



RESULTS EMBARGOED UNTIL TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, AT NOON E.S.T.

Press Contact Information

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Goucher Poll Has Marylanders Weigh In on State Parks

Baltimore – The Goucher Poll asked Maryland residents for their perspectives regarding Maryland state parks, including park use, activities, goals, and barriers to visitation.

Use of Maryland State Parks

In terms of visitation of Maryland state parks during the last year, Maryland residents reported:

- 25 percent visited 1-2 times;
- 28 percent visited 3-9 times;
- 16 percent visited 10 or more times; and
- 32 percent have not visited any state park during this time frame.

Residents who had visited a Maryland state park at least once during the past year were asked to rate their overall experience on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). A large majority (82 percent) rated their experience at Maryland state parks at a 4 or 5.

More than half of Maryland residents indicated they are “very interested” in visiting a Maryland state park during the next year; 35 percent indicated they were “somewhat interested” in visiting a park. Thirteen percent of residents said they are “not at all interested” in visiting a Maryland state park during the upcoming year.

Park Activities

Marylanders were asked to rate—on a scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely)—how likely they would be to participate in activities offered at various parks across the state.

Percent Likely to Participate (4 or 5)

Visiting historic sites – 69 percent

Hiking – 56 percent
Fishing – 42 percent
Guided nature programming – 38 percent
Canoeing or kayaking – 38 percent
Camping – 36 percent
Mountain biking – 26 percent
Hunting – 12 percent

Park Goals

When asked what goals were the most important for the Maryland Park Service to achieve, more than 80 percent of Marylanders said preserving historic sites, improving natural areas for wildlife, and conserving more land to protect natural resource were important. Seventy-eight percent of residents said improving outdoor recreating opportunities is an important goal for the Maryland Park Service to achieve. Providing more guided nature programming was lowest in terms of importance (46 percent).

Barriers to Visitation

Thirty-five percent of Marylanders said a lack of free time is a barrier to visiting a Maryland state park. Sixteen percent were not aware of the location of any state park, and 15 percent felt Maryland state parks are too far from their home. Ten percent of residents responded expense and crowds were barriers to visiting a Maryland state park.

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.

For full results, including crosstabs, please visit www.goucher.edu/hughescenter. 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 410-337-6316 or Kristen.pinheiro@goucher.edu.

About this Project

In addition to its regular release of data that reflect the most pressing statewide issues, the Goucher Poll also works with community partners in the “Polling for the Public Good” series. Through partnerships with government and nonprofit entities, additional questions are included in the poll to shed light on issues that provide collective benefits to Marylanders.

In July 2013, the director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center reached out to the Maryland Park Service to inquire whether there was interest in a collaborative research project on resident perceptions of Maryland state parks. In exchange for a series of questions on the October Goucher Poll, the Maryland Park Service gave students a firsthand experience of working with a governmental agency and the opportunity to present their work to members of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Under the guidance of the director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center, Goucher undergraduate students helped design the survey instrument, analyze the data, and co-author the executive report.

This project exemplifies the Goucher College commitment to experiential learning and the integration of environmental issues into the academic curriculum. We are thankful for this opportunity for student learning and to provide valuable information on public perceptions of Maryland state parks to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.



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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 a 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: PARKINT

Next, I'm going to ask you a few questions about Maryland state parks. Just to be sure we are taking about the same thing, when I say "state parks" I mean parks that are maintained and run by the state of Maryland.

Q: VISIT1

To begin, over the past year, about how many times have you visited a Maryland state park?

[OPEN-ENDED]

	Percent
Never	31.7
1 to 2	24.5
3 to 4	19.4
5 to 9	8.2
10 or more	16.1
Total=665, +/-3.8	100.0

Q: VISIT1A

Because you said you have visited a Maryland state park this past year, .on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "poor" and 5 means "excellent," how would you rate your overall experience?

	Percent
1 "Poor"	0.2
2	0.4
3	16.4
4	38.9
5 "Excellent"	42.8
Don't know/refused (v)	1.1
Total=469	100.0

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

Q: VISIT2

Thinking ahead, how interested—very interested, somewhat interested, or not at all interested—are you in visiting a Maryland state park during the next year?

	Percent
Not at all interested	13.0
Somewhat interested	35.4
Very interested	51.1
Don't know/refused (v)	0.5
Total=665, +/-3.8	100.0

Q: ACT

Next, I'm going to read you a list of activities that are offered at various state parks across Maryland. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "extremely unlikely" and 5 means "extremely likely," how likely are you to participate in each activity if you were to visit a Maryland state park?

Items Randomized

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't Know (v)
Hiking	19.9	6.7	16.4	20.6	35.8	0.5
Mountain biking	42.9	14.1	17	10.7	15.0	0.3
Fishing	29.4	12.1	16.6	14.5	27.1	0.3
Camping	33.5	11.8	17.8	13.3	22.7	0.8
Canoeing or kayaking	32.5	11.8	17.7	15.7	22.0	0.3
Hunting	72.5	9.2	6.1	3.5	8.5	0.3
Visiting historic sites	6.9	7.0	16.7	22.0	47.1	0.3
Guided nature programming	27.7	12.6	20.9	17.9	19.7	1.2

Total=665, +/-3.8

Q: GOALS

Next, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “not important at all” and 5 means “extremely important,” please tell me how important it is to you that state parks achieve each of the following goals. . .

Items Randomized

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't Know (v)
Conserve more land to protect natural resources	3.8	1.6	11.6	17.2	65.1	0.7
Improve outdoor recreation opportunities	3.6	2.8	14.9	30.0	47.5	1.2
Provide more guided nature programming	10.5	12.9	29.0	19.1	26.8	1.8
Preserve historic sites	2.5	1.0	8.6	20.7	66.7	0.5
Improve natural areas for wildlife	3.3	2.7	8.6	18.3	66.4	0.7

Total=665, +/-3.8

Q: BAR

Finally, please tell me whether you [disagree or agree] with each of the following statements about Maryland state parks. . .

PROBE**Items Randomized**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Maryland state parks are too expensive to visit.	26.7	51.6	7.2	2.6	11.9
Maryland state parks are too far from my home.	27.8	50.5	11.7	3.1	6.9
I'm not aware of the location of any state park.	43.2	38.7	10.1	6.3	1.6
Maryland state parks are too crowded.	22.1	52.6	9.2	1.1	15.0
I just don't have the free time to visit a Maryland state park.	19.3	43.3	23.5	11.7	2.1

Total=665, +/-3.8