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Goucher Poll Asks Maryland Citizens About Same-Sex Marriage, Immigration, and Marijuana

Baltimore – The Goucher Poll asked Maryland citizens for their opinions toward same-sex marriage, immigration, and marijuana. Highlights of the results regarding these pressing issues in the state are detailed below.

When asked their opinion on the effects that same-sex marriage has had on Maryland society since it became legal last year, 28 percent of citizens indicate it has changed Maryland society for the better, and 44 percent indicate it has had no effect. Twenty-three percent indicate it has changed Maryland society for the worse.

Marylanders are divided in their opinions toward the new gun laws the state government passed last year and recently implemented on October 1. Twenty-seven percent of Marylanders think the new gun laws are “too strict,” while 32 percent think they are “not strict enough.” Another 23 percent think they are now “about right.”

The majority of Maryland residents (53 percent) continue to support allowing a pathway to U.S. citizenship for undocumented immigrants; however, this support has waned since October 2012. Twenty-six percent of residents believe undocumented immigrants should be required to leave their jobs and the United States, while 15 percent support a temporary guest-worker program.

Fifty-one percent support making marijuana use legal in the state, while 40 percent oppose legalization. Ninety percent of Marylanders support the use of marijuana for medical purposes, if prescribed by a doctor. Finally, when asked about the consequences for possessing small amounts of marijuana, 49 percent of residents support policies that focus on fines, and 34 percent are in favor of rehabilitation. Six percent prefer measures that focus on jail time.

“When it comes to marijuana use in the state, a slight majority of Marylanders support legalization for small amounts, and a large majority support the drug’s use for medicinal purposes,” said Mileah Kromer, director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center. “Citizens of the state also seem to support the decriminalization of marijuana, favoring policies that focus on rehabilitation and fines, rather than jail time for possession. This will be an issue to watch for the upcoming legislative session.”

The poll, conducted October 27-31, surveyed a dual-frame (landlines and cell phones) random sample of 665 Maryland residents and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.8 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. For additional media requests, please contact Kristen Pinheiro, director of media relations, at 443-253-3680 or kristen.pinheiro@goucher.edu.



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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, 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, October 27, to Thursday, October 31. During this time, interviews were conducted 1-9 p.m. on Sunday and 5-9 p.m. 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-eight percent of the interviews were conducted on a cell phone, and 62 percent were conducted on a landline.

Interviews for this survey were completed with 665 Maryland citizens. For a sample size of 665 there is a 95 percent probability the survey results have a plus or minus 3.8 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 respondents do not receive a set order of response options presented to them, which maintains question construction integrity by avoiding respondent agreement 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 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	.48
Female	.52	.52
Age		
18 to 24 Years	.13	.13
25 to 34 Years	.18	.18
35 to 44 Years	.17	.18
45 to 54 Years	.20	.20
55 to 64 Years	.16	.16
65 Years and Older	.16	.15
Race		
White	.63	.61
Black	.29	.31
Other	.08	.08
Region		
Capitol	.36	.37
Central	.46	.47
Eastern	.08	.07
Southern	.06	.05
Western	.04	.04

*Population parameters are based on Census estimates as of July 2011.
Sample is weighted by age, race, 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:

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

Party Identification	
Republican	.27
Democrat	.54
Independent	.11
Other	.07
Don't Know/Refused (v)	.01

Survey Results¹

Q: SOCIETY

As you may know, same-sex couples are now permitted to marry legally here in Maryland. Do you believe this has changed Maryland society for [the better, the worse or has it had no effect]?

	October 2012*	October 2013
Change for the Better	22.3	28.4
Have no Effect	41.6	43.6
Change for the Worse	31.8	23.0
Don't Know (v)	3.2	4.3
Refused (v)	1.1	0.7
Total=	100.0 (667, +/-3.7)	100.0 (665, +/-3.8)

*Note: Question wording for October 2012 was as follows: "Taking your best guess, do you think that allowing two people of the same sex to legally marry will [change our society for the better, have no effect, or change our society for the worse]?"

Q: GUNSTRICT

On October 1, Maryland implemented its new gun laws. Do you think these gun laws are [now too strict, about right, or still not strict enough]?

	Percent
Not Strict Enough	31.9
About Right	22.6
Too Strict	26.6
Don't Know (v)	18.3
Refused (v)	0.7
Total=665, +/-3.8	100.0

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

Q: IMMGEN

Now, thinking more generally about undocumented immigrants in the United States. I'm going to read you three statements, and I'd like for you to tell me which one comes closest to your opinion.

[STATEMENTS ROTATED]

#1 Undocumented immigrants should be allowed to stay in their jobs and to eventually apply for U.S. citizenship.

#2 Undocumented immigrants should be allowed to stay in their jobs as temporary guest workers but not to apply for U.S. citizenship.

#3 Undocumented immigrants should be required to leave their jobs and leave the United States.

	October 2012	October 2013
Statement #1	62.7	53.4
Statement #2	15.2	15.1
Statement #3	16.9	25.9
Some Other Opinion (v)	2.8	3.3
Don't Know (v)	1.7	2.0
Refused (v)	0.8	0.3
Total=	100.0 (667, +/- 3.79)	100.0 (665, +/-3.8)

Q: POTLEG

Next, I'm going to ask you a few questions about marijuana. In general, do you [support or oppose] making the use of marijuana legal in Maryland?

PROBE

	Percent
Strongly Oppose (p)	19.5
Oppose	20.8
Support	25.9
Strongly Support (p)	25.0
Don't Know (v)	7.5
Refused (v)	1.3
Total=665, +/-3.8	100.0

Q: POTMED

Do you [support or oppose] allowing the use of marijuana for medical purposes, if prescribed by a doctor?

PROBE

	Percent
Strongly Oppose (p)	3.8
Oppose	4.3
Support	39.0
Strongly Support (p)	50.7
Don't Know (v)	2.1
Refused (v)	0.1
Total=665, +/-3.8	100.0

Q: POTFAVOR

Now, thinking generally about the consequences for possessing small amounts of marijuana, do you favor policies that focus [more on jail time, more on rehabilitation, or more on fines]?

	Percent
Jail	5.8
Rehabilitation	33.7
Fines	48.9
Some Other Policy (v)	8.5
Don't Know (v)	2.9
Refused (v)	0.2
Total=665, +/-3.8	100.0