett, Washington

Other Sample Demographics

Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

If respondent indicates they are an Independent:

Since you indicated you were an Independent, during elections, do you typically lean toward the Republican or Democratic candidate?

Party Identification	
Republican	.31
Democrat	.53
Independent	.10
Other	.06

Do you, or a member of your household, own a gun?

Gun Ownership	
Yes	.33
No	.67

Survey Results¹

Q: IMPISSUE

What do you think is the most important issue facing the state of Maryland today?

[OPEN ENDED]

	Percent
Economy/Jobs	27.8
Taxes	13.4
Education	10.4
Guns/Gun Control	9.7
Budget deficit	7.8
Transportation/roads/mass transit	3.0
Environmental concerns	2.2
Crime	2.7
Dislike Government Officials/Parties	2.7
Gay Marriage	1.4
Healthcare	1.5
Other	13.2
Don't Know/Refused (v)	4.2
Total=791, +/- 3.48	100.0

¹ Percent totals may not add up to 100 due to weighting and/or rounding.

Job Approval/Favorability Ratings

Q: OMALLFAV

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

PROBE

	Percent
Very Unfavorable (p)	26.1
Unfavorable	19.2
Favorable	34.6
Very Favorable (p)	11.2
Don't know (v)	8.4
Refused (v)	0.4
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

Q: OMALLJOB

Do you [approve or disapprove] of the way Martin O'Malley is handling his job at governor?

PROBE

	Percent
Strongly Disapprove (p)	25.4
Disapprove	17.1
Approve	38.4
Strongly Approve (p)	8.4
Don't know (v)	10.6
Refused (v)	0.1
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

Q: MDGAALL

Now, thinking about the Maryland state legislature, do you [approve or disapprove] of the way the Maryland General Assembly is handling its job?

PROBE

	Percent
Strongly Disapprove (p)	14.5
Disapprove	23.1
Approve	32.4
Strongly Approve (p)	5.1
Don't know (v)	24.8
Refused (v)	0.1
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

Q: TRACK

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

	Percent
Wrong Track	46.8
Right Direction	43.6
Don't know (v)	9.7
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

Q: STINT

How much of the time—[none, very little, some, or all of the time]—do you think you can trust the state government in Annapolis do what is in the public's interest?

	Percent
None of the time	13.5
Very little of the time	19.8
Some of the time	60.4
All of the time	3.7
Don't know (v)	2.1
Refused (v)	0.4
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

Death Penalty

[DEATH1 to DEATH3 Rotated/Randomized]

Q: DEATH1

As you may have heard, the state government is considering ending the use of the death penalty in Maryland. Do you [support or oppose] abolishing the death penalty in Maryland?

PROBE

	Percent
Strongly Oppose (p)	28.8
Oppose	22.1
Support	18.9
Strongly Support (p)	23.7
Don't know (v)	6.0
Refused (v)	0.5
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

Q: DEATH2

Do you [agree or disagree] that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to the commitment of murder—that it lowers the murder rate?

PROBE

	Percent
Strongly Disagree (p)	24.5
Disagree	30.6
Agree	18.6
Strongly Agree (p)	18.1
Don't know (v)	7.5
Refused (v)	0.7
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

Q: DEATH3

If you could choose between the following, which do you think is the better penalty for murder—[the death penalty or life imprisonment with absolutely no possibility of parole]?

	Percent
Death Penalty	40.0
Life in Prison	47.5
Don't know (v)	1.1
Refused (v)	9.3
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

Q:DEATH4

Taking your best guess, about how many people do you think have been executed by the state of Maryland over the past 10 years?

[OPEN ENDED]

	Percent
0	15.1
1 to 3	17.6
4 to 5 (includes "less than 5")	12.9
6 to 10 (includes "less than 10")	14.2
11 to 20 (includes "less than 20")	7.5
21 to 50 (includes "less than 50")	4.6
51 to 100 (includes "less than 100")	4.0
More than 100	5.9
Don't Know/Refused (v)	18.1
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

Transportation

Q: TRANSISS

Changing topics to transportation, what do you think is the biggest transportation issue in Maryland?

[OPEN ENDED]

	Percent
Public transportation—quality, efficiency, service, schedule, availability	26.1
Infrastructure issue--condition and/or maintenance of Maryland's roads/highways/bridges	19.2
Traffic/congestion/commute time	17.8
Concerned about rising costs-taxes, tolls, gas prices, cost of public transportation	17.0
DC/Baltimore Beltway—condition and travel time to DC via highway	2.1
Safety Concerns due to other drivers—DUI, texting while driving	1.7
Speed Cameras	1.0
No transportation problems	0.7
Other	3.7
Don't Know/Refused (v)	10.7
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

Q: SPEED

Now, thinking about the speed cameras throughout the state of Maryland ... do you think that they are an [effective or ineffective] tool for reducing speeding?

PROBE

	Percent
Very Ineffective (p)	24.7
Ineffective	24.3
Effective	29.8
Very Effective (p)	18.3
Don't know (v)	2.6
Refused (v)	0.3
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0

Q: TRANS1

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “very bad” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you *rate the condition of the roads and highways* in the state of Maryland?

Q: TRANS2

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “very bad” and 5 means “excellent,” how would you rate *public transportation* in the state of Maryland?

	Roads and Highways	Public Transportation
1 “Very Bad”	8.4	8.7
2	13.8	21.1
3	43.6	34.1
4	28.6	18.2
5 “Excellent”	4.8	4.3
Don’t know (v)	0.8	13.5
Total=791, +/-3.48	100.0	100.0

Guns

Q: GUNMAG

Do you [support or oppose] a statewide ban on the sale of high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 bullets?

Q: GUNPRINT

Do you [support or oppose] finger printing as a requirement for purchasing a hand gun?

Q: GUNLICEN

Do you [support or oppose] requiring a license for handgun buyers?

Q: GUNASST

Do you [support or oppose] a statewide ban on the sale of assault weapons?

Q: GUNMENT

Do you [support or oppose] prohibiting anyone who was involuntarily committed—for any length of time—to a mental health facility from purchasing a gun?

	Strongly Oppose (p)	Oppose	Support	Strongly Support (p)	DK/Refused (v)
A statewide ban on the sale of high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 bullets	23.4	14.9	17.8	40.9	3.2
Finger printing as a requirement for purchasing a hand gun	10.8	5.6	29.2	52.7	1.6
Requiring a license for handgun buyers	8.9	6.3	30.5	52.3	2.1
A statewide ban on the sale of assault weapons	22.4	12.8	20.4	40.7	3.8
Prohibiting anyone who was involuntarily committed to a mental health facility from purchasing a gun	9.4	9.6	29.7	47.3	4
Total=791, +/-3.48					